Stakeholder Engagement, Lived Experience and Maturity Assessment Summary

Introduction

Stakeholder engagement and co-production were central to the development of the Strategy. Six stakeholder engagement workshops were undertaken with public services, housing providers, commissioned services and voluntary, community and faith sector organisations through the Bury Homeless Partnership and wider partnership forums. These sessions reviewed delivery of the previous Strategy, completed a homelessness maturity assessment and identified priorities for future action. Five lived experience workshops were undertaken with residents who had experienced homelessness, rough sleeping, prison release, recovery pathways and housing insecurity. Participants shared what had worked well, barriers they had experienced and opportunities to improve support. Feedback highlighted the importance of early intervention, trauma-informed practice, tenancy sustainment, life skills support and stronger involvement of people with lived experience in shaping services.

A public survey was also undertaken to gather wider resident feedback and identify priorities for the future Strategy. Further consultation was undertaken through the Health and Wellbeing Board, elected members, strategic leadership arrangements, Greater Manchester Combined Authority partners and key housing stakeholders to ensure alignment with wider housing, health and wellbeing priorities.

Outcomes (summarised)

Maturity Assessment Summary –Review of Bury Homelessness strategy 2022-2025

A structured Homelessness Strategy Maturity Assessment was undertaken with members of the Bury Homeless Partnership, key stakeholders and the Homelessness and Housing Options Service to review delivery of the 2022-2025 Homelessness Strategy. Participants assessed progress across the seven strategic themes of Prevention, Person, Property, Promote, Purpose, Place and Partnership using a maturity framework ranging from "Getting Started" to "Matured". The assessment concluded that significant progress had been made across all themes, with each area assessed as either making progress, maturing or matured. Partnership, Property, Purpose and Prevention were identified as strengths, reflecting the successful development of homelessness pathways, accommodation provision, partnership structures and prevention activity.

The assessment also identified several opportunities for further development. Partners highlighted the need to improve awareness and promotion of homelessness services across the wider system, ensuring organisations such as health services, education providers, Adult Social Care and community partners have a stronger understanding of homelessness risks and routes into support. Feedback emphasised the importance of expanding community-based and neighbourhood prevention approaches beyond Bury Town Centre, improving accessibility of services and strengthening universal prevention activity. While person-centred approaches have become increasingly embedded across homelessness services, particularly within rough sleeping provision, partners identified that some services can still feel transactional and would benefit from further trauma-informed and strengths-based approaches.

The maturity assessment further highlighted the importance of strengthening co-production arrangements within strategic decision-making structures. Whilst engagement mechanisms currently exist, stakeholders felt that people with lived experience should have a more influential role in shaping future priorities, service design and system-wide improvement activity. The findings directly informed the development of the new Strategy's priorities, governance arrangements and commitment to prevention, partnership working and continuous improvement

Lived Experience and Co-Production Summary

Co-production and lived experience engagement formed a central part of the Strategy review process. To support development of the new Strategy, Bury facilitated four lived experience workshops, a borough-wide people survey and targeted co-production activity involving individuals with experience of homelessness, public services, community-based services, rough sleeping, recovery, prison pathways, temporary accommodation and housing insecurity. The engagement sought to capture personal experiences of homelessness, understand barriers within the current system and identify opportunities for improvement.

People with lived experience consistently described homelessness as being driven by a combination of factors including relationship breakdown, financial hardship, domestic abuse, poor mental health, substance misuse, loss of employment and transitions from institutions such as prison, care, hospital and asylum accommodation. Many participants described homelessness as an emotionally and physically exhausting experience, often characterised by prolonged periods of rough sleeping, temporary accommodation and uncertainty whilst waiting for settled housing. The survey identified important themes around service accessibility and inclusion. Participants highlighted concerns regarding

unsuitable temporary accommodation, stuck in supported accommodation, lack of amenities, digital exclusion, complexity of systems and difficulties accessing housing opportunities. Feedback showed that whilst many residents valued the support received from housing staff, outreach teams and voluntary sector organisations, some individuals felt their wider support needs were not fully addressed despite disclosing them to services. The findings reinforced the need for more personalised, trauma-informed and holistic support that recognises the wider factors contributing to homelessness.

Co-production workshops identified several priority areas for future improvement, including greater access to recovery-focused accommodation, stronger life skills and tenancy sustainment support, simpler and more accessible housing systems, better access to digital services, increased peer mentoring opportunities, services designed around the individual and stronger involvement of people with lived experience in service design. Participants also identified the need for more flexible approaches to rough sleeper verification, improved communication and clearer pathways into settled housing.

A recurring message throughout all engagement activity was the importance of dignity, respect and meaningful involvement. Participants expressed a desire not only to access services but to actively influence how they are designed and delivered. As a result, the Strategy commits to embedding ongoing co-production throughout implementation, with people who have lived experience helping to shape delivery plans, outcomes, service development and future policy decisions.