

APPENDIX C

A review of homelessness in the Fareham Borough Council local authority area

June 2021

Neil Morland & Co

Neil Morland & Co are housing consultants, working throughout England, Scotland and Wales. Formed in 2011, we provide advice and assistance to national and local government, housing associations, voluntary organisations and others. We believe there should be adequate housing for everyone. Using authoritative evidence and our unique expertise, we improve the quality and potential of landlord, communitywide and specialist housing services.

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Executive Summary

Levels of Homelessness

More people are approaching the Council for homelessness assistance. However, relative rates remain lower than that for Hampshire, the South East and the whole of England. Young people are more likely to experience homelessness. The majority of households include dependent children. Single people are more often experiencing physical and or mental health problems.

The main reasons for homelessness are due to parents, other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate or due to the end of a private rented sector tenancy. An allocation of social rented housing is the most common way of helping someone to obtain suitable accommodation.

There has been a significant reduction in the numbers of people experiencing street homelessness following the introduction of various initiatives by the Council, which were in place prior to the pandemic but have accelerated over the past year.

Static child poverty rates, high levels of unemployment amongst younger people and higher than an average house prices will all contribute to future increases in the level of homelessness.

Preventing homelessness

Homelessness is typically prevented by having someone find alternative accommodation. However, many people are provided with temporary accommodation until somewhere settled can be found for them.

The Council has worked successfully with neighbouring local authorities to better facilitate referrals from other agencies. However, there is still potential to improve on the existing provision of housing advice.

There are already joint working arrangements in place between the Council and many other public authorities, but there is much scope for further improvement.

Although there has been a recent reduction in the levels of prevention action, people are still frequently being helped to secure private sector housing and resolving housing benefit problems.

Securing accommodation

The Council has been successful in procuring a range of temporary accommodation (TA). The number of households occupying TA is lower than other areas.

The Council's FareLets scheme has been working successfully with private sector landlords to make the best of private sector housing despite the restrictive Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates.

The number of people on the Council's housing register continues to increase while at the same time the number of new properties available to let continues to reduce.

Support

Support to help sustain accommodation is key to preventing homelessness. Mental health problems, physical ill-health, disability, experienced domestic abuse and a history of offending are all commonly identified support needs.

There is already some good work being done around the issues of youth homelessness however, more could be done to put in place a clear pathway into settled and sustainable housing, for both young people and vulnerable adults.

Resources for tackling homelessness

The Council's decision to increase spending on homelessness services demonstrates its commitment to tackling the issue. The Council have been successful in winning additional funding from the Government for tackling homelessness, however its annual grant remains lower than average.

The Council has a dedicated and hard-working team of officers to help people with their housing needs. The team would benefit from having some additional posts to help cope with the increased workload.

IT software has been used to help drive efficiencies in the service with further significant investment over the coming months.

Consultation

People who have had a lived experience of homelessness have stated a preference to be provided with advice and support at the point of crisis and afterwards, rather than in advance.

A range of stakeholders have demonstrated a keen willingness to work with the Council to tackle homelessness.

Staff view everyone being equally important for being provided with support and believe in utilising all tools to help someone remain in existing accommodation or obtain alternative accommodation.

Recommendations

There are opportunities to improve the monitoring of current and future levels of homelessness, and how this intelligence is used to inform future decision-making.

Efforts to prevent homelessness must be redoubled, with more help being available at an earlier stage.

The range of housing options available must be increased so that people can be more quickly helped to secure accommodation.

More support is needed at an early stage and over a longer period so that people don't experience a repeat occurrence of homelessness

Additional resources will be needed to tackle the increasing number of people who are expected to face homelessness and the growing complexity of their needs.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Preamble

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on English local housing authorities, to formulate a homelessness strategy at least every five years. A review of homelessness in a local housing authority area must take place prior to a homelessness strategy being formulated and published. The legislation requires local housing authorities to take strategic responsibility for tackling and preventing homelessness in their local authority area. This duty complements other duties local housing authorities have to advise and assist persons who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The law requires that a homelessness review concentrate on:

- current and future likely levels of homelessness,
- activities to prevent homelessness,
- activities to secure accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness,
- activities to provide support for people who are homeless, threatened with homelessness, or have previously experienced homelessness, and
- the resources available to deliver the above activities.

This Homelessness Review considers all of the activities being carried out to tackle homelessness in the local authority area of Fareham. This encompasses the public law homelessness functions that Fareham Borough Council (The Council) is responsible for, plus those also provided by various public authorities, housing associations, voluntary organisations, community groups and others.

The decision by the Council to appoint Neil Morland & Co Housing Consultants to complete this homelessness review, ensured impartiality and transparency in the findings.

The aim of this Homelessness Review was to assess if the activities for tackling homelessness in the Fareham local authority area, are reflective of good practice, delivering good outcomes for people experiencing homelessness, and are of value for money to the public purse.

There are two important contextual factors that have influenced this Homelessness Review. The first of which is the commencement of important new homelessness legislation from April 2018. The enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, (HRA17), brought about the most significant change to homelessness law in the past 40 years. The improved rights of people who are at risk of homelessness, are equally matched with the additional responsibilities of local housing authorities. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020, has also had a significant impact, nationally and locally, on the strategies and services being delivered to

households at risk of homelessness, especially people who are sleeping rough or are likely to do so.

The ambition for this Homelessness Review is to identify key objectives and actions that should be pursued to tackle homelessness in the Fareham local authority area, which can be carried forward to form a new local Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

The structure of this Homelessness Review is shown below:

- Chapter two reviews the current and future likely levels of homelessness
- Chapter three reviews the activities for preventing homelessness
- Chapter four reviews the activities for securing accommodation for people who are homeless
- Chapter five reviews the activities for supporting people who have previously been, are presently, or might be in the future, homeless
- Chapter six reviews the resources available to carry out the activities
- Chapter seven sets out findings from consultation with service users and stakeholders
- Chapter eight sets out the conclusions and recommendations from the review

1.2 Definition of homelessness

The law¹ defines a person as being homeless or threatened with homelessness if they:

- Have no accommodation (e.g. sleeping rough)
- Have accommodation, but it is unavailable to them (e.g. due to an emergency or disaster)
- Have accommodation, but no right to occupy it (e.g. squatting, or informal arrangements with family, friends or others)
- Have accommodation, but it is unreasonable to occupy (e.g. due to it being unaffordable, unfit, overcrowded, being victim of domestic abuse, or another special reason)
- Have accommodation, but it will not be available within 56 days (e.g. due to being asked to leave, by either family, friends or others, or from a public authority institution)
- Have accommodation, but have been served a valid notice of eviction by their landlord (e.g. Section 21 notice to bring an assured shorthold tenancy to an end)
- Have accommodation, but it is not available for the whole household (e.g. due to a household member requiring an aid or adaptation to access and/or move around it)

¹ Housing Act 1996, Part 7, section 174

Any usual household members of a person whose circumstances matches the above legal definition is also homeless or threatened with homelessness.

There is considered to be four forms of homelessness². A person might experience only one of these forms, but could encounter some or all of them:

- statutory homelessness – persons owed the main duty of assistance by a local housing authority
- single homelessness – persons living in supported housing (including hostels, refuges, and supported lodgings), usually commissioned by a local authority
- street homelessness – persons sleeping rough in places not designed for habitation
- hidden homelessness – persons accommodated in insecure arrangements often with relatives or friends, but just as often with people not previously known to them

Rough sleeping

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) (the UK Government department responsible for homelessness policies and programmes), has defined street homelessness, as ‘people sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or ‘bashes’)³.

1.3 Methodology

This Homelessness Review has been carried out in accordance with the law⁴, statutory guidance⁵, national guidelines⁶ and national good practice⁷.

This Homelessness Review provides an accurate portrayal of homelessness in the Fareham local authority area at the time of it being completed. This Homelessness Review contains all the evidence that has been assessed, the conclusions reached, and the resulting recommendations made.

This Homelessness Review has clear findings about:

- what is working well to tackle homelessness
- what must be done better to tackle homelessness

² Fitzpatrick, S. (2005), ‘Explaining homelessness: a critical realistic perspective’, *Housing & Society*, 22(1): pp.1-17

³ Department for Communities & Local Government (2010), ‘Evaluating the extent of rough sleeping.

⁴ Homelessness Act 2002, sections 1-3

⁵ Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, published 2018 and most recent updated 31 December 2020 (as of the date this Homelessness Review was carried out).

⁶ Homelessness: applying All Our Health, Public Health England, November 2018

⁷ Morland, Neil. 2019. Making homelessness strategies happen: ensuring accountability and deliverability. Local Government Association. London

- what needs to be the future priorities for tackling homelessness.

The following parties were invited to contribute to this Homelessness Review:

- Fareham Borough Council's housing services
 - homelessness
 - allocations and lettings
 - tenancy services
 - housing strategy
- Fareham Borough Council's Environmental Health housing service
- Fareham Borough Council's Community Safety service
- Hampshire County Council's Adult Social Care services
- Hampshire County Council's Children Services:
 - social care
 - leaving care
 - youth justice
- housing associations
- various local and national public authorities, such as:
 - prisons
 - youth offender institutions
 - National Probation Service
 - Jobcentre Plus
 - NHS Trusts and NHS Foundations Trusts
 - others
- voluntary organisations, such as:
 - registered charities
 - community groups
 - faith organisations
- any other interested person, such as:
 - persons who have lived experience of homelessness.

Representation from these bodies were at a sufficiently senior level of responsibility that afforded decision making powers, especially in respect of policy and/or budgets.

1.3.1 A review of the level of homelessness

The first step was to analyse the current and future likely levels of homelessness in the Fareham local authority area. A comparison was be made to the Hampshire local housing authority areas of:

- Basingstoke and Deane
- East Hampshire
- Eastleigh
- Gosport
- Harts

- Havant
- New Forest
- Portsmouth
- Rushmoor
- Southampton
- Test Valley
- Winchester,

Additionally, comparisons were also made with the collective total of local authorities from South East England, England excluding London and the whole of England. Data was sought from Fareham Borough Council, a wide range of public authorities, private registered providers of social housing (housing associations) and voluntary organisations.

The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, with a greater emphasis on preventing and relieving homelessness, necessarily required a change in monitoring away from the P1E statistical return. The new annual and quarterly monitoring requirement is HCLIC (Homelessness Case Level Information Collection, which retains little of the exact detail of its predecessor P1E requirements and is not therefore always comparable.

To fully understand homelessness in the Fareham local authority area, the analysis in this review covers the preceding five years (2015/16 to 2019/20), which requires collection and analysis of both the discontinued P1E and HCLIC data. Therefore, in some cases, only two years HCLIC data or three years P1E data is available, and not both. MHCLG update and amend HCLIC data as new information is acquired, as it remains an experimental system for MHCLG and local housing authorities, so for the time being data is subject to minor amendment. The HCLIC data collected for this review was last checked by the authors on 20th February 2021.

An analysis of statistics from these data sets, was carried out to understand trends such as:

- numbers of applications for assistance
- number of decisions made by outcome
- characteristics of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- household size
- support needs assessed
- reason for loss of accommodation
- types of prevention activity
- types of relief activity
- types of decisions made
- types of activities to end the main duty
- assistance received by households with their support needs
- local connection referrals made and received
- number of households living in temporary accommodation (by type)

- length of stay in temporary accommodation
- number and types of reviews requested, and decisions made, and
- nationality of applicants

Authoritative sources, such as the Office for National Statistics, were used to forecast future levels of homelessness, by looking at child poverty rates, labour markets factors, housing market factors and any other relevant trends.

1.3.2 A review of activities to prevent homelessness

A review of the activities to prevent homelessness was divided into three strands, to inform the focus of the review:

1. early prevention – information and advice to prevent homelessness or a threat of homelessness (including those being at more risk of homelessness)
2. crisis prevention – assistance to help people remain in existing accommodation or secure alternative housing (including provision of temporary accommodation)
3. reoccurrence prevention – support to sustain accommodation (both accommodation-based and communitywide)

MHCLG issued findings from an external evaluation of its £20m Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer programme, in March 2019⁸. The findings from this research were used to inform a local review of prevention activities.

The review of early prevention activities looked at the duty to provide advisory services⁹. This focused on the advice offered by Fareham Borough Council and other providers of housing advice and concentrated on the quality, availability/accessibility, and accuracy of the advice provided. This encompassed arrangements for assistance to be available outside of usual working hours.

Many early homelessness prevention activities focused on those most at risk of homelessness. Homelessness legislation¹⁰ recognises some characteristics and circumstances when a person has a heightened risk of homelessness, such as:

- leaving prison or youth detention accommodation,
- leaving care of a children services authority,
- regular armed forces veterans,
- victims of domestic abuse,
- leaving hospital, and
- experiencing mental illness.

⁸ Knight, T., Purdon, S., Lloyd, R., Bryson, C. (2018) Evaluation of the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazers, Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government. London

⁹ Housing Act 1996 (amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017), Part 7 section 179

¹⁰ Housing Act 1996 (as amended) Part 7 section 179(2)

The above list is not exhaustive, as many other persons have a heightened risk of homelessness. For example, due to being a young adult, a victim of violence or sexual abuse, a victim of harassment, having a drug or alcohol addiction, being a victim of trafficking, or possessing any of the characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010. This Homelessness Review looked at local arrangements to provide information, advice, and assistance to the above listed persons, to see whether these arrangements are fit for purpose. Identification and analysis of joint working protocols, pooled budgets, shared commissioning, and common service delivery arrangements were also carried out.

Duty to refer

In relation to early prevention activity, the impact of the ‘duty to refer’, which came into force from October 2018¹¹, for specified public authorities, was also reviewed, along with an analysis of the effectiveness of local arrangements. This has been carried out with reference to national good practice¹².

A review of crisis prevention activities focused on the duties to prevent or relieve homelessness¹³. This Homelessness Review seeks to understand how the new burdens arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 have impacted on the how the local authority administers its duties. There has also been scrutiny of the outcomes for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. This extends to how assessments and personalised plans are being completed, plus the effectiveness of these. This Homelessness Review has probed how people are helped to remain in their existing accommodation, or when this is not safe or possible, assisted to secure alternative accommodation. The effectiveness of joint working arrangements with housing benefit administrators, debt advice services, private rented sector enforcement officers, sanctuary schemes, housing possession court desks and pre-eviction protocols with private registered providers of social housing have all been reviewed.

A review of activities to prevent the reoccurrence of homelessness has focused on the support, advice, assistance and counselling people receive to be able to sustain their accommodation. This includes activities carried out by Fareham Borough Council, either via its own homelessness service, or as a commissioner of support services. Logically, a review of activities to prevent the reoccurrence of homelessness has also extended to those undertaken by numerous public authorities, voluntary organisations, housing associations and others. Both community-wide and accommodation-based support has been investigated for its quality, effectiveness, and impact.

1.3.3 A review of activities to secure accommodation

¹¹ Homelessness (Review Procedure Etc.) Regulations 2018, Part 4 Duty to Refer

¹² Morland, Neil. 2018. Duty to refer: an opportunity to co-operate. Local Government Association. London.

¹³ Housing Act 1996, Part 7, sections 195 - 196

A review of activities to secure accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, has concentrated on:

- temporary accommodation provision,
- social rented housing allocations to persons who are homeless or owed a homelessness duty of assistance, and
- private rented sector accessibility for persons who are homeless or owed a homelessness duty of assistance

Temporary accommodation

A review of temporary accommodation provision has covered arrangements for procuring, allocating and managing temporary accommodation, to ensure it is fit for purpose. An analysis of the types and suitability of temporary accommodation used (including use of bed and breakfast accommodation), length of stay, out-of-borough placement, characteristics of households placed in temporary accommodation (including those with children and/or a pregnant woman, 16/17-year-olds) has also been carried out with reference to national good practice¹⁴.

A review of how Fareham Borough Council's Housing Allocation Scheme helps people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness to secure social rented housing has been carried out. An analysis of data associated with applications from persons who are homeless, or owed a duty of assistance, plus lettings made to these groups of people was also carried out. This data was analysed over a period of five years in order to clearly understand the trends. The Government publishes data about the lettings and sales of social housing in England, via its CORE (Continuous Recording of Social Housing Lettings and Sales) website <https://core.communities.gov.uk>. This information is usually updated annually and is available on a local authority area basis. The statistics provided intelligence on trends in social lettings, characteristics of new tenants, the properties available, and more. Additionally, an analysis of MHCLG published tables showing numbers of households on local authorities' waiting lists was also carried out.

In regard to Fareham's Housing Allocation Scheme, a review was carried out of:

- the housing options available to persons who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance, who are not eligible for an allocation of social rented housing,
- how grounds for disqualification from joining a housing allocation scheme might impact on persons who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance,
- the advice, information, and assistance on making an application for social rented housing provided to persons who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance,
- the choice and opportunities of persons who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance to express a preference of what social rented housing is allocated them,

¹⁴ Gray, Tim., Messenger, Gary. 2018. Housing our homeless households. Local Government Association. London.

- the degree of reasonable preference afforded to persons who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance, and
- whether persons more at risk of homelessness (e.g. persons leaving prison, offenders, care leavers, persons leaving hospital, the armed forces, escaping domestic abuse, that are a vulnerable adult, or others) are regarded as having a reasonable preference for an allocation of social rented housing, or have been given additional preference.

A review was carried out on the trends associated with the types of tenancy agreements issued to persons who were homeless or owed a duty of assistance by housing associations. The Government publishes data about the types of tenancy agreements, via its CORE website <https://core.communities.gov.uk>. This information is usually updated annually and is available on a local authority area basis.

Having regard to the requirements of the tenancy strategy, a review was carried out of:

- The type of tenancies granted to persons who were homeless or owed a duty of assistance,
- The circumstances in which social landlords will grant persons, who were homeless or owed a duty of assistance, a tenancy of a particular kind,
- where social landlords have granted persons, who were homeless or owed a duty of assistance, tenancies for a certain length of term, and
- Circumstances where social landlords have granted persons, who were homeless or owed a duty of assistance, a further tenancy when an existing tenancy came to an end.

A review of private rented sector access schemes for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness has been carried out. This has focussed on the types and effectiveness of landlord incentives used. The use and impact of initiatives such as rent-in-advance, cash deposits, bonds, and other measures has also been probed.

1.3.4 A review of activities to provide support

A review of the support provided to people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or have previously been homeless has looked at the activities carried out to stop households becoming homeless and avoiding a repeat occurrence of homelessness in the future. This has included:

- the types and prevalence of support needs,
- the types of accommodation-based support services and the outcomes they are achieving,
- the types of non-accommodation-based support services and the outcomes they are achieving,
- support provided by public authorities under public law duties, and

- support provided by voluntary organisations, both commissioned and non-commissioned.

MHCLG with the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) published independent research on the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping^{15 16 17}, the findings of which have been used to inform a local analysis of support needs.

A review of the types of accommodation-based support services (e.g., hostels, refuges) and the outcomes they are achieving has considered:

- the accessibility of this provision,
- the standard of accommodation,
- the staffing arrangements and support philosophy,
- the rules for exclusions and evictions,
- move-on support, and
- other matters.

A review of the types of non-accommodation-based support services (e.g., floating support, Housing First provision) and the outcomes they are achieving, has considered matters such as:

- whether the support being provided is sufficiently personalised,
- the joint working arrangements between the support provider and the accommodation provider,
- the efforts being made to help people feel part of their community and to take-up employment,
- whether the support is outcome focused and asset-based, and
- how people are being helped to increase their personal income and improve their wellbeing.

For both accommodation-based and non-accommodation-based support services, service users, staff and stakeholders have all been consulted. An analysis of performance results and outcomes has been carried out, where reliable data is available.

¹⁵ Alma Economics (2019). Homelessness: causes of homelessness and rough sleeping rapid evidence assessment. Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government and Department for Work & Pensions. London

¹⁶ Alma Economics (2019). Homelessness: causes of homelessness and rough sleeping review of models of homelessness. Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government and Department for Work & Pensions. London

¹⁷ Alma Economics (2019). Homelessness: causes of homelessness and rough sleeping feasibility study. Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government and Department for Work & Pensions. London

Response to rough sleeping during the COVID 19 pandemic review

We reviewed activities to house people who were rough sleeping and those at risk of rough sleeping, during the COVID-19 pandemic, referencing national good practice¹⁸.

We focused on steps taken to source accommodation and support, whilst also looking at the funding and procurement arrangements that were put in place. Particular attention was paid to how the Council delivered its own homelessness services, involvement from health services, measures taken to safeguard people who were sleeping rough, and female specific issues when sleeping rough.

A review of support provided by public authorities under public law duties, has looked at how the Council's homelessness service is working with:

- adult social care services to fulfil their duties owed to vulnerable homeless adults owed a duty under the Care Act 2014,
- child social care services to fulfil their duties owed to homeless 16/17-year-olds and other cases involving homeless households where dependent children reside under the Children Act 1989,
- NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups, NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts to fulfil duties owed to adults who are mentally ill owed a duty under the Mental Health Act 1983, and
- the Council's private sector housing colleagues to fulfil public law housing duties to various persons in specified circumstances.

When reviewing how vulnerable homeless adults are supported, there was scrutiny of joint working between the Council's homelessness service and adult social care services in respect of¹⁹:

- using powers and duties to provide accommodation,
- carrying out assessments and care planning to meet support needs,
- preventing homelessness and promoting wellbeing, and
- supporting persons from abroad who are not eligible for homelessness assistance.

When reviewing how 16/17-year-olds and other homeless households where dependent children reside are supported, there was scrutiny of joint working between the Council's homelessness service and children services in respect of²⁰:

¹⁸ Coombs, Jenny., Gray, Tim. 2020. Lessons learnt from councils' response to rough sleeping during the COVID-19 pandemic. Local Government Association. London.

¹⁹ Care and Support Statutory Guidance, Department of Health, June 2014

²⁰ Working together to safeguard children, Department for Education, March 2015

- assessment of causes of homelessness, housing and support needs, and whether a child needs services to achieve or maintain their health and wellbeing, or avoid it being significantly impaired,
- provision of services to meet a child's identified needs,
- support for children from abroad,
- individual children who have no parents or carers,
- young people who need care beyond the age of 18 years, and
- generally performing obligations under the Children Act 1989.

When reviewing how adults who are mentally ill are supported, there was scrutiny of joint working between the Council and NHS authorities in respect of²¹ those who are leaving hospital after having been unwell and need after-care.

MHCLG published an independent evaluation of the Skills, Training, Innovation and Employment (STRIVE) pilot, in August 2018²². This programme was targeted at single people experiencing homelessness in London, who were claiming unemployment welfare benefits. Together with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (now known as Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy) £297,000 of funding was provided. STRIVE was commissioned to pilot an alternative to the Work Programme, which had been identified as being unsuitable for the target cohort. The findings from this research were used to inform a local review of how support is provided to be people who are, or have, experienced homelessness to secure employment.

1.3.5 A review of resources available to fund activities for tackling homelessness

A review of the resources available to carry out activities to tackle homelessness covered money, people, and IT.

A review of money looked at both a local housing authority's own spending on homelessness activities and the grants received from MHCLG and other Government bodies.

In terms of a local housing authority's own spending, scrutiny of forecast and actual spend of the Council's budget for its homelessness service was carried out. There was also consideration of spending by the Council on commissioning others to prevent homelessness, supply accommodation and provide support. Where available, spending by other public authorities on activities to tackle homelessness was also examined, as was funding available to housing association and voluntary organisations from philanthropic trusts, social enterprise trading, investment national bodies, non-governmental bodies and other public sector agencies.

In terms of grants received from MHCLG, inquiries were made about whether the total amount allocated is used for its intended purpose, the success of bidding for

²¹ Code of Practice: Mental Health Act 1983, Department of Health, 2015

²² ICF Consulting. (2018). STRIVE Evaluation: Final report. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. London

additional funding was also probed. Where possible, the money available to a local authority was benchmarked against that of other local authorities to ascertain if income and expenditure is satisfactory.

The review also considered the potential of securing investment from the commercial sector, via a social impact bond, and using a payment by results arrangements with commissioned providers. MHCLG published an independent evaluation of its Fair Chance Fund programme, in April 2019²³. Together with the Cabinet Office and Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport, funding was provided via Social Impact Bonds (SIB), using a payment by results (PBR) approach to improve accommodation, education and employment for people aged 18 to 24 years, who were experiencing homelessness. The findings from this research were used to inform a local review of how private sector resources are being secured for tackling homelessness.

A review of staffing looked at the employees of the local housing authority. There was consideration of the staffing structure, the procedures and processes in force and whether there is enough staff to cope with caseload levels. Additionally, the training that staff receive, both in terms of the specifics of homelessness legislation (e.g., knowledge of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the Housing Act 1996, etc.) and the general skills (e.g., providing advice, carrying out assessments, etc.) to undertake their role was also assessed.

A review of IT looked at the software and hardware available to help administer homelessness functions and assist people who are at risk of homelessness. This involved investigating the use and effectiveness of software for:

- self-service housing advice,
- receiving referrals for cases of homelessness
- formulating personalised plans,
- case management,
- recording prevention activity,
- data reporting (e.g., H-CLIC),
- temporary accommodation property and void management,
- controlling referrals and use of housing related support services, and
- other modules to help enhance the administration of homelessness functions, such as online forms, applications, reports, information packs, letter templates.

Connectivity of software for administering a housing register, mutual exchange schemes, and a potential social lettings agency was also reviewed. An appraisal of hardware available to deliver homelessness services was also undertaken, including looking at the use of self-service housing advice.

²³ ICF Consulting. (2019). Fair Chance Fund: Final Evaluation. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. London

1.4 National homelessness context

The UK Government is responsible for making decisions about homelessness law and strategy for England. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is charged with leading on policy formulation and programme delivery.

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to formulate a homelessness strategy at least every five years. A review of homelessness in a local housing authority area must take place prior to a homelessness strategy being formulated and published. The legislation requires local authorities to take strategic responsibility for tackling and preventing homelessness in their area. This duty complements other duties local authorities must freely provide advice to anyone at risk of homelessness and assist persons in specified circumstances who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

1.4.1 Homelessness legislation

The current legal framework setting out the rights of people who are experiencing homeless and the duties local authorities must administer, has been in force since 1977²⁴, with significant amendments being made to it 1985²⁵, 1996²⁶, and 2017²⁷. The most recent adjustments have substantially increased the assistance local authorities must provide to people who are homeless and threatened with homelessness.

The legal definition of homelessness is set out in section 1.2 of this Homelessness Review and is summarised again below.

Definition of homelessness

Households (single persons, couples, families with dependent children are all covered by the term) who are homeless or threatened with homelessness include those who:

- are street homeless,
- are hidden homeless,
- have been illegally evicted,
- are living in accommodation that is unaffordable, unfit, overcrowded, are experiencing domestic abuse or threats of domestic abuse, and other exceptional circumstances,
- are at risk of becoming homeless due to parents/family/other no longer willing or able to accommodate, leaving care, prison the armed forces or escaping domestic abuse), and
- have been served a valid notice to quit their tenancy by their landlord.

²⁴ Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977

²⁵ Housing Act 1985

²⁶ Housing Act 1996, Part 7

²⁷ Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

All local authorities have a duty to ensure advice and information is available, free of charge to any household, about preventing homelessness, finding a home, rights when homeless, and help available locally.

Any adult, or child aged 16/17, who believes they are homeless or threatened with homelessness, is entitled to make an application for assistance to any local authority.

A household who usually lives in the UK and has a right to enter and remain in the country without any restrictions, is normally eligible for assistance.

Local authority duties

When a household is eligible for assistance, local authorities must:

- Carry out an assessment of their housing and support needs and formulate a personal plan to meet these needs.
- Arrange temporary accommodation, when a local authority believes they have a priority need for accommodation due to them having a specified vulnerability.
- Attempt to prevent homelessness, if they are likely to become homeless within 56 days of them making their application for assistance.
- Attempt to relieve homeless for up to 56 days, when they are already homeless, when making an application for assistance.
- Arrange short-term accommodation when they are intentionally homeless and have a priority need.
- Obtain permanent accommodation when they are unintentionally homeless and have a priority need.

Local authorities have discretion to consider whether the household has a local connection with the local authority to which they have made an application for assistance.

A household has a right to request review of certain decisions made about their application.

When administering their public law homelessness duties, local authority housing services must co-operate with each other and can expect co-operation from housing associations and child social care services. Specified public authorities have a duty to refer a household who is at risk homelessness to a local authority.

1.4.2 Causes of homelessness

MHCLG with the DWP published independent research on the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping²⁸.

²⁸ Alma Economics. 2019. Homelessness: Causes of homelessness and rough Sleeping: rapid assessment of evidence, London, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and Department for Work & Pensions

An assessment of evidence concluded that structural factors were more likely to cause homelessness for families, whereas individual personal factors more often caused single persons to become homeless, and individual health related factors were a more common cause of street homelessness. For families there was strong evidence of domestic abuse, relationship breakdown, financial issues, poverty, and lack of social housing being the causes of homelessness. For single persons there was strong evidence that relationship breakdown, mental health and substance misuse were the causes. In terms of rough sleeping, the strongest cause identified was relationship breakdown.

The researchers went on to conclude that a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods need to be used to understand the current and future likely causes of homelessness, plus the impact policies are having, or might have, on preventing and reducing homelessness. It was recommended that MHCLG and DWP develop a range of sophisticated modelling tools, that produce detailed information to better understand the causes of homelessness, but which are easy to use and maintain by their in-house analysts.

1.4.3 Homelessness statistics

The latest annual official statistics published by the UK Government, for April 2019 – March 2020²⁹, showed:

- Households with children are more likely to be owed a prevention duty at initial assessment than a relief duty.
- Single adult households are the largest group of households owed a prevention or relief duty, representing 60.1% of all households who had a duty accepted.
- 57.6% of single adults are initially accepted under the relief duty.
- Of the households that were owed a duty in 2019/20, those that were owed a prevention duty were more likely (58.5%) to have an accommodation secured outcome than households owed an initial relief duty (40.0%).
- Accommodation secured under the prevention duty is more likely to be in self-contained private rented sector accommodation at 36.3%, or in a social rented sector registered provider tenancy at 21.7%.
- Accommodation secured at the relief stage is more likely to be a social rented supported housing or hostel offer at 26.6%.
- Main duty acceptances have reduced by 29.3% over the past three years, due to the number of households who are prevented from becoming homeless or have homelessness relieved.

Of all cases:

- 54.8% of households secured accommodation for 6+ months,
- 26.3% lost contact or withdrew their application for assistance,
- 12.5% were owed a main duty, and

²⁹ Statutory Homelessness Annual Report, 2019-20, England. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

- 6.3% were deemed to be not homeless or not owed a main duty following relief.
- A greater proportion of households with children were owed a main duty (21.9% versus 12.5%).
- Fewer family households left the system for Other reasons (19.5% versus 26.3%).
- More single males aged 18-34 left the system for other reasons (36.0% versus 26.3% overall)
- A greater proportion of single males were homeless and not owed a main duty following relief (11.4% versus 6.3% overall), most commonly as a result of having no priority need.
- For applicants sleeping rough on approach, 48.5% of duties ended without accommodation secured outcome or main duty acceptance.

Compared to before the introduction of HRA 17, between 2017/18 and 2019/20 (post the introduction of HRA17) the number of households owed the main duty of assistance (obtain permanent accommodation for households that are unintentionally homeless and have a priority need) has decreased 29.3%, from 56,600 to 40,040. Despite more households being owed an initial prevention or relief duty, including priority needs groups such as households with children, there are fewer main duty acceptances as more households are receiving assistance at an earlier stage, through prevention and relief duties.

There has been a 9.4% increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation from 85,040 on 31st March 2019 to 93,000 on 31st March 2020, the highest level in almost 15 years. This is largely driven by single households, which have increased 41.2% from 22,870 to 29,390 households, while the number of households with children in temporary accommodation has remained more stable (a 3.3% increase from 62,170 to 63,610 households). The COVID-19 pandemic will inevitably, and adversely impact on the number of people experiencing homelessness, the number of households occupying temporary accommodation and the levels of rough sleeping.

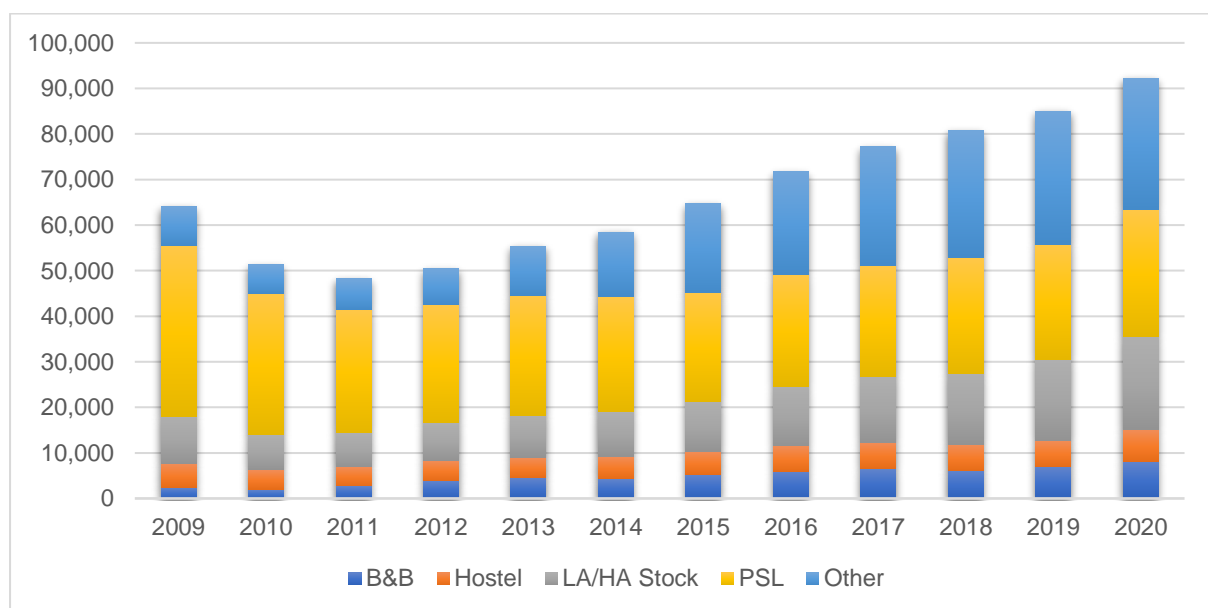
During 2019/20, 2,920 16/17-year-olds were owed a prevention or relief homelessness duty in England, 57% of whom were female, 42% male and 1% gender not known/other. In publishing these figures, MHCLG does clarify that households within age and gender breakdowns may also include other adults and children, and that female households are more likely to include children than male households³⁰. In almost 69% of cases, the main reason for the loss of last settled home for 16/17-year-olds; male, female and gender unknown, was family no longer willing or able to accommodate. Other reasons for the loss of their last settled home for 16/17-year-olds included 5% due to friends no longer willing or able to

³⁰ Reason for loss of last settled home of 16-24 year-olds initially owed a prevention or relief homelessness duty in 2019-20, Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government, October 2020

accommodate, 4.5% due to domestic abuse, and a further 4.5% due to eviction from supported housing.

There were also 54,080 18-24-year-olds owed a prevention or relief homelessness duty in England during 2019/20, more than 60% of these were female, 39% male and 1% gender not known/other. 44% of 18-24-year-olds lost their last settled home due to family no longer willing or able to accommodate, 8.8% due to the end of an assured shorthold tenancy, 75% of which were due to the landlord wishing to sell the property. Other reasons for loss of last settled home for this age group included 8% due to domestic abuse, 5.8% due to friends no longer willing or able to accommodate and 5.8% evicted from supported housing.

Chart 1: Households in temporary accommodation, England, annual snapshot taken on 31st March each year from 2009 to 2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Demographics of homeless households

During 2019/20 69.8% of homeless households had a White lead applicant. In England, 84.6% of individuals are White, suggesting White households are less likely to be homeless. Households containing an Asian lead applicant are also underrepresented as they account for just 6.3% of homeless applications and for 8.1% of the population. Households with a Black lead applicant are the most disproportionately homeless as they account for 10.7% of those owed a duty while are estimated to comprise of only 3.6% of the population.

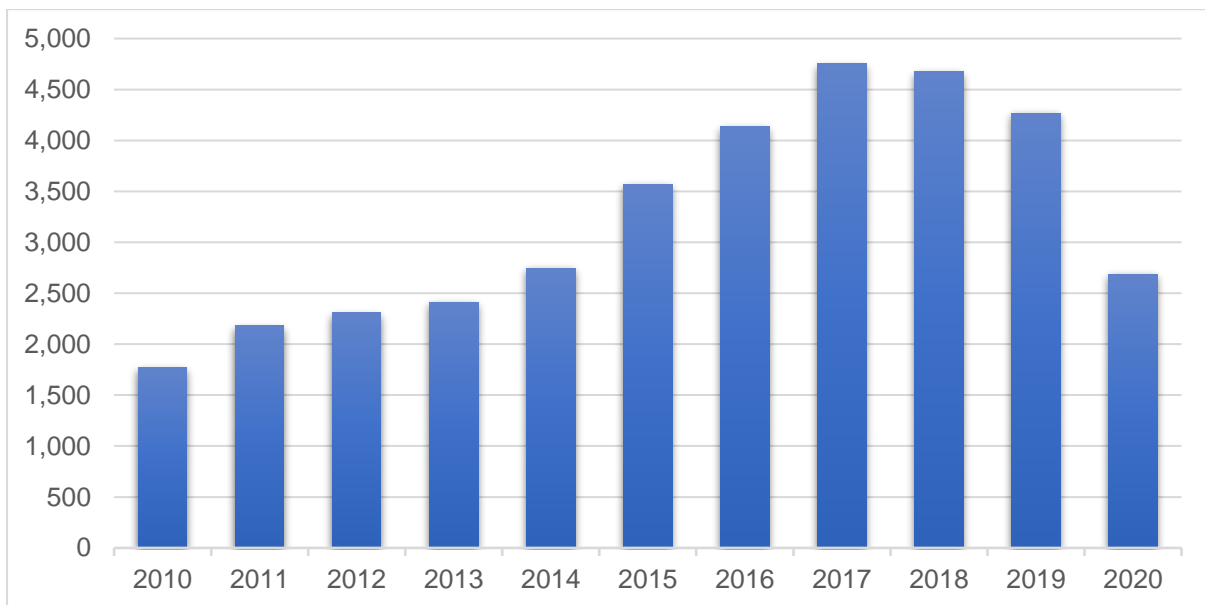
In 2019/20, the most common age group of lead applicants in households owed a prevention or relief duty were aged between 25 and 34 years old, making up 87,990

households (0.115% of 25-34 years old in England³¹) or 30.5% of the homeless population. Households aged between 25-34 years make up 13.52% of the overall population of England and are therefore over-represented within the homeless population.

The most common employment status for lead applicants of households owed a prevention or relief duty during 2019/20 was Registered Unemployed, totalling 88,030 (5.05% of all unemployed people in England at November 2020³²) or 30.5% of the total homeless population. During the same period, the unemployment rate in England was 5.1%, showing that homeless people were six times more likely to be unemployed.

The latest rough sleeping snapshot statistics³³ show that in 2020 there were 2,688 individuals recorded as sleeping rough on a single night in England, down 37% from 2019. This was largely due to the 'Everyone In' scheme helping to protect rough sleepers and others from the impact of Covid-19.

Chart 2: Rough sleeping in England, England, annual snapshot taken Autumn each year from 2010 to 2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

In 2019/20, 17.5% of the 306,187 total new social lettings went to households that were classed as statutory homeless and owed a main homelessness duty³⁴.

³¹ Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Office for National Statistics, April 2020

³² Unemployed: UK: All: Aged 16+: 000s: SA: Annual = 4 Quarter Average, Office for National Statistics, November 2020

³³ Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2019. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

³⁴ Social housing lettings: April 2019 to March 2020, England. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

The latest data available confirms that in 2018/19, £144m was spent on prevention; £68m on support; £1bn on temporary accommodation (excluding non-housing revenue account accommodation)³⁵.

The latest figures from the Ministry of Justice, for 2019/20, show that 1,222 individuals were classed as 'Rough sleeping' and 3,414 individuals were classed as 'other homeless' in England and Wales at the start of a community sentence. These figures also show that 2,775 individuals were classed as 'Rough sleeping', and 8,744 individuals were classed as 'other homeless' in England and Wales on release from custody³⁶.

The Ministry of Justice also publishes quarterly statistics on Mortgage and Landlord Possession in England and Wales. Figures for 2019/20, show 18,097 social landlord possessions, and 12,514 private landlord possessions, with 9,070 of all landlords using the accelerated procedure³⁷.

1.4.4 Homelessness Policy

The UK Government has an ambition of ending street homelessness by 2024³⁸.

From 2017 to 2019 the UK Government invested £1.2bn to tackle homelessness, which included £76m for an initiative to reduce street homelessness and £28m to pilot the Housing First approach. From April 2018 new legislation came into force ensuring more households got more help, at an earlier stage and over a longer period³⁹. In August 2018, the MHCLG published a Rough Sleeping Strategy⁴⁰.

Housing First

The Housing First Pilots in Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region and West Midlands, have helped more than 200 rough sleepers to date. The Housing First approach supports vulnerable people into their own homes where they can rebuild their lives. The pilots are replicating the success seen across Europe, where Housing First projects have been successful in preventing repeat homelessness for at least eight out of 10 people in such projects.

MHCLG has published two evaluation reports, carried out by independent researchers on the Housing First Pilots. The first report⁴¹, provides key learning and recommendations for both national and local government, regarding development, preparation, and early delivery. The second report⁴² focuses on the effects of the

³⁵ Local authority revenue expenditure and financing: 2018-19 final outturn, England. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

³⁶ Community performance quarterly release to March 2020. Ministry of Justice.

³⁷ Mortgage and Landlord Possession statistics: October to December. Ministry of Justice.

³⁸ The Conservative and Unionist Party, Manifesto 2019.

³⁹ Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

⁴⁰ The rough sleeping strategy, 2018, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

⁴¹ ICF Consulting Services, Heriot Watt University, Homeless Link, BPSR and IER. 2020. Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots: interim process evaluation report. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. London

⁴² ICF Consulting Services, Heriot Watt University, Homeless Link, BPSR and IER. 2020. Effects of the pandemic on the Housing First Pilots and service users. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

COVID-19 pandemic on the Housing First Pilots, reporting findings from weekly calls during the lockdown period during Spring 2020.

Groundswell and the London Homeless Health Programme have produced 'My Right to Healthcare' cards for people experiencing homelessness which explain this population have a right to register with GP surgeries. NHS England have committed to rolling out the card nationally.

The UK Government appointed an independent advisor to lead a review into the causes of street homelessness, that will provide advice on additional action required to end street homelessness by the end of 2024.

The UK Government announced a £23 million funding for drug and alcohol treatment services. The aim of the funding is to ensure that engagement that people have had with drug and alcohol treatment services whilst in emergency accommodation, is maintained as they move into a longer term move on accommodation and support those who have not previously engaged with treatment services. This funding has been prioritised for the areas which have the highest numbers of people sleeping rough.

Everyone In campaign

The UK Government's initial response to COVID-19 and rough sleeping in March 2020 was to bring in those people experiencing street homelessness to protect their health and stop wider transmission, particularly in hot spot areas, and those in assessment centres and shelters that are unable to comply with social distancing advice. This approach sought to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on people facing homelessness and ultimately on preventing deaths during this public health emergency. MHCLG asked local authorities to lead a local programme of actions. The UK Government put in place an exemption for hotels, hostels and B&Bs to open so they could offer accommodation to key workers and support rough sleepers.

This resulted in 5,400 people being helped off the streets by the end of April 2020. 90% of people known to local authorities as being street homelessness at the beginning of the crisis were offered accommodation where they could self-isolate. By May 2020, a total of 15,000 people who were at risk of homelessness were reported as being helped to obtain accommodation. By September 2020, over 29,000 people were reported as being helped, with 10,000 into emergency accommodation and nearly 19,000 provided with settled accommodation or move-on support.

Following this, a new taskforce was created by the UK Government, to lead the next phase of support for people experiencing street homelessness during the pandemic. Businesses, faith groups and local communities have been encouraged to help the new Rough Sleeping Taskforce.

During summer 2020, the UK Government suspended for 12 weeks, rules that restricted the assistance local authorities could provide to EEA nationals who were

experiencing street homelessness, to find employment, accommodation and facilitate a reconnection.

An eviction ban for six months was put into force, subsequently the law was changed to increase notice periods to 6 months. Bailiff enforcement action is not permitted during periods national restrictions.

A new scheme, the Protect Programme, was launched late autumn 2020, to run alongside the Everyone In campaign, concentrating on areas with high levels of people experiencing street homelessness. All local authorities were asked to update action plans for tackling rough sleeping by the end of 2020, following which they have been expected to carry out a rapid assessment of need for everyone they assist who is experiencing street homelessness.

As new restrictions came into force in January 2021, MHCLG asked local housing authorities to once again make sure people experiencing street homelessness were helped to obtain accommodation and register with a GP.

A study published by the Lancet showed that the Everyone In campaign helped avoid 266 deaths during the first wave of the pandemic amongst England's homeless population, plus thousands of infections and hospital admissions.

An independent review of the HRA17⁴³, commissioned by MHCLG, concluded that more people are getting help who previously would not. The review also identified improvements which could be made to how the HRA17 is being administered, data collection and joint working.

MHCLG and the Department of Education published good practice advice⁴⁴ to support the development of joint protocols that can help local authorities meet the needs of care leavers, to prevent them from becoming homeless.

Research⁴⁵ carried out by MHCLG with over 500 people who had experienced street homelessness found that before sleeping rough most had not been in stable accommodation, had high levels of vulnerabilities, had experienced adverse childhood events, were not currently in employment, but were registered at a GP surgery and had previously sought help from a local authority. Half had been involved with the criminal justice system and had also experienced hidden homelessness before becoming street homeless. The research estimated the annual cost of a person who is experiencing street homelessness was £12.2k, compared to £3.1k people at risk of homelessness who were not having to sleep rough.

1.4.5 Homelessness Funding

⁴³ Knight, Tim., Greenstock, Jane., Beadle, Shane., Charalambous, Steph., Fenton, Catherine. 2020. Evaluation of the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act: Final Report. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. London.

⁴⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers-good-practice-advice>

⁴⁵ 2020. Understanding the multiple vulnerabilities, support needs and experiences of people who sleep rough in England. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. London.

Since December 2019, The UK Government has allocated over £700m to local homelessness services, with over 300 Councils across England receiving a share of funding to support people experiencing homelessness in their areas. Money distributed includes:

- £200m (2020/21) for all local authorities to obtain accommodation for households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- £62.9m (2020/21) for all local authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- £23m Cold Weather Fund (£13m 2019/20, £10m 2020/21) for people experiencing street homelessness, to provide more emergency accommodation during the winter.
- £3m to homelessness support funding for Jobcentres to help people experiencing street homelessness to claim benefits and find work.
- £433m to offer accommodation for up to 6,000 people experiencing street homelessness and those at most immediate risk of having to sleep rough, with the intention of 3,300 homes becoming available by May 2021. To date, 276 schemes have been approved across England, which will provide 904 homes.
- £6m for voluntary organisations that provide, advice, accommodation and support to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- £700k for local authorities to support people leaving care at risk of homelessness.
- £3.2m emergency funding to help people experiencing street homelessness self-isolate to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- £105m to support people experiencing street homelessness and people threatened with homelessness, to help them secure accommodation during the COVID-19 outbreak, which was allocated to 274 local authorities.
- £75m (£23m 2020/21, £52m 2021/22) substance misuse funding allocated to 43 areas, to help people experiencing street homelessness recover from alcohol or drug dependency.
- £90k for St Basil's Youth Voice Programme, to ensure the voices of people with lived experience of homelessness inform and influence national and local homelessness policy and strategy.
- £2m Transformation Fund, administered by Homeless Link, for voluntary organisations to make more self-contained emergency accommodation available.
- £15m allocated to 19 local authority areas with the highest levels of rough sleeping, to make sure they have accommodation, as new national restrictions start.
- £310m homelessness prevention grant for all local authorities, to deliver local strategies and services for preventing homelessness.

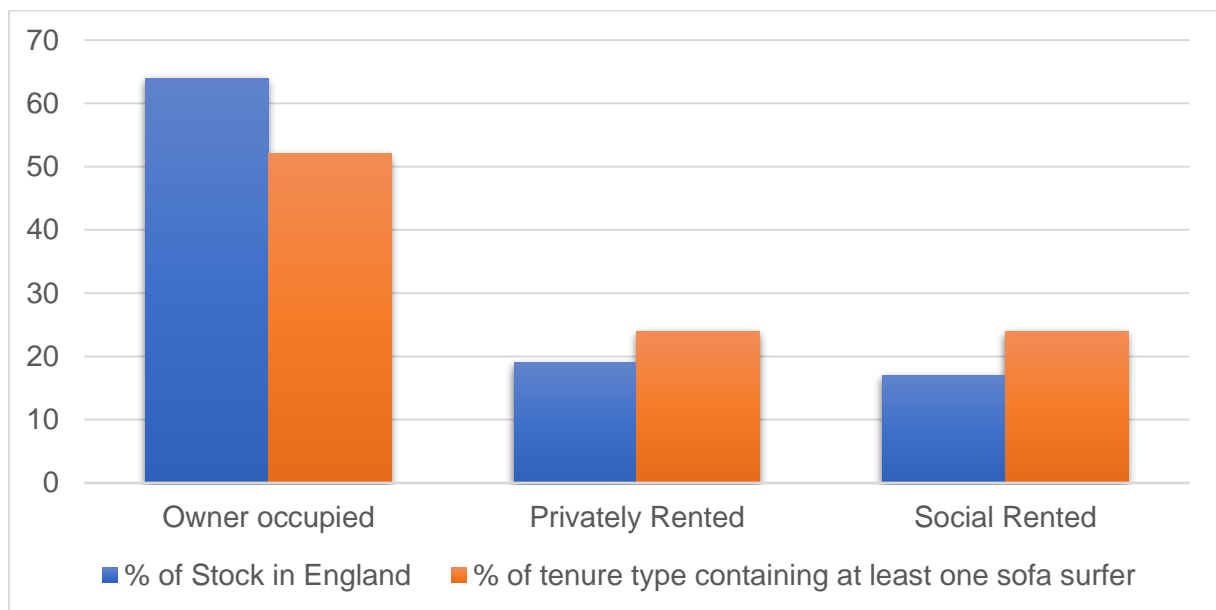
- £10m allocated to all local authorities to house people experiencing street homelessness and help them register with a GP, during the restrictions that came into force in early 2021.

2.0 Levels of homelessness

This chapter considers the current and future likely levels of homelessness in the Fareham local authority area, comparing these to countywide regional and national trends.

The Council collects statistics on statutory homelessness, plus some intelligence on single and street homelessness. There is no coordinated collection of statistics on hidden homelessness from either public authorities or voluntary organisations, however, this is typical throughout the country. During 2018/19, 2% (541,000) of households in England reported having at least one adult 'sofa surfing' in their home who would otherwise be homeless. This was found to be more common in the South East and London, and 29% of these c541,000 sofa surfing adults had children living with them ⁴⁶. As Chart 3 below shows, an adult sofa surfing in England is twice as likely to be doing so in an occupied property than other tenures. However, the number of people sofa surfing in private rented a social rented housing exceeds the size of these tenures, relative to the overall housing market.

Chart 3: Percentage and likelihood of adults 'sofa surfing' by tenure in England during 2018/19



Source: Office of National Statistics

Where data is available, the Council's levels of homelessness have been compared with that of:

- Hampshire local housing authorities:
 - Basingstoke and Deane
 - East Hampshire
 - Eastleigh
 - Gosport
 - Hart

⁴⁶ English Housing Survey 2018-19 'Sofa surfing' and concealed households', Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Office of National Statistics, 2019

- Havant
- New Forest
- Portsmouth
- Rushmoor
- Southampton
- Test Valley
- Winchester
- South East England
- England excluding London
- All of England.

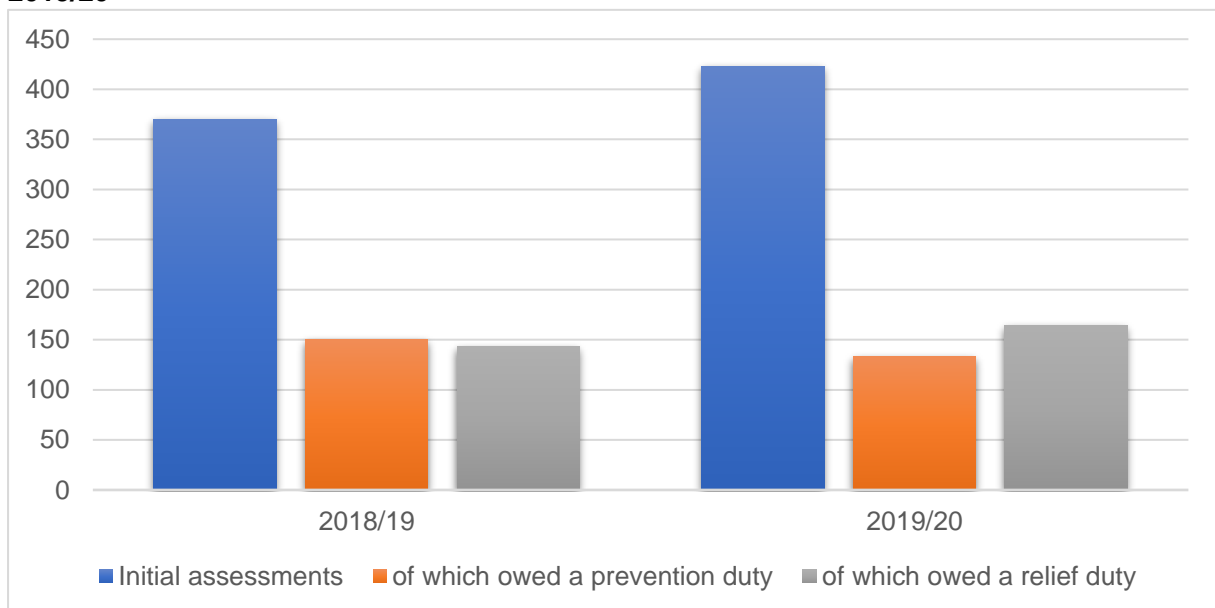
Collectively these areas are referred to throughout the report as the benchmarking group.

Criminal justice agencies monitor the number of offenders who leave prison with no fixed abode. While this data is submitted to national governments, local authorities do not benefit from having this intelligence shared with them.

2.1 Current levels of homelessness

From 2018 an initial assessment must be carried out for each household approaching the Council in accordance with the new duty imposed by HRA17⁴⁷, to establish their eligibility and homelessness status, as well as what, if any, duty is owed. The number of households in Fareham who were provided with an initial assessment increased by 53 (11.4%) between 2018/19 and 2019/20. 293 (79%) of those initially assessed in 2018/19, and 297 (70%) in 2019/20, were found to be owed a homelessness duty by the Council.

Chart 4: Homelessness Initial Assessments, Fareham Borough Council, 2018/19 to 2019/20



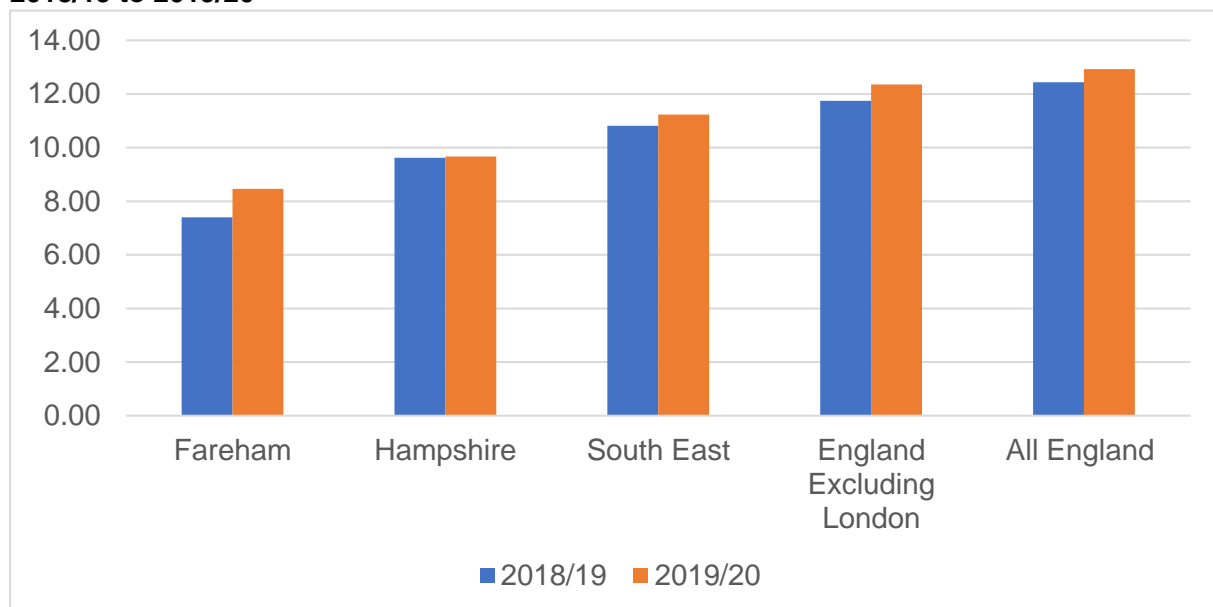
Source: Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

⁴⁷ Housing Act 1996 s.189A(1)

The new HRA17 statistical recording is not yet mature enough to be fully analysed by itself and will require at least five years of data before trends will become clear. Additionally, the UK Government’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic, in placing rough sleepers in temporary accommodation and banning evictions for a period, will have impacted on the workloads of the homelessness service and the statistics, and this may continue for some time.

When comparing the Council with the Benchmarking Group, the local authority completed fewer initial assessments than the Hampshire County local authorities, South East regional and nationally for both 2018/19 and 2019/20, at 5.03 and 4.46 per thousand households lower than All England.

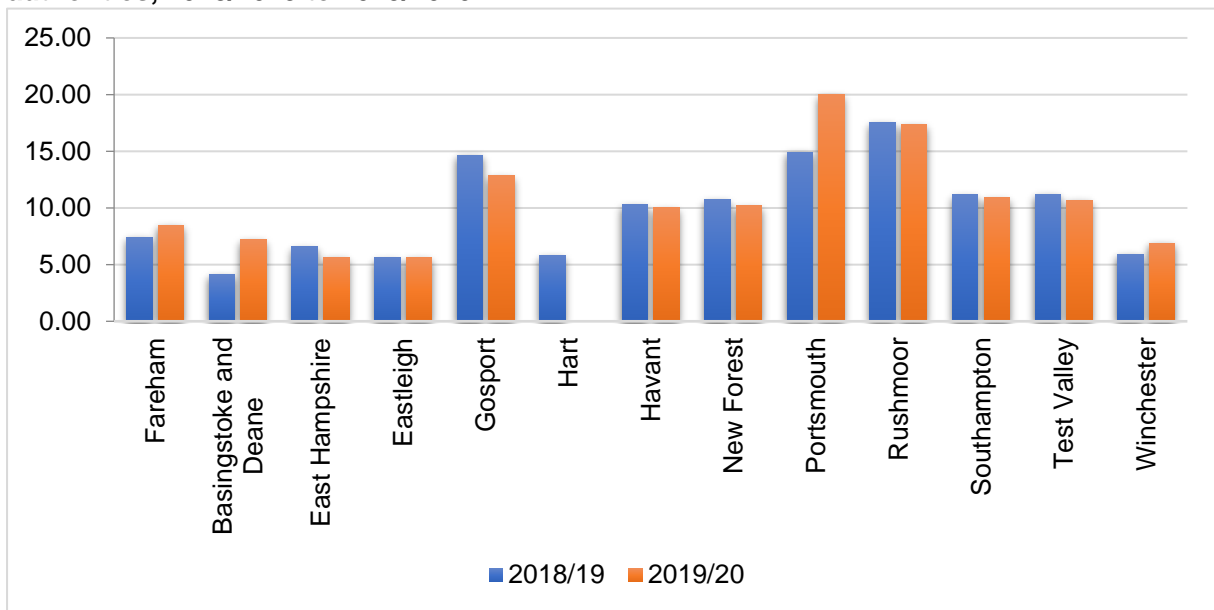
Chart 5: Total Initial Assessments per thousand households, Benchmarking Group, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The mean number of assessments per thousand households for 2018/19 and 2019/20 for the Hampshire local housing authorities was 9.68 and 9.67 consecutively. The Council, at 7.4 were 2.28 per thousand households below this average for 2018/19, but 2019/20 saw this number increase by 1.06 assessments per thousand households to 8.46, which was 1.21 per thousand households below the mean number for this group. This was the third greatest increase of the thirteen Councils between the two years, after Portsmouth and Basingstoke and Deane.

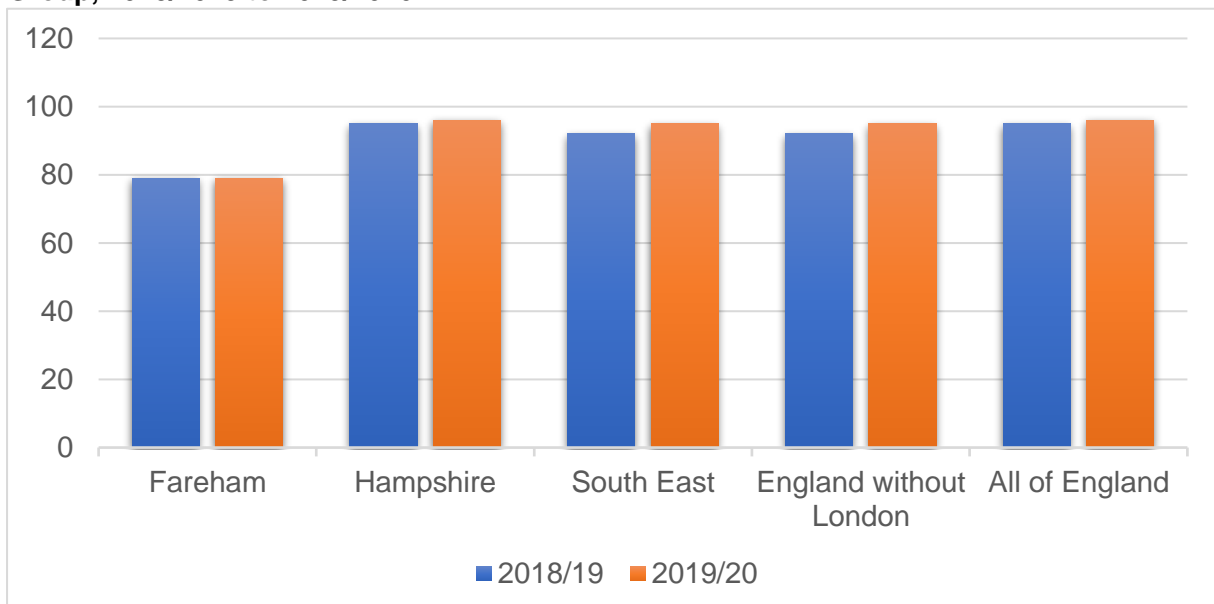
Chart 6: Total Initial Assessments per thousand households, Hampshire local housing authorities, 2018/2019 to 2019/2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The Council assessed the lowest percentage of households as owed a homelessness duty following the initial assessment of the Benchmarking Group during 2018/19 and 2019/20, at 79%. This remained at the same proportion for both years and was between 16% and 17% lower than all the Benchmarking Group for 2019/20.

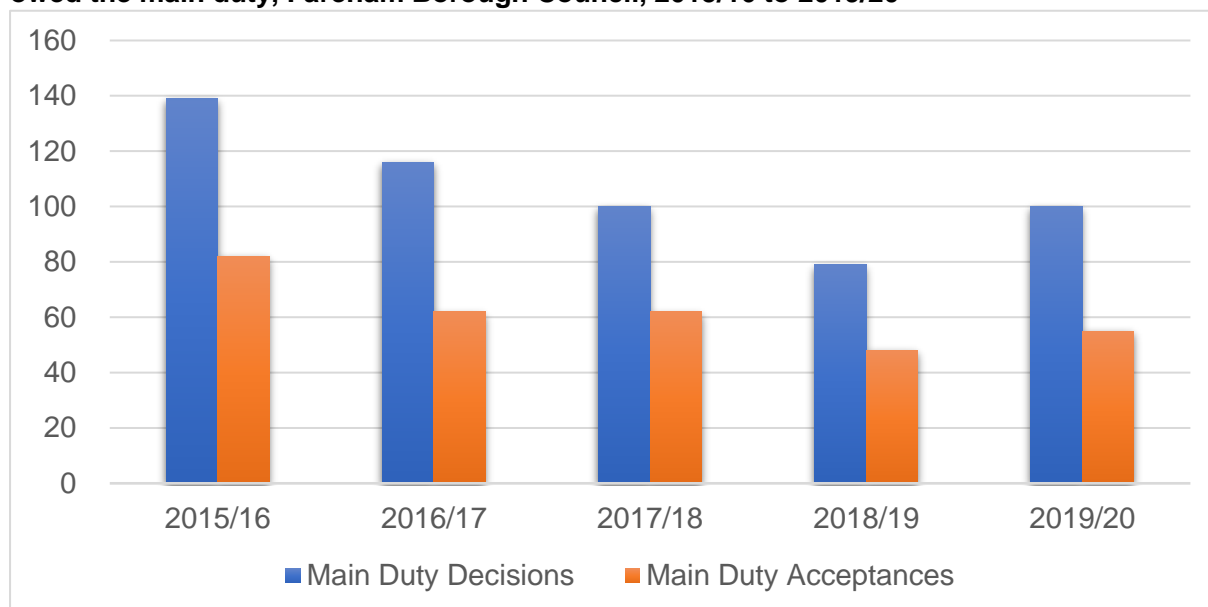
Chart 7: Percentage of assessed households owed a homelessness duty, Benchmarking Group, 2018/2019 to 2019/2020



Source: Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The number of main housing duty⁴⁸ decisions made on homelessness applications by the Council reduced year on year for the period 2015/2016 to 2018/19, to a low of 79, as the initial impact of the HRA-17 changes became evident. There was an increase to the pre HRA-17 level in 2019/20 with 100 main duty decisions being taken, of which 55 (55%) were accepted as being owed the main duty. This was the lowest proportion of acceptances since 2016/17, although fewer main duty acceptances may be inevitable from 2018/19 onwards as a result of the HRA-17 changes.

Chart 8: Number of main duty applications and percentage of those accepted as being owed the main duty, Fareham Borough Council, 2015/16 to 2019/20

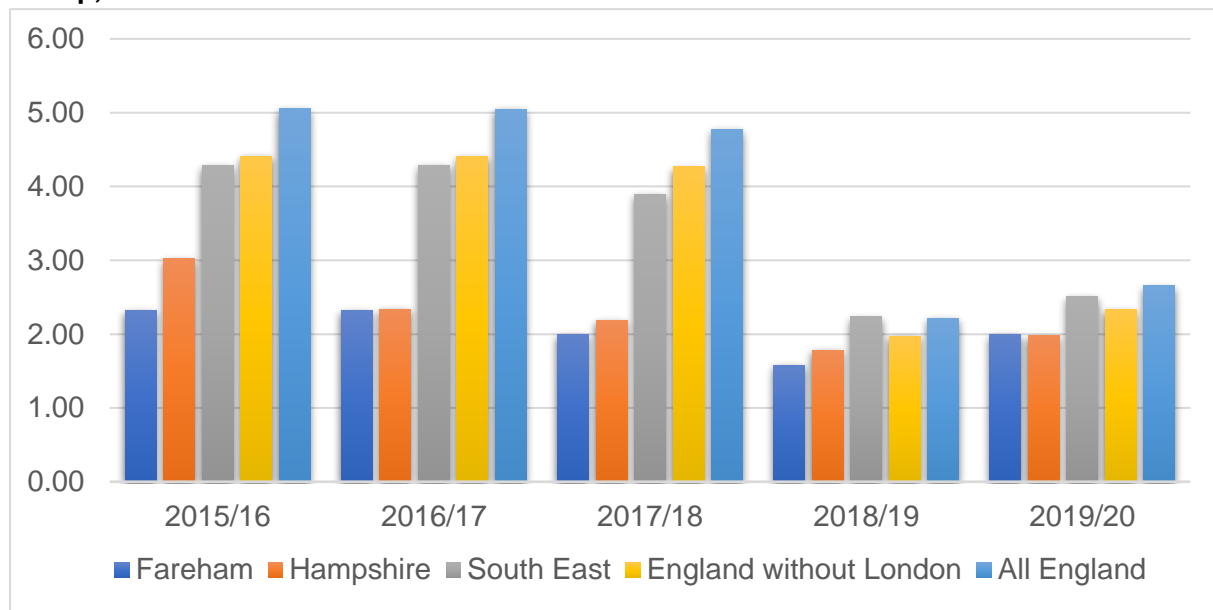


Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The Council made the lowest number of main duty decisions per thousand households compared with the Benchmark Group for the period 2015/2016 to 2018/19 and made 0.02 per thousand households more than Hampshire for 2019/20. As stated above, the reduction in main duty decisions at 2018/19 reflects the national picture, likely due to the enactment of HRA 17 requiring prevention and relief decisions to be made prior to a main duty decision. The number of main duty decisions per thousand households increased again in 2019/20 for all the Benchmark Group.

⁴⁸Housing Act 1996, Pt VII s193(2)

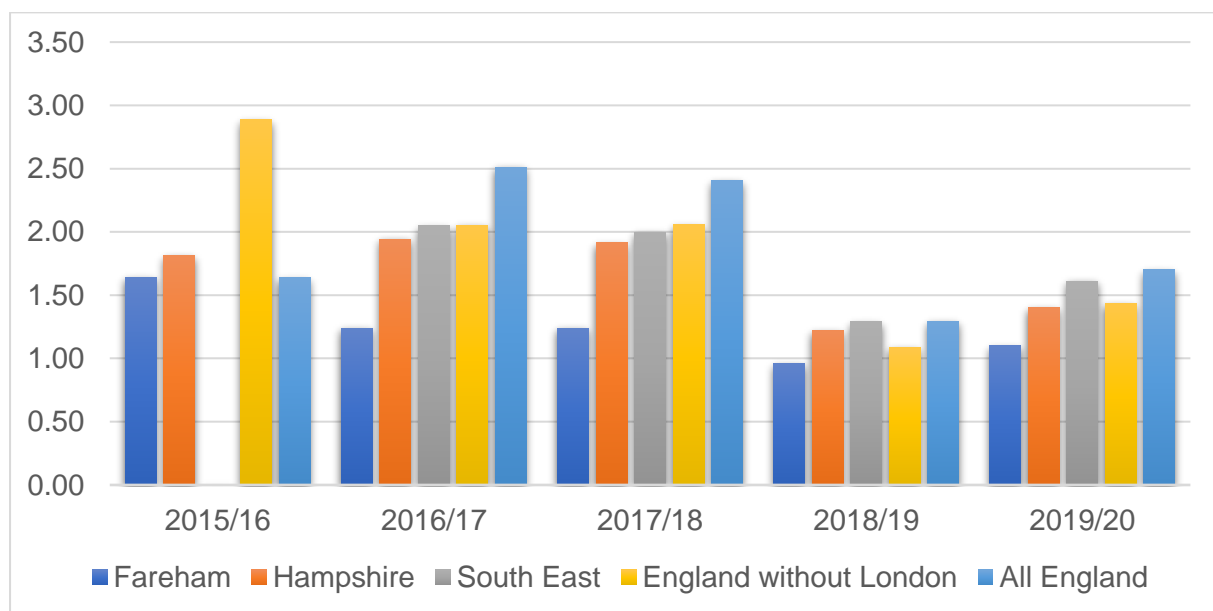
Chart 9: Total number of main duty decisions taken per 1000 households, Benchmark Group, 2015/16 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The Council accepted a lower proportion of main duty cases than all other Benchmarking group areas for all years within the period, with the exception of 2015/16 when acceptances were the same as All England. This proportion only increased in 2019/20, in line with all Benchmarking group areas, though remained the lowest proportion.

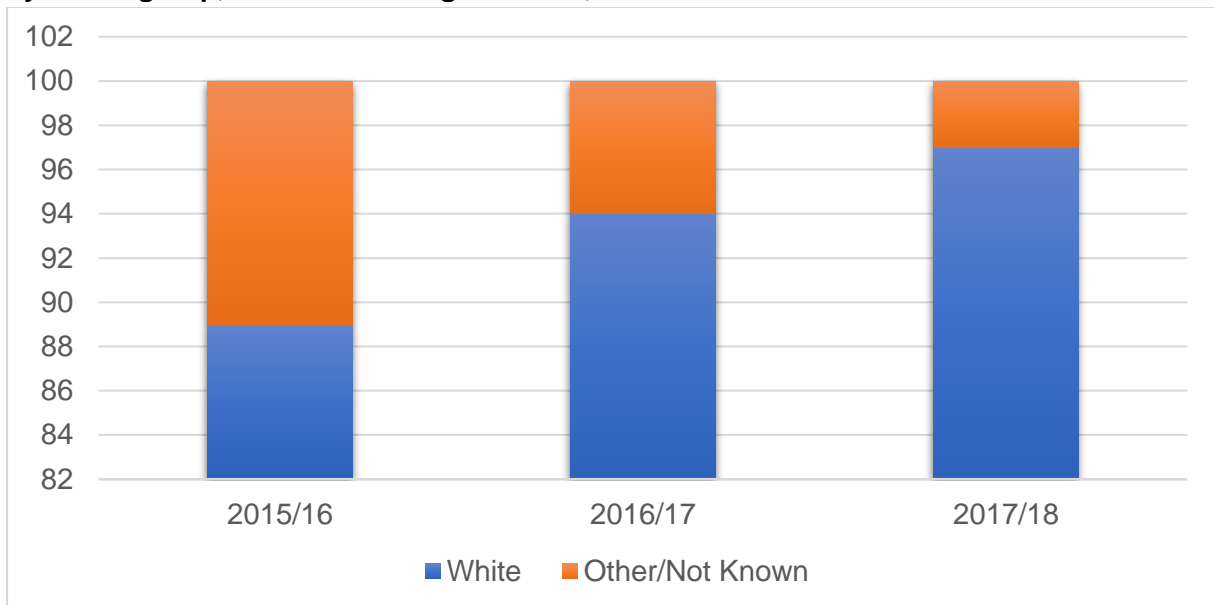
Chart 10: Main housing duty acceptances as a percentage of decisions taken, Benchmark Group, 2015/16 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

95.6% of Fareham residents are recorded as white British and 4.4% as Black and Minority Ethnic⁴⁹ which corresponds with the 2019/20 homelessness applications which show that 95% of main applicants stated that they were White. An average of 5% of main applicants accepted for a homelessness duty by the Council for the period 2015/16 to 2019/20 were recorded as 'Ethnic Group not stated' or 'other/not known', with 1% recorded as Black/Black British and 1% Asian/Asian British for 2019/20. Ethnicity data is now recorded in HCLIC at the stage of prevention or relief duty, and recording requirements are now more comprehensive, therefore futures years will have full datasets which can be compared with the general population.

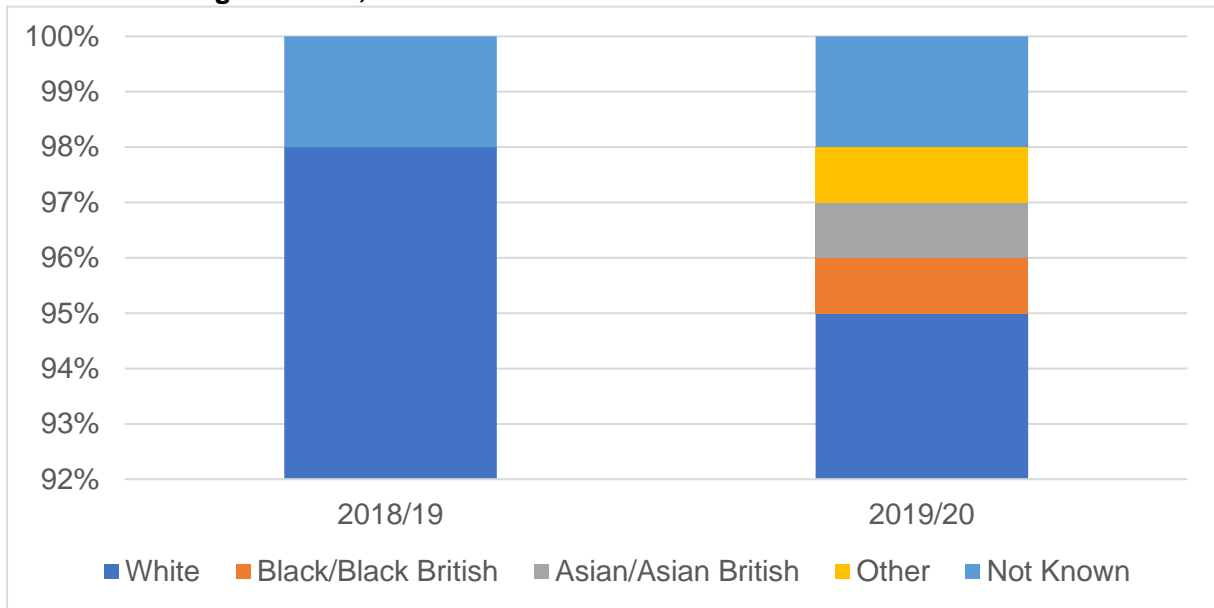
Chart 11: Percentage of lead applicants accepted as being homeless and in priority need by ethnic group, Fareham Borough Council, 2015/16 to 2017/18



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

⁴⁹ Office of National Statistics 2011 Census

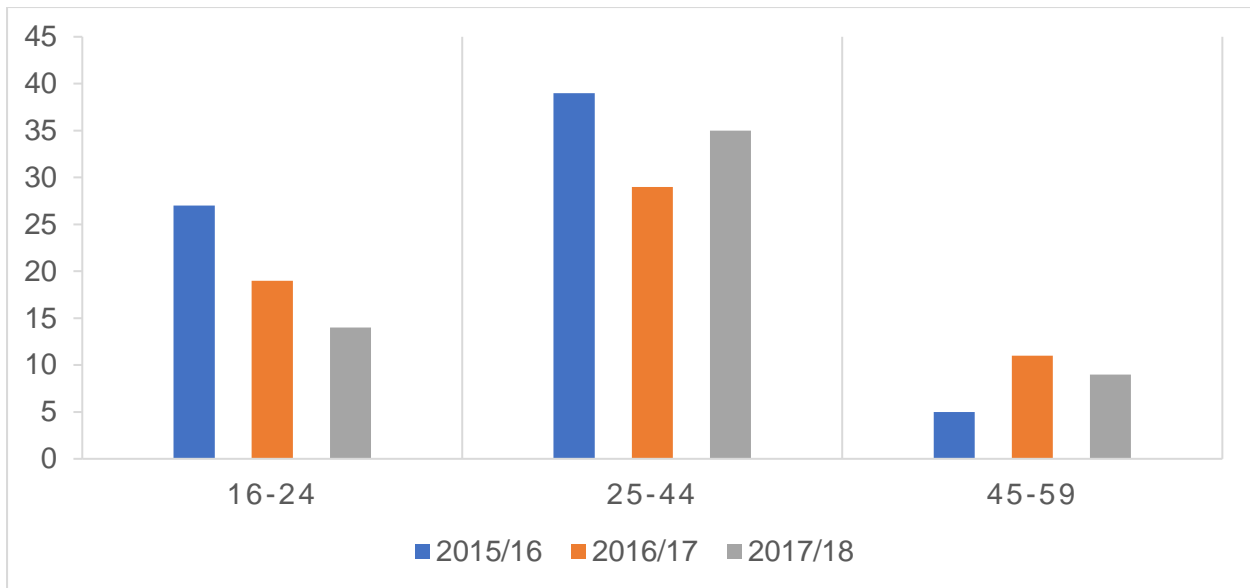
Chart 12: Percentage of lead applicants owed a prevention or relief duty by ethnic group, Fareham Borough Council, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

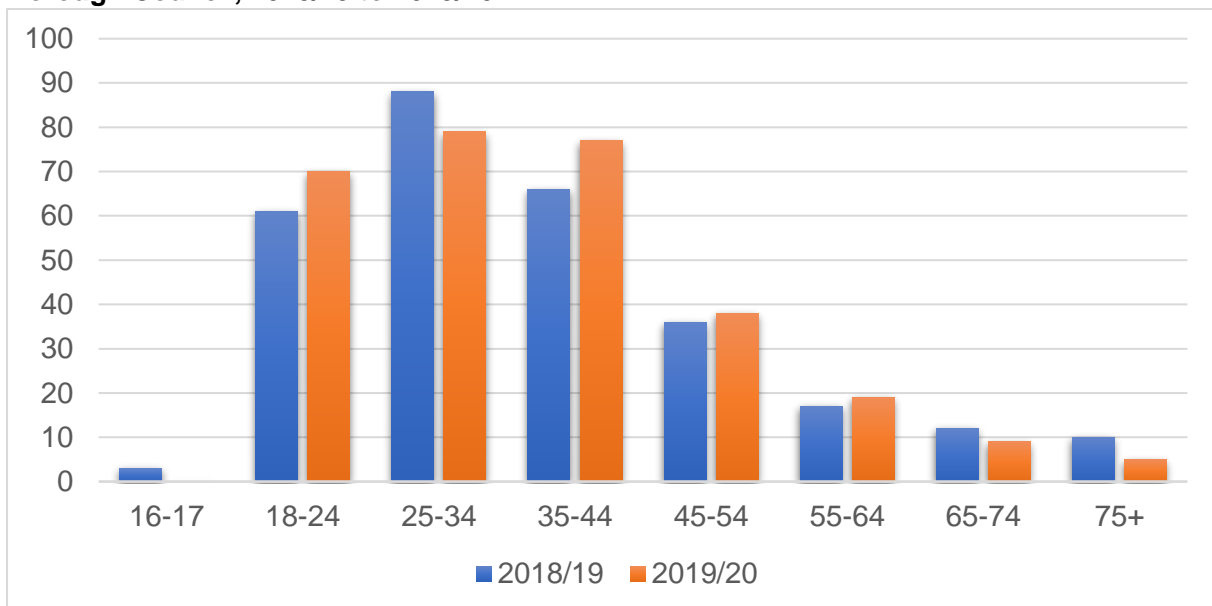
The age group of the main applicant most accepted for a main duty by the Council for the period 2015/16 to 2017/18 was those aged 25 - 44 years. Age Group is no longer recorded for those owed a main duty but is now recorded for those owed a prevention or relief duty, and the age groups are broken down further. Chart 13 shows the age group of the main applicant accepted for a prevention or relief duty is 25 - 34 years, followed by 35-44 years. The 18-24-year-old age group being the third highest age group shows an increase 9 households between 2018/19 to 2019/20, even taking account of 16/17-year-olds to compare with the numbers from 2015/16 to 2017/18, this age group is increasing each year.

Chart 13: Age group of main applicants owed a main duty (of those recorded) by percentage, Fareham Borough Council, 2015/16 to 2017/18



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Chart 14: Age group of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty, Fareham Borough Council, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

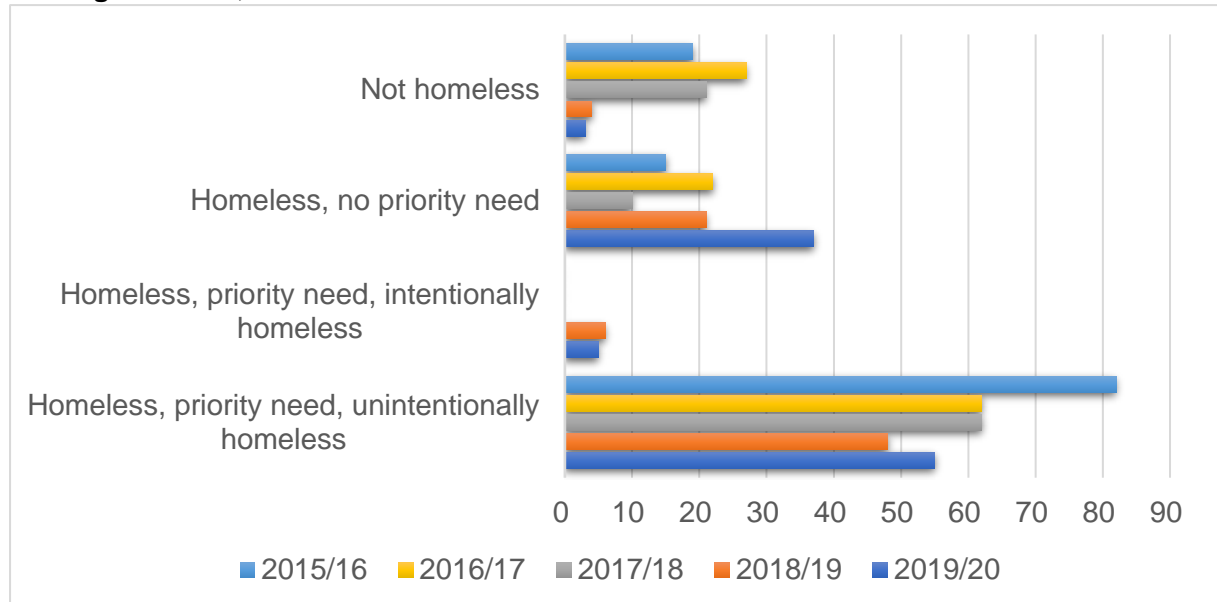
Of the main duty decisions made by the Council during 2019/20, 55(55%) were accepted as being eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need; owed the main homelessness duty to secure accommodation⁵⁰. This is an increase of 7% on the previous year but lower than all other years.

37 (37%) of main duty applications during 2019/20 were found to be eligible, homeless but not in priority need. This is the highest number for each of the five

⁵⁰ Housing Act 1996, Pt VII s193(2)

years analysed and may reflect the new duties from the HRA-2017 which, where homelessness is not resolved by the relief duty activities, may result in an increase in main duty applications from households that do not have a main duty priority need.

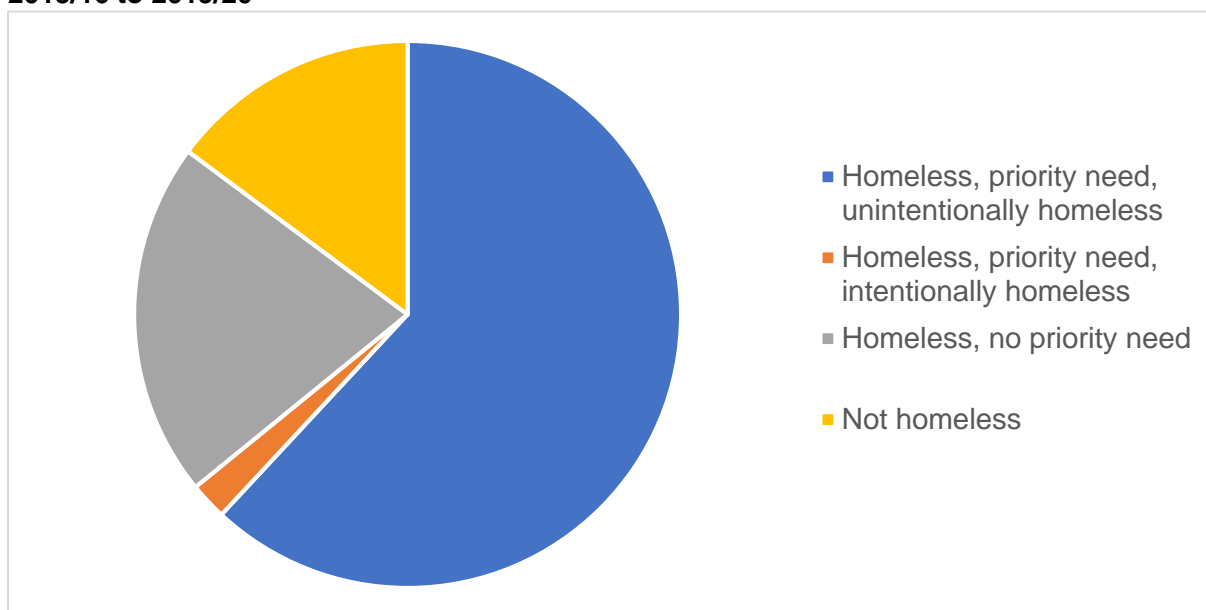
Chart 15: Outcome of main housing duty decision for eligible households, Fareham Borough Council, 2015/16 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The cumulative number of households recorded as being assessed who were found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period analysed for this review, at 309 households, is 62% of all decisions across the five-year period. While the remaining 38% were not considered to be homeless but with no priority need, not homeless or intentionally homeless, there still a duty to provide advice and assistance to these households and, in some cases, further support to help resolve their homelessness difficulties would prevent homelessness recurring for these households.

Chart 16: Cumulative main duty decisions by outcome, Fareham Borough Council, 2015/16 to 2019/20



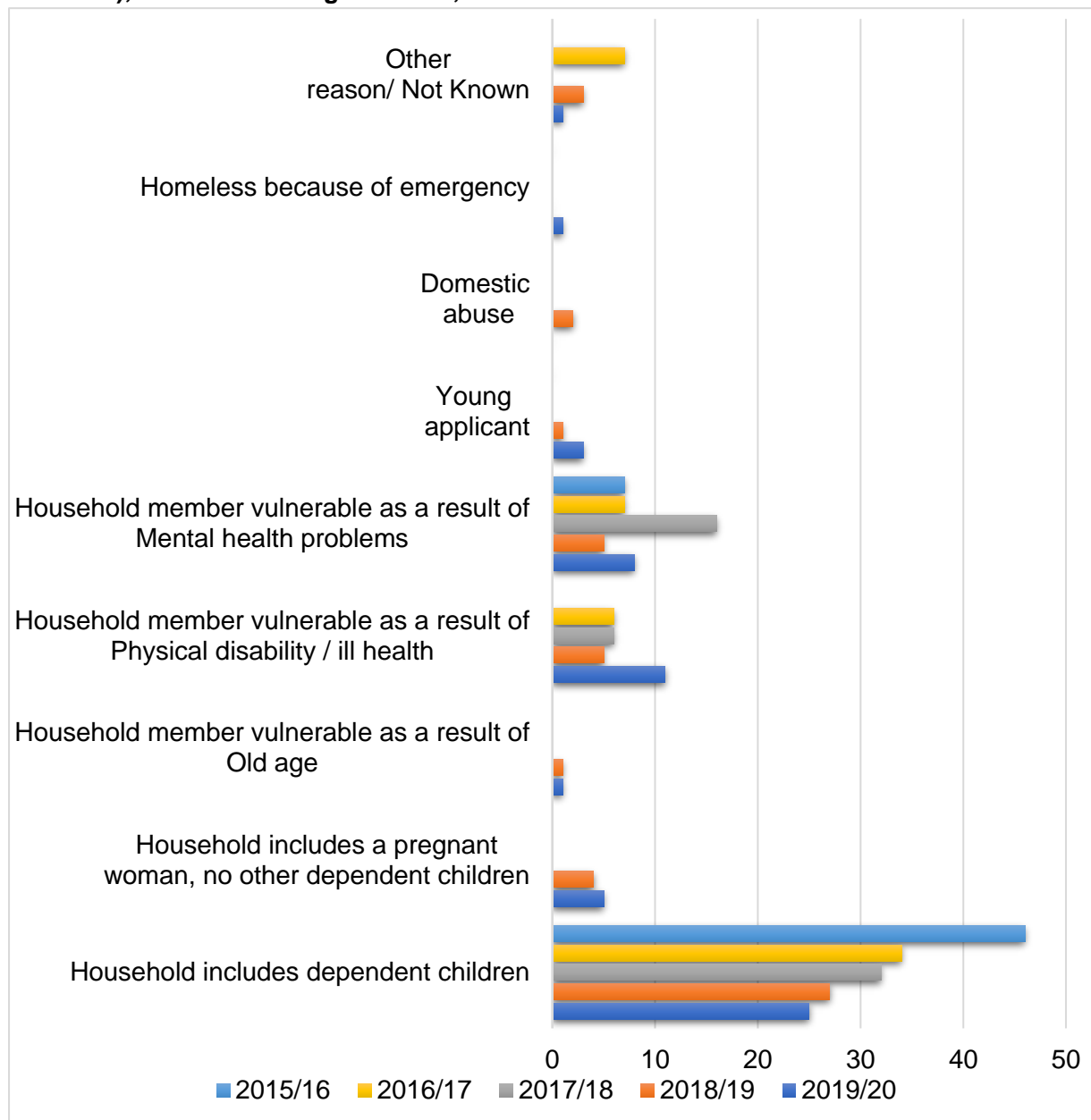
Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

All households with dependent children are required to be recorded as being in priority need, irrespective of any other priority need(s) they may have. All other priority need categories will therefore only include single persons, couples, or families with no dependent children. As such, most households the Council owed the main duty are recorded as being in priority need due to being a household which includes dependent children for each of the five years analysed.

The number of households which include a dependent child and are owed a main duty fell from 46 in 2015/16 to 25 2019/20. Meanwhile, the number households with no dependent children owed a main duty by the Council, with a priority need due to physical health problems, almost doubled from 6 to 15 households, and those with a priority need due to mental health problems, while lower than its previous high of 16 during 2017/18, has increased from 5 to 8 households during 2018/19 to 2019/20.

Priority need due to domestic violence or abuse appears low, with 2 cases recorded for 2018/19. It is important to note that there will also be cases where domestic abuse is a priority need for a household with dependent children but will not be recorded within the domestic violence or abuse category as they are an automatic priority due to the dependent children. The reason for homelessness will however be recorded as being due to domestic violence or abuse.

Chart 17: Households owed a main homelessness duty by priority need category (where recorded), Fareham Borough Council, 2015/16 to 2019/20



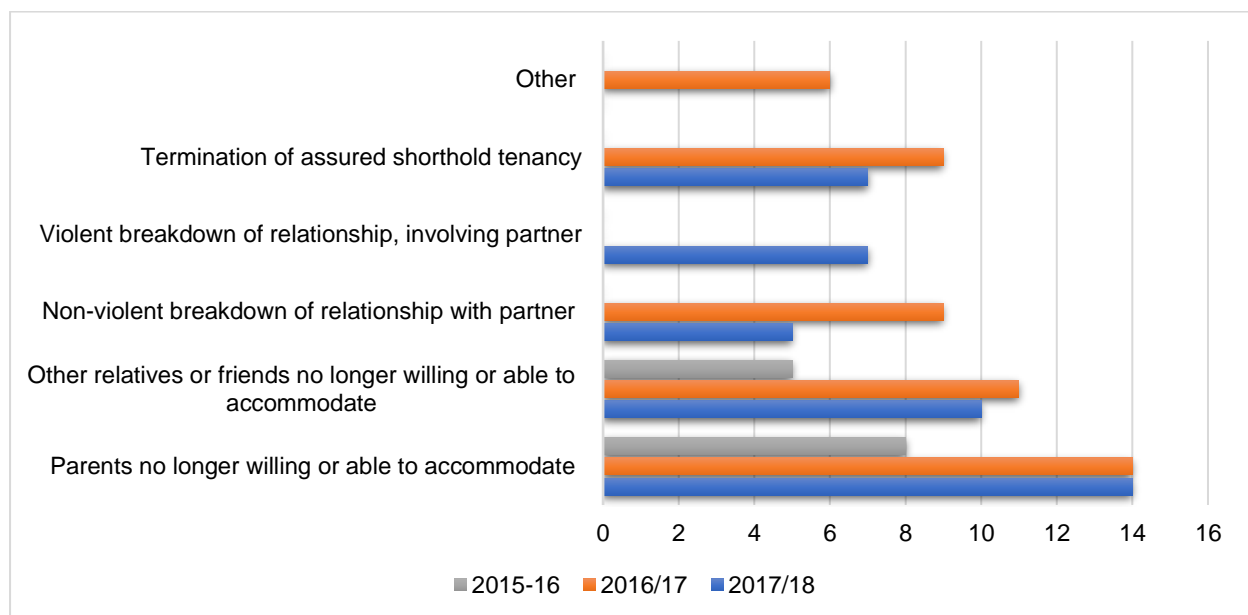
Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Additional priority need data collection categories with zero cases recorded include:

- Other violence/threat of violence
- Drug dependency
- Alcohol dependency
- Former asylum seeker
- Vulnerable as a result of having been in care
- Vulnerable as a result of having served in HM forces
- Vulnerable as a result of having been in custody/on remand
- Formerly in care, and aged 18 to 20

As a result of the changes made by HRA 17, the 'reason for loss of last settled home' is now recorded for households owed a prevention or relief duty, and not for households owed the main duty. The chart below therefore only covers the reason for loss of last settled home for those households owed the main duty for the period 2015/16 to 2017/18. Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate is the greatest recorded reason for loss of the last settled home, followed by other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate. Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner reduced from 9 households to 5 households in 2016/17 to 2017/18, while violent breakdown or relationship with partner was recorded as 7 households in 2017/18.

Chart 18: Main reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a main duty (where recorded) Fareham, 2015/16 to 2017/18



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

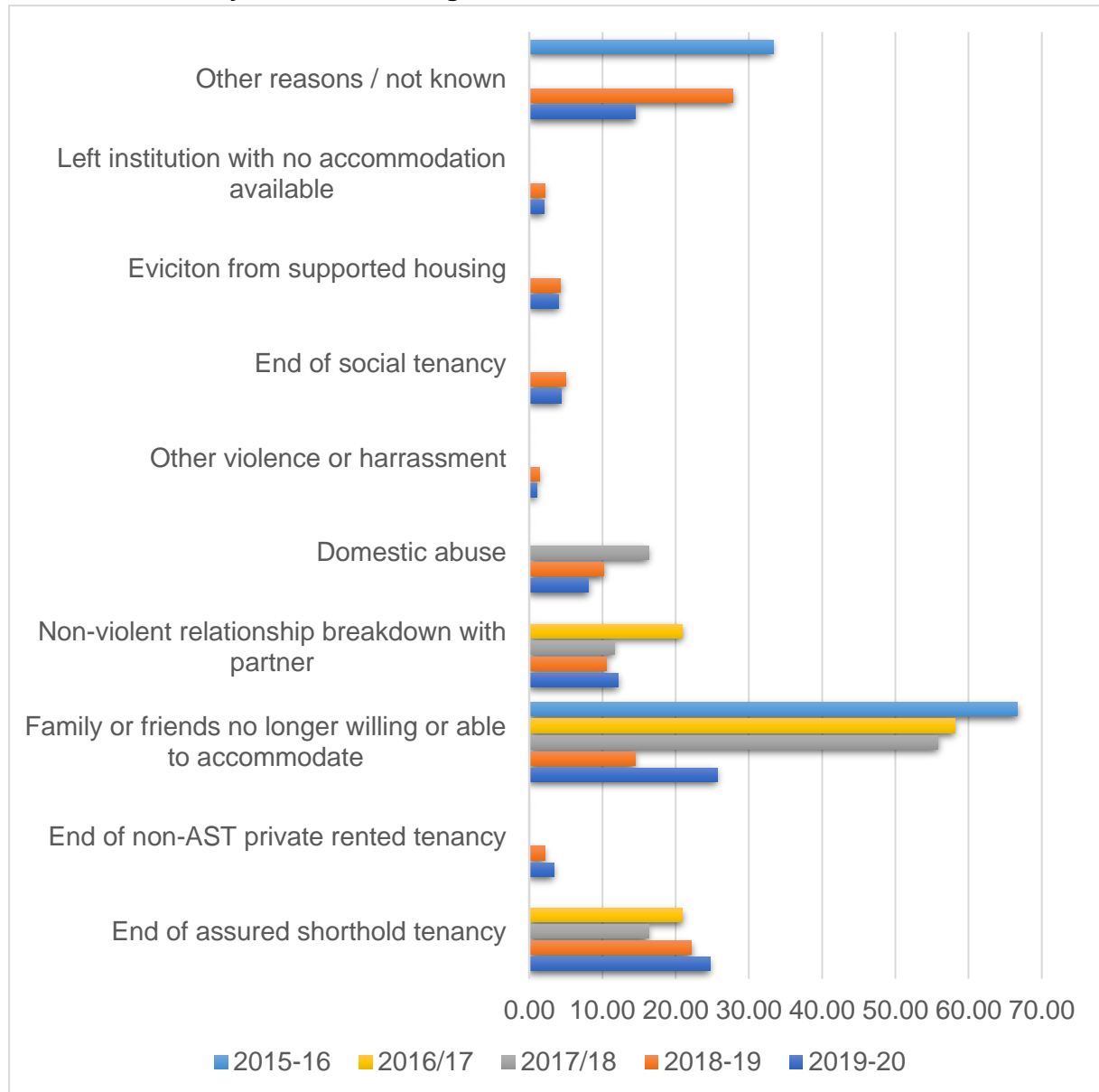
Additional loss of last settled home data collection categories with zero cases recorded include:

- Racially motivated harassment
- Other forms of harassment
- Mortgage arrears
- Rent arrears – all tenure
- Left an institution such as prison, hospital, or left local authority care
- Left HM forces

With the exception of 2018/19, the highest proportion of households whose loss of their last settled home where a reason was recorded for 2015/16 to 2019/20 is family or friends no longer willing to accommodate, which reduced from 66.67 during 2015/16 to 25.8% in 2019/20. This reason for loss of last settled home is the

amalgamation of two categories from the former P1E and is therefore likely to be the largest category going forward. The end of private rented assured shorthold the second highest reason for 2019/20 at 24.66%, a 2.48% increase from the previous year, 2018/19, followed by Other/Not Known, Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner and Domestic abuse, which reduced 2.1% between 2018/19 to 2019/20.

Chart 19: Reason for loss of last settled home by percentage of households owed a homelessness duty, Fareham Borough Council, 2015/16 to 2019/20



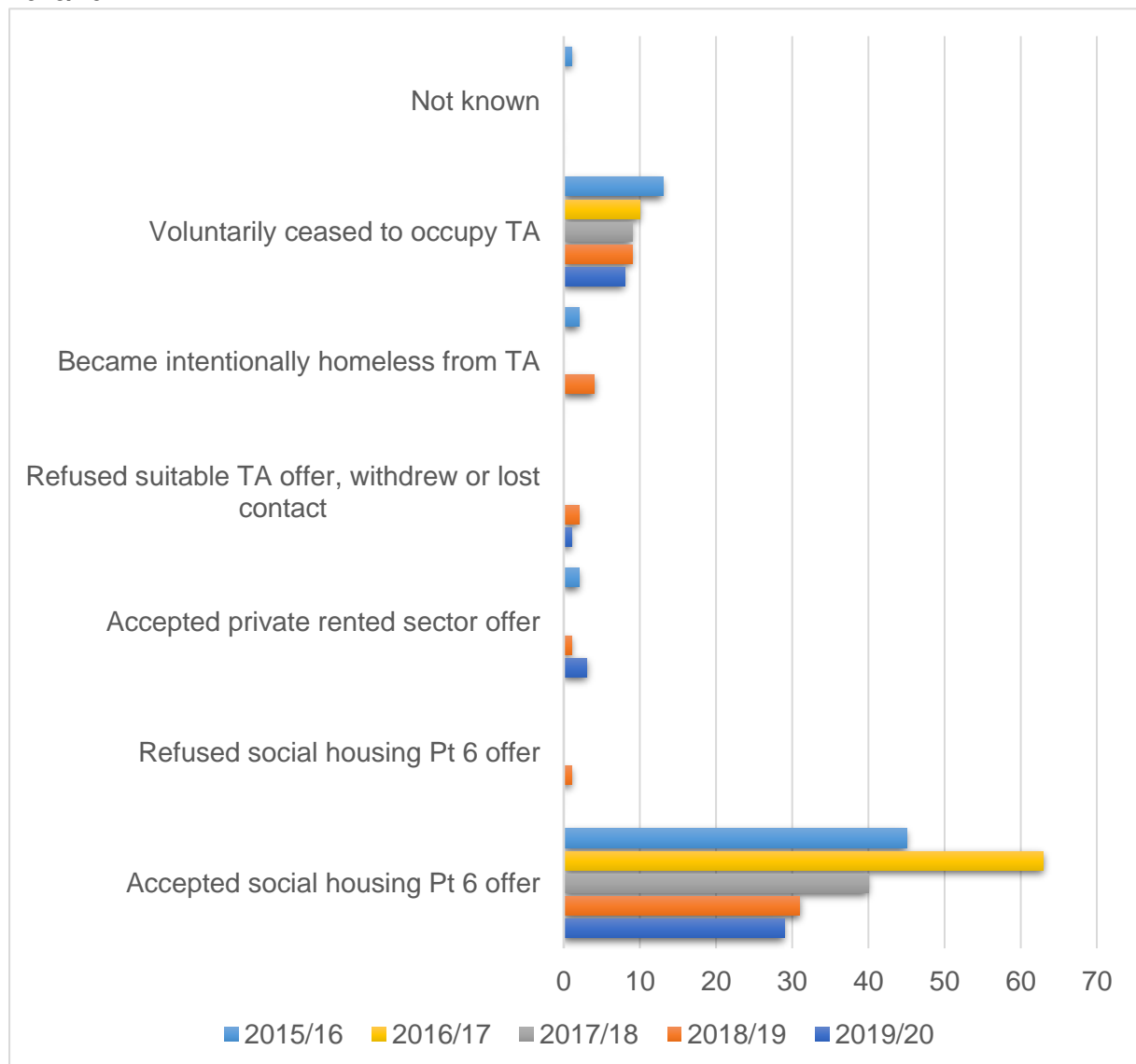
Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The Part 6 offer⁵¹ and acceptance of a social rented home was the main outcome each year for households no longer owed a main homelessness duty in Fareham over the period analysed, at a peak of 63 in 2016/17, reducing to 29 during 2019/20. The next greatest outcome for those no longer owed a main homelessness duty for

⁵¹ Housing Act 1996, Part 6, section 193C A final offer of accommodation under Part 6, subsection (8)

the period was voluntarily ceased to occupy temporary accommodation, though this has also reduced from 13 to 8 from 2015/16 to 2019/20.

Chart 20: Outcome of households no longer owed a main duty, Fareham, 2015/16 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

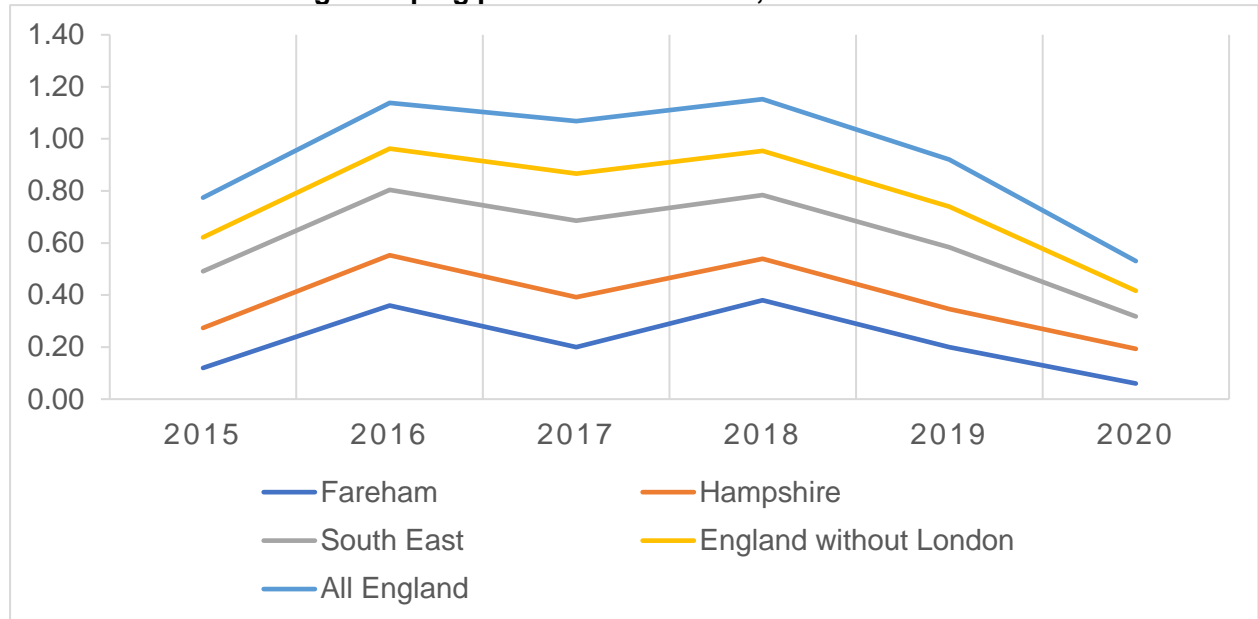
An evaluation of the levels of rough sleeping is carried out annually in Fareham, in accordance with national guidance⁵², and in consultation with partners including, voluntary sector agencies, police, local faith groups, mental health agencies, outreach workers, substance misuse agencies and drug and alcohol teams.

The 2020 evaluation followed the Everyone-In initiative and therefore only those who had refused accommodation were estimated to still be sleeping rough. This reduction, from 10 rough sleepers in 2019 to the estimated 3 in 2020, consisted of two males and one female, all of whom were aged over 26 years. Fareham also had

⁵² Department for Communities and Local Government. (2010). Evaluating the extend of rough sleeping: A new approach.

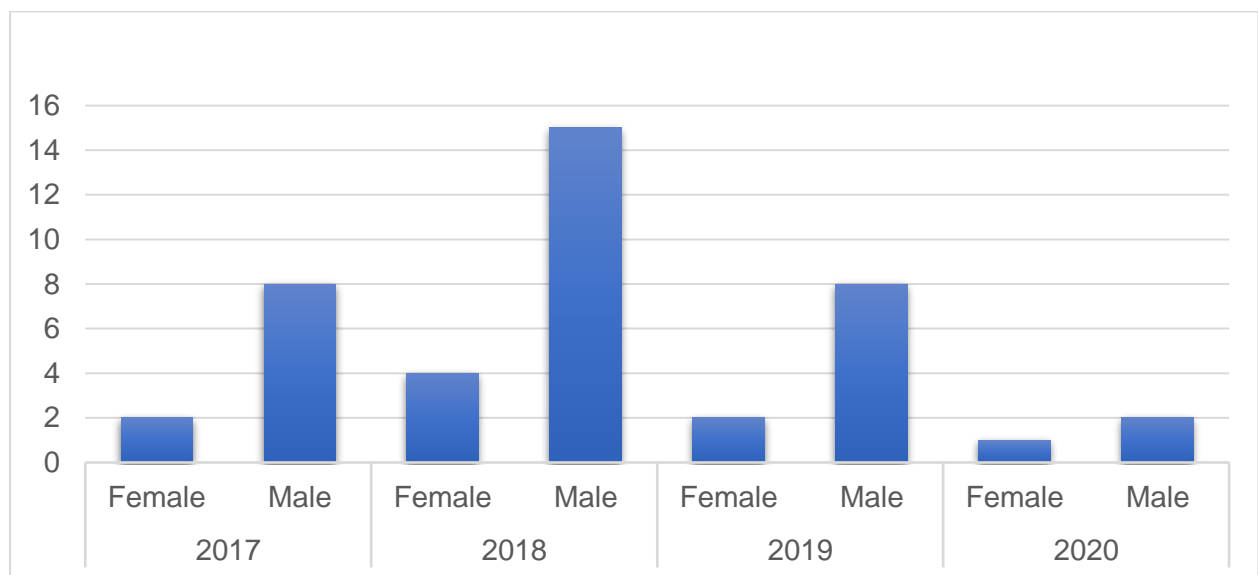
the greatest reduction between 2019 and 2020, and the lowest number of rough sleepers in 2020, per thousand households in the benchmarking group.

Chart 21: Levels of rough sleeping per 1000 households, 2015 to 2020



The proportion of female and male rough sleepers has reduced from one female to every four males to one in three during the 2020 evaluation. As the total number of rough sleepers is particularly low for this year it is difficult to predict whether this trend will continue or the ratio reduce further to an equal number of female and male rough sleepers, although a general increase in homelessness among single females with no dependent children is now evident in Fareham.

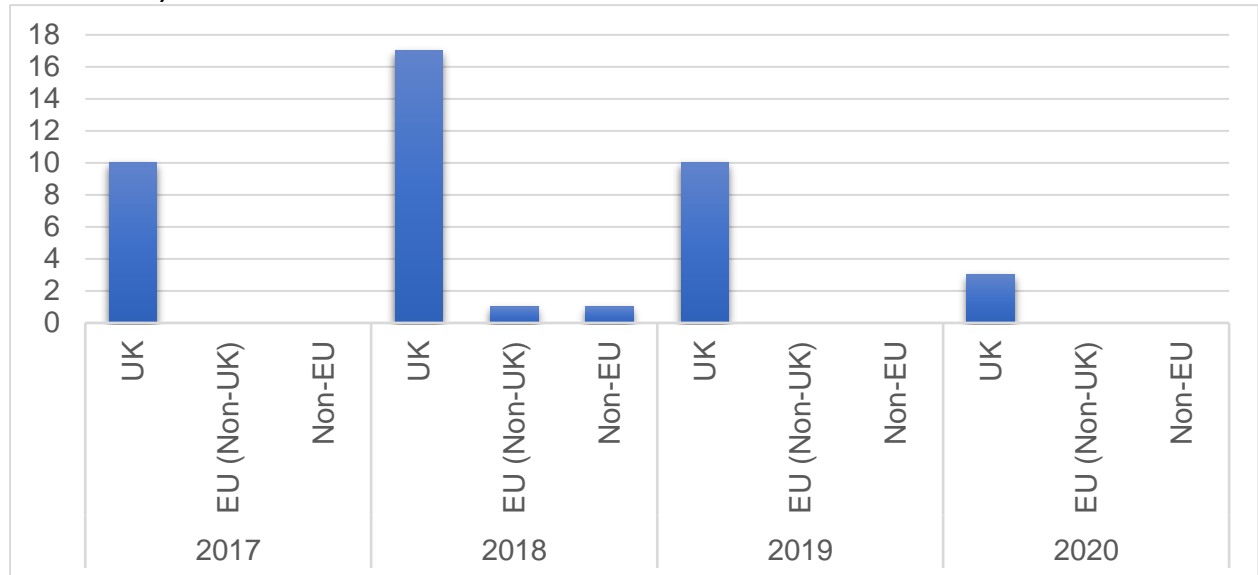
Chart 22: Rough sleepers by gender in Fareham, official annual count, 2017 to 2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Rough sleepers in Fareham have historically been United Kingdom nationals. The non-UK nationals were found to be sleeping rough in Fareham was 2018, the year with the highest number of rough sleepers since nationalities were recorded.

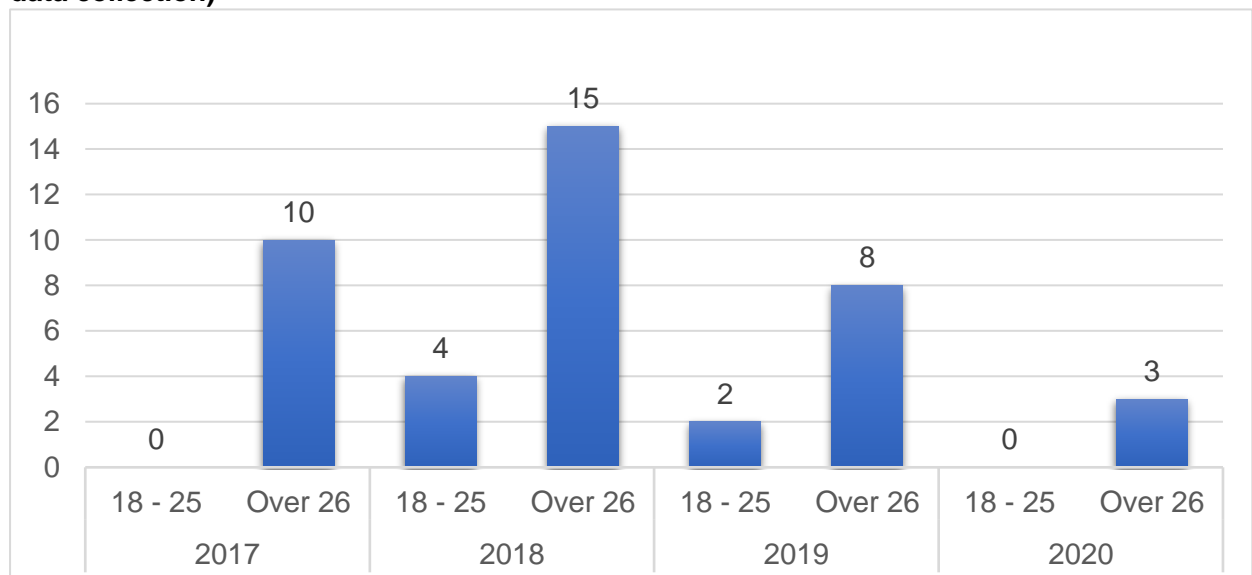
Chart 23: Number of rough sleepers in Fareham by Nationality 2017* to 2020 (*first year of this data collection)



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

The over 26-year-old age group has been the group with the highest number of rough sleepers since age data was collected. There are no recorded cases of anyone under the age of 18 sleeping rough in Fareham during the past five years.

Chart 24: Number of rough sleepers by age in Fareham, 2017* to 2020 (*first year of this data collection)



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

2.2 Future levels of homelessness

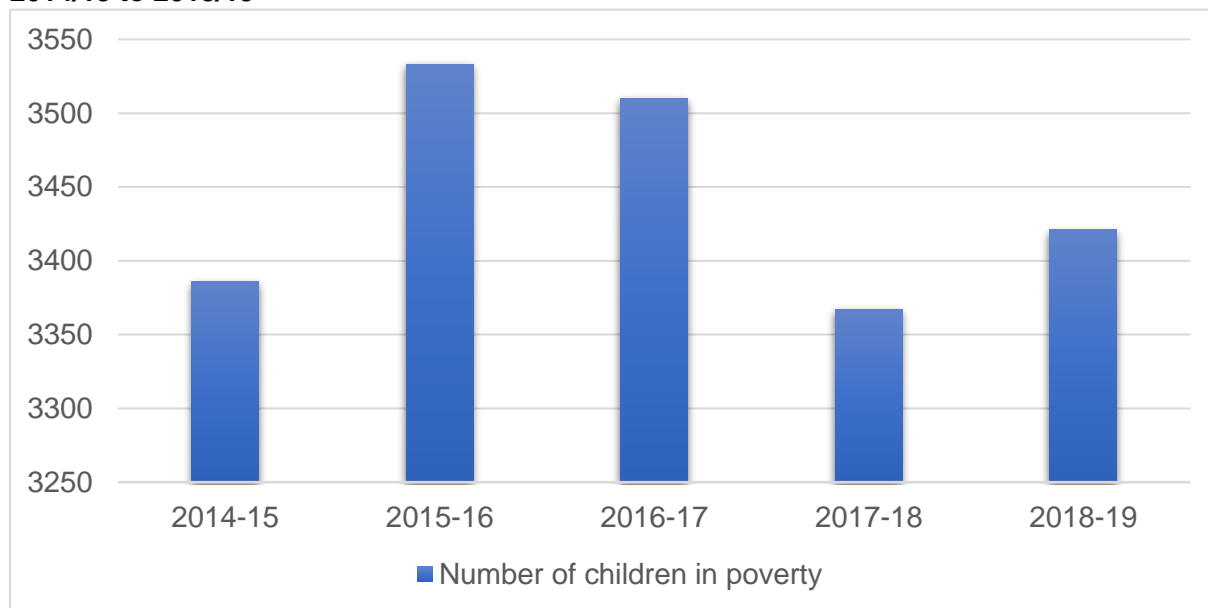
Research⁵³ published in 2017 shows the primary cause of homelessness to be childhood poverty. This is closely followed by labour and housing market factors as secondary causes.

To forecast future levels of homelessness, we have taken account of trends shown in homelessness statistics analysed in section 2.1 of this chapter, plus other sources of data relating to the main causes, to create as accurate a forecast as is possible.

The latest child poverty figures, published July 2020, state that in the UK in 2018/19 there were 4.2 million children (30% of all UK children) living in poverty. Housing and childcare are the two primary factors that have been identified as putting pressure on family budgets⁵⁴. Figures published by the UK Government, showed the percentage of children living in poverty increased by 1% from 2015 to 2016 and have subsequently remained unchanged. This means current rates of child poverty are at the same level as seen in 2009/2010. Children are more likely, compared to the overall population, to be living in low-income households⁵⁵.

The number of all children in Fareham living in poverty after housing costs are taken account of in 2018/19 is 3421, 54 (0.2%) higher in 2018/19 than 2017/18 though lower than 2015/16 at 3533 children (20.3%).

Chart 25: Number and percentage of children in poverty after housing costs, Fareham, 2014/15 to 2018/19



Source: Child Poverty Action Group. End Child Poverty

⁵³ Professor Glen Bramley & Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick (July 2017), 'Homelessness in the UK: who is most at risk', Housing Studies Journal, pp1-21

⁵⁴ <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/child-poverty-facts-and-figures>

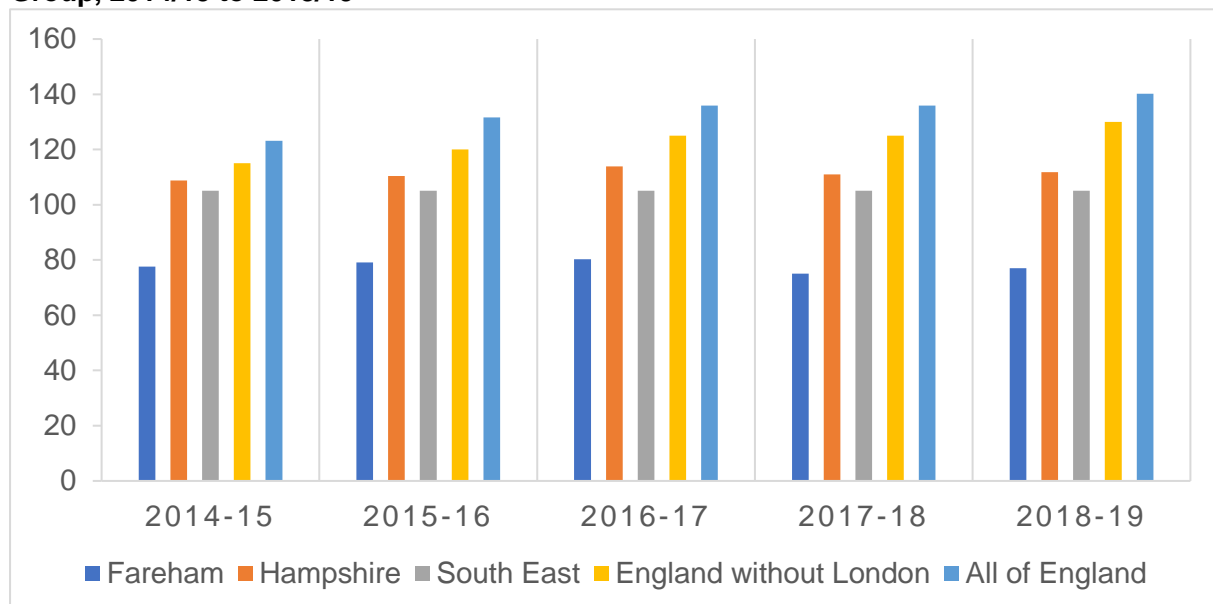
⁵⁵ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

Recently published research from Homeless Link⁵⁶ found that one of the barriers to homeless young people succeeding included difficulty in gaining access to education training and employment, and in sustaining it. According to the research, appropriate, individual support by organisations that recognise the challenges young people face, is what is needed to help them thrive. The key recommendations for all tiers of government and service providers resulting from the research include several that Fareham Borough Council could consider, such as

- recognise housing precarity within the responsibility for Children in Need
- fund schools to identify and support young people at risk of homelessness⁵²

The number of children living in poverty after housing costs per thousand households, show that Fareham had the lowest figures compared with the Benchmarking Group for the five-year period 2014/15 to 2018/19. At 77 for 2019/20, this number was 55% of the number of children living in poverty in All England.

Chart 26: Children living in poverty after housing costs per 1000 household, Benchmark Group, 2014/15 to 2018/19

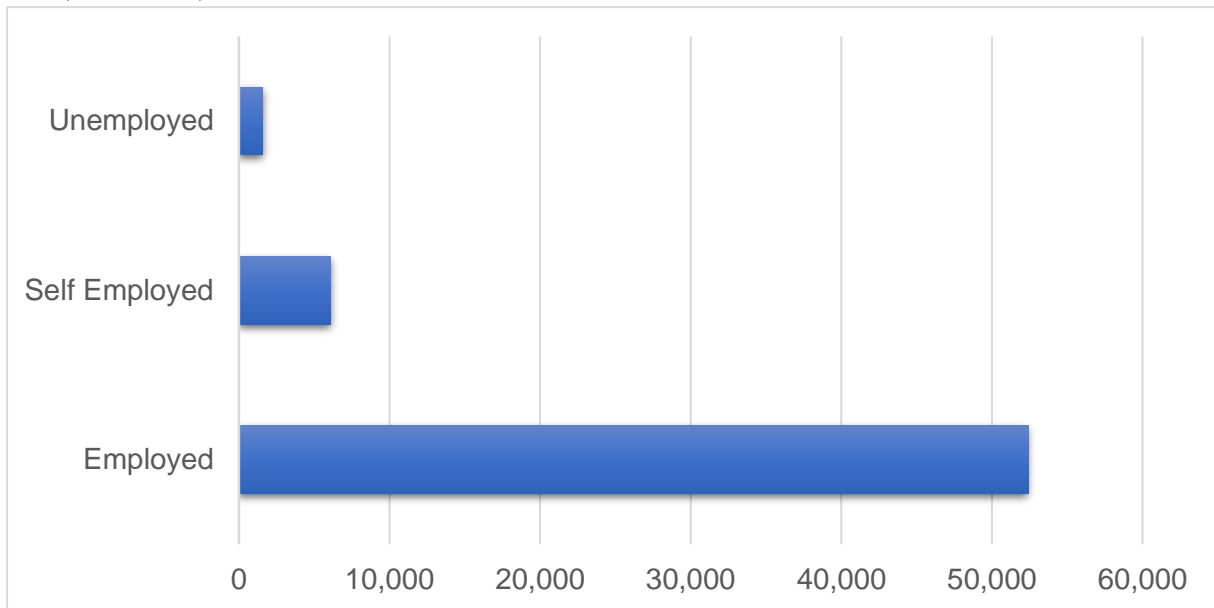


Source: Child Poverty Action Group. End Child Poverty

The number of people between the ages of 16 to 64 years who were economically active between April 2019 to March 2020 was 58,500. Of those, 89.5% were in employment and 10.5% were self-employed.

⁵⁶ Young and Homeless 2020, Homeless Link October 2020

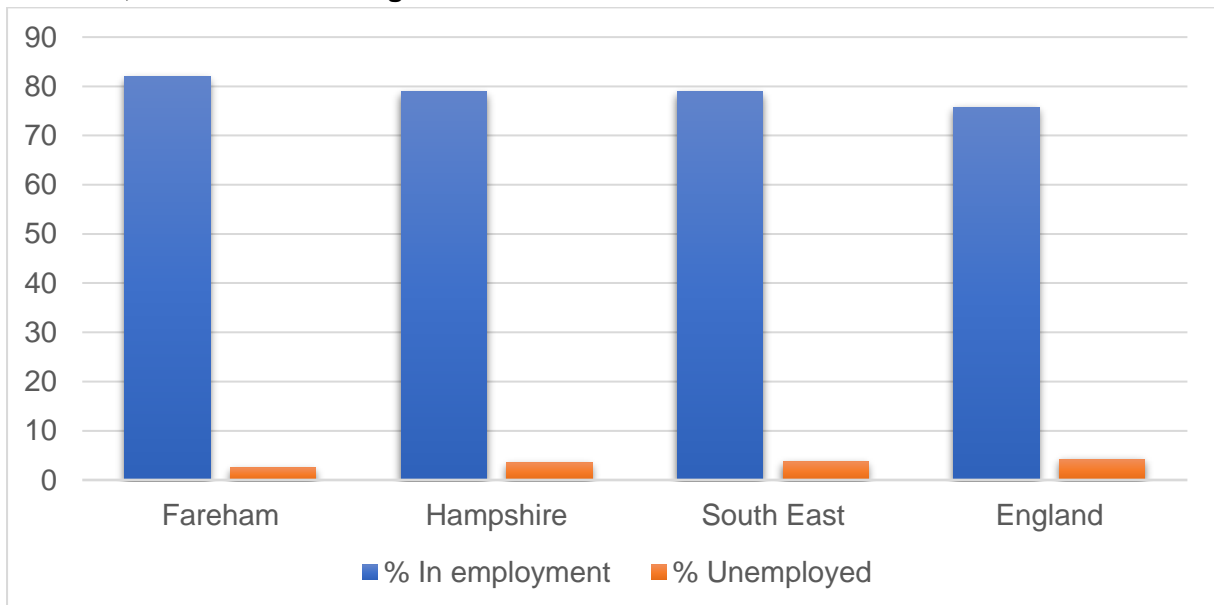
Chart 27: Employment, self-employment and unemployment by number of 16 to 64-year olds, Fareham, 2019/20



Source: ONS Nomis labour Market Statistics

When employment and unemployment are displayed by percentage this shows that Fareham had a greater percentage of residents in employment and a lower rate of unemployment during October 2019 to September 2020, than Hampshire, the South East and England.

Chart 28: Employment and unemployment by percentage of 16 to 64-year olds, 2019/20, Fareham, South East and England

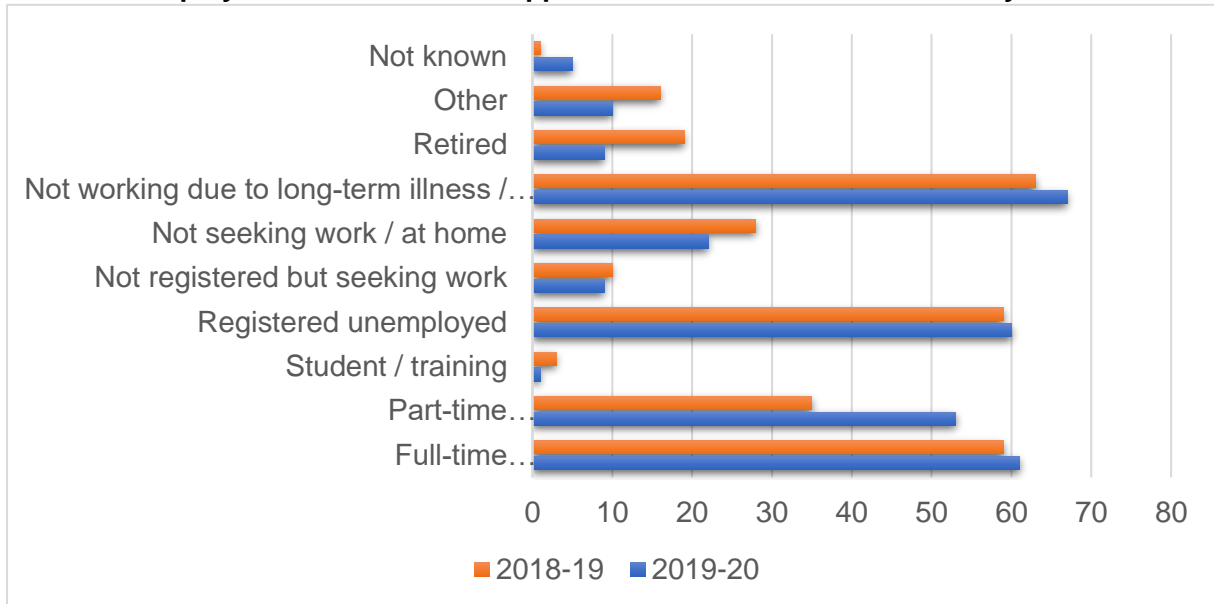


Source: ONS Nomis labour Market Statistics

The most commonly occurring employment status of the main applicants owed a homelessness duty in Fareham is those not working due to long-term illness or disability for both 2018/19 and 2019/20, and this increased by 4 households during the two years. Of those main applicants who are working, there are a greater number

working full time than part time for both years, although part time work increased from 35 to 53 households between 2018/19 to 2019/20. The number of main applicants owed a homelessness duty in Fareham that were registered unemployed increased by one to 60 in 2019/20, while those not seeking work/at home reduced by 6 to 22 in the same years.

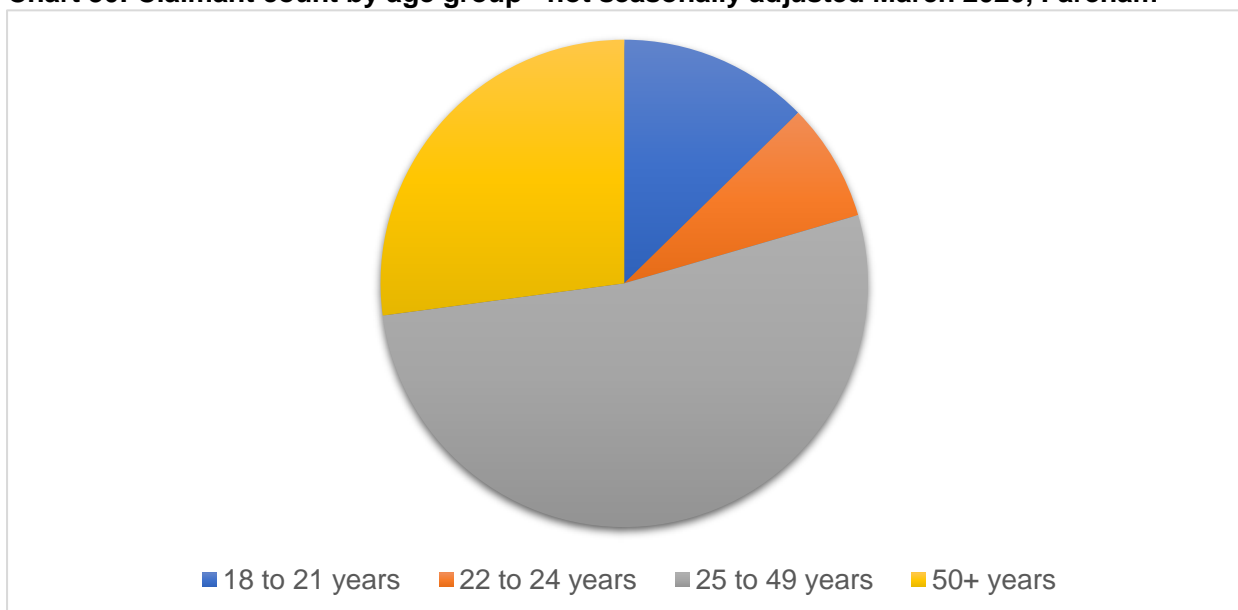
Chart 29: Employment status of main applicants owed a homelessness duty in Fareham



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The age group with the greatest proportion of claimants receiving out of work benefits in Fareham in March 2020 was the 25 to 49 years at 52% of all claimants, followed by the 50+ age group at 27%, with the fewest in the 22-24-year-old age group at 8%. There were zero 16/17-year-old claimants in this period.

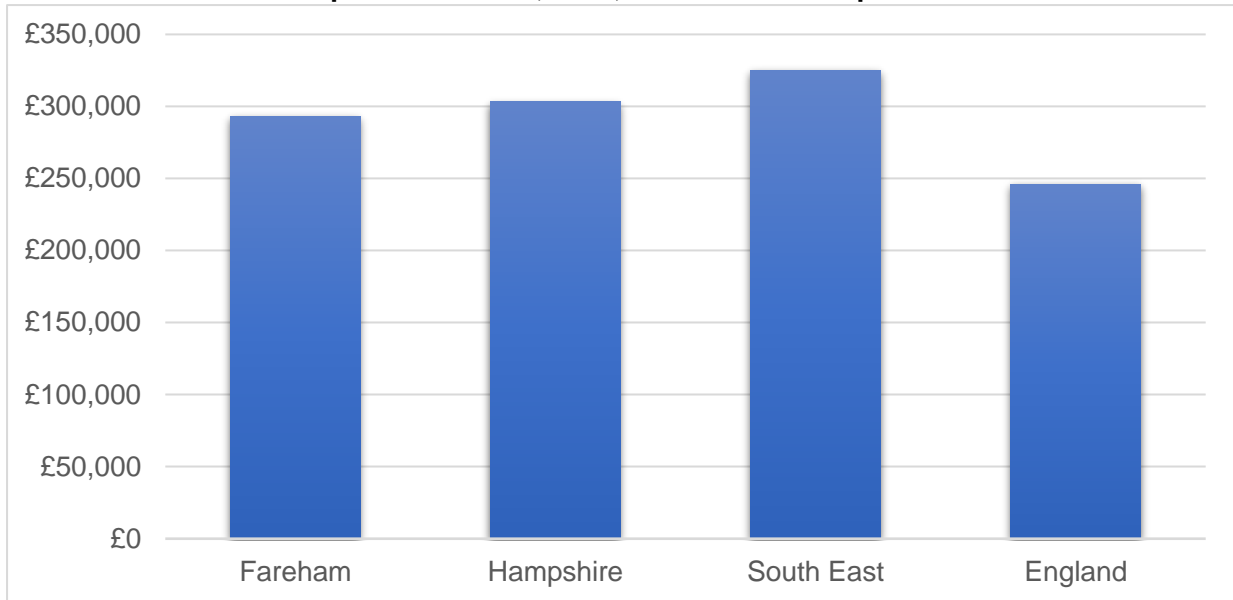
Chart 30: Claimant count by age group - not seasonally adjusted March 2020, Fareham



Source: ONS Claimant count by sex and age

Median house prices for Fareham at March 2020 were lower than Hampshire and the South East, but higher than England.

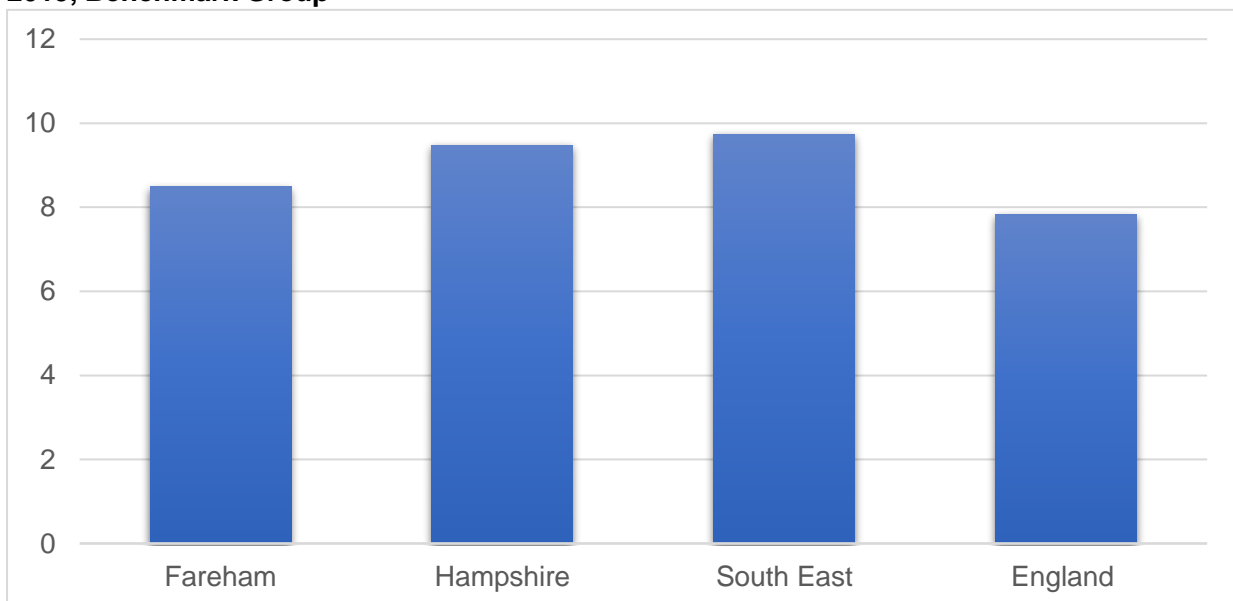
Chart 31: Median house prices at March, 2020, Benchmark Group



Source: ONS Median house price by local authority district, England and Wales

The ratio of median house prices to median gross annual workplaces earnings in Fareham is 0.99 times lower than Hampshire and 1.24 times lower than the South East, but 0.66 times higher than these ratios are the latest published, in 2019. It is therefore uncertain what impact the Covid-19 pandemic will have on these ratios in the future.

Chart 32: Median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings ratio, 2019, Benchmark Group



Source: Office for National Statistics: House Price to Earnings Ratio.

2.3 Conclusions about the levels of homelessness

- Like most other areas, there is no systemic collection and analysis of statistics on hidden homelessness.
- Initial assessments are increasing, with prevention cases reducing and relief cases increasing
- Overall rates of homelessness locally are lower than those with comparator areas, although local rates are increasing, and this is not the case in areas which are coterminous to Fareham.
- Following a four-year decline in the number and percentage of main duty decisions and acceptances, levels have begun to increase again. A main duty decision and acceptances are a less likely outcome in Fareham compared to elsewhere, suggesting action being taken to prevent or relieve homelessness has proven to be successful
- Persons of a black or other minority ethnic origin are less likely to seek assistance from the Council's homelessness service compared to those from a white ethnic origin.
- The younger age profile of people getting homeless assistance is contrary to that of the population as a whole.
- People are much more likely to be found as intentionally homeless and having a priority need for accommodation. It is now less likely for someone to be found to be not homeless but more likely to be found as to not having a priority need. It is always been far less likely that someone has been found to have been intentionally homeless and having a priority need.
- Households which include a dependent child are more likely to be owed a main duty, despite rates falling over the past five years.
- Single people with physical and or mental health problems have more than doubled.
- Parents, other relatives, or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate continues to be the main reason for why a person loses their home when owed the main duty
- Allocation of social rented housing remains the most common method for bringing a duty to an end.
- It is positive that the numbers of people voluntarily assisted occupied temporary accommodation has reduced over the past five years, so has people who become intentionally homeless from temporary accommodation.
- The reduction in rough sleeping is very positive, levels had begun to fall prior to the pandemic and rates accelerated downwards subsequently. Rough sleepers continue more likely to be male, UK nationals, aged over 26 years.
- The rates of child poverty in Fareham have fluctuated in recent years, levels remain now what they were back five years ago.
- It is positive that child poverty rates are considerably lower in Fareham compared to the benchmarking group.
- Fareham's overall population has a high employment rate and low unemployment rate compared to other areas. However, those who are homeless are much more likely to be unemployed compared to the general population and also not working due to long-term illness or disability. Just over half of all people claiming out of work benefits in Fareham are aged between

25 and 49 years. This trend is mirrored in age profiles of those who are provided with homelessness assistance by the local authority or are found to be sleeping rough.

- Fareham's higher than average house prices mean that there will be some considerable demand for affordable housing to buy or rent. The higher than average house price to earnings ratio for Fareham, means that many people will struggle to pay their housing costs.

3.0 Preventing homelessness

This chapter considers activities to prevent homelessness in Fareham and compares these activities regionally and nationally.

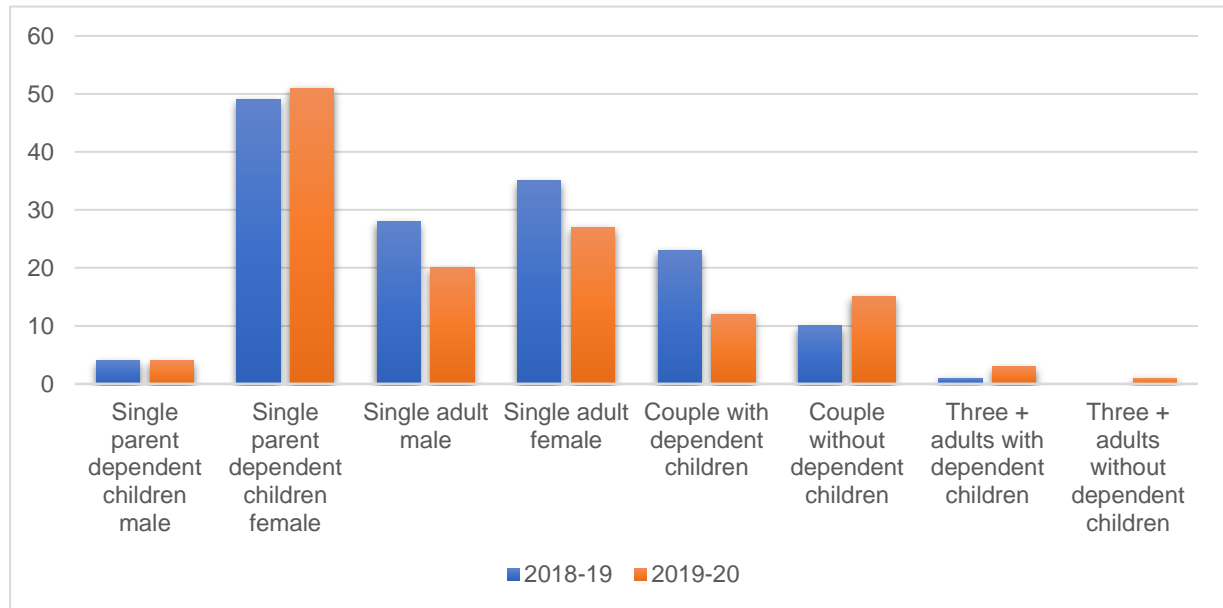
Homelessness prevention activity has been divided into three recognised strands⁵⁷ to inform the focus of this review:

1. Early prevention – those most at risk are identified and services provided to prevent problems escalating
2. Pre-crisis prevention – advice services, mediation, or negotiation with landlords to avoid the imminent loss of a home
3. Preventing recurring homelessness – tenancy sustainment services are provided to address other support needs

Prevention duty owed by household composition is shown by number and percentage of prevention duty owed cases in charts 33 and 34 below. The main type of household recorded as being owed a prevention duty by the Council for both years was single female parent with dependent children, in line with national trends. This increased by 2 households between 2018/19 and 2019/20 and remained more than 12 times greater than the number of single male parents with dependent children. The next largest group, single adult females (with no dependent children) reduced by 8 households between 2018/19 and 2019/20 and remained greater than single adult males. Couples without dependent children had the greatest increase over the period to 15 households owed a prevention during 2019/20.

⁵⁷ Hal Pawson, Gina Netto, Colin Jones, Fiona Wager, Cathie Fancy, Delia Lomax (2007), *Evaluating Homelessness Prevention*, London, Department for Communities & Local Government

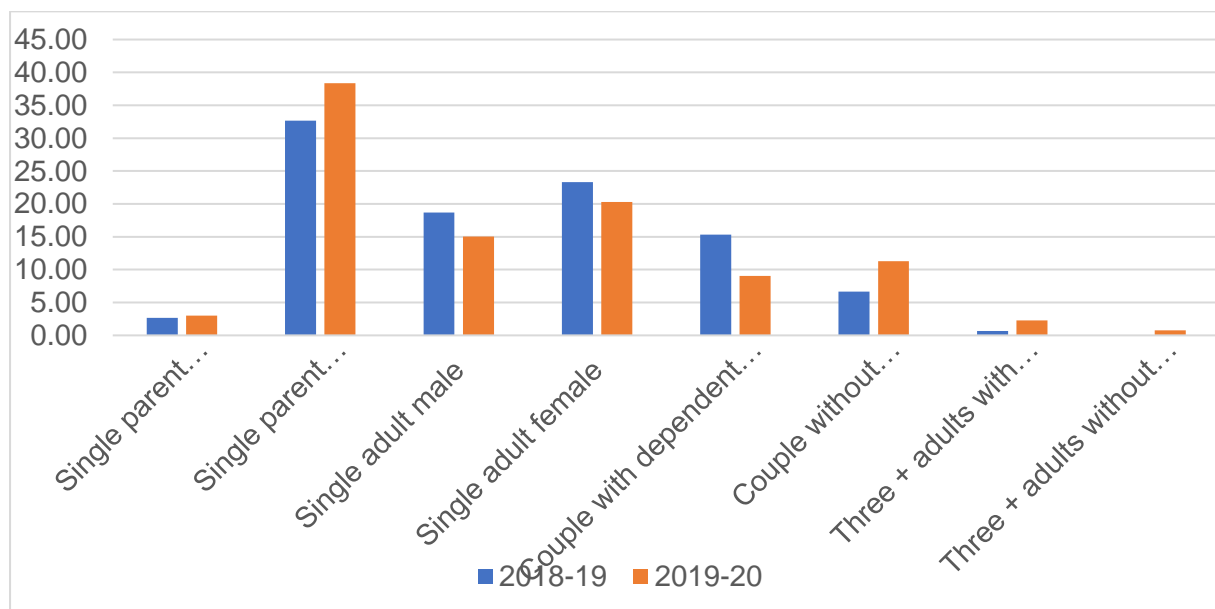
Chart 33: Household composition of those owed a prevention duty, Fareham, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

When shown as a percentage of households owed a prevention duty, it is clear that more than 50% of household include dependent children, and almost 58% of lead applicants of all households owed a prevention duty were female.

Chart 34: Household composition of those owed a prevention duty by percentage of all cases where the duty is owed, Fareham, 2018/19 to 2019/20

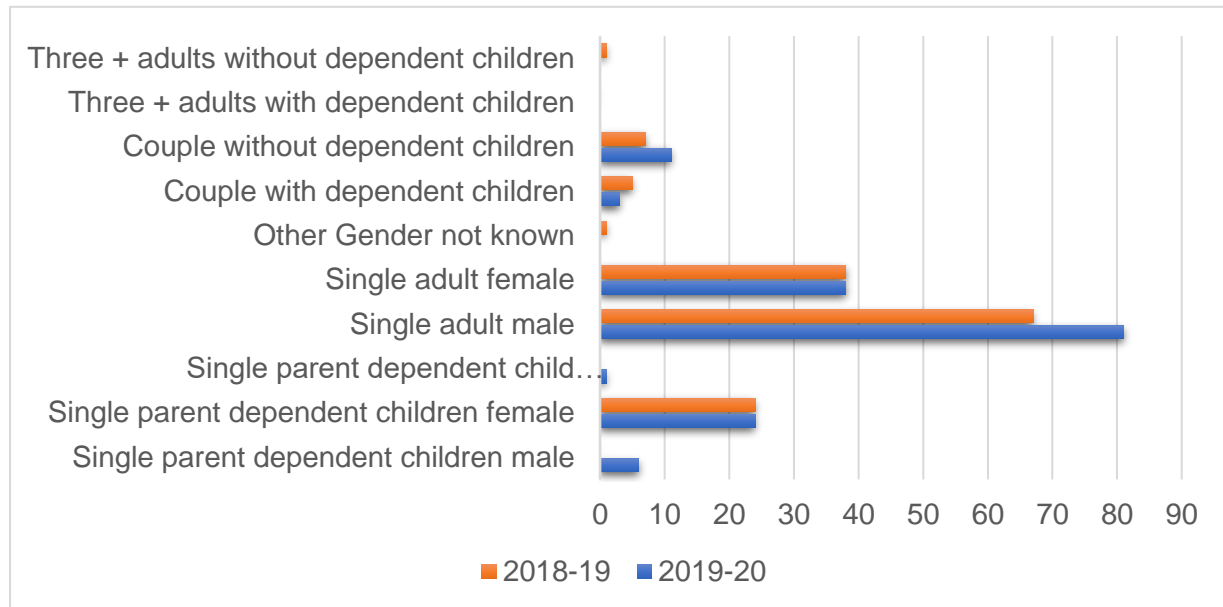


Source: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government

Relief duty owed by household composition is shown by number and percentage of relief duty owed cases in charts 35 and 36 below. The main type of household recorded as being owed a relief duty for the period 2018/19 to 2019/20 were single adult males (without dependent children), which increased by 14 during the period. This was followed by single adult female households (without dependent children),

and single female parent households, which both remained at the same level for each year. There was a significant increase in single male parent households, and couples without children during the period analysed, though these remained small in number.

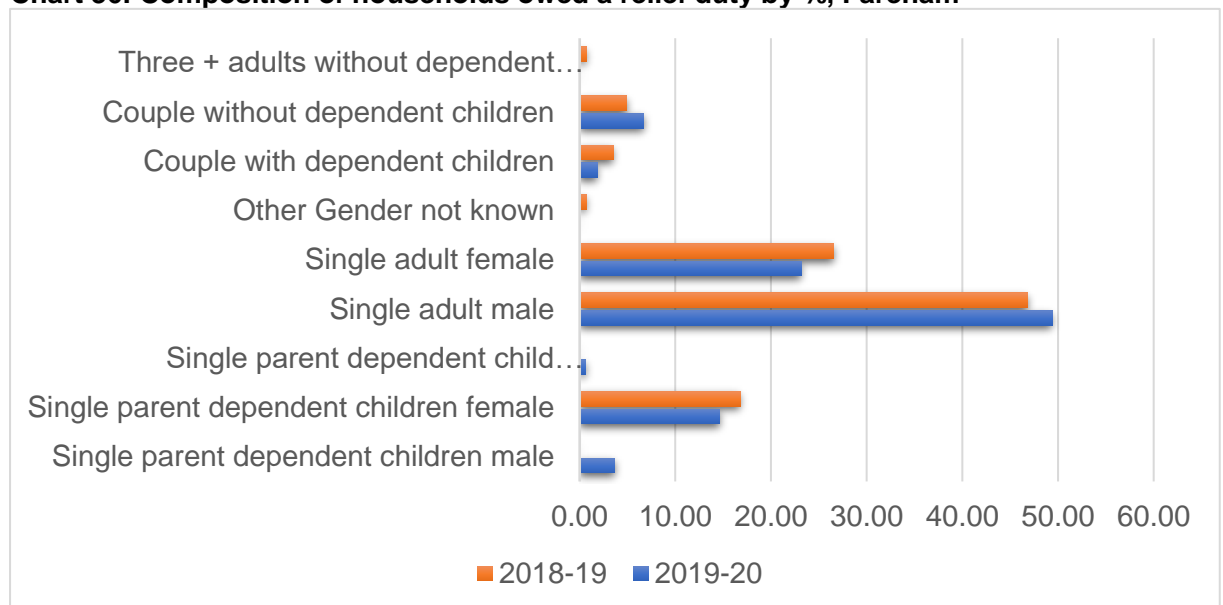
Chart 35: Households composition of those owed a relief duty, Fareham, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

When shown as a percentage, it is clear that more than 72% of all households owed a relief duty were single people, although more than 20% were households which include dependent children during 2019/20.

Chart 36: Composition of households owed a relief duty by %, Fareham

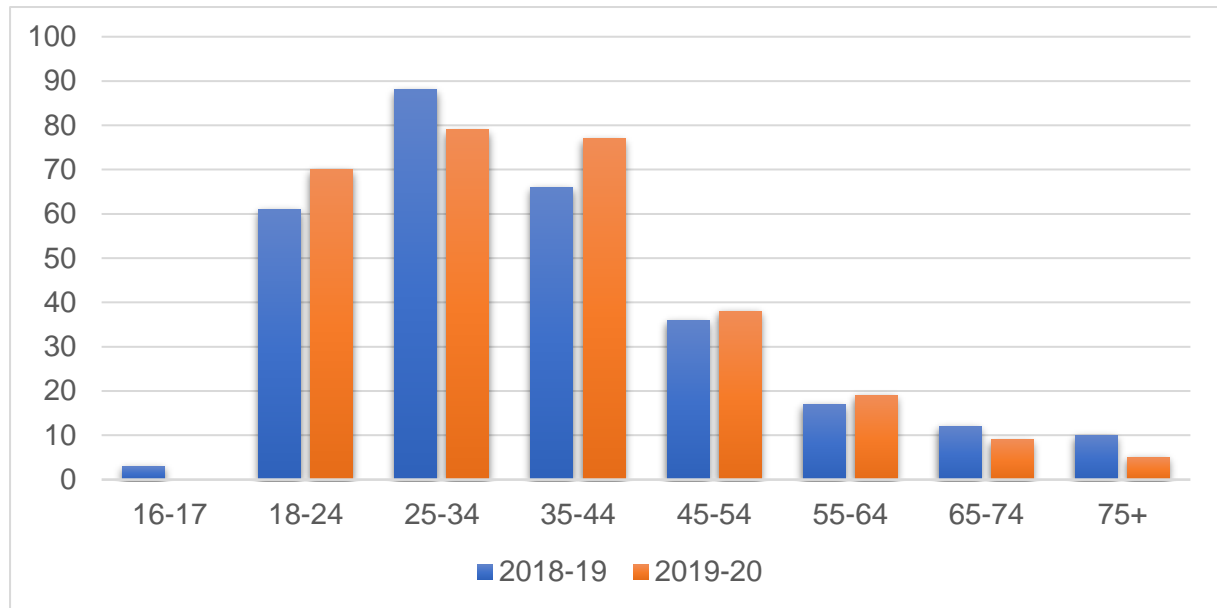


Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The largest group of main applicants by age of households owed a prevention or relief duty in Fareham during 2018/19 and 2019/20, were 25 to 34-year-olds,

although the number of applicants in this age group did reduce by 11 households to 79 between the two years. The number of main applicants aged 18 to 24 and 35 to 44 both increased during the same period, by 9 and 11 households respectively. There were no households with a prevention or relief duty owed aged 16/17-year-olds during 2019/20 and while those aged 45 to 54 years and 55 to 64 years showed minor increases, those aged over 65 showed reductions and remained small in number.

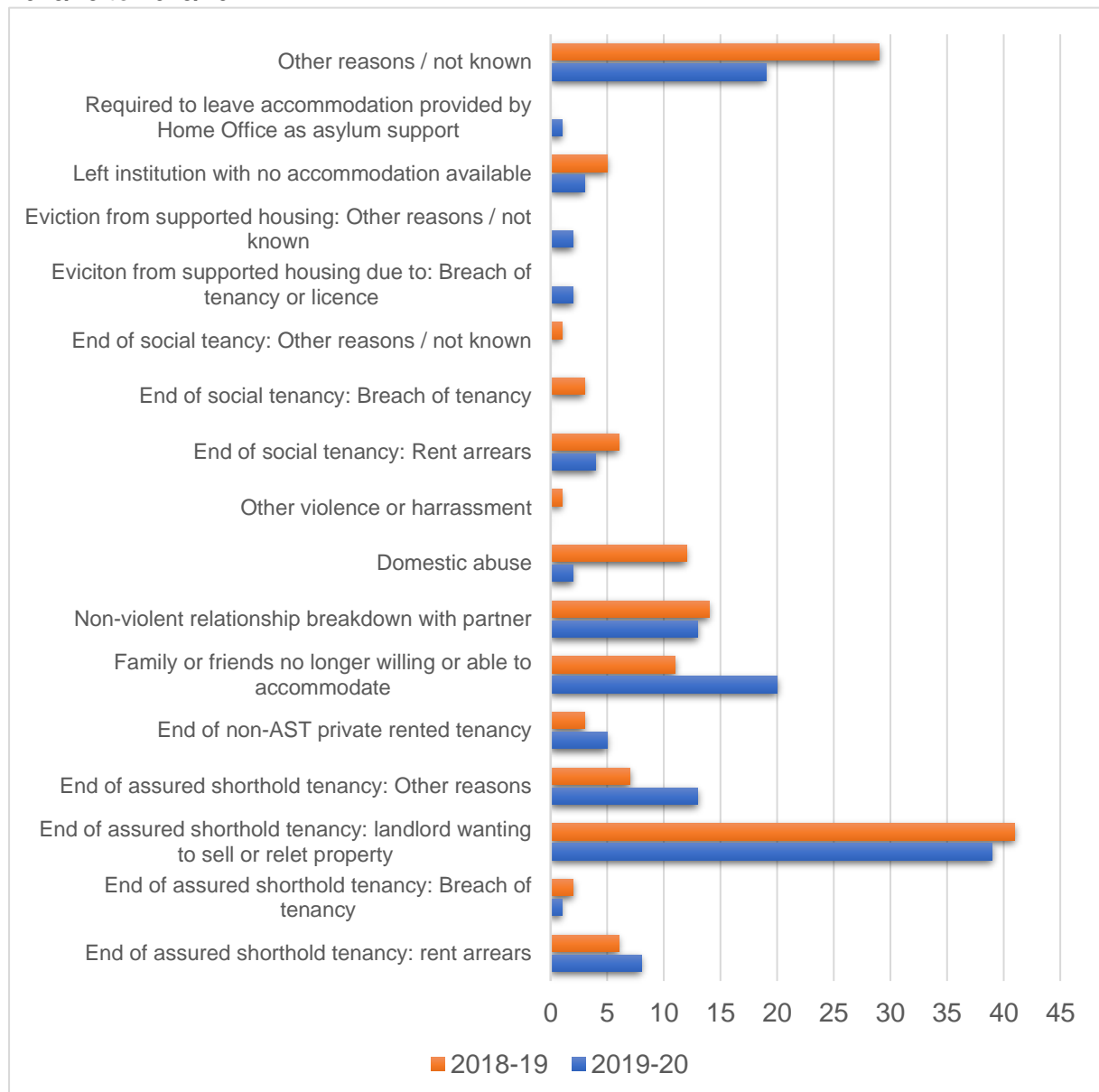
Chart 37: Age of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty, Fareham, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The end of private rented assured shorthold tenancy is the most commonly specified reason for the loss of last settled home for the period 2018/19 to 2019/20, increasing from 37% of all households owed a prevention duty in 2018/19 to 46% in 2019/20. The number of households recorded as losing their last settled home due to family and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate also increased from 11 households in 2018/19 to 20 in 2019/20. Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner reduced by 1 household during the two-year period, while domestic abuse being the reason for loss of the last settled home went down by ten households to 2 in 2019/20. Other Reasons/Not Known for loss of last settled home includes emergency such as fire or flood, and the number of households owed a prevention duty in Fareham due to this reason also reduced by 10 households to 19 in 2019/20.

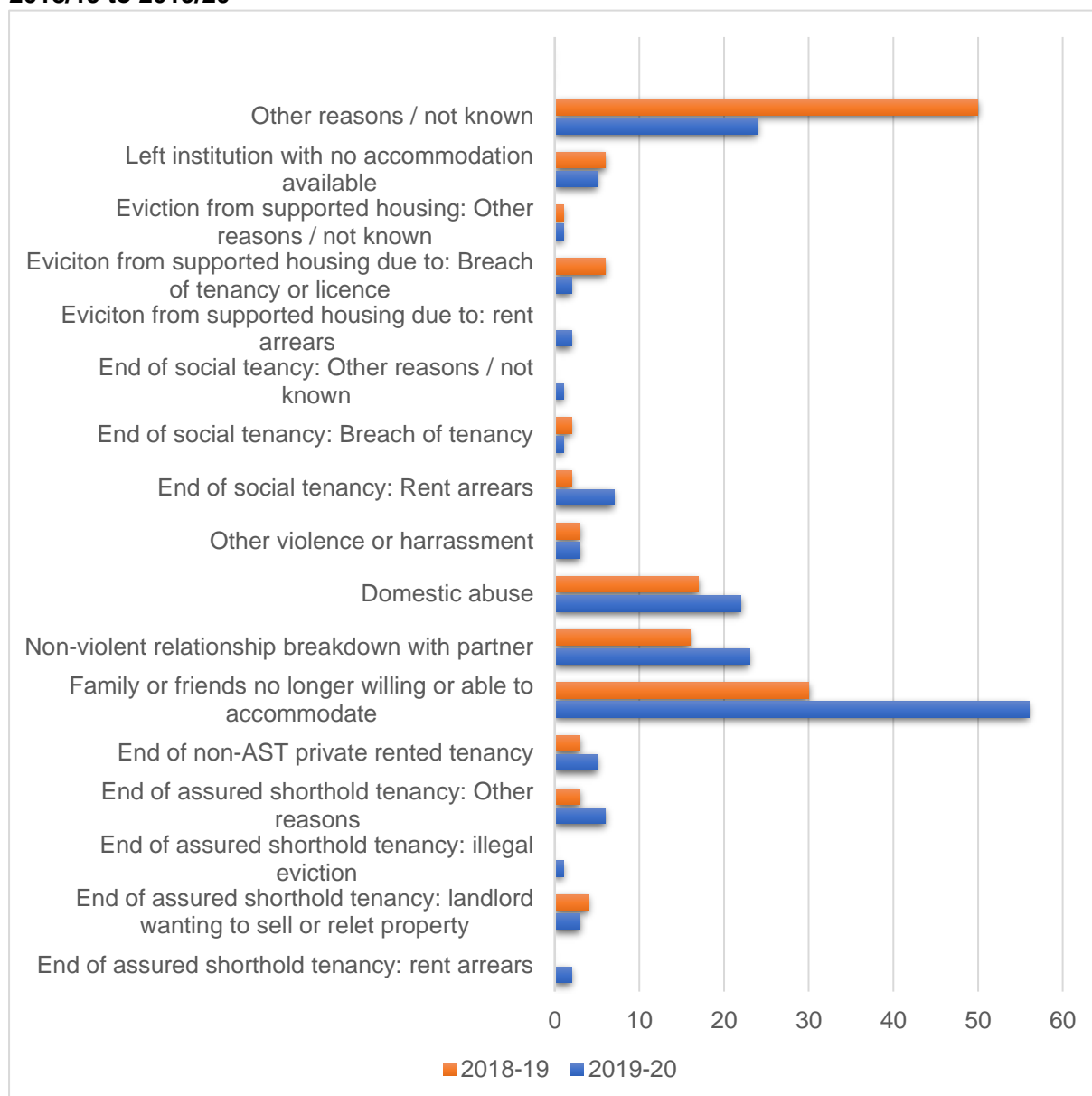
Chart 38: Reason for loss of last settled home for those owed a prevention duty, Fareham, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The most commonly recorded reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a relief duty is family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate which increased by 16 households to 56 between 2018/19 to 2019/20. Households owed a relief duty losing their home due to non-violent relationship breakdown with partner increased from 16 to 23 households and those losing their less settled home due to domestic abuse rose by 7 to 22 households in 2019/20. Loss of assured shorthold for any reason rose from 7 to 12 over the period.

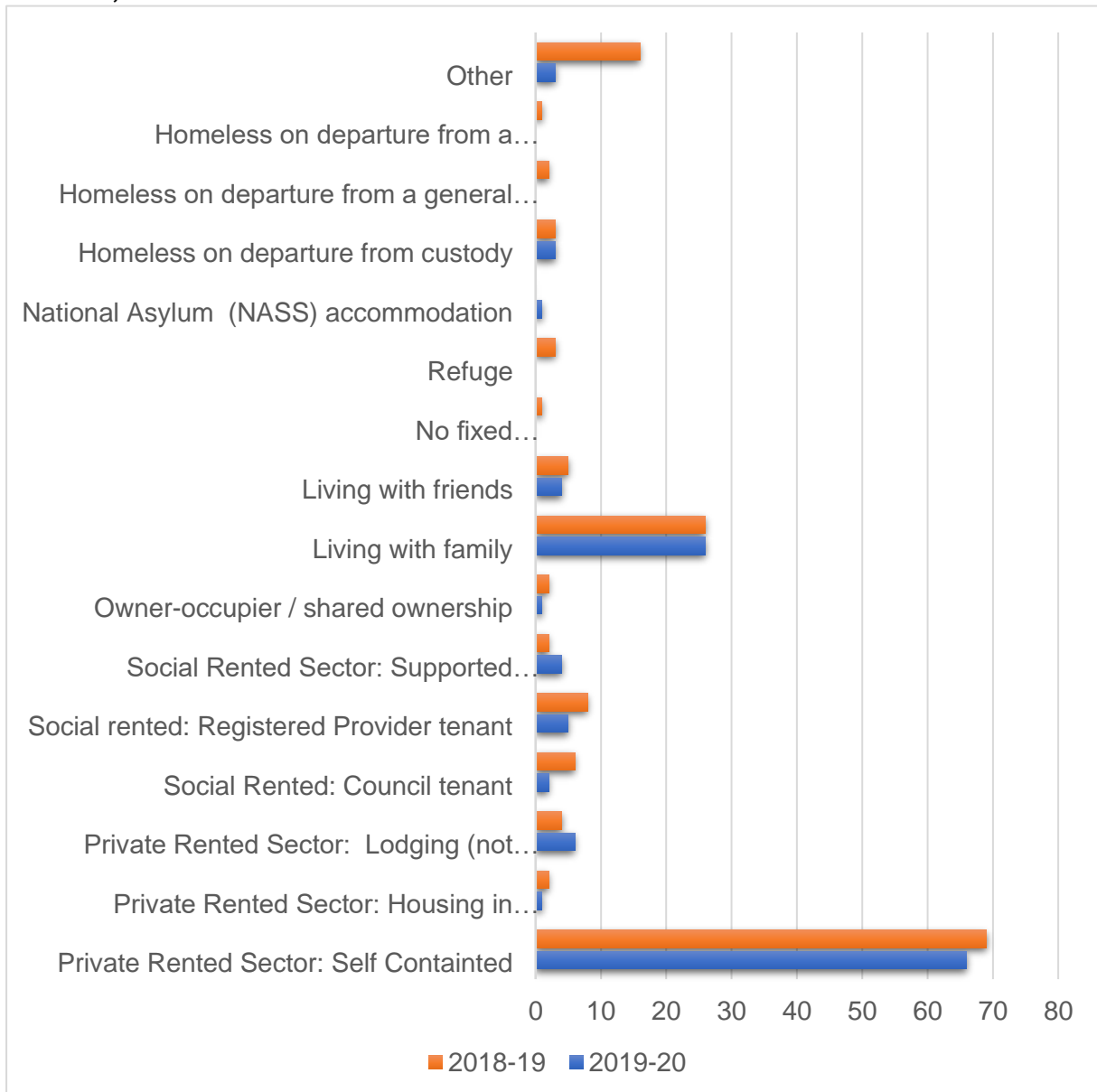
Chart 39: Reason for loss of last settled home for those owed a relief duty, Fareham, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

46% of all households owed a prevention duty for 2018/19, and 54% of those in 2019/20, were living in self-contained privately rented accommodation at the time of application. Households living with family was 17% of all those owed a prevention duty for 2018/19 and 21% for 2019/20. Households owed a prevention duty who were living in the social rented housing at the time of application reduced from 10.7% during 2018/19 of all households owed a prevention duty to 9.02% during 2019/20. This included council-owned housing, private registered provider owned housing and social rented supported housing. Other/not known which includes other, unknown, caravan / houseboat, student accommodation, looked after children placement, tied accommodation, Armed Forces accommodation, reduced from 10.6% to 2.5% of all households owed a prevention duty during the two-year period.

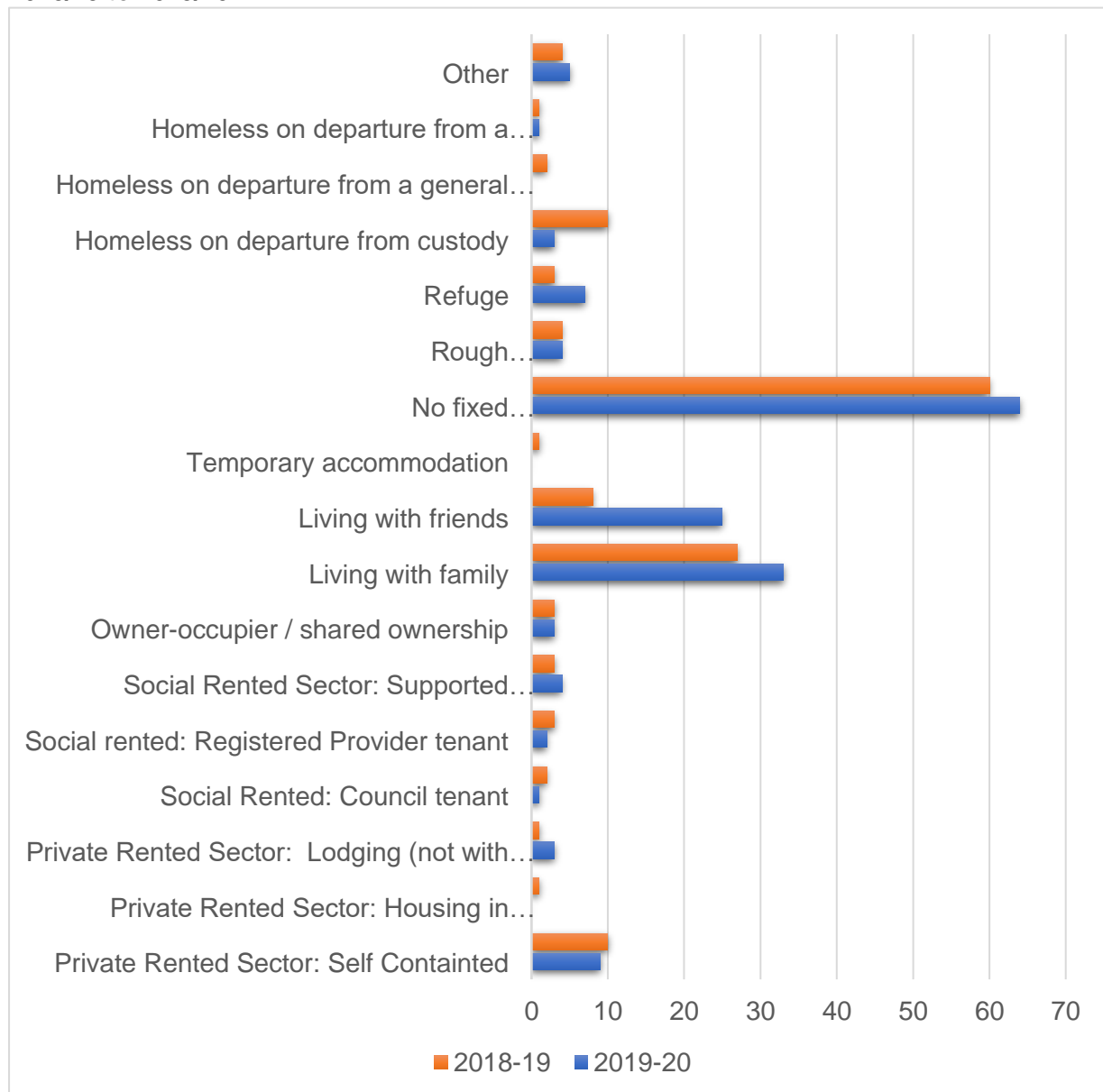
Chart 40: Accommodation at time of application for those owed a prevention duty, Fareham, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

No fixed abode was the most common recorded form of accommodation at the time of application, 42% at 2018/19 and 39% to 2019/20, of all households owed a relief duty. This was followed by living with family which increased from 19% to 20% of all households owed a relief duty in the same period. The number of households living with friends increased from 6% of all households owed a relief duty in 2018/19 to 15% in 2019/20.

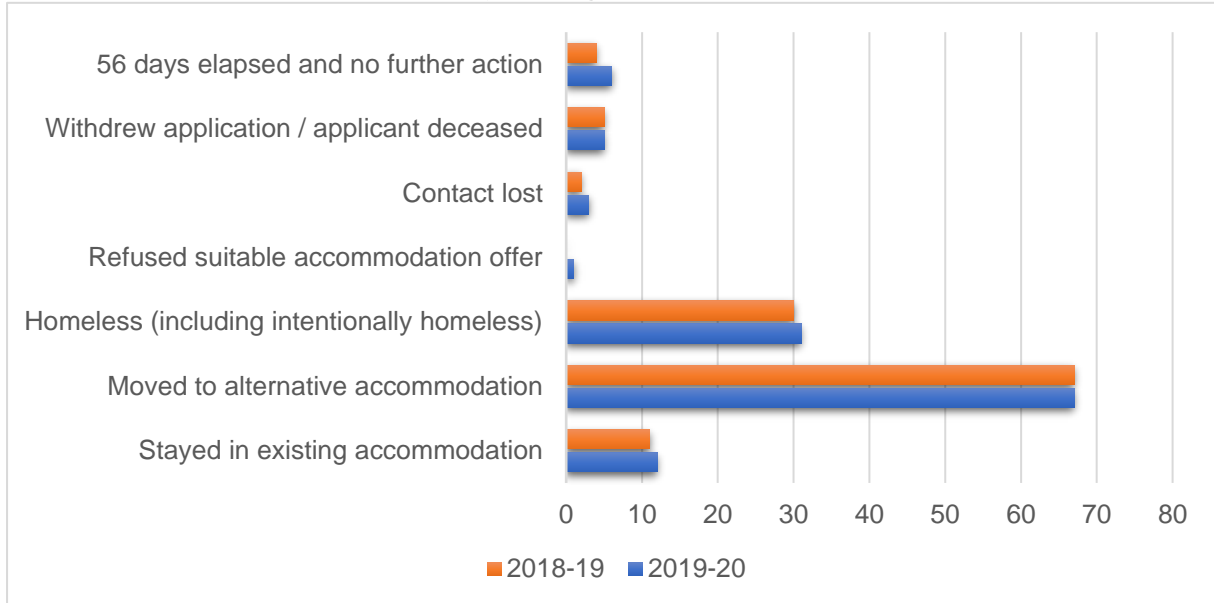
Chart 41: Accommodation at time of application for those owed a relief duty, Fareham, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

56% of all households whose prevention duties ended in Fareham during 2018/19 and 53% for 2019/20 were due to new accommodation being secured for at least 6 months, while 9% and 10% respectively were due to being able to remain in existing accommodation. For both years, 25% of households whose prevention duty ended in Fareham were due to becoming intentionally homeless. When combined with no further action, contact lost, application withdrawn/deceased and refused suitable offer of accommodation, up to 37% of households whose prevention duty ended during 2018/19 to 2019/20 have resulted in potentially negative outcomes, which may have resulted in an unresolved homelessness situation for the household.

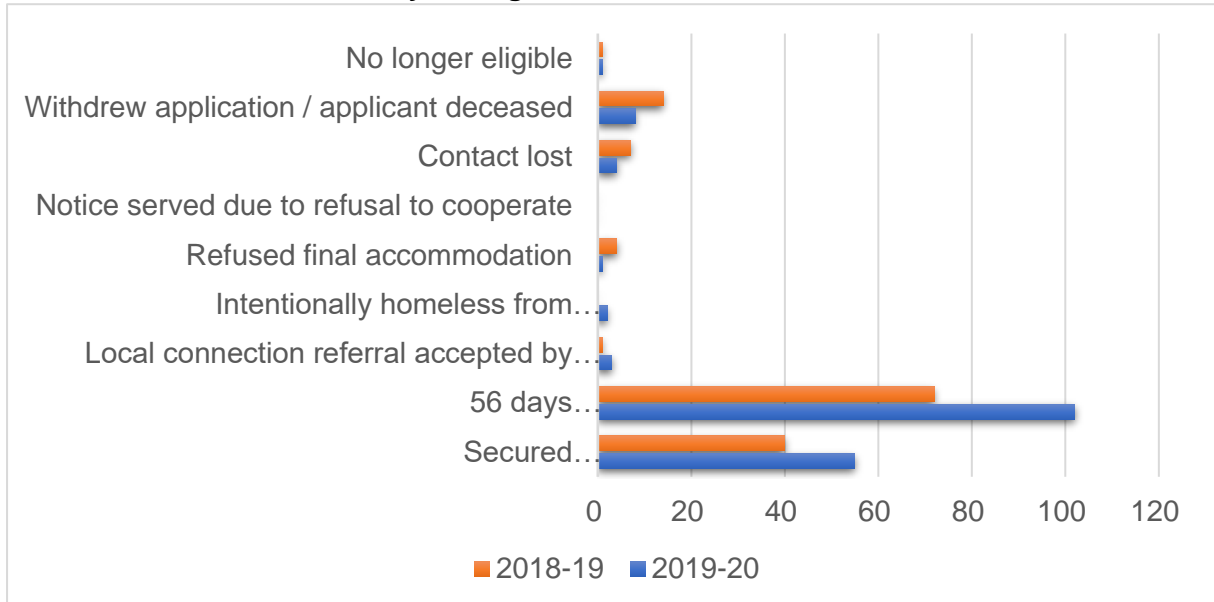
Chart 42: Reason for prevention duty ending, Fareham 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The most common reason for the relief duty ending in Fareham is 56 days elapsing, which increased from 52% of all households whose relief duty ended during 2018/19 to 58% during 2019/20. This is followed by accommodation secured for 6+ months, at 29% of all households whose relief duty ended during 2018/19 and 31% during 2019/20, though this data set does not record the tenure of such accommodation.

Chart 43: Reason for relief duty ending, Fareham, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

3.1 Early Homelessness Prevention Activities

3.1.1 Universal advice and information

A new 'duty to refer' came into force from October 2018⁵⁸. Specified public authorities are obliged to ask any person they believe might be homeless or threatened with homelessness if they wish to be referred to a local authority of their own choosing.

The Council has made information available to relevant public bodies, such as probation services, prisons, social services, armed forces and local NHS Trusts, about how to make referrals of cases of homelessness. A joint Duty to Refer Protocol⁵⁹ was established with Fareham and other Hampshire local authorities and this remains in place today, while a dedicated online referral form is available on The Council website⁶⁰, plus a specific email address has been set-up.

Fareham Local Housing Authority action on Duty to Refer

An assessment⁶¹ of the Councils progress in the use of the duty to refer, carried out during this review, confirmed that the provision of advice, support and information for public authorities and other referral agencies is still developing. A Hampshire wide joint working protocol was agreed by the Hampshire local housing authorities in September 2018 and other actions are in place, including:

- an online referral form that makes clear what information is required,
- a dedicated duty to refer email address for enquiries and referral submission,
- a range of different of ways in which to forward the referral to the Council,
- a triage system for assessing and prioritising referrals,
- a data collection process reported though HCLIC
- a record of public authorities within Fareham who have a duty to refer

Additional outcomes of the assessment highlighted actions which should be undertaken to ensure that referrals are made in every possible case by those public authorities who have a duty to refer, and to develop and improve relationships between organisations to prevent and relieve homelessness, including:

- Involving public authorities and other referral agencies who have a duty to refer within the joint working protocol, including providing information and training on housing needs, to develop engagement and cooperation for each referral.
- Actively encourage other public bodies, voluntary organisations, other persons and organisations to voluntarily comply with the duty to refer.
- Make available printed and electronic housing advice information to the referring public authorities.
- Mapping out the accommodation pathway for the person referred, and reference referral information when the personal housing plan is formulated.
- Regular training of Housing Options Officers based on the national duty to refer guidance⁶², lesson plan⁶³ and Homelessness Code of Guidance⁶⁴, and ensuring officers are clear about timescales for responding to referrals.

⁵⁸ Homelessness (Review Procedure Etc) Regulations 2018, Part 4 Duty to Refer

⁵⁹ Hampshire Homelessness Referral Protocol, Hampshire Housing Authorities, September 2018,

⁶⁰ Duty to Refer online form

https://www.fareham.gov.uk/PDF/housing/HampshireDutyReferralForm_Sept18.pdf

⁶¹ Duty to refer: an opportunity to cooperate. Local authority self-assessment checklist

⁶² Duty to Refer: an opportunity to cooperate to tackle homelessness, Local Government Association, 2018

⁶³ Duty to Refer Lesson Plan

<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/LGA%20Duty%20to%20Refer%20Training%20Plan.pdf>

⁶⁴ Homelessness Code of Guidance, Chapter four, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018

- Create a record of the housing associations in the Borough that have signed up to the National Housing Federation’s Commitment to Refer and provide a copy of Commitment to Refer⁶⁵ guidance for Housing Options officers to reference.
- Developing a procedure setting out all tasks the Housing Options officer must undertake following a referral, including arrangements to provide proof of receipt when a referral is received by Fareham Borough Council.
- Adding a duty to refer button to the homepage on the Council’s website, providing easy access to duty to refer information and referral form.

Both the duty to refer and the commitment to refer are excellent opportunities to develop a strong multi agency approach to tackling homelessness at an individual level and putting these actions in place will foster this approach and enable the development of organisational relationships allowing for considerably earlier homelessness prevention opportunities across Fareham.

During 2019/20, 17 referrals were recorded as being made to Fareham Borough Council, including 14 made under the new Duty to Refer. As Table 1 illustrates, one referral was made by an adult secure estate, and 7 by the Probation Service or community rehabilitation company. The timing of referrals of these offenders/ex-offenders would be critical in being able to prevent homelessness rather than it having to be relieved as the referees had already become homeless. The same is true for the three referrals from children’s social services, and one from mental health in-patient care, and with 11 households accepted by Fareham Borough Council as owed a prevention of relief duty during 2018/19 and 8 during 2019-20 reporting their last settled home as an institution, opportunities for earlier referrals under this duty should be sought.

Table 1: Households assessed for homelessness as a result of a referral including under the duty to refer, Fareham, 2019/20

Referrals made to Fareham Borough Council including under Duty to Refer 2019/20	
Organisation Type	Number of referrals
Agency not subject to Duty to Refer	3
Other organisation type/not known	0
Children’s Social Services	3
National Probation Service	4
Adult Social Services	0
Hospital A&E, Urgent Treatment Centres of in-patient care	0
Mental health in-patient care	1
Adult secure estate (Prison)	1
Other local authority	2
Job Centre Plus	1
Community rehabilitation company	2

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

⁶⁵ Commitment to Refer: Guidance for Housing Associations, National Housing Federations, 2020

Many of the 30 housing associations that own social rented housing stock in Fareham local authority area have signed up to the National Housing Federation's voluntary Commitment to Refer⁶⁶, including:

- Vivid Housing
- Abri
- Clarion Housing Group
- Sanctuary Housing Association
- The Guinness Partnership Limited
- Places for People Group Limited
- Home Group Limited

The prevention of homelessness often starts with good housing advice. The Council provides an in-house housing advice service, from the main local authority offices. The responsibilities performed include:

- Providing Housing advice,
- Taking applications for homelessness assistance,
- Determining eligibility for assistance,
- Providing accommodation for an interim period to people who might be homeless, eligible for assistance and have a priority need,
- Completing assessments and formulating personalised plans,
- Fulfilling duties to prevent and/or relieve homelessness, provide accommodation to people who are unintentionally homeless and have a priority need, plus provide advice and accommodation for a reasonable period to people who are intentionally homeless and have a priority need,
- Making referrals to other local authorities for persons who do not have a connection to Fareham Borough Council.
- Completing reviews of decisions made about entitlements to assistance,
- Ensuring suitability of accommodation offered, protection of persons property, working with children services when cases involve children, receiving referrals from specified public authorities, and
- Detecting fraudulent applications for assistance.

In addition to housing advice, the Council is also responsible for:

- Responding to requests for assistance from other local authorities to discharge their homelessness duties, and
- Completing a homelessness review and formulating a homelessness strategy.

The Council delivers the homelessness and housing advice functions from the Civic Offices in Fareham. The Council's website has an easily identifiable, specific housing button which is also a drop-down box, providing a selection of housing links including

⁶⁶ National Housing Federation. (2018). Commitment to refer: guidance for housing associations

homelessness. This links to the dedicated homelessness page, which provides information about:

- How to access the service over the telephone, by email and opening times and location of the Housing Advice Drop-in Service including the new arrangements during the Covid-19 pandemic
- A weblink for help for rough sleepers via Streetlink
- Information on HRA 2017 and the new duties, as well as a link to a non-cooperation procedure for use in the event of deliberate and unreasonable refuse to cooperate by an applicant
- Where to get independent advice, with links to Shelter and Citizens Advice websites
- Information and a link to a more comprehensive document on the right to review
- The Duty to Refer information and links to the dedicated email address and protocol

The housing advice pages on the website set out the types of housing related issues which may require housing advice and provide a link to a set of advice sheets, and a self-assessment tool which helps to refine the type of fact sheet required. The advice sheets cover several housing related areas including:

- Housing Benefits and Universal Credit
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- letting agents and private sector renting
- Direct access hostels in Hampshire
- floating support
- domestic abuse services

The advice sheets are basic but informative and simple to read. They include telephone and email contact details for the housing advice service as well other appropriate independent advice agencies and other organisations. All pages and fact sheets encourage the reader to contact the Housing Options team if their situation is urgent. The Council's webpages all have an 'accessibility' button which allows the reader to enlarge the font and change the colour scheme but there does not appear to be accessible advice for those with other sight problems, hearing loss, mobility, learning disability, language or other needs as required by the 2018 Homelessness Code of Guidance⁶⁷. Some of the information is out of date and there are some gaps in the advice provided in the sheets, such as information on HRA-17.

3.1.2 Targeted action

There are specific homelessness prevention initiatives to respond to the common characteristics of adults who experience homelessness, such as alcohol

⁶⁷ Homelessness Code of Guidance, Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, para 3.6, 2018.

dependency, street drinking, use of hard drugs, begging, injecting drugs, being charged with a violent criminal offence, abuse of solvents/gas/glue, engaging in sex work, being a victim of a sexual assault⁶⁸. StreetAid, a multi-agency initiative led by the Council, to help those rough sleeping off the street and into accommodation, has been so successful it has now been subsumed into the Community Safety Partnership Action Group (PAG).

Street Aid/Community Safety Partnership Action Group

StreetAid started as a stand-alone multi-agency initiative, in response to town centre rough sleeping, begging and drug use, with the aim of helping rough sleepers off the streets with targeted support.

Meetings with all agencies in attendance focussed on community safety led discussions about individual rough sleepers, their street location and specific vulnerabilities and support needs. With officers from the Police, Fire Service, Environmental Health, Community Safety, substance misuse and rough sleeper support services, NHS mental health, Adults and Children's services, and Fareham Housing Options in attendance the group had a comprehensive package of advice and support to offer the rough sleepers.

Stakeholders reported that the initiative was very different from the usual enforcement approach and focussed on engagement and support, as many times as it took to help each person off the street.

Everyone sleeping on the street in Fareham has been offered engagement and support. The reduction in the number of rough sleepers from 9 in 2019 to just three currently sleeping rough is a result of this engagement. These individuals are still regularly offered support in the hope that this will at some point be accepted. Many other individuals responsible for anti-social or criminal activity, such as the misuse of drugs, have also been helped through this partnership, not just those sleeping rough.

The success of StreetAid has been down to the level of engagement from all partners, as they all have a stake in successful outcomes for the individuals assisted within their own areas of responsibility. The initiative continues to work well, as new or repeat rough sleeping emerges, and this success has resulted in StreetAid being incorporated into the Community Safety Partnership Action Group (PAG), a tactical group of operational partners, and will continue indefinitely. The partnership is clear that they are preventing and relieving homelessness as well as improving community safety.

The Probation Service

The Probation Service attends the Fareham Community Safety Partnership Action Group (PAG), which is a multi-agency group tackling specific community issues which include homelessness. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), is located in the same building as Fareham Housing Options Service. The CRC supervises offenders in the community, including in hostels for prison leavers in Fareham, Portsmouth and Southampton, and delivers the Through the Gate service to help prisoners nearing release to improve wellbeing and skills and address substance misuse. The website also states that the support offered for

⁶⁸ Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Dr Sarah Johnsen, Dr Michael White (2011), 'Multiple Exclusion Homelessness in the UK: Key Patterns and Intersections', *Social Policy & Society*, 10(4), p501-512

offenders includes areas such as accommodation. This is important as prisoners can be released to unknown addresses or no address but should be released to a safe address and assisted in securing longer term accommodation according to their needs, to prevent homelessness and repeat offending. There is no current joint protocol between Housing Options and the Probation Service.

Youth Offending Team

The Hampshire Youth Offending Team takes a multi-agency approach to preventing and reducing the number of young people in the criminal justice system. While there is currently limited joint working with Fareham Borough Council Housing Options Team, the early preventative approach is also an opportunity for early homelessness prevention.

Care Leavers

Hampshire County Council Care Leavers Service provides all those leaving care a personal adviser to help with accessing housing, as well as health services, finances, employment, training and education, until the care leaver reaches the age of 21, or 25 if in full time education. The County Council has a responsibility to prepare children in care for becoming adults and living independently⁶⁹. The Personal Adviser, who takes on this role when the child in care reaches the age of 16, sees care leavers every two months to ensure that they are managing to live independently as a duty. Accommodation options for care leavers arranged by Children's Services include supported housing, supported lodgings, shared housing and privately renting, and if an independent living option is chosen, a set up fund of up to £2,000 is provided by Children's services for essential items.

The Children in Care webpage provides links to Shelter for support where a care leaver is having difficulties with housing or homelessness and where they may need to challenge the housing authority. There is limited engagement between Fareham Housing Options Service and Children's Services, However, there is a very good relationship with the County Council's care leaving service and personal advisors. Data shows three young people being assessed as owed a prevention duty in Fareham, and Table 1 (above) shows that Children's Services referred three young people through the Duty to Refer. This demonstrates that young people are becoming homeless or threatened with homelessness, however for the period of this review, 2015/16 to 2019/20, there were no care leavers or former care leavers recorded as being owed a homelessness duty.

Regular armed forces veterans

The Council, which adopted armed forces covenant in 2014, provides an advice sheet for the armed forces community providing links to specialist veterans organisations and charities providing housing advice. This includes armed forces charity Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) which provides former serving armed forces personnel information on the options around housing

⁶⁹ Children and Social Work Act 2017, s1(1),

and homelessness and will work to secure financial help to fund a tenancy deposit or clear mortgage arrears.

The Veterans Gateway also provides information on housing and living independently for armed forces veterans and has launched an App to help veterans find local services.

Riverside Housing Group provide a national helpline for armed forces veterans facing homelessness, SPACES (Single Persons' Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services), provide an advice and housing placement service with access to supported housing in Hampshire providing for the complex needs of veterans with issues including post-traumatic stress and/or substance misuse. The offer to ex-service personnel extends to floating support once the veteran has moved on to independent accommodation.

Alabare is a homelessness care and support charity offer 20 bedspaces of supported accommodation for homeless ex forces personnel with high support needs in Fareham and Gosport and four move-on spaces, which are all offered for a maximum of one year, with follow on support for a limited period.

Domestic Abuse

The Council provide a web page with advice for people suffering domestic abuse, which has been updated to include information on how to get help during the Covid-19 crisis when the order is to stay at home. The web page includes a link to the main domestic abuse partner, SDAS (Southern Domestic Abuse Services trading as Stop Domestic Abuse), a Hampshire based charity providing accommodation-based services, including refuges and other temporary accommodation, as well as outreach and resettlement support and advice, and a 24-hour advice line. Support and advice is also offered to women, children and men who are not staying at a refuge but are still in need of information and support. A recent innovative approach to offering help to victims who are having to isolate with the perpetrator is the virtual Stop Domestic Abuse drop-in service on Facebook, which includes information, training opportunities and a way to contact the service discreetly.

Leaving Hospital

There is some information on the NHS, CCG and County Council websites about discharge from hospital, but there is no information about what happens when a patient being discharged is, or becomes, homeless. There was previously no reported collaboration on this issue and anecdotally discharge was made into an emergency situation when potentially unsuitable temporary accommodation has to be provided either by Adult Social Care or Fareham Council Temporary Accommodation Team. However, the housing options team have recently started working with health and social care colleagues to make improvements in this area.

Experiencing mental illness

Southern Health NHS have a specialist mental health service working with adults who have a history of multiple and complex needs for example dual diagnosis, although a primary diagnosis of psychosis is required for a referral.

The Richmond Fellowship is commissioned by Hampshire County Council to provide support for those with mental health problems to help to prepare for managing independent accommodation. The Fellowship has considerable experience of helping clients that have been through their pathway to turn their lives around and live independently, although they report that the different degrees of mental health is a stumbling block to helping someone make a homeless application and the response from housing options officers is inconsistent. However, the housing option service has recently started work to rectify this.

Substance misuse

Inclusion is a service commissioned by the NHS to provide substance misuse and addiction support and recovery planning and work with other agencies, Housing Options and Two Saints in particular, to prevent eviction or help secure housing for their clients.

Supported housing

Two Saints are a homelessness support charity, providing a community drop-in services at the Council offices and a telephone support an advice line to individuals and families facing difficulties with housing, and other related issues. Two Saints are also commissioned by Hampshire County Council to provide support and supported accommodation, including hostel accommodation, to homeless households. Information provided by Hampshire shows that for quarter two during 2020/21, 54 individuals were provided with support by Two Saints under the contract, the majority of which was to rough sleepers and households placed in bed and breakfast.

3.2 Pre-crisis homelessness prevention activities

Pre-crisis homelessness prevention activities are carried out by the Council's Housing Options Service. These activities can be divided into two broad areas: assistance that helps people to remain in their existing accommodation or, when this is not safe or possible, help to obtain alternative accommodation. These activities are typically carried out anytime between when someone is homeless, and up to two months prior to someone potentially losing their home, and occasionally even further ahead in time. MHCLG's homelessness statistical recording from 2009/10⁷⁰ (until 2017/18, following which recording methods were changed), detailed pre-crisis homelessness prevention activities typically carried out throughout England as shown below:

⁷⁰ Department for Communities and Local Government. (2009). Recording homelessness prevention and relief at E10 of the P1E quarterly return: Further guidance for local housing authorities.

Homelessness Prevention Activities to Remain in Existing Home

Mediation using external or internal trained family mediators

Conciliation including home visits for family/friends threatened exclusion

Financial payments from a homelessness prevention fund

Debt advice

Resolving housing benefit problems

Resolving rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sectors

Sanctuary scheme measures for domestic violence

Crisis intervention – providing emergency support

Negotiation or legal advocacy to ensure someone can remain in accommodation in the private rented sector

Providing other assistance that will enable someone to remain in the private rented sector

Mortgage arrears interventions or mortgage rescue

Homelessness Prevention Activities to Obtain Alternative Accommodation

Any form of hostel or house of multiple occupation with or without support

Private rented sector accommodation with landlord incentive scheme

Private rented sector accommodation without landlord incentive scheme

Accommodation arranged with friends or relatives

Supported housing, including supported lodging schemes

Management move of an existing social housing tenant

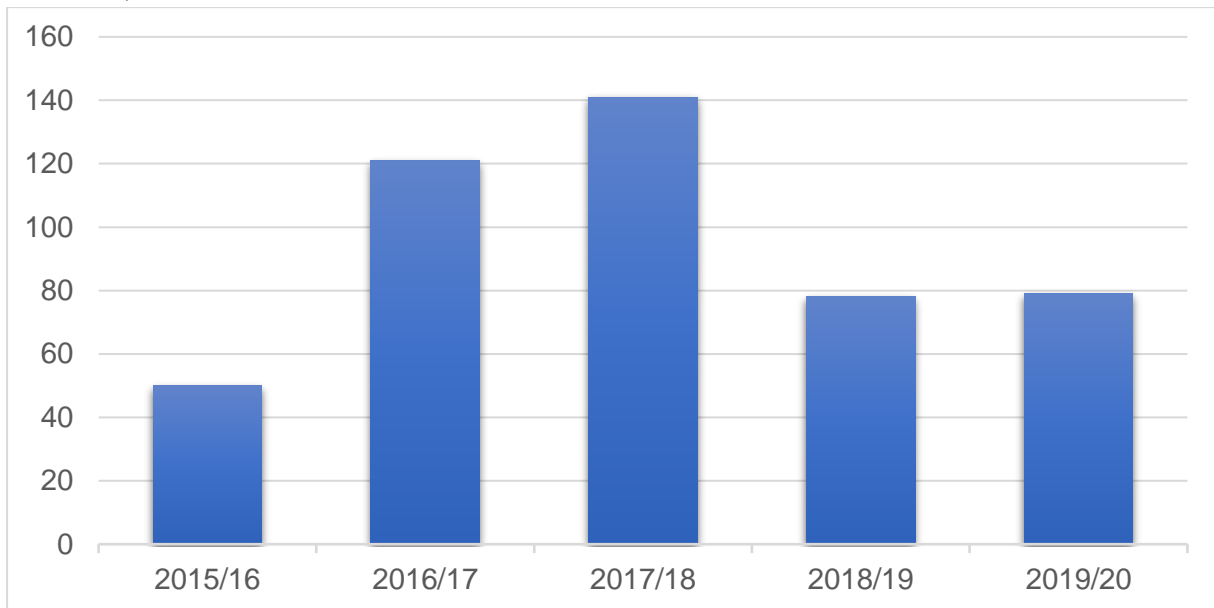
Housing register offer or nomination of accommodation to a social landlord

Negotiation with an RSL outside housing register or nomination arrangements

Low cost homeownership scheme or low-cost market housing solution

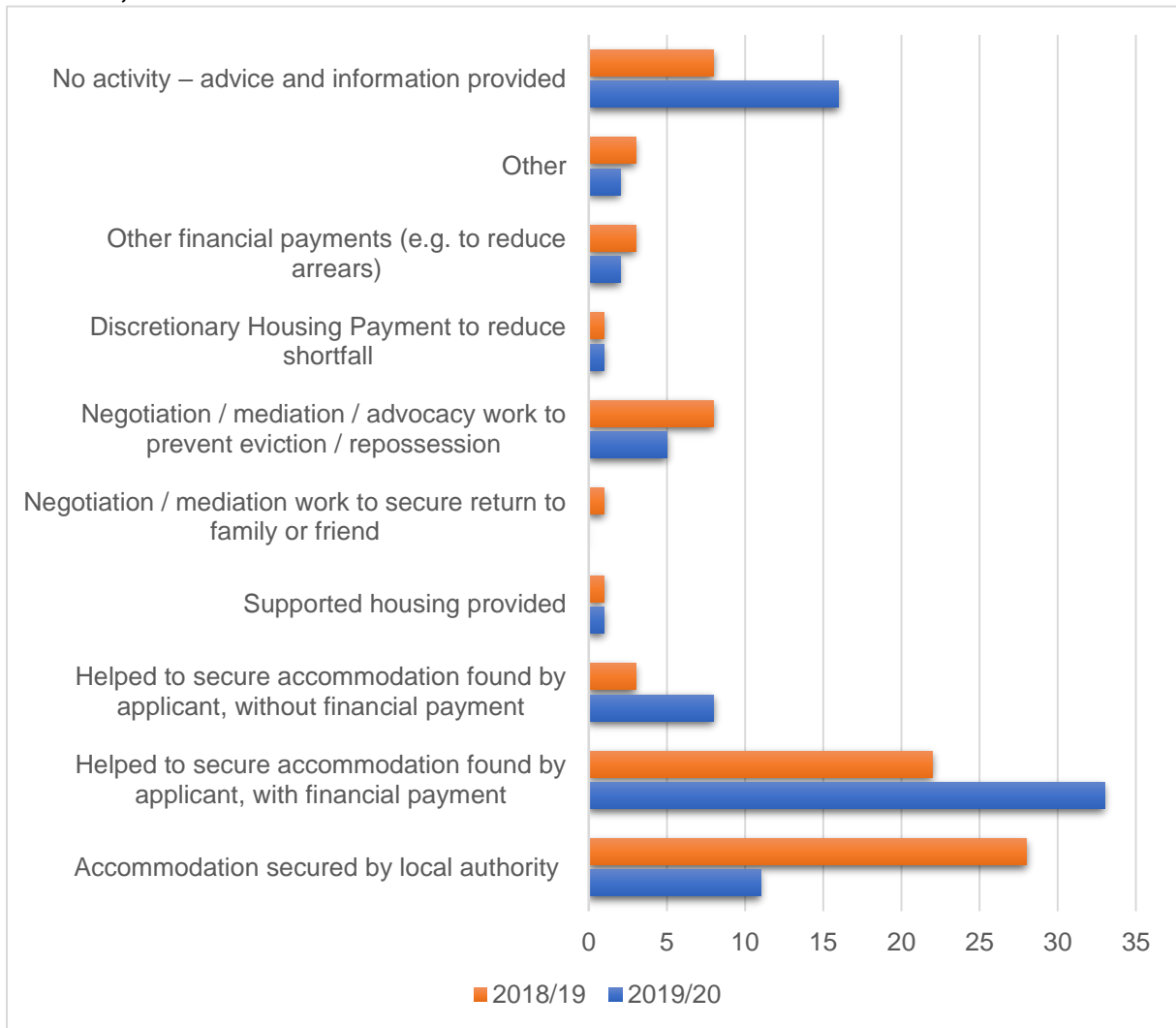
The reduction in the number of cases where positive action succeeded in preventing homelessness from a high of 141 in 2017/18 to 79 in 2019/20 coincide with the HRA-17 implementation. The numbers may be impacted by the additional burdens this new Act created and other factors, such as, the increasing cost of the private rented sector, a greater number of people becoming homeless, and fewer new social housing lettings. These outcome figures will be impacted further in the 2020/21 year, as a result of the response to Covid-19, and it may be some time before the rate of successful preventions increases to earlier levels.

Chart 44: Number of cases where positive action succeeded in preventing homelessness, Fareham, 2015/16 to 2019/20



Accommodation found by the applicant and secured with the financial support of the Council, such as help with rent in advance or a rent deposit for a private sector assured shorthold tenancy, was the main activity that secured accommodation to prevent homelessness during 2019/20. This was more common than accommodation secured by the local housing authority, usually in the form of social rented housing, which was the most common during 2019. The increase in the numbers secured with financial help contrasts with the reduction in the number of those where non-financial help was used to secure accommodation from eight to five households during 2018/19 to 2019/20. The second most common prevention activity used to secure accommodation during 2019/20 was advice and information, doubling from 2018/19. It is important to review why this activity has become more successful and consider action to focus on this area.

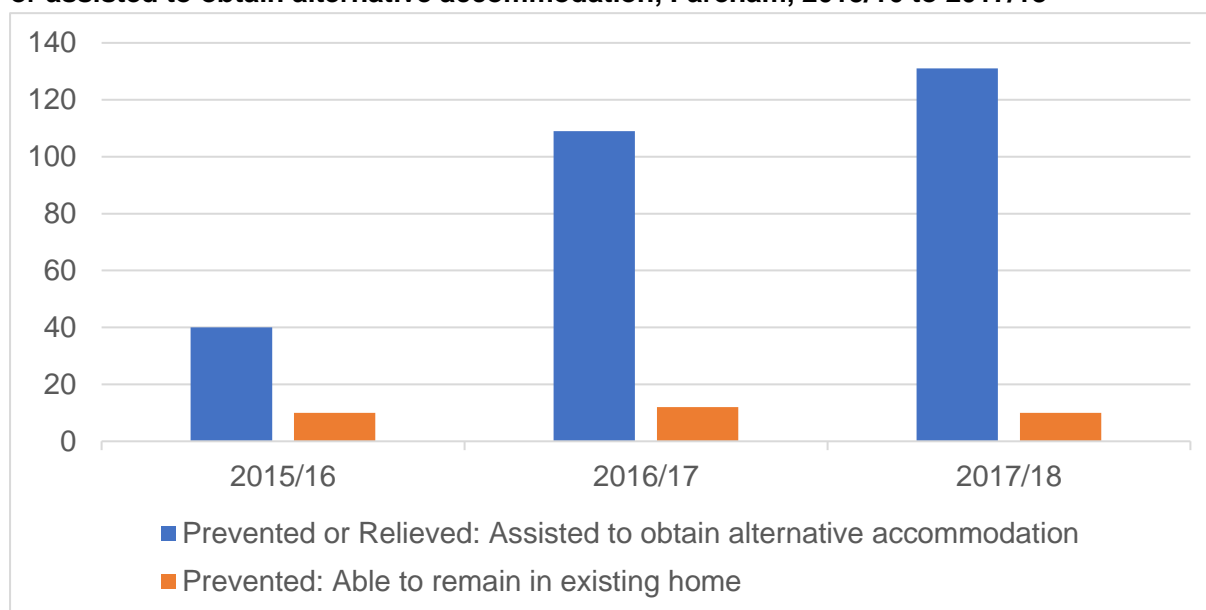
Chart 45: Main prevention activity that resulted in accommodation being secured, Fareham, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The number of households assisted to remain in their existing home prior to 2018/19 was low. This is in contrast to the number helped to secure alternative accommodation, which increased year on year between 2015/16 and 2017/18.

Chart 46: Homelessness prevented or relieved - households to remain in existing home, or assisted to obtain alternative accommodation, Fareham, 2015/16 to 2017/18



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Housing Benefit Administration

Joint working between the Housing Benefits service and the Housing Options team is proactive and effective. The Council considers the Housing Benefits service to be a people function as well as a financial one. Both teams are in the same department, located within the same office space and understand that they share not only a client group, but also objectives in helping to prevent and relieve homelessness.

Discretionary Housing Payments

The Housing Benefits service actively promotes DHP's (Discretionary Housing Payments), including on its comprehensive web pages⁷¹, in plain language with a link entitled Extra Help. This link takes the reader to a separate page which is well set out and clearly provides all the information an applicant needs about DHPs including a simple budgeting tool and details of all three ways to apply, in person at the Council offices, over the telephone or at the applicant's home if they are ill or disabled and unable to attend the Council offices. Applications cannot be made without this face to face or telephone call with a Housing Benefits officer. Currently, most appointments are over the telephone and this has not led to any reduction in quality of service. There would also normally be a drop-in service where officers aim to get the DHP applied for and payment agreed while the customer is still in the building.

While many local authorities are switching to online application and self-service, Fareham have seen great results in reducing customer contact and preventing homelessness by ensuring that the resources are put where the demand is.

⁷¹ Housing Benefits Webpages, Fareham Borough Council, <https://www.fareham.gov.uk/benefits/intro.aspx>

Essentially, putting experienced Housing Benefit officers on the front line and assisting applicants to complete the DHP form at the initial contact or shortly afterwards, ensures the form is completed correctly with all required information and can be processed quickly without the applicant being passed from one officer to another, or the applications being left for when the telephones are quiet, and the officers have a little time to catch up on admin.

Treating the customer as a person and not a piece of paper can mean having to provide a high level of support, but this is where the process adds value. The experienced officers will ascertain through the face to face or telephone appointment, the reasons for needing the DHP. Where the need is due to ill health or disability the DHP is likely to be awarded for a longer term, and the applicant is assisted to apply to join the social housing register for more affordable and often more suitable rented accommodation. Where the need is due to affordability, the officer will work with the Housing Options team to investigate the reasons for this, such as a reduction in working hours, redundancy, increase in rent or other financial problems, and if it is apparent that the tenancy cannot be rescued, a short term DHP will be put in place and Housing Options will start the initial assessment process.

When the Housing Benefits service are notified by DWP that a household is receiving the housing element of Universal Credit, they will contact the applicant and discuss their financial situation to ascertain the need for a DHP and refer to Housing Options for homelessness prevention activity as necessary. *'We have learned that you have got to pick up the phone. An awful lot gets discussed during that phone call, things that the applicant may have forgotten to add to the form if we didn't ask, and if we can get it sorted during that phone call the customer is always very grateful.'*

Housing Benefit officers report that they used to feel protective of the DHP allocation, but this has shifted to seeing the 'pot' as money that has been allocated to support the local community and to considering what difference the additional money would make to the customer.

Debt Advice Services

Citizens Advice

There is long history of joint working between Housing Options and Citizens Advice Fareham (CAF), with the Council referring service users to CAF for free impartial advice to help prevent or relieve homelessness. CAF provide this over the telephone, face to face at the County Library Building and other drop-in locations, or online. The online debt advice is comprehensive and makes very clear that if eviction or bailiff proceedings are taking place, CAF should be contacted immediately, but the pages are not all easy to navigate or access and may be overwhelming for people with complex needs. The service includes general money and debt advice as well as a specialist debt adviser for those with substantial debt. CAF confirm that the good

partnership working is making a difference, however data is not regularly shared, and it is not currently possible to ascertain the outcomes from this joint working.

Community Money Advice (CMA)

Fareham has a local branch of the national charity who train volunteers to become 'money mentors' providing free, confidential debt advice to anyone in the community who needs it, including via Zoom video calls if required.

Private rented sector enforcement officers

The Fareham and Gosport Environmental Health Partnership includes a small team of private sector housing officers that deal with private rented sector landlord and tenant issues. This team have all received training on how to work with tenants effectively to help resolve issues rather than immediately serving notice on the landlord. Therefore, enforcement is the last resort. The service offered is flexible and includes initiatives such as helping to take away rubbish from the home and garden where they may have threatened action against the tenant, encouraging the tenant to clean and decorate the home and take some personal responsibility for its upkeep, and checking in on the tenant regularly to keep the encouragement going. Joint working with the Housing Options service is proactive and effective. For example, when a property must be closed, for repairs to ensure occupants safety, both teams work together to secure alternative accommodation for the displaced residents. The private sector team regularly carry out prevention activities, but these are not recorded and therefore not included in the Council's recorded homelessness prevention outcomes.

Sanctuary Scheme

A Sanctuary Scheme is a multi-agency victim-centred initiative which aims to enable households at risk of domestic violence, to remain safe in their own homes, by installing a 'Sanctuary' in the home and through the provision of support to the household. There is a property that can be used as used temporary accommodation, whenever required by the Council, for victims and their families who are escaping domestic abuse. However, there is no Sanctuary Scheme for Fareham at present.

Housing possession court duty scheme (HPCDS)

The HPCDS for Fareham residents facing immediate, on the day possession proceedings action is based in Portsmouth and is manned by Swain and Co., who provide free legal advocacy and advice regardless of means. Swain and Co's specialist advisers, funded by the Legal Aid Agency for this work, will try and negotiate with a landlord or lender, and write to the applicant after the hearing with follow up advice. The Housing Options team do not currently attend court or receive monitoring information regarding Fareham residents attending the Housing Possession Court.

Pre-eviction protocols

Effective pre-eviction protocols with housing associations provide an early opportunity to work in partnerships with the housing association landlord and their

tenants at risk of eviction action, helping to facilitate behaviour change in the case of antisocial behaviour, or money and debt advice and financial support in the case of rent arrears. There are no current pre-eviction protocols in place, however some housing associations have expressed an interest in agreeing these.

Rent deposit bond and rent in advance

Rent deposit and rent in advance are normally paid by the Housing Benefits service through the award of a DHP and there is no specific fund for rent deposits or other assistance. The Housing Options team offer two financial assistance schemes to help prevent or relieve homelessness:

- The Tenancy Assistance Fund provides loans to help resolve housing difficulties, including non-priority single homeless households.
- The Tenancy Rescue Fund, which is a grant for households with rent arrears that can be awarded from the first day the household is accepted as being owed the prevention duty, with the aim of resolving the housing difficulties as early as possible.

These schemes are funded through a homelessness reserve, which is not guaranteed to be available. Between April 2019 and March 2021, the following grants and loans were approved.

Table 2: Financial profile of schemes funded from homelessness reserves

Name of Scheme	Amount approved	Number of cases approved	Average spend per case
Tenancy assistance fund	£82,482	80	£1018
Tenancy Rescue fund	£1442	1	£1442

3.3 Preventing the reoccurrence of homelessness

Prevention of the reoccurrence of homelessness is typically carried out by a mixture of public authorities, housing associations and voluntary organisations. This might involve providing information, advice, assistance or counselling about health, education, relationships, housing, money, employment and much more. There is variable local verifiable statistical evidence on the volume of activity being carried out, and outcomes being achieved. There is plenty of anecdotal material that has been considered as part of this review. An evaluation of this can be found in chapter 5 of this Homelessness Review.

3.4 Conclusions about activities to prevent homelessness

- More than half of all households seeking homeless prevention assistance featured a female as the head typically with responsibility for dependent children. Whereas households seeking homelessness relief assistance are much more likely to be a single adult, more than often male. Three-quarters of

them are aged below 44 years, with almost one third of them being aged between 25 and 34 years.

- Homelessness prevention cases typically arise due to a landlord wanting to sell or re-let their property which result in them bringing an assured shorthold tenancy to an end. Whereas homelessness relief cases typically arise due to family or friends no longer being willing or able to continue to accommodate someone.
- Helping people to move to alternative accommodation is the primary method for preventing homelessness. It is more common for people to become homeless than be helped to remain in their existing home. For those in a relief duty, the majority are not helped within the 56-day timeframe, but instead go on to be assisted under the main duty. However, it's important to note that a growing proportion of people are helped to obtain accommodation.
- Positive steps, such as the Hampshire wide duty to refer protocol, have been taken as part of the introduction of the duty to refer, to ensure public bodies can refer cases to the Councils homelessness service. However, referral rates are low with the National Probation Service being the primary referring agency.
- There is a clear suite of information available online about the Council's homelessness responsibilities along with practical information for people in housing need. However, there is a limit to the scope of this advice and not all of it is up to date. There is a provision of independent housing advice, part funded by the Council, which ensures people are able to get assistance to protect and uphold their housing rights.
- The StreetAid initiative has achieved tremendous outcomes, this should be promoted as an example of positive practice.
- Firm foundations for an effective working relationship with the Probation service are already in place, however, more could be done to establish a stronger partnership with the youth offending team and the County Council's Care Leaver Service. The various arrangements in place (some of which are shared with the neighbouring Gosport Borough Council) to support armed forces personnel are very positive. As is the current provision available to victims escaping domestic abuse. There is considerable scope for improving joint working arrangements around hospital discharge for people at risk of homelessness. Likewise, despite there being a range of mental health services available for people who are at risk of homelessness, more work could be done to improve current working arrangements between the Council's homelessness service and the County Council's adult social care services.
- Following a substantial increase in successful homeless prevention action by the local authority there has been a considerable reduction following the introduction of the HRA17. Notwithstanding this, it is notable that applicants are more likely to be helped to secure accommodation with benefit of financial payment from the local authority, suggesting that private sector housing is a primary solution for many people. This contrasts considerably to the high levels of people becoming homeless from the private rented sector. Prior to the commencement of the HRA 17, the local authority relied on preventing homelessness by assisting people to obtain alternative accommodation and very rarely was able to help people remain in their existing home. This

contrasts with the national picture whereby outcomes were split fairly evenly between these two routes.

- There is some hugely positive practice going on between the Council's homelessness service and its housing benefit service, which is enabling effective use of the Discretionary Housing Payment budget and helping people to access private sector housing.
- There is some smart joint working going on between the Council's homelessness service and a range of other local government and voluntary sector services, which helps to tackle debt and private rented sector housing issues.

4.0 Securing accommodation

This chapter focuses on activities to obtain accommodation for people who are or may become homeless. This includes temporary accommodation arranged by the Council, for households owed a duty of assistance and other accommodation secured to relieve homelessness from housing association and private sector housing.

4.1 Temporary accommodation

The Council's Temporary Accommodation team procure and manage temporary accommodation, including providing support to tenants.

Procurement of temporary accommodation

Accommodation is actively sourced by the Temporary Accommodation team, although there is no current formal procurement strategy or framework in place. Temporary accommodation is procured by the Council from three main sources:

Private sector landlords

Properties are leased from the landlord and sublet to homeless households on a non-secure basis using a licence agreement drawn up by the in-house legal team, a shared service with Southampton City Council. This includes properties sourced through the Farelets scheme, which include a rent guarantee to landlords, and a small number of these properties are located outside of Fareham.

Registered social landlord

A large local housing association provides a number of homes, and support for tenants through their in-house welfare team.

Fareham Borough Council social housing stock

Good use is made of some of the Council's harder to let social housing for homeless households on a licence basis. Additional properties are also leased by the Council to Two Saints, who sublet these to homeless households as supported accommodation.

Allocating temporary accommodation

The Temporary Accommodation Officers allocate accommodation as it becomes vacant, aiming to meet the needs of the individual as best as possible within the constraints of availability of accommodation. Officers report that the lack of choice within the current portfolio does cause issues for households in need of accommodation, particularly regarding expectation and type of location as well as standards. There is a suitability test carried out in accordance with legislation⁷², but no suitability policy or allocations policy are currently in place. Meeting the requirement to ensure that accommodation is suitable by developing an effective

⁷² Housing Act 1996, s206

policy which is compliant with regulations⁷³ would enable appropriate allocation of temporary accommodation plus allow for lawful discharging of duty into the private rented sector⁷⁴.

Managing temporary accommodation

The accommodation is managed by the temporary accommodation team, which includes three Tenancy Support Officers who provide housing related support to all tenants, including those who have been evicted from other rented accommodation due to anti-social behaviour or rent arrears.

Some service users with more complex needs are supported by Two Saints as part of the Hampshire County Council commissioned service. Where a service user also has mental health needs, managing the accommodation can become more challenging.

Analysis of temporary accommodation types

At the time writing this report, temporary accommodation within the Borough consists of; the Council's own portfolio (consisting of 133 units), properties provided by housing associations, including Two Saints, and private sector landlords. Temporary accommodation is distributed across the local authority area, some of which is direct access and therefore available to other areas, and ten properties in a neighbouring borough. The units consist of a mixture of property types with varying numbers of bedrooms. A further 7 one-bedroom properties from Fareham Council's housing stock will also shortly be available for use. The ten units of accommodation that are outside of Fareham are all private rented sector housing leased and managed by Fareham Borough Council. These homes are all self-contained and are also used as longer term move on provision. Out of area placements are avoided wherever possible, but access to privately rented accommodation within Fareham is limited by the size of the market.

Table 3: Temporary accommodation portfolio, Fareham Borough Council (shared with Gosport Borough Council), 2020

	Private Registered Provider	Fareham Borough Council	Managed Leased Private Sector	Total number
Property size				
Hostel space	27*	0	0	27
Bedsit	0	13	1	14
1 bed	6	9	14	29
2 bed	15	6	20	41
3 bed	1	6	10	17
4 bed	0	0	5	5

⁷³ Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation)(England) Order (2012)

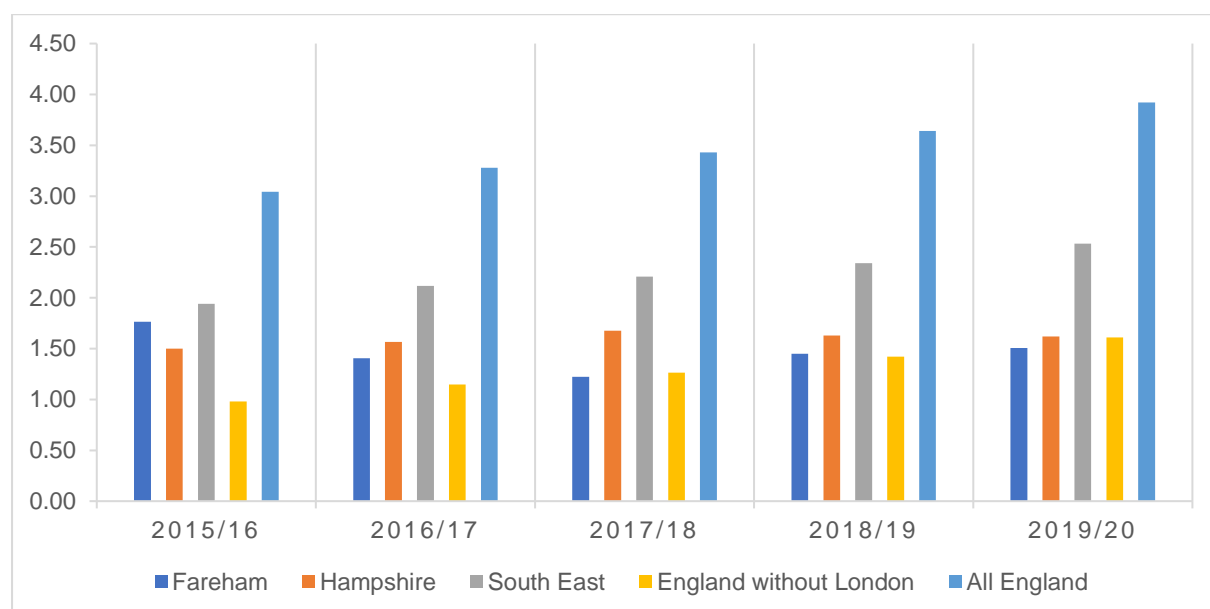
⁷⁴ Housing Act 1996, s196 (7AC)

Totals	49	34	50	133
Of which, out of area	0	0	10	10

*Shared with Gosport Borough Council

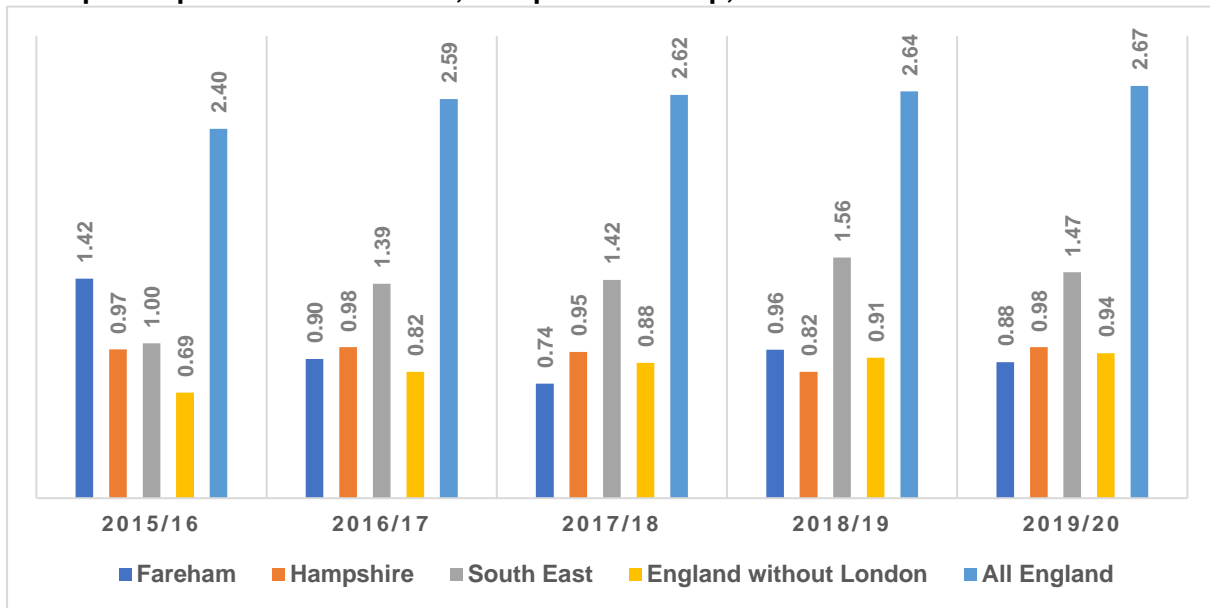
Fareham has the fewest or second fewest number per 1000 households in temporary accommodation compared with the benchmarking group between 2016/17 and 2019/20, with All England having the most in each year, although the majority of this is households in London. As charts 47 and 48 below show, almost 60% of households in temporary accommodation in Fareham during 2019-20 include children, which is an average rate within the benchmarking group, the highest of which is All England at more than 68%.

Chart 47: Number of households in temporary accommodation at end of final quarter per 1000 households, Benchmarking Group, 2015/16 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

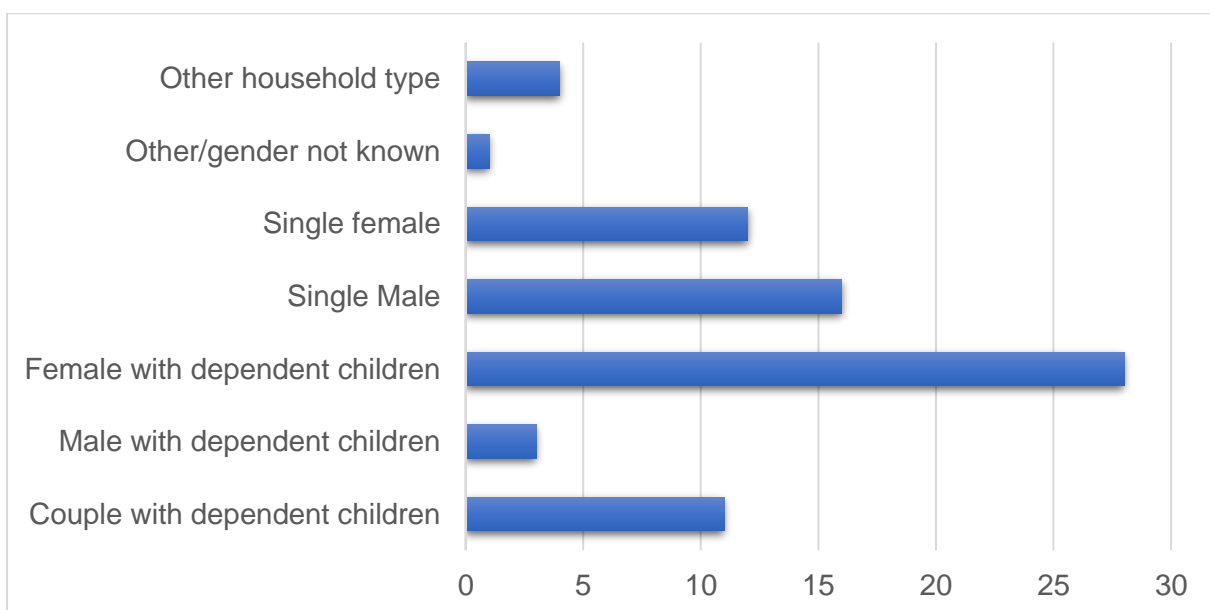
Chart 48: Number of households with children in temporary accommodation at end of final quarter per 1000 households, Comparison Group, 2015/16 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

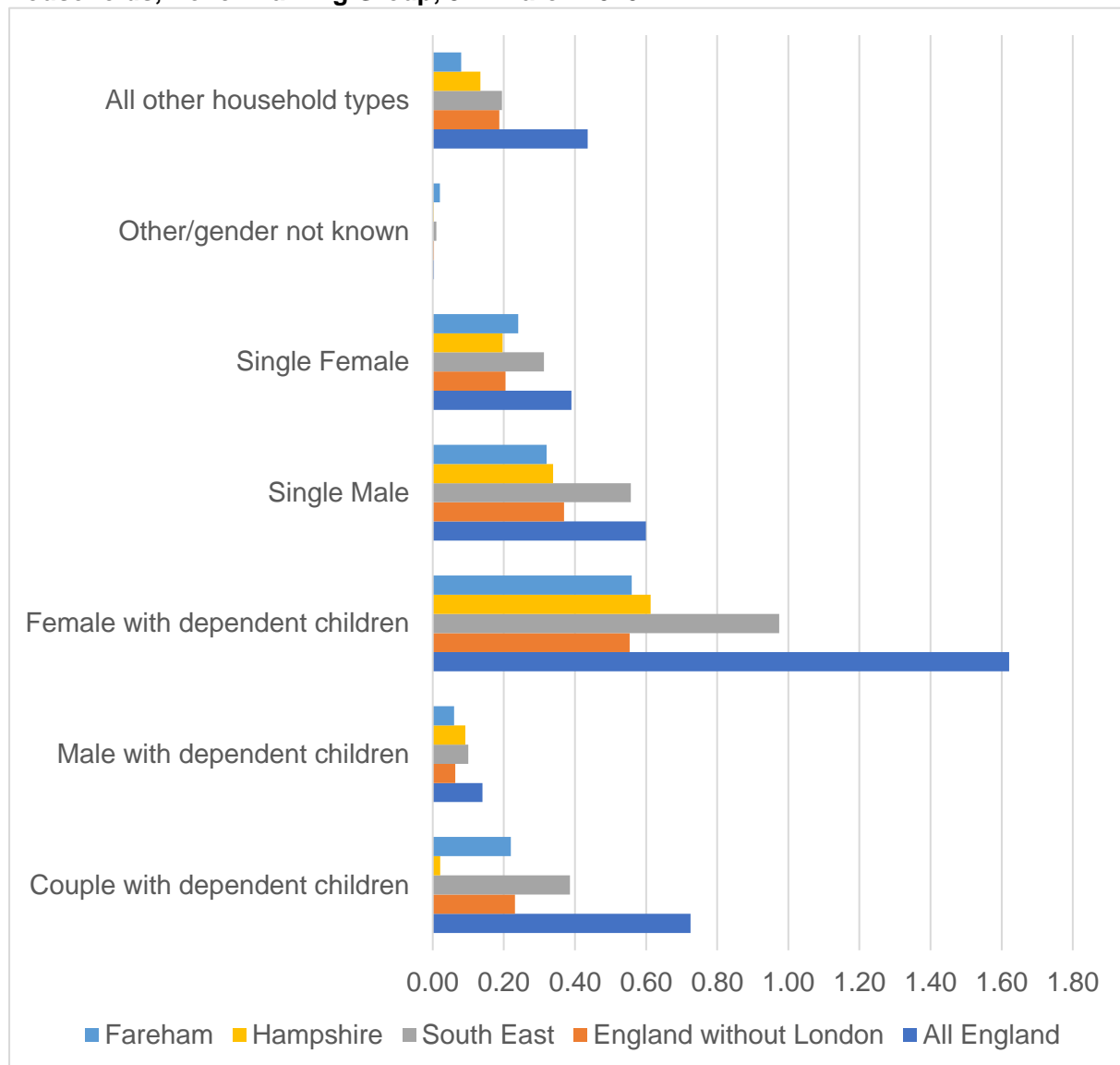
When compared with the provision of temporary accommodation shown in chart 48 above, the proportion of accommodation available that is suitable for families, i.e., more than one-bedroom accommodation, is limited at 47% of units. This means that an average of 13% of households in temporary accommodation are potentially having to live in one-bedroom accommodation. One-bedroom accommodation can be suitable for a limited period, depending on the size of the family, however when compared with the final snapshot of 2019/20 seen in chart 49 below however, the 63 two-bedroom plus units were ample for the 42 families with dependent children.

Chart 49: Number of households in temporary accommodation in Fareham by household composition, at March 2020



Female single parents with dependent children were the most common type of household placed in temporary accommodation, and this was also the case for all the benchmarking group when compared per 1000 households. For Fareham this was followed by single male households, then single female households and couples with dependent children, which differs from All England, where the number of couples with dependent children was greater than the number of single male and single female households placed.

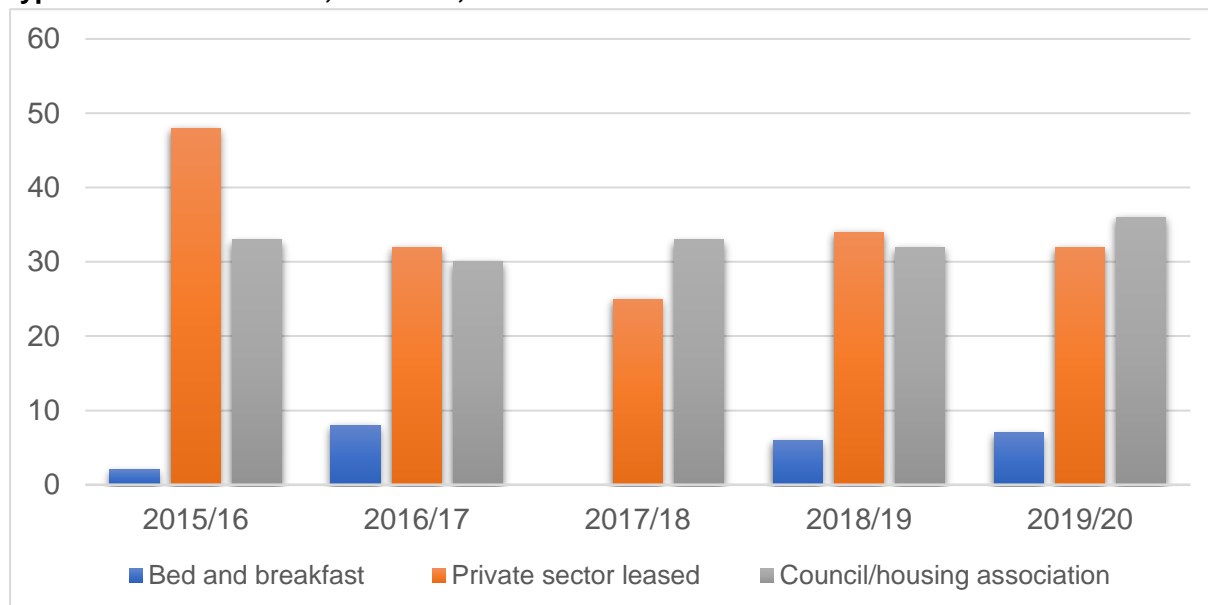
Chart 50: Households in temporary accommodation by household type, per 1000 households, Benchmarking Group, 31st March 2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

The use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation has increased for the period 2015/16 to 2019/20. While still single figures, it is evidence of the often necessarily reactive response to homelessness, despite prevention being at the core of the service. The increase in the use of Fareham Borough Council-owned stock, with an additional seven units soon to be available, should provide more flexibility for the accommodation team in the future to reduce the use of bed and breakfast.

Chart 51: Number of households in temporary accommodation at end of final quarter by type of accommodation, Fareham, 2015/16 to 2019/20



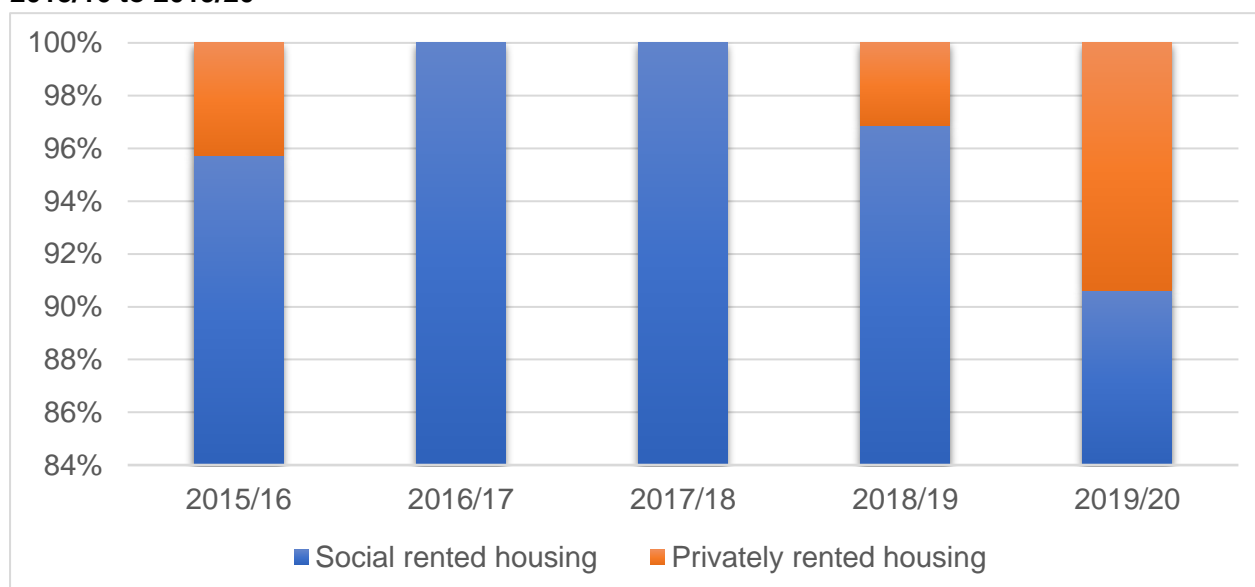
Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

4.2 Other accommodation

Accommodation secured to end the main homelessness duty in Fareham is predominantly social rented housing. As shown in chart 52 below, less than 10% of households were able to secure privately rented housing during 2019/20, and this was the highest proportion for the five-year period. Social rented housing is clearly a more secure and affordable tenure than privately rented housing, and therefore potentially more attractive to all households in housing need, although not all households will meet the criteria of housing association lettings policies, which are individual to each organisation.

For privately rented housing to be appropriate for ending the main homelessness duty, it must pass a suitability test which includes affordability. This is an issue that can cause significant difficulty for households on a low income, including the minimum wage, universal credit or housing benefit, as they are often unable to afford to cover the cost of private sector rents as well as other essential living costs, which leaves social housing as the most sustainable option for securing accommodation for households owed the main homelessness duty.

Chart 52: Type of accommodation secured for households at end of main duty, Fareham, 2015/16 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

4.2.1 Activities to relieve homelessness

Homelessness relief activities are carried out by Fareham Borough Council. Examples of homelessness relief actions are shown in the box below:

Homelessness Relief Activities to obtain:

- Any form of hostel or house of multiple occupation with or without support
- Private rented sector accommodation with landlord incentive scheme
- Private rented sector accommodation without landlord incentive scheme
- Accommodation arranged with friends or relatives
- Supported housing, including supported lodging schemes
- Management move of an existing social housing tenant
- Housing register offer or nomination of accommodation to a social landlord
- Negotiation with an RSL outside housing register or nomination arrangements
- Low-cost homeownership scheme or low-cost market housing solution

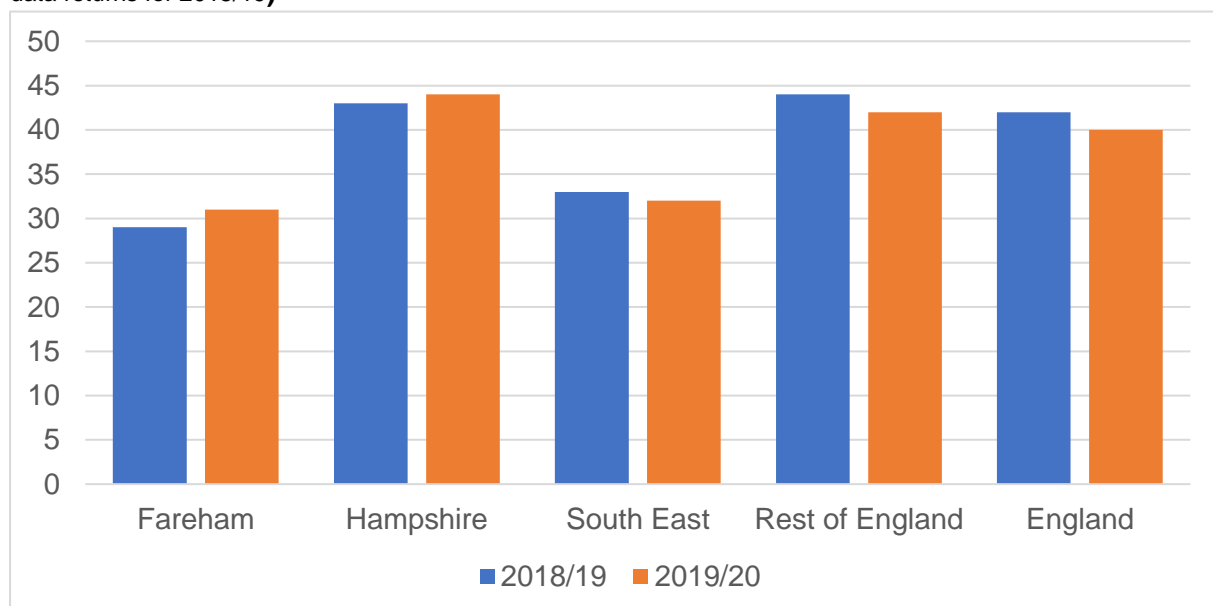
Only Fareham and Hampshire* improved their performance on securing accommodation for those owed a relief duty during 2018/19 and 2019/20, compared with the benchmarking group, although with the exception of Fareham, the group all had more than a 50% increase in relief duty cases between the two years (Chart 53) As a proportion of relief duty ending, Fareham was the only one of the benchmarking group to improve its performance in securing accommodation to end the relief duty for homeless applicants between 2018/19 and 2019/20. However, Fareham also had the lowest ratio of homeless applicants with a relief duty ending through

accommodation being secured, to the total number of relief duty ending. This is important, as all other outcomes that end a relief duty, with the exception of a local connection referral being accepted by another local housing authority, are likely to be negative for the homeless household. These outcomes include:

- the ending of the 56-day timescale for when the duty being owed,
- the homeless household becoming intentionally homeless from the allocated temporary accommodation
- the applicant refusing a final offer of suitable accommodation
- the applicant refusing to cooperate with the Council and notice being served on the temporary accommodation
- the application being withdrawn by the applicant
- the applicant is deceased, or contact is lost
- the applicant becoming otherwise no longer eligible for the relief duty

Some of the applicants who have not secured accommodation to end the duty may go on to be accepted for the main homelessness duty. However, many will not be considered to have a priority need for a main homelessness duty and therefore may remain homeless. Such applicants have the right to a request review of any decision made in their case, and the housing advice duty is still owed. Relief cases often need additional support as they have, by definition, lost their former home, and Fareham Housing Options service will endeavour to continue working with these households, resources permitting. If they are street homeless the Community Safety PAG will work together to keep trying to help resolve their housing difficulties as all the appropriate agencies are committed to the partnership.

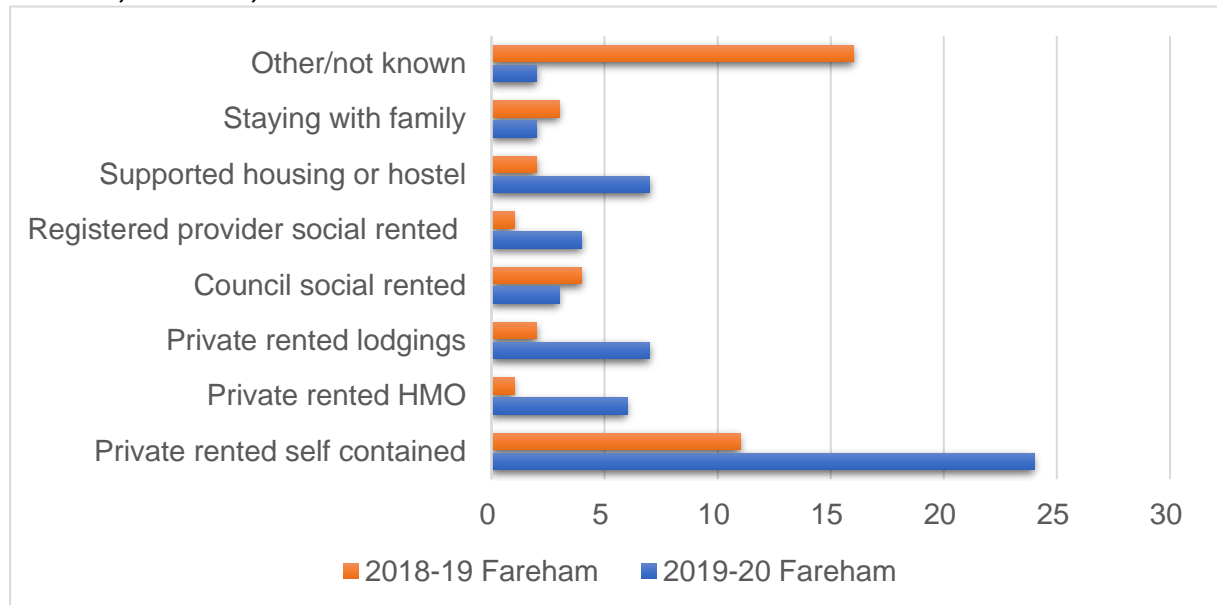
Chart 53: Number of households where relief activity resulted in accommodation secured at end of duty, by percentage of relief duty ending, Benchmarking Group, 2018/19 to 2019/20 (*Hampshire does not include Portsmouth or Harts in this data as they were unable to submit HCLIC data returns for 2018/19)



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The type of accommodation most frequently secured to end the relief duty in Fareham was self-contained privately rented, for both 2018/19 and 2019/20, which is in contrast to that most frequently secured for the main housing duty. This is possibly due to the difference in household types that are owed the relief duty compared with the main duty.

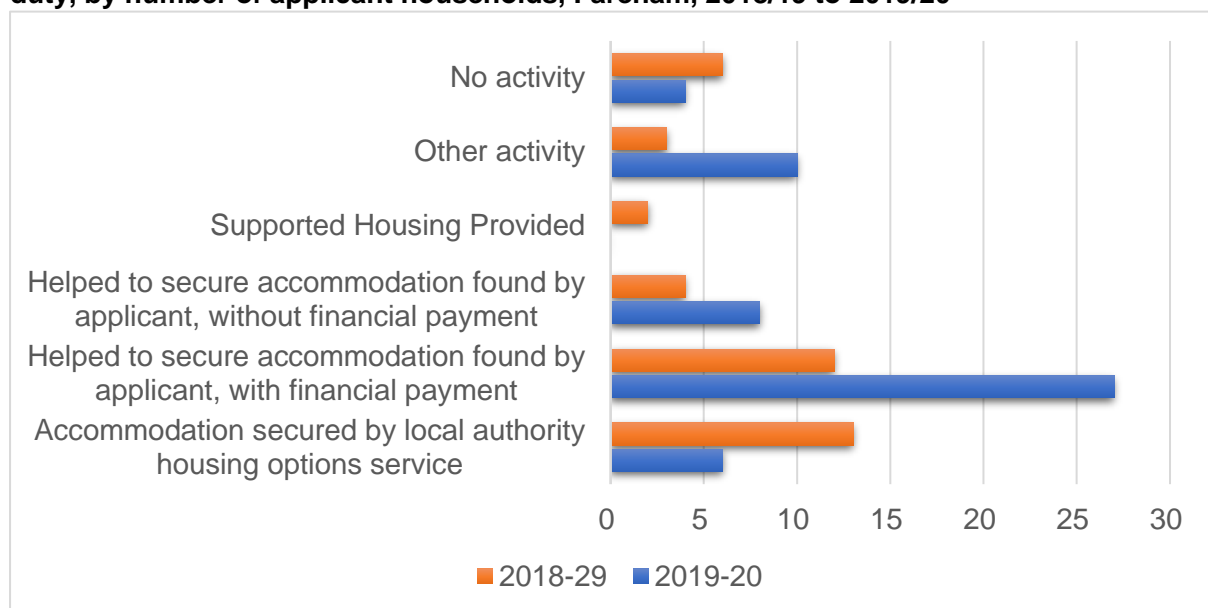
Chart 54: Number of households whose relief duty ended by type of accommodation secured, Fareham, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The main activity resulting in accommodation being secured at the end of a relief duty for 2018/19 to 2019/20 was help by the Council to secure accommodation either by providing financial support or finding the accommodation, although the latter reduced by more than half between the two years while the former more than doubled from 12 cases to 27.

Chart 55: Main activity that resulted in accommodation being secured at the end of a relief duty, by number of applicant households, Fareham, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

4.2.2 Housing Support

Housing support in Fareham includes supported housing, floating support in the home and outreach support. The Council help to fund this through the use of specific government grants for homelessness activity detailed in Section 7 of this report, although a large proportion of the support services are commissioned and funded by Hampshire County Council Adults’ Health and Care service, in consultation with Fareham Borough Council, to try and ensure that the appropriate type and level of support meets local needs.

The background to the upper tier of local government now commissioning housing support, much of which is essentially funding to help prevent homelessness, began in 2003, when the Department of Communities and Local Government began distributing the ring-fenced Supporting People Funding programme to local housing authorities to help fund housing related support within their area. By 2009 the ring-fence had been removed and this national budget became decentralised and administered by upper tier councils who then also had the discretion on where the grant should be spent. This funding was incorporated into the main central government grant funding for upper tier and unitary councils by 2012.

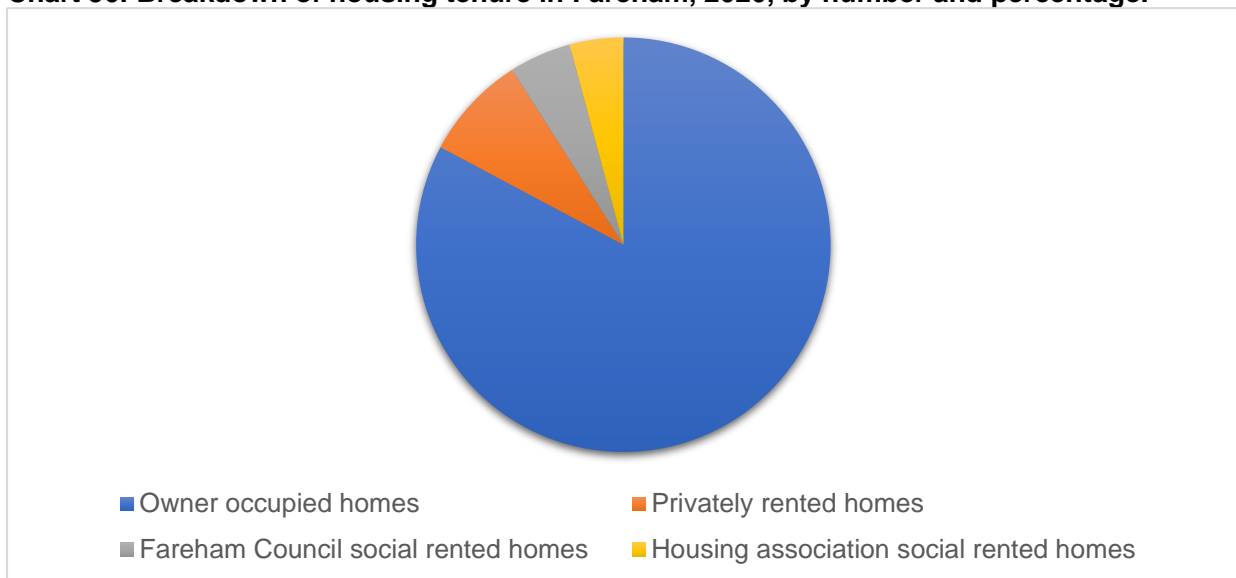
The commissioning of services is agreed between the County Council and local housing authorities through the Strategic Housing Officers Group, at which Fareham Borough Council is represented at senior level.

The support services include a direct access homeless hostel, supported accommodation, some floating support and outreach and resettlement services to help rough sleepers and other vulnerable adults secure and sustain accommodation. More information on housing support can be found at section 5.

4.2.3 Private Rented Sector

The private rented sector in Fareham is approximately 8% of the housing market at c. 4,100 homes. This which is smaller than the combined 4,604 social rented homes owned by Fareham Borough Council and Housing associations, at 9%. The availability of private rented homes in the Borough is very limited, with only 40 properties advertised as being available to rent⁷⁵.

Chart 56: Breakdown of housing tenure in Fareham, 2020, by number and percentage.

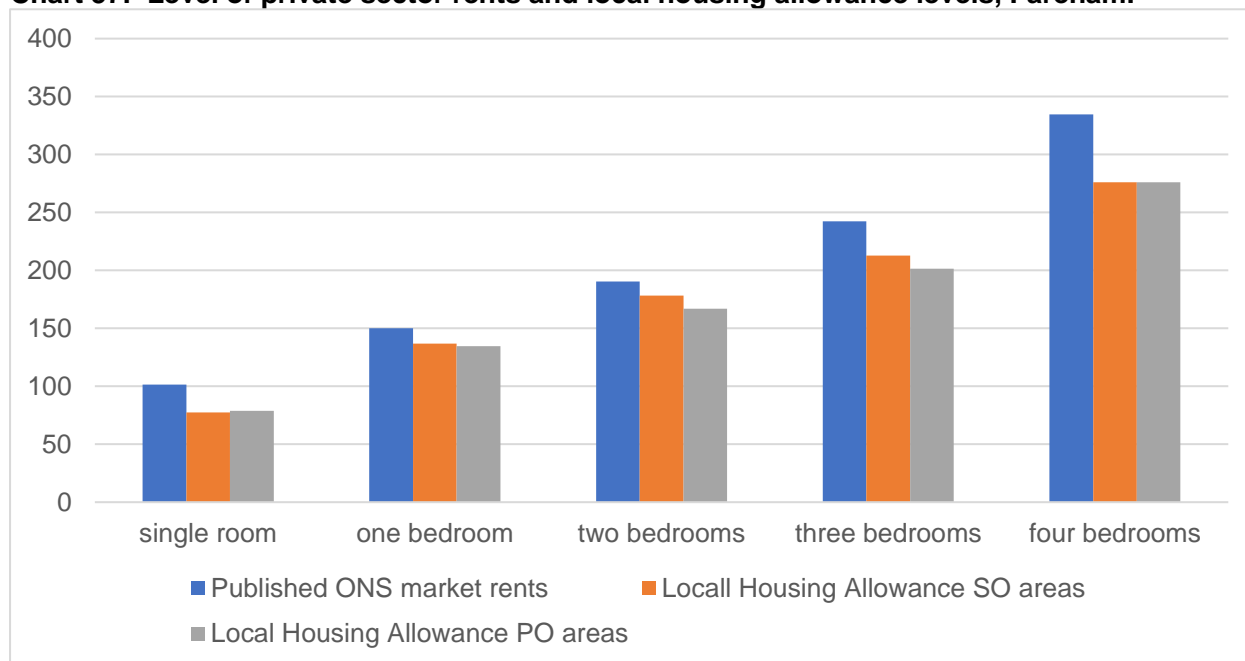


Source: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government

Chart 57 shows the level of private sector rents in Fareham compared with Local Housing Allowance levels in each of the BRMA (Broad Rental Market Area) within the Borough, plus the number of properties advertised as available on 19th March 2021. The difference between the private sector rents and local housing allowances levels ranges from £15.40 each week for a one-bedroom home to £58.46 for a four-bedroom home. For a single room, £24.10 would be needed each week to make up the shortfall for a person in receipt of local housing allowance, and with only 6 advertised single room properties the private rented sector, this is a very limited housing solution.

⁷⁵ <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/property-to-rent/Fareham.html> 19th March 2021

Chart 57: Level of private sector rents and local housing allowance levels, Fareham.



Source: Office of National Statistics, DWP

FareLets

FareLets is Fareham Borough Council's private rented scheme, set up in June 2019 to provide services to landlords and help to prevent homelessness. The service is advertised on the Council's website and as a local authority, the service is transparent and fully accountable. The accommodation team managing the service are professional, experienced and trustworthy.

The majority of private rented properties are within the Fareham Borough, although some are in Gosport and the Council would consider properties in other neighbouring Boroughs. Properties taken on by the Council for letting to people in housing need must meet certain standards as set out on the website. The property must be safe, secure and in good repair and must have valid safety certificates and an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). The landlord must also provide the Council with proof of ownership, permission to let the property from any mortgage company, as appropriate, and proof of building insurance for the property.

There are 3 types of service available:

Tenant Find

This basic service is free to landlords. The Council identify a suitable tenant for the property and provide a standard tenancy agreement for the landlord and tenant to sign. In addition, the Council will put up a bond equivalent to one month's rent in lieu of a deposit and if a 12-month tenancy agreement is signed and provide a rent guarantee for the first 12 months. The landlord then takes full responsibility for the management of the tenancy.

Managed Lease

Under this service, the Council will take on the lease of a landlord's property for between 12 months and 3 years and will then sub-let directly to tenants in housing need. This

service costs £300 on first registration of the lease for properties with gas and £200 for those with no gas. The Council signs up new tenants, manages the tenancy and provides a gas safety certificate, an electrical certificate and a hard-wired carbon monoxide detector. The rent is guaranteed and paid to the landlord by the Council on the 1st day of every month. The property is returned to the landlord on surrender of the lease in the same condition as it was taken on, excluding fair wear and tear.

Full Management

This service is similar to that provided by a high street letting agent with 8% fee. Along with full tenancy management, the Council provides a gas safety certificate, an electrical certificate, a hard-wired carbon monoxide detector and repairs up to the value of £150 per year. The Council will provide a bond equivalent to one month's rent in lieu of a deposit and if a 12-month tenancy is signed, provide a rent guarantee for the first 12 months.

For the managed lease and full management schemes a Tenancy Support Officer (TSO) focusses on supporting the tenants to maintain their tenancy by providing advice and assistance including help with making benefit claims, registering for Council Tax and utility companies. The TSO will also carry out regular visits and inspections to ensure that the tenants are looking after the property.

Properties are inspected prior to being taken on and any works needed must be completed by the landlord before tenants can be placed in the property. If a landlord is unable to fund the improvement works in order to achieve the scheme standard, an interest free loan of up to £2,000 may be applied for, which is repayable through the monthly rental income.

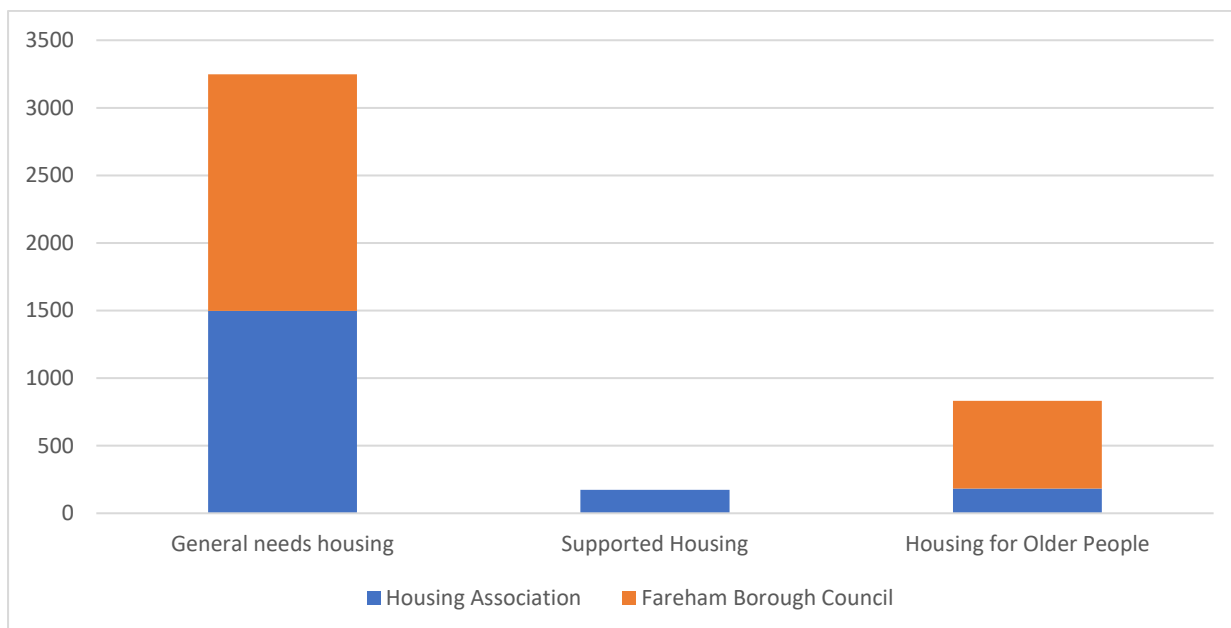
At the time of writing this report the accommodation team have 30 properties of varying types and sizes being leased or managed and are working hard to expand the FareLets scheme.

4.2.4 Social Rented Housing

There are 33 social landlords who own and manage housing within Fareham, the largest of which is Fareham Borough Council with 2400 units⁷⁶ of accommodation (1750 general needs and 650 sheltered).

Chart 58: Number of Social Housing units by accommodation type and Landlord type in Fareham, February 2021

⁷⁶ LARP look up tool, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-registered-provider-social-housing-stock-and-rents-in-england-2019-to-2020>



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

The administration of Fareham Council's public law housing allocation responsibilities include:

- Determining which applicants are eligible and qualify for an allocation of social rented housing,
- Have an up-to-date housing allocation scheme,
- Ensure allocations for social rented housing are made in accordance with the local scheme,
- Notifying applicants of decisions made about their application for social rented housing,
- Providing advice, information, and assistance about making an application for social rent housing,
- Determining which applicants have priority for an allocation of social rented housing
- Determining if an applicant has a local connection that qualifies them for an allocation of social rented housing,
- Providing a summary of the how the Fareham allocations scheme operates, and
- Detecting any fraudulent application made for an allocation of social rented housing

The law⁷⁷ stipulates that a reasonable preference for allocation of social rented housing must be given to any person who is at risk of being homeless, this includes applicants in the following circumstances:

⁷⁷ Housing Act 1996, Part 6, section 166A Allocation in accordance with allocation scheme, subsection (3)(a)(b)

- Homeless⁷⁸ (including those owed a local housing authority duty to have their homelessness relieved⁷⁹, but also people for whom the relief duty has come to an end and no further duty is owed, plus those who have never made an application for assistance)
- Intentionally homeless, eligible for assistance, and have a priority need for accommodation⁸⁰ (owed a duty by a local housing authority to have advice and accommodation for a reasonable period)
- Not intentionally homeless, eligible for assistance and have a priority need for accommodation⁸¹ (owed a duty by a local housing authority to be provided with suitable accommodation)
- Threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance⁸² (owed a duty by a local housing authority to be prevented from becoming homeless).

The Council uses a banding system to assess priority. Each band takes account of the statutory reasonable preference categories and the Council's local priorities. The bands are as follows:

- Urgent – urgent situation with no other options available
- High – high priority housing need for example those leaving the care of the County Council
- Medium – moderate priority housing need for example lacking 1 bedroom
- Low – housing need but no higher priority for example 'right-to-move' applicants

The allocations scheme sets out the reasonable preference categories as follows:

- People who are homeless as defined by Part 7 of the Housing Act (1996)
- People who are defined as owed a duty under the Housing Act (1996)
- People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory conditions
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds.

The scheme also provides additional preference to the following groups:

- Existing Council or Registered Provider tenants who wish to downsize
- Households occupying temporary accommodation provided by Fareham Borough Council
- Existing tenants who have property adaptations and no longer require them

78 Housing Act 1996, Part 7, section 175 Homelessness and threatened with homelessness

79 Housing Act 1996, Part 7, Section 189B Initial duty owed to all eligible persons who are homeless

80 Housing Act 1996, Part 7, section 190 Duties to persons becoming intentionally homeless

81 Housing Act 1996, Part 7, section 193 Duty to persons with priority need who are not homeless intentionally

82 Housing Act 1996, Part 7, section Duties in cases of threatened homelessness

- Those who are homeless and require urgent rehousing as a result of violence or threats of violence, including intimidated witnesses and those escaping serious antisocial behaviour or domestic violence
- Those who have a local connection,
- Households with Armed Forces connections
- Foster carers

Those who do not qualify to join the housing register include:

- permanent social rented tenants who are adequately housed,
- applicants with assets, savings or income over a prescribed threshold,
- those with no established local connection.

There is a local connection criteria in place though certain groups who are exempt from this, including young people leaving the care of Hampshire County Council or other care authority whether or not they currently live in Fareham, verified rough sleepers who have been sleeping in the Borough in the last 6 months, persons in prison who were continuously living in the Borough for 5 years immediately before going into prison and those living in a refuge or other form of safe temporary accommodation having escaped domestic abuse

In some cases, applicants may be excluded from joining the housing register if they have made false statements or information has been withheld at any stage of the application, they have debts with the Council or a registered provider with no arrangements to repay these arrears, they have been responsible for serious anti-social behaviour or illegal or immoral use of a property.

The grounds for qualification for joining the Fareham housing allocation scheme impact negatively on persons who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance when there is a history of rent arrears or antisocial behaviour. Not being able to secure an offer of social rented housing can result in an increase in the length of time a household remains in temporary accommodation. This difficulty is extended where a household may qualify for a place on the Fareham housing register, but not for an offer of social rented housing from a private registered provider, although the usual barriers of anti-social behaviour and rent arrears with no arrangement in place also apply to the Fareham allocations scheme, which could leave many homeless households with only the private rented sector in which to secure alternative accommodation.

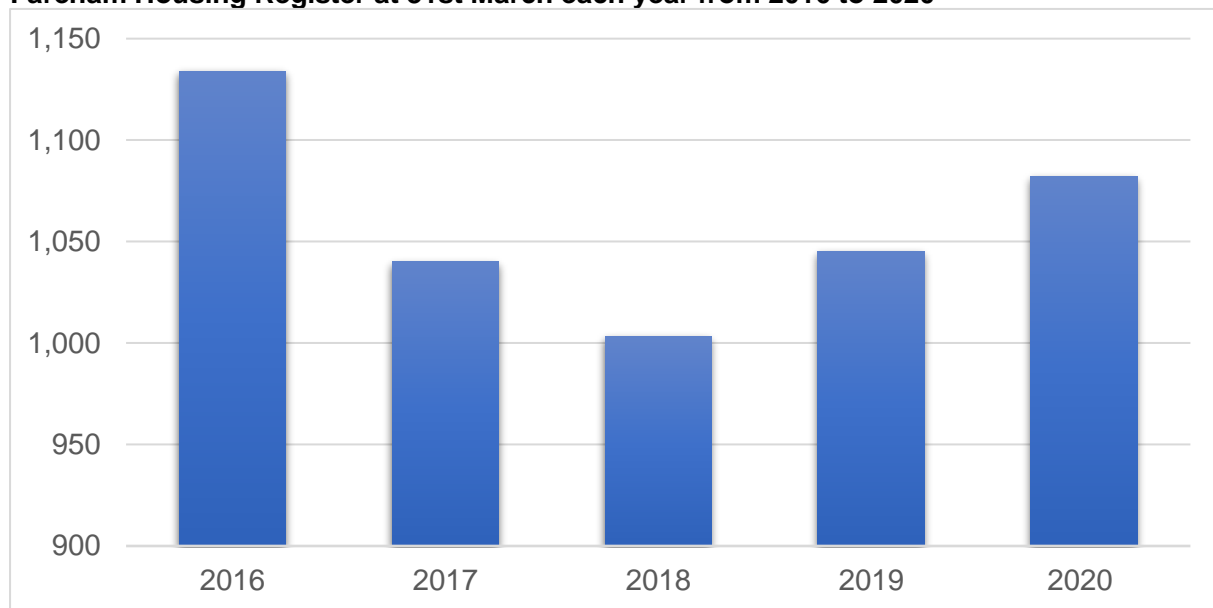
The housing options available to persons who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance, who are not eligible for an allocation of social rented housing, are limited to financial support for a suitable privately rented property where this is available and affordable, housing advice, and, in the case of those who have no recourse to public funds, only housing advice.

The statement of choice within the Fareham allocations scheme extends only to explain that applicants are all able to express choice of area when applying for

accommodation, although matching the area of choice may not be possible, and all allocations will be through matching. This includes homeless households who may be offered an allocation or accommodation.

The number of households registered for social housing has remained over 1000 during the five-year period and has increased each year since 2018/19. This may change with the impact of the new allocations scheme and the outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic become clear.

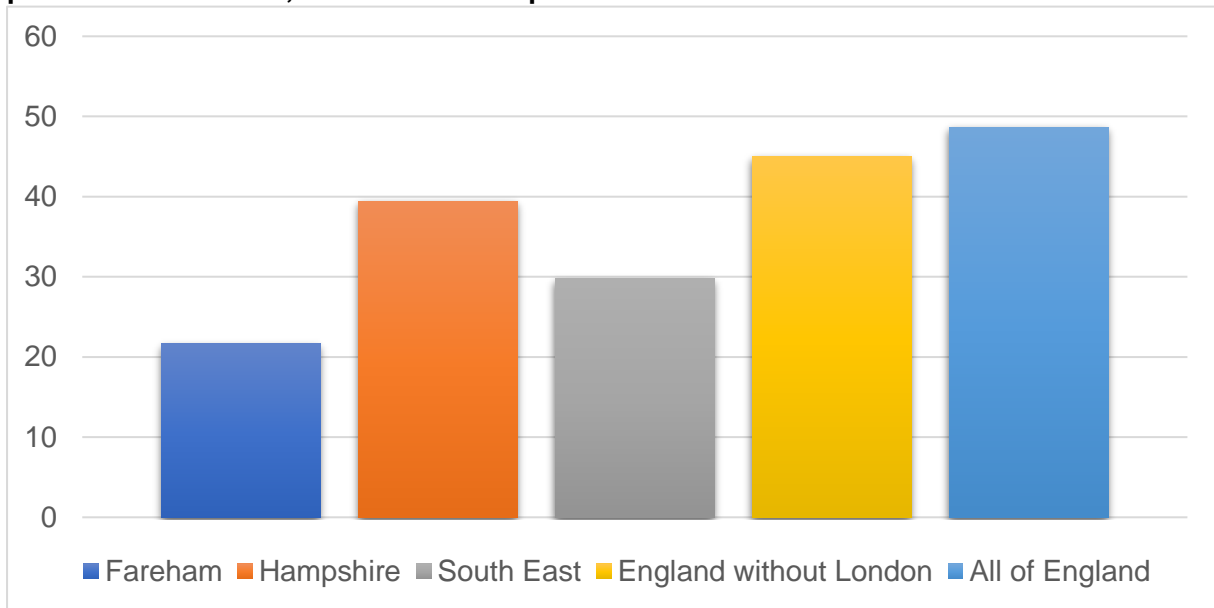
Chart 59 Number of households registered for an allocation of social rented housing, Fareham Housing Register at 31st March each year from 2016 to 2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

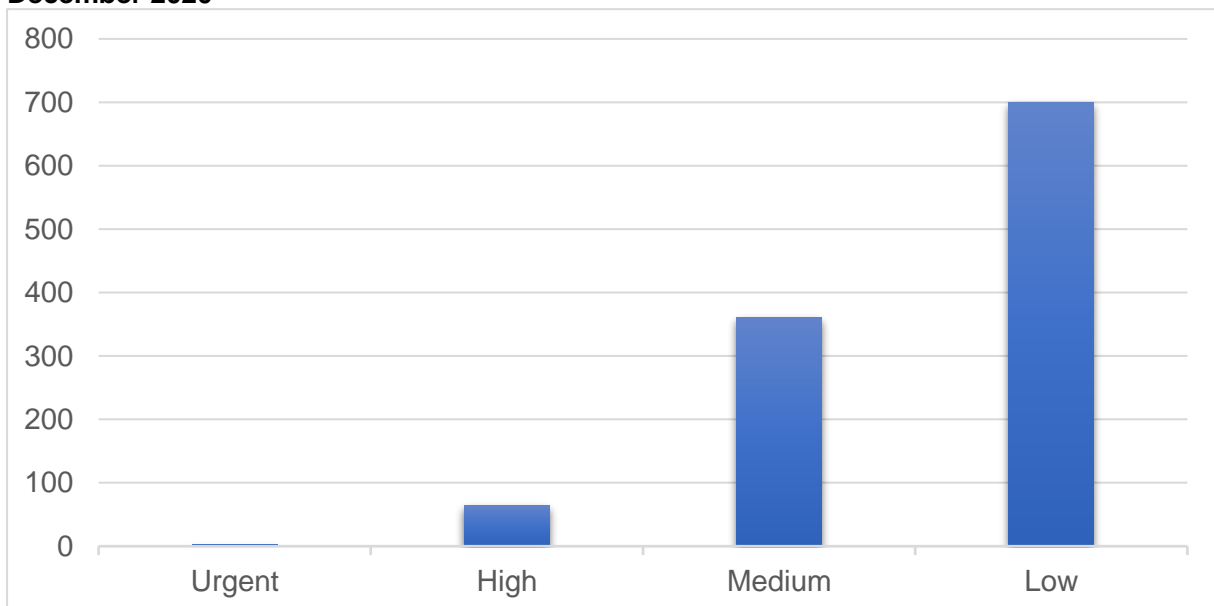
The number of households currently registered for social housing compared with the benchmarking group per 1000 households is low, and more than half that of England without London and All England. This low number per thousand households is a result of a number of factors, which include the Fareham allocations scheme qualification criteria, but does not demonstrate the entirety of housing need within the Borough and should not be used to define this.

Chart 60: Households registered on local authority housing waiting lists at March 2020, per 1000 households, Benchmark Group



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Chart 61: Number and percentage of Fareham housing register applications by Band, December 2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Fareham Borough Council Welfare Support Officer

A Welfare Support Officer has been appointed to work with Fareham Council housing tenants to help them with issues threatening their ability to meet their tenancy conditions with regard to maintaining their rent accounts. This initiative is proving highly successful, helping tenants avoid eviction, and providing them with

tools to help them manage their finances and improve their rent arrears to a point that eviction is no longer required.

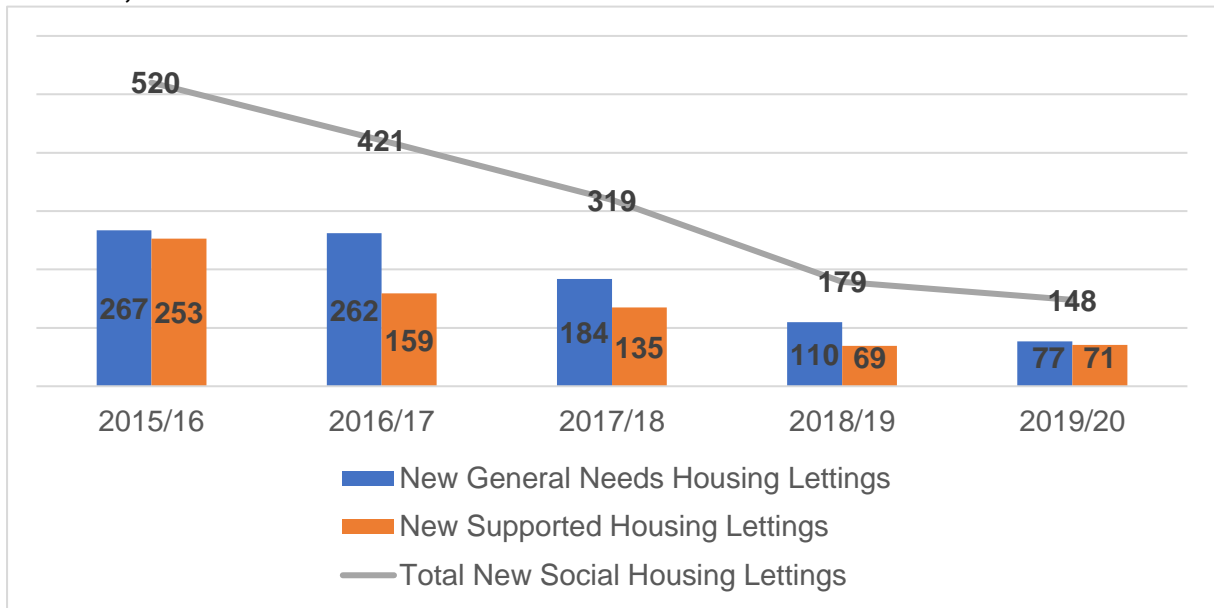
The Welfare Support Officer works with the tenant to help them organise their finances, including their rent account, as well as other welfare issues and has autonomy to 'do whatever is required' to help the tenant remain in their home. Any tenant in arrears within the Council housing stock can be referred to the Welfare Support Officer.

One tenant having difficulty was referred due to large rent arrears, a housing benefit overpayment and large debts with utility and water bills. The Welfare Support Officer helped the tenant to complete a budget form to ascertain the priority bills and the cost, contacted the tenant's energy and water providers to ensure they were on the lowest and most affordable tariff, and to update them that the tenant should be classed as vulnerable due to mental and physical health conditions. In addition, the Welfare Support Officer requested that any outstanding debts or bills were put on hold for a period to give time to agree a sustainable payment plans to avoid further action being taken. The Officer also helped the tenant successfully applied for a Personal Independence Payment and contacted Step Change for advice and support to help the tenant manage the outstanding debts.

The tenant was a single person in a two-bedroom Council-owned property. The Welfare Support Officer successfully applied for a Discretionary Housing Payment to cover the rent for the second bedroom to prevent the arrears increasing further, and after liaising with the Neighbourhood Officer and the Housing Options Team, the tenant was able to downsize to a more affordable one-bedroom flat, using the downsizing incentive to reduce the rent arrears. The tenant's rent is now covered by Universal Credit and they are now able to contribute a small amount each fortnight to the rent arrears and other outstanding commitments.

The year-on-year reduction in the number of new social lettings in Fareham is considerable. Available social rented housing to let is essential in resolving homeless at the three stages of prevention, relief and main duty. New lettings are only available following the end of a tenancy, which is not within the control of the landlord, or through new housebuilding, which can be somewhat influenced by the local authority, although the other essential elements of a developing housing association and newbuild funding must also be in place. The Council's Affordable Housing Strategy aims to resolve this known issue.

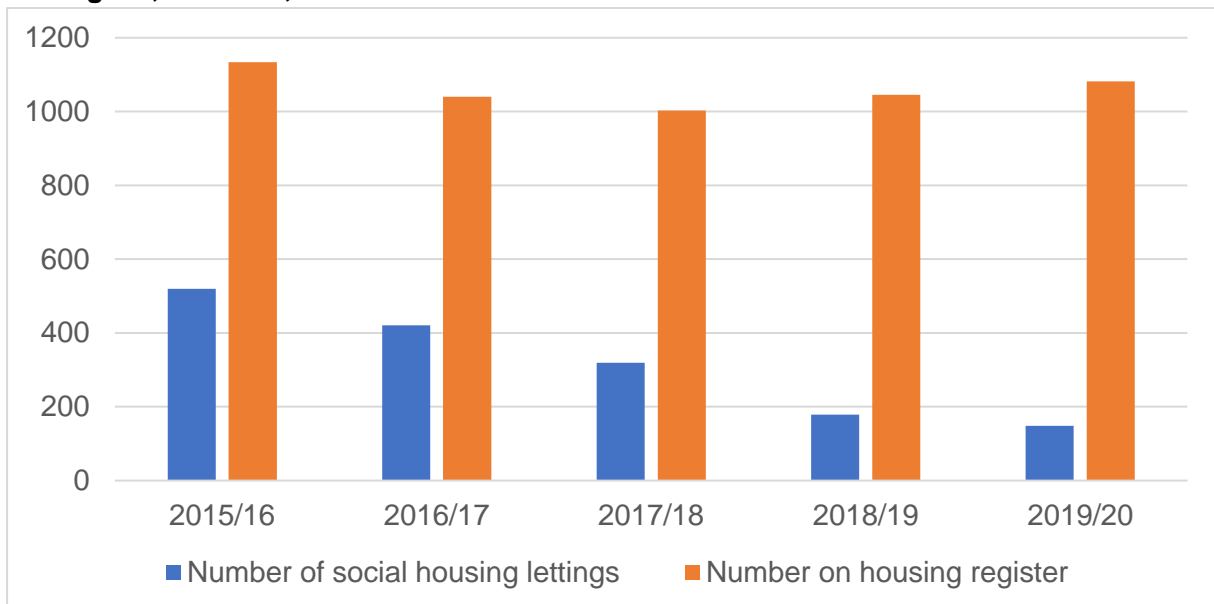
Chart 62: New lettings of social rented housing, by general needs or supported housing, Fareham, 2015/16 to 2019/20



Source: ONS Social housing lettings in England.

The ratio of new lettings to the number of households on the register is also inevitably growing, standing at 7.34 times the number of households on the register to those being housed in 2019/20.

Chart 63: Ratio of new social rented housing lettings to number of households on housing waiting list, Fareham, 2015/16 to 2019/20



Source: MHCLG and ONS Social housing lettings in England.

Fareham Tenancy Strategy

All local housing authorities are required to have in place a Tenancy Strategy⁸³ setting out for registered providers within the Borough the matters to which they are to have regard when developing their own policies relating to the type and length of tenancies they will grant and the circumstances on which they will grant each type. When formulating the Tenancy Strategy, the local housing authority must have regard to their current homelessness strategy⁸⁴

The 2013-2018 Fareham Tenancy Strategy⁸⁵ confirms that there should be strategic links with homelessness strategy but falls short of specifying the type and length of tenancy which it expects registered providers to grant to households who are homeless.

This strategy has now expired, and a new Tenancy Strategy must be adopted, providing an opportunity to fully engage with other registered providers of social housing within Fareham to influence their own tenancy policies and lettings policies with regard to homeless households.

Nationally, a social rented housing offer, or nomination to a social landlord, is the second most common method of preventing or relieving homelessness, equalling 27.4% of cases⁸⁶.

Since 2016/17 more than 40% of new housing association tenants in England were accommodated directly by the housing association and not through local authority waiting list nomination or referral⁸⁷. Data on new housing association lettings to households owed a homelessness duty by the Council is now recorded on HCLIC, and the chart below shows the latest published data for Fareham. Data for Fareham Council social housing lettings has not yet been published. New lettings by housing associations are predominantly made to households who are not homeless, with only 2 new housing association tenants for 2019/20 being afforded reasonable preference for homelessness. 12 new lettings were made to households assessed by the Council as being owed a homelessness duty, and more than four times this amount 51, did not come from the Council but were assessed as homeless by the housing association. This demonstrates that housing associations are helping to tackle homelessness in the local authority area, although this appears to be independent of the Council and it is unclear if this is meeting local need.

⁸³ Localism Act 2011, s150 (1) requirement to prepare and publish a Tenancy Strategy

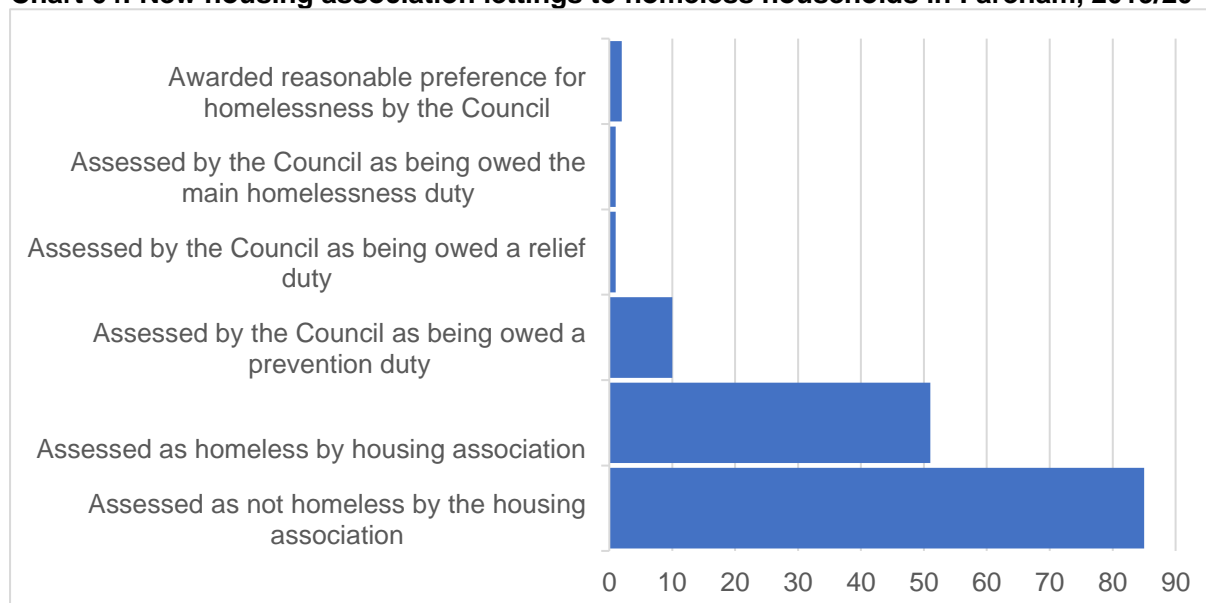
⁸⁴ Localism Act 2011, s151 (3)(b), requirement to have regard to the homelessness strategy

⁸⁵ Fareham Tenancy Strategy 2013 to 2018, Fareham Borough Council, 2013

⁸⁶ Annual Statutory Homelessness Release 2019-20, Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government

⁸⁷ Social Housing Lettings in England, April 2019 to March 2020, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Chart 64: New housing association lettings to homeless households in Fareham, 2019/20



Source: MHCLG and ONS Social housing lettings in England.

Housing Fraud initiative

Fareham Borough Council is working hard to ensure that the maximum social housing is available for households in need. In addition to building their own homes and renovating those no longer fit for purpose, the Council has an Investigations Officer who carries out investigations into cases of potential fraud, including social housing fraud.

This officer sits within the Housing Department and investigates at a criminal level using Authorised Officer powers under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act. These powers were used on 46 occasions between 2018/19 to 2019/20 for both FBC and some housing association properties. In 6 of these cases, the Council took back a property that was either being sub-let or uninhabited, or a Right-to-Buy was refused.

4.3 Conclusion about activities to secure accommodation

1. The diverse range of temporary accommodation used by the Council means it is more able to secure a range of accommodation in different areas of the Borough of different types.
2. The number of households in temporary accommodation is typically lower than other areas in the benchmarking group, as are the number of children living in temporary accommodation. Notwithstanding this, households (more often headed by a lone female parent) with dependent children account for more than 50% of those occupying temporary accommodation, however there is also a considerable number of single persons placed in temporary accommodation. Whereas nationally there has been a considerable increase in the levels of temporary accommodation usage, locally usage of temporary accommodation has remained fairly static in recent years and is slightly lower now than it was five years ago. Despite this, levels of B&B use have increased.

3. The overwhelming majority of people owed the main homelessness duty were helped to secure social rented housing, with very few people being assisted to secure private rented housing.
4. Fareham is bucking regional and national trends by increasing the number of people who are helped to secure accommodation when owed the relief duty. Typically, this is achieved by securing private rented sector accommodation by making a financial payment, that covers any deposit or rent in advance that might be charged by a private rented sector landlord. This success is a stark contrast to that of the situation with regards to people of the main homelessness duty.
5. Considering the low proportion of private sector housing in the Borough and market rent being higher than LHA rates for single rooms, one bed and two-bedroom accommodation, the Council is doing very well to help the number of people it does into private sector housing. The FareLets scheme is clearly an outstanding success.
6. With the Council being one of the largest landlords in the Borough, owning almost 40% of all social rented housing, it was inevitable that the local authority would be the main provider of housing solutions to people facing homelessness. Despite some fluctuation in the overall number of households presenting for allocation of social housing, numbers today are broadly the same as what they were five years ago. However, overall numbers are lower locally than all of the other benchmarking group comparators. Almost two-thirds of housing register applicants are placed in the lowest band, with homeless applicants being in one of the other three higher bands, alongside the other one-third of applicants on the register.
7. The appointment of a Welfare Support Officer has resulted in positive outcomes around tackling rent arrears. Despite a consistent ongoing demand for social rented housing, the number of new lettings has reduced considerably in recent years, falling each year consecutively, to a level that is less than half what it was five years ago. This results in fewer people being able to be offered social rented housing, meaning those who are more likely to secure a letting and more likely to be one of the groups entitled to a reasonable preference, which are typically characterised by people with multiple and complex needs.
8. Statistics suggest that housing associations are agreeing lettings with people who are homeless, however this activity is taking place outside of any job working arrangements that might be in place between the Council and social landlords.

5.0 Providing Support

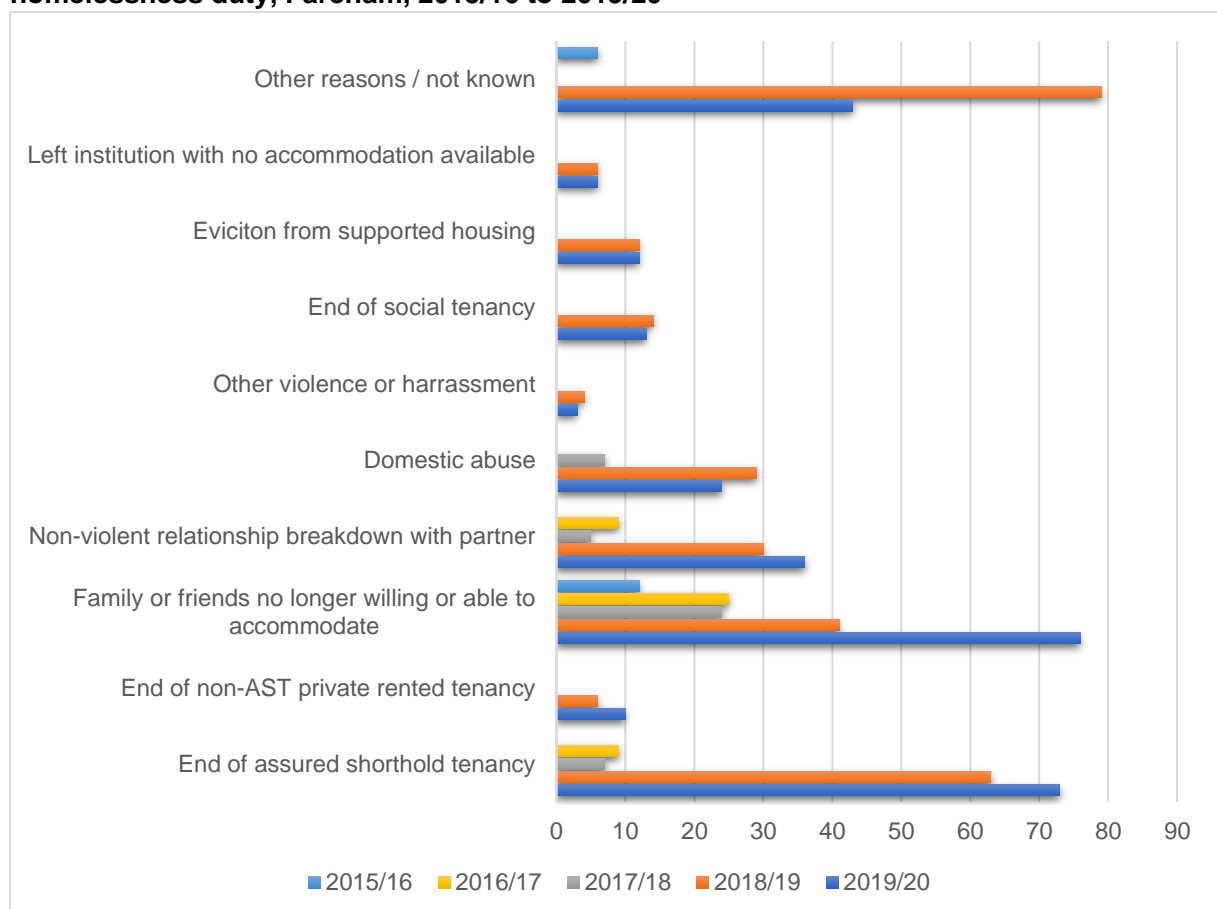
This chapter reviews the support provided to people who are homeless or have been homeless. Support can mean information, advice or assistance, all of which can help a person to stop being homeless, plus avert a repeat occurrence of homelessness in the future.

5.1 Support needs of people experiencing homelessness

The reasons why people become homeless offer an indication as to the support people require. The Council collects some information on these factors, which has been analysed for the purpose of this review.

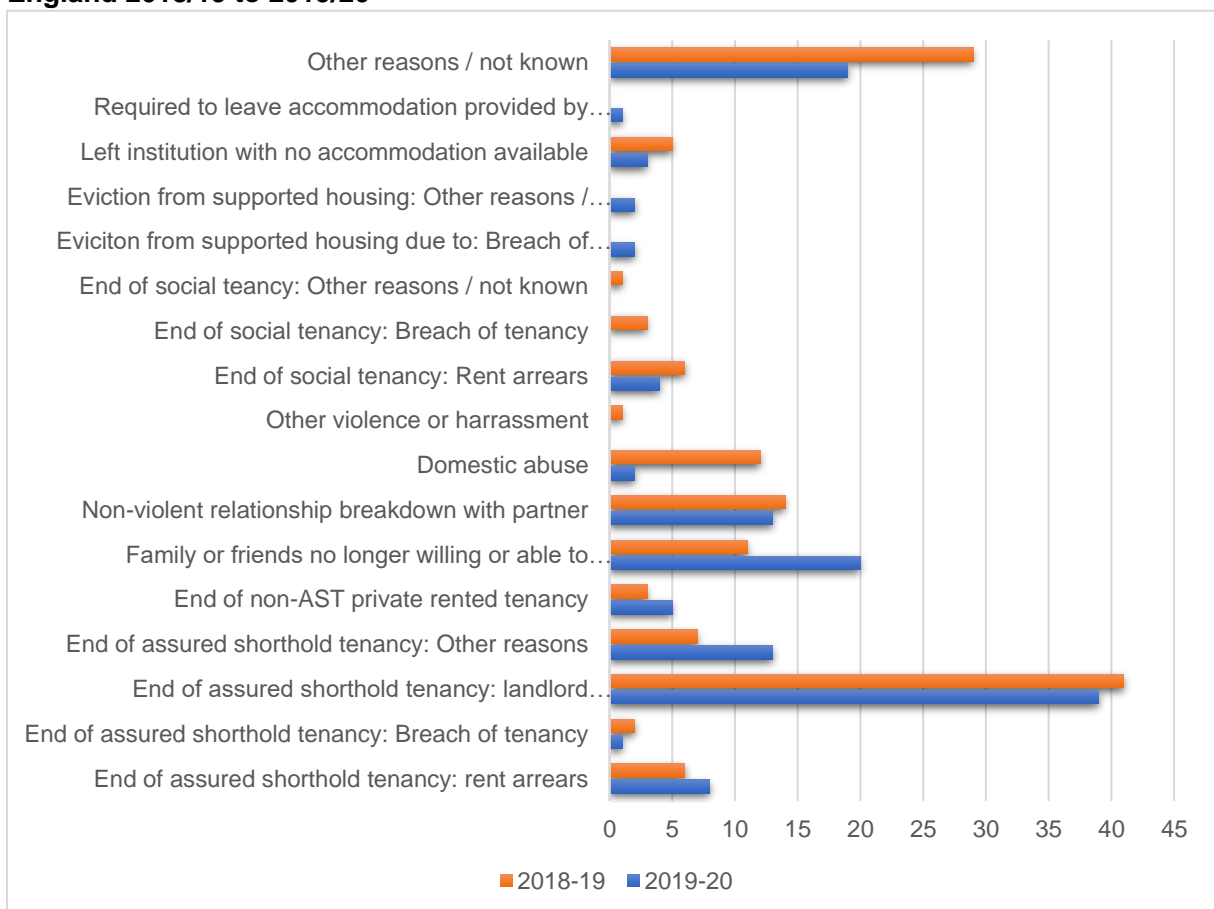
The main reason for loss of the last settled home for households owed a homelessness duty in Fareham for 2019/20 was family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate them. This is followed by the ending of a private sector assured shorthold tenancy. For the previous year, 2018/19, these were still the top two recorded reasons for loss of the last settled home, although their positions reversed. The 'other reasons' or 'reasons not known' category is also high, and this must be analysed in order to fully understand support needs, as does the eviction from or end of supported and social tenancies category. Domestic abuse has increased significantly since 2018/19 and ensuring that the response to this is robust should be a priority.

Chart 65: Main reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a main homelessness duty, Fareham, 2015/16 to 2019/20



For those owed a prevention or relief duty, the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy has been a significantly greater reason for the loss of the last settled home than all other recorded reasons, in particular due to the landlord wanting to sell or relet the property. This is a real concern for Fareham as the private rented sector is becoming increasingly part of the reason for homelessness rather than one of the major solutions to it, particularly as the number of family and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate, and non-violent relationship breakdown with partner are both also high.

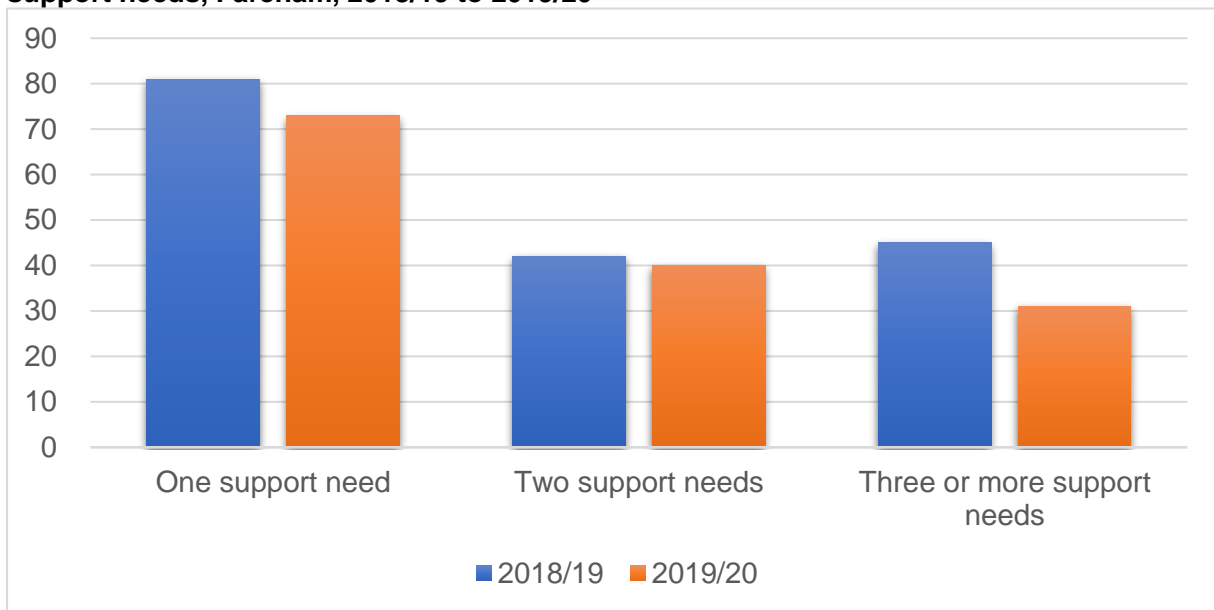
Chart 66: Reason for loss of last settled home for those owed a prevention or relief duty. England 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

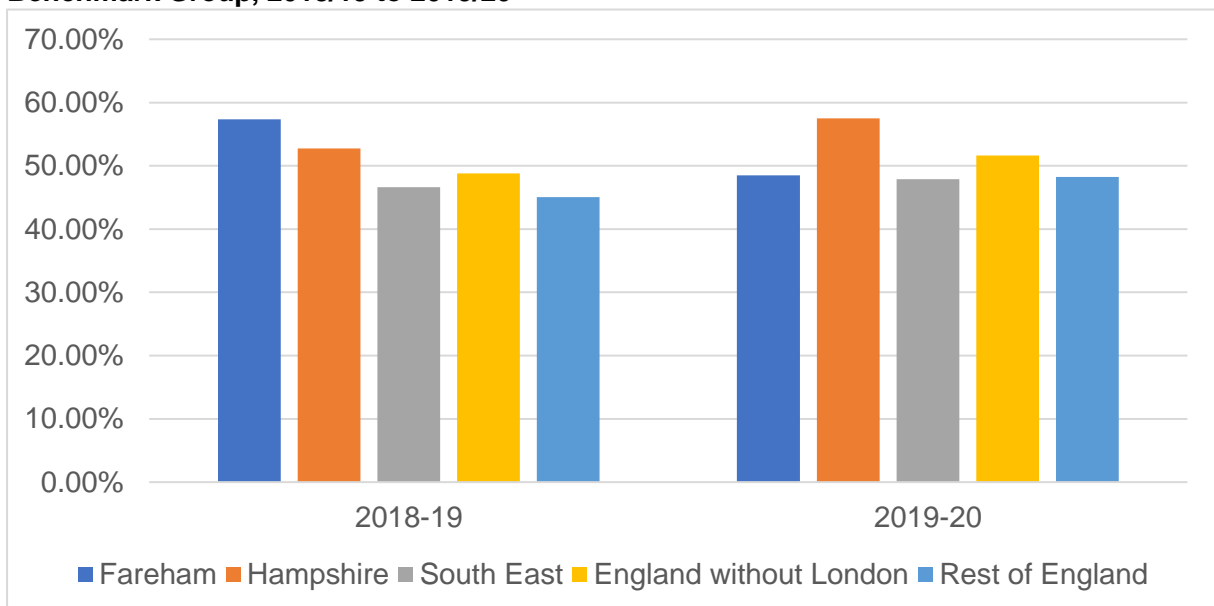
The clear recording of support needs within the HCLIC monitoring system is helping to understand the levels of support required to help prevent and relieve homelessness and sustain suitable accommodation to stop repeated homelessness. While the number of recorded support needs has reduced over the two years, recording of these is still relatively new and The Council is still recorded as having among the highest percentage of support needs for those owed a homelessness duty within the benchmarking group for the past two years.

Chart 67: Households with support needs owed a homelessness duty, by number of support needs, Fareham, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

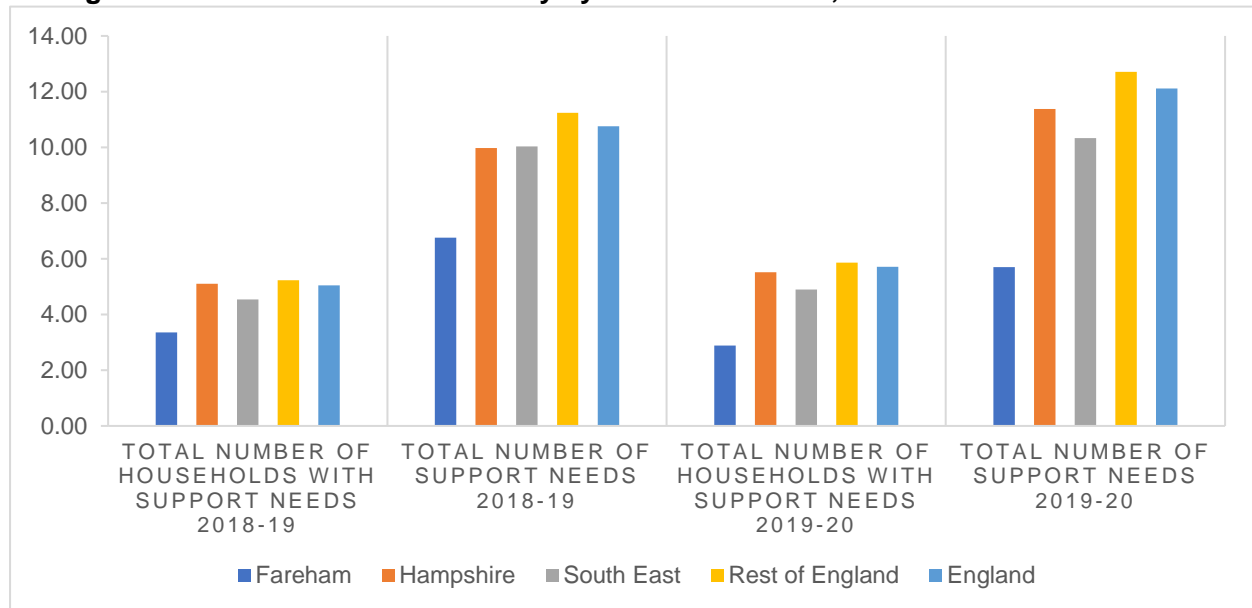
Chart 68: Percentage of households owed a homelessness duty that have support needs, Benchmark Group, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

When presented as per 1000 households, Fareham has the lowest number of households with support needs and the lowest number of support needs of the benchmarking group for both years. Fareham was also the only area which showed a reduction in support needs when all others recorded increases.

Chart 69: Total number of households with support needs, and number of support needs, among those owed a homelessness duty by 1000 households, 2018/19 to 2019/20

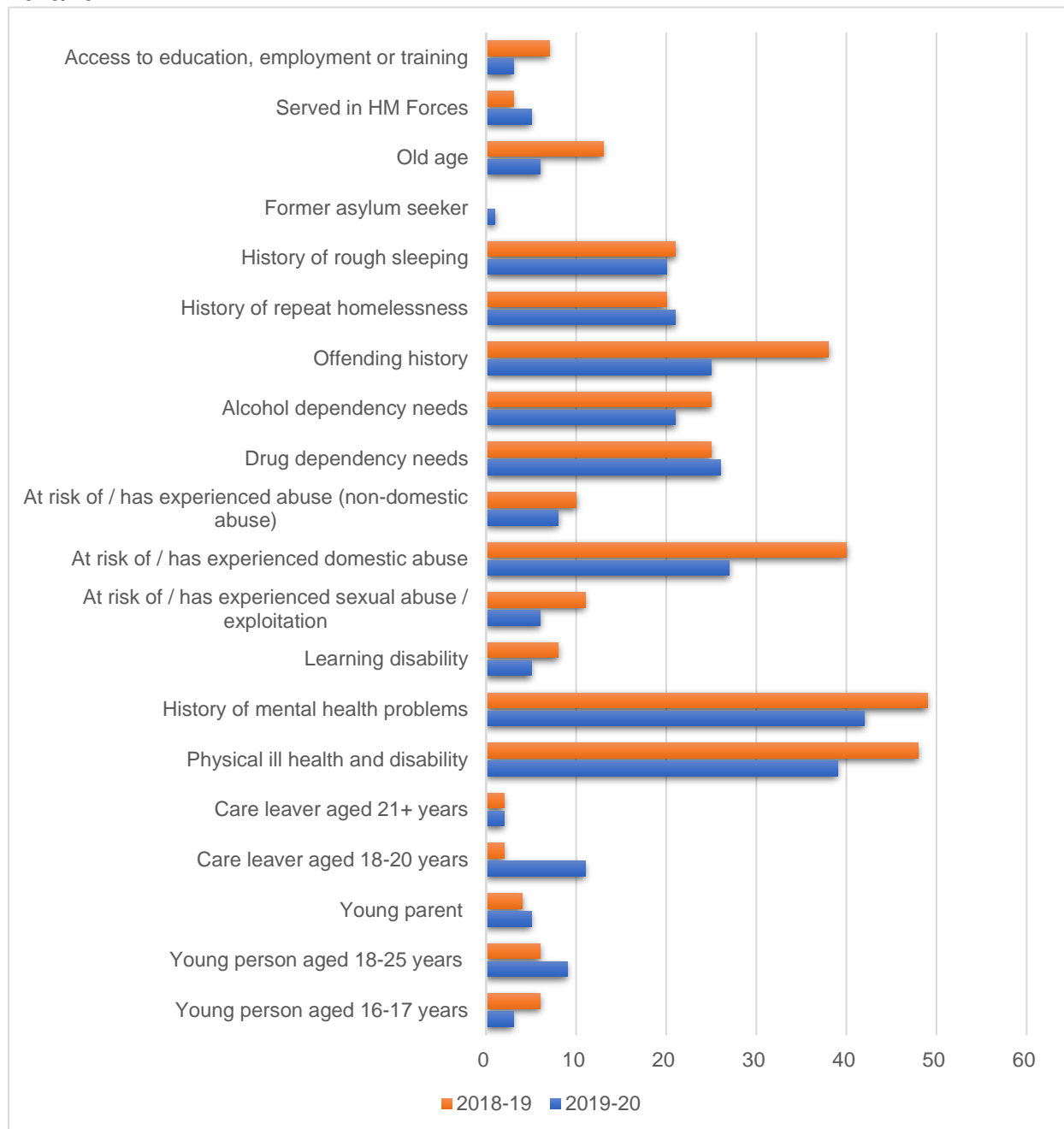


Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

The recorded support needs that must be addressed to ensure suitable accommodation can be sustained by those owed a homelessness duty in Fareham are predominantly mental health and physical health problems. Both of these support needs can be variable and complex and require specialist assessment, specialist support as well as, in some cases, specialist accommodation. These needs are not being fully met in every case in Fareham, as in many other areas, which can case increasing difficulty for the households suffering with these issues.

Few of the support needs shown on the chart can be provided for with general housing related support as most require some form of specialism, usually from another statutory service such as Adult Services or the Youth Offending Team. The services detailed in this chapter are reportedly carrying large caseloads and only able to offer minimum service levels to households in need.

Chart 70: Households owed a homelessness duty by support need, Fareham, 2018/19 to 2019/20



Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

ROUGH SLEEPERS

The Council has been proactive in supporting rough sleepers and helping them off the street following a Rough Sleepers Conference in 2018, which was attended by at least 25 statutory and voluntary agencies working with rough sleepers. The conference was organised as there was a recognised problem with begging and substance misuse issues in Fareham town centre, and enforcement action was not seen as effective or even appropriate, as many of those carrying out these activities had complex needs which required support. The risks around these activities still needed to be managed and the Council introduced security guards to tackle the anti-

social behaviour. The security team carried leaflets to hand out to rough sleepers providing information about where they could get help. This approach helped to reduce anti-social behaviour and engage rough sleepers with services.

Street Aid, a multi-agency partnership in Fareham, was developed to help vulnerable people off the streets. Street Aid involves Fareham's Community Safety Partnership, Fareham Housing Services, Two Saints Hostel, Hampshire Constabulary, One Community and Inclusion Recovery Hampshire, Hampshire County Council and Acts of Kindness. All those involved share information and work together to help rough sleepers.

Fareham Borough Council recognise that some rough sleepers need additional support to help resolve a range of problems, including helping to manage debt, mental health conditions, anger management, domestic abuse support, substance misuse or low self-esteem. In order to reduce the risk of tenancy failure, providing support to someone who is sleeping rough before placing them into a self-contained tenancy is seen as essential. The Council works with the charity Two Saints to help manage this transition in stages, with the appropriate level of support.

The Council has funded extended winter provision for rough sleepers by increasing the bed space available at the hostel during periods of extreme, often cold weather.

The Council use their local stewardship to encourage people not to give money to those sleeping rough, but to donate money, food and other supplies to the local charities working with rough sleepers. One Community, located within Fareham Shopping Centre will, by arrangement, accept donations given for rough sleepers to pass on to those who need them. Acts of Kindness (one of the Fareham Mayor's Charities for 2018/19) has a separate storage facility which holds clothes, toiletries, bedding and sleeping bags which it supplies to Two Saints and other organisations that support rough sleepers.

The response to the April 2020 request from Government to bring rough sleepers off the street and into safer accommodation, the Council worked with Two Saints, Vivid Housing Association, Acts of Kindness and others to provide fully equipped self-catering accommodation to all known rough sleepers to help keep them safe and socially distanced during the Coronavirus pandemic, and worked with neighbouring Gosport Council to fund the Two Saints outreach service, which focuses on helping those leaving prison with complex needs such as substance misuse issues, mental health needs and behavioural challenges, to secure and maintain suitable accommodation.

Fareham and Gosport Adult Mental Health Service generally provide a range of community-based mental health services for people who need support for their mental health issues. However, there is no specific homelessness mental health initiative.

A commissioned 'Inclusion Recovery' service, which is based at Fareham Health Centre and provides support and treatment to anyone impacted by their own or someone else's drug or alcohol use.

With all of the 9 people recorded as rough sleepers in Autumn 2019 receiving offers of accommodation and support on a regular basis, the earlier provision through StreetAid, now incorporated into the Community Safety PAG, meant that a proven structure and services were already in place and could be scaled up to meet the new demand. The number recorded as rough sleeping in Autumn 2020 reduced to just three, two males and one female, all of whom were also regularly offered support and accommodation. The success of this pre-existing pathway and multi-agency collaboration corresponded to the good practice findings from the Lessons Learnt⁸⁸ review of Councils response to helping rough sleepers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A further benefit of the StreetAid partnership approach was that Community Safety led the initiative, which meant that Housing Options could focus on working with housing providers and landlords to secure the accommodation needed and managing the increasingly busy homelessness front line. This became even more difficult when offices and drop-in services had to close and staff had to work from home, mainly speaking with customers and services over the telephone. Officers and partner agencies report that Fareham Housing Options officers adapted well and quickly to the new arrangements.

5.2 Housing Support

Domestic abuse services

The Council, and Fareham residents facing domestic abuse, have access to support and if necessary, emergency accommodation including out of the area. This is through the Council's main domestic abuse partner, Southern Domestic Abuse Services (SDAS Trading as Stop Domestic Abuse) who provide accommodation-based services across Hampshire, including refuges and other temporary accommodation. SDAS also provide a 24-hour answerphone services with clear instructions in what to do in each situation, including in an emergency.

Homeless Hostel

Two Saints are commissioned by Hampshire County Council in partnership with Fareham Borough Council to deliver the social inclusion contract in Fareham, provide temporary accommodation to support and assist single homeless people including:

- 18 room direct access hostel for stays of up to one year. Agencies can also make referrals and there are no automatic exclusions, with dogs allowed.
- 10 room move on hostel for homeless people with support needs for stays of between six months and one year. Access is referral only through Fareham Council
- 9 room move on supported accommodation.
- The service also provides outreach and resettlement support to current and former rough sleepers.

⁸⁸ Lessons learnt from council's response to rough sleeping during the COVID-19 pandemic, Grey, T., Combs, J., Local Government Association, November 2020

The hostel accommodation is shared with Gosport residents, although outcomes data ⁸⁹ shows that more than half of service users have a local connection with Fareham. The data also presents evidence of a client group with complex and multiple needs who require high levels of support. For the quarter ending September 2020, hostel bedspaces had 100% occupancy, and out of the 41 using the hostel provision during the quarter, 13 service users moved out with only 6 of these being planned moves, and five being due to being evicted.

Stakeholders, including commissioning officers and Fareham Council Housing Options officers, report that Two Saints is an excellent organisation who work hard to offer a service user led service, with the aim of providing every opportunity for homeless and vulnerable people to build a better future. Evictions from the hostel are always a last resort and even where a person is evicted, Two Saints outreach officers will still try and maintain engagement and wherever possible, support, as well as working hand in glove with the Housing Options and Community Safety teams to resolve any difficulties an individual may have that prevents them from being sustainably housed.

Two Saints is registered with the Regulator of Social Housing, whose Board oversee the 267 strong staff team delivering the operational core activity of preventing and relieving homelessness and improving wellbeing through personalised service user development.

Mental Health

The Richmond Fellowship, a mental health support charity focussed on mental health recovery, also provides housing support within Fareham. They have also been awarded a new contract with Hampshire County Council. Working with landlords including Fareham Borough Council, Guinness and Abri housing associations, Richmond Fellowship currently support service users in properties as well as others in the community. Referees have different levels of mental ill health, and a flexible approach which allows service users to develop their independent living and social skills is required.

5.3 Other support

In addition to the outreach service provided by Two Saints, the following support services are available and active within the Borough:

Y Services, a youth work charity, provide outreach and support to young people up to 19 years of age, or up to 25 if they have additional needs. The outreach workers have experience and intelligence around where young people may be gathering, and potentially at risk, and are out three nights a week engaging with them, mainly working to get the young people home, providing support in the home if required. Where this is not possible, Y Services will work with the Early Help hub and Two Saints to help to secure accommodation to get the young person off the street and

⁸⁹ Social Inclusion Contract Workbook 2020/2021

away from risk taking behaviours. Funding from Hampshire commissioned services ends in March 2021, and the charity will now be funded by the Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner, and local fundraising, for 2021 to 2022. The charity provides specialist sexual health services, drug and alcohol advice as well as one to one LGBT+ support.

Inclusion Recovery, an NHS commissioned alcohol and drug addiction support service working to support individuals, and their families, who are impacted by such addiction, including those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. As a partner of Street Aid, Inclusion have worked closely with Fareham Housing Options service and Two Saints to provide support to service users, including those within Two Saints accommodation. Inclusion will also support those under threat of eviction as well as those who are rough sleeping.

Richmond Fellowship also provides non-accommodation-based support for adults with mental health problems.

Local support provision is service user led, with the aim of personalisation in order to improve employment opportunities and help people feel part of their community, however in practice support services are generally focussed on individuals at crisis level, such as those who have been rough sleeping and are recovering from drug addiction. Anecdotal evidence suggests that while the support provided by each agency is excellent and can make a real difference when an individual engages with the support worker, the level of support provision is low compared with the scale of support needs. The support needs identified above are only those recorded by the Housing Options service as part of HCLIC requirements and while these are a good indicator of types of need, should not be assumed to be the totality of support need in the Borough.

Hampshire adult social care services owe duties to vulnerable homeless adults under the Care Act 2014, to provide or arrange services that help to maintain or improve people's independence and wellbeing to prevent them from developing the need for ongoing care and support. The Act contains a general duty⁹⁰ of the local authority to promote an individual's wellbeing in relation to, among other areas, the suitability of their living accommodation. An assessment of the services and facilities available for local people as well as identifying local people that might have care and support needs should be carried out in order to understand what gaps or duplications there are in service provision. One of the ways in which Hampshire County Council does this is by working with the local housing authorities through the Strategic Housing Officers Group and the Homelessness Officer Group. These groups have worked with Hampshire County Council Adult Services Commissioning Team to develop and agree priorities for these services, and while the meetings are considered by Council officers to be useful and productive, the reducing budget funding these services has meant that they are mostly targeted at the most vulnerable to help relieve homelessness, and not at the earlier stage of pre-crisis prevention activity.

⁹⁰ Care Act 2014, Part 1(2)(h), wellbeing insofar as relating to an individual's living accommodation.

Schedule 3 of the Care Act⁹¹ requires the NHS to inform the Adult social services authority when it has a patient to be discharged that will require a care assessment to establish care needs of the patient when going home from hospital. Where the care or support needs are not at the level where residential care is required, but the patient is either homeless or unable to live in their former home due to disability causing access issues for example, this is an opportunity for the NHS and the social services authority to work jointly with the local housing authority to develop a hospital discharge protocol. Such a protocol, enacted effectively, would help to prevent homelessness of vulnerable people leaving hospital, and help to ensure they are not placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation until more suitable housing can be found. Such a protocol is not in operation in Fareham and there have been occasions where adults discharged from hospital are sent to the Housing Options Service with little or no notice or support from other public authorities.

There is a good relationship with Hampshire care leavers team, who also have a homelessness prevention officer on their team. This officer is proactive and has a good working relationship with Fareham Housing Options service, resulting in few homeless care leavers within the Borough. There is also a 16/17-year-old joint protocol with children's social services, which has been reviewed within the last six months and this is another area where there are few cases.

For cases involving homeless households where dependent children reside, Hampshire County Council's Children's Services must fulfil their duties under The Children Act 1989, by using powers and duties to provide accommodation, carry out assessments and care plans to meet support needs. This is an area where both organisations would benefit from additional partnership working.

With the limited exception of the StreetAid initiative, there is reportedly little joint working between the local NHS Clinical Commissioning Group or NHS Trust, Hampshire mental health social work team and the Housing Options Service, although significant advances have been made since March 2020 due to the on-going pandemic. These NHS services owe a duty to adults who are mentally ill under the Mental Health Act 1983. Mental health is a growing factor in homelessness and greater than all other support needs of those owed a homelessness duty, as well as a significant cause of the inability to sustain a tenancy for single people. It is therefore essential that effective joint working further develops between Fareham Borough Council, the NHS Trust, the CCG and Hampshire County Council urgently.

5.4 Conclusions about activities to provide support

1. Support to help people remain living with their family and friends or to avert the end of an assured short hold private rented sector tenancy is key to preventing homelessness. Support with these matters should be made available as early as possible to reduce the number of people seek assistance from the local authority in an emergency. For too many people, the reason why they lost their last settled accommodation remains unclear.

⁹¹ Care Act 2014, Schedule 3, Discharge of hospital patients with care and support needs.

2. The majority of people who seek assistance with homelessness have only have one support need. However, it is important to recognise that there are significant numbers of people with multiple support needs. The support needs of those owed a duty of assistance by the Council is broadly reflective of that across the wider county, region and country, however the total number of support needs is lower than comparative areas. A history of mental health problems, physical ill-health and disability, experience of domestic abuse, and history of offending behaviour are all commonly reported to support needs.
3. The Council together with its partners, has achieved a tremendous success in reducing the number of people experiencing street homelessness, through the StreetAid initiative. Joint arrangements with Gosport Borough Council has brought about positive outcomes for both local authority areas. The diverted giving scheme has ensured that gifts and donations are channelled to those most in need.
4. For a Borough of its size, Fareham is fortunate to have a range of hostel and other supported housing options, operated by nationally recognised reputable providers. The fact that such a provision exists is remarkable given the significant cuts that have been made nationally to supporting housing budgets over the past decade.
5. There is some support available for young people at risk of homelessness, with all its organisations being particularly active in this area. However public sector services could be much more aligned in their working. Support for homeless vulnerable adults due to mental illness, physical disabilities and sensory disabilities or age patchy, and weather is provision this is due to effective working rather than planned and commissioned services.

6.0 Resources for tackling homelessness

This chapter reviews the resources available to carry out activities to tackle homelessness. For the purpose of this review, resources being considered are the money, people and I.T. available to the local housing authority.

6.1 Money

The Council is legally obliged to discharge the administration of homelessness and is responsible for funding it. The Council carries out a range of activities including homelessness prevention, housing options advice and the provision and management of temporary accommodation. These activities are described in chapters three and four of this review.

The Council's Executive agreed a revised budget for homelessness and housing advice from the original Budget Estimate⁹², for the financial year 2020/21, which set the homelessness budget at £470,300, and housing advice budget at £443,800, to the amounts shown in table 4 below⁹³.

Table 4: Homelessness and housing aid budget revision, Fareham.

Budget heading	Original Approved budget 2020/21	Revised Budget projection 2020/21	Proposed budget 2021/22
Homelessness	470,300	551,000	566,300
Housing Advice	443,800	438,300	474,200

The increase in budget, resulting partly from the government request to accommodate all people sleeping rough or at risk of doing so, is to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. It takes account of the potential for further additional expenditure in 2021/22. The Council clarifies within its financial strategy that there are risks and uncertainties, acknowledging that the increase in expenditure has been caused by factors outside of their control. It is accepted that this is a positive response which demonstrates support for the Housing Options service.

The Council is known to have financial reserves, however there are regulations determining how these should be used, and much are earmarked for specific areas, including homelessness. The homelessness reserve is used to cover any additional expenditure.

There are currently ongoing discussions regarding benchmarking with other housing authorities on budgets and expenditure. Financial information from the County Council regarding spend within Fareham on both commissioned and in-house services, such as early help and care leaver services, or other organisations actively working with homeless or potentially homeless households within Fareham, is not

⁹² https://www.fareham.gov.uk/PDF/about_the_council/estimates2021.pdf

⁹³

<https://moderngov.fareham.gov.uk/documents/s25729/Finance%20Strategy%20Revenue%20Budget%20CTX%202021-22%20Report.pdf>

available for this review, thus assessing value for money of the Housing Options and related services is not possible here.

Alongside the money committed from Fareham Borough Councils revenue budget, additional funding is awarded by MHCLG.

Table 5: MHCLG Homelessness Reduction Act Grant, Benchmark Group 2017/18 to 2019/20

Area	Amount	% of budget
Fareham	£72,0552	0.01% of national budget 0.7% of regional budget
Hampshire	£2.13m	2.9% of national budget
South East	£10.1m	14% of national budget
England without London	£43.49m	59.8% of national budget
All England	£72.7m	100% of national budget

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

The Flexible Housing Support Grant replaced the Temporary Accommodation Subsidy regime previously administered by the Department for Work & Pensions in March 2017⁹⁴. This funding arrangement replaced a tightly controlled subsidy system to procure and manage temporary accommodation. The previous system could only be used once a person had become homeless; therefore, a new grant system was developed to enable flexibility to spend the funding on preventing homelessness, in addition to assisting those who are homeless.

Table 4: Flexible Homelessness Support Grant, Benchmark Group 2017/18 to 2019/2020

Area	Amount	% of budget
Fareham	£594,058	0.103% of national budget 0.74% of regional budget
Hampshire	£11,936,606	2.07% of national budget
South East	£79,920,613	13.84% of national budget
England without London	£235,971,943	40.88% of national budget
All of England	£577,259,410	100% of national budget

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

From 2021/22 the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and Homelessness Reduction Grant funding streams will be combined into the new Homelessness Prevention Grant. This funding has been increased by £47 million, to help local housing authorities support those who are at risk of homelessness, with greater financial control and flexibility.

Table 5: Homelessness Prevention Grant, Benchmark Group 2021/22

Area	Amount	% of budget
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⁹⁴ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. (2017). Flexible homelessness support grant – funding allocations formula explanation

Fareham	£279,229	0.09% of national budget 0.66% of regional budget
Hampshire	£7,641,118	2.46% of national budget
South East	£42,581,971	13.7% of national budget
England without London	£174,690,326	56% of national budget
All of England	£310,000,000	100% of national budget

The Rough Sleeper Initiative funding has been allocated to help more rough sleepers into accommodation, by delivering 6,000 additional bedspaces and 2,500 support staff nationally. Fareham also helped to fund the creation of street outreach services, additional hostel accommodation, and specialist support to rough sleepers to help them remain off the street.

Table 6: Rough Sleeper Initiative, Benchmark Group 2020-2021

Area	Amount	% of budget
Fareham and Gosport	£141,450	0.13% of national budget 1.02% of regional budget
Hampshire	£ 2,490,268	2.2% of national budget
South East	£13,892,469	12.4% of national budget
England without London	£79,508,817	71% of national budget
All of England	£112,000,000	100% of national budget

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

The Next Steps Accommodation Programme short-term funding is for interim accommodation and support for those rough sleepers accommodated during the pandemic. The funding was for activities such as helping people into private rented accommodation or helping to reconnect them with their community, as well as the procurement of interim accommodation. This is revenue funding only and had to be used in 2020/21. Alternative funding will be required for this to continue in the longer term.

Table 6: Next Steps Accommodation Programme funding 2020/21 - Short term accommodation and intermediate support funding – revenue only, Benchmark Group 2020-2021

Area	Amount	% of budget
Fareham	£24,900	0.024% of national budget 0.165% of regional budget
Hampshire	£2,492,700	2.37% of national budget
South East	£15,066,772	14.35% of national budget
England without London	£48,358,369	46.06% of national budget
All England	£105,000,000	100% of national budget

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

The capital stream of the Next Steps Accommodation Programme, allocated to secure new units of accommodation, had also been made available for use during 2020/21. This was to be used to bring forward long term move-on accommodation as part of a four-year £433 million programme to secure 6,000 additional supported homes in England, 3300 to be delivered in 2020/21. MHCLG guidance confirms that

this funding allocation was for both capital and revenue based longer term accommodation provision, and that the deadline for delivering the new units of accommodation was 31st March 2021. Fareham Borough Council used their allocation to fund additional accommodation units.

Table 7: Next Steps Accommodation Programme Capital Funding – Longer Term move on accommodation funding, Benchmark Group 202021

Area	Amount	% of budget
Fareham	£129,575	0.08% of national budget 0.59% of regional budget
Hampshire	£5,924,517	3.14% of national budget
South East	£22,059,786	13.7% of national budget
EWL	£137,709,634	85.53% of national budget
England	£161,000,000	100% of national budget

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

6.2 People

The Housing Options staff structure, shown below in Fig 1, consists of two senior officers, one responsible for homelessness and housing advice, and the other responsible for essential temporary and move on accommodation provision and management. The teams include officers with significant experience, particularly the team leaders, and those who are fairly new to the role, as well as temporary officers. This busy housing options service delivers homelessness, housing advice and housing register application services, and the accommodation team with procurement and management of both temporary accommodation and the FareLets scheme.

In addition to managing the service the senior officer makes decisions on all reviews and appeals, supports the management of internal and external relationships with key agencies and represents the Council at external partnerships including StreetAid and Hampshire Homeless Officers Group. The vacant housing options officer positions are currently covered by temporary officers. The team delivers both the housing options and housing advice services, including drop-in front-line provision, currently delivered over the telephone, plus managing the assessment of housing register applications.

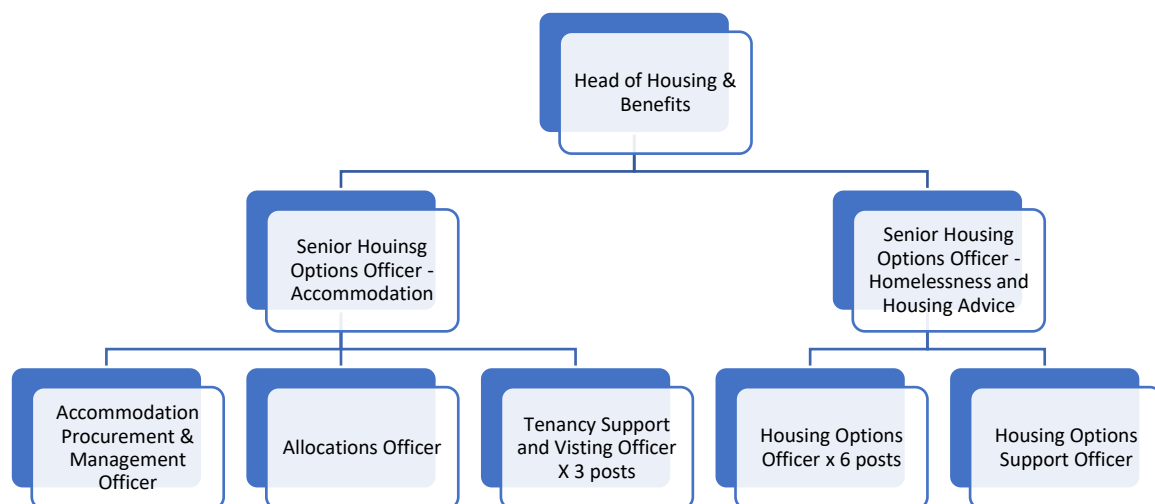
Like many front-line homelessness services, both teams are unable to manage the current demand for services in order to position themselves proactively and focus on prevention. The Accommodation Team comprises a senior officer, accommodation procurement officer and three Tenancy Support Officers. This team work together to secure temporary accommodation for homeless households, including social rented and private sector housing, as well as managing the FareLets scheme. The support that the team provide to both landlords and tenants has helped to increase the number of properties being managed, and the team leader is clear that there is room for expanding that number to help meet the demand for accommodation. Expanding both the privately rented and homelessness temporary accommodation is needed

now, and in the future, therefore full consideration of the critical level of properties to support hours will be required.

There have been some limited informal benchmarking discussions regarding team structures, caseloads and training through the Hampshire Strategic Housing and Homeless Officer Groups, and general restructuring of the Housing Options service to meet demand, although the current structure is not providing the essential opportunity for such essential activities as case file auditing, training, comprehensive case file management, and other activities required in order to deliver an effective homelessness prevention service. It is therefore a probability that additional officers and a revised structure are required to enable full investment of the time and resources needed at the earliest stage of customer interaction with Housing Options and Advice services, to focus on preventing homelessness. This is however currently difficult to assess as many policies and internal procedures and processes are either not yet in place or requiring updating. It is worth mentioning that these would be updated whilst still carrying out the delivery of an increasingly busy service.

In addition, for effective delivery of these services all housing options staff require regular, structured training regarding specific legislation such as the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Housing Act 1996, as well as housing advice provision, homelessness assessment, and best practice in homelessness prevention and this is not yet embedded.

Diagram 1: Fareham Borough Council Homelessness Service staffing structure, June 2020



6.3 I.T.

The software and hardware available to the Housing Options service to help administer homelessness functions is effective in formulating personalised plans, case management, recording prevention activity, and other modules to help enhance the administration of homelessness functions, such as online forms, applications, reports, information packs, letter templates. Not all functionality is currently used, and the potential to support case management to a level which enhances service delivery, particularly in the use of personal housing plans, is not being realised as officers are not able at present to spend the time at the front of the process.

The temporary accommodation, property and void management, is at the moment recorded separately. A new housing management system has been procured for the Fareham Council social rented housing stock management, and housing register, and the temporary accommodation will also use this software. This does not integrate with the housing options, housing advice and homelessness software, so there may be duplication of records and liaison will be required between the teams, as well as ensuring records are updated.

There is self-service housing advice in the form of a set of advice sheets on the Council's website, but this is not comprehensive, requires updating and will need doing so on a regular basis, the use of such self-service systems is being considered.

6.4 Conclusions about resources for tackling homelessness

1. The Council must be congratulated for its decision to increase spend for tackling homelessness in the most recent financial year. The Council receives only a small annual grant from the UK government for tackling homelessness and whilst this budget is complimented by a range of other funding awarded by MHCLG, the relative amount awarded to the Council is always smaller than that compared to the county, region or elsewhere in England. The Council has done well recently to secure extra investment from MHCLG to tackle rough sleeping, securing short and long-term revenue and capital funding.
2. The Council has done well to neatly align homelessness and housing advice functions alongside those for housing allocations and within a wider service area that also has responsibility for administering housing benefits. With increasing numbers of people seeking homelessness and housing assistance, existing staff levels are being stretched beyond their maximum capability.
3. IT is being used to help drive efficiencies in the homelessness service. Investment of a new housing management software system will bring improvements to the temporary accommodation and housing register aspects of the service. Full functionality of all software system should be fully exploited and duplication between different software systems needs to be minimised as much as possible. The introduction of self-service housing advice module would help to reduce some demands on the staff team.

7.0 Consultation

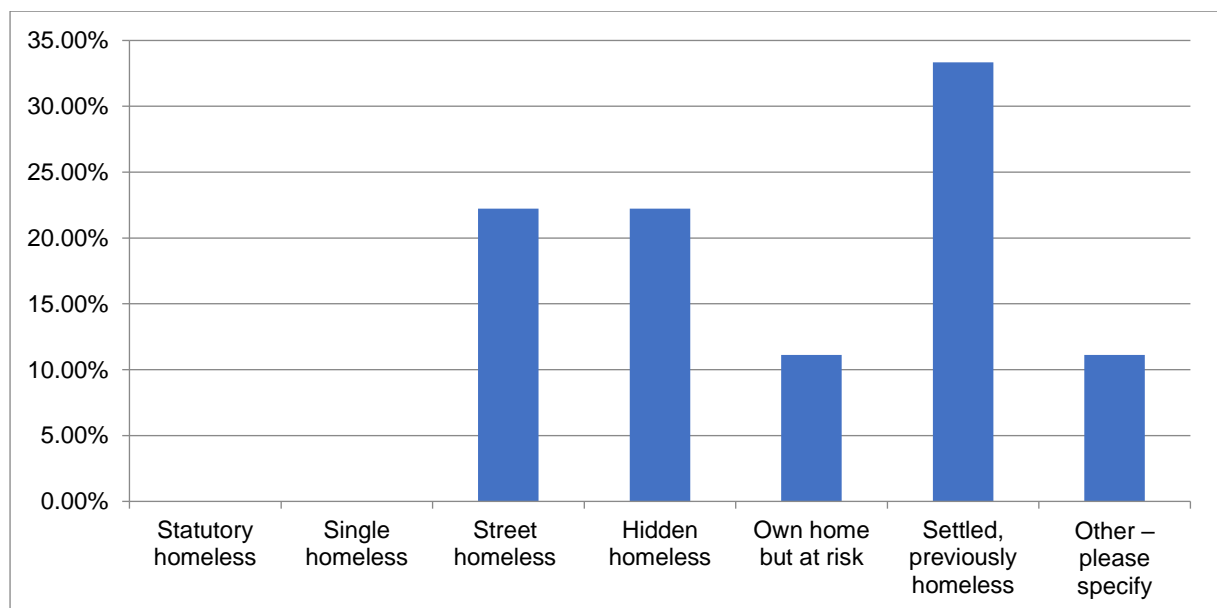
This chapter shows the results from three surveys carried out with service users, housing options staff, and stakeholders. The surveys were carried out to gather quantitative data on people's attitudes, opinions and experiences of homelessness in Fareham Borough Council.

7.1 Service user consultation

People with lived experience of homelessness were invited to complete an online survey which included a total of 12 questions, each with multiple choice answers and the option of providing additional comments. The survey was launched on 09th February 2021, a reminder email being sent 14 days after the initial invitation was issued, to people with no response or partial response. A total of 70 invites were sent, 74% of invitations were opened, 20% remain unopened, 6% bounced. 24% of respondents ticked through the survey, nobody opted out. Nine responses were received.

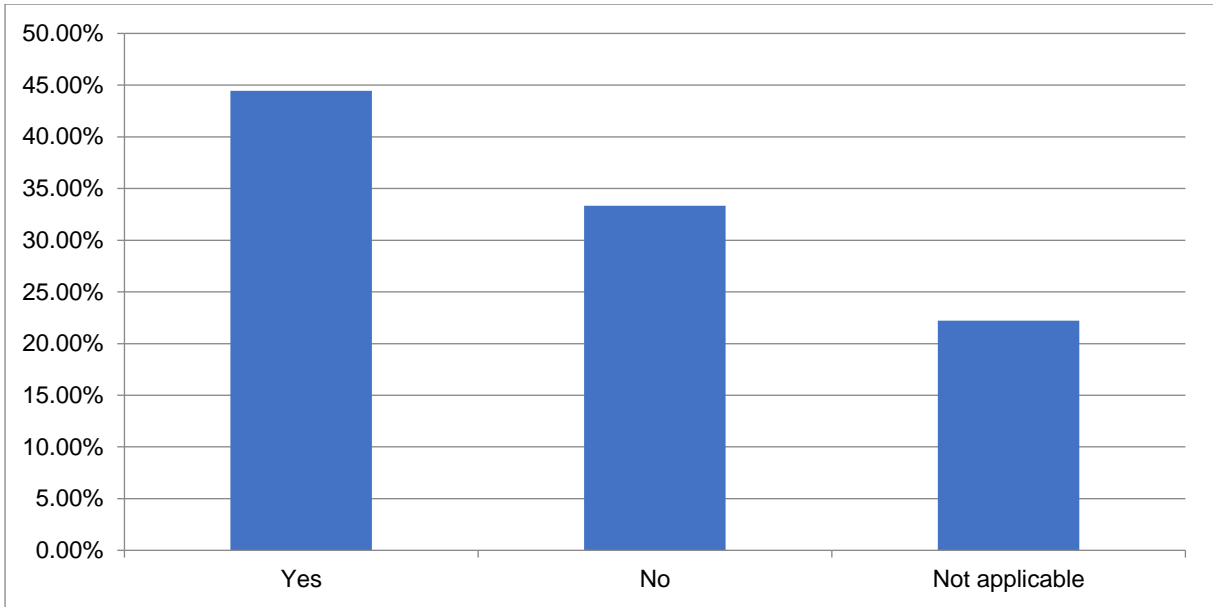
One third of respondents describes themselves is now living in settled accommodation but previously homeless. One-fifth of respondents describe themselves as sleeping rough, with another one-fifth describing themselves as sofa surfing with friends, family or others.

Chart 71: How would you describe your current experience of homelessness?



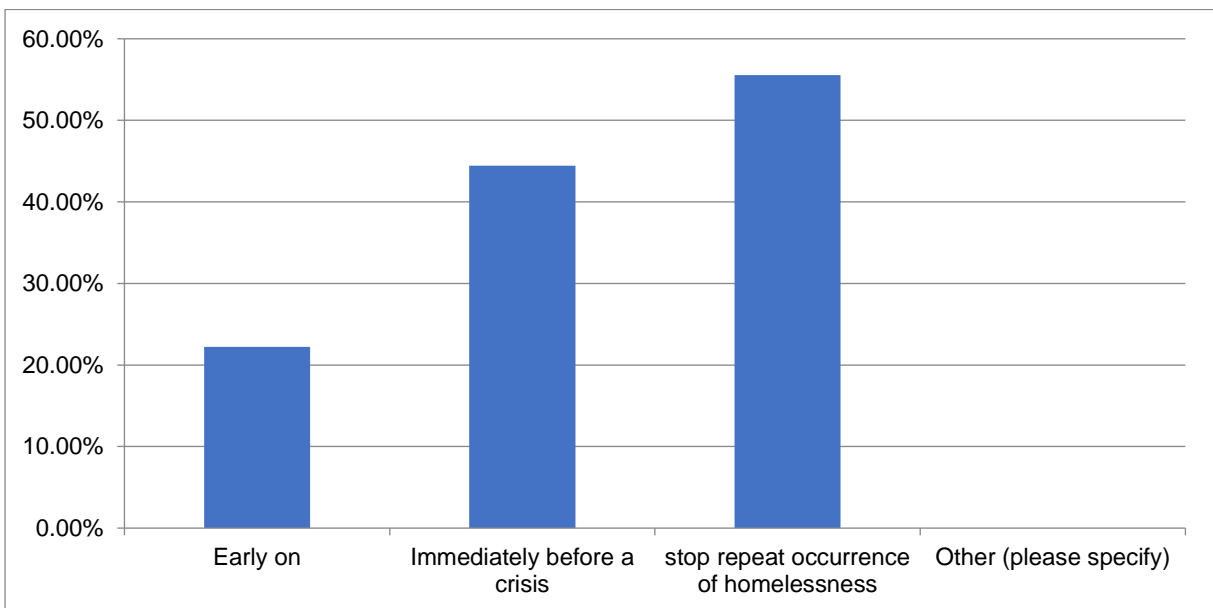
Of those respondents that were currently homeless or threatened with homelessness, 44% had previously been homeless on another occasion, with a further 33% being homeless for the first time. 22% of respondents were not homeless at the point of completing this survey, therefore this question was not applicable to them.

Chart 72: If you are currently homeless or threatened with homelessness, have you been homeless before this occasion, i.e. is this a repeat occurrence of homelessness?



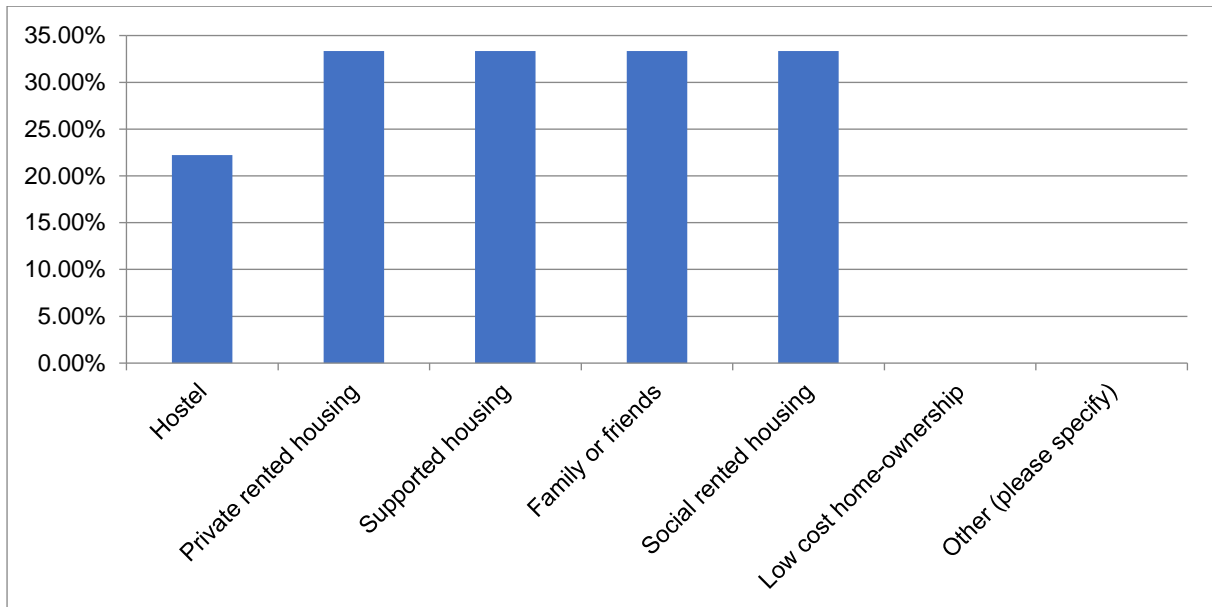
55% of respondents reported that the best approach to preventing homelessness was, after obtaining accommodation, being helped to stop a repeat occurrence of homelessness. Examples include, being given advice and support to retain accommodation. A further 44% reported that the best approach to preventing homelessness was to get assistance immediately before a crisis (for example up to two months for becoming homeless). Examples include, being helped to stay in their current home or getting help to find somewhere else to live in the instances when a landlord issues a notice of eviction, parents are no longer willing/able to accommodate, or a relationship breaks down. A final 22% reported that the best approach for preventing homelessness was being helped early on (up to 2 years before becoming homeless). Examples include, being given advice and assistance before leaving prison, care, beyond forces, hospital, or to escape domestic abuse, or when having mental health problems.

Chart 73: What do you think works best to prevent homelessness?



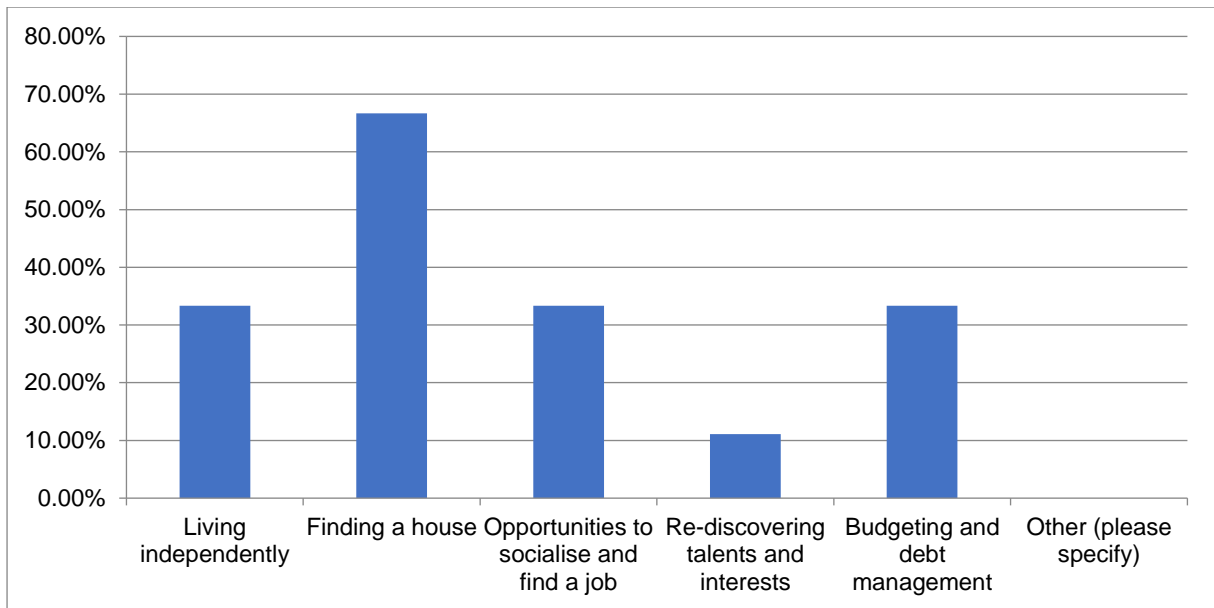
When asked what they thought the best housing option is when homeless or threatened with homelessness, respondents rated all options equally, except for hostel accommodation which scored slightly lower. Low-cost homeownership was not seen as a valid option by any of the respondents.

Table 74: When homeless or threatened with homelessness, what do you think is the best housing option?



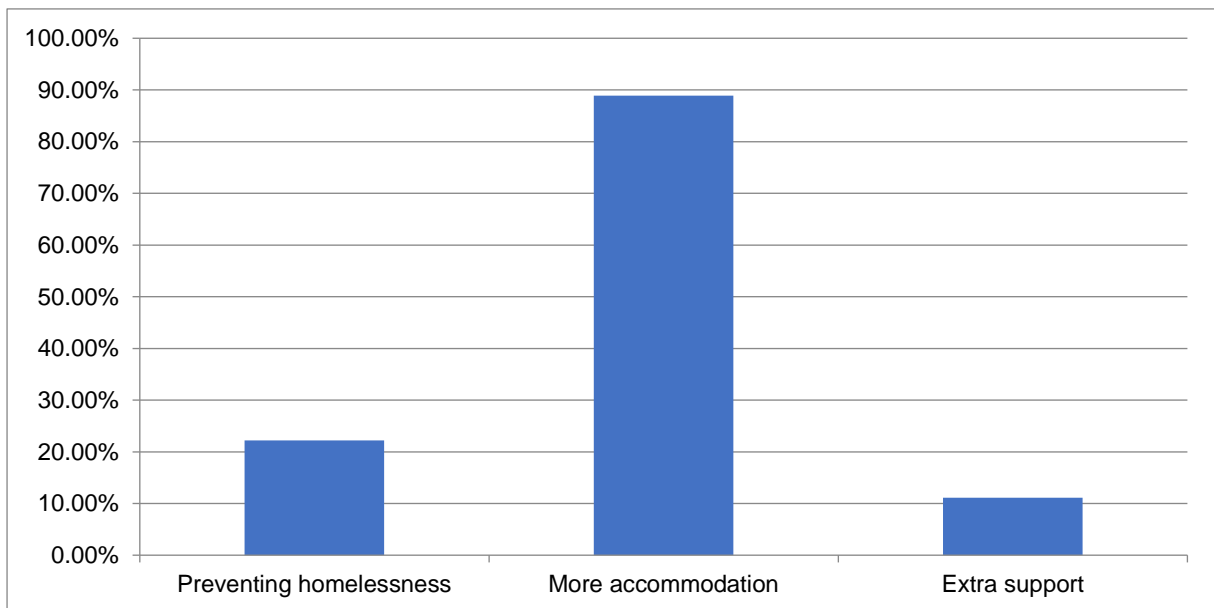
Two-thirds of respondents reported that the most important thing they needed help and support with when homeless or having been homeless, was with finding a house. Of second importance, respondents rated equally help and support with living independently, opportunities to socialise and find a job and budgeting and debt management. There was less weight given to help and support for rediscovering talents and interests, with only just over 10% of respondents saying this was important.

Table 75: When someone is, or has recently been homeless, what is the most important thing they need help and support with?



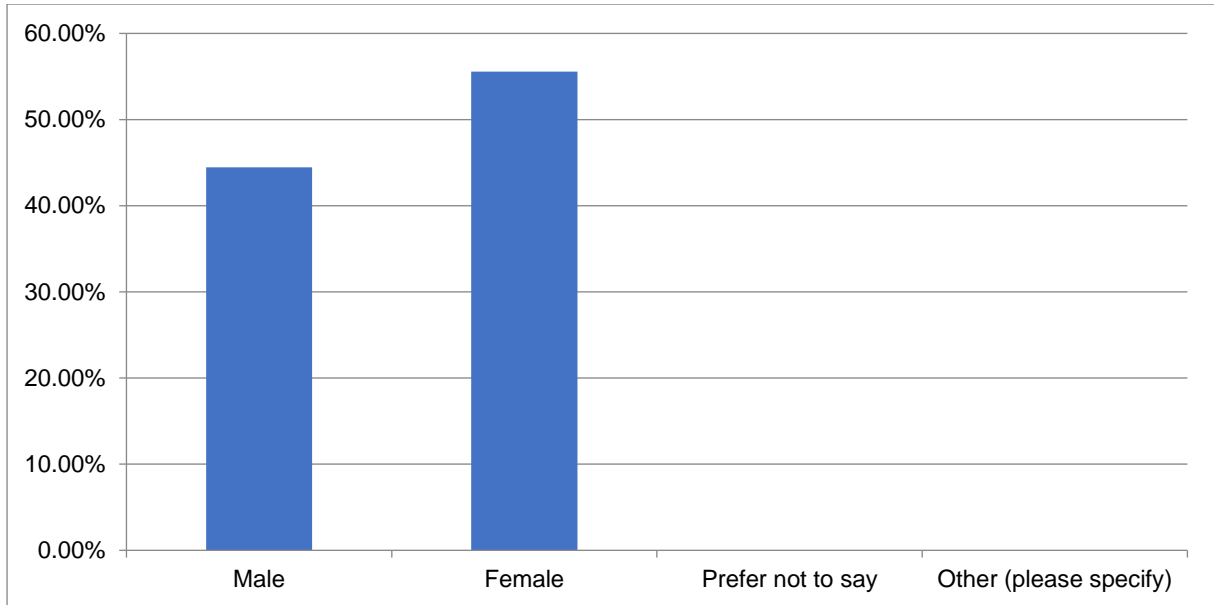
When asked how they think homeless funding should be spent, almost 90% of respondents said it should be targeted at more accommodation. Only one-fifth of respondents said funding should be targeted towards preventing homelessness and only a further 10% saying it should be targeted at extra support.

Table 76: How do you think homelessness funding should be spent?



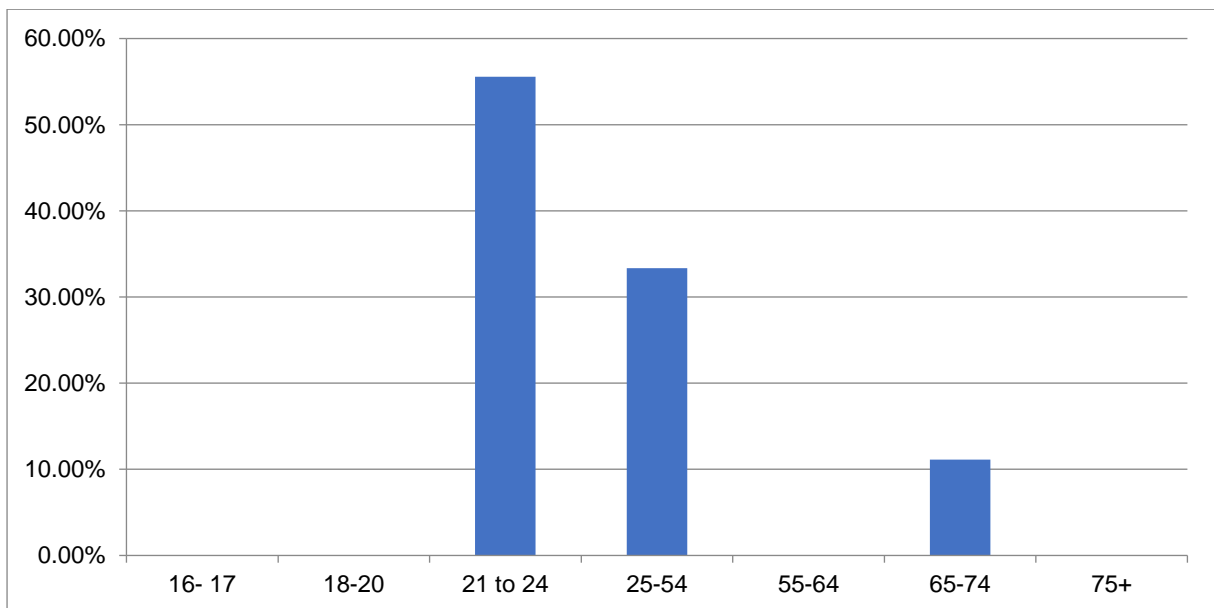
There was almost an equal split of responses from males and females.

Table 77: What gender are you?



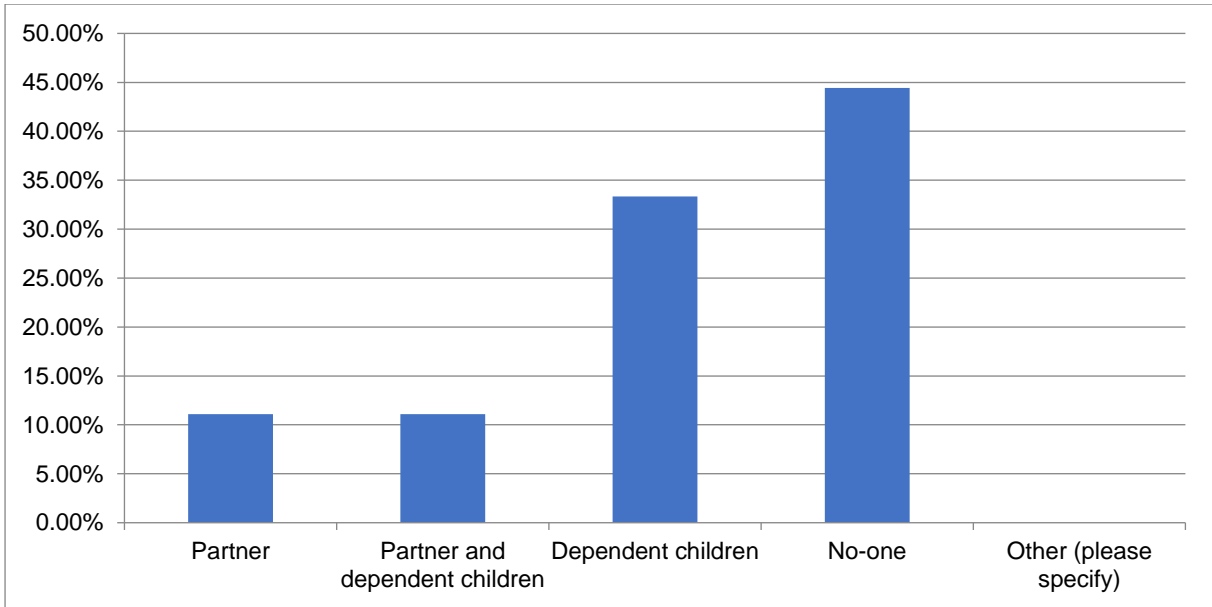
Just over half of all respondents were aged 21 to 24 years, with a further one third of respondents being aged 25 to 54 years, and just over 10% of respondents being 65 to 74 years.

Table 78: What age are you?



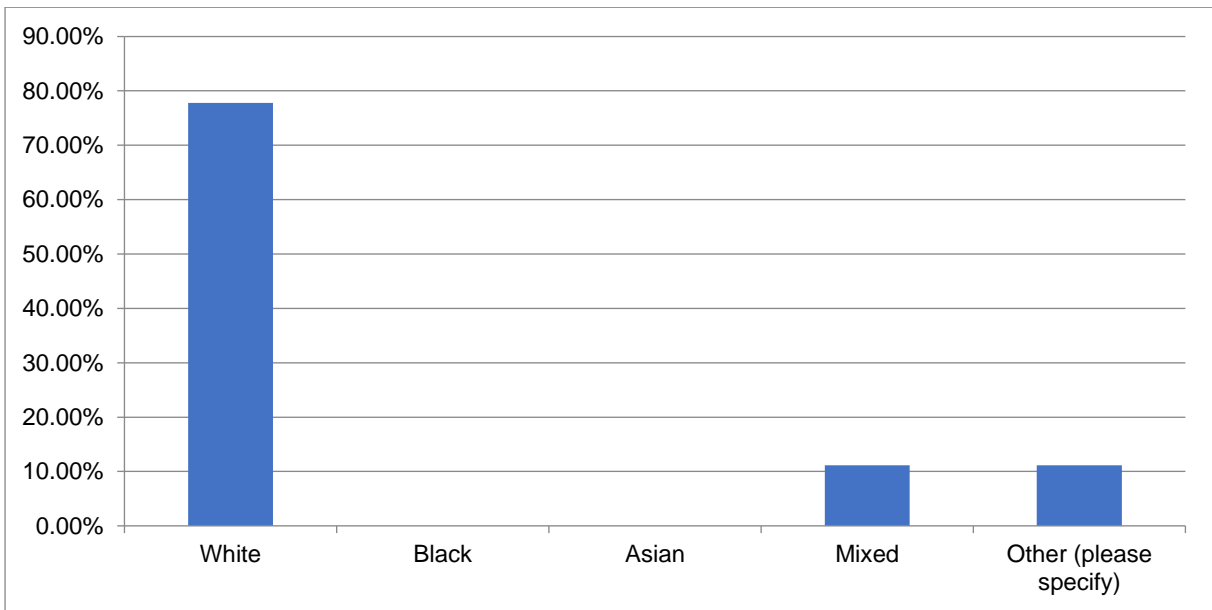
The majority of respondents lived alone or had dependent children living with them.

Table 79: Who else normally lives with you?



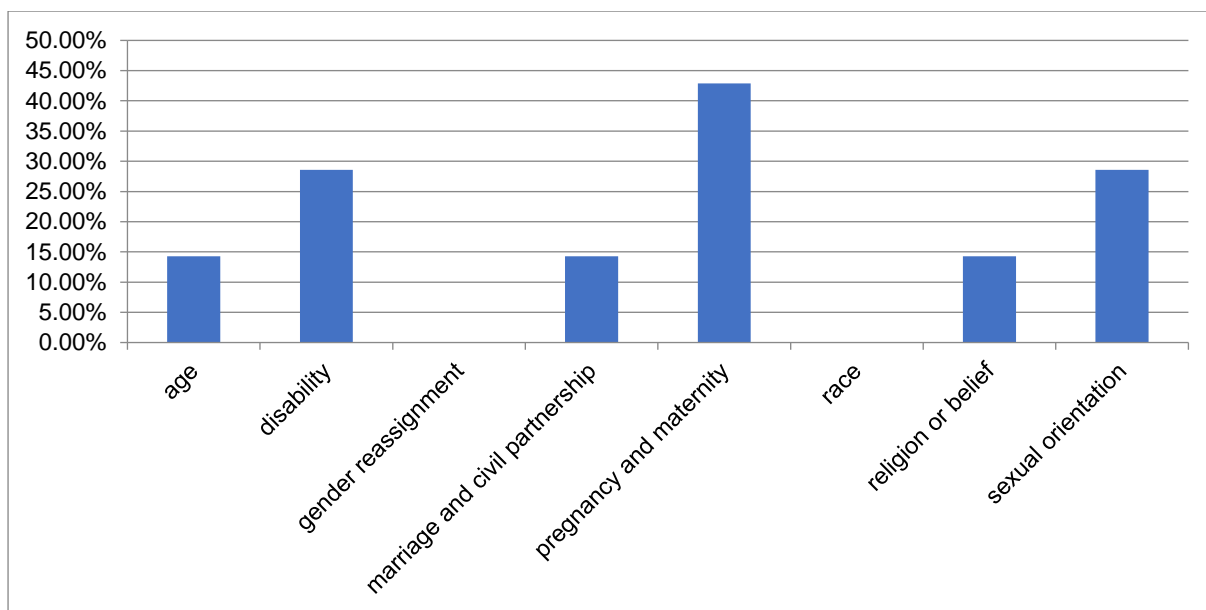
Just over three-quarter of respondents reported they were of a white ethnic origin, with just under one-quarter of respondents reporting they were of a mixed or other ethnic origin.

Table 80: What is your ethnic origin?



Respondents identified with a diverse range of characteristics, including pregnancy and maternity disability, and sexual orientation.

Table 81: Do you identify with any of the following characteristics (Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics)



Additional comments made by respondents are shown below. Overall positive feedback was given about people’s experiences of using the Council’s homelessness service. However, it’s important to note that there is also some dissatisfaction.

“you’re doing amazingly considering how tough times are and the fact that some people just cannot be helped!”

“I’ve been homeless for over two years now. No response from the Council”

“Fareham Borough Council were a great during my homelessness and did a fantastic job in resolving it so me and my twins can now live in settled accommodation where it is safe. They acted fast on a safeguarding move as the area wasn’t safe for a mother and children. I will forever be grateful for how quickly they acted into resolving us not feeling safe in a temporary accommodation”

“I really appreciate everything that a housing option officer from Fareham Borough Council has done for me! I felt as if no one cared in the world until she proved me wrong. Not only helping me with my homelessness, but with my feelings and thoughts! Very big well done to her!!! I think that the Council should employ more people that care and less people that just think it’s a job”

7.2 Stakeholder consultation

Organisations involved with tackling homelessness were invited to complete an online survey which included a total of 10 questions, each with multiple choice answers and the option of providing additional comments. The survey was launched on 09th February 2021, a reminder email being sent 14 days after the initial invitation was issued, to people with no response or partial response. A total of 25 invites were issued, 40% were opened and 60% were unopened. 36% were clicked through. Five responses were received. The low response rate doesn’t allow for analysis of trends; however, responses have been presented below for the purposes of completeness.

Table 82: Which type of organisation do you work for?

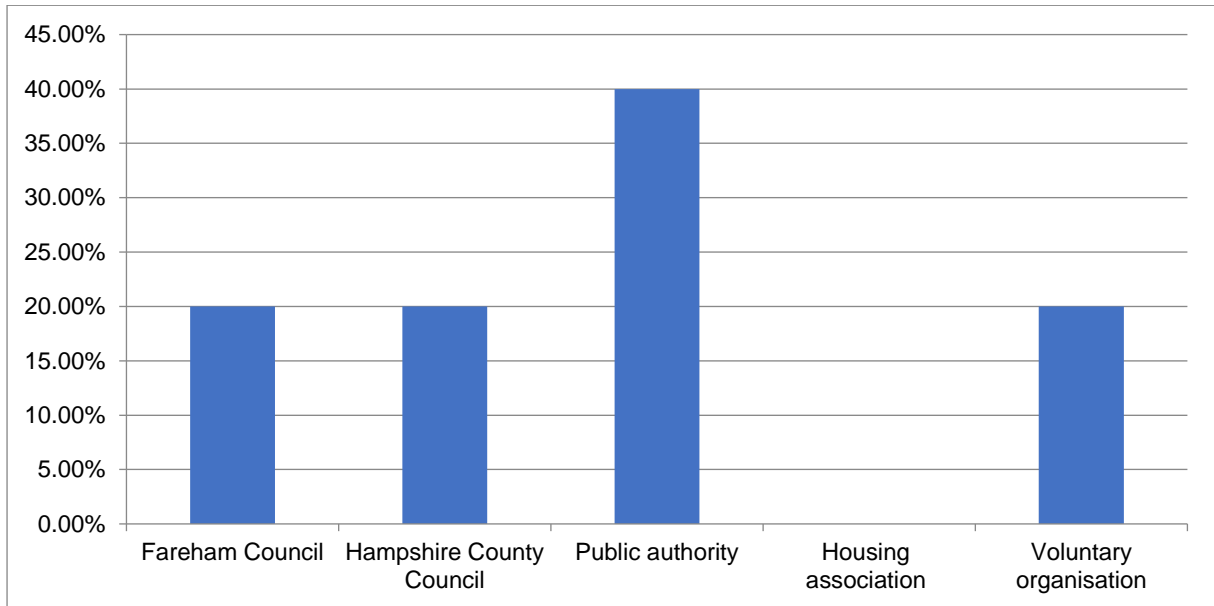


Table 83: During the past five years, how have a number of cases of homelessness you or your organisation has dealt with changed?

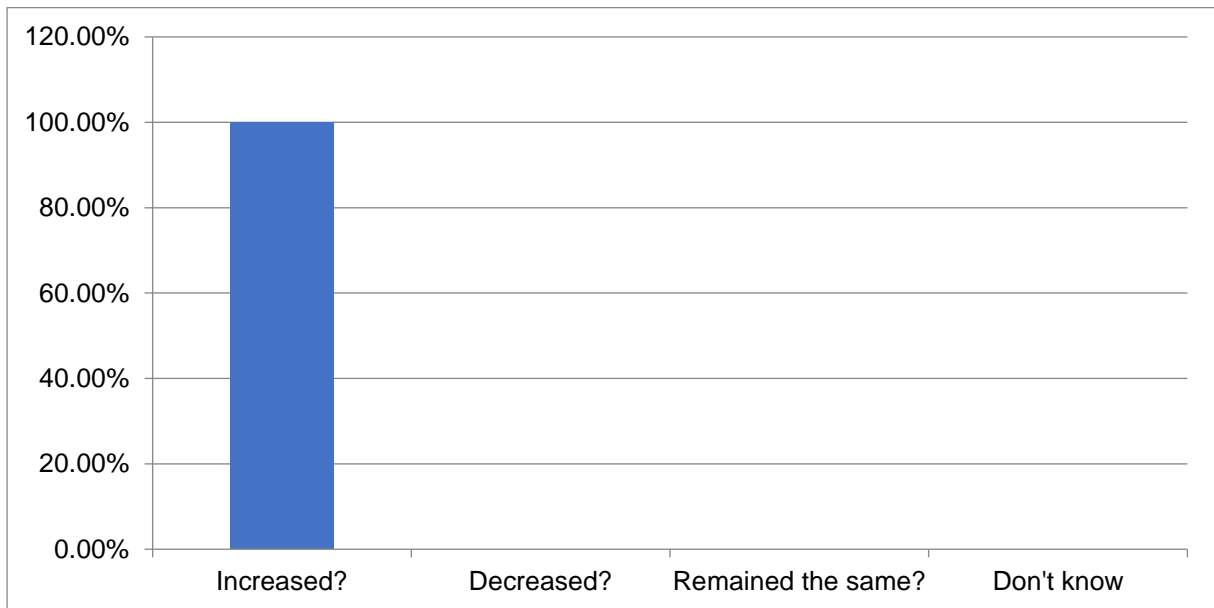


Table 84: During the next five years is there an expectation that the number of overseas cases you or your organisation might deal with will change?

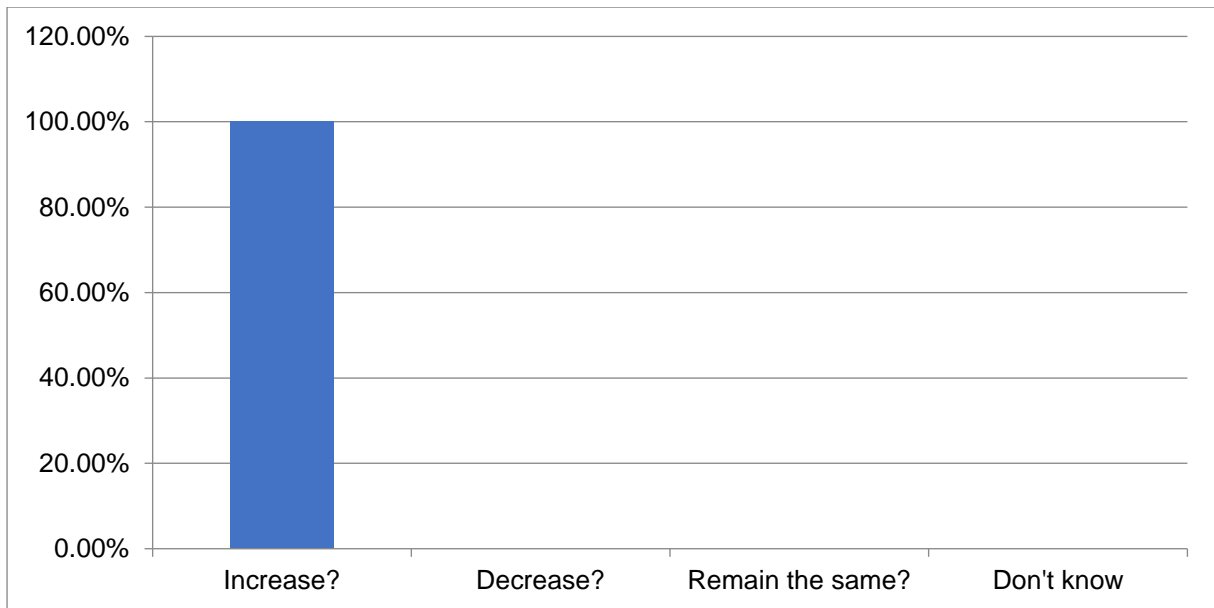


Table 85: When preventing homelessness, in what order should the groups of people share and be prioritised (ranked from 1 to 7)?

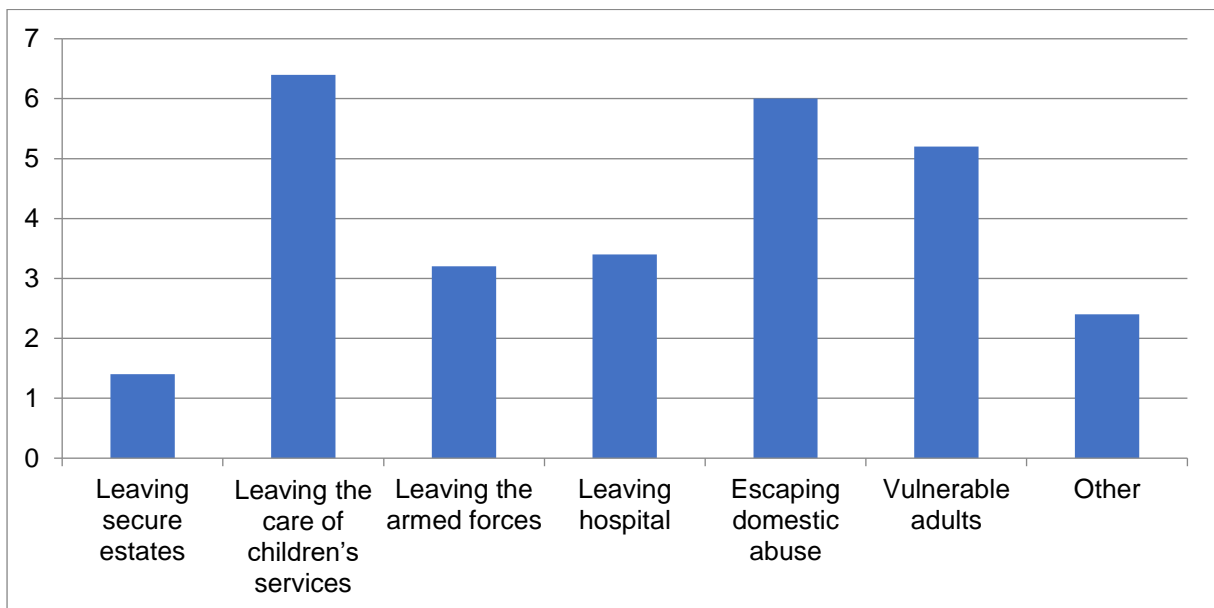


Table 86: When preventing homelessness, which is the most useful method to help someone remain in their existing home (ranked from 1 to 10)?

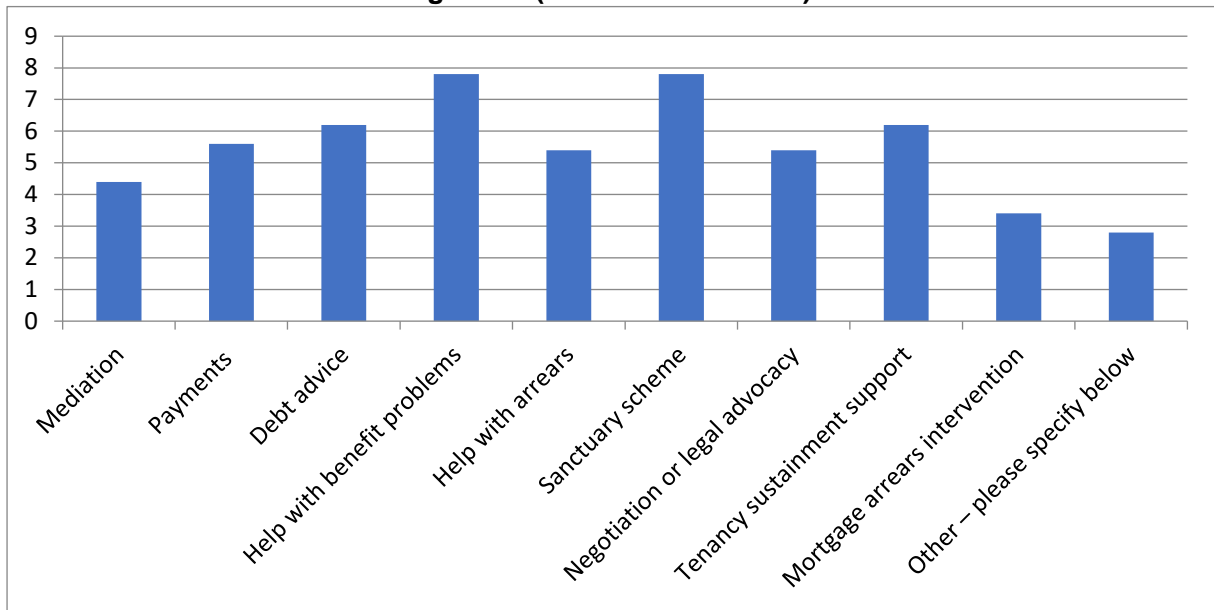


Table 87: When obtaining accommodation for someone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness, which is the best has an option (ranked from 1 to 7)?

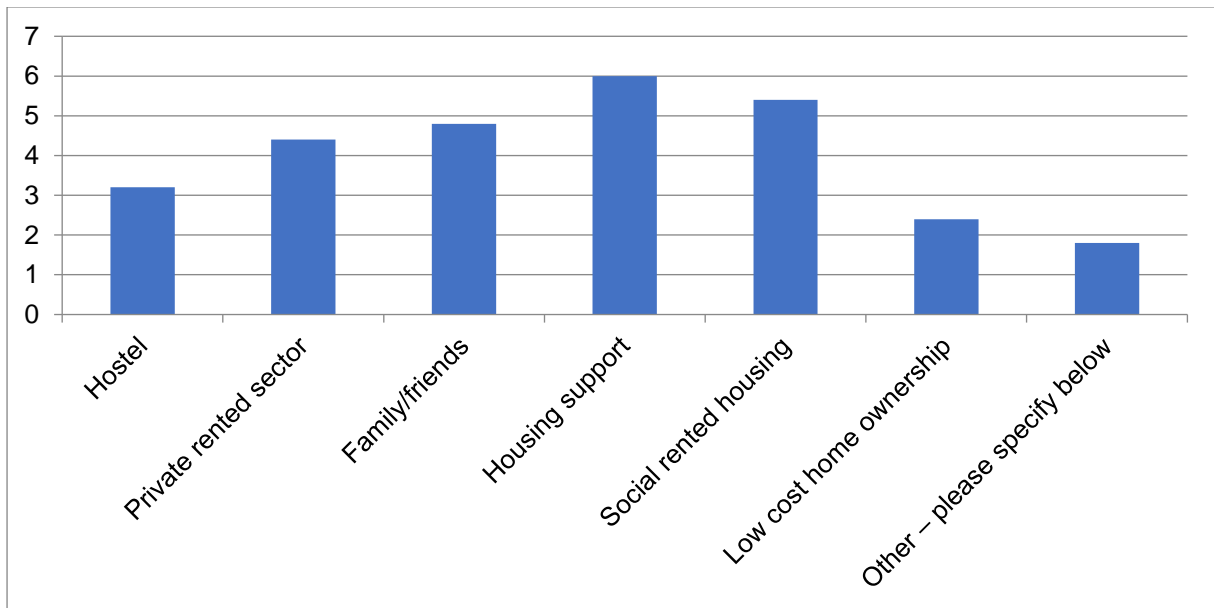


Table 88: When supporting someone who is, or has been homeless, how important are the following (ranked from 1 to 5)?

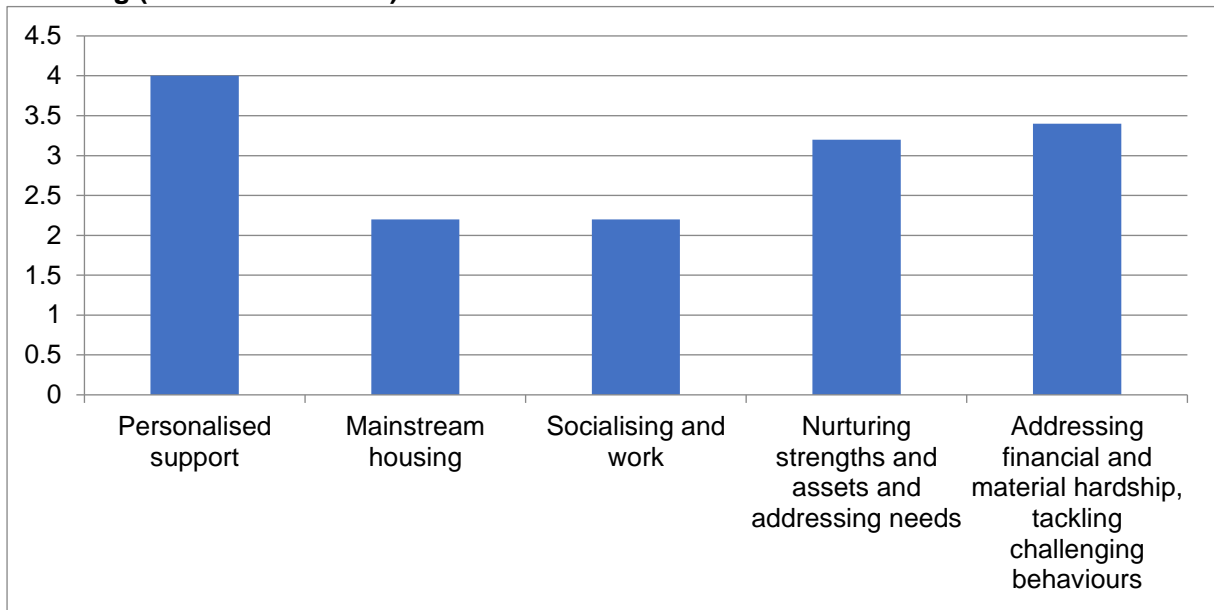


Table 89: Thinking about the resources needed to tackle homelessness, what should be prioritised for funding (ranked from 1 to 3)?

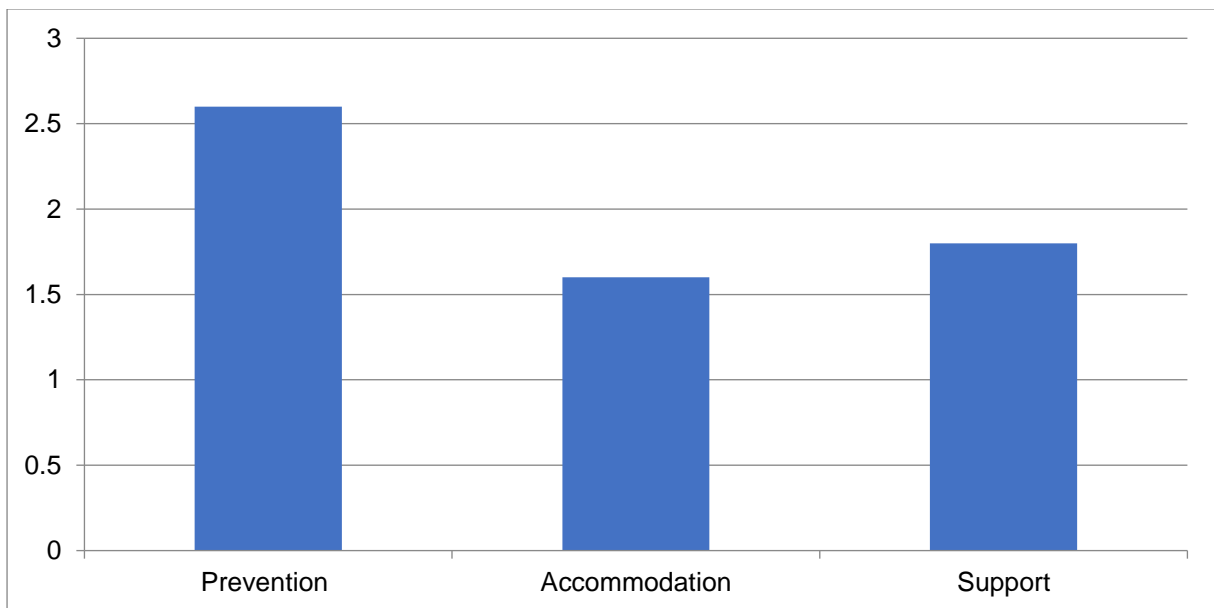
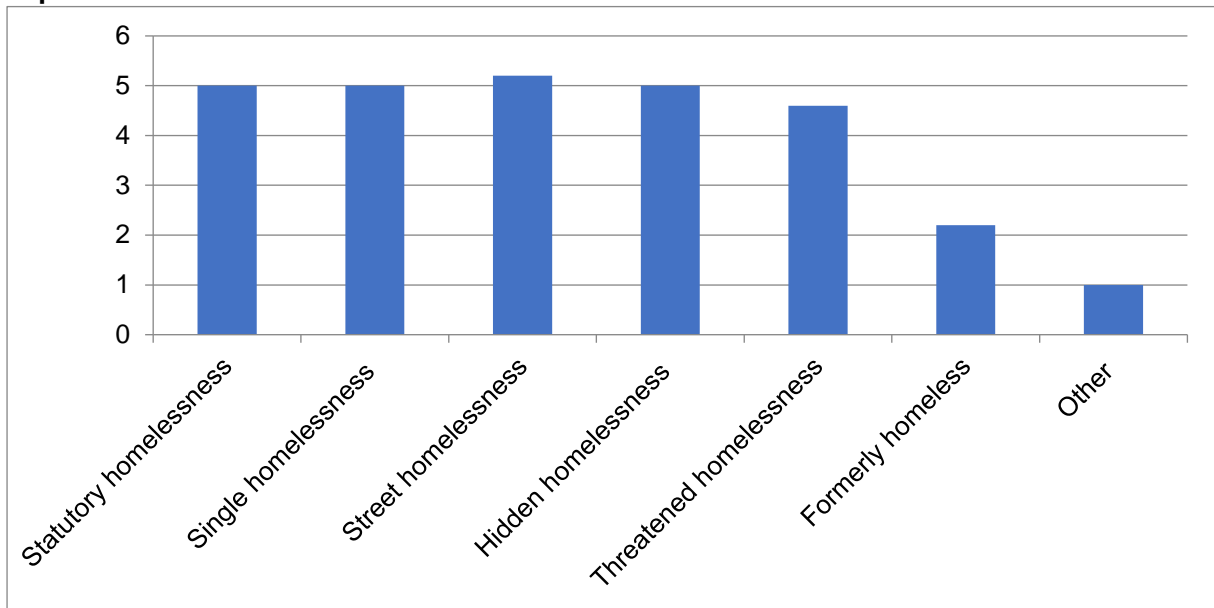


Table 90: Which type of homelessness do people who use your organisation typically experience?



An additional comment made by one stakeholder respondent is shown below.

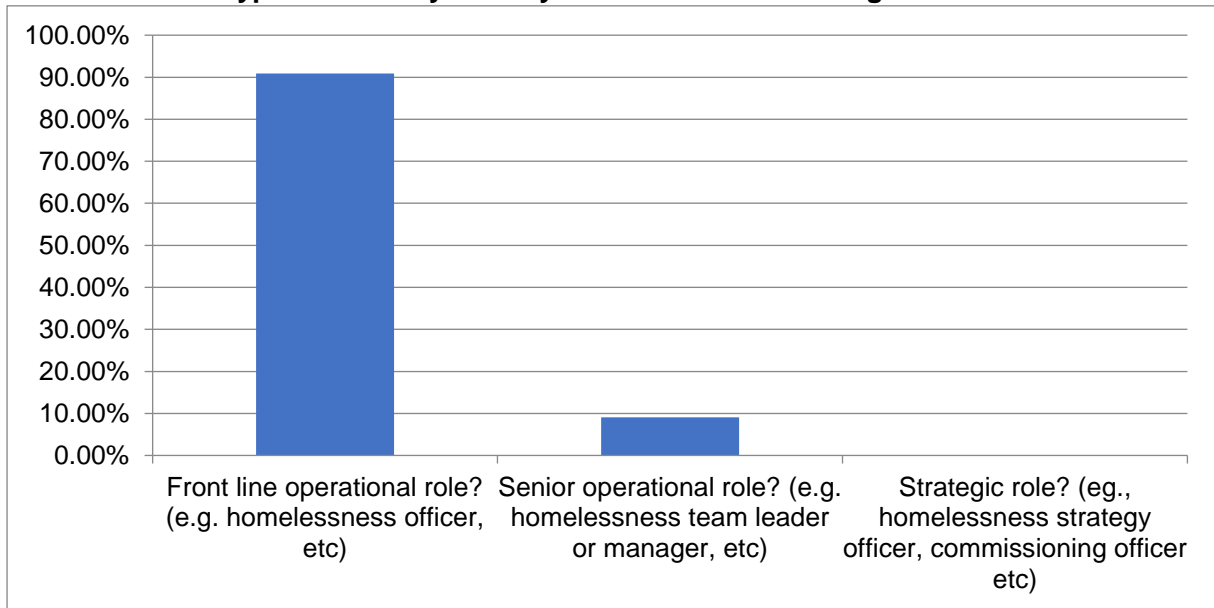
“People need a holistic approach, so that support is not just about the current housing circumstances, but is looking at how people can move forward into employment and independence”

7.3 Staff consultation

Employees of the Council with responsibility for administering homelessness duties were invited to complete an online survey. This included a total of 10 questions, each with multiple choice answers, and the option of providing additional comments. The survey was launched on 09th February 2021, a reminder email being sent 14 days after the initial invitation was issued to people with no response or partial response. A total of 11 invites were issued, 100% were opened and 0% were unopened. 11 responses were received.

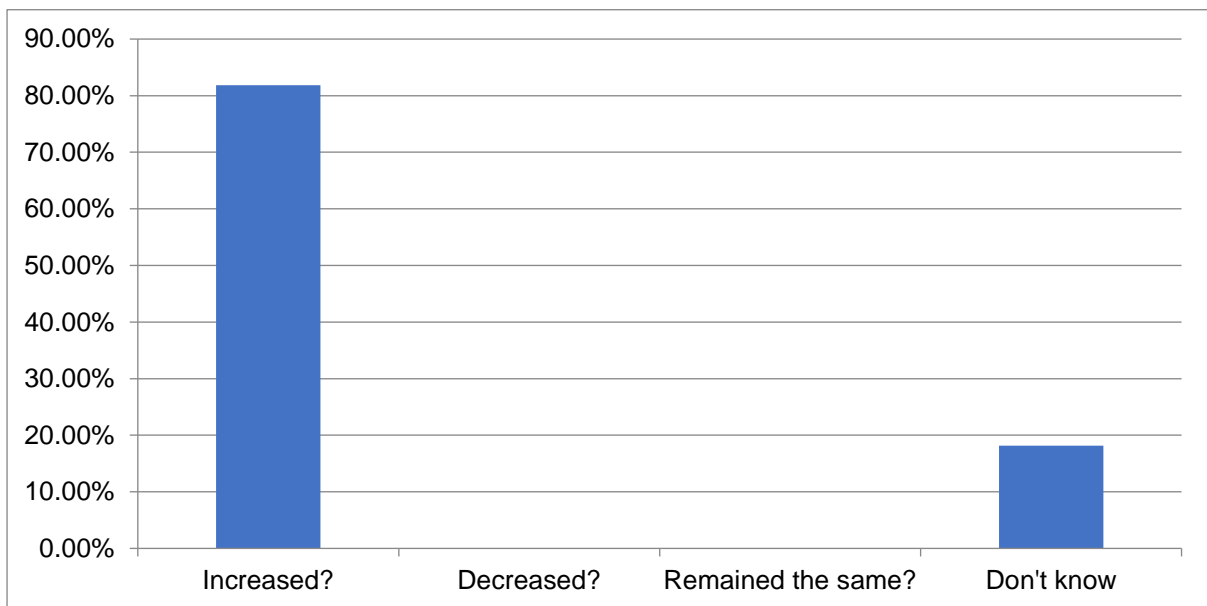
90% of respondents reported they were employed in an operational role, with just under 10% reporting they held a senior operational role. No responses were received from anyone who have a strategic role. These ratios accurately reflect the prevailing staffing arrangements.

Table 91: Which type of role do you carry out for Fareham Borough Council?



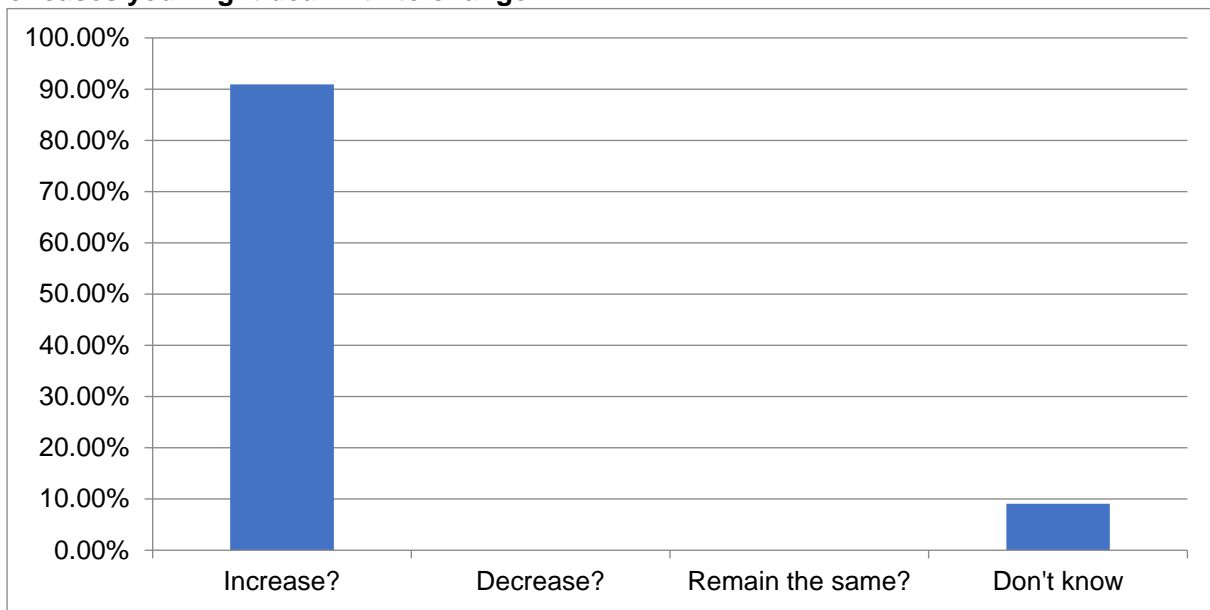
Just over 80% of staff reported that numbers had increased in the past five years, the remaining employees being unsure as to whether there had been any increase or not.

Table 92: During the past five years how have the number of cases you or your service that was changed?



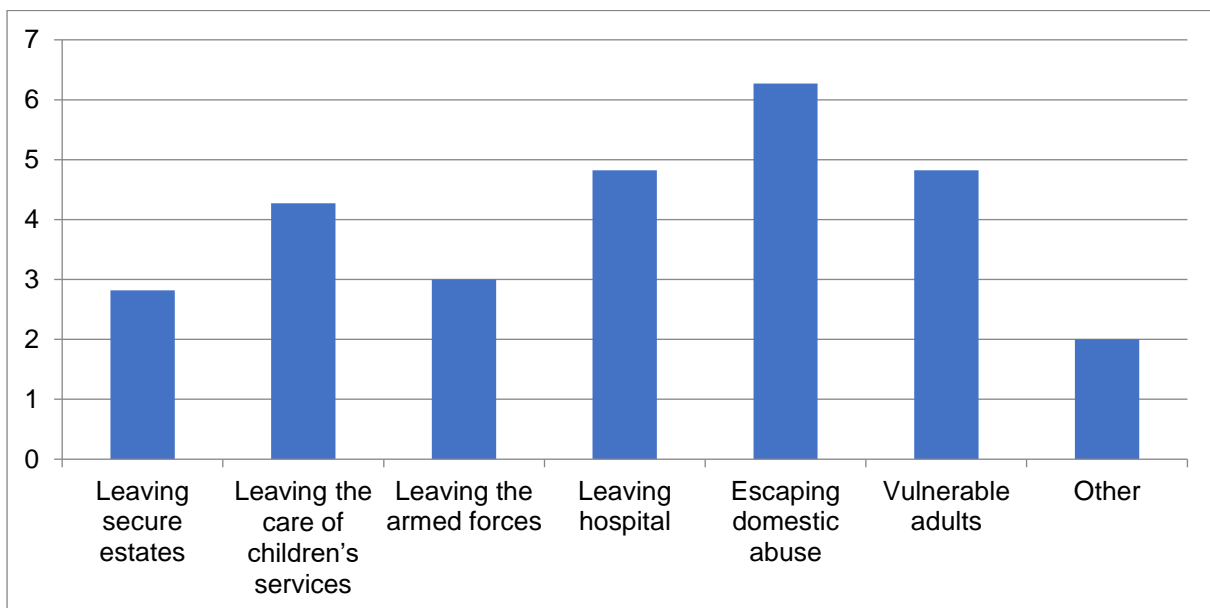
90% of staff expected the levels of homelessness to increase over the next five years, with only just under 10% of staff unsure of what might happen.

Table 93: During the next five years, how do you or your organisation expect the number of cases you might deal with to change?



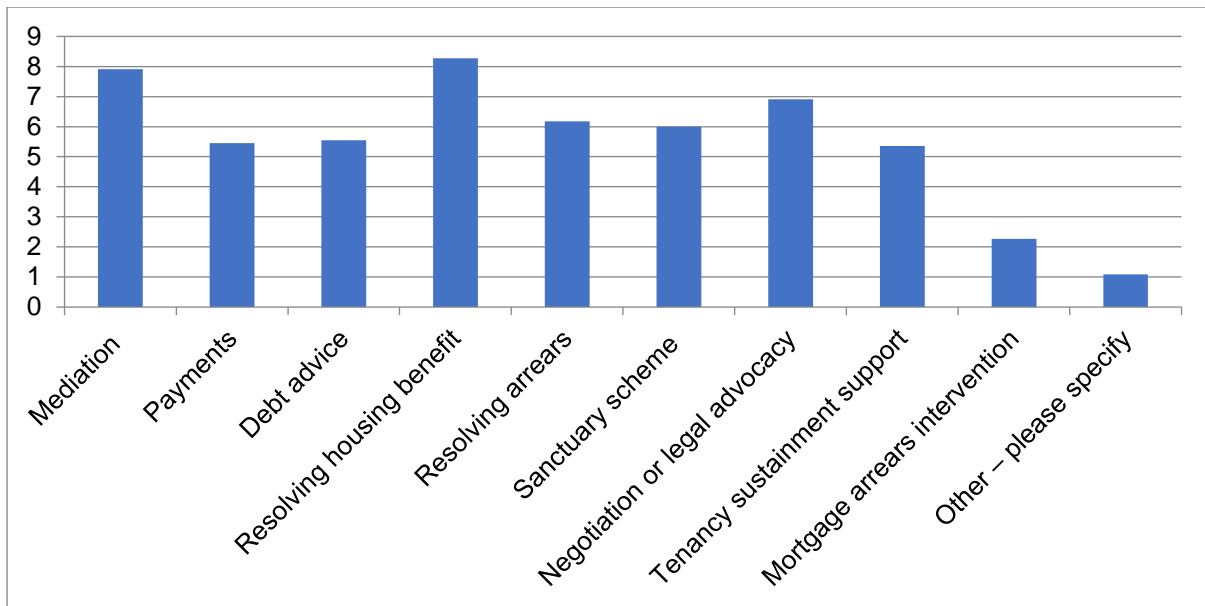
People escaping domestic abuse were ranked highest in the order of those that should be prioritised for help to prevent homelessness, this was followed equally by vulnerable adults and those living in hospital.

Table 94: When preventing homelessness, in what order should people be prioritised (ranked from 1 to 7)?



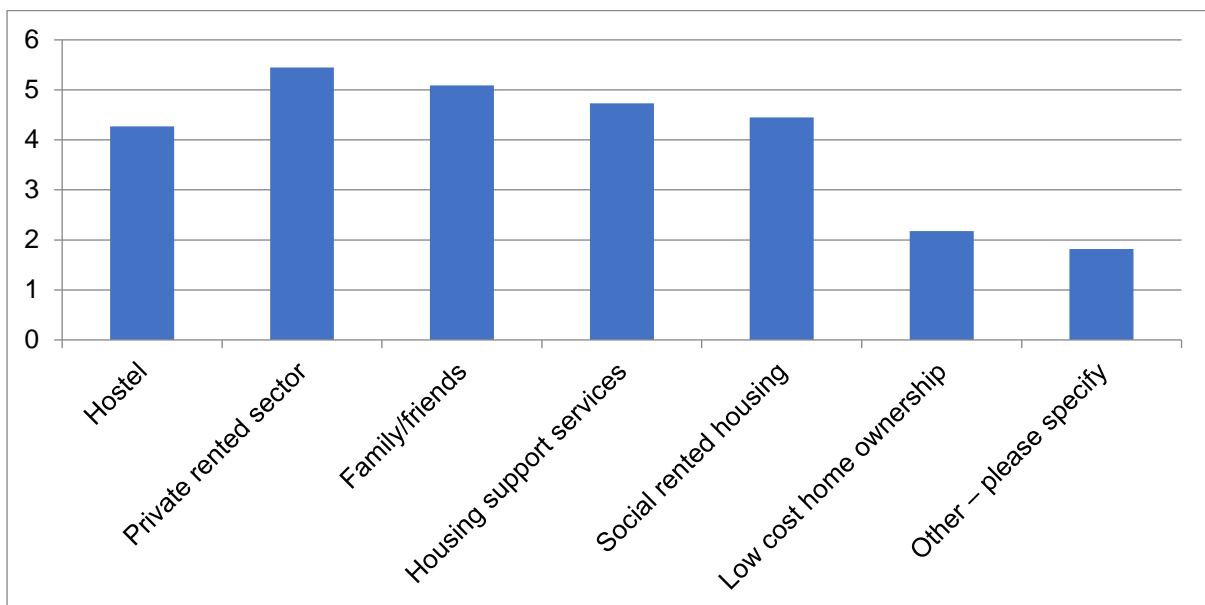
Resolving tenancy issues or housing benefit problems was ranked first as the most useful method to help someone remain in their existing home. This was followed by mediation with family or friends and then negotiation or legal advocacy with landlords and tenants to resolve tenancy issues.

Table 95: When preventing homelessness which is the most useful method to help someone remain in their existing home (ranked from 1 to 10)?



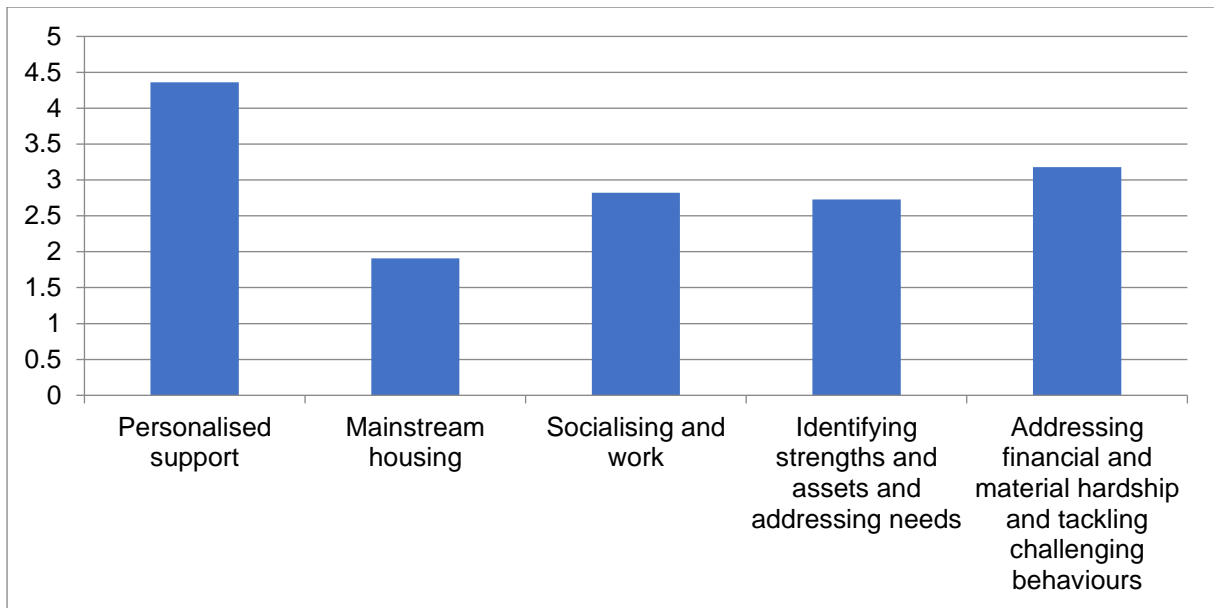
Private rented sector housing was ranked as the best housing option, this was closely followed by living with family or friends and then supported housing.

Table 96: When obtaining accommodation for someone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness, which is the best housing option (ranked from 1 to 7)?



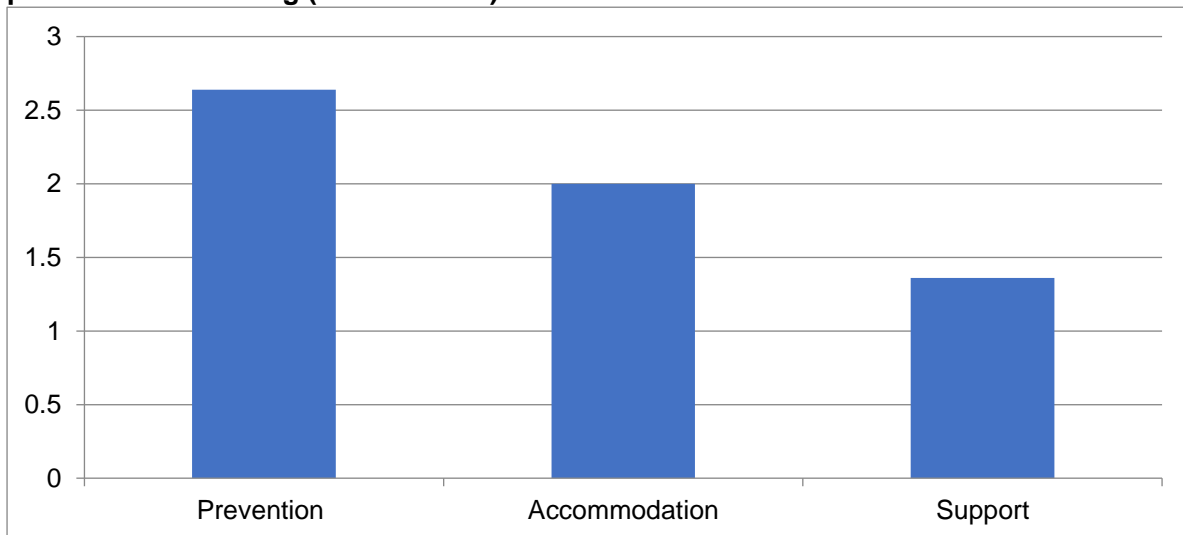
Personal rights support was ranked as the most important thing people needed help with, followed by addressing financial problems and tackling behaviours. Help living in mainstream housing was ranked the lowest, which is interesting given the primary focus of the service is to help people secure housing.

Table 97: When supporting someone who is or has been homeless, how important are the following?



Just over 80% of respondents thought that funding should be prioritised for prevention activities, such as housing advice helping people to remain in their existing home and obtaining alternative accommodation. Just under 10% of respondents ranked accommodation as being what funding should be prioritised for, such as affordable housing to rent or buy, emergency or temporary accommodation, etc. Just under 10% of respondents ranked support as being what funding needed to be prioritised for, such as help to recover well-being, improve relationships, live independently, manage money, etc.

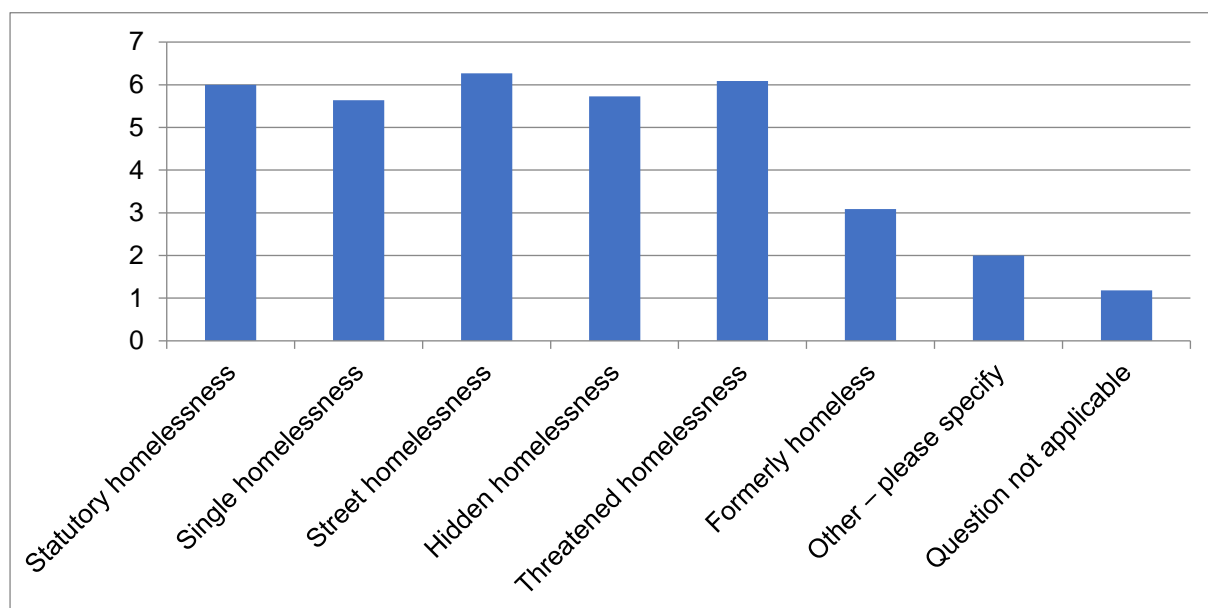
Table 98: Thinking about the resources needed to tackle homelessness, what should be prioritised for funding (ranked 1 to 3)?



Respondents reported that people experiencing street homelessness (e.g. sleeping rough) were most likely to use the Council's homelessness service. This was closely followed by those who might be threatened with homelessness (e.g. at risk of losing their home within the next 56 days) and others who are statutory homeless (e.g. living in temporary accommodation). Overall respondents reported that people experience in all forms of homelessness were broadly as likely to use the service.

Logically, given the remit of the service, those who are formally homeless were less likely to be service users.

Table 99: Which type of homelessness to people who use your service typically experience?



Additional comments made by staff respondents are shown below. Two common themes emerge: Separating the administration of housing allocation functions away from the administration of homelessness functions, and a reluctance by respondents to rank applicants' needs or circumstances as they view these to be equally deserving and/or too complex to put one apart from another:

“The majority of approaches received are actually for the housing waiting list which was not an available option. The amount of approaches for the housing waiting-list exceeds any other type of approach, often with no actual need for social housing which over saturates the list and makes decisions less reliable. There should be a dedicated service for part seven approaches or there should be a clear statement on the website and on available resources the fact about the housing waiting list and its function”

“It is difficult to accurately put the cases into numbers, as we deal with so many different cases on a day-to-day basis. Our role as housing officers encompasses not only HRA legislation and knowing the legislation to assist our customers, it also involves social work, counselling, mental health support, child protection knowledge, knowledge of all welfare benefits, probation, immigration services and debt advice amongst other services, to ensure that we provide an all rounded customer service to support and assist our customers. It is a challenging but rewarding job”

“Question four: when preventing homelessness, in what order should the groups of people share and be prioritised – it is very hard to rank in a list as people’s situations, expectations and timescales are different and can lead to different priorities, so this might change each day, and people will overlap the categories. There are very, very few affordable private rented properties in this area, with

barriers for people on low incomes being accepted as tenants. And not enough social housing, or right number of units of social housing that we need. Not enough supported accommodation schemes in the local area for young people. Question eight – they are all an equal priority. Too many people are sent to us by other organisations as they do not want to help them despite those organisations being the ones are best placed to do so and they know that we have a duty to assist that person – often leads to conflict between ourselves and different organisations at the detriment of the person concerned”

“a lot of our time is spent on dealing with housing register issues which would be much better dealt with by a separate housing register team thus enabling us to focus on homelessness”

“I am unable to rank many of the last four questions and answers into order as each case will be different depending upon the circumstances of the individual presenting, it is not simply a case that one size fits all, therefore the basis of this survey is biased by the inability to end no particular order option, and will give a false response”

7.3 Conclusions about consultation

1. Feedback from people who have had a lived experience of homelessness shows that they prefer to be provided with advice and support at the point of crisis and afterwards, rather than in advance. They are equally interested in a range of housing options that will allow them to live independently (with or without support) or return to living with their family. There is less interest in hostel type accommodation. They are clear that help with finding house is the most important thing that they need help with when experiencing homelessness and the funding should very much be concentrated on providing more accommodation. This is contrary to national and local policy and legislation that encourages a preventative approach to tackling homelessness. This reinforces some of the principles behind the rapid rehousing approach which is a concentration of Scottish homelessness policy and has also featured in English homelessness policy.
2. The low response rate from stakeholders is unlikely to be representative of partner organisations interested in tackling homelessness. Throughout this Review stakeholders have demonstrated a keen willingness to provide information and evidence. Nevertheless, the limited number of responses doesn't allow for analysis of trends. Given this, it's important to consider how stakeholders might wish to be consulted in future about the delivery of homelessness strategy.
3. Staff are of the view that homelessness has risen in the past five years and will continue to do so in the next five years, which broadly reflects the analysis of statistics and forecast made in chapter 2 of this report. Within the range of a limited variation, staff view everyone being equally important for being provided with support and believe all tools to help someone remain in existing accommodation or obtain alternative accommodation are equally effective. Compared to responses from service users, staff rate private rented sector and hostel accommodation more highly. The view from staff is that personal

life support and funding prevention action are more important. This is opposite to that of service users who views were that funding of accommodation was more important. It's important to acknowledge the gap between established homelessness policy which is that of prevention and early intervention and the preferences of the intended beneficiaries. This behaviour is likely to mean they will seek assistance at the point of crisis. This has implications for how the service is organised and promote what it can do.

8.0 Findings

This chapter re-visits the conclusions set out at the end of each chapter of the report. As a direct response to the conclusions are a series of recommendations. These recommendations are for the use of the local authority to prioritise actions for the next homeless strategy.

8.1 Conclusions

8.1.1 Levels of Homelessness

1. Like most other areas, there is no systemic collection and analysis of statistics on hidden homelessness.
2. Initial assessments are increasing, with prevent cases reducing and relief cases increasing
3. Overall rates of homelessness locally are lower than those with comparator areas. Although local rates are increasing this is not the case in areas which are coterminous to Fareham.
4. Following a four-year decline in the number and percentage of main duty decisions and acceptances, levels have begun to increase again. A main duty decision and acceptances are a less likely outcome in Fareham compared to elsewhere, suggesting action being taken to prevent or relieve homelessness is proven to be successful
5. Persons of a black or other minority ethnic origin are less likely to seek assistance from the Council's homelessness service compared to those from a white ethnic origin. The younger age profile of people getting homeless assistance is contrary to that of the population as a whole.
6. People are much more likely to be found as intentionally homeless and having a priority need for accommodation. It is now less likely for someone to be found to be not homeless but more likely to be found as to not having a priority need. It is always been far less likely that someone has been found to have been intentionally homeless and having a priority need.
7. Households which include a dependent child are more likely to be owed a main duty, despite rates falling over the past five years. At the same time, single people with physical and or mental health problems have more than doubled. Parents, other relatives, or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate continues to be the main reason for why a person loses their home when owed the main duty
8. Allocation of social rented housing remains the most common method for bringing a duty to an end. It is positive that the numbers of people volunteer assistant occupied temporary accommodation has reduced over the past five years, as has people who become intentionally homeless from temporary accommodation.
9. The reduction in rough sleeping is very positive, levels had begun to fall prior to the pandemic and rates accelerated downwards subsequently. Rough sleepers continue to more likely be male, UK nationals and aged over 26 years.
10. The rates of child poverty in Fareham have fluctuated in recent years, levels remain now what they were back five years ago. However, it is positive that champerty rates are considerably lower in Fareham compared to the benchmarking group.

11. Fareham's overall population has a high employment rate and a low unemployment rate compared to other areas. However, those who are homeless are much more likely to be unemployed compared to the general population and also not working due to long-term illness or disability. Just over half of all people claiming out of work benefits in Fareham are aged between 25 and 49 years, this trend is mirrored in age profiles of those who are provided with homelessness assistance by the local authority or are found to be sleeping rough.
12. Fareham's higher than average house prices mean that there will be some considerable demand for affordable housing to buy or rent. The higher than average house price to earnings ratio for Fareham, means that many people will struggle to pay their housing costs.

8.1.2 Activities to prevent homelessness

1. More than half of all households seeking homeless prevention assistance featured a female as the head typically with responsibility for dependent children. Whereas households seeking homelessness relief assistance are much more likely to be a single adult, more than often male. Three-quarters of them are aged below 44 years, with almost one third of them being aged between 25 and 34 years.
2. Homelessness prevention cases typically arise due to a landlord wanting to sell or re-let their property which result in them bringing an assured shorthold tenancy to an end. Whereas homelessness relief cases typically arise due to family or friends no longer being willing or able to continue to accommodate someone.
3. Helping people to move to alternative accommodation is the primary method for preventing homelessness. It is more common for people to become homeless than be helped to remain in their existing home. For those under a relief duty, the majority of them are not helped within the 56-day timeframe, but instead go on to be assisted under the main duty. However, it's important to note that a growing proportion of people are or helped to obtain accommodation.
4. Positive steps, such as the Hampshire-wide Duty to Refer protocol, have been taken as part of the introduction of the Duty to Refer legislation, to ensure public bodies can refer cases to the Councils homelessness service. However, referral rates are low with the National Probation Service being the primary referring agency.
5. There is a clear suite of information available online about the Council's homelessness responsibilities along with practical information for people in housing need. However, there is a limit to the scope of this advice and not all of it is up to date. There is a provision of independent housing advice, part funded by the Council, which ensures people are able to get assistance to protect and uphold their housing rights.
6. The StreetAid initiative has achieved tremendous outcomes, this should be promoted as an example of positive practice.
7. Firm foundations for an effective working relationship with the probation service are already in place. However, more could be done to establish a stronger partnership with the Youth Offending Team and the County Council's Care Leaver Service. The various arrangements in place (some of which are

shared with the neighbouring Gosport Borough Council) to support armed forces personnel are very positive. As is the current provision available to victims escaping domestic abuse. There is considerable scope for improving joint working arrangements around hospital discharge for people at risk of homelessness. Likewise, despite there being a range of mental health services available for people who are at risk of homelessness, much more work could be done to improve current working arrangements between the Council's homelessness service and the County Council's adult social care services.

8. Following a substantial increase in successful homeless prevention action by the local authority there has been a considerable reduction following the introduction of the HRA17. Notwithstanding this, it is notable that applicants are more likely to be helped secure accommodation with benefit of financial payment from the local authority, suggesting that private sector housing is a primary solution for many people. This contrasts considerably to the high levels of people becoming homeless from the private rented sector. Prior to the commencement of the HRA17, the local authority was over reliant on preventing homelessness by assisting people to obtain alternative accommodation and very rarely was able to help people remain in their existing home. This contrasts with the national picture whereby outcomes were split fairly evenly between these two routes.
9. There is some hugely positive practice going on between the Council's homelessness service and its housing benefit service, which is enabling effective use of the Discretionary Housing Payment budget and helping people to access private sector housing.
10. There is some smart joint working going on between the Council's homelessness service and a range of other local government and voluntary sector services, which helps to tackle debt and private rented sector housing issues

8.1.3 Activities to secure accommodation

1. The diverse range of temporary accommodation used by the Council means it is more able to procure a range of accommodation in different areas of the Borough of different types.
2. The number of households in temporary accommodation is typically lower than other areas in the benchmarking group, as are the number of children living in temporary accommodation. Notwithstanding this, households (more often headed by a lone female parent) with dependent children account for more than 50% of those occupying temporary accommodation. However, there is also a considerable number of single persons placed in temporary accommodation. Where nationally there has been a considerable increase in the levels of temporary accommodation usage, locally usage of temporary accommodation has remained fairly static and is slightly lower now than it was five years ago. Despite this, levels of B&B use have increased recently.
3. The overwhelming majority of people owed the main homelessness duty have been helped to secure social rented housing, with very few people being assisted to secure private rented housing.
4. Fareham is bucking regional and national trends by increasing the number of people who are helped to secure accommodation when owed the relief duty.

Typically, this is achieved by securing private rented sector accommodation. This success is a stark contrast to that of the situation with regards to people of the main homelessness duty.

5. Considering the low proportion of private sector housing in the Borough and market rent being higher than LHA rates for single rooms, one bed and two-bedroom accommodation, the Council is doing very well to help the number of people it does into private sector housing. The FareLets scheme is clearly an outstanding success.
6. With the Council being one of the largest landlords in the Borough, owning almost 40% of all social rented housing, it was inevitable that the local authority would be the main provider of housing solutions to people facing homelessness. Despite some fluctuation in the overall number of households presented for allocation of social housing, numbers today are broadly the same as what they were five years ago. However, overall numbers are lower locally than all of the other benchmarking group comparators. Almost two-thirds of housing register applicants are placed in the lowest band, with homeless applicants being in one of the other three higher bands, alongside the other one-third of applicants on the register.
7. The appointment of a Welfare Support Officer has resulted in positive outcomes around tackling rent arrears. Despite a consistent ongoing demand for social rented housing, the number of new lettings has reduced considerably in recent years, falling each year consecutively, to a level that is less than half what it was five years ago. This results in fewer people being able to be offered social rented housing, meaning those who are more likely to secure a letting are more likely to be one of the groups entitled to a reasonable preference, which are typically characterised by people with multiple and complex needs.

8.1.4 Activities to provide support

1. Support to help people remain living with their family and friends or to avert the end of an assured short hold private rented sector tenancy is key to preventing homelessness. Support with these matters should be made available as early as possible to reduce the number of people seek assistance from the local authority in an emergency. For too many people, the reason why they lost their last settled accommodation remains unclear.
2. The majority of people who seek assistance with homelessness have only one support need, it is important to recognise that there are significant numbers of people with multiple support needs. The support needs of those owed a duty of assistance by the Council is broadly reflective of that across the wider county, region, and country, however the total number of support needs is lower than comparative areas. A history of mental health problems, physical ill-health and disability, experience of domestic abuse, and history of offending behaviour are all commonly reported to support needs.
3. The Council together with its partners, has achieved a tremendous success in reducing the number of people experiencing street homelessness, through the StreetAid initiative. Joint arrangements with Gosport Borough Council has brought about positive outcomes for both local authority areas. The diverted giving scheme has ensured that gifts and donations are channelled to those most in need.

4. For a Borough of its size, Fareham is fortunate to have a range of hostel and other supported housing options, operated by nationally recognised reputable providers. The fact that such a provision exists is remarkable given the significant cuts that have been made nationally to supporting housing budgets over the past decade.
5. There is some support available for young people at risk of homelessness, with all its organisations being particularly active in this area. However public sector services could be much more aligned in their working. Support for homeless vulnerable adults due to mental illness, physical disabilities and sensory disabilities or age patchy, and weather is provision this is due to effective working rather than planned and commissioned services.

8.1.5 Conclusions about resources for tackling homelessness

1. The Council must be congratulated for its decision to increase spend for tackling homelessness in the most recent financial year. The Council receives only a small annual grant from the UK government for tackling homelessness and whilst this budget is complimented by a range of other funding awarded by MHCLG, the relative amount awarded to the Council is always smaller than that compared to the county, region or elsewhere in England. The Council has done well recently to secure extra investment from MHCLG to tackle the sleeping, securing short and long-term revenue and capital funding.
2. The Council has done well to neatly align homelessness and housing advice functions alongside those for housing allocations and within a wider service area that also has responsibility for administering housing benefits. With increasing numbers of people seeking homelessness and housing assistance, existing staff levels are being stretched beyond their maximum capability.
3. IT is being used to help drive efficiencies in the homelessness service. Investment of a new housing management software system will bring improvements to the temporary accommodation and housing register aspects of the service. Full functionality of all software system should be fully exploited and duplication between different software systems needs to be minimised as much as possible. The introduction of self-service housing advice module may help to reduce some demands on the staff team

8.1.6 Conclusions about consultation

1. Feedback from people who have had a lived experience of homelessness shows that they prefer to be provided with advice and support at the point of crisis and afterwards, rather than in advance. They are equally interested in a range of housing options that will allow them to live independently (with or without support) or return to living with their family. There is less interest in hostel type accommodation. They are clear that help with finding house is the most important thing that they need help with when experiencing homelessness and the funding should be concentrated on providing more accommodation. This is contrary to national and local policy and legislation that encourages a preventative approach to tackling homelessness. This reinforces some of the principles behind the rapid rehousing approach which is a concentration of Scottish homelessness policy and has also featured in English homelessness policy.

2. The low response rate from stakeholders is unlikely to be representative of partner organisations interest in tackling homelessness. Throughout this Review stakeholders have demonstrated a keen willingness to provide information and evidence. Nevertheless, the limited number of responses doesn't allow for analysis of trends. Given this, it's important to consider how stakeholders might wish to be consulted in future about the delivery of homelessness strategy.

3. Staff are of the view that homelessness has risen in the past five years and will continue to do so in the next five years, broadly reflecting the analysis of statistics and forecast made in chapter 2 of this report. Within the range of a limited variation, staff view everyone being equally important for being provided with support and believe all tools to help someone remain in existing accommodation or obtain alternative accommodation are equally effective. Compared to responses from service users, staff rate private rented sector and hostel accommodation more highly. The view from staff personal life support and funding prevention action are more important. Their views are opposite to that of service users who feel that funding of accommodation was more important. It's important to acknowledge the gap between established homelessness policy which is that of prevention and early intervention and the preferences of the intended beneficiaries who this behaviour is likely to mean they will seek assistance at the point of crisis. This has implications for how the service is organised and promote what it can do.

8.2 Recommendations

8.2.1 Current and future levels of homelessness

1. Collect and analysis statistics on hidden homelessness to inform future bespoke intervention to help those who are sofa surfing.

2. Continue to monitor overall caseload activity and adjust staffing levels accordingly

3. Increase benchmarking with other areas, to better understand the context of homelessness in Fareham compared to elsewhere

4. Analyse quarterly the rate of major decisions and acceptances, looking at what action was taken to prevent and/or relieve homelessness and whether anything more might have been done.

5. Analyse quarterly the characteristics of people seeking assistance from the Council's homelessness service and use intelligence collected to improve how the service is promoted and provided to everyone in the community.

6. Monitor annually the reasons for loss of last settled home outcomes of households to track long-term trends to inform future prevention and relief activities.
7. Increase the parameter of matters monitored via the annual rough sleeping count, to better understand how many people have newly flowed onto the streets, how many are stuck sleeping rough and how many are experiencing a repeat occurrence of street homelessness.
8. Gather intelligence on child poverty rate at a ward level, to inform which areas might be targeted for early interventions to prevent homelessness.
9. Continue to monitor employment circumstances of people seeking homeless assistance from the Council, share this data appropriately with colleagues in economic regeneration and at Job Centre Plus, to inform plans for making early interventions to prevent homelessness.

8.2.2 Preventing homelessness

1. Use information on the characteristics of people seeking homelessness assistance, to ensure the Council's homelessness service is accessible to all.
2. In conjunction with the Council's private sector housing service, consult with private rented sector landlords to understand what could be done to prevent the end of an assured shorthold tenancies.
3. Review the range, effectiveness and quality of initiatives being used to prevent and relieve homelessness.
4. Additional steps should be taken to improve how the Council works with other public organisations to fulfil the Duty to Refer such as agreeing joint work and protocols, providing training, encouraging other bodies not subject to the duty to voluntarily comply with it, distributing more widely housing advice information, encouraging housing association that have not already signed up to the commitment to refer to do so, reviewing procedures for what needs to be done following receipt of a referral and adding a Duty to Refer button on the homepage of the Council's website.
5. Ensure there continues to be funding for independent housing rights assistance.
6. Improve joint working with other public bodies by adopting protocols and shared working relationships:
 - a. Prison/young offender releases
 - b. Care leavers
 - c. Ex-service Personnel

- d. Hospital discharges
 - e. Adult social care
7. Investigate further as to why levels of prevention activity have fallen since the introduction of the HRA17. Explore what could be done to increase successful outcomes due to reducing arrears or housing benefit shortfalls and by carrying out work to prevent evictions or repossessions from occurring, securing a return to family and friends or brokering access to supported housing. There should be a particular emphasis on improving interventions to help people remain in their existing home.
 8. Improve the collection of outcomes data from key partner agencies around the prevention of homelessness due to debt advice, enforcement action from private sector housing service and prevention of housing possession.
 9. Adopt a pre-eviction protocol with all local housing associations

8.2.3 Securing accommodation

1. Formulate and publish a Temporary Accommodation Procurement Policy and a Temporary Accommodation Allocation Policy, to ensure full compliance with relevant legislation. Both policies should seek to ensure sufficient accommodation is available to put an end to out-of-borough placements and the use of Bed & Breakfast.
2. Use data held by the Council about occupants of TA, about household formation, needs of children, and last settled address, to inform future procurement of temporary accommodation.
3. Increase the number of households whose main duty is ended by an offer of suitable private rented housing. This will help to reduce the length of time people have to remain in occupation of temporary accommodation. A consequence will be the greater frequency of freeing up of more units, contributing to wider efforts for ending the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation.
4. Explore options for increasing the number of households helped to secure private rented accommodation in an HMO or private rented lodgings. This type of accommodation will typically be of the right size for many applicants who are seeking assistance and will more likely be affordable to them.
5. Continue to promote the FareLets scheme and ensure it is adequately resourced.
6. Formulate a new Tenancy Strategy for the Borough, the focus of which should be to help deliver the priorities of the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme and its Homelessness Strategy.

8.2.4 Providing support

1. Explore opportunities with the Council's landlord tenancy services & estate management teams, private sector housing team and other neighbourhood-based services, to identify at an early stage those at risk of losing their accommodation and to develop new ways to help people remain in their existing home.
2. The Council should share the data it collects on support needs with key stakeholders such as the County Council's adult social care service, the Community Safety Partnership, and local Probation Service staff, to inform discussions about future joint working arrangements and commissioning of suitable support services for those at risk of homelessness.
3. Build on the existing success of tackling street homelessness by adopting a rough sleeping pathway by
 - a. Agreeing arrangements with social and private landlords to rapidly rehouse rough sleepers into mainstream accommodation using the Housing First model
 - b. Improve joint working with Jobcentre Plus for rough sleepers who are assisted to pursue employment (paid or voluntary)
 - c. Continuing to provide a personalisation budget so that rough sleepers can address their financial and material hardship
 - d. Improve relationships with voluntary and faith organisations who provide support to rough sleepers

8.2.5 Resources

1. Increase spending on homelessness in line with increases in the levels of homelessness. Continue to protect any budget surplus generated by the homeless service for reinvestment into prevention activities. Develop a long-term funding strategy for the short-term grants that MHCLG currently offer. Carry out benchmarking activities with neighbouring local authorities, to determine whether the level of spend by the Council and investment from MHCLG is proportionate to other areas.
2. The Council should benchmark its staffing arrangements with neighbouring local authorities, to determine whether its own staffing arrangements are sufficient. We recommend that additional posts are added to the existing staffing arrangements. The Head of Housing & Benefits has responsibility for the delivery of the homelessness strategy. The two Senior Officers between them take responsibility for ensuring case reviews take place, there is robust case file audits and other mechanisms to support staff with the continual improvement of their practice. An additional 1.5 Housing Options Officer posts should be enough to help with the increase of day-to-day casework administration. Two extra officers for procurement and management temporary accommodation will help to bring an end to out-of-borough placements and the use of Bed & Breakfast, as well as improve how temporary accommodation is allocated. Two additional officers to compliment

the housing allocation functions will provide a better service to members of the public for whom their primary interest is housing register enquiries.

3. Full functionality of all software system should be fully exploited and duplication between different software systems needs to be minimised as much as possible. Consider the introduction of online self-service housing advice.

8.2.6 Consultation

1. Establish a forum of people with lived experience of homelessness, who can work with the Council to shape and inform policy and practice for tackling homelessness. This forum can also be involved with the delivery of the homelessness strategy action plan.
2. Continue to work with the Hampshire-wide Strategic Housing Officers Group (SHOG) to collaborate on performance, benchmarking, joint commissioning of training, sharing of positive practice and policy, developing and continuously improving joint working arrangements.

