

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY CONSULTATION SUMMARY.

Comments on the draft strategy were collated following consultation, undertaken using the following methods:

- Online consultation via Keep Connected on Lancaster City Council website, which received 46 responses.
- Direct emails to statutory bodies included social services and health trusts, voluntary sector, and council colleagues, the homelessness forum and advisory group, encouraging them to complete the online consultation.
- Presentations to the Homelessness Forum, Housing Advisory Group and the Poverty and Truth Commission Housing sub-group.

Prior to the draft consultation meetings with the providers of supported housing and floating support services, in the district, took place.

The summary below includes responses from all these sources, and how this will be reflected in the strategy and action plan. The action plan reflects the four priorities and will be a living document, which is monitored and reported on at the Lancaster Advisory Group and the Homelessness Forum. It is recognised that changes may need to be made to this so local need and circumstances are responded to.

QUESTION	SUMMARY OF RESPONSES	LCC COMMENT
<p>1. What do you feel are the biggest challenges around preventing homelessness and/or rough sleeping in the Lancaster district? Please provide up to three challenges below</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The affordability and supply of housing is not meeting demand. Within the strategy the importance of influencing and taking account of the wider agenda to meet priorities is stated. The private rented sector market, was highlighted for several reasons, including rent levels being unaffordable, quality of accommodation and a need to proactively work with private landlords in the area. It was also noted there is too much student accommodation in the area, which impacts the private rented market. It was felt supported housing supply and move on options are limited, and not always meeting the needs of individuals. 	<p>An example of linking work across the council is Lancaster City Council Housing Strategy includes the need for affordable housing and progress has been demonstrated by the purchase of the old Skerton secondary school site.</p> <p>The supply of supported housing has increased over the past few years and work has been done to respond, for example Jubilee Court opened in 2023, providing 12 self-contained flats, with floating support.</p> <p>It is important that when developing services best use is made of the funding to develop services which meet local need and are delivered in a way which achieves outcomes for individuals.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of funding to provide services and staffing. Feedback showed the view is a lack of funding impacts the services provided, and staffing levels are lower than needed to respond to the complex needs presenting. • Meeting the needs of people with complex needs. As above it was commented there is a lack of staffing to work with the complex needs presenting, and working to support individual need is key. • Positive Feedback Feedback also highlighted examples of good practice and solutions to minimise homelessness, such as the positive work of our Rough Sleeper Navigator and the Changing Futures Programme. The successful work completed in the previous strategy is a good base on which to build over the lifetime of the revised strategy. 	<p>An example of our response is the development of a Housing First pilot to support up to six rough sleepers who have committed to wanting to maintain a tenancy.</p> <p>All the points highlighted are interlinked and cannot be seen in isolation and highlights the need for our partnership work to continue and increase. At a local level we aim to respond to local circumstances, and this will be reflected in the action plan. However, we are working within a national framework and guidance provided by the department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)</p> <p>The strategy highlights the national and local context in which the strategy and action plan are operating, during the life of the strategy there could be changes in these, with an election in 2024, the approach and priorities of Government could change, and this would need to be reflected in the strategy.</p>
<p>2. PRIORITIES: The following priorities are included in our strategy. Please tell us if you agree with these priorities, if you disagree with any of these priorities, please give a reason in the next section below.</p> <p>Priority one: We will continue working to prevent all forms of homelessness and rough sleeping.</p>	<p>There was overall agreement with the four priorities, our online consultation shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 85% agreeing with priority 1 • 80% agreeing with priority 2 • 91% agreeing with priority 3 • 89% agreeing with priority 4 	<p>These four priorities will guide the action plan and the key performance indicators (KPIs) for monitoring progress on our actions</p>

<p>Priority two: We will ensure services minimise repeat rough sleeping and homelessness.</p> <p>Priority three: We will work towards increasing the availability of affordable and suitable rented accommodation, reducing our reliance on temporary accommodation.</p> <p>Priority four: We will further build on the existing strong partnerships with external agencies and increase customer satisfaction for those experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping.</p>		
<p>3. If you disagree with any of these priorities, please explain why.</p>	<p>Responses covered a range of views, from stating nothing is working to prevent homelessness through to recognising that waiting times for council housing is increasing and a lack of accommodation will make priorities difficult to achieve.</p>	<p>The council will continue to work with statutory agencies, landlords, people with lived experience and the voluntary sector to minimise homelessness and will adapt the action plan to take account of national and local strategies/policy and guidance, which impact service development and delivery.</p>
<p>4. Are there any additional priorities you feel should be included in this strategy? If yes, please explain in the box below.</p>	<p>A range of responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the Local Housing Allowance. • Minimising empty homes • Complex needs clients provided with the needed support to end their homelessness. • Incentives for private sector landlords • Protect housing for local residents. • Ensuring availability of adapted homes 	<p>Where Lancaster City Council can influence national policy, we will do so and access funding to respond to needs.</p>
<p>5. Do you have any further comments that you would like to make about this strategy?</p>	<p>Wide ranging and often repeating comments in earlier questions.</p>	

DETAILED FEEDBACK FROM THE KEEP CONNECTED CONSULTATION

The text below are the full responses received for each question asked.

1. What do you feel are the biggest challenges around preventing homelessness and/or rough sleeping in the Lancaster district? Please provide up to three challenges below

Themes

AFFORDABILITY AND SUPPLY OF HOUSING

Council/Social Housing

A big shortage of affordable housing

Not enough funding from central government for social housing.

Not enough housing.

Stop selling council properties.

Lack of suitable housing

There's not enough council properties at all in and around Lancaster

Lack of adapted/disabled accommodation

Private Rented Sector

Rising private rents.

A council that does not encourage landlords in PRS.

Pay rent direct to landlord or letting agent.

Identifying people with no secure tenancies Access to bonds: deposits.

Increase in no fault evictions.

Poor landlords who leave the property in disrepair and charge disproportionate rent.

Good landlords who can't afford to pay the mortgage due to the cost of living or the non payment of rent.

Student Accommodation

Too many Student properties

Not enough available housing too much emphasis on student accommodation.

Lack of Move On Options

Move-on accommodation from temporary accommodation has been an issue and continues to cause backlogs and bed-blocking issues within temporary services.

Supported Housing Portfolio

One of the biggest challenges is the range of services provided in accommodating homeless and rough-sleeping individuals, a variety of accommodation options are necessary for supporting individuals and meeting their needs.
The majority of temporary accommodations are in communal-based service and more options such as housing first should be continued to develop.
This would also support the issue of repeat homelessness.
Insufficient hostel beds, the lack of a night shelter

RESOURCES

Staffing / Funding

Lack of staff to manage the situation.
Lack of outreach support in the Morecambe area.
Lack of housing support for problematic complex individuals.
Lack of evening outreach engagement work.

Lack of Funding

Money - lack thereof- central govt to blame on many fronts.
LHA - Not enough being done to prevent people being homeless... more help with paying rent the cost of renting has outgrown the housing benefit rates.
Priorities have to be affordable and suitable rented accommodation for all. We live in a society where only the rich care about themselves and leave the rest of us swindling in poverty.

COMPLEXITY OF NEED

Substance Misuse and Mental Health

Addiction to alcohol/drugs
The alcohol and drugs addiction in the town centre
Not enough being done to prevent people being homeless – i.e., social care ...
Substance Abuse
Use of alcohol and drugs Mental Health
Lack of mental health support
Family breakups
Anti-social behaviour - help with mandatory attendance.

Worklessness

Most homeless refuses to work and pay their bills. Some will prefer not to work and get handouts.

Other

- A waste of funds by council on meaningless consultations and grants for certain people.

- The council's response, or lack of it. Why set rules and guidelines that you then ignore, or twist to suit yourselves. Also middle class attitudes, little understanding and actively not listening.
- Public push-back, not wanting 'rough' individuals next door.
- A big shortage of affordable housing. A council that does not encourage landlords in PRS. A waste of funds by council on meaningless consultations and grants for certain people.
- A council that does not encourage landlords in PRS. Too many Student properties. Not enough funding from central government for social housing.
- Rising private rents. Family breakups. Addiction to alcohol/drugs
- The alcohol and drugs addiction in the town centre
- Most homeless refuses to work and pay their bills. Some will prefer not to work and get handouts.
- Not enough housing. Not enough being done to prevent people being homeless – i.e. social care ... more help with paying rent the cost of renting has outgrown the housing benefit rates
- Pay rent direct to landlord or letting agent. Anti-social behaviour help with mandatory attendance. Stop selling council properties.
- Money - lack thereof- central govt to blame on many fronts.
- One of the biggest challenges is the range of services provided in accommodating homeless and rough-sleeping individuals, a variety of accommodation options are necessary for supporting individuals and meeting their needs. The majority of temporary accommodations are in communal-based service and more options such as housing first should be continued to develop. This would also support the issue of repeat homelessness. Further support for case management, Changing futures have had a significant impact on this, but it is not far-reaching enough to support all those who would benefit. Move-on accommodation from temporary accommodation has been an issue and continues to cause backlogs and bed-blocking issues within temporary services.
- Substance abuse. Lack of suitable housing. Lack of staff to manage the situation.
- Not enough available housing too much emphasis on student accommodation
- Identifying people with no secure tenancies Access to bonds: deposits. Increase in no risk evictions.
- Lack of outreach support in the Morecambe area. Lack of housing support for problematic complex individuals. Lack of evening outreach engagement work.
- Drug & alcohol use. Homeless sleepers preferring the streets to accommodation offers.
- Knowing who is at risk, before they become homeless. Providing accommodation for any person, especially when they may have complex problems and may not be safe to themselves or others.
- Public push-back, not wanting 'rough' individuals next door.
- Lack of accommodation and help

- The issues that cause homelessness such as the cost of living, addiction, long term mental health issues, long term unemployment. Also poor landlords who leave the property in disrepair and charge disproportionate rent. Our keep an empty property for long periods. Also, good landlords who can't afford to pay the mortgage due to the cost of living or the non-payment of rent.
- Lack of mental health care, stresses of modern living, costs being too high - rent prices - lack of appropriate accommodation
- Identifying genuine homeless people
- The council's response, or lack of it. Why set rules and guidelines that you then ignore, or twist to suit yourselves. Also middle class attitudes, little understanding and actively not listening
- Lack of affordable rental housing
- Safe place for the homeless, homeless people crime, loneliness and health
- Use of alcohol and drugs Mental Health. A service which could help someone in trouble, who was considering homelessness.
- Lack of accommodation. So much student accommodation.
- For all Council Officers and other designated officials, volunteers to ascertain , from the homeless person or persons concerned, if there is a modicum of the individual wanting to be helped. Perhaps a strategy might be to ask " do you want to be helped". This view recognises, that on the ground at the time, the individual might not be in condition to be asked but the question should be put asap.
- To recognise that some individuals, who are apparently " homeless " may not actually be so and adopted the "apparently homeless" stance for their own reasons. Some of which may well involve criminality. 3.To challenge some members of the public's view that giving those who are apparently homeless cash donations.
- It would seem that the policy of some Local Authorities to set up a collection fund which, individuals who wanted to donate cash to local schemes for the homeless, is better than members of the public giving money direct to those who present has homeless.
- Growing number of people struggling to find affordable accommodation. Vulnerable people are not sure where to find help. Resources from other agencies such as faith groups and churches are not as available as before COVID.
- There's not enough council properties at all in and around Lancaster
- Insufficient available social housing. Insufficient hostel beds, the lack of a night shelter
- Money, compassion, support from over stretched and underfunded resources.
- lack of suitable properties / incorrect priorities - for example – asylum seekers getting prioritised over ex forces which I feel is disgraceful.
- Lack of private Landlords willing to house people on low incomes or UC, Increased rents, cost of living, Student housing and now the Eden Project will also impact on low income households and the rental market. Rough sleeping- There are difficulties with people who have complex needs as their needs are too great for the supported housing we have to keep other residents safe and staff. These people are often the most difficult to house or to support to sustain their accommodation.
- not enough supported housing, not enough social housing, not enough high needs supported housing.
- Lack of affordable renting accommodation Private landlords profiteering
- Finances Lack of support and information working with drug and alcohol services

- Housing costs Lack of mechanisms to develop self-worth and aspire to being accommodated A failure to make support and/or housing offers that rough sleepers should/would believe.
- Substance misuse is at its highest peak ever. It is prevalent in every part of society now with crack cocaine being abused by the highest prevalence ever seen. Crack cocaine is responsible for far more crime than heroin as its the most powerful drug and there is no limit on the amount desired. Until substance misuse is given a large injection of funding homelessness will continue to rise. Additionally, the introduction of universal credit giving the rent to the individual was ridiculous as in the hands of the vulnerable, that money will never get to the place it is supposed to. Also, inflation has pushed rents up with top ups being required in the private sector and if trying to sustain a property on benefits, it is now literally impossible.
- The biggest challenge in the short will be Prioritising temporary accommodation (b&b/hotel rooms) for local needs.

2. PRIORITIES: The following priorities are included in our strategy. Please tell us if you agree with these priorities, if you disagree with any of these priorities, please give a reason in the next section below.

PRIORITY	AGREE	DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE
Priority one: We will continue working to prevent all forms of homelessness and rough sleeping. Do you agree with this priority?	40	4	3
Priority two: We will ensure services minimise repeat rough sleeping and homelessness. Do you agree with this priority?	38	5	4
Priority three: We will work towards increasing the availability of affordable and suitable rented accommodation, reducing our reliance on temporary accommodation. Do you agree with this priority?	42	2	3
Priority four: We will further build on the existing strong partnerships with external agencies and increase customer satisfaction for those experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping. Do you agree with this priority?	43	1	3

3. If you disagree with any of these priorities, please explain why in the box below:

- Nothing in Priority 1 or 2 is working.
- Give priority to those to work hard to provide for their families. These individuals should be sent back to school and learn how to manage their finances and go to work.
- Repeat homelessness can mean people need tenancy support to manage finances and often regulate behaviours.
- I don't think it's about the services provided by the Council it's about reaching out to other service who can provide a wraparound service that address the multiple issues that cause homelessness. Homeless people often find it hard to engage with people in authority as they feel they have been let down by government and statutory services so much.
- I don't believe that focusing on reducing rough sleeping is an effective priority - it is treating the symptom but not the cause. A focus on helping improve and support healthy mental and physical living needs to be the priority.
- Again, a priority needs to be if genuinely homeless.
- I agree with all, but I will note it doesn't give any guarantees.
- More proactive measures might be needed. Is it possible to fund a designated officer, who duties do not relate to general housing homelessness, who could be tasked towards prevention.
- It is all very well having these statements but in reality, they are not practiced. The vulnerable are conned into giving up their council properties to go into temporary accommodation without understanding that if they break rules in the temp accommodation, they are homeless and told they are intentionally homeless and owed no duty. Many of the most vulnerable cannot cope or abide by rules due to the chaos of their lifestyles. They are set up to fail.
- I agree with priorities but having worked closely with housing over many years and seen available accommodation and waiting lists times increase year on year so don't see how this will be achieved.

4. Are there any additional priorities you feel should be included in this strategy? If yes, please explain in the box below.

- Yea there are a number of ways 1. Increase local housing rates 2. Try and get landlords in. PRS to trust and work with you Which I being one of those said landlords completely do not trust any council or Councillor and will not work with local council.
- Make the town centre less attractive to rough sleepers move them on
- Working hard should pay
- Increase housing benefit it's about preventing homeless as well.
- Stop selling council property and do not rely on others to supply accommodation.
- Tackling substance abuse Mental health support.

- Access to ideal choice via a person initially as registration excludes people with minimal literacy and IT skills.
- Teaching younger homeless youths housekeeping and self-hygiene skills.
- Dealing with people who come into the district and wild camp, I think this group of people are the most worrisome for local people. An easy conclusion to jump to is that the person in the tent is 'bad' no matter who they may be. Having a clear way for members of the public to report this, so that the person gets some help and guidance, would be reassuring.
- We need to find out why they are sleeping rough. I also feel that some of this is just accepted as the norm. For example, Morecambe Town centre
- Not allowing property owners to keep their properties empty. There are schemes in other parts of the country to prevent properties being disused. Is there not an empty property tax or something similar?
- Focus on diversity, in lifestyles as well as people. Supporting different ways of thinking, different needs, rather than making everyone conform to one way of life and pathologising anyone who struggles to fit in with this.
- While it is not going to be as many people as just needing any accommodation, there is a very significant lack of disabled, adapted/accessible properties in the area. I personally know 4 people in accommodation which does not meet their requirements - none of them have proper wheelchair access (often needing to drag portable ramps around) let alone the wet rooms they need. Combining this with the significantly higher price of flats as compared to general houses and the higher likelihood of disabled people being out of work or on very low pay, this causes a lot of problems. My rent on an unsuitable property (but literally all I can find that I can make work) increased 12% this year, after a 13% increase last year. This is not an uncommon problem with people I speak to, and everyone is on the verge of not being able to afford it at all.
- The policies are fine, but will they actually happen in reality?
- Protect a proportion of housing to keep it available for local residents, not students. Not sure how but if it could be done it would help?
- LGBT + People need to be housed according to need - rather than heteronormative values.
- Utilising some of the boarded up and derelict buildings to accommodate homeless people.
- Knowledge for young people should be made available to all, at signiorage school and university. People should be made aware of short-, mid- and long-term consequences on all aspects of homelessness.
- Coming from an agency with difficulty to house people feel that LCC more so than other areas continue to put barriers in the way preventing them being housed. Outreach worker service has been positive on some occasions and poor on others.
- A public campaign asking people not to give directly to people who are apparently homeless, on the street, setting up of the public donation scheme (as previously mentioned) and, at the same time, publicising the said donation scheme. There
- Yes to rehouse families who aren't getting where they want to live.
- The bringing on stream of a night shelter providing temporary accommodation whilst referrals and assessments are being
- Ex war veterans should get some type of priority
- Incentives for Landlords- we need to be creative with this and make sure Landlords know they're supported in all ways if they have difficult tenants, this may encourage new landlords and existing ones to not sell up. Set up Landlord forum.

- I was speaking to someone the other morning Liam who works with the rough sleepers of Lancaster one morning he said he worked with LCC and I just wanted to send over my praise for this individual. And feel he is a credit to the team.
- Having contactable services. Need to be able to contact homelessness team (phone off) and out of hours phone also off. I tried at 4:10 on 26th June.
- To provide accommodation to all rough sleepers every night.
To operate a no exclusions policy.
- To operate an all in policy.
- To purchase as a council or through ESP's accommodation that's affordable.
- To account for the financial costs of rough sleepers in society on the public purse when compared to those with similar care act needs in accommodation when considering investments in capital and services.
- To promote access to support services to those who are rough sleepers in recognition of the need for 'stepping stone' services.
- To dispel the notion that the first three points above have a negative impact on the numbers of people rough sleeping and recognise the contradiction in that notion when also referring to positive impacts from the COVID all in policy.
- To promote charitable and church services that the Council has sought to oppress into closing down and allow them to provide the above services where the Council fails to do so.
- To describe the service delivery in the plan that supports rough sleepers in living on the streets in recognition of the need to avoid human rights breaches and provide believable stepping stones.
- To match service delivery to need rather than to offer services to those who best meet criteria. Homeless people identify criteria as systems to reject them which makes a barrier to entry to support.
- To provide a plan that names services, access routes in a language that service users would understand.
- To allow staff to be honest about the issues.
- My experience of the Head of Service was one where they appeared to be dishonest and seemed comfortable in acknowledging they were being dishonest.
- To develop a culture of integrity, consistency and care.
- There needs to be far more supported accommodation. Newcastle has a far better strategy than here. Everyone is offered overnight accommodation unless there has been extreme risk to staff.
- I think the application process to ideal choice social housing should be far easier and a quicker process. It can take months for an application to be active. It can be quite complicated and off putting for a lot of people. I support a lot of people who find the process totally overwhelming and confusing. It can at times take so long that the time of support that is in place for people has ended before the application is fully completed and the account active.

5. Do you have any further comments that you would like to make about this strategy. Please state the relevant paragraph and page number that you are commenting on and provide details of the changes you would like made.

- You have obviously seen the survey that has been brought Forward by yourself Councillor Caroline Jackson on licensing and I believe you have made the homeless situation far Worse in the past few days and we have yet to see what carnage you Created in the future months for families with this selective licensing sham. (passed to Housing Standards)
- Send them back to school and we hope they will learn to read and write
- Building more homes and flats so there is cheap as possible homes for people NOT the nearly £1000 a month homes on Westminster road
- One singular system should be commissioned by the local authority so that providers and support agencies can view details of clients they are working with, it is often difficult in this climate to get information shared between agencies or to see what has been done or what support is required, this applies to changing futures, LDHAS, and accommodation providers, who should work in unity for the individuals they are supporting.
- Accountability so that suitable accommodation isn't misused
- Get people with lived experience of homelessness around the table when making strategies. Don't make decisions about homelessness unless some homeless people or some who have been homeless are in the room
- Why not also look at properties that are empty and not lived in
- Multiple people move in with others, but keep their home for when a relationship breaks down. Frequently the benefits system is paying for this. It's so wrong. There would be a lot more available properties if you actually monitored where people live. You could work with the benefits fraud teams!
- Whilst I agree that society should support people, I can't help notice that the numbers are relatively small, a lot of investment for a small minority. Maybe parents could be more informative to their children. I would think most parents would naturally warn their children of the dangers of smoking, drinking and probably sexually related matters. I wonder how many of them actually talk to their children about homelessness the possible implications for all.
- Really think that the working with other agencies should be higher priority in light of us working with so many difficult to house people
- There may be cases on homelessness where the individuals have had no choice about their homeless circumstances but, again, it should be recognised that some people have made a choice to adopt the apparently homelessness stance or continually take no action to improve their circumstances.
- I'm currently homeless and I have asked to be rehoused in Lancaster due to me being emergency moved I have been put in a hotel which is disgusting and unclean. Me and my children have been made to stay in a hotel full of drug addicts I'm expected to be staying in Morecambe and to get my children to school and nursery every day I'm struggling with food and facing financial hardship as it is. I think it's disgusting how the council aren't prioritising families and just trying to dump them wherever they fell is appropriate which is causing people's mental health and also their safety.
- I haven't seen a strategy; I agree with the wish list above but surely that isn't a strategy"!

- The strategy lacks a financial discourse about the opportunity cost of policies proposed. The strategy is not clear in what the actions will mean in terms of service delivery in the future. The strategy does not define present service delivery. The strategy misrepresents the financial pressures in the private rental and Housing Association market and does not reference the Housing Strategy properly SMART targets are absent making the strategy feel disingenuous. How many beds would be created, what would the access criteria be and how does that correlate to the number of rough sleepers. In what way is the number of people on the count relevant to the number of rough sleepers. The count number simply gives the number of people who choose to be prominent in the community when sleeping. Where's the references to the Adult Social Care commitment to service provision and how does that enable an open-door practice to those who at times reject service provision. The policy does not reflect upon the community-based services which have closed over the last few years and in what ways that has been a gain or loss to rough sleepers. Policies that don't recognise mistakes are fundamentally flawed. The policy does not reflect, or have sufficient links to, government policy which would explain much of it's following content. The key issue is that it does not have SMART targets for providing services to rough sleepers to have better lives as rough sleepers so that they can access services. I've been on first name terms with more rough sleepers than you acknowledge exist and all but a few want housing. Their lifestyles leave them unable to meet criteria or maintain themselves in housing. I can't find how you will improve their lives, engage them in society and provide the stability and belief that enables them to access housing. I can't find reference to where the author has had fundamental consultation with service users on the issues. This document needs a plethora of appendices and links.
- The council severely underestimate homelessness by discounting all those who on the count nights who aren't observed on the streets. They preach good practice but in reality the most vulnerable cannot access quality support. The boundaries put in place make it impossible for them to progress. There is a distinct lack of understanding of the barriers faced by the individual who has multiple barriers to accessing housing. You cannot expect a homeless substance misuse to behave in the same way as a standard member of society. Until that is understood and addressed, nothing will change.