

# Report of the Assistant Director to the meeting of Regeneration and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 28th September 2021

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**Subject: Homelessness in Bradford District**

## **Summary statement:**

This report sets out the activities undertaken by Bradford Council (with partners) to prevent and relieve homelessness and the report highlights opportunities and challenges in carrying out these duties.

## **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:**

Bradford's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (approved by the Council's Executive in January 2020) sets out an explicit commitment to reducing inequalities, and recognises that housing has a big part to play in promoting equality of access and support, and in tackling inequalities.

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## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the activities undertaken by Bradford Council (with partners) to prevent and relieve homelessness and highlights the opportunities and challenges involved in carrying out these duties.

## 2. BACKGROUND

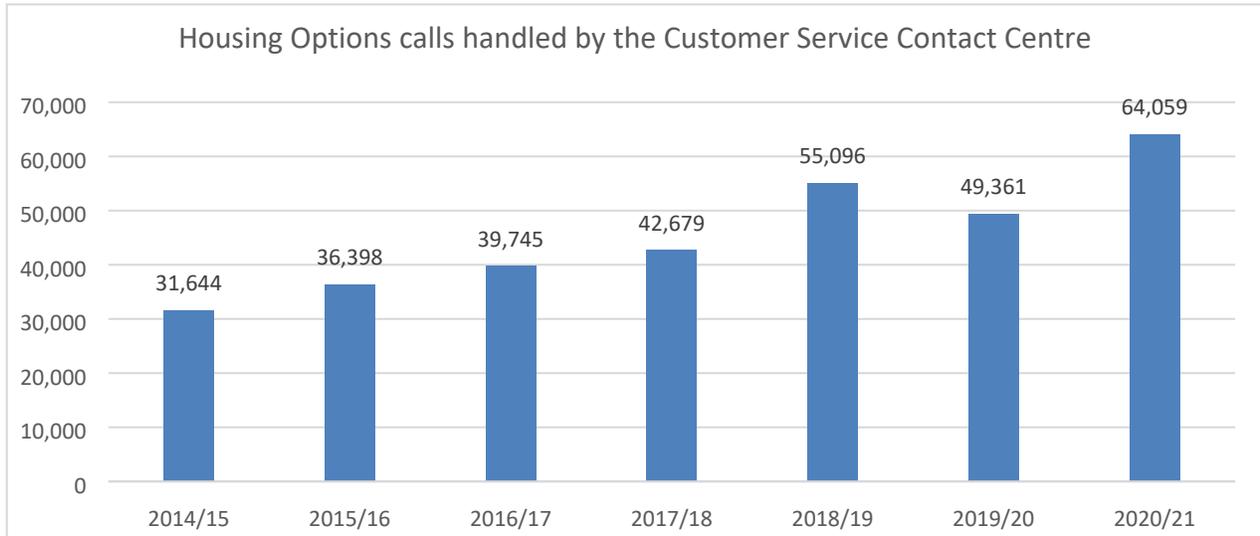
### The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy

- 2.1 Bradford's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was agreed by the Executive on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2020.
- 2.2 The Bradford Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is partnership-led and jointly owned by the Council and the Bradford Housing Partnership, reflecting the reality of the role played by a wide range of organisations and agencies in delivering the (housing and) homelessness objectives contained within the strategy. This means that whilst the Council is a key delivery partner, it is not responsible for delivering all of the actions and relies on the co-operation of its partners for successful implementation.
- 2.3 The Bradford Housing Partnership oversees the monitoring and delivery of the Housing Strategy (A Place to Call Home, A Place to Thrive) and the Bradford Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 2.4 The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping strategy has identified the following vision:  
***'Across our partnerships we will strive towards ending homelessness and rough sleeping once and for all. Homelessness is everyone's business.'***
- 2.5 The five key themes for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy are:-
- Early intervention and prevention of homelessness
  - Deliver support in the right way at the right time to people who are homeless
  - Tackle rough sleeping
  - Improve access to housing for people who are homeless
  - Work better together.
- 2.6 There are also five general principles identified, which will be incorporated across each of the themes. These are co-production; person-centred; recovery-focused; equality and diversity; and safeguarding vulnerable people.
- 2.7 The Strategy identifies four overarching areas that are targeted for activity. These are:
- Increase the rates of successful prevention of homelessness
  - Reduce the number of placements into temporary accommodation
  - Reduce the length of stays in Bed & Breakfast accommodation (B&B)
  - Reduce the incidence of rough sleeping significantly

### 3. KEY HOMELESSNESS STATS IN THE DISTRICT

#### 3.1 Number of service approaches

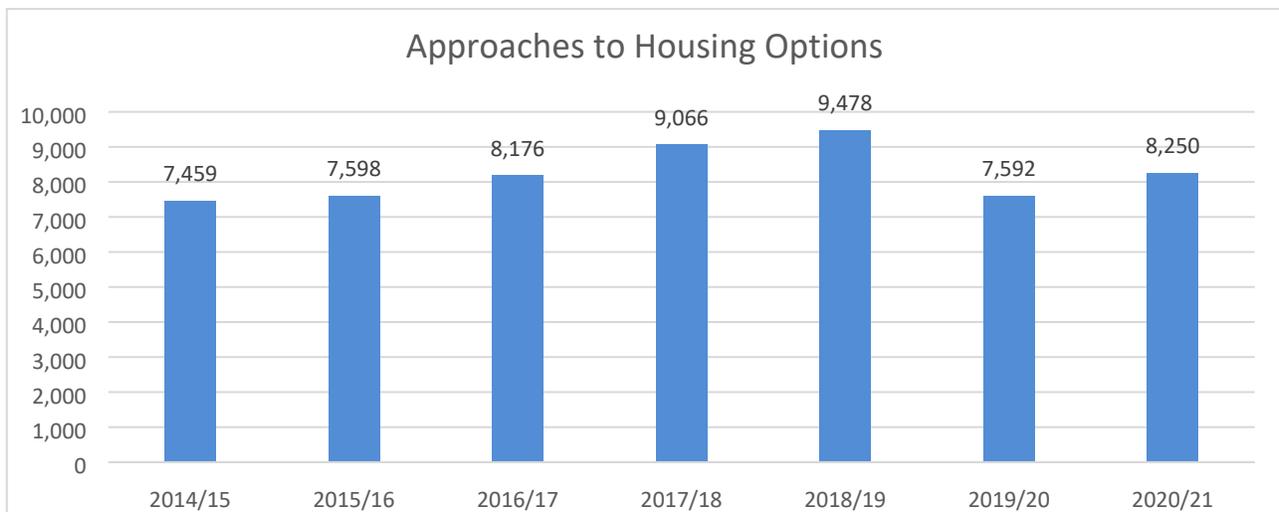
The Housing Options Service is operated on a triage basis, with the first point of contact being Customer Services.



The above table shows the number of calls taken annually by the Customer Services team for the Housing Options team, showing a consistent increase since 2014/15. The figures for 2020/21 show an increase of nearly 30% over 2019/20, mainly due Covid restrictions and the introduction of a self registration system for applying for housing in March 2020.

The calls are then assessed to determine which calls need a full Housing Options Assessment and these are transferred to the Housing Options team and a homeless case is opened.

The table below shows the number of service approaches received by the Housing Options Service since 2014/15. Worthy of note is that whilst the numbers remain steady over the years, since 2018 the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act has required a greater level of assistance adding more time to case work. This includes a Personal Housing Plan with actions which are regularly reviewed with the client.



### 3.2 Top 5 Homelessness Approach Reasons

The table below shows the main reasons for customer approaches to the Housing Options team, made since 2018. Overall, the number of approaches reduced from 2018/19, due to the impact of Covid. However there are some noteworthy changes in the figures during the pandemic period. The largest volume of calls are for friends/family refusing to accommodate and for domestic/violent abuse. However, over the last year, the greatest percentage increase has been in people experiencing non racial harassment (resulting in Anti-Social behaviour, from a family member, partner or neighbour). Also of note is the decrease in End of Private Tenancy from 2019/20 to 2020/21, due to the moratorium on evictions during the pandemic. Domestic Violence is reported on further in this report at 4.17.

<b>Top 5 Approach Reasons</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>
Non Racial Harrassment	117	120	216
Non Violent Breakdown	222	246	248
End of Private Tenancy	400	516	408
Domestic Violence / Abuse	441	441	585
Friends/Family refuse to accommodate	613	806	712
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>1,793</b>	<b>2,129</b>	<b>2,169</b>
Grand Total of all approaches	9,478	7,592	8,250

## 4.0 HOW HAS THE COUNCIL BEEN TACKLING AND PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS?

### 4.1 Housing Options

The Housing Options Service continued to operate at full capacity during the covid pandemic but face to face assessments were suspended with assessments carried out over the telephone. A safe return of staff to greater face to face assessments will be considered as part of the Corporate planning process.

Other measures implemented during the pandemic include:-

- Extension of notice periods for privately rented properties
- Suspension of housing possession claims
- Uplift to Universal Credit of £20 per week
- Housing Allowance Rate increased to cover at least 30% of market rents in an area
- Mortgage payment holidays
- Suspension of evictions
- “Everyone In” Initiative: launched on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Required local authorities to ensure rough sleepers were brought into suitable COVID secure accommodation.
- “Protect” and “Protect Plus” Programmes: Introduced during the second and third lockdown (November 2020 and January 2021) to ensure councils continue to offer safe accommodation to anyone sleeping rough. Emphasis on facilitating GP registration to ensure rough sleepers could be vaccinated
- “Next Steps” Accommodation Programme: funding for local authorities to secure accommodation for people assisted by emergency provisions.

- “Rough Sleeping” Accommodation Programme: funding for move-on accommodation and accompanying support services.

## 4.2 Homelessness Prevention & Relief

### Prevention

The prevention duty applies when a local authority is satisfied that an applicant is threatened with homelessness and is eligible for assistance.

2018/19			2019/20			2020/21		
Total	No: Success	% Success	Total	No: Success	% Success	Total	No: Success	% Success
663	441	66.52%	1,337	958	71.65%	1,480	1,111	75.10%

The above table shows all prevention cases since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act. Success is measured by securing alternative accommodation for a minimum of 6 months.

In 2020/21 there were 1,480 preventions with 1,111 successful which is an increase from 2019 from 1,337 preventions of which 958 were successful and shows a steady increase year on year with the success rate having risen from 71.75% in 2019/20 to 74.49% in 2020/21.

### Relief

Relief is when a local authority is satisfied that an applicant is homeless and eligible, and it must take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure accommodation for at least 6 months. Reliefs differ from preventions in that the clients are already deemed as homeless.

In 2019/20 there were 1,684 cases when Relief was applied, of which 849 had a successful outcome of gaining a tenancy for 6 months and in 2020/21 there were 1,100 cases of which 571 had a successful outcome, showing an improvement in the success rate from 50.42% to 52.50% with the reduction in total cases due, in part, to Everyone In accommodating clients (See Section 4.9).

2018/19			2019/20			2020/21		
Total	No: Success	% Success	Total	No: Success	% Success	Total	No: Success	% Success
1298	689	53.08%	1,684	849	50.42%	1,088	571	52.50%

Note that the 2018/19 figures for Prevention and Relief were labelled by MHCLG as ‘experimental’ due to the IT infrastructure not being fully developed at the time.

Whilst it is difficult to compare between local authorities due to demographics and other factors, the tables below show how we have performed in comparison with other West Yorkshire authorities.

<b>Prevention</b>	<b>2018/19</b> % Successful	<b>2019/20</b> % Successful	<b>2020/21</b> % Successful
Bradford	66.52%	71.65%	75.10%
Calderdale	75.74%	60.72%	54.80%
Kirklees	75.49%	73.57%	70.10%
Leeds	87.30%	86.43%	88.70%
Wakefield	36.04%	47.39%	49.80%
Y&H	67.50%	67.65%	68.70%

<b>Relief</b>	<b>2018/19</b> % Successful	<b>2019/20</b> % Successful	<b>2020/21</b> % Successful
Bradford	59.10%	53.27%	52.50%
Calderdale	60.59%	61.03%	56.10%
Kirklees	62.63%	54.71%	37.80%
Leeds	73.41%	65.38%	55.00%
Wakefield	11.41%	22.62%	41.40%
Y&H	58.86%	52.88%	46.80%

The above tables show that Prevention success in Bradford, Leeds and Wakefield has increased and Relief success rates have come down in all Districts except Wakefield.

### **4.3 Temporary Accommodation**

#### **4.3.1 Number of placements into temporary accommodation**

In 2019/20, there were 811 unique customers who accounted for 32,195 nights in temporary accommodation, with an average stay of 39.7 days.

In 2020/21, Covid has significantly increased the duration of stay and with the MHCLG launching the 'Everyone In' scheme, the duty placed on Local Authorities to accommodate clients has been widened so there were 732 unique clients who accounted for 67,699 nights accommodated, at an average duration of 92 nights stay.

#### **4.3.2 Reduce the length of stays in bed and breakfast accommodation (B&B)**

Traditionally most local authorities use Bed & Breakfast Hotels in emergencies and over recent years, the use of B&Bs has increased significantly throughout the Country and in Bradford.

Bradford Council considered an alternative model and outsourced emergency crisis accommodation to Concept Housing (started in March 2020, at the beginning of lockdown). The contract is limited to statutory homeless and does not apply to rough sleepers being supported in the "Everyone In" Scheme. As a result of the new contract, B&B use by the Council ended and the costs of emergency accommodation was reduced significantly by at least £300,000 per annum.

During 2020/21 Concept Housing accommodated over 200 vulnerable households in single and family accommodation units.

## **4.4 Eviction Prevention**

The Government's legislation for a temporary ban on bailiff-enforced evictions was introduced in March 2020 and extended several times since, but expired on 31st May 2021. The ban provided protection to social and private tenants by delaying when landlords can evict tenants. The provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020 increased the length of the required notice period that landlords must provide to tenants when seeking possession of a residential property, and have been extended through additional legislation.

With the exception of the most serious cases, landlords needed to give their tenants six months' notice before starting possession proceedings. From 1 June 2021, notice periods reduced to at least four months in most cases. From 1 August 2021 notice periods for cases involving less than 4 months' of unpaid rent reduced again to 2 months' notice, and for rent arrears of at least 4 months, the required notice period is 4 weeks. From 1 October 2021, notice periods are due to return to pre-pandemic levels, subject to the Government's roadmap out of lockdown.

### **Actions**

Our activities to respond to the added demands are focused primarily on:

- a) designing effective and targeted solutions
- b) proactive engagement with tenants and landlords, and
- c) bringing additional value from peripheral services and providers.

These include:

- Created a specialist Housing Options Officer role to exclusively work on eviction cases and engage with Courts, Bailiffs and the VCS sector.
- Task & finish group to develop a "tenancy rescue" offer
- Strengthening pathways and partnership work with the VCS to reduce duplication and make use of expertise (e.g. debt advice, money management)
- Fast-track floating support to mediate with Landlords and support customers to remain in their accommodation.
- Referrals to the Government's free Rental Mediation Service for landlords and tenants involved in a housing possession court case.
- We will be unable to rehouse 100% of evictions so emphasis must be on keeping clients at home where possible and engage with Landlords either long-term or short-term (to plan for a move).
- Aligned to this project is our recent decision to increase the Crisis to Permanent contract value by £100,000 p.a. to rehouse statutory singles and families

## **4.5 Access to Private Rented Housing**

The Government has encouraged local authorities to use the private rented sector as an alternative option to social housing. In Bradford, we started to build up the team in recent years and to develop incentives for landlords who sign up with the Council to offer their

properties. All properties are inspected by Housing Standards Officers before they are accepted onto the scheme.

The Private Rented Options (PRO) Team also had to adapt its working practices during lockdown in order to continue to deliver a full service. The team agreed to by work remotely through telephone, emails and virtual contacts without any face to face interaction with customers or landlords. Most customers and landlords were happy with virtual viewings. Tenancy sign-ups reduced but were still healthy despite the challenges and the significantly lower turnover in tenancies due to lockdowns and general uncertainty, as well as the moratorium on evictions.

The service will undergo a further review during 2021/22. The review will consider the operation of the scheme, including the lessons learned about the effectiveness of alternative methods of working, and the perception of the scheme among current and prospective landlords and tenants, and will make recommendations on the future focus of the scheme, processes, incentives and other activities to encourage landlords to house homeless people for whom the Council has a responsibility.

The table below shows the number of successful private sector lets over the same period over 2 years. The impact of the pandemic has been significant in reducing the number of private sector lets.

Q1 19/20	Q2 19/20	Q3 19/20	Q4 19/20	<b>Total</b>
80	70	73	35	<b>258</b>

Q1 20/21	Q2 20/21	Q3 20/21	Q4 20/21	<b>Total</b>
31	24	26	81	<b>162</b>

In addition to its main scheme, the PRO Team is sourcing private rented accommodation for the Housing First programme, using an enhanced incentive package to encourage landlords to accommodate individuals with complex need.

We have also been recently successful in bidding for funding from the Offender Accommodation Programme which aims to sustain tenancies in the private rented sector for offenders or those released from prison.

#### **4.6 Housing Outreach Support**

The Housing Outreach Support Team is critical to the delivery of sustainable tenancies, re-integrating vulnerable homeless people or those at risk back into the community. The Service complements the range of commissioned Housing Related Support schemes we offer and is directly responsive to immediate needs emanating from Housing Options and other agencies such as the Home Office (when positive decisions are made for asylum seekers), Prisons and Probation and also when we place homeless people into the private rented sector ensuring there is initial tenancy support and landlord liaison.

The Housing Outreach Support team continued operating throughout the lockdown periods. Customers had their support needs met by various remote means, but the service also

continued to offer face to face support through the Customer Service Centre in Bradford and Keighley. This was important as many of the other organisations were forced to shut their doors in 2020.

Despite the general moratorium on evictions, the Home Office only paused evictions following a positive decision on refugee status from April – July 2020. The Outreach team continued to be involved in assisting new refugees to move on from Home Office accommodation – supporting 342 individuals in 187 households. Since April 2021, the team has operated as part of the Refugee Integration Service (see section 4.7 below).

The team also supported landlords and tenants generally who had run into difficulties with their tenancies, and people moving on from temporary to permanent accommodation with a particular focus in 2020 on supporting people fleeing domestic violence – again because other organisations had been forced to shut their doors or offer services by remote means only, while the Outreach team remained present in person and mobile, able to deliver support in person, and food parcels and other essential items.

Additional priorities for the coming year for the team will be delivering the Offender Accommodation Programme and supporting Housing Options in Eviction Prevention by providing fast-track floating support to mediate with Landlords and support customers to remain in their accommodation.

#### **4.7 Refugee Integration Service (RIS)**

Migration Yorkshire is a partnership of Local authorities in Yorkshire & Humber and was recently awarded grant funding for a new programme called 'Refugee Integration Service (RIS). This programme will improve the integration of Refugees in Yorkshire and Humber through a 'whole-region' approach, coordinating strategic and operational interventions underpinned by comprehensive evidence and Refugee participation. Bradford Council is a partner in this project and aims to contribute to the outcomes by linking up services and providing a co-ordinated approach. An example of this approach successfully applied was working with new refugees, the Home Office, Mears Group, Migrant Help and other agencies on a hotel exit programme in a large local hotel housing asylum seekers.

#### **4.8 Homeless Outreach Partnership (HOP Team)**

The HOP was established in 2019 following a successful bid for funding from the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI), a programme developed to end rough sleeping. The HOP is a team of specialists with the skills to secure the necessary support to those who are most vulnerable and have the most complex needs. They are recruited from existing services on secondments and provide expertise in their specific work area. They include a substance misuse worker, a Psychiatric Nurse and a Housing Options Officer and other experts in rough sleeping.

The HOP provides a street-based response to address the issues of rough sleeping, through assertive outreach by intercepting and engaging with clients in order to direct them into services away from the street. This is the crucial first stage in getting people into a pathway of services and ultimately away from the streets.

Funding for this service has been made available to bid for on an annual basis and current

funding lasts until March 2022. The Government's RSI team are confident that a new round of funds will be made available to bid for in 2022/23 following the Government's Autumn Spending Review.

Whilst the scheme was set up before the pandemic, the HOP has been critical in ensuring that the government's directive to take all rough sleepers off the streets via the Everyone In Scheme was implemented successfully. The HOP stepped up and exceeded its initial target of supporting 20 rough sleepers per annum and went on to assist 424 rough sleepers during the pandemic. (See section 4.9 below Everyone In).

#### **4.9 Everyone In – Rough Sleepers**

The Everyone In Scheme was introduced by the Government at the start of the first lockdown. Local authorities were required to take all rough sleepers off the streets and into temporary accommodation irrespective of immigration status or Priority Need.

Since the start of Everyone In on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 a total of 424 individual placements have been made, supporting rough sleepers off the street up until the programme closed to new referrals on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

As of 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021 - 58 individuals remain in emergency accommodation who are being supported with "move-on" options. Those with immigration restrictions are being helped to secure settled status.

Since 19<sup>th</sup> July when the Government lifted most restrictions, we have continued to work with the rough sleepers we were supporting and have put in place an Exit Plan with a target to move all rough sleepers off the scheme by 19<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

The Council is now working with voluntary and community sector partners to develop a scheme to support rough sleepers with No Recourse to Public Funds for the period after the 19<sup>th</sup> October.

#### **4.10 Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP)**

The Next Steps Accommodation Programme follows the Everyone In scheme and aims to provide sustainable "move-on" solutions for the rough sleepers within the Everyone In scheme. Working with partners, the Council successfully secured NSAP funding.

The following funded schemes are being delivered currently:

- **Additional emergency accommodation (Funding £205k)**  
Covering use of local B&B provision. This funding was used towards the cost of B&B accommodation for the rough sleepers.
- **Hope Housing (Funding £60k)**  
Hope Housing is working with the Council to assist destitute EU Nationals within the Everyone In scheme to achieve settled status, employment, stable rehousing. options and reconnection. Approximately 30 EU Nationals are being supported to achieve move on from the programme.

- **Beacon (Funding £6k)**  
Beacon is working with the Council to support destitute asylum seekers from the Everyone In scheme. 5 failed asylum seekers are being supported to achieve move on from the programme.
- **Incommunities/Bradford District Care Foundation Trust (Funding £120k)**  
Partners Bradford District Care Foundation Trust and Incommunities are delivering this project providing mental health focused floating support to 11 rough sleepers from the Everyone In scheme.
- **Fairmount Lodge**  
Horton Housing was awarded capital matched funding of £900k and Revenue funding of £555k to provide an 18 bed hostel with self contained accommodation for the Everyone In clients. All 18 clients are now placed within the high quality accommodation. In Round 2 a further £315k Capital funding and £150k Revenue funding has been secured to develop 7 dispersed units for former rough sleepers.

#### **4.11 Housing First**

Housing First is a successful concept begun in the United States and in Finland. It was introduced by the government as successful practice in the UK in recent years. It involves providing a tenancy first and intensive support to go with the tenancy for as long as needed. The programme started as a pilot using short term funds and has proved to be highly successful after 2 years of delivery.

The Council has now invested longer term funding to continue the scheme. The funding enabled the Council to expand capacity within the programme to 30 individuals from the initial 15.

Housing First has demonstrated that this model has a positive impact on the most complex and multiple needs clients as well as having a positive wider impact on front line services in terms of engagement and a reduction in crisis intervention.

The housing arm was procured through the council building on partnerships with local social housing partners as well as recruitment of private sector landlords through the Private Sector Lettings Team. Clients are screened via an established Complex Needs Panel to ensure all other accommodation routes are exhausted and the programme is purely for the most complex and multiple needs cases. In response to the Covid pandemic, Housing First has provided an effective “move-on” route for the most complex and multiple need rough sleepers from Everyone In.

#### **4.12 No Second Night Out**

Bradford Council initially commissioned the No Second Night Out (NSNO) service in 2015, to help people who are sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough in the district. This service is contracted to Humankind, and delivered from Discovery House - a 20 bed hostel on Barkerend Road. The service provides short term emergency accommodation for people with nowhere else to stay. The No Second Night Out is open 365 days a year and offers a range of services to rough sleepers including outreach work, assessments and advice as well as co-ordinating the delivery of the Cold Weather provision for rough sleepers.

The service has supported 105 clients in 2020/21 which is lower than 2019/20, yet the length of stay has significantly increased and has achieved an average occupancy level of 95% (the target is 85%).

NSNO Target Criteria	2019/20	2020/21
Length of stay in accommodation (Average Days)	42	70

Other Key Figures	2019/20	2020/21
Total clients accommodated in Year	183	105
Planned departures in Year	109	52
Clients worked with who work with the service who fit the 'entrenched' definition	41	33
Number of clients Reconnected	16	1

The table above highlights some of the main performance criteria to monitor NSNO service provision and it can be seen that the length of stay and planned departures have been significantly affected by Covid restrictions.

NSNO was re-commissioned and expanded in 2021 to include an additional, 12 bed hostel, along with the existing hostel at Barkerend, now offering a much expanded capacity with 32 units. The new accommodation will provide short stay emergency accommodation to rough sleepers and placements will be made by the HOP team. This will increase capacity to address rough sleeping and provide stability to work with clients to address their issues. The new contract will commence in November 2021.

#### 4.13 Cold Weather Provision

The Cold Weather Provision (CWP) is a multi-agency partnership that provides emergency bed spaces in Bradford to rough sleepers on freezing winter nights, commissioned by Bradford Council. The service operates between 1 October and 30 April and opens when the predicted temperature for the upcoming evening is due to fall to zero or below. The CWP partners provide emergency beds for clients in communal rooms, so no-one has to sleep on the streets on the coldest winter nights.

The CWP was open for 15 nights this winter. The service dealt with 85 referrals and provided 54 bed spaces for those in need of emergency accommodation. As in previous years, the service received a substantial amount of referrals who did not use the bed space provided.

The key issue the CWP faced was Covid -19. It was agreed on the 17 March 2020 that communal spaces in accommodation services would not be suitable. This was reviewed with Bradford Council and all parties agreed that B&B accommodation would be used instead. This only applied to 2 CWP nights and only 1 client utilised this facility.

	2018/19	2019/20
Number of Nights Open	26	15
Clients accessing CWP	117	36
Total bed spaces provided	258	54
B&B use	0	1
Move On	39	16

#### 4.14 Access to Social Housing

Our Social Housing Allocations System provides a platform for Housing Associations, including Incommunities to discharge their nominations agreements with the Council. The table below shows lettings during the past 5 years for Incommunities with a significant decline during Covid which is now picking up with the lifting of restrictions. In a normal year almost 2,500 lets are made against 19,000 applicants who are awaiting rehousing on the Housing Register.

Year	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
No: of Incommunities Lets	<b>2457</b>	<b>2491</b>	<b>2370</b>	<b>2049</b>	<b>1555</b>

#### 4.15 Housing Related Support – Temporary Accommodation/Homeless

The Housing Options Service has been the Single Gateway for customers accessing all commissioned supported services in the District.

The table below shows the performance data for the temporary accommodation/homeless provision to support vulnerable adults primarily aimed at accommodating customers towards whom the Council owes the temporary accommodation duty.

The provision includes 39 units of hostel accommodation and 62 units of dispersed accommodation at Octavia Court, Jermyn Court and Clergy House which delivers Housing Related Support to homeless customers:

Period	Q1 19/20	Q2 19/20	Q3 19/20	Q4 19/20	Total
No. of clients in service	131	120	111	127	489
No. of clients support ended	118	103	104	102	427

Period	Q1 20/21	Q2 20/21	Q3 20/21	Q4 20/21	Total
No. of clients in service	126	101	143	132	502
No. of clients support ended	31	39	57	49	176

It can be seen in the lower table above that clients leaving the service has been significantly impacted by the pandemic.

#### 4.16 Housing Related Support - Centre Point and Homeless Young people

Centre Point has been commissioned to provide accommodation and support homeless young people in the district. There were 120 admissions into supported accommodation between April 2020 to December 2020. All of the admissions were from referrals through Bradford Gateway managed by Housing Options. The provision includes 28 units of hostel accommodation, 44 units of dispersed accommodation and 70 units of floating support.

#### **4.17 Housing Related Support – Multiple Needs/High Risk**

Bradford’s Housing Options has been the Single Gateway referral point into multiple needs and high risk provision since April 2016. The Single Gateway provides the mechanism to assess and refer individuals who are eligible for commissioned short term supported housing. The aim of the Gateway is to have a central housing related support assessment point and target support to vulnerable customers who need it the most.

During 2020/21, 1642 customers with high to medium risk need were referred to the multiple needs/high risk provision.

The current commissioned contracts expire at the end of June 2022 and the Commissioners Adults Services have commenced the re-commissioning process with support from the Housing team.

#### **4.18 Housing Related Support - Domestic Abuse**

Domestic Abuse has been a major concern as to how people have coped with enforced isolation especially in abusive relationships. During April to December in 2019 there were 308 recorded cases whereas for the Covid period in April to December 2020 there were 445 cases. On average, a victim experiences over 37 instances of Domestic Violence before contacting one of the statutory authorities, so such a large increase may mask the full severity of the problem. Bradford Council has invested substantially in Domestic Violence prevention and assistance and housing feeds into that service on a weekly basis.

<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>
441	441	586

#### **4.19 Challenges/Opportunities**

- Young people are disproportionately represented amongst people who present as homeless. We need to ensure that our young people are equipped with the skills and the support to thrive in their own homes. Closer working with colleagues in Children’s has enabled both teams to understand the needs of young people better and this should lead to improved provision and solutions.
- We also know from research that 24% of homeless youth population identify as LGBTQ+ nationally and there is therefore a need to recognise and respond to the specific needs of this section of the population.
- Women experiencing homelessness are typically less visible on the streets than men and more likely to be hidden homeless and suffering abuse. Timely wraparound support is critical for those who are able to stay safely in their own homes and for those who need to flee to a place of safety. Considerable work is ongoing with the Domestic abuse and Sexual Violence team to address the needs of this group including men suffering abuse.

- Rough sleepers have complex needs and require extra support to access and sustain tenancies. Schemes such as the No Second Night Out Service, the HOP team, Day Shelter, Housing First, Multiple Needs provision etc have been/will be reviewed and maximised for effectiveness for rough sleepers who have unmet mental health, physical health and substance misuse needs.
- Mental health support provision has declined during austerity years including Housing Related Support provision and a review of HRS will take place to ensure we deliver effectively with the budgets available recognising that support provision inevitably results in wider savings to society and other services budgets.
- A Supported Housing Needs Assessment (SHNA) stated that the Single Gateway operates reasonably well. Amongst other recommendations, the report suggested that future modelling should consider implementing 'trusted assessor' and 'pathway coordinator' roles to streamline the assessment process and reduce multiple referrals.
- SHNA identified gaps in existing provision and indicated that based on future demand trends an injection of an additional circa £600,000 is needed in the multiple needs / high risk commissioned provision.
- Access to suitable permanent housing for vulnerable homeless can be challenging particularly when landlords (social and private) place barriers to accommodate high risk clients. These barriers include refusing applicants with arrears as an example although most Associations agree to a debt management plan. As for private landlords they expect sufficient incentives and risk management before they commit to taking high or medium risk tenants. A review is taking place for maximising the effectiveness of the private rented sector which may yield better solutions.
- The impact of homelessness on the health of individuals is recognised and we are working with partners such as Bevan Health to tackle the social determinants of health on vulnerable people.
- There is a lack of suitable homes particularly larger homes for large families and those with a need for adapted and wheelchair homes who become homeless or are living in severely overcrowded conditions. As a result these households are waiting much longer on the Housing Register for suitable housing.
- The moratorium on evictions ended on the 31 May. During the pandemic, notice periods were raised to 6 months. However, from 1 June 2021 these reduced to 4 months except for the most serious cases such as domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour. From 1 August 2021 notice periods for cases less than 4 months' of unpaid rent reduced again to 2 months' notice and for rent arrears of at least 4 months, the required notice period is 4 weeks. We are expecting a surge of applications for people being evicted from private and social housing as rent arrears increase due to loss of income, unemployment, withdrawal or reduction in furlough assistance etc. Mortgage repossessions will also increase demand for the service for the same reasons. We have put in place a set of measures as set out above to provide early intervention and prevent evictions.
- The impact of government policy on migrants and the effects of the Immigration Act on homelessness and destitution needs to be closely monitored.

- The Everyone In Scheme which was set up by government to accommodate all rough sleepers during the Covid 19 Pandemic presents an opportunity to eliminate rough sleeping within the District by providing accommodation for all rough sleepers irrespective of Priority Need. However the challenges in addition to costs of emergency temporary accommodation, include suitable and adequate wraparound and Housing Related Support to sustain longer term tenancies. The most problematic rough sleepers however are those with No Recourse to Public Funds. We are working with government and the voluntary sector to develop a sustainable solution to support NRPF rough sleepers.
- Emergency responses to fire and flood situations particularly high rise blocks facing prohibitions eg with cladding issues, poor standards of accommodation, unpaid Council bills etc which may require invoking high level procedures in the Emergency Evacuation Accommodation Plan and temporary redeployment of resources and partnership working. Often these responses are immediate with little or no notice.
- Short term funding commitments from government to support homelessness is an issue as we cannot plan for the long term. This has been raised with the relevant government Department and the concern of Local Authorities appear to be understood. This consideration will form part of the governments spending review.

## **5. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 5.1 Whilst the costs of tackling homelessness including providing Temporary Accommodation can be impacted by national and local policy changes, the strength of the economy, and other factors leading to a rise in homelessness, this report does not result in additional cost outcomes.

## **6. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

- 6.1 A significant health risk would have arisen if the Council had failed to provide accommodation to homeless & rough sleepers during the pandemic allowing the disease to spread throughout the District. By adhering to the stipulations and guidelines from the 'Everyone In' scheme, Bradford is complying with all NHS and wider government advice.

## **7. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

- 7.1 The Council has a duty under Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 to publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of a homelessness review at least every five years. This strategy must be taken into account in the exercise of the Council's functions.
- 7.2 The aim of this strategy must be to prevent homelessness, to secure that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in the district who are or may become homeless, and to secure the satisfactory provision of support for such people, or those who have been homeless and need support to prevent a recurrence.
- 7.4 The main provisions on homelessness are contained in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. The Act includes:

- Principal criteria for determining which duties a local authority will owe to a homeless applicant
- The duties to inquire into an application
- When and how an applicant should be notified of a decision
- Main accommodation duties and how they can be discharged
- How a decision can be challenged

7.5 The **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** came into force in April 2018. The new legislation creates additional duties on local authorities to try and prevent homelessness regardless of whether or not the household is considered to be in 'priority need'. Implementation of the Act is having a big impact on the volume of casework undertaken by Housing Options and there is also increased pressure to source a wider range of accommodation options for people in housing need.

7.6 The Localism Act 2011 amended the 1996 Act by giving local authorities the power to end the main housing duty by arranging an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector.

7.7 The Secretary of State has the power to issue regulations to specify details regarding the homelessness provisions, and has done so under 'Everyone In' to prescribe, for example:

- Additional categories of people in priority need
- Persons from abroad who are eligible for assistance
- Suitability of accommodation criteria

## 8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

### 8.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Throughout the pandemic, homelessness has been a key consideration for the Government through the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG). The moratorium placed on evictions has temporarily reduced service pressure from evictions but with the moratorium now ended the Housing Options Service is likely to face a significant increase in calls for assistance. This is also dependent on when HM Court Service clears their backlog of cases. It is difficult to calculate or estimate how significant this increase will be but it is anticipated that an extra 1,000 serious cases (on top of an annual normal 1000) are already in backlog.

### 8.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

8.2.1 Recommendations from this report do not create any specific actions or investment that directly alters the Council's own or wider District's carbon footprint and emissions from other greenhouse gasses.

### 8.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.3.1 No direct community safety implications, however the strategy does seek to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping, by improving access to housing and support. With the Everyone In scheme and all rough sleepers being offered accommodation, it is likely that street level ASB has seen a significant reduction and potentially ancillary

and associated crimes such as drug use also recording a reduction. These objectives contribute towards keeping individuals safer, and in turn deliver wider positive outcomes in relation to creating thriving communities.

#### **8.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

8.4.1 Implementation of the strategy will be conducive to the fulfilment of the Convention, Rights and Freedoms under Schedule 1 of the Human Rights Act 1998, and in particular the right to respect for private and family life, and the right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions.

#### **8.5 TRADE UNION**

8.5.1 There are no trade union implications identified.

#### **8.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

8.6.1 There are no specific ward implications identified, as the strategy will apply district-wide. Some of the projects relating to supported housing will inevitably be focused in specific locations. However, residents from any part of the district are able to access locality-based homelessness services specific to their needs.

#### **8.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING**

8.7.1 The strategy identifies a range of issues linked to youth homelessness, and clearly states that the Council has a role, as corporate parent, to ensure that young people who have been looked after are equipped with the skills and support to thrive in their own home. Youth homelessness is explicitly recognised in the strategy as a key priority to address, and a number of actions are included that aim to improve homeless prevention work with children and young people, improve pathways to enable earlier intervention and develop a discrete Youth Homelessness Delivery Plan.

#### **8.8 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT**

8.8.1 None directly arising from this report

#### **8.9 NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

None.

#### **9. OPTIONS**

9.1 N/A

#### **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 That Members support the range of actions being taken to prevent and tackle homelessness in the District.

10.2 That Members note the challenges set out in the report including the pressures the service will face caused by the lifting of the Evictions ban and the ending of the Everyone In Scheme.

## **11. APPENDICES**

11.1 None

## **12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

12.1 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 - 2025

<https://www.bradford.gov.uk/media/5755/bradford-homelessness-strategy-2020-to-2025.pdf>