

Bury Homelessness Strategy 2022 to 2025



Making life better in partnership



Forward

Becoming homeless, or the fear that this could potentially occur, is one of the most damaging experiences that can happen to individuals and families. It can pervade many aspects of life and leave long lasting damage to prospects, potential, wellbeing and health.

In 2020 a new Housing Strategy was agreed for the Borough of Bury which included a commitment to end rough sleeping by 2024. The new Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan has been co-produced with the Bury Homelessness Partnership to deliver this, by applying the Borough-Wide 'Lets Do it' ethos of prevention; early intervention and the targeting of public service resources.

Everyone deserves a good quality of life, to be healthy and safe and have somewhere they can call home, and this should not be dependent on status. A multi-agency approach and working alongside community partners and stakeholders is the only way that this can happen effectively and the Homelessness Partnership is vital to this.

The strategy builds and expands on the wonderful work that has been done to date. Homelessness is an issue which is high on the national agenda. The 'Everyone In' response to the COVID-19 pandemic has shown what can be achieved in addressing rough sleeping with a joined-up response, whilst helping people in transformative ways. We need to continue to build on this progress and the commitments in this strategy reflect this.

It is important to emphasise that homelessness is a much wider issue than rough sleeping, with many people living in precarious or unsuitable homes or in temporary or emergency accommodation. All of this must be considered as we work hard at all forms of homelessness prevention as well as minimising repeat and long-term cases and ensuring sustainable solutions, which focus on individual need and aspiration.

The strategy is a wide-ranging and proactive response to this challenging issue, with the community and all stakeholders playing a vital part in helping to deliver. Integral to our response is involving those individuals who have lived experience or who have been disproportionately affected by homelessness in shaping our services and delivery so that they best meet the needs of those people that need them most.

I welcome your support.

Cllr Clare Cummins – Lead Cabinet Member – Housing

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1. Introduction

In 2020 partners across Bury adopted '**Let's Do It - Bury 2030**', the vision and blueprint of how the Council and its communities want to see Bury flourish over the next 10 years. At the heart of this strategy is a new commitment to prevention, early intervention and the co-design of solutions with communities.

In parallel, the Council led the development of a complementary **housing strategy** which sets out the following key objectives:

- More good quality, low-carbon and healthy homes in the borough, designed to meet our bespoke checklist for great places.
- Increased affordable housing supply – through new build, leasing and acquisition.
- A more dynamic housing market – a broader range of housing tenures and more tailored support for people to access a suitable home they want under any tenure.
- Support that enables people to live well in their own community.
- Intelligent, evidence-driven, targeted investment to improve health through housing.
- A township housing strategy shaped to support the future of each town centre and neighbourhood.
- To align with Government's objective to eliminate rough sleeping by 2024 – through an evidenced approach to preventing homelessness, increasing supply of affordable new homes, supporting accessibility and 'enabling support' towards independence. The continued Government support, resources and funding will be critical in achieving this objective.

The prevention and management of homelessness and rough sleeping in Bury is managed by a multi-agency partnership comprised of community leaders; service users and others with lived experience; the Council and Six Town Housing. This document, **Bury's Homelessness Strategy for 2021-2025**, has been co-produced by the partnership and sets out the vision for how the strategic objective to eliminate rough sleeping and prevent homelessness will be achieved and how outcomes for these vulnerable people will be secured through a proactive, multi-agency approach.

2. Strategic Priorities and Legislation

This strategy aims to deliver the agreed objective of eliminating all rough sleeping in the Borough of Bury by 2024, by preventing homelessness and providing "enabling support" towards independence. The strategy describes how the Council and its partners will discharge duties under the relevant legislation, which includes:-

- Housing Act 1996 – Part VII
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

These provisions cover people who:

- Want or need general advice about housing options

- Are at risk of homelessness in the future
- Are already homeless
- Are rough sleeping
- Are staying in supported housing or temporary accommodation
- Are settling into their new home after becoming homeless

In addition to fulfilling the Council's statutory duties in relation to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, the partnership also provides specialist support to other potentially vulnerable cohorts including:

- Victims of domestic abuse (DA). As part of a recent review of DA arrangements and the development of a new strategy, the provision of specialist housing for singles of both genders and families is being arranged.
- Council Care Leavers through a long-standing arrangement to provide priority support to Looked After Children in order that these children become independent at the point of adult hood. As part of the Childrens and Young Persons improvement plan, arrangements for care leavers are currently under review.
- co-ordination and commissioning of services for refugees and asylum seekers through Serco, with community support from community groups. Serco provide 139 dispersed properties across the private rented sector, accommodating 450+ refugees and asylum seekers.
- Armed Forces covenant obligations and priority around Homelessness and Housing support to ex-service personnel.

3. Context

3a National context

During the last decade, households affected by homelessness have increased across England with extreme pressures on statutory services and increased demands on social, affordable and appropriate accommodation.

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) increased expectations around prevention with an expanded Duty to Refer, Personal Housing Plans and greater expectations on Local Authorities to provide assistance and support to a larger cohort, at the same time as welfare reforms and cuts in public services were made.

There were 222,580 households nationally who received homelessness assistance in 2018-19 and whose case had either closed or reached a main duty decision as of March 2020.

Main duty acceptances have reduced by 29.3% or 16,560 from 56,600 in 2017-18 to 40,040 in 2019-20. Although the number of households approaching and receiving help from local authorities has increased, the overall fall in main duty acceptances is due to the number of households who are prevented from becoming homeless or have homelessness relieved under the new HRA duties. The reduction in main duty acceptances has been larger for households with children than for households without

children. This is likely to reflect an increase in access to homelessness services for single households brought about through the requirements of the HRA.

There has been no notable change in the number of households who are owed a prevention duty at first assessment from 2018-19 to 2019-20. However, there has been 18,170 households or a 14.9% increase in households owed the relief duty and 71.0% of this increase is attributed to single adult households, which indicates that the overall increase in those who are recorded as homeless and owed a relief duty, is driven by more single adults coming forward for and receiving help.

Most households with children have their homelessness application taken at the prevention stage, whereas most single adult households are applying for assistance at the relief stage, when they are actually homeless. Households with children are more likely to be owed a prevention duty at initial assessment (63,650 households) than a relief duty (33,530 households), which suggests that more families are receiving help earlier.

Of the households that were owed a duty in 2019-20, those that were owed a prevention duty were more likely (58.5%) to have an accommodation secured outcome than households owed an initial relief duty (40.0%).

Between 1 April and 30 June 2020, 63,650 households were owed a homelessness duty which has decreased by 11% from the same time in 2019. The 'Everyone In' scheme has had positive effects. By the end of September 2020, nearly 30,000 people in England had been moved from the streets or out of unsafe accommodation.

Single adult households are the largest group of households owed a prevention or relief duty, representing 60.1% of all households who had a duty accepted. Single adult households are more likely to access support when they are already homeless than when they are threatened with homelessness, 99,910 or 57.6% of single adults are initially accepted under the relief duty

However, changes in the housing market and economic conditions in England, will mean a greater need to ensure prevention services are working for the community, in an efficient and targeted way.

The COVID-19 pandemic has absolutely changed the landscape of homelessness, partnership working and the economic climate.

This demand has contributed to the already difficult climate of rents in the private-rented sector increasing, and demand for social affordable housing outstripping supply.

Recent announcements by Government have reinforced their commitment to ending rough sleeping but also wider homelessness with increased funding of circa £639m by 2024/25. We will need to maximise these future funding opportunities for the benefit of Bury.

3b Regional context

The Greater Manchester (GM) Combined Authority co-ordinates the partnership of all 10 GM Local Authorities to maximise expertise, knowledge and cascade good practice for the benefit of our customers and to end Homelessness in the region.

Recently and over the past several years the following main strategy and projects have been developed and delivered collectively. This includes:

GM homeless prevention strategy (2021 to 2026)

The Greater Manchester Homeless Prevention strategy has 5 defined missions:-

- Everyone can access and sustain a home that is safe, decent, accessible and affordable
- Everyone leaves our places of care with a safe place to go.
- Everyone can access quality advice, advocacy and support to prevent homelessness.
- People experiencing homelessness have respite, recovery and re-connection support.
- Homelessness is never an entrenched or repeat experience.

The GM strategic objectives are integrated within the Bury's local housing and homeless strategies. Through this overarching alignment the Bury team is able to access regional expertise and funding.

Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathfinder (2021)

The objective of the GM Youth Homelessness Prevention programme is to identify young people in transient and persistent forms of homelessness and associated risks. This programme is an outcomes based contract (Social Impact Bond) for 1,500 young people across GM including Bury, using £5m of funding across the region to deliver:-

- personalised support plans and follow ups
- Homelessness prevention via suitable new or maintained accommodation, sustained for 6 months
- Self-determined personal outcomes.

The pathfinder will run from January 2022 – December 2024 and is integrated into the Local Housing Options statutory homeless prevention offer.

ABEN (A Bed for Every Night)

A Bed Every Night (ABEN) is a Greater Manchester-wide response, which provides accommodation and support for people experiencing rough sleeping, or at imminent risk, who have no statutory accommodation options open to them. ABEN is now in its 4 year of delivery.

Initially developed as an additional service in the winter months, ABEN has grown to deliver an essential accommodation option for people experiencing rough sleeping, all year round.

Funding has been secured for the next 3 years from April 2022 to March 2025. This allows Bury to commission 25 individual self-contained units with support for our rough sleepers and to develop pathways into longer term permanent, affordable and sustained accommodation to help break the cycle of homelessness.

Housing First

Housing First is an evidence-based approach, which uses housing as a platform to enable individuals with multiple and complex needs to begin recovery and move away from homelessness.

The Greater Manchester Housing First (GMHF) pilot was commissioned for three years by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) with funding from Ministry of Homes, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

The Pilot launched in April 2019 with the aim of rehousing more than 300 people, over the three years, who are homeless or at the risk of being homeless across all 10 Greater Manchester Boroughs. Further funding has been agreed and the current specification is currently being developed.

GMHF is a partnership between 12 organisations across Greater Manchester.

Delivery is split into 4 zones with Bury in Zone B with Bolton and Rochdale.

Housing first focuses on the most entrenched rough sleepers to provide wrap around support to ensure accommodation is sustained.

Since 2019 we have referred 18 entrenched rough sleeper into this programme.

3c Local Context & Demands

Over the past decade Bury has seen a gradual increase in homeless cases within the Borough but data shows greater increases over the past 3 years. This increase is consistent with national and regional trends and is mainly due to:

- the increasing expectation on Local Authorities through Homeless Reduction Act 2017 to prevent homelessness but also provide greater support and advice
- The outbreak of Covid 19 since March 2020. In particular, through the 'Everyone in' and then 'Keep them off the streets' initiatives, non-statutory emergency homeless accommodation for rough sleepers has increased by 455% over the past year alone, with a similar requirement to source the equivalent additional move on properties.

A further key issue within Bury is limited access to affordable housing and the small and high-cost private rented sector. Housing supply issues constrain both move-on options for people in emergency accommodation and the opportunities for people to access and maintain independent affordable housing.

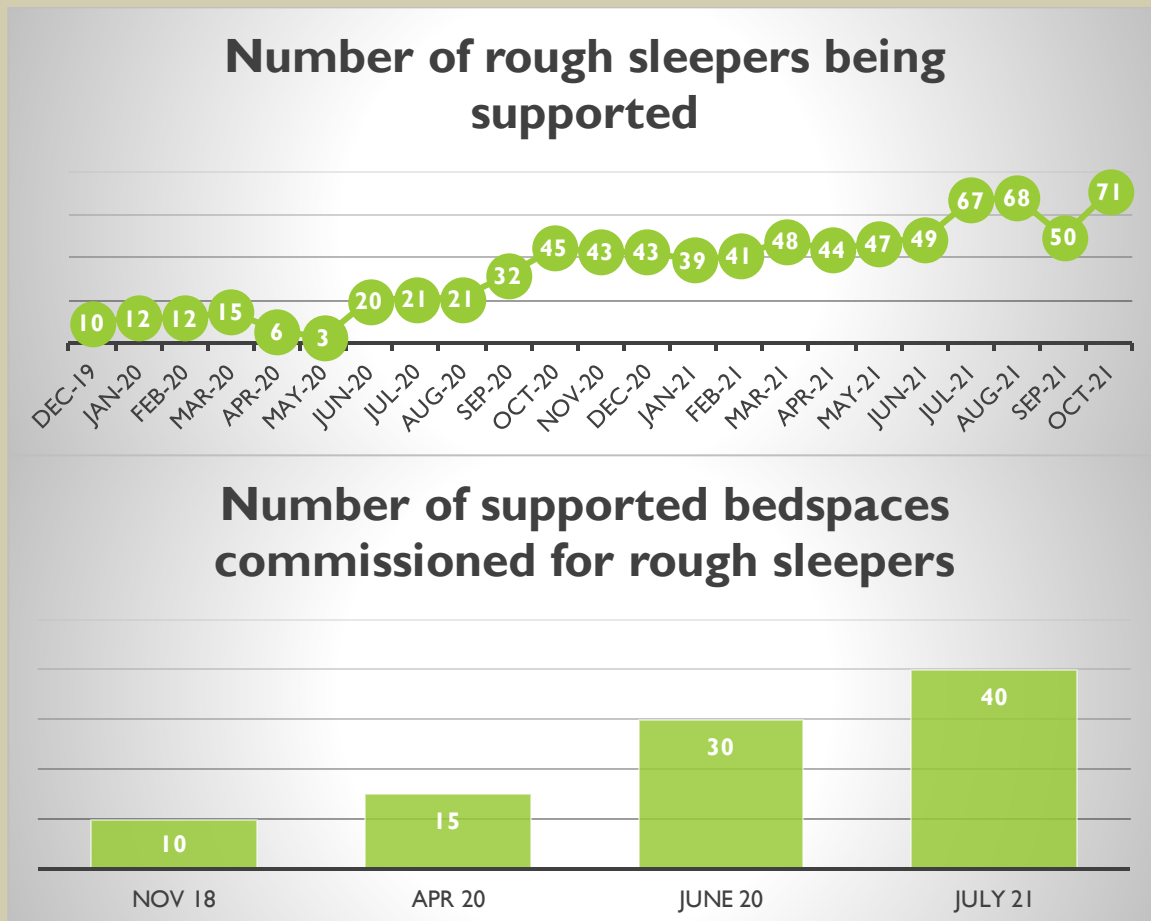
The impact of these issues on statutory and non-statutory homelessness demand in Bury is described below.

Rough sleeping – (non-statutory demand)

Local intelligence suggests that historically (prior to 2018) Bury has had around 10 rough sleepers at any one time living in the Borough.

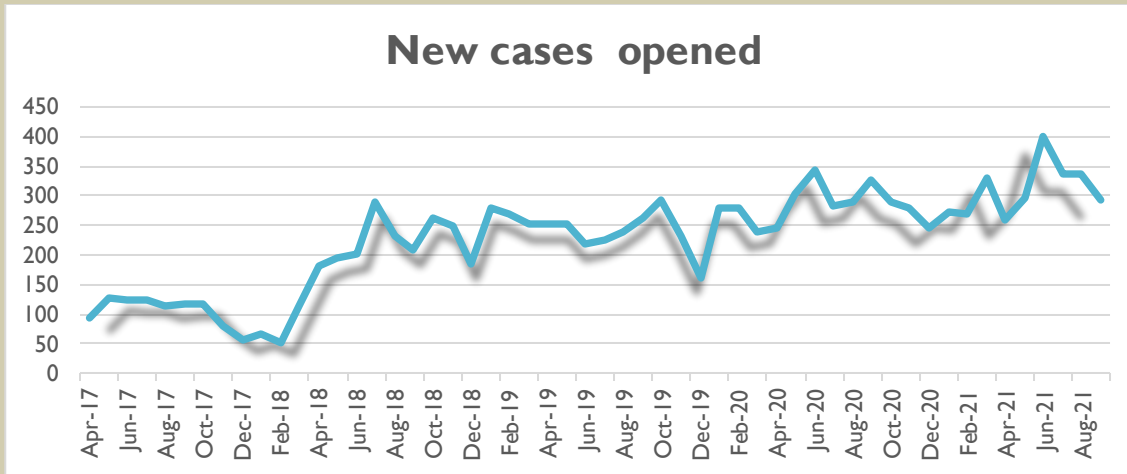
The Council introduced a Rough Sleeping outreach service in March 2020 dedicating assistance to those rough sleeping. On 27th March 2020 the national 'Everyone In' initiative was implemented, which required all rough sleepers to be accommodated during the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, an additional 10 bed spaces were commissioned in addition to the existing ABEN provision described above.

During 2020-21, collectively 316 rough sleepers were supported by the service and 79 individually. The Council has now commissioned 40 individual and supported bed spaces and the service is always at capacity.

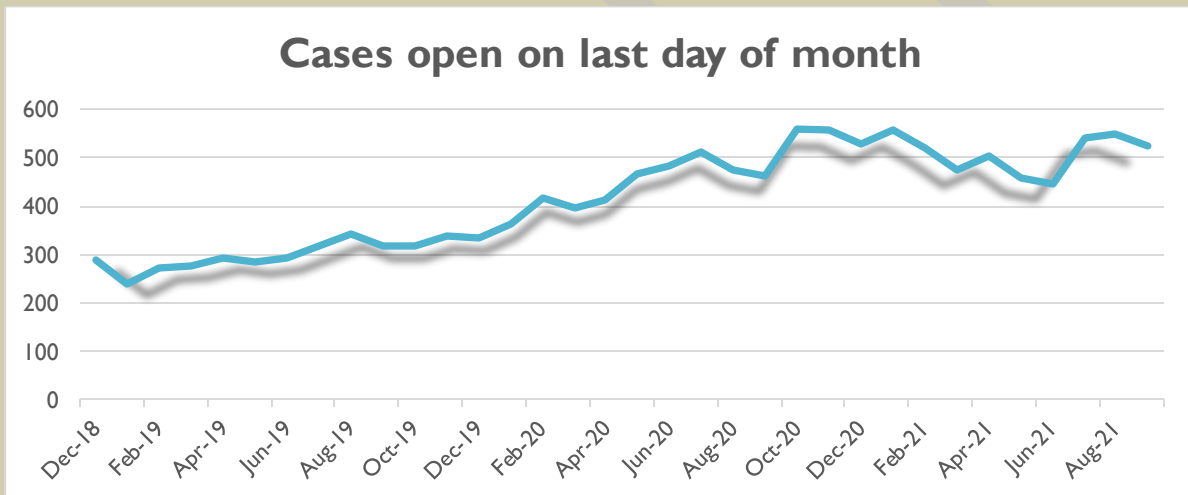


Statutory Homelessness cases

The number of statutory Homeless cases which require support has increased by 230% over the last 2 years. Recent volumes further increased when the eviction embargo and wider social restrictions which were implemented during the pandemic were lifted.

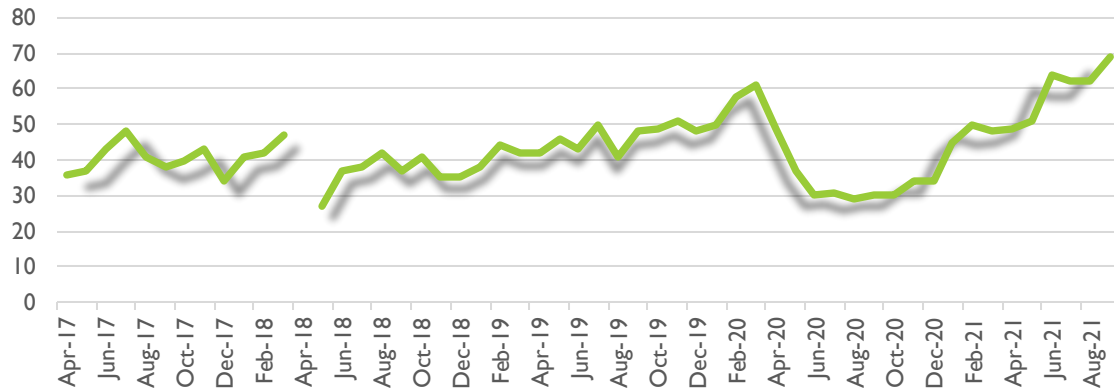


The number of new cases has risen over the last 18 months and is now on average 300 a month. The increase is due to the numbers of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness because of the effects of COVID-19 and the fact that cases remain open longer whilst officers work to find a solution.



The number of households in temporary accommodation has almost doubled in the last 12 months. The Council manages a mix of 90 dispersed houses, maisonettes and flats to meet this demand. This portfolio provides a total of 320 bed spaces when at full capacity

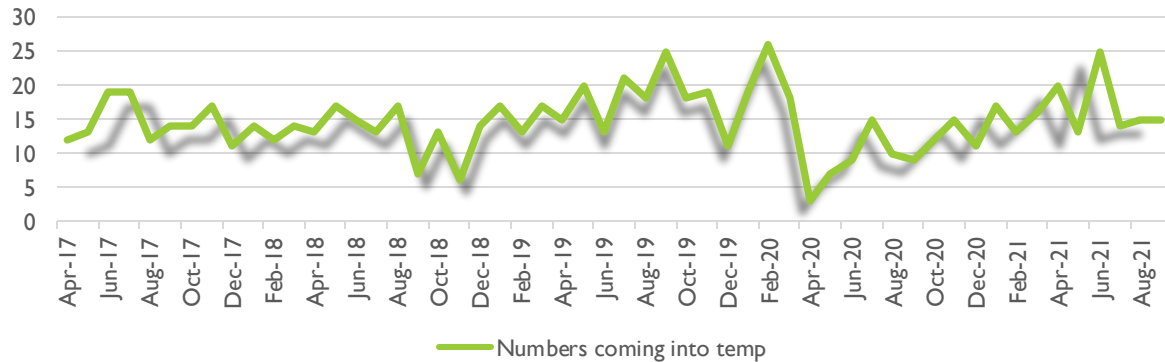
Number in temp on last day of month



- Number not available for April 18 due to crossing over to a new system

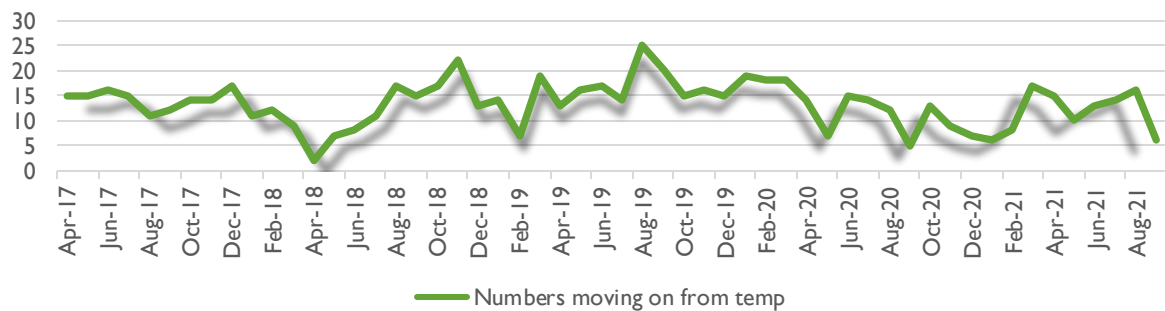
Between April and June 2020, Bury's choice-based lettings systems was placed on hold due to COVID-19. Properties that were ready to let were allocated to households in temporary accommodation, to help the Council relieve the pressure on those in temporary housing. The number coming into temporary accommodation significantly dropped during this period to assist with capacity and future demand once Covid restrictions ended.

Households coming into temp



— Numbers coming into temp

Households leaving temp



— Numbers moving on from temp

Household size is having an impact on households remaining in temp due to the lack of larger family homes for move on. There are currently 77 households in temporary accommodation, 60 families with a total of 118 children and 17 single people.

Demand for social housing

Social housing demands far exceeds supply. General Housing demand in the Borough has increased by 19% in applicants on the waiting list over the past year with average wait of 421 days. This does not factor the increasing homeless demands on social housing.

	<i>Number of applicants</i>	<i>Average waiting time (days)</i>
<i>1 Bed</i>	783	361
<i>2 Bed</i>	402	426
<i>3 Bed</i>	319	532
<i>4 Bed</i>	70	679
<i>5 Bed</i>	11	824

Asylum & Immigration

Greater Manchester is the largest asylum dispersal conurbation in the UK. Bury is currently supporting a number of schemes designed to improve outcomes for refugees, including:

- a local response to the Afghan asylum crisis with partners and stakeholders. Bury has pledged 10 properties, housing 30-40 people, for this community
- Contributing to a Greater-Manchester led programme RTOF (Refugee transitions Outcomes fund), which is seeking to improve outcomes for refugee individuals and families in relation to housing and employment in particular. The programme is a keyworker-based approach to develop a better understanding of new people and communities and ensure appropriate referrals into substantive services including housing, employment, education and health
- Long standing support to unaccompanied children seeking asylum, to ensure they are supported as Looked After Children and access the education system through the virtual School or ESOL courses at a local college; access to an enhanced health screening assessment and a suitable housing offer in line with the Care Leaver offer. Bury has always supported this scheme on a voluntary basis but the requirement has now become law through the National Transfer Scheme.

4. Preventing Homelessness – Let's do it!

The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 requires local authorities to take a preventative approach to managing homelessness. Homeless prevention and meaningful response can only be achieved on a system-wide, multi-agency basis. The Homeless partnership has therefore worked as a collective to agree the following seven key themes to drive its work:-

- Prevention
- Person
- Property
- Promotion
- Purpose
- Place
- Partnership

4a Prevention

Preventing and stopping both statutory and non-statutory Homelessness, through early and targeted intervention in the known risk factors associated with homelessness.

Priorities within this strategy to achieve this include:

- *Act faster to prevent people losing their homes*
- *Specific awareness raising for young people around homelessness*
- *Promote in schools and colleges life skills and managing debt.*
- *Earlier and ongoing tenancy sustainment for people at risk of homelessness, through new networks of public services and community groups*
- *Performance measured correctly for local needs, as well as national and regional.*
- *Prevent people being discharged from hospital before housing option in place.*
- *Resolutions to the challenges created by welfare reform.*
- *Strengthen Private Rented Sector (PRS) landlord support, advice and assistance to avoid S21 notices and evictions.*
- *A clear plan to be ready for people - "in-reach" prevention work (how to manage a tenancy) with prisons / prison liaison*
- *Training offers for all frontline staff to address barriers to housing, including debt management.*
- *Ensure Asylum and Refugee community are given early housing options.*
- *Maximise funding opportunities to create capacity and new initiatives.*

4b Person

Identifying and then providing person-centred support with wrap around provision.

Priorities within this strategy to achieve this include:

- *Complex needs of all homeless people to be identified and be met including bespoke offers for care leavers; asylum seekers and refugees*
- *"Keyworker" ie One Worker approach*

- *Whole family approach to support households at risk*
- *Encourage co-writing of support plans and packages*
- *Greater awareness and access of services available for homeless*
- *Peer support delivered by people with lived experience*
- *Produce and provide easy to read housing advice in different formats.*
- *Health / employment & training opportunities*
- *Act faster and sensitively to prevent homelessness*
- *Reducing impact of homelessness on LGBT+ community*
- *Joined up public service approach with a neighbourhood-based offer for homelessness aligned to 'Lets Do it'.*

4c Property

Increasing access to permanent and temporary affordable, sustainable housing provision and support when required. Move on accommodation that maximises all opportunities in both the social and private sectors.

Priorities within this strategy to achieve this include:

- *Influence investments for what is needed in Bury for social housing and accommodation*
- *Develop the Private Rented Sector (PRS) in the borough*
- *Range of accessible housing for people at all stages of the housing market and on all incomes, including the provision of supported accommodation*
- *Develop different models of temporary accommodation*
- *Maximise opportunities from Housing strategy delivery of social and affordable housing delivery with timescales*
- *Development of the Ethical Lettings Agency offer*
- *Production of a tenancy sustainment strategy that applies across the Borough*

4d Promotion

Proactive promotion and awareness of Homeless provision and services across the Borough including successes and achievements to ensure a culture that Homeless is everyone's responsibility

Priorities within this strategy to achieve this include:

- *Celebrate good practice and achievements of partners and service users in Bury*
- *Promote services to Schools and Colleges*
- *Engage business community to recognise challenges of homelessness, sponsorship and investment*
- *Promote innovation and new ideas*
- *Campaign to improve policies, services and attitudes to end homelessness.*
- *Awareness building of homelessness challenges and impact*

4e Purpose

Giving homeless people a purpose and sense to improve their lives through meaningful interventions with a co-design approach.

Priorities within this strategy to achieve this include:

- *Connect clients at risk to the Community Hub network, to access activities and engagement opportunities which will help clients to create a sense of purpose to improve their lives and build up inner strength*
- *Co-Production opportunities to drive ownership and give a sense of purpose*
- *Peer Mentoring and Peer Training programme*

4f Place

Neighbourhood integration of service delivery. Public services, people, communities and businesses coming together based on co-design and accountability for shared decision making and a Neighbourhood hub approach.

Priorities within this strategy to achieve this include:

- *Integration of homeless services into multi-agency neighbourhood hub working*
- *Positive sense of identity and belonging to the community*
- *Define 'Place' in context of homelessness*
- *Greater involvement with communities to address homelessness*
- *Develop of positive 'Intentional Communities', defined by commitments, developing community spaces, peer support, giving back, on fundraising and community development*

4g Partnership

To continue to deliver homeless services in partnership across the Borough through the Bury-wide "LETS" principles, from the overarching Borough Strategy "Let's do it!". This means working Locally; with Enterprise; Together and through a Strengths-based approach as follows:

Priorities within this strategy to achieve this include:

- **Local** – *Teams working locally in each of the Borough's neighbourhoods will work to sustain tenancies by proactively identifying and seeking to prevent people with chaotic and complex lifestyles losing their homes and becoming street homeless. Teams will include health, drug and alcohol and training & employment services, as well as housing experts. It is anticipated that these teams will support people who are, for example, experiencing acute mental health issues; domestic or substance misuse. Vulnerable clients will be supported and encouraged to engage socially and develop their sense of purpose through the network of Community Hubs which connect people with local resources, networks and opportunities.*

- **Enterprise** - *A main challenge to tackling homelessness is access to sufficient affordable and social rented accommodation, to ensure access to a home for all and both emergency and “move on” accommodation for people who need help. The delivery of greater access to affordable housing in the private and social housing sectors, through implementation of the Housing Strategy, is a key dependency in achieving the ambition to reduce homelessness.*
- **Together** – *Delivery of the homelessness prevention strategy will be a whole team effort across the council, community sector, private and social landlords and informed by people with lived experience:*
 - *Partners will work together to bid for opportunities and share information and resources*
 - *Those people that have used services must have a strong voice in shaping future responses through the Homeless Partnership co-production and voice for change group*
 - *Current service users will be helped to navigate the system through clear communication which drives trust; the production of a directory/resource to assist homeless people and mutual accountability through shared decision making.*
- **Strengths** - *A person centred approach will be taken by all agencies which are working with people who are homeless or at risk of becoming so. This approach is about doing ‘with’ not ‘to’ through a “Keyworker” approach which requires all support workers to:*
 - *provide support and take responsibility to vulnerable clients within their own homes by empowering the client with the skills to lead an independent life within the community .*
 - *lead and provide a comprehensive support assessment, a holistic support plan and review meetings to clients who come from a variety of challenging client groups*
 - *lead, take responsibility and facilitate the smooth transition of clients from supported accommodation into mainstream society*
 - *Mapping and development of directory/resource to assist homeless people*

5. Resources to deliver

The partnership has access to some resources and resilience to meet its ambition through national initiatives and funding streams such as:

- The Homelessness Prevention Grant
- RSI (Rough Sleeper Initiative)
- RSAP (Rough sleeper accommodation programme) and
- the former NSAP (Next Steps Accommodation Programme)

These new programmes bring an additional circa £1.2 million of additional funding to the Borough and new funding opportunities will be continuously pursued. It is also helpful that Government has also recently announced increased Homelessness funding post Covid and that funding streams will be provided over 3 years, rather than yearly, which supports medium term strategic planning

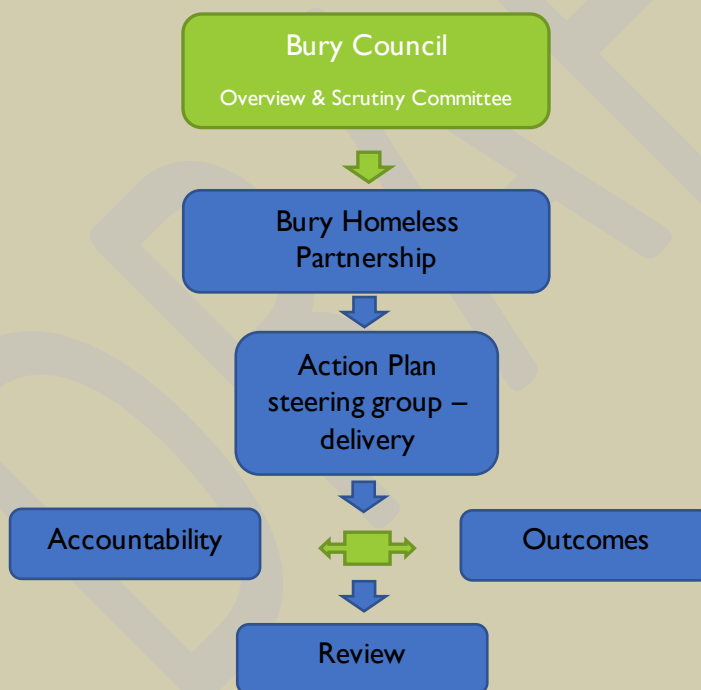
6. Governance – including plans to review and reflect

The strategy and action plan will be a living document to reflect the continual challenges and changes that homelessness brings. The strategy and action plan will be reviewed annually by the Homelessness partnership and outcomes reported to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Evaluation will be undertaken against the following key measures:

- Numbers of rough sleepers; statutory homeless cases and demand for asylum and immigration support
- Speed and volume of people supported into move on properties and independence both statutory and non-statutory provision.
- Individuals reporting positive change in when and how they receive support including improved wellbeing, integration and a reduction in social isolation
- Outcome measures for former homeless clients including employment, stability in housing and financial stability

Governance for delivery is summarised as follows:-



7. Summary

There is no doubt that homelessness trends will continue to increase in the short-term following the impact of covid and until the benefits and outcomes of the Government's new funding streams are realised. Partners must remain focussed around prevention and sustainment activity, to ensure the whole system is robustly supporting all homeless people from rough sleepers to statutory homeless families and single people.

This strategy proposes a clear framework for delivery over the next three years including priorities for 2022/23 as follows:

- Specific awareness raising for young people around homelessness
- Promoting life skills and managing debt in schools and colleges
- Early tenancy sustainment support for people at risk of homelessness
- Performance and data measured correctly for local needs, as well as national and regional insight to align resources.
- Prevent people being discharged from hospital before housing options in place.
- Resolutions to the challenges created by welfare reform.
- Strengthening Private Rented Sector (PRS) landlord support, advice and assistance to avoid S21 notices and evictions
- A clear plan to be ready for people - 'in-reach'" prevention work (how to manage a tenancy) with prisons / prison liaison
- Training offers for all frontline staff to address barriers to housing, including debt management and mental health.
- Ensuring that the Asylum and Refugee community are given early housing options and support.
- Partnership approach with all stakeholders to help prevent homelessness and improve resources and capacity.

Delivery of these priorities will be managed by all partners within the Homelessness Partnership through a detailed delivery plan which will be produced annually and reported to Bury Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee.