

Spelthorne Borough Council Homelessness Review 2014-2019

November 2019



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Introduction

Under the Homelessness Act 2002¹ local housing authorities have a statutory duty to conduct a Homelessness Review at least every five years in order to formulate a Homelessness Strategy that tackles and prevents homelessness in their borough. Spelthorne Borough Council last carried out its Homelessness Review in 2014 with a strategy for 2014 to 2019.

The purpose of a Homelessness Review is to establish the housing need in the borough and outline current and likely future levels of homelessness. It identifies what is currently being done to prevent and tackle homelessness and who the key stakeholders are in these activities. The review also considers what resources are available to the Council and its partners to support households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The last Homelessness Strategy outlined eight key strategic priorities that we wanted to achieve in the last five years²:

1. Adopt a corporate and partnership commitment to preventing homelessness.
2. Develop and provide a comprehensive preventative housing options service including the single homeless.
3. End the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families.
4. Facilitate the discharge of the homelessness duty into the private rented sector.
5. Through the Housing Forum develop housing pathways for vulnerable groups.
6. Develop a private sector offer through working with local landlords and through a Spelthorne Borough Council lettings agency that will acquire properties for the discharge of the duty and where necessary as temporary lets.
7. In collaboration with Runnymede and Elmbridge Councils: Adopt a 'no second night out' for emergency accommodation.
8. In partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) prevent mortgage repossessions.

The following Homelessness Review highlights what we have achieved as a local housing authority and identifies gaps and key areas for improvement to inform the next Homelessness Strategy.

¹ Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (2002) Homelessness Act. The National Archives.

² Spelthorne Borough Council (2014) Spelthorne Homelessness Strategy 2014-2019.

Data analysed

This Homelessness Review has taken in to account both national and local statistics to help inform the current levels and likely future levels of homelessness in Spelthorne. It has considered the current activities which are preventing homelessness in the borough and identified support for households who are experiencing or are threatened with homelessness. The review has also given some thought to the ways in which securing accommodation are available or may be available for households threatened with homelessness. We have also considered the resources that are available to us for the activities noted above.

The following data has been used to help inform this Homelessness Review:

- Both national and local context of homelessness.
- Spelthorne Borough Council's casework records and locally recorded figures on homelessness approaches between April 2014 and March 2019. This includes information on the number of households that approached the council for help and the underlying reasons for the approaches. The figures also identify which duty, if any, was owed to the clients under homelessness legislation and how temporary or emergency accommodation was utilised (where applicable).
- Spelthorne Borough Council's recorded local statistics on housing register figures between April 2014 and March 2019. This indicates how social housing has been allocated by property type and bedroom size. It also gives an insight in to what proportion of social housing has been allocated to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- Local context of the private rental sector including information on our Spelthorne Rent Assure scheme for private lettings.
- Recorded statistics on rough sleeping locally and regionally, and the options available to rough sleepers in the area; including the recent implementation of the Rough Sleeper Initiative in Spelthorne.
- Existing data on the resources available to use which includes expenditure on homelessness prevention activities. This is broken down by associated revenue costs and the workforce delivery costs.

National context

Levels of and reasons for homelessness

Statutory duties have been placed on local housing authorities by the Housing Act 1977³ and Housing Act 1996⁴ to ensure advice and support is available to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The recent Homelessness Reduction Act 2017⁵ marks one of the biggest changes in homelessness legislation in 30 years. Local authorities are tasked with determining whether a household who has approached for help is homeless or threatened with homelessness. They must decide if the household is eligible for assistance from the Council and if they are eligible, take reasonable steps to help to either prevent or relieve their homelessness.

Latest statistical data from the Chartered Institute of Housing indicates the levels of homelessness in England and more specifically in the South East region where Spelthorne is located. The data is recorded from the years 1991 to 2017 but for the purpose of this review we will concentrate on the years of 2014 to 2017. In 2014 the total number of homeless households in England was 54,590. The South East region made up 7,330 of the total figure. By 2017 the total number of homeless households in England was 56,570. The South East region made up 7,730 of the total figure. A small extraction of the statistical table provided by CIH is demonstrated in Table 1 below to highlight the statistical changes over the last four years.

	2014	2015	2016	2017
South East Region	7,330	7,800	7,930	7,730
England	54,590	57,760	59,100	56,570

Table 1: Extraction of table 94a 'levels of homelessness in England, 2019 UK Housing Review (CIH, 2009, p.224)⁶

Ultimately the number of homeless households has slightly increased each year with the exception of 2017 where it decreased both nationally and regionally. CIH break down the main reasons for homeless nationally across 2014 to 2017. An extraction of the reasons for homelessness table is provided in Table 2.

Reason for homelessness (England) (%)	2014	2015	2016	2017
Parents, relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	27	27	27	26
Breakdown of relationship with partner	17	17	16	18
Loss of private dwelling, including tied accommodation	35	36	38	34
Mortgage arrears	2	1	1	1
Rent arrears	3	3	3	3
Other	17	16	16	18

Table 2: Extraction of table 94 'reason for homelessness in England', 2019 UK Housing Review (CIH, 2019, p.222)⁷

³ Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (1977) Housing (Homelessness Persons) Act. The National Archives.

⁴ Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (1996) Housing Act. The National Archives.

⁵ Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (2017) Homeless Reduction Act. The National Archives.

⁶ Chartered Institute of Housing. M. Stephens, J. Perry, P. Williams, and G. Young (2019) 2019 UK Housing Review. CIH: Coventry.

⁷ Chartered Institute of Housing. M. Stephens, J. Perry, P. Williams, and G. Young (2019) 2019 UK Housing Review. CIH: Coventry.

Notably, the largest reason for homelessness nationally is the loss of private dwelling, including tied accommodation. This is followed by parental, relative or friend evictions. Generally all six reasons for homelessness in England remain a similar percentage annually. Loss of private dwelling increased steadily every year by 1-2% then dropped in 2017 by 4%, however, it remains the main reason for homelessness.

Local Housing Allowance, private rents and Discretionary Housing Payments

As indicated by Table 3, the local housing allowance rates for Spelthorne Borough Council has marginally increased in the last five years but has not significantly changed.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Rates for Spelthorne (monthly)	1 st April 2014 to 31 st March 2015	1 st April 2015 to 31 st March 2016	1 st April 2016 to 31 st March 2017	1 st April 2017 to 31 st March 2018	1 st April 2018 to 31 st March 2019	1 st April 2019 to 31 st March 2020
Shared accommodation	£364.00	£367.64	£367.64	£378.69	£390.04	£390.04
One bedroom	£722.54	£751.44	£751.44	£751.44	£773.98	£797.20
Two bedroom	£923.82	£960.79	£960.79	£960.79	£960.79	£989.60
Three bedroom	£1187.03	£1198.90	£1198.90	£1198.90	£1198.90	£1198.90
Four bedroom	£1594.32	£1658.11	£1658.11	£1658.11	£1658.11	£1658.11

Table 3: Local Housing Allowance rates for Spelthorne 2014-20

However, the Valuation Office Agency highlights the average renting price in Spelthorne is significantly higher than the Local Housing Allowance rate as outlined in Table 4: Average private rental costs in Spelthorne from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019

Whilst there are some fluctuations, the private rental prices in Spelthorne have generally increased over the last five years.

Private Rental Market Statistics Median Monthly Rent (£)	1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015	1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016	1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017	1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018	1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019
Room	585	575	550	638	530
One bedroom	825	895	900	900	918
Two bedrooms	1,095	1,150	1,150	1,175	1,150
Three bedrooms	1,250	1,350	1,375	1,350	1,350
Four bedrooms	1,798	1,750	1,725	1,695	1,741

Table 4: Average private rental costs in Spelthorne from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019⁸

This means there is often a shortfall between the local housing allowance rate and market rent which Housing Benefit or Universal Credit claimants will have to top up. Spelthorne Borough Council is granted a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) budget by the Government each year, which can be allocated to claimants who need further help with their housing costs; this may include

⁸ Valuation Office Agency (2019) Private Rental Market Summary Statistics: April 2018 to March 2019, April 2017 to March 2018, April 2016 to March 2017, April 2015 to March 2016, and April 2014 to March 2015.

help with the shortfall in rent. DHPs are at the discretion of the council and are administered by the housing benefit department for those with special circumstances. DHPs may also be administered to households that are threatened with homelessness in an attempt to prevent them from becoming homeless. Table 5 outlines Spelthorne Borough Council's total expenditure on DHP for the last five years.

Year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Central Government contribution to DHP	£202,187	£120,689	£188,045	£294,771	£265,061
Spelthorne Council additional DHP top up	Nil	£79,311	£111,955	£105,229	£134,939
Total DHP budget	£202,187	£200,000	£300,000	£400,000	£400,000
Total DHP expenditure	£197,799	£199,995	£295,973	£337,860	£352,666

Table 5: Discretionary Housing Payment funding and expenditure

Table 5 outlines how much money we received from the Government and how much we topped it up using our own funds. The data highlights that our DHP expenditure has increased over the last five years. Our DHP budget is almost double what it was in 2014 and indicates a greater demand in DHP requests.

Welfare Reform Act

Changes in legislation and policy includes the 2012 Welfare Reform Act⁹ which adjusted the means-tested benefit system and introduced two new benefits Universal Credit (UC) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Universal Credit was introduced on a phased implementation basis and came fully in to Spelthorne's borough from November 2018. UC replaces six existing benefits: housing benefit, working and child tax credits, income support, jobseeker's allowance and employment support allowance.

Other significant changes from the Welfare Reform Act includes:

- Introduction of council tax support in replacement of council tax benefit.
- Introduction of the 'benefit cap' which limits the amount of benefit a person can claim. Outside Greater London, the maximum benefit threshold for couples and single parents with children is £384.62 per week and £257.69 for single adults.
- Emphasis on localised support as the social fund community care grants and crisis loans were abolished.
- Automatic recovery of benefit overpayments.
- Replacement of budgeting loans and interim payments with advance benefit payments.
- Under occupation rule through the introduction of 'bedroom tax' on socially rented properties where the number of bedrooms exceeds the tenants households composition.

⁹ Department for Work and Pensions (2012) Welfare Reform Act 2012 Regulations.

Spelthorne context

Spelthorne is located on the south-west edge of London and in the north-west of Surrey, neighbouring the boroughs of Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead, Runnymede, Elmbridge, and the London Boroughs of Richmond upon Thames, Hounslow and Hillingdon. The north of the borough borders London Heathrow airport. Spelthorne is densely populated and has five main urban areas: Ashford, Shepperton, Staines-upon-Thames, Stanwell and Sunbury. Outside these urban areas:

- 65% is green belt,
- 30% of the total area is either flood plain or reservoir,
- 17% of the borough is water, and
- We have 12 miles of River Thames frontage.

Almost half of Surrey's 20 most deprived super output areas are in Spelthorne. Three are in the ward of Stanwell North, two in Ashford North and Stanwell South and one in each of Ashford East and Sunbury Common. Spelthorne has the highest number of lone parent families and the highest level of child poverty in Surrey; it also has the highest under-18 conception rate in the county. That said, residents are largely healthy, with life expectancy for both males and females slightly above the national average.

Whilst house prices remain well above the national average, most residents are owner-occupiers (73%), followed by private rented (13%) and social rented (12%).

Spelthorne has a slightly lower population of under-30s (34%) compared to the rest of the country (37%), and a slightly higher population of 30-69 year olds (42%) compared with the UK average of (40%), The number of 70+ is 23%, which is broadly in line with the rest of the UK (24%).

Although the number of VAT and/or PAYE-registered business has fallen slightly over the past four years, Spelthorne has a low rate of unemployment: 1.4% of those economically active aged 16 to 64, compared to the South East (2.2%) and UK as a whole (3.5%). Heathrow Airport is a significant local employer, with 8.3% of Spelthorne's working population employed there. Significantly, 21.5% of those in work in Stanwell North are in low level employment compared to an average of 11.6% in Surrey. Average wages are slightly above regional averages at £630 per week for full-time employees.

Homelessness in Spelthorne prior to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Prior to the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018, when an applicant approached the Council for homelessness assistance, they were assessed by a housing officer to determine whether or not the Council owed them the 'main' housing duty. Under homelessness legislation the assessment involved five tests:

- Their eligibility for assistance;
- Whether they were homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days;
- Whether they had a priority need;
- Whether they had a local connection to the borough; and,
- Whether they had become homeless intentionally.

Approaches for housing advice

Prior to the change in legislation a total of 4,377 approaches to the Council were recorded since April 2014. Table 6 breaks down the case status of each approach. Cases whereby advice was given is where our housing officers determined that a client was not threatened with homelessness within 28 days, and was therefore given general housing support and advice. Those that were not prevented or relieved would have made a homelessness application which would have been assessed by the Council. Cases who approached as homeless on the day would have also gone straight to assessment.

Case Status	Total	% of Total
Advice only given	2,211	51%
Lost Contact and Withdrawn	761	17%
Not Prevented or relieved	513	12%
Homeless on the day	299	7%
Prevented or relieved	593	14%
Total	4,377	100%

Table 6: Approaches for housing advice by outcome 2014/18

Table 6: Approaches for housing advice by outcome 2014/18 indicates to us that approximately half our cases were advice only cases. Whilst we successfully prevented or relieved homelessness in just under 15% of our cases we also took homelessness applications from approximately a fifth of our total number of homelessness approaches. We lost contact or the application was withdrawn with just under 20% of our cases.

Homelessness prevention toolkit

The Council works to prevent homelessness through mediation and negotiation with landlords and tenants. In some circumstances, the Council may be able to use a discretionary prevention fund to help an applicant retain their home or find alternative suitable accommodation. For example, where an applicant approaches as threatened with homelessness due to rent arrears, the Council may give budgeting advice to help sustain the tenancy and signpost the client for more specialist financial support from the Citizens Advice Bureau to help resolve the issue through a repayment plan. Where possible the Council will always try to negotiate with a landlord or relative to prevent an eviction.

In cases where there is domestic abuse the Council will look at methods such as the North Surrey Sanctuary Scheme to try and prevent an applicant from becoming homeless. The scheme offers

preventative methods to make the home more secure and 'sanctuary like' where it is appropriate for victims of domestic violence to remain in their home. Spelthorne Borough Council spent £22,339 on implementing the sanctuary scheme across 29 households between April 2014 and March 2019. In 2018/19 we did a comprehensive review of the sanctuary scheme which resulted in the implementation of a streamlined process from referral through to job completion.

The outcome whereby assistance was provided to prevent homelessness is outlined in Chart 1. This demonstrates to us that negotiation with landlords to help tenants remain in their privately rented sector (PRS) accommodation is our largest type of preventative assistance. The figure highlights two further key points during 2017/18 where resolving Housing Benefit (HB) issues made up the majority of assistance followed by mediation, conciliation or legal assistance.

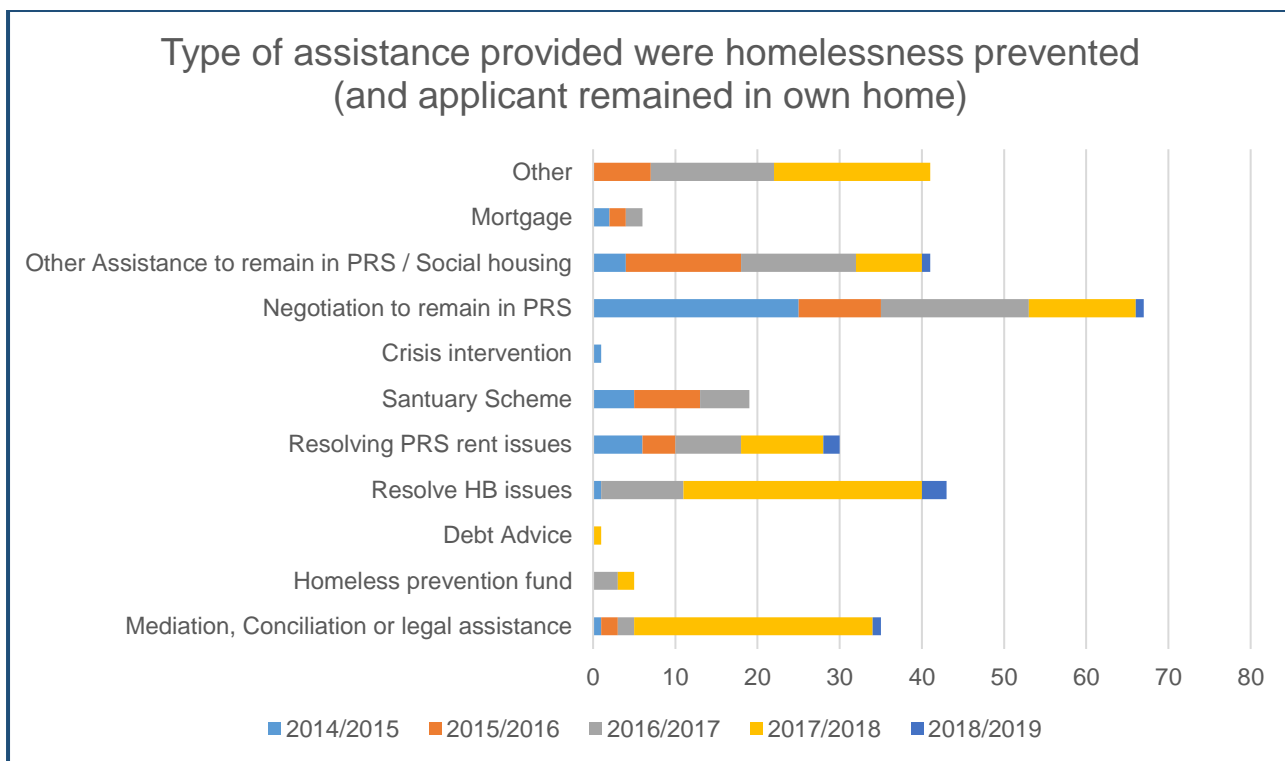


Chart 1: Type of assistance provided were homelessness prevented (and applicant remained in own home)

Homelessness applications

A total of 822 homeless applications were taken by Spelthorne Borough Council between April 2014 and March 2018. As demonstrated in Table 7, from the total number of homelessness applications, 540 were accepted under the main duty by Spelthorne Borough Council as they were eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need. Out of the total number of homeless applications, 13 were found ineligible for assistance due to their immigration status.

	Main s193(2) duty accepted	Eligible but not homeless	Eligible but intentionally homeless	Homeless but not in priority need	Ineligible	Lost contact or withdrew application
Total	540	64	38	43	13	124
% of Total	66%	8%	5%	5%	2%	15%

Table 7: Homelessness applications by outcome 2014/18

Information collated on any protected characteristics of applicants that have been owed the main duty in 2014/18 is outlined in Chart 2 and Chart 3. The majority of our cases were UK nationals and

around three quarters were White British. There is a still a proportion of various other ethnic groups and nationalities which demonstrates some diversity in the community and our clientele.

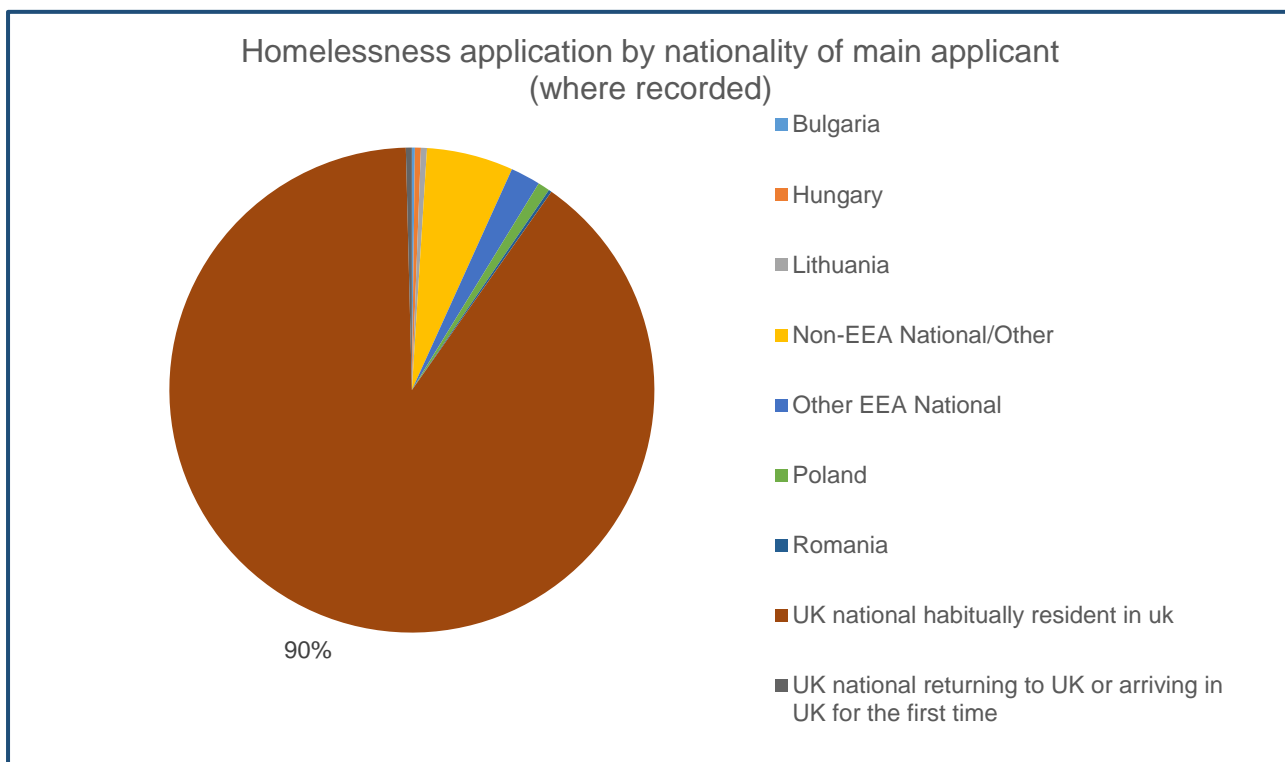


Chart 2: Homelessness application by nationality of main applicant (where recorded) 2014/18

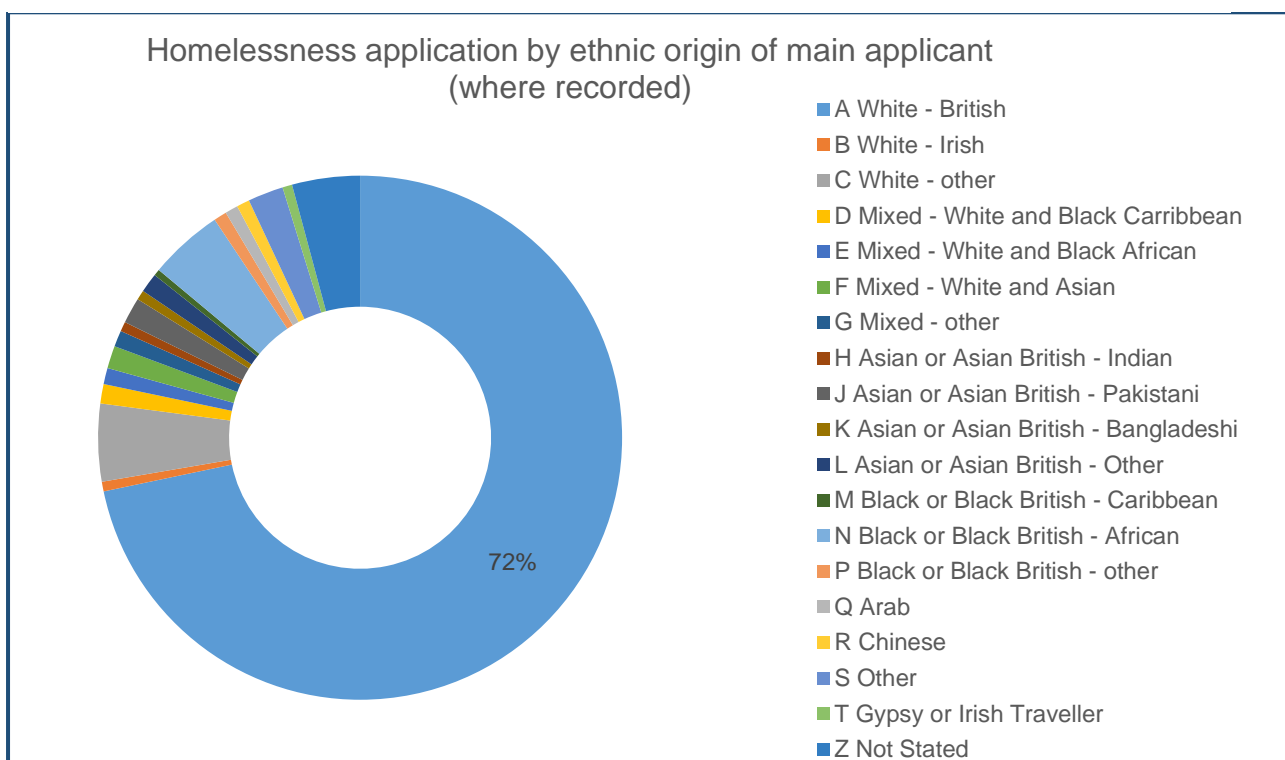


Chart 3: Homelessness application by ethnic origin of main applicant (where recorded) 2014/18

Priority need

Section 189 of the 1996 Act¹⁰ defines priority need as someone who has either:

- Dependent children in their care or is pregnant;
- A care leaver or vulnerable as a result of having been in care;
- Vulnerable due to a physical or mental disability or as a result of having been a member of HM forces;
- Threatened with harassment of violence which means they are unable to occupy their accommodation;
- Homeless from an emergency or disaster e.g. flood or fire;
- Vulnerable as a result of a custodial sentence, remanded in custody or other kind of offence, or
- Any other special circumstances that would deem a person to be vulnerable if homeless.

Chart 4 identifies the priority need of cases in which the main duty was owed. The data highlights the most common priority need when applicants have approached Spelthorne Borough Council for homelessness assistance. The largest category is homeless households with dependent children which makes up around 71%.

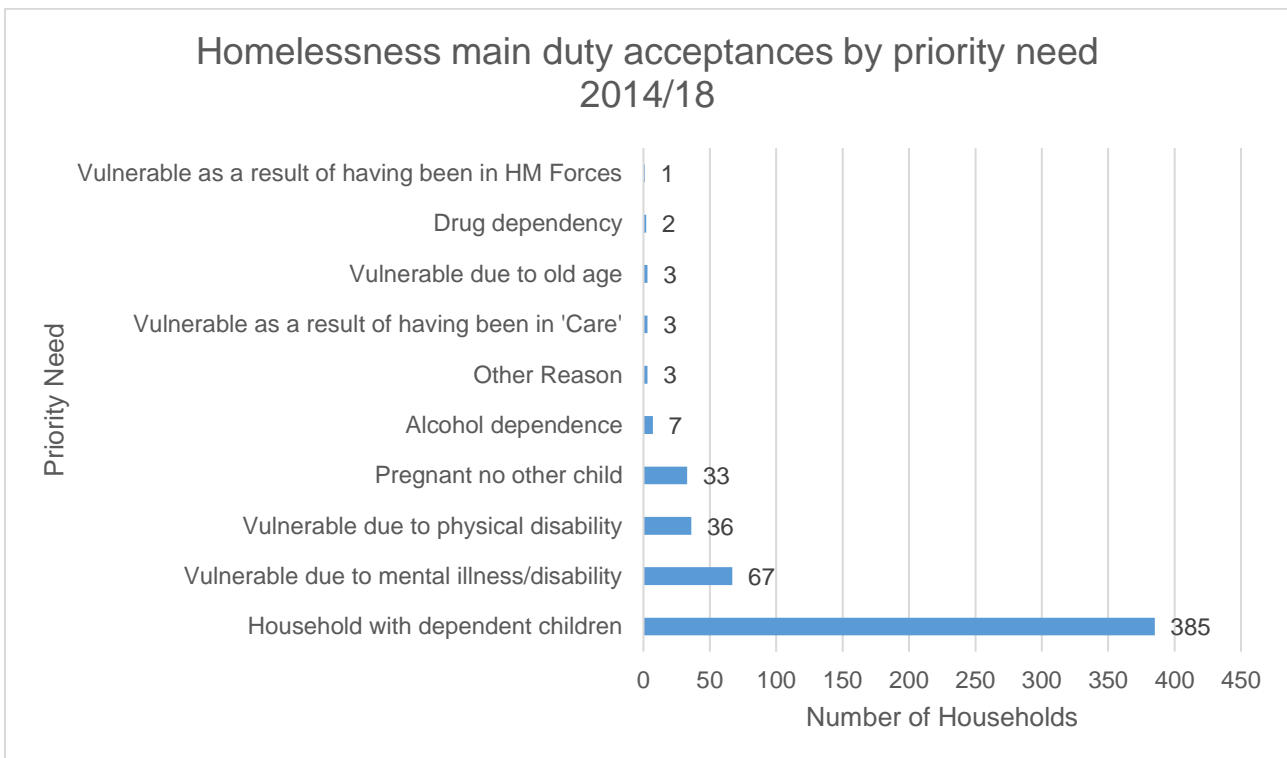


Chart 4: Homelessness main duty acceptances by priority need 2014/18

Reason for homelessness

Homelessness applications broken down by reason for homelessness between April 2014 and March 2018 is displayed in Chart 5. Spelthorne Borough Council's three biggest reasons are indicated as first, parents no longer willing or able to accommodate. Second, loss of rented or tied accommodation due to termination of an assured shorthold tenancy (for example, an applicant has been served with a S.21 notice). Third, other relatives or friends are no longer willing or able to accommodate. In comparison to the national data collected on reasons for homelessness

¹⁰ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (1996) Housing Act. The National Archives.

Spelthorne Borough Council’s top three reasons for households approaching as homeless or threatened with homelessness slightly varies.

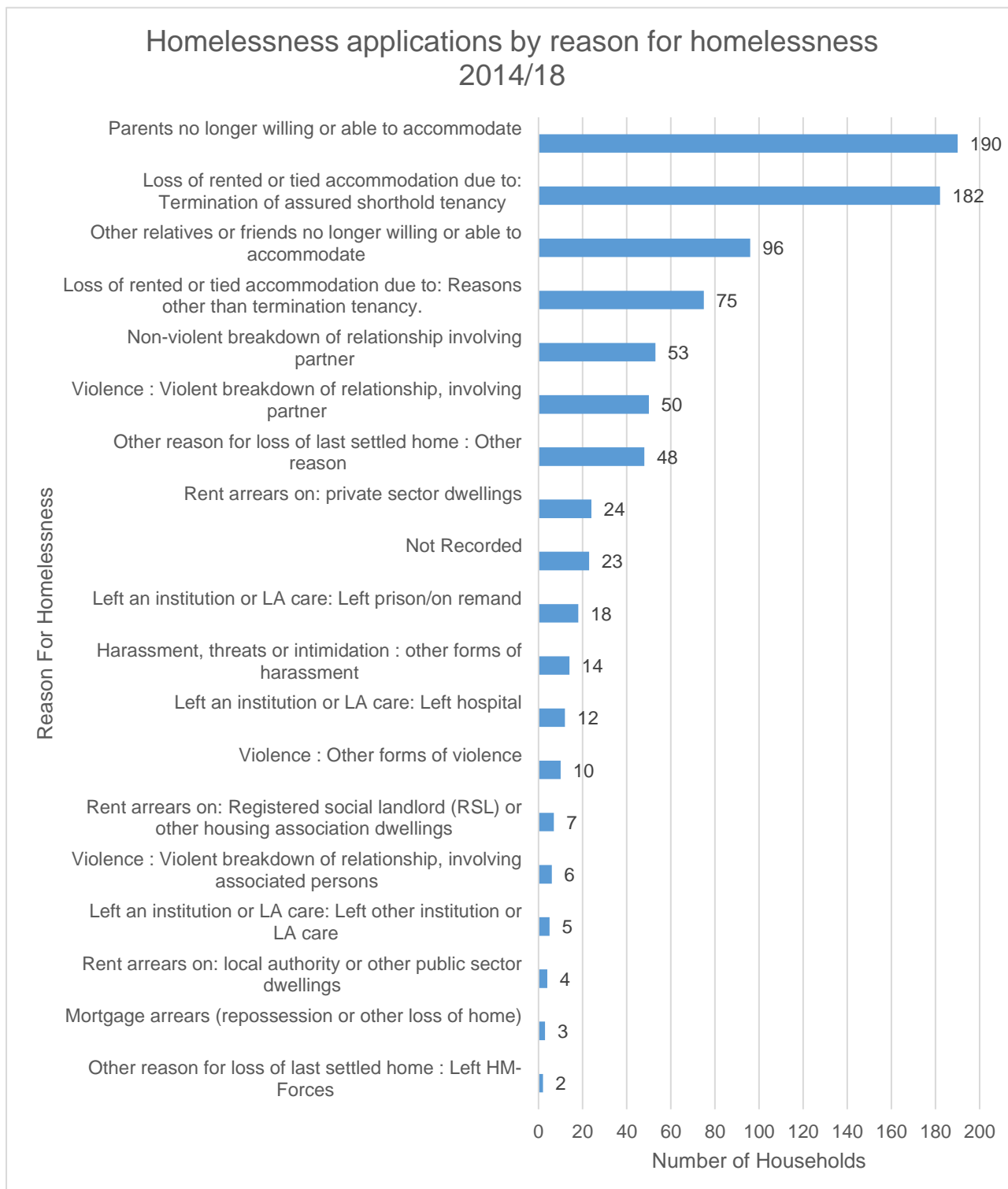


Chart 5: Homelessness applications by reason for homelessness 2014/18

Outcomes of main duty acceptances

The reasons for why the Council has discharged the main duty is indicated in Chart 6. The majority of households accepted an offer of social housing. This is followed by an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector. There are still 38 households who approached the Council for help prior to

3 April 2018, which have not yet reached an outcome. These are referred to as 'legacy' households and we are still working with them to help find suitable settled accommodation.

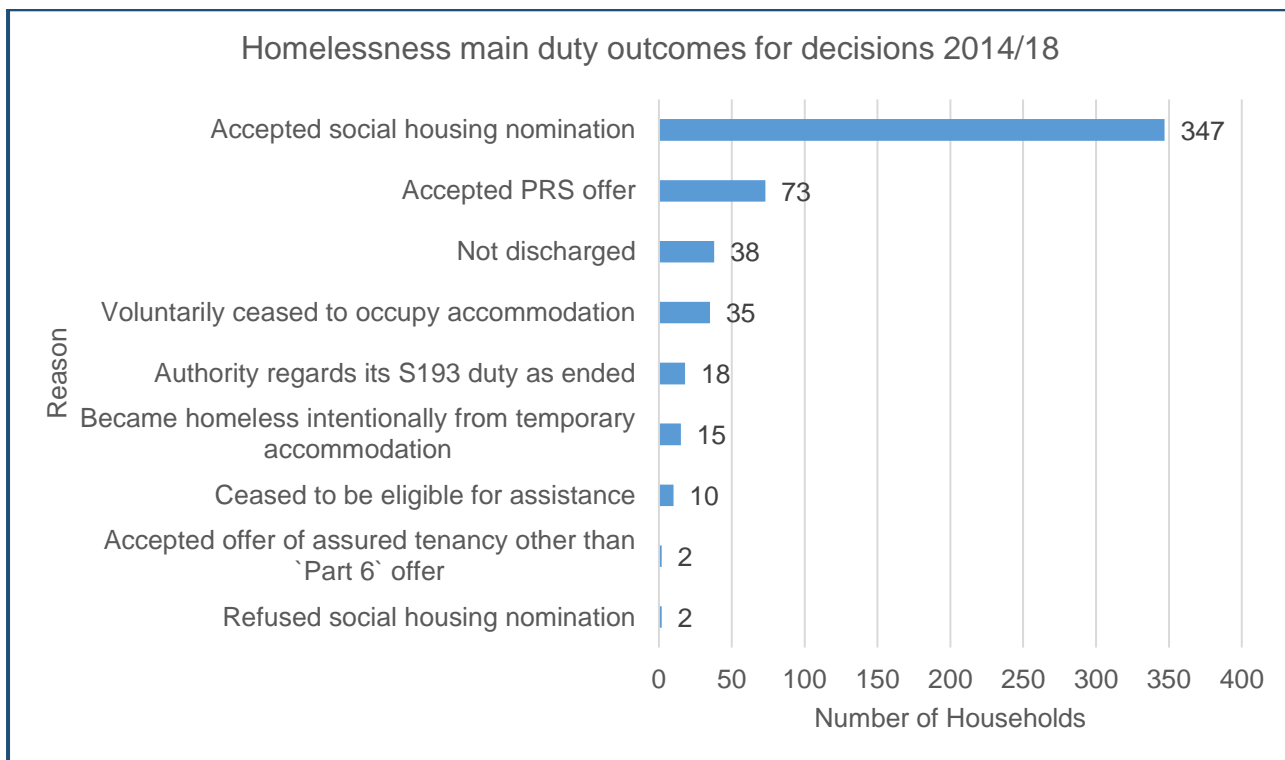


Chart 6: Homelessness main duty outcomes for decisions 2014/18

Homelessness in Spelthorne following the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017¹¹ was a significant change in homelessness legislation and was introduced in April 2018 with the main aim of targeting earlier homelessness prevention. Some of the main changes included:

- Earlier intervention. If a client is threatened with homelessness within 56 days the local authority is required to offer assistance to prevent homelessness. The previous time frame was 28 days.
- A Personalised Housing Plan (PHP) is now developed and agreed for each applicant which aims to outline reasonable steps for both the household and Council to take in order to try and prevent or relieve homelessness. The plan is designed with emphasis on a joint effort to help tackle homelessness.
- Introduction of the “duty to refer” which has been enforced on certain public bodies to refer households directly to the local housing authority who they believe may be homeless or at risk of homelessness in an effort to identify and offer support at an earlier stage.

The Homelessness Reduction Act places three specific duties on local authorities, this includes:

- **Prevention duty** – a 56 day prevention duty may be triggered when a client is threatened with homelessness within 56 days. This means the Council will try to prevent the client from becoming homeless within a 56 day period.
- **Relief duty** – if a client is already homeless or the Council has not been able to prevent a client from becoming homeless, a 56 day relief duty will commence. This means the Council will try to relieve homelessness by supporting the client to find alternative accommodation.
- **The ‘main’ duty** – if the Council has been unable to relieve a client’s homelessness the Council will consider whether a ‘main’ duty may be owed under homelessness law to help the client on a longer term. The Council will assess if the client is eligible, homeless, has a local connection, and has a priority need and whether the client has become homeless unintentionally. These are the original five tests undertaken prior to the HRA coming into force, and were unchanged by the new legislation.

In preparation for the change in legislation, Spelthorne Borough Council took 3 main steps to help implement the Homelessness Reduction Act¹²:

- 1) Five new members of staff were recruited and in post by March 2018 due to the expected increased workload. This included three Housing Options Officers, one Tenancy Sustainment Officer, and one Complex Needs Worker.
- 2) A new electronic case management system called HPA2 was developed by our system provider Locata. This was developed from the original HPA system and allowed for the creation of personalised housing plans, and allowed for the client to self-serve more easily. These individual plans are accessible to both housing officers and clients who can update and note any circumstantial changes. HPA2 also enables us to collate statistical information which we report back quarterly through the quarterly ‘H-CLIC’ return to MHCLG.
- 3) Staff and stakeholders were prepared through HRA training and two stakeholder events were jointly held with Runnymede Borough Council to inform our partners of the changes.

¹¹ Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (2017) Homelessness Reduction Act. The National Archives.

¹² Spelthorne Borough Council (2019) Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Housing Options Update 15 January 2019.

Approaches for housing advice

Between April 2018 and March 2019, a total of 1,223 households approached Spelthorne Borough Council seeking assistance as they were either homeless or threatened with homelessness. This is broken down in Chart 7.

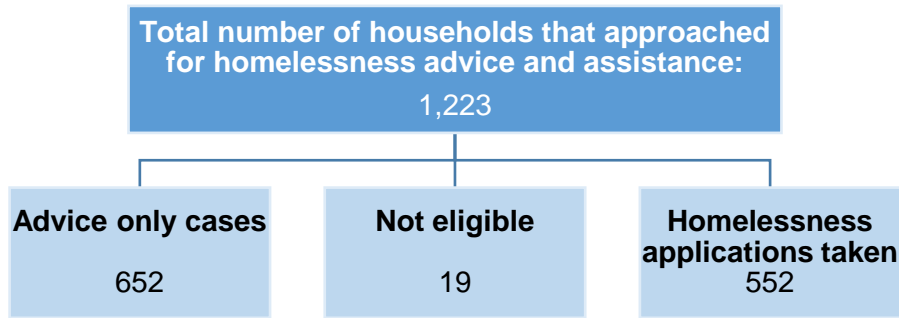


Chart 7: Approaches for initial housing advice 2018/19

Under s179 of the 1996 Act, the Council is required to provide free advice and assistance to residents who need help with their housing. Where we are approached and the issue is resolved purely through the provision of this s179 advice and assistance, we refer to these cases as ‘advice only cases’. This will also include cases where we have carried out non-statutory preventative work, for example before the 56 day trigger we may request a discretionary housing payment to help cover the shortfall in rent as a temporary measure.

As shown in Chart 8, where the main reason for the loss of a household’s last settled address was recorded, the main reason was friends or family no longer willing or able to accommodate, followed closely by the end of an assured shorthold tenancy in the private sector. This is in line with approaches prior to the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. There have been a number of cases recorded as ‘other reasons / not known’, which needs addressing.

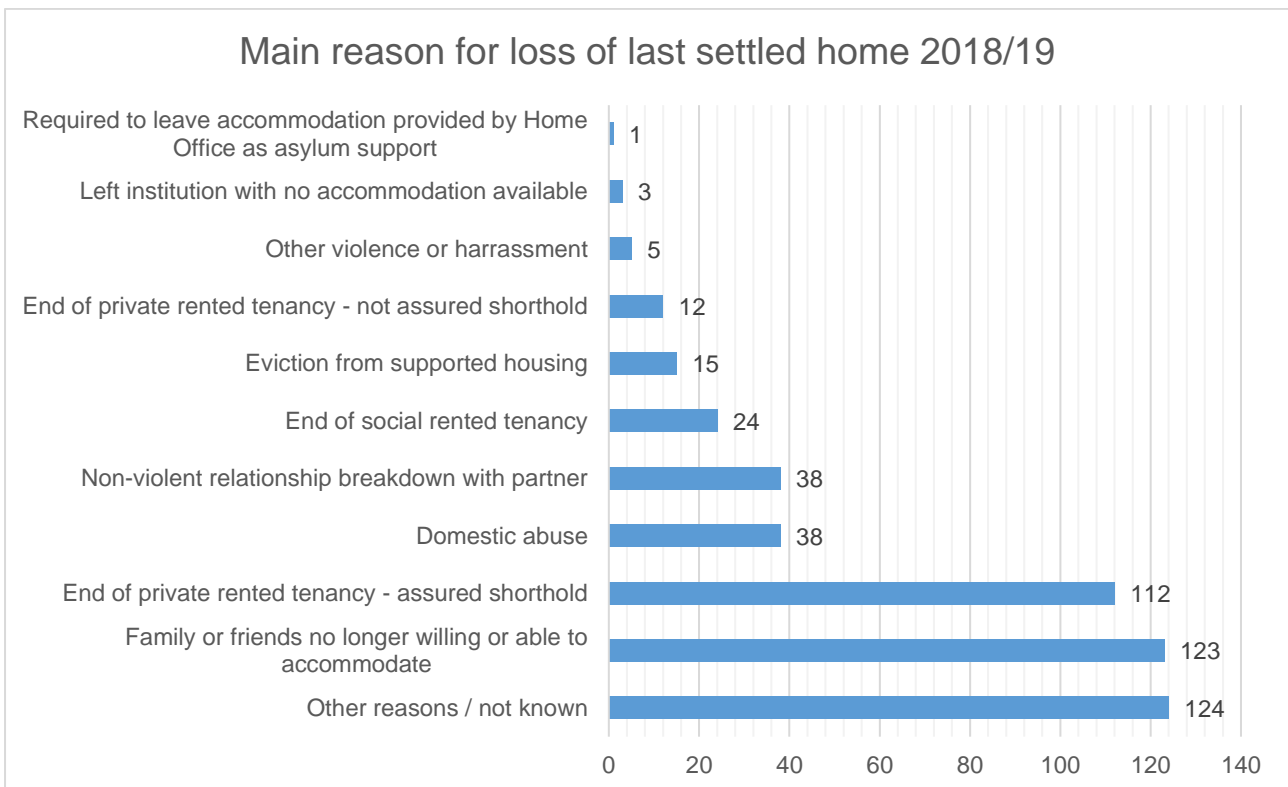


Chart 8: Main reason for loss of last settled home 2018/19

Once the trigger for taking a homelessness application is met, we carry out the assessment of circumstances and needs. From April 2018 to March 2019 a total of 552 applications were taken. Table 8 breaks down how each client was assessed upon application acceptance.

Assessment of Circumstances on Approach	Total	% of Total
Not threatened with homelessness within 56 days	46	8%
Prevention duty owed	355	64%
Already homeless relief duty owed	151	27%
Total	552	100%

Table 8: Initial assessment of circumstances for homelessness applications 2018/19

Meeting the support needs of homeless households

Throughout the course of 2018/19, we assisted a number of households with support needs. 63% of all households owed either a Prevention Duty or a Relief Duty had a support need. As shown in Chart 9 below, for one in five households, this main support need was mental health issues. Some of the ways in which we responded to these support needs are contained within the Partnerships section later in this review.

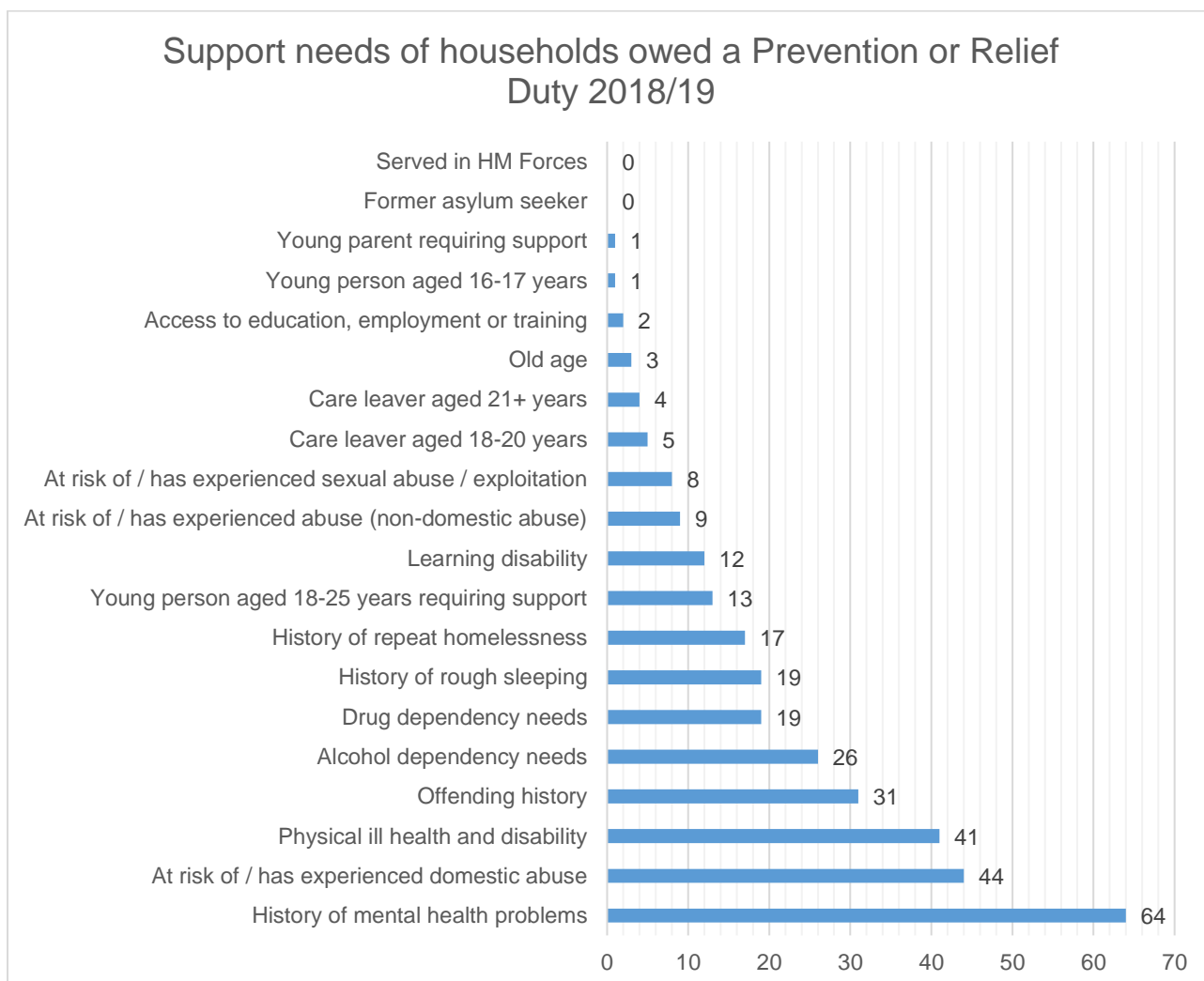


Chart 9: Support needs of households owed a Prevention or Relief Duty 2018/19

Nationality and ethnicity of households

In line with the years prior to the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the vast majority of households owed a duty were habitually resident UK nationals. Additionally, our data shows that we continue to serve a diverse range of ethnicities in our community. Chart 10 and Chart 11 show this data in more detail.

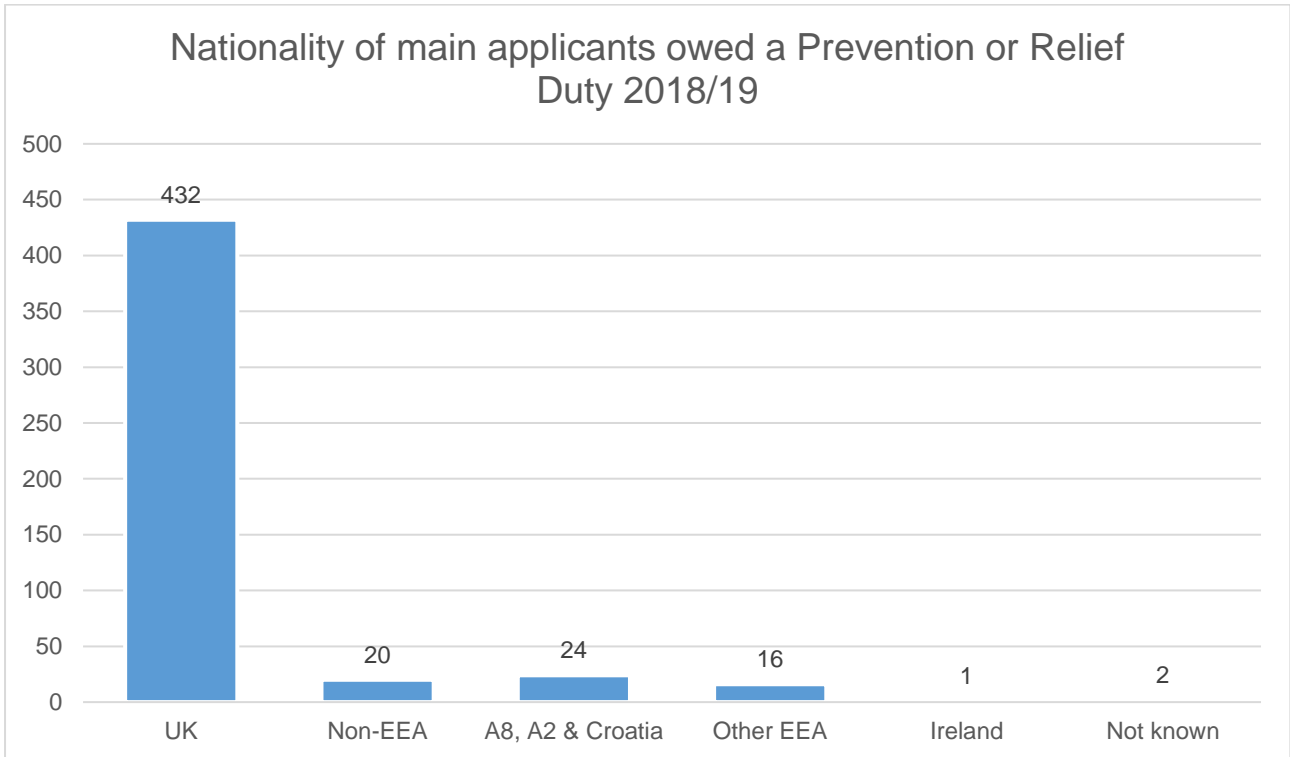


Chart 10: Nationality of main applicants owed a Prevention or Relief Duty 2018/19

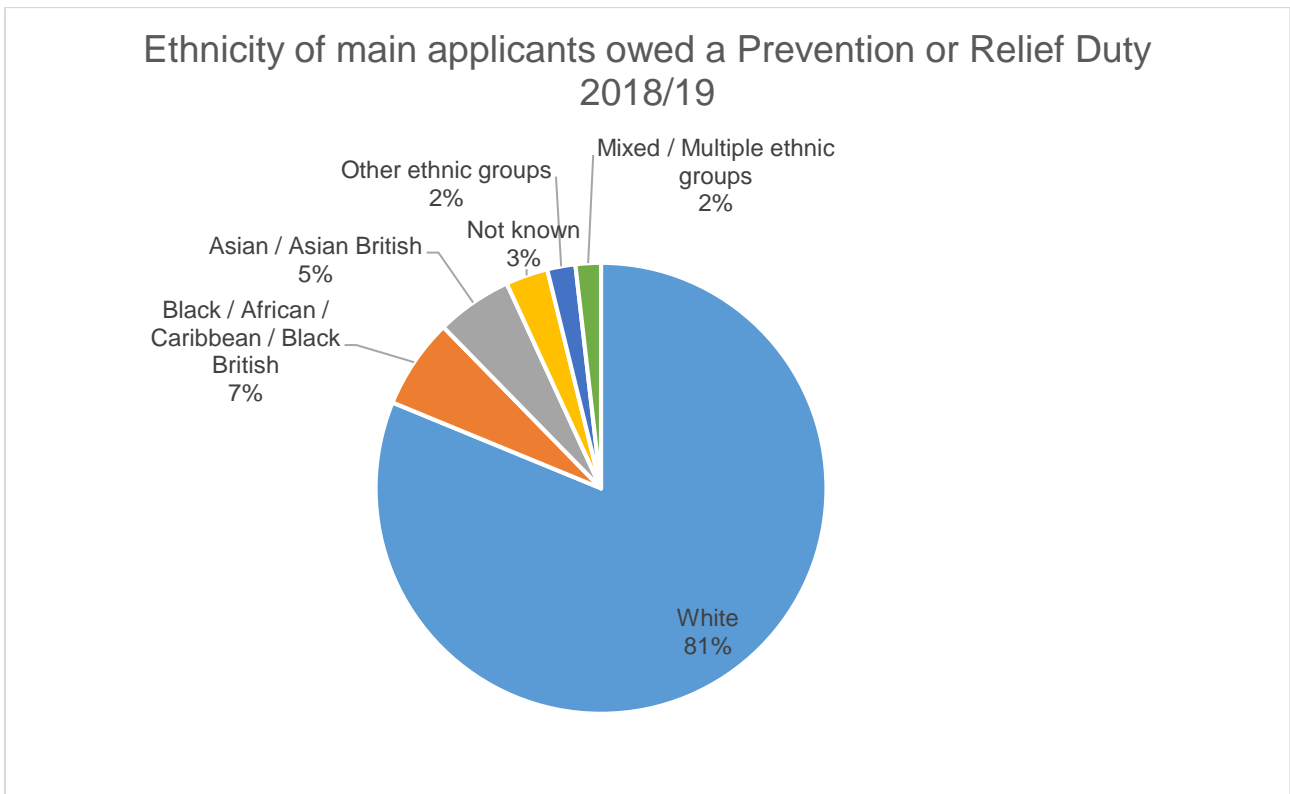


Chart 11: Ethnicity of main applicants owed a Prevention or Relief Duty 2018/19

Employment status of households

The majority of households approaching us for assistance are in employment, with 35% in either part-time or full time employment. Chart 12 breaks down the employment status of households.

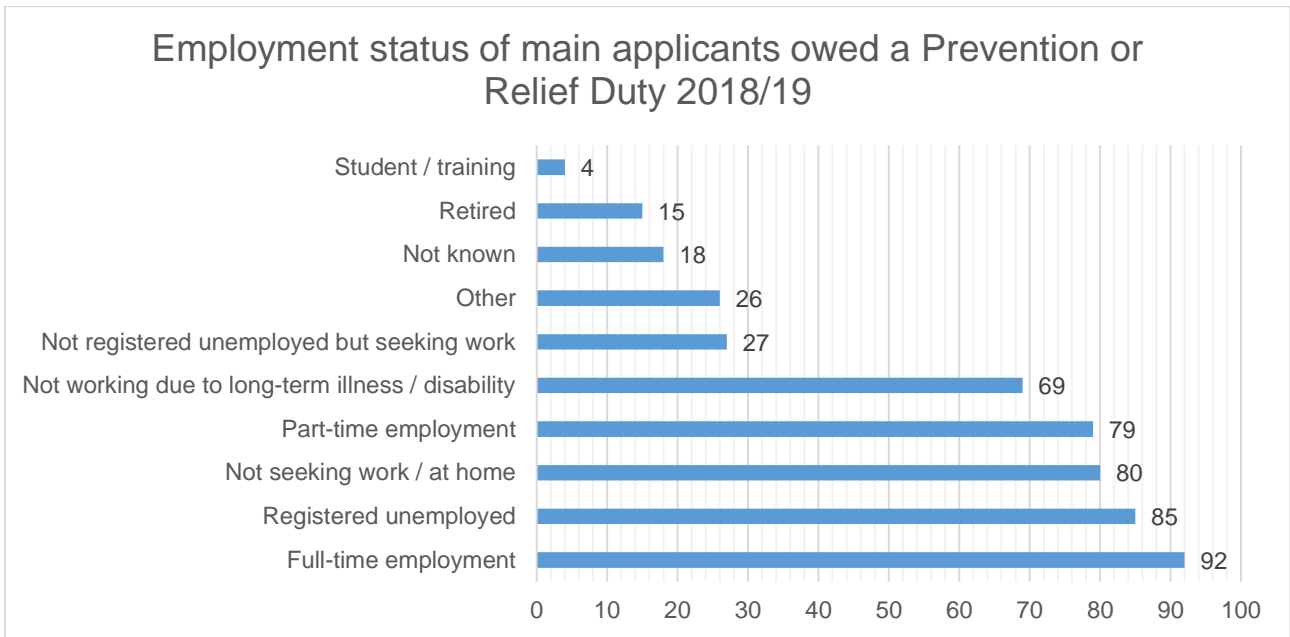


Chart 12: Employment status of main applicants owed a Prevention or Relief Duty 2018/19

Outcomes of applications

The outcomes of these applications are broken down by the three main duty types: Prevention Duty in Chart 13, Relief Duty in Chart 14 and Main Duty in Chart 15. The categories in green suggest a positive outcome for the applicant. This highlights that a significant proportion of households are assisted to either remain in their existing accommodation or are helped to secure alternative accommodation. It also indicates that we are still losing contact or applications are being withdrawn in a large number of cases. In summary:

- We successfully prevented homelessness in 50% of cases, with 65% of the accommodation secured for clients being in the private sector.
- We successfully relieved homelessness through securing suitable accommodation for clients in 31% of cases. 51% of the accommodation secured for clients was in the private sector.
- The Main Duty was discharged successfully in 86% of cases, with 22% of discharges into the private sector.

Outcomes of Prevention Duty discharged in 2018/19

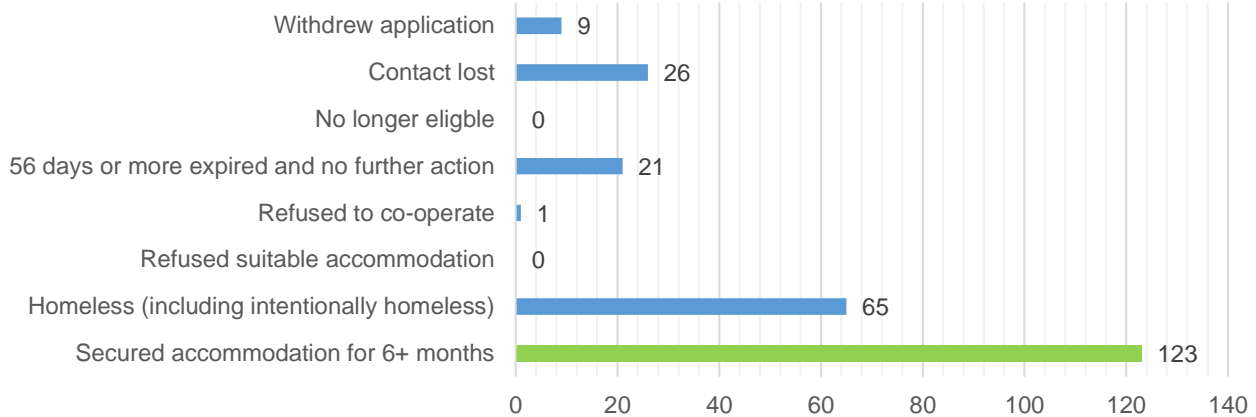


Chart 13: Outcomes of Prevention Duty discharged in 2018/19

Outcomes of Relief Duty discharged in 2018/19

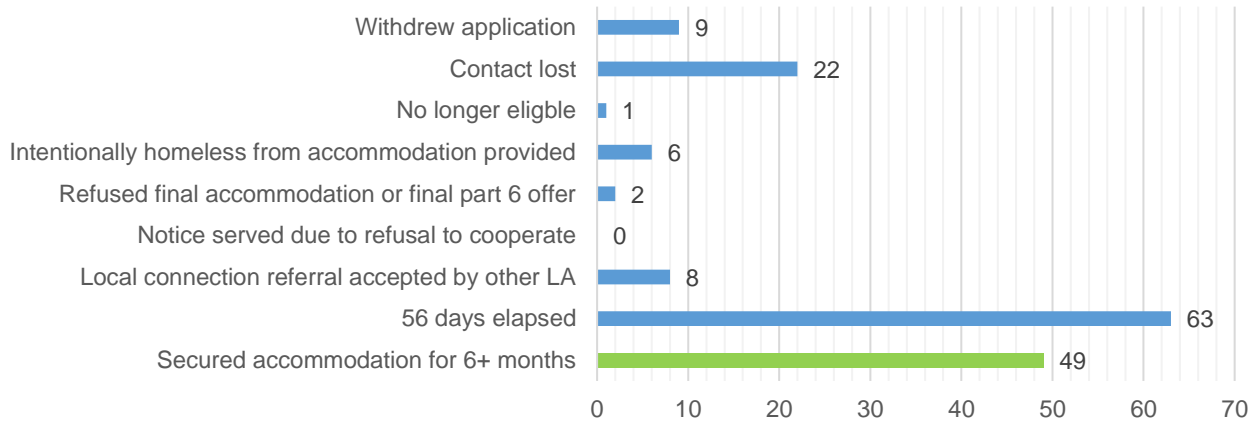


Chart 14: Outcomes of Relief Duty discharged in 2018/19

Outcomes of Main Duty discharged in 2018/19

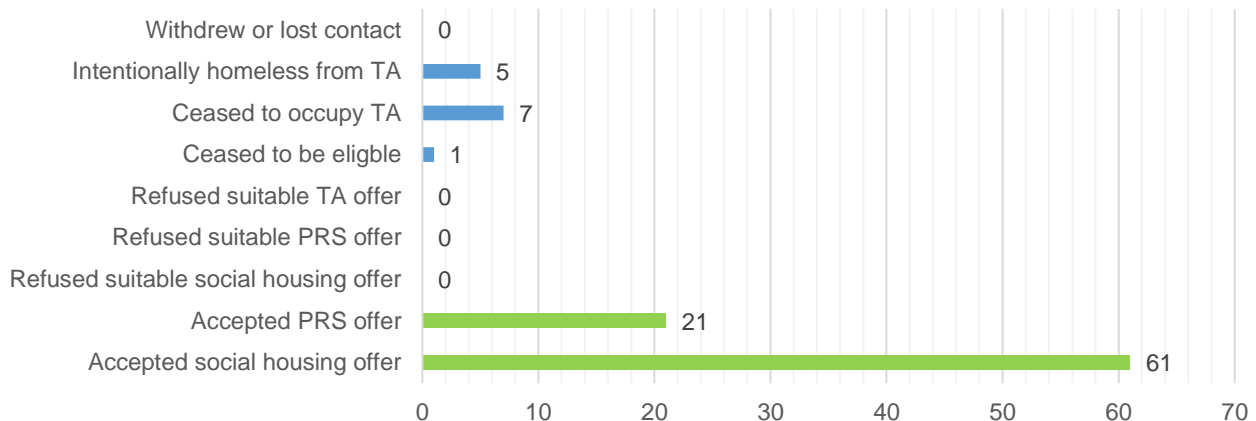


Chart 15: Outcomes of Main Duty discharged in 2018/19

Since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, Spelthorne Borough Council provides even earlier intervention to prevent homelessness. Inevitably, it is easier to tackle homelessness at an earlier stage with more time to assist and offer planned support. Spelthorne Borough Council has focused a large proportion of assistance to helping clients stay in their existing accommodation or help them in securing accommodation in the private rented sector.

Main Duty acceptances

Where we were unable to successfully relieve homelessness, we considered whether the household was owed the Main Duty under s193 (2) Housing Act 1996. This assessment involved considering whether the household was eligible, homeless, in priority need, had a local connection to Spelthorne, and that they had not become homeless intentionally. This assessment was carried out in 84 cases, and we accepted the Main Duty in 73% of cases. Where the Main Duty was accepted, 69% were in priority need because of dependent children within the household. This is in line with acceptances prior to the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

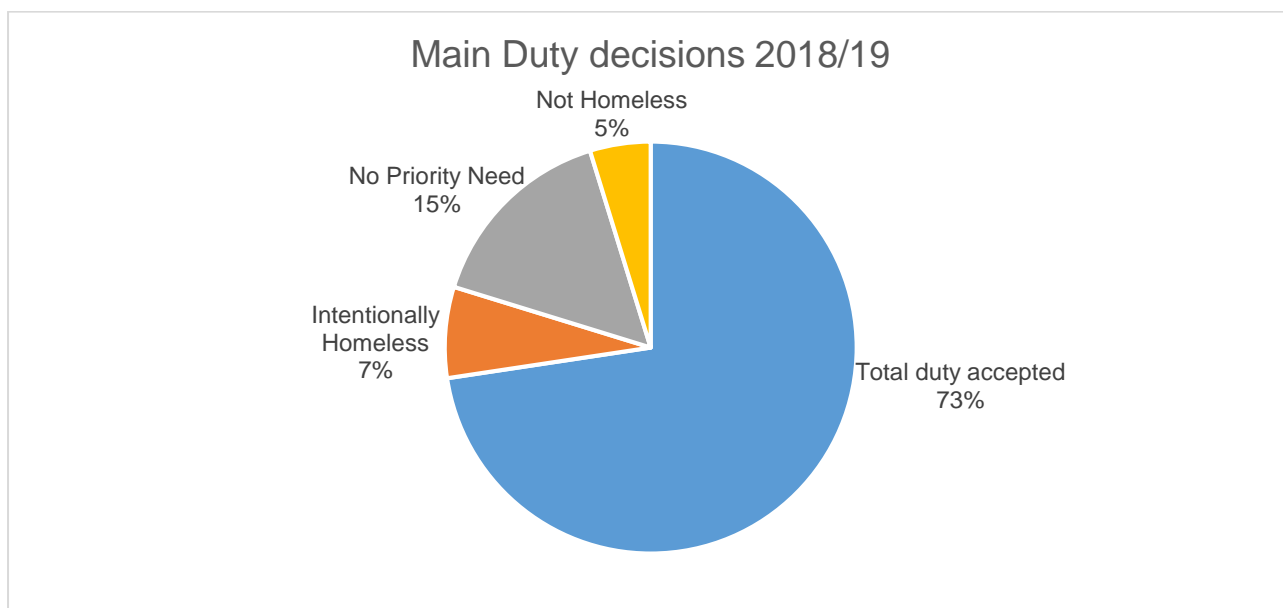


Chart 16: Main Duty decisions 2018/19

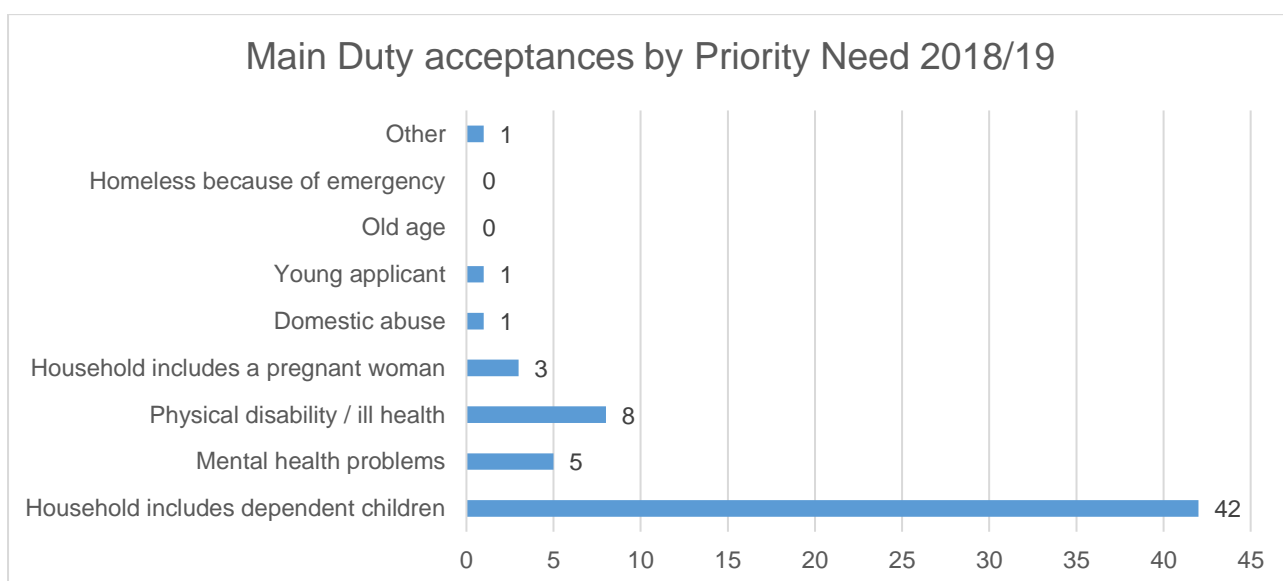


Chart 17: Main Duty acceptances by Priority Need 2018/19

Supply and demand of affordable and social housing

Spelthorne Borough Council does not own its own housing stock and as a result works closely with housing associations in the borough who offer social rented accommodation. Spelthorne Council transferred its housing stock in 1996 to what is now A2Dominion Housing Group. Social housing is extremely limited due to the high demand for affordable rented properties in the borough and nationwide. In order for residents to access social housing they must register with the Council's housing register by completing an online application on the Search Moves Website <https://www.searchmoves.org.uk/choice/>. By joining the housing register applicants are able to bid for properties in the local area through 'choice based lettings'. As previously mentioned, demand significantly outweighs the supply of social housing so the majority of applicants on the housing register will likely not be given the opportunity to be offered social housing.

Housing register

As of the annual snapshot date of 1st April 2019, there were 1242 households on Spelthorne's housing register who were waiting and trying to secure a social housing let. Table 9 shows the statistics were affected in the years of 2015 and 2019 as highlighted in yellow. The changes that occurred included a change in the housing allocations policy and the housing register re-application process whereby existing housing register applicants were invited to re-register an updated application with us. These changes explain the decrease in numbers on the housing register for the years 2015 and 2019 as not all existing applicants applied again.

Number of Accepted Housing Register Applicants					
Year	Bedroom Need				Total
	1	2	3	4	
2019	507	501	195	39	1242
2018	1030	828	281	40	2179
2017	881	720	228	40	1869
2016	721	661	182	34	1598
2015	549	493	153	23	1218
2014	1034	589	525	47	2195
	Numbers after re-application and new policy				

Table 9: Applicants registered for social housing by bedroom need as at 1 April each year 2014/19

The largest bedroom need on the housing register has consistently been one beds followed by two beds for the last five years.

Chart 18 breaks down the age band categories of our one bed need applications. This demonstrates that approximately 65% of our applicants with a one bed need are under 50 and are therefore exempt from age restricted properties, including sheltered accommodation. A comparison of the number of properties that are let with age restrictions is indicated further below.

Age of main applicant for households requiring one bedroom

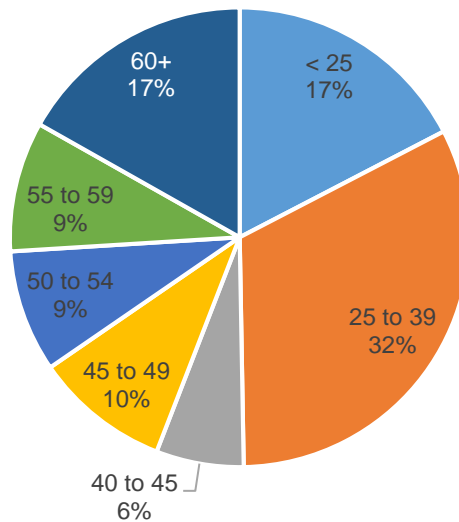


Chart 18: Age of main applicant for households requiring one bedroom

Supply of affordable and social housing

Over the last five years a total of 1,101 properties were let via Spelthorne Borough Council through Search Moves.

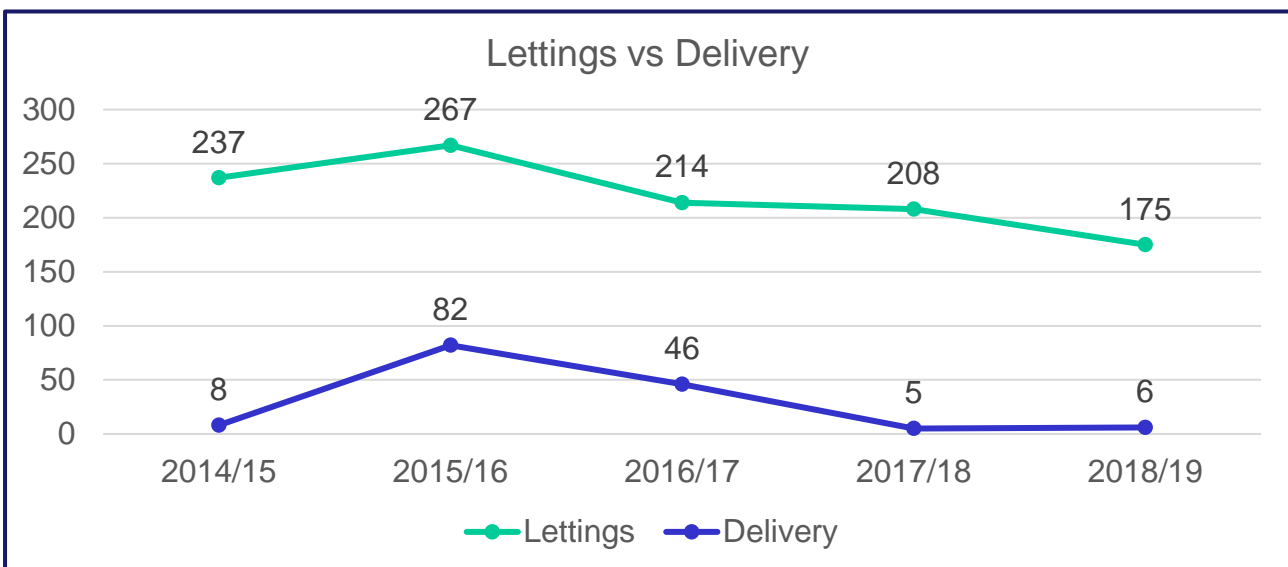


Chart 19: Lettings vs. delivery of affordable and social housing 2014/19

Social lettings have declined by approximately 25% in the last five years. A clear decline in social lets is also in line with a decline in the number of new affordable properties being delivered in the borough. In 2015/16 there was a slight peak in social lets which we interpret to be an impact of the Stanwell New Start regeneration development which commenced in 2009 and was led by A2Dominion. However, the consistent trend over the past four years is a decrease in social let properties.

Chart 20 and Chart 21 identifies the total number of Search Moves lettings by bedroom size and property type between the financial years of April 2014 to April 2019. Nearly half of the properties let were one bedroom properties, this was the highest number of bedroom size let through Search Moves. Out of the total number of 1 bedroom properties let, 97 were recorded as sheltered

accommodation and a further 203 were listed as age restricted. Age restricted properties accounts for nearly half of our one bedroom lets despite 65% of applicants with a one bed need being under the age of 50. As expected, the smallest number of properties let through Search Moves was 4 bedroom properties. This is mainly due to the limited availability of this property size. The majority of properties let were flats which make up approximately 63% of the total number of lets between the financial years of 2014 to 2019. The second highest property type was houses which made up approximately 23% of the total number of properties let.

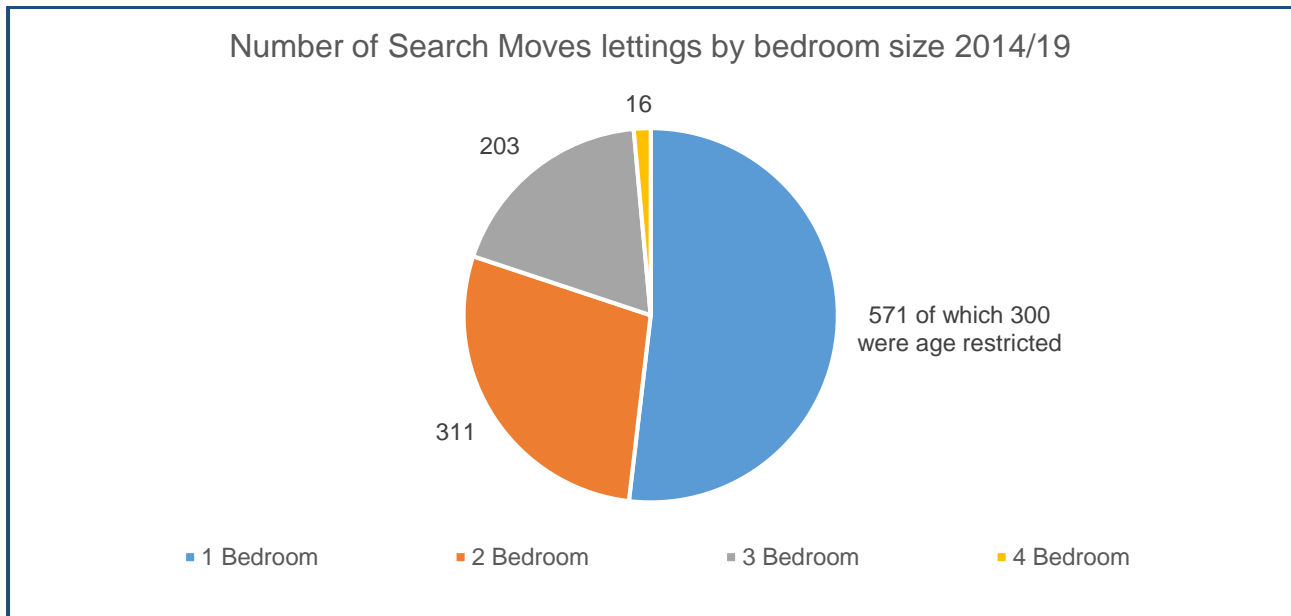


Chart 20: Total number of affordable and social lettings through Search Moves by bedroom size 2014/19

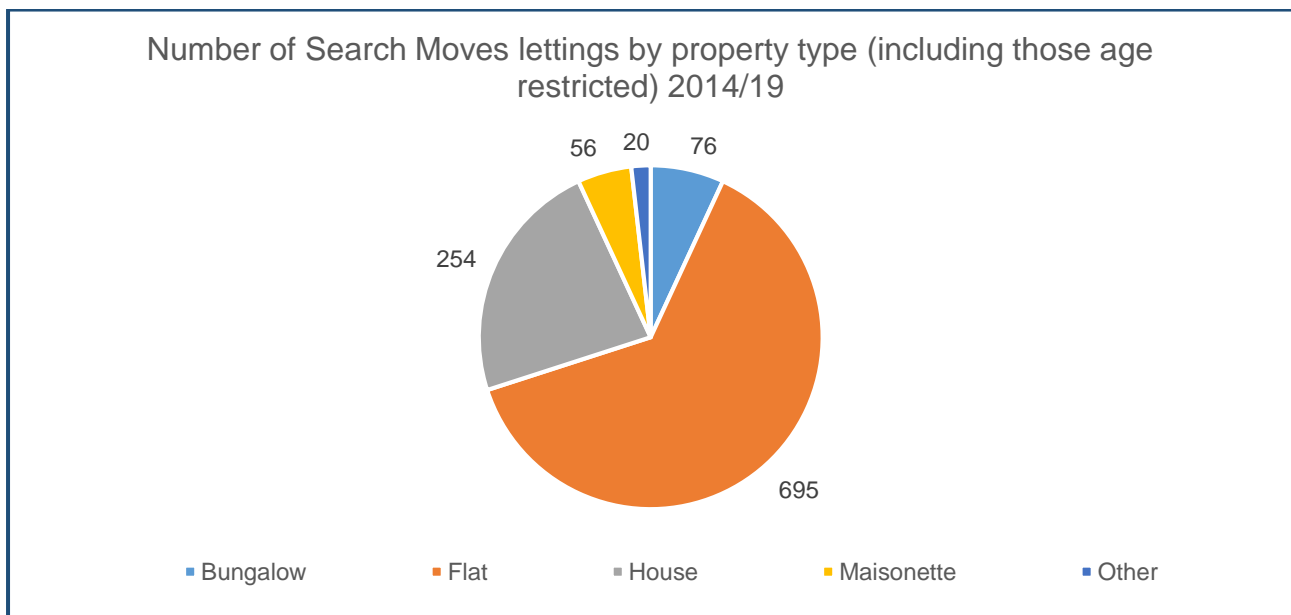


Chart 21: Total number of affordable and social lettings through Search Moves by property type 2014/19

Chart 22 and Chart 23 further clarify a decline in social lets. All bedroom sizes have generally declined over the five year period. Similarly flats and houses have declined whilst bungalows and maisonettes have generally stayed consistent. Overall these figures reiterate the decline in social housing lets.

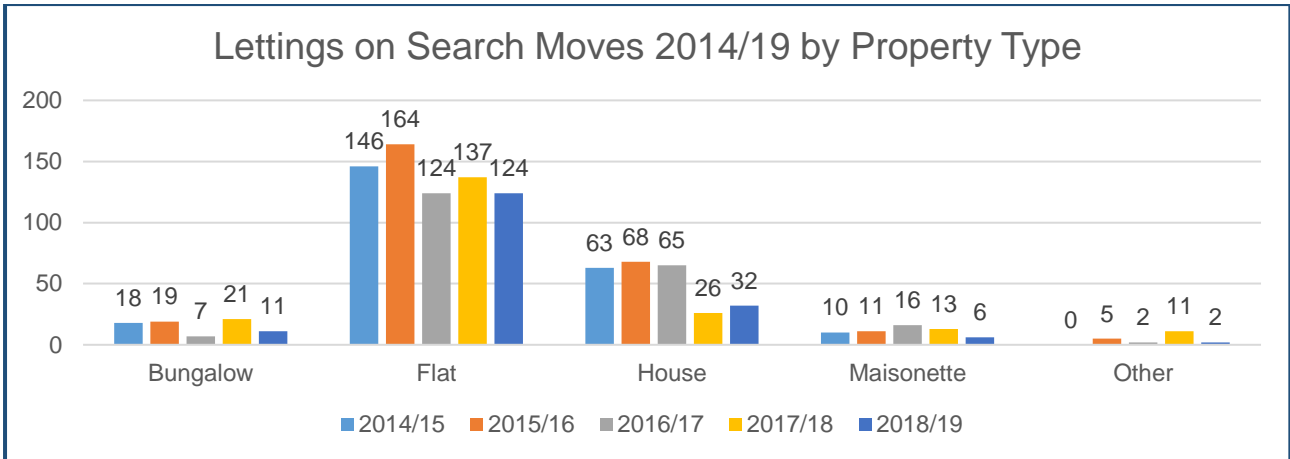


Chart 22: Total number of affordable and social lettings through Search Moves by property type and year 2014/19

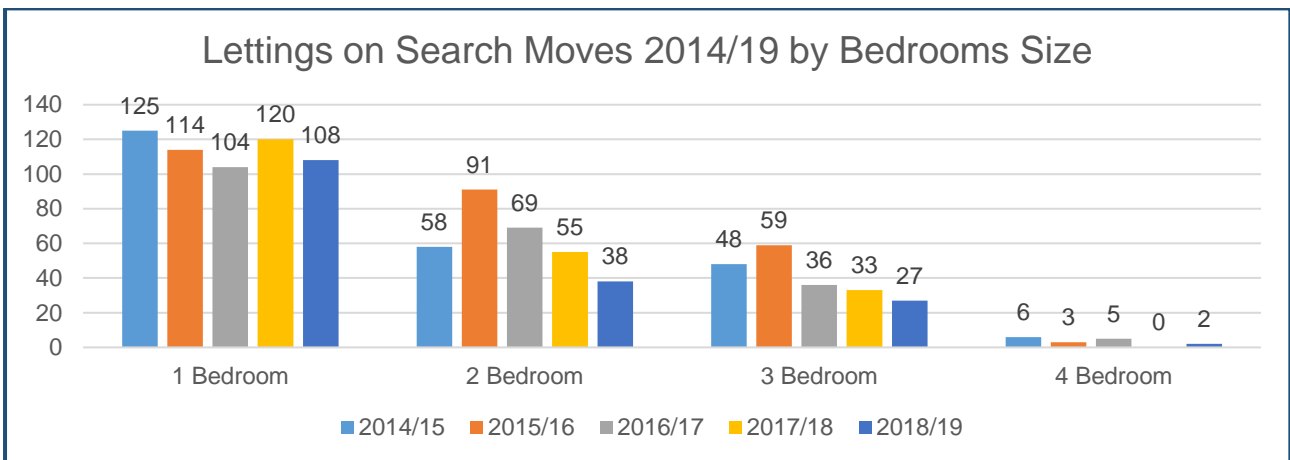


Chart 23: Total number of affordable and social lettings through Search Moves by property size and year 2014/19

Despite 1,101 properties being let through Search Moves between the financial years of 2014 and 2019, there was still a large number of households in this time period that were registered on Spelthorne Council’s housing register. There is an extremely limited number of social housing in comparison to the number of households seeking assistance and demand significantly outstrips supply.

The allocation of affordable and social housing to homeless households

The allocation of social housing is one way of helping households that are facing homelessness. Due to its limited availability and large numbers of others waiting for it, it is not a realistic option to resolve a homelessness crisis. The number of Search Moves lettings to homeless households when compared with all other households on the housing register between the years of April 2014 to April 2019 is demonstrated in Chart 24.

The data is broken down to those threatened or duty accepted as homeless versus all other households that were not. Ultimately a total of 383 homeless households were let properties through the Search Moves website over this date period. This makes up approximately 35% of persons let properties between the financial years of April 2014 to April 2019, the remaining numbers were all other households that were successful in bidding through the choice based lettings.

Number of Search Moves lettings to homeless households vs. all other households 2014/19

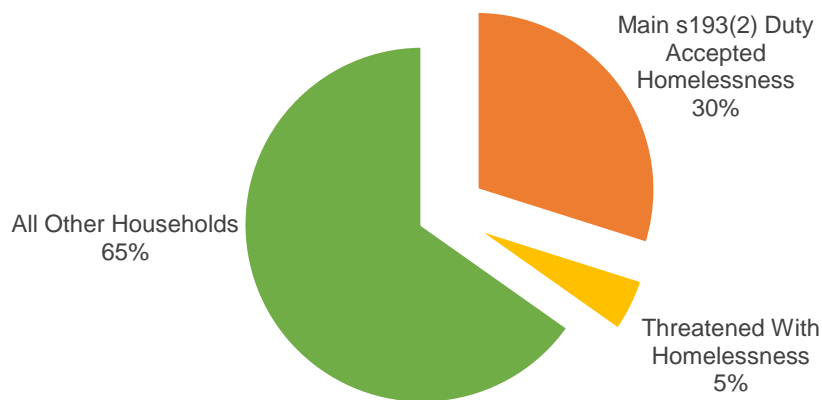


Chart 24: Total percentage of lettings of affordable and social housing through Search Moves by household type 2014/19

Table 10 is a short extract of a CIH table on lettings to homeless households in England and more specifically the South East region. An extra line for Spelthorne has been added to draw comparisons.

Area	% Lettings 2014/15	% Lettings 2015/16	% Lettings 2016/17	% Lettings 2017/18
Spelthorne	18	37	39	41
South East Region	17	15	20	24
England	14	12	16	19

Table 10: Extract and addition to Table 98c 'lettings to homeless households in England', 2019 UK Housing Review (CIH, 2009, p.230).¹³

On average 19% of socially let properties are let to homeless households annually in the South East region. This is in comparison to 15% nationally. Spelthorne averages out as 34% which is just over double of the national average and just under double of the South East region average.

¹³ Chartered Institute of Housing. M. Stephens, J. Perry, P. Williams, and G. Young (2019) 2019 UK Housing Review. CIH: Coventry.

Emergency and temporary accommodation

There are some instances where we as a Council are unable to prevent homelessness. A duty to provide interim accommodation arises where an applicant is assessed as homeless and there is a reason to believe that they are in priority need. This duty continues until the Council decides what further duty, if any, is owed to the household. There are two particular types of accommodation Spelthorne Borough Council use:

- **Emergency accommodation** (e.g. Bed and Breakfast): usually procured by the Council on a nightly basis. Although the Council has exclusive access to Harper House in Ashford, private providers are also used.
- **Temporary accommodation (TA)**: let on a longer term, although still temporary in nature. The Council owns two properties which it uses as temporary accommodation. These properties are let on non-secure weekly tenancies. We also have access to 40 properties owned by A2Dominion which are reserved exclusively for use as temporary accommodation. These properties are let on six-monthly assured shorthold tenancies.

Type of emergency and temporary accommodation used

To give an indication of how Spelthorne Borough Council uses interim accommodation, the data in Table 11 and Table 12 gives a snapshot of the 31st March 2019 to demonstrate this.

Accommodation type for properties within Spelthorne	Studio	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	Total
B&B (Travelodge)	0	2	0	0	2
Other Nightly Paid (Shared)	0	1	0	0	1
Other Nightly Paid (Self-Contained)	0	20	17	1	38
Temporary Accommodation (Registered Provider)	2	25	7	3	37
Temporary Accommodation (Spelthorne Council)	0	0	1	0	1
Total	2	48	25	4	79

Table 11: Snapshot of emergency and temporary accommodation placements within Spelthorne as at 31 March 2019

Accommodation type for properties outside of Spelthorne	Studio	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	Total
B&B (Travelodge)	0	1	0	0	1
Other Nightly Paid (Self-Contained)	0	12	2	4	18
Total	0	13	2	4	19

Table 12: Snapshot of emergency and temporary accommodation placements outside of Spelthorne as at 31 March 2019

At the 31st March 2019, the largest accommodation type that the Council arranged for eligible homeless applicants is self-contained nightly paid accommodation which was provided to 56 households. Part of this reasoning may be due to the Council's duty to provide suitable accommodation to households with children or expectant children. Under the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 2003, B&B accommodation with shared facilities is not considered suitable for families with children or those who are pregnant where the placement is beyond six weeks. Therefore, this may influence the numbers in self-contained accommodation.

This is further echoed by the second largest accommodation type which is temporary accommodation from a registered provider which totals to 37. The smallest accommodation types are B&B and shared nightly paid premises.

Location of temporary and emergency accommodation used

Where suitable, the Council aims to use accommodation within Spelthorne to reduce disruption to households and their links to the borough. There are some instances where this is not possible or not suitable so some households are placed out of borough. However, the information highlights that in total 79 households were placed in borough compared to 19 that were placed out of borough. Chart 25 demonstrates that the majority of placements are made within Spelthorne.

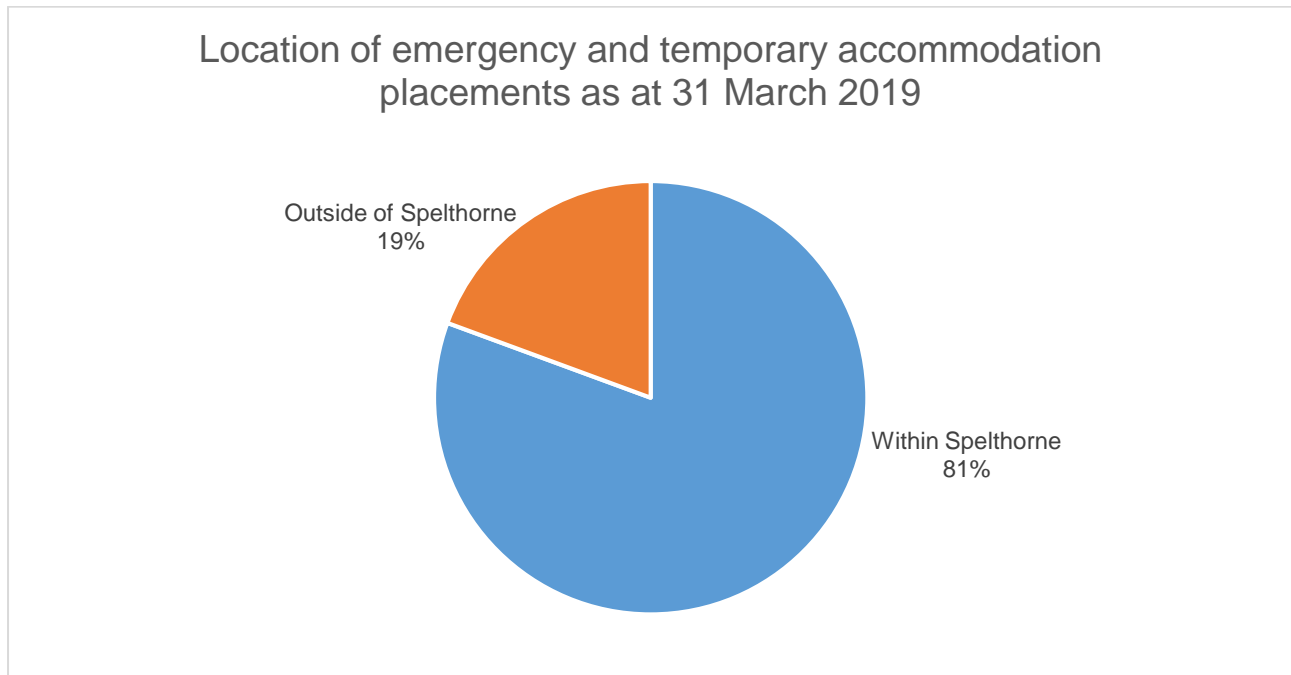


Chart 25: Location of emergency and temporary accommodation placements as at 31 March 2019

Chart 26 shows households in emergency and temporary accommodation as at the snapshot date of 31 March 2019 were made up of predominantly families with one child, closely followed by families with two children.

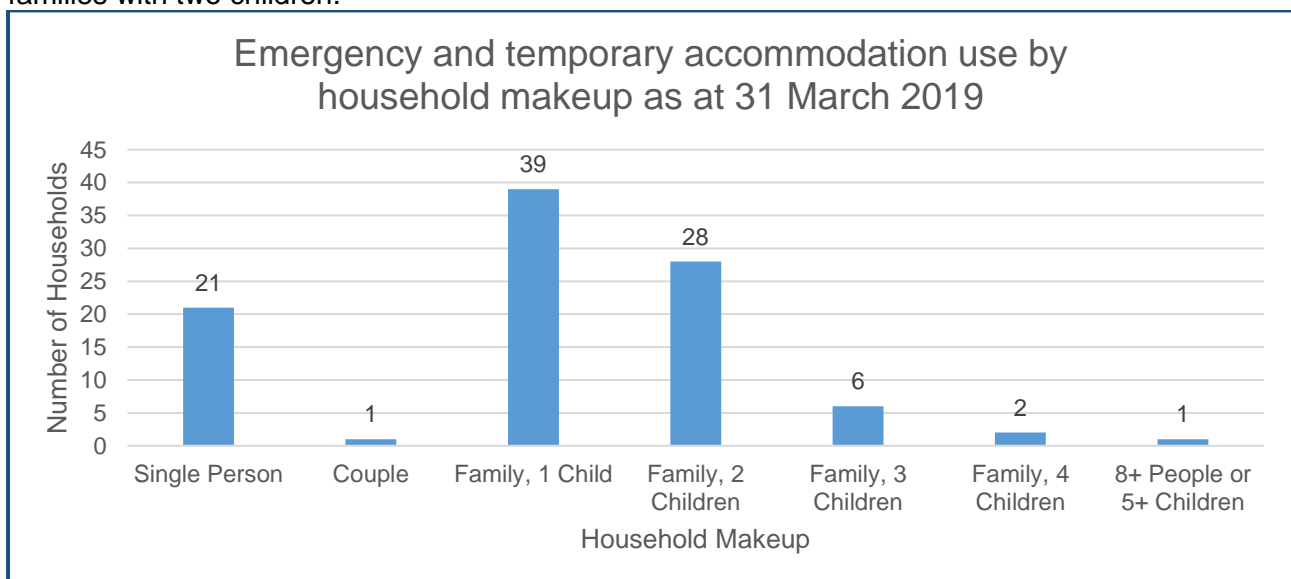


Chart 26: Emergency and temporary accommodation use by household makeup as at 31 March 2019

Length of stay in temporary and emergency accommodation

We try to minimise the length of time a household may have to be in emergency or temporary accommodation. However, this is strongly dependent on the availability of alternative suitable accommodation that meets the housing needs of the client. The average length of stay in temporary accommodation is shown in Chart 27; this is based on 56 households and their total length of stay after they exited their temporary accommodation. Unfortunately there has been an increase in the average time a household spends in temporary accommodation over the past four years.

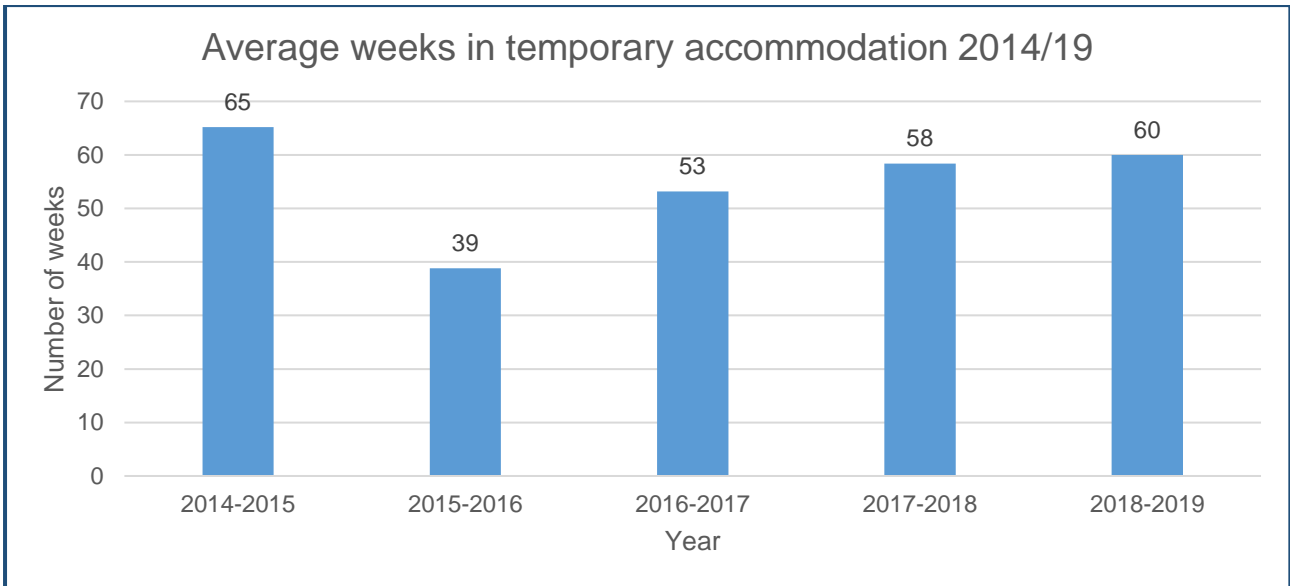


Chart 27: Average weeks in temporary accommodation 2014/19

In comparison, Chart 28 is based on 597 households and their total length of stay after they exited their bed and breakfast accommodation. The average time in this type of accommodation for the last five years has significantly decreased from 47 weeks in 2014/15 to 14 weeks in 2018/19. This is a significant success compared to previous years and is indicative of our service provision in moving households on from B&B to more suitable accommodation.

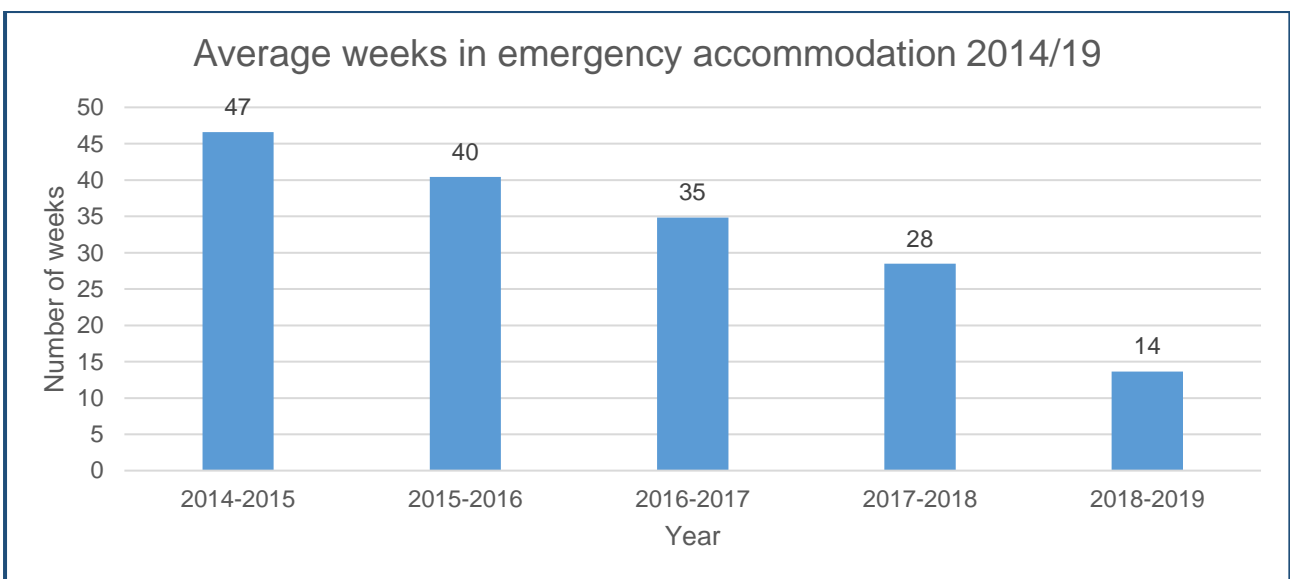


Chart 28: Average weeks in emergency accommodation 2014/19

Access to the private rented sector

Privately rented accommodation is our primary route to help relieve homelessness in the borough and is what we will use in the first instance to help prevent or relieve homelessness. One of the main issues our applicants have when securing privately rented accommodation is the large costs incurred up front by the tenant. This is usually one month's rent in advance and a 5 week deposit. When facing the threat of homelessness these large costs can cause pressures on households who may not be in a position to afford this.

Affordability of private sector housing is one of the big issues households face. There is usually a large sum of monies requested from tenants to secure a private tenancy. Expenses usually consist of a deposit, rent in advance and other costs incurred from setting up, renewing or ending the tenancy. In a bid to help our homeless applicants find and secure privately rented accommodation, Spelthorne Borough Council offers three methods of support.

1. **Prevention Fund** – With the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act and in an attempt to prevent homelessness at the earliest possible stage. Spelthorne Council has utilised a prevention fund to help assist applicants in securing suitable accommodation through a loaned deposit and rent in advance. The applicant enters in to an affordable repayment plan with the council to pay these monies back. In the last 5 years, Spelthorne Borough Council has spent a total of £244,232.36 towards homelessness prevention.
2. **Rent Deposit Scheme** – Was designed by the Council to assist homeless families with a bond deposit and one month's rent in advance to secure privately rented accommodation. This was the Council's original scheme that was introduced in 1997 to help single persons and childless couples that were homeless or threatened with homelessness. In 2007 the scheme was amended to run as a family scheme. In total, 245 landlords have signed up to the Rent Deposit Scheme across 368 properties since 2007. Between the financial years of 2014 and 2019 Spelthorne Council made 88 of these placements. We have since produced a new scheme as outlined below but still offer the rent deposit scheme where we can.
3. **Rent Assure Scheme** – Introduced in December 2016 offers a rent guarantee scheme to landlords with an aim of them renting their properties through the Council to families who have been accepted as homeless. Additional incentives offered to landlords is outlined in part of the scheme's leaflet displayed. To April 2019, there have been 59 landlords that have signed up to the Rent Assure Scheme, across 78 properties. The data below indicates the scheme's success in forming tenancies with families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and landlords. Spelthorne Council has demonstrated its good working relationships with landlords as it's noted that landlords who have started on the scheme have come back with other properties to rent through the Rent Assure Scheme.

Benefits of this completely free scheme include:

- rent being paid directly to landlords by the Council at a fair guaranteed local market rate
- a rent guarantee and five week security repair bond agreement which lasts two years
- free assured short-hold tenancy agreement
- free tenant finding service
- choice of approved tenants
- free professional inventory service
- free tenancy support service
- tenant training programme
- ongoing support for landlord and prospective tenants

Image 1: Summary of Rent Assure Scheme benefits to landlords

Clients placed on Spelthorne Rent Assure 2016 - 2019

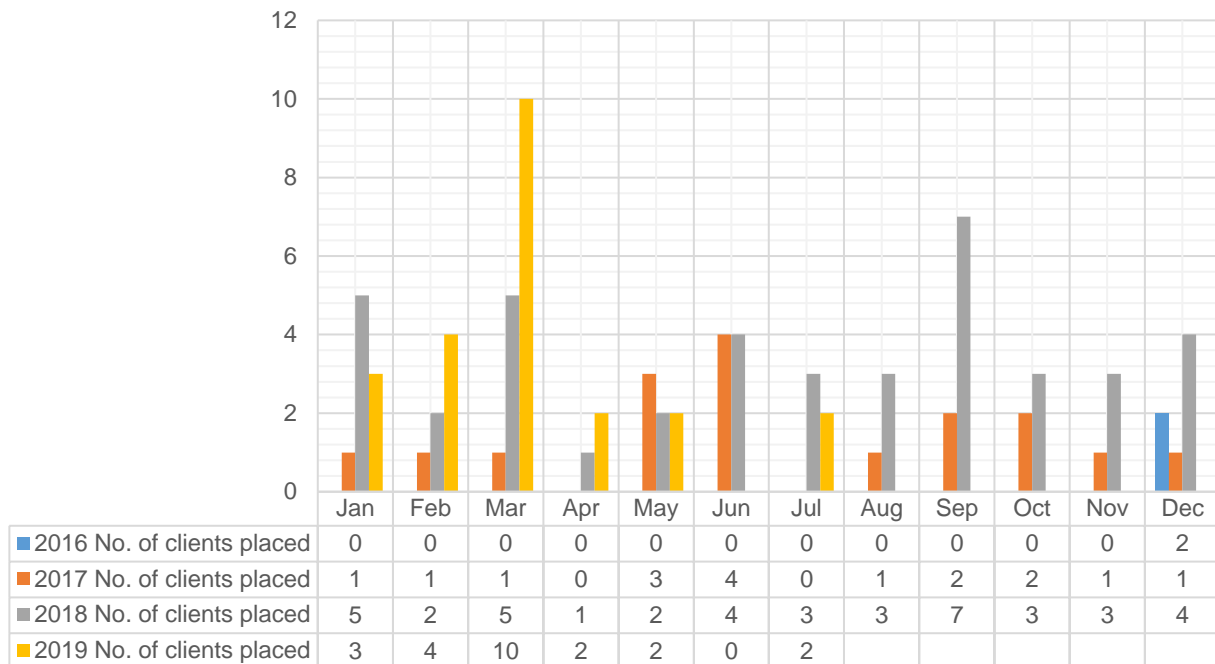


Chart 29: Total placements on Spelthorne Rent Assure 2016/19

Chart 29 details the number of placements which have been made under the Spelthorne Rent Assure Scheme. Noticeably the number of households placed on the scheme increased at two major points; September 2018 and March 2019. During these two separate occasions Spelthorne Borough Council worked with Knowle Green Estates (KGE). KGE is a company wholly owned by Spelthorne Borough Council, set up to manage residential accommodation within the borough. All of the new KGE properties to date have been let through the Spelthorne Rent Assure scheme and the rent was capped at the local housing allowance. The impact of Spelthorne Borough Council working with KGE means we have been able to help assist 11 homeless households in to affordable privately rented properties. We have built a good working partnership with KGE, they consult Spelthorne Borough Council during decision making on future housing projects. The benefit of this is that future specifications of housing planning by KGE will consider the housing need and demand in Spelthorne.

Spelthorne Rentstart

Whilst the Rent Assure scheme helps families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, Spelthorne Council works closely with a local charity called Spelthorne Rentstart who are able to offer support to single persons and childless couples. Rentstart offers similar incentives for landlords to the Rent Deposit scheme in that they help tenant's secure privately rented accommodation through wholly or part funding a rent deposit through their deposit guarantee scheme and offer ongoing tenancy sustainment support.

As highlighted in Chart 30, Rentstart have successfully assisted a total of 1,747 clients between the financial years of 2014 to 2019. Assistance was given through housing advice which was provided to 1,362 clients and an additional 385 were supported in to accommodation through the Deposit Scheme.

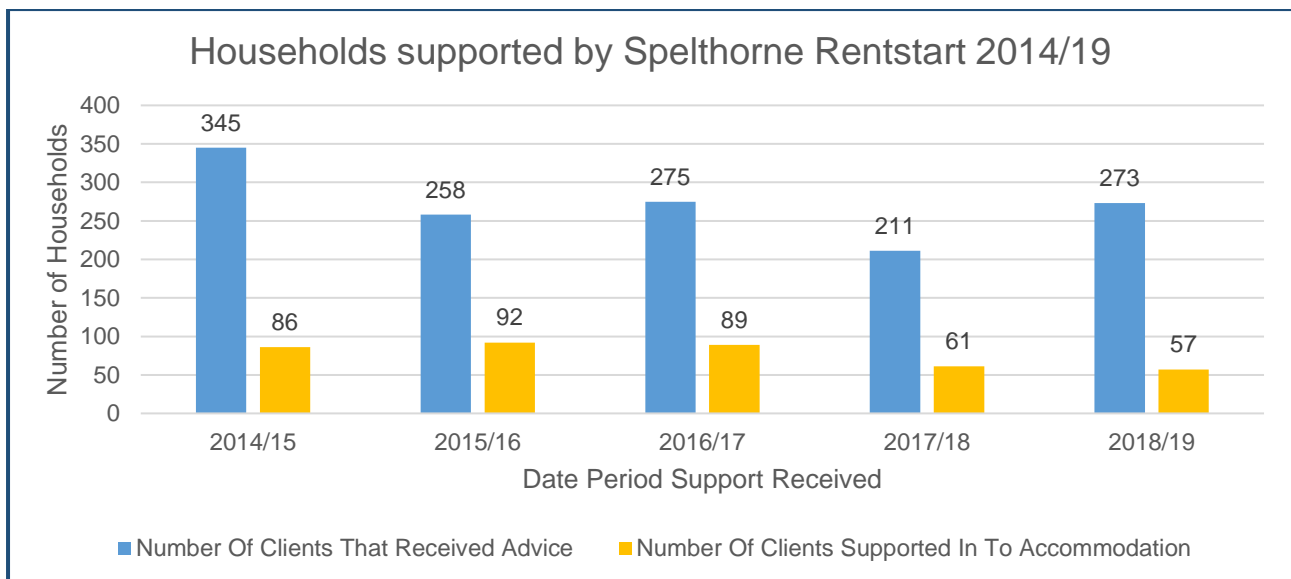


Chart 30: Number of households supported by Spelthorne Rentstart 2014/19

Rentstart have advised the number of client's housed in rooms has been declining in recent years which has led to a reduction in the overall number of client's housed.

Rentstart consider the lack of rooms is attributable to several factors including:

- The scarcity of rooms has led to rents being pushed up to unaffordable levels;
- The Local Housing Allowance has not kept up with market rents;
- The introduction of Universal Credit. This received a lot of negative press which put new landlords off, making it increasingly difficult for Rentstart clients to secure properties; Fortunately, Rentstart managed to retain all of their existing landlords;
- A change in the travel and tourism accommodation market has led to less availability of rooms as they are being utilised for other means;
- The absence of a Night Shelter in 2017/18 and 2018/19. This was a lifeline to Rentstart during the winter months, as it gave access to rooms at short notice for brief periods, giving Rentstart a window to work intensively with clients to secure more permanent accommodation in the private rented sector.

Rough Sleeping

MHCLG conduct an annual snapshot of people rough sleeping on a single night. The snapshot uses street or spot counts and evidence-based estimates. MHCLG's 2018¹⁴ annual autumn snapshot of national rough sleeping recorded 4,677 people as sleeping rough on a single night with London accounting for 27% of the total number. This figure is nearly double what it was four years ago when it was 2,744. MHCLG goes on to identify that:

- 64% were UK nationals;
- 14% were women;
- 6% were aged 25 years or younger.

MHCLG break their figures down by region; Spelthorne falls under the South East region of England. This is recreated in Chart 31 to indicate the total number of rough sleepers over the last 8 years. The general trend is a significant increase in the number of rough sleepers.

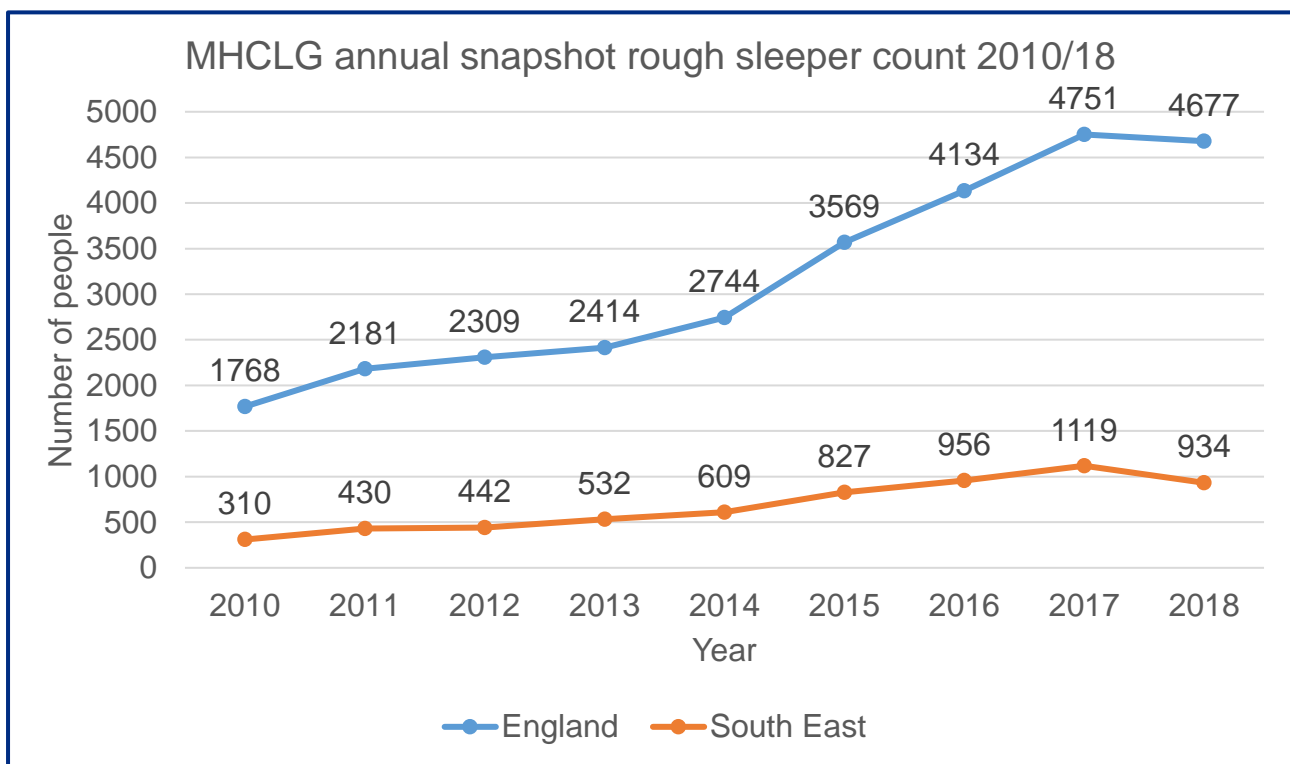


Chart 31: MHCLG annual rough sleeper count 2010/18

The South East Region was noted as having 20% of the total number of people sleeping rough and was ranked second highest by region after London. However, the total number of rough sleepers in the South East Region decreased from the previous year which was recorded as 1,119. This may be partly from the introduction of The Rough Sleeping Initiative that was launched in spring 2018 as part of the government's strategy to initially half rough sleeping and then fully eradicate it by 2027¹⁵.

Similarly, the trend of increased numbers of rough sleepers is a common pattern in Spelthorne. Chart 32 shows the numbers of rough sleepers recorded in Spelthorne for the last 8 years. Whilst people rough sleeping may not be a significant problem in the borough it is still an increasing concern.

¹⁴ Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (2018) 'Rough Sleeping Statistics Autumn 2018, England (Revised)'.

¹⁵ Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (2018) 'Rough Sleeping Strategy: Delivery Plan.'

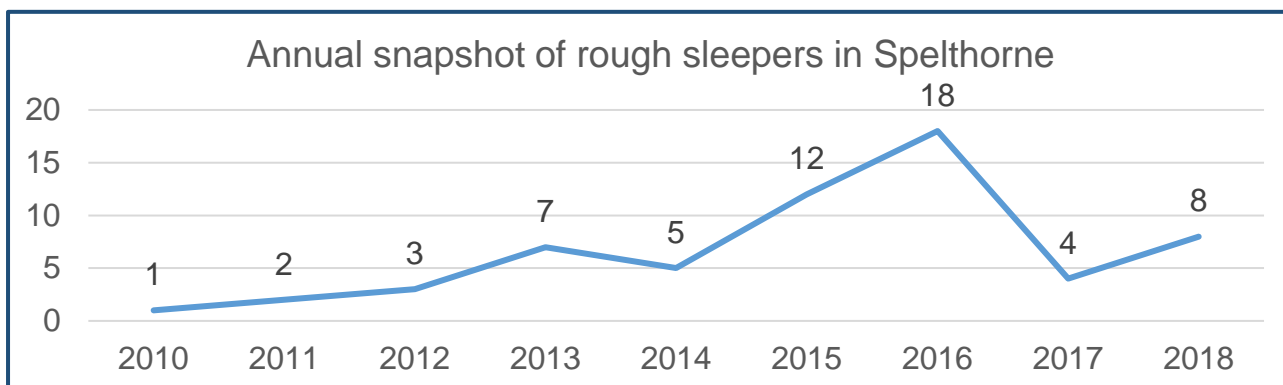


Chart 32: Annual snapshot of rough sleepers in Spelthorne 2010/18

Annual winter shelter

For the past number of years, we have worked with Transform Housing & Support, Runnymede Borough Council and Elmbridge Borough Council to provide a winter shelter for rough sleepers. The most recent accommodation being the Hersham Road hostel. Since 2017 each borough has made their own arrangements. This was due to a number of factors which included a required change in the planning layout of an extension to Hersham Road hostel which was intended to be used as a winter shelter. The extension was smaller than originally intended and unfortunately effected the capability of it being used as a winter shelter.

Each year, the Council identifies provision for homeless people to shelter them from inclement and severe weather. Those accessing this facility are generally people who are not owed a longer-term housing duty by the Council, and who would otherwise qualify to be accommodated on an emergency basis under what is known as the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP). SWEP is activated when the 'feels like' temperature falls to below 0°C for at least three consecutive nights. It is up to the Council to determine when SWEP is activated.

For the past number of years, the Council has funded a service jointly with Runnymede Borough Council and Elmbridge Borough Council. The location of this service has varied over the years:

- 2014/15 – Whiteley Village, Hersham
- 2015/16 – Fairways, Staines-upon-Thames
- 2016/17 – Fairways, Staines-upon-Thames
- 2017/18 – Hersham Road, Walton-on-Thames

In each of the years 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17, the Council contributed £5,000 revenue funding towards the set-up and running of the shelter. No revenue funding was provided for the year 2017/18 for reasons given later in this report.

Due to difficulties with the Hersham Road extension works, there was no winter shelter provision for the 2018/19 winter months. Instead, Officers relied on SWEP activation, and placed a total of four homeless people into emergency accommodation who would otherwise have been referred to the night shelter. This figure does not include those individuals who refused offers of assistance – this data is not currently held in an easily reportable manner.

Rough Sleeper Initiative

As a result of increasing rough sleep numbers, Spelthorne Borough Council put in a recent bid and was successful for Rough Sleeping Initiative funding. As of March 2019 we were awarded £50,000 towards helping reduce and where possible eliminate rough sleeping in Spelthorne's borough. This fund has already been utilised by the recruitment of a Rough Sleeper Coordinator and Outreach

Officer who is working to map existing services for rough sleepers in Spelthorne. The officer is responsible for working with service providers to ensure that those persons who are experiencing or are at risk of rough sleeping have information and access to outreach services. The remaining monies will be used towards a personal support budget to help rough sleepers into settled accommodation.

The role is still in its early stages but has already provided us with some indicative data on the number of rough sleepers in Spelthorne. The number of people recorded as rough sleeping is broken down in Table 13.

Month of 2019	Number of people recorded as rough sleeping in Spelthorne
May	8
June	7
July	8
August	13
September	10

Table 13: Monthly snapshot of the number of people recorded as sleeping rough in Spelthorne

Having a rough sleeper coordinator allows us to dedicate a resource to monitor the number of people rough sleeping in the borough more carefully and allows us to focus our attention on ways to encourage them to engage with us for support.

Since the beginning of June 2019 the rough sleeper coordinator reported the following successes so far:

- One rehoused in to sheltered accommodation;
- One rehoused in to private rented accommodation;
- Three in B&B under statutory duty after referring to a housing options officer – the rough sleeper coordinator is still offering an outreach service to them;
- Two rehoused in to supported housing with an ongoing outreach service for one month whilst the rough sleeping coordinator works with the key worker. A further one has an assessment booked for supported housing;
- Four have moved on out of borough and not been sighted again.

The Council hopes to see ongoing success from the Rough Sleeping Initiative funding as part of achieving its new strategy and will continue to monitor its results.

Resources available to deliver homelessness services

Staffing revenue expenditure

A comparison of our staffing team in 2014 to 2019 is demonstrated in Chart 33 and Chart 34.

Housing Options Team 2014

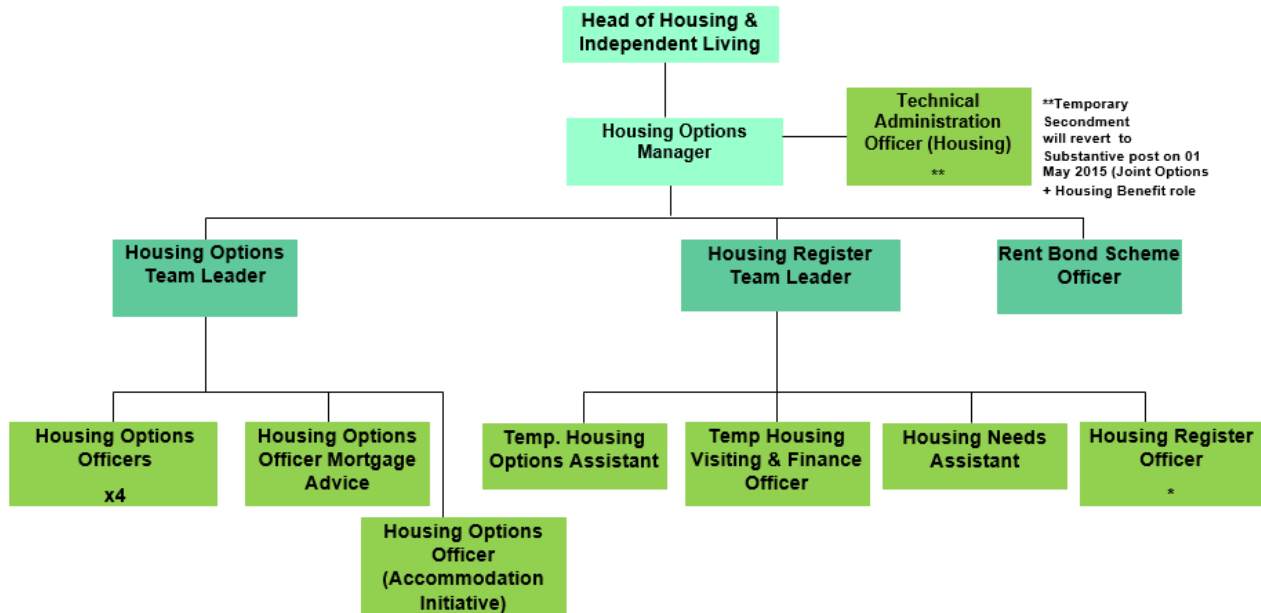


Chart 33: Housing Options team structure 2014

Housing Options Team 2019

The Housing Options team at Spelthorne Borough Council has significantly expanded over the last five years. This includes the recruitment of five new members of staff posted by March 2018 due to the increased workload predicted as a result of the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act. This included three Housing Options Officers, one Tenancy Sustainment Officer, and one Complex Needs Worker.

The Complex Needs Worker sits within the Family Support Team (a shared service with Elmbridge Borough Council and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council), but is funded by the Community Wellbeing Group, and works wholly for the Housing Options team.

In addition to this, in March 2018 the corporate Housing Strategy function transferred from the Regeneration and Growth Group to the Community Wellbeing Group.

Total expenditure related to these costs are displayed in Chart 35. This highlights an increase in expenditure with staff related costs including: salaries, insurance, pension, and essential allowances for home visits. Staff related costs has doubled compared to five years ago due to the required team expansion. This has ensured our ability to deliver a well-structured and effective Housing Options service. With increasing numbers of homeless households and rough sleepers Spelthorne Borough Council has aimed to meet with the demand for housing support, advice and assistance.

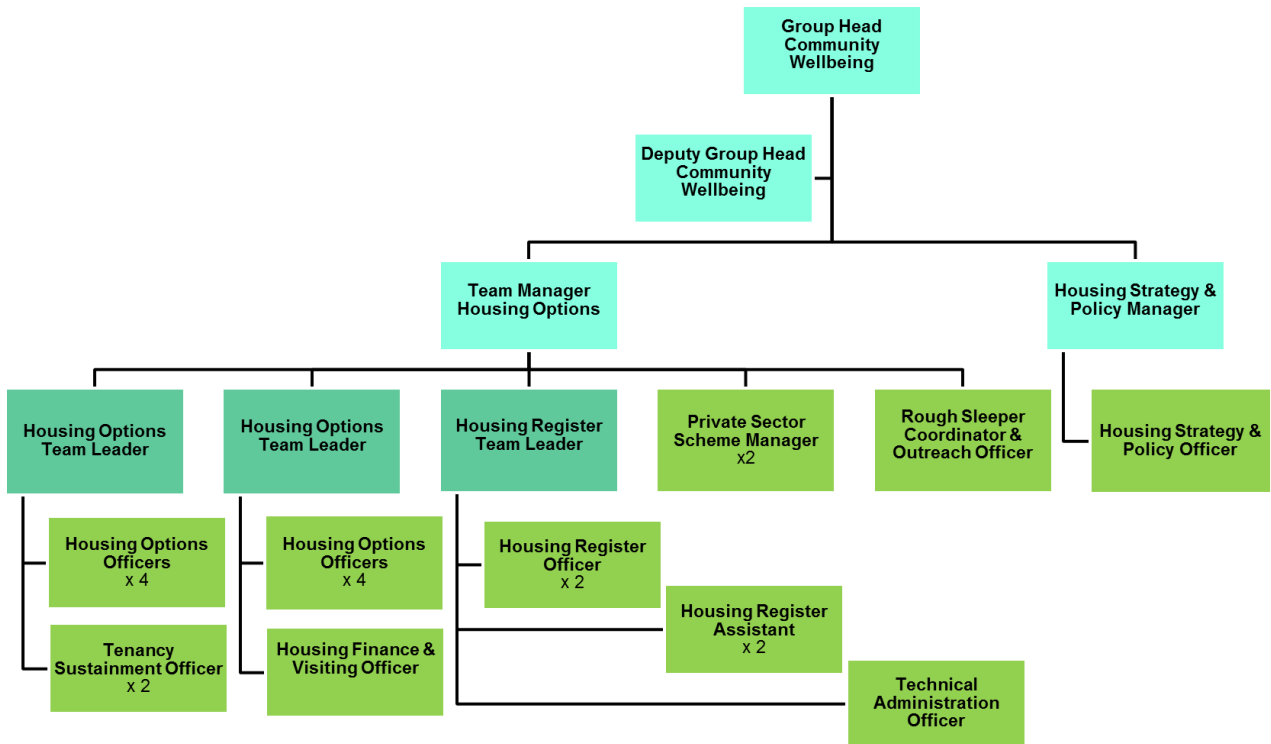


Chart 34: Housing Options team structure 2019

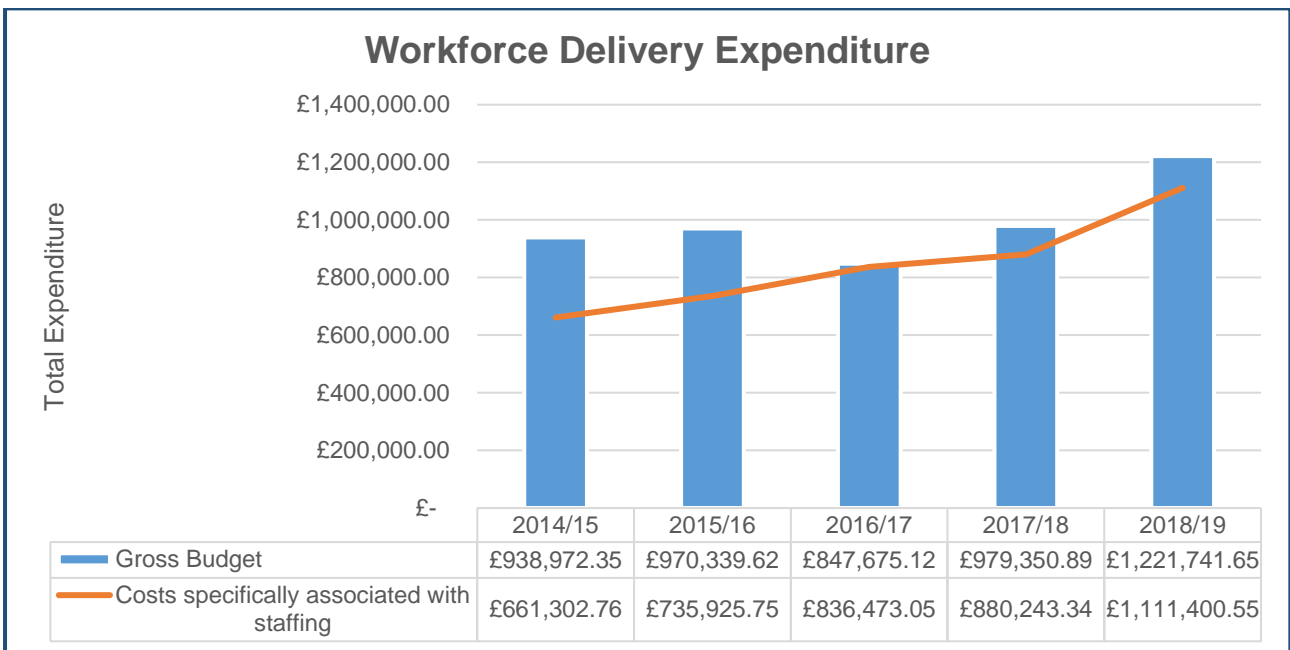


Chart 35: Workforce delivery expenditure 2014/19

Non-staffing revenue expenditure

Spelthorne Borough Council has also seen an increase in expenditure on homelessness and rough sleeping prevention initiatives. Chart 36 indicates a slight increase in initial years with a more than doubling in 2018/19. Some major changes in this final year included:

- The expiry of the St Mungo's and A2 Dominion floating support contract in 2018. As a result of this, Spelthorne Borough Council appointed an additional resource to work as a tenancy sustainment officer within the Housing Options team.
- Our Choice Based Lettings system was also upgraded in light of the new allocations policy and reapplication process in 2018/19.

- Spelthorne Borough Council now tops up our annual grant for Citizens Advice Runnymede and Spelthorne (CARS) services by £35,000.
- Due to Surrey County Council cuts, Spelthorne, Elmbridge and Runnymede Borough Council must now contribute towards the costs for a Look Ahead housing related floating support service. This contribution is £20,000 each per annum. This has been initially agreed for three years.

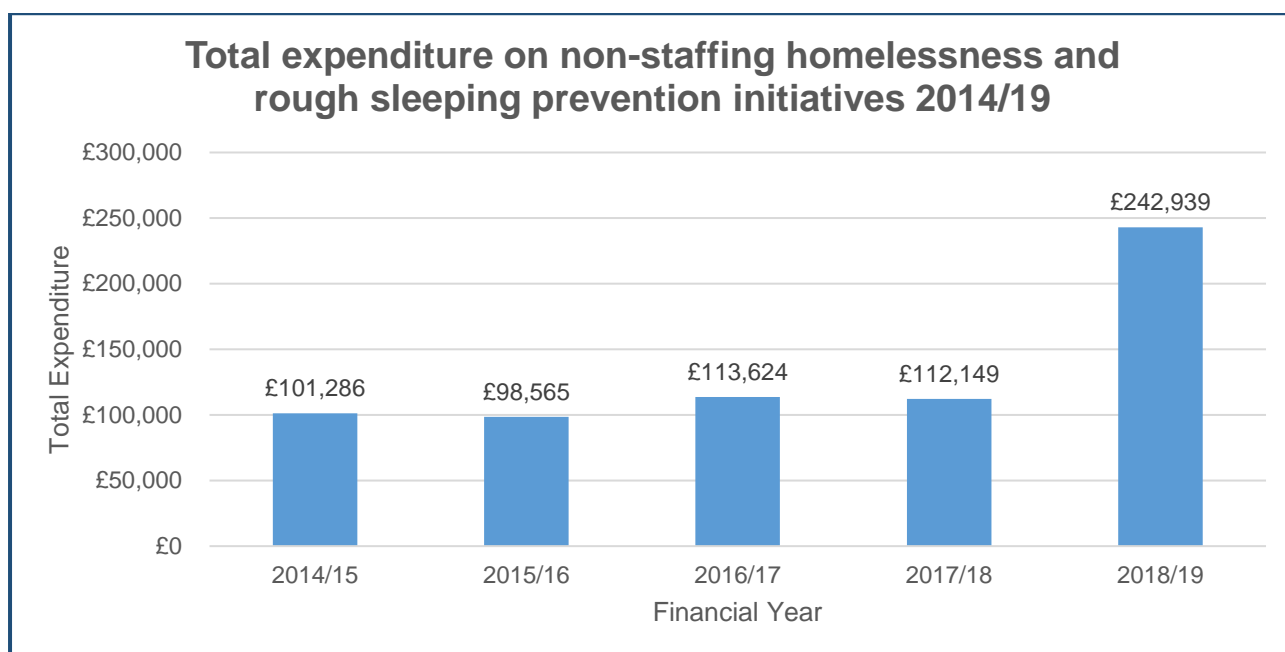


Chart 36: Total expenditure on non-staffing homelessness and rough sleeping prevention initiatives 2014/19

Emergency accommodation expenditure

Given the level of use of emergency accommodation, a significant amount of money is spent by Spelthorne Borough Council to secure emergency accommodation for homeless households. Whilst some of these charges are recovered back from the homeless applicant, there is still a shortfall which the Council pays for. Chart 37 identifies the total expenditure on emergency accommodation over the last five years. Whilst the figures fluctuate there has generally been an increase in expenditure compared to five years ago.

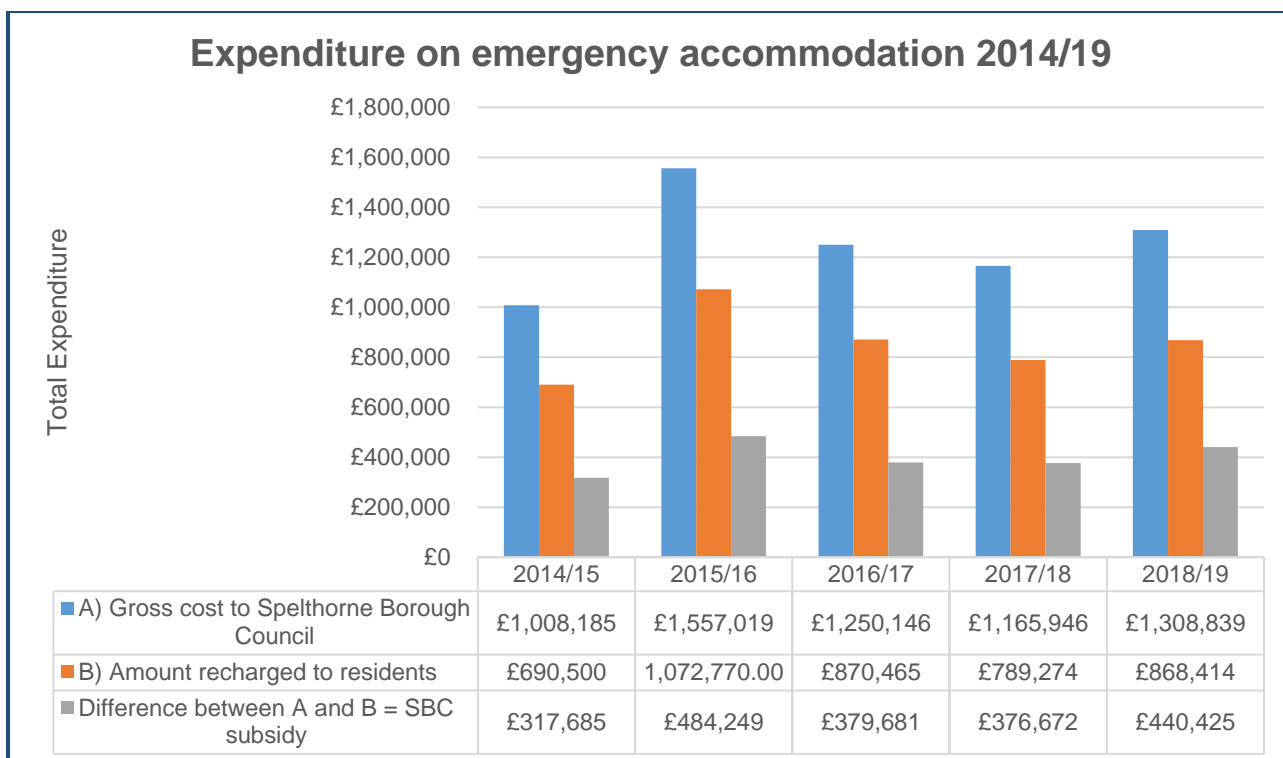


Chart 37: Expenditure on emergency accommodation 2014/19

Protection of property

Under section 211(1) and (2) Housing Act 1996 the local authority has a responsibility to ensure that where it has become subject to a duty to a homeless household they have ensured their possessions are safely stored. Table 14 indicates the total expenditure on reasonable steps taken to prevent the loss or damage to any personal property of the homeless household.

Financial Year	Storage expenses directly incurred by SBC	Reimbursement for storage expenses incurred by household
2014/15	£4,157.00	£0.00
2015/16	£869.59	£488.00
2016/17	£463.48	£0.00
2017/18	£1,100.00	£0.00
2018/19	£4,317.00	£45.50
Total:	£10,907.07	£533.50

Table 14: Expenditure on protection of property 2014/19

Spelthorne Rent Assure

Our privately rented scheme whilst successful is also initially costly as we enter in a two year guarantee rent period with the landlord. Since the commencement of our Rent Assure Scheme in December 2016, we have committed £2,227,689.80 up to April 2019. These costs are made up of the total market rents we have offered to pay for a period of 24 months. We collect back rent equivalent to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate and top up the remaining monies to make up the market rent. Therefore whilst we have committed £2,227,689.80, providing we collect the full LHA rent back from the tenant the total cost to the council to top up these rents is £222,363.21. This

is approximately 9% of the monies we have committed and is significantly lower than the costs that would be incurred by an emergency accommodation placement

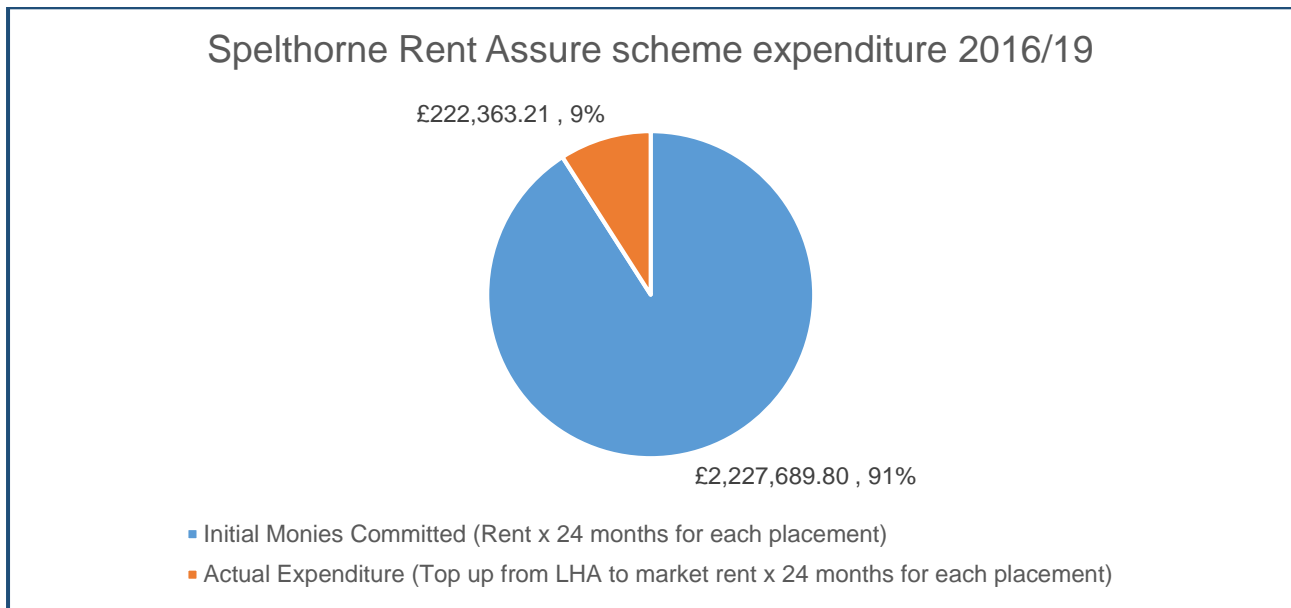


Table 15: Spelthorne Rent Assure scheme expenditure 2016/19

As the scheme is fairly new a total of £4,592.95 has been spent to market the scheme and gauge landlord interest. The scheme also offers the incentive of paying for an inventory to be completed at the start of the tenancy by a professional company. These inventory costs have accumulate to £4,060 for all placements made before April 2019.

Partnerships

Joint working is key to earlier intervention of preventing homelessness. Spelthorne Borough Council prides itself in working with its local partners to help reduce the levels of homelessness. To list but a few partnerships, Spelthorne Borough Council demonstrates some of the effective joint working relationships we have achieved so far and hope to continue building.

- **Social Services – e.g. mental health team (Catalyst), adult social care (Locality team), MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter), children’s social services, and the family support team.** These are key partnerships that we have to ensure that some of the most vulnerable groups in our society are offered specialist support and assistance. We have open opportunities to communicate with the various social services to ensure the wellbeing of households is being upheld when faced with potential homelessness. The introduction of the ‘Duty to Refer’ under the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 has also placed greater links between statutory services and the Housing Options team. By attending regular **MARAC** meetings with statutory and voluntary sector agencies, we are more informed about households who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. These meetings allow us to work together to ensure we are all offering the support needed by high-risk cases.
- **Surrey Police, National Probation Service, and Kent, Surrey and Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company** – By attending regular **MAPPA** meetings we are able to ensure we are supporting clients who are under probation and are either threatened or are facing homelessness. These meetings gives us deeper insight to the needs of this potentially vulnerable group.
- **Gypsy and traveller support** – to better understand the needs of this community and the types of support we can give.
- **Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)** – whilst we can offer budgeting advice, CAB are able to offer more enhanced financial and legal advice. Spelthorne Borough Council has formed a direct fast track referral service with CAB.
- **Job Centre Plus / DWP** – with the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) to Spelthorne borough in November 2018, we were proactive with our awareness and training of UC by working with Staines Jobcentre Plus (JCP). We also have a direct contact at JCP to assist with specific UC queries or complications.
- **Applied Resilience** - if there is an emergency there will almost certainly be a housing element involved. The applied resilience team have provided training sessions to staff at Spelthorne Borough Council in preparation for an emergency response.
- **Look Ahead** – the housing related floating support contract with Look Ahead means single people, couples and families are offered support with tenancy sustainment, homelessness and resettling in a community. Look Ahead specialise in delivering support services to those with mental health or learning difficulties. They also deliver assistance to young people and those facing homelessness.
- **Transform Housing** - we have worked with Transform Housing to ensure our cases with more complex needs are assessed for support housing and are offered the assistance they need or require.
- **Homestart** – We work together to ensure families with young children who are experiencing challenging times are getting the additional support and assistance they need on a day-to-day basis.

- **Rentstart** - we have worked very closely with this charitable organisation for a number of years. Our PRS team in particular have built a good working relationship to ensure single homeless applicants are provided with the support they need whilst the PRS team mainly focus on families. The PRS team and Rentstart have run joint landlord forums and keep an open line of communication when new landlords or potential properties arise.
- **Salvation Army** - who operate a service in the Spelthorne Borough means an additional support service is available to help offer tailored assistance for those experiencing homeless. Our rough sleeper coordinator has worked with the Salvation Army to understand how we can offer a joint outreach service.
- **Children's centres** – By working with local schools in the area, we are able to keep clear lines of communication open to ensure the welfare and well-being of vulnerable children are being monitored and assured.
- **St Giles Trust** – We have worked with St Giles Trust to broaden our support service and widen our opportunities of helping a homeless household find a suitable tenancy. St Giles Trust particularly help to assist vulnerable young people by helping them seek employment, understand financial management and support them in finding accommodation.
- **St Mungo's** - Our rough sleeper coordinator and outreach officer has particularly worked closely with St Mungo's to gain an insight on rough sleeping and the impact it has. By working together, both parties are able to monitor rough sleeping more closely and work to provide outreach services to this vulnerable group of people.
- **Foodbanks** – in times of crisis we directly complete referrals to local foodbanks in order to help households in a desperate time of need e.g. **MANNA, Stanwell Foodbank, St Saviours Church.**
- **Surrey Crisis Fund / Besom Project / Hounslow Furniture Recycling Project / Woking Community Furniture Project** - We work closely with charitable organisations and the Surrey Crisis fund to help clients set up homes with furniture and white goods where no other funds or resources are available for households.
- **Age UK** – by keeping in regular contact, we are ensuring we provide support for this potentially vulnerable group of people and are better informing our understanding of this groups support needs.
- **Sanctuary Scheme** – Spelthorne Borough Council in partnership with Surrey Police and CAB Elmbridge (West) (North Surrey Domestic Abuse Outreach Service). Through joint working, the sanctuary scheme provides additional security to victims of domestic abuse where it is appropriate for them to remain in their own homes. Without this partnership this service would not have been operationally available.
- **Housing associations e.g. A2Dominion, PA Housing, Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing, L&Q** – As Spelthorne Borough Council does not own its own stock it aims to work with housing associations that operate in the local area to ensure affordable housing is available and being delivered. Our allocations team work effectively with the lettings teams of all of our housing association partners to ensure nominations are suitable and lets are completed in a timely fashion.

Monitoring and review

Strategic Housing Group (SHG)

SHG exists to ensure that Spelthorne Borough Council has a focussed strategic approach on housing matters, in order that Spelthorne's housing need is identified and met.

The objectives of SHG are:

- To decide priorities and focus of the group for the coming year.
- Develop strategies for dealing with issues (which may translate into projects to be reviewed).
- To ensure all housing strategies dovetail with other relevant strategies e.g. Asset Management Plan, Capital Strategy, etc.
- Develop and monitor the progress of the Housing Strategy Action Plan.
- Monitor key areas of concern (such as emergency accommodation and shortage of affordable housing) and make strategic decisions on approaches to mitigate the impact.
- To make decisions on operational matters which impact the delivery of strategic priorities.
- To share information on housing and housing-related issues (including changes to legislation).
- To identify and allocate resources to help meet the priorities identified.
- To ensure key politicians and partners are effectively communicated with.
- To receive updates on Knowle Green Estates acquisitions and developments.
- To consider and agree corporate responses to government consultations which directly or indirectly affect housing.

Membership of SHG includes:

- Deputy Chief Executive (s)
- Portfolio Holder – Housing
- Joint Group Heads Community Wellbeing
- Group Head Regeneration and Growth
- Deputy Group Head Community Wellbeing
- Housing Strategy & Policy Manager
- Housing Options Manager
- Housing Benefits Manager
- Senior Environmental Health Manager
- Accountant (Housing)

A number of staffing changes over the first three years of the strategy period meant that strict monitoring of the implementation of the strategy and action plan was not fully carried out. Despite this, much of the strategy was being implemented as intended, and being monitored by service managers.

Implementation of the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2014-19

Looking back at the eight strategic priorities that were set out for 2014-19, we have achieved some of our targets but we have not been successful in all.

A reminder of these targets are outlined below in Table 16.

Strategic Priority	Did we accomplish it?
Adopt a corporate and partnership commitment to preventing homelessness.	Yes – Spelthorne Borough Council adopted a Homelessness Strategy which was commissioned at Cabinet on 15 July 2014. To date a housing forum has not been established, although for the past year Spelthorne Borough Council has joined Runnymede Borough Council’s Homelessness Task Group Meetings.
Develop and provide a comprehensive preventative housing options service including the single homeless.	Partly – The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has resulted in an entire new suite of processes and procedures, which now outdate the processes we said we would do when the strategy was implemented. All cases are offered an assessment, and where applicants are identified as homeless or threatened with homelessness, they are offered a personal housing plan to either prevent or relieve their homelessness.
End the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families.	No – Whilst we have not ended the use of B&B accommodation by families we have significantly reduced the number of out-of-borough placements and reduced the average length of time for B&B users over the last five years.
Facilitate the discharge of the homelessness duty into the private rented sector.	Yes – We continue to discharge duty into the private rented sector. We work to promote the private rented sector as the most realistic way of preventing and relieving homelessness.
Through the Housing Forum develop housing pathways for vulnerable groups.	Partly – As previously noted, we did not establish a housing forum. Since the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017, we prepared statutory pathway plans required for the identified groups. These plans have been jointly created with the relevant partners and are able to evolve in time.
Develop a private sector offer through working with local landlords and through a Spelthorne Borough Council lettings agency that will acquire properties for the discharge of the duty and where necessary as temporary lets.	Yes – Our Rent Assure Scheme was launched in December 2016 which offers competitive market rent to landlords who offer their properties to the Council for homeless families. This is in addition to our existing Bond scheme which was set up in 2007.
In collaboration with Runnymede and Elmbridge Councils: Adopt a ‘no second night out’ for emergency accommodation.	Yes – We had a Single Person Complex Case Worker attached to the Family Support Team which was shared with Elmbridge. We also worked with Runnymede Borough Council and Elmbridge Borough Council to provide SWEP accommodation in Hersham Road. This was successfully implemented for one year and thereafter each borough has made their own arrangements.

In partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) prevent mortgage repossessions.

Partly – The mortgage rescue protocol was introduced by national government so there is now earlier preventative work. This is reflected in our statistics which show we have a low number of homeless households from mortgage repossessions.

Table 16: Review of the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2014-19