

# Gosport Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022–2027



### **Gosport Borough Council**

Gosport Borough Council is a district local authority that was founded on 01st April 1974, located in County of Hampshire. The council consists of 28 elected councillors, with day-to-day decisions being made via four boards one of which meets specifically to make decisions about housing. The council's chosen statement is to 'build on our strengths to empower and support our communities and ensure the potential of the borough and all of our residents is achieved'. The council is responsible for administering a range of local government functions, including landlord and communitywide housing services.

### **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. We carrying out research and create policies that improve the quality and potential of housing services and strategies.

Acknowledgement: This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was commissioned and funded by Gosport Borough Council and formulated by Neil Morland & Co Housing Consultants. Thanks go to Julie Smith and Claire Nijjer from Gosport Borough Council for providing invaluable assistance. The time and materials that numerous people and organisations have generously contributed to help produce this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, especially those persons with lived experience of homelessness, is very much appreciated.

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# 1. Introduction

The approach taken to formulating this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, complies with the obligations found in the Homelessness Act 2002. This legislation requires local authorities to take strategic responsibility for tackling and preventing homelessness.

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy provides a single plan for all Gosport agencies to concentrate their activities for tackling and preventing homelessness.

In formulating this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Gosport Borough Council's Housing Services were assisted by Hampshire County Council's adult social care and children services and had the co-operation of housing associations. Numerous other agencies also made contributions.

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is intended to be in place for a maximum of five years, from 2022-2027. A new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy shall be published sooner, if there are substantial changes to homelessness legislation or significant revisions to statutory guidance on homelessness.

Prior to this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy being formulated, a review of homelessness (the Homelessness Review) was completed, to evaluate the current picture of homelessness in Gosport. This concentrated on:

- levels of homelessness,
- activities for preventing homelessness
- activities for securing accommodation
- activities for providing support, and
- the resources available to deliver the above activities

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is a forward-looking document that includes a summary of the findings from the Homelessness Review. This separate document paints a picture of homelessness at the time the research was carried out, looking at what has happened over the past five years.

This Homelessness Strategy incorporates a comprehensive action plan, which shows clearly:

- specifics of each action to be taken,
- a deadline for when each action is expected to be completed,
- the resources that will be needed to complete each action,
- the intended change that accomplishing each action will achieve.

When formulating this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy the objectives of Gosport Borough Council's Housing Allocation Scheme and Tenancy Strategy have been cross-referenced. Statutory guidance on homelessness strategies was also considered, as was national guidance published by the Local Government Association.

The action plan forms part of this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and will be updated annually. This will ensure accountability and explain why any actions might be behind schedule, have been completed early, or are no longer relevant.

Gosport Borough Council carried out consultation on the objectives and actions of this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, prior to publishing it.

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is available to download from the council's website. A copy of this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy can be viewed at the council offices during usual opening hours. Copies are also available free of charge.

## 2. Summary

### 2.1 Introduction

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy seeks to tackle all forms of homelessness, including those who are owed a statutory duty of assistance and often living in temporary accommodation, as well as people who are staying in supported housing, sleeping rough on the streets, or have other transient arrangements (e.g. sleeping on a friend's sofa).

#### **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Priorities:**

- 1) Reduce the current and future likely levels of homelessness.
- 2) Prevent homelessness
- 3) Arrange for suitable accommodation to be available for everyone
- 4) Support households to retain their accommodation

A range of actions has been identified for the council, along with other public bodies, private registered providers and voluntary organisations, that can help tackle and prevent homelessness. Specific actions have been included for people who are more at risk of homelessness. The priorities and actions contained in this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy have had regard to the functions exercised by Gosport Borough Council and Hampshire County Council in respect of housing, adult social care, and child social care services. This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy promotes working across organisations and policy boundaries, to ensure social inclusion and equality of access to services. When developing this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, a broad range of organisations have

been consulted, including people who were experiencing homelessness, or had done so previously.

## **2.2 National homelessness context**

There is national legislative framework setting out the rights of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and the responsibilities of local authorities, other public bodies and private registered providers of social housing (housing associations).

Causes of homelessness include poverty, inadequate housing, health problems and relationship breakdown. All contribute to why people become homeless.

Nationally, levels of homelessness have increased over the past decade, with more people approaching local authorities for assistance and rising numbers of people sleeping rough. The amount of households living in temporary accommodation has doubled since March 2010 from 50,000 up to 95,000 at March 2021. Persons of black ethnic origin are disproportionately more likely to become homeless, as are young people aged 16 to 25 years of age.

The UK Government has an ambition to end rough sleeping by 2024. As part of their pursuit of this objective, an internationally proven method of helping people exit street homelessness, known as the Housing First approach is being piloted. During 2020, the UK Government launched the Everyone In campaign as part of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in over 29,000 people being helped to find accommodation.

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.

## **2.3 Local homelessness context**

The information in Section 4 of this Strategy is a summary of the evidence found in the recent review of homelessness<sup>1</sup>.

When formulating this strategy, regard was had to the conclusions of the Review, which assessed the levels and patterns of homelessness, and identified gaps in local knowledge and services. Regard was also had to local Housing Allocations Scheme and Tenancy Strategy, plus other relevant strategies and policies.

Households aged 24 to 44 years, with dependent children and of White British origin are the main type of household to seek assistance from the council in relation to homelessness, in line with national trends. In addition, a growing number of single

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<sup>1</sup> A Review of Homelessness in the borough of Gosport, 2021.

male and single females who have difficulties as a result of physical and mental health problems are becoming homeless in Gosport, also in line with national trends.

Levels of homelessness in Gosport have increased over the past five years, and several factors indicate that this is set to continue, including; 26% of children in Gosport living in poverty; lower rate of employment and higher rate of economic inactivity; and the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic leading to potential job losses and reduced incomes.

It is clear from the Homelessness Review that activity to prevent homelessness and support for those who are, or may become homeless, is the key to tackling homelessness in Gosport. The council has developed excellent partnerships with services in Gosport that have been commissioned to support homeless people and help to prevent homelessness. These services are well placed, experienced and keen to expand to help meet the growing need.

The Action Plan at Section 6 of this Homelessness Strategy has been designed, with input from stakeholders, to help meet the growing levels of homelessness and secure additional suitable housing for those in need.

### **3. National Homelessness Context**

The UK Government is responsible for making decisions about homelessness law and strategy for England. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) (prior to September 2021 known as the Ministry for 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 to anyone at risk of homelessness and assist persons in specified circumstances who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

### 3.1 Homelessness legislation

The current legal framework setting out the rights of people who are experiencing homelessness and duties local authorities must administer, has been in force since 1977<sup>2</sup>, with significant amendments being made to it 1985<sup>3</sup>, 1996<sup>4</sup>, and 2017<sup>5</sup>.

#### Definition of homelessness

- Homeless within 56 days
- Have no accommodation available in the UK or abroad
- Have no legal right to occupy the accommodation
- Have a split household and accommodation is not available for the whole household
- It is unreasonable to continue to occupy the accommodation
- At risk of violence
- Unable to secure entry to their accommodation
- Occupy a moveable structure but have no place to put it

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 or 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.

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<sup>2</sup> Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977

<sup>3</sup> Housing Act 1985

<sup>4</sup> Housing Act 1996, Part 7

<sup>5</sup> Homelessness Reduction Act 2017



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 private registered providers and child social care services. Specified public authorities have a duty to refer a household who is at risk of homelessness to a local authority.

### **3.2 Causes of homelessness**

DLUHC with the DWP published independent research on the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping<sup>6</sup>. 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.

### **3.3 Homelessness statistics**

The latest annual official statistics published by the UK Government, for April 2020-March 2021<sup>7</sup>, showed:

- 119,400 households were owed a prevention duty in 2020-21, down 20.0% from 2019-20. Of these 8,940 were due to a Section 21 notice, down 50.9% from 2019-20
- 149,160 households were owed a relief duty in 2020-21, up 6.1% from 2019-20
- The number of households with children threatened with homelessness fell 29.0%, and those already homeless fell 11.6%
- The number of single households (households without children) threatened with homelessness fell 13.3%, while those already homeless increased 11.7%
- 15,370 households with children were homeless or threatened with homelessness due to domestic abuse, up 13.9% from 2019-20 – this represents a fifth (20.5%) of households with children owed a prevention or relief duty
- 11,580 single households were assessed as rough sleeping at the time of approach, up 39.4% from 2019-20
- 26,670 single households owed either a prevention or relief duty had an offending history support need in 2020-21, up 25.8% from 2019-20

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<sup>6</sup> Alma Economics. 2019. Homelessness: Causes of homelessness and rough Sleeping: rapid assessment of evidence, London, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Department for Work and Pensions

<sup>7</sup> Statutory Homelessness Annual Report, 2020-21, England. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

- Households with a black lead applicant were the most disproportionately homeless as they accounted for 9.7% of those owed a duty while they are only estimated to comprise of 3.5% of the population
- The number of lead applicants who were registered unemployed increased 18.2% from 2019-20 to 104,640 applicants

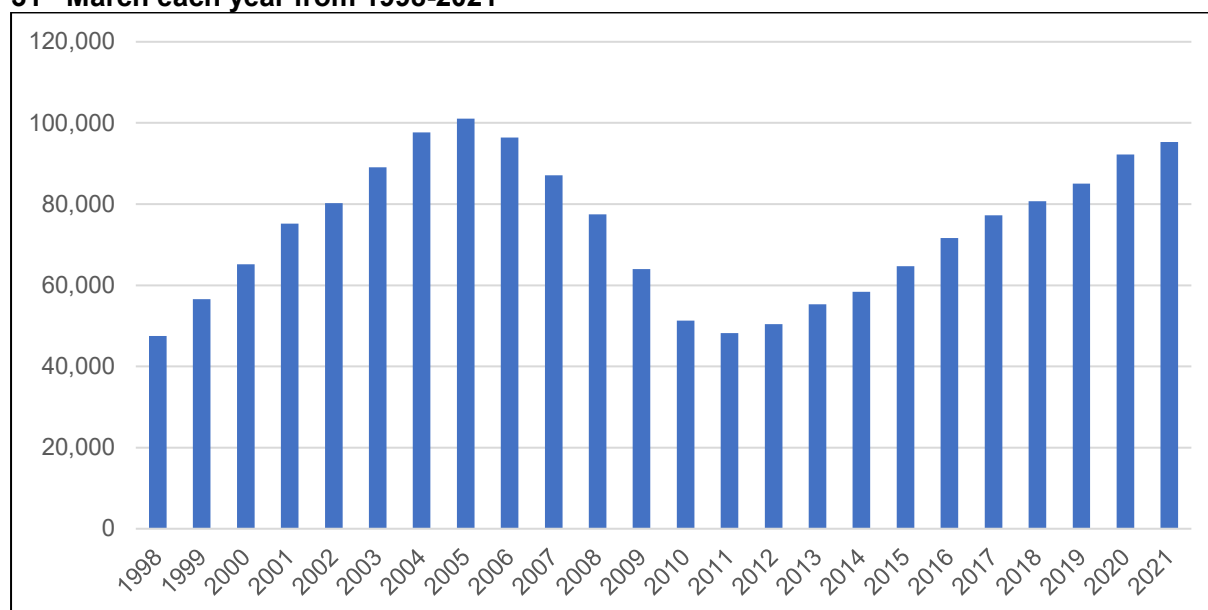
Many of the changes from 2019-20 can be linked to COVID-19, and the government and local authority response including:

- Households accommodated under the 'Everyone In' campaign, whereby local authorities were asked to provide emergency accommodation to rough sleepers, people who were living in shelters with shared sleeping arrangements, and those at risk of rough sleeping
- The restriction on private rented sector evictions, and lengthened notice periods for landlords

Overall, 258,620 households received homelessness assistance in 2019-20. Of these households, 54.7% secured accommodation for 6+ months, 24.1% left the system for other reasons, 13.9% were owed a main duty, and 7.3% were homeless and not owed a main duty following relief. Households with children were more likely to approach at prevention (64.5%), while single households are more likely to approach at relief (55.6%). Households with children were the most likely to secure accommodation for 6 months or more at 55.4% of those who approached in 2019-20. This is followed by care leavers aged 18 to 20 at 55.1%, single households at 54.4%, those rough sleeping at the time of application at 44.6%, and finally those on departure from custody at 40.4%.

Excluding London, households with children in temporary accommodation are most likely to be placed in local authority or housing association provided accommodation. Single households in temporary accommodation are most likely to be in bed and breakfast hotels, or local authority or housing association provided accommodation.

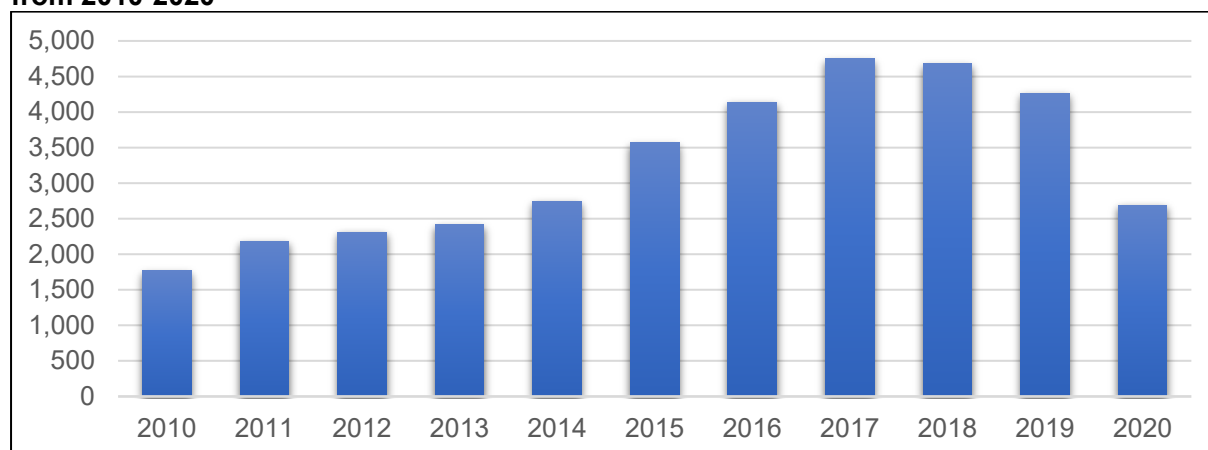
**Chart 1: Households in temporary accommodation, England, annual snapshot taken on 31<sup>st</sup> March each year from 1998-2021**



Source: Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

The latest rough sleeping snapshot statistics<sup>8</sup> 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 2010-2020**



Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

### 3.4 Homelessness Policy

The UK Government has an ambition of ending street homelessness by 2024<sup>9</sup>.

From 2017-2019, the UK Government invested £1.2bn to tackle homelessness, which included £76m for an initiative to reduce street homelessness and £28m to

<sup>8</sup> Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2019. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

<sup>9</sup> The Conservative and Unionist Party, Manifesto 2019.

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 period<sup>10</sup>. In August 2018, the DLUHC published a Rough Sleeping Strategy<sup>11</sup>.

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.

### **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. DLUHC asked local authorities to lead a local programme of actions. The UK Government put in place an exemption for hotels, hostels and B&B's 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 six months. Bailiff enforcement action is not permitted during periods of 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.

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<sup>10</sup> Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

<sup>11</sup> The rough sleeping strategy, 2018, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

As new restrictions came into force in January 2021, DLUHC 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 HRA17<sup>12</sup>, commissioned by DLUHC, 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.

Research<sup>13</sup> carried out by DLUHC with over 500 people who had experienced street homelessness found that before sleeping rough most had not been in stable accommodation and had high levels of vulnerabilities. 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.

The UK Government has put together nine indicators that it will use to track national progress in tackling the disadvantages that affect families and children's outcomes<sup>14</sup>. Included within this is the number of households with dependent children living in temporary accommodation, which at the end of June 2020 equated to 9 in every 1000 households (approximately 63,000).

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 received Royal assent in April of this year. This pioneering legislation will extend priority need for homeless assistance to persons who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse.

### **3.5 Homelessness Funding**

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<sup>12</sup> Knight, Tim., Greenstock, Jane., Beadle, Shane., Charalambous, Steph., Fenton, Catherine. 2020. Evaluation of the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act: Final Report. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. London.

<sup>13</sup> 2020. Understanding the multiple vulnerabilities, support needs and experiences of people who sleep rough in England. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. London.

<sup>14</sup> Improving Lives: Helping Workless Families Indicators 2021: data for 2005 to 2020

Since December 2019, The UK Government has allocated about £1bn to local homelessness services, with over 300 councils across England receiving a share of funding to support people experiencing homelessness in their areas.

**Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme**

The UK Government has committed £433 million from 2021 through to 2024 to fund 600 rough sleepers into long-term accommodation. The program offers both capital and revenue funding, with the former being made available early on in the program and the latter being offered in the later stages of the program. Homes England are delivering the capital funding element of the program with DLUHC leading on the revenue funding.

## 4. Local Homelessness Context

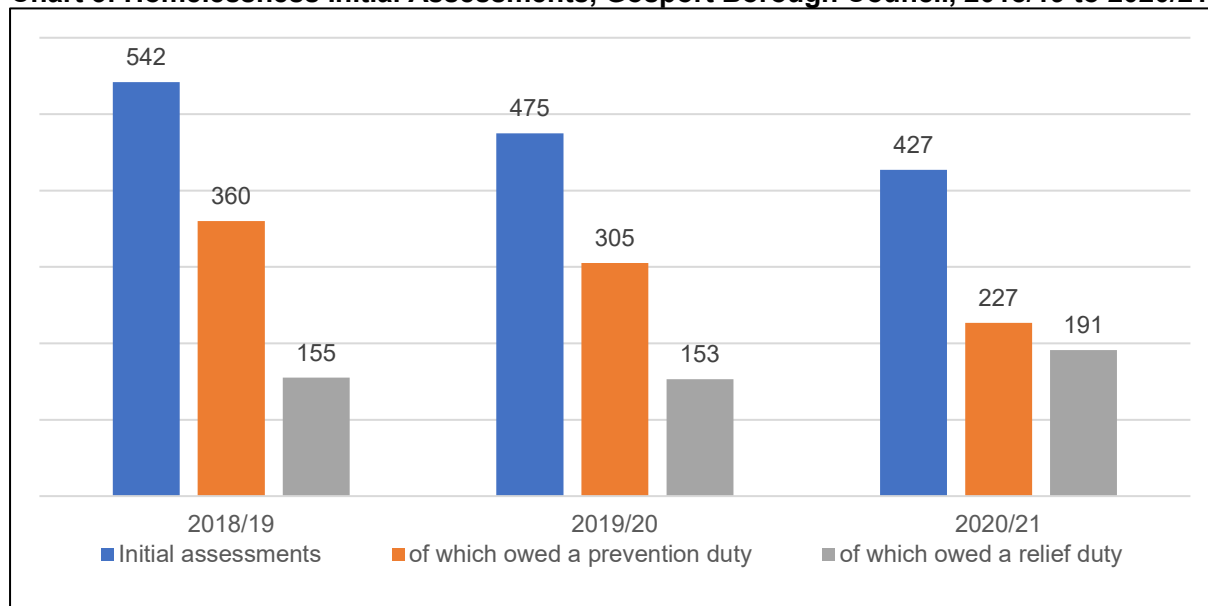
### 4.1 Levels of homelessness

From April 2018 the council's duty to prevent<sup>15</sup> and relieve<sup>16</sup> homelessness has placed increased pressure on local housing authorities. Between April 2018 and March 2021 Gosport Borough Council assisted an additional 1,391 households under the new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness, of which 64% of households (892) received preventative assistance. In line with the regional and national percentage, 96% of those initially assessed were found to be owed a homelessness duty by the council<sup>17</sup>.

Gosport Borough Council completed a greater number of initial assessments (14.33) per thousand households in 2018/19 compared both regionally and nationally<sup>18</sup>. Whilst the number of people approaching the council for homelessness assistance has reduced in recent years, the complexity of cases has, and will continue to, place increased pressure on services.

Despite a year-on-year reduction in assessments, the number of relief cases has increased over the 3-year period. Despite an overall reduction in the number of assessments, single male applicants are the only household type to record an increase each year.

**Chart 3: Homelessness Initial Assessments, Gosport Borough Council, 2018/19 to 2020/21**



Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

<sup>15</sup> s.195(1) Housing Act 1996, as substituted by s.4(2) Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 The prevention duty applies when a local authority is satisfied that an applicant is threatened with homeless and eligible for assistance.

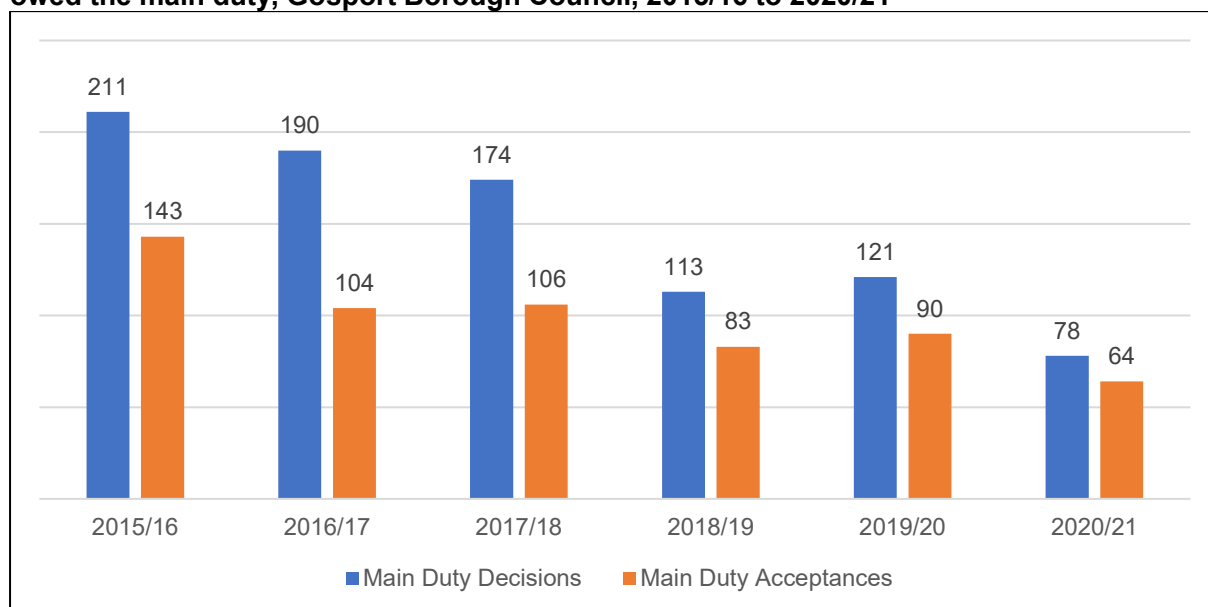
<sup>16</sup> s.189B(1) Housing Act 1996, as inserted by s.5(2) Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 The relief duty applies when a local authority is satisfied that an applicant is homeless and eligible for assistance.

<sup>17</sup> Total initial assessments owed a duty 2019/20 England 95%, South East 94% Hampshire 95%

<sup>18</sup> 2018-19 Total initial assessments per thousand households Hampshire 9.77, South East 10.84, England excluding London 11.84 and All England 12.52

The number of main housing duty<sup>19</sup> decisions made by the council has reduced by 70% over the six-year period 2015/2016 to 2020/21, with the initial impact of the HRA-17 becoming evident from April 2018. Chart 4 illustrates a reduction in the number of main housing duty decisions post April 2018 and an increase in the percentage of acceptances compared with earlier years.

**Chart 4: Number of main duty applications and percentage of those accepted as being owed the main duty, Gosport Borough Council, 2015/16 to 2020/21**



Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Between 2018/19 and 2020/21 applicants aged 25 to 34 received the highest number of initial assessments, followed by 18 to 24 year-olds and 35 to 44 year-olds. In line with general population data the majority of applicants are of white, compared both regionally and nationally, Gosport records a higher percentage of white ethnicity applicants.

The main 'reason for loss of last settled home' both prior and post HRA 17 is as a result of households no longer able to stay with friends or family and termination of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy.

Between 2018/19 and 2020/21 an average of 71% of main duties ended following acceptance of a 'social housing Part 6 offer'<sup>20</sup>.

Gosport recorded the lowest number of rough sleepers per thousand households in the benchmarking group over four of the past five years. All rough sleepers recorded over the five-year period are of UK nationality, 77% were male and 91% over 26 years old. In 2020 Gosport recorded 3 male rough sleepers of UK nationality over the age of 26.

<sup>19</sup>Housing Act 1996, Pt VII s193(2)

<sup>20</sup> Allocation of accommodation in accordance with the Local Authority's Allocation Scheme under Part 6 Housing Act 1996

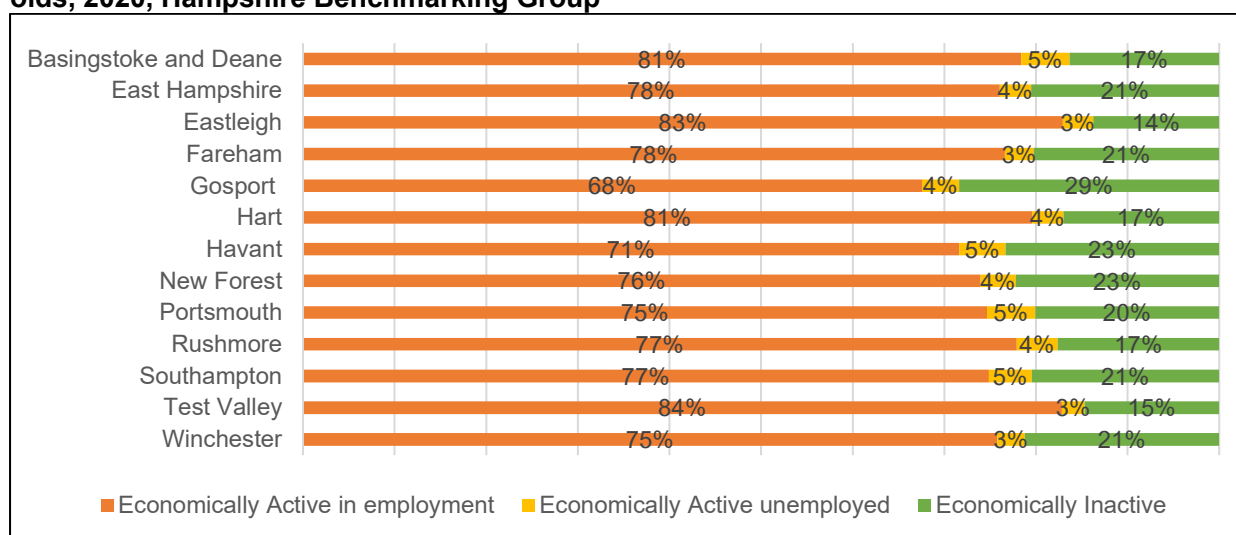


Research<sup>21</sup> shows the primary cause of homelessness to be childhood poverty, closely followed by labour and housing market factors as secondary causes. To forecast future levels of homelessness these factors have been analysed.

Gosport has the fourth highest percentage of child poverty in Hampshire, below Southampton, Portsmouth and Havant. Unlike Southampton, Portsmouth and Havant recording an increase in child poverty, Gosport has remained at 26% over the 5-year period<sup>22</sup>.

Gosport has a lower rate of employment and a higher rate of economic inactivity due to long term illness/disability; unemployment is in line with regional and national percentage, however the percentage of 16 to 24 year-old claiming out of work benefit is higher compared with neighbouring authorities.

**Chart 5: Employed, unemployed and economically inactive by percentage of 16 to 64 year olds, 2020, Hampshire Benchmarking Group**



Source: ONS Nomis Labour Market Statistics

The percentage of households either registered unemployed or not working due to long term illness or disability has increased year on year. In 2021, 51% of main applicants owed a homeless duty were either registered unemployed or not working due to long term illness or disability.

Median house prices for Gosport at £216,000 were lower than Hampshire (£327,500) the South East (342,000) and England (£259,000)<sup>23</sup>. The ratio of median house prices to median gross annual workplaces earnings in Gosport is more than 3 times lower than Hampshire and the South East, 1.2 times lower compared with England. This data was published in 2020, it is therefore uncertain what impact the Covid-19 pandemic will have on these ratios in the future.

<sup>21</sup> Professor Glen Bramley and Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick (July 2017), 'Homelessness in the UK: who is most at risk', Housing Studies Journal, pp1-21

<sup>22</sup> 5 year (2014/15 – 2019/20) median number of children living in poverty Gosport 4,508

<sup>23</sup> Office for National Statistics Median house price by local authority district, England and Wales December 2020

## 4.2 Preventing Homelessness

Positive action succeeded in preventing homelessness for just over half of applicants assisted under the prevention duty between 2018/19 and 2020/21.

**Table 1: Cases where positive action succeeded in preventing homelessness**

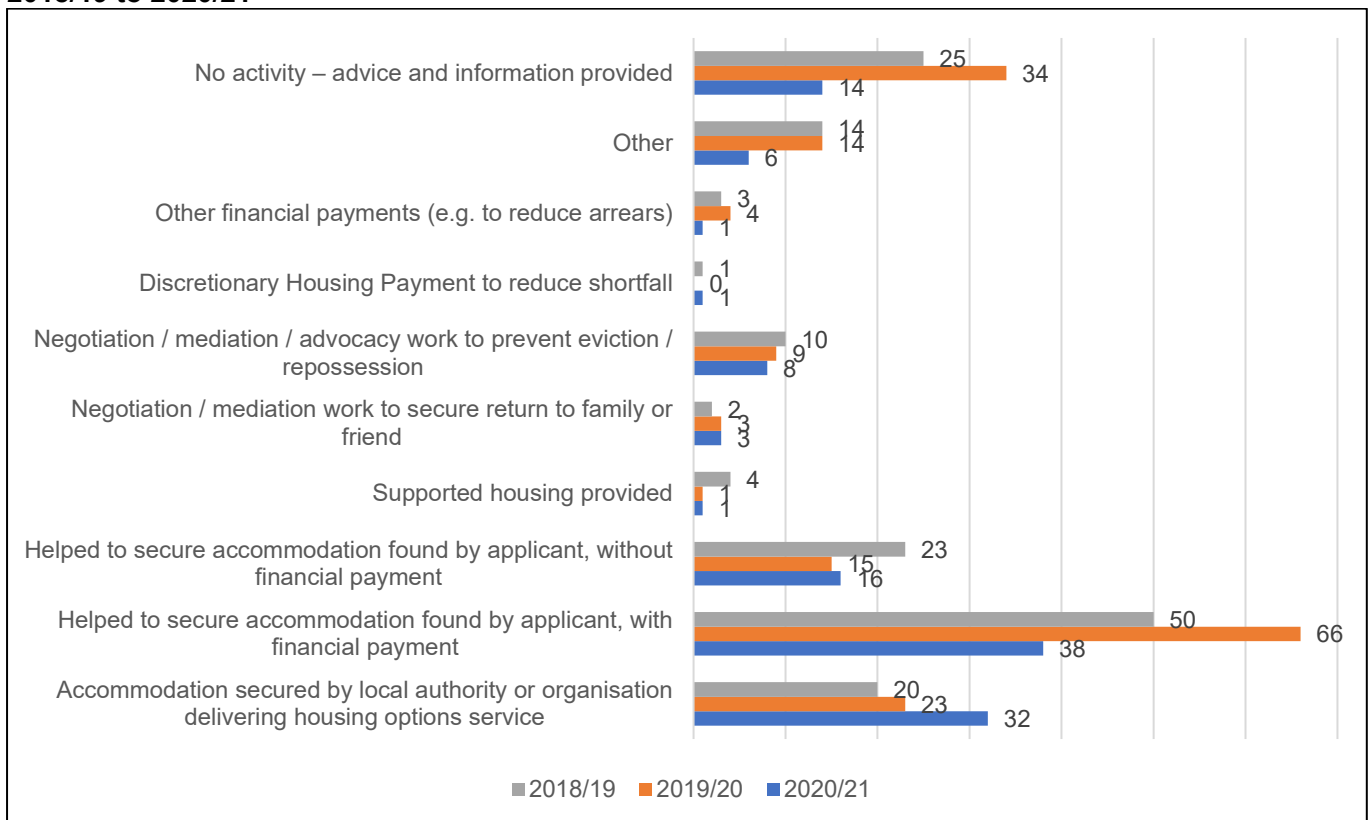
	Succeeded in preventing homelessness stayed in existing accommodation	Succeeded in preventing homelessness moved into alternative accommodation	Unsuccessful in securing accommodation
2018/19	34	118	118
2019/20	33	136	150
2020/21	21	99	99

Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

The Homeless Prevention fund was considered by housing advisors the most useful resource used to relieve or prevent homelessness. 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 2018/19 and 2020/21.

The number of households whose accommodation was secured by the local housing authority, has increased year on year and is the second most common prevention activity in 2020/21.

**Chart 6: Main prevention activity that resulted in accommodation being secured, Gosport, 2018/19 to 2020/21**



Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

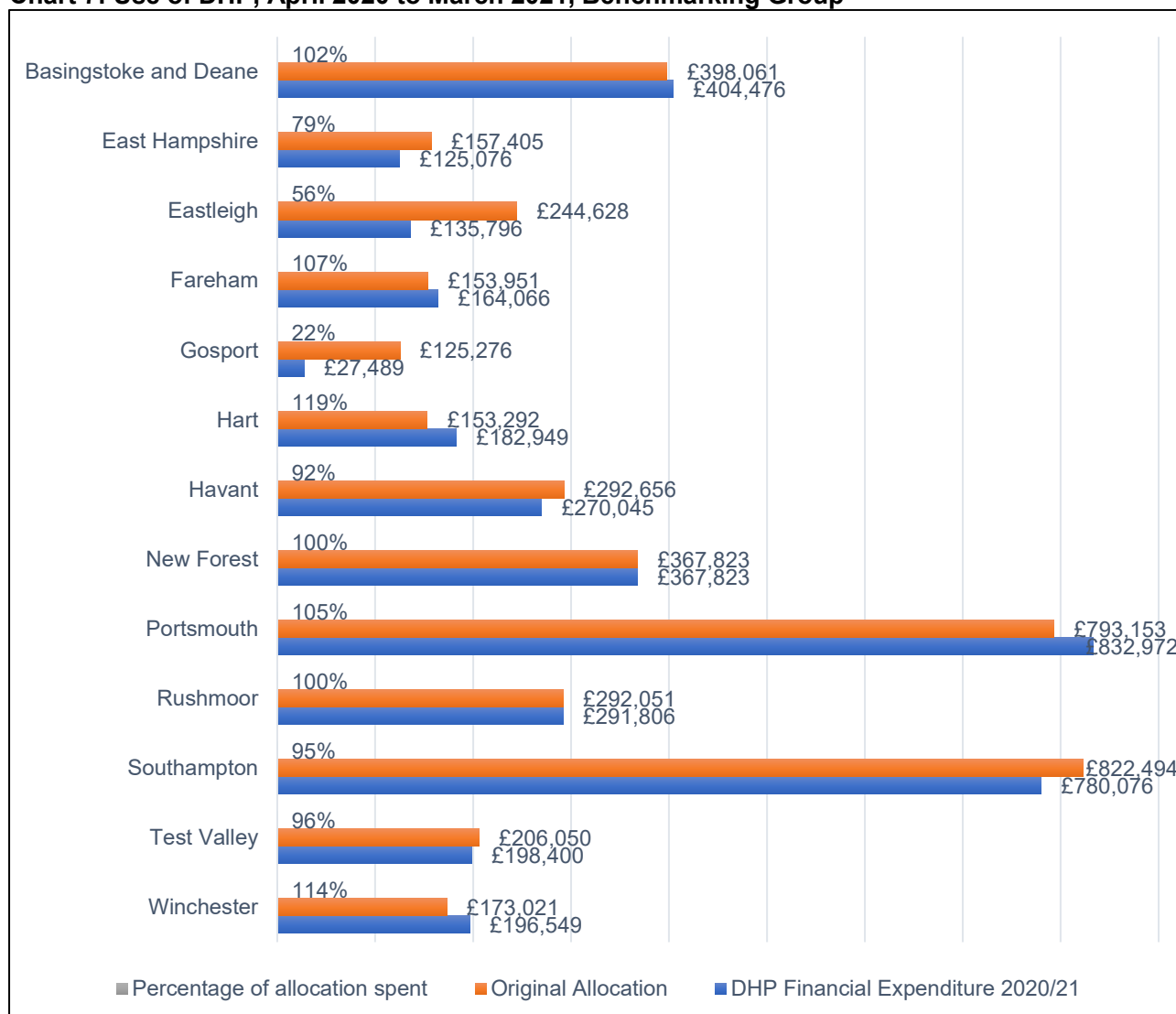
Information, including a directory of services is available online with practical information for people in housing need. The council will ensure advice and assistance is accessible for people with particular needs, including those with mobility difficulties, sight or hearing loss and learning difficulties, as well as those for whom English is not their first language.

Gosport's proactive approach in promoting and developing the Duty to Refer has resulted in a significant increase in referrals. However, the provision of advice, support and information for public authorities and other referral agencies is still developing and opportunities for earlier referrals under this duty should be sought, particularly in relation to:

- Maintaining relationships with referring agencies to link in with personal housing plans following on from the Duty to Refer
- Establish a resettlement pathway for households homeless upon release from custody
- Produce a joint protocol with Leaving Care services to help ensure care leavers have the stable homes they need, and prevent them from becoming homeless.
- Continue to work with Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership in the implementation of new duties contained within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and put in place their own local policies to identify and respond to domestic abuse
- Improve working arrangements around hospital discharge for people at risk of homelessness
- Build on current working arrangements between the council's homelessness service and the County Council's Adult Social Care services to develop clear local actions, partnership working (across the local authority, clinical commissioning group and other local organisations) and understanding and alignment of commissioning decisions to prevent and respond to homelessness across the life course

Housing Benefit and Housing Options will develop a joint working protocol and collaborative approach to homelessness services and the administration of Discretionary Housing Payment awards to ensure funding is fully utilised.

**Chart 7: Use of DHP, April 2020 to March 2021, Benchmarking Group**



Source: Department for Work and Pensions: Official Statistics Use of Discretionary Housing Payments

Gosport will continue to develop the Pre-Court Action Partnership, providing an early opportunity to work in partnership with social landlords and their tenants who are at risk of eviction action, and which all Registered Providers in Gosport should be signed up to.

Joint working between the council’s homelessness service and the Citizens Advice Gosport provides a much needed and valued service to help tackle debt and advice on private rented sector housing issues and homelessness.

### 4.3 Securing accommodation

Gosport’s strategic plans commit to providing affordable housing and specialist residential accommodation for people with learning disabilities, young people at risk, children, people with a drug or alcohol problem, ex-offenders, homeless people,

former armed services personnel with care needs and people fleeing domestic abuse.

The portfolio of temporary accommodation is made up of two hostels, Agnew House and Barclay House, and B&B placements are sourced for a small number of households.

The Rented Accommodation in the Private Rented Sector (RAPS) scheme aims to provide temporary accommodation for 6-12 months, however the number of licences available are limited and do not meet demand.

**Table 2: Gosport Borough Council, temporary accommodation portfolio**

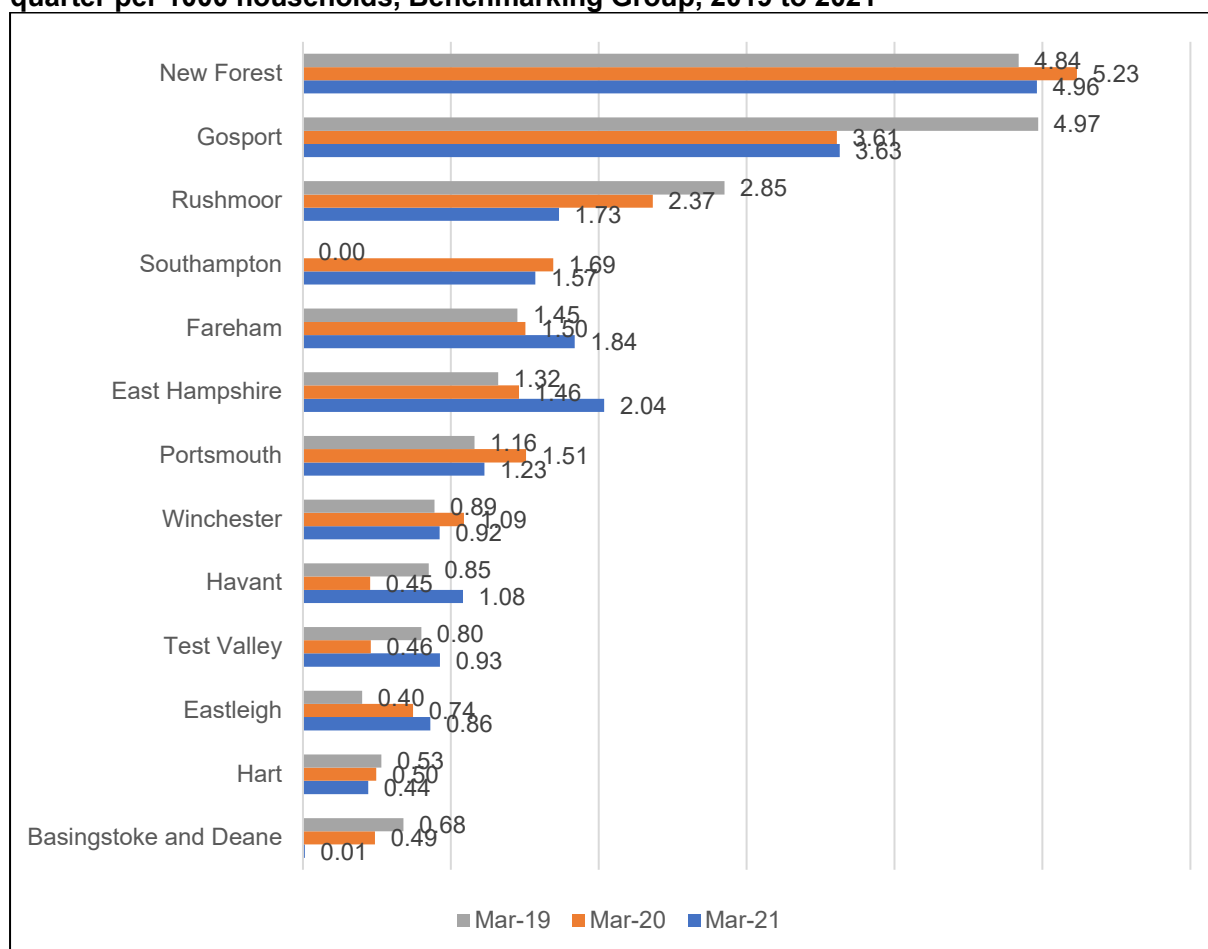
Temporary Accommodation	Description	Units
Agnew House	Council-owned, 2 floors made up of single, double and family rooms some with en-suite bathroom facilities, all share kitchen	56 Units
Barclay House	Council-owned, 2 floors 2 blocks 14 x 2 units, all en-suite bathroom facilities and shared kitchen.	28 Units
B&B (snapshot August 2021)	Privately owned B&B can be out of the borough	12 Units
RAPS Scheme	Private sector leased dwellings	97 Units

Source: Gosport Borough Council

Gosport has the second highest number per 1000 households in temporary accommodation compared with the Benchmarking Group between 2019 and 2021. This is higher compared with the South East (median 2.53 per 1000 households) and just below All England at a 3 year median of 3.92 per 1000 households.

Almost half (48%) of households in temporary accommodation in Gosport (2021) include children, this is in line with Hampshire at 48% and lower compared with the South East and England where 51% and 62% of households in temporary accommodation include children.

**Chart 8: Number of households in temporary accommodation at the end of the final quarter per 1000 households, Benchmarking Group, 2019 to 2021**



Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Government guidance and good practice identifies hostel accommodation as a short-term provision to meet needs and stresses vulnerable young people or families with children should not be accommodated alongside vulnerable adults.

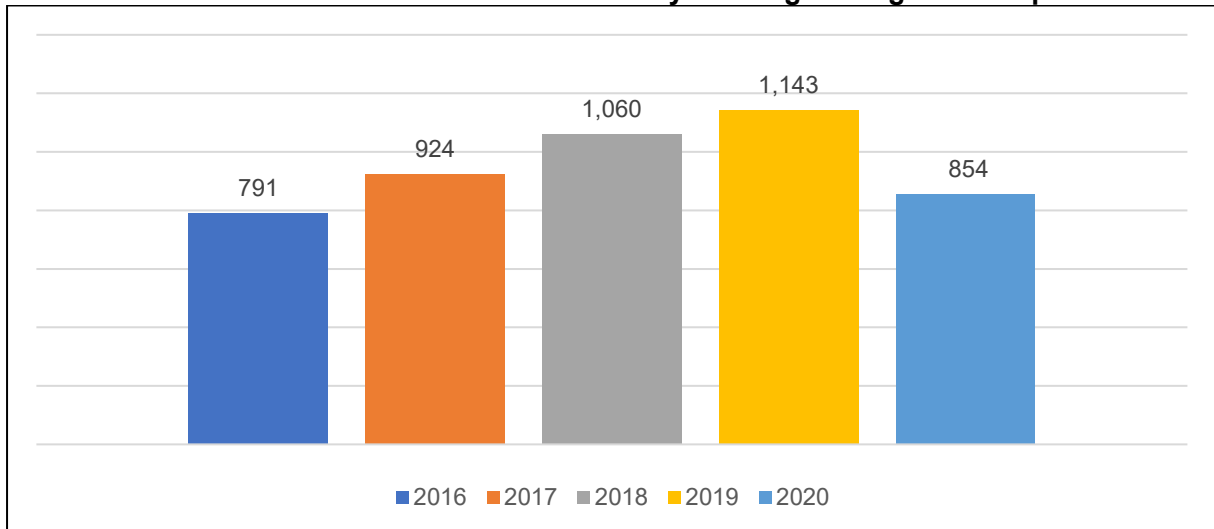
Gosport Borough Council will undertake an options appraisal to inform and develop a Temporary Accommodation Procurement Strategy. The options appraisal will identify demand by area and include innovations to make use of existing buildings, develop the hostels, as well as property acquisition from registered providers, the open market, new developments and modular construction.

A significant contributing factor to the high number of households in temporary accommodation is the RAPS scheme, which in its current form, is not fit for purpose. An options appraisal will be carried out to identify what the best private sector access initiative is for the council to deliver a readily available supply of private sector stock.

The council has a total 3,111 units of social rented housing, of which 99% (3,075) are general needs social rent (a further 1% (36) are general needs affordable rent). Average weekly net rent is below the regional and national average. Gosport has a further 3,362 units of social rented housing owned by registered providers, equating to 52% of all social rented housing in the local authority area.

The council has successfully negotiated a 100% nomination agreement with Registered Providers in Gosport. In 2020, 854 households were registered on the council’s Housing Allocation Scheme, a reduction of 26% compared to the previous year. This is due, in part to the Housing register being suspended for approx. six months at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic when only essential allocations were undertaken.

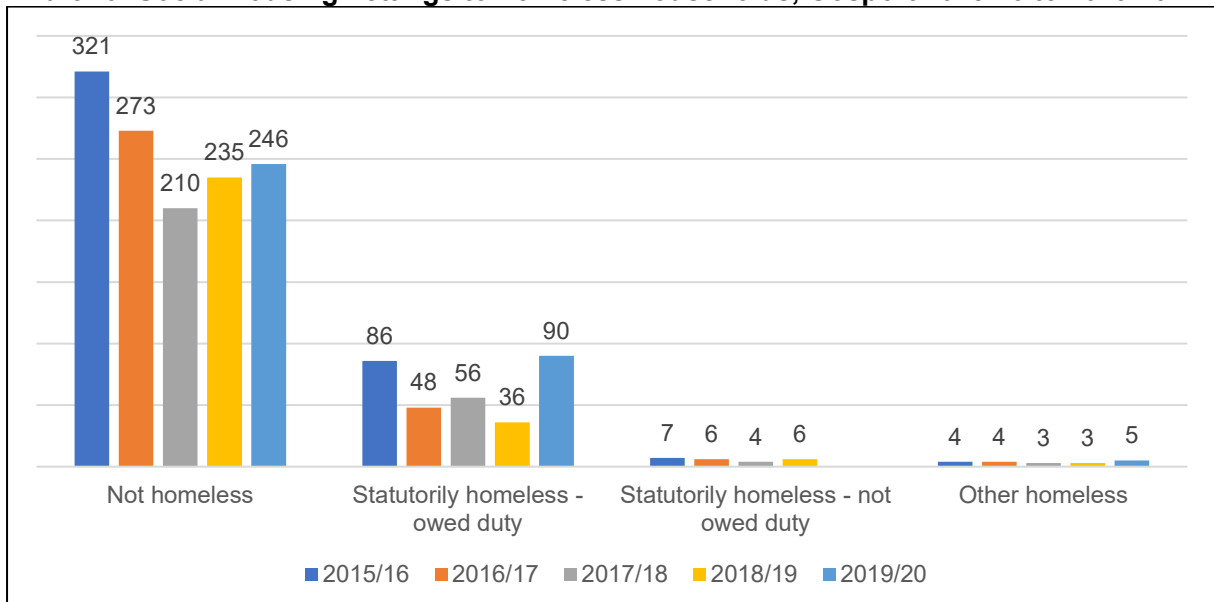
**Chart 9: Number of Households on Local Authority housing waiting lists Gosport 2016-20**



Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

The medium percentage of lettings to homeless households between 2015/16 to 2019/20 was 21%. There was an increase in lettings to homeless households in 2019/20 with 26% of lettings made to homeless households.

**Chart 10: Social Housing Lettings to homeless households, Gosport 2015/16 to 2019/20**



Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Gosport Borough Council should work with local registered providers to adopt pre-tenancy processes that prioritise supporting people into sustainable tenancies rather

than informing decisions about whether to allocate the tenancy. This can be achieved by working together to develop consistent processes that include locally agreed criteria, procedures and thresholds for what should be included in, and action taken from, pre-tenancy assessments.

#### **4.4 Providing Support**

The reasons why people become homeless offer an indication as to the support people require. For those owed a prevention or relief duty, households no longer able to stay with friends or family, and termination of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) made up 32% and 23% of all households between 2018/19 and 2020/21.

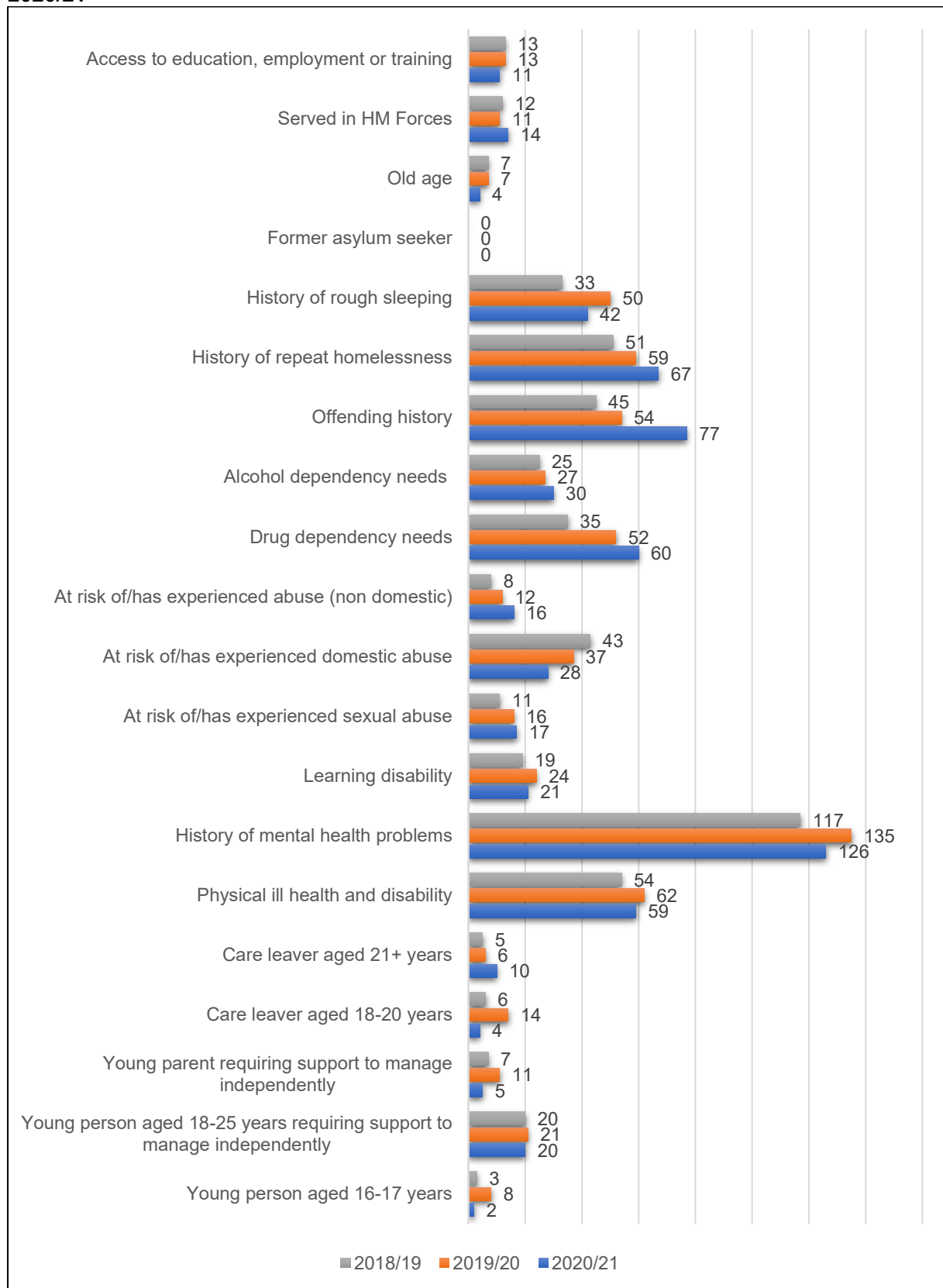
Gosport Borough Council has the second highest percentage of support needs for those owed a homelessness duty within the Benchmarking Group for the past three years.

The support needs of those owed a homelessness duty are predominantly:

- Mental health
- Ill health and disabilities
- History of repeat homelessness
- Offending history
- Drug dependency
- History of rough sleeping



**Chart 11: Households owed a homelessness duty by support need, Gosport, 2018/19 to 2020/21**



Source: Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government

Both hostels in Gosport operate at full capacity and accommodate a client group with complex and multiple needs, in particular co-occurring mental health and substance misuse needs.

Housing First, along with access to the health and care system (with a focus on access for those with a dual diagnosis of mental health and substance misuse needs) has a crucial role to play in Gosport.

Gosport Borough Council's cold weather planning for 2021 consists of self-contained B&B. The winter bed provision should also facilitate a rapid assessment and support to people who are already, or at risk of, sleeping rough.

Gosport Borough Council will work in collaboration with service users and stakeholders to ensure that local evidence of homelessness and support needs is collected, monitored and made available to inform commissioning priorities across Hampshire and help facilitate efficient referral and move on from supported housing services.

Consultation with service users will be multi-layered, providing a range of opportunities and methods for people who use services to have an input into the review and monitoring of services.

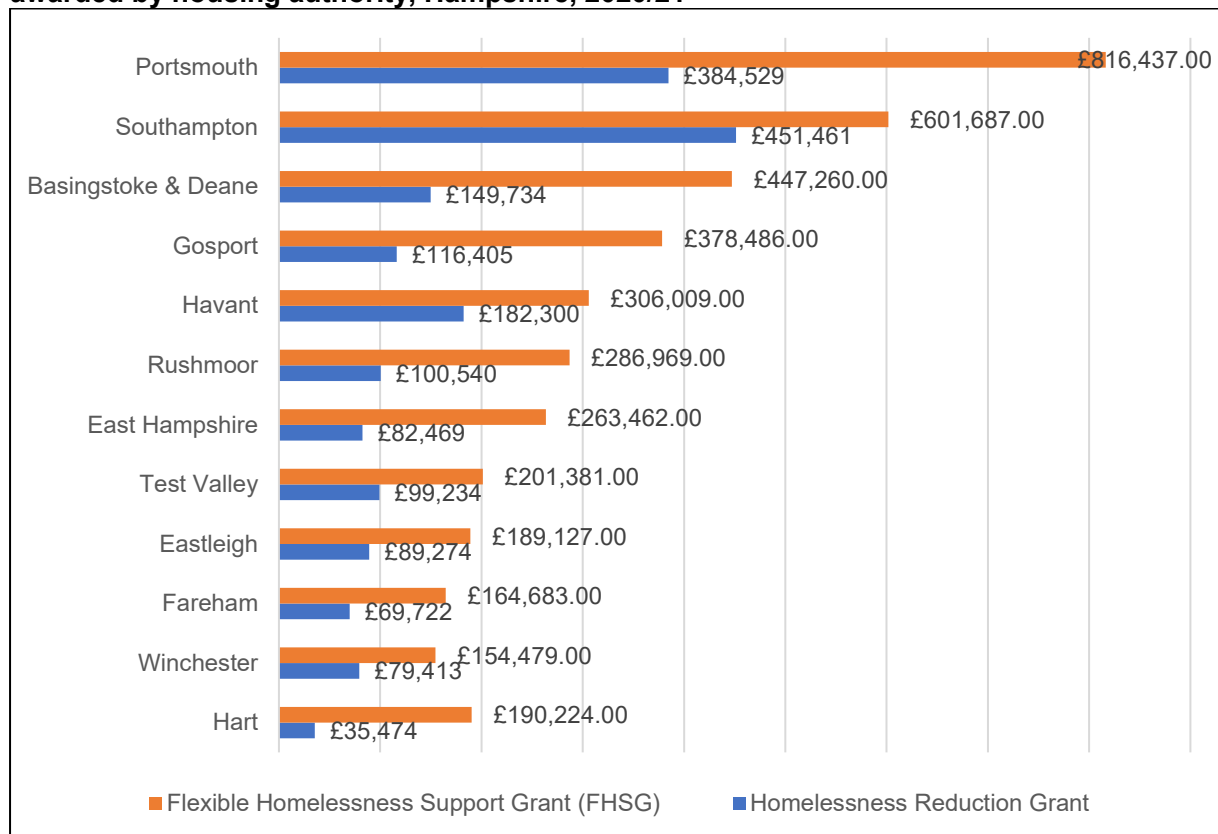
Formalising established partnership working arrangements between the Jobcentre, Housing Options and other key organisations in Gosport will assist and support, not only the Jobcentre service to homeless clients, but delivery of Gosport's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

#### **4.5 Resources**

The graph below shows Gosport's allocation of homelessness grant funding in 2020/21 which is equal to 8 percent of all funding for Hampshire County Council, this percentage of allocation has been consistent throughout 2017/18 to 2020/21.

Compared with other Hampshire local authorities, Gosport's allocation of regional funding from UK government has remained amongst the highest for tackling homelessness.

**Chart 12: DLUHC Flexible Homelessness Support and Homeless Reduction Grant awarded by housing authority, Hampshire, 2020/21**



Source: Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government

Demand will be monitored across all areas of Housing Options to ensure there is sufficient capability and capacity in the team to deliver a consistent and quality service. Staff will receive training to ensure they have the skills and knowledge required to provide excellent housing advice and be able to effectively respond to changing demands on the service.

It is recommended that a new Homeless Strategy Officer role, with responsibility for embedding the Strategy and delivering the Action Plan, is considered.

## 5. Monitoring delivery of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan

This strategy sets out the council's priorities for the next five years and has been developed following a comprehensive review of homelessness in the Borough.

The strategy will remain under review to ensure it is kept up-to-date and takes account of any new, emerging priorities. The Action Plan will be updated annually to respond to any new identified needs in the Borough, and reflect changes to policies or legislation.

The Action Plan sets out the key areas of work over the period of the strategy and progress against each action will be monitored through:

- Annual reports to the council's Housing Board
- Regular briefing sessions with the Chairman of the Housing Board
- Updated Action Plan published annually on the council's website
- Mandatory statistical returns to the Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC)

