

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).
 The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

That:

- the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 (Appendix A) be approved for public consultation, and
- the Chief Officer Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Growth be authorised to make any necessary minor editorial textual changes to the draft prior to public consultation.

2. Date of decision

17th January 2024

3. Reasons for decision

The purpose of the decision is to obtain comments and feedback from members of the public and other interested parties on the draft new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy such that they can be considered and incorporated where appropriate prior to its consideration for adoption.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

The Council is required to have an up-to-date Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and public consultation is necessary to ensure that the new Strategy being developed to cover the period 2024 – 2029 is soundly developed. No alternative proposals have therefore been considered.

5. How decision is to be funded

The undertaking of public consultation and the analysis of responses requires staff time and will be undertaken within existing resources.

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

Yes *Ton Woller*

Signed *P.A. Martin - Moran - Bryant* Date *17.01.24* Name of Decision Taker *PHILIPPA MARTIN - MORAN - BRYANT*

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published:18 January 2024.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in:29 January 2024.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

Agenda Item *

For publication

Bedford Borough Council – Executive

Date of Decision: January 2024

Report by: Chief Officer Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Growth

Subject: Public Consultation – Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029

1. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 In March 2023, the Executive resolved to extend the Council’s Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 (the Existing Strategy) to cover the period to June 2024 in order to allow time for a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2024-2029 (the New Strategy) to be developed.
- 1.2 The draft New Strategy (Appendix A) reflects changes in the homelessness and rough sleeping related operating environment since the Existing Strategy was published, identifies three key themes, the drivers and influences they present for the New Strategy and the proposed actions to be taken to address them.
- 1.3 This report seeks approval to consult externally on the draft New Strategy. It is anticipated that the consultation will run for six weeks beginning in early February until mid-March 2024. All responses received will be considered in finalising the New Strategy which, once adopted, will provide the overarching framework against which the Council will prevent homelessness, ensure the sufficient supply of accommodation and provide support and help to aid recovery for those that need it.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 It is recommended that:

- the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 (Appendix A) be approved for public consultation, and
- the Chief Officer Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Growth be authorised to make any necessary minor editorial textual changes to the draft prior to public consultation.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

3.1 To obtain comments and feedback from members of the public and other interested parties on the draft New Strategy such that they can be considered and incorporated where appropriate prior to its consideration for adoption.

4. THE CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Following the approval at Executive in March 2023 to extend the Existing Strategy, the New Strategy has been drafted and, following internal consultation, is now ready for external consultation.

5. DETAILS

5.1 As a housing authority, Bedford Borough Council (the Council) has an obligation to produce a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which assesses homelessness in its area and formulates a strategy to address it. The Council's Existing Strategy covered the period 2016-2021 and, as detailed above, was extended to June 2024 to allow a New Strategy to be developed.

5.2 In line with the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, the draft New Strategy focuses on three key themes:

- **Preventing** homelessness with intervention at the earliest possible points
- Ensuring sufficient **supply** of accommodation
- Providing **support** and help to aid recovery for those that need it.

- 5.3 It also:
- Establishes the national legislative and policy contexts in which the Council's homelessness functions must be delivered,
 - Summarises the key drivers in informing the New Strategy's Vision,
 - Illustrates the relationship between the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy, its key inputs and the outcomes needed to prevent homelessness, ensure a supply of accommodation, and deliver support,
 - Identifies the local partnerships critical to the delivery of the New Strategy and the plans to which preventing homelessness must align and how they will do so,
 - In relation to the three themes:
 - Analyses data sources,
 - Establishes the drivers and influences for Bedford Borough during the lifetime of the strategy,
 - Identifies the actions necessary to address these issues, and
 - Commits to delivering them within available resources.
 - Recommends the setting up of a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board to oversee and drive focused action plans which will deliver the New Strategy's Vision, and
 - Provides an Action Plan which sets targets and timescales for the delivery of these actions.
- 5.4 External consultation is now programmed for six weeks beginning in early February until mid-March 2024, when all interested parties will have a chance to comment and contribute.
- 5.5 There will be publicity to encourage participation including via the Council's website, social media and press releases and an email to all Members. There are also focus groups planned for interested parties and service users.
- 5.6 The programme for adoption of the New Strategy after the external consultation is dependent upon its outcome, but it is currently anticipated that the New Strategy will be presented to Executive for adoption prior to the expiry of the Existing Strategy in June 2024.
- 5.7 Approval is sought to undertake a public consultation on the draft Strategy.

6. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

6.1 The Council is required to have an up-to-date Strategy and public consultation is necessary to ensure that the New Strategy is soundly developed. No alternative proposals have therefore been considered.

7. KEY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Legal Issues	<p>The Council retains its role as a strategic and enabling authority along with a number of statutory responsibilities in relation to housing, housing conditions, housing need and homelessness including development of a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy.</p> <p>The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local housing authorities to take strategic responsibility for tackling and preventing homelessness by publishing a Homelessness strategy.</p>
7.2 Policy Issues	<p>The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out the Council’s key priorities for tackling homelessness in the Borough. As a housing authority, the Council has an obligation to produce a Homelessness Strategy which formulates the vision and actions to address issues that are identified.</p> <p>The Government published a Rough Sleeper Strategy in 2018 which sets out a commitment to support local housing authorities to update local homelessness strategies and rename them ‘homelessness and rough sleeping’ strategies.</p> <p>There are a number of national and local policies that sit above the draft New Strategy and inform its content. These are identified in section 1.18 of the draft New Strategy.</p>

<p>7.3 Resource Issues</p>	<p>The intention of the New Strategy is to make the most effective use of the resources that the Council has available to it to promote homelessness prevention, supply of accommodation and support provision. The resource implications of each particular theme will require separate consideration as they are brought forward.</p> <p>The undertaking of public consultation and the analysis of responses requires staff time and will be undertaken within existing resources.</p>
<p>7.4 Risks</p>	<p>The Council's Existing Strategy originally covered the period 2016 to 2021 and was extended in March 2023 to June 2024. If it is not replaced by the end of that period, there will no longer be an up-to-date strategy in place to meet the Council's statutory homelessness obligations.</p> <p>Failure to undertake public consultation would prevent important constructive feedback from members of the public and other interested parties being taken into account in the adopted New Strategy.</p>
<p>7.5 Environmental Implications</p>	<p>The Sustainable Development and Environmental Efficiency Strategy (SDEES), contains the following goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achieve resource efficiencies and cost savings. 2. Be more resilient against increasing energy prices. 3. Enhance and protect the local environment. 4. Empower local communities and businesses. 5. Plan for and protect against future change. 6. Improve quality of life for all. 7. Create long term business value for the Council. <p>Consulting upon the New Strategy contributes to the delivery of goals 1, 4, 5 and 6 by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing the views expressed to contribute to the Council's thinking on how homelessness services, including temporary accommodation, might most efficiently and effectively be provided (goal 1) • Enabling local communities and businesses and other stakeholders to contribute their views on an important emerging Council Strategy (goal 4). • Allowing stakeholders and interested parties to contribute to the Council's five year Strategy for

	<p>tackling homelessness in the Borough (goal 5).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enabling the views expressed to contribute to the Council's five-year Strategy for tackling homelessness in the Borough (goal 6) <p>This is a report seeks approval to consult externally on a Council Strategy and, as such, contains no specific proposals that contribute to the Council's objective of achieving a net zero carbon Council by 2030.</p>
--	---

<p>7.6 Equalities Impact</p>	<p>In preparing this report due consideration has been given to the Borough Council's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>This report seeks approval to consult externally on a draft New Strategy. Equalities impacts have been considered in the development of the draft New Strategy and a full Equality Analysis will be undertaken once external consultation responses have been analysed and, where appropriate, incorporated. The Equality Analysis will be available and published prior to the New Strategy being considered for adoption.</p>
<p>7.7 Impact on Families</p>	<p>The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy's Vision is to ensure that homelessness is addressed at whatever stage or circumstances people are in with particular focus on preventing homelessness occurring in the first place. It is recognised that families with children facing homelessness are faced with far more than just losing a home but also their access to children's schools, colleges, local friends and family support and established local communities. Undertaking an external consultation will ensure the views of stakeholders, service users, including families impacted upon by homelessness and other interested parties are taken into account in formulating the New Strategy.</p> <p>Future adoption and implementation of the New Strategy, incorporating where appropriate consultation comments will help the Council to help ensure that families can remain in their homes wherever possible, where temporary accommodation is needed that it is suitable and as close to an area known as home as possible, that a quick and quality service to end homelessness is delivered and that a suitable long-term solution is offered to enable families to recover and grow.</p>
<p>7.8 Community Safety and Resilience</p>	<p>The draft New Strategy sets out actions for delivering partnership working which will drive improved assessment and understanding of people's support needs to enable identifying the right solutions to prevent and relieve homelessness to meet the bespoke needs of each person and family. Undertaking an external consultation will ensure the views of stakeholders, service users and other interested parties, including those with an interest in community safety, can be taken into account in formulating the New Strategy.</p>

7.9 Impact on Health and Wellbeing

Homelessness often results from a combination of events such as relationship breakdown. Debt, adverse experiences in childhood and though ill health. Homelessness and ill health are intrinsically linked and professionals in both sectors have a role to play in tacking the issues together. Undertaking an external consultation will ensure the views of stakeholders, service users and other interested parties are taken into account in formulating the New Strategy.

8. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME

8.1 The following officers have been consulted in preparing this report:

- Management Team
- Chief Officer for Legal & Democratic Services
- Chief Officer for Finance
- Chief Officer for Assessment, Application and Business Support
- Energy Team

The following Members were consulted in the development of the draft New Strategy:

- Mayor Wootton
- Cllrs Spice, Weir, Coombes, Walker and Rigby

8.2 Comments on the draft New Strategy were accommodated in revisions prior to finalising this report.

9. WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS

9.1 Not applicable for this report

10. CONTACTS AND REFERENCES

Report Contact Officer	Tracey Barrett (Team Leader Housing Policy, Development and Viability) 01234 718572 (x47572) tracey.barrett@bedford.gov.uk Tabitha Resta (Housing Partnerships Officer and Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator) 07557 800169 tabitha.resta@bedford.gov.uk
File Reference	None
Previous Relevant Minutes	Executive, 8 th March 2023, Minute no 78.
Background Papers	None
Appendices	A: Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029



Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029

Foreword

This strategy sets out the Council's vision for tackling homelessness and how it will work with partners to prevent homelessness, support those who experience it, ensure there is sufficient supply of suitable accommodation for those who do and minimise rough sleeping.

This strategy comes at a crucial period in time. A national shortage of housing supply to meet demand is placing increased pressure on homelessness services, whilst at the same time, the Covid 19 pandemic and cost of living crisis have impacted on many households' circumstances leaving them vulnerable to homelessness.

In Bedford, we have seen a steady increase in the numbers of households, particularly single people, presenting as homeless over the last three years. Homelessness undoubtedly has a negative impact on people's lives, well-being and opportunities as well as creating a significant financial challenge for the Council. Therefore, preventing homelessness by assisting people to remain in their homes and / or to swiftly access alternative suitable accommodation is a key objective of the Council's priority to support families and vulnerable residents.

Despite the challenges we have had to face over recent years, there have been a number of significant achievements. These include successful implementation of one of the most radical changes to homelessness legislation this century, responding to service continuity needs during the pandemic, implementing Rough Sleeper Initiatives which more than halved rough sleeping in two years, and maintaining very low numbers of rough sleeping far beyond the Covid-19 'Everyone In' commitment.

Using government funding to tackle rough sleeping, we have seen numbers reduce dramatically because of the support and assistance that we are providing. We are fortunate to work with local stakeholders who share our commitment to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping. I would like to extend my thanks to all of these colleagues, as we could not achieve the successes we have already, without them. Over the next few years, we need to build on our successes and increase our focus on preventing all types of homelessness, including assisting less 'visible' groups, such as families and extend the scope of our partnership working. I am very pleased to endorse this strategy, knowing that it will deliver continuous improvements in how we tackle and prevent homelessness, and impact positively on people's lives.

Signature here

Relevant Cllr or
Senior Management
photo here?

Name and Title

Contents

1. Introduction

2. The Homelessness Review

3. The Strategy

4. Theme 1: Preventing Homelessness

5. Theme 2: Supply of Accommodation

6. Theme 3: Providing Support

7. Delivery

8. The Action Plan

Appendix 1 – Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2019 / 2020

Appendix 2 - The Review Update 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Bedford Borough Council's (the Council) Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2024-2029 (the Strategy) has been developed during a period of unprecedented uncertainty. The currently known housing and homelessness influences will shape the detail of this Strategy, but at the same time it must be flexible, to allow the Council to respond to a challenging, unpredictable and constantly changing operating environment.
- 1.2 There have been significant changes in national policy since the publication of the last Homelessness Strategy 2016 – 2021. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was introduced in April 2018, with the aim of offering more assistance to single people and to improve prevention of homelessness through placing this within a statutory framework which gives more focus and opportunity for families and individuals to be supported to remain in their homes. This change is one of the most significant in homelessness law in 40 years. At the same time, the Government announced a cross-departmental priority to focus on ending rough sleeping.
- 1.3 Our Strategy addresses all forms of homelessness including rough sleeping. It is important to ensure homelessness, in whatever form it presents itself is tackled in a holistic way by the actions set out in the Strategy.
- 1.4 More resources have been made available by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) to support our work to prevent homelessness for families, single people and to end rough sleeping.
- 1.5 The Strategy aims to consolidate some of the positive progress the Council has made as well as focus on better meeting customer's needs and changing, where possible, what's not been working well, through identifying and addressing barriers to continual improvement.
- 1.6 In line with the requirements of the [Homelessness Act 2002](#) and the [Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities](#), we will focus on the key themes of;
 - **Preventing** homelessness with intervention at the earliest possible points
 - Ensuring sufficient **supply** of accommodation
 - Providing **support** and help to aid recovery for those that need it

1.7 The delivery of actions coming out of this Strategy will be set in the context of the resources available to the Council. It is also important to recognise that local authorities and Government cannot always fully understanding or predict the medium and longer-term effects of global and financial impacts on housing and homelessness. We know that we need to ensure the Action Plan (at Section 8 of this Strategy), is continually reviewed and when needed, can be updated or changed in response to new trends or circumstances as a result of unforeseen emergencies and any major economic and policy drivers.

1.8 Effective partnership working lies at the heart of all successful homelessness prevention services. The vision set out in the Government report ‘Making Every Contact Count’ published back 2012 sums up what is still the priority focus today:

“...the visions of this report is simple, but bold. There is no place for homelessness in the 21st century. The key to delivering that vision is prevention – agencies working together to support those at risk of homelessness”

Source; Department for Communities and Local Government Making every contact count - foreword from The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP – Minister for Housing 2010 to 2012

1.9 In August 2018, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government published the first ‘Rough Sleeper Strategy’, which highlighted a need for stronger accountability and consulted on the use of local ‘Homelessness Reduction Boards’. Homelessness Reduction Boards, if established, could be an opportunity to increase the commitment of a variety of public bodies to the review and delivery of a local homelessness strategy.

1.10 The more recent Government Strategy ‘Ending Rough Sleeping for Good’ published in September 2022 maintains this vision;

“By taking a holistic view of the problem, by focusing on prevention and by looking at the causes as well as the symptoms, it sets out how everyone – from central government, local leaders, rough sleeper coordinators, health workers, social workers, volunteers, prison workers and housing officers – can work together to not only get people off the streets, but stop them ending up there in the first place”

Source; Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities Ending Rough Sleeping for Good – foreword from Eddie Hughes MP – Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing 2021 to 2022

1.11 The scope of the Strategy is therefore wider than the services delivered directly by the Council. It supports the delivery of services within other public services, including adult and children’s social services, health and criminal justice agencies, Registered Providers (RPs also known as housing associations) and voluntary sector organisations.

- 1.12 The Councils Homelessness and Health – Executive Summary published in 2018 by the Director of Public Health set out an independent report focused on improving the health of the people of Bedford Borough and made recommendations to address the public health challenges of homelessness, in order to better prevent homelessness and improve the health of homeless people. The report highlights homeless people being more likely to have poor physical and mental health, and people with physical and mental health problems are more vulnerable to becoming homeless. The recommendations made in the report need to continue to be taken forward in the Strategy.
- 1.13 The Council has recently formed a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Board whose work will be of significant importance in driving the Strategy Action Plan forward.
- 1.14 We have used local and national data, other information, and feedback to review homelessness in Bedford Borough.

The Aims of the Strategy

- 1.15 As a priority, our aim has to be to increase our focus on preventing homelessness occurring in the first place. This is the best outcome for people at risk of homelessness living in Bedford Borough. It also makes good financial sense for the Council and other public sector agencies locally to prevent homelessness, because the cost of homelessness and its wider impacts on other services is high. At present, our limited resources have unavoidably been spent assisting people once the crisis of homelessness has already happened. For some single people, this can be at the point they are on the edge of, or are already, rough sleeping. Our objective is to turn that around and help people earlier by directing our focus on preventing homelessness.
- 1.16 It is also important to break the cycle of insecure housing and repeat homelessness and continue to assist those who do become homeless, so that they can find a home and, where needed, offer them support to make sure they do not experience homelessness again.

The Scope of the Strategy

1.17 The Strategy aims to ensure homelessness is addressed at whatever stage or circumstance people are in. It covers single people and couples without children, young people and families who:

- Want or need general advice about housing options.
- Are at risk of homelessness in the future.
- Are already homeless.
- Are currently rough sleeping.
- Are staying in temporary accommodation.

Other Strategies and Plans

1.18 Delivery of this Strategy relies on maintaining links and aligning action plans with other relevant Strategies, to ensure tackling homelessness is supported across the Council. By making the best use of available resources, we can avoid duplication, ensuring the efficient and effective delivery of services and streamlining the journey for residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness now and in the future.

1.19 The table below lists the Council's other strategies, policies and plans which are referenced in this Strategy and its Action Plan;

Title	Adopted	Due for review	Link
Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026	2021	2026	Housing Strategy 2021 - 2026
Housing Allocation Scheme	2021	2024	Allocations Scheme April 2021 (bedford.gov.uk)
Empty Homes Strategy 2019 – 2024	2019	2024	Empty Homes Strategy 2019 - 2024
Strategy to Address & Reduce Domestic Abuse 2021 – 2026	2021	2026	Bedford Borough Strategy to Address & Reduce Domestic Abuse 2021 - 2026
Local Plan 2030	2021	Review complete	Local Plan 2030
Emerging Local Plan 2040	2024	2029	Local Plan 2040
Homelessness and Health; Director of Public Health Report 2018	2018	-	PUB011_18 Director of Public Health Summary BB DRAFT v3.pdf (bmksna.org)

2. The Homelessness Review

- 2.1 In line with statutory requirements, this Strategy is based upon a review into homelessness and rough sleeping in Bedford Borough. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and its Update are at Appendix 1 and 2.
- 2.2 Figures 1 – 3 below highlight key data from the Review which drives this Strategy:

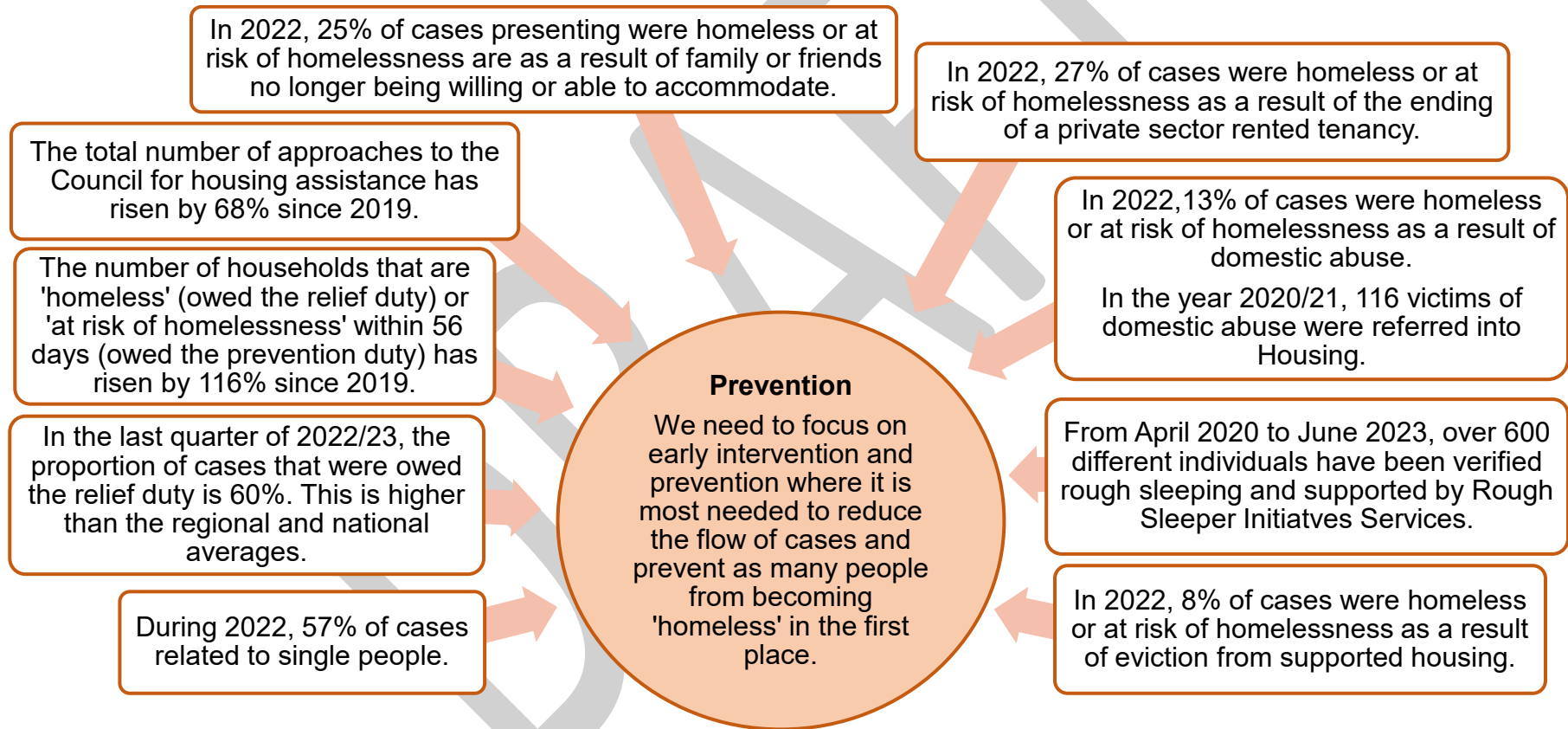


Figure 1; Drivers & Influences for homelessness prevention actions in the Strategy

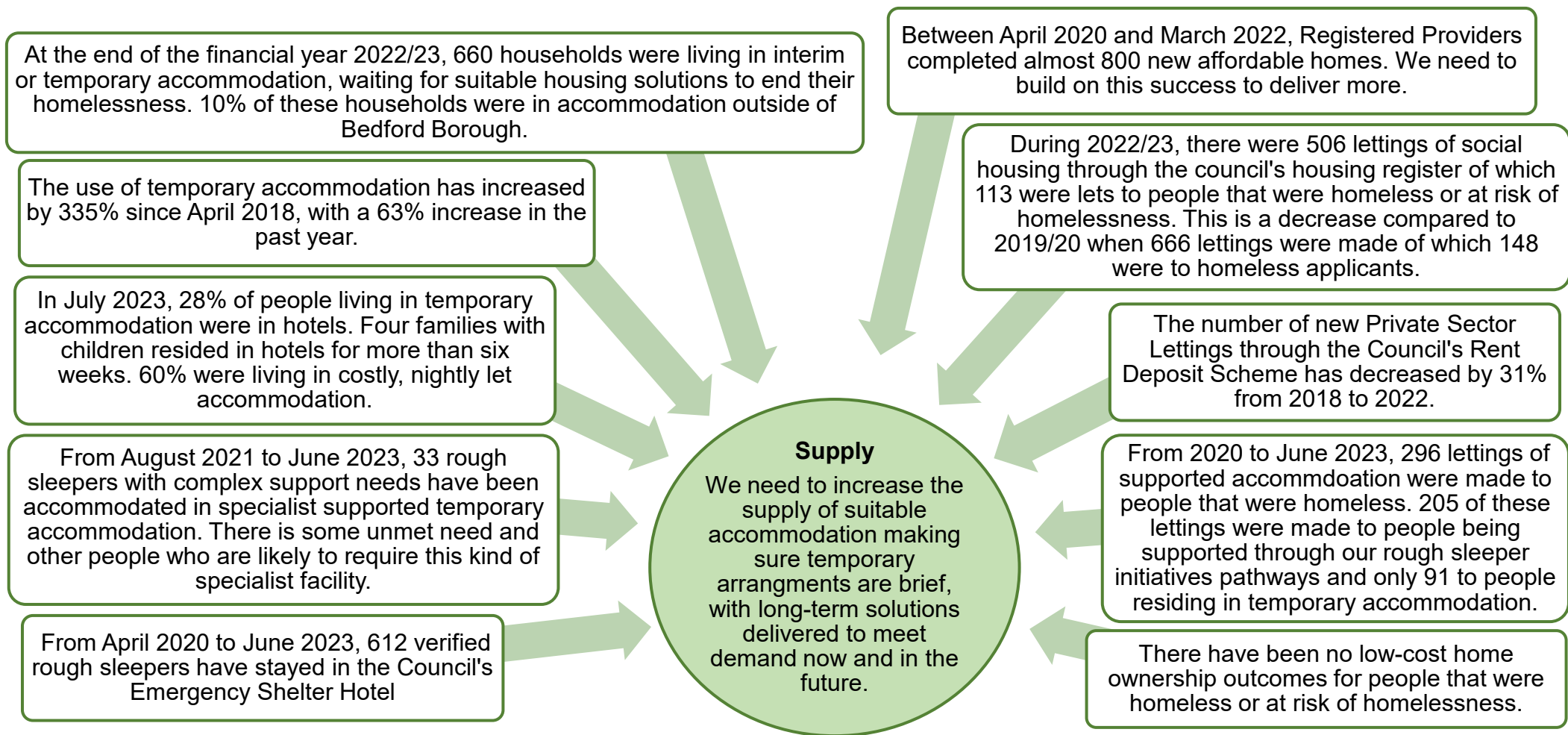


Figure 2; Drivers & Influences for supply of accommodation actions in the Strategy

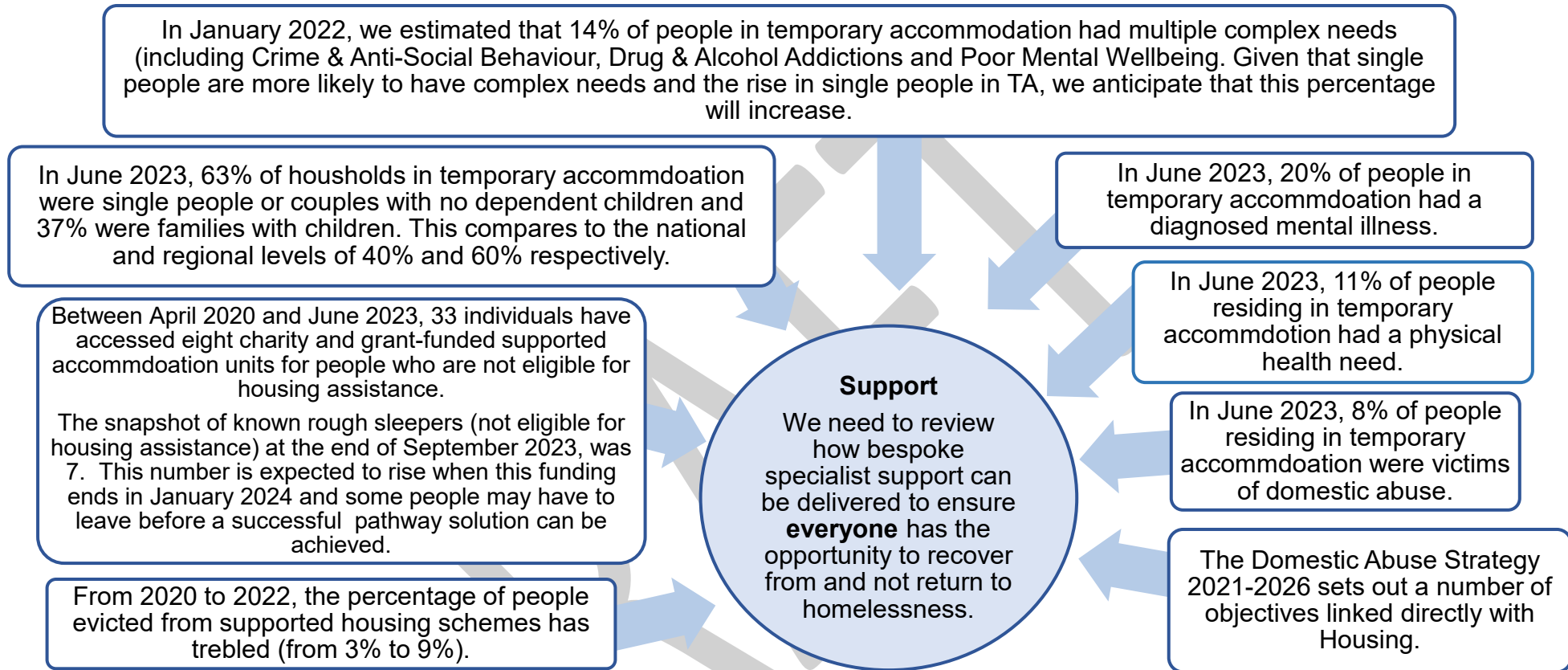
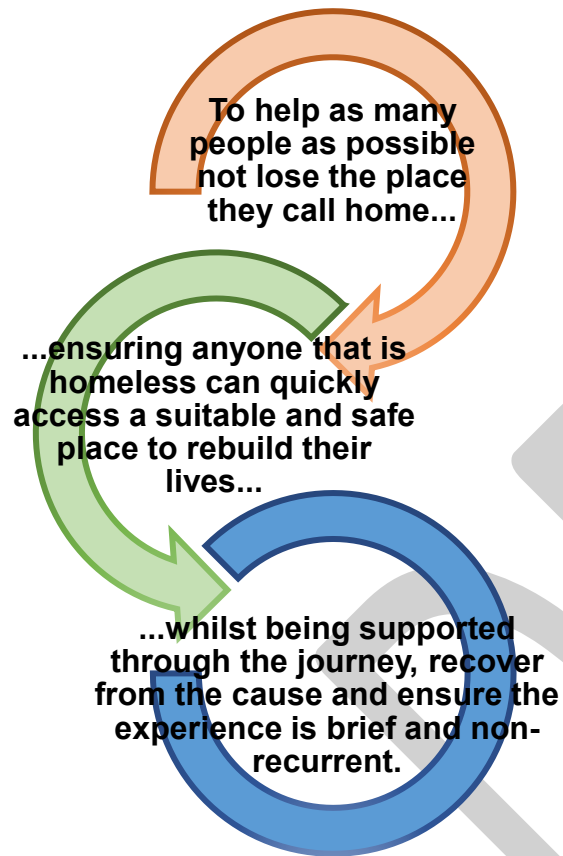


Figure 3; Drivers & Influences for prevention and recovery support actions in the Strategy

3. The Strategy

Vision:



Our focus is to prevent homelessness occurring at the earliest opportunity through a range of initiatives, as well as tackling the wider causes of homelessness by strengthening partnerships with other agencies.

We will develop partnership-wide toolkits to ensure people who are at risk of homelessness can be efficiently and effectively supported to remain at home, or quickly be provided with a pathway to a place they can call home for good.

We will reduce the numbers of people that are already homeless and living in temporary housing by reviewing the supply of accommodation of all tenures; social housing, supported housing, private sector housing and low-cost home ownership.

The success of our Rough Sleeper Initiatives delivered since 2018, proves that co-ordinated partnership working lies at the heart of successfully preventing and relieving homelessness. We want to replicate this success by developing improved partnership working and suitable housing solutions for young people and families.

We know that the causes of homelessness are complex and cannot be tackled through the provision of housing alone. Preventing and reducing homelessness for people with multiple and complex needs continues to be our biggest challenge, particularly where some people's support needs, often borne from life trauma, have seemingly exhausted local options.

We will focus our actions on this vision over the next five years.

4. Theme One: Preventing Homelessness

- 4.1 Prevention of homelessness underpins the Vision of this Strategy. Dating back as far as 2002, when the Government's publication 'More than a roof' first began the refocus of homelessness services from process to prevention; there has been a consistent aim for the delivery of solution-based outcomes which, in many cases, avoid the need for households to make a homelessness application.
- 4.2 Today, statutory homelessness support is delivered through the most radical change to legislation this century implemented in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which makes preventing homelessness a legal duty owed to anyone who is eligible that approaches the Council seeking help.
- 4.3 We need to identify and assist people at higher risk of homelessness much earlier than the statutory guideline, which is 56 days or less before homelessness is likely to occur. A strong partnership with other organisations is critical to reach more people where there are early signs of a housing problem and resolve these before homelessness becomes a real possibility.
- 4.4 We need to give people clear information, so that there is an increased understanding about the realities of housing options locally so that people can help themselves but also know where to go for advice when needed.
- 4.5 We need to make sure that other organisations and departments of the Council, including both adults' and children's services, health services, job centres, criminal justice services, voluntary agencies and housing providers have a good understanding of the warning signs of housing need and are equipped with the tools to encourage self-help, give basic early advice or easily signpost, refer and support people to contact the Housing Service.
- 4.6 With partners we need to find ways to identify those at risk, promote advice and information and then work together with partners to develop creative policies and services, for example, for families, victims of domestic abuse, care leavers and people leaving hospital or mental health units. We will support people to easily help themselves at times of need but also ensure holistic safety nets are in place and robust enough to respond as needed to prevent homelessness wherever possible.

- 4.7 The Review Update (Appendix 2 para 4.2.2) confirms that, locally, the four main reasons that people become homeless or at risk of homelessness are; the ending of a private sector tenancy, family or friends no longer being willing or able to accommodate, being a victim of domestic abuse or eviction from supported housing.
- 4.8 In line with Local Government Association best practice guidance the Council will establish a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board. Actions will include development of sub-taskforce groups which will include statutory and non-statutory stakeholders both internal and external and people who use the service. These sub-taskforce groups will support development of particular prevention pathways.

In relation to Preventing Homelessness we will;

- Strengthen data recording and the use of data to improve our understanding and analysis of homelessness, including repeat homelessness, to enable better forecasts of future demand and the focused use of prevention toolkits.
- Review and improve information provided through the Council's website, and through partner organisations, to promote easy access to advice and self-serve help.
- Establish a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board to include a rolling programme of forums with local agencies to deliver briefings and training on homelessness services and to facilitate sharing of information and ideas.
- Provide social, private and supported housing providers with information on locally available services and promote the Council's role in negotiation, planning and averting homelessness.
- Review single homelessness accommodation pathways and protocols with local health professionals and probation services to encourage and promote improved referral pathways and support for people leaving either custody or hospital where mental health and / or addictions are an issue.
- Review and strengthen the 'toolkit' of homelessness prevention initiatives available for front line housing advisors and local agencies.
- Incorporate health and wider outcomes into the evaluation of homelessness prevention toolkits.
- Monitor the duty to refer protocol for effectiveness and adherence and establish closer working with agencies to improve referral processes where a person may be at risk of homelessness.
- Support the objectives set out in the Council's 'Strategy to Address & Reduce Domestic Abuse 2021 – 2026' to prevent homelessness where individuals want to remain in their own homes.
- Complete the operating model review of Housing Services and implement a restructure of staffing to enable effective delivery of homelessness prevention.

5. Theme Two: Supply of Accommodation

- 5.1 Homelessness is exacerbated by limited access to suitable, settled accommodation. We need to create more affordable housing options that are available before people are in crisis and to meet the need for temporary accommodation where this is required.
- 5.2 We need to reduce the number of households living with the insecurity of being at risk of homelessness, homeless and roofless, or in temporary accommodation, and instead provide options so that people can move in a planned way into accommodation that is suitable and available to them long-term.
- 5.3 Preventing homelessness and ensuring that when it does occur the journey for those affected is brief and non-recurrent relies on both helping as many people as possible to remain in their own homes, but also helping those who can't do so to access accommodation across all tenures. For those who have both a housing need and support needs too, they need an effective pathway to receive the support from other agencies and services, to achieve the end goal of homelessness never occurring again.

Affordable Housing

- 5.4 The needs of homeless people form part of the overall housing needs of the Borough. The level of Borough-wide need, the dwelling types required and the tenures that will best meet those needs up to 2040 were identified in the Local Housing Needs Assessment, which forms part of the evidence base for our Local Plan 2040.
- 5.5 The Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026 sets out the Council's approach to supporting the delivery of new housing, including the delivery of new affordable and supported housing. The Review (section 7.4) highlights the need for the Council and its partner organisations to continue to work together to maximise the supply of available housing in the Borough across all types and tenures.
- 5.6 The provision of housing, particularly affordable housing, is essential in helping to minimise homelessness. The Council's Housing Strategy Team works closely with the planning system, developers, RP's and Homes England to secure the delivery

of new housing in the Borough. This partnership approach has facilitated the successful delivery of general needs affordable housing for rent, purchase and specialist supported housing.

- 5.7 Qualifying sites (those of ten dwellings or more) allocated for housing in Local Plan 2030 (Policy 58S) and the emerging Local Plan 2040 (Policy DM1S) are required to deliver 30% affordable housing, of which 78% should be for affordable or social rent. These properties are allocated in accordance with the Allocation Scheme and are available to meet the housing needs of those on our Housing Register, including those who are homeless.
- 5.8 In addition, we will work with RP partners to bring forward sites that deliver more than the 30% planning policy requirement for affordable housing. Opportunities include small sites already owned by RPs, sites purchased by RPs for 100% affordable housing schemes and, potentially, sites owned by the Council where, as landowner, we might require higher percentages of affordable housing.

Private Sector Housing

- 5.9 In recent years, increasing market rents have risen significantly above Local Housing Allowance rates putting them out of reach for those claiming benefits affecting the supply of private rented sector (PRS) properties available to low-income households and more recently led to people who are working and earning higher incomes being unable to afford to rent privately.
- 5.10 We have seen a significant decrease in the number of private sector properties being used to prevent and relieve homelessness due to landlords choosing to sell and at the same time the ending of private sector tenancies is one of the biggest causes of homelessness.
- 5.11 We need to complete a review of the Council's landlord incentive schemes to ensure they align to the current private sector market and give landlords confidence to let their properties to any tenants that we might put forward. We need to make sure a landlord offer is attractive, competitive but is also value for money in helping the Council meet the demand for accommodation. We will therefore re-introduce the previously successful partnerships and local forums for private sector landlords and owners of empty homes.

Supported Accommodation

- 5.12 The Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026 sets out the Council's approach to supporting the delivery of new housing, including settled supported housing, places people can call home, for specific vulnerable groups. Specific actions to increase the supply of accommodation that is let with support to meet the needs of single people who are threatened with homelessness or already homeless is delegated to this Strategy.
- 5.13 There is no statutory duty to provide supported accommodation and as a result careful review of funding allocations is necessary to ensure that commissioning is targeted at provisions that support our wider statutory agenda to prevent and relieve homelessness and deliver value for money.
- 5.14 It is essential that we maintain partnerships with providers of supported housing to ensure that information and needs' data is shared and fed into a continuous review of services provided. This will ensure that they are shaped to meet local needs for preventing homelessness and supporting an effective supply of housing for people who are homeless.
- 5.15 There is a need to improve the allocation of supported housing units to ensure a fair system is operated across all providers, both commissioned and as many non-commissioned ones as we can to ensure offers of accommodation support the delivery of this Strategy.
- 5.16 In addition to approved allocation process, we also need to review and refresh pre- eviction and planned move protocols to reduce the number of people needing to approach the council for housing assistance because they are threatened with becoming homelessness from supported accommodation.
- 5.17 Furthermore, there is a need to increase move-on provision and floating support models, and to further develop models for addressing the multiple and complex needs of homeless people with substance misuse and/or mental health problems.

Temporary Accommodation

- 5.18 In addition to homelessness prevention underpinning the Vision of the Strategy, the current unprecedented numbers of households residing in temporary accommodation (TA) must drive priority action to reduce its use. The more the council spends on crisis and the use of TA, the less there is for work on prevention.
- 5.19 We will examine our processes, models of best practice, frameworks, and the effect of other actions in this Strategy to reduce the use of temporary accommodation and ensure a supply of suitable accommodation that can be managed and maintained to support homeless households through their journey from crisis to finding long-term rehousing quickly and smoothly.
- 5.20 Our on-going property acquisition programme should consider our ambition to re-focus on prevention, reduce the high numbers of households in temporary accommodation, reduce the significant cost to the Council of nightly let and hotel type provision and improve the conditions for individuals and families who require temporary accommodation.
- 5.21 It is important that the provision of temporary accommodation is affordable to the Council and is financially sustainable. Therefore, we will normally only provide temporary accommodation where we have a statutory duty to do so. Where we do not have a duty we will work together with partners to identify and implement opportunities to provide shelter for homeless people that are not entitled to temporary accommodation where the law allows.
- 5.22 We will seek Government funding, both capital and revenue funding, when opportunities arise and there is a robust and sustainable business case for use of the funding.

In relation to Supply of Accommodation we will;

- Review existing offers to private sector landlords and launch new proactive and innovative approaches to accessing Private Rented Sector properties for preventing and relieving homelessness.
- By implementing the Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026 and supporting the delivery of sites allocated for housing in our Local Plan(s), continue to maximise the delivery of affordable housing and supported housing. As a minimum, we must meet the figure determined in the current Local Housing Needs Assessment or its successor documents.
- Work with Providers on schemes on local authority owned land
- Continue to work to reduce the number of long-term empty homes in the Borough by implementing the Empty Homes Strategy 2019 – 2024.
- Progress the acquisition of residential properties for use as temporary accommodation in order to reduce cost and improve control over the quality and location of properties.
- Deliver a programme of residential properties for refugees.
- Review, explore opportunities and develop new accommodation options, with bespoke support, specifically for people who have been or are at significant risk of rough sleeping based on our Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme-funded 'Rogers Court' model.
- Complete the review of supported housing and implement a commissioning programme which meets the aims of this strategy.
- Establish closer partnership working with local RPs to promote improved access to affordable and supported housing for single homeless people including people recovering from rough sleeping.
- Review the Housing Allocations Scheme to ensure it balances the housing needs of people that are at risk of homelessness to effectively support the overarching aim of preventing homelessness, with the housing needs of other applicants.

6. Theme Three; Providing Support

- 6.1 For many people, homelessness is symptomatic of other issues in their lives, mental or physical health problems, domestic abuse, drug or alcohol dependency, offending behaviour or fractured support networks.
- 6.2 Moving into temporary accommodation can be extremely disruptive and unsettling for individuals and families, and they are sometimes moved at short notice which presents challenges for adults who may be trying to hold down a job, or children who need to get to school. It is particularly difficult for individuals and families who are placed in hotels, sometimes a long way from amenities and often without basics like access to cooking and laundry facilities.
- 6.3 The recovery from homelessness requires strong partnership working with other statutory services, voluntary agencies and housing providers.
- 6.4 A range of support options are needed to help people address the root causes of their homelessness, consolidate their initial recovery from homelessness and to sustain accommodation in the longer term.
- 6.5 Achieving our vision relies on effective assessment and support from other agencies running through the journey from beginning to end. We need work with partners to develop the toolkit required to help prevent homelessness occurring in the first place, ensure anyone who is homeless is helped to navigate the pathway from crisis to rehousing, and to support the continued prevention of homelessness by ensuring people don't have to endure it again.
- 6.6 We also need to work with partners and other suppliers of supported housing in the Borough to ensure that the accommodation and support is of good standard, meets the residents' need and meet any statutory requirements.
- 6.7 We will work with partners to ensure that supported housing models are financially sustainable, are not reliant on funding from the Council and, as far as is feasible, do not adversely affect the Council's finances (for example, through the unsubsidised cost of Housing Benefit).

- 6.8 We need to work with our partners to ensure our supply of all types of accommodation is delivered with the right levels of support to meet the needs of people who are homeless and that provision is in place to tailor support plans for those with both low to complex needs.
- 6.9 Implementing a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board will give us the platform to share information about new and remodelling housing supply to open up discussion and action plans for delivering shared services support.

DRAFT

In relation to Providing Support we will;

- Strengthen data recording in order to deliver effective monitoring of support outcomes and identify gaps in service to feed into effective service commissioning and delivery. Improve the monitoring of commissioned housing-related support services to ensure we are delivering quality and value for money through an outcome-based approach.
- Collaborate with partners and stakeholders to make available a directory of support services for people who are experiencing or recovering from homelessness, including focus on support for victims of domestic abuse, care leavers, families with children with special needs and refugee families needing post trauma and resettlement support.
- Improve the conditions for individuals and families who are being accommodated in temporary accommodation, particularly hotels, by linking with Family Hubs and Health Services to provide compassionate wrap-around support to help people meet their basic needs.
- Improve the identification, assessment, recording and sharing of housing vulnerability, including little understood groups such as individuals who are 'sofa surfing' and leading complex lifestyles.
- Improve the understanding of the overlap between mental health and housing.
- Improve signposting and access to local services that can impact root causes of homelessness.
- Complete the review of supported housing to include assessment of the needs and options for supported housing for vulnerable single people and work with housing providers to identify and implement financially sustainable options to provide good quality accommodation and support.
- Include a review of current short term commissioned rough sleeper services within the review of supported housing to consider how specialist provisions may-be effectively delivered longer term.

Continued...

- Improve the consistency of health care access for people who are homeless.
- Support the delivery of access to domestic abuse advocacy within the housing service.
- Work with our public health colleagues to review the effectiveness and value for money of the Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant and contribute to future plans and funding bids.
- Build strong partnership working protocols to include training programmes with mental health services to improve two-way referrals based on a shared objective to identify homelessness risk, prevent homelessness and ensure anyone affected by homelessness receives the support needed to recover and resettle.
- Re-commission services where needed to ensure effective use of resources and achieve the best outcomes for everyone affected by or at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Review the delivery of Rough Sleeper Initiatives to ensure rapid and effective outreach support to keep rough sleeping brief and non-recurrent and ensure that the needs and options for rough sleepers that are not eligible are met.
- Reduce the time families spend in temporary accommodation by reviewing and improving our focus, targets and best practice for move-on work and ensure this aligns with effective support plans with identified support needs and relevant referrals.
- Link the recommendations made in the 'Homelessness and Health Report 2018' to the Strategy vision and development of improved protocols.

7. Delivery

- 7.1 Section 8 of this Strategy sets out the initial Action Plan through which we will deliver the Vision. The Action Plan will be driven by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board and its focus groups and will be reviewed and updated annually, although operational changes currently being implemented in the housing service may necessitate a review prior to the first anniversary of its adoption.
- 7.2 We will build on positive partnership work and establish the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action group at which the Action Plan is a regular and standard agenda item. This will ensure that we listen to and consult with stakeholders both internally and outside of the Council on the progress against developing Action Plan targets.
- 7.3 It is designed to be flexible to enable us to respond to the on-going changes in the homelessness and rough sleeping environment.
- 7.4 The Housing Service will lead on the delivery of all actions, but where specialist provisions, outside of their remit, are needed in order to deliver the Strategy's Vision the Action Plan reflects the need for partnership working.
- 7.5 To deliver the Vision of this Strategy, we will continuously take into account the resources available to the Council and other partners, progress with the Action Plan and any new legislation and / or regulations, which impact homelessness; as well as market forces which affect the supply of accommodation, and local circumstances affecting need.
- 7.6 We will ensure there is a good understanding of the Strategy and our commitments amongst the Council's staff particularly those who work in housing and other services upon which delivery of those commitments depends, as well as amongst partners so that the Vision and the relevant actions needed to achieve change are embedded in daily work within services.

8.The Action Plan

- 8.1 This initial Action Plan has been developed to deliver the vision of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029. It will be monitored, reviewed and developed annually.
- 8.2 Operational changes in the delivery of the Housing Service currently being implemented mean that the Action Plan may be reviewed earlier than on its first anniversary to take account of them.
- 8.3 It is envisaged that individual SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) targets to enable monitoring of progress against its objectives will be developed as part of the work of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board. In advance of this, the Action Plan articulates what overall success will look like when the identified actions are achieved.
- 8.4 Increased prevention of homelessness, rapid homelessness relief where it cannot be prevented, a reduction in the use of temporary accommodation and reduced flow and numbers of rough sleepers will be successful outcomes from delivering the Action Plan across all of its Themes. The ‘What Success Looks Like’ measures detailed in the Action Plan below are those that are specific to each action.

Generic Actions				
Action	Timescale for Completion	What Success Looks Like	Resources & Partners	Responsible Lead
Increase the number / percentage of cases of homelessness prevented	Ongoing	In line with contextual performance indicators set by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board, percentage of cases of homelessness prevented increased.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Existing staff resource. ➤ Commissioned systems partners. ➤ Internal Partners. 	Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services

Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation	Ongoing	In line with contextual performance indicators set by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board, number of households in temporary accommodation reduced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Existing staff resource. ➤ Commissioned systems partners. ➤ Internal Partners. 	Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services
Reduce the number of people sleeping rough	Ongoing	In line with contextual performance indicators set by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board, number of people sleeping rough reduced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Existing staff resource. ➤ Commissioned systems partners. ➤ Internal Partners. 	Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services
Review and improve the consistency, quality & accuracy of data capture across the Housing Service.	October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection process map published. • Data recording guidance for staff published. • Accurate statistics across all data capture and reporting platforms available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Existing staff resource. ➤ Commissioned systems partners. ➤ Internal Partners. 	Manager for Housing
Improve data collection relating to homelessness risk, decisions and outcomes for protected groups to inform continued best practice review, improvements and delivery.	On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data recording guidance for staff published. • Confidence in accurate data for on-going service performance monitoring and delivery achieved. • Informed recommendations for service improvements made. • Fair and transparent homelessness service delivered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Existing staff resource. ➤ Commissioned systems partners. ➤ Internal Partners. 	Manager for Housing
Design and implement a Bedford Borough Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board to:	Established by May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Named members on the board. • Published terms of reference agreed. • Action plan agreed and circulated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Existing staff ➤ Adult Social Care ➤ Children's Services 	Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drive this Strategy forward, • increase the commitment, at a strategic level, of a variety of public bodies in supporting homelessness prevention, • reducing the use of temporary accommodation, • improved quality of support for homeless individuals and families and • reduce the flow and numbers of rough sleepers. 	and On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist 'taskforce' groups identified and established. • Customer satisfaction improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Registered providers of social housing ➤ Police & Crime Commissioner ➤ Public Health ➤ Supported Housing Providers. ➤ Department of Work and Pensions ➤ Private Sector Landlords ➤ Charity Sector partners 	
--	-----------------	--	--	--

Theme 1; Preventing Homelessness

Action	Timescale for Completion	What Success Looks Like	Resources & Partners	Responsible Lead
Review and improve the consistency, quality & accuracy of data capture relating to identifying early homelessness intervention and prevention.	October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations for service improvements agreed and implemented. • Confidence in accurate data for on-going service performance monitoring and delivery achieved. • Staff performance monitoring, training implemented, and development needs identified and addressed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Existing staff resource. ➤ Commissioned systems partners. ➤ Internal Partners. 	Manager for Housing
Identify early intervention opportunities, outside of the statutory 'prevention' duty, through improved staff training,	On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People presenting to the council threatened with homelessness reduced. • Numbers of 'prevention' duty ending with successful outcome increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Existing staff resource. ➤ Internal Partners. 	Manager for Housing

initial assessment scripts and data capture.				
Design and implement a 'Homelessness Prevention Taskforce' focusing on development of a prevention toolkit, which reaches all causes of homelessness.	Establish taskforce by June 2024. Published toolkit by April 2025.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention toolkit guidance for staff developed and published. • Local homelessness prevention training programme developed and delivered. • Numbers of 'prevention' duty ending with successful outcome increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Existing staff resource. ➤ Internal partners ➤ Members and delegates of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Action Board. 	Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services
Theme 2; Supply of Accommodation				
Action	Timescale for Completion	What Success Looks Like	Resources & Partners	Responsible Lead
Design and implement a 'Social Housing Taskforce' focusing on reviewing demand and supply of affordable housing.	Establish taskforce by June 2024. and On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate understanding of housing demand. • Internally agreed action plan for delivering the right housing to meet the objectives of the Strategy. • A platform for consulting with social housing providers on housing allocation scheme review established. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing staff resource. • Internal partners • Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board • Operational managers from all local social housing providers. 	Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services
Review the Housing Allocation Scheme ensuring it aligns to the objectives of homelessness prevention, relief, suitability and long-term tenancy sustainment.	April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the Scheme completed and informed by accurate data and homelessness board & taskforce recommendations. • New Housing Allocation Scheme published. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing staff resource. 	Manager for Housing

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance and Training for staff on the new scheme implemented. • Early intervention and statutory homelessness prevention increased. • Homelessness relief increased. Improved pathways into social housing solutions for rough sleepers identified and implemented. 		
Design and implement a 'Private Rented Sector Taskforce' focusing on development of initiatives to increase access to affordable private rented sector opportunities.	Establish taskforce by June 2024. and On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed and published Terms of Reference for the group. • Publicity produced and published to reach out to the private sector. • Commitment confirmed from private sector representatives. • Redesigned and fit for purpose Rent Deposit Scheme implemented. • Number of empty homes bought back into use increased. • Positive feedback from private sector landlords received. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing staff resource. • Internal partners • Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board members and delegates • Local PRS landlords and letting agents, property developers and empty property owners. • Department of Work and Pensions. 	Manager for Housing
Procure more Council owned temporary accommodation to reduce costs and improve quality subject to value for money assessment.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of delivering temporary accommodation reduced. • Use of B&B and Nightly Let arrangements reduced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing staff resource. • Internal partners 	Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply of local accommodation to enable homeless households to remain local increased. 		
Complete a review of commissioned supported housing schemes bringing forward recommendations for future commissioning to align services to meeting the Vision of the Strategy.	<p>Review complete by April 2025.</p> <p>Delivery of new or renewed Services by April 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on current supported housing outcomes and value for money produced and recommendations implemented. • New or improved housing schemes brought forward. • Procurement process and mobilisation of schemes undertaken. • Number of people being evicted from supported housing reduced. • Pathway solutions for rough sleepers improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing staff resource • Internal partners inc. procurement • Current commissioned providers of supported housing. 	Manager for Housing

Theme 3; Providing Support

Action	Timescale for Completion	What Success Looks Like	Resources & Partners	Responsible Lead
Review and improve the consistency, quality and accuracy of data capture relating to people's support needs to inform and focus partnership-working protocols.	October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations for service improvements made and considered. • Accurate data for service performance monitoring and delivery produced. • Accurate data feeding into housing supply and supported housing taskforce action plans produced. • Quality of personal housing plans improved. • Suitability considered in all property offers. • Tenancy sustainment and reduction in repeat homelessness improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Existing staff resource. ➤ Commissioned systems partners. ➤ Internal Partners 	Manager for Housing

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate data and service gap analysis used to inform future grant funding bids. 		
Design and implement a 'Supported Housing Taskforce' focussing on developing best practice and protocols for making best use of all available bed spaces, tenancy sustainment and move-on options.	<p>Establish taskforce by June 2024.</p> <p>Published protocols by October 2026.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported housing pathway agreed. • Best practice protocols published. • Local supported housing awareness programme implemented. • Number of evictions reduced. • Number of prevention and relief outcomes increased. • A platform for consulting with supported housing providers on new commissioning proposals developed and implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing staff. • Internal partners • Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board • Managers of local supported housing schemes. 	Manager for Housing
Review of floating support services, needs, gaps and recommendations.	<p>Review completed by September 2024.</p> <p>Delivery of new or renewed Commissioned Services by April 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on the current floating support outcomes and value for money produced. • Recommendations for service improvements from the report implemented. • New or improved schemes designed and brought forward. • Procurement process completed and schemes mobilised. • Sustainment of temporary accommodation licence agreements improved. • Homelessness early intervention and prevention of repeat homelessness improved. • Resettlement programme and tenancy sustainment improved. • Repeat homelessness reduced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing staff resource • Internal partners including procurement teams • Current commissioned providers of floating housing support services 	Manager for Housing

<p>Review support services in order to make decisions on any changes to the services for people who are rough sleeping</p>	<p>Report recommendations and proposals to maintain RSI services to meet current demands by September 2024</p> <p>Mobilise the new services and ways of working by April 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on the ending of RSI 2022 – 2025 to include numbers supported, outcomes, flow of new and repeat rough sleeping published. • Seamless transition from RSI grant funded specialist services to new ways of delivering rough sleeper initiatives delivered. • Guidance and training to internal staff and agencies on rough sleeper interview skills and pathway options developed and delivered. • Relief options for rough sleepers identified. • Clear recovery and rehousing pathways for rough sleepers delivered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing staff resource • Internal partners including adult safeguarding and public health • Rough Sleeper specialist external partners 	<p>Manager for Housing</p>
<p>Ensure delivery of the aims and objectives set out in the Domestic Abuse Strategy relating to housing needs and support for victims.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear links to Domestic Abuse Strategy in all action plans and recommendations from homelessness board and taskforce groups identified. • Two-way guidance and training for all housing service staff and domestic abuse support agencies delivered. • Customer journey for victims experiencing homelessness improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing staff resource • Internal partners • Domestic Abuse specialist external partners. 	<p>Manager for Housing</p>

Informing a new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy for Bedford Borough

Contents:

1. Preface 2021 / 2022 – The Current Operating Environment
2. Introduction
3. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping – The Legislative Context
4. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping – The National Context
 - 4.1 National Trends in Statutory Homelessness
 - 4.2 White Paper: Fixing the ‘Broken’ Housing Market
 - 4.3 Planning For The Future: White Paper August 2020
 - 4.4 Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018
 - 4.5 Next Steps Accommodation Programme
 - 4.6 Decision to leave the European Union
5. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping – The Local Context
 - 5.1 Corporate Strategy Context
 - 5.2 Partnership Working
 - 5.3 Local Government Finances
6. Homelessness Strategy 2016 - 2021
 - 6.1 Objectives
 - 6.2 Progress Made and Achievements

7. Homelessness

Definition of Homelessness

7.1 Overarching Homelessness Data

- 7.1.1 Analysis of Statutory Homelessness in Bedford Borough
- 7.1.2 Ethnicity and Homelessness
- 7.1.3 Predicting the Future Trend in Homelessness in Bedford Borough

7.2 Theme 1 - Prevention

- 7.2.1 Housing Needs
- 7.2.2 Homelessness Approaches
- 7.2.3 Analysis of Homelessness Prevention and Relief
- 7.2.4 Analysis of the Outcomes following Acceptance of Prevention and Relief Duties
- 7.2.5 Independent Advice and Support Providers
- 7.2.6 Housing Benefits and Household Finances
- 7.2.7 Young People and Homelessness
- 7.2.8 Vulnerable Adults and Homelessness

7.3 Theme 2 - Support

- 7.3.1 Floating Support
- 7.3.2 Hostel and Supported Housing Provision
- 7.3.3 Emmaus Village, Carlton
- 7.3.4 Support on Being Discharged from Prison
- 7.3.5 Support on Being Discharged from Hospital
- 7.3.6 Homelessness and Mental Health Support
- 7.3.7 Local Welfare Provision – Financial Support

7.4 Theme 3 - Supply

- 7.4.1 Affordable Housing
- 7.4.2 Private Rented Sector

- 7.4.3 The Tenancy Deposit Guarantee Scheme
- 7.4.4 Discharge of Homelessness Duty in the Private Sector
- 7.4.5 Empty Homes
- 7.4.6 Temporary Accommodation
- 7.4.7 Bed & Breakfast

7.5 Additional Considerations

- 7.5.1 Homelessness and Health
- 7.5.2 Homelessness and Domestic Abuse
- 7.5.3 In-Migration to Bedford Borough
- 7.5.4 Allocations and Choice Based Lettings
- 7.5.5 Armed Forces
- 7.5.6 Homelessness and Non-Traditional Housing

8. Rough Sleeping in Bedford Borough

Definition of Rough Sleeping

8.1 Rough Sleeping in Bedford Borough – The Environment Prior to Covid 19

- 8.1.1 Numbers of People Sleeping Rough
- 8.1.2 Additional Funding to Tackle Rough Sleeping
- 8.1.3 Impact of Additional Pre-Covid 19 Funding on Rough Sleeping

8.2 Rough Sleeping in Bedford Borough – The Environment Post the Advent of Covid 19

- 8.2.1 Accommodation for those Sleeping Rough during the Covid 19 Pandemic
- 8.2.2 Housing First

8.3 Other Rough Sleeping Services

- 8.3.1 Prebend Street Day Centre
- 8.3.2 Rough Sleeper Partnership and Outreach Service

- 8.3.3 Bedford Homeless Partnership
- 8.3.4 Health Services for Rough Sleepers

Appendix 1 - Hostel, Supported Housing & Floating Support Provision

- A) Hostel and Supported Housing Provision
- B) Floating and other Support Provision
- C) Independently Funded Hostel Accommodation, Floating Support & Advice Services

1. Preface – 2021 / 2022 – The Current Operating Environment

- 1.1. Since Bedford Borough Council (the Council) began this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review (the Review) the advent of Covid 19 has impacted dramatically on the nature of homelessness and rough sleeping services and the way in which they are delivered.
- 1.2. Notwithstanding the production of effective vaccines, Covid 19 is likely to be a continuing significant threat to public health during 2022 when the Council's new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy – informed by this Review - must be produced. A second national lockdown began in December 2020 and it is difficult to predict how and when further restrictions on life as we used to know it might be implemented or lifted, or what the post-Covid social and economic landscape of the country might look like.
- 1.3. Against this backdrop, there are increasing pressures on public finances, faced by Councils everywhere. This Council is facing a £21.8 million revenue shortfall in 2021 / 2022 and an ongoing shortfall of £4.6 million over the following 4 years. Work is underway to meet these financial challenges at a time when we are facing new homelessness and rough sleeping ones. Creative solutions will be necessary to address them both.
- 1.4. As demonstrated in this Review, the Council and its partners have achieved significant successes in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping since the adoption of the Homelessness Strategy 2016 - 2021. A number of significant and innovative measures – considered in sections 6.2 and 8 of this Review - have already been implemented or are being progressed.
- 1.5. The changing public health and financial environment has meant some sections of this Review have become obsolete almost as soon as they were completed. Given the requirement to draw the Review to a conclusion the Review is accurate at December 2020.
- 1.6. Changes to the actions required and priorities in respect of homelessness and rough sleeping caused by Covid 19 and financial considerations will be reflected in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 / 2028 and its Action Plan when it is drafted in 2022.
- 1.7. Under normal circumstances this Review would have been conducted by holding a series of face to face meetings. Due to the concerns regarding public health caused by the Covid 19 pandemic, this has meant alternative arrangements have had to be put in place. These have not however, prevented us from contacting partners to receive their input to complete the Review and thereby shape our next Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory obligation on all local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area every five years and, based on the findings of the review, develop and publish a strategy to tackle and prevent homelessness.
- 2.2. In August 2018 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published its Rough Sleeping Strategy. This states they will work with the Local Government Association and local authorities to update their Homelessness Strategies to include Rough Sleeping. Local authorities will report their progress through annual Action Plans.
- 2.3. The Review has been produced in conjunction with partner organisations. Its findings will inform the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for the period 2023 / 2028 (the New Strategy) which will be the subject of public consultation in 2022.
- 2.4. The requirements of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Reviews are governed by The Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018 (the Code) which was published by the MHCLG in February 2018 in readiness for the implementation of the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

A link to the 'Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities' updated by the MHCLG in December 2020 is copied below:-

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

- 2.5. Amongst other detailed obligations, the Code requires that homelessness (though not rough sleeping) is reviewed under the themes of Prevention, Support and Supply. This does not prevent this Review from looking at other things that would helpfully inform the New Strategy.
- 2.6. In addition, the Code requires examination of some homelessness topics that do not neatly relate to any of the three themes. Where this is so, they have been included along with those matters the Council has decided to examine in addition to the Code requirements in a discreet 'Additional Considerations' section 7.5.

- 2.7. The purpose of this Review is to establish the operating environment in which homelessness and rough sleeping services are provided; collect and analyse key data relating to the effectiveness of the current Homelessness Strategy and identify key issues for consideration in the New Strategy which will detail the actions necessary to address them.
- 2.8. To achieve its objectives the Review:
- Summarises the relevant legislation, guidance and the policy context at national and local level.
 - Details the wider local context including links to other Council strategies and partnership working.
 - Reviews the successes and challenges faced during the period covered by Homelessness Strategy 2016 - 2021.
 - For homelessness, takes each of the key themes of Prevention, Support and Supply, analyses pertinent data, identifies the existing provision of services, support and accommodation. Based on these findings it identifies key issues to be considered in the New Strategy.
 - For rough sleeping, details the considerable and significant work undertaken in the previous 3 years to tackle the issue in both the pre and post-Covid environment.
- 2.9. It should be noted here that the experience of homelessness and rough sleeping is not limited to the urban areas of Bedford and Kempston. Homelessness can arise in the rural area and references to Bedford contained in this review are intended to include the Borough as a whole.
- 2.10. This Review covers the period 2019 / 2020. Any material changes after the end of 2020 will be addressed in the New Strategy when it is drafted in summer 2022.

3. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping - The Legislative Context

This section identifies the most significant legislation that applies to homelessness and rough sleeping and for each, sets out its most important implications. The legislation is considered in date order. Some Acts have a greater relevance to homelessness and rough sleeping than others and where this is so, greater explanation and detail is provided.

3.1. The Housing Act 1996

The Housing Act 1996 (HA 1996) came into effect on 20 January 1997. Part 7 of the HA 1996 is the overarching piece of legislation that relates to homelessness.

The HA 1996 has been amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, the Localism Act 2011 and more recently by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, as detailed below.

3.2. Homelessness Act 2002

The Homelessness Act 2002 obliges all housing authorities to have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district. The strategy must be renewed at least every 5 years. The Social Services authority must provide reasonable assistance.

3.3. Localism Act 2011

The Localism Act 2011 amended Part 7 of the HA 1996. It introduced powers for a Local Authority to end the main housing duty, owed to applicants where a homeless duty had been accepted, by arrangement of a suitable offer of accommodation through the private rented sector.

3.4. The Welfare Reform Act 2012

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced a number of changes to reduce the level of benefit payable. As a result of these measures, there are increasing pressures on low income families to maintain and access accommodation. The changes have limited the amount of benefit payable towards housing costs in a time where costs continue to increase, potentially making it harder for some households struggling to pay their rent.

The National Audit Office (NAO, 2017) determined that the impact of the government’s welfare reforms on homelessness had not been evaluated:

‘Homelessness in all its forms has significantly increased in recent years and at present costs the public sector in excess of £1 billion a year. It appears likely that the decrease in affordability of properties in the private rented sector, of which welfare reforms such as the capping of Local Housing Allowance are an element, have driven this increase in homelessness. Despite this, the government has not evaluated the impact of its welfare reforms on homelessness, or the impact of the mitigations that it has put in place’. (House of Commons Library – Briefing Paper Number 01164, 15 October 2019 – Statutory Homelessness in England).

Some of the most significant changes that may have had an effect on homelessness and rough sleeping are set out in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Benefit Changes and Their Impact on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Welfare Reform	Implications
Local Housing Allowance (LHA)	LHA is the name given to Housing Benefit for private renters. Rates were frozen in April 2016 and remained at the same level until April 2020, regardless of how much private sector rents increased in the area over that period. (From April 2011 LHA was based on 30 th percentile of designated Broad Market Rental Areas whereas previously they had been set at the 50 th percentile. The result has been a reduction in the number of properties which are affordable for LHA claimants.)
Benefits freeze	There was a four-year freeze on benefits levels until 2020.
Benefit cap	Households on working age benefits can no longer receive more in benefits than the average wage for working families. The cap is applied through Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (UC), with payments being made directly to claimants in a similar way to a monthly salary. From November 2017 the cap has been £23,000 in London and £20,000 elsewhere for couples and single parents whose children live with them. For single adults it is £15,410 in London and £13,400 elsewhere.

Universal Credit	This is a single payment (including Housing Benefit), aimed at increasing independence and improving incentives for claimants to find employment. The amount of UC payable is limited by the Benefit cap.
Spare Room Subsidy (SRS)	Working age tenants residing in Council or Registered Provider accommodation, now receive Housing Benefit towards housing costs based on the need of their household. If there are any 'spare bedrooms', these will not normally be covered by Housing Benefit and the cost will be met by the tenant. The reduction is 14% for 1 spare bedroom and 25% for 2 or more spare bedrooms. (There are some exemptions which include certain disability requirements, residence in supported housing, foster carers, children in the armed or reserved forces where they are planning to return and persons who reside with the tenants, away for up to a year, who intend to return and are away for particular reasons for example hospitalisation.)
Shared accommodation rate for private renters	The shared accommodation rate is the maximum amount of Housing Benefit or UC housing costs available to those renting a room in a shared house from a private landlord. For those under 35 and claiming as a single person, in most instances the shared accommodation rate will be the maximum they are eligible to claim even if the accommodation rented is self-contained.

3.5. The Care Act 2014

The Care Act 2014 prescribes that local authorities must promote wellbeing when carrying out their care and / or support functions when working with clients. The Act obliges Councils to consider the suitability of living accommodation.

3.6. Deregulation Act 2015

The Deregulation Act 2015 aims to prevent notices seeking possession of a property being issued in retaliation for complaints made about the condition of the property. It also introduced more stringent rules around the validity of notices ensuring they can only be served if certain processes have been followed by the landlord at the beginning or during the tenancy.

3.7. Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (the Act) is the most significant change to legislation relating to homelessness in over 40 years. It has transformed the way homelessness services must be delivered and introduced new duties including the duty to work to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants as opposed to only those with a priority need, not intentionally homeless and who have a local connection. Advice and assistance duties have also been strengthened.

The definition of homelessness has changed and the Act extends the number of days someone is deemed to be threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56. It also prescribes that when a person receives a valid notice seeking possession of a property under Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 and it is due to expire within 56 days, they should be treated as threatened with homelessness.

All local authorities are now required to provide or secure services to give people free information and advice on:-

- Preventing homelessness – these are considered in detail in section 7.1 under the theme of Prevention.
- Securing accommodation if homeless.
- Housing rights.
- Help that is available to resolve their housing crisis and how to access that help

Services need to be designed to meet the needs of specific groups of people who are deemed to be more likely to become homeless. These groups include:-

- People released from prison or youth detention accommodation;
- Care leavers;
- Former members of the regular armed forces;
- Victims of domestic abuse;
- People leaving hospital;
- People suffering from a mental illness or impairment and
- Any other group that the authority identifies as being at particular risk of homelessness in their district.

The Council now has a duty to assess all applicants and agree a personalised housing plan. This must be provided to the client in writing and outline the 'reasonable steps' that they and the Authority will need to take to ensure accommodation is either retained or alternative accommodation secured. The personalised housing plan must be regularly reviewed and updated.

In addition there are two new duties, the 'Prevention' duty for those threatened with homelessness and the 'Relief' duty for those who are already homeless. For these duties, the applicant must be 'eligible' and either at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days, or already homeless. There is no need to satisfy 'priority need' criteria or to establish whether homelessness is threatened or occurred due to the client's own actions. Intentionality is not considered at this stage.

The duties can be discharged if accommodation is secured and has a reasonable prospect of being available for the next six months.

Applicants are encouraged to follow the steps set out in their personalised housing plan. Failure to do so could result in the Council discharging their duties if it is deemed an applicant has 'deliberately and unreasonably refused' to work with them.

All the decisions made by the Council under its new duties can be challenged by the applicant.

From 1st October 2018, certain other public authorities must notify a local housing authority in England (in this case the Council) where one of its service users:-

- May be homeless or at risk of homelessness within 56 days, and
- Consents to the referral

The following are public authorities with a Duty to Refer:-

- Prisons (public and contracted out);
- Youth Offender Institutions and Youth Offending Teams;
- Secure training centres (public and contracted out) and colleges;
- Probation services (community rehabilitation companies and National Probation Service);
- Jobcentre plus;
- Accident and emergency services provided in a hospital;
- Urgent treatment centres, and hospitals in their capacity of providing inpatient treatment;
- Social Service authorities.

A link to the guide to the 'Duty to Refer' is copied below:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-duty-to-refer/a-guide-to-the-duty-to-refer>

4. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping - National Context

This section sets out the national context for homelessness and rough sleeping, including national trends, the most significant government initiatives that influence one of the three Review themes of Prevention, Support or Supply and the impact of the decision to leave the European Union (EU).

4.1. National Trends in Statutory Homelessness

The MHCLG tracks the number of households deemed to be owed a duty to secure accommodation (i.e. unintentionally homeless and in priority need as defined in Chapters 8 and 9 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities updated in December 2020, a link to which is available in paragraph 2.4).

The financial year 2010 / 2011 saw a 10% increase in homelessness acceptances by local authorities, representing the first financial year increase since 2003 / 2004. Homelessness acceptances continued to rise over the next three years but fell by 3% between 2012 / 2013 and 2013 / 2014. The 2014 / 2015 financial year recorded a further increase, with acceptances 36% higher than in 2009 / 2010 (but 60% below the peak in 2003 / 2004). Acceptances increased again in 2015 / 2016 and 2016 / 2017 but fell by 4% in 2017 / 2018 compared to the previous year.

The increase in statutory homelessness since 2009 / 2010 is attributed to several factors, of which the most important is identified as a continuing shortfall in levels of new house building, particularly of affordable housing, relative to levels of household formation. Housing Benefit reforms are also viewed as a significant contributory factor, particularly in London. In addition to contributing to levels of homelessness, local authorities in areas of high housing demand argue that benefit reforms are making it more difficult for them to secure housing for eligible applicants. This is reflected in one of the key findings recorded in The homelessness monitor: England 2019 :

“The safety net once provided by Housing Benefit, whereby post housing incomes were protected from erosion below basic benefit levels, has now effectively ended for the bulk of private tenants in receipt of benefit across the country, with young people under 35 particularly badly affected by reduced Local Housing Allowance rates and the working age benefit freeze.”

(House of Commons Library – Briefing Paper Number 01164, 15 October 2019 – Statutory Homelessness in England – by Wendy Wilson & Cassie Barton)

4.2. White Paper: Fixing the ‘Broken’ Housing Market

In February 2017, the then Department of Communities and Local Government, published its White Paper: Fixing the ‘Broken’ Housing Market. The proposals in the White Paper set out how the government intends to boost housing supply and, over the long-term, create a more efficient housing market whose outcomes more closely match the needs and aspirations of all households.

The White Paper’s proposals were set out as follows:-

Step 1: Planning for the right homes in the right places - making it simpler for councils to put Local Plans in place ensuring sufficient land is allocated to meet housing needs.

Step 2: Building homes faster - increasing certainty to support developers to build homes faster.

Step 3: Diversifying the market - diversifying the market by actively supporting more types of small and medium-sized builders to accelerate construction.

Step 4: Helping people now - helping people to buy their own home through a variety of financial products.

The White Paper identified a consensus for a need to build 225,000 to 275,000 or more homes per year to keep up with population growth and start to tackle years of under-supply. The then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Sajid Javid acknowledged that:

“For decades, the pace of house building has been sluggish at best. As a result, the number of new homes has not kept pace with our growing population.”

More recent research commissioned by the National Housing Federation (NHF) and Crisis from Heriot-Watt University (2018), identified a need for 340,000 homes each year to 2031 of which “145,000 must be affordable.” Of the 145,000, the research concluded that 90,000 “should be for social rent.” (National Housing Federation (NHF) Press Release, England short of 4 million homes, 18 May 2018.)

4.3. Planning For The Future: White Paper August 2020

On 6 August 2020 the government launched its ‘Planning for the future consultation’. Its stated aims are to streamline and modernise the planning process, bring a new focus to design and sustainability, improve the system of developer contributions to infrastructure and ensure more land is available for development where it is needed. As with Fixing the ‘Broken’ Housing Market, the White Paper’s aim is to increase the delivery of the number of homes developed.

The Paper identifies the planning system as central to the most important national challenges including the ‘capacity to house the homeless and provide security and dignity’.

It states reform of the planning system is needed as it ‘simply does not lead to enough homes being built, especially in those places where the need for new homes is the highest. Adopted Local Plans, where they are in place, provide for 187,000 homes per year across England – not just significantly below our ambition for 300,000 new homes annually, but also lower than the number of homes delivered last year (over 241,000). The result of long-term and persisting undersupply is that housing is becoming increasingly expensive’.

The consultation period ended on 29 October 2020. At the time of this Review the feedback received is still being analysed.

4.4. Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018

The national Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out the government’s commitment to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it completely by 2027.

It sets out key areas of work around prevention, intervention and recovery and highlights the importance of collaboration between statutory and community sector partners.

A link to The Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 is copied below:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-rough-sleeping-strategy>

4.5. Next Steps Accommodation Programme 2020

In response to the success of local authorities across the country rapidly delivering short-term accommodation for approximately 15,000 rough sleepers following the announcement of the first lockdown to deal with Covid 19, the government has published a prospectus for the ‘Next Steps Accommodation Programme’ (NSAP).

The NSAP makes available financial resources to support local authorities and their partners in preventing the former rough sleepers from returning to the streets.

A link to the NSAP is copied below:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/next-steps-accommodation-programme-guidance-and-proposal-templates>

4.6. Decision to leave the EU

The future impact of the decision to leave the EU is hard to predict. A possible downturn in the economy, potentially compounded by the long-term impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic, could have a significant effect on households' financial circumstances. This in turn may lead to an increase in the number of households approaching the Council to seek housing / homeless advice and assistance.

There could also be an increase in the number of European Economic Area (EEA) nationals with uncertain status in respect of employment, benefits and housing rights. Data in relation to this is considered in section 7.5.3 – Inward Migration - below.

5. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping - Local Context

This section sets out the local context relating to homelessness and rough sleeping including links to corporate strategies, details of partner organisations and the current financial operating environment.

5.1. Bedford Borough Council - Corporate Strategies

Sections 4.2 and 4.3 of Bedford Borough's Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026 comprehensively sets out the corporate strategy context that relates to housing in general and homelessness in particular. A link to the Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026 is copied below:-

<https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Housing/housing-strategy%202021-2026.pdf>

In addition, the Bedford Borough Council Domestic Abuse Strategy, introduced to 'Tackle the Cause and Effects of Domestic Abuse', was published in January 2017. An operational group was formed within the Borough to develop the Action Plan that supports the delivery of the strategy. This group has representation from both statutory and local partners. A link to the strategy is copied below:-

https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Files/DA_Strategy_2017_-_2020.pdf

Domestic abuse and its links to homelessness are considered in detail in section 7.5.2 below.

5.2. Partnership Working

The Council's Homelessness Strategy 2016 – 2021 highlights the need for partnership working.

The necessity to work in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies remains as strong as ever. Working in partnership helps to maximise the opportunities to prevent homelessness, support those households at risk of, or who become, homeless and maximise the supply of available housing in the Borough to meet the identified need for good quality accommodation for those who are homeless.

The Council is fortunate to have a large number of organisations working in partnership to prevent, support and provide accommodation for homeless households or those in danger of becoming homeless. Our main partners are listed below. Further details and information about the services they provide, together with other organisations working with homeless

households or those threatened with homelessness, are set out in Appendix 1, Hostel, Supported Housing & Floating Support Provision.

- Kings Arms Project
- SMART
- One Housing Group
- Emmaus Village
- YMCA Bedfordshire
- Penrose Trust
- Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- East London NHS Foundation Trust
- Citizens Advice Bedford
- Orchard & Shipman
- bpha
- Grand Union
- Cross Keys
- L&Q
- Paradigm

Going forward the Council aims to build on its existing partnerships and develop new ones where the opportunity arises to complement and develop homelessness and rough sleeping services.

5.3. Local Government Finances

The Council has a strong track record of achieving efficiencies by adapting the way it works and has already saved in excess of £18 million since the introduction in 2017 of the Transformation Programme. However, as outlined in Section 1 above, it continues to face financial challenges.

In the period up to 2025 / 2026, the Council currently anticipates a funding gap of an estimated £26.4 million. The main cause of the predicted gap is the result of the impact of Covid 19. New ways of working and new demands upon the Council's services have placed unprecedented pressure in providing care for vulnerable groups (including homeless households), rough sleepers and the elderly. These pressures are in addition to maintaining vital day-to-day services.

The immediate challenge is bridging the £21.8 million funding gap for 2021 / 2022. Originally the 2020 Budget and Efficiency Plan set out how the Council would save a further £18million by 2025, with reduced central government funding and a rising demand for services.

Efficiencies will need to be made whilst minimising the effect on services including those for homeless households and rough sleepers. The Council is keeping the funding gap under constant review as there remains a large number of uncertainties that depend upon the ongoing impact of Covid 19, any additional financial assistance made available to local authorities by central government, the medium to long-term economic impact of measures put in place to control Covid 19 and any potential economic disruption caused by Brexit.

Bedford Borough benefits from a significant amount of supported housing with provision for a wide range of client groups. Supported Housing is provided by a variety of statutory bodies, registered providers and voluntary organisations. Provision is funded in part by the Council but other funding streams also have an important role. (Further details of Hostel and Supported Housing Provision are set out in section 7.3.2 and Appendix 1.)

The use of non-registered provider accommodation, temporary accommodation (7.4.6) and accommodating rough sleepers during the pandemic (8.2.1), has significant extra costs for the Council as Housing Benefit subsidy cannot be claimed. It has been identified that for the financial year 2020 / 2021 the additional costs of using non-registered providers accommodation in respect of homelessness and rough sleeping will be in the region of £3 to £4 million.

By continuing to develop and promote early intervention in its homelessness and rough sleeping services through a coordinated multi-agency approach, the Council can assist people before they reach crisis point. This can reduce expenditure and more importantly avert the many social costs that are associated with households becoming homeless. Preventing homelessness by early intervention is one of the three key themes of this Review and considered in detail in Section 7. It will also form a key element of the Councils Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

6. Homelessness Strategy 2016 – 2021

This section outlines the objectives of the Homelessness Strategy 2016 – 2021 (the Strategy), details the progress made in delivering those objectives – including particular successes – by each of the key themes of Prevention, Support and Supply.

6.1. Objectives

The Strategy was developed from the Homelessness Review undertaken in 2014 / 2015. It was adopted at a time of pressure on homelessness services due to the ongoing impact of welfare reform and severe constraints on the Council and its partners' budgets.

The Strategy identified the following actions to be achieved by working closely with our partner organisations:-

- To continue to prevent homelessness and help people sustain their tenancies by early intervention and providing good quality advice and support services.
- To ensure there is a sufficient supply of temporary accommodation for those who are homeless.
- To commission support services for people who are homeless or those at risk of homelessness.
- To support an appropriate range of hostel and specialist accommodation including the provision of a Complex Needs Unit.
- Continue to take a proactive and innovative approach to dealing with the impact of welfare reform to ensure its potential to impact on homelessness is minimised.
- To encourage the provision of debt and welfare rights advice services.
- To work to inform expectations surrounding housing availability and tenure particularly among young people.
- To provide continuing support for young people at risk of homelessness.
- To look for new and innovative ways to prevent homelessness and help tenants remain in their homes.

- To continue to work with owner occupiers at risk of mortgage repossession.
- To maintain a proactive approach to reducing rough sleeping.
- Continue to support families who have suffered domestic abuse.
- To improve information sharing regarding release programmes for people leaving care and institutions' such as the hospital, prison and the Armed Forces.
- To ensure that the homelessness services offered by the Council are available equally to all members of the community.
- To continue to support the Mental Health Partnership to rehouse single people with mental health problems, and provide ongoing support from mental health professionals to help maintain tenancies created.

Significant progress has been made since the last Homelessness Strategy was adopted in 2016, with most of the actions having been achieved although some, by their nature, remain ongoing.

6.2. Progress Made and Achievements

Progress against the original and updated Housing Strategy 2016 – 2021 Action Plan can be accessed here:-

<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/housing/housing-strategies-and-policies/housing-development-and-policy/>

Any outstanding actions from the currently approved Action Plan will be considered and if appropriate carried forward to the Action Plan which will accompany the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023 / 2028.

However, set out below are the most significant achievements made in tackling homelessness in the Borough across the Themes of Prevention, Support and Supply since the adoption of the Strategy. Details are considered in Sections 7 and 8 below but in summary the Council has:-

6.2.1. Prevention

- Successfully incorporated the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 into the day-to-day operation of the Housing Options Service.

- Restructured the Homelessness & Housing Advice Team in April 2020 thereby creating a single Assessment Team to deal with Part 6 and Part 7 cases, enabling a greater emphasis on preventing homelessness.
- Appointed Tenancy Sustainment Officers into the Rehousing and Lettings Team to increase the support available to Tenancy Deposit Guarantee Scheme tenants to sustain tenancies.
- Worked in partnership with the identified public bodies to ensure the successful implantation of the Duty to Refer.
- Brought the operation of the Housing Register, which had previously been administered by bpha, in house in 2018.
- Improved discharge procedures for ex-offenders.
- Introduced a hospital discharge protocol.

6.2.2. Support

- Secured completion of the Complex Needs scheme, run by One Housing Group, in March 2018.
- Successfully bid for and obtained government funding from a number of sources to tackle rough sleeping. During the period 2017 – 2019 there was 60.5% reduction in rough sleeping in the Borough reversing the trend of recent years.
- Successfully bid for additional Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP), funding in 2020 to assist rough sleepers not residing in the accommodation provided by the Council.
- Between April and the end of December 2020 supported 167 people to move on from the accommodation provided for rough sleepers in response to the Covid 19 pandemic.

6.2.3. Supply

- Delivered a thriving, successful Tenancy Deposit Guarantee Scheme. At 31 March 2020, this provided accommodation for 207 householders who had been homeless or threatened with homelessness.

- Continued use of private sector accommodation to discharge housing duty. At 31 March 2020, 110 offers of private sector discharge have been accepted during the previous six years.
- Consistently and significantly increased the provision of affordable housing completions.
- Identified a site and secured a partner to provide a new purpose built refuge for those fleeing domestic violence.
- In the five years since the Homelessness Review 2014 / 2015, brought back into use and occupation 515 empty properties following Council intervention, with 126 of these during 2019 / 2020.
- Committed a Temporary Accommodation Capital Budget of £10 million for the acquisition of 50 units of suitable freehold premises.
- Purchased a new build block of flats in Bedford town centre in 2020 which provides temporary accommodation for twelve households. A further block of 14 existing flats was purchased in late December 2020 but will require works prior to being ready to use as temporary accommodation.
- Brought back into use as temporary accommodation nine properties formally required by service tenancy employees of the Council.
- Between April and the end of December 2020 secured accommodation for 261 rough sleepers in response to the government's requirements to deal with the Covid 19 pandemic.

7. Homelessness

This section defines homelessness and takes in turn the key themes of Prevention, Support and Supply and for each

- identifies the Council's responsibilities
- provides and analyses relevant key data
- details the role other specialist partner organisations play in addressing the theme
- identifies the issues that should be considered and addressed in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 / 2028

Definition of Homelessness

“Homelessness as a term refers to a range of different people and experiences. In law, it means that a person or household does not have accommodation that is available for them to occupy, that they have a legal right to occupy, and that it is reasonable for them to continue to occupy. This includes people who sleep rough, people living in hostels, shelters and domestic abuse refuges, and hidden homeless people who have to rely on friends or family for accommodation in unreasonable circumstances. Additionally, as part of our strong safety net, local authorities are legally obliged to house many homeless people as a result of their needs, for example those with children or those who are vulnerable as a result of their health.” (MHCLG) Rough Sleeping Strategy, August 2018, page 13 Paragraph 22.

7.1. Overarching Homelessness Data

Section 7.1 considers data that relates to homelessness in general – overarching data that does not relate specifically to any of the three themes of Prevention, Support and Supply, each of which are addressed in their own individual sections at 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4 below.

7.1.1. Analysis of Statutory Homelessness in Bedford Borough

Of the approaches made to the Homelessness and Housing Advice Team, Table 2 shows the number of Statutory Homelessness Decisions made by the Housing Needs Service between 2014 / 2015 to 2019 / 2020.

Table 2: Number of Statutory Homelessness Main Duty Decisions made by the Housing Needs Service between 2014 / 2015 to 2019 / 2020

Statutory Homelessness Decisions						
Year	2014 / 2015*	2015 / 2016*	2016 / 2017*	2017 / 2018*	2018 / 2019**	2019 / 2020****
Eligible Unintentional Priority Need	164	287	252	224	195***	202
Eligible Homeless Priority Need but Intentionally Homeless	40	53	39	45	35	31
Eligible Homeless but Not Priority Need	37	50	36	24	70	96
Eligible but Not Homeless	121	130	106	86	29	11
Total	362	520	433	379	329	340
Ineligible	4	Not Available	6	2	13	10
Total (Where numbers of ineligible cases are known)	366	Not Known	439	378	342	350

* Sources MHCLG Tables 784 & 784a: Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Acts

** Source MHCLG – Statutory homelessness main duty decisions & outcomes – Tables April 2018 to March 2019

*** Figures include 41 Legacy cases from 2017 / 2018. These cases were initiated prior to the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act

**** Source MHCLG – Statutory homelessness main duty decisions & outcomes – Tables April 2019 to March 2020

The Table shows that following an initial significant increase in the number of Statutory homeless decisions (excluding households who are ineligible), from 362 to 520, after 2015 / 2016 there was a steady decline in the overall numbers to below the 2014 / 2015 level (362 to 329). Between 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020, there has been a slight increase in the number of decisions to 340.

The number of Accepted Duties also declined steadily from 2015 / 2016 (287) to 2018 / 2019 (195). Between 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020 however the Accepted Duties rose to 202. They are now 23.1% (38) higher, than in 2014 / 2015.

During the period 2014 / 2015 to 2019 / 2020, the number of households assessed as being intentionally homeless has remained reasonably constant. In 2019 / 2020, households assessed as intentionally homeless fell to 31, the lowest number recorded throughout the period in question.

The number of households assessed as being not priority need has seen a significant increase from 24 in 2017 / 2018, to 96 in 2019 / 2020. Since 2018 / 2019, it is likely these households will qualify for assistance under the duties of Prevention or Relief, whereas they may not have been eligible for further assistance prior to the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The period has also seen a significant fall in the number of households assessed as eligible for assistance but are not homeless, starting from 121 in 2014 / 2015, falling to 11 in 2019 / 2020. This is to be welcomed as it frees up resources in the Homelessness & Housing Advice Team to assist those who need assistance or who have been assessed as owed the duty of Prevention or Relief.

Going forward, once the lifting of the eviction ban introduced during the first Covid 19 lockdown occurs, there is the possibility of a surge in the number of homeless applications received and statutory decisions made. The Council will be ready and prepared should this prove to be the case.

Of the households assessed under statutory homelessness in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020, Table 3 shows the priority need of the households owed a main duty.

Table 3: Priority need of households owed a main Housing Duty in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Priority need of households owed a main Duty	Year Total 2018 / 2019	Percentage	Year Total 2019 / 2020	Percentage
Household includes dependent children	120	61.5%	124	61.4%
Household includes a pregnant woman	9	4.6%	10	5.0%
Vulnerable with children	4	2.1%	2	1.0%
Support Needs - Mental Health problems	32	16.4%	35	17.3%
Support Needs - Physical disability / ill health	13	6.7%	17	8.4%
Support Needs - Domestic abuse	3	1.5%	2	1.0%
Support Needs - Young applicant	4	2.1%	3	1.5%
Support Needs - Old age	5	2.6%	0	0.0%
Homeless because of emergency	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Other	5	2.6%	9	4.4%
Total	195	100%	202	100%
Total Vulnerable Households	57	29.3%	57	28.2%

Source MHCLG –Statutory homelessness main duty decisions & outcomes – Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Across the two years, the percentages of the types of priority need of households owed a main duty of housing has remained fairly constant. This should be monitored going forward however, to help identify whether resources are to be reallocated should there be significant changes.

When compared to Tables 18 and 19, there is a higher percentage of households with dependent children where a main duty has been accepted (61.5% & 61.4%), than where a duty of Prevention (54.5% & 54.7% %) or Relief (26.1% & 25.2%) has been determined.

In 2018 / 2019 of the 195 main duty acceptances, just under a third (29.3%) are classified as having support needs. Slightly over half of all support needs are due to the identification of the applicant having mental health problems. In 2019 / 2020, the percentage of people accepted with identified support needs falls slightly to 28.2%, with the main applicant having mental health problems slightly increasing from 16.4% to 17.3%.

Table 4: Outcome of Households no longer owed a main Duty

Outcome of households no longer owed a main Duty	Year Total 2018/19	%	Year Total 2019/20	%
Housing Act 1996 Pt6 social housing offer - accepted	21	56.8%	109	68.6%
Housing Act 1996 Pt6 social housing offer - refused	1	2.7%	31	19.5%
Private rented sector offer - accepted	5	13.5%	10	6.3%
Private rented sector offer - refused	0	0.0%	1	0.6%
Voluntarily ceased to occupy	5	13.5%	6	3.8%
Refused suitable TA offer, withdrew or lost contact	1	2.7%	1	0.6%
Became intentionally homeless from TA	4	10.8%	1	0.6%
Ceased to be eligible	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Not known	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Totals	37	100%	159	100%

Source MHCLG –Statutory homelessness main duty decisions & outcomes – Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Due to the limited number of outcomes in 2018 / 2019, comparisons across the two financial years are, to some extent, tenuous. More helpful data should be available going forward. Points of potential interest are however set out below:-

- For households no longer owed a main duty the, the largest outcome across both 2018 / 2019 (56.8%) and 2019 / 2020 (68.6%), is to accept a Part 6 offer of accommodation in to social housing.
- It is concerning that in 2019 / 2020, 31 households (19.5%) refused an offer of social housing. This statistic would benefit from further investigation to determine where these households ended up and if there are any specific reasons for the refusals of social housing that can be addressed through the Council's Allocations Policy or the Choice Based Lettings website.
- The private rented sector only provided accommodation for 10 (6.3% of) households no longer owed a duty. This is positive in as far as the majority of households found accommodation in more secure social housing. The Council will however, continue to look at how best the private sector can be used to assist with meeting its housing obligations.

7.1.2. Ethnicity and Homelessness

This section details and considers data in relation to the ethnicity of those owed a Prevention or Relief duty and of statutory homelessness decisions.

- Ethnicity of main applicants owed a Prevention or Relief Duty

Table 5 shows the 'Ethnicity of main applicants owed a Prevention or Relief duty' within Bedford Borough during 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020.

Table 5: Ethnicity of main applicants owed a Prevention or Relief Duty

Ethnicity of main applicants owed a Prevention or Relief Duty	Total Number of Households 2018/19	%	Total Number of Households 2019/20	%
White	631	67.4%	678	68.6%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	147	15.7%	108	10.9%
Asian / Asian British	77	8.2%	73	7.4%
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	27	2.9%	34	3.4%
Other ethnic groups	14	1.5%	28	2.8%
Not known	40	4.3%	65	6.6%
Total	936	100%	986*	99.7%*

Source MHCLG – Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

**The figures in this Section of the H-CLIC Return do not add up to 989 or 100%. No reason is given for this so they are repeated as produced on the MHCLG spreadsheet.*

Table 6 shows Ethnicity Census Details – 2011 for Bedford Borough. It is a replica of Table 29 repeated here for ease of reference.

Table 6: Ethnicity Census Details - 2011

Ethnicity Census Details - 2011	Bedford	England	East of England
White	80.6%	85.5%	91.2%
Black	3.9%	3.4%	2.0%
Asian	11.4%	7.7%	4.8%
Mixed	3.5%	2.2%	2.0%
Other	0.7%	1.0%	0.5%
Not Stated	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Census Table KS201EW

The figures in Tables 5 and 6 highlight:-

- A significant under representation of the White community owed a duty of Prevention or Relief when compared to the last Census data. This has persisted since the last Review undertaken in 2014 / 2015 and is worthy of further investigation. As there has been significant in-migration from the Accession States which entered the European Union on 1st May 2004 and 1st January 2007, it cannot be simply explained by the indigenous population being more established in their accommodation and therefore at less risk of becoming homeless.
- A noticeable over representation of the Black community owed a duty of Prevention or Relief. In 2018 / 2019 members of the black community were four times over represented compared to the census date of 2011. This has reduced to two and a half times in 2019 / 2020. Clearly research is needed to understand the reasons why this is the case and establish what can be done to assist in preventing members of this section of the community from becoming homeless.
- In contrast to the Black community, the representation of those owed a duty from the Asian community is 71.9% of the census total in 2018 / 2019. This reduces further to 64.9% in 2019 / 2020. Research is therefore required to establish the reasons for this and whether more needs to be done to make the Asian community aware of the Housing Advice and Homelessness Services available in the Borough.
- Bedford Borough had a higher percentage of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Groups than England and East Anglia. The only exception is the 'Other' category where England had a slightly higher percentage.

Ethnic Groups and Statutory Homelessness Decisions

Table 7: Breakdown of Ethnicity where Housing Duty Owed - Numbers

Homelessness Duty Accepted – Ethnicity Numbers						
Year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19**	2019/20**
White	106	184	153	131	Not Available	Not Available
Black	18	27	23	17	Not Available	Not Available
Asian	22	44	38	34	Not Available	Not Available
Mixed	6	14	12	17	Not Available	Not Available
Other	7	13	10	14	Not Available	Not Available
Not Stated	5	4	16	11	Not Available	Not Available
Total	164	286* (287)	252	224	Not Available	Not Available

Sources: Bedford Borough Councils P1E – 2014 / 2015 to 2017 / 2018

* The figure recorded in the Council's records differs from our statistical return.

** A Breakdown of ethnicity figures where Homelessness Duty was accepted in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020 is not available.

The analysis undertaken therefore runs between 2014 / 2015 to 2017 / 2018.

Table 8: Breakdown of Ethnicity where Housing Duty Owed - Percentages

Homelessness Duty Accepted – Ethnicity Percentages							Bedford	England	East of England
Year	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019*	2019 / 2020*	2011 Census	2011 Census	2011 Census
White	64.6%	64.4%	60.7%	58.5%	N/A	N/A	80.6%	85.5%	91.2%
Black	11.0%	9.4%	9.1%	7.6%	N/A	N/A	3.9%	3.4%	2.0%
Asian	13.4%	15.4%	15.1%	15.2%	N/A	N/A	11.4%	7.7%	4.8%
Mixed	3.7%	4.9%	4.8%	7.6%	N/A	N/A	3.5%	2.2%	2.0%
Other	4.3%	4.5%	4.0%	6.2%	N/A	N/A	0.7%	1.0%	0.5%
Not Stated	3.0%	1.4%	6.3%	4.9%	N/A	N/A	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	N/A	N/A	100%	100%	100%

Sources: Bedford Borough Councils P1E 2014 – 2015 to 2017 / 2018 & ONS 2011 Census Table KS201EW.

* A Breakdown of BAME figures where Homelessness Duty was accepted in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020 is not available.

The analysis undertaken therefore runs between 2014 / 2015 to 2017 / 2018.

The figures in Tables 7 and 8 highlight:-

- In overall terms, there was a large increase in the number of cases where Duty was accepted between 2014 / 2015 and 2015 / 2016. This is followed by falls over the following two years. The total at the end of 2017 / 2018 however, remains 60 higher than the starting figure.
- A significant and increasing under representation in percentage terms of the White community owed a Homelessness Duty when compared to the last Census data. This has persisted since the last Review undertaken in 2014 / 2015 and is worthy of further investigation. As there has been significant in-migration from the Accession States which entered the European Union on 1st May 2004 and 1st January 2007, it cannot be simply explained by the indigenous population being more established in their accommodation and therefore at less risk of becoming homeless.
- Where stated there is an over representation of all BAME communities where a Homelessness Duty has been accepted.
- The Black community are still over represented against census data at 195%, however it is positive to note over three years this has fallen from 282% over representation.
- Although less dramatic than the other BAME groups, the Asian community are also over represented in the figures. This has increased from 117.5% against the Census in 2014 / 2015 to 133.3% in 2017 / 2018.
- In 2014 / 2015, representation of the mixed community was around the census levels. Over the next three years it has risen to 217% when compared to the census data.
- The 'Other' category is also over represented. A breakdown of the ethnic grouping contained within this category would however be required in order to draw clear trends and identify if certain groups are possibly being disadvantaged.
- Bedford Borough had a higher percentage of all BAME Groups than England and East Anglia in 2011 except for the 'Other' category where England as a whole had a slightly higher percentage.

It is therefore important that work is undertaken to determine whether:-

- There are factors leading to some ethnic groups having a greater likelihood of being picked up with a Homelessness Duty.
- Some groups have a better understanding of how to access Housing Advice and if so how it might be possible to increase the understanding in those groups where it is less.
- Other factors are determining the ethnicity of applicants approaching the Council as they are potentially homeless.

This information may then help the Council in its duties to Relieve and Prevent Homelessness, allocate resources and potentially identify actions to be taken to address identified issues. Statistics are not available for 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020. These statistics should be maintained going forward so the Council can monitor the accessibility of its services and the outcomes for all ethnic groups especially given the diverse ethnicity of the population of the Borough.

7.1.3. Predicting the Future Trend in Homelessness in Bedford Borough

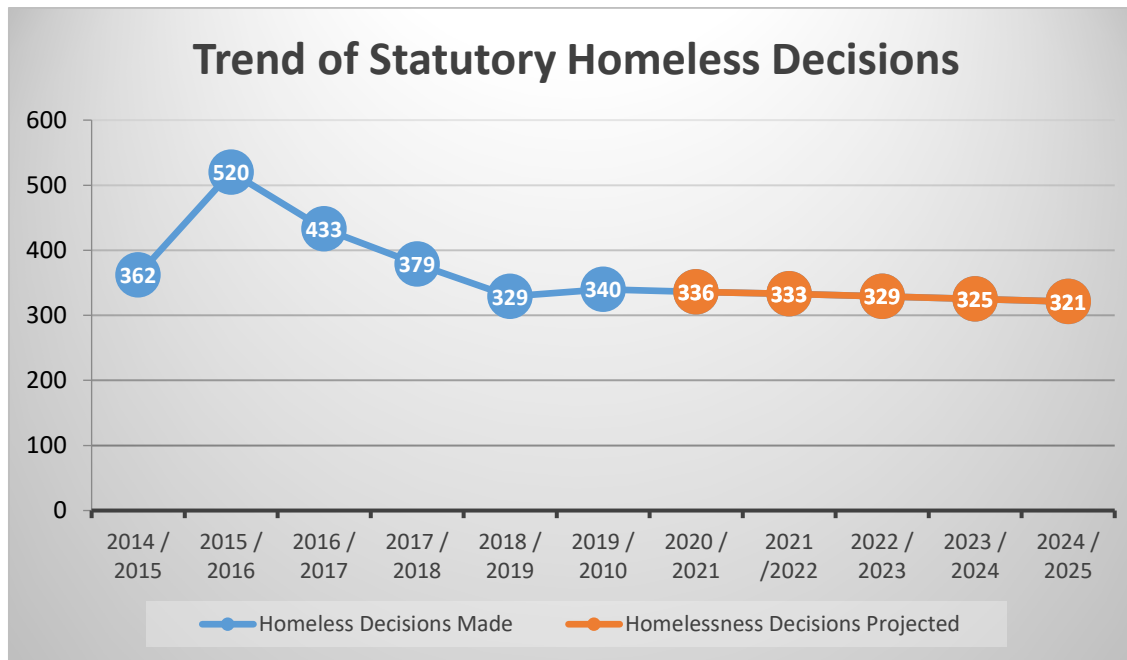
Pre-Covid 19 Pandemic

Identifying current and future levels of homelessness is a requirement of the Code.

With only two financial years' worth of data to analyse from the Prevention and Relief Duties, the use of Statutory Homelessness Decisions provides a longer term insight in respect of possible future trends.

Figure 1 shows the trend in the number of Statutory Homeless decisions made by Bedford Borough Council, with a potential projected forward to 2024 / 2025.

Figure 1: Trend in Statutory Homeless Decisions made by Bedford Borough Council 2014 / 2015 to 2019 / 2020, with a projection to 2024 / 2025.



Following a significant increase in 2014 / 2015 from 362 to 520 decisions, there was a steady fall to 329 decisions in 2018 / 2019. Between 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020, there has been a slight increase in the number of decisions to 340, an increase of 3.3%.

If the fall is considered simply over the 6 year period from 2014 / 2015 to 2019 / 2020, this equates in total to 22 cases or slightly over 6%. On a yearly basis this equals 3.7 cases.

If this reduction is projected over the next five years there would be a fall of 19 statutory homelessness cases, to 321 per year in 2024/25.

Post-Covid 19 Pandemic

The above exercise may have provided a potential insight in to the future direction of statutory homelessness cases in the Borough until March 2020. As previously described in this Review the advent of the Covid 19 pandemic has created an uncertain, although clearly negative, impact on the economy. Coupled with the unknown impact of Brexit, this has brought together significant new factors which are very likely to alter any establish trends in homelessness and make predicting future ones, in the short-term at least, much harder and less reliable.

According to the government's economic watchdog, unemployment in the United Kingdom is likely to reach 2.6 million or 7.5% of the working age population in the middle of 2021. At November 2020, the figure was 1.6million. (BBC News – Unemployment rate: How many people are out of work? 25 November 2020 by Ben King, Business Reporter).

Such a rise in unemployment, will adversely impact the ability of many households to maintain rental or mortgage payments and therefore the likelihood is there will be a rise in the number of homelessness approaches to the Council. At this point in time however, this is impossible to predict with any accuracy.

In addition to the adverse economic conditions the ban on evictions, brought in due to the pandemic, will be lifted at some point as yet to be determined. This may cause a spike in homeless applications.

When all these factors are taken together, it makes any current attempt to accurately predict future homelessness in the Borough somewhat unsound beyond there is very likely to be a rise in 2021 / 2022.

Whatever the circumstances going forward, the Council will continue to work in conjunction with its partners to use available resources to prevent and relieve homelessness for residents of the Borough.

7.2. Theme 1 – Prevention

7.2.1. Housing Needs

Section 3 considers the legislative environment in which the Council must fulfil its front line housing functions. These are mainly captured in the Housing Act 1996 Part VI and VII as amended.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced significant changes to the Housing Act 1996 Part VII introducing a number of new duties as set out in section 3.7.

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has also led to a change in the recording of data by MHCLG from April 2018. Prior to this date, data was collected and reported through the P1E Return. From April 2018 wider data has been collected through the Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (H-CLIC) return which tracks homelessness applications and the new Prevention and Relief Stages. The change in recording of homelessness data is reflected in a number of the tables set out in this Review.

7.2.2. Homelessness Approaches

A significant number of residents approach the Council each year with a specific housing need or require assistance with securing accommodation. Of these approaches, many arise from households being homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Up to the end of the financial year 2017 / 2018, the Council kept specific records of approaches to the Housing Options Service. With effect from 03 April 2018 however, this figure has incorporated contacts received from people on, or applying to join the Housing Register. Prior to this date, the Housing Register had been administered on the Council's behalf by bpha, the Registered Provider created by the transfer of the Council's housing stock in 1990.

The changes in the data collected by the Council mean it is not possible to provide a meaningful comparison with Homeless contacts made prior to 2018 / 2019.

The figures used to show homelessness approaches in this Review are therefore those collected in the H-CLIC Return for 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020. Going forward this data will provide a consistent comparison to approaches made to the Council together with the effectiveness of actions taken to prevent and relieve homelessness.

7.2.3. Analysis of Homelessness Prevention and Relief

The figures in Table 9 show the 'Initial Assessments of statutory homeless duties owed' within Bedford Borough during 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020.

Table 9: Initial Assessments Bedford Borough Council April 2018 – March 2019 & April 2019 – March 2020

Initial Assessments Bedford Borough Council		
	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020
Total Number of Households Assessed	984	998
Total Households Assessed as Owed a Duty	936	989
Total Households Not Threatened with Homelessness within 56 Days (No Duty Owed)	48	9
Total Households with Support need(s) Owed a Duty	398	432
Total Number of Support Needs for those Owed a Duty	596	659

Source MHCLG – Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Comparisons between 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020:-

- There is only a small increase (14 or 1.4%) in the total number of households who had initial assessment undertaken by the Council between 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020.
- In 2018 / 2019, 95.1% of assessed households were owed a duty of Prevention or Relief. This has risen to 99.1% in 2019 / 2020.
- In 2018 / 2019, 4.9 % were assessed as having no duty. This fell to 0.9% in 2019 / 2020.
- In 2018 / 2019, 42.5% of households were assessed as having at least one support need. This increased to 43.7% in 2019 / 2020.

The figures in Table 10 shows 'Households Assessed and Duty Owed' within Bedford Borough during 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020.

Table 10: Households Assessed and Duty Owed During 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Households Assessed and Duty Owed	Total Households 2018/19	% 2018/19	Total Households 2019/20	% 2019/20
Threatened with Homelessness – Prevention Duty Owed	407	43.48%	404	40.85%
Homelessness Relief Duty Owed	529	56.52%	585	59.15%
Total	936	100%	989	100%

Source MHCLG – Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Comparisons between 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020:-

- The Table shows that of the applications assessed as having a duty owed under the new assessment of circumstances and needs in 2019 / 2020, 18.3% more were owed the duty of Relief (as the applicant was already homeless) rather than Prevention (where the applicant is threatened with homelessness). This compares to 13.04% in 2018 / 2019.
- The total number of households owed a duty of either Prevention or Relief has increased by 53 between 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020 or 5.4%.
- The number of households owed a Prevention duty has remained almost static across the two financial years. As a percentage of total cases however, it has fallen by 2.63%.
- There has been an increase of 56 households owed the duty of Relief between 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020 or 9.6%
- In 2018 / 2019, 62 (15.23%) of the 407 cases where a Prevention duty was owed was due to the service of a valid Section 21 Notice. In 2019 / 2020, this accounted for 84 (20.79%) of the 404 Prevention cases. There has therefore been a rise of 5.56% across the two years. The serving of Section 21 Notices are therefore, becoming more prevalent in leading to a duty of Prevention being owed.
- As the reorganisation of the Homelessness and Housing Advice Team instigated to meet the challenges of the Homelessness Reduction Act beds in, the greater emphasis on Prevention of homelessness should

ultimately lead to a reversal of these statistics. This is important as Prevention of homelessness is usually less costly in both financial and social terms.

- The emphasis on Prevention is going to be particularly important going forward as the lifting of the eviction ban imposed to deal with Covid 19, coupled with its probable impact on employment, could create a surge in homeless approaches to the Council.

The figures in Table 11 show 'Reasons for Loss of Last Settled Home for Households Owed a Duty' within Bedford Borough during 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020. In Tables 12 and 13, the figures are analysed separately.

Table 11: Reasons for Loss of Last Settled Home for Households Owed a Duty (Prevention and Relief)

Reasons for Loss of Last Settled Home for Households Owed a Duty	Total Households 2018 / 2019	%	Total Households 2019 / 2020	%
Family / Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	171	18.27%	194	19.62%
End of private rented tenancy – assured shorthold	234	25.00%	217	21.94%
Domestic abuse	77	8.22%	61	6.17%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	69	7.37%	85	8.59%
End of social rented tenancy	92	9.83%	77	7.79%
Eviction from supported housing	42	4.49%	32	3.24%
End of private rented tenancy – not assured shorthold	9	0.96%	12	1.21%
Other violence or harassment	15	1.60%	27	2.73%
Left institution with no accommodation available	10	1.07%	36	3.64%
Required to leave accommodation provided by HO as asylum support	1	0.11%	2	0.20%
Other Reasons / Not known	216	23.08%	246	24.87%
Total	936	100%	989	100%

Source MHCLG – Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Comparisons between 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

- The two main reasons for homeless households' loss of their previous accommodation across both financial years are family / friends no longer willing or able to accommodate them or their private rented tenancy - assured shorthold, has come to an end. These account for 43.27% of recorded cases in 2018 / 2019 and 41.56% in 2019 / 2020.
- It is positive to see there has been a fall in the number of domestic abuse cases, although there has been an almost converse rise in the number of 'Other' violence or harassment category.
- The fall in the number of social tenancies where the applicant is owed a duty of Prevention or Relief is also to be welcomed in both numbers and percentage terms. This may be due to improvements in support offered to residents within the Borough to help them maintain their tenancies.
- In a similar vein, the reduction in the number of approaches from persons evicted from supported housing is positive.
- There has been an increase in the number of cases where the applicant has left an institution with no accommodation available. This increase may be caused by organisations developing a better knowledge of the Duty to Refer. It is however important to monitor this going forward to ascertain whether a more proactive approach can be instigated.
- There are a high percentage of entries in Other Reasons / Not Known. This constitutes the second highest number of cases in 2018 / 2019 and the highest in 2019 / 2020. Further interrogation of these figures may determine whether there are other significant factors in families becoming homeless in Bedford Borough. If identified this may enable a targeted approach to be taken to try and bring in appropriate support at an earlier stage thereby assisting households before a homeless approach is made to the Council.

The figures in Table 12 show the 'Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a Prevention duty' in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020.

Table 12: Reason for Loss of Last Settled Home for Households Owed a Prevention Duty in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Reasons for Loss of Last Settled Home for Households Owed a Prevention Duty	Total Number of Households 2018 / 2019	Percentage	Total Number of Households 2019 / 2020	Percentage
Family / Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	51	12.5%	59	14.6%
End of private rented tenancy – assured shorthold	174	42.7%	152	37.6%
Domestic abuse	15	3.7%	7	1.7%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	6	1.5%	17	4.2%
End of social rented tenancy	67	16.5%	49	12.1%
Eviction from supported housing	13	3.2%	14	3.5%
End of private rented tenancy – not assured shorthold	5	1.2%	4	1.0%
Other violence or harassment	2	0.5%	8	2.0%
Left institution with no accommodation available	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Other Reasons / Not known	74	18.2%	94	23.3%
Total	407	100%	404	100%

Source MHCLG – Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

With only two financial years' data to compare, it is not currently possible to confirm ongoing trends. These will be compiled over time. Monitoring trends going forward may provide insights as to how best to target scarce resources in order to try and prevent homelessness.

Points of interest from Table 12 where a category includes one year's entry of more than 50 households are as follows:-

- End of private rented tenancy – assured shorthold, is by far the largest single reason for a duty of Prevention being owed over both years.
- Although there has been an increase in Prevention duties due to the service of a Section 21 Notice, the actual number and percentage of private sector assured shorthold tenancies ending which has led to a duty of Prevention has fallen from 174 (42.7%) in 2018 / 2019 to 152 (37.6%) in 2019 / 2020.
- It is positive to see a reduction in the number of social rented tenancies coming to an end which result in a duty to prevent. These have fallen from 67 (16.5%) to 49 (12.1%) of cases in 2019 / 2020.
- There has been a small increase in the number of cases where Family / friends are no longer able to accommodate between 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020 from 51 (12.5%) to 59 (14.6%).
- There is a high percentage of entries in Other Reasons / Not Known. This constitutes the second highest number of cases in both 2018 / 2019 (18.2%) and in 2019 / 2020 (23.3%). Further interrogation of these figures may determine whether there are other significant reasons for families being owed a duty of Prevention. If identified this may enable a targeted approach to be taken to try and bring in appropriate support at an earlier stage thereby assisting households before a homeless approach is made to the Council.

The figures in Table 13 show the 'Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a Relief duty' in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020.

Table 13: Reason for Loss of Last Settled Home for Households Owed a Relief Duty in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Reasons for Loss of Last Settled Home for Households Owed a Relief Duty	Total Number of Households 2018 / 2019	Percentage	Total Number of Households 2019 / 2020	Percentage
Family / Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	120	22.7%	135	23.1%
End of private rented tenancy – assured shorthold	60	11.3%	65	11.1%
Domestic abuse	62	11.7%	54	9.2%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	63	11.9%	68	11.6%
End of social rented tenancy	25	4.7%	28	4.8%
Eviction from supported housing	29	5.5%	18	3.1%
End of private rented tenancy – not assured shorthold	4	0.8%	8	1.4%
Other violence or harassment	13	2.5%	19	3.2%
Left institution with no accommodation available	10	1.9%	36	6.2%
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	1	0.2%	2	0.3%
Other Reasons / Not known	142	26.8%	152	26.0%
Total	529	100%	585	100%

Source MHCLG – Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

With only two financial year's data to compare, it is again not currently possible to confirm ongoing trends where a Relief duty is owed. These will be compiled over time. Points of interest from Table 13 are as follows:-

- Family / Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate, is by far the largest single reason for a duty of Relief being owed over both years. It has increased from 22.7% of cases in 2018 / 2019 to 23.1% in 2019 / 2020.
- Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner has been the next highest reason over both financial years. This has seen an increase in numbers from 63 to 68, but a fall in percentage terms from 11.9% to 11.6%.
- The third highest reason for a duty of Relief in 2019 / 2020 is the end of private rented tenancy, assured shorthold. This has increased slightly from 60 (11.3%) when it was fourth in 2018 / 2019 to 65 (11.1%).
- It is positive to see the reduction in the number of Relief duties owed due to domestic abuse. This has fallen from 62 (11.7%) in 2018 / 2019 to 54 (9.2%) in 2019 / 2020, a reduction in percentage terms of 12.9%.
- It is also worthy of note that there has been a reduction in the number of cases where a Relief duty is owed because of an eviction from Supported Housing. This represented 29 cases in 2018 / 2019 (5.5%), falling to 18 cases (3.1%) in 2019 / 2020.

When comparing reasons for Prevention and Relief duties for the loss of last settled home, there are a number of points of interest. These are set out below using the figures for 2019 / 2020:

- Where family / friends are no longer willing or able to accommodate, there is a significantly higher percentage of applicants owed the duty of Relief in 2019 / 2020 (23.1%), than those owed a duty of Prevention (14.6%).
- The situation is reversed in respect of assured shorthold tenancies ending. Those households owed a Relief duty represent 11.1% of the total where those owed a Prevention duty account for 37.6%. This is by far the largest reason for a Prevention duty being owed.
- The ending of social rented tenancies represent 12.1% of Prevention cases, which is the second highest identified Prevention reason. In terms of Relief they comprise only 4.8% of cases.

- A non-violent relationship breakdown with partner is the second highest identified reason for a Relief duty at 11.6% of cases. In respect of Prevention it is just 4.2%.
- Domestic abuse accounts for 9.2% of duty to Relief cases but just 1.7% of Prevention cases.
- As set out in Tables 11, 12 and 13, there are a significant percentage of entries in Other Reasons / Not Known category. This constitutes the highest percentage entry for Relief cases at 26.0% and the second highest for Prevention cases, 23.3%. Again a further interrogation of these figures may determine whether there are other significant reasons for families becoming homeless in Bedford Borough. If identified this may enable a targeted approach to be taken to try and bring in appropriate support at an earlier stage thereby assisting households before a homeless approach is made to the Council.

The figures in Table 14 show 'Accommodation at Time of Application for those owed a Duty' of Prevention and Relief within Bedford Borough during 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020.

Table 14: Accommodation at Time of Application for those owed a Duty of Prevention and Relief in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Accommodation at Time of Application for those owed a Duty	Total Households 2018/19	%	Total Households 2019/20	%
Private Rented Sector	224	23.93%	233	23.56%
Living with family	141	15.06%	179	18.11%
No fixed abode	242	25.85%	175	17.69%
Social rented sector	134	14.32%	139	14.05%
Living with friends	54	5.77%	69	6.98%
Homeless on departure from an institution	30	3.21%	35	3.54%
Rough Sleeping	17	1.82%	53	5.36%
Owner-occupier / shared ownership	5	0.53%	10	1.01%
Temporary accommodation	35	3.74%	40	4.04%
NASS accommodation	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Refuge	3	0.32%	3	0.30%
Other / Not known	51	5.45%	53	5.36%
Total	936	100%	989	100%

Source MHCLG – Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed – Tables 2018/19 and 2019/20

- The figures published in Table 14 for the past two years, show three of the top five accommodation types applicants approached the Council from in respect of homelessness are the private rented sector, living with family or living with friends. These account for 44.76% of the accommodation types that approaches were made from in 2018 / 2019 and 48.65% in 2019 / 2020.
- In 2018 / 2019 the highest individual type of accommodation at the time of application was households of no fixed abode at 25.85%. This has fallen to 17.69% in 2019 / 2020 and is now the third highest. Households of No Fixed Abode are not rough sleepers, their details are recorded as a separate category.
- In 2018 / 2019 social rented accommodation at 14.32% was the fourth highest accommodation type homeless approaches are received from. It remains in this position in 2019 / 2020 but with a small drop to 14.05% of applications. Undertaking a review of the reasons for the approaches may assist to identify better targeted tenancy support from Registered Providers and other non-accommodation based support providers who work with this client group.
- The number and percentage of Rough Sleepers owed a duty has increased from 17 (1.82%) in 2018 / 2019 to 53 (5.36%) in 2019 / 2020. This increase may be due to many initiatives being undertaken by the Council and its partners to help persons sleeping rough back in to accommodation. Details of the work being undertaken by the Council and its partners to tackle rough sleeping in the Borough are set out in Section 8 of this Review.
- Unlike the Reasons for the loss of last settled accommodation, there are far fewer entries under Other / not known. In 2018 / 2019, 5.45% were recorded in this category with 5.36% in 2019 / 2020. The figures therefore provide a relatively clear picture of the type of accommodation the applicant applied from to be owed either a duty of Prevention or Relief.

The figures in Table 15 show 'Accommodation at Time of Application for those owed a Prevention Duty' within Bedford Borough during 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020.

Table 15: Accommodation at Time of Application for those owed a Prevention Duty in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Accommodation at Time of Application for those owed a Prevention Duty	Total Number of Households 2018 / 2019	Percentage	Total Number of Households 2019 / 2020	Percentage
Private Rented Sector	192	47.2%	188	46.5%
Living with family	64	15.7%	74	18.3%
No fixed abode	0	0.00%	0	0.0%
Social rented sector	110	27.0%	95	23.5%
Living with friends	10	2.5%	16	4.0%
Homeless on departure from an institution	1	0.2%	0	0.0%
Rough Sleeping	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Owner-occupier / shared ownership	3	0.7%	9	2.2%
Temporary accommodation	3	0.7%	2	0.5%
NASS accommodation	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Refuge	1	0.2%	0	0.0%
Other / Not known	23	5.8%	20	5.0%
Total	407	100%	404	100%

Source MHCLG – Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Across the two financial years Table 15 covers, there has been no change in the order of the three main accommodation types those owed a duty of Prevention applied from. These totalled 89.9% of cases in 2018 / 2019 and 88.3% in 2019 / 2020.

Within these figures:-

- The private rented sector is by far the largest from where applicants are assessed as being owed a duty of Prevention. It accounted for 47.2% of cases in 2018 / 2019 and 46.5% in 2019 / 2020.
- The social rented sector is the second highest, with 27.0% of cases in 2018 / 2019, with a fall to 23.5% in 2019 / 2020.

- Living with family remains the third largest accommodation type with 15.7% of cases in 2018 / 2019, increasing to 18.3% in 2019 / 2020.

The figures in Table 16 show 'Accommodation at Time of Application for those owed a Relief Duty' within Bedford Borough during 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020.

Table 16: Accommodation at Time of Application for those owed a Relief Duty in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Accommodation at Time of Application for those owed a Relief Duty	Total Number of Households 2018 / 2019	Percentage	Total Number of Households 2019 / 2020	Percentage
Private Rented Sector	32	6.0%	45	7.7%
Living with family	77	14.6%	105	17.9%
No fixed abode	242	45.8%	175	29.9%
Social rented sector	24	4.5%	44	7.5%
Living with friends	44	8.3%	53	9.1%
Homeless on departure from an institution	29	5.5%	35	6.0%
Rough Sleeping	17	3.2%	53	9.1%
Owner-occupier / shared ownership	2	0.4%	1	0.2%
Temporary accommodation	32	6.0%	38	6.5%
NASS accommodation	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Refuge	2	0.4%	3	0.5%
Other / Not known	28	5.3%	33	5.6%
Total	529	100%	585	100%

Source MHCLG – Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Across the two financial years Table 16 covers, those owed a duty of Relief are residing in a wider range of accommodation than those owed the Prevention duty.

As with the duty of Prevention, there has been no change in the order of the three main accommodation types those owed a duty of Relief applied from, although rough sleepers became a joint third in 2019 / 2020. These totalled 68.7% of cases in 2018 / 2019 and 66.0% in 2019 / 2020.

Within these figures:

- The numbers and percentage of those of No Fixed Abode owed a Relief duty has fallen significantly from 242 (45.8%) in 2018 / 2019 to 175 (29.9%) in 2019 / 2020. The reasons for this should be investigated to establish to see if any actions were taken which could be replicated.
- Those who were living with family at the time of Relief duty have increased from 77 (14.6%) to 105 (17.9%).
- Households who were living with friends at the time of Relief duty have also increased from 44 (8.3%) to 53 (9.1%).
- The number of persons owed a Relief duty who were sleeping rough has risen from 17 (3.2%) to 53 (9.1%). It is possible the reason for this increase is due to the extra resources received from central government by the Council to tackle rough sleeping in a multi-agency approach. This has enabled a greater engagement with rough sleepers and thereby homeless approaches. Full details of the rough sleepers initiatives undertaken by the Council are set out at Section 8 of this Review.

Tables 15 and 16 show there is a significant divergence in respect of the accommodation occupied at the time of application for those who are owed a duty of Prevention or Relief. With only two financial year's data to compare, it is not currently possible to identify ongoing trends however points of potential interest are set out below:-

- In 2019 / 2020 the spread of applicants who are owed a Relief duty by the Council covers a greater number of categories (11) than those owed a duty of Prevention (7).
- The categories of No fixed abode, Living with Family, Living with Friends and Rough Sleeping comprised 66% of those owed a Relief duty in 2019 / 2020. The same categories made up only 22.3% of applicants owed a duty of Prevention in 2019 / 2020.

- The categories of Private Rented Sector, Living with Family and Social Rented Sector account for 88.3% of Prevention cases owed a duty in 2019 / 2020. The same categories account for only 33.1% of applicants owed the duty of Relief.
- In 2019 / 2020 almost half of households owed a Prevention duty (46.5%) are residing in the Private Rented Sector at the time of application. This compares to 7.7% of households owed a duty of Relief.
- Applicants from No Fixed Abode, make up nearly a third of cases owed the duty of Relief (29.9%) in 2019 / 2020. As is to be expected, there are no applicants from No Fixed Abode owed a duty of Prevention as they are already without accommodation.
- On a lesser scale the same situation arises with Rough Sleepers. They account for 9.1% of applicants owed the duty of Relief in 2019 / 2020 but as they do not have accommodation, they do not contribute to the Prevention figures.
- The same situation arises with Homelessness on departure from institution. This represents 6.0% of Relief cases, but for the reasons set out above, does not contribute to the Prevention statistics in 2019 / 2020.
- Almost a quarter of applicants owed a duty of Prevention are in the Social Rented Sector (23.5%) in 2019 / 2020. Just 7.5% of applicants owed a duty of Relief are accommodated in the Social Sector at the time duty is determined.
- Applicants residing in Temporary accommodation account for 6.5% of Relief cases but only 0.5% of Prevention cases in 2019 / 2020.

Table 17 shows the employment status of main applicants owed a duty of Prevention and Relief within Bedford Borough during 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020.

Table 17: Employment Status of Main Applicants Owed a Duty of Prevention and Relief in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Employment Status of Main Applicants Owed a Duty	Total Number of Households 2018 / 2019	Percentage	Total Number of Households 2019 / 2020	Percentage
Registered unemployed	255	27.2%	290	29.3%
Not working due to long-term illness / Disability	160	17.1%	173	17.5%
Full-time work	157	16.8%	165	16.7%
Part-time work	111	11.8%	106	10.7%
Not seeking work / at home	128	13.7%	113	11.4%
Not registered unemployed but seeking work	38	4.1%	52	5.3%
Retired	20	2.1%	14	1.4%
Student / training	12	1.3%	16	1.6%
Other	43	4.6%	36	3.7%
Not known	12	1.3%	24	2.4%
Total	936	100%	989	100%

Source MHCLG – Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

- The figures showing the employment status of the main applicant owed a duty, have not been separated between Prevention and Relief duties by MHCLG.
- Although there is some variation in the percentages between the two years, there are no major increases or decreases to suggest a great change in the economic circumstances of households owed a duty. This may however change from 2020 / 2021. Circumstances which could determine this are the impact on the economy caused by the Covid 19 pandemic and Brexit.
- In both years over a quarter of applicants main employment status is registered unemployed, 27.2% in 2018 / 2019 and 29.3% in 2019 / 2020.
- The next highest number of applicants are those recorded as unable to work due to long-term illness or disability, 17.1% in 2018 / 2019 and 17.5% in 2019 / 2020.

- Applicants who are working full or part time accounted for 28.6% of the total applicants owed a duty in 2018 / 2019 and 27.4% in 2019 / 2020.
- 13.7% of main applicants were either not seeking work or at home in 2018 / 2019. In 2019 / 2020 the percentage had reduced to 11.4%.

The figures in Table 18 show the 'Household type of households owed a Relief duty' within Bedford Borough during 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020.

Table 18: Household type of households owed a Relief Duty during 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Household type of households owed a Relief Duty	Total Households 2018/19	%	Total Households 2019/20	%
Single parent with dependent children – Male	11	2.1%	15	2.6%
Single parent with dependent children – Female	111	21.0%	104	17.8%
Single parent with dependent children – Other / not known	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Single adult – Male	264	49.9%	291	49.7%
Single adult – Female	111	21.0%	110	18.8%
Single adult – Other / gender not known	1	0.2%	0	0.0%
Couple with dependent children	13	2.4%	22	3.8%
Couple / two adults without dependent children	13	2.4%	34	5.8%
Three or more adults with dependent children	3	0.6%	6	1.0%
Three or more adults without dependent children	2	0.4%	2	0.3%
Not known	0	0.0%	1	0.2%
Total	529	100%	585	100%

Source MHCLG – Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

- By a significant margin the main household type owed a duty of Relief across both years is single adult males. They comprised 49.9% of cases in 2018 / 2019 and 49.7% in 2019 / 2020.
- Single male parents formed 2.1% of cases in 2018 / 2019. This has increased slightly in 2019 / 2020 to 2.6%.

- Single adult females, owed a duty of Relief represented 21.0% of cases in 2018 / 2019. This figure has reduced to 18.8% in 2019 / 2020.
- Single female parents represented 21.0% of household types in 2018 / 2019. This reduces to 17.8% in 2019 / 2020.
- Families with children formed 26.1% of those owed a Relief duty in 2018 / 2019. In 2019 / 2020 the figure had slightly decreased to 25.2%.
- Families comprising of two or more adults with dependent children accounted for 3.0% of households where a Relief duty was owed in 2018 / 2019. This has risen to 4.8% in 2019 / 2020.

The figures in Table 19 show the ‘Household type of households owed a prevention duty’ within Bedford Borough during 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020.

Table 19: Household type of households owed a Prevention Duty in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Household type of households owed a Prevention Duty	Total Households 2018/19	%	Total Households 2019/20	%
Single parent with dependent children – Male	11	2.7%	9	2.2%
Single parent with dependent children – Female	128	31.4%	141	34.9%
Single parent with dependent children – Other / gender not known	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Single adult – Male	88	21.6%	92	22.8%
Single adult – Female	62	15.2%	64	15.8%
Single adult – Other / gender not known	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Couple with dependent children	72	17.7%	58	14.4%
Couple / two adults without dependent children	23	5.7%	25	6.2%
Three or more adults with dependent children	11	2.7%	13	3.2%
Three or more adults without dependent children	12	3.0%	2	0.5%
Not known	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	407	100%	404	100%

Source MHCLG – Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

- In contrast to households owed a duty of Relief, the main household type owed a duty of Prevention across both years is single female parents, 31.4% in 2018 / 2019 increasing to 34.9% in 2019 / 2020.
- Single females formed 15.2% of households owed a duty of Prevention in 2018 / 2019. In 2019 / 2020, this is little changed at 15.8%
- There are significantly less single adult males owed a duty of Prevention as opposed to Relief. In 2018 / 2019 it stood at 21.6% (Relief 49.9%). In 2019 / 2020, the percentage increases slightly to 22.8% (Relief 49.7%).
- Single male parents represented 2.7% of household types owed a duty of Prevention in 2018 / 2019. This reduced to 2.2% in 2019 / 2020.
- Families with children owed a duty of Prevention (54.5%) was significantly higher than those owed a duty of Relief (26.1%) in 2018 / 2019. In 2019 / 2020 the figures are 54.7% (Prevention), 25.2% (Relief).
- Families comprising of two or more adults with dependent children owed a duty of Prevention was 20.4% in 2018 / 2019 (Relief 3.0%). In 2019 / 2020 the figure has decreased to 17.6% (Relief 4.8%).

The figures in Table 20 below show the 'Age of main applicants owed a Prevention or Relief duty' within Bedford Borough during 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020.

Table 20: Age of main applicants owed a Prevention or Relief Duty in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Age of main applicants owed a Prevention or Relief Duty	Total Households 2018/19	%	Total Households 2019/20	%
16 - 17	1	0.1%	1	0.1%
18 - 24	166	17.7%	183	18.5%
25 - 34	316	33.8%	294	29.7%
35 - 44	225	24.0%	254	25.7%
45 - 54	148	15.8%	157	15.9%
55 - 64	57	6.1%	71	7.2%
65 - 74	15	1.6%	21	2.1%
75 +	8	0.9%	7	0.7%
Not known	0	0.0%	1	0.1%
Total	936	100%	989	100%

Source MHCLG – Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed - Tables 2018/19 and 2019/20

- MHCLG figures not been separated between Relief and Prevention duties.
- In both financial years, the largest band of main applicants owed a Prevention or Relief duty are those aged 25 – 34. There is however a reduction in the percentage from 33.8% in 2018 / 2019 to 29.7% in 2019 / 2020.
- The next highest age range of main household applicants owed a duty of Prevention or Relief over the two years are those aged 35 – 44. This stood at 24.0% in 2018 / 2019, increasing slightly to 25.7% in 2019 / 2020.
- Applicants aged 18–24 were the third highest group in each year, increasing from 17.7% to 18.5% of cases.
- Fourth in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020 were those in the range of 45 – 54. The percentage remained almost static raising from 15.8% to 15.9%.
- In both 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020 only one 16–17 year who approached the Council was owed a duty of Prevention or Relief. This shows the effectiveness of the work undertaken by Children’s Services and partner organisations in preventing young people from becoming homeless.

- Those 65+ were 2.5% of applicants owed a duty of Prevention or Relief in 2018 / 2019, rising to 2.8% in 2019 / 2020.

Table 21 show the needs of households owed a duty within Bedford Borough during 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020.

Table 21: Support needs of households owed a Prevention or Relief Duty in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Support needs of households owed a Prevention or Relief Duty	Total Households 2018/19	%	Total Households 2019/20	%
History of mental health problems	222	23.7%	232	23.5%
Physical ill health and disability	118	12.6%	137	13.9%
At risk of / has experienced domestic abuse	36	3.8%	40	4.0%
Offending history	27	2.9%	25	2.5%
History of repeat homelessness	9	1.0%	17	1.7%
Drug dependency needs	46	4.9%	57	5.8%
History of rough sleeping	15	1.6%	18	1.8%
Alcohol dependency needs	34	3.6%	37	3.7%
Learning disability	23	2.5%	8	0.8%
Young people (18–25) requiring support to manage independently	26	2.8%	24	2.4%
Access to education, employment or training	5	0.5%	3	0.3%
At risk of / has experienced abuse (non-domestic abuse)	7	0.7%	10	1.0%
At risk of / has experienced sexual abuse / exploitation	4	0.4%	12	1.2%
Old age	4	0.4%	9	0.9%
Care leaver aged 21+ years	3	0.3%	10	1.0%
Care leaver aged 18 – 20 years	13	1.4%	12	1.2%
Young person 16 – 17 years	1	0.1%	1	0.1%
Young parent requiring support to manage independently	7	0.7%	4	0.4%
Former asylum seeker	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Served in HM Forces	2	0.2%	3	0.3%
Total	602*	64.1%**	659***	66.5%****

Source MHCLG – Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed - Tables 2018/19 and 2019/2020

*The total of 602 represents all support needs identified in 2018 / 2019. As only 398 households have support needs, some households have two or more needs identified.

** The percentages in 2018 / 2019 are calculated as the number of identified support needs in each category (totalling 602) against the Total households assessed as owed a duty (936). The percentages do not therefore total 100%.

*** The total of 659 represents all support needs identified in 2019 / 2020. As only 432 households have support needs, some households have two or more needs identified.

**** The percentages in 2019 / 2020 are calculated as the number of identified support needs in each category (totalling 659) against the Total households assessed as owed a duty (989). The percentages do not therefore total 100%.

With only two financial year's data to compare, it is not currently possible to identify firm ongoing trends in the support needs of households owed a duty of Prevention or Relief. These will be compiled over time and can be used to determine and effectively allocate resources.

There are, however, a number of points of interest in Table 21 as follows:-

- The figures showing support needs of households owed a duty, have not been separated between Prevention and Relief duties by MHCLG.
- By a significant margin across both years mental health issues form the greatest support need of those owed a duty of Prevention or Relief at 23.7% in 2018 / 2019 and 23.5% in 2019 / 2020.
- The next highest support need identified is physical ill health and disability at 12.6% in 2018 / 2019 and 13.9% in 2019 / 2020.
- Together these two groups account for 56.5% of those assessed a having support requirements who are owed a duty of Prevention or Relief in 2018 / 2019 and 56% of those in 2019 / 2020.
- The next highest support need is drug dependency at 4.9% in 2018 / 2019, which has increased to 5.8% in 2019 / 2020.
- Care leavers over the age of 18 account for 1.7% of support needs in 2018 / 2019 and 2.2% in 2019 / 2020.
- Those who have served in the Armed Forces account for just 0.2% of applicants with support needs owed a duty of Prevention or Relief in 2018 / 2019 and 0.3% in 2019 / 2020.

- Only one 16 – 17 year old who approached the Council was owed a duty of Prevention or Relief in both 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020. This highlights the effectiveness of the work undertaken by Children’s Services and partner organisations in preventing young people from becoming homeless.
- Whilst the numbers and percentages of applicants with specific identified support needs who are owed a Prevention or Relief duty are in some cases small, it is important to remember these are people who have approached the Council needing help with their housing circumstances. Assistance to avoid them, and where applicable their households becoming homeless or be found accommodation from that position, is therefore important as homelessness has many social and financial costs. Being able to identify support needs of those owed a duty should assist in identifying and enabling appropriate support to be put in place to help prevent that household being threatened with or becoming homeless in the future.

7.2.4. Analysis of the Outcomes following Acceptance of Prevention and Relief Duties

The new Prevention and Relief duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, has seen Relief activity significantly increase but with a corresponding fall in Preventions. The figures are shown in Table 22 below:-

Table 22: Prevention and Relief cases where the applicant remained in their home or were assisted to obtain alternative accommodation between 2014 / 2015 and 2019 / 2020

	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019*	2019 / 2020**
Prevented	464	556	438	266	163	177
Relived	14	7	26	19	135	173
Total	478	563	464	285	298	350

Source: Bedford Borough Councils P1E

*MHCLG – Statutory homelessness Prevention & Relief duty outcomes - Tables April 2018 – March 2019

**MHCLG – Statutory homelessness Prevention & Relief duty outcomes - Tables April 2019 – March 2020

It should be noted there is no direct comparison between the figures before and after April 2018. Prior to 2018 / 2019, Prevention and Relief assistance were categorised by the type of assistance available. Since April 2018 they have been categorised by support needs.

The data collected through H-CLIC going forward will enable the effectiveness of the Prevention and Relief Duties to be measured. At the time of compiling this Review, data is only available for 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020 and is set out then analysed in the tables below.

Prevention Outcomes Where Duty Ended

Tables 23 to 28 below provide a comparison of outcomes where the duty of Prevention has ended between 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020.

Table 23: Reasons for Households' Prevention Duty Ending in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Reasons for households' Prevention Duty ending	Number of Households 2018 / 2019	Percentage	Number of Households 2019 / 2020	Percentage
Secured accommodation for 6+ months	163	49.3%	177	48.9%
Homeless (including intentionally homeless)	113	34.1%	117	32.3%
Contact lost	30	9.1%	40	11.1%
56 days elapsed and no further action	7	2.1%	15	4.1%
Withdrew application / applicant deceased	16	4.8%	12	3.3%
No longer eligible	1	0.3%	0	0.0%
Refused suitable accommodation offer	0	0.0%	1	0.3%
Refused to cooperate	1	0.3%	0	0.0%
Not known	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Totals	331	100%	362	100%

Source MHCLG – Statutory homelessness prevention duty outcomes - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

With only two financial year's data to compare, it is not currently possible to confirm ongoing trends where Prevention duty has ended. These will be compiled and identified over time. Points of interest from Table 23 are however as follows:-

- There is little change in the percentages for the reasons Prevention duty ended across the two years.

- At almost 50% of cases in both years, households Prevention duty ended as they have been found secure accommodation for 6 months or more.
- For 34.1% of cases in 2018 / 2019 and 32.3% of cases in 2019 / 2020, Prevention ended as the applicant became homeless.
- Loss of contact occurred in 30 cases in 2018 / 2019 and 40 in 2019 / 2020. It may be beneficial to analyse these cases to see if there are any common themes that can be addressed to minimise loss of contact in future.

Table 24: Existing or Alternative Accommodation Secured at Prevention Duty End in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Existing or alternative accommodation secured at Duty end	Number of Households 2018 / 2019	Percentage	Number of Households 2019 / 2020	Percentage
Moved to alternative accommodation	78	47.9%	104	58.8%
Stayed in existing accommodation	85	52.1%	73	41.2%
Totals	163	100%	177	100%

Source MHCLG – Statutory homelessness prevention duty outcomes - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Of interest from Table 24 is the figures have reversed between the two years. Currently therefore, no trends can be determined.

Table 25: Type of Accommodation Secured for Households at End of Prevention Duty in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Type of accommodation secured for households at end of Duty	Number of Households 2018 / 2019	Percentage	Number of Households 2019 / 2020	Percentage
Social rented sector	100	61.4%	94	53.1%
Private rented sector	60	36.8%	73	41.1%
Staying with family	0	0.0%	1	0.6%
Staying with friends	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Owner-occupier	1	0.6%	4	2.3%
Other	2	1.2%	4	2.3%
Not known	0	0.0%	1	0.6%
Totals	163	100%	177	100%

Source MHCLG – Statutory homelessness prevention duty outcomes - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Points of interest from Table 25 are set out below:-

- Social housing is by far the largest type of accommodation secured at the end of Prevention duty being 61.4% in 2018 / 2019 and 53.1% in 2019 / 2020.
- The second largest type of accommodation secured is in the private rented sector being 36.8% in 2018 / 2019 and 41.1% in 2019 / 2020.
- Across the two years accommodation secured in the social and private rented sectors accounted for 98.2% of outcomes in 2018 / 2019 and 94.2% in 2019 / 2020.

Table 26: Main Activity that Resulted in Accommodation being Secured for Households owed a Prevention Duty in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Main activity that resulted in accommodation secured for households	Number of Households 2018 / 2019	Percentage	Number of Households 2019 / 2020	Percentage
Accommodation secured by local authority or organisation delivering housing options service	20	12.3%	45	25.4%
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, with financial payment	16	9.8%	20	11.3%
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, without financial payment	8	4.9%	0	0.0%
Negotiation / mediation / advocacy work to prevent eviction / repossession	36	22.1%	5	2.8%
Negotiation / mediation work to secure return to family or friend	1	0.6%	17	9.6%

Supported housing provided	5	3.1%	37	20.9%
Discretionary Housing Payment to reduce shortfall	3	1.8%	3	1.7%
Other financial payments (e.g. to reduce arrears)	16	9.8%	12	6.8%
Other	18	11.0%	6	3.4%
No activity – advice and information provided	40	24.5%	32	18.1%
Totals	163	100%	177	100%

Source MHCLG – Statutory homelessness prevention duty outcomes - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Table 26 shows there have been significant swings in the types of activity which has proved successful in securing accommodation for households under the duty of Prevention. This currently makes establishing trends and identifying the most effective interventions difficult. This should become clearer as more data becomes available. If certain types of intervention are identified as being more effective than others, resources can be channelled in to these.

Table 27: Destination of Households with Alternative Accommodation Secured owed a Prevention Duty in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Destination of households with alternative accommodation secured	Number of Households 2018 / 2019	Percentage	Number of Households 2019 / 2020	Percentage
Same local authority	71	91.0%	94	90.4%
Another local authority, same region	1	1.3%	0	0.0%
Another region	0	0.0%	2	1.9%
Not known	6	7.7%	8	7.7%
Totals	78	100%	104	100%
Total accommodated from other local authorities	13	16.7%	18	17.3%

Source MHCLG – Statutory homelessness Prevention duty outcomes - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Points of interest from Table 27 are set out below:-

- By far the majority of households have been found accommodation in the same local authority.
- The percentage of households accommodated from other local authority areas has remained fairly constant at 16.7% in 2018 / 2019 and 17.3% in 2019 / 2020.

Table 28: Household Type of those with Accommodation Secured at Prevention Duty End in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Household type of those with accommodation secured at Duty end	Number of Households 2018 / 2019	Percentage	Number of Households 2019 / 2020	Percentage
Single parent with dependent children - Male	2	1.2%	7	4.0%
Single parent with dependent children - Female	53	32.5%	66	37.3%
Single parent with dependent children - Other / gender not known	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Single adult - Male	37	22.7%	38	21.5%
Single adult - Female	25	15.3%	18	10.2%
Single adult - Other / gender not known	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Couple / two adults with dependent children	28	17.2%	28	15.8%
Couple / two adults without dependent children	9	5.5%	8	4.5%
Three or more adults with dependent children	4	2.5%	10	5.6%
Three or more adults without dependent children	5	3.1%	2	1.1%
Not known	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Totals	163	100%	177	100%

Source MHCLG – Statutory homelessness Prevention duty outcomes - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Points of interest from Table 28 are set out below:-

- Households with dependent children made up 53.4% of cases in 2018 / 2019 and 62.7% in 2019 / 2020.
- Single adults accounted for 38% of household types in 2018 / 2019. This reduced to 31.7% in 2019 / 2020.

Relief Outcomes Where Duty Ended

Tables 29 to 33 below provide a comparison of outcomes where the duty of Relief has ended between 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020.

Table 29: Reasons for Households’ Relief Duty Ending in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Reasons for households’ Relief Duty ending	Number of Households 2018 / 2019	Percentage	Number of Households 2019 / 2020	Percentage
Secured accommodation for 6+ months	135	28.5%	173	26.6%
56 days elapsed	247	52.1%	337	51.8%
Contact lost	58	12.2%	86	13.2%
Withdrew application / applicant deceased	25	5.3%	44	6.8%
Refused final accommodation	0	0.0%	1	0.2%
Intentionally homeless from accommodation provided	1	0.2%	2	0.3%
Local connection referral accepted by other LA	6	1.3%	4	0.6%
No longer eligible	1	0.2%	3	0.5%
Notice served due to refusal to cooperate	1	0.2%	0	0.0%
Not known	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Totals	474	100%	650	100%

Source MHCLG – Statutory homelessness Relief duty outcomes - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Points of interest from Table 29 are set out below:-

- There is little change in the percentages for the reasons Relief duty ended across the two years.
- At just over 50% of cases in both years, households' Relief duty ended when the 56 days had elapsed.
- Securing accommodation for more than 6 months accounted for just over a quarter of cases in 2018 / 2019 (28.5%) and 2019 / 2020 (26.6%).
- Loss of contact occurred in 58 cases in 2018 / 2019 and 86 in 2019 / 2020. It may be beneficial to analyse these cases to see if there are any common themes that can be addressed to reduce loss of contact in future.
- With only two financial year's data to compare, it is not currently possible to confirm ongoing trends where Relief duty has ended. These will be compiled and identified over time.

Table 30: Type of Accommodation Secured for Households at End of Relief Duty in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Type of accommodation secured for households at end of Duty	Number of Households 2018 / 2019	Percentage	Number of Households 2019 / 2020	Percentage
Social rented sector	54	40.0%	64	37.0%
Private rented sector	55	40.8%	80	46.3%
Staying with family	7	5.2%	3	1.7%
Staying with friends	0	0.0%	3	1.7%
Owner-occupier	1	0.7%	0	0.0%
Other	3	2.2%	5	2.9%
Not known	15	11.1%	18	10.4%
Totals	135	100%	173	100%

Source MHCLG – Statutory homelessness Relief duty outcomes - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Points of interest from Table 30 are set out below:-

- Private sector housing is the largest type of accommodation secured at the end of the Relief duty being 40.8% in 2018 / 2019 and 46.3% in 2019 / 2020.
- The second largest type of accommodation secured is in the social rented sector being 40.0% in 2018 / 2019 and 37.0% in 2019 / 2020.
- Just over 10% of accommodation secures at the end of each year is recorded as unknown.
- Across the two years accommodation secured in the social and private rented sectors accounted for 80.8% of outcomes in 2018 / 2019 and 83.3% in 2019 / 2020.

Table 31: Main Activity that Resulted in Accommodation being Secured for Households owed a Relief Duty in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Main activity that resulted in accommodation secured for households	Number of Households 2018 / 2019	Percentage	Number of Households 2019 / 2020	Percentage
Accommodation secured by local authority or organisation delivering housing options service	42	31.1%	75	43.4%
Supported housing provided	25	18.5%	16	9.2%
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, with financial payment	20	14.8%	19	11.0%
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, without financial payment	8	5.9%	23	13.3%
Other activity through which accommodation secured	16	11.9%	17	9.8%
No activity	24	17.8%	23	13.3%
Totals	135	100%	173	100%

Source MHCLG – Statutory homelessness Relief duty outcomes - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Points of interest from Table 31 are set out below:-

- All listed activities have been used by the Council to secure accommodation for households owed the duty of Relief across both years.
- Accommodation being secured by the local authority or organisation delivering the housing options service has been the main activity for securing accommodation for households owed the duty of Relief, rising from 31.1% in 2018 / 2019 to 43.4% in 2019 / 2020.
- Accommodation sourced from supported housing provision has fallen from 18.5% to 9.2% in 2019 / 2020.
- Financial assistant from the Council to secure accommodation sourced by the applicant has fallen from 14.8% to 11.0% of cases in 2019 / 2020.

Table 32: Destination of Households with Alternative Accommodation Secured owed a Relief Duty in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Destination of households with alternative accommodation secured	Number of Households 2018 / 2019	Percentage	Number of Households 2019 / 2020	Percentage
Same local authority	92	68.2%	140	80.9%
Another local authority, same region	2	1.5%	5	2.9%
Another region	3	2.2%	2	1.2%
Not known	38	28.1%	26	15.0%
Totals	135	100%	173	100%
Total accommodated from other local authorities	8	5.9%	18	10.4%

Source MHCLG – Statutory homelessness Relief duty outcomes - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Points of interest from Table 32 are set out below:-

- The majority of households have been found accommodation in the same local authority in both years. The percentage has increased quite significantly however from 68.2% in 2018 / 2019 to 80.9% in 2019 / 2020.

- At 28.1% in 2018 / 2019 and 15.0% in 2019 / 2020, the number of cases where the destination of alternative accommodation is not known is significant but reducing.

Table 33: Household type of those with accommodation secured at Relief Duty end in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020

Household type of those with accommodation secured at Duty end	Total Households 2018/19	%	Total Households 2019/20	%
Single parent with dependent children – Male	3	2.2%	4	2.3%
Single parent with dependent children – Female	17	12.6%	33	19.1%
Single parent with dependent children – Other / not known	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Single adult – Male	64	47.4%	80	46.2%
Single adult – Female	38	28.2%	29	16.8%
Single adult – Other / gender not known	1	0.7%	0	0.0%
Couple / two adults with dependent children	6	4.5%	10	5.8%
Couple / two adults without dependent children	3	2.2%	13	7.5%
Three or more adults with dependent children	2	1.5%	3	1.7%
Three or more adults without dependent children	1	0.7%	1	0.6%
Not known	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Totals	135	100%	173	100%

Source MHCLG – Statutory homelessness Relief duty outcomes - Tables April 2018 – March 2019 and April 2019 – March 2020

Points of interest from Table 33 are set out below:-

- Households with dependent children made up 20.8% of cases in 2018 / 2019 and 28.9% in 2019 / 2020.
- Single adults accounted for 75.6% of household types in 2018 / 2019. This reduced to 63% in 2019 / 2020.

7.2.5. Independent Advice and Support Providers

Good independent advice and support services can play a critical role in helping prevent households from becoming homeless. Details of two such services in the Borough are listed below. To avoid duplication they are only listed under the Theme of Prevention although they are also able to offer their clients support services too.

- Bedford Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Bedford's CAB provides information and advice on applying for homelessness related help from the Council, including how to make a homelessness application. Where required, advice is also provided where an applicant wishes to challenge the homelessness decision reached by the Council. A link to their website is copied below:-

<https://www.bedfordcab.org.uk/>

- Advocacy & Support Service

JustUs provides an advocacy and support service to adults in the Borough who are rough sleeping, sofa-surfing, in direct access accommodation or who are living somewhere it is not reasonable to live (i.e. at risk of violence). A link to their website is copied below:-

<https://www.bedfordhomeless.org.uk/justus>

7.2.6. Housing Benefits and Household Finances

Housing Benefit is the means tested benefit administered by the Council, to help people on other benefits or low incomes who live in rented accommodation and forms a key element of the household finances of many households threatened with homelessness.

In May 2017 Housing Benefit was replaced with UC for all new claims made within the Borough. The rules within UC broadly mirror the Housing Benefit system.

The introduction of UC has led to a steady decline in the Housing Benefit caseload and a slow increase in the numbers of people receiving the Housing Element of UC. This has resulted in far less information on the levels of rent charged and people's entitlement to benefit than was available prior to the introduction of UC. The Council's Assessment Hub and the Local Job Centre continue to work towards ensuring that all people who are entitled to receive it have access to support with their rent.

The Council's Assessment Hub has developed a strong ethos of taking a proactive approach to assisting applicants, landlords, other departments and organisations to, wherever possible, prevent claimants from becoming homeless. This has been shared with the Local Job Centre and strong links are maintained between the two organisations. Actions to prevent homelessness include:

- Households Facing Eviction – Where this is known claims made are always prioritised to, wherever possible, prevent the eviction from taking place. Job Centre staff have been fully trained in the Duty to Refer and direct applicants to the Council's Homelessness & Housing Advice Team where they meet the set criteria.
- Payment Direct to Landlords – To protect vulnerable tenants, wherever the terms of the legislation allow, payments of Housing Benefit are made directly to the landlord. UC is currently developing a more proactive use of managed payments to landlords to help prevent homelessness wherever this can be applied.
- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) – DHPs are used in an innovative fashion in conjunction with the Homelessness & Housing Advice and Re-housing Teams to assist households who would otherwise not be able to access the private rented sector or alternatively maintain their existing tenancy. This has successfully prevented and relieved homelessness for many households. In the year to March 2020, 180 DHPs were made by the Council totalling £316,200. This figure predates the impact of Covid 19. Karl Handscomb, senior economist at the Resolution Foundation think tank stated, "The current crisis has pushed three-quarters of a million employees out of work, increased the number of households impacted by the benefit cap, and seen more private renters falling in to arrears. All of these factors will have in turn increased demand for Discretionary Housing Payments. The increased demand is likely to remain elevated while the crisis is still with us, highlighting both the need for the welcome additional housing support announced in March, and for more action to support renters struggling to pay for their homes." (Times & Citizen 03 September 2020 – page 4.) DHP will therefore be a significant factor in preventing homelessness during the Covid 19 crisis and going forward.
- Homelessness Prevention Fund - The Homelessness and Housing Advice Team also has access to the Council's Homelessness Prevention Budget. Although these funds are limited and strictly controlled, they can be used where it can be proved that the initial expenditure will save money in the longer term, for example preventing someone becoming homeless and needing to access temporary accommodation.

7.2.7. Young People and Homelessness

- 16-17 Year Olds

Bedford Borough Council is acutely aware of the need to support 16 and 17 year olds and their families in order to prevent them from becoming homeless. Referrals of 16 and 17 year olds who are, or at risk of becoming, homeless in Bedford Borough are made through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). This process is underpinned by a close working partnership between Housing and Children's Services.

In line with government guidance wherever possible the first intervention is, wherever safe to do so, to try and sustain the young person in the family home or with extended family members. Only where this is not possible or there are no friends for the young person to stay with are other housing arrangements made.

Wherever possible, an early referral will provide more time for the MASH and / or Early Help to undertake work or refer on to support services that may prevent the young person from becoming homeless.

Where it is not possible to support young people in their present home, accommodation may need to be sought for them.

- Leaving & Aftercare

A particularly vulnerable group of young people are those who are leaving care. The legislative framework created by the Children Act 1989 identifies two groups: those who are voluntarily accommodated (S20) (for whom the parents retain responsibility even though they have been placed in care) and those who are subject to a full time care order obtained through legal proceedings (S31).

The breakdown of entitlements of how young people qualify for the Leaving Care Service is set out within the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. A link is provided below:-

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/35/data.pdf?view=extent>

The Leaving and Aftercare Team provide a service to children when they are 16 plus who meet the statutory threshold of having been looked after for a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who remain looked after at the age of 16.

The Team works closely with identified children of 15 ½ who meet the statutory threshold, together with their Social Worker, to make the transition from care to adulthood as smooth as possible. This is done through Care Planning, a statutory duty through the Pathway Plan.

Accommodation available for 16 – 18 year olds includes:

- Foster care
- Semi-independent accommodation
- Supported Lodgings
- Hostel accommodation

Post 18, the Team do not have a duty to provide accommodation to all care leavers, but instead to provide support to young people to obtain it. The housing options available at this time are supported lodgings, hostel accommodation, social housing or private rented sector accommodation.

Where a young person disengages or causes problems which may lead to them to losing or being refused accommodation, they are referred to the Homelessness and Housing Advice Team under the Duty to Refer.

7.2.8. Vulnerable Adults and Homelessness

- Safeguarding Team

The Safeguarding Team deals with referrals of all adults over the age of 18 where it is believed they are at risk of, or are suffering abuse and neglect. Referrals can be made by any agency (statutory or non-statutory), professionals, the person themselves, family and friends or anyone concerned for the person in question.

When received the Team quickly assess the referral to determine priority as either high, medium or low risk; the Care Act 2014 provides the statutory tests. The Team operate to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Policy shared with Central Bedfordshire Council.

Where the assessment determines the applicant has a safeguarding need, the Team's role is to refer them to the appropriate internal Community Team or external agency to offer care, support and / or advice for the

individual concerned. To achieve this, strong relationships have been developed with numerous partners across housing, health and care services.

Assisting persons referred simply on the basis they are homeless, in danger of homelessness or rough sleeping is not a significant part of the Safeguarding Teams work. They are however clear about the Duty to Refer such cases to the Homelessness and Housing Advice Team who will assess the client and act in accordance with the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act. Where health issues are identified in addition to homeless concerns, referrals are also made to agencies who can help.

Domestic abuse, which can become a route to homelessness, forms a larger portion of the referrals received and made by the Safeguarding Team. Domestic abuse and associated services in the Borough are covered in more detail in Section 7.5.2 of this Review.

- Physical Disabilities Team

The Physical Disabilities Team work with adults of working age with a physical disability. The primary legislation governing their housing responsibilities is the Care Act 2014.

Where the Team supports persons whose disability requires 24 hour care, accommodation is secured in a residential care home which meets their eligible care needs. Where a person with such requirements is in danger of becoming homeless, this remains the route through which accommodation is provided and homelessness prevented.

The Team also work with persons with physical disabilities who are in rental or home owner accommodation but require less than 24 hour care. Working in partnership with the Occupational Therapists properties can be adapted to meet individual needs, thereby assisting the occupier to remain in their existing accommodation.

In practice the Physical Disabilities Team can receive referrals where the client is homeless, facing imminent homelessness or is sleeping rough but does not require 24 hour care. Where such referrals are received, for example through the Safeguarding process, and there is no legal requirement for the Team to provide accommodation, the Duty to Refer route is followed.

Where the applicant is homeless or in imminent danger of becoming homeless, they are referred directly to the Homelessness and Housing Advice Team. Where there is not an imminent threat of homelessness, they are referred to One Support. The services One Support provide are set out in Section 7.3.1 of the Review.

- Disabled Facilities Grants

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) are administered by local authorities to support disabled people remaining in their home and promote independence across all housing tenures. Eligibility is determined in accordance with the Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996. They are used to fund identified physical adaptations to properties in order to make them suitable for those with disabilities. Examples of adaptations include: widening doors, levelling thresholds, installing ramps, installing stair lifts and improving or providing heating systems.

The uptake of DFGs enables occupiers to remain living independently in their existing home, thereby potentially preventing homelessness approaches in addition to making the best use of existing stock.

In October 2019 the Council implemented a new information technology based case management system (HIACM) which permits a greater interrogation of available data on such matters as the type of adaptation required, costs of works and waiting times.

Table 34 shows the number of DFG applications received, applications approved and jobs completed in Bedford Borough from April 2014 to March 2020. This emphasises the continued need and demand for DFGs in Bedford Borough.

Table 34: DFG Applications Received, Applications Approved and Jobs Completed – Bedford Borough

	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020
Total number of DFG applications received*	423	471	422	246	181	129
Total number of DFG applications approved	121	130	204	183	135	136

Total number of DFG jobs completed	89	108	134	144	165	129
------------------------------------	----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Source: Bedford Borough Council Home Improvement Team

*Figures for applications prior to 2017 / 18 include applications and inquiries for types of grant other than DFGs.

Theme 1 – Prevention – Issues Identified for Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 / 2028

- **Interrogate H-CLIC data annually to identify factors and trends in households owed a duty of Prevention or Relief. The analysis of this data will assist with the allocation of resources to those services which are most effective (especially in terms of prevention) and provide the opportunity to identify and address services which appear to be under performing or proving to be less effective.**
- **Where H-CLIC data highlights a large percentage of ‘not known’ to, wherever possible, interrogate this data to establish whether there any trends or patterns contained within it which can be used to assist with the prevention of homelessness.**
- **Determine the causes of and identify possible solutions to reduce the number of single persons who approach the Council as homeless.**
- **Closely monitor the number of abandonments / evictions from temporary accommodation. If they increase further determine the reasons why and review the provision of support to households in temporary accommodation to see if it can be revised to address this.**
- **Monitor the ongoing use DHPs and the Homelessness Prevention Fund to ensure sure they remain effective and continue to provide value for money.**

7.3. Theme 2 – Support

As acknowledged in section 7.2.5, good independent advice and support can play a critical role in helping prevent households from becoming homeless. The primary function of the services listed below is support and they are therefore included here. However, the cross overs between Support and Prevention are clear in some instances and where this is so the links are identified.

7.3.1. Floating Support

It is vitally important that vulnerable households can sustain tenancies or licences either in the social housing sector or the private rented sector to avoid becoming homeless. Floating support refers to a support service that is not tied to a particular accommodation but is available to people who are assessed as needing support to sustain their tenancies or licences in non-supported housing.

To help facilitate this, the Council commissions a floating support service. Funding is allocated to provide support for 160 clients. Floating support in the Borough has continued to be provided by One Support, part of One Housing Group.

The service can be accessed by referral from a statutory agency or self-referral. One Support additionally run drop in services together with other organisations at various locations within Bedford. Here households can obtain one off advice or, where required, be referred for longer term support.

One objective of floating support is to prevent clients becoming homeless, wherever necessary working in conjunction with other agencies such as Community Mental Health and housing teams. The service has the greatest chance of success where early proactive referrals are made, allowing time for the Support Worker assigned to work with the client to try and put in place the necessary measures and actions to prevent them from becoming homeless.

The service is available to anyone who is

- Living in the Borough;
- Willing to engage;
- Is aged 16 or over;
- Needs short term housing related support.

One Support floating support packages can include:

- Benefits advice;
- Tenancy sustainment;
- Accessing local services;
- Developing life skills;
- Social inclusion;
- Tackling complex debt problems;
- Building and strengthening relationships;
- Helping customers to move on;
- Employment and training;
- Budgeting;
- Debt management.

In addition to the key role of tenancy sustainment, One Support provide a bespoke service to improve a referred client's independence, ability to contribute to the community and provide life skills to reduce the risks of social isolation.

At the time of the last Homelessness Review, support was provided for a period of up to 2 years with a review at 6 months. The contract awarded in 2014 however, allowed clients to self-refer where they required 'Crisis' or 'Brief' (up to 6 weeks) intervention to prevent them from becoming homeless. It was envisaged the revision of the service would enable One Support to assist a greater number of households to maintain their tenancies.

The re-tendering process also identified a need to deliver improvements to the accessibility of the service to clients living in rural areas within the Borough.

Table 35: Floating Support Outcomes 2017 / 2018 to 2019 / 2020

Outcomes	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	Overall Totals (Percentages)
Planned	141 (95.3)	143 (96.0%)	164 (97.6%)	448 (96.3%)
Unplanned	7 (4.7%)	6 (4.0%)	4 (2.4%)	17 (3.7%)
Annual Totals	148	149	168	465

Source: CDPsoft Referral Figures

The success of the floating support service is demonstrated over the past 3 years with 96.3%, of clients obtaining a planned outcome.

Table 36 shows the ethnic breakdown of Bedford Borough's population at the 2011 Census. Its age is acknowledged as a limiting factor. However, this information is the most up to date available in late 2020, the next 10 year census being imminent.

Table 36: Ethnicity of Bedford Borough Census Details - 2011

Ethnicity Census Details - 2011	Bedford	England	East of England
White	80.6%	85.5%	91.2%
Black	3.9%	3.4%	2.0%
Asian	11.4%	7.7%	4.8%
Mixed	3.5%	2.2%	2.0%
Other	0.7%	1.0%	0.5%
Not Stated	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Census Table KS201EW

Ethnicity - Access to Floating Support

Table 37: Shows the Ethnicity of clients receiving floating support in 2017; 2018 and 2019

Ethnicity of clients receiving support in:-	White	Mixed	Asian	Black	Other	Not Stated	Total
2017	81 (67.5%)	1 (0.8%)	14 (11.7%)	12 (10.0%)	0 (0.0%)	12 (10.0%)	120(100%)
2018	196 (64.5%)	7 (2.3%)	29 (9.5%)	41 (13.5%)	2 (0.7%)	29 (9.5%)	304(100%)
2019	161 (54.9%)	7 (2.4%)	31 (10.6%)	41 (14.0%)	4 (1.4%)	49 (16.7%)	293(100%)

Source: CDPsoft Referral Figures

The trends identified when comparing the ethnic breakdown of clients accessing the floating support service to the 2011 Census data are record below:-

- The floating support service is reaching all BAME Groups in Bedford Borough.
- There is a significant under representation of the White community (54.9% of One Support clients in 2019 compared to a Census return of 80.6% in 2011). This has persisted since the last Review undertaken in 2014 / 2015 and is worthy of further investigation. As there has been significant in-migration from the Accession States which entered the European Union on 1st May 2004 and 1st January 2007 as set out in 7.5.3, it cannot be simply explained by the indigenous population being more established in their accommodation and therefore at less risk of becoming homeless.
- An over representation of the Black community requires floating support (14.0% of clients in 2019 compared to the 2011 Census figure of 3.9%). Further research is therefore needed to see if there is more that can be done to assist in preventing members of the Black community from requiring floating support. It should however be noted that it is positive that the Black community are aware of the floating support service and are applying to take advantage of it.
- Those recorded as 'Other' are also over represented in receiving floating support (1.4% of clients in 2019 compared to a 2011 Census figure of 0.7%). This should not necessarily be too great a concern however, as there is a very wide range of ethnic groups living within the Borough and only 4 applicants described themselves in this category.
- In contrast the percentage of households receiving floating support and describing themselves as Asian (10.6% in 2019) is broadly consistent with the percentage of the Bedford community identifying as Asian in the 2011 Census statistics (11.4%).
- The Mixed community are underrepresented (2.4% of clients in 2019 compared to the Census data of 3.5%). As with the 'Other' band this represents only a small number of applicants (7) and may therefore not be a reliable sample.
- As nearly 17% of floating support users are recorded as ethnicity not stated in 2019 compared to around 10% in the previous 2 years, this is may have affected some of the percentages recorded.

Although there is a degree of under and over representation of all groupings, the floating service is clearly reaching all sections of the community within the Borough. However access to the service should be monitored on an annual basis to make sure different ethnic groups are not being excluded.

7.3.2. Hostel and Supported Housing Provision

Bedford Borough benefits from a significant amount of supported housing with provision for a wide range of client groups. Provision ranges from generic through to high level support and is predominantly for single person households.

Supported Housing is provided by a variety of statutory bodies and voluntary organisations. Provision is funded in part by the Council but other funding streams also have an important role.

Referrals to Council funded schemes are made through the CDPsoft System. This is a web based referral portal allowing:

- Providers to place clients and record information (including Support Plans) in one place.
- Referral Agents to match their clients to the best available support using the automated process, thereby helping to keep void times to a minimum.

The system has proved effective in assisting users to make correct referrals and has also improved the monitoring of the homelessness support services intervention outcomes. This information is fed back in to performance monitoring and ultimately future re-tendering processes to ensure the Council makes the best use of its resources in procuring future support services.

Nominations made to the Hostel and Supported Housing sector help to prevent homelessness especially where the person has specific support needs, are excluded from the Housing Register or may struggle to sustain a tenancy even if floating support was provided.

In addition to providing accommodation many schemes use a holistic approach to working with residents, backed by support planning, to help them to gain the self-confidence and skills to live independently. This requires residents to engage with the programmes provided. In many cases this helps them in the long-term to sustain a tenancy and constructively contribute to the wider community when they move to their own independent

accommodation. This approach reduces the risks of social isolation and the potential for former residents to lose their new tenancy thereby becoming homeless, possibly for not the first time.

Hostel and Supported Housing providers additionally contribute to the Health and Wellbeing agenda by helping or signposting residents to register with a GP or dentist and access medical services.

Further details of Hostel and Supported Housing provision within the Borough are set out in Appendix 1 to this Review.

7.3.3. Emmaus Village, Carlton

In addition to the 'standard' hostel and supported housing provision, the Borough also benefits from having an Emmaus Village within its boundary. Emmaus Village, Carlton was set up in 2001 on the former St Margaret's approved school site. It forms part of a national network across the UK, supporting over 750 homeless people nationally.

Emmaus communities are not hostels for the homeless. They are instead places where formerly homeless people and people at risk of homelessness are offered a home and work within their social enterprise. Living in an Emmaus community provides companionship, time and support to deal with any issues they might have. This offers the opportunity to restore their sense of purpose, confidence and self-esteem through work and where possible, re-establish relationships with loved ones.

Emmaus in Carlton provides accommodation for 42 residents, known as "Companions". They are given their own room, clothing, food and a small weekly allowance. "Companions" stay for as long as they need in exchange for the following commitments:-

- Working up to 40 hours per week in the community's social enterprise; the shops and the café.
- Behaving in a respectful way towards one another.
- Not to bring or consume alcohol or illegal drugs on the premises.
- Signing off all work related benefits, with the exception of Housing Benefit.

When a "Companion" wishes to move on from Emmaus, they are assisted in finding accommodation and work.

A link to the Emmaus Village Carlton website is copied here:- <https://emmaus.org.uk/village-carlton/>

7.3.4. Support On Being Discharged from Prison

The National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO), funded through the Probation Service, have provided support for offenders coming up for release from HMP Bedford for the past 4 years. They employ a Resettlement Advisor based in the all-male prison. Their role is wider than advising and assisting offenders with housing needs who are coming up for release. It also includes help with finances, debt advice, obtaining identification documentation (where required) and setting up bank accounts.

The Resettlement Advisor works with offenders from all over the country, not just those who live within Bedford Borough. Their work includes establishing local connections for referral purposes and working with offenders and local authorities where a local connection is established.

For offenders being discharged with a local connection to Bedford Borough, the Kings Arms Project (KAP) employ a Prison Leavers Outreach Worker. Prior to Covid 19 they attended the weekly pre-release board meetings. Where it is identified a client with support needs is to be released, they can meet them on a one to one basis at a prison visit prior to this. From here the Prison Leavers Outreach Worker liaises with the Resettlement Advisor to ascertain what referrals have been made in terms of housing, support around addictions / mental health issues, probation and other identified needs.

Offenders with a local connection to Bedford Borough who are to be discharged from prison are able to join the Housing Register three months in advance, thereby reducing the chances they will be homeless when they leave. This is a significant factor in the reduction of reoffending.

Where the Housing Register is not an option the Resettlement Advisor operates informal partnerships with organisations including Emmaus and the Langley House Trust who have a number of shared units of accommodation for ex-offenders. Referrals are also made through the CDPsoft system to local hostels appropriate for the needs of the individual. Cases involving high risk ex-offenders are usually handled by Probation or Probation working through Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

Both the Resettlement Advisor and Prison Leavers Outreach Worker have attended training sessions and meetings with the Council to ensure the referral processes work in accordance with the Duty to Refer and any regulatory requirements. Relationships have also been developed with the Borough's Rough Sleeping Coordinator. This cooperation remains ongoing.

Although a significant amount of work is put in to finding accommodation on release from prison, there are still a number of people who leave without accommodation to go to. The Prison Leavers Outreach worker will pick these people up and try to assist. They can also provide ongoing support to ex-offenders even where they do find housing.

Since the commencement of Covid 19 there have been fewer prison referrals made for those with a local connection to the Borough. The Prison Leavers Outreach Worker has however, supported a number of clients who were in hotel and temporary accommodation to be rehoused.

In addition to the KAP Outreach worker, NACRO have Community Workers based in Bedford and Luton Probation Offices providing 'through the gate support' to a number of ex-offenders.

Even if accepted for hostel accommodation, there remains the possibility of ex-inmates ending up rough sleeping until a bed space becomes available if there are no family or friends who can accommodate them on a temporary basis. This greatly increases the possibility of reoffending and therefore more proactive approaches are sought to minimise this risk, including seeking private sector accommodation.

Where it has not been possible to find accommodation for an ex-offender by the release date, applicants are directed to the Homelessness and Housing Advice Team who are provided with as much advanced notice as is possible.

The Council is fully aware of the duties placed on it by the Care Act 2014, where a prisoner is homeless on discharge and has verified needs. Procedures are in place to meet these duties.

7.3.5. Support on being Discharged from Hospital

Since the last Homelessness Strategy Review was undertaken, a formal hospital discharge process has been put in place to refer patients where it is known they will be homeless at the end of their stay in hospital. In practice, the majority of referrals are now made through the Duty to Refer as set out in paragraph 3.7.

Where referrals are made by whichever process, the Housing Assessment and Advice Team will, wherever possible, undertake a homelessness assessment prior to the patient's discharge. This determines whether temporary accommodation will be required and works through the homelessness Relief duty. Appropriate support is provided to those being discharged from hospital at that stage.

7.3.6. Homelessness and Mental Health Support

From April 2015, East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT) has been commissioned by the Council and the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group to provide non-crisis mental health and associated services for Bedford Borough. The services are:

- Adult, older adult mental health and learning disability services.
- Adult rehabilitation and recovery services.
- Child and adolescent mental health services.

Through these services ELFT are, in partnership with other agencies, able to support people with mental health issues to maintain living in their existing accommodation or to return there when they have been receiving treatment elsewhere. In addition to assisting in the prevention of homelessness, this proactive approach helps reduce the need for people to access primary or acute care, thereby relieving pressure on the health service.

At a time where there has been two national lockdowns to prevent the spread of Covid 19 during 2020 and 2021, the importance of mental health services in helping people manage and maintain their accommodation both at the present time and going forward cannot be overestimated.

ELFT is also involved with the Street Outreach Team which aims to identify those at high risk of becoming rough sleepers and works proactively to prevent them from moving on to the streets. The Team includes three dedicated Mental Health Crisis Workers employed by ELFT and Central North West London Foundation Trust.

7.3.7. Local Welfare Provision - Financial Support

The Council has a Local Welfare Provision Policy which can assist homeless households or those at risk of becoming homeless.

The scheme provides the most vulnerable households with assistance in the form of crisis grants and community support grants subject to funds being available and the applicant meeting eligibility criteria. The Council provides two forms of payment under the Policy as set out below:

- Crisis Grants – These provide immediate assistance to qualifying residents experiencing an emergency that jeopardises their health or safety.

- Home in the Community Grants – These grants will provide assistance to qualifying vulnerable persons in setting up or maintaining a home in the community.

Grants made from Local Welfare Provision have assisted residents to purchase essential items when they have had to access temporary or hostel accommodation.

A link to the page where the Local Welfare Provision Policy can be accessed is provided below:-

<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/benefits-and-support/benefits-council-tax-support/local-welfare-provision/>

Theme 2 - Support – Issues Identified for Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 / 2028

- **Assess and consider the support services funded by the Council.**
- **Investigate why members of the Black Community appear to have a much greater proportionate need to access floating support. From the findings consider if any additional action needs to be instigated.**
- **Investigate why members of the White Community appear to have an under proportionate need to access floating support. From the findings consider if any additional action needs to be instigated.**
- **Review the analysis contained in this review as the findings of Census 2021 are released. Identify any actions that are required as a result of that review and devise a plan for implementation.**

7.4. Theme 3 – Supply

Ensuring a sufficient supply of suitable accommodation is of critical significance to meeting the needs of the population of the Borough and particularly homeless households. Accommodation requirements fall into three broad categories – general needs housing, special needs accommodation and temporary housing specifically for homeless households.

Increasing the supply of general needs, including affordable, housing can assist in preventing households from becoming homeless as well as enabling homeless households (including those in temporary accommodation), to move on to a more permanent residence in either the social or private sectors. (How affordable housing is allocated and the priority given to homeless households is detailed in the Council's Allocation Scheme – see section 7.5.4 below.)

The provision of emergency accommodation ensures those in urgent need can be offered interim accommodation pending the outcome of their application for homelessness assistance or temporary accommodation where the Council has assessed a household's application and established it has a duty to rehouse them. The term temporary accommodation is used in this section to cover all emergency accommodation for homeless households.

The supply of general needs, special needs and temporary housing within the Borough are considered in the paragraphs below.

Supply of General Needs Housing

7.4.1. Affordable Housing

The Housing Strategy Team has continued to work closely with developers and Registered Providers to promote the delivery of all forms of new housing, particularly affordable housing. Working closely with the planning system, developers, Registered Providers and Homes England, the Council has achieved successes in providing both general needs affordable housing and special needs housing.

The Housing Strategy Review 2016 – 2020 set a target for affordable housing at 256 dwellings per annum following the findings of the Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). A review of the SMHA in November 2018, has subsequently amended this figure to 279. A link to the SMHA is copied below:-

<http://edrms.bedford.gov.uk/OpenDocument.aspx?id=0xKX2rw0H6KIZ53bDCOfVA%3d%3d&name=01%20-%20Strategic%20Housing%20Market%20Assessment%20Update%20and%20Addenda.pdf>

In the five years where records are available since the Homelessness Strategy Review in 2014 / 2015, the Council has delivered a total of 1,561 affordable homes at an average of 312 per year as set out in Table 38 below.

Table 38: Total additional affordable dwelling completions in Bedford Borough

Total Additional Affordable Dwellings					
Year	2015 – 2016	2016 – 2017	2017 – 2018	2018 - 2019	2019 - 2020
Number of completions	184	205	299	386	487

Source: MHCLG Table 1008C: Total additional affordable dwellings provided by local authority - Completions

The impact of Covid 19 on the housing market is yet to be fully understood. If, however, there is a slowdown in the housing market, it may result in an increased focus on affordable housing delivery as Registered Providers can offer private developers guaranteed cash flow and housing ‘sales’.

The Housing Strategy Team works closely with colleagues across the Council to ensure that new affordable housing schemes meet identified needs. Fuller detail (including meeting the needs of vulnerable people, homelessness and affordable housing), are set out in the Council’s new Housing Strategy for the period 2021 - 2026.

7.4.2. Private Rented Sector (PRS)

The PRS has continued to grow in importance as a housing resource for all sections of the community, including households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Table 39 below, shows how numbers in the PRS have increased. It is taken from the Building Research Establishment Integrated Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Data Base for the Council, 22 October 2018.

Table 39: Tenure Split – Comparison of BRE database outputs with census figures for Bedford Borough

	Owner Occupier (Percentage of Stock)	Private Rent (Percentage of Stock)	Social (Percentage of Stock)	Total
2018 Database	44,991 (59.7%)	17,575 (23.3%)	12,816 (17.0%)	75,382
2011 Census	42,602 (66.8%)	10,958 (17.2%)	10,252 (16.1%)	63,812
Increase	2,389	6,617	2,564	11,570

Source: BRE Integrated Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Data Base for Bedford Borough Council - 22 October 2018.

The figures show a fall in the percentage of properties which are owner occupied from 66.8% in 2011 to 59.7% in 2018. This is almost fully accounted for by the corresponding increase in PRS Stock, from 17.2% to almost a quarter of the available housing stock at 23.3%. There has also been a less dramatic increase in the number of social housing units available, both in terms of numbers and percentage of the available housing stock.

With greater numbers and proportion of the housing stock in the Borough being in the PRS, it is vital they are accessible to families in danger of becoming or are homeless, to assist the Council in its requirements to prevent and relieve homelessness. This cannot be achieved in the social sector alone.

The PRS is however, not always easy for homeless or low paid households to access. The 2017 national survey of 1,137 Private Landlords undertaken by Shelter (2018a), highlighted 43% had an outright ban on letting to households in receipt of Housing Benefit.

In July 2020 the House of Commons published a briefing paper 'Can private landlords refuse to let to Housing Benefit claimants?'. The paper discusses private landlords' reluctance to let to Housing Benefit claimants and considers whether this is a form of discrimination.

It concludes that refusing to let to those in receipt of Housing Benefit is unlikely to amount to direct discrimination as income and employment status are not protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, however, it may be a form of indirect discrimination.

Indirect discrimination is when a practice, policy or rule which applied to everyone has the effect that people with a certain protected characteristic are put at a disadvantage when compared with those who do not share it. For example, if Housing Benefit claimants are predominantly female or from an ethnic minority group, a refusal to let to Housing Benefit claimants might amount to indirect discrimination against these groups with protected characteristics.

In what is being described as a 'landmark' judgement, the courts have held that in the case of a disabled single parent who had an application for private rented housing refused by a letting agent based on her receipt of Housing Benefit, the agent was in breach of the Equality Act 2010. The judgment declared that:

“The Defendant’s former policy of rejecting tenancy applications because the applicant is in receipt of Housing Benefit was unlawfully indirectly discriminatory on the grounds of sex and disability contrary to sections 19 and 29 of the Equality Act 2010.”

Reacting to the judgment the National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA) said:

“No landlord should discriminate against tenants because they are in receipt of benefits. Every tenant’s circumstance is different and so they should be treated on a case by case basis based on their ability to sustain a tenancy.”

Private landlords have indicated there are a number of other reasons why they may be reluctant to let to households claiming Housing Benefits. These include:

- The low level of LHA Rates, frozen between April 2016 and April 2020.
- A lucrative demand for short term lets from professionals.
- Landlords perceive households to be claiming benefit to be riskier tenants.
- Universal Credit is viewed as making the receipt of rent being less secure.
- Restrictions on mortgage and insurance policies.

To maximise the access to the PRS to assist with the Relief and Prevention of homelessness, it is vital that the Council takes a proactive and innovative approach. This will become increasingly important when the lifting of the eviction ban caused by the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic comes in to effect.

Table 40 shows median monthly rents in Bedford Borough by property type between 2014 / 2015 and 2019 / 2020 and the percentage by which they have increased during that period. The average increase across all property types is 22.3%. The highest increases are in the studio and 4 bed roomed plus properties, at 35.7% and 29.5% respectively.

Table 40: Median Monthly Rent Values in Bedford Borough 2014 / 2015 – 2019 / 2020

	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 /2020	% Increase
Room	£350.00	£350.00	£365.00	£420.00	£395.00	£395.00	12.9%
Studio	£350.00	£450.00	£450.00	£475.00	£458.00	£475.00	35.7%
1 Bedroom	£495.00	£525.00	£575.00	£600.00	£595.00	£600.00	21.2%

2 Bedroom	£650.00	£695.00	£750.00	£750.00	£750.00	£750.00	15.4%
3 Bedroom	£750.00	£815.00	£895.00	£895.00	£900.00	£900.00	20.0%
4+Bedrooms	£1,000.00	£1,250.00	£1,250.00	£1,250.00	£1,250.00	£1295.00	29.5%
All Categories	£650.00	£695.00	£750.00	£775.00	£775.00	£795.00	22.3%

Source: Valuation Office Agency & Office for National Statistics (Private rental market summary statistics in England)

Table 41 shows that, apart from studio flats, LHA Rates within Bedford Borough were below Median monthly rents during the financial year 2018 / 2019. This was the result of the freeze on LHA rates brought in from 2016.

Over the period of its implementation, the freeze in LHA created affordability issues for those on low incomes and benefits in both being able to obtain and then sustain accommodation in the PRS which, as Table 39 shows, forms 23.3% of the available housing stock in the Borough. Affordability pressures have therefore been a contributory factor in creating homelessness within Bedford Borough for the majority of the period covered by this Review.

When LHA Rates are significantly below the Median Rent, it may reasonably be assumed that only accommodation at the 'lower end' of the PRS is available to households in receipt of LHA or UC. This may have other implications, for example in respect of households' health and wellbeing.

The significant uplift in LHA rates for the Borough in 2020 / 2021 has been due to the government increasing LHA rates nationally back to the 30th percentile of market rents in reaction to the Covid 19 pandemic. At the time of writing the Review it is not clear whether this will continue but, if so, it will make property sizes in the PRS more affordable for people in receipt of benefits or on low incomes, thereby increasing the availability of accommodation. The outliers to this are shared rooms and 4 bed plus properties.

As LHA is set at the national level and there are no controls on private rental charges, these are not issues the Council has direct control over. It will therefore continue to work with partners to provide advice and support to assist households to maintain, or where appropriate access, accommodation in the PRS.

Table 41 – Comparative Monthly LHA Rates in Bedford Borough

Bedrooms	Bedford BRMA – April 2019*	Bedford Median Rent 2018 / 2019	Difference LHA to Median Rent	Bedford BRMA – April 2020*	Bedford Median Rent 2019 / 2020	Difference LHA to Median Rent
-----------------	-----------------------------------	--	--------------------------------------	-----------------------------------	--	--------------------------------------

Room	£286.66	£395.00	-£108.34	£345.75	£395.00	-£49.25
Studio	£474.89	£458.00	+£16.89	£575.00	£475.00	+£100.00
1 Bedroom	£474.89	£595.00	-£120.11	£575.00	£600.00	-£25.00
2 Bedroom	£614.59	£750.00	-£135.41	£725.00	£750.00	-£25.00
3 Bedroom	£742.51	£900.00	-£157.49	£875.00	£900.00	-£25.00
4 Bedroom	£963.77	£1,250.00	-£286.23	£1150.00	£1,295.00	-£145.00

Source: Valuation Office Agency from GOV.UK LHA 2019 – 20 Tables Published 30 January 2020 & Office for National Statistics (Private rental market summary statistics in England)

** A small number of properties on the Bedford / Cambs / Northants borders come under the LHA Rates for Hunts or Northants Central. As the vast majority of properties in the Borough come under the Bedford LHA Rate, this is the only Rate quoted in Table 32.*

In addition to the general issue of affordability, most single persons under the age of 35 are only eligible for the Single Room Rate of LHA. This is at least partly the explanation of why 56.3% of applicants owed a duty of Relief or Prevention in 2019 / 2020, as set out in Tables 18 & 19, are households comprised of single males or females.

7.4.3. The Tenancy Deposit Guarantee Scheme (TDGS)

The factors set out above have limited the supply of PRS housing available to low income households or those who are homeless. However, the PRS is an important resource and the Council's TDGS exists to facilitate access to it.

During the period of the freeze on LHA rates, the TDGS Team have been able to access funding to make top up payments to landlords, in line with current market rates. This has helped maintain the participation in the TDGS of existing landlords in addition to continuing to attract new landlords to the scheme.

The TDGS Team work to a protocol with Housing Benefits and UC. The Team are authorised to communicate on a landlord's or tenant's behalf and are advised of changes to a claimant's entitlement. This enables the Team to deal with potential rent arrears at an early stage, providing a greater opportunity to sustain tenancies within the TDGS. They work with the Council's ASB Team and the Police where anti-social behaviour could put a tenancy at risk.

At the end of March 2020 there were 207 properties in the TDGS.

Table 42: Tenancy Deposit Guarantee Scheme – New Tenancies and Total Tenancies 2014 / 2015 – 2019 / 2020

Financial Year	New Tenancies Created	Total Tenancies in Scheme
2014 / 2015	73	213
2015 / 2016	42	189
2016 / 2017	51	202
2017 / 2018	62	209
2018 / 2019	62	233
2019 / 2020	63	207

Source: Bedford Housing Needs Service

7.4.4. Discharge of Homelessness Duty in the Private Sector

Using the powers granted under the Localism Act, the Council has continued to actively pursue the option of discharging duty in to the PRS. This has predominantly been used where persons with an accepted duty for rehousing are either:

- Ineligible to join the Housing Register;
- Would face a long wait in temporary accommodation due to the type of accommodation they require (for example 4, 5 or 6 bedroom properties);
- 'Homeless at home' where the need for them to enter temporary accommodation can be avoided.

Between 2014 / 2015 and 2019 / 2020, Bedford Borough Council has made 131 offers to discharge its housing duty to suitable private sector properties. Of the 131 offers made, 110 (84%) have been accepted and 21 (16%) refused.

Table 43: Offers and Outcomes made to the Private Rented Sector to Discharge Housing Duty 2014 / 2015 – 2019 / 2020

Financial Year	Offers Made	Offers Accepted	Offers Refused
2014 / 2015	28	24	4
2015 / 2016	14	11	3
2016 / 2017	29	22	7
2017 / 2018	31	26	5
2018 / 2019	15	15	0
2019 / 2020	14	12	2
Totals	131	110	21

Source: Bedford Housing Needs Service

Where qualifying private sector properties become available the Council will continue to make offers to discharge its housing duties.

7.4.5. Empty Homes

It remains a particular concern that at a time when there are homeless households, there are also properties standing empty.

The Housing Strategy Team, who are responsible for implementing the Council's Empty Homes Strategy, receives data from Council Tax on a monthly basis on selected categories of empty homes. Details of the categories are set out in Table 44 below:-

Table 44: Council Tax Codes Included in the Monthly Empty Homes List

Code	Description of empty property
PCLC	Unoccupied & Unfurnished
PREM 100	Unoccupied and unfurnished for > 2 years
PREM 200	Unoccupied and unfurnished for > 5 years
PCLBF	Unoccupied & Furnished
Class B	Charity
Class D	Liable Person Detained
Class E	Liable Person In Care Home
Class F1	Awaiting Probate
Class F2	Probate Granted
Class G	Occupation Prohibited by Law
Class H	Religious
Class I	Receiving Personal Care
Class J	Providing Personal Care
Class K	Left Unoccupied by Student
Class L	Mortgagee In Possession
Class Q	Bankrupt

The number varies from month to month but as at December 2020 there are approximately 800 properties within the codes identified above, which have been unoccupied for over a year in the Borough. The vast majority of these are privately owned.

Prior to the initial Covid 19 lockdown from the end of March 2020, the number of homes empty for over twelve months had been fairly constant at slightly over 600. Numbers have increased as lockdown measures:-

- Prevented people travelling to work on properties.
- Made it harder to obtain the services of builders and tradespersons.
- Created a backlog in probate cases, thereby delaying new owners from taking the actions required which would lead to the property coming back in to use.
- The first lockdown initially prevented house moves from taking place.

The reasons for properties being empty are varied and the vast majority come back in to occupation without the need for the Council to intervene. There are however a number of cases in which a lack of effective activity by owners has led to properties remaining empty for many years.

The Council continues to take a proactive approach when dealing with empty homes. Since the Homelessness Review 2014 / 2015, 515 properties have been brought back in to use and occupation following the intervention of the Council with 126 during 2019 / 2020.

Compulsory purchase is used as a last resort to tackle long-term empty homes. The Council has allocated almost £3 million for this purpose with receipts from property sales being recycled back in to the budget. Seven long-term empty properties have been brought back in to use this way. An eighth has also been acquired. Following renovation it will be used by the Council to provide temporary accommodation.

Prior to the latest property acquired under compulsory purchase legislation, properties which came in to the Council's ownership were resold with a covenant that the new owners had to bring them back in to occupation within a set period of time, usually 12 months. Access to these properties for homeless households has depended upon the decisions of the new owners.

Unoccupied properties in the Council's ownership whose original use is no longer required, are also being brought back in to use. At September 2020, nine such properties have been renovated and are providing temporary

accommodation for homeless households. Works are also planned on a number of other such properties which will further increase the available stock of temporary accommodation.

The Councils Empty Homes Strategy 2019 – 2024, provides further details. A link to it is copied below:-

https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Housing/ENV037_19_Empty-Homes-Strategy_A4-SCREEN%20WEB%20FINAL%20VERSION.pdf

Emergency Accommodation

7.4.6. Temporary Accommodation

Since the Homelessness Strategy Review undertaken in 2014 / 2015, there has been a significant increase in the requirement to use temporary accommodation. It is notable that the larger increases came after the package of welfare reforms announced in 2015 and additionally after the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which came in to effect on 03 April 2018.

Table 45: The Number of Households in Temporary Accommodation at the End of the Financial Year Between 2014 / 2015 and 2019 / 2020

Financial Year	No of Households In Temporary Accommodation at the end of the Financial Year
2014 / 2015	61
2015 / 2016	70
2016 / 2017	93
2017 / 2018	132
2018 / 2019	220
2019 / 2020	313

Source: Bedford Housing Needs Service

In order to accommodate the increasing number of households who require and are eligible for temporary accommodation, the Council has had to widen the type of accommodation used from Private Sector Leased (PSL) and Bed and Breakfast (B&B) to include Nightly Paid Accommodation. Nightly Paid Accommodation is self-contained private sector properties let on a nightly basis only.

Due to the significant increase in the use of temporary accommodation and associated costs, especially with Nightly Paid Accommodation, the Council is examining options to provide its own temporary accommodation. A Temporary Accommodation Capital Budget of £10 million has been set aside for the acquisition of 50 units of suitable freehold premises. The funding will also assist in addressing the loss of 16 flats previously managed through the PSL scheme where the site is now being redeveloped.

So far the Council has purchased a new build block of 12 flats in Bedford town centre which are now used as temporary accommodation. A further block of 14 existing flats in Bedford town centre was purchased in late December 2020 but requires works prior to being ready to occupy. A three bedroom bungalow has also been acquired which will be adapted for use by households who need disability standard accommodation.

During the duration of this Review, the management of temporary accommodation through the PSL scheme has been undertaken by Orchard & Shipman working in partnership with the Council.

Table 46: – Breakdown of Households Types Entering Temporary Accommodation Between 2016 / 2017 and 2019 / 2020

Breakdown of Household Types Entering Temporary Accommodation				
Financial Year	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020
Total New TA tenancies (including B&B, Nightly Paid & PSL)	281	319	491	394
Singles	134 (47.7%)	149 (46.7%)	307 (62.5%)	228 (57.9%)
Couples	15 (5.3%)	11 (3.5%)	4 (0.8%)	16 (4.0%)
Households with Children	132 (47%)	159 (49.8%)	180 (36.7%)	150 (38.1%)
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Bedford Housing Needs Service

Table 46 above, shows a rapid increase in the total number of households entering temporary accommodation between 2016 / 2017 and 2018 / 2019. There is then a significant fall in 2019 / 2020. The number of households going in to temporary accommodation however, remains higher than in 2016 / 2017 and 2017 / 2018.

The figures also highlight the increase in both the numbers and percentage of single persons who required temporary accommodation. Although they follow the same overall pattern as the total, the percentage of single persons entering temporary accommodation has increased from 47.7% to 57.9%. This may be due to the changes introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, but further investigation may be needed to identify and, where possible, address the causes of this.

The increase in the number of single persons needing temporary accommodation is mirrored by a fall in percentage terms of households with children, although there has been a small increase in numbers from 132 in 2016 / 2017 to 150 in 2019 / 2020. It is a positive however, that proportionately fewer households with children are suffering the upheaval of moving in to temporary accommodation.

Table 47 shows the headline number of people who have vacated temporary accommodation and how they moved on.

Table 47: – Breakdown of How Households Vacated Temporary Accommodation Between 2016 / 2017 and 2019 / 2020

Breakdown of How Households Vacated Temporary Accommodation Between 2016 / 2017 and 2019 / 2020				
Year	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020
Rehoused from TA - Part 6	86 (33.5%)	116 (39.3%)	80 (24.3%)	159 (46.5%)
Rehoused from TA - Other	84 (32.7%)	74 (25.1%)	79 (24.0%)	79 (23.1%)
Ab/Evic from TA	60 (23.3%)	69 (23.4%)	125 (38.0%)	65 (19.0%)
Private Sector Discharge	27 (10.5%)	36 (12.2%)	45 (13.7%)	39 (11.4%)
Not Eligible	0	0	0	0
Deceased	0	0	0	0
Total	257 (100%)	295 (100%)	329 (100%)	342 (100%)

Source: Bedford Housing Needs Service

Within the total figures, apart from what appears to be a rogue year in 2018 / 2019 where abandonments and evictions rose to 38% of temporary accommodation leavers, the numbers rehoused through Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 has significantly increased from 33.5% to 46.5%. Those rehoused through other means has fallen by a similar amount, 32.7% to 23.1%. Discharges in to the PRS have remained reasonably constant.

If future statistics show another year where abandonments / evictions from temporary accommodation rise sharply from around 20%, this will need further investigation. A starting point could be how the support offered to households residing in temporary accommodation is functioning.

Table 48: – Breakdown of Temporary Accommodation Vacated 2016 / 2017 to 2019 / 2020

Breakdown of Temporary Accommodation Vacated 2016 / 2017 to 2019 / 2020				
Year	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020
Nightly Paid Vacated			177	208
PSL Vacated			91	98
Nightly Paid & PSL Vacated*	132	273		
B&B Vacated	125	26	62	43
No of nights in B&B	254	767	2627	1906

Source: Bedford Housing Needs Service

** The figures for Nightly Paid and PSL properties were not recorded separately until 2018 / 2019.*

In 2018 / 2019, the average length of time per household in temporary accommodation was 125 nights. In 2019 / 2020 it was 135 nights, an increase of 8.0%.

With the figures for Nightly Paid and PSL accommodation combined for the first two years, it is difficult to draw many conclusions beyond the fact that Nightly Paid Accommodation now plays a very significant role in the provision of temporary accommodation used by the Council.

Although the numbers vacating B&B have dropped significantly during the period, the number of nights households have spent in B&B has risen significantly. Households are therefore having to spend longer in B&B until they can be found either alternative interim / temporary or permanent accommodation. This is clearly not an ideal situation and has been a factor in the Council's decision to acquire 50 freehold units to use as temporary accommodation.

7.4.7. Bed & Breakfast (B&B)

Due to increasing demand, it has been necessary for the Council to continue to make use of B&B accommodation.

It is acknowledged that as emergency accommodation in certain situations e.g. hospital discharges, fleeing domestic abuse, short-term use of B&B accommodation can be beneficial. It is not however ideal long-term temporary accommodation, especially for families with children.

The length of times families stay in B&B has been monitored as a Key Performance Indicator since 2018 / 2019. Since this date no family has been placed in B&B by the Council for more than 6 weeks before they have either been accommodated within the Council's 'standard' stock of temporary accommodation or found suitable alternative housing. The Council will continue to use all its endeavours to try and ensure this remains the situation going forward.

On rare occasions in emergency situations when there is no access to B&B or any other temporary accommodation in the Borough, or where the circumstances of the applicant require, placements are made on a short term basis outside of the area. As soon as either 'standard' temporary or alternative accommodation becomes available, then arrangements are made for the household to return to the Borough.

Where it is unsafe for the applicant to return, arrangements are made to find them more suitable temporary accommodation in another local authority as soon as is practical.

It remains the Council's intention to keep B&B usage to the absolute minimum.

Theme 3 – Supply – Issues Identified for Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 / 2028

- Completion of the Council's acquisition programme to provide an additional 50 units of freehold temporary accommodation.
- Build on the existing proactive and innovative approaches to maintain access to Private Rented Sector properties to continue the Council's successful record in preventing and relieving homelessness.
- Continue to maximise the delivery of affordable housing and supported housing to, as a minimum, meet the figure determined in the current SMHA.

- Identify opportunities to use options such as modular housing to increase the supply of accommodation for homeless households.
- Continue to work to reduce the number of long-term empty homes in the Borough.

7.5. Additional Considerations

This section considers issues that are either required by the Code or that are important factors bearing on Homelessness but that do not logically form part of the three themes of Prevention, Support and Supply. They are:

- The links between Homelessness and health
- Details of national and international in-migration to Bedford Borough
- Allocations and Choice based lettings
- Homelessness and the Armed Forces
- The needs of those who do not live in traditional housing

7.5.1. Homelessness and Health

'Homelessness and health: improving the health and wellbeing of those without safe and stable housing in Bedford Borough' (the Report) was published by the Council's Director of Public Health in 2018.

The Report highlighted how ill health can be both a cause and consequence of homelessness. Key findings include:-

- Being homeless is associated with extremely poor health outcomes relative to those of the general population, with the average age of death of homeless people in 2012 being 47 years for men and 43 years for women compared to 77 for the general population (74 for men, 80 for women).
- Homeless people are more likely to have poor physical and mental health, and people with physical and mental health problems are more vulnerable to becoming homeless.
- As with other risks to public health, prevention and early intervention can help to keep people housed appropriately, stopping the escalation of issues that can lead to losing stable accommodation and worsening health.

The Report drew on national and local evidence to describe key challenges for homeless people, focusing on the health impacts of homelessness for the following vulnerable groups:-

Children, young people and their families

- Hidden homelessness
- Persons with complex needs
- People who misuse substances
- People experiencing mental health issues
- Ex-offenders
- Armed forces veterans

It concluded:

“There has been considerable work in Bedford Borough to reduce homelessness and especially rough sleeping over the last few years. The Homelessness Strategy 2016 – 21 has highlighted the need to work in partnership both to prevent people becoming homeless in the first place and to provide a joined up response when people do become homeless. However, further work is needed to prevent and address the health impact of homelessness and to understand and address the wider forms of homelessness and their impact on health and wellbeing.”

The following six recommendations are made:-

- Improve awareness of the Homelessness Reduction Act and implications for partner organisations, especially regarding the Duty to Refer.
- Improve the identification, assessment, recording and sharing of housing vulnerability, including little understood groups such as hidden homeless.
- Improve understanding of the overlap between mental health, substance misuse and housing.
- Improve signposting and access to local services that can impact root causes of homelessness.
- Improve consistent health care access for homeless individuals, from primary care through to acute care.
- Incorporate health and wider outcomes into evaluations of homelessness initiatives.

These recommendations will be considered for inclusion in the Borough’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 / 2028.

A link to the Report is copied below:-

https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Social%20Care%20Health%20and%20Community/Bedford%20JSNA/PUB011_18%20Director%20of%20Public%20Health%20Report%20BB%20DRAFT%20v3.pdf

In addition the Council has many other inputs and duties in respect of the health and wellbeing of its residents.

Bedford Borough Health and Wellbeing Board has a duty to improve integrated working between local health care, social care, public health and other public service practitioners so patients and service users experience more joined-up care, particularly when moving between health and social care. It is also responsible for leading locally on reducing health inequalities.

The Board has three main statutory duties:

- To assess the needs of their local population through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).
- To set out how these needs will be addressed. This is achieved through the Bedford Borough Joint health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2023 that offers a strategic framework in which the Council, Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, and NHS England can make their own commissioning decisions.
- To promote greater integration and partnership, including joint commissioning, integrated provision and pooled budgets.

The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy was developed by the Council in partnership with those who commission services across the NHS, public health, adult social care and children's services and local Healthwatch representatives. It identifies three priorities:

- Give children and young people the best start in life.
- Enable adults and older people to live well and remain independent.
- Empower residents to create strong, safe and healthy communities.

The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2023 is available here:-

https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Social%20Care%20Health%20and%20Community/Bedford%20Borough%20Joint%20Health%20and%20Wellbeing%20Strategy%202018_final.pdf

The findings of the report are included in the Council's JSNA. The summary was refreshed in May 2019. In respect of homelessness, it covers issues concerning young people and Rough sleepers. Both of these areas are covered in greater detail in this Review. A link to the JSNA Summary is copied below:-

<https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Social%20Care%20Health%20and%20Community/Bedford%20JSNA/JSNA-Annual-Summary-2019.pdf>

7.5.2. Homelessness and Domestic Abuse

- [Draft Legislation - Domestic Abuse Bill 2019-2021](#)

The first reading of the Domestic Abuse Bill 2019-2021 took place on 7 July 2020. This stage is a formality that signals the start of the Bill's journey through the Lords. The second reading - the general debate on all aspects of the Bill is due to take place on 05 January 2021.

Full details about the Bill can be found at Home Office "Policy paper Domestic Abuse Bill 2020: Overarching factsheet" – Updated 17 August 2020. A link to the factsheet is copied below:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-overarching-factsheet>

- [Domestic Abuse Bill and Homelessness](#)

Under the Heading 'What are we going to do?' the Home Office is quoted on the website GOV.UK as follows:-
'The Bill will give those who are homeless as a result of fleeing domestic abuse priority need status for accommodation secured by the local authority.

This should allow more victims to access accommodation and prevent the fear of homelessness for victims seeking to flee abuse.'

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government said of the Bill:-

'This is a fully funded commitment which will mean that no victim of domestic violence has to make the unbearable choice between staying somewhere where they know is unsafe or becoming homeless.'

Home Office – Policy Paper Homelessness – Updated 17 August 2020.

A link to the full Policy Paper details is copied below:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets/homelessness>

If the Bill is passed un-amended in to statute, it will require local authorities to give priority need status to all victims of domestic abuse who are homeless and eligible for assistance. This will mean that victims will no longer need to prove they are vulnerable as result of their abuse in order to access accommodation secured by the local authority.

The Council will be fully prepared to implement the Bill when it comes in to law

- Domestic Abuse – Bedford Borough

In the period April 2019 – March 2020 Bedfordshire Police recorded 3859 domestic abuse Crimes and Incidents in Bedford Borough. This is an average of more than 74 per week and an increase of 8% from 2018 / 2019.

Of the cases reported:-

- 7.4% (285) of all domestic abuse reported to the police in the 12 months were scored as High Risk (greater than 14 points on a DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence) assessment). This is an increase from the previous year's figure of 5.4%.
- 60.4% (2330) of all victims were graded as Medium Risk, a reduction of 96 victims from the previous year.
- 32.6% of domestic abuse crimes reported to the police in the 12 months identified a repeat victim (one or more additional offence in the previous 12 months). This is an increase from the previous year's figure of 29.5%.

Levels of reporting in domestic abuse have been steadily rising since 2015, with a 21.2% increase between April 2015 and March 2020. This pattern can however be considered potentially positive, as it may support the aim that victims have increasing levels of awareness and confidence in the services that support those who suffer domestic abuse and thereby seek support earlier. (Bedford Borough Community Safety Partnership – Strategic Assessment 2020.)

The link below is to Bedford Borough Councils Domestic Abuse website page:-

<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/environmental-issues/community-safety/domestic-abuse/#!>

Table 11 above sets out the 'Reasons for Loss of Last Settled Home for Households owed a Duty in 2018 / 2019 and 2019 / 2020'. This shows domestic abuse being the fifth highest reason for acceptance of duty in both 2018 / 2019, 77 cases (8.22%) and 2019 / 2020, 61 (6.17%) of cases. Although reducing, Domestic abuse is a significant reason for homelessness in the Borough and is important to address.

The support available through the Independent Domestic Violence Advisory (IDVA) service to those experiencing domestic abuse is detailed in Appendix 1 section B 'Floating and Other Support'

- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

Within Bedford Borough, MARAC meetings take place monthly. The meetings are supported by approximately 20 agencies that share information and agree safety plans to reduce the risk of harm to the most high risk victims of domestic abuse. Referrals are made within 6 weeks of the most recent incident and by use of the DASH Risk Indicator Checklist. Those victims that receive a score of 14+ on the DASH assessment are considered to be high risk. MARAC referrals can also be made on the basis of professional judgement for those victims that score below 14 points.

Between April 2019 and Mar 2020, 327 cases were discussed at the Bedford MARAC. This is an increase of 41 (16.7%) on the previous year and is currently above the level set by SafeLives.

SafeLives is a United Kingdom wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse. In September 2016, they were asked to support Bedford Borough Council to understand the current landscape across the Borough in terms of commissioning, need, capacity, prevention and provision for families affected by domestic abuse. This work supported the local authority in developing its strategy to tackle domestic abuse published in 2017.

Table 49: MARAC – Cases Heard 2015 - 2016 to 2019 - 2020

Bedford MARAC	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Target	Most Similar Force	National
Cases Heard	253	196	245	286	327	260		
Repeats	97 (38.3%)	51 (26%)	76 (31%)	131 (45.8%)	122 (37.3%)	28%- 40%	26%	25%
Children Affected	303	289	393	303	511			
Police Referrals	139 (54.9%)	110 (56.1%)	110 (44.9%)	162 (56.6%)	172 (52.6%)	60%- 75%	72%	64%
BME Referrals	33 (13%)	38 (19.4%)	52 (21.2%)	76 (26.6%)	91 (27.8%)	30%	12%	15%
Male Victims	3 (1.2%)	5 (2.6%)	7 (2.9%)	13 (4.9%)	9 (2.8%)	4%- 10%	5%	4.7%
Victims 16-17 years	5 (1.9%)	5 (2.6%)	6 (2.4%)	7 (2.4%)	3 (0.9%)		1.9%	1.7%

Points of interest from the Table are listed below:-

- As a percentage, the proportion of cases referred by the police (with the exception of 2017 / 2018) has been in the low to mid 50%'s.
- The number of repeat cases heard at the MARAC increased from 97 to 122 over the reporting period although the percentage of cases is similar. There has however, been significant changes in both the numbers and percentages of repeat cases considered between each year.
- The number and percentage of cases from the BAME community has increased steadily during the period. This can however, be seen as a potential positive as under-reporting within this group is considered to be greater than the overall population. It may also support the aim that victims have increasing levels of awareness and confidence in the services that provide support and are now more likely to seek help.
- Male victims have continued to represent a small number of the cases, although rising from 3 (1.2%) at the start of the reporting period to 9 (2.8%) in 2019 / 2020.

- Victims aged between 16-17 years have remained the smallest group over the period in terms of numbers and the percentage of cases. In 2019 / 2020 just three cases considered by MARAC involved 16-17 year olds.

The number of repeat cases heard at the MARAC reduced to 122 in 2019 / 2020 from 131 in 2018 / 2019 and represent 37.3% of all the cases heard. This is now within SafeLives levels.

- Impact of Covid 19 on Domestic Abuse

Between April 2020 and February 2021 during which there have been two national lockdowns to deal with the Covid 19 pandemic, domestic abuse crimes and incidents in the Borough are recorded as having risen by 6.9%. Domestic abuse crimes recorded as a repeat have increased by 4.3%.

It is not currently considered this increase will have a significant impact on the number of approaches made to the Council for assistance under homelessness legislation, although any increase in domestic abuse is a cause for concern and needs to be monitored and addressed.

7.5.3. In-Migration to Bedford Borough

- International In-Migration

Since 2001 there has been a significant international migration to the Borough, particularly from the Accession States which entered the European Union (EU) on 1st May 2004 and 1st January 2007. There has also been significant in-migration from Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Census estimates indicate that 12,900 of the Borough's residents in 2011 had arrived in the United Kingdom since 2001.

Between 2005 and 2016, National Insurance Number (NINo) registrations have been issued to 22,257 non-UK nationals (DWP, NINo registrations) resident in the Borough. Poland had been the largest source of NINo registrations each year but in 2015 there were more NINo's issued to Romanian nationals (925) than Polish (723). This is also reflected in the number of school pupils who have Romanian as their first language. The number of statutory aged school pupils with Romanian as their first language has increased from 156 in spring 2015 to 215 in spring 2016.

A link to the Councils 'Migration' statistics is copied below

[https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Files/People_Place - Migration.pdf](https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Files/People_Place_-_Migration.pdf)

Although there has been a significant rise in in-migration, migrants have largely been incorporated within the community and existing housing stock and there has not been a significant rise in overall homelessness applications or homelessness as detailed in Table 2.

Migrants from Eastern Europe are however, disproportionately represented in rough sleeping. The 2019 estimate highlighted an increase in Eastern European rough sleepers to 24 out of 30 (80%) from 15 out of 51 (29.4%) in 2018. It is considered changes in eligibility legislation introduced in 2014 which restricted recourse to public funds for EU nationals who cannot secure employment or choose not to return to their home country is a significant factor that has led to the disproportionate number of Eastern Europeans who are rough sleeping.

The Council remains committed to providing and commissioning services which are accessible for and meet the needs of the whole community. It will therefore analyse the data it collects of ethnic groups accessing its services together with outcomes to ensure they meet these needs.

On a national level leaving the EU will not necessarily result in a reduction in net migration to the United Kingdom (UK) and thereby a proportionate fall in the need for housing and the number of households requiring housing advice and homelessness services. The data set out below shows net migration to the UK is returning towards its highest levels following an initial fall in 2016 after the country voted to leave the EU:-

- According to the latest estimates by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), net migration from overseas to the UK in the year ending March 2020 totalled 313,000. This the highest in four years and approaching the all-time record of 331,000 set in the year to March 2015.
- Total long-term immigration by those of all citizenships (715,000), and total immigration by non-UK citizens (633,000) were both at the highest levels recorded.
- Net migration to the UK from outside the EU has nearly tripled since the year to March 2013 (when it was 106,000) to its highest level of 316,000.
- Net migration to the UK from the EU has fallen, from 219,000 in the year to March 2015, to 58,000 in the most recent year.

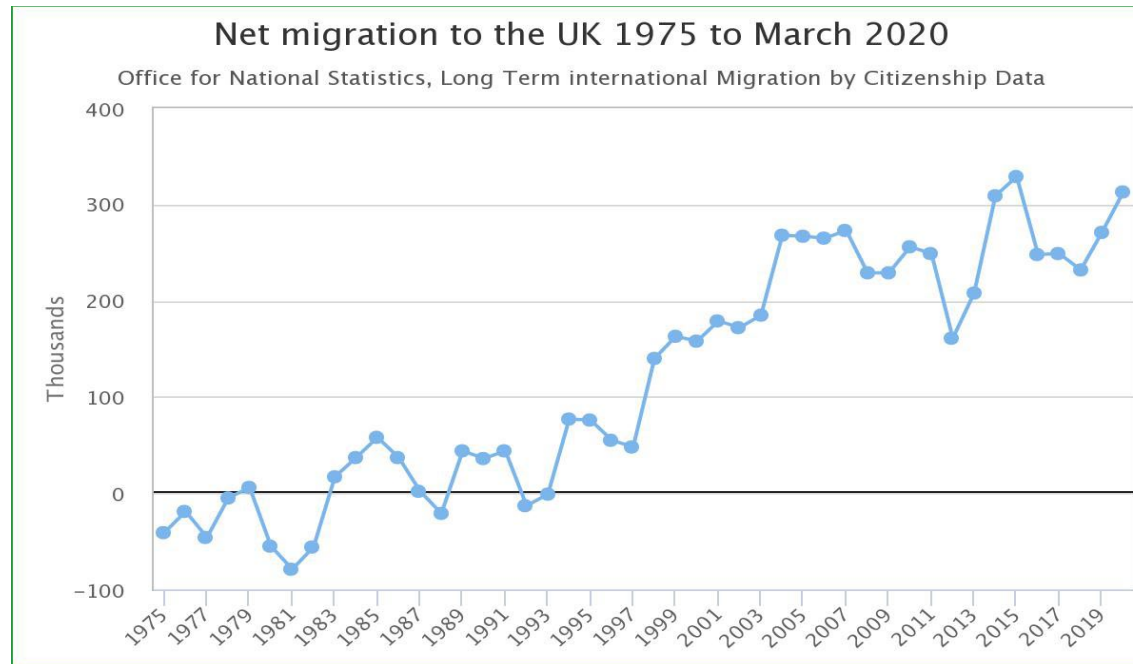
- More British citizens left the UK than returned. In the year ending March 2020, 61,000 more British citizens left the UK for 12 months or more than arrived over the same time period.

A link to the 'Office for National Statistics Migration Statistics Quarterly Report: August 2020' is copied below:-

[Migration Statistics Quarterly Report - Office for National Statistics](#)

Figure 2 below shows net migration from overseas to the UK, 1975 to March 2020:-

Figure 2 Net Migration from overseas to the UK 1975 - 2020



- National In-Migration

The Council's Homelessness Strategy 2016 - 2021 identified concerns of continuing migration pressures as people may move north from London, Luton and the rest of Bedfordshire to find accommodation which was

more affordable for them. This in turn could have led to increased pressure on the local housing market and a possible increase in homelessness. There is currently no evidence that this has been the case.

A further concern was that other local authorities (for example London Boroughs, Milton Keynes or Luton), may help people to relocate or place homeless persons in Bedford Borough to relieve pressure on their own housing stock. At the time the Council was aware of other local authorities placing homeless families in temporary accommodation in Bedford. Although the practice has continued, there is no evidence of a significant increase in the numbers of homeless persons from other local authorities being placed in the Borough.

7.5.4. Allocations and Choice Based Lettings

The HA 1996 (Part VI) and the associated guidance gives the Council, in its capacity as the local housing authority, responsibility for the allocation of social housing in its area through an Allocation Scheme. The Allocation Scheme must allow qualifying people to be allocated a social housing tenancy, a choice over housing accommodation and the opportunity to express preferences about the accommodation allocated to them. Since the Council does not own any general needs social housing, it allocates accommodation by nominating prospective tenants to the Registered Provider that owns the property.

The Act requires that an Allocation Scheme must offer reasonable preference to people who:-

- are homeless;
- are owed a homelessness Duty;
- are occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including any grounds relating to a disability);
- need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others);
- are serving or have served in the armed forces.

The Council's Allocation Scheme seeks to maximise the supply of affordable stock and ensure that it is appropriately targeted at households whose need is greatest. It operates a Choice Based Lettings Scheme to provide households accepted on to the Housing Register the ability to choose, bid and ultimately secure suitable social and affordable accommodation.

In order to ensure that all eligible applicants have an opportunity to be rehoused, the properties available to let are designated into four groups or quotas, based on the housing circumstances of applicants:-

- Properties allocated for homeless applicants – 33%
- Properties allocated for applicants with a housing need who are not currently social housing tenants – 33%
- Properties allocated for applicants with a housing need who are currently social housing tenants – 33%
- Right to Move - 1%. (The Right to Move is a government policy to increase mobility for social tenants to enable them to meet their aspirations, and support them into work.)

In early 2021 the Council proposes to issue a consultation on a revised Scheme of Allocation of Social Housing, which takes account of the changes brought about by the Homelessness Reduction Act. There is also explicit inclusion of priority for victims of domestic abuse, reflecting the current broader definition of abuse and anticipated changes under the new Domestic Abuse Bill currently going through Parliament and due to come into force in April 2021.

Once adopted, the new Allocation Scheme will be revised annually to allow for potential adjustments to quotas. This is to ensure they remain up to date and best reflect the demand for and supply of social housing. The revised Allocation Scheme is expected to be implemented from 01 April 2021, following the full public consultation.

A link to the latest progress update of the Review, reported to Housing Committee on 04 November 2020, is copied below:-

<http://www.councillorsupport.bedford.gov.uk/documents/s51902/Item%2007%20-%20Review%20of%20the%20Allocation%20Scheme.pdf>

7.5.5. Armed Forces

- National Picture

For many Veterans, leaving the Armed Forces will be the first time they have to find a home for themselves. It is estimated that in 2016 there were approximately 2.5 million Veterans residing in Great Britain. (Population Projections: UK Armed Forces Veterans residing in Great Britain, 2016 to 2028 Ministry of Defence Published 10 January 2019.)

There is however, no evidence to suggest they are overrepresented in the homeless population. This is in part due to the initiatives and support already in place across the UK. However, the public perception is that there is a significant problem with Veteran homelessness. Though work will need to be done to improve perceptions, all governments in the UK are committed to tackling rough sleeping and homelessness. (The Strategy for Our Veterans – Published 14 November 2018 from Ministry of Defence and Cabinet Office - page 18.)

- Local Level

At a local level the Council continues to lead the multi-agency, Bedford Borough Armed Forces Community Covenant Steering Group which is championed by the Mayor. This group oversees the implementation of the Bedford Borough Armed Forces Covenant (the Covenant) - a pledge signed by a number of organisations.

A core principle of the Covenant is to ensure that members of the Armed Forces community do not suffer any disadvantages as a result of their service.

The issue of housing is covered at paragraph 4.2 which states:

‘Due to the transient nature of the work undertaken by the Armed Forces, military personnel can sometimes face hurdles when trying to integrate into everyday community life. It is therefore important to develop ways to facilitate and ease the transition of those leaving the military, into the civilian community in Bedford Borough. In order to facilitate easier access to services, Bedford Borough Council and its partners will work towards:

- Providing appropriate information relating to housing.
- Providing information on applying for school places.
- Encouraging activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces community into local life.’

As set out in Table 21 above ‘Support needs of households owed a Prevention or Relief Duty’, only two applicants who approached the Council in 2018 / 2019 were identified as having support needs resulting from service in the Armed Forces. In 2019 / 2020 the figure was three. This made up just 0.34% of applicants with support needs owed a duty of Prevention or Relief in 2018 / 2019 and 0.46% in 2019 / 2020. Although these figures are low, it is important to continue to work to ensure those who have served in the Armed Forces are not disadvantaged in obtaining and then maintaining settled accommodation or assisting those who, for whatever reason, find themselves homeless or rough sleeping.

A link to the Covenant and the Armed Forces Veterans Information Booklet is copied below:

<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/about-the-council/armed-forces/>

7.5.6. Homelessness and Non-Traditional Housing

Not everyone within the Borough resides in what is perceived as 'standard' housing. Persons living in 'alternative accommodation' may from time to time need to access the Council's homelessness services. It is important therefore that they are aware of the existence of the services and how they can be accessed. When approached by households residing in 'alternative accommodation', housing advice and homelessness applications are dealt in accordance with current legislation fully taking in to account their individual circumstances. Examples of 'alternative accommodation' in the Borough are as follows:-

- Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation

The Borough has two public Gypsy and Traveller sites providing 36 Pitches and two authorised Travelling Show People's Yards providing 11 plots. The need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation is assessed in the Bedford Borough Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA), Final Report, February 2017. (This is being updated in early 2021 to inform the production of a new Local Plan.) The primary objective of the Report is to provide a robust assessment of the current and future need for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople in the Borough.

A link to the Council's 'Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment Final Report' published in February 2017 is copied below:-

https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Files/Bedford_Final_Report_280217_Final_inc_TN.PDF

- Houseboats

The River Great Ouse provides the opportunity for the mooring of houseboats within the Borough's boundaries. In 2016, the Valuation Office reported the number of households who are boat dwellers in the Borough as being under 5. (Number of houseboats in England and Wales as at 31 March 2016, Valuation Office Agency.)

The Canal and River Trust website provides a link for house boaters concerned about homelessness to use to help them identify the local authority they need to approach for advice or to make a homeless application to.

- Park Homes Sites

There are seven park home sites which provide a total of 687 units of accommodation located in the Borough.

Additional Considerations – Issues Identified for Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 / 2028

- **Improve awareness of the Homelessness Reduction Act and implications for partner organisations, especially regarding the Duty to Refer.**
- **Improve signposting and access to local services that can impact root causes of homelessness.**
- **Improve the identification, assessment, recording and sharing of housing vulnerability, including little understood groups such as hidden homeless.**
- **Improve understanding of the overlap between mental health, substance misuse and housing.**
- **Improve consistent health care access for homeless individuals, from primary care through to acute care.**
- **Incorporate health and wider outcomes into evaluations of homelessness initiatives.**
- **Going forward maintain ongoing Ethnicity statistics in respect of accessibility and outcomes of the housing and homelessness services provided by the Council.**
- **Interrogate Ethnicity statistics annually to identify if there any improvements that can be made to the accessibility of the Council's housing services together with outcomes achieved.**
- **Prepare for the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Bill.**

8. Rough Sleeping in Bedford Borough

The requirement to include rough sleeping in the Council's Homelessness Strategy was introduced as part of MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Strategy published in August 2018. This is therefore the first Homelessness Review produced by the Council that will inform its strategy to tackle rough sleeping.

The advent of Covid 19 was a particular turning point in the provision of rough sleeping services in the Borough. Having defined rough sleeping, this section outlines the operating environment and achievements prior to the advent of Covid 19 and then goes on to review measures taken to address rough sleeping in the Covid era. Some rough sleeping services that were provided pre-Covid are anticipated to continue in the post-Covid era. These are considered separately at the end of this section.

Definition of rough sleeping

- "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). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes" which are makeshift shelters, often comprised of cardboard boxes).
- The definition does not include people in hostels or shelters, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protest, squatters or travellers." (MHCLG Rough Sleeping Strategy – August 2018 Page 13 and Footnote 1.)

8.1. Rough Sleeping in Bedford Borough – The Environment Prior to Covid 19

8.1.1. Numbers of People Sleeping Rough

The national annual snapshot of rough sleeping is required by government to be undertaken by all local housing authorities each November. The Council conducts its annual Rough Sleeper Evaluation in partnership with Bedford based agencies and organisations which work locally with socially disadvantaged people.

In its publication Official Statistics 'Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2020' published on 25 February 2021, the MHCLG lists the following approaches local authorities can use to determine the number of rough sleepers:-

1. A count based estimate which is the number of people seen sleeping rough in the local authority on a 'typical night' - a single date chosen by the local authority between 1 October and 30 November.
2. An evidence based estimate meeting which is an evidence based assessment by local agencies, leading to a single snapshot figure that represents the number of people thought to be sleeping rough in the local authority on a 'typical night' - a single date chosen by the local authority between 1 October and 30 November.
3. An evidence based estimate meeting including a spotlight count which is the same as above, but with one of the evidence sources also including a street count, which might not be as extensive as the count based estimate but has taken place after midnight on the 'typical night'.

The Council uses the evidence based estimate meeting including a spotlight count to conduct its rough sleeper count (3 above), which requires a robust verification process confirming the number of people sleeping rough on that night.

Table 50 shows rough sleeper estimates undertaken between in November 2014 and November 2019 (the last official data pre-Covid) in Bedford Borough.

Table 50: Rough Sleeper estimates undertaken between in November 2014 and November 2019 in Bedford Borough

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Rough Sleeper Estimate	25	51	59	76	51	30
% Change (from previous year)	-4	104	16	29	-33	-41

Source: MHCLG – Annual Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England: Autumn 2019

Although there are a wide range of services provided to support the prevention of homelessness in the Borough, rough sleeping increased between 2014 and 2019, the date the last pre-Covid data was available for.

Of the 30 rough sleepers identified in November 2019:-

Gender

- 24 were male (41 in 2018)
- 6 female (10 in 2018)

Nationality

- 6 UK nationals (31 in 2018)
- 24 EU non-UK nationals (15 in 2018)
- 0 Nationality unknown (5 in 2018)

Age

- 0 were Under 18 (0 in 2018)
- 1 was 18 - 25 (2 in 2018)
- 22 were over 25 (46 in 2018)
- 7 rough sleepers ages were unknown (3 in 2018)

The increase in the number of people sleeping rough prior to Covid 19 was not an issue affecting Bedford Borough alone. The increase in the number of rough sleepers was also recorded at the national and regional level.

The Table below shows rough sleeper estimates between November 2014 and November 2019 for England as a whole and the East of England, the region the Council's figures are included within.

Table 51: Rough Sleeper estimates between November 2014 and November 2019 for England and the East of England

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
England Rough Sleeper Estimate	2,744	3,569	4,134	4,751	4,677	4,266
% Change (from previous year)	14	30	16	15	-2	-9
East of England Rough Sleeper Estimate	302	418	604	615	484	458
% Change (from previous year)	2	38	44	2	-21	-5

Source: MHCLG – Annual Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England: Autumn 2019

The figures in Table 51 for England and the East of England follow a similar pattern, though not as marked, as Bedford. Between 2015 – 2017, all saw an increase in rough sleeping and from 2018 all have seen rough sleeping reduce although all remain at a higher than at 2014.

Prior to the additional finances made available through the Rough Sleeping Initiative Fund in 2018, work to tackle rough sleeping was undertaken through the Rough Sleeper Partnership and Outreach Service.

In Bedford Borough the Rough Sleeper Partnership included SMART and the KAP, as well as Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and ELFT Community Mental Health Services. Its role was to actively identify, engage and provide support to those most vulnerable on the streets, sleeping rough and homeless.

The Street Outreach Team worked to identify those at high risk of becoming rough sleepers and work proactively to prevent them from moving on to the streets. The Team included three dedicated Mental Health Crisis Workers employed by ELFT and Central North West London Foundation Trust, alongside open referral into the service including mechanisms for self-referral.

The availability of additional funding from 2018 enabled the Council to significantly expand its support to tackle rough sleepers with the positive results seen in Table 50 above. Details are set out in 8.1.2 below.

8.1.2. Additional Funding to Tackle Rough Sleeping

Additional funding to tackle rough sleeping prior to Covid 19 came from two sources: the Rough Sleeping Initiative Fund and the Rapid Rehousing Pathways Fund.

- [Rough Sleeping Initiative Fund](#)

As part of the MHCLG Rough Sleeper Strategy published in August 2018, additional funding was made available to Councils to implement initiatives to reduce rough sleeping. A link to the MHCLG Rough Sleepers Strategy is published below:-

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy_WEB.pdf

Following an initial allocation to the Council of £307,477 for 2018 / 2019, the government subsequently confirmed a further allocation of £383,323 for 2019 / 2020. This funding was ring fenced to addressing rough sleeping and expenditure was closely monitored by MHCLG.

Details of the additional support posts and the additional accommodation initiatives funded by the MHCLG Rough Sleeping Initiative Fund in the Council for 2019 / 2020 are set out below:-

- **Additional Support Posts**

The following new posts were created to assist in the support of those who are sleeping rough:

Rough Sleeper Coordinator

The Rough Sleeper Coordinator appointed by the Council is responsible for:-

- Coordinating the activities of the Council and its partners in relation to supporting rough sleepers
- Developing and monitoring an Action Plan to ensure the delivery of the current rough sleeper initiatives
- Coordinating future funding bids with partners
- Liaison with the MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Advisor
- Organising bi-monthly counts of rough sleepers
- Submitting monthly data returns to the MHCLG
- Identifying gaps in service delivery and options to address any shortfall in services

Six Additional Third Sector Support Posts

Six additional outreach / support workers were employed from 24 September 2019 by SMART - a charity who work in partnership with professionals and housing providers in the Borough to help those who are rough sleeping. These workers are engaged with rough sleepers on the streets, at the Prebend Street Day Centre and night shelter assisting them into accommodation suited to their specific needs. Once accommodation is secured, the workers support the former rough sleeper to sustain their tenancy and to recover from the causes of their homelessness.

The initiative was reviewed for 2019 / 2020 in consultation MHCLG and extended to include a deputy manager with specific responsibility for the management of the Outreach Team.

- **Additional Accommodation**

The following additional accommodation was provided for those sleeping rough pre-Covid:-

Accommodation for Rough Sleepers

This initiative is closely linked to the six additional third sector support posts, described above.

Initially, eleven properties were sourced by way of difficult to let properties that were available through bpha. Whilst consideration will be given to any further hard to let properties owned by Registered Providers, the future focus of this initiative is to source tenancies from private sector landlords.

The outreach / support workers are integral to providing assurances to landlords that the tenants' obligations will be met. The tenant is supported by the outreach / support workers, who have already built a relationship with the individual, to maintain the new tenancy and avoid relapsing into rough sleeping.

Overnight Beds Provision

Funding was received to provide overnight beds during the winter period from 1 November 2018 to 31 March in 2019 and a further allocation was confirmed for the period 1 November 2019 to 31 March in 2020 allowing overnight beds to be provided continuously through 2019 / 2020.

The beds were operated on behalf of the Council by SMART and provided in the upper floors of a Council owned building located in the town centre which formed the 'Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub'.

The accommodation was only available overnight with those using the beds required to vacate the premises during the day. Around 14 people were accessing the beds on a regular basis.

This bed provision was in addition to the SWEP which is provided when temperatures overnight are predicted to be below freezing for three consecutive nights.

Unfortunately the arrival of Covid 19 meant the overnight bed provision at the 'Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub', which had been praised as an example of good practice by MHCLG, is no longer able to operate as it is not possible to maintain social distancing.

Additional Accommodation for People with “No Recourse to Public Funds”

This initiative is for two properties managed by the KAP for people from overseas who are not eligible for welfare benefits or statutory housing assistance. In addition to providing housing, the KAP also provides assistance in obtaining employment, e.g. providing an English as a Second Language course to enable those assisted to move on to settled accommodation.

- Rapid Rehousing Pathways Fund

The Council was also successful in bidding for funding through the ‘Rapid Rehousing Pathways fund’ and received £452,239 in 2019 / 2020. The fund aimed to deliver the Rough Sleeper Strategy objective to end rough sleeping through a rapid rehousing approach to include:-

- Rapid assessment of need and eligibility
- Rapid rehousing into an appropriate settled home and referral to support services where required.

The funds received by the Council financed one accommodation scheme and further posts:

Somewhere safe to stay hub

This is the 24/7 rapid assessment centre located in the town centre providing the following:-

- Reception and interview space
- ‘Sit-up’ provision to enable rough sleepers to have an immediate place to stay inside and be safe
- Washing and cooking facilities
- Referral to overnight bed provision
- Office space for outreach workers and Navigators

Temporary planning approval was secured for three years for use of the building as an assessment hub with emergency bed provision on the first floor. Work required to the property to make it suitable for this use included the reconfiguration of the ground floor to provide reception with interview space, the first floor for sit up and further interview space and the second floor provision of washing and laundry facilities along with staff office space.

As stated in Overnight Beds Provision above, unfortunately the arrival of Covid 19 has meant the emergency bed provision is no longer able to operate.

Navigators

These are two specialist posts who are employed by and working under the umbrella of the Council's Housing Options Service but co-located in the hub. This enabled the Council to deliver rapid statutory homelessness assessments and delivery of personal housing plans in close partnership with the existing outreach and other specialist housing pathway plans.

Two members of the Homelessness and Housing Advice Team were seconded into these roles and the funding used to fund agency workers to cover the secondees' substantive roles.

Local Lettings Officer Posts

This consists of two posts (employed on fixed term contracts) linking the work of the Council's Rehousing Team and the need for rapid move-on accommodation which is paramount to successful delivery of the Hub.

The local lettings officers build relationships with all forms of accommodation providers; private, public and third sector, including supported housing providers, making sure that the right accommodation is available to meet the often complex needs of individuals.

8.1.3. Impact of Additional Pre-Covid 19 Funding on Rough Sleeping

The implementation of the government funded initiatives outlined above, resulted in a significant reduction in the number of rough sleepers in the Borough.

The 2019 rough sleeping figure of 30 represents a reduction of 61% on 2017.

The fall of 41% in rough sleepers between autumn 2018 and autumn 2019 placed Bedford Borough tenth in the Table of local authorities with the ten largest decreases in the number of people sleeping rough in England. During the same period, there was a 9% decrease of people rough sleeping in England and a decrease of 5% in the East of England.

Table 52: Local authorities with the largest decrease in the number of people sleeping rough

Local Authority	2018	2019	Difference	% Change
Camden	141	65	-76	-54
Enfield	78	24	-54	-69
Birmingham	91	52	-39	-43
Manchester	123	91	-32	-26
Tameside	36	5	-31	-86
Cornwall	53	24	-29	-55
Hastings	48	21	-27	-56
City of London	67	41	-26	-39
Swale	32	10	-22	-69
Bedford	51	30	-21	-41

Source: MHCLG – Rough Sleeping snapshot in England: 2019 – Published 27 February 2020.

Table 53: Number of people sleeping rough by region

Area	2018	2019	Difference	% Change
England	4,677	4,266	-411	-9
Rest of England	3,394	3,130	-264	-8
London	1,283	1,136	-147	-11
West Midlands	420	319	-101	-24
North West	428	349	-79	-18
East Midlands	358	305	-53	-15
South East	934	900	-34	-4
East of England	484	458	-26	-5
Yorkshire and The Humber	246	242	-4	-2
North East	66	67	1	2

Area	2018	2019	Difference	% Change
South West	458	490	32	7

Source: MHCLG – Rough Sleeping snapshot in England: 2019 – Published 27 February 2020.

Although the availability of additional funds enabled the Council to achieve significant success in reducing the number of persons sleeping rough, as of April 2020 there remained a considerable challenge to, working inventively with our many partners, achieve the government’s goal of ending rough sleeping for good by 2027.

At that time the arrival of the Covid 19 pandemic completely changed the rough sleeping landscape.

8.2. Rough Sleeping in Bedford Borough – The Environment Post the Advent of Covid 19

8.2.1. Accommodation for those Sleeping Rough during the Covid 19 Pandemic

Prior to Covid 19 it had largely been the Council’s practice to provide accommodation only where it was under a statutory Duty to do so. Having said this, it had, however, provided funding for a night shelter and proactively engaged with the recent rough sleeper initiatives, which enabled the provision of the ‘Somewhere Safe to Stay’ hub.

With the introduction of the national lockdown in late March 2020 to tackle the Covid19 pandemic, local housing authorities were asked by the government to ensure all homeless persons, including rough sleepers and people in hostel type night shelters, were provided with accommodation. The accommodation needed to be suitable to enable them to comply with the lockdown restrictions in order to minimise the risk of the spread of the virus.

- Emergency Hotel Accommodation

Since 1 April 2020 in line with the request from central government, the Council has ensured there is sufficient non-statutory temporary and emergency accommodation available so there is no need for anyone in the Borough to sleep rough. The Council has achieved this by securing a block booking for 64 rooms at a hotel in the town centre to provide individual en-suite rooms.

Many of the people sleeping rough or at risk of doing so in the Borough are known to have complex needs. Often these can contribute to anti-social behaviour that can be difficult to manage. From the outset therefore, robust support services have been put in place at the hotel.

The rough sleeper support services that were being provided at the 'Somewhere Safe to Stay' hub detailed in 8.1.2 above have been transferred to the hotel together with support services provided by the KAP. In addition, as part of the local response to the pandemic, a rough sleeping and homelessness joint working cell has been established. This has brought together a wide range of partners to support the people accommodated at the hotel.

Partners in the cell include:

- Bedford Borough Council Community Safety Team
- Bedfordshire Police
- ELFT
- Bedford Borough Council Public Health
- CCG (NHS & Safeguarding)
- Bedford Borough Council Adult Social Care Services
- Bedford Borough Council Housing Assessment and Advice Service
- Prison & Probation Service
- Bedfordshire Fire Service
- Samaritans Partnership
- Bedford Hospital Safeguarding Team

The hotel has proved to be a particularly suitable venue for accommodating those at risk of rough sleeping for the following reasons:

- It provides good quality accommodation.
- It is located in the town centre.
- It has been able to provide rooms for support services, security and drug and alcohol triage clinics.
- It has been able to provide catering which is essential as the usual charitable food providers could not operate.

The combination of good quality accommodation and the broad partnership approach to delivering comprehensive support has combined to provide a unique opportunity to engage with homeless people who

may otherwise have been hard to reach and may not have wished to seek support from the Council or partners agencies.

Initial estimates were 60 to 70 people would require accommodation. This was based on knowledge of those:-

- Sleeping rough.
- Residing at the 'Somewhere Safe to Stay' hub.
- Persons displaced from the night shelter, due to its reduced capacity.

At August 2020 there were 44 people accommodated at the hotel, of which just 7 were from the original group of 60 to 70 expected to require accommodation. Since the hotel arrangements were put in place, a total of 170 people have been provided with accommodation. The majority of the 126 people who have left have moved on to more secure forms of accommodation as shown in Table 54 below. This clearly demonstrates the success of this initiative.

Table 54: Move on Outcomes from the Hotel Accommodation Provided in Response to the Covid 19 Pandemic

Reason for Moving On	Number of Individuals	Percentage
Supported Housing	29	23.0%
Private Rented Sector	29	23.0%
Returned to Family Home	7	5.6%
Social Housing	3	2.4%
Statutory Temporary Accommodation	13	10.3%
Night Shelter	5	4.0%
Sent to Prison	2	1.6%
Admitted to Hospital	1	0.8%
Reconnected to Home Country	6	4.8%
Staying with Family or Friends	10	7.9%
Moved from the Area	4	3.2%
Not known	16	12.7%
Rough Sleeping	1	0.8%
Totals	126	100.1%

Source: Future Strategy To Prevent Rough Sleeping – Report to Bedford Borough Council Housing Committee – 09 September 2020

To bring the Review fully up to date, between 1st April and the end of December 2020 a total of 261 rough sleepers had been accommodated by the Council. Of these:-

- 127 had moved in to settled accommodation.
- 40 moved to temporary accommodation.
- 53 were in the town centre hotel.
- 3 were accommodated in the Severe Weather Emergency Accommodation provided by the Council.
- 4 had moved out of the area.
- 4 had been sent to prison
- 30 were no longer in contact.

In addition to the hotel accommodation, a daily outreach service continues to operate to identify any new cases of rough sleeping and to verify the number of people sleeping rough. The November 2020 Rough Sleeper Count, recorded 6 persons who are currently sleeping rough in the Borough. This is a reduction of 24 from the 2019 count.

- Next Steps Accommodation Programme

In response to the success of local authorities across the country in rapidly delivering short term accommodation for rough sleepers, the government published a prospectus for a 'Next Steps Accommodation Programme' (NSAP) on 18 July 2020. A link to the programme details is copied below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/next-steps-accommodation-programme-guidance-and-proposal-templates>

The NSAP aimed to ensure that as few people as possible return to sleeping rough by providing new capital and revenue funding to enable local authorities to deliver new long-term supported housing aimed specifically for rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping. It also offered funding to continue to provide short term accommodation until the new supported housing is delivered. Further revenue funding was available through the Programme to provide additional support linked to the accommodation for up to three years from 2021 / 2022.

MHCLG has worked with local authorities to co-produce funding proposals through specialist Rough Sleeping Advisors and its Housing and Advice Support Team. Bedford Borough is considered a priority due to the high number of rough sleepers reported in recent years.

In view of the opportunity to access funding which offered an unprecedented opportunity to put in place a long-term programme to tackle rough sleeping and prevent people from becoming entrenched rough sleepers in the future, a number of options have been explored by the Council. The Programme itself presented an opportunity to increase the overall supply of housing in the Borough, rather than simply repurpose existing accommodation.

In response to the programme, the Council submitted a bid for funding toward delivering 46 units of supported housing by 31 March 2021. The accommodation to be made up of:-

- 20 units from the purchase and redevelopment of vacant office accommodation.
- 26 units of modular housing, with provision for 24 hour on-site support.

The outcome of the bid has seen the Council secure funding to provide 20 of the 46 units of accommodation applied for with the purchase of Rogers Court. This was completed in December 2020.

The long-term revenue costs of providing the accommodation are to be met from rental income generated. An accompanying bid was also submitted for revenue funding to enable the provision of intense support services from 2021 / 2022 to 2023 / 2024.

The new accommodation at Rogers Court will become available around the end of August 2021. Given the success of the arrangements at the town centre hotel, the Council's preference is to maintain the existing arrangements until such time as people can be transferred into the new accommodation. A bid has been successful for short term funding to enable the continuation of the current hotel arrangements up until the end of March 2021.

At the end of December 2020 however, there were 66 rough sleepers in short term accommodation. The additional 20 units of accommodation obtained through NSAP is to be welcomed, but this still leaves a challenge to secure accommodation for 46 potential rough sleepers when the funding for short term accommodation comes to an end.

The capital funding is to be provided through Homes England and subject to terms and conditions, including a requirement that newly constructed or converted accommodation must be used for housing for persons at risk of sleeping rough or homeless for a minimum of 60 years.

- Severe Weather Emergency Accommodation

Prior to 2020, to reduce the risk of rough sleepers dying during cold weather, the Council together with funding from the CCG, operated a SWEP with SMART. The funding allowed a 'night café' to open where the temperature was forecast to be 0 degrees or less for 3 consecutive nights.

The 'night café' offered rough sleepers a warm, safe and secure place to sleep in addition to an evening meal and breakfast. Where appropriate clients were signposted to other support and medical services.

With the advent of the Covid 19 pandemic and most rough sleepers being housed in the hotel in Bedford town centre, less severe weather accommodation has been required in 2020. However as there remains a small number of people sleeping rough, the Council has successfully submitted a bid for additional funds for winter provision made available through MHCLG.

The additional funding provides:-

- **Two rooms to be available at all times in the night shelter to enable direct access out of hours.** This:
 - prevents people having to rough sleep for a night whilst it is verified they are genuinely rough sleeping before being offered accommodation at the hotel
 - prevents people coming to Bedford if direct access was available to the hotel (this happened in April before the verification process was introduced)
- **Two units at Rothbury Court with basic facilities (camp bed etc).** This enables the Council to offer shelter to anyone banned (either temporarily or permanently) from the hotel when in a SWEP situation. The majority find sofa surfing arrangements but there are some who sleep rough until they can return to the hotel (or find alternative arrangements). For those who are banned, these units provide shelter from the severe weather as there are no other SWEP shelters available this year.
- **Additional outreach support.** This allows the Council to verify rough sleepers at all times of the day and to try and bring people into the hotel without them having to sleep out in the winter months and in particular

during SWEP triggered times. This extra resource enables more welfare checking and support to those who do not take up offers of accommodation and choose to stay out.

- **Day time respite from the cold.** With the day centre and hub closed, the funding provides this additional outreach resource to support people who would be out in the cold to access (on a one to one basis) the day centre and hub for a hot shower, something to eat, laundry facilities and time indoors during the day to get respite from the cold.
- **Additional security.** This adds to the security already at the hotel to try and limit the number of people the Council may have to ban during the winter months. It also monitors the Rothbury Court units during SWEP periods.

Depending on the Covid 19 situation, 'standard' severe weather precautions may return from the winter of 2021.

8.2.2. Housing First

Housing First is described by homeless link as a housing support approach which:

- Gives people who have experienced homelessness and chronic health and social care needs a stable home from which to rebuild their lives.
- Provides intensive, person-centred, holistic support that is open ended.
- Places no conditions on individuals; however, they should desire to have a tenancy.

The approach was first developed in New York by Pathways to Housing in 1992. It has since been widely adopted in the USA and become central to the national homelessness strategies in Canada, Denmark, Finland and France and increasingly adopted in England from 2016. Housing First pilots are operating in Newcastle, London, the Midlands, Greater Manchester, on the South Coast and in Wales and Scotland

With the advent of Covid 19, the Council has found accommodation for 126 (Table 54) persons who were sleeping rough in the Borough in both the social and private sectors. Where persons have been housed in a Housing First approach, this provides the opportunity for the Council and its partners to monitor how successful this proves to be when compared to those assisted through the more traditional route of assisting entrenched rough sleepers with multiple and complex needs through hostel or supported accommodation before moving on to independent living.

Collating and analysing the outcomes for rough sleepers rehoused through the Housing First approach may help shape the Council's future direction in assisting rough sleepers. If it proves to be successful, it can added as an additional option in determining and providing the most effective approaches to tackling rough sleeping in the Borough.

A link to the homeless link website which provides additional details in respect of the Housing First approach in England is copied below:-

<https://www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/national-projects/housing-first-england>

8.3. Other Rough Sleeping Services

8.3.1. Prebend Street Day Centre

SMART has run the Prebend Street Day Centre, since September 2017. This is a drop in service where referrals are not required. It provides facilities, support and guidance with the aim to relieve rough sleeping and to prevent further homelessness.

The Day Centre in Bedford is open every day of the year, supporting those who sleep rough, are vulnerably housed and often face issues around social isolation and exclusion. It is a place of safety, meeting the basic needs of service users; providing food, warmth, water, a place to get clean and rest. Services provided include:

- Breakfast, lunch, emergency food packs;
- Showers and toiletries;
- Clothes;
- Phone and postal services;
- Advocacy and signposting;
- Clinics provided by nurses, chiropodists and vets.

The Day Centre can see up to 70 people a day, but numbers are usually around 100 a week. Staff have noticed the female homeless population is increasing, but the majority of clients are white European men. A number of these are Eastern European men with no recourse to public funds.

Unfortunately, as with the Somewhere Safe to Stay hub, the advent of the Covid 19 pandemic has meant that, for the time being, the Day Centre has had to temporarily close. Its services are however running from the hotel sourced to accommodate rough sleepers in Bedford town centre.

8.3.2. Bedford Homeless Partnership

Bedford Homeless Partnership provides a free data base internet resource for members of the public and professionals. It allows users to locate a wide range of services and people who can help homeless households in Bedford. Membership of Partnership is open to all groups and organisations who are involved in homeless service delivery and individuals with direct experience of homelessness.

The partnership works on the basis that one organisation does not have all of the answers, or that there should be a one-size-fits-all approach to homeless support. They recognise that the issues that cause someone to become homeless are complex and that if different charities and groups unite this will assist in meeting their goal of ending homelessness in Bedford. A link to the Bedford Homeless Partnership is copied here:-

<https://www.bedfordhomeless.org.uk/>

8.3.3. Health Services for Rough Sleepers

Access to health services is a key issue for Rough Sleepers. For homeless persons not registered with a doctor, Bedfordshire CCG commissions primary care outreach services for rough sleepers via the Goldington Medical Practice which is part of the De Parys Group.

Prior to the advent of Covid 19, these included a local GP, nurse and dentist operating from the night shelter and regular clinics provided by nurses, chiropodists and vets at SMART Prebend Day Centre. Post the arrival of Covid 19, medical services have been provided by the De Parys Group from the town centre hotel.

Clients can have immediate medical needs attended to and, where necessary, referrals are made to other services. Clients are encouraged to sign up with a GP. The health issues of men and women can differ, but common concerns include mental and sexual health.

Rough Sleeping – Issues Identified for Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 / 2028

- Continue to secure funding to assist the provision of accommodation and support for rough sleeping and those at risk of rough sleeping from all available sources.
- To deliver the additional 20 units of accommodation for rough sleepers at Rogers Court achieved through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme, by 30 August 2021.
- To explore the reasons for the disproportionate number of Eastern Europeans who are rough sleeping in the Borough and with partners continue to explore ways in which this can be addressed.
- Use data collected from the rehousing of Sleepers during the Covid 19 pandemic to determine the success of the Housing First approach. If it has been a success then to adopt this approach going forward.

Appendix 1

Hostel, Supported Housing & Support Provision

The Borough benefits from a wide range of Council and alternatively funded hostel, supported housing and support provision for persons who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This Appendix details these including floating support (support provided to individuals not linked to a specific housing scheme) and where relevant provides some data in relation to their outcomes. Some provisions, such as the night shelter, are specifically for those who are homeless or sleeping rough. Others, such as the provision for teenage parents, contribute to preventing homelessness by assisting those who might otherwise be at risk.

The provisions aim to provide the support, opportunities and life skills required by those who use their services to assist them to get back in to main stream accommodation. Where required ongoing assistance is arranged to give residents moving on the best possible opportunity to continue to develop their skills and sustain their new accommodation.

The Council's Supported Housing Strategy 2017 – 2022 is available here:

https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Files/FINAL_Supported_Housing_Strategy_-_September_2017.pdf

Details of Hostels, Supported Housing and Floating Support provision are set out below.

A) Hostel and Supported Housing Provision

- **Council Funded Accommodation**

Access to hostels funded by the Council is through the CDPsoft referral system (with the exception of the night shelter which is direct access emergency accommodation). Hostels funded by alternative means can be accessed directly by the client or through referrals made by other agencies.

Table A1 below, sets out the supported housing accommodation based services which receive funding from the Council.

Table A1: Supported Housing Accommodation Based Services receiving Council Funding

Supported Housing Services		
Provider	Name of Scheme	Total No of Units
Homelessness Providers		
Kings Arms Project	Night shelter	18
YMCA	Supported Lodgings	8
YMCA	Cornerstone House	25 (8 Spaces SP funded)
YMCA	Weaver House	25 (14 Spaces SP funded)
One Support	Clarence House	29
Teenage Parents		
Home Group	Charis & Foster Hill Road	10
Domestic Abuse		
Stonewater	South Asian Women's Refuge (SAWR)	6
Places for People	Butterfly House	10
Mental Health		
Penrose Trust	Holman House	19
Total SP Funded Units		124

- **Emergency Instant Access Accommodation - Bedford Night Shelter**

Run by the Kings Arms Project (KAP) the night shelter is for individuals of 18 years and over who have nowhere else to stay. It is a direct access hostel providing 18 bed spaces. The minimum stay is one night with the maximum being 10 weeks.

Due to emergency nature of the night shelter, unlike other Council funded schemes, access is by self-referral rather than through the CDPsoft system. The night shelter staff support clients with applications for hostel accommodation or to join

the Housing Register in addition to signposting them to other services such as the Housing Assessment and Advice Team. It enables client's access to a number of other services including:-

- Evening and morning meals
- Basic personal hygiene toiletry facilities
- Clothing store
- Laundry service
- Medical care offering health checks.

Due to the health implications of the Covid 19 pandemic, although the night shelter is continuing to operate, guidance provided has led to a reduction in bed spaces from 18 to six. This is to allow for social distancing and to minimise the risk to both clients and staff. The loss of the twelve bed spaces has been accounted for in the additional provision provided by the Council at a town centre hotel as set out in the Rough Sleepers section of this Review.

- **Young People at Risk**

YMCA Supported Lodgings

Supported Lodgings are for young people who are in or working towards education, training or employment; who want a safe, homely environment to concentrate on achieving their potential and becoming successful contributors to the community. Placements last from a few months to 2 years.

Referrals are made through the Council's Leaving and After Care Team.

YMCA Young Persons at Risk Hostel

Cornerstone House is a 25 bed supported accommodation project for young single homeless males and females aged 16-24. Residents must participate in a programme of support and work to achieve Action Plan outcomes. Staff provide advice and support on living and social skills, access to employment and training and attending appointments.

Move on support is provided through a three stage process and resettlement workbook.

- **Single Homeless Adults with Support Needs – Weaver House**

Weaver House is a 29 bed supported accommodation project for single homeless men and women aged 18-65 run by the YMCA. Residents are allocated a key worker and work to achieve Action Plan outcomes. Staff provide advice and support on basic living skills, access to training and employment. The key worker can also provide assistance with finding move on accommodation and a follow up floating support service is available for up to 6 months.

- **Complex Needs - Clarence House**

Clarence House opened in March 2018 and is a key addition to existing services employed in tackling homelessness across the Borough.

It is a purpose-built hostel having 29 self-contained studio apartments with a team of support staff available 24/7, including specialist support officers to assist residents with a range of complex needs. It is managed and run by One Housing Group.

Entry to the scheme is through referral only. For persons referred to the Scheme, once they take up residency a key worker is allocated and a personal support plan drawn up. Depending on the residents' needs, they can stay for up to 18 months.

The aim of Clarence House is to help people to live independently. Persons who do not reach that goal during their time at the scheme, are referred on to another agency where they can continue to receive support towards achieving the goal of independent living.

Twelve of the rooms are dedicated to rough sleepers who lead the most chaotic lifestyles. They have often tried and failed to get help through other services and may have previously been excluded from alternative supported living in Bedford. Clarence House provides a safe environment for these individuals, enabling them to re-engage with the services available to them.

The other 17 units are for people with medium to high needs, who are likely to be more engaged with the system but require additional support to sustain independent living.

The Clarence House model is one which has worked successfully elsewhere in the United Kingdom. During its first two years of pre-Covid operation it assisted in reducing the number of Rough Sleepers in the Borough from 51 in November 2018 to 30 in November 2019. The success of Clarence house is demonstrated in Table A2 below.

Table A2: Clarence House Outcomes - 2017 / 2018 to 2019 / 2020

Outcomes	2017 / 2018*	2018 / 2019 (Percentages)	2019 / 2020 (Percentages)	Overall Totals (Percentages)
Planned	N/A	13 (59.1%)	9 (75%)	22 (64.7%)
Unplanned	N/A	9 (40.1%)	3 (25%)	12 (35.3%)
Annual Totals	N/A	22	12	34

Source: Data from CDPsoft Referral Figures

*Although Clarence House opened in March 2018, it was too late in the financial year for any resident to have taken up occupancy and moved on either in a Planned or Unplanned way.

As the operation of Clarence House has settled in and links developed with the other agencies working within the Borough, the percentage of Planned Outcomes in the two full financial years it has been taking referrals has increased from 59.1% to 75%, giving an average of 64.7%.

This compares favourably to Barton House, the previous accommodation for single homeless persons with high or Complex needs. In 2014 / 2015 (the date of the last Review) planned outcomes from Barton House stood at 52.6%.

The complex needs of the client group assisted by Clarence House means the number of clients moving on is relatively low compared to other schemes.

- **Teenage Parents Schemes - Stonham (Home Group)**

The two teenage parent schemes provide a total of 13 units of accommodation and are run by Home Group. Their objectives are to prevent homelessness and provide young mothers with a holistic package of support to successfully develop the skills they need when they move on from the accommodation provided.

The figures set out in Tables A3 to A5 below, clearly demonstrate the ongoing success of the teenage parents schemes in the Borough. Out of 30 referrals made during the three year period, only one outcome has not been planned providing a success rate of 96.67%.

Table A3: Referrals and Outcomes to the Teenage Parents Schemes in 2017 / 2018

Referrals & Outcomes 2017 / 2018	Numbers	Unplanned Outcomes as % of Referrals
Referrals Made	12	
Planned	15	
Unplanned	0	0%

Source: Data from CDPsoft Referral Figures

Table A4: Referrals and Outcomes to the Teenage Parents Schemes in 2018 / 2019

Outcomes 2018 / 2019	Numbers	Unplanned Outcomes as % of Referrals
Referrals Made	8	
Planned	12	
Unplanned	1	12.5%

Source: Data from CDPsoft Referral Figures

Table A5: Referrals and Outcomes to the Teenage Parents Schemes in 2019 / 2020

Outcomes 2019 / 2020	Numbers	Unplanned Outcomes as % of Referrals
Referrals Made	10	
Planned	11	
Unplanned	0	0%

Source: Data from CDPsoft Referral Figures

- **Refuges for women fleeing domestic abuse**

Bedford Borough is provided with refuge spaces in the Bedford Women's Refuge and the South Asian Women's Refuge.

The South Asian Women's Refuge benefits from recent investment in the building that it occupies but the Bedford Women's Refuge operates from a building that would benefit from improvement or possible replacement. In this regard a site to provide a new purpose built refuge has been identified.

It should be noted that the refuge services will usually be accessed by clients from outside of the Bedford Borough area as it is generally not safe for those fleeing domestic abuse to remain in their home area.

- **Mental Health - Holman House**

Holman House provides 19 supported self-contained bedsits and flats for people with mental health issues. All have ensuite bathroom facilities and five also have kitchen facilities included. The clients are assigned a key worker who supports them to move towards independent living in the community. The maximum stay is 2 years.

Since November 2016, the scheme has been managed by the Penrose Trust.

The figures set out in Tables A6 to A8 below demonstrate the ongoing positive outcomes from Holman House. Out of 43 referrals made during the three year period, 13 were unplanned providing a success rate of 69.8%.

Table A6: Referrals and Outcomes to Holman House in 2017 / 2018

Referrals & Outcomes 2017 / 2018	Numbers	Unplanned Outcomes as % of Referrals
Referrals Made	14	
Planned	14	
Unplanned	2	14.3%

Source Data from CDPsoft Referral Figures

Table A7: Referrals and Outcomes to Holman House in 2018 / 2019

Outcomes 2018 / 2019	Numbers	Unplanned Outcomes as % of Referrals
Referrals Made	22	
Planned	9	
Unplanned	7	31.8%

Source: Data from CDPsoft Referral Figures

Table A8: Referrals and Outcomes to Holman House in 2019 / 2020

Outcomes 2019 / 2020	Numbers	Unplanned Outcomes as % of Referrals
Referrals Made	43	
Planned	7	
Unplanned	4	9.3%

Source: Data from CDPsoft Referral Figures

B) Floating and other Support Provision

The Borough also benefits from a wide range of Council and alternatively funded floating supported services for persons who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless.

- **Council Funded Floating Support**

Details of Floating Support Services funded through the Council are set out below.

Table A9: Council Funded Floating Support Services for Homeless Persons

Floating Support Services		
Provider	Name of Scheme	Total No of Units
Homelessness Providers		
Kings Arms Project	Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker	12
Domestic Abuse		
Victim Support	IDVA Floating Support	100 (across the County)
Victim Support	Hospital IDVA	No Limit
Floating Support		
One Support	Generic Floating Support	160
Total Units		

- **Single Homeless & Rough Sleepers - Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker**

The Rough Sleepers Outreach Worker employed by the KAP, brings support to long-term rough sleepers who are not engaging with available services or who have been serially excluded from them.

Clients are engaged through street work, assessing how best to support them and help them break free from life on the streets and move into suitable accommodation. The Outreach Worker can signpost to relevant agencies and services that can assist the rough sleeper in gaining accommodation and ongoing support to maintain it.

The aim of the service is to help rough sleepers to regain choice and responsibility for their lives.

- **Support for Victims of Domestic Abuse**

The following support services are available to those who are suffering from domestic abuse:

- **Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVA)**

In addition to refuge spaces, the local authority co-funds the IDVA service with Central Bedfordshire Council. To run alongside the Bedfordshire IDVA Service, Victim Support also runs the Luton IDVA Service and has an IDVA based within Bedford Hospital. The Bedfordshire Service covers both Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire authority areas.

The IDVA service is SafeLives Leading Lights accredited and provides specialist short term crisis intervention, safety planning and support for victims of domestic abuse to be at the highest risk of harm. IDVAs receive SafeLives accredited training which provides them with comprehensive knowledge covering a range of topics including risk assessing, support planning, honour based violence, forced marriage, impact of domestic abuse on children, housing options and the criminal justice system (including civil and criminal proceedings and remedies).

In the period April 2018 – March 2019 the IDVA service:

- Received 539 referrals.
- 73% engaged with the service for ongoing support and develop support and safety plans to meet their individual needs.
- All clients not engaging for ongoing support were given useful contact numbers, initial safety advice and IDVA contact details for the service should they want further support.
- Attended 100% of Bedford MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) meetings to advocate on behalf of victims and work with partners to help mitigate risk.
- Attended 100% SDVC (Specialist Domestic Violence Court) to be a conduit between Crown Prosecution Service, magistrates and victims of domestic abuse.
- Hospital IDVA received 80 referrals ranging from low to high risk.

In the period April 2019 – March 2020 the IDVA service

- Received 368 referrals.
- 56.3% engaged with the service for ongoing support and develop support and safety plans to meet their individual needs.

- All clients not engaging for ongoing support were given useful contact numbers, initial safety advice and IDVA contact details for the service should they want further support.
 - Attended 100% of Bedford MARAC meetings to advocate on behalf of victims and work with partners to help mitigate risk.
 - attended 100% SDVC to be a conduit between Crown Prosecution Service, magistrates and victims of domestic abuse
- Hospital IDVA received 106 referrals ranging from low to high risk.
 - **The Council's Domestic Abuse Webpage**

The Council has a Domestic Abuse website page which provides help and advice to those suffering from domestic abuse, the link to which is given below

<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/environmental-issues/community-safety/domestic-abuse/#>

C) Independently Funded Hostel Accommodation, Floating Support & Advice Services

Due to the significant number of independently funded accommodation and support services for homeless households in the Borough, it is not practical to include a detailed description of them all of the in this Review.

All of these services however, have an important role to play in the prevention and relief of homelessness in addition to assisting with rough sleeping. Table A10 details independently funded hostel accommodation, floating support and advice services for homeless persons which is available in the Borough.

Table A10: Independently funded Hostel / Day Centre accommodation for the homeless persons which is available in the Borough.

Organisation	Client Group	Referrals	No. Bed spaces
Amicus Trust Ltd Alexandra House	Single homeless	Self or any appropriate supporting agency	10
Amicus Trust Ltd Bedford Methodist Outreach, The Bridge Hostel	Homeless males – Young people at risk / leaving care	Self or any appropriate supporting agency	9

Amicus Trust Ltd Perkins House	Homeless women – Young people at risk / leaving care	Self or any appropriate supporting agency	8
Amicus Trust Ltd Project 14	Single homeless	Self or any appropriate supporting agency	14
Amicus Trust Ltd Hero's House	Single Veterans of the UK armed forces who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, aged between 16-65	Self or any appropriate supporting agency	12
Athena Housing and Support Lavender house	Young People at Risk / Leaving Care	Appropriate supporting agency	6
Athena Housing and Support Various Units	Young People at Risk / Leaving Care	Appropriate supporting agency	19
Bedfordshire Supported Housing Ltd Amphill Road	Supported living for people with a mental health problem	Appropriate supporting agency	10
Bedfordshire Supported Housing Ltd Rutland Road	Supported living for people with a mental health problem	Appropriate supporting agency	5
Bedfordshire Supported Housing Ltd Grafton Road	Supported living for people with a mental health problem	Appropriate supporting agency	5
Bedfordshire Supported Housing Ltd Francis House	Supported living for people with a mental health problem	Appropriate supporting agency	6
Bedfordshire Supported Housing Ltd Foster Hill Road	Supported living for people with a mental health problem	Appropriate supporting agency	7
Bedfordshire Supported Housing Ltd Newnham Avenue	Supported living for people with a mental health problem	Appropriate supporting agency	5
Bpha Sisters House & Warwick Avenue	Supported living for people with a mental health problem	Appropriate supporting agency	17
Care Success Chantry Avenue	Young People at Risk / Leaving Care	Appropriate supporting agency	5
Care Success Marigold Way	Young People at Risk / Leaving Care	Appropriate supporting agency	3
Care Success Victor Close	Young People at Risk / Leaving Care	Appropriate supporting agency	4
Care Success Kirkstall Close	Young People at Risk / Leaving Care	Appropriate supporting agency	3
Catalyst Housing Limited Angel View	Supported living for people with a mental health problem	Self or any appropriate supporting agency	8
Catalyst Housing Limited Shakespeare Road	Supported living for people with a mental health problem	Self or any appropriate supporting agency	4

Each One Homes Blue Rain House & Precious House	Young People at Risk / Leaving Care	Appropriate supporting agency	12
Emmaus Village Carlton	Homeless adults	Self-referral or any third party organisation	42
Kings Arms Project Althorpe Street	Single homeless persons with support needs	Self-referral or any third party organisation	2
Kings Arms Project Bunyan Centre Bungalow	Single homeless persons with support needs	Self-referral or any third party organisation	4
Langley House Trust	Adult male offenders	Self-referral or any third party organisation	20
Polish British Integration Centre	Advice, support and signposting for migrants from Poland and Eastern Europe who have a housing need or at risk of becoming homeless	Self-referral or any third party organisation	Advice
Prebend Day Centre	Homeless, rootless, disadvantaged, vulnerable, those with alcohol, drug and solvent problems – anyone who needs support – 16+	Self and any organisation. Open door policy but security gate in operation	Day Centre Only
Support For You Bedfordshire James Kelly House	Young People at Risk / Leaving Care	Appropriate supporting agency	4
Together Kelvin Grove	Supported living for people with a mental health problem	Self-referral or any third party organisation	12
YMCA Bedford Foyer	16-25 years old in housing need unemployed or on low income	Housing Register, Social Services, Youth workers and Others	34
YMCA Crash Pads	Emergency accommodation for 16 / 17 year olds. Length of stay ranges from 1– 21 days	MASH	No set figure
YMCA Linden House	Stage 2 move on accommodation primarily for 18 to 65 year olds from Weaver House	YMCA move on accommodation	16
YMCA Number 10	Stage 2 move on accommodation primarily for 18 to 65 year olds from any YMCA housing project	YMCA Move on accommodation	6

Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Review December 2020 Update 2023

Informing a new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy for Bedford Borough.

Contents

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Background
- 1.2 The Covid Pandemic

2. Legislative and National Context update

- 2.1 Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- 2.2 From Harm to Hope 2021
- 2.3 Ending Rough Sleeping for Good 2022
- 2.4 Renters (Reform) Bill 2023
- 2.5 Census 2021
- 2.6 Global Political Environment
- 2.7 National and International Economic Environment

3. Local Context update

- 3.1 Bedford Borough's Strategy to Address & Reduce Domestic Abuse 2021 – 2026
- 3.2 Ending Rough Sleeping Plan (Rough Sleeper Initiatives) 2022 – 2025

4. Statistics Update

- 4.1 Summary
- 4.2 Key Data Update
- 4.3 Census Data Update

5. Conclusion

Appendix 1 – Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2019 / 2020

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

- 1.1.1. Bedford Borough Council's previous Homelessness Strategy covered the period 2016 – 2021. In March 2023 this was extended to cover the period to June 2024 to allow additional time for the development of a new strategy to be undertaken.
- 1.1.2. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires that local authorities undertake a review of homelessness in their area every five years and, based on the findings of the review, develop and publish a new strategy for tackling homelessness in their districts.
- 1.1.3. In August 2018, the MHCLG published its Rough Sleeper Strategy, which sets out a requirement for all local authorities to update and rebadge their strategies as 'homelessness and rough sleeping' and to include rough sleeping as part of their reviews.
- 1.1.4. The Council completed such a review in December 2020 (Appendix 1). Since that time, work on developing a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been delayed due to ongoing continuous and significant change in the delivery of homelessness and rough sleeping services through the post Covid pandemic period. The impact of some of these changes has meant that the 2020 Review now requires an update to ensure that the new strategy, upon which it is based, is effective for the future.
- 1.1.5. This Update does not re-examine all of the information contained in the 2020 Review. It focusses on those matters which have changed significantly, and which have a noteworthy impact on the delivery of homelessness and rough sleeping services and are therefore of importance in the drafting of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029 (the New Strategy).
- 1.1.6. Based upon the findings of the 2020 Review and this update, the New Strategy must set out how the Council will;

- Prevent homelessness.
- Secure sufficient accommodation for people who are, or may become, homeless.
- Deliver support to people who are, or may become, homeless, or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

1.2. The Covid Pandemic

- 1.2.1. The aftermath of the Covid pandemic and its accompanying lockdowns have brought a new focus on the needs of people experiencing homelessness, which has had a substantial impact on their lives and practice in this area of work. The success of the Government's 'Everyone In' initiative in 2020, which enabled local authorities to offer accommodation to anyone rough sleeping or living in shared facility night shelters, and thereby protection from Covid19, has demonstrated what can be achieved when there is investment and coordinated intervention aiming to meet people's accommodation, physical and mental health, and care and support needs.
- 1.2.2. The pandemic, however, has also led to a significant increase in the number of individuals and families in need of homelessness and rough sleeper services including an unprecedented number of households living in emergency and temporary accommodation.
- 1.2.3. Changes to our priorities in respect of homelessness and rough sleeping, the actions required and the financial considerations post-pandemic will be reflected in the New Strategy.

2. Legislative and National Context Update

The 2020 Review detailed the full legislative and national context at that time. The key additions, changes and / or potential changes that will influence the New Strategy are as follows:

2.1. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which came into force on 29th April 2021, changed the homelessness legislation to give automatic priority need to survivors of domestic abuse. Changes to homelessness legislation mean that the new statutory definition of 'domestic abuse' replaces the term 'domestic violence' and people made homeless due to being a victim of domestic abuse have automatic priority need for homelessness assistance.

These changes are brought about by amendments to Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and to the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002.

2.2. From harm to hope 2021

The Government's 10-year drugs plan, published in December 2021, to cut crime and save lives, includes focus on making sure that the needs of people with drug addictions are addressed to reduce harm and support recovery. The strategy works alongside the commitment to end rough sleeping and break the cycle of homelessness often associated with drug addiction. It sets out investment in the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant (RSDATG) to improve services for people who sleep rough or are at risk of sleeping rough.

The full plan is available here; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/from-harm-to-hope-a-10-year-drugs-plan-to-cut-crime-and-save-lives>

2.3. Ending Rough Sleeping for Good 2022

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) published its new strategy to end rough sleeping, reflecting on the significant progress that has been made since the 2018 National Rough Sleeping Strategy. The strategy sets out how it will deliver:

- Better prevention,
- Swift and effective intervention
- Extra help to aid recovery.
- Where rough sleeping does happen, for it to be rare, brief and non-recurrent.

The full publication is available here; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-rough-sleeping-for-good>

The strategy includes the delivery of homes and wrap-around support through accommodation funding programmes which led on from the first Next Steps Accommodation Programme in 2020. The most recent funding announcement is the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme. (SHAP).

Details and prospectus are available here; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/single-homelessness-accommodation-programme>

2.4. Renters (Reform) Bill 2023

In June 2022 DLUHC published its white paper; 'A fairer private rented sector' setting out plans to fundamentally reform the private rented sector and level up housing quality.

The Renters (Reform) Bill sets out reforms proposed in the white paper introduced to parliament in May 2023. One of the measures set out in the Bill abolishes section 21 'no fault' evictions and moves to a simpler tenancy structure. Any consequential changes to homelessness legislation as a result of the Bill are not expected to have an impact on how local authorities exercise their duties, but will align the homelessness legislation with the wider reforms. The contents of this Bill may change during the development of the Strategy and amendments will need to be taken into account as the Strategy is developed.

2.5. Census 2021

Since the full review was completed, a new census has been undertaken by the Office for National Statistics. The Census is completed every ten years and provides demographic data on people and households in England and Wales. The Census helps to build a detailed picture of local society. Information from the census helps the government and local authorities to plan and fund local services. Relevant updated census findings are detailed in a Statistics Update (Section 4, below).

2.6. Global Political Environment

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has resulted in an ongoing need to support refugees fleeing Ukraine in addition to the refugees already being supported by the UK from other war-torn countries including Syria and Afghanistan. Housing plays an important and positive role in the lives of refugees, but this in turn places further pressure on the demand for affordable housing in the UK.

2.7. National and International Economic Environment

The ongoing effects of the COVID 19 pandemic, uncertainties in financial markets, interest rate increases and the rising cost-of-living all create uncertainty for the national and / or international economy. In turn, these factors impact on people's ability to meet their own housing needs and increases the risk of homelessness and rough sleeping.

3. Local Context Update

The local context relating to homelessness and rough sleeping is detailed in the 2020 Review. Key updates, additions and / or changes are as follows:

3.1. Bedford Borough's Strategy to Address & Reduce Domestic Abuse 2021 – 2026

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 placed statutory duties on local authorities, including the setting up of a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and completion of a needs assessment to identify gaps in support so as to inform a new domestic abuse strategy. Bedford Borough's new strategic domestic abuse plan identifies five key areas of priority;

- Provision of services in safe accommodation
- Raising awareness of domestic abuse
- Provision of services in the community
- Justice, recovery and ongoing protection
- Early Education and Intervention

The link to the full strategy is available here; [Bedford Borough Strategy to Address & Reduce Domestic Abuse 2021 - 2026](#)

3.2. Ending Rough Sleeping Plan (Rough Sleeper Initiatives) 2022 – 2025

To maintain the Council's well-established initiatives in tackling rough sleeping, DLUHC awarded a further £2,633,216 funding for the two-year period covering 2020/21 and 2021/22.

In 2022 this funding continued with a three-year award of £3,137,167 for 2022/25. This funds the on-going delivery of the following initiatives to help the Council achieve the Government's goal of ending rough sleeping:

- Prevention and Rough Sleeper Coordinator
- Casework Co-ordinator
- Prevention Surgery, Outreach and Floating Support Staffing

- Specialist Homelessness Assessment Navigators
- Local Lettings Officers
- Off the Street Emergency Shelter Support
- Prevention / Personal Budget Funding
- Surge Accommodation (to meet peaks in demand and Severe Weather Emergency response)

4. Statistics Update

4.1. Summary

- 4.1.1. The 2020 Review set out a detailed analysis and review of homelessness and rough sleeping in Bedford Borough focussing on the period 2018-20.
- 4.1.2. Since then, the impact of changes in the global and national context detailed above has led to an unprecedented increase in the demand for homelessness services, in turn placing significant pressure on current resources, both staffing and accommodation supply. The need to ensure the Council's statutory duties are met whilst also balancing a need for holistic support and pathways for an increasing number of vulnerable customers has led to the Council's service delivery focus to be on addressing immediate issues.
- 4.1.3. The 2020 Review sets out detailed statistics taken from DLUHC's published data on homelessness. These statistics do not, however, provide a simple story of the flow in and out of the Council's Statutory Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Services, or the backlogs caused by unprecedented demand nor the complexities of delivering solutions to end homelessness. Some of the 2020 Review dashboard data appears counter-intuitive and updated key data in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping – obtained from the Council's own records – adds further explanation and is provided below.

4.2. Key Data Update ⁽¹⁾

4.2.1. Requests for Assistance due to Homelessness or Risk of Homelessness

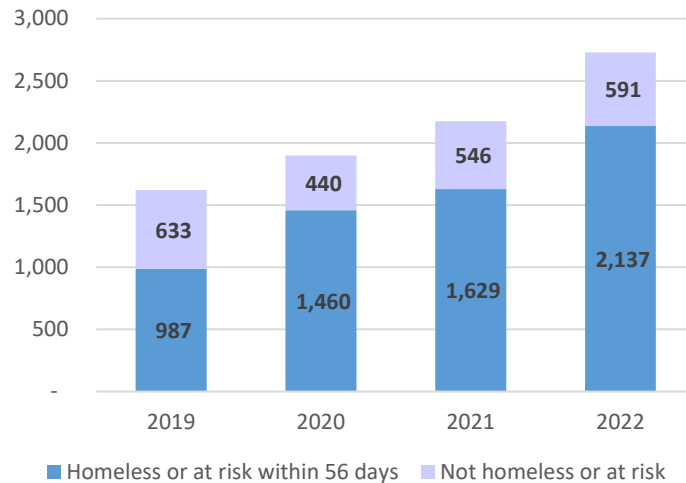
Table 1, below shows the number of approaches for assistance from households homeless or at risk of homelessness by year from 2019 to 2022. Figure 1 shows this information in graphical form. The number of households approaching the

Council for assistance because they are homeless or at risk of homelessness has increased by 25% over the four years 2019–22, with a noteworthy rise of 9% in 2022. A proportion of the people requesting help do not meet the statutory ¹ definition of being either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days. Where this is the case officers will offer the person general advice about housing options and homelessness support.

Table 1: Number of Approaches to the Council for Assistance 2019-22

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Homeless or at risk within 56 days	987	1,460	1,629	2,137
Not homeless or at risk	633	440	546	591
Total requests	1,620	1,900	2,175	2,728
Annual % increase	-	17%	14%	25%

Figure 1: Number of Approaches to the Council for Assistance 2019-22



¹ [Source: Bedford Borough Council Budget and Corporate Service Scrutiny Committee Homelessness Position Statement – June 2023](#)

4.2.2. Homelessness Duties Accepted

Table 2 below shows a breakdown of the number of homelessness duties accepted during 2022 broken down by the duty owed (Prevention or Relief). At the time of the data being reported 1,214 of the 2,137 households had been assessed to determine whether a prevention or relief duty was owed, with duties being accepted in 1,191 cases.

Of the remaining 923 cases, some would have found their own solution to their homelessness before needing a full assessment, or they never attended the assessment appointment and we lost contact. The remainder would be caught up in assessment appointment backlogs, which would mean that their assessment took place later and in the new calendar year, and therefore are not captured in this data.

Table 2: Homelessness Duties Accepted by Duty Owed 2022

Prevention duty owed	463	39%
Relief duty owed	728	61%

Table 3 shows the percentage breakdown of homelessness duties owed by type for Bedford Borough, the East of England and England as a whole during the last quarter of 2022/23. The proportion of cases for which a prevention duty was accepted in Bedford Borough (40%) was lower than the average for England (48%) and the East of England (46%). The percentage for which a relief duty was owed in Bedford Borough (60%) was higher than for England (54%) and significantly higher than for the East of England (25%).

Table 3: Homelessness Duties Accepted – Bedford Borough, East of England and England (Quarter four 2022 / 23)

	Bedford Borough	East of England	England
Prevention duty owed	40%	48%	46%
Relief duty owed	60%	25%	54%

It should be noted that where a prevention duty has been accepted, but the person subsequently becomes homeless, a relief duty will normally then be accepted. Therefore, applicants may be included in both the prevention and relief figures.

Reasons for Homelessness

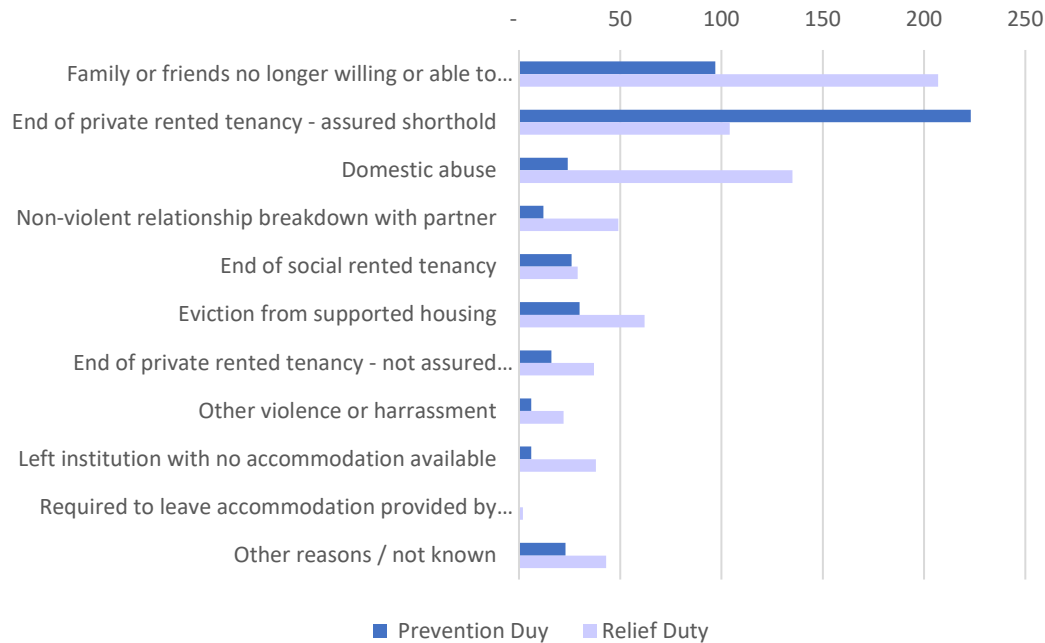
Table 4 below shows for each duty accepted the reasons that households had become homeless or were at risk of homelessness. Figure 2 shows this in graphical form. Overall, the most significant causes of homelessness in the Borough can be seen to be the ending of a private sector tenancy (48% for prevention duty and 14% for relief duty) and family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate someone (21% for prevention duty and 28% for relief duty).

Escaping from domestic abuse was also a significant reason for homelessness, with 19% of people owed a relief duty and 5% a prevention duty due to domestic abuse.

Table 4: Reasons for Homelessness or Risk of Homelessness Where Duty Accepted 2022

Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a duty:	Prevention Duty		Relief Duty	
	No.	%	No.	%
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	97	21%	207	28%
End of private rented tenancy – assured short hold	223	48%	104	14%
Domestic abuse	24	5%	135	19%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	12	3%	49	7%
End of social rented tenancy	26	6%	29	4%
Eviction from supported housing	30	6%	62	9%
End of private rented tenancy – not assured short hold	16	3%	37	5%
Other violence or harassment	6	1%	22	3%
Left institution with no accommodation available	6	1%	38	5%
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	-	0%	2	0%
Other reasons / not known	23	5%	43	6%
Total	463		728	

Figure 2: Reasons for Homelessness or Risk of Homelessness Where Duty Accepted 2022



4.2.3. Household Composition

During 2022, the majority of households owed a duty continued to consist of single people. Figure 3 below shows the breakdown of households, by composition, owed a prevention duty. Figure 4 shows the breakdown by household composition of those owed a relief duty.

Figure 3: Composition of Households Owed a **Prevention** Duty in Bedford Borough 2022

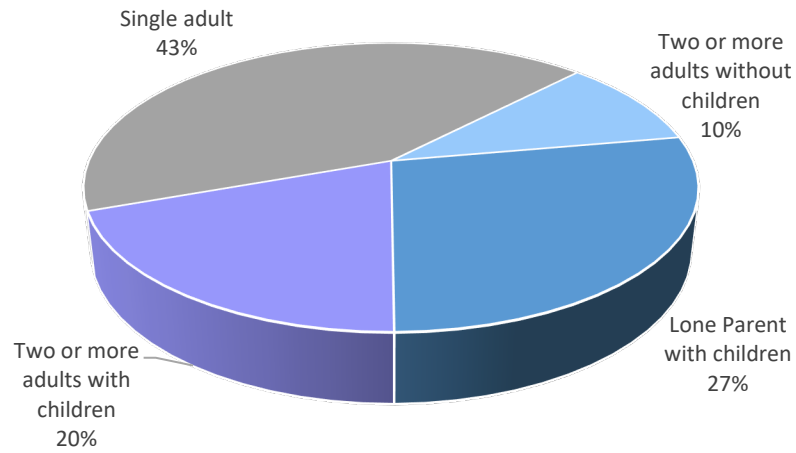
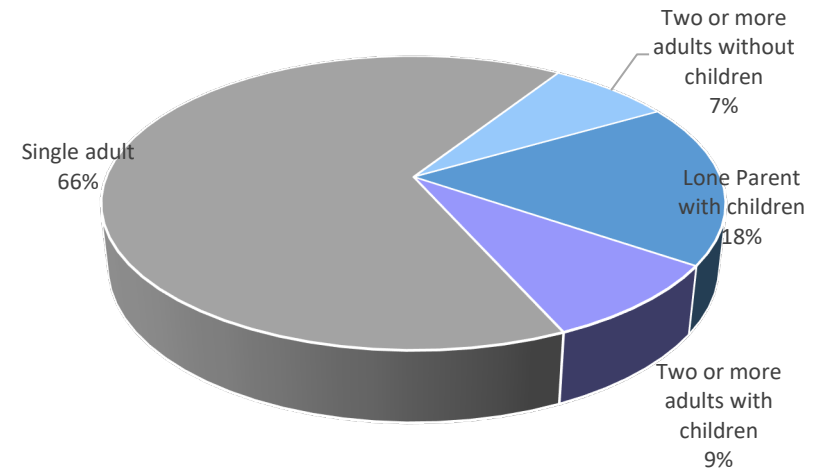


Figure 4: Composition of Households Owed a **Relief** Duty in Bedford Borough 2022



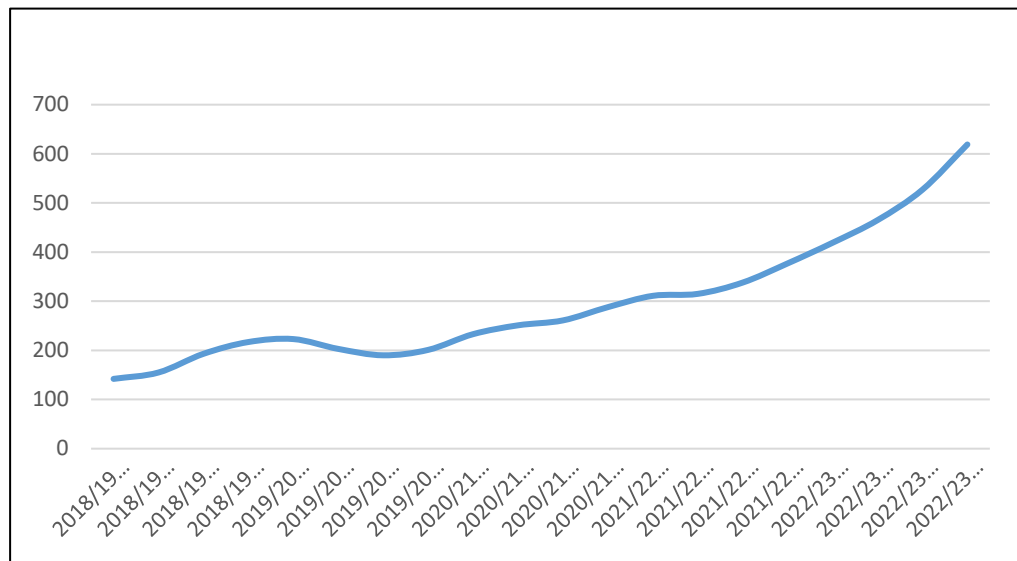
4.2.4. Duty to Secure that Accommodation is Available (temporary accommodation)

Where the Council has reason to believe that a person is eligible for housing assistance, is homeless, and is in priority need, it has a duty to secure that suitable accommodation is available to the household whilst it carries out its enquiries to determine if a duty is owed. This accommodation duty will continue whilst the household is owed the relief duty and the main housing duty.

In some circumstances, a household may be statutorily homeless because their accommodation is not suitable as permanent accommodation, but it may be reasonable for them to continue to occupy the accommodation on a temporary basis. However, in the majority of cases the only way that the Council can ensure suitable accommodation is available is by providing them with some form of temporary accommodation.

The need for temporary accommodation has been increasing significantly due to the increasing number of households becoming homeless that is not matched by the availability of affordable rental properties. Figure 5 below shows the upward trend in the number of households in temporary accommodation by quarter from Q1 2018/19 to Q4 2022/23 in Bedford Borough.

Figure 5: Number of Households in Temporary Accommodation in Bedford Borough Q1 2018/19 to Q4 2022/23



At the time of writing this review update – July 2023 - there were 660 households placed in temporary accommodation. Table 5 below shows how this accommodation was sourced.

Table 5: Sources of Temporary Accommodation in Bedford Borough July 2023

Type of Accommodation	Number
BBC owned or leased accommodation	75
Block booked hotels / guest houses	22
Nightly let accommodation	397
Ad-hoc hotel bookings	166
Total	660

In accordance with national standards, the Council aims to ensure that families do not spend longer than six weeks in hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation.

4.2.5. Housing Supply and Affordability

The majority of people that approach the Council for homelessness assistance are on a limited income and will rely on Universal Credit or Housing Benefit to help them meet the cost of renting. Therefore, the Council’s ability to prevent homelessness depends significantly upon the availability of properties at rent levels affordable by those claiming benefits.

During 2022/23 there were 563 lettings of social housing through the Council’s choice based letting scheme. Of these, 306 were let to people who were eligible for social housing because they were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The maximum amount of Universal Credit Housing Element and Housing Benefit for a private sector tenancy is set by the Local Housing Allowance, which is based on the size of property required by the household. There is now a very significant difference between the typical market rents in the Borough and the Local Housing Allowance (LHA), which makes it very difficult to source affordable private tenancies. Table 6 below compares the LHA rates to the cheapest properties available on Rightmove in July 2023 and shows that the cheapest rental properties available in the private sector were at rents well in excess of LHA across properties of all bedroom sizes.

Table 6: Comparison of LHA rates to cheapest property available to rent on Rightmove in Bedford Borough July 2023.

	Local Housing Allowance per Month	Number of Properties Advertised on Rightmove	The Three Cheapest Monthly Rents Advertised		
One bedroom	£575	18	£695	£700	£750
Two bedroom	£725	24	£850	£895	£925
Three bedroom	£875	21	£1,100	£1,150	£1,250
Four bedroom	£1,150	15	£1,550	£1,575	£1,575

4.2.6. Rough Sleeping

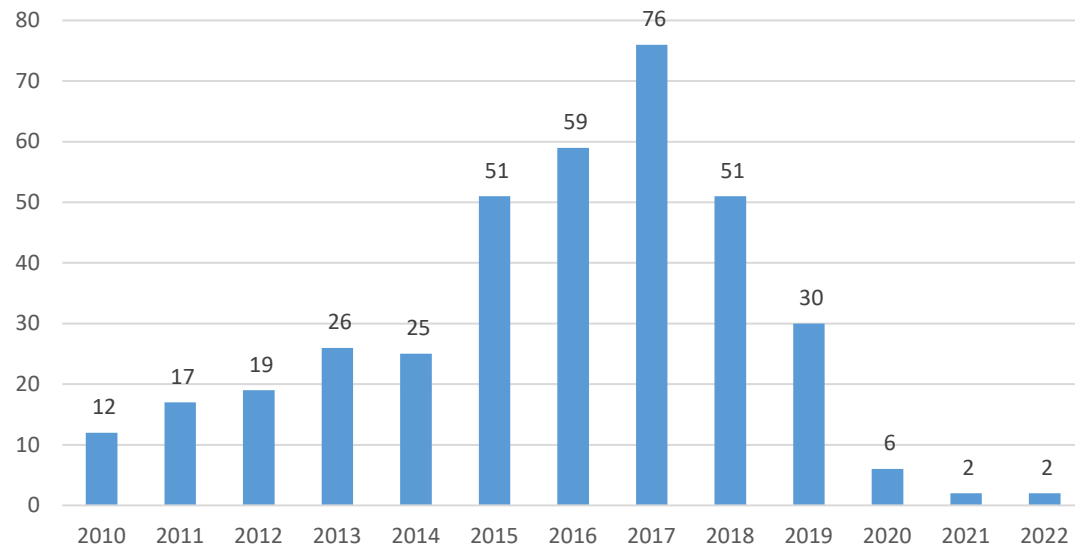
Local housing authorities are required by DLUHC to carry out an annual count and / or estimate of the number of people sleeping rough in their area. Bedford Borough Council provides an estimate based on a snapshot of the number of people known to be sleeping rough on a date determined by the Council between 1st October and 30th November each year. Our estimate is backed up by a daily search and count of rough sleeping in Bedford Borough which occurs every weekday morning.

At the onset of the COVID19 lockdown, the Council embraced the Government’s “Everyone In” scheme to ensure that people who were rough sleeping were offered accommodation. The Council has continued to offer shelter to homeless people who would otherwise be sleeping rough by offering them rooms at a local hotel, with 32 rooms currently being used. A wide range of support services, funded through the Rough Sleeper Initiative grant secured from the Government, are also provided to ensure rapid delivery of holistic support pathways as well as a daily outreach service to identify and quickly support any new cases of rough sleeping. Since 2020, up to the time of writing this review, a total of 615 individuals have stayed at the hotel.

This ongoing initiative, together with the completion of 20 units of accommodation at Rogers Court, funded through the Governments ‘*Next Steps Accommodation Programme*’, has enabled the number of people sleeping rough to be kept to minimal levels. Just two people have been reported sleeping rough on the last two annual estimate days in 2021 and 2022, in contrast to the higher numbers of people found sleeping rough prior to 2020.

Figure 6 shows the numbers of people estimated to have been sleeping rough in Bedford Borough at the DLUHC annual estimate from 2010 to 2022.

Figure 6: Numbers of People Estimated to Have Been Sleeping Rough in Bedford Borough – Annual DLUHC Count



4.3. Census Data Update - 2021

Source; Office for National Statistics - <https://census.gov.uk/census-2021-results>

4.3.1. National Population Summary

On Census Day, 21st March 2021, the size of the usually resident population in England and Wales was 59,597,542; this was the largest population ever recorded through the census.

The population of England and Wales has grown by more than 3.5 million (6.3%) since the last census in 2011, when it was 56,075,912.

The population grew in each of the nine regions of England and also grew in Wales; the region with the highest population growth was the East of England, which increased by 8.3% from 2011 (a gain of approximately 488,000 residents).

There were 24,783,199 households in England and Wales on Census Day; the number of households had increased by more than 1.4 million (6.1%) since 2011, when there were 23,366,044 households.

4.3.2. Local Population Summary

The population of Bedford Borough increased by 17.6%, from around 157,500 in 2011 to around 185,200 in 2021.

This means that Bedford Borough's population saw the largest percentage increase in the East of England.

The population of the East of England increased by 8.3%, while the population of England rose by 6.6%.

4.3.3. Ethnicity Update National and Bedford Borough

Table 7 below shows the ethnic breakdown of the population of Bedford Borough, England and Wales and the East of England at the Census dates of 2011 and 2021.

Table 7: Ethnicity of Population Bedford Borough, England & Wales and East of England 2021 and 2011 Census

	Bedford Borough		England & Wales		East of England	
Census Year	2021	2011	2021	2011	2021	2011
Asian	12.6%	11.4%	9.3%	7.5%	6.41%	4.8%
Black	5.3%	3.9%	4.0%	3.3%	2.92%	2.0%
Mixed	4.6%	3.5%	2.9%	2.2%	2.84%	2.0%
White	75.7%	80.6%	81.7%	86.0%	86.48%	91.2%
Other	1.8%	0.7%	2.1%	1.0%	1.36%	0.5%

"White" remained the largest high-level ethnic group in Bedford Borough; 75.7% of usual residents identified this way in 2021, a decrease from 86.0% in 2011.

The percentage of the population in all high-level ethnic groups, excluding "White", has increased since 2011.

There are many factors that may be contributing to the changing ethnic composition of Bedford, such as differing patterns of ageing, fertility, mortality, and migration. Changes may also be caused by differences in the way individuals chose to self-identify between censuses.

4.3.4. Housing – Tenure of Households Bedford Borough

Table 8 below shows the tenure of households in Bedford Borough in 2021 and 2011

Table 8: Tenure of Households in Bedford Borough 2021 and 2011

	Bedford Borough	
Census Year	2021	2011
Owned; outright, with mortgage or shared ownership	64.6%	65.7%
Rented; social rented	16.3%	16.1%
Private rented (including lives rent free)	19.2%	15.8%

Of Bedford Borough households, 19.2% rented privately in 2021, up from 15.8% in 2011.

In 2021, just under one in six households (16.3%) lived in socially rented housing, compared with 16.1% in 2011. The percentage of Bedford Borough households that owned their home (outright or with a mortgage or loan) decreased marginally from 65.7% to 64.6%.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2020 and this accompanying update demonstrate that tackling homelessness over recent years has seen significant change and faced previously unforeseen challenges.
- 5.2. The introduction of The Homelessness Reduction Act in 2018 significantly changed the way that statutory homelessness duties were delivered. Before the Council had been able to embed this change and undertake a sound review of the outcomes of the act, the Covid-19 pandemic brought about further unprecedented change which, in its aftermath, has left the Council with significant numbers of households being owed a homelessness duty.
- 5.3. The data and information gathered in the 2020 Review and this update will inform the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029, and will set out how the Council will deliver solutions to prevent more homelessness, ensure an increased supply of suitable and affordable homes for homeless households, and support people in never facing homelessness again.
- 5.4. The New Strategy will also set out how the Council will continue to strive to end rough sleeping; setting out how it will prevent it occurring in the first place, intervene quickly when it does occur, and ensure everyone receives the right support to recover from its impacts.