



# Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Review

Undertaken between  
Oct 2022 – Jan 2023



**LANCASTER  
CITY COUNCIL**  
*Promoting City, Coast & Countryside*



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# Introduction

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The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all local housing authorities to compile a Homelessness Strategy and to renew the strategy at least every five years. In order to do that, a review of homelessness needs to take place, which informs both the development of the new strategy and the action planning needed to deliver the objectives within the strategy.

The issues surrounding homelessness in any local area are multi-faceted and complex. Since the last Homelessness Strategy was published in 2020 there have been some significant changes nationally which have had an impact on homelessness and the services to assist people at risk of homelessness in Lancaster:

- The Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on local communities, the economy and public services
- The cost-of-living crisis and its impact on households, in particular the significantly higher levels of inflation, rise in energy costs and interest rates
- More people needed assistance through homelessness services because they are newly arrived refugees, notably from Afghanistan and Ukraine

Because of these and other significant changes nationally since the last Review and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy were published in 2020, Lancaster City Council has undertaken a new Review earlier than the statutory requirement and the Strategy has been re-written based on the Review.

This review will focus on understanding the local context, homelessness patterns and local service delivery, including our partnership working, given some of the significant changes since the last Homelessness and Rough Sleeping review, as outlined above.

We have followed the Government's Homelessness Code of Guidance in preparing this review. Chapter 2 of the Code sets out the minimal requirements that a review should cover. Based on this we have split the review into 2 sections:

Section 1: The local housing context and data available on homelessness

Section 2: The current activity and resources available to manage homelessness services

The housing context and data section will cover much of the detail set out in the Code of Guidance:

- General information about Lancaster's social and economic context
- Homelessness casework records and other local sources of data
- Trends in homelessness approaches and in underlying causes
- Which cohorts may be more likely to become homeless or be threatened with homelessness
- The profile of households who have experienced homelessness
- Equality monitoring data, including that relating to homelessness applications and outcomes
- The range of factors that may affect future levels of homelessness in Lancaster
- The personal and structural factors that may contribute to people becoming homeless;
- Any planned legislation or local policy changes that are likely to impact on levels of homelessness for particular groups in the district.



The second section of the Review outlines current activity and resources in Lancaster and will cover the following:

- Financial resources within the Council specifically for homelessness
- Other services to support homeless people, including some services not provided directly by or on behalf of the Council
- Current activity to prevent homelessness
- Types of accommodation available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- How we assist people rough sleeping to come off the streets and into recovery and support services
- What types of temporary and supported accommodation are available in Lancaster and use of temporary accommodation outside Lancaster

The information contained within the review come from a range of sources:

- Government and local authority information and statistics that are available in the public domain
- Relevant policy and research documents for a number of different agencies, as well as key directives, guidance and communications which Lancaster, Lancashire County Council or the Government have published
- Consultation in both late 2019 for the last Review and also in 2022 with people in Lancaster, with people who have lived experience of homelessness; with other organisations and with Lancaster City Council officers in the Housing Options Service.

Whilst there are specific legal duties placed on local housing authorities in England in terms of homelessness, which are outlined below, it is useful to note that this is not the whole picture, in terms of the services delivered by different agencies and services. Many of the services that can prevent homelessness occurring in the first place or support people who are recovering from homelessness do not sit within a legal framework and whilst some of these are delivered by Lancaster City Council, some are delivered by other organisations.



The purpose of a homelessness and rough sleeping review is to inform a future strategy by understanding and learning from what has happened recently, highlighting through data, other service specific information and consultation what is working well, progress, pressure points and gaps in services. The last 3 years are of most significance for the purposes of this review, in terms of the Covid-19 pandemic and more recently the cost of living crisis.

Since March 2020 the UK has been significantly impacted by the unforeseen national and global socio-economic and political changes, including the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis. Lancaster City Council like every authority, is continually assessing the impact these changes have on the local authority area, with residents and partner agencies, including Health agencies, Lancashire Police, local businesses, landlords, including housing associations, faith organisations and the voluntary and community sector.

Where relevant, the short and medium term impacts of the pandemic and/or the cost of living crisis on homelessness and rough sleeping are noted, for example in changes in homelessness trends, the housing market and impacts on health, well-being and relationships.

Projecting into the future is challenging for all organisations and there have been constant shifts in trends and policy changes which indirectly and directly impact on homelessness. The impact of both rising inflation and interest rates and increasing levels of household poverty are all factors which are likely to drive homelessness.

## **The homelessness legislation that will inform this Review**

In 2017, Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 was changed to incorporate the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) and on the 3rd April 2018, the local authorities started to work under the new legislation. This is a significant change, with many commentators describing it as the biggest change in homelessness for 40 years.

This Act does not replace the previous legislation but adds into Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 some new duties. These aim to ensure local authorities intervene earlier to prevent homelessness and to take 'reasonable steps' to assist people who are eligible to prevent homelessness or 'relieve' their homelessness.

It is important to set out the basic elements of the legislation at this point in the Review, so the reader can then understand some of the tables and data set out later in this document.

The overall aims of the Act are to reduce homelessness by:

- Improving the quality of the advice available
- Refocusing local authorities on prevention work and sets this within a new legal framework
- Increasing support for single people
- Joining up services to provide better support for people, especially those leaving prison/hospital and other groups at increased risk of homelessness, such as people fleeing domestic abuse and care leavers

The Act requires local authorities to give free information and advice on:

- Preventing homelessness and securing accommodation when homeless
- The rights of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- How to get help
- Information on tenants' rights, rights to benefits, advice on debt, rent and mortgage arrears, help for people at risk of violence and abuse and advice on how to obtain accommodation in the social sector and private rented sector
- Help available for specific groups of people who are at higher risk of homelessness, including victims of domestic abuse, young people leaving care, people leaving prison, people leaving hospital.

### **The 'Prevention Duty':**

Local Authorities' must take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness for any eligible applicant, at risk of homelessness within 56 days, regardless of priority need. This can involve assisting them to stay in their current accommodation, or helping them to find a new place to live

### **The 'Relief' Duty:**

Local authorities have a 56 day duty to take 'reasonable steps' to help the applicant to secure suitable accommodation. Help could be, for example, providing a bond guarantee, funding a rent deposit or working with a private landlord to make properties available. Where an eligible applicant who is homeless, has or may have, a 'priority need' for accommodation they must be offered temporary accommodation.

If the relief duty activity fails after 56 days, and the applicant is still homeless, the tests of priority need, and intentionality are applied to ascertain if the person is owed the 'main' homelessness duty. If they are not owed the main duty, the 'relief duty' can continue at the discretion of the local authority.

### **Assessments and Personal Housing Plans:**

Councils must carry out a holistic assessment of the applicant's housing circumstances if they are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The assessment covers their housing needs and any support needs they have which need to be addressed for them to be able to sustain accommodation in the future. This assessment will result in developing a Personal Housing Plan with them, that sets out the 'reasonable steps' that the Council and the applicant and, if applicable, other professionals, will take in order to prevent or relieve their homelessness.



## A 'Duty to Refer' on some public bodies:

Some public bodies must refer (with consent) details of any person they are aware of who is at risk of homelessness, within 56 days, to the housing department. The list of the public bodies are:

- prisons
- youth offender institutions
- secure training centres
- secure colleges
- youth offending teams
- probation services (including community rehabilitation companies)
- Jobcentre Plus
- social service authorities
- emergency departments
- urgent treatment centres
- hospitals in their function of providing inpatient care
- Secretary of State for defence in relation to members of the armed forces

Prevention and relief duties can be ended in a number of ways including:

- The 56 days of prevention or relief duty has expired
- If an applicant becomes homeless during the 'Prevention Duty' stage, that duty ends and a new 'relief' duty would be owed for 56 days
- Refusing an offer of suitable accommodation that is likely to be available for 6 months or more
- Deliberate and unreasonable non-co-operation with the Personal Housing Plan, after a formal warning notification
- Becoming intentionally homeless from accommodation provided as a 'reasonable step'
- Securing suitable accommodation that has a reasonable prospect of being available for a minimum of 6 months
- No longer being 'eligible'
- Withdrawal of the homelessness application

## Care Leavers

Care leavers who are homeless have a local connection to the authority who looked after them. For Lancaster City Council this means that any care leaver from any part of Lancashire has a local connection if homeless with Lancaster. A care leaver will also have a local connection with an area outside Lancashire if they have lived there for 2 years, including some time before their 16th birthday.

More detail on this can be found on the Government website, where there is an overview of the legislation and what it means in practice in the MHCLG Homelessness Code of Guidance. See here for the link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>

# 1



**The local housing  
context and data  
available on  
homelessness**

## General information about Lancaster's social and economic context

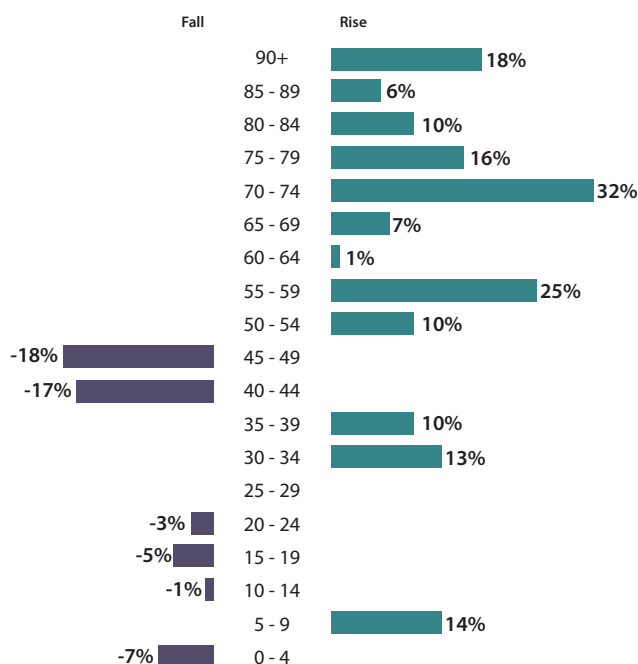
The population of Lancaster at the 2021 census was recorded as 142,900 people. This is a rise of 3.3% from the 2011 Census which recorded 138,375 people residing in the area. This is a lower rate of increase than the North West as a whole (5.2%) and also England's population as a whole, which increased by 6.6% between 2011 and 2021 <sup>1</sup>.

Overall, in England, there has been an increase of 20.1% in people aged 65 years and over, an increase of 3.6% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and an increase of 5% in children aged under 15 years. The picture in Lancaster is different: since the 2011 Census, the proportion of older people aged over 65 has risen the most significantly in Lancaster, with an increase of 15.5%, which is lower than the national position overall. There is only a very slight increase of 0.3%, in people aged 15 to 64 years in Lancaster, and a small increase of 1.3%, in children aged under 15 years.

Morecambe, the coastal town near to the city of Lancaster and the easy access to the Lake District, makes the Lancaster City Council area a desirable place for inward migration, including retirement, so there is net migration into the area of over 65 year olds in particular.

In terms of particular trends around the age demographics, the presence of University in Lancaster means that there is a student population which, like every university area, will have fluctuated between 2020 – 2022 due to some students opting to save money and study from their parental home during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 1: Population change (%) by age group in Lancaster between 2011 and 2021:



The Office of National Statistics undertake population estimates and project Lancaster City Council's population to continue to rise<sup>2</sup>. The latest estimate was made in 2018 and projects that by 2032 the population will rise to 154,297.

Changes in population affect the housing needs of any area. In terms of an increase in the proportion of people aged 65 and over, this will have significant implications for health and social care provision, as well as the types of housing which will be needed for older people with more limited mobility.

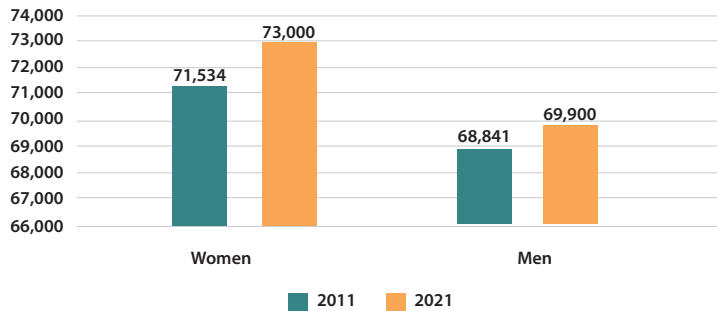
<sup>1</sup> See the 2021 census here for more information on Lancaster, Lancashire and England <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/ED7000121/>

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/datasets/localauthoritiesinenglandtable2>

## Gender

Based on the census from 2011 and 2021, the number of women in Lancaster has increased by 2% over the last 10 years, and the number of men by 5%. In 2021, women made up 51.1% of the population and men made up 48.9% of the population. This follows the regional and national trends on the gender within the population.

Table 2: The change in population 2011 - 2021 in Lancaster by gender



## Ethnicity

There is a changing profile in every local authority in terms of ethnicity of the population. In Lancaster there are slight changes to the population, as set out in the Table below.

Table 3: The ethnic composition of the population in Lancaster

Ethnicity by ONS groupings (Census Year)	White British	Other White	Mixed / multiple ethnic groups	Asian / Asian British	Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	Other ethnic group
2011	91.5%	4.1%	0.9%	2.7%	0.4%	0.2%
2021	87.8%	5.3%	1.5%	3.5%	0.8%	0.9%

## Deprivation

In the 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, out of the 317 authorities in England, Lancaster is ranked as the 89th most deprived.

Table 4: Lancaster ranking overall compared to neighbouring boroughs

Local authority area	Overall ranking by score in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation
Blackpool	1st
Lancaster	89th
Wyre	129th
Fylde	195th
Craven	245th
South Lakeland	250th

The Indices scoring is based on an average score, combining data across a number of domains. The individual scoring in 2019 against each domain for Lancaster is highlighted below.

- **Income Deprivation:** the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income. The definition of low income used includes both those people that are out-of-work, and those that are in work but who have low earnings. Rank for Lancaster is 110th.
- **Employment Deprivation:** the proportion of the working-age population in an area involuntarily excluded from the labour market. This includes people who would like to work but are unable to do so due to unemployment, sickness or disability, or caring responsibilities. Rank for Lancaster is 94th.
- **Education, Skills and Training Deprivation:** the lack of attainment and skills in the local population. The indicators fall into two sub-domains: one relating to children and young people and one relating to adult skills. Rank for Lancaster is 187th.
- **Health Deprivation and Disability:** the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health. The domain measures morbidity, disability and premature mortality but not aspects of behaviour or environment that may be predictive of future health deprivation. Rank for Lancaster is 59th.
- **Crime:** the risk of personal and material victimisation at local level. Rank for Lancaster is 125th.
- **Barriers to Housing and Services:** the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services. The indicators fall into two sub-domains: 'geographical barriers', which relate to the physical proximity of local services, and 'wider barriers' which includes issues relating to access to housing such as affordability. Rank for Lancaster is 275th.
- **Living Environment Deprivation:** the quality of the local environment. The indicators fall into two sub-domains. The 'indoors' living environment measures the quality of housing; while the 'outdoors' living environment contains measures of air quality and road traffic accidents. Rank for Lancaster is 41st.

The 3 domains which indicate higher levels of deprivation in Lancaster area are living environment, health and employment. There is more information about the levels and types of deprivation in Lancaster here: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/lancashire-insight/>

The full set of information can be found here:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

At any time a significant proportion of Lancaster’s adult population is not economically active. Overall this amounted in August 2022 to 19,400 people, or 22.6% of the adult population of working age (16 – 64). But nearly 90% of this group did not wish to work and were not actively seeking work, in the main due to being retired, long term sick, being a student or caring for a family.

The most useful measure to use in terms of unemployment levels amongst the working age population are claimant counts for those who are available and actively seeking work:

Table 5: Claimant rates in Lancaster over 3 years, compared to the regional and national positions

Month	Lancaster % (and numbers )	North West %	England %
March 2020	5.4% (5,405)	7.1%	6.5%
March 2021	4.1% (3,855)	5.7%	5.2%
August 2022	2.8 % (2,620)	4.3%	3.7%

Table 6: Claimant rates in Lancaster in August 2022 by age

Age group	Lancaster % (and numbers )	North West %	England %
16/17s	0.3% ( 10)	0.3%	0.2%
18 – 24s	2.4% ( 505)	5.5%	4.6%
25 -49s	3.5% (1,484)	5%	4.2%
50+	2.2% (620)	3%	2.9%

Lancaster does not have a significantly higher rate of unemployment compared to the North West, and wages are slightly higher overall when compared to the North West, although women in Lancaster earn less each week than the regional average based on gender. Wages are lower when compared to the all England position:

Table 7: Earnings by place of residence in 2021

Gross weekly pay			
	Lancaster	North West	England
Full time workers	£610.80	£578.00	£613.10
Male full time workers	£628.00	£615.80	£655.50
Female full time workers	£522.60	£529.00	£558.10

More information on the labour market is available here: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

## An overview of the housing market in Lancaster

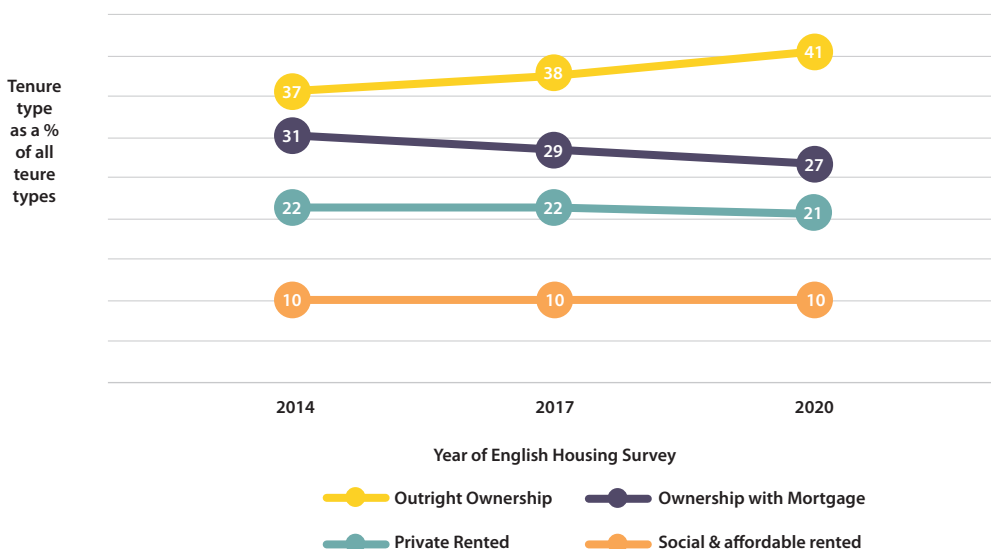
Whilst the causes of homelessness are complex and multi-faceted, spanning a range of underlying structural factors and individual circumstances, the availability of decent and affordable local housing is a key factor in protecting many households from homelessness altogether and quickly resolving homelessness if this occurs.

The diversity of the local housing market, in terms of types of housing available and levels of affordability determine the ability of residents to find and keep a suitable home and local authorities to prevent and resolve homelessness.

There is a high level of detail in Lancaster’s 2018 Strategic Housing Market Assessment document<sup>3</sup> where the general housing needs of the population, including the predicted changes in the age of the population, in the future is outlined.

The breakdown of tenure type within the housing stock across Lancaster has only changed marginally, based on the most up to date statistics<sup>4</sup>:

Table 8: Estimated changes in tenure of all housing stock in Lancaster



The breakdown of tenure type within the housing stock across Lancaster has changed over the 6 years, with a significant increase in homes being owned outright. This may reflect the increased proportion of the population who are aged 60 or over, who were owner occupiers with a mortgage and are more likely to be a point where they are mortgage-free. There has been little change in terms of social or affordable rented housing or the private rented sector. These estimates have been made before the Covid-19 pandemic and recent levels of inflation, coupled with rising interest rates. These factors are influencing the housing market and will continue to do so. Many local authorities anecdotally report that there is higher demand for private rented housing, outstripping supply and this in turn pushes up rents.

<sup>3</sup> See here for the 2018 Lancaster Strategic Housing Market Assessment: <https://planningdocs.lancaster.gov.uk/NorthgatePublicDocs/00930527.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> See the ONS estimates of tenure types by local authority up to 2020 here: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/subnationaldwellingstockbytenureestimates>

## Home Ownership

Around 68% of homes in Lancaster were owner occupied in 2020, with no significant rise in this proportion since 2014.

The table below sets out the increase over the last 20 years on the proportion of income which households in the middle and lower income brackets in Lancaster would need to spend on home ownership, set against the North West and England positions<sup>5</sup>. Like every area of the country, the amount of money and proportion of income needed to purchase a property has increased significantly, with almost double the proportion of income needed for home ownership in Lancaster than 20 years ago. Despite this, Lancaster is still, in relatively terms, more affordable than many other parts of England.

The rising cost of living generally and recent rises in interest rates may make home ownership less likely for those on lower incomes, because higher proportions of incomes are being spent on essential items like energy and food costs.

Table 9: Ratios of earnings for purchase of median priced housing in Lancaster, the North West and England.

Year	England		North West		Lancaster	
	Median House Price (and ratio to median earnings)	Lower Quartile House Price (and ratio to LQ earnings)	Median House Price (and ratio to median earnings)	Lower Quartile House Price (and ratio to LQ earnings)	Median House Price (and ratio to median earnings)	Lower Quartile House Price (and ratio to LQ earnings)
2001	£89,950 (4.40)	£58,500 (4.08)	£59,950 (3.23)	£38,500 (2.88)	£55,000 (2.84)	£40,000 (2.98)
2011	£180,000 (6.89)	£127,000 (6.77)	£127,500 (5.28)	£89,950 (5.14)	£125,000 (4.97)	£97,500 (5.49)
2021	£240,000 (7.55)	£158,500 (6.91)	£190,000 (6.43)	£133,000 (6.11)	£180,000 (6.34)	£132,500 (5.97)

## Social Housing

Lancaster has retained its own stock and currently has 3,660 social housing properties. In addition, there are 2,910 properties owned by other Registered Providers (RPs)<sup>6</sup>, including Places for People and The Guinness Partnership.

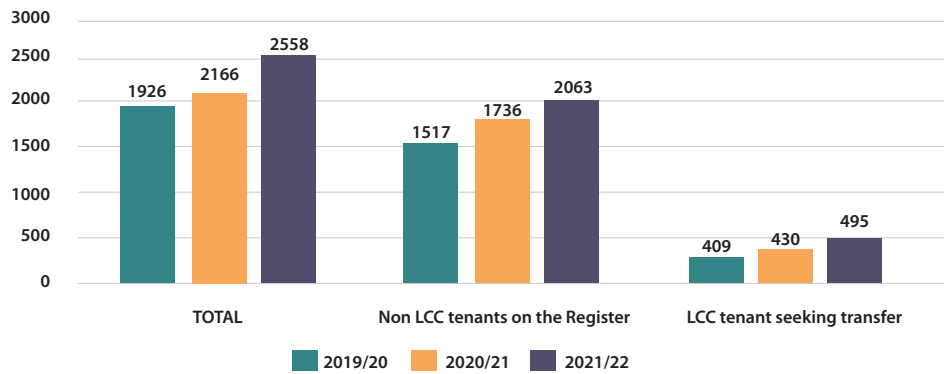
At the end of October 2022, there were 2,655 households on the Housing Register. The number of households is rising year on year based on the last 3 years of statistics as shown in the table below.

<sup>5</sup> See: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/ratioofhousepricetoworkplacebasedearningslowerquartileandmedian>

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants#full-publication-update-history>



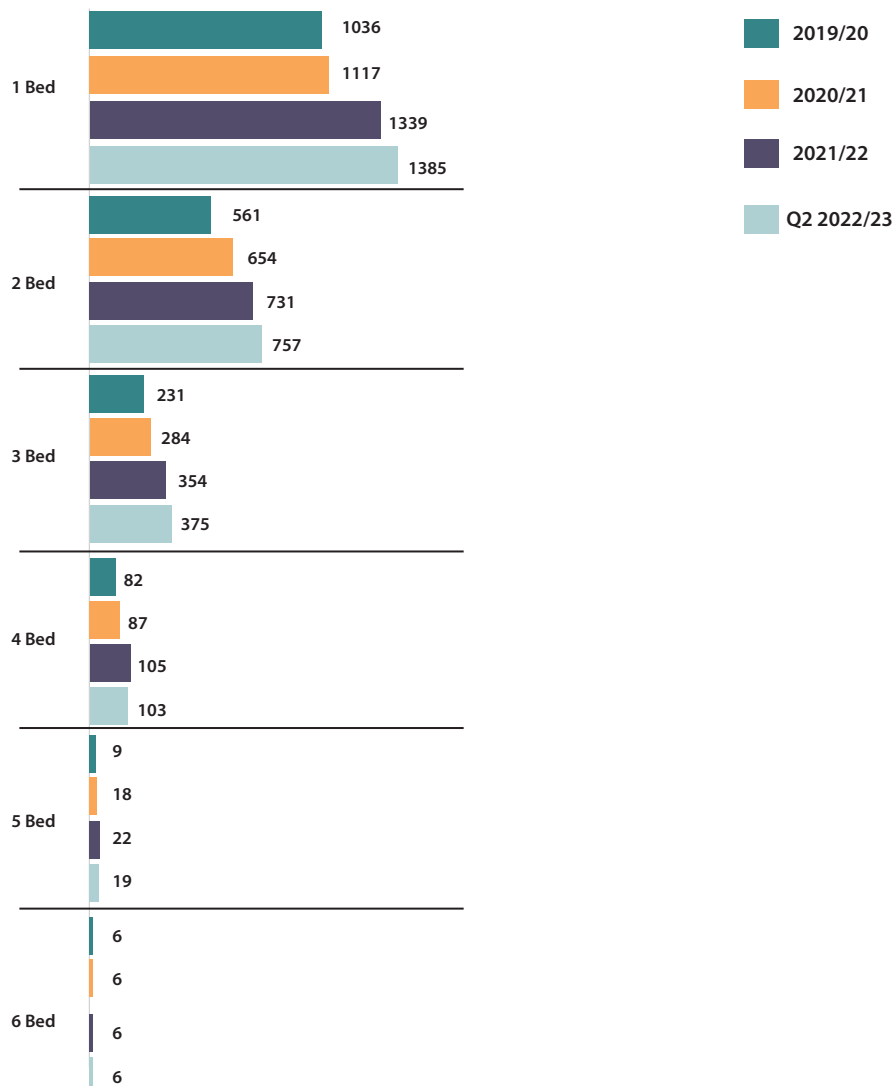
Table 10: Numbers on Lancaster’s Housing Register



During the Covid-19 pandemic there was a national slowdown in letting of properties, in part due to lower rates of turnover, as people decided not to move or were protected from eviction under Government policy to place a temporary stay on evictions. In addition there was reported to be a scarcity of some building and repair supplies and in some areas, a shortage of labour, meaning that properties remained void for greater lengths of time between lets.

Different households have different needs in terms of size of property. The Table below shows the overall position over the last 3 years.

Table 11: Applicants on Lancaster’s Housing Register by property size need

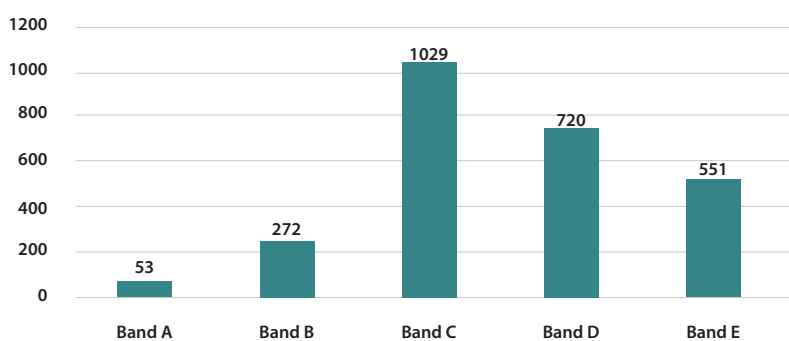


The numbers of households seeking different types of social housing is one part of the equation of what makes up demand and likely waiting times. The other main factors are the level of priority households are awarded, expressed in Lancaster through banding; the rate of turnover of different types and sizes of stock, which then creates voids; the overall size of the portfolio of social housing against demand; and whether there is a particular preference or need in terms of area of Lancaster a household wishes or needs to live.

A 'choice based lettings' scheme, Ideal Choice Homes, is in place which means that households can bid for properties when they become available. There is also some discretion to enable 'direct offers' to be made to some households.

Lancaster City Council's allocation scheme gives each household on the Register a banding based on their housing needs and circumstances<sup>7</sup>. Of the 2,655 households on the Register in Lancaster at the end of October 2022, they were in the following bandings:

Table 12: All households on the Register by banding award in October 2022



Some households must be given some 'reasonable preference' under law, based on their circumstances, including households which are statutorily homeless. Homeless households owed a reasonable preference are not all given the same banding. Those who are homeless and who have a priority need will be awarded Band A in Lancaster. Households which are homeless but have no priority need are awarded Band C. Households found to be homeless but intentionally so are awarded Band D. It is not possible to provide a breakdown of the numbers of homeless households with reasonable preference in each banding, but the overall reasons for award of reasonable preference is shown below.

<sup>7</sup> See here for the list of housing needs and circumstances against the bandings for Lancaster: <https://www.idealchoicehomes.co.uk/Data/ASPPages/1/32.aspx>

Table 13: Reasonable Preference on Lancaster's Housing Register

Reasonable preference awarded	Numbers waiting on the Housing Register with 'reasonable preference'		
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Homeless within meaning within Part VII of Housing Act, regardless of whether there is a statutory duty to house them	15	13	28
Owed a duty by a housing authority under S190(2), S193(2) or S195(2) or are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under the Act	28	51	103
Occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions	154	211	270
Need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability	290	327	3980
Need to move to a particular locality in the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).	1	1	1
And of the households in reasonable preference groups, how many have urgent housing needs & are given additional preference	72	134	212
of which, how many are members of the Armed Forces community	2	2	3

Demand expressed over the last 3.5 years, through a combination of both property size need and banding is outlined below. This shows there is a growing level of demand for 1 and 2 bedroom properties in particular for those in Bands C, D and E.

Table 14: Numbers on the Housing Register over the last 3.5 years, by bedroom need and banding

	Year	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	6 Bed
<b>Band A</b> Emergency housing need	2019/20	16	7	2	1	0	1
	2020/21	13	13	5	2	0	1
	2021/22	19	26	9	5	2	1
	Q2 2022/23	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Band B</b> High housing need	2019/20	92	43	16	4	6	4
	2020/21	84	62	30	9	12	4
	2021/22	129	79	41	14	14	4
	Q2 2022/23	<b>117</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Band C</b> Medium housing need	2019/20	319	260	131	41	2	0
	2020/21	345	285	154	44	1	0
	2021/22	436	316	190	47	1	0
	Q2 2022/23	<b>471</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Band D</b> Low housing need	2019/20	307	178	50	26	1	1
	2020/21	340	205	57	23	4	1
	2021/22	379	209	72	28	4	1
	Q2 2022/23	<b>395</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Band E</b> Very low housing need	2019/20	302	73	32	10	0	0
	2020/21	335	89	38	9	1	0
	2021/22	376	101	42	11	1	0
	Q2 2022/23	<b>388</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

The Table below sets out the number of lettings in total per year for the last 3 years. A significant proportion of lettings in 2021/22<sup>8</sup> were for Independent Living housing, which is designated for people aged 60 and over. This is because there was a decision during the Covid-19 pandemic not to let new tenancies in Independent Living stock due to the health issues of tenants and concerns about risks of transmission of the Covid-19 virus.

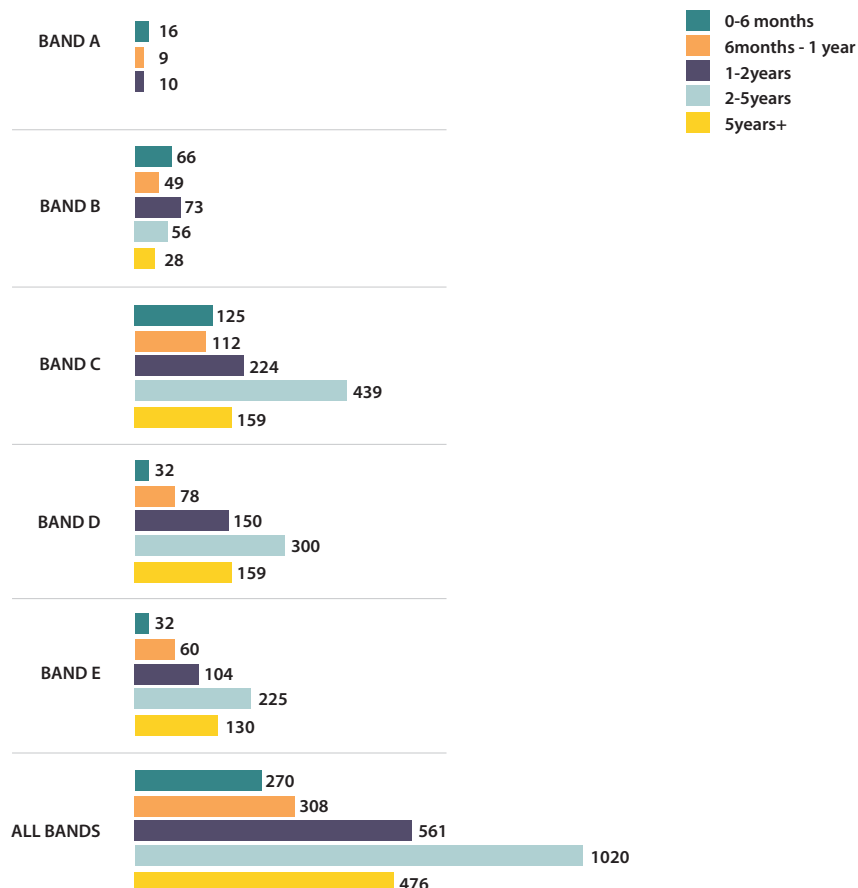
The level of turnover generally is low, but in part this may be attributable to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and resultant shortages of staff and some building supplies for repairs and maintenance.

Table 15: Lettings per year

Year	Number of social housing units in the portfolio	Number on the Housing Register	Total number re-housed through the Register	Of which, how many were re-housed into Independent Living ( sheltered) stock	% re-housed through the Housing Register	Rate of lettings as a % of all stock
2019/20	3677	1926	305	67	15.8%	8.2%
2020/21	3660	2166	234	48	10.8%	6.3%
2021/22	3644	2558	289	104	11.2%	7.9%

Because of increasing overall demand and low turnover of stock, waiting times can be lengthy and vary based on banding, with the longest waiting times in Band C and Band E.

Table 16: Length of waiting times based on banding



8 See: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/privaterentalmarketssummarystatisticsinengland>

## Private rented accommodation

Around 20% of all homes in Lancaster are reported to be privately rented as shown in Table 8 above.

Nationally there has been a significant rise in private rent costs over the last 2 years, with rents outside London in October 2022 estimated to be 11.8% higher than in the autumn of 2021. The number of new /available rental properties is still lower than in 2021 but is improving. New rental listings are up 8% in June compared to the start of the year.

There is significant demand for private rented property and this is not expected to reduce. As a consequence of demand and the slowdown in available supply, combined with rising inflation and interest rates, rents are expected to continue to rise.

Where households need welfare support to pay their rent, the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) sets out local entitlement. The levels of benefit payable for housing are set through a Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA) assessment of rental costs. Lancaster spans 2 different BRMAs, Lancaster and Kendal.

The LHA rates were revised by the Government in April 2020 so housing support from the benefits system would be sufficient to cover the cheapest 30% of all rental properties in any area. Rates have since been frozen and there was no announcement of an increase in the Chancellor's 2022 Autumn Statement.

Whilst the LHA rates have not risen since they were uprated in 2020/21, the market conditions and reports suggest that rents are likely to have increased, alongside the significant increases in the cost of living for all households. The overall picture is one of reduced affordability for lower income households.

In some areas of England the uprating in 2020 of the LHA rates helped address the reductions made by the Government to the LHA levels since 2012, when the rates increased with inflation until 2015, and were then subject to the four-year nominal freeze that affected most means-tested benefits.

The table below, using the current LHA rates, shows that the uprated LHA rates for Lancaster should mean that the bottom end of the market is more affordable in the Kendal area for those households with a self-contained 1 bedroom need or larger. It is less affordable within the Lancaster BRMA for single people or couples with no dependents and may be affordable for those with larger families. Note that the table below is based on 2021/22 rates and does not take into account any rent rises that may occur over the recent period of interest rate rises.

Table 17: Affordability of private rented accommodation in Lancaster for households on low incomes

	LHA rates PCM for Lancaster 2021/22		ONS Lower Quartile Rent PCM in Lancaster for 2021/22
	Lancaster	Kendal	Lancaster
Shared accommodation rate	£305.25	£295.47	£386
1 bed	£420.01	£495.00	£450
2 bed	£524.99	£601.29	£542
3 bed	£599.99	£725.00	£625
4 bed	£700.01	£850.01	£650

There is a significantly higher proportion of private rented accommodation in the Morecambe area within Lancaster. Private rented accommodation in some areas of Morecambe was considered for targeted improvement through selective licensing. The intention was to improve general housing conditions by:

- Eliminating poor standards of management in the private rented sector
- Obtaining a named individual, responsible for properties
- Reducing anti-social behaviour within the designated area
- Targeting rogue landlords

Following an extensive consultation in 2017, a decision was reached by Lancaster City Council not to introduce selective licensing<sup>9</sup>. However, there has been a more recent decision to consult again on selective licensing, which will commence in 2023.

As will be highlighted later in this review, the ending of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy in the private rented sector is now the most common cause of threat of homelessness in England, the North West and in Lancaster.

<sup>9</sup> See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/selective-licensing-in-the-private-rented-sector-a-guide-for-local-authorities>

## Homeless statistics

For this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping review, we are drawing on a range of information sources:

- **Casework information from work under statutory duties.** Since April 2018, when the Homelessness Reduction Act commenced, a new system, called 'H-CLIC' has been used in England to record statutory homelessness. See below for more information on this.
- **Other information recorded outside the H-CLIC requirements.** This includes people who contact Lancaster for advice and information because they have a housing need and the numbers of people who are sleeping rough in Lancaster.
- **Other information** on services available in Lancaster

As outlined earlier, in April 2018 new homelessness legislation commenced in England. Alongside a range of new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for everyone who is eligible and homeless, or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, some other changes also came in. New case level information collection requirements were set out for local housing authorities to adhere to. All cases where a homelessness application is taken should be reported to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) through a quarterly return, known as 'H-CLIC'.

Because H-CLIC is a relatively new system for recording and the legislation changed so significantly, some authorities have found it difficult to consistently return data. This is the case for Lancaster.

Ideally this Review should draw on 3 or more full years of Lancaster's homelessness statistics on H-CLIC but this is not possible due to some quarters in each year not being available on-line. As a result, we are not able to compare data and analyse trends across any whole years of homelessness data including the last year.

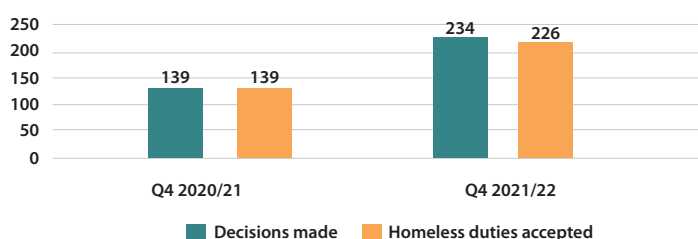
As a 'work around' we are looking, in the main, at some Quarters in the last 2 years, drawing on Quarter 4 (January -March in both 2020/21 and 2021/22) for most information. This includes a time during the Covid-19 pandemic where England was in a period of 'lockdown' and trends were different due to short term changes in the law to protect tenants from eviction during the pandemic.

Where helpful we have looked at other available Lancaster H-CLIC statistics, to check to see if patterns are repeated and is more of a trend than on a 'one-off' and this is referenced where this is, or is not the case.

## What do we know about how many households in Lancaster are at risk of homelessness or have become homeless?

The first table shows the numbers of homelessness decisions made and the numbers owed a statutory duty. Note this includes households who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

Table 18: Lancaster All Decisions and Duties Accepted between January and March in 2020/21 and 2021/22



In Quarter 4 of 2020/21 all of the applications led to a duty being accepted. This is unusual but may be in part explained by the Covid-19 pandemic and a period of lockdown in England at that time. In Quarter 4 of 2021/22, 96.6% of all applicants had a homelessness duty owed to them, in line with the national position during that Quarter, and slightly lower than the North West position of 97.2%.

## Rates of homelessness per 1000 households

Another way of understanding levels of homelessness in any area in relative terms, is to look at the rate of homelessness per 1,000 households. This can be broken down into rates of households where the applicant is threatened with homelessness within 56 days and owed the 'prevention' duty and households which are already homeless and are owed the 'relief' duty.

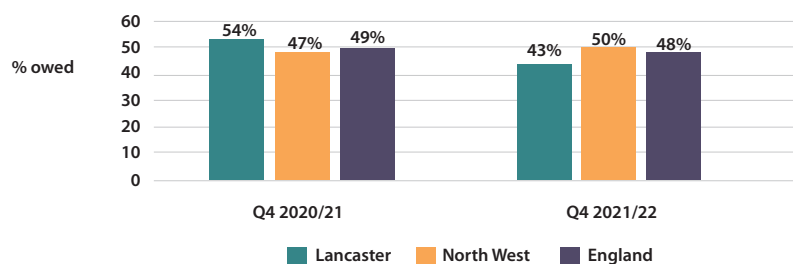
Table 19: Rates of homelessness per 1,000 households in Quarter 4 of 2020/21 and 2021/22

Rate of homelessness per 1,000 households	Rate of prevention duty accepted			Rate of relief duty accepted		
	Lancaster	North West	England	Lancaster	North West	England
Q4 2020/21	0.82	1.41	1.33	1.47	1.89	1.55
Q4 2021/22	2.07	1.72	1.56	1.64	1.84	1.55

The table above should be treated with some caution because of the lockdown during Quarter 4 of 2020/21 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. If the 2 different rates (prevention and relief) are added together for both years, Lancaster has a lower rate of overall homelessness in Quarter 4 of 2020/21 but that position reverses in Quarter 4 of 2021/22, with a rate of 3.71 compared to the North West rate of 3.56 and England rate of 3.11.



Table 20: Households owed a prevention duty compared to those owed a relief duty in Quarter 4 of 2021/22



More households in Lancaster were owed the prevention duty in Quarter 4 of 2021/22, which can be viewed as positive in comparison to both the North West and to England. Where homelessness has not yet occurred, there is time to prevent this, and avoid the impact of a crisis on households, as well avoiding additional pressures on some services. But this is not a trend and cannot be relied on, for example, in the previous Quarter, (October – December 2021), there was a slightly higher proportion of relief cases than prevention cases in Lancaster.

## Homelessness casework records and other local sources of data

The most acute form of homelessness is rough sleeping. In most local authority areas not everyone who is rough sleeping has approached the Council for help and therefore they may not appear as ‘relief’ cases in the statutory homelessness statistics set out in Tables 18 and 19 above.

Later in this document there is more detail on what we know about rough sleeping in Lancaster and what we and our partners are doing about this currently. But to give an overview of rough sleeping numbers at this point, Table 21 sets this out. The Council are required to complete a count of people rough sleeping or provide an estimate each year to DLUHC. In Lancaster an estimate is made based on a range of local information and using a nationally agreed methodology. This takes place in November each year and is verified by Homeless Link. The table below sets out the numbers estimated in Lancaster based on this methodology.

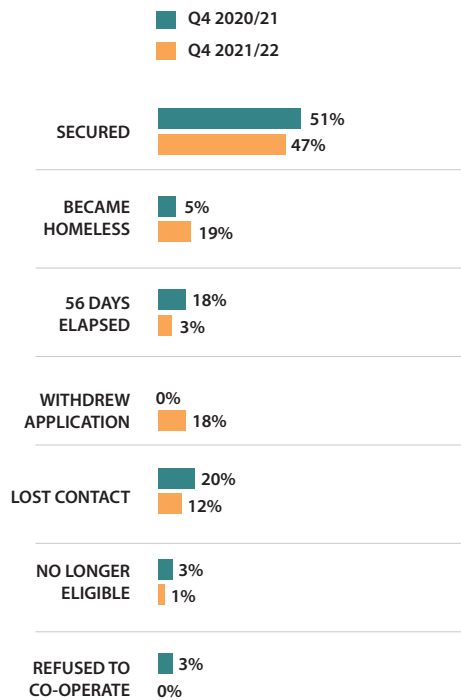
Table 21: Annual rough sleeping estimates in Lancaster 2014 - 2022

Rough sleeping estimates for Lancaster taken in November each year								
2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
6	8	8	4	4	6	2	3	9

## How successful is the Council at preventing homelessness?

When a local authority accepts a prevention duty to an applicant, the duty must be ended, and this can happen in one of several ways.

Table 22: The different ways the 'prevention' duty ended in Lancaster in Quarter 4 of 2020/21



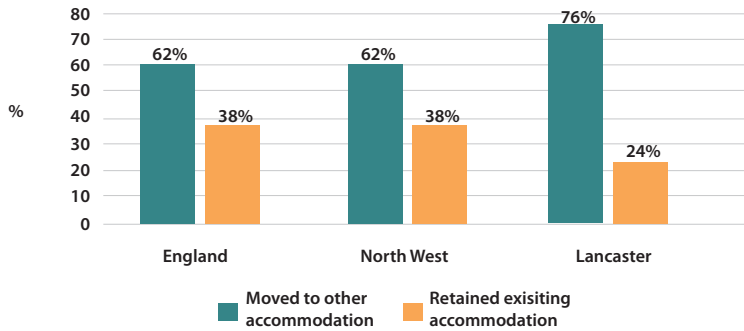
The rate of securing accommodation, which is the most positive outcome, dipped in Q4 of 2021/22. Lancaster trails behind both the North West and the national rates of prevention by about 10 percentage points in Quarter 4 2021/22. There was a much higher rate of applicants withdrawing their applications in Lancaster (18%) in Quarter 4 of 2021/22 when compared to both the North West (4.3%) and England rate (4.5%). This may account for some of the dip in performance.

Note that the prevention duty can also be lawfully ended through 2 other means, the 'refusal of a suitable offer' and 'Not known' but these were not used by Lancaster in either of the Quarters outlined above.

Assisting an applicant to secure accommodation can be broadly split into 2 sub-outcomes: the applicant is assisted to move to new accommodation or they retain their current accommodation because they resolve whatever was the underlying cause(s) of the threat of homelessness. In both scenarios, the accommodation must be suitable, and the local authority need to be satisfied that this has a 'reasonable prospect' of being available for six months or more.

Retaining accommodation is generally viewed as the most positive outcome and is an indication of timely, pro-active prevention work. Lancaster have a significantly lower rate of assisting people to stay in their own accommodation when compared to the North West overall and England. This is set out in the table below for Quarter 4 of 2021/22, but this is also true in other H-CLIC Quarters.

Table 23: The proportion of households prevented from becoming homeless through retaining current accommodation and moving to other accommodation in Quarter 4 of 2021/22

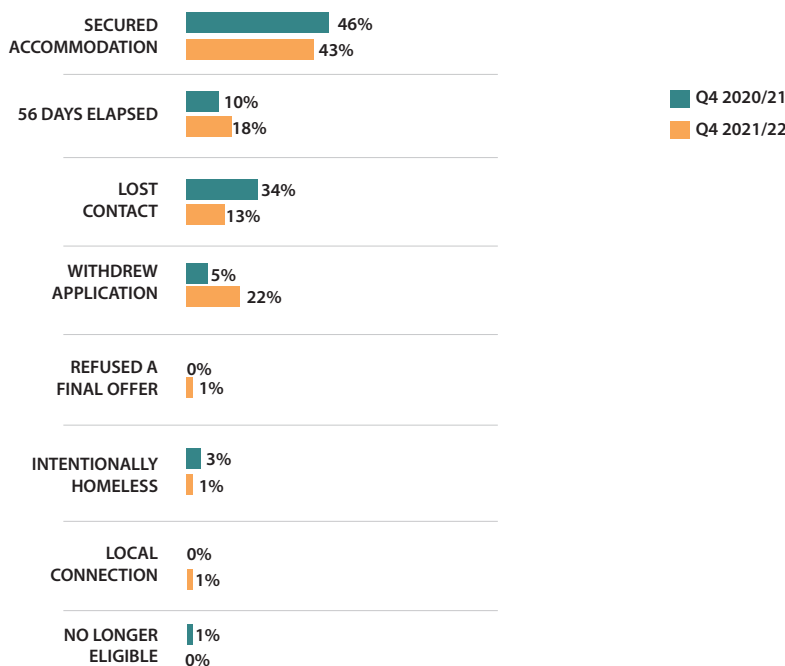


## How successful is the Council at relieving homelessness?

Table 24 below sets out how households who were owed a 'relief' duty had the duty ended in Quarter 4 over the last 2 years. The most common outcome is a successful resolution of homelessness in Lancaster through the securing of suitable accommodation for at least 6 months. The proportion of households with this outcome is slightly higher across both years than the North West and England overall, which is positive. Lancaster is also performing well on resolving homelessness within 56 days, with a significantly lower proportion of households having the relief duty ended because the statutory 56 days to relieve homelessness has passed.

The relief duty can also be lawfully ended through other means which are shown on the table below. Most of these are related to households making their own arrangements and withdrawing their applications or losing contact. Some categories are not frequently used, reflecting the regional and national position but are in the Table for completeness.

Table 24: The different ways the 'relief' duty ended in Lancaster in Quarter 4 of 2020/21

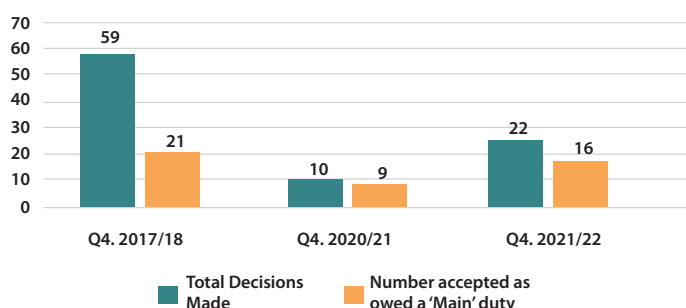


## Main duty acceptances

The number of households accepted as owed the 'main' homelessness duty has fallen in England since 2017/18, including Lancaster, because of the change in legislation, which brought in the 'prevention' and 'relief' duties as statutory stages to go through before the 'main' duty tests of priority need and intentionality are applied. Every household is therefore assisted for at least 56 days, if not longer, before they reach the 'main' duty point and if homelessness can be resolved then the main duty is not applied.

Since the commencement of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018, the number of 'main duty' decisions being made has reduced by 63% in Lancaster, based on Quarter 4 of 2017/18, which was just before the commencement of the Homelessness Reduction Act, to Quarter 4 in 2021/22. However, as the table below indicates, the number of main duty decisions did increase in Quarter 4 of 2021/22, compared to the previous year's Quarter 4. This may not be a 'blip' as this is also the case in Quarter 3 of 2021/22, when, like Quarter 4 of 2021/22, 22 decisions were made.

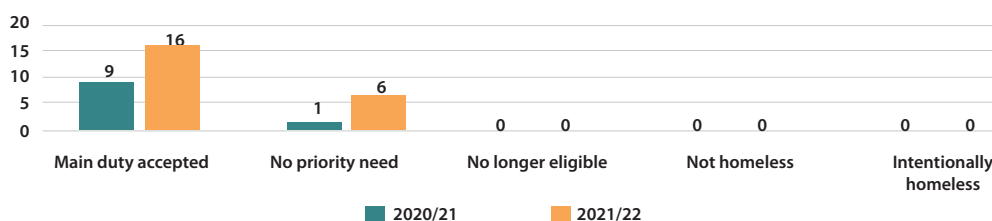
Table 25: Overall numbers of 'main duty' decisions in Lancaster between 2017/18 and 2020/21



Whilst the number of decisions has significantly dropped since 2017/18, the proportion of main duty decisions which are then accepted as owed the 'main' duty has increased. For example, in Quarter 4 of 2017/18, of the 59 decisions made, only 21, or 36%, were owed the main duty compared to Quarter 4 of 2021/22, when 73% of applicants were owed the main duty. This should be treated with some caution, as there is no full year position to compare with and there is considerable variation between Quarters. However, at decision stage, the overall ratio of acceptances of the main duty has increased, even though actual numbers are lower.

This is likely to be attributable to the change in the legislation which gives single people more meaningful assistance at an earlier point through prevention or relief support. As will be shown later in Tables 31 and 32, this has changed to composition of the overall customer groups in Lancaster, as it has in all other areas, with many more single people approaching for assistance.

Table 26: Outcomes of main duty decisions in Quarter 4 of 2020/21 and 2021/22



It is helpful to understand the profiles of those people or households who were accepted as being owed main duty. This provides insight into which groups may need more assistance at an earlier point and could suggest a need to take more pro-active action in some instances.

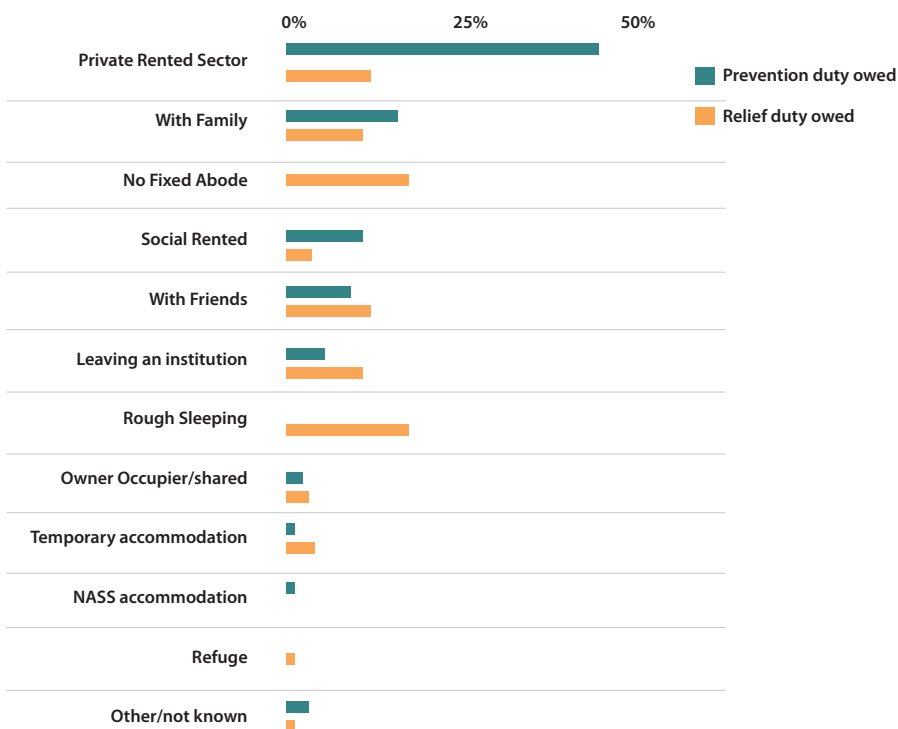
Table 27: Acceptances of the Main Duty by Priority Need decision type in Quarter 4 of 2020/21 and 2021/22

	Q4 2020/21	Q4 2021/22
Dependant Children	2	9
Pregnant	1	0
Old Age	1	0
Mental Health	1	3
Physical Health	1	1
Domestic Abuse	0	0
Young Person	0	1
Other	2	2
Emergency	1	0

## Where were people living at the time they became homeless or were threatened with homelessness?

To understand the causes of homelessness, there are several data sources in the H-CLIC statistics to draw on. Firstly, data on where applicants were living at the point they approached the Council can give some context regarding what has driven their homelessness, although this alone does not tell us why someone became homeless, or is threatened with homelessness. This information is based on the assessment of an applicants' housing circumstances.

Table 28: Accommodation at the time of an acceptance of a prevention or a relief duty in Quarter 4 of 2021/22

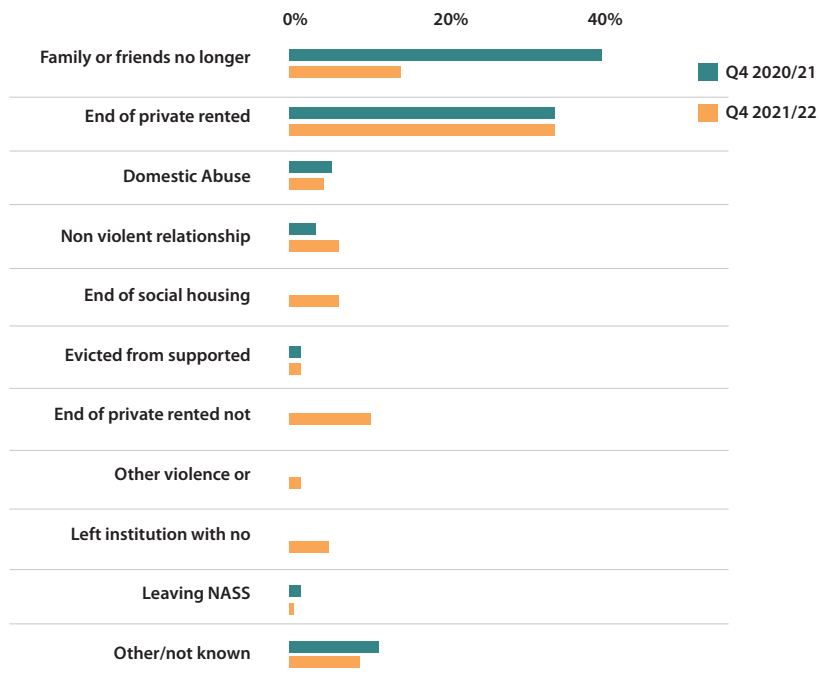


Because the numbers are relatively low in Lancaster, spotting trends is not always straightforward based on limited data sets, but comparing Q4 of 2020/21 to Quarter 4 2021/22 there has been an increase in:

- households owed a prevention duty who were living in the private rented sector ( from 38% to 47%) or in social housing ( from 0% to 11%). These are likely to be attributable at least in part to the ending of the Covid-19 pandemic measures to prevent evictions through a stay on court action following a Section 21 or a Section 8 notice
- applicants owed a relief duty who were rough sleeping as their last address has risen from 6% to 19%, whilst those who have no fixed abode has dropped significantly from 43% to 18%. This change may also be related to the Covid-19 pandemic and the 'Everyone In' programme which assisted those rough sleeping off the streets during 2020/21

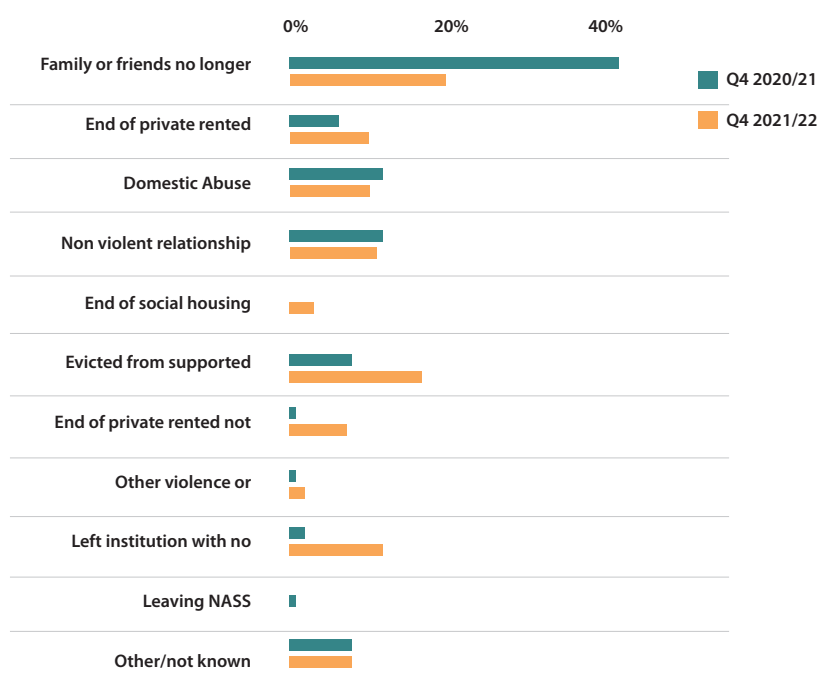
The main causes of a threat of homelessness within 56 days are family or friends no longer being able or willing to accommodate and ending of a tenancy in the private rented sector, as set out in the Table 29 below. In the most recent Quarter 4 statistics, the loss of a tenancy in the private rented sector is driving more applications than the threat of eviction from family or friends. This is likely to be due to mixture of the policy which placed a temporary stay on evictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic with rising demand pushing up rents and some landlords leaving the market.

Table 29: Comparing cause of threat of homelessness (and prevention duty owed) Quarter 4 in 2020/21 and 2021/22



The main drivers of actual homelessness differ slightly from those which drive a threat of homelessness. The main cause, as set out in Table 30 below, is family and friends no longer being willing or able to accommodate, with domestic abuse, ending of a non-violent relationship and eviction from supported housing being the other more frequent reasons. There is a tendency to record some causes in the 'other' category, which provides no further information.

Table 30: Comparing cause of homelessness ( and relief duty owed) in Quarter 4 in 2020/21 and 2021/22



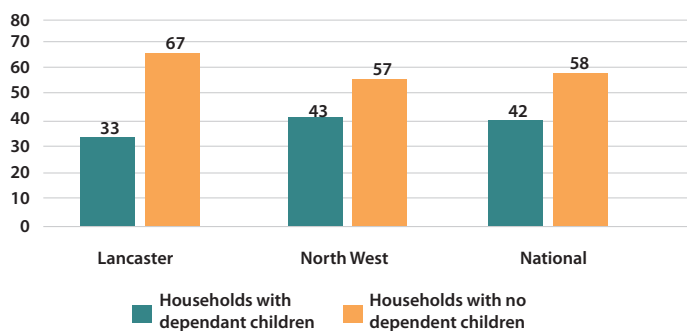
## Which groups of people are at higher risk of becoming homeless or threatened with homelessness in Lancaster?

More single people with no dependent children or childless couples approach the Council seeking assistance than families, see Tables 31 and 32 below. This is a national trend, which is more pronounced since the commencement of the new homelessness legislation in April 2018.

A significantly higher proportion of single people approach Lancaster for assistance, compared to families, when they are threatened with homelessness than the regional or national position. This indicates that insecure housing and the threat of homelessness is much more prevalent amongst those who do not have children living with them.

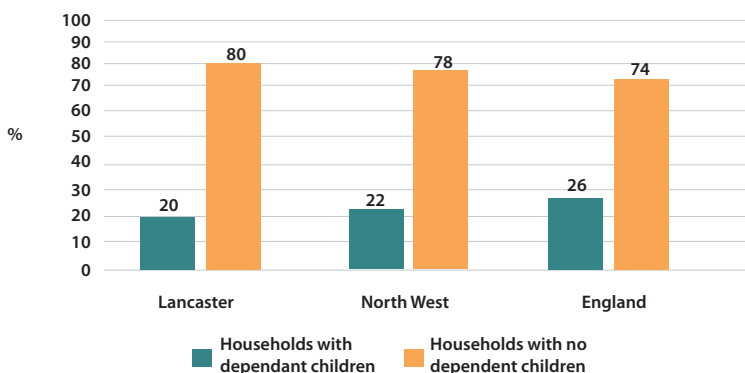
This position does fluctuate by a few percentage points each Quarter, in terms of the ratio between the 2 different types of household in Lancaster, but it is an established trend that there are significantly more single people and childless couples approaching for assistance and are accepted as being owed the prevention duty in Lancaster.

Table 31: Ratios of households with dependent children and no dependent children owed the prevention duty in Quarter 4 2021/22



When compared to the regional and national position, there is a less significant difference in the proportion of single people and childless couples approaching the Council for assistance when they are already homeless, as set out in Table 32 below.

Table 32: Percentage of families and single people owed relief duties in Quarter 4 of 2021/22

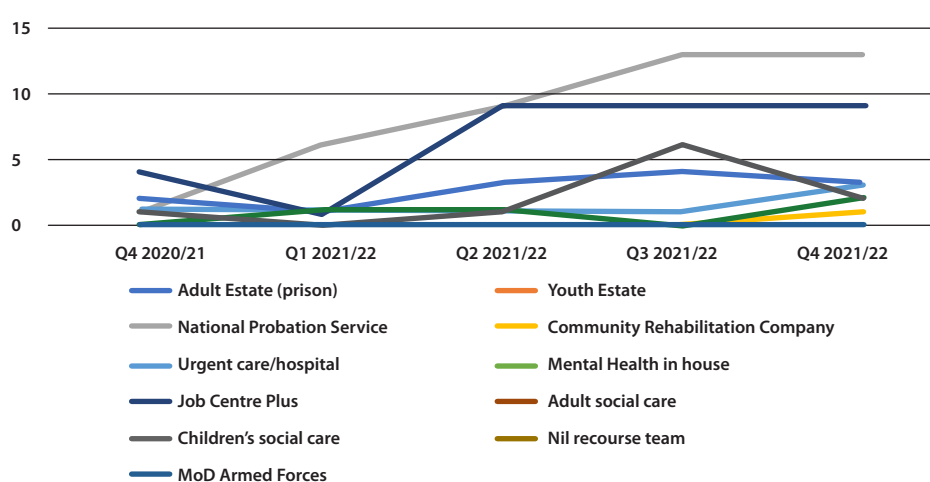




The homelessness legislation places a duty on some public bodies to refer to a housing authority anyone that they believe is or may be at risk of homelessness within 56 days. The referral can only take place with the consent of the client. The referral in itself does not automatically trigger a homelessness application as the housing authority would need to be satisfied that there was reason to believe the person was homeless or may be at risk of homelessness within 56 days.

The problems with reporting of data into the Government’s system means that it is not possible to compare the annual change in use of the ‘duty to refer’ route. However, there appears to an increase in the use of the ‘duty to refer’ just over the last 5 Quarters of published data, as set out below, using the available H-CLIC data from Quarter 4 2020/21 onward:

Table 33: Use of Duty to Refer Q4 2020/21 to Q4 2021/22



This is likely to be a reflection of the strength of partnership working during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, which will be outlined later in more detail later in this review and came through strongly in consultation with other agencies. However, referrals are also an indication of demand for services to address housing need and homelessness.

Other referrals were received by the Housing Options Service in Lancaster as well over the same time period, and these are also recorded, though not specified.

Table 34: Referrals into Lancaster’s Housing Options Service

	'Duty to Refer' referrals	Other referrals	Total referrals
Q4 2020/21	8	4	12
Q1 2021/22	12	3	15
Q2 2021/22	28	29	57
Q3 2021/22	39	57	96
Q4 2021/22	36	34	70

We have looked at our statistics in relation to different groups of people, including those groups which are named within the protected characteristics set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty . This is important to help us understand if any groups are over or under represented the homelessness statistics and any changes needed to priorities and services to address any in-balances or possibilities of direct or indirect discrimination.

## Age

In the table below those aged between 25 and 44, and in particular the 35-44 year old group appear to be significantly over-represented in homelessness figures.

A sizeable, but unquantifiable proportion of the 18-24 year old population in Lancaster are students from other areas and are less likely to be at risk of homelessness than their peers not at university in Lancaster. This may mask to some extent the prevalence of youth homelessness in Lancaster.

Table 35: Age of homeless applicants in quarter 4 of 2021/22 compared to the overall population

Age	% of Homeless applicants age 18 and over (and number) by age	% of Lancaster population by age group aged 18 and over in Lancaster in 2021 ( census)
18-24*	21% (48)	20%
25- 34	25% (57)	11%
35-44	28% (63)	14%
45-54	12% (26)	15%
55-64	7% (15)	16%
65-74	5% (12)	13%
75+	2% (5)	11%

\*Note that the general population figure for the 18-24 age group includes some of the over 8,000 students at Lancaster University

In the table below, men are over-represented in the homelessness statistics, indicating as a group they are at higher risk of homelessness in Lancaster.

Table 35: Gender of homeless applicant ( where specified ) owed a duty in quarter 4 of 2021/22 compared to the overall population

	% of Homeless applicants (and number)	% of Lancaster population by gender (Census 2021 )
Female	39% (88)	51% (73,000)
Male	46% (104)	49% (69,900)

The table below shows the gender breakdown locally by the type of duty owed. This shows a clear pattern, reflecting a national trend, of more women owed duties due to threat of homelessness and more men owed relief duties.

Table 36: Gender of homeless applicants by type of duty owed in quarter 4 of 2021/22

	Prevention duty owed	Relief duty owed
Female	53	35
Male	49	55

Whole year data on ethnicity is not available for the reasons set out earlier in this document, so the figures below should also be treated with caution as the numbers are small. This warrants some further investigation once more up to date and complete data is available through the Census and H-CLIC. But based on the 2021 Census information on ethnicity, this indicates that those who are White or Asian are slightly under-represented in the homelessness statistics and households which are headed up by someone who is Black, African, Caribbean or Black British are over-represented.

Table 37: Ethnicity of homeless applicants compared to the overall Population

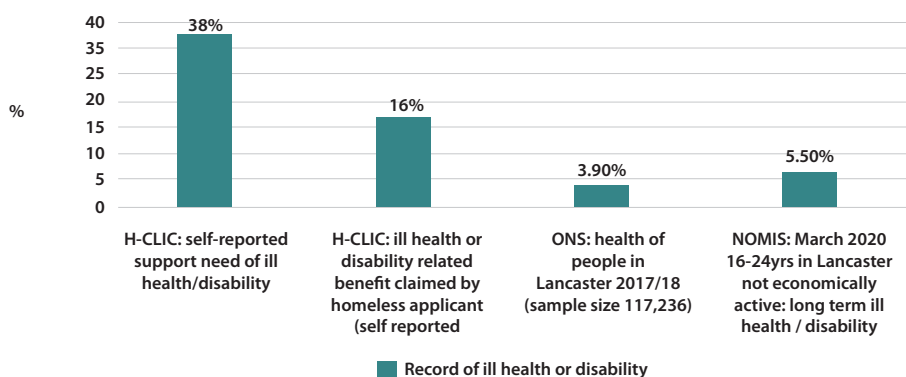
Ethnicity	% of Homeless applicants (and number) in Q4 of 2020/21 and 2021/22		Population in Lancaster by ethnicity
	Q4 2020/21	Q4 2021/22	
White (White British and White Other)	90.6% (126)	92.9% (210)	93.1%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	2.2% (3)	1.3% (3)	0.8%
Asian/Asian British	0.7% (1)	1.3% (3)	3.5%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	0.7% (1)	1.3% (3)	1.5%
Other ethnic groups	1.4% (2)	0.4% (1)	0.9%
Don't know	4.3% (6)	2.7% (6)	-

As the UK has now left the European Union, migration patterns are changing and the way in which EU citizens are recorded has changed. Eligibility for public funding is subject to the same rules as people from outside the EU unless an EU citizen already has settled status or pre-settled status.

The national and local authority data on H-CLIC regarding homelessness, nationality and eligibility is not available for Quarter 4 in 2021/22. It is not possible in any case to make comparisons directly between estimates from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) on nationality in each local authority area and the data reported through H-CLIC on nationality, as the former does not require any test of eligibility. Different criteria are used by DLUHC and the ONS, which mean some groupings of residents do not correspond.

There are several different ways of presenting information about health and disability. We have both the self-reported claims of physical ill health and disability and information on benefit related claims (for ESA, incapacity benefit and Disability benefit ) in the table below to show that there are several sources of data and that this may be an area which warrants more focus in the future, as it appears that people with ill health and disability are significantly over-represented in homelessness statistics when compared to the overall population.

Table 38: Ill health and disability in Lancaster



In 2018 the Office of National Statistics estimated that 2.1% of the population in the North West of England were gay, lesbian or bisexual. More detailed breakdowns by local authority are not available.

Table 39: Homelessness data on sexual orientation of applicants in Lancaster.

	% of Homeless applicants (and number) in Q4 of 2021/22
Heterosexual	68% (154)
Gay Lesbian and Bisexual	2.2% (5)
Prefer not to say	27.8% (63)
Other	1.7% (4)

The accuracy of the H-CLIC statistics should be treated with caution, because, as the Table above indicates, a high proportion of applicants may not wish to disclose their sexual orientation. There is national research to draw on in relation to the increased likelihood of homelessness for people who identify as LGBTQI+.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, it is clear that economic activity is a protective factor in terms of reducing the risk of homelessness in Lancaster. People who are not in paid work are at a higher risk of becoming homeless. A lower proportion of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in Lancaster are economically active compared to the North West overall. This is quite significant and it may be useful to consider prevention and relief options which also support employment activity for some households, as well as assisting with homelessness.

Table 40: Overall economic status of homeless applicants in quarter 4 of 2021/22 compared to the overall population

	% of Homeless applicants (and number) in Lancaster	% of Homeless applicants in the North West region	% of Homeless applicants in England	NOMIS Labour Market Profile 2021/22: % of working age population in Lancaster
Economically active (part time, full time, self-employed or in training/apprenticeship)	15.9% (36)	22.4%	25%	75.5% (64,700)
Economically inactive and seeking work	43.3% (98)	37.9%	37.2%	4.6% ( 3,100)
Economically inactive due to sickness or disability, carer for children or others in family, retired, students	29.6% (67)	26.4%	25%	20.8% (17,800)
'Not known' and 'Other'	11% (25)	13.2%	12.8%	-

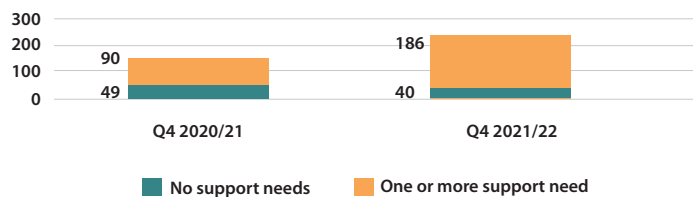
<sup>10</sup> For example see: <https://www.akt.org.uk/report> and also <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02673037.2022.2104819>

## What do we know about the support needs of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in Lancaster ?

The assessment process under the homelessness legislation requires Councils to find out about any particular issues that an applicant might need support with in order to have and to sustain suitable accommodation. We compared Quarter 4 in 2020/21 with the most recently published Quarter 4 in 2021/22.

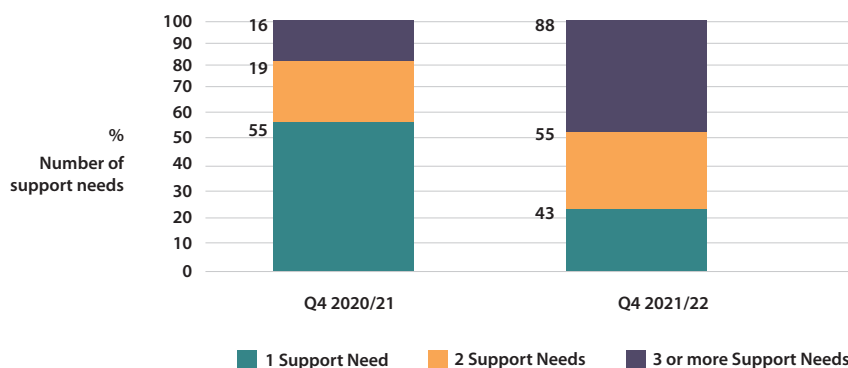
More households made homeless applications in Quarter 4 of 2021/22 than in Quarter 4 of 2020/21 and of these, a higher proportion (82.3%) were reported to have support needs than the same time period in the previous year (64.7%). This could be as a result of improved assessments identifying higher levels of support needs, or that support needs had risen due to a range of other factors. In order to better understand this, monitoring using a full year of data or more is necessary in the future.

Table 41: Number of Households owed a homelessness duty and how many were assessed as having additional Support Needs in Lancaster in Quarters 4 of 2020/21 and 21/22



The chart below sets out the number of assessed support needs of applicants owed either a prevention or a relief duty. Assessments can record up to 3 support needs per household, so the number of support needs recorded in any authority do not equate exactly to the number of applicants.

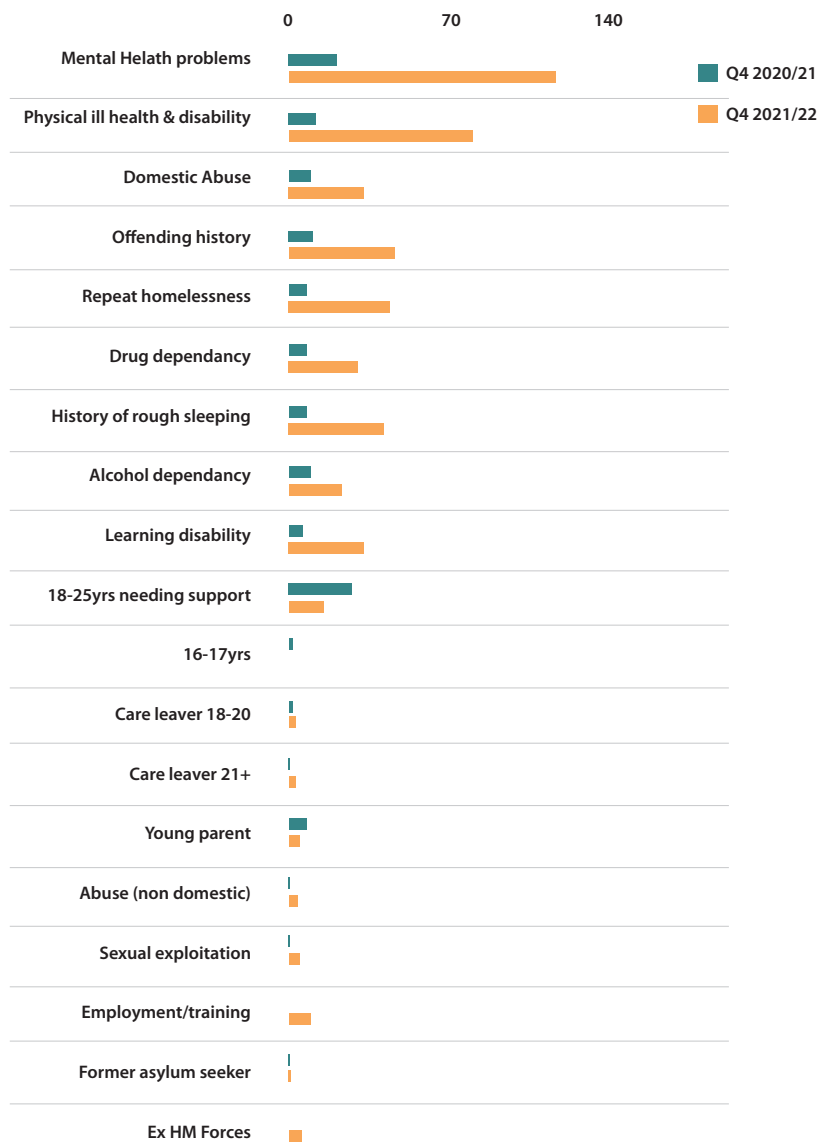
Table 42: The number of support needs recorded per household in Quarter 4 of 2020/21 and 2021/22



As noted above, in Lancaster, there was a significant difference in the proportion of applicants with support needs between Quarter 4 of 2020/21 and the same Quarter in 2021/22, with a rise from 16 applicants with 3 or more support needs to 88 applicants in Quarter 2 of 2021/22.

The detail of the type of support needs households had is set out in the chart below. The 5 highest support needs in Quarter 4 2021/22 were: Mental health; physical ill health and disability; offending, rough sleeping and repeat homelessness. This is a pattern which is repeated regionally and nationally with one exception: domestic abuse is higher in the North West and England overall, replacing rough sleeping. The other difference is that Lancaster City Council are reporting much higher proportions of the most common support needs in Quarter 4 of 2021/22, when compared regionally and nationally. This may reflect the types of households approaching for assistance – as noted earlier (See Tables 31 and 32) many more single people approach for help both at the point of homelessness, as well as when there is a threat of homelessness. A significantly higher proportion of men are owed the ‘relief’ duty than women. The extent of ‘repeat’ homelessness is high and may warrant further analysis in order to plan services to reduce risks of tenancy failure in the future.

Table 43: The Assessed Support Needs of People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness



## What do we know about people who are rough sleeping in Lancaster and their support needs?

Some people who sleep on the streets or outside do so for relatively short periods of time, days or weeks, whilst for other people, sleeping rough can last for several months or more. Like many other areas of England, in Lancaster there are some people who have spent significant periods of time living in hostels, sofa surfing and rough sleeping.

In 2019/20 the Housing Options Service began to commission services, funded by DLUHC's Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) programme, to improve services for people who are rough sleeping in Lancaster. The data and other qualitative evidence informs the increasingly detailed picture about people who are rough sleeping in Lancaster, with monthly counts and estimates providing a continual picture of trends in rough sleeping in the local authority.

Table 44: The characteristics of those counted as rough sleeping

Annual Rough Sleeping Snapshot	2019	2020	2021	2022
Overall number	6	2	3	9
Gender	Male: 5 Female: 1	Male: 0 Female: 2	Male: 3 Female: 0	Male: 7 Female: 2
Nationality	UK: 6	UK: 2	UK: 2 Not known: 1	UK: 9
Age	Over 26: 6	Over 26: 2	Over 26: 3	Over 26: 9

In 2022, the Lancaster and District Homeless Action Service (LDHAS) worked with 142 different people who were homeless and rough sleeping or at high risk of doing so. The average age of clients they worked with was 40 years old and 80% of all those accessing services were male. There is more about LDHAS in Section Two of this Review.

As the UK entered lockdown in March 2020, people who were rough sleeping or at high risk of doing so were offered accommodation under the 'Everyone In' programme<sup>11</sup>. Whilst the pandemic has had a negative impact in many areas of society and the economy, for some people sleeping rough it was a catalyst to being offered assistance to come off the street and stay off the streets in the longer term.

In Lancaster, 59 people who were either rough sleeping or at high risk of doing so were assisted. Of these, 22 people had been rough sleeping regularly and were assessed as 'entrenched' rough sleepers. This positive action continued, with only 1 person still rough sleeping at the height of the pandemic.

People rough sleeping usually have a number of support needs. It is well understood nationally and locally that a significant proportion of people who rough sleep have had a high number of 'adverse childhood experiences'<sup>12</sup> and these can impact on adult lives. Support needs are not reflected in detail in some of the data collected through H-CLIC, as this cannot be extrapolated to particular groups. But through Everyone In, we assessed the needs of people we assisted, including the 22 people who were rough sleeping.

<sup>11</sup> A Government-led programme in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown from March 2020 onward, which required local authorities to get people off the streets through an offer short stay accommodation to all rough sleepers.

<sup>12</sup> For example: abuse (physical, sexual, emotional); living with someone who abused drug or alcohol; exposure to domestic violence; living with someone who has gone to prison; living with someone with serious mental illness; losing a parent through divorce, death or abandonment.

Table 45: Summary of gender and support needs of 22 people who had been rough sleeping in Lancaster and were assisted off the street through 'Everyone In'.

Details of the 22 people who have been rough sleeping	Number	Percentage of the total
Female	5	23%
Male	17	77%
Drug misuse/addiction	6	27%
Alcohol addiction	5	23%
Mental health issues	10	45%
History of offending behaviour	13	59%
Victim of domestic abuse	3	14%
Perpetrator of domestic abuse	0	0
Physical health issues	6	27%
Exploitation	1	4%
Aged under 25	0	0
Learning difficulty	2	9%
At risk from others	0	0

Over the last 3 years and in particular in response to the 'Everyone In' directive from Government, additional rough sleeping services in Lancaster have been developed. These services contribute to the understanding about the needs of rough sleepers. More about the services available are outlined in Section 2 of this Review.



## Use of Temporary Accommodation (TA) for those who have, or may have a priority need for accommodation

The table below sets out use of TA in the 4th Quarter of 3 of the 4 most recent years. One year, 2020, is missing as this has not been published. In addition, the most recently published Quarter of data is also noted, in order to highlight the particular trends in use of TA.

The numbers in Temporary Accommodation have risen significantly over the last 3 years, from 8 in March 2019 to 34 households in March 2022, a rise of 325%. There has been an increase in the last 2 years in single people /couples with no dependent children. Some of the increase is likely to be related to the Covid-19 pandemic and the 'Everyone In' programme. In March 2019, 37.5% of those in Temporary Accommodation had no dependent children, but by March 2022 this had risen to 82%.

However this is a changing picture. The most recently published H-CLIC data for Quarter 1 of 2022/23 showed that there were 28 households in TA, of which 13, or 46%, were families.

Table 46: Temporary Accommodation by household type and accommodation type in Lancaster

Quarter ending	Total	Families	Total number of children	Single people	Other household type	LA/RP stock	Hostel	Private Sector Leased	Bed & Breakfast	Other TA types	Number placed out of area
March 2019	8	5	12	2	1	2	0	1	2	3	0
March 2021	40	5	13	26	9	9	13	0	15	3	0
March 2022	34	6	17	29	1	3	0	0	31	0	0
June 2022	28	8	30	20	0	8	0	0	20	0	0

The use of different types of TA varies which may be due to the particular issues with the TA itself, or the complexity of a person's needs, or particular issues within a family, which means placing them into the available suitable TA is not possible.

Based on the Table above, Lancaster is increasingly using bed and breakfast accommodation. This is a high cost to local authorities and is generally a low quality type of TA.

The use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families, is unsuitable and unlawful if used for over 6 weeks. In March 2021 there was 1 family in bed and breakfast accommodation and they had been there for over 6 weeks. In March 2022 there were 3 families in bed and breakfast accommodation in Lancaster, of which 1 family had been there for more than 6 weeks.

In June 2022 there were 5 families in bed and breakfast although none had been there for more than 6 weeks. All single people were placed into bed and breakfast.

Table 47: Duty under which a household is placed in TA

Duty under which a household was placed into Temporary Accommodation		
Duty owed	March 2021	March 22
S193: the 'main' duty	6	4
Interim duties: pending enquiries; intentionally homeless; review appeal; pending referral	17	29
S189B power	5	0
Duty ended	12	1

A number of households were recorded on the Table above as being placed into Temporary Accommodation in March 2021 under a power not a duty. This is likely to be related to needing to find and place single people at risk of rough sleeping but who did not have a priority need for accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown period in early 2021.

The length of stay in Temporary Accommodation increased significantly in 2020/21. This is likely to be related to the Covid-19 pandemic and difficulties in moving on into new tenancies some homeless households, in part due to a slowdown in lettings generally in the private and social housing sectors but also in part due to the challenges of finding suitable settled accommodation for some people who have been rough sleeping who have high levels of support needs.

Use of the private rented and social housing sectors to end homelessness duties:

The prevention and the relief duties can both be ended through the offer of a 6 month Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) in the private rented sector or a social tenancy offer. In Lancaster, like every area, the likelihood of a social housing offer is limited, based on the level of priority awarded through the banding on the housing register. As noted earlier, the private rented sector may be unaffordable for low income households in the City, if they are reliant on welfare support.

There was reported to be slowdown in access to both sectors in 2020/21 at the point there was a significant increase in demand and higher use of Temporary Accommodation for single people. The slowdown is in part attributable to the impact of Covid-19. Supply chain issues have delayed repairs and combined with periods of lockdown social landlords slowed their lettings for large periods of 2020/21.

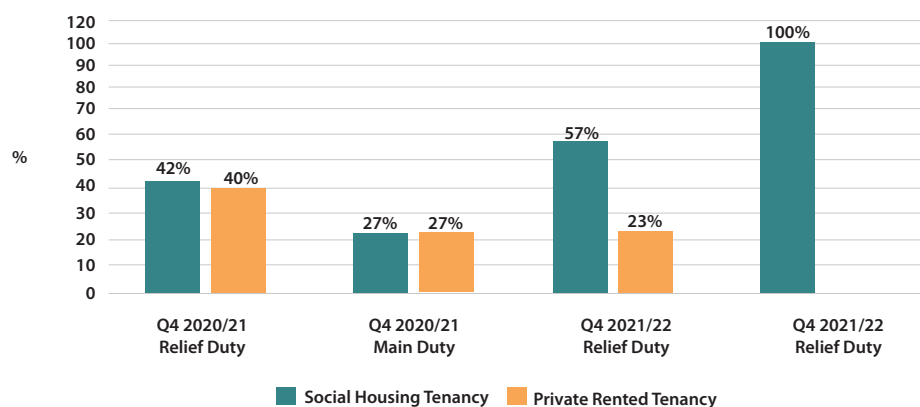
Private landlords had fewer vacant properties for letting as people tended not to move so readily. Since this point there has been a lifting of the suspension of possession orders, with an ending of lockdowns, and an easing of supply chain difficulties. In addition, other agencies have also been accessing the private rented sector for vulnerable households, most notably SERCO, which has been leasing accommodation in the local authority area in order to house those households seeking asylum and awaiting decisions from the Home Office.

The relief duty lasts for 56 days and for those households then owed the main housing duty, the offer must be either social housing or a tenancy in the private rented sector for 12 months. Local authorities generally report that this is more difficult and the Table below shows this is the case in Lancaster, with only 2 of the 34 tenancies in the private rented sector being for households which were owed the main duty.

There has been a general expectation that the Homelessness Reduction Act would enable Councils to end relief duties more readily with the 6 month AST option, and over time reduce numbers owed the main duty.

This does appear to be the case at the moment in Lancaster. However social housing is much more likely to be the route through which households are re-housed.

Table 48: Comparing the use of Social and Private Rented Sector for ending of Homelessness Duties



## What legislative or policy changes might impact on levels of homelessness for particular groups in Lancaster?

### At a National level

The overall picture is one of economic instability resulting in pressures on low income households in particular. The Covid-19 pandemic and prior to that, the departure of the UK from the European Union have both had an impact on the UK economy. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia since March 2022 has contributed significantly as well to rising costs, most notably energy costs but also food costs.

This review has been undertaken in the Autumn of 2022, following a period in October 2022 of significant change to Government economic policy, resulting in severe instability in the financial markets and a sharp rise in interest rates which will impact on millions of households with fixed rate mortgages, including some private landlords with buy-to-let mortgages.

Whilst most of the policy proposals have now been reversed, measures have been needed to deal with the accumulated Government debt, which includes the significant amount borrowed to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic and the furlough scheme, which, by March 2021 was estimated to have cost the public purse £53 billion.

The Government indicated in early November 2022 that there will be tax rises and public sector cuts to deal with the accumulated debt and also the annual deficit. Where the most significant public sector cuts will fall is not yet clear as some of these decisions have been delayed for 2 years.

The symptoms of the economic instability has been rising inflation have been impacting on households and businesses. It is widely accepted that lower income households are more adversely affected by inflation in terms of food and energy costs<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> For example, see: <https://policyinpractice.co.uk/cost-of-living-crisis-low-income-families-with-children-set-to-be-1683-worse-off-this-winter/>

The Government had already committed to ending rough sleeping by end of this Parliament, which is in 2024 with various programmes of funding from Government being made available to local authorities since 2018. A new Rough Sleeping Strategy, 'Ending Rough Sleeping for Good' was published in September 2022. It committed to cross Government actions and additional funding over the next 3 years which aims to 'prevent first' in order to stop more people rough sleeping in the future. In the strategy document the Government ambitions, policy and funding commitments cover some new areas of funding and policy change and also investment which has already been committed to. Areas included are:

- Continuation of the Rough Sleeping Initiative funding - £500 million
- Continuation of the Homeless Prevention Grant to support the work under the Homelessness Reduction Act - £316 million
- More focus on stopping homelessness on leaving institutions ( children's social care, hospital, secure estate, the Armed Forces )
- A new Supported Accommodation Programme - which is focused on young people in particular - capital and revenue £200 million
- The Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme – 6,000 units of long term accommodation for former rough sleepers - £433 million
- Transforming of Night Shelter accommodation into single room provision - £10 million
- Drug and alcohol services
- Work with Job Centre Plus to assist people into employment
- Funding to voluntary agencies
- Funding to establish more evidence and knowledge regarding what works well
- Improved data /information

The Domestic Abuse Act received Royal Assent In April 2021 and introduced some significant changes in homelessness, through the amending of Part 7 of Housing Act 1996, giving victims of domestic abuse a priority need for accommodation. The definition of domestic abuse, as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act has been incorporated into the homelessness legislation. As a consequence, local authorities have to ensure they can offer safe temporary accommodation to those fleeing domestic abuse and set out an annual strategy for doing so based on local needs.

Many victims of domestic abuse will already have a 'priority need' for accommodation without having to demonstrate vulnerability, because they have dependent children. The changes will mean single people and couples without children now have a priority need if they are homeless as a result of domestic abuse. A new burdens assessment has led to additional funding being provided to local authorities.

## Housing reform changes:

The Affordable Homes Programme for 2021 – 2026 aims to supporting the building of 180,000 new homes. The Programme will be worth £11.5 billion. There has been a change in prioritisation, reducing the proportion of building for the rental market towards a 50 – 50 split with affordable home ownership.

Local authorities have been granted greater flexibilities to build affordable housing through the investment of monies from Right to Buy sales. House building using Right to Buy receipts, combined with the abolition of the borrowing cap in 2018 mean that some local authorities which still own their own stock are in a stronger position to plan new developments of housing to meet community needs.

In May 2021, the Government announced the implementation of First Homes from 28 June 2021, which includes the requirement that 25% of the affordable housing secured through planning obligations is provided as First Homes (homes with a discount of at least 30% on the market value). In many areas, the likely impact will be a reduction in the level of social and affordable rented homes delivered and more homes for purchase are developed.

The Government has committed to £3.8 billion over 3 years through the Social Housing Decarbonisation programme. Using a new Government standard, all social housing landlords are working to ensure their properties are not below Level C in EPC assessments.

The Government awarded funding to 69 Councils in England to assist with increasing the energy efficiency of homes and support the decarbonising targets relating to social housing. A second round of bidding is due in 2023. Lancaster City Council was not awarded any funding in the first round.

## Other housing policy changes

Private renting tenants have some more protections, brought in over the last 5 years:

The Tenant Fees Act 2019 bans private landlords and letting agents from charging a 'relevant person' (a tenant, licensee, guarantor or person acting on their behalf) any fee unless it is a 'permitted payment'. Where a local housing authority is acting on behalf of someone in helping them to secure accommodation under homelessness duties, they are exempt from the restrictions. A 'permitted payment' includes rent, a tenancy deposit (up to maximum of five or six weeks' rent), a holding deposit (up to maximum of one week's rent), a fee in the event of a 'relevant default', damages for breach of agreement, in connection with tenant's request for a change in their tenancy agreement or in respect of council tax, utilities, communication services and TV licence.

The Deregulation Act 2015 introduced protection for private rented tenants against retaliatory evictions. Retaliatory eviction is where a tenant makes a legitimate complaint to their landlord about the condition of their property and instead of making the repair the landlord serves them with an eviction notice. All new Assured Shorthold Tenancies starting on or after 1 October 2015 are covered by the provisions in the Act.

In April 2019 the Government signalled it was considering abolishing 'no fault' evictions to give greater security to tenants, to be set out in a new Renter's Reform Bill. In June 2022 the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published a White Paper, A Fairer Private Sector Rented Sector. There is consultation phase underway through the White Paper. There are different views on the advantages and challenges of abolishing Section 21 or 'no fault' notices. The main cause of a threat or homelessness at the moment is the issuing of a Section 21 notice, which gives tenants very little security in their homes.

One concern raised by organisations representing landlords is that this will be a catalyst for landlords to sell and leave the market. Ending of a tenancy in the private rented sector through Section 21 was reported to be the highest cause of a threat of homelessness in Lancaster in Quarter 4 of 2021/22, which mirrors the national position.

A Select Committee focussed on exempt accommodation met during 2022 and published a final report and recommendations in October 2022. It found that the current system of exempt accommodation, a type of supported housing that is used to house a range of people with support needs, is a 'complete mess' that is failing too many residents and local communities at the expense of the taxpayer<sup>14</sup>.

An All Party Parliamentary Group ( APPG) is began to meet in 2022 with an aim to improve the health, lives and experiences of families and single adults living in Temporary Accommodation (TA) across England<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> The final report from the DLUHC Select Committee on Exempt Accommodation can be found here: <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/17/levelling-up-housing-and-communities-committee/news/173906/exempt-housing-and-support-services-are-a-complete-mess-says-committee/>

<sup>15</sup> The most recent report from the APPG on Temporary Accommodation can be found here: <https://householdsintemporaryaccommodation.co.uk>

## At a regional level:

There are policies and strategies that relate directly or indirectly to homelessness and cover the Lancashire area. For example:

- The Lancashire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021 – 2024 published by Lancashire Domestic Abuse Partnership Board
- Mental Health Strategy for Children, Young People and Adults 2021 – 2024 published by the NHS Lancashire Teaching Hospitals

Local policy and planning relating to homelessness and rough sleeping

Lancaster City Council's Homes Strategy 2020 – 2025 has set out a wide range of plans which indirectly and directly support work to prevent and relieve homelessness, in terms of improving the quality and quantity of affordable housing locally. Set out in the Strategy are plans to commence small scale social and affordable house building programmes, developing a new local authority owned housing company as a vehicle for achieving this, as well as measures to improve the quality of both social and private rented housing stock, working with other landlords to do so.

Although not awarded any funding in the first round of bidding under the decarbonisation programme, work is already underway in Lancaster to retrofit social housing to bring stock up to a Level C in terms of Energy Performance Certificate.

## Summary of key points from Section One:

- The 3 domains of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation which Lancaster scores more highly on are: employment; poor health and quality of the living environment, which includes housing.
- Demand for social housing has risen over the last 3 years, with most demand for 1 and 2 bed properties.
- Waiting times have lengthened. In 2019/20, before the Covid-19 pandemic, around 16% of households on the Housing Register were re-housed, but by 2021/22 this had fallen to 11%. Wait times are longer for those with a Band C and Band E.
- Rents have risen and continue to increase in the private rented sector. Generally, the levels of housing costs paid through the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is not sufficient to meet rent costs in the lower quartile of the market in most parts of the Council. This is of particular concern with rising rents but also energy bills and food costs.
- There are indications that homelessness overall is rising, with higher rates per 1,000 households in Lancaster than both the North West region and England.
- Alongside this, numbers of people who are rough sleeping are reported to be rising again in Lancaster, with 9 people identified in a 'snapshot' taken in November 2022.
- The Council is recording lower levels of success in terms of prevention of homelessness rates. In Quarter 4 of 2021/22 rates of success were 10% lower than the regional and national averages.
- There were also comparatively lower rates of success in Lancaster in helping people to retain their existing accommodation, rather than move to a new type of housing arrangement/tenancy.
- In Quarter 4 of 2021/22, a high proportion of households living in the private rented sector came for assistance to the Council because they were threatened with homelessness.
- In the same Quarter, the main cause of threat of homelessness was loss of a tenancy in the private rented sector. This is likely to be a combination of the lifting of the temporary stay on possession orders, which was brought in during the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the cost of living crisis, rising rents and landlords opting to sell or re-let at higher rent levels.

- As a proportion, there are more households without dependent children approaching the Council for assistance than the North West or national proportions.
- More women seek assistance than men at the point they are threatened with homelessness, and conversely, more men seek assistance than women when they are already homeless.
- There has been a notable increase in the use of the 'Duty to Refer' by the specified public bodies, with the National Probation Service being the highest referrer by some margin in Quarter 4 of 2021/22. Job Centre Plus is also a regular referrer into the Housing Options Service in Lancaster.
- People who have poor ill health ( mental or physical ) are much more likely to become homeless than those adults who have fair or good health.
- There is not yet enough detailed information available in Lancaster through the H-CLIC reporting on ethnicity to determine if some groups are at more risk of homelessness than others based on their ethnicity.
- There are lower rates of working households seeking assistance due to homelessness in Lancaster, compared to the North West region and England overall. Conversely there are a higher proportion of households seeking assistance which are not economically active, including people seeking work and those who are not economically active, usually due to caring responsibilities or ill health.
- In Quarter 4 of 2021/22 there was a sharp rise in the overall number of recorded support needs of applicants compared to the same Quarter the previous year. This may warrant further analysis.
- The 5 types of support needs which were recorded most frequently were: a history of mental health problems; ill health and physical disability; a history of offending; rough sleeping and repeat homelessness. Also scoring highly were domestic abuse and drug misuse.
- The support needs of the 22 people rough sleeping during the Covid-19 pandemic and supported off the street through the 'Everyone In' programme, found that the most common support needs were mental health issues and a history of offending.
- Use of Temporary Accommodation (TA) has increased significantly over the last 2.5 years. From a low position in March 2019, when there were 8 households in TA, this had risen to 34 households by the end of March 2022. Most of these households were being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation.
- The profile of households in TA has also changed. In March 2019, 37.5% of those in Temporary Accommodation had no dependent children, but by March 2021 this had risen to 82%.
- Accommodation offers in social housing are more likely to be used than private rented offers to end either the relief or main duty. It is significantly more likely that a household will move into the private rented sector under the relief duty, on a 6 month AST than a 12 month AST under the main duty.

# 2



**The current activity  
and resources available  
to prevent and  
relieve homelessness  
in Lancaster**



This Section of the review covers what is available to the local authority and the area in terms of capacity to support work on homelessness. This includes work with partner agencies, as well as funding, staffing and the types of housing choices available.

## **The financial resources available to Lancaster City Council**

All housing authorities in England have had an uplift from the Government over the last 5 years in financial resources to support work on both preventing homelessness and relieving homelessness, including targeted funding which is specifically aimed at assisting people who are rough sleeping. The funding programme changes over time, with some funding streams being short-term programme-based and targeted.

The funding is set out in 2 headings: General Homelessness Prevention and Relief and below that a heading specifically for Rough Sleeping work, but there is some cross over between these, as people rough sleeping who are eligible can also access services under the Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and would be able to get some assistance on that basis as well as through the more targeted rough sleeping funding services. Some information was not available for this Review, so there are some gaps in terms of allocation of funding for some specific areas of work, especially on rough sleeping.

Table 49: Funding for work on homelessness and rough sleeping allocated by central Government

General Homelessness Related Funding from Central Government: Grant/Award	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<p>DLUHC - Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) : A ring-fenced grant, which is to enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and contribute to ending rough sleeping by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing activity to prevent single homelessness</li> <li>Reduce family temporary accommodation numbers through maximising family homelessness prevention,</li> <li>Eliminate the use of unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation for families for longer than the statutory six week limit.</li> </ul> <p>In addition 2 further payments have been made via the HPG:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Domestic Abuse Act New Burdens funding</li> <li>Exceptional one off payments for additional funding over winter.</li> </ul>	<p>£398,484</p> <p>During 2020/21 the funding was still split into 2 separate funding streams ( the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and the Homelessness Reduction Grant, previously new burdens funding ).</p>	<p>£478,898</p> <p>Domestic Abuse Act New Burdens funding £9,902</p> <p>One-off exception payment for winter of 2021/22: £100,414</p>	<p>£478,898</p> <p>Domestic Abuse Act New Burdens funding £9,902</p> <p>One-off exception payment for winter of 2022/23: £77,242</p>
<p>DWP - Discretionary Housing Payments: available to local authorities to assist people on a one off or short term basis if they are in receipt of housing costs/ housing benefit and where there is a shortfall in their rent. Guidance set out how this may be used. DHP can be used for prevention of homelessness</p>	£371,502	£263,085	£182,678
<p>Supported Housing Improvement Programme ( SHIP) funding: Lancaster City Council and Preston City Council were awarded funding in November 2022 through a joint bid to improve support offered to vulnerable people living in non-commissioned exempt accommodation .</p>	N/A	N/A	£627,299 Total funding to be split between the 2 Councils, to be spent by March 2025
Funding for Rough Sleeping Services	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
DLUHC - Rough Sleeping Initiative	£226,875	£129,000 with Fylde and Wyre	£603,660 3 year funding award for 2022 - 2025
DLUHC - Rapid Rehousing Pathway funding for:			
DLUHC - Next Steps Accommodation Programme to source accommodation for people assisted off the streets during Covid-19 pandemic	£192,000 revenue only for winter provision, emergency accommodation, Help2Rent Landlord Incentive Scheme and expansion of the Floating Support Service	N/A	N/A
Protect and Vaccinate funding	N/A	N/A	£69,433
One off grant to increase the uptake of vaccinations amongst homeless single people			(£61,480 for accommodation and ££7,953 for vaccination take up)

## The structure of Lancaster City Council's Homelessness Services

The Housing Options Service is managed by a Principal Officer. Day to day operational management is through a Team Leader post but this has been vacant for several months at the point of finishing this Review ( February 2022) despite advertising the role twice.

The Service:

- The Principal Manager
- A Team Leader
- 7 Housing Options Officers -a mix of part time and full time
- 1 Housing Options Officer with a specialism in work with victims of domestic abuse
- A Policy and Projects Officer
- A Temporary Accommodation support worker to work with households placed in Bed & Breakfast accommodation and other dispersed accommodation across the district.
- A Private Sector liaison and support worker

## Working in partnership in Lancaster to prevent and relieve homelessness

Within the local authority area there are a range of public and voluntary organisations and businesses which work individually and also together to prevent and relieve homelessness. For some agencies this is their primary purpose, for others it is one of several aims. For some of the partners there are shared aspirations to assist vulnerable people, and being homeless runs counter to achieving positive outcomes, for example, in employment or good mental health.

## Lancaster's Homelessness Forum and Homelessness Advisory Group

Partners meet through the Homelessness Forum in Lancaster, which covers all elements of homelessness, In addition there is a Homelessness Advisory Group, which has a focus on single homelessness and in particular, people who are rough sleeping.

Members of these bodies communicate between each other, often work together on cases and meet regularly. These groups are an opportunity for partner agencies and some individual landlords to discuss work, communicate any developments and challenges and find solutions where possible.

Members of both bodies understand the complexities of homelessness, in terms of both causes and potential solutions. The Advisory Group members, many of whom are also part of the Forum, reflected at a meeting in the Autumn of 2022 that joint working had increased, and communication improved as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, which acted as a catalyst in bringing agencies together.

The Homelessness Advisory Group and Forum have a shared understanding regarding the housing crisis in Lancaster for people on low incomes. The importance of working together to try to prevent homelessness and reducing the risks to households is a key feature of both bodies.

There are concerns regarding the lack of social housing and the risk of staff 'burn out' due to the levels of demand and need and the challenge of finding tangible housing solutions for some households.

## Early Intervention and Prevention Services

### General housing advice services

Local authorities have a duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to provide information and advice on homelessness and the prevention of homelessness. This must be free and accessible, and some groups at higher risk of homelessness must be provided with specific information.

On the local authority website there is general information and signposting to other agencies and services, but there is no targeted information for groups at higher risk of homelessness.

### Community based advice and support services

There is a range of services in Lancaster which offer advice and practical assistance to households and in so doing, they indirectly or directly assist people to retain their accommodation and avoid any threat of homelessness.

The ambition of Lancaster City Council and their partners is to support people to remain where they live, as long as the accommodation is reasonable to occupy. The services below offer advice and support to different groups of people in different circumstances. Considerations of safety, affordability, overcrowding and the state of repair of a property are all aspects to be assessed. Where a move to different accommodation is needed, because the person/household cannot remain where they are, the aim is to plan ahead and avoid any risk of homelessness.

Having a comprehensive network of community support agencies, including the Council, which work to prevent the more severe impacts of poverty is a protective factor for households with low incomes in Lancaster.

North Lancashire Citizen's Advice has offices in Morecambe and in Lancaster provides a range of advice and assistance to members of the public, covering:

- Housing
- Money advice
- Welfare benefits
- Employment
- Community Support
- Cost of living

The NLCAB also work in partnership with many other agencies, for example, as outlined below they play a key role in administering the Household Support Fund for the local authority.

Lancaster City Council provide funding to NLCAB to provide a full time homeless debt advisor to provide advice to households and prevention risks of homelessness.

## The Home Improvement Agency

An award winning Service in Lancaster City Council, which aims to support vulnerable and disabled people to stay in their own homes and live independently. The HIA makes full use of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) for aids, adaptations, including arranging necessary adaptations prior to people being discharged from hospital. In addition the Home Improvement Agency can offer a wide range of other inter-linked services including:

- A Handyman Technician service - low cost repair and maintenance service
- Advice and assistance with energy efficiency changes for DFG applicants
- A Sanctuary scheme for those experiencing domestic abuse or anti-social behaviour ( see below)

Job Centre Plus is one of the main referral agencies to Lancaster City Council under the Duty to Refer (see Section 1, Table 33). The Job Centre works with vulnerable households to:

- resolve issues directly with claims
- apply easements where appropriate
- build positive interactions through trying to keep the same work coaches assigned to claimants

Household Support Fund provides financial support to households which are struggling with rising costs.

Lancashire County Council receive and then apportion funding from the Department for Work and Pensions to district authorities. £9, 678,235 was allocated to the County in Round Three of the HSF, which covers October 2022 – March 2023.

Lancaster City Council manage the funding for the District in partnership with North Lancashire Citizens Advice and the Lancaster District Food Justice Partnership. No more than one application per household can be considered for each round of the funding made available through the Fund.

Lancaster's Community Hub was set up to reach and assist local residents during Covid-19 pandemic and has continued as part of Lancaster City Council's Customer Services team. The team have a presence in communities, as well as offering on-line video calls. A team of community connectors aim to bring services, information and advice more readily to people who would not usually access Lancaster City Council services.

The Lancaster District Food Justice Partnership works to reduce food poverty for households on low incomes through raising the profile of food poverty and practical help to those in communities who need assistance through food banks, community run food pantries/ co-ops, food clubs and provision of meals for particularly vulnerable communities.

## Services to prevent and relieve homelessness

### Generic Prevention tools

- Negotiation with landlords or with parents/family/friends to prevent eviction
- Resolving landlord and tenant disputes
- Work with the Housing Standards Service on cases of illegal eviction and disrepair cases
- Income maximisation
- Referrals to North Lancashire Citizen's Advice for money and benefits advice
- Help with registering for social housing
- Use of Discretionary Housing Payments for those in receipt of housing benefit/costs in order to access to additional housing benefit on a short-term basis where agreed
- Use of Homelessness Prevention funding for rent deposits and rent in advance, or to pay off arrears in some instances.

Discretionary Housing Payments are used to assist households in receipt of housing benefit with additional short term and one off housing costs. DHP funding comes from DWP to local authorities each year. In Lancaster City Council DHP is administered by the Benefits Team, a shared service between Preston and Lancaster. Some of the payments are made to prevent homelessness and assist people to find new accommodation. The DHP amounts have reduced year on year. In 2021/22, 108% of the allocation from DWP was used. Of the £285,155, the payments can be broken down into the following categories:

Table 50: Categories of DHP awards in 2021/22

Category of award	Amount spent in 2021/22	% of Lancaster's total spend through DHP awards in 2021/22
Benefit cap	£14,131	4.9%
Ending of Spare Room Subsidy	£22,707	7.9%
Local Housing Allowance	£154,566	54.2%
Combination of factors relating to welfare reform	£13,195	4.6%
Non-welfare related payments	£79,836	27.9%

## Rough Sleeping Services

The Everyone In programme in 2020 successfully assisted 22 people off the streets who had long term histories of rough sleeping, and into accommodation, and helped a further 37 people at high risk of rough sleeping.

Despite the success of Everyone In, the number of single people rough sleeping is rising again, with the most recent 'snapshot' in November 2022 recording 9 people, compared to 3 in November 2021.

Services to assist people who are rough sleeping have increased and diversified to meet a wider range of unmet needs over the last 3 years. Adding to the existing tranche of work funded through the Rough Sleeping Initiative programme, and existing well-established services run by Lancaster and District Homeless Action Service (see below for more information on LDHAS), and some other agencies, the set of services is as follows:

- Street Outreach Service to meet and offer support to people rough sleeping.
- 1 Navigator employed by Calico provides a mixture of outreach, support and liaison for people in short stay accommodation who need move on into more settled accommodation and close working with the Supported Lettings Service
- Supported Lettings Service provided by Calico has 1 Manager, 2 Floating Support Workers. Work with landlords to secure tenancies accommodation for people recovering from rough sleeping and offer floating support.
- Peer-led befriending for people with lived experience of homelessness provided by Let's Be Friends
- A Health and Well-Being Service with a full time post of Parish Nurse employed by West End Impact enabling access to primary care services and other health and well-being NHS services and access to 2 specialist health/ fitness workers to assess and plan health and well-being sessions with former rough sleepers, and free gym membership via a Leisure Centre in Morecambe
- A Housing First pilot to be commissioned in the next few months.

All the agencies involved in Lancaster in the delivery of rough sleeping services work closely together. Working relationships are described as very good - close, open and honest, with challenge at times when needed. There is a good understanding of the difficulties that the local authority face in finding accommodation for households who are homeless, including those rough sleeping. The Covid-19 pandemic was, for some agencies, a catalyst in terms of deeper partnership working and appreciation of each other's roles.

The feedback shared in Autumn 2022 at a Homeless Advisory Group meeting highlighted:

- Levels of repeat homelessness, in part due to challenges of meeting people's support needs in supported housing
- Access to services and some ambiguity in terms of referral pathways between Adult Social Care and Mental Health Services
- Use of the private rented sector as an option being increasingly challenging, with less availability for those on low incomes who are also vulnerable

Emergency Accommodation: Following on from 'Everyone In' during the Covid-19 pandemic, funding was identified by Lancaster City Council to continue to continue to accommodate people who were previously rough sleeping but did not have a 'priority need' for Temporary Accommodation. This was done under power, as these were people for whom there was not a statutory duty to provide Temporary Accommodation.

However, it has been noted that there is no longer an offer of 'off the street' accommodation or somewhere safe to go, for people who have been sleeping rough. The direct access night shelter closed several years ago and there has been no replacement of this to date.

Lancaster and District Homeless Action Service provide in a single location a range of advice and information, signposting and referrals to specialist agencies, as well as practical help and services. There is a strong partnership approach ethos underpinning the services delivered from the current day centre premises, which is a portacabin in Edward Street, and a new replacement building is due to be opened nearby in early 2023.

Five staff, supported by volunteers, provide breakfast, lunch, showers, laundry facilities, clothing, use of IT, use of phone, can provide a 'care of' address and casework support. A homeless hub or 'one stop shop' has been set up, comprising of several agencies which attend regularly (some daily). Amongst these are Calico, Red Rose Recovery, Inspire, Changing Futures, a nurse (via Changing Futures,) Citizens Advice, and the Hepatitis C Trust. Eye tests are provided and there is an ongoing project with a poet. LDHAS are currently in the process of attempting to secure the services of a mental health practitioner.

There is strong synergy between the work of LDHAS and the Changing Futures programme (see below).

Health and Well Being Services available for people who are rough sleeping or recovering from rough sleeping have increased over the last 3 years:

- Salt Ayre Leisure Centre have 2 Health and Well-Being Coaches who work with people on their individual health outcomes. Alongside this, free gym membership is provided.
- A Parish Nurse employed by a faith-based organization, West End Impact, offers holistic health care and facilitates access into primary care services,
- Bespoke personalised budgets enable people who were formerly rough sleeping to set up new homes

Calico's Supported Lettings Service works with people who are or have been sleeping rough, to support them to access services and then work towards finding and keeping suitable housing in the private rented sector. Support is geared to individual needs and is offered on all aspects of tenancy management.

Let's be Friends has been set up and is being delivered by people in Lancaster who have all had experience of being homeless, including, but not limited to, the experience of rough sleeping.

The Service, which is completely peer-led, was funded initially for 12 months through the Government's Rough Sleeping programme work following the 'Everyone In' programme and has been funded more recently as part of a successful application by Lancaster City Council to the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative.

The Service aims to address isolation, a key feature in the lives of many people who have or are experiencing homelessness. At the point of undertaking this Review in late 2022, there have been 40 referrals. Training has been delivered with 26 people with lived experience of homelessness, so they are able to volunteer as befrienders. There are inevitably a turnover of people coming forward, as many people go on to get jobs. In the Autumn of 2022 this was around 26% of all befrienders. A further 7% of those trained have entered into education or a training programme. At the time of this Review there are 10 befriender volunteers and 3 people wishing to be matched to a befriender. Referrals come from a range of different places, including the Housing Options Service.

The Changing Futures provision in the local authority area is part of a £64 million 3 year pilot programme which aims to improve outcomes for adults experiencing multiple disadvantage in England. The programme commenced in 2021 and will end in 2024. Lancashire, including Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, was one of 15 areas in England to be awarded Changing Futures funding. The delivery for the county has been divided into 4 areas, with the Lancaster and Morecambe being the North Lancashire area.



The programme is voluntary and is outcome based, which means there is detailed monitoring over time with those on the programme to understand more about the impacts of interventions offered through the programme. In order to apply, applicants need to have 3 of the 5 areas of multiple disadvantage identified through the programme:

- homelessness
- substance misuse
- mental health issues
- domestic abuse
- contact with the criminal justice system.

The partners in the North of Lancashire working on the programme are:

- Lancaster City Council
- The National Probation Service
- The Well Communities
- Change Grow Live (CGL)
- Lancaster District Community Voluntary Solutions
- Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Trust Foundation
- University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust

There are approximately 60 people on the programme.

Lancaster District Street Aid was launched in 2021 to enable members of the public to make cashless donations to assist people rough sleeping rather than donate cash on the street. There are several cashless terminals where people can make a minimum donation of £3.00 by tapping their bank card on a QR code. Donations go towards assisting individuals with a new life off the street, through setting up a home and help prepare for job interviews. Several partners joined Lancaster District Council in developing the initiative including Lancaster BID (Business Improvement District), Lancaster District CVS and Lancaster and Morecambe Area Police.

## Domestic Abuse Services

In 2020 -21 and also in 2021 -22, 5% of all households threatened with homelessness have domestic abuse as the primary cause of risk of homelessness in Lancaster and this rises to around 11% for those households which are homeless. In addition, the number of households where a support need was recorded relating to domestic abuse rose from 11 in Quarter 4 of 2020 -21 to 36 in the same quarter of the following year.

The Homes Improvement Agency deliver 'sanctuary' services to some victims of domestic abuse. These aim to assist people to stay in their homes safely, by assessing accommodation and completing low level security works where clients are at risk of experiencing domestic abuse or anti -social behaviour. The Service is funded by the Council's Housing Options Service.

In 2021/22, 17 households were assisted with the completion of 'sanctuary' work.

When people are not able to stay in their own homes, emergency and short term housing options are available and are provided across Lancashire and other parts of the North West by SafeNet, which is part of the Calico Group. Many victims of domestic abuse in Lancaster will not stay in accommodation within the District but move out of the area. The provision within Lancaster is listed later in this Section, in Table 51 below.

The number of people fleeing domestic abuse which SafeNet can support in Lancaster has significantly increased over the last 3 years from a refuge of 6 spaces to 28 spaces across 3 different services, one of which is 'second-stage' accommodation for up to 6 women and is not emergency access. One service is for 2 men.

There is a new post within Lancaster's Housing Options Service, which is a full time Housing Options Officer who has a specialist focus on working with victims of domestic abuse.

Due to the changes and growth in the SafeNet Services and the significant changes to usual joint working arrangements with local authority during Covid, the levels of communication between agencies working on domestic abuse have reduced temporarily.

## Services for people leaving hospital who may be at risk of homelessness or have no accommodation to return to

Discharge from hospital with no accommodation is not recorded a major cause of homelessness in Lancaster and the numbers of people referred from hospitals under the 'duty to refer' is low in Lancaster, with between 1 and 3 referrals made each quarter. This is unlikely to reflect the reality of day to day work between the Housing Options Service and local hospitals, with people who are 'familiar faces' to several services accessing, for example, Accident and Emergency services, other acute health services, mental health services, substance misuse services and housing options services. Some people will also come into contact with criminal justice agencies.

The pressures on the NHS are likely to mean that there is less consistency in referrals to the Housing Option Service through the 'duty to refer' route, so ensuring there are a range of 'touch points' between Lancaster City Council and the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust is important for successful joint working. The following services are in place:

- The Homes Improvement Agency work with hospitals and patients on adaptations, to ensure people have a home that is reasonable for them to occupy on discharge from hospital.
- 2 Hospital Alcohol Liaison Specialist Nurses (HALS) work as part of the 'Familiar Faces' Team with colleagues from the Mental Health Liaison Team. They are based in A&E and can identify, support and refer people with these issues.
- A Complex Needs Panel meets monthly and is attended by Accident and Emergency staff, the Housing Options Service and the Police.
- A bi-monthly 'Familiar Faces' multi-agency meeting to discuss in more detail people who are attending A&E regularly with complex needs, attended by A&E staff, Police, alcohol and mental health specialist services and community alcohol/ substance abuse teams (Inspire/The Wells).

## Services for people leaving prison

A range of data recorded on H-CLIC indicate that there is a relatively high proportion of households experiencing homelessness in Lancaster where a history of offending behaviour is also a feature. For example, in Quarter 4 of 2021/22, 50 people were assessed as having support needs relating to offending, 21% of all the support needs assessed. Alongside this, in the same quarter, 12% of all households who were homeless had as the primary cause leaving an institution with no accommodation.

## Services for young people

Each quarter, between 24% and 33% of all homelessness applications in Lancaster are made by young people aged between 16 and 25. In some instances this a household with children, headed up by an under 25 year old and some applications will be from single young people.

There is a joint protocol in place for 16 and 17 year olds who are or may be homeless, setting out how all the District Councils in Lancashire will work with Children's Services if a 16 or 17 presents as homeless. The Joint Protocol was due to be reviewed in February 2020 but due to the Covid-19 pandemic this was delayed.

For young people who are leaving care, there is a Lancashire wide joint housing protocol which was updated in 2022 to incorporate new good practice guidance from Department for Education and DLUHC.

A small amount of funding has been awarded by the Department for Education to Lancashire County Council to support care leavers who are at high risk of rough sleeping, as part of the cross-Government Rough Sleeping Strategy actions. This amounts to £13,100 in 2022/23 to cover all of Lancashire and is part of a total of £3,190,328 grant funding allocated to 63 different children's services authorities in 2022-23.

Feedback as part of this Review raised key concerns regarding poor operational understanding and joint working between Lancashire Children's Services Authority around care leavers, with little notice being provided to Lancaster City Council prior to many young people

leaving care. The new joint protocol on leaving care has not made any difference to this situation and as a result some care leavers are becoming homeless on leaving care.

There is supported accommodation available for young people in Lancaster which is outlined later in this Section of the review. Some of this is reported to be continually full, in part due to low rates of move-on due to the lack of affordable supply within the housing market locally.

## **Services for vulnerable adults with a disability, mental health issues or addiction to substances**

The support needs data reported through H-CLIC consistently shows that the most commonly reported unmet support need was mental health issues. In addition, other support needs which also feature strongly amongst adults who are or may be homeless in Lancaster include:

- Poor physical health or disability
- Learning disability
- Alcohol addiction
- Drug addiction

There are a range of services to support vulnerable adults in Lancaster, some of which are provided through Adult Social Care services or NHS run services and others which are provided through the voluntary sector. There are a range of lower level, Tier 1 type support services for people with mental health issues, providing talking/ listening services. For people who need additional more specialist services, The Community Mental Health Team works across several local authority areas in Lancashire. The CMHT provides support to service users who require a multi-disciplinary approach under the Care Programme Approach. The team is made up of :

- Registered mental health nurses
- Social workers
- Approved mental health professionals
- Advanced practitioner in social work
- Consultant psychiatrist
- Psychologists
- Support time and recovery workers
- Occupational therapists
- Healthcare assistants.

The Team also has a dedicated Registered Mental Health Nurse who supports those service users with long-term and stable mental health conditions.

In addition to this Service there are in-patient acute mental health services in Lancaster.

Adult Social Care services leads on provision of day care and residential services for people with physical and learning disabilities who are eligible for Adult Social Care services.

Despite the range of mental health services available, the feedback from agencies and the local authority for this Review indicated there are still significant challenges in accessing mental health services for people who are homeless and in particular those who have a multiple disadvantage , often including rough sleeping. There was a clear view that mental health services are not sufficiently flexible to successfully engage with highly vulnerable people and this presents a barrier to accessing on going treatment services.

For people with drug and alcohol addictions, there are a range of services available in Lancaster including in-house treatment/detox and rehabilitation services and lower level or 'step down' community based support services, including Inspire, The Well Communities, which run services through a hub in Morecambe and Lancaster and Red Rose Recovery.

There is reported to be strong partnership working between the local authority and substance misuse agencies, and an agreement in place with residential treatment centres regarding referrals to the Housing Options Service should a resident from Lancaster be at risk of homelessness.

## Services for refugees who are or may be homeless

There has been an increase in the number of people with refugee status living in Lancaster and Morecambe, most notably from Ukraine and Afghanistan as well as from other countries. Levels of demand from households which have refugee status is anecdotally reported to have risen but numbers presenting as homeless who are former asylum seekers as homeless are not reported through H-CLIC. Support needs can be recorded but this is not likely to be an accurate reflection of numbers.

The Housing Options Service has close links with agencies supporting people seeking asylum and those who have refugee status. Where people who have been given leave to remain, Global Link and Refugee Advocacy, Information and Support (RAIS) can both make referrals to the Housing Options Service should they be homeless or at risk of homelessness.

## Services for ex-Armed Forces personnel and their families

In the first 6 months of 2022, 16 people in Lancaster owed either a prevention or relief duty were assessed as having support needs relating to leaving the Armed Forces. This is a significant rise from the previous year and requires some further analysis to better understand the reasons for the increase.

A First Light Trust Café Hub is based in Lancaster and provides a range of advice and support services through the Hub, as well as signposting to other services.

# Accommodation Options to Prevent and Relieve Homelessness

## Temporary Accommodation

The most recently published data, from the end of June 2022, on use of Temporary Accommodation (TA) reported 28 households in TA, 13 of which were families. A total of 20 households were in bed and breakfast type accommodation with shared facilities. Of which 5 were families. The remaining 8 households were in accommodation which was owned by either the local authority or a Registered Provider, Adactus (Jigsaw Group). All of these households were families.

In recognition of increased pressures, a Temporary Accommodation support worker post has been established to manage the numbers in bed and breakfast provision.

There has been little diversification of the TA portfolio away from bed and breakfast provision since 2019/20 and this may result in increased pressures on the local authority in terms of:

- Families placed into bed and breakfast. This is unsuitable and may leave the local authority open to legal challenge as this is unlawful if a family is placed for more than 6 weeks into bed and breakfast.
- Cost pressures – reliance on bed and breakfast is high cost as well as low quality. Lower cost forms of TA which are more suitable include use of local authority or Registered Provider general needs stock; local authority run hostel provision; some Private Sector Leasing (PSL) may be more cost neutral, even though the housing benefit subsidy rules have changed for this type of provision

There is likely to be an overall rise in use of TA nationally due to the cost of living crisis, predicted recession and increased demand pressures on the lower end of the housing market. Diversification of the TA portfolio is an area for further development.

## Supported Accommodation

In terms of recovery from homelessness, different types of supported housing schemes or projects can offer people with support needs the security of accommodation and regular support. Rent is claimed from the housing benefit system, and service charges paid for by the client. Usually the support costs are funded through a procurement process with a public sector agency.

Some provision in Lancaster is not on the list below. It is funded only through housing benefit and service charges to residents with no procurement process with a public sector agency. There is some 'light touch' housing management support provided to residents. This is classed as 'non-commissioned exempt accommodation' and there has been considerable national focus, including a report from a Select Committee in 2022, on this type of provision, in terms of its quality and its impact on communities.

Various supported housing providers have moved into the Lancaster and Morecambe area taking the opportunity to provide exempt supported housing. Some of these providers are used by the Council for homeless households.

In Lancaster district, of the 797 units of supported accommodation there are 198 units which have not been commissioned by a public sector agency but are funded through housing benefit. In November 2022 Preston City Council and Lancaster City Council were jointly awarded £600,000 by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, over 3 years, to drive up standards in exempt supported accommodation. A plan is now in place to deliver this.

The Table below is not complete at the time of this Review, but the majority of the commissioned provision is listed below.

Table 51: Commissioned supported accommodation in Lancaster.

Name of Project/Service and Service Provider	Client group and number of units
Morecambe Foyer: Salvation Army:	29 units - Young People
Adactus (Jigsaw Group)	11 units for 16 – 18-year-olds
Oak Tree House (Jigsaw Group)	23 units - People with complex needs
SafeNet	21 units - Women fleeing domestic abuse
SafeNet	2 units Men fleeing domestic abuse
Sanctuary Housing	8 units for people with complex mental health issues
Sanctuary Housing	4 units for people with complex mental health issues
Walter Lyon House: Acorn, part of Calico Group Housing	14 units - People recovering from substance misuse addiction
Aldcliffe House, Portland Street, Mary Street: Acorn, part of Calico Group Housing	Aldcliffe House is 8 beds - shared facilities (can be male and female) Portland Street is 4 bedroom complex female accommodation Mary Street is 5 beds – mixed - but is mainly male single people.
Places for People	7 units - Young People
Jubilee Court: Calico Group Housing	12 units for single people who have formerly been rough sleeping - 2nd stage move on accommodation

Alongside supported housing projects, Humankind offers tenancy ready training to all residents. The training package has been updated to take into account the more significant challenges around budgeting due to rising inflation and the cost of living crisis.

## Social Housing

As set out in Section 1, demand for social housing outstrips supply within Lancaster City Council area. Representatives from agencies which are part of the Homelessness Advisory Group cited the lack of social housing as a major concern, in terms of both preventing homelessness and meeting the housing needs of homeless people in Lancaster.

In Lancaster the most significant demand is for 1, 2 and 3 bed properties. There are long waiting times for properties in all bands except Band A, which includes all homeless households which are owed the 'main' duty. Even so, waiting times can be lengthy, even with the discretion of making direct offers to homeless households where appropriate.

The Homes Strategy 2020/2025 sets out the priorities for Lancaster City Council, including the range of housing products for rent and for purchase needed to ensure the local population have a range of decent and affordable housing options. This includes the commitment of the local authority to borrow in order to develop more social housing and to encourage and support other Registered Providers to do the same.

Alongside this, the Homes Strategy outlined a willingness to consider the purchasing of property from the open market in order to build up a more diverse portfolio of social housing and is considering setting up an arms-length company as a vehicle to do this.

The development of extra-care housing for older people with eligible care needs, in partnership with Lancashire County Council is also a priority, as well as development of property for affordable rent.

## Private Rented Sector housing

As set out in Section 1 of the Review, access to the Private Rented Sector (PRS) is challenging for households on low incomes, including those reliant on welfare benefits.

The Housing Options Service must be satisfied a property is suitable before making an offer to a household which is homeless or threatened with homelessness. This is set out in Chapter 17 of DLUHC's Homelessness Code of Guidance. Affordability is part of the suitability assessment as well as the standards of repair, health and safety.

The Housing Options Service can support people to access the Private Rented Sector through access to Discretionary Housing Payments or the Prevention Fund for rent advance or rent deposits.

Help2Rent provides landlords with private accommodation free insurance packages for homeless households coming through the Housing Options Service. The insurance protects against non-payment of rent, malicious damage and legal fees if the landlord has to take enforcement action as a last resort. There has been no significant take up of this service via the Housing Options Service.

The Accommodation Finding Service is delivered by Calico. It provides support to households who are homeless, including people who have been rough sleeping and those at risk of homelessness by supporting them to secure tenancies or supported housing by:

- finding properties which are affordable
- ensuring a property is safe and well maintained by the landlord
- help with rent in advance and rent deposits for landlords
- help to apply for housing benefit including help to set up alternative payment arrangements where rent can be paid direct to a landlord by DWP
- on-going liaison and advice to landlords as needed
- support to set up a tenancy and information on rights and responsibilities as a tenant
- help to obtain furniture and essential items needed for a new tenancy
- referrals to attend tenancy training
- referral to services to access education, volunteering and employment opportunities
- house sharing options where appropriate
- a named worker who can offer support throughout the duration of a tenancy for a former rough sleeping or up to 6 months for other households

There is a strong partnership between the Service and the Housing Options Service. Demand for the Service is reported to have risen, with more referrals from households who are in housing need but don't have support needs. This is reported to be due in part to landlords selling up and tenants being unable to find affordable rental properties in the area.

Tenancy support is also available for people in their existing properties by supporting them to clear rent arrears via applications for funding to the local authority or assist with any other issues which may put their tenancy at risk.

There is a Landlord Forum, bringing together the Council and landlords to communicate more formally and enable landlords to share their experiences of letting accommodation.

