



Bristol City Council Homelessness Supported Accommodation Pathways – Adults (22+)

**Draft Commissioning Plan - Summary
January 2024**

Introduction and context

Purpose of this document

This summary draft plan has been prepared for an engagement exercise about our proposals related to accommodation services to protect people from homelessness from October 2024. The full plan is available online here: <https://www.ask.bristol.gov.uk/homelessness-supported-accommodation>.

We are keen to get views on these proposals from people who have used homelessness services, providers of homelessness services, landlords, and any other people with a stake in homelessness services in Bristol.

This draft plan is provisional and subject to change following the end of the engagement process. Feedback received will be critical in shaping the pathways and how we commission services. We may also have to amend the plan to align with any final budget constraints.

Current supply

For single adults and couples aged 22+ there are around 850 units of supported accommodation, including 140 units of specific substance misuse accommodation. The amount of support offered ranges across services, from high support services with 24/7 on-site support to low support services with visiting support. Current contracts expire at the end of October 2024.

Commissioning Proposals

1. Retaining the benefits of a partnership approach to working, whilst considering how contracts are structured

We are seeking views on the best way of organising services in to contracts while retaining the excellent collaboration and joint-working that exists across Pathway services. We are seeking views on:

1. Contractual relationships: Should contracts continue to be between BCC and one lead provider, who sub-contracts with other providers in the Pathway? Or should contracts be between BCC and each provider without the need for sub-contracts?
2. Day-to-day coordination and monitoring: There is a clear need to have individuals with responsibility for areas including overseeing client moves between services, monitoring and improving client outcomes and resolving (currently the Pathway Leads). Should this role continue to be held by an individual from one of the providers delivering services? Or should this function be taken in-house by dedicated individuals within BCC?

2. Increasing the number of Level 2 units to better meet current demand and facilitate throughput

We are therefore proposing to reconfigure some Level 3 and 4 accommodation as Level 2 with a focus

on Level 3 and 4 buildings that have space for staff to work on site, more flexible tenure (i.e. Licences rather than ASTs) and at least 5 units of accommodation.

To fund more Level 2 accommodation, we will likely have to reduce the overall number of Level 3 and 4 units. We don't however want to lose units from the sector entirely, so our intention is to advocate that any units lost from Pathways become long-term accommodation for Pathway clients who no longer require ongoing support.

3. Combining Levels 3 and 4 to create consistency and limit the number of Pathway moves before a client moves into independent accommodation

We therefore propose combining Levels 3 and 4 into one Level, which we will call Level 3. This would create a simpler breakdown of all services into one of the following levels:

- Level 1 (High Support)
- Level 2 (Medium Support)
- Level 3 (Low Support)

To ensure fairness to providers and value for money for the council, we will be looking to reduce current Level 3 costs to align with (uplifted) unit rates for Level 4, with any savings used to fund additional Level 2 units (as in Proposal 2).

4. Creating a move-on protocol to facilitate greater move-on into the private rented sector

We propose creating a move-on protocol, with input from the sector, to clearly outline expectations for move-on across all Pathway services. This will outline:

- Expectations on clients for pursuing accommodation in the private rented sector.
- Support that will be offered for finding and sustaining private rented accommodation.
- What constitutes a reasonable offer of private rented accommodation.
- Consequences for refusing a reasonable offer of private rented accommodation.
- Very limited situations in which it will be reasonable for clients to wait for an offer of social housing – i.e. where there are demonstrable reasons that the private rented sector is not a sustainable option for a client.

We also propose changes to the Priority Move-On Scheme to allow residents to retain their banding if they move out of Pathway accommodation into the private rented sector, or into sustainable accommodation with family with friends. This would support the above protocol by allowing residents to continue to pursue social housing whilst freeing up Pathway units for those who need them the most.

5. Bringing resettlement support within the responsibility of accommodation providers, rather than commissioning a separate service

We propose decommissioning the Resettlement Service and instead using funding towards accommodation-based services, with the requirement for all providers of accommodation-based services to offer time-limited transitional support when clients move-on.

6. Reviewing allocation guidance, including the use of Outreach Access Beds and Crash Pads

We propose reviewing the allocation guidance and use of OABs and Crash Pads to ensure that individuals with the greatest need can access Pathways accommodation, and access accommodation at the level that is most suitable.

7. Working towards smaller hostels that align with best practice in the sector

We therefore propose including sufficient flexibility in the contracts of larger services to ensure that emerging opportunities to commission smaller services can be explored, whilst at the same time working with providers of larger hostels to mitigate the concerns raised by clients and other stakeholders.

8. Reducing subsidy loss

We propose that we will not commission accommodation that is contributing towards subsidy loss, unless there is a clear plan in place to resolve this within the first 12 months of new contracts.

9. Reviewing the inclusion of mother and baby units within single adult contracts

We propose reviewing the suitability of this mix of single homeless accommodation and mother and baby accommodation.

10. Improving the Trusted Assessment process

We propose reviewing how the Trusted Assessment is working in practice, and looking at how we increase confidence in the accuracy of information recorded (e.g. by rolling out training or making it easier for partners to talk to each other about queries).

11. Reviewing the use of self-contained properties, with a particular focus on properties let on ASTs

We propose moving away from the use of properties let on ASTs, particularly at the higher support levels where there are more likely to be tenancy issues which require swift action. We are also seeking feedback on how best to use self-contained properties within the pathway to provide options for clients who cannot share, whilst avoiding these units becoming long-term accommodation in what should be a temporary Pathway.

12. Engaging landlords to increase the quality of accommodation and reduce voids

We propose having minimum accommodation standards for all Pathway accommodation, including a requirement for providers to evidence that landlords have committed to meeting expectations around meeting void targets. We will include a mechanism to claw back support funding in cases of persistent breaches of these expectations.

13. Exploring Pathway wide client involvement

We are inviting feedback on whether it would be beneficial to have a budget for Pathway-wide client feedback and, if so, what this budget should cover (e.g. incentives for participation in client involvement

activities, travel costs, costs for room bookings, salary costs towards a dedicated worker).

14. Using data better to improve outcomes for clients

We propose reviewing the way we use data to better understand Pathway services and how we can improve outcomes for clients. Any new monitoring will be evaluated to ensure that it is as streamlined as possible to complete, and essential for improving outcomes for clients; we do not want to introduce burdensome reporting requirements which unnecessarily take providers away from the core work of supporting clients.

15. Considering how pathway services relate to other homelessness services in Bristol

We will review how other homelessness services best complement Pathways accommodation, as well as considering the impact of funding streams ending part way through Pathway contracts.

Process for recommissioning

Process for recommissioning

Current contracts expire at the end of October 2024. Current Pathway contracts were directly awarded in 2017 as there were insufficient options in the market to run a competitive tender process. BCC will undertake soft market testing to explore whether there are new providers who have the ability and resources to provide supported accommodation in Bristol under new contracts. A final decision on the most appropriate procurement route will be taken after this soft market testing is concluded, based on what is best for the service as well as being compliant with the Bristol City Council Procurement Rules and Public Contract Regulations 2015.

Contract values will be set with reference to indicative unit costs for each Level of accommodation. This proposal does not mean applying one single price per unit at different levels, but does mean that any differences in the support contract will need to be justifiable as transparent exceptional costs and subject to set ceiling costs at each level. Overall we will aim to standardise support costs wherever possible.

Contracts will be for an initial term of 3 years from the end of October 2024 with the option to extend for a maximum of 2 further years. The contracts will encourage ongoing service improvements and scope for variations in contract terms where necessary/appropriate. Any option to extend would be dependent on performance.