

Homeless

Homelessness Strategy

2016 - 2021

Environment and Sustainable Communities

Foreword

This is Bedford Borough Council's Homelessness Strategy for the next five years. It is supported by a Review of the Council's work in addressing homelessness.

Homelessness is a critical social challenge and is increasing nationally. Bedford Borough Council is committed to meeting this challenge. The resources available to the Council are limited and are in the process of being reduced. The success of the Homelessness Strategy will rely upon continued joint working with the Council's partners.

The Homelessness Strategy focusses first on prevention. Homelessness is a damaging experience for all who experience it. There are pressures on many different organisations arising from the increasing level of homelessness. For these reasons prevention is the priority. Where people do become homeless or are at risk of homelessness, support is needed and this is the second focus of the strategy.

The underlying challenge is to ensure that there is sufficient supply of accommodation. The provision of affordable housing is the core underlying challenge. This strategy is concerned with immediate issues of access to accommodation, including specialist accommodation and temporary accommodation for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.

The Homelessness Strategy and the accompanying Review make it clear that Bedford Borough Council relies on working with partners who play a key role in addressing this major challenge.

Dave Hodgson
Mayor of Bedford Borough

Contents

Executive Summary	5
Introduction	7
The Strategy: Themes and Objectives	8
Theme 1 - Prevention	10
Theme 2 - Support	10
Theme 3 - Supply	11
Key Issues and Objectives	11
Action Plan	16
Appendix A Homelessness Review 2014 / 2015	19
Appendix B Hostel & Supported Housing Schemes	47
Appendix C No Second Night Out	55
Appendix D Gold Standard	59

Executive Summary

1. The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory obligation on all local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area and, based on the findings of the review, to develop and publish a strategy to tackle and prevent homelessness.
2. This Homelessness Strategy is for the period 2016 – 2021 and follows a review of detailed research and consultation about homelessness in the Borough carried out in 2014 / 2015. It also takes into account developments in legislation, welfare reform and best practice. The strategy has been developed by Bedford Borough Council and its partners, all of who are committed and actively working to reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough. The draft Strategy has been the subject of public consultation.
3. This Homelessness Strategy is brought forward at a time of severe constraints on Bedford Borough Council's budget. Many partners also face budget pressures. It will be critical that the Council and its partners work together to identify improved ways of working that generate efficiencies and deliver the objectives of the strategy and ensure that there is a focus on delivering key priorities.
4. This Homelessness Strategy has 3 themes which follow those set out in the 2006 Code of Guidance. These are:
 - **Prevention** - the prevention of homelessness.
 - **Support** - the provision of effective support to people who are homeless or those at risk of homelessness.
 - **Supply** - to ensure that there is sufficient supply of accommodation for those at risk of homelessness and those who are homeless.
5. The Homelessness Strategy sets out priorities and objectives under each of these themes and creates an action plan.
6. Across these themes the Homelessness Strategy sets the following objectives all of which can only be delivered by close working with partner organisations:
 - To continue to prevent homelessness and help people sustain their tenancies by early intervention and providing good quality advice and support services.
 - To ensure that there is sufficient supply of temporary accommodation for those who are homeless.
 - To commission support services for people who are homeless or those at risk of homelessness.
 - To support an appropriate range of hostel and specialist accommodation including the provision of a Complex Needs Unit.
 - Continue to take a proactive and innovative approach to dealing with the impact of welfare reform to ensure its potential to impact on homelessness is minimised.
 - To encourage the provision of debt and welfare rights advice services.
 - To work to inform expectations surrounding housing availability and tenure particularly among young people.
 - To provide continuing support for young people at risk of homelessness.
 - To look for new and innovative ways to prevent homelessness and help tenants remain in their homes.

- To continue to work with owner occupiers at risk of mortgage repossession.
- To maintain a pro-active approach to reducing rough sleeping.
- Continue to support families who have suffered domestic abuse.
- To improve information sharing regarding release programmes for people leaving Care and institutions' such as the Hospital, Prison and the Armed Forces.
- To ensure that the homelessness services offered by Bedford Borough Council are available equally to all members of the community.
- To continue to support the Mental Health Partnership to re-house single people with mental health problems, and provide ongoing support from mental health professionals to help maintain tenancies created.



1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory obligation on all local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area and, based on the findings of the review, to develop and publish a strategy to tackle and prevent homelessness. Bedford Borough Council has specific legal duties towards homeless people depending upon their circumstances. In this strategy the Council addresses homelessness in broad terms and identifies the ways in which the Council will offer Housing Options advice to customers and where necessary meet its statutory responsibilities.
- 1.2 This Homelessness Strategy is for the period 2016 – 2021 and follows a review of detailed research and consultation about homelessness in the Borough carried out in 2014 / 2015. It also takes into account developments in legislation, welfare reform and best practice. The strategy has been developed by Bedford Borough Council and its partners, all of who are committed and actively working to reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough. The draft Strategy has been the subject of public consultation.
- 1.3 This Homelessness Strategy is brought forward at a time of severe constraints on Bedford Borough Council's budget. Many partners also face budget pressures. It will be critical that the Council and its partners work together to identify improved ways of working that generate efficiencies and deliver the objectives of the strategy and ensure that there is a focus on delivering key priorities.
- 1.4 The homelessness review that has informed the proposed strategy is set out in Appendix A. It includes an examination of recent levels and trends in homelessness together with a review of the existing provision of support and other services for those facing homelessness in the Borough alongside the achievements secured in recent years. The experience of homelessness is not limited to the urban area of Bedford. Homelessness can arise in the rural area and references to Bedford in this strategy, and the review that accompanies it, are intended to include the Borough as a whole.

2. The Strategy : Themes and Objectives

2.1 This Homelessness Strategy has 3 fundamental themes which follow those set out in the 2006 Code of Guidance. These are: -

1. **Prevention** - the prevention of homelessness.
2. **Support** - the provision of effective support to people who are homeless or those at risk of homelessness.
3. **Supply** - to ensure that there is sufficient supply of accommodation for those at risk of homelessness and those who are homeless.

2.2 The sections below set out Bedford Borough Council's strategy for each of these themes but there are a number of current and potential pressures on homelessness which bear to varying degrees on the need for and challenges of addressing homelessness under all three themes:

- The continuing and worsening shortage of housing supply relative to demand and the consequent pressures on affordability.
- The reduction in affordable housing in particular resulting from the reduced availability of government grants and the reductions in affordable housing delivered through planning agreements on new developments.
- Consequent pressures on rent levels in the private rented sector which can place properties out of the reach of people on low incomes or dependent upon Housing Benefit at Local Housing Allowance levels.

- The loss of social rented stock through the Right to Buy, not only in Bedford Borough but in London and other high pressure areas, eventually reduces local authorities' capacity to respond to homelessness.
- Some welfare reforms affect the affordability and availability of housing for people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness.
- Continuing migration pressures as people move north from London, Luton and the rest of Bedfordshire. This will primarily consist of people moving to the area of their own volition, in many cases to find accommodation which is more affordable for them. There are also pressures arising from international migration. The Census estimates in 2011 indicate that 12,890 of the Borough's residents in 2011 had arrived in the United Kingdom since 2001. National Insurance Number registrations have been issued to 19,080 overseas nationals resident in Bedford Borough between 2002 and 2013.
- The risk that other local authorities (for example London Boroughs, Milton Keynes or Luton) may help people to relocate or place homeless persons in Bedford Borough to relieve pressure on their own housing stock. The Council is aware of other Local Authorities placing homeless families in temporary accommodation in Bedford. At present this is on a limited scale but it has been reported that between 2012 / 2013 and 2013 / 2014 the number of families given financial assistance to leave 15 London Boroughs rose from 119 to 210 (a 76% increase), (Source Local Government Chronicle, 30 October 2014).

2.3 The Homelessness Strategy has the following fundamental objectives all of which can only be delivered by close working with partner organisations:

- To continue to prevent homelessness and help people sustain their tenancies by early intervention and providing good quality advice and support services.
- To ensure that there is sufficient supply of temporary accommodation for those who are homeless.
- To commission support services for people who are homeless or those at risk of homelessness.
- To support an appropriate range of hostel and specialist accommodation including the provision of a Complex Needs Unit.
- Continue to take a proactive and innovative approach to dealing with the impact of welfare reform to ensure its potential to impact on homelessness is minimised.
- To encourage the provision of debt and welfare rights advice services.
- To work to inform expectations surrounding housing availability and tenure particularly among young people.
- To provide continuing support for young people at risk of homelessness.
- To look for new and innovative ways to prevent homelessness and help tenants remain in their homes.
- To continue to work with owner occupiers at risk of mortgage repossession.
- To maintain a pro-active approach to reducing rough sleeping.
- Continue to support families who have suffered domestic abuse.
- To improve information sharing regarding release programmes for people leaving Care and institutions' such as the Hospital, Prison and the Armed Forces.
- To ensure that the homelessness services offered by Bedford Borough Council are available equally to all members of the community.
- To continue to support the Mental Health Partnership to re-house single people with mental health problems, and provide ongoing support from mental health professionals to help maintain tenancies created.

3. Theme 1 - Prevention

- 3.1 The prevention of homelessness is the key objective in Bedford Borough Council's Homelessness Strategy. Appendix A sets out measures already in operation and the successes and challenges in the recent past.
- 3.2 Looking forward, the Council and its partner organisations will continue to work together to prevent homelessness. This includes helping people to sustain their tenancies by early intervention, providing good quality advice and support services together with the continued development of policies and services which both support and sustain existing tenures.
- 3.3 The review also highlights areas where we can improve our service. These improvement options are set out in the Action Plan and spelt out in the strategy objectives. The Borough Council will continue to look for new and innovative ways to prevent homelessness and help tenants, leaseholders and property owners to remain in their own homes.

4. Theme 2 - Support

- 4.1 The strategy looking forward is to continue to work with our partners to provide a wide range of accommodation, support and advice services available for homeless persons or persons in danger of becoming homeless within Bedford Borough. Additionally the Council's Supporting People Strategy highlights the need for the Council, its partner organisations and voluntary agencies to work together to develop policies and services which provide support to those who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless in order to assist them to either sustain their tenancies or get back in to accommodation by providing them with the support, opportunities and the life skills required to achieve this.
- 4.2 Support in the Borough will continue to be provided through a number of channels which include:-
- Rough Sleepers Outreach Teams
 - Hostel Provision (covering a number of different client groups)
 - Bedford Nightshelter
 - Complex Homelessness Intervention Panel (CHIP)
 - Severe Weather Emergency Protocol Provision
 - Prison & Post Release Worker
 - Teenage Parent Schemes
 - Domestic Violence Refuges & Advice Service
 - Young Persons Specialist Schemes
 - Health Services for the Homeless
 - Local Welfare Provision
 - Floating Support
 - Rent Deposit Scheme – Tenancy Sustainment

Details of these schemes are at appendix A and B.

5. Theme 3 - Supply

- 5.1 The needs of homeless people form part of the overall housing needs of the Borough. The level of need, the dwelling types required and the tenures that will best meet those needs are considered through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment which provides an evidence base for both Planning Policy and the Housing Strategy. A new Strategic Housing Market Assessment is currently in preparation.
- 5.2 The Housing Strategy 2012 - 2017 sets out Bedford Borough Council's approach to supporting the delivery of new housing and, in particular, the delivery of new affordable housing. This review highlights the need for the Council and its partner organisations to continue to work together to maximise the supply of available housing in the Borough covering all types and tenures as this provides an ongoing role in meeting housing need in addition to helping prevent homelessness and provide good quality accommodation and options for those who are.



6. Key Issues and Objectives

- 6.1 This section summarises key issues and objectives to address them. The Action Plan that follows offers a more comprehensive statement of the range of actions and their associated targets.

Theme 1 - Prevention

Key Issues

- 6.2 Referral services have a vital role in homelessness prevention. All organisations need to be aware of how appropriate referrals can be made and the range of services provided within the Borough. Referral services generally perform well, however the potential exists to improve the process across a range of needs and services. Where possible agencies should work to improve the knowledge of young people in particular about housing issues and the risks of homelessness.
- 6.3 Private sector landlords often have limited knowledge of the advice and support services available to their tenants. Awareness needs to be improved to enable earlier intervention where a tenant is in danger of losing their home. This increases the chances of preventing homelessness or securing alternative accommodation before a household has to leave their existing home. This cannot be achieved by working with one or two organisations as most private sector landlords own a small number of properties.
- 6.4 The Court Desk which currently operates at Bedford County Court is funded by the House of Industry and operated by the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). It plays an important role in preventing homelessness, often where advice has not been

sought prior to the client attending court. Between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2015, homelessness was prevented for 156 households. Following the governments review of court services, Bedford County Court is scheduled to close during the first quarter of 2017. The future requirement for a Court Desk service will therefore require review.

Objectives

- 6.5 To improve inter-agency working, the JSNA chapter on Housing (2014) already includes the following recommendation:

To review existing referral systems and examine the value and the feasibility of developing a community referral to provide a single point of contact for all non-statutory provision, linking in with statutory providers where appropriate.

(http://www.bedford.gov.uk/health_and_social_care/bedford_borough_jsna/wider_determinants/housing.aspx)

- 6.6 The needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness will form a key element in this review.
- 6.7 Private sector landlords' knowledge of how homelessness can be prevented should be developed through a sustained educational effort. This should include regular landlord events attended by the Housing Options Team and improved publicity of the services available.
- 6.8 The relocation of the service provided by Bedford County Court to Luton will require a review to be undertaken of the options available to enable a Court Desk service to be maintained.

Theme 2 - Support

Key Issues

- 6.9 There is an element of migration of homeless persons into the Borough. This has an impact on the scarce resources made available for local residents. The range of services for homeless persons offered by statutory and voluntary agencies may have the effect of encouraging this movement. Until 31st March 2015 a Reconnection Service for rough sleepers was operated by NOAH Enterprise as part of the No Second Night Out programme. Of 57 referrals made, 35 persons were reconnected to their home local authority. Now funding has ended, this service is no longer provided. There is therefore, a danger that the number of homeless persons with no connection to the Borough who choose to remain here may increase.
- 6.10 Improvements have been made in liaison with institutions in discharging vulnerable people but more needs to be done to instigate a proactive approach.
- Bedford Hospital – By ensuring housing and support agencies are aware at an early stage of a person who will be homeless on discharge. This will allow time to plan and provide suitable permanent or temporary accommodation. This approach should ultimately reduce the need for people to access primary or acute health care services in future, making it easier to provide home based support. A more co-ordinated approach to discharges therefore needs to be developed between the hospital and housing and support agencies.

- Bedford Prison – The Prison and Post Release worker employed by the prison through St Mungo's, endeavours to take a proactive approach to establishing housing solutions for prisoners with a local connection in the run up to their release. The effectiveness of this approach can be improved by developing a better co-ordinated approach between the agencies involved.

Objectives

- 6.11 Consideration should be given to securing external funding to re-introduce a Reconnection Service for rough sleepers where they do not have a local connection with the Borough.
- 6.12 A review of hospital discharge procedures, to include patients with physical needs and those with mental health needs, should be undertaken to maximise the opportunities available to provide housing and support solutions where it is known a person will otherwise be homeless. The commissioning of East London NHS Foundation Trust on a 7 year contract to provide mental health care from 1st April 2015 creates an opportunity to review and develop hospital discharge procedures for this client group.
- 6.13 A review of the prison discharge procedure should be undertaken to maximise the opportunities available to re-house ex-offenders who have a local connection to the Borough. This review should include the liaison process with bpha and the extension of existing liaison arrangements to hostels which are not funded by Bedford Borough Council. The provision of accommodation on release should reduce the chances of re-offending.

The review should also include developing a procedure to ensure the Housing Options Team are informed when it is known a prisoner will be homeless on discharge, in case the Council has a duty to provide temporary or permanent accommodation.

Theme 3 - Supply Key Issues

- 6.14 Addressing the Borough Council's need for temporary accommodation is a critical issue. The Private Sector Leasing scheme, introduced in 2012, has provided just over 50% of the 62 units originally specified. The provider, Orchard & Shipman, has found it difficult to secure the private rented accommodation required. Bpha continues to have a responsibility to make temporary accommodation available under the terms of the stock transfer. Short term arrangements have, therefore, been maintained with bpha to make up the shortfall and currently 30 units are provided by them. A more permanent solution to this issue is however required.
- 6.15 There has been a significant increase in the number of applications and homeless decisions since the beginning of 2015. The number of homeless acceptances is 82% higher than this time in 2014 (150 acceptances for April to September compared to 164 for the whole of 2014/15). Overall Bedford Borough Council has seen a 40% increase in the number of homeless families approaching the Council for assistance in the first 6 months of 2015 compared to last year. This has led to an increase in the demand for emergency accommodation. It peaked in July but the long term trend is uncertain.

The Council is actively securing additional temporary accommodation in order to relieve the pressure on the use of bed and breakfast and have been working hard at prevention options where possible. We will continue to procure additional properties as needed in order to manage demand as effectively as possible.

6.16 The increase in demand is mainly due to the increase in the number of private sector landlords recovering possession of their property. This is due to the fact that there is very high demand for rental properties and landlords are able to increase their rental income significantly if they re-let the property to a new tenant. This is especially the case where the tenant was previously receiving Local Housing Allowance. There are very few properties available at the Local Housing Allowance rate in the Bedford Borough area and this is creating a significant issue with increasing numbers of homeless families approaching the Council as they are unable to access the private market.

6.17 Estimates by the ONS suggest the population of the Borough will increase from the 2014 figure of 163,900 to 174,700 in 2021. During the same period, the number of households are expected to increase from c. 67,000 to c. 73,000. The challenge for Bedford Borough Council is to deliver the new homes required, meeting needs across the range of tenures. Continued liaison on affordable housing supply to meet emerging need is essential. On 1st October 2014 there were 1037 households on the Housing Register, 28 of whom had a homeless duty accepted. The Housing Register is managed by bpha under a Service Level Agreement with the Council; the impact of the operation of the Register on people at risk of homelessness should be kept under review.

6.18 The Private Rented Sector (PRS) is playing an increasing role in housing supply across the Borough. Bedford Borough Council's Rent Deposit Scheme (RDS) exists to secure access to the PRS for homeless people and people at risk of homelessness. This can now include the discharge of the Council's statutory duty. Since April 2011 Housing Benefit has fallen against average rents making it harder to attract new landlords to the RDS even with innovative offers such as (under certain qualifying conditions) paying the first year of a rent guarantee insurance. More properties are however always needed particularly for households who would otherwise be unable to access the RPS. The Council therefore, needs to examine ways to maintain and expand the supply of available PRS properties and continue to engage with landlords.

6.19 The Complex Needs Scheme has been identified as the one significant gap in service provision. The 2014 count identified over half (52%) of the 25 rough sleepers had complex needs and 80% were entrenched. Most have been excluded from the other local hostels due to their needs / behaviour.

Objectives

6.20 To address the need for long term temporary accommodation Bedford Borough Council will seek to: -

- Identify the long-term availability of temporary accommodation from bpha including the programme for redevelopment of sites and the availability of units during decanting exercises.
- Identify alternative strategies for securing temporary accommodation including the acquisition of suitable accommodation by the Council.

- Continue to identify provision through the Private Sector Leasing scheme to maximise the accommodation available.
- 6.21 The overall level of need, the dwelling types required, and the tenures which meet these needs are set out in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). Within the framework of the SHMA, Bedford Borough Council will continue to work with its partner organisations to identify the supply of accommodation needed to help prevent homelessness and to maximise that supply.
- 6.22 The Borough Council will investigate options for improving engagement with the Private Rented Sector to assist in securing accommodation for households who would otherwise not be able to access the sector or are excluded from the Housing Register including:
- A Council run commercial letting agency which would focus on households on low incomes who need lettings at Housing Benefit levels. Potential tenants would include households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
 - A partnership arrangement with a local letting agent (or agents) who would consider nominees for properties at LHA rates.
 - Access to the Choice Based Lettings system to advertise private sector properties which are at or below LHA rent.

- 6.23 Delivery of the Complex Needs Scheme is a key component of Bedford Borough Council's strategy for tackling rough sleeping. A site with planning permission has been acquired by One Housing Group who are working on bringing forward the scheme. It is expected to be completed and ready for occupation by November 2017.

Corporate

Key Issue: The Gold Standard

- 6.24 In August 2012, DCLG published a homelessness prevention strategy entitled 'Making every contact count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness'. The strategy poses ten local challenges for Local Authorities to address (see Appendix D). These have since been developed as a "Gold Standard". The awards range from bronze (meeting up to 3 challenges), Silver (up to 9) and Gold (meeting all 10). The Council has not yet registered for assessment.

Objectives

- 6.25 Bedford Borough Council will review whether to register for the assessment with the aim of meeting all 10 challenges. This review will take into account the resource constraints that the Council faces and the potential that is identified for efficiencies and service improvements through working with the Council's partners.

7. Action Plan

7.1 This Action Plan will be reviewed, updated and refreshed biannually in the light of the progress made and the resources available.

Priority 1: - Prevention of Homelessness

Objectives	By When	By Whom	Resources
a) Ensure all organisations that have contacts with homeless persons are aware of the full range of services available in the Borough so they are able to make appropriate referrals.	April 2017	Housing Services	Staff Time
b) In line with JSNA recommendations, 'to review existing referral systems & examine the value & feasibility of developing a community referral to provide a single point of contact for all non-statutory provision, linking in with statutory providers where appropriate'.	April 2017	Housing Services & other Council departments	Staff Time
c) Develop information for referral agencies to raise awareness of how to recognise homelessness.	April 2017	Housing Services & Supported Housing	Staff Time
d) Review homelessness risks for those households who are in receipt of DHP identifying possible solutions.	Ongoing	Housing Services & Customer Services	Staff Time
e) Review and monitor the effectiveness of the Homelessness Prevention Fund wherever possible implementing improvements identified.	Ongoing	Housing Services	Staff Time
f) Review the range of services available to people fleeing domestic abuse.	Ongoing	Housing Services & Customer Services	Staff Time
g) Review the options available to continue providing a Court Desk service in light of the forthcoming relocation of Bedford County Court services to Luton.	January 2017	Housing Services	Staff Time

Priority 2: - Support

Objectives	By When	By Whom	Resources
a) Support the identification of external funding to re-introduce a Reconnection Service for rough sleepers who have no local connection to the Borough.	April 2017	Housing Services	Staff time and cost of running an effective Reconnection Service.
b) Review hospital admittance and discharge procedures wherever possible implementing improvements identified.	April 2017	Housing Services	Staff Time
c) Review discharge procedures for ex-offenders wherever possible implementing improvements identified.	April 2017	Housing Services	Staff Time

Priority 3: - Supply

Objectives	By When	By Whom	Resources
a) Identify long term need for Temporary Accommodation.	Ongoing	Housing Services	Staff Time
b) Work to increase affordable housing supply appropriate to homeless households.	Ongoing	Strategic Housing/ Housing Services	Staff time. Possible capital funding.
c) Work to increase private sector supply accessible to homeless households.	Ongoing	Strategic Housing/ Housing Services	Staff time. Possible capital funding.
d) Investigate the introduction of a Council run Letting Agency.	December 2017	Housing Services/ Strategic Housing	Staff time. Possible feasibility and set up costs.
e) Deliver the Complex Needs Scheme.	November 2017	Strategic Housing/ Housing Services	Staff time. Possible capital funding.

Priority 4: - Corporate

Objectives	By When	By Whom	Resources
a) Review the option and feasibility of signing up for the 'Gold Standard'.	April 2017	Housing Services	Staff Time
b) Review the delivery of front line services and recommended changes to improve service delivery.	April 2017	Housing Services	Staff Time
c) Review accommodation options for traveller households experiencing homelessness.	April 2017	Housing Services/ Strategic Housing	Staff Time
d) Monitor the ethnic breakdown of persons who use the Borough Council's homelessness services and commissioned support services to ensure they are and remain accessible to all sections of the community.	Ongoing	Housing Services & Supported Housing	Staff Time
e) Monitor the breakdown by disability of persons who use the Borough Council's homelessness services and commissioned support services to ensure they are and remain accessible to all sections of the community.	Ongoing	Housing Services & Supported Housing	Staff Time

Appendix A

Homelessness Review 2014/2015

Informing a new Homelessness Strategy for Bedford Borough

Contents:

1. Achievements
2. Review of themes and objectives
 - (a) Prevention
 - (b) Support
 - (c) Supply

1. Achievements

1.1 Over the last 5 years there have been many significant achievements in tackling homelessness:

- The continuance of a thriving Rent Deposit Scheme which at 31st March 2015 provides accommodation for 213 households who were homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- The successful introduction of using the private sector to discharge housing duty following the Localism Act of 2011. At 31st March 2015, 36 offers of private sector discharge have been accepted.
- The 2013 review of the Housing Register created a needs led, quota based allocation system, ensuring equal access to allocations for homeless, housing register and transfer applicants with each being given a 33% share. The quota of 33% of allocations to 'waiting list' applicants has increased the opportunity for households to be re-housed before they become homeless therefore increasing the options for prevention and allowing people a greater housing choice.
- The No Second Night Out initiative ran between May 2013 and April 2015 and proved successful in stopping the rise in rough sleeping by identifying and finding accommodation for those new to the streets. It also provided an effective Reconnection Service dealing with 57 referrals.
- The standard of temporary accommodation provided by the Council has been improved through the use of Private Sector Leasing introduced in April 2012. The Council no longer uses any shared units of temporary accommodation.
- Engagement with local landlords has continued through bi-annual meetings.
- Continuously developing the knowledge and expertise of the Housing Options Team, has ensured the ongoing provision of a quality housing advice service. This has maximised the options for homelessness preventions keeping the number of households who need to make a homeless application to a minimum. In 2014 / 2015 the team secured 230 preventions including 44 through using the cost effective Homelessness Prevention Budget.
- Improvements in monitoring and data gathering systems, including casework monitoring systems in Housing Options, have continued.
- The protocol between Housing and Children's Services has continued to be successful in preventing young homeless people from entering bed and breakfast by using successful alternatives such as family negotiation, Crash Pads and Supported Lodging Schemes.
- Ongoing identification of low demand housing schemes. A number of these have been re-designated, redeveloped or demolished in order to provide accommodation for groups where there is an existing identified need.
- The identification of a site and partner to develop a Complex Needs Scheme to be delivered by November 2017 which will assist further with the long term reduction of rough sleepers.
- The Council has continued through effective engagement with partner agencies to provide temporary shelter to rough sleepers during severe cold weather.

2. Review of themes and objectives

(a) Theme 1 - Prevention Housing Needs

- 2.1 A significant number of residents approach the Council each year with a specific housing need. Bedford Borough Council works with bpha in maintaining a Housing Register and operates a choice based lettings system for social housing. At 1st October 2014 there were 1037 people on the Housing register seeking permanent accommodation.
- 2.2 Some residents require assistance with securing accommodation and approach the Council for help. The tables below show the number of face to face contacts with the Housing Options Service over the last 5 years and the number of contacts made using the dedicated Housing Options Service phone line from 2012 / 2013, its first full year of operation. In both cases these numbers include follow-up calls and contacts.

Figure 1: Housing Options Service Customer Contacts – Front Desk

Housing Options Service Customer Contacts – Front Desk					
Year	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Total approaches to the Housing Options Service	3507	4121	3081	2728	2883

Source: Bedford Borough Council Housing Needs Service

Figure 2: Housing Options Service Customer Contacts – Telephone

Housing Options Service Customer Contacts – Telephone			
Year	12/13	13/14	14/15
Total approaches to the Housing Options Service	7243	6603	4945

Source: Bedford Borough Council Housing Needs Service

- 2.3 Of these approaches, many arise from a person or family being homeless or at risk of homelessness. The table below shows the number of homelessness decisions made by the Housing Needs Service over the past 5 years. These figures demonstrate that the advice provided by the Housing Options Team has assisted by far the majority of households, with only 4.7% of households who contacted the service in 2014 / 2015 going on to make a formal homeless application.

Figure 3: Statutory Homelessness Decisions

Statutory Homelessness Decisions					
Year	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Accepted	107	211	242	174	164
Intentional	26	35	31	32	40
Non priority	4	14	15	27	37
Not homeless or threatened with	75	75	64	51	121
Ineligible	0	2	1	2	4
Total	212	337	353	286	366

Source: Bedford Borough Council Housing Needs Service

2.4 The above statistics for 2014 / 2015 incorporate the impact of changes to the allocations system introduced in September 2013 and the Benefit Cap and Social Size Criteria (benefit restrictions for under-occupiers of social housing).

- i. Trends generally show an increase in statutory homelessness decisions with the exception of 2013 / 2014. Decisions taken in the last quarter of 2013 / 2014 were exceptionally low and reflected staffing pressures through vacant posts.
- ii. The figures for 2014 / 2015 therefore do not demonstrate a significant increase in homelessness decisions within the Borough but show the success of pro-active measures put in place to minimise the potential for households to become homeless.
- iii. There are a small number of cases where an individual has a health need or children, but they are not owed any housing duty because investigations determined they were intentionally homeless. The table below gives a breakdown of these cases.

Figure 4: No homelessness duty owed – Children & Health Needs

No homelessness duty owed – Children & Health Needs					
Year	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Total number of intentionally homeless households	26	35	31	32	40
Applicant (or a member of the household) has health needs	10	11	9	7	Figures not collected
Applicants household includes children	16	24	22	25	Figures not Collected

Source: Bedford Borough Council Housing Needs Service

- iv. A key function of the Housing Needs Service is to prevent homelessness where possible through the use of the Homelessness Prevention Fund initiatives or assisting individuals to access properties in the private sector. Below is a table showing the success of this over the last 5 years.

Figure 5: Homelessness Prevention

Homelessness Prevention					
Year	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Total number of preventions	294	331	207	209	230
Able to remain in current home	106	125	68	51	51
Assisted to secure alternative accommodation*	180	204	135	149	163
*of which were supported into a Rent Deposit Scheme tenancy	91	50	59	77	73
Homelessness relieved (following an adverse statutory decision being issued)	8	2	4	9	16

Source: Bedford Borough Council Housing Needs Service

- v. The Housing Needs Team continues to review and develop its service against best practice in order to focus wherever possible on preventing a client from becoming homeless. Where prevention proves not to be possible then the Team will work to targets set to deal with Statutory Homeless Applications.

BME Groups and Homelessness - Accessibility of services

- 2.5 The 2011 Census data highlights the diversified nature of the Borough's population.
- 2.6 In 2013 / 2014, 2728 persons were seen by the Housing Options Team representing 1.73% of the total population of the Borough using the 2011 Census figure. Data on ethnicity was collected from 2274 persons who attended the service. The data in the table below shows the ethnic breakdown of persons who accessed the Housing Options Service:

Figure 6: BME access to Housing Options Services

Ethnicity	No of Persons	% of Persons Accessing Housing Options Services	% of Population from Census
White	1571	69.1%	80.6%
Mixed	82	3.6%	3.5%
Asian	197	8.7%	11.4%
Black	196	8.6 %	3.9%
Other	66	2.9%	0.7%
Not Stated	162	7.1%	0.0%
Total	2274	100%	100.1%

Data Source – Housing Options Team

- 2.7 The data in the table highlights the following: -
- i. In proportion to the percentage of the population, the 'White grouping' is significantly under-represented in using the service.
 - ii. In breaking the data available down further, of the 1571 recorded contacts from the 'White' community, 268 (17.1%) were made by persons identified as from Eastern Europe or the EEA.
 - iii. 'White UK' nationals accessing the service accounted for only 56.4% of persons seeking advice, well below the national and local Census data. This may mean this group have a better understanding of their options and do not need to use the service or that they have secured accommodation which they are less likely to vacate.
 - iv. 'White groups' who originate from Eastern Europe, account for 11.8% of clients who use the Housing Options Service. 11.8% significantly is above the 7.9% of 'White other' groups identified in the Census.
 - v. The 'Asian' community are approximately 25% under-represented in accessing the Housing Options Service.
 - vi. Compared to Census data, members of the 'Black' community are over twice as likely to use the service.

BME Breakdown of where Housing Duty was accepted

2.8 The tables below show the breakdown by ethnic grouping where a rehousing duty has been accepted by the Council from 2011 / 2012 to 2013 / 2014: -

Figure 7: BME Duty Accepted 2011 / 2012

Total Duty Accepted	211	Percentage	Change in % from Previous Year	% Census Data 2011 Bedford	% Census Data 2011 England
White	142	67.3	N/A	80.6	85.5
Black	20	9.4	N/A	3.9	3.4
Asian	24	11.3	N/A	11.4	7.7
Mixed	16	7.5	N/A	3.5	2.2
Other	5	2.4	N/A	0.7	1.0
Not Stated	4	1.8	N/A	0.0	0.0
		99.7%		100.1%	99.8%

Figure 8: BME Duty Accepted 2012 / 2013

Total Duty Accepted	242	Percentage	Change in % from Previous Year	% Census Data 2011 Bedford	% Census Data 2011 England
White	164	67.8	+ 0.5	80.6	85.5
Black	20	8.2	- 1.2	3.9	3.4
Asian	31	12.8	+ 1.5	11.4	7.7
Mixed	18	7.4	- 0.1	3.5	2.2
Other	8	3.3	+ 0.9	0.7	1.0
Not Stated	1	0.4	- 1.4	0.0	0.0
		99.9%		100.1%	99.8%

Figure 9: BME Duty Accepted 2013 / 2014

Total Duty Accepted	174	Percentage	Change in % from Previous Year	% Census Data 2011 Bedford	% Census Data 2011 England
White	125	71.8	+ 4.0	80.6	85.5
Black	17	9.8	+ 1.6	3.9	3.4
Asian British	14	8.0	- 4.8	11.4	7.7
Mixed British	8	4.6	- 2.8	3.5	2.2
Other	9	5.2	+ 1.9	0.7	1.0
Not Stated	1	0.6	+ 0.2	0.0	0.0
		100%		100.1	99.8%

Data Sources: - 1. Bedford Borough Council's P1E Returns 2010 – 2014 2. 2011 Census – Office for National Statistics © Crown Copyright 2012

Note – The P1E Return for 2013 / 2014 no longer records 'White British', 'White Irish' & 'White Other' groups, with all being classified as 'White'. To ensure consistency of approach therefore, all 3 tables have been produced in this format.

2.9 The Tables show the following: -

- i. The percentage of the 'White' community re-housed has remained fairly constant although there was a 4% increase between 2012 / 2013 and 2013 / 2014. The percentage compared with the overall population of the Borough is over 10% less than that identified in the Census data.
- ii. There is clearly knowledge of the Housing Options Service amongst the 'Black' community as 8.6% of its use is by this group against an overall representation of 3.9%. In 2013 / 2014 the group made up 9.8% of duty discharges. Further research is therefore needed to see if there is more that can be done to assist in preventing members of this section of the community from becoming homeless.
- iii. In 2013 / 2014 there has been a significant fall in the number of 'Asian' households where a duty has been

- accepted, with a 4.8% drop from the previous year. The figure of 8% is significantly under the 11.4% of the population this group constitutes in the Census data.
- iv. There has also been a significant fall in the number of 'Mixed households' (-2.8%) where a re-housing duty is accepted. At 4.6% however, their overall representation is still around a third higher than the 3.5% of the Borough's population these households make up.
- v. Due to the lack of definition in the 'Other' group, it is not possible to draw any specific conclusions regarding their re-housing needs.
- vi. From the data set out in Accessibility of Services, although there are some discrepancies between the proportions of the various ethnic groups accessing the Housing Options Service, it is generally accessible to and serving all sections of the Borough's diverse community.

In – Migration

- 2.10 Since 2001 there has been a significant international migration to the Borough, particularly from the Accession States which entered the European Union on 1st May 2004 and 1st January 2007. The Census estimates in 2011 indicate that 12,890 of the Borough’s residents in 2011 had arrived in the United Kingdom since 2001.
- 2.11 Between 2002 and 2013, National Insurance Number (NINo) registrations have been issued to 19,080 overseas nationals resident in the Borough. Poland has been the largest source of NINo registrations each year followed by Lithuanian and Indian nationals. There has also been significant in-migration from countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan and Zimbabwe.
- 2.12 Although there has been a significant rise in in-migration, migrants have largely been incorporated within the community and existing housing stock and there has not been a significant rise in overall homelessness applications or homelessness.
- 2.13 Migrants from Eastern Europe are however, disproportionately represented in rough sleeping. The 2014 estimate highlighted an increase in non-British rough sleepers to 13 out of 25 (52%) from 7 out of 26 (26.9%) in 2013. Of the 13, 12 were from Eastern Europe. It is considered changes in eligibility legislation introduced in 2014 which have restricted recourse to public funds for EU nationals who cannot secure employment or choose not to return to their home country are behind the increase.

- 2.14 The Borough Council remains committed to providing and commissioning services which are accessible for and meet the needs of the whole community and will therefore continue to analyse the data it collects of BME groups accessing its services to ensure they meet these needs.

Breakdown by Disability where Housing Duty was accepted

- 2.15 The 2011 Census data presented in Table KS301EW: ‘Health & Provision of Unpaid Care’, highlighted 7.1% of the Borough’s population had their day to day activities ‘limited a lot’ by health issues and 8.9% ‘a little’. This provided a combined total of 16% of the population.

Figure 10 - KS301EW: Health & Provision of Unpaid Care (Edit)

		Bedford Borough		England
		Number	%	%
All Usual Residents		157,479		
Day-to-day activities limited by health*	All People: Limited a Lot	11,181	7.1	8.3
	All People: Limited a Little	14,020	8.9	9.3
	All People: Not Limited	132,278	84.0	82.4

Source: 2011 Census, Office for National Statistics

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*Day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or expected to last, at least 12 months (includes problems related to old age)

2.16 The tables below show the breakdown by disability where a re-housing duty has been accepted by the Council in 2013 / 2014 and 2014 / 2015: -

Figure 11: Disability Duty Accepted 2013 / 2014

Total Duty Accepted	174
No's and % where duty accepted due to physical Disability	12 (6.9%)
No's and % where duty accepted due to mental health issues	5 (2.9%)

Data Source: - Bedford Borough Council's P1E Returns 2013 – 2014

Figure 12: Disability Duty Accepted 2014 / 2015

Total Duty Accepted	164
No's and % where duty accepted due to physical Disability	8 (4.9%)
No's and % where duty accepted due to mental health issues	22 (13.4%)

Data Source: - Bedford Borough Council's P1E Returns 2014 – 2015

2.17 The tables show the following: -

- i. The number of people with a duty accepted primarily on the grounds of a physical disability has fallen by a third over the past 2 years from 12 to 8, now representing 4.9% of duties accepted.
- ii. This relatively small number of cases compared to the general population with a stated health problem or disability identified by the Census, demonstrates there are effective support services in the Borough for people with physical disabilities which help prevent them from facing homelessness.

- iii. For people experiencing mental health problems, the trend over the past 2 years is reversed, with numbers almost trebling from 8 to 22, now representing 13.4% of duties accepted. Further research is therefore needed to establish the reasons for this increase.
- iv. With effect from 1st April 2015, the Mental Health Care Service has been provided by the East London NHS Foundation Trust, who will be increasing the emphasis on a preventative approach to homelessness for people experiencing mental health issues. This approach should assist in reversing this trend.

2.18 The Borough Council remains committed to providing and commissioning services which are accessible for and meet the needs of the whole community and will therefore continue to analyse the data it collects relating to people with disabilities accessing homelessness services to ensure their needs are met.

Breakdown by Old Age where Housing Duty was accepted

- 2.19 The 2011 Census data presented in Table KS102EW: 'Age Structure', shows 21.7% of the Borough's population are over 60. This is the age a homelessness duty can be accepted on the basis of Old Age only.
- 2.20 In most age groups the Borough follows the nation trends very closely, although there is a noticeable under representation in the age 65 to 74 band.

Figure 13: KS102EW: Age Structure

	Bedford Borough		England
	Number	%	%
All Usual Residents	157,479		
Age 60 to 64	9,303	5.9	6.0
Age 65 to 74	12,761	8.1	8.6
Age 75 to 84	8,680	5.5	5.5
Age 85 to 89	2,297	1.5	1.5
Age 90 and over	1,130	0.7	0.8
Total (& Total % > 60)	34,171	21.7	22.4

Source: 2011 Census, Office for National Statistics
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2.21 The tables below show the breakdown by Old Age only as the reason where a re-housing duty has been accepted by the Council between 2012 / 2013 and 2014 / 2015: -

Figure 14: Old Age Duty Accepted 2012 / 2013

Total Duty Accepted	242
No's and % where duty accepted due to Old Age	1 (0.4%)

Data Source: - Bedford Borough Council's P1E Returns 2012 – 2013

Figure 15: Old Age Duty Accepted 2013 / 2014

Total Duty Accepted	174
No's and % where duty accepted due to Old Age	1 (0.57%)

Data Source: - Bedford Borough Council's P1E Returns 2013 – 2014

Figure 16: Old Age Duty Accepted 2014 / 2015

Total Duty Accepted	164
No's and % where duty accepted due to Old Age	0 (0%)

Data Source: - Bedford Borough Council's P1E Returns 2014 – 2015

2.22 The tables show the following: -

- i. The number of people with a duty accepted on the grounds of Old Age only is extremely small. There have only been 2 acceptances under this category in the past 3 years representing just 0.34% of the total of duties accepted.
- ii. The very small number of cases compared to the percentage of the local population over the age of 60 identified by the Census (21.7%), demonstrates there are effective support services and a supply of accommodation specifically for this client group. In many cases assistance to access services and accommodation has prevented the need for a homeless application to be made.
- iii. Although the number of people with a duty to be re-housed as homeless for reasons of Old Age alone is very small, people over the age of 60 may still be being re-housed through the homelessness route. This will be where their priority has been determined for a reason other than simply old age.

2.23 The Council remains committed to providing and commissioning services which are accessible for and meet the needs of the whole community. It will therefore continue to analyse the data it collects relating to old age and the need to access homelessness services to ensure this groups needs continue to be met.

Bedford Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

2.24 Household finances are a key issue in homelessness prevention. Management of personal finances, debt advice and advice on housing benefit all have a key role to play.

2.25 The CAB Debt Advice service plays an important role. In 2013 / 2014 there were a further 147 cases of homelessness prevention in addition to the work undertaken by the Housing Options Team. In 2014 / 2015 this increased to 190.

2.26 The main focus of the CAB homelessness prevention work is the Court Desk located at Bedford County Court. A full time debt advisor (funded by the House of Industry), attends on days when possession hearings are held, providing access to the service for people who may not otherwise have approached the CAB. In 2013 /14 the Court Desk prevented homelessness for an additional 97 households. In 2014 / 2015, 59 households were assisted.

2.27 Overall preventions undertaken by the CAB in the past 2 years have remained very similar with 244 in 2013 / 2014 and 249 in 2014 / 2015.

2.28 Where the CAB identifies that legal intervention is required to try and prevent a client's homelessness which may require legal aid to fund, a referral is made to the Luton Law Centre.

2.29 The CAB regularly meets with a number of Registered Providers who increasingly have money advice teams and housing officers who are able to work with tenants to help to prevent evictions.

Housing Benefit and Household Finances

2.30 Housing Benefit is the means tested benefit administered by Bedford Borough Council, to help people on other benefits or low incomes who live in rented accommodation and forms a key element of the household finances of many households threatened with homelessness.

2.31 Becoming a unitary authority has prompted closer working between the Council's Housing Benefits Team and other Council departments to use the funding streams available to help prevent households from becoming homeless within the terms of the current legislation. (The Council also operates a Council Tax Support Scheme but this tends to be relevant to single persons in larger houses or families who have non-dependants living with them and only has a small impact on homelessness in the Borough.)

2.32 Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit claimant levels in the Borough both exceed the regional average but are significantly below the level in England. 9,880 households were claiming both Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. Of the 11,446 households receiving Housing Benefit in the Borough, 68% were Social Rental and 32% were Private Rental households. The latter figure has risen from 28.3% in August 2009 and is in line with the growing share of the private rental market in the Borough's housing tenure mix.

Figure 17: Households receiving Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit, February 2013

Benefit	Bedford Borough		England	East of England
	Number	% Households	% Households	% Households
Housing	11,446	17.5	19.3	16.4
Council Tax	13,090	20.0	22.3	19.5

DWP, Single Housing Benefit Abstract, June 2013

2.33 Bedford Borough Council’s Housing Benefit team has developed a strong ethos of taking a proactive approach to assisting applicants, landlords, other departments and organisations to, wherever possible, prevent claimants from becoming homeless. Actions include: -

- i. **Households Facing Eviction** – Where this is known claims made are always prioritised to, wherever possible, prevent the eviction from taking place.
- ii. **Payment Direct to Landlords** – To protect vulnerable tenants, wherever the terms of the legislation allow, payments of housing benefit are made directly to the landlord. This has proved successful in promoting and encouraging private landlords to rent through the Council’s Tenancy Deposit Guarantee Scheme whose objectives include preventing and relieving homelessness. The Scheme additionally benefits from an information sharing protocol with Housing Benefits and a Tenancy Sustainment Officer who work together to try and ensure tenants do not lose their homes.

- iii. **Discretionary Housing Benefit Payments (DHPs) and Homelessness Prevention Fund** – DHPs are used in an innovative fashion in conjunction with the Housing Options and Re-housing Teams to assist households who would otherwise not be able to access the private rented sector. This has successfully prevented and relieved homelessness in a number of cases. A more comprehensive way for monitoring outcomes is currently being developed to ensure value for money is being achieved. The Housing Needs Team also has access to the Council’s Homelessness Prevention Budget. Although these funds are limited and strictly controlled, they can be used where it can be proved that the initial expenditure will save money in the longer term, for example preventing someone becoming homeless and needing to access temporary accommodation.
- iv. **Pro-Active Approach to Identification of Families Affected by Welfare Reforms** – The Housing Benefit Team has worked closely with Registered Providers and Job Centre Plus to identify and assist households likely to be affected by the Welfare Benefit Cap and Spare Room Subsidy.



- **Welfare Benefit Cap** - Identified applicants are signposted to the Job Centre for assistance with finding work as this negates the Cap. Where applicants are actively looking for work, DHP has been considered as a temporary measure to help them maintain their accommodation until they have successfully gained employment.
- **Spare Room Subsidy** - Work has been undertaken with Registered Providers to identify households who are at risk of losing their accommodation as they now have to contribute towards the rent. Where agreed DHPs are set for a maximum period of 12 months before a re-application for assistance is made. The aim of DHP funding is to either enable applicants to move to suitable sized accommodation or find a way to meet the shortfall and remain in their home thereby preventing potential homelessness.

16-17 Year Olds

- 2.34 Bedford Borough Council is acutely aware of the need to support 16 & 17 year olds and their families in order to prevent them from becoming homeless. Referrals of 16 and 17 year olds who are, or at risk of becoming, homeless in Bedford Borough are made through the Multi- Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and directly to the Council's Youth Accommodation Support Practitioner (YASP). This process is underpinned by a formal protocol between Housing and Children's Services.
- 2.35 In line with government guidance wherever possible the first intervention is, wherever safe to do so, to try and sustain the young person in the family home or with extended family members. Only where this is not possible or there are no friends for the young person to stay with are other housing arrangements made.

- 2.36 To maximise the opportunities of preventing 16 & 17 year olds from becoming homeless, emphasis is placed on early intervention. Wherever possible referrals are made to the YASP before the crisis point is reached and this enables them to meet the family to negotiate and 'buy time' to arrange support to prevent the young person from becoming homeless.
- 2.37 Early referrals also create the opportunity to arrange mediation through a Family Group Meeting, from which a Family Action Plan is created. This sets out what needs to change in respect of all parties' behaviour and to address the issues which may otherwise lead to the young person leaving the family home. Family Group meetings have been used a number of times with some success.
- 2.38 Where it is not possible to support young people in their present home, accommodation needs to be secured for them. The YASP co-ordinates and facilitates this approach.
- 2.39 The success of the YASP has been due to the close partnerships which have been developed between all the statutory and voluntary agencies involved with the care and wellbeing of 16 & 17 year olds in the Borough. A measure of the success of the approach is demonstrated by the fact that there are no young people under the age of 18 currently recorded as sleeping rough in the Borough.

Leaving & Aftercare

- 2.40 A particularly vulnerable group of young people are those who are leaving care. The legislative framework created by the Children Act 1989 identifies two groups: those who are voluntarily accommodated (S20) (for whom the parents retain responsibility even though they have been placed in care) and those who are subject to a full time care order obtained through legal proceedings (S31).
- 2.41 The breakdown of entitlements of how young people qualify for the Leaving Care Service is set out within the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.
- 2.42 The Leaving and Aftercare Team provide a service to children when they are 16 plus who meet the statutory threshold of having been looked after for a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who remain looked after at the age of 16.
- 2.43 The Team works closely with identified children of 15 ½ who meet the statutory threshold, together with their Social Worker, to make the transition from care to adulthood as smooth as possible. This is done through Care Planning, a statutory duty through the Pathway Plan.
- 2.44 Accommodation available for 16 – 18 year olds includes:
- Crash Pads
 - Supported Lodgings
 - Hostel accommodation
- 2.45 Post 18, the Team do not have a duty to provide accommodation, but instead to provide support to young people to obtain it. The housing options available at this time are supported lodgings, hostel accommodation, social housing or private rented sector accommodation.
- 2.46 Where a young person disengages or causes problems which have led them to losing or being refused accommodation, they are referred to the Housing Options Team who will assess whether they have priority need to assist but will generally have no statutory obligation as it is likely that the individual concerned will be intentionally homeless.
- 2.47 In 2013 / 2014 only one 16 / 17 year old had a re-housing duty accepted together with three applicants who were formally in care between the ages of 18 – 20 (P1E Return), demonstrating the success of the services provided by Bedford Borough Council to prevent members of these client groups from becoming homeless.

(b) Theme 2 - Current Channels of Support
Rough Sleeping in Bedford Borough

2.48 Rough sleeping refers to people sleeping in the open air, or in buildings or places not designed for habitation. Although a wide range of services are provided to support the prevention of homelessness in the Borough, rough sleeping is still an issue. Using the snapshot date of the 13th November 2014, Bedford Borough Council conducted its own annual Rough Sleeper Evaluation in partnership with Bedford based agencies and organisations that work locally with socially disadvantaged people.

2.49 The Estimate methodology requires a robust verification process which showed that 25 people were sleeping rough on that night; this compares to previous year’s estimate figures as follows:

Figure 18: Rough sleeper estimate

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014
Estimate Figure	17	19	26	25

Source: Bedford Borough Housing Needs Service

2.50 The 2014 estimate found 25 people to be sleeping rough, compared to 26 in 2013 and 19 in 2012. Of the 25 rough sleepers:

- i. Around half of cases (52%) were identified as having multiple or complex needs. This is a decrease from 70% in 2013.

- ii. 20 cases (80%) were long term rough sleepers, i.e. persons who had been sleeping rough for months as opposed to a number of weeks. This compares to 50% in 2013 and demonstrates the need to find a way to try breaking this cycle and assisting this group to get back in to housing.
- iii. Only 4 of the 25 rough sleepers (16%) were identified in the previous annual estimate compared to 23% in 2013.
- iv. The 2014 estimate highlighted an increase in non-British rough sleepers to 13 (52%) from 7 (27%) in 2013. Of the 13, 12 (92%) were from Eastern Europe.
- v. Rough sleepers with no recourse to public funds rose from 3 cases in 2013 (11.5%) to 8 in 2014 (32%) and is much higher than the average (14%) of the previous two years. This increase is understood to be due to changes in eligibility legislation introduced in April 2014 which make it harder for EU nationals to qualify for assistance in the UK where they cannot secure employment or choose not to be reconnected to their home country. There is a need for strong links between outreach services and the UK Border Agency in respect of rough sleepers with no recourse to public funds.

2.51 The Complex Homelessness Intervention Panel (CHIP) meets on a monthly basis and enables relevant agencies to assess possible solutions for entrenched rough sleepers. One Support has a dedicated officer embedded in the CHIP to assist former rough sleepers to move on through an assessment of their support needs before they leave their supported accommodation. Where required, continuing support packages are put in place before a new tenancy commences.

- 2.52 To reduce the risk of rough sleepers dying during cold weather the Council has entered in to a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol with the Salvation Army. Funding from the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group allows a 'night café' to open when the temperature is forecast to be 0 degrees or less for 3 consecutive nights. The 'night café' offers rough sleepers a warm, safe and secure place to sleep in addition to an evening meal and breakfast. Clients are signposted to other services where appropriate and medical services are available.
- 2.53 The options for couples, one or both of whom need supported accommodation, are finding accommodation in the private rented sector where their need for access to the floating support service can be considered or to live in a hostel temporarily. It may be possible for the couple to live temporarily in a mixed hostel but the rooms are single rooms. Hostel providers and support services should be sensitive to this situation and be flexible where possible.
- 2.54 The Council recently agreed funding to help the Aysha Academy Trust to set up a 'Soup Kitchen' for disadvantaged and homeless persons.

Floating Support

- 2.55 It is important that vulnerable persons can sustain tenancies either in the social housing sector or in the private rented sector either to avoid the need to rely on specialist accommodation or to move on from it. To help facilitate this, the Council commissions a floating support service managed by One Housing Group.

- 2.56 Floating Support refers to a support service that is not tied to particular accommodation but is available to people who are assessed as needing support to sustain their tenancies or licences in non-specialist housing. The service is currently provided by One Support which is part of One Housing Group. It successfully re-tendered for the contract in 2014.
- 2.57 The key objective of the service is to prevent clients becoming homeless by providing a tenancy sustainment service, wherever necessary working in conjunction with other agencies. The service has the greatest chance of success where early proactive referrals are made, allowing time for the Support Worker to work with the client to try and put in place the necessary measures and actions to prevent them from becoming homeless.
- 2.58 The service includes:
- Maximising & maintaining benefit claims
 - Debt reduction
 - Support to deal with children's behaviour / improving parenting skills
 - Matters surrounding family breakdown and / or domestic violence
 - Accessing physical and mental health services
 - Accessing drug / alcohol & substance misuse services

- 2.59 In addition to the key role of tenancy sustainment, One Support provide a bespoke support service to improve referred client's independence, ability to contribute to the community and provide life skills to reduce the risks of social exclusion and isolation.
- 2.60 Funding is allocated to provide support for 160 clients in standard housing and the Council's temporary accommodation. Support can be provided for a period of up to 2 years but is reviewed at 6 months.
- 2.61 To develop and improve the service, the new contract allows clients to self-refer where they need 'Crisis' or 'Brief' (up to 6 weeks), intervention to prevent them from becoming homeless. It is envisaged this revised service provision will enable One Support to assist a greater number of households to maintain their tenancies. Systems to record the outcomes of self-referred short term support interventions are in place.
- 2.62 The re-tendering process also highlighted a need to improve access to the service in both urban and rural areas. Consideration is currently being given as to how best this can be achieved.
- 2.63 The Success of the floating support service in preventing homelessness is demonstrated in the table below. This shows 83.2% of completed cases achieving a planned outcome.

Figure 19: Floating Support Outcomes

Outcomes 2014 / 2015	No's	%
Planned	94	83.2
Unplanned	19	16.8
Completed Total	113	54% of recorded cases
Still Receiving Support	96	46% of recorded cases
Total	209	

(Data from SP CAPITA Referral Figures)

BME Access to Floating Support & Outcomes

- 2.64 Nominations to the service broadly reflect the composition of the ethnic breakdown of the Borough, although the White group are under-represented against Census data of 80.6 % and Black groups are over-represented at 10.5% (Census data 3.9%). Although there is a degree of under and over representation of all groupings, the service is clearly reaching all sections of the community and not leaving any group at a significant disadvantage in accessing tenancy support.

Figure 20: Ethnicity of clients receiving Support in 2014 /2015

Ethnicity of clients receiving Support in 2014 /2015	White	Mixed	Asian	Black	Other	Not Stated	Total
Numbers	139	6	18	22	6	18	209
%	66.5	2.9	8.6	10.5	2.9	8.6	100

(Data from SP CAPITA Referral Figures)

- 2.65 The Table below shows that there are good levels of Planned Outcomes across all ethnic groups although there is some variation that should be monitored.

Figure 21: Ethnicity of clients receiving Support in 2014 /2015 – Outcomes

Outcomes by Ethnicity (2014 / 2015)	Total No's	Planned Outcomes	% Planned Outcomes
White	77	64	83.1%
Mixed	2	2	100%
Asian	11	8	72.7%
Black	12	12	100%
Other	4	3	75%
Not Stated	7	5	71.4%
Total/Overall % Outcomes	113	94	83.2%

(Data from SP CAPITA Referral Figures)

Hostel and Supported Housing Provision

2.66 Bedford Borough benefits from a significant amount of supported housing with provision for a wide range of client groups.

Supported Housing is provided by a variety of statutory bodies and voluntary organisations. Provision is funded in part by Supporting People (SP) but other funding streams also have an important role.

2.67 Provision ranges from generic through to high level support. The provision is set out in the Appendix B – Hostel & Supported Housing

Provision.

2.68 Referrals to Supporting People funded schemes are made through the CAPITA System. This is web based and designed to be a referral portal allowing:-

- Providers to place clients and record information (including Support Plans) in one place
- Referral Agents to match their clients to the best available support using the automated process, thereby helping to keep void times to a minimum

2.69 The latest version has proved more effective in assisting users to make correct referrals and has also improved the monitoring of the homelessness support services intervention outcomes. This information is fed back in to performance monitoring and ultimately future re-tendering processes to ensure the Council makes the best use of its resources in procuring future support services.

2.70 The table below shows the percentage of Planned Outcomes from hostels funded by Supporting People:

Figure 22: Hostels and Supported Schemes – Outcomes

SP Funded Scheme	Completed Cases	Planned Outcomes 2014/2015
Teenage Parents	10	100%
Holman House (mental health)	13	100%
Cornerstone House (16 - 25 homeless persons with support needs)	25	60%
Weaver House (18 – 65 homeless persons with support needs)	33	80%
Barton House (mental health; drug & alcohol; homeless & ex-offenders)	30	52.6%
TOTAL	111	72%

(Data from SP CAPITA Referral Figures)

2.71 Overall the number of Planned Outcomes is very positive. Where schemes have lower levels of planned outcomes, this is where support needs are generally higher and clients lead a more chaotic lifestyle.

2.72 Barton House provides accommodation and support for single persons with high and complex needs. The completion of the Complex Needs Unit in 2017 will meet specialist higher end support needs by creating an environment where occupiers are able to work with health care and support professionals to achieve planned outcomes with the aim of returning to mainstream housing. Once the Complex Needs Scheme is operational, SP funding for Barton House will come to an end.

2.73 As well as the ability to access the service, the table below shows there are generally positive levels of Planned Outcomes for ethnic groups when they move on from the supported accommodation. The figures are however based on a relative small sample taken over one year and will need close monitoring going forward to ensure all ethnic groups are benefitting from supported accommodation.

Figure 23: Hostels & Supported Schemes - Ethnicity of clients receiving Support in 2014 /2015 – Outcomes

Outcomes by Ethnicity (2014 / 2015)	Completed Cases	Planned Outcomes	Planned Outcomes %
White	36	22	61.1%
Mixed	3	2	66.6%
Asian	4	3	75%
Black	0	0	N/A
Other	0	0	N/A
Not Stated	0	0	N/A
Total/Overall % Outcomes	43	27	62.8%

(Data from SP CAPITA Referral Figures)

2.74 In addition to providing accommodation, many schemes use a holistic approach to working with clients backed by support planning to help residents to gain the self-confidence and skills to live independently. This requires residents to engage with the programmes provided. In many cases this helps them in the long term to sustain a tenancy and constructively contribute to the wider community when they move on to their own independent accommodation, reducing the risks of social isolation and potentially losing their tenancy and becoming homeless.

2.75 Nominations made to the Supported Housing sector are proving successful in helping to prevent homelessness (mainly for single people) especially where they have specific support needs, are excluded from the housing register or may struggle to sustain a tenancy even if floating support was provided.

2.76 As not all Supported Housing schemes are funded through Supporting People funding, there is the potential for the schemes funded through other sources to take residents from outside of the Borough. The Housing Allocations Scheme has been amended to prioritise clients moving from Supporting People funded schemes.

2.77 Supported Housing providers contribute to the Health and Wellbeing agenda by helping or signposting residents to register with a GP or dentist and access medical services.

Prison Discharge

2.78 Through St Mungo's Bedford Prison employs a Prison & Post Release worker who is dedicated to assisting and supporting inmates who are about to be discharged to find accommodation where they have a local connection but no accommodation to go to.

2.79 People with a local connection who are to be discharged from prison are able to join the Housing Register three months in advance of discharge thereby reducing the chances that they will be homeless when they leave. This is a significant factor in the reduction of re-offending. Links are being developed between the Prison & Post Release Worker and bpha to maximise the number of ex-offenders taking this route to re-housing.

2.80 Where the Housing Register is not an option the Prison & Post Release worker operates an informal partnership with the Langley House Trust who have a number of shared units of accommodation for ex-offenders. They also assist by making referrals through the CAPITA system to local hostels. Cases involving high risk ex-offenders are usually handled by Probation or Probation working through Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

2.81 Even if accepted for hostel accommodation, there remains the possibility of ex-inmates ending up rough sleeping until a bed space becomes available if there are no family or friends who can accommodate them on a temporary basis. This greatly increases the possibility of re-offending and therefore more pro-active approaches are being explored to minimise this risk.

2.82 Where it has not been possible for Bedford Prison to find accommodation by the release date, applicants are advised to see Housing Options or of the option of Bedford Nightshelter.

2.83 Bedford Borough Council is fully aware of the duties placed on it by the Care Act 2014, where a prisoner is homeless on discharge and has verified needs. Procedures are in place to meet these duties.

Health Services for the Homeless

- 2.84 Access to health services is a key issue for homeless people.
- 2.85 For homeless persons who are not registered with a doctor, the Borough benefits from a designated Primary Care GP together with a clinical nurse, who provide ongoing health care through the Nightshelter, Daycentre and other services run by commissioned and voluntary agencies.
- 2.86 Homeless persons are also provided with opportunities to access outreach services in order that they can be encouraged to be vaccinated for flu, to be screened and treated for any sexual health infections, and to receive support for alcohol and substance misuse problems.
- 2.87 From 1st April 2015 the Mental Health Care service commissioned by Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire will be provided by the East London NHS Foundation Trust on a 7 year contract. The emphasis of the new service will be to develop a preventative approach to homelessness by improving the support available to help people maintain tenancies and to improve hospital discharge procedures where people have no accommodation to return to in order to ensure they have a smoother transition back in to the community. This pro-active approach will assist in preventing the need for people to access primary or acute care and makes it easier for agencies to provide support with accessing suitable accommodation, thereby relieving future pressures on health services.

Local Welfare Provision

- 2.88 Bedford Borough Council introduced a Local Welfare Provision Policy from April 2013. The scheme provides the most vulnerable residents with assistance in the form of crisis grants for essential household items, subject to funds being available. Grants from the scheme have assisted local residents to purchase essential items where they have had to access temporary accommodation.

Armed Forces

- 2.89 The Council leads the multi-agency, Bedford Borough Armed Forces Community Covenant Steering Group which is chaired by the Assistant Director, Environment, Regulatory & Recreational Services and championed by the Mayor. This oversees the implementation of the Armed Forces Community Covenant; a pledge signed by a number of organisations stating that ex members of the armed forces will not be disadvantaged as a result of their service.

- 2.90 There are relatively few instances of homelessness in Bedford Borough where Veterans are leaving the Armed Forces, it is often years later that support may be needed to deal with an ex-service person's homelessness or other needs.
- 2.91 The Borough benefits from there being a number of agencies locally and nationally that provide information, support, counselling and in some cases housing exclusively for ex-service personnel, in addition to signposting or supporting them to access general or specialist support services.
- 2.92 For personnel leaving the Armed Forces, the Housing Register enables them to register and start bidding 3 months before they are discharged. In nearly all cases this has allowed them to successfully bid on properties in advance of leaving the services and thereby prevented them from needing to present as homeless.



(c) Theme 3 - Supply Affordable Housing

- 2.93 The Housing Strategy Team works closely with developers and Housing Associations to promote the delivery of all forms of new housing and particularly affordable housing. Working closely with the planning system, developers, housing associations and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the Council has achieved significant successes in providing both general needs affordable housing and special needs housing.
- 2.94 The Housing Strategy sets a target of 200 affordable homes per year. In the five years following becoming a unitary authority in 2009 the Council delivered 1530 affordable dwellings – an average of 306 per year. There are a range of pressures on the supply of new affordable housing:
- i. The HCA has reduced funding for social housing and restricted the ability of the Council and housing associations to combine the provision of affordable housing through planning obligations with grant. There is only a small amount of funding available from the Council's own resources.
 - ii. There have been significant extensions in the ability of developers to use viability assessments to restrict affordable housing delivery on new sites. Grant is no longer available for affordable housing on S106 sites and small sites (under 10 units or 1,000 sq m) no longer have to provide affordable housing.
 - iii. Unlike some local authorities, Bedford Borough Council has very little land in its ownership which is available for development.

2.95 The Housing Strategy Team works closely with colleagues across the Council to ensure that schemes do meet the needs that are identified. Current projects include a Complex Needs Scheme for rough sleepers which has been identified as a key need in addressing homelessness in the Borough.

The Housing Register

2.96 Demand for affordable housing is expressed through Bedford Borough Council's Housing Register which is managed by bpha. Following the Localism Act, a review of the Allocation Scheme was undertaken and implemented in September 2013. As a result of the changes at 1st October 2014 there were 1,037 households registered, of which 28 were classified as homeless.

2.97 The review also changed how properties are made available to different groups on each bidding round with a 33% split between Housing Register applicants, those who have a statutory homeless decision and transferring Registered Provider tenants. Ensuring a third of properties each round are available to Housing Register applicants, has enabled a more proactive approach to preventing homelessness as households in some circumstances have time to successfully bid on properties before they lose their existing accommodation. This offers greater choice to the customer and reduces the need to access temporary accommodation and the homelessness route.

2.98 The changes to the Housing Register have also meant the Council has had to secure a different supply of accommodation for some applicants who have presented as homeless who do not qualify to go on to the Housing Register. Prior to September 2013, if a homelessness duty was accepted applicants were placed on the Housing Register and allowed to bid. The revision of the Register has excluded applicants who do not meet the Local Residency Criterion or who have a history of anti-social behaviour and / or poor tenancy management. People with a history of anti-social behaviour can also experience difficulty securing accommodation in the private rented sector. The Complex Needs Scheme is designed to assist with this issue.

Empty Homes

2.99 It is a particular concern that, at a time when there are homeless people, there are also properties standing empty. The number varies from month to month but there are approximately 500 properties in Bedford which have been empty for over a year. The great majority of these are privately owned. The reasons for them being empty are varied but there are cases in which a lack of effective activity by owners has led to properties remaining empty for many years.

2.100 Bedford Borough takes a proactive approach to dealing with empty homes. 1,111 empty homes have been brought back in to use between 2006 - 2007 and 2014 - 2015.

2.101 Compulsory purchase is used as a last resort by the Council to tackle long-term empty homes. 4 long term empty properties have been brought back into use in this way and a fifth has been acquired recently. The Council has allocated almost £3 million for this purpose.

2.102 Access to these properties for homeless people will depend upon the decisions of owners regarding selling or letting their property but the Rent Deposit Scheme (see below) helps to secure access for homeless people to privately rented property.

Private Rented Sector

2.103 The private rented sector is of growing importance as a housing resource for all parts of the community. This includes people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Between the 2008 English Housing Survey and the House Condition Survey 2011, the Private Rented Sector increased from 14 to 18% of the Housing Stock in the Borough. Although the sector has significantly increased in size households dependant on Housing Benefit are finding it harder to secure accommodation in the Sector.

2.104 Research carried out by CAB in Bedford in 2012 found that increasingly private landlords and agents are not accepting households who are in receipt of Housing Benefits. Of the 284 properties available with local letting agents only 18% were potentially available to households dependent on Housing Benefit.

2.105 There are a number of reasons why private landlords may be reluctant to let to housing benefit claimants:

- Low Local Housing Allowance rates.
- There is demand for short term lets from professionals
- Landlords perceive households claiming benefit to be riskier tenants.
- Universal Credit could create the perception that the receipt of the rent is less secure.

The Rent Deposit Scheme (RDS)

2.106 The factors set out in 2.105 above, serve to limit the supply of private rented sector housing available to homeless people. Nevertheless, the private rented sector is an important resource and the RDS exists to facilitate access to it. The Re-housing Team works to a protocol with Housing Benefits. The Team are authorised to communicate on the landlord and tenants behalf and are advised of changes to a claimant's entitlement. Where necessary, the Tenancy Sustainment Officer works with the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team and the Police in order to tackle anti-social behaviour which could put a tenancy at risk.

2.107 Being able to intervene early enables the majority of benefit problems to be resolved preventing RDS tenants from losing their accommodation. Additionally it increases the likelihood of the tenancy being successful making it more likely that the landlord will let their property again through the RDS.

2.108 At the end of March 2015 there were 213 properties in the RDS.

Figure 24: Properties in the Rent Deposit Scheme

Year	New Tenancies Created	Total Tenancies in Scheme
2012 / 2013	59	201
2013 / 2014	77	214
2014 /2015	73	213

Discharge of Homelessness Duty in the Private Sector

- 2.109 Using the powers granted under the Localism Act, the Council has actively pursued the option of discharging duty in to the private rented sector. This has predominantly been used where persons with an accepted duty for re-housing are either:
- Ineligible to join the Housing Register
 - Would face a long wait in temporary accommodation due to the type of accommodation they require (for example 4, 5 or 6 bedroom properties)
 - 'Homeless at home' where the need for them to enter temporary accommodation can be avoided.
- 2.110 The use of private rented sector properties requires the initial let to be for a minimum of 12 months. The Council inspects every property to ensure its suitability and that there is no evidence that the landlord is not a fit and proper person.
- 2.111 Between November 2012 and the end of 2014, Bedford Borough Council has made 44 offers to discharge its housing duty to suitable private sector properties. Of the 44 offers made, 28 have been accepted, 16 refused.

Figure 25: Discharge of Homeless Duty in the Private Sector

Year	Offers Made	Offers Accepted	Offers Refused
2012	1	0	1
2013	21	11	10
2014	22	17	5
Totals	44	28	16

Source: Bedford Housing Needs Service

- 2.112 Where qualifying private sector properties become available, the Council will continue to make suitable offers to discharge its housing duty.

Temporary Accommodation

- 2.113 Since 2012 the Council has improved the quality of its temporary accommodation working with Orchard & Shipman to procure new units through Private Sector Leasing (PSL).
- 2.114 This has been a significant additional resource but it has not been possible to secure enough properties on the private rented market to meet the need that the Council is presented with. The Council has continued to rely on properties from bpha to provide sufficient temporary accommodation. As at February 2015 of the 63 properties available to the Council for temporary accommodation, 33 had been obtained from the private rented sector and 30 leased from bpha.
- 2.115 The long-term availability of both the bpha properties and the private sector properties is not certain. Redevelopment could lead to the withdrawal of the bpha properties and market trends could reduce the availability of private sector properties. Options as to how best to secure a supply of temporary accommodation are under consideration.

Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

- 2.116 Bedford Borough Council did not need to use Bed & Breakfast as temporary accommodation between November 2003 and October 2011. Although the Council has increased the number of temporary accommodation units, due to recent demands it has been necessary to make limited use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for short term emergency placements.

- 2.117 Although it is acknowledged that as emergency accommodation in certain situations e.g. hospital discharges, fleeing domestic violence, short term use can be beneficial, in line with the ten “local challenges” set out in ‘Making Every Contact Count’, no family has been placed in Bed & Breakfast for more than 6 weeks before they have either been accommodated within the Council’s ‘standard’ stock of temporary accommodation or found suitable alternative housing.
- 2.118 On rare occasions in emergency situations when there has been no access to Bed & Breakfast accommodation within the Borough, placements have been made on a very short term basis outside of the area. As soon as either ‘standard’ temporary accommodation or spaces in local Bed & Breakfast accommodation becomes available, then arrangements are made for the client to return to the Borough. It remains the Council’s intention to keep Bed & Breakfast usage to the absolute minimum.



Appendix B

Hostel and Supported Housing Provision

Hostel and Supported Housing Provision

Bedford Borough Council benefits from a wide range of Supporting People (SP) and alternatively funded hostel and supported housing provision for persons who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless.

The schemes aim to provide the support, opportunities and life skills required by those who use their services to assist them to get back in to main stream accommodation. Where required ongoing support is arranged to give residents moving on the best possible opportunity to continue to develop their skills and sustain their new accommodation.

Access to hostels funded by SP is through the CAPITA referral system (with the exception of the Nightshelter which is direct access emergency accommodation). Hostels funded by alternative means can be accessed directly by the client or through referrals made by other agencies.

SP Funded Accommodation

The table below sets out the supported housing accommodation based services which are funded by Supporting People.

Figure 1: SP Funded Supported Housing Accommodation-based Services

Supported housing services		
Provider	Name of Scheme	No of Units
Offenders		24
Langley House Trust	Bedford Project	24
Mental Health		19
Mayday Trust	Holman House	19
Single Homeless and Rough Sleepers		92
YMCA	Interim Single Homeless Service	15
YMCA	Weaver House	25
Kings Arms Project	Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker	20
Kings Arms Project	Nightshelter	18
Kings Arms Project	Barton House	14
Young People at Risk		25
Bedford YMCA	Cornerstone House (Young Persons Hostel)	25
Teenage Parents		13
Stonham (Home Group)	Charis and Foster Hill Road	13
Domestic Abuse		66
Raglan Housing Association Ltd	Santosh Asian Womens Refuge	6
Stonham (Home Group)	IDVA Floating Support	50
Places for People	Butterfly House (Bedford Refuge)	10
Total units		239

Offenders

Langely House Trust

The Bedford Project offers supported resettlement with shared and individual houses in the community for adult male offenders who are under a supervision order from Probation. The scheme aims to assist them to resettle in to the community before moving on to mainstream housing. Priority is given to Bedford residents.

Key features:

- Self-catering single room accommodation
- Floating support
- Emergency out of hours on-call support
- Drop-in service

Mental Health

Mayday Trust

Holman House provides 19 supported self-contained bedsits and flats for people with mental health issues. All have ensuite bathroom facilities and 5 also have kitchen facilities included. The clients are assigned a key worker who supports them to move towards independent living in the community. The maximum stay is 2 years.

Holman House was accessed by 13 clients in 2014 / 2015. During this period 5 people moved on, all with planned outcomes.

Single Homeless & Rough Sleepers

Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker

The Rough Sleepers Outreach Worker employed by the Kings Arms Project, brings support to long term rough sleepers who are not engaging with available services or who have been serially excluded. Clients are engaged through street work and signposted to relevant agencies and services that can assist them in gaining accommodation and ongoing support.

YMCA – Weaver House

Weaver House is a 29 bed supported accommodation project for single homeless men and women aged 18-65. Residents are allocated a key worker and work to achieve action plan outcomes. Staff provide advice and support on basic living skills, access to training and employment. The key worker can also provide assistance with finding move on accommodation and a follow up floating support service is available for up to 6 months.

In 2014 / 2015 the scheme was accessed by 33 persons. Of the 10 persons who moved on from the scheme during the year, in 80% of cases the outcomes were planned.

Bedford Nightshelter

Run by the Kings Arms Project, the Nighshelter is for individuals of 18 years and over who have nowhere else to stay. It is a direct access hostel providing 18 bed spaces. The minimum stay is one night with the maximum being 10 weeks.

Due to emergency nature of the Nightshelter, unlike other SP funded schemes, access is by self-referral rather than through the CAPITA system.

The Nighshelter staff support clients with applications for hostel accommodation or to join the Housing Register in addition to signposting residents to other services such as the Housing Options Team. It enables client's access to a number of other services including: -

- Evening and morning meals
- Basic personal hygiene toiletry facilities
- Clothing store
- Laundry service
- Medical care offering health checks.

Kings Arms Project - Barton House

Barton House is a 14 bedspace hostel, with shared rooms, for single homeless people with high and complex needs. The client base includes ex- offenders and persons with alcohol, drug or mental health problems. Applicants must have a connection to the Borough.

Residents must participate in a programme of support and work to achieve action plan outcomes, agreeing to engage in up to 16 hours of purposeful activities per week. These are agreed in advance of occupancy

and are organized and based on residents aspirations. Staff offer advice and support around independent living skills, accessing training and employment and liaison with specialist welfare agencies.

During 2014 / 2015, 30 people took up residence.

Planned move ons from the scheme stand at 52.6%. As the scheme caters for persons who have high support needs and lead the most chaotic lifestyles, it is unlikely that its planned outcomes in terms of successes will match the other SP funded schemes.

Young People at Risk

YMCA Young Persons Hostel

Cornerstone House is a 25 bed supported accommodation project for young single homeless males and females aged 16-24. Residents must participate in a programme of support and work to achieve action plan outcomes. Staff provide advice and support on living and social skills, access to employment and training and attending appointments.

Move on support is provided through a 3 stage process and resettlement workbook.

25 young people entered Cornerstone House in 2014 / 2015.

Of the 5 people who left the scheme, 3 moves were planned and 2 unplanned.

Teenage Parents Schemes

Stonham (Home Group)

The two teenage parent schemes provide 13 units of accommodation and are run by Stonham (Home Group). Their objectives are to prevent homelessness and provide young mothers with a holistic package of support to successfully develop the skills they need when they move on from the accommodation provided. There are opportunities to improve this accommodation.

10 teenage parents accessed the two schemes during 2014 / 2015.

During 2014 / 2015 4 residents moved on from the scheme. All outcomes were planned.

Domestic Abuse Refuges and Advice

Nationally domestic abuse represents approximately 25% of all violent crime, which on average results in the death of 2 women every week.

In Bedford Borough there are on average 44 domestic abuse incidents reported to the Police every week. Between April 2012 and March 2013, there were 2439 incidents of domestic abuse in the Borough which were reported to Bedfordshire Police. (Source - Bedford Borough Councils Domestic Abuse webpage.)

Escaping domestic abuse can make the victim homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Independent Domestic Violence Advisor Service

The Independent Domestic Violence Advisor Service (IDVA) is a shared service for Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire managed by Bedford Borough Councils Supporting People Team. The IDVA's are specialist case workers working with victims most at risk of homicide or serious harm.

The service provides specialist independent support to victims of domestic abuse (DA) identified through the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). They have proved very successful in preventing persons in the Borough identified as at high risk of DA from becoming homeless.

National research indicates that 57% of all victims supported by an IDVA experience complete or near cessation in abuse suffered following 3 to 4 months contact. Where abuse continued, 43% advised it was at a much lower level.

Refuges

In addition to the IDVA service, Bedford Borough is provided with refuge spaces in the Bedford Women's Refuge and the Asian Women's Refuge. Both receive Supporting People funding.

The Asian Women's Refuge benefits from recent investment in the building that it occupies but the Bedford Women's Refuge operates from a building that would benefit from improvement or possible replacement.

It should be noted that the refuge services will usually be accessed by clients from outside of the Bedford Borough area as it is generally not safe for those fleeing domestic abuse to remain in their home area.

Independently Funded Hostel Accommodation

The Table Below details independently funded hostel / Day Centre accommodation for homeless persons which is available in the Borough.

Organisation	Client Group	Referrals	No. Bed spaces
Amicus Trust Ltd, Alexandra House	Single homeless	Self or any appropriate supporting agency	8 hostel 2 move-on
Amicus Trust Ltd Bedford Methodist Outreach, The Bridge Hostel	Homeless males – Young people at risk / leaving care	Self or any appropriate supporting agency	9
Amicus Trust Ltd, Perkins House	Homeless women – Young people at risk / leaving care	Self or any appropriate supporting agency	8
Amicus Trust Ltd, Project 14	Single homeless	Self or any appropriate supporting agency	14
Amicus Trust Ltd, Sidney Road	Single veterans of the UK armed forces who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, aged between 16-65	Self or any appropriate supporting agency	3
Emmaus Village Carlton	Homeless adults	Self-referral or any third party organisation	35
Kings Arms Project, Althorpe Street	Single homeless persons with support needs	Self-referral or any third party organisation	2
Kings Arms Project Bunyan Centre Bungalow	Single homeless persons with support needs	Self-referral or any third party organisation	4
NOAH, Outreach Support Service	Rough Sleepers	Street Outreach	No set figure
Polish British Integration Centre	Advice, support and signposting for migrants from Poland and Eastern Europe who have a housing need or at risk of becoming homeless	Self-referral or any third party organisation	Advice
Prebend Day Centre	Homeless, rootless, disadvantaged, vulnerable, those with alcohol, drug and solvent problems – anyone who needs support – 16+	Self and any organisation. Open door policy but security gate in operation	Day Centre Only
YMCA, Bedford Foyer	16-25 years old in housing need unemployed or on low income	Housing Register, Social Services, Youth Workers and Others TBA	34
YMCA, Beds For All	Adults who would be homeless on discharge from hospital	Protocol with Bedford Hospital	8
YMCA, Crash Pads	Emergency accommodation for 16 / 17 year olds. Length of stay ranges from 1– 21 days	MASH, YASP	
YMCA, Echodene	Single homeless persons with support needs	Self-referral or any third party organisation	3
YMCA, The Fountain Café	CAPITA referrals, advice, support & signposting for those in housing need or at risk of becoming homeless	Self-referral or any third party organisation	Advice
YMCA, Supported Lodgings	Accommodation for 16 + care leavers who need 'homely' surroundings and support. Placements last from a few months to 2 years	Bedford Borough Council Leaving and After Care Team	10

Appendix C

No Second Night Out

No Second Night Out (NSNO)

The NSNO initiative was introduced in the Borough after the first report produced by the Ministerial Working Group, 'Vision to end Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out Nationwide 2011', with funding arrangements being implemented in May 2013. The scheme ran until 31st March 2015.

Details of the scheme and its achievements in the Borough are set out below: -

- The funding secured an additional Street Outreach Service and a Reconnection Service provided by Noah Enterprise working in partnership with the Council through the Action Group which also included the Kings Arms Project and the Polish British Integration Service. The funding for the NOAH Street Outreach Service came to an end on 31st December 2014. The Reconnection Services finance ended on 31st March 2015.
- The primary outcome of the project has been to highlight the scale and nature of street homelessness. The information collected has been provided to key decision makers to most effectively address the issue of rough sleeping.
- Of the 361 referrals made, 287 were accepted by the Project during its initial 18 month of funding. Of the 287 referrals, 153 individuals were assisted to re-settle back in to housing.
- The November 2014 Homeless persons count highlighted 25 rough sleepers a slight reduction from the 26 identified in 2013. No rough sleepers were new to the street or were under 25. This year's estimate showed that the current proportion of rough sleepers with multiple needs (in addition to their housing need) is in the region of 52%. This is a decrease from 70% in 2013.

- The 57 referrals which had been process under the Reconnections Pathway, have served to highlight a significant level of homeless migration to Bedford.

Current Situation

Although NSNO ended on 31st March 2015, NOAH Enterprise working with Bedford Borough Council secured funding in December 2014 through the Help for Single Homelessness Grant. This project runs until July 2016 and provides one mentor outreach worker in the Borough who operates alongside the Kings Arms Project Outreach Worker.

The project takes an 'upstream' approach, targeting rough sleepers who are new to the streets to prevent them from becoming entrenched. To achieve this there is £30,000 of 'personalisation' budget which is used to help secure accommodation for them in the private sector.

The programme no longer provides for a Reconnection Service.



Appendix D

DCLG Gold Standard

DCLG 'Gold Standard' approach to homelessness prevention

1. To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services
2. To actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
3. To offer a Housing Options prevention service to all clients including written advice
4. To adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative
5. To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support
6. To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord
7. To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
8. To have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness, reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs
9. To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
10. To not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks

Notes

Notes

Finding out more

If you would like further copies, a large-print copy or information about us and our services, please telephone or write to us at our address below.

Për Informacion

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Per Informazione

Informacja

তথ্যের জন্য



01234 718585 / 267422



Environment and Sustainable Communities Directorate

Bedford Borough Council

Borough Hall

Cauldwell Street

Bedford MK42 9AP



housing.strategy@bedford.gov.uk



www.bedford.gov.uk