

DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOMELESSNESS REVIEW 2016/2017

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Context

- 1.1.1 In 2003 Dartford Borough Council published its first Homelessness Strategy setting out how services will be delivered to prevent and tackle homelessness in the borough. Since then three further strategies have followed, the last being published in 2011. Progress made in the delivery of the previous Strategy can be found in Annex 1.
- 1.1.2 The Council is in the process of developing a new Homelessness Strategy for the borough now that a review of homelessness has been undertaken. This document sets out the findings of the review of homelessness, covering a review period from 2014 to 2017
- 1.1.3 The review takes into account the current levels of homelessness in the borough; the causes of homelessness; the activities carried out for the prevention and relief of homelessness and the resources available for these activities.

1.2 Summary of main findings

- 1.2.1 Despite a long period where the number of homeless decisions and acceptances were generally decreasing, this trend is showing signs of shifting as there were twice as many applications and acceptances made in 2014/15 than the previous year although this has now mainly stabilised in 2017.
- 1.2.2 781 decisions were made in the period 2014 to 2017. Of these 498 households were accepted under the main homelessness duty (they were eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need).
- 1.2.3 The primary priority need category for applicants accepted under the main homelessness duty continues to be because the applicant has dependent children, mainly in a lone parent household. This is followed by the applicant being vulnerable because of mental illness and vulnerable because of a physical disability.
- 1.2.4 The majority of applicants accepted the main homelessness duty were from a white ethnic group and aged between 16 and 44 years old.
- 1.2.5 The main reason for homelessness is because of the loss of tied or rented accommodation in the private rented sector, mainly because of the termination of an assured shorthold tenancy. This cause of homelessness has increased significantly since the last review. Parents, relatives or friends no longer willing to accommodate is now the second highest cause of homelessness followed by violent breakdown of a relationship.
- 1.2.6 A total of 189 homelessness preventions and relief took place outside of the statutory homeless framework. The number of homelessness preventions and relief has remained relatively stable over the last three years.
- 1.2.7 The levels of homeless households placed into temporary accommodation is steadily increasing with more households in temporary accommodation at the end of quarter 4 in 2016/17 than previous quarters. This increase in the use of temporary

accommodation is mainly due to the lack of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector.

- 1.2.8 Factors surrounding welfare reform, rising housing costs and the difficulty of procuring private rented accommodation, have contributed to the rising numbers of homeless households in temporary accommodation. A lack of available private sector accommodation in the borough has resulted in a growing proportion of homeless households being accommodated in another borough.
- 1.2.9 There were 9 rough sleepers identified on a given night in 2016/2017 compared to 10 in 2015/2016 and 19 in 2014/2015.
- 1.2.10 Resources for funding the Council's approach towards preventing and tackling homelessness through the Homelessness Prevention Grant and New Burden's funding has been agreed up to 2020.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 About the Homelessness Review

2.1.1 Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 places a duty on local authorities to provide advice and assistance to homeless people and people threatened with homelessness.

2.1.2 The Homelessness Act 2002 also places a duty on local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their borough at least every five years and to develop a Homelessness Strategy in response to the findings of the review.

2.1.3 The homelessness review must take into account:

- The levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in the borough
- The activities which are carried out for:
 - preventing homelessness
 - securing accommodation for people who are or may become homeless
 - providing support for people who are or may become homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again
- The resources available in the borough for the above activities.

2.1.4 The review will inform a revised Homelessness Strategy that will ensure appropriate actions are taken to:

- Prevent homelessness in the borough
- Ensure that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in the borough who are or may become homeless
- Secure the satisfactory provision of support for people in the borough who are or may become homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

2.1.5 As part of the revised Homelessness Strategy, an Action Plan will be developed to help ensure the objectives set out in the Strategy are achieved. The progress of implementing the Strategy Action Plan will be monitored by the multi-agency Dartford Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group, chaired by the Housing Options and Private Sector Manager.

2.2 The Homelessness Review process

2.2.1 A desk top review of data held by the Council, in the form of P1E statutory returns to central government, and data held by other bodies and organisations, has been used to inform the review.

2.2.2 Consultation has been undertaken to look at and discuss the key issues that are important to homeless people. Key stakeholder organisations that the Council works in partnership with were also consulted. The consultation outcomes are detailed in Section 10.

3.0 HOMELESSNESS LEGISLATION

3.1 Homeless Reduction Act 2017

3.1.1 The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 significantly reformed England's homeless legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires housing authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need'. These include:

- a) An enhanced prevention duty extending the period a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days meaning that housing authorities are required to work with people to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage;
- b) A new duty for those who are already homeless so that housing authorities will support households for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.

3.2 Housing Act 1996

3.2.1 A person is accepted as homeless and entitled to assistance (a main homelessness duty under S.193) when they are:

- homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days
- eligible for assistance
- in priority need
- not intentionally homeless.

3.2.2 The local authority will also look at whether the person has a local connection to the borough.

3.3 Homelessness Act 2002

3.3.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 amended previous homelessness legislation to extend the priority need categories. A person is in priority need if they or someone they normally live with:

- Has dependent children living with them who are aged 16 or under, or aged 17 to 18 and still in full time education
- Are pregnant
- Are aged 60 years or over and vulnerable
- Are vulnerable because they or someone they live with are physically or mentally ill or disabled
- Are leaving the armed forces, coming out of prison or have been in care, or fostered, or are fleeing violence
- Are homeless because of fire, flood or any similar disaster
- Are aged 16 or 17.

3.3.2 When a main homelessness duty is owed, the person is either assisted to remain in their existing accommodation (duty owed, no accommodation secured) or are placed in temporary accommodation to await an offer of settled accommodation.

3.3.3 When a main homelessness duty is not owed (i.e. the person is homeless but not in priority need, or they have brought about their own homelessness), the local authority

must make an assessment of their housing needs and provide advice and assistance to help them find accommodation for themselves.

4.0 NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 Since 2010, there have been a number of key national policy and legislative changes affecting the housing and homelessness sector.

4.2 Localism Act 2011

4.2.1 The Localism Act 2011 introduced local government reforms that gave local authorities:

- The power to bring the homelessness duty to an end by offering the applicant a suitable property let on an assured shorthold tenancy from a private landlord
- A requirement to develop and publish a Tenancy Strategy and Policy (these can be found at www.dartford.gov.uk)
- A requirement when formulating a Homelessness Strategy, to have regard to the local authority Allocations' Policy and Tenancy Strategy
- The right to grant fixed term tenancies
- Greater flexibility for local authorities in managing their housing allocations scheme based on local needs and policy.

4.3 Welfare Reform Act 2012

4.3.1 The Welfare Reform Act 2011 aimed to simplify and improve efficiency in the benefits system, increase incentives to work and tackle the costs of the system to ensure its future sustainability. Below is a summary of the main welfare reforms:

- Introduction of a Universal Credit which replaces six in work and out of work benefits rolled into a single payment to a household
- Personal Independence Payment has replaced Disability Living Allowance for working age claimants aged between 16 and 64 years old
- Caps introduced on Local Housing Allowance rates for properties of specific sizes
- Reduction of the Local Housing Allowance rate from the 50th to 30th percentile
- Extension of the age threshold for the shared accommodation rate from 25 to 35
- Localised support for Council Tax introduced to replace Council Tax Benefit
- Housing Benefit for tenants renting social housing is restricted where people are under occupying their property (not applicable to those of pensionable age)
- A benefit cap on the total amount of benefits a household can receive
- Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans abolished. Local authorities are now free to deliver their own local arrangements to assist people facing a crisis or short-term unavoidable need.

4.4 Ministerial Working Group on preventing and tackling homelessness

4.4.1 The Ministerial Working Group on preventing and tackling homelessness formed in 2010. In July 2011 a report 'Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out nationwide' was published which drove forward the national roll out of No Second Night Out, a rapid response service for ensuring rough sleepers do not spend a second night out on the streets.

- 4.4.2 Their second report in August 2012, 'Making every contact count: a joint approach to preventing homelessness' outlined 10 local challenges to the homelessness sector:
- Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services
 - Actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
 - Offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients
 - Adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative
 - Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support
 - Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords
 - Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
 - 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
 - Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
 - Not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks.
- 4.4.3 Their third report published in March 2015, 'Addressing complex needs: improving services for vulnerable homeless people', highlights the progress the group has made to date, sets out their future aspirations for future services to help some of society's most vulnerable single homeless people and called for evidence to help understand the scope and potential of a future scheme of:
- Locally-led commissioning of services
 - A central voluntary sector role to delivering the specialist help homeless people with complex needs require
 - Using payment by results and social finance so that public investment is used in the most cost-effective way
 - Exploring the 'Housing First' model which places homeless people into long-term settled accommodation and then uses this stability as a basis to address their other support needs.
- 4.5 2015 to 2020**
- 4.5.1 The Government elected in May 2015 set out its intentions for housing in their party manifesto. Their pledges included:
- Helping to keep mortgage rates lower by continuing to work through their long-term economic plan
 - Extending the Help to Buy Equity Loan scheme to 2020 to help more people onto and up the housing ladder, and introduce a new Help to Buy ISA to support people saving for a deposit
 - Giving more people the chance to own their home by extending the Right to Buy to tenants of housing associations and create a Brownfield Fund to unlock homes on brownfield land
 - Ensuring local people have more control over planning and protect the Green Belt.
- 4.5.2 The Summer Budget was presented to Parliament on the 8 July 2015. The main aim of the Government is to move towards higher employment and wages, lower taxes and a

lower welfare economy in order to reduce the deficit and achieve a surplus by 2019-20. Their plans include measures such as rewarding work through the introduction of the national living wage, an increase in tax free personal allowance, free childcare and apprenticeships. Included in measures to help achieve a surplus will be £12 billion savings through welfare reforms.

Welfare reforms announced in the Summer Budget 2015

Tax Credits – Tax Credits and Universal Credit will be restricted to two children, affecting children born after April 2017. The income level at which Tax Credits can be claimed will reduce from £6,420 to £3,850

Benefits freeze – Working-age benefits, Tax Credits and Local Housing Allowance will be frozen for four years (disability benefits, pensions and maternity pay exempted)

Benefit Cap – The annual household benefit cap will be reduced to £20,000 (£23,000 in London) There are exemptions to this for households certain types of benefits.

Housing Benefit – 18-21-year-olds will not be entitled to claim housing benefit automatically. Parents whose children live with them will not be included in this measure. Vulnerable groups will also be excluded, as will claimants who have been in continuous work for the preceding six months.

Social housing – Social housing rents will reduce by 1% for four years from 2016.

Employment and Support Allowance – New claimants of the Work Related Activity Group element of Employment and Support Allowance who are deemed able to prepare for work will receive the same amount as is paid for Jobseekers Allowance (a reduction of £30)

5.0 PROFILE OF DARTFORD

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 Dartford is a borough in north-west Kent, in the south east of England. It is the smallest borough in Kent; both in terms of area and population. The major urban centre is Dartford town in the north-west part of the borough, and in contrast the south and east of the borough is largely semi-rural with a number of historic villages and settlements.

Commuters are serviced by good transport links with the M25 motorway and the Dartford Crossing, the Fast Track bus service, the north Kent railway line that provides regular services to mainline London stations, and the international railway station at Ebbsfleet offering rail links across Europe.

Dartford is situated at the heart of the Thames Gateway which will see major growth including a Garden City at Ebbsfleet which will deliver 15,000 new homes and up to 20,000 jobs.

5.2 Population

- 5.2.1 Dartford has a population of 105,500, the smallest in Kent. However, although it is the smallest, it is the most populated, with 14.5 people per hectare. The population of Dartford is projected to increase to 133,400 by 2025 (Source: Kent County Council population estimates).

5.2.2 Net migration in Dartford in 2015 was +1100. The positive growth in migration means there have been more people entering the borough than leaving which is a contributing factor to the population growth (Source: Kent County Council population change).

5.3 Ethnicity

5.3.1 The largest ethnic group in Dartford is White (87.37%) whilst the remaining 12.63% of Dartford's population are from a Black Minority Ethnic (BME) group. The largest BME group in Dartford is Asian/Asian British (5.96%) (Source: 2011 Census, Office of National Statistics).

5.4 Housing tenure

5.4.1 As at 31 March 2017 it is estimated that there were 43,130 dwellings in Dartford (Source: Departments for Communities and Local Government). The 43,130 dwellings are made up of:

- Dartford Borough Council's social housing stock - 4,250
- Housing Associations/Private Registered Providers - 2,500
- Private Sector Housing - 36,380

5.5 Mortgage and landlord possessions

5.5.1 There were 213 mortgage repossessions in Dartford between 2014 and 2017. Despite this being the highest type of possession in cumulative terms, the numbers have generally been declining each year since low interest rates took effect in 2008, with a 56.25% fall in mortgage possessions in 2016/17 compared to the previous year.

5.5.2 Of the 166 private landlord possessions between 2014 and 2017, there was a 21.05% decrease in 2015 from the previous year. Accelerated possessions however have increased each year during this period (177 in total). There was a 10.63% increase in 2015 from the previous year

5.5.3 Of the 155 social landlord possessions between 2010 and 2015, there was a 9.37% decrease in 2017 from the previous years.

(Source: Quarterly landlord and possession statistics, Ministry of Justice).

5.6 Housing costs

5.6.1 Social housing rents have been increasing each year. However, the Government announced that social rents must decrease by 1% per year from 2016. The average cost of a social rented two bedroom property in Dartford in 2017 is around £130 per week; far lower than any comparable property in the private rented sector.

5.6.2 Average monthly rents in the private rented sector have been increasing each year. In 2011, the average monthly rent for a one-bedroom property in the private rented sector was £541 and in 2017 it is £769. A two bedroom property would cost on average £679 per month to rent in 2011 and £996 in 2017. A three bedroom property would cost on average £791 per month to rent in 2011 and £1275 in 2017 (Source: Estate Agent Data).

5.6.3 Average house prices have also increased each year. In 2010, the average house price in Dartford was £210,959 whereas in 2017 it is around £290,000.

5.7 Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

- 5.7.1 The January 2017 bi-annual Traveller Caravan Count undertaken by the Department of Communities and Local Government, counted a total of 105 caravans on both authorised and unauthorised sites in Dartford.
- 5.7.2 The Dartford Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment in 2013 estimated there to be at least 408 individuals (127 households) in Dartford from the Gypsy and Traveller community living in socially rented and private sites, unauthorised sites, bricks and mortar accommodation and travelling show people plots.
- 5.8. Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Relocation Scheme**
- 5.8.1 As part of its response to the current situation in Syria, the Government set up the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) in February 2014. This scheme involves taking particularly vulnerable refugees straight from the Middle East and resettling them in the UK. The refugees are given five years Humanitarian Leave to Remain and as such are able to work and claim benefits and other public funds from day one. Currently, Dartford Borough Council has accommodated two families under this scheme.
- 5.9 Earnings**
- 5.9.1 In 2016 the median full-time weekly earnings for workers living in Dartford was £612.50. This was above the Kent figure of £553.30 and above the figure for Great Britain of £541. Overall earnings of people living in Kent continue to increase. (Source: Kent County Council area profiles).
- 5.10 Deprivation and poverty**
- 5.10.1 In 2015 Dartford was ranked 170 out of 326 English boroughs in terms of deprivation (a rank of 1 being least deprived). Dartford has seen a decrease in the level of deprivation since 2010 by moving down the rankings by 5 places. However, there are still pockets of deprivation in the borough with some Lower Super Output Areas in the borough being within the top 20% of most deprived in England (Source: 2015 English Indices of Deprivation).
- 5.11 Unemployment**
- 5.11.1 As at July 2017 the unemployment rate in Dartford was 1.2% which is below the national average of 1.9% and the Kent average of 1.7%. This is based on the number of people aged 16-64 who are claiming Jobseekers Allowance. (Source: Kent Council unemployment statistics).
- 5.12 Health and wellbeing**
- 5.12.1 Life expectancy is 8.0 years lower for men and 5.9 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Dartford than in the least deprived areas. In 2015, 69.1% of adults were classified as overweight or obese. The rate of alcohol related harm hospital stays was 644 (per 100,000 population) in 2014/2015, which represents 593 stays per year. The rate of smoking related deaths was 293 (per 100,000 population) in 2015, which represents 139 deaths per year (2016 Health Profile for Dartford, Public Health England).

6.0 LEVELS AND CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

6.1 Levels of homelessness

6.1.1 Homeless decisions and acceptances

All applications for assistance under current homelessness legislation are referred to as 'decisions'. If an applicant is found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need, it is referred to as an 'acceptance'. When an applicant is accepted as homeless they are owed a 'main homelessness duty'. This means the local authority must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the applicant and his or her household.

The number of homeless decisions and acceptances in the last three years is shown in the chart below. Decisions generally followed a declining trend until 2014/15 where a clear increase can be seen with twice as many decisions made in 2014/15 than the previous year.

Acceptances also increased, however, the increase in decisions and acceptances may be partly due to new case management software, which has resulted in improved recording mechanisms.

Chart 1: Homeless decisions and acceptances – 2014/15 to 2016/17



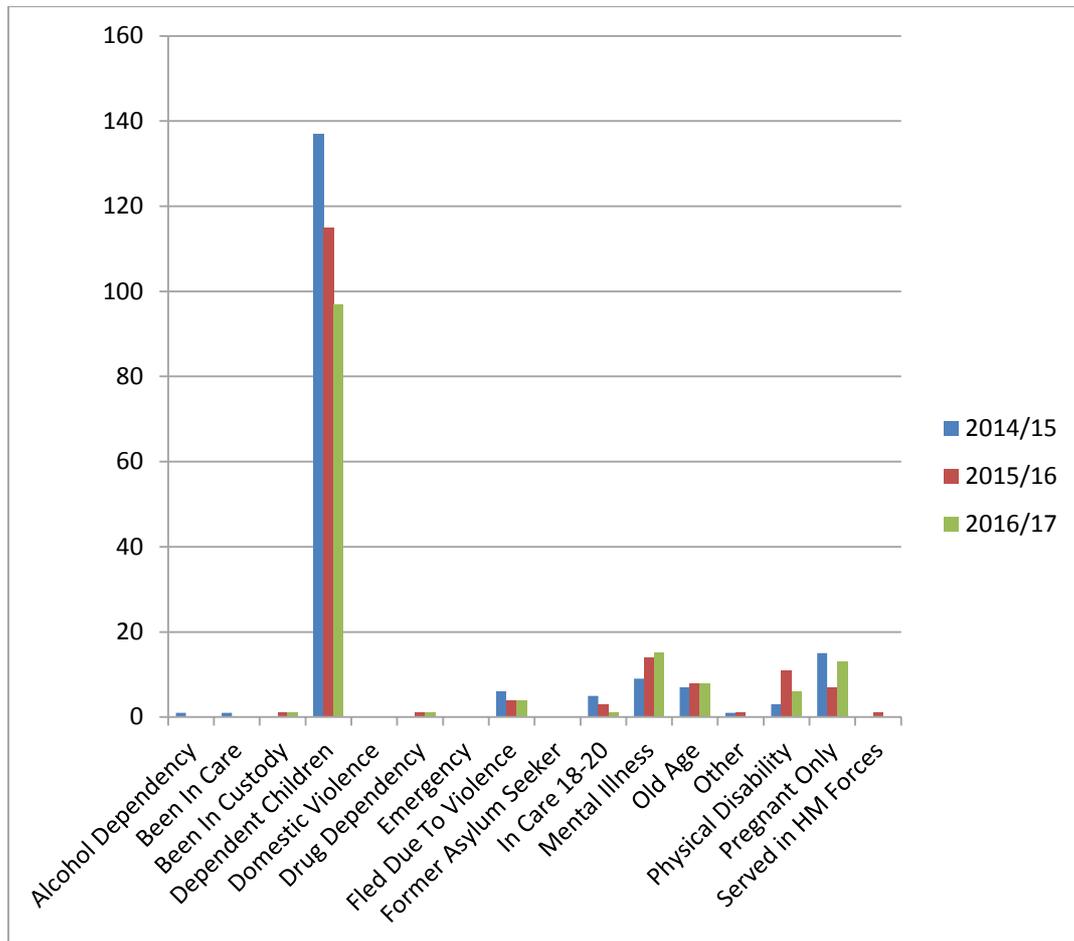
Source: P1E

6.1.2 Homeless acceptances by priority need category

Between 2014 and 2017, the main priority need category for applicants accepted a full homelessness duty was households with dependent children. This category represented just over two thirds of cases which is consistent with previous reviews and reported nationally.

The second highest priority need category was households who were vulnerable because of mental illness followed by households vulnerable because of a physical disability.

Chart 2: Homeless acceptances by priority need category – 2014/2015 – 2016/2017

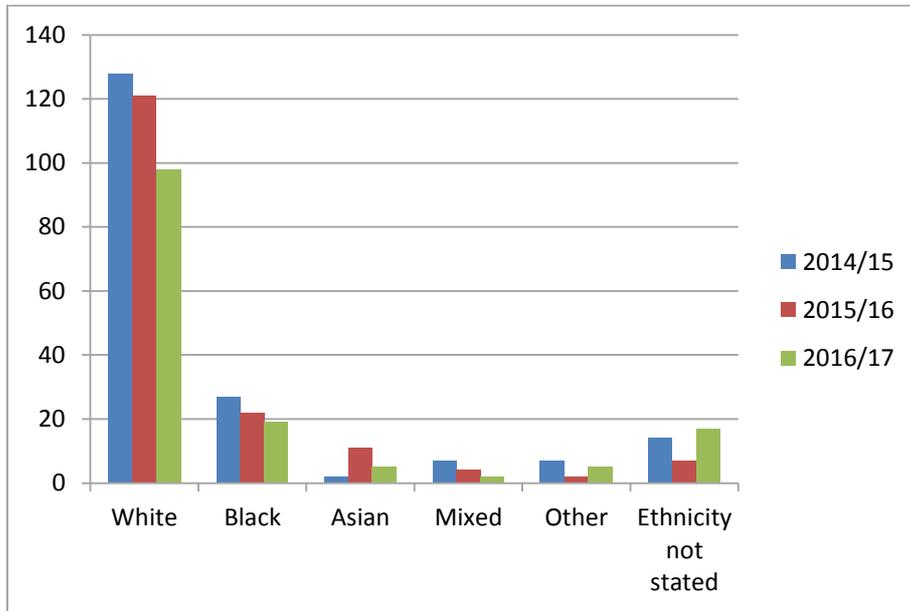


Source: P1E

6.1.3 Homeless acceptances by ethnicity

Between 2014 and 2017, the majority of applicants accepted as homeless were from a white ethnic group followed by applicants from a black ethnic group. This is to be expected given the ethnicity profile of Dartford (see Section 5).

Chart 3: Homeless acceptances by ethnicity – 2014-15 to 2016-17

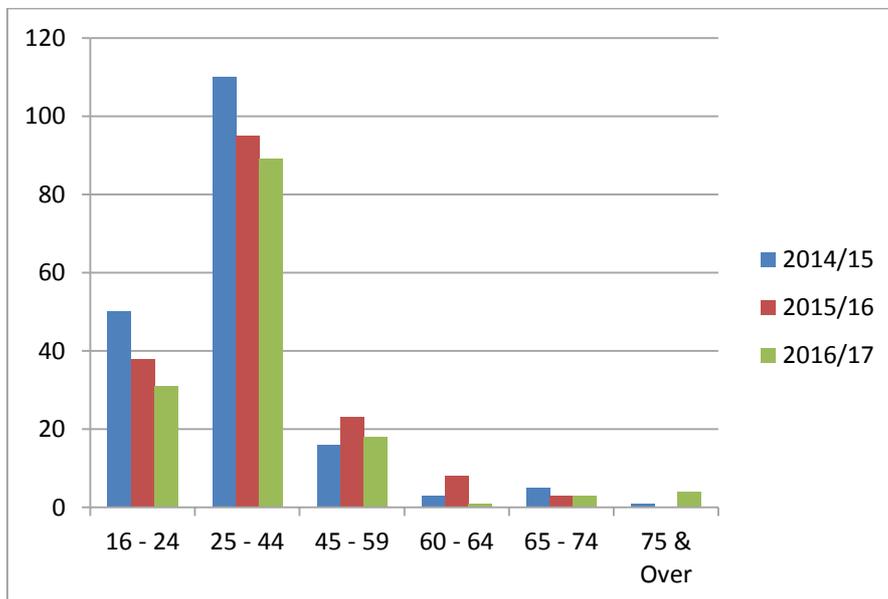


Source: P1E

6.1.4 Homeless acceptances by age

The majority of applicants accepted as homeless between 2014 and 2017 were aged between 25 and 44 years old, followed by applicants aged 16 to 24 years old. Nationally these age groups are also the primary age groups accepted. This is to be expected considering that those aged under 45 years old are much more likely to have dependent children within their household and that this is the primary priority need group accepted as homeless.

Chart 4: Homeless acceptances by age – 2014/2015 to 2016/2017

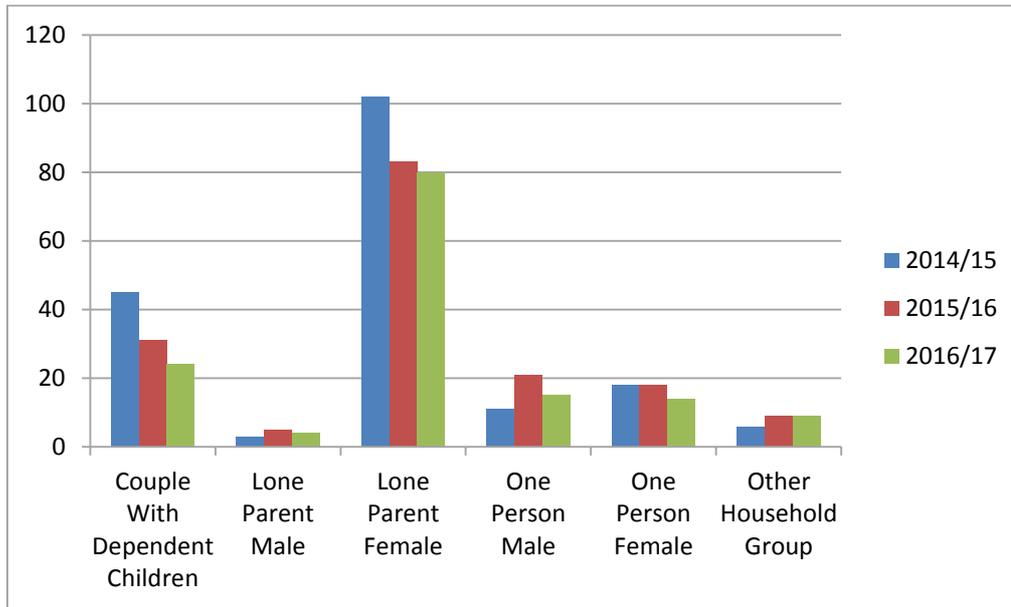


Source: P1E

6.1.5 Homeless acceptances by household type

The majority of applicants accepted as homeless between 2014 and 2017 were from a lone parent household followed by couples with dependent children. Again, this is consistent with national trends and to be expected since households with dependent children are the primary priority need group accepted as homeless.

Chart 5: Homeless acceptances by household type – 2014/2015 – 2016/2017



Source: P1E

6.1.6 Decisions where a main homelessness duty is not owed

Between 2014 and 2017 there were 283 decisions made where a main homelessness duty was not owed out of a total of 781 decisions. This represents 36% of all decision.

6.1.7 Rough sleeping

Rough sleeping remains the most visible and damaging manifestation of homelessness. Historically, the Council would measure the extent of homelessness in the borough by undertaking a street count on a given night each year. These counts always returned a figure of zero and were thought to be unrepresentative of the actual levels of rough sleeping considering that evidence from other sources, such as the local outreach service, suggested otherwise.

In 2010, the Government introduced a new methodology for evaluating the extent of rough sleeping by giving local authorities the option to either submit a count figure or an estimate relating to the number of people thought to be rough sleeping on a typical night.

Since 2011, the Council has submitted an estimate figure, which is informed by intelligence gathered from local agencies that have the most accurate information about who is sleeping rough. The estimates can be seen in the below table and shows that, rough sleeping has declined since 2014.

Source: Rough Counts and Estimates

Table 2: Rough sleeping in Dartford – 2010 to 2014

| | | |
|------|----------|-----|
| 2011 | Estimate | 15 |
| 2012 | Estimate | 16 |
| 2013 | Estimate | 12 |
| 2014 | Estimate | 19 |
| 2015 | Estimate | 10 |
| 2016 | Estimate | 9 |
| 2017 | Estimate | TBA |

It is important to note that not all people who are homeless approach the local authority for assistance and show up in official homelessness figures. Often referred to

as 'hidden homelessness', these people usually find a temporary solution such as sofa surfing, living in squats or hostels and sleeping rough.

For the purpose of official rough sleeping figures, those who are in hostels or shelters, in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protest, squatters or travellers are not included in the definition of rough sleeping which means there is nowhere else that they are counted in official homelessness figures. It is therefore recognised that quantifying the full level of hidden homelessness is very difficult.

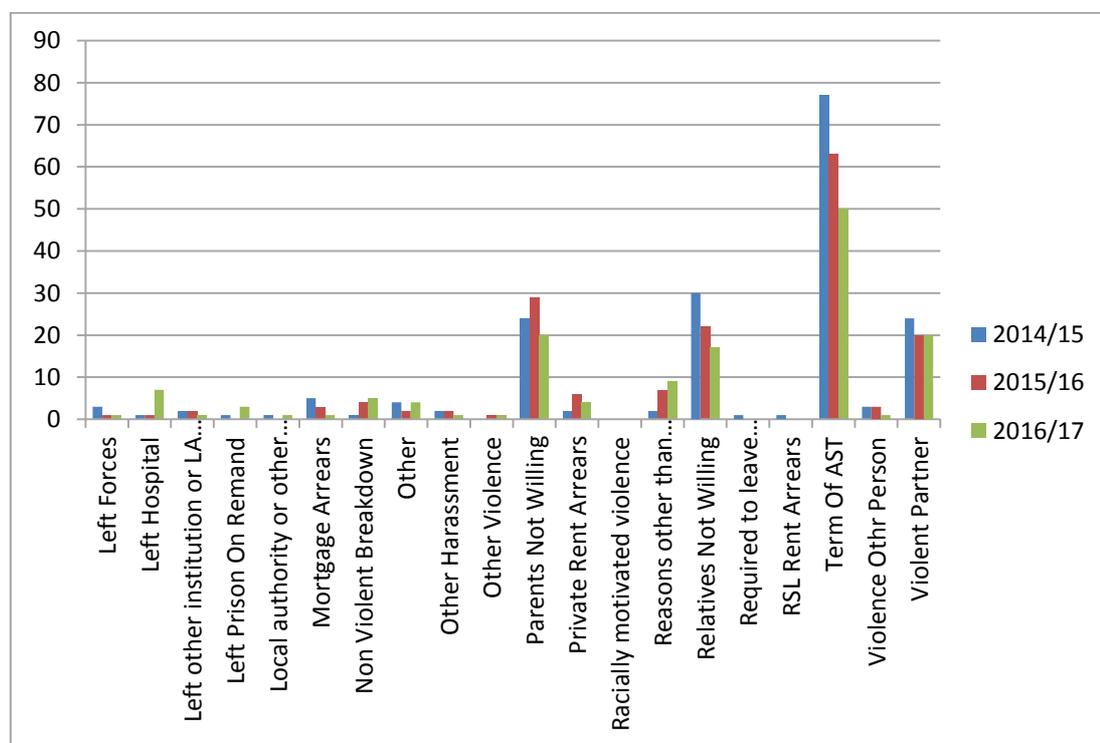
6.2 Causes of homelessness

6.2.1 Main causes of homelessness for households

The main reason for homelessness for households owed a main homelessness duty over the last three years is the loss of rented or tied accommodation in the private rented sector. Nationally this is also the most frequently occurring reason for the loss of last settled home. The main cause of the loss of private rented accommodation is the termination of an assured shorthold tenancy (AST). The main reason for termination is usually because the landlord wants the property returned. Only a small proportion of terminations are due to rent arrears.

The second highest reason for homelessness is because parents, relatives or friends are no longer willing to accommodate. The third highest is violence. This can involve a partner or associated person, be racially motivated or other forms.

Chart 7: Causes of homelessness – 2014/2015 to 2016/2017



Source: P1E

The main cause of homelessness has changed since the last review where violence was the most prominent cause of homelessness. The loss of rented or tied accommodation broadly reflects the severe lack of suitable rented accommodation in the private sector and landlord's increasing reluctance to let to households in receipt of housing benefit.

7.0 HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION, ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT

7.1 Housing Options & Private Sector Team

7.1.1 The Council's Housing Options & Private Sector Team is responsible for the delivery of activities carried out to prevent homelessness, to assist in securing accommodation and the provision of support to homeless households.

7.1.2 Housing advice is available between 8:45am and 5:15pm Monday to Thursday and 8:45am and 4:45pm on Friday. There is an emergency service for emergencies outside of these hours. Any person at risk of becoming homeless who approaches the Council will receive an appointment where an in depth assessment of their needs will take place. The primary aim of the assessment is to explore and put in place measures that will prevent homelessness wherever possible. Emergency cases will be seen without an appointment.

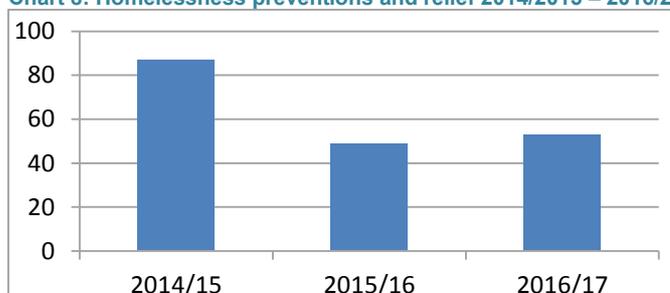
7.2 Homelessness preventions and relief

7.2.1 Homelessness prevention entails providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness. This is achieved by either assisting them to obtain alternative accommodation or enabling them to remain in their existing home.

7.2.2 Homelessness relief occurs where the Council has been unable to prevent homelessness but assists in securing accommodation, even though the Council is under no statutory obligation to do so.

7.2.3 A total of 189 homelessness preventions and relief took place in Dartford outside of the statutory homeless framework between 2014 and 2017. The total number of homelessness preventions and relief has decreased since 2014. This is also due to the severe lack of suitable private sector accommodation and the fact that landlords are now less willing to let their properties to tenants in receipt of housing benefit or universal credit as the Local Housing Allowance cap is not sufficient to cover rental costs.

Chart 8: Homelessness preventions and relief 2014/2015 – 2016/2017



7.2.4 Activities carried out to help prevent homelessness in Dartford

Homeless Prevention Payments

The Council administers homeless prevention payments to provide a short term solution to homelessness. The payments are commonly used for rent 'top-ups', to cover delays in benefit payments, rent arrear payments and financial incentives to delay evictions.

Young Person's Team

The Young Persons Team is a partnership between the Council, Specialist Children's Services and the YMCA. The aim of the team is to assess the needs of 16/17 year olds with homeless prevention being a focal point of activity. The team works to resolve family relationship problems with the objective of mediating the young person back into the family home. A crash pad at the YMCA is used to help support young people who are homeless in an emergency.

Sanctuary Scheme

The Council operates a Sanctuary Scheme to enable households at risk of domestic abuse to remain living safely in their own accommodation and reduce repeat victimisation. This is made possible through the provision of enhanced security measures and support, where it is their choice, it is safe, and the perpetrator does not live in the accommodation.

Discretionary Housing Payments

Discretionary Housing Payments are extra payments made at the discretion of the Council when it considers that a claimant, in receipt of housing benefit, requires further financial assistance towards housing costs. In general, the term 'housing costs' means rental liability, but housing costs can be interpreted more widely to include rent in advance, deposits or other lump sum costs associated with housing need such as removal costs. Discretionary Housing Payments are administered by the Revenues & Benefits department of the Council.

Porchlight

Porchlight is a Kent based charity that helps vulnerable and isolated people access housing and related support services. Their floating support service works to prevent homelessness by addressing issues that affect housing security. Their Rough Sleeper Service helps to provide short term solutions to homelessness including finding the most appropriate accommodation for each person. From October 2015, Porchlight has been providing a drop-in service at the Civic Centre to provide assistance to single homeless people.

Homeless joint working protocols

The Council is a member of the Kent Joint Policy & Planning Board (Housing) and through this partnership, has adopted a number of Kent-wide homeless joint working protocols for emergency accommodation, offenders, mental health hospital discharge, people with physical disabilities and intentionally homeless families with children.

Multi Agency Hub

From 2018, and in direct response to the Homeless Reduction Act 2017, Dartford Borough Council will be working with a number of agencies situated in the Civic Centre, in a multi-agency hub to deliver effective prevention outcomes. Direct and appropriate assistance will be available for every applicant's housing issue or

homelessness risk; with the most appropriate service tasked with delivery. This is the first time that all relevant agencies have come together in one place to ensure that clients receive the most effective help and prevent homelessness wherever possible.

7.3 Securing accommodation

7.3.1 Local authorities need to consider that a range of accommodation is likely to be required for people who are, or may become, homeless.

7.3.2 Temporary accommodation (TA)

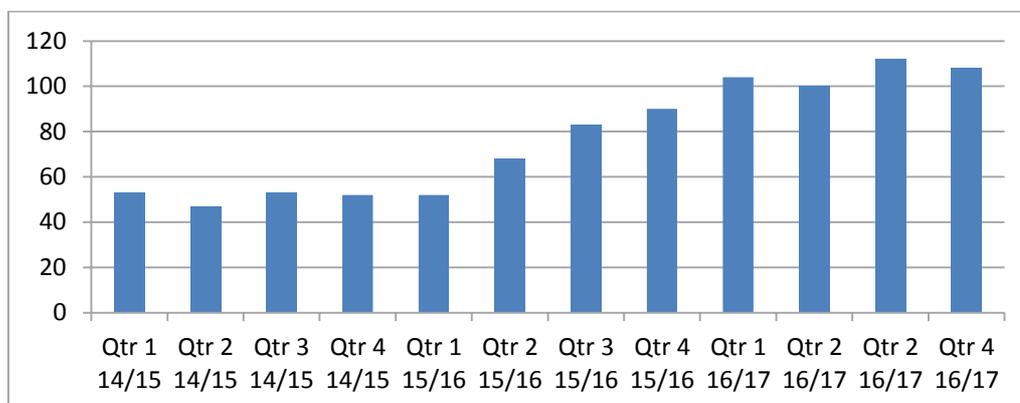
If a main homelessness duty is owed, the applicant may have to be placed into temporary accommodation before an offer of settled accommodation is made.

The local authority may also place applicants into temporary accommodation under an interim duty to accommodate, (pending a decision as to whether a main homelessness duty is owed), if they have reason to believe the applicant may be homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need.

The definition of TA includes nightly paid accommodation (Bed & Breakfast, privately managed accommodation with shared facilities or self-contained accommodation), hostels, local authority/private registered provider stock, leased properties and other stock.

The number of households placed in TA has steadily increased since 2014 reflecting the increase in the number of households accepted as homeless, the main reason being the loss of private rented accommodation. At the end of quarter 4, 2017 there were 108 households placed in TA, compared to 52 in the same quarter in 2014.

Chart 9: Numbers in all types of temporary accommodation 2014/2015 – 2016/2017



Source: P1E

The Council does not place homeless households into shared accommodation unless it is absolutely necessary. The types of temporary accommodation used are either nightly paid, privately managed accommodation (either self-contained or with shared facilities) or accommodation within the Council's own stock.

The length of time spent in temporary accommodation largely depends on the availability of suitable accommodation in the borough. The aim is to minimise the length of time spent in temporary accommodation, particularly for households with dependent children/pregnant women and 16/17 year olds. During the review period there has only been one case each of a household with dependent children/pregnant woman and a 16/17 year old being in temporary accommodation for longer than six weeks.

7.3.3 Activities carried out to help secure accommodation

Social rented housing

Social rented housing is allocated to people in housing need through a choice-based lettings scheme; Kent Homechoice. Applicants accepted onto the scheme are placed into one of four bands (A to D) which determine their level of priority for housing (A being highest priority and D lowest priority). Applicants assessed as Band E are not eligible to join the housing register and have no priority for housing. When a suitable vacant property becomes available, applicants are able to bid for the property. The applicant with the highest priority and longest time on the register, will usually be successful in securing the property.

Under the Council's Allocations Policy, homeless households are assisted through the choice-based lettings scheme if they meet certain criteria:

Criteria for homeless households under the allocations policy

Band C:

- People who are homeless where the local authority has accepted a rehousing responsibility under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), or determined that the person has a priority need for accommodation or the household will be homeless soon and is in priority need
- Homeless applicants with no fixed abode where proof of local connection can be established through for example doctors, dental, job centre or council held records.

Band D:

- People who are intentionally homeless where a decision has been made by the local authority under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended)
- Where a person has deliberately worsened their housing circumstances (such as deliberate overcrowding) and would have been found to be intentionally homeless if an application under Part VII had been made
- People who are homeless by another local authority. This applies where a duty is owed by another local authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the Housing Act 1996, or who are occupying accommodation secured by another local authority under section 192(3)
- Applicants who have been placed in long term temporary accommodation by the Council

In some cases, a direct and final suitable offer may also be made to households owed a duty under S.193. Applicants who are working receive additional priority and are placed in Band B.

Affordable housing development

Affordable housing development is a very important element of the Council's work to assist households whose needs are not met by the private market. It includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, for example shared ownership.

The Council's current policy is to seek 30% of homes provided on qualifying urban sites (i.e. sites of more than 0.5 hectares or 15 homes or more) to be affordable homes, and 50% on rural sites containing 2 or more units. The table below shows the number of affordable homes delivered during the review period. Dartford is in the top 5 of all Kent authorities for affordable housing delivery per population head.

Source: Dartford Borough Council

Table: 5 Number of affordable homes delivered

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| 2014/2015 | 151 |
| 2015/2016 | 103 |

The Council entered into an agreement with the Secretary of State to enable capital receipts from the sale of its properties under Right to Buy to be retained and invested in the provision of new council housing for rent.

The Council has planning permission for the development of 86 new homes to be delivered up to 2019. The first development, completed in 2017 has provided 25 new homes for local people and is a mix of flats and houses. An additional 4 homes were converted for affordable rent from a former Oast House.

The Council has now progressed the second phase of its new build project which will provide an additional 55 units for rent across two sites.

Private rented sector

The Dartford Private Leasing Scheme is operated by the Council and is an important means of securing accommodation, as well as preventing homelessness. The scheme works by leasing properties from private landlords to temporarily house homeless people. During the two year lease period, the Council guarantees to pay the agreed rent in advance on a quarterly basis.

The Council also operates a Deposit Guarantee Scheme where the Council provides the landlord with a guarantee for the required deposit, up to a maximum of four weeks rent.

Kent Agency Assessment

The Kent Agency Assessment is a process for Health or Social Services professionals (and their agents) to refer any service user who has a housing related health/support need to the Council for help accessing suitable accommodation. The assessment assists up to 20 households a year to secure suitable accommodation.

Joint Housing Panels

This multi-agency panel, led by Dartford Borough Council, looks at and agrees any applications for Housing Related Support accommodation within the borough. This includes the YMCA, Daisies and LIFE Housing and looks at residents that may need to be fast tracked into social housing.

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol for Rough Sleepers

During periods of extreme cold weather, the Council operates a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol which is triggered when the night time temperature is predicted to be zero degrees Celsius or below for three consecutive nights. When the protocol is triggered, emergency accommodation will be provided for any person sleeping rough in the borough so that it can prevent unnecessary deaths during the cold snap.

Dartford Churches Cold Weather Shelter

The Dartford Churches Cold Weather Shelter is a joint initiative between seven churches in the borough. The shelter operates between January and March, providing a hot meal and an overnight stay for homeless people. The Council has committed £10k to this project for winter 2017/2018,

Domestic Abuse

Centra provide four refuges in Dartford and Gravesham for up to 17 women and 35 children who have had to leave their home as a result of domestic abuse and also manage the IDVA and Outreach Services

Choices, formerly North Kent Women's Aid, also provide a number of domestic abuse services within the borough including those for young people. They also provide hostel accommodation in Gravesham for up to 7 homeless single young people aged between 16 and 25 years old.

7.4 Providing support

7.4.1 Homelessness cannot be tackled solely through the provision of accommodation. Some households will require a range of support services to help prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place; or to help sustain accommodation in order to prevent homelessness from recurring; or help to access other services to improve their quality of life and resilience to further problems.

7.4.2 Activities carried out to help provide support

Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop

The Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop offers free advice, information and support from a range of agencies, including the Council's Housing Options and Private Sector Team, under one roof to help victims of domestic abuse. The service is held every Tuesday from 9:30am to 12pm at the Brent Children's Centre.

Linking homeless households to GPs

Homeless households living in temporary accommodation, and sometimes moving from one address to another, can lose touch with Primary Health Care Services such as GPs. The Council ensures that homeless households accessing the service are provided with information about local GPs and how to register at local surgeries.

HERO Project

The HERO Project is an advice project set up by Sevenoaks District Council. The aim of the project is to get people back to work and prevent homelessness. The project offers independent advice and individual support on a range of issues including unemployment, housing advice, maximising income, debt advice, obtaining bank accounts, training and education, saving money on energy and getting online.

The Council commissioned the HERO Project to work in the borough from November 2015 to help customers prepare for Universal Credit. This is ongoing.

Housing related support

Housing related support is administered by Kent County Council and provides a range of support to help people who are having difficulties with their housing situation to remain independent and resolve the difficulties they are having. The support can range from a few weeks up to one year.

Kent Support and Assistance Service

The Kent Support and Assistance Service is administered by Kent County Council and offers support to people having serious difficulties managing their income or facing exceptional pressures because of an emergency or crisis.

8.0 RESOURCES

8.1 Homeless Prevention Grant

8.1.1 For many years local authorities have been in receipt of Homelessness Prevention Grant funding from central Government. This grant helps to deliver the activities carried out by the Council for the prevention and tackling of homelessness (as outlined in Section 7).

8.1.2 In 2013/14 the mechanism for paying Homeless Prevention Grant was changed from being ring-fenced to being rolled into the Business Rates Retention Scheme. Since this change, the Council has ensured that the grant continues to be fully allocated towards homelessness prevention services and not diverted elsewhere.

8.1.3 The following table shows the Homelessness Prevention Grant allocations received by the Council over the last three years:

Table 6: Homelessness Prevention Grant – 2014-15 to 2016-17

| | |
|-----------|----------|
| 2014 15 | £106,500 |
| 2015 16 | £106,500 |
| 2016/2017 | £106,500 |

Source: Dartford Borough Council

8.2 Discretionary Housing Payments

8.2.1 The Council receives Discretionary Housing Payment funding from central Government which was increased in recent years to allow local authorities to offer ongoing support to people affected by the welfare reforms.

9.0 KEY CHALLENGES

9.1. Historically, one of the key ways the Council has been successful in preventing homelessness is through securing accommodation in the private rented sector. A large procurement of temporary accommodation in the borough has also been used for homeless households who are waiting for a decision on their application, or if a main homelessness duty is owed and the household is waiting for secure accommodation to become available.

9.2 In recent years, it has become increasingly difficult to source and retain private rented accommodation for the provision of both permanent and temporary accommodation for homeless households. This is mainly due to the following factors:

9.3 Demand

9.3.1 Private renting is the second largest tenure (following home ownership) both locally and nationally. It is a sector that has grown in size over recent years. With rising house

prices, the value of deposits paid to secure a mortgage increasing and tighter lending requirements; there has been a decline in the number of first time buyers entering into home ownership and a surge in demand for the private rented sector.

9.4 Location

9.4.1 Dartford is uniquely placed bordering London, serving as an important commuter town for residents working in the capital. With the location and demand, private landlords are in a strong position to attract a young professional market over benefit-dependent households. Indeed, the review has identified that the loss of private rented accommodation has now become the main cause of homelessness in the borough as private landlords have a right to end tenancies in order to charge higher rents to working private renters.

9.5 Welfare reforms

9.5.1 Welfare reforms reduced the setting of Local Housing Allowance (the maximum amount of housing benefit) rates in the private rented sector from the 50th percentile to the 30th percentile of the local market; capped weekly rates; and changed the method for uprating the rates. As a result the expenditure on Local Housing Allowance was reduced and, for the majority of properties in Dartford, there is a shortfall between the rate and the rent levels.

In 2017 in Dartford:

| | |
|---|------------|
| Average weekly rent for a 2 bed property | £249 |
| Local weekly Housing Allowance for a 2 bed property | £153 |
| Shortfall | £96 |

9.5.2 The government increased its contribution to the Discretionary Housing Payment budget to assist claimants in making up the shortfall. However, this is not a permanent solution and cannot be considered sustainable for these households in the long-term.

9.5.3 The reforms also increased the shared accommodation rate age threshold from 25 to 35. This means that the amount of Local Housing Allowance entitlement for single under-35 year olds in the private rented sector is the rate of renting a room in a shared property. As a result, accommodation options for single people under the age of 35 are very limited.

9.6 Out of borough placements

9.6.1 Welfare reforms, rising property prices and rents as well as an increasing shortage of affordable accommodation in London, has led to many London boroughs placing homeless households into both permanent and temporary private rented accommodation outside of their areas, including into Dartford. This is further limiting the availability of stock for in-borough placements.

9.6.2 As the hosting local authority pays the Local Housing Allowance, London boroughs are also in a position to pay landlords a significant amount more in incentives and LHA to encourage use of their own private sector leasing schemes. In addition, with fewer private rented properties being procured for the Council's own private sector leasing schemes, it is difficult to make full use of the power to discharge a homelessness duty into the private rented; placing further pressure on the use of temporary accommodation stock.

9.6.3 As a result, the shortage of suitable properties for use as temporary accommodation in the borough, has led to the Council having to place households into temporary

accommodation outside of the borough. At the end of quarter 4 in 2016/17 there were 9 households accommodated in another borough compared to 15 in the same quarter the previous year.

9.7 Shortage of social housing stock

9.7.1 Under the Council's Allocations Policy, homeless households are assisted through the choice-based lettings scheme if they meet certain criteria. However, there is a shortage of social housing stock within the borough meaning that demand far outweighs supply as more applicants are registered on the scheme than properties available.

10.0 CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

10.1 Aim of the consultation

10.1.1 The consultation activity that has formed part of this review, aimed to ensure that stakeholders had an impact on decision-making and service delivery. Listening to stakeholder's experiences and what is important to them is central to understanding how the homelessness service can respond to and reflect their needs.

10.1.2 A number of stakeholder groups were consulted, including service users, partners and council staff members. A summary of the consultation outcomes are outlined below.

10.2 Service users

10.2.1 A survey was sent to service users in August 2017. The results of the survey indicated that overall people were happy with the service provided by the Council. The full survey can be found in Annex 2.

10.3 Partners

10.3.1 Statutory and voluntary sector partners were invited to take part in a focus group. There were 11 attendees and those who could not attend had the opportunity to give their feedback via a survey.

10.3.2 Good practice

- Partners highlighted that the Council has a good reputation across Kent. The Council is effective at working in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies. Meetings cover all partners' agendas and information is shared and communicated well. Council officers are approachable and willing to give advice.
- There is a straightforward approach to homeless applications with few barriers. Applications are appropriately and holistically investigated.
- The Council offers a fair service, takes a pragmatic approach and delivers what it says it is going to do, taking ownership of actions.

10.3.3 Challenges

- Partners agreed that the shortage of both temporary and permanent accommodation in the borough presents the most significant challenge to the

Council. It is positive that the Council is building homes but it is only a small amount of homes in comparison to the amount that is needed. There was also a concern that the extension of the Right to Buy to tenants of housing associations could further deplete the social housing stock.

- Dartford's locality and the issue of placements into the borough by London boroughs, was raised as challenge that is impacting on the supply of private rented accommodation for local people. More financial resources are needed to combat this.
- High private sector rents and the shortfall in Local Housing Allowance rates were cited as an issue alongside the impact of the shared accommodation rate and the restriction of housing benefit for 18 to 21 year olds.
- It was recognised that any reduction in homelessness funding will considerably impact on current good practice.

10.3.4 Improvements and working together

- Partners suggested that more needs to be done to increase the supply of accommodation and to promote different models of housing. Relationships need to be built with private sector landlords in order to tap into this valuable resource. With housing demand exceeding supply, the expectations of service users should be effectively managed by providing appropriate advice on all housing options.
- It was felt that support is a very important element of preventing homelessness. Early intervention work is paramount in preventing housing problems reaching crisis point. Getting it right first time is the most effective way of avoiding the revolving door of homelessness. Suggestions for increasing support included:
 - Having a dedicated support worker, similar to the 'Team Around the Family Model', where the service user is at the centre of the process and the Support Worker co-ordinates support from a wide range of agencies
 - Organising workshops for service users to help them gain essential skills e.g. in money management, computer skills, CV writing etc
 - Organising drop-in events with key partners who provide support so they can promote their services
 - Having a floating support drop-in facility at the Civic Centre
- Some partners commented that if housing benefit claim times and the processing of changes of circumstances times are reduced, this would reduce rent arrears and the risk of problems with the landlord.
- Partners suggested lobbying on matters such as increasing the Local Housing Allowance rate to match London rates and for rent controls in the private rented sector.
- Continuing with the sharing of information and multi-agency meetings was seen as important in working together as well as more joint working with certain agencies such as Troubled Families Programme, DWP and Job Centre Plus

10.4 **Dartford Borough Council staff**

10.4.1 Representatives from the Housing Options & Private Sector team and other Council departments were invited to attend two focus groups. 17 staff members attended the focus groups.

10.4.2 Good practice

- Staff echoed partners in emphasising the effective joint working with statutory and voluntary agencies as well having as good inter-departmental working relationships. The Young Person's Team and the Kent Agency Assessment were highlighted as particular positive examples of joint working.
- It was commented that service users follow a streamlined and clear pathway and that the service is accessible. For example, the same officer is assigned to a case from beginning to end and is on hand after a decision is made, thereby providing continuity. In addition, service users do not have to wait for an appointment and can speak to an advisor on the same day
- Staff felt they are approachable, empathetic, proactive, informative, knowledgeable on legislation and not afraid to make difficult decisions.
- A particularly positive element of the service noted is the work carried out to mediate with families and landlords in order to prevent eviction.

10.4.3 Challenges

- As with the partner consultation, staff agreed that the shortage of both temporary and permanent accommodation in the borough presents the most significant challenge to the Council.
- Likewise, Dartford's locality and issue of placements into the borough by London boroughs impacts on the supply of private rented accommodation for local people. Staff raised concerns of having to place households into temporary accommodation outside of the borough because of a lack of available accommodation in the borough.
- Staff acknowledged there can be a stigma attached to being a benefit claimant e.g. 'No DSS' in private sector property adverts. There is a need to break down barriers with private sector landlords so that they have trust in renting to benefit recipients. However, it was also recognised that the shortfall between private sector rents and Local Housing Allowance rates is not an incentive for private sector landlords to rent to benefit recipients.
- The numbers of households on the housing register is increasing which can lead to a long wait for accommodation into social housing.
- Whilst there are positive working relationships with partners, maintaining these relationships is important.

10.4.4 Improvements and working together

- As with the partner consultation, staff suggested there is a need for an increase in the supply of accommodation. Staff also agreed that relationships need to be built with private sector landlords in order to tap into this valuable resource. One example of engaging with landlords is to provide a social lettings agency where the management of the property and tenancy is taken on by the Council among

other incentives offered to the landlord. This could then enable the greater use of the power to discharge the homelessness duty into the private rented sector.

- It was suggested that if the length of assured shorthold tenancies were increased to five years, this would provide greater stability to households.
- Increasing staff and the homelessness budget was seen as a way to enable more to be done in the prevention of homelessness.
- Staff suggested that some interdepartmental communications could be enhanced further. For example:
 - To have a direct contact in the Benefits department who specialises in homelessness cases
 - To work more closely with the Finance department to forward plan and forecast budgets
 - To use IT more effectively, such as having one IT system between services or linking IT systems
 - To organise in-house cross training
- It was highlighted that it would be beneficial to explore more options for assisting single non priority need households.
- Further suggestions included ideas such as creating an online housing portal similar to NHS Direct, facilitating multi-agency advice hubs at the Civic Centre and in the town, and arranging an annual seminar to bring partners together to share ideas and best practice.

11.0 CONCLUSIONS

11.1 Conclusions

- 11.1.1 This review has highlighted that overall, homeless decisions and acceptances have remained relatively stable, although there was an increase in 2014/15 which occurred alongside a decrease in homeless preventions. This will need to be closely monitored as pressure on the homeless prevention service appears to be increasing.
- 11.1.2 The main cause of homelessness is because of the loss of tied or rented accommodation in the private rented sector, mainly due to the termination of an assured shorthold tenancy. This cause of homelessness has increased significantly since the last review. Violence and other relatives or friends no longer willing to accommodate are the second and third highest causes of homelessness.
- 11.1.3 The use of temporary accommodation has increased. The supply of temporary accommodation is also diminishing which has led to the Council having to make use of temporary accommodation outside of the borough.
- 11.1.4 The Council is currently making direct offers of accommodation into its own housing stock in order to discharge its homelessness duty. However, the demand for social housing considerably outweighs the supply and can mean a lengthy wait before a suitable property becomes available.
- 11.1.5 Overall, the factors surrounding welfare reforms, rising housing costs and lack of supply of sufficient move-on accommodation can leave homeless household feeling

unsettled and anxious about their future. The main challenge for the next Homelessness Strategy will be to mitigate the impact of these factors and create opportunities to further develop and improve the service. This is of course only possible with a continued commitment for funding homeless prevention by central government.

11.2 Next steps

11.2.1 This review will be made available on the Council's website for all stakeholders and the wider public to view at www.dartford.gov.uk. Paper copies of this document can also be obtained upon request by contacting the Housing Policy Team at HousingPolicy@dartford.gov.uk, or writing to: Housing Policy, Dartford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Home Gardens Dartford, Kent, DA1 1DR.

11.2.2 Having completed the review, the Council is now in a position to start formulating its revised Homelessness Strategy. Invitations to comment on the draft revised Strategy will be requested from members of the public and stakeholder organisations. After the consultation period is over, the final version of the Strategy will be approved by Members of the Council and published.

ANNEX 1: DELIVERY OF PREVIOUS HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

| STRATEGIC PRIORITY ONE PREVENTION To prevent homelessness, wherever possible | | |
|--|--|--|
| No. | Task | Outcome |
| 1a | Formulate a referral agreement and procedure with a mediation provider | Not achieved Not considered VFM. Staff are experienced in mediation and providers are used on an ad-hoc basis |
| 1b | Explore the feasibility of setting up a pilot Young Person's Team with Children Social Services | Achieved Young Persons Team in place from Nov 2011. Model to be adopted Kent-wide in 2016 |
| 1c | Roll out the education programme across secondary schools in Dartford | Not achieved Not progressed due to a lack of interest from schools |
| 1d | Take part in discussions around the use of Rough Sleeper Funding for Kent | Achieved It was agreed that the funding will be used by Porchlight |
| 1e | Give training in basic debt advice to Housing Advisors | In progress Liaising with Shelter to provide training |
| 1f | Explore the feasibility of the Housing Service influencing decisions about Discretionary Housing Payments for homeless cases and include this in the SLA with the Benefits Service | Ongoing Some discretion is given on using DHP for deposits and rent in advice. Further discussions will take place |
| 1g | Approach Health partners to set up a local hospital discharge protocol | Not achieved Some discussions have been held with the local hospital and will be progressed |
| 1h | Put in place mechanisms to enable private sector landlords to make referrals to the homeless prevention service if their tenants | In progress This is promoted at the Landlords Forum |

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| | are experiencing tenancy sustainment difficulties | |
| 1i | Offer housing advice in prisons to prisoners with a Dartford connection | Not achieved Discussions were held with prisons but has not been progressed any further |

STRATEGIC PRIORITY TWO ACCOMMODATION

To provide a range of accommodation for homeless households, making innovative use of solutions in the private rented sector alongside more traditional methods

| No. | Task | Outcome |
|-----|---|---|
| 2a | Investigate the feasibility of using DPLS properties during the Child in Need assessment period | No longer to be progressed The Young Persons Team aims to prevent the need for the use of temporary accommodation |
| 2b | Review the Deposit Guarantee Scheme and implement any improvements identified through the review | Not achieved To be progressed |
| 2c | Review the Dartford Private Sector Leasing Scheme and implement any improvements identified through the review | Ongoing The Senior Private Sector Housing Officer continues to review this on an ongoing basis |
| 2d | Explore different ways of working with AmicusHorizon to procure private sector properties | Not progressed Amicus Horizon did not demonstrate that they are able to take on any extra responsibility. This arm of the business has been disbanded |
| 2e | Carry out research, including a single homeless survey, into the need for a short-term supported accommodation scheme in the borough for single homeless people | Not achieved Resource issue |
| 2f | Look for more affordable and cost effective housing solutions to the use of temporary accommodation | Ongoing This has been made difficult with a decline in the availability of temporary accommodation |
| 2g | Carry out property accreditation inspections on Deposit Guarantee Scheme and Private Sector Leasing Scheme properties alongside Housing Health and Safety Rating System inspections | Achieved Implemented by the Senior Private Sector Housing Officer |

STRATEGIC PRIORITY THREE SUPPORT

To ensure there is sufficient and appropriate support to meet the needs of various client groups, particularly those who are vulnerable

| No. | Task | Outcome |
|-----|--|---|
| 3a | Carry out a review of the domestic abuse 'Directory of Services' for Dartford and Gravesham' | Not achieved Resource issue |
| 3b | Explore how the Council can work in partnership with other interested services to help support women with no recourse to public funds who are victims of domestic abuse | Ongoing Meeting took place on the 30 Sep 2015 |
| 3c | Carry out a review of the 'Dealing with Debt' booklet | Not achieved Resource issue |
| 3d | Publicise the advice and assistance available to home owners in mortgage difficulties | Achieved Page set up on the DBC website for homeowners in mortgage difficulties. MRS is no longer available in Dartford |
| 3e | Publicise the Deposit Guarantee Scheme | Ongoing This is promoted at the Landlords Forum |
| 3f | Produce information around local health services, nutrition and exercise; and disseminate this to new Council tenants and to people the Council houses in the private sector | Not progressed DBC's Healthy Living Co-ordinator arranges and promotes healthy living programmes across the borough |
| 3g | Publish a private sector landlord newsletter twice a year | Not achieved Resource issue |
| 3h | Produce a leaflet on basic housing advice and | Not progressed |

| | | |
|----|--|---|
| | the services available to homeless households | Information is contained on the DBC website. The JPPB has produced and 'Moving In or Moving On' booklet that gives this information |
| 3i | Regularly review DBC website information on homelessness and housing advice | Achieved Regular reviews are undertaken. Last reviewed 30 Sep 2017 |
| 3j | Develop an online self-help tool which offers customers basic housing advice and information. Display this in reception and review it on a 6 monthly basis | Not achieved To be incorporated into the pre-assessment project under Kent Homechoice |
| 3k | Provide housing option packs to hand out at housing advice appointments | Not achieved To be progressed |
| 3l | Enable interested partner organisations access to HELP software | Ongoing On the HSIAG agenda 2 Oct 2015. Now called the Referrals Module |
| 3m | Explore any further opportunities to deliver EHO services | Not achieved No longer a government priority |

STRATEGIC PRIORITY FOUR PARTNERSHIP WORKING

To work with local organisations to provide a co-ordinated approach to tackling and preventing homelessness

| No. | Task | Outcome |
|-----|--|--|
| 4a | Organise joint refresher training between the Council and local partners to the Kent Young Person's Protocol | No longer to be progressed As DBC has set up the Young Persons Team this protocol is not currently in use |
| 4b | Formalise a joint assessment process between the Council and Children Social Services where a young person approaches either service for assistance under the young person's protocol | Achieved Joint assessments are taking place under the Young Persons Team |
| 4c | Annually review the domestic abuse One-Stop-Shop | In progress Meeting currently being arranged |
| 4d | Raise awareness about MARAC to other DBC departments | Achieved Domestic Abuse Procedure for Housing Services developed and a briefing session was held in Nov 2011. Briefing note for other DBC departments disseminated |
| 4e | Take part in awareness raising sessions for the housing and resettlement of offenders protocol | Achieved Training held at the Trinity Foyer on 13 Jul 2011 and a further event was held in 2013 at Ashford Borough Council. Now currently being reviewed by the JPPB |
| 4f | Discuss with JARS partners incorporating the existing five placement per year quota with YMCA Thames Gateway into the JARS | Achieved The Kent Agency Assessment has been adopted and incorporated into the Allocations Policy |
| 4g | Discuss with JARS partners the possibility of incorporating the existing one placement per year quota through Kent Probation into the JARS | Achieved As 4f |
| 4h | In light of discussions around expanding membership of the JARS partnership; carry out a review of the operational working practices under the scheme (including a review of the quota six months after this review) | Achieved As 4f |
| 4i | Once the review of JARS is complete, deliver training around any changes in working practices and awareness raising sessions amongst partners | Achieved As 4f |
| 4j | Review the SLA between the Housing Service and the Benefits Department | Not achieved Meeting to be arranged with the Benefits Manager |
| 4k | Set up regular liaison meetings with the Benefits Department | Ongoing Although sporadic, meetings do take place |

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| 4l | Feedback the outcome of HSIg meetings to the Landlords Forum as a regular standing item on their agenda | Ongoing This is ongoing |
| 4m | Set up regular liaison meetings with private sector landlords who provide accommodation to the Council | Not progressed The current economic climate has made it difficult to engage with landlords |

STRATEGIC PRIORITY FIVE MONITORING

To keep up to date with homelessness trends, customer satisfaction, government policy, legislation and good practice in the area of homeless prevention

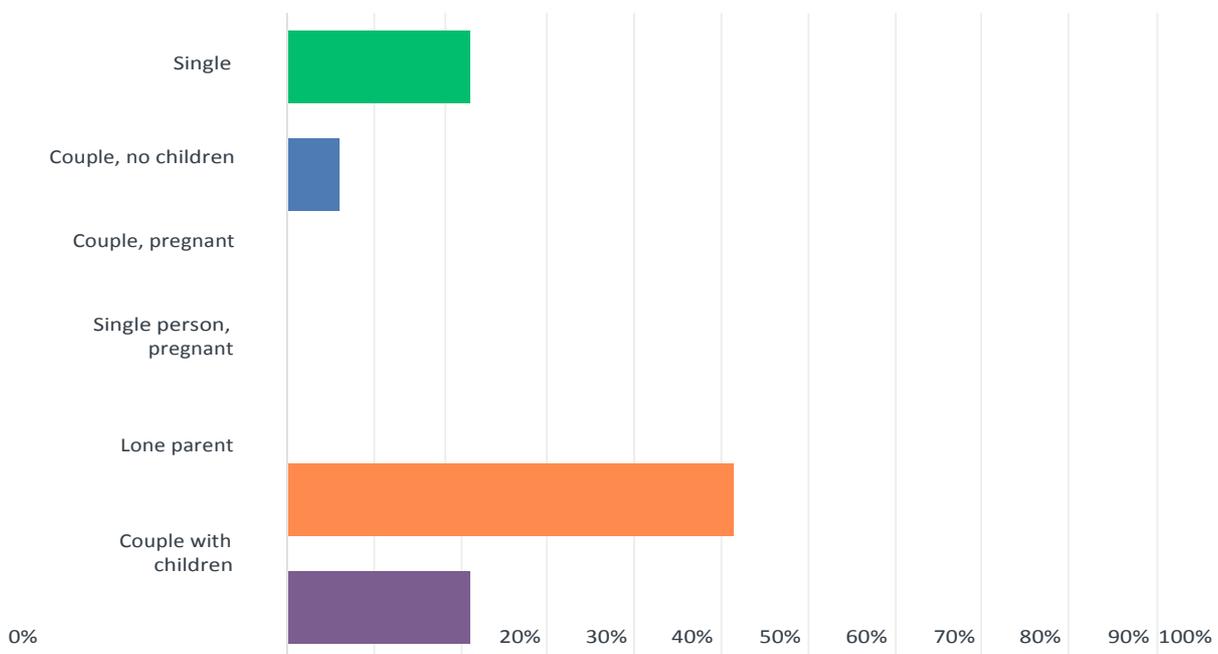
| No. | Task | Outcome |
|-----|--|---|
| 5a | Keep up to date with government policy, legislative changes and good practice in the area of homelessness and disseminate this to partners | Ongoing Disseminated through the HSIg |
| 5b | Annually evaluate the extent of rough sleeping | Ongoing Annual estimates submitted to government |
| 5c | Monitor the impact of the Housing Benefit and wider benefit reforms on homelessness in terms of levels of approaches. Report any updates to the HSIg and decide on any remedial action | Ongoing This is ongoing |
| 5d | Track and monitor HELP referrals | Not achieved Unable to progress until task 3l is completed |
| 5e | Amend the Homelessness Prevention Application Form to record applicants from the Gypsy and Traveller Community | Achieved The vulnerability needs assessment has been added to the homeless application form |
| 5f | Change the Homeless Prevention Form so that it more accurately measures disability | In progress Meeting arranged in April and review of form will incorporate this |
| 5g | Assess the likely impact of the ending of A8 nationals on the Housing Service and develop plans to respond to any likely increases in approaches from this group | Ongoing Monitoring is ongoing |
| 5h | Develop mechanisms to collect satisfaction feedback from service users who receive advice only | Not achieved To be progressed |
| 5i | Carry out mystery shopping on the homelessness service | Not achieved To be progressed |

ANNEX 2

HOUSING OPTIONS CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Q1 Which family group do you consider yourself to be in?

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES

RESPONSES

Single

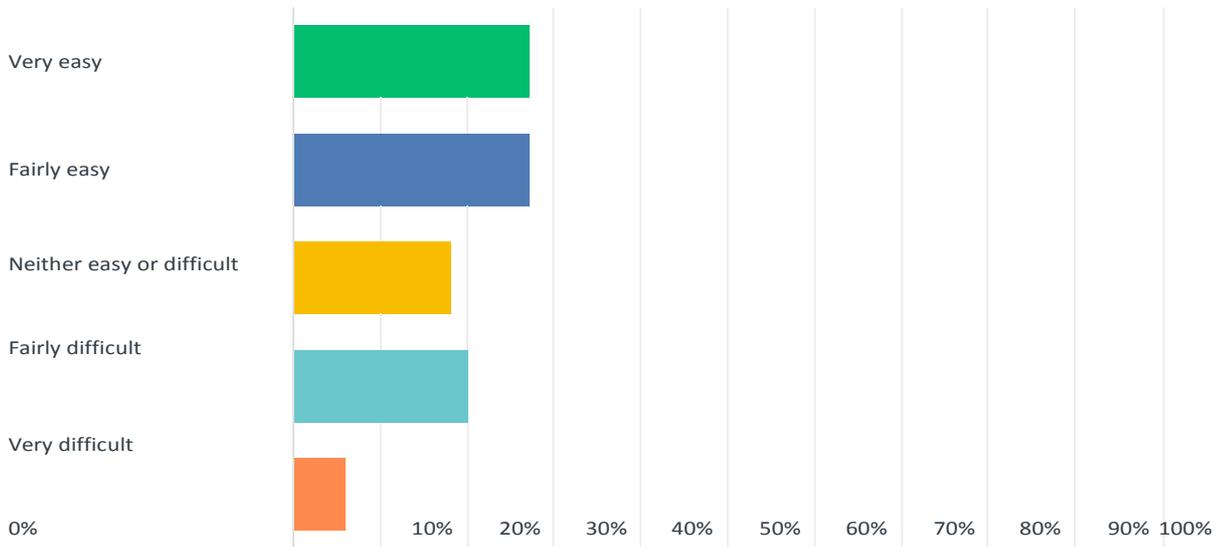
21.21%

7

| | | |
|-------------------------|--------|----|
| Couple, no children | 6.06% | 2 |
| Couple, pregnant | 0.00% | 0 |
| Single person, pregnant | 0.00% | 0 |
| Lone parent | 51.52% | 17 |
| Couple with children | 21.21% | 7 |
| TOTAL | | 33 |

Q2 How difficult or easy was it to contact us?

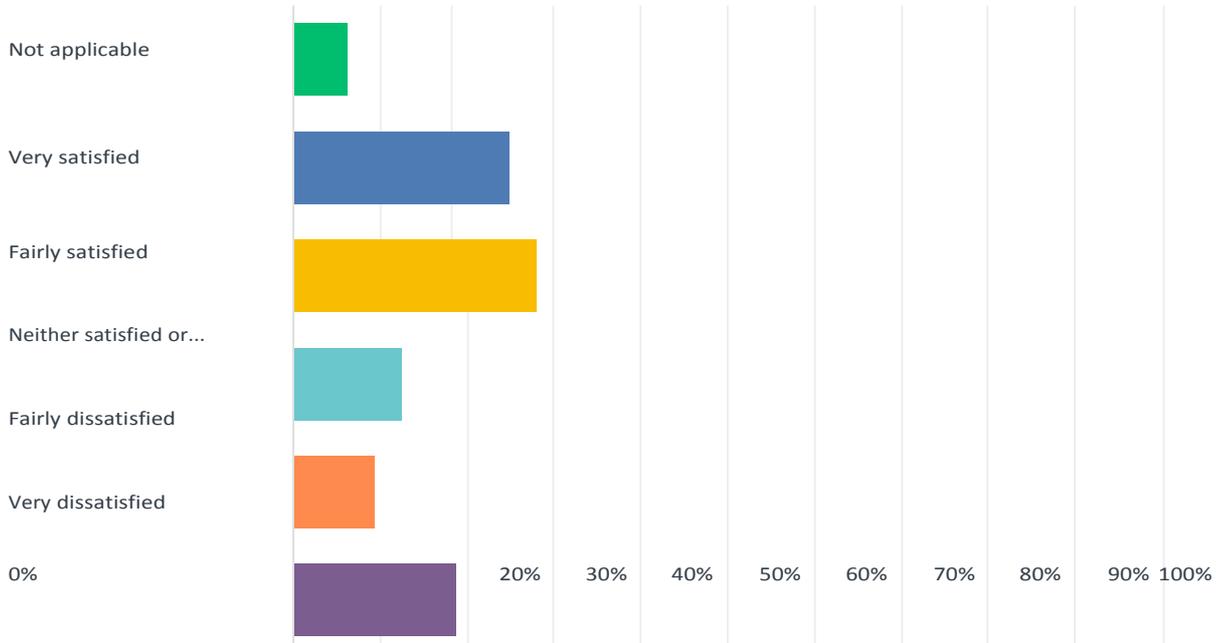
Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Very easy | 27.27% | 9 |
| Fairly easy | 27.27% | 9 |
| Neither easy or difficult | 18.18% | 6 |
| Fairly difficult | 21.21% | 7 |
| Very difficult | 6.06% | 2 |
| TOTAL | | 33 |

Q3 How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the information and/or advice you were initially given?

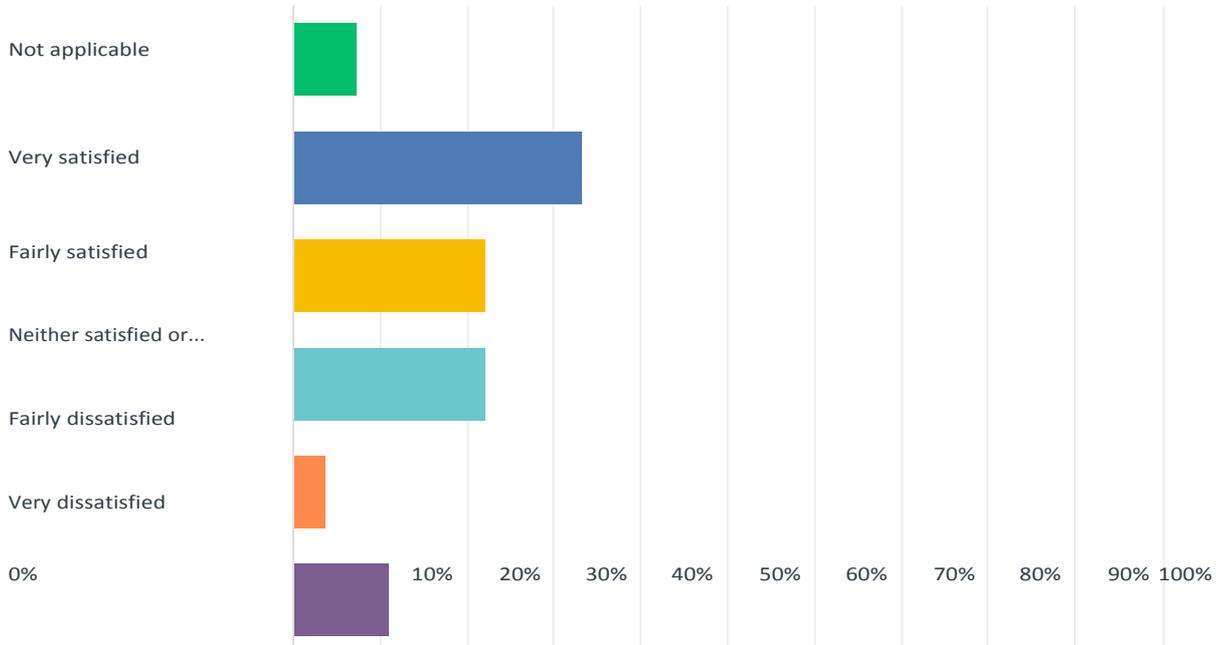
Answered: 32 Skipped: 1



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Not applicable | 6.25% | 2 |
| Very satisfied | 25.00% | 8 |
| Fairly satisfied | 28.13% | 9 |
| Neither satisfied or dissatisfied | 12.50% | 4 |
| Fairly dissatisfied | 9.38% | 3 |
| Very dissatisfied | 18.75% | 6 |
| TOTAL | | 32 |

Q4 In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with your interview/s?

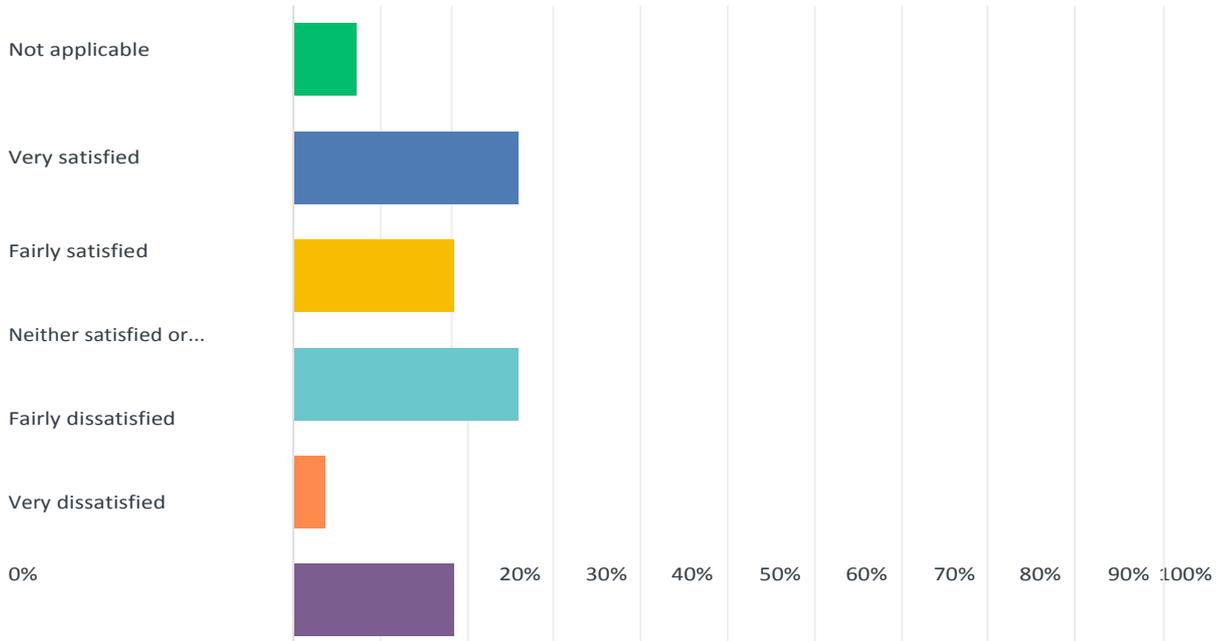
Answered: 27 Skipped: 6



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Not applicable | 7.41% | 2 |
| Very satisfied | 33.33% | 9 |
| Fairly satisfied | 22.22% | 6 |
| Neither satisfied or dissatisfied | 22.22% | 6 |
| Fairly dissatisfied | 3.70% | 1 |
| Very dissatisfied | 11.11% | 3 |
| TOTAL | | 27 |

Q5 How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the information/advice you received about your housing options?

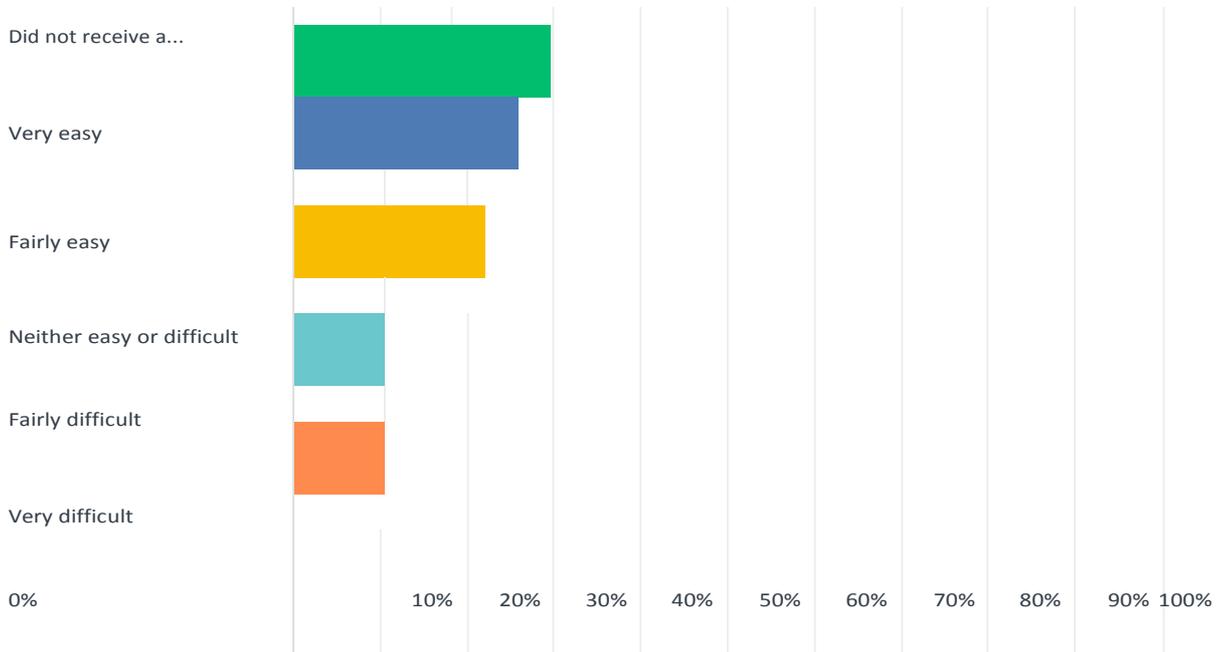
Answered: 27 Skipped: 6



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Not applicable | 7.41% | 2 |
| Very satisfied | 25.93% | 7 |
| Fairly satisfied | 18.52% | 5 |
| Neither satisfied or dissatisfied | 25.93% | 7 |
| Fairly dissatisfied | 3.70% | 1 |
| Very dissatisfied | 18.52% | 5 |
| TOTAL | | 27 |

Q6 If we have sent you a letter, how easy or difficult was it for you to understand?

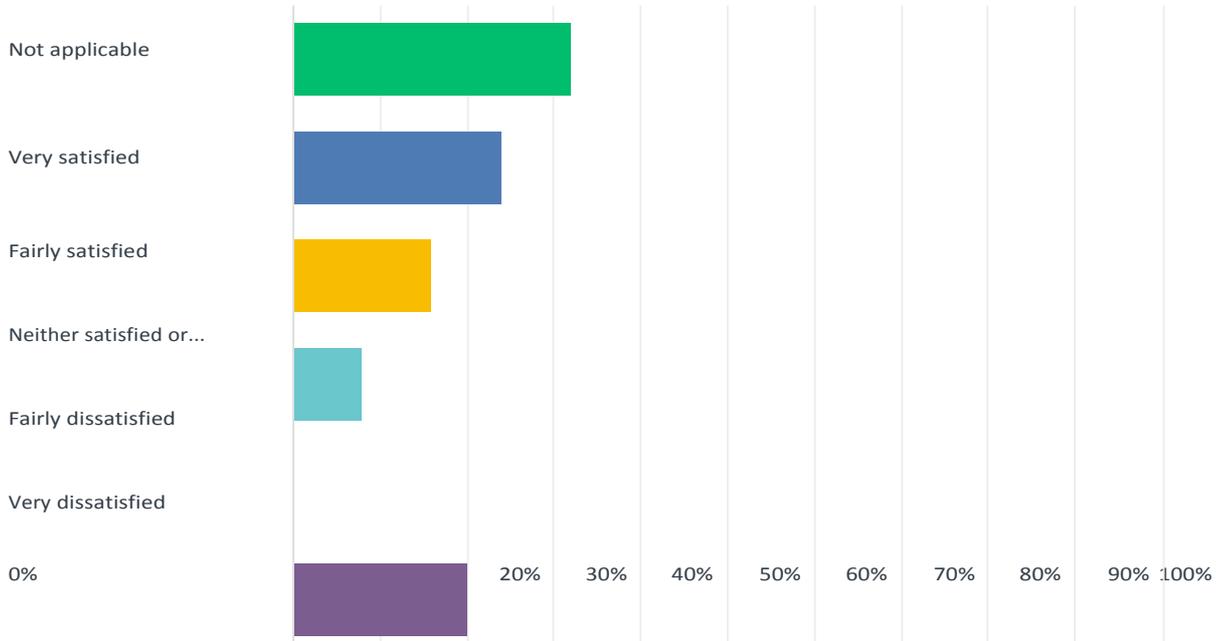
Answered: 27 Skipped: 6



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Did not receive a letter | 29.63% | 8 |
| Very easy | 25.93% | 7 |
| Fairly easy | 22.22% | 6 |
| Neither easy or difficult | 11.11% | 3 |
| Fairly difficult | 11.11% | 3 |
| Very difficult | 0.00% | 0 |
| TOTAL | | 27 |

Q7 If the Housing Options Team has provided you with temporary emergency accommodation, how satisfied are you/were you with it?

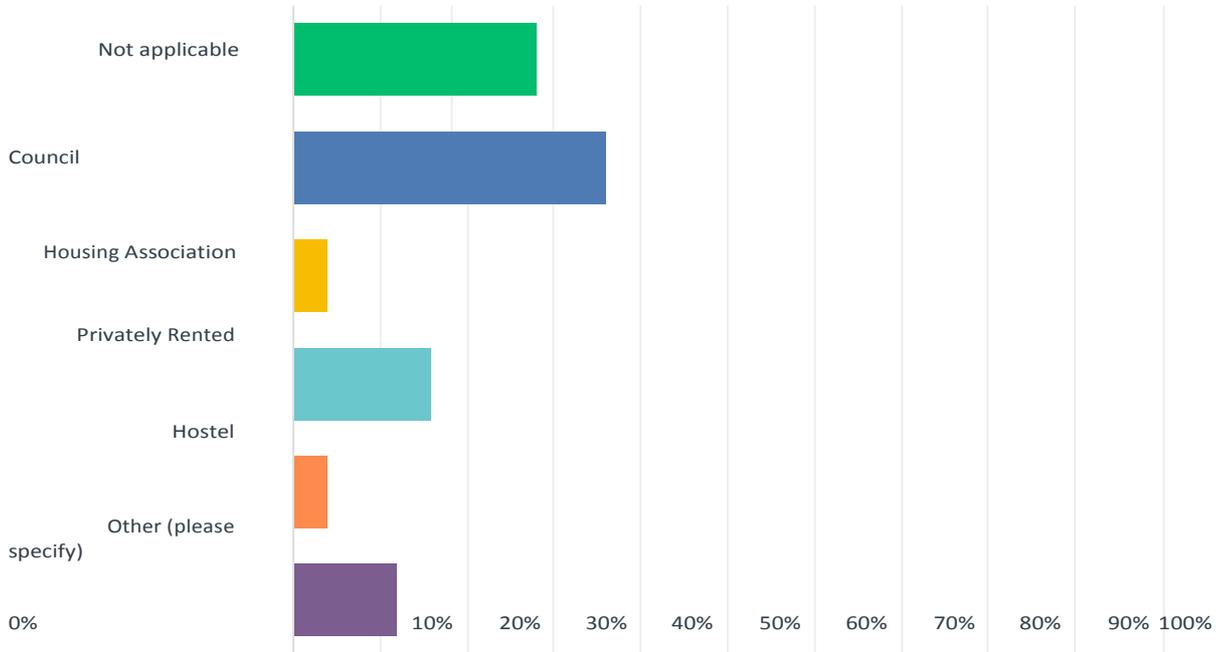
Answered: 25 Skipped: 8



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Not applicable | 32.00% | 8 |
| Very satisfied | 24.00% | 6 |
| Fairly satisfied | 16.00% | 4 |
| Neither satisfied or dissatisfied | 8.00% | 2 |
| Fairly dissatisfied | 0.00% | 0 |
| Very dissatisfied | 20.00% | 5 |
| TOTAL | | 25 |

Q8 If you have now been housed, what type of accommodation were you housed into?

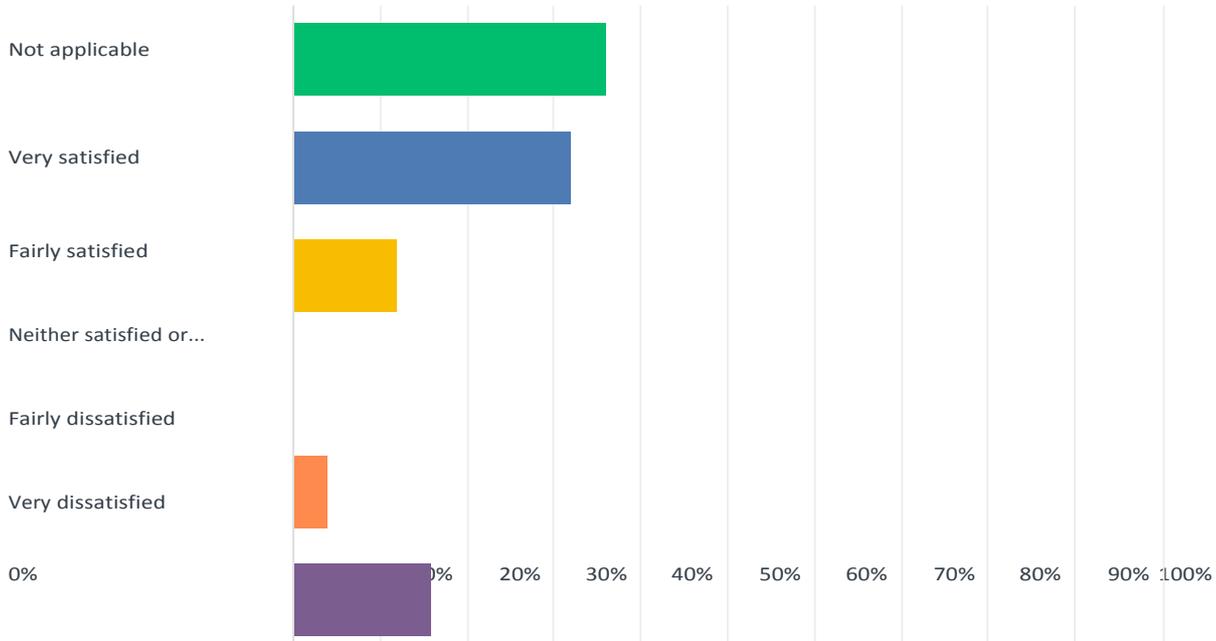
Answered: 25 Skipped: 8



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES |
|------------------------|-----------|
| Not applicable | 28.00% 7 |
| Council | 36.00% 9 |
| Housing Association | 4.00% 1 |
| Privately Rented | 16.00% 4 |
| Hostel | 4.00% 1 |
| Other (please specify) | 12.00% 3 |
| TOTAL | 25 |

Q9 How satisfied are you with the accommodation that you were housed in (not temporary accommodation)

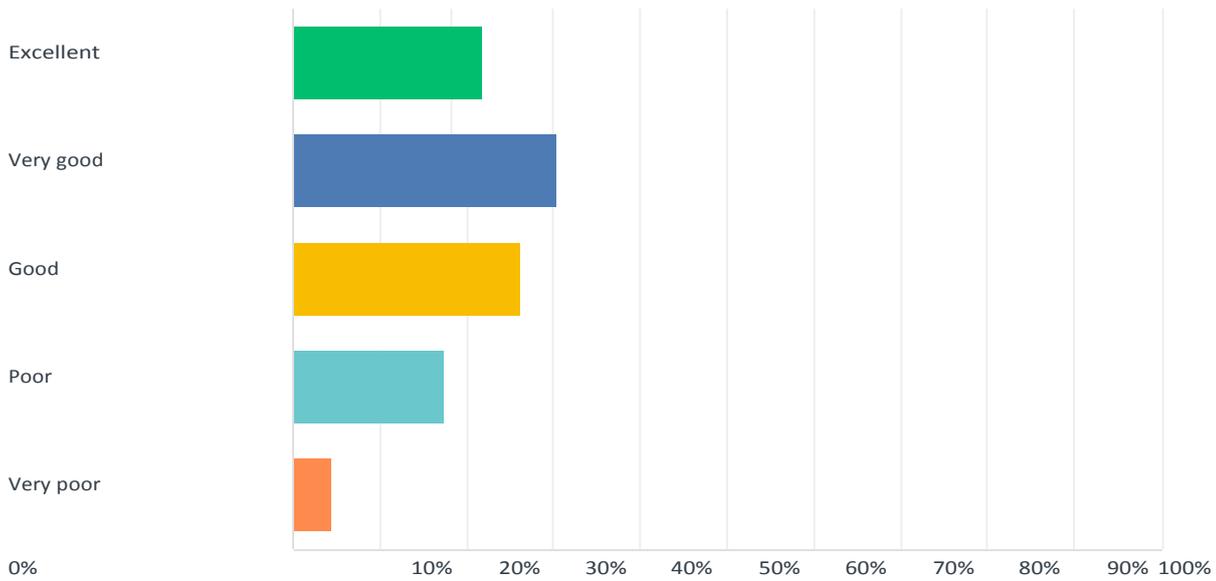
Answered: 25 Skipped: 8



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Not applicable | 36.00% | 9 |
| Very satisfied | 32.00% | 8 |
| Fairly satisfied | 12.00% | 3 |
| Neither satisfied or dissatisfied | 0.00% | 0 |
| Fairly dissatisfied | 4.00% | 1 |
| Very dissatisfied | 16.00% | 4 |
| TOTAL | | 25 |

Q10 Overall, what do you think of the service that you received from the Housing Options Team?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 10



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Excellent | 21.74% | 5 |
| Very good | 30.43% | 7 |
| Good | 26.09% | 6 |
| Poor | 17.39% | 4 |
| Very poor | 4.35% | 1 |
| TOTAL | | 23 |