



Homelessness Review Brief 2017

Final Version

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Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a legal requirement on local authorities to carry out a review of all forms of homelessness in their district and publish a Homelessness Strategy at least every 5 years. The Homelessness Review is intended to provide part of an evidence base for developing the new Homelessness Strategy. For the purposes of this Act “homelessness review” means a review by a local housing authority of:

- the levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness
- the activities which are carried out to address homelessness
- the resources available to the council for such activities.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Amongst a number of changes the act makes to current homelessness legislation the following points are important to note for purposes of the Review:

- **Changes to those considered as threatened with homelessness** – extension of the period during which someone qualifies as being threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days.
- **Changes in duty owed** – extension of the existing duty to provide free homelessness advice and information to any person as well as to take reasonable steps to prevent or relieve homelessness. Councils will be required to carry out an assessment in all cases where an applicant is homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless and agree on a homelessness plan. Councils will have a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness for any individual who is at risk, regardless of priority need. This means either assisting them to stay in their current accommodation, or helping them to find a new place to live. The act also places a duty on councils to relieve homelessness for all eligible households, regardless of priority need. This involves taking reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure suitable accommodation.

Defining homelessness

For purposes of the review the definitions of homelessness used will be those that have applied during the period 2012-2017. Moving forwards it will be important to note the changes in duty owed outlined by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Statutory Homelessness

The council currently takes a homelessness application where it has reason to believe that a person is already homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days and where a person consents to enable the Council to carry out enquiries and co-operates to enable a decision to be reached. Statutory homelessness refers to applicants that have met the criteria set out in legislation (Housing Act 1996, Homelessness Act 2002) i.e. are considered to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

Threatened with Homelessness

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, the council must have a strategy for preventing homelessness that applies to everyone at risk of homelessness, not just people who fall within the priority need group. Authorities are also encouraged to take steps to relieve homelessness in cases where someone has been found to be homeless but is not owed a duty to secure accommodation under the homelessness legislation.

Street Homelessness

The Department for Communities and Local Government’s definition of street homelessness is:

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

Levels of homelessness in East Staffordshire

Statutory Homelessness

Table 1: Homelessness decisions – Oct 2012-Sept 2017 (Housing Options data)

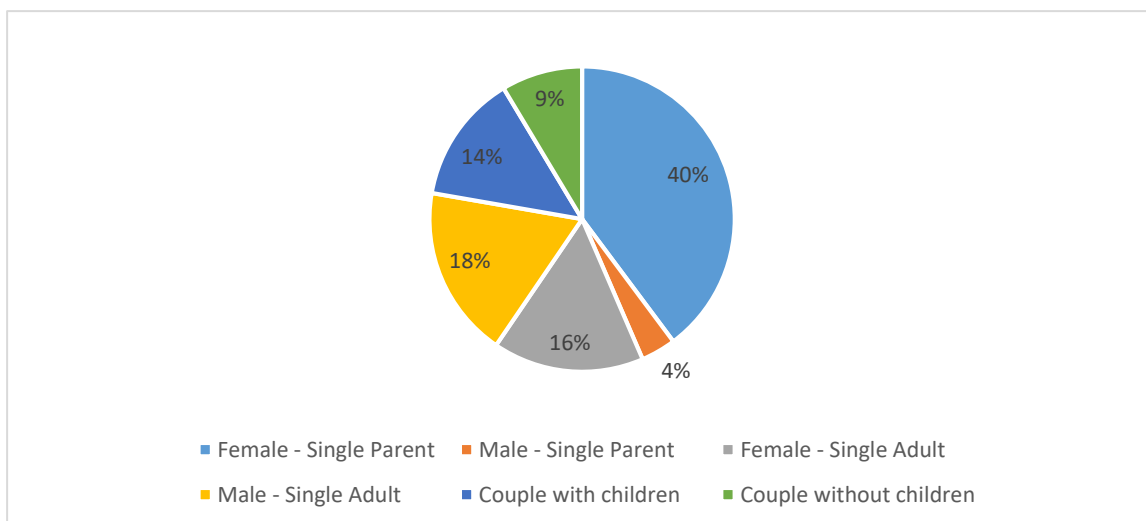
Decision	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total	%
Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need	11	87	129	134	144	90	595	38.3%
Eligible, homeless and in priority need, but intentionally homeless	10	34	19	26	22	14	125	8.0%
Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	14	39	67	51	42	22	235	15.1%
Eligible, but not homeless	5	16	28	32	24	27	132	8.5%
Ineligible	1	1	2	3	3	2	12	0.8%
Withdrawn	3	33	29	21	24	28	138	8.9%
Cancelled	1	3	5	4	5	19	37	2.4%
Found suitable alternative accommodation	4	58	54	45	47	41	249	16.0%
Other	3	2	2	4	3	3	17	1.1%
Total	52	273	335	320	314	259	1553	

General Trends

- 70% of applicants were 18-44 are old. 52% 25-44 years old.
- The largest categories of applicants are single female parents (28%) and single males with no children (30%).
- The majority of applicants (87%) consider themselves to be of white ethnic origin.
- In total 38.3% of applicants were accepted as main duty homeless.

Main Duty Trends

Figure 1: Household type of main duty decisions – Oct 2012-Sept 2017 (Housing Options data)

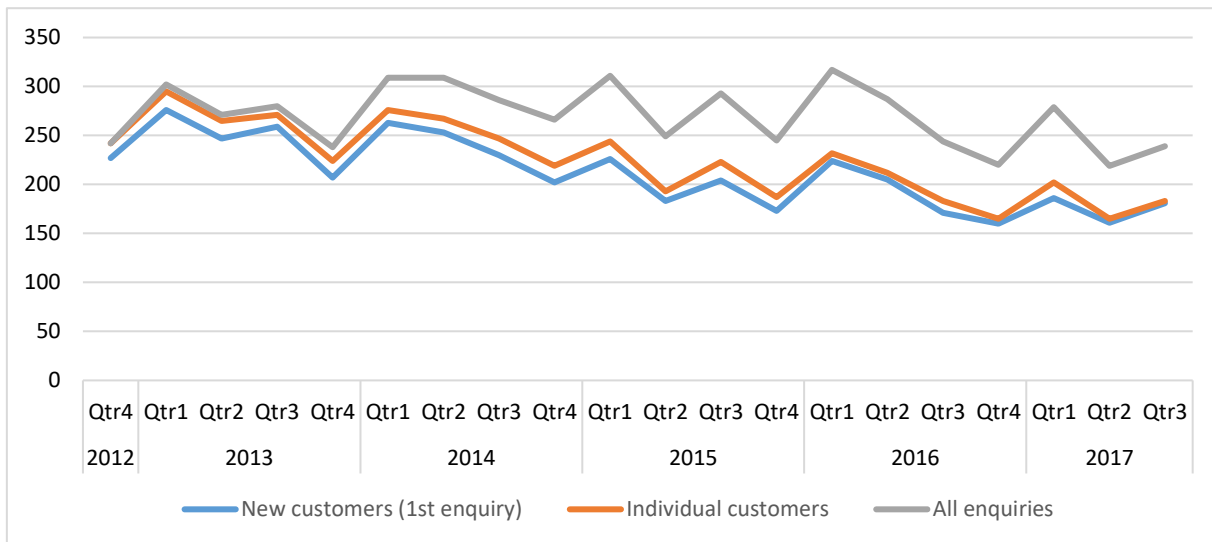


- The largest group of applicants accepted as eligible and in priority need are female single parents (40%), followed by male/female single adults (18% and 16% respectively).
- 43% of acceptations were adults without dependants, 27% had 1 child and 14% had 2 children.
- Most acceptations are for 25-34 year olds (33%), followed by 35-44 (23%) and 18-24% (19%).

Threatened with Homelessness

In practice the number of households known to become legally homeless in East Staffordshire is fairly small. However, many people experience the knowledge that they are going to have to leave their accommodation and the stress and struggle of trying to find somewhere else to live. This is illustrated by the fact that on average around 1,000 people have approached the Council each year for housing options advice.

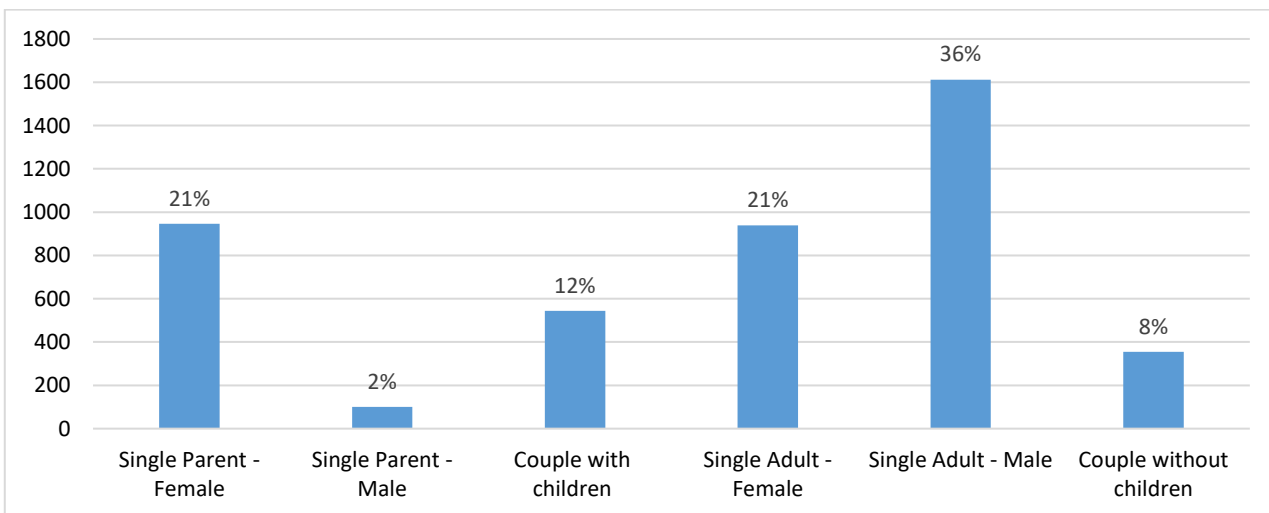
Figure 2: Number of enquiries to Housing Options – Oct 2012-Sept 2017 (Housing Options data)



General Trends

- Total number of new service users has declined.
- 78% have been 1st time enquiries.
- 74% are between 18-44 years old.
- 43% consider themselves disabled.
- 53% are female.
- 80% are single and 65% have no dependants. Of those with dependants 48% have 1 child, 29% 2 children.

Figure 3: Service users’ household type – Oct 2012-Sept 2017 (Housing Options data)

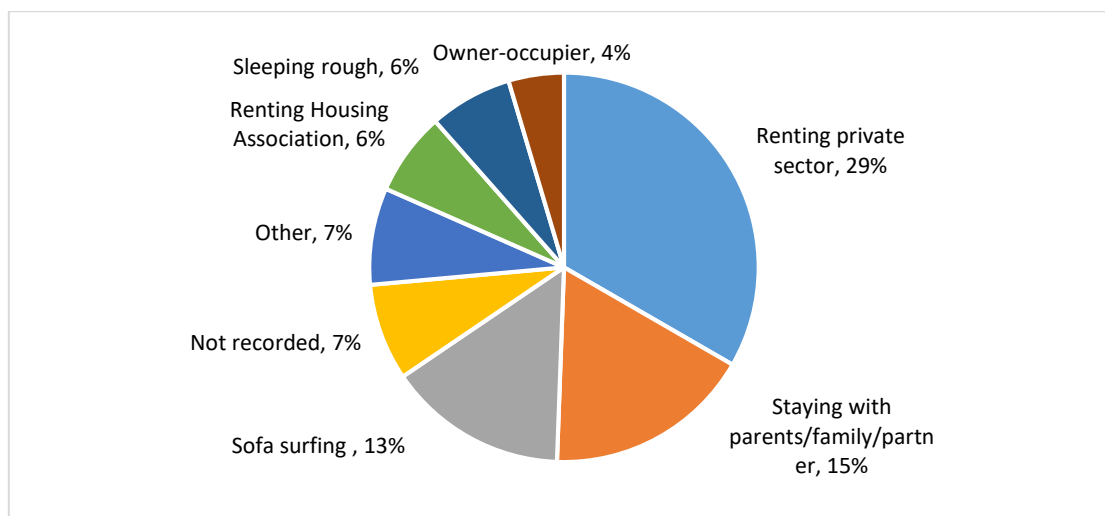


- Average profile of the Housing Options service user is single male/female, no dependants between the ages 18-44 or single female parent between 18-34 with 1-2 children.

Housing Status

Figure 4: Top 8 housing statuses of service users by overall percentage – Oct 2012-Sept 2017

(Housing Options data)



- The top housing statuses of service users was renting in the private sector (29%), followed by family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate (15%) and sofa surfing (13%).

Reasons for Homelessness

Table 2: Top 7 reasons given for homelessness – Oct 2012-Sept 2017 (Housing Options data)

Reason given for homelessness	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Av.
Non-violent breakdown of relationship	19.0%	12.9%	16.8%	14.5%	13.0%	17.5%	15.6%
Other loss of rented or tied accommodation	8.9%	12.4%	10.3%	12.0%	13.3%	13.3%	11.7%
Relatives/friends no longer willing/able to accommodate	13.1%	11.5%	12.6%	14.8%	14.9%	13.5%	13.4%
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	24.4%	18.3%	18.0%	20.2%	17.1%	16.8%	19.1%
Rent arrears	11.9%	16.1%	15.3%	10.3%	9.9%	10.1%	12.3%
Termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	13.7%	16.4%	17.6%	19.5%	21.6%	19.1%	18.0%
Violent breakdown of relationship	8.9%	12.5%	9.4%	8.7%	10.2%	9.7%	9.9%

- There has been a rise in termination of AST being quoted as reason for homelessness whilst rent arrears has gone down after a peak in 2013-14.

Top reasons for homelessness continue to be the same as those identified in the 2008-2013 review:

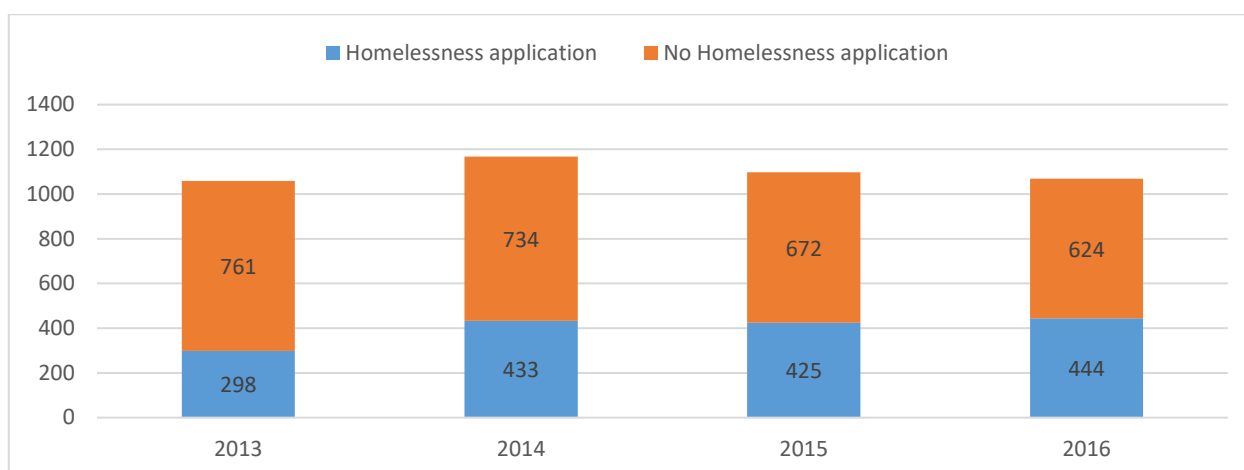
- Parents/family/friends no longer willing or able to accommodate (av. 32.5%)
- Breakdown of relationship with partner, in most cases non-violent (av. 15.6%) than violent (av. 9.9%)
- Loss of rented accommodation, including termination of AST, rent arrears + other reasons (av. 42%)

Youth Homelessness

- 30% of 18-24 year olds quoted parental eviction as the reason for homelessness, 15% due to family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate.
- Overall, 18-24 year olds are most likely to have been made homeless from their family home (54% of all parental evictions).

Outcomes

Figure 5: Outcome of approaches – 2013-2016



Prevention and Relief

- ‘Homelessness prevention’ means providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness. This would usually take place before a homeless application is made or before a decision is reached.
- ‘Homelessness relief’ is where an authority has been unable to prevent homelessness but helps someone to secure accommodation, even though the authority is under no statutory obligation to do so (i.e. they are judged either not in priority need or intentionally homeless).

Table 3: Prevention and relief outcomes of approaches – Oct 2012-Sept 2017

Intervention	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Action unsuccessful	0	6	4	4	2	0	16
Prevented	17	53	57	62	36	15	240
Relieved	6	19	24	22	17	10	98
Prevention casework not yet concluded	47	290	139	78	115	64	733
No Prevention Casework	172	723	946	932	898	642	4313

- 63 preventions were help to stay in their current accommodation, 177 were help to move on to other accommodation.
- All relief cases were helped to move on to other accommodation.
- 42 relief cases were helped into supported accommodation.

Street Homelessness

- 6% (318) of applicants stated that they were sleeping rough over the period Oct 2012-Sept 2017.

Table 4: Street homelessness counts – 2012-2017

Year	Housing Options users reported sleeping rough	Reported number of rough sleepers
2012	9	7 (estimated)
2013	41	2 (estimated)
2014	56	3 (estimated)
2015	79	7 (estimated)
2016	83	6 (estimated)
2017	50	16 – count took place 15 th Nov

Predicting likely future levels of homelessness in East Staffordshire

The Housing Market in East Staffordshire - Availability & Affordability

- According to the [2014 SHMA](#), buying a home was unaffordable to 65% of residents in 2014.¹
- The private rental sector as housing tenure grew by 77% 2001-2011.²
- Median rent levels in the Borough have not substantially risen 2014-2017³.
- However, private rented housing is not readily available to all households in housing need. The main reasons for this are:
 - The market is sufficiently competitive to allow landlords to be selective about tenants. This means benefit claimants and low-income or insecure income households have difficulty finding and securing suitable private rented housing.⁴
 - The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) freeze and Benefit cap further limit the options of affordable private rented housing to claimants (See Table 5 below).
- The social rented sector is also under pressure. Total households on the housing waiting list at 1st April 2015/16 for East Staffordshire = 40.5/1,000 households which is higher than the mean for the district authorities in the area = 31.2/1,000 households.⁵
- The SHMA estimates a need for an additional 1,483 affordable homes between 2012-31⁶.

National Policy and Implications for Homelessness

Welfare reform

- **Universal Credit (UC)** – There are concerns about the difficulties that some of the arrangements for UC pose for vulnerable households e.g. move away from direct payment to landlords, 6 week initial waiting periods and no support with housing costs for 18 to 21 year-olds not subject to exemption.⁷
- **LHA freeze** – Rates are restricted to the lower 30th percentile of rents, which limits the number of properties available to benefit claimants.

Table 5: Private Rental Market Statistics, monthly lower quartile rents recorded between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 and November 2017 LHA rates for East Staffordshire (Valuation Office Agency + HMRC data)

N. of bedrooms	1 bedroom (shared, studio and flat)	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4+ bedrooms
Lower quartile rents	£325-395	£475	£550	£750
LHA rates	£240.16-326.32	£414.24	£494.32	£649.6

- Moreover, the SHMA highlights that there is currently insufficient single room (shared) and 1-2 bedroom properties in the Borough at LHA rates for the number of households receiving those rates.⁸
- **Benefit cap** – There is potential for this policy to lead to homelessness for larger households (2+ children) where movement into employment is not an option through the inability to meet rents.⁹

A combination of pressures in the housing market combined with welfare reform could potentially put people at risk of homelessness, notably single young people and large households relying on benefits. However, it is difficult to predict how welfare reforms will actually impact and how markets will behave.

¹ [Strategic Housing Market Assessment Oct 2013](#), updated April 2014, East Staffordshire Borough Council (ESBC) p.74

² Office for National Statistics Census 2001 and Census 2011

³ Valuation Office Agency Reference Rents, comparison of Jan 2014, Jan 2015, Jan 2016 & Oct 2017

⁴ SHMA p. 182

⁵ [Communities and Local Government data](#)

⁶ 42% of projected outstanding permissions for market housing led development above the threshold. SHMA p. 194

⁷ 2017 [Homelessness Monitor](#) p. 10-11

⁸ SHMA. p. 179

⁹ 2017 [Homelessness Monitor](#) p. 10-11