



## **Buckinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 to 2025 consultation**

**Open date:** 21 February 2022

**Close date:** 21 March 2022

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### **Overview**

**We want to hear your views on the new Buckinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which will set out how we intend to tackle homelessness to 2025.**

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all housing authorities to have a Homelessness Strategy in place.

Buckinghamshire Council has been working with its key partners to develop a draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy that will set the framework for how we tackle homelessness over the next three years.

This will be the Council's first single homelessness strategy since it was created. It will build on the work and priorities in the strategies of the former district councils.

### **The draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 to 2025**

The draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is intended to focus on the Council's key main priorities for tackling homelessness and setting the direction of travel going forward.

We are seeking feedback on the draft strategy document and the proposed priorities for action going forward. We want to hear from anyone who may be affected or wishes to comment on how Buckinghamshire Council is addressing homelessness going forward.

## **Proposed priority areas for tackling homelessness**

The draft strategy sets out the following priorities:

- To provide advice, information and support on housing and related issues to enable those at risk of becoming homeless to take steps to remain in their accommodation where feasible and appropriate, or to undertake a planned move if required
- To identify those at risk of becoming homeless at the earliest possible stage, and to intervene proactively to prevent them becoming homeless
- Where a household does become homeless, to support them to find appropriate alternative accommodation as quickly as possible
- To prevent anyone having to sleep rough
- To maximise the supply of affordable rented accommodation

### **The priority areas we have identified are equally important.**

In addition to these priorities, there are two cross-cutting themes to which we will continue to address with associated plans and ideas. These are:

- Making best use of resources
- Partnership working

### **How the Strategy has been developed**

The draft strategy document has been prepared based on:

- A review of the existing homelessness strategies that were carried forward from the former District Councils
- Analysis of key data and information on homelessness (both local and national)
- A series of stakeholder sessions involving Councillors, external partners and officers to inform the key priorities and content of the strategy

For more information about how the strategy has been developed, please see the Evidence base for preventing homelessness and rough sleeping strategy.

The strategy will be a live document, subject to an annual review to:

- Establish whether the key main priorities remain relevant, and / or
- Identify any revisions that may need to be made to reflect national and local homelessness circumstances and trends.

The draft strategy is accompanied by an Evidence Base document which provides technical and statistical background information and a summary of the stakeholder sessions that informed how the Strategy has been developed.

### **Related documents**

Before you respond to this consultation, please have a look at the following documents. These are available on Buckinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 to 2025 consultation page at <https://yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com>

- Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 – 2025
- Evidence base for preventing homelessness and rough sleeping strategy

### **How to have your say**

You can tell us your views in one of the following ways:

- Complete the online survey at <https://yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com>
- Complete, and return, printed version of the survey below
- Email us at [homelessnessstrategy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:homelessnessstrategy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)
- Write to us at **Homelessness Strategy Consultation**, Buckinghamshire Council, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Bucks HP19 8FF

If you have any questions about this consultation, please email us at [homelessnessstrategy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:homelessnessstrategy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk) or phone us on 0300 131 6000

**Please tell us your views by midnight on Monday 21 March 2022.**

### **What happens next**

Following the close of the consultation, we will review the responses and identify where any amendments or changes should be made to the draft strategy document before it is finalised and adopted.

Once the finalised strategy is agreed and adopted, the high-level priorities and actions in the strategy will be broken down into more detailed action plans that will set down specific and measurable objectives with responsibilities and timeframes.

These plans will be formulated in partnership with key stakeholders including the North and South Homelessness Forums.

The plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed and will underpin the delivery of the high-level priorities set down in the strategy.

## **Privacy**

We will use the information you provide here only for this activity. We will store the information securely in line with data protection laws and will not share or publish any personal details. For more information about data and privacy, please see our [Privacy Policy](#).

If you have questions about data and privacy, please email us on [dataprotection@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@buckinghamshire.gov.uk). Or write to our Data Protection Officer at Buckinghamshire Council, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF.

## **Printed consultation survey**

### **Priority one**

Priority one: To provide advice, information and support on housing and related issues to enable those at risk of becoming homeless to take steps to remain in their accommodation where feasible and appropriate, or to undertake a planned move if required

We have identified a number of actions (1.1 to 1.11 below) that we need to take to meet this priority.

### **Identified actions (1.1 to 1.11):**

- 1.1 Review and develop on-line housing options information by updating signposting and self-delivery systems on the website. Consideration to be given to launching an online Homelessness Triage service
- 1.2 Ensure consistent access to services across the area with appropriate thresholds and eligibility criteria.
- 1.3 Ensure on-line advice includes tailored information for those being asked to leave private rented sector accommodation, with signposting to other services as appropriate
- 1.4 Continue to raise awareness of mediation services and ensure they are offered at earliest possible opportunity for intervention.

- 1.5 Continue to work with the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) to ensure homelessness is prevented and that the Council and its partners can intervene and support clients as early as possible. Explore direct rent payments to landlords where there are known financial risk factors.
- 1.6 Review the need and develop possible options and expansion for existing tenancy sustainment services.
- 1.7 Increase awareness in other frontline services around how to help people with mental health difficulties; ensure that appropriate housing officers are trained in mental health issues
- 1.8 Explore a gap analysis of homelessness prevention education delivered through schools, colleges and youth services
- 1.9 Develop longer-term monitoring of outcomes to identify and respond to repeat homelessness
- 1.10 Roll out the financial inclusion partnerships money advice campaign 'Back on Track' to the whole area
- 1.11 Continue to work with services for children and young people to review options for early education around financial issues, especially for young people (including those in care)

**1a. To what extent do you agree or disagree that 'To provide advice, information and support on housing and related issues to enable those at risk of becoming homeless to take steps to remain in their accommodation where feasible and appropriate, or to undertake a planned move if required' should be a priority for the Buckinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 to 2025?**

Please tick (✓) one option

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

**1b. Please tell us the reasons for your previous answer:**

**1c. We have identified a number of actions (1.1 to 1.11, outlined above) that we need to take to meet this priority. Do you agree that these are the actions needed to address this priority?**

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

**1d. Please tell us the reasons for your previous answer:**

If you think we need to consider additional action(s) to address this priority, please include them in your answer.

**1e. If you have any other comments related to this priority, please tell us here:**

## **Priority two**

Priority two: To identify those at risk of becoming homeless at the earliest possible stage, and to intervene proactively to prevent them becoming homeless

We have identified a number of actions (2.1 to 2.19 below) that we need to take to meet this priority.

### **Identified actions (2.1 to 2.19):**

- 2.1 Develop agreed indicators of early signs of potential homelessness to promote and encourage early referrals to service
- 2.2 With RPs (Registered Providers of social housing) and other partners, develop a 'tenancy ready' approach which incentivises those who have

- not had a previous tenancy, or whose previous tenancy failed, to undertake appropriate preparatory work for their tenancy;
- 2.3 Continue to work with health partners to maximise impact of self-referral services, befriending, social prescribing and other initiatives in support of homelessness prevention.
  - 2.4 Review data sharing process with partner agencies
  - 2.5 Continue to work with partners to develop and implement a 'tell us once' referral pathway for victims and survivors of domestic violence and abuse, including exploring a Safeguarding Information Sharing Agreement
  - 2.6 Ensure housing officers are trained and aware of the potential complexities of dealing with domestic violence and abuse in LGBTQ+ communities, with male victims, minority ethnic groups and other minoritized communities
  - 2.7 Together with the Community Safety department team and in line with the Domestic Abuse Strategy, conduct a comprehensive needs analysis of housing options for survivors of domestic violence and abuse Ensure a wide range of safe accommodation options are available to victims, survivors and their children. This may include refuges, sanctuary schemes and specialist accommodation as required
  - 2.8 Encourage landlords to contact the Council at an earlier stage. Consider improving options for direct contact and discussion. Continue to negotiate with landlords to secure retention of the tenancy wherever possible
  - 2.9 Improve application and review process of the Council's Homelessness Prevention Fund to help address rent arrears as soon as practicable.
  - 2.10 Continuing to work with mental health services to identify clients at risk of becoming homeless
  - 2.11 Review eligibility criteria for rent deposit schemes to maximise their impact
  - 2.12 Ensure that 'Duty to Refer' policy is fully understood and being implemented by all statutory agencies
  - 2.13 Explore and investigate links with probation and prison resettlement teams to enable engagement with ex-offenders at risk of becoming homeless.
  - 2.14 Continue to work with partnership agencies to enable accommodation for offenders to be sourced prior to release
  - 2.15 Investigate further options for emergency accommodation on release from prison or other institution for both male and female medium to high risk ex-offenders

- 2.16 Work with prisons to encourage an assessment of housing options when people first go into prison, including options for retaining a tenancy where appropriate
- 2.17 Continue to work with armed forces champion and ensure clear information is available for those who've served in the armed forces (and make every effort to identify applicants who are serving or have served in the armed forces at an early stage)
- 2.18 Continue to operate and follow shared protocols between Housing and Children's Services and continue to improve joint working between Housing and Children's Services to ensure a clear understanding of the responsibilities of both services both internally and with partners
- 2.19 Continue to operate close and effective joint working between the Housing Service and Adult Social Care teams within the council to improve joint working, provide staff training. Explore shared protocols where this will improve the service to clients.

**2a. To what extent do you agree or disagree that 'To identify those at risk of becoming homeless at the earliest possible stage, and to intervene proactively to prevent them becoming homeless' should be a priority for the Buckinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 to 2025?**

Please tick (✓) one option

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

**2b. Please tell us the reasons for your previous answer:**

**2c. We have identified a number of actions (2.1 to 2.19, outlined above) that we need to take to meet this priority. Do you agree that these are the actions needed to address this priority?**

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

**2d. Please tell us the reasons for your previous answer:**

If you think we need to consider additional action(s) to address this priority, please include them in your answer.

**2e. If you have any other comments related to this priority, please tell us here:**

### **Priority three:**

Priority three: Where a household does become homeless, to support them to find appropriate alternative accommodation as quickly as possible

We have identified a number of actions (3.1 to 3.4 below) that we need to take to meet this priority.

#### **Identified actions (3.1 to 3.4):**

- 3.1 Continue to work proactively with partners to find effective ways to prevent homelessness and to intervene and support clients as early as possible.
- 3.2 Where homelessness cannot be prevented, work proactively to relieve homelessness within the timescales set by law

- 3.3 Ensure an appropriate supply of emergency and temporary accommodation; ensure that those in emergency and temporary accommodation are supported to find a permanent home as quickly as possible
- 3.4 Minimise the use of bed and breakfast accommodation and other temporary accommodation with shared facilities. Where it is unavoidable, limit its provision to emergency and short term stays only.

**3a. To what extent do you agree or disagree that ‘Where a household does become homeless, to support them to find appropriate alternative accommodation as quickly as possible’ should be a priority for the Buckinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 to 2025?**

Please tick (✓) one option

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

**3b. Please tell us the reasons for your previous answer:**

**3c. We have identified a number of actions (3.1 to 3.4, outlined above) that we need to take to meet this priority. Do you agree that these are the actions needed to address this priority?**

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

**3d. Please tell us the reasons for your previous answer:**

If you think we need to consider additional action(s) to address this priority, please include them in your answer.

**3e. If you have any other comments related to this priority, please tell us here:**

**Priority four**

Priority four: To prevent anyone having to sleep rough

We have identified a number of actions (4.1 to 4.3 below) that we need to take to meet this priority.

**Identified actions (4.1 to 4.3):**

- 4.1 Continue to work with partners to sustain and build on the arrangements already in place, from initial outreach through a variety of support services to finding accommodation and preparing people for employment
- 4.2 Deliver the Housing First initiative to provide supported accommodation for rough sleepers; review after six full months of operation
- 4.3 Review accommodation options for ex-rough sleepers, including whether additional provision is needed for those with high and complex needs, and whether there is a requirement for additional long-term supported accommodation for this group

**4a. To what extent do you agree or disagree that 'To prevent anyone having to sleep rough' should be a priority for the Buckinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 to 2025?**

Please tick (✓) one option

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

**4b. Please tell us the reasons for your previous answer:**

**4c. We have identified a number of actions (4.1 to 4.3, outlined above) that we need to take to meet this priority. Do you agree that these are the actions needed to address this priority?**

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

**4d. Please tell us the reasons for your previous answer:**

If you think we need to consider additional action(s) to address this priority, please include them in your answer.

**4e. If you have any other comments related to this priority, please tell us here:**

## **Priority five**

Priority five: To maximise the supply of affordable rented accommodation

We have identified a number of actions (5.1 to 5.6 below) that we need to take to meet this priority.

**Some aspects of the actions below are linked to the development and delivery of the Council's wider Housing Strategy and Local Plan**

### **Identified actions (5.1 to 5.6):**

- 5.1 Explore ways to access more privately rented accommodation at an affordable rent, including options for incentives to encourage existing private landlords to work with us
- 5.2 Re-establish the private landlords forum
- 5.3 Work with RPs and other partners to increase supply of affordable rented accommodation; consider whether any existing stock can be used more effectively
- 5.4 Research the feasibility of a social lettings agency to increase the supply of affordable rented housing
- 5.5 To explore additional one bedroom accommodation need within Buckinghamshire
- 5.6 To explore provision for large families with registered providers and private landlords

**5a. To what extent do you agree or disagree that 'To maximise the supply of affordable rented accommodation' should be a priority for the Buckinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 to 2025?**

Please tick (✓) one option

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

**5b. Please tell us the reasons for your previous answer:**

**5c. We have identified a number of actions (5.1 to 5.6, outlined above) that we need to take to meet this priority. Do you agree that these are the actions needed to address this priority?**

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

**5d. Please tell us the reasons for your previous answer:**

If you think we need to consider additional action(s) to address this priority, please include them in your answer.

**5e. If you have any other comments related to this priority, please tell us here:**

**Buckinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 to 2025**

**6. Are there any other priorities that you think should be part of the Buckinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 to 2025?**

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

**If 'Yes', please tell us the other priorities and why you think they should be part of the strategy:**

**7. Do you find the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy easy to understand?**

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes, it is easy to understand
- No, it is not easy to understand
- Partly, some of it is easy to understand and some of it is not
- I don't know

**If you think we could make the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy easier to understand, please tell us how:**

**8. If you have any other comments about the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 to 2025, please tell us here:**

**About you**

**9. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation (e.g. a business or a voluntary group), please provide the following details:**

Name of organisation:

Job title:

## 10. How did you find out about this consultation?

Please tick (✓) all that apply

- Local media (newspaper, radio or TV)
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter)
- Nextdoor
- Buckinghamshire Council website or Your Voice Bucks website
- Buckinghamshire Council newsletter
- From Buckinghamshire Council staff
- Through working at Buckinghamshire Council
- Local Community Board
- Local councillor
- Local Parish / Town Council
- Other (please give details below):

## End of the survey

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.**

Please return your completed survey by midnight on **Monday 21 March 2022.**

You can:

- Email it to [homelessnessstrategy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:homelessnessstrategy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)
- Post it to **Homelessness Strategy Consultation**, Buckinghamshire Council, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Bucks HP19 8FF
- Take it to one of our three main council access points located at:
  - Walton Street Offices, Aylesbury, HP20 1UA
  - Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe, HP11 1BB
  - King George V House, King George V Road, Amersham, HP6 5AW