

West Berkshire Council

# Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2019



WestBerkshire  
C O U N C I L

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# 1 Background

This Homelessness Review has been prepared to inform the West Berkshire Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25. The Review provides a detailed evidence base identifying the key homelessness successes and gaps in provision and reflects a wide range of views including those of service users, key stakeholders and Council staff. The Review also utilises a wide range of data from local and national sources and includes, where appropriate, comparisons with neighbouring authorities.

## 2 Introduction

The term homelessness can describe a variety of circumstances that an individual or family may find themselves in, not always related to whether they actually have a roof over their head(s). This section sets out these circumstances and the statutory duties past and present that local authorities have in relation to homeless households and those at risk of homelessness. A summary of key terms used in this document can be found in appendix 1 (page 29).

### 2.1 Overview – Definitions of Homelessness

Homelessness, although often considered to apply to people ‘sleeping rough’, also applies to people who are considered to be ‘statutorily homeless’. A definition for the latter is those households which meet specific criteria of priority need set out in legislation, and to whom a homelessness duty has been accepted by a local authority.

Whilst many of these households are rarely homeless in the literal sense (i.e. without a roof over their heads), they are often threatened with the loss of, or are unable to continue with, their current accommodation.

Circumstances include:

- Staying with friends or family (‘sofa surfing’)
- Staying in a hostel, night shelter or B&B
- Squatting (because you have no legal right to stay)
- Being at risk of violence or abuse in your home
- Living in poor conditions that affect your health
- Living apart from your family because you don’t have a place to live together.

#### 2.1.1 Statutory homelessness

Statutory homelessness covers all eligible households who are owed a homelessness duty by a local authority. A household is considered statutorily homeless if a local authority decides that they do not have a legal right to occupy accommodation that is accessible, physically available and which would be reasonable for the household to continue to live in. The Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) determines the legal duties on local authorities towards homeless households and households threatened with homelessness. Eligible households are those that meet eligibility criteria, which broadly concern UK immigration status and whether the household is habitually resident in the UK.



### 2.1.2 Rough sleepers

Rough sleepers are defined as people sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People residing in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or ‘bashes’) are also defined as rough sleepers.

The definition does not include people in hostels or shelters, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protest, squatters or travellers.

## 2.2 Homelessness prevention and relief

[The Homelessness Act 2002](#) requires local housing authorities to have a Strategy for preventing homelessness in their district. The Strategy must apply to everyone at risk of homelessness, not just people who may fall within a priority need group for the purposes of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. Authorities are also expected to take steps to relieve homelessness in cases where someone has been found to be homeless but is not owed a duty to secure accommodation under the homelessness legislation.

### 2.2.1 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA)

The HRA (which came into force in April 2018) provided enhanced duties for Local Authorities, which are outlined below:

- Eligible households threatened with homelessness in the next 56 days must be assessed and have a personalised housing plan whether they have a local connection, are in priority need or are intentionally homeless or not.
- If a household has been served with a valid Section 21 notice they are automatically owed the prevention duty.
- Where the Council, working with the household, is unable to prevent homelessness the household will be owed a relief duty for 56 days.

- The relief duty is activated as soon as the household becomes homeless (a household without a local connection can at this point be referred to the Council that they do have a connection with).
- For eligible homeless households in priority need an offer of temporary accommodation is required. The relief duty runs for up to 56 days. If homelessness is not relieved the household is then fully assessed under Part 7 of the Housing Act and a decision made about whether the full homelessness duty is owed.
- Households are owed a prevention and relief duty regardless of whether they are deemed to be intentionally homeless.

## 2.3 Responsibilities in West Berkshire

Statutory Homelessness Assessments, housing advice and prevention in West Berkshire are carried out by Housing Options Officers, other functions such as, purchase, procurement and management of temporary accommodation form part of the Council’s Housing Operations Team based at Market Street, Newbury. Teams responsible for the commissioning of supported homelessness prevention services and other housing related services, all form part of the Housing Services Department which sits within the Places Directorate.





## 2.4 Deprivation in West Berkshire

Although West Berkshire is perceived as relatively affluent there are areas of deprivation within the district which impact on homelessness and the following provides an overview:

### West Berkshire Deprivation – IMD 2019

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) provides the Government's official measure of relative deprivation across 32,844 small geographical areas in England. These areas, termed Lower-Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), are on average home to approximately 1,500 residents or 650 households. In terms of ranking the LSOA ranked as 32,844 is the least deprived while the rank of 1 signifies the most deprived area.

Overall IMD measures are drawn using data from the following seven domains of deprivation:

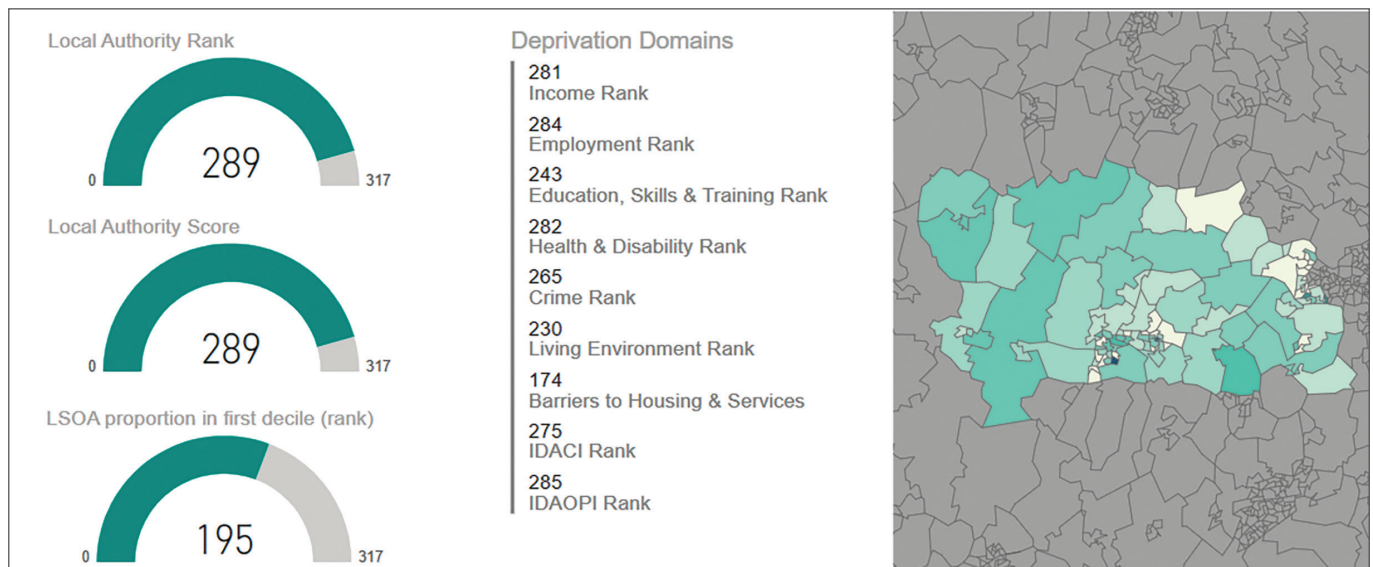
- Income Deprivation
- Employment Deprivation
- Education, Skills and Training Deprivation
- Living Environment Deprivation.
- Health Deprivation and Disability
- Crime
- Barriers to Housing and Services

The above can be used to rank England's 317 district authorities in overall and specific terms where, again, the rank of 1 signifies the most deprived area. On this scale, overall, West Berkshire, has a rank of 289 which makes it England's 28th least deprived district authority.



“Although West Berkshire is perceived as relatively affluent there are areas of deprivation within the district which impact on homelessness”

The diagram below shows 2019 deprivation data for West Berkshire for all domains.



Source: IoD2019 Interactive Dashboard- Local Authority Focus

Key to the above map:

- The darker shades indicate relatively more deprived areas while the lighter shades indicate relatively less deprived areas for domains combined.

Of particular relevance to this review, the district fares less well in the Barriers to Housing and Services domain where it has an IMD rank of 174 compared to 289 overall. This domain focuses on the physical and financial accessibility of housing and key local services and it is important to highlight that the indicators used to create data fall into two sub-domains, as follows:

- The Geographical Barriers sub-domain, covering road distances to a:
  - Post office
  - Primary school
  - General store or supermarket
  - GP surgery.
- The Wider Barriers sub-domain, covering:
  - Household overcrowding: The proportion of all households in a Lower-layer Super Output Area which are judged to have insufficient space to meet the household's needs
  - Homelessness: Local authority district level rate of acceptances for housing assistance under the homelessness provisions of the 1996 Housing Act, assigned to the constituent Lower-layer Super Output Areas
  - Housing affordability: Difficulty of access to owner-occupation or the private rental market, expressed as the inability to afford to enter owner occupation or the private rental market.

## 3 Homeless Data

### 3.1 Background to Data Collection

For many years, the P1E form was used to collect household data aggregated at a local authority level and to measure the performance of local authorities under statutory homeless legislation and their prevention and relief activity. The 2017 Homeless Reduction Act in addition to introducing new statutory duties for local authorities (see section 2.1.5 above) led to the replacement of the P1E collection method with the more fit for purpose H-CLIC method.

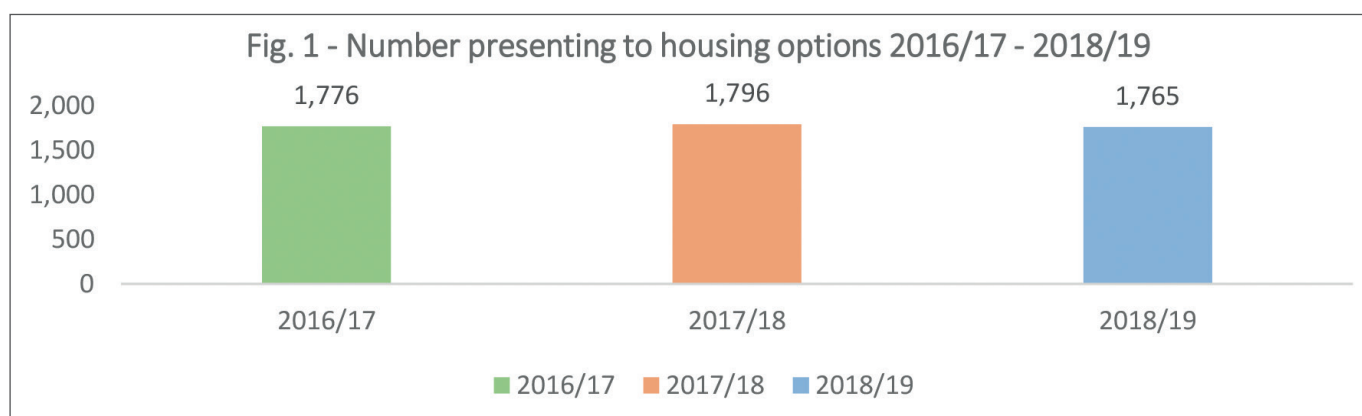
H-CLIC, the Homelessness Case Level Information Classification, was introduced in April 2018 to coincide with the commencement of the HRA and was designed to collect case level data that

provides more detailed information on the causes and effects of homelessness, long term outcomes and what works to prevent it.

A detailed breakdown of the H-CLIC data for West Berkshire can be found in Appendix 2 (page 30) and excerpts are included in appropriate areas in the sections that follow.

### 3.2 Baseline Data

The table below outlines the number of people presenting to housing options for the years 2016/17 to 2018/19. As can be seen the number of presentations is broadly static with an average of 1,779.



### 3.3 Profile of applicants in West Berkshire 2018-19

In total 575 households were assessed between April 2018 and March 2019 of which 572 were owed a duty (broadly half a prevention duty and half a relief duty).

- With regards to households owed a prevention duty the most numerous groups were single parent households with dependent children (mostly female), single adults (an even mix of males and females) and couples with dependent children.
- In terms of relief duty, single adults (two thirds male) and single parents with dependent children were most numerous groups.

The main reasons for the loss of last settled home were the end of a private rented shorthold tenancy, family / friends no longer willing to accommodate and the end of a social rented tenancy. Of note, significant numbers of households lost a settled home due to relationship breakdown (violent and non-violent) and eviction from supported housing.

In terms of age bands for those owed either a prevention or relief duty most were aged 25-34, closely followed by those aged 35 – 44 and 18-24. With regards to the ethnicity of applicants, 89% were white and 7% BAME and 4% not known. In terms of employment status, a third of applicants were in full or part time work, a quarter either registered unemployed or seeking work (but not

registered unemployed) and 13% were not working due to long-term illness / disability.

Applicants with support needs featured highly. Over a third registered with a support need and often more than one. The main categories of support need were mental health issues, a history of repeat homelessness and rough sleeping, drug and alcohol dependency, offending history and domestic abuse.

## 3.4 Circumstances and the reasons for homelessness

### 3.4.1 Circumstances

The most common circumstance for those owed a duty in 2018/19 was a position of having no fixed abode (31%) furthermore, 18% were registered as living with family and 5% living with friends. Combined, 54%, presented without independent accommodation. This compares with 38% presenting from a private rented or social tenancy (23% and 14% respectively). Of note, 7 rough sleepers presented and a further 6 presented from owner occupied / shared ownership accommodation.

### 3.4.2 Reasons

The most common reason for loss of last settled home for those owed a duty in 2018/19 was the end of a private rented shorthold tenancy (21% plus a further 2% from private rented accommodation with no tenancy in place). This was closely followed by family / friends no longer willing to provide a home (19%). 10% lost their last settled home due to the end of a social rented tenancy. Reasons for potential loss of an assured tenancy include non-payment / consistent late payment of rent and anti-social behaviour. The payment of Housing Benefit directly to vulnerable tenants rather than to the landlord is seen to be a significant cause of the loss of a settled home particularly among more vulnerable clients.

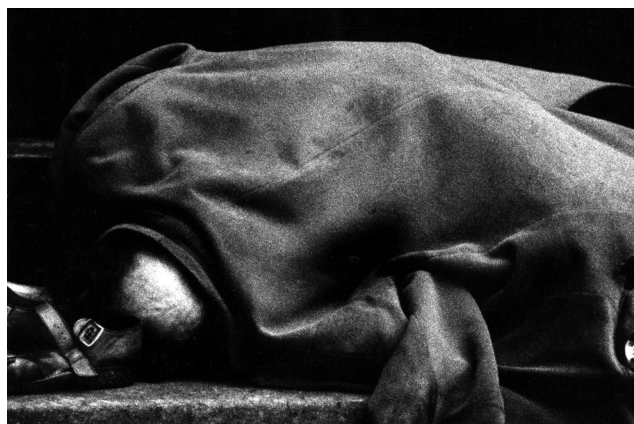
Of note, significant numbers of households lost a settled home due to relationship breakdown (non-violent 8% and violent 5%) and eviction from supported housing (6% plus 1% who left an institution with no accommodation available).

## 3.5 Demography of homelessness

The most numerous age band for those owed either a prevention or relief duty in 2018/19 was 25-34 (29%), followed by 35-44 (22%), 18-24 (21%) and 45-54 (18%). Of note 10% of those presenting were aged 55 plus.

In terms of gender, 44% of single adults owed a duty in 2018/19 were female (135 with dependent children and 114 without); 37% were male (12 with dependent children and 200 without). 18% were either households with couples or 3 or more adults (65 with dependent children and 45 without). In essence, two thirds of households / individuals owed a duty did not have dependent children and a third did.

The vast majority of applicants owed either a prevention or relief duty in 2018/19 were white (British / Irish / Other); in total, 7% were identified as being from other ethnic groups (Black / African / Caribbean / Black British – 19, Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups – 10, Asian / Asian British – 7).



### 3.6 Future impacts on homelessness

A key question asked of stakeholders as part of this Review was about emerging issues that would impact on homelessness in the future. A summary of the key outcomes is outlined below.

#### Housing Supply

- The shortage of suitable move on / affordable housing for vulnerable and younger people
- The absence of sufficient HMOs
- Limited downsizing options for older people impacting on the supply of family accommodation

#### Affordability

- Rents increasing compounded by insufficient LHA values
- The potential impact of BREXIT on the economy and the knock on effect on low income households / house building

#### Approach

- The imbalanced focus on rough sleeping at the cost of support for families at risk of homelessness (reduced prevention)
- The absence of a holistic approach for homeless people with multiple issues that comprises inputs from NHS, DWP as well as Council services
- The feasibility of continued use of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) to fund rent shortfalls Increased homelessness resulting from people with high support needs being paid Housing Benefit directly

#### Resources

- The further reduction of statutory and voluntary services which will impact on clients' wellbeing and safety, e.g. substance misuse / alcohol support services, police availability and support and mental health pathway thresholds increasing
- Short term nature of the critical Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding

### 3.7 Personal factors affecting homelessness

Overall, 34% (193) of those owed either a prevention or relief duty in 2018/19, were households registered with support needs. In total 455 support needs were registered suggesting an average of over two support needs per case. This latter reality was reflected in the consultation with service users and service providers, with strong perceptions of multiple needs contributing to homelessness.

The main categories of support need were a history of repeat homelessness and rough sleeping (102 combined), mental health (96), drug and alcohol dependency (59), offending history (55) and domestic abuse (32). Of note, young people aged 18-25 years requiring support and care leavers aged 18-20 years combined, led to a total of 21.

### 3.8 Policy impacts on homelessness approaches

#### 3.8.1 Benefits

● **Local Housing Allowance (LHA):** West Berkshire's Local Housing Allowance is significantly below market rents for all property sizes, making access to the private rented sector a major challenge. This is compounded by competition in and around Newbury for rented accommodation by particularly employees from Vodafone Head Office. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this has led landlords to increase rent levels. Also, landlords choosing to let their properties on 'Airbnb' has also been mentioned as a perceived challenge in the district. Further information on LHA rates is included in section 5.2 below.

● **Benefit Cap:** As at 31 March 2019 the Benefit Cap impacted on 56 households in West Berkshire. The Benefit Cap does not take into account size of family meaning an increased risk of homelessness for families with three or more children.



● **Under occupation charge:** As at 31 March 2019, 416 Housing Benefit claimants were subject to a 14% reduction in their benefits and 65 households subject to a 25% deduction. The accommodation shortage in the district can leave few options for these people to find suitable alternative accommodation.

● **Universal Credit:** This policy went live in West Berkshire in December 2017 and requests for assistance in completing applications for those requiring digital support totalled 346 during 2018/19. In addition, there were 41 requests for assistance from clients requiring 'personal budgeting support'.

## 4 Specific subgroups experiencing or at risk of homelessness

### 4.1 Rough sleepers

#### 4.1.1 Rough sleeping defined

Government defines rough sleeping as: 'People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/ in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the

streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments).

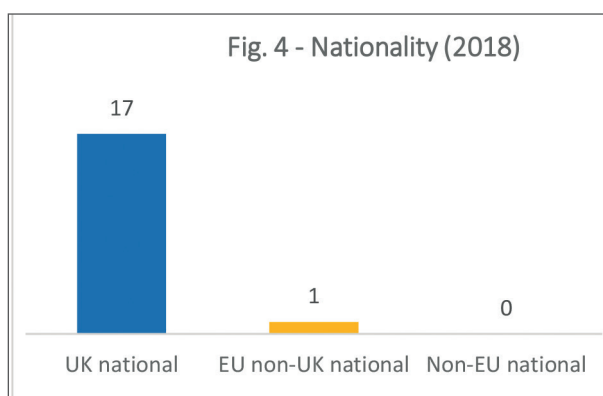
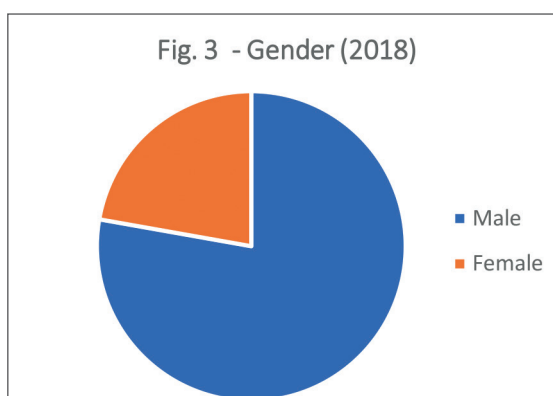
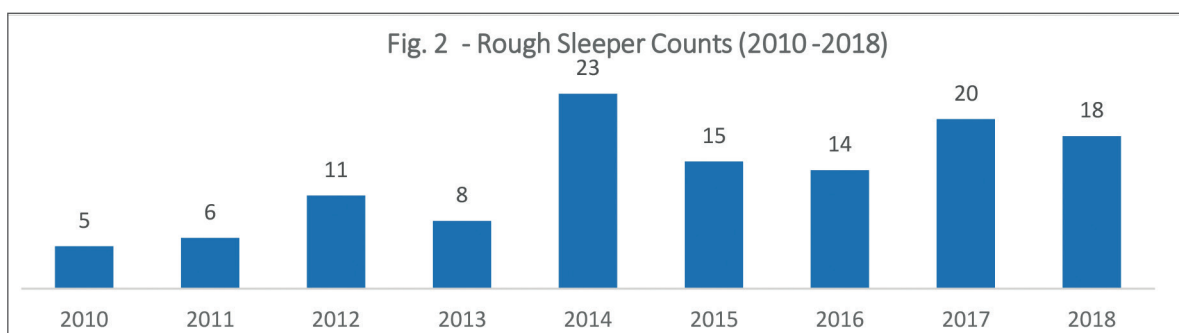
People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or 'bashes' (makeshift shelters).

The definition does not include people accommodated in hostels or shelters, people on campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protest. Squatters are excluded from the definition as are Gypsies and Travellers.

The definition of rough sleepers also excludes those individuals who are at risk of rough sleeping, for example, people who are so-called 'sofa-surfing' or 'homeless at home' who remain at high risk of sleeping on the street and therefore becoming a rough sleeper. This can often be misunderstood when considering rough sleeping statistics.

#### 4.1.2 Numbers

For England as a whole, rough sleeping has risen year on year since 2010. Whilst the position in West Berkshire has fluctuated over the same period, there has been a reduction since the peak in 2014



### 4.1.3 Planning

The Government published its Rough Sleeping Strategy in August 2018 with a commitment to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending rough sleeping by 2027. To support this aim, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) awarded the Council Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding of £211,000 for 2018/19 and £265,000 for 2019/20 to deliver a range of interventions to prevent and relieve rough sleeping. Further funding of £103,000 was awarded for 2019/20 through the MHCLG's Rapid Rehousing Pathway to provide additional interventions to support rough sleepers into sustainable accommodation.

In September 2019 West Berkshire Council adopted: 'Reducing rough sleeping in West Berkshire: A plan to ensure no-one has the need to sleep rough'. The development of the plan included consultation with West Berkshire's Homelessness Strategy Group (a stakeholder group of homelessness charities, registered providers, and homelessness service providers, working across the District) and consultation with MHCLG as part of their oversight of the Council's actions in respect of the Rough Sleeping Initiative.

In the document, a detailed Action Plan sets out how the Council, working with partners plans to address the challenging goal through work across the five key priority areas shown below with their respective implementation timeframes:

<b>1</b>	<b>Delivering targeted support and accommodation services that meet the needs of rough sleepers</b>	31/10/19 – 31/03/20
<b>2</b>	<b>Providing innovative solutions to assist entrenched rough sleepers leave the streets</b>	31/03/20 – on-going
<b>3</b>	<b>Improving the health and well-being of rough sleepers</b>	30/09/19 – 31/03/20
<b>4</b>	<b>Preventing residents at risk of rough sleeping from needing to sleep rough</b>	31/03/20 – on-going
<b>5</b>	<b>Tackling the negative public perceptions surrounding rough sleeping</b>	31/12/19 – 31/03/20

## 4.2 Gypsies and Travellers

### 4.2.1 Background

For this section of the Review the primary information source has been the 2019 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) final report produced for West Berkshire Council by independent consultants' arc4. The key aim of this GTAA is to inform the Council's future Gypsy and Traveller related planning and housing policies for the period up to 2036.

In brief, the research undertaken to provide a picture of current provision and future need for the GTAA publication involved:

- Reviewing existing secondary data
- Undertaking interviews with 25 Gypsy and Traveller households
- Gaining information from other local sources and planning application data
- An electronic survey that contributed views from 19 stakeholders.

### 4.2.2 Current provision

The GTAA identified 6 sites with a combined total of 36 pitches, as follows:

- One permanent Council-owned Gypsy and Traveller site at Four Houses Corner, Ufton Nervet. This 16-pitch site is scheduled for refurbishment when its remaining households (six as at 3rd September 2019) have been decanted temporarily to alternative accommodation. It is understood that the total number of pitches at the site will still be 16 post refurbishment.
- A privately-owned authorised site at Paices Hill, Aldermaston with 24 pitches.
- A privately-owned authorised site near Old Forge House, Beenham, with one pitch.
- Three unauthorised, privately-owned sites at: Stable View, Bath Pond, and Hermitage with a combined total of 4 pitches.

### 4.2.3 Planning policy used for GTAA 2019

GTAA 2019 notes that Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (updated in August 2015) requires an assessment of the current needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show people and the projection of future needs. It adds that the calculation of pitch/plot requirements for the report is based on established MHCLG (then DCLG) modelling methodology guidance which, although withdrawn in 2016 and not replaced, is still used by most local planning authorities and also confirmed by inspectors at public enquiries.

### 4.2.4 Future Gypsy and Traveller pitch requirements

GTAA 2019 found evidence for, over the next 5 years (2018/19 to 2022/23), a need for 20 Gypsy and Traveller pitches associated with the above cultural definition and 18 pitches under the PPTS 2015 definition. Then, for the period 2023/24 to 2035/36, the research identified a cultural need for 31 pitches and a PPTS 2015 need for 30 pitches. The evidenced need for the period 2018/19 to 2035/2036 therefore totals 51 pitches (cultural) and 48 (PPTS 2015).

However, the GTAA study also considered potential impact on need through turnover, intensification/ expansion at existing authorised sites and regularising unauthorised sites. In this regard it was concluded that if regularisation and turnover is considered overall shortfalls would reduce to:

- Over the 5 years 2018/19 to 2022/23: 8 cultural and 6 PPTS pitches
- Over the period 2018/19 to 2035/2036: 18 cultural and 15 PPTS pitches.

## 4.3 Travelling Show Persons

### 4.3.1 Provision

Currently there is one Show Person's Yard in the West Berkshire district, located at Long Copse Farm, Enborne. This provision resulted from the 2015 GTAA identifying a need for 24 Travelling Show Person plots ('plot' rather than 'pitch' being the term generally used for Show Person living space), which then received planning permission. However, subsequently, it transpired that the yard is being used for storage rather than residential use and in view of this the 2019 GTAA concludes that future need for Show Person residential provision can be addressed by the Long Copse yard.

### 4.3.2 Meeting transit site / stop over requirements

The GTAA 2019 household survey found that 60% of Gypsies and Travellers felt that there is a need in the district for transit provision and most respondents stated that they feel the Council should manage any transit site. Of note a transit pitch normally consists of a hard standing, electric hook up and an amenity building.



An indicator of transit provision need is the level of unauthorised encampment activity and, over the period 2014/15 to 2017/18, there were 39 recorded incidents on Council-owned land. Statistics are not available for incidents on Parish Council and private land.

Given the incidences of unauthorised encampments and the views of survey respondents GTAA 2019 recommends that the Council considers developing a transit site to facilitate travelling through the district. From observation and household survey outcomes it is suggested that a 4-pitch site accommodating up to 8 caravans would be appropriate. Additionally, it is suggested that a tolerated stopping policy could be considered, where Travellers can be directed to appropriate locations to temporarily stop over – with access to support if required.

## 4.4 Houseboat mooring needs

The GTAA states that no specific need for houseboat moorings has been identified and that attempts to engage with households living on houseboats did not yield interview opportunities. The recommendation is therefore made that the Council considers an ongoing Review of houseboat activity and liaises with the Canal and River Trust (CRT) which is the sole authority for licencing and regulating houseboat use.

In terms of potential homelessness it is understood that the CRT can refuse to renew licences and seek to evict those living in houseboats if they do not meet its interpretation of the British Waterways Act 1995, i.e. that canal boats should not remain in any one place for more than 14 days and must move at least 15 to 20 miles a year in one direction. Clearly this can pose problems, for example, among households with school age children who therefore need an element of stability but cannot afford permanent mooring fees, currently understood to be in the order of £5,000 a year.



## 4.5 The racing industry

### 4.5.1 The racing industry - Lambourn

The village of Lambourn lies at the centre of an extensive racehorse training hub, second only to the country's largest, in Newmarket. Recent figures show that in the Lambourn Valley there are currently 34 trainers employing approximately 530 full time equivalent (FTE) staff- of which many are young, i.e. aged between 18 and 24, and earning relatively low wages. While some stables may offer their staff accommodation this is diminishing and there is clear anecdotal evidence indicating a shortage of single person housing that is realistically affordable, even given statutory or other assistance.

For example, the Lambourn office of National Charity, Racing Welfare, sees one or two individuals a week facing significant housing issues, including homelessness. Although Racing Welfare has a Registered Provider (RP) housing arm (Racing Homes) its social housing stock in the Lambourn area for young workers starting out in the industry and retirees is currently limited, however, the charity 'does what it can' to find other housing solutions, often working with the charity Shelter. For those in racing a key consideration in terms of housing is that split shift patterns mean they need to live near to work and accommodation offered elsewhere is often not a practical option.



In terms of working to expand its housing portfolio in Lambourn, Racing Welfare has recently launched a new project to develop a site in the village at Collingridge Farm to provide a young people's residence with 20 en-suite rooms within a managed two-story building and a complex of 24 one and two bedroom apartments built within three-story buildings and forming a quadrangle to encourage a sense of community. At the time of writing a pre-planning application has been made.

#### 4.6 Military veterans

As with anyone facing homelessness, former military personnel, given a local connection, can present to West Berkshire's Housing Options team. It is also noted that West Berkshire Council has signed the Armed Forces Covenant which funds the Veterans' Gateway, a support and advice service included within the West Berkshire Directory. However, it appears that the Housing Options team direct single individuals in need to Newbury's Two Saints direct access hostel. It is, however, understood that the prospect of living there is unpopular because of the perceived levels of, for example, alcohol and substance misuse in this 60-room provision.

As might be expected the above outcomes can and do leave individuals in a quandary because there is currently no established knowledge source locally where they can seek help and advice with their housing and support needs. In this regard one stakeholder interviewed for this Review believed that a 'drop-in centre' could fill this gap and create synergy through hosting information-giving sessions by charities and other relevant sources of advice. The suggestion here is that the centre could be of assistance to a diverse range of vulnerable groups, including the former military personnel. In terms of a suitable venue one suggestion heard was exploring the possibility of locating the centre to operate at, for example, the Newbury Soup Kitchen.





## 5 Housing in West Berkshire

### 5.1 Housing supply

According to GOV.UK live tables there were 67,900 dwellings in West Berkshire in 2018. Since 2012 the housing supply has increased by on average 522 units per year. In 2017/18 the increase was 526, the majority of which (466) were new builds.

**Fig. 5 - Components of net supply of new housing**

Dwellings	New builds	Conversions	Change of use	Other	Demolitions	Net supply
2012/13	513	4	63	0	-28	<b>552</b>
2013/14	443	9	49	2	-56	<b>447</b>
2014/15	467	32	103	3	-109	<b>496</b>
2015/16	464	3	169	-1	-10	<b>625</b>
2016/17	401	29	103	5	-53	<b>485</b>
2017/18	466	5	88	1	-34	<b>526</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,754</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>-290</b>	<b>3,131</b>

New supply: MHCLG, [Live Table 123](#)

The supply of affordable dwellings has increased by an average of 103 per year since 2012 and in 2017/18 by 129 (46 for social rent, 5 for affordable rent and 78 other affordable housing).

**Fig. 6 – New Affordable housing supply by type (dwellings built and acquired)**

	Social rent	Affordable rent	Other affordable housing	Total
2011/12	45	0	0	<b>45</b>
2012/13	59	0	32	<b>91</b>
2013/14	120	7	15	<b>142</b>
2014/15	28	39	10	<b>77</b>
2015/16	61	42	59	<b>162</b>
2016/17	4	10	5	<b>19</b>
2017/18	46	5	78	<b>129</b>

Affordable housing: MHCLG, [Live Tables 1006C, 1006aC, 1007C, 1008C](#)

### 5.2 Housing tenure

A summary breakdown of tenure types based on Census 2011 is shown in the table below

Households	West Berkshire UA (No.)	West Berkshire UA (%)
Owned: Owned outright	19,455	31.2
Owned: Owned with a mortgage or loan	23,980	38.5
Shared ownership (part owned and part rented)	695	1.1
Social rented: Rented from council (Local Authority)	575	0.9
Social rented: Other	8,053	12.9
Private rented: Private landlord or letting agency	7,457	12.0
Private rented: Other	1,098	1.8
Living rent free	1,027	1.6

## 5.3 Rented accommodation

As shown in 5.2 above circa 14% of the housing stock was social rented in 2011 and a similar proportion was private rented. According to monthly rents recorded between April 2018 to March 2019 by the Valuations Office Agency, the mean monthly rental was £1,050 (the lower quartile being £850 and the upper quartile being £1,150). The mean rental is marginally higher than Reading and significantly above Basingstoke and Deane and Wiltshire Council but below the Vale of the White Horse and Wokingham.

Fig. 7 - Summary of monthly rents recorded between 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019					
Area	Count of rents	Mean	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
<b>SOUTH EAST</b>	<b>79,750</b>	<b>980</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>1,125</b>
Reading UA	1,880	1,010	850	960	1,150
West Berkshire UA	680	1,050	795	925	1,200
Wokingham UA	510	1,220	900	1,100	1,395
Basingstoke and Deane	1,490	933	775	895	995
Vale of White Horse	200	1,135	825	925	1,220
Wiltshire UA	3,970	812	650	750	895

Source: Valuation Office Agency's administrative database as at 31 March 2019

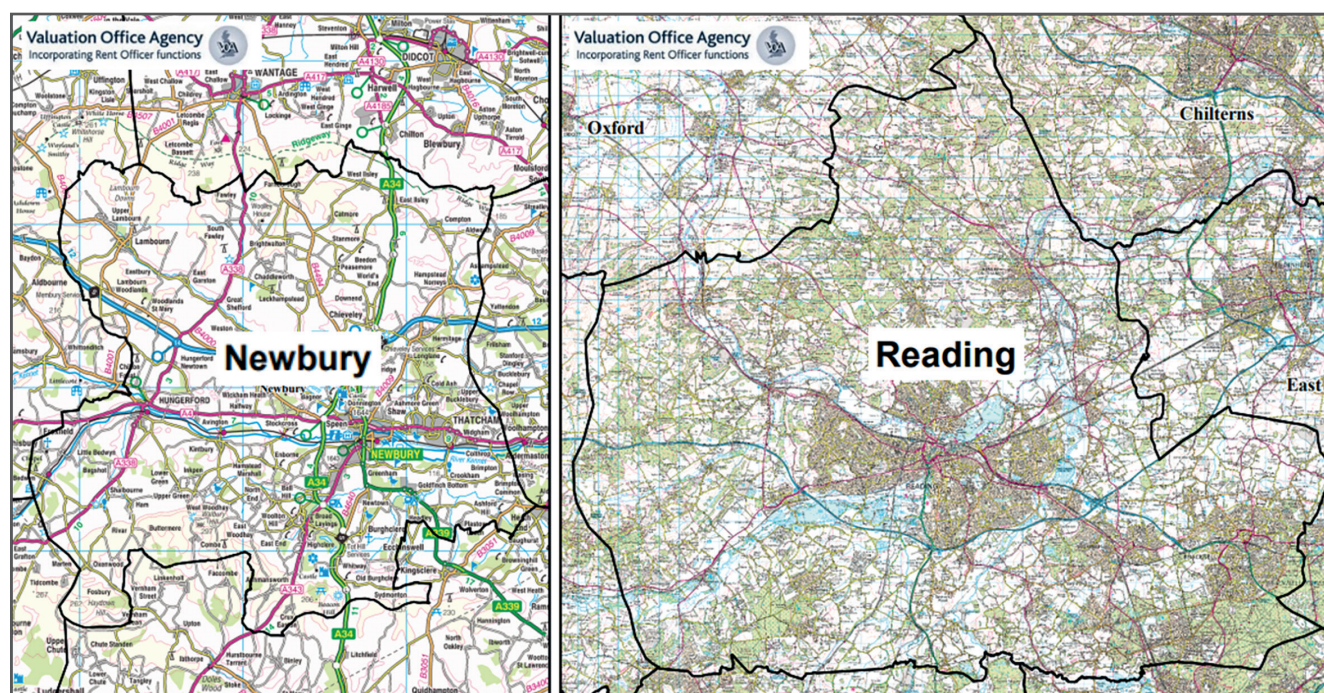
It should be noted that the average rents cited above are for all rentals (including social, affordable and private rents) the Valuation Office Agency does not provide data for solely private rents. However, as an example [home.co.uk](http://home.co.uk) lists the following average rents for Newbury.

Fig. 7.1 – Private Rental Values Newbury (October 2019)	
1 Bedroom	£758.00
2 Bedrooms	£948.00
3 Bedrooms	£1,293.00
4 Bedrooms	£1,496.00

LHA monthly rates for the Newbury Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA) are £568 for one-bedroom accommodation, £719 for two bedroom, £866 for three bedroom and £1,214 for four bedroom.

Fig. 8 - West Berkshire Council Local Housing Allowance Rates		
BRMA/MONTHLY	NEWBURY	READING
<b>LHA RATE</b>		
<b>01 APR 2019 – 31 MAR 2020</b>		
Room (not self-contained)	£319.24	£351.61
1 Bedroom	£568.14	£682.98
2 Bedrooms	£718.90	£865.80
3 Bedrooms	£865.80	£989.91
4 Bedrooms	£1,213.68	£1,365.52

N.B. Both Newbury and Reading Broad Rental Market Areas (BRMA) cover the West Berkshire Council area as shown below.



## 5.4 Houses in multiple occupation

A house in multiple occupation (HMO) is a property rented out by at least 3 people who are not from 1 'household' (for example a family) but share facilities like the bathroom and kitchen. It's sometimes called a 'house share'.

Data from the census 2011 ([Table KS401EW](#)) shows that the number of HMOs in West Berkshire was 11, which represents 0.17 per 1,000 dwellings. Of note, the corresponding average for the South East Region is 0.61 per 1,000. As can be seen in figure 8.1 below all the neighbouring Authorities have a similar scarcity of HMOs with the exception of Reading which is well above the South East average (potentially due to a larger student population).

Fig. 8.1 – Shared Dwellings	Total Dwellings	Shared dwelling: Three or more household spaces	Shared dwelling: Three or more household spaces per 1000
ENGLAND	22,976,066	13,918	0.61
SOUTH EAST REGION	3,694,388	1,864	0.50
Reading UA	65,551	87	1.33
<b>West Berkshire UA</b>	<b>64,603</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0.17</b>
Wokingham UA	62,474	3	0.05
Basingstoke and Deane	70,936	7	0.10
Wiltshire UA	201,991	38	0.19
Vale of White Horse	51,020	2	0.04

Source: Census 2011: [Table KS401EW](#): Dwellings, household spaces and accommodation type

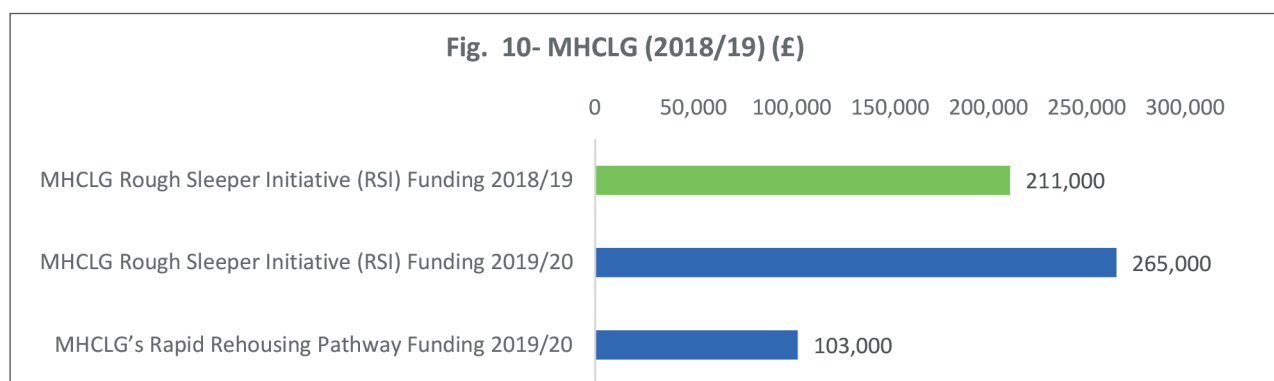


## 6 Resources to prevent and alleviate Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

### 6.1 Funding sources

The Council's Flexible Homelessness Support Grant 2018/19 was £131,480. Following the introduction of the HRA in 2018 the Council estimated a potential doubling of the workload for staff. The housing service consequently bid for an extra 10 staff to cover this additional workload and received funding for seven. As shown in the table below the funding from the RSI brought a significant increase in funding which the Council has used to recruit additional staff and fund the Housing First programme. However, this funding is due to end in March 2020 and the housing service has applied for a 'pressure bid' to replace some, but not all, of this funding pending any future bidding opportunity for MHCLG funds.

In addition, the Council put in a successful bid for the 2019/20 round of the Rapid Rehousing Pathway Funding to provide additional interventions for rough sleepers.



### 6.2 Dedicated resources

#### 6.2.1 Commissioned

In addition to the support provided by the Council's housing team there are two services commissioned directly to support homeless people and rough sleepers. These are as follows:

#### Two Saints

A Newbury based facility, 210 New Town Road, is a 59-room direct access hostel with shared facilities and full-board catered service. The provision is for single homeless persons owed a statutory duty as well as a service offered to those not owed a duty at the Council's discretion.

Additionally, Two Saints manage / provide:

- 107 New Town Road, comprising 16 rooms of supported move on accommodation.
- Queen's House- 5 rooms of supported housing.
- Outreach- 2 workers.

#### Housing First

Partnership working between the Council and Sovereign HA for up to 10 units of accommodation with tenancy support provided by Two Saints. See section 7.1.3.

### 6.2.2 Independent resources

The district also benefits from a wide range of dedicated resources that are largely independent of statutory funding and represents a beacon in the context of the wider geographic area.

#### Loose Ends

A drop-in centre in Newbury, serving food to the homeless and vulnerable. It provides a hot meal, donated food and a safe, friendly atmosphere where people can socialise. Open 5 days a week.

#### Newbury Soup Kitchen

A drop-in centre (Thursday evenings and Saturday Soup Service). Provision of a hot meal and other donated food. Volunteers with enhanced DBS provide support, advice and signposting. HOLT nurse led clinics and Dental clinics are held on alternate weeks (these are RSI funded as opposed to other neighbouring authorities where the services are CCG funded). The charity (Haven) is seeking to extend provision via a new building with the support of the Greenham Trust.

#### WB Homeless

A community-based charity in West Berkshire set up a night shelter and assist the homeless back into a home and work with mentoring. The night shelter for two successive winters (in 2018/19 into spring).

#### West Berkshire Food Bank

A project founded by local churches and community groups, with substantial support from Greenham Common Trust, working together towards relieving hunger in our local area.

#### Healthwatch West Berkshire

A local consumer champion for health and social care services, (which benefits from some Council funding) which has taken an active interest in homelessness and rough sleeping in the district and has promoted key actions to improve access to health services.

### 6.3 Indirect resources

Additional resources that play a key role in supporting people at risk of homelessness / homeless are as follows:

#### Swanswell West Berkshire

Swanswell West Berkshire is an alcohol and drug recovery service for adults who want to change their alcohol and/or drug use, and who live in West Berkshire. 15 to 20% of the case load have issues that include actual homelessness or the risk of.

#### Eight Bells for Mental Health

A member led peer support group for people with mental health issues which meets twice a week with other events periodically. Some homeless and rough sleepers participate.



### Garland Court and Bramble Court

13 flats specifically for people with mental health needs (9 – 5 service Monday – Friday commissioned by WBC service provided by Richmond Fellowship) Landlord L&Q.

### Bramlings House

Supported Accommodation for young people aged 12 to 24 in West Berkshire. 12 x single rooms; 13 self-contained flats of which 8 are for young parents. Landlord A2 Dominion.

### Step by Step

26 beds in hosts' homes funded by Children's Services. Funding by Housing Services has been withdrawn and therefore the charity cannot house young people where Children's Services have no duty.

### Sovereign Housing Association

Thomas Askew House, Newbury housing for vulnerable adults. 26 units; studios; 1-bedroom accommodation. Matthews Close, Thatcham.

## 7 Recent activities and outcomes

The previous Strategy included the following core headings:

- Continuing to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies
- Mitigating the negative impacts of the welfare and housing reforms
- Making best use of the District's housing stock
- Improving the life chances of homeless people
- Proactively working with partners to provide a co-ordinated approach to tackling and preventing homelessness
- Keeping people in their accommodation through negotiation.

Recent activities and outcomes are considered against these objectives in the sections that follow.

### 7.1 Prevention, relief and mitigation

#### 7.1.1 Prevention outcomes 2018/19

There were 232 cases where prevention duty ended between April 2018 and March 2019. 55% of these involved households moving to alternative accommodation with the remainder remaining in existing accommodation. In the vast majority of cases (68%) households had secured accommodation for 6+ months. Just over 10% remained or were rendered homeless (including intentionally so). A similar proportion were categorised '56 days elapsed and no further action'.

For those where accommodation was secured 60% either gained or retained accommodation in social rented housing, a further 30% did so in private rented housing. In total 6% either gained or retained accommodation with family or friends.

In terms of the activities that resulted in accommodation being secured, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) proved to be the most common activity (33% of cases). In 20% of cases no activity was required beyond provision of advice and information. Other key interventions included, accommodation secured by the Council, help to secure accommodation found by applicant (with and without financial payment) and negotiation / mediation / advocacy work to prevent eviction / repossession.

### 7.1.2 Relief outcomes 2018/19

There were 227 cases in West Berkshire where relief duty ended between April 2018 and March 2019. In the vast majority of cases (50%) households had secured accommodation for 6+ months. In 21% of cases contact was lost. 15% of cases were categorised '56 days elapsed'.

56 days had elapsed with no further action being required, for a similar proportion the application was withdrawn for various reasons.

For those where accommodation was secured a quarter retained accommodation in social rented housing, a further 14% did so in private rented housing. In 59% of cases the type of accommodation is not known.

In terms of the activities that resulted in accommodation being secured, provision of supported housing proved to be the most common activity (45% of cases). In 15% of cases no activity was required beyond provision of advice and information. Other key interventions included, accommodation secured by the Council and help to secure accommodation found by applicant (with and without financial payment).

### 7.1.3 Comparison of performance with neighbouring authorities

The West Berkshire Council area borders five other administrative areas. To the east, Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council, to the south, Basingstoke and Deane Council, to the west, Wiltshire Council and to the north, the Vale of the White Horse. In terms of comparative performance the table below shows the number of assessments and key outcomes. Commentary follows.

Fig. 11 - Assessments - 2018/19	WBC	Reading	Wokingham	Vale	Basingstoke and Deane	Wiltshire
Total number of households assessed	575	1,614	228	275	365	1,729
Total households assessed as owed a duty	572	1,243	221	262	349	1,611
Total households assessed as owed a duty (%)	99	77	97	95	96	93
Prevention Outcome - 18/19						
Total number of households where prevention duty ended	232	369	61	177	152	848
Prevention: Secured accommodation for 6+ months (No.)	157	160	23	139	104	583
Prevention: Secured accommodation for 6+ months (%)	68	43	38	79	68	69
Relief Outcome - 18/19						
Total number of households where prevention duty ended	227	391	22	69	134	530
Relief: Secured accommodation for 6+ months (No.)	113	174	11	38	73	333
Relief: Secured accommodation for 6+ months (%)	50	45	50	55	54	63

Both Reading and Wiltshire have significantly higher population numbers and this is reflected in the number of households assessed. West Berkshire Council has the highest number of assessments compared to the other smaller authorities. In terms of households assessed as being owed a duty, West Berkshire has the highest rate of all the authorities (99%). In terms of prevention, 68% of West Berkshire households where duty has ended, have secured accommodation for 6+ months (the average for all authorities being 61%). This outcome is amongst the highest and only significantly exceeded by the Vale of the White Horse. In terms of relief, 50% of West Berkshire households where duty has ended, have secured accommodation for 6+ months (the average being 53%). This outcome is broadly in line with the other authorities and only significantly exceeded by Wiltshire.

## 7.2 Use of housing stock

### 7.2.1 Temporary accommodation

The table below shows the use of Temporary accommodation during 2018/19. Of note most residents were accompanied by children.

Fig. 12 - 2018/2019	Apr-Jun		Jul-Sep		Oct-Dec		Jan-Mar	
	Total	With children	Total	With children	Total	With children	Total	With children
Households in temporary accommodation at end of quarter	51	42	50	42	57	48	62	53

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

The majority of temporary accommodation used by the Council is Local Authority owned with a small proportion is leased from Sovereign Housing Association. Of note, the third most common category was temporary accommodation in another Local Authority. When temporary accommodation is utilised 'out of borough' to comply with the Housing Act section 208 the Council must notify the Authority in writing within 14 days of the accommodation being occupied by the applicant. West Berkshire owns temporary accommodation in Slough and they recognise that this is not desirable particularly for families with children as it disrupts their education and also distances vulnerable families for their support networks.

Fig. 13 - Households by type of temporary accommodation: 2018/19	Apr-Jun		Jul-Sep		Oct-Dec		Jan-Mar	
	Total	With children	Total	With children	Total	With children	Total	With children
Private sector accommodation leased by authority or by a registered provider	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nightly paid, privately managed accommodation, self-contained	0	0	0	0	3	3	4	3
Local authority or Housing association (LA/HA) stock	34	32	36	34	38	36	41	41
Bed and breakfast hotels (including shared annexes)	10	9	6	5	6	5	8	6
Hostels (including reception centres, emergency units and refuges)	6	0	6	1	5	0	6	0
Any other type of temporary accommodation (including private landlord and not known) <sup>3</sup>	1	1	2	2	5	4	3	3
In TA in another local authority district	9	-	8	-	7	-	3	-
Duty owed, no accommodation secured	7	7	7	7	6	6	0	0

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

The table below shows that the most numerous groups in temporary accommodation are single adults and couples with dependent children.

<b>Fig. 14 - Household type of households in temporary accommodation</b>	<b>Apr-Jun</b>	<b>Jul-Sep</b>	<b>Oct-Dec</b>	<b>Jan-Mar</b>
Single parent with dependent children - Male	6	3	2	3
Single parent with dependent children - Female	22	24	28	33
Single adult - Male	4	3	5	8
Single adult - Female	3	3	3	0
Single adult - Other / gender not known	0	0	0	0
Couple with dependent children	14	14	17	17
All other household types	2	3	2	1

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

## 7.2.2 Housing First

Housing First (an approach developed in the US and used extensively across the developed world) was launched in West Berkshire in May 2019. The aim of the project is to support homeless people with complex needs by providing a long-term place to live with ongoing support. Beneficiaries do not need to prove they are ready for independent housing. The initiative in West Berkshire is funded through the Rough Sleeping Initiative.

The aim of the project in West Berkshire is to access, within the first year, 10 one-bedroom flats from Sovereign Housing Association's general needs stock with housing related support provided by Two Saints. Currently four / five properties have been sourced and Sovereign believes that they are on track to meet this ambition. In general Sovereign believes the project is working well and they are committed to it.

The decision to house a tenant is made by the Housing First Panel comprising representatives from Newbury District Council, Two Saints and Sovereign Housing Association. The tenants are given an assured tenancy but with a probationary period for the first year (a 'Starter Tenancy'). There is a view that there has been a learning curve in terms of the panel for the following reasons:

- Four to five potential residents are identified, and the panel discuss their suitability. However, there are occasions when none of them are suitable and a new person is identified by the

Council. When this occurs at short notice the panel may have insufficient information to make an informed decision and it is considered that increased information-sharing at an early stage would assist in this regard.

- There is a view that the panel would benefit from representation from the Building Communities Together team and a specialist police officer. However, it would be important that the representatives are committed to the project.

Housing First is funded via the RSI and this is due to come to an end in March 2020. However, MHCLG have announced further funding to support rough sleepers, and the Council is confident that there will be additional financial support to provide the on-going housing support element of Housing First as the Council is acknowledged as delivering an innovative 'pure' Housing First project.

## 7.3 Partnerships and Initiatives

### 7.3.1 Homelessness Strategy Group (HSG)

The HSG was established in 2018. The group comprising representatives from statutory services, commissioned providers and charities meets quarterly to discuss specific cases and wider strategic objectives. The outcomes from the group are reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

### 7.3.2 Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM)

The MEAM Approach was set up in West Berkshire in December 2017 following a successful bid to the MEAM Coalition. The MEAM concept represents a tried and tested scheme designed to employ a co-ordinated approach to help tackle the root causes of homelessness. The initiative aims to offer joined-up thinking between a range of local agencies to provide help and support to those dealing with such issues. MEAM represents over 1,300 frontline organisations across England and other MEAM areas to offer effective support to vulnerable people with complex and combined needs of homelessness, substance misuse, offending behaviour and mental health need. West Berkshire is one of 27 partnerships using the MEAM Approach and is committed to working alongside people with lived experience to ensure that people with multiple disadvantages are:

- Supported by effective and coordinated services
- Empowered to tackle their problems
- Reach their full potential
- Contribute to their communities.

The Council, in partnership with Thames Valley Police, lead the project and work with the following key charities and health professionals in the area; Clinks, Homeless Link, Mind and associate member Collective Voice. Since MEAM was introduced:

- 84 people have been referred to MEAM
- 28 have been taken onto the MEAM Cohort
- 19 have been successfully exited.

The MEAM Coordinator is the primary point of contact for all agencies involved in the MEAM Approach and is responsible for coordinating the support given to the MEAM Cohort. MEAM has been a standing item on the Homelessness Strategy Group since the MEAM Steering Group was dissolved in January 2019 and the functions of the MEAM Operational Group have been absorbed into the Disadvantaged Adults Resolution Meeting (DARM) which was established in June 2019. Of note, the initiative received positive feedback in the stakeholder consultation, undertaken as part of this Review. as a forum for enhanced partnership working for high profile cases which has led to better working practices.

### 7.3.3 Disadvantaged Adult Resolution Meeting (DARM)

The DARM has superseded the Rough Sleepers Task and Targeting Meeting, MEAM Operational Group and the Blue Light Operational Group. This group was formed in June 2019 and took over responsibility for the previous three meetings/groups. The meeting is chaired by the three agencies who take leadership of different parts of the meeting. This group reports to the Homelessness Strategy Group.

## 8 Outcomes from engagement with stakeholders

### 8.1 Background

Feedback from stakeholders was gained via a combination of visits to various establishments, telephone and face to face interviews and a self-completion survey completed by 23 stakeholders. Participants included representatives from the following organisations / bodies.

- WBC Housing Service
- Two Saints
- Step by Step (Supported Lodgings)
- Adult Social Care
- Newbury Soup Kitchen
- Swanswell
- Building Communities Together
- West Berkshire Homeless
- Sovereign HA
- WBC Development and Planning
- Healthwatch West Berkshire
- Council Portfolio Holder



## 8.2 Perceived barriers and challenges

**Accommodation / affordability:** Shortages across a range of affordable accommodation in the district was cited by respondents, for example:

- Suitable move on accommodation for single homeless and larger households, particularly in social housing, was a consistent outcome across the stakeholder base. The absence of sufficient HMO accommodation was raised by a number of respondents and it was considered that this contributed to the fact that people remain in Two Saints' accommodation for too long causing a blockage.
- There is a shortage of properties with affordable rents in the private sector partly caused by the 'Vodafone effect' and exacerbated by the low LHA rates making properties unaffordable. Also support for private landlords is insufficient and of note Reading Borough Council offer 6 months' rent upfront and therefore it is understood that private landlords on border with West Berkshire let their properties utilising the Reading Borough Council scheme. In addition, there is an under-supply in the district.
- A shortage of temporary accommodation is also a major issue for the district which has led to housing families out of district as a last resort. The Council owns 47 units of temporary accommodation some of which is in Slough and is buying three units in West Berkshire but also has had to lease self-contained apartments in West Berkshire which is costly.
- More family homes could be made available through accessing properties where tenants are under occupying their homes. In this case there was a perception that more could be done by Registered Providers.
- There is a growing body of evidence that RPs affordable rents are too costly for some clients when other costs are taken into account, e.g. food, utilities, etc. making the rent unsustainable and leading the RP not to offer the tenancy to the applicant.

- LHA at 30% percentile is a continuing challenge and currently the Council is topping up rents and also the impact of Universal Credit is having an adverse effect on the most vulnerable.
- A related factor raised by a number of respondents is the lack of safe spaces during the day for rough sleepers, naturally this is more pronounced during the winter months.

**The Two Saints direct hostel:** this being the main accommodation of this nature in the district it is not surprising that this featured significantly in all elements of the consultation. It was accepted that good work is done at Two Saints, but areas of concern were raised, and these included:

- People who leave Two Saints' accommodation because they cannot cope in the environment within the buildings, e.g. people with mental health and addiction issues, are penalised as they do not receive extra points on the housing register, whereas those coming directly from Two Saints are awarded extra points. Also there is reluctance among some applicants to accept the accommodation at Two Saints due to drug use within the schemes and the reluctance of private landlords to offer them a tenancy if they have Two Saints on their address history. Linked to the above is the shortage of specific accommodation for clients with mental health issues. The loss of Fountain Court (a scheme dedicated to people with mental health issues) was cited as an example.
- Another concern raised was about residents with rent arrears being evicted from Two Saints. The view here was that ASC staff should work with these clients before they reach the stage when they are evicted due to rent arrears. The main issue here is that where residents with drug and alcohol problems receive Direct Payments they wait by the Tesco ATM and at one-minute past midnight draw all their benefits and therefore are unable to pay their rent.

- Despite inputs from Swanswell and liaison with the Police more specialist staff are required to assist residents in Two Saints with drug and alcohol and mental health issues and this leads to a reluctance to house these clients. However, it is recognised that shortages of essential staff resources to support these clients with multiple needs is due to funding cuts.
- Another issue raised was the need for the Council to Review its contract management arrangements for commissioned services.

**Funding challenges / workloads:** The service has experienced significant cuts in spending over recent years which naturally affect service delivery. This has been compounded by the Housing Reduction Act (HRA) which has put significant pressure on staff resources. The housing department recognised the challenge ahead and put in a bid for 10 additional staff and was given funding for seven. Therefore, there is pressure on resources to meet the needs of the people accessing the service which in turn puts pressure on staff workloads.

**A Local Connection:** The Council's Housing Service Improvement Plan will review local connection Issues such as hospitals discharging and prisons releasing without checking local connection

**Partnership working:** Respondents commented that partnership working had been a challenge within the district and there was a lack of trust and alignment between statutory, commissioned and charitable services. However, generally there was a view that there had been an improvement recently. The multi-agency groups were seen to be important in this respect, but it was felt that they must achieve positive outcomes and not become 'talking shops'.

**The Common Housing Register:** This was considered to be an area for improvement as the housing register is based on a points system whereas a banding system was considered by many to be a more appropriate approach. It is understood that this will be addressed within the Council's Housing Service Improvement Plan which will also include no longer having a 'one borough'

approach and improving the availability of data to monitor case management and performance.

**Access to Services:** This aspect was seen as a challenge for the most vulnerable and areas mentioned were barriers to health services (GP, A&E, Dental) and previous rent arrears acting as a barrier to accessing accommodation.



### 8.3 Perceived most successful support / interventions to date

Respondents were asked to identify the successes in relation to service delivery overall and their responses included:

#### Helping people to gain and sustain

**accommodation:** The availability of the rent advance and deposit schemes, DHP and the Financial Assistance Fund had proven to be instrumental in this respect. Also mentioned were the interventions by officers of the Council's Housing Team who advocate on behalf of service users where landlords have given an invalid notice and therefore preventing an eviction. Other vital services raised were the floating support service for tenancy sustainment and the support from ASC and MH teams in preventing homelessness.

#### Interventions with Rough Sleepers: A

key component here is the Outreach work commissioned by the Council to identify Rough Sleepers and provide support and signpost to services. Also mentioned were the Health Outreach clinics provided by the Health Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT) who work with homeless people and rough sleepers across the district. The charitable sector was also mentioned, and these included the West Berkshire Homeless charity, Loose Ends and the Soup Kitchen who provide food, support and signposting.

**Partnership Working:** Overall it was noted that the voluntary and statutory sector are now working more closely together and, in this respect, the following services and initiatives were highlighted:

- Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) Disadvantaged Adults Resolution Meeting (DARM) achieving more coordinated working.
- MEAM – there has been a definite improvement over the last 2 years but more work needed to ensure that it works at a strategic level.
- DARM is good as everyone gets together which has resulted in a good sharing information exercise but it can be improved further. Of note a recent change which has worked better for members is that the three meetings are now combined on the same day.
- Building Communities Team based in the contact centre at Market Street, Newbury is a good example of partnership working across services.
- The new / emerging Corporate Strategy framework including the West Berkshire Vision (owned by the Health and Wellbeing Board), and the Council Strategy and its delivery plan both feature housing as a priority area either specifically or by implication. So key themes include helping the vulnerable, helping people to help themselves and delivering housing. There are also other areas around improving health outcomes and education that housing can also obviously support.
- A shift in culture in the Council resulting in an improvement in preventative services and customer service overall.

**New initiatives and Funding:** Funding has been an issue for the service and its short-term nature in some instances continues to be an ongoing challenge. However, respondents were positive about many aspects of the services. Although the HRA is a challenge in terms of resources clients now have access to advice and assistance for longer (56 days) and clients are able to actively bid on Common Housing Register under a Relief Duty. Housing First is seen as an excellent provision for those with complex needs and the RSI funding has enabled this initiative to be launched. The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol accommodation

provision (winter and summer) has also been recognised as a success. Council has also adopted Government policy and increased Council Tax to 300% on homes that have been empty for two years or more and has seen a number of empty homes being refurbished as a result. Of note, there are approximately 200 empty homes in the district with around 80 being empty for 2 years or more.

#### 8.4 Perceived options for the future

**Accommodation Resources:** A major issue raised by respondents was the urgent requirement for more affordable accommodation for all household types. Also raised was the question of whether a decision is required on whether Two Saints is the right type of provision or is it too large. It was suggested that the provision should be split into three: Mental Health; Drug and Alcohol; Multiple Complex Needs. Another issue raised by respondents was there should be alternative provision for those with lower support needs, also specialist accommodation for mental health and for those with complex needs (for example Housing First accommodation). Related to the above was the issue of the slow throughput at Two Saints and the requirement for more ‘move on’ accommodation.

As would be expected with this topic there were a wide range of suggestions by respondents and these included:

- Consideration being given on how the Council can build its own social housing despite a shortage of land.
- Prioritising accommodation for people with complex needs (supported housing) and older persons’ housing – this needs to be implemented while trying to protect retail properties in town centres.
- Increasing the supply of temporary accommodation in the district whilst demand for this form of accommodation remains.
- Encourage downsizing to free-up accommodation for families.
- Improved working with the private sector and housing developers.
- Encouraging smaller housing developments for key workers and those wishing to get on the housing ladder.

- No longer using B&B / temporary accommodation in Slough by providing alternative temporary accommodation in West Berkshire.

**Services:** areas mentioned here included improving access to specialist treatment for addiction, scoping the feasibility of a local charity providing a community hub for use during the day, improving tenancy sustainment resources and creating a Vulnerable Adult Social Work team. In terms of partnership working adopt an approach where services can be ‘flexed’ to meet the needs of a particular client, particularly those with the most complex needs.

**Tackling exclusion / barriers to access:** Issues raised here included providing better leaflets and information for people to refer to and improving the website. Advice on budgeting for individuals combined with earlier intervention/laising between agencies/RPs was also mentioned.

**Prevention:** This is a key theme within the HRA and respondents mentioned a renewed focus on keeping people in tenancies, utilising flexible options and making early intervention and prevention a key element in the Strategy. An area for improvement is the ‘customer journey’ which may benefit from increased focus on prevention rather than relief.

**Resources:** A key theme raised was having enough staff to avoid high caseloads that can affect the service provided and reduce staff stress levels. This could be addressed via staff training.

**Partnership:** This was a key area for respondents and a major component was continuing with and ‘mainstreaming’ initiatives such as MEAM and Housing First to sustain and further develop an effective and coordinated response for clients. Work to make the Homelessness Strategy Group more strategic, fostering trust within the group and reviewing its terms of reference and membership.

**Policy:** Respondents mentioned that there are uncertainties going forward and it was noted that West Berkshire has seen a downturn in planning applications and some evidence of empty office accommodation not being let. If there is an

economic downturn more people will present with homelessness / risk of homelessness and the Council funds will diminish and these are issues that the Council will need to address. Also it was mentioned that work is ongoing to establish ways of continuing services that are no longer funded by Government and as a result Housing Services is applying for a pressure bid to keep some, but not all, of the funding accessed via the RSI. It was also mentioned that work is being undertaken to introduce a better private rented sector offer to meet the challenges of shortages of affordable accommodation and this is being addressed within the Service Improvement Plan. It was felt that the ‘policy framework’ within the Council was out of date as was the Allocations Policy. Of note, the Council in delivering its Housing Strategy will address these areas.

## 9 Outcomes from engagement with service users

### 9.1 Background

Interviews undertaken during visits to Loose Ends, Two Saints (210 Newtown Road), and Newbury Soup Kitchen between 11th and 19th September. In total, seven of the service users engaged with were resident at Two Saints (4 at 210 and 3 at 107), two had been rough sleeping in Newbury for some time (1 without a local connection) and one was a Traveller with no connection to West Berkshire.

- Four of those interviewed were female (all of whom had experienced serious domestic violence prior to entering the hostel).
- Seven in total cited a history of mental health problems and six have or formerly have had addiction issues.
- Four had physical health problems (one had successfully applied for a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and three were at the application /appeal stage.
- Seven had experienced severe relationship breakdown (one from out of county had fled domestic violence).



- At least five respondents had children (either living with former partner or in care) and all faced challenges in maintaining relationships with their children while in temporary accommodation or rough sleeping.
- One was employed in regular part time work and only one (a travelling busker) did not rely on benefit income.

## 9.2 Key perceptions

Drug and alcohol issues, mental ill health and relationship breakdowns all featured as the main causes in respondents' journey to homelessness and rough sleeping and the former two main barriers to moving on, compounded by the lack of affordable accommodation and benefits to gain and maintain a tenancy.

The perceptions of residents and former residents of 210 New Town Road were prominent in interviews and discussions. Some did not seem satisfied that Two Saints staff turned a 'blind eye' to drug use. Others, however, were resigned to the inevitability of drugs and alcohol being in circulation but acknowledged this as a key contributor to relapse and a barrier to recovery. Other perceptions included:

- The levels of rent and service charges led to very little money left over for living essentials (£10 per week).
- Resistance of some to fixed mealtimes that if missed meant no opportunity to prepare food independently.
- Issues with heating (not reflecting the season) and issues with the hot water.

For parents, the lack of fixed and suitable accommodation created a negative effect on relationships with children which in turn can compound mental health issues / cause relapses. Failed PIP applications were cited as a key element blocking progression into more stable accommodation. Good support from support workers with PIP appeals / applications was acknowledged.

There were mixed views on the effectiveness of the Council and the system in place to provide support. Some felt that there were insufficient staff others felt that staff were 'unsympathetic'. One respondent stated, 'I have sympathy for them dealing with Central Government cuts'. Many were confused by the processes involved in dealing with the Council (digital exclusion featured here). In particular, a number of respondents gave perceptions on the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system:

- Access limited by previous rent arrears.
- Few suitable properties to bid for and responses to applications can 'take a very long time'.
- Offers in rural locations not seen as practical (fear of isolation).
- Low bidding rate for those in second stage accommodation within Two Saints 107 London Road, Newbury.
- Little recognition of achievement.

Local Connection was a key barrier for some. For example, where social connections are at the Reading border, Newbury can seem alien and expensive to travel to. In other cases, lack of a local connection to West Berkshire was a severe barrier when fleeing domestic violence and drug related street violence in area of origin when accompanied by an unwillingness to involve the police.

Housing First – seen as a good solution by some but there is a sense of unfairness from those who have made progress on addictions / lifestyle combined with concerns over the challenges of maintaining a tenancy before addressing issues (despite support provided).





## APPENDIX 1- KEY TERMS

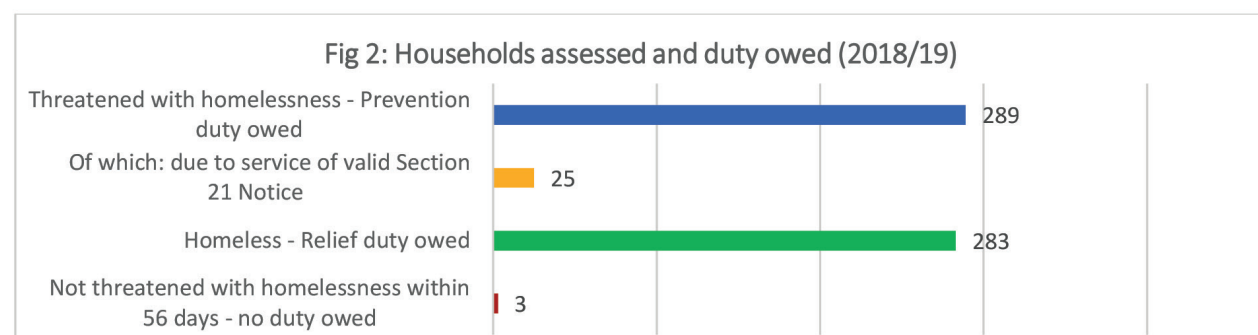
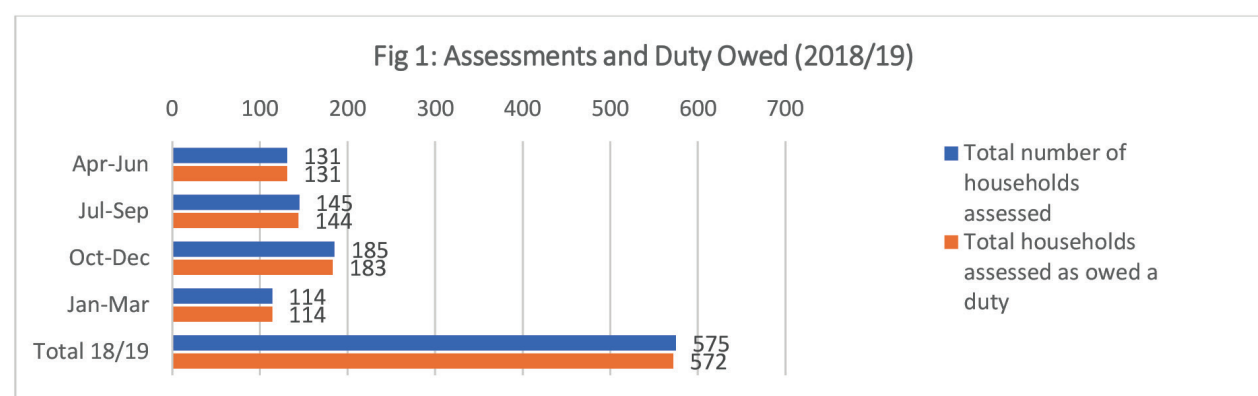
<b>Homelessness prevention</b>	Providing people with support to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness.
<b>Homelessness relief</b>	An authority supports someone to secure accommodation, even though the authority is under no statutory obligation to do so.
<b>Statutory homelessness</b>	People who have made a homeless application to their local authority and have met the necessary criteria set out in legislation to be accepted as eligible for assistance (according to immigration status), homeless and in priority need. This group may include families, pregnant women and vulnerable single people. A household may be accepted as statutorily homeless if they are going to be evicted or are living in accommodation so unsuitable that it is not reasonable for them to remain there.
<b>Discretionary funding</b>	For example, rent in advance payments through a local welfare provision scheme.
<b>The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (came into force April 2018)</b>	<p>Presented a new homelessness prevention duty, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Households threatened with homelessness in the next 56 days must be assessed and have a personalised housing plan (regardless of whether they have a local connection, are in priority need or are intentionally homeless).</li> <li>● If a household has been served with a valid section 21 notice they are automatically owed the prevention duty.</li> <li>● Where the Council, working with the household, is unable to prevent homelessness the household will be owed a relief duty for 56 days.</li> <li>● The relief duty is activated as soon as the household becomes homeless. At this stage a household without a local connection can be referred to the Council that they do have a connection with.</li> <li>● An offer temporary accommodation may be required at this stage, but only if the household is homeless, eligible and is in priority need.</li> <li>● The relief duty runs for up to 56 days. If homelessness is not relieved the household is then fully assessed under Part 7 of the Housing Act and a decision made about whether the full homelessness duty is owed.</li> <li>● Households are owed a prevention and relief duty regardless of whether they are deemed to be intentionally homeless.</li> </ul>

# APPENDIX 2- DETAILED HCLIC DATA – 2018/19

## 1 Assessment outcomes

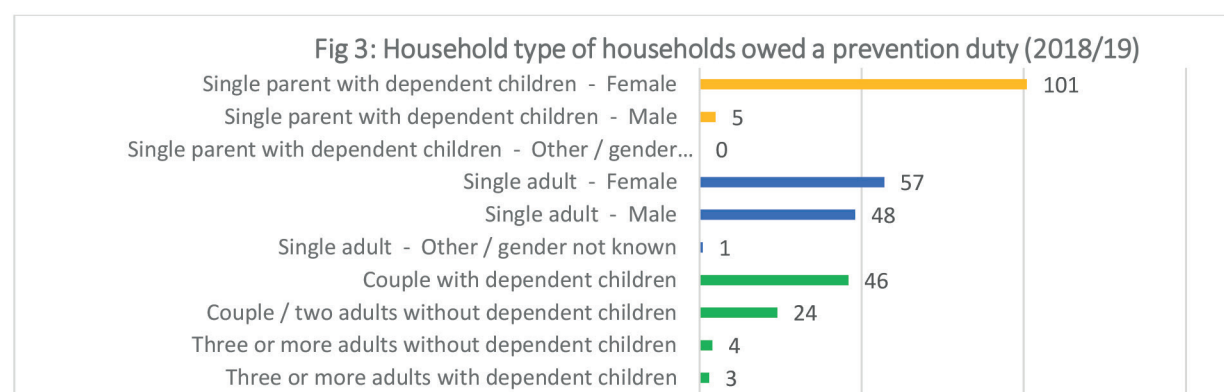
In total 575 households were assessed between April 2018 and March 2019 of which 572 were owed a duty. Of these:

- 289 (50.3%) were owed a prevention duty (25 of which with a valid Section 21 notice)
- 283 (49.2%) were owed a relief duty
- 3 (0.5%) were not threatened with homelessness within 56 days thus no duty owed



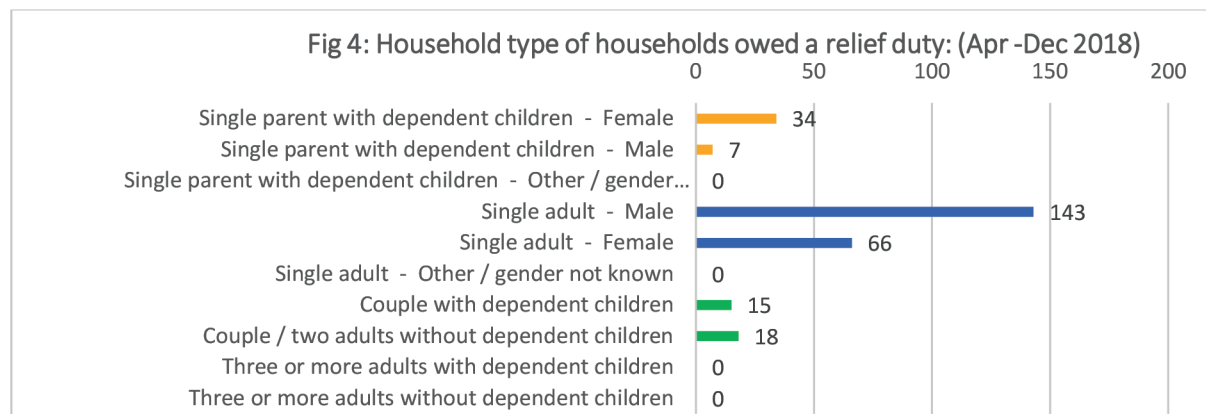
With regards to households owed a prevention duty:

- 106 households were single parents with dependent children (101 female and 5 male)
- 105 households were single adults (57 female, 48 male and 1 gender not known)
- 77 households comprised 2 or more persons (49 with dependent children)



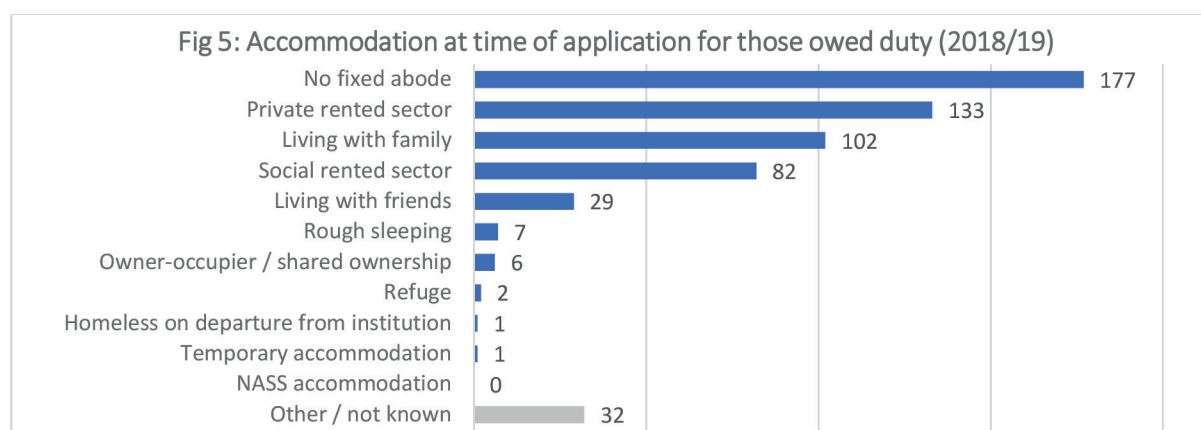
With regards to households owed a relief duty:

- 41 households were single parents with dependent children (34 female and 7 male)
- 109 households were single adults (143 male and 66 female)
- 33 households comprised couples (15 with dependent children and 18 without)

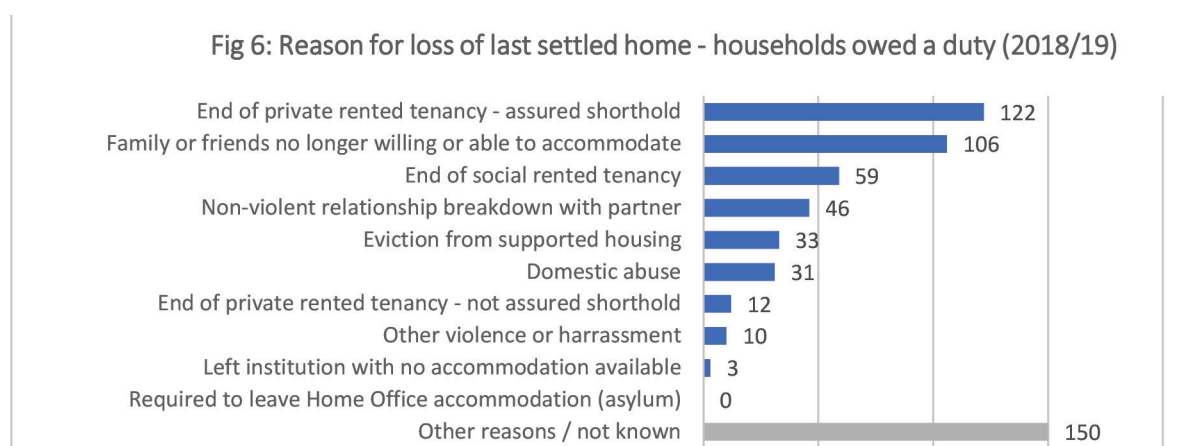


## 2 Last settled home and reasons for loss

Looking at accommodation held at the time of application 177 were NFA, 138 in Private rented housing, 102 living with family and 82 in social rented housing. Of note, 29 were living with friends and 7 rough sleeping.

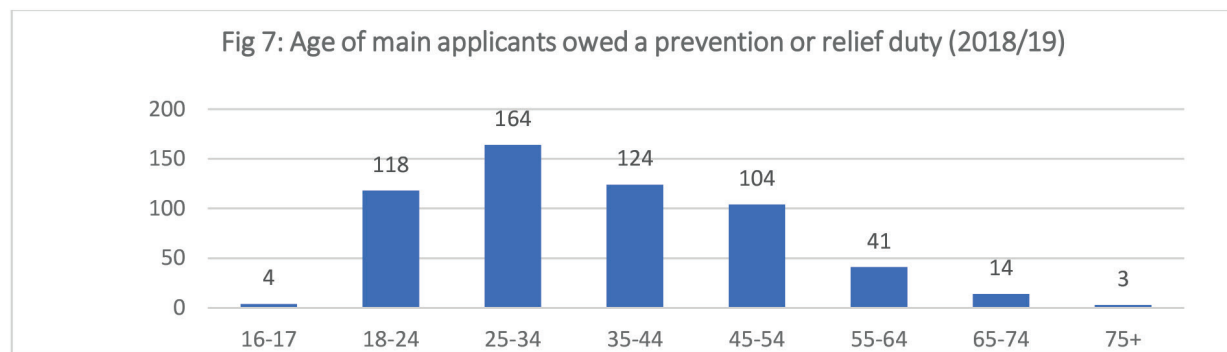


The main reasons for the loss of last settled home were end of a private rented shorthold tenancy (122), family / friends no longer willing (106) and end of a social rented tenancy (59). Of note, significant numbers of households lost a settled home due to relationship breakdown (violent and non-violent) and eviction from supported housing.

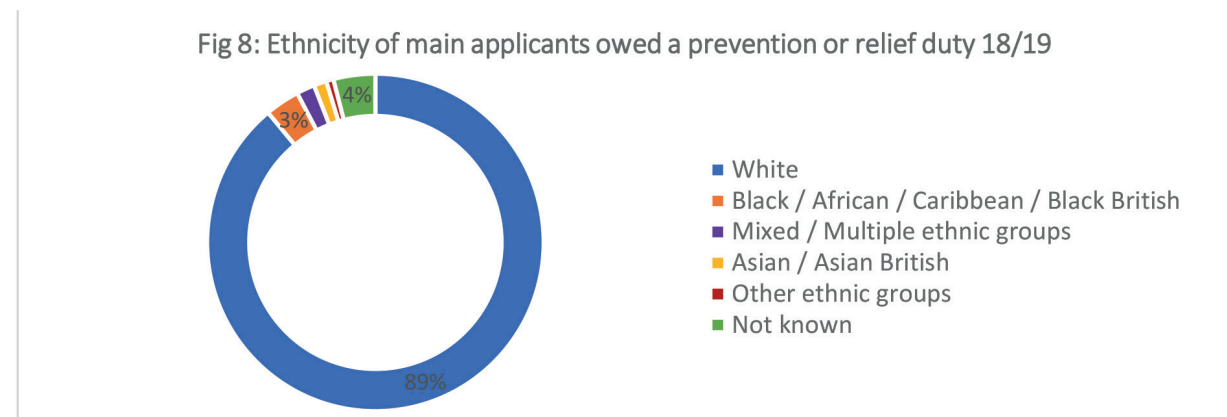


### 3 Age, ethnicity and employment status

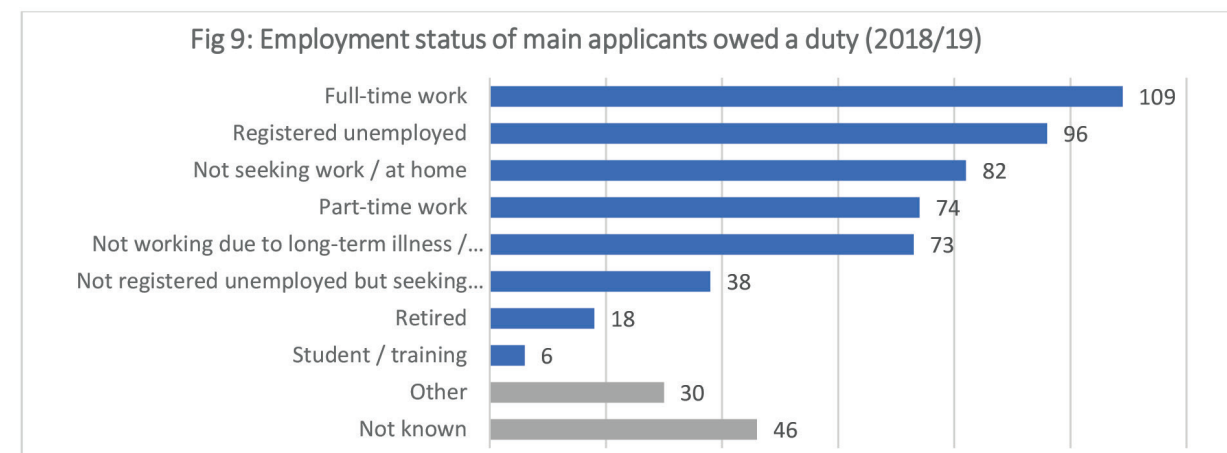
In terms of age bands for those owed either a prevention or relief duty 29% were aged 25-34, closed followed by 35 – 44 (22%), 18-24 (21%) and 45-54 (18%).



In terms of ethnicity 89% were white and 7% BAME and 4% not known.



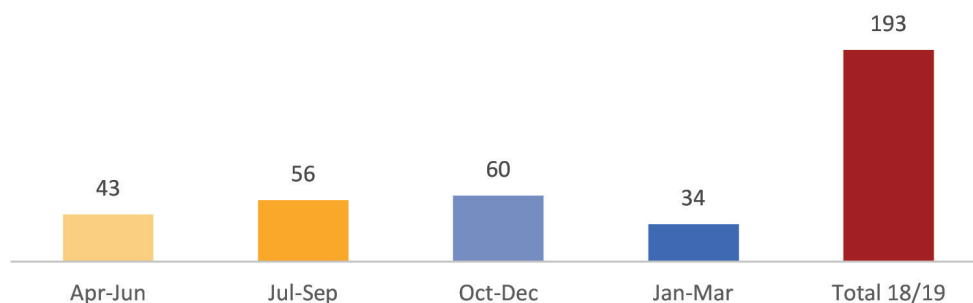
In terms of employment status, 183 applicants (32%) were in full or part time work, 127 (23%) either registered unemployed or seeking work (but not registered unemployed). 73 (13%) were not working due to long-term illness / disability.



## 4 Support Needs

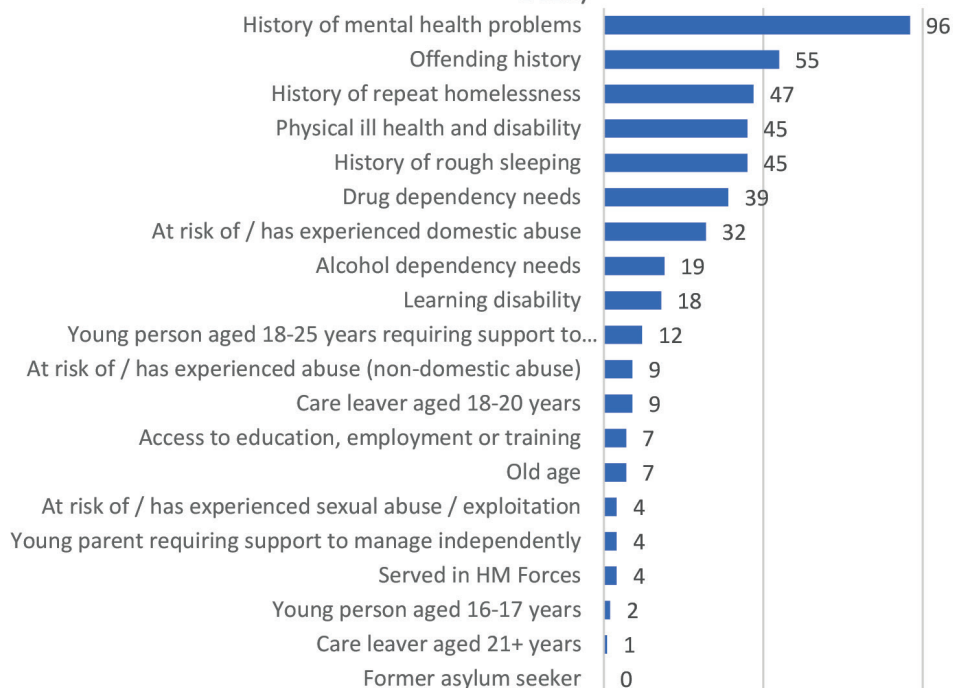
In total, 34% (193) were households with support needs. The total number of support needs registered was 455 suggesting an average of over 2 support needs per case.

Fig 10: Total households with support need(s) owed a duty (2018/19)



The main categories of support need were a history of repeat homelessness and rough sleeping (102 combined), mental health (96), drug and alcohol dependency (59), offending history (55) and domestic abuse (32). Of note, young people aged 18-25 years requiring support and care leavers aged 18-20 years combined led to a total of 21.

Fig 11: Support needs of households owed a prevention or relief duty (Apr -Dec 2018)

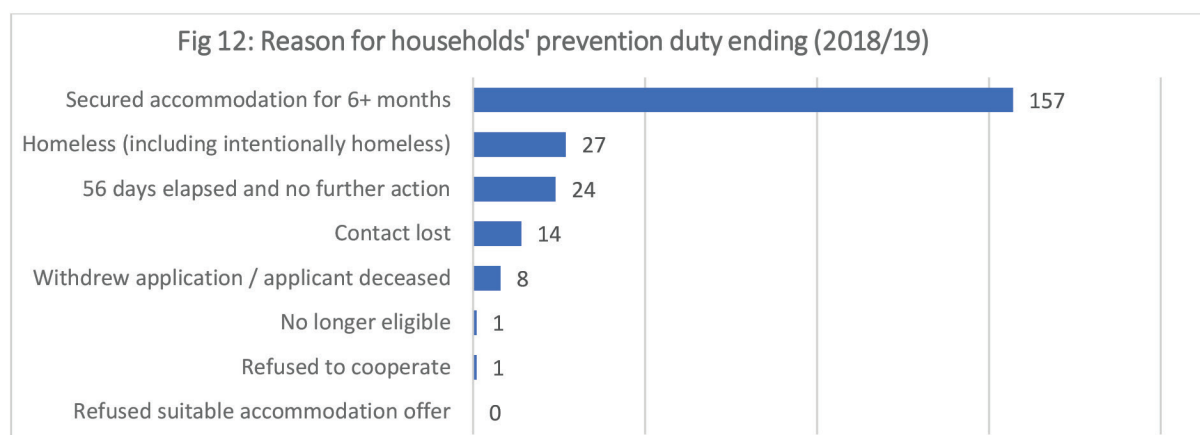




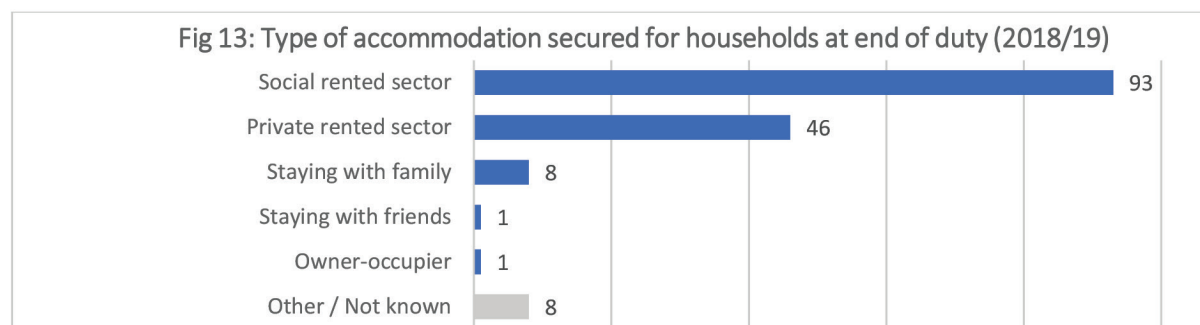
## 5 Prevention duty outcomes

There were 232 cases where prevention duty ended between April 2018 and March 2019. 55% of these involved households moving to alternative accommodation with the remainder remaining in existing accommodation.

In the vast majority of cases (68%) households had secured accommodation for 6+ months. Just over 10% remained or were rendered homeless (including intentionally so). A similar proportion were categorised '56 days elapsed and no further action'.

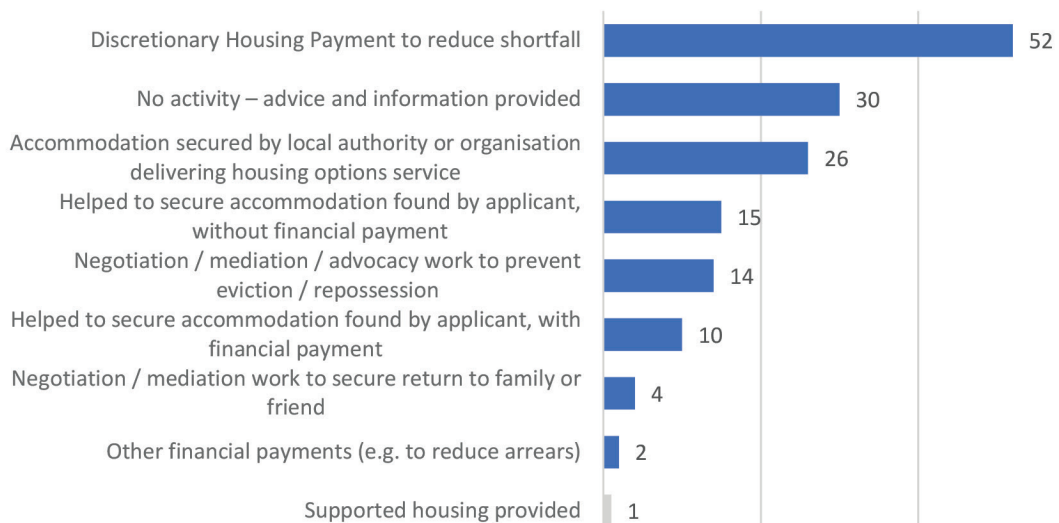


For those where accommodation was secured 60% either gained or retained accommodation in social rented housing, a further 30% did so in private rented housing. In total 6% either gained or retained accommodation with family or friends.



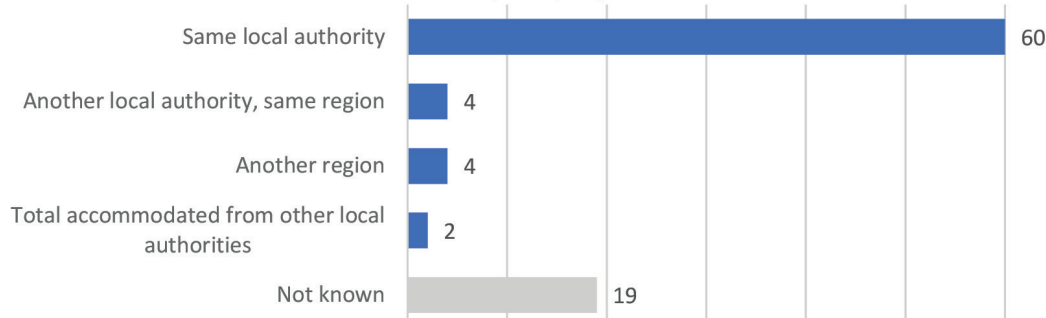
In terms of the activities that resulted in accommodation being secured, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) proved to be the most common activity (33% of cases). In 20% of cases no activity was required beyond provision of advice and information. Other key interventions included, accommodation secured by the LA or organisation delivering housing options service, help to secure accommodation found by applicant (with and without financial payment) and negotiation / mediation / advocacy work to prevent eviction / repossession.

**Fig 14: Main activity that resulted in accommodation secured for households:  
(2018/19)**



In terms of location of alternative accommodation, the majority (two thirds) was in West Berkshire.

**Fig 15: Destination of households with alternative accommodation secured  
(2018/19)**



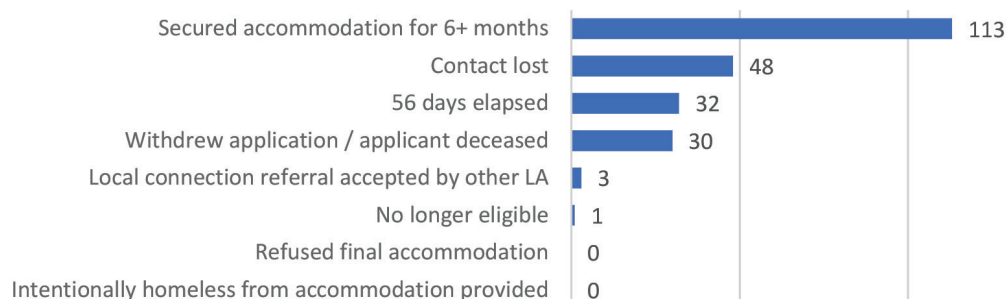
*N.B. Not Known: Values suppressed to prevent disclosure of sensitive information or No data received from local authority*

## 6 Relief duty outcomes

There were 227 cases in West Berkshire where relief duty ended between April 2018 and March 2019.

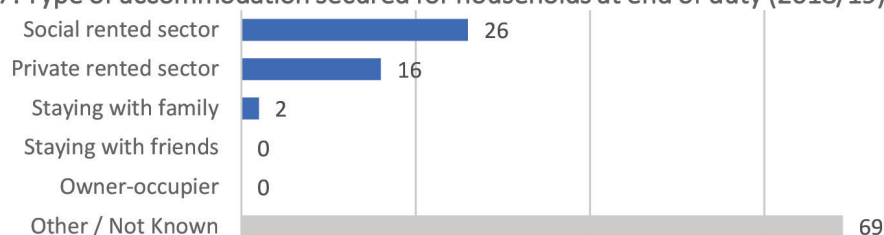
There were 227 cases in West Berkshire where relief duty ended between April 2018 and March 2019. In the vast majority of cases (50%) households had secured accommodation for 6+ months. In 21% of cases contact was lost. 15% of cases were categorised '56 days elapsed'.

**Fig 16: Reason for households' prevention duty ending (2018/19)**



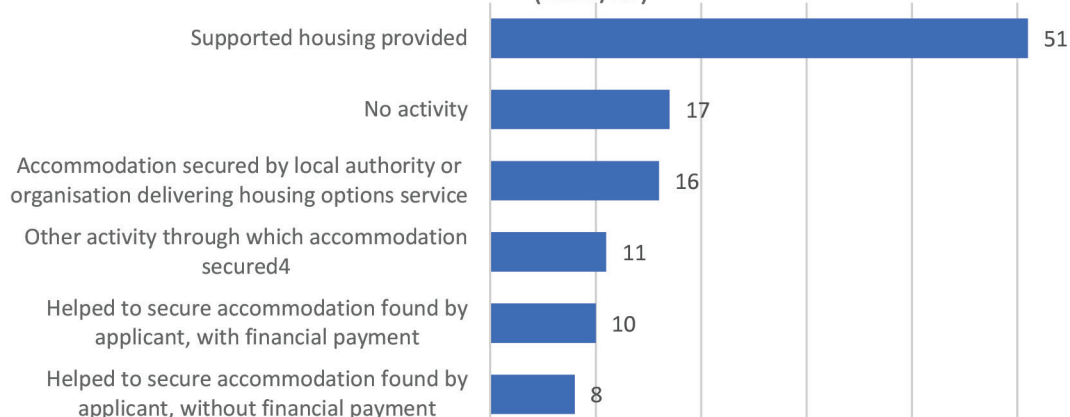
For those where accommodation was secured a quarter retained accommodation in social rented housing, a further 14% did so in private rented housing. In 59% of cases the type of accommodation is not known.

**Fig 17: Type of accommodation secured for households at end of duty (2018/19)**

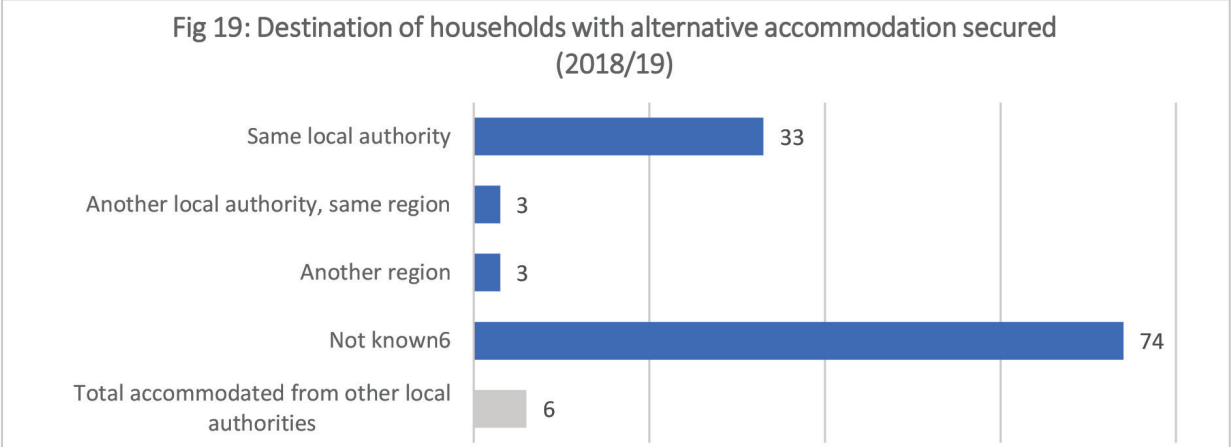


In terms of the activities that resulted in accommodation being secured, provision of supported housing proved to be the most common activity (45% of cases). In 15% of cases no activity was required beyond provision of advice and information. Other key interventions included, accommodation secured by the LA or organisation delivering housing options service and help to secure accommodation found by applicant (with and without financial payment).

**Fig 18: Main activity that resulted in accommodation secured for households: (2018/19)**



In terms of location of alternative accommodation, 28% was verified as being in West Berkshire with a further 62% not known



*N.B. Not Known: Values suppressed to prevent disclosure of sensitive information or No data received from local authority*







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