

Dover District Council

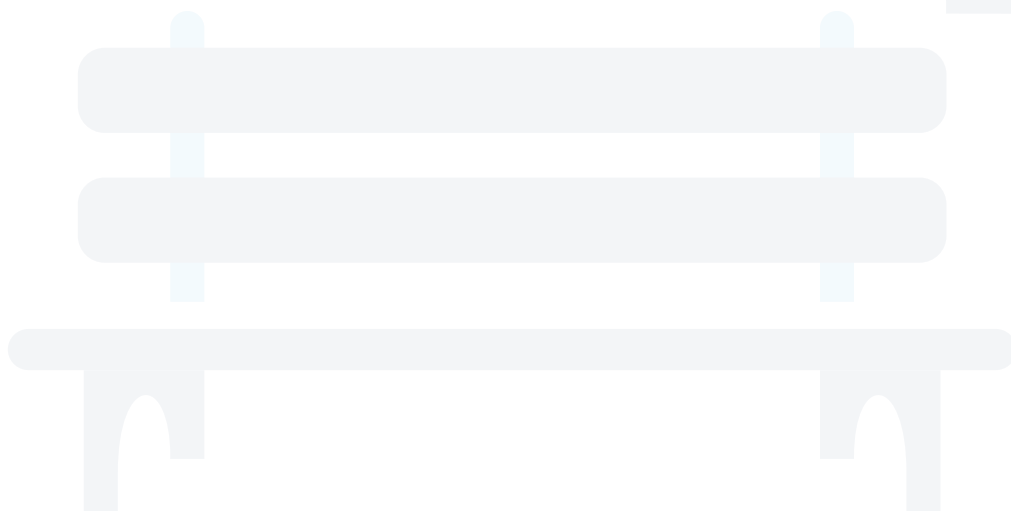
# Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review



2024

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Section 1(1) the Homelessness Act 2002 stipulates that every local housing authority in England must conduct a review of homelessness and rough sleeping within their administrative area, in preparation for the development of a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 1.2 This review has been conducted in accordance with the requirements set out in the Act 2002 and the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (HCOG).

## 2. Purpose and scope

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 A range of information drawn from the Council's own data, current housing market trends and information from publicly available sources has been used to provide an overview of homelessness and rough sleeping in the district. This information, alongside consultative work with public and local authorities, statutory and non-statutory services and service users has been used to inform the development of the Council's renewed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 ("the Strategy").

## 3. Background

- 3.1 No consideration of homelessness and rough sleeping can avoid touching upon housing, and in particular, its availability and affordability. This section will provide summaries of the following:
  1. Housing data from the Census 2021
  2. An overview of the housing market in the district
  3. Current levels of housing need
  4. Housing waiting list data
- 3.2 Section 4 of this assessment will focus on the review of homelessness and rough sleeping

### **Housing data from the 2021 Census**

- 3.3 The 2021 Census recorded that:
  - The largest single housing tenure in the district was owner-occupation (66.2%).
  - The private rented accommodation in the district has doubled in size and now accounts for around 19% of the total tenure types in the district, compared to just 9% in 2001.
  - Social housing equates to around 13.9% of all tenure types and has decreased by 1.5% since 2001. These statistics show how the housing market in the district has changed over the past 20 years.

Table 1 shows a comparison of the figures between the 2001, 2011 and 2021 censuses.

**Table 1: Percentage of tenure type for the District as shown by the Census 2001, 2011 & 2021**

Tenure	2001	2011	Change +/-%	2021	Change +/-%
Owner occupier	71.3%	66.5%	-4.8%	66.2%	-0.3%
Shared ownership	0.4%	0.5%	+0.1%	0.8%	+0.3%
Private rented	9.0%	17.1%	+8.1%	19.0%	+1.9%
Social rented	15.4%	14.2%	-1.2%	13.9%	-0.3%
Lives rent free	0.0%	1.7%	+1.7%	0.1%	-1.6%
Other	3.9%	0.0%	-3.9%	0.0%	0.0%

## Overview of the housing market

### Property prices

- 3.4 Property prices in the district have increased significantly over the last decade. The average property price in 2024 was £291,000<sup>1</sup> compared with an average price of £192,000 in 2014<sup>2</sup>, an increase of 52%.
- 3.5 Data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) shows that the house price to work-place based earnings ratio for the district has doubled from 4 in 2001 to 8.15 in 2023<sup>3</sup>, meaning it is significantly doubly more expensive and therefore challenging for households to purchase a property.

### Private rents

- 3.4 The average monthly private rent in the district was £880 in September 2024. This is an increase from £825 in September 2023, a 6.7% rise. Average rent for one bed properties rose by 7.2%, while the average for four or more bed properties increased by 5.1%. Table 2 provides the average rents as of September 2024 in the district by the number of bedrooms, Table 3 by property type.

**Table 2: Average monthly rents by bedroom size<sup>4</sup>**

Bedroom size	Mean monthly rent (£)
1 bedroom	£622.00
2 bedrooms	£818.00
3 bedrooms	£1,003.00
4+ bedrooms	£1,453.00

<sup>1</sup>[Housing prices in Dover \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

<sup>2</sup>[House Price Statistics - UK House Price Index \(data.gov.uk\)](https://data.gov.uk)

<sup>3</sup>[House price to workplace-based earnings ratio - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

<sup>4</sup>[Housing prices in Dover \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

**Table 3: Average monthly rents by property type<sup>5</sup>**

Property type	Mean monthly rent (£)
Flat / maisonette	£711.00
Terraced properties	£886.00
Semi-detached properties	£985.00
Detached properties	£1,204.00

### Local Housing Allowance (LHA)

- 3.6 There are 2 LHA rates in the district, each determined by a Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA). These are the Dover-Shepway LHA rate and the Canterbury LHA rate. The former is around 30-35% lower on average than other rates in Kent, and covers most of the district, including the urban areas of Dover, Deal and Sandwich where private rents have increased.

**Table 4: Kent LHA rates (October 2024)<sup>6</sup>**

Bedroom size	Dover – Shepway rate	Canterbury rate
Shared accommodation	£99.30	£97.81
1 bedroom	£117.37	£155.34
2 bedrooms	£159.95	£205.97
3 bedrooms	£199.07	£253.15
4 bedrooms	£276.16	£302.63

- 3.7 LHA rates have been consistently frozen since 2016, or increases have been negligible in comparison to private rents which have seen significant increases in recent years. This means that many households wholly or partly reliant on housing benefit to subsidise their rent, are feeling their budgets compounded, and particularly more so over the past 3 years because of the cost-of-living crisis.
- 3.8 LHA rates were uplifted to the 30th percentile from April 2024 by the Government in response to the cost-of-living crisis and pressures, however this increase is temporary and due to end in March 2025. The change is expected to give approximately 1.6 million people an extra £800 per year.
- 3.9 Subsidy for LHA rates where a household is placed into temporary accommodation (TA) is calculated differently. Currently, the LHA covers 90% of rent costs based on 2011 levels for people in receipt of benefits who are living in TA. This means in most cases the Council is required to pay the difference at a loss to its General Fund

<sup>5</sup>[Housing prices in Dover \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

<sup>6</sup>[Local Housing Allowance Rates for the Dover Local Authority : DirectGov - LHA Rates \(voa.gov.uk\)](https://voa.gov.uk)

## Housing need

- 3.10 Social housing remains the primary and most affordable source of housing for households who are unable to purchase or rent privately. However, social housing in the district is in short supply relative to demand. While there are efforts to increase the number of available social housing, it has decreased over time, particularly stock owned by the Council through Right to Buy.
- 3.11 The Council's Local Plan 2020-2040 which was approved in October 2024, identified a need to provide around 11,000 new properties by 2040, of which 3,466 need to be affordable housing<sup>7</sup>. Broken down over the 20-year period, this equates to roughly 172 new properties per year.
- 3.12 Affordable housing includes: social housing (both social and affordable rent), shared ownership and First Homes. Table 5 provides a breakdown of the number of properties by each type required, as well as the bedroom sizes, as determined by the Local Plan 2020-2040.

**Table 5: Affordable housing by type and size required by 2040**

Tenure type	One bedroom	Two bedrooms	Three bedrooms	4 or more bedrooms	Total (by tenure)
Social housing	568	184	459	620	<b>1,831</b>
Shared Ownership	160	210	168	119	<b>657</b>
First Homes	156	166	334	322	<b>978</b>
Total (by size)	<b>884</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>961</b>	<b>1,061</b>	<b>3,466</b>

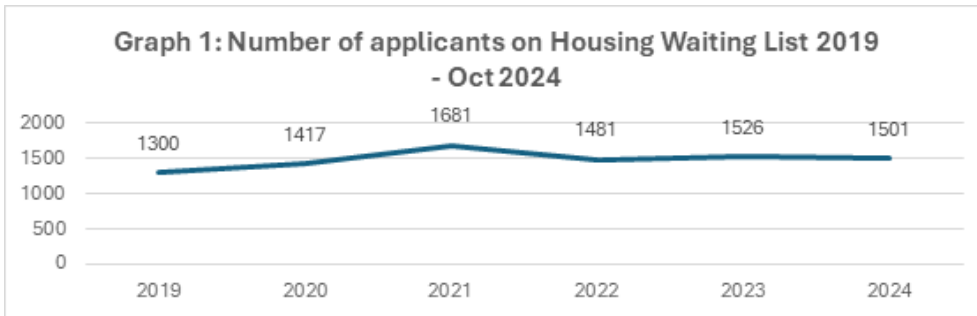
- 3.13 In 2023 the Council conducted a Housing Needs Survey which asked all households, regardless of circumstances, what their housing needs were. The results from the survey showed that for those households who needed to move:
- 34.9% of households said their tenure preference was social housing, closely behind owner occupation 37.0%, but significantly ahead of private rent 19.2%.
  - 37.7% said they needed a 2-bed property, while 33.6% required a 3 -bed property.
  - 47.2% said that a house was the preferred property type, followed closely by bungalows 21.4%, and flats 16.8%.

The results from the survey do not supersede the targets stipulated in the Local Plan but provide an indication in the short term (over 5 years) of the type and size of properties required by district residents.

<sup>7</sup>[Modelling-the-future-demand-for-First-Homes.pdf \(dover.gov.uk\)](#)

### Housing waiting list

- 3.14 Every English local authority maintains a waiting list, known as a Housing Needs Register, of households wishing to register for social housing in their area. Changes implemented by the Localism Act 2011 gave local authorities considerable discretion as to who they accepted onto the register.
- 3.15 In October 2024, there were 1,501 applicants on the housing waiting list. Over the past 5 years (2019-2023), the figure has fluctuated, however it has remained consistently high during this period and demonstrates that there is a clear housing need in the district. The highest number of applications received during this period was in 2021 where there were 1,681 applicants.



## 4. An assessment of homelessness and rough sleeping in the district

- 4.1 This section will provide an overview of homelessness and rough sleeping in the district over a five-year period, from 2019/20 to 2023/24.
- 4.2 Data used in this section has been taken from the homelessness live tables, which are publicly accessible sources of information that all local authorities contribute towards on a quarterly basis, as well as the Council’s own sources of information.

### Homelessness – general statistics

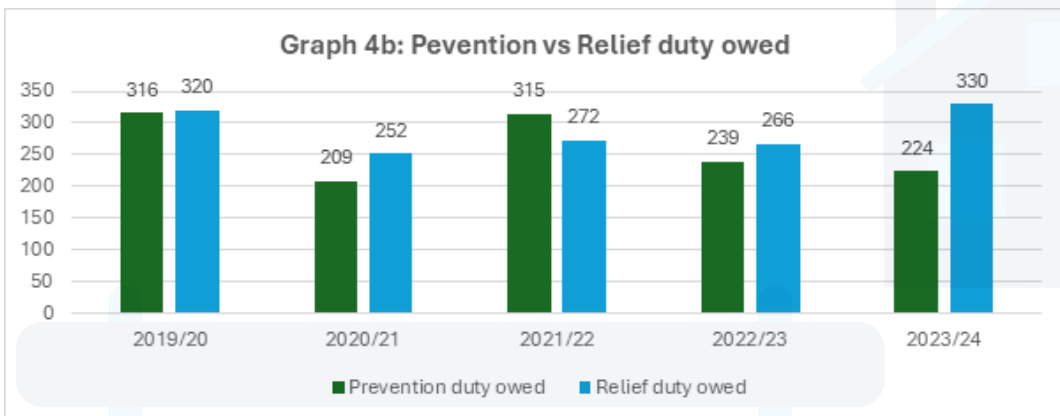
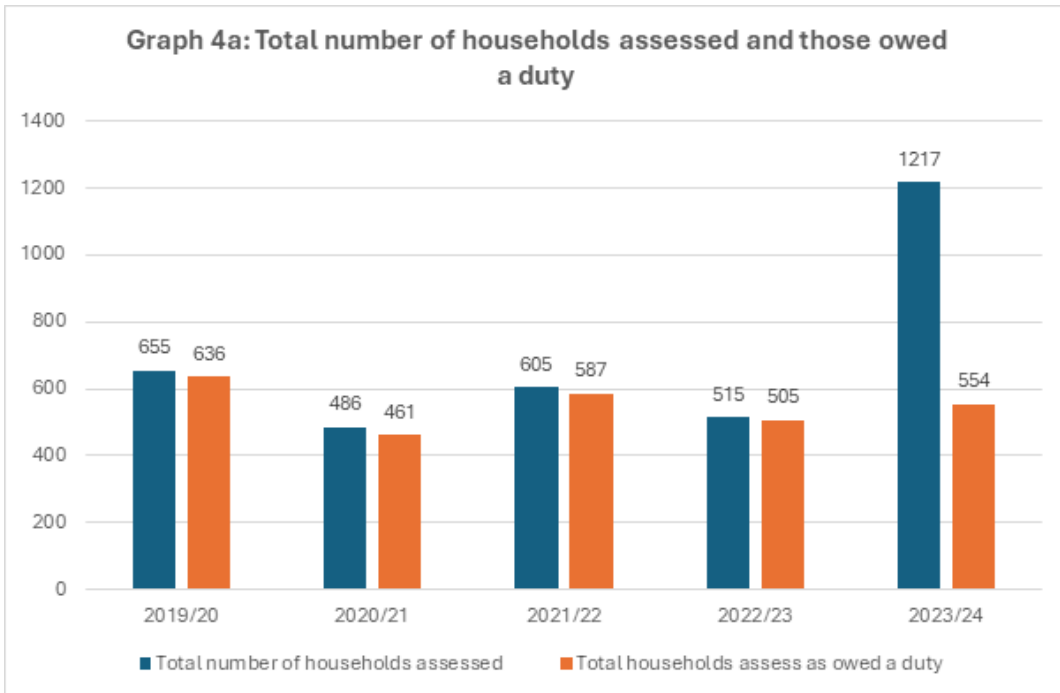
#### Cost of homelessness

- 4.3 On average the total gross cost of homelessness has increased by 26%. As Graph 3a shows, the cost has doubled to almost £2.5 million in 2023/24 compared to £1,262,289. Most of this cost is attributed to the use of private sector temporary accommodation (TA). On average, the cost of TA increased by 20% per year over this period



**Number of households assessed and duty owed**

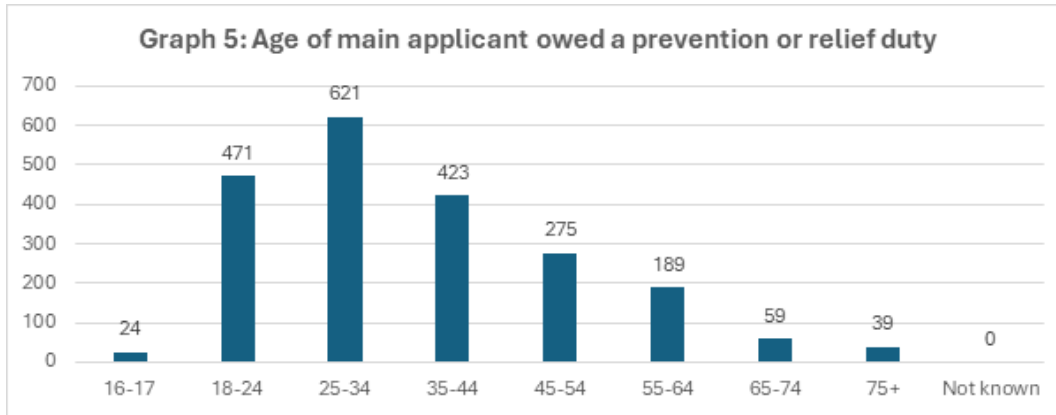
- 4.4 Over the past 5 years, the Council has assessed 3,478 households of which 2,743 (79%) were owed a duty.
- 4.5 The number of households assessed has fluctuated over the past five years, but in general, it has reduced by 4% on average annually.
- 4.6 Of the 2,743 households owed a duty, 1,303 (48%) were owed a prevention duty, while 1,440 (52%) a relief duty.





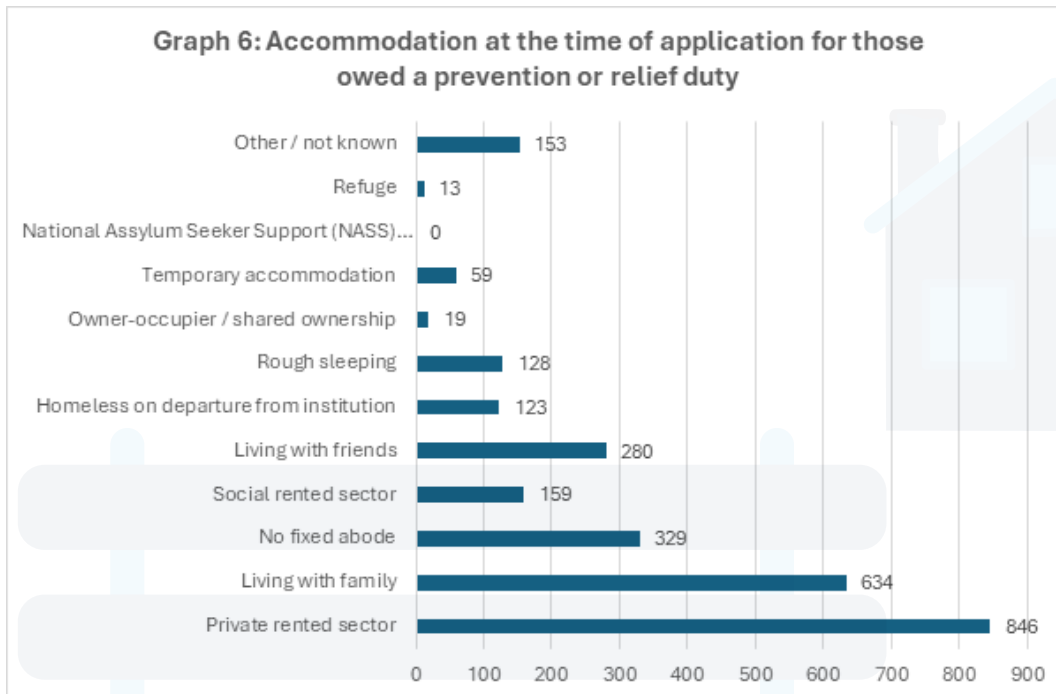
**Age of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty**

4.7 Graph 5 provides a breakdown of applicants owed a prevention or relief duty by age. The top three age groups that were owed a prevention or relief duty were 25-34 (30%) 18-24 (22%), and 35-44 (20%). The data demonstrates that 72% of households owed a prevention or relief duty had a main applicant aged between 16 – 44, compared to just 28% for those aged between 45-75+



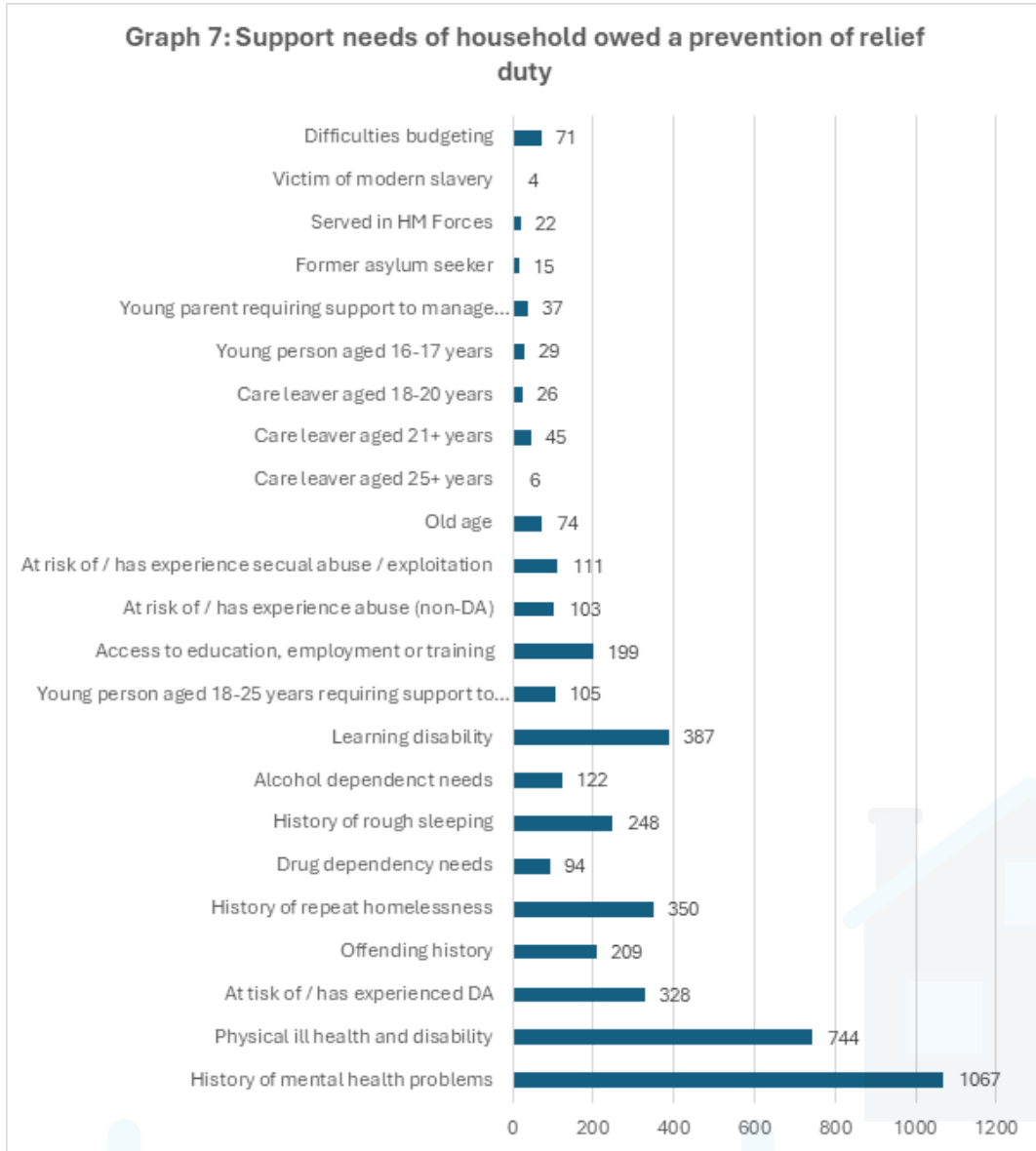
**Accommodation at time of application for those owed a prevention or relief duty**

4.8 Graph 6 shows that the accommodation types were applicants were owed a duty were the private rented sector (31%), followed by those living with family (23%), and no fixed abode (12%). If combined, living with a family member or a friend would be the largest accommodation type (33%)



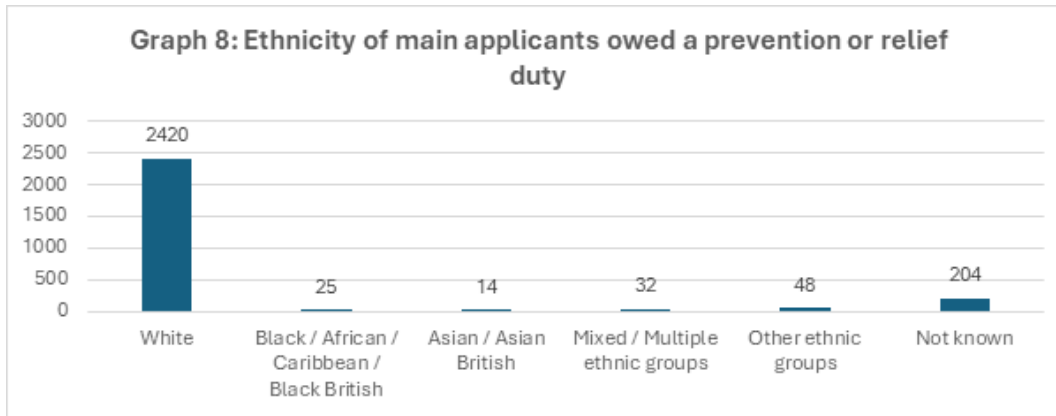
**Support needs of households owed a prevention or relief duty**

4.9 Mental and physical health accounted for 40.8% of support needs identified for households either owed a prevention or relief duty. As demonstrated by Graph 7, a ‘history of mental health problems’ was the highest and accounted for 24.1% of all applications, followed by ‘physical ill health and disability’ 16.7% of all applications.



**Ethnicity of main applicant owed a prevention or relief duty**

4.10 The data shows that most individuals / households who approached the Council and were owed a prevention or relief duty were 'white' (88%).



4.11 Table 6 provides a comparison between the percentage of homeless applications by race / ethnicity compared to the ethnicity demographics captured by the 2021 Census. It suggests that individuals of 'Black / African / Caribbean / Black British' and 'Other ethnic groups' were slightly disproportionately impacted by homelessness than other groups.

**Table 6: Main applicant ethnicity compared to census 2021 data on population demographics**

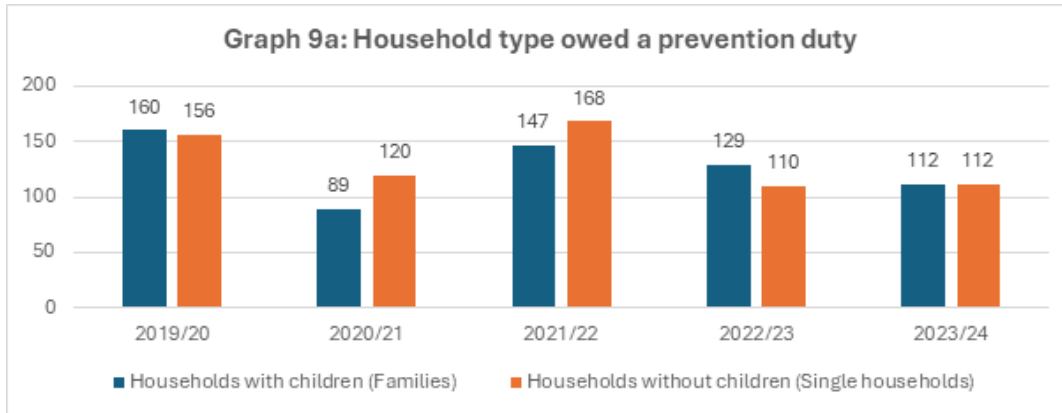
Ethnic group	Homelessness (main applicant) %	Census 2021 population %
White	88.0%	95.0%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	0.9%	0.7%
Asian / Asian British	0.5%	2.1%
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	1.2%	1.5%
Other ethnic groups	1.7%	1.5%
Not known	7.0%	-

**Prevention**

**Household type owed a prevention duty**

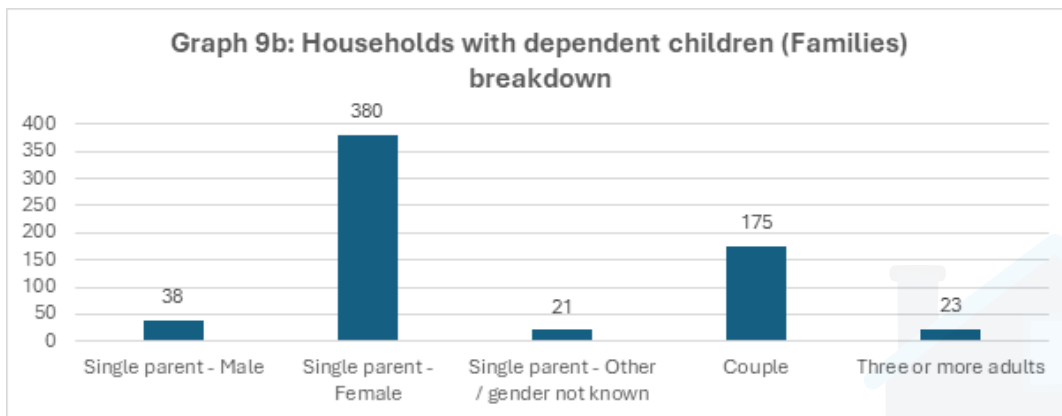
4.12 Housing authorities have a duty to take reasonable steps to help prevent any eligible person (regardless of priority need status, intentionality and whether they have a local connection) who is threatened with homelessness from becoming homeless. This means either helping them to stay in their current accommodation or helping them to find a new accommodation to live before they become homeless. The prevention duty continues for 56 days unless it is brought to an end by an event such as accommodation being secured for the person, or by them becoming homeless.

4.13 There were 1,338 cases where a prevention duty was owed. 51% of households who were owed a prevention duty were 'households without children', however as Graph 7a shows this trend has fluctuated year on year.



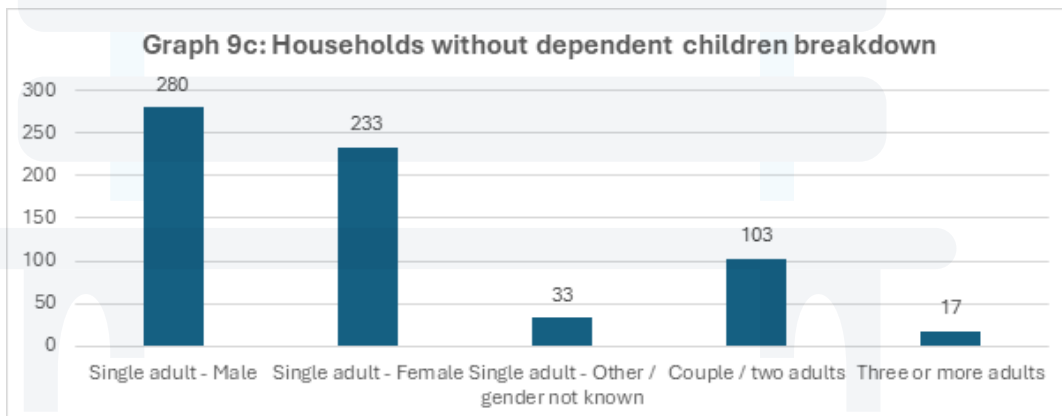
**Households with children (Families) breakdown**

4.14 Graph 9b shows that when broken down, most applications that were owed a prevention duty and who had children were from 'single parent – female' households (60%). Overwhelmingly, single parent households represented the majority of preventative cases with dependent children as part of the household (69%).



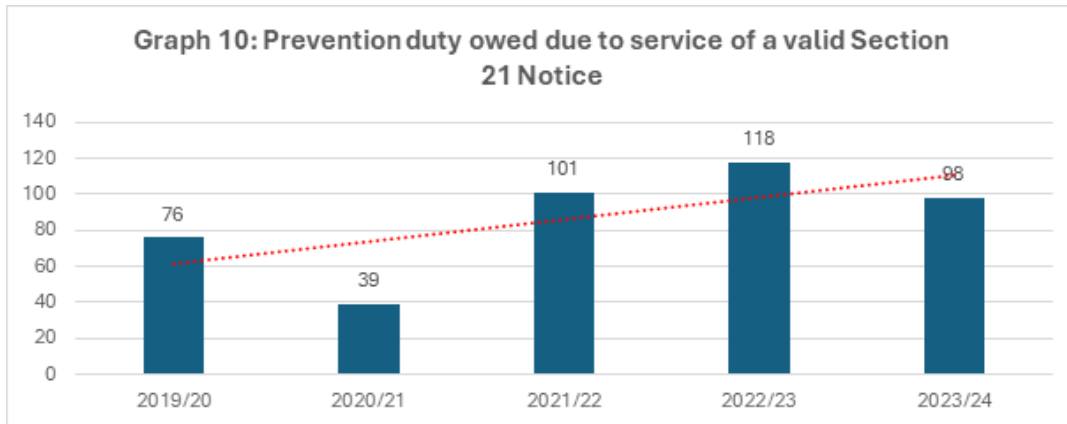
**Households without children breakdown**

4.15 In contrast, 'single adult – Male' was the highest household type without children (42%), although 'single-adult female' was second (35%). Overwhelmingly Graph 9c shows that single adult households without children were highest amongst households owed a prevention duty (77%).



**Households assessed and owed a prevention duty due to the service of a valid Section 21 Notice (no fault eviction)**

4.16 The number of households assessed and owed a prevention duty 2023/24 was 98, representing an increase of 27% since 2019/20. As demonstrated by Graph 10, the general trend has seen an increase in the number of cases over the 5-year period and has overall increased by 28% overall.



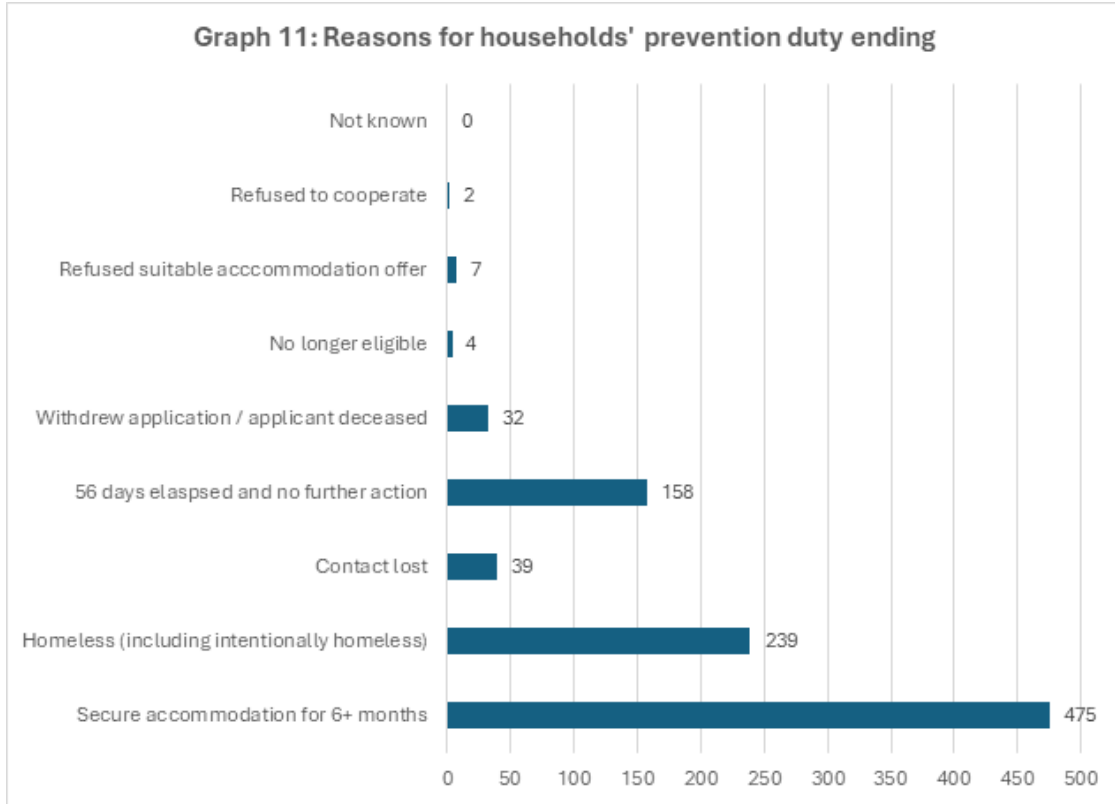
4.17 The relatively low figure in 2020/21 can be linked to the Government’s eviction ban for 6 months during the height of Covid-19 pandemic. However, as Graph 9 clearly shows, the number of cases continued to increase above pre-pandemic levels in the following years 2021/22.

4.18 There are several potential contributory reasons for this increase:

- The number of evictions seen in 2021/22 and 2022/23 may be artificially high due to the Government’s ban on evictions in 2020/21 during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Post-pandemic ‘housing boom’ – more people were looking to move from urban areas to rural and coastal locations, making it profitable for homeowners to sell their properties larger amounts. This also had an impact on the availability of properties to rent privately, and the cost of private rent charged.
- The proposed new regulations within the Renters’ Rights Bill (previously the Renters’ Reform Bill) may have been a catalyst for some landlords to pull out of the private rented market altogether, thereby reducing the number of properties available.
- Private rents have increased in the district by around 7% between 2020 – 2024, while until recently, LHA rates had been stagnant if not had negligible growth since 2013.
- The cost-of-living crisis has had a broader impact across socio-economic backgrounds, impacting on both tenants and landlords, particularly around utility costs, cost-of-living and the increase in interest for mortgages.

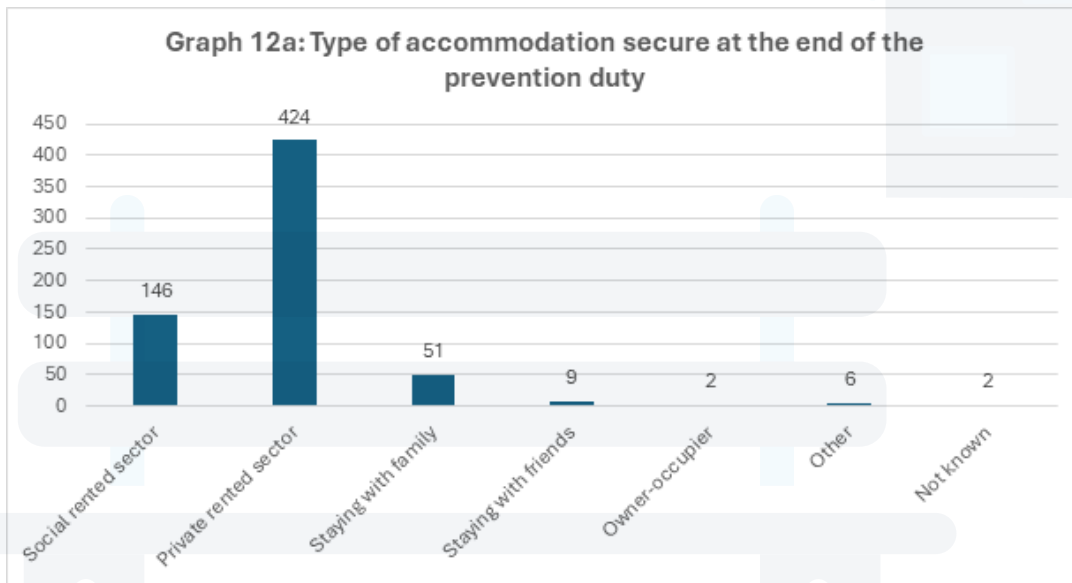
**Reasons for why households' prevention duty ended**

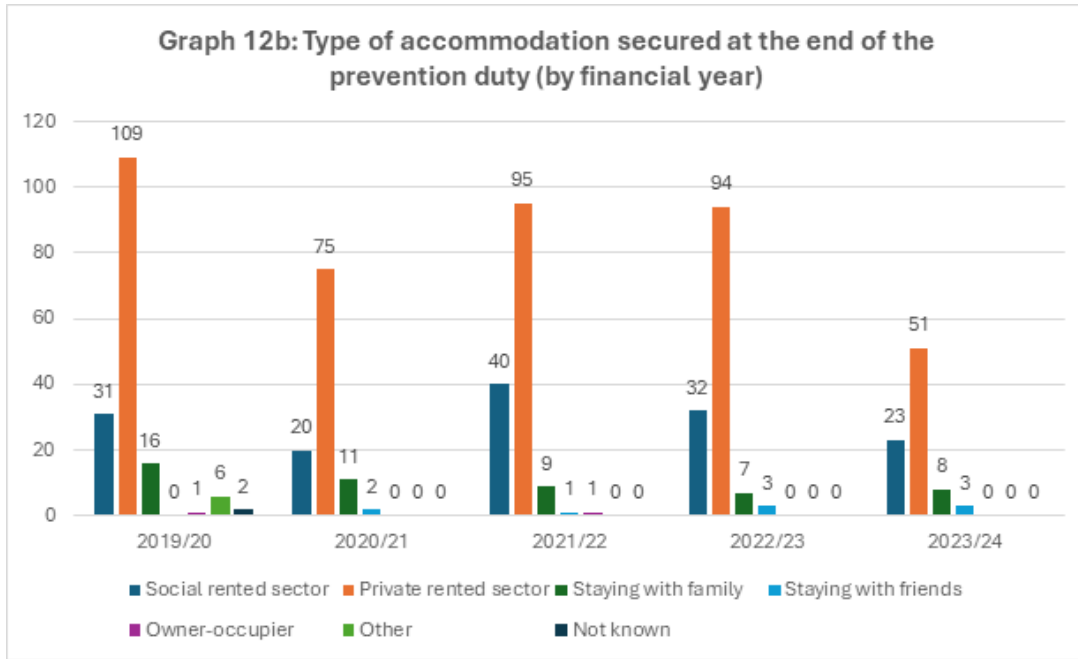
4.19 Graph 11 shows that the main reason for the end of a prevention duty was that 'secure accommodation for 6+ months' (50%) was found.



**Accommodation secured at the end of the prevention duty**

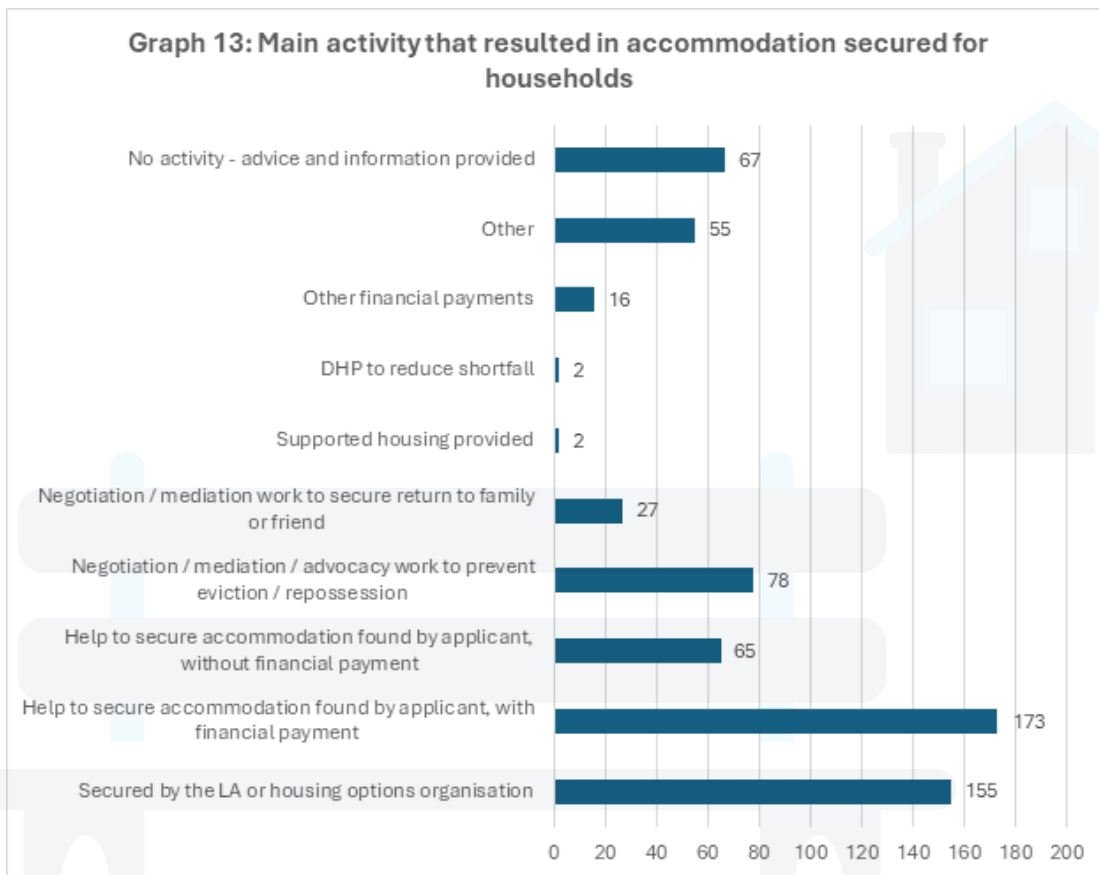
4.20 The 'private rented sector' has consistently been the main source of accommodation secured that has led to the end of a prevention duty (66%) followed closely by the social rented sector (23%).





**Main activity that resulted in accommodation secured for households**

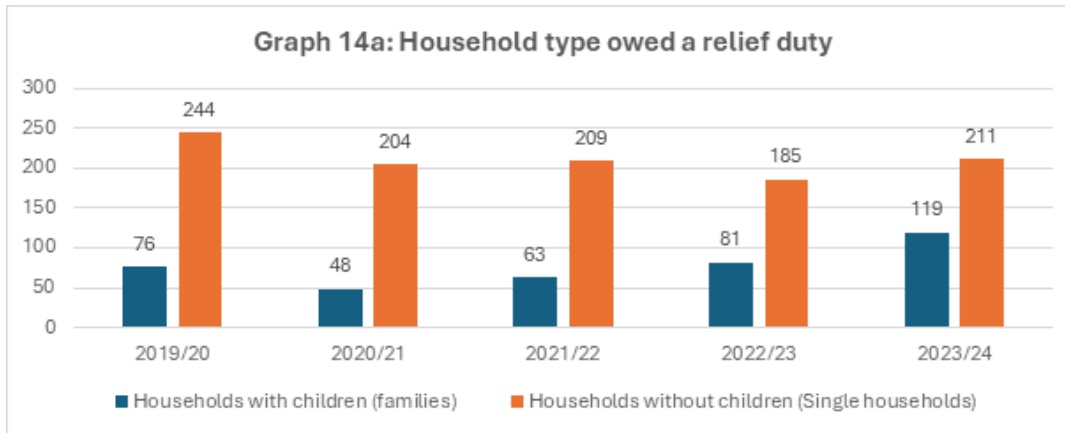
4.21 Graph 13 shows that the main activity which resulted in accommodation secured for households was helping applicants to secure accommodation found by them with the help of a financial payment (27%), followed closely by accommodation secured by the Council or another housing options organisations (24%).



## Relief

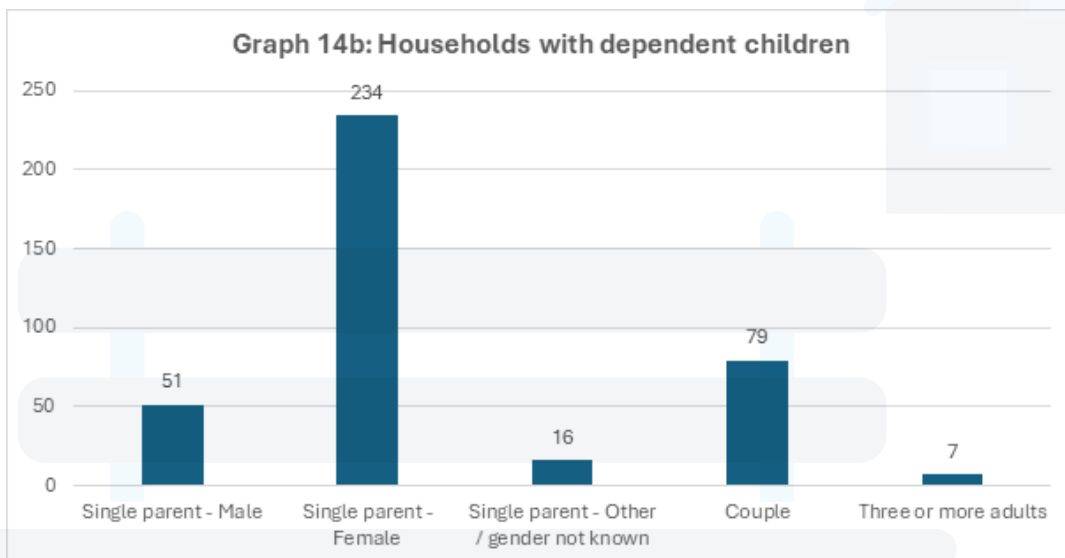
### Household type owed a relief duty

- 4.22 There were 1,440 households who were owed a relief duty. A relief duty is owed if the applicant is already homeless, or becomes homeless despite activity during the prevention stage, the reasonable steps will be focused on helping the applicant to secure accommodation. This relief duty lasts for 56 days unless ended in another way. If the housing authority has reason to believe a homeless applicant may be eligible for assistance and has a priority need, they must be provided with interim accommodation.
- 4.23 73% of all cases where a relief duty was owed were 'households without children (single households)', and this was consistently the case every year as shown by Graph 13a, although the number of relief cases for households with children has generally increased.



### Households with children

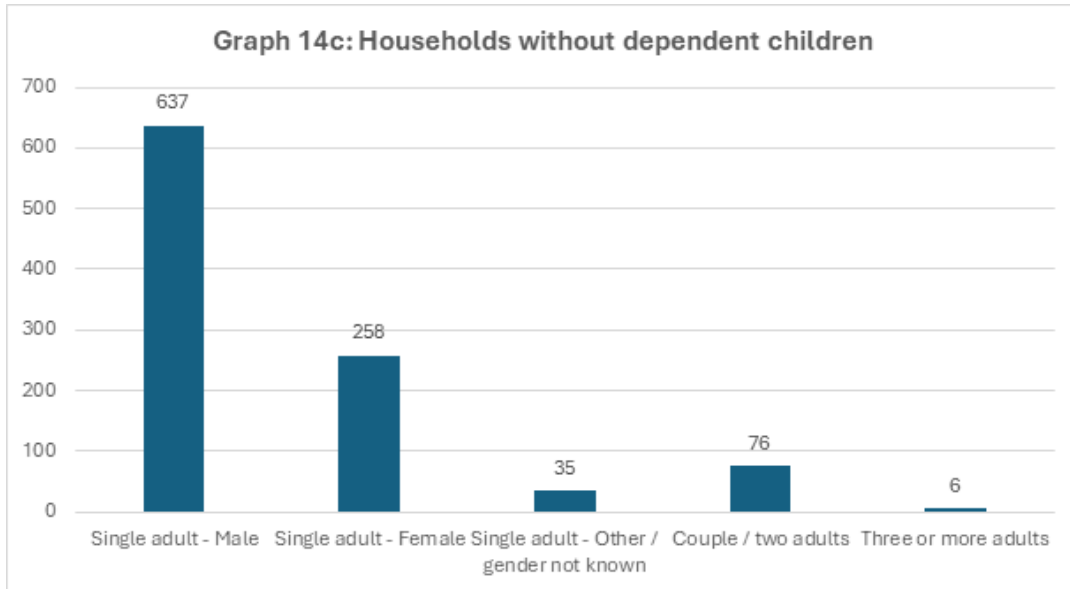
- 4.24 Graph 14b shows that when broken down, most applications that were owed a relief duty with dependent children were 'single parent – female' households (60%), this is comparable to households with children owed a prevention duty. Overwhelmingly, single parent households represented most relief cases with dependent children as part of the household (78%).





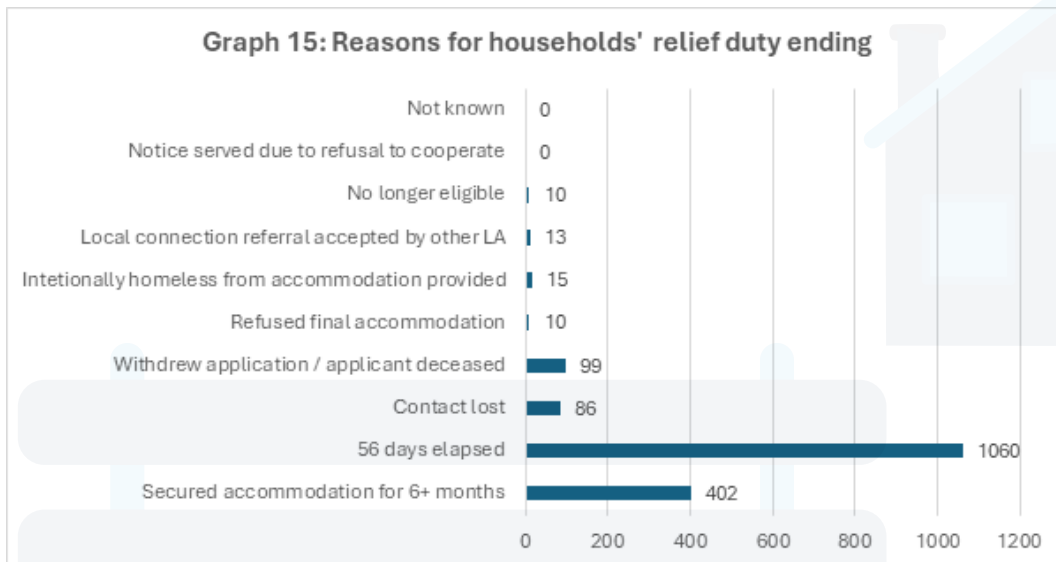
**Households without children**

4.25 Graph 14c demonstrates 'Single adult – males' were the largest household type without children (63%). Again, just as with prevention, single adult households overwhelmingly represented the largest group owed a relief duty (92%) compared to couples / two adults or more (8%).



**Reasons why relief duty ended**

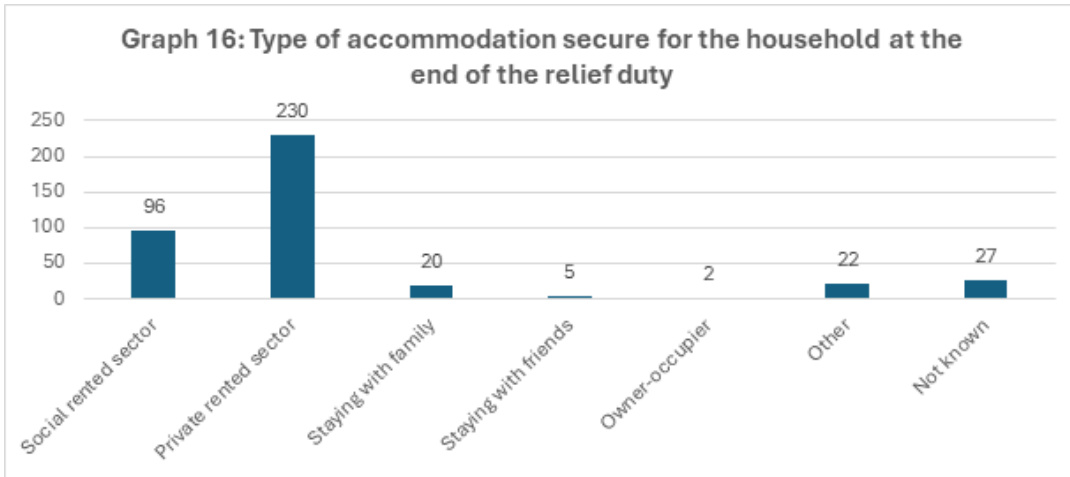
4.26 Graph 15 shows that the main reason for the end of a relief duty '56 days elapsed' (63%). This refers to the length of time the Council will support a household to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.



**Relief duty outcomes**

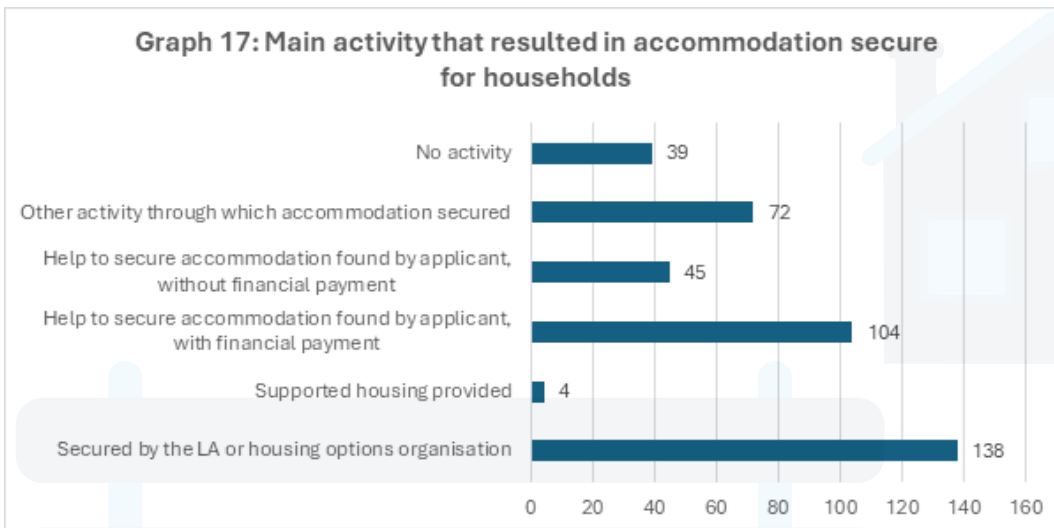
**Type of accommodation secured at the end of the relief duty**

4.27 As Graph 16 demonstrates, the vast majority of relief duties that were ended because accommodation has been secured were in the private rented sector (57%), followed the social rented sector (24%). Again, this demonstrates the importance of the private sector in helping to relieve homelessness.



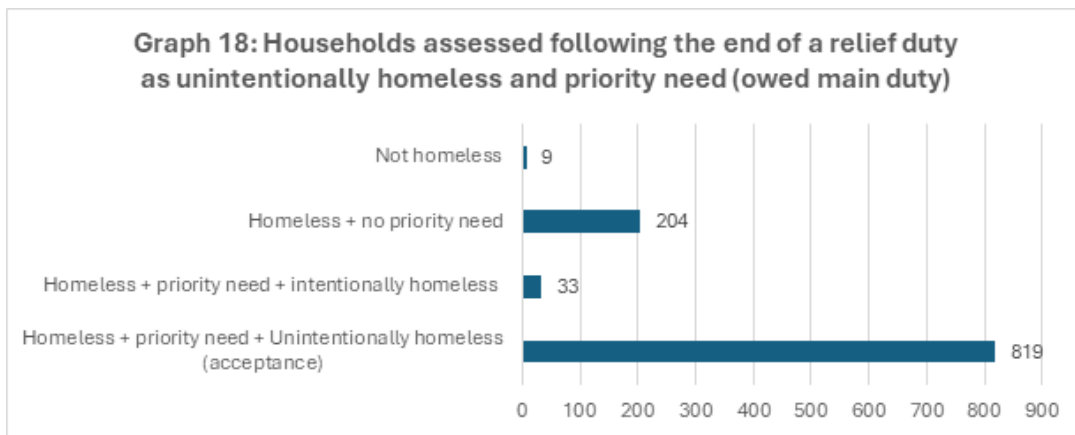
**Main activity that resulted in accommodation secured for households**

4.28 Graph 17 shows that the main activity that resulted in accommodation secured for households, that ended the relief duty, was secured by the Council or another housing options organisation (34%), followed by 'help to secure accommodation found by applicant, with financial payment' (26%).

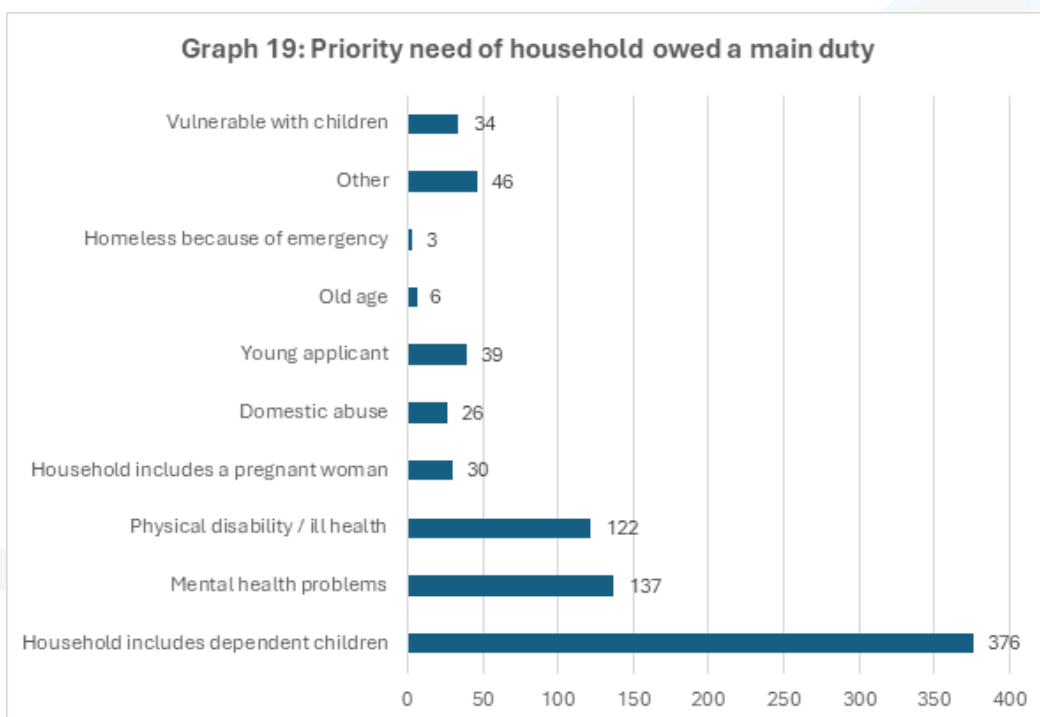


**Households assessed following the end of a relief duty as unintentionally homeless and priority need (owed a main duty)**

- 4.29 If homelessness is not successfully prevented or relieved, a housing authority will owe the main housing duty to applicants who are eligible, have a priority need for accommodation and are not homeless intentionally.
- 4.30 Certain categories of households have priority need if homeless, such as pregnant women, families with children, and those who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse or due to an emergency such as a fire or flood. Other groups may be assessed as having priority need because they are vulnerable as a result of old age, mental ill health, physical disability, having been in prison or care or as a result of becoming homeless due to violence.
- 4.31 Graph 18 demonstrates that in most cases where a main duty was owed the majority households were 'homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless' (77%).



- 4.32 Graph 19 shows a break down for the priority needs for households owed a main duty. The main 'priority need' was 'households with dependent children' (46%), followed by 'mental health problems' (17%) and 'physical disability / ill health' (15%).

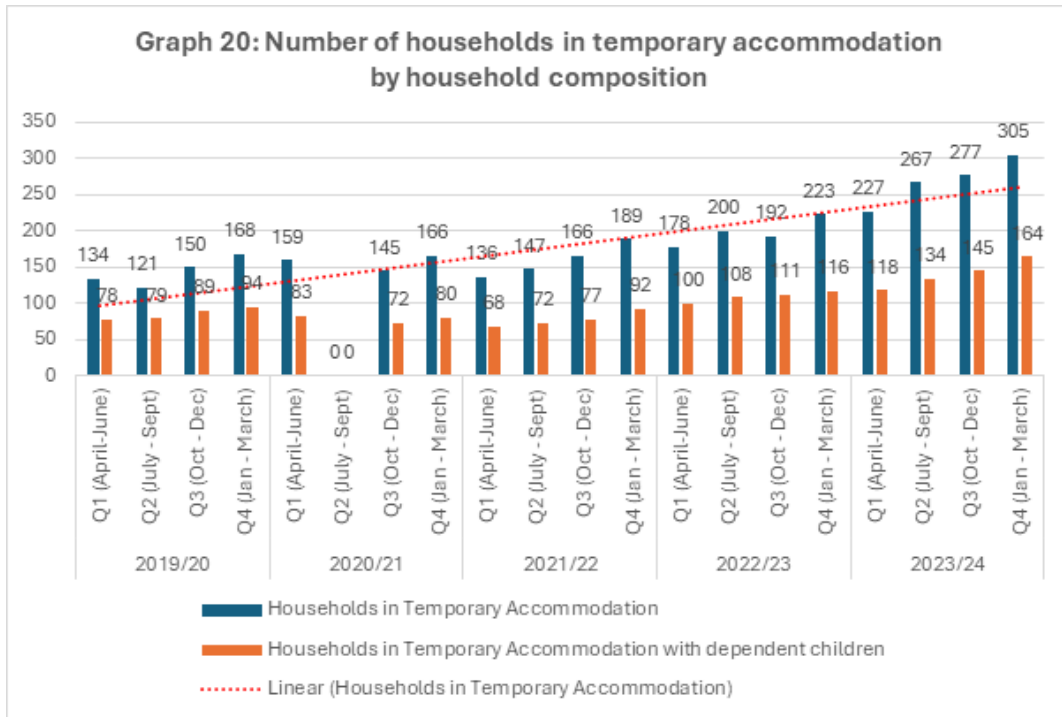


### Temporary accommodation

- 4.33 The Council has a duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households in priority need under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). Households might be placed in temporary accommodation (TA) pending the completion of inquiries into an application, or they might spend time waiting in TA after an application is accepted until secure accommodation becomes available.
- 4.34 TA can be provided by the Council or by the private sector. Local authorities, including the Council, have become increasingly reliant on the private sector to provide TA, as a result of a lack of available council housing, and council-owned temporary accommodation.
- 4.35 The Council continues to increase its TA stock through the construction of new build properties and the acquisition of properties on the open market to reduce its reliance on private sector accommodation.

### Temporary accommodation statistics

- 4.36 Data for Temporary Accommodation (TA) is submitted and recorded quarterly to central government. Submissions ask for the number of households in TA at the end of the quarter, rather than new households placed in TA. Graph 20 shows that the number of households in TA has increased over the past 5 years.



## Rough sleeping

- 4.37 Rough sleepers are defined for the purposes of rough sleeping counts and estimates as:
- People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on / in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments)
  - People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or 'bashes').

The definition does not include people in hostels or shelters, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protect, squatters or travellers.

Bedded down is taken to mean either lying down or sleeping. About to go to bed down includes those who are sitting in / on or near a sleeping bag or other bedding.

- 4.38 The causes of rough sleeping can be divided into structural factors and individual factors. Structural explanations locate the causes of homelessness in broader forces, and individualist explanations focus on the personal vulnerabilities and circumstances of those who experience rough sleeping. However, these factors can be interrelated and reinforced by one another.

Structural factors include:

- Poverty
- Inequality
- Housing supply and affordability
- Unemployment or insecure employment
- Access to social security

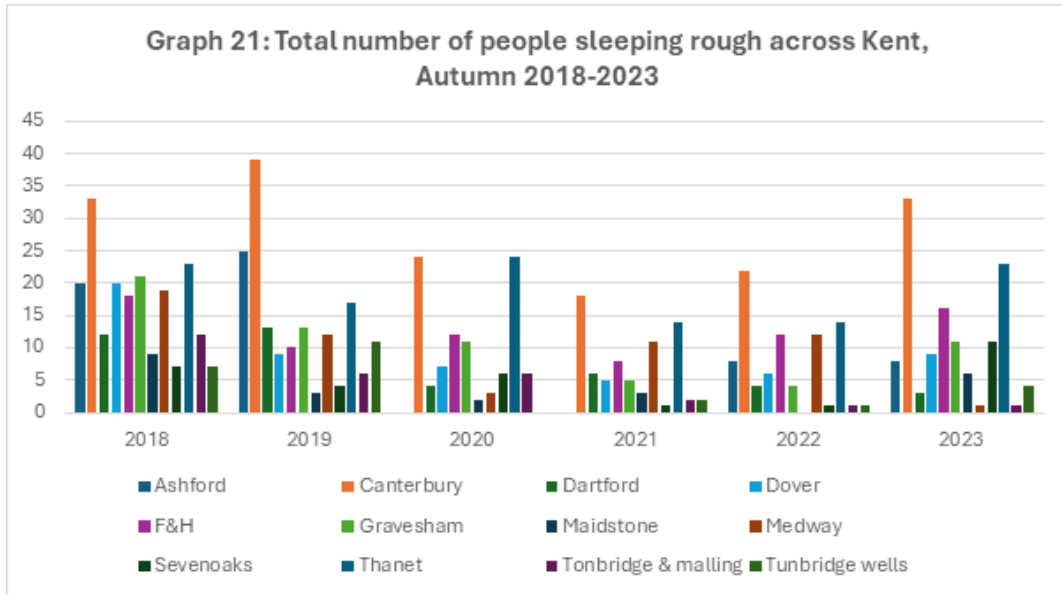
Individual factors include:

- Poor physical health
- Mental health problems
- Experience of violence, abuse, and neglect
- Drug and alcohol problems
- Relationship breakdown
- Experience of care prison
- Bereavement
- Refugees

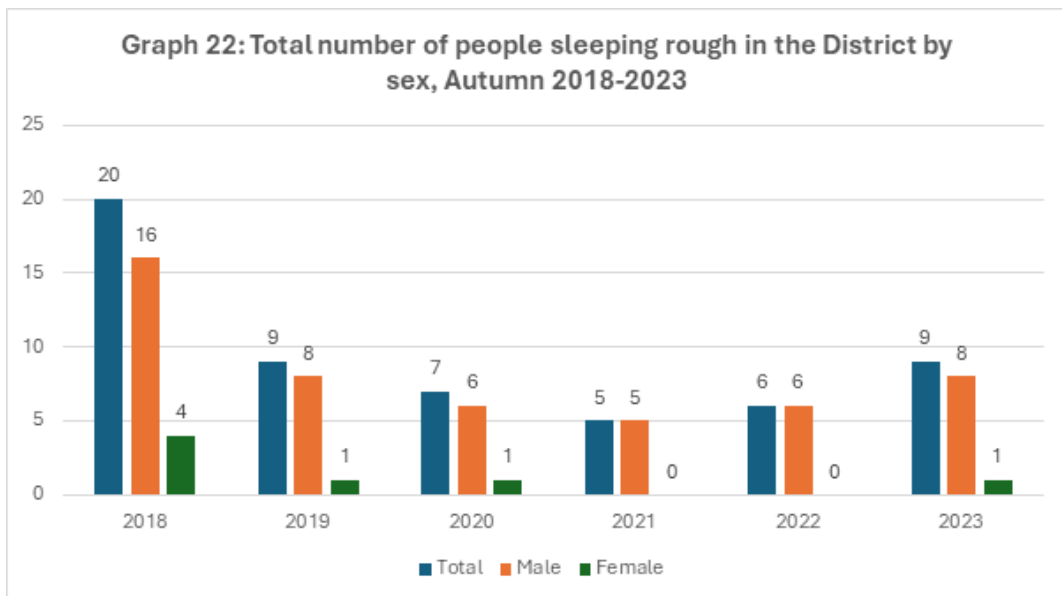
### Number of rough sleepings in the district

- 4.39 The number of rough sleepers in the district has fallen significantly over the last 5 years from a high of 20 in Autumn 2018 to a low of 5 in 2021. However, the number has risen slightly in recent years to 9 rough sleepers accounted for in 2023. This leaves the rate of people sleeping rough per 100,000 at 7.7 in 2023, down from a high of 17.1 in 2018





4.40 In 2018 the Rough Sleeper Initiative was introduced which had a demonstrable impact to rough sleeping figures nationally as well as locally. A reason for the fall in the number or people sleeping rough in 2020 and 2021 was partly due to the Covid-19 pandemic and ‘Everyone in RSAP’ launch, which requires local authorities to house rough sleepers. Since that scheme ended in 2020, the numbers have picked back up.



4.41 ‘Males’ were the highest gender demographic amongst people sleeping rough, on average representing 88% of people sleeping rough per year. The number of ‘females’ sleeping rough dropped drastically; there were none recorded in 2021 and 2022; however, this number rose in 2023 again but is still below its high point in 2018.

## 5. Resources

5.1 Several resources were used in the preparation and development of this review. These were:

### Internal

- Housing Waiting List data
- Dover District Local Plan 2020-2040
- District Housing Needs Survey 2023

### External

- [Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities](#)
- [Live Tables on Homelessness \(MHCLG\)](#)
- [Tables on Rough Sleeping \(MHCLG\)](#)
- [Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics](#) (Census, 2001, 2011 & 2021)
- [Housing prices in Dover](#)
- [House Price Statistics - UK House Price Index](#)
- [House price to workplace-based earnings ratio - Office for National Statistics](#)

