

# **Working Together to End Homelessness**

## **Ryedale Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2020-2025**

**Foreword**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to Ryedale District Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2020-2025. The strategy details how the Council will prevent and relieve homelessness and work with partners throughout the district and sub-region to provide the right accommodation and support for those facing homelessness.

### **Definition of homelessness**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Definition of Rough Sleeping**

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

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

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

## Notable Achievements since 2015



- In July 2017 Ryedale District Council was only the 9th local authority of 326 in England to achieve a Gold Standard award. At the time this showed that the local housing options service was in the top 3%, but we are not complacent and always want to improve and develop our services.
- Enhanced partnership working on homelessness between agencies, including police, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), adult services, health, substance misuse services, community, voluntary and faith groups.
- Completed a full restructure of the department
- Successfully bid for funding to prevent rough sleeping in the form of rough sleeper initiative and rapid rehousing pathway and employed 2 additional staff on a 12 month contract, with funding recently extended until March 2021.
- Implemented a new IT system for recording approaches to the service and homeless applications
- Implemented the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requirements, including implementing the new homelessness prevention and relief duties and introducing Personal Housing Plans.
- The Homelessness Prevention support service that was previously provided by Horton Housing, has been integrated into the Housing Team at Ryedale District Council from October 2019, streamlining the service.
- The National Practitioner Support Service Reviewed the Housing Options Service in August 2019, assessing the local authority service at 62%, with significant positive feedback.
- We continue to ensure that Safeguarding of Children and Adults is paramount in all services provided
- The young persons accommodation pathway has continued to provide mediation, homelessness prevention and advice services for 16-25 year olds in partnership with other agencies
- The North Yorkshire Home Choice pathway has been maintained and continues to provide a county wide allocations scheme
- Housing options and the development officer continue to work closely together and with developers and landlords, regarding affordable housing need and the allocation of affordable properties once built
- In July 2017, in partnership with Broadacres an additional House of Multiple occupation was developed, for those aged 18-25 in education, training or employment
- The Housing team continue to manage 4 Houses of Multiple Occupation, providing affordable accommodation options for single people

This strategy builds on the achievements made in the last five years and responds to the changing environment in which homelessness and rough sleeping support services are now delivered. It has been developed in consultation with partners and stakeholders.

The strategy has been written to comply with legal requirements, and with regard to national and sub-regional policy, with input from stakeholders, partners and following Ryedale District Council's review of the service in 2018 and 2019. The latter was undertaken in consultation with:

- Partner agencies across Ryedale
- Front-line staff in our own and all partner services
- Clients using the service
- National Practitioners Support Service (NPSS) who completed a detailed review of our services

The strategy recognises the important role that other partners and stakeholders have to play in harnessing skills and delivering sensitive and tailored solutions to address some of the issues within our community.

The Council has developed the strategy alongside partner agencies and input from the Council's Housing Forum and through focus groups with specific partners. The feedback received from customers accessing the service and frontline staff has also been valuable in developing this document.

This strategy will take into account the significant changes over the past 5 years since the previous strategy was developed.

### **Why do we need a Homelessness Strategy?**

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

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

A homelessness strategy aims to:

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

## **Equality and Diversity**

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

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

The council is committed to equality and diversity issues and will comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on this strategy and can be found at Appendix 1.

## **External Review of Services**

The Council asked the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) to review the housing options service with the purpose of informing this strategy and helping us to produce a continuous improvement plan.

This review was undertaken in August 2019 and the overall score was the highest that had so far been achieved by a local authority.

There were a number of recommendations but the top three are shown below

- Consider refresher training on the Homelessness Reduction Act to ensure that decision making is legally compliant
- Review the way the structure works to bring all officers within the same team
- Exploit the opportunities that are currently available to re-structure the service to make it future proof and fit for purpose for the future

We have already made changes to address all these three recommendations. The full housing options and support team have undertaken refresher training, the team structure has been reviewed to bring all relevant officers into the Housing Team and the service has been restructured.

## **Consultation Undertaken**

- Housing Forum information gathering and feedback
- 3 x focus groups in July and August 2019
- National Practitioner Support Service review of previous Homeless Strategy in October 2018
- National Practitioner Support Service Diagnostic Peer review of Housing Options Service in August 2019
- Leaving questionnaires / feedback from residents at Derwent Lodge and in temporary accommodation
- Focus group with Housing Options and Support Staff
- Snap / Survey monkey questionnaire with wider community

## **2. OUR HOMELESSNESS REVIEW – THE NATIONAL CONTEXT**

In April 2018 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force, changing the way local authorities processed applications and dealt with individuals at risk of homelessness and those already homeless. The main elements include:-

- A duty to provide improved advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness
- Extension of the period 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 days to 56 days
- New duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible people regardless of priority need.
- Assessments and personalised housing plans
- Encouraging public bodies to prevent and relieve homelessness through the Duty to Refer

The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy (August 2018) sets out a commitment to half rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027

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

Reform in the private rented sector including the extension of mandatory licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO's), the development of a rogue landlord register, civil penalties against rogue landlords

Assessments under the Care Act 2014 can be relevant when establishing whether a person is in priority need, determining what type of accommodation is suitable for them and what support may be required by the individual.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to publish a 'local offer' for care leavers up to age 25. This includes services related to health and wellbeing, relationships, education and training, employment, accommodation and participation in society. This is relevant given the fact that care leavers have a higher chance of becoming homeless than other young people. Ryedale has worked alongside North Yorkshire County Council and other local authorities to create a local offer for care leavers.

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

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

### **3. OUR HOMELESSNESS REVIEW – THE SUB-REGIONAL CONTEXT**

There is extensive well-established partnership working in the sub-region relating to housing strategy and Ryedale's strategy links to the wider objectives agreed in the sub-region. The Local Government York, North Yorkshire & East Riding Housing Board meets quarterly and has agreed the sub-regional '[York, North Yorkshire & East Riding Housing Strategy 2015-21](#)'

There are 9 priorities in the strategy, covering all aspects of housing:

- Priority 1 - Work with partners to increase the supply of good quality new housing across all tenures and locations
- Priority 2 - Ensure that our housing stock reflects the needs of urban, rural and coastal communities
- Priority 3 - Ensure that our housing stock meets the diverse needs of our population at all stages of their lives
- Priority 4 - Via policy guidance and negotiation, ensure new homes are of good design and environmental quality, regardless of tenure
- Priority 5 - Continue to make best use of existing stock and ensure it is of a decent quality to meet the needs of our communities
- Priority 6 - Ensure all homes have a positive impact on health and well being and are affordable to run
- Priority 7 - Continue to reduce homelessness
- Priority 8 - Ensure affordable housing is allocated fairly and on the basis of need
- Priority 9 - Provide appropriate housing and support for those with specific needs

#### **North Yorkshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

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

#### **North and North Yorkshire Domestic Abuse Strategy**

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

#### **North Yorkshire Homechoice**

Ryedale District Council is a partner in the North Yorkshire – wide allocation scheme, launched in July 2011, officers are involved in actively reviewing the policy and procedures. The scheme works to ensure that housing resources are allocated to those most in need and has been considered within this strategy.

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

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

## **The Young and Yorkshire 2 Plan**

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

Tackling homelessness, providing support for vulnerable people and carrying out work to provide affordable housing options links to priorities within this plan in particular:

Priority 1: Empower families to be resilient and economically secure

Priority 2: Protect those at risk of harm.

## **Young Peoples Accommodation Partnership**

North Yorkshire County Council funds this partnership. Ryedale and other housing authorities across the county work with Foundation and North Yorkshire County Council to provide youth homelessness services for individuals aged 16-25 working together to ensure young people have one point of contact (in each district or borough), for support to prevent homelessness and access supported accommodation if required. This partnership currently runs until October 2021 and is being reviewed.

## **North Yorkshire Armed Forces Community Covenant**

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

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

In April 2019 a report was published '[Meeting the needs of the Armed Forces Community in North Yorkshire: What does the evidence tell us?](#)' There is a section on housing for veterans and we need to have regard to the recommendations in the report and evidence gathered. We must ensure that we identify veterans when assessing the housing support needs of households and offer them personalised support when accessing our service. The report shows that Ryedale has quite a large number of veterans in the district living in private rented properties but the housing options team seem to work with very few.

## **Refugee resettlement scheme**

In 2017, Ryedale District Council rehoused 4 families (21 individuals) under the Refugee resettlement scheme. These have remained within the district and integrated into society.

#### **4. OUR HOMELESSNESS REVIEW – THE RYEDALE CONTEXT**

The population of Ryedale was estimated to be 54,800 in 2019, with a projected increase to 56,700 over the lifetime of this Strategy (ONS). The previous census data in 2011 showed a population of 51,700, therefore there is a steady rise in local population.

Populations are dispersed across a huge, mostly rural area, with five market towns (Malton, Norton, Pickering, Helmsley and Kirkbymoorside), which in this context constitute “urban” areas. Analysis of homelessness across the District would tend to show that it is Malton and Norton where there is a higher proportion of housing need; however, the dispersal of the population is wide and accessibility to services can prove difficult. The provision of outreach Housing Services is regularly reviewed and this is an area of recognised need.

The average house price in Ryedale in the year ending September 2018 is £225,000, with workplace based earnings averaging £24,131 (ONS). This provides a median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings of 9.32 for our district, compared to 8.11 across North Yorkshire and 5.95 throughout Yorkshire and the Humber.

This shows that people in Ryedale find it more difficult to afford to buy a property than in other parts of the wider region.

#### **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**

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

Key themes which relate to housing include:-

- Housing in Ryedale is becoming less affordable relative to earnings
- There is increasing evidence of a direct association between unaffordable housing and poor mental health, over and above the effects of general financial hardship.
- The ageing population has specific needs
- Pockets of child poverty
- High rates of fuel poverty particularly in the most rural areas

#### **Ryedale District Council Plan**

A new Council Plan is at the time of writing this strategy being drafted and this has highlighted specific corporate priorities, housing being one of them. This needs to take into account findings of the homelessness review. The current corporate priorities are shown below:

#### **Homelessness and Housing are identified within Ryedale District Council’s Corporate Priorities under Sustainable Growth**

- Enabling the provision of housing that meets and anticipates future need
- Minimising homelessness, improving the standard and availability of rented accommodation and supporting people to live independently

#### **Climate change**

Where possible we always consider climate change and finding ways to reduce the carbon foot print of the department.

In April 2018 all case management was moved onto an online system, significantly reducing the need to print off forms. Leaflets are still available for customers, but information is provided electronically where possible. Reducing unnecessary travel is also a consideration when we plan visits throughout the district, attend meetings and training courses and when managing accommodation. Wherever possible we telephone customers and use conference calling for meetings to reduce travelling times and minimise travel, whilst still providing a service for residents who are unable to get to our offices due to disabilities.

## **5. FUNDING PROVISIONS AND SPEND FOR HOUSING OPTIONS**

### **Discretionary Housing Payments**

The Ryedale benefits team hold a budget of additional funding which can be allocated to residents who are in receipt of housing benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit and have specific needs. During the financial year 2018/19 £180,778.32 was spent. During 2019/20 the total allocation was £207,413.00 for Ryedale and £168,129.00 was spent as of 6<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020. This fund can be used to prevent homelessness and enable people to move to more suitable accommodation under certain circumstances.

### **Core homelessness prevention funding**

The following table shows the main MHCLG funding allocations for Ryedale for the current and forthcoming years.

	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>
Prevention Budget	£85,000	£85,000
Flexible Homelessness prevention grant	£40,000	£40,000
Preventing Homelessness grant	£8,275	£0
New Burdens Funding		£21,000

Of the above funding the following allocations were made for 2019/20

- Training - £1,500
- North Yorkshire Home Choice administration and co-ordination - £5,000
- Positive activities - £1,800
- Homelessness Prevention Fund - £19,000
- Ryedale Citizens Advice (money and debt advice) - £12,000
- Ryedale Foodbank - £5,000
- Staffing – £40,000

### **Additional funding bids obtained**

£65,000 was obtained in 2019/20 through bids to the Rapid Rehousing Pathway and Rough Sleeper Initiative for Rough sleepers. This has employed a Pathway Co-ordinator (rough sleeping and mental health) and a Supported Lettings Officer. Continuation funding has been obtained, to develop these roles and initiatives further in 2020/21.

The Housing Support Team (formerly Horton Housing) have successfully assisted customers to apply for £2,468.00 in charity payments over a 4 month period between Oct 2019 and the beginning of Feb 2020 to prevent and relieve homelessness in the district.

### **Demand for Housing Options and Homelessness Advice and Assistance**

In 2018/19 there were 479 approaches for advice or assistance.

So far in 2019/20 there have been 275 approaches in the first 3 quarters. In addition to this between 1<sup>st</sup> October and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019, there were 147 customers accessing the Housing Drop in to access support.

Overall the number of households approaching for general housing advice has not increased over the past 5 years. It has actually reduced.

Year	Number of approaches	Preventions
2018/19	479	30 from cases opened pre April 2018.
2017/18	515	171
2016/17	640	173
2015/16	646	173

Due to the changes to legislation and the way homelessness is recorded, the number applying as homeless has increased as it now includes all households homeless and at risk of homelessness within 56 days.

The number of full duty acceptances has remained low over the past 5 years. From 2017/18 to 2018/9 there was an increase of 5, which although small, demonstrates a 50% increase homeless acceptances.

Under previous homelessness legislation, the figures represent households who were homeless within 28 days. Households not within this time frame may have been dealt with under advice and prevention work carried out.

Year	Homeless Applications	Decisions made	Acceptances
2017/18	35	31	10
2016/17	23	20	9
2015/16	37	36	11

The statistics for 2018/19 represent new applications taken using the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017,

In 2018/19 193 presented who were found to be homeless within 56 days, of these 158 were owed a prevention duty and 35 owed the relief duty.

In the same period 100 successful preventions were recorded and 20 successful reliefs.

21 cases received a full duty decision, with 15 of these receiving a full homeless duty. These figures, include 7 based on applications prior to April 2018 and 2 of these households were accepted.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 quarters of 2019/20 there were 64 households either homeless or at risk of homelessness, with 53 being prevented or relieved during the same period. So far in this period 8 households have been accepted as homeless.

### **Single people**

When we analyse the data about the people who approach Ryedale Council for housing advice we find that most people are single:-

- In 2018/19 61% of the households that were homeless or at risk of homelessness were single people. Of the successful outcomes for all households, 67% were single people, demonstrating a higher than average prevention and relief rate for these households.
- For the first 9 months of 2019/20 60% of the households that were homeless or at risk of homelessness were single people, with 59% successful outcomes.

There were 120 successful outcomes and in almost all of these the household had accommodation available to them for six months or more, whilst in three cases the customer accepted a part 6 accommodation offer, which means that the council secured accommodation as part of their statutory duty.

### **Reasons for approach**

This shows the reason that households have approached the local authority for housing advice, homeless prevention and homelessness over the past 4 years. In 2016/17 there was a significant increase in the number of social housing tenants approaching for assistance with arrears.

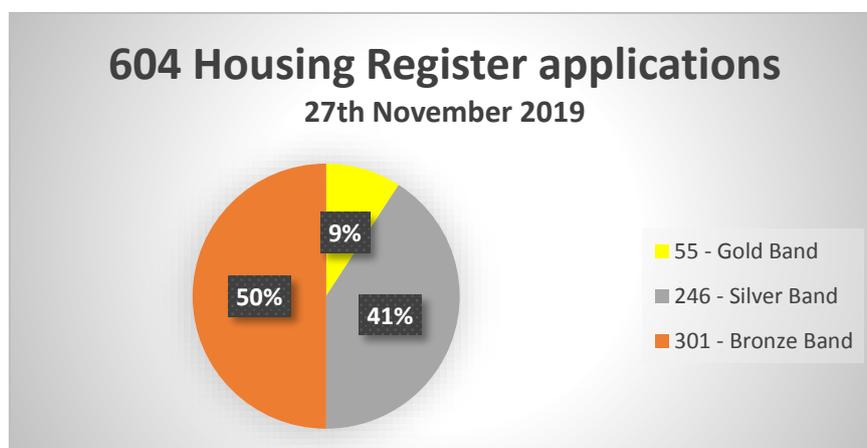
This could be linked to the fact that in June 2016, universal credit was rolled out in Ryedale, but also referral pathways with the registered social landlords were improved around this time therefore, a greater number of referrals came directly from the landlord than previously.

2018/19 was the first year that 'loss of private rental accommodation' has not featured in the top 3 reasons for customers approaching.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Reason for approach</b>	<b>%</b>
2018/19	Relationship breakdown – partner	15.44
	Arrears – RSL	14.70
	Relationship breakdown – parents	9.37
2017/18	Relationship breakdown partner	19.00
	Loss of private rental	10.90
	Arrears – RSL	9.70
2016/17	Arrears – RSL	15.20
	Loss of private rental	12.00
	Relationship breakdown – partner	10.80
2015/16	Relationship breakdown	13.80
	Loss of private rental	12.40
	Relationship breakdown – parents	9.80

## North Yorkshire Home Choice – Demand for Social Housing

The council is part of the shared North Yorkshire Home Choice scheme which has an agreed common allocations policy. The processing team assesses the housing need of households and applicants are placed in one of 3 bands (with an additional band for emergencies).



On the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2019, of the 602 on the Register, over half are currently renting from a council or housing association. 95% of the applicants on the waiting list are UK nationals, with Polish applicants making up 3% and other nationalities much less.. 4 households on the Ryedale waiting list were classed as statutory homeless on 27 November 2019.

### Application by age

16-17	18-24	25-31	32-38	39-45	46-52	53-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80+	Total
1	46	83	77	58	67	77	54	47	34	31	27	602

Since 2014 there has been an increase in the number of applicants who are aged 60+ on the register, and a 20% reduction in those registering who are aged under 60, and there are fewer customers aged 32 and under registering on the system.

### Disability

There has been an increase in the number of applicants declaring a disability over the past 6 years. In 2014, 203 out of the 642 on the list at that time, stated that they had a disability (32%). That increased to 271 of the 602 (45%) on the list in November 2019. There may be an increase in the number of people declaring disabilities, but it is reassuring that the housing register is accessible and those with a variety of disabilities have been able to apply.

Autistic	6	
Does not wish to disclose	16	
Hearing Impairments	7	
Learning Disability	5	
Mental Health	62	22.9%
Mobility	83	30.6%
Other	30	
Progressive Disability / Chronic Illness	56	20.7%
Visual Impairment	6	

## **Initial Findings**

- There has been a reduction in numbers approaching the authority. Since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, there are a greater number of complex cases and more cases that were previously dealt with outside of the legislation now require statutory assessments, as the prevention period has been extended from 28 days to 56 days.
- There has been an increase in the numbers of rough sleepers approaching the Council, this may be partly due to greater awareness in the community and partner agencies and better staff knowledge of the definition of rough sleeping.
- The local food bank has seen a significant increasing in usage over the past 5 years.
- There is a need for improved communication and advertising about housing services to ensure information is available to customers when needed (i.e. available online, promote customer portal)
- There has been a reduction in funding from NYCC including support services i.e. the homelessness prevention service, loss of services e.g. accommodation for ex-offenders, specialised support for the gypsy and traveller community, and loss of family support services such as home start.
- Social housing arrears has been in the top three reasons for approach for the last 3 years, whereas this was not the case previously. This could be linked to the introduction of universal credit, but may be also linked to the increased number of referrals and recent commitment to refer, which encourages social landlords to contact our service if their tenants are in arrears
- Relationship breakdown is also one of main reasons for approach
- The district continues to have a low wage to high house price ratio, above the North Yorkshire and national average
- There are continuing difficulties accessing the private sector ( but the team are working on securing additional houses of multiple occupation, building relationships with landlords and letting agents, helping clients to access the private sector)

## **6. GAPS IN SERVICES**

### **Access to Advice, Assistance and Mediation**

We acknowledge that some households are not aware of our services and become homeless having not approached the council for assistance. Ryedale is a large rural geographical area and it is difficult to provide face-to-face service throughout the whole district. Consultation with partners revealed that some individuals are reluctant to approach the council, or find it difficult to access mainstream services, so we need to improve our marketing and target individuals in hard-to-reach groups to ensure that the service is accessible to all.

We need to review how we work with people who need help communicating, either in other languages or through sign language to ensure that we give the best service we can and refer to specialist support services if appropriate.

We must continue to ensure that people with poor IT skills or no internet access are still able to obtain advice and access our services.

### **Tenancy Sustainment, Resettlement and Floating Support**

We identified a gap in support for single people with complex needs who found it difficult to move on from supported accommodation into mainstream accommodation, as landlords were reluctant to take them on without a support package.

From September 2019 we have received funding from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to provide a support worker but this may become a gap again should the post come to an end when this round of funding ceases in March 2021.

We are developing more units of independent accommodation in Norton and will need a staffing resource to support the individuals who take on tenancies in the 7 flats when they are completed.

### **Pre-Tenancy Training**

We identified a need to offer pre-tenancy training. We have obtained funding from MHCLG to run a weekly pre-tenancy training session for clients who have previously failed in tenancies or who have been identified as having not previously held a tenancy. This activity is currently funded from April 2020 until March 2021.

### **Support for New Tenancies**

There is limited support available locally for people taking on new tenancies; however, we have funding from MHCLG until March 2021 to employ a Supported Lettings Officer or Tenancy Sustainment Officer.

### **Emergency Accommodation for Rough Sleepers**

There is no night shelter in the area and B&B is often the only emergency option for single homeless people.

### **Refuge**

There is no refuge locally for households fleeing domestic abuse.

### **Access to Specialist Services**

Households in Ryedale often find it difficult to get specialist support in the district and have to travel to York or Scarborough to access services and keep appointments with probation, drug and alcohol services for example.

### **Ongoing support for people with mental health problems**

Provision is often time-limited and dependent on people engaging fully with the service so people who disengage are more likely to lose their tenancies if their health worsens. There is no specialist accommodation with ongoing specialist mental health support in the district; however we are currently developing a rough sleeper (mental health) pathway.

### **Lack of support for people who have mental health problems and misuse substances (dual diagnosis)**

It is very difficult to find appropriate support for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness who have dual diagnosis, as the local services are provided separately.

### **Lack of temporary accommodation for households with disabilities**

4 of our temporary accommodation flats are located on the ground floor, with level access. These are not fully adapted for those with significant mobility needs, such as walk in showers. We recognise that there is an increasing need for this and currently work with our partners to identify suitable temporary accommodation if required.

## **Lack of Shared Accommodation**

There is a lack of shared accommodation in Pickering, Kirkbymoorside and Helmsley

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## 7. OUR VISION

“Homelessness is everyone’s business. Across our partnerships we will strive towards ending homelessness and rough sleeping once and for all”

### OBJECTIVE 1 - Prevent and relieve homelessness

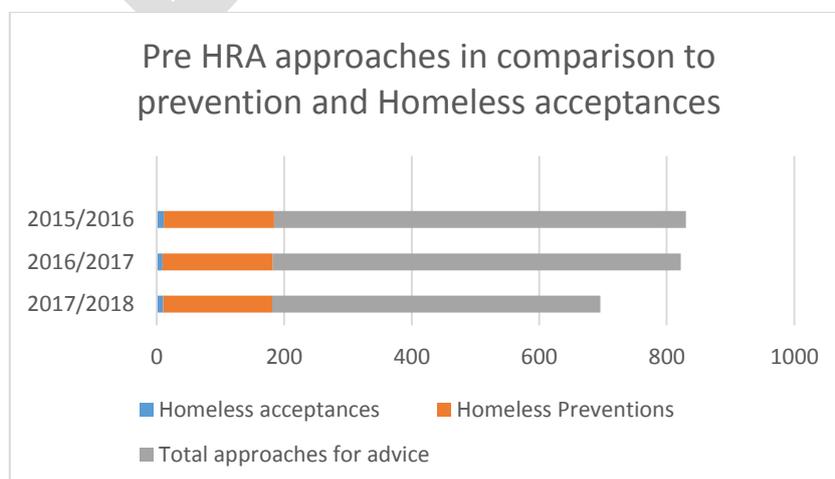
We want to provide the best service that we can for all of our customers – we will review our casework on a regular basis, ensure our staff are well-trained and consider ways to improve the customer journey. We will try to ensure that customers have one key worker throughout their customer journey, so that they do not have to repeat themselves telling their circumstances multiple times to different people. We will gather feedback from customers to inform our future service planning.

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

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

As there is now a statutory responsibility to prevent homelessness, there has been a significant increase in the level of assessment and administration to process applications. The table below demonstrates the level of pre homelessness work that was carried out prior to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 coming into force and the number of Homeless Preventions in comparison to Homeless acceptances.

It also shows that prior to the enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 we assisted the vast majority of households approaching the Housing Options service by preventing their homelessness and only a small minority were helped under the statutory homelessness legislation through the homeless route.



Over the period of the last strategy (2015 to 2020), there were 4 common reasons why people approached the Local Authority for assistance, therefore, we will concentrate on investing in initiatives relating to these in order to continue to reduce homelessness.

#### Parents/relatives no longer willing to accommodate

This still continues to be a main reason for homelessness in Ryedale; however, the young people's partnership is having a real effect on the number of younger people potentially having to leave the family home, through providing mediation and other interventions. Households are staying together much longer than they used to with different generations sharing accommodation. It is difficult for people to leave home at an early age to form new households; it is up to the Council to assist by providing a real affordable alternative for our clients.

#### Relationship breakdown remains an issue in Ryedale.

We work hard to try to enable families with children to remain in the family home, whether or not the relationship breakdown is due to domestic abuse. Where domestic abuse is the problem, there are further interventions and support in place to ensure the safe retention of the home. Independent Domestic Abuse Services and Making Safe schemes have proven to be very successful as prevention tools, we work closely with specialist support agencies and other partners to keep victims of domestic abuse as safe as possible.

When relationships breakdown there is a consequential need for additional accommodation, for this reason figures for single people approaching the service at risk of becoming homeless have continued to increase.

#### Loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancy

The housing team work closely with landlords to try and minimise the number of households who lose private rented tenancies; however, with the housing market recovering many single property landlords are now looking to sell their properties.

The Council supports landlords through providing information at annual landlord forums, through our webpage and whenever we receive individual requests, to make letting properties as easy as possible and encourage an increase across Ryedale. All Housing Options staff are fully trained in Landlord and Tenant Law to ensure support and good legal advice is given to both the tenants and the landlords.

#### Loss of Social Housing due to rent arrears

This reason for approach has increased within the past 3 years. Ryedale works very closely with the social housing providers especially with Yorkshire Housing, the local stock transfer landlord, to encourage the early referral of tenants who are facing homelessness through rent arrears. All social landlords in Ryedale have signed up to the Commitment to refer, encouraging greater joint working to prevent homelessness. This referral system is successful, with few households actually losing accommodation as a result of rent arrears.

#### Prevention Tools available to prevent and relieve homelessness

- Repossession loan fund and Breathing Space for home owners
- Work to delay or stop repossession of mortgaged properties before court action takes place
- Housing Support service
- Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator
- Supported Lettings Officer

- Housing Support to assist people to sustain their accommodation and prevent them from becoming homeless again
- Housing Options Toolkit (Rent arrears payments, Bond guarantee, bond payments, Rent in Advance)
- North Yorkshire Local assistance fund
- Work with Charities to obtain grants to prevent homelessness for a variety of reasons
- Community Safety partnership
- Negotiations and engagement with landlords for tenants to remain in current accommodation
- Referrals to specialist support services
- Mediation with family and parents so young people can return home.
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Holistic Personal Housing Plan for every household homeless or at risk
- Duty to refer for statutory agencies
- Commitment to refer by social landlords
- Credit Union
- Ryedale Letting Scheme
- Houses of Multiple Occupation
- Lenders notifications
- Charity applications for customer
- Environmental Health to resolve disrepair issues
- Disabled Facilities Grants
- Ryecare lifeline
- Safeguarding
- Community Safety – Housing staff work closely with police and the Community team

In Ryedale we focus on assisting households to maintain their existing accommodation and prevent homelessness wherever possible by early intervention. In order to do this, early identification that a household is at risk of homelessness is key, so that we can take action to support them, maximise their income if required, and negotiate with the landlord rather than assisting them to look for alternative accommodation. Social housing is limited and should not be the default housing option. Many households may also prefer the freedom of private rental as they have more choice about which area they would like to live in and they can quickly move if they wish to, for work or personal reasons. There are also options for sharing accommodation in the private sector, which meets the needs of young people or people on a low income who would struggle to sustain an independent flat or house on their own.

We will focus many of our initiatives, including the housing support service on activities to prevent the main causes of homelessness, having the staff in-house will enable a more flexible approach so that those in most need will be prioritised. Prior to integrating within the housing team, the

#### *CASE STUDY*

*Anne fell into rent arrears at her privately rented property as her ex-partner had not disclosed that he failed to pay the rent. Anne only became aware of the issues when notice was served at the property. During the housing assessment Anne divulged that her ex-partner was controlling and aggressive and she felt unable to confront him. Negotiations started with the landlord and the Housing Support team successfully applied for charity payments to clear the rent arrears. An assisted payment arrangement was put in place so all future payments were to be paid direct to landlord. The Housing Support team assisted with budgeting and maximised Anne's benefits. The landlord agreed to retract the notice and Anne and her children remained in the family home. A referral was made for support from the local domestic abuse survival charity, Anne welcomed the provision and her confidence soared. Housing Support continue to engage with Anne to avoid further issues occurring.*

housing support service has been successful in obtaining charity funding for customers to help clear arrears or debts, purchase essential household items and also to assist with daily living costs.

### **Actions**

We will review our protocols and pathways to ensure that we are working in the most efficient way to prevent homelessness. This will include:

1. Work with landlords and estate agents in the district to encourage people to approach our service early
2. Continue to review and improve prevention tools to enable customers to sustain and remain in their current accommodation.
3. Work with registered social housing providers to address the high number of approaches for rent arrears.
4. Increase access to specialist services for customers

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**OBJECTIVE 2 – Work with partners to enable sufficient and appropriate accommodation is and will be available for those in housing need and for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness**

Ryedale has a buoyant private rented sector and it can be difficult for people who are on a low income or disadvantaged to access private rented housing, we will continue to work with private landlords and estate agents and will look to develop improved ways to assist households who are at risk of homelessness to access the private rented sector.

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

**Affordable Housing Development**

The Council’s development programme outlines the required development of both affordable and market housing. Ryedale District Council is proactive in working to enable affordable housing development across the district and the figures below document the level of success achieved in this area. The Ryedale Housing Strategy outlines how the development programme will be achieved. There is an annual target of 75 properties and we need to work to ensure this met, it has only been achieved once in the last 5 years.

*In 2019/20 we expect to exceed our target of affordable housing again, partly due to a brand new development in Malton. The scheme consists of 56 affordable houses with a choice of rented or shared ownership tenures. The properties include a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bedrooomed houses and 2 bedrooomed bungalows. We are working hard with the landlord to ensure that these properties all go to local people with a housing need.*

**Affordable Housing Completions**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of completions</b>
2018/19	100
2017/18	40
2016/17	52
2015/16	30
2014/15	67

**Empty Properties**

Ryedale Council’s Empty Property Strategy has a target to bring 5 empty properties back into use on an annual basis. The Council looks to direct resources where appropriate to try and bring such housing stock back into use and ensure it is available to those in housing need or at risk of homelessness. This is done through the provision of Landlords’ Improvement Grants and Loans, for empty properties and Houses in Multiple Occupation. The North Yorkshire Empty Property Strategy ends in 2021, Ryedale will be active in ensuring that this is reviewed during the next 12 months. An additional staffing resource will be in place in 2020 on a permanent basis to ensure that this target is met.

**Council Loans and Grants**

The existing private sector housing stock makes an important contribution to the provision of affordable housing, so it is essential to maintain this supply. The Council recognises that the elderly, vulnerable and those on fixed or low incomes will require assistance to maintain their properties in a good state of repair and improvement, and therefore the available financial resources will be directed so as to assist this particular client group within the terms of the Private Sector Renewal Strategy. Currently the incentives below are available:

- Property Improvement Loans
- Landlords Improvement Grants
- Landlords Improvement Loans

### Low Cost Home Ownership

Shared Ownership and Discount for Sale properties are provided on most Affordable Housing developments to provide those on a lower income with the opportunity to purchase a property. There are also government initiatives, such as the [Help to buy equity loan and Help to buy ISA](#).

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

### Affordable Rent

On the recent large scale developments in Ryedale, properties designated for 'Affordable Rent' have been delivered, as an alternative to the provision of social housing. The cost of these properties are 80% of the market rent.

### Council Managed Rented Housing

Ryedale District Council manages four Houses of Multiple Occupation providing 13 units of affordable shared accommodation. These properties, for single people were developed to address the increasing need in the district for accommodation for single working people on a low income, those seeking work, young people in education, training and employment.

### Supported Accommodation

In all supported accommodation schemes, residents are allocated a support worker and a support plan is created to address the areas where support is required.

Derwent Lodge is owned and managed by the Council and provides 14 en-suite bedrooms for those with support needs. The aim is to accommodate individuals in the medium term and provide them with support and enable them to develop their skills to manage an independent tenancy in the future. 7 of the rooms are available for people between the ages of 16 and 25 who are deemed to have high support needs and 7 rooms are for those with low to medium level needs aged 26 and over.

Ryedale YMCA provides supported resettlement accommodation to 7 young people aged 16-25, through the young persons' pathway and 7 bedsits for 16-35 year olds who require low level support.

The Cornmill in Malton was taken over by Impact Living who re-opened it in 2018. This provides accommodation for 34 households, in self contained flats. There is a mixture of unsupported tenancies, and households with medium needs and high level intensive support in the project. A local lettings arrangement is in place to prioritise local people when properties become vacant.

### Social Housing

We will continue to work with our partner registered providers through North Yorkshire Homechoice to ensure that the best use is made of social housing stock, and any new providers let accommodation fairly according to the joint allocations policy.

## Extra Care and Older Persons' Supported Housing

The provision of extra-care house has increased significantly in the district.

There have been 85 affordable, extra care properties built within the last 3 years over two sites at Micklehill, Pickering and Bransdale View, Helmsley, with 37 properties offered for rent and 48 shared ownership. Previously there was only Deansfield Court in Norton providing extra care affordable housing, within the district. The housing options team have been involved in the allocations process at these new developments.

## Temporary Accommodation

We will continue to work with Yorkshire Housing and other providers to ensure that we have access to temporary accommodation for families who are homeless and minimise the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. This requirement will be reviewed annually to determine further requirements for the next year. We will continue to work with North Yorkshire County Council and Safe and Sound Homes (SASH) to provide options for young people.

## Households with complex needs

We will work with specialist agencies to find suitable accommodation and support for people with complex needs. Individual packages of support and financial incentives can be tailored for the customer's specific needs. This is known as a Housing First model, where accommodation is sourced and the package developed around the household.

## Private Rental Sector

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

In some areas of Ryedale, such as the North West of the district it is unaffordable for those in receipt of benefits to rent in the private sector because the rents are much higher than the allowance provided to pay for it; however Malton, Norton and surrounding villages, benefit from a higher benefit allowance falling into the York Local Housing Allowance area, so can be more affordable for people claiming a housing related benefit.

Annually we hold a landlords forum to ensure that local landlords are aware of changes to legislation and policy and are aware of services that can be offered to them and their tenants. This helps to prevent homelessness through increasing landlords' awareness of support services and how to obtain advice if they need it for tenants with support needs or if they should fall into arrears. It also increases contact with landlords who may consider working with the authority to house customers who are at risk of homelessness or homeless in the future.

## Gypsy and Traveller site

Local authorities have the power to provide Gypsy and Traveller sites and government guidance advises that local planning authorities should ensure that sites are sustainable economically, socially and environmentally. The Council is also required to include policies

to address the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in their local development documents. We are also required to assess the need for accommodation of Gypsies and Travellers when undertaking a review of housing needs in the district.

Ryedale District Council owns a caravan site in Malton, with 19 pitches for Gypsies and travellers. In September 2019, the management of the site returned to Housing Services at the Council. Residents are also provided with support to enable them to comply with the site rules, as and when required.

### Specialist Accommodation

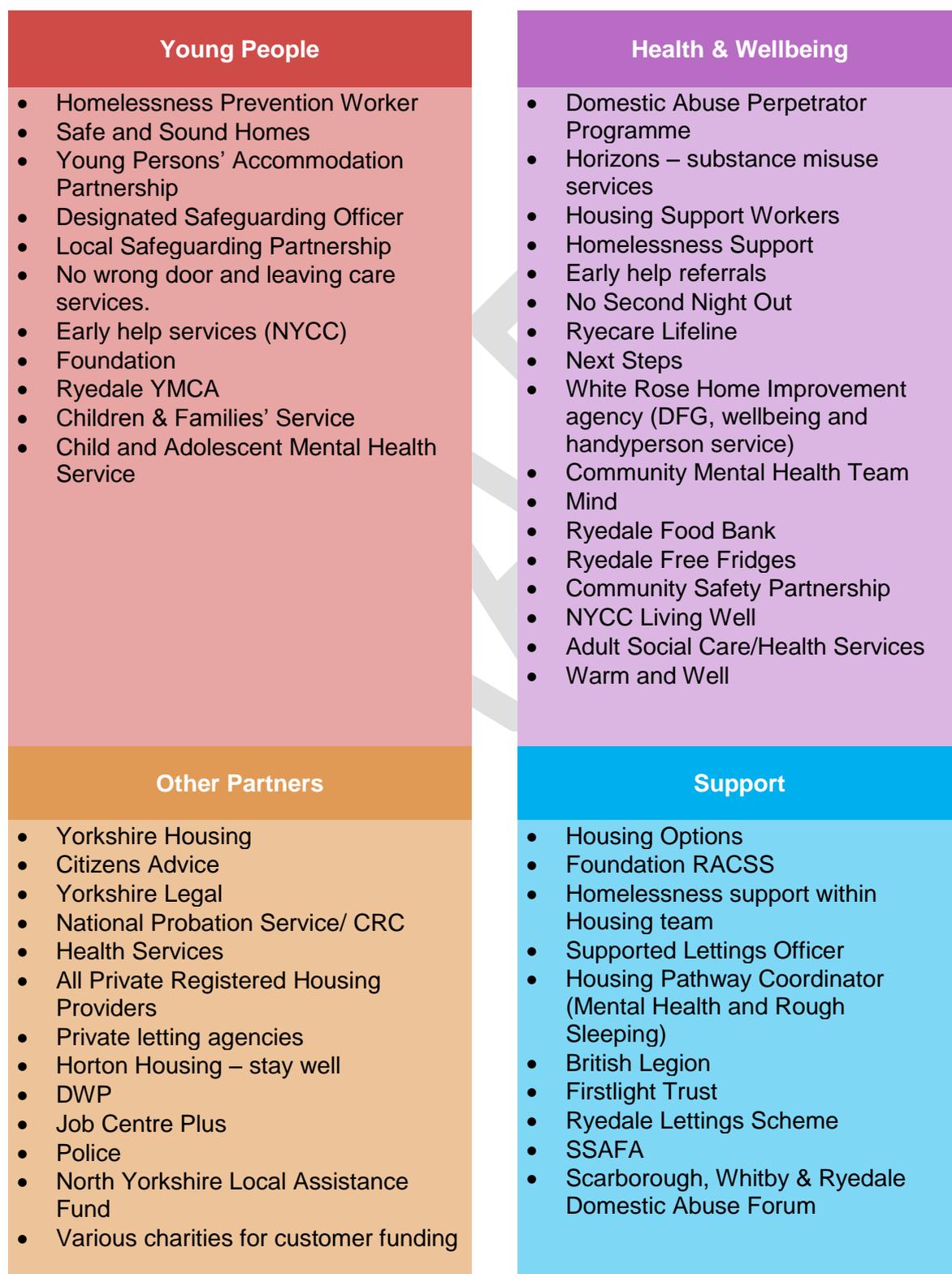
Other than the generic or young person's supported accommodation, there is not currently the provision of specialist accommodation in Ryedale for those experiencing domestic abuse, young mothers and babes, offenders or those with mental health support needs. Provision of this type of accommodation is commissioned by North Yorkshire County Council and other providers, so Ryedale District Council will continue to work with the commissioner to ensure that the needs of Ryedale residents are identified.

### Actions

1. To increase the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation that the Council have access to for customers
2. To develop and increase access to move on accommodation from supported accommodation
3. To annually review the temporary accommodation availability and requirements
4. To improve relationships with private landlords and develop an improved landlord offer to encourage acceptance of our clients into the private sector
5. To promote and facilitate access to low cost home ownership and affordable rent, housing options

### **OBJECTIVE 3 – Maximise partnerships and improve access to support services**

Partnerships and inter-agency working within Ryedale is vital to the prevention of homelessness and ensuring the appropriate support is available for those who are homeless, to prevent them from becoming homeless again in the future. This is a mapping exercise of some of the main agencies and services that work alongside Ryedale District Council to prevent homelessness. Many provide holistic support, so although their focus may be on one area, they will support in much more.



Ryedale District Council Housing Services currently provide £5000 annually to the Ryedale Food bank to support them in the delivery of their voluntary services to provide food for households who are in need. Between November 2018 and October 2019, they redeemed 802 food vouchers for households, ranging from single people to families. The use of this service has been increasing and there is also a free fridge in Malton and Norton and will soon be one opening in Pickering, which assists those who are struggling financially but aims to reduce food waste.

The money advice service provided in Malton by Citizens' Advice also receives an annual grant of £12,000. This is to provide money advice to those who are facing homelessness, providing them with specialist independent advice and help to access money and debt advice and to assist them to resolve these issues.

Citizens' Advice also currently provide a Help to Claim service to support people in the early stages of claiming Universal Credit through to their first payment being received.

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

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

For each of the categories of need above, tailored advice has been developed and is accessible via the website or can be obtained from the housing team. This advice lays out not only information we can provide about housing options, but wider support that is available from specialist agencies and services. We continue to develop contacts and referral pathways to specialist support providers for the specified vulnerable groups and will add to the list above where local need requires.

During the consultation process with staff and partner agencies, there were some clear concerns raised about gaps in the services available locally. This included drug and alcohol services within the district for chaotic individuals. In addition, it was identified that there is a gap locally and those consulted would like work to be carried out on the provision of accessible local employment and training opportunities, especially following the loss of specific services for 16-25 year olds that were previously provided within supported accommodation.

We will work with partner agencies to ensure that the advice that we provide is up-to-date and relevant to local people who are looking for information or facing homelessness in the district whether given face-to-face, on our website or in leaflet form. We will make sure that people are given realistic information about their local housing options.

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

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced a new duty on certain statutory authorities to refer anyone who is known to be homeless to the housing authority (with consent) and we will carry out work with partners to ensure that this is effective and that statutory agencies are aware of their responsibilities. We will also work with other agencies who are not subject to the statutory duty to encourage early referrals. Since the Duty to Refer was introduced there has been a significant increase in referrals from the DWP and from the prison service. This has ensured that we begin working with households at an earlier stage, with greater chance of resolving their housing situation before they lose their current property.

We identify that there will be continued work needed to engage with other referring agencies, which will include further training and awareness raising.

Housing Staff are trained in safeguarding and are aware of how to raise alerts should they have a concern. There is a strong awareness of safeguarding in the department as the Housing Manager is also the Designated Safeguarding Officer and Safeguarding Concerns Manager for the council. There is strong partnership working with community safety partners, and this enables timely and appropriate referrals for vulnerable individuals who need specialist support.

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

#### CASE STUDY

*Gary was brought to the attention of the housing team through the fortnightly multi-agency community safety meeting. There had been a vast amount of emergency service presence at the block of flats Gary was living in. Calls had been made to the RSPCA regarding Gary's dog not having the correct amount of exercise. A home visit was conducted with the housing officer and local police community officer. Gary had previously served in the armed forces but had not discussed his experiences with any agencies. A referral was made to the Firstlight Trust who provide support for veterans. Gary attended counselling facilitated by Firstlight and was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Gary stated that the noises in the communal area where he was living reminded him of traumatic events experienced in the armed forces. With assistance from Housing Services and Firstlight Trust, Gary moved to a rural service village with a large garden for his dog. Gary continues to engage with support services and has become a mentor for other veterans.*

#### **Actions**

1. Review our housing pathway and referral protocols (offender, hospital discharge, drugs and alcohol services, mental health, drug and alcohol services)
2. Increase numbers of referrals sent through Duty to Refer from statutory and non-statutory agencies, to increase early intervention to prevent homelessness
3. Maintain and develop relationships with organisations providing support to specific groups to prevent and relieve homelessness and improve referrals and signposting
4. Work with agencies, funders and commissioners to increase drugs and alcohol services within the Ryedale area.
5. In partnership with DWP and partner agencies increase employment and training opportunities for young people
6. Review money advice, income maximisation, financial support and basic living provision available to residents and look at future funding provision from the council and external sources

#### **OBJECTIVE 4 – Raise awareness of homelessness and housing issues across the district, improving access to the services**

Unless the public and partners are aware of the services that are provided for those facing homelessness and the information is easily accessible, we will struggle to make further improvements in the way services are delivered and households will not come for help early enough to access help.

We want to raise awareness in the Council, in the local community and with local agencies so that people approach us as early as possible for advice to prevent their homelessness and they also know where else to go directly for specific advice or support. Consultation identified that some members of the public and partners were not aware of many of the tools that we had available to assist people in housing need, such as discretionary housing payments, bond schemes, support services and other prevention options. We need to ensure that we accurately record the work we do with households who approach our service before they are officially classed as threatened with homelessness as this is not captured on our IT system.

We will review our Communication and Marketing Plan and work with new Communications Team in order to implement it effectively. We will ensure we continue to attend multi-agency meetings and take part in consultations locally in order to keep housing and homelessness high on the agenda and improve joined up working.

Consultation is completed with customers on an 'ad hoc' basis currently. It is always completed for those leaving supported accommodation. Feedback has been largely positive, but we will work to improve consultation with customers, partner agencies and the wider community in order to ensure that we are fully aware of issues affecting homelessness in the district and the demand for our services.

Ryedale is a very large geographical area and transport links are poor and transport can be expensive. We acknowledge that some people find it difficult to access our services which are mostly based at Ryedale House in Malton. We currently provide a drop-in service in Pickering and will attend other agencies to give advice. We will work flexibly providing home visits to people with specific needs if necessary or give advice by the telephone encouraging the use of our customer portal to gather evidence where possible. We will review our service provision and, if there is a need, increase the number of drop-in sessions in outlying parts of the district so that people can access housing support. We will explore joint working opportunities in order to provide housing and homelessness advice where and when it is needed.

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

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

There is regular training arranged and delivered to inform and update agencies and partners on changes to legislation, services and to improve working practices. The quarterly Housing Forum provides information to over 30 organisations and this is the main forum for information sharing around housing and homelessness in the district. This information sharing needs to be increased, for example a newsletter that Ryedale District Council and wider agencies can feed into, that will then be available online and sent out to agencies, so information can be shared regularly with a wider audience.

## **Actions**

1. Advertise the service on all platforms to inform agencies and the public about the services
2. Improve information available online so customers and partners are able to self-help and access information 24/7
3. Increase the use of technology where possible and explore how and where advice is provided
4. Implement a robust customer feedback and analysis system to continue to develop the service
5. Review the communication and marketing plan
6. Extend housing advice drop-in services throughout the district to cover the rurality of the area
7. Enable customers with additional needs to access our services
8. Improve engagement with sections of the community who do not currently use our services by working with local employers, LGBTQ and veteran communities.

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## **OBJECTIVE 5 – Continue to work strategically to maintain services and seek new opportunities for funding and partnership working**

We will raise awareness with decision makers and budget holders of the issues surrounding demand on service provision locally to safeguard services and funding. We will ensure that elected members and senior management are regularly updated about the work of the team and work with the communication team to ensure that we portray a realistic image of homelessness issues in the district.

We continue to actively seek opportunities to bid for additional funding from MHCLG and other funding streams. We will build on our relationships with neighbouring authorities and partner agencies to facilitate further funding opportunities. We will concentrate in particular on seeking opportunities to work more closely with public health and North Yorkshire County Council Commissioners, with an interest in mental health as we have identified that many people facing homelessness in the district have mental health needs, some of whom do not engaging well with existing services.

We will continue to attend networking opportunities across the county and region in order to build our networks and find out about partnering opportunities.

Our new in-house housing support service will continue to access charity funding to support individuals to resolve their homelessness and tackle debt issues.

We will ensure that our services represent value for money by monitoring the cost of temporary accommodation and minimising void periods in the accommodation that we manage.

### **Externally Funded Services**

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

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

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

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

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

These services include:

- the Housing Homeless Prevention and Support Service, which was previously provided by Horton Housing in Ryedale but is currently provided by Ryedale District Council,
- the Young Persons Pathway
- Housing Support Service for people with mental health needs – currently provided by Horton Housing
- Support for victims of domestic violence (provided by IDAS)
- Offenders housing related support service (provided by Foundation)

The provision of these services is a legacy of what was the Supporting People grant funding programme. NYCC were provided with a ring-fenced grant to pay for housing related support for homeless and vulnerable people. NYCC were the administering authority for the Supporting People grant and the Ryedale District Council (along with the Primary Care Trust and Probation) were on the Commissioning Body. The ring fence for this grant was removed some years ago and the Commissioning Body was disbanded.

It is understood that NYCC face significant budgetary pressures. Across the whole of the county health and adult services provide services to 8,500 vulnerable adults spending £227m in 2018. Demand for services is increasing as the number of households with someone over the age of 85 is set to increase by 155% by 2039. On average it costs £31,500 for each older adult in residential care and £26,000 for a younger adult with learning disabilities in the community. Despite being protected, the pressures of austerity are such that savings have to be made even in this priority area. £11m has been saved over the past two years and there are plans for a further £7.5m of savings over the next three years. Difficult decisions are therefore being made regarding services that are not the County Council's prime responsibility in order that the statutory duties to the most vulnerable can be met.

There is significant concern that funding pressures across the county council will have an impact in relation to services to reduce homelessness; of particular concern is the Young Persons' Pathway and the recent reduction of support services to those in the community. These services form core elements of the local homelessness strategy.

Whilst a new contract is in place to ensure the continuation of the Homeless Prevention and Support contract there is currently (Feb 2020) no certainty over the future of the Young Persons' Pathway.

The Gypsy and Traveller support service ended in 2018 and funding reductions are already planned for certain groups including offenders and some services have already been decommissioned; in addition changes to the way that other services are being commissioned because of the ending of the Supporting People Programme have meant that the District Council has lost a degree of input and control over what these services do.

## **Actions**

1. Work with Commissioners and providers to improve the availability of Drug and Alcohol services within Ryedale
2. Work with NYCC in reviewing services that deliver specific young peoples' accommodation and support services within Ryedale
3. Work with partners to provide and increase access to domestic abuse refuge accommodation within North Yorkshire
4. Ensure that housing support services within the Council are maintained and meet

targets

5. Work with NYCC commissioners and successful contractors, in partnership, on the provision of mental health accommodation and offender support services in Ryedale
6. Improve links with probation services

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## **OBJECTIVE 6 - End Rough Sleeping**

### Why is this important?

Rough Sleepers are some of the most vulnerable people in society. They may have complex support needs which can be worsened by having no settled suitable accommodation.

The Government have pledged to half rough sleeping by 2022 and end rough sleeping nationally by 2027, as outlined in the [Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy](#).

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

### What is the demand?

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

Through the multi-agency work undertaken by the community safety partnership, the council undertakes regular mapping of all known rough sleepers in the district. The last formal rough sleeper count was undertaken in November 2019 and 1 rough sleeper was identified. A previous count undertaken in November 2018 identified 2 rough sleepers.

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

The housing options team have found that rough sleeping in the district is often hidden as people tend to sleep in their vehicles or in outbuildings or tents in isolated locations rather than in obvious locations on town streets, this leads to the perception that there are no rough sleepers in Ryedale; however between July 2019 and January 2020 we identified 30 individuals who were at risk of rough sleeping or had actually slept rough in Ryedale and worked with them to resolve their homelessness.

### What services do we have?

The Council has an on-going commitment to keep levels of rough sleeping as low as possible.

The Council is a key partner within a local multi-agency partnership that forms a Safer Ryedale. The local neighbourhood policing team in Ryedale works closely with the community team and officers from Housing Services who attend strategic meetings and confidential multi-agency meetings. Strategic partnership meetings include the following partners:

- North Yorkshire Police
- Ryedale District Council
- North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue
- Registered Providers of social housing
- North Yorkshire County Council Adult Social Care
- Community Mental Health Services
- Supported Housing Providers

- IDAS (independent domestic abuse services)

We do not have a direct access hostel in our area and all reports of rough sleeping are dealt with by the Housing Options Team.

### What are the big issues going forward?

The Government have committed to end rough sleeping nationally by 2027.

Without additional intervention at the local level we estimate that rough sleeping levels are likely to increase going forward in line with the national trends.

We recognise that more needs to be done to both stem the rate of increase in numbers of people sleeping rough and reduce rough sleeping overall. To monitor progress against this we have set ourselves ambitious targets over the lifetime of the strategy to reduce rough sleeping on an on-going annual basis.

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

The council needs to strengthen partnership arrangements to tackle rough sleeping in a joined up way, and ensure that the different agencies are working towards a common goal.

We have identified during consultation that the general public in Ryedale are not aware of how the council can help rough sleepers and who to contact if they come across someone who is sleeping rough.

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

These are:

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

All rough sleepers, regardless of 'priority need' will be provided with some form of service within the District and will not be turned away.

They will be referred to a relevant agency for some form of help. This approach acknowledges that various agencies have a different role to play but will work in partnership to tackle this problem.

We will engage with all relevant agencies in the district and particularly concentrate on improving links with mental health and drug and alcohol services. We currently have additional funding from central government for the period July 2019 to March 2021 through the Rough Sleeper Initiative and are able to employ a full time staff member as Housing Pathway Coordinator (Mental Health and Rough Sleeping) to carry out this work.

We are also currently in receipt of additional funding from central government under the Rapid Rehousing Pathway and are able to employ a full-time worker as Supported Lettings Officer for the 12 month period from September 2019 until August 2020. This member of staff is principally working to support individuals who have been, or are at risk of rough sleeping to assist them into new tenancies and to help them to maintain their tenancies whether they are in the private sector, social housing or supported accommodation. This staff member is able to provide an enhanced level of support

#### *CASE STUDY*

*It was reported that a man had been sleeping rough at a church yard, the outreach team were able to quickly locate him and offer assistance, it was discovered that Richard had been sofa surfing following a relationship breakdown and his friends were no longer able to accommodate him. Richard stated that he thought because he was a single man he would not receive any help from the council. It was established that Richard was suffering with anxiety and depression and felt unable to manage a tenancy without support. Richard was offered a place in supported accommodation, where he was supported to make a claim for benefits and address debts that he had accumulated with his ex-partner. He has now been accepted onto the social housing register and is receiving counselling. Richard is seeking employment and volunteering at a local community café.*

and we hope that there will be fewer failed tenancies as a result of this support being available, and landlords will have greater confidence when taking on people who have been homeless. This staff member is also able to support individuals who are moving on from our supported accommodation in Derwent Lodge and are not able to manage a tenancy without some level of support in the future.

#### **Actions**

1. Refresh and implement a 'single service offer' based on the no second night out principles.
2. Develop and embed a rough sleeping pathway across the district
3. Continue to deliver tenancy sustainment work to prevent rough sleeping
4. Increase knowledge across the district with both partners and the general population of how to seek help for a rough sleeper
5. Create a rough sleeping personalised intervention fund
6. Create an emergency bed space for Rough Sleepers

## **7. DELIVERING AND MONITORING THIS STRATEGY**

It is recognised that delivering the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy is the responsibility of many organisations working together in partnership and not just the Council.

### **Ryedale Housing Strategy Steering Group**

The aim of the Steering Group is to ensure that this work is co-ordinated in an effective way with all partners influencing and contributing to a coherent agreed strategy. Once the strategy has been out to consultation and updated a more detailed action plan with specific targets and timescales will be developed.

The Ryedale Housing Strategy Steering Group will monitor the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action plan on a regular basis and the group will drive forward delivery and progress in meeting the objectives set out in the strategy. The action plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that any new changes in legislation and policies are reflected within the strategy.

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

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Further information is available at <https://www.ryedale.gov.uk/homelessness>

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