

Strategic Priorities for Tackling Homelessness in Bolton 2017 to 2021

Going forward, housing services face increasing difficulty in meeting the housing needs of the borough. The securing of both interim and longer term housing outcomes is a particular problem for those in high need as well as more generally, at a time of increasing demand for affordable housing.

In terms of the highest needs including homelessness and those in precarious and unsuitable accommodation arrangements; the increased competition and relative scarcity of available suitable alternative housing presents major challenges.

Access to sufficient housing options across tenures; improving through-put and move-on from temporary accommodation; and ensuring efficient void management and allocation processes are all critical interlinked elements. Households with histories of arrears, abandonment and/or anti-social behaviour also face greater barriers to accessing settled accommodation, particularly given the high demand for accommodation. These circumstances have very significant implications for a wide range of statutory responsibilities of the Council.

Tackling homelessness requires a balance between interventions to prevent homelessness and meeting the needs of households experiencing homelessness; and the wider contexts that provide for the aspirations of the community as a whole. To focus resources and actions too far one way or the other, risks either failing those in the most immediate and pressing need or allowing an unsustainable increase in demand and wider deterioration of housing circumstances.

The preventative approach ensures where possible circumstances are addressed early and in a planned way to ensure interventions are more likely to prevent a critical deterioration. Therefore reducing household difficulties and impacts as well as minimising requirements for more costly interventions. Financial difficulties are an increasing complication requiring specialist intervention in a timely manner. The following priorities provide the strategic direction for homelessness services in the Borough:

- **Priority 1: Homelessness prevention and sustainability**

Continue emphasis towards prevention approaches and interventions to improve the sustainability of vulnerable households. This includes early interventions to prevent the loss of accommodation, money management support to create financially sustainable tenancies and mortgages and the provision of sustainable resettlement in cases of homelessness. Links to the development of wider life skills including education, training, financial capability and employment support will be made to enable greater chances of longer term stability.

- **Priority 2: Advice and access**

Ensure access to quality advice and affordable, appropriate housing options for those who are most vulnerable and in highest need. Achieve a balance in allocations between the high/urgent need cases and those with general housing need; whilst addressing the needs of those who have been excluded.

- **Priority 3: Accessing interim accommodation**

Reduce inappropriate use of temporary accommodation, increase through-put and ensure availability of suitable temporary/emergency accommodation when required. Ensure maintenance of viable and appropriate base line provision; including appropriate support and resettlement services.

- **Priority 4: Move-on and sustainable outcomes**

Promote an adequate and varied supply of accommodation within social and private rented sectors (as well as home ownership options) for both those in high/urgent need and those in wider housing need. Where appropriate, facilitate the provision of support and housing management practices that assist the long term resettlement of the needier households.