

Lancaster District Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2026-2031

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Introduction

Everyone deserves a safe, secure and suitable place to call home.

A home provides the foundation for health, wellbeing, employment, education and participation in community life. When people lose their home, or are at risk of losing it, the impact can be significant and long-lasting.

Lancaster District has made significant progress in recent years. More people are being supported before reaching crisis point, the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families has been eliminated and maintained, rough sleeping remains comparatively low and strong partnership working has improved outcomes across a range of homelessness pathways.

However, homelessness continues to affect some of the most vulnerable people in our communities and the challenges facing residents and services are changing.

The Homelessness Review, which informs this strategy, found that homelessness is increasingly concentrated amongst people experiencing multiple and overlapping support needs. Poor mental health, physical ill health, domestic abuse, substance misuse, trauma, financial hardship and social isolation often sit alongside housing problems, making homelessness more complex and more difficult to resolve through housing interventions alone. The review also found that access to suitable and affordable accommodation remains a significant challenge across the district

This strategy sets out how partners across Lancaster District will respond to those challenges between 2026 and 2031. It is informed by evidence from the Homelessness Review, engagement with stakeholders and the experiences of people who have experienced homelessness.

Our approach is simple:

- Prevent homelessness wherever possible.
- Respond quickly and effectively when homelessness occurs.
- Support people to achieve stable and sustainable housing outcomes.

The strategy provides a shared framework for action, supported by a detailed Implementation Plan that will be reviewed and updated throughout its lifetime.

Our Vision

Everyone in Lancaster District should have access to a safe, secure and suitable place to call home.

By 2031 we want to see:

- Fewer people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping.
- More people receiving support before reaching crisis point.
- Better outcomes for people experiencing multiple and complex needs.
- Improved access to suitable accommodation.
- Stronger partnership working and shared accountability.
- More people able to sustain their accommodation and move forward positively with their lives.

Our ambition is straightforward:

To make homelessness rarer, briefer and less likely to reoccur.

What We Learned

The Homelessness Review examined local data, service performance, stakeholder feedback, partner insight and lived experience evidence. Whilst it highlighted many examples of good practice, it also identified several key challenges that will shape our priorities over the next five years.

1. Prevention Works

More people are receiving support before reaching crisis point and prevention activity continues to deliver positive outcomes. However, there is further scope to identify housing risks earlier and strengthen prevention across a wider range of services and organisations.

2. Homelessness Is Becoming More Complex

Homelessness is increasingly concentrated amongst people experiencing multiple and overlapping needs. Nearly half of households approaching homelessness services have three or more recorded support needs and repeat homelessness is significantly more common amongst this group.

3. Access to Accommodation Remains Difficult

Housing affordability pressures, limited social housing availability and challenges within the private rented sector continue to create barriers to prevention, move-on and long-term housing stability.

4. Housing Alone Is Not Enough

Securing accommodation is often only the first step. Long-term success depends on tenancy sustainment, health and wellbeing, positive relationships, access to support and opportunities for recovery and independence.

5. Better Outcomes Depend on Effective Partnership Working

The review identified strong local relationships but also opportunities to strengthen accountability, improve coordination and develop greater collective ownership of homelessness outcomes.

6. Evidence and Lived Experience Must Continue to Inform Improvement

Partners recognised the importance of using data, operational insight and lived experience to understand what is working, identify emerging challenges and drive continuous improvement.

These findings have directly informed the six strategic priorities set out below.

Our Strategic Priorities

Priority 1: Strengthening Prevention and Early Intervention

Preventing homelessness remains the most effective way of reducing harm and improving outcomes.

Over the life of this strategy, partners will work together to identify housing risks earlier, strengthen referral pathways, improve tenancy sustainment and help more people access support before reaching crisis point.

Success will mean:

- More people receiving support before crisis occurs.
- Earlier identification of housing risks.
- Stronger prevention pathways.
- Stronger partner referrals and earlier engagement with housing support.
- Reduced reliance on crisis responses and temporary accommodation.
- Improved housing stability.

Priority 2: Improving Outcomes for People with Multiple and Complex Needs

The review found that homelessness is increasingly concentrated amongst people experiencing multiple and overlapping needs.

Partners will strengthen coordinated responses, reduce repeat homelessness and rough sleeping, and improve support for people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

Success will mean:

- Better outcomes for people with multiple and complex needs.
- Reduced repeat homelessness.
- Reduced repeat rough sleeping.
- Better coordinated support.
- Improved long-term housing stability.

Priority 3: Improving Access to Accommodation and Housing Pathways

Access to suitable accommodation remains one of the most significant challenges affecting homelessness outcomes.

This priority focuses on improving access to accommodation, strengthening housing pathways and reducing barriers that prevent people from securing and sustaining suitable housing.

Success will mean:

- Improved access to accommodation.
- Stronger move-on arrangements.
- Reduced blockages across housing pathways.
- Better housing outcomes.
- More effective use of available accommodation.

Priority 4: Strengthening Partnership Leadership and Shared Accountability

Preventing homelessness requires action across a wide range of organisations and services.

This priority focuses on strengthening governance, improving coordination and ensuring partners work collectively to deliver shared priorities and outcomes.

Success will mean:

- Strong partnership leadership.
- Improved coordination.
- Shared ownership of homelessness outcomes.
- Clear accountability for delivery.
- More collaborative approaches to solving problems.

Priority 5: Creating Accessible, Inclusive and Person-Centred Services

People with lived experience consistently highlighted the importance of accessible services, trusted relationships and clear communication.

This priority focuses on making services easier to access, reducing barriers and ensuring people receive support that reflects their needs and circumstances.

Success will mean:

- Easier access to support.
- Improved customer experience.
- Reduced barriers to services.
- More consistent trauma-informed practice.
- People feeling listened to and involved.

Priority 6: Using Data, Insight and Lived Experience to Drive Improvement

Good decisions depend on good information.

This priority focuses on strengthening the use of evidence, improving performance monitoring and ensuring lived experience continues to influence service development and decision-making.

Success will mean:

- Better use of data and intelligence.
- Stronger understanding of homelessness outcomes.
- Improved performance monitoring.
- Meaningful involvement of people with lived experience.
- Continuous improvement across the homelessness system.

How We Will Measure Success

This strategy is focused on outcomes rather than activity.

Success will not be measured by the number of meetings held, projects delivered or services commissioned. It will be measured by whether fewer people experience homelessness, whether more people achieve sustainable housing outcomes and whether the homelessness system is becoming more effective.

Progress will be monitored through the Monitoring and Outcomes Framework which combines nationally recognised outcome measures with locally developed measures reflecting Lancaster's strategic priorities and local challenges.

The framework includes:

- National outcomes aligned with MHCLG's Outcomes Framework.
- Local strategic outcomes measuring prevention, early intervention, homelessness recurrence, multiple disadvantage, customer experience and partnership effectiveness.
- A quarterly operational dashboard providing supporting intelligence on demand, temporary accommodation, rough sleeping, housing pathways and service performance.

Performance information will be reviewed alongside stakeholder feedback, operational learning and lived experience to understand what is working well and where further improvement is required.

National Outcome Measures

Measure	Baseline	2028 Target
Households with children in B&B over 6 weeks	0	Maintain at 0
Households with children in Temporary Accommodation	12	10
Success at Preventing and Relieving Homelessness	74.4%	78%
People Sleeping Rough on a Single Night	9	1
Long-Term Rough Sleeping	4	1

Local Strategic Outcome Measures

Measure	Baseline	2028 Target
Prevention Duty Rate	65.4%	71%
Partner Referrals / Duty to Refer	63.3%	70%
Repeat Homelessness	31.9%	27%
Successful Homelessness Outcomes for Households Experiencing Multiple Disadvantage	65.2%	Maintain at or above 65%
Customer Satisfaction	Baseline to be established	TBD
Partnership Effectiveness	Baseline to be established	TBD

Delivering the Strategy

This strategy provides the long-term direction for homelessness and rough sleeping activity across Lancaster District between 2026 and 2031.

This strategy is supported by a detailed Implementation Plan which translates the strategic priorities into specific actions, milestones and responsibilities. The Implementation Plan will be reviewed regularly to ensure delivery remains responsive to emerging needs, opportunities and evidence.

Preventing homelessness is a shared responsibility. No single organisation can achieve the ambitions set out in this strategy alone. Success will depend on housing providers, health services, social care, criminal justice agencies, voluntary and community organisations and people with lived experience working together to improve outcomes for residents.

Delivering this strategy will also require continued investment in the knowledge, skills and confidence of those working across the homelessness system. Partners will work together to strengthen understanding of homelessness prevention, multiple disadvantage, housing pathways and effective partnership working, ensuring that staff and volunteers are equipped to respond to the changing needs of residents and communities.

Governance

The Homelessness Advisory Forum will provide strategic oversight of delivery.

The Forum will monitor progress, review performance, identify emerging issues and support shared accountability for delivery of the strategy.

People with lived experience will continue to play an important role in shaping delivery of the strategy. Their experience and insight will help the partnership understand what is working well, identify barriers and inform future service improvement.

Partnership Commitment

Partners will be invited to support the strategy and contribute to delivery of the priorities relevant to their organisation.

This commitment is based on a simple principle:

Preventing homelessness is a shared responsibility and improving outcomes requires collective action.

Task and Finish Groups

Where appropriate, task and finish groups will be established to develop solutions, progress specific areas of work and report recommendations back to the partnership.

This approach will help ensure that strategic priorities are translated into practical action and that partners can contribute their expertise where it will have the greatest impact.

Review and Reporting

Progress will be reviewed annually through agreed governance arrangements.

An annual report will summarise progress, challenges, emerging issues and priorities for the year ahead, ensuring transparency, accountability and continuous improvement throughout the life of the strategy.