



# Homelessness Review 2021

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This review is being undertaken as part of the first stage in updating the borough's homelessness strategy. It sets out to provide an up to date picture of the:
  - Current levels of homelessness across Eastbourne.
  - Support available to prevent homelessness and those experiencing it.
  - Level of resources available locally to tackle homelessness.
2. It is being undertaken in line with the requirements set out in the Homelessness Act 2002, which places a legal responsibility on local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their district and publish a revised homelessness strategy every five years. The review will help shape the councils next strategy by; estimating the demand for homelessness and housing advice services; finding out what currently works well, (as well as what works less well); and by identifying gaps in the current provision of related support and services.
3. The context within which local authorities deliver services to reduce homelessness continues to provide key challenges. Increasing house prices, rising private sector rents and the reduced income many local households have experienced as a result of the pandemic have all had an impact, sustaining the high number of households accessing services and needing to be placed in temporary accommodation. Locally, affordability ratios in the district are at unprecedented levels, rents continue to challenge welfare subsidy caps and where the increasing living costs are having a significant impact on household budgets, disproportionately so for those already on lower incomes. Meanwhile, the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA 2017), whilst bringing welcome additional protections for those at risk of homelessness, has increased the number of applicants qualifying for assistance, further stretching the resources of local authority housing needs teams. Sections C and D provide full review of the national and local context.
4. The existing homelessness strategy focuses on preventative measures and improving access that local residents have to housing needs services, support, advice and housing options. The associated objectives set out to:
  - Provide sustainable financial support to those in genuine housing debt.
  - Develop partnerships with local landlords.
  - Raise awareness of the risks of homelessness.
  - Establish new support services with local partner agencies.
  - Work with local landlords to improve access to privately rented homes.
  - Partner with housing associations to improve access to homes let at social and affordable rents.
5. Section E summarises the wide range of programmes, initiatives and partnerships developed over the past five years, which have made significant contributions to addressing these. Examples include the Rough Sleeper Initiative; the successful adaptation of housing needs services in response to both the pandemic and the HRA 2017; and the forging of successful partnerships with local advice agencies, landlords and voluntary support providers.

6. Section F reviews who is accessing the housing needs service, summarises the outcomes of applications for assistance under current homelessness provisions and examines the steps taken to prevent and relieve any associated homelessness. The analysis shows that the demand remains extremely high, but that local services are, in general, operating well and have adjusted to meet the new requirements of the HRA, albeit at a financial cost.
7. The analysis indicates that it is, in large part the implementation of the HRA, rather than the pandemic, that has impacted the profile of this being helped under homelessness duties. As a result the number of single households eligible for help has increased, accounting for almost three-quarters (73%) of all households during 2020/21. So, whilst in the short term there is likely to be some re-balancing of the profile of those accessing the service, in the longer term services are likely to face an ongoing level of demand from a more marginalised and challenging customer base.
8. Although levels of rough sleeping remain an issue across the town, the impact of the interventions provided by the Rough Sleeper Initiative has made a key difference, in terms of both the picture overall and the positive outcomes experienced by the individuals it has helped. The recent focus has been on adjusting the service to cope with the higher numbers of individuals assisted under 'everyone in' and the support required to secure move-on accommodation.
9. Section G summarises the resources deployed to address homelessness, including:
  - Corporate plans that set out plans to tackle homelessness and accelerate the delivery of affordable housing.
  - Key services in place that support households that experience homelessness – these comprise of the council's housing needs service and a range of essential partnerships in place with statutory and voluntary partners.
  - The funding in place to meet the costs of service provision – summarising the sources of funding from grants, rent receivable and core council budgets.
10. Finally, section H provides a summary of the findings and puts forward a number of suggested goals and themes that might be useful in shaping the new strategy. It sets out three key goals, namely, to prevent, intervene and put in place sustainable responses to address homelessness.
11. The views of the public, partners and stakeholders are sought to help shape the forthcoming revision of the Council's homelessness strategy. This review has been published on the Council's web site and further details of the consultation and how to respond to it, can be found at <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/consultations/eastbourne-borough-council-homelessness-review-2021/>. The consultation closes on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022.

## **A. INTRODUCTION.**

### **A1. Why is this review being undertaken?**

A1.1. This review is being undertaken as part of the first stage in updating the district's homelessness strategy, and sets out to provide an up to date picture of the:

- Current levels of homelessness across Eastbourne.
- Support available to prevent homelessness and those experiencing it.
- Level of resources available locally to tackle homelessness.

A1.2. It is being undertaken in line with the requirements set out in the Homelessness Act 2002, which places a legal responsibility on local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their district and publish a revised homelessness strategy every five years. The review will help shape the councils next strategy by; estimating the demand for homelessness and housing advice services; finding out what currently works well, (as well as what works less well); and by identifying gaps in the current provision of support and services.

A1.3. Local statutory and voluntary partners have been asked for their experiences as this review has been undertaken and they will continue to be engaged as the new strategy is drafted.

A1.4. This review has been published on the Council's web site and further details of the consultation and how to respond to it, can be found at <https://www.lewes-east-bourne.gov.uk/consultations/eastbourne-borough-council-homelessness-review-2021/>. The consultation closes on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022.

## **B. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY HOMELESSNESS?**

### **B1. Definition.**

B1.1. Those who present as homeless do not have to be sleeping on the streets or not have a roof over their head at the time they apply for help. Households can also be considered homeless if they are:

- Having to stay with friends or family.
- Staying in a hostel, night shelter or bed and breakfast accommodation.
- At risk of violence or abuse in their home.
- Living in poor or unsafe conditions.
- Leaving a state institution such as a prison or hospital, or the care system and have nowhere to go.

B1.2. This review uses a definition of homelessness that includes both rough sleepers, single people and families that are threatened with, or present as homeless. In short, any household members who find themselves without a safe or secure place to call home.

## **C. NATIONAL CONTEXT.**

### **C1. Background.**

- C1.1. The context within which local authorities must deliver services to reduce homelessness continues to provide key challenges. Increasing house prices, rising private sector rents and the reduced income many local households have experienced as a result of the pandemic have all had an impact, sustaining the high number of households accessing services and needing to be placed in temporary accommodation. Meanwhile, the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA 2017), whilst bringing welcome additional protections for those at risk of homelessness, has increased the number of applicants qualifying for assistance, further stretching the resources of local authority housing needs teams.
- C1.2. Over the past year, the impact of Covid-19 has, unsurprisingly, had a significant impact on central Government strategy. At a local level, this has resulted in teams re-focusing services through; providing emergency accommodation to rough sleepers as part of the 'Everyone In' initiative; putting in place additional safeguards to help maintain social distancing in temporary accommodation; and delivering remote services as standard. A ban on private rented sector evictions, in place since the first national lockdown, expired at the end of May 2021. Along with the broader economic impacts of the pandemic, this may increase the level of demand on services and the potential impact will need to be carefully monitored in the months ahead.

### **C2. Homelessness Legislation.**

- C2.1. Local authorities have a statutory duty to deliver services that set out to prevent homelessness and provide assistance to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The framework for these duties is set out in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996. Key changes to how this framework operates were introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA 2017).
- C2.2. Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act contains specific provisions which set out the criteria local authorities must use to determine whether households making homelessness applications are owed a 'main duty'.
- C2.3 The key considerations used to determine this are:
- Priority need – local authorities must provide emergency accommodation if they have reason to believe members of a household applying for assistance have a priority need, defined as where they:
    - Have children who live with them or are pregnant.
    - Are aged 16 or 17.
    - Are a care leaver aged 18 to 20.
    - Are a victim of domestic abuse (from July 2021 on).
    - Are classed as vulnerable - for example because of domestic abuse, old age, physical and learning disabilities or mental health problems.

- Whether an applicant's actions have intentionally caused their homelessness – for example if they left their previous accommodation of their own accord, or deliberately breached their previous terms of tenancy.
- Whether applicants have a genuine 'local connection' to the local authority area to which they are applying, through residence, family connection or employment.

C2.4. Where an applicant is found to be owed a main duty, the local authority must assist them to secure permanent housing, but where not, the local authority is only required to provide preventative advice and assistance. The 1996 Act also includes a duty to provide 'interim accommodation' (section 188) whilst the application is being assessed, and 'temporary accommodation' (section 193) where a household is accepted as qualifying for the main duty.

C2.5. Since being passed, key provisions of the 1996 Act have been amended by:

- The Human Rights Act 1998 / The Equality Act 2010, which requires that housing authority policies and decisions do not amount to unlawful conduct, and that the public sector equality duty is complied with in relation to homelessness administration.
- The Homelessness Act 2002, which introduced the requirement for local authorities to regularly review the levels of homelessness in their areas, and to formulate a homelessness strategy (to which this review contributes).
- The Localism Act of 2011, which gave local authorities the power to end a main housing duty by arranging an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector.

C2.6. However, it is the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA 2017). that has introduced the most significant recent changes to homelessness legislation. The Act aims to reduce homelessness by improving the quality of housing advice, re-focusing authorities on preventative work and joining up services to provide better support, especially for single people, those leaving prison/hospital and other groups at increased risk of homelessness. The main provision of the Act introduced a range of new duties, to be delivered regardless of whether the applicant has a priority need. These include:

- A new 'prevention duty', requiring local authorities' to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness for any eligible applicant, who is likely to become homeless within 56 days of applying for help. This can involve assisting them to stay in their current accommodation or helping them find a new place to live.
- A new 'relief duty', which applies to those who are already homeless when they ask the local authority for help. Local authorities must provide support for a minimum of 56 days and help to relieve their homelessness during this time. The relief duty provides the scope for local authorities to provide emergency accommodation for those not assessed as being in priority need.

- A new requirement for local authorities to carry out a holistic assessment of the applicant's housing needs, support needs and the circumstances that led to them becoming homeless. The outcome of the assessment is a 'personal housing plan' which can be used to best determine what help is available and shared with local partner agencies, where appropriate.
- A new 'duty to refer', requiring specified public bodies to notify a local housing authority when the agency encounters someone it thinks may be homeless or is at risk of becoming homeless.

C2.7. All of these new requirements work alongside, rather than replace local authorities' duties under the established framework set out by the 1996 Act.

### **C3. Rough Sleeping.**

C3.1. In August 2018, the Government published its Rough Sleeping Strategy, which sets out the Government's plans for ending rough sleeping by 2027. It has three parts:

- Prevention: understanding the issues that lead to rough sleeping and providing timely support for those at risk.
- Intervention: helping those already sleeping rough with swift support tailored to their individual circumstances.
- Recovery: supporting people in finding a new home and rebuilding their lives.

C3.2. Funds to help deliver the strategy are provided under the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI). The RSI was first announced in March 2018, with the goal of making an immediate impact by suppressing the rising levels of rough sleeping being experienced across the country, through funding a support service for those verified as sleeping rough and those at high risk of becoming rough sleepers. Separate funds have been provided since 2019, under the Rapid Rehousing Pathway, which offers similar services, but is targeted at individuals with lower levels of support need.

C3.3. The latest round of funding is targeted at providing support to local authorities, charities, and other organisations in around 270 areas and will fund up to 6,000 bed spaces and 2,500 staff. Locally, the RSI first provided support to individuals in Eastbourne and Hastings, but operations have now expanded to cover the whole of East Sussex.

### **C4. Everyone In.**

C4.1. Those experiencing homelessness are more vulnerable to COVID-19, due to the higher prevalence of underlying health conditions and respiratory illnesses<sup>1</sup>, as well as the higher risks of transmission in shared accommodation settings.

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<sup>1</sup> Lewer, D., Braithwaite, I., Bullock, M., Eyre, M.T., White, P.J., Aldridge, R.W. Story, A., Hayward, A.C. (2020). 'COVID-19 among people experiencing homelessness in England: a modelling study'. The Lancet. Volume 8, Issue 12. Pp.1181-1191. DECEMBER 01, 2020. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600\(20\)30396-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600(20)30396-9/fulltext)

- C4.2. The urgency of the situation was recognised by Government and on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020, they launched the 'Everyone In' campaign, asking local authorities to immediately take steps to house all rough sleepers. The National Audit Office<sup>2</sup> reports the likely cost of these measures was in the region of £170M, paid for through a mixture of emergency government grants, existing homelessness funding streams, and local authorities' own resources.
- C4.3. The scale of the operation was significant. By mid-April 2020, some 5,400 people had been made an offer of emergency accommodation, and by the end of November, over 33,000 people had received help under the initiative. Of these, over 23,000 people had been supported to move into the private rental sector or another form of settled accommodation, whilst almost 10,000 people remained living in hotels and other emergency homes. The number of people accommodated far exceeded the Government's annual national 'snapshot' of the rough sleeping population, which reported 4,266 rough sleepers in October 2019.
- C4.4. COVID-19 claimed relatively few lives among the rough sleeping population during the first wave of infections. Up to June 2020, just 16 deaths among homeless people had been linked to COVID-19 (ONS). Evidence suggests that 'Everyone In' may have avoided more than 20,000 infections and 266 deaths overall (Lewer et al., 2020).
- C4.5. More recently, additional funds have been announced in the shape of the £15M 'Protect Fund', to support the continued housing of rough sleepers, and extra 'Cold Weather Funds', to help protect the most vulnerable across the winter. Funding has also been secured under the Government's Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP), which will deliver longer term accommodation and support for rough sleepers. However, there is uncertainty about the scale of future Government funding, so it remains to be seen whether local authorities will be able to maintain the current level of support on offer to rough sleepers across the county.

## **C5. Levels of homelessness – key national trends.**

- C5.1. The latest national homelessness statistics cover the three-month reporting period to March 2021<sup>3</sup>: During this time 71,690 households were assessed under the new HRA duties, and of these 95.2% (68,250) were owed a prevention or relief homelessness duty. This figure is 10.7% down on the same reporting period in 2019/20. Of those owed a duty, 54% (36,800) were assessed as already being homeless (so owed a relief duty) and 46% (31,450) as being threatened with homelessness (so owed a prevention duty). The number of households living in temporary accommodation at the end of the quarter was 95,450, an 3.5% increase on the same quarter last year, driven largely by the higher number of single adults being housed.

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<sup>2</sup> Nat. Audit Office. 14 Jan 21. Investigation into the housing of rough sleepers during COVID-19. <https://www.nao.org.uk/press-release/investigation-into-the-housing-of-rough-sleepers-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

<sup>3</sup> MHCLG. 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2021. Statutory Homelessness Oct to Dec (Q3) 2020: England. [Statutory homelessness in England \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94424/statutory-homelessness-in-england-q3-2020.pdf) Last accessed on 27/09/21.

- C5.2. These trends are directly linked to the policy response to COVID-19, as a result of more single households being housed as part of the 'Everyone In' campaign, the restrictions on private rented sector evictions, and lengthened notice periods for landlords. Between them, these measures have considerably shifted the balance of those seeking assistance under homelessness legislation, towards single households, and away from households with children.
- C5.3. Friends and family no longer being able to accommodate, the ending of a private sector rented tenancy and domestic abuse, remained the three leading reasons underlying requests for assistance.
- C5.4. Over half of all households owed a duty (51% or 34,840 households) were identified as having one or more support needs, the most common being a history of mental health problems. A quarter (17,170) of all households owed a duty identified as having this particular support need.
- C5.5. Nine percent (6,510) of the assessments made under the new homelessness duties were a result of referrals from other public bodies under the new 'duty to refer'. The National Probation Service was the most common source of referral.

#### **C6. Homelessness outcomes – key national trends.**

- C6.1. Between January & March 2021, 29,220 prevention duties that came to an end. In around 60% of these cases (17,530) the household secured accommodation for 6 months or more, a third of whom (6,020 households) were able to remain in their existing home. Fifteen percent of households whose prevention duty ended were homeless at the end of the 56 days, and therefore owed a subsequent relief duty by the local authority. For the remaining households contact was lost, the application withdrawn, or duty ended because the household refused to co-operate.
- C6.2. During the same period, 41,930 relief duties ended and in just over 40% of these cases (16,060) the household secured accommodation for 6 months or more. For 38.4% of households the relief duty ended because their homelessness had not been relieved within 56 days and at this point the local authority would need to assess whether a main duty is owed. Again, for the remaining households contact was lost, the application withdrawn, or duty ended because the household refused to co-operate.
- C6.3. Between January and March 2021, local authorities made 14, 880 main homelessness duty decisions, down 6.5% when compared to the same period in 2019/20. Of these, just over 60% were accepted as being owed a main homelessness duty.
- C6.4. The main homelessness duty ended for 7,480 households, of whom 7.3% accepted an offer of settled accommodation, most commonly an offer of a social housing tenancy with a local authority or housing association.

## **D. LOCAL CONTEXT.**

### **D.1. Setting and population.**

- D1.1. Eastbourne is located approximately halfway between Brighton and Hastings. The borough covers a total area of 4,500 hectares, a significant proportion of which is Downland (39 per cent), located in the South Downs National Park. There is a limited supply of developable land given the urban area's tight confinement by the National Park, the sea, and land subject to flood risk. In 2020, the population was estimated to be 103,745, a 5.6% increase on the position ten years earlier.<sup>4</sup> This growth is forecast to continue, with current (dwelling-led) projections expecting the population to reach 107,661 by 2034, an increase of 3.8%.
- D1.2. The number of people in Eastbourne aged 65 and over increased by 18 percent between 2009 and 2019 and this trend is predicted to continue, with the percentage of over-65's set to rise from 25% in 2019 to 32% of the population by 2034. Dependency ratios will increase as a result of the corresponding fall in the working age population. In the last census, just over 87% of the boroughs residents describe themselves as White British, whilst 5.94% of residents are from Black, Asian and Mixed Ethnic groups and 6.64% made up of other White Ethnicities.<sup>5</sup> However data from school admission indicates that the borough is becoming increasingly diverse and this position is expected to have changed once the results of the 2021 census become available.
- D1.3. In 2019 there were 47,060 households in Eastbourne, a number forecast to increase by 8.29 percent to 50,963 households, by 2034.<sup>6</sup> Household size is set to fall, with the percentage of single person households set to rise from 36.53% in 2019 to 38.21% by 2034. There is predicted to be a corresponding fall in the percentage of households with children.

### **D.2. Economics & employment.**

- D.2.1. Eastbourne is one of the key economic drivers for East Sussex and has a broad economic base with businesses from a wide range of industries. Gross Value Added (GVA)<sup>7</sup> figures, which measure the increased value that locally produced goods and services add to the economy, placed Eastbourne at £18,979 per capita, higher than the East Sussex average (£17,077), but considerably below the figure for the South-East (£31,783 per capita). That said, GVA has grown steadily over each of the past ten years.
- D2.2. Figures released in May 2021<sup>8</sup> place the employment rate of Eastbourne at 74.5% of the working age population. This is lower than the East Sussex average (76.3%), and the average for the South-East (78.3%). In 2020, gross workplace earnings in Eastbourne for full-time employment (all people) were £527 per week. This is higher than for East Sussex overall (£502), but considerably lower than the South-East average (£609). Average earnings are a key component of housing affordability.

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<sup>4</sup>ESCC Projections April 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Office for National statistics: 2011 Census.

<sup>6</sup> East Sussex County Council.

<sup>7</sup> Gross Value Added Release – [ONS Regional economic activity statistics 1998 - 2019](#).

<sup>8</sup> Local labour market indicators by local authority - [ONS Labour market regional stats – May 2021](#).

### D.3. Deprivation.

- D3.1. Indices of Deprivation, last published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in 2019, are the official measure of deprivation for neighbourhoods in England. They provide a snapshot of relative deprivation by looking at a range of factors including income, employment, education, health, barriers to housing and services, living environment and crime. These are combined to form a single index.
- D3.2. Overall in 2019, Eastbourne ranked as 106 out of a total of 317 local authorities in England (where 1 is the most deprived) and relative deprivation appears to have increased, with 22 LSOAs ranking in a relatively more deprived decile than in 2015. Only 4 LSOAs ranking in a relatively less deprived one. It contains four Lower Super Output Areas (or LSOA's – the small areas of geography used by the index) that fall within the 10 percent most deprived in the country, the most deprived of which is Hampden Park. Eastbourne now also has 12 LSOAs that are amongst 20% most deprived in England, four more than in 2015.<sup>9</sup>
- D3.3. There were 4,040 children were living in low-income families across 2019/20. This figure is estimated to account for 18.2 percent of all children in Eastbourne, up from 15% percent in 2015/16.<sup>10</sup> The 2019/20 percentage of 18.2% is slightly higher than the East Sussex average (16.9%), but significantly higher than the figure for the South-East (13.4%).
- D3.4. As is the case elsewhere, Covid-19 has had a significant impact on economic fortunes, which is reflected in key indicators of deprivation. In May 2020 the claimant count in Eastbourne, which includes those claiming Job Seekers Allowance and UC claimants seeking work, place unemployment, was 4,725. A year later in May 2021 this figure was 4,290, a claimant rate (the number of claimants resident in an area expressed as a percentage of the population resident) of 7.2 percent. This is higher than the overall East Sussex claimant rate of 5.8 percent.

### D.4 Housing tenure & supply.

- D4.1. The total housing stock of Eastbourne was 48,925 in 2019, an increase of 1,945 (4.14%) since 2009 (see figure D1). This increase was largely driven by new private sector provision (1,824 homes), accompanied by an increase in the homes delivered by housing associations (473 homes). Local authority stock fell, as a result of homes lost through the Right to Buy (RTB).

**Figure D1 – Housing stock by tenure, 2009 & 2019**

Year	All	Local Authority	Housing Assoc	Private sector
2009	46,979	3,788	2,251	40,940
2019	48,925	3,437	2,724	42,764

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, Live table 100.

- D4.2. An analysis of planning permissions shows that 230 dwellings were added to the stock in Eastbourne in 2020/21, with a further 172 homes expected to be completed during 2021/22. A total of 677 dwellings (net) have planning permission (permissions granted between 2018 and 31 March 2021) across Eastbourne and are yet to commence or be completed.

<sup>9</sup>East Sussex in figures – Indices of Deprivation 2019 briefing – October 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

- D4.3. The social housing stock saw a net increase of only 122 homes between 2009 and 2019. However, this picture is changing. Planning records show that 12 homes are expected to complete by March 2022 and that a further 63 affordable homes have been granted planning permission, the majority of which will be new council owned homes at a site in Bedfordwell Road. Proposals for the delivery of a further 100 new council new homes are set out in the Council's latest housing development plan.
- D4.4. The private rented sector is relatively large in Eastbourne, when compared with the other districts and boroughs of East Sussex. At the last census in 2011, the private rented sector housed 23.3 percent of households, noticeably higher than the East Sussex average (17.8%) and the South-East (16.3%).

## D5. Housing costs, demand, and availability.

- D5.1. Property prices in Eastbourne are high. Prices have risen consistently in recent years, with the recent surge in market activity pushing up the average cost of a home in quarter 3 of 2020 to £296,027.<sup>11</sup> Affordability ratios measure the relationship between average property price and average earnings. By the autumn of 2020, these showed that median property prices were almost eight times the local median full-time salary, creating a significant challenge many households looking to buy their first home.
- D5.2. Meanwhile, in March 2020, the average (median) monthly rent (all sizes of accommodation) stood at £800, a rise of 19% over the past five years. The median monthly rent for a one-bedroom self-contained flat in Eastbourne is of £625. To remain affordable this would require a household income of £22,000 for those in work, which is well above the average wage employees in Eastbourne.
- D5.3. Despite increases to the cap that Local Housing Allowance (LHA) applies to the amount of welfare benefit payments that can be claimed to cover rent, the maximum rate of LHA paid continues to restrict access to the private rented sector for those on lower incomes. Figure D2, below, shows that the increased LHA rates are noticeably lower than the ONS recorded rents (in all bed sizes), and significantly lower than the rents of available rental homes advertised on Rightmove.<sup>12</sup>

**Figure D2 – Private rental sector rental costs and vacancies – Eastbourne.**

	Studio	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4-bed+
ONS Av. Rent - April 2020 to March 2021	£535	£650	£850	£995	£1,300
Rightmove - Mean Monthly Rent - July 2021	£642	£702	£992	£1,243	£1,673
Max Local Housing Allow. (LHA) - monthly	£325	£598	£763	£897	£1196
Rightmove search - No. of vacancies	10	19	10	8	6

- D5.4. The Rightmove search illustrates there were 53 private rented sector (PRS) vacancies available across Eastbourne. Only **two** of the homes listed were available at rents below the respective LHA rates and these were both 1-bed homes, so unsuitable for families with children. The limited number of vacancies in the private rented sector is, clearly, a major factor in the ability of the local housing market to meet local housing need across the borough.
- D5.5. The demand for social housing is high and there are currently over 1100 households waiting for homes on the council's housing register, each of whom meets one or more categories of preferential need. The availability of social housing, on the other

<sup>11</sup> Quarterly land prices and transactions – Land Registry – October 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Right move search conducted for rental properties across Eastbourne – July 2021.

hand, is restricted in terms of both new supply and the number of existing homes that become available to re-let. During 2019/20 a total of 108 council homes were let to new tenants, which represents a stock turnover of just 3.2% percent. Although a further 55 housing association homes were let to those waiting on the housing register, there is a significant discrepancy between the levels of supply and demand.

- D5.6. The combined impact of high housing costs and restricted housing availability in both the private and social rented housing sectors, presents a real housing challenge to residents of Eastbourne. These challenges restrict the housing choices of many households on middle incomes and severely restrict the ability of those on low and unstable incomes to secure housing that meets their needs. These inequalities will continue to have a disproportionate impact on young people, single households, and those reliant on welfare benefits.

## **E. PROGRESS AGAINST OUR EXISTING STRATEGY**

### **E1. Previous objectives.**

E1.1. The current strategy, which runs up to the end of 2021, outlines a number of key objectives, set out under two key areas. The first set of objectives focus on preventing homelessness, through:

- Providing financial support to those in genuine housing debt.
- Developing partnerships with local landlords.
- Raising awareness of the risks of homelessness.
- Improving access to housing and financial advice services.
- Working in partnership with the local Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) service.

E1.2 The second set of objectives are targeted at improving access to housing needs services, support services; and housing options, by:

- Adapting services to respond to the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the challenges posed by the pandemic.
- Establishing new support services with local partner agencies.
- Working with local landlords to improve access to privately rented homes.
- Partnering with housing associations to improve access to homes let at social and affordable rents.
- Increasing the availability of good quality temporary accommodation.
- Reducing the time households with children spend in emergency accommodation containing shared facilities.

### **E2. Preventing homelessness.**

E2.1. A range of initiatives have been put in place that focus on taking direct action to prevent homelessness. Key examples include:

- Administering Discretionary Housing Payments - these payments are targeted to help households where financial assistance will provide sustainable support that will stop homelessness occurring. In 2020/21, £315,000 of support was provided to households across the borough, helping 521 households to remain in their homes, or find alternative accommodation.
- Directly funding financial and advice services - the local Citizens Advice Bureaux provided advice to over 2,800 local residents in 2021/22, with welfare benefits, debt and housing the leading concerns that clients ask for help with. The collective impact of the advice services resulted in a total income gain of over £3.1M and debt write-offs of over £250k.
- Directly funding housing and homelessness prevention advice - provided by Brighton Housing Trust, who during 2020/21 helped over 300 local people with homelessness applications, housing benefits and enquiries about the suitability and condition of their home. The collective impact of the advice services resulted and total income gain of over £140k.
- Accessing HomeWorks - the short-term housing support service in East Sussex, operated by Southdown Housing Association, which is set up to help vulnerable people find and manage homes. It focusses on; supporting mental health and wellbeing; delivering coaching in life skills; budgeting support; and helping those it supports access employment and training opportunities. In 2020/21 382 clients were referred to this service.

- Working in partnership with the YMCA – providing funding to deliver the schools homelessness project, which engages up to 2,000 pupils aged 14-16 each year.
- Delivering STEPS - a service commissioned by East Sussex County Council, to provide advice to Eastbourne residents over the age of 60 who are experiencing housing difficulties. During 2020/21 the service helped over 300 people in the borough get extra help with tenancy sustainment; claim additional benefits to help meet housing costs; access affordable warmth advice; and adapt their home or move to a new home that better suited their needs.
- Securing ongoing funding under the Government's Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) – this now provides a unified service across the County that helps individuals with entrenched rough sleeping patterns access a multi-disciplinary team of health, social care, substance misuse & housing professionals. Wrap-around tenancy support is provided to ensure that former rough sleepers can access appropriate housing pathways to reduce their chances of repeat homelessness. During 2020/21 the service has assisted 261 rough sleepers across the borough.
- Delivering the Rapid Rehousing Pathway (RRP) - a similar programme to the RSI, but one which focuses on individuals with less complex levels of need. This is now funded as part of the RSI, to improve the co-ordination of delivery and maximise the impact. During 2020/21 the part of the service has assisted over 300 clients across the borough.

### **E3. Improving access to services and support.**

E3.1. Responding to recent changes to legislation and, over the past year the pandemic, has presented a unique set of challenges that have resulted in the emergence of new patterns of demand and housing need. Active monitoring of these trends and adjusting services to meet them, have been key to maintaining effective services. Some of the key aspects of this approach, include:

- Updating policies and processes to deliver new duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act - to underpin an approach that; supports a wider and more vulnerable cohort of applicants; delivers services to those at risk of homelessness earlier than before; and works effectively with partners to develop personal housing plans. In addition, strategies have focussed on collaborative work with key partner agencies to develop jointly agreed means of identifying needs and creating 'duty to refer' pathways that work.
- Keeping housing needs services accessible during the pandemic – by moving to a telephone-based assessment model to deliver services, whilst maintaining face-to-face contact, where essential. The team have adapted quickly to being based at home and have worked with colleagues in benefits, legal and IT to update forms and processes to support the new way of working. These steps helped minimise disruption to service users throughout lockdowns and the pandemic.
- Providing support and outreach services to rough sleepers - delivered and funded by the Rough Sleeper Initiative, the team carries out proactive outreach work, generally between 4am and 7am. The service identifies people who are rough sleeping and helps them connect with local services, which include referrals to the multi-disciplinary team of health, social care, substance misuse & housing professionals, as appropriate. Separately, council funding provided to the Salvation Army provides wellbeing support to over a 150 vulnerable single people every month.

- Putting in place pathways for young people - agreed pathways are in place to housing schemes operated by the YMCA, including supported housing and transitional units for under 35's. The service received 92 referrals from EBC's housing needs team during 2020/21.
- Establishing new pathways for those experiencing or at risk of domestic abuse – working with neighbouring boroughs to establish additional roles (Independent Domestic Violence Advocates) who will help support housing needs teams to shape best practice when delivering services to victims. A successful was also made to the Department for Levelling Up Housing & Communities (DLUHC) which will support the development of 12 respite units across East Sussex for victims of domestic abuse.
- Focussing on our support for those with mental health and other complex needs –improving the working relationships with the local mental health trust by providing direct contacts for key members of staff to escalate queries around the most complex need cases. In addition we have, in partnership with other members of the East Sussex Safer Adults Board, established a new multi-agency assessment framework which meets monthly to discuss high risk cases and identify tailored management plans to address their needs.
- Subscribing to Streetlink - this nationwide service enables members of the public to connect people sleeping rough with the local services that can support them. Concerns can be reported by the public via their website or a mobile app.
- Putting in place the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) - SWEP provides overnight accommodation for rough sleepers during periods of cold temperatures. Across the winter of 2020/21, as a result of Covid-19 restrictions, the regular night shelter provision was replaced by units of leased accommodation which has been let out tot verified rough sleepers since November 2020. The funding has now been extended beyond 31st March 2021, to allow the ongoing support of residents into move-on accommodation.
- Establishing a county-wide team of wellbeing and employment coordinators, jointly funded by the Public Health team, setting out to bridge the gap between health and housing, supporting clients in temporary accommodation to improve their wellbeing and therefore better sustain their tenancies in the longer term. Three co-ordinators have been working across Lewes & Eastbourne since the summer, to target and improve the life chances of 90 clients in the first year.

#### **E4. Improving access to housing options and new homes.**

E4.1. Focussing on providing a range of housing options for local households is key to reducing demand across the borough and plans have sought to put in place a balanced approach that works with the private rented sector, partners with other social landlords and increases the delivery of new council homes. Meanwhile services have sought to reduce the disruption that those families experiencing homelessness face, by reducing the time that families with children in particular, have to spend in emergency accommodation. In working toward these goals the council has focussed on:

- Setting out supplementary planning guidance (policy D5) – this requires developers to provide affordable housing as part of their scheme in line with set criteria, or pay commuted sums in lieu of provision. The tenure make-up must be agreed with the council, the starting point for which is 70% rented vs 30% shared ownership, whilst the agreed size mix should be based on the latest assessment of local housing need.

- Identifying opportunities to develop brownfield land sites, within the wider context of limited land supply in the borough.
- Working in partnership with local landlords - incentivising the availability of homes to 'at risk' households, who would otherwise have been placed in temporary accommodation. The scheme has recently been reviewed and relaunched, to help secure an expanded and financially viable offer that draws together colleagues in the five districts and boroughs to optimise the impact across the county.
- Reducing the use of hotel / bed & breakfast accommodation with shared facilities – since the end of the first quarter in 2019/20 the use of shared accommodation has fallen by a third. This has been achieved by increasing the use of self-contained longer term leased and council owned homes.
- Minimising the use of emergency accommodation for those households with children – by implementing processes to match households with children and self-contained accommodation in the first instance. Where this is not possible, steps are taken to move those with children into self-contained accommodation within six weeks, in line with our agreed policy.

## **F. DELIVERING HOMELESSNESS SERVICES.**

### **F1. Background.**

- F1.1. This section reviews who is accessing the housing needs service, summarises the outcomes of any applications made for assistance under current homelessness provisions and examines the steps taken to prevent and relieve any associated homelessness. It also provides a summary of recent rough sleeping trends.
- F1.2. A new system of recording data, the Homelessness Case Level Collection System (H-CLIC)<sup>13</sup>, was introduced by the Government in 2018, to help monitor the new prevention, relief and referral duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act. It also records information about the established main housing duty, priority need, as well as the profile characteristics and support needs of applicants and their households.
- F1.3. The data it presents is not generally comparable with earlier data collected by local authorities and, as a result, most of the information set out below refers to the past three years (from April 2018 onwards). Some elements of the 2020/21 H-CLIC data are still awaiting final validation, so has been supplemented with information taken from the council's management information systems. As such, some information may be subject to future amendment as it is uploaded to Government records.
- F1.4. The information relating to rough sleeping is collected separately and has been reported consistently and in the same format over a longer period of time.

### **F2. Accessing the housing needs service.**

- F2.1. During 2020/21, 1,370 households raised enquiries with the housing needs team, a small increase of 2% on the 1,339 enquiries received the year before. Sixty percent of these enquiries (817) progressed through to a formal homelessness application, with the remaining 40% being either enquiries answered at first point of contact, general enquiries about housing in the local area, or enquiries where no response was received once followed up by the team.
- F2.2. Just under 20% of the enquiries comprised of referrals made by another agency, the majority being made under the new '*duty to refer*'. This arrangement, introduced by the HRA 2017, requires specified public bodies to notify the housing needs team when they encounter someone it thinks may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Prisons, hospitals and the National Probation Service, were the leading sources of referral.

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<sup>13</sup> Homelessness live tables, HCLIC header page – DLUHC, [Live tables on homelessness - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/datasets/homelessness-live-tables)

### F3. Prevention & relief duty - assessment outcome.

F3.1. A total of 817 cases received a formal assessment to determine the duty owed by the council. Two-thirds (66% or 540 households) were found to be owed a duty, whilst just over a quarter (26%) were not. In a further 68 (8%) of cases, households were either awaiting the outcome of enquiries or lost contact with the housing needs team.

F3.2. Of the 540 households owed a duty, 118 were owed a prevention duty, whilst 422 households were found to be homeless at the time of application, so owed a relief duty. Figure F1 (below) shows how these results compare against previous years.

**Figure F1 - Duty assessment outcomes April 2018 to March 2021.**

Duty owed	2018/19*	2019/20*	2020/21**
Prevention duty owed	411	183	118
Relief duty owed	421	542	422
Not homelessness - no duty owed	6	104	209

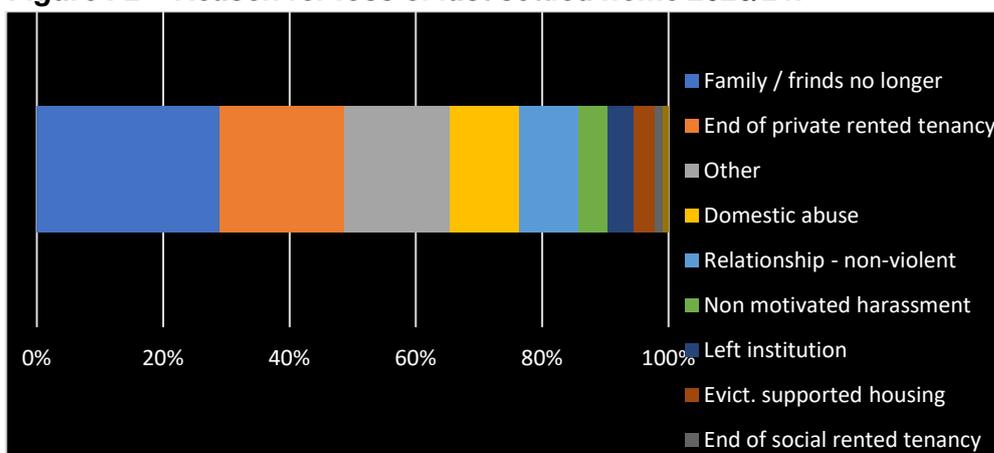
\*Source – H-CLIC live homelessness tables.

\*\* Source - Eastbourne CX Homelessness Information System.

F3.3. Despite an increase in enquiries, the number of households found to be owed a prevention or relief duty fell, (87% to 72%), when compared to the previous year. This pattern reflected national trends, resulting in an accompanying increase in the number of households found not to be threatened with homelessness.

F3.4. Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate, was the leading reason those owed a duty lost their last settled home, cited by 151 (29%) of the 527 households owed a duty<sup>14</sup> across the year. The ending of a private sector tenancy was the next most common reason, reported by 107 (20%) households. Domestic abuse and non-violent relationship breakdown were the other leading reasons given. The full list is set out in figure F2, below.

**Figure F2 – Reason for loss of last settled home 2020/21.**



Source - Eastbourne CX Homelessness Information System.

<sup>14</sup> Of the 527 households owed a duty who provided a specified reason.

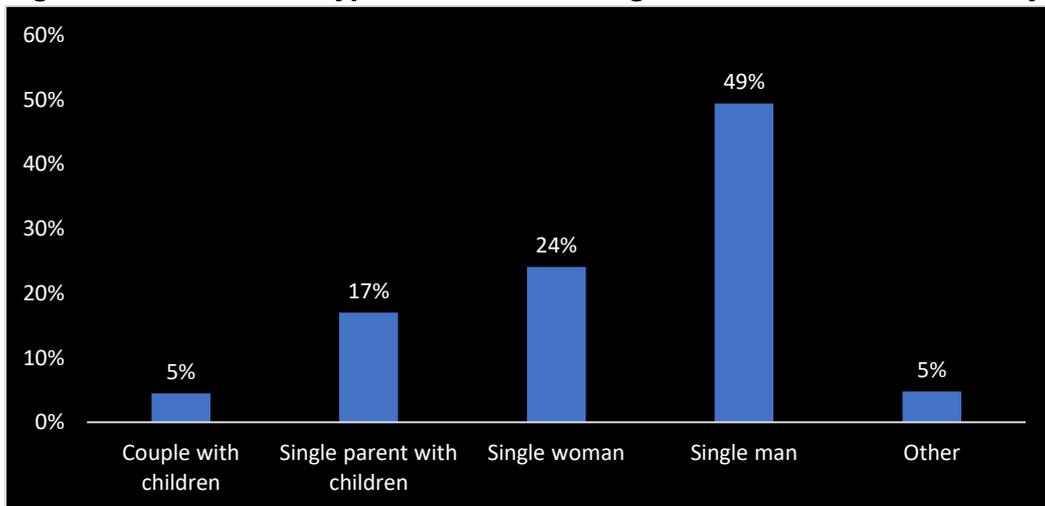
F3.5. Compared to the previous year, there was a 9% reduction in the numbers citing an end to their private rented sector tenancy as the main reason for seeking assistance. An analysis of the last settled accommodation of those seeking help backs this up. This showed that the percentage of households who had been living in the private rented sector, prior to seeking assistance, had fallen by 12% between 2019/20 (30%) and 2020/21(18%). rented sector evictions and funded local authorities to house rough sleepers under the ‘everyone in’ initiative. These measures have reduced levels of private rented sector evictions and shifted the balance of those assisted by local authorities from families with children to single households.

F3.7. Increased levels of applications from those losing their homes due to family breakdowns and because they can no longer be accommodated by family & friends are also apparent. These could be indicative of rising family pressures being exasperated by lockdown.

**F4. Characteristics of those owed a prevention or relief duty.**

F4.1. Single person households made up the majority of those receiving help through the provision of a relief or homelessness duty in 2020/21, accounting for almost three-quarters (73%) of those assessed as qualifying for a relief or homelessness duty (see figure F3, below).

**Figure F3 - Household type of those receiving relief or homelessness duty.**

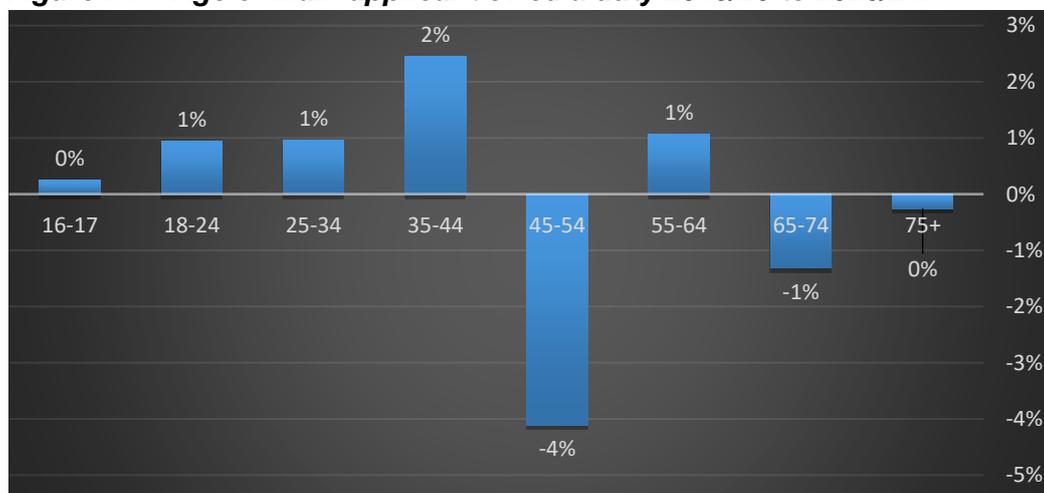


Source - Eastbourne CX Homelessness Information System.

This represents a fall of (3%) on the previous year, which stands in contrast to the national picture, which saw pandemic related Government policies significantly increase the number of single and increase the number of family households seeking assistance. This may well reflect the increased numbers of single household in Eastbourne already being assisted as a result of the HRA and the high level of services directing resources at supporting rough sleepers in the town.

F4.2. The age profile of those owed a duty in 2020/21 was younger, but only marginally so, with the only notable trend a slight fall in 45-54 year olds seeking help (see figure F4).

**Figure F4 – Age of main applicant owed a duty 2019/20 to 2020/21.**



Source - Eastbourne CX Homelessness Information System.

F4.3. The percentage of main applicants registered as unemployed increased by 9%, whilst the percentage who were long term sick or disabled fell, which could be reflective of the younger age profile.

F4.4. A majority (54%) of households were in receipt of benefits contributing directly to their housing costs (Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit), whilst the majority, 81% received welfare benefits to assist with general living costs, the most commonly claimed being Universal Credit, Disability Living Allowance and Employment Support Allowance.

F4.5. There were no significant changes in terms of gender, with 45% of those owed a duty being female and 54% male. Ninety-one percent of those who provided ethnicity information described themselves as White British, whilst 93% who provided nationality information classified themselves as being UK nationals. Both of these figures are consistent with previous years.

**F5. Support needs of those owed a prevention or relief duty.**

F5.1. Around half (49%) of households owed a duty were assessed as having one or more support need. This is a fall compared to the previous year, likely as a result of the younger age profile of those assisted under the duties – see table F5.

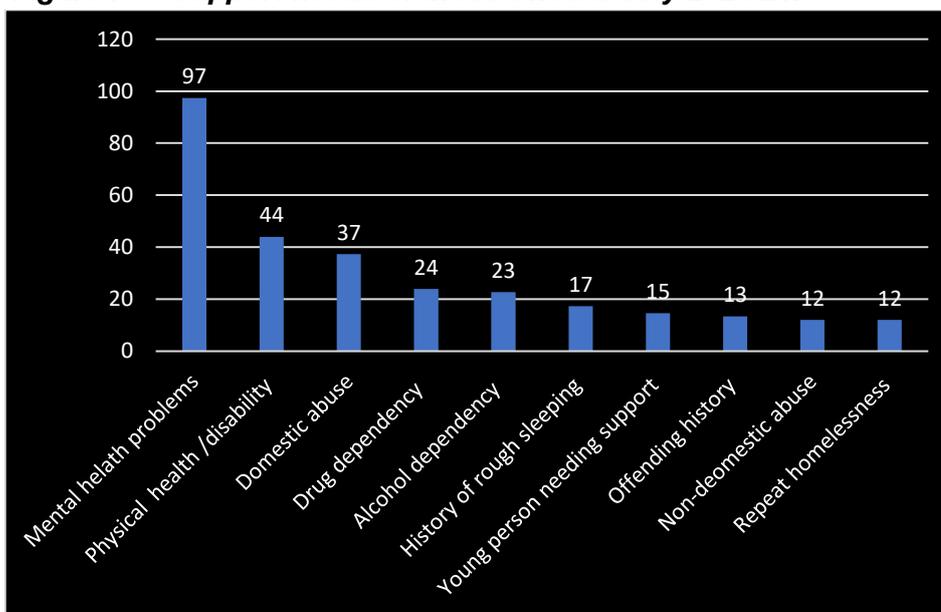
**Figure F5 – Households with support needs 2018/19 to 2020/21.**

	Support needs	No needs	Total	% with supp. need
2018/19	530	302	832	64%
2019/20	418	307	725	56%
2020/21	265	275	540	49%

Source - Eastbourne CX Homelessness Information System.

F5.2. A history of mental health problems remained the most common reason for requiring support, accounting for almost 30% of those identified as having support needs. Physical ill health and disability (13%), then domestic abuse (11%) were the other leading reasons - see figure F6. Drug dependency, alcohol dependency and a history of rough sleeping all featured in the top five reasons. The top three reasons remain unchanged from the previous year.

**Figure F6 - Support needs of those owed a duty 2020/21.**



Source – H-CLIC data & Eastbourne CX Homelessness Information System.

F5.3. Compared to the previous year, the percentage of those whose support needs were driven by mental health issues, drug dependency, or alcohol dependency showed small increases, whilst the percentage driven by a history of rough sleeping, showed a small decrease. None of the changes were significant, which reflects the relatively stable picture of household types qualifying for relief and homelessness assistance across the two years. In turn this likely reflects the already high number of individuals with multiple and complex needs already accessing services, which has increased considerably since the introduction of the HRA.

**F6. Prevention duties ended.**

F6.1. The number of households whose prevention duty ends, in any given period, is used to measure the level of activity under this duty. During 2020/21 this duty ended for 111 households in Eastbourne, with the preventative activities undertaken by the housing needs team successfully securing accommodation for over sixty percent (62%) of those seeking help – see figure F7, below. This is just ahead of the figure reported for 2019/20, when preventative activities secured homes for 60% of those seeking help. Preventing homelessness occurring reduces the social costs of homelessness and hardship that these households would face and significantly reduces the associated financial costs to the Council.

F6.2. Of those receiving help, nine households were able to stay in their existing home, further minimising the disruption, social and financial cost.

**Figure F7 – Prevention duties ended by reason 2020/21.**

Secured accommodations for 6 month +	69	62%
Homeless	21	19%
Contact lost	7	6%
No further prev. action ( 56 days lapsed)	6	5%
Withdrew / deceased	4	4%
No longer eligible	2	2%
Refused accommodation	2	2%
Refused to co-operate	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source –CX Homelessness Information System.

F6.3. Around one in five (19%) of households whose duty ended became homeless and progressed to be assessed under the relief or main homelessness duty, broadly the same proportion as in 2019/20, when 20% of those whose prevention duty ended became homeless. In the remaining cases households either lost contact with the team, withdrew their application, or refused to co-operate with the help offered.

F6.4. Of the 69 households successfully securing accommodation, the majority (82%) did so in the private rented sector (see figure F8, below), which reflects the housing needs team’s continued focus on partnership working with private sector landlords. A similar proportion of households secured accommodation in the private rented sector in the previous year.

**Figure F8 – Accomm. secured at end of prevention duty 2019/20 to 2020/21.**

	No. 2019/20	% 2019/20	No. 2020/21	% 2020/21
Social rented sector	8	10%	8	12%
Private rented sector	65	82%	56	83%
Staying with family	1	1%	4	6%
Staying with friends	0	0%	0	0%
Owner-occupier	0	0%	0	0%
Other	5	0%	0	0%
Not known	0	6%	1	0%

Source –CX Homelessness Information System.

F6.5. This is reflected by the type of preventative activities undertaken to help these households, which can be seen in figure F9, below. This shows the percentage of households that the housing needs team helped secure homes for directly, doubled from 8% to 16%, whilst in a further 56% of cases the team helped secure accommodation found by the applicants themselves. This is also an increase on last year.

**Figure F9 – Prevention activity that secured accomm. for households 2020/21.**

	No. 2019/20	% 2019/20	No. 2020/21	% 2020/21
Accomm. secured by local authority	6	8%	11	16%
Secured acc. found by app. - with £	33	41%	29	42%
Secured acc. found by app. - no £	3	4%	10	14%
Negotiated stop eviction / possession	2	3%	1	1%
Negotiated return to family / friend	10	12%	3	4%
Supported housing provided	7	9%	0	0%
Discretionary Housing Payment given	3	4%	0	0%
Other financial payments	3	4%	5	7%
Other	12	15%	10	14%

Source –CX Homelessness Information System.

## **F7. Relief duties ended.**

- F7.1. The number of households whose relief duty ends, in any given period, is used to measure the level of activity under this duty. During 2020/21 this duty ended for 335 households in Eastbourne, with the activities undertaken by the housing needs team successfully securing accommodation and preventing homelessness for over a third (36%) of those seeking help – see figure F10, below. This is in line with the national average and is a marginal increase on the figure for Eastbourne reported in 2019/20, when activities secured accommodation for just over a quarter (34%) of those seeking assistance.
- F7.2. As is the case with preventative measures, relieving homelessness in this way reduces the social costs of hardship that households face and significantly reduces the associated financial costs to the Council.

**Figure F10 – Relief duties ended by reason 2020/21.**

	No. 2020/21	% 2020/21
Secured accommodation for 6+ months	121	36%
56 days elapsed	138	41%
Contact lost	32	9%
Withdrew application / applicant deceased	33	10%
Refused final accommodation	0	0%
Intentionally homeless from accommodation provided	0	0%
Local connection referral accepted by other LA	5	1%
No longer eligible	7	2%
Notice served due to refusal to cooperate	0	0%
Not known	0	0%

Source –CX Homelessness Information System.

- F7.3. Forty-one percent of households whose duty ended became homeless and progressed to be assessed under the main duty, a small reduction compared to 2019/20, when 42% of those whose relief duty ended became homeless. In the remaining cases households either lost contact with the team, withdrew their application, or refused to co-operate with the help offered.
- F7.4. Of the 121 households successfully helped to secure accommodation, around two-thirds (77) moved into private rented sector homes, whilst 21 households moved into social rented housing, six of whom moved into supported housing schemes – see figure F11, below.

**Figure F11 – Accommodation secured at end of relief duty 2019/20 to 2020/21.**

	No. 2019/20	% 2019/20	No. 2020/21	% 2020/21
Social rented sector	29	30%	21	17%
Private rented sector	49	50%	77	64%
Staying with family	3	3%	0	0%
Staying with friends	0	0%	0	0%
Owner-occupier	1	0%	0	0%
Other	1	1%	5	4%
Not known	15	15%	18	15%

Source – CX Homelessness Information System.

- F7.5. Directly finding applicants suitable private and social rented sector housing (in 33 cases) and helping secure accommodation identified by applicants themselves (in 71 cases), were the main activities that helped relieve homelessness – see figure F12, below. Maintaining close links with private landlords and the targeted use of financial incentives to help support placements have been key to this success.

**Figure F12 – Relief activity that secured accommodation for households 2020/21.**

	No. 19/20	% 19/20	No. 20/21	% 20/21
Accommodation secured by local authority	35	36%	33	27%
Supported housing provided	8	8%	6	5%
Secured accommodation found by applicant - with £ help	34	35%	48	40%
Secured accommodation found by applicant – no £ help	12	12%	23	19%
Other activity through which accommodation secured	8	8%	8	7%
No activity	1	1%	3	2%

Source – CX Homelessness Information System.

## **F8. Main duty assessments.**

- F8.1. The number of main duty assessments undertaken has fallen over the past three years, from 214 cases in 2018/19 to 134 cases in 2020/21 – see figure F13, below. This trend reflects the impact of the HRA, which has seen households assisted earlier in the process as part under the prevention and relief duties it introduced.

**Figure F13 – Main duty assessment & outcomes 2018/19 to 2020/21.**

	No. 18/19	% 18/19	No. 19/20	% 19/20	No. 20/21	% 20/21
Homeless (accepted)	160	75%	71	42%	60	45%
Homeless + priority + intentionally	15	7%	21	12%	10	7%
Homeless + no priority	21	10%	67	39%	59	44%
Not homeless	18	8%	11	6%	5	4%
Total	214	100%	170	100%	134	100%

Source –CX Homelessness Information System.

- F8.2. The number of households accepted under the main duty assessment has fallen over the past three years, accounting for less than half (45%) of cases in 2020/21. This is almost certainly as a result of the increasing numbers of single households coming through the system, again as a result of the implementation of the HRA and more recently, the pandemic. Single households are less likely to qualify as a priority than families as children are the key drivers of priority need.
- F8.3. Despite this, having dependent children remained the most common reason for households being accepted as having a priority need, followed by mental health issues, then ill health and other vulnerabilities– see figure F14, below.

**Figure F13 – Priority need of those accepted under the main duty 2020/21.**

Household includes dependent children	29	48%
Mental health problems	10	17%
Physical disability / ill health	4	7%
Other vulnerability reason	5	8%
Learning difficulty	2	3%
Has been in custody or on remand	0	0%
Domestic violence / threat of domestic violence	2	3%
Household includes a pregnant woman	2	3%
Homeless due to fire, flood or other emergency	1	2%
Applicant is care leaver aged 18 to 20 years	1	2%
Care leaver 21+	1	2%
Drug dependency	1	2%
Alcohol dependency	1	2%
Non-domestic violence / threat of	1	2%

Source –CX Homelessness Information System.

## **F9. Main duties ended.**

- F9.1. The number of main duties that ended fell significantly in 2020/21. This reflects the lower numbers of households being assessed as having a main duty, as well as a restriction on lettings activity introduced after April 2020, to help reduce the local spread of Covid-19. The majority of households for whom the main duty ended were housed in a council, or other socially rented home (52% or 13 ). Five households accepted accommodation in the private rented sector – see figure F15.

**Figure F15 – Accommodation at end of main duty 2019/20 to 2020/21.**

	No. 2019/20	% 2019/21	No. 2020/21	% 20120/21
Accepted a social housing offer	41	37%	13	52%
Accepted a Private Rented Sector offer	39	35%	5	20%
Applicant withdrew or lost contact	3	3%	4	16%
Became intentionally homeless from TA	11	10%	1	4%
Ceased to occupy temporary accommodation	16	15%	1	4%
Refused suitable social / private rented offer	0	0%	1	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source –CX Homelessness Information System.

## **F10. Use of temporary accommodation.**

F10.1. The numbers of households in temporary accommodation (TA) has fallen steadily across the past year. At the end of March 2021 there were a total of 166 households in TA, a slight reduction in the number at the end of June 2020 (176) - see figure F16, below.

**Figure F15 – Households in temporary accommodation at the end of quarter.**

	Jun-20	Sep-20	Dec-20	Mar-21
Private sector leased (self-contained)	0	2	2	9
Nightly paid (self-contained)	101	101	101	90
Local authority stock (self-contained)	24	34	37	36
Bed and breakfast hotels ( shared)	50	37	36	31
Hostels & refuges (shared)	3	2	0	0
Other (shared / self-contained)	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>166</b>
Percentage self-contained	70%	78%	80%	81%
Percentage shared	30%	22%	20%	19%

Source –CX Homelessness Information System

\* DLUHC homelessness live tables.

F10.2. Since the end of the first quarter in 2019/20 the use of shared accommodation has fallen by a third, accounting for less than 20% of those housed temporarily at the end of March 2021. This fall is largely attributable to increasing the use of existing local authority self-contained homes as TA, in line with the Council's strategic objectives.

## **F11. Rough sleeping.**

F11.1. The number of rough sleepers in Eastbourne continues to be relatively high when compared with areas of a similar size, though in absolute terms the numbers remain fairly low. The relatively high incidence of rough sleeping is a common feature of coastal towns and communities across the country. The annual rough sleeper count, which takes place in all local authorities each autumn, has recorded fewer than 20 rough sleepers in the town for all years bar 2017, and in 2020 the count fell slightly to 14 - see figure F16, below.

**Figure F16 – Annual rough sleeper count.**

<b>Year (Oct)</b>	<b>Count</b>
2015	10
2016	19
2017	41
2018	6
2019	16
2020	14

Source – DLUHC – Homelessness live tables.

F11.2. The Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) continues to provide ongoing support, carrying out proactive outreach work that:

- Identifies those who are rough sleeping.
- Helps rough sleepers to connect with local services.
- Supports individuals to reconnect with their home authority, where appropriate.

F11.3. Additional engagement sessions are undertaken throughout the week, with targeted interventions supported by a dedicated team of multi-disciplinary specialists. A similar programme, the Rapid Rehousing Pathway, is focussed on rough sleepers with less complex needs. Across 2020/21 these programmes supported over 50-0 interventions to assist local rough sleepers.

## **G. RESOURCES TO TACKLE HOMELESSNESS.**

### **G1. Corporate plans & housing delivery.**

G1.1. The Corporate Plan sets out the borough's priorities over the next four years, including key aspirations to increase the supply of housing and help reduce housing need and homelessness across the borough. There are five key priorities which set out to:

- Deliver good access to housing that meets modern standards.
- Provide safe, well managed and decent homes.
- Regenerate locations and deliver more housing.
- Promote housing that sustains health & wellbeing.
- Address the causes of homelessness.

G1.2 In addressing homelessness the plan sets out goals to; focus on prevention; support households at risk of homelessness; and work in partnership to address the number of rough sleepers in the town.

G1.3. The Council is accelerating its delivery of new affordable homes. In addition to the twelve new homes scheduled to be completed in the remaining months of 2021/22, a further 63 affordable homes have been granted planning permission, the majority of which will be new council owned homes at a site in Bedfordwell Road. Proposals for the delivery of a further 100 new council new homes are set out in the Council's latest housing development plan, alongside 44 homes to be developed on various sites across the town, supported by funds awarded as part of a successful bid to the Government's Brownfield Land Release Fund.

G1.4. A number of supported housing units, commissioned via the County Council's Supported Housing Framework, are available for households nominated by the borough, including the young persons' foyer scheme, operated by the YMCA Downlink Group in Eastbourne. Increases in the numbers of vulnerable single households now being assessed under homelessness duties are likely to see the future demand for this, and similar types of accommodation increase.

### **G2. Support to prevent and mitigate the impact of homelessness.**

G2.1. A range of services, projects and programmes continue to put in place measures targeted at preventing homelessness and support those households in need of help. These comprise of many of the statutory and voluntary services summarised in the review of existing activities set out in section E (above), the key elements of which include:

- Maintaining a comprehensive housing needs service - the service will continue to lead the Council's homelessness operations, through teams that; deliver strategic projects and partnerships; undertake statutory prevention, relief, and main duty assessment; and manage all aspects of temporary accommodation. A new structure has recently been put in place to focus resources on these objectives and the transition to the new roles will be complete by the end of the December 2021.

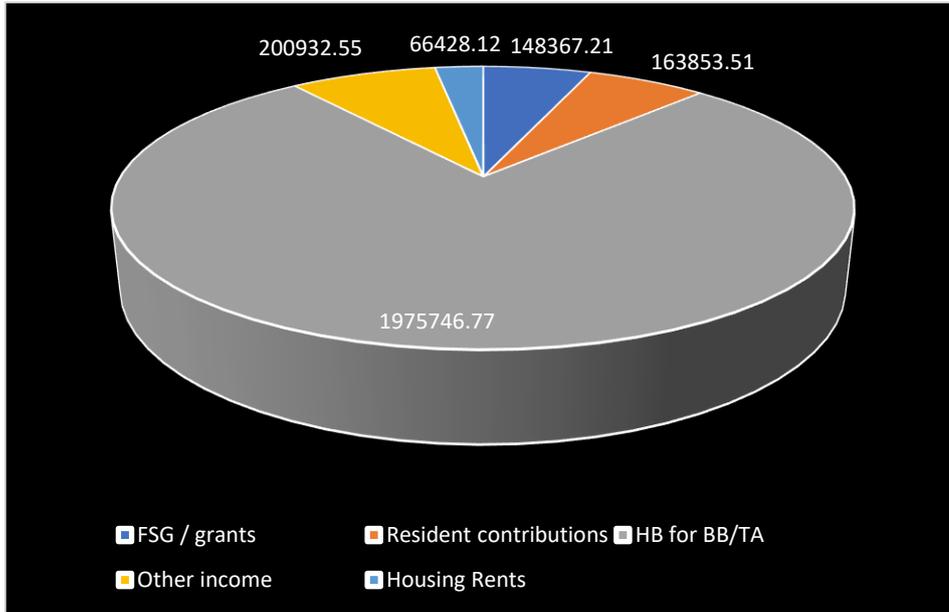
- Forging partnerships with other key statutory agencies – working closely with nearby local authorities to share information about shared challenges and co-ordinate work plans, including via the East Sussex Housing Officers Group, will continue to form an essential means of planning strategy.
- Securing funding together – working with partners in this way provides a solid platform from which joint bids for funding can be made to central Government. Recent examples include successful bids to extend the RSI & RRP programmes and deliver respite rooms provision for victims of domestic abuse across the county. Locally, the work with other agencies to put in place the wellbeing co-ordinators ins another successful example of collaboration.
- Next Steps & Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme - through these DLUCH's programmes, the council has secured over £1M of funding to purchase eight units of self-contained accommodation, to be used as Housing First for former rough sleepers working referred from the RSI. As at the end of October 2021 two homes have been purchased and a let, with the occupants receiving the support they need to help maintain their tenancy. A further two have been identified and conveyancing is underway. The revenue grant provided under the scheme is being used to lease shorter term accommodation and fund a support worker post to provide a tenancy sustainment service to these and up to ten Housing First placements in existing council stock.
- Delivering financial support and advice services – directly supporting households by targeting Discretionary Housing Payments at those who experience a shortfall between the costs of their rent and welfare housing payments, is a key preventative tool that will continue to be deployed. Funding advice services, including those provided by the CAB and Brighton Housing Trust.
- Continuing to directly fund financial and housing advices service provided by the Citizen's Advice Bureaux and Brighton Housing Trust.
- Working with agencies who support those experiencing housing difficulties – These include floating support providers, such as Homeworks and providers of move-on accommodation, such as the Salvation Army and YMCA.
- Working in partnership with local landlords - incentivising local landlords to make homes available to 'at risk' households, who would otherwise have been placed in temporary accommodation.

### **G3. How homelessness services are funded.**

G3.1. In 2020/21 the core housing needs service cost £3.62M to run, with the largest items of expenditure being the payments made for temporary accommodation, the staff teams in place to deliver statutory homelessness services and manage temporary accommodation.

G3.2. This expenditure is funded from a number of different income sources, as shown in figure G1 (below), which together provided an income of £2.56M.

Figure G1 – Housing needs income 2020/21.



G3.3. This income comprised of:

- Rental income of £1.98M, including housing benefit subsidies claimed back from the Government. The income received covers some, but not all of the cost of the temporary accommodation provided. Taking steps to maximize what can be claimed back from Government, collected from residents, and reducing the amount paid for temporary accommodation to landlords, are key to reducing service costs overall.
- Flexible Support Grant (FSG) - £148k of FSG payments received from central Government. These funds are provided to help local authorities meet their statutory duties and provide the additional tools put in place to prevent and relive homelessness, such as rents in advance and deposit payments, advice and education services.
- Resident contributions - £164k paid by residents towards the cost of service charges that are not eligible for housing benefits.

G3.4. The resultant gap between income and expenditure, approximately £1.06M was met by funding from core council budgets.

G3.5. Additional funding, bid for over the past year, includes a £630k share of the funding secured to deliver the RSI across the county until March 2022, and £204k awarded to cover Covid-19 related accommodation placement in local hotels.

G3.6. As detailed above additional capital funding of £1M has been secured to purchase move on accommodation for rough sleepers, alongside revenue funding to cover the cost of associated support and tenancy sustainment services.

## **H. STRATEGIC INSIGHTS.**

### **H1. Summary & key themes.**

H1.1.1. This review set out to provide an up to date picture of the:

- Current levels of homelessness across Eastbourne.
- Support available to prevent homelessness and those experiencing it.
- Level of resources made available locally to tackle homelessness.

H1.2. The review of the local context and analysis of recent trends demonstrates that the demand for services is high and likely to remain so into the foreseeable future. It also demonstrates that the housing needs service is operating well to meet demand, has adjusted to meet the new requirement of the HRA 2017, but that addressing it successfully has a significant financial cost. Partnerships are an essential element of addressing the needs of homeless households across the borough and draw in the dedicated efforts of a wide range of statutory and voluntary agency partners, who for the most part, work well together.

H1.3. Over the past year, analysis of how the housing needs service has been operating indicates that the pandemic has had an impact that very much reflect national trends and the policies that have sought to restrict evictions and increase the assistance given to the most vulnerable in society. The impact of these has been seen, though given the high level of assistance already being given to single households across the town, this impact may have been less marked than elsewhere. Indeed, there is clear evidence to suggest that the main shift took place as a result of implementing the new prevention and relief duties introduced by the HRA 2017, which resulted on many more single and more vulnerable people being assisted under statutory homelessness provisions.

H1.4. So, whilst in the short term there is likely to be some re-balancing of the profile of those accessing the service, particularly as the restrictions on evictions ease, strategic approaches need to take account of background trends driven by the HRA. As such, services are likely to face an ongoing level of demand from a more marginalised and challenging customer base. The emphasis on having in place high quality services that seek to prevent homelessness occurring, and relieve is swiftly where it occurs, will needs to be maintained to address this.

H1.6. All of this is taking place against a background where affordability ratios in the borough are at almost unprecedented levels, where rents continue to challenge welfare subsidy caps and where the increasing living costs are having a significant impact on household budgets, disproportionately so for those already on lower incomes. Putting in place sustainable measures that seek to address homelessness, by promoting access to homes and meeting longer term affordable housing needs and tackling the broader socio-economic causes that drive homelessness, will become even more essential.

## H2. Strategic response.

H2.1. In taking forward the strategy, this final section of the review sets out a number of suggested themes that set out to achieve three key goals, namely, to prevent, relieve and put in place sustainable responses to address homelessness.

### **GOAL 1 – PREVENT HOMELESSNESS – THROUGH:**

- Upstream interventions that tackle the wellbeing, welfare and employment issues that drive homelessness.
- Quality housing needs service – holistic assessment & early intervention.
- Targeted financial support – landlords.
- Targeted financial support – tenants (DHP; deposit; RIA).
- Education & awareness – schools, young people & care leavers.
- Advice, & practical support (employment, training, budgeting, home skills).
- Targeted prevention for at risk groups (floating & intensive & wellbeing support).
- A continued focus on tackling rough sleeping through the RSI and related initiatives.

### **GOAL 2 – INTERVENE TO RELIEVE HOMELESSNESS – THROUGH:**

- Upstream interventions that tackle the wellbeing, welfare and employment issues that drive homelessness
- Quality housing needs service – holistic assessment & timely intervention.
- Targeted financial support – landlords.
- Targeted financial support – tenants (DHP; deposit; RIA).
- Advice, & practical support (employment, training, budgeting, home skills).
- Targeted pathways for at risk groups (RSI; prison; care leavers; hospital).
- Targeted support for at risk groups (floating, intensive & wellbeing support).
- Value for money partner led EA/TA.
- Implementing a multiple agency framework to address the needs of individuals with the highest level of complex needs.

### **GOAL 3 – SUSTAINABLE RESPONSES TO HOMELESSNESS – THROUGH:**

- Maintaining a clear profile and housing needs of those accessing services.
- Maximising the availability of affordable homes through new provision.
- Allocations that balance the needs of homeless and housing register applicants.
- Commissioning a suitable supply of supported housing.
- Maximising re-housing opportunities in the PRS.

H2.2. Each of these goals would be supported by a series of cross cutting themes that seek to put in place:

- Effective collaborations with statutory, agency and voluntary partners.
- High quality, value for money services that make the most of available funding.
- Skilled and well trained staff.

H2.3. The views of the public, partners and stakeholders are sought to help shape the forthcoming revision of homelessness strategy.

**END**