

# A review of homelessness in Gosport

2022

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Borough Council

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Gosport Borough Council is a district local authority that was founded on 01st April 1974, located in County of Hampshire. The council consists of 34 elected councillors, with day-to-day decisions being made via six boards one of which is 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.

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# Executive summary

## Levels of Homelessness

From April 2018, the council's duty to prevent and relieve 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.

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.

Young people are more likely to experience homelessness. The majority of households are single people, who often are experiencing physical and or mental health problems. The main reasons for homelessness are due to parents, other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate, or due to the end of a private rented sector tenancy.

Gosport has the fourth highest percentage of child poverty in Hampshire which, over the last five years, has remained at 26%.

The borough has a lower rate of employment and a higher rate of economic inactivity due to long term illness/disability with a higher percentage of 16–24-year-old's claiming out of work benefit compared with neighbouring authorities.

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.

## Preventing homelessness

Helping people to move to alternative accommodation is the primary method for preventing homelessness. It is more common for people to become homeless than be helped to remain in their existing home.

Gosport's proactive approach in promoting and developing the Duty to Refer has resulted in a significant increase in referrals. Partnership working around hospital discharge and adult social care is still developing and will provide opportunities for earlier referrals along with improved working arrangements.

The percentage of households owed a relief duty as a result of domestic abuse has increased; the council will continue to work with Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership in the implementation of new duties contained within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Gosport's Pre-Court Action Partnership provides an early opportunity to work in partnerships with social landlords and their tenants at risk of eviction. The Citizens Advice in Gosport provides a much needed and valued service to help tackle debt and private rented sector housing issues and homelessness.

## **Securing accommodation**

A Temporary Accommodation Allocation and Procurement Policy is needed to facilitate the appropriate allocation of suitable temporary accommodation.

The council should review the aims and objectives of its tenancy strategy, to ensure the types of tenancies offered promote the prevention of homelessness and does not adversely impact on tackling homelessness.

The Homeless Prevention fund was considered by Housing Advisors the most useful resource used to relieve or prevent homelessness.

## **Support**

Support to help sustain accommodation is key to preventing homelessness. Households with a history of repeat homelessness, mental health problems, an offending history, drug dependency and a history of rough sleeping are all commonly identified support needs. The borough has hostel and other housing-related support services which operate at full capacity and accommodate a client group with complex and multiple needs, in particular co-occurring mental health and substance misuse needs.

In response to the Coronavirus pandemic the council adopted an innovative approach by sourcing pods to provide safe accommodation to those people experiencing street homelessness. Although advances have been made in collaborative working since March 2020, there remains an urgent need for the further development of partnership working between the council, statutory and non-statutory partners to attain an understanding and alignment of commissioning decisions, prioritise and identify unmet need, funding and actions to address gaps in provision.

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.

## **Resources for tackling homelessness**

Compared with other Hampshire local authorities, Gosport's allocation of regional funding from UK government has remained amongst the highest for tackling homelessness. Whilst the council maintains healthy financial reserves it should explore the possibility of securing additional investment to fund support services, including funding from revenue or capital grants available from national government, any of its agencies, or philanthropic trusts, investment from the commercial sector via a social impact bond, and using payment by results arrangements with commissioned providers.

To manage current and future demand for services proactively a revised staffing structure with additional officers is required, introducing a clear separation between Housing Advisers and Housing Allocation staff.

I.T. hardware is in urgent need of updating and functionality of all software systems should be fully exploited to reduce duplication between different software systems.

## **Consultation**

Most people with lived experience of homelessness felt that having advice and support at the point of crisis to, for example, remain in their home, works best to prevent homelessness. Responses referenced the need for specialist support, in particular, the need for separate accommodation for families, residents with drug addictions and mental health issues.

Stakeholder comments referenced the need for different types of accommodation such as Housing First and increased partnership working, particularly with Health and Social Care.

Additional comments made by staff respondents identified two common themes: lack of suitable affordable move on accommodation and the absence of general welfare support and partnership working to deliver specialist support, particularly for young people, families, people with substance abuse issues, mental health and learning difficulties, and those escaping domestic abuse.

## **Recommendations**

The council should, in collaboration with service users and stakeholders, 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.

Develop collaborative working with other public bodies to build on the Duty to Refer to facilitate an early intervention and prevent homelessness. Formalise existing working relationships with Housing Benefit to make best use of DHP and expedite benefit claims for those at risk of homelessness.

Undertake an options appraisal to identify demand and how to make best use of the existing temporary accommodation provision and private sector access initiatives in order to deliver a readily available supply of suitable accommodation.

Manage current and future demand for services proactively by introducing a revised staffing structure with additional officers, with a clear separation between Housing Advisers and Housing Allocation staff.

# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Preamble

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

The law requires that a homelessness review concentrates on:

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

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

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

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

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

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

The structure of this Homelessness Review is shown below:

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

## 1.2 Definition of homelessness

The law<sup>1</sup> defines a person as being homeless or threatened with homelessness if they:

- Are going to be 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 their accommodation
- Are at risk of violence from any person
- Are unable to secure entry to their accommodation
- Live in a moveable structure but have no place to put it

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

There is considered to be four forms of homelessness<sup>2</sup>. A person might experience only one of these forms, but could encounter some, or all of them:

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

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<sup>1</sup> Housing Act 1996, Part 7, section 174

<sup>2</sup> Fitzpatrick, S. (2005), 'Explaining homelessness: a critical realistic perspective', *Housing & Society*, 22(1): pp.1-17



### **Rough sleeping**

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

## **1.3 Methodology**

This Homelessness Review has been carried out in accordance with the law<sup>4</sup>, statutory guidance<sup>5</sup>, national guidelines<sup>6</sup> and national good practice<sup>7</sup>.

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

This Homelessness Review has clear findings about:

- What is working well to tackle homelessness
- What must be done better to tackle homelessness, and
- What needs to be the future priorities for tackling homelessness

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

- The council’s housing services
  - homelessness,
  - allocations and lettings
  - housing strategy
- The council’s private sector housing service
- Hampshire County Council’s Adult Social Care Services
- Hampshire County Council’s Children Services
  - social care
  - leaving care
  - youth justice
- Private registered partners
- Various local and national public authorities, such as
  - prisons
  - youth offender institutions
  - National Probation Service
  - Jobcentre Plus
  - NHS Trusts and NHS Foundations Trusts
  - Others

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

<sup>4</sup> Homelessness Act 2002, sections 1-3

<sup>5</sup> Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities, Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities , published 2018 and most recent updated 31 December 2020 (as of the date this Homelessness Review was carried out).

<sup>6</sup> Homelessness: applying All Our Health, Public Health England, November 2018

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

- Voluntary organisations, such as
  - registered charities
  - community groups
  - faith organisations
- Any other interested person, such as
  - persons who have lived experience of homelessness.

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

### **1.3.1 A review of the levels of homelessness**

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

- Basingstoke and Deane
- East Hampshire
- Eastleigh
- Fareham
- Harts
- Havant
- New Forest
- Portsmouth
- Rushmoor
- Southampton
- Test Valley
- Winchester

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

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

In order to fully understand homelessness in the Gosport local authority area, the analysis in this review covers the preceding five years (2016/17 to 2020/21), which requires collection and analysis of both the discontinued P1E and HCLIC data. Therefore, in some cases, only three years HCLIC data or two years P1E data is available, and not both. DLUHC update and amend HCLIC data as new information is acquired, as it remains an experimental system for DLUHC and local housing authorities, so for the time being data is subject to minor amendment. The HCLIC

data collected for this review was last checked by the authors on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

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

- Numbers of applications for assistance
- Number of decisions made by outcome
- Characteristics of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Household size
- Support needs assessed
- Reason for loss of accommodation
- Types of prevention activity
- Types of relief activity
- Types of decisions made
- Types of activities to end the main duty
- Assistance received by households with their support needs
- Local connection referrals made and received
- Number of households living in temporary accommodation (by type)
- Length of stay in temporary accommodation
- Number and types of reviews requested, and decisions made, and
- Nationality of applicants.

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

### **1.3.2 A review of activities to prevent homelessness**

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

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

DLUHC issued findings from an external evaluation of its £20m Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer programme, in March 2019<sup>8</sup>. The findings from this research were used to inform a local review of prevention activities.

The review of early prevention activities looked at the duty to provide advisory services<sup>9</sup>. This focused on the advice offered by the council, plus that from other providers of housing advice, concentrating on the quality, availability/accessibility, and accuracy of the advice provided. This encompassed arrangements for assistance to be available outside of usual working hours.

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

<sup>9</sup> Housing Act 1996 (amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017), Part7 section 179

Many early homelessness prevention activities focused on those most at risk of homelessness. Homelessness legislation<sup>10</sup> recognises some characteristics and circumstances when a person has a heightened risk of homelessness, such as:

- Leaving prison or youth detention accommodation
- Leaving care of a children services authority
- Regular armed forces veterans
- Victims of domestic abuse
- Leaving hospital, and
- Experiencing mental illness.

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

#### **Duty to refer**

In relation to early prevention activity, the impact of the 'duty to refer', which came into force from October 2018<sup>11</sup>, for specified public authorities, was also reviewed, along with an analysis of the effectiveness of local arrangements. This has been carried out with reference to national good practice<sup>12</sup>.

A review of crisis prevention activities focused on the duties to prevent or relieve homelessness<sup>13</sup>. This Homelessness Review seeks to understand how the new burdens arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act have impacted on the way the local authority administers its duties. There has also been scrutiny of the outcomes for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. This extends to how assessments and personalised plans are being completed, plus the effectiveness of these. This Homelessness Review has probed how people are helped to remain in their existing accommodation, or when this is not safe or possible, assisted to secure alternative accommodation. The effectiveness of joint working arrangements with housing benefit administrators, debt advice services, private rented sector enforcement officers, sanctuary schemes, housing possession court desks, and pre- eviction protocols with private registered providers of social housing have all been reviewed.

A review of activities to prevent the reoccurrence of homelessness has focused on the support, advice, assistance, and counselling people receive to be able to sustain their accommodation. This includes activities carried out by the council, either via its own homelessness service, or as a commissioner of support services. Logically, a review of activities to prevent the reoccurrence of homelessness has also extended

<sup>10</sup> Housing Act 1996 (as amended) Part 7 section 179(2)

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

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

<sup>13</sup> Housing Act 1996, Part 7, sections 195 - 196

to those undertaken by numerous public authorities, voluntary organisations, housing associations, and others. Both community-wide and accommodation-based support has been investigated for its quality, effectiveness, and impact.

### **1.3.3 A review of activities to secure accommodation**

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

- Temporary accommodation provision
- Social rented housing allocations to persons who are homeless or owed a homelessness duty of assistance, and
- Private rented sector accessibility for persons who are homeless or owed a homelessness duty of assistance.

#### **Temporary accommodation**

A review of temporary accommodation provision has covered arrangements for procuring, allocating and managing temporary accommodation, to ensure it is fit for purpose. An analysis of the types and suitability of temporary accommodation used (including use of bed and breakfast accommodation), length of stay, out-of-borough placement, characteristics of households placed in temporary accommodation (including those with children and/or a pregnant woman, and 16 to 17 year-olds) has also been carried out. This has been carried out with reference to national good practice<sup>14</sup>.

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

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

- The housing options available to persons who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance, who are not eligible for an allocation of social rented housing
- How grounds for disqualification from joining a housing allocation scheme might impact on persons who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance
- The advice, information, and assistance on making an application for social rented housing, provided to persons who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **1.3.4 A review of activities to provide support**

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

- The types and prevalence of support needs
- The types of accommodation-based support services and the outcomes they are achieving
- The types of non-accommodation-based support services and the outcomes they are achieving
- Support provided by public authorities under public law duties, and
- Support provided by voluntary organisations, both commissioned and non-commissioned.

DLUHC, with the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP), published independent research on the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping<sup>15 16 17</sup>. The findings from this research have been used to inform a local analysis of support needs.

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

- The accessibility of this provision
- The standard of accommodation
- The staffing arrangements and support philosophy
- The rules for exclusions and evictions
- Move-on support, and
- Other matters.

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

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

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

### **Response to rough sleeping during the COVID 19 pandemic review**

We reviewed activities to house people who were rough sleeping and those at risk, during the COVID-19 pandemic, referencing national good practice<sup>18</sup>.

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

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

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

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

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

When completing this aspect of the review, we follow the national guidance formulated by an NM&Co associate and issued by the LGA in November 2019, titled 'Lessons learnt from council's response to rough sleeping during the COVID-19 pandemic'.

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

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

When reviewing how vulnerable homeless adults are supported, there was scrutiny of joint working between the council's homelessness service and adult social care services in respect of<sup>19</sup>:

- Using powers and duties to provide accommodation
- Carrying out assessments and care planning to meet support needs
- Preventing homelessness and promoting wellbeing, and
- Supporting persons from abroad who are not eligible for homelessness assistance.

When reviewing how 16 to 17-year-olds and other homeless households where dependent children reside are supported, there was scrutiny of joint working between the council's homelessness service and children services in respect of<sup>20</sup>:

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

When reviewing how adults who are mentally ill are supported, there was scrutiny of joint working between the council and NHS authorities in respect of<sup>21</sup> those who are leaving hospital after having been unwell and need aftercare.

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<sup>19</sup> Care and Support Statutory Guidance, Department of Health, June 2014

<sup>20</sup> Working together to safeguard children, Department for Education, March 2015

<sup>21</sup> Code of Practice: Mental Health Act 1983, Department of Health, 2015



DLUHC published an independent evaluation of the Skills, Training, Innovation and Employment (STRIVE) pilot, in August 2018<sup>22</sup>. This programme was targeted at single people experiencing homelessness in London, who were claiming unemployment welfare benefits. Together with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (now known as Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy) £297,000 of funding was provided. STRIVE was commissioned to pilot an alternative to the Work Programme, which had been identified as being unsuitable for the target cohort. The findings from this research were used to inform a local review of how support is provided to be people who are, or have, experienced homelessness to secure employment.

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

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

A review of finances looked at both the council's own spending on homelessness activities, along with grants the council received from DLUHC and other UK government bodies.

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

In terms of grants received from DLUHC, enquiries were made about whether the total amount allocated is used for its intended purpose. The success of bidding for additional funding was also probed. Where possible, the money available to a local authority was benchmarked against that of other local authorities, to ascertain if income and expenditure is satisfactory.

The review also considered the potential of securing investment from the commercial sector, via a social impact bond, and using a payment by results arrangements with commissioned providers. DLUHC published an independent evaluation of its Fair Chance Fund programme, in April 2019<sup>23</sup>. Together with the Cabinet Office and Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport, funding was provided via Social Impact Bonds (SIB), using a payment by results (PBR) approach to improve accommodation, education and employment for people aged 18 to 24 years, who were experiencing homelessness. The findings from this research were used to inform a local review of how private sector resources are being secured for tackling homelessness.

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<sup>22</sup> ICF Consulting. (2018). STRIVE Evaluation: Final report. Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities . London

<sup>23</sup> ICF Consulting. (2019). Fair Chance Fund: Final Evaluation. Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities . London

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

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

- Self-service housing advice
- Receiving referrals for cases of homelessness
- Formulating personalised plans
- Case management
- Recording prevention activity
- Data reporting (e.g. H-CLIC),
- Temporary accommodation property and void management
- Controlling referrals and use of housing-related support services, and
- Other modules to help enhance the administration of homelessness functions, such as online forms, applications, reports, information packs, letter templates.

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

## **1.4 National homelessness context**

The UK Government is responsible for making decisions about homelessness law and strategy for England. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) (prior to September 2021 known as the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government – DLUHC, the primary term used throughout this report) 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.

### **1.4.1 Homelessness legislation**

The current legal framework setting out the rights of people who are experiencing homelessness, and the duties local authorities must administer, has been in force

since 1977<sup>24</sup>, with significant amendments being made to it 1985<sup>25</sup>, 1996<sup>26</sup>, and 2017<sup>27</sup>. The most recent adjustments have substantially increased the assistance local authorities must provide to people who are homeless and threatened with homelessness.

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

- 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 their accommodation
- Are at risk of violence from any person
- Are unable to secure entry to their accommodation
- Live in 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 to 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

A person can have a priority need for accommodation due to:

<sup>24</sup> Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977

<sup>25</sup> Housing Act 1985

<sup>26</sup> Housing Act 1996, Part 7

<sup>27</sup> Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

- Being pregnant
- Having dependent children reside
- Being vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or mental handicap or physical disability, or other special reasons
- Being homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as a flood, fire, or other disaster
- Being a child aged 16 or 17
- Being a young person under 21 who has been looked after, accommodated, or fostered
- Being a person over 21 who is vulnerable as a result of having been looked after, accommodated, or fostered
- Being a person who is vulnerable as a result of having served in the armed forces
- Being a person who is vulnerable as a result of having been imprisoned
- Being a person who is a victim of domestic abuse

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

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

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

#### **1.4.2 Causes of homelessness**

DLUHC, with the DWP, published independent research on the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping<sup>28</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.

The researchers went on to conclude that a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods need to be used to understand the current and future likely causes of

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<sup>28</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 & Pensions

homelessness, plus the impact policies are having, or might have, on preventing and reducing homelessness. It was recommended that DLUHC and DWP develop a range of sophisticated modelling tools that produce detailed information to better understand the causes of homelessness, but which are easy to use and maintain by their in-house analysts.

### **1.4.3 Homelessness statistics**

The latest annual official statistics published by the UK Government, for April 2020 – March 2021<sup>29</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
- 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 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,
  - those at risk of rough sleeping
  - the restriction on private rented sector evictions, and lengthened notice periods for landlords

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<sup>29</sup> Statutory Homelessness Annual Report, 2020-21, England. Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities .

45,370 households with children were owed a prevention duty in 2020-21, a 29.0% decrease from 2019-20. 29,760 households with children were owed a relief duty in 2020-21, an 11.6% decrease from 2019-20. The number of households with children threatened with homelessness due to the end of their private rented AST fell 46.9% from 2019-20 to 13,360 households (29.4% of those owed a prevention duty). The proportion of households with children who were living with family at the time of application increased under both prevention and relief. Domestic abuse was the most common support need for households with children owed a duty, up 6.7% from 2019-20 to 12,850 households (17.1%). The majority of households with children whose prevention duty ended (28,160 households or 61.0%) secured accommodation for 6 months or more. Of these, over a third (38.5%) were able to stay in their existing accommodation. 18.7% of those whose prevention duty ended became homeless and were owed a relief duty. The majority (23,230 households or 53.9%) of households with children whose relief duty ended did not have their homelessness relieved within 56 days.

119,360 single households were owed a relief duty in 2020-21, an 11.7% increase from 2019-20. 73,990 single households were owed a prevention duty in 2020-21, a 13.3% decrease from 2019-20. Family or friends no longer able to accommodate was the most common reason for loss of last settled home, up 11.9% for those owed a prevention duty, and up 29.2% for those owed a relief duty. The majority of single households whose prevention duty ended (40,940 households or 58.4%) secured accommodation for 6 months or more. A third (33.1%) had their relief duty end because their homelessness had not been relieved within 56 days.

A third (32.0%) of lead applicants were aged between 25 and 34 years old, equating to 85,930 applicants.

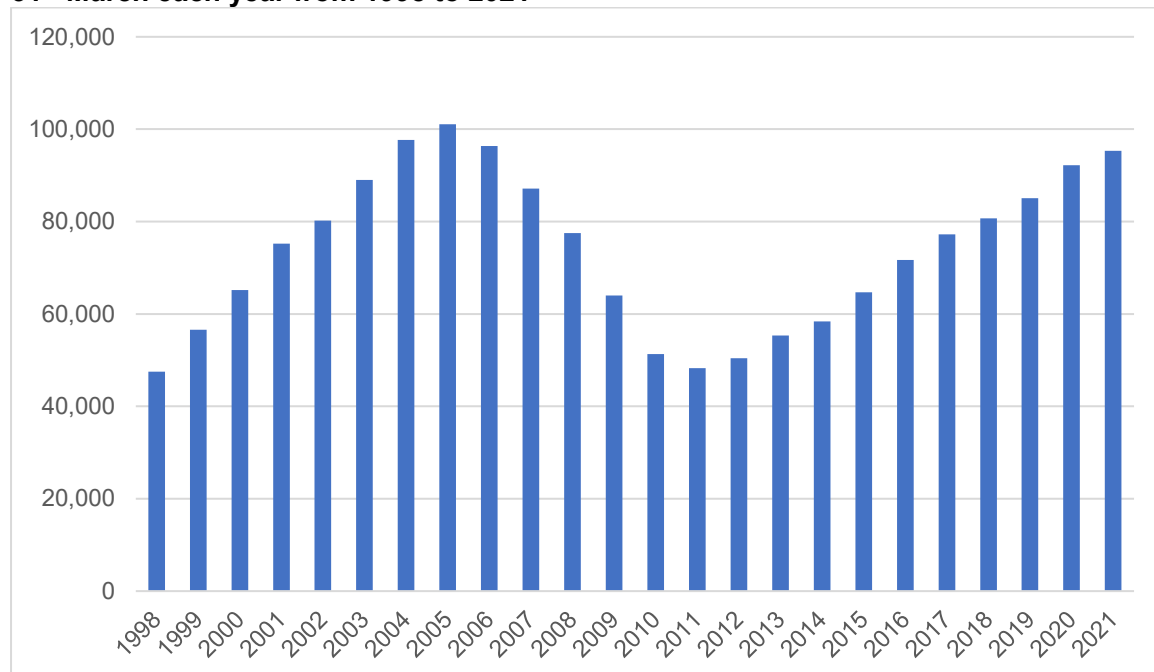
Local authorities made 62,640 main homelessness duty decisions in 2020-21, which is a similar level to 2019-20. 39,210 households were accepted as owed a main homelessness duty, down 2.8% from 2019-20. The proportion of households owed a main duty who were households with children has decreased to 62.5% in 2020-21 compared to 68.8% in 2019-20. This reflects the fall in the number of households with children making homelessness applications in 2020-21.

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 18-20 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%.

In London, households with children in temporary accommodation are most likely to be in private sector accommodation, or nightly paid self-contained accommodation, whereas in the rest of England, they are most likely to be in local authority or housing association provided accommodation. In London, single households in temporary

accommodation are most likely to be in nightly paid self-contained accommodation, or private sector accommodation, whereas in the rest of England, they are most likely to be in bed and breakfast hotels, or local authority or housing association provided accommodation.

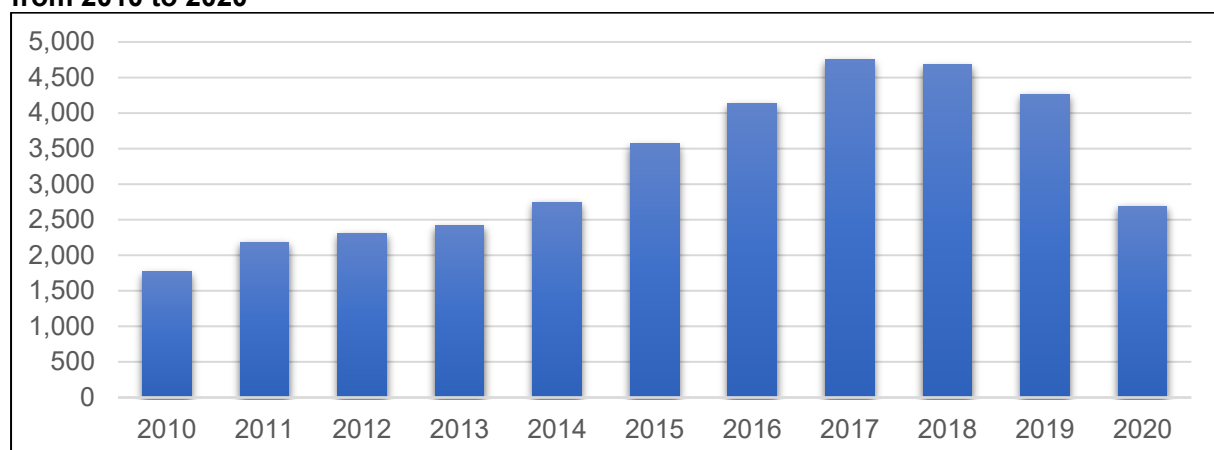
**Chart 1: Households in temporary accommodation, England, annual snapshot taken on 31<sup>st</sup> March each year from 1998 to 2021**



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

The latest rough sleeping snapshot statistics<sup>30</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 to 2020**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

<sup>30</sup> Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2019. Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities .

In 2019/20, 17.5% of the 306,187 total new social lettings went to households that were classed as statutory homeless and owed a main homelessness duty<sup>31</sup>.

The latest data available confirms that in 2019/20, £542M was spent on prevention, administration and support, with a further £1.2BN on temporary accommodation (excluding non-housing revenue account accommodation)<sup>32</sup>.

#### **1.4.4 Homelessness Policy**

The UK Government has an ambition of ending street homelessness by 2024<sup>33</sup>.

From 2017 to 2019 the UK Government invested £1.2bn to tackle homelessness, which included £76m for an initiative to reduce street homelessness and £28m to pilot the Housing First approach. From April 2018, new legislation came into force ensuring more households got more help at an earlier stage, and over a longer period<sup>34</sup>. In August 2018, the DLUHC published a Rough Sleeping Strategy<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Social housing lettings: April 2019 to March 2020, England. Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities .

<sup>32</sup> Local authority revenue expenditure and financing: 2019/20 final outturn, England. Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities .

<sup>33</sup> The Conservative and Unionist Party, Manifesto 2019.

<sup>34</sup> Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

<sup>35</sup> The rough sleeping strategy, 2018, Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities



## **Housing First**

The Housing First Pilots in Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region and West Midlands, have helped more than 900 rough sleepers to date. The Housing First approach supports vulnerable people into their own homes where they can rebuild their lives. The pilots are replicating the success seen across Europe, where Housing First projects have been successful in preventing repeat homelessness for at least eight out of 10 people in such projects.

DLUHC has published three evaluation reports, carried out by independent researchers on the Housing First Pilots. The first report<sup>36</sup> provides key learning and recommendations by both national and local government, regarding development, preparation, and early delivery. The second report<sup>37</sup> focuses on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Housing First Pilots, reporting findings from weekly calls during the lockdown period during spring 2020. The third report<sup>38</sup> provides further evidence from evaluations of the three pilots, to inform future spending decisions. Housing supply was seen as a key challenge to the pilots being a success. The pilots were able to demonstrate fidelity to the housing first model. The effectiveness of partnership working was variable. In addition to these evaluations, a Housing First toolkit has been published, providing advice to commissioners and providers about mobilising a Housing First service<sup>39</sup>.

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

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

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

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<sup>36</sup> ICF Consulting Services, Heriot Watt University, Homeless Link, BPSR and IER. 2020. Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots: interim process evaluation report. Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities . London

<sup>37</sup> ICF Consulting Services, Heriot Watt University, Homeless Link, Bryson Purdon Social Research and IER. 2020. Effects of the pandemic on the Housing First Pilots and service users. Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities . London

<sup>38</sup> Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots: second process evaluation report. 2021. Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities . London.

<sup>39</sup> ICF Consulting Services, Heriot Watt University, Institute for Employment Studies, Bryson Purdon Social Research, Homeless Link. Mobilising Housing First toolkit: from planning to early implementation. 2021. Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities . London.

### **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&Bs to open so they could offer accommodation to key workers and support rough sleepers.

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

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

During summer 2020, the UK Government suspended for 12 weeks rules that restricted the assistance local authorities could provide to EEA nationals who were experiencing street homelessness, to find employment, accommodation and facilitate a reconnection.

An eviction ban for six months was put into force. Subsequently, the law was changed to increase notice periods to 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.

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>40</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.

DLUHC and the Department of Education published good practice advice<sup>41</sup> to support the development of joint protocols that can help local authorities meet the needs of care leavers, to prevent them from becoming homeless.

Research<sup>42</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, had high levels of vulnerabilities, had experienced adverse childhood events, were not currently in employment, but were registered at a GP surgery and had previously sought help from a local authority. Half had been involved with the criminal justice system and had also experienced hidden homelessness before becoming street homeless. The research estimated the annual cost of a person who is experiencing street homelessness was £12.2k, compared to £3.1k people at risk of homelessness who were not having to sleep rough.

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>43</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.

#### **1.4.5 Homelessness Funding**

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. Money distributed includes:

- £200M (2020/21) for all local authorities to obtain accommodation for households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- £62.9M (2020/21) for all local authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness
- £23M Cold Weather Fund (£13m 2019/20, £10m 2020/21) for people experiencing street homelessness, to provide more emergency accommodation during the winter

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<sup>40</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>41</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers-good-practice-advice>

<sup>42</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>43</sup> Improving Lives: Helping Workless Families Indicators 2021: data for 2005 to 2020

- £3M homelessness support funding for Jobcentres to help people experiencing street homelessness to claim benefits and find work
- £433M to offer accommodation for up to 6,000 people experiencing street homelessness and those at most immediate risk of having to sleep rough, with the intention of 3,300 homes becoming available by May 2021. To date, 276 schemes have been approved across England, which will provide 904 homes
- £6M for voluntary organisations that provide advice, accommodation and support to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- £700K for local authorities to support people leaving care at risk of homelessness
- £3.2M emergency funding to help people experiencing street homelessness self-isolate to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- £105M to support people experiencing street homelessness and people threatened with homelessness, to help them secure accommodation during the COVID-19 outbreak, which was allocated to 274 local authorities
- £75M (£23M 2020/21, £52M 2021/22) substance misuse funding allocated to 43 areas, to help people experiencing street homelessness recover from alcohol or drug dependency
- £90K for St Basil's Youth Voice Programme, to ensure the voices of people with lived experience of homelessness inform and influence national and local homelessness policy and strategy
- £2M Transformation Fund, administered by Homeless Link, for voluntary organisations to make more self-contained emergency accommodation available
- £15M allocated to 19 local authority areas with the highest levels of rough sleeping, to make sure they have accommodation, as new national restrictions start
- £310M homelessness prevention grant for all local authorities, to deliver local strategies and services for preventing homelessness
- £10m allocated to all local authorities to house people experiencing street homelessness and help them register with a GP, during the restrictions that came into force in early 2021
- £230M Rough Sleeping Initiative fund, allocated to 281 local authorities, to provide local support for those experiencing street homelessness
- £18M investment by the National Lottery community fund in the UK Government's £54M Changing Futures programme, which helps adults facing multiple issues such as homelessness, substance misuse and domestic abuse
- £1.5M new burdens funding for 2021-22 for the extension of priority need assistance to eligible persons who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse
- £15M (with £15M match funding from Big Society Capital) to deliver 200 homes via 30-year social investment package that will enable the purchase of homes for rough sleepers across Greater London, Greater Manchester Teeside, and a small number of other areas, over a three-year period
- £3.7M Respite Rooms Trial Programme, to fund accommodation and expert support for rough sleepers experiencing violence and abuse

- £16M to provide temporary accommodation, care and support, to help end the cycle of homelessness and hospital admissions
- £65M support package for vulnerable renters struggling due to the impact of the pandemic
- £66M to provide safe and warm accommodation over winter

**Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme**

The UK Government has committed £433M 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

## 2.0 Levels of homelessness

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

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

Where data is available, the council's levels of homelessness have been compared with that of Hampshire local housing authorities<sup>44</sup>, South East England, England excluding London and all of England. Collectively these areas are referred to throughout the report as the benchmarking group.

Nationally, there is no coordinated collection of statistics on hidden homelessness from either public authorities or voluntary organisations. However, evidence suggests around 2% of households in England have at least one adult 'sofa surfing' in their home who would otherwise be homeless<sup>45</sup>.

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

### 2.1 Current levels of homelessness

From April 2018, the council's duty to prevent<sup>46</sup> and relieve<sup>47</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>48</sup>.

Between 2018/19 and 2020/21 the annual number of initial assessments undertaken by Gosport Borough Council reduced by 21% from 542 to 427. Despite a year-on-year reduction in assessments, the number of relief cases has increased over the 3-year period.

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<sup>44</sup> See Section 1.3.1 for comparative local housing authorities

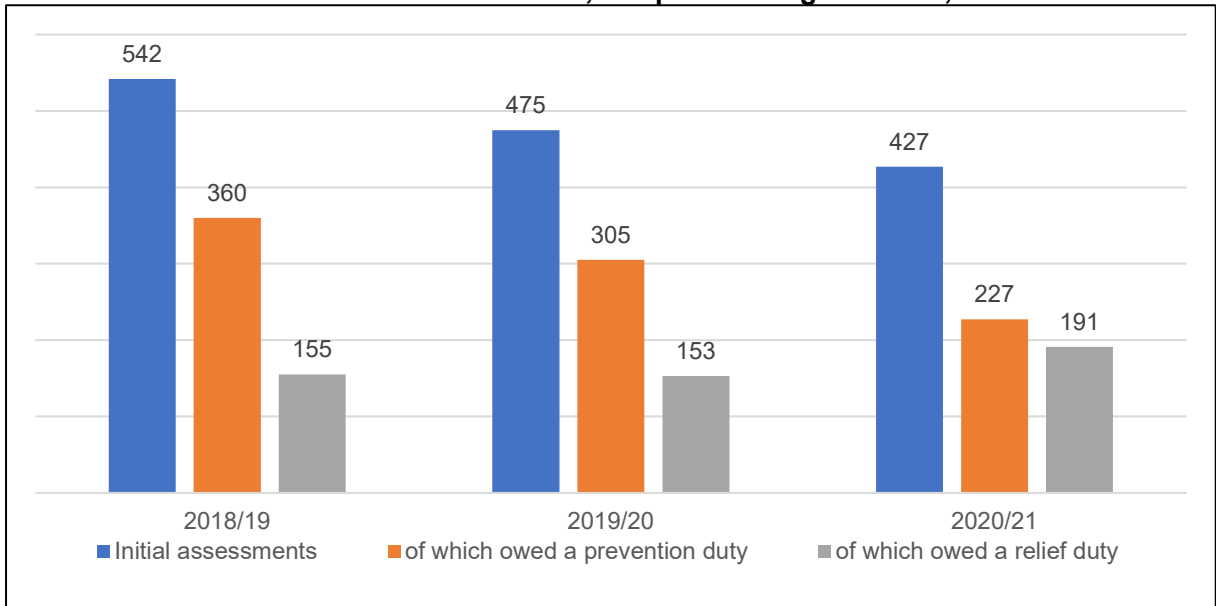
<sup>45</sup> English Housing Survey 2018-19 'Sofa surfing' and concealed households', Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Office of National Statistics, 2019

<sup>46</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>47</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>48</sup> Total initial assessments owed a duty 2019/20 England 95%, South East 94% Hampshire 95%

**Chart 4: Homelessness Initial Assessments, Gosport Borough Council, 2018/19 to 2020/21**

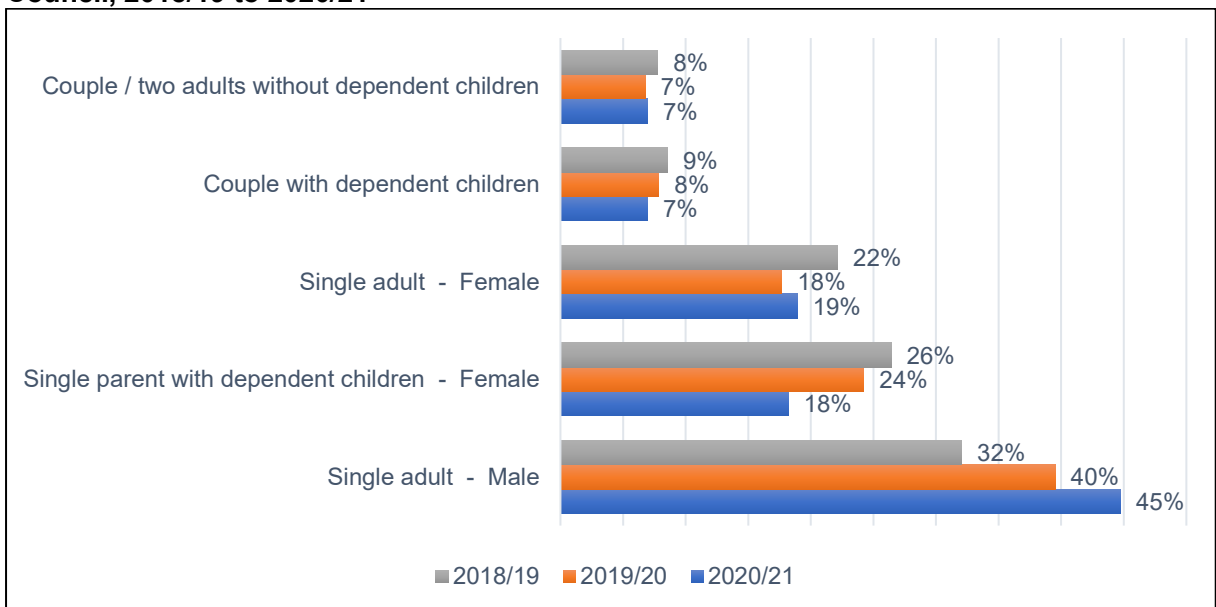


Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

Single male households year on year, increasingly make up the largest percentage of applicants owed a prevention or relief duty, followed by single females with dependent children and single females.

Despite an overall reduction in the number of assessments, single male applicants are the only household type to record an increase each year.

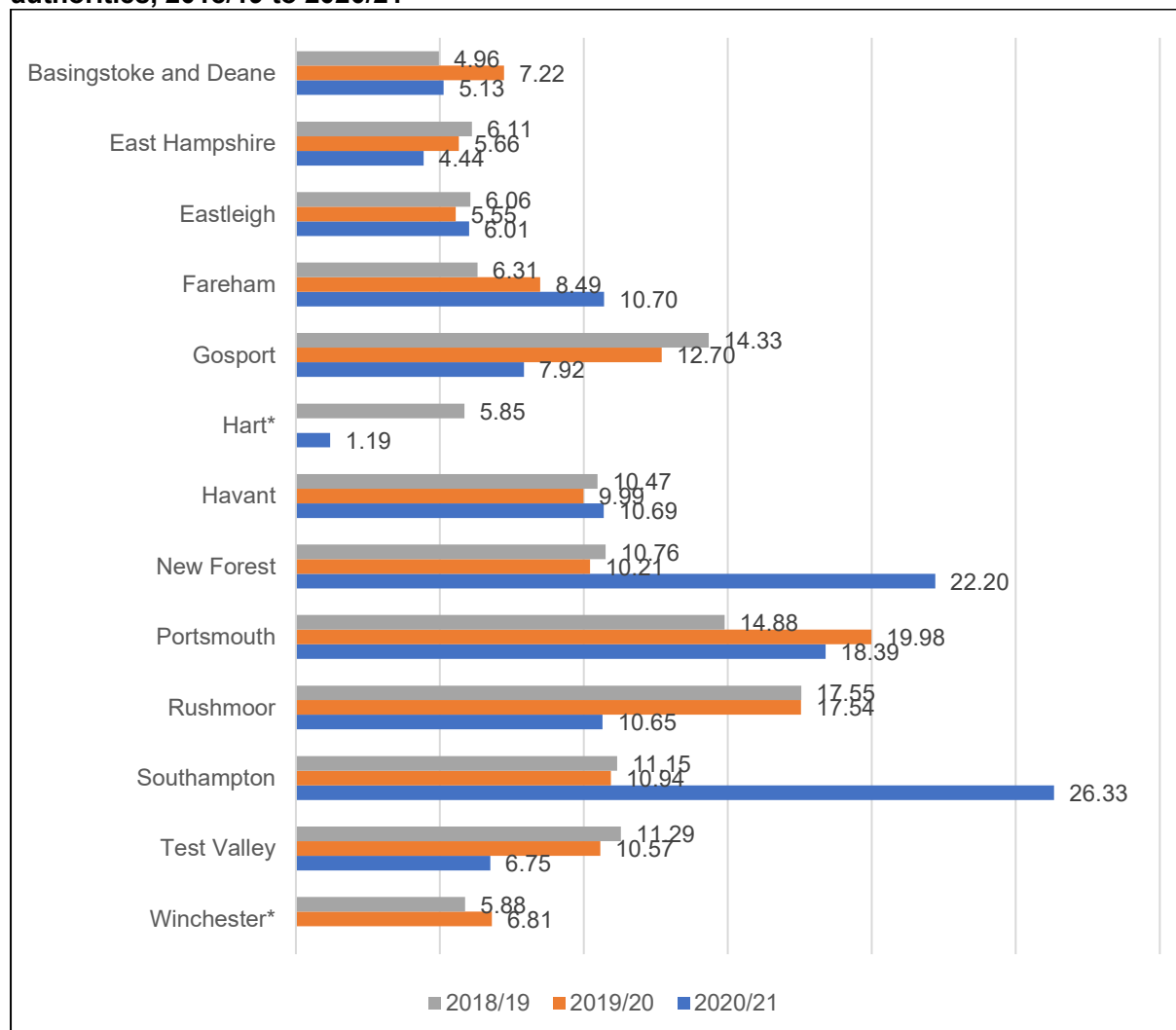
**Chart 5: Homelessness Initial Assessments by household composition, Gosport Borough Council, 2018/19 to 2020/21**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

Gosport Borough Council completed a greater number of initial assessments (14.33) per thousand households in 2018/19 compared both regionally and nationally<sup>49</sup>, the number of assessments have reduced year on year and in 2020-21 Gosport recorded amongst the lowest number of assessments compared both regionally and nationally<sup>50</sup>.

**Chart 6: Total Initial Assessments per thousand households, Hampshire local housing authorities, 2018/19 to 2020/21**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

\* 2019/20 Hart and 2020/21 Winchester did not provide accurate data for all four quarters

The number of main housing duty<sup>51</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 7 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.

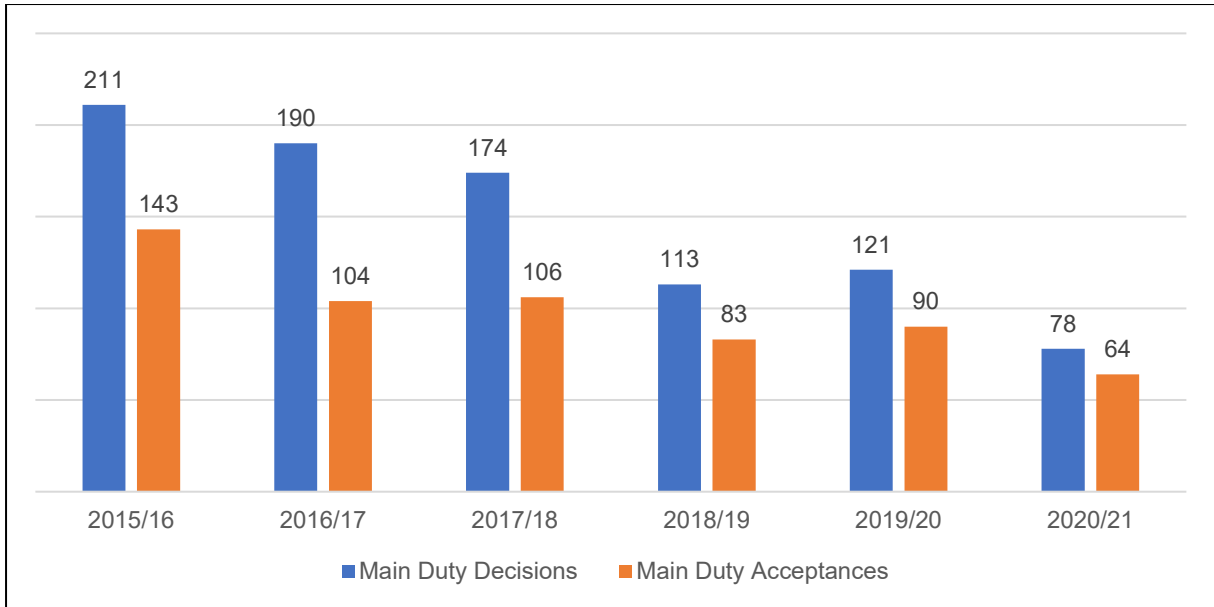
**Chart 7: Number of main duty applications and percentage of those accepted as being owed the main duty, Gosport Borough Council, 2015/16 to 2020/21**

<sup>49</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

<sup>50</sup> 2020-21 Total initial assessments per thousand households Hampshire 10.68, South East 10.67, England excluding London 11.37 and All England 11.99

<sup>51</sup> Housing Act 1996, Pt VII s193(2)

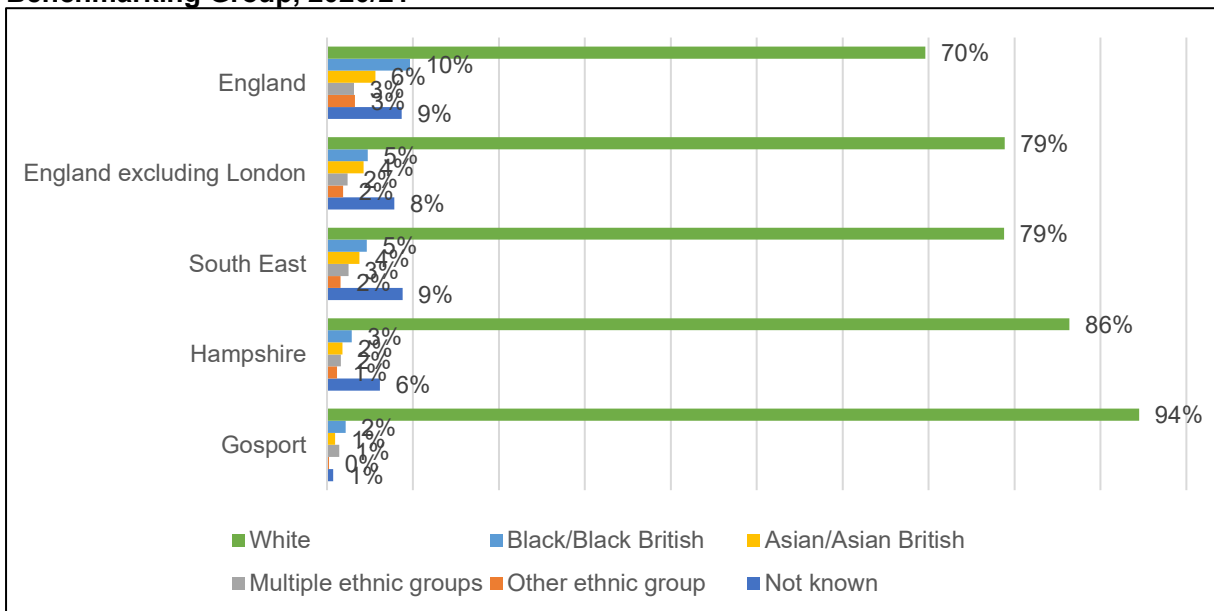




Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

From April 2018, ethnicity data is recorded at the stage of prevention or relief duty, recording requirements are more comprehensive, chart 8 below shows H-CLIC data for Gosport in 2020/21 recorded 94% of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty as white, this corresponds with general population data recording 96% of Gosport residents as white British and 4% as black and minority ethnic<sup>52</sup>. Compared both regionally and nationally Gosport records a higher percentage of white applicants.

**Chart 8: Percentage of lead applicants owed a prevention or relief duty by ethnic group, Benchmarking Group, 2020/21**

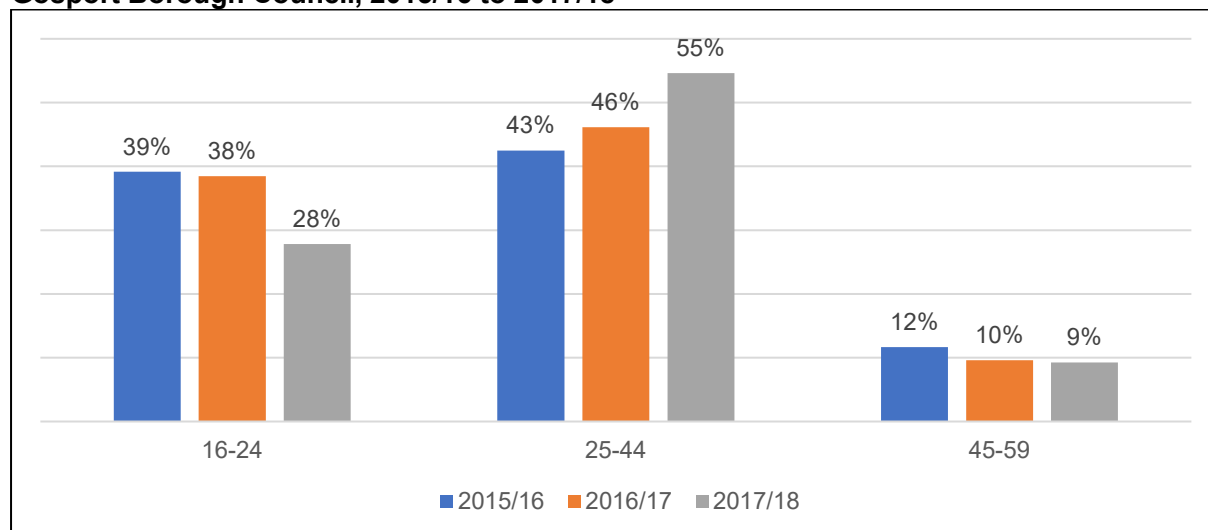


Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

<sup>52</sup> Office of National Statistics 2011 Census

Between 2015/16 and 2017/18 the number of 16 to 24 year-olds owed a main duty reduced<sup>53</sup> by 43%, the same period saw a 4% increase in the number of 25 to 44 year olds, who made up the majority (47%) of main applicants accepted as eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need in this 3 year period.

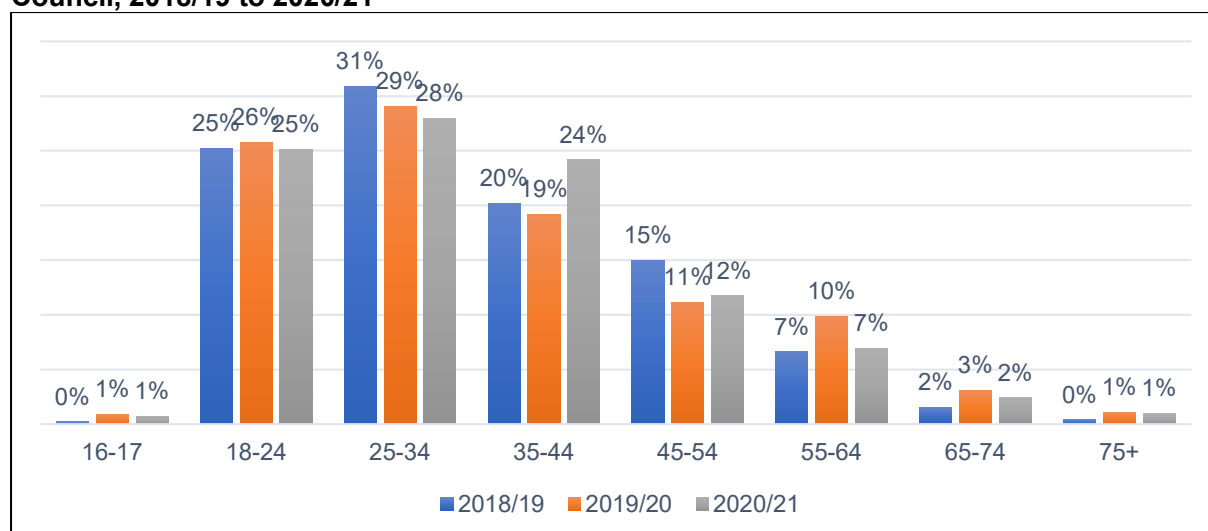
**Chart 9: Age group of main applicants owed a main duty (of those recorded) by percentage, Gosport Borough Council, 2015/16 to 2017/18**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

From April 2018, age group is no longer recorded for those owed a main duty but is recorded for those owed a prevention or relief duty. 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. Whilst the number of 18 to 34 year old applicants has remained steady over the 3 years, there was a 5% increase in the number of 35 to 44 year old applicants in 2020/21.

**Chart 10: Age group of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty, Gosport Borough Council, 2018/19 to 2020/21**



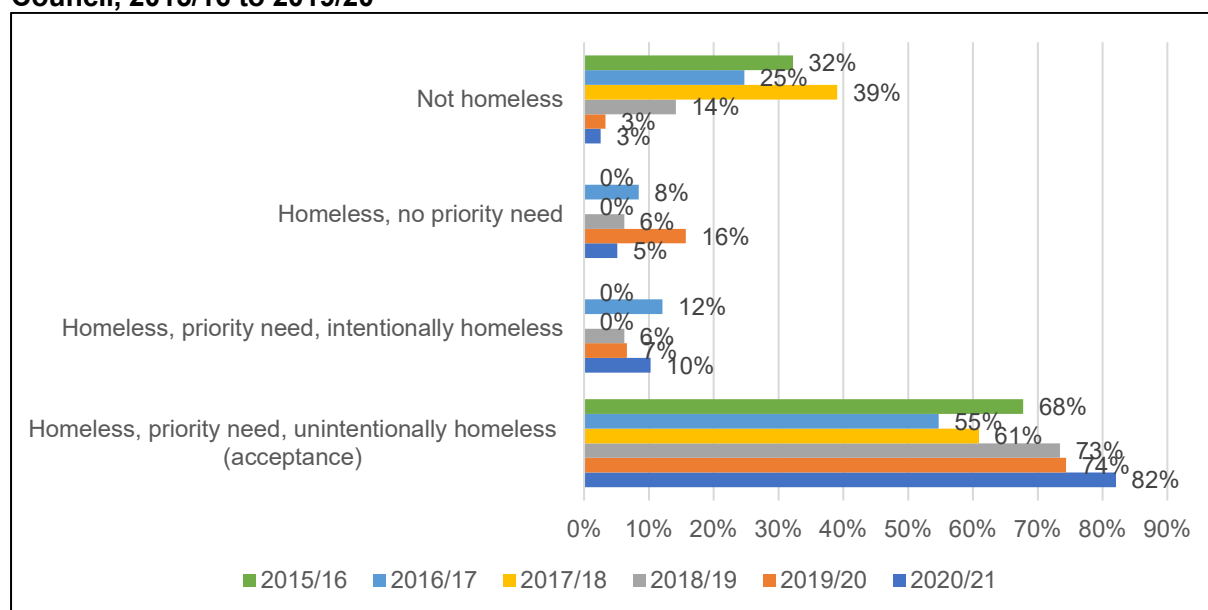
Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

<sup>53</sup> DLUHC Detailed local authority level homelessness figures 2015/16 recorded 47 main applicants aged 16 to 24 owed a main housing duty and 27 main applicants in 2017/18

Of the main duty decisions made by Gosport Borough Council during 2020/21, 64 (82%) were accepted as being eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need; owed the main homelessness duty to secure accommodation<sup>54</sup>.

Applicants found ‘not homeless’ make up the lowest percentage of negative decisions<sup>55</sup> during 2019/20, a significant change compared with post 2018 where applicants found ‘not homeless’ made up the highest percentage of negative decisions.

**Chart 11: Outcome of main housing duty decision for eligible households, Gosport Borough Council, 2015/16 to 2019/20**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

All households with dependent children are required to be recorded as being in priority need, irrespective of any other priority need(s) they may have. All other priority need categories will therefore only include single persons, couples, or families with no dependent children. As such, the number of households with children owed a main duty represents the largest priority need group, followed by household members vulnerable as a result of mental health problems.

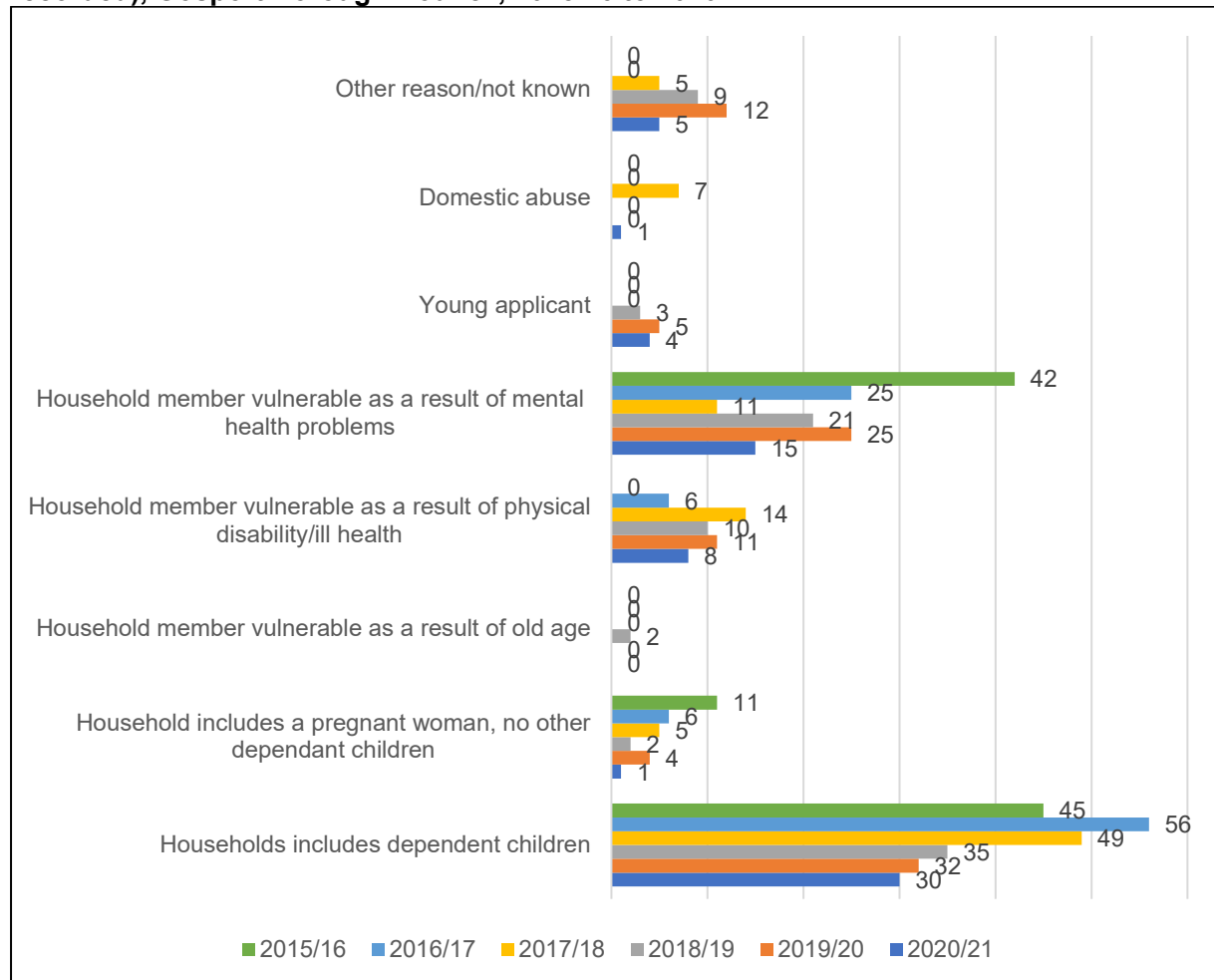
Priority need due to domestic abuse appears low, with the exception of 7 cases in 2017/18, five of the six years recorded 1 or less households owed a duty due to domestic abuse. It is important to note that households with dependent children experiencing domestic abuse will be recorded as priority need as a result of the children rather than domestic abuse.

The number of households experiencing domestic abuse is captured at Charts 13 and 14 below.

<sup>54</sup> Housing Act 1996, Pt VII s193(2)

<sup>55</sup> Housing Act 1996, Pt VII s.193(1) The main housing duty only arises if the local authority is satisfied that the applicant is homeless, eligible, in priority need and not homeless intentionally.

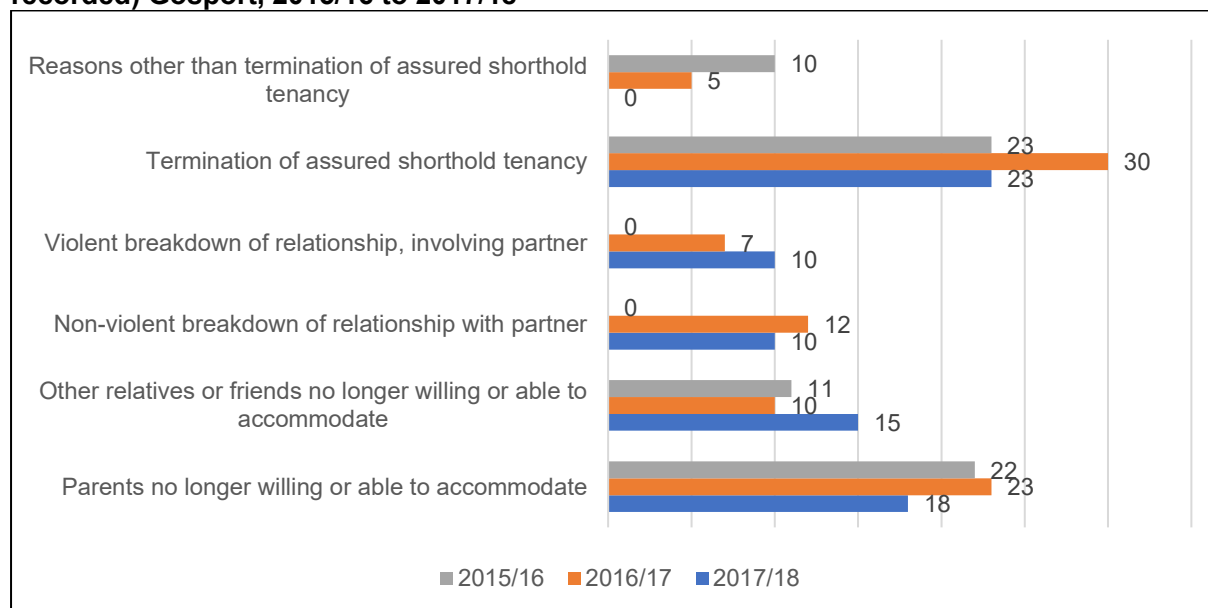
**Chart 12: Households owed a main homelessness duty by priority need category (where recorded), Gosport Borough Council, 2015/16 to 2020/21**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

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.

**Chart 13: Main reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a main duty (where recorded) Gosport, 2015/16 to 2017/18**



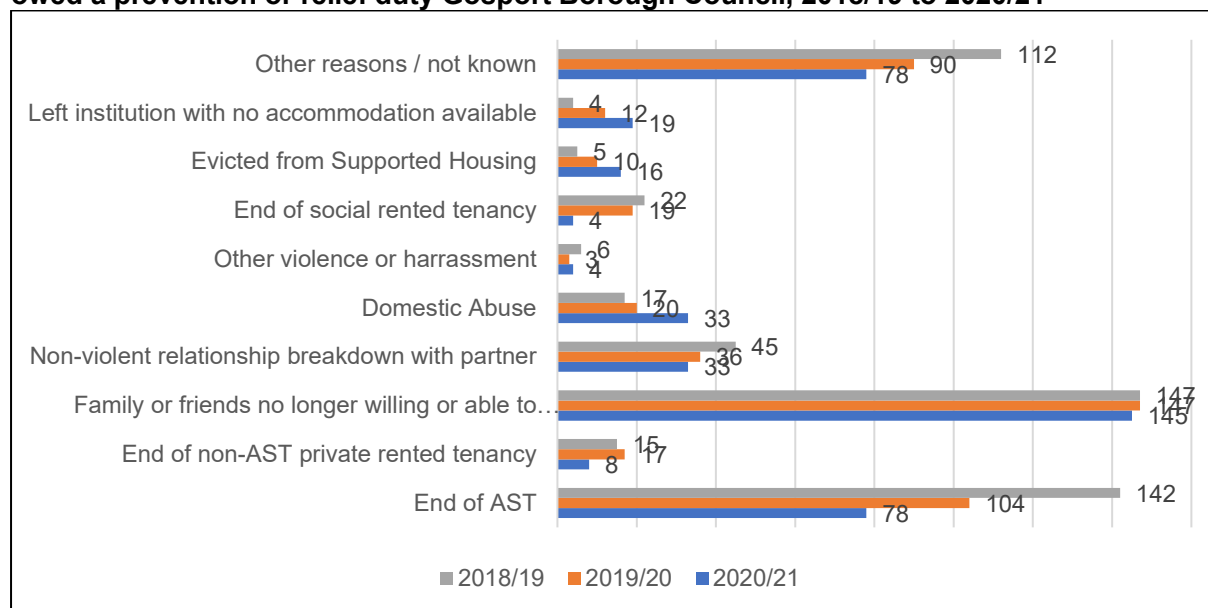
Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

From April 2018 to March 2021 the number households becoming homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate them made up the largest percentage (32%) of households, followed by 23% of households becoming homeless or threatened with homelessness due termination of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy.

Of the 324 households threatened with or homeless due to an Assured Shorthold Tenancy ending, 93% were assisted under the prevention duty, as were 60% of households no longer able to stay with friends or family.

The number of households seeking assistance as a result of domestic abuse has increased steadily over the six-year reporting period.

**Chart 14: Reason for loss, or threat of loss, of last settled home by number of households owed a prevention or relief duty Gosport Borough Council, 2018/19 to 2020/21**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

The main duty can be brought to an end where the applicant satisfies one of the circumstances set out in law<sup>56</sup> listed in chart 15 below.

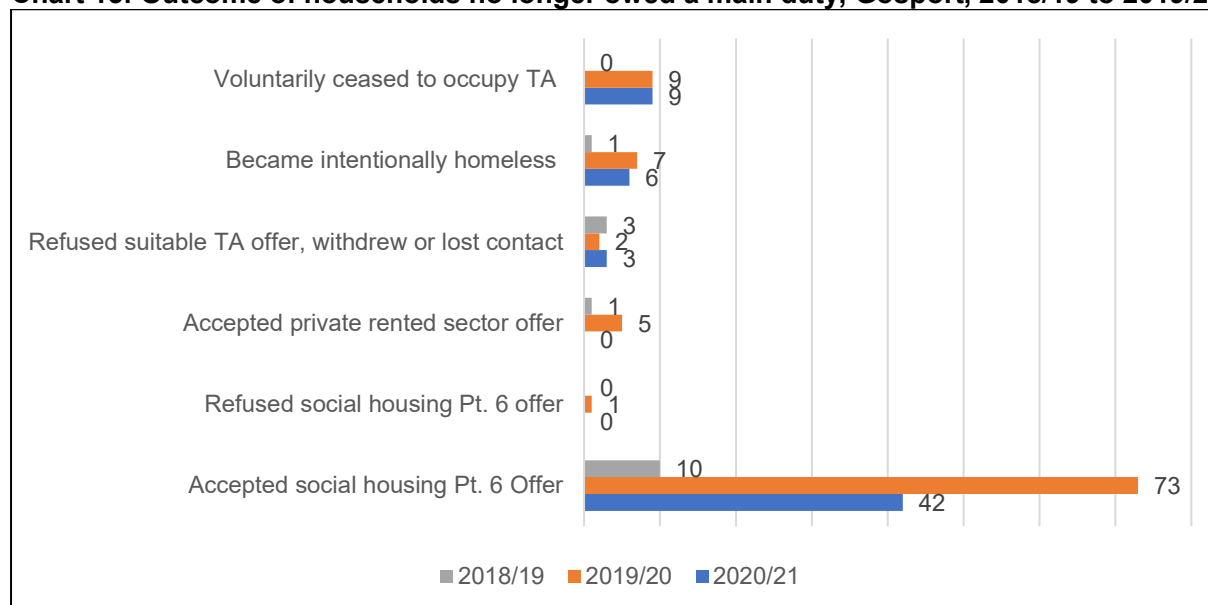
No data was available from DLUHC for Gosport covering the period 2015/16 to 2017/18. Data for 2018/19 recorded a main duty ending for 15 households compared with 97 households 2019/20.

Between 2018/19 and 2020/21 an average of 71% of main duties ending following acceptance of a 'social housing Part 6 offer'<sup>57</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> ss.193(5), s.193(6), s.193(7) and s.193(7AA) Housing Act 1996, as amended by s.148 Localism Act 2011; para 15.41 Homelessness Code of Guidance, DLUHC, Feb 2018.

<sup>57</sup> Allocation of accommodation in accordance with the Local Authority's Allocation Scheme under Part 6 Housing Act 1996

**Chart 15: Outcome of households no longer owed a main duty, Gosport, 2018/19 to 2019/21**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

An evaluation of the levels of rough sleeping is carried out annually in Gosport, in accordance with national guidance<sup>58</sup>, in consultation with partners including, police, local faith groups, outreach workers, substance misuse agencies and drug and alcohol teams.

Rough sleeper numbers<sup>59</sup> are inconsistent having increased and decreased each year, comparing 2016 to 2020 there is a 50% reduction. 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.

**Table 1: Rough sleeping statistics, Gosport, 2016 to 2020**

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total	6	9	0	4	3
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	4	7	0	3	3
Female	2	2	0	1	0
<b>Age</b>					
18-25	0	1	0	1	0
Over 25	6	8	0	3	3

Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

The 2020 Rough sleeping snapshot identified 18% of all people sleeping rough are in the South East of England, second only to London (27%).

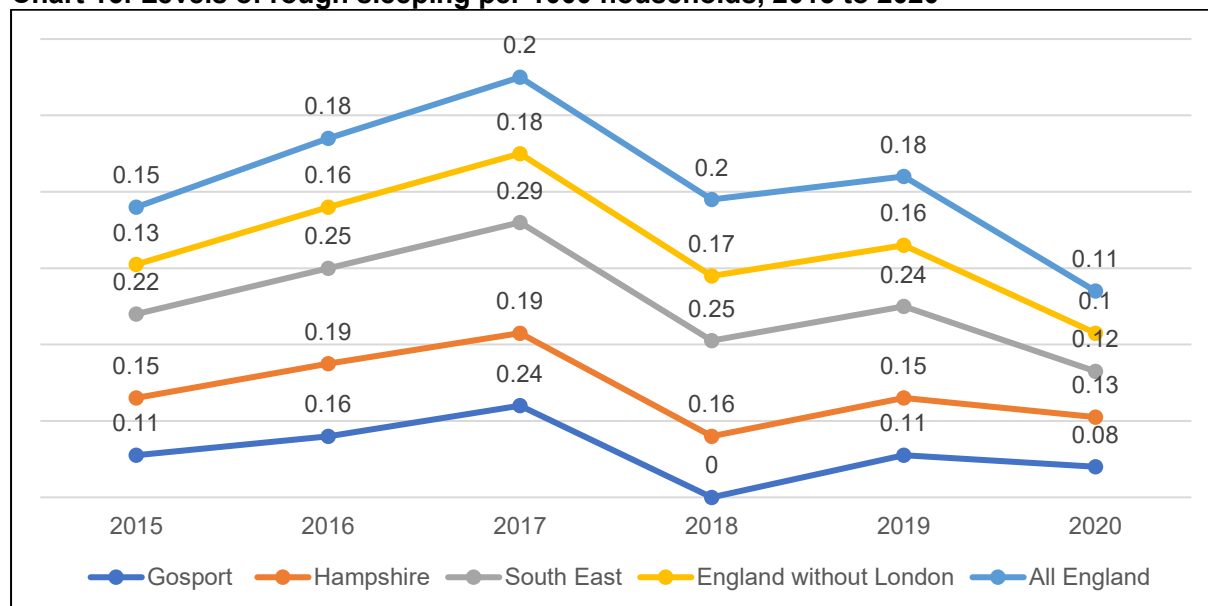
<sup>58</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government. (2010). Evaluating the extend of rough sleeping: A new approach.

<sup>59</sup> Gosport annual autumn snapshot of rough sleeping using an evidence-based estimate meeting including a spotlight count in specific areas.

On 23 March 2020 the government launched the ‘Everyone-In’ scheme<sup>60</sup> across England, in autumn 2020 the South East recorded the largest decrease in the number of people estimated to be sleeping rough, 474 people in 2020 compared to 900 people in 2019.

For the third year in a row all benchmarking groups, with the exception of Gosport (recording an increase in 2019), have seen a reduction in the number of rough sleepers per thousand households. Gosport recorded the lowest number of rough sleepers per thousand households in the benchmarking group over four of the past five years.

**Chart 16: Levels of rough sleeping per 1000 households, 2015 to 2020**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

## 2.2 Future levels of homelessness

To forecast future levels of homelessness, we have taken account of trends shown in homelessness statistics analysed in section 2.1 of this chapter, plus other sources of data relating to the main causes, to create as accurate a forecast as is possible. Research<sup>61</sup> published in 2017 shows the primary cause of homelessness to be childhood poverty, closely followed by labour and housing market factors as secondary causes.

The Homelessness Monitor: England 2021<sup>62</sup> identified the combined impact that key policies like raising the Local Housing Allowance, and suspending evictions have had in preventing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had resulted in a drop in ‘core homelessness’ in England in 2020. It is predicted however, that the economic aftermath of COVID-19 risks a substantial rise in core homelessness, including rough sleeping, unless Government implements a range of housing and welfare mitigation

<sup>60</sup> Local authorities were asked to immediately house rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping to protect their health and stop wider transmission of COVID-19

<sup>61</sup> Professor Glen Bramley & Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick (July 2017), ‘Homelessness in the UK: who is most at risk’, Housing Studies Journal, pp1-21

<sup>62</sup> Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2021) The Homelessness Monitor: England 2021. London: Crisis.



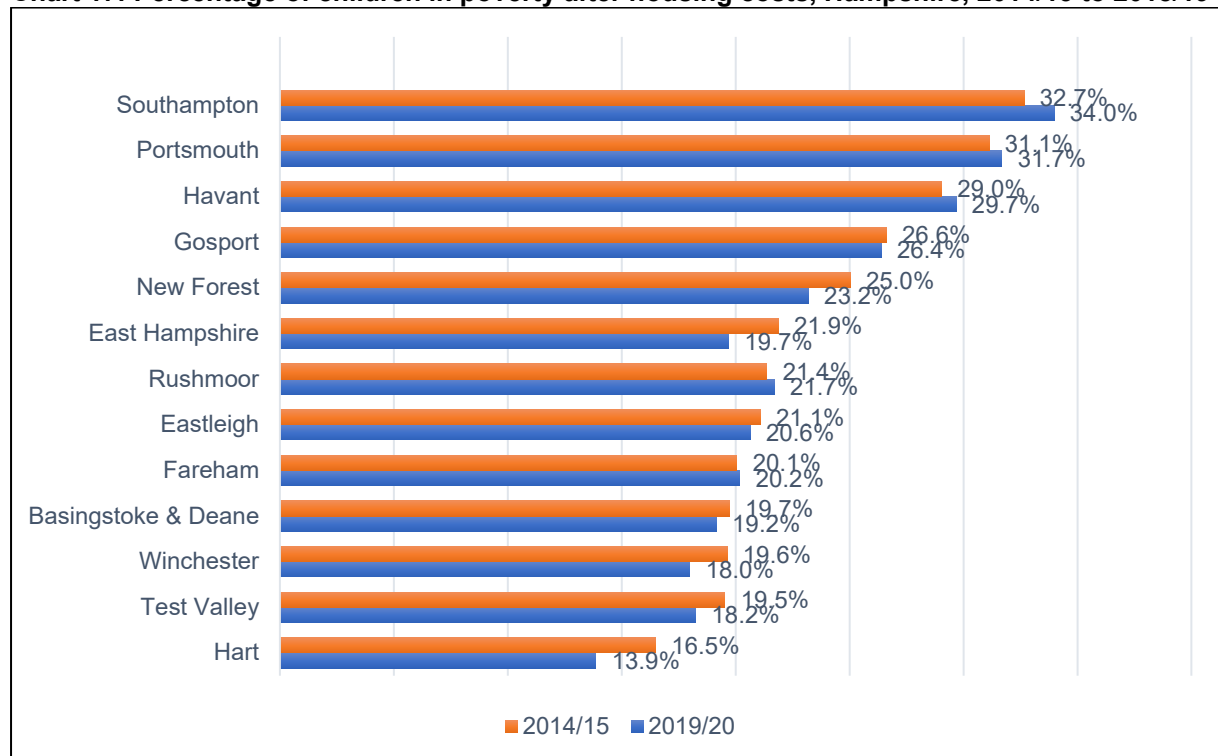
interventions, including continuing with emergency accommodation measures for those at risk of rough sleeping.

The latest child poverty figures<sup>63</sup>, published March 2021, state that in the UK in 2019/20 there were 4.3 million children (31% of all UK children) living in poverty. Housing and childcare are the two primary factors that have been identified as putting pressure on family budgets<sup>64</sup>.

Work does not provide a guaranteed route out of poverty in the UK. 75 per cent of children growing up in poverty live in a household where at least one person works<sup>65</sup>.

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>66</sup>.

**Chart 17: Percentage of children in poverty after housing costs, Hampshire, 2014/15 to 2018/19**



Source: Child Poverty Action Group. End Child Poverty

Gosport has a population of 84,700, of which 51,700 (61%) are aged 16 to 64. Between January 2020 and December 2020, 68% (39,500) of those aged 16 to 24 were in employment<sup>67</sup>, 4% (1,700) were unemployed.

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/local-child-poverty-data-2014-15-2019-20/>

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/child-poverty-facts-and-figures> (updated March 2021. All poverty figures are after housing costs)

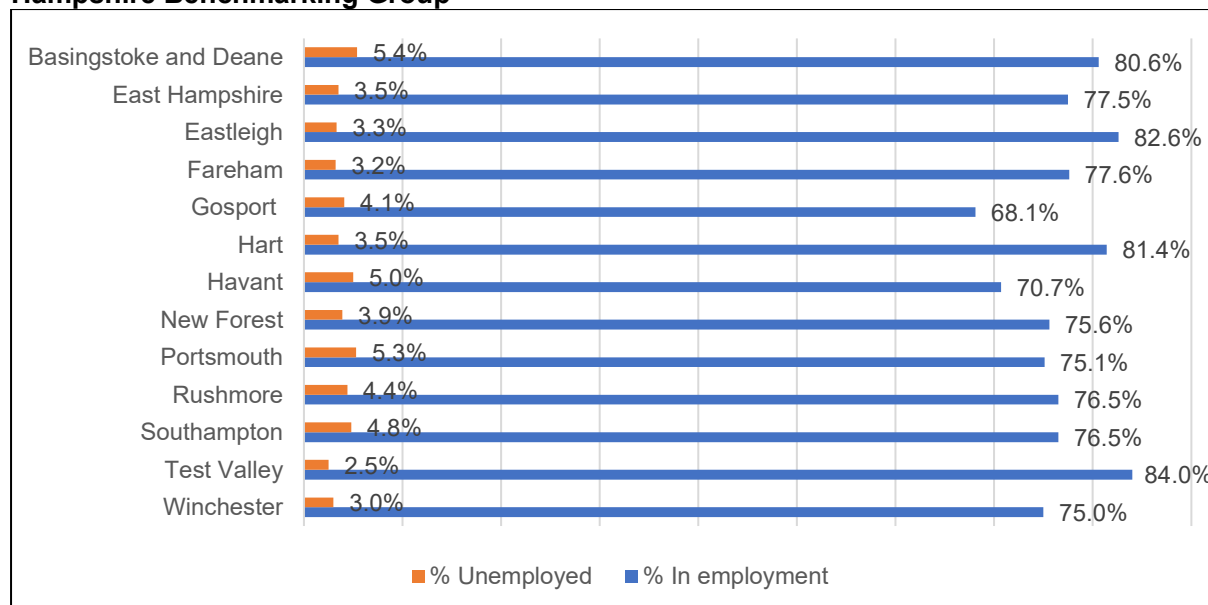
<sup>65</sup> <https://cpag.org.uk/child-poverty/child-poverty-facts-and-figures>

<sup>66</sup> 5 year (2014/15 – 2019/20) median number of children living in poverty Gosport 4,508

<sup>67</sup> 34,400 Employees and 5,000 Self Employed

Compared both regionally and nationally<sup>68</sup>, at 68%, Gosport has the lowest percentage of employment. The percentage of unemployed (4.1%) is in line with the median percentage of the Hampshire benchmarking group (3.9%) and the South East at 3.9%.

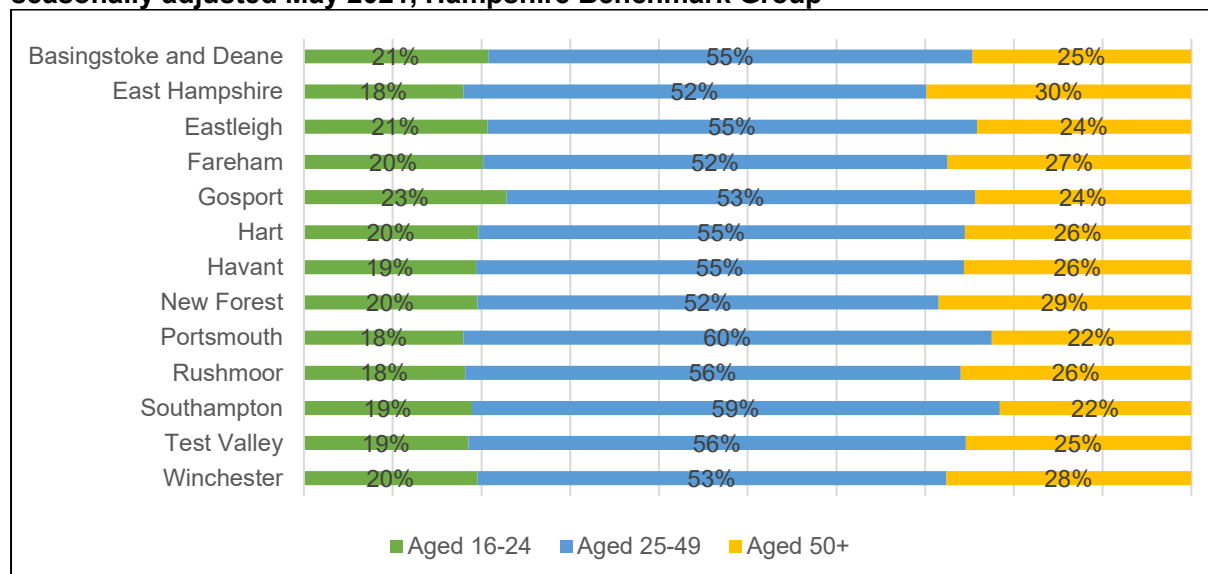
**Chart 18: Employment and unemployment by percentage of 16 to 64-year olds, 2020, Hampshire Benchmarking Group**



Source: ONS Nomis Labour Market Statistics

The age group with the greatest proportion of claimants of out of work benefits in Gosport in May 2021 was the 25 to 49 years at 53% of all claimants, followed by the 50+ age group and 16 to 24 year olds at 24% and 23%. Compared with neighbouring authorities, Gosport had a greater percentage<sup>69</sup> of younger claimants aged 16 to 24.

**Chart 19: Claimant count (Jobseekers Allowance and Universal Credit) by age group - not seasonally adjusted May 2021, Hampshire Benchmark Group**



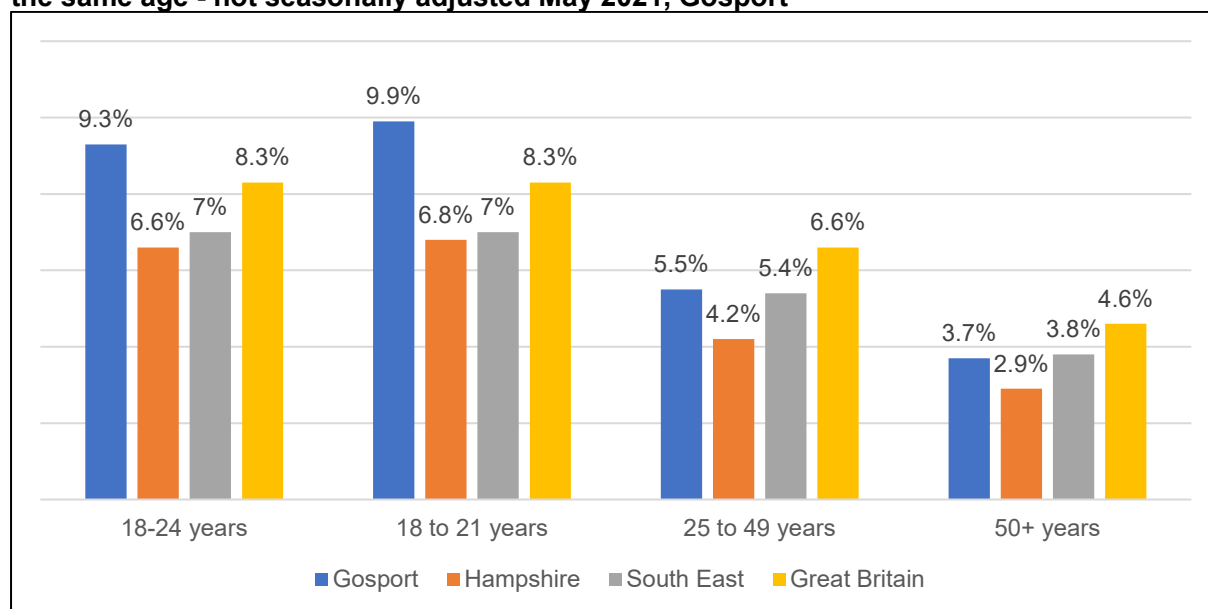
Source: ONS Claimant count by sex and age

<sup>68</sup> Hampshire 77.5%; South East 78.3% and Great Britain 75.4%

<sup>69</sup> Median percentage of 16 to 24 year old claimants for the 13 Hampshire Local Housing Authorities 20%

Claimants aged 18 to 24, particularly those aged 18 to 21 represented the largest percentage of the resident population of the same age in Gosport compared regionally and nationally.

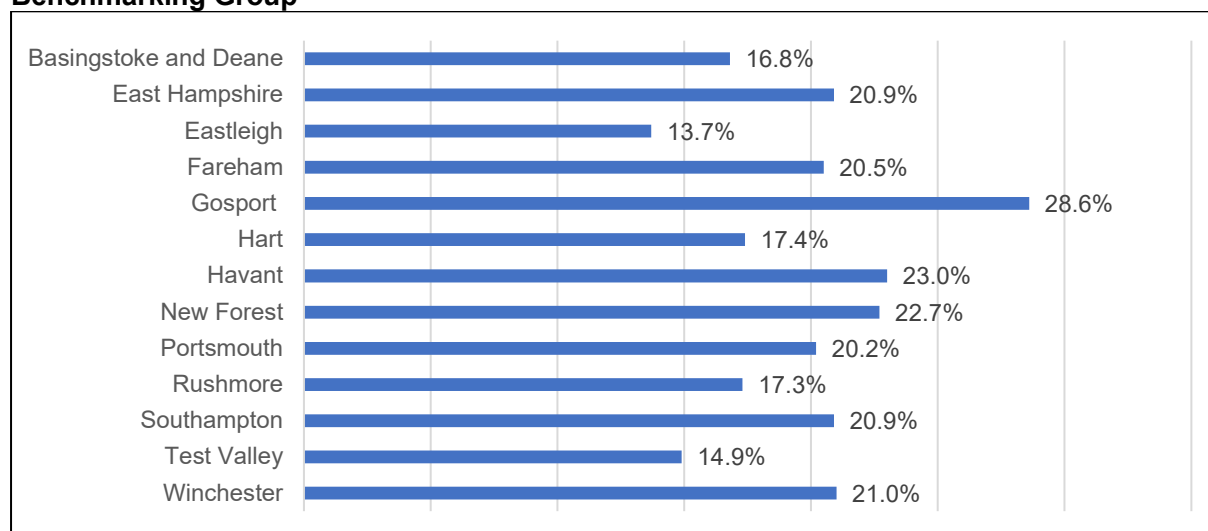
**Chart 20: Claimant count by percentage of claimants as a proportion of resident population of the same age - not seasonally adjusted May 2021, Gosport**



Source: ONS Nomis labour Market Statistics

Gosport has a higher percentage of economically inactive<sup>70</sup> 16 to 64 year-olds, compared both regionally and nationally<sup>71</sup>, a notably higher percentage (37.4%) of which compared regionally<sup>72</sup> and nationally (20.9%) were inactive due to long term sick.

**Chart 21: Economically inactive by percentage of 16 to 64 year olds, 2020, Hampshire Benchmarking Group**



Source: ONS Namis Labour Market Statistics

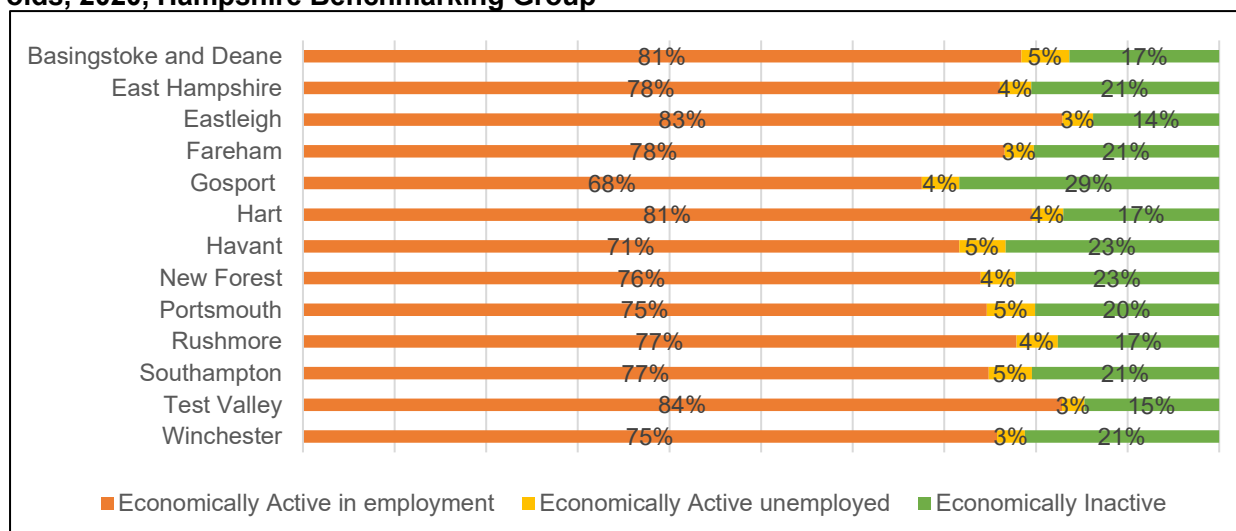
<sup>70</sup> Gosport 15,400 (28.6%) 16 to 64 year olds neither employed or unemployed due to: Looking after Family/Home, Temporary Sick, Long-Term Sick, Discouraged, Retired, Student, Other

<sup>71</sup> Hampshire 19.5%, South East 18.4%, Great Britain 20.9%

<sup>72</sup> South East 18.4%, Hampshire 19.5%

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 olds claiming out of work benefit is higher compared with neighbouring authorities.

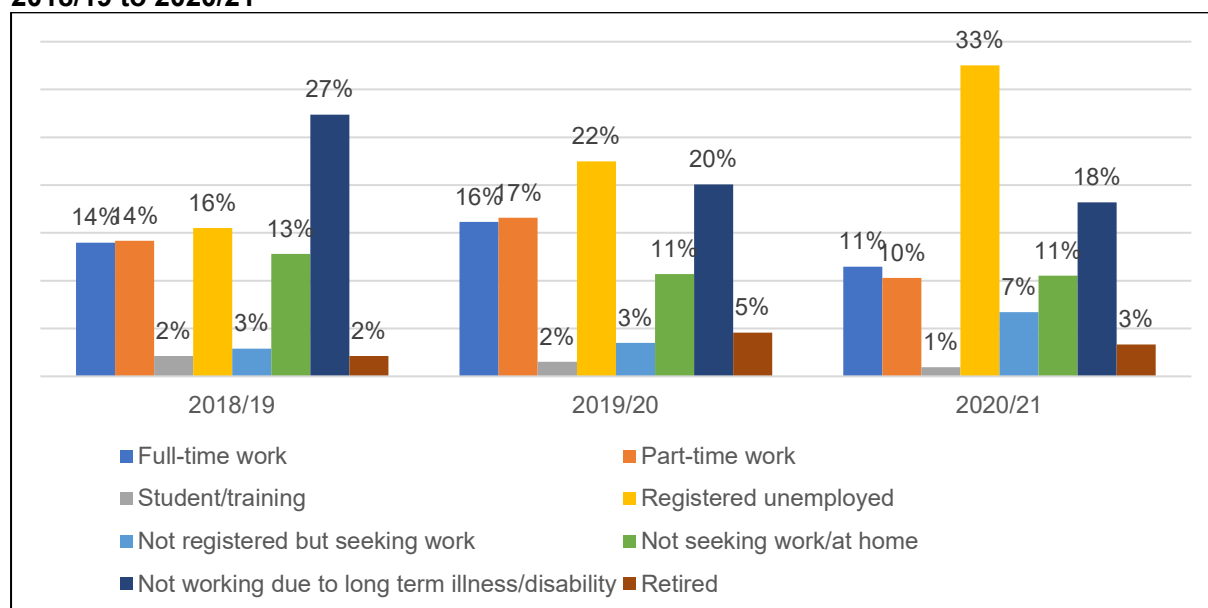
**Chart 22: Employed, unemployed and economically inactive by percentage of 16 to 64 year olds, 2020, Hampshire Benchmarking Group**



Source: ONS Namis Labour Market Statistics

Between 2018/19 and 2020/21 there has been a 9% reduction in the number of applicants not working due to long-term illness or disability, and 17% increase in the number of applicants registered unemployed.

**Chart 23: Employment status of main applicants owed a homelessness duty in Gosport 2018/19 to 2020/21**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

Median house prices for Gosport, at £216,000, were lower than Hampshire (£327,500) the South East (342,000) and England (£259,000)<sup>73</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 time 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.

**Table 2: Median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings ratio, 2020, Benchmark Group**

Gosport	6.64
Hampshire	9.73
South England	9.92
England	7.84

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

### **Conclusions about the levels of homelessness**

On average around 39 initial assessments are undertaken each month, over half of which are single households and around 20% are single female parent households with dependent children.

Despite an overall reduction in the number of assessments, single male applicants are the only household type to record an increase each year.

Between 2018/19 and 2020/21, the annual number of initial assessments undertaken by Gosport Borough Council reduced by 21%, now recording amongst the lowest number of assessments compared both regionally and nationally

COVID-19 - It is predicted that the economic aftermath of the pandemic risks a substantial rise in core homelessness, including rough sleeping, unless Government implements a range of housing and welfare mitigation interventions.

Applicants aged 18 to 34 years old represent over 50% of households owed a duty. In line with national trends the most common age group of lead applicants in households owed a prevention or relief duty are aged 25 to 34.

Main duty decisions have reduced by 70% over the past six years. Households with children, followed by household members vulnerable as a result of mental health problems, remain the largest priority need groups.

The number of households seeking assistance as a result of domestic abuse has increased steadily over the six-year reporting period.

The largest number of households are homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate them, and termination of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy.

Allocation of social rented housing remains the most common method for bringing a main duty to an end.

<sup>73</sup> Office for National Statistics Median house price by local authority district, England and Wales December 2020

In 2020, Gosport recorded 3 male rough sleepers of UK nationality over the age of 26. Rough sleeper numbers have fluctuated over the last five years.

Gosport has the fourth highest percentage of child poverty in Hampshire which, over the last five years, has remained at 26%.

Gosport has a lower rate of employment and a higher rate of economic inactivity due to long term illness/disability, with a higher percentage of 16 to 24year olds claiming out of work benefit compared with neighbouring authorities.

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.

## 3.0 Preventing homelessness

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

Homelessness prevention activity has been divided into three recognised strands<sup>74</sup> to inform the focus of this review:

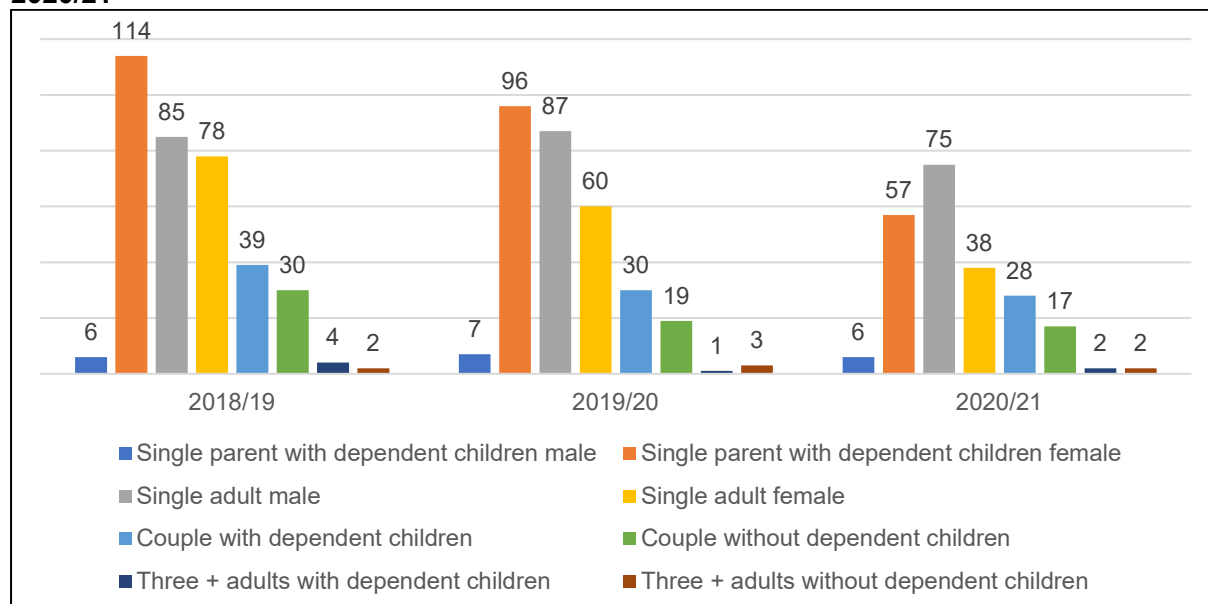
1. Early prevention – those most at risk are identified and services provided to prevent problems escalating
2. Pre-crisis prevention – advice services, mediation, or negotiation with landlords to avoid the imminent loss of a home
3. Preventing recurring homelessness – tenancy sustainment services are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

Prevention duty owed by household composition is shown by number and percentage of prevention duty owed cases in charts 27 and 28 below.

During 2020/21, single males were the largest household group owed a prevention duty. Proportionately this is a 9 and 4 percentage point increase from 2018/19 and 2019/20, but an overall decrease in the number of single males from the two earlier years.

Single female parent households with dependent children were the largest household group owed a prevention duty in 2018/19 and 2020/21, and second largest behind single males in 2020/21. Single female parent households had the greatest decrease over the three-year period.

**Chart 24: Household composition of those owed a prevention duty, Gosport, 2018/19 to 2020/21**

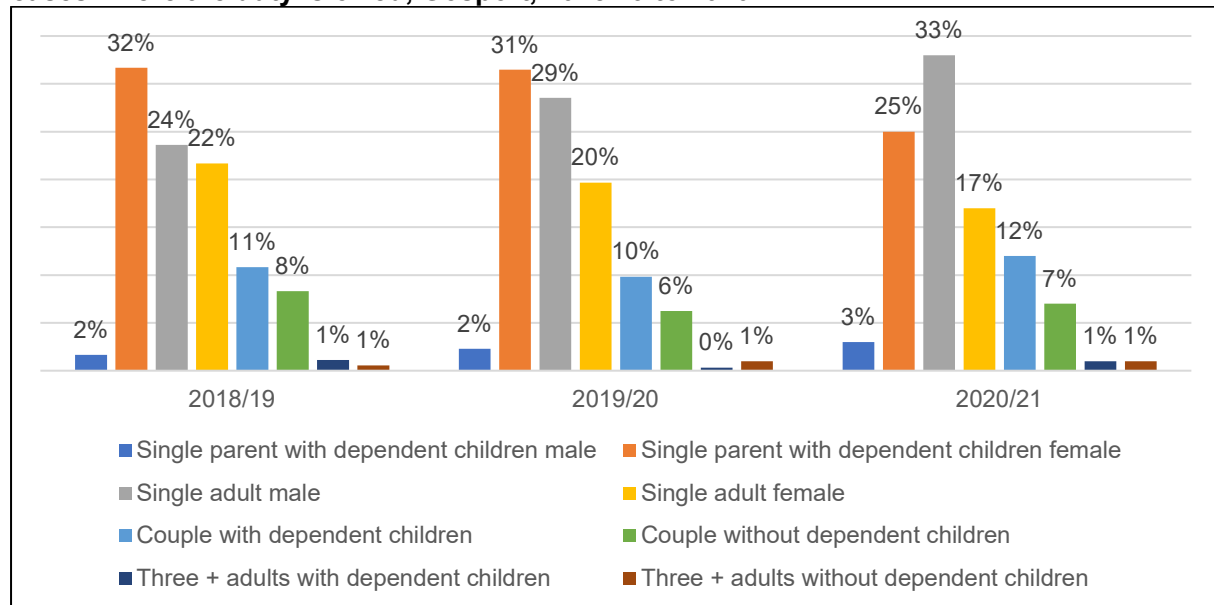


Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

<sup>74</sup> Hal Pawson, Gina Netto, Colin Jones, Fiona Wager, Cathie Fancy, Delia Lomax (2007), *Evaluating Homelessness Prevention*, London, Department for Communities & Local Government

When shown as a percentage of households owed a prevention duty, it is clear that proportionately, single male households are the only household category to record a year-on-year increase.

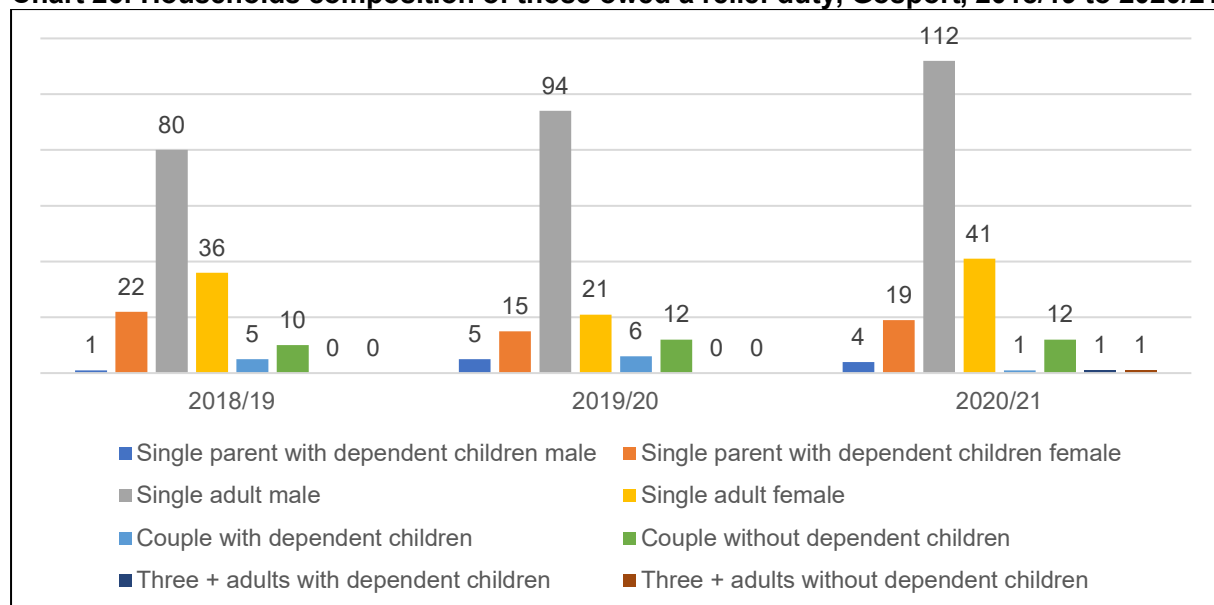
**Chart 25: Household composition of those owed a prevention duty by percentage of all cases where the duty is owed, Gosport, 2018/19 to 2020/21**



Source: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government

Relief duty owed by household composition is shown by number and percentage of relief duty owed cases in charts 29 and 30 below. Single male households have increased each year and represent over half of all households owed a relief duty, followed by single female households.

**Chart 26: Households composition of those owed a relief duty, Gosport, 2018/19 to 2020/21**

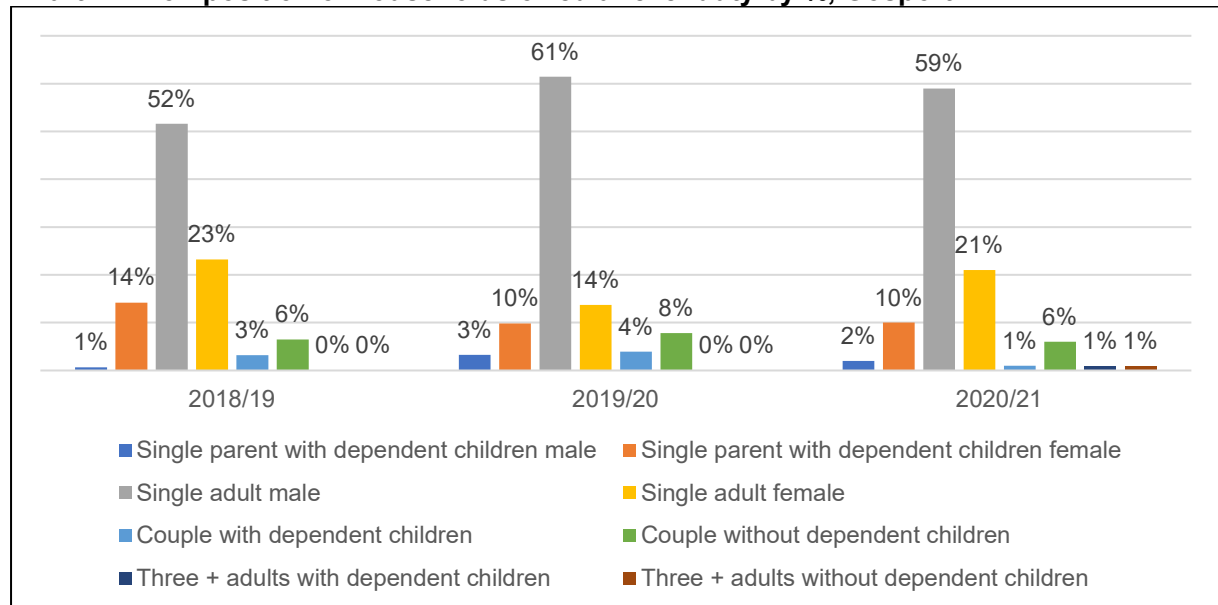


Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities



When shown as a percentage, it is clear that more than 75% of all households owed a relief duty in 2018/19 and 2019/20 were single people, increasing to 80% in 2021. That same year, households with dependent children reduced from 18% to 14%.

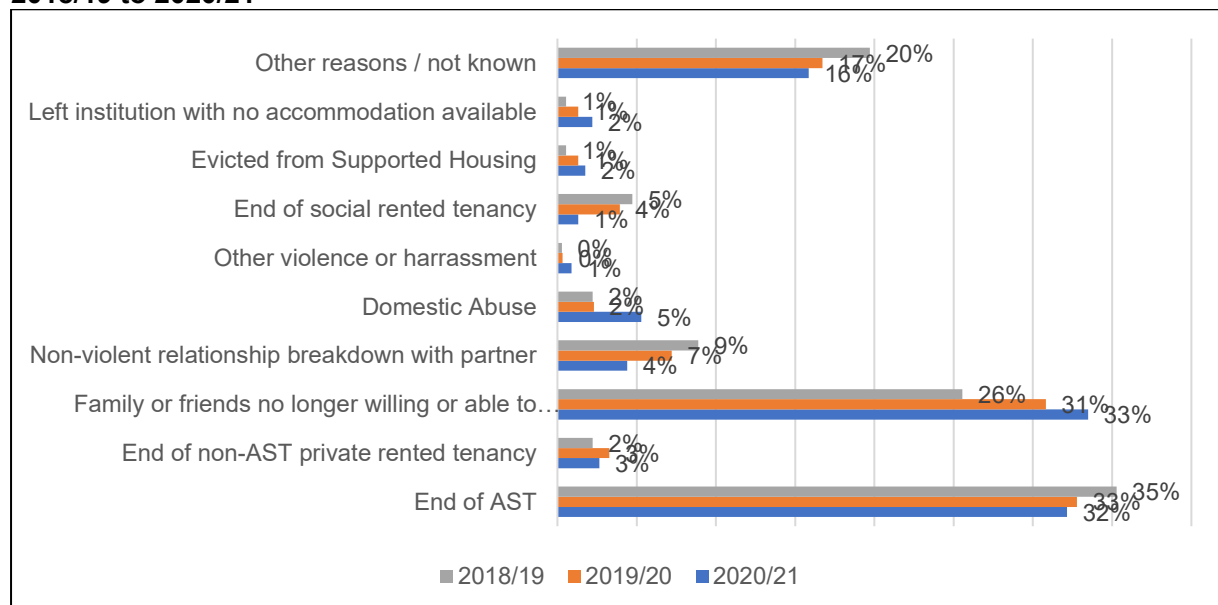
**Chart 27: Composition of households owed a relief duty by %, Gosport**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

The largest percentage of applicants owed a prevention duty were threatened with homelessness as a result of either an assured shorthold tenancy ending, or family and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate them. Between 2018/19 and 2020/21, there has been a 7 percent increase in the number of applicants owed a prevention duty as a result of family and friends no longer able to accommodate them.

**Chart 28: Reason for loss of last settled home for those owed a prevention duty, Gosport, 2018/19 to 2020/21**

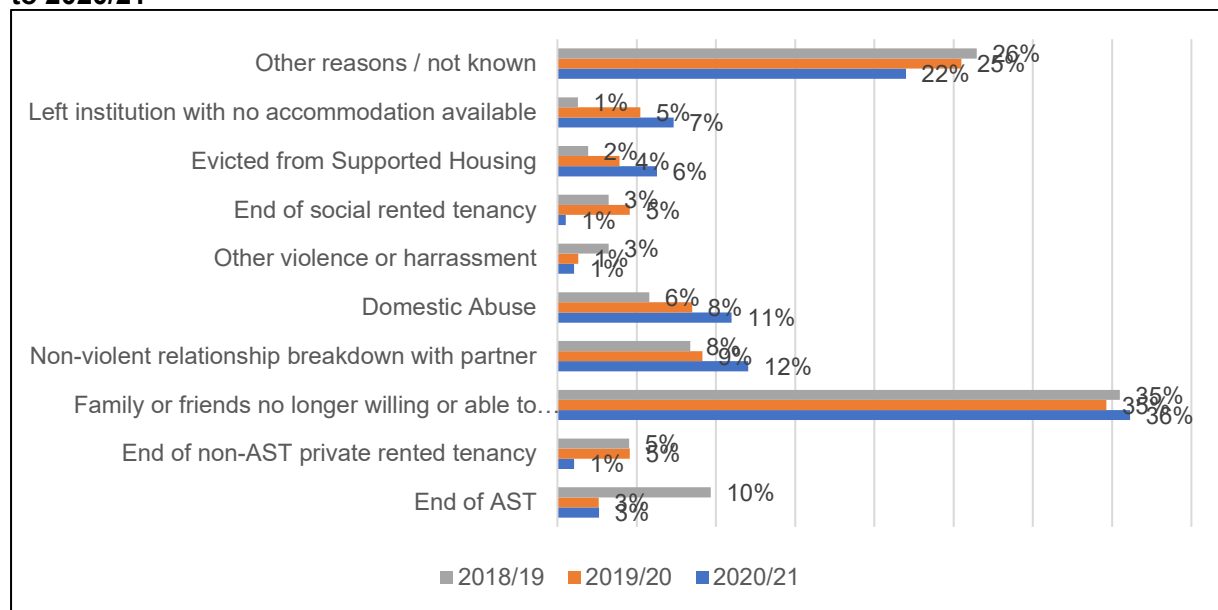


Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

The most commonly recorded reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a relief duty, making up just over one third of applicants, is as a result of family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate.

The percentage of households owed a relief duty after leaving an institution with no accommodation available, and as a result of domestic abuse, has recorded a 6 and 5 percent increase respectively between 2018/19 and 2020/21<sup>75</sup>. Homelessness due to the end of a non-violent relationship, and eviction from supported housing, also records an increase<sup>76</sup>.

**Chart 29: Reason for loss of last settled home for those owed a relief duty, Gosport, 2018/19 to 2020/21**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

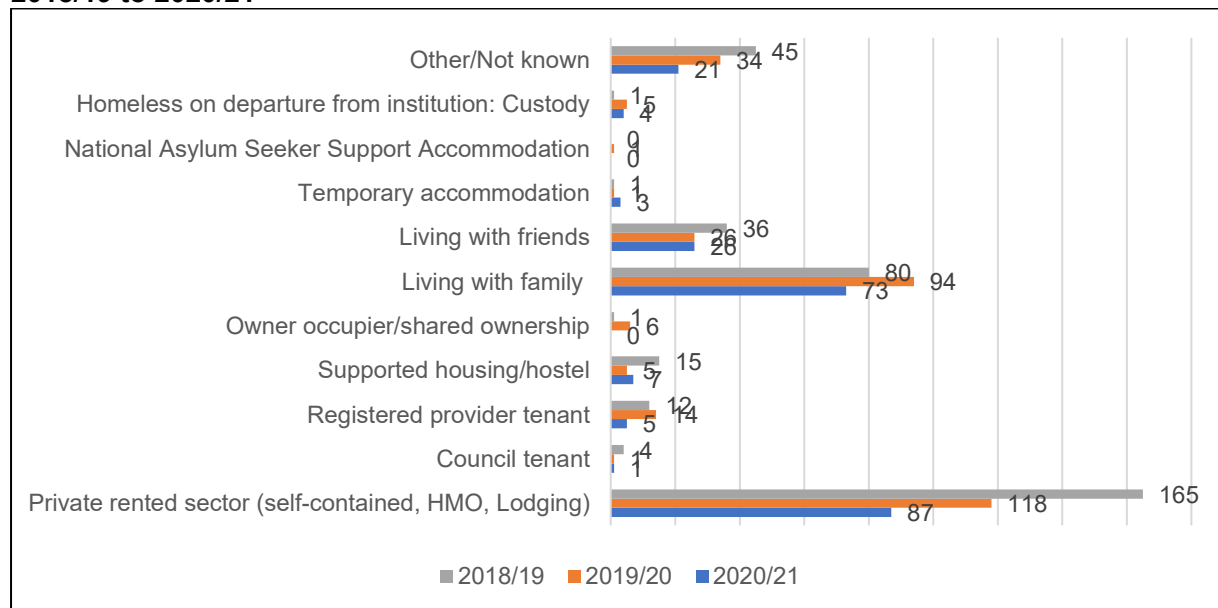
In 2020/21, over half of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty were aged between 18 and 34, with 28% aged 25 to 34 and 25% aged 18 to 24 (see Chart 10).

42% of all households owed a prevention duty for 2018/19, and 34% of those in 2019/20 and 2020/21, were living in self-contained privately rented accommodation at the time of application. Households living with family and friends made up 32% of all those owed a prevention duty for 2018/19, increasing to 39% in 2019/20, and 44% in 2020/21.

<sup>75</sup> Left institution with no accommodation available; 2 applicants 2018/19, 8 applicants 2019/20, and 14 applicants 2020/21. Evicted from Supported Housing; 3 applicants 2018/19, 6 applicants 2019/20, and 12 applicants 2020/21

<sup>76</sup> Domestic Abuse; 9 applicants 2018/19, 13 applicants 2019/20, and 21 applicants 2020/21. Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner; 13 applicants 2018/19, 14 applicants 2019/20, and 23 applicants 2020/21

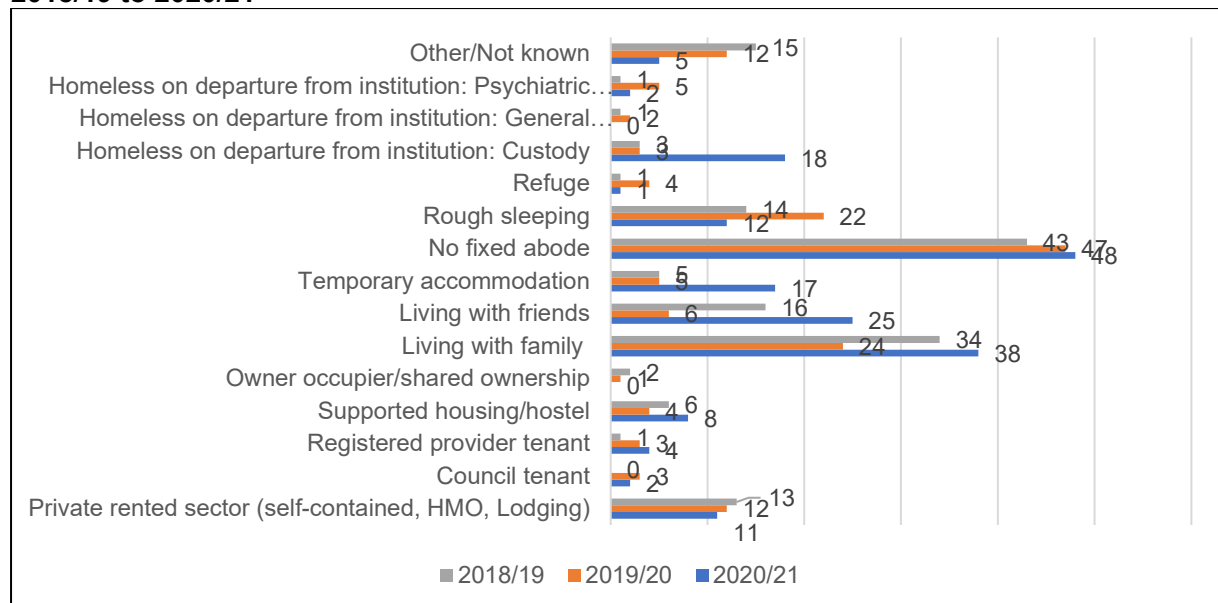
**Chart 30: Accommodation at time of application for those owed a prevention duty, Gosport, 2018/19 to 2020/21**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

The most commonly recorded reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a relief duty is family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate, which made up 33% of households in 2020/21. In the same year, households recording no fixed abode made up a quarter of households owed a relief duty. 2020/21 records a notable increase in the number of households homeless upon release from custody and temporary accommodation<sup>77</sup>.

**Chart 31: Accommodation at time of application for those owed a relief duty, Gosport, 2018/19 to 2020/21**

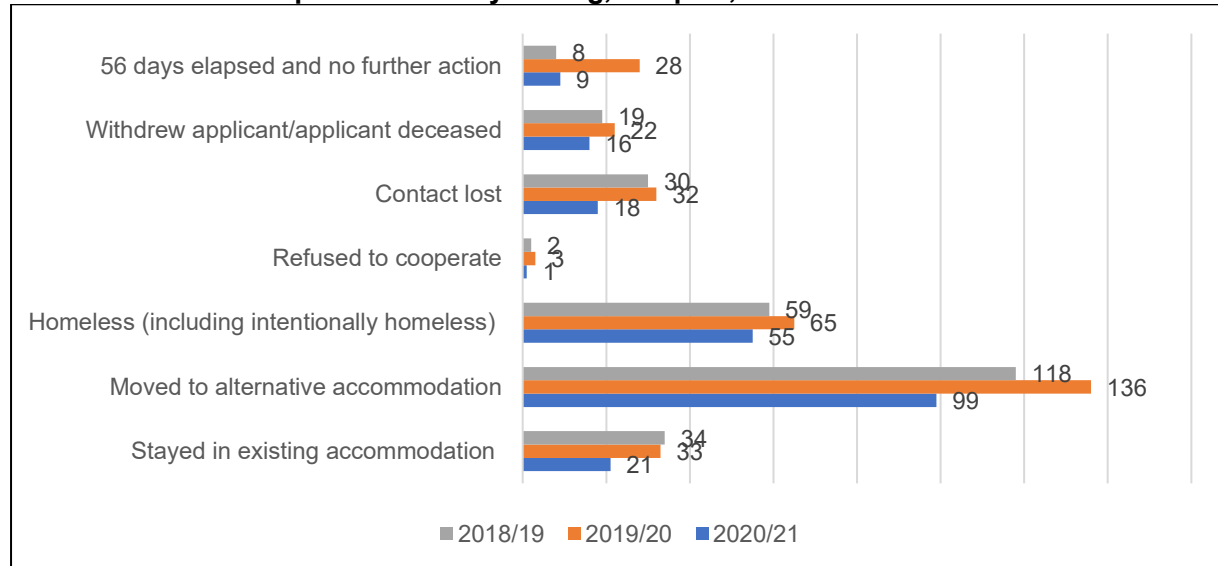


Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

<sup>77</sup> Release from custody; 2018/19 – 2%, 2019/20 – 2%, and 2020/21 – 9%.  
Temporary Accommodation; 2018/19 – 3%, 2019/20 – 3%, and 2020/21 – 9%.

Just over half (median 55%) of all households whose prevention duties ended in Gosport between 2018/19 and 2020/21 were due to new accommodation being secured for at least 6 months, 10% of which remained in existing accommodation. 22% of households whose prevention duty ended were recorded as intentionally homeless.

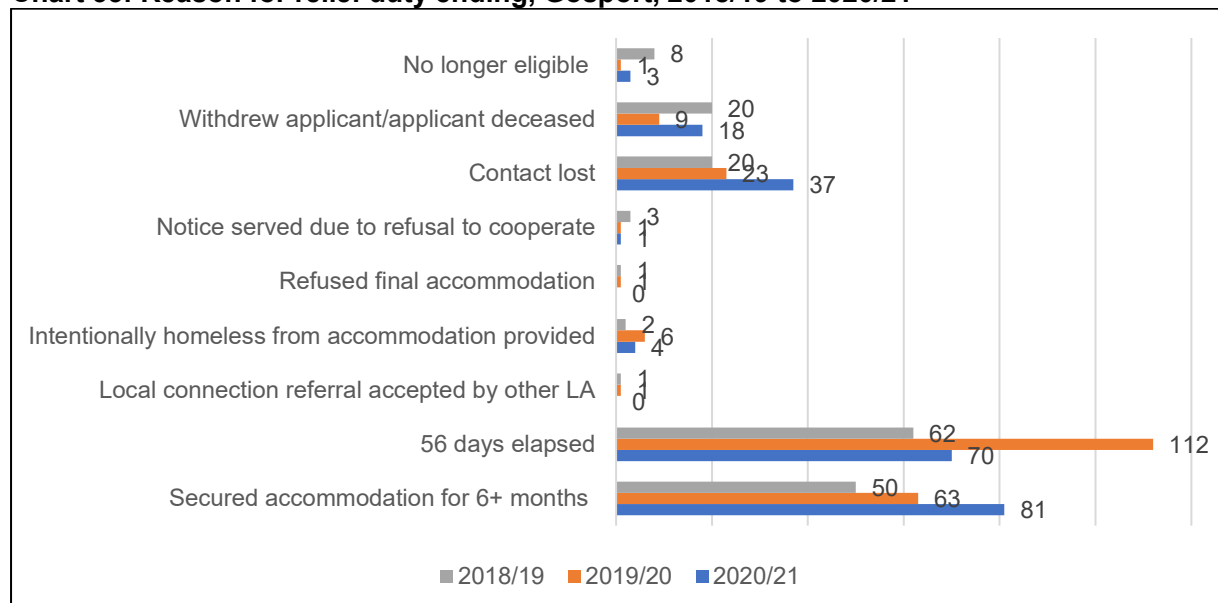
**Chart 32: Reason for prevention duty ending, Gosport, 2018/19 to 2020/21**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

Between 2018/19 and 2020/21, the most common reason for the relief duty ending in Gosport is 56 days elapsing, which decreased from 37% of all households whose relief duty ended during 2018/19, to 33% during 2020/21. This is followed by accommodation secured for 6+ months at 30% of all households whose relief duty ended during 2018/19, and 38% during 2020/21, though this data set does not record the tenure of such accommodation.

**Chart 33: Reason for relief duty ending, Gosport, 2018/19 to 2020/21**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

### 3.1 Early Homelessness Prevention Activities

### 3.1.1 Universal advice and information

#### Duty to Refer

A new 'duty to refer' came into force from October 2018<sup>78</sup>. Specified public authorities are obliged to ask any person they believe might be homeless or threatened with homelessness if they wish to be referred to a local authority of their own choosing.

The council has made information available to relevant public bodies, such as probation services, prisons, social services, armed forces and local NHS Trusts, about how to make referrals of cases of homelessness. A joint Duty to Refer Protocol<sup>79</sup> was established with Gosport and other Hampshire local authorities, and this remains in place today. A dedicated online referral form is available on the council's website<sup>80</sup>, plus a specific email address has been set-up with a range of ways to forward the referral to the council.

Gosport Borough Council operates a triage system for assessing and prioritising referrals. All referrals are recorded along with action taken, with a data collection process reported internally and through HCLIC.

The number of referrals received by Gosport Borough Council between 2019/20 (35 referrals) and 2020/21 (60 referrals) increased by 71% and, based on 7 months of 2021/22 data (contained in chart 1 below), the number of referrals will increase by 160% in 2021/22.

Between January and July 2021, 92 referrals were recorded as being made to Gosport Borough Council under Duty to Refer. As Table 1 illustrates, just over a quarter of referrals were received from HM Prison service (26%), and the Department of Work and Pensions (26%). Referrals from probation and police services made up 17%, and NHS referrals made up 14% of all referrals received over the 7 month period.

**Table 3: Households assessed for homelessness as a result of a referral, including under the duty to refer**

Referrals made to Gosport Borough Council under Duty to Refer January to July 2021 (7 months)	
Organisation Type	Number of referrals
Agency not subject to Duty to Refer	6
Justice System including police and probation services	16
Adult Secure Estate (Prison)	24
Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)	24
National Health Service (NHS)	14
College/Further education	1
Other Local Authority	7

Source: Gosport Borough Council

The timing of referrals is critical in being able to prevent homelessness. Almost three quarters of referrals received from prison services were homeless in 7 or more days,

<sup>78</sup> S.213 Housing Act 1996 as inserted by s.10 Homelessness Reduction Act 2017; chapter 4 Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, DLUHC, February 2018.

<sup>79</sup> Hampshire Homelessness Referral Protocol, Hampshire Housing Authorities, September 2018,

<sup>80</sup> Duty to Refer online form <https://www.gosport.gov.uk/dutytorefer>

however most other referrals were either homeless, or the date of homelessness was not provided. Referrals from DWP provided insufficient information with 21 of the 24 referrals received recorded as containing “very little information”.

An assessment<sup>81</sup> of the council’s progress in the use of the duty to refer suggests 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 by:

- Involving public authorities and other referral agencies who have a duty to refer within the joint working protocol, including providing information and training on housing needs, to develop engagement and cooperation for each referral.
- Actively encourage other public bodies, voluntary organisations, other persons and organisations to voluntarily comply with the duty to refer.
- Make available printed and electronic housing advice information to the referring public authorities.
- Mapping out the accommodation pathway for the person referred, and reference referral information when the personal housing plan is formulated.
- Regular training of housing options officers based on the national duty to refer guidance<sup>82</sup>, lesson plan<sup>83</sup>, and Homelessness Code of Guidance<sup>84</sup>, and ensuring officers are clear about timescales for responding to referrals.
- Create a record of the housing associations in the borough that have signed up to the National Housing Federation’s Commitment to Refer, and provide a copy of Commitment to Refer<sup>85</sup> guidance for Housing Options officers to reference.
- Developing a procedure setting out all tasks the Housing Options officer must undertake following a referral, including arrangements to provide proof of receipt when a referral is received by Gosport Borough Council.

Both the duty to refer and the commitment to refer are excellent opportunities to develop a strong multi-agency approach to tackling homelessness at an individual level.

The number of referrals have significantly increased year on year. Putting these actions in place will foster this approach and enable the further development of organisational relationships, allowing for considerably earlier homelessness prevention opportunities across Gosport.

## Housing Advice

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<sup>81</sup> Local Government Association Duty to refer: an opportunity to cooperate and tackle homelessness. Advice for Local Authorities. Local authority self-assessment checklist (page 56)

[https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.44%20Duty%20to%20refer%20advice\\_v04.pdf](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.44%20Duty%20to%20refer%20advice_v04.pdf)

<sup>82</sup> Duty to Refer: an opportunity to cooperate to tackle homelessness, Local Government Association, 2018

<sup>83</sup> Duty to Refer Lesson Plan

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

<sup>84</sup> Homelessness Code of Guidance, Chapter 4, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018

<sup>85</sup> Commitment to Refer: Guidance for Housing Associations, National Housing Federations, 2020

The prevention of homelessness often starts with good housing advice. The council provides an in-house housing advice service, from the Town Hall offices in Gosport, which includes:

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

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

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

The council's Housing Options section of the website contains information on how to access the service either by telephone, in person, or by email, and where to get independent advice, with links to organisations<sup>86</sup> that may help to prevent homelessness. Information leaflets on tenants' rights of occupation, what to do about harassment and threats of illegal eviction and rights to benefits and assistance with making claims are available

There is also a directory of local services containing a substantive list of organisations by category<sup>87</sup> as well as Duty to Refer information, and links to the dedicated email address and protocol.

The website does not contain a dedicated homelessness page, nor does it, as required by homelessness legislation,<sup>88</sup> provide information and advice on:

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<sup>86</sup> Shelter, Citizens Advice, Money Advice, SAFFA, Crisis hotline, Family information service hub, Gosport Basics Bank and NHS Health Connections.

<sup>87</sup> Drug & Alcohol, Autism, Bereavement, Counselling, Domestic Abuse, Education, Employment, Enforcement, Family Support/Parenting, Forces/Veteran Support, Housing, LGBT, Mental Health, Older Persons, Safety, Sexual Health, and Support for Young People.

<sup>88</sup> S.179(1) Housing Act 1996 as substituted by s. 2 Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

- (a) Preventing homelessness
- (b) Securing accommodation when homeless
- (c) The rights of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and the duties of the authority
- (d) Any help that is available from the authority, or anyone else, for people in the authority's district who are homeless or may become homeless (whether or not they are threatened with homelessness), and
- (e) How to access that help

There appears to be no provision to ensure accessibility 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.

### Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice service in Gosport provides a wide range of specialist services.

**Table 4: Gosport Citizens Advice Specialist Services**

Hampshire Macmillan project	Provides advice for cancer sufferers and their families
Universal Credit	Help to claim UC
Healthwatch	Information and signposting about local health and care services
Money Advice Matters (MAM)	Money advice for people with debt that could affect their ability to remain in their homes
Consumer Services	Phone and e-mail advice on consumer matters
Pensionwise	Help those approaching retirement age with a defined contribution pension plan - Contact us for a referral
Money Watch	Money advice for Emergency Services Personnel and Veterans of the Armed Forces
Welfare Benefit Advocacy Service	Welfare Benefits Advocacy Service providing free, confidential and independent support to Gosport residents with mandatory reconsiderations, appeals and challenging negative decisions
Pathways	The Pathways Project is a 12 week programme aimed to help develop employability skills and provide you with the confidence needed for modern employment and active job searching

Source: Gosport Citizens Advice

Gosport CAB has adapted to the change in working practices as a result of COVID-19 and remained accessible to the public throughout the pandemic, recording an increase in the number of households accessing housing advice in 2020/21.

**Table 5: Gosport Citizens Advice, number of clients accessing services, 2018/19 to 2020/21**

Year	Debt Clients	Housing issues
2018/19	2869	931
2019/20	3002	1001
2020/21	1331	1112

Source: Gosport Citizens Advice

There is a range of online self-help information and advice available on benefits, debt and money, relationships, housing, discrimination, consumer, education, law and rights,



and healthcare. The housing section includes comprehensive advice on all aspects of housing and homelessness legislation.

### **3.1.2 Targeted action**

There are specific homelessness prevention initiatives to respond to the common characteristics of adults who experience homelessness, such as alcohol dependency, street drinking, use of hard drugs, begging, injecting drugs, being charged with a violent criminal offence, abuse of solvents/gas/glue, engaging in sex work, being a victim of a sexual assault<sup>89</sup>.

The following list of services have been provided by Gosport Borough Council Housing Services, Gosport Borough Council's directory of services as well as services identified online. Due to the low level of response to a stakeholder consultation, not all operational information for each service was made available and therefore not verified.

#### **The Probation Service**

Since 2014, probation services have been split between the National Probation Service (NPS), which manages the higher risk offenders, and 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC), which manage low and medium risk offenders. There is no statutory duty on probation services to house those they supervise. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) manages approved premises, which are short-term facilities for managing high risk individuals on release from prison. They also commission the Bail Accommodation and Support Service (BASS), which provides a short-term facility for low and medium risk individuals, many of whom are on home detention curfews.

Gosport Borough Council works closely with Multi Action Public Protection (MAPPA) to re-house those that are being monitored and assisted in a multi-agency approach, and a number of referrals are made to Housing Options under the Duty to Refer. However, there is no joint protocol between Housing Options and the Probation Service.

#### **Gosport Community Safety Partnership**

The Partnership is made up of six statutory partners<sup>90</sup> that has delivered significant reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour across Gosport over the past several years<sup>91</sup>. An annual plan sets out the key priorities for areas of work. The Community Safety Partnership Plan 2021-22 has been developed in consultation with statutory partners and key stakeholders and identifies 3 priorities with actions to promote a multi-agency approach for those at risk of exploitation, victims of domestic abuse, perpetrators of anti-social behaviour and to improve community confidence.

#### **Homeless Action Group (HAG)**

Gosport HAG is held 6 weekly. Partners come round the table to identify and agree a multi-agency approach to those individuals who have been identified as sleeping rough.

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<sup>89</sup> Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Dr Sarah Johnsen, Dr Michael White (2011), 'Multiple Exclusion Homelessness in the UK: Key Patterns and Intersections', *Social Policy & Society*, 10(4), p501-512

<sup>90</sup> Gosport Borough Council, Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Constabulary, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, Hampshire Community Rehabilitation Company and Clinical Commissioning Group alongside other key partners such as Housing Providers, Voluntary Organisations and Youth Support Services.

<sup>91</sup> <http://www.safergosport.co.uk/community-safety-partnership-plan-and-priorities/>

Members include representatives from Homelessness, Housing, Job Centre, Probation, Inclusion, Two Saints outreach/housing first, Hyde Housing, Public Health, Salvation Army, Gosport Discovery Centre (Library), Police.

### **Care Leavers**

Hampshire County Council have a joint working protocol between Housing and Children's Services for 16 and 17 year olds in housing need. The protocol outlines the agreed practices, responsibilities and roles within a framework of services for young people who are identified as being homeless or threatened with homelessness, and has been developed with due regard to statutory guidance on operational joint working in the context of homeless 16 and 17 year olds.

Section 9.3 of the protocol references the need for a planned handover of statutory responsibility prior to the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday for care leavers requiring housing after they are 18 years old. There is, however, no joint protocol between Children's Services and Housing to help both services deliver the local accommodation offered to care leavers and prevent homelessness, setting out the commitments as corporate parents, and how these will be delivered in practice.

Almost all 16 to 17 year olds are accommodated by Children's Services and front line homelessness officers reported good working relations with Hampshire Children's Services. Between 2018/19 and 2020/21, the number of 16 to 17 year olds recorded as owed a prevention or relief duty was 1% or less (Chart 10).

### **Regular armed forces veterans**

The Council adopted Armed Forces Covenant in 2014, and is recognised as a Forces Friendly Employer, receiving the gold award from the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme in 2020. The Council website contains an advice sheet for the armed forces community providing links to specialist veterans' organisations and charities providing housing advice. This includes the Veterans Outreach Service (VOS) which provides former serving armed forces personnel and their family welfare advice and links to Shelter for information on housing/homelessness rights and duties.

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

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

### **Domestic Abuse**

The Housing Options web page contains no reference to what homelessness duties would be owed to someone fleeing domestic abuse. No Domestic Abuse Policy or staff procedure is in place.

The Housing Options page does contain a link to the main domestic abuse partner, SDAS (Southern Domestic Abuse Services trading as Stop Domestic Abuse), a Hampshire based charity providing accommodation-based services, including refuges and other temporary accommodation, as well as outreach and resettlement support and advice, and a 24-hour advice line. Support and advice is also offered to women, children and men who are not staying at a refuge but are still in need of information and support.

A representative from housing attends the monthly Multi Agency Risk Assessment Committee (MARAC) meetings, which serves as a forum for key agencies to discuss and agree support and safeguarding measures for high-risk domestic abuse cases.

The Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership (HDAP) aim is to lead a co-ordinated effort to both prevent and reduce incidences of domestic abuse<sup>92</sup> and works to determine the most effective ways of delivering domestic abuse services across all agencies in Hampshire.

The HDAP is leading on the implementation of new duties on local authorities that came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and accompanying statutory guidance<sup>93</sup>. The Act places duties on each relevant local authority in England to appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board which it must consult as it performs certain specified functions. These are:

- i) Assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support in their area for all victims and their children who reside in relevant safe accommodation, including those who come from outside of their area
- ii) Prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their area having regard to the needs assessment
- iii) Give effect to the strategy (through commissioning / decommissioning decisions)
- iv) Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy
- v) Report back annually to central government

The HDAP will also address any recommendations from MARAC reviews, Domestic Homicide Reviews, Serious Care Reviews and OFSTEAD/JTAI Reviews/Inspections.

## Leaving Hospital

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<sup>92</sup> Hampshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2017-22 (Covering the areas within the County boundary) Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership

<sup>93</sup> Delivery of support for victims of domestic abuse in domestic abuse safe accommodation services. Statutory Guidance for local authorities in England. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Community (DLUHC) October 2021

Gosport Borough Council has a Hospital Discharge Proforma to encourage early referrals from hospital and between January and July 2021 received 14 NHS referrals under the Duty to Refer. There is no information on the Housing Options website about what happens when a patient being discharged from hospital is homeless. There is no protocol in place between Homelessness and local NHS hospital discharge teams.

### **Experiencing mental illness**

The Richmond Fellowship is commissioned by Hampshire County Council to provide support for those with mental health problems to prepare for managing independent accommodation. The Fellowship has considerable experience of helping clients that have been through its pathway to turn their lives around and live independently.

Housing Options staff said there was a lack of supported accommodation for people with mental health problems and learning disability services. Richmond Fellowship has a couple of services in Fareham and Gosport, however shared accommodation is not always suitable, and clients end up remaining at the hostel for support until they are ready to move on. Dual diagnosis support is lacking in Gosport and Mental Health services won't accept clients living with substance misuse.

### **Substance misuse**

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

## **3.2 Pre-crisis homelessness prevention activities**

Pre-crisis homelessness prevention activities are carried out by the council's Homelessness Service. These activities can be divided into two broad areas: assistance that helps people to remain in their existing accommodation or, when this is not safe or possible, help to obtain alternative accommodation. These activities are typically carried out anytime between when someone is homeless and up to two months prior to someone potentially losing their home, and occasionally even further ahead in time.

DLUHC’s homelessness statistical recording from 2009/10<sup>94</sup> until 2017/18, provides examples of pre-crisis homelessness prevention activities typically carried out:

**Homelessness Prevention Activities to Remain in Existing Home**

- Mediation using external or internal trained family mediators
- Conciliation including home visits for family/friends threatened with exclusion
- Financial payments from a homelessness prevention fund
- Debt advice
- Resolving housing benefit problems
- Resolving rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sectors
- Sanctuary scheme measures for domestic violence
- Crisis intervention – providing emergency support
- Negotiation or legal advocacy to ensure someone can remain in accommodation in the private rented sector
- Providing other assistance that will enable someone to remain in the private rented sector
- Mortgage arrears interventions or mortgage rescue

**Homelessness Prevention Activities to Obtain Alternative Accommodation**

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

Positive action succeeded in preventing homelessness for just over half (median 55%) of applicants assisted under the prevention duty between 2018/19 and 2020/21.

**Table 6: 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

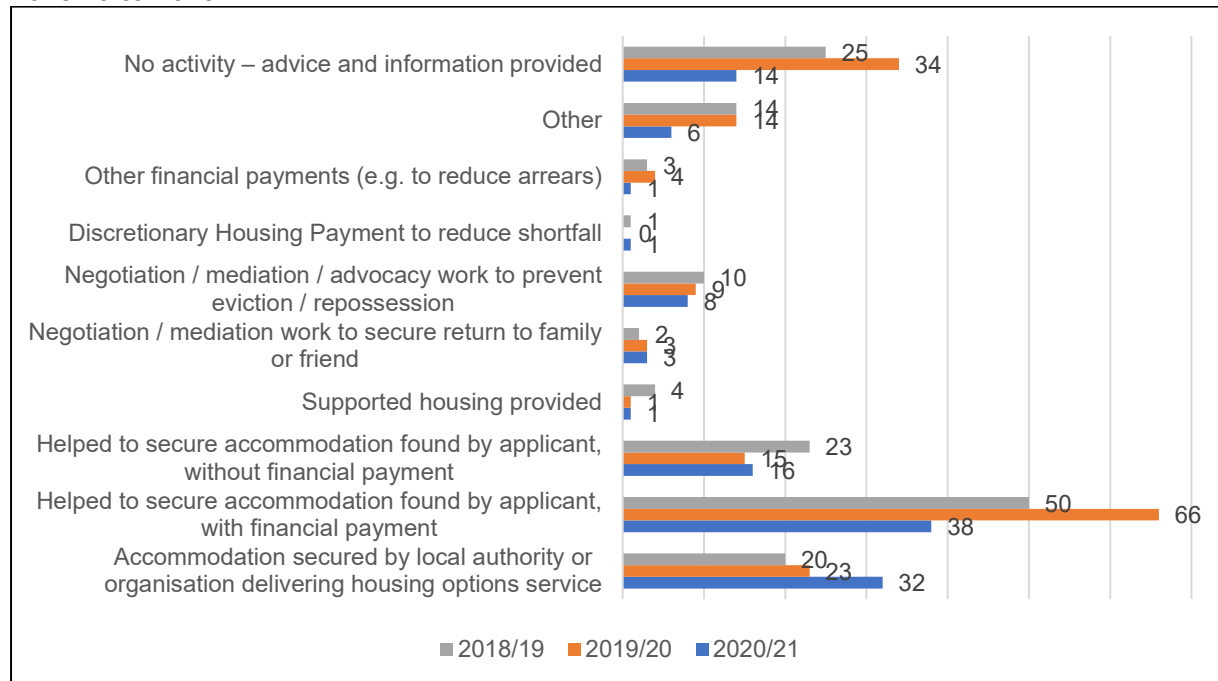
Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

<sup>94</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government. (2009). Recording homelessness prevention and relief at E10 of the P1E quarterly return: Further guidance for local housing authorities.

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. An increase in the local authority securing accommodation and decrease in the use of financial support and advice to secure accommodation in 2020/21 may have been an effect of changes in practice as a result of the pandemic, however it is important to review why this activity has become more successful and consider action to focus activity in this area.

**Chart 34: Main prevention activity that resulted in accommodation being secured, Gosport, 2018/19 to 2020/21**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

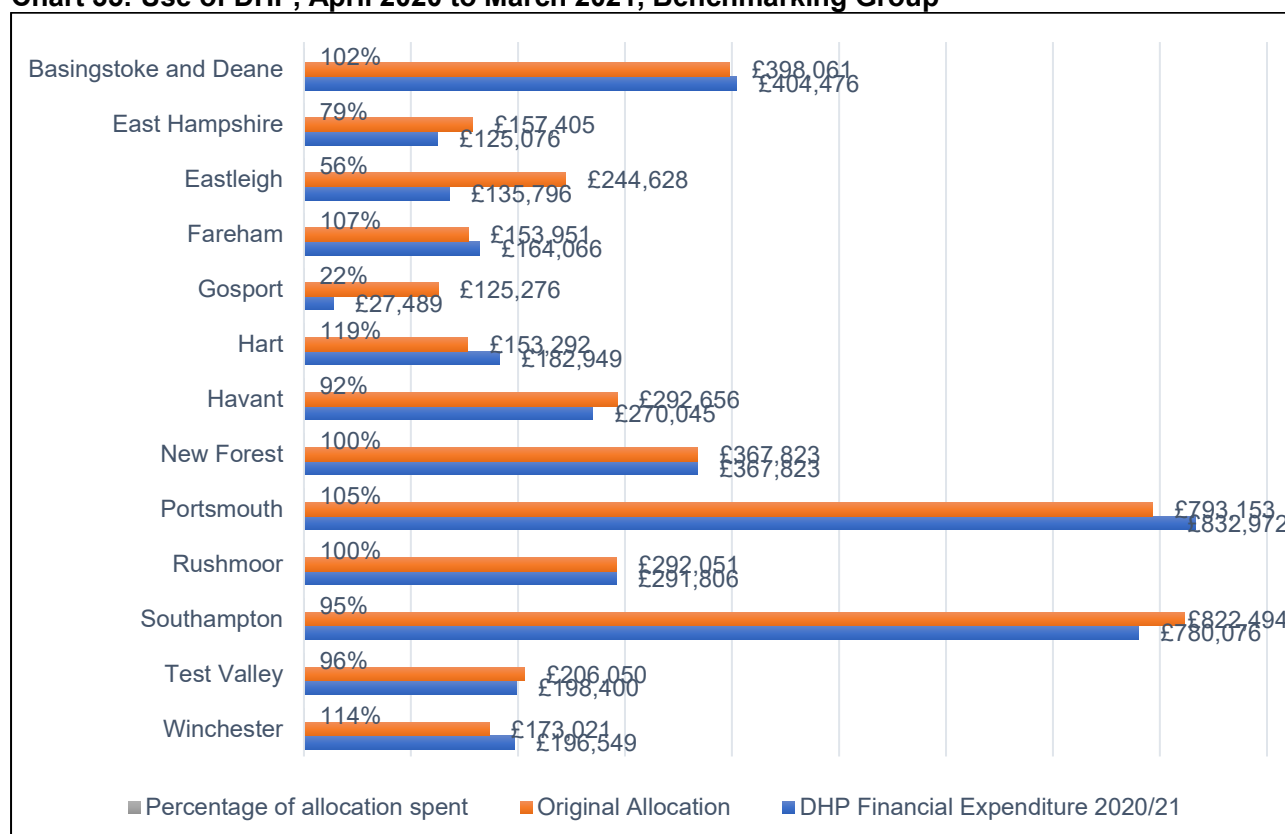
### Housing Benefit Administration

Staff and stakeholder interviews identified disparity in Housing Benefit and Housing Options perception of co-ordination between services, particularly in relation to the administration of DHP awards and Housing Benefit’s ability to fast track and respond to urgent homelessness referrals.

## Discretionary Housing Payments

In 2020/21 Gosport spent 22% of the allocated £125,276 Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) funding<sup>95</sup>, 68% of which was used to help households secure and move to alternative accommodation (e.g., rent deposit). Compared to neighbouring authorities, Gosport by far utilised the least amount of DHP funding.

**Chart 35: Use of DHP, April 2020 to March 2021, Benchmarking Group**



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

With the lifting of restrictions on evictions in England and notice periods returning to their pre-Covid lengths from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021, there is a clear intention from Government that Discretionary Housing Payments should be fully utilised to provide transitional financial support for those impacted<sup>96</sup>.

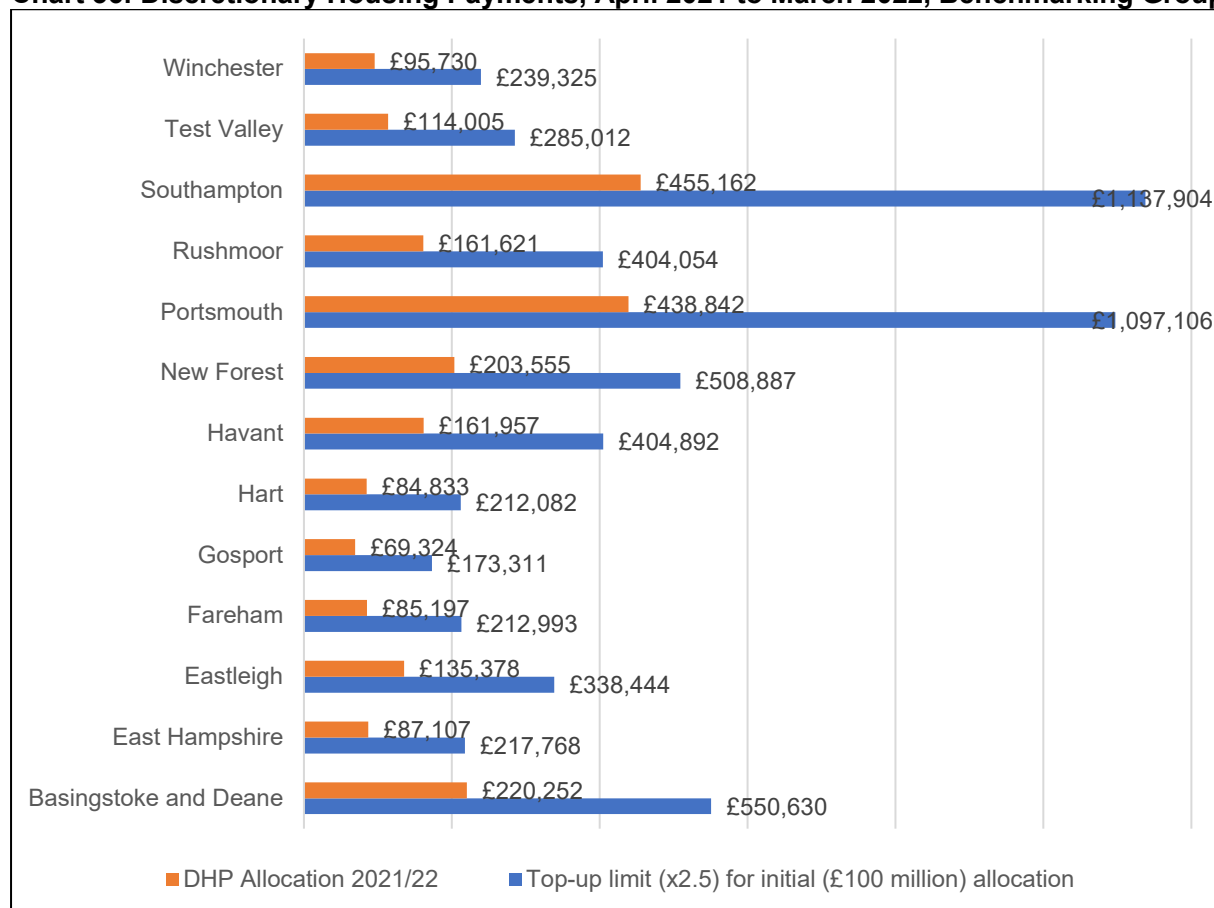
2021-22 DHP allocation has been awarded at -45% of 2020-21 allocation with an additional midyear allocation of up to 2.5 times initial allocation. The £40M reserved funding will be allocated at mid-year based on the latest caseload data<sup>97</sup>.

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/use-of-discretionary-housing-payments-financial-year-2020-to-2021/use-of-discretionary-housing-payments-analysis-of-end-of-year-returns-from-local-authorities-data-for-april-2020-to-march-2021>

<sup>96</sup> On 30 June 2021 the Commons Select Committee on Housing, Communities and Local Government published a letter from the Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing concerning the lifting of restrictions on evictions in England and Covid-19 related rent arrears. <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/6510/documents/70735/default/>

<sup>97</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-benefit-subsidy-circulars-2021/s42021-discretionary-housing-payments-government-contribution-for-english-and-welsh-local-authorities>

**Chart 36: Discretionary Housing Payments, April 2021 to March 2022, Benchmarking Group**



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

Gosport Borough Council last updated its DHP Policy in 2013, the latest DWP guidance was updated February 2021<sup>98</sup>, which included the Discretionary Housing Payments Good Practice Guide: January 2021 which contains good practice examples of DHP awards.

Looking to neighbouring authorities Fareham Borough Council Discretionary Housing Payment Policy 2021/22<sup>99</sup> contains details of their 2020/21 DHP award, the factors considered in deciding whether to award DHP and provides a good DHP Policy example.

### **Citizens Advice Gosport**

The Money Advice Matters service is funded by Gosport Homelessness Service to provide money advice and debt counselling services for households at risk of losing their home. Referrals to this service are made by housing officers or self-referral, the offices are a 2-minute walk away from the council's Town Hall and, if urgent, clients can be seen the same day.

The service can provide support to challenge homeless decisions and, where necessary, access legal advice on housing law from a local firm of solicitors that provide

<sup>98</sup> Discretionary Housing Payments guidance manual updated 1 February 2021 Section 5 Further examples of good practice <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/discretionary-housing-payments-guidance-manual/discretionary-housing-payments-guidance-manual>

<sup>99</sup> <https://www.fareham.gov.uk/PDF/benefits/DHPpolicy2122.pdf>



legal advice if the client is eligible for legal aid or if not by way of pro-bono or through Gosport Citizen Advice Core funding.

Gosport CAB are funded by Gosport Borough Council to deliver a Welfare Benefit Advocacy service and work closely with the Housing Benefit department. CAB will be working with Housing Benefit to identify clients that may be eligible for DHP.

Short term funding of individual projects adds to the challenges, for example funding for the Welfare Benefit Advocacy service ended August 2021 and as at October 2021 the £40K needed to continue providing the service has not been secured.

Partnership working results in referrals and signposting to other agencies, CAB use their own internal Local Information System and, with funding from Hampshire County Council, are in the process of developing a new county-wide referral system, Refer Net.

Gosport CAB Chief Executive felt the biggest challenge will come post pandemic, with the recommencing of enforcement action in relation to possession proceedings, reduction of £20 per week in UC, end of furlough and increasing energy bills. CAB is expecting to see a 60% increase in demand for their service and will need additional resources.

### **Private rented sector enforcement officers**

The Fareham and Gosport Environmental Health Partnership includes a small team of private sector housing officers that deal with private rented sector landlord and tenant issues. This team have all received training on how to work with tenants effectively to help resolve issues rather than immediately serving notice on the landlord and therefore enforcement is the last resort.

The service offered is flexible and includes initiatives such as helping to take away rubbish from the home and garden where they may have threatened action against the tenant, encouraging the tenant to clean and decorate the home and take some personal responsibility for its upkeep, and checking in on the tenant regularly to keep the encouragement going.

Staff interviews identified joint working with, for example, housing options referring cases of disrepair. Also, frustration that Gosport Borough Council will not prosecute private landlords for illegal evictions. Clients are signposted to CAB who work with Swayne & Co. Solicitors however, not all clients qualify for legal funding.

### **Domestic Abuse**

Staff will make referrals to local domestic abuse services, Gosport's Housing Options website and Directory of Services both contain details of the main domestic abuse provider in Gosport, Stop Domestic Abuse.

Making Hampshire Safe Scheme includes target hardening, the Blue Light Foundation, Bobby Trust and some Sanctuary solutions.

The Making Safe Scheme includes Target Hardening Service which is run as a partnership with Stop Domestic Abuse, the YOU Trust and Blue Lamp Trust, supported by Hampshire County Council and Hart District Council, but is run as a Hampshire-wide

service. The council is also looking to introduce an in-house Sanctuary Scheme<sup>100</sup> in Gosport.

Housing Options staff have recently received National Homeless Advice Service (NHAS) training on the new domestic abuse legislation and are due to attend coercive behaviour training in the near future.

### **Housing possession court duty scheme (HPCDS)**

The HPCDS for Gosport residents facing immediate, on the day, possession proceedings action is based in Portsmouth and manned by Swain and Co., who provide free legal advocacy and advice, regardless of means. Swain and Co's specialist advisers, funded by the Legal Aid Agency for this work, will try and negotiate with a landlord or lender, and write to the applicant after the hearing with follow-up advice.

### **Pre-eviction protocols**

There is a Pre-Court Action Partnership between Gosport Borough Council Housing and Homelessness dated 2019, the principle of the protocol is to work together to reduce and prevent failed tenancies, respond to request for support, set out clear expectations at the start of the tenancy in terms of rent and behaviour to tenants and identify households earlier to allow intervention at an early stage.

### **Rent deposit bond and rent in advance**

The Rent Guarantor scheme helps Housing Advisors secure private rented accommodation, the service offers 6 months' rent in advance and deposit. Housing Associations require rent in advance, which staff reported is generally paid from the Homeless Prevention Grant. Staff were frustrated at what they felt to be limited access to DHP to pay deposits and rent in advance and felt Housing Options should hold a portion of DHP Funding.

## **3.3 Preventing the reoccurrence of homelessness**

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

## **3.4 Conclusions about activities to prevent homelessness**

More than half of all households seeking homeless prevention assistance featured a female as the head, typically with responsibility for dependent children. Whereas, households seeking homelessness relief assistance are much more likely to be a single adult, more often male. Three-quarters of applicants are aged below 44 years, with just over half aged between 18 and 34 years.

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<sup>100</sup> A Sanctuary Scheme is a multi-agency victim centre initiative which aims to enable households at risk of domestic violence, to remain safe in their own homes, by installing a 'Sanctuary' in the home and through the provision of support to the household.

Homelessness prevention cases typically arise as the result of either an assured shorthold tenancy ending or family and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate them. Whereas, homelessness relief cases predominately arise due to family or friends no longer being willing or able to accommodate them.

Helping people to move to alternative accommodation is the primary method for preventing homelessness. It is more common for people to become homeless than be helped to remain in their existing home. For those owed a relief duty, the majority are not helped within the 56-day timeframe, but instead go on to be assisted under the main duty. However, it's important to note that a growing proportion of people are helped to obtain accommodation.

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.

There is information available, including a directory of services available online with practical information for people in housing need. However, the housing options website does not contain a dedicated homelessness page, nor does it provide information and advice explaining the rights of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and the duties of the authority.

There appears to be no provision to ensure accessibility 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.

The number of households homeless upon release from custody recorded a notable increase in 2020/21, a trend that has been identified nationally<sup>101</sup>. Improvements are needed in linking with the personal housing plans produced by local authorities following on from the Duty to Refer. A recent report into accommodation and support for adult offenders in the community and on release from prison identified the need for "greater clarity in some cases about which service is leading on specific actions to avoid confusion or duplication, between Through the Gate, local authorities, responsible officers and accommodation providers. For the more complex cases, including many initially released to approved premises, planning needs to start earlier with a view to achieving longer-term housing outcomes"<sup>102</sup>. DLUHC have produced a helpful report<sup>103</sup> to provide a starting point for local authorities and criminal justice stakeholder to develop prison release protocols to better uphold their responsibilities under the duty to refer.

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<sup>101</sup> A Justice System Fit for the Future: Lessons from the Coronavirus Pandemic to build a fairer and effective path to resettlement. NACRO Policy Briefing August 2020 <https://3bx16p38bchl32s0e12di03h-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Briefing-JusticePostCovid-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>102</sup> Accommodation and support for adult offenders in the community and on release from prison in England: An inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation July 2020 <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/07/FINAL-Accommodation-Thematic-inspection-report-v1.0.pdf>

<sup>103</sup> Prison Release Protocol Guidance Research Report DLUHC Ministry of Justice July 2019 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/814964/Prison\\_Release\\_Protocol\\_research\\_report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/814964/Prison_Release_Protocol_research_report_FINAL.pdf)

Establish a stronger partnership with Leaving Care services. DLUHC recently published new guidance<sup>104</sup> for councils to help ensure care leavers have the stable homes they need, and prevent them from becoming homeless. The guidance recommends how council housing departments and children's services should produce a joint protocol that sets out how they will work together to ensure:

- a) Each care leaver has a tailored support plan as they transition to independent living
- b) Those at risk of homelessness are identified early and action is taken to prevent it
- c) A quick, safe and joined up response for care leavers who go on to become homeless.

The percentage of households owed a relief duty as a result of domestic abuse has increased. Both staff and stakeholder consultation identified domestic abuse as the highest area of likely increased homelessness. Gosport Borough Council should 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.

There is considerable scope for improving working arrangements around hospital discharge for people at risk of homelessness. Likewise, more could be done to improve current working arrangements between the council's homelessness service and the County Council's Adult Social Care Services. Guidance<sup>105</sup> produced by Public Health England to help health professionals prevent ill health, promote wellbeing and take action on homelessness acknowledges the need for "clear local action, 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." This requires strong local leadership and prioritisation to identify unmet need, funding and actions to address gaps in provision.

Examples of how this can be achieved includes:

- i) Reducing the risk of homelessness to children and young people to strengthen their life chances
- ii) Enabling working-age adults to enjoy social, economic and cultural participation in society
- iii) Breaking the cycle of homelessness or unstable housing by addressing mental health problems, or drug and alcohol use, or experience of the criminal justice system

There is a clear disparity in Housing Benefit and Housing Options perception of co-ordination between services, particularly in relation to the administration of DHP awards and Housing Benefit's ability to fast track and respond to urgent homelessness referrals.

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<sup>104</sup> Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers: Good Practice Advice DLUHC October 2020  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers-good-practice-advice>

<sup>105</sup> Homelessness: Applying all our health Public Health England updated June 2019  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-applying-all-our-health/homelessness-applying-all-our-health>

It is recommended that Housing Benefit and Housing Options 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.

Gosport's Pre-Court Action Partnership provides an early opportunity to work in partnerships with social landlords and their tenants at risk of eviction action, to which all registered providers in Gosport should be signed up to.

There is some smart joint working going on between the council's homelessness service, in particular the Citizens Advice Gosport, which provides a much needed and valued service to help tackle debt and private rented sector housing issues and homelessness.

## 4.0 Securing accommodation

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

### 4.1 Local housing market

#### Gosport Borough Local Plan

Gosport Borough Council's adopted Local Plan 2011-2029 is used to determine planning applications. It is envisaged this will be replaced by the emerging Local Plan 2038.

The Government's 'Standard Method' for determining the housing requirement for each area identifies that approximately 5,500 dwellings are required in the Borough over the period to 2038. Gosport Borough Council has committed to build approximately 3,500 new homes by 2038.

The clear need for affordable housing is identified in the Plan as a key issue, recommending new developments should provide a suitable mix of market and affordable dwellings.

**Table 7: Gosport Borough Council's indicative mix of future dwellings by size and tenure**

<b>Suggested Mix of Housing by Size and Tenure</b>				
	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4+ bedroom
Market	5-10%	35-40%	40-45%	10-15%
Affordable Home Ownership	30-35%	40-45%	20-25%	0-5%
Affordable Housing (rented)	35-40%	30-35%	20-25%	5-10%

Source: Gosport Borough Council Local Plan 2038

The Plan references the need for new specialist residential accommodation for younger people (under 55) who may be disabled, vulnerable or both. This includes people with particular 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 violence.

#### Gosport Borough Council Housing Management Strategy & Plan 2013 - 2018

Referred to as Housing Services Asset Management Strategy, describes demand for housing on the housing register as vastly outweighing supply. The strategy identifies a need for all types and sizes of affordable housing in the borough, with the biggest need for one bed properties. This strategy has now expired.

## 4.2 Emergency accommodation

The borough has a range of emergency accommodation and a full analysis of the number of units, housing management and outcomes is contained in Section 5 of this report.

**Table 8: Gosport Borough Council, Emergency Accommodation**

Provider/Accommodation	Description	Units
Two Saints Hostel 101 Gosport Road Fareham PO16 0PZ	Direct access hostel for male and females aged between 18-59 years. Working with individuals who are homeless to access support specific to their needs. Sourcing appropriate move on accommodation whilst aiming to work towards independent living.	18 Units
Two Saints Acton Lodge Stage 2	Supported accommodation for single homeless people aged 18 years and over with the expectation that service users move on within 12 months having established independent living skills and the confidence to live independently. Priority in each area will be given to clients who are being reconnected from Stage 1 services.	10 Units
Stop Domestic Abuse Refuge	Provide accommodation-based services across Hampshire (see table 9), including refuges and other temporary accommodation.  In addition to the Hampshire County Council commissioned domestic abuse refuges, Gosport have a property they use to accommodate households fleeing domestic abuse and owed a homeless duty.	3 Units
Two Saints Housing First		10 Units

Source: Gosport Borough Council

**Table 9: Hampshire Domestic abuse refuge provision**

Type of accommodation	Basingstoke & Deane	East Hampshire	Eastleigh	Fareham	Gosport	Hart	Havant	New Forest	Rushmoor	Test Valley	Winchester City Council	Hampshire total
Refuge accommodation	Shared accommodation, 1 self-contained  17 victims  23 children and 14 cot spaces  1 fully disabled access	Shared accommodation  9 victims  13 children and 6 cot spaces  1 disabled access	Shared accommodation  9 victims  No details of children  1 low level mobility	Shared accommodation  6 victims  13 children and 6 cot spaces  0 disabled access	Shared accommodation  3 victims  4 children and 2 cot spaces  0 disabled access	None	Shared accommodation  6 victims  12 children and 3 cot spaces  1 disabled access	Shared accommodation  9 victims  12 children and 10 cot spaces  0 disabled access	Self-contained flatlets  7 victims  10 children and 7 cot spaces  1 disabled access	Shared accommodation  19 victims  21 children and 7 cot spaces  1 fully disabled access	Shared accommodation  7 victims  11 children and 4 cot spaces  1 low level mobility	10 refuges  92 refuge spaces (bedrooms) accommodating up to 124 children

Source: Gosport Borough Council

### 4.3 Temporary accommodation

The portfolio of temporary accommodation is made up of two hostels, Agnew and Barclay House. B&B placements are sourced for a small number of households assessed by either the Housing Advisor or Senior Hostel Support Officer as too high risk for hostel accommodation.

The council's Accommodation and Lettings team procure B&B placements. There is no formal temporary accommodation procurement strategy or framework in place.

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 10: Gosport Borough Council, temporary accommodation portfolio**

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

Source: Gosport Borough Council

Temporary accommodation is managed by the Accommodation and Lettings Manager who is responsible for both Accommodation and Lettings Team and the Hostel Support Staff.

#### Allocating temporary accommodation

The Accommodation and Lettings officers manage referrals received from Housing Advisors for temporary accommodation and allocate accommodation as it becomes vacant, aiming to meet the needs of the individual as best as possible within the constraints of availability of accommodation. Officers report that the lack of choice within the current portfolio does cause issues for households in need of accommodation, particularly for high-risk households placed in B&B accommodation. There is a suitability test carried out in accordance with legislation<sup>106</sup>, but no suitability policy or allocations policy are currently in place.

Meeting the requirement to ensure that accommodation is suitable by developing an effective policy which is compliant with regulations<sup>107</sup> would enable appropriate allocation of temporary accommodation.

#### Managing temporary accommodation

The Hostel Support Team include 7 Hostel Support Officers, 1 Senior Hostel Support Officer and a concierge service to cover evenings and weekends.

Hostel Support Officers provide tenancy support to all households in temporary accommodation, including those in B&B accommodation. Staff felt support plans should

<sup>106</sup> Housing Act 1996, s206

<sup>107</sup> Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order (2012)



be linked with Personal Housing Plans which are currently saved on different case management systems (Capita and Locata).

Staff felt move-on from temporary accommodation was sometimes delayed due to lack of support services, particularly for single males with complex support needs. Analysis of move-on plans for hostel residents whose length of stay exceeded 3 months has recently been undertaken. This identified 22 residents (21 were single) with move-on plans to access either:

- Social housing through the housing register
- Sub-let property
- Private rented
- Supported housing

There are a small number of residents with more complex needs supported by Two Saints under Housing First Scheme.

Both staff and service users felt there needed to be more person-centred support along with separate specialist accommodation for families, parent and baby units, and support for vulnerable adults with substance misuse and/or mental health problems.

The hostel accommodation typically involves shared bathroom facilities. While Agnew does have some en-suite rooms, all hostel residents have access to a shared kitchen.

Published guidance<sup>108</sup> provides a helpful reference to the standards that should apply to ensure temporary accommodation meets the physical or sensory disability requirements of any member of the household and complies with relevant housing quality standards. The guidance recommends temporary accommodation provides:

- Individual bathroom/toilet facilities
- Access to adequate cooking facilities
- Access to on site laundry facilities
- Adequate communal living space which includes, for example, space for children to play or do homework

The Code of Guidance stresses the need for local authorities to be alert to the risks that may be associated with placing families with children, and young people, in mixed hostel settings. The Code clearly states that where hostel accommodation is used to accommodate vulnerable young people or families with children it would be inappropriate to accommodate these groups alongside vulnerable adults<sup>109</sup>.

Whilst hostels can offer short-term accommodation to people who are experiencing homelessness, housing authorities will wish to ensure they make the most effective use of services available, and that accommodation is suitable for the applicants placed there. Hostel accommodation that involves families or pregnant women sharing facilities with other households will not be suitable for longer-term placements<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>108</sup> Guidance on Standards for Temporary Accommodation Shelter Scotland and CIH Scotland 2010

<sup>109</sup> Paras 16.35 Homelessness Code of Guidance, DLUHC, Feb 2018

<sup>110</sup> Paras 16.36 Homelessness Code of Guidance, DLUHC, Feb 2018

A local authority must also take into account the location of the accommodation offered, including:<sup>111</sup>

- The significance of any disruption to employment, caring responsibilities or education of the applicant and her/his household
- Proximity and accessibility of medical facilities and other support which are currently being provided and are essential to well-being
- Proximity and accessibility of local services, amenities and transport.

The portfolio of temporary accommodation contains little or no housing association stock. Social landlords have a duty to co-operate with a housing authority in carrying out their housing functions under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. This could be particularly appropriate in assisting Gosport Borough Council meet their duty to provide suitable temporary accommodation.

Gosport Borough Council should undertake an options appraisal to identify demand, how they meet their statutory duties and make best use of the existing temporary accommodation provision.

### **Rented Accommodation in the Private Sector (RAPS) Scheme**

The RAPS scheme was set up in or around 2003. The aim of the scheme is to provide housing to households who are threatened with homelessness by introducing tenants to private landlords under a 6 to 12 month introductory period following which, and subject to agreement of both parties, the landlord and tenant enter into an assured shorthold tenancy arrangement.

An internal review of the RAPS scheme in 2018/19, noted that while the tenant is in a RAPS property, it is still considered to be temporary accommodation, despite letters to tenants stating the council has alleviated its homeless duty, unless the tenant is exiting the scheme to become a tenant of the landlord direct. The review identified that, over the time of the scheme, only 35 properties had been handed over, 2 tenancies had lasted 11 years, 35 tenancies were over 5 years, the average length of a tenancy was calculated to be 3.49 years.

A snapshot taken in August 2021 of RAPS portfolio of 96 properties identified 5 (5%) households in occupation for 10 or more years, 34 (35%) for over 5 years and 27 (28%) for over 2 years.

The properties managed under the RAPS scheme are occupied under a licence as temporary accommodation, originally designed to provide 6 to 12 months of temporary accommodation before becoming permanent settled accommodation. The reality is 68% of households continue to occupy under a temporary accommodation licence for a term of 2+ years.

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<sup>111</sup> art. 2 Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 SI 2012/2601; R (on the application of E) v Islington LBC [2017] EWHC 1440 (Admin); see also paras 17.47 to 17.57 Homelessness Code of Guidance. DLUHC, Feb 2018

Housing Benefit is paid at temporary accommodation rates, topped up with an annual payment of around £300K from the Homeless Support Grant. Financial analysis of the RAPS scheme has not been undertaken.

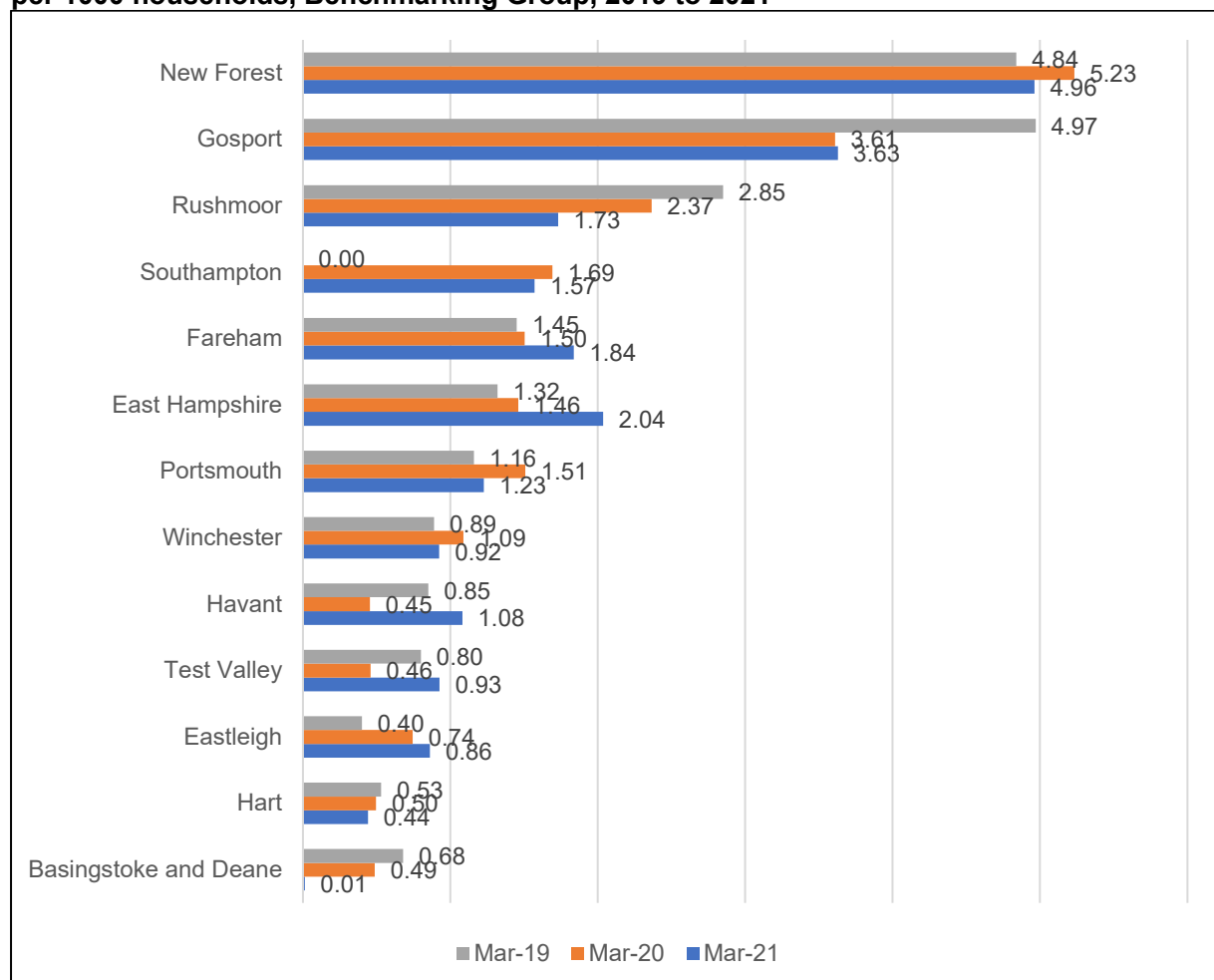
The RAPS scheme, in its current form, is not fit for purpose and should be drawn to a close. An options appraisal should be carried out to identify what the best private sector access initiative is for Gosport Borough Council to deliver a readily available supply of private sector stock.

### Temporary Accommodation data

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.

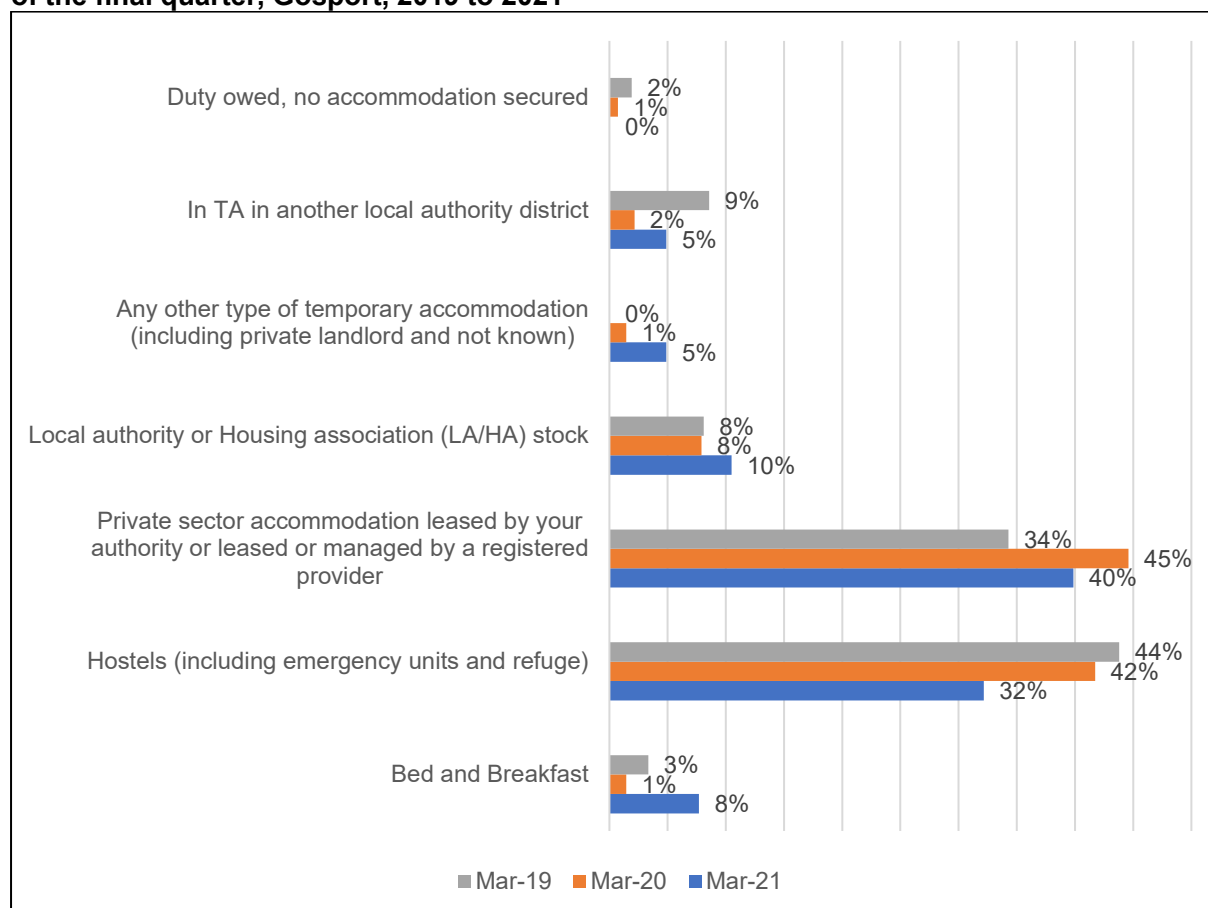
**Chart 37: Number of households in temporary accommodation at the end of the final quarter per 1000 households, Benchmarking Group, 2019 to 2021**



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

Over 70% of temporary accommodation in Gosport is either Hostel accommodation owned and managed by the local authority or private sector leased accommodation. The use of B&B increased in 2021 to 11 single households; no families are placed in B&B accommodation.

**Chart 38: Breakdown by percentage of households in temporary accommodation at the end of the final quarter, Gosport, 2019 to 2021**



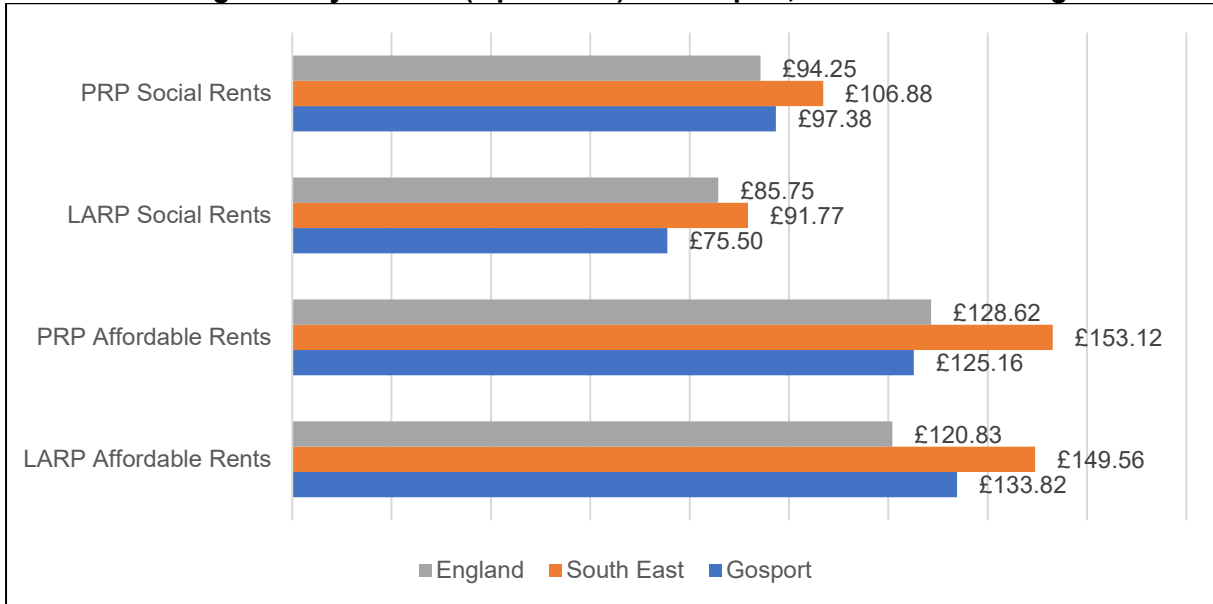
Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

#### 4.4 Social rented housing

The council is responsible for the provision of communitywide and specialist housing services, which includes asset management and stock investment, revenue income services, tenancy and estate management, resident involvement, allocations and lettings, homelessness and housing advice, private sector housing, supported housing, leasehold management, right to buy and regeneration and neighbourhood renewal.

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 £75.50, below the regional (£91.77) and national average (£85.75).

**Chart 39: Average weekly net rent (£ per week) for Gosport, South East and England 2020**

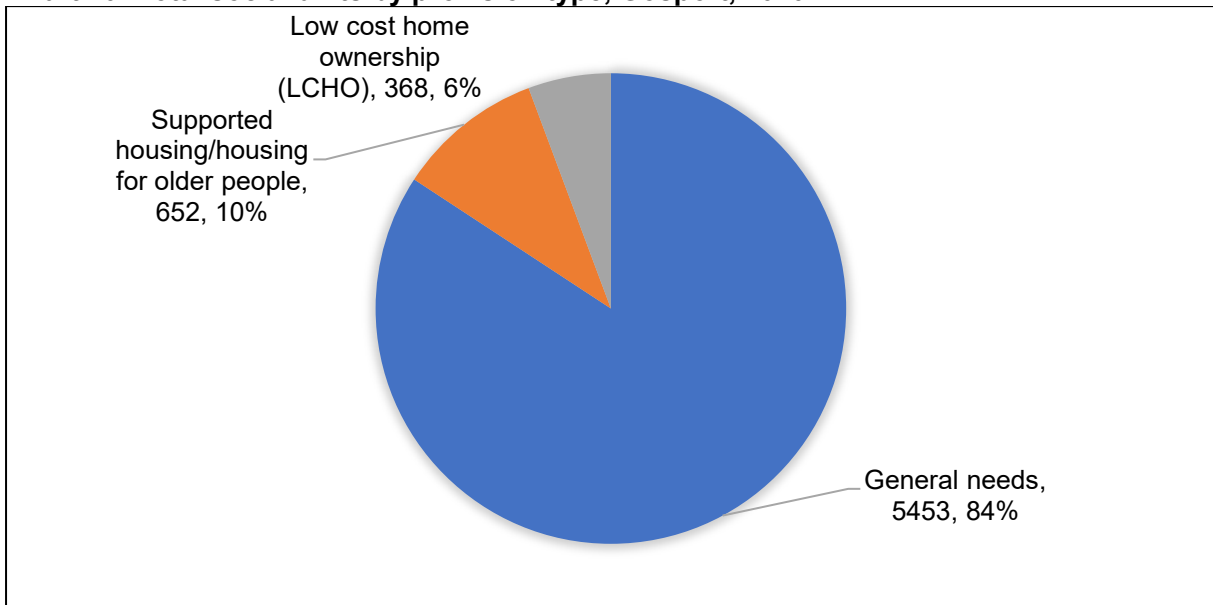


Source: Regulator of Social Housing. Local authority registered provider social housing stock and rents in England

Gosport has a further 3,362 units of social rented housing, which includes 652 units of supported housing/housing for older people and 368 units of low-cost home ownership, owned by 24 housing associations, equating to 52% of all social rented housing in the local authority area. Of these, Vivid is the largest, owning 1,463 (22% of all social rented housing in Gosport and 57% of all housing association owned stock in the borough, and 5% of the housing association’s overall stock).

The majority (94%) of general need properties in Gosport are available at social rent levels, the remaining 6% (332 units) at affordable rent levels.

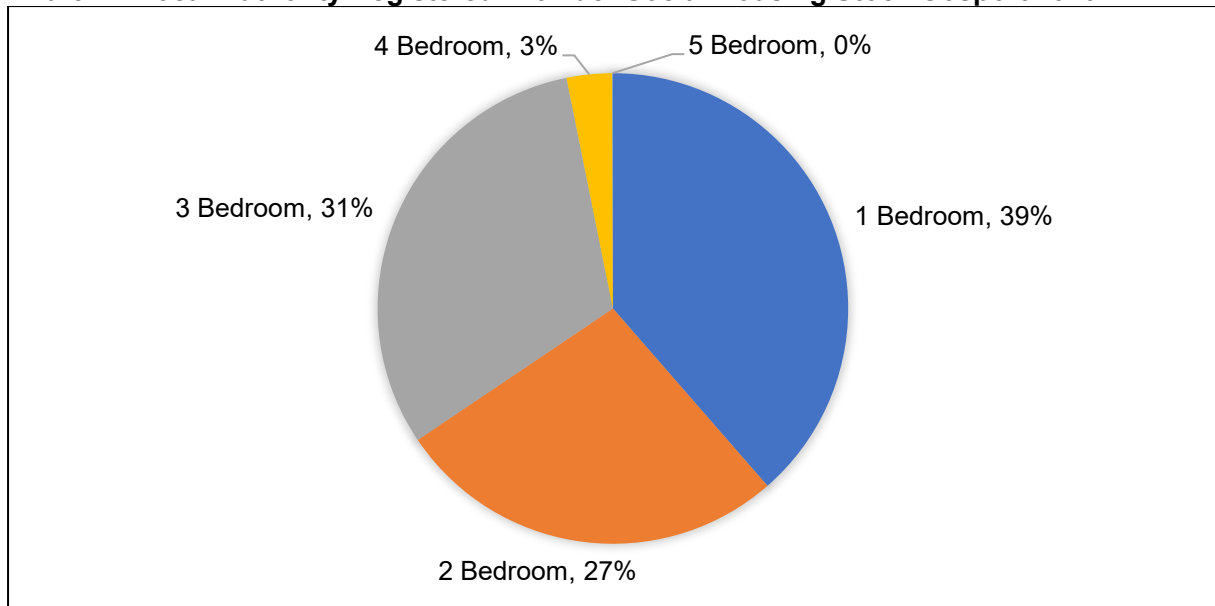
**Chart 40: Total social units by provision type, Gosport, 2020**



Source: Regulator of Social Housing

A total of 1,904 1 bedroom properties make up the largest percentage of social housing stock in Gosport, followed by (1,543) 3 bedroom and (1,331) 2 bedroom properties.

**Chart 41: Local Authority Registered Provider Social Housing Stock Gosport 2020**



Source: Regulator of Social Housing. Local authority registered provider social housing stock and rents in England

### **Housing Allocation Scheme**

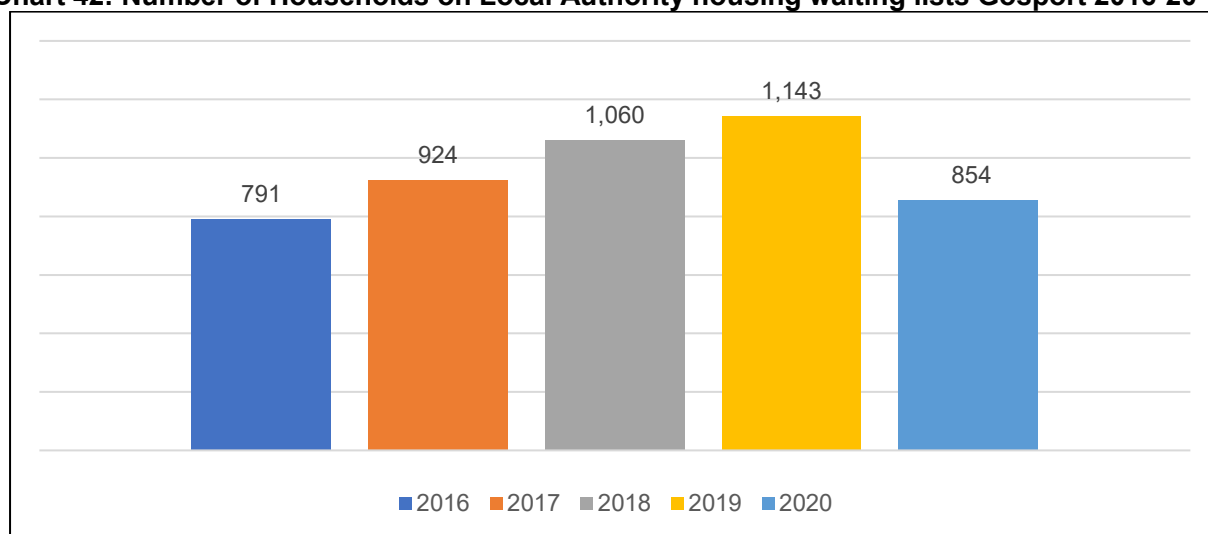
As a general rule, applications for an allocation of social rented housing from a person who is homeless or owed a homelessness duty, should be consistently administered as per the rules for all other applicants. A person who is homeless encompasses applicants who are owed the initial homeless (relief) duty and also any other person who is homeless as per the legal definition of the term. There is no requirement for a person who is homeless to have also made an application for homelessness assistance, to be allocated social rented housing. A person who is owed a homelessness duty includes those who are (i) intentionally homeless, (ii) those that have a priority need and are not intentionally homeless and (iii) those that are threatened with homelessness.

The council's current Housing Allocation Scheme explains how people who are homeless, or owed a homelessness duty, are prioritised for an allocation of social rented housing. These rules apply the councils' own stock and nominations it makes to housing associations which own and manage properties 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% (1,143) compared to the previous year (2019), a reduction by 73% (3,110) when numbers peaked in 2010 and an increase of 16% (722) compared to when numbers were at the lowest since records began, in 1997.

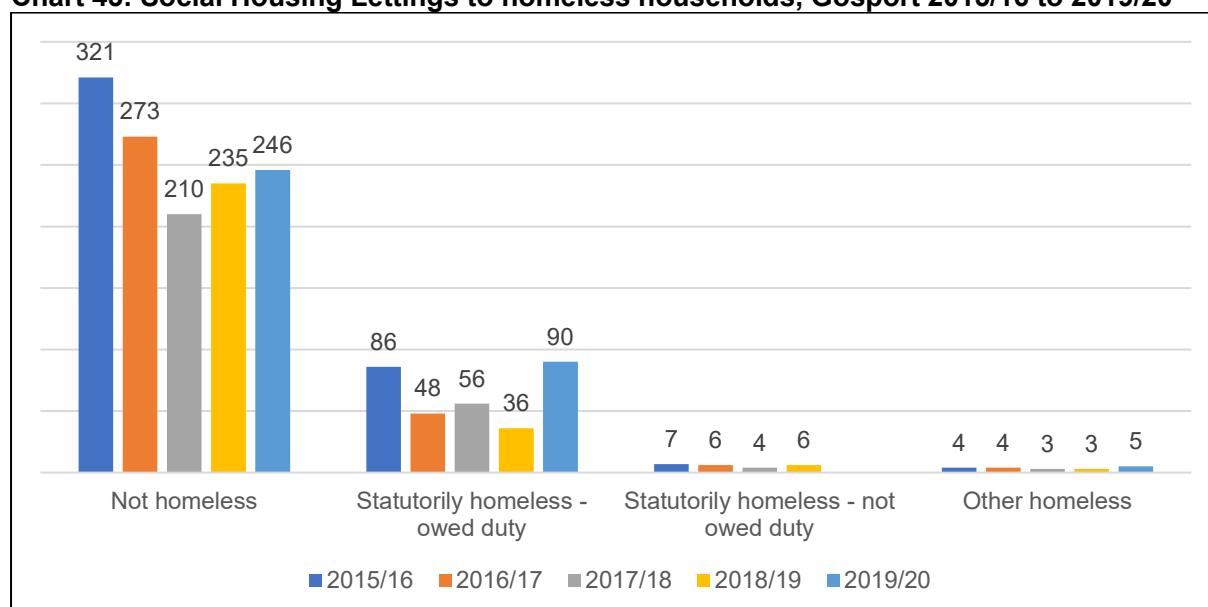
**Chart 42: Number of Households on Local Authority housing waiting lists Gosport 2016-20**



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



Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

Immigration law prohibits social rented housing being allocated to people who are seeking asylum, anyone who isn't usually resident in the UK, or some other person from abroad (for example some economic migrants). A person in such circumstances who is homeless is not entitled to an allocation of social rented housing also won't be entitled to homelessness assistance, such persons might be entitled to assistance and housing from the Home Office and/or voluntary organisations. Organisations funded via legal aid funded will be able to link individuals to applicable support and accommodation and advise them of their housing rights (see Chapter 5 for further details).

Persons who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance can qualify to join the council's housing allocation scheme. Nevertheless, like other applicants, they can be disqualified for any of the following reasons:

- Being guilty of unacceptable behaviour
- Not having sufficient mental capacity
- Deliberately worsening their circumstances

However, applicants who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance are exempt from needing to have a local connection of five years or more to the borough. In such circumstances the council will instead seek to make an offer of private rented sector housing to discharge their homelessness duties. This option will be explored with all applicants owed a homelessness duty, regardless of whether or not they qualify to join the Housing Allocation Scheme.

Everyone, including those who are homeless or owed a homelessness duty, is entitled to advice about social rented housing, information about the council's Housing Allocation Scheme and assistance to make an application, exercise any choice they might be entitled to and determine whether or not to accept an offer of accommodation.

Unlike others, applicants who are homeless or owed a homelessness duty, are not entitled to express a choice of their preferred type of property type and area where they might like to live. Instead, they can be assured that a suitable offer will be made, that will take account of all their housing needs and wide prevailing circumstances.

Applicants who are owed the main homelessness (section 193) duty are placed second highest band, along with families or vulnerable adults who are owed the homelessness prevention (section 195) duty. Any other applicants who are owed the homelessness prevention duty, are placed in lowest of the four bands, along with those who are intentionally homeless and have a priority need, (owed the section 190 duty). The policy is silent on which banding placement of applicants who are homeless, including those owed the homelessness relief (section 189B).

Some persons more at risk of homelessness, such as care leavers, persons leaving hospital or the armed forces have been given additional preference for an allocation of social rented housing under Gosport's Housing Allocation Scheme.

### **Registered Provider Rent in Advance**

The majority of local registered housing providers in Gosport require rent in advance, which for homeless households, is often unaffordable and in turn met through a Homeless Prevention Grant.

Rent in advance can mean new tenants have little or no money to pay for essential items like furniture, white goods and cooking/eating utensils – driving tenants to borrow money from friends, family and even unaffordable loan providers. This can result in



tenants falling into financial difficulty from the beginning of their tenancy, increasing the likelihood of getting into rent arrears and facing eviction.

Asking for some kind of payment of rent in advance is not uncommon practice by social landlords, however, the extent to which this is a 'requirement' varies. Some housing providers stipulate that a payment in advance must be made before a tenancy can begin, regardless of the applicant's circumstances. Insisting on rent in advance fails to recognise that certain groups will find it particularly challenging to afford it, including people who have been homeless.

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) recently published *Rethinking Allocations*<sup>112</sup> suggests ways for landlords to seek payments of rent in advance while also allowing flexibility on a case-by-case basis:

- The application stage presents an ideal opportunity to inform people that they may wish to start saving in order to pay their rent in advance, rather than waiting until an offer. An allocation system should fully inform all applicants about payments in advance and how to access support or advice if they think this will be a challenge, or impossible. This can be included in the general information for applicants and then detailed in each advert e.g. 'this property requires rent in advance of £x, please speak with x agency/person if you will have trouble making this payment'.
- Not requiring rent in advance at all for people in receipt of help with their housing costs, recognising that they are paid their money in arrears.
- Agreeing an affordable amount for tenants to pay over a period of time, so that their rent account ends up in advance.
- Consider, on a case-by-case basis, if applying for a DHP or help via the homelessness prevention fund would be a suitable option to explore.

### **Gosport Tenancy Strategy 2013 - 2018**

All local housing authorities are required to have in place a Tenancy Strategy<sup>113</sup> setting out for registered providers within the borough the matters to which they are to have regard when developing their own policies relating to the type and length of tenancies they will grant and the circumstances on which they will grant each type. The type and length of tenancies contained within Gosport's Tenancy Strategy are listed below.

#### **Introductory Tenancy**

All new tenants are assigned an introductory tenancy for the first 12 months, an introductory tenancy can be extended for a further 6 months if the council is not satisfied the tenant has met the conditions of the tenancy, or ended if the terms of the tenancy have been breached. The tenant has the right to appeal a decision to extend or end an introductory tenancy.

Upon expiry of the introductory term the tenancy becomes either a secure or five year flexible tenancy.

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<sup>112</sup> *Rethinking Allocations* Chartered Institute of Housing sponsored by South Liverpool Homes September 2019

<sup>113</sup> Localism Act 2011, s150 (1) requirement to prepare and publish a Tenancy Strategy

## **Secure Tenancy**

Secure tenancies are assigned to applicants moving into sheltered accommodation or accommodation specifically designed for the elderly, where immediately before the tenancy began the applicant was a Gosport Borough Council secure tenant or assured tenant with a register social landlord. The council's Tenancy Policy also contains provision for applicants to be assigned a secure tenancy having been forced by circumstances to relinquish a secure or assured tenancy under specified conditions.

## **Five Year Flexible Tenancy**

A five year flexible tenancy will be offered to applicants not covered by secure tenancy conditions, applicants rehoused in adapted properties for disabled tenants and where significant disability adaptations are planned.

Before the end of the five years, the tenancy will be reviewed and a further five year flexible tenancy offered unless:

- The property is under occupied by one bedroom or more as determined by the Housing Allocation Scheme
- The property is overcrowded as determined by the Housing Allocation Policy
- The property is an adapted property allocated to (or adapted for) someone with a disability who no longer lives in the property
- The tenant is in breach of a current order for possession for arrears of rent, antisocial behaviour and other tenancy breaches.

Both Secure and Five-Year Flexible tenancies have the right to one succession under specified circumstances. A tenant has the right to review a decision to offer a Flexible Tenancy and a decision to seek possession.

The policy states the council will not be introducing 'affordable rents' for new builds, however this may be considered as an option in future years.

An updated Tenancy Strategy is currently in development. This will provide the council with an opportunity to fully engage with other registered providers of social housing within Gosport to influence their own tenancy policies and lettings policies with regard to homeless households.

## **Social housing tenure**

A total of 262 lettings were made from April 2018 through to March 2019 (the most recent year for which data is available from CORE), just under half (47%, 125) were by housing associations and just over half (53%, 137) were by the council. Two-thirds (178) of tenants were given a starter or introductory tenancy. Following the initial tenancy period, just over half (52% 137) were given a secure tenancy (including flexible tenancies), just over one-quarter (27%, 71) were given an assured shorthold tenancy and just under one-fifth (16%, 44) were given an assured tenancy. A further 10 were given other types of tenancies. Of those given a fixed term tenancy, nine out of ten (93%, 123) had a period of five years (excluding any starter/introductory period). A further six were given six years and two were given seven years. There is no data that

specifically relates to the types of tenancies given to tenants who had been homeless or owed a homelessness duty.

Types of tenancies granted are typically the most secure possible. Tenants who had previously been homeless or owed a homelessness duty are given the same types of tenancy as any other applicants and they are no more or less disadvantaged by the type of tenancy offered. Likewise, the circumstances in which social landlords will grant persons a tenancy of a particular kind are the same for all applicants, regardless of whether or not they have previously been homeless or owed a homelessness duty.

Where social housing providers have granted persons tenancies for a certain length of term, this has been done regardless of whether a person had been homeless or owed a homelessness duty of assistance. This is also the case in respect of the circumstances where social housing providers have granted a further tenancy when an existing tenancy came to an end.

#### **4.5 Private sector housing**

There is estimated to be around 31,735<sup>114</sup> private sector housing in Gosport. A snapshot taken of private rented properties available to rent in the Gosport borough<sup>115</sup> identified 38 properties; widening the radius by 1 mile significantly increased the number of available properties to 325.

With the exception of house shares, median rent levels for 1, 2 and 3 bed properties within a 1-mile radius of Gosport are 8%, 29% and 20% higher compared to Gosport. Median rent levels within both Gosport and the 1-mile radius of Gosport are on average 18% and 27% higher than Local Housing Allowance rates<sup>116</sup>.

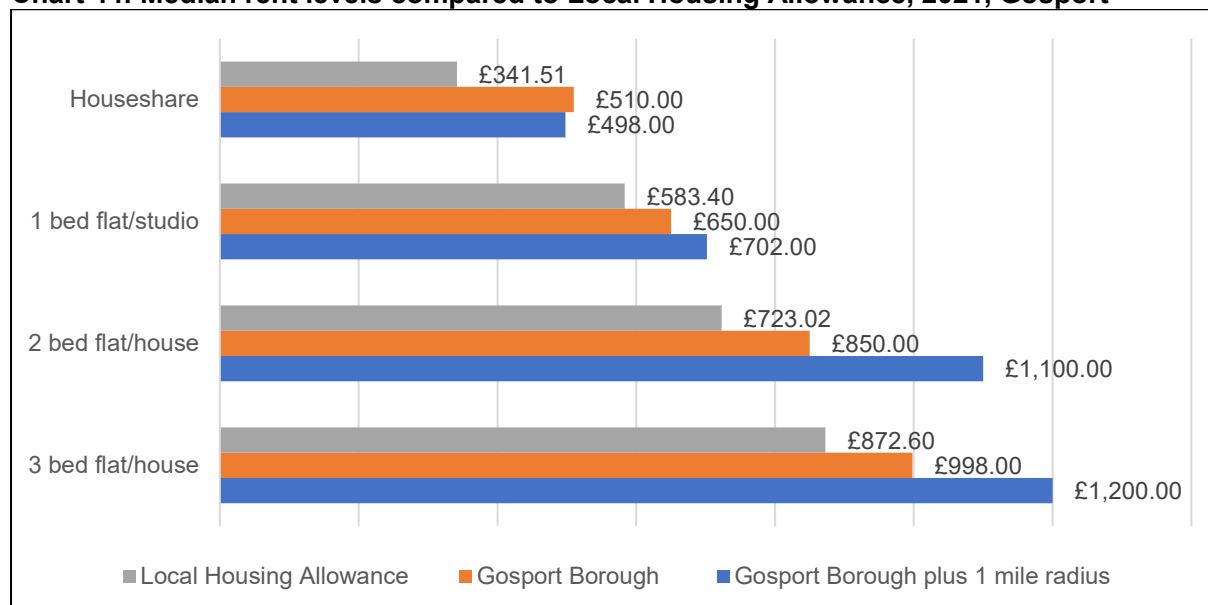
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<sup>114</sup> DLUHC Live tables on dwelling stock Table 100: number of dwellings by tenure and district 31 March 2020

<sup>115</sup> Snapshot of property-to-rent in Gosport 13/07/21 <https://www.rightmove.co.uk> Total 38 properties including 4 House share; 9 x 1 bed flat/studio; 11 x 2 bed flat/house; 14 x 3 bed flat/house

<sup>116</sup> GOV.UK Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates applicable from April 2021 to March 2022

**Chart 44: Median rent levels compared to Local Housing Allowance, 2021, Gosport**



Source: <https://www.rightmove.co.uk> and <https://www.home.co.uk>

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

Despite these challenges, Housing Advisors said the Homeless Prevention fund was the most used resource to relieve or prevent homelessness.

### **Gosport Homeless Prevention Loans & Grant Service**

Gosport Housing Options Service has a budget that can be used to prevent & relieve homelessness. The service can be used by Gosport Housing Advisors and registered providers who have signed up to the Gosport Repossessions Protocol.

A loan or grant can be payable for up to £3,000 to prevent homelessness where there are no other means of meeting the payment and can be used for rent in advance, deposit and tenancy set up fees, and for anything else that might prevent or relieve homelessness (*grant or loan*).

Payments can cover 2 weeks rent in advance to secure a Direct Let Registered Provider (HA) property where the customer cannot access funding through DHP, friends or family, and only cases accepted under a Relief or Main homeless duty and where this duty could be discharged if the customer moved into the property.

## **4.6 Conclusion about activities to secure 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 violence.

A Temporary Accommodation Allocations Policy is needed to facilitate the appropriate allocation of suitable temporary accommodation.

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.

Longer-term supported accommodation may be more suitable for young people, including those leaving care or custody, and adults who need 'a period of stability and individual support'.

Gosport Borough Council should undertake an options appraisal to inform and develop a Temporary Accommodation Procurement Strategy.

The options appraisal should identify demand by area and include innovations to make use of existing buildings, develop the hostels, as well as property acquisition from open market, new developments and modular construction. Various procurement options have been piloted in England<sup>117</sup>, including frameworks to set prices and standards, and dynamic purchasing systems to enable supply to respond to demand.

The portfolio of temporary accommodation contains no or little housing association stock. Social landlords have a duty to co-operate with a housing authority in carrying out their housing functions under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. This could be particularly appropriate in assisting Gosport Borough Council meet their duty to provide suitable temporary accommodation.

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 and should be drawn to a close. An options appraisal should be carried out to identify what the best private sector access initiative is for Gosport Borough Council to deliver a readily available supply of private sector stock.

Bringing the RAPS scheme to a close will require negotiation with private landlords to end existing arrangements by either the issue of permanent tenancies with a different LHA rate or moving occupants to alternative accommodation if the landlord is not satisfied with prevailing LHA rate.

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<sup>117</sup> Housing our Homeless Households, Gray, T., Messenger, G., Local Government Association, 2017, p 51

With regards to applicants who are homeless or owed a homelessness duty, the council has exercised its powers to determine:

- Whether to exempt them from any qualification criterion adopted for their housing allocation scheme.
- Whether to afford them any choice or additional preference and how to prioritise them, when making an allocation of social rented housing.

For persons who are homeless or owed a homelessness duty when compared to any other applicants, the council has decided to apply its powers to have a consistent affect in relation to the qualification criteria, a more limited affect in the degree of choice they are entitled, and both a greater and lesser affect in relation to preference and prioritisation.

The council should re-consider the principles on which its Housing Allocation Scheme has framed, to ensure it is:

- Sufficiently contributing to meeting housing need and tackling homelessness
- Effectively identifying those homeless households in housing need and matching them with appropriate housing
- Nominations agreements are being adhered.

The council should review the aims and objectives of its tenancy strategy, to ensure the types of tenancies offered promote the prevention of homelessness and does not adversely impact on tackling homelessness.

The Homeless Prevention fund was considered by housing advisors the most useful resource used to relieve or prevent homelessness.

Gosport Borough Council should work with local housing associations 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.

## 5.0 Providing support

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

### 5.1 Support needs

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

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.

Over half (53%) of AST ending were as a result of landlords wanting to sell or relet the property. The percentage of households evicted due to rent arrears reduced from 32% to 19% of all AST ending between 2018/19 and 2020/21.

The percentage of households owed either a prevention or relief duty as a result of domestic abuse has increased from 3% (17 households) to 8% (33 households) between 2018/19 and 2020/21. There has also been an increase in the number of households leaving an institution with no accommodation available<sup>118</sup> and eviction from supported housing<sup>119</sup>, in particular for rent arrears

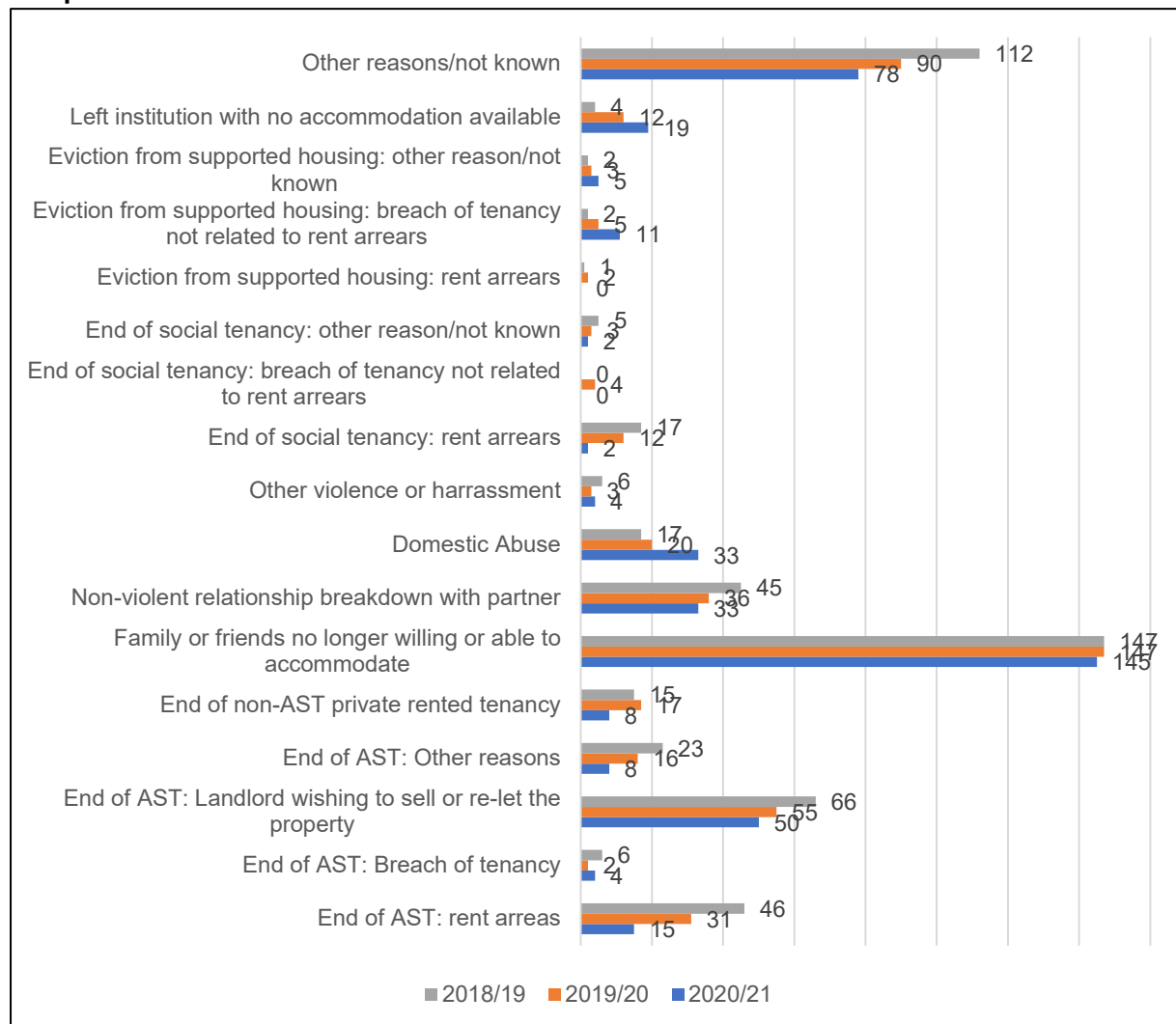
The 'other reasons' or 'reasons not known' category represents 20% of recorded households post HRA 17, and this must be analysed in order to fully understand support needs

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<sup>118</sup> Percentage of households owed a prevention or relief duty after leaving an institution with no accommodation available 2018/19: 1%, 2019/20: 3% and 2020/21: 5%

<sup>119</sup> Percentage of households owed a prevention or relief duty following eviction from supported housing 2018/19: 1%, 2019/20: 2% and 2020/21: 4%

**Chart 45: Reason for loss of last settled home for those owed a prevention or relief duty. Gosport 2018/19 to 2020/21**



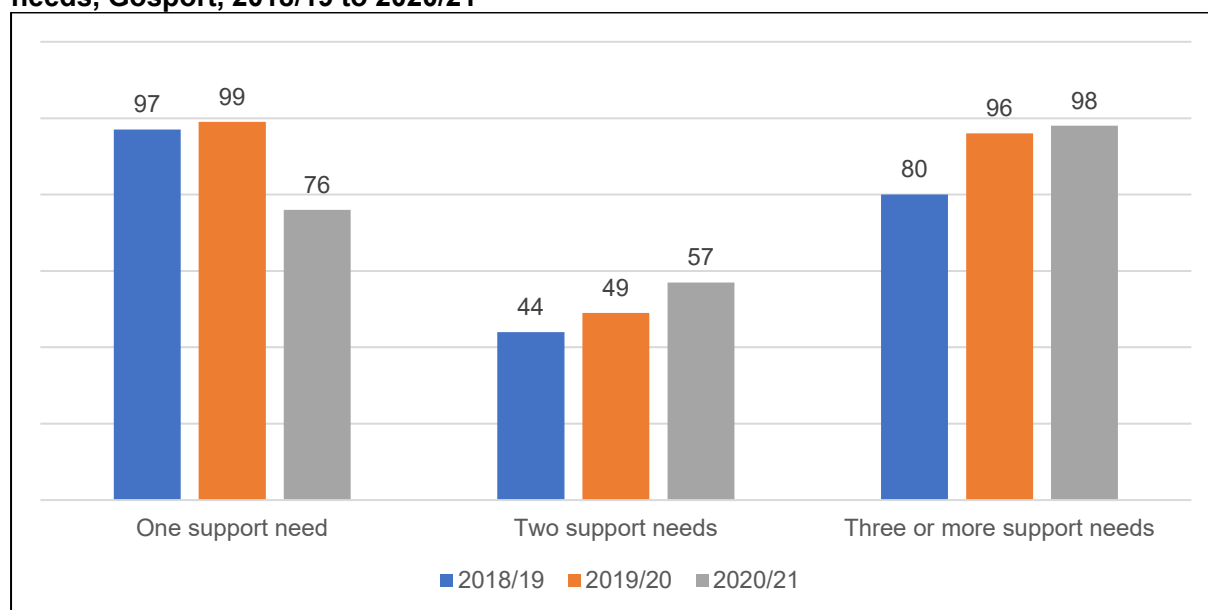
Source: Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

The clear recording of support needs within the HCLIC monitoring system is helping to understand the levels of support required to help prevent and relieve homelessness and sustain suitable accommodation to stop repeated homelessness. While the total number of households with one support need has reduced over the three years, the number of households with two or more support needs has increased.

After Hampshire recording a three-year median of 54%, Gosport Borough Council at 53% is recorded as having the second highest percentage of support needs for those owed a homelessness duty within the Benchmarking Group for the past three years.

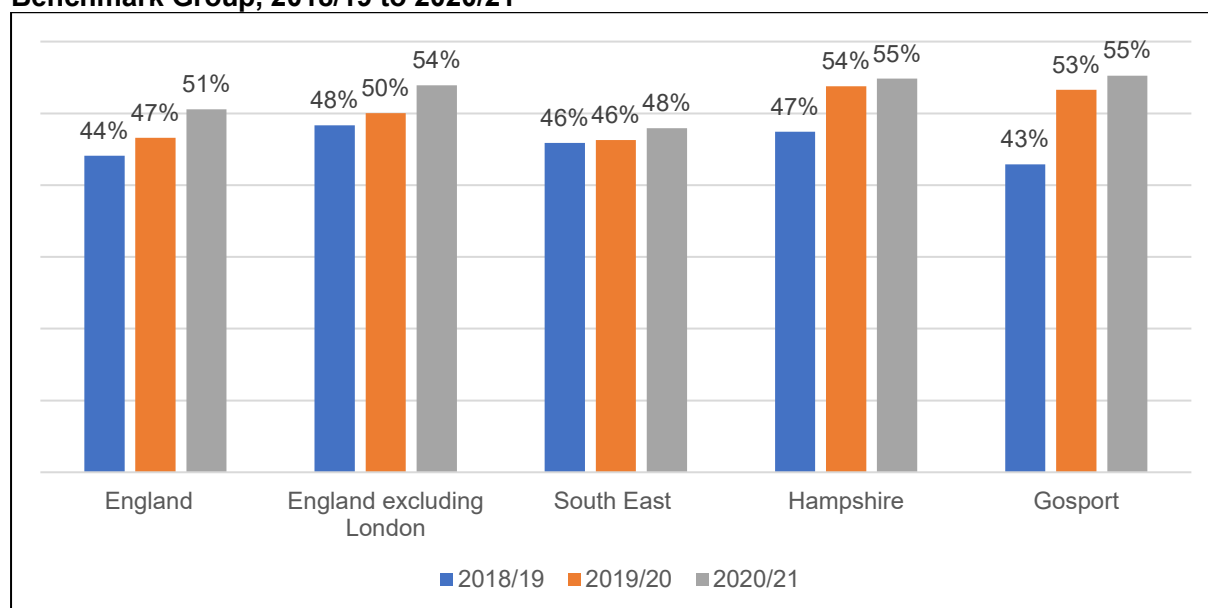


**Chart 46: Households with support needs owed a homelessness duty, by number of support needs, Gosport, 2018/19 to 2020/21**



Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

**Chart 47: Percentage of households owed a homelessness duty that have support needs, Benchmark Group, 2018/19 to 2020/21**



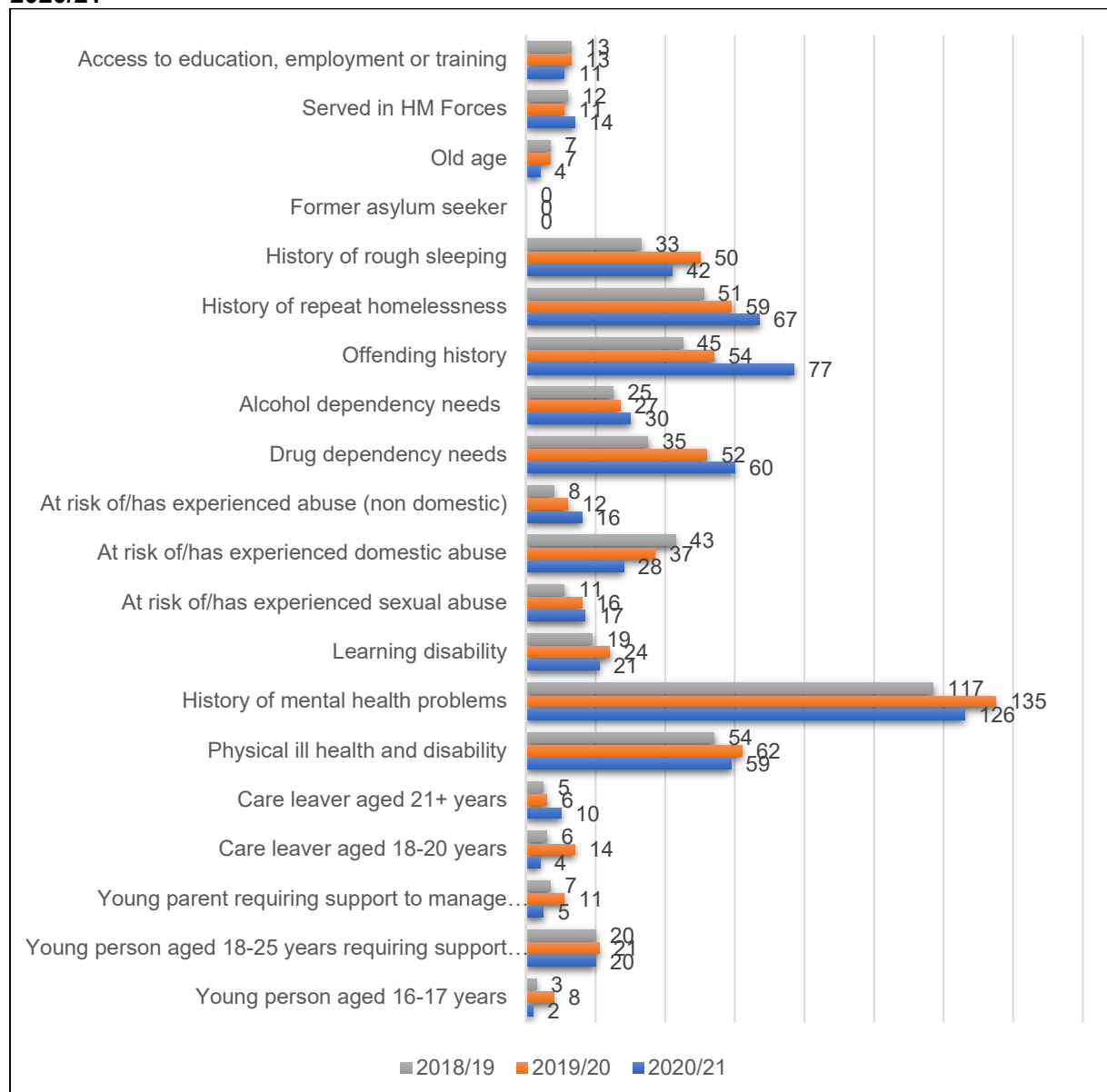
Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

The recorded support needs that must be addressed to ensure suitable accommodation can be sustained by those owed a homelessness duty in Gosport are predominantly mental health (22% of all support needs 2018/19 to 2020/21), households with a history of repeat homelessness and offending history both represented 10%, drug dependency made up 8% of support needs followed by a history of rough sleeping (7%) over the three-year period.

Support in these five areas can be variable and complex and require specialist assessment, specialist support, as well as in some cases, specialist accommodation. These needs are not being fully met in every case in Gosport, as in many other areas, which can cause increasing difficulty for the households suffering with these issues.

Few of the support needs shown on the chart can be provided for with general housing related support as most require some form of specialism, usually from another statutory service such as Public Health, Adult Services and Probation.

**Chart 48: Households owed a homelessness duty by support need, Gosport, 2018/19 to 2020/21**



Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

## 5.2 Rough sleeping

Preventing people from sleeping rough benefits vulnerable individuals as well as society more broadly. People who sleep rough over a long period of time are more likely to die young<sup>120</sup>, be victims of violence, theft and other crime, and will often have a combination of support needs requiring contact with a range of public bodies and services.

An evaluation of the levels of rough sleeping is carried out annually. In 2020, Gosport recorded 3 male rough sleepers of UK nationality over the age of 26.

National policy to end rough sleeping lays out the foundations for a system focused on prevention, early intervention and a rapid rehousing approach to recovery. The Rapid Rehousing Pathway brings together four policy elements (Somewhere Safe to Stay, Supported Lettings, Navigators and Local Lettings Agencies) that will help rough sleepers, and those at risk of rough sleeping, access the support and settled housing they need to leave the streets for good.

These four elements provide the headings to describe and evaluate the services available to households either, at risk of, or sleeping rough in Gosport.

### **Somewhere safe to stay**

Gosport Winter Bed Scheme, delivered in partnership with Two Saints, provided hostel bed spaces for rough sleepers. The scheme included access to laundry and washing facilities, as well as a hot evening meal and breakfast along with additional staff, including outreach workers, to facilitate or provide access to support. This provision was shared with Fareham Borough Council.

Two Saints also support clients into temporary B&B accommodation under the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP).

The winter bed scheme initially identified a number of clients that would benefit from Housing First. This was highlighted when implementing the Everyone In initiative and Gosport commissioned Two Saints to deliver a Housing First pilot commencing early 2021.

Due to Covid-19, some accommodation traditionally used for SWEP and extended winter provision is no longer viable and presented a number of implications in terms of capacity of provision, the funding required and logistics of support delivery. Gosport adopted an innovative approach to these challenges by sourcing 30 pods to provide safe accommodation for those people experiencing street homelessness.

The pods provided two-bedroom, self-contained units of accommodation with a bathroom and kitchen area. One pod was used as office space from which Two Saints delivered daily support to residents, which included practical help and support to access medical, drug and alcohol services, benefits advice, food parcels etc. Gosport Housing Advice officers were also based at the pod office, providing help and support to apply to the general housing waiting list, access move on accommodation such as private

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<sup>120</sup> Thomas, B (2011) 'Homelessness: A silent killer – A research briefing on mortality amongst homeless people'. Crisis. Calculated the average age of death for a person who dies while living on the streets or in homeless accommodation as just 47, 30 years lower than the general population of 77 years old.

tenancies, Two Saints supported housing including council sub-let accommodation, Housing First and B&B. Clients with mental ill health were referred to Richmond Fellowship or Guinness for assessment.

The pods were available throughout the peak of the pandemic with all 30 units occupied. The pods have now been removed and the majority of residents have secured move on accommodation.

Gosport Borough Council cold weather planning for 2021 will include self-contained B&B to ensure that people who sleep rough are safeguarded against both the cold weather and the risks posed by the pandemic.

The winter bed provision should also facilitate a rapid assessment and support to people who are already, or at risk of, sleeping rough.

#### **Case study Cheshire East RSI: Emerging Futures Complex Needs Accommodation**

In Cheshire East, the Rough Sleeping Initiative is funding the establishment of dedicated complex needs temporary accommodation provision.

This provision is designed to support a number of individuals who are in priority need and also have specific issues with alcohol and/or drug misuse.

Historically these individuals had been placed into emergency accommodation but complex needs and challenging behaviours meant they lost that accommodation. This placed them at risk of sleeping rough.

The Rough Sleeping Initiative funding has enabled Cheshire East Council to provide eight complex needs beds by commissioning Emerging Futures, an organisation with experience in dealing with substance misuse in the borough. Seven of the eight beds have already been filled within weeks.

Individuals accessing these beds have a dedicated support worker, as well as additional support from staff on a 24/7 basis. The workers engage clients to address their substance misuse by supporting them to gradually reduce their alcohol intake. The aim is to address and tackle the behaviours which would have previously led to accommodation being terminated, helping to create a sustainable change.

The provision also links with the new Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker provision, based within the council. These workers provide additional support build interventions around wider individual needs such as debt, income and engagement with health services, with the aim of sustaining long-term accommodation as a result.

#### **Supported Lettings**

Two Saints Prevention, Early Intervention and Resettlement Services (PEIRS) provides a flexible and responsive service which supports single persons 18 years and over who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The service is short term, support is focused on homelessness prevention, tenancy management, and signposting to relevant agencies and specialist services in the local community. The service supports service users to develop an action plan to manage identified support needs and achieve independent living at the earliest appropriate stage.

This floating support service is commissioned by Hampshire County Council Social Inclusion Service. Contract monitoring workbooks are submitted quarterly, a workbook for the period July – September 2021 identified 42 clients receiving support in Gosport.

The majority of clients (41%) were occupying properties sublet by Two Saints, 26% of clients were supported to maintain their social or private rented tenancy, 10% were either staying with friends or in temporary accommodation provided by the local authority.

**Table 11: Two Saints, PIERS Floating Support, Breakdown of support**

<b>Community Support</b>	<b>Clients</b>
Number receiving support to maintain RSL/private rented (not Housing First)	10
Housing First clients	0
Clients in 'supported' housing not attached to a support contract	1
Number of rough sleepers supported	1
Number of people supported in B&B	2
Number of people supported in LHA temporary accommodation	4
Number of people supported in sublets	16
Family and friends	4
Number of rough sleepers supported to access accommodation during the qtr	1

Source: Two Saints Quarter 2 2021/22 Contract Monitoring Workbook

All clients that had identified mental or physical health support need had been supported to access primary, secondary mental health services and mobility support/healthcare services.

In addition to Hampshire contract monitoring all Two Saints services undergo internal Quality Assurance assessments. A copy was provided showing regular review of assessment and support planning, client risk, safeguarding and fair access to the service.

### **Navigators**

Gosport and Fareham Borough Council jointly commission a Complex Needs Navigator (CNN) to work across both Fareham and Gosport Local Authority areas. This cross-borough role has provided support to the most complex homeless clients and ensured they have access to health, accommodation and community support provision. The CNN has access to a Personalisation Budget.

The chaotic and challenging behaviour of such clients has previously led to difficulties in accessing and sustaining accommodation – this role has enabled close relationships to build and breakdown barriers which has resulted in these clients taking up offers of accommodation. The post holder is currently working with 21 extremely challenging clients with multiple needs across both boroughs. Gosport and Fareham Council plan to increase this service by recruiting an additional 1FTE Complex Needs Navigator in 2021/22.

### **Local Lettings Agencies**

Gosport received RSI funding for 1 full time Accommodation Procurement Officer - working across both Local Gosport and Fareham Authority areas unfortunately the success of this role has been hindered by the pandemic and resultant lockdowns. However, the post holder has developed a Guarantor Scheme which has helped clients access privately rented accommodation and has built positive relationships with landlords and local letting agents.

Successful applications have been made to the Rent Guarantee Scheme, individuals have been assisted with Rent in Advance sums and additional properties have been added to a stock of managed-leased accommodation for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping. Gosport Borough Council anticipates an additional 30 units of accommodation in the private rented sector will be secured by this post.

## 5.3 Housing support

### Domestic abuse services

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

### Supported Housing

Two Saints, are commissioned by Hampshire County Council, in partnership with Gosport Borough Council to deliver the social inclusion contract in Gosport. This includes both supported housing and floating support. The table below provides a description of the supported housing provision available to Gosport Borough Council.

**Table 12: Gosport Supported Accommodation**

Provider/Accommodation	Description	Units
Two Saints 101 Hostel Stage 1	Direct access hostel for males and females aged between 18-59 years. Working with individuals who are homeless to access support specific to their needs. Sourcing appropriate move on accommodation whilst aiming to work towards independent living.	18 Units
Two Saints Acton Lodge Stage 2	Supported accommodation for single homeless people aged 18 years and over with the expectation that service users move on within 12 months having established independent living skills and the confidence to live independently. Priority in each area will be given to clients who are being reconnected from Stage 1 services.	10 Units

Source: Gosport Borough Council

The accommodation is shared with Fareham residents, although outcomes data<sup>121</sup> shows the majority of service users (9 of the 10 units at Acton Lodge and 14 of 18 units at 101 Hostel) have a local connection with Gosport.

Contract monitoring data presents evidence of a client group with complex and multiple needs, in particular co-occurring mental health and substance misuse needs. For the quarter ending September 2021, hostel bed-spaces had 100% occupancy, 12 residents moved out, half of which (6) were unplanned moves, including 2 evictions from the direct access hostel.

<sup>121</sup> Social Inclusion Contract Workbook 5.10.21 101 Gosport Road and Workbook dated 8.4.21 Acton Lodge (local connection data was incomplete for Acton Lodge Workbook dated 13.10.21)

### **Hostel Temporary Accommodation**

Whilst hostels can offer short-term accommodation to people who are experiencing homelessness, as an alternative to B&B, hostel accommodation that involves families or pregnant women sharing facilities with other households is not suitable for longer-term placements.

The Government guidance clearly states that where hostel accommodation is used to accommodate vulnerable young people or families with children it would be inappropriate to accommodate these groups alongside vulnerable adults.

Evidence shows people are more likely to thrive in their own home, the majority of the temporary accommodation portfolio should include disbursed self-contained properties. Wherever possible the household would remain in that disbursed property throughout each stage of a homelessness journey up until discharge of duty into that same property where feasible.

Full analysis of the portfolio of temporary accommodation in Gosport has been undertaken and set out in Chapter 4.3 of this report, along with a recommendation that Gosport Borough Council undertake an options appraisal to ensure supply of temporary accommodation and support responds to demand.

### **Housing First**

Government policy recognises 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 supporting entrenched rough sleepers.

Gosport operates two Housing First projects. The first (funded by Homeless Prevention) is delivered by Two Saints and Vivid Housing Association to support 5 individuals and is expected to run beyond the 3-year funding arrangement.

The second project (funded by RSI) is jointly commissioned by Gosport and Fareham Borough Council, and each local authority identified 5 individuals (10 in total) in emergency accommodation who had a demonstrable need for intensive support. All 5 units of accommodation are from Gosport's own social housing stock, support is provided by Two Saints. Funding is expected to continue beyond the 1-year RSI award.

The success of the project is reliant on partnership working with key organisations which currently include Health, Adult Social Care, Inclusion and the Police.

### **Monitoring and commissioning of housing support services**

Supported housing can provide a highly valuable source of accommodation, particularly for young people and adults who need a period of stability and individual support to help them prepare to live independently. In two-tier local authority areas, Government guidance<sup>122</sup> recommends housing authorities should ensure that evidence of homelessness and support needs is available and informs commissioning priorities at

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<sup>122</sup> Paras 16.38 Homelessness Code of Guidance, DLUHC, Feb 2018

upper tier level, and that there is collaboration across the districts to ensure efficient referral and move on from supported housing services.

Evidence of homelessness and support needs in Gosport can be collated using a range of sources such as:

- Needs mapping information
- Service user consultation
- National data sets, e.g. Census
- Analysis on trends and patterns
- Contract reviews including analysis of outcomes met by service providers
- Information from providers, professionals and other stakeholders
- Anecdotal information from a variety of sources

Although its use is no longer mandatory, the Quality Assessment Framework<sup>123</sup> (QAF) was considered an essential part of ensuring that support providers deliver services to an acceptable standard and in accordance with contractual expectations.

The QAF ensured service user consultation was integrated throughout the strategic and operational element of the organisation. A revised QAF was released by Government in April 2009 which contained an increased emphasis on client involvement and empowerment, focusing on involving service users and supporting them to be provided with resources which allow them to make informed decisions.

Service user consultation is essential in ensuring service quality and should involve clients at all levels, from individual client engagement to user involvement in service delivery and setting strategic priorities for support services.

Contract reviews undertaken for both accommodation-based and non-accommodation-based support services in both Gosport and Hampshire countywide should consider:

#### Accommodation based

- The accessibility of this provision
- The standard of accommodation (in accordance with the Supported Housing: National Statement of Expectations)
- The staffing arrangements and support philosophy
- The rules for exclusions and evictions
- Move-on support, and other matters

#### Non accommodation based

- Whether the support being provided is sufficiently personalised
- The joint working arrangements between the support provider and the accommodation provider

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<sup>123</sup> The Quality Assessment Framework is an annual self-assessment for service providers which measures levels of performance against six key objectives: needs and risk assessment; support planning; security; health and safety; protection from abuse; fair access, diversity and inclusion; and complaints. Under the Supporting People Programme England 2003 to 2009



- The efforts being made to help people feel part of their community and take-up employment
- Whether the support is outcome focused and asset-based, and
- How people are being helped to increase their personal income and improve their wellbeing

## **5.4 Communitywide support**

We reviewed the support provided by other public authorities in Hampshire looking at how the Council's Homelessness Service works with colleagues under each relevant public law duty.

A representative from all public authorities in Hampshire completed the on-line stakeholder consultation, however attempts to speak with colleagues from Domestic Abuse and Health services, Child and Adult Social Care were unsuccessful and as such detailed scrutiny of joint working between the Council and Hampshire County Council has not been undertaken.

### **Hampshire County Council Adult Social Care services**

Hampshire adult social care services owe duties to vulnerable homeless adults under the Care Act 2014, to provide or arrange services that help to maintain or improve people's independence and wellbeing to prevent them from developing the need for ongoing care and support.

The Act contains a general duty<sup>124</sup> of the local authority to promote an individual's wellbeing in relation to, among other areas, the suitability of their living accommodation. An assessment of the services and facilities available for local people as well as identifying local people that might have care and support needs should be carried out in order to understand what gaps or duplications there are in service provision. One of the ways in which Hampshire County Council does this is by working with the local housing authorities through the Strategic Housing Officers Group and the Homelessness Officer Group. These groups have worked with Hampshire County Council Adult Services Commissioning Team to develop and agree priorities for these services.

### **Hampshire County Council child social care services**

Housing Options staff reported good working relations with Hampshire Children's Services, there is a joint working protocol in place between Housing and Children's Services for 16 and 17 year olds in housing need. Section 9.3 of the protocol references the need for a planned handover of statutory responsibility prior to the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday for care leavers requiring housing after they are 18 years old.

There is however, no joint protocol between Children's Services and Housing to help both services deliver the local accommodation offered to care leavers and prevent homelessness, recommendation is made in chapter 3.1.2 of this report that Hampshire Children's Services produce a joint protocol that sets out how they will work together to ensure:

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<sup>124</sup> Care Act 2014, Part 1(2)(h), wellbeing insofar as relating to an individual's living accommodation.

- Each care leaver has a tailored support plan as they transition to independent living
- Those at risk of homelessness are identified early and action is taken to prevent it
- A quick, safe and joined up response for care leavers who go on to become homeless.

### **NHS Trusts**

Inclusion Recovery is an NHS commissioned alcohol and drug addiction support service which works to support individuals, and their families, who are impacted by such addiction, including those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Inclusion has worked closely with Gosport Housing Options service, regularly working with support services and providing a drop-in service at the temporary accommodation hostels. The Inclusion service also works with Two Saints to support Housing First clients when needed.

Schedule 3 of the Care Act<sup>125</sup> requires the NHS inform Adult Social Services when a patient, due to be discharged from hospital, requires a care assessment. Where the care or support needs do not require residential care, but the patient is either homeless or unable to live in their former home due to a disability, both the NHS and Adult Social Services will work jointly with the local housing authority to find suitable accommodation. To prevent homelessness and, where necessary, allow time to source suitably adapted and/or located accommodation upon discharge from hospital, Gosport Borough Council should work in partnership with health colleagues to develop and publish a hospital discharge protocol.

Hampshire Specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is an NHS service that aims to help young people up to the age of 18 years old who are finding it hard to manage their emotional, psychological and mental health. CAMHS have community teams of staff across the Hampshire area who are able to support young people and families if needed. No working arrangements are in place between CAMHS and Housing Options.

The Richmond Fellowship is commissioned by Hampshire Council to provide supported accommodation to support people with mental health problems prepare for independent living. Housing Options staff said the shared accommodation was not always suitable and when referrals are made, availability is limited.

Mental health is a growing factor in homelessness and greater than all other support needs of those owed a homelessness duty, as well as a significant cause of the inability to sustain a tenancy for single people. With the exception of the Inclusion Recovery service, there is reportedly little joint working between the local NHS Clinical Commissioning Group or NHS Trust, Hampshire Mental Health Social Work team and the Housing Options Service.

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<sup>125</sup> Care Act 2014, Schedule 3, Discharge of hospital patients with care and support needs.

Although advances have been made in collaborative working since March 2020 due to the pandemic, there remains an urgent need for the further development of partnership working between Gosport Borough Council, the NHS Trust, the CCG and Hampshire County Council to attain an understanding and alignment of commissioning decisions, prioritise and identify unmet need, funding and actions to address gaps in provision.

### **Gosport Borough Council Housing Department**

Special statutory provision is made for the re-housing<sup>126</sup> of those who currently occupy, but need to leave, a defective home in specified circumstances.

Whilst it is acknowledged such circumstances are infrequent, consideration should be given to necessary arrangements in the event of:

- Rehousing households whose home has been subject to a compulsory purchase order (CPO)
- Homeowners who purchased their home under right-to-buy arrangements, whose home is defective, and
- Secure tenants of local housing authority social rented housing who are being evicted

### **Department of Work and Pensions**

Jobcentres received additional funding in 2020/21 to help those experiencing homelessness in their area, the funding will enable Jobcentre staff to join outreach teams on the streets and speak to people sleeping rough, helping them to claim their benefits, find new work, secure stable accommodation and direct them to additional support.

Staff will be able to spend more time working with charities and other organisations to help people who are homeless, including those rough sleeping. Jobcentre staff could also be stationed in charity run day centres to advise those who use those services, but have not yet visited a Jobcentre.

This approach is based on the Skills, Training, Innovation and Employment (STRIVE) pilot<sup>127</sup> supporting 100 individuals with a current and past history of homelessness. In the first two years (2014-2016) of the programme nearly half of all participants had progressed to either education, volunteering or employment. By end of February 2016, the programme had progressed 15 individuals into work, representing 14% of the total cohort. This compares favourably to available evidence on the performance of the Work Programme that demonstrates, at best, a 4% success rate in moving homeless people into work.

The following key features of STRIVE contributed to its success:

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<sup>126</sup> Housing Act 1985, Pt XVI, 'Assistance for Owners of Defective Housing'.

<sup>127</sup> a London based pre-employment and skills programme targeted at single homeless people claiming JSA, ESA or equivalent legacy sickness benefits delivered by St Mungo's and Crisis Skylight funded by DLUHC and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

- Management and delivery by specialised providers who have wide experience of homeless people and have internal referral routes that support access to the target group
- A learning programme that brings together IT, English and maths with 'soft' pre-employability skills, flexibly delivered by tutors who understand the needs of the target group
- A bespoke learning programme that moves at the pace of participants and includes the co-production of individual learning goals subject to regular review
- Access to specialist teams and staff, and external organisations who can offer volunteering, work placements and support entry into employment, and
- Dedicated management alongside strong and supportive strategic guidance and governance arrangements delivered through the STRIVE steering group

## **5.5 Conclusions about activities to provide support**

The increase in households threatened with or homeless as a result of domestic abuse and leaving an institution with no accommodation available is discussed in Chapter 3 of this report.

There has also been an increase in the number of households evicted from supported housing, in particular for rent arrears.

The recorded support needs of those owed a homelessness duty are predominantly mental health, households with a history of repeat homelessness and offending history and drug dependency followed by a history of rough sleeping.

Both of the Two Saints Hostels operate at full capacity and accommodate a client group with complex and multiple needs, in particular co-occurring mental health and substance misuse needs. The direct access hostel (101) records a notably higher number of unplanned exits and evictions compared with Acton Lodge.

Due to the health risks posed by the Coronavirus pandemic, the Winter Bed Scheme is deemed unsafe due to the communal nature. Gosport adopted an innovative approach by sourcing 30 pods to provide safe accommodation for those people experiencing street homelessness. Housing officers were based on site along with outreach support services. The pods have now been removed and the majority of residents have secured move-on accommodation.

Although advances have been made in collaborative working since March 2020 due to the pandemic, there remains an urgent need for the further development of partnership working between Gosport Borough Council, the NHS Trust, the CCG and Hampshire County Council to attain an understanding and alignment of commissioning decisions, prioritise and identify unmet need, funding and actions to address gaps in provision.

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 cold weather plans for 2021 consist 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 should, in collaboration with service users and stakeholders, 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 should 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. An annual service user feedback event would promote transparency and provide valuable evidence to inform commissioning priorities throughout Hampshire.

Regular review of existing joint working protocols to identify any gaps would be prudent, particularly in relation to rehousing households in specified circumstances such as defective dwellings, following service of a CPO and eviction from social rented housing.

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

## 6.0 Resources for tackling homelessness

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

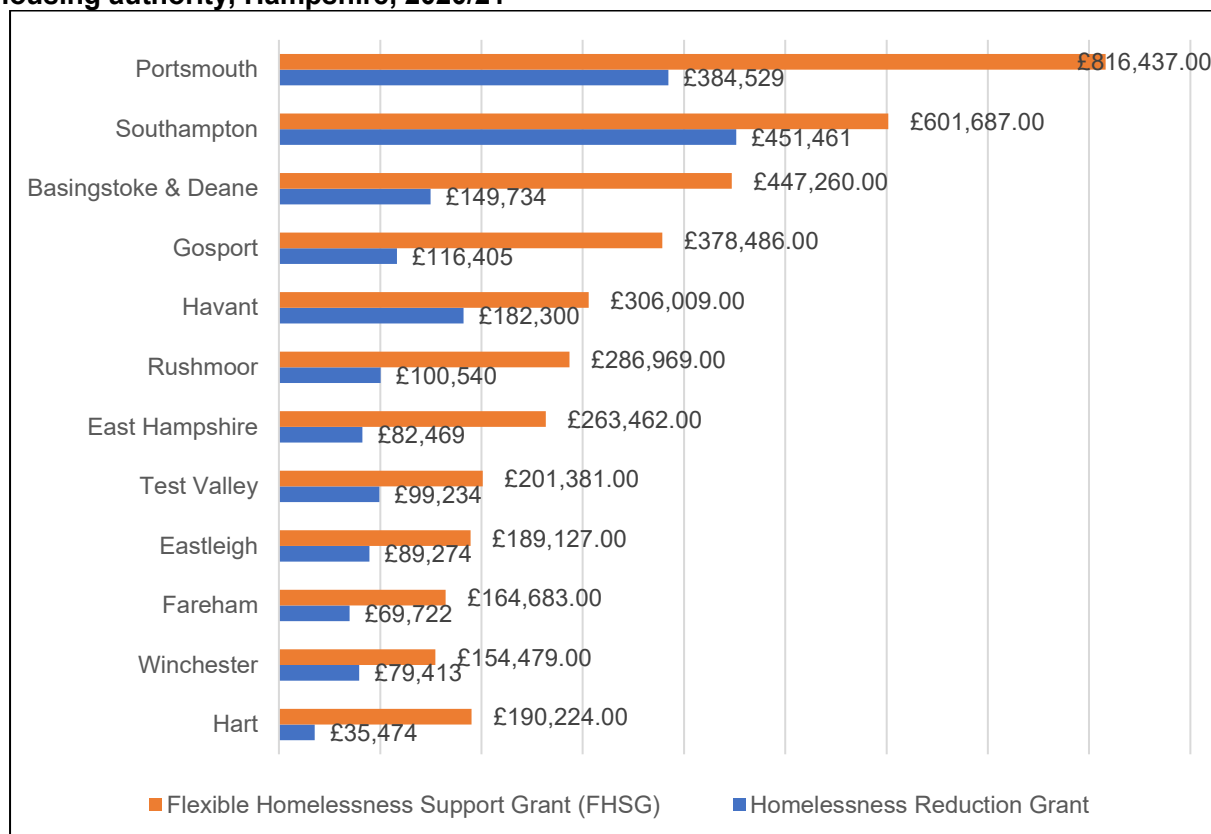
### 6.1 Finances

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

We have looked at the council's own spending on homelessness activities, grants received from DLUHC and other UK Government bodies which have been benchmarked against other Hampshire housing authorities.

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.

**Chart 49: DLUHC Flexible Homelessness Support and Homeless Reduction Grant awarded by housing authority, Hampshire, 2020/21**

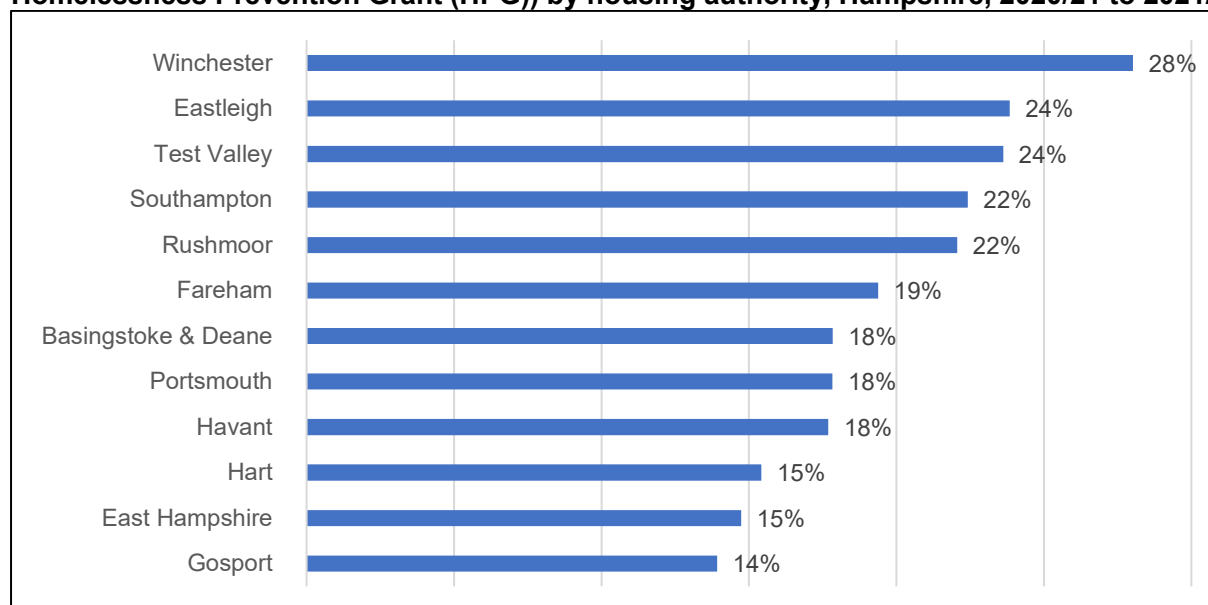


Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

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

and flexibility. Homeless Prevention Grant allocations in Hampshire have increased by between 14 to 28 percent.

**Chart 50: Percentage increase in DLUHC funding (2020/21 FHSG/HRG and 2021/22 Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG)) by housing authority, Hampshire, 2020/21 to 2021/22**



Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

Despite receiving the lowest percentage increase in funding, Gosport's allocation of regional funding remains at 8 percent of Hampshire's homeless prevention grant funding.

**Table 13: Homelessness Prevention Grant, Benchmark Group 2021/22**

Area	Amount	% of budget
Gosport	£556,267	0.18% of national budget 8% of regional budget
Hampshire	£7,641,118	2.46% of national budget
South East	£42,581,971	13.7% of national budget
England without London	£174,690,326	56% of national budget
All of England	£310,000,000	100% of national budget

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

The Rough Sleeper Initiative funding has been allocated to help more rough sleepers into accommodation, by delivering 6,000 additional bed spaces and 2,500 support staff nationally. In Gosport, this grant is used to commission specialist support to rough sleepers such as a Complex Needs Navigator, Housing First, Personalisation Budget and also a Winter Bed Provision.

**Table 14: Rough Sleeper Initiative, Benchmark Group 2020-2021**

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

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

The Next Steps Accommodation Programme short-term funding is for interim accommodation and support for those rough sleepers accommodated during the pandemic, funding such activities as helping people into private rented accommodation or helping to reconnect them with their community, as well as the procurement of interim accommodation. This revenue funding was used mainly to fund the ‘pod’ accommodation in 2020/21.

**Table 15: Next Steps Accommodation Programme funding 2020/21 - Short term accommodation and intermediate support funding – revenue only, Benchmark Group 2020-2021**

Area	Amount	% of budget
Gosport	£200,000	0.19% of national budget 8.02% of regional budget
Hampshire	£2,492,700	2.37% of national budget
South East	£15,066,772	14.35% of national budget
England without London	£48,358,369	46.06% of national budget
All England	£105,000,000	100% of national budget

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

In terms of the council's own spending, scrutiny of forecast and actual spend of the homelessness service budget was carried out along with spending on commissioning voluntary organisations and others to prevent homelessness, supply accommodation and provide support.

The council maintains healthy financial reserves, recorded as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 of £594,691. A budget is listed below providing a summary of income and expenditure between 2017/18 and 2020/21.

**Table 16: Gosport Borough Council Homelessness Budget 2017/18 to 2020/21**

Gosport Income and Expenditure	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Grant Income	£ 596,300	£ 651,887	£ 432,104	£ 704,891
Actual Spend (B&B, RAPS and Prevention)	-£ 846,704	-£ 885,946	-£ 726,416	-£ 922,506
Balance/Gosport Borough Council Contribution	-£ 250,404	-£ 234,059	-£ 294,312	-£ 217,615

Gosport Group Accountant (Housing)

An annual payment is made to Housing Benefit to cover rent shortfall on RAPS temporary accommodation these payments have increased by 70 percent over the last 4 years (£198,824 in 2016/17 and £338,876 in 2020/21). The forecast budget includes Housing Benefit payment at the 2020/21 figure of £338,876.

Gosport provided a forecast budget primarily based on grants received in 2021/22 and known commitments.

**Table 17: Gosport Borough Council Homelessness Forecast Budget 2021/22 to 2022/23**

Gosport Income and Expenditure	2019/20	2020/21
Grant Income	£ 819,491	£ 702,854
Forecast Spend (B&B, RAPS and Prevention)	-£ 679,474	-£ 639,920
Balance not including Gosport Borough Council Contribution	£ 140,017	£ 62,934

Gosport Group Accountant (Housing)

Financial information regarding Hampshire County Council spend within Gosport on both commissioned and in-house services, such as early help and care leaver services, or other organisations actively working with homeless or potentially homeless households within Gosport, was not available for this review, thus assessing value for money of the Housing Options and related services has not been undertaken.



Recommended actions contained in Section 5 of this review identified an urgent need for the further development of partnership working between Gosport Borough Council, the NHS Trust, the CCG and Hampshire County Council to attain an understanding and alignment of commissioning decisions, prioritise and identify unmet need, funding and actions to address gaps in provision.

This partnership should explore the possibility of securing additional investment, to fund support services, including funding from revenue or capital grants available from national government, any of its agencies, or philanthropic trusts, investment from the commercial sector, via a social impact bond and using payment by results arrangements with commissioned providers.

DLUHC published an independent evaluation<sup>128</sup> of funding provided to tackle youth homelessness and rough sleeping via Social Impact Bonds (SIB), using a payment by results (PBR). The findings from this research could be used to inform a local review of how resources are allocated for tackling homelessness.

## **6.2 People**

A review of the staffing structure was undertaken which considered whether there are enough staff to cope with caseload levels, procedures and processes along with an overview of staff training available, both in terms of the specifics of homelessness legislation and the general skills needed e.g., providing advice, carrying out assessments, etc. to undertake their role.

The Housing Options staff structure, shown below in Fig 1, consists of three senior officers, two responsible for homelessness and housing advice, and the other responsible for essential temporary and move on accommodation provision and management.

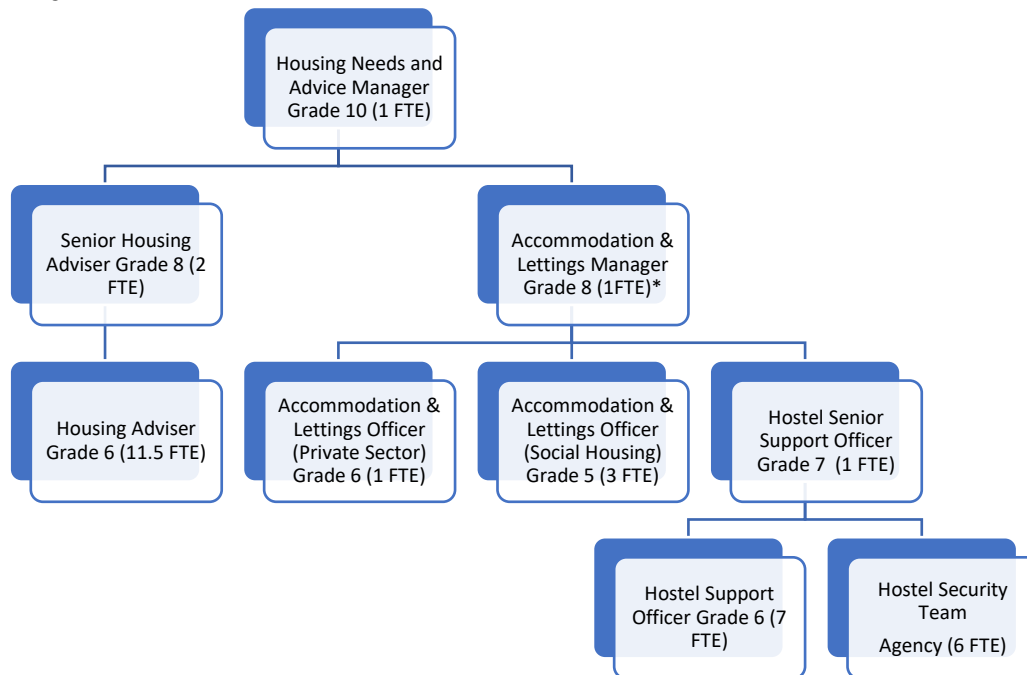
The teams include officers with significant experience, particularly the team leaders one of which had worked with the council for 27 years. Staff felt well supported by colleagues and seniors alike, colleagues were dedicated to providing a good service.

Senior Housing Advisers felt staff caseloads were too high. Recruitment of Housing Advisers has been difficult, felt to be due to salary and location. A significant amount of Housing Adviser's time is spent managing Housing Register functions, the majority of staff felt Part 6 and Part 7 functions should be separated into two teams.

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<sup>128</sup> Evaluation of the Fair Chance Fund Final Report April 2019  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/793810/Fair\\_Chance\\_Fund\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/793810/Fair_Chance_Fund_final_report.pdf)

**Diagram 1: Gosport Borough Council Homelessness Service staffing structure, April 2021**



\*Excluding 1 x Temporary Accommodation Income Recovery Officer post currently on hold (vacant grade 4 post)

Like many front-line homelessness services, the housing options team struggle to manage the current demand for services in order to position themselves proactively and focus on prevention. A revised staffing structure with additional officers is recommended, introducing a clear separation between Housing Advisers and Housing Allocation staff.

Housing Options would be made up of three teams:

1. Triage Team would provide the first part of all statutory functions, fulfilling the advice duty, making referrals to agencies such as food bank, CAB, receiving and processing Duty to Refer correspondence, identify whether someone is making an application for assistance under Part 7 and dealing with initial information including failure to disclose information etc. before handing over to a Caseworker.
2. Caseworker Officer would determine eligibility, carrying out an assessment and formulate the Personal Housing Plan (PHP), delivering the prevention or relief duty and carrying the case on towards fulfilling duties to those owed a main duty or duty for a reasonable period, working with people who fail to cooperate with PHP or refuse final offer and where appropriate closing the case, complete local connection referrals to another local authority and cooperating with Children Services.
3. Accommodation Officer would work in tandem to the Casework Team but on a separate channel of work to help the Caseworker Team secure accommodation for the applicant. Delivering the Temporary Accommodation Procurement Strategy, finding housing from local housing authorities, registered providers and

private sector landlords, checking properties meet the legal definition of suitability and making properties available to fulfil interim S188 duties, prevention, relief and main duties. This role would also be responsible for notifying other local authorities when an out of area placement is made and receiving out of area legal notifications and protecting people's belongings.

There would be a clear separation between the allocation function and homeless function, with the administration of allocation functions being the responsibility of Allocation and Lettings Officers. The team would provide information on the right to apply for social housing, advice and assistance to make the application, express choice, arrange viewings, receive and process applications, determine if someone is eligible and qualifies to join the scheme, placing on an appropriate band, making an offer and sharing the information with a registered provider if making a nomination.

The Homeless Strategy Officer post is essential to embedding the homeless strategy and would be responsible for the Homeless Strategy Delivery Plan, driving partnership working, sharing good practice and promoting funding opportunities.

### **Hostel Team**

The Temporary Accommodation Procurement Strategy will determine whether or not the current provision of the 2 temporary accommodation hostels remains or temporary accommodation is provided in the community in the form of disbursed individual units.

Should the council continue with the hostel model, the rent collected should pay for housing management functions. The number of hostel staff will be determined by the rental income which, first and foremost must cover the landlord functions, any spare revenue could pay for some support. If there is no spare money support should be funded through other means, such as the homeless grant, Supporting People budget or exempt accommodation payments using housing benefit rates.

### **6.3 IT**

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

The council's recent decision to provide interactive advice on the council website, along with staff access to up to date legal tools advice, will undoubtedly provide a valuable service to customers and assist to relieve pressure on front line staff.

The software (Locata) available to the Housing Options service to help administer homelessness functions is effective in formulating personalised plans, case management, recording prevention activity, and other modules to help enhance the administration of homelessness functions, such as online forms, applications, reports, information packs, letter templates.

Case management notes are detailed and comprehensive, however some staff felt Locata was difficult to navigate resulting in inaccurate data input. Whilst there is a basic manual on how to use Locata staff training is needed, along with detailed instructions for staff to follow when inputting data.

The temporary accommodation, property and void management is recorded separately using Capita/P:Drive and does not integrate with the housing options, housing advice and homelessness software, so there will be duplication of records and constant liaison will be required between the teams, as well as ensuring duplicate, and at times triplicate records are updated.

The hardware is in urgent need of updating, when using fixed PC's in offices staff cannot access relevant systems during virtual (TEAMS) meetings. Post pandemic staff were provided with laptops however not all locations have access to Wi-fi.

The absence of Wi-fi at the hostels presents difficulties to both staff and residents, again, emphasised by the pandemic, during which time staff sourced Wi-fi boxes from local charities to facilitate home schooling for resident's children.

## **6.4 Conclusions about resources for tackling homelessness**

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

Whilst the council maintains healthy financial reserves it should explore the possibility of securing additional investment, to fund support services, including funding from revenue or capital grants available from national government, any of its agencies, or philanthropic trusts, investment from the commercial sector, via a social impact bond and using payment by results arrangements with commissioned providers.

To manage current and future demand for services proactively a revised staffing structure with additional officers is recommended, introducing a clear separation between Housing Advisers and Housing Allocation staff.

To develop staff knowledge and understanding of key areas in delivering housing services all housing staff should complete the Chartered Institute of Housing Level 3 Certificate in Housing Practice to gain deeper knowledge and understanding of key areas in delivering housing services

The hardware is in urgent need of updating; fixed PC's in offices cannot facilitate virtual (TEAMS) meetings as they do not have cameras. Post pandemic staff were provided with laptops, however not all locations, including the hostel accommodation, have access to W-fi.

Case management notes are detailed and comprehensive, however the use of multiple systems that do not integrate creates duplication. Functionality of all software systems should be fully exploited and duplication between different software systems needs to be minimised as much as possible.

Whilst there is a basic manual on how to use case management systems staff training is needed, along with detailed instructions for staff to follow when inputting data.

## 7.0 Consultation

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

### 7.1 Service user consultation

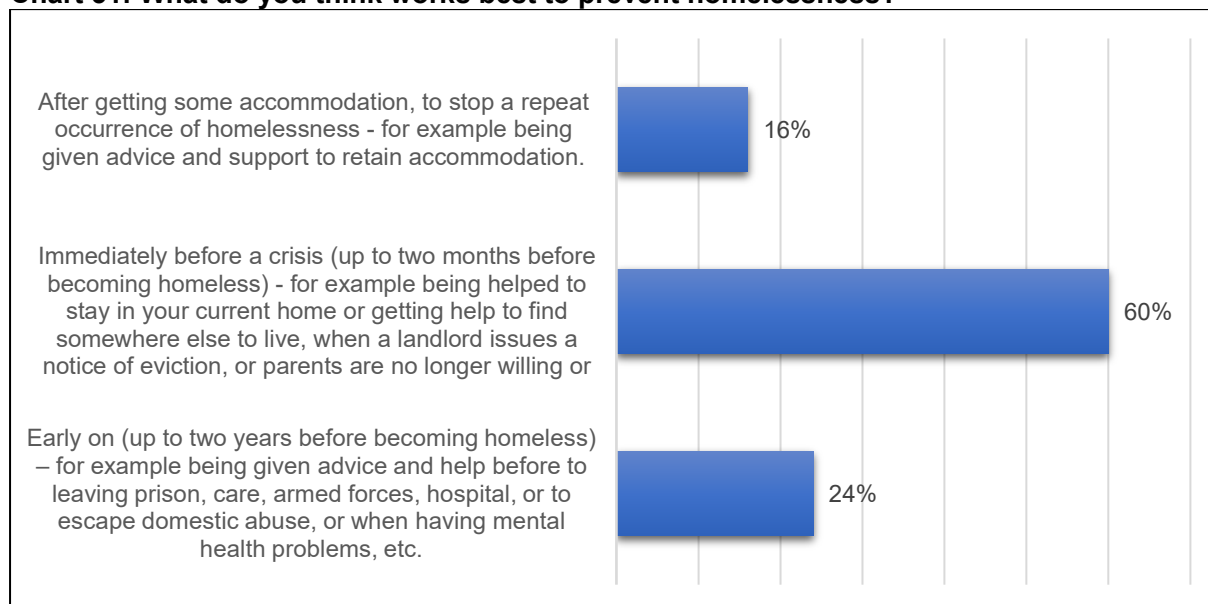
People with lived experience of homelessness were invited to complete an online survey which included a total of 12 questions, each with multiple choice answers and the option of providing additional comments. Hostel staff from Gosport Borough Council facilitated paper responses, other support providers such as Two Saints were sent a link to the survey.

A total of 25 responses were collected throughout September 2021, 60% of respondents were female, 62% were aged 25 to 54 followed equally by those aged 18 to 20 (19%) and 21 to 24 (19%). The majority of respondents either had dependent children living with them (40%) or lived alone (36%).

Almost all respondents (24) describe themselves as owed a duty by a local authority and staying in hostel accommodation, 1 respondent described themselves as sofa surfing with friends, family or others. Of the 25 respondents 8 (33%) had previously been homeless, including 'hidden homelessness'.

60% of respondents reported that the best approach to preventing homelessness was to get assistance immediately before a crisis.

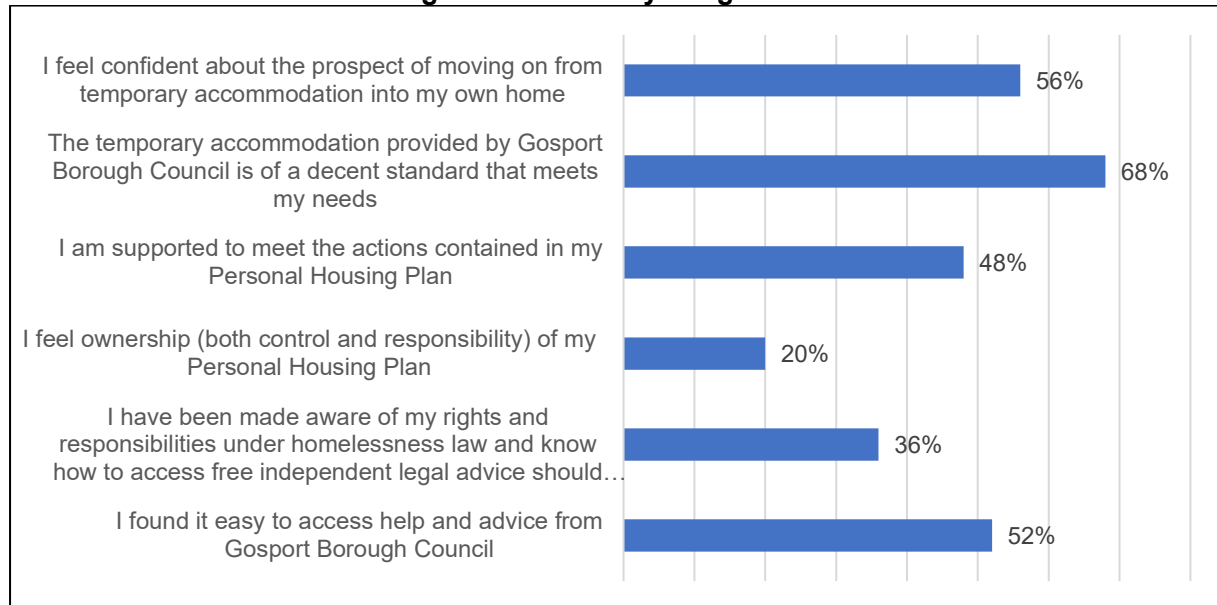
**Chart 51: What do you think works best to prevent homelessness?**



Just 20% of respondents felt ownership of their Personal Housing Plan (PHP), 36% had been made aware of their rights and responsibilities and how to access independent legal advice.

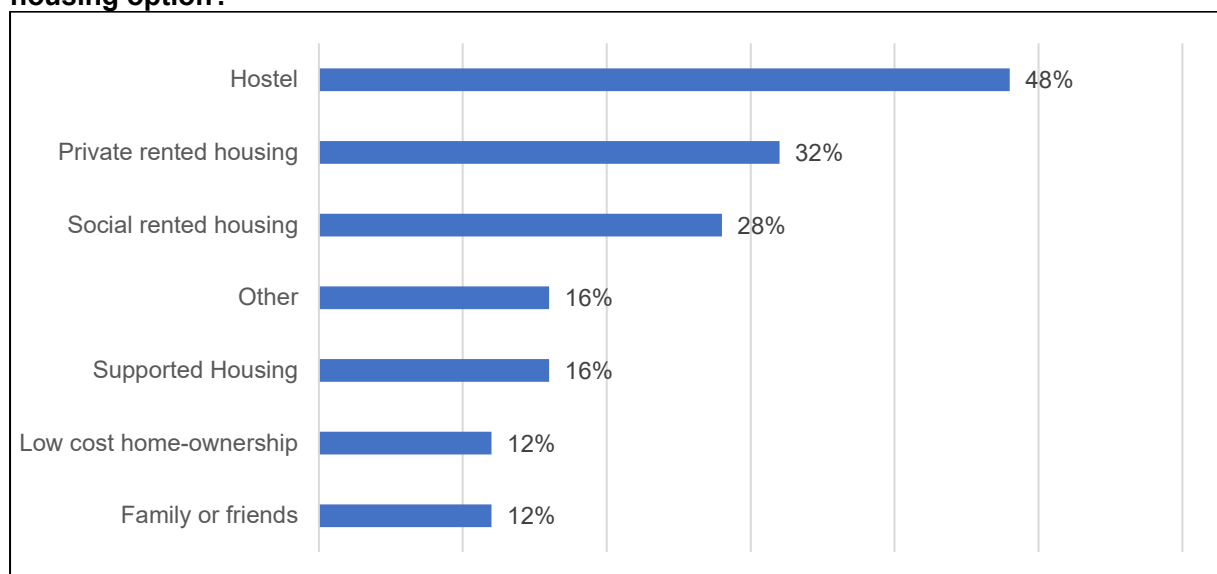
Almost half of respondents had found it easy to access help and advice from the council, had been supported to meet the actions contained in their PHP and felt confident about the prospect of finding their own home. 17 of the 25 respondents (68%) described the temporary accommodation as of a decent standard that met their needs.

**Chart 52: Which of the following statements do you agree with?**



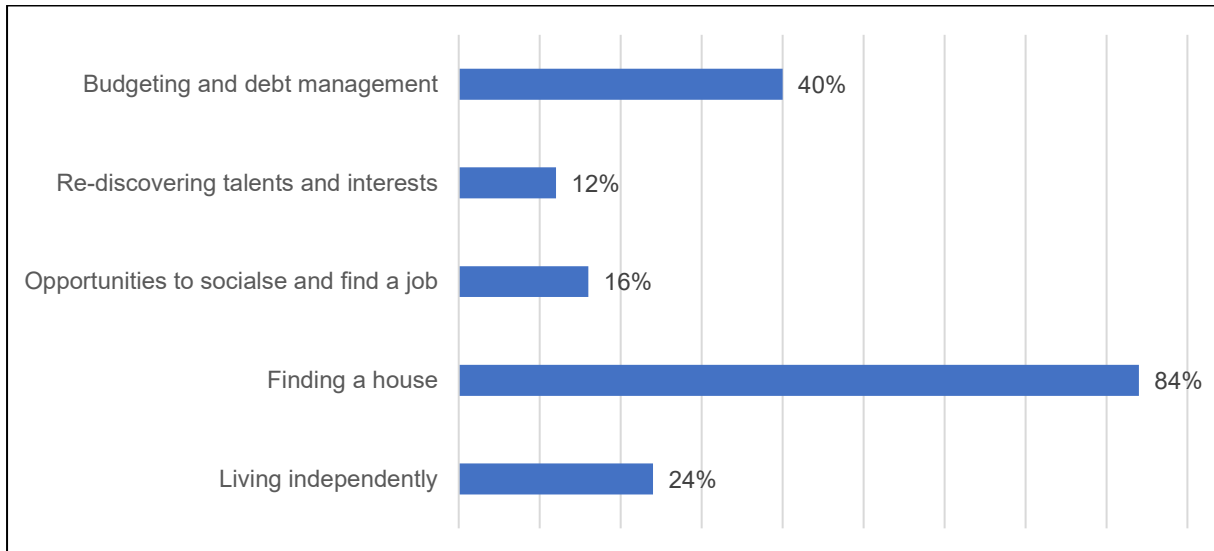
When asked what they thought the best housing option is when homeless or threatened with homelessness, respondents rated hostel accommodation highest, followed by private/social rented accommodation and supported accommodation. Low-cost homeownership and staying with family/friends is seen as the least favoured option by respondents.

**Chart 53: When homeless or threatened with homelessness, what do you think is the best housing option?**



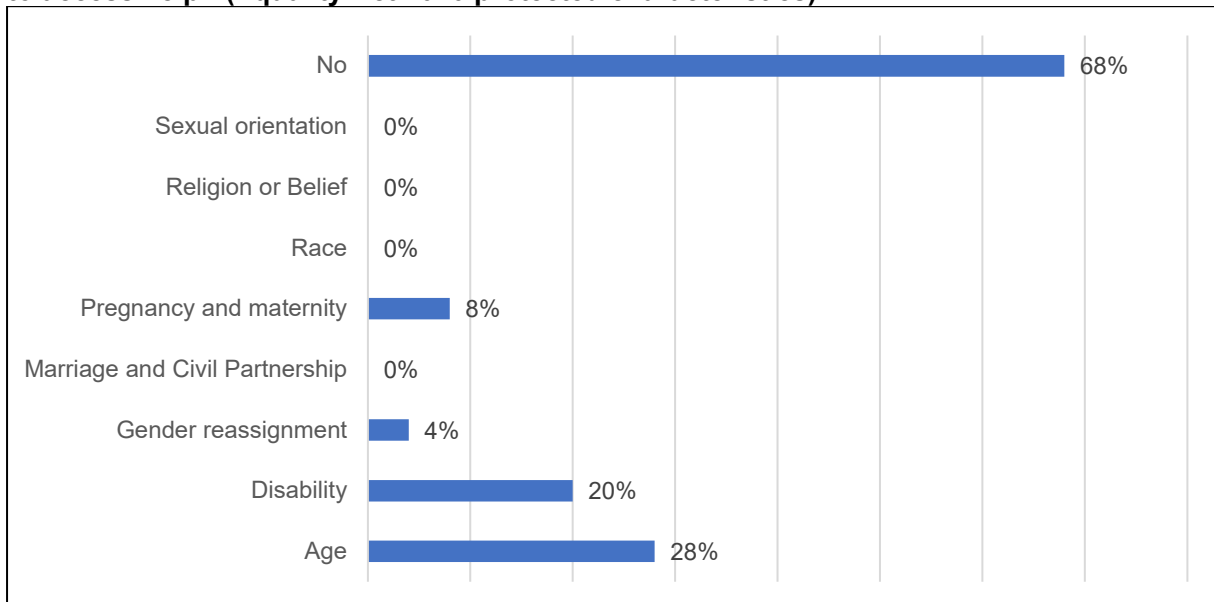
The majority of respondents (84%) reported that the most important thing they needed help and support with when homeless or having been homeless, was with finding a house. Of second importance, respondents rated budgeting and debt management.

**Chart 54: When someone is, or has recently been homeless, what is the most important thing they need help and support with?**



A notable percentage of respondents felt their age, disability, pregnancy and gender reassignment had made it more difficult for them to access help.

**Chart 55: Do you believe any of the following characteristics made it more difficult for you to access help? (Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics)**



When asked how homeless funding should be spent, 68% of respondents said it should be targeted at more accommodation, 40% of respondents said funding should be targeted towards preventing homelessness and 32% felt it should be targeted at extra support.

Additional comments from respondents referenced good advice and support received from housing and hostel staff.

Respondents had experience of repeat homelessness/offending, hidden homelessness and identified the need for a more effective multi-agency response.

**Early intervention, consistent advice, support and a multi-agency approach.**

“In the past I have left prison with nowhere to go and hence found returning my best option, it’s not a good system”.

“Availability of move on accommodation is limited but any successful transition will depend heavily on the ongoing support I receive during that time due to my life being so chaotic for so many years I really will, despite appearances, require a lot of multi-agency support.”

“Personally, when faced with homelessness I have great difficulties coping, mentally with all the different problems it brings and certainly benefit from any support”

“Homelessness itself is a hugely debilitating problem and as I stated I spent many years as a 'hidden homeless' person via sofa surfing. I can only emphasise the cyclic nature of the problem and that I believe multi-agency cooperation and long-term support is key to keeping people from returning to homelessness. Mental health, budgeting and assistance with developing social relationships both in general and with the supporting services are essential in helping someone transitioning from a life that can have been very chaotic to one of stability and purpose within the community. “

“Help has been quick and personalised. All staff involved in my case have been friendly and professional. Temporary accommodation is clean and tidy and a safe environment for me and my son.”

“Government should have one rule for all councils to abide by, duty of care. Not different rules for different places. Should learn which councils are doing things right and share their experiences with other rural places, the ones struggling to set a Citizen Charter for all areas.”

Whilst respondents acknowledged support from hostel staff had been sufficient, a number of responses referenced the need for specialist support. In particular, the need for separate accommodation for families, residents with drug addictions and mental health issues.



## Specialist support and accommodation

“Mental health tends to decline in these situations”

“It’s difficult for children to concentrate on education when other residents are on drugs and shouting. Separate families from mental health, drug addicts etc. I do not like my child having to deal with outbursts”

“I’ve found it safer here and I can talk to my support worker if I need help with anything. But I don’t like many people here”

“Would like to be able to create a help and hints for new residents to give ideas on how to get on in a hostel. Personally my time in the hostel has been positive, all staff helpful friendly and approachable. I feel safe here.”

“Loss of confidence on both myself and the system in general creates a stagnating depression that becomes very hard to get out of.”

“After being made homeless I was nervous about moving into Agnew. Since being here I have been shown nothing but respect, looked after well, all my needs have been met and full support given when needed. The staff have gone above and beyond to keep me and my children safe and I am very grateful.”

“It’s been one hell of an emotional rollercoaster, after finding out I’m pregnant (now 22 weeks) with hormones flying everywhere not particularly have a great night’s sleep woken up few nights by fire alarms going off stupid o’clock in the mornings, defoggers almost making me choke from the fumes, the fact I as a single person carrying my first child has been living here for a good year and a half and feel in myself its nothing but lonely depressing and boring to live here with nothing to do and only just within the space of 6 months this year got housing involved with my move on as nothing is being done as such to get me out of this sad lonely depressing environment and feeling like I have to wait a long period of time to be move on could be looking at realistically raising my first born up in a place like this which I really don’t want to be doing but have no other choice but to do. Hoping and wishing it won’t be long until I am out of this place”  
Single female (21) Agnew

Overwhelmingly, respondents identified the absence of internet access at the hostel, had negatively affected residents particularly in relation to home schooling children, searching for move on accommodation, completing benefit, housing applications and communicating with family and friends.

### Access to internet

“Children need access to internet to do school work, homework etc.”

“Ensure children don’t fall further behind in their studies”.

“Wi-fi is needed at the hostel to complete forms online”

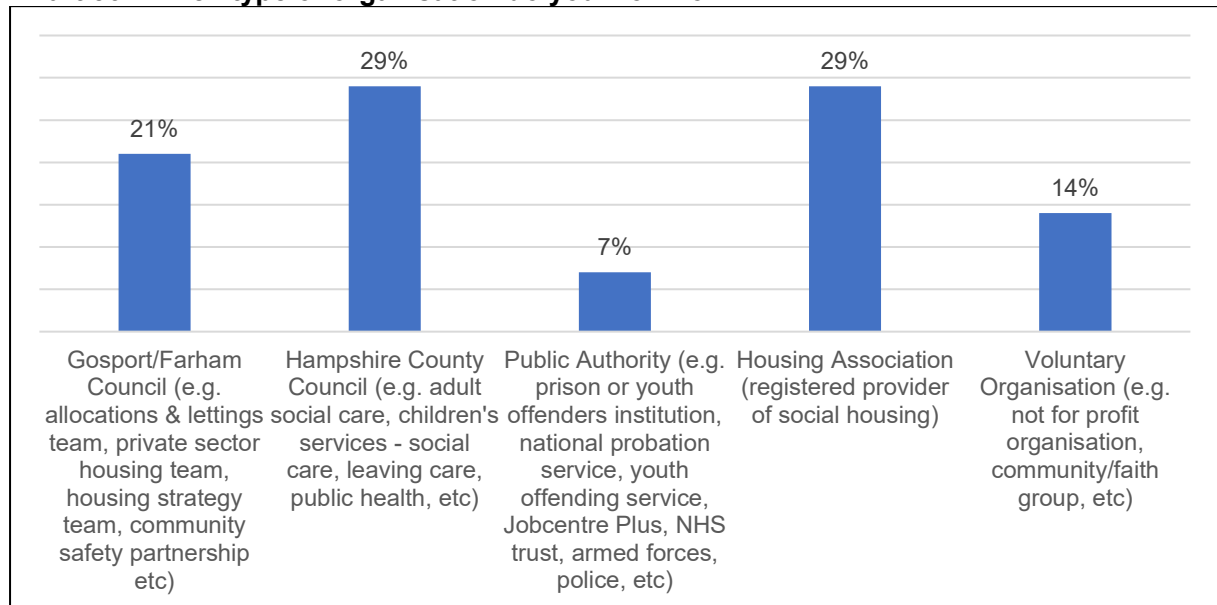
“Hostel needs Wi-fi to do work and none work – Universal Credit forms etc.”

## 7.2 Stakeholder consultation

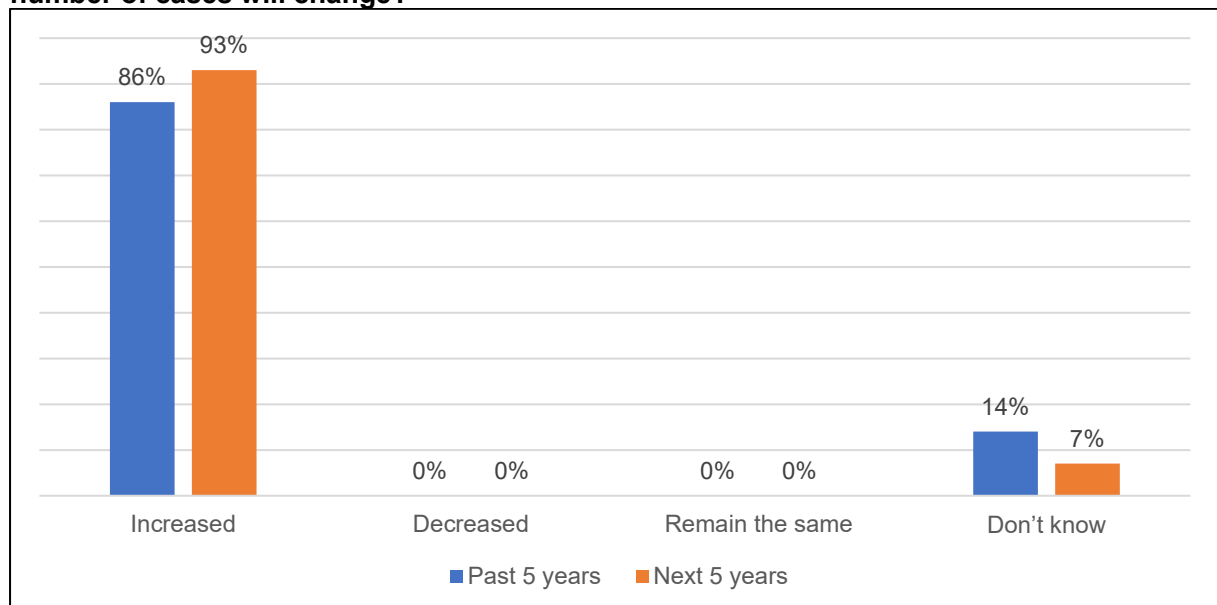
Organisations involved with tackling homelessness were invited to complete an online survey which included a total of 10 questions, each with multiple choice answers and the option of providing additional comments. The survey was launched on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2021, a reminder email being sent 14 days after the initial invitation was issued, to people with no response or partial response.

A total of 107 invites were issued, 23% were opened and 71% were unopened. Fourteen responses were received, 14% of invitations sent. The low response rate doesn't allow for analysis of trends; however, responses have been received from all key organisations and are presented below for the purposes of completeness

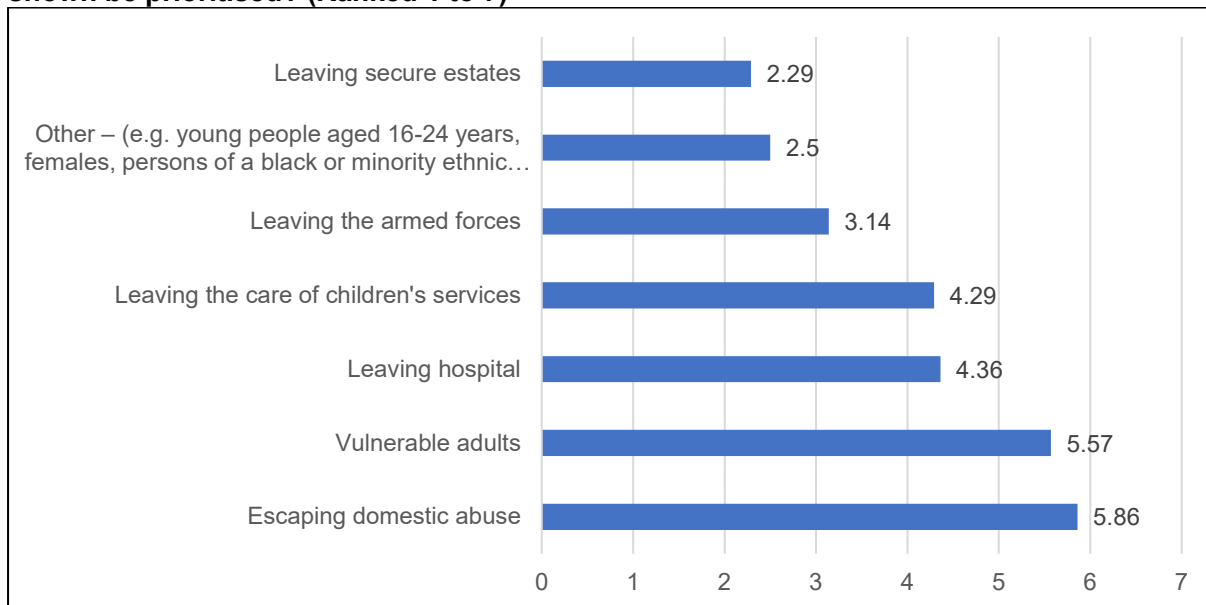
**Chart 56: Which type of organisation do you work for?**



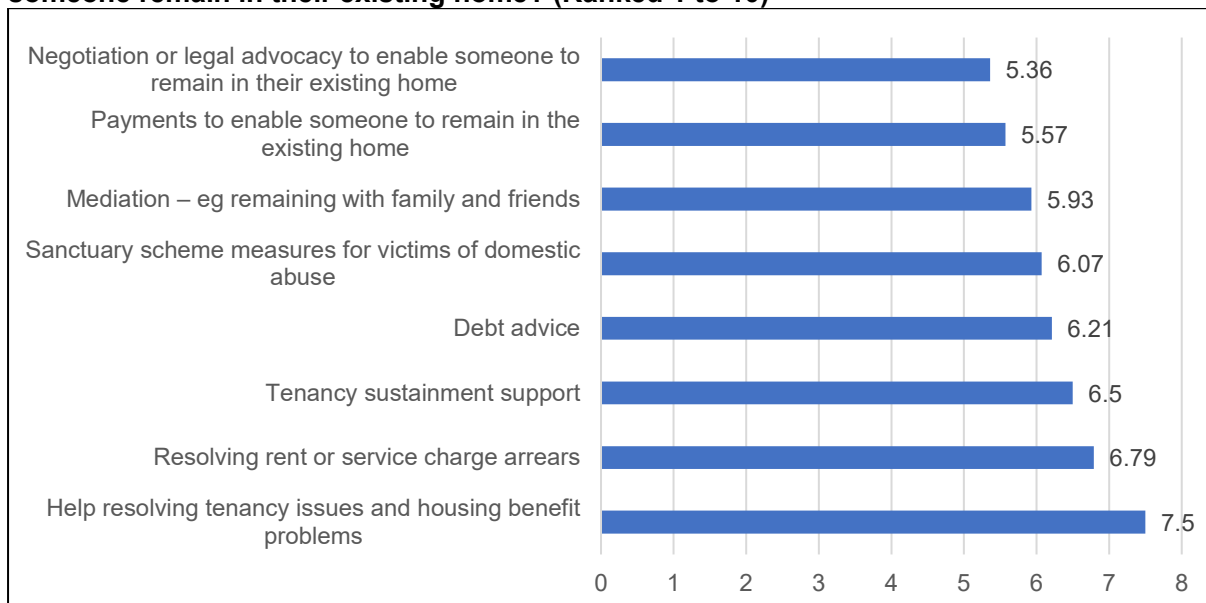
**Chart 57: During the past five years, have the number of homelessness cases you or your organisation has dealt with changed? Over the next five years is there an expectation the number of cases will change?**



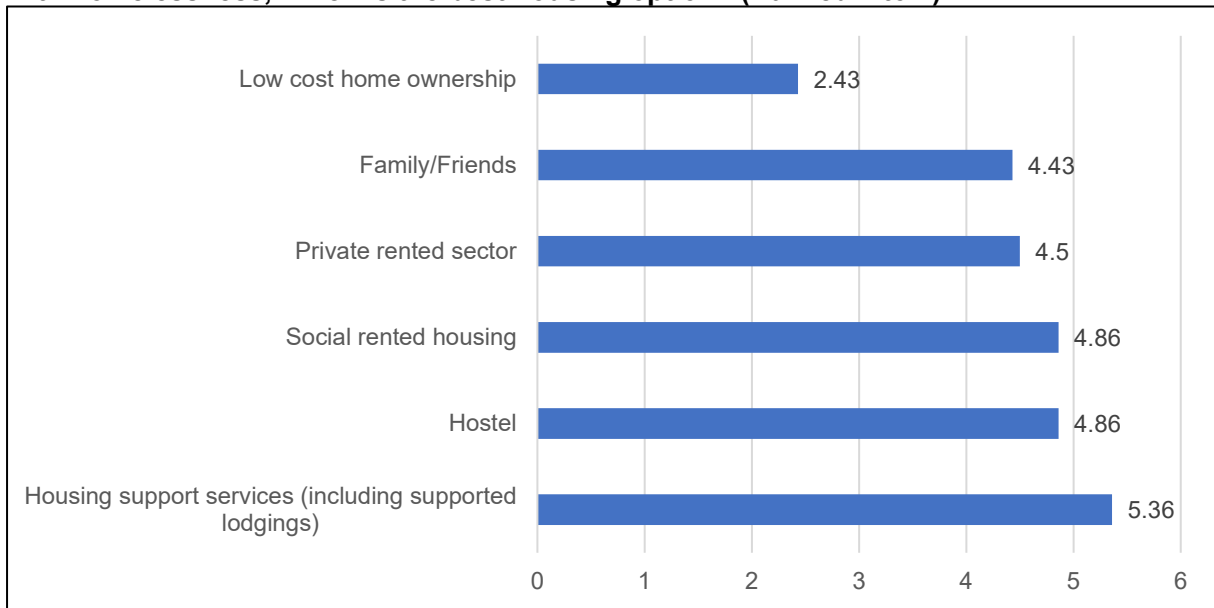
**Chart 58: When preventing homelessness, in what order should the groups of people shown be prioritised? (Ranked 1 to 7)**



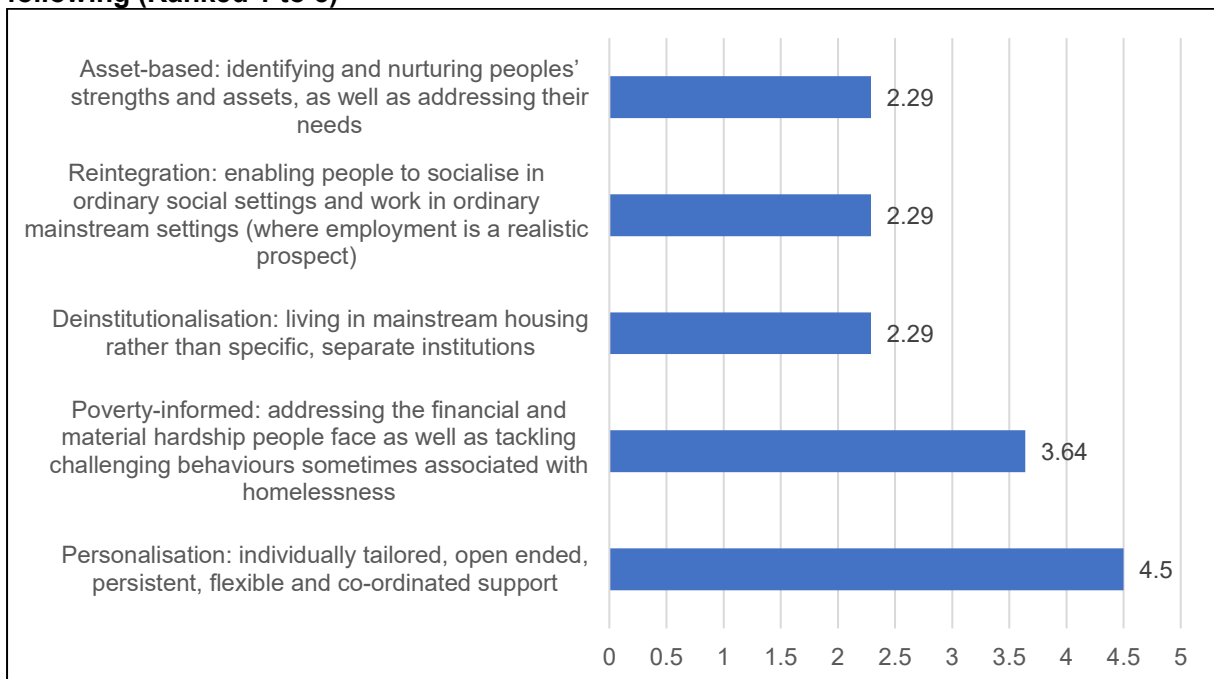
**Chart 59: When preventing homelessness, which is the most useful method to help someone remain in their existing home? (Ranked 1 to 10)**



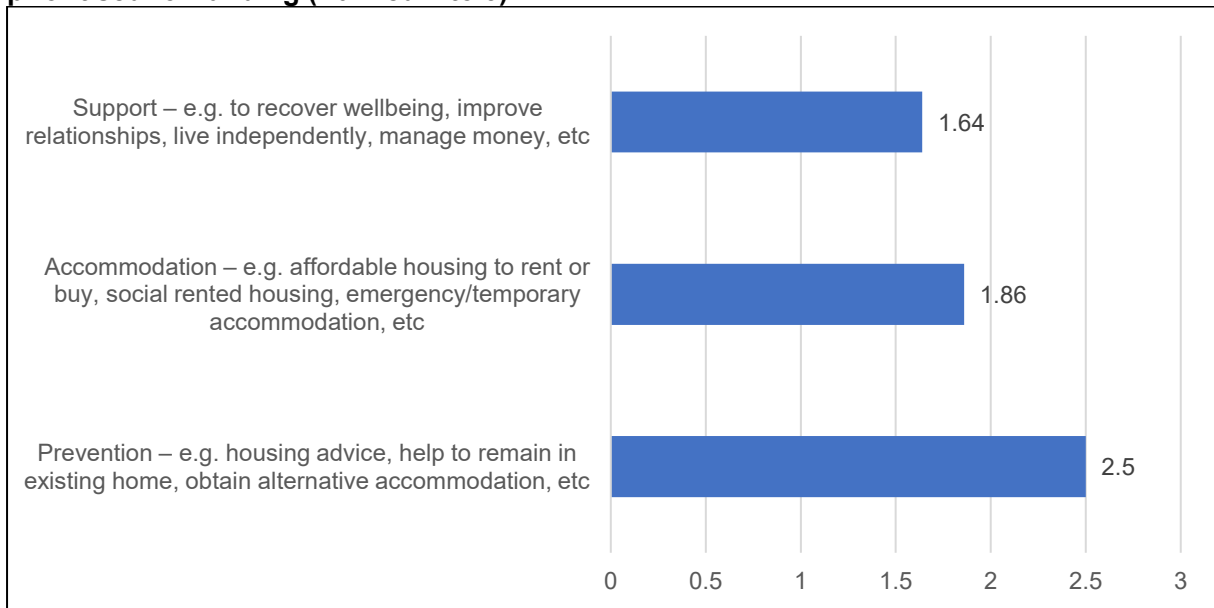
**Chart 60: When obtaining accommodation for someone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness, which is the best housing option? (Ranked 1 to 7)**



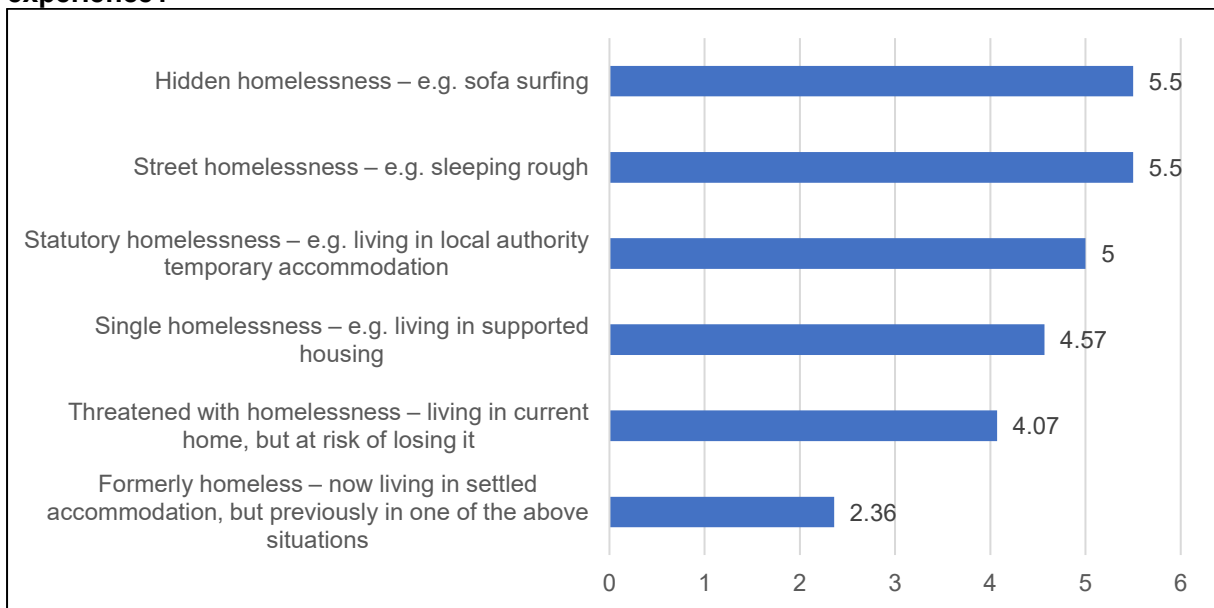
**Chart 61: When supporting someone who is, or has been homeless, how important are the following (Ranked 1 to 5)**



**Chart 62: Thinking about the resources needed to tackle homelessness, what should be prioritised for funding (Ranked 1 to 3)**



**Chart 63: Which type of homelessness do people who use your organisation typically experience?**



Stakeholders were invited to provide additional feedback; the following comments were made:

“There is not enough housing for different types of accommodation such as Housing First. Increased partnership would be key for this also.”

“Complex needs have increased in the homeless population which make securing tenancies in private sector and some supported very difficult, especially if there is a substance misuse and mental health support need.”

“Short term support contracts impact service delivery and planning for services.”

“Clients are not consulted with using strength-based approach.”

“Health and social care support is particularly a problem in Gosport and Fareham and leaves vulnerable clients at risk of future homelessness.”

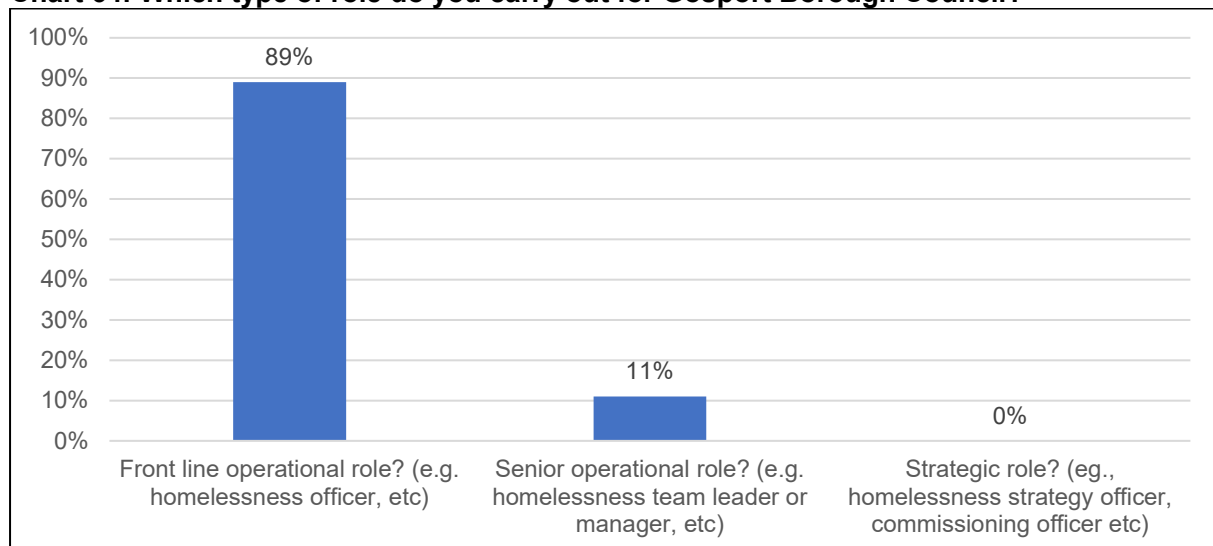
### 7.3 Staff consultation

Employees of the council with responsibility for administering homelessness duties were invited to complete an online survey which included a total of 10 questions, each with multiple choice answers and the option of providing additional comments.

The survey was launched on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2021, a reminder email being sent 14 days after the initial invitation was issued, to people with no response or partial response. A total of 37 invites were issued, 18 responses were received.

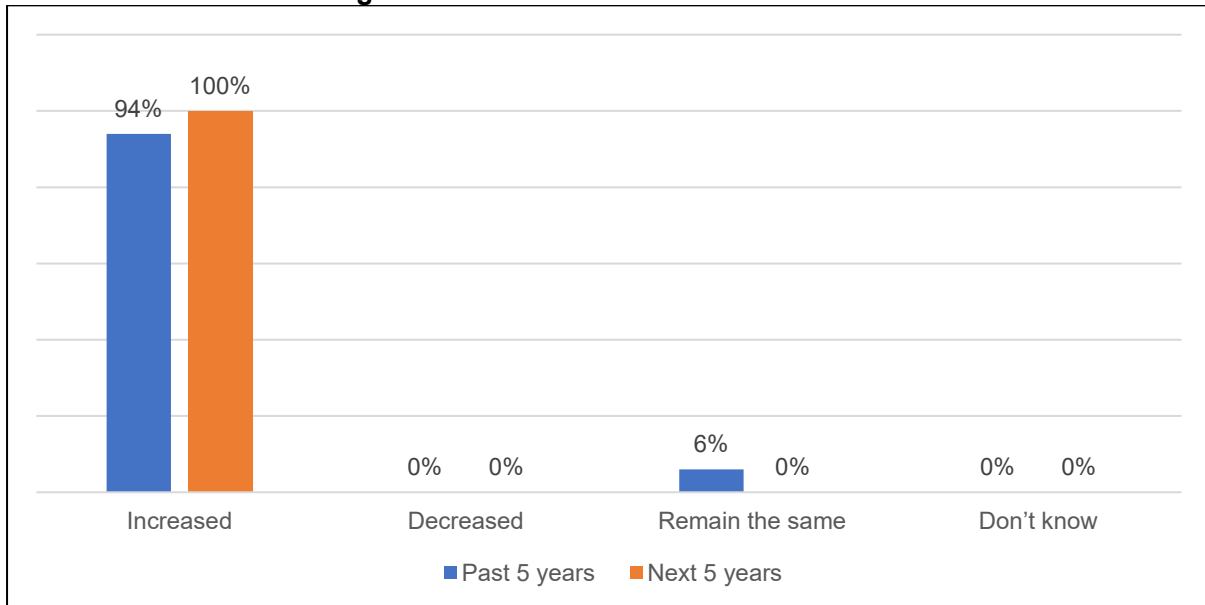
89% of respondents reported they were employed in an operational role with just under 11% reporting they held a senior operational role. No responses were received from anyone who had a strategic role. These ratios accurately reflect the prevailing staffing arrangements.

**Chart 64: Which type of role do you carry out for Gosport Borough Council?**



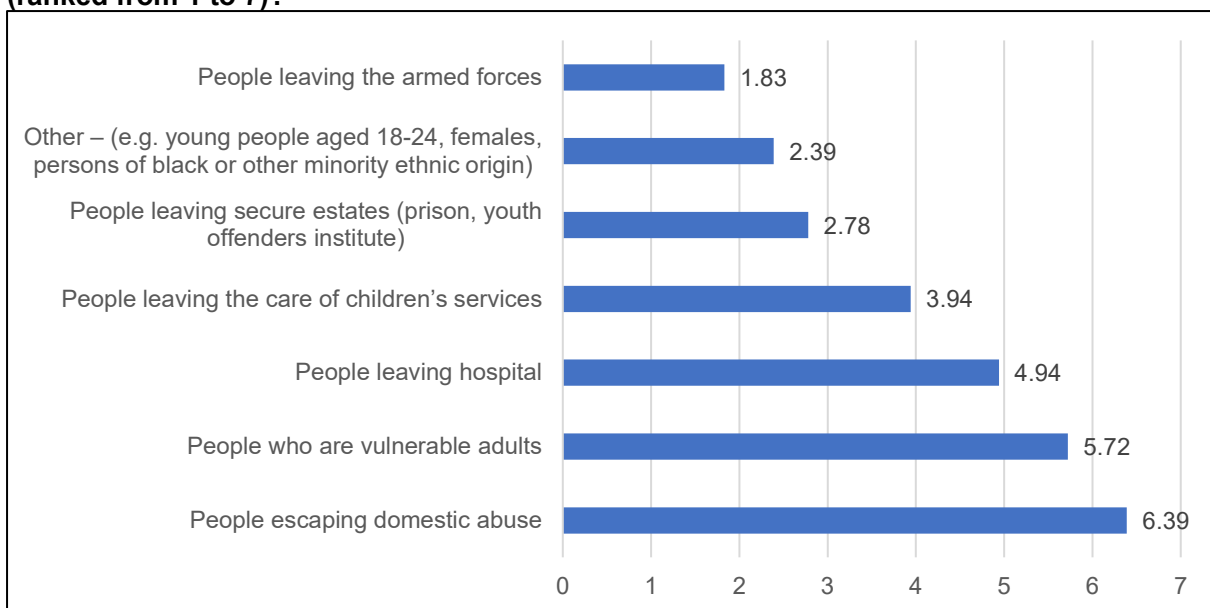
17 of the 18 staff responding had seen an increase in the number of homeless cases in the past five years, all staff expected the number of cases to increase in the next 5 years.

**Chart 65: During the past five years, have the number of homelessness cases you or your service has dealt with changed? Over the next five years is there an expectation the number of cases will change?**



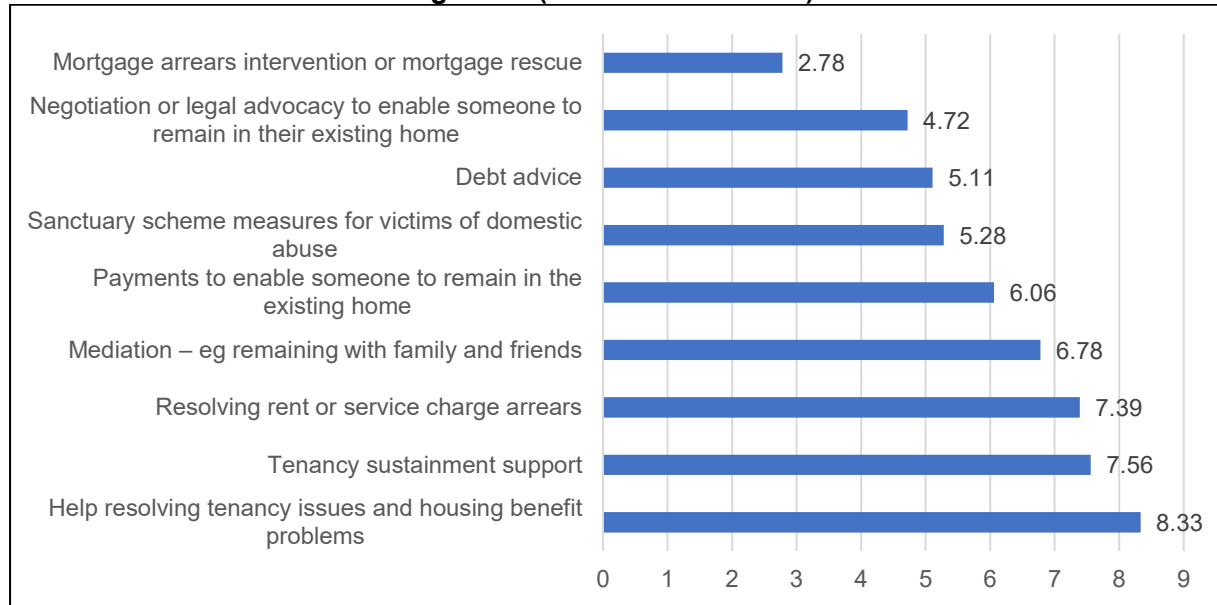
People escaping domestic abuse were ranked highest in the order of those that should be prioritised for help to prevent homelessness, this was followed by vulnerable adults and those leaving hospital.

**Chart 66: When preventing homelessness, in what order should people be prioritised (ranked from 1 to 7)?**



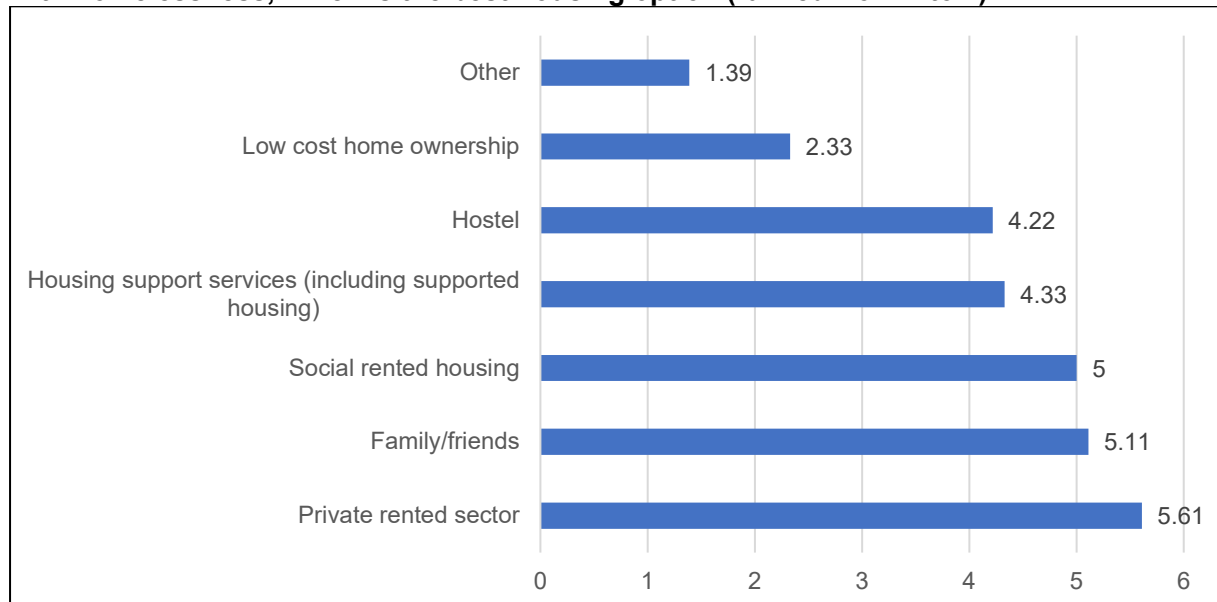
Resolving tenancy issues or housing benefit problems was ranked first as the most useful method to help someone remain in their existing home. This was followed by tenancy sustainment support and resolving rent or service charge arrears.

**Chart 67: When preventing homelessness which is the most useful method to help someone remain in their existing home (ranked from 1 to 10)?**



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

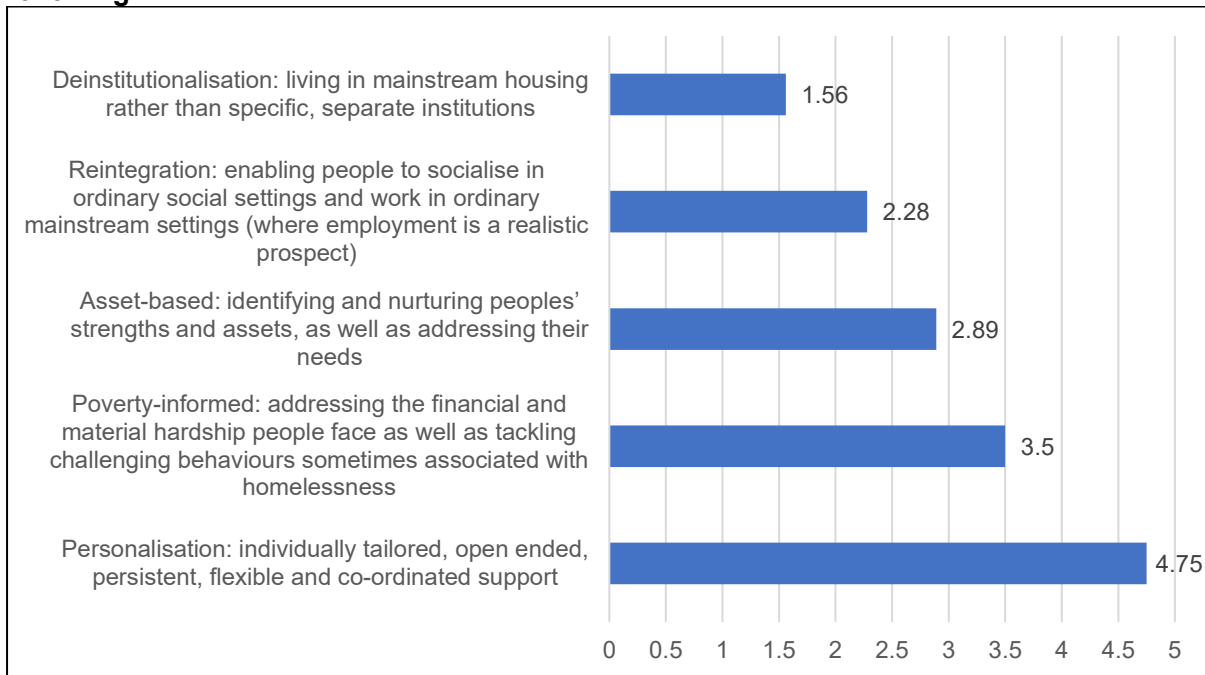
**Chart 68: When obtaining accommodation for someone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness, which is the best housing option (ranked from 1 to 7)?**



Person centred flexible and coordinated support was ranked as the most important thing people needed help with, followed by addressing financial problems and tackling behaviours.

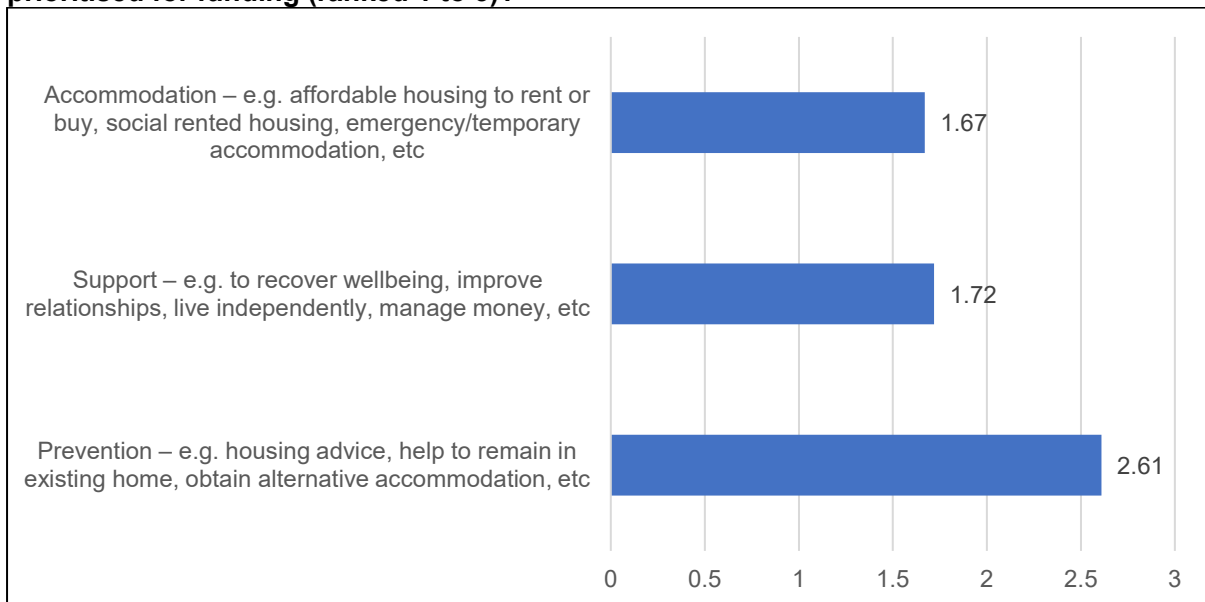


**Chart 69: When supporting someone who is or has been homeless, how important are the following?**



12 of the 18 (67%) respondents thought that funding should be prioritised for prevention activities.

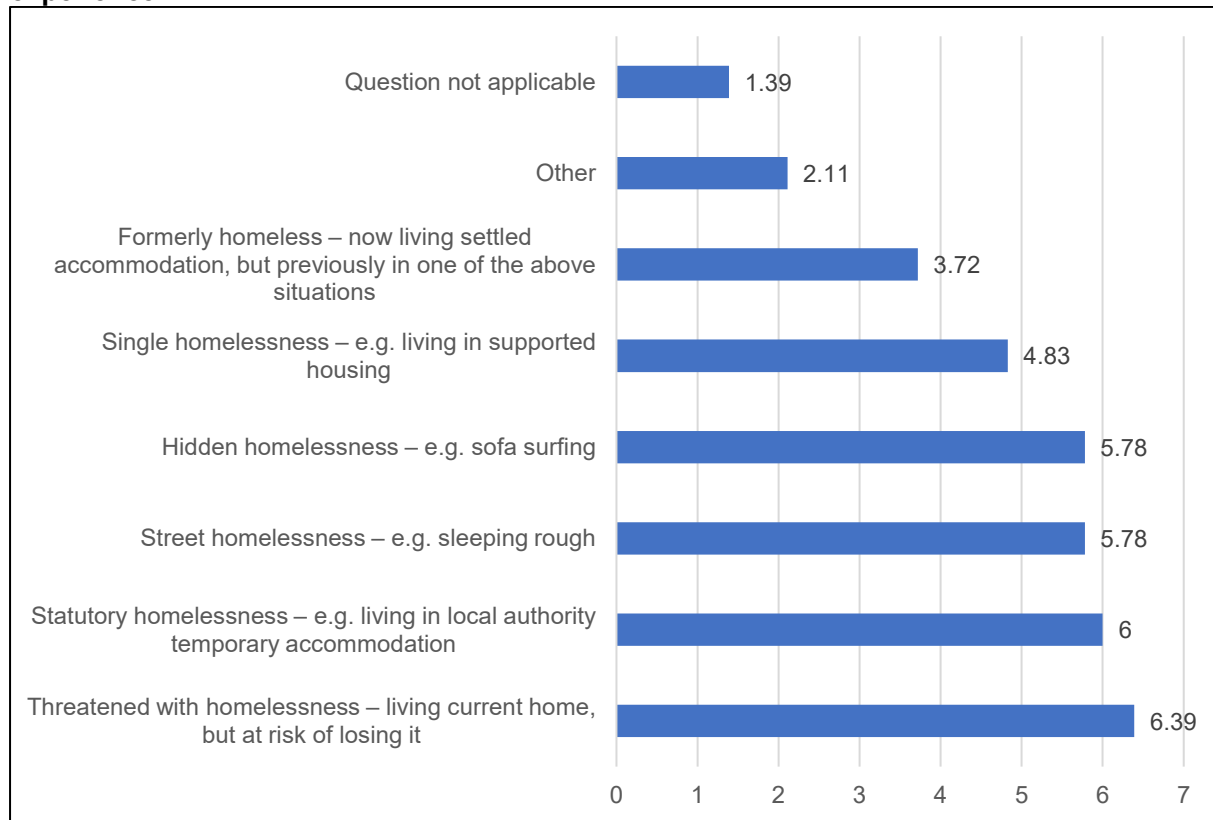
**Chart 70: Thinking about the resources needed to tackle homelessness, what should be prioritised for funding (ranked 1 to 3)?**



Respondents reported that people threatened with homelessness were most likely to use the council's homelessness service. This was closely followed by those who are statutory homeless (e.g. living in temporary accommodation) and people experiencing street homelessness (e.g. sleeping rough).

Overall respondents reported that people experiencing all forms of homelessness were broadly as likely to use the service.

**Chart 71: Which type of homelessness to people who use your service typically experience?**



Additional comments made by staff respondents are shown below. Two common themes emerge: lack of suitable affordable move on accommodation and the absence of general welfare support and partnership working to deliver specialist support, particularly for young people, families, people with substance abuse issues, mental health and learning difficulties and those escaping domestic abuse.

### Settled Accommodation

“There needs to be more affordable, good quality housing”

“Lack of affordable suitable housing and available tenancy support services are the main drivers of homelessness. Throwing money at a problem will not solve it – the root causes need identifying and addressing”

“I believe we should go into schools to manage expectations and explain the lack of social housing and private rented housing and the implications of becoming homeless. Many parents are ‘evicting’ their children because they believe they will secure social housing. This is no longer the case. We need more social housing to be built and the Right to Buy discontinued because we are not replacing our stock”

“I have worked in prevention of homelessness for many years and have not known the demand for assistance to be as great as it is now. The levels of rent for private rented is above the local housing allowance which has a huge impact on move-on for families placed in TA. The pressures of the job have increased immensely.”

## Temporary accommodation and support

“The hostel provision could do with a revamp, the focus feels more like one of enforcing rules, telling people off, evicting people and creating more homelessness when they don’t conform.”

“The current focus is more on warnings and making sure admin is done, having up to date admin does not mean someone is a good support worker.”

“We need more services operating out of hostel or for those in B&B to have access to services such as mental health support, drugs and alcohol addiction, NHS drop in doing stuff like check-ups, flu jabs etc. there seems to be no funding for outreach work to support clients to move on and manage their new tenancies.”

“There are gaps in services, families at the hostel struggle bringing up babies and children in an environment where they are exposed to those with addictions, smelling or seeing someone take drugs. It would be better if we had a dedicated block for families and parents with facilities and activities. When elderly are homeless there should be more joint working to accommodate them in guest rooms at sheltered homes rather than placing an 80 year old in a hostel.”

“We just need management to decide what the purpose of temporary accommodation is?”

“Chaotic clients that are hard to place would benefit from bedsit type accommodation like Blakes where support is priority, with good relationship with Two Saints, Inclusion and NHS, best managed by Gosport BC to ensure a holistic approach”

“I’m concerned we sometimes create more homelessness than prevent it as we evict due to rent arrears or not staying every night at TA, going into an institutionalised environment full of rules sets them up to fail.”

“It would be beneficial to have a dedicated outreach team that can focus on clients in B&B and do transitional visits to their new homes, a lot of our time is consumed by admin and building management rather than focusing on client’s welfare and support needs”

“We would benefit from more partnership working and more opportunities to discuss our clients support needs.”

“I’ve noticed a rise in clients who have been a victim of domestic abuse and it would be beneficial to have more specialist training to be able to support clients until they can access the service needed as often big waiting lists. Also rise in learning disabilities and mental health.”

“Whilst hostel is pitched as independent living, I feel it has a confused identify and is everything to everyone at present, we have people in there who should be in care homes, some clients need care packages and with delays on services providing support vulnerable clients are not have their basic needs met.”

“Young people may benefit from being in a block dedicated to young people, we have staff who have experience working with young people before this role, there is a lot of talent on the team that is not being fully utilised. Young people need more support especially with life skills, especially care leavers, often most can’t cook or clean and live on pot noodles and no clean bedding, they need more encouragement.”

“More training in life skills for residents who need it would be beneficial, there are a lot of clients not eating properly which were working with NHS and Two Saints could help to enhance their lives.”

## 7.4 Conclusions about consultation

### Lived Experience

Most people with lived experience of homelessness felt that having advice and support at the point of crisis to for example, remain in their home works best to prevent homelessness. Just over half had found it easy to access help and advice from the council and felt confident about the prospect of moving into their own home.

A number of responses referenced the need for specialist support. In particular, the need for separate accommodation for families, residents with drug addictions and mental health issues. A notable percentage of respondents felt their age, disability, pregnancy and gender reassignment had made it more difficult for them to access help.

Whilst hostel accommodation was considered to be the best option for someone facing homelessness, receiving support to find a home was considered most important along with funding to provide more accommodation. Overwhelmingly, respondents identified the absence of internet access at the hostel, had negatively affected residents particularly in relation to home schooling children, searching for move on accommodation, completing benefit, housing applications and communicating with family and friends.

### Stakeholders

Stakeholders view that homelessness had risen in the past five years is inconsistent with the analysis of statistics in Chapter 2 of this report identifying a 21% reduction in the number of initial assessments undertaken over the last 3 years. There is however universal agreement in the predicted rise in homelessness

People escaping domestic abuse were ranked highest in the order of those that should be prioritised for help to prevent homelessness, this was followed equally by vulnerable adults and those living in hostels. Notably, statistical analysis identified a year-on-year increase in the number of households seeking assistance as a result of domestic abuse.

Resolving tenancy issues or housing benefit problems was ranked first as the most useful method to help someone remain in their existing home. This was followed by resolving rent or service charge arrears and tenancy sustainment support. Respondents thought that funding should be prioritised for prevention activities.

Stakeholder comments referenced the need for different types of accommodation such as Housing First and increased partnership working, particularly with Health and Social Care. Housing support services, including supported housing was a ranked as the best housing option, this was followed equally by hostel and social rented housing.

Personal rights support was ranked as the most important thing people needed help with. Help living in mainstream housing was ranked amongst the lowest, which conflicts with the primary focus of the service to help people secure housing. Respondents reported that people experiencing hidden homelessness (sofa-surfing)

and street homelessness (e.g. sleeping rough) were most likely to use the council's homelessness service.

In addition to the online survey, 29 individuals from a range of partnership organisations<sup>129</sup> were selected by Gosport Borough Council and invited to contribute to the review, 4 responses were received and interviews undertaken with CAB, Two Saints, Friends of the Homeless and Gosport Housing Benefit Department.

The low response rate from stakeholders is unlikely to be representative of partner organisations interest in tackling homelessness. Throughout this Review stakeholders we have spoken with have demonstrated a keen willingness to provide information and evidence. It is however, important to consider how stakeholders might wish to be consulted in future about the delivery of homelessness strategy.

### **Staff**

As with stakeholders, staff are of the view that homelessness has risen in the past five years and will continue to do so in the next five years, people escaping domestic abuse should be prioritised for help to prevent homelessness and resolving tenancy issues or housing benefit problems was most useful to help someone remain in their existing home. Compared to responses from stakeholders and service users, staff rate private rented sector and staying with friends or family more highly.

Staff viewed personalised support for households and prioritised funding of prevention actions as most important, this is opposite to that of service users who felt that support with accommodation and funding of accommodation was more important.

It's important to acknowledge the gap between established homelessness policy which is that of prevention and early intervention and the preferences of the intended beneficiaries whose behaviour is likely to mean they will seek assistance at the point of crisis. This has implications for how the service is organised and promotes what it can do.

Additional comments made by staff respondents identified two common themes: lack of suitable affordable move on accommodation and the absence of general welfare support and partnership working to deliver specialist support, particularly for young people, families, people with substance abuse issues, mental health and learning difficulties and those escaping domestic abuse.

In addition to the online survey, 10 members of staff were interviewed<sup>130</sup> information and data received from staff has helped to inform Sections 3 to 6 of the review.

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<sup>129</sup> Organisations: Probation, Leaving Care and Social Care Children's Services, CAB Gosport, Vivid Housing Association, Two Saints, Inclusion Gosport, Domestic Abuse services, Housing Benefit, Adult Social Care, Public Health

<sup>130</sup> Interviews undertaken between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> August 2021. 2 Senior Housing Advisors, 2 Housing Advisors, 2 Accommodation & Lettings Officers, 2 Accommodation & Lettings Officers (Private), 1 Senior Hostel Support Worker and 1 Hostel Support Worker

## 8.0 Findings

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

### 8.1 Conclusions

#### 8.1.1 Levels of Homelessness

From April 2018, the council's duty to prevent and relieve 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.

On average around 39 initial assessments are undertaken each month, over half of which are single households and around 20% are single female parent households with dependent children.

A reduction in the number of initial assessments undertaken by Gosport Borough Council post 2018 has resulted in Gosport Borough Council now recording amongst the lowest number of assessments compared both regionally and nationally. Despite an overall reduction in the number of assessments, single male applicants are the only household type to record an increase each year.

COVID-19 - Whilst the combined impact that key policies have resulted in a drop in 'core homelessness' in England in 2020. It is predicted that the economic aftermath of the pandemic risks a substantial rise in core homelessness, including rough sleeping, unless Government implements a range of housing and welfare mitigation interventions.

Applicants aged 18 to 34 years old represent over 50% of households owed a duty. In line with national trends the most common age group of lead applicants in households owed a prevention or relief duty are aged 25 to 34.

Main duty decisions have reduced by 70% over the past six years, households with children followed by household members vulnerable as a result of mental health problems remain the largest priority need groups.

The number of households seeking assistance as a result of domestic abuse has increased steadily over the six-year reporting period.

The largest number households are homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate them and termination of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy.

Allocation of social rented housing remains the most common method for bringing a main duty to an end.

In 2020 Gosport recorded 3 male rough sleepers of UK nationality over the age of 26. Rough sleeper numbers have fluctuated over the last five years.

Gosport has the fourth highest percentage of child poverty in Hampshire which, over the last five years, has remained at 26%.

Gosport has a lower rate of employment and a higher rate of economic inactivity due to long term illness/disability with a higher percentage of 16 to 24 year olds claiming out of work benefit compared with neighbouring authorities.

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.

### **8.1.2 Activities to prevent homelessness**

More than half of all households seeking homeless prevention assistance featured a female as the head typically with responsibility for dependent children. Whereas, households seeking homelessness relief assistance are much more likely to be a single adult, more than often male. Three-quarters of applicants are aged below 44 years, with just over half aged between 18 and 34 years.

Homelessness prevention cases typically arise as the result of either an assured shorthold tenancy ending or family and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate them. Whereas, homelessness relief cases predominately arise due to family or friends no longer being willing or able to accommodate them.

Helping people to move to alternative accommodation is the primary method for preventing homelessness. It is more common for people to become homeless than be helped to remain in their existing home. For those owed a relief duty, the majority are not helped within the 56-day timeframe, but instead go on to be assisted under the main duty. However, it's important to note that a growing proportion of people are or helped to obtain accommodation.

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.

There is information, including a directory of services available online with practical information for people in housing need. However, the housing options website does not contain a dedicated homelessness page, nor does it provide information and advice explaining the rights of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and the duties of the authority.

There appears to be no provision to ensure accessibility 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.

The number of households homeless upon release from custody recorded a notable increase in 2020/21, a trend that has been identified nationally<sup>131</sup>. Improvements are needed in linking with the personal housing plans produced by local authorities following on from the Duty to Refer. A recent report into accommodation and support for adult offenders in the community and on release from prison identified the need for “greater clarity in some cases about which service is leading on specific actions to avoid confusion or duplication, between Through the Gate, local authorities, responsible officers and accommodation providers. For the more complex cases, including many initially released to approved premises, planning needs to start earlier with a view to achieving longer-term housing outcomes”<sup>132</sup>. DLUHC have produced a helpful report<sup>133</sup> to provide a starting point for local authorities and criminal justice stakeholder to develop prison release protocols to better uphold their responsibilities under the duty to refer.

Establish a stronger partnership with Leaving Care services. DLUHC recently published new guidance<sup>134</sup> for councils to help ensure care leavers have the stable homes they need, and prevent them from becoming homeless. The guidance recommends how council housing departments and children’s services should produce a joint protocol that sets out how they will work together to ensure:

- Each care leaver has a tailored support plan as they transition to independent living
- Those at risk of homelessness are identified early and action is taken to prevent it
- A quick, safe and joined up response for care leavers who go on to become homeless

The percentage of households owed a relief duty as a result of domestic abuse has increased. Both staff and stakeholder consultation identified domestic abuse as the highest area of likely increased homelessness. Gosport Borough Council should 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.

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<sup>131</sup> A Justice System Fit for the Future: Lessons from the Coronavirus Pandemic to build a fairer and effective path to resettlement. NACRO Policy Briefing August 2020 <https://3bx16p38bchl32s0e12di03h-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Briefing-JusticePostCovid-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>132</sup> Accommodation and support for adult offenders in the community and on release from prison in England: An inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation July 2020 <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/07/FINAL-Accommodation-Thematic-inspection-report-v1.0.pdf>

<sup>133</sup> Prison Release Protocol Guidance Research Report DLUHC Ministry of Justice July 2019 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/814964/Prison\\_Release\\_Protocol\\_research\\_report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/814964/Prison_Release_Protocol_research_report_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>134</sup> Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers: Good Practice Advice DLUHC October 2020 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers-good-practice-advice>



There is considerable scope for improving working arrangements around hospital discharge for people at risk of homelessness. Likewise, more could be done to improve current working arrangements between the council's homelessness service and the County Council's Adult Social Care Services. Guidance<sup>135</sup> produced by Public Health England to help health professionals prevent ill health, promote wellbeing and take action on homelessness acknowledges the need for "clear local action, 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." This requires strong local leadership and prioritisation to identify unmet need, funding and actions to address gaps in provision.

Examples of how this can be achieved includes:

- Reducing the risk of homelessness to children and young people to strengthen their life chances
- Enabling working-age adults to enjoy social, economic and cultural participation in society
- Breaking the cycle of homelessness or unstable housing by addressing mental health problems, or drug and alcohol use, or experience of the criminal justice system

There is a clear disparity in Housing Benefit and Housing Options perception of co-ordination between services, particularly in relation to the administration of DHP awards and Housing Benefit's ability to fast track and respond to urgent homelessness referrals. It is recommended a review of Housing Benefit practice and policies be undertaken in order to support the development of a joint working protocol and collaborative approach to homelessness services.

Gosport's Pre-Court Action Partnership provides an early opportunity to work in partnerships with social landlords and their tenants at risk of eviction action, to which all registered providers in Gosport should be signed up to.

There is some smart joint working going on between the council's homelessness service and the Citizens Advice Gosport in particular, which provides a much needed and valued service to help tackle debt and private rented sector housing issues and homelessness.

### **8.1.3 Activities to secure 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 violence.

A Temporary Accommodation Allocations Policy is needed to facilitate the appropriate allocation of suitable temporary accommodation.

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<sup>135</sup> Homelessness: Applying all our health Public Health England updated June 2019  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-applying-all-our-health/homelessness-applying-all-our-health>

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.

Longer-term supported accommodation may be more suitable for young people, including those leaving care or custody, and adults who need 'a period of stability and individual support'.

Gosport Borough Council should undertake an options appraisal to inform and develop a Temporary Accommodation Procurement Strategy.

The options appraisal should identify demand by area and include innovations to make use of existing buildings, develop the hostels as well as property acquisition from open market, new developments and modular construction. Various procurement options have been piloted in England<sup>136</sup>, including frameworks to set prices and standards, and dynamic purchasing systems to enable supply to respond to demand.

The portfolio of temporary accommodation contains no or little housing association stock. Social landlords have a duty to co-operate with a housing authority in carrying out their housing functions under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. This could be particularly appropriate in assisting Gosport Borough Council meet their duty to provide suitable temporary accommodation.

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 and should be drawn to a close, an options appraisal should be carried out to identify what the best private sector access initiative is for Gosport Borough Council to deliver a readily available supply of private sector stock.

Exploring all options when bringing the RAPS scheme to a close will require negotiation with private landlords to end existing arrangements by either the issue of permanent tenancies with a different LHA rate or moving occupants to alternative accommodation if the landlord is not satisfied with prevailing LHA rate.

In regards to applicants who are homeless or owed a homelessness duty, the council has exercised its powers to determine:

- Whether to exempt them from any qualification criterion adopted for their housing allocation scheme.
- Whether to afford them any choice or additional preference and how to prioritise them, when making an allocation of social rented housing.

For persons who are homeless or owed a homelessness duty when compared to any other applicants, the council has decided to apply its powers to have a consistent effect in relation to the qualification criteria, a more limited affect in the

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<sup>136</sup> Housing our Homeless Households, Gray, T., Messenger, G., Local Government Association, 2017, p 51

degree of choice they are entitled, and both a greater and lesser affect in relation to preference and prioritisation.

The council should re-consider the principles on which its Housing Allocation Scheme has framed, to ensure it is:

- Sufficiently contributing to meeting housing need and tackling homelessness
- Affectively identifying those homeless households in housing need and matching them with appropriate housing
- Nominations agreements are being adhered.

The council should review the aims and objectives of its tenancy strategy, to ensure the types of tenancies offered promote the prevention of homelessness and does not adversely impact on tackling homelessness

The Homeless Prevention fund was considered by Housing Advisors the most useful resource used to relieve or prevent homelessness.

Gosport Borough Council should work with local housing associations 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.

#### **8.1.4 Activities to provide support**

The increase in households threatened with or homeless as a result of domestic abuse and leaving an institution with no accommodation available is discussed in Chapter 3 of this report.

There has also been an increase in the number of households evicted from supported housing, in particular for rent arrears.

The recorded support needs of those owed a homelessness duty are predominantly mental health, households with a history of repeat homelessness and offending history and drug dependency followed by a history of rough sleeping.

Both of the Two Saints Hostels operate at full capacity and accommodate a client group with complex and multiple needs, in particular co-occurring mental health and substance misuse needs. The direct access hostel (101) records a notably higher number of unplanned exits and evictions compared with Acton Lodge.

Due to the health risks posed by the Coronavirus pandemic, the Winter Bed Scheme is deemed unsafe due to the communal nature. Gosport adopted an innovative approach by sourcing 30 pods to provide safe accommodation those people experiencing street homelessness. Housing officers were based on site along with outreach support services, the pods have now been removed and the majority of residents have secured moved on accommodation.

Although advances have been made in collaborative working since March 2020 due to the pandemic, there remains an urgent need for the further development of partnership working between Gosport Borough Council, the NHS Trust, the CCG and Hampshire County Council to attain an understanding and alignment of commissioning decisions, prioritise and identify unmet need, funding and actions to address gaps in provision.

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 cold weather plans 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 should, in collaboration with service users and stakeholders, 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 should 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. An annual service user feedback event would promote transparency and provide valuable evidence to inform commissioning priorities throughout Hampshire.

Regular review of existing joint working protocols to identify any gaps would be prudent, particularly in relation to rehousing households in specified circumstances such as defective dwellings, following service of a CPO and eviction from social rented housing.

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

### **8.1.5 Conclusions about resources for tackling homelessness**

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

Whilst the council maintains healthy financial reserves it should explore the possibility of securing additional investment, to fund support services, including funding from revenue or capital grants available from national government, any of its agencies, or philanthropic trusts, investment from the commercial sector, via a social impact bond and using payment by results arrangements with commissioned providers.

To manage current and future demand for services proactively a revised staffing structure with additional officers is recommended, introducing a clear separation between Housing Advisers and Housing Allocation staff.

To develop staff knowledge and understanding of key areas in delivering housing services all housing staff should complete the Chartered Institute of Housing Level 3 Certificate in Housing Practice to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of key areas in delivering housing services

The hardware is in urgent need of updating, when using fixed PC's in offices staff cannot access relevant systems during virtual (TEAMS) meetings. Post pandemic staff were provided with laptops however not all locations, including the hostel accommodation, have access to W-fi.

Case management notes are detailed and comprehensive, however the use of multiple systems that do not integrate creates duplication. Functionality of all software systems should be fully exploited and duplication between different software systems needs to be minimised as much as possible.

Whilst there is a basic manual on how to use case management systems staff training is needed, along with detailed instructions for staff to follow when inputting data.

### **8.1.6 Conclusions about consultation**

#### **Lived Experience**

Most people with lived experience of homelessness felt that having advice and support at the point of crisis to for example, remain in their home works best to prevent homelessness.

Just over half had found it easy to access help and advice from the council and felt confident about the prospect of moving into their own home.

A number of responses referenced the need for specialist support. In particular, the need for separate accommodation for families, residents with drug addictions and mental health issues. A notable percentage of respondents felt their age, disability, pregnancy and gender reassignment had made it more difficult for them to access help.

Whilst hostel accommodation was considered to be the best option for someone facing homelessness, receiving support to find a home was overwhelmingly considered most important along with funding to provide more accommodation.

Overwhelmingly, respondents identified the absence of internet access at the hostel, had negatively affected residents particularly in relation to home schooling children, searching for move on accommodation, completing benefit, housing applications and communicating with family and friends.

#### **Stakeholders**

Stakeholders view that homelessness had risen in the past five years is inconsistent with the analysis of statistics in Chapter 2 of this report identifying a 21% reduction in

the number of initial assessments undertaken over the last 3 years. There is however universal agreement in the predicted rise in homelessness

People escaping domestic abuse were ranked highest in the order of those that should be prioritised for help to prevent homelessness, this was followed equally by vulnerable adults and those living in hostels. Notably, statistical analysis identified a year-on-year increase in the number of households seeking assistance as a result of domestic abuse.

Resolving tenancy issues or housing benefit problems was ranked first as the most useful method to help someone remain in their existing home. This was followed by resolving rent or service charge arrears and tenancy sustainment support.

Respondents thought that funding should be prioritised for prevention activities.

Stakeholder comments referenced the need for different types of accommodation such as Housing First and increased partnership working, particularly with Health and Social Care.

Housing support services, including supported housing was ranked as the best housing option, this was followed equally by hostel and social rented housing. Personal rights support was ranked as the most important thing people needed help with. Help living in mainstream housing was ranked amongst the lowest, which conflicts with the primary focus of the service to help people secure housing.

Respondents reported that people experiencing hidden homelessness (sofa-surfing) and street homelessness (e.g. sleeping rough) were most likely to use the council's homelessness service.

In addition to the online survey, 29 individuals from a range of partnership organisations<sup>137</sup> were selected by Gosport Borough Council and invited to contribute to the review, 4 responses were received and interviews undertaken with CAB, Two Saints, Friends of the Homeless and Gosport Housing Benefit Department.

The low response rate from stakeholders is unlikely to be representative of partner organisations interest in tackling homelessness. Throughout this Review stakeholders we have spoken with have demonstrated a keen willingness to provide information and evidence. It is however, important to consider how stakeholders might wish to be consulted in future about the delivery of homelessness strategy.

## **Staff**

As with stakeholders, staff are of the view that homelessness has risen in the past five years and will continue to do so in the next five years, people escaping domestic abuse should be prioritised for help to prevent homelessness and resolving tenancy issues or housing benefit problems was most useful to help someone remain in their existing home.

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<sup>137</sup> Organisations: Probation, Leaving Care and Social Care Children's Services, CAB Gosport, Vivid Housing Association, Two Saints, Inclusion Gosport, Domestic Abuse services, Housing Benefit, Adult Social Care, Public Health

Compared to responses from stakeholders and service users, staff rate private rented sector and staying with friends or family more highly.

Staff viewed personalised support for households and prioritised funding of prevention actions as most important, this is opposite to that of service users who felt that support with accommodation and funding of accommodation was more important.

It's important to acknowledge the gap between established homelessness policy which is that of prevention and early intervention and the preferences of the intended beneficiaries whose behaviour is likely to mean they will seek assistance at the point of crisis. This has implications for how the service is organised and promotes what it can do.

Additional comments made by staff respondents identified two common themes: lack of suitable affordable move on accommodation and the absence of general welfare support and partnership working to deliver specialist support, particularly for young people, families, people with substance abuse issues, mental health and learning difficulties and those escaping domestic abuse.

In addition to the online survey, 10 members of staff were interviewed<sup>138</sup> information and data received from staff has helped to inform Sections 3 to 6 of the review.

## 8.2 Recommendations

### Current and future levels of homelessness

- Continue to monitor overall caseload activity and adjust staffing levels accordingly
- Analyse the characteristics of people seeking assistance from the council's homelessness service and use intelligence collected to improve how the service is promoted and provided to everyone in the community.
- Analyse the different outcomes and reasons for main duty decisions, to understand what could be done differently or better to improve casework interventions and check that all data collection categories are been completed accurately.
- Monitor the reasons repeat homelessness, to track long-term trends to inform future prevention and relief activities.
- Increase the parameter of matters monitored via the annual rough sleeping count, to better understand how many people have newly flowed onto the streets, how many are stuck sleeping rough and how many are experiencing a repeat occurrence of street homelessness.
- Gather intelligence on child poverty rate at a ward level, to inform which areas might be targeted for early interventions to prevent homelessness.

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<sup>138</sup> Interviews undertaken between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> August 2021. 2 Senior Housing Advisors, 2 Housing Advisors, 2 Accommodation & Lettings Officers, 2 Accommodation & Lettings Officers (Private), 1 Senior Hostel Support Worker and 1 Hostel Support Worker

- Continue to monitor employment circumstances of people seeking homeless assistance from the council, share this data appropriately with colleagues in economic project regeneration and at job centre plus, to inform plans for making early interventions to prevent homelessness.
- Continue to use housing market data to inform the council's strategic approach to enabling a supply of affordable housing, which will help to prevent homelessness.
- Benchmark homelessness, unemployment, child poverty and housing market data with other areas, to better understand the context of homelessness in Gosport compared to elsewhere.

## Preventing homelessness

- In conjunction with the council's private sector housing service, consult with private rented sector landlords to understand what could be done to prevent the end of an assured shorthold tenancies.
- Review the range, effectiveness and quality of initiatives being used to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- Additional steps should be taken to improve how the council works with other public organisations to fulfil the duty to refer such as agreeing protocols, providing training, encouraging housing association that have not already signed up to the commitment to refer to do so, reviewing procedures for what needs to be done following receipt of a referral.
- Use information on the characteristics of people seeking homelessness assistance, to ensure the council's homelessness service is accessible, customer focused and reflects the diversity of the community it serves.
- Improve joint working with other public bodies by:
  - i. adopting a prison release protocol, based on guidance published jointly by DLUHC and the Ministry of Justice<sup>139</sup>
  - ii. establishing a stronger partnership with Leaving Care services. DLUHC recently published new guidance<sup>140</sup> for councils to help ensure care leavers have the stable homes they need, and prevent them from becoming homeless.
  - iii. continuing 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.

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<sup>139</sup> Prison Release Protocol Guidance Research Report DLUHC Ministry of Justice July 2019  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/814964/Prison\\_Release\\_Protocol\\_research\\_report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/814964/Prison_Release_Protocol_research_report_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>140</sup> Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers: Good Practice Advice DLUHC October 2020  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers-good-practice-advice>



- iv. adopting a hospital discharge protocol with NHS trusts and the clinical commissioning group, based on good practice published by Homeless Link from a Department of Health funded pilot<sup>141</sup>
- v. adopting a joint working protocol with adult social care, based on guidance<sup>142</sup> produced by Public Health England to help health professionals prevent ill health, promote wellbeing and take action on homelessness
- 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 to include:
  - i. arranging for both services to have read access to computer screens.
  - ii. developing a jointly drafted DHP protocol on how Discretionary Housing Payments can be used to help prevent homelessness.
  - iii. Updating the DHP Policy to reflect DWP guidance published and reviewed every 12 months and/or with any changes in regulations (GBC last updated its Policy 2013, DWP guidance was last updated February 2021).
  - iv. Delivering annual training provided by Housing Benefit to all homelessness staff and vice versa.
  - v. Attendance of a senior Housing Benefit manager at homeless strategy groups.
- Improve the collection of outcomes data from CAB around the prevention of homelessness due to debt advice, enforcement action from private sector housing service and prevention of housing possession.

## Securing accommodation

- Undertake an options appraisal to identify demand and how to make best use of the existing temporary accommodation provision. This should include the use of housing association stock, leasing and licencing schemes, and working with private landlords and letting agents. Also use data held by the council about occupants of TA including household formation, needs of children, and last settled address, to inform future procurement of temporary accommodation.
- Formulate and publish a temporary accommodation procurement policy and a temporary accommodation allocation policy
- The RAPS scheme will be drawn to a close, an options appraisal should be carried out to identify what the best private sector access initiative is for

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<sup>141</sup> Evaluation of the homeless hospital discharge fund. January 2015

<https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Evaluation%20of%20the%20Homeless%20Hospital%20Discharge%20Fund%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>142</sup> Homelessness: Applying all our health Public Health England updated June 2019

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-applying-all-our-health/homelessness-applying-all-our-health>

Gosport Borough Council to deliver a readily available supply of private sector stock.

- The council should continue to consider the principles on which its Housing Allocation Scheme is framed, to ensure it is sufficiently contributing to meeting housing need and tackling homelessness, affectively identifying those homeless households in housing need and matching them with appropriate housing and nominations agreements are being adhered.
- The council should review the aims and objectives of its tenancy strategy, to ensure the types of tenancies offered promote the prevention of homelessness and does not adversely impact on tackling homelessness.
- The council should work with local housing associations to adopt pre-tenancy processes that prioritise supporting people into sustainable tenancies.

### **Providing support**

- There is a need for the further development of partnership working between Gosport Borough Council, the NHS Trust, the CCG and Hampshire County Council to attain an understanding and alignment of commissioning decisions, prioritise and identify unmet need, funding and actions to address gaps in provision.
- Regular review of existing joint working protocols should be undertaken to identify any gaps, particularly in relation to rehousing households in specified circumstances such as defective dwellings, following service of a CPO and eviction from social rented housing.
- The council should formalise established partnership working arrangements between the Jobcentre, Housing Options and other key organisations in Gosport to assist and support delivery of Gosport's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

### **Resources**

- The council should continue to protect any budget surplus generated by the homeless service for reinvestment into prevention activities and develop a long-term funding strategy for the short-term grants that DLUHC frequently offer.
- Explore the possibility of securing additional investment to fund support services, including funding from revenue or capital grants available from national government, any of its agencies, or philanthropic trusts, investment from the commercial sector, via a social impact bond and using payment by results arrangements with commissioned providers.
- Introduce a revised staffing structure with additional officers and a clear separation between Housing Advisers and Housing Allocation staff.
- Housing staff should complete the Chartered Institute of Housing Level 3 Certificate in Housing Practice

- The hardware is in urgent need of updating, fixed PC's in offices cannot facilitate virtual (TEAMS) meetings and staff laptops have no access to Wi-fi at certain locations, including the hostel accommodation.
- Functionality of all software systems should be fully exploited and duplication between different software systems needs to be minimised as much as possible.
- Staff training on case management systems is needed, along with detailed instructions for staff to follow when inputting data.

### **Consultation**

- An annual service user feedback event should be established to promote transparency and provide valuable evidence to inform commissioning priorities throughout Hampshire.
- The council should, in collaboration with service users and stakeholders, 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.