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Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029



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If you have any questions or feedback about our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, please contact us at: housing@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

If you or someone you know is at risk of homelessness, please visit the Council's website for further information www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

Foreword

Welcome to Westmorland and Furness's new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which sets out the Council's priorities for tackling homelessness and rough sleeping over the next five years.

Having a stable, safe and secure home is essential to enable people to live healthy, happy, active and fulfilling independent lives in their communities. We recognise the negative impacts that homelessness has on the health and wellbeing of those who are affected.

Homelessness is a complex issue and we are facing an unprecedented combination of economic, social and global pressures on the housing 'system'. We have a unique opportunity to build on the strengths and successes experienced in each of the former Districts and we are committed to sharing our best practices to find flexible solutions across our new area.

The prevention of homelessness is our top priority, as 'prevention is better than a cure'. This strategy sets out how we will collaborate with our partners to ensure that support is available before people have to leave their existing homes. We will work to help people remain in their existing accommodation and, where this isn't possible, find an alternative before they become homeless. We value our existing partnerships with both statutory services, housing associations and the third sector and we will build on these connections to ensure access to: housing-related support;

benefits advice; domestic abuse support; addiction recovery and health support; and budgeting and life skills support.

We will work closely with others to find longer term solutions to the prevention of homelessness by increasing the supply of safe and affordable housing.

Our strategic action plan also details what we will do to help those who experience homelessness including how we will use our temporary accommodation effectively to minimise the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation. In addition, we will work proactively to support individuals who are rough sleeping.

I would like to thank all organisations who have contributed to our work to date and who continue to support our residents. I would also like to express my admiration for all the Westmorland and Furness staff who work with residents to prevent homelessness and to find suitable homes for those who have been made homeless, and I would like to acknowledge their hard work, passion and dedication.



Judith Derbyshire

Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness

Contents

Section 1 | Strategy

Introduction	5
Strategic vision, aims and objectives	6
Current context	8
Levels of homelessness	8
Reasons for homelessness presentations	10
Where are we now?	11
How we work	12
Related strategies & policies	12
What we want to achieve and how we will do it	13
Review and monitoring	14

Section 2 | Needs Analysis

People accessing our service	
Care experienced young people	15
Other young people	16
Contact with criminal justice system	17
Complex needs	18
Domestic abuse victims and perpetrators	19
Refugees and asylum seekers	21
Armed forces families	22
Challenges accessing affordable housing	
Housing supply, tenure and affordability	23
Economic disadvantage and welfare reform	25
Second homes and empty homes	26
Legal context	27
How this works in practice	27
Interim accommodation	29
Rough sleeping	30
Severe weather emergency protocol	32
Performance	32
Section 3 Action Plan	35

Section 1 | Strategy

Introduction

Westmorland and Furness Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out how the newly formed Unitary Council will work collaboratively to meet the needs of residents at risk of or who are experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping.

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, Westmorland and Furness Council is required to develop a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy every five years.

This strategy has been developed during the first year of the newly created Unitary Authority using the findings from the homelessness review required by Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transitional Arrangements) (No.2) Regulations (2008). Details of the review are included in Section 2.

This Strategy refers to the areas covered by the former Tier 2 districts as Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland.

Nationally and locally homelessness and rough sleeping are increasing.

Maintaining tenancies and accessing settled accommodation in Westmorland and Furness has become increasingly difficult due to the current economic and housing climate. Pressures on household finances are increasing due to the cost of living crisis, lasting impact of welfare reform, a sustained period of austerity and a reduced housing supply.

There are not enough homes available to buy or rent for people on moderate/low incomes. The shortage of socially rented and supported accommodation has increased the reliance on private rented dwellings. The private rented sector is becoming harder to access due to increased

rents, landlords leaving the sector and other pressures such as the demand for supported housing via the exempt housing benefit regulations and government resettlement programmes.

The Councils operating area contains diverse communities ranging from Barrow, a busy shipbuilding town and port with cutting edge sub-sea technology industries, to rural, land-based market towns and villages with a strong visitor and cultural economy in Eden and South Lakeland.

The needs of each area are well understood by the Homelessness Teams based in each area (also known as Housing Options teams) formed following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The transition to a Unitary Authority has created opportunities to build on previous joint working, existing strengths, align services and further develop partnership working with other statutory agencies and third sector organisations.

This strategy considers the relevant legislation, reviews the situation in Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland and identifies the actions we will take to address homelessness and rough sleeping across Westmorland and Furness.

Our action plan can be found on pages 35-39.

Strategic vision, aims and objectives

Our vision for Westmorland and Furness is to be: ‘A great place to live, work and thrive’.

The provision of support to those facing or experiencing homelessness enables people to secure housing which improves health and wellbeing, enables access to employment and learning alongside facilitating connectivity and integration in the wider community.

Our aim is to prevent and tackle homelessness in all its forms to ensure that everyone can live in a place they call home - a home which is affordable, clean, safe and warm, from which people can build stable, independent lives with access to schools, work and cultural activities.



Our Key objectives are to:

Prevent homelessness

Relieve homelessness when it can't be prevented

Provide support for people who are rough sleeping including pathways into settled accommodation

Our operating model helps us provide preventative support before people are in crisis.

Teams are located in Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland and we are committed to providing face-to-face appointments in addition to digital options and telephone support.

Where a household does not have access to technology/digital communication/phone signals are minimal and public transport is not available, we will offer face-to-face meetings within the household's current accommodation or at a place accessible to them.

We work closely with other agencies to ensure the needs of each household are addressed and provide a focused personalised housing plan (PHP).

Community focus



We will focus on early intervention and prevention, working with individuals, community groups, parish and town councils, the voluntary sector and partners to reduce need for our services and improve health and wellbeing.

Easy access



Services will be user friendly, caring and accessible through multiple channels. Wherever possible services will be available and delivered digitally, reducing demand for phone and in-person interaction so those resources can be focused to those most in need.

Effective services



Services are outcome focused and maximise use of technology to drive efficiency and effectiveness. Service delivery is citizen centred and seamless between services and partner organisations.

Enabling Processes



Internal processes and functions are designed to support a seamless end-to-end experience. Improvement and change is supported by key enabling functions including HR, Legal, PMO etc working closely with service delivery teams.

Supporting Technology



'Fit for purpose' technology across the Council that supports the delivery of services, promotes digital ways of working, and enables organisational efficiency.

Current context

Levels of homelessness

Nationally, levels of homelessness and rough sleeping are rising. The year 2021/22 saw a significant increase in people presenting due to the end of an assured short hold tenancy.

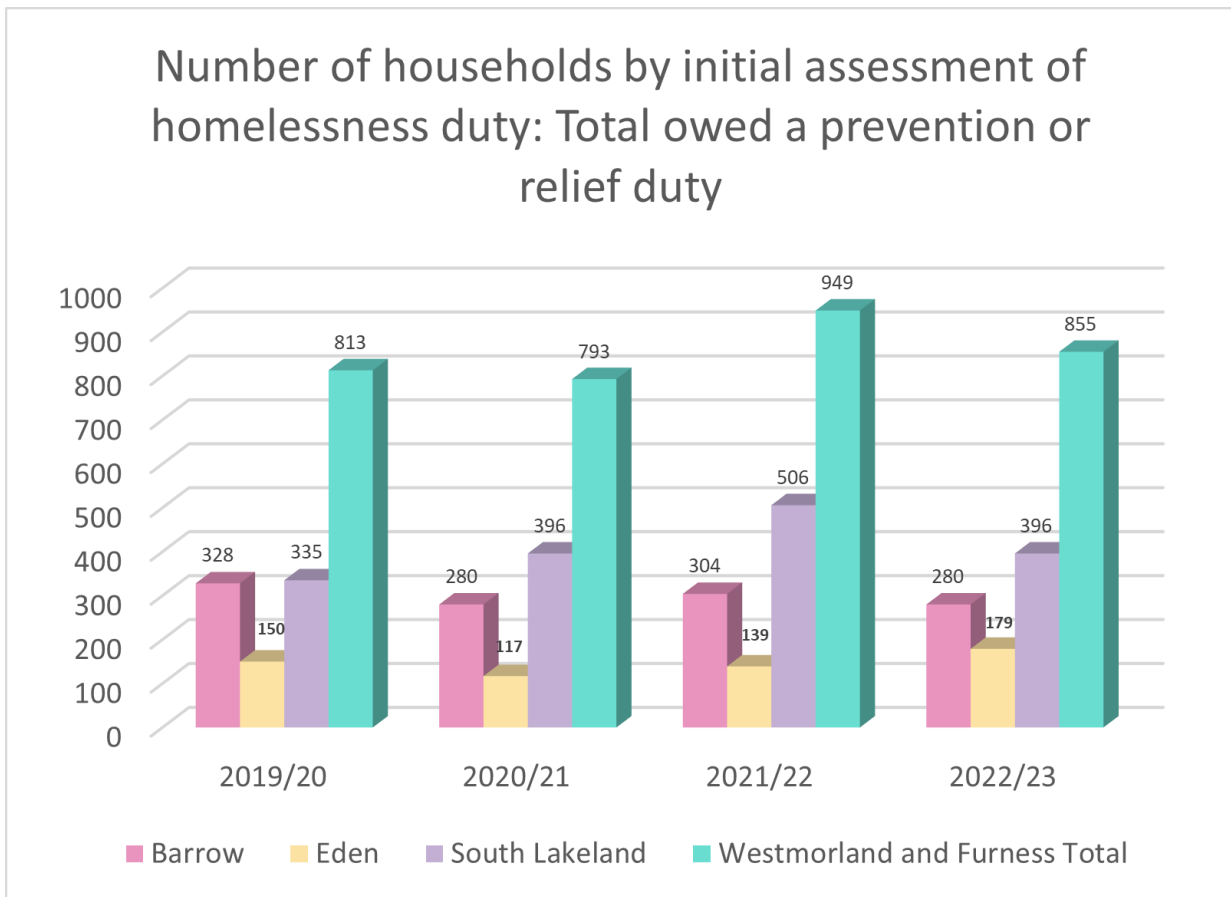
In the year 2022/23, 311,990 initial assessments were made - an increase of 7% from the previous year. Of these, 298,430 were owed a prevention or relief duty - up 6.8% on the previous year and 3% above pre-Covid levels.¹

Notable national changes for 2022/23 compared to the previous year include:

- decreases in the proportion of successful outcomes at the end of prevention and relief duties

- increases in number of households due to the end of an assured short hold tenancy due to landlords wishing to sell or re-let properties
- an increase in households owed a prevention or relief duty where the main applicant was aged 65-74 (23.3%)
- an increase in number of households owed a prevention or relief duty where the main applicant was in full-time (up 10.8%) or part-time work (up 6.5%), as well as a 19.3% increase in households where the main applicant was retired.

Between 2019/20 and 2022/23 Westmorland and Furness saw an overall increase of 5.2% in the number of households owed a prevention or relief duty as detailed in the graph below.



Please note that data relating to the end of social tenancies has been removed due to changes in reporting practices.

¹Please note all homelessness data is taken from the HLIC Data as available on the Gov.UK website unless indicated otherwise.

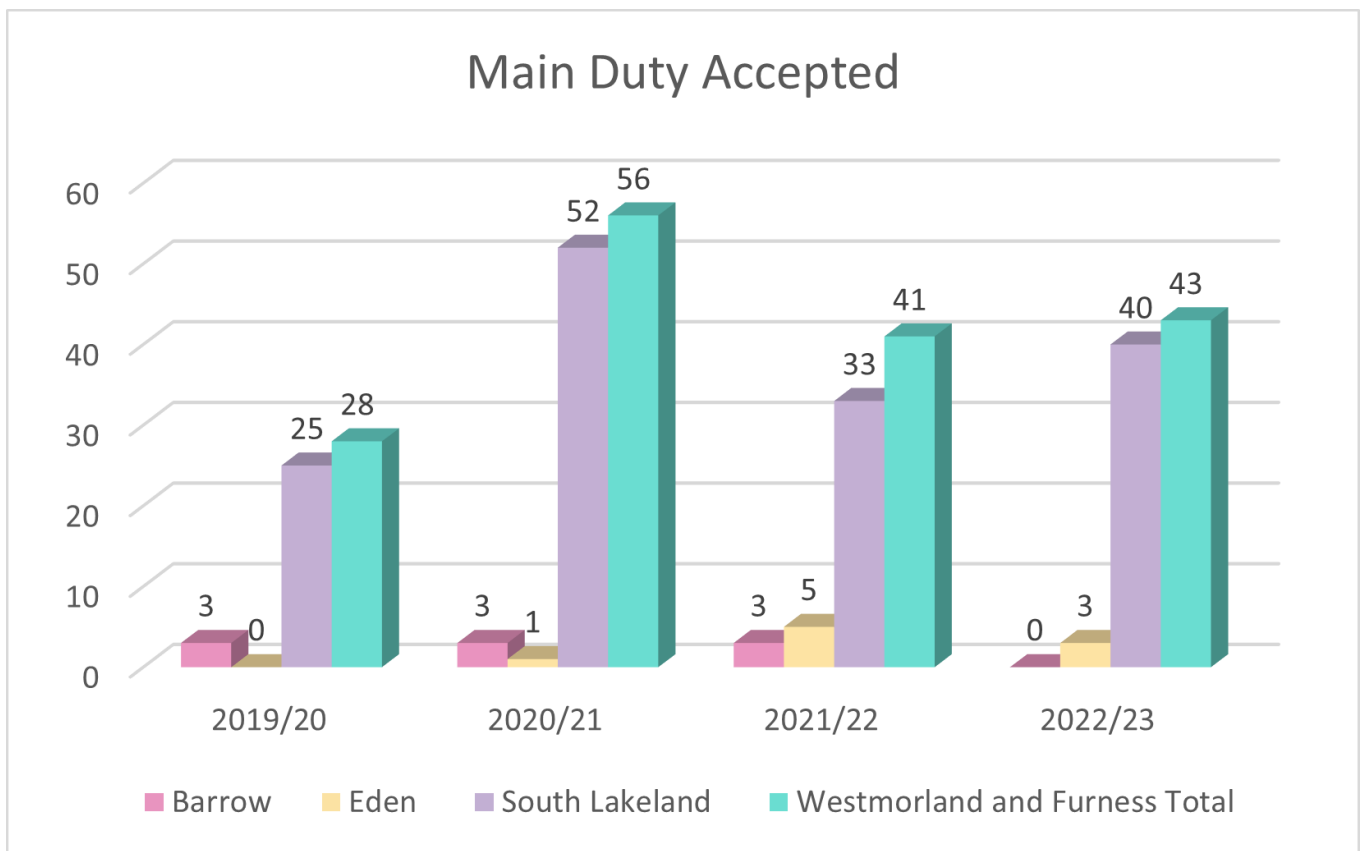
In 2018, duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2017 were implemented.

Notable changes in Westmorland and Furness for 2022/23 compared to the previous year include:

- Variable changes across Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland in the proportion of successful outcomes (at the end of prevention and relief duties)

- An increase in the loss of last settled accommodation due to valid Section 21 eviction notices
- An increase in the number of households with drug dependency needs, alcohol dependency needs and offending history

Main duty acceptances in South Lakeland are particularly high due to persistent difficulties in accessing affordable accommodation.



Reasons for homelessness presentations

The reasons for homelessness presentations are complex and often inter-related. A combination of housing supply and affordability together with welfare policy and the economy affect people's ability to secure accommodation and sustain relationships within the household.

Nationally, the most common reason for the threatened loss of last settled accommodation in 2022/23 was due to the end of their private rented assured shorthold tenancy because of landlords wishing to sell or re-let the property. Increased rents also contributed to ending these tenancies.

The most common reason for those owed a relief duty was domestic abuse. The non-violent breakdown of relationships is also prevalent.

In Westmorland and Furness the main reasons for homeless presentations remain consistent and are in line with national trends i.e. the end of private tenancies, followed by family or friends no longer willing to accommodate, followed by domestic abuse and non-violent relationship breakdown with partner.

Please see page 28 for information on assessments for prevention and relief duties.

Reason for loss of last settled home for households	Owed a prevention duty			Owed a relief duty		
	BBC*	EDC*	SLDC*	BBC*	EDC*	SLDC*
April 2022 – March 2023						
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	25	26	16	39	15	54
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	59	37	106	15	2	33
Domestic abuse	11	20	3	31	15	43
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	13	18	4	23	7	37
Eviction from supported housing	12	0	5	0	1	4
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	4	16	13	20	1	9
Other violence or harassment	0	1	3	5	6	27
Left institution with no accommodation available	0	0	0	5	0	11
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0	1	0	6	3	13
Other/not known	4	3	7	1	2	0
End of social rented tenancy (Relief only) ²				7	5	8
Total April 2022 - March 2023	128	122	157	152	57	239

*BBC— Barrow Borough Council | EDC—Eden District Council | SLDC—South Lakeland District Council

² End of social rented tenancy for prevention has been removed due to variations in reporting practices.

Case Study | Housing Related Support Service – Single female

The client became homeless following the loss of employment which included the provision of accommodation. The client was also vulnerable due to long term drug use, a criminal history, and involvement in an abusive relationship.

Accommodation was secured by the homelessness team and housing-related support was provided. This focused on building a trusting and positive relationship, ensuring housing costs from Universal Credit were paid directly to the landlord to prevent rent arrears increasing, maximising income from benefit entitlements and grants, addressing tenancy issues promptly, liaising with Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), the relevant Housing Officers, Probation, Recovery Steps, Victim Support, GP practice and the Police; and carrying out joint working where possible.

A Discretionary Housing Payment was awarded which cleared the outstanding rent arrears, and paid the rent shortfall caused by under occupancy of the two-bed accommodation for a six-month period. As the client was unfit for work support was provided to undertake a work capability assessment and the Universal Credit claim was updated. This resulted in increased income and no expectation from DWP for her to be involved in work-related activity. The client then felt confident to make a claim for Personal Independence Payment which was also successful. Additional income received was utilised to improve the home and take up responsibility for payment of the rent shortfall.

The client was able to build a trusting relationship with support staff at Eden Housing Association to start to communicate and work with other organisations such as the Police. This client now has a secure assured tenancy, is trying to make more positive life choices, has increased income and self-confidence and is more able to reach out for help in the future as needed enabling her to make significant progress and prevent repeat homelessness.

Where we are

Westmorland and Furness Council is one of two new unitary authorities created on 1 April 2023 in Cumbria. It comprises the former Barrow Borough Council, Cumbria County Council, Eden District Council and South Lakeland District Council.

We cover 3,754 Km², with 1,900 Km² within National Parks. We are England's most sparsely populated local authority area with 60 people per square kilometre across the whole area. This ranges from 25 in Eden to 864 in Barrow, which presents challenges in sustaining and delivering services.

Between the last two censuses (held in 2011 and 2021), the population of Eden and South Lakeland rose while the population in Barrow fell, leading to an overall rise from 225,400 to 226,600 (1.47% increase).³

Compared to the national average, Westmorland and Furness and Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland had older age profiles at the Office for National Statistics annual estimates of the resident population (Mid-2022); with lower proportions of younger residents and higher proportions of older residents.

However, there was some variation between Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland. Barrow had a greater proportion of younger residents than Eden and South Lakeland.

Inversely, Eden and South Lakeland had greater proportions of older residents than Barrow-in-Furness.

Of all Local Authority Districts (LADs) nationally, South Lakeland had the fifth lowest proportion of 0-15 year olds.

³ Census 2021 Population estimates - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

How we work

Whilst Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland have their own challenges, we have strong working relationships which we will build on to further develop services. We already have:

- Established homelessness teams comprising experienced staff with a local presence in each area. NB: In Eden the services are delivered by Eden Housing Association under contract up to 31 March 2025.
- Information accessible on line including a directory of private landlords.
- A range of temporary accommodation.
- Support services.
- A common allocation policy for social housing through Cumbria Choice Based Lettings (CBL).
- Care leaver's protocols.
- Hospital discharge protocols.
- Prison leaver protocols.
- A commitment to support veterans.
- Provision for emergency accommodation through the Severe Weather Emergency Protocols (SWEP).
- A Rough Sleeper Charter.
- Consistent standards for support for victims of domestic abuse in safe accommodation.
- Strong relationships with statutory and third sector partner organisations.

We know from our homelessness needs analysis conducted in December 2023 (see page 14) that:

- Instances of people being threatened with homelessness, experiencing homelessness and people rough sleeping are increasing. There are many reasons for this including the end of private rented tenancies, instances of domestic abuse and relationship break-downs.
- We are supporting more people with increasingly complex needs.
- Affordable accommodation is becoming

increasingly difficult to access. This is due to increased house prices, fewer socially rented and private rented properties being available and increased rents in the private sector.

- People leaving care; fleeing from domestic abuse; those who have had contact with the criminal justice system and those with mental health or substance misuse issues are particularly vulnerable and need additional support to secure and maintain accommodation.
- We are likely to see increased presentations from refugees. Support will be offered to refugees in line with the Homeless Reduction Act 2018.
- Pressure on interim (temporary) accommodation is likely to increase due to difficulties in accessing settled (permanent) accommodation.

Please note: Where specific providers are referred to throughout the Strategy, these are the current providers and may be subject to change dependent on funding and commissioning outcomes.

Related strategies and policies

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy aligns with other key strategies some of which are under development. When reviewing the action plan we will consider the following:

- Housing Strategy (under development)
- Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (under development)
- Customer Strategy
- Climate Change Action Plan
- Current Local Plans and future Westmorland and Furness Local Plan
- Temporary Accommodation Strategy (under development)
- Domestic Abuse Support in Safe Accommodation Strategy
- The Armed Forces Covenant

What we want to achieve and how we will do it

OBJECTIVE 1: Prevent homelessness

We will provide a consistent delivery model by aligning services and practices relating to each objective. We will achieve this by standardising: team structures; reporting systems; and through staff training.

We want to prevent homelessness wherever possible. We will achieve this by:

- Understanding the reasons for homelessness and the needs of those affected.
- Working with partners to ensure that households are able to establish and sustain tenures.
- Improving information available to people about their housing options.
- Improving referral pathways.
- Working with partners to increase the supply of safe and affordable housing.
- Increasing access to the private rented sector.

OBJECTIVE 2: Relieve homelessness

When we can't prevent homelessness we want to relieve it. We will achieve this by:

- Meeting the need for interim accommodation by increasing the number of units available and through the effective use of existing units.
- Increasing access to settled accommodation by working with housing providers.
- Ensuring support is available to victims of domestic abuse in safe accommodation.

OBJECTIVE 3: Provide support for people who are rough sleeping including pathways into settled accommodation

We are committed to work towards the central government objectives to make rough sleeping rare, brief and non-recurring. We will achieve this by:

- Developing consistent monitoring systems to measure levels of rough sleeping so that resources can be targeted to areas of highest need.
- Raising awareness of rough sleeping to facilitate appropriate reporting of rough sleepers enabling timely contact to be made.
- Providing a proactive outreach service.
- Working with partners to improve pathways into housing which identify and provide for additional support where this is required.

Reviewing and monitoring

We will know we have succeeded when we have:

- Aligned homelessness services so that all residents receive the same offer and level of support.
- Increased preventative work so that fewer people experience homelessness.
- Increased housing solutions for households facing homelessness so that people spend less time in interim and temporary accommodation.
- Increased interim and temporary accommodation so that reliance on Bed and Breakfast accommodation is reduced.
- Increased support for individuals facing street homelessness so more people have pathways into secure housing.

This Strategy will be reviewed when required by legislative or regulatory changes, and a new strategy will be published within five years as required by Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002.

The action plan will be updated quarterly by the Homelessness Strategic Lead in conjunction with the Homelessness Operational Lead.

Progress on the priorities will be reported to the Senior Manager Housing Landlord and Homelessness Services, the Assistant

Director of Housing, the Director of Thriving Communities and the Housing and Homelessness Portfolio Holder on a quarterly basis.

A summary of progress performance and actions will be circulated to key partners.

We will engage with partners for feedback and will arrange meetings where necessary.

The following key performance indicators will be reported to Cabinet as part of the Council's corporate monitoring procedures. This information is publicly available on the Westmorland and Furness Council website in the committee reports.

- The number of households in interim and temporary accommodation during the quarter.
- The percentage of successful homeless prevention outcomes of cases closed during the quarter.
- The percentage of successful homeless relief outcomes of cases closed during the quarter.
- The total number of people who are confirmed to be rough sleeping in Westmorland and Furness.

Updates and information will be provided to the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Committee on request. Targets will be set and reviewed annually by senior managers.

Section 2 | Needs Analysis

People accessing our services

Care experienced young people

Care experienced young people are young people aged over 16 leaving local authority care.

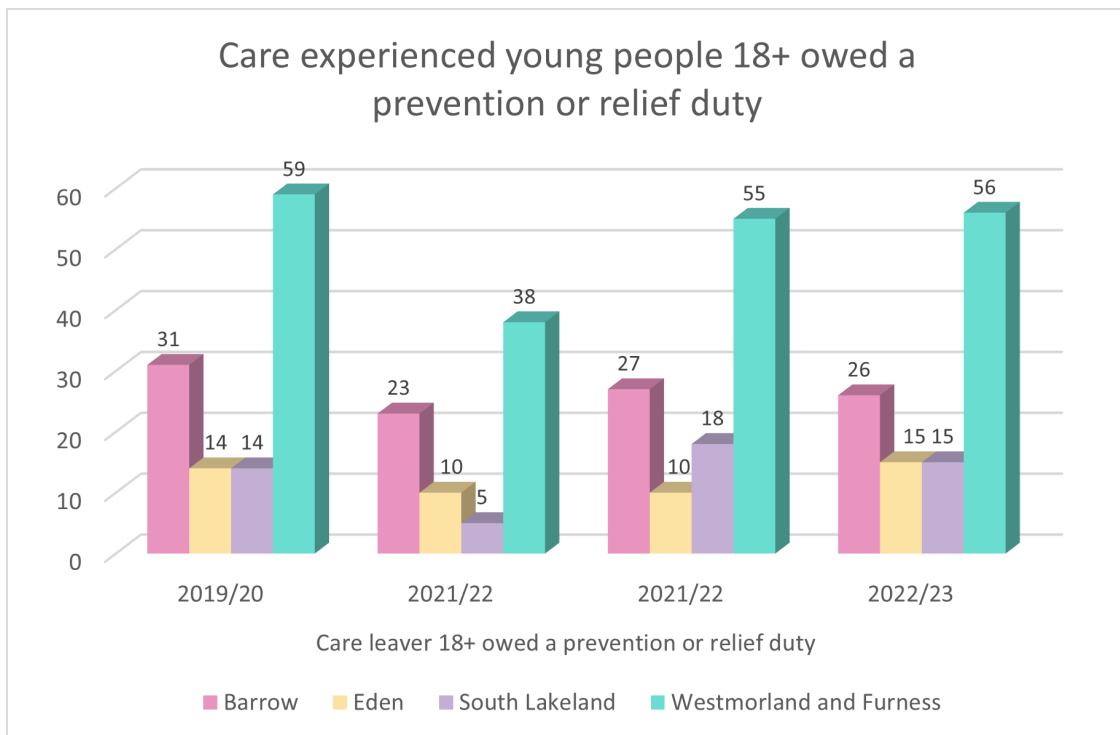
According to the Department for Education, in 2021/22 there were 45,940 care experienced young people in England now aged 17 to 21.⁴ There are various categories of care experienced young people including: Eligible Childs; Relevant Child; Former Relevant Child and Qualifying Care Leaver.

Information on Westmorland and Furness’s services for care experienced young people can be found on the Council’s website— children’s services/care leavers.

An independent review of children’s social care conducted in 2022 found evidence suggesting that those leaving care are at greater risk of becoming homeless than adults in the wider population, estimating that 26% of the homeless population has spent time in care at some point in their lives.⁵

Care experienced young people are particularly at risk of homelessness due to factors such as:

- A shortage of suitable, affordable accommodation
- Accommodation moves impacting education
- Greater social isolation
- Lack of family support to rely on during difficult periods



⁴ Support for Care experienced young people; House of Commons Library, October 2023 CBP-8429.pdf (parliament.uk)

⁵ Josh MacAlister, Independent Review of children’s social care, Recommendations annexes (PDF), May 2022:Independent review of children’s social care - recommendation annexes (publishing.service.gov.uk) page 141

The Youth Homeless teams work closely with social workers to prepare young people for independent living which includes establishing pathways into housing.

Pathway Advisers stay involved with the young person until they are 21 (potentially 25) years old. Prior to leaving care an assessment is undertaken and a plan produced which encompasses a wide range of aspirations including housing. In addition the young person can access a 'Setting up Home' allowance to cover essential items.

Where a young person is at risk of homelessness they are referred to the Gateway Group which includes representatives from relevant agencies including supported housing providers and the Homelessness Team.

If accommodation is not secured and the young person remains at risk of homelessness a referral is made under the Duty to Refer. Where appropriate, the young person will be provided with interim accommodation.

In Westmorland and Furness the number of people owed a prevention or relief duty with support needs identified as 'care experienced young people' have remained consistent, with the exception of 2021/22 which can be attributed to the Covid pandemic. In 2022/23 this represented just over 6% of presentations. The number of 16/17 years olds has been minimal averaging four annually across the footprint.

Referral protocols are in place in Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland. These are scheduled for alignment.

Other young people

Although care experienced young people have been identified as a specific group at risk of homelessness, Westmorland and Furness Council recognises other young people are in need of similar support. This includes young people fleeing domestic abuse, young people fleeing home because of coming out as gay, or those who may be sexually exploited.

Case Study | Care Leaver – Single female age 20, sofa surfing in South Lakeland

The Care leaver moved into the area having experienced domestic abuse. She approached the homelessness team in South Lakeland having left her most recent accommodation due to friends no longer being willing to accommodate her.

The team were able to access private rented accommodation in Eden through the Rough Sleeper Initiative funded Property Links scheme, which matches homeless people with private landlords. The team provided her rent in advance and worked with her Corporate Parent's Social Care team (out of area) to access a setting up home grant, which enabled her to buy essential items to establish her new home. The team provided additional support to access a food parcel, set up utility bills and update her Universal Credit Claim.

Since being housed she has received advice on managing her tenancy and she has recently attended job interviews.

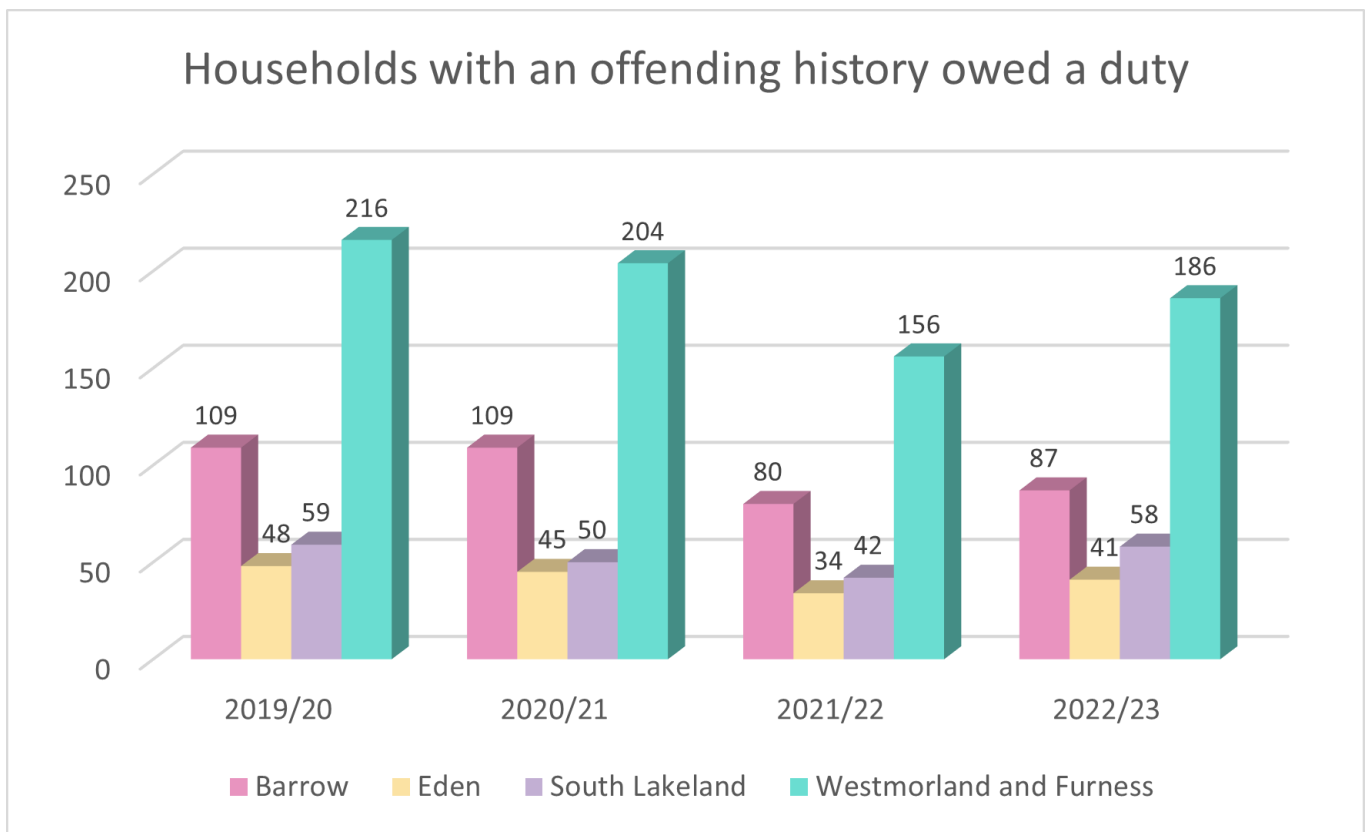
Contact with criminal justice system

Statutory Homelessness (H-CLIC⁶) data for 2022/23 shows that in England 16.45% of households with a support need, owed a duty had an offending history. Westmorland and Furness fell below this at 8.6%

The Duty to Refer applies to prison releases and protocols are in place for Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland. In June 2023 the Offenders (Day of Release from Detention) Act was passed allowing prison governors the power to release prisoners with mental health issues, substance misuse problems or who have far to travel home, on a Wednesday or Thursday rather than on a Friday which aims to prevent last minute homeless presentation.

The Community Accommodation Service (CAS) provides temporary accommodation for up to 84 nights for homeless prison leavers and those moving on from Approved Premises or the Bail Accommodation and Support Service. Support to secure settled accommodation is also provided.

The homelessness teams work closely with the CAS team, probation and the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) to minimise homelessness amongst ex-offenders.



⁶ Statutory Homelessness detailed local authority-level tables April 2022 – March 2023 Tables on homelessness www.gov.uk

Complex needs

The number of households who have identified health related support needs is increasing.

Since the withdrawal of the ‘Supporting People’ funding in 2021 support providers have relied on exempt housing benefit to fund limited housing related support. The lack of regulation means that levels of support provided can be varied.

There is a gap in support provision for individual falling below statutory thresholds. Where appropriate the homelessness team refer individual to Health and Wellbeing Coaches. In addition, Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland currently have funding from the National Lottery for a part time Floating Support worker who provides assistance to people moving into settled accommodation to help them settle into their new home by offering support to complete universal credit applications, set up utilities and sources essential items.

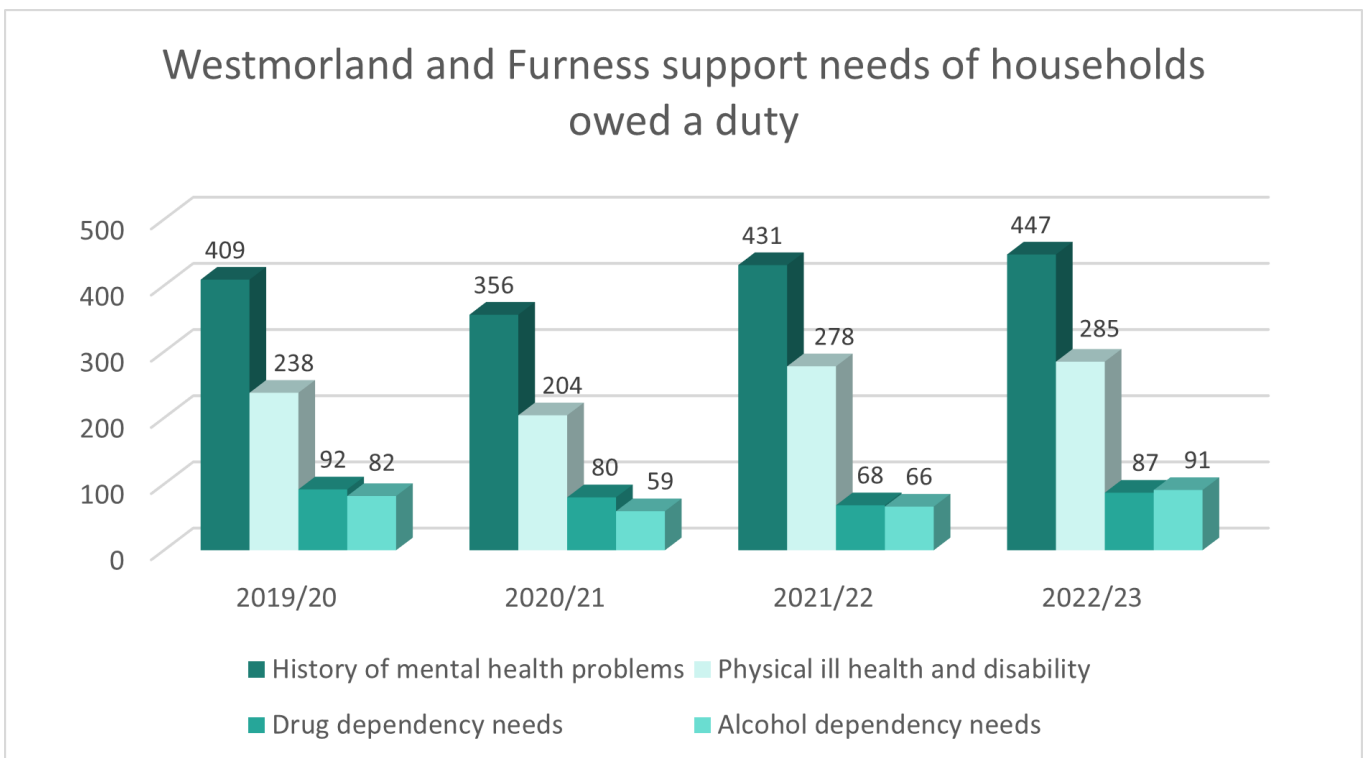
Additional support has been provided utilising Control Outbreak Management Funding for the Changing Futures cohort i.e. individual presenting with three out of the

following five characteristics: homelessness; domestic abuse; contact with the criminal justice system; mental health issues and substance misuse. This funding is not being renewed.

The homelessness teams refer individuals seeking help to recover from addiction to the commissioned service Recovery Steps Cumbria which is a partnership between Humankind and The Well Communities (The Well).

The Well provides a range of services and initiatives to support mental health and addiction recovery and minimises the harm caused by alcohol and substance misuse. They provide housing, hospital and street outreach, therapeutic programmes and activities, through peer run community hubs.

In developing this strategy the Council has considered all the protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Duty 2011. In particular, due regard has been given to how people with a physical or mental disability can receive a ‘reasonable adjustment’ in all service areas.



Domestic abuse victims and perpetrators

Domestic Abuse is defined under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as any incident or pattern of incidents of physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological, emotional or other abuse between those aged 16 and over and personally connected to each other.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales for the year ending March 2022 estimated that around five in every 100 adults aged 16 years and over (2.4 million people) experienced domestic abuse in the 12 months to March 2022.

The number of domestic abuse related crimes has continued to increase in recent years with the latest figure 7.7% higher than the year ending March 2021, and 14.1% higher than the year ending 2020. The increase in domestic abuse related crimes recorded by the police may reflect increased reporting.⁷

People fleeing from domestic abuse are in priority need and can present as homeless to any local authority, regardless of local connection. Interim accommodation is provided where required. A Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment (DASH) risk assessment is undertaken using the DASH assessment tool developed by Victim Support in Cumbria which incorporates the Domestic Homicide Timeline. Referrals are made to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) where appropriate, which members of the homelessness teams attend. MARAC aims to share information with relevant agencies with a view to providing support to victims to ensure their safety.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a statutory duty on local authorities to deliver support to victims of domestic abuse and their children residing within refuges and

other safe accommodation and to assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support in their area for all victims or their children, including those who require highly specialist support and those who come from outside the area.

The homelessness teams refer all victims to a Domestic Abuse Support in Safe Accommodation (DASSA) worker. Referral protocols are in place and are scheduled for alignment.

Up to the end of December 2023 Domestic Abuse Support in Safe Accommodation was provided by Women's Community Matters in Barrow; via the Housing Options Team at Eden Housing Association in Eden, and via the Homelessness Team in South Lakeland.

Services have been recommissioned for 2024 and going forward the core DASSA Service will be delivered by Women's Community Matters in Barrow; via the Housing Options Team at Eden Housing Association in Eden, and by Springfield Domestic Abuse Support in South Lakeland (Springfield) in South Lakeland.

The homelessness teams engage with other domestic abuse support providers including, Victim Support; Gateway for Women and The Birchall Trust in partnership with SafetyNet.

Springfield also have refuge accommodation which is open to applicants nationally.

Details of the support provided by agencies is available on the Westmorland and Furness Council website.

The service is also represented on the Community Safety Partnership Domestic Abuse sub group.

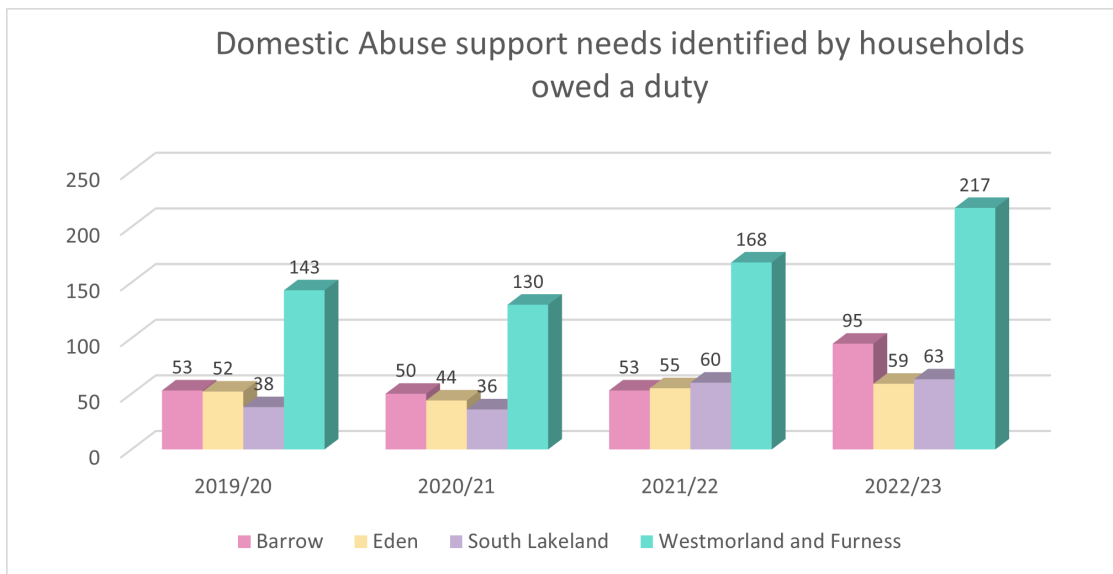
⁷ Office for National statistics people population and community/crime and justice domestic abuse prevalence and trends England and Wales year ending March 2022

Presentations to the homelessness teams in Barrow and South Lakeland have increased significantly since 2020/2021. A further rise is anticipated as awareness of domestic abuse and the support available increases.

The homelessness teams offer support to assist perpetrators of domestic abuse secure alternative accommodation. While it is recognised that it may be preferable for perpetrators to leave the property at which the abuse is taking place interim

accommodation is only provided where there is reason to believe that the perpetrator is in priority need.

Members of the homelessness teams take part in Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) meetings with other agencies to assess and plan interventions to target and disrupt serial perpetrators. The aim is to provide support to help individuals address the behaviours which are causing harm.



Case Study | Female age 61 Domestic Abuse victim

The client presented six times over a five year period. This mature lady and her partner had a long history of alcohol abuse. They had a very affluent lifestyle with regular foreign holidays which was one of the factors for her repeatedly returning to the relationship.

Most of the presentations were following Domestic Violence Protection Orders from Police call outs which rendered her homeless as the property belonged to the perpetrator to which she had no rights of occupation.

Unfortunately, despite best attempts, he always managed to persuade her to return following the initial period of separation as the alternative of living in less affluent circumstances was not favourable.

Following the development of the Women’s Accommodation and Support Centre (WASC) at Bath Street, Barrow the additional wrap around support from the agencies commissioned to deliver Domestic Abuse Support in Safe Accommodation has enabled her to recognise and not minimize the harm the violent relationship and alcohol were having on her health and wellbeing. Benefits and personal income from pensions were maximised to allow her to move into her own accommodation following additional preference being awarded in relation to the domestic abuse via Cumbria Choice Based Lettings. She was able to make this her home and build a healthier relationship with her partner without living together which has given her autonomy and broken the cycle of abuse.

This support was funded by the Domestic Abuse Support in Safe Accommodation from DHLUC.

Refugees and asylum seekers

Primary support for refugees is provided by the Resettlement Team which sits within Westmorland and Furness's Safe and Strong Communities Team.

There are a number of resettlement schemes open to refugees including: UK Resettlement Scheme (global); Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC); Afghan Citizen Relocation Scheme (ACRS); Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP); Resettlement of Hong Kong British Nationals and Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland made a pledge to house 16 individuals arriving under the resettlement schemes (totalling 48 for the Unitary area). Historically there has been a low uptake of accommodation due to household preferences for more urban locations, with greater support networks. Homeless presentations for this cohort have therefore been rare. Changes in central government policy have meant that individuals refusing this accommodation may now be classed as intentionally homeless. Therefore uptake is expected to increase.

As a result of the war between Russia and Ukraine, a number of households (Hosts) came forward to offer accommodation to people fleeing from the war (Guests). Between February 2022 and November 30 2023 a total of 18 homeless presentations were made by this cohort, 15 of which were

due to 'accommodation or arrangement broken down'.

Fewer presentations are anticipated as the Resettlement Team work closely with Guests to rematch with alternative Hosts/find other accommodation to avoid homelessness.

There are currently two hotels located in Barrow accommodating asylum seekers. Serco is procuring additional dispersed accommodation.

A protocol is in place to ensure referrals to the homelessness teams are made as soon as a positive decision has been made. The notice period is significantly less than the 56 days prevention period.

The current cohort comprises single men accommodated in hotels, however the increased use of dispersed accommodation has led to an increase in presentations from families. A continual flow of presentations is anticipated.

It should be noted that while refugees will have experienced traumatic events, refugee status does not automatically mean that individuals are in priority need. Therefore interim accommodation will not always be provided whilst homeless assessments are undertaken and Personal Housing Plans agreed.

The homelessness teams liaise with voluntary sector groups including Furness Multicultural Forum; Penrith and Eden Refugee Network.

Case Study | Homelessness Support for Refugees

A recent positive decision from the Home Office for a family of five resulted in the homelessness team responding to the 21 day notice given to refugees who are expected to leave their asylum accommodation within that timeframe.

The family were supported by the Asylum Lead who accompanied the family to the initial meeting where the family were assessed in accordance with the Homeless Reduction Act 2018. Following this, temporary accommodation was provided whilst further work commenced to assist the family to find secure affordable accommodation. There were some difficulties to overcome as the family were concerned that the property was not large enough for their needs, once explained that this was only temporary, their expectations were managed and the family signed the licence agreement for the flat.

The homeless team have been working in partnership with the Asylum Lead, the Multicultural Forum, the Furness Refugee Support Group and the Salvation Army to support the family during their journey into more permanent accommodation. Translation and interpretation services have been made available to assist the family move forward with settling into the area in the long term.

Armed Forces Families

In drafting this strategy, the Council has given consideration to the Armed Forces Covenant which has been enshrined in law through the enactment of the Armed Forces Act 2021, resulting in additional actions including improvements to the assessment screening questions and referral pathways.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) Veteran Survey 2022 indicates that the majority of veterans (78.9%) live in an owner-occupied or shared ownership house or flat. This is higher than the general population. A further 8.9% lived in privately rented accommodation and 6% lived in a socially rented house or flat, with 2.3% living with family or friends.⁸

Around 1 in 400 veterans said they were homeless, rough sleeping or living in a refuge for domestic abuse.

Data from the 2021 Census shows the proportion of veterans residing in Westmorland and Furness is low - however numbers are above the national average.

Homeless presentations amongst veterans in Westmorland and Furness are relatively low, the highest numbers being in Barrow.

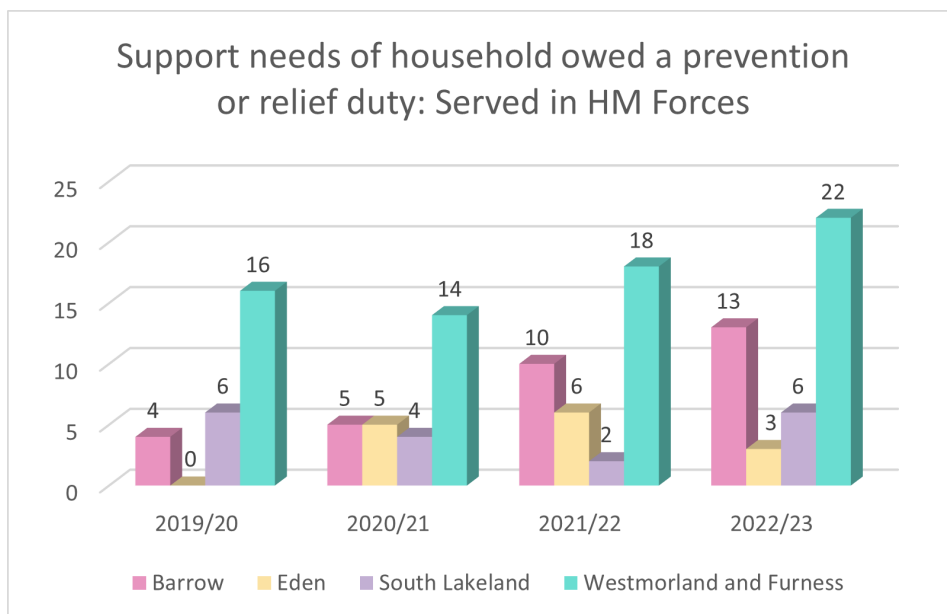
Cumbria Choice Based Lettings reflects Westmorland and Furness' commitment to veterans, by including provision under the Qualification Rules in relation to Local Connection and Financial Resources and by giving additional preference to meet the relevant criteria.⁹

Nationally, Riverside deliver OpFORTITUDE which is a centralised referral pathway into veteran supported housing.

The Royal British Legion also offer crisis grants for veterans, including accommodation costs for rough sleepers. Details are available on the Royal British Legion website.

Locally, the Rawthay Project CIC provide peer led support to veterans including residential recovery for up to three months. Details are available on the Rawthay Project website.

Geography	% of population aged 16+ who have previously served in the armed forces
Westmorland & Furness	4.7%
Barrow	4.8%
Eden	4.6%
South Lakeland	4.5%
England & Wales	3.8%



⁸ ONS Veterans' Survey 2022, demographic overview and coverage analysis, UK: December 2023

⁹ Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Allocation Policy www.cumbriachoice.org.uk

Challenges accessing affordable accommodation

Housing supply, tenure and affordability

Between 2019 and 2021 new housing supply fell below the government target of 300,000.¹⁰ While Census data shows there an increase of over 1.4 million households from 2011 to 2021.¹¹

Westmorland and Furness area has a mean affordability ratio of 7.3 i.e. the mean house price is 7.3 times the mean annual household income.¹²

In England, properties sold under the Right to Buy/Aquire have not been replaced. The supply of social rented homes let at affordable 'social' rents fell by almost 210,000 between 2012 and 2020. Only 11% of new 'affordable' homes built in England are at "genuinely affordable social rents".¹³

Nationally 15.5 million households own their accommodation either outright, with a mortgage or through shared ownership (62.5%). Renting from private landlords has increased to 5 million (20.3%), and renting from social landlords has fallen to 4.2 million (17.1%).

In Westmorland and Furness the percentage of owner occupiers is higher than the national average at 72%, with private renting and renting from social landlords being lower at 17% and 11% respectively.

Average market rents range from £511 per calendar month for a one bedroom property to £983 for a 4+ bedroom property.

Cumbria Choice is a partnership between the two Cumbrian local authorities (Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness) and six housing associations: (Accent Housing Association; Castles and Coasts Housing Association; Eden Housing Association; Home Group, Riverside and South Lakes Housing) with a single allocations policy and application form for available social housing across Cumbria.

Eligible applicants are placed into one of three Bands according to their housing need:

- **Band A:** Urgent housing need to move
- **Band B:** Statutory housing need to move
- **Band C:** All other applicants in housing need

At the end of December 2023, there were a total of 7,511 applicants on the housing register banded as follows:

Area	Band A	Band B	Band C	Unverified	Total
Barrow	118	857	1699	4	2678
Eden	23	264	736	17	1040
South Lakeland	186	987	2572	48	3793
Westmorland and Furness Total	327	2,108	5,007	69	7,511

¹⁰ House of Commons Library, 2022 UK research-briefings

¹¹ Census 2021 www.ons.gov.uk people population and community

¹² Experian Data - © Experian 2023 - All rights reserved

¹³ Chartered Institute of Housing, 2021 www.cih.org

The household composition is detailed below.

Household composition	Barrow	Eden	South Lakeland	Grand Total
2 adults (couple)	133	74	331	538
2 adults (non couple)	26	9	44	79
2+ Adults (non couple)	2	2	10	14
Couple 1 child	98	41	197	336
Couple 2 children	110	51	190	351
Couple 3 children	73	24	71	168
Couple 4 or more children	49	19	45	113
Couple over 55	38	67	128	233
Parent with 1 Adult child	57	26	55	138
Parent with 2+ Adult children	6	6	24	36
Single 1 child	307	74	333	714
Single 2 children	230	63	235	528
Single 3 children	118	27	96	241
Single 4 or more children	54	15	45	114
Single over 55	285	151	566	1002
Single person	975	301	1182	2458
Not stated	117	90	241	448
Grand Total	2678	1040	3793	7511

Economic disadvantage and welfare reform

In 2021, the working age population stood at 123,777 (55%). 7.9% of the council area is amongst the 10% most deprived areas in England.

The 2019 Indices of Deprivation published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) classified 12 of Westmorland and Furness' 144 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) as being within the 10% most deprived areas in England. All of these communities are located within the Barrow area.

In contrast, Westmorland and Furness had seven LSOAs classified as in the 10% least deprived of LSOAs nationally. The majority of these LSOAs are located within the South Lakeland area (six LSOAs in South Lakeland, one in Barrow-in-Furness). However, it is important to note that not all socially and economically disadvantaged people in Westmorland and Furness will be living in the most deprived areas, therefore consideration should be given to all.

Eden and South Lakeland have seen the greatest fall in the percentage of people aged 16 years and over (excluding full-time students) who were employed across the North West, while Barrow has seen this figure rise.

Approximately 5.2% of households in Westmorland and Furness have an annual household income below £10,000.¹⁴

In Westmorland and Furness approximately 4.4% of households fall within the 'Family Basics' Mosaic Category. The category definition is: Families with limited resources who budget to make ends meet. Key Features include: families with children, council/housing association tenants, low discretionary income, low affluence and internet via smartphone.¹⁵

Changes to welfare benefits from 2010 have

impacted those on the lowest incomes creating affordability barriers.

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) - the rates used to calculate Housing Benefit for people in private rented accommodation) has been frozen since 2020. As this is based on rents payable in 2018/19, the gap between the benefit available and the rents charged has increased. This causes significant issues in South Lakeland and Eden where there is a prevalence of second homes and tourist accommodation, which has led to higher rents.

The benefits cap limiting total benefit received and the introduction of Universal Credit has further impacted claimants making access to home ownership and private rented accommodation unaffordable.

The Local Housing Allowance is due to be increased in April 2024.

LHA Weekly Rates	1 Bed shared rates	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
Barrow	£81.35	£86.54	£102.41	£126.58	£166.85
Eden	£68.00	£80.55	£97.81	£120.82	£155.34
South Lakeland	£68.00	£113.92	£138.08	£166.85	£195.62

Average Private rents based on Office for National Statistics data 2021/2022

Weekly Rates	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
Barrow	£114.69	£125.54	£150.92	£207.46
Eden	£107.54	£129.46	£151.62	£201.46
South Lakeland	£131.30	£157.84	£188.77	£271.85

Difference	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
Barrow	£28.15	£23.13	£24.34	£40.61
Eden	£26.99	£31.65	£30.80	£46.12
South Lakeland	£17.38	£19.76	£21.92	£76.23

¹⁴ & ¹⁵ Experian Data - © Experian 2023 - All rights reserved

Case Study | Family served Section 21 notice

A pregnant female with two children contacted the homelessness team, having received a Section 21 notice from her private sector landlord who had decided to sell the property. The applicant faced additional challenges due to an anxiety disorder, making changes to daily routines difficult. In addition, one of her children had autism.

The homelessness team provided interim accommodation and support to: liaise with school to access the pupil premium and school transport; maximise her income, register with Cumbria Choice Based Lettings and search for a property in the private rented sector.

The client was allocated a property with a housing association and received further support through Ways to Welfare for essentials for her new home. The client, children and new baby are now settled in their home.

Second homes and empty homes

Westmorland and Furness attracts many visitors. Use of accommodation for bed and breakfast and Airbnb is therefore prevalent reducing the availability of private rented accommodation.

The total number of properties empty for six months is approximately 2,358.¹⁶ This can be broken down to:

- Barrow : 951
- Eden : 547
- South Lakeland : 860

The total number of second homes is approximately 5,441.¹⁷ This can be broken down to:

- Barrow : 362
- Eden : 1,278
- South Lakeland : 3,801

¹⁶ and ¹⁷ Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, Council Tax base 2022 Please note: This figure reflects a snapshot in time. As empty property figures are derived from 'live data', numbers may differ across other Council documents depending upon the information at the time of creation www.gov.uk/government/collections/council-taxbase-statistics

Legal context

All local authorities have a statutory duty to prevent and relieve homelessness.

Relevant legislation is contained in a number of different Acts including:

- Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 which requires local authorities to have an allocations scheme for social housing
- Section 2B of the National Health Service Act 2006 (as introduced by the Health and Social Care Act (2011)) which requires a local authority to take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of people in its area. Government guidance on homelessness strategies and reviews says that this duty includes people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness
- Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 which contains the primary legislation which provides for action to prevent homelessness and assist people threatened with or who are homeless
- The Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 which was made under Section 189(2) of the Housing Act 1996 and introduced the need for a homelessness strategy and extended the priority need categories to include people who are vulnerable as a result of time spent in the armed forces
- The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 which requires local authorities to ensure that their websites and applications are made more accessible for users, unless doing so would impose a disproportionate burden on the public sector body
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which introduced duties for local authorities to take action at an earlier

stage to prevent homelessness and to support house-holds already homeless to find secure accommodation. It also places a duty on public bodies to refer people threatened with or experiencing homelessness to the local authority, with consent

- In 2021 the Domestic Abuse Act which strengthened support to Victims of Domestic Abuse in safe accommodation and included a new definition which local authorities must use

In September 2022 the Government updated its Rough Sleeping Strategy, which is based on a whole system approach to prevent rough sleeping from occurring, intervening swiftly when it does aiding recovery to ensure people can stay off the streets and ensuring there is a more joined-up approach.

How this works in practice

The Council will provide support if a person is legally homeless or will become homeless within the next 56 days if they:

- Have no legal right to live in accommodation anywhere in the world
- Cannot get into their home, for example the landlord has locked them out
- It is not reasonable to stay in their home - for example the person is at risk of violence or abuse
- Are forced to live apart from their family or people they normally live with because there is no suitable accommodation for them
- Are living in very poor conditions which pose a risk to health

UK citizens and people living in the UK who have recourse to public funds are eligible for support.

Applicants can make applications to any local authority, however, applicants are usually considered by councils to which they have a local connection. A person has a local connection when, usually six months out of the last 12 months or three out of the last five years:

- (a) They are, or were in the past, normally resident there, and that residence was of their own choice; or
- (b) They are employed there; or
- (c) They have family associations living there; or
- (d) Because of any special circumstances.

An assessment is made to determine 'priority need' and a personalised housing plan (PHP) is developed with the applicant.

The plan includes the circumstances which have caused the homelessness, their housing needs and any support they would need to avoid homelessness.

The plan also sets out the steps the applicant and the Council will take.

The applicant may agree or disagree with the plan but must set out any reason for their disagreement.

Priority need applies automatically if:

- The applicant or someone they live with is pregnant
- The applicant is fleeing from domestic abuse
- The applicant has 'dependent children' living with them (under 16 or under 19 if they are studying full-time)
- The applicant is 16 or 17
- The applicant is a care experienced young person
- The applicant is homeless after a flood, fire or other disaster

- The applicant is assessed by the council as vulnerable. It is for the Council to decide whether the person is vulnerable for the purposes of a homeless application. Being vulnerable means being much more vulnerable than most people if they were homeless, and likely to suffer more harm in the same situation. People do not always have a priority need if they are disabled or have a health condition. Officers take a composite approach and consider individual circumstances, the Equality Act 2010 and its protected characteristics.

Prevention duty applies where there is evidence that eligible applicants will be homeless within 56 days.

A relief duty applies when there is reason to believe the applicant is actually homeless. Reasonable steps must be taken to help the applicant secure accommodation for at least six months. This does not mean that the authority has to source and provide accommodation, but that it should try to agree reasonable steps for itself and the applicant which could result in accommodation being found.

Interim accommodation is provided for eligible applicants while investigations are undertaken to confirm if they are in priority need.

The relief duty can be ended where an applicant is deemed to be intentionally homeless. This is where someone deliberately does or does not do something which causes their homelessness where otherwise the accommodation would be available and they could have continued to occupy it. Acts or omissions are not considered deliberate in circumstances beyond the persons control e.g. the result of Universal Credit delays in payments.

Interim accommodation

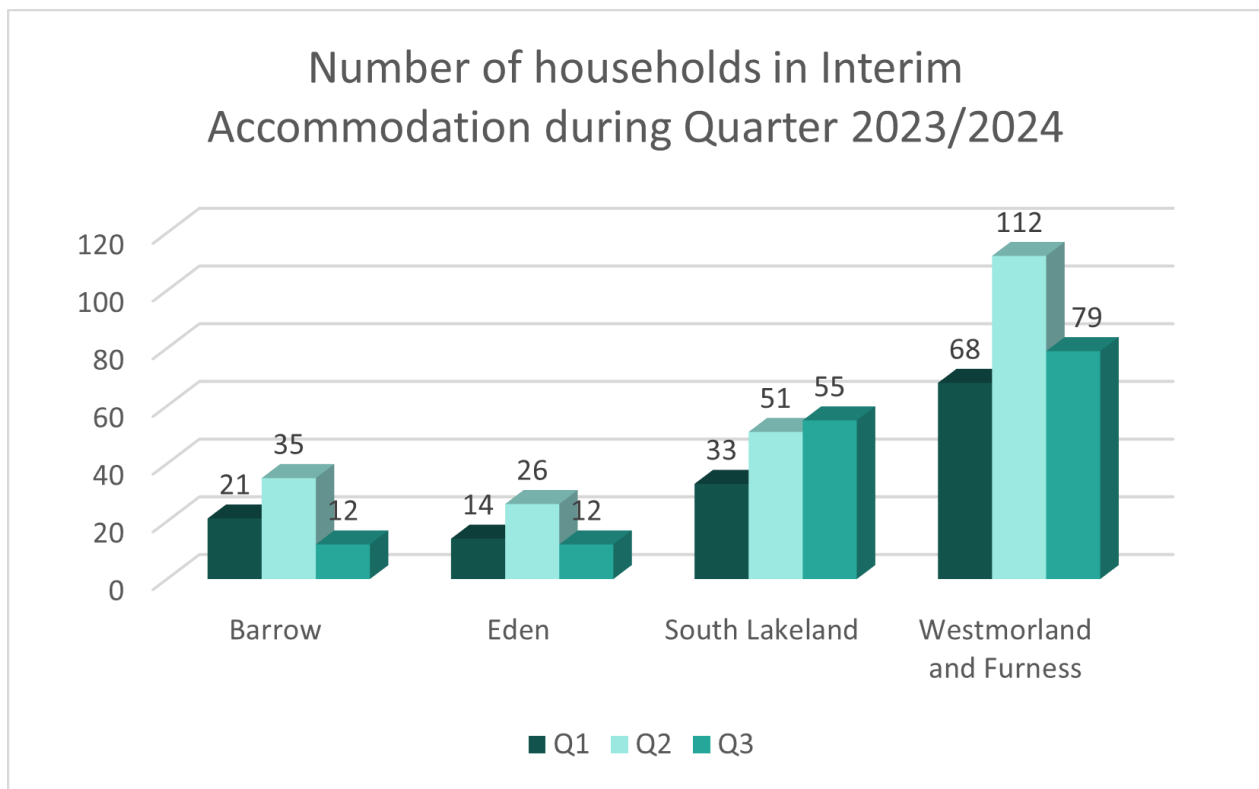
Interim accommodation is provided when households are eligible for support under the Relief Duty.

The Council has access to 50 units of interim accommodation, 10 of which incorporate target hardening measures making them suitable for victims of domestic abuse. An additional four designated domestic abuse units are available via Furness Homeless Support Group.

Units of dispersed accommodation predominate in Barrow and Eden while the majority of units in South Lakeland are within the Hostel.

Bed and Breakfast accommodation is used to supplement provision. In accordance with DLUHC guidance, families are not placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation for prolonged periods of time.

Use of interim accommodation is highest in South Lakeland where access to affordable accommodation is particularly problematic.



Rough sleeping

Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland undertake an annual evidence-based estimate of rough sleepers in line with government guidance. This provides information about the estimated number of people sleeping rough on a single night between 1 October and 30 November each year to show year-on-year trends.

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

This definition of rough sleeping does not include people in hostels or shelters, individuals who are sofa surfing, people in

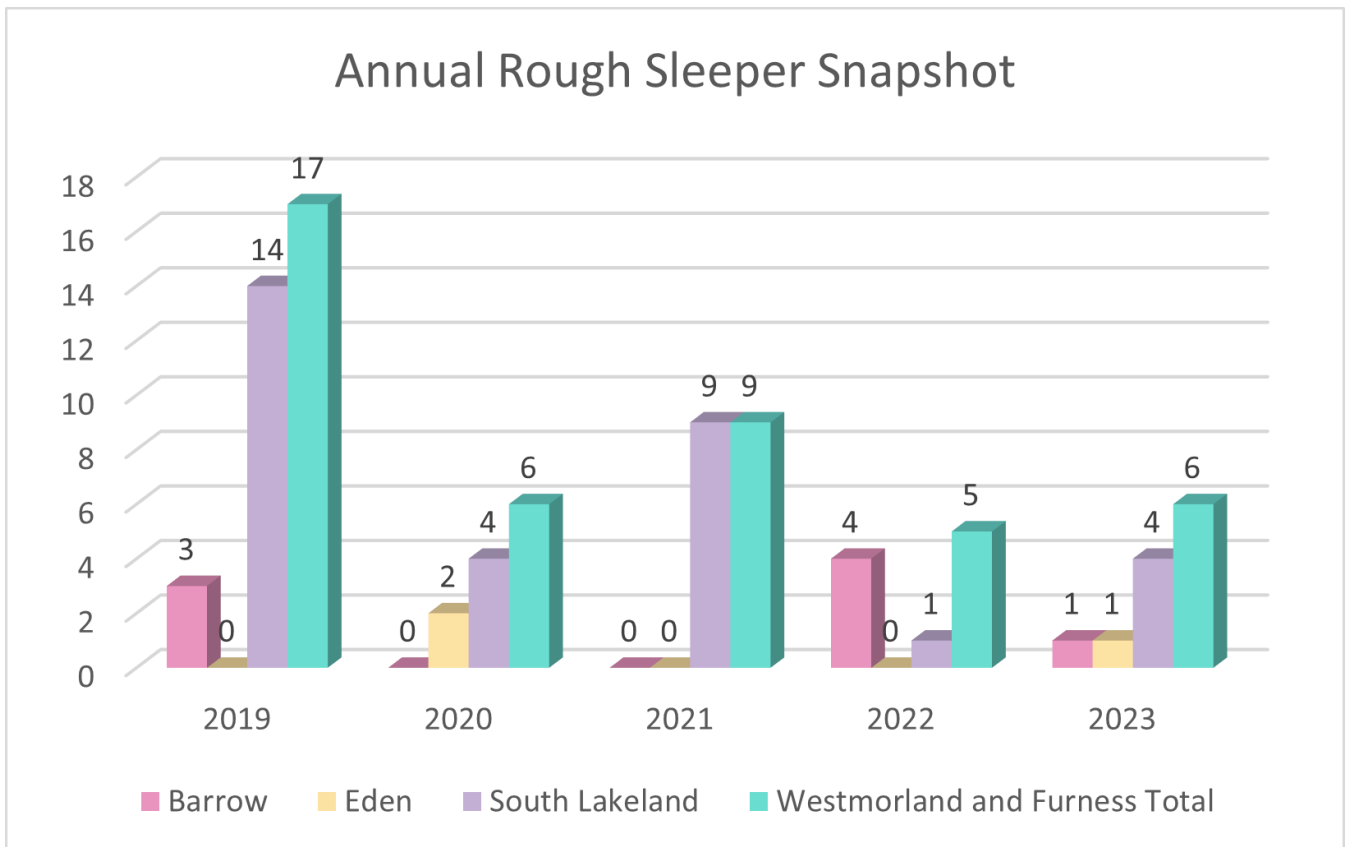
campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protest, squatters or Travellers.

Barrow and Eden have low instances of people rough sleeping, with South Lakeland seeing higher levels - again reflecting the difficulties in access to affordable accommodation.

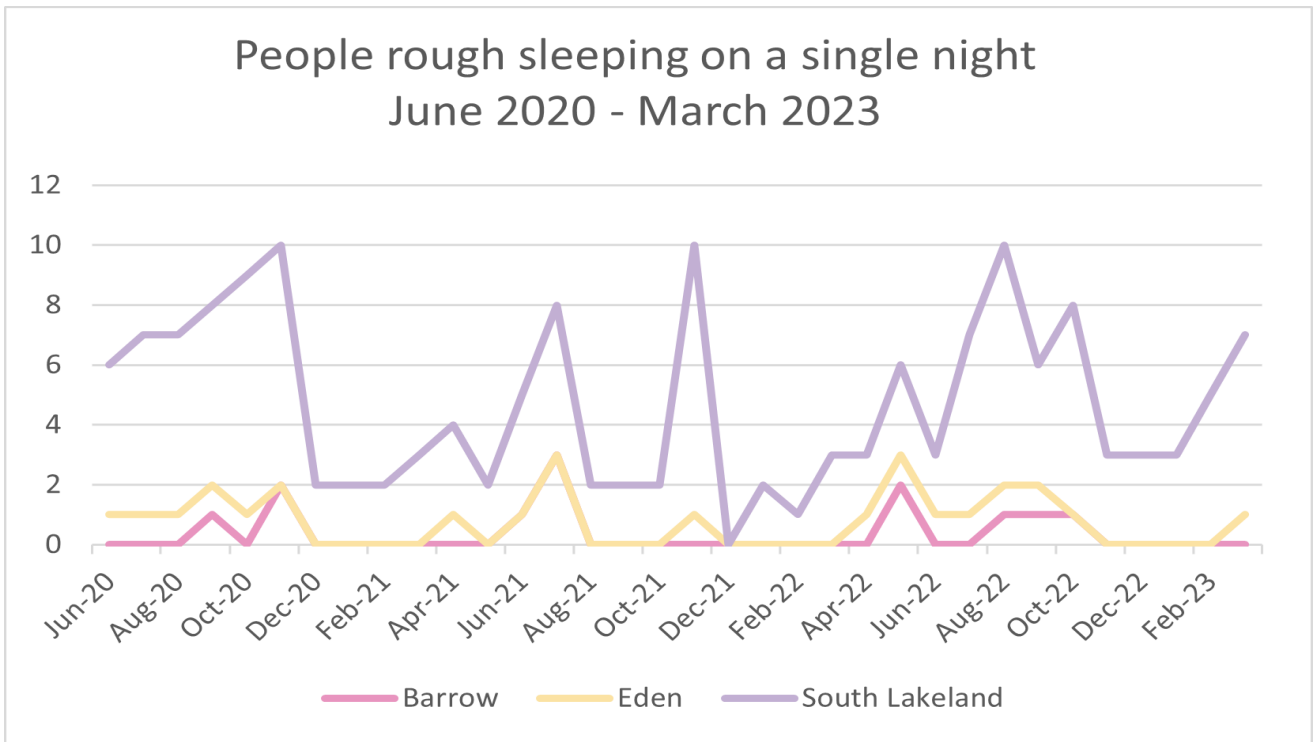
Information gathered during the initial homelessness application process indicates that ‘sofa surfing’ is prevalent across Westmorland and Furness.

Monthly data gathered since 2020 presents a similar picture. The majority of rough sleepers are single male, UK nationals.

It should be noted that geographically rough sleeping is primarily an issue in towns, however this may be due to challenges around reporting and identifying individuals in rural areas.

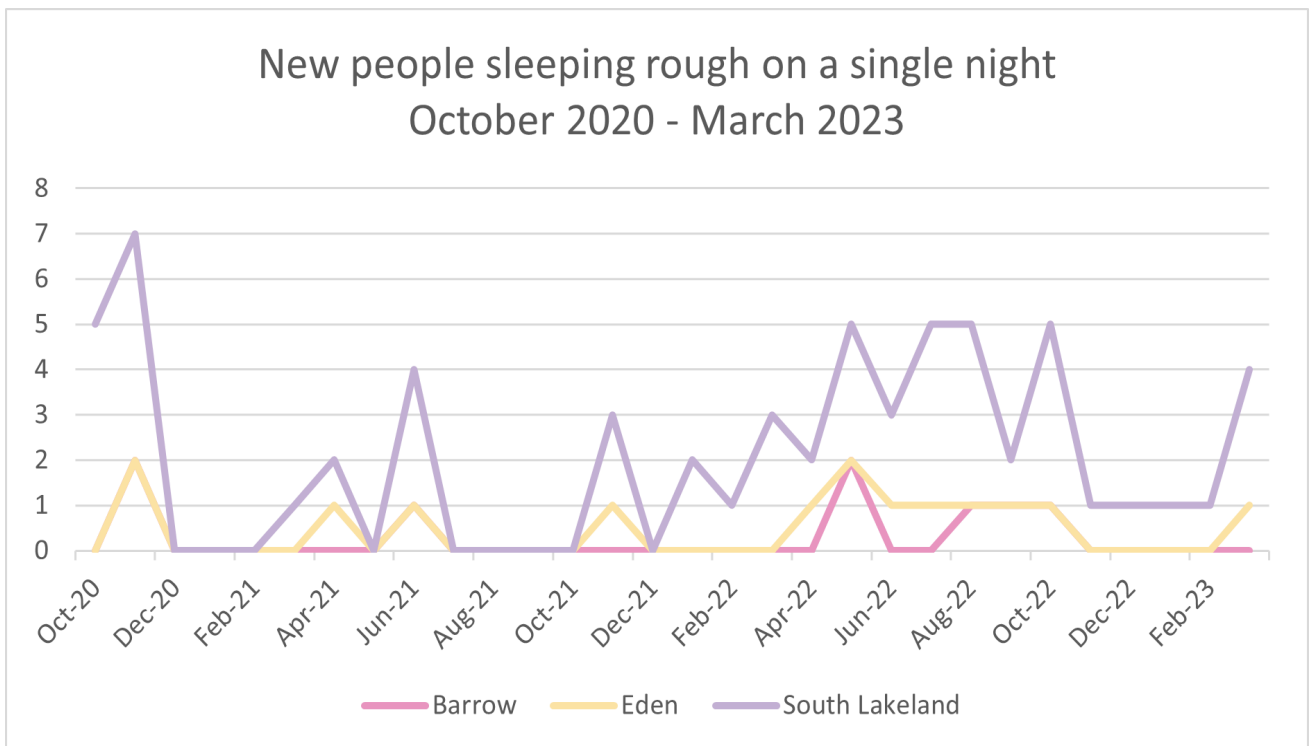


Fluctuations in the number of people sleeping rough on a single night is illustrated below:



In line with government policy, the Council is committed to preventing rough sleeping where possible, and when it does occur acting to ensure that it is brief and non-reoccurring.

The chart below show the number of new rough sleepers between October 2020 and March 2023.



Case Study | Confirmed Male Rough Sleeper

A number of reports were received from the public who were concerned about a gentleman bedding down in shop doorways. Staff made several visits to offer assistance and check the welfare of the man. It was established that he was a Veteran who insisted that he did not want an intervention from the statutory services provided by the Council. He described himself as “fine” and this is “just what I do”. He wasn’t local to the area but had been living in supported accommodation relating to substance misuse. He was getting hot drinks and food items from members of the public and was in good spirits.

The following week further reports were received which fitted the same description. Staff went out again to speak to the man and check his welfare. He was still unwilling to access our services. He was offered alternative assistance in the form of advice around local organisations providing warm spaces, food and companionship. He was also given the information leaflets on how to contact us and where to come for assistance and access accommodation during periods of severe weather (SWEP)

The actions to try and engage this gentleman to date have not been successful. The Council is committed to improving engagement with hard to reach clients to encourage positive changes and is in the process of implementing a pilot project which will proactively engage with vulnerable individuals.

Severe weather emergency protocol

During periods of severe weather - which includes persistent cold, extreme heat, excessive rain and high winds - the Council’s Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is implemented.

Individuals at risk of significant harm are provided emergency accommodation. In exceptional circumstances individuals who pose a risk to others are excluded from this provision. To date there have been no deaths whilst sleeping on the streets within Westmorland and Furness.

Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland are in receipt of Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding which, prior to the formation of the new Council, has been used differently in each locality. Initiatives include:

- Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators – undertaking outreach work to assist rough sleepers to find pathways into accommodation.
- Tenancy Sustainment Officers – undertaking activities to maintain

tenancies and providing support in temporary accommodation to find pathways into permanent accommodation.

- Supported lettings – providing intensive support to ensure individuals are supported into permanent accommodation and are able to maintain the tenancy.
- Private Rented Accommodation Officers – facilitating access to accommodation in the private sector and liaising with landlords to ensure tenancies are maintained.

In October 2023 the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) allocated additional funding for a project in South Lakeland to combat the relatively high instances of street homelessness. This has been used to develop a project in collaboration with The Well Communities and Manna House to provide additional support to individuals facing barriers to accessing housing with a view to providing pathways into long term accommodation.

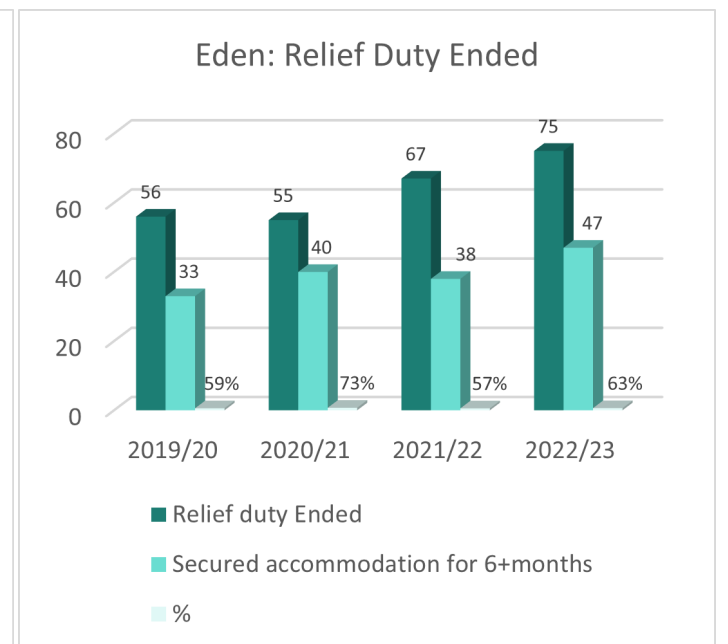
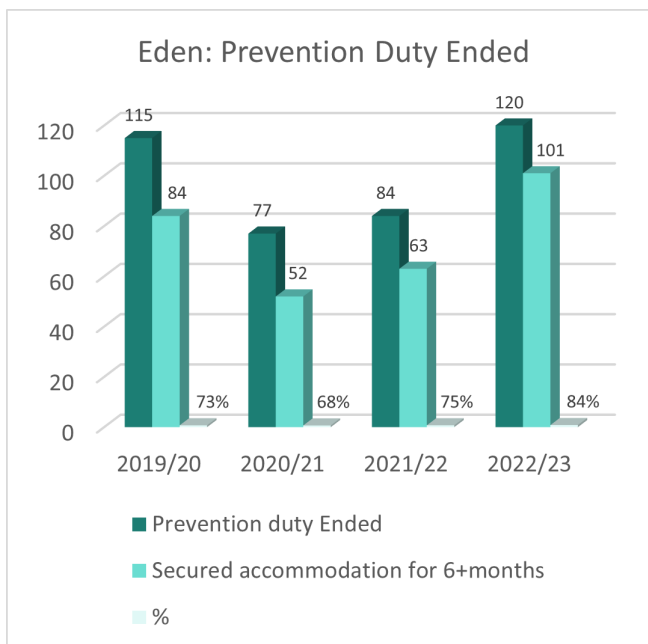
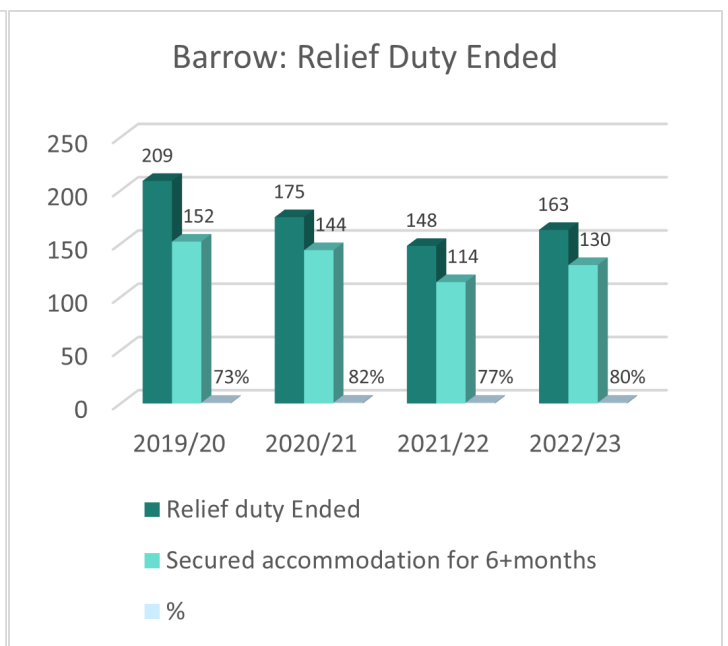
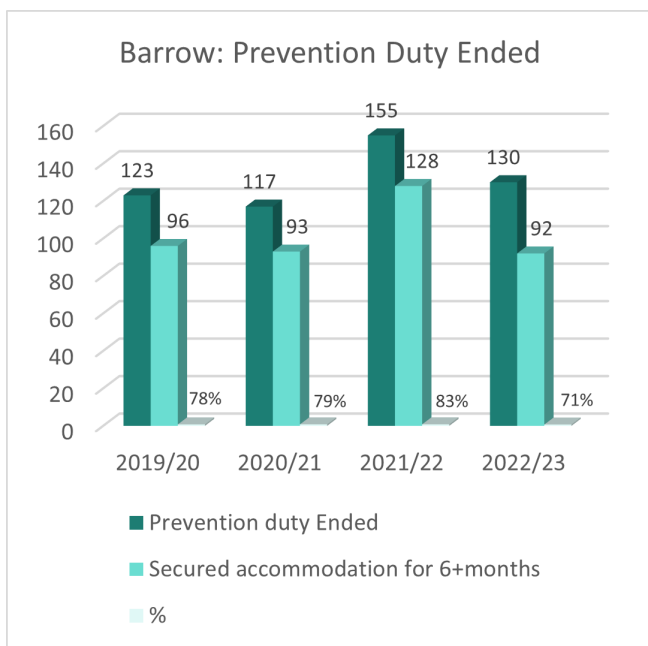
Performance

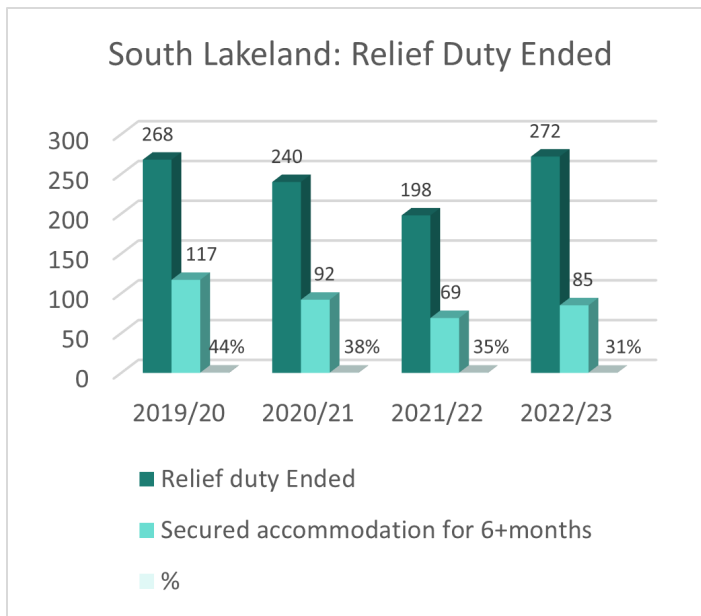
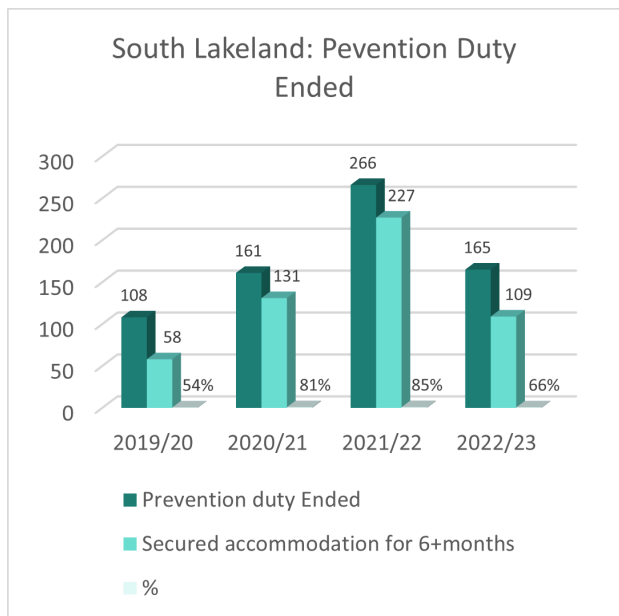
To monitor our performance Westmorland and Furness Council publicises key performance indicators via the quarterly Corporate Monitoring report for Cabinet.

The measures used are:

- The number of households in temporary accommodation - Target 73 per quarter
- The percentage of positive homeless prevention outcomes -Target 65%
- The percentage of positive homeless relief outcomes - Target 55%

The number households whose prevention and relief duty ended due to secure accommodation are detailed in the charts below:





In addition the following are monitored:

- The number of households owed a main duty.
- The number of households accessing Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
- The number of nights in temporary accommodation.
- The number of rough sleepers reported and the number contacted.

Section 3 | Action Plan

Theme	Aims	Objectives	Actions	*Target/progress
Cross cutting: •PREVENTION •RELIEF •ROUGH SLEEPING	Provide a consistent delivery model across the unitary footprint with flexibility to meet specific needs in each area	Provide a consistent approach to prevention activities across Westmorland and Furness	Implement a new interim Homelessness Team structure leading to a transformed service delivery model	Medium
			Standardise temporary accommodation offer to ensure consistent access and support is available to households	Short
			Standardise the reporting system utilising relevant IT system to ensure a consistent approach is taken to record keeping and relevant information is available to Officers adhering to GDPR	Short
			Update the Personal Housing Plan (PHP) screening questions asked during assessments to capture risk factors such as domestic abuse, substance misuse, risky behaviours, gambling, and vulnerabilities to County Lines, mental health, old age, ill health, trauma including trauma experienced by refugees, people with disabilities and veterans/members of the armed forces community	Short
			Develop a rolling training programme for staff in addition to mandatory training including: legislative update; domestic abuse awareness, trauma informed practice, addiction awareness, mental health first aid and housing policies specific to the armed forces community	Short
			Standardise fees and charges methodology	Short
PREVENTION Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping	Prevent homelessness amongst all 'at risk' groups	Understand the reasons for homelessness and the needs of those affected	Consolidate information on housing and homelessness across Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland	Short
			Ensure clients with protected characteristics can access homelessness prevention and rehousing advice: accessible premises, website, documents, staff training	Short
			Monitor data on the characteristics of clients at risk of homelessness and use the information to inform pathways for prevention	Medium
			Monitor rough sleeper numbers and reasons for rough sleeping	Short
			Engage with people with lived experience of services; Domestic Abuse Lived Experience Network; The Well; service user feedback	Medium
			Share information to work collaboratively with partners of the Cumbria Homelessness Forum	Medium
			Adopt a trauma informed approach to all homelessness services	Medium

***Target Progress**

Short: 31 March 2025 | **Medium:** 31 March 2027 | **Long:** 31 March 2029

Theme	Aims	Objectives	Actions	*Target/progress
Continued ... PREVENTION Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping	Improve access to advice and support	Ensure households are able to establish new and maintain existing tenures	Increase provision of tenancy support in partnership with accommodation providers including pre-tenancy support, particularly for high risk clients; clients in supported housing; refugees and care experienced young people	Medium
			Work with the Resettlement Team and third sector partners to address the needs of refugees to ensure clients with protected characteristics can access services	Short
			Consider options for providing dedicated resource to help individuals sustain tenancies including the use of Rough Sleeper Initiative funding and ensuring clients with protected characteristics can access services/support	Short
			Increase access to specialist services e.g. Debt Advice; Health & Wellbeing Coaches	Medium
			Work with Adult Social Care/Mental Health services to ensure that individual care needs are assessed and appropriate provision is in place at the earliest opportunity	Short
			Work with housing associations (Duty to Refer) and private landlords to establish protocols for early identification of clients at risk of eviction	Short
			Work with DWP to ensure that appropriate benefits are claimed, ways into work are promoted and claims are processed promptly to assist homeless households	Short
		Improve referral pathways	Promote the work of the homelessness service/ share best practice through meetings and networking events	Medium
			Ensure people are well informed about their housing options.	Short
			Increase awareness of the Duty to Refer	Medium
			Review pathway referral protocols: care experienced young people/hospital discharge/ prison leavers/domestic abuse/refugees	Medium
			Work with housing associations, community land trusts and private developers to implement an affordable housing development programme which responds to local needs	Short
		Maintain and develop services	Bid for funding to maintain and further develop homelessness and rough sleeper services	Short

Target Progress*Short:** 31 March 2025 | **Medium:** 31 March 2027 | **Long:** 31 March 2029

Theme	Aims	Objectives	Actions	*Target/ progress
Continued ... PREVENTION Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping	Increase access to safe affordable housing	Ensure plans for an increased supply of affordable housing are in place	Ensure the Housing Strategy and Planning Policy supports the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy	Short
			Work with Housing Standards and Services to develop an Empty Homes strategy	Short
			Increase availability of Council housing stock	Long
			Work with registered providers to increase the supply of affordable housing	Long
			Work with housing associations to consider initiatives aimed at addressing under-occupation, particularly in relation to older people struggling in their current accommodation due to mobility or disability	Long
			Consider partnership opportunities with Stoll's Veteran Nomination Scheme	Long
			Work with housing associations and care providers to increase the supply of supported accommodation to respond to local needs	Long
			Work with Housing Standards to increase the supply of shared housing through the provision of advice re HMO licensing	Medium/ Long
			Work with partners via the Community Safety Partnership to develop positive interventions to reduce anti-social behaviour/re-offending	Medium
			Ensure staffing resource and advice is available to encourage private sector landlords to work with the Council to help households secure and maintain tenancies	Short
		Increase access to good quality affordable housing (social and private sector)	Utilise deposit schemes/rent in advance to secure accommodation	Short
			Develop a rent guarantee scheme/incentives for hard to place households	Short
			Actively engage with private landlords through landlord forums	Short
			Consider establishing a Local Lettings Agency	Long
			Work with the Cumbria Choice Partnership to ensure the allocations policy remains relevant in supporting this strategy	Short
			Work with housing standards enforcement teams to improve support available to landlords and tenants	Medium

***Target Progress**

Short: 31 March 2025 | **Medium:** 31 March 2027 | **Long:** 31 March 2029

Theme	Aims	Objectives	Actions	*Target/progress
RELIEF: Supporting people experiencing homelessness	Meet temporary accommodation housing needs and reduce reliance on B&B accommodation	Effectively utilise existing temporary accommodation	Implement systems to ensure the use of temporary accommodation is maximised across Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland	Short
			Minimise void turnaround times	Short
			Improve move on pathways into settled accommodation by working in partnership with housing associations and private landlords	Medium
			Develop relationships with hotel/B& B providers	Short
		Increase the supply of good quality, value for money temporary accommodation	Investigate options for increasing the supply of smaller units across all tenures	Medium
			Investigate acquiring additional units on the open market	Medium
			Investigate the use of caravan parks	Long
			Consider the best use of accommodation provision at Town View Fields	Short
	Improve the quality of life for victims of domestic abuse	Provide support for victims of domestic abuse	Work with partners to ensure that specialist support is available to victims of domestic abuse in safe accommodation	Short
			Work with partners to ensure that housing related support is available to victims of domestic abuse	Short
			Engage with partners to raise awareness of domestic abuse ie: preventing abuse; identifying abuse; support services available to victims of abuse including support in safe accommodation (DASSA)	Medium
			Work with partners to actively seek funding opportunities to develop an accommodation programme for perpetrators of domestic abuse	Medium

***Target Progress**

Short: 31 March 2025 | Medium: 31 March 2027 | Long: 31 March 2029

Prevention aims, objectives and actions are also relevant to relief cases to enable individuals to move on into secure accommodation and have support to sustain this

Theme	Aims	Objectives	Actions	*Target/progress
ROUGH SLEEPING: Support people at risk of or who are rough sleeping	Ensuring Rough Sleeping is rare, brief and non-recurring	Access accurate data	Develop monitoring systems to measure levels of rough sleepers and enable individual recording and assessment to provide data which can be shared/used to develop services	Short
		Preventing rough sleeping	Promote positive communications to help the general public: report rough sleepers; understand the difference between street based activity and those who are homeless; support rough sleepers	Short
		Provide support to those experiencing street homelessness	Introduce a Rough Sleeper Charter to outline the support available to rough sleepers	Short
			Provide a proactive outreach service	Short
			Work with Housing Associations, private landlords, private and third sector organisations to develop housing pathways for individual with additional support needs	Medium
			Explore options for working with the voluntary sector to establish night shelter provision	Medium
			Work with the voluntary sector to ensure access to day centres/foodbanks	Short
			Work with mental health and drug/alcohol support providers to improve access to services for rough sleepers	Medium
			Review severe weather protocol and winter provision annually to ensure appropriate protection is available for rough sleepers, where possible leading to more suitable housing	Short

***Target Progress**
Short: 31 March 2025 | **Medium:** 31 March 2027 | **Long:** 31 March 2029



**Westmorland
& Furness
Council**