

Appendix C

Consultation Report Proposed priorities for Reading's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020 - 2025

Overview and reason for consultation

The aim of the consultation was to obtain views from the public, partners and other professionals regarding proposed priorities for Reading's next homelessness strategy. Reading's existing strategy is not due for renewal until 2021; however, there has been significant recent legislative change and significant reductions in the use of emergency accommodation for homeless households since 2016. Several interventions in the previous strategy have been successful and consequently, there is a need to review the borough's needs and refresh Reading's strategic objectives around homelessness.

The proposed priorities for the next Homelessness Strategy were:

- **Priority 1:** Intervening early to prevent and reduce homelessness in Reading
- **Priority 2:** Increasing access to decent, suitable accommodation
- **Priority 3:** Supporting people who are vulnerable to recurring homelessness¹

Methodology: How we consulted

The consultation regarding the three priorities ran between 5th August and 29th September 2019.

The consultation had four different approaches, aimed at capturing a cross-section of views.

These were:

1. **Online survey via RBC's Consultation Hub (open public consultation)**
Target audience: General public, businesses, university students, sector partners and internal staff (Appendix 1)
2. **One-to-one interviews with people who have lived experience of homelessness; being at risk of homelessness and of recurring homelessness**
Target audience: Single people and families living in Homelessness Support Services, emergency accommodation, temporary accommodation, those attending Homelessness Prevention appointments (Appendix 2)
3. **Use of social media (Facebook and Twitter) and RBC internal communications (Intranet and Inside Housing) to provide an information piece and promote the on-line survey (Appendix 3)**
Target audience: General public, businesses, university students, internal staff and those affected by homelessness
4. **Cross-sector focus groups with informed and experienced partners**
Target audience: Statutory, charity and community led services who are supporting or providing a service to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

The on-line consultation was publicised via the following means:

- **Social media:** Facebook and Twitter
- **On-line:** Consultation hub, RBC website, Intranet, via Street Support Reading, CEO's weekly email blog and email signatures across Housing Needs

¹ Please note that post-consultation the order of priorities two and three were changed

- **Press release:** to local press
- **Leaflets and posters:** RBC reception and libraries
- **Multiple cross-sector partnership meetings:** including the Access Panel, Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM), strategic groups, Street Support Reading day

Who responded?

- 71 responses to the on-line survey
- 15 workshops and meetings with key groups/organisations and individuals who are directly supporting homeless households or whose professional work links to homelessness/homeless households between 5th August - 29th September 2019
- Service user one-to-one sessions were undertaken with three individuals
- 79 people responded to the Facebook on-line poll which asked, “Have you ever given someone a bed, your sofa or space on your floor to sleep when they didn’t have anywhere else to stay that night?”
- 26 re-tweets for the one-a-day facts tweeted over a working week between 15th - 19th August 2019

Demography of on-line survey respondents

63% of on-line respondents were members of the public and 14% were RBC employees. Of the 11 respondents who were from homelessness sector service providers/voluntary community groups, five of these organisations attended workshops to provide further input regarding strategic priorities.

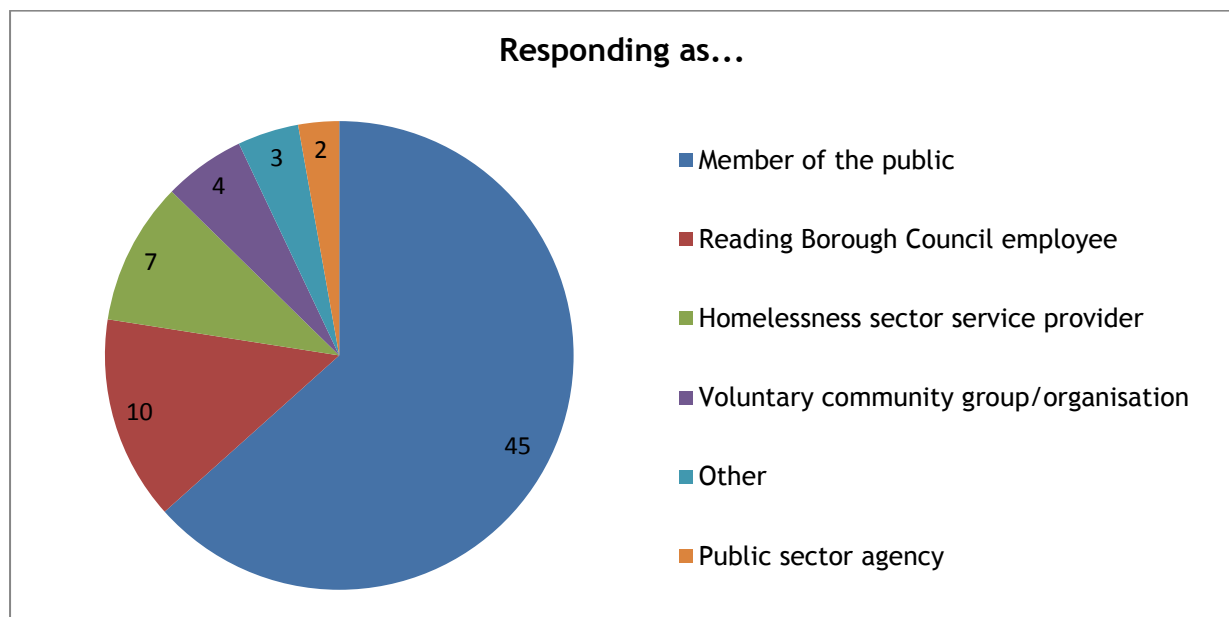


Figure 1: Organisations respondents were from

Gender

Of those contributing to the consultation that identified their gender, 56% were female and 35% were male, 7% preferred not to say and 2% did not answer.

Age

The age of online questionnaire respondents is profiled below:

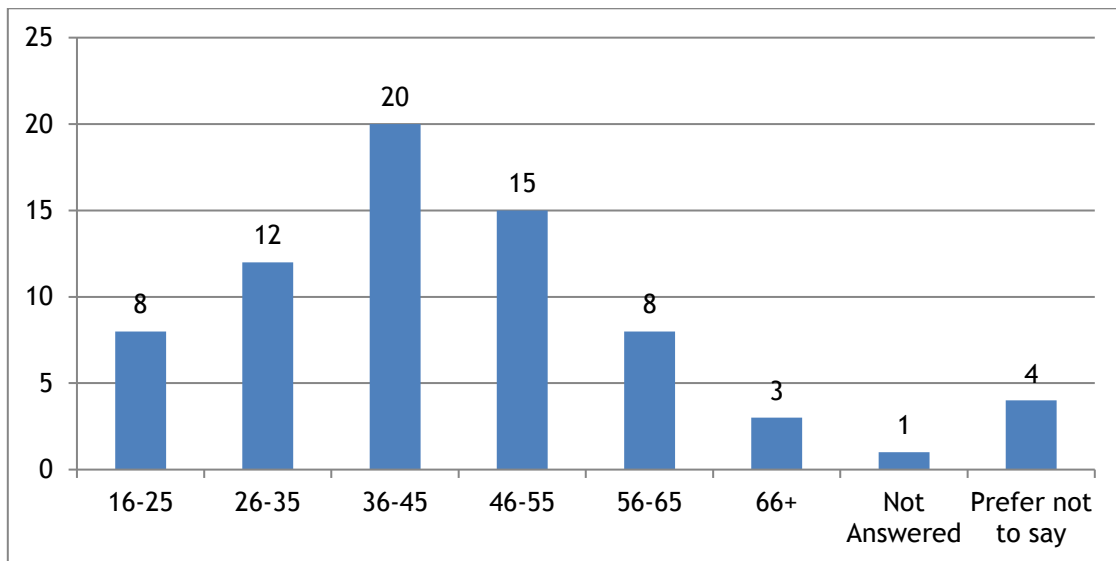


Figure 2: Responses from people online by age

Most of those who responded were aged 36 - 55; however, there were responses across all age ranges from 16 - 74 years old.

Disability and long-term illness

Across all returned online surveys, 14% of people identified as having a disability or long-term illness.

Ethnicity

72% of respondents defined themselves as White British, 13% defined as being from another White background, only 3% identifying themselves as within a Black, Asian or part of a Minority Ethnic (BAME) group and 12% preferring not to say, not knowing or not answering this question.

Religion or belief

56% identified as having no religion or belief, 30% as being Christian, 1% Jewish and 13% identified as other, preferring not to say or not answering this question.

Sexuality

Across all returned online surveys, 73% identified their sexuality as heterosexual or straight whilst 4% identified as gay or lesbian, 4% as bisexual, 1% as pansexual and 17% preferring not to say or not answering.

Dates of responses

Most on-line responses (17) were received on 6th August 2019, the day directly after launch and initial promotion.

Key Findings: Summary of all on-line consultation responses

There was clear overall support for the proposed priorities where:

- 93% agreed that they were clear
- 93% agreed with using Priority 1 within a new homelessness strategy
- 92% agreed with using Priority 2 within a new homelessness strategy
- 93% agreed with using Priority 3 within a new homelessness strategy

Overall commentary regarding these priorities, including where people disagreed with them; felt priorities/groups had been missed and had additional comments have been grouped as follows:

Priority 1: Intervening early to prevent and reduce homelessness in Reading

Theme from on-line responses regarding intervening early to prevent and reduce homelessness:	On-line consultation comments:
Links to other support and treatment services as key to sustaining accommodation	Specific reference to mental health support and drug and alcohol treatment
Immediate access to accommodation for people sleeping rough - a safe place to stay at all times	
Providing the right support at the right time	“Helping those who want to be helped”
Support for people who do not speak English as their first language to enable contact with homelessness services for advice, assistance and signposting	Including refugees, asylum seekers, EEA and Non-EEA Nationals
Additional support and incentives for working families on low incomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for low income working families into accommodation • “Reward” those who are working
Communications between the Council and members of the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of support available to homeless people • Educate people on the different 'types' of homelessness • Reduce the stigmatisation of homelessness • Make it easy to give money to local homelessness charities • “Create and maintain MUCH GREATER PUBLICITY” throughout Reading • Use the new Street Support Reading App to advertise what resource is needed for vulnerable people in Reading - e.g. what food donations do the Foodbank need etc.
Prevention - scoping and using intelligence systems	Use systems and technology to predict homelessness

Priority 2: Increasing access to decent, suitable accommodation

Theme from on-line responses regarding increasing access to decent, suitable accommodation:	On-line consultation comments:
Private rented sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector needs to be affordable • Quality and standards need to be improved - especially Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) and disrepair issues • Illegal evictions • Incentivising landlords • The rental market - LHA levels do not match local market rents • Skills preparation within supported accommodation and temporary accommodation for independent living in the PRS • Unsuitable, unfit and unaffordable
Temporary accommodation	Reduce the use and associated fees (storage etc.)
No Recourse to Public Funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to reconnect to country of origin • Education amongst professionals regarding the difference between refugees, NRPF and asylum
Refugees and asylum seekers	Accommodation and support for this group - include them within the strategy
Increased supply of social housing and long-term housing	Build housing rather than focusing only upon interventions

Priority 3: Supporting people who are vulnerable to recurring homelessness

Theme from on-line responses regarding supporting people who are vulnerable to recurring homelessness:	On-line consultation comments:
Employment	Preparation for, opportunity for, access to and sustainment of employment to prevent and relieve homelessness
Charity and community sector	<p>Too much reliance on these funds and services due to cuts from local government</p> <p>Ensure local authority are linked to charities/third sector - a unified approach</p>

Employment and meaningful occupation of time	Upskilling in terms of life skills for independent readiness Upskilling and creating job opportunities Innovative meaningful occupation of time
Tackle the causes of homelessness	Commitment from wider organisations (Police)

Theme from on-line responses - general comments:	On-line consultation comments:
Resourcing of the strategy and interventions	How will the delivery of these priorities and interventions be resourced?
Begging and homelessness as separate issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-social Behaviour • Supply of drugs in Reading • Address organised and prolific begging; “fake” homelessness

On-line responses regarding groups not represented that should be considered:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sofa surfers and hidden homeless groups • Provision for single males that is not substandard, shared or dangerous • Dual ‘un’diagnosis; support for those misusing drugs • Children, young people, students and young carers • Specific women's provision and support • No Recourse to Public Funds - including those fleeing domestic abuse without recourse • Travellers and gypsies • Intentionally homeless people who form 'hidden homelessness' • LGBT groups • Ex-service people • Ex-offenders • Long-term homeless people • Trafficked and exploited people • Those where English is not a first language • Those experiencing substance misuse • Those experiencing autism

Key Findings: Semi-structured interviews with service users

Three households were interviewed as part of this consultation. The questions asked are outlined in Appendix 2.

Case example 1

Household composition:	Couple with two dependents (aged 9 and 14)
Experience of homelessness:	Threatened with homelessness once
Reason for homelessness:	Served Section 21 by landlord who was selling the property. Household were having difficulty finding affordable accommodation in Reading - the landlord extended the notice to give more time to find alternative housing/avoid homelessness.
Current accommodation:	Temporary accommodation - placed by RBC Waiting on social rented property via Homechoice
Support needs:	Felt needed support with finding accommodation due to mental health needs.
Comments on Council intervention:	Council responded to extension of Section 21 notice by advising that could not help as no longer threatened with homelessness within 28 days. Homelessness was prevented, but feels that if offered social rented accommodation earlier, this would have prevented having to live in temporary accommodation and moving several times which is unsettling. Does not feel that the Council enabled access to a decent and suitable home - this would be an accessible 3-bedroom social rented property with a garden.
Services that provided support:	Launchpad who have advocated between household and the Council where this relationship had broken down - have also supported with mental health issues. RBC Housing Officer.

Case example 2

Household composition:	Single male
Experience of homelessness:	Rough sleeping at time approached the Council Repeated incidents of homelessness over several years

Reason for homelessness:	Homeless following release from custody
Current accommodation:	Recovery house in Woodley funded and support provided by faith sector organisation
Support needs:	Offending history, drug dependency and mental health (anger management)
Comments on Council intervention:	<p>Moved from rough sleeping into a small shared supported accommodation project funded by the Council. This was unsuccessful due to disagreements with other residents (felt like negative influences).</p> <p>Feels that the Council did intervene early enough, but that he delayed submitting paperwork (proof of address/local connection) for two years as did not feel ready - states there was no follow-up from the Council whilst he was rough sleeping, but that it was his choice not to come to the Civic Offices. However, felt confident that if he had, he would have been supported.</p> <p>Council did support into a decent and suitable home into supported accommodation, but this wasn't the right environment to progress.</p>
Services that provided support:	<p>Referred by the Council into drug and alcohol services</p> <p>Received support from Council funded Homeless Support Services and drug/alcohol services as well as faith sector accommodation/support and the CAB.</p> <p>Support included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support with reading and writing helped with tenancy sustainment - when served notice, could go to the Council and let them know about eviction (floating support) • Accessing counselling which helped with mental health and anger management (supported accommodation) • Live PIP (personal independence payment) claim which helped him manage his finances to sustain his tenancy (CAB) • Volunteering opportunities (supported accommodation) • Drug and alcohol support

Recurring homelessness	<p>Feels that earlier signposting and support whilst in prison could have prevented rough sleeping/homelessness.</p> <p>Earlier intervention for rough sleepers could include additional checks by outreach teams when people are on the streets - if people are not engaging, there should be a question around why.</p> <p>Council could chase people for documents and updates, but that there is personal responsibility too when using drugs and alcohol was more of a priority.</p>
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Case example 3

Household composition:	Single male
Experience of homelessness:	<p>States that made decision to end private tenancy and sleep rough for two months. Decided not to come to the Council or engage with services as needed the time to 'sort his head out'.</p> <p>However, when he did come to the Council they acted quickly - acknowledged that the Council must follow process and therefore wait times are necessary and can't be avoided.</p>
Reason for homelessness:	Previous joint tenancy; relationship breakdown resulted in leaving the property
Current accommodation:	Private rented sector one-bed flat sourced through Council's Rent Guarantee Scheme for past 8 months - move-on from Council funded supported accommodation
Support needs:	Mental ill-health and alcohol dependency
Comments on Council intervention:	<p>Referred by outreach team into Winter Shelter; moved on into 24/7 supported accommodation funded by the Council.</p> <p>Now lives in a flat which is big enough for his needs. Landlord has been receptive to requests such as installing a gate to stop people loitering and using/dealing drugs outside his address.</p> <p>Would like a garden and a house so he could have a dog. However, the agreed that the property he is now in is decent and suitable by his standards.</p>

Services that provided support:	<p>St Mungo’s Rough Sleeping Outreach Service. The Salvation Army, Faith Christian Group/CIRDIC helped by making claim to universal credit. The Transition Intervention Liaison Service (TILS) helped provide mental health support due to formerly being in the Royal Navy.</p> <p>Referred to TILS by Health Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT) and RBC. Now receives support from Launchpad and Change Grow Live (for alcohol dependency).</p> <p>If available, mental health support would have meant sleeping rough for a shorter period or perhaps not at all.</p> <p>Launchpad floating support helped with sourcing accommodation.</p>
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Key Findings: Focus groups

Consultation workshops were held with representatives from the following partner organisations throughout August and September 2019:

- Adult Social Care, Brighter Future for Children (Children’s Social Care) and Drug and Alcohol service commissioners and managers
- Private Sector Housing
- Commissioned supported accommodation services, including Reading YMCA, Launchpad Reading, The Salvation Army and St Mungo’s
- Community Safety
- Business Improvement District (BID) and Connect Reading
- Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and Healthwatch Reading
- Faith and voluntary sector partners including Reading Refugee Support Group, FAITH Christian Group, Reading Minster and SADAKA

The aim of these workshops was to obtain their views on (a) whether the three identified priorities were appropriate and (b) what should be included under each of these priorities to meet their organisational and client needs in addressing homelessness in Reading.

Each group was asked:

- What is the one thing that you want to see change when it comes to homelessness in Reading?
- Do you agree with the priorities and if not, what should be included?
- How do your key priorities and strategies fit with these priorities?
- What would you/your organisation/sector need from a homelessness strategy over the next five years under each of these priorities?
- How do we deliver these priorities - both separately and together?

Partners identified several key themes which can be pulled through into Reading’s Homelessness Strategy 2020 - 2025.

PRIORITY 1 - Intervening early to prevent and reduce homelessness in Reading

Consultation theme outcomes for Priority 1

- Focus on intervention at the earliest opportunity to prevent crisis
- Intervening as a 'whole systems' embedded culture, across sectors, to achieve a cross-partnership intervention in homelessness prevention
- Improved internal, external and community partnerships and communications, within professional and public domains, to ensure early identification and homelessness prevention is 'everyone's business' and in 'everyone's interests'
- Education, training and upskilling amongst those who have direct contact with people at risk of homelessness, including professionals, local businesses, charities, volunteers and members of the public, regarding how to identify risk factors and intervene and/or refer into services as early as possible
- Having a responsive, accessible and reputable homelessness prevention service in Reading
- Holistic support, across sectors, for specific groups transitioning from other supportive settings into independent living for the first time for example, care leavers, those leaving the armed forces, those leaving custody, those moving on from supported accommodation or adult social care supported living, households moving on from refuges and gypsy and traveller households choosing to access settled accommodation within Reading's communities
- Enforcement as an early intervention and prevention tool, to accompany supportive interventions
- Joint commissioning/bids and strategic approaches to preventing and relieving homelessness by seizing opportunities, irrespective of each sector's position in the commissioning cycle

PRIORITY 2 - Increasing access to decent, suitable accommodation

Consultation theme outcomes for Priority 2:

- Homelessness not solely being a 'provision of bricks and mortar' issue
- Mapping housing need across households, including household composition and anticipated need to inform property procurement and housing development
- Maintaining standards within emergency and temporary accommodation
- Driving up private rented sector standards
- Working with housing associations and their tenants when properties are identified as being in disrepair by providing support to follow processes for improvements
- Increasing accommodation options for single people within the private rented sector, including those moving on from supported accommodation
- Developing an accommodation and support pathway for young people aged 18 - 24
- Options for gypsy and traveller communities to prevent unauthorised encampments
- Accommodation options for those without recourse to public funds

PRIORITY 3 - Supporting people who are vulnerable to recurring homelessness

Consultation theme outcomes for Priority 3:

- Higher need clients and households who have experienced/are experiencing multiple disadvantage
- Cyclical supported accommodation clients
- Hospital admittances and discharges
- Targeted use of existing tenancy-related support services: From intensive post-crisis to transitional resettlement support
- Social isolation, loneliness and occupation of time

Appendix 1 Online Consultation Hub survey questions

Question 1

Please can you tell us if you agree or disagree that the proposed priorities for Reading's Homelessness Strategy are clear?

Question 2

Please can you tell us if you agree or disagree that the following proposed priorities should be included in Reading's Homelessness Strategy?

Priority One - Intervening early to prevent and reduce homelessness in Reading

Priority Two - Increasing access to decent suitable accommodation

Priority Three - Supporting people who are vulnerable to recurring homelessness

Question 3

If you disagree with any of the proposed priorities, please tell us which priorities you disagree with and why?

Question 4

Are there any priorities you think have been missed?

If yes, please tell us which priorities you think we should include and why.

Question 5

Do you believe there to be any groups who are not represented in the proposed priorities for Reading's Homelessness Strategy? If yes, please tell us which groups you believe are not represented.

Question 6

Do you have any additional comments?

Question 7

Are you responding as a:

- Homelessness sector service provider
- Reading Borough Council employee
- Public sector agency
- Housing association/registered provider
- Local business
- Voluntary community group/organisation
- Landlord/temporary accommodation provider
- Member of the public
- Other - If you have answered 'other' please give us details.

About you

- What gender are you?
- Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?
- Which age group do you belong to?
- Do you consider that you have a disability, long-term illness or health problem (12 months or more) which limits your daily activities or the work you can do?
- To which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong?
- What is your religion or belief?
- What is your sexual orientation?

Appendix 2

Interview Questions for people with lived experience

Initial questions:

- (1) Have you ever experienced homelessness or been at risk of becoming homeless?
- (2) Have you ever experienced homelessness or being at risk of homelessness more than once in your lifetime?

Regarding 'Priority One'

- In your opinion, did the Council intervene early enough to try to prevent your homelessness?
- How did the Council intervene?
- Did any other service intervene to help you prevent your homelessness?
- Which of these interventions were successful, if any?
- What could have been done earlier, by any service, to prevent your homelessness?

Regarding 'Priority Two'

- In your opinion, when you were homeless or at risk of homelessness, did the Council enable you to access a decent and suitable home?
- Did the Council support you with finding this?
- Did any other service support you with finding this?
- What type of housing did you move into - private rented, social rented, with family, supported housing? Other?
- In your opinion, what would be a decent and suitable home for you/your family?


Regarding 'Priority Three' - for those who answered 'yes' to question 2 only

- What were the circumstances under which you found yourself facing homelessness, or were actually homeless, more than once?
- Was your homelessness prevented? Was this by the Council or another agency?
- What support did you receive from the Council or another agency to prevent your homelessness occurring again?
- What support did you feel you required to prevent your re-occurring homelessness?

Appendix 3 Social media posts and content

5 THINGS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT HOMELESSNESS


HOMELESSNESS:
IT COULD BE YOU



One in three working families are only one paycheque away from losing their home (Shelter, 2016)

https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_releases/article/one_paycheque_away


HOMELESSNESS IS



... not having a permanent place to live.


Homelessness can be hidden. It can include temporarily staying with friends, in hostels and squats.

MOST LIKELY
CAUSES ARE



... being evicted from a private tenancy or from a family member's home.

ROUGH SLEEPING



... represents the smallest proportion of homelessness in Reading.

SOMEONE BEGGING



... on Reading's streets may not be sleeping rough. They will probably have somewhere to stay that night.



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Reading Council
August 5 · 🌐

Views are invited on tackling homelessness in Reading with a public consultation launched today. http://news.reading.gov.uk/homeless_consult/

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Views Invited on Tackling Homelessness in Reading – Reading Council News

Housing Views Invited on Tackling Homelessness in Reading August 5, 2019 David Millward TACKLING the problem of homelessness in...

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Reading Council
August 19 · 🌐

Reading Council created a poll.

Have you ever given someone a bed, your sofa or space on your floor to sleep when they didn't have anywhere else to stay that night? If you have, you've helped someone who could have been homeless. The Council has duties to prevent and relieve homelessness. We want to reach as many people as possible who are homeless or at risk of it. To have your say about how we do this, please complete our consultation at: www.reading.gov.uk/HLSConsultation

52% Yes

48% No

This poll has ended. 79 Votes

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Doda Craig Ibrahim Mpungu.

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14

Homelessness Strategy consultation on Twitter through 'Homelessness - did you know?' facts.

