

Appendix 1

A Review of Homelessness in Lichfield District

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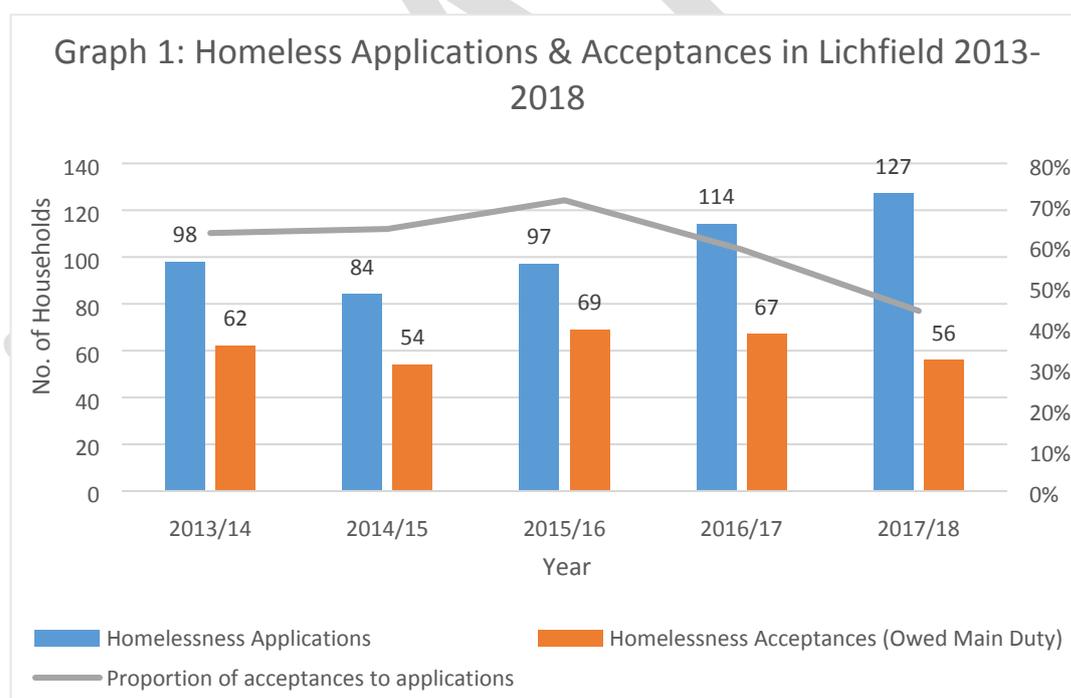
A Review of Homelessness in Lichfield District

Introduction

This purpose of this review is to obtain the most comprehensive and up to date information on homelessness in our district. This will give a clear understanding of the issues we face, enabling the development of robust policies and actions to tackle the causes of homelessness now and into the future. Since our last Homelessness Strategy was published in 2013, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) has come into force, which has fundamentally changed the way that local authorities deliver their statutory homelessness duties. It has also affected how homelessness data is measured which has meant that, in many cases, data from 2018/19 cannot be directly compared with that from previous years. The first section of this review therefore examines data collected prior to the HRA giving a picture of homelessness since the last strategy was produced and the remaining part looks at information obtained since the HRA was introduced in April 2018. It is important to note that, due to initial problems with transitioning the old data gathering method to the new one, statistics for 2018/19 have been labelled by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as 'experimental' and therefore should be treated with caution.

Pre-Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Levels of Homelessness



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

Between 2013 and 2018, we received 6,308 housing advice enquiries¹ (an average of 1262 a year) from households who were either homeless or were worried about losing their home. The number of enquiries has reduced slightly since the last strategy as the average from 2008 to 2013 was 1425, a reduction of 11%. Of the 6,308 enquiries, 520 were found to be either homeless or at risk of homelessness (called homeless

¹ These consist of all enquiries regarding homelessness and other housing issues via telephone calls, emails or visits to reception including multiple enquiries for individual cases.

applications) as defined by housing law, of which 309 (59%) were accepted as homeless and owed the main housing duty².

Graph 1 above shows the breakdown of homeless applications and acceptances between 2013/14 to 2017/18 and shows that:

- ⌘ Homelessness applications were on the increase, rising from 84 to 127 households (an increase of 51%) between 2014/15 and 2017/18. This increase mirrors the national trend in rising homelessness. The reasons specific to Lichfield district are discussed later on page 5 under 'Reasons for Homelessness'.
- ⌘ The number of acceptances, however, dropped from 69 to 56 households (a decrease of 19%) between 2015/16 to 2017/18 and the number of acceptances in relation to applications was also decreasing. This is likely to be due to the council becoming more successful at preventing people from becoming homeless before they reached the main duty stage which was encouraged by the government in the lead up to the introduction of the HRA.

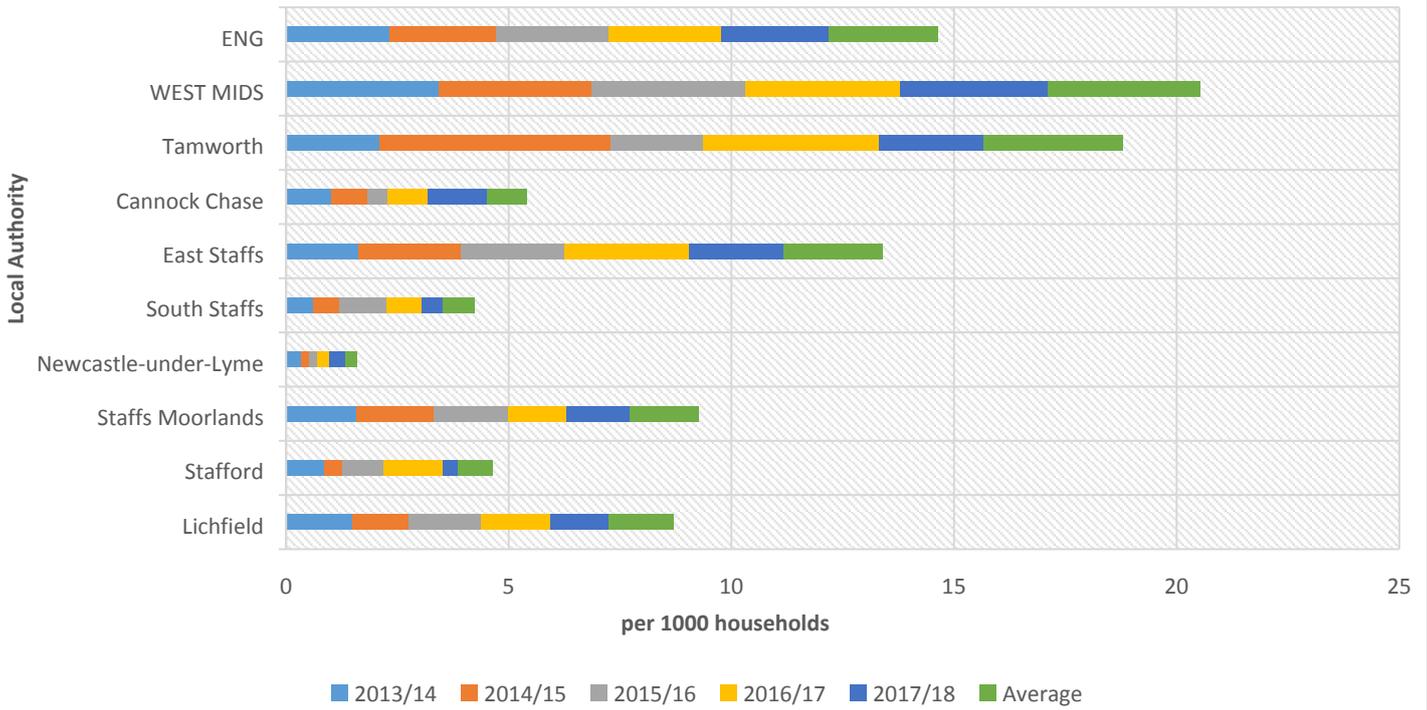
Relative Levels of Homelessness compared to other Staffordshire Local Authorities

To understand the levels of homelessness in relation to the population size, MHCLG measures the rate of homelessness acceptances per 1000 households. The graph below gives our homelessness acceptances in comparison to the other Staffordshire local authorities and shows that:-

- ⌘ Our number of homelessness acceptances in relation to population size is low compared to England and the West Midlands and, with the exception of Tamworth Borough, all other Staffordshire local authorities had a lower acceptance rate than England.
- ⌘ When calculating the average score for the Staffordshire local authorities, we had the fourth highest rate of acceptances per 1000 households, which is the middle position out of the eight authorities.

² These are households that are eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

Graph 2: Comparative Homeless Acceptances - no. per 1000 households of population - Staffs Local Authorities

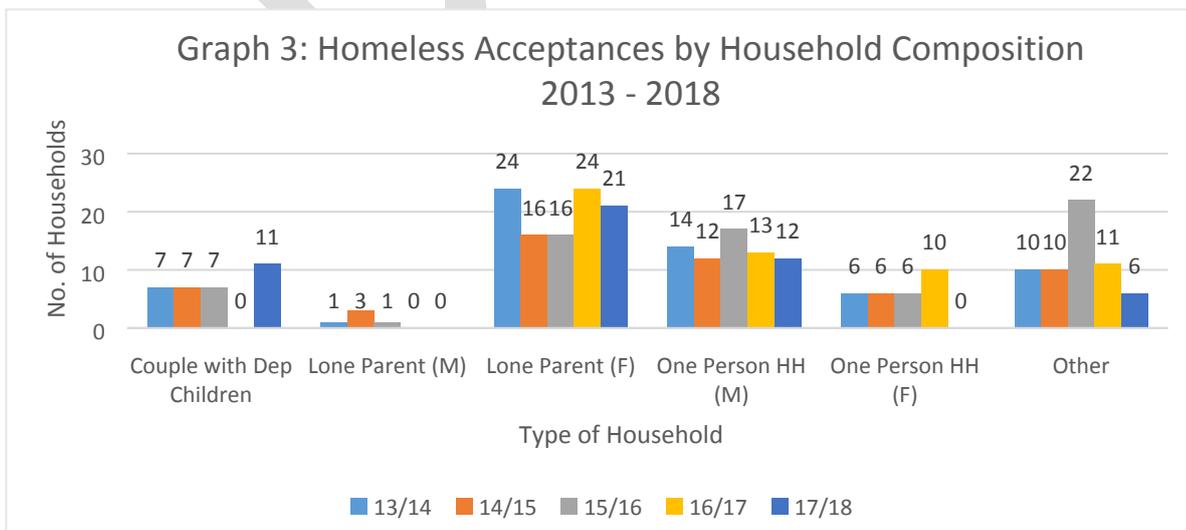


Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

Who is Being Made Homeless in Lichfield?

Household Type

Data from the MHCLG can tell us what type of household is being made homeless. For example, the graph below shows the composition of households accepted as homeless between 2013 and 2018.



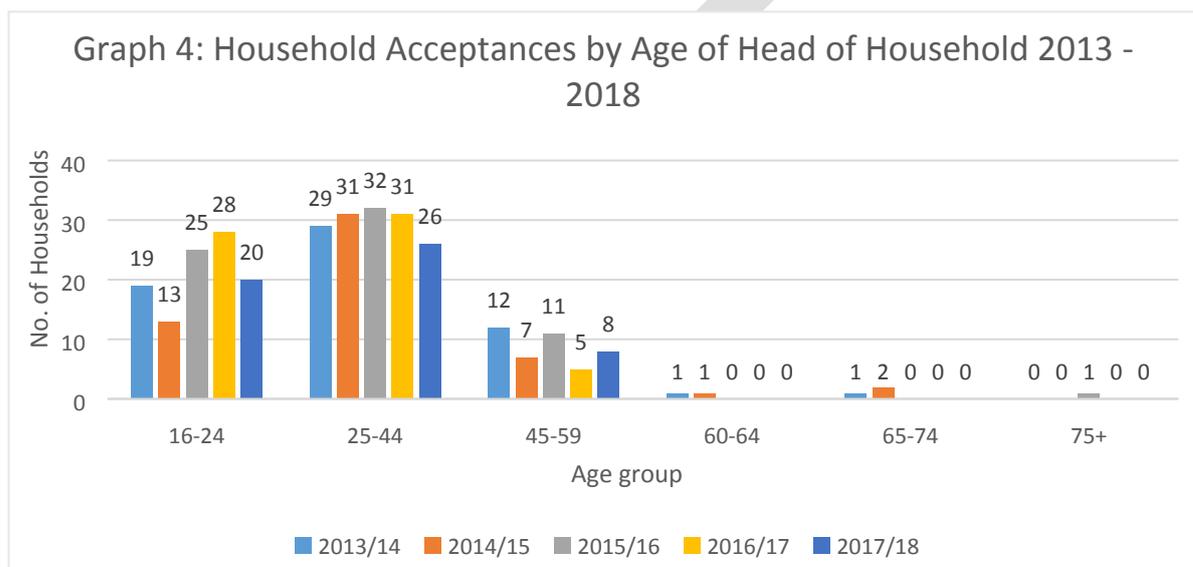
Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

Key findings are:-

- ⊞ 34% of households accepted as homeless were female single parent families with the second most common type being single males, comprising 23% of the total.
- ⊞ 20% of acceptances were classed as 'other' types of household which would include families with multiple generations or childless couples.

Age

- ⊞ Graph 4 below shows that almost half (49%) of acceptances between 2013 and 2018 were aged between 25 and 44 years old.
- ⊞ 37% of the total acceptances in those five years (172 households) were young people aged 16 to 24.
- ⊞ In these five years, 6 people aged 60 or over were accepted as homeless.



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

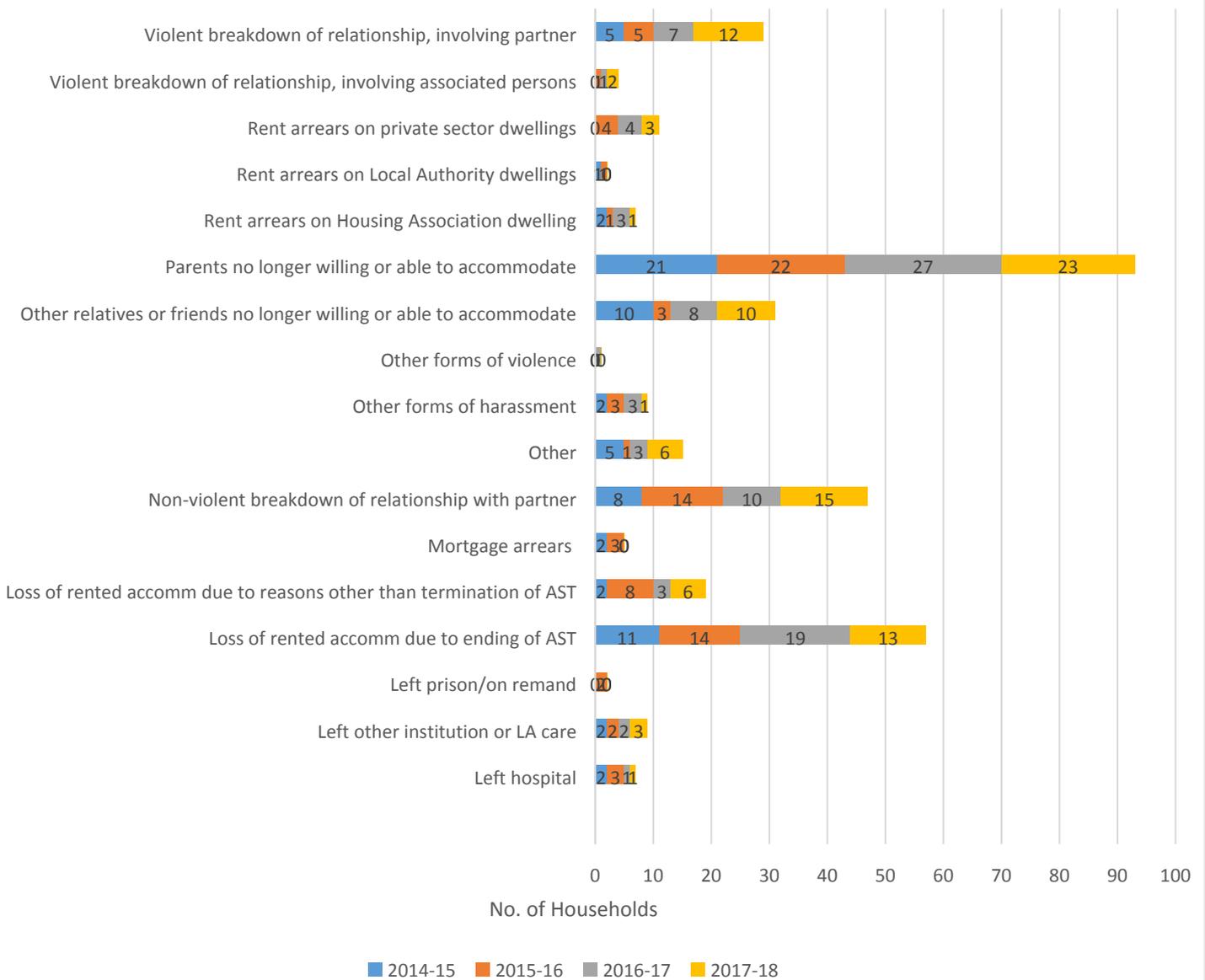
Ethnicity

Lichfield district’s population is predominantly White British which is reflected in the homeless acceptance figures and shows no particular group was over-represented in the homelessness statistics. Between 2015-2018, 95% of acceptances were White British. The remaining applicants described themselves as Black or Black British (3 applicants), Asian or Asian British (1) or mixed race (3) whereas 7 were recorded in the ‘other’ or ‘not recorded’ category.

The government now requires local authorities to include additional categories of household type and age in order to give more detailed information. This will, in future, give a better understanding of the composition of households accepted as homeless and will therefore improve the targeting of resources for different cohorts.

Reasons for Homelessness

Graph 5: Reason for Loss of Last Settled Home 2014 - 2018

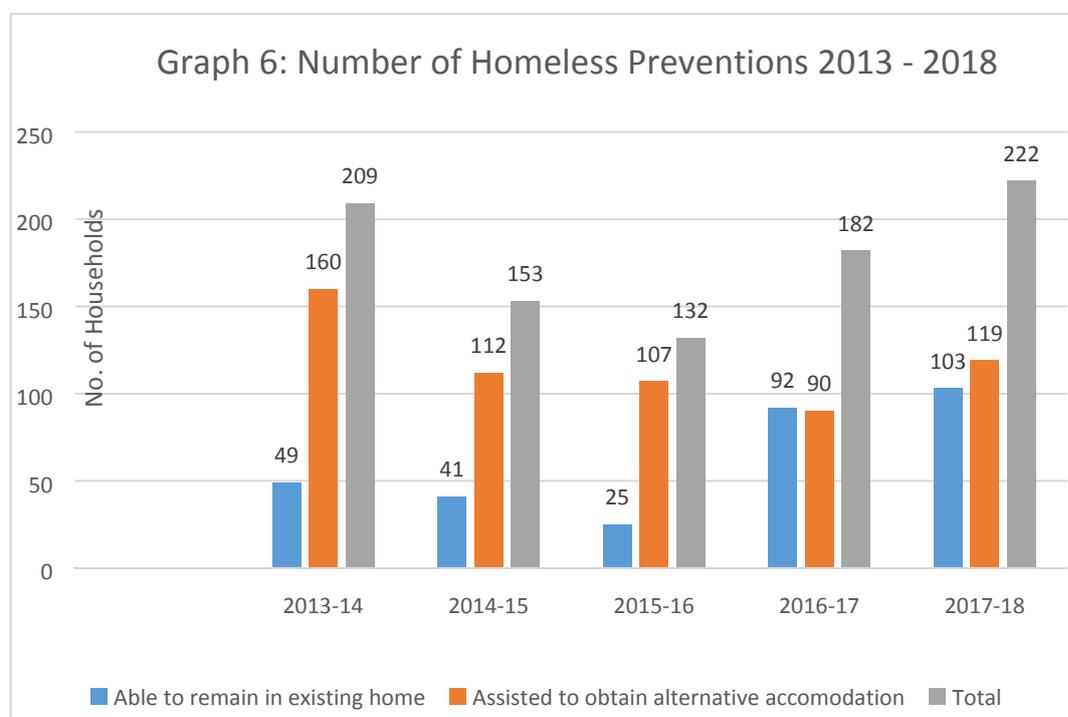


Source: Lichfield District Council

- 🏠 The graph above show that over the 5 year period the primary reason for being accepted as homeless was ‘Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate’ which accounted for over a quarter (27%) of all homeless acceptances. Over each of these five years, this has been the largest single reason for the loss of last settled home.
- 🏠 The second and third most common reasons for being accepted as homeless were:
 - Relationship breakdown (76 cases or 22%).
 - The loss of a private rented property due to termination of an assured shorthold tenancy (57 cases or 16%)
- 🏠 When combining all forms of violence (harassment, domestic violence and violence associated with other persons), as a reason for loss of last settled home, this accounted for 43 households or one in eight households accepted as homeless.

Homeless Prevention

Before the HRA was introduced, the duty for local authorities to prevent a household from becoming homeless was discretionary. It was, however, considered good practice and graph 1 on page 1 does indicate that our ability to prevent homelessness was improving between 2015 and 2018, shown by the decrease in homelessness acceptances and the reduction in the proportion of acceptances to applications.



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness and LDC & Citizens Advice South East Staffordshire (CASES)

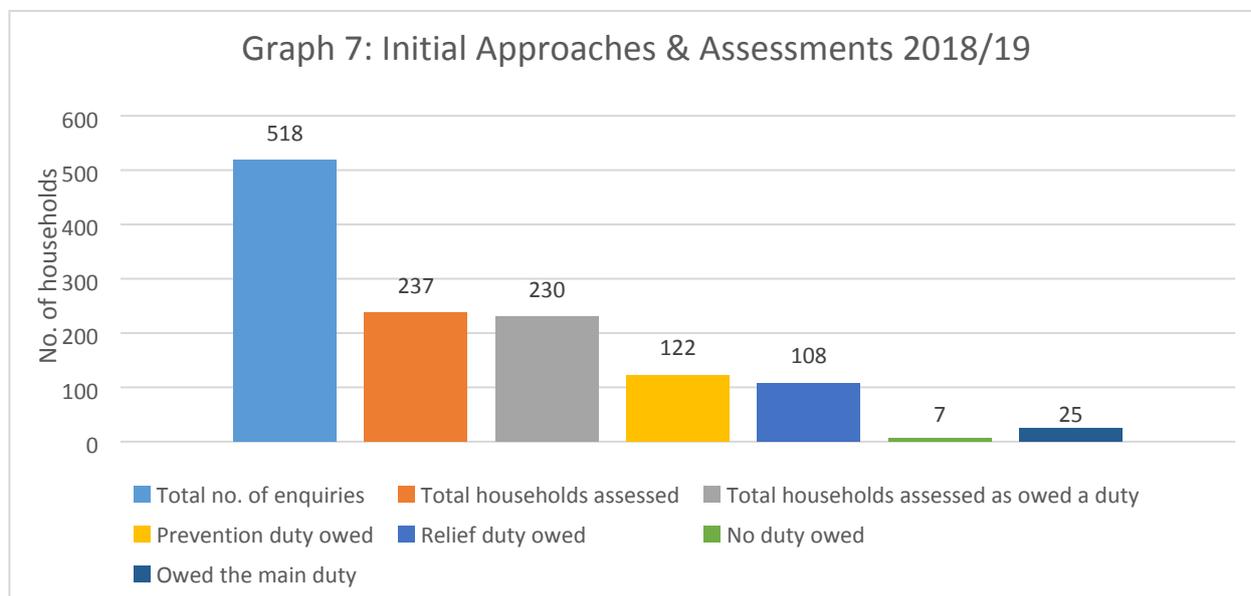
The graph above shows the number of cases where positive action was taken by the council to prevent homelessness between 2013 and 2018.

Key findings:-

- From 2015, we can see that the number of preventions was rising, in particular with regard to households able to remain in their existing home. In 2016, we supported the local Citizens Advice called Citizens Advice South East Staffordshire (CASES). This service helped to prevent homelessness through debt advice, dealing with housing benefit problems and resolving rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sector. It is clear that this proved to be an invaluable service, as the number of preventions rose considerably in the two years that CASES data was recorded.
- When comparing numbers with those following the introduction of the HRA (see page 17), this shows that the council was more successful at preventing homelessness prior to the new legislation. However, this is due to the simplicity in recording a 'successful prevention' before the HRA. Under the new Act, prevention of homelessness is now a statutory duty which requires certain actions to be undertaken before it can be officially recorded as a successful prevention. Eventually, this will enable the government to identify the most successful prevention methods but, in the short term, it will mean that prevention figures will be lower than before the new legislation was introduced.

Homelessness statistics since the Introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Levels of Homelessness 2018/19



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

Homelessness applications are now called assessments in the MHCLG data and are the number of households that approach the council and are then assessed as being owed a prevention or relief duty, or have no duty owed to them (i.e. they are not homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days). Once the relief duty expires if the household has still not secured permanent accommodation, then they will be assessed as being owed the main duty³.

The graph above shows that:-

- 🏠 Last year, we received 518 homelessness enquiries, a significant drop from previous years which showed an average of 1262 from 2013 to 2018. However, this is probably due to the change in the way that we record enquiries in the data we provide to MHCLG, as we now record how many new enquiries are made by household, but previously, there could have been multiple enquiries recorded per household. This new method, coupled with the fact that accessing homelessness information online has been made much easier means that fewer enquiries will be made directly to the council.
- 🏠 In 2018/19 230 households were assessed as being owed a duty. This could be seen as an increase of 81% from the previous year, although as explained above they are not comparable numbers. The increase is therefore, most likely due to the following reasons:
 - A household can now be regarded as at risk of homelessness 56 days before losing their home, rather than 28 days under the previous legislation, meaning that more people will now meet the homelessness criteria.
 - Local authorities are now required to prevent or relieve homelessness for anyone who is eligible⁴ not just those in priority need.
 - More people are coming forward for assistance as they are made aware of the changes in legislation. Under the previous law, where statutory duties were fewer, households (particularly

³ This definition has not changed with the introduction of the HRA and still refers to households who are eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need

⁴ Eligibility for assistance is dependent upon the applicant's immigration status, or her/his right of residence in the UK.

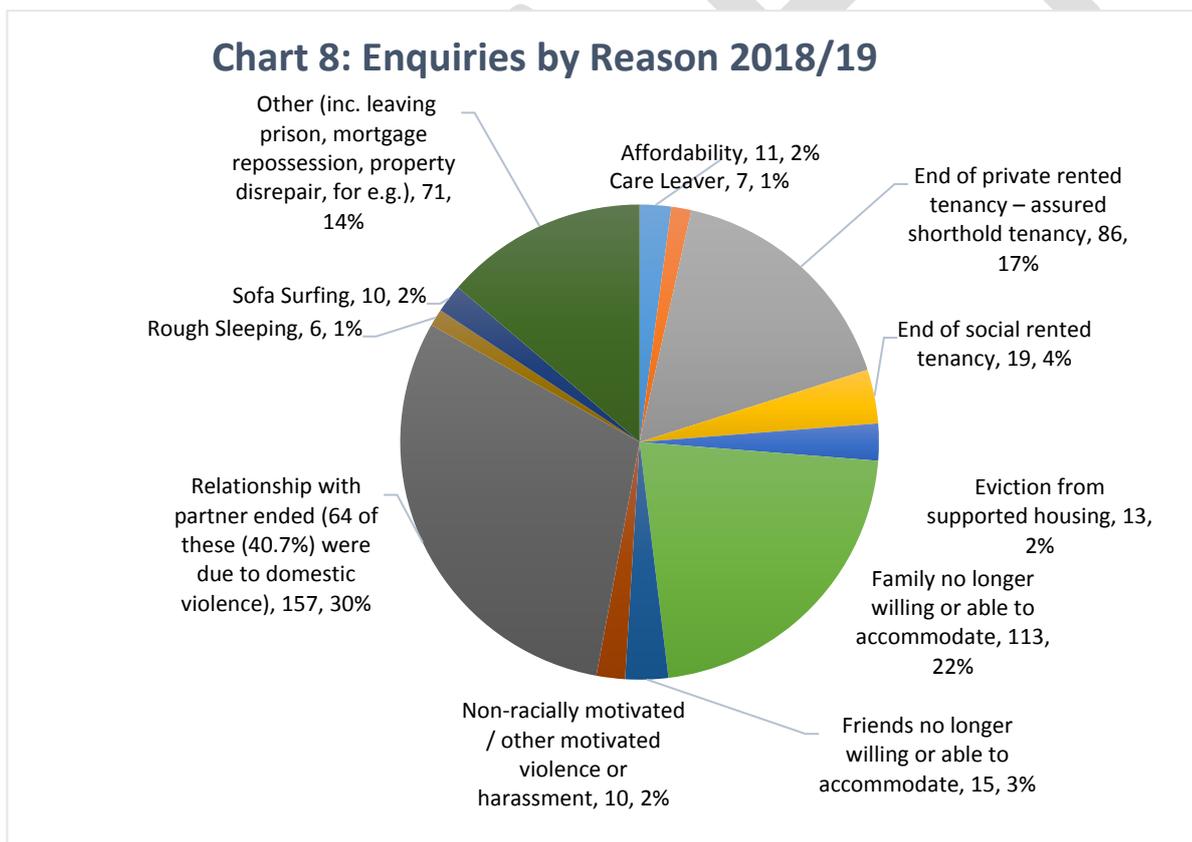
single person) often chose not to make a formal homeless application as no advantage could be gained.

Graph 1 on page 1 shows that homeless acceptances were reducing prior to the introduction of the HRA, which, in part was due to our proactive approach to preventing homelessness. These cases have dropped even further, with the number of households owed the main housing duty decreasing by 57% from 56 in 2017/18 to 24 in 2018/19. Again, this is expected due to the changes in legislation as we now have a duty to prevent (for 56 days) or relieve (for 56 days) an applicant from homelessness, and so it is more likely that they would have had their housing issue resolved in the 112 days before they would be owed the main duty.

Reasons for Approaching the Council

The graph below gives a breakdown of why the 518 households approached the council for advice and it shows that the top three most common reasons were:-

- Relationship breakdown (30%)⁵
- Family not being able to accommodate (22%)
- The ending of a private rented tenancy (17%)



Source: Lichfield District Council

These are also the most common reasons why households were ultimately accepted as homeless both in the years 2014 to 2018 and 2018/19 which is discussed further on page 14 under 'Reason for Loss of Last Settled Home'.

⁵ Total of 157 households, of which 64 of these (40.7%) were due to domestic violence

Duty to Refer

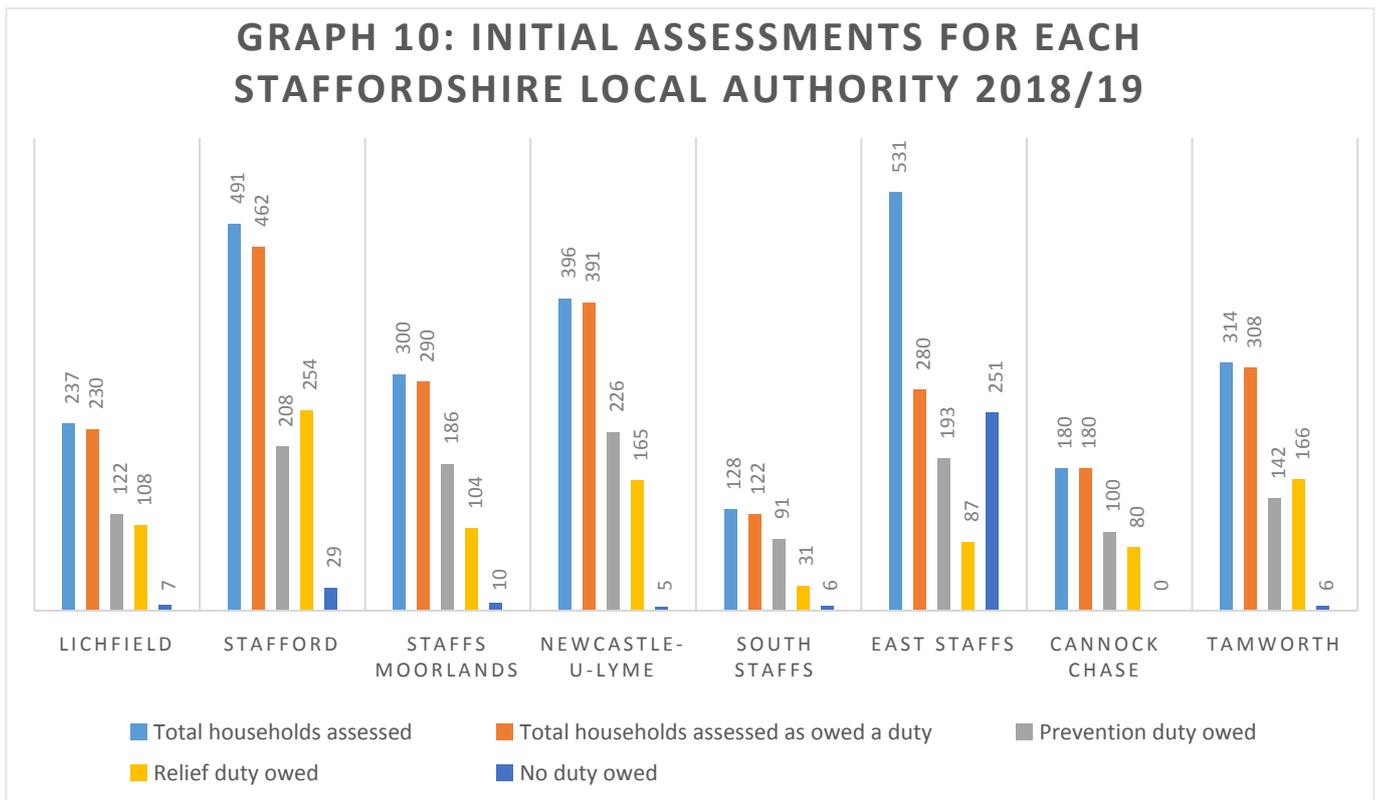
From October 2018, as part of the HRA, certain public bodies have a Duty to Refer, which places an obligation on specified public authorities to notify the relevant local authority of households they consider may be at risk of homelessness within 56 days. This means a person's housing situation must be considered whenever they come into contact with wider public services. The aim of the change is to intervene at an earlier stage when a person is at risk of becoming homeless and give meaningful assistance to someone who may not yet have made contact with their local authority.

- 🏠 Table 9 below shows that, already, this is proving to be an important service as we have received 44 referrals since October 2018 with the most number of referrals from Job Centre Plus.
- 🏠 9 referrals have come from agencies which are not required by law to notify us but it is considered good practice, such as registered providers (housing associations).

Organisation	No. of referrals
Job Centre Plus	19
Probation	7
Social services	4
Hospital	1
Mental health	4
Wider agencies (non-statutory) e.g. Registered Providers	9
Total	44

Source: Lichfield District Council

Relative Levels of Homelessness compared to other Staffordshire Local Authorities



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

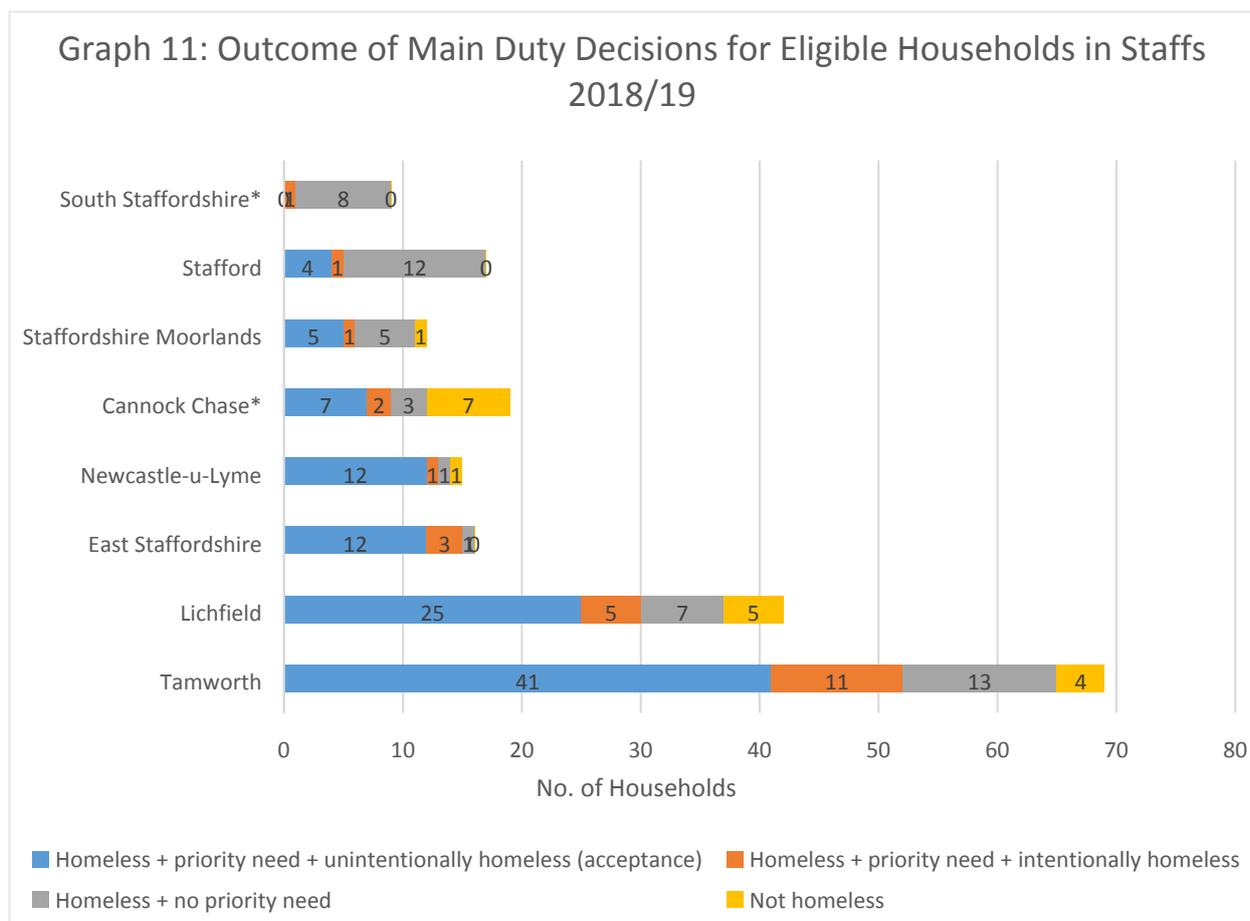
- 🏠 Graph 10 above shows that we still have relatively few numbers of households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness compared to the other Staffordshire local authorities. Graph 2 compared the numbers under previous housing legislation showing that we had the fourth lowest number of acceptances. With the change in homeless definitions, we now have the third lowest number of total assessments and households owed the prevention duty, with only Cannock Chase and South Staffordshire having fewer.
- 🏠 The number of households owed the relief duty is slightly higher as we had the fourth lowest numbers in 2018/19.

Main Duty Decisions

The full housing or main duty applies where the duty to prevent or relieve homelessness has not been successful. Only those who are eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless, and have a priority need will qualify.

- 🏠 Despite Graph 10 showing that we had low numbers of assessments, Graph 11 below shows that this was very different with regard to main duty decisions made in 2018/19. Here, we had the second largest number in the county behind Tamworth Borough Council and the next placed local authorities (East Staffordshire and Newcastle-under-Lyme) had less than half the number of decisions compared to Lichfield. There are a number of explanations regarding this inconsistency, namely:-
 - We have a shortage of affordable private rental properties available to low-income families resulting in fewer options when it comes to finding alternative accommodation, which means that more will consequently be owed the main housing duty as they have not been rehoused once the relief stage had ended.

- Some of the other local authorities in Staffordshire have more supported accommodation than we do which are vital in helping vulnerable households to secure housing.



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

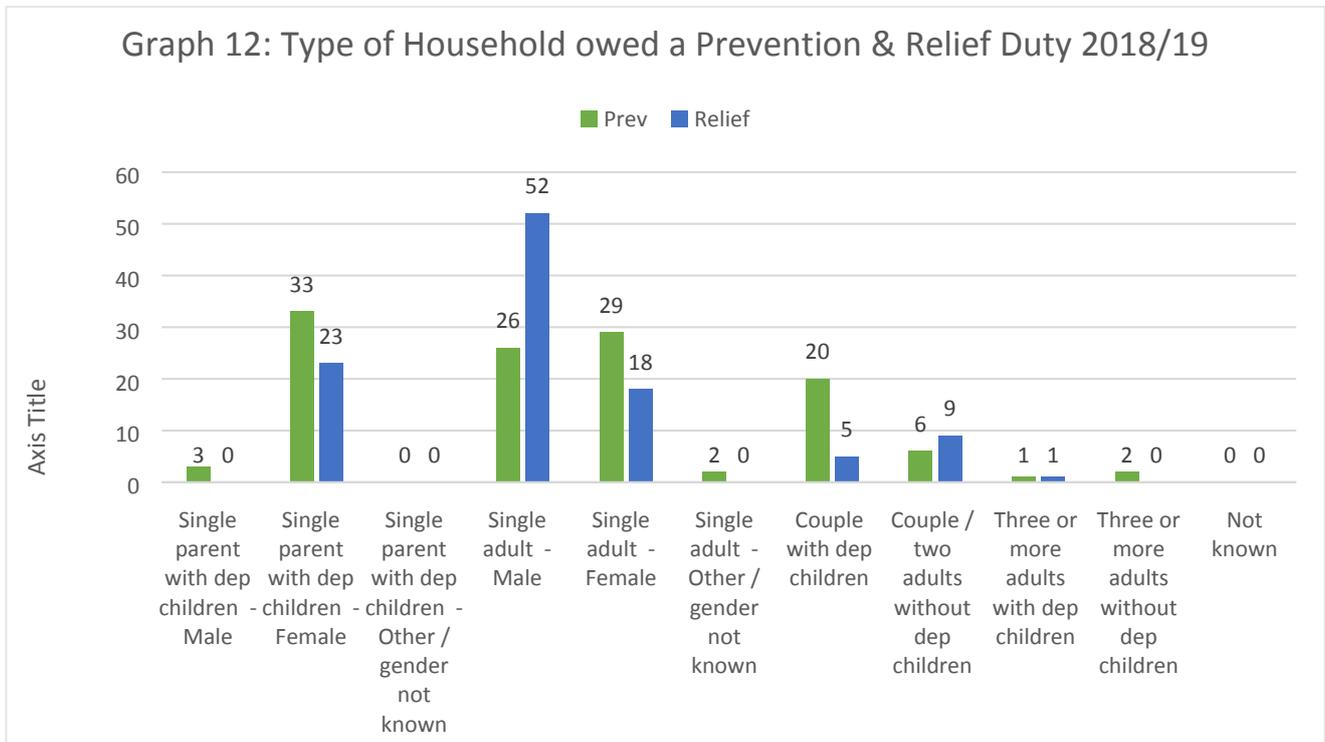
Who is Being Made Homeless in Lichfield District?

Type of Household

The information collated under the new legislation is more detailed than before, particularly with regard to the type of household which will give a better understanding of who is most at risk of homelessness. The graph below shows that:-

- 🏠 In 2018/19, single males were most likely to be owed a duty with twice the number being owed the relief duty rather than prevention. This suggests that single men are more likely to only seek help when they are at crisis point and actually homeless. This may be for the following reasons:-
 - In the past, this group were not entitled to much assistance with their homelessness and so single men may not have bothered seeking help from the council.
 - For some time, we have had little access to supported accommodation and floating services for complex needs such as drug and alcohol dependency which is more prevalent in men than women.
- 🏠 The next most likely group was female single parents though, in these cases, there were more owed the prevention duty rather than relief.
- 🏠 The third most likely group to seek help with homelessness was single females, making up 20% of the total owed a duty.

- 🏠 In 2018/19 there were a total of 29 households with dependent children who were owed the relief duty. In other words, there were 29 families who were at the most extreme end of homelessness and at crisis point.
- 🏠 These figures contradict the trends we were seeing prior to the introduction of the HRA when it was most common for families with females as the head of the household to be homeless. The new trends of single males and females now being more likely to be owed a duty shows that these groups were largely overlooked before the HRA. It also strongly suggests a lack of housing related support in the district which is vital in helping to prevent homelessness.

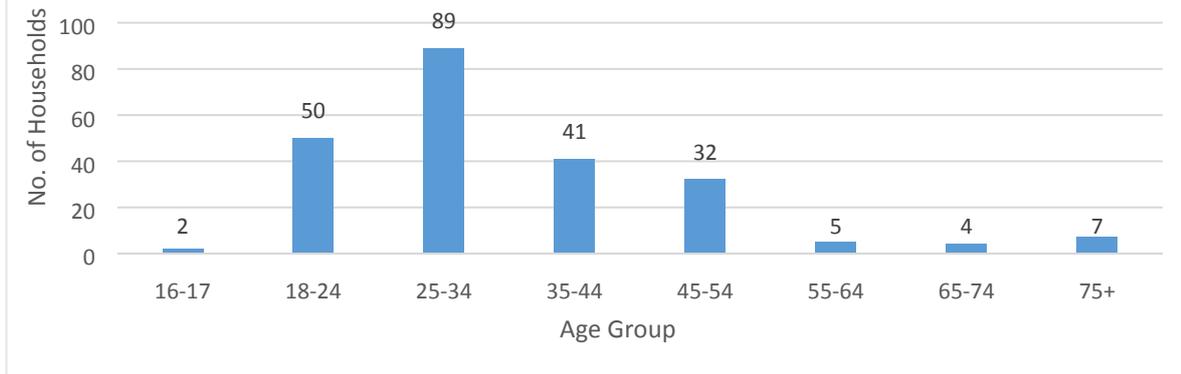


Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

Age

- 🏠 The graph below shows that there were 52 households aged between 18 and 24 who were owed a duty. This is a very young age to be facing homelessness and suggests that, in many cases, these are individuals who have just left the parental home and are struggling with finding suitable and affordable accommodation. This may be a reflection on the lack of housing options for this group as a single person up to the age of 34 is usually only entitled to housing costs based on the single room rate of Local Housing Allowance, meaning they are further disadvantaged by the lack of affordable shared housing in the district.

Graph 13: Age of Main Applicants owed a Prevention or Relief Duty 2018/19



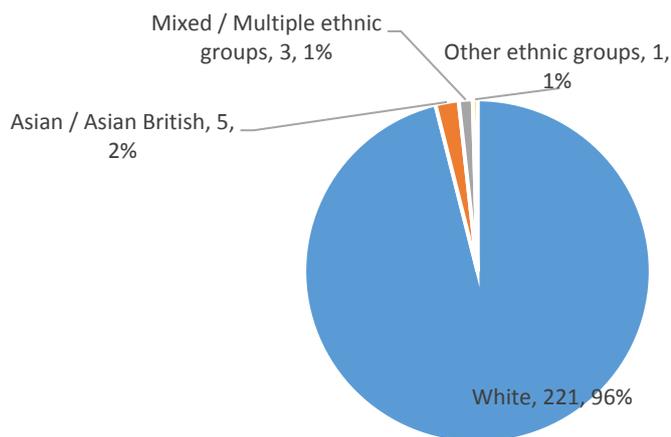
Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

11 households aged 65 or over were also accepted as homeless including 7 aged 75 or older. This may suggest a rise in the number of older people facing homelessness, which is something that is also emerging on a national level.

Ethnic Background

The chart below shows that the ethnicity of those households owed a duty in 2018/19 has not altered significantly since the introduction of the HRA and still reflects the composition of the district population as a whole.

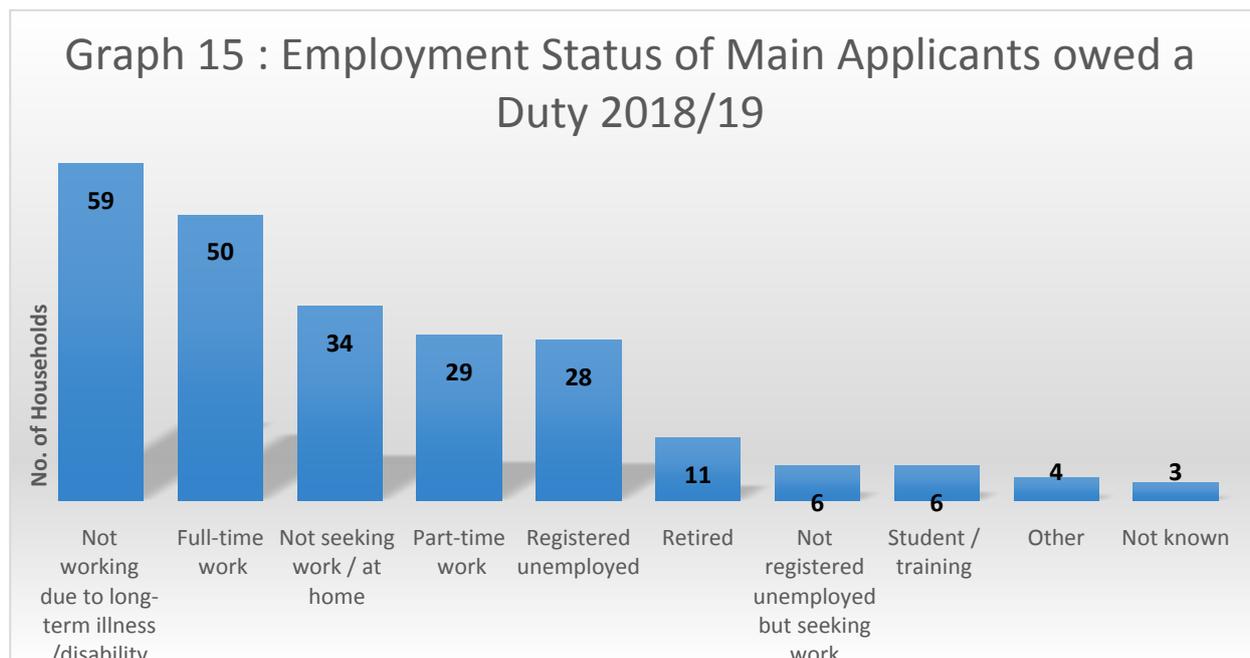
Chart 14: Ethnicity of Applicants owed a Prevention or Relief Duty 2018/19



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

Employment Status

The graph below shows the employment status of the main applicants owed a duty in 2018/19.



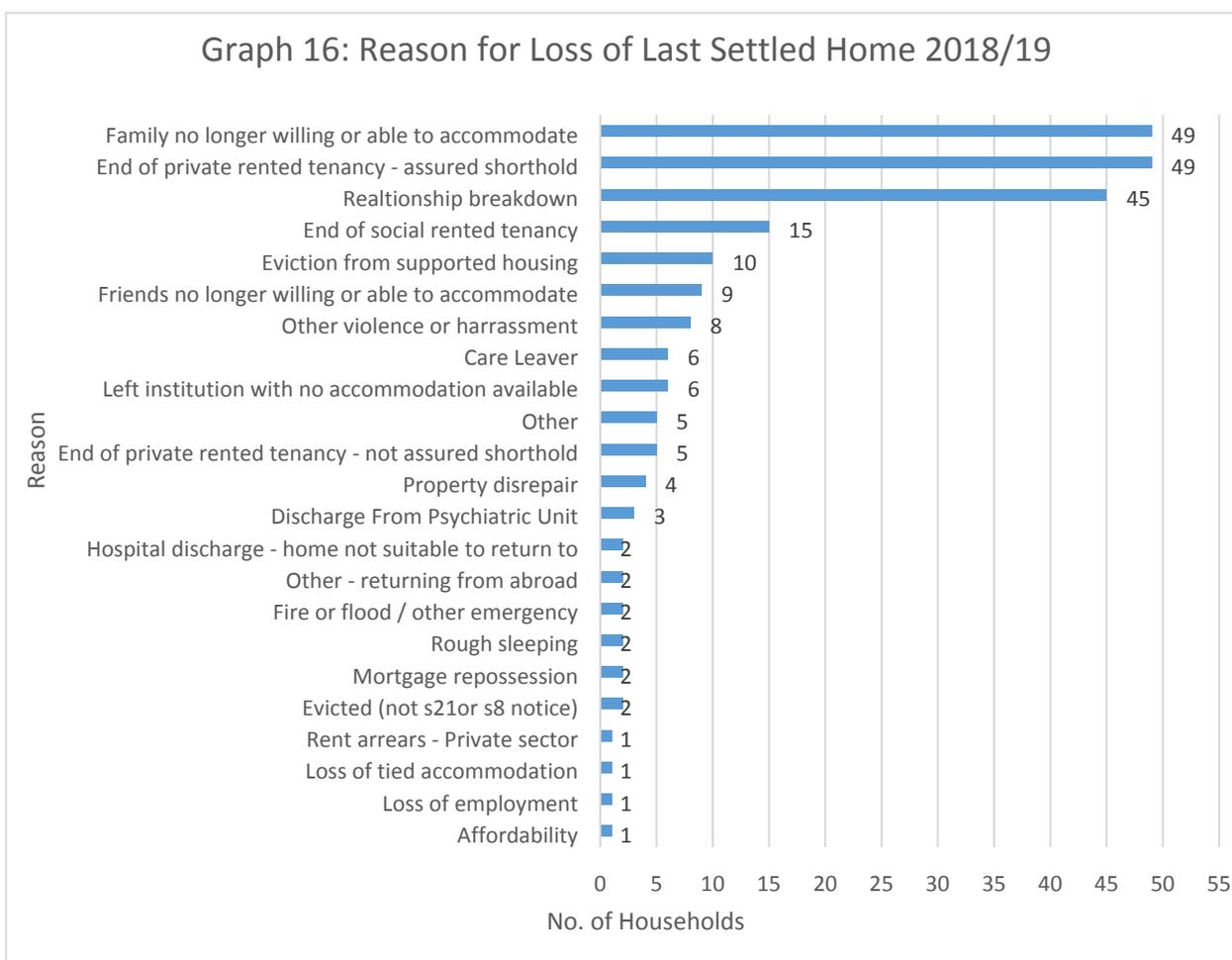
Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

Key findings:

- 🏠 The majority of homeless applicants were those who were not working due to a long-term illness or disability.
- 🏠 22% of applicants owed a duty were in full-time work, which is again an indication that there is a lack of affordable housing in the district if households cannot find a suitable property on a full-time salary.
- 🏠 The number of applicants not seeking work is most likely a reflection on the number of single parent households that present to the council
- 🏠 The number of applicants in part-time work and registered unemployed/seeking work shows that there is a need for support services that can advise on seeking appropriate and better paid employment. It also suggests a need for suitable advice on benefit entitlement, which may also help those who are retired or studying and facing homelessness.

Reason for Loss of Last Settled Home in 2018-19

Graph 16: Reason for Loss of Last Settled Home 2018/19



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

The graph above gives the most common reasons for households to lose their home in 2018/19 and shows that:-

🏠 The top three most common reasons for homelessness applications in 2018/19 were:-

- Families no longer able or willing to accommodate (21%) (joint first),
- The ending of a private tenancy (21%) (joint first)
- Relationship breakdown (19.5%)⁶

🏠 These were also the top three reasons, although in a slightly different order, for homelessness in 2014-2018 (see Graph 5) though numbers have increased considerably. For example, Graph 5 shows that in 2017/18, 21 households were accepted as homeless due to parental eviction compared to 49 in 2018/19. It is not clear, however, if these cases are parents evicting their children as the category is now 'family eviction'. There were 13 households made homeless due to the loss of a private tenancy and 27 were due to a relationship breakdown in 2017/18 whereas graph 5 shows these numbers have noticeably increased to 49 and 45 respectively.

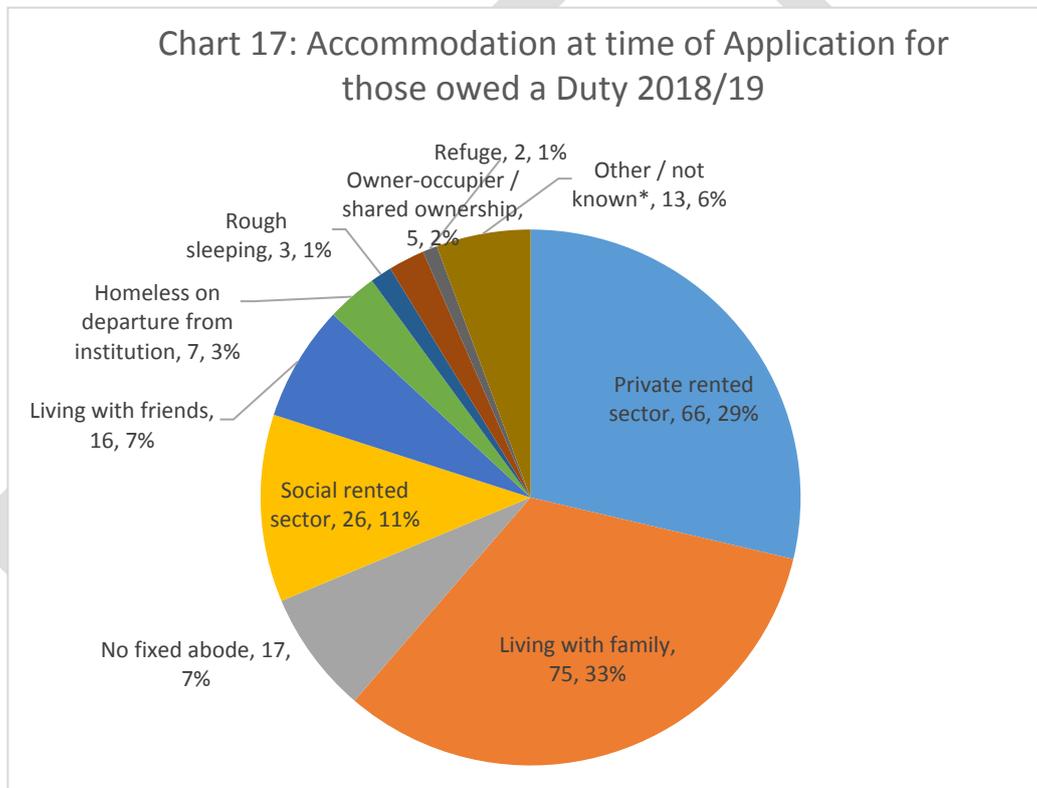
🏠 In 2018/19, the number of domestic violence cases doubled from 12 in 2017/18 to 24 in 2018/19. Homelessness due to domestic violence was, in fact, on a steady increase from 2014 to 2018. This may have been due to the closure of refuges which were shut due to funding cuts around this time. The rise to 24 domestic abuse cases in 2018/19 may also be because, under the HRA, these households are now owed a housing duty. Before the HRA, these cases would not always have made a formal homeless application and would have been rehoused directly from the refuge due to having a priority status on our housing register.

⁶ 24 of relationship breakdowns were due to domestic abuse

Domestic abuse cases may therefore have been higher before the HRA, but previously they would not have been included in our homeless data.

Accommodation at time of application for those owed duty

The chart below shows that the majority (33%) of households owed a duty were living with family at the time, followed by 29% of households who were in private rented accommodation. The third group was households living in the social sector. There is a worrying trend of households being made homeless by both private and social landlords which we have noticed for some time and in many cases, the eviction is due to rent arrears. As Lichfield district has a very buoyant private rental market it has disadvantaged low-income households. Some landlords are therefore quick to serve a section 21 notice on a tenant if they are having difficulty paying their rent, rather than allow time for them to pay off their debts. In addition, registered providers have become much more commercial and risk averse in recent years and so we are seeing more social sector tenants losing their tenancy through rent arrears.



Source:

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

Support Needs for Households Owed a Duty

The recording of support needs is a new requirement under the HRA, which will give us a greater understanding of issues that could have a contributing factor to a person’s homelessness.

Of the 230 households that were owed a duty, 151 (66%) were identified as having support needs. The table below shows a list of support needs that were recorded on the personal housing plans of those who were owed a duty in 2018/19. Households can have multiple support needs, so the total number of support needs is more than the actual number of households. Our records show that 24% of those with a support need were

found to have two or more support needs and 19% had three or more support needs. Information shown from the table below includes:-

- 🏠 The most common support need was help with mental health issues, accounting for 46% of households with support needs who were owed a duty. 22% of cases had a physical health issue or disability followed by 18.5% who were at risk of or experienced domestic abuse.
- 🏠 2 of those who were owed a duty had served in the armed forces. It is now a requirement for all local authorities to record this number due to the rise in homeless applicants who are veterans.
- 🏠 This is a reflection on the growing number of households that approach the council with multiple and complex support needs. It goes some way in explaining how these households became homeless in the first place but also demonstrates the importance of effective referral processes and protocols with our stakeholders, to ensure that vulnerable households are given the support they need to find and keep suitable accommodation.

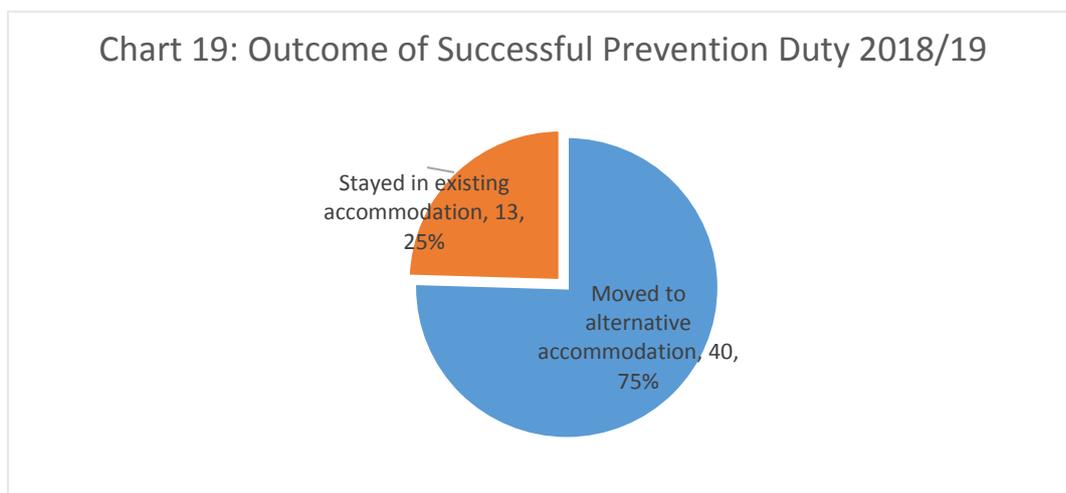
Table 18: Support needs of households owed a prevention or relief duty	No. of times reported
History of mental health problems	69
Physical ill health and disability	33
At risk of / has experienced domestic abuse	28
Access to education, employment or training	27
Drug dependency needs	19
Young person aged 18-25 years requiring support to manage independently	15
Alcohol dependency needs	12
Offending history	9
History of repeat homelessness	9
History of rough sleeping	7
Learning disability	6
At risk of / has experienced abuse (non-domestic abuse)	6
Old age	6
Care leaver aged 18-20 years	6
Care leaver aged 21+ years	5
Young person aged 16-17 years	5
Young parent requiring support to manage independently	4
At risk of / has experienced sexual abuse / exploitation	2
Served in HM Forces	2
Total (for 151 individual households)	270

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

Homeless Preventions and Reliefs

Of the 122 households owed the prevention duty (see Graph 10), 109 had their prevention duty discharged⁷ and, of the 108 households owed the relief duty, 106 had this duty discharged.

These new prevention figures cannot be directly compared with those in Graph 6 due to the change in definition under the HRA, which, as highlighted earlier, now places more obligations on local authorities before they can record a successful prevention. In addition, the relief duty which helps to secure suitable accommodation for applicants who are homeless and eligible for assistance was not included in previous legislation.

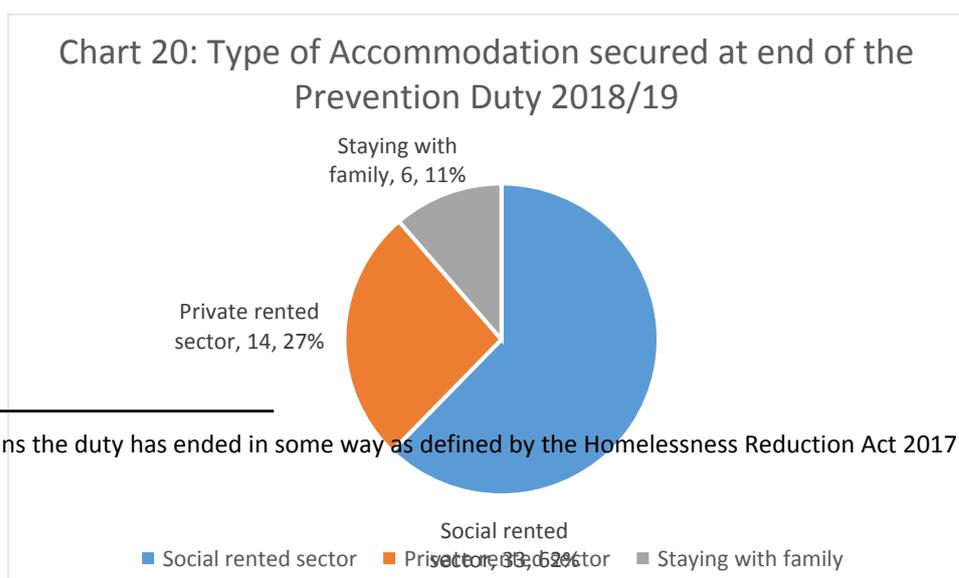


Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

- ⊞ The chart above shows that three quarters of prevention cases avoided homelessness by moving to alternative accommodation. This is not ideal and it is usually preferable for households to remain in their existing accommodation, as it is less disruptive, costly and time-consuming than having to relocate. In some circumstances, however, accommodation will be unsustainable or inappropriate (e.g. if the applicant is fleeing domestic abuse).

Type of Accommodation Secured

- ⊞ Chart 20 below shows that, the majority (62%) of households owed a prevention duty were found alternative accommodation in the social rented sector whereas only 14 households were rehoused in the private sector. This clearly shows the difficulty that the council has in finding suitable affordable accommodation in the private rented sector. In most cases, social rented accommodation is the preferred option for households though we are always in need of private rented properties if suitable social housing is not immediately available or if households need a short term tenancy.



⁷ This means the duty has ended in some way as defined by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

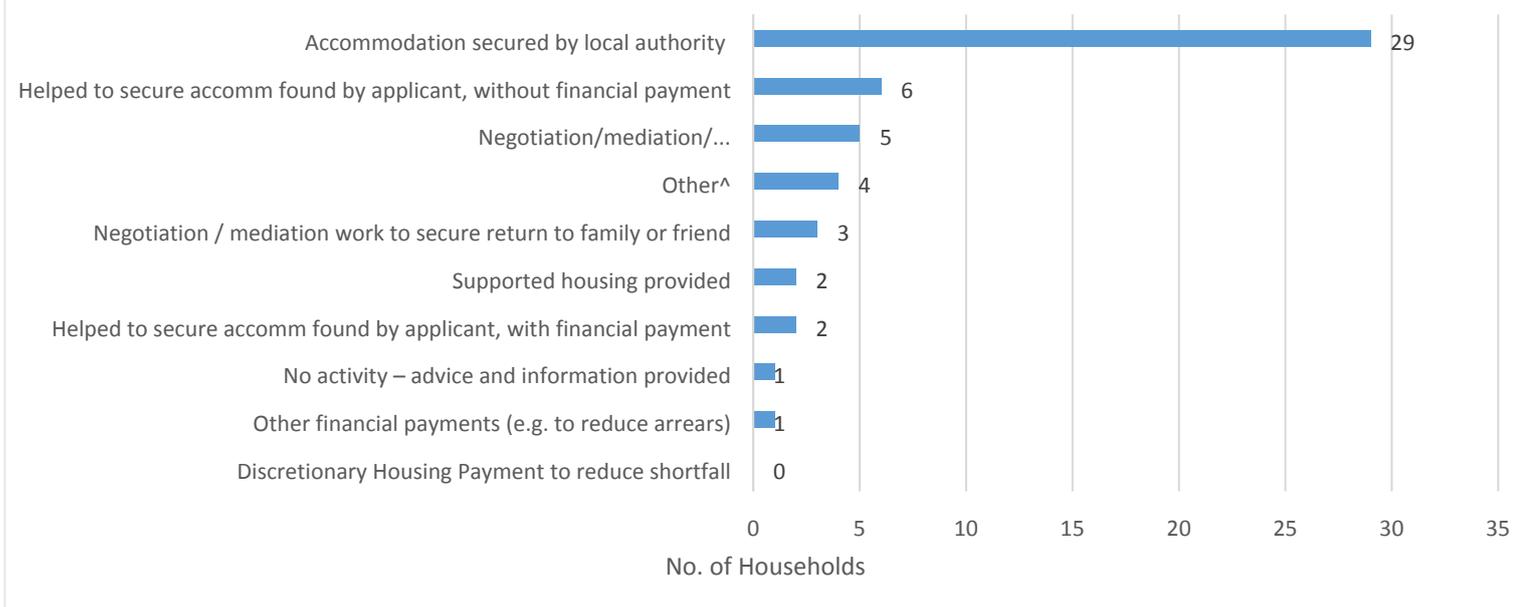
How Accommodation was secured

^ Other includes debt advice, resolved benefit problems, sanctuary or other security measures to home, not known, housing related support to sustain accommodation

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

- 🏠 The graph above shows that, the majority of households (55%) were able to secure accommodation through positive action by our Housing Options team. We also negotiated for 5 households to remain in their home and for 3 to stay with family or friends. This demonstrates the importance of thorough and more complex working with customers under the HRA which will help to keep evictions down.

Graph 21: Main Activity that Resulted in Accommodation Secured for Households



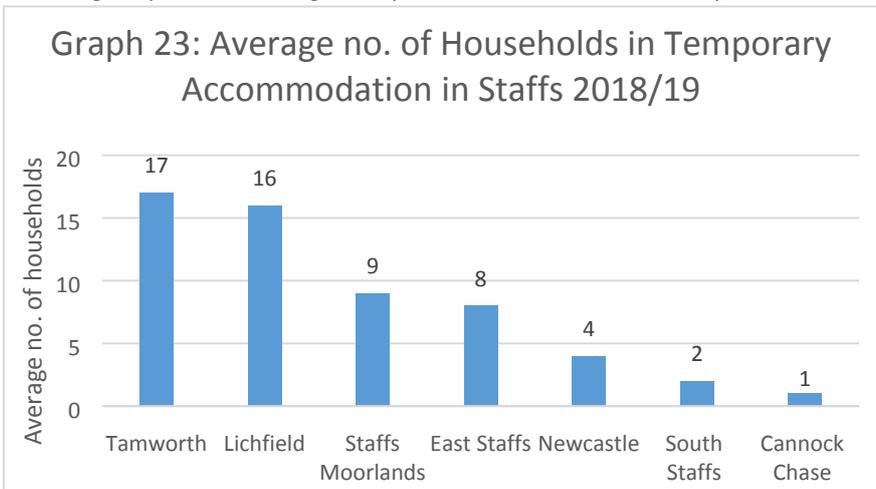
- 🏠 It is interesting that no DHP's were used in 2018/19. We will investigate the use of these payments in more prevention cases in the future as they are an invaluable way of reducing homelessness, particularly when a short-term solution, such as paying rent arrears or securing a rental bond, is required.

Homeless Reliefs

- 🏠 Chart 22 below shows that the top three ways that households were relieved of their homelessness were:-
- The provision of a tenancy in the social rented sector

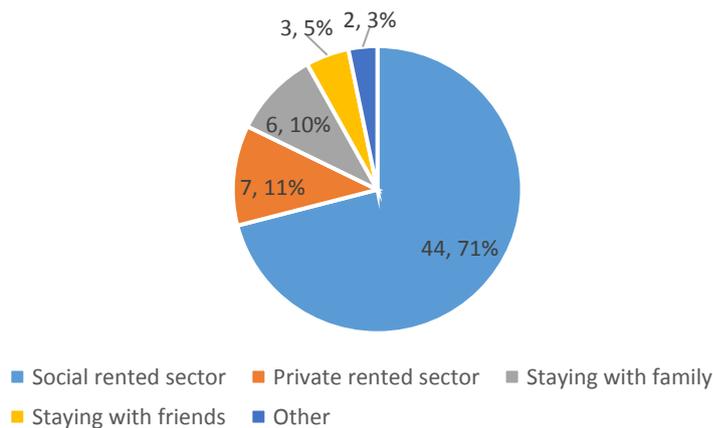
- A private rented property
- Staying with family

There is, however, a significant difference between the number of households that secured accommodation in the social sector (44) and those that took on a private tenancy (7). We will endeavour to address this imbalance through seeking ways to encourage our private sector landlords to provide affordable accommodation households.



to low income

Chart 22: Type of Accommodation secured at end of the Relief Duty 2018/19



Source: Ministry of Housing, Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Homelessness

Communities & Tables on

Use of

Temporary Accommodation

Number of Households in Temporary Accommodation

Local authorities have a statutory duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households that are in a priority need group⁸. Once this has been established, temporary accommodation must be provided whilst the local authority is investigating their homelessness. The cost of accommodation is paid for by the council, for which we can be reimbursed from housing benefit.

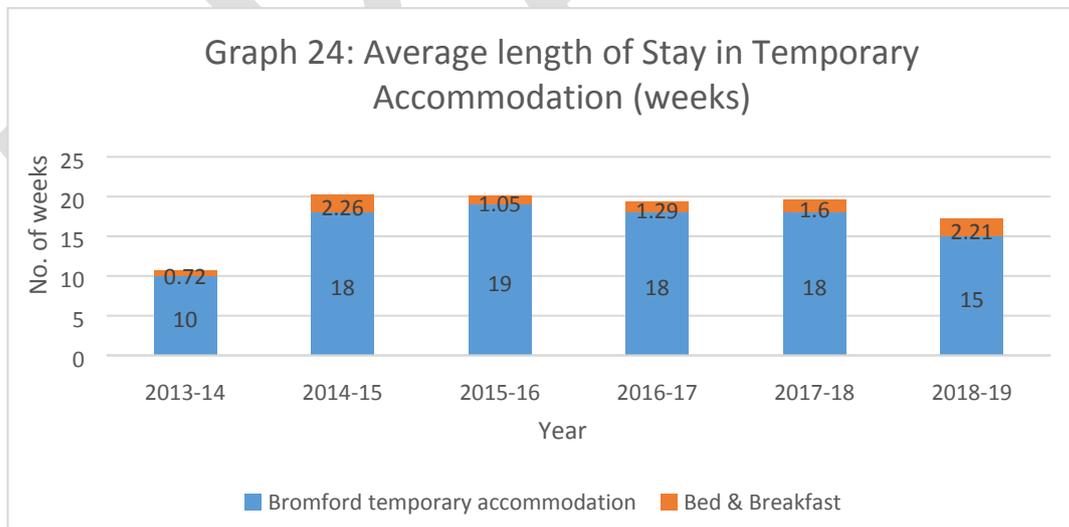
Government statistics show the number of households that are in temporary accommodation at the end of each quarter in the year. This means that some households may be in this accommodation for more than one quarter and so will be counted twice. In order to give an indication of our use of temporary accommodation compared to the other Staffordshire authorities, the table below shows the average number of households that were in temporary accommodation at the end of quarter.

⁸ Includes pregnant women, those who have dependent children living with them, 16- and 17-year-olds, care leavers aged 18 to 20 years old and anyone considered vulnerable due to old age, mental illness or disability, or physical disability.

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

- ⊞ The graph above shows that, despite having lower numbers of homeless acceptances in relation to the other Staffordshire authorities, we are a high user of temporary accommodation. This is due to the difficulty we have in securing accommodation for our most vulnerable and/or low income families which is, most likely for the following reasons:-
 - Private landlords are reluctant to offer accommodation to tenants with support needs, such as mental health issues or drug or alcohol dependency that may cause issues with their tenancy.
 - In addition, registered providers are refusing to take on tenants if they are in rent arrears or cannot demonstrate their ability to sustain a tenancy. This results in households staying in temporary accommodation for longer than is necessary.

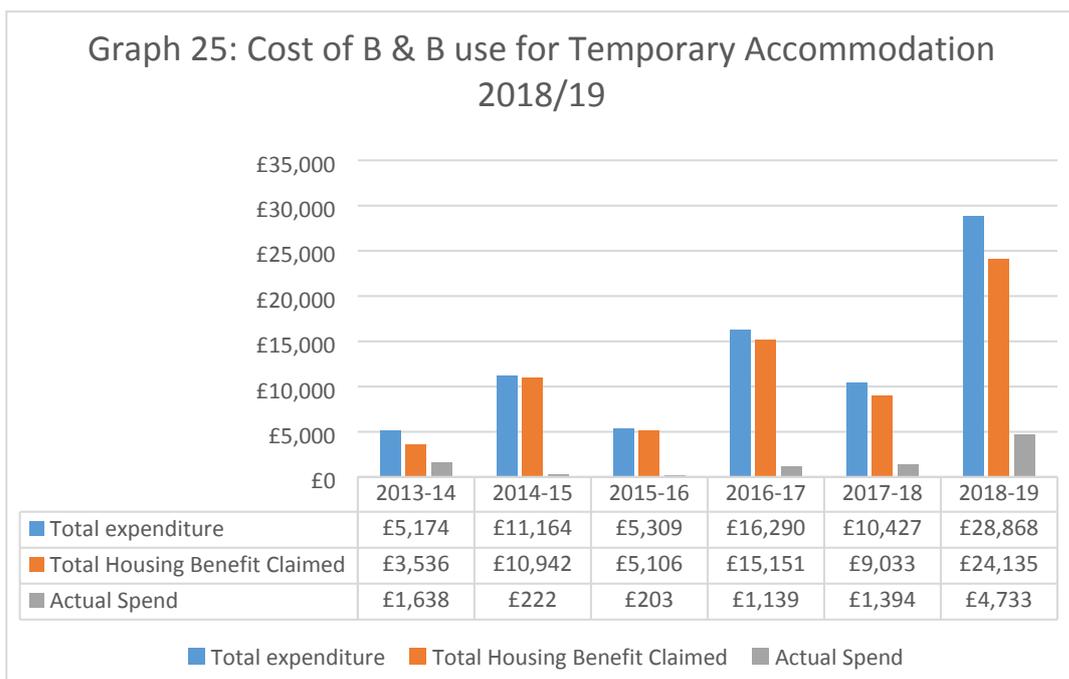
Average length of stay in Temporary Accommodation.



Source: Source: Lichfield District Council

- ⊞ Table 24 above shows that the length of time that households stayed in temporary accommodation until they found a suitable home almost doubled from 10 weeks in 2013/14 to a peak of 19 weeks in 2015/16.
- ⊞ The length of stay decreased from 2017/18 to 2018/19 by a drop of 3 weeks (18 weeks to 15 weeks).
- ⊞ However, the length of stay in Bed and Breakfast accommodation in 2018/19 was three times longer than in 2013/14.

Cost of Bed and Breakfast Emergency Accommodation



Source: Lichfield District Council

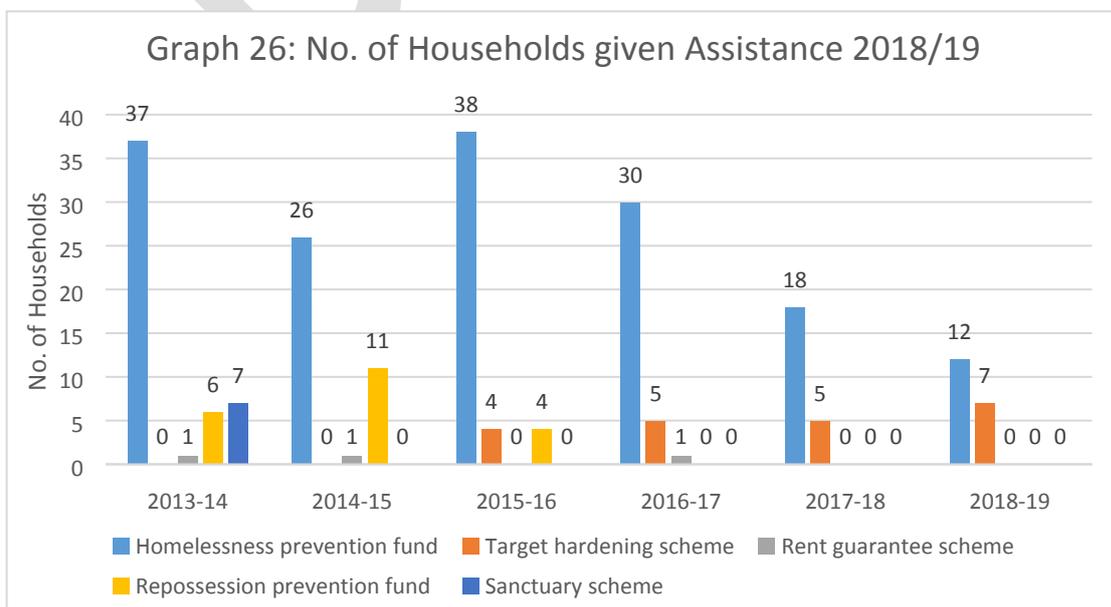
- ⊞ The graph above shows that in 2018/19, the council spent nearly three times as much on B&B accommodation than in 2013/14.
- ⊞ It is likely that the increase in the use of temporary accommodation and the length of stay in Bed & Breakfast establishments is due to the new legislation as
 - households spend more time in temporary accommodation whilst their homelessness situation is thoroughly investigated
 - the new statutory duties to prevent or relieve homelessness have added to the length of time an application is open
- ⊞ The council is also seeing more households becoming homeless who have multiple support needs and, as registered providers are now insisting that support for these needs is put in place before they are offered accommodation, it has resulted in a longer stay in emergency provision.

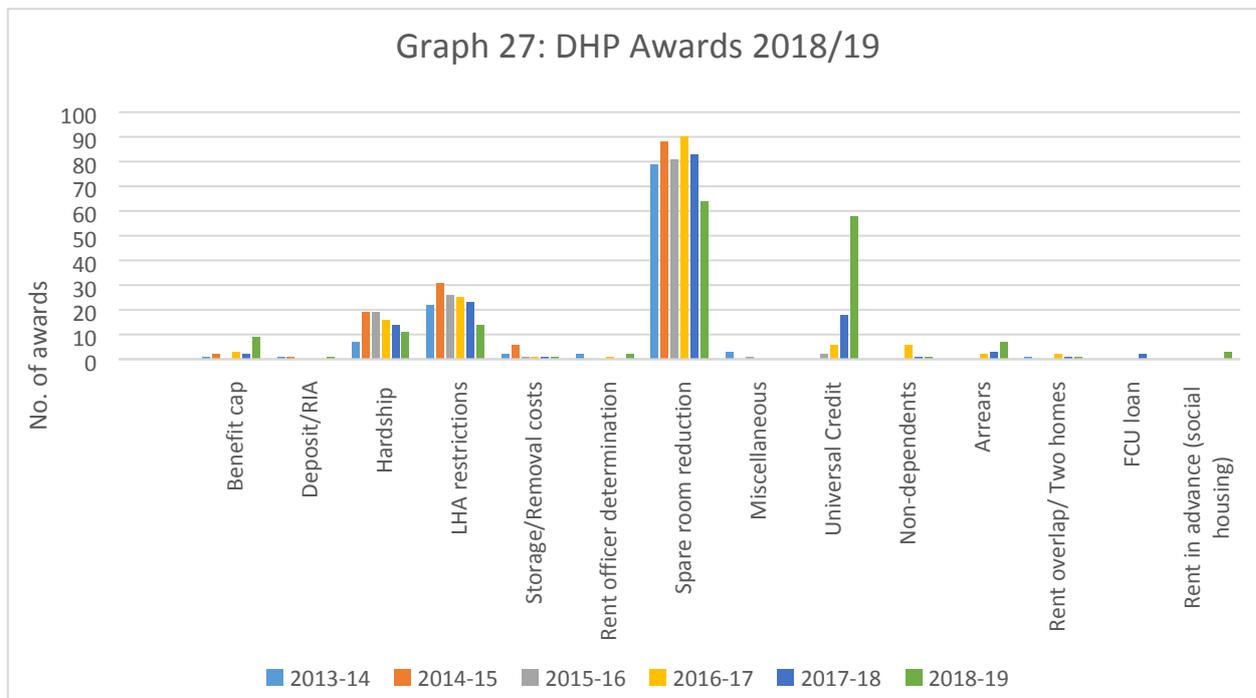
Homeless Prevention Schemes

The council has a number of schemes that it can access in order to help prevent homelessness. These are summarised below:

Scheme	Description of scheme
Homelessness prevention fund	A financial assistance scheme (in the form of loans or grants) available to applicants to be used where homelessness can be prevented or relieved and/or the use of temporary accommodation avoided or brought to an end. Can be used for rent in advance, deposits for private rental and Housing Association tenancies. The loans are provided by Fusion Credit Union and underwritten by the council.
Sanctuary (Target hardening) scheme	The prevention of homelessness by ensuring that survivors of domestic abuse and other violent crimes are able to remain in their homes and feel safer and more secure in doing so by the installation of security measures to make a home more resistant to attack or damage.
Rent guarantee scheme	To assist homeless households access private rented sector accommodation. Under this scheme, the council will provide a guarantee against the value of the rent deposit or rent in advance, rather than it being actually paid to the landlord. These are not popular with landlords so few have been used over the last 6 years.
Repossession prevention fund	Specific loans available for any households, which risk becoming homeless through repossession or eviction. It can also be used for individuals at risk of rough sleeping. Merged with the homelessness prevention fund in 2016.
Discretionary Housing Payments(DHP)	A DHP is a payment made in addition to housing benefit or universal credit where the applicant needs financial assistance with housing costs.

Source: Lichfield District Council





- ⊞ Graph 26 above shows that the Homeless Prevention fund has, by far, assisted the most households. This is used mainly for helping households with rent deposits in order to secure a tenancy in the private sector and is therefore a reflection on the increase in the number of households that now rely on this tenure for housing. The number of households being offered this assistance has, however, dropped considerably, particularly when it merged with the repossession fund in 2016/17. Only a third of households were offered this fund in 2018/19 compared to 2013/14. This is partly due to our increased use of DHP to cover such costs as rent arrears, rent in advance and rent deposits (see page 25).
- ⊞ The number of households that were assisted through the target hardening (sanctuary) scheme is likely to be a reflection on the rising numbers of domestic violence incidents in the district which is also displayed in the figures of households who are being made homeless.

The use of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to Prevent Homelessness

DHP is available to anyone in rented accommodation who needs further financial assistance with their housing costs and is currently, or will be claiming Housing Benefit or Universal Credit that includes a housing element. Further financial assistance is defined as additional financial help that is needed where an applicant is unable to meet their housing costs from their available household income, for example because they have a shortfall or need help with rent arrears. Housing costs generally means rent but can be interpreted more widely to include rent in advance, rent deposits, storage/removal costs or other lump sums associated with a housing need.

DHP payments can be used to support the prevention of homelessness. By assisting people to maintain or move to more affordable tenancies, it can be used to prevent households from falling into debt that might cause them to lose their homes.

- 🏠 The graph above shows that the majority of payments were for customers affected by the spare room reduction. However, there are an increasing number receiving DHP for help with Universal Credit issues, such as changes to the frequency of payments and changes in the amount that is awarded. It is expected that, as more claimants move to Universal Credit that this may increase over the next few years.

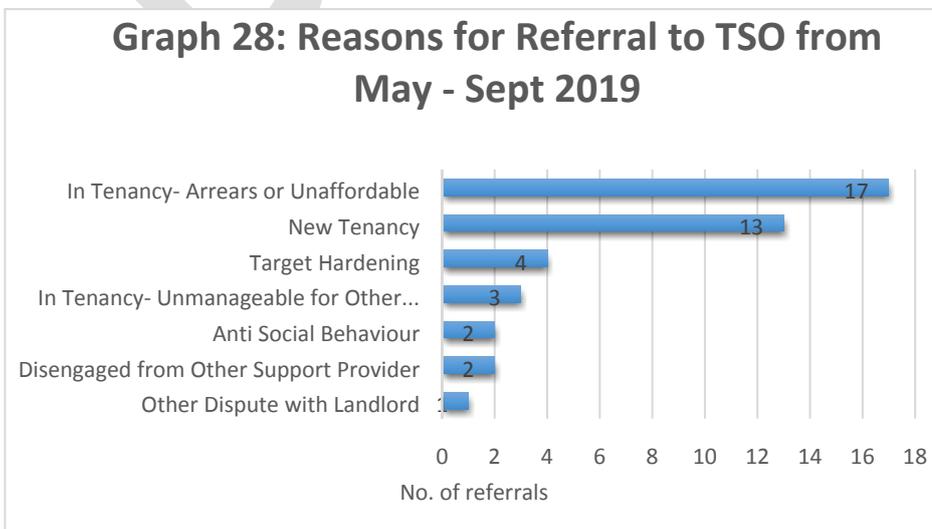
The work of the Tenancy Sustainment Officer (TSO)

The purpose of tenancy sustainment is to enable people to keep their tenancies, thereby reducing evictions and preventing homelessness. Our TSO was appointed in April 2019 to assist vulnerable people by connecting them to the right services and support agencies who can help them with issues they might have which can have an impact on their ability to sustain a tenancy.

Source: Lichfield District Council

- 🏠 Graph 28 above shows the invaluable work that our TSO is carrying out to help prevent homelessness. Through advising the client on debt management and liaising with other support agencies this has resulted

being in their



in a number of households able to remain

accommodation.

- 13 households have also been supported in preparing for their new tenancies. This includes training on paying utilities and budgeting advice which will help them to sustain their tenancies in the long-term.

Working with our Partner Agencies

Citizens Advice South East Staffordshire (CASES)

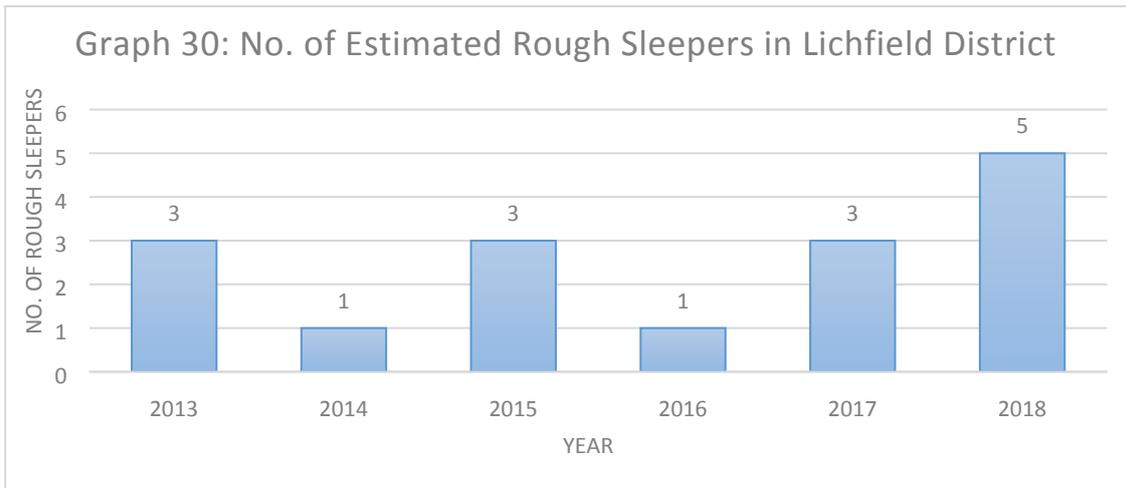
The local Citizens Advice advises residents on issues such as debt management, welfare benefits and housing advice. The council supports this service through our community and voluntary sector grant funding in recognition of how important this work is in the prevention of homelessness.

The table below shows the number of homelessness preventions that were directly related to the work of Citizens Advice in 2018/19 and demonstrates how significant their role is in helping us to prevent homelessness. These cases are additional to the number of preventions that were reported on page 10, Graph 10.

Type of action	How prevented from becoming homeless	No. of cases
Debt Advice	Remain in existing accommodation	12
Resolving rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sector	Remain in existing accommodation	8
Accommodation arranged with friends or relatives	Found alternative accommodation before became homeless	2
Total		22

Source: CASES

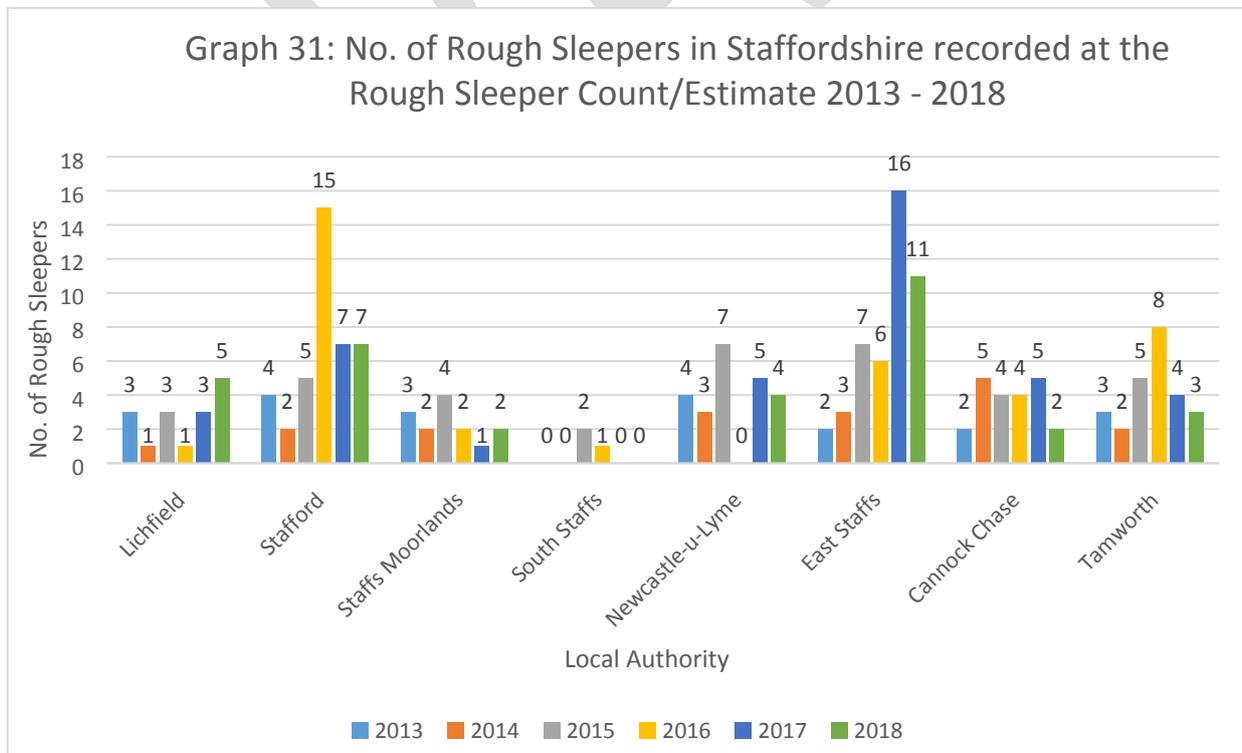
Rough Sleeping



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness

- 🏠 The above figures represent the official rough sleeper annual estimate, which is a snapshot of a single night.
- 🏠 The chart above shows that we had relatively few numbers of people rough sleeping throughout this time period, but there has been a steady increase in the last three years.
- 🏠 Graph 31 below shows that our overall level of rough sleeping is low compared to other areas within Staffordshire with East Staffordshire and Stafford having the highest numbers.

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Govt (MHCLG) Live Tables on Homelessness



Lichfield Emergency Night Shelter (LENS)

The Lichfield Emergency Night Shelter opened for the first time in 2018/19 for two months running from 2 February to 31 March 2019. The table below shows how successful the scheme was in its first year.

Table 32: Information on use of Lichfield Emergency Night Shelter Feb & March 2019	
No. of rough sleepers that used the shelter	8
Average occupancy levels per night	3
Average no. of nights people stayed	22
No. of rough sleepers helped to move to independent or supported accomm.	4
No. offered permanent accommodation	3
No. began engaging in recovery services	2

Source: Lichfield District Council

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

The SWEP is designed to protect rough sleepers from the effects of severe weather by providing accommodation to any rough sleepers, regardless of their eligibility under the homelessness legislation when the night time temperature is likely to be 0 degrees C or below for at least three consecutive nights.

The table below show the number of nights that the SWEP was active and the number of rough sleepers assisted.

Table 33: No. of Rough Sleepers assisted under the SWEP Protocol 2017-2019				
Year	No. of nights	No. of Rough Sleepers assisted	No. of nights	Total cost (£)
2017	19	1	3	144
2018	30	3	3	162
2019	11	3	8	360

Source: Lichfield District Council

Glossary

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)

This is a payment that can be granted at the discretion of the local authority to help towards housing costs. Only those entitled to Housing Benefit or the Housing Costs element of Universal Credit can receive it.

Duty to Refer

Certain public authorities must notify a local housing authority in England where one of its service users may be homeless or at risk of homelessness (and they agree to the referral). The following are public authorities with a duty to refer:-

- prisons
- youth offender institutions and youth offending teams
- secure training centres and colleges
- probation services
- jobcentre plus
- accident and emergency services provided in a hospital
- social service authorities.
- The Ministry of Defence is also subject to the duty to refer in relation to members of the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the regular army and the Royal Air Force.

Eligible for Assistance

To qualify for help under the homelessness legislation or to be entitled to housing benefit, an applicant must be eligible for assistance. Eligibility for assistance is dependent upon the applicant's immigration status, or her/his right of residence in the UK or whether s/he is habitually resident in the UK.

Homeless acceptances (pre HRA)

Acceptances: households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falling within a priority need group (as defined by homelessness legislation - see below) during the quarter are referred to as "acceptances". These households are consequently owed a main homelessness duty by a local housing authority. The main duty is to secure settled accommodation.

Homeless Application (prior to the Homelessness Reduction Act)

This refers to when a person who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days applies to the local authority for help in finding them a home, to prevent them from losing their home, or to secure alternative accommodation. The application does not need to be in writing and can be made on a person's behalf.

Homelessness Assessments (after the Homelessness Reduction Act)

This is a new definition introduced by the HRA and refers to those households who approach the council as homeless or threatened with homelessness. They are then assessed as being owed either the prevention or relief duty or no duty at all (i.e. they are not homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days).

Housing Enquiries

These are all enquiries made to the council about issues regarding housing and homelessness. They include telephone calls, emails or visits to reception.

Housing Main Duty (post HRA)

A person or household is owed the main housing duty if they are found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

Intentionally Homeless

Section 191(1) provides that a person becomes homeless intentionally if ALL of the following apply:

- a. they deliberately do or fail to do anything in consequence of which they cease to occupy accommodation; and,
- b. the accommodation is available for their occupation; and,
- c. it would have been reasonable for them to continue to occupy the accommodation.

Prevention Duty

The prevention duty applies when a local authority is satisfied that an applicant is

threatened with homelessness within 56 days and eligible for assistance. The LA is required to 'take reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure that accommodation does not cease to be available'.

Priority Need

The Housing Act 1996 defines five categories of people who must be accepted as in priority need, namely:-

- pregnant women, or any person who resides with a pregnant woman
- households with dependent children
- all 16- and 17-year-olds, provided they are not a 'relevant child' (i.e. they remain the responsibility of social services) or a child in need to whom a local authority owes a duty under section 20 of the Children Act 1989
- all 18- to 20-year olds, who 'at any time after reaching the age of 16, but while still under 18' were, but are no longer, looked after, accommodated or fostered
- any person who has lost her/his accommodation as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster.

The Housing Act 1996 also defines the following groups who will be accepted as in priority need provided that the authority is satisfied that they are vulnerable. A person may be vulnerable as a result of:

- old age, mental illness or disability, physical disability or other special reason, or someone who lives with one of these categories of vulnerable person
- having been looked after, accommodated or fostered and is aged 21 or over

- having been a member of Her Majesty's regular naval, military or air forces
- having served a custodial sentence
- having had to leave accommodation because of violence or threats of violence from another person that are likely to be carried out.

Registered Providers (Housing Associations)

Registered Providers in England are independent societies, bodies of trustees or companies that provide low-cost social housing for people in housing need on a non-profit-making basis. They are predominantly charities and any trading surplus is used to maintain existing homes and to help finance new ones.

Relief Duty

The relief duty applies when a local authority is satisfied that an applicant is homeless and eligible for assistance. It requires an authority to 'take reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure that suitable accommodation becomes available for the applicant's occupation' for at least six months.

Rough Sleeping

A person who is sleeping rough as defined by the government is someone who is sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); or are in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats or stations).

Temporary Accommodation

This is accommodation provided by the local authority to homeless households in priority need owed the relief duty or the main duty