

## Section 5: Supporting people to live well in the community

Some of our residents require additional support to live well in the community or to turn their lives around.

Specialised supported accommodation has its place; Section 2 of this strategy sets out our approach to new schemes to fill gaps in provision. However, supported housing schemes are not our default. We want to support people independently from their accommodation wherever possible and part of the support we offer is to help people to move into their own home with their own tenancy when they are ready to do so.

Finding new ways to support our burgeoning older population within their natural communities is a key focus for Bury. Adopting types of support that enable our learning-disabled residents 'to live in an ordinary house in an ordinary street', which we know is a strong ambition, is another. And we will shift to 'enabling' forms of support that help people who are homeless or have mental health problem to regain confidence and control over their lives.

Support can come in many forms. Having a community to connect with and practice the 5 *Ways to Wellbeing: Connect, Notice, Be active, Learn, Give*<sup>8</sup> helps to promote mental wellness and protect against mental ill health. More specialised support needs can range from just a few months to life-long support. We are committed to enable all residents to live valued lives in their own homes and communities.

"The key to an effective housing strategy is to facilitate the right level of support at the right time with access to appropriate options for people when their needs increase or reduce, to maximise their capacity for independent living".

**GM Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust Housing and Mental Health Strategy 2019-22**

### 5.1 Easy access to informal support and early help through community hubs

Our new neighbourhood model is intended to make it easy for residents to connect with others, to both offer and receive a range of informal support and to come together to design new services to access relevant support through one of five Community Hubs based in Bury East Radcliffe, Whitefield, Ramsbottom and Prestwich.

It will also soon be possible for residents of any age and all housing tenures to access higher level support and to address more complex matters through multi-disciplinary public service teams offering access to 'Early Help' through the community hubs. This will include, for

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<sup>8</sup> The Five Ways to Wellbeing are an evidence interrelated set of activities brought together in 2007 by the New Economics Foundation and widely promoted by the NHS, especially Mental Health Trusts. Here is a link to an updated version of the five ways to wellbeing at a time of social distancing:  
<https://neweconomics.org/2020/03/five-ways-to-wellbeing-at-a-time-of-social-distancing>

example, helping people to register with a doctor, access to domestic abuse support, connecting to sources of support with money and debt problems.

## 5.2 Developing natural communities of support and peer support

Community spirit across the borough's six towns is high and growing and 'natural communities' have provided important informal support through the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to encourage natural communities to become the main type of support for most people. We are already providing some community-based 'floating support' but want to go further both to enable informal support networks to flourish and to enable more people to live shared lives where appropriate.

This includes, for example:

- intergenerational, age-friendly 'village hubs' built around sheltered and extra care housing
- peer-led, networked communities of support wherever possible for people with a wide range of needs such as learning disabilities, mental health issues, experience of homelessness or addiction<sup>9</sup>
- 'shared lives' and supported lodgings for those who want to share more of their lives with others<sup>10</sup>

We will also develop peer mentorship programmes to train people who have had particular life experiences and who would like to support others going through similar challenges. We will look into peer mentors to support homeless people, people with substance misuse issues, people with mental health issues and survivors of domestic violence.

## 5.3 Commissioned support to meet particular support needs

We have recently commissioned four lots of support dedicated to meet particular support needs. These are:

- **A complex needs service:** a 30-bed unit for single homeless people with complex mental health, substance misuse or offending behaviour issues, providing a hub for residents to access a range of services onsite
- **Floating support:** principally for people living in their own home or private rented accommodation who have low to moderate needs and may benefit from support, for example to pay their mortgage or to manage a tenancy. This includes 115 supported dispersed tenancies per annum secured from registered providers and through leases with private landlords throughout the borough. The housing management and a minimum of 6 months of support provided by specialist support provider, Calico Group.
- **Domestic abuse outreach service:** to facilitate safe planned moves for male and female survivors of domestic abuse

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<sup>9</sup> See Keyring networks of support: <https://www.keyring.org/>

<sup>10</sup> See Shared Lives Plus <https://sharedlivesplus.org.uk/> and HomeShare <https://homeshareuk.org/>

- **Young people's supported accommodation:** coproduced with young people aged 16 to 25, including care leavers, this offers support to help break negative cycles of behaviour as well as providing opportunities to try a range of activities not normally available to them (such as art, music etc) and including resettlement packages to help people move on into their own tenancy.

## 5.4 Dedicated 'enabling' support for particular groups

Many people require support to live well in their homes and communities. While we tend to think of them in distinct 'groups', such as people with a learning disability or someone with a mental health issues, the reality is that they are all individuals with different existing family and support networks and there are many overlaps between what different people in the different groups actually need.

Most people want to live in a normal house in a normal street and if they need support, they want it to enable them to live just like anyone else. We are therefore intending to modernise the way we support people to live independently within the community.

### 5.4.1 Networked support for people with a learning disability

We know that the types of 'live-in' support we are currently offering are not what most people with a learning disability want.

We have recently established a Coproduction Network to enable us to learn more about how the Bury's 500-600 people with a learning disability want to live. We will listen to them and use this information to inform our plans for increasing the supply of the right sort of accommodation – both through new build and through acquiring existing properties through purchase and lease.

Working with one or more specialist RP partners, we will develop new forms of support so that people with a learning disability can enjoy greater levels of independence while having access to a range of 'enabling support' from a range of sources, including from their peers, to live their whole lives well.

*In recent years there has been a movement away from the use of residential care and institutional accommodation for people with learning disabilities towards supported housing services that allow individuals to live more independent lives".* **Bury Council Learning Disabilities Needs Assessment 2020**

### 5.4.2 Support for care leavers

The Council has 'corporate parenting' duties towards children leaving care up until the age of 25 affirmed in the Children and Social Work Act 2017. To make this fail-safe, we have recently passed a rule that no care leaver will be made intentionally homeless. In addition, we are working with looked after children aged 16/17 through our Children's Housing, Employment and New Opportunities scheme to help them develop life skills and become

ready to manage their own tenancy. We have secured 20 bedspaces through an SLA with adult services and are working towards a 'trainer flat' to support skills development.

### **5.4.3 Support to promote recovery for people with a mental health problem**

Mental ill health is frequently cited as a reason for tenancy breakdown. Recognising housing and support as central to an effective recovery pathway, as well as a key element in preventing ill health, the Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust published a Housing and Mental Health Strategy in 2019.

Six Town Housing and a range of other RPs are partners in delivery of the strategy that aims to:

- Eliminate out of area placements of people with mental health problems on discharge from hospital
- Improve pathway flow and reduce length of stay in hospital by integrating housing into the Acute Care Pathway
- Improve health and social care outcomes, promoting recovery for service users.
- Identify new development opportunities for new models of service delivery and potential funding streams.
- Extends their services further into the community by reconfiguring the Rehabilitation Pathway to include support and supported housing
- Address the mental health needs of people who experience homelessness.

## **5.5 Preventing and relieving homelessness**

### **5.5.1 Bury's homelessness strategy and action plan**

Bury saw an increase in homeless cases through the pandemic and we are also anticipating a rapid increase in homelessness over the coming months as unemployment increases.

Bury Homelessness Partnership has recently developed a Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan. There are six priorities and they are:

- Place: connecting homeless people to their community to support wellbeing
- Property: increasing the supply of suitable accommodation
- Partnership: effective partnerships with those who have a role to play
- Person: relationships to enable the things that matter to homeless people
- Prevention: acting earlier and faster to prevent people losing their home
- Promote: raise awareness of homelessness, the causes and solutions

As we deliver the Homelessness Action Plan, we will actively collect and monitor a range of data about the causes of homelessness, demand for different types of housing and support, placements made, reasons repeat homelessness, ongoing unmet need and other important information. This information will inform the detail of our programmes to prevent and relieve homelessness.

### 5.5.2 Tenancy sustainment support for all tenants

Ending of a private sector tenancy is one of the leading causes of homelessness in Bury. The temporary ban on evictions has now ended and the COVID-19 pandemic is putting more tenancies at risk in both private and social rented sectors. We intend to increase our support for all tenants at risk of eviction.

The first port of call for Council and RP tenants will be their landlord. Support is already in place for Six Town tenants to access money, debt and welfare advice as well as support to help people address non-financial difficulties and assistance to access employment and training. Six Town Housing will consider what further steps it might take to avoid evicting tenants for non-payment of rent where the tenant is cooperating with them and will seek out good practice in tenancy sustainment.

Private tenants already have recourse to floating support provided through Calico Group. However, we do not yet know what impact this will have on people becoming homeless due to loss of a private tenancy and whether this will be sufficient to avert a rise in evictions. We will continue to closely monitor the reasons for people becoming homeless with a view to taking further action to expand the tenancy sustainment and landlord liaison support we offer.

### 5.5.3 Support for homeowners facing repossession

Inability to pay the mortgage could become a bigger cause of homelessness over the coming months and years. While there are no plans for government funding to support this, we are nevertheless considering whether a Mortgage Rescue scheme, through which the Council purchases a property and rents it back to the former owner, might provide a good solution for a small number of households, enabling them to stay living in their home.

### 5.5.4 Next Steps to eradicating rough sleeping

COVID-19 rapidly has changed the way rough sleepers are supported. At the same time Government is making some new tools and funding available to address longstanding problems in the way we address homelessness, particularly for rough sleepers.

#### **Everyone In – arrangements for Bury's rough sleepers through the COVID-19 pandemic**

The Government's 'Everyone In' programme prompted rapid action to accommodate all those living in shared accommodation, rough sleepers and people who have become homeless through the lockdown period in self-contained hotel accommodation. Support, coordinated across a number of agencies, was also transferred to the hotel environment.

The experience for some homeless people and support workers has been a positive one partly due to having private space and separate sleeping arrangements, due to social distance requirements.

Bury Council is now working with MHCLG through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) to close some of the gaps in homeless provision that meant too many people have had to resort to sleeping rough. Our ambition is to eliminate rough sleeping and support both rough sleepers and other homeless households to find a sustainable housing solution going forward.

For the current years (20/21) NSAP has made £105m revenue funding available for short-term/interim accommodation and £130m to deliver 3,300 units of longer-term, move-on accommodation and £31m revenue funding. This is in addition to £23m for drug and alcohol treatment services.

Bury Council is looking at a range of options both to prevent people from becoming homeless and to support 'non-priority' homeless people – who do not qualify for assistance within the current homelessness legislation – through this programme.

We will also continue our partnership with other GM local authorities to support delivery on programmes like *A Bed Every Night* and *Housing First* for rough sleepers as well as continued engagement with the GM Homeless Action Network. The Network is currently reviewing its approach to 'Build Back Better' to address homelessness following COVID-19.

#### **5.5.5 Potential for a Homeless Hub**

We are examining whether there is a need for a Homeless Hub combining self-contained accommodation for single homeless people with a range of on-site support, offering the potential for people to make connections and to be supported into independent living by a peer mentor (see Section 5.2). Alongside this, we are also looking into options for delivering the hub.