



# Growth Housing & Infrastructure Select Committee

Feb 17<sup>th</sup> 2022

*Update on progress with development of  
the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping  
Strategy*



# Development of Buckinghamshire Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2025

## Homelessness Act 2002 requires Council to have a strategy

Aims to meet requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 to

1. Prevent more people from becoming homeless in the first place by identifying people at risk and intervening earlier;
2. Intervene rapidly if a homelessness crisis occurs, so it is brief and non-recurrent;
3. Help more people to recover from and exit homelessness by getting them back on their feet.

Our upcoming strategy will reflect the requirements above and the recognised need to continue to intervene at the earliest possible stage to prevent homelessness.

# Actions to Date

- HQN (Housing Quality Network) appointed to support strategy development
- Review of the three former district strategies;
- Workshops with internal and external stakeholders;
- Collection of data and information;
- Identification of causes of homelessness and rough sleeping;
- Drafting of strategy prior to consultation activity

# Strategy Context

The Homelessness Strategy will underpin the Council's key priorities:

1. **Strengthening our communities**
2. Improving our environment
3. **Protecting the vulnerable**
4. Increasing prosperity

The key priorities are for our residents, employees, businesses, service users and councillors.

# Strategy Context

## Strengthening our communities

Provide the homes our growing communities need, including affordable housing, at the right stage in people's lives

## Protecting the Vulnerable

Work to reduce homelessness and address its root causes.

The Homelessness Strategy also supports the priorities of increasing prosperity and improving the environment.

# Challenges In Buckinghamshire

The evidence base we have collected highlights some of the key challenges.

1. The number of people, particularly young people, being asked to leave by family and friends. Many of these have never held a tenancy in their own right.
2. The number of households with debt and financial challenges affecting their ability to pay their current rent.
3. The number of households threatened with homelessness when their private sector tenancy is ended.

# Challenges In Buckinghamshire

4. The number of people threatened with homelessness as a result of a relationship breakdown, many involving domestic abuse.
5. Encouraging those threatened with homelessness to make early contact with the service in order to resolve the situation and prevent homelessness.
6. Increasing the proportion of households where homelessness can be prevented either by retaining the existing tenancy or making a planned move.

# Challenges In Buckinghamshire

7. Reducing rough sleeping to zero.
8. Continuing to manage temporary accommodation (TA) tightly; minimise the use of B&B accommodation; and ensure move-on from temporary accommodation as early as possible to affordable, sustainable, settled accommodation.
9. Ensuring appropriate support is available for vulnerable households, with a particular focus on mental health needs.



# Challenges In Buckinghamshire

- In 2020/21 circa 2,000 households approached us for advice and support.
- Statutory duty to assist (prevention or relief) in 90%+ cases.
- Homelessness successfully prevented in over 50% of cases.
- Around 30% of cases moved to alternative accommodation - private sector let or social housing (including supported).

# Challenges In Buckinghamshire

- Most of those where a housing duty applied were single people without children.

The Council must prevent and relieve homelessness for this group, there is no test of vulnerability or other threshold criteria at this stage.

- Next largest group were single parents.
- Most heads of households age 25–44.
- Approx. 1/3<sup>rd</sup> in work, 1/3<sup>rd</sup> unemployed
- One in ten unable to work due to a disability

# Challenges In Buckinghamshire

Main causes of homelessness:

1. Friends/family no longer willing to accommodate
2. Ending of private sector tenancy
3. Non-violent relationship breakdown
4. Domestic abuse
5. End of social rented tenancy

Other reasons:

6. Leaving an institution (prison, hospital etc.)
7. Harassment
8. Eviction from supported housing

In many cases underlying reasons for homelessness - debt, ill-health, or another vulnerability.

# Challenges In Buckinghamshire

Many households threatened with homelessness have a support need:

- Mental health
- Physical health and disability
- Domestic abuse
- Offending history
- Repeat homelessness
- Drug/Alcohol dependency
- History of rough sleeping
- Learning disability
- 18-25's requiring support to manage independently

# Draft Vision and Priorities

Draft vision:

*“That everyone has a secure and affordable place to live; advice and support is available for those threatened with homelessness; effective early intervention means that no-one becomes homeless or has to sleep rough.”*

# Draft Vision and Priorities

## Priorities:

1. To provide advice, information and support to enable those at risk of becoming homeless to take steps to remain in their accommodation where feasible and appropriate, or to undertake a planned move if required
2. To provide appropriate and consistent services and to recognise the individual needs of different localities.
3. To identify those at risk of homelessness early and to intervene to prevent homelessness.
4. To support homeless households to find appropriate alternative accommodation quickly.
5. To prevent anyone having to sleep rough.
6. To maximise the supply of affordable rented accommodation.

# Draft Vision and Priorities

In addition to these draft priorities, there are two cross-cutting themes to which we will continue to address with associated plans and ideas.

These are:

- Making best use of resources
- Partnership working

# Next Steps

- Develop and Action Plan to deliver the Vision & Priorities
- Consult with internal and external stakeholders in the coming weeks
- Adoption by Buckinghamshire Council
- Implementation of action plan – monitoring of delivery and review – further scrutiny?





# *Questions*

