Homelessness Supported Housing Move-On Protocol [Draft]

1. Policy statement

1.1. Bristol City Council (BCC) provides a range of supported housing for people who are homeless. The purpose of this accommodation is to help people recover from homelessness and to develop the skills, confidence and resources to move into and sustain independent accommodation.

1.2. Supported housing is intended to be a temporary step towards independent living. Our aim is for people to move-on as soon as they are ready to a suitable and sustainable housing option. Timely move-on is:

- *Better for residents:* People who stay for years in supported accommodation are more likely to become dependent on services and less likely to make longer term plans.
- *Better for those who need supported accommodation.* Supported housing is in high demand. When people remain in supported accommodation after they are ready to leave, other people who need support are unable to access it.
- *Better for Bristol:* Our supported accommodation is very cost effective. Good throughput allows available accommodation and support to be used effectively and can reduce reliance on more expensive emergency and temporary accommodation, allowing money saved to be used elsewhere.

1.3. Historically, a greater proportion of residents were able to move from supported housing to social housing within an acceptable time period. Due to increased demand and reduced social housing lettings this is no longer a realistic prospect for most residents.

1.4. At the same time, the Renters' Rights Act 2025 has overhauled the private rented sector to create more security for tenants, addressing many of the concerns from residents and providers and creating more opportunities for residents to move-on more quickly.

1.5. This protocol has been introduced to update Bristol City's approach to move-on in light of current challenges and opportunities. The aims of this approach are to:

- Prevent people from becoming stuck in supported accommodation;
- Make supported housing available for those who need it most;
- Help residents move to accommodation that is suitable and sustainable;
- Reduce the risk of repeat homelessness;
- Be open with residents about their realistic housing options before and during their placement;
- Consider each resident's circumstances, support needs and ability to engage;
- Provide appropriate support and make reasonable adjustments where needed;
- Treat residents consistently, regardless of their support provider; and
- Give residents the right to challenge decisions they feel are unfair.

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2. Purpose

2.1. This protocol sets out Bristol City Council's approach to move-on from supported housing. It:

- Explains the usual routes from supported housing into independent accommodation;
- Gives residents clear and realistic information about their housing options;
- Sets out the key stages of the move-on process;
- Defines the responsibilities of Bristol City Council, supported housing providers and residents;
- Establishes the support that residents should receive;
- Sets clear and consistent expectations across services; and
- Explains the action that may be taken where a resident deliberately and unreasonably refuses to engage with move-on or refuses a suitable accommodation option without good reason.

2.2. This protocol is not intended to provide legal advice around housing law. Housing providers must seek their own legal advice if unsure about any elements of the protocol.

3. Scope

3.1. The protocol applies to all supported housing provided by Bristol City Council's Housing Options Department. This includes::

- Adults' Homelessness Pathways;
- Young People's Homelessness Pathway;
- Supported Move-On Accommodation;
- Families' and Young Parents' Supported Accommodation;
- Singles' and Families' Frameworks.

4. Move-on offer from supported housing

4.1. Providers will carry out an assessment with residents to ascertain individual factors that need to be taken into account to ensure move-on options are suitable and sustainable (e.g. geographical risk areas, health conditions, support needs).

4.2. Unless they can provide evidenced reasons to say otherwise, residents will be expected to consider:

- Accommodation anywhere in Bristol or, where securing accommodation within Bristol is not reasonably practicable, in the areas surrounding Bristol; and
- Any property type, including shared accommodation for single adults.

4.3. The standard move-on offer for people moving from supported housing into independent accommodation will be into the private rented sector.

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4.4. Where a provider's assessment shows that private rented accommodation is unlikely to be suitable due to individual factors, in the first instance they will consider whether it could become suitable in time with the right support, information or resources.

4.5. A preference for social housing, concern about private renting or a previous negative experience of private renting will not, on its own, establish that private rented accommodation is unsuitable.

4.6. Where a provider's assessment is that the private rented sector is unlikely to ever be suitable for a resident (e.g. due to enduring care and support needs) other options should be considered, such as:

- Accommodation through Adult Social Care (e.g. Supported Living, CSA+);
- Social housing via the Priority Move-On Scheme (see section 8.3 below).

4.7. Some supported housing residents may quality for a Band 1 under the HomeChoice Bristol Allocations Policy, for example some Care Leavers. As an offer of social housing cannot be guaranteed, all suitable move-on options should be actively pursued. Applications for social housing should not delay planned move-on from supported housing where a suitable alternative housing option has been identified.

5. The move-on process

Principles

5.1. Throughout the move-on process, providers must ensure that:

- Residents' views and preferences are considered and taken into account where reasonable, realistic and in line with this protocol;
- Support is tailored to the needs of each resident;
- Information is communicated in way which is understandable;
- Barriers and concerns are identified and tackled;
- Residents are given the opportunity to explain any non-engagement in the process.

5.2. Providers must maintain a clear and up-to-date record of move-on work, including support offered and each resident's response to this.

At referral

5.3. When discussing referrals with residents, referrers to supported accommodation will make it clear that the usual move-on route will be into private rented accommodation.

5.4. For residents owed a Part VII duty, where supported accommodation is given as an interim or final offer of accommodation, offer letters will note that the usual move-on route from supported accommodation will be into private rented accommodation.

At sign up

5.5. Providers must ensure that licence/ tenancy agreements accurately reflect the temporary purpose of the accommodation and the resident's responsibilities. Licence/ tenancy agreements must specify that engagement with the move-on process is a condition of tenure which, if breached, could ultimately lead to a resident being evicted.

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5.6. Providers must explain from the beginning of a placement that:

- Supported housing is not permanent – it is designed to support people to prepare for, secure and move-on to independent accommodation;
- The private rented sector will be the usual move-on route for most residents;
- Social housing is unlikely to be available for most residents;
- Residents will be expected to take reasonable steps agreed through their support and move-on plan;
- Deliberate and unreasonable refusal to engage with suitable move-on options will be treated as a breach of their tenancy or licence and may ultimately lead to notice and possession proceedings.

5.7. All residents will be required to sign the BCC Support Agreement (Appendix A) at sign up confirming their understanding of the above.

Within the first 3 months

5.8. Providers will carry out an assessment with residents to ascertain individual factors that need to be taken into account to ensure move-on options are suitable and sustainable (e.g. geographical risk areas, health conditions, support needs).

5.9. As part of the assessment, providers will complete an Income and Expenditure Form (Appendix B) to inform how much rent the resident can afford. This form will be updated whenever there is a significant change in circumstances.

5.10. Providers will support residents to maximise their income and reduce unnecessary expenditure. BCC's Welfare Rights and Money Advice Service (WRAMAS) are available to offer support.

5.11. Providers will complete the first move-on plan with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) actions for the provider and resident. The resident should sign the move-on plan to evidence that they were involved in the discussion. If they do not sign the plan, an explanation as to why not will be recorded.

From 3 months

5.12. Providers will review the move-on plan with residents at least every 3 months and more frequently where:

- The resident is ready to move;
- An accommodation opportunity becomes available;
- There is a significant change in circumstances;
- Agreed actions are not being completed;
- There are concerns about engagement.

The resident should sign the move-on plan to evidence that they were involved in the discussion. If they do not sign the plan, an explanation as to why not will be recorded.

5.13. Providers will deliver training to residents on accessing the private renting sector, including, as a minimum:

- Local Housing Allowance rates;

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- Where and how to search for properties;
- How to contact landlords and letting agents;
- How to prepare for a viewing;
- How to present relevant information to prospective landlords;
- Financial support available for rent in advance/ deposits;
- Tenancy rights and responsibilities;
- How to identify and report property condition concerns.

5.14. When nearing the point of being ready for independent accommodation, residents will be required to search for private rented properties and contact landlords, with support from providers where needed. This action will be recorded on the resident's move-on plan.

5.15. Residents will be required to fill out an evidence log showing attempts to contact landlords, with support from providers where needed - PRS Search Log (Appendix C) can be used for this purpose. Providers and residents should agree on how many landlords the resident should contact each week. This should be tailored to each resident's support needs, but as a general guide it is expected that residents are supported to respond to at least 5 property adverts per week.

5.16. Providers will meet with residents at least once a month to review the evidence log, using previous attempt to contact landlords to learn and inform future contacts.

5.17. Where reasonably practical to do so, providers will accompany residents to viewings to check the property and help answer questions asked by the resident and agent/ landlord.

<u>When a property is offered (private rented accommodation only)</u>

5.18. The Private Renting Team (PRT) will check that private rented accommodation offered to residents is suitable and sustainable. When a property is offered the provider will support residents to:

- Submit PRT's online self-serve request form (https://forms.office.com/e/sAfPjqy869); and
- Supply identification, income and bank statement evidence to private.renting@bristol.gov.uk (this is requested in the self-serve form).

The above actions will take place as soon as possible after a property is offered. The resident should not pay any money or sign a tenancy agreement until they have discussed this with PRT.

5.19. The Private Renting Team will carry out the following within 2 working days:

- Assess whether the proposed rent is affordable and sustainable for the resident;
- Confirm with the landlord or letting agent that they are willing to proceed;
- Obtain and review the proposed tenancy and property information;
- Check that there is a valid Energy Performance Certificate;
- Check the gas safety record, where gas is supplied;

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- Check the electrical safety report;
- Check whether an HMO or other property licence is required and whether the appropriate licence or application is in place;
- Check property ownership and the landlord's identity where applicable;
- Make checks with Private Housing where required, including whether there are known concerns about the landlord or property; and
- Arrange any agreed deposit or rent in advance assistance once the required checks and agreements have been completed.

6. When a property is offered (all accommodation types)

6.1. When an offer of accommodation is made by BCC, residents will be notified in writing that if they do not take up an offer of suitable accommodation then their placement will be ended.

- Where a resident is under a main housing duty, BCC will send the resident a final offer letter informing the resident that duty will be discharged and steps will be taken to bring their placement to an end if they do not take up the offer of accommodation.
- Where a resident is not under a main housing duty, BCC will issue a One Offer Letter (Appendix D) informing the resident that steps will be taken to bring their placement to an end if they do not take up the offer of accommodation.

6.2. Providers will support residents to prepare to move, for example assisting with:

- Reviewing and signing the tenancy agreement;
- Arranging payment of the deposit/ rent in advance;
- Arranging utilities;
- Applying for grants for furniture/ essentials;
- Arranging a van to move possessions.

<u>After the resident moves-on</u>

6.3. Where contracted to do so, providers will deliver a minimum of 6 weeks' resettlement support to the resident after they move.

6.4. Providers will support residents to settle into the new accommodation, for example assisting with:

- Completing a change of circumstances form with the DWP;
- Setting up a Direct Debit for rent payments;
- Setting up utilities;
- Exploring the local area.

6.5. Providers will refer residents onto longer term resettlement services where needed and available. Providers will ensure an appropriate handover is given to new resettlement services to provide a seamless transition of support.

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7. What happens if a resident refuses to engage with move-on?

7.1. Where a resident deliberately and unreasonably refuses to engage with move-on, the provider will take the following steps, moving through steps where insufficient progress is demonstrated by the resident:

- *Informal discussion:* The provider will discuss the concern with the resident, explore the reasons for non-engagement and review the move-on plan, suitability assessment and support offered. This discussion will be documented.
- *Warning(s):* The provider will issue a written warning explaining what the resident has not done, what they are required to do, what support is available, the time period for improvement and the possible consequence of continued non-engagement. Providers will seek feedback from the resident on what support they need to meet the expectations outlined.
- *Contact with BCC's Homelessness Prevention Team (HPT):* The provider will contact HPT to notify them that the resident has been served a warning for refusing to engage with move-on. HPT will contact the resident to outline the implications that an eviction for refusing to engage with move-on may have on existing homelessness duties (where owed) or potential future presentations to the council.
- *Contact the Leaving Care Team (where applicable)*: The provider will contact the Leaving Care Team to notify them if a Care Leaver has been served a warning for refusing to engage with move-on.
- *Notice and possession proceedings:* Where non-engagement continues, the provider will serve notice in accordance with their own procedures. It is expected that the notice period will be at least 28 days.

7.2. The following steps will apply where a resident refuses a suitable offer of move-on accommodation. These steps apply regardless of whether the accommodation was found by the resident or the provider or offered by BCC.

- *Discharge of Part VII duty (where applicable):* Where a Part VII duty is owed and a final offer letter was issued to a resident with the offer of move-on accommodation, HPT will end the Part VII duty.
- *Notice and possession proceedings:* Where the resident refuses an offer of move-on accommodation, the provider will service notice in accordance with their own procedures. It is expected that the notice period will be at least 28 days.

7.3. When a provider serves notice, they must inform HPT by sending the Common Referral Form (CRF). This is standard practice for all notices under the Pre Eviction Protocol. The provider must be able to provide evidence of efforts to engage the resident with the move-on process, for example:

- Licence/ tenancy agreement;
- Signed BCC Support Agreement;
- Income and Expenditure Form;
- Move-on plan outlining SMART actions that the resident is required to take and what support staff will offer;
- Records of attempts to creatively engage the resident;

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- Details of any move-on accommodation offered to the resident (where applicable);
- Warning(s);
- Notice.

8. Appeals

8.1. Residents will usually have the right to appeal all evictions from supported accommodation with their provider or landlord. Supported accommodation providers will give details of how to appeal when serving notice.

8.2. Residents under a Part VII duty will be advised of any rights they have to appeal, including:

- The right to a review of a final offer of accommodation (where offered) if they feel the accommodation is not suitable.
- The right to a review if their Part VII is discharged as a result of them losing their accommodation.

8.3. Residents who are not under a Part VII duty will be advised that they can appeal accommodation offered with a One Offer Letter (Appendix D) if they feel the accommodation offered is not suitable. Appeals will be reviewed by BCC's Move-On Panel. The panel will consist of at least three Team Leaders from Housing Options and will meet at least monthly. For Care Leavers, a Manager from the Leaving Care Team will be part of the panel.

9. Priority Move-On Scheme (PMOS)

PMOS - Eligibility

9.1. A quota of direct offers to social housing will be made available as a move-on option for supported housing residents under the Priority Move-on Scheme (PMOS) each year. This quota will be reviewed on an annual basis.

9.2. Those accepted onto PMOS will be placed into Band 2 on HomeChoice Bristol and their effective date will be backdated by 6 months.

9.3. Residents will be eligible for PMOS if:

- It is agreed that a move into the private rented sector would be a wholly unsuitable move-on option for them and therefore likely to breakdown; and
- They meet the HomeChoice Bristol eligibility criteria; and
- They have arrears of less than £500; or
- They have arrears of £500 or more with a payment plan that has been adhered to for at least 3 months.

9.4. The private rented sector may be considered a wholly unsuitable move-on option for a range of reasons. A non-exhaustive list includes:

- Where specialist adaptations are needed which are unlikely to be found or considered in the private rented sector;

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- Where a resident may need more flexibility and/or stability than a private landlord is likely to offer. For example:
    - Where close coordination between the landlord, support services, social care or health professionals is needed;
    - A need for a landlord to be able to use specialist tenancy-sustainment or safeguarding procedures over the longer term;
    - Where a higher tolerance around tenancy management issues is likely to be required;
    - Where there is a significant and evidenced risk of exploitation or tenancy breakdown in the private rented sector;
- Where private rented accommodation has not been secured despite evidence of sustained and supported attempts over a period of at least 12-months;
- Where a resident can evidence that they cannot find affordable private rented accommodation due to specific restrictions on their income, which are unlikely to change within a 12-month period;
- Where a resident is under Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and agencies have identified that social housing is necessary to manage risk to the public.

PMOS - Application Process

9.5. PMOS applications should be emailed to hsr.admin@bristol.gov.uk by the provider working with the resident. The provider must complete and send the following documents which must be read, agreed and signed by residents and their provider:

- The PMOS Referral Form (Appendix E);
- Direct Offer Form (Appendix F);
- Health, Housing and Support Needs Form (Appendix G);
- Income and Expenditure Form (Appendix B);
- Evidence related to any factors detailed in the Direct Offer Form and/or Health, Housing and Support Needs Form that could affect the suitability of an accommodation offer;
- ID for all applicants;
- Evidence of immigration status for any new members of the household (where relevant).

9.6. In addition to the above, providers must update the resident's:

- Contact details on the HSR (General tab);
- Trusted Assessment (Forms tab).

9.7. The decision as to whether accept residents onto PMOS will be made by BCC's Move-On Panel. The panel will consist of at least three Team Leaders from Housing Options and will meet monthly to review applications.

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PMOS – Process for those Accepted

9.8. If accepted onto PMOS:

- Residents will be supported to register on HomeChoice Bristol, if not already registered. HCB applications will be fast tracked for those who are accepted onto PMOS.
- Once their application is live, it is recommended that residents are supported to make bids on a weekly basis. Residents should bid on a variety of areas and property types, taking into account any factors disclosed in their Direct Offer Form and/or Health, Housing and Support Needs Form.
- Residents must ensure that they update their HomeChoice Bristol application with any change of circumstances which could impact on whether an offer of accommodation is suitable. Providers will contact hsr.admin@bristol.gov.uk to ask for updates to be fast tracked on HomeChoice Bristol.
- Where residents are in arrears of £500 or more, residents must have and adhere to repayment plans.

9.9. To ensure that residents move on within a reasonable timeframe, BCC reserves the right to directly offer a property to those accepted onto PMOS, taking into account any needs specified on their Health, Housing and Support Needs Form and Direct Offer Form.

9.10. Providers should advise residents that BCC operates a one-offer policy under PMOS. Refusing one offer of accommodation will lead to residents being removed from PMOS (see below).

PMOS - Removal

9.11. Residents will be removed from PMOS and their HomeChoice Bristol application re-banded if:

- They fail to adhere to any of the expectations listed under 9.8.
- They move to accommodation that is not commissioned by BCC's Housing Options department.
- They refuse one offer of accommodation, regardless of whether this is a direct offer or a property they bid on. Where BCC owes a homelessness duty under Part VII, the homelessness duty will also be discharged.

9.12. Residents who are removed from PMOS cannot reapply unless there has been a significant change in circumstances, for example a significant deterioration with health or change in household composition.

9.13. Residents will be informed that they have a right to appeal if they are removed from PMOS:

- A written request must be sent to hsr.admin@bristol.gov.uk within 14 days after the decision to remove the client has been notified.
- The council will acknowledge this request and the client has 21 days from this acknowledgment to submit any supporting evidence / letters relating to the refusal (e.g. a doctor's statement).

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- The council then has a further 21 days to carry out and respond to the appeal request.
- When an appeal against PMOS removal is upheld the resident's Band 2 will be reinstated.

10. Supporting Documents [To be created if the protocol is taken forward]

Appendix A - BCC Support Agreement

Appendix B - Income and expenditure form

Appendix C - PRS Search Log

Appendix D - One Offer Letter

Appendix E - PMOS Referral Form

Appendix F - Direct Offer Form

Appendix G - Health, Housing and Support Needs Form

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