

Working Together to End Homelessness

Ryedale Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020- 2025

Summary document of the strategy

Foreword

Our new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 sets out the Council's plan to prevent homelessness and reduce rough sleeping throughout the district over the next five years. This document contains key facts relating to homelessness and rough sleeping in our district; levels of demand, key trends and how effective our previous strategy was in reducing homelessness across the district. Our Housing Options Team are proud to have achieved Gold Standard status and we are determined to adopt good practice and adapt in order to respond to new challenges as and when they arise. Our strategy is based on evidence and has been devised in consultation with local partner agencies.

Collaborative and partnership working is vital in preventing and reducing the impact of homelessness on local people. Prevention of homelessness has been at the forefront of the work carried out by Ryedale District Council and our Housing Forum partners for over 10 years; it will continue to be our main goal and we would like to take this opportunity to thank the people and organisations who have contributed to this important work and have helped shape this strategy.

Despite the challenging landscape that we work within, the Council and its partners have made significant progress in tackling homelessness throughout the lifetime of our last homelessness strategy (2015-2020). Housing supply, affordability, welfare reform, economic and social factors all play a part in the challenges faced both nationally and locally addressing homelessness.

Whilst Ryedale residents enjoy the benefits of its beautiful location, property prices to rent or buy are beyond the reach of many; this creates demand for affordable housing. The council has been successful in developing affordable housing, but demand outstrips supply. This results in some households with a low income having to seek accommodation in less expensive areas outside of Ryedale. Alternatively, finding themselves unable to afford independent accommodation so that they have to live in the homes of friends or relatives, this can put pressure on personal relationships and lead to homelessness due to relationships breaking down. Some residents need support to find accommodation or manage their tenancies and we will continue to work with local specialist support agencies to provide the best service we can for Ryedale residents.

With the new duties placed on councils under the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and by working together to provide advice, support and assistance, we aim to prevent homelessness whenever we can. Together we aim to end rough sleeping and help everyone to find a suitable home to call their own. The Council is committed to ensuring that Housing is a corporate priority in coming years in order to support our residents and help our local economy to thrive.

Councillor Keane Duncan

Leader of the Council

Introduction

Welcome to Ryedale District Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 summary. The strategy details how the Council will prevent and relieve homelessness and work with partners throughout the district and sub-region to provide the most suitable accommodation and support for those facing homelessness. The strategy has been written to comply with legal requirements in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002. Also, 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 strategy will take into account the significant changes over the past 5 years since the previous strategy was developed. Review and consultation has been undertaken and the findings of which have detailed what the strategy aims to deliver over the next five years. This is all available in the full strategy document '[Working Together to End Homelessness - Ryedale Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2020-2025](#)'.

Ryedale's 'Gold Standard' Homelessness Service



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%.

Objectives

This summary will focus on the six objectives within our strategy, which are to:

1. Prevent and relieve homelessness
2. Ensure sufficient and appropriate accommodation is and will be available for those in housing need and for people who are homeless or may become homeless
3. Maximise partnerships and improve access to support services
4. Raise awareness of homelessness and housing issues across the district, improving access to the services
5. Continue to work strategically to maintain services and seek new opportunities for funding and partnership working
6. End rough sleeping

OUR PRIORITIES

This strategy links to a number of the 9 priorities within the [Council's Housing Strategy](#) that cover all aspects of housing.

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.

There are many reasons for homelessness within Ryedale that are still apparent and we will continue to work towards preventing homelessness, with a multi-agency perspective. The most frequent reasons people approach the team are **parents/relatives no longer willing to accommodate, relationship breakdowns, loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancy, and loss of Social Housing due to rent arrears.**

In Ryedale we focus on assisting households to maintain their existing accommodation and prevent homelessness wherever possible by early intervention, meaning 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 therefore we will continue to make best use of this by considering alternatives such as private rental. 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 utilise all of the homelessness prevention initiatives we have at our disposal, including the prevention toolkit and the housing support service, focusing on activities to prevent the main causes of homelessness. Prior to integrating within the housing team, the 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.

Outcomes

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. Encourage landlords, letting agents and tenants to refer to 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 specific and quality advice for customers.
5. Ensure customers who want to stay in their own home are given as much opportunity as possible to allow this to happen.

OBJECTIVE 2 – Ensure sufficient and appropriate accommodation is and will be available for those in housing need and for people who are homeless or may become homeless

Ryedale has a buoyant housing market and it can be difficult for people who are on a low income or disadvantaged to access suitable home ownership or private rented housing.

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

We will continue to:

- Work with Housing Development to deliver sufficient Affordable Housing Developments as set out in the Ryedale Housing Strategy.
- Support the Private sector team to deliver the Empty Property Strategy and bring empty properties back into use.
- Ensure maintenance of private sector housing stock through Council loans and grants, within the terms of the Private Sector Renewal Strategy.
- Ensure people with a local connection are allocated properties through Shared Ownership, Discount for Sale and the [Help to buy equity loan and Help to buy ISA](#).
- Ensure sufficient Affordable Rent properties continue to be developed throughout Ryedale, which cost 80% of the market rent.
- Maintain four buildings providing rented housing managed by the Council which offers 13 units of affordable shared accommodation for single working people on low income, seeking work and young people in training, education and employment.
- Maintain availability of supported accommodation and the allocation of support workers within Derwent Lodge (owned and managed by the council), Ryedale YMCA (Young Person's Pathway) and the Cornmill in Malton (Impact Living).
- Ensure the best use of social housing through North Yorkshire Home Choice.
- Assess and support customers to access the 85 extra properties built in Ryedale for extra care and older persons supported housing (Micklehill at Pickering and Bransdale View in Helmsley).
- Ensure access to temporary and emergency accommodation, working with Yorkshire Housing, NYCC and Safe and Sound Homes (SASH) and private providers.
- Work with specialist agencies to find suitable accommodation and support for people with complex needs through accommodation led models.
- Ensure maximisation of access to private rental properties to those at risk of homelessness or homeless through things such as landlord incentives.
- Continue the landlord's forum to ensure landlords are aware of changes in legislation, policy and available services, while networking with possible landlords to work with the authority.
- Maintain the Traveller site in Malton which holds 19 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers.
- Work with commissioners for NYCC to ensure the needs of Ryedale residents are identified with regard to specialist accommodation, which is not currently available in Ryedale.

In 2019/20 we exceeded 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 bedroomed houses and 2 bedroomed bungalows. We are working hard with the landlord to ensure that these properties all go to local people with a housing need.

Outcomes

1. To increase access to low cost shared accommodation 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. Develop and extend clear and co-ordinated private sector offer to increase private rental options.
5. Continue to be an active partner in North Yorkshire Home Choice (NYHC), to ensure that the properties are made available to as many customers as possible.
6. Promote and facilitate access to all types of affordable accommodation 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. We work alongside over 30 organisations to deliver this strategy, to find the best solutions for customers. This varies from involvement with young people, health and wellbeing, support and other partners. Many provide holistic or focused support for a specific group, with others providing advice for the wider public.

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 April 2019 and March 2020, they redeemed 986 food vouchers for households, ranging from single people to families, with numbers increasing. There is also a free fridge in Malton and Norton and there will soon be another 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.

The [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#) placed a duty on local authorities to provide advice to specific groups of people who may be more vulnerable. For each of the categories of need stated in the Act, tailored advice has been developed and is accessible via our website or can be obtained from the housing team, including support from specialist agencies. We will 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.

We will work with partner agencies to ensure that the advice that we provide is realistic, 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 continue to facilitate Ryedale Housing Forum which 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. Membership and contacts will be reviewed.

We will carry out work with partners to ensure duties for referral under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 are 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. 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 within 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.

Outcomes

1. Ensure those with complex or specific needs have tailored support suitable for them and vulnerable customer groups.
2. Increase numbers of referrals sent through Duty to Refer from statutory and non-statutory agencies, to increase early intervention and 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 availability of Drug and Alcohol Services within Ryedale.
5. Increase employment and training opportunities in partnership with DWP, economic development and partner agencies.

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 for advice as early as possible 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 will continue to review how we record the work completed, especially with households who approach our service before they are officially classed as threatened with homelessness.

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

Currently, consultation is completed with customers on an 'ad hoc' basis. 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 to some rural areas 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. Prior to the recent pandemic, we provided a drop-in service in Pickering and attended 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, once regulations allow, 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.

Outcomes

1. Raise awareness of the Housing Options service within the Council, local community and with local agencies.
2. Increase the use of technology where possible and explore how and where advice is provided.
3. Implement a robust customer feedback and consultation analysis system to continue to develop the service.
4. Review the communication and marketing plan.
5. Enable customers with additional needs to access our services.

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 and substance misuse, as we have identified that many people facing homelessness in the district have mental health needs, some of whom do not engage well with existing services.

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 governments' [Code of Guidance for Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#) highlights 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 main statutory responsibility towards homelessness sits with the District Council as the housing authority, however many of the services that are provided locally are funded via the upper tier authority NYCC, such as the Housing Homeless Prevention and Support Service, the Young Persons Pathway, support for victims of domestic violence (provided by IDAS), Offenders housing related support service (provided by Foundation) and Housing Support Service for people with mental health needs (provided by Horton Housing).

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. We will continue to monitor this, as there is no certainty over the future of the Young Persons Pathway.

Outcomes

1. Work with NYCC in reviewing services that deliver specific young peoples' accommodation and support within Ryedale.
2. Work with partners to provide and increase access to domestic abuse refuge accommodation within North Yorkshire.
3. Ensure that housing support services within the Council are maintained while increasing homeless prevention and supporting households in order to prevent repeat homelessness.
4. Work with NYCC commissioners and successful contractors, on the provision of mental health accommodation and offender support services in Ryedale.
5. MHCLG funding and local funding options.
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.
7. Develop closer links with Public health and other health services provided within the district.

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](#).

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

What are the big issues going forward?

- 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 jointly 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 or who to contact if they come across someone who is sleeping rough.

What are we going to do?

- It is our intention to relaunch the 'Single Service Offer' approach based on the Government's 'No Second Night-Out' Principles, which can be found on our website - [Help for rough sleepers - No Second Night Out](#).
- 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.

Outcomes

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.

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. The quarterly Housing Forum, provides ongoing information sharing and updates which feed into the Strategy and action plan reviews, significant updates and progress will be shared with this group.

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.

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>