

Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy - Evidence Review

Background and Context

Stafford Borough is resident to 134,800 people, with the population expected to grow by 3% between 2017 and 2027. Although a relatively affluent area it contains some neighbourhoods experiencing social and economic deprivation. Generally, employment rates in Stafford are high, with around 82% of the adult population in employment, compared to 75% nationally and 79.3% in Staffordshire. However, it is recorded that around 24% (31,900) of the population of Stafford are estimated to be financially stressed, i.e. find it difficult or very difficult to cope on their current income (Source: Stafford District Data Pack, Staffordshire County Council, September 2018).

Historically, levels of homelessness and rough sleeping have been relatively low with resources and facilities able to meet needs. A number of programmes were rationalised as part of the process of refocussing public expenditure in the last decade, and this has provided challenges in delivering and maintaining appropriate services. The Borough Council worked closely with all providers prior to the reductions and successfully secured the future of Eagle House, a 32 bed unit of supported accommodation for single homeless people. Unfortunately, funding constraints meant that Eagle House was re-designated as accommodation for people with low needs only and therefore was unable to accept individuals with multiple and more complex needs.

A review of the Housing Option Service (undertaken in 2016) recognised that provision of social housing was not the driving force behind homelessness within the Borough, with delivery of affordable homes exceeding targets for 2015 – 2019. Instead it was recognised that some households are either losing tenancies, or are unable to access accommodation, due to unaddressed support needs. The support needs of these households were assessed as too high for much of the existing accommodation provision, meaning landlords were often unwilling to give them a tenancy, but too low to meet the criteria for statutory support. With increasing pressures on registered providers of social housing, it was becoming increasingly difficult to find suitable accommodation for this cohort and was placing increasing reliance on the private rented sector. Stafford Borough also saw a spike in rough sleeping during this period with 46 individuals recorded in Summer 2016.

The outcome of the Housing Options Review was to bring the waiting list for social housing back in house to Stafford Borough Council and to permanently fund a Tenancy Sustainment Officer to help those individuals who were struggling to access core services into suitable and sustainable accommodation. This coincided with a successful application for funding for the post of the Community Matron for the Homeless and for eight units of Housing First accommodation.

In 2017, official rough sleeping figures were halved, and the Housing Options Service achieved Gold Standard for Homeless Prevention from the National Practitioners Support Service.

Welfare reform and changes to Government policy and legislation continue to place additional pressures on the role of the Housing Options Team. Homeless legislation has significantly changed in the last two years with additional focus on homeless prevention and

provides eligible households access to homeless advice and assistance irrespective of priority need or intentionality. The Housing Options Team have embraced changes and have worked closely with partners to achieve positive outcomes. The Housing Options Team have been pragmatic in its approach to these challenges and evolved our way of working in order to meet the needs of vulnerable households in Stafford borough.

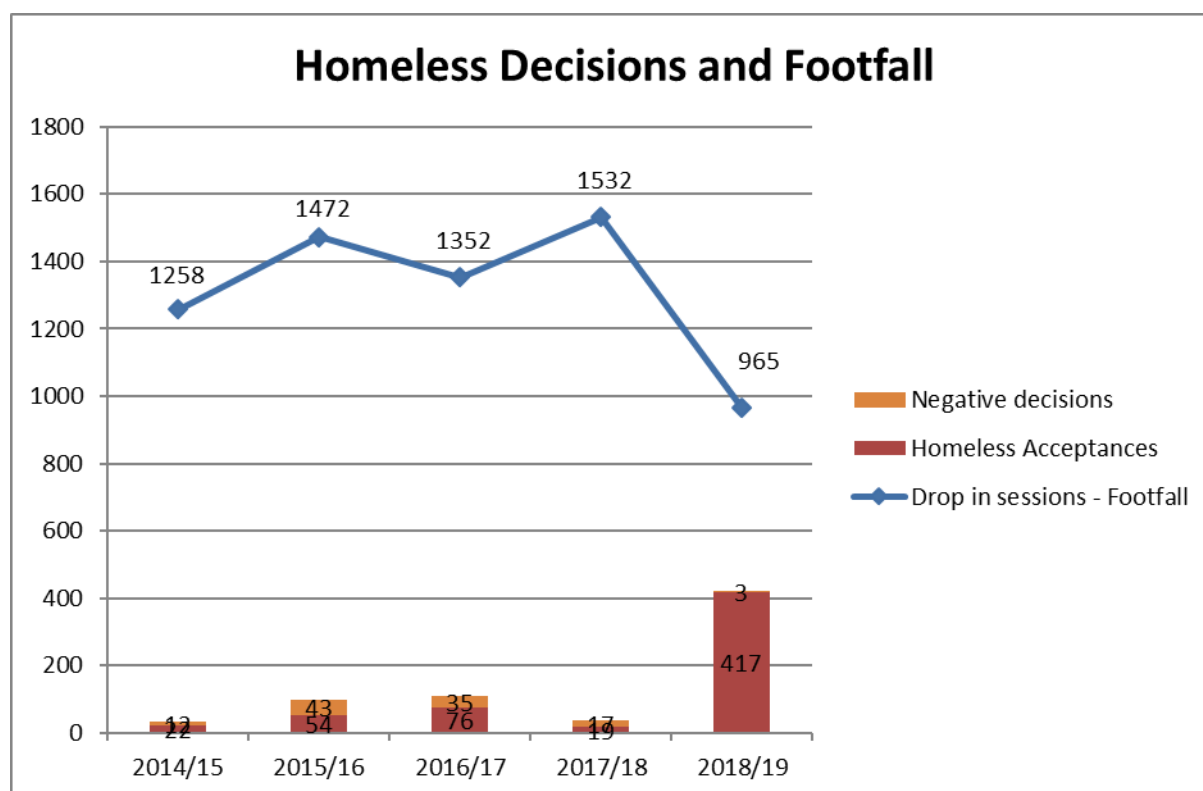
Households Accessing the Housing Options Service

The Housing Options Service provides general housing advice, free of charge to all members of the public. Households who are assessed as eligible for assistance and homeless or threatened with homelessness fall within our statutory function to take reasonable steps to prevent and/or relieve homelessness.

In April 2018, the Housing Options Team went through substantial change with the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 which significantly extends the statutory function of local housing authorities. The two major changes include; the 'prevention duty' which extends the definition of 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 to 56 days and requires local authorities to assist all households who are eligible and threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need, intentionality or local connection and; the 'relief duty' that requires local authorities to take reasonable steps to secure accommodation for eligible homeless households, regardless of priority need or intentionality. This means that all homeless, or threatened with homelessness, approaches are now considered as 'homeless applications' and has had a substantial impact on the workload of the Housing Options Team.

Case Type

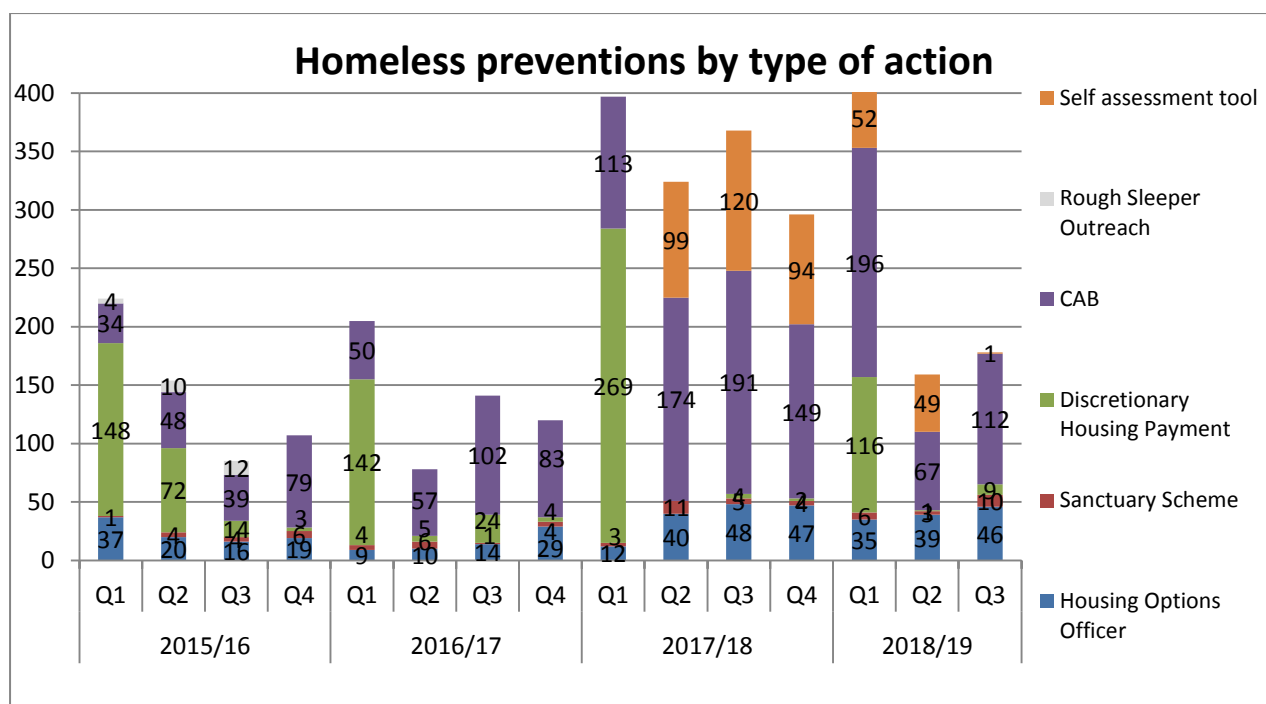
Between April 2018 and February 2019, 965 households approached our service for housing advice, compared to 1532 in 2017/18. Out of these, 374 applications (39%) were closed at triage stage; the applicant was not threatened with homelessness within 56 days but required general housing advice only.



In 2017/18, there were 65 homeless applications compared to 417 applications taken between April 2018 and February 2019. The substantial increase in homeless application reflects the new requirements under the Homeless Reduction Act however footfall through the service decreased by 25% compared to 2017/2018.

Out of homeless applications received since April 2018, 175 (42%) have been homeless prevention and 228 (55%) have been homeless relief demonstrating that individuals are accessing our service at crisis point as opposed to an earlier opportunity. The remaining 14 applicants (3%) have been final duty cases. The impact of crisis based intervention is demonstrated in the 'Outcomes' section of the evidence review.

The Housing Options Team has a long-standing focus on homeless prevention and continues to collect data from numerous sources within the Borough to demonstrate the wide-reaching impact of homeless prevention. The below table demonstrates homeless prevention across various services in Stafford Borough.



Prevention figures by the Housing Options Team for 2018/2019 remain similar to the previous year demonstrating Stafford Borough Council’s commitment to homeless prevention before the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act. The graph also demonstrates the importance of partnership working, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and Benefit Service in preventing homelessness through other measures such as debt advice and Discretionary Housing Payment.

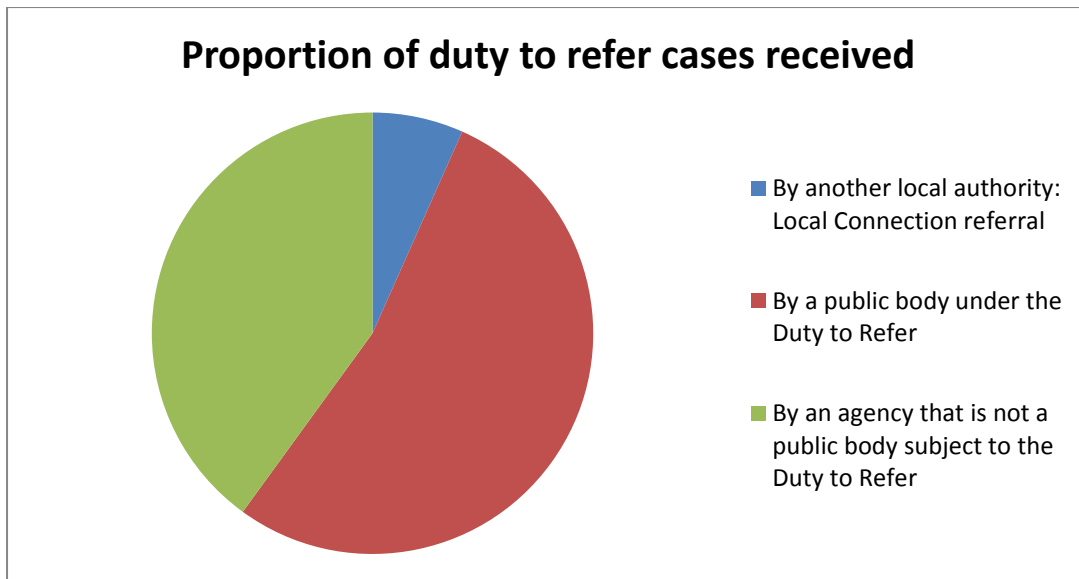
Duty to Refer

In October 2018, the Government introduced a new duty to refer households who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness on public bodies, including prisons, the Job Centre and adult social services (amongst others). There is a discretion on other agencies to refer into the service and this has been an available option since April 2018.

Between April 2018 and February 2019, the Council received 30 such referrals, with 53% being received from a specified public body under the Duty to Refer.

The main agencies that the Council received referrals from were:

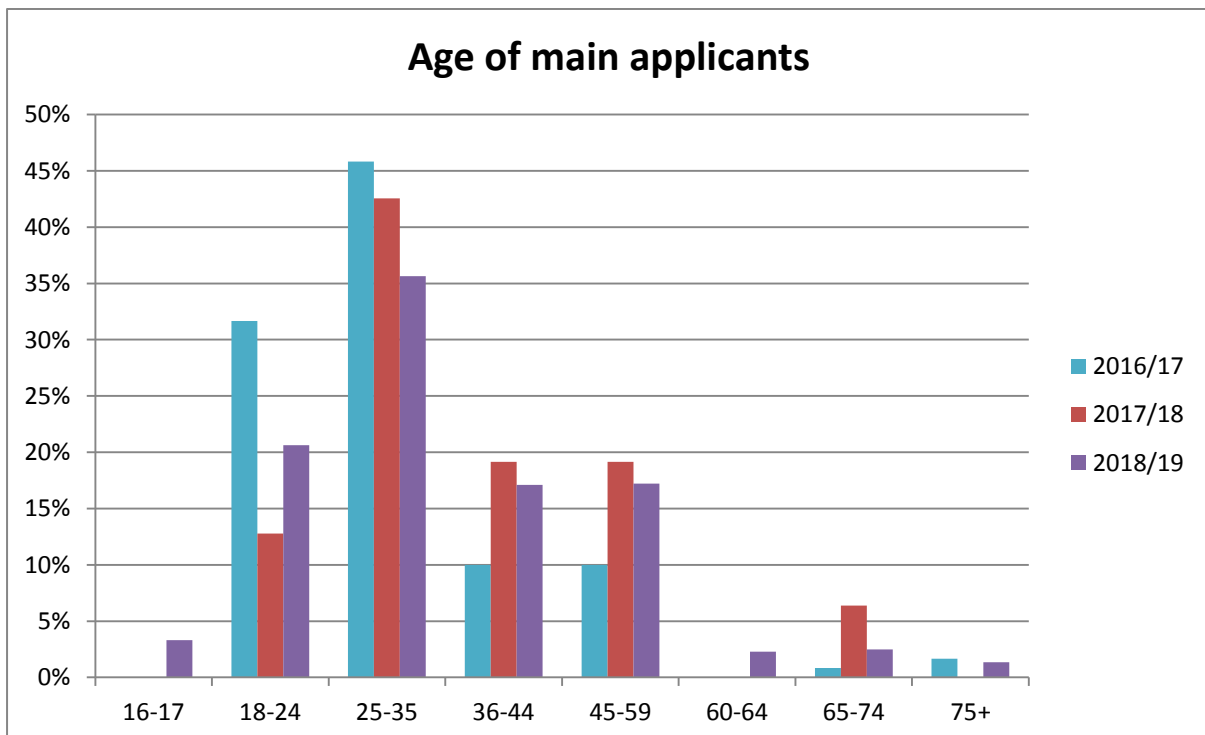
- Citizens Advice Bureau / Debt Advice Agency (13%)
- Community Rehabilitation Company (13%)
- DWP – Jobcentre Plus (10%)
- Adult Social Services (10%)



The overall proportion of referrals is only 7% of the total number of homeless applications (417) received since April 2018. The data demonstrates that there needs to be additional focus on encouraging partner agencies to refer cases into the Housing Options Team.

Breakdown of Individuals approaching the Housing Options Service

Between April 2018 and February 2019, 965 individuals approached our service, 57% of individuals approaching the Housing Options service are aged between 18 and 35. Out of this figure, 21% are aged between 18 and 24. This figure reflects trends pre-Homeless Reduction Act as demonstrated by the graph below.



Within our highest age band of 25-35 year olds, 55% are female and 44% are male. 1% of individuals approaching our service identified themselves as transgender.

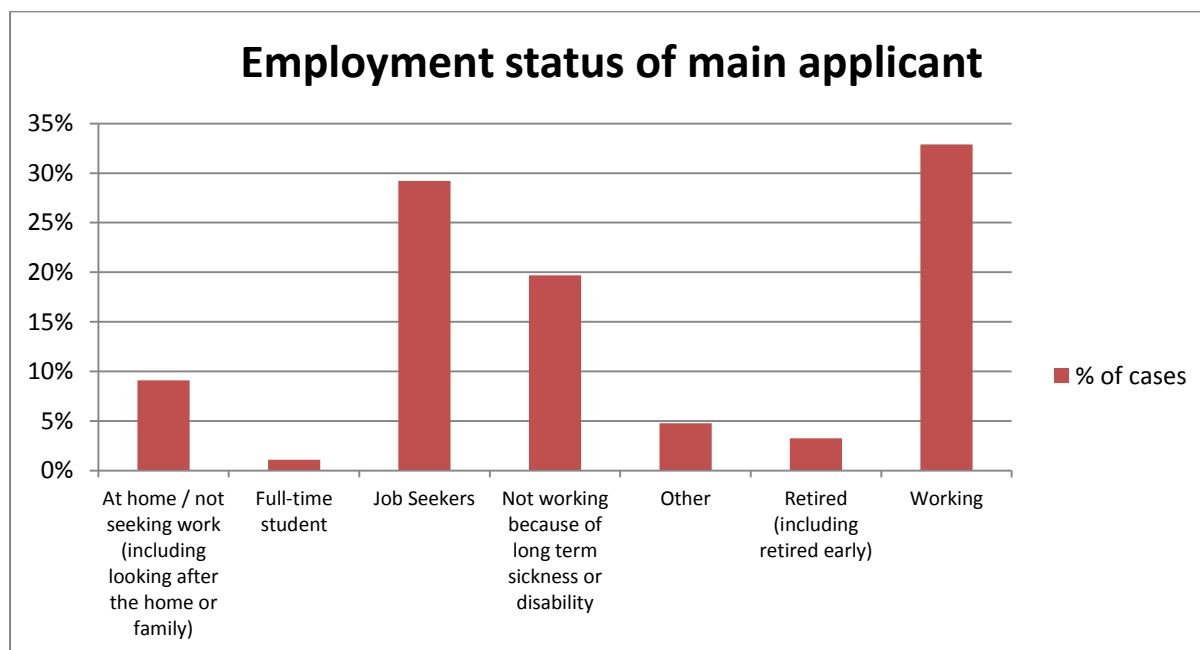
Sexual orientation of individuals approaching the Housing Options service, during the same period, is outlined below:

| | Gay / Lesbian | Heterosexual | Other | Prefer not to say |
|---|---------------|--------------|-------|-------------------|
| % of Applicants April 2018 – February 2019 | 1% | 92% | 3% | 5% |

The largest ethnicity groups in the Borough are:

- White: English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British (90%)
- Any other White background (3%)
- Black / African / Caribbean / Black British: African (2%)
- Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean (2%).

The employment status of individuals approaching our service is demonstrated by the graph below:



49% of individuals were in receipt of an income- based benefit, with 29% assessed as capable of work and 20% on a long- term sickness related benefit. 33% of individuals were employed at the time of approaching our service.

The roll out of full digital service for Universal Credit took place in Stafford on 21st November 2018. The impact was that qualifying households would transfer onto Universal Credit upon reporting a change of circumstances, which includes putting in a new claim for Housing Benefit. The impact since 21st November 2019 has been relatively minor with 26 applicants who are on Universal Credit as Benefits towards housing costs. The Housing Options Team are continuing to work closely with the Job Centre Plus, Benefits Team and Citizens Advice Bureau (along with voluntary groups and housing associations) in order to monitor the impact of Universal Credit and promote clear pathways of support for vulnerable households, particularly those who may be at risk of homelessness.

Support Needs of Homeless Applicants

The table of data below compares the support needs of Stafford homeless applicants between April 2018 and February 2019 and homeless applicants across England between April 2018 and June 2018.

During the period of Stafford applications:

- 965 individuals approaching the service in Stafford
- 417 homeless applications
- 213 of these applicants had no support needs

204 applicants had at least 1 support need (49%). The figures for each support need (see table below) relates to the proportion of homeless applicants having each support need. Therefore, the percentages don't add up to 49% for Stafford or 47% for England. An applicant may have more than 1 support need so are included in multiple support needs.

Overall, the table shows that the support needs of homeless applicants in Stafford are similar to support needs across England overall. However, the percentage of applicants with alcohol dependency, drug dependency and an offending history are slightly higher in Stafford than across England. The number of applicants with physical ill health or disability is significantly lower in Stafford than throughout England.

| Support Need | Access to education, employment or training | Alcohol dependency needs | At risk of/has experienced abuse (non-domestic) | At risk of/has experienced domestic abuse | At risk of/has experienced sexual abuse/exploitation | Care leaver aged 18-20 years | Care leaver aged 21+ years | Drug dependency needs | Former asylum seeker |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|---|---|--|------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Count - Stafford | 3 | 24 | 12 | 32 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 29 | 0 |
| Stafford % of Applicants | 1% | 6% | 3% | 8% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 7% | 0% |
| England % of Applicants | 4% | 4% | 3% | 9% | 2% | 1% | 1% | 5% | 1% |

| Support Need continued | History of rough sleeping | Learning disability | No support needs | Offending history | Old age | Physical ill health and disability | Served in HM forces | Young parent requiring support to manage independently | Young person aged 16-17 years | History of mental health problems | History of repeat homelessness |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------|------------------------------------|---------------------|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Count – Stafford | 32 | 12 | 213 | 38 | 11 | 30 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 71 | 36 |
| Stafford % of Applicants | 8% | 3% | 51% | 9% | 3% | 7% | 0% | 1% | 0% | 17% | 9% |
| England % of Applicants | 6% | 4% | 52% | 7% | 1% | 14% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 22% | 7% |

In February 2019, we conducted a survey with partner agencies to understand their views on homelessness within the Borough. The partner agencies who responded are outlined below:

| Organisation Name | Type of organisation |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Rethink Mental Illness | Supported Housing |
| Staffordshire County Council | Local Authority |
| Wrekin Housing Trust | Housing Association |
| Stafford & Cannock League of Hospital Friends | Housing Charity |
| Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust | Mental Health Trust |
| Citizens Advice Bureau – Staffordshire South West | Advice Charity |
| 22 Signal Regiment | Military Establishment |
| Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company | Probation Service |
| Stafford and Rural Homes | Housing Association |
| Midland Heart | Housing Association |
| iMOVEHOME | Letting Agent |

Partner agencies were asked to provide the top 3 support needs in ranked order.

The top needs identified by partner agencies are:

- 1) Drug and alcohol dependency
- 2) Budgeting
- 3) Physical illness or disability

Additional comments from organisations stated that “mental health needs are often present”, but that they also “work with a number of adults who have multiple and complex needs”, and the “majority of homeless may be dual diagnosis or have tri-morbidity issues”, as well as clients having “no concept of making sure they have money to pay their bills and keep their tenancies safe”.

10 out of the 12 partner agencies said that their agency or service was impacted by homelessness.

Causes of Homelessness

The main 3 reasons for homelessness in the Borough in 2018/19 are:

- End of private rented tenancy (17%)
- Family no longer willing or able to accommodate (17%)
- Domestic Abuse (10%)

As demonstrated in previous years, end of private rent tenancy and domestic abuse have consistently been the main reasons for loss of settled home; however, family no longer willing or able to accommodate has seen a sudden spike in 2018/19 (however this is in line with national trends).

In the period between 3rd April 2018 and 1st February 2019, there were 417 homeless applications in Stafford. This compares to 65 homeless applications in 2017/2018 and 76 homeless applications for 2016/2017.

The table below also looks at the main reason for loss of settled home across the whole of England in the period between April 2018 and June 2019. During this period, there were 58,660 homeless applications nationally. The main reasons for homelessness across England during this period are the same as Stafford Borough. However, there is also a significant number of 'Other' causes across England (25%).

Reason for loss of settled home

2018/19

| | Domestic Abuse | End of private rented tenancy | End of social rented tenancy | Eviction from supported housing | Family no longer willing or able to accommodate | Fire or flood / other emergency | Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate | Left HM Forces | Left institution with no accommodation available | Mortgage Repossession | Non-racially motivated / other motivated violence or harassment | Other | Property disrepair | Racially motivated violence or harassment | Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown) | Rent arrears | Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office or asylum |
|--|----------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|--|----------------|--|-----------------------|---|-------|--------------------|---|---|--------------|---|
| Stafford No. April 2018 – February 2019 | 45 | 95 | 26 | 14 | 81 | 2 | 18 | 3 | 7 | 5 | 10 | 41 | 4 | 0 | 66 | 0 | 0 |
| Stafford % of Applicants | 11% | 23% | 6% | 3% | 19% | 0% | 4% | 1% | 2% | 1% | 2% | 10% | 1% | 0% | 16% | 0% | 0% |
| England % of Applicants April – July 2018* | 8% | 24% | 6% | 0% | 18% | 0% | 4% | 0% | 1% | 1% | 2% | 25% | 0% | 0% | 7% | 3% | 1% |

*Source: Statutory homelessness decisions on initial duties owed, Reason for loss of last settled home for those owed a prevention or relief duty by region – England, April to June 2018, MHCLG, December 2018

2017/18

| | Domestic Abuse | End of private rented tenancy | End of social rented tenancy | Eviction from supported housing | Family no longer willing or able to accommodate | Fire or flood / other emergency | Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate | Left HM Forces | Left institution with no accommodation available | Mortgage Repossession | Non-racially motivated / other motivated violence or harassment | Other | Property disrepair | Racially motivated violence or harassment | Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown) | Rent arrears | Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office or asylum |
|----------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|--|----------------|--|-----------------------|---|-------|--------------------|---|---|--------------|---|
| Stafford No. 2017/18 | 11 | 10 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| % of Applicants | 23% | 21% | 0% | 2% | 4% | 0% | 6% | 0% | 4% | 9% | 4% | 17% | 0% | 0% | 4% | 4% | 0% |

2016/17

| | Domestic Abuse | End of private rented tenancy | End of social rented tenancy | Eviction from supported housing | Family no longer willing or able to accommodate | Fire or flood / other emergency | Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate | Left HM Forces | Left institution with no accommodation available | Mortgage Repossession | Non-racially motivated / other motivated violence or harassment | Other | Property disrepair | Racially motivated violence or harassment | Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown) | Rent arrears | Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office or asylum |
|----------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|--|----------------|--|-----------------------|---|-------|--------------------|---|---|--------------|---|
| Stafford No. 2016/17 | 24 | 31 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 9 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 9 | 0 |
| % of Applicants | 20% | 26% | 0% | 1% | 4% | 1% | 8% | 0% | 4% | 2% | 7% | 12% | 0% | 0% | 9% | 8% | 0% |

Repeat homelessness

Between April 2018 and February 2019, there were 49 cases recorded of repeated homelessness, which equates to 21% of relief cases during this period. Repeated homelessness cases are individuals or households who have accessed our services on more than one occasion within the last year.

The main causes of repeat homelessness are:

- End of private rented tenancy (14%)
- Eviction from supported housing (12%)
- End of social rented tenancy (10%)

In February 2019, Stafford Borough Council conducted a survey with 12 partner agencies. We asked 'do you think repeat homelessness is an issue in Stafford? 100% of respondents answered "Yes" to this question.

Reasons for this response included "individuals not having outreach support or the skills to live independently", "repeat offenders who struggle to maintain accommodation" and "clients with complex needs require high levels of support to be able to maintain independent living" and "because we see customers coming through our service many times" as they have "lost their accommodation due to non payment of rent, anti social behaviour etc."

We also asked 'what do you think are the main causes of repeat homelessness in Stafford?' Partner agencies were asked to provide their top 3 causes of repeat homelessness in ranked order.

The main causes identified were:

- Inappropriate offers of accommodation
- Low income
- Drug use

Despite repeat homelessness amounting to only 8% of total homeless applications, there is still a perception amongst partners that it is an issue in Stafford. The perceived causes of repeat homelessness from partner agencies demonstrates the importance of holistic housing and suitability of accommodation assessments in order to promote tenancy sustainment.

Rough Sleeping

Rough Sleeper Estimate

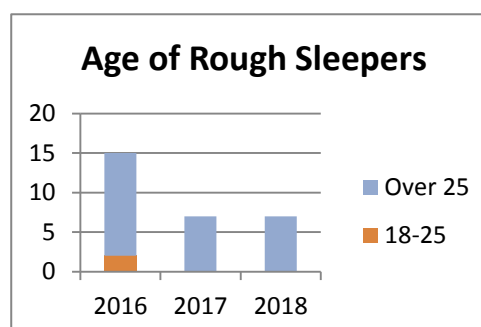
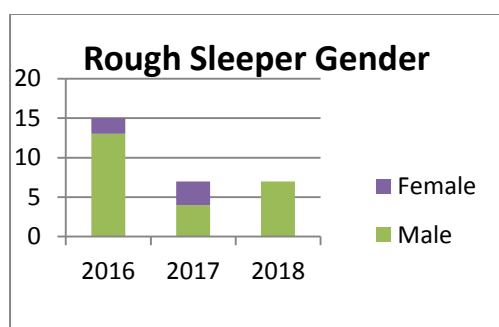
Rough Sleeping is the most acute form of housing need and is used to describe individuals who are roofless and bedding down without adequate shelter. Stafford Borough Council takes a proactive approach to rough sleeping with various interventions in place to provide options into long-term sustainable accommodation, including the Community Matron for the Homeless, the Tenancy Sustainment Officer and Housing First. Through the use of various interventions, Stafford have reduced the number of individuals rough sleeping by half since 2016 and have sustained this reduction into 2018.

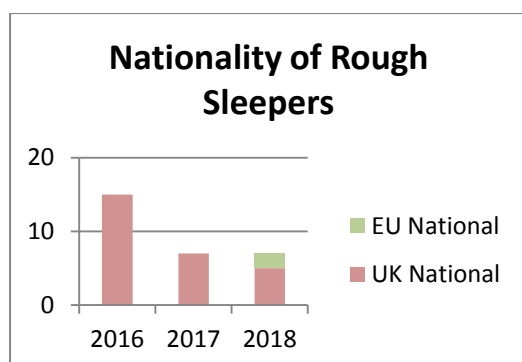
The Housing Options Team collect weekly estimates on rough sleepers within the Borough through the Vulnerabilities HUB which includes feedback from various partner agencies. This detailed approach has allowed us to maintain a named list of rough sleeper and gain a detailed understanding of their support needs which has been used to tailor the above mentioned interventions.

The Housing Options Team submits an official rough sleeper estimate on an annual basis to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The most recent count, in November 2018, was 7 individuals rough sleeping in Stafford Borough. The data shows that the majority of our rough sleepers are consistently male. In 2018, for our most recent reporting, there were no female rough sleepers.

For the last 2 years, all rough sleepers have been aged over 25.

In the latest report, we had 2 individuals who were EU nationals with no recourse to public funds. Previously, all rough sleepers were UK nationals only. This has presented new challenges to the Housing Options Team who worked closely with adult social care and safeguarding in order to address the needs of vulnerable rough sleepers with no recourse to public funds.





Between April 2018 and February 2019, there were 13 homeless applicants whose accommodation at time of application was listed as rough sleeping (in the judgement of the assessor).

Out of the 13 approaches, the main reasons for loss of settled home for rough sleepers are:

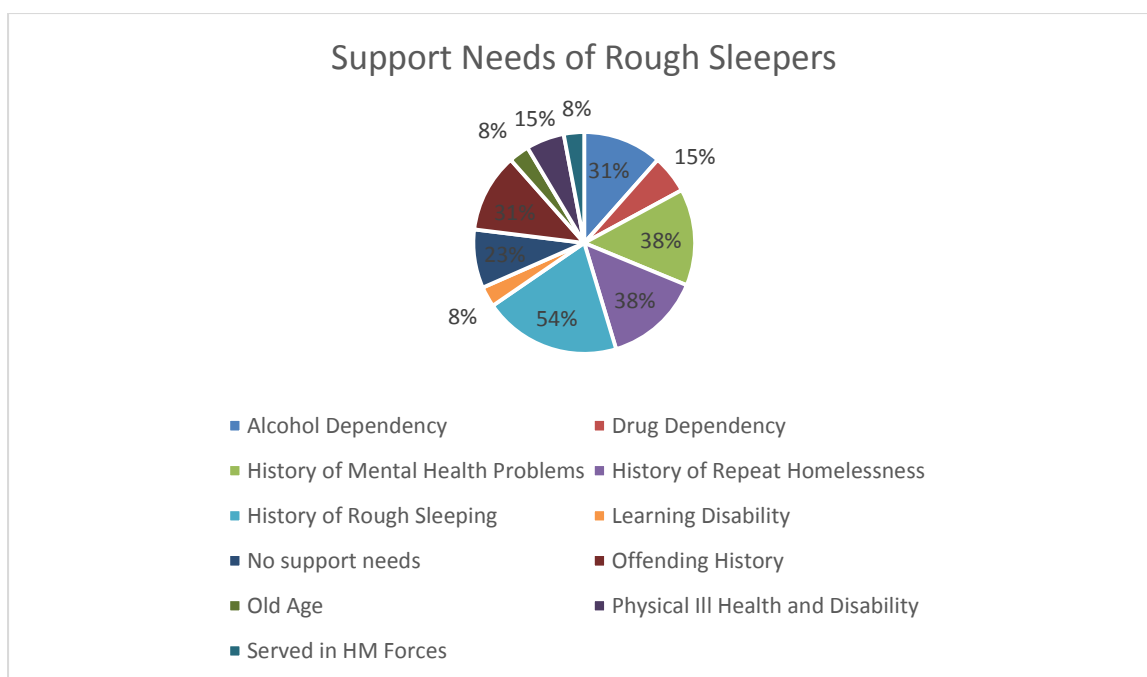
- Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown) (31%)
- End of social rented tenancy (15%)
- Eviction from supported housing (15%)
- Left institution with no accommodation available (15%)

In addition to the above, 97 applicants (23% of all applicants) were recorded as having no fixed abode or sofa surfing with family or friends. There were also 5 applicants (1%) who were recorded as becoming homeless on departure from an institution – custody or hospital.

Support Needs

77% of rough sleepers have at least 1 support need with 46% presenting with support needs relating to substance misuse and 38% presenting with a history of mental health problems. Out of the 13 rough sleepers who approached the service between April 2018 and February 2019, 46% were recorded as having multiple and complex needs as they approached with both substance misuse and a history of mental health problems.

When we consider data collected from the Community Matron for the Homeless, this figure increases to 71% of entrenched rough sleepers who present with both substance misuse and mental health related support needs.



Outcome of Homeless Applications

Between April 2018 and February 2019, there were 633 closed cases, of which 120 were Prevention cases and 129 were Relief cases.

70% of Prevention cases were considered to be a “successful” outcome – identified as the first 4 reasons in the Prevention table below.

56% of Relief cases were considered to be a “successful” outcome – identified as the first 3 reasons in the Prevention table below.

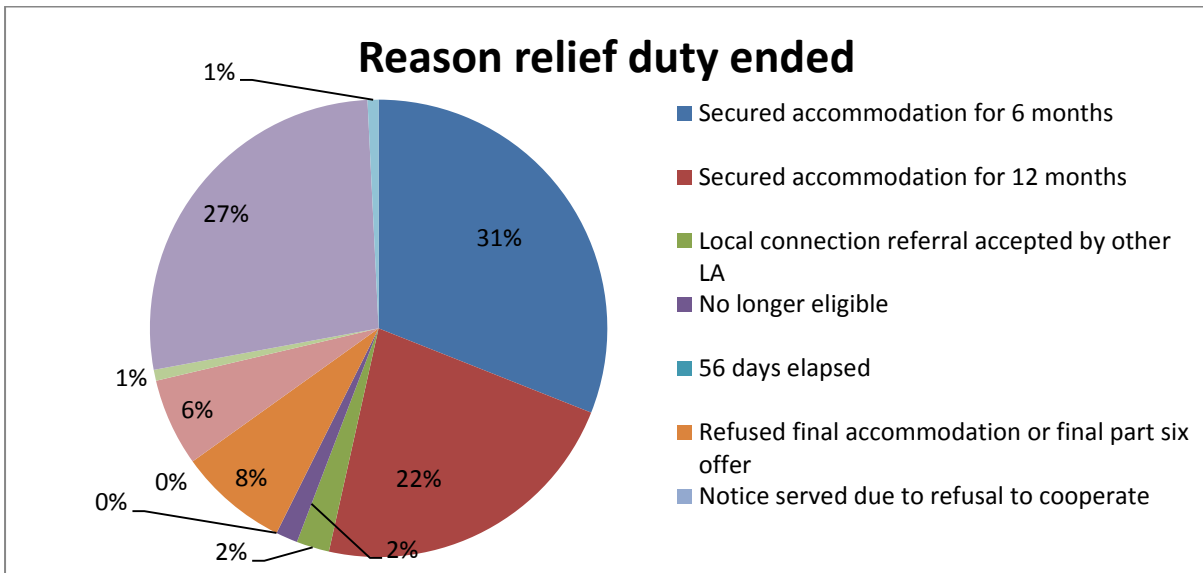
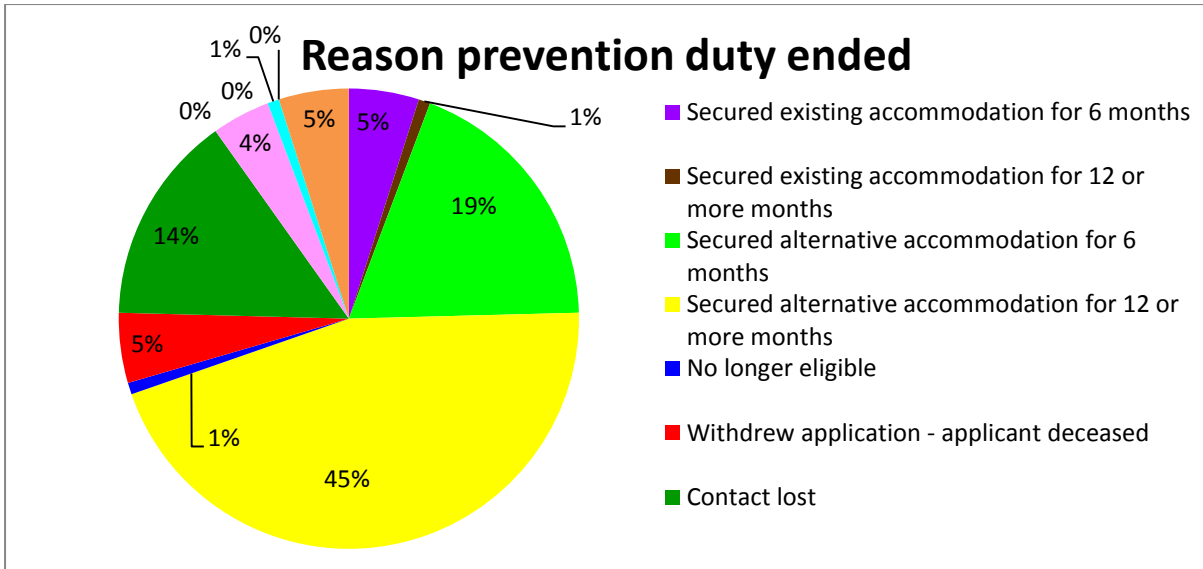
The 2nd column in the table below identifies the % of cases out of all prevention or relief cases. The 3rd column identifies the proportion the associated reason has as a % of all closed cases, for example 9% of all closed cases secured alternative accommodation for 12 or more months as a prevention case, and 5% of all closed cases secured accommodation for 12 months as a relief case.

Out of the closed prevention cases, 70% secure some form of accommodation for at least 6 months.

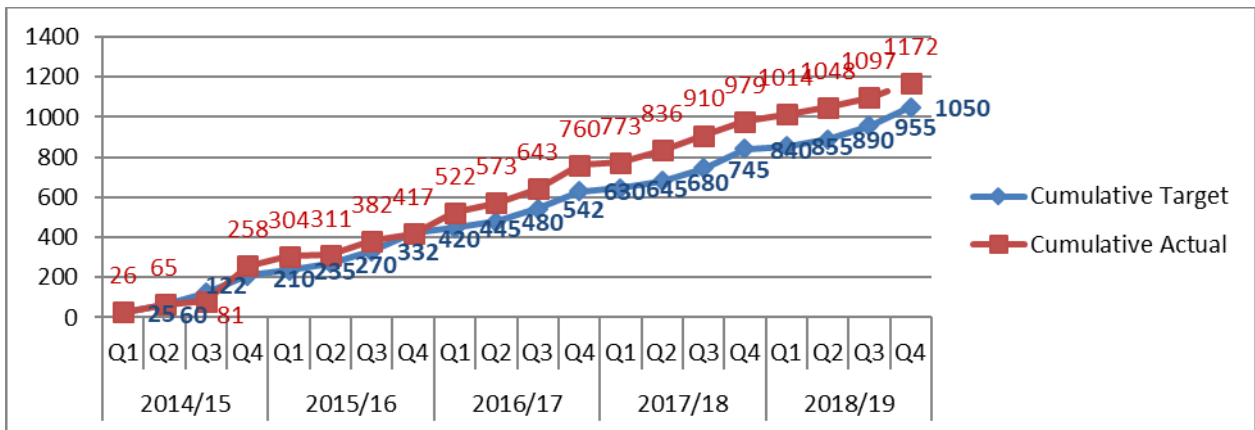
Out of the relief cases, 53% secured some form of accommodation for at least 6 months.

Unfortunately, contact lost is a common reason for prevention or relief duty to end. For relief cases, 27% of closed cases ended due to contact being lost.

| Reason prevention duty ended | % of all Prevention cases | % of all closed cases |
|---|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Secured existing accommodation for 6 months | 5% | 1% |
| Secured existing accommodation for 12 or more months | 1% | 0% |
| Secured alternative accommodation for 6 months | 19% | 4% |
| Secured alternative accommodation for 12 or more months | 45% | 9% |
| No longer eligible | 1% | 0% |
| Withdrew application - applicant deceased | 5% | 1% |
| Contact lost | 15% | 3% |
| Homeless | 0% | 0% |
| 56 days or more expired and no further action | 4% | 1% |
| Intentionally homeless from accommodation provided | 0% | 0% |
| Refused suitable accommodation | 1% | 0% |
| Refused to cooperate | 0% | 0% |
| Unknown | 5% | 1% |
| TOTAL | 100% | 19% |
| Reason relief duty ended | % of all Relief cases | % of all closed cases |
| Secured accommodation for 6 months | 31% | 6% |
| Secured accommodation for 12 months | 22% | 5% |
| Local connection referral accepted by other LA | 2% | 0% |
| No longer eligible | 2% | 0% |
| 56 days elapsed | 0% | 0% |
| Refused final accommodation or final part six offer | 8% | 2% |
| Notice served due to refusal to cooperate | 0% | 0% |
| Withdrew application - applicant deceased | 6% | 1% |
| Intentionally homeless from accommodation provided | 1% | 0% |
| Contact lost | 27% | 6% |
| Unknown | 1% | 0% |
| TOTAL | 100% | 20% |



Supply of Affordable Homes



Continued delivery of affordable homes remains a Council priority as this is essential in tackling homelessness. The graph demonstrates how delivery is currently exceeding targeted figures however we are not predicting this trend to continue going forward.

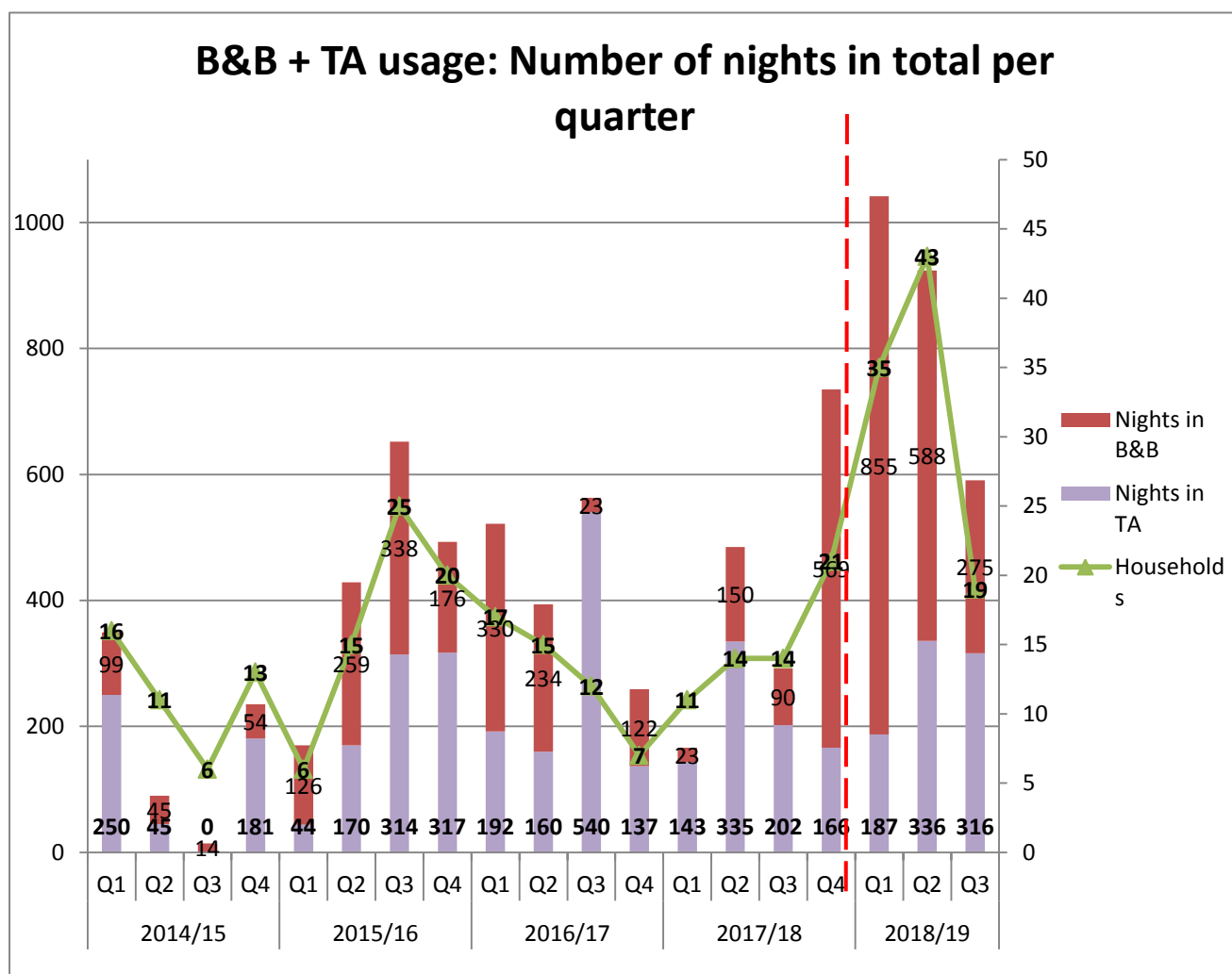
Local Housing Allowance Disparity

Local Housing Allowance covers the housing cost for individuals on a low income who live in the private rented sector. Local Housing Allowance is capped depending on the size of the property. Whilst rents in the private rented sector have been increasing in recent years, local housing allowance has been frozen resulting in a disparity between the rents charged by private landlords and the amount of benefit low income households receive towards their housing cost. The result is that the private rented sector has become unaffordable for low income households resulting in households both being evicted from their homes and struggling to access new homes in the private sector.

The disparity in Stafford is as outlined in the table below:

| | Local Housing Allowance (weekly) | Average Private Rent (weekly) | Percentage Disparity (Shortfall) |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Shared Room (Bedsit) | £66.70 | £90.00 | 35% (£23.30) |
| One Bedroom | £90.90 | £103.15 | 11% (£12.25) |
| Two Bedrooms | £113.92 | £132 | 13% (£18.08) |
| Three Bedrooms | £129.47 | £156.23 | 17% (£26.76) |
| Four Bedrooms | £170.67 | £219.46 | 22% (£48.79) |

Temporary Accommodation



NB: The red line demonstrates a change in our methodology.

Quarter 4 of 2017/018 saw the beginning of the spike in temporary accommodation usage and nights spent in temporary accommodation. The Housing Options Team introduced the changes associated with the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 in January 2018 which can be attributed to the increased use of temporary accommodation as households that had previously been found ‘intentionally homeless’ became eligible for temporary accommodation for a longer period of time. The Housing Options Team have a focus on reducing temporary accommodation use and we can see this take effect towards the end of 2018/2019.

Breakdown of applicants spending more than 4 weeks in B&B

Since 2016, there have been 37 households that have spent more than 28 days (4 weeks) in B&B accommodation. In 2018/19 alone, there have been 24 households in B&B longer than 4 weeks. Households who spend more than four weeks in B&B accommodation are single

homeless who present with multiple and complex support needs. The Housing Options Team are required to tailor packages of support to find suitable accommodation within the Borough which can be challenging.

| | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | TOTAL |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Number in B&B > 4 weeks | 4 | 9 | 24 | 37 |

The Housing Options Team will place families in leased accommodation, and not use B&B provisions where possible.

Waiting List

In February 2019, there were 80 people on the waiting list.

The property type most in demand are 1-bed properties, with almost half of these individuals waiting for 1-bed properties.

| | 1-bed | 2-bed | 3-bed | 4-bed | TOTAL |
|------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| No. on waiting list | 39 | 27 | 13 | 1 | 80 |
| % of people on waiting list | 49% | 34% | 16% | 1% | 100% |

The majority of people on the waiting list are in band A (urgent need) or band B (high need) (95% of people on the waiting list). The highest property type and band in demand are people in band B waiting for a 1-bed property (33 individuals, 41% of people on the waiting list).

| | 1-bed | 2-bed | 3-bed | 4-bed | TOTAL | % of Waiting List |
|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------|
| A | 4 | 8 | 6 | 1 | 19 | 24% |
| B | 33 | 17 | 7 | 0 | 57 | 71% |
| C | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4% |
| D | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1% |
| TOTAL | 39 | 27 | 13 | 1 | 80 | 100% |

Outcomes – Lack of Engagement with Services.

There have been increased trends of individuals who are difficult to engage and often do not want to work with the Housing Options Team. Lack of engagement can be for a variety of different reasons that relate to both support needs and previous experiences with public services, particularly for those leaving institutions. As demonstrated by the outcome of cases data above, lack of engagement is a particular issue for applicants who are already homeless with 27% of relief cases being closed due to lost contact and 15% of prevention cases being closed for the same reason.

We asked partner agencies ‘what do you consider are the main reasons for individual’s lack of engagement with services?’ As with previous questions, partner agencies were asked to provide the top 3 reasons in ranked order.

The most common reasons for individuals’ lack of engagement with services were:

- Mental illness or disability
- Mistrust for services (2.4)
- Inflexible working commitment from professionals
- Complicated pathways into services

Why do you think these are the main reasons?

Partner agencies were asked to provide additional information to support their answers to the previous question.

Responses stated that support services teaching life skills and tackling substance addiction “is failing”, and pathways / barriers to mental health support is making it “difficult for lower level needs to be treated”, as well as there being a “minimal understanding of the root causes of homelessness” and “judgemental attitudes”.

Another response suggested that homeless individuals find it difficult to “trust anyone, let alone those that are trying to help them” and that “this trusts needs to be built up over time”.

Another response acknowledged that agencies are “working really hard to provide services” and that they “don’t see a lack of compassion”.

They also acknowledged that services can stop working with individuals if they are seen as difficult or not engaging. This lack of engagement means the individuals misses opportunities for support and then they become lost from services. This can lead to a deterioration of an individual’s physical and mental health and the person will continue to be homeless, which may eventually progress to entrenched homelessness.

Partner agencies suggested the following ideas for tackling a lack of engagement:

- Keep trying to arrange visits / appointments with the individual / offering drop-in sessions that do not require a booked in appointment and visiting the individual in a place that they choose
- Focus on achieving small goals and praising individuals for these achievements e.g. attendance at a support visit
- Spending time to build a relationship with the individual to encourage engagement
- Work with people and organisations who the individual does successfully engage with, is familiar and comfortable with

- Working with other partner agencies to establish a joint engagement strategy

The Role of the Tenancy Sustainment Officer

Stafford Borough Council employed a Tenancy Sustainment Officer (TSO) in June 2017.

The role of the TSO involves assisting vulnerable individuals with high support needs through engaging with mental health services to work towards individuals' mental health stability, ensuring benefits are maximised e.g. Personal Independent Payments and Employment Support Allowance, setting up payment plans, securing white goods and pulling in other services such as Social Care and Occupational Health in order to support individuals as best as possible in order that they sustain their tenancies.

Since the beginning of this post, the TSO has:

- Supported 14 single people and 13 families
- Sustained 35 tenancies
- Secured in excess of £8,500 grants, in addition to £1,700 carpet grants and £100 grant for children's furniture
- Purchased £7000 worth of white goods
- Obtained 20 cookers with fitting, 7 fridge freezers, 3 washing machines, 10 single beds and mattresses
- Housed 7 rough sleepers with multiple and complex needs who had previously been refused access to accommodation.