

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY FOR PENDLE

2025 - 2030

Introduction

This is Pendle Borough Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2025 – 2030. It will support the delivery of some of the key priorities in the Corporate Plan 2023 - 2027 and be complementary to other strategies such as the Pendle Housing Strategy 2018 - 2023. Its purpose is to show what we, the Council, will do about homelessness and rough sleeping. It lists the key actions we'll be undertaking, with partners, in order to deliver this strategy.

Aims of the Strategy

The key aims of the Strategy are:-

- To prevent homelessness
- To continue to ensure that there is a safety net of accommodation for people who are or who may become homeless
- To provide support to people who are or may become homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again.

How the Strategy was formulated

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, the Council must carry out a homelessness review for their district and formulate a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review. As such, 'Homelessness in Pendle Review – 2025' has been carried out which has considered the levels and likely future levels of homelessness in Pendle. The outcomes from the Review, feeds into this strategy and its recommendations have been used as Key Actions for this strategy (p11- 12). The result is this strategy which has been produced in consultation with various agencies concerned with homelessness across Pendle. These agencies included registered providers, supported housing providers, local advice & support agencies, probation, job centre plus, health services, drugs & alcohol mis-use services, children's social care, councillors and council departments.

Legislation and Guidance

In delivering a homelessness service, the Council must adhere to homelessness legislation and consider guidance issued by Government. Homelessness legislation derives principally from the 1996 Housing Act Part VII as amended and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The main changes under the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act have been:-

- **Meaning of homelessness and threatened with homelessness amended.** This measure extends the period an applicant is “threatened with homelessness” from 28 to 56 days, and in addition ensures that anyone that has been served with a valid section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 eviction notice that expires in 56 days or less is classed as “threatened with homelessness”.
- **Duty to assess all eligible applicants' cases and agree a plan.** This measure requires local housing authorities to carry out an assessment in all cases where an eligible applicant is homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless. Following this assessment the local authority must work with the person who has applied for help, to agree the actions to be taken by both parties to ensure the person has and is able to retain suitable accommodation.
- **Duty in cases threatened with homelessness (prevention).** Homelessness prevention is about helping those at risk of homelessness to avoid their situation turning into a homelessness crisis. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requires the local authorities to take reasonable steps to help prevent any eligible person who is at risk of homelessness from becoming homeless.
- **Duty owed to those who are homeless (relief).** Homelessness relief is action taken to help resolve homelessness. This duty requires local authorities to take reasonable steps to help secure accommodation for any eligible person who is homeless.
- **Duty of Public Authority to refer cases to local housing authority.** Requires public authorities in England specified in regulations to notify the local authority of service users they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The Government also issues a **Homelessness Code of Guidance** which is periodically updated. The Council must have regard to this guidance to when exercising its functions relating to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Potential new legislation

The Renters' Rights Bill will bring forward some changes which are likely to have an impact in relation to people at risk of homelessness or already homeless, including:

- **Abolish section 21 evictions** and move to a simpler tenancy structure where all assured tenancies are periodic – providing more security for tenants and empowering them to challenge poor practice and unfair rent increases without fear of eviction. We will implement this new system in one stage, giving all tenants security immediately.
- **Ensure possession grounds are fair to both parties**, giving tenants more security, while ensuring landlords can recover their property when reasonable. The bill introduces new safeguards for tenants, giving them more time to find a home if landlords evict to move in or sell, and ensuring unscrupulous landlords cannot misuse grounds.
- **Provide stronger protections against backdoor eviction** by ensuring tenants are able to appeal excessive above-market rents which are purely designed to force them out. As now, landlords will still be able to increase rents to market price for their properties and an independent tribunal will make a judgement on this, if needed.
- **Introduce a new Private Rented Sector Landlord Ombudsman** that will provide quick, fair, impartial and binding resolution for tenants' complaints about their landlord. This will bring tenant-landlord complaint resolution on par with established redress practices for tenants in social housing and consumers of property agent services
- **Create a Private Rented Sector Database** to help landlords understand their legal obligations and demonstrate compliance (giving good landlords confidence in their position), alongside providing better information to tenants to make informed decisions when entering into a tenancy agreement. It will also support local councils – helping them target enforcement activity where it is needed most. Landlords will need to be registered on the database in order to use certain possession grounds.
- **Make it illegal for landlords and agents to discriminate against prospective tenants in receipt of benefits or with children** – helping to ensure everyone is treated fairly when looking for a place to live.

As this proposed legislation is subject to amendment and has not been implemented, it is not known specifically how this may affect people who are at risk of homelessness. It is hoped however that it will reduce evictions from private rented accommodation which contributes towards homelessness.

National Context

On 18th December 2024, the government advised that a new dedicated Inter-Ministerial Group, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, will bring together ministers from across government to develop a long-term strategy working with mayors and councils across the country to get back on track to ending homelessness once and for all. The funding for homelessness services in 2025 – 26 will deliver three important steps in the government's long-term plan to tackle homelessness:

- stopping households becoming homeless in the first place.
- addressing the growing use of B&Bs and nightly-let accommodation.
- streamlining funding structures to make it easier for councils to spend their cash.

The council's Housing Needs service will continue to deliver statutory homelessness services and use the funding provided to help tackle homelessness in the Pendle area.

Regional Context

Lancashire Joint Homelessness Prevention Protocol - This Protocol outlines the joint responsibilities of Lancashire County Council Children's Social Care and District Housing authority partners concerning the assessment of need and provision of accommodation services to homeless 16/17 year olds.

At present this Protocol is in process of being refreshed. The council is contributing towards the development of this new document and will continue to ensure successful implementation of the protocol locally.

Local Context

This updated Strategy has been developed to continues to deliver elements of the ***Housing Strategy 2018–2023***. One of the key objectives of the Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023 was 'to meet the housing and support needs of residents and vulnerable people'.

The last **Pendle Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024** was developed following a review of homelessness in Pendle. Much of the strategy and its objectives remain relevant to this updated Strategy. The 2019 - 2024 strategy identified a number of actions, all of which were completed.

The **Pendle Homelessness Temporary Accommodation Policy 2019** was developed as a result of guidance issued in [Nzolameso v Westminster City Council – Supreme Court Judgement – April 15](#) - *Ideally, each local authority should have, and keep up to date, a policy for procuring sufficient units of temporary accommodation to meet the anticipated demand during the coming year.* The Policy concluded at the time that it was felt that the needs of those using temporary accommodation was being met.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in Pendle

Many people believe anyone who is homeless is actually living on the streets. However, this is rarely the case. The legal definition of homelessness which local authorities work to is contained within Part VII, s175 of the Housing Act 1996. Broadly, when assessing whether a person is homeless or not, the Housing Act states that an applicant is not homeless if he/she has accommodation, which is available for the applicant's occupation, to which there are rights of occupation, entry or use to which is not restricted, and which it is reasonable for the applicant to continue to occupy. Consequently many people may be classed as homeless even if s/he is staying temporarily with friends / family.

The precise level of homelessness at any one time is impossible to ascertain due to a number of factors:-

- a person could become homeless at any point or their homelessness be resolved at any point, thus numbers of people potentially homeless may change on a day to day basis.
- it is known that not all homeless people approach the Council for assistance ie they approach a wide number of agencies, who may help to prevent their homelessness
- there may be 'hidden' homelessness ie where some people may decide not to approach the Council or any other agencies for assistance.

Table 1 provides some indication of the numbers of people who approach the Council for assistance and outcomes.

Table 1 – Housing enquires, homelessness applications and outcomes

Year	Housing Enquiries	Housing enquiries resulting in Homelessness Applications*	Number of cases where homelessness has been prevented or relieved **	Bed & Breakfast (B&B) Use		
				Number of nights provided	Number of placements	Average length of stay (days)
2019/20	943	732	357***	768	79	9.72
2020/21	769	680	123	2077	130	15.98
2021/22	944	688	107	3530	121	29.17
2022/23	1125	789	184	5372	195	27.55
2023/24	1669	1076	256	5837	209	27.93
2024/25 *To 31/12/24	1358	1068	175	3865	147	26.29

*Homelessness applications are triggered where the Council has reason to believe that the applicant is homeless or at risk of homelessness within 56 days

** These cases relate to where a household was at risk of, or actually homeless and that intervention by PBC Housing Needs has resulted in the household being able to remain where they are for at least 6 months or rehoused for an expected six month period or more.

***cases from external organisations also counted. From 2020/21 only PBC Housing Needs cases counted

****a number of placements overlap into new financial years, and where this occurs, they are counted as two separate placements.

Homelessness applications were relatively static between 2019 and 2023 but have since grown considerably. There can be many reasons why homelessness occurs, with the main two reasons being cited as

- End of private rented tenancy – assured shorthold tenancy
- Family no longer willing or able to accommodate

That said, there may be other external nationwide factors which have also had an effect on homelessness but in a broader context ie over the last few years there appears to have been the following general issues locally, and perhaps nationally:

- less vacancies arising in social housing for people to move into
- longer turnaround times for when social housing properties are 'void'. Anecdotally, housing associations have said there has been a shortage of staff and / or materials to undertake the required works to repair properties before they can be let again.
- Rising rents with the private rented sector, which appears to have resulted in such properties becoming less affordable for people to access.

Rough Sleeping

The council's Housing Needs service undertake monthly estimates of rough sleeping by contacting local agencies from the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Homeless Forum to ask for any evidence of rough sleeping in the Pendle area on a specified night. Periodically, the Rough Sleeper Navigator Service provided by Calico, also undertakes a spotlight search of all known areas where rough sleepers have been found previously to check for rough sleepers. Estimates calculated from this exercise, usually result in an out-turn of between zero and five people identified to be sleeping rough on the specified night chosen.

All local authorities are also required to submit an annual 'snapshot' figure to Government to indicate the number of people sleeping rough in their area on a typical night. In following guidance, the Council selects a 'typical night' between 1st October and 30th November each year and follows the same process as for the monthly estimates but a spotlight count is always undertaken. Evidence must be sufficiently strong to show that a person in all probability actually slept rough on the typical night chosen.

Table 2 - Rough Sleeper Out-turns submitted to Government by year

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Out-turn	0	0	0	0	5	1

This indicates that rough sleeping does not appear to be a major issue in Pendle, although the table is a snapshot of one night only and it could be that on a different night, there could be more people sleeping rough. It appears however that over the last few years that this, most visual expression of homelessness, has been more prevalent, whether rough sleeping itself, or perhaps more commonly, street begging. It should be noted that not all of those begging are found to actually be homeless. Anecdotally, it is believed by Housing Needs staff that at any one night, there are likely to be between two and four people sleeping rough in Pendle.

Consultation and Partner Involvement

Consultation has occurred with many agencies concerned with homelessness across Pendle. These agencies included registered providers, supported housing providers, local advice & support agencies, probation, Job Centre Plus, health services, drugs & alcohol mis-use services, LCC Children's Social Care, councillors and Pendle Borough Council departments.

In September 2024 all members of the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Homelessness Forum were invited to provide comment and feedback on the following three questions:

- What do you think are likely to be the biggest challenges over the next 5 years for homelessness services?

- What improvements / changes would agencies like to see in homelessness service provision?
- Any further ideas which you would like to put forward

A wide variety of responses were made recorded in the homelessness review along with an indication of how the responses would be acted upon.

Funding / Delivery Challenges

Homelessness provision in Pendle is currently funded through a variety of sources. In addition to support from the council itself, Government support the council to deliver homelessness services via Preventing Homelessness Grant and periodically through targeted grants which includes:

Rough Sleeper Initiative 2022-25 (*Rough Sleeper Navigator Service*)

Government provides funding for the Rough Sleeping Initiative, which provides local councils with funding to support those sleeping rough or at risk of rough sleeping. Rossendale Borough Council (*lead authority*), supported by Burnley and Pendle Council, was successful in securing funding. Through this scheme Pendle benefits from a Rough Sleeper Navigator Service provided by Calico housing association whereby an officer will visit reported locations of rough sleepers and provide advice and support to help get that person into accommodation.

Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)

Under this scheme, the council has been allocated funding to provide 1 x property for homelessness temporary accommodation and also 1 x property for Afghan resettlement. It is anticipated that both properties will begin accepting residents from 2025-26.

Whilst these funding streams all help with delivering a service, many of these funds are usually provided on a year by year basis, therefore it is difficult to plan too far ahead. Thus future funding for homelessness interventions is not guaranteed and where shortfalls occur, could result in less of a service being provided.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2025 - 2030: Key Actions

The Pendle Homelessness Review 2025 makes a number of recommendations, which have been used as Key Actions for this strategy. These Key Actions will be taken forward using SMART' criteria – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time based. It is recognised that there may be 'overlap' with regards some of the actions as reducing homelessness may minimise rough sleeping and meet the housing and support needs of residents.

The delivery plan sets out the key actions for the Council to deliver with its partners. Cumulatively these actions will work towards delivering the overall aim.

STRATEGIC AIM 1: To prevent homelessness

Key Actions

- To successfully implement the Renters' Rights Act in Pendle
- To ensure that any future developments within the Government's approach towards homelessness is successfully implemented.
- To contribute to the development of the refreshed Lancashire Joint Homeless Prevention Protocol for 16 and 17 year olds – 2024 and ensures successful implementation of the protocol locally.
- To update the 2025 - 2030 Homelessness Strategy Action Plan on a quarterly basis and circulate to Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale, Homelessness Forum.
- Continue to contribute towards the review of the B-with-us choice-based lettings scheme allocations policy to ensure sufficient reasonable preference for applicants at risk of, or who are homeless.

STRATEGIC AIM 2: To continue to ensure that there is a safety net of accommodation for people who are or who may become homeless

Key Actions

- Support any future bid for funding under the Rough Sleeper Initiative programme
- Implement the Local Authority Housing Fund scheme to develop temporary accommodation.
- To refresh the Pendle Homelessness Temporary Accommodation Policy
- To consider 'Housing First' as a model towards addressing homelessness within the borough
- Continue to undertake the review of TA and implement the findings of that review.

STRATEGIC AIM 3: To provide support to people who are or may become homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again.

Key Actions

- Review all literature / advice being given out and update information where required.
- Continue to monitor enquires and applications to the council's Housing Needs service to ensure the service is being accessed by all sections of the community.
- Review 'prevention' work and implement any changes recommended to continue to help prevent homelessness
- Review 'relief' work and implement any changes recommended to help relieve homelessness