

Shropshire Council Homelessness Strategy 2015-2017

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1. Foreword

Despite the increasing financial challenges faced by all public sector services, Shropshire Council remains committed to working towards the prevention of homelessness across the County. This new Homelessness Strategy for Shropshire provides a working document indicating how the Council intends to achieve the above aim through early intervention, working together with key partner organisations as well as members of the public whom may become threatened with homelessness.

Local Authorities throughout England and Wales have been reporting an increase in levels of homelessness and I am very concerned there appears to be a similar increase in the number of Shropshire residents experiencing housing difficulties. For this reason the Action Plan in this new Strategy focuses on tackling the main causes of homelessness in Shropshire i.e. being asked to leave home by family, relationship breakdown, and being served notice to leave private rented accommodation, whilst also addressing key factors impacting on sustainability of housing including Welfare Reform.

Shropshire Council recognises it is essential for all the relevant agencies to work together in order to address and begin to reverse the worrying trend of increasing numbers of households reporting housing difficulties. To this end the Council's Housing Services intend to continue and build upon the collaborative work they are already engaged in with statutory partners, local housing providers and all relevant private and voluntary sector organisations in order to address the County's housing needs.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed towards the development of this new Homelessness Strategy for Shropshire. Whilst the challenges ahead may be great, I look forward to the Council working together with our stakeholder partners to strive to make homelessness in Shropshire an issue from the past.

Councillor Malcolm Price
Shropshire Council Member for Battlefield Division
Portfolio Holder for Regulatory Services, Housing and Commissioning (Central)

2. Executive Summary

Whilst the environment within which Housing Services operate has undergone significant change since the publication in 2011 of Shropshire Council's previous Homelessness Strategy, the key principle remains of providing early intervention with an emphasis on the prevention of homelessness.

This document clearly sets out the vital importance, in light of key legislative changes and increased demand on services, of adopting an early preventative approach in homelessness services in order to successfully address the needs of customers facing housing difficulties now and in the future. Homelessness prevention means a better outcome for households in housing need, with less disruption to family life. This approach also provides a financially more effective way of working for Housing Services, meaning services can be targeted where the needs are greatest.

The key reasons for homelessness in Shropshire identified through the recent Homelessness Review remain the same: they are parental or family exclusions, relationship breakdowns and the loss of private rented accommodation. Unfortunately, in keeping with the trend nationally, Shropshire Council has seen a substantial increase in homelessness presentations over the last two financial years. This new Homelessness Strategy for Shropshire aims to address these key issues through adopting an action plan focused on enabling those in housing need to seek out their own sustainable housing solutions and to ensure better outcomes for households when homelessness cannot be prevented.

PART ONE: STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3. Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on Local Authorities to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy and to renew this at least every five years. The Homelessness Strategy is intended to be an active working document with an emphasis on the prevention of homelessness, through the provision of relevant advice and support, and on the provision of suitable accommodation for households where homelessness cannot be prevented.

In 2011 the former Coalition Government published 'Making Every Contact Count', in which the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness set out their vision for a joint approach to preventing homelessness based on early intervention with everyone at risk of losing their home. In the report the government set out their commitment to make sure that every contact a vulnerable household makes with a local agency really counts to: tackle troubled childhoods and adolescence; improve health; reduce involvement in crime; improve skills, employment and financial advice; and to pioneer social funding for homelessness. These commitments provide the context for local authorities and their partners to provide a gold standard level of service rooted in 10 local challenges:

1. Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services
2. Actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
3. Offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients
4. Adopt a *No Second Night Out* model or an effective local alternative
5. Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support
6. Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords
7. Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
8. Have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs
9. Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
10. Not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks

Through delivery of this new Homelessness Strategy for Shropshire the Council's Housing Services is aiming to achieve the gold standard level of service detailed above and to receive recognition of this through accreditation awarded via the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) funded National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS). Councillor Malcolm Price's foreword to this new Homelessness Strategy provides a corporate commitment by Shropshire Council towards delivering the 'gold standard' in Housing Services.

The Council's homelessness services operate within a 'Housing Options' model. This approach provides a comprehensive range of advice and assistance for people at risk of homelessness. The aim is to, wherever possible, prevent homelessness from occurring. When homelessness cannot be prevented, the Housing Options approach ensures options for re-housing are fully explored. The Housing Options team sits within the Shropshire Council Adult Social Care and Housing Services, and as such is embedded within broader advice and prevention services.

Similarly, there is now an emphasis on preventative work by Local Authorities Social Services departments under the new Care Act 2014 which has introduced a new duty for Social Services, Housing, and Health departments to work together to jointly assess individuals needs in certain circumstances. This, combined with anticipated increased demand and diminishing resources to both Housing and Social Services, reinforces the need for effective joint-working between Housing Services and our stakeholder partners. The Council is seeking to address this issue in relation to the services it provides for young people and care leavers through the development of Children's Services new Early Help Strategy for the county.

The sub-regional Herefordshire and Shropshire Housing Strategy (2012 – 2015) acts as the over-arching document to the Homelessness Strategy. It identifies three main priorities, one of which identifies the importance of homelessness prevention through ensuring "appropriate, timely housing support and advice is available". Shropshire Council is presently engaged in developing a new Housing Strategy for the county. However the need for preventative action through early intervention, to provide timely and appropriate advice and assistance, remains the guiding principle of services working to address housing needs and homelessness issues across the county.

Notable achievements from the previous Homelessness Strategy include the continued development and implementation of accommodation pathway plans for vulnerable groups most likely to be affected by homelessness. For example Shropshire continues to provide (single occupancy) supported accommodation referral schemes for mental health service users, 16- and 17-year-olds, homeless persons whom have been 'sleeping rough', ex-offenders with a housing need and individuals at risk of homelessness whom are

recovering from former drug or alcohol misuse. This has been complemented through Shropshire Council's work as the lead Authority in delivering cross-boundary joint working with Telford and Wrekin Council and South Staffordshire Housing Authorities to address rough sleeping under the Government's 'No Second Night Out' principles.

'No Second Night Out', or NSNO, was introduced by the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness in 2011 as the Government's vision for ending rough sleeping nationwide through Local Authorities and their partners delivering the following 'gold standard' principles:

- Any new rough sleepers to be identified and helped off the streets immediately;
- Public to be enabled to report rough sleepers and refer them for help;
- Rough sleepers to be helped quickly to a safe place for timely needs assessment and options advice;
- Rough sleepers enabled to access emergency accommodation and other services, e.g. healthcare, as required;
- Rough sleepers to be reconnected with their area or country where they have connections unless there is a good reason why they cannot return.

Section 5 below provides more information regarding delivery of NSNO across Shropshire and neighbouring Authority areas.

In 2010 Prime Minister David Cameron introduced his then Coalition Government's new ideology referred to at the time as the 'Big Society', now referred to as 'Community and Society', aimed at giving members of the public more power and opportunity based on five precepts which include giving communities more powers and encouraging people to take an active role in their communities. In response to this Shropshire Council has developed and piloted a new team of multi-disciplinary staff predominantly from Adult Social Care and the Housing Options team, now entitled 'Your Community', which has been based since October last year in Craven Arms.

Since the last Homelessness Strategy for Shropshire was published in 2011, a key achievement in the Council's preventative work and towards improving public empowerment has been the introduction and development of an internet based self-help toolkit for anyone seeking housing advice: the 'Enhanced Housing Options Wizard', which has been available for public usage via the Shropshire HomePoint website since March 2014.

4. National & Current Context

In their budget statement for July 2015 the recently elected Conservative Government made clear their intention to continue implementing significant changes to the Welfare State as instigated under the previous Coalition Government. Consequently, reduced public sector expenditure and legislative changes introduced through the Welfare Reform Act 2012 have necessitated serious consideration in developing this new Homelessness Strategy for Shropshire.

Through successive governments in recent years there has been a shift toward increasing and ensuring the independence and resilience of the more vulnerable and marginalised individuals in our society. This can be traced from the beginning of the 'personalisation' agenda aimed at those receiving care in the community to the more recent Welfare Reform changes affecting eligibility for and the administration of working age state benefits. There is now a significant emphasis on the individual recipient of services taking greater responsibility, including managing their own financial affairs. For example working age state benefits are moving towards single monthly payments (called Universal Credit) with housing costs paid direct to the applicant included amongst other benefit elements intended for the costs of daily living. This combined with the reductions in the benefits amounts paid, including for housing costs, represents a new and potentially significant challenge to all housing related services in their efforts to help customers sustain their own accommodation or find suitable alternative options. Consequently, in developing this strategy careful consideration has been given to the possible ramifications of the changes introduced through the Welfare Reform Act. See Appendix 3 for details of some key changes introduced or to be implemented via the Welfare Reform Act 2012 which are likely to impact on housing services.

Other key legislative changes have been introduced through the Localism Act 2011, which has provided Local Housing Authorities the power to determine which households can be included on the housing register. This has also provided Local Authorities the power to discharge their duty to accommodate households accepted as statutorily homeless, under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996, through an offer of a suitable private rented sector tenancy with a minimum twelve-month fixed term. Besides this, the Localism Act has provided Registered (Accommodation) Providers (previously referred to as Housing Associations) and Local Housing Authorities the opportunity to grant fixed-term tenancies with limited security of tenure. To complement this, the Localism Act has introduced a requirement for Local Authorities to produce a Tenancy Strategy. The Tenancy Strategy is intended to provide guidance for Registered Providers working within Shropshire when developing their tenancy policies and is available for members of the public to view via the Shropshire Council website.

Shropshire Council's overall vision for the county, as described in its Sustainable Communities Strategy 2010-2020 is of a 'flourishing Shropshire' which sets out as its three priorities: enterprise and growth, with strong market towns and rebalanced rural settlements; responding to climate change and enhancing our natural and built environment; and, healthy, safe and confident people and communities.

These aims are reinforced in the Council's Business Plan and Financial Strategy, where the Council's three priorities are identified as:

- Strive to keep people from harm (in a way that doesn't compromise their choices)
- Help people, communities and businesses to help themselves (in a way that helps them to make the most of the choices available to them)
- Help to manage our environment (in a way that helps Shropshire to thrive)

This Homelessness Strategy has been developed based on the findings of the review of homelessness figures 2011-2015, please see Appendix 1, and using feedback from the Council's stakeholders and partners gathered during a Homelessness Strategy consultation event held on 14th July 2015. The key themes identified from the desk-top review of homelessness figures are a large increase (approximately 25% in the last financial year) in homeless applications and increased numbers of households accepted as statutorily homeless due to parents or other relatives excluding them. The review has also identified a significant decrease in the number of homelessness preventions achieved in the last financial year, in particular there has been significantly less new accommodation secured via the private rented sector. To fully understand the reasons behind this last alarming trend more detailed research and analysis is required. However, the Council's stakeholder partners have indicated local private sector landlords may be seeking to reduce their portfolios of properties through open market sales in the face of impending Welfare Reform changes and their potential financial impact on rental income.

There was common consensus amongst the Council's stakeholder partners attending the Homelessness Strategy consultation event of the need for earlier intervention, improved joint working and more timely and relevant information sharing between agencies. In view of this and Shropshire Council's key priorities referred to above the Council has identified as its over-arching aims for this Homelessness Strategy:-

1. To increase prevention of homelessness, with a focus on helping more people facing housing issues to help themselves;
2. To improve outcomes for, and protect persons, where homelessness cannot be prevented.

The needs and objectives associated with the aims of this Strategy are discussed below and provided in full in the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan in Appendix 2.

This Strategy supports Shropshire Council's Business Plan, the Empty Homes Strategy 2014-2017, the recently published new Domestic Violence Strategy and the Housing Strategy and links with the Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) and Local Investment Plans (LIPs).

5. Regional and Sub-regional Partnerships

In the past ten years Shropshire has worked sub-regionally with Hereford to complete a SMART Action Plan under the West Midlands Regional Homelessness Strategy and more recently to produce the shared Housing Strategy 2012-2015.

The previous Coalition Government allocated £563K of DCLG funding for single homelessness services to be delivered across the sub-region. Shropshire was nominated lead authority of the sub-regional group, including Staffordshire borough/district housing authorities, Stoke on Trent and Telford & Wrekin. The funds have been used to bolster provision of frontline services for rough sleeping across the area, with a focus on addressing rough sleeping implementation of the No Second Night Out (NSNO) principles described in section 3 above. A large number of rough sleepers have been supported into accommodation since the rough sleeper outreach began in May 2013, and more focused casework is on-going to support long-term rough sleepers with complex needs to exit rough sleeping. Funding was won from the Homelessness Transition Fund (HTF) to continue the rough sleeper outreach beyond the period funded by the initial single homelessness fund. Other projects commissioned with the sub-regional single homelessness monies include; schemes improving access to shared accommodation in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) for under 35s, homelessness education projects, prison in-reach for prevention of homelessness.

6. Progress since the Homelessness Strategy 2011-2015 Action Plan review in 2013

Shropshire Council's Homelessness Strategy for 2011-2015 identified as its four main aims:-

1. Focus on early intervention that prevents homelessness from occurring and allows for planned solutions to housing needs (to deliver a more effective and enhanced housing options service);
2. Provide appropriate support to vulnerable people to enable them to develop the skills needed to sustain their accommodation (to support vulnerable people to stay in their own homes);
3. Ensure that there is a joined-up approach to tackling homelessness (to strengthen partnerships to meet the needs of people affected by homelessness);
4. Promote a wider range of tenure options and choices to help meet housing needs (to understand and meet the needs of the diverse range of groups with a housing need).

All of the actions associated with each of the above aims detailed in the previous Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, or identified in the 2013 Action Plan review, have now been progressed with only two notable exceptions:-

- Evidence indicates an increasing and urgent need for the implementation of a fully operational Hospital to Home Protocol. This will ensure closer, more effective joint working between Housing, Health and Social Services colleagues to address hospital patients' housing needs in a timely manner, and will provide an important accommodation pathway for a particularly vulnerable group of customers whilst ensuring all services meet the requirements in the new Care Act;
- The desk-top Homelessness Review has identified a growing need to focus on increasing opportunities for re-housing via the private rented sector for both statutory and non-statutory homeless households. This along with actions to improve advice and support for both housing applicants and landlords should ensure the Council's Housing Services delivery of the 'gold standard' local challenge 6 provided above.

PART TWO: THE STRATEGY

7. The Aims, Outcomes and Difference We Want To Make

Aims of the Strategy

Shropshire's Homelessness Strategy has been developed in consultation with a broad number of stakeholders, partners, service users and service providers.

The primary aim of the Strategy is to address both the causes of homelessness in Shropshire, and, provide a response to those affected by homelessness and those in housing need.

In order to continue to actively prevent homelessness there must be an on-going development of a high quality, accessible and responsive service to address 'housing options', that is available to the people of Shropshire, regardless of their geographical location. This will ensure delivery of a gold standard service against the ten local challenges identified by DCLG and detailed above.

Long-term Aims

As already described in section 4 above the over-arching aims for Housing Services in Shropshire are:-

1. To increase the prevention of homelessness, with a focus on helping more people facing housing issues to help themselves;
2. To improve outcomes for, and protect persons, where homelessness cannot be prevented.

To ensure successful delivery of this Homelessness Strategy against the above identified aims Shropshire Council will utilise the SMART Action Plan below, which has been initially produced in light of key trends identified through the Homelessness Review and shall be monitored and developed periodically through the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group (HSIG).

Prevention of homelessness is a fundamental preventative service integral to the effective operation and delivery of a wide range of services.

The National Practitioner Support Service's value for money exercise looking at Shropshire Council's General Fund Revenue Outturn* for Housing Services in 2014/15 (*reported annually to the Department for Communities and Local Government) demonstrates a financial saving of almost one thousand pounds for every household where homelessness has successfully been prevented as opposed to providing temporary accommodation for households whom become homeless.

Where homelessness occurs, we aim to support people who do become homeless more effectively, in order for them to settle into sustainable accommodation and minimise the future risk of homelessness.

Shropshire Council is presently carrying out a full review of all the Housing Support Services it has commissioned across the county since 2011. The Homelessness Review data provided below identifies a need for targeted rapid response Housing Support as a potential means of increasing the prevention of homelessness in the county.

Examples of medium and short term aims that will help to fulfil the long-term aims;

Short-term/Medium-term Aims will involve;

- Temporary Accommodation Action Plan
- Landlord Incentive/Accreditation Scheme
- Move-on from supported housing
- Rough Sleeping estimates
- HSIG Meetings

PART THREE: DELIVERY OF THE STRATEGY

8. Action Plan

The Action Plan details how we aim to deliver the strategy over the next two years. An Action Plan for the first 12 months of the Strategy (2015-16) has been developed throughout the consultation period, please see Appendix 2 for the initial version of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2015-17.

9. Monitoring Arrangements

To ensure work being carried out is relevant and effective the Homelessness Strategy objectives and Action Plan are to be reviewed at least annually through the multi-agency Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group (HSIG). Following a recent strategy consultation event with stakeholders and partners interest has been secured in recommencing the work of HSIG and plans are to hold quarterly meetings to review progress and continuously develop the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan. This should provide a valuable reassurance against the backdrop of uncertainty given the economic, funding and policy situation in the current political climate. Performance will be mainly monitored through the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group (HSIG) examining and analysing the Council's quarterly P1E homelessness statistical return to Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

10. Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment

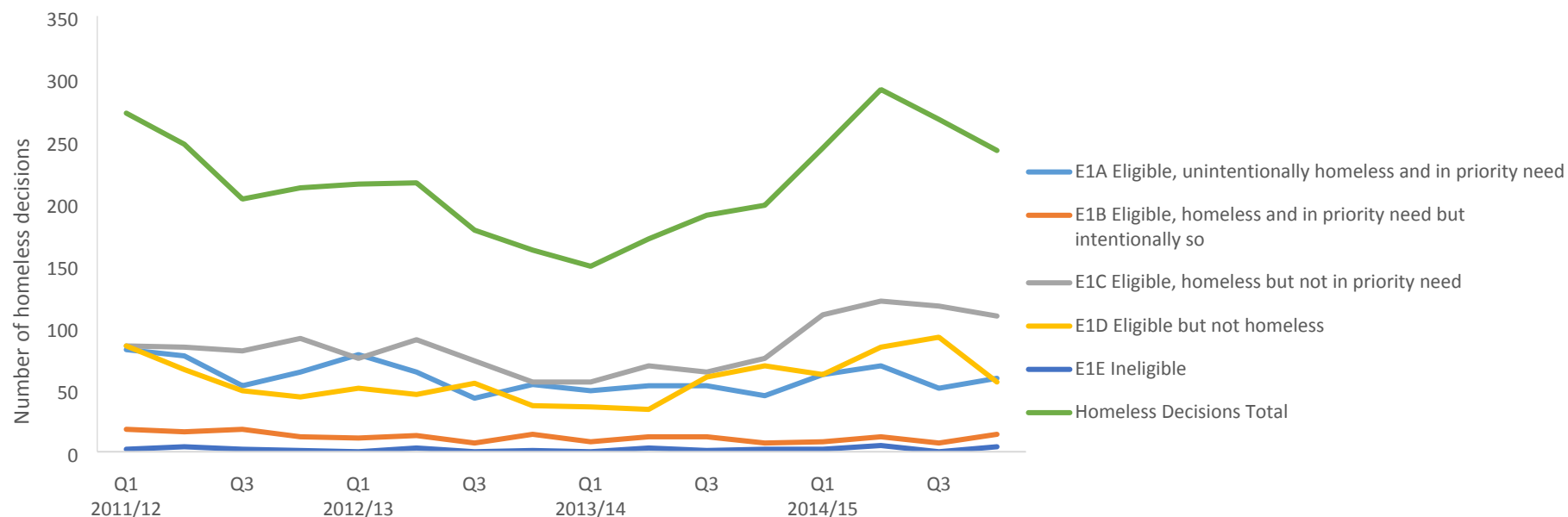
To comply with the Local Authority's equality duty under the Equality Act 2010 a Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment of this strategy and any proposed actions contained herein has been completed before the Strategy has been adopted by Shropshire Council. Any actions proposed in this new Homelessness Strategy are considered to advance equality of opportunity for vulnerable groups affected by homelessness issues who share a protected characteristic as defined in section 4 of the above Act.

SHROPSHIRE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY APPENDIX 1

Homelessness Strategy Review Data

The following information provided on pages 18 to 26 is taken from the Homelessness statistical data reported to DCLG quarterly through the P1E statistical returns over the last four complete financial years.

Homeless decisions by quarter

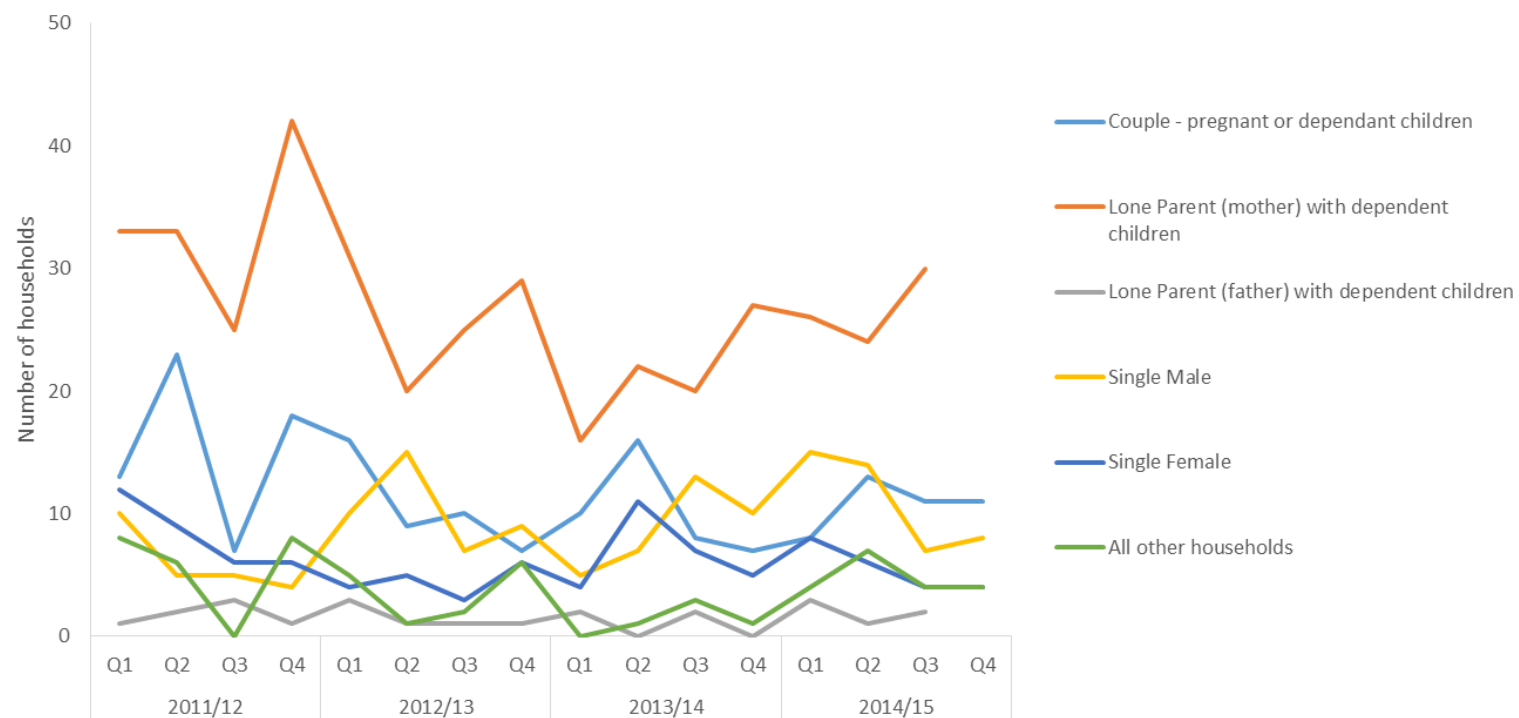


Homeless decisions, by quarter from 2011/12 to 2015/15

When a homeless household approaches their local authority they are assessed under housing law (Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Localism Act 2012) as to whether the local authority has a duty to provide assistance. This assessment is a Homeless Application, the outcome of which is termed a Homeless Decision. Where a household are deemed to be ‘E1A Eligible, unintentionally homeless, and in priority need’ the local authority has a duty to provide one suitable offer of accommodation. Where a household is deemed to be ‘E1B Eligible, homeless and in priority need but intentionally so’, the local authority have a duty to provide temporary accommodation and advice and assistance to secure their own settled accommodation. Where an ‘E1C Eligible, homeless but not in priority need’ decision is made, the local authority do not need to provide accommodation, but have a duty to provide advice and assistance. Where an ‘E1D Eligible but not homeless’ or ‘E1E Ineligible’ decision is made, the local authority have no duty to provide the household with any form of homeless assistance.

The 25% increase in homeless applications received in the last financial year is in keeping with the trend nationally.

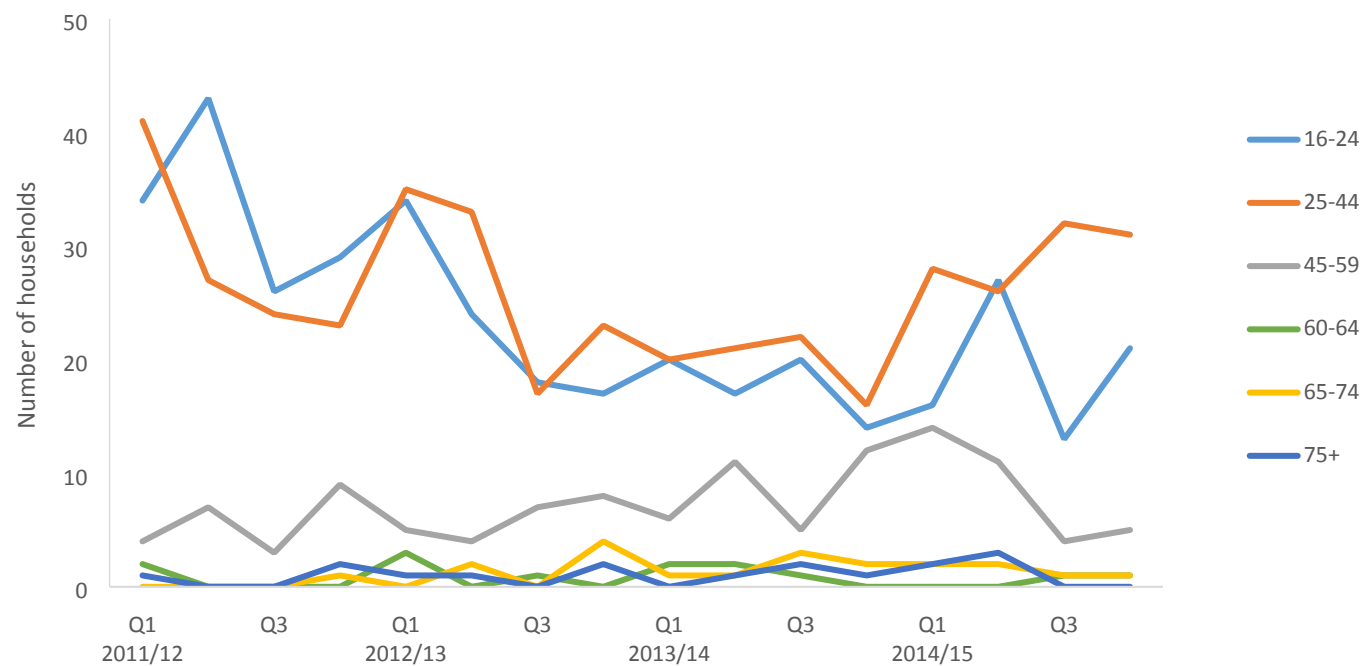
Households with an 'E1A Eligible, unintentionally homeless, and in priority need' decision, by household type



Households with an ‘E1A Eligible, unintentionally homeless, an in priority need’ decision, by household type, by quarter 2011/12 – 2014/15

Where a household makes a homeless application and are deemed to be ‘E1A Eligible, unintentionally homeless, and in priority need’ the local authority has a duty to provide one suitable offer of accommodation. This chart shows these households by household type.

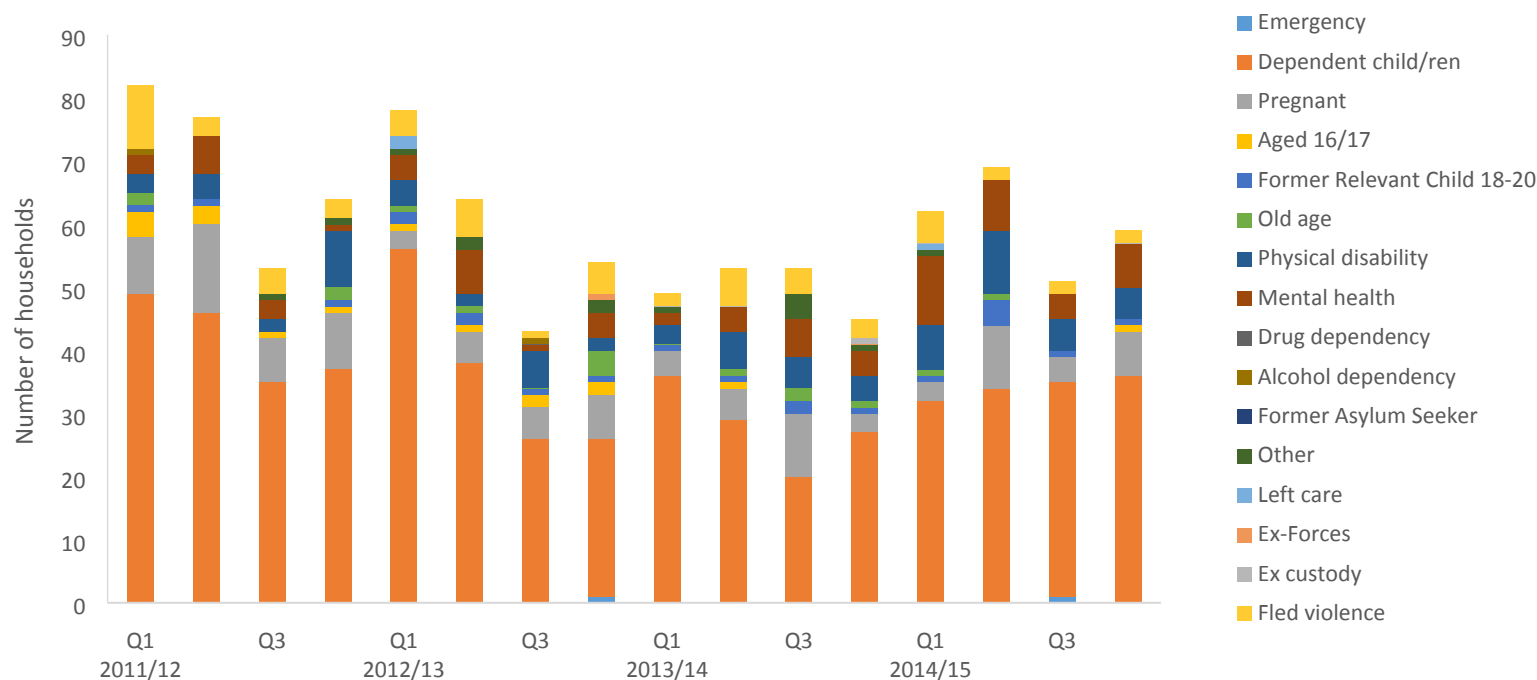
Households with an 'E1A Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need' decision, by age of primary applicant



Households with an 'E1A Eligible, unintentionally homeless, an in priority need' decision, by age of primary applicant, by quarter 2011/12 – 2014/15

Where a household makes a homeless application and are deemed to be 'E1A Eligible, unintentionally homeless, and in priority need' the local authority has a duty to provide one suitable offer of accommodation. This chart shows these households by age of primary applicant.

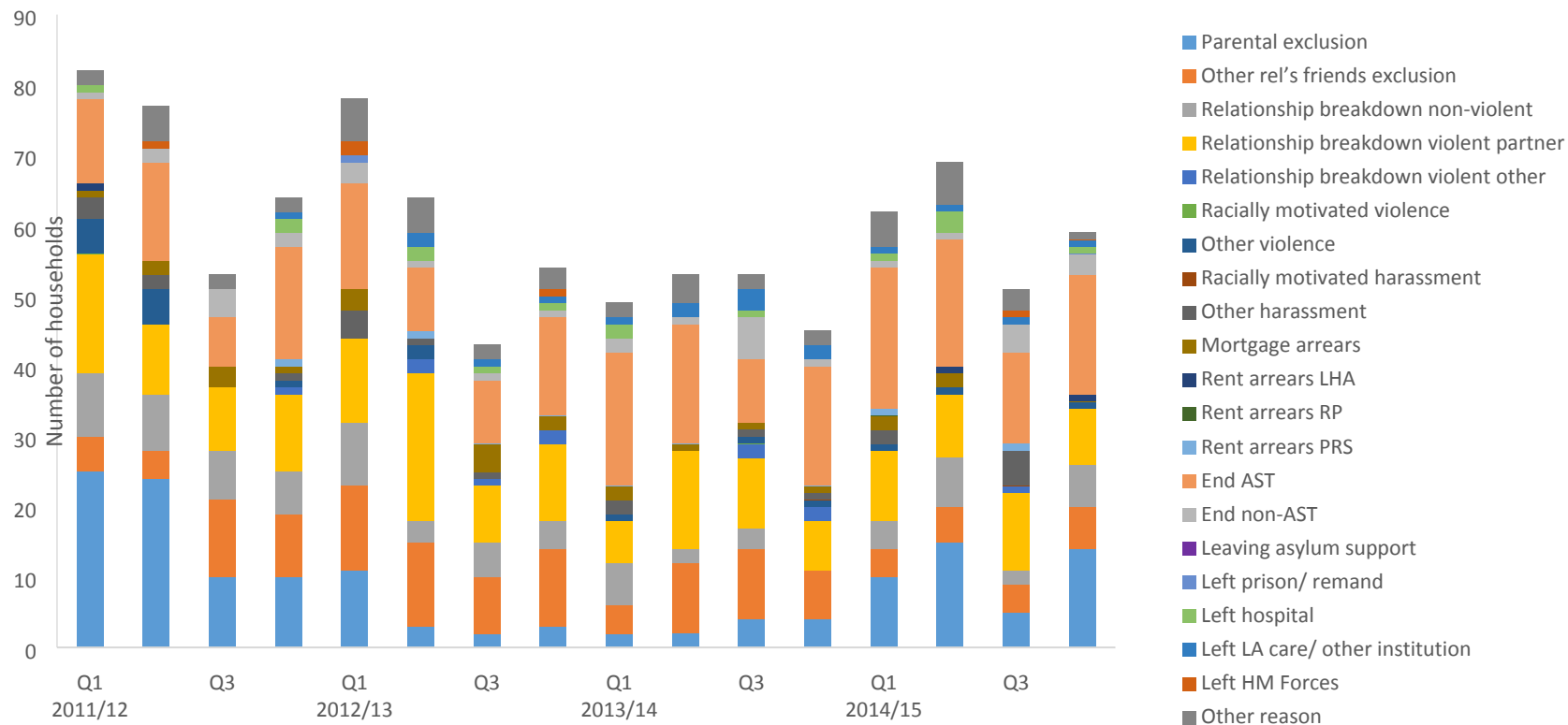
Households with an 'E1A Eligible, unintentionally homeless, and in priority need' decision, by reason for priority need



Households with an 'E1A Eligible, unintentionally homeless, an in priority need' decision, by priority need category, by quarter 2011/12 – 2014/15

Where a household makes a homeless application and are deemed to be 'E1A Eligible, unintentionally homeless, and in priority need' the local authority has a duty to provide one suitable offer of accommodation. This chart shows these households by reason for priority need e.g. physical disability, household has dependent children

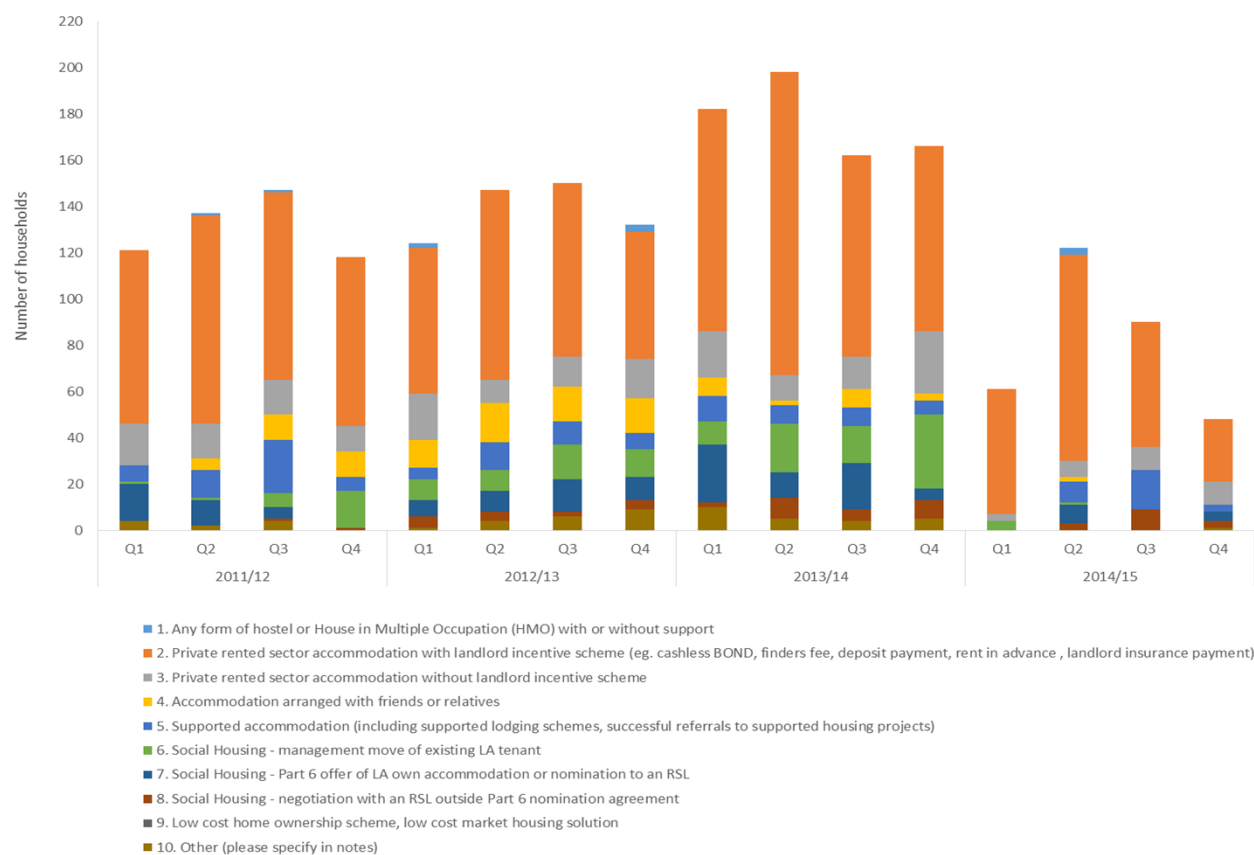
Households with an 'E1A Eligible, unintentionally homeless, and in priority need' decision, by reason for loss of last settled accommodation



Households with an 'E1A Eligible, unintentionally homeless, and in priority need' decision, reason for loss of last settled accommodation by quarter 2011/12 – 2014/15

Where a household makes a homeless application and are deemed to be 'E1A Eligible, unintentionally homeless, and in priority need' the local authority has a duty to provide one suitable offer of accommodation. This chart shows these households by reason for loss of last settled accommodation. The chart indicates a significant

Cases where prevention was successful in preventing homelessness, and households were assisted to obtain alternative accommodation, by prevention activity.

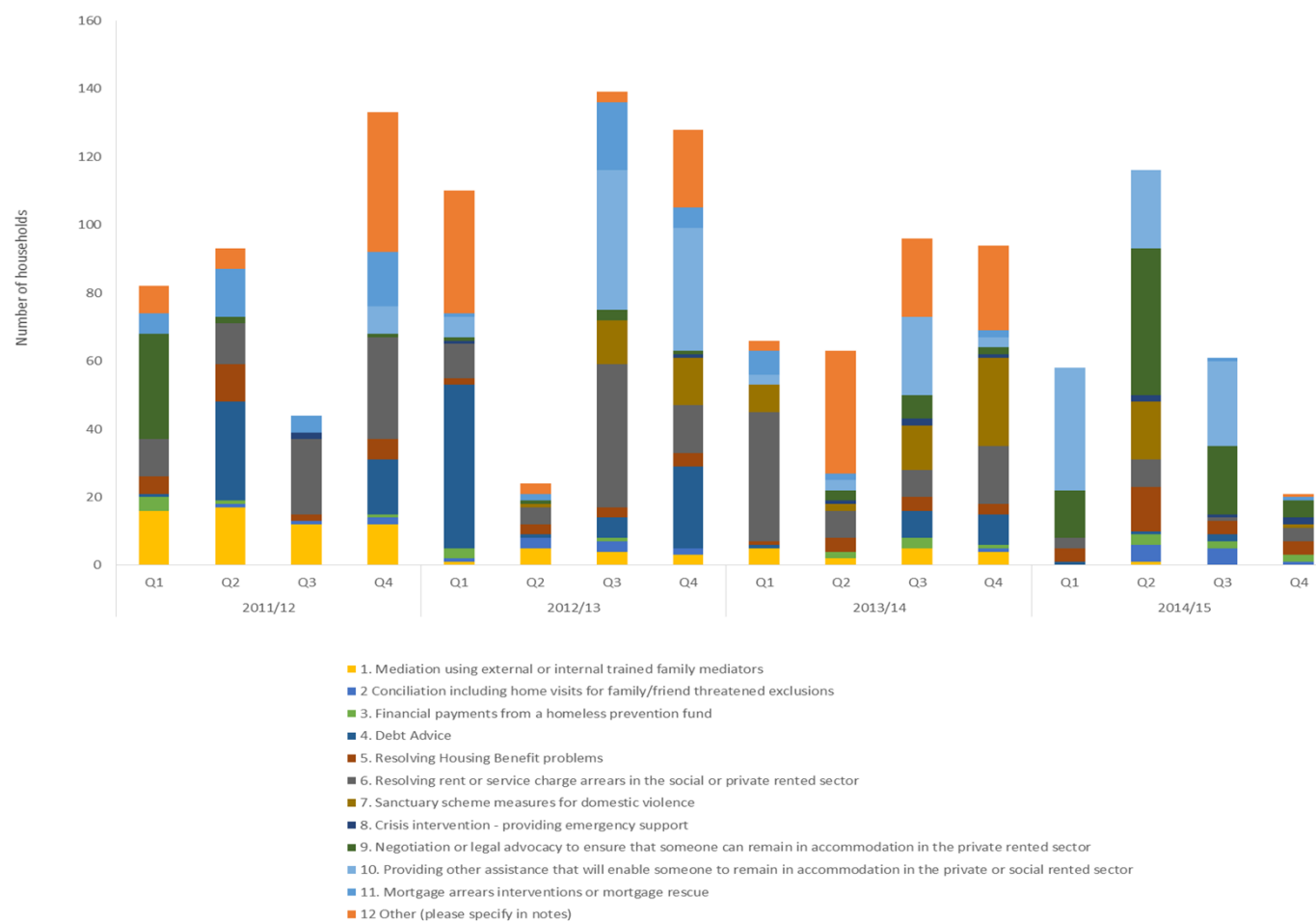


increase back to previous levels of homelessness resulting from exclusion by parents amongst statutorily homeless households.

The Council is required to record and periodically report the total numbers of households threatened with homelessness which it assists to obtain alternative accommodation and consequently to avoid being made homeless.

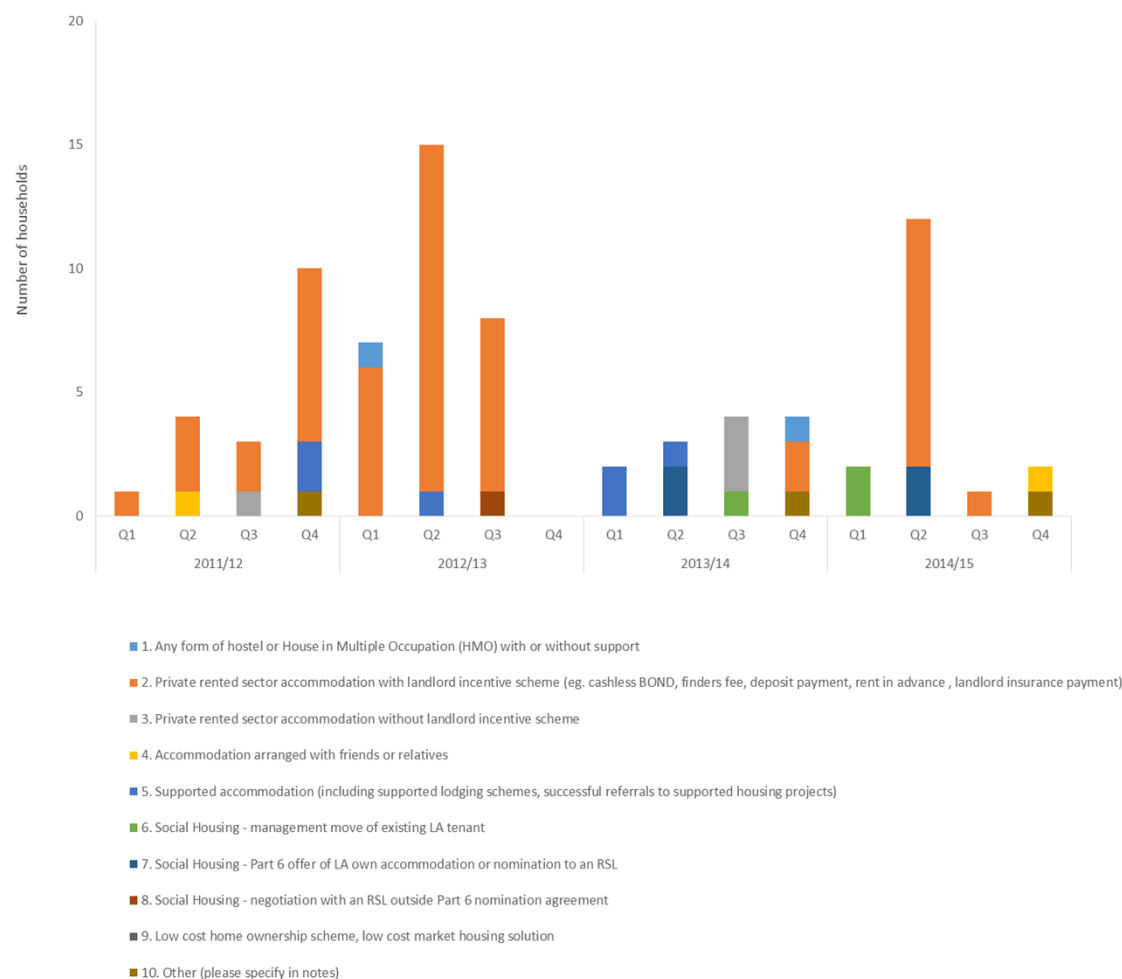
The above chart indicates a significant reduction in homelessness prevention achieved through assisting customers to secure alternative accommodation in the last complete financial year, whilst also indicating a significant reduction in new accommodation commencements secured via the private rented sector. Potential influencing factors include reduction in Local Housing Allowance rates since they are now calculated based on the 30th percentile of market rents.

Cases where prevention was successful in preventing homelessness, and households were able to remain in their existing home, by prevention activity.



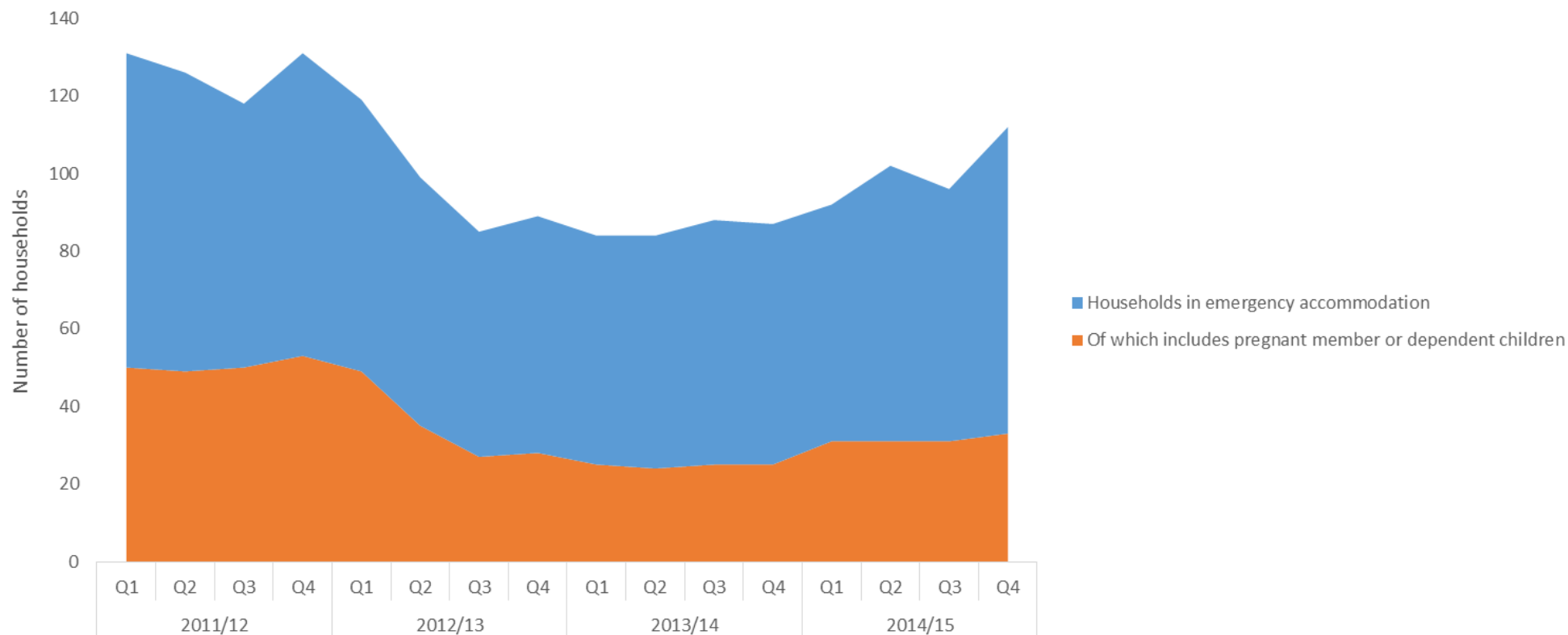
The Council is required to record and periodically report the total numbers of households threatened with homelessness which it assists to remain in their existing accommodation and consequently to avoid being made homeless.

Cases where homelessness was successfully relieved and households were assisted to obtain alternative accommodation, by prevention activity.



The chart above indicates a reduction in homelessness prevention achieved through enabling or assisting customers to return home to live with family.

Households in emergency accommodation at the end of each quarter



The Council is required to record and periodically report the total numbers of non-statutory homeless households which it assists to remain in their existing accommodation and consequently to avoid being made homeless.

The Council is required to report the total number of households it is providing emergency accommodation for on the last day of each financial quarter along with a breakdown of the numbers with children or expectant mothers included in the household.

In 2014 Shropshire Council commissioned independent consultants, arc⁴ Limited, to undertake a new Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Assessment for the county pursuant with section 225 of the Housing Act 2004. The assessment was updated and completed in January 2015 and through detailed consultation, review and analysis arc⁴ Limited's final report concludes that existing pitch provision and likely turnover of pitches is anticipated to adequately provide for all projected accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers within Shropshire over the next five years. The only outstanding action from this assessment of need is the necessity for the Council to identify suitable alternative provision for Travelling Showpeople currently living in Shropshire.

Shropshire Council's Housing Options team invited stakeholder partners to attend a Homelessness Strategy consultation event held on 14th July 2015. There was common consensus amongst the twenty two delegates whom attended on behalf of stakeholder partners of the need for earlier intervention, improved joint working and more timely and relevant information sharing between agencies. There was substantial interest amongst the stakeholder partners in recommencing a Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group meeting quarterly to review and continuously develop the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan. The consultation event included 'world café' style workshops where delegates were asked to discuss six key issues faced by homelessness services in Shropshire, i.e. domestic violence, ending of Assured Shorthold Tenancies, independent living, parental / family exclusions, rough sleeping, and welfare reform, and in particular delegates were asked to provide suggestions of how each issue may be addressed. A pictorial summary of key things identified in participant's feedback during this event has been created using 'Wordle' and is provided overleaf.

Appendix 2: Action Plan for the Homelessness Strategy (2015-17) is provided in draft format below:

Needs	Aims	Objectives	Method	Implementation	Evaluation
<p>25% increase in homeless applications;</p> <p>1/3rd increase in homelessness due to parental / family exclusions;</p> <p>Continuous increase in homelessness due to section 21 notices;</p> <p>More homeless households vulnerable due to physical disability or mental illness;</p> <p>Homelessness preventions halved and preventions via PRS lettings almost halved;</p>	<p>To increase prevention of homelessness, with a focus on helping more people facing housing issues to help themselves.</p> <p>To improve outcomes for, and protect persons, where homelessness cannot be prevented.</p>	<p>Shropshire Council have adopted a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services (Gold Standard local challenge one)</p>	<p>Commitment made explicit in new Homelessness Strategy lead elected member foreword;</p> <p>Convene a Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group (HSIG);</p> <p>Continued joint working with Benefits colleagues and DWP;</p> <p>County support service to be targeted towards early intervention to prevent homelessness;</p>	<p>New Homelessness Strategy to be published before April 2016.</p> <p>Periodic HSIG meeting to review and update Homelessness Strategy Action Plan (HSAP);</p> <p>Re-commissioning of support services in Shropshire to be completed in 2016;</p>	<p>Shropshire Council awarded Gold Standard for local challenge one by National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) before end 2016;</p> <p>Increase in homelessness preventions achieved;</p>

Needs	Aims	Objectives	Method	Implementation	Evaluation
<p>25% increase in homeless applications;</p> <p>1/3rd increase in homelessness due to parental / family exclusions;</p> <p>Continuous increase in homelessness due to section 21 notices;</p> <p>More homeless households vulnerable due to physical disability or mental illness;</p> <p>Homelessness preventions halved;</p> <p>Homelessness preventions via PRS lettings almost halved;</p>	<p>To increase prevention of homelessness, with a focus on helping more people facing housing issues to help themselves.</p> <p>To improve outcomes for, and protect persons, where homelessness cannot be prevented.</p>	<p>Shropshire Council actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs (Gold Standard local challenge two)</p>	<p>Carry out service mapping including details of all Voluntary and Community Organisations (VCO) in the county;</p> <p>Improve digital inclusion across county;</p> <p>Named / Lead homelessness / rough sleeping contacts within LHA departments, statutory services, RAP's & VCO's to be invited onto HSIG;</p> <p>SLA for partner agencies to provide P1E homeless prevention data;</p>	<p>ASC;</p> <p>Ongoing – Registered Accommodation Providers;</p> <p>HSIG – in place before April 2016;</p> <p>SLAs & recommissioning of support services;</p>	<p>Shropshire Council awarded Gold Standard for local challenge two by National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) before end 2016;</p>

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<p>25% increase in homeless applications;</p> <p>1/3rd increase in homelessness due to parental / family exclusions;</p> <p>Continuous increase in homelessness due to section 21 notices;</p> <p>More homeless households vulnerable due to physical disability or mental illness;</p> <p>Homelessness preventions halved;</p> <p>Homelessness preventions via PRS lettings almost halved;</p>	<p>To increase prevention of homelessness, with a focus on helping more people facing housing issues to help themselves.</p> <p>To improve outcomes for, and protect persons, where homelessness cannot be prevented.</p>	<p>Shropshire Council does not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks (Gold Standard local challenge ten)</p>	<p>Temporary Accommodation Action Plan to be developed to include targeted use of Spend to Save Fund to prevent use of B&B accommodation for families & arrangements with ALMO & local RAP's for access to temporary accommodation units responsive to demand;</p>	<p>Housing Services, ST&R Housing & RAP's;</p>	<p>Shropshire Council awarded Gold Standard for local challenge ten by National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) before end 2016;</p> <p>No families placed in B&B at end of quarter for four consecutive returns to DCLG – by end quarter 1 in 2016/17;</p>

Appendix 3. Some key Welfare Reform changes:

The *Autumn 2015 Government Budget Statement* contained a lot of information about the longer-term funding of local government. Subsidy and administration grants will change significantly over the next few years. Some of the dates are as yet unknown, but below are some of the changes announced that will impact specifically on Housing Benefit.

Absence from home: this will end if a claimant leaves the UK for more than 4 weeks (starting from April 2016) thereby replacing the current 13 week rule.

Social sector rents will in future be limited to the maximum of the Local Housing Allowance rates. This means the shared rate for single claimants aged under 35 without dependent children will start to apply in this sector (and this may make it very difficult for social landlords to let to this group). The cap will apply from 1 April 2018 but only to tenancies signed after 1 April 2016. In other words, another "transitional protection scheme" will apply. The numbers of such schemes are building again...

The **funding of temporary accommodation** will be radically reformed; the additional amount paid by DWP to local authorities on each qualifying claim will end from 2017-18. Instead, there will be a new grant system.

Additional Discretionary Housing Payment funding will be made available to local authorities to "protect the most vulnerable including those in supported accommodation". This suggests there will be no or few exceptions under the rules above.

There are plans for **Job centres** to be fully located in local authority buildings.

Consideration will be given to transferring the responsibility for funding the **administration of Housing Benefit for pensioners**. Where or how or to whom is as yet unclear and it might be that local authorities will have to fund the cost at some stage in the future. This seems to suggest that HB for those of pensionable age will continue to be administered by local authorities long-term.

The proposed **changes to tax credits** are being abandoned although the "two children" limit for new claimants (from 2017) will still apply.

Selling of **Housing Association** homes under new "right to buy" rules commenced from 26th November 2015 in some areas.

JSA claimants may be required to sign on every week in the first three months of their claim and there will be an extension of "conditionality".

The **Fraud and Error Reduction Incentive Scheme** (FERIS) will be extended until the end of 2017-18.

The government is concerned about **levels of fraud and error** in the benefits system where it is not clear whether someone must make a joint, rather than single, claim. It will therefore consult shortly on ways to make the requirement clearer.

The **basic state pension** will increase by the 'triple lock', rising by £3.35 to £119.30; from April 2016, those reaching pensionable age will receive the 'single-tier' pension with a starting rate of £155.65.

The government will begin the **rollout of the Universal Credit (UC) Digital Service** in 2016, completing by 2021.

Welfare Reforms are changing and developing every day. Plans to locate Job Centres within the Local Authority Hubs may prove very useful for Housing Services customers - particularly those in receipt of UC.

