

Equality Impact Assessment: conversation screening tool

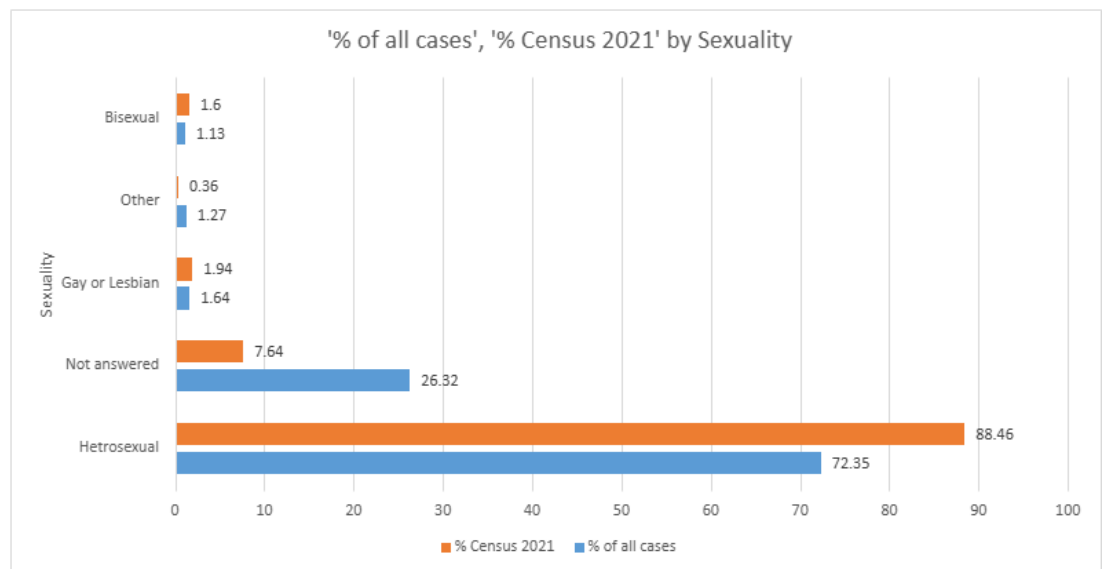
[Use this form to prompt an EIA conversation and capture the output between officers, stakeholders and interested groups. This completed form or a full EIA report will be published as part of the decision-making process]

Policy/Service under development/review:	Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy
What changes are being made to the policy/service?	Under the Homelessness Act 2002, all housing authorities must have in place a Homelessness Strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district and demonstrating how homelessness will be prevented and resolved. The Strategy must be renewed at least every 5 years. The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Homelessness Partnership have worked together to develop a new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy which seeks to make homelessness everyone's business and building on the initial one (2021-25). This work therefore aims to build on the commitments of the preceding strategy whilst including anything that needs to be added. There was an interim review last year (2024) which streamlined the commitments following work with partners, experts by experience and Homewards. This included incorporating the Homewards BCP Action Plan, to ensure that that work was included as part of the overall Homelessness and rough sleeping strategy and action plan for BCP and was not siloed. The primary aim is preventing homelessness in the first place, ideally as upstream as possible to mitigate risk and harm, and where this is not possible, that homelessness incidences are rare, brief and not repeated. Part of this involves seeking to understand, and then address, factors that result in a higher risk of homelessness (or repeat homelessness), including groups that are at disproportionate risk, which includes diverse communities and groups more likely to be impacted by inequity and multiple disadvantage. The Strategy, and the accompanying Action Plan will provide refreshed and up to date strategic aims and commitments and specific actions to, broadly speaking, prevent and address all forms of homelessness via integrated partnership working. This will include specific work relating to tackling inequity, multiple disadvantage and disproportionate risk. This work is currently in the engagement phase, before a draft will be written and go to public consultation in the Autumn.
Service Unit:	Housing
Persons present in the conversation and their role/experience in the service:	• Fraser Nicholson – Homelessness Partnerships Coordinator • Linda Wilson – Business and Compliance Coordinator
Conversation dates:	26/06/25 and 03/07/25
Do you know your current or potential client base? Who are the key stakeholders?	• Commissioned Housing Related Support/Housing led providers (St Mungo's, BCHA, CCP, Pivotal, Two Saints, Centrepont, Bournemouth YMCA) • Housing providers / Landlords • Strategic Steering Group (SSG)

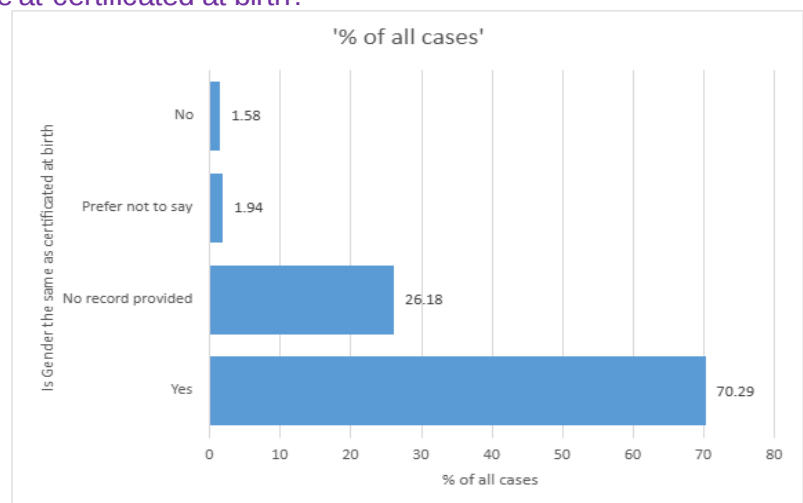
- Homelessness Delivery Board (Faithworks, Shelter, ICB (Integrated Care Board), Probation, Department of Work & Pensions (DWP), PRS (Private Rental Sector) Landlord Forum, Homeless Link, Public Health, MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter) Dorset Police)
- Support services - health, substance use and dependency, mental health
- MDT (Multidisciplinary Team working with long term cases of rough sleeping)
- Partnership services involved in the Homelessness Partnership and related Forum (50+ Charter signatories)
- Coproduction Community of Practise
- Frontline staff Community of Practice
- Reframing The Narrative Group (Comms)
- People who are homeless/ rough sleeping or at risk
- General public
- Community safety teams

Key data

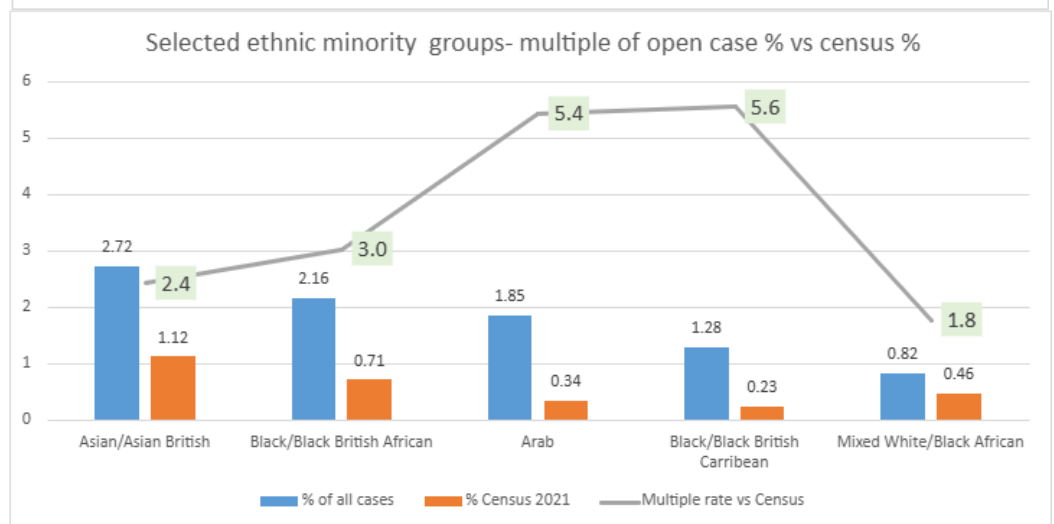
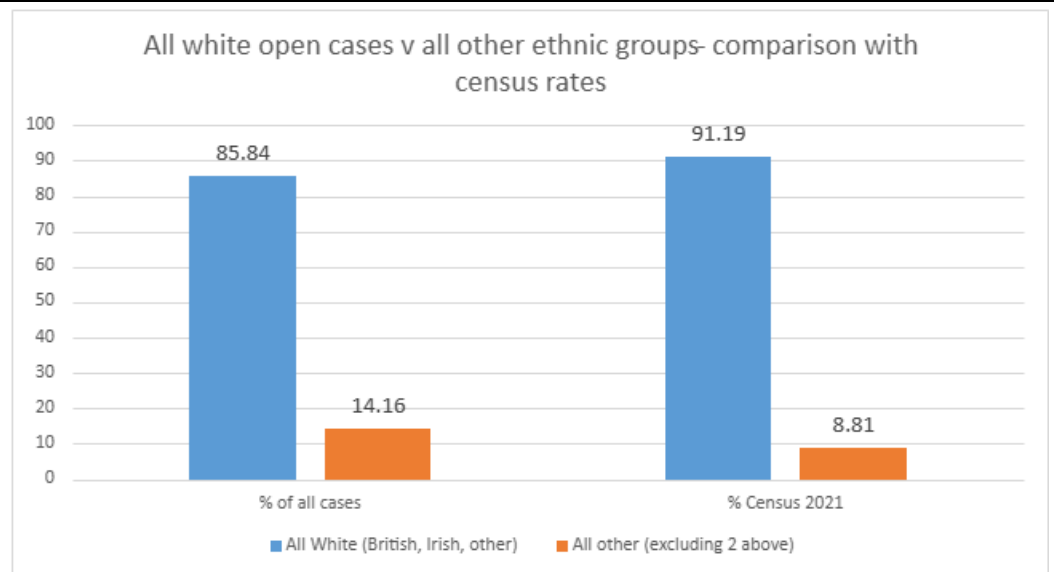
Sexuality



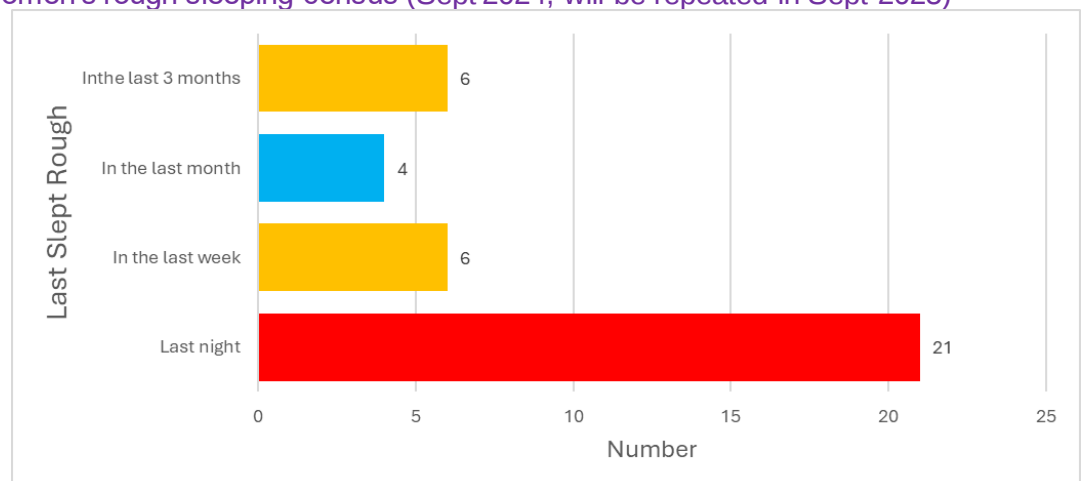
Gender the same as certificated at birth?

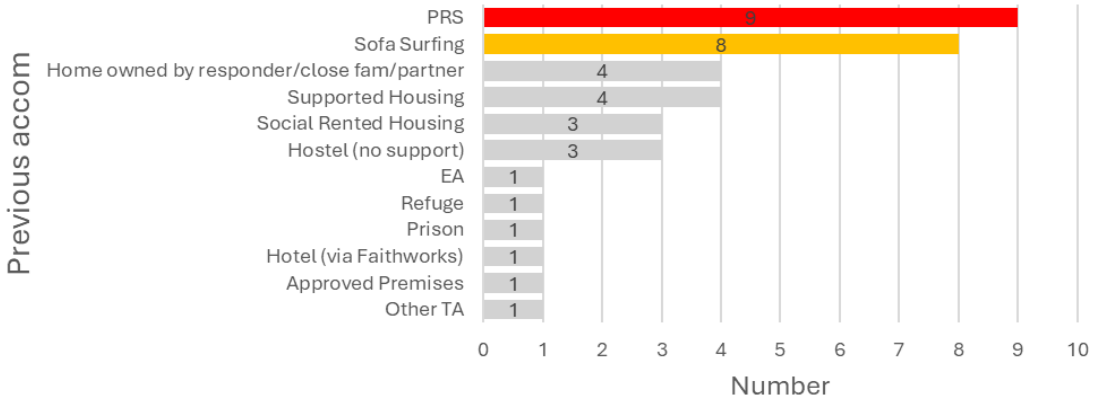


Ethnicity



Women's rough sleeping census (Sept 2024, will be repeated in Sept 2025)



	'Previous accom': PRS and Sofa Surfing have noticeably higher number  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Previous accom</th> <th>Number</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>PRS</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sofa Surfing</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Home owned by responder/close fam/partner</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Supported Housing</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Social Rented Housing</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hostel (no support)</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>EA</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Refuge</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prison</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hotel (via Faithworks)</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Approved Premises</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other TA</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Previous accom	Number	PRS	9	Sofa Surfing	8	Home owned by responder/close fam/partner	4	Supported Housing	4	Social Rented Housing	3	Hostel (no support)	3	EA	1	Refuge	1	Prison	1	Hotel (via Faithworks)	1	Approved Premises	1	Other TA	1
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Do different groups have different needs or experiences in relation to the policy/service?	LGBTQ+ people As part of formulation and background research it is known that some groups are at particular risk of homelessness, including but not limited to the LGBTQ+ community (especially trans people) and the ethnic minority community. Nationally, see LGBT Youth Homelessness Research Report 2025 - There's No Place Like Home - akt In BCP we are working at improving our data and understanding re this. Indicatively, on a snapshot in May 2025, there is indication that open homelessness cases are disproportionately higher for those in the LGBTQ+ community, when comparing with the wider population measured by census stats. The much lower level of heterosexual cases when compared to the census, combined with a much higher incidence of 'not answered' indicates that this is an area where people do not always feel comfortable asking (in case of staff) or answering (for a potential host of reasons including prior negative experiences, fear of prejudice etc) When it comes to gender being the same as registered at birth, there is not the same ability to match to census records, but the relatively high incidence of no record provided, indicates that this could a similar issue in terms of accurate reporting and underreporting, especially given that overall number of trans people is very low, and that this minority receive a significant amount of overt abuse and prejudice as well as any wider unconscious bias. There is clearly more to do in this area, and it is part of the work outlined below. Following early scoping meetings with groups such as Dorset Race Equality Council, Community Action Network and the LGB&T Dorset Equality Network regarding this area a group was put together to develop and improve partnership approaches and ensuring minorities groups are given focus. The focus was primarily agreed to be, at least initially, the LGBTQ+ community, although there is a great degree of intersectionality involved. There has been some key work achieved to date including a comms campaign and a dedicated section for LGBTQ+ people in the BCP Homelessness Partnership website. The group has recently been refreshed, in June 2025, with additional members added to take the work on to the next stage including work on data, allyship and staff training. Specific needs.																										

- Better data and ensuring that sufficient choices in terms of personal data (e.g. description of gender, sexuality and not being too binary or limiting.)
- There may be specific accommodation needs
- Subject to conscious and unconscious bias
- Higher likelihood of familial home breakdown, abuse, direct prejudice
- Disproportional related issues such as access to employment
- Trans people facing particular stigma, abuse and prejudice, as well as practical challenges such as use of public toilets and other gendered spaces.
- There are likely to be more needs identified

Ethnic Minorities

Similarly, whilst compared to some other parts of the country the numbers of ethnic minorities are relatively low in BCP, again there is evidence that rates of homelessness are higher, and this would again be in line with national patterns.

A snapshot demonstrated that all white categories together made up over 91% of the census population, this dropped to under 86% of the open cases. Conversely, all other ethnic groups made up less than 9% of the census population, but over 14% of all open cases. In addition, like with other minority groups, there is likely to be hidden homeless and other under-reporting masking the true scale and nature.

When the ethnic minority groups are further broken down, further disproportion appears to be evident with the scale of Arab and Black/Black British Caribbean both being more than 5 times the census rates, and black African 3 times.

This tracks close to national trends [Black people in England four times as likely to face homelessness, study finds | Homelessness | The Guardian](#)

Specific needs

- Higher likelihood of poverty and other forms of multiple disadvantage
- Direct and indirect prejudice and racism, particularly related to asylum myths and far right rhetoric
- Subject to conscious and unconscious bias
- Disproportional related issues such as access to employment, or only to lower paid and less secure work.
- Potential for relatively low numbers in areas such as BCP to mask higher proportional homelessness for this group
- There are likely to be more needs identified

Armed Forces- there can sometimes be a misperception around the numbers and proportion of people from the armed forces being more likely to become homeless, and especially rough sleeping, although it is certainly an issue for some. There are different options available for homeless veterans through the Armed Forces Covenant and associated support services. Generally, or at least often, veterans will only open up and talk to people with similar experiences, or certainly this will be their preference, and the outreach service has links to the relevant support services to maximise enablement of this.

A recent snapshot in May 2025 had 1.2% of open cases as having a background in the armed forces, against 4.5 of the 2021 census.

Specific needs

- Often have no experience of unregimented life (e.g. may have been in forces since leaving school) May never have had a civilian job, dealt with social security, needed to source and fund accommodation etc.
- Higher probability of PTS (Post Traumatic Stress) and other trauma responses, especially if previously deployed to war zones or disaster relief sites etc.
- Often struggle to trust support services, and are more comfortable speaking to fellow veterans
- There are likely to be more needs identified

Women

Another group where we have evidence that there are systemic barriers to support and to understanding and evidencing scale, is that of women, and especially those who are rough sleeping or experiencing related hidden homelessness or insecure, precarious accommodation. In these cases, there is often also a VAWG element, adding to the challenges. For the last 2 years BCP has participated in the week-long Women's Rough Sleeping Census, with plans for this coming Sept (2025) also. This multi-agency work uses wider forms of gender-based outreach and interaction with other services, to seek to establish a complete and more accurate picture of women's rough sleeping than standard outreach generally provides.

This is national work, but the trends in BPC have followed a similar pattern in terms of demonstrating that women's rough sleeping is undercounted. This has already allowed us to make some changes including a women's drop in, women-only accommodation and a more flexible approach re verification.

The census provided a host of evidence but below shows a periodic breakdown of when last slept rough, with the majority having been the previous night.

In terms of accommodation prior to rough sleeping the vast majority had come from the PRS, just ahead of having been sofa surfing.

Work continues to better understand and improve this situation, including planning for a Somewhere Safe to Stay off the street accommodation service for women and ongoing work to help ensure verification is not a barrier.

Specific needs

- Homelessness more likely to be hidden, especially rough sleeping, and may involve precarious accommodation, which may also involve coercion.
- Higher likelihood of domestic abuse of all forms
- System still geared towards homelessness affecting men, especially re rough sleeping.
- Disproportionally affected by other forms of social disadvantage, such as earnings gap and institutional sexism, glass ceilings etc, especially if they have had children
- There are likely to be more needs identified

Neurodiversity

	For many people who are impacted by homelessness, there are much higher levels of neurodiversity that in the wider population. This is often undiagnosed or misdiagnosed, with factors such as masking impacting on how they are treated. There can also be a gender factor to this too, especially with females, including those with ADHD or AuDHD who until recently were not diagnosed or were labelled as having a personality disorder or similar. Additionally, many LGBTQ+ people are neurodivergent, which can mean another potential barrier to equitable treatment and access. Autism and Homelessness Homeless Link Specific needs • Very often undiagnosed • Very often misdiagnosed or labelled as difficult, rude, having a personality disorder etc • Often have had to mask to fit in or appear neurotypical, at personal cost • Often has led to educational challenges, employment challenges and social challenges when growing up and into adolescence and adulthood • There are likely to be more needs identified
Will the policy or service change affect any of these service users?	Yes, further detail is included by protected characteristics below. This strategy will bring about beneficial outcomes with aims to prevent, reduce and stop homelessness and rough sleeping.
[If the answer to any of the questions above is 'don't know' then you need to gather more evidence and do a full EIA. The best way to do this is to use the Capturing Evidence form]	
What are the benefits or positive impacts of the policy/service change on current or potential service users?	Age • Fewer care experienced young people and other young people becoming homeless via better, earlier and multi-disciplinary upstream prevention, including in schools supported by the activity of the Youth Homelessness Board. • Improved advocacy supported by the activity of the Youth Homelessness Board • Fewer care experienced young people and other young people in B&B/Temp accommodation and adult homeless services • Address rise in older people becoming homeless by considering resourcing an older person's champion. • Fewer children in B&B, reducing later likelihood of their being homeless themselves, via more effective, and earlier prevention and shorter stays in TA. Disability • Better and quicker options for people with mobility challenges including via the allocations process. • Trauma training and similar will improve support staff's understanding of aspects such as post-traumatic stress, emotional dysregulation and acquired brain injuries. This will help with reducing misunderstanding, escalation and resulting unsuccessful or truncated appointments and help with improving empathy and the experience of those being assisted. • Other forms of disability, which may be hidden including neurodiversity (although this can also be a strength and it is neurotypical systems and short-sighted restrictions that can and often do make this a disability) and mental health challenges, particularly when severe in nature. Neurodiversity training has been made compulsory for the Housing Options team, with regular resources also

being shared to aid understanding. Other considerations include how customer contact spaces could be better adapted to be inclusive, or alternative venues utilised.

Sex

- Better accommodation and support for women leaving prison by improving planning for release and maximising options, including *own front door* options.
- Enhanced support for people who sex-work, working in close partnership with specialist services to ensure that safe routes off the street are optimised where needed, including safeguarding considerations.
- Consider supported housing provision and need for additional female-only provision. There is some existing provision, but there is a need for off the street accommodation such as a Somewhere Safe to Stay service.
- Consider need for male provision for refuge from domestic abuse.
- Consider need for safe trans spaces. First step via dialogue with trans people.

Gender Reassignment

- Closer working with specialist organisations to preclude/minimise direct and indirect discrimination and unconscious bias as well as better understanding of specific needs, particularly given recent High Court ruling concerning the definition of a woman and the subsequent fallout including a rise in abuse, prejudice and trauma, as well as potential legal challenge. Staff to be provided with information and training to ensure better and more bespoke support, and certainly not a one size fits all approach
- Focused work as part of sub-group of Partnership Action Group. This work includes improvements relating to training, data and comms as well as allyship and challenging prejudice.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

- Better options for all couples, including those not in heterosexual/heteronormative relationships including in supported housing.

Race

- Closer and focussed working with specialist organisations including ICN to preclude/minimise direct and indirect discrimination and unconscious bias as well as better understanding of specific. Advocacy and support particularly in the light of rising tensions, misinformation, prejudice and abuse fuelled by far-right activity.
- Ensure that data is regularly reviewed to help monitor and patters in relation to race, particularly as most minority ethnic groups are disproportionately impacted.
- Targeted prevention work in collaboration with community groups and leaders.

Religion or Belief

- Closer working with specialist organisations to preclude/minimise direct and indirect discrimination and unconscious bias as well as better understanding of specific needs.

Sexual Orientation

- Closer working with specialist organisations to preclude/minimise direct and indirect discrimination and unconscious bias as well as better understanding of specific needs.
- Focused work as part of sub-group of Partnership Action Group (see above)

Armed Forces

	• Early advice and housing options for veterans- prevention • Plan to implement having an Armed Forces Champion in the team, to be main point of contact and lead of proactive prevention and awareness raising Carers • Improved advocacy and support for carers • Prevention work will reduce distress for carers of individuals at risk of homelessness/rough sleeping • Seek to reach the wider public, including carers, via community work such as the KEEP Project in location such as wellbeing hubs, community centres, food banks and libraries. Human Rights • Consideration of how to better help people with no recourse to public funds via a specific task and finish group involving community stakeholders. Close working with Social Care and organisations such as ICN. It must also be recognised that with many of these groups there will be at least a degree of intersectionality, and in some cases this will be significant. This means that for some people the potential disadvantage and disproportional risk of homelessness will be accordingly much higher, as well as other forms of multiple disadvantage relating to poverty, education and poor health and mental health etc. This is obviously not universally true but is more likely to be the case than with many other groups. All other protected characteristics have been considered, and no other needs and experiences have been identified.
What are the negative impacts of the policy/service change on current or potential service users?	Age • Increase in online assistance may be disproportionately challenging to some older people who are not online or IT proficient, especially if at risk of homelessness for the first time. Disability • As above Again, for those who fall into both these categories, the likelihood for negative impact may rise and particularly if gradual with no significant trigger incident.
Will the policy or service change affect employees?	Yes, this strategy will further strengthen links with other services and the knowledge and experience of working alongside and in partnership with other services. This is a central BCP strategy and new action plan building on a successful current strategy and plan.
Will the policy or service change affect the wider community?	Yes, by preventing homelessness as early as possible, ensuring any cases are brief and ending repeat cases of homelessness. There will be benefits to people, services and less community issues. It will be very beneficial to the wider community as well as bringing savings and better value for money from the reduction of homelessness cycles and a better experience for everyone involved as capacity is freed up to help more people.
What mitigating actions are planned or already in place for those negatively affected by the policy/service change?	Where accessibility to online options was raised as an issue it's important to note there are other options available such as 1-2-1's and face-to-face support. Online options free up these services for those that might not have access or might need 1-2-1 support. We are still early in the process, and at this time are in the engagement phase, prior to the strategy being drafted. Any further negative impacts that become clear during the remainder of this process, including public consultation, will be addressed and mitigated and updated detail added to the EIA.

**Summary of
Equality
Implications:**

This strategy will further improve links between services, increasing knowledge and experience of working with other services and aim to prevent homelessness and end repeat cases of homelessness and rough sleeping. Communication will be a part of this, including a focus on changing narratives and challenging perceptions about homelessness, its causes and the impacts.

As is clear in this document, whilst homelessness effects a broad range of society including people of all ages and backgrounds, there are specified groups who are at heightened and disproportional risk and as such much more likely to be directly impacted, including by hidden homelessness that is more likely to be hidden from official figures.

Throughout the development of this strategy, the needs, aspirations and insight of people accessing services, or with the potential to need to do so, is being considered, reflecting on protected characteristics and other vulnerabilities and seeking to achieve positive outcomes for all.

It is important to be mindful that these factors can mean that more effort and consideration is required to ensure or at least maximise equitable treatment and outcomes, and that there needs to be consideration of potential unconscious (or conscious) bias from workers and systems.

There will be benefits to people, staff, services and the wider community, bringing value for money from the reduction of homelessness cycles and a better experience for everyone involved, as more integrated and varied support services free-up capacity to help more people.

For any questions on this, please contact the Policy and Performance Team by email
performance@bcpcouncil.gov.uk