



# **Integrated Homelessness Strategy**

**2014 - 2019**

## **Forward from the lead member**

Welcome to Blackburn with Darwen's third five year homelessness strategy.

It is based on the recognition that the current economic climate demands that radical changes to the way that services are commissioned and managed will be essential if we are going to continue to address homelessness in the way we have been doing for the last twelve years.

The strategy is therefore underpinned by a belief that joint working between Council departments, partners in the statutory and the third sector can achieve outcomes that not only address homelessness but impact positively on health, social care and community safety.

Our strategy is ambitious but it is not 'aspirational'. All the actions are achievable given the active support of partners within and outside of the Council.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council has achieved notable successes in meeting the aims and objectives of its two previous homelessness strategies (2002 and 2008) and we will continue to do so despite the challenges we face

The strategy supports our vision to have a balanced and accessible housing market, which supports the economic and social well-being of the people of Blackburn.

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

This is the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Integrated Homelessness Strategy for 2014 to 2019.

It is based on the recognition that the current economic climate demands that radical changes to the way that services are commissioned and managed will be essential to effective delivery.

It is underpinned by belief that joint working between Council departments, other statutory agencies and the third sector can achieve outcomes that not only address homelessness but impact positively on health, social care and community safety.

## Aim of the Strategy

The overall aim of the homelessness strategy is to continue to provide the people of Blackburn with a first class service that builds on our past successes and moves forward to a true cross disciplinary multi agency approach to homelessness and its adverse effects on health, wellbeing and community safety.

The strategy supports the Council's aim to achieve efficiency savings for the local authority and other key partners and to create a model that manages and reduces the increasing demand on high cost services.

## Objectives

To achieve this aim the strategy will focus on the following 'thematic objectives:

- Working with other Council services, external partners and key stakeholders to **prevent homelessness**
- Delivering improved **housing** and support options for vulnerable local people at risk of homelessness, or in existing supported housing pathways
- Developing access to and housing options in the **private rented sector**
- Engaging with the most vulnerable people to enable better **access** to appropriate housing, support and other services

Above these themes sit the over-arching objectives to:

- maximise capacity whilst achieving efficiency savings and leveraging in external funding wherever possible
- facilitate cross disciplinary and multi agency working
- develop the Council's services and **monitor** our performance against targets

## **Homelessness Review**

The strategy has been developed following a comprehensive review of homelessness in the Borough which can be read or downloaded at [www.blackburn.gov.uk/homelessness/review](http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/homelessness/review).

The review found:

- Well-developed joint working between the Council and its partner agencies
- A strong emphasis on prevention
- A good range of supported provision
- A shortage of permanent housing for some groups
- Well-developed referral pathways for some groups
- A significant problem of 'Inward Migration' of chaotic people
- Welfare Reform and budget cuts seen as potential threats

The review further noted that a small but significant number of people who are either homeless, threatened with homelessness or vulnerably housed and who have needs that cannot be met by one agency are present in the Borough. These people frequently exhibit challenging behaviour and present high risks to themselves, other service users and agencies.

### **S.W.O.T Analysis**

A Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT), analysis undertaken as part of the Homelessness Review identified a number of challenges and opportunities

The challenges are the potential effects of welfare reform, cuts to the council's staffing and revenue pressure on Housing Needs - in particular the cessation of homelessness prevention funding and consequent loss of the private rented sector bond scheme— other local efficiency savings and particular circumstances relating to the Borough.

Three significant opportunities have been identified by the review: integration of Council services at the commissioning and service delivery levels, further development of working partnerships with Voluntary, Community and Faith (VCF) sector agencies and better use of the private rented sector.

The creation of an 'integrated commissioning Team' comprising Housing Strategy, Children's and Adult Social Care and Public Health brings real opportunities for the Council to commission services that meet a range of objectives and avoid duplication.

### **Homelessness Enquiries, Preventions and Decisions**

In 2013/14 a total of 1923 enquiries were fielded by Housing Needs; of these 1,406 were dealt with by giving brief advice. A further 476 households had potential homelessness prevented or relieved by the Housing Needs team using

a casework intervention leaving a total of 41 households being accepted as homeless: this an acceptance rate of less than 10% and six less than the total accepted in 2008/9.

In 2008-09 the three main causes of homelessness (where a duty was awarded) were:

- Termination of Assured Short hold Tenancy 14 (29%)
- Mortgage Arrears 11 (23%)
- Friends / Relatives no longer accommodating 5 (10%)

In 2013-14 the three main causes of homelessness (where a duty was awarded) were:

- Termination of Assured Short hold Tenancy 9 (22%)
- Parent no longer willing or able to accommodate 5 (12%)
- Friends / Relatives no longer accommodating 4 (10%)

### **Efficiency Savings**

The Council has benchmarked its homelessness services against those of other local authorities (Greater Manchester area), and found that its overall costs for homelessness, administration, prevention and support amount to some 15% less than those of the comparison group.

The Council has further benchmarked the costs of its prevention and homelessness prevention and homelessness enquiry/duty services against national data and these show that the Blackburn with Darwen Housing Needs team are performing their duties at a level some 30% below the national average.

### **Performance Management**

Effective monitoring is essential to understanding the progress being made towards the strategic targets

The integrated commissioning group will monitor progress and developments at the strategic level on a quarterly basis

### **Action Plan**

The action plan at the end of the strategy document shows what will be done over the next five years. Actions listed in the strategy document are reproduced (and in some cases expanded) in the action plan.

Each action is numbered and actions may appear more than once in the strategy if they contribute towards success against more than one target.

### **Appendices**

As well as the S.W.O.T analysis, tables have been appended to show how the actions in the homelessness strategy action plan support the Council's other

strategic plans and to provide data on cost savings, homelessness prevention and duties, the causes of homelessness and the groups most affected.

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## **Section 1 Background**

### **Introduction**

This is the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Integrated Homelessness Strategy for 2014 to 2019.

It describes how the Council and its partners aim to address homelessness in the Borough for the next five years.

The strategy is set against a backdrop of changes in social and fiscal policy at the national and local level and consequent budget cuts across all sectors. The challenges that these conditions impose do however also carry within them opportunities. These opportunities can only be taken by working together. This will therefore be an 'integrated' strategy.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council has achieved notable successes in meeting the aims and objectives of its two previous homelessness strategies (2002 and 2008).

In so doing, the Council has further demonstrated its commitment to conform to legislation and recognised good practice criteria, as set out by the Government and bodies such as 'Homeless Link' in various notices and communiqués issued since the passing of the Homelessness Act (2002).

The principle pieces of legislation and good practice guidelines that have helped shape the Council's response to homelessness since 2002 are:

### **Legislation**

- The Homelessness Act (England and Wales) 2002
- The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Orders (2003 & 2012)
- The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (2006)
- The Localism Act (2011)
- The Gold Standard initiative (2013)

### **Good Practice Guidelines**

- Making every contact count - A joint approach to preventing homelessness (2012)
- Public Health Outcome Framework – Five Ways to Well Being (2012)
- Transforming Rehabilitation: A Strategy for Reform (2014)
- National Drug Strategy for England (2010)
- Making Every Child Matter (2007)
- Making Every Adult Matter (2009)

## **Achievements of the First and Second Homelessness Strategies**

The list below shows the most significant actions from both the original strategy and the annual updates that have either been fully or substantially completed:

- ✓ Service standards for housing needs have been developed and an procedure manual is in place
- ✓ Standards have been set for temporary accommodation and homeless families in temporary accommodation now have access to a health visitor
- ✓ No families or young people aged 16 and 17 are placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation except in extreme circumstances
- ✓ Information available to people at risk of homelessness has been improved and web based information on homelessness services is now available
- ✓ A responsive out of hour's emergency telephone service for homeless people has been developed
- ✓ A directory of services for accommodation providers and referral agencies has been produced
- ✓ The needs of homeless and other vulnerable people have been considered and prioritised in the 'B with Us' Choice Based Lettings Scheme
- ✓ Funding was secured for a 'Sanctuary' scheme to help domestic violence victims remain in their homes
- ✓ A vacancy notification system between Housing Needs, supported housing providers and referral agencies developed and implemented
- ✓ The 'Passport to Housing' – which prepares vulnerable people for tenancies – has been developed and rolled out to providers
- ✓ Links have been strengthened between refugees and Housing Needs' floating support service
- ✓ Joint protocols between Children's Services and Housing Needs covering homeless young people aged 16 to 21 have been developed
- ✓ Selective licensing has been introduced to areas in which poor quality private sector housing is contributing to neighbourhood decline – to create a better housing offer to people in housing need
- ✓ A home improvement service has been implemented to assist older people to remain in their homes if they wish to do so
- ✓ Access to supported accommodation for young couples both with and without children has been increased

## **The Gold Standard**

The Gold Standard is based on ten 'local challenges' set out by government.

In order to achieve this standard a local authority must:

1. adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services
2. actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
3. offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients
4. adopt a *No Second Night Out* model or an effective local alternative
5. have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support
6. develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords
7. actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme (N.B. scheme ended 31.03.14)
8. have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs
9. not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in bed and breakfast accommodation
10. not place any families in bed and breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks.

The Gold Standard application is a voluntary process which involves local authorities demonstrating that they have met each of the ten local challenges.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is striving for continuous improvement in its frontline services and will endeavour to meet the criteria specified by the Gold Standard. It must be recognised however that the financial constraints imposed by recent budget cuts may militate against this.

### **Strategic Fit**

As an 'integrated' strategy this document does not stand in isolation; rather it has been designed to help the Council and its partners to achieve aims that cross boundaries and address issues of health, social care and community safety.

Successful implementation of the homelessness strategy will therefore help to achieve some of the objectives of the following Blackburn with Darwen strategic plans:

- Health and Well Being Strategy

- Corporate Plan
- Domestic Abuse Strategy
- Pennine Lancashire Housing Strategy (refresh)
- Supporting People Commissioning Plans
- Looked After Children's Strategy
- 0-25 Complex Needs Strategy
- Making Every Adult Matter Business Plan
- Community Safety Strategy
- DAAT Alcohol Strategy
- DAAT Substance Misuse Strategic Summary
- Young People's Housing Delivery Plan (Unpublished)
- Transforming Lives Strategy

A column has been included in the action plan to show which other strategic objectives are supported by each action.

Tables showing the linkages with the other strategies are found at Appendix 1. The tables show the overlapping priorities of the various strategic plans and where the actions in the homelessness strategy will compliment and help to deliver these outcomes.

### **Performance Management**

Effective monitoring is essential to understanding the progress being made towards the strategic targets

Learning from a peer review, carried out with two other local authorities, and continuous assessment of progress towards the Gold Standard targets, will be incorporated into the ongoing monitoring process

The Housing Needs team will monitor enquiries and homeless preventions recording relevant data such as the ethnic origin of presenting households on a quarterly basis.

The integrated commissioning group will monitor progress and developments at the strategic level on a quarterly basis

Updates will be provided to cross disciplinary and multi-agency forums regularly.

The strategy action plan will be regularly monitored to assess progress against the targets set out and will be formally reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

The progress of the strategy can also be measured against specific outcomes (see Section 3 Below) and those contained in national publications such as the Public Health Outcomes Framework and the Social Care Outcomes Framework.

## **Section 2 Review Summary**

The strategy has been developed following a comprehensive review of homelessness in the Borough which is available to read online or download at: [www.blackburn.gov.uk/homelessness/review](http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/homelessness/review). As well as a desktop review of current literature, the reviewer carried out 'face-to face' consultations with sixteen key stakeholders within and outside of the Council and sent an electronic questionnaire to a further 29 agencies.

It lists the achievements of the first and second strategies and identifies the current challenges and opportunities facing the Council and its partners in implementing this third strategy.

The review also identified the causes of homelessness, the groups most affected and the services that have been developed to meet the needs of homeless people.

### **Key Findings**

The review found that:

- On the whole joint working between the Council and its partner agencies is well developed
- There is a strong emphasis on prevention
- There is a good range of supported housing provision
- There is a shortage of permanent housing for some groups
- Referral pathways are well developed for some groups
- 'Inward Migration' of chaotic people is a significant problem
- Welfare reform and budget cuts are seen as current and potential threats.

### **Gaps Identified by the Review**

The review has highlighted a number of impending gaps in provision that need to be addressed by the strategy and will therefore be replicated in the strategy under the appropriate heading(s); these are:

- Cessation of CLG Homelessness Prevention funding (the Homelessness Prevention Fund is no longer 'ring fenced') means that after March 2014 it will no longer be possible to provide rent bonds.
- The 'early warning system' to prevent homelessness caused by eviction from social housing also depends upon the Prevention Fund which will no longer be available after March 2014
- The Prevention of Eviction Fund (mortgage arrears) and the Mortgage Rescue Scheme ended in March 2014

- The dedicated service for young people provided by the Young People's Housing Team continues at present but there may be a need for the officer to take on generic duties if further efficiency savings are necessary within Housing Needs
- Concerns were expressed in relation to discharge to homelessness from the Accident & Emergency department of Blackburn Royal Hospital

The face-to-face interviews and responses to the survey questionnaire further highlighted to potential challenges to the strategy, in particular the following national and local drivers

- The inclusion of the rent element in Universal Credit
- The Spare Room Subsidy – 'Bedroom Tax'
- Cuts to the Supporting People Budget
- Cuts to the Council's Budget

### **Good Practice**

The review found many instances of good practice reported by partner agencies; some examples are reproduced below

The THOMAS project reported good joint working with the Council and that it was undertaking more targeted work with women through floating support and the Darwen drop in.

The Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust Health Outreach Team reported "*an excellent rapport with all hostel and B&B owners, third sector organisations and Blackburn with Darwen Council*". Service delivery includes weekly clinics in hostels and B&B establishments that have allowed NHS staff to provide personalised care to patients with acute and chronic conditions. Health care professionals who attend the events include Podiatry, Dermatology and Vascular Assessment.

The Revolution Housing Officer (offenders) works well with landlords in the private sector by resolving problems for this cohort before they escalate to prevent eviction

Blackburn with Darwen without Abuse (domestic violence) report good links with Housing Needs "*the team is very supportive in accommodating women in good quality properties – very open and fair and understanding in cases when people have to give back-word on properties. They (Housing Needs) are key players at strategic, operational and MARAC groups*".

The Foyer (young people) manager commended the Council Housing Needs 'single point of access' "*the relationship works well and the Housing Needs manager sits on the Foyer's Advisory Board. Generally referrals are suitable and this reduces the number of out-of-area referrals received from other sources*".

The James Street and Hollin Street hostel managers report good working relationships with the Council and other providers of supported housing. The Council *“adopts a very pragmatic approach enabling the two organisations to discuss cases that cannot be resolved at the frontline level”*. Twin Valley Homes support the Council in the prevention agenda. Regular meetings are held re problems and progress of referrals and early warning is given to Housing Needs if an eviction is pending.

The Night Safe project (young people) reports a *“really good relationship with Housing Needs who are very supportive”*.

The James Street hostel (single homeless) has a mutual agreement with Housing Needs that residents who are ready to move on may have an increased priority level to Band 1 on B-with-U's after three months if their previous bids have been unsuccessful. This avoids bed blocking in the hostel and also creating dependency on the service.

The Age UK manager noted that *the proposed Shorey Bank retirement village in Darwen is a positive response by the Council and, as Twin Valley Homes invest in the Borough there is more social housing available to elderly people.*

### **Multi Agency Working**

As well as being a unitary authority, Blackburn with Darwen is a relatively small district so agencies tend to know each other and work in partnership, for example last year THOMAS, Night Safe and Blackburn with Darwen without Abuse jointly held a pop-up charity shop to raise funds. A multi-agency forum meets at Hollin Street every six months.

The quarterly Supporting People forum was commended as *‘very useful for sharing information and learning about what’s happening across the Borough’*

### **Challenges and Opportunities – S.W.O.T Analysis**

The S.W.O.T analysis undertaken as part of the Homelessness Review identified a number of challenges and opportunities which are reproduced below; the full S.W.O.T analysis is attached at Appendix 2.

The challenges are the potential effects of welfare reform, cuts to the council’s staffing and revenue pressure on Housing Needs - in particular the cessation of homelessness prevention funding in March 2014 – other local efficiency savings and particular circumstances relating to the Borough.

Three significant opportunities have been identified by the review: integration of Council services at the commissioning and service delivery levels, further development of working partnerships with Voluntary, Community and Faith (VCF) sector agencies and better use of the private rented sector.

## **Challenges**

### **Welfare Reform**

Research conducted by Herriot-Watt University and the University of York on behalf of Crisis describes evidence of the impact of [welfare reform] on homelessness as “very worrying.” The research paper concluded that:

*‘housing market conditions tend to have a more direct impact on homelessness than labour market conditions, and the last major housing market recession actually reduced statutory homelessness because it eased access to home ownership, which in turn freed up additional social and private lets. However, no such benign impact of the housing market downturn is likely in this current recession, with levels of lettings available in the social rented sector now much lower.*

The introduction of Universal Credit has been cited as a ‘massive worry’ as households will get their housing costs paid directly to them. It is expected that rent arrears will increase significantly across all rented accommodation particularly the social sector.

### **Cuts to Staffing Levels and Revenue Pressure on Housing Needs**

Despite an increase in the number of enquiries dealt with by Housing Needs from 915 in 2008/9 to 1,923 in 2013/14, the Housing Needs team has seen a reduction in its staffing level. The team has lost 4.5 full time equivalent posts since 2010.

There is no longer a fund to prevent evictions and repossessions, nor a rent bond scheme to secure private rented accommodation; further savings in Council services will be required from 2015/16 onwards.

Blackburn with Darwen’s Preventing Homelessness Grant allocation for 2014-15 is £106,734. DCLG writes that “it would always encourage local authorities to use their Preventing Homelessness Grant allocation to support the development and enhancement of front line housing services, which will ensure that services for anyone homeless, threatened with homelessness, or rough sleeping in (the) area are available and of a high quality”.

Three years ago, an agreement was made that housing would receive £100,000 in lieu of receipt of the prevention funding from central government and other housing related funding reductions. Since then the grant from DCLG has increased but there has been no increase in the internal allocation leaving a gap in excess of £7,000 for 2014-15.

### **Other Local Budget Cuts**

The review of Supporting People funded services has achieved efficiency savings but it has also led to reductions in service provision and is likely to have a significant impact in the future.

## **Inward Migration**

Inward migration of homeless people is a major issue for Blackburn with Darwen. The review concluded that the increase in the number of spaces available in (largely) unregulated hostels serves as a 'magnet' for marginalised and often transient people who migrate into the Borough. Many have substance misuse problems, offending backgrounds and consequent chaotic lifestyles which means they put pressure on support services which are primarily designed for local people.

## **Shortage and Suitability of Accommodation**

The register for social housing in Blackburn with Darwen currently stands at 4,649 households, 2,384 of which are classified as being in 'housing need' and approximately 53% are seeking one bedroom accommodation.

Twin Valley Homes, the largest social landlord, has a stock of 1300 one bed properties. In some areas demand is high, particularly since the Spare Room Subsidy (Bedroom Tax) was introduced but in other areas there is a high (21%) turnover of one bed properties each year.

There is still a significant amount of poor quality private rented sector housing in the Borough

## **Opportunities**

### **Restructuring of Council Services**

The creation of an 'integrated commissioning Team' comprising Housing Strategy, Children's and Adult Social Care and Public Health brings real opportunities for the Council to commission services that meet a range of objectives and avoid duplication. The return of Public Health to local authority control is a particularly welcome development as it will enable 'outcome focussed funding' to be accessed from the Clinical Commissioning Group in appropriate cases.

The group will be able to form closer strategic links with the Supporting People Partnership enabling even more joint commissioning to be implemented further reducing any duplication and leading to better outcomes at reduced cost.

The Housing Needs service is now part of Adult Social Care which means that closer operational service delivery can take place. This is expected to lead to workforce development the avoidance of duplication and cost reduction whilst providing a service that leads to better outcomes across the two service delivery areas.

### **Partnership Working with the Voluntary Sector**

The Council has worked well with third sector partners in the past. Referral pathways have been developed and close liaison maintained where Housing Needs and a third sector agency are both working with a household to prevent homelessness.

Further development of these partnerships will be instrumental in developing new services and leveraging in external funding.

#### **Partnership working with the Private Rented Sector**

The amount of available stock in the social sector – especially smaller properties suitable for single people, couples and small families – is insufficient to meet the need and therefore the homelessness strategy has a thematic objective to develop the private sector. It contains actions specifically designed to harness the power of the private rented sector to address homelessness.

In recent years there has been a significant increase in private renting - primarily in terraced housing. In 2001 6.9% of the stock was privately rented; this had risen to 15.6% in 2011; in some streets over 30% of houses are now privately rented.

In 2013 nearly half (47%) of all private tenants were claiming welfare benefits compared with approximately 20% nationally and the Council was administering 4,900 Housing Benefit claims from people who were living in private rented accommodation.

The Department for Communities and Local Government has awarded the Pennine Lancashire authorities a short term (two year) funding allocation to develop private sector lettings for homeless households, especially but not exclusively, young single people. This will be an accommodation finding, tenant 'matching' (where accommodation is shared) and pre tenancy training project

Blackburn with Darwen is included in this consortium and hopes to be able to take full advantage of the opportunity afforded by this funding stream to develop a sustainable project (albeit initially benefitting a relatively small number of households) that will continue beyond the period of government funding.

#### **Empty Homes**

At the time of writing (June 2014), there are 680 properties in the borough that have been empty for more than two years.

The council has a robust empty homes strategy to co-ordinate action across all housing tenures. This aims to take positive action to improve empty properties in partnership with housing associations and private developers, to bring them back into use and thereby contribute to meeting housing needs.

The potential exists to use some of these properties to house people in housing need - families and single people – who would not be able to access social housing, using a private sector leasing scheme.

#### **Efficiency Savings**

The homelessness strategy 2014 – 2019 supports the Council's aim to create efficiency savings for the local authority and other key partners and to create a model that manages and reduces the increasing demand on high cost services. It is based on the recognition that radical changes to the way that services are commissioned and managed will be essential if continuous improvement in homelessness outcomes is to be achieved.

In 2013 the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Troubled Families Unit commissioned research into the costs of delivering reactive services across seven service areas: criminal justice, health, education, employment, housing, health and social services.

A framework to assist local partners in reforming the way they deliver public services has been developed to provide an indication of the likely scale of costs for different interventions and outcomes.

Tables showing some of the cost savings to the Council and its partners achievable by effective implementation of the strategy are attached at Appendix 3. Of particular note is the difference between a homeless prevention at around £700.00 and a full homeless duty at around £7,000.00.

The Council has benchmarked with its immediate neighbours in Pennine Lancashire and a CIPFA comparator group comprising Oldham, Rochdale, Luton, Bolton and Bradford. It has also looked at authorities operating the Gold Standard. The average cost of homelessness, administration, prevention and support for AGMA local authorities minus Manchester, plus Blackburn with Darwen, Preston and Lancaster in 2012-13 was £467,000. The cost for Blackburn with Darwen was £407,000. Blackburn with Darwen's performance for Rough Sleeping and B&B Accommodation is comparable for other benchmarked authorities.

On all of the above measures the Council's performance is either equal to, or better than the majority of other local authorities in its comparator group.

Spending in Blackburn with Darwen on rough sleeping and B&B accommodation is substantially less than the other benchmarked authorities and is at a very low level. The Council has met its obligations under the relevant national legislation and good practice guidelines.

The Council has further benchmarked its prevention and homelessness duty costs against national data with the following results:

In 2013/14 the Housing Needs team prevented homelessness for 476 households: using the national average costs detailed above this would amount to an expenditure of £324,632.00

In the same period the Council processed 41 homelessness applications that led to a full duty; the national average cost for this is £108,896.00

The total national average costs for 476 preventions and 41 duties amount to £433,528 but the total Blackburn with Darwen Housing Needs budget for 2013/14 was some £336,000.00.

This figure will be even lower in 2014/15 but will be difficult to sustain given the effect of budget cuts

These figures therefore show that the Blackburn with Darwen Housing Needs team are performing their duties at a cost level some 30% + below the national average.

## **Homelessness Prevention**

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local housing authorities must have a strategy for preventing homelessness in their district. Authorities are also encouraged to take steps to relieve homelessness in cases where someone has been found to be homeless but is not owed a duty to secure accommodation under the homelessness legislation.

'Homelessness prevention' means providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness.

'Homelessness relief' is where an authority has been unable to prevent homelessness but helps someone to secure accommodation, even though the authority is under no statutory obligation to do so.

In 2013/14 a total of 1923 enquiries were fielded by Housing Needs; of these 1,406 were dealt with by giving brief advice.

A further 476 households had potential homelessness prevented or relieved by the Housing Needs team using a casework intervention leaving a total of 41 households being accepted as homeless.

Homelessness is the 'presenting problem'. A household often presents as homeless or threatened with homelessness to the Housing Needs team as a result of long standing issues.

Homelessness amongst young adults is very often the result of 'Adverse Childhood Experiences' (ACE), such as poor parenting, being taken into care, being subjected to abuse ETC. The case for early intervention using a multi agency approach is therefore strengthened in that if appropriate interventions are made by agencies such as the Vulnerable Families Team, then a decrease in the number of homeless presentations will be achieved

Other issues such as domestic abuse, substance abuse or criminal behaviour also precipitate people into homelessness.

It is likely that a number of households with multiple and complex needs approach the Housing Needs team first as their presenting problem is the threat of homelessness and an approach to Housing Needs is less stigmatising than a presentation to another department / agency.

The team do however make a large number of referrals to departments and agencies with a specialist remit – health, criminal justice and social care, again illustrating how timely intervention by Housing Needs can avoid an intervention, and associated cost, by another department / agency.

## **Discretionary Housing Payment**

The Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) scheme provides customers with further financial assistance which covers shortfalls between rental liability and payment of Housing Benefit. Every claimant who is entitled to the minimum amount of Housing Benefit and who has a shortfall is entitled to make a claim for help

The scheme utilises central government funding and is administered by Capita in Blackburn with Darwen. Capita reports a 100% utilisation of this fund in the year 2013/14 providing an important element of homelessness prevention.

### **Homeless Presentations and Acceptances**

Homeless presentations and acceptances in Blackburn with Darwen have fluctuated over the last five years but have remained lower than when the last strategy was published. The downward trend, that reached its lowest level in 2010/11 has now reversed however and has started to increase albeit by a small amount.

The percentage of enquiries that result in a full homelessness duty being awarded has remained stable at around 25%.

A table showing the number of presentations, acceptances and the percentage of acceptances against presentations is provided at Appendix 4.

### **Causes of Homelessness**

In 2008-09 the three main known causes of homelessness enquiries were:

- Medical 229 (25%)
- Termination of assured short-hold tenancy 144 (16%)
- Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner 49 (5%)

By 2013-14 ending of tenancies was still a significant issue but other reasons for enquiries had increased in number:

- Friend/relative no longer willing/able to accommodate 261 (13%)
- Termination of assured short-hold tenancy 244 (12%)
- Parent no longer willing/able to accommodate 210 (11%)

In 2008-09 the three main causes of homelessness (where a duty was awarded) were:

- Termination of Assured Short hold Tenancy 14 (29%)
- Mortgage Arrears 11 (23%)
- Friend/relative no longer willing/able to accommodate 5 (10%)

In 2013-14 the three main causes of homelessness (where a duty was awarded) were:

- Termination of Assured Short hold Tenancy 9 (22%)
- Parent no longer willing or able to accommodate 5 (12%)
- Friend/relative no longer willing/able to accommodate 4 (10%)

## Section 3 Objectives, Actions and Outcomes

### Objectives

The overall aim of the strategy is to provide the people of Blackburn with a cross disciplinary and multi agency approach to homelessness and its adverse effects on health, wellbeing and community safety

To achieve the above aim the strategy will focus on four 'thematic objectives:

- Working with other Council services, external partners and key stakeholders to **prevent homelessness**
- Delivering improved **housing** and support options for vulnerable local people at risk of homelessness, or in existing supported housing pathways
- Developing access to and housing options in the **private rented sector**
- Engaging with the most vulnerable people to enable better **access** to appropriate housing, support and other services

Above these themes sit the over-arching objectives to:

- maximise capacity whilst achieving efficiency savings and leveraging in external funding wherever possible
- facilitate cross disciplinary and multi agency working
- develop the Council's services and **monitor** our performance against targets

### Actions

These objectives are reflected in Section 5 of the strategy: the action plan. Some of the actions in the plan have been disaggregated from the list of actions below.

The actions that need to be undertaken to deliver the Council's strategic aim and meet its objectives are:

#### Preventing Homelessness

**Action 1** Remodel the Housing Needs Vulnerable Families and Floating Support Teams to create a wider housing support service to prevent homelessness amongst the most vulnerable groups prioritised in wider strategies for health and well-being.

**Action 2** Examine options for the future of the 'early warning and intervention system' to prevent homelessness caused by Welfare Reform

**Action 3** Research possible future funding streams to enable the Community Safety Partnership to continue to deliver the Sanctuary Scheme post March 2015 when current funding ends

**Action 4** Maintain the limit on the number of refugee and asylum seeker households in the Borough to minimise pressure on available accommodation

**Action 5** Develop strategic and operational protocols between the Clinical Commissioning Group, Social Care and Public Health to ensure the re-organisation of mental health services focuses on better access for people who live in supported accommodation or who are at risk of homelessness, including those in transition from child to adult mental health services

**Action 6** Review the way in which the hospital discharge protocol is working including discharges from Accident & Emergency and psychiatric wards

### **Providing Housing**

**Action 7** Develop better housing options for domestic abuse victims who are unable to access current provision due to employment status, chaotic behaviour or substance misuse/mental health problems

**Action 8** Examine options for the development and/or re-modelling of existing provision to provide modern high quality accommodation for homeless adults and young people with complex needs and chaotic lifestyles and identify appropriate funding streams

**Action 9** Develop recovery-focussed housing in which communities of people who have reached the abstinence stage live together in shared houses and can support each other's recovery process

**Action 10** Work with the Transforming Lives Partnership, the Community Rehabilitation Company, the Probation Service and third sector partners to develop better accommodation for offenders being released from prison as part of their resettlement

**Action 11** Utilise a commissioning process across Supporting People and Housing Benefit – to ensure better value, better quality of provision and better outcomes for people with complex needs

**Action 12** Explore further potential for developing a local response to worklessness amongst homeless people including measures to improve access to employment and projects combining access to employment or training with accommodation

### **Developing the Private Rented Sector**

**Action 13** Consider procurement of a managing agent to lease properties from private landlords and then let them, to homeless households

**Action 14** Identify funding streams for and deliver rent bond schemes involving a range of partners to enable wider access to the private rented sector

### **Improving Access**

**Action 15** Develop outreach to signpost vulnerable tenants in the private rented sector to relevant advice, support and services

**Action 16** Continue to deliver the 'No Second Night Out' initiative and develop outreach services to rough sleepers by implementing recommendations in the Homeless Link Assessment and Re-connection Toolkit

**Action 17** Develop a local connection and re-connection policy for Supporting People to minimise inward migration and ensure local services are available to local people

**Action 18** Integrate learning from the MEAM project into ongoing service development for single homeless people with high/complex needs

### **Developing the Council's Services and Monitoring Performance**

**Action 19** Carry out a peer review with two other local authorities against the Gold Standard criteria and other relevant benchmarks and update the strategy and action plan annually

Relevant action numbers will be given again in Section 4 (People) below, where they address an issue pertinent to the particular group.

### **Outcomes**

Delivering the actions above will result in change, improvement and sustainability. As well as an overall improvement brought about by the streamlining of services and joint working between Council departments, other statutory agencies and the third sector we can achieve outcomes that not only address homelessness but impact positively on health, social care and community safety. Additionally, the strategy will support the Council to meet the legal requirements contained in the following pieces of legislation:

- The Housing Act 1996 (Part 7)
- The Homelessness Act 2002
- The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2006
- The Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) Order 2002
- The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 2003

The following specific outcomes will stem from successful implementation of the strategy:

1. There will be no use of B&B accommodation for families and young people aged 16 or 17, other than in very exceptional circumstances
2. Homelessness will be prevented by timely advice and support, prioritising vulnerable groups at risk
3. Suitable accommodation will be available for young offenders, care leavers, vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds, ex-offenders, people recovering from addiction, domestic violence victims, refugees and asylum seekers, people suffering from poor physical or mental health, rough sleepers and people with complex needs
4. The 'No Second Night Out' initiative will be fully implemented to minimise rough sleeping

5. Access to good quality and secure private rented sector accommodation will be developed including rent bonds and the procurement of managing agents to lease properties and re-let them to households at risk

Cost savings will be achieved across all sectors will be achieved by effective multi agency working (see Appendix 3).

## **Section 4 People**

This section shows what will be done to help the groups identified by the review as being particularly at risk of homelessness and how partnership working will help to achieve our aims and objectives.

Under each group heading a brief summary of the review findings is given followed by the proposed actions to be carried forward to the action plan. The actions are cross-referenced to Section 3 above

The data in this section are mainly re-produced from the enquiries register operated by Housing Needs. This dataset has been chosen as it is more representative of the demographic makeup of the groups approaching Housing Needs.

The groups that are awarded a full homeless duty only make up a small part of the total thanks to effective prevention measures. Where acceptances are high however, relevant data are also included.

The 'Priority Groups' for whom services will be delivered under the strategy are:

- Families and Expectant Mothers
- Single People - Under 35
- Young People Aged 16 and 17
- Older Homeless People
- Ethnic Minorities
- Asylum Seekers and Refugees
- Gypsies and Travellers
- Offenders and People Leaving Prison
- People with Drug and/or Alcohol Problems
- People with Mental Health Problems
- People Leaving Hospital
- Rough Sleepers
- People with Complex Needs
- Unemployed Homeless People

## **Families and Expectant Mothers**

*“Some families will never manage without support”*. Supported Housing Project Manager

The total number of enquiries received by Housing Needs from Families and expectant mothers was 640 in 2013/14. Enquiries from couples with 3+ children increased from 11 in 2008-09 to 84 in 2013-14 which is a significant increase.

In 2013/14 these groups accounted for a significant proportion (nearly 60%) of homeless acceptances.

For the past year the Vulnerable Families Team has been based in Housing Needs and 50% funded through the Troubled Families budget, working with a mix of young parents and families with multiple problems. They have now secured from Supporting People the funding necessary to continue to employ two full-time support workers until March 2015 as part of a wider re-modelling of floating support within Housing Needs.

Cessation of CLG Homelessness Prevention funding means that after March 2014 it will no longer be possible to provide rent bonds which have been a very significant measure for preventing families from becoming homeless.

The ‘early warning system’ to prevent homelessness caused by eviction from social housing also depends upon the Prevention Fund which will no longer be available after March 2014.

**Actions for Families and Expectant Mothers are 1 and 2 (Preventing Homelessness) and 13 and 14 (Developing the Private Rented Sector)**

## **Domestic Violence Victims**

*“More complex families are coming through using cannabis and alcohol. There is a need for agencies to work together better from the planning stage with parallel planning and partnership working”* Blackburn, Darwen & District Without Abuse Manager.

Enquiries to Housing Needs from households citing domestic violence as an issue rose from 49 in 2008/9 to 108 in 2013/14. Over the same period however acceptances for a full homelessness duty remained the same at three. The figures show that the majority of cases are helped using prevention interventions.

One of the forthcoming challenges in this sector is that from May 2014 domestic violence protection orders will make it possible for perpetrators to be removed from the property for up to 28 days.

The knock on effect of this is likely to be there will be greater need for the Sanctuary scheme designed to help women victims to remain in their home and feel safe. From a Housing perspective this is very cost-effective because it reduces the need to move or go into a refuge.

There is massive under-reporting of domestic abuse amongst women in employment who cannot access refuge provision because it is too expensive.

Blackburn with Darwen Without Abuse do take working women at a rate of £100 per week but income is then reduced by £200 per week making this unsustainable in the long term.

There is also an evidenced need for supported housing provision for families where there is a mental health and/or a substance misuse problem.

### **Actions for Domestic Violence Victims are 3 (Preventing Homelessness) and 7 (Providing Housing)**

#### **Single People**

Enquiries from single households with no dependent children have risen from 377 in 2008-09 to 1283 in 2013-14. Enquiries from this group have increased most rapidly since the last strategy and single people without dependants are by far the largest group approaching Housing Needs.

Single people are not, in the main, eligible for a full homeless duty but there must be provision in place to address the issues that have led them to seek advice.

It is very difficult to generalise about this group. In many cases these people will fall into other groups such as under 35 years, 16 – 25 years, 16 and 17 year olds, offenders or people with health problems including addictive behaviour and therefore actions will be presented under these headings.

Cessation of CLG Homelessness Prevention funding means that after March 2014 it will no longer be possible to provide rent bonds which have been used for preventing single people from becoming homeless.

It is possible however to maximise rent payment to landlords by ensuring that Housing Benefit is paid directly to them where the tenant is classed as 'vulnerable'. This will cease to be the 'default' situation when Universal Credit comes into effect but the DWP has accepted that there are some working-age people who will not be capable of managing a monthly payment, and for whom direct payments to the landlord will remain appropriate. There will be a mechanism within UC to facilitate the payment of benefit direct to the landlord once someone is identified as vulnerable. However, ministers have not yet announced what types of tenants will fall into this 'vulnerable' definition.

#### **Single People - Under 35**

Households under 35 now account for 937 of the total number of enquiries in 2013-14, up from 437 in 2008/9.

The recent extension of the Local Housing Allowance shared accommodation rate to those up to age 35 has had some impact on number of enquiries from this age group and may be expected to increase in the future.

#### **Young People 16 – 25**

*"Private landlords [are] reluctant to take young people because their benefits go to the individuals. (This is not always the case – see above regarding rent payments direct to landlord in cases of 'vulnerability'). Some young people do not*

*access the Foyer, Night safe due to their beliefs about these places such as drug taking, etc. They would prefer more independent living".* Connexions Manager

In 2008-09 the main reason for 16-24 year olds making an enquiry to the Housing Needs team was 'termination of assured short-hold tenancy'. Parental evictions accounted for the next highest number. Parental eviction enquiries have increased to 143 in 2013-14 accounting for 25.3% of all enquiries from this age group.

Young people who have typically experienced disruption and disadvantage in childhood before they become homeless are at risk of sexual assault, violence and crime if they spend time on the streets. This underlines the vital importance of early intervention to support vulnerable young people and their families before problems at home escalate and homelessness becomes a reality.

A 'young people's housing delivery plan' was developed in 2010/11 following consultation with young people who were homeless or who had been through the 'homeless process' and partner agencies whose work supports such individuals.

The plan has been re-positioned following budget cuts, to use the structures already in place but if it is to be fully realised it will require a further investment of resources.

The Night Safe project delivers AQA accredited, pre tenancy training to young people.

### **Young People aged 16 and 17**

'Parent(s) unwilling to accommodate' as a reason for seeking advice from Housing Needs is on an acute upward trend with 184 enquiries in 2013/14 against 27 in 2008/9; enquiries from households aged 16-17 has quadrupled from 19 in 2008-09 to 91 in 2013-14.

A joint protocol between Housing Needs and Children's Social Care covering duties owed to homeless 16 and 17 year olds was agreed in 2011 and outlines the duties of each organisation when a 16 or 17 year old presented as homeless. There is also a protocol for Care Leavers aged 18-21. The protocol is generally working well and is being kept under review.

The dedicated service for young people provided by the Young People's Housing Team continues at present but there may be a need for the officer to take on generic duties if further staff cuts are necessary within Housing Needs

**Actions for Single People under 35 and Young People aged 16 to 25 are 1 and 5 (Preventing Homelessness); 8, 11 and 12 (Providing Housing); 13 and 14 (Developing the Private Rented Sector)**

### **Young People with Complex Needs and Young Offenders**

Supported accommodation providers find that young people with mental health issues do not always present as such at referral and interview but, after moving into the project, it can soon become apparent that they have eating disorders or are using drugs and/or alcohol, possibly as well as prescribed drugs. Providers

need support because they are not trained to deal with such issues but they report having to 'fight' for interventions such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Such young people are amongst the most likely to be evicted from supported accommodation, moving from project to project until all their options are exhausted. Their needs are unlikely to meet the threshold for support from Adult Services but with no adequate support the risk to themselves and the community in which they live is likely to increase.

Providers make referrals to a range of support agencies but budget cuts have led to noticeable gaps in services relating to sexual health, drug and alcohol misuse, anger management, and low level mental health. The capacity for preventative work has been reduced or in some cases no longer exists. Anecdotal evidence suggests more young people coming into supported accommodation have learning difficulties and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

The percentage of young offenders in suitable accommodation was 81% in 2013/14 which is in line with the national and regional averages and above the average for comparable local authorities.

**Actions for Young People with Complex Needs and Young Offenders are 5 (Preventing Homelessness); 8 and 11 (Providing Housing) and 13 and 14 (Developing the Private Rented Sector))**

## **Older People**

The Coalition for Older Homeless People defines older homeless people as 'those over 50 years of age [who have] aged prematurely and have some frailties of someone 10 –20 years older - a striking characteristic of older homeless people, and the one that supremely demonstrates their extremely disadvantaged state, is their high mortality'.

Whilst some older homeless people will fall into other groups such as those leaving hospital or those with an alcohol issue, there is a need to recognise older homeless people as a distinct group.

The number of housing enquiries from households over 65 remains low despite the fact that Blackburn with Darwen has an aging population; the reason for this is the availability of properties for this age group. Housing Needs received only 34 enquiries from people over 65 during 2013-14. This was down from 73 in 2008-09.

Blackburn with Darwen carried out an older homeless needs audit using methodology developed by Homeless Link and found a relatively small number of older men living in hostels with very little quality of life. They tend not to meet the Adult Social Care threshold because their needs are for life-skills rather than care.

A significant number of elderly people in the Borough live in sub-standard housing stock which they cannot afford to maintain.

The number of elderly homeless is not large and mainly consists of older, entrenched and institutionalised men living in hostels or HMOs with very little

quality of life. These people are frequently discharged from Accident and Emergency to repeat homelessness.

## **Ethnic Minorities**

More than half of all enquiries are from White British households. In a large percentage of enquiries ethnic origin information is not obtained but it is thought that if data was obtained for the 'not known' category the total percentage of White British would approximate to census data (June 2009) that shows 74.6% of Blackburn with Darwen being White British.

The two other significant groups represented under 'enquiries' are Indian with 46 (0.05%) in 2008-09 which has stayed fairly constant at 47 in 2013-14 and the larger numbers of Pakistani origin with 70 (0.08%) in 2008-09 increasing and almost doubling to 134 (larger rise than in population size) in 2013-14. The Mixed white /Asian group has seen a dramatic rise from 4 in 2008 to 22 in 2014, a much higher rise than is representative of the total population.

It is difficult to make precise comments about the ethnic background of households making homelessness related enquiries to other agencies as the data capture systems used by the agencies are not congruent and the categories used have recently been altered.

However it is proposed that the Council will implement a robust data capture system to gain a better perspective on the ethnic and racial background of all households who make housing and homelessness related enquiries. (See under performance management above)

## **Asylum Seekers and Refugees**

A Local Authority has a duty to house families and vulnerable single people with refugee status who meet the homeless criteria

Enquiries from this group have remained relatively stable over the last five years: peaking in 2010/11(88), and returning to the 2008/9 level (31) in 2013/14. The level of enquiries reflects variations in the number of families, as opposed to single people making enquiries. Over the same period acceptances for a full homelessness duty have likewise remained stable with two in 2008/9 and four in 2013/14.

Blackburn with Darwen has been a dispersal area for asylum seekers for 14 years and is the only authority in Lancashire to have this status. The contract for providing accommodation and support whilst decisions are reached is held by SERCO but was previously held by the Council.

An agreement with the Home Office limits the number of new asylum seeker households in the Borough but the number of households is putting further pressure on the already limited housing stock and is a challenging issue for Housing Needs because of the demand placed on temporary accommodation.

Asylum dispersal needs to be managed in a manner that considers the impacts at a local level. There is a very clear requirement, nationally, for an equitable dispersal policy to be developed, implemented and managed. This is particularly apparent in the North West where asylum dispersal is anything but equitable. For example, the Northwest is currently at 26% of the agreed quota for dispersals to the region instead of the 21% which is the agreed quota level.

Under the current protocol adopted by all 12 North West dispersal areas all procurement of stock to the asylum estate must be approved by the local authority. Serco provide details of discontinuations to Housing Needs in advance - to minimise pressure on available accommodation by providing time to plan.

Multi agency work –the Asylum Support Multi-Agency Forum (ASMAF) – is facilitated by the Council.

### **Action for Asylum Seekers and Refugees is 4 (Preventing Homelessness) Gypsies and Travellers**

There are six gypsy and traveller sites in the Borough. Two of which are 'tolerated' though not yet licensed.

The largest site is at Ewood where there are 39 plots. There are 40 currently on the waiting list for Ewood and the last taken were two families in 2001. There is little movement now because fewer people are travelling because of restrictions on roadside stopping.

Plans to meet accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers are included in the Borough's Development Plan.

### **Offenders and People Leaving Prison**

In 2008/9 there was only one enquiry made to housing needs regarding an ex or soon to be released prisoner; by 2013/14 this had increased to 34

This increase appears to be linked with the proliferation of unregulated hostels in the Borough. The result is a concentration of individuals involved in crime and often substance misuse in unregulated accommodation that provides no support or positive move-on pathways.

As there are approved probation hostels in Accrington and Blackburn with Darwen, some ex-offenders tend to stay in the areas often occupying poor quality private sector housing. This can have a negative effect both on the individuals and the local community.

Services for offenders in Blackburn with Darwen are being re-organised following legislative changes. 'High risk' offenders are still supervised by the probation service but those deemed to be lower risk will be supervised by a 'Community Rehabilitation Company'. A significant change is that offenders who are serving less than 12 months in prison will now be supervised by the CRC.

A number of prisons discharge into the Borough but the lack of consistency and timely intervention have been cited as contributory factors to inappropriate housing – usually in one of the unregulated HMO's – on release. In many cases a referral is made from the prison without Housing Needs being contacted. According to a senior probation officer some 60+ offenders have moved into Blackburn with Darwen since January 2014. The vast majority of these offenders are single males aged under 35.

The Revolution project - a multi-agency approach to reducing re-offending - works with around 50 clients mostly white males, aged 18-40 They generally require bed-sits/one bed' accommodation and tend to be placed in the Salvation Army, Union House and occasionally the Islington or Canterbury House HMOs.

The 'Gateway' service helps people leaving prison as part of a pilot programme with Preston, Kirkham, Lancaster Farms YOI and Styal Women's Prison. It uses an early adopter model with a worker in the prison to improve the prisoner's pathway back into the community.

The Council employs an officer with part time responsibility for securing accommodation for offenders working with the Revolution project. Cessation of CLG funding will impact negatively on the issue of bonds for offenders subject to supervision by the Revolution Scheme but this will be mitigated in the short-term at least, by the creation of a two year support worker post, funded by Probation and delivered by Foundation, with a bond element included.

It has been noted that NHS England has an overall responsibility for offender health and that joint working initiatives may be developed in the future.

**Actions for Offenders and People Leaving Prison are 8 and 10 (Providing Housing); 13 and 14 (Developing the Private Rented Sector and 15 (Improving Access)**

## **People with Drug and/or Alcohol Problem**

The importance of the role of Housing in promoting and sustaining recovery from substance misuse is recognised in the *2010 Drug Strategy Reducing Demand, Restricting Supply, Building Recovery: Supporting People to Live a Drug Free Life* which states

*Housing, along with the appropriate support, can contribute to improved outcomes for drug users in a number of areas, such as increasing engagement and retention in drug treatment, improving health and social well being, improving employment outcomes and reducing re-offending.*

*Failure to provide housing for those with drug or alcohol dependence can have a range of negative consequences for local communities, including increases in drug-related crime, visible signs of drug use, street homelessness, drinking and begging. It is therefore vital that communities recognise the importance of providing accommodation for these people.*

The Blackburn with Darwen Integrated Substance Misuse Needs Assessment: Refresh (2013) notes that:

*Addressing the housing needs of clients in Blackburn with Darwen has proved challenging over a number of years for a variety of reasons. The local housing market with its shortage of suitable accommodation for single people and a lack of affordable quality rental homes in either the public or private sector, alongside the complex needs of clients both locally and moving into the area, especially from prison, compound this challenge as have increased planning applications for B&Bs / HMOs particularly in the Town Centre.*

There is some high quality supported accommodation available but it is difficult for chaotic people to access and therefore much of the accommodation available to problem drinkers and drug users is still in unregulated private sector properties where access to support services may be restricted.

The THOMAS Direct Access project provides access to stable accommodation and substance misuse treatment for local people who are known to be facing barriers to achieving successful health and social care outcomes, mainly due to poor housing circumstances and other complexities.

The project aims to break the cycle of homelessness, substance misuse and offending behaviour by providing pathways into longer term recovery enhanced by access to accommodation, education and employment.

Abstinence focused placements lasting up to 26 weeks are offered, following which the service user will be enabled to move on to other THOMAS managed accommodation and service users with a connection to Blackburn with Darwen are prioritised for placements

The 'Gateways' service for people leaving prison is especially useful when working with people suffering from drug and alcohol issues. It uses an early adopter model with a worker in the prison to improve the prisoner's pathway back into the community. An essential element of this is emphasis on the recovery-focussed model.

The substance misuse and recovery support system in Blackburn with Darwen is being re-modelled and will be re-tendered in the near future which will bring about further opportunities for closer integrated working to achieve better outcomes.

It has also been noted that there is a need for more training for supported housing staff around substance misuse and dual diagnosis (a substance misuse and a mental health problem). It is possible that the provider of the re-modelled service will deliver this.

**Actions for People with Drug / Alcohol Problems are 5 (Preventing Homelessness); 9 (Providing Housing); and 15 and 18 (Improving Access)**

## **People with Mental Health Problems**

*"Information sharing can be a problem between agencies, especially in relation to mental health"* Supported Housing Manager.

*“BIG ISSUE”*: the investment in mental health services. We need an invest to save model: reduce the waiting time for assessment, increase the availability of services both in the community and in hospital and make referral pathways clearer” Social Housing Chief Executive.

*“There is a gap in relation for mental health services for young people which makes it extremely difficult to obtain diagnosis and treatment”* Supported Housing Manager.

Mental health or disability is one of the priority needs categories but there are few acceptances for this reason (four in 2013-14).

The particular needs of young people with mental health problems facing homelessness have been referred to in the ‘Young People’ section of the strategy and there is considerable work to be done here particularly at the ‘transition’ stage where a young person moves from children’s to adult services. It is notable that nationally only 6% of the total mental health budget is allocated to young people yet they make up 25% of the total patient cohort.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is planning to join the East Lancashire Mental Health and Housing service which has been operating from the Community Restart office in Burnley since 2009.

The service provides a ‘one stop shop’ for homeless and vulnerably housed people with mental health problems.

### **Actions for People with Mental Health Problems are 5 (Preventing Homelessness) and 15 (Improving Access)**

#### **People with a Learning Disability**

As is the case with single people, it is difficult to quantify the exact number of people with a learning disability who are in housing need as they often have other presenting problems such as substance misuse or a mental health problem,

As the eligibility criteria for access to statutory services become more stringent, an increasing number of individuals cease to be engaged with services and their needs may not be identified.

There is some empirical and anecdotal evidence however to suggest that a significant number of people with LD may be in housing need or at risk of homelessness. Some people with LD are too vulnerable to be considered under the homelessness legislation as they do not have the capacity to understand the responsibilities of signing and maintaining a tenancy.

Data from Housing Needs show that the number of enquiries from people with a learning disability remained stable (around five), from 2008/9 until 2012/13 when they increased to eleven and twelve enquiries were recorded in 2013/14.

Reasons for the enquiries were evenly spread across the categories. In seven recent (2013/14), cases, homelessness was prevented by Housing Needs

The Joint Health and Social Care Assessment Framework (2013/14), categorises people with LD as living in ‘settled’ or ‘unsettled’ accommodation.

Out of a total of 393 people known to services, 37 were living in supported accommodation/supported lodgings and two were living in temporary accommodation

A study commissioned by the Council in 2011 found 17 people with LD currently being supported by elderly carers and 15 young people in transition from children's to adult services.

This demographic is arguably significant in that the older people may become homeless when their relatives are no longer able to live with them and the younger ones may find difficulty in accessing services if their needs are not deemed to be high enough.

The James Street hostel manager also reports an increase in the number of people with 'mild' to 'moderate' LD (those who can no longer access statutory services) using the facility over the last five years.

### **Actions for People with a Learning Disability are 5 (Preventing Homelessness) and 15 (Improving Access)**

#### **People Leaving Hospital**

This is another group where Housing Needs has seen an upsurge in enquiries since the last strategy was published. There were two enquiries in 2008/9 and 24 in 2013/14. The majority of these presentations were following a presentation to the Accident and Emergency department.

A protocol to prevent homelessness on hospital discharge was agreed between the six Pennine Lancashire authorities and the East Lancashire Hospitals Trust in 2010 and has been in operation since then.

The protocol covers general and psychiatric ward discharges and has been, in the main, successful in preventing homelessness.

It does not however apply to Accident and Emergency departments and there has been some concern expressed by Housing Needs staff members and third sector partners regarding unplanned discharges – often at night – which result in chaotic individuals being placed in unsuitable accommodation without appropriate support. In many cases these people go on to make repeat presentations at A&E.

#### **Action for People Leaving Hospital is 6 (Preventing Homelessness)**

#### **Adults with Complex Needs, Rough Sleepers and 'inward Migrants'**

The review has identified that a small but significant number of people who are either homeless, threatened with homelessness or vulnerably housed and who have needs that cannot be met by one agency are present in the Borough. These people frequently exhibit challenging behaviour and present high risks to themselves, other service users and agencies.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council has therefore joined a pilot scheme to work with some of the most vulnerable adults in the Borough.

The 'Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM)', project will focus on re-connection with families, communities and the local support networks and services provided within their localities. It will initially target 30 residents of HMOs in Blackburn with a particular focus on local connection. Funding for the project will come from Public Health and Community Safety.

The MEAM project sits within an overall strategy called 'Transforming Lives'. This approach is based on the growing body of local, regional and national evidence that high cost public sector services involving many agencies including the Police, Social Care and Health, are often focused on a relatively small number of the population, and are often involved with the same individuals/families at the same time, sometimes without realising it. (See tables in Appendix 3).

The ultimate aim of Transforming Lives is to address the individual's needs to the point where their needs can best be met from within universal services. The approach has three core aims:

- Improve short, medium and long term outcomes for people and communities
- Integrate support for people within their local areas
- Ensure fewer gaps and duplications in service provision

One of the MEAM project's ambitions for years 2 and 3 is to improve standards in HMOs and develop a MEAM kite-mark for those that achieve the required improvements.

### **Rough Sleepers**

It is difficult to accurately quantify the number of people sleeping rough in the Borough. Although rough sleeper counts are carried out they are not comprehensive - they cannot identify those who sleep rough on private property for example – but the number of presentations to Housing Needs citing rough sleeping as a problem rose from two in 2008/9 to 60 in 2013/14.

### **Inward Migration**

Inward migration of homeless people is a major issue for Blackburn with Darwen. The review concluded that the increase in the number of spaces available in (largely) unregulated hostels serves as a 'magnet' for marginalised and often transient people who migrate into the Borough. Many have substance misuse problems, offending backgrounds and consequent chaotic lifestyles which means they put pressure on support services which are primarily designed for local people.

The Homeless Link organisation has produced a 'toolkit' to help services to develop effective assessment procedures. It is designed to support voluntary sector providers and local authorities to work with people who are sleeping rough

in an area where they do not have a local connection and, as a result, cannot access the services and support needed to end their homelessness.

As one of a range of measures to tackle rough sleeping, reconnection plays an important role and helps to:

- reduce the risk of harm to people who are sleeping rough
- enable people to access accommodation and support in a known area
- ensure agencies provide a coordinated multi-agency approach to support
- make sure that there are enough resources to meet local need
- advocate for support from services in local areas, helping people stay close to social and family networks.

**Actions for Adults with Complex Needs, Rough Sleepers and ‘Inward Migrants’ are 5 (Preventing Homelessness); 8 (Providing Housing) and 15, 16, 17 and 18 (Improving Access)**

### **People with Mortgage or Rent Arrears**

Enquiries from households facing possible eviction due to mortgage arrears peaked between 2010 and 2012 but have now returned to a level only slightly above that in 2008/9.

Homelessness acceptances declined sharply from a peak of 11 in 2008/9 to three in 2013/14.

Enquiries from private rented sector households in rent arrears increased from 20 in 2008/9 to 42 in 2013/14 and enquiries from social sector households in rent arrears rose from five to 86 over the same period. More than 50% of Twin Valley Homes’ tenants are in arrears. Causal factors may well be welfare reform related.

There were no homeless acceptances in 2008/9 and one in 2013/14. This is very likely due to effective prevention work by the Housing Needs service.

**Action for People with Mortgage or Rent Arrears is 5 (Preventing Homelessness)**

### **Worklessness**

Worklessness is a national and local problem that affects all sectors of society but is particularly prevalent amongst the homeless and vulnerably housed.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) recently reviewed the employment support provided by Jobcentre Plus (JCP) to homeless people. This review led to two main principles and a range of recommendations. The principles are:

- work can make a significant contribution to recovery and resettlement for homeless people

- joined-up service delivery is required to address the barriers to employment experienced by homeless people

Central to this approach is the creation of the 'Flexible Support Fund' (FSF). This fund offers a potential source of monies to develop innovative local responses to worklessness that will have significant 'cross cutting' effects.

Another national funding scheme for helping homeless, and severely marginalised, young people make progress towards employment has recently been announced – the 'Fair Chance Fund'.

The £15 million fund will support vulnerable, homeless NEET young people in England between the ages of 18 and 24 into housing, education and work. Specialist organisations, including those from the voluntary sector, will have the freedom to run innovative projects and schemes that will give these young people the best possible opportunities to move forward and they will be rewarded for achieving real results. The Night Safe project is part of a pan-Lancashire consortium currently bidding for funding from this source.

Blackburn with Darwen is also considering a proposal from an organisation called Re-cycling Lives which provides accommodation and employment under one roof.

**Action to Address Worklessness is 12 (Providing Housing) and (Improving Access)**

## Section 5 Delivering the Strategy

### Action Plan

The action plan below sets out in table form what the Council and its partners will do over the next five years. The actions have been drawn from a 'long list' of over 100 potential actions identified by the review and some have been expanded from those detailed in the strategy document. As this is an integrated strategy the majority of the actions support other strategies; these linkages will be shown in the 'other strategies that this action will support' column of the action plan and, in more detail, in Appendix 1.

These actions are S.M.A.R.T – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound and will be placed within the appropriate 'thematic objectives':

- Working with other Council services, external partners and key stakeholders to **prevent homelessness**
- Delivering improved **housing** and support options for vulnerable local people at risk of homelessness, or in existing supported housing pathways
- Developing access to and housing options in the **private rented sector**
- Engaging with the most vulnerable people to enable better **access** to appropriate housing, support and other services

Above these themes sit the over-arching objectives to:

- maximise capacity whilst achieving efficiency savings and leveraging in external funding wherever possible
- facilitate cross disciplinary and multi agency working
- develop the Council's services and **monitor** our performance against targets

Some of the actions fall under more than one theme and this is noted.

Above these themes sits the 'over-arching' objective to maximise capacity whilst achieving efficiency savings and leveraging in external funding wherever possible.

### Key

The Action Plan is divided into eight columns:

**Baseline Position** – This column summarises the current situation regarding a particular issue

**What Will We Do** – This column describes the proposed action

**When By** – This column shows the timescale for the action

**Who Will Deliver** (Lead in Bold) – Most actions in the Homelessness Strategy are multi agency but must have leadership to be effective

**Other Strategies Supported** – This is the column that exemplifies the multi-agency approach that is central to this 'integrated' strategy

**Performance Measures** – This column must contain a measurable outcome that may be a 'milestone' on the way to achieving a complex action

**Resources**– Most, but not all, actions will require some financial input

**Progress** – The action plan needs to be updated at least annually to record progress.

## Appendix 1 Strategic Fit

The tables below show how the Integrated Homelessness Strategy is linked to and actively supports the objectives of, a number of local strategic plans

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
Corporate Plan 2012/15	Creating more jobs	Improve skills to allow local people to access local jobs	Explore further potential for developing a local response to worklessness amongst homeless people including measures to improve access to employment and projects combining access to employment or training with accommodation
	Improving housing quality	Address the issues related to private sector housing	<p>Develop outreach to signpost vulnerable tenants in the private rented sector to relevant advice, support and services</p> <p>Include in the revised plan for selective licensing that when properties are inspected occupants with health needs can be signposted to appropriate health services and other preventative interventions</p> <p>Consider procurement of a managing agent to lease properties from private landlords and re-let them to homeless households</p>
	Improving health and wellbeing	Improve integration of public health commissioned programmes	Develop strategic and operational protocols between the Clinical Commissioning Group, Social Care and Public Health to ensure the re-organisation of mental health services focusses on better access for people who live in supported accommodation or who are at risk of homelessness, including those in transition from child to adult mental health services.

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
Corporate Plan 2012/15	Safeguarding and helping the most vulnerable people	Integrated support for people with significant needs and their carers	<p>Develop strategic and operational protocols between the Clinical Commissioning Group, Social Care and Public Health to ensure the re-organisation of mental health services focusses on better access for people who live in supported accommodation or who are at risk of homelessness, including those in transition from child to adult mental health services.</p> <p>Improve the transition from Children's to Adults' Services ensuring housing needs and options are assessed and support is provided</p> <p>Integrate learning from the MEAM project into ongoing service development for single homeless people with high/complex needs</p> <p>Remodel the Housing Needs Vulnerable Families and Floating Support Teams to create a wider housing support service to prevent homelessness amongst the most vulnerable groups prioritised in wider strategies for health and well-being.</p>
	Improving outcomes for young people	Review with partners all of the commissioning functions in Children's Services	<p>Improve the transition from Children's to Adults' Services ensuring housing needs and options are assessed and support is provided</p> <p>Monitor and improve as necessary the Joint Protocol between Housing Needs and Children's Social Care to ensure that homeless 16 &amp; 17 year olds and care leavers aged 18 – 20 receive the most appropriate service</p> <p>Develop better access to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), for young people who are living in supported accommodation or who are risk of homelessness</p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012/15</b></p>	<p><b>Best start for children and young people</b></p>	<p><b>Improve support for children and young people in relation to mental health and wellbeing</b></p> <p><b>Ensure that the right care is provided in the right place and at the right time, reducing unplanned health and social care utilisation.</b></p> <p><b>Scale up support to families through parenting programmes</b></p>	<p><b>Improve the transition from Children's to Adults' Services ensuring housing needs and options are assessed and support is provided</b></p> <p><b>Develop better access to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), for young people who are living in supported accommodation or who are risk of homelessness</b></p> <p><b>Examine options for the development of supported housing services for young people with high support needs and chaotic lifestyles and identify an appropriate funding stream</b></p> <p><b>Research possible future funding streams for the Vulnerable Families Team</b></p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012/15</b></p>	<p><b>Health and Work</b></p>	<p><b>Maximise the social value of commissioning and procurement to promote local employment and skills, particularly of disadvantaged groups. Frontline staff coming into contact with those out of work will be able to signpost people to support, for mental health or stress issues</b></p>	<p><b>Explore further potential for developing a local response to worklessness amongst homeless people including measures to improve access to employment and projects combining access to employment or training with accommodation</b></p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012/15</b></p>	<p><b>Safe and Healthy Homes and Neighbourhoods</b></p>	<p>Reduce levels of poor, unhealthy housing occupied by vulnerable groups</p> <p>Make better use of enforcement systems to reduce health inequalities.</p>	<p>Develop outreach to signpost vulnerable tenants in the private rented sector to relevant advice, support and services</p> <p>Include in the revised plan for selective licensing that when properties are inspected occupants with health needs can be signposted to appropriate health services and other preventative interventions</p>
	<p><b>Promoting Health and Supporting People when they are unwell.</b></p> <p><b>Developing a recovery model for drug and alcohol services</b></p>	<p>Support for individuals to change their behaviour needs to be complemented with action to reduce the environmental and economic forces that are barriers to engagement</p> <p>All people using substance misuse and alcohol treatment services will be supported to address the underlying causes of their substance misuse. This will include access to training and employment.</p>	<p>Develop recovery-focussed housing in which communities of people who have reached the abstinence stage live together and support each other's recovery process</p> <p>Explore further potential for developing a local response to worklessness amongst homeless people including measures to improve access to employment and projects combining access to employment or training with accommodation</p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Supporting People Programme</b></p>	<p><b>Deliver a diverse range of high quality housing related support services to vulnerable people living in the Borough</b></p> <p><b>Make the best use of resources</b></p> <p><b>Take account of views of users; partners and stakeholders</b></p> <p><b>Integrate with existing services/strategic plans</b></p>	<p><b>Re-align commissioning towards preventative measures</b></p>	<p><b>Make a business case to sustain homelessness prevention measures</b></p> <p><b>Develop a local connection and re-connection policy for Supporting People to minimise inward migration and ensure local services are available to local people</b></p> <p><b>Utilise a commissioning process (Supporting People and Housing Benefit) – to ensure better value, better quality of provision and better outcomes for people with complex needs</b></p> <p><b>Integrate learning from the MEAM project into ongoing service development for single homeless people with high/complex needs</b></p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Looked After Children's Strategy 2014/18</b></p>	<p><b>Corporate Parenting Promises</b></p>	<p><b>We promise to find you a safe, comfortable and caring place to live [and] provide you with support &amp; advice to find a suitable place to live when you leave care</b></p>	<p><b>Monitor and improve as necessary the Joint Protocol between Housing Needs and Children's Social Care – to ensure that homeless 16 and 17 year olds and care leavers aged 18 – 20 receive the most appropriate service</b></p> <p><b>Ensure all [young] people preparing to take on their own tenancies have the opportunity to undertake pre-tenancy training</b></p> <p><b>Consider procurement of a managing agent to lease properties from private landlords and then let them, either in shared or self-contained units to homeless households – to ensure better access to the private sector</b></p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>0-25 Complex Needs Strategy</b></p>	<p><b>Promotes access to appropriate support and enables social integration</b></p>	<p><b>Provision of suitable housing for young people with complex needs living with their families or separately</b></p>	<p><b>Ensure all [young] people preparing to take on their own tenancies have the opportunity to undertake pre-tenancy training</b></p> <p><b>Monitor and improve as necessary the Joint Protocol between Housing Needs and Children's Social Care</b></p> <p><b>Access external funding to deliver further investment in modern high quality accommodation for homeless people with complex needs</b></p> <p><b>Improve the transition from Children's to Adults' Services ensuring housing needs and options are assessed and support is provided</b></p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Young People’s Housing Delivery Plan (Unpublished)</b></p>	<p><b>Early intervention to reduce demand and crisis within the family</b></p>	<p><b>Develop integrated approaches for preventing family breakdown using a whole family approach</b></p>	<p><b>Remodel the Housing Needs Vulnerable Families and Floating Support Teams to create a wider housing support service to prevent homelessness amongst the most vulnerable groups prioritised in wider strategies for health and well-being.</b></p> <p><b>Examine options for the future of the ‘early warning and intervention system’ to prevent homelessness caused by Welfare Reform.</b></p>
	<p><b>Develop targeted interventions to prevent youth homelessness</b></p>	<p><b>Prevent youth homelessness through the provision of timely housing options and advice</b></p>	<p><b>Remodel the Housing Needs Vulnerable Families and Floating Support Teams to create a wider housing support service to prevent homelessness amongst the most vulnerable groups prioritised in wider strategies for health and well-being.</b></p> <p><b>Examine options for the future of the ‘early warning and intervention system’ to prevent homelessness caused by Welfare Reform.</b></p>
	<p><b>Ensure there is a strong network of support for vulnerable young people</b></p>	<p><b>Ensure that young people have access to suitable and affordable accommodation tailored to meet different needs</b></p>	<p><b>Ensure all [young] people preparing to take on their own tenancies have the opportunity to undertake pre-tenancy training</b></p> <p><b>Consider procurement of a managing agent to lease properties from private landlords and then let them, either in shared or self-contained units to homeless households – to ensure better access to the private sector</b></p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Young People’s Housing Delivery Plan (Unpublished)</b></p>	<p><b>Develop housing services for young people with high and complex needs including teenage parents and vulnerable young couples</b></p>	<p><b>Develop mentoring services for young homeless people with high and complex support needs</b></p>	<p><b>Examine options for the development of supported housing services for young people with high support needs and chaotic lifestyles and identify an appropriate funding stream</b></p> <p><b>Access external funding to deliver further investment in modern high quality accommodation for homeless people with complex needs</b></p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Making Every Adult Matter Business Plan</b></p>	<p><b>MEAM aims to consolidate governance and accountability across the range of services</b></p> <p><b>MEAM will offer:</b></p>	<p><b>Re-connection of individuals</b></p>	<p><b>Continue to implement the ‘No Second Night Out’ initiative and implement the recommendations in the Assessment and Re-connection Toolkit – to ensure that local services are provided to local people and that people from other areas are able to access accommodation and support in their local areas</b></p>
	<p><b>Consistency</b></p> <p><b>Coordination</b></p> <p><b>Flexibility</b></p> <p><b>Partnership</b></p> <p><b>Audit</b></p>	<p><b>Engagement with appropriate services</b></p>	<p><b>Develop strategic and operational protocols between the Clinical Commissioning Group, Social Care and Public Health to ensure the re-organisation of mental health services focusses on better access for people who live in supported accommodation or who are at risk of homelessness, including those in transition from child to adult mental health services.</b></p>
	<p><b>Service improvement</b></p> <p><b>Gap Filling</b></p> <p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <p><b>System change</b></p>	<p><b>Appropriate accommodation secured</b></p>	<p><b>Access external funding to deliver further investment in modern high quality accommodation for homeless people with complex needs</b></p> <p><b>Develop recovery-focussed housing in which communities of people who have reached the abstinence stage live together in shared houses and support each other’s recovery process</b></p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Making Every Adult Matter Business Plan</b></p>	<p><b>MEAM aims to consolidate governance and accountability across the range of services</b></p> <p><b>MEAM will offer:</b></p>	<p><b>Improved standards in HMO's – development of MEAM kite-mark for HMO's</b></p>	<p><b>Integrate learning from the MEAM project into ongoing service development for single homeless people with high/complex needs</b></p> <p><b>Develop a local connection policy for Supporting People – to minimise inward migration and ensure local services are available to local people</b></p>
	<p><b>Consistency</b></p> <p><b>Coordination</b></p> <p><b>Flexibility</b></p> <p><b>Partnership</b></p> <p><b>Audit</b></p> <p><b>Service improvement</b></p> <p><b>Gap Filling</b></p> <p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <p><b>System change</b></p>	<p><b>Improved links between service providers</b></p>	<p><b>Work with 'Gateways' to ensure people leaving prisons have accommodation, jobs or training and support for substance misuse when they return to the community</b></p> <p><b>Work with the Transforming Lives Partnership, the Community Rehabilitation Company, the Probation Service and third sector partners to develop better accommodation for offenders being released from prison as part of their resettlement</b></p>
		<p><b>Reduction in numbers of chaotic and vulnerable adults not known to, or accessing services</b></p> <p><b>Reduction in costs to Health Providers, Police and Adult Social Care</b></p>	<p><b>Develop recovery-focussed housing in which communities of people who have reached the abstinence stage live together and support each other's recovery process</b></p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Community Safety Strategy</b></p>	<p>To work together to make Blackburn with Darwen a better place for today's and future generations, where crime continually reduces, innovative and excellent practice is the norm, and fear of crime is not a constraint to daily life and investment</p>	<p>Working with partners to support and intervene at an individual, family and community level</p> <p>Improving the efficiency of existing Domestic Violence projects such as Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), the Sanctuary scheme, interventions for perpetrators, Independent Domestic Violence Advocates and Specialist Domestic Violence Courts.</p> <p>Developing an accredited 'haven' project in partnership with key stakeholders to provide places of safety for people to go to if they feel they are at risk of harm.</p> <p>Addressing issues of homelessness, overcrowding and poor quality housing</p> <p>Targeting resources to where they are most needed</p>	<p>Develop strategic and operational protocols between the Clinical Commissioning Group, Social Care and Public Health to ensure the re-organisation of mental health services focusses on better access for people who live in supported accommodation or who are at risk of homelessness, including those in transition from child to adult mental health services.</p> <p>Develop better housing options for domestic abuse victims who are unable to access current provision due to employment status, chaotic behaviour or substance misuse/mental health problems</p> <p>Develop an accommodation panel to oversee offender pathways</p> <p>Access external funding to deliver further investment in modern high quality accommodation for homeless people with complex needs</p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Domestic Abuse Strategy</b></p>	<p>To work together to make Blackburn with Darwen a place where victims and survivors of domestic abuse are supported, perpetrators are made accountable, innovative and excellent practice is the norm, and fear of crime is not a constraint to daily life.</p>	<p>Address issues of homelessness, overcrowding and poor quality housing</p>	<p>Research potential funding streams to enable the Community Safety Partnership to continue to deliver the Sanctuary Scheme post March 2015 when current funding ends</p> <p>Develop better housing options for domestic abuse victims who are unable to access current provision due to employment status, chaotic behaviour or substance misuse/mental health problems</p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>DAAT Alcohol Strategy</b></p>	<p>Address the needs of complex hazardous and harmful drinkers to improve outcomes</p>	<p>Work specifically with key partners to address the needs of the most complex hazardous and harmful drinkers to improve outcomes</p>	<p>Develop recovery-focussed housing in which communities of people who have reached the abstinence stage live together and support each other's recovery process</p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>DAAT Substance Misuse Strategic Summary</b></p> <p><b>Integrated Substance Misuse Needs Assessment: Refresh 2013</b></p>	<p>Improve access to suitable accommodation for individuals who seek substance misuse treatment and abstinence whilst considering the commitment to long term recovery and behaviour change</p>	<p>Consider an urgent review of local accommodation strategies to ensure the provision of suitable accommodation for vulnerable young adults, taking steps to address the reported poor practice</p>	<p>Develop recovery-focussed housing in which communities of people who have reached the abstinence stage live together in shared houses and support each other's recovery process</p> <p>Work with 'Gateways' to ensure people leaving prisons have accommodation and support for substance misuse when they return to the community</p> <p>Work with the Transforming Lives Partnership, the Community Rehabilitation Company, the Probation Service and third sector partners to develop better accommodation for offenders being released from prison</p>
		<p>Consider ways to improve effective partnership working to address the potential increase of problematic hostels/houses of multiple occupation</p>	<p>Develop a local connection policy for Supporting People – to minimise inward migration</p> <p>Integrate learning from the MEAM project into ongoing service development for single homeless people with high/complex needs</p> <p>Utilise a commissioning process across Supporting People and Housing Benefit – to ensure better value, better quality of provision and better outcomes for people with complex needs</p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Children and Young People's Plan</b></p>	<p>To create a place to live where every child and young person can be happy, successful, healthy and safe and contributes to the communities in which they live,</p>	<p>Improving the use of housing and family support services for young people who run away, who are homeless, or require independent or supported living</p>	<p>Improve the transition from Children's to Adults' Services ensuring housing needs and options are assessed and support is provided</p> <p>Develop better access to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), for young people who are living in supported accommodation or who are risk of homelessness</p> <p>Monitor and improve as necessary the Joint Protocol between Housing Needs and Children's Social Care – to ensure that homeless 16 and 17 year olds and care leavers aged 18 – 20 receive the most appropriate service</p> <p>Research possible future funding streams for the Vulnerable Families Team</p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Transforming Lives Strategy</b></p>	<p><b>Outcomes for People</b></p>	<p><b>Reduced interaction with social care services</b></p> <p><b>Reduced levels of offending</b></p>	<p><b>Work with ‘Gateways’ to ensure people leaving prisons have accommodation, jobs or training and support for substance misuse when they return to the community</b></p> <p><b>Develop strategic and operational protocols between the Clinical Commissioning Group, Social Care and Public Health to ensure the re-organisation of mental health services focusses on better access for people who live in supported accommodation or who are at risk of homelessness, including those in transition from child to adult mental health services.</b></p> <p><b>Develop recovery-focussed housing in which communities of people who have reached the abstinence stage live together and support each other’s recovery process</b></p> <p><b>Access external funding to deliver further investment in modern high quality accommodation for homeless people with complex needs</b></p> <p><b>Develop an accommodation panel to oversee offender pathways</b></p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Transforming Lives Strategy</b></p>	<p><b>Outcomes for People</b></p>	<p><b>Gaining employment</b></p> <p><b>Reduced alcohol/substance consumption</b></p> <p><b>Improved mental well-being (self-assessed)</b></p>	<p><b>Explore further potential for developing a local response to worklessness amongst homeless people including measures to improve access to employment and projects combining access to employment or training with accommodation</b></p> <p><b>Develop recovery-focussed housing in which communities of people who have reached the abstinence stage live together and support each other's recovery process</b></p> <p><b>Develop strategic and operational protocols between the Clinical Commissioning Group, Social Care and Public Health to ensure the re-organisation of mental health services focusses on better access for people who live in supported accommodation or who are at risk of homelessness, including those in transition from child to adult mental health services.</b></p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Transforming Lives Strategy</b></p>	<p><b>Outcomes for services</b></p>	<p><b>Reduction of Children in need cases</b></p> <p><b>Reduction of the number of children and young people entering the youth justice system</b></p> <p><b>Increased number of households with one or more person in employment</b></p>	<p><b>Monitor and improve as necessary the Joint Protocol between Housing Needs and Children's Social Care</b></p> <p><b>Research possible future funding streams for the Vulnerable Families Team</b></p> <p><b>Examine options for the development of supported housing services for young people with high support needs and chaotic lifestyles and identify an appropriate funding stream</b></p> <p><b>Explore further potential for developing a local response to worklessness amongst homeless people including measures to improve access to employment and projects combining access to employment or training with accommodation</b></p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Transforming Lives Strategy</b></p>	<p><b>Outcomes for services</b></p>	<p><b>Reduction of repeat victims of domestic violence</b></p>	<p><b>Develop better housing options for domestic abuse victims who are unable to access current provision due to employment status, chaotic behaviour or substance misuse/mental health problems</b></p> <p><b>Research potential funding streams to enable the Community Safety Partnership to continue to deliver the Sanctuary Scheme post March 2015 when current funding ends</b></p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p><b>Transforming Lives Strategy</b></p>	<p><b>Outcomes for services</b></p>	<p><b>Reduction of costs associated with crisis services (to be base-lined on 2013-2014 data)</b></p>	<p><b>Continue to implement the ‘No Second Night Out’ initiative and implement the recommendations in the Assessment and Re-connection Toolkit – to ensure that local services are provided to local people and that people from other areas are able to access accommodation and support in their local areas</b></p> <p><b>Utilise a commissioning process (Supporting People and Housing Benefit) – to ensure better value, better quality of provision and better outcomes for people with complex needs</b></p> <p><b>Develop a local connection and re-connection policy for Supporting People – to minimise inward migration and ensure local services are available to local people</b></p> <p><b>Integrate learning from the MEAM project into ongoing service development for single homeless people with high/complex needs</b></p> <p><b>Examine options for the future of the ‘early warning and intervention system’ to prevent homelessness caused by Welfare Reform.</b></p>

Strategy / Plan	Strategic Aims	Cross Cutting Targets	Relevant Actions
<p align="center"><b>Capita Benefits Discretionary Housing Payments Policy Statement 2012</b></p>	<p><b>The Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) scheme provides customers with further financial assistance which covers shortfalls between rental liability and payment of Housing Benefit. Every claimant who is entitled to the minimum amount of Housing Benefit and who has a shortfall is entitled to make a claim for help</b></p>	<p><b>Safeguard customers in their homes by preventing homelessness</b></p>	<p><b>Develop outreach to signpost vulnerable tenants in the private rented sector to relevant advice, support and services</b></p> <p><b>Examine options for the future of the ‘early warning and intervention system’ to prevent homelessness caused by Welfare Reform</b></p>
		<p><b>Keep families together</b></p>	<p><b>Research possible future funding streams for the Vulnerable Families Team – to help prevent homelessness caused by family relationship breakdown</b></p>
		<p><b>Support vulnerable young people in the transition to adult life</b></p>	<p><b>Improve the transition from Children’s to Adults’ Services – to ensure housing needs and options are assessed and support is provided</b></p>
		<p><b>Help people who are getting back into employment ... as their benefit ceases and they wait for their working income to be received’</b></p>	<p><b>Explore further potential for developing a local response to worklessness amongst homeless people</b></p>
		<p><b>[support] people who are single and [the] under 35’s’ (who are subject to the Single Room Rent Restriction)</b></p>	<p><b>Consider procurement of a managing agent to lease properties from private landlords and then let them, either in shared or self-contained units to homeless households – to ensure better access to the private sector</b></p>

## **Appendix 2 S.W.O.T Analysis**

### **Strengths**

- Strong Council leadership
- Co-location of Council services
- Integrated Commissioning Group in place
- Housing Needs service is now integrated with Social Care
- Housing Needs service is high quality and low cost - £60,000 p.a. less than benchmarking group and 30% less than national average
- Homelessness Strategies for 2003-2013 have good track record of delivery
- Good range of supported accommodation
- Partnership working is well-developed

### **Weaknesses**

- Inward migration of homeless via the HMOs
- Supported accommodation is used by out-of-area authorities
- Prison discharge system often leaves vulnerable people homeless.
- Some gaps in supported housing provision especially for higher need groups –young homeless, substance abusers; and ex-offenders.
- Shortage of re-lets in the social rented sector especially of smaller units
- Poor quality private rented housing
- No longer a fund to prevent evictions and repossessions, nor a rent bond scheme to secure private rented accommodation.
- Loss of posts in Housing Needs

### **Opportunities**

- Radical changes to the way that services are commissioned and managed will be essential if continuous improvement in homelessness outcomes is to be achieved
- Housing Strategy being part of the Integrated Commissioning team will allow for more joined up working, efficiencies and effectiveness.
- Partnerships with the third and voluntary sector to develop new services and lever in external funding.
- Housing Needs is now part of Adult Social Care which will encourage closer joint working especially related to safeguarding and vulnerable people in transition and should deliver efficiencies.

- Supporting People Review process delivering efficiency savings. Further develop the SP review process to commission further new and remodelled services.
- Opportunity to raise standards of certain HMOs by applying a kite mark supported by the MEAM project
- Grant funding levered in by third sector providers
- Remodelling of the prison resettlement process including ex-offender management and 'Through the Gate' creates offenders for better discharge protocols attached to provision of supported accommodation.

### **Threats**

- Reductions in Housing Needs staffing
- Further savings required of Housing Needs from 2015/16 onwards
- Welfare Reform, in particular Universal Credit
- Supporting People Savings may put service quality at risk

### Appendix 3 Cost Savings Interventions and Savings – National Averages

The Unit Cost Database was developed as part of work under the Investment Agreement and Partnerships Exemplar project to produce a framework to assist local partners in reforming the way they deliver public services

The project was funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Troubled Families Unit, and delivered by Greater Manchester and Birmingham City Council. Work to develop and update the database is being undertaken by New Economy (Greater Manchester), with further support from DCLG.

The database contains costs across the following themes: crime; education and skills; employment; fire; health; housing; and social services.

The data have been subject to a rigorous validation process, including assessing the robustness of the original source documentation, considering how data have been derived from constituent cost elements, comparing costs to related data, and exploring the availability of more recent/robust sources.

Using the database it is possible to extrapolate costs and savings that may accrue to the Council and its partner agencies following effective implementation of the integrated homelessness strategy.

Some examples of costs and savings that may accrue to the Council are:

#### Costs:

• ASB (per case)	£648.00
• CAF	£3,218.00
• Child taken into care	£46,389.00
• Homeless application	£2,656.00
• Rough Sleeper	£8,391.00

#### Savings:

• Structured drug treatment	£3,621.00
• Alcohol dependency	£1,962.00
• Parenting programmes	£3,772.00

Examples of costs and savings accruing to partner agencies are:

#### Annual Costs

• Complex eviction	£7,079.00
• 18-24 year old NEET	£4,528.00
• Persistent truancy	£1,832.00
• Exclusion from school	£11,192.00
• Prison	£39,472.00

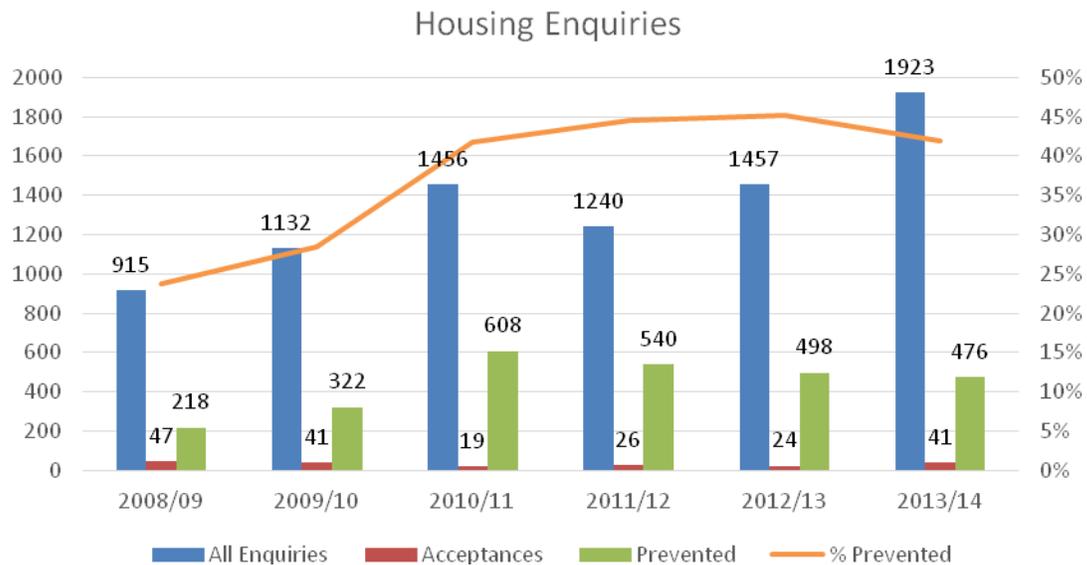
#### Savings:

• JSA claimant enters work	£10,025.00
• ESA claimant enters work	£8,831.00

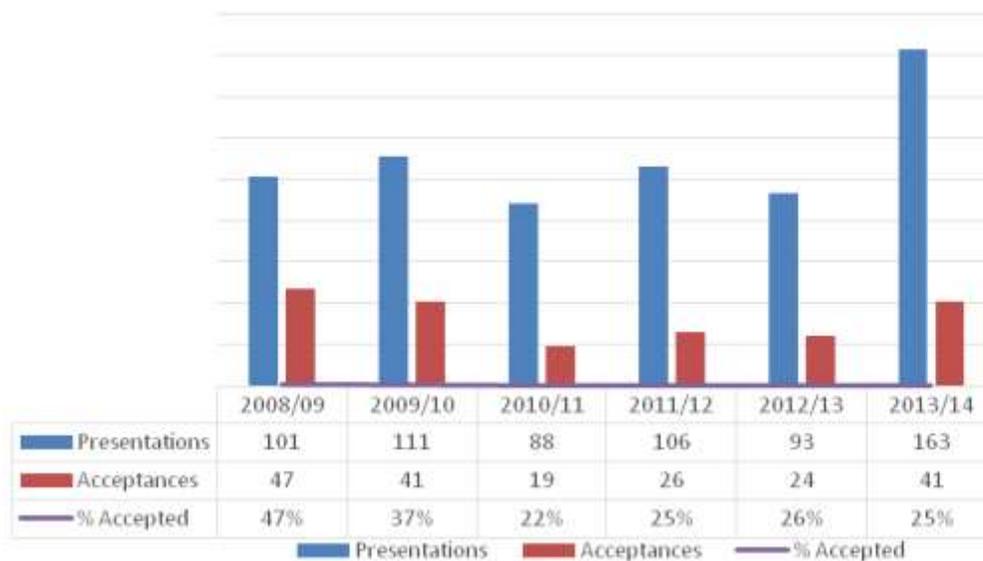
## Appendix 4 Enquiries, Preventions, Presentations and Acceptances

The tables below show performance data for the Housing Needs service over the last five years

**Table 2 Homelessness Enquiries and Preventions 2008 – 2014**



**Table 3 Homelessness Presentations and Acceptances 2008 - 2014**



**Table 4 Homelessness Prevention Casework Summary – Household Remains in Accommodation**

<b>Intervention to allow applicant(s) to remain in their home</b>	<b>Number of Preventions</b>
Mediation using external or internal trained family mediators	1
Conciliation including home visits for family / friend threatened exclusions	1
Financial payments from a homeless prevention fund	22
Debt advice	16
Resolving housing benefit problems	23
Resolving rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sector	12
Sanctuary scheme measures for domestic abuse	1
Negotiation or legal advocacy to ensure that applicant can remain in accommodation	1
Providing other assistance that will enable app. to remain in accommodation	3
Mortgage arrears interventions or mortgage rescue	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>

**Table 4A Homelessness Prevention – Household Assisted to find Alternative Accommodation**

<b>Interventions to provide Alternative Accommodation</b>	<b>Number of Preventions</b>
Hostel Accommodation	13
Private Rented Sector accommodation with landlord incentive scheme	32
Private Rented Sector accommodation without landlord incentive scheme	14
Supported accommodation	115
Social housing - nomination to a Registered Social Landlord	221
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>

**Table 5 Causes of Homelessness 2008 & 2014 – Enquiries and Acceptances**

Stated Reason for Homelessness	2008-09 enquiries	2008-09 Acceptances	2013-14 Enquiries	2013-14 Acceptances
Termination of AST	144	14	244	9
Mortgage difficulties	44	11	51	3
Other reason	488	8	600	5
Friend/Relative no longer able to accommodate	33	5	261	4
Violent breakdown of relationship partner	49	3	122	4
Non-violent breakdown of relationship partner	32	2	96	4
Leaving NASS property	37	2	31	4
Parent no longer willing or able to accommodate	27	1	210	5
Other forms of harassment	6	1	26	0
Violent breakdown of relationship ass' person	7	0	19	1
Rent arrears RSL	5	0	98	1
Rent arrears private rented	20	0	51	1
Racially motivated violence	0	0	1	0
Racially motivated harassment	0	0	0	0
Other forms of violence	2	0	13	0
Leaving prison/remand	1	0	35	0
Leaving hospital	2	0	26	0
Leaving HM Forces	0	0	1	0
Leaving care	15	0	36	0
Emergency (Fire/Flood ETC)	3	0	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>1923</b>	<b>41</b>

**Table 6 Homelessness by Category 2008 & 2014 – Enquiries and Acceptances  
Priority Need Cases**

Priority Need Reasons	2008-09 enquiries	2008-09 Acceptances	2013-14 Enquiries	2013-14 Acceptances
Has dependent children	467	39	548	23
Applicant/household is an expectant mother	38	3	50	1
Physical Disability	7	2	22	5
Emergency	1	1	1	0
Alcohol dependency	4	1	23	0
Fled due to violence or threat of violence	1	1	54	5
16/17 year old	13	0	95	0
Leaving Care	5	0	6	0
Old Age	0	0	22	2
Mental illness or disability	11	0	91	5
Drug dependency	5	0	31	0
Former asylum seeker	4	0	19	0
Served in HM Forces	0	0	0	0
Custody or remand	0	0	28	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>990</b>	<b>41</b>

**Table 7 Young Offenders in Suitable Accommodation**

