

HAMBLETON

DISTRICT COUNCIL

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Review and Strategy 2021-24

a place to

grow

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Foreward

Welcome to Hambleton District Council's Homelessness Strategy for 2021-2024.

My vision is to make sure there is a decent home within reach of every citizen within Hambleton district. I want Hambleton to be a place where individuals, couples and families affected by homelessness have simple and effective access to a range of housing services and other opportunities - to enable them to rebuild their lives and make a success of their futures.

This strategy is the product of thorough consultation with our partners, homelessness services/providers and citizens. We are now in the midst of very difficult times, including a worldwide pandemic, and budget cuts to statutory and voluntary services pose enormous challenges in a rural community such as Hambleton.

Unfortunately, many people live in crisis, and one of the worst crises of all is to be without a home. The causes of homelessness and its effects are complex and intertwined, and inevitably there are no simple solutions. It is not just about buildings and beds - it is about the many social problems that may go wrong in people's lives, such as health, income, family breakdown; and things can go wrong for any one of us in such a climate.

Although this strategy is focused around the details of our policies and services for homelessness for the next 3 years, it does not do this in isolation. The Council's Housing Options team, Broadacres Housing Association and our other partners are working hard to deliver a comprehensive economic action plan, a new Health and Wellbeing strategy, a Children and Young People's plan. Building on these and the recommendations of the Hambleton child poverty commission are just a few of the strategies that seek to impact on some of the causes and effects of homelessness.

Hambleton District Council cannot tackle homelessness effectively alone - it is a countywide issue requiring action from many organisations. Support is provided within the housing options team to provide this critical service which provides support for homeless clients and their families - harnessing the skills and hard work of many people to deliver sensitive and tailored solutions to our diverse communities, often from within those communities themselves.

Much has already been achieved and we have much more to do. I am very conscious of and grateful for, the hard work that is being done by council staff, and our statutory and voluntary partners.

I look forward to working together with all our partners to deliver this strategy and tackle homelessness in Hambleton together.



Councillor David Webster
Portfolio Holder for Economy and Planning Services
Hambleton District Council

Our Vision



Homelessness is everyone's business. Together with our partners we will strive to deliver practical and effective housing solutions to ensure that Hambleton remains a special place to live for every member of our rural community.

Introduction

Welcome to Hambleton District Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy for 2021-2024.

The strategy responds to the changing environment in which homelessness and rough sleeping support services are now delivered and has been shaped by national policy, a review of current services, customer feedback and partner views.

The strategy also fully recognises the important role that other partners and stakeholders have to play in harnessing their skills and expertise to deliver sensitive and tailored solutions to some of these issues within our communities.

The strategy details how the council and its partners will seek to optimise opportunities to prevent and relieve homelessness including rough sleeping throughout the district and the sub-region to provide the right accommodation and support for those facing homelessness and builds on the achievements made in the last five years.

Notable achievements for the Housing Options Service from the previous strategy

- The young person's accommodation pathway has continued to provide mediation, homelessness prevention and advice services for 16-25-year olds in partnership with other agencies, assisting 13 individuals in 2019/20.
- The North Yorkshire Home Choice pathway has been maintained and continues to provide a county wide allocations scheme. Between November 2019 and November 2020, a total of 425 properties were allocated across the scheme.
- In July 2017 Hambleton District Council was only the 3rd local authority of 326 in England to achieve a Gold Standard award. At the time this showed that the local housing options service was in the top 3% of local authorities in England, but we are not complacent and always want to improve and develop our services.
- In November 2017, in partnership with Broadacres an additional House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) was developed, providing vital accommodation for 16 individuals aged 18-25 in employment.
- In April 2018 we fully implemented the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requirements, including the new homelessness prevention and relief duties and Personal Housing Plans.
- In October 2019 the Homelessness Prevention Support Service previously provided by Humankind was successfully integrated into the Housing Options Team helping to streamline the service.



Why do we need a Homelessness Strategy?

Due to the complex nature of the causes of homelessness, a homelessness review and strategy must take a broad view of both population and housing market characteristics. Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires housing authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy based on the results of a homelessness review. A homelessness review must include a review of:

- the levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in the housing authority's area
- the activities which are carried out in the local housing authority's district for the prevention of homelessness
- accommodation that is or will be available for people who are or may become homeless
- support available for people who are homeless or who may be at risk of homelessness, or those who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again
- the resources available to the authority, social services authorities and other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons for such activities.

A homelessness strategy aims to:

- prevent homelessness in the district
- securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in the district who are or may become homeless
- securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in the district who are or may become homeless, or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again
- ensuring accommodation is fit for purpose and in a decent state of repair.

Definition of homelessness

The common perception of homelessness is a single person seen sleeping rough on the streets. However, homelessness is a more complex issue affecting families, couples and single people. Not all homeless people live on the streets. They may have access to unsettled accommodation by "sofa surfing" or living in overcrowded accommodation with families or friends. This review uses a wide definition of homelessness which includes the following:

- People sleeping rough
- Single homeless people living in shelters, hostels and supported accommodation
- Statutory homeless

It also includes people that can be described as "hidden homeless". These are people who are squatting and/or living in severely overcrowded accommodation.



The government has set out in legislation, in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, who can be considered as being homeless or threatened with homelessness and has provided guidance on how the council assesses this. People who present as homeless do not have to be sleeping on the streets or not have a roof over their head at the time they apply for help.

A person is 'threatened with homelessness' if they are likely to become homeless within 56 days or they have received valid Section 21 notice under the Housing Act 1988.

A person is 'homeless' if they have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere which is available for their occupation and which that person has a legal right to occupy. A person is also homeless if they have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or the accommodation is a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation and there is nowhere it can lawfully be placed in order to provide accommodation. A person who has accommodation is to be treated as homeless where it would not be reasonable for them to continue to occupy that accommodation.

Definition of Rough Sleeping

Since 2010, the figures used for national statistics have used the following definition of rough sleeping:

"People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as, on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or 'bashes')."

The definition does not include people in hostels or shelters, sofa surfers, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protests, squatters or Travellers sites.

Equality and Diversity

This strategy is aimed at improving homelessness services for all residents with housing or housing-related support needs. As such, no group or individual in the Hambleton district should be adversely affected or disadvantaged as a result of the strategy. The strategy actively recognises the difficulties faced by those facing homelessness and rough sleeping in accessing services and promotes inclusion.

The outcomes of the Homelessness Review show that, proportionate to the district profile, no protected characteristic group, as determined by the Equality Act, is adversely impacted by homelessness or by decisions made by the council.

The council is committed to equality and diversity issues and will comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on this strategy.

Our Homelessness Review

The National Context

In April 2018 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force, changing the way local authorities were required to respond to approaches from households who were homeless or threatened with homelessness. The main elements include:-

- A duty to provide improved advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness
- Extension of the period 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 days to 56 days
- A requirement to undertake an assessment for any household whom the council is satisfied are eligible for assistance and homeless or threatened with homelessness
- New duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible people regardless of priority need
- The new requirement to create a personalised housing plan for households owed a prevention duty
- The broadening of the local connection criteria for care leavers making it easier for a care leaver to demonstrate an established connection to a local authority area
- Encouraging public bodies to prevent and relieve homelessness through the Duty to Refer

This key piece of legislation was subsequently followed by the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy (August 2018) which set out a commitment to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027.

Other major national influences on this strategy include;

Welfare reform

Changes to the benefit system and introduction of Universal Credit (roll out started in June 2016 for Hambleton)

The Children and Social Work Act 2017

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to publish a 'local offer' for care leavers up to age 25. This includes services related to health and wellbeing, relationships, education and training, employment, accommodation and participation in society.

The Care Act

A fundamental component of the Care Act is the 'suitability of accommodation' in meeting the at home care and support needs of older and vulnerable people. The Act and the accompanying regulations and guidance outline how housing can support a more integrated approach and set out local implementation requirements by April 2015.



The Rough Sleeping Strategy

In 2018 the Government published its Rough Sleeping Strategy in which it set out its commitment to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. The strategy called on central and local government as well as businesses, communities, faith and voluntary groups and the general public to work together in new ways. The strategy was backed by £100 million funding and marked the beginning of the government's ambition to ensure no one has to sleep rough again.

Brexit

It remains unclear how much impact there will be on homelessness following the UK leaving the European Union. Staff will therefore keep up to date with national developments, policy changes and continue to support European Nationals with accessing accommodation and advice during this transition process.

The Renters Reform Bill

At the state opening of Parliament on 19 December 2019, the Queen's Speech announced a Renters' Reform Bill that will abolish the use of 'no fault' evictions by removing Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 and reforming the grounds for possession. If this becomes law, it may have an impact on homelessness in the district as landlords may be discouraged from renting properties and the private rented sector may shrink.

The Domestic Abuse Bill

The Domestic Abuse Bill is currently progressing through the required stages to make its contents a legislative requirement. The new Domestic Abuse Act will place duties on local authorities to assess the need for abuse support locally, produce and publish a strategy and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy. A Domestic Abuse Partnership Board will need to be formed from local partnerships to advise on the formation of the strategy.

Coronavirus

On 26 March 2020, the Minister for Local Government and Homelessness write to local authorities asking them to urgently accommodate all rough sleepers and focus on the provision of adequate facilities to enable people to adhere to the guidance on hygiene or isolation, including for those who are at risk of sleeping rough.

Furthermore, in May 2020, the Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing requested that when arranging move-on accommodation for people sleeping rough, local authorities provide short-term accommodation whilst looking for long term options. The impact of this being an increased number of individuals with complex needs requiring accommodating in the short and longer term by the local authority.



The Sub Regional Context

There is extensive well-established partnership working in the sub-region relating to housing strategy and Hambleton's strategy links to the wider objectives agreed in the sub-region. The Local Government York, North Yorkshire & East Riding Housing Board meets quarterly and has agreed the sub-regional 'York, North Yorkshire & East Riding Housing Strategy 2015-21'. There are 9 priorities in the strategy, covering all aspects of housing.

North Yorkshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy

There are strong links between public health and housing therefore it is important to take into account wider objectives. North Yorkshire Health and Wellbeing Board works across the county to bring partners together and has produced a strategy which is available online. Our homelessness strategy links to the theme of 'Live Well' which includes the aim to have: Fewer people living in poor quality or inappropriate housing or living in fuel poverty.

North and North Yorkshire Domestic Abuse Strategy

Domestic abuse is a recognised cause of homelessness and it is important that our strategy has regard to the sub-regional strategy, in order that victims are supported and given appropriate priority for housing when necessary and safety planning takes place to safeguard victims and families.

North Yorkshire Homechoice

Hambleton District Council is a partner in the North Yorkshire - wide allocation scheme, launched in July 2011, officers are involved in actively reviewing the policy and procedures. The scheme works to ensure that housing resources are allocated to those most in need and has been considered within this strategy. As of November 2020, there were 1145 (Hambleton) active applicants on the council's housing register (North Yorkshire Home Choice).

Joint Housing Investment Plan - York, North Yorkshire and East Riding

The housing options team work closely with colleagues in housing development and are able to inform them about housing needs in the district and requirements for affordable options.

Young Peoples Accommodation Partnership

North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) funds this partnership. Hambleton and other housing authorities across the county work with Foundation and NYCC to provide youth homelessness services for individuals aged 16-25 working together to ensure young people have one point of contact (in each district or borough), for support to prevent homelessness and access supported accommodation if required.



The Young and Yorkshire 2 Plan

Written by North Yorkshire Children’s Trust aims to improve the lives of children and young people living in the county including Hambleton. This is relevant when considering how we plan to tackle youth homelessness and brings together the key priorities for everyone working with children, young people and families, setting out in detail the actions needed to improve outcomes for young people living in the county.

North Yorkshire Armed Forces Community Covenant

Hambleton District Council is a signatory to the above Covenant. The aims of the covenant are to:

- encourage local communities to support the armed forces community in their areas, and vice versa
- promote understanding and awareness among the public of issues affecting the armed forces community
- recognise and remember the sacrifices made by the armed forces community

Refugee resettlement scheme

In 2017, Hambleton District Council rehoused 6 families (32 individuals) under the Refugee resettlement scheme. These have remained within the district and integrated into society.

In January 2020 the council agreed to take more refugee families into Hambleton, however this was subsequently delayed due to the global pandemic.

The Hambleton Context

The population of Hambleton was estimated to be 90,718 in 2019, with a projected increase to 91,400 by 2025 (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2019).

Populations are dispersed across a large, mostly rural area, with five market towns (Northallerton, Thirsk, Easingwold, Stokesley and Bedale), which in this context constitute ‘urban’ areas. Analysis of homelessness across the District would tend to show that it is Northallerton and Thirsk where there is a higher proportion of housing need; however, the dispersal of the population is wide and accessibility to services can prove difficult.



Hambleton Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment 2018

This identified a net need for 55 affordable homes per annum in the District for the 2016-2035 period. It found that the median house price in Hambleton in 2017 was £223,500 which was above the North Yorkshire figure of £205,000. The affordability ratio of median house prices to residence-based earnings in Hambleton was 7.84 (compared with 7.30 for North Yorkshire). This shows that people in Hambleton find it more difficult to afford to buy a property than in other parts of the wider region.

The identified need is derived from the earlier Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which was commissioned in 2016.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2019

As the local authority with responsibility for housing, the council has an important role to play in working with partners towards shared goals, North Yorkshire County Council have produced a profile for Hambleton which is available online.

Key themes which relate to housing include:

- The population is ageing which will lead to increased health and social care needs.
- The affordability of housing for people on lower than average incomes is worse than for England. This may impact on mental health.
- Excess winter deaths are at their highest level for more than a decade.

Hambleton District Council Plan

The Council Plan 2019-2023 includes four priorities. One of these is 'Providing a Special Place to Live' and includes an aim to ensure 100% of homelessness decisions are made within 56 days.

Covid-19 - the impact in Hambleton

The pandemic led to a significant increase in the number of homeless households accommodated in temporary accommodation: 50 in the period from March to July 2020 (compared to 17 in the same period in 2019) in response to the Government's 'Everybody In' initiative.

Most of these households were placed in hotels (bed and breakfast) and have since moved on to more settled accommodation. However due to the lack of availability of affordable accommodation within the District some of these people had to move out of the area.

Delivering the homelessness and rough sleeping strategy

Staffing levels

The Housing Options Service team comprises of:

- 0.4 Housing Services Manager from October 2020
- 1 FTE Housing Options Team Leader
- 4 FTE Housing Options Advisors
- 2.5 FTE Housing Support Workers
- 1 FTE Admin Officer
- 0.3 FTE Young Peoples Prevention Worker employed by North Yorkshire County Council and working under the Young People's Pathway.

On announcing the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017, the government provided additional funding for 3 years to help meet the costs associated with additional duties (see table below).

Some of this funding can be used to provide financial assistance to households facing homelessness to enable them to either remain in their existing accommodation or access alternative housing. For example, it can be used for rent in advance or as a deposit for a new property.

In 2019/20 over £57,530 was provided to customers under this initiative, helping 67 households in preventing or relieving homelessness.

Funding source	2018/19 spend	2019/20 spend	2020/21 budget
Prevention Budget	£212,259	£267,742	£270,810
Flexible Homelessness prevention grant	£43,539	£41,272	£14,5454
Homeless Data Grant	Nil	Nil	£9,202
New Burdens Funding	£11,791	£12,455	£33,621
Totals	£267,591	£321,470	£459,088

The main types of expenditure are staff salaries, rent bonds and temporary accommodation.



Additional funding and bids

The Housing Options team are also able to access North Yorkshire Local Assistance Funding for customers. This is available for people who are deemed vulnerable, have limited financial resources and are unable to access financial assistance from other services. The funding can supply up to two emergency awards in any 12-month period, or one award for furniture/household items.

In July 2020 the council received £1,470 from the Government’s Rough Sleepers fund to assist the council with additional costs incurred for rough sleepers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In August 2020 in partnership with Broadacres Housing Association, the council successfully applied to the Government’s Next Steps Accommodation Programme for funding for additional move-on accommodation for rough sleepers and potential rough sleepers. This will provide 3 units of specialist accommodation for those who have either slept rough or are at significant risk of rough sleeping for up to 3 years.

Number of people presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 required local authorities to focus firmly on positive preventative action; upstreaming efforts to support households and ensuring those at risk of homelessness approached the local authority at the earliest possible opportunity.

Since the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act on 3 April 2018, presentations to the Housing Options Team for assistance with housing and homelessness issues have increased however it is not possible to perform a percentage comparison as we no longer have access to the former database.

	Customer presentations	Successful preventative activity	Successful relief activity
2018/19	218	82	83
2019/20	333	100	149
2020 year to date	352	10	60

Where the local authority is unsuccessful in preventing or relieving homelessness, they must consider whether a main housing duty is owed. In 2019/20, a total of 107 main duty decisions made. Of these, 90 households were found to be owed a main housing duty.

Hambleton District Council has noted an increase in customers presenting with complex needs, requiring extensive casework and creative solutions. In 2019/20, a total of 204 customers disclosed that they had at least one or more support needs (61% of all customers).

Reasons for approach

The main reasons for approach are shown below with loss of private rented sector tenancy accounting for 46% of all presentations in 2019/20:

Year	Main Reasons	%
2018/19	Loss of private tenancy	46%
	Relationship breakdown	28%
	Family eviction	26%
2019/20	Loss of private tenancy	42%
	Relationship breakdown	22%
	Family eviction	36%

**Breakdown not available prior to the implementation of the HRA 2017*

A more detailed look at the reason for loss of private rented sector tenancy shows that there are three main causes:

- Rent arrears due to difficulty budgeting or making other payments
- Rent arrears due to reduction in employment income
- Landlord wishing to sell or re-let the property

Funding source	2018/19	2019/20
Rent arrears due to tenant difficulty budgeting or tenant making other payments	22	33
Rent arrears due to increased rent	0	3
Rent arrears due to reduction in employment income	26	23
Rent arrears following changes in benefit entitlement	0	0
Rent arrears due to change in personal circumstances	0	0
Breach of tenancy, not related to rent arrears	0	0
Landlord wishing to sell or re-let the property	53	18
Tenant complained to the council/agent/landlord about disrepair	3	5
Tenant abandoned property	0	0
Illegal eviction	0	0
Other	0	0
Total	104	82

At the time of writing this strategy data was not available to support an analysis of the household make up of those presenting to the council for housing advice and assistance. It is recognised, however, that this information would help to ensure that services are better informed moving forwards.



Rough Sleepers Count

The council undertakes a count of all rough sleepers in the District every year. The last count was undertaken on 30 October 2019 and identified two individuals who were rough sleeping. Both were offered temporary accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic but unfortunately declined assistance. This is not unusual where individuals present with multiple and complex needs. Hambleton District Council's 2020 rough sleeper count was undertaken in November 2020 and is currently pending validation.

Support Services

Following changes to commissioning arrangements for floating support services by NYCC, the Homelessness Prevention Service has now been brought in-house.

The service will provide increased scope to target resources specifically at customers where homelessness is potentially imminent, helping to reduce homelessness in the district. The main types of support are shown below:

NYLAF Applications (North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help with gas, electric and other utilities • Help with purchasing white goods/furniture
Housing Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General housing advice • Homeless advice
Housing Affordability Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falling behind on rent payments • Loss of benefits • Loss of employment • Other debt issues
Housing Register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Yorkshire Homechoice Applications • Questions about social housing
Local Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help sourcing private rented accommodation • Assistance with bond application • North Yorkshire Homechoice bidding
Benefit claim and maximising income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checking Benefit entitlements • Council Tax assistance • Discretionary Housing Payment applications
Referrals to other service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and wellbeing • Securing employments • Accommodation providers • Foodbank and food vouchers



External Links

The Housing Options team have a number of successful joint working partnerships with local services, both statutory and third sector. The most notable of which is with the Children’s and Young People’s Service, via the Young Person’s Pathway.

The Housing Options service also facilitates a six-monthly multi-agency meeting called the Hambleton Homelessness Forum. All local agencies involved in preventing homelessness in the district are invited to attend, providing an opportunity to share knowledge and good practice, network and collaborate on local projects. Hambleton’s Homelessness Forum is integral to supporting such a collaborative approach and therefore central in supporting the delivery of the strategy moving forward. Strategic buy-in is therefore required from all partner agencies some of whom will be invited to join the steering group which will oversee the implementation of this strategy.

Temporary Accommodation

The council leases dispersed accommodation from Broadacres Housing Association who manage these properties on our behalf through a Service Level Agreement. This provides 12 self-contained homes for temporary accommodation. The average length of stay is 106 days (this average is taken from 1st April 2019 until 31st March 2020). The council seeks to limit households’ stay in temporary accommodation and move households on to longer term settled accommodation as quickly as possible.

The council has no dedicated emergency accommodation. In an emergency, or when the temporary accommodation units are full, the council is able to provide customers with Bed and Breakfast accommodation for a short period. This is often located outside of the district as such provision is very limited locally.

In line with the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, the council recognises that Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation caters for very short term stays only and offers residents only limited privacy, and may lack or require sharing of important amenities, such as cooking and laundry facilities. Wherever possible, therefore, the council seeks to avoid using B&B accommodation for homeless households unless, in the very limited circumstances where it is likely to be the case, it is the most appropriate option for the applicant.

Living in B&B accommodation can be particularly detrimental to the health and development of children. Under section s210(2), the Secretary of State has made the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003. The 2003 Order specifies that B&B accommodation is not be regarded as suitable for applicants with family commitments provided with accommodation under Part VII.

The average number of nights spent in Bed and Breakfast accommodation increased significantly from 2018/19 to 2019/20:

	2018/19	2019/20
Average number of nights in B&B accomodation	6 nights	62 nights



In line with the increase in the average number of nights spent in Bed and Breakfast, the council’s spend on accommodation has increased significantly from £9,086 in 2017/18 to £86,468 in 2019/20.

Supported Housing

Supported accommodation is available in the district for young people, via the Young People’s Pathway and managed by Foundation. Anecdotally, the move-on process is difficult; both in finding suitable move-on accommodation, as well as providing adequate support to manage the pressures that come with independent living.

There is also a reported lack of supported accommodation throughout the district for the remaining customer base, including ex-offenders, customers experiencing mental and physical health issues, as well as those with complex needs. Where specialist accommodation is available it is often located in neighbouring districts and is ring-fenced for those with local connection.

Social Housing Stock

The council transferred its housing stock to Broadacres Housing Association in 1993. Along with stock owned by other housing associations, there are approximately 4731 affordable homes in the District, which includes: 124 extra care units, 6 Hub properties, 19 HDC Leased, 17 refuge spaces and 82 non-social housing rented (rent to buy).

In 2018/19 there was a total of 1054 applicants registered for social housing in the district. Of these, almost 60% were assessed as requiring a 1-bedroom property. In 2019/20 the council undertook a review of housing register applications which resulted in an overall reduction of those on the housing register to 980. Applications from households requiring a 1-bedroom property remained high, however, and currently makes up over 58% of all applications on the housing register:

Year	Total Applications	1 bed need	2 bed need	3 bed need	4+ bed need
April 2018 - March 2019	1054	621	329	101	12
April 2019 - March 2020	980	572	301	95	11

In 2018/19 a total of 375 properties were allocated of which 37 percent were 1-bedroom units. In 2019/20 407 properties were allocated of which 28 percent had 1 bedroom.



Year	Total Let	1 bed need	2 bed need	3 bed need	4+ bed need
1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019	375	139	168	61	7
1 April 2019 - 31 March 2020	407	114	179	110	0

Private Rented Sector

Hambleton benefits from a buoyant private rental sector, however this can be to the detriment of those who are on a low income or would not pass traditional credit and referencing checks. Hambleton District Council work closely to maximise the number of private rental properties those at risk of homelessness or homeless have access to; this may be through offering landlord incentives. As a first option we try to sustain tenancies to prevent homelessness and support landlords to keep existing tenants and provide support for the tenants if appropriate or refer to specialist support. It can be preferable for the landlord to retain a tenant than go through the process of re-letting their property.

There has been significant growth in the number of households living in privately rented accommodation in the district. Specifically, for households under 35, analysis shows a sharp increase in the number living in private rented accommodation, opposed to owning their own homes.

The majority of the Hambleton district does benefit from LHA rates covered by the 'York' and "Teesside" Broad Rental Market Areas (BMRA), assisting with affordability. However, a number of smaller towns fall within alternative BRMAs and therefore customers in these areas may struggle more with affordability because local rents are often potentially charged above the relevant LHA rate.

Accommodation affordability is an issue for single people under 35 who are eligible only for the 'Shared Room' LHA rate. Given the need to increase shared accommodation in the district, many single people are limited to larger accommodation which is more likely to be unaffordable.

The council holds a Landlords' Forum 3 times a year to ensure that local landlords are aware of changes to legislation and policy and are aware of services that can be offered to them and their tenants. This helps to prevent homelessness through increasing landlords' awareness of support services and how to obtain advice if they need it for tenants with support needs or if they should fall into arrears.

The Landlords Forum also increases contact with landlords who may consider working with the authority to house customers who are at risk of homelessness or homeless in the future which helps to reduce demand on social housing stock and on temporary accommodation. Work must continue to ensure our private rented offer is not only maintained but increased. This includes increasing the number of homeless cases discharged into the private sector.

Priority 1

Reduce the number of households becoming homeless

Our goal is to provide the best possible service that we can for all of our customers and to achieve this we will regularly review our casework and ensure that our staff are well-trained to perform their roles. Whilst we have a strong team ethos, we will ensure that each customer has one key point of contact throughout their journey with us and we will routinely gather their feedback to help shape and improve our services for all customers.

Hambleton District Council has worked hard to prevent homelessness for many years; however, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 now underpins this work making this a legal requirement. It sets out how councils must work to prevent and relieve homelessness:-

- An extension of the period during which an authority should treat someone (regardless of priority need) as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days.
- A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness (regardless of priority need) and a requirement to provide applicants with housing prevention plans.
- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants (regardless of priority need) and a required to provide application with housing relief plans.
- A new duty on certain external organisations (including prisons and hospitals) to refer homeless households to the council.

As there is now a statutory responsibility to prevent homelessness, there has been a significant increase in the level of assessment and administration to process applications.

Over the period of the last strategy, there were three common reasons why people approached the Local Authority for assistance, therefore, we will concentrate on investing in initiatives relating to these in order to continue to reduce homelessness. These were, loss of private tenancy, relationship breakdown and eviction by family.

In Hambleton we strive to assist customers to retain their existing accommodation where possible through early intervention. To achieve this, we use a range of 'prevention tools' such as working with their landlord or mortgage provider, identifying ways to maximise their income and negotiating on their behalf. Given that access to social housing is limited in our area, we will actively support customers to find properties to rent privately recognising that for some customers the flexibility of private renting might be their best housing option.

We will focus our initiatives, including the housing support service on activities which aim to prevent the main causes of homelessness. This will enable us to maintain a flexible approach and ensure that those most in need will continue to be prioritised. The team will also continue to help customers in other ways such as obtaining charitable funding to help clear rent arrears or debts, purchase essential household items and also to assist with daily living costs.

Actions

1. Review and enhance prevention tools to enable customers to sustain and remain in their current accommodation
2. Conduct a gap analysis of homelessness prevention education delivered through schools, colleges and youth organisations and refine accordingly enabling us to re-imagine our service offer to young people
3. Review the support available for households across the district from wider organisations and ensure this is signposted from the council's website
4. Commission an independent review of the Housing Options Service and identify areas for improvement

Priority 2

Raise awareness of homelessness and rough sleeping ensuring that services are accessible to those in need

How we communicate with others is a key part of our strategy going forward. We have to ensure that our communities are fully aware of the help that we can provide to those households who may be at risk of homelessness so that they approach us as soon as possible.

We will therefore review the effectiveness of our current communications and work with others in order to implement these more successfully.

We will ensure we continue to attend multi-agency meetings and take part in consultations locally in order to keep housing and homelessness high on the agenda and to improve joined up working. We need to ensure that we accurately record the work we do with households who approach our service before they are officially classed as threatened with homelessness as currently this is not fully captured on our existing systems.

Hambleton is a very large geographical area and transport links are poor and transport can be expensive. We acknowledge that some people find it difficult to access our services which are mostly based at Hambleton in the civic centre. Therefore, we will work flexibly providing home visits to people with specific needs if necessary or give advice by the telephone. We will review our service provision and, if there is a need, consider the use of drop-in sessions in outlying parts of the district so that people can access housing support. We will explore joint working opportunities in order to provide housing and homelessness advice where and when it is needed.

There are increasing opportunities for customers to contact the housing team via electronic devices and manage their applications via our online system at a time that suits them. We will encourage people to access advice online through our website, where possible, and use our customer portal if they have internet access once it has been made live.

We will ensure that our housing support staff continue to offer extra support to customers who are not able to access online services in order that they are not disadvantaged, for example making bids for social housing on their behalf and assisting them to maximise their incomes.

The six-monthly Homelessness Housing Forum provides information to a range of organisations and this is the main forum for information sharing around homelessness in the district. This information sharing needs to be increased.



Actions

1. Work with partners and other organisations to enhance publicity of our services and encourage people to approach our service early and in particular private landlords
2. Review the effectiveness of all current communications and continually update information which is available online
3. Review the current systems which record customer contact to ensure that all contacts are being accurately recorded and data captured used to inform future service delivery
4. Implement a robust customer feedback and analysis mechanism to ensure the service is continually developed and improved
5. Consider the use of drop-in and outreach services throughout the district to cover the rurality of the area

Priority 3

Continually improve access to support services

Partnership working is essential to the prevention of homelessness and for ensuring that the appropriate support is available for those who are homeless, to prevent them from becoming homeless again in the future.

The council currently provide a £5,000 annual grant to Citizens' Advice to provide money advice to those who are facing homelessness, providing them with specialist independent advice and help to access money and debt advice and to assist them to resolve these issues. Citizens' Advice also currently provide a Help to Claim service to support people in the early stages of claiming Universal Credit through to their first payment being received.

Other agencies who have received a financial contribution from the council in recognition of the importance of their role include the Hambleton food bank to support them in the delivery of their voluntary services to provide food for households who are in need. Between November 2019 and October 2020, they redeemed 406 food vouchers for households, ranging from single people to families.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 placed a duty on local authorities to provide advice to specific groups of people who may be more vulnerable namely:

- people released from prison or youth detention accommodation
- care leavers
- former members of the regular armed forces
- victims of domestic abuse
- people leaving hospital
- people suffering from a mental illness or impairment, and
- any other group that the authority identifies as being at particular risk of homelessness in their district

For each of the identified categories of need, we have developed tailored advice which is available via the website or can be obtained directly from the Housing Options Team.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 also introduced a new duty - the Duty to Refer - on certain statutory authorities to refer anyone who is known to be homeless to the housing authority (with consent) including the DWP and the Prison Service. These referrals are important as they mean that we can work with customers from an earlier stage in close co-operation with our partners.



Although Registered Providers are not subject to a statutory duty, the National Housing Federation developed its own Commitment to Refer and, in line with this, we continue to encourage registered providers to work with us as soon as possible as this is in the collective interest. Allied to this we also have a keen understanding of the role of safeguarding and our staff are able to raise alerts should they have any concerns about a particular customer. In addition, we also have a strong working relationship with our Community Safety Partners which means that we are able to make timely and appropriate referrals for vulnerable individuals who need specialist support.

There is an ongoing need to work closely with health services in Hambleton to ensure that people can access the support they need when they need it. We have links with mental health services and GPs but will work to strengthen and formalise these and other pathways. We will also regularly review our hospital discharge protocol to ensure it is operating effectively.

Actions

1. Regularly test and review our existing partnership protocols with other agencies to maintain their effectiveness
2. Maintain and strengthen existing partnerships and explore opportunities to develop new ones with organisations providing support to specific groups to prevent and relieve homelessness.
3. Regularly monitor, review and evaluate financial contributions to third parties to ensure that they continue to deliver value for money
4. Identify ways in which we can work more closely with Health services across the district and in particular with mental health services

Priority 4

Work strategically and seek new opportunities for funding

We recognise the need to work with other stakeholders and to positively influence decision makers and budget holders by making them aware of the challenges we face locally. We will do this through our attendance at county wide groups and at other networking opportunities as well as through hosting our local partnership forums.

We will bolster our approach in Hambleton by re-introducing a strategic level steering group which will oversee the implementation of this strategy and its associated action plan and work with us to deliver the best service locally.

We will provide regular and timely updates to our elected members and senior management team and work with the communication team to ensure that we portray a realistic image of homelessness issues in the district.

In terms of funding we will continue to actively seek opportunities to bid for additional funding from the government and other funding streams. In particular, we will build on our relationships with neighbouring authorities and partner agencies to facilitate further funding opportunities where appropriate and our in-house support service will continue to access charity funding to support individuals to resolve their homelessness and tackle debt issues.

We will ensure that our services represent value for money by monitoring the cost of temporary accommodation we use and minimising void periods in the accommodation leased directly from Broadacres Housing Association.

Externally Funded Services

Preventing homelessness and providing support is not just a Housing Authority responsibility. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 sets out the importance of enhanced joint working and integration between housing authorities, health and social care in relation to the development and implementation of homeless prevention strategies. The Act further bolsters existing legal requirements on local authorities under the Health & Social Care Act 2012 to take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area. This includes people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness and under The Children Act 1989 to work in partnership to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need.



The new Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities stresses the need for close integration between social care, housing and health authorities around this whole agenda, specifically in relation to the development of homeless strategies. The governments' Code of Guidance for Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 highlights that:

"the homelessness strategy should secure the satisfactory provision of support for people in the district who are or may be homeless, or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

In two-tier authority areas it will be necessary to engage the upper tier authority, which holds responsibility for commissioning housing related support, in identifying resources available to meet support needs across all cohorts that are at high risk of homelessness."

The main statutory responsibility towards homelessness sits with the district council as the housing authority, however many of the services that are provided locally are funded via the upper tier authority (NYCC).

These services include:

- the Housing Homeless Prevention and Support Service
- the Young Persons Pathway
- support for victims of domestic violence
- Offender housing related support service

The provision of these services is a legacy of what was the Supporting People grant funding programme.

We want to build upon existing relationships and strengthen partnership working across the district. The North Yorkshire Housing Forum meets on a quarterly basis and is a well-established mechanism for monitoring the county wide approach to homelessness, discussing local issues, improving communication and sharing good practice. We will continue to facilitate this, as it is a useful group and will review our membership and encourage agencies to additional to attend in future.

Actions

1. Establish a Homelessness & Rough Sleeper steering group to oversee implementation of the strategy and the associated delivery plan
2. Work with NYCC in reviewing services that deliver specific young peoples' accommodation and support services within Hambleton
3. Work with NYCC commissioners and successful contractors, in partnership, on the provision of mental health accommodation and offender support services in Hambleton
4. Work with the North Yorkshire Housing Forum to contribute to the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping across the County

Priority 5

Deliver a range of affordable housing options

The private rented sector in Hambleton can be difficult to access for people who are on a low income or disadvantaged in other ways so we will continue to work with private landlords and estate agents and will look to develop improved ways to assist households who are at risk of homelessness to access the private rented sector.

We will continue to be innovative and look for ways to increase the provision of affordable housing in the district, including shared housing to accommodate single people on low incomes who cannot afford independent accommodation.

Affordable Housing Development

Hambleton District Council is proactive in working to enable affordable housing development across the district and there is an annual target of 55 properties as set out in the HEDNA 2018.

Empty Properties

Whilst the majority of new homes will be provided through the affordable development programme the council will also look to identify other potential sources of accommodation including bringing empty properties back into use through the application of the Empty Property Strategy which is overseen by the Housing Services Manager.

Low Cost Home Ownership

Shared Ownership and Discount for Sale properties are provided on most Affordable Housing developments to provide those on a lower income with the opportunity to purchase a property.

The housing options team are involved in ensuring that people with a local connection are allocated properties through these schemes.

Gypsy and Traveller sites

Local authorities have the power to provide Gypsy and Traveller sites and government guidance advises that local planning authorities should ensure that sites are sustainable economically, socially and environmentally. The council is also required to include policies to address the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in their local development documents. We are also required to assess the need for accommodation of Gypsies and Travellers when undertaking a review of housing needs in the district.

Hambleton District Council owns a caravan site in Seamer and Thirsk, managed on our behalf by Horton Housing. Residents are also provided with support to enable them to comply with the site rules, as and when required.



Specialist & Supported Accommodation

In addition to the young person's supported accommodation, other specialist accommodation within the District includes a women's refuge as well as accommodation for offenders or those with mental health support needs. Provision of this type of accommodation is commissioned by NYCC and other providers, so Hambleton District Council will continue to work with the commissioner to ensure that the needs of Hambleton residents are identified.

Actions

1. To promote and facilitate access to low cost home ownership and affordable rented housing options where possible
2. To seek opportunities to increase access to Houses in Multiple Occupation within the private rented sector to improve housing options for single applicants aged 18-35
3. To review access to move on accommodation from supported accommodation particularly for young people
4. Consider setting a target for bringing Empty Homes back into use in line with other Districts in the County

Priority 6

End Rough Sleeping

We know that rough sleepers are some of the most vulnerable people in society, often with additional and complex support needs which can be worsened by having no settled suitable accommodation.

The Government pledged to half rough sleeping by 2022 and end rough sleeping nationally by 2027, as outlined in the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy. However, the impact of Coronavirus and the Government's Everyone In policy to ensure that nobody slept rough during the pandemic has meant that the landscape has changed significantly in recent months.

In addition, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 increases the responsibilities of the council to all homeless people, including rough sleepers regardless of whether they have a priority need for housing.

At national level there has been a 165% increase in levels of rough sleeping since 2010. This increase is likely to be attributable to a range of factors including the withdrawal of funding to pay for support services and hostels, the impact of austerity on public sector services more generally (particularly around mental health services) and the impact of welfare reforms.

Through the multi-agency work undertaken by the community safety partnership, the council undertakes regular mapping of all known rough sleepers in the district. The last formal rough sleeper count was undertaken in November 2020 and 0 rough sleepers were identified. A previous count undertaken in November 2019 similarly identified 0 rough sleepers.

Nov 2020	Nov 2019	Nov 2018	Nov 2017	Nov 2016	Nov 2015
0	0	0	0	1	2

Whilst the formal counts may indicate that rough sleeping is not an issue in our area the reality is that rough sleeping in the district is often hidden as people tend to sleep in their vehicles or in outbuildings or tents in isolated locations rather than in obvious locations on town streets, this leads to the perception that there are no rough sleepers in Hambleton. Further work is being undertaken to help routinely capture those individuals who present to the service and who have indicated that they have spent a number of days sleeping rough.

Tackling this issue requires a close and co-ordinated multi-agency response to ensure that anyone sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough in the Hambleton area is aware of the services available and is able to access the necessary support to help them off the streets and to address the problems that led to them becoming homeless.

We recognise that rough sleeping is much more than a housing problem and through strengthening our partnership arrangements to tackle rough sleeping in a joined-up way we can ensure that the different agencies are working towards a common goal.



It is therefore our intention to relaunch the 'Single Service Offer' approach based on the Government's 'No Second Night-Out' Principles.

These are:

- New rough sleepers should be identified and helped off the streets immediately so that they do not fall into a dangerous rough sleeping lifestyle
- Members of the public should be able to play an active role in reporting and referring people sleeping rough through a national rough sleeper helpline which in turn informs our emergency out of hours contact line within Hambleton Housing Options Service (these numbers can be found on our website).
- Rough sleepers should be helped to access a place of safety where their needs can be quickly assessed, and they can receive advice on their options
- They should be able to access emergency accommodation and other services such as healthcare, if needed
- If people have come from another area or country and find themselves sleeping rough, the aim should be to reconnect them back to their local community, unless there is a good reason why they cannot return. There they will be able to access housing and recovery services and have support from family and friends. Our housing team will take action to connect people with local support services, if they are returning to another area or country to which they have a local connection.

All rough sleepers, regardless of 'priority need' will be provided with some form of service within the District and will not be turned away. They will be referred to a relevant agency for assistance. This approach acknowledges that various agencies have a different role to play but will work in partnership to tackle this problem.

Actions

1. Refresh and implement a 'single service offer' based on the no second night out principles.
2. Increase knowledge across the district with both partners and the general population of how to seek help for a rough sleeper
3. In partnership with other Districts, explore the possibility of creating an emergency bed space for Rough Sleepers
4. Successfully establish the Homeless Supported Move-On scheme in Northallerton in partnership with Broadacres

Delivering the Monitoring this Strategy

It is recognised that delivering the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy is the responsibility of many organisations working together in partnership and not just the council. Therefore, a key action arising from the implementation of this strategy will be to establish an effective steering group which will be called the Hambleton Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (see below).

The council will monitor delivery of the key actions and the impact on key performance measures including:

- Number of homeless preventions per quarter
- Numbers of young people presenting as homeless
- Number of people placed into temporary accommodation
- Average cost of temporary accommodation
- Numbers of people accommodated in private rented accommodation
- Number of approaches from people threatened with homelessness
- Numbers of people sleeping rough
- Waiting times for housing advice

Hambleton Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Steering Group

The aim of the steering group is to ensure that this work is co-ordinated in an effective way with all partners influencing and contributing to a coherent agreed strategy.

The Hambleton Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Steering Group will monitor the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action plan on a regular basis and the group will drive forward delivery and progress in meeting the objectives set out in the strategy. The action plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that any new changes in legislation and policies are reflected within the strategy and to ensure that the actions continue to be the right ones to meet the key priorities of the strategy. Where identified, new actions will be introduced to meet priorities.

We will continue to welcome comments which will help to shape future reviews of this strategy and associated action plans.

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a place to
grow

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