

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021–2025

Cabinet - April 2021

Introduction and purpose

The BCP Homelessness Partnership have worked together to develop a robust and ambitious strategic plan which seeks to make it everyone's business to contribute to the ending of homelessness and rough sleeping across the conurbation, recognising that many residents, communities, businesses and services provide for, and are affected by homelessness in many different ways.

Prior to the formation of BCP Council in April 2019, the legacy authorities all had their own homelessness and rough sleeping strategies, with related action plans. In the period between the creation of BCP Council and this strategy being formulated, an interim aligned Action Plan was created. This coincided with an increased recognition of the value and effectiveness of collaboration, co-production and partnership, leading to proactive measures to formalise and expand this approach.

The first Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) has been co-produced with local partners and stakeholders from across the sector locally. This corresponds with the value placed on joint working and thinking as we seek to put an end to homelessness and its impact in our conurbation.

The strategy is in six parts as follows.

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| Part 1 | Vision, definition of homelessness and values |
| Part 2 | Homelessness & rough sleeping governance and an overview of the Homelessness Partnership |
| Part 3 | Strategic review and current context for BCP |
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Part 1

Vision, definition of homelessness and values

Our Vision

“Ending homelessness in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole by ensuring everyone has a safe place to live that they can call home.”

This aspiration demonstrates the Homelessness Partnership’s desire to achieve this outcome or get as close to it as we possibly can.

Definition of Homelessness

Partners across the BCP area have committed to working together to ensure homelessness is ended across the conurbation. For the purposes of this strategy we define homelessness as where someone:

- has no accommodation available in the UK or abroad
- has no legal right to occupy the accommodation
- lives in a split household due to availability of accommodation for whole household
- unreasonable to continue to occupy accommodation
- is experiencing violence from any person
- is unable to secure entry to their home
- or lives in a moveable structure but has no place to put this

It is the ambition therefore of this strategy to:

- Ensure no one sleeps rough or lives in places which aren’t designed as a home, such as tents, vehicles, squats or non-residential buildings
- That anyone staying in emergency or temporary accommodation has a rapid rehousing plan specifying their appropriate move-on housing which is suitable & affordable, and support being accessible & flexibly delivered
- Everyone threatened with homelessness (whether over 56 days or more immediately) is provided with the advice, assistance and support they need to prevent their homelessness, and for people who leave institutional settings and survivors of domestic abuse to ensure that housing pathways are in place so that they do not become homeless.

Our Values

The vision and below values were agreed by the Homelessness Reduction Board in December 2019 and adopted by the BCP Homelessness Partnership. They demonstrate a wider commitment to ending homelessness, and to homes being places of safety where people can develop, prosper and maintain good health and wellbeing; to being more than a roof or basic place of shelter.

The values illustrate the need for collaborative and innovative joint work across multiple agencies, services and sectors and that this work must be open to new ideas and to the best and emerging practice from around the country and the wider world. In addition, there is emphasis on the need for significant input and insight from people with lived experience of all forms of homelessness, the true experts regarding its impact.

- **Collaboration and Co-production:** we can do more together than on our own
- **Integrity:** built on knowledge and listening to each other & those with lived experience
- **What works:** build on the "bright spots" both locally and learning from other areas
- **Resolution:** recognition that it is everyone's business to seek to end homelessness locally

Part 2

Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Governance

BCP Homelessness Partnership

The BCP Homelessness Partnership officially launched on October 10th, 2019, which was World Homeless Day, involving over 40 local organisations from all sectors across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

Following this, the overarching Homelessness Reduction Board was established ahead of its inaugural meeting in December 2019, and various action groups established covering a broad spectrum of areas such as financial resilience, community support, lived experience involvement, rough sleeping and health, with around 100 people from the sector getting involved to agree key priorities.

The partnership was relaunched with new focus in May 2020, with some added learning from the Covid-19 pandemic. This renewed impetus has led to some early successes and initiatives and will continue to be instrumental to ongoing process and to this strategy. A summary of the early successes of the Homelessness Partnership can be found [here](#).

Homelessness Reduction Board

The Homelessness Reduction Board (HRB) was formed to provide overall strategic lead and governance for the Partnership. The Board includes representatives from various key services including the Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group, Dorset Police, Probation, Adult and

Childrens Social Care, Housing, and third sector representatives. As the Covid-19 pandemic started to impact, the HRB started to meet more frequently, initially every fortnight, before moving to the current monthly frequency.

Homelessness Forum

The Homelessness Forum is the membership meeting of the Homelessness Partnership and has a wide and active membership from services and organisations with an interest in resolving homelessness in BCP, for the statutory, private and voluntary sectors. The Forum, like the HRB, currently meets every four weeks. The meetings provide an opportunity to update and engage the rest of those in the Homelessness Partnership about what is happening in the sector locally and nationally and disseminating information from the HRB meetings, as well as a range of other matters such as identifying local opportunities for training, funding and collaboration. There is also a [Charter](#) which outlines the aims and vision, in line with the HRB Terms of Reference as well as this strategy and helps to maximise coherence and focus.

Part 3

BCP strategic review and current context

The homelessness sector over the past five years has seen a period of significant change and challenge; including welfare reforms, austerity and the single biggest legislative change in homelessness (Homelessness Reduction Act 2017). Services have shifted locally in response to provide a greater emphasis on early intervention and prevention, in efforts to negate the need to provide for homelessness crisis. The reality however is that overall homelessness has not reduced, nor has the use of temporary accommodation.

The overarching local priorities for homelessness and rough sleeping have been identified during the formulation of this strategy by considering best practice and data from a wide range of sources nationally, with particular consideration of Crisis' comprehensive *Everybody In* report and recommendations, various research papers from a range of organisations and webinars on subjects including lived experience and changing perceptions, as well as the consideration and analysis of local data and mapping of needs and provision concerning the local picture in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

Where this includes benchmarking with other areas, the data is compared either to England & Wales, or to areas of a similar population as the BCP Council region. The strategy has been co-produced, meaning that it is not solely a council undertaking, but rather has been created with significant input from the Homelessness Partnership and Homelessness Reduction Board, including from people with lived experience, and the aims and commitments build on the early successes of the partnership. It will also feed into the overarching BCP Housing Strategy.

The Local Context

The overall number of homeless applications has risen sharply over the last year. There were 4256 applications in 2019/20 compared to 3696 the previous year. This represents a rise of 15 per cent. Approximately a fifth of applicants are under the age of 24 and it is also worth noting that this

age group also faces other disproportionate disadvantages such as lower mean incomes or salaries and increasing job insecurity, with disproportionate reliance on renting.

Applications in 2020 were broadly in line with last year in terms of age group proportion. The biggest differences are increasing this year in the 18-24 and 30-34 age groups, whilst the biggest drop (and biggest age group change) is a reduction in the 40-49 age group (a drop of about 2 per cent). There also appears to be a relatively high proportion of older people being at risk of, or becoming homeless, with just under 8 per cent of applications being from people aged sixty or older.

Local data also indicates that single people account for a significant majority of homelessness cases in the BCP region, with 64 per cent of applications being from single people. Nationally, single people represent just under 30 per cent of the population. However, there was a slight drop in single applications in 2020, and a small rise in all categories of families with children. The number of homeless applications with dependent children increased by 52 per cent between 2018/19 and 2019/20.

When compared with the 6 other local authorities (by population) BCP Council accepted 1.84 per '000 of population. This compares with the lowest rate of 0.87 and a highest of 5.57 across the comparative authorities. The average rate was 1.99. All authorities are likely to differ in at least some areas such as levels and affordability of the local private rented sector, employment rates and metrics of health and inequality, and so direct comparison is difficult. The BCP region is very reliant on the private rented sector for resolving housing need and homelessness demand, rents are high and genuinely affordable self-contained move-on accommodation is in limited supply.

The main cause of homelessness is the end of a private rented sector tenancy, normally due to rent arrears or anti-social behaviour, with other common reasons being due to a family being no longer able to accommodate and relation breakdown. In terms of rough sleeping, BCP has had relatively high rates of this, in common with other seaside towns in the south of England, the relative temporal climate and wealth of the area being attractive in comparison with some other parts of the country. In 2019 the rate of people rough sleeping in BCP was 0.18 per 1,000 households, compared to 0.09 in the south west as a whole, and 0.08 in England. However, the BCP region is a relatively urban part of the south west, and higher figures would be expected, in line with other southern towns and cities of a comparable size. This figure has reduced significantly since late 2019 and is projected to remain low in 2021.

For a full report on this area, including data on protected characteristics, as well as some of the information touched on in the overarching priorities below, please see [here](#).

Early intervention and focus on higher risk areas

Early intervention and prevention not only prevent homelessness and reduce its impact, but also prevent and reduce a lot of the harm that is often caused or results from the related impact. In 2019/20 BCP Council recorded 1215 prevention cases and partner agencies including Shelter and Citizens Advice are also effective in this area. HCLIC (Homelessness Case Level Collection) data shows that collectively we are good at finding alternative homes, but not so strong at keeping people in their homes.

Every case of homelessness is a personal tragedy and it is important to avoid this whenever possible and to help people to remain in their homes via support, intervention and advocacy, also ensuring that landlords are not evicting unfairly or when other solutions could be found. There is concerning evidence that a very high proportion of younger people who are in the BCP single homeless pathway services have previously been open to Children Social Care, (a July 2020 snapshot demonstrated that all 55 aged 25 or under have been previously known) with a further high proportion previously being LAC (looked after children). This demonstrates a need to review the support and housing pathways available to our young people.

A national concern relating to the pandemic lockdown was that this would lead to a further rise in domestic abuse and see this becoming an even greater risk, fears which Women's Aid research show were founded. Data indicates that this was already rising in the BCP area as evidenced by a rise in applications where the priority need was related to domestic abuse rising by 217 per cent between 2018/19 and 2019/20. This does not even include any further rise during the lockdown and confirms that we need to have a safe and quickly accessible range of options for those needing to leave such situations. Housing and accommodation solutions are part of this and there will be a joined-up approach in tackling this issue as part of the annual needs assessment undertaken and synergy with the new Domestic Abuse Strategy.

With worldwide focus on the Black Lives Matter movement, it is also important to consider the needs of the local ethnic minority community. This is smaller in the BCP area proportionately than much of the country and homelessness applications are low from this group (around 2 per cent of total) but we need to review this to ensure equitable access and considering factors such as cultural and language differences which could potentially prevent people from seeking assistance.

Similarly, the LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community is another diverse group that disproportionately faces disadvantage and is overly represented in homelessness cases. Locally, the data is not very good in this area and we need to review and improve our recording to better understand and respond to this and ensure that there are no barriers to approaches or accessing assistance.

With all areas of prevention, it will be important to monitor this closely, ensure good outcomes and intervene with mitigation measures.

Focus on health and wellbeing

There are clear links between homelessness and poor health.

Poor health can lead to increased risk of homelessness, and likewise health can be affected by the risk of losing a home. People can lose their jobs due to being unable to work, particularly in the case of longer-term conditions. This can be exacerbated by mental health being affected due to the often-constant pressure caused by conditions such as stress, anxiety and depression. This is illustrated by BCP Council demographic information which shows that the most common factors for all homeless applicants are mental and physical health problems, making up around 45 per cent of the total.

The most severe and pernicious form of homelessness is rough sleeping and there are often further related concerns such as substance dependency. Long term rough sleeping leads to a vastly reduced life expectancy (an average of around 46 years, even less for women at 43 years), so effective health intervention is literally a matter of life and death. The risks involved are numerous, including the very real threat of

assault, prolonged exposure to cold and damp, overheating and dehydration, and lack of a balanced diet as well as other aspects such as stress, worry and other mental distress. On top of this there can be further risks such as those relating to overdose and blood-borne disease for those who also battle with dependency.

In the BCP region there are numerous existing services in place to respond to this large and critical need, including the Health Bus, blood-borne virus clinics, specialist substance misuse workers, a new hospital pathway and developing plans for a community hub, and focus will be on enhancing and further joining up health and housing related services. Currently there are some issues regarding access to all such services for those in temporary accommodation, and there remains some siloed working whereby housing and health needs are not jointly assessed, so this is an area to further review and improve.

This work has a key role in preventing homelessness in the first place, resolving, and then helping to sustain the solutions.

Reducing Unsuitable Temporary Accommodation / B&B and emergency accommodation

At the time of collation of this strategy there are still just over 450 people in emergency and temporary accommodation as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and this has provided an opportunity to accommodate people who had been rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness across the BCP region. A lack of suitable emergency supported settings has resulted in an over-reliance on expensive B&B use with related challenges with throughput.

Quarter 4 of 2019/20, the latter part of which is when the *Everyone In* approach commenced, saw a rise in placements of 43 per cent from 319 to 453. The previous couple of years had broadly seen consistent figures with an average of 332 per quarter since April 2018. The pre-Covid-19 quarter had thus seen a drop to below the average, and the lowest number since Q1 of 2018/19.

Similarly, B&B numbers were previously relatively stable, with an average of 75 per quarter before a large Covid-19 related rise in Q4 to 185. During this latter period, and in the time since March 2020 a new Rough Sleeping Pathway has been developed in BCP; a multi-agency team which has reshaped the provision, primarily using hotels as places to assess, stabilise and support people with planned move-on housing and support pathways. The provisions delivered due to the pandemic has illustrated an opportunity to strength arrangements with partners to provide for people needing emergency assistance and particularly been useful to test and challenge the emergency housing environments which work well and should be considered in future planning.

Research for the BCP Domestic Abuse Strategy shows that only 2.9 per cent of those fleeing domestic abuse are found refuge accommodation, with 82 per cent being accommodated in alternative temporary accommodation such as B&B and hostels.

Ending rough sleeping and a housing-led approach

Sleeping rough is the most obvious and harmful form of homelessness, especially when it becomes long term in nature. It can be difficult to address for a host of reasons, especially when those who are impacted feel disenfranchised and have never had a settled home of their own. Additionally, there can be background circumstances such as trauma or an undiagnosed mental health illness, and these often lead to self-medicating with substances, which is often a gateway to dependency.

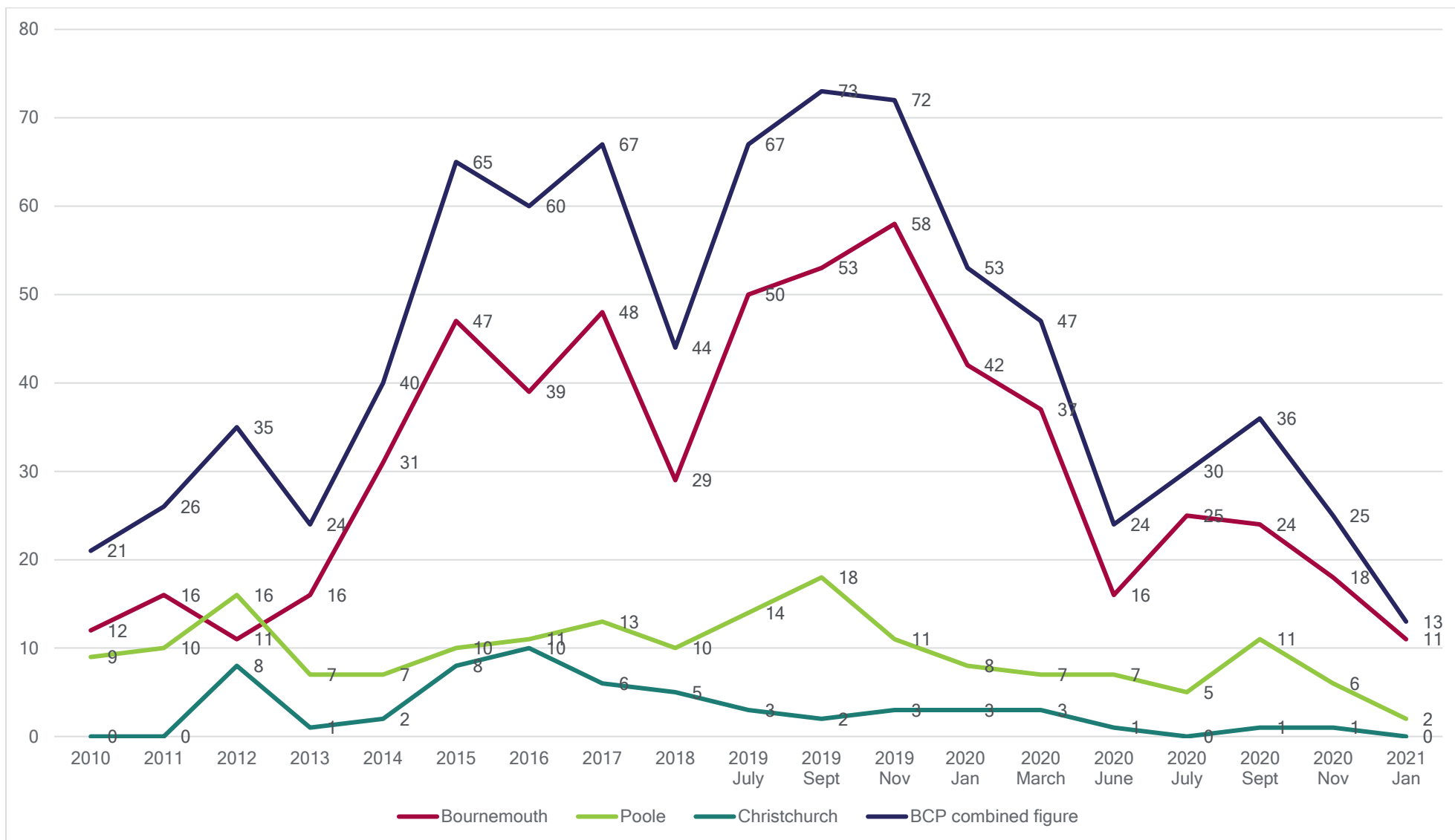
Addressing this needs to involve each person and what their strengths and aspirations are. Often there has been too much focus on negative aspects such as needs and risk, and while these need to be considered and addressed, the focus needs to shift to a more positive outlook. Recent work with people who are rough sleeping has been moving toward this asset-based approach, including placing increased focus on what housing aspirations are, including with Rough Sleeper Initiative funding and the Drug & Alcohol Team's *Creative Solutions* group

Additionally, our new Rough Sleeping Pathway has been working to not only provide emergency accommodation but to source appropriate move-on solutions. This remains a work in process and area for development and lived experience insight and ongoing involvement will help build on this effective approach, although maintaining the resources required is a risk as largely grant funded.

Rough sleeping numbers had been consistently rising since 2010 in the BCP area, in common with much of the country. However, the previous two street counts in January and March 2020, just prior to the pandemic had seen a significant reduction from late 2019, which was also reflected in a reduction in cases open to the Street Outreach Team. The November 2019 count for BCP was 72, reducing to 53 in January and 47 in March: a drop Nov-March of 35 per cent. Since then the progress has primarily continued, with November 2020's annual count being 25, a reduction of 65 per cent on the previous year. Since then there has been another count in January 2021, which was 13, the lowest for over a decade and an 82 per cent reduction since the peak in Sept/Nov 2019. (see chart below)

Part of the success with housing people who had previously regularly slept rough has been the housing-led accommodation offer with flexible intensities of support and Housing First accommodation provided to the most disadvantaged people due to their multiple and complex needs and vulnerabilities. Engagement is not mandatory however in most cases there is a high level of acceptance of the support offered. In the current Housing First services in BCP, there have been 35 people accommodated in the last 3 years. Of these there have been 3 evictions and the remainder have maintained their tenancies to date, a success rate of 91 per cent. To date those allocated to Housing First have largely been those who had consistently struggled to hold down accommodation elsewhere, including supported housing such as hostels, which makes this more striking and impressive. Both housing-led and Housing First are approaches this strategy will intend to build upon and grow.

Street Count figures by year since 2010. Additional bi-monthly figures since July 2019



Best use of current resources

As an area the BCP region already has a lot of resources currently where the primary focus is on accommodation with support, currently providing over 300 commissioned placements in total. BCP Council's Housing Related Support budget mainly provides supported housing across the three towns for various groups including young people, domestic abuse survivors, single homeless adults, people with mental health illness and older people. Other types of housing related support include floating support to help people remain in their homes.

In addition, there have been successful applications to central government for grant funding to address homelessness, with focus on rough sleeping. In Dec 2019 BCP Council was awarded £1.4 million in RSI (Rough Sleeper Initiative) funding, and in Sept 2020 was awarded funds for the Next Steps Accommodation Pathway to help accommodate those currently in emergency accommodation due to Covid-19. More recently there has been further funding including via the Protect Programme and the Cold Weather Fund, although this has been even shorter term in nature.

These awards have helped add extra capacity to existing services such as the Street Outreach Team and Housing First, enabled more effective joint working and multi-agency working, and provided brand new initiatives such as a hospital worker, a psychologist and increased health and substance dependency support.

Partnership approach and building on success

The Homelessness Partnership has already provided a good foundation for shaping of this strategy in terms of momentum and some early success. There is increased focus in many areas and the involvement from so many organisations has helped with identifying issues and enabling more flexible and creative solutions.

Some indication and examples of initial progress include an increase in homelessness preventions of 33% between 2018/19 and 2019/20, the imminent launch of a contactless giving scheme across the BCP region to help reduce street begging whilst directly assisting homeless people, the initial development of a network of champions with lived experience to help shape local delivery and strategy and central government recognition of the success of BCP regarding the *Everyone In* response particularly in collaborating health, social care and housing services.

In addition, there are already various ongoing plans at different stages of planning including the proposed launch of a multi-disciplinary community hub which will include better access to health interventions, a new housing enquiry gateway solution and a shared data project to reduce the need for multiple assessments as well as better risk management and data sharing.

Part 4

Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic, which has affected the country, and the world, since the early months of 2020 has had a huge and unique impact on many aspects of life. This has included immediate impact on those most at risk including those without a secure home, with potential longer-term effects on the economy, unemployment levels and an impact on the ability to pay rent or mortgages. In addition, there has been a deterioration in the mental health of many people and a significant rise in problematic areas such as domestic abuse and alcohol misuse. For example, the Royal College of Psychiatrists estimate that the latter had increased from 4.8 million people drinking problematically in Feb 2020 to 8.4 million just 4 months later, a huge rise of 75 per cent.

The BCP region has been less affected than some parts of the country with comparatively low R rates and deaths overall, at least initially, although there was certainly more impact latterly in the second wave. However, the response has still needed to be wide-ranging, assertive and creative and this is reflected in the local response, including with respect to homelessness. The BCP region approach to this has been effective and recognised nationally and has involved pulling together an integrated team to create a new Rough Sleeping Pathway to source emergency accommodation for those who have needed it, and then having provided a thorough assessment of need helping source suitable move on options. This work has also included the Street Outreach Team, health, substance and mental health support and interventions, as well as many partners in the community. This learning and practice can be taken forward, built on and improved, and other such areas of learning need to be considered.

Prevention is also vital, given the stated concerns re increased unemployment and rent arrears. This matter has been mitigated to some extent in the last 12 months due to a national ban on evictions, but this remains short term, and is likely to lead to a downstream surge in evictions if not mitigated, so this is a key risk and priority as arrears will be continuing to build for many. The pandemic has also increased attention and focus on those who, in normal circumstances would have great difficulty in accessing housing, including people with no recourse to public funding. Work to find solutions to this is another priority.

During the early days and weeks of the pandemic, and with most people suddenly working from home, there was a need for frequent online meetings to be arranged to keep all agencies and services informed with the constantly changing situation, and in particular with the *Everyone In* arrangements that involved accommodating all those rough sleeping as well as the variables involved with ensuring that anyone who was in need of self-isolating was able to do so safely.

As we later emerged from the worst of the crisis, it was clear that this multi-agency forum needed to be built on and enhanced; expanded to encompass the wider spectrum of homelessness and preventing it in all its forms. This resulted in the Homelessness Forum.

It is likely that the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will be far-reaching, particularly in terms of putting more people at risk of homelessness and hardship.

The increased statutory homelessness responsibilities placed on the local authority in recent years, coupled with a high dependence on short-term government grants in this area and the significant financial pressures the wider council has to consider, means that providing cohesive, collaborative and innovative partnerships with other public and voluntary sector services will be critical.

Making best use of our local affordable social housing to meet this need and taking opportunities in the private sector to develop more sustainable housing solutions will be key to this.

Part 5 **Key challenges arising from the review and the pandemic**

Targeted early and upstream intervention

Reducing PRS evictions

Ensuring people don't lose their homes due to losing their jobs, with likely rise in unemployment

Ending unsuitable B&B placements

Proactive approach regarding ensuring equitable support for minority groups

Increased focus on health and mental and physical wellbeing.

More housing-led provision

Continuing to build on partnership and community support work

More affordable move-on housing

More self-contained housing-led provision

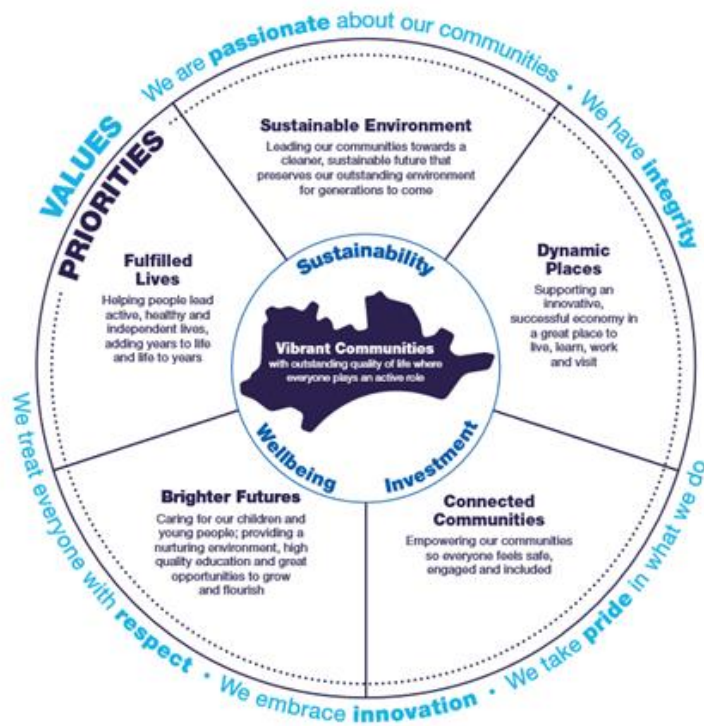
Part 6

Core Aims and related links

Three core strategic aims have been identified for this strategy each with a comprehensive group of commitments.

There are direct links with the **BCP Council Corporate Strategy**.

BCP Council's Corporate Strategy



We are a **modern, accessible** and **accountable** council committed to providing effective community leadership

► Our Objectives are to...

Sustainable Environment

- ensure sustainability underpins all of our policies
- protect and enhance our outstanding natural environment
- develop an eco-friendly and active transport network
- tackle the climate and ecological emergency
- promote sustainable resource management
- maximise access to our high quality parks and open spaces

Dynamic Places

- revitalise and reinvent our high streets and local centres
- invest in the homes our communities need
- create a sustainable, vibrant and inclusive economy
- increase productivity through skills investment
- develop sustainable infrastructure
- support our businesses to operate more creatively
- create a 21st century digital infrastructure

Connected Communities

- strengthen the cultural identity of our towns and places
- respect and engage with our diverse communities
- encourage intergenerational interactions
- reduce loneliness and isolation
- ensure our communities feel safe
- empower a thriving voluntary and community sector

Brighter Futures

- enable access to high quality education
- be aspirational for our children in care
- support parents and guardians to care for their children well
- prevent harm through early intervention

Fulfilled Lives

- support people to live safe and independent lives
- promote happy, active and healthy lifestyles
- develop age-friendly communities
- value and support carers
- enable people to live well through quality social care
- tackle homelessness and prevent rough sleeping
- promote lifelong learning for all



The following core aims have synergy with national strategies and guidelines, as well as being aligned with the Homelessness Partnership's stated vision, values and overarching goals. Some further examples of links are provided below.

- **CORE AIM 1 - EARLY AND EFFECTIVE UPSTREAM PREVENTION: REDUCING HOMELESSNESS BY INTERVENING AND EDUCATING PRIOR TO OCCURANCE**
- **CORE AIM 2 - REDUCING AND STOPPING THE CYCLE OF HOMELESSNESS: WHERE THIS DOES OCCUR, WORK AT MAKING IT A ONE-OFF EVENT**
- **CORE AIM 3 - ONGOING IMPROVEMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY: ENSURING THAT PROGRESS IS SUSTAINED.**

The 2002 Homelessness Act and associated code of guidance requires local authorities to produce a homelessness strategy every five years, with an annual review and provides guidance as to what should be in a local homelessness strategy. There are 3 main categories, the first being the prevention of homelessness in the area in question.

The UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence has published a prevention framework with five categories of preventions as follows.

- **Universal**
- **Targeted**
- **Crisis**
- **Emergency**
- **Recovery**

Universal, Targeted and Crisis Prevention activity closely align with Core Aim 1 of this strategy with Emergency and Recovery Prevention aligning with Aim 2, where rapid resolution and ensuring homelessness is brief, a one-off occurrence and is non-recurring remains the focus.

For people who may become homeless it is important to consider the standard of accommodation and affordability to ensure sustainability and maximise the chance of long-term success and minimise repeat cases. Areas such as location and accessibility also need to be considered carefully. Support is also crucial as there are many instances where the provision of accommodation alone is unlikely to be sufficient to safeguard against a tenancy breaking down and tailored and person-centred support will be required.

Finally, the third core aim builds on the previous two to ensure that progress is ongoing and that there is continual learning, innovation and improvement.

In summary Aim 1 is concerned with preventing homelessness from occurring in the first place, Aim 2 with prompt, effective and sustainable solutions to those cases that do occur and Aim 3 is about ensuring homelessness is ended across the BCP region by ensuring that there are no repeat cases and that ongoing practice and education works towards this collectively, that there is not complacency when the situation improves.

If cases can be prevented in the first place, with those cases that do occur being prevented from re-occurring, then this will significantly reduce and eventually end the numbers of people/families being made homeless, including the numbers of people sleeping rough. The earlier that this prevention work can be done the less impact and potential harm will be done to those involved in terms of factors such as stress, exponential financial difficulties and related effects such as those on a child's education.

As people, in many cases supported in the community by their neighbours, peers and the voluntary and faith sectors, receive help to remain in their homes, get re-housed or perhaps get their own accommodation for the first time, there are likely to be further benefits to ensure these activities collaborate a focus on providing meaningful occupation, volunteering, training, employment and leisure.

Core Aims and Commitments

For each Core Aim there will be a summary of some key considerations followed by specific commitments for each area.

CORE AIM 1 EARLY AND EFFECTIVE UPSTREAM PREVENTION: REDUCING HOMELESSNESS BY INTERVENING AND EDUCATING PRIOR TO OCCURANCE

It is important to ensure that there are no inevitabilities in terms of people becoming homeless and that no-one is missed or falls between the cracks. This will include early targeted intervention in terms of high-risk groups and ensuring that all parts of the community are reached and supported, including minority groups. Additionally, some people who have never previously been at risk of homelessness may find themselves at risk due to a health crisis, relationship breakdown or shifting employment conditions such as those related to the *gig economy* or similar. Early action is also vital in ensuring that homelessness is prevented via education and the promotion of support available across all sectors and that potential problems such as rent arrears or notice being given by a landlord, prison releases and hospital discharges or a transition from care are addressed promptly.

Building on existing and developing work in terms of partnership working across the BCP region to ensure that silo working is minimised with good and honest communication and clear messaging which supports collective working. This also includes working with local landlords, providers and communities to ensure that accommodation is well maintained, safe and that standards of accommodation are high and provide an incentive to remain accommodated, with a focus on homes rather than units of accommodation. This will also help enhance local communities.

Finally, there is a need for close working between prevention services, housing and health to ensure that people receive access to health interventions and treatment, with focus on people who are currently being forced to sleep outside as well as with households and families at risk of becoming homeless and in insecure or poor quality accommodation and help to access any other help that may be required. This work will include further development of a health hub and a hospital pathway team.

Commitments for Core Aim 1

- Provide timely housing options planning and support advice to all care leavers, and other relevant under 19 year olds, which supports their Pathway plan
- Develop homelessness employment pathways for people who have recently lost employment or who are otherwise looking for work
- Ensure that when people are discharged from institutional settings, they have accommodation and services in place to help them avoid homelessness, including good health support.
- Ensure specialist settled housing, care and support is in place for groups of people who require a more tailored setting and home
- Develop a web-based housing advice platform where anyone seeking advice, guidance, and support if homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Provide targeted support and early intervention to all groups at greater risk of homelessness, including the 'hidden homeless' and those in precarious accommodation and also relating to health, frailty and complex cross-cutting challenges.
- Communicate clear housing support and assessment pathways
- Strong partnership working to continue to develop and enhance support being delivered
- High standards of accommodation that communicate value and worth to their occupants
- Work alongside landlords to create robust early alert systems and ensure protocols are in place for tenancies at risk or when properties are going to be removed from the market
- Ensure mediation is available to maintain or repair relationships whilst longer term housing solutions are identified
- Provide early advice and housing options services to people leaving the armed forces and prioritise veterans for housing and support.
- Ensure appropriate safeguarding practices are embedded across the Homelessness Partnership, inclusive of further developing a robust multi-agency safeguarding approach for rough sleeping
- Focus on significantly reducing homelessness-related deaths including those dying of suicide, due to poor health or as a result of being a victim of crime

CORE AIM 2 REDUCING AND STOPPING THE CYCLE OF HOMELESSNESS: WHERE THIS DOES OCCUR, WORK AT MAKING IT A ONE-OFF EVENT

The desire is to eliminate homelessness altogether, and this will be the focus. However, there will still be cases that arise and need to be resolved. On such occasions there will be a need to source suitable accommodation as promptly as possible to minimise time that people are rough sleeping, sofa surfing or in unsuitable accommodation. Whilst B&B accommodation will have a limited role due to the need for quick solutions, this will be minimal as this is not the desired or best solution, especially for families with children. The focus will be on better standards and value for money options.

Giving people as much of a stake in their accommodation as possible, whether temporary/emergency accommodation, supported housing or their longer-term home is also important, as is involving those with lived experience to all aspects of partnership working, including the outworking of the strategy, as well as in its formulation.

Those who require additional support will need this at different levels and for differing lengths of time. There will need to be flexible solutions which focus on an integrated and multi-agency approach and have the ability to increase and decrease as needed to maximise long term success. This is particularly important for those who have experienced multiple challenges who may need a creative or bespoke approach including relating to their health and mental health. This will also involve multi-agency and cross-departmental work regarding cross-cutting areas such as aggressive begging and street-based anti-social behaviour where there can be some links with homelessness, whilst being sure to avoid inaccurate conflation and ensure support-led.

Commitments for Core Aim 2

- An end to rough sleeping in the BCP region within the lifetime of this strategy
- Reduce the dependency on inappropriate B&B accommodation, instead providing more suitable emergency housing solutions
- Focus to be on the inherent strengths, potential and aspirations of each person, couple and family, rather than concentrating primarily on needs and risk factors
- Provide flexible approaches, according to need, and ensuring that no-one is left behind or falls between provisions.
- On any occasion where rough sleeping coalesces with anti-social behaviour, the approach will be support-led and any resulting enforcement will be proportionate and a last resort.
- Working with the private rented sector, registered social landlords/supported housing providers and BCP Council to maximise the range of affordable and sustainable accommodation available for those who are or become homeless. This will include various forms of supported housing, bedsits, studios and flats suitable for individuals or couples and larger properties for families.
- To provide an accommodation & support offer to any local resident who may otherwise sleep rough regardless of priority need or intentional homelessness – adopting a “No First Night Out Approach”
- Seek long lasting housing led solutions for everyone, including a focus on affordable rapid re-housing pathways
- Ensure any victim of Domestic Abuse has somewhere safe to stay and receive support
- Provide specialist and targeted programmes of meaningful occupation, volunteering and employment for people who have complex needs
- Consider adopting critical time intervention for people who are affected by homelessness to ensure they have the access to the right support, resources and services at the right time irrespective of their tenure
- Provide an appropriate range of support for people with substance dependency to aid them maintain and find a home
- To provide more social rented affordable housing, including Housing First to more people affected by homelessness
- Ensure that there no systemic barriers to health provision, including access to GPs and dental care

CORE AIM 3 ONGOING IMPROVEMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY: ENSURING THAT PROGRESS IS SUSTAINED.

All aspects of the Homelessness Partnership, including the Homelessness Forum will continue to drive co-operation and joint working via various Action Groups and under the strategic direction and oversight of the Homelessness Reduction Board, who will monitor the progress of the Partnership and also the aims and Action Plan of this Strategy.

As and when services relating to homelessness and rough sleeping come up for procurement and tendering, BCP Council will work with stakeholders including the Homelessness Reduction Board to ensure that future provision is of a high standard, good value for money, willing and able to meet and respond to local needs and priorities and being mindful of future trends, challenges and objectives.

Partners will also work together to ensure that all local services working in or related to the field of homelessness are flexible and responsive in terms of local need, and are willing to consider amending practice if necessary in order to ensure strategic relevance and offering the most effective solutions to those at risk of homelessness. We will ensure that those with lived experience have an active part to play in relation to this, with their experience and insight crucial and invaluable.

Commitments for Core Aim 3

- Ongoing communication with the general public regarding promotion of services and progress with tackling homelessness, as well as ensuring the public is informed on the reality, scale and causes of homelessness, and addressing misconceptions.
- Regularly review what we do, using data, feedback and evidence to make a positive changes & impact. This will include regularly consulting and seeking insight from people with lived experience of homelessness.
- The Homelessness Reduction Board to oversee progress of the Strategy and Action Plan and ensure corrective action if required
- Full framework, review and procurement process of Housing Related Support services and Rough Sleeping Pathway
- Use data, feedback and evidence to understand ways to work smarter to manage demand and to inform how we improve prevention and relief intervention services
- Improve our understanding & service offer to ethnic minorities, the LGBT+ community and other minority groups
- Provide Psychologically Informed Environments for people who access the services provided by BCP Homelessness Partnership providers
- Share training and learning experiences across the Homelessness Partnership building our collective capacity & expertise
- To deliver a community hub where services for anyone who is rough sleeping and those in temporary accommodation can improve health wellbeing and housing outcomes by ensuring a holistic and proactive package of tailored support
- Commit to deliver common info sharing, assessment & risk tool

Part 7

Delivery and monitoring

Action Plan

Once agreement has been finalised regarding the core aims and commitments of the strategy these will then be broken down into specific and measurable actions. This will ensure that the *how, who and when* detail is agreed and this will involve stakeholders from across the Homelessness Partnership, both in terms of setting and delivering the agreed actions. This will ensure that there is a thread from strategic aim to specific action, allowing for monitoring and measuring of progress and success. The Action Plan will be appended to the strategy for Board and Council approval.

The work and action points needed to deliver on the core aims and commitments will primarily be delivered via the Action Groups in the Homelessness Partnership, as well as any sub or task and finish group from these. These groups are accountable and report to the Homelessness Reduction Board which will provide oversight and quarterly monitoring. There is also good representation from wide cross-section of services and departments, and any gaps will be identified and addressed. There is also likely to be the need for some additional action groups to ensure scope covered in full.

This approach will also ensure that wider needs than accommodation alone are considered and will help to give consistency to the manner of evidence and data gathering, the insight and input of those with lived experience and personalisation of services.

Monitoring and review

The Strategy Action Plan will be reviewed and monitored by the Homelessness Reduction Board every quarter with alignment with the Councils Key Performance Indicators and Corporate Plan and Priorities. The Strategy Steering Group will take a lead role in ensuring a Performance data set is produced quarterly and reports provided to the Homelessness Reduction Board and governance structure.

The strategy and action plan will also be kept in regular review, to ensure it maintains strategic relevance to the shifting landscape of homelessness. An annual report with updated Action Plan will be produced and presented to Council, the Homelessness Reduction Board and associated forums.