

Mid Sussex District Council

Homelessness Review 2019



Ending
homelessness
together

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1.1 IN BRIEF

The Homelessness Review ('the Review') forms part of Mid Sussex District Council's response to its statutory duties to produce a Homelessness Review and Strategy outlining the main causes of homelessness in its area and the strategic plans and actions the Council has in place to tackle them.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Housing authorities are required by legislation (Housing Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) to carry out a periodic review of homelessness in their area. The purpose of the review is to determine the extent to which the population in the district is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, assess the likely extent in the future, identify what is currently being done and by whom, and identify what resources are available to prevent and tackle homelessness.

Local housing authorities should use this understanding of homelessness in their area to inform their Homelessness Strategy and they are obliged by legislation to involve partners in this process.

In addition, the Homelessness Code of Guidance for local authorities sets out some requirements for a Homelessness Strategy. It should:



Link to the wider contributory factors of homelessness, such as health, wellbeing, employment and economic factors.



Be consistent with other corporate strategies and objectives.



Involve partners in implementing the strategic homelessness objectives.



Have an Action Plan to show how the strategic objectives will be achieved.



Be monitored and reviewed during the life of the Strategy.

Definition of Homelessness and the statutory duties owed to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness

The main provisions for dealing with homelessness are contained in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force on 3 April 2018. It made significant changes to Part 7 of the 1996 Act. Its main effect is to place increased duties on local authorities to assess an applicant's needs and to prevent and relieve homelessness.

A person is threatened with homelessness if it is likely that they will become homeless within 56 days. This includes where they have been given a valid section 21 notice in respect of their only accommodation, and the notice is due to expire within 56 days. Where a person is threatened with homelessness, the local authority will have a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent them from becoming homeless.

A person is statutorily homeless if they have no accommodation available for their occupation which they have a legal right to occupy and is reasonable for them to continue to occupy. If the person is statutorily homeless, the local authority will have some form of duty towards them. This ranges from advice and assistance, or providing interim accommodation, to the relief duty or the main housing duty of securing accommodation for a continuing period. The extent of the duty will depend on whether or not they are, or may be, eligible for assistance, in priority need, intentionally homeless, or have a local connection. It is important to note that there is only a duty to secure accommodation for those who are eligible for assistance and have a priority need.

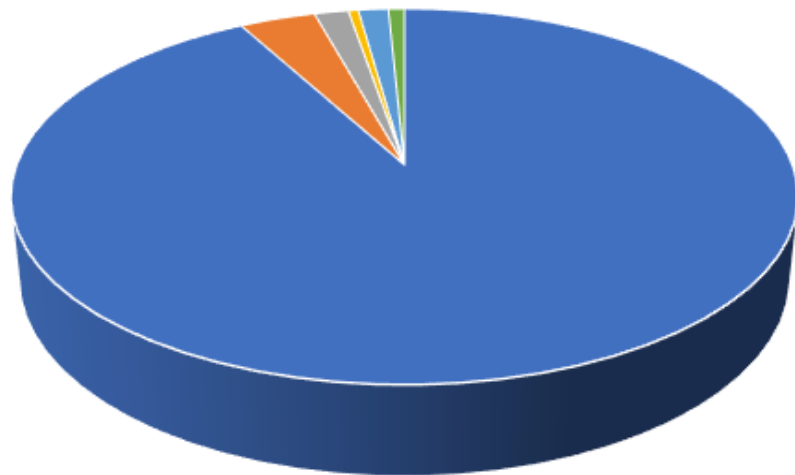
The priority need categories are set out in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and these are:

- Pregnant women
- Households with dependent children
- 16 and 17 year olds
- Care leavers aged 18,19 or 20
- People made homeless by an emergency
- People vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or physical disability, having been in care, having served in the armed forces, having been in custody, having to leave accommodation because of violence or abuse or vulnerable for some other special reason.

1.3 LOCAL CONTEXT

Mid Sussex is a local government district in the county of West Sussex. The district borders Tandridge, Lewes and Horsham districts as well as Brighton and Hove and Crawley. The District covers approximately 128 square miles and is largely rural. There are three main towns – Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath and East Grinstead – as well as twenty-five villages and other smaller hamlets.

Mid Sussex is one of the least deprived local authority areas in the country and the least deprived district within West Sussex, however there are pockets of deprivation within each of the District's three main towns.



■ White British 95.1% ■ White Other 3.8% ■ Asian 1.7%
■ Black 0.5% ■ Mixed Race 1.5% ■ Other 0.8%

POPULATION - The total population of Mid Sussex (2017) stood at just over 148,000 and there has been a 10% increase in the previous 10 years. The population is expected to rise by around 30,000 by 2031. It is predicted that by 2031 25% of the population will be aged over 65 and around 22% will be under the age of 19.

**Age Profile of Mid Sussex. (MSDC modelling(POPGROUP) – 2018)*

The aging population is reflected in the increased West Sussex County Council (WSCC) Adult Social Care budget which has increased by over 11 million in the last 3 years to £139.7 million in 2018/19. As a result WSCC spend around 37% of their total budget on Adult Social Care. This is relevant to MSDC as part of its Strategy as an increasing number of homeless applicants have complex needs including adult social care needs.

Mid Sussex's population is split approximately 50/50 male and female and is predominantly White British. The most recent Census is the 2011 Census. The chart shows the 2011 Census ethnic make-up data for Mid Sussex.

** Office of National Statistics 2017.*

EMPLOYMENT

Mid Sussex has a high level of residents who are deemed to be economically active and low levels of unemployment. Between April 2018 – March 2019 unemployment in the district stood at 2.1%. This is considerably lower than the national average of 4.1% for the same period. In July 2019 only 0.9% of the population of Mid Sussex was recorded as an unemployed claimant compared to the national average of 2.8%. In 2018 the average gross pay for workers in Mid Sussex was £645.60 per week. This is higher than the national average of £571.10 per week.

**Nomis official labour market statistics*

Over 60% of the district's population are of working age, which is nearly the same as the average for West Sussex, but slightly below the regional level.

HOUSEHOLDS & HOUSING NEED

The data from the 2011 Census shows that the number of households in Mid Sussex rose from 51,969 in 2001 to 57,409 by 2011. The Mid Sussex District Plan identified that there is a need for 16,390 homes during 2014-2031 and that there is a housing need for 876 homes per year until 2023/24.

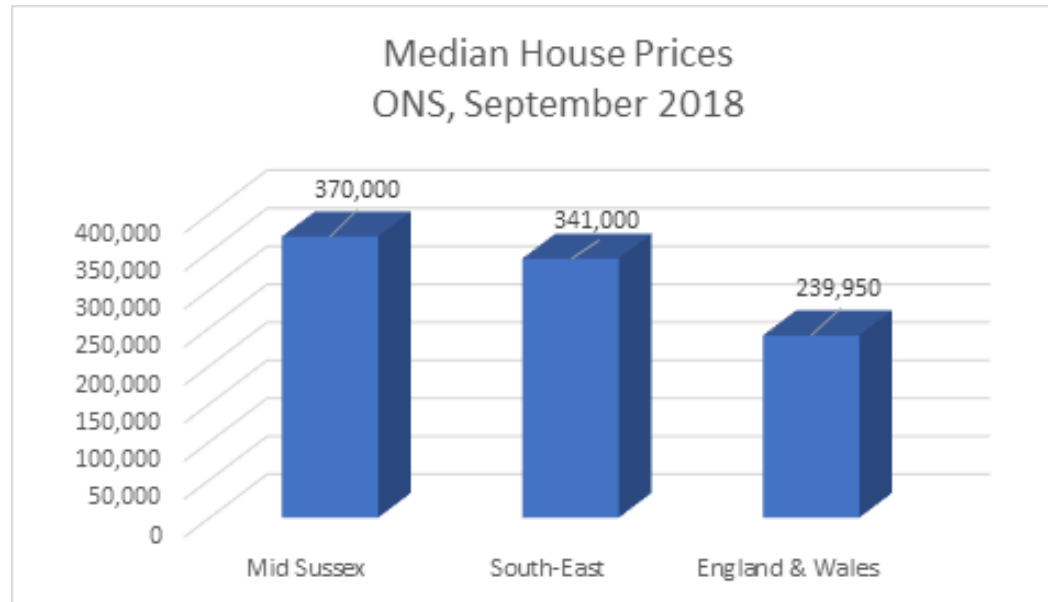
HOUSING TENURE

Mid Sussex has a higher level of privately owned homes than most of the country. This likely reflects the higher than average wages of residents and that many residents are settled long-term. However the Census shows a decline in the proportion of home owners from 79% to 74% between 2001 and 2011. This compares to the national average of 68%.

Over the same period there has been a large increase in the size of the private rented sector, increasing from 4,002 properties to 7,322. Census data shows there are more privately rented properties than social rented properties in Mid Sussex. Privately rented housing makes up 13% of housing provision, compared to 12% in social housing. This compares to the national figures of 16.8% and 16.4% respectively.

MARKET HOUSING COSTS AND INCOMES

As Mid Sussex has a high standard of living and is an attractive place to live, there is a great demand for housing and this impacts on house prices. Housing prices are high in Mid Sussex compared with the average for West Sussex and nationally. House prices have increased by 49% in the last 10 years, a higher percentage than the average across the South East.



The ratio of median house prices to median earnings in 2017 in Mid Sussex was 13.82 (ONS 2017), demonstrating issues with housing affordability, particularly for young people trying to get on to the housing ladder.

Information from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Update 2014 identified that 62.7% of households in Mid Sussex were unable to afford to buy and 44.2% unable to rent without some form of support.

Key Issues identified from the Review

The homelessness monitor England 2018 by CRISIS shows that homelessness is rising across the country, in rural and inner city areas.

Mid Sussex follows the national trend in the number of households that have faced homelessness. Use of temporary accommodation and numbers of those who experience rough sleeping have increased. At the same time, the number of private rented homes that are affordable to those on a low income or reliant on benefits has shrunk, putting further pressure on social housing.

Housing options for people on low incomes or those receiving housing costs related benefits are increasingly limited. Private landlords are reluctant to rent to people on welfare benefits, with many worried that such households would struggle to pay rent and bills. Rising housing costs combined with welfare reform have resulted in many more people facing homelessness.

The impacts of homelessness are devastating for individuals and families. It can affect both physical and mental health, educational and employment opportunities (for both adults and children) and can have long term consequences for those affected. For these reasons reducing homelessness and rough sleeping is a priority for the Council.

The previous change in emphasis nationally from government grant to support the provision of new rented affordable housing in favour of home ownership options such as Help to Buy and the proposed extension of the Right to Buy to tenants of housing associations, is likely to reduce the number of homes available to rent for those who are homeless or on the Council's housing register. If this policy direction is maintained, it will remain a risk to meeting affordable housing need. A reduction in the number of lettings in social housing is likely to contribute not only to increased housing pressure and therefore an increased incidence of homelessness but will also make it harder to move those households placed in temporary accommodation into longer term housing.

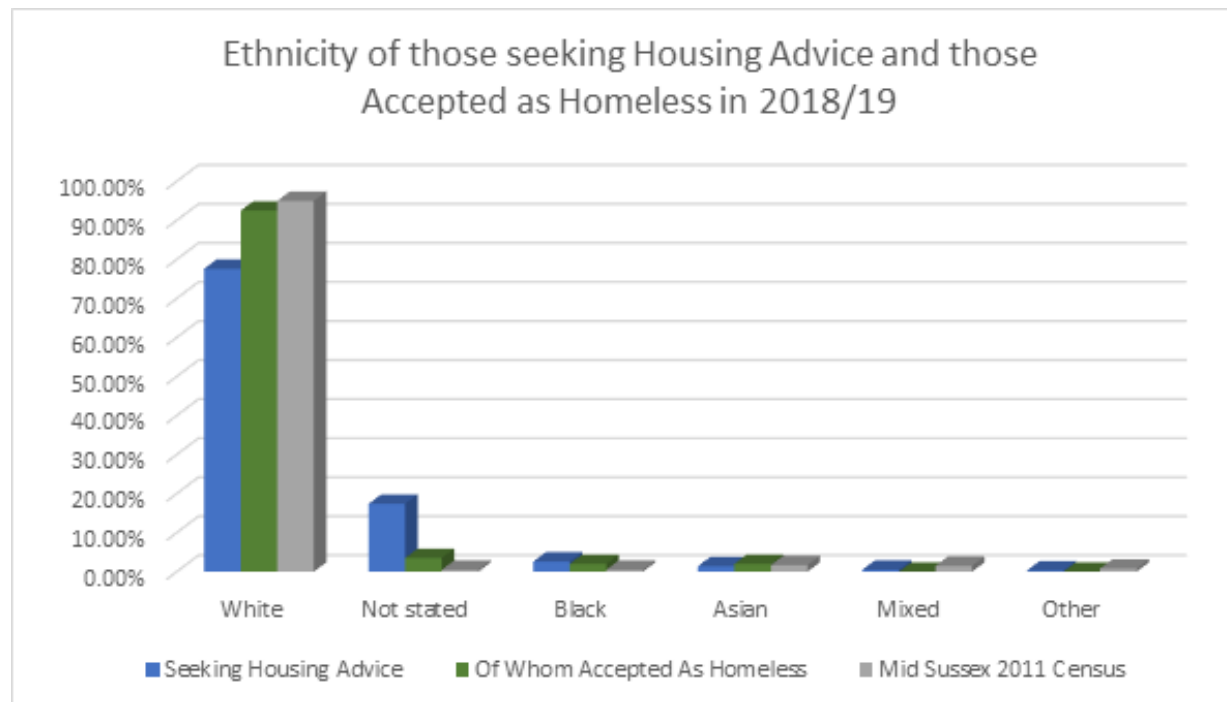


1.4 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people when carrying out their activities.

The Council's Housing Needs service, in the main, deals with people on low to modest incomes and those who are vulnerable. This means that the principles of equality and diversity are particularly important in the provision of homelessness services and the Council is committed to them.

Equality means that everyone is treated fairly and in accordance with their needs. Diversity means valuing and embracing people in terms of their background, skills, abilities and experiences that they may bring with them.



* White includes: British, Irish, Other. Asian includes: British, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Other. Black includes: British, African, Caribbean

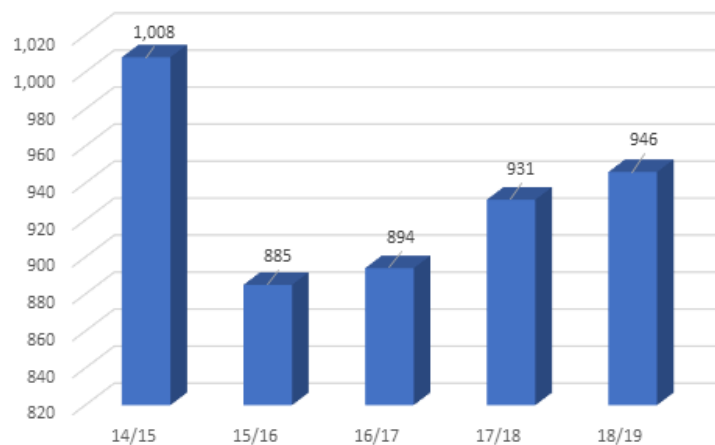
The above table suggests that the ethnicity of those approaching the Council for housing advice, and who are then accepted as homeless, is consistent with the background population in Mid Sussex.

The number of approaches from people who have identified as from the Gypsy and Traveller community is relatively few. This may reflect some under reporting as those seeking housing support may not self-identify in all instances. The wider housing and accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller Community are identified in the Council's Local Plan. The local needs assessment has identified the need to accommodate 23 households through the allocation of new site pitches in Mid Sussex up to 2031.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. This identifies homelessness related issues for those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act and how these will be addressed. The Assessment is available at <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/my-council/about-the-council/equality-and-diversity/equality-impact-assessment/>



Households seeking face to face Housing Advice



1.5 HOMELESSNESS

Extent of Homelessness in Mid Sussex

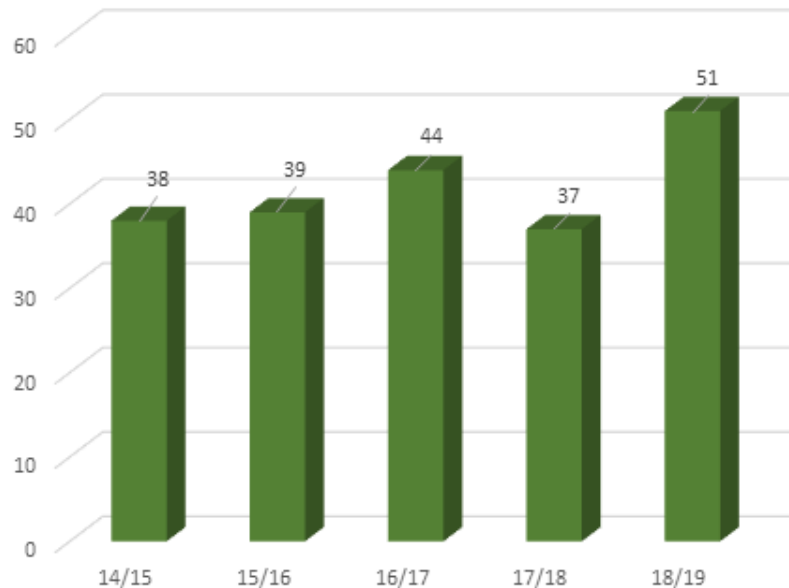
Key Homelessness Statistics for Mid Sussex 2014-19

The number of households approaching the Council for Housing advice has increased over the last 4 years. The complexity of problems presented by these people has also increased, (for example people with complex mental health needs and/or physical health issues and with substance misuse issues) and the Council has difficulty in finding ways to help them.

As shown here, between April 2014 and March 2019 the Council dealt with over 4660 requests for advice and assistance regarding housing and homelessness. This figure does not include the increased number of contacts made by telephone, e-mail, or use of information made available on the Council's website.

The service saw an increase in approaches for support during 2018/19. **The number of approaches during April to June 2018 compared to April to June 2019 increased by 19%.** If this trend continues then the number of approaches to the Council could rise to over 2,500 per year by 2024/25.

Households accepted as homeless



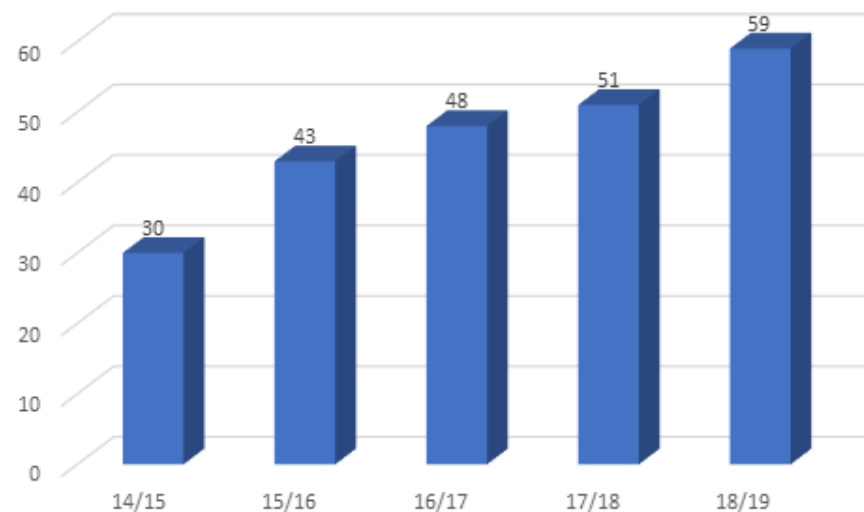
The number of households accepted under the main duty of the homelessness legislation has increased over the past 5 years despite the positive preventative work by the service.

The recruitment of two new Homeless Prevention Officers from January 2019 has assisted in are compliant with the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and helped to meet the increased demand. It is likely that main duty acceptances will continue to increase in the forthcoming years due to the factors identified elsewhere in this review.

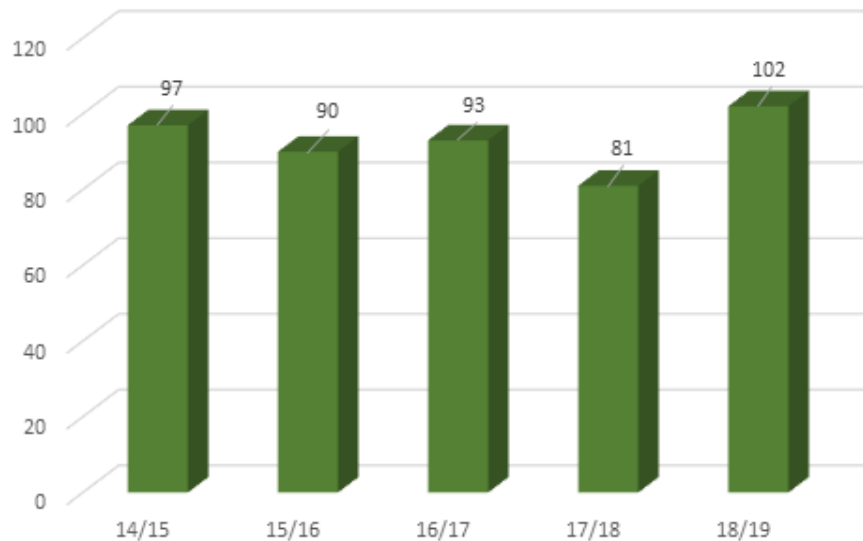
The chart shows that the number of households in temporary accommodation has significantly increased over the past 5 years. This is largely due to the increase in homelessness referred to and the new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act meaning that the Council has a duty to accommodate some households for longer.

This is compounded by factors such as fewer affordable homes becoming available and reduced access to the private sector housing for those on low incomes.

Households in Temporary Accommodation



Households assisted to access Privately Rented properties



The numbers The Council has helped to access the private rented sector has started to increase in the past year but remains challenging due to:

- Competitiveness of the market
- High rents
- Welfare benefit changes

These issues exclude many residents from renting privately. In April 2018 the Council employed a full time Private Rented Tenancy Negotiator and Sustainment Officer who has successfully increased access to the private rented sector for households the Council are assisting.

REASONS FOR HOMELESSNESS

The charity, Homeless Link, states that there is no single reason why people become homeless, and that it can be a result of individual circumstances as well as wider economic and social factors. The research undertaken by Homeless Link has found that homelessness is most commonly a result of one or more adverse life events, which are outside the individual's control; combined with insufficient means to obtain accommodation, and lack of adequate or available support. These life events can include unemployment, poverty, long term health issues, relationship or family breakdown and a lack of affordable accommodation.

Changes of circumstances and removal of support systems can also lead to homelessness, such as release from prison, discharge from the armed forces, coming out of the local authority care system, or relocation to an area without social support.

Reasons for people seeking face-to-face housing advice from the Council

	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Unable to remain with parent, relative or friend	196	183	208	177	177
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	85	73	74	101	88
Violent breakdown of relationship with partner	59	63	37	40	47
Other violence or harassment	8	10	22	17	36
Mortgage arrears	48	34	38	24	33
Rent arrears	217	141	196	209	245
Assured Shorthold Termination only	126	126	98	132	148
Other reasons for loss of rented/tied housing	129	116	126	82	74
Discharged from institution	18	24	19	26	23
Other	117	115	77	123	92
Total number seeking housing advice	1,003	885	894	931	951

Over 49% of those seeking advice from the Council about their housing in 2018/19 were experiencing difficulties with their rented accommodation, including 26% with difficulties paying their rent.

Reasons for homelessness where full housing duty accepted by the Council

	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Unable to remain with parent, relative or friend	9	6	21	11	17
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	4	4	5	0	3
Violent breakdown of relationship with partner	11	8	5	8	7
Other violence or harassment	-	-	3	3	1
Mortgage arrears	-	-	1	-	-
Rent arrears	-	2	1	3	-
Assured Shorthold Termination only	9	10	4	6	11
Other reasons for loss of rented/tied housing	3	4	3	4	4
Discharged from institution	-	3	1	-	6
Other	2	2	4	2	5
Total number accepted as homeless	38	39	48	37	54

The number of households accepted as homeless by the Council has been relatively stable but with an increase in the last 12 months. This increase is expected to continue.

In 2018/19 31% of households who were accepted as homeless had been asked to leave by family or friends, making this the most common reason for being accepted as homeless. This was followed by termination of tenancies in the private rented sector accounting for 20% of homelessness acceptances, this is up from 8% in 2016/17.

In contrast to the rented sector, the numbers experiencing problems paying their mortgages has shown a general decline over the last 5 years and now accounts for only 3% of enquiries. Only one household become homeless as a result of mortgage difficulties has been accepted in the last 5 years, and none since 2017/18. Consistently low mortgage interest rates since the crash in 2008 have assisted with this.

Support for those in arrears with their rent and for those on low incomes

Where households are at risk of losing their home because of rent arrears, the Council work to try to keep them in their current home, including undertaking tenancy sustainment visits. The Council provides a high standard of housing advice to households around complex landlord and tenant disputes, disrepair, rent arrears and welfare benefits. We negotiate with landlords (both social and private) to try and save the tenancy, or if that is not possible to negotiate time to achieve a planned move to alternative accommodation.

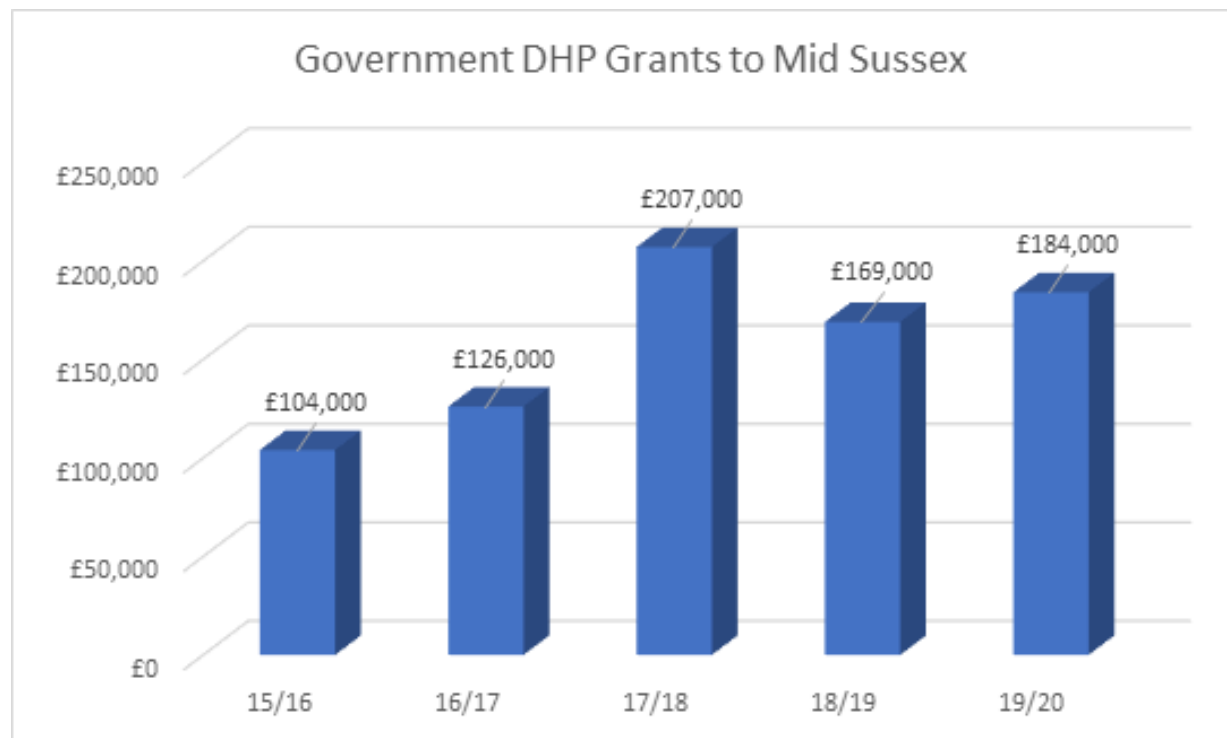
WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL'S ACCOMMODATION TEAM - The Council work closely with WSCC's Accommodation Team Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub. The Accommodation Team are able to support some families at risk of being homeless due to rent arrears with match funding to allow them to remain in their home. A multi-agency team is put in place around the family to look at income and budgeting. WSCC is then able to match (to an agreed limit) the repayments made by the family towards their arrears. Whilst this support and the repayments are ongoing the landlord agrees not to take further possession action. This joint work aims to prevent families with children becoming homeless who would potentially become intentionally homeless where their accommodation costs would fall to the County Council because of their legal duties under the Children Act.



DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS - (DHPs) are special non-repayable payments from a cash-limited annual fund provided to each local authority by the Government. Their use is covered by regulation and statutory guidance.

In some circumstances DHP's may be utilised to prevent homelessness by clearing some or all of the arrears and or cover the rent shortfall. It may also be possible to utilise Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) to prevent homelessness in a similar way. If it is not possible to save a tenancy, DHP or FHSG can be used to help with the tenancy start-up costs to help households move to alternative affordable accommodation.

DHPs and FHSG payments have been collectively issued to over 1008 households (as at 30/06/19) to prevent homelessness.



UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE BENEFIT CAP - The Council works closely with the Job Centre Plus to help identify those who are at risk of homelessness due to unemployment and welfare reform. The Job Centre Plus is one of the public bodies that has a Duty to Refer those who they are aware of that may be at risk of homelessness or are already homeless to the local housing authority.

The Council has successfully bid for funding to recruit an Employment Project Co-ordinator who has been in post since 1 May 2019. The funding for this post is for one year but it is likely that future funding will be secured. The post was set up to:

- Provide a proactive service working with key partners to help vulnerable people at risk of homelessness back into employment
- Providing appropriate advice, help and support to prevent and or alleviate homelessness
- Supporting clients to maximise income through additional benefits
- Proactive use of DHP as an incentive to change behaviours.

Effective work done with residents affected by the benefit cap includes assistance to move into work and more affordable accommodation. This complements the work of the Council's benefits team who are assisting those affected by referring them onto the Employment Project Co-ordinator.

FOODBANKS - There are three voluntary foodbanks operating in Mid Sussex who supply free food to those most in need. Vouchers are issued by a number of agencies including this Council. Like DHP, Foodbanks help to mitigate the effect of welfare reform for those who have been hardest hit and are largely funded by public donation.

The foodbanks in Mid Sussex are at Haywards Heath and East Grinstead, run by the Trussell Trust, and the Burgess Hill Community Food Bank. Use of food banks has increased with the numbers assisted by the Haywards Heath Food Bank up 23% in 2018 from the previous year to 1,657. The East Grinstead Food bank assisted 1,593 in 2018. 162 food vouchers were issued by the Council in the period 2018, compared to 99 in the previous year. Increases are in line with national trends for the Trussell Trust which saw a 19% increase in emergency help in 2018/19. The main reasons for people needing emergency food were:

- ☐ 33% household income not covering essential costs
- ☐ 20% benefit delays
- ☐ 17% benefit changes.

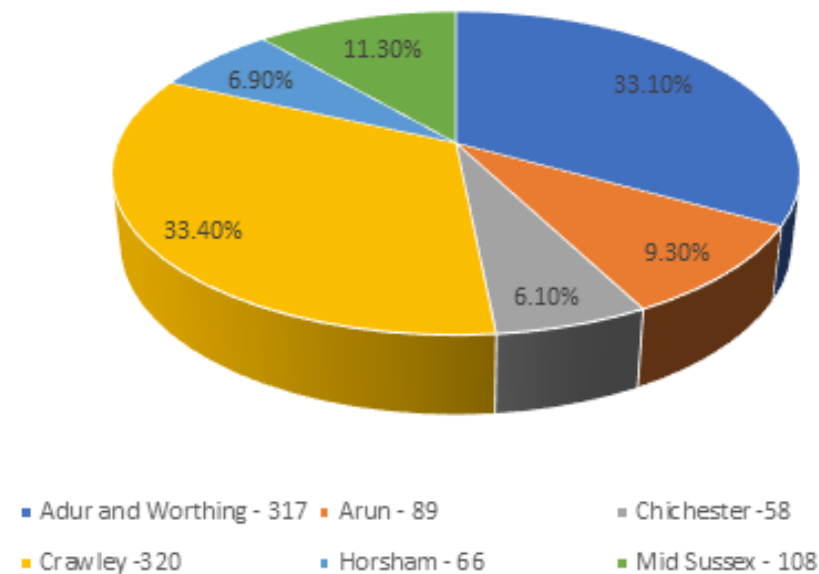
WSCC have reduced funding for foodbanks in East Grinstead and Haywards Heath from 2018/19 to 2019/20 by an average of 23%.

LOCAL ASSISTANCE NETWORK (LAN) FUNDED BY WSCC - Since April 2013, WSCC has funded support through a number of agencies to provide discretionary services to households facing hardship as a result of a crisis or an emergency. This assistance has taken the form of a range of basic needs including:

- Food from foodbanks
- Furniture recycling schemes
- Vouchers to get personal and household goods such as nappies, cooking equipment, clothes
- Help with transport and fuel costs

Support is provided via foodbanks, Furnihelp, Citizens Advice and Children and Family Centres in Mid Sussex. This scheme replaced the Government Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants which were abolished in April 2013 under the Welfare Reform Act 2012.

LAN payments, by district & borough, in West Sussex in 2018/2019



The Council makes use of the services funded by the LAN by referring households to the Foodbanks and also by making referrals to Furnihelp for those in need of furniture and white goods when moving into temporary accommodation or into a more permanent home.

From 2019-20 the funding for this will be severely reduced resulting in a reduction of over £50,000 to only £7,500 for Furnihelp provision in Mid Sussex. WSCC are considering reducing LAN Funding across West Sussex by a further 50% going forward. The current total LAN budget is £200,000 per year. There is a proposal to reduce this to only £100,000 from April 2020.

CO-LOCATED CITIZENS ADVICE MONEY ADVICE & HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION WORKER – Since November 2018 MSDC have funded a member of Citizen's Advice to be co-located in the Council's Housing Team. The service provides homeless prevention work focused on budgeting and debt management as well as expertise in defending possession proceedings for residents in rented accommodation. The service was originally commissioned part time but extended to 5 days a week due to its success. From November 2018 to October 2019 143 clients used the service and of these around 40% remained in their own home. The service supported clients in generating around £100,000 in extra finance, through assisting them to maximise income including accessing benefits they were entitled to.

Support in cases of parental/relative ejections

In cases of parental/relative ejections, the Council works with family and friends to resolve the issues causing the eviction and refer to support services to help build better relationships. There is often the misconception that applicants need to go into temporary accommodation before they can access social housing. Officers explain the realities of housing in Mid Sussex and that many people face long periods in Temporary Accommodation and may never access social housing. These difficult conversations help families to understand the choices and options that are available to them.

CLIENT GROUPS AND THOSE MOST AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

Priority Need category of those households accepted as homeless

	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Household with dependent children	22	24	25	20	18
Household with pregnant member only	2	1	2	1	2
Applicant aged 16 or 17	-	-	-	-	-
Applicant aged 18, 19, 20, previously in care	1	-	2	1	-
Homeless in emergency (fire, flood, disaster)	-	-	-	-	-
Vulnerable due to old age	2	2	-	2	1
Vulnerable due to physical disability	1	4	5	6	13
Vulnerable due to mental illness or learning disability	8	6	12	7	19
Vulnerable for other reason	3	2	2	-	1
Total number accepted as homeless	38	39	48	37	54

Headline figures:

- Over the 5-year period approximately 216 applicants were accepted as a homeless which means the Council owed then a duty to ensure that they had suitable accommodation available for their occupation.
- The majority of accepted households were in priority need because they had dependent children. **These households accounted for 37% of acceptances in 2018/19.**
- Households who are vulnerable as a result of mental health issues are increasing and accounted for **35% of acceptances in 2018/19.**
- Households who are vulnerable due to a physical disability has also increased significantly over the last 5 years from 1 to 13, accounting for **24% accepted as homeless in 2018/19.**
- The households containing a pregnant woman with no other children remain very low and accounted for just 4% (just 2 households) in 2018/19.

Youth homelessness and care leavers – Support for young people

Young people are at risk of homelessness for a range of complex reasons that can require specialist intervention by trained staff.

West Sussex Youth Homelessness Prevention Service

Following the House of Lords decision in Southwark in 2009, a Joint Protocol for the Assessment of Homeless 16- & 17-year olds was agreed between WSCC and the seven District and Borough Council housing departments in West Sussex.

Since 2011,, all homeless or potentially homeless 16 & 17 year olds have been referred to the countywide Youth Homelessness Prevention Team, who have taken responsibility for all assessment of the housing and support needs of 16/17 year olds. The Team may, where appropriate, involve parents and extended family members in efforts to enable young people to remain in their family home with appropriate support.

The work of this team is widely regarded as being successful and, as the table below shows, the numbers of young people referred into the service has generally fallen. This protocol is being reviewed in light of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the recommendations of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) following an OFSTED inspection of WSCC's Children's services which advised they required improvement.

The numbers of young homeless people in Mid Sussex are comparatively low when compared the rest of West Sussex.



Number of young people referred to the WSCC Youth Homelessness Prevention Team – 2014 to 2019

	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Arun	49	35	34	24	27
Chichester	31	22	22	7	18
Crawley	85	40	20	29	36
Horsham	44	37	21	26	28
Mid Sussex	34	16	10	8	15
Worthing and Adur	76	74	39	57	32
Out of Country	-	-	13	7	10
Total	319	224	179	158	166

Support for Care Leavers

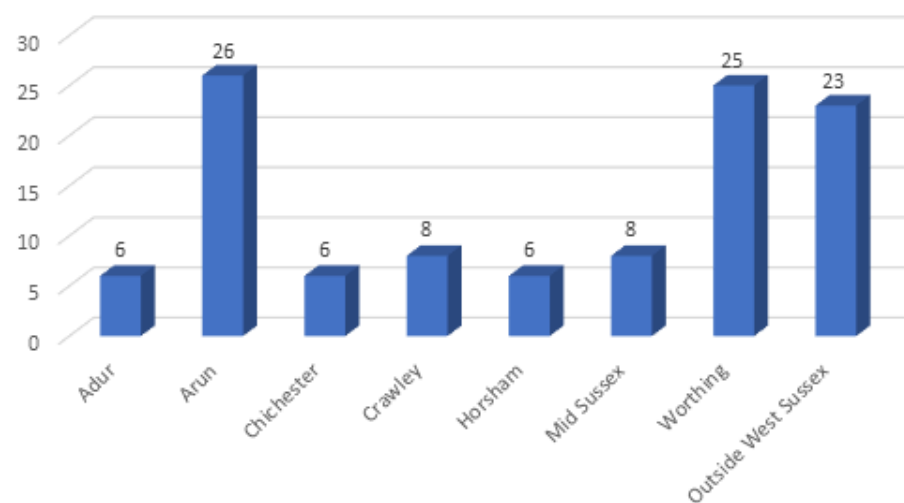
In October 2015, a Joint Working Protocol for Care Leavers was agreed between WSCC and the seven District & Borough Councils to ensure closer liaison between those working with Care Leavers. The protocol aims to ensure that the accommodation needs, and associated support are identified and that procedures are in place to ensure agencies work in partnership to achieve better outcomes for care leavers.

This has improved a liaison between the WSCC Young Peoples Service (YPS) and the Council. However, the protocol needs to be reviewed in light of the Homelessness Reduction Act and recommendations by Ofsted.

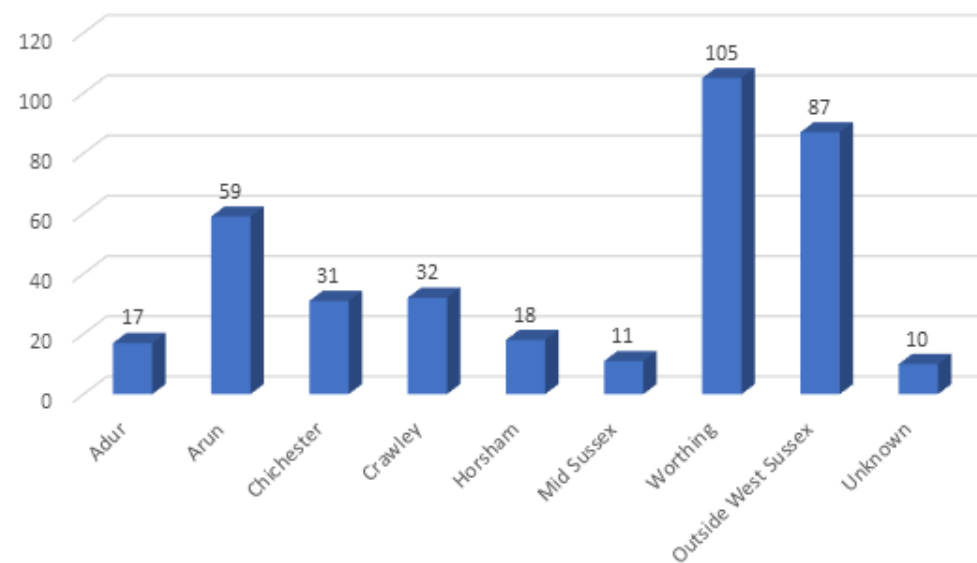
It is incorrect to assume that young people leaving care will automatically require social housing. The majority, instead, move on into other forms of accommodation such as renting privately, and some go on to further education. There should be no need for a young person leaving care to apply as homeless if the pathway planning has been successful. **Over the last 5 years, only 4 young people leaving care have been accepted as homeless in Mid Sussex.**

The numbers leaving care in Mid Sussex are relatively small compared with the wider West Sussex area as the table below shows. Just under 3% of Care Leavers in the County are currently accommodated in Mid Sussex.

Young people aged 17 who are due to join the Leaving Care Service during 2019/20



Young people aged 18-21 open to the Leaving Care Service



Supported Accommodation for Young People

The YMCA provides 16 units of supported accommodation for 16 – 25 year olds in Mid Sussex who are homeless with low to medium support needs. They also provide 8 units of low transitional supported accommodation which are available for people up to the age of 35. This accommodation is allocated through a multi-agency panel where priority is given to young people with a local connection to Mid Sussex.

Family Intervention Project

The Council's Housing Needs Team works closely with the Family Intervention Project, which is managed by the Mid Sussex Partnership and is part of the Government's Troubled Families Initiative.

This provides intensive support to families with multiple problems to address their complex needs with the aim of preventing homelessness and reducing the impact they have on their local community.

The Council's Early Intervention Officer worked with 15 families in 2018/19, providing practical, emotional and parenting support to these families.





Leaving Prison or Hospital

Clients who lived in insecure housing prior to entering prison or hospital are at increased risk of homelessness. Time spent in prison or hospital can put a strain on personal relationships meaning support may not be available on release. Clients serving a prison sentence, under temporary absence rules, can only continue to receive Housing Benefit if they are expected to be released within 13 weeks or 6 months if they are in receipt of the 'Housing Element' of Universal Credit. As such, they will often have lost their home if they were in rented housing (whether in the social or the private sector) on release.

Approaches from those leaving prison or hospital

	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Households approaching the Council for housing advice due to leaving prison or hospital	18	24	19	26	23
Homeless applications made by those due to leaving prison or hospital	7	14	8	6	16
Households where full housing duty accepted due to leaving prison or hospital	0	3	1	1	6

Support for those leaving prison

The Council has a good working relationship with Probation who refer prisoners who are at risk of homelessness prior to release. The Council works with Probation to support these clients to find a suitable housing solution. However, many ex-offenders will not be owed a main housing duty so are at risk of rough sleeping. Such people will be referred to the Rough Sleeper Navigators to obtain support to prevent them from becoming rough sleepers until another option can be found.

Support for those leaving hospital

The Council works with WSCC's Mental Health and Housing Co-ordinator and the Housing Co-Ordinator for Health to ensure those who are leaving hospital are supported into accommodation where required. These posts co-ordinate between the sectors, as well as review individual complex cases and provide support to staff.

A Hospital Discharge Co-ordinator based at Langley Green Hospital works alongside ward staff, to support those with housing related issues. The Co-Ordinator liaises with the Council to help support smooth discharge and resolution of housing issues. Further joint work with West Sussex is being undertaken to evaluate what additional services are needed to facilitate the discharge from acute services of people with complex mental health needs. There is a recognition that there is an increasing gap in the provision of appropriate housing with support for this client group.

Domestic Violence

Approaches from those experiencing domestic violence or other forms of violence or harassment

	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Households approaching the Council for housing advice who are experiencing domestic violence in a personal relationship	58	63	43	42	48
Households approaching the Council for housing advice who are experiencing other forms of violence or harassment	13	10	16	15	25
Homeless applications made by those experiencing domestic violence	31	27	19	22	28
Households where full housing duty accepted	11	8	8	11	8

Key headlines:

- The number of approaches from those suffering domestic abuse or other forms of violence has remained fairly stable over the past 5 years and accounts for approximately 8% of all approaches in 2018/19.
- Whilst the majority of people seen do not need emergency accommodation homelessness resulting from violence in a personal relationship continues to be a significant cause of homelessness, accounting for over **13% of acceptances in 2018/19.**

Victims of domestic violence or abuse may be forced to move out of their home and away from the area to remain safe and avoid being found by the perpetrator. Such circumstances may lead to the victim's enforced homelessness, often without their household belongings and away from their support network.

Support for victims of domestic abuse

Good quality advice is key to preventing homelessness and helping households to make informed decisions on their options. This then leads to better outcomes for victims of domestic abuse. The Council offers advice and support to victims including:

- Support to find a refuge space.
- Pursue legal remedies such as injunctions so that they may return safely if possible
- Help to find alternative accommodation, either within Mid Sussex or in another local authority area.

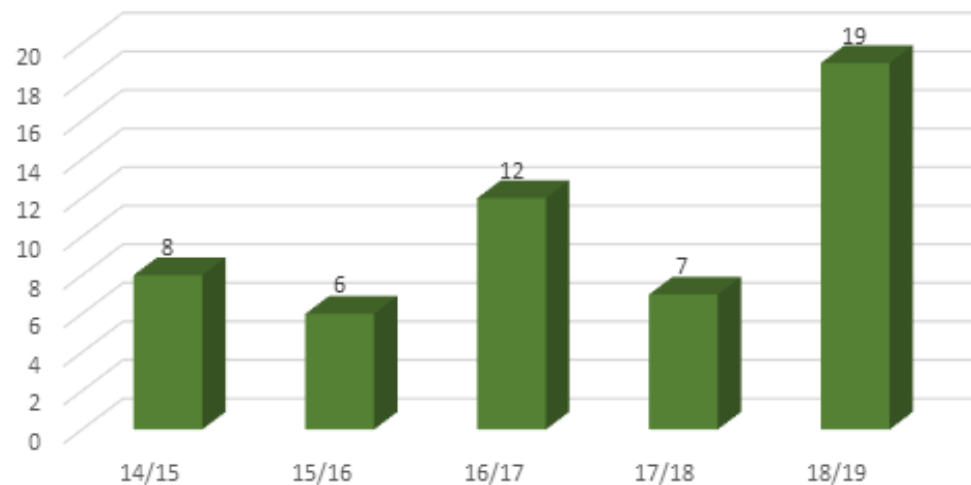
The Council works closely with WORTH Specialist Domestic Abuse Services and the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) to ensure that victims are provided with the appropriate support. MARAC is a victim focused information sharing and risk management meeting attended by all key agencies, where high risk situations are discussed. The role of the MARAC is to facilitate, monitor and evaluate effective information sharing to enable appropriate actions to be taken to increase public safety.

WORTH Services support people at high risk of harm or homicide due to domestic abuse. Those at low to medium risk are supported by Safe in Sussex. The Council also encourages housing associations to follow actions given by the MARAC to provide "Safe at Home" measures, which enable those suffering domestic violence to stay in their own homes through additional security measures.

Mental Illness and Learning Disability

There is a high incidence of mental health needs amongst those who are threatened with homelessness. It is recognised that affordable and secure housing is crucial to good mental health. Services to support those who have a mental illness or learning disability are vital in efforts to prevent homelessness. Any cut in support services, or reduction in the supply of supported housing, are likely to lead to homelessness amongst such households.

Households with a mental illness or learning disability who have been accepted by the Council



* above households had no children

The number of households without children who have been accepted as homeless and contain a person who is considered to be vulnerable due to mental illness or learning disability **has more than doubled over the last 5 years, with an increase of 137.5%.**

In 2018/19 such households accounted for 35% of those accepted as homeless by the Council.

The increase is in part due to the Prevention and Relief Duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act meaning that there are increased homelessness duties owed to those who are threatened with homelessness much earlier than would have previously been the case.

Support for those with mental illness or learning disability

Mid Sussex has 35 units of supported accommodation for vulnerable adults with low to medium support needs currently provided by Peabody Housing Association. Places are allocated via the Resettlement Panel, a multi-agency panel Chaired by the Council's. As well as allocating vacancies, the Panel is a forum for information exchange and discussion about operational issues relating to systems policy and practice, particularly matters relating to housing need at the point of hospital discharge. The group discusses complex cases and holds additional professionals' meetings on each case if needed with WSCC intervention.

Funding for this service is provided by WSCC but this has recently been subjected to significant cuts. The work of the Task and Finish Group detailing what is being done to address these cuts and to ensure provision of supported housing in Mid Sussex going forward has been discussed in the strategy document.

In addition to this there are 5 further units of supported accommodation for people with severe and enduring mental health needs provided by Sussex Oakleaf that are funded by the West Sussex NHS partnership Trust.

A new North West Sussex project, starting in Autumn 2019, based in Crawley for those with enduring mental health issues will accommodate 6 residents, who will have a connection to Mid Sussex, Crawley or Horsham and are in unstable housing situations. Vacancies will be allocated by a panel including WSCC and Sussex NHS Partnership. Residents will live in for the property for 18 to 36 months, receiving support focused on recovery.

Armed Forces Personnel

Armed forces personnel face particular difficulties in establishing themselves into the community after they leave the services, and accessing suitable housing is no exception. This is reflected in members of the armed forces over-represented nationally among rough sleepers.

The Council has agreed on an Armed Forces Community Covenant to reflect its commitment. In line with this, the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme sets out how applications for social housing from armed forces personnel are dealt with.

Examples of this include:

- Exemption from the need to meet the local connection qualifying criteria to be able to join the Council's housing register
- Additional priority is also given to bids from armed forces personnel who are in housing need.

Numbers of armed forces personnel in housing need in Mid Sussex remain low. There are currently 8 applicants on the Council's housing register who are recorded as having been in the armed forces. There have been only 2 homeless approaches from armed forces personnel in the last 3 years.

The council provide specific specialist advice and information on the website and liaise with charitable organisations such as Soldiers, Sailors and Families Association (SSAFA) to support any homeless applicants who have been members of the Armed Forces to ensure they receive the support they need.



1.6 USE OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

The duty to provide temporary accommodation (TA) is triggered when there is reason to believe a household may be eligible for assistance, homeless and in priority need. The Council always seeks to place households into TA within the District where possible. This is not always possible due to availability or because it may not be safe for the household to remain in the District, where for example, they are at risk of domestic abuse or other violence.

The Council has access to 19 specially designated self-contained TA units in the District owned and managed by Clarion Housing Group. Access to a further limited supply of TA on an ad-hoc basis has been agreed with Clarion should the need for it arise. The Council also accesses a small supply of TA provided in the District by Sussex Oakleaf, who provide an intensive housing management service for vulnerable single people who may be suffering from mental health issues. In 2019 the Council also acquired 14 units of TA. However due to the increase in demand there is still not sufficient TA in the District to meet the need. As at 1 November 2019 there were 67 households in TA, 37 of whom were in nightly paid accommodation outside of Mid Sussex.

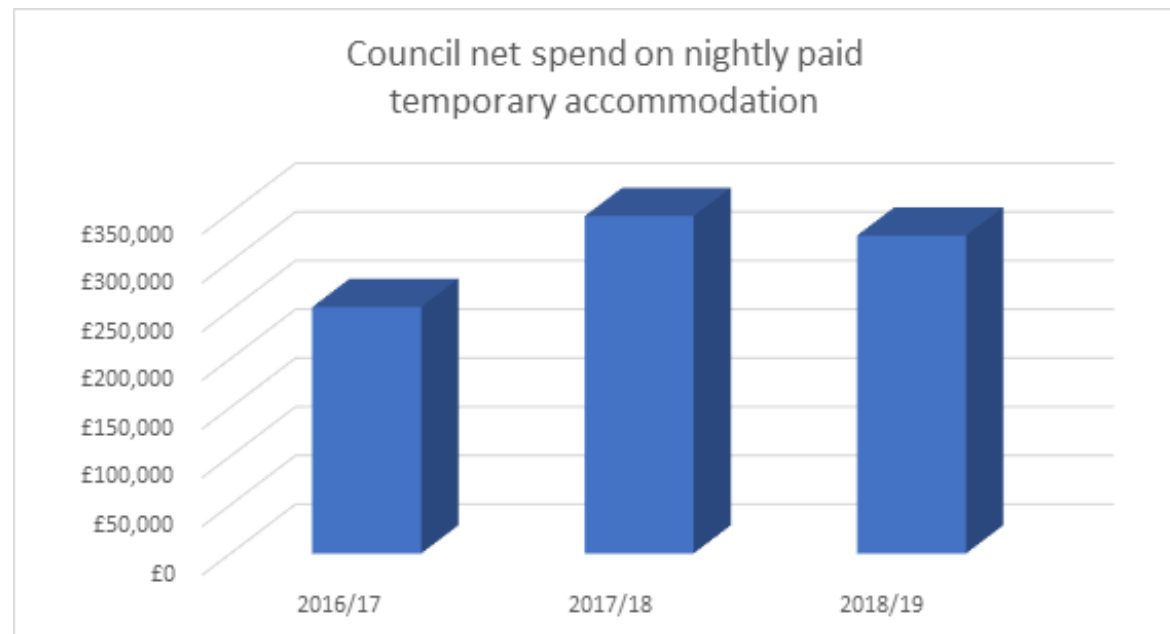
Due to the shortage of TA in the district it is not uncommon for households to be placed outside the district. TA outside of the District consists of nightly paid privately-owned guest house units. Self-contained units are used for families with children, pregnant women and care leavers with no sharing of bathing, cooking or toilet facilities. Nightly paid accommodation with shared use of bathroom and or cooking facilities are used for single people or for a strictly limited period for families where no alternative can be found. The use of this type of accommodation is expensive and where it is out of District may result in households experiencing difficulties in accessing their place of employment, their support networks, including GP and other health providers and school. For these reasons the use of nightly paid guest house accommodation out of the District is kept to minimum.

Any increase in the use of privately run nightly paid accommodation increases pressure

on the Council's budget and in turn on local Council Tax payers and so all effort is made to contain its use. However, there will always be a need for a flexible range of TA to meet fluctuations in demand and this will inevitably include this type of accommodation, which can be purchased on a nightly basis and at short notice in an emergency.

Key Headlines

- The Council's spending on providing nightly paid temporary accommodation has increased over the past 5 years due to the increase in homelessness, in line with National trends.
- Nationally there were 83,700 households in TA at the end of December 2018. **This is a 74% increase since December 2010.**
- In July 2019, there were 65 children in temporary accommodation in Mid Sussex.
- Government confirmed in November 2019 the Government stated that Councils in England spent £1.1 billion on temporary accommodation between April 2018 and March 2019. **This has increased by 78% in the last five years.**
- 30% (£344 million) of the total spend was on emergency nightly paid accommodation. **An increase of 111% in the last five years.**
- For 2019/20, the Council has set its budget for net spend on temporary accommodation placements at £347,977.



Number of households' in temporary accommodation at the year end at 30 March 2019

	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Bed and Breakfast (shared facilities)	4	12	8	8	11
Private guest house (self-contained)	3	10	16	15	19
Women's refuges	1	0	0	0	0
Temporary units owned by housing associations	22	21	24	28	25
MSDC Stock (2018/19 onwards only)	-	-	-	-	4
Total households in temporary accommodation	30	43	48	51	59

TA costs have traditionally been paid from local government budgets. Housing Benefit assistance has remained capped at 90% of the January 2011 Local Housing Allowance Rate. On the 1 April 2017, the removal of the Temporary Accommodation Management Fee Subsidy from the Housing Benefit subsidy saw an additional financial burden transferred from central government to local government budgets. To assist with this, from 2017, the subsidy was replaced by the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant. However, there is no guarantee that this annual grant will be continued indefinitely.

To reduce the need for nightly paid TA outside (FHSG) the district and to improve the service during 2018/19, the Council agreed to set aside £4m, to secure up to 20 properties to use as TA across the District. As stated above, so far 14 properties have been acquired. In addition, the Council intends to acquire up to 10 further properties through private sector leasing. This is increasing the provision of good quality TA in Mid Sussex so that households can maintain support and social networks and reduce disruption to employment and education. The Council has adapted one property to ensure that it is wheelchair accessible as it is very difficult to secure suitable TA for households that contain a wheelchair user.

The anticipated financial benefit of the Council's TA project has been reduced impacted by an increase in homelessness and an increase in the numbers that the Council has a legal duty to accommodate. The project has however meant that the spend on nightly paid accommodation is still less than it would otherwise have been. By November 2019 by accommodating a total of 14 households in Council owned temporary accommodation rather than nightly paid accommodation there was a saving of £74,500. As more properties are acquired and or leased there will be further commensurate savings against the temporary accommodation budget.



- The number of households in temporary accommodation in Mid Sussex reached 61 at the end of July 2019, and peaked at 67 at the end of June 2019, and the reasons for this are complex (as explained below).
- **There has been a 40% increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation from end of June 2018 compared to end of June 2019** (67 compared to 48).
- If the numbers continue to increase at this rate, then the average number of households in TA could increase to 139 in 2020/21 and to 380 by 2024/25. Whilst it is likely that the demand will not increase to this point, there is an increase in demand and whilst housing costs remain high it is unlikely that the demand will reduce in the short to medium term.

The 5 year forecast of this review shows that the increasing demand for TA, particularly if the Council continues to rely heavily on nightly paid out of area accommodation, could have a serious impact on the Council's budgets.

There needs to be a short, medium and long term plan to enable the Council to plan for this potential increase. Options available could include:

-  Purchasing more properties, subject to finance
-  A PSL project that pays close to 100% of market rent
-  Accessing more RSL support properties for single adults with mental health issues
-  Building a TA hostel/flats on Council land

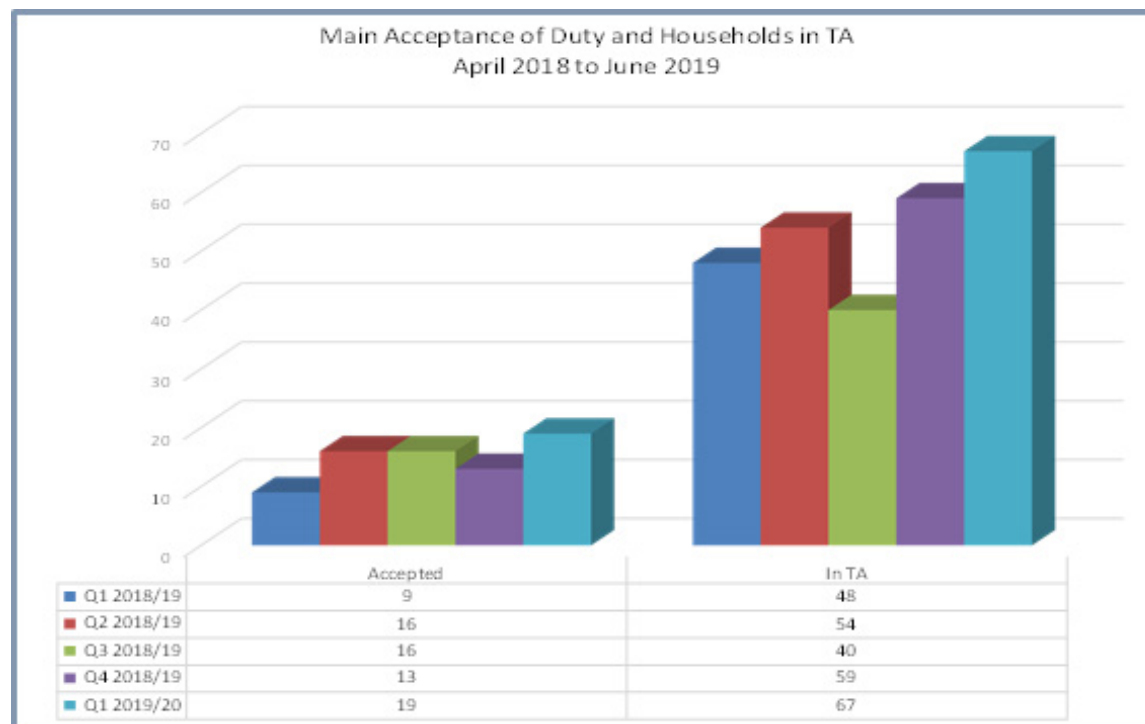
It is recognised that it can take a long time for some households to move on from TA. In 2018/19, the average time a household spent in TA was 31 weeks. **The number of households living in TA for more than six months was 16 at the end of July 2019**, just over 26% of all those in TA. This figure is increasing, and the time spent by a household in TA is affected by the following:

-  The increased duty to provide TA for some households for 56 days under the Relief Duty introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
 -  The time taken to investigate their homeless application and the decision on any housing duty that may or may not arise.
 -  Current and or historic rent arrears, housing related debt, history of anti-social behaviour delaying the household moving on.
- The availability of further affordable move on accommodation in the social or private rented sectors.

Key Headlines

- The biggest increase in demand for TA provision is from single adults with mental health issues. The largest number of households in TA is single adults with no children.
- **This represented 58% of households in temporary accommodation as at 30 June 2019 and has increased by 230% since June 2017.**
- **The number of single households with mental health issues represents 60% of the 40 single households in TA in June 2019.**
- The majority of single adult households were placed in private guest houses outside of the district. This shows the need for the Council to secure more TA provision in the District for this client group.

Acceptances and Households in Temporary Accommodation



Support for those in Temporary Accommodation

To support households in TA to move on into longer term accommodation the Council has created a Temporary Accommodation Support Officer post & a Temporary Accommodation Management Officer post to manage the stock that we have acquired through purchase and lease. The Council continues to monitor average length of time in TA and is doing what it can to move on households who have spent the longest time in TA.

The Allocation Scheme has also been amended to allow direct lets to accommodation from the housing register to those in TA in exceptional circumstances, such as those needing adapted property. This will enable households that need a particular type of property to move through TA more quickly who might otherwise be in accommodation for a long time.

1.7 THE HOUSING REGISTER

Housing Demand

The Council maintain a register of households in housing need, with their priority assessed using a banding system as set out in the Council's Allocation Scheme. The housing register is currently managed under contract by the Homemove Team at Clarion Housing Group.

Number of applicants on the register by band and size of accommodation required – September 2019

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	Sheltered	Total
Band A - emergency/urgent	11	10	-	-	5	26
Band B - high priority	2	10	11	4	1	28
Band C - medium priority	81	152	80	22	17	352
Band D - low priority	487	388	81	10	67	1033
Totals	581	560	172	36	90	1439

- **Single people and couples requiring 1 bedroom accommodation account for 40% of those on the housing register**
- **Families requiring 2 bedrooms make up 39%**

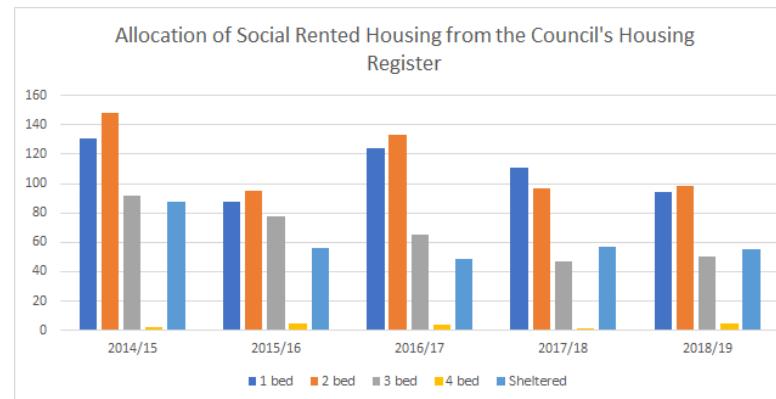
Housing Allocation & Supply

The Council does not have any social housing, following the voluntary transfer of its housing to Clarion Housing Group in 1990. Clarion has the largest number of social homes in Mid Sussex, owning approximately 60% (4,559 out of 7,512) of the total social housing units as at April 2019. Mid Sussex have 54.4 social housing dwellings available per 1,000 of its population which is below the county average of 57.9.

The Council operates a choice-based lettings (CBL) system where vacant properties are advertised in a two weekly cycle and registered applicants can 'bid' for those that are suitable for their housing need. From a shortlist of those who have bid, the applicant in greatest assessed housing need in accordance with the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme is then nominated to the housing provider as a prospective tenant.

The Council currently shares a CBL software system in partnership with 4 other local authorities across Sussex. Apart from a very few hard to let homes which are made available across the partnership, the vast majority of Mid Sussex homes are only accessible to those on the Council's housing register.

The following table shows the number of social housing properties that became available to let over the past 5 years:



** from April 2015 the above figures do not include lettings to Clarion's tenants who transferred to a new tenancy within Clarion's own stock.*



Whilst the table shows that the majority of properties that become available are two bed properties, followed by one bedrooms, these are also in the greatest demand and supply is not able to meet demand. It is clear that the number of lettings since 2014/15 has reduced year on year, particularly of one and two bedroom homes.

The reduction in lettings is likely to reflect a number of factors that reduced the levels of vacancies arising. This in turn impacts on the time homeless households may stay in TA for further housing and overall numbers in TA.

One of the factors contributing to the reduction in lettings from 2015/16 is that transfers within Clarion's housing stock are not included in the figures above, following a decision by Clarion to take control of transfers in its own housing. During this time Clarion allowed their tenants to apply directly for a transfer to a new home through their choice-based lettings system 'Home Choice'. At the same time as deciding to manage its own transfers, Clarion decided to significantly reduce the number of vacancies it allowed the Council to nominate to. As a result of the reduction in vacancies available to people on the Council's Housing Register, it was agreed with Clarion that their tenants should no longer remain on the register, as alternative arrangements were available to them to apply for a move through their own landlord. Following a decision by Clarion to make their vacancies available to households on the Council's Housing Register in August 2019, Clarion tenants are able to join the Council's Housing Register. The return of Clarion tenants will better assist mobility across the whole social housing sector in Mid Sussex. It is estimated that an initial 400 will apply who are currently on Clarion's own transfer housing list.

The length of wait for an offer of social housing is dependent on the households banding, priority housing date, the size and availability of the property they are eligible for, and criteria that might limit their options. The Allocation Scheme has to balance the competing demands of housing homeless households, existing social housing tenants needing to transfer and households who have applied to join the Housing Register for other reasons, such as overcrowding or having medical issues that affect their current housing situation. The Council is legally required to give certain categories of applications a reasonable preference, and homeless households are one of these categories.

Affordability of Social Housing

END OF SOCIAL RENTS – The new funding regime introduced in 2011 for affordable housing moved away from providing Government grants to registered providers to fund development of new housing at 'social rents' (typically 50% of open market rent), to new development financed through registered providers' future rental streams using the new 'affordable' rent tenure set at a maximum of 80% of local market rent.

CONVERSION TO AFFORDABLE RENTS – The Government allowed from 2011 the conversion of existing social rents to 'Affordable Rents' (usually at 80% of market rents). As a result, the main developing registered providers in Mid Sussex have converted a high proportion of their

relets from 'social' to 'affordable' rents as they become vacant and the vast majority of new builds are at 'affordable' rents. According to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update 2014, **30% of Mid Sussex households are unable to afford 'social' rents and 44.2% are unable to afford 'affordable' rents without assistance from housing benefit.**

CHANGES IN RENTS - Following on from the introduction of compulsory 1% cut in rent per year for 4 years from April 2016 imposed on social housing providers, the government has confirmed that social housing rents will rise by the consumer price index (CPI) measure of inflation plus 1% for five years from 2020. There is concern that this new rent deal will leave some tenants on low incomes or reliant on benefits unable to afford the higher rents when providers start raising rents.

RENT IN ADVANCE - In addition to the above social landlords are increasingly requesting prospective tenants to pay rent in advance and carrying out affordable assessments before they will accept new tenants. This can sometimes mean that non-working households, or those in receipt of a low wage, may not meet the affordability criteria set by some landlords. This is particularly the case for those that are affected by the benefit cap.

Accessing social housing

The wider housing and economic climate over the last five years has brought considerable change across the social housing sector. Many housing associations and stock holding local authorities across the country responded by strengthening their checks pre-tenancy, including:

- Making rent in advance payments and/or deposits a condition of tenancy sign-up
- Carrying out affordability assessments
- A more considered approach to those who might struggle to sustain a general needs tenancy, unless a support package is in place

However, social housing providers are also investing in their tenants and the wider community to create environments in which their tenants will thrive and maximise the likelihood of successful tenancies. Examples of the support and assistance offered by the housing associations with a presence in Mid Sussex are:

- Supporting tenants into work (with CV writing, and helping to apply for jobs)
- Helping tenants to gain skills that will assist them in getting back to work (including computer skills and internet use)
- Financial inclusion (supporting tenants with budgeting, managing debt, maximizing income, benefit claims, creating support plans)
- Providing funds for community groups/organisations that work in the community

1.8 ACCESSING THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

It is becoming increasingly difficult to assist households to access private rented housing in Mid Sussex. This is due to high rents and a shortage of landlords who are willing to take tenants who need help to meet their housing costs through either housing benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit.

The rents for private sector properties in Mid Sussex are higher, on average, than those for West Sussex and considerably higher than the UK average. This reflects the proximity of Mid Sussex to London for commuting and the buoyancy of the district's private sector market. As at July 2019, the average private rent was £1182pm in Mid Sussex.

Average property rental costs per calendar month, by the number of bedrooms and location.

	Burgess Hill	East Grinstead	Haywards Heath	West Sussex
1 Bed	£824	£843	£831	£806
2 Bed	£961	£1069	£1027	£1027
3 Bed	£1360	£1408	£1303	£1319
4 Bed	£1488	£2042	£1908	£1932
5 Bed	Not available	£3464	£3283	£2323
Average rent across all sizes August 2019	£1143	£1128	£1276	£1179

* Home.co.uk, August 2019

Local Housing Allowance (LHA)

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is the maximum amount that will be paid in Housing Benefit or in the housing element of Universal Credit to help towards rent charges. This is dependent on the income, number of bedrooms that the household needs and the location of the property. There are 2 geographical areas of differing LHA rates across the Mid Sussex district. Most of the properties for rent in Mid Sussex share a Broad Market Rental Area of Crawley and Reigate.

Research by the Chartered Institute of Housing found that before the April 2016 freeze on LHA took effect, in some areas of the UK, people who are dependent on benefits for all or part of their rent were only able to afford the bottom 5-10% of the private rental market.

LHA was originally set at a local level to reflect median market rents being charged and allowed those dependent on benefits for all or part of their rent access to 50% of the market. However, from April 2011 this was reduced to the bottom 30% of the market. This meant that a significantly higher proportion of the market was not accessible to those reliant on benefits. The problem was compounded in April 2016 by the freezing of LHA rates until April 2020. Consequently, the gap between market rents and the amount covered by benefits means that the private rented sector is not affordable for many Mid Sussex residents on low incomes. Increasingly limited access to the private rental market is of significant concern in terms of predicting future levels of homelessness. Particularly so, as the private rented sector contributes around 13% of housing for people in Mid Sussex.

Lower quartile rents in the private sector are now above the level of LHA rates affordable by those in receipt of rental benefits for all sizes of accommodation. This is demonstrated in the table below. The situation is likely to get more difficult because the gap between the LHA and actual rents is becoming increasingly wide.

Mid Sussex private sector rents 1 Apr 2018 to 31 Mar 2019 and LHA Rates

	Mean	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile	LHA Rate April 2019
Room in shared house*	£439	£395	£435	£490	£365.73
Studio	£613	£585	£625	£640	£696.50
1 bedroom	£750	£700	£750	£790	£696.50
2 bedrooms	£957	£875	£950	£1000	£854.19
3 bedrooms	£1,239	£1,123	£1,225	£1,300	£993.29
4+ bedrooms	£1,780	£1,500	£1,650	£1,895	£1,382.16

*No data for Mid Sussex for the level of rents for room in shared house. Figures shown are West Sussex averages
 Source: VO website <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/private-rental-market-statistics>. Source Valuation Office

Accessing affordable private rented accommodation locally is challenging:

- Start-up costs can total in excess of £2,500 for an average sized rental property in Mid Sussex to be paid in full before commencement of a tenancy.
- Many landlords and letting agents will not let to households in receipt of benefits and some buy-to-let mortgage providers do not allow properties to be let to those in receipt of benefits. The roll out of Universal Credit is further compounding this issue due to concerns about non-payment of rent and households falling into arrears.
- Households on low incomes are often asked to provide a guarantor (who would be liable for the rent if the tenant failed to pay), however many households do not have anyone who meets the financial criteria to do this.
- Single private renters under the age of 35 are only entitled to the shared accommodation LHA rate. This means that they can only receive housing benefit for a single room in a shared house, even if they are living in a one bedroom self-contained property.
- In 2016, LHA rates were frozen for four years until 2020. This has led to the gap between LHA rates and rents in the private sector widening further.

Assistance from the Council with renting in the private sector

The Council has operated a Rent in Advance loan and Deposit Guarantee Scheme to provide financial assistance with the up-front costs of renting privately since 1991. The Scheme has assisted 2127 households since its inception at very little cost to the Council. The scheme has proved very successful in helping people access private rented tenancies and offers a flexible alternative option to social housing to many people who are experiencing housing difficulties.

For support under the Scheme a household must

- Have a local connection with Mid Sussex
- Be either homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Be on a low income
- Be unable to afford the upfront costs associated with renting privately

Single people and those found to have become intentionally homeless are also eligible for assistance under the Scheme.

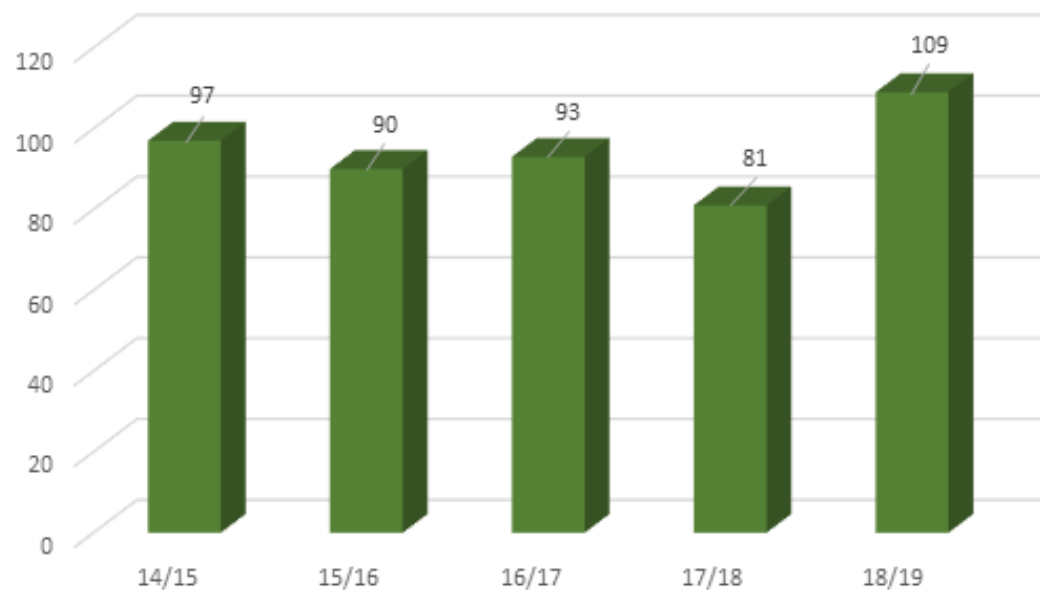
Deposit: A bond is issued in place of a cash deposit and if at the end of the tenancy the tenant has arrears or leaves the property in a state of disrepair, the landlord or agent can make a claim against the bond. The tenant will be responsible for repaying this to the Council.

Rent in advance: Assistance with rent in advance is through an affordable repayable loan.

When households are assisted into tenancies, they are encouraged to save during the course of the tenancy to be in a position to repay the Council should a claim be made against the bond. This also enables the households to be financially independent after the tenancy ends as they will have saved for their own deposit.

The Scheme has become a significant tool to prevent homelessness however any reduction in its effectiveness is likely to result in increased homelessness and pressure on the Council's temporary accommodation budget.

Households Assisted under the Rent Deposit Scheme



The numbers assisted under the scheme began to fall from 2015 for the reasons identified above. To counter this increasingly difficult situation the Council appointed a Private Sector Tenancy Negotiator and Sustainment Officer from April 2018. The aim of the role is to engage with private landlords and increase the supply of lettings available to households who are being assisted by the Council as well as carrying out ongoing sustainment work for tenants. Although the appointment is regarded as a success, there is a limit to what can be done in the increasingly difficult market. The Council is looking at what it can do to increase the private rented offer to encourage more landlords, but this needs to be carefully considered due to financial implications.

The future of the private rented sector

At the time of the Review being published there were a number of reforms proposed that would benefit households in the private rented sector:

- Controlling the frequency and rate of rent increases. This was part of a consultation carried out in the summer of 2018, the Council is awaiting further news of whether these proposals are to be passed into law
- The abolition of non-fault section 21 notices
- Longer fixed terms for assured shorthold tenancies (ASTs). The Government has since announced that they would not be pursuing this option.

1.9 THE SUPPLY OF HOUSING

Housing need manifests itself in a variety of ways, such as increased levels of overcrowding, young people living with their parents for longer and acute affordability issues leading to increased levels of homelessness. The delivery of new build social and affordable housing is a crucial step in meeting this need.

In July 2019 the National Housing Federation found that for every one new social home built in England, eight families are accepted as homeless by their local authority. Ten years ago, every day five more new homes for social rent were built than families accepted as homeless.

The table below shows the Housing Tenure in Mid Sussex and the change between 2001 and 2011.

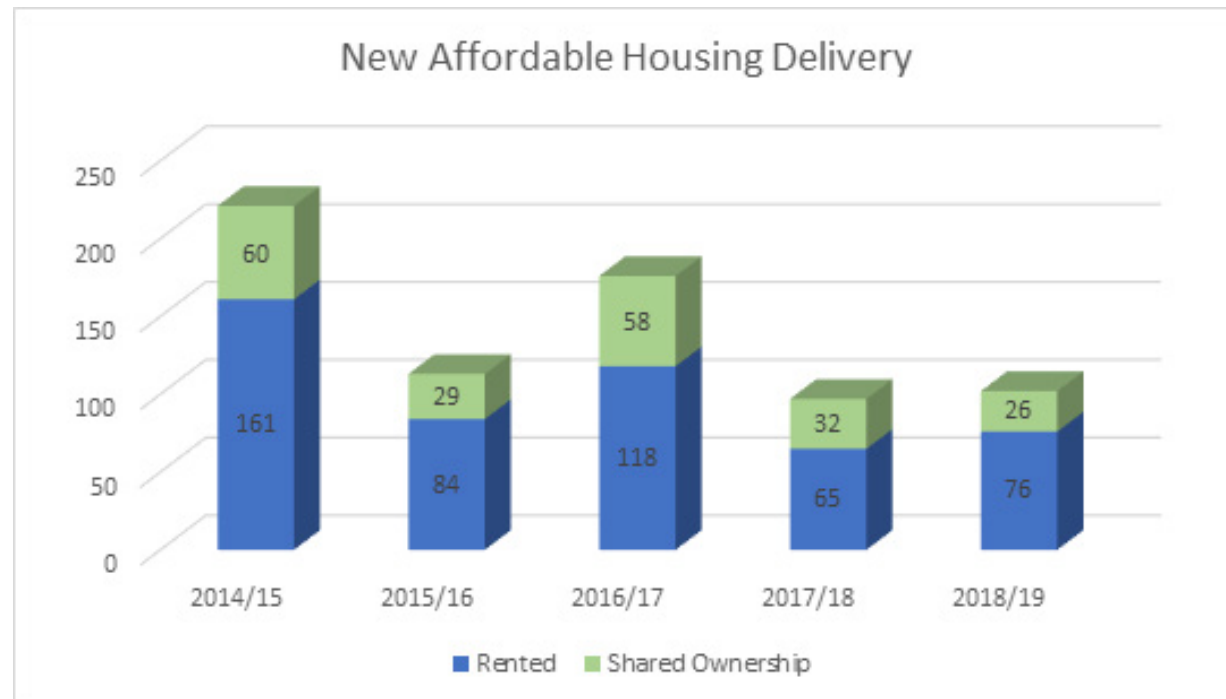
Housing tenure in Mid Sussex

Tenure	2001 Census	2011 Census	% change
Owner occupied	41,314 (79.5%)	42,658 (74.3%)	+3.3%
Shared ownership	386 (0.5%)	561 (0.7%)	+45.3%
Social rent	5,279 (10.2%)	6,092 (10.6%)	+15.4%
Private rented	4,002 (7.7%)	7,322 (12.8%)	+ 83.0%
Living rent free	988 (1.9%)	776 (1.4%)	- 21.5%
Total number of households	51,969	57,409	+ 10.5%

Between April 2008 and April 2018 there have been 1,431 new affordable homes built across the District at an average of 143 affordable homes per annum.

New affordable housing delivery over the past 5 years in Mid Sussex

	Total Units
2014/15	221
2015/16	113
2016/17	176
2017/18	97
2018/19	102
Total affordable housing	709



Through the most recent Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 – 2031, provision is made for the development of at least 13,600 new homes and associated infrastructure (876 per annum). This includes social housing properties and properties for sale on the open market. For 2019 – 2032, there are 11,201 committed dwellings to be built in Mid Sussex. During the period 2020/21 to 2023/24 it is anticipated, that the District Plan, will deliver approximately 800 new affordable homes on allocated sites that are subject to a S106 agreement and that meet the affordable housing threshold. This is 200 on average per annum. A significant number of affordable housing units will be delivered on strategic housing sites such as Brighton Road, Pease Pottage that will provide 90 affordable homes and at the Northern Arc Burgess Hill in partnership with Homes England. This site is due to provide 912 affordable units in total by 2034 with approximately 390 affordable units by the end of 2025.

Affordable housing delivery projections rely on the permitted sites coming forward, which may be subject to fluctuations in the housing market, and that the sites deliver new housing in accordance with current projections. Additional units will be delivered through windfall sites and developments on Housing Association or Council owned land. In order to boost delivery, we are seeking to increase the amount of affordable housing provided on Council owned sites, identified for disposal, by increasing the percentage of affordable housing where possible to above policy compliant levels.

There is a concern that current and future supplies of social housing may be reduced in Mid Sussex as a result of the following:



RIGHT TO BUY DISCOUNT INCREASED - Increase in discount for tenants taking up the Right to Buy from April 2014 from 60% to 70% (up to a maximum of £75,000 outside London, which increases with inflation each April and currently stands at £82,800). Council stocks have been vastly exceeded by sales and the gap will grow as discounts are increased. In Mid Sussex there are few tenancies left in Clarion's stock that existed prior to the stock transfer and who have the preserved Right to Buy so this is not a significant factor in this district.



RIGHT TO BUY EXTENSION TO HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS – the government has proposed that the Right to Buy be extended to housing associations through an extended Right to Acquire, which may affect their ability to acquire development finance. Homes sold will be replaced by affordable homes but not necessarily on a like for like basis e.g. what was originally a social rented home could be replaced by other affordable tenures such as affordable rent, shared ownership or a Starter Home for sale. The discounts for the existing Right to Acquire are lower than under Right to Buy and typically range from £9,000 to £16,000. Since this proposal a number of pilot schemes have been used to test the policy in practice. As yet the full roll out to all Housing Association tenants has been delayed and there is no indication of if or when the policy may go live.



The government has also announced a further proposal that will enable social housing tenants to purchase as little as a 10% share in their home. The detail of how this will work in practice has yet to be established but there is concern within the Housing Association sector that such a scheme could undermine their development business plans and create uncertainty around future projected income.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are mandatory grants issued by the District Council to private sector owners, private tenants and registered social landlords to assist eligible people with physical disabilities to remain living independently in their current home. The grant is subject to a maximum limit and is means tested. Whilst DFGs do not affect the supply of new homes, by allowing people to remain in their homes, it can help reduce the need to seek alternative housing (via the housing register) or potential homelessness because the home no longer meet the resident's needs.

The annual allocation granted to the Council from the Better Care Fund has increased in the last three years from over £650,000 in 2016/17 to just over £900,000 in 2019/20. The increase in funding has allowed the Council to introduce a Discretionary Disabled Grant Policy to assist more households, with the figure rising from 90 in 2016/2017 to 140 in 2018/2019 for Mid Sussex. **Over the course of five years (2014 to 2018) the Council has assisted 491 households to remain in their own home through the provision of DFG's.**

Mid Sussex has been working in partnership with WSCC and the District and Borough Council's in West Sussex to develop a consistent approach to the provision of DFGs. As part of the project, all District and Borough Councils have adopted a policy regarding the provision of discretionary DFGs under the 2005 Regulatory Reform Order. This has increased access to grant funding for some households who may otherwise have been ineligible and simplified the application process for others. It has also enabled the Council to achieve expenditure levels to ensure that central government Better Care Funding is spent assisting our residents.



1.10 ROUGH SLEEPING

As part of this review, the Council has aimed to understand the extent of rough sleeping and visible signs of homelessness in the district. It is difficult to determine an absolute figure for the number of people sleeping rough because many rough sleepers hide to protect themselves and do not engage with services until they are ready.

There are many reasons why people end up sleeping rough. These include:

- Relationship breakdowns
- Impact of welfare reform
- Loss of employment
- Eviction for rent arrears or ASB
- Loss of tenancy whilst in prison
- Mental health and or substance misuse issues
- Leaving care or the armed forces

This is reflected in Mid Sussex with the main causes being due to issues with mental health, substance, offending and family/relationship breakdown.

Government require local authorities to work with local agencies to submit an annual figure of people sleeping rough within their area on a typical chosen night in October and November. This provides a snapshot in order to monitor numbers at a national and local level. Local authorities may choose to undertake an actual count of individuals who are sleeping out on that night, or they may carry out an evidence-based estimate, based on detailed information about known individuals or rough-sleeping 'hot spots' in their area. This annual figure gives Councils an understanding of the general trend of rough sleeping; to highlight it in their strategies and operational responses; and to see whether their approaches to tackle rough sleeping are being effective.

MHCLG National Rough Sleeping data based on counts/estimates for East and West Sussex local authorities between 2013-2018

Authority	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Adur	1	2	-	3	2	-
Arun	18	13	15	19	17	18
Brighton & Hove	50	41	78	144	178	64
Chichester	19	14	17	19	10	16
Crawley	17	21	33	15	17	28
Eastbourne	6	11	10	19	41	6
Hastings	15	12	16	26	40	48
Horsham	5	2	3	6	7	11
Lewes	-	-	9	3	1	9
Mid Sussex	6	11	6	7	8	10
Rother	5	-	5	1	4	8
Wealden	-	1	-	7	4	3
Worthing	17	17	19	11	35	11
Total in Sussex	159	155	211	280	364	232

**Source MHCLG rough sleeper count statistics.*

Despite the number of people recorded as rough sleeping on a typical night across Sussex almost doubling between 2013 and 2017, there was a significant reduction in 2018 with the total number dropping from 364 to 232. A single night in November is usually chosen across Sussex to avoid double counting. Most authorities in Sussex carry out an estimate rather than a count, as this has been found to be more reliable than an actual count on the night.

Apart from in 2014, when numbers almost doubled, the number of rough sleepers known about in Mid Sussex had remained fairly stable.

Rough sleeping is likely to increase in the future for the reasons detailed throughout this review. The reduction in mental health and drug and

alcohol services and housing related support as a result of funding cuts and a rising of thresholds for access to various support services including supported housing, is likely to have a particular impact. The lack of affordable housing, including the restricted single room LHA rate for single people under 35 adds to the difficulties.

Rough sleeping represents the sharp end of homelessness and the cost to the public purse is significant. Research (by the DCLG 2015) suggests that each rough sleeper costs between £16,000 to £21,000 per year compared to the average cost of an adult at £4,600 per year. Rough sleepers present many challenging issues and complexities which include poor physical and mental health, drug and alcohol misuse issues, lack of family and personal support, financial exclusion and often antisocial behaviour. They require a range of coordinated assistance including housing, health and general support.

Helping people before they sleep rough will not only reduce the human cost of rough sleeping, it will also help to reduce costs to wider services such as health care, drug and alcohol treatment, emergency services and the criminal justice system.

Support for Rough Sleepers

The Council with WSCC and other District and Borough Councils in West Sussex successfully placed a joint bid for £335,000 funding for 2019/20 to deliver a Rapid Rehousing Pathway. The funding has provided 4 Navigator and 5 -6 Supported Lettings Officer posts across the County.

In Mid Sussex this service is provided by Turning Tides. Homelessness support is provided to homeless adults without dependent children and in close collaboration with the Council. **Turning Tides have been working in Mid Sussex since June 2018 and have supported 41 people as at November 2019.** The majority of whom needed support around mental health, substance misuse and physical health needs. We intend to make further joint bids for any future funding to build upon this work. However as further funding is not guaranteed it is critical that we begin planning now should the funding stop. The intention is that by the time the funding ceases the number of persons coming to the street will have diminished and that entrenched rough sleeping will have been resolved.

There is no hostel facility in Mid Sussex for rough sleepers, however rough sleepers with a local connection to Sussex are able to access the Crawley Open House, a hostel with 24 bed-spaces. Rough sleepers can initially be accommodated for up to 28 days. This allows for them to engage with relevant services and supports move on to more settled accommodation. All rough sleepers are able to access the day centre however priority for bed spaces is given to those with a local connection to Crawley first.

Although there is no statutory duty to do so, Local Authorities are encouraged to offer Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) services to

provide protection for rough sleepers during particularly cold or inclement weather. Mid Sussex follows the guidance provided by Homeless Link and all rough sleepers can access accommodation when temperatures drop below freezing in accordance with the Council's SWEP protocol. **In the winter of 2018/19, 4 individuals were assisted through the SWEP service.**

During winter 2018/19, the Council also implemented the Cold Weather Fund (MHCLG funding) which enabled rough sleepers to be accommodated during the winter months beyond the provisions of SWEP. This enabled Turning Tides to work with rough sleepers to provide support and assistance to them to move on to more settled accommodation. **The Cold Weather Fund was used to assist a further 6 individuals with emergency accommodation.** 3 of these 6 individuals were able to move on to alternative accommodation and did not return to rough sleeping. The Council has successfully bid for further Cold Weather Fund provision for winter 2019/20. It is hoped that the MHCLG will continue to make funding available to deliver this scheme each winter.

The public can alert the Council and Turning Tides workers to the presence of a rough sleeper through the www.streetlink.org.uk/ website which is highlighted on the Council's own website. An outreach worker will aim to meet with the rough sleeper as soon as they are able.

1.11 HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) came into effect in April 2018. It is a significant revision of the statutory duties for local housing authorities, greatly extending responsibilities to prevent homelessness for those who are at risk of losing their home within the next 56 days and a responsibility to work with clients who are already homeless to relieve their homelessness. The new act is extremely administratively heavy. The duties to try to prevent and/or relieve homelessness are owed to all, regardless of intentionality or priority need. **Since the introduction of the HRA Mid Sussex has seen a 2% increase in demand with 951 approaches in the first year. The increase in demand is expected to continue and rise.**

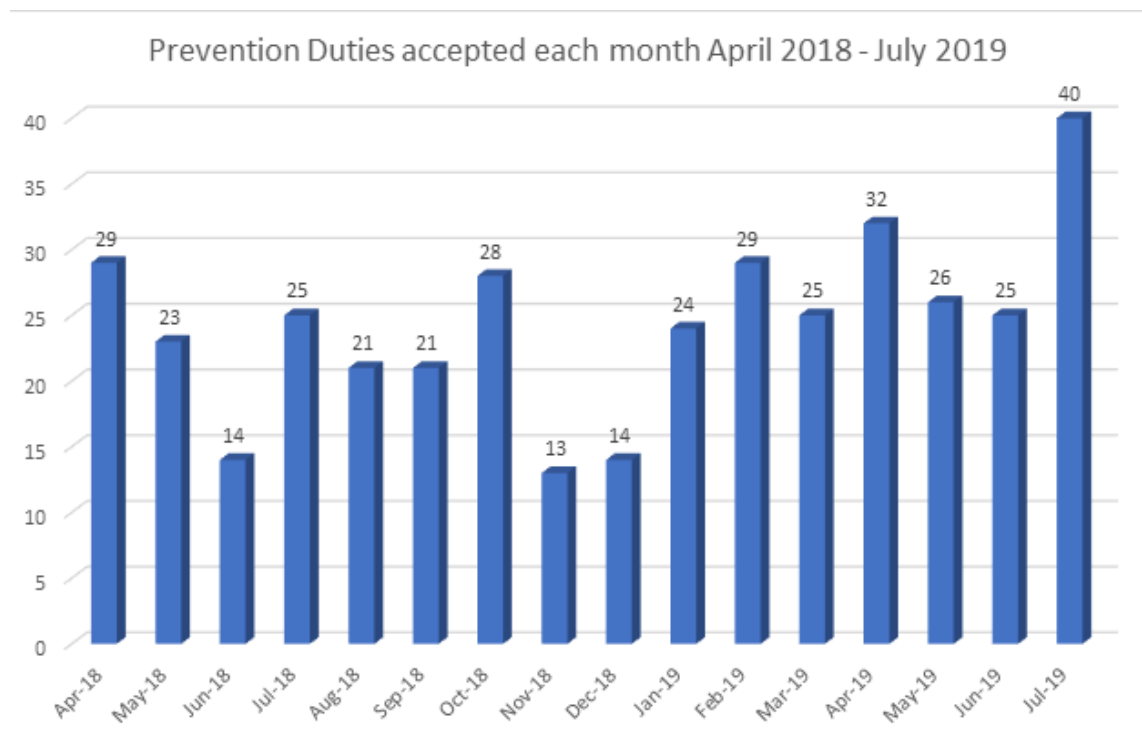
The HRA aligns with the Council's efforts to prevent homelessness. The prevention duty ensures that holistic homelessness assessments are completed earlier – providing greater opportunity for early intervention. Holistic assessments consider the needs of every household member including children and those with disabilities, recommendations from these assessments consider all household members.

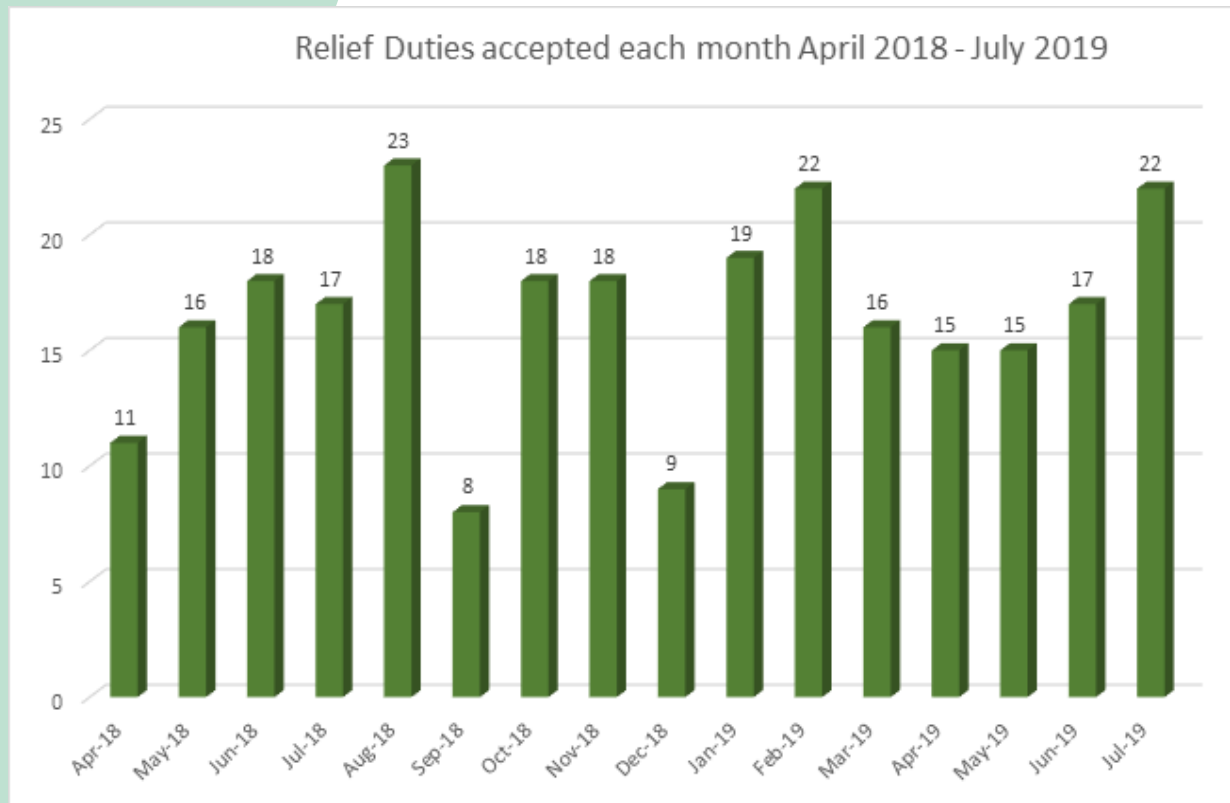
In its broadest terms a 'homeless prevention' is where:

The Council takes positive action to provide assistance to a household who is considered to be at risk of homelessness in the near future, and as a result the household is able to either remain in their existing accommodation or alternative accommodation, providing a solution for at least the next 6 months.

Key Headlines

- Between April 2018 and the end of July 2019, the Council accepted 389 prevention duties
- Of the prevention duties closed between June 2018 and July 2019 an average of 81% (of where we could influence the outcome) of the households were prevented from becoming homeless. This included 98 households who were supported to remain in their existing home and 65 households who were supported to find alternative accommodation.
- Between April 2018 and July 2019 the Council accepted 264 relief duties.
- Of the relief duties closed between July 2018 and July 2019 an average of 30% were successfully relieved.
- As this information demonstrates, there is more opportunity to successfully prevent someone from becoming homeless that there is to relieve homelessness once it has happened.





The Council is seeking to build on the successful outcomes to achieve 85% successful preventions and 40% of successful reliefs of homelessness for 2020/21. This will then set the benchmark with the aim to drive up the success each year. The intention of the HRA is that fewer households end up requiring homelessness duties, as people will be assisted at the earlier stages in the process.

Successful homelessness prevention is key. These figures will provide the focus of attention over the lifetime of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 – 2025.

Percentage of cases where the client's homelessness has been successfully prevented or relieved

	Prevention	Relief
June 2018	67	29
July 2018	73	22
August 2018	69	24
September 2018	95	21
October 2018	65	17
November 2018	75	43
December 2018	75	31
January 2019	75	10
February 2019	69	29
March 2019	88	28
April 2019	100	36
May 2019	86	38
June 2019	100	43
July 2019	100	53
Average	81%	30%

Duty to refer

In October 2018 the Duty to Refer came into effect as part of the HRA to help meet the prevention objectives of the legislation. This duty requires public sector organisations such as prisons, social services, Jobcentres and hospitals, to notify the local housing authority when they think someone may be homeless or be at risk of homelessness, with the clients consent. The aim of this is to support homelessness prevention by helping people to access homelessness services as soon as possible by ensuring their housing needs are considered when they come into contact with other public authorities.

In the first 10 months since the new Duty to Refer came into force, the Council received 62 referrals. The majority of these came from the JobCentre Plus (DWP). Some of the bodies subject to the duty to refer are not making referrals as frequently as might have been expected, therefore we will be working more closely with these organisations to ensure that they are fully aware of their duties and know how to make referrals.

The introduction of the HRA has had a significant implication in terms of resources. To respond the Council has created additional posts including 2 new Homelessness Prevention Officers and an additional administrative post to help meet the increasing demand.

1.12 FUNDING AND RESOURCES FOR DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

One of the functions of the Homelessness Review is to identify the resources available, including services available locally to assist in the prevention and relief of homelessness. The Council uses its own budget to resource its housing needs service and temporary accommodation costs. These budgets are reviewed on an annual basis and closely monitored. In addition the Council uses available central Government funding resources to invest in its housing and homelessness service and the associated staffing costs. Mid Sussex will continue to bid for any additional sources of funding which become available, linking with other local authorities in West Sussex and with relevant partners.

In Mid Sussex and the surrounding area there is a variety of services that support, assist and signpost households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Links and partnership working is strong amongst the different organisations, groups and multi-agency meetings in the district, to raise awareness of what is available, to provide complimentary rather than duplicate services and work towards the shared purpose of preventing homelessness.

The resources and services for the prevention and relief of homelessness that have been identified by the Review include:

-  Flexible Homelessness Support Grant which is and has been used to fund additional posts including Homelessness Prevention Officers and for case specific prevention initiatives
-  'New Burdens' funding to help mitigate the impact of the HRA
-  Temporary accommodation, including Council capital funding to acquire units of temporary accommodation within the District
-  Supported housing and partnerships with Housing Related Support providers as well as the continued availability of WSCC funding
-  Other accommodation providers such as Hope in Action, Sussex Oakleaf, Amber Project, Crawley Open House and Turning Tides
-  Change Grow Live
-  Social housing and partnership work with Housing Associations and other registered providers of social housing particularly to prevent homelessness from social housing stock and to ensure access for previously homeless households.
-  Turning Tides Rough Sleeper service
-  Private rented sector with assistance through the Councils' Rent in Advance & Deposit scheme if required
-  Owner occupation and intermediate housing through shared ownership Help to Buy schemes
-  Discretionary Housing Payments
-  Voluntary agencies such as Citizens Advice
-  West Sussex County Council services
-  Government funding for Rough Sleeping and cold weather

-  Mid Sussex District Council commissioned Money Advice and Homelessness Prevention Service
-  The Council's Housing Needs Team
-  The Council's Revenues and Benefits Team in relation to the employment adviser and Discretionary Housing Payments
-  DWP Jobcentre Plus
-  Find it Out Centre
-  WORTH IDVA Services
-  Rent Deposit Scheme

Challenges for accessing funding in the future have been identified and are reported below:

-  The majority of additional funding released by central Government to tackle homelessness is short-term and awarded via different bidding processes. This can create challenges due to the timescales between announcing the funding and the deadline for submitting a bid. Identifying resources (both financial and staffing) to write a bid, deliver the project and have an exit strategy in place (once bid funding ends) can be difficult to achieve in the timescale given, especially if the intention is to deliver countywide outcomes and liaison with other local authorities is required.
-  New burdens funding (introduced to meet the costs of implementing the additional duties in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) appears to end after 2019/2020.
-  There is no guarantee of future specific central government funding in respect of Flexible Homelessness Support Grant beyond March 2020 for housing or homelessness. Local authorities are advised on an annual basis about grants which will be provided by central government. This places pressure on services and uncertainty around future funding can make it difficult to plan or commit to longer term strategic investment.
-  Future funding is likely to be linked to outcomes (such as the prevention and relief of homelessness). This will prove challenging against the backdrop of welfare reform, an expensive private rented market and reduced central government funding for services.
-  A countywide group was established to mitigate the impact of budget reductions and utilise, the opportunity to shape and commission supported housing services to meet the needs across West Sussex. The continued management and commissioning of housing related support services and their utilisation to prevent homelessness and sustain vulnerable households will be monitored by the district and boroughs and overseen by the Strategic Housing Group at County level.

1.13 CONSULTATION

The Homelessness Code of Guidance states that housing authorities must consult with public bodies, voluntary organisations and other relevant persons when adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy. In preparation for drafting the Homelessness Strategy, Mid Sussex District Council undertook a consultation process that involved the following:

- A consultation event, with a focus on identifying:
 - > gaps in services locally
 - > the biggest challenges to tackling homelessness in Mid Sussex
 - > what the priorities for the coming five years of the Strategy should be
 - > what support agencies can provide to help prevent and relieve homelessness
 - > whether Government plans to reduce rough sleeping are achievable and how that might be achieved, and how the groups and organisations present can play a role in tackling homelessness in Mid Sussex
- A survey of relevant stakeholder organisations, staff within the Council, elected members and the public that looked to gauge opinion on:
 - > housing need in Mid Sussex
 - > factors that contribute towards homelessness
 - > priorities for the Homelessness Strategy
 - > how to achieve Government plans to reduce sleeping nationally
 - > what would have the greatest impact in tackling homelessness
 - > identifying gaps in local service provision

45 responses were received to this and a summary of the responses can be found at <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/4620/homelessness-strategy-2019-short-summary-consultation-response-report.pdf>

The key issues identified in this review as well as the responses to the consultation have been used to inform and develop the strategic objectives.

1.14 FUTURE LEVELS OF HOMELESSNESS

It is extremely difficult to predict with accuracy the likely future levels of homelessness, given the links to wider nationally led factors such as economic prosperity and welfare reforms, however based on previous trends both locally and nationally the following can be surmised:

-  Although the number of rough sleepers was only slightly higher locally in autumn 2018 than the previous autumn, the number of people sleeping rough is rising nationally. Government plans to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end rough sleeping by 2027 will only be successful if long-term and sustainable funding is made available and the wider national issues tackled.
-  With high rent and property prices locally, many young people are living with parents for longer or returning to the parental home. Family relationships can become strained and lead to parental eviction. This is likely to remain a predominant cause of homelessness unless the fundamental causes, (such as young people being able to access affordable accommodation independently) are tackled at a national level.
-  The end of an assured shorthold tenancy is likely to remain a predominant cause of homelessness, as the private rented sector continues to thrive in the wake of home ownership being largely unaffordable to those on low incomes. Only action taken at a national level will address the issues within this sector.
-  The Council's ability to access the private rented sector is likely to remain challenging (given the issues with affordability locally and impact of Welfare Reform). The Council will need to consider how best to work with landlords in the future to meet the needs of homeless households in the District. The Council does not have the resources to meet the shortfall between the private rent levels and the amount of assistance that low income households are entitled to, through the benefits system, except through short term use of Discretionary Housing Payments.
-  Multiple factors can lead to households being caught in a cycle of repeat homelessness. Breaking the cycle is going to be a key challenge for the future.
-  The impact leaving the European Union will have on migration into the District (and the diversity of its population) is difficult to predict at this time as is the impact on the local economy including the development of new homes.
-  The introduction of duties through the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 to prevent and relieve homelessness will continue to ensure

there is demand for affordable housing across multiple tenures in Mid Sussex, including supported housing options for those who are not able or ready to access general needs accommodation.

By examining past and future levels of homelessness five key issues emerge. These issues are the Councils priorities' for the future, shaping and providing focus for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025.