

CABINET

11 APRIL 2025

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING AND PLANNING

A.5 HOMELESSNESS IN TENDRING

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Further to a request from Cabinet, this report sets out the current levels of and causes of homelessness. In particular, the number of households presenting as homeless, numbers placed in temporary accommodation and data on rough sleeping and how these pressures have continued to grow. It also sets out the various actions that are being put in place to address these pressures.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council's Housing Solutions Service is experiencing increasing numbers of homelessness cases. This is impacting on the services' ability to discharge the Council's statutory duties effectively and cost efficiently. The Council is committed to ensuring accessible high-quality customer services, but the levels of demand mean that, in some instances, the Council is finding it increasingly challenging to meet the minimum levels of statutory housing duties.

The Homelessness Act 2002 sets out the definition of homelessness and the duties that local housing authorities owe to those who are accepted as being homeless or threatened with homelessness. Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 provides the primary homelessness legislation setting out the statutory duties on local housing authorities to prevent homelessness and provide assistance to those who are at risk of being homeless or actually homeless.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA 2017) placed new duties on local housing authorities to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness and to take reasonable steps to relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants, not just those that have priority need under the Act. This legislation sought to provide increased protection to people facing homelessness. It extended the length of time an individual or household could be seen as at risk of homelessness, from 28 to 56 days, which in turn increased the length of a local housing authority's prevention duty.

More recently, the enactment of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has placed a duty on local authorities in England to provide support to survivors of domestic abuse and their children. All eligible homeless survivors of domestic abuse automatically receive 'priority need' status for homelessness assistance.

The Council has seen an 87% increase in homelessness approaches between 2018/2019 and 2023/24 and a 26% increase in homelessness applications during the same period.

The top five causes of homelessness have remained static during this time and include the loss of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy in the private rented sector, relationship breakdown, eviction by family, domestic abuse and eviction by friends.

There has been a 77% increase in the number of households being placed in temporary accommodation between 2018/19 and 2023/24.

Expenditure by the Council on temporary accommodation in the first nine months of 2024/25 was £2.1 million.

Expenditure on rent deposits in the same period was £164,713.36 and a further £153,617.52 was spent on rent in advance payments all of which were paid to assist those faced with homelessness into settled accommodation.

The cost of providing temporary accommodation and other homelessness services is accounted for within the General Fund and, alongside the money committed from the Council's General Fund budget to fund homelessness services, funding is awarded by Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to support the prevention and reduction of homelessness and rough sleeping. Confirmation has already been received that the Homelessness Prevention Grant funding for 2025/26 will be £1,456,782, an increase from just over £1 million in 2024/25.

As set out in previous reports, the cost of responding to homelessness is presenting a significant resource / financial challenge for most Local Authorities nationally and is of such significance that it is now one of the highest risk factors in terms of the wider financial sustainability of Councils. Although financial support from the Government is welcomed, it falls significantly short of the associated costs.

With all of the above points in mind, it is proposed that a Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Working Group is established, chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Planning, to support the Council in exploring and identifying measures aimed at relieving the pressure and spending on the service. Membership of this group will be predominantly officers.

Although various options will be explored via the proposed working group, measures initially identified to relieve pressure and reduce spend are focussed on:

- Potential to increase income streams
- Reducing the use of temporary accommodation through early prevention measures
- Ensuring the quality of the temporary accommodation offered
- Increasing the availability of accommodation in the private rented sector

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Cabinet:

- 1) notes the current pressures on the homelessness function provided by the Council and the level of spending on the service including provision of temporary accommodation to comply with its statutory duties;**
- 2) endorses the setting up of a Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Working Group, chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Planning, to explore and identify measures aimed at relieving the pressure and spending on homelessness; and**
- 3) subject to 2) above, a report is presented to Cabinet within six months setting out the initial outcomes from the activities undertaken by the working group to inform future decisions.**

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

The recommendations are to ensure that the Council responds to the unprecedented levels of demand in order to not only reduce costs but also ensure we meet our statutory homelessness duties and that homeless households and those threatened with homelessness are adequately assisted and supported.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

An alternative option is to do nothing and accept the rise and increase in complexity of cases and consequent increase in costs. Given the level of spending on homelessness and temporary accommodation this is placing significant pressure on the Council's general fund and long-term financial plan.

The cost to all local housing authorities of meeting their obligations to those experiencing homelessness has increased exponentially recently and it is important that the Council takes action.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**DELIVERING PRIORITIES**

Th recommendations contribute to a number of Corporate Plan 2024-28 themes:

- Pride in our area and services to residents – homelessness advice and support is a key service available to residents
- Raising aspirations and creating opportunities – a stable, settled home is key to supporting aspiration for our residents
- Working with partners to improve quality of life – there are a number of partners the council works with as part of the homelessness and advice service.
- Financial sustainability and openness – with the high levels of spending on homelessness services and the focus on that spending the working group will bring, it should be possible to develop a more financially efficient service.

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Consultation will be undertaken with relevant stakeholders in relation to the development of a revised Housing Strategy early in 2025/26 that will include a priority and supporting actions relating to homelessness.

Homelessness and temporary accommodation has been identified as a priority by Cabinet at its meeting in March 2025. A highlight priority in respect of homelessness for 2025/26 is to address the provision and steps to make the service sustainable going forward. The Council will positively review and take appropriate actions to review the Council's use of temporary accommodation, working with the sector to drive improvement and efficiencies and to develop interventions ahead of homelessness occurring and thereby improve the sustainability of this service for the Council over the longer term. Explore the possibility of working with other authorities in light of the Local Government Reorganisation.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)

| | | | |
|--|------------|--|---|
| Is the recommendation a Key Decision (see the criteria stated here) | Yes | If Yes, indicate which by which criteria it is a Key Decision | X Significant effect on two or more wards <input type="checkbox"/> Involves £100,000 expenditure/income <input type="checkbox"/> Is otherwise significant for the service budget |
|--|------------|--|---|

| | | | |
|--|--|--|------------------|
| | | And when was the proposed decision published in the Notice of forthcoming decisions for the Council (must be 28 days at the latest prior to the meeting date) | 13 February 2025 |
| <p>Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) provides the statutory underpinning for action by the Council to prevent homelessness and provide assistance to people threatened with or actually homeless.</p> <p>The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 significantly reformed England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on the Council to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in its area. It also requires the Council to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need'.</p> <p>These include:</p> <p>a) an enhanced prevention duty extending the period a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that the Council is required to work with people to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage. This means either helping them to stay in their current accommodation or helping them to find new accommodation before they become actually homeless; and</p> <p>b) a new duty for those who are already homeless so that the Council will support households for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.</p> <p>There are various section of the Housing Act 1996 that trigger a temporary accommodation duty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ S.188 – the duty to provide temporary accommodation to anyone the Council has reason to believe may be homeless and may be in priority need ➤ S.190 – in the event of an adverse decision, the Council has a duty to provide temporary accommodation for a reasonable period of time in order to give clients the opportunity to make their own arrangements ➤ S.193 – following acceptance of the main housing duty, the Council is required to continue to provide temporary accommodation until suitable, alternative accommodation can be found. <p>In addition to households applying to the Council for accommodation under homelessness legislation, other households can require temporary accommodation. This includes people who are sleeping rough, people who require emergency accommodation due to risk of fire or flood, etc. and Council tenants who are being decanted due to major repairs or remodelling works to their homes.</p> <p>Main housing duty - The Council is subject to an ongoing duty (the 'main housing' duty) to ensure that accommodation is available to an applicant who is eligible for assistance, in priority need, and unintentionally homeless. This duty is owed by the Council unless there is a local connection referral from another local authority.</p> | | | |

The Localism Act 2011 (s148 and s149) introduced provisions which enables the Council to bring its main housing duty to an end, by making an offer of a private rented sector tenancy rather than a social housing tenancy.

Accommodation must always be 'suitable' and there are particular matters the Council must have regard to when determining suitability, including space and arrangement, location, property condition, and social considerations relating to the applicant and their household.

| | |
|---|--|
| x | The Monitoring Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below: |
|---|--|

The report highlights the relevant homelessness legislation throughout however, the Council must also consider its statutory Best Value Duty under [Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999](#) ("the 1999 Act") to "*make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness*". In practice, this covers issues such as how authorities exercise their functions to deliver a balanced budget ([Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992](#)), provide statutory services, such as the Homeless Service, and secure value for money in all spending decisions.

Due to the demand of homelessness and requirements on local authorities nationally, a number of studies have been undertaken over the last year researching on strategies which can be considered and adopted, using local data on the cost and use of temporary accommodation. The working group should explore the published outcomes to provide further insight to whether the Council is maximising all avenues to demonstrate value for money and compliance with its Best Value Duty.

In addition, with the Government's Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution programmes, joint working and collaboration with partners should also form the remit of the working group.

If the Working Group is to include Members, the Constitution sets out the requirements for such a group to be formed.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The costs of providing homelessness services and temporary accommodation is accounted for within the General Fund and this is subject to ongoing review and amendment to take into account any significant changes to legislation and/or operating environment.

Alongside the money committed from the Council's General Fund budget to fund homelessness services, MHCLG provide an annual Homelessness Prevention Grant along with other funding to support the prevention and reduction of homelessness and rough sleeping. In the last two years, the funding received has been as follows:

2023/24 Rough Sleeper Grant £56,544

2023/24 Homelessness Prevention grant £1,045,270

2024/25 Rough Sleeper Grant £32,500

2024/25 Homelessness Prevention grant £1,051,892

Confirmation has already been received that the Homelessness Prevention Grant funding for 2025/26 will be £1,456,782.

In terms of the financial support receivable from the Government in 2025/26, a new ringfencing arrangement has been introduced which means that 49% of local authorities' funding allocation must be spent on prevention, relief and staffing activity rather than on the direct provision of temporary accommodation. This will therefore be an important factor to consider when exploring options to respond to the challenges of homelessness heading into the new financial year.

In the first nine months of the 2024/25 financial year, the monthly expenditure on temporary accommodation was as set out below:

| | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| April | £180,725 |
| May | £234,215 |
| June | £270,503 |
| July | £224,821 |
| August | £209,797 |
| September | £195,476 |
| October | £271,271 |
| November | £301,530 |
| December | £306,533 |
| Total | £2,194,872 |

Expenditure on rent deposits in the same period was £164,713.36 and a further £153,617.52 was spent on rent in advance payments, assisting those who would otherwise be homeless to move in to privately rented accommodation.

The Government has recently consulted on the funding formula used to calculate the Homelessness Prevention Grant provided to all local housing authorities in England, with the aim of determining a new formula to reflect relative demand and cost pressures. This new formula will apply to payments in 2026/27 onwards, with allocations calculated and announced in late 2025. At the current time, it is not known what impact this will have on the funding provided to Tendring.

As part of the annual budget setting process and regular financial performance reports, additional funding has been identified within the Council's wider financial / budget position to support the increasing costs of homelessness. In 2024/25, in addition to an additional £0.500m included within the base budget, a further one-off amount of £1.700m has been added to the budget during the year. In terms of 2025/26, a further £0.500m has been added to the base budget for the year.

It is also important to note the importance of the Spendells House scheme which is already significantly contributing to the Council's ability to respond to the provision of suitable temporary accommodation.

| | |
|------------|---|
| Yes | The Section 151 Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below: |
|------------|---|

Although there are no significant comments over and above those set out elsewhere within this report, it is worth highlighting the considerable impact that responding to the homelessness challenge is having on Local Authorities nationally. The proposed establishment of the working group is therefore proportionate to this significant issue and provides a pragmatic and focused approach to support the Council respond in responding to the associated and on-going challenge in 2025/26 and beyond.

USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

| | |
|--|---|
| The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators: | |
| A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services; | The Council has an adopted Financial Strategy. |
| B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, | The Council has a mature constitutional structure and framework of policy for decision-making. This report highlights the need to undertake a review through a working group to inform future decisions. |
| C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services. | <p>The Council has an adopted Financial Strategy.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer has highlighted the statutory requirements to demonstrate value for money in its review through the working group to inform future decisions.</p> |
| MILESTONES AND DELIVERY | |
| <p>The Council's Housing Strategy consultation draft is due to be presented to the Council's Cabinet in May 2025 and will include a priority and supporting actions relating to homelessness.</p> <p>If endorsed, the Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Working Group, chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Planning, will be set up with the first meeting taking place in April 2025. Further update reports will be prepared and presented to Cabinet on a quarterly basis, commencing in July 2025.</p> | |
| ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION | |
| The provision of decent homes and the prevention of homelessness has a significant impact on our communities. Failure to respond to the growing pressures will have a significant impact on the Council's financial resources as it has a legal obligation to provide temporary accommodation to those presenting as homeless and to whom it owes a relief duty. By having a range of provisions to respond to the demand for homelessness services, the Council will have a positive impact on those experiencing potential homelessness as well as financial benefits to the Council | |
| EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS | |
| In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, within these policies the Council has due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. | |
| SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS | |
| Creates healthier, safer and more resilient communities: To build stronger and deeper partnership working arrangements whilst continuing to engage and empower tenants, potential tenants and other service users. | |
| IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2050 | |
| The implementation of these measures do not present a direct impact on the Council's target for net zero greenhouse gas emissions from its business operations by 2050. The Council will be mindful of energy efficiency measures, wherever relevant, in the implementation of its policies. | |
| OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS | |
| Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below. | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Crime and Disorder | Research has shown that homeless people are at increased risk of experiencing crime compared with non-homeless people, especially violent crime. Rough sleepers are at particular risk of experiencing crime. Findings from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Rough sleeping questionnaire reported that two-thirds of respondents in England had been a victim of crime (65%) within the last six months. The most common experiences of crime included theft, verbal abuse, threats, robbery, and violence. |
| Health Inequalities | People who have experienced homelessness are more likely to have poor physical and mental health than the general population. Poor mental and physical health is both a cause and consequence of homelessness. Homeless people are also far more vulnerable to issues relating to alcohol and drug use. Multiple health needs alongside drug and alcohol use can act as a barrier to accessing mainstream health services, and as a result often end up using more costly primary healthcare services. |
| Subsidy Control (the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the related Statutory Guidance). | The Council will follow subsidy control legislation and regulations, where applicable, in relation to the content and implementation of these policies. |
| Area or Ward affected | All |

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

National context

The Homelessness Act 2002 sets out the definition of homelessness and the duties that local authorities owe to those who are accepted as being homeless or threatened with homelessness, while Part 7 of the Housing Act (1996) provides the primary homelessness legislation setting out the statutory duties on local housing authorities to prevent homelessness and provide assistance to those who are at risk of being homeless or actually homeless.

The Localism Act 2011 also amended the Housing Act 1996 by allowing local authorities to discharge their homelessness duty by arranging a suitable offer of accommodation in the private rented sector.

The most recent and notable change in legislation came from the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The Act, implemented on 3 April 2018, placed new duties on local housing authorities to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness and to take reasonable steps to relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants, not just those that have priority need under the Act. This legislation sought to provide increased protection to people facing homelessness. It extended the length of time an individual or household could be seen

as at risk of homelessness, from 28 to 56 days, which in turn increased the length of a local housing authority's prevention duty.

More recently, the enactment of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has placed a duty on local authorities in England to provide support to survivors of domestic abuse and their children. All eligible homeless survivors of domestic abuse automatically receive 'priority need' status for homelessness assistance - providing re-assurance and certainty for individuals and their families presenting as homeless because of domestic abuse and simplifying the decision-making process for officers.

The Act also introduced a new definition of domestic abuse and requires that local housing authorities, should provide a secure lifetime tenancy to applicants who held a similar security of tenure in social housing in the past. The new priority need category means councils should no longer assess whether someone at risk of domestic abuse is also vulnerable to access assistance.

The nationwide cost of living crisis has seen increasing fuel and energy prices coupled with negative economic growth - resulting in a dire situation for the national and local economy. This poses a significant challenge to all of our residents but particularly those already facing precarious financial situations and struggling to meet housing costs.

Increasing house prices, rising private sector rents and the reduced income many households have experienced because of the pandemic and now the cost-of-living crisis have all contributed to the rise in homelessness. The current cost-of-living crisis has seen a decline in household living standards with lower wages, higher inflation, rising energy, fuel and housing costs all contributing to and increasing the pressures on households and in turn driving demand for support and assistance on local authorities and the third sector.

Rising rent costs in the Private Rent Sector as well as mortgage interest rate rises are already increasing the pressures on local authorities' homelessness services who (prior to the pandemic) had already been beset by austerity and reductions in public finance.

These pressures undoubtedly put further strain on people's finances and will in many cases lead to homelessness as stagnating wages struggle to keep up with rising rents, food, and energy costs

Definition of homelessness

The legal definition of homelessness is that a household has no home in the UK or anywhere else in the world available and reasonable to occupy.

The following housing circumstances are examples of homelessness:

- street homeless and hidden homeless
- have been illegally evicted
- are living in accommodation that is unaffordable, unfit, overcrowded,
- are experiencing domestic abuse or threats of domestic abuse, and other exceptional circumstances

- are at risk of becoming homeless due to parents/family/other no longer willing or able to accommodate, leaving care, prison, the armed forces or escaping domestic abuse)
- where a valid notice has been served to quit their tenancy by their landlord

All local authorities have a duty to ensure advice and information is available, free of charge, to any household about preventing homelessness, finding a home, rights when homeless and the help that is available locally.

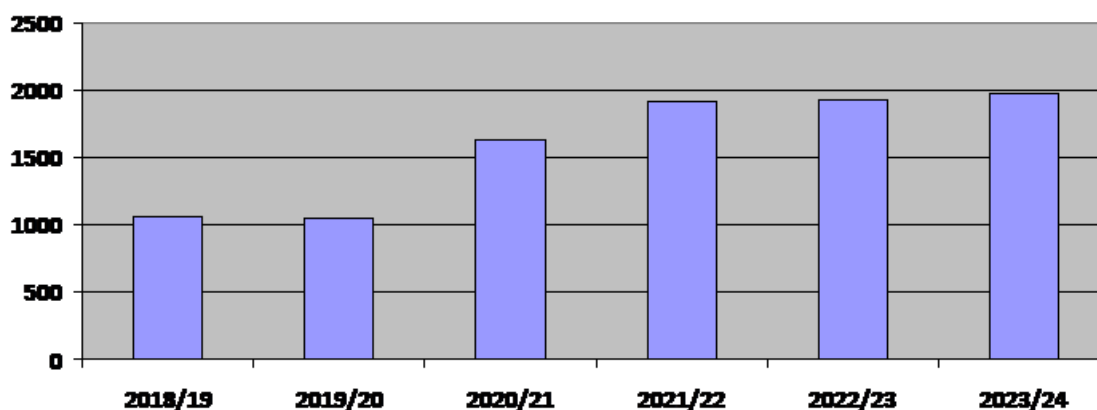
Any adult, or child aged 16-17, who believes they are homeless or threatened with homelessness, is entitled to make an application for assistance to any local authority

A household who usually lives in the UK and has a right to enter and remain in the country without any restrictions, is normally eligible for assistance

Levels and Causes of Homelessness

The following section provides an update on current levels of homelessness and how the trend compares with previous years.

Homelessness approaches

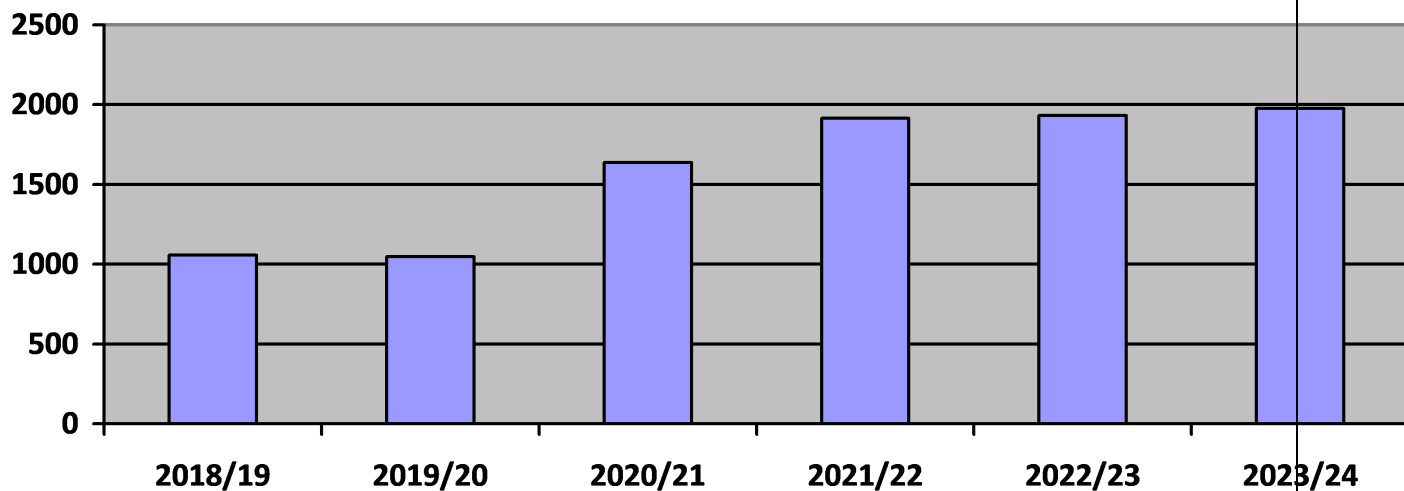


As illustrated in the above chart, there has been an 87% increase in the number of homelessness approaches between 2018 and 2024 and details of the household composition of those making these approaches is given in the table below:

| Overview of approaches | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| Year | H'holds with children | Singles (no dependents) | | | Others h'holds |
| | | Single male | Single female | Single Other | |
| 2018/19 | 402 | 358 | 184 | 1 | 113 |
| 2019/20 | 324 | 221 | 393 | 0 | 108 |
| 2020/21 | 432 | 668 | 412 | 5 | 119 |
| 2021/22 | 624 | 669 | 436 | 5 | 180 |
| 2022/23 | 630 | 684 | 464 | 13 | 142 |
| 2023/24 | 659 | 725 | 470 | 5 | 118 |

Homelessness applications

There has also been a 26% increase in the number of homelessness applications being received as illustrated in the graph below:



Details of the household composition of those making these approaches is summarised in the table below:

| Overview of applications | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| Year | H'holds with children | Singles (no dependents) | | | Others h'holds |
| | | Single male | Single female | Single Other | |
| 2018/19 | 277 | 225 | 105 | 1 | 89 |
| 2019/20 | 263 | 258 | 135 | 0 | 85 |
| 2020/21 | 220 | 287 | 137 | 3 | 64 |
| 2021/22 | 331 | 283 | 183 | 3 | 84 |
| 2022/23 | 356 | 283 | 159 | 4 | 76 |
| 2023/24 | 355 | 300 | 160 | 2 | 60 |

Causes of Homelessness

Whilst the number of homelessness approaches and applications has increased in recent years, the causes of homelessness have remained fairly constant, with the top five causes being the same in each of the years from 2018 to 2024.

These are:

- Loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancy in private rented sector
- Eviction by family
- Victim of domestic abuse
- End of relationship with partner
- Eviction by friends

In respect of the loss of assured shorthold tenancies, this is increasingly due to the affordability of such accommodation within the private sector. This is not helped by the fact that local reference rents that form part of the calculation of how much households receive for housing costs if eligible for support, have not kept pace with actual market rents over the past decade or so. This means that in many parts of the country there are no properties available / affordable to those entitled to such support with their housing costs, as they would otherwise have to effectively 'top up' the support they receive to be able to meet their monthly rental payments.

In 2018/19, these causes accounted for 77% of the applications received and 80% of applications received in 2023/24. The number of cases in each of these categories and the change over time is illustrated in the table below.

| Reason for loss of last settled accommodation | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| NTQ - AST | 280 | 289 | 176 | 279 | 316 | 305 |
| Family eviction | 143 | 137 | 216 | 179 | 186 | 219 |
| Victim of domestic abuse | 42 | 51 | 70 | 86 | 107 | 101 |
| Relationship with partner ended | 61 | 61 | 58 | 68 | 57 | 51 |
| Friend eviction | 9 | 16 | 29 | 24 | 35 | 28 |

Homelessness duties

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness

Prevention duty:

The authority has a duty to provide advice and assistance if an applicant is:

- eligible for assistance, which means they have the right to claim benefits and housing in the UK
- at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days (eight weeks)

This is called the prevention duty and the Council must take reasonable steps to help applicants from becoming homeless. This duty lasts for 56 days.

Relief duty:

If the authority cannot prevent an applicant from becoming homeless during the prevention duty period, it has to take reasonable steps to find the applicant suitable accommodation that will last for at least six months. This duty lasts for a further 56 days.

Homelessness decision:

If an applicant is still homeless when the relief duty period ends, the authority will make a decision about whether any further housing duty is owed. Accepting a main duty to house an applicant will only normally be if they are in priority need, are not intentionally homeless and have a local connection to Tendring.

| | Breakdown of duties | | |
|---------|---------------------|--------|-----------|
| | Prevention | Relief | Main duty |
| 2018/19 | 269 | 463 | 32 |
| 2019/20 | 306 | 494 | 60 |
| 2020/21 | 266 | 469 | 33 |
| 2021/22 | 414 | 499 | 29 |
| 2022/23 | 301 | 614 | 62 |
| 2023/24 | 285 | 647 | 112 |

These figures demonstrate that, although the number of homelessness applications has increased, the number of cases where homelessness has been prevented has remained relatively static.

Temporary accommodation options

Households might be placed in temporary accommodation pending the completion of inquiries into an application, or they might spend time waiting in temporary accommodation after an application is accepted until suitable secure accommodation becomes available.

The Council makes use of various temporary accommodation options for homeless households in the district and has access to a variety of properties for the provision of temporary accommodation through several providers.

As set out within the business case associated with the redevelopment of Spendells House that was previously reported to Cabinet, the provision of temporary accommodation is prioritised over the following key areas based on a value for money approach:

- Accommodation with shared facilities, such as bed and breakfast accommodation and hotels
- Self- contained accommodation
- Accommodation within the Council's housing stock
- Council owned temporary accommodation at Spendells House.

Spendells House opened in December 2024 and provides accommodation for up to 31 households. To date, this has provided accommodation for 41 households.

The Council also currently funds the support provided at Derek Crossfield House, which is a supported housing scheme run by Peabody for young people aged 16-25 (single people and couples) who either have care of a baby or are expecting a child and consists of 8 self-contained flats.

How the need for temporary accommodation is assessed

In cases where people have to leave their home and do not have any family or friends they can stay with whilst their homeless application progresses, the Council may offer temporary accommodation.

However, not every person who contacts the Council with a housing situation will be offered temporary accommodation. Homeless applicants may initially be provided with temporary

accommodation under the Council's interim duty to accommodate (section 188 of the Housing Act 1996) pending a decision as to what duty (if any) is owed in accordance with the legislation.

The Housing Solutions Officer will make enquiries into the reason why an applicant is homeless. These enquiries include, but are not limited to:

- Speaking to a landlord to discuss the option to allow an applicant to stay in their current home beyond the notice expiry date, if it is reasonable and safe to do so
- Speaking to parents, friends or family members to discuss the option for the applicant to stay with them whilst enquiries are completed, if it is reasonable and safe to do so

The Council will ask if an applicant has anyone that they can stay with whilst their homeless application progresses.

If the Housing Solutions Officer decides that there is an urgent need for accommodation, that a household are eligible and may have a priority need, the Homelessness Accommodation Officer will find temporary accommodation for them.

Temporary accommodation is usually allocated on the day the household will need it.

The Council has two Homelessness Accommodation Officers, who are based at Spendells House and who oversee all of the temporary accommodation provided and those households placed in this accommodation.

There is also an Accommodation Officer whose role is to source accommodation for households in temporary accommodation or under the prevention or relief duties.

Numbers in temporary accommodation

There has been a 77% increase in the number of households being placed in temporary accommodation between 2018/19 and 2023/24, as illustrated in the table below:

| Households in temporary accommodation | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---------|--|-------|
| | No of households placed in temporary accommodation * | Singles | Households with children (or expected child) | Other |
| 2018/19 | 233 | 109 | 100 | 24 |
| 2019/20 | 301 | 136 | 144 | 21 |
| 2020/21 | 279 | 188 | 72 | 19 |
| 2021/22 | 252 | 138 | 98 | 16 |
| 2022/23 | 363 | 191 | 152 | 20 |
| 2023/24 | 412 | 197 | 189 | 26 |

* this will be less than the total placements due to families being moved around

The type of temporary accommodation being provided and the average number of days spent in nightly paid accommodation is as set out below:

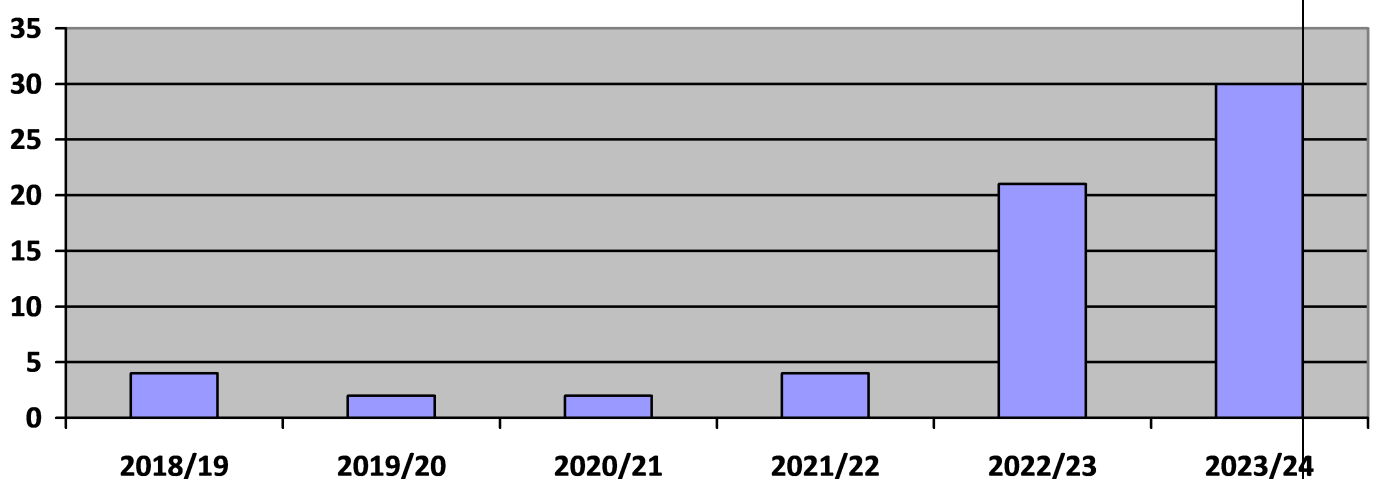
| | Placement types | | | Average no of days in B&B/nightly paid placement |
|----------------|-------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| | Placements in own stock | Placement in self-contained nightly paid | Placements in B&B/shared facilities | |
| 2018/19 | 34 | 10 | 218 | 38 |
| 2019/20 | 46 | 10 | 266 | 44 |
| 2020/21 | 25 | 14 | 237 | 39 |
| 2021/22 | 24 | 16 | 218 | 46 |
| 2022/23 | 16 | 18 | 339 | 49 |
| 2023/24 | 25 | 28 | 371 | 69 |

Placing families in bed and breakfast is not considered to be suitable accommodation and where this is for more than 42 days, this is not in accordance legislation – Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 2003.

Bed and breakfast provision is also unsuitable for 16/17yr old homeless young people as set out in joint guidance from Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Education and monitored through quarterly statistical returns to Government.

In accordance with the Domestic Abuse Act, the Local Authority has Safe Accommodation Duties to provide Safe Accommodation and support for those fleeing domestic abuse. Under these duties bed and breakfast is unsuitable and states there must be alternative provision to meet the Safe Accommodation duties under the Act.

The chart below shows the increase in the number of households with children in bed and breakfast accommodation for over six weeks, as at the end of each financial year:



The Council has a Bed and Breakfast Elimination Plan, which is a requirement of the Homelessness Prevention Grant funding received from the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This details our plans to reduce and then end our use of bed and breakfast accommodation for residents who are homeless and is submitted to and monitored by the Government's Homelessness Adviser assigned to the Council from within the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Directorate.

Rough sleepers

The Council has regard to the Government's Rough Sleeper Initiative to support people sleeping rough off the streets and develop their wellbeing and stability, helping to reduce people sleeping rough in both the short and longer term.

The numbers of people sleeping rough over the course of the last three years was as follows:

2021/22 - 38
2022/23 - 125
2023/24 – 121

This is the cumulative total of the monthly returns that are submitted to the Government – the average number of people sleeping rough in any one month is 10. Due to the location of the district, there is an annual peak in the figures during the summer months.

The Council currently has a three-year contract with Anglia Care Trust for the provision of Homeless Early Intervention and Support Services. This was entered into in September 2022, following a tender exercise, and using funding previously awarded from the Rough Sleeper Initiative as part of a collaborative bid by Essex County Council on behalf of Essex authorities. The purpose of this contract is to provide intensive support to people sleeping rough along with people who are 'sofa surfing' because they could potentially be at risk of sleeping rough and to assist them in obtaining accommodation in the Tendring area or help in locating back to their home area if this is outside of our district.

As part of the effort to assist rough sleepers during the winter months, the Council operates a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) to provide emergency temporary accommodation to rough sleepers to prevent deaths on the streets caused by extreme weather conditions. The SWEP is activated when the Met Office predicts one night of temperatures below 0 degrees Celsius.

Move on accommodation

The tables below illustrate the accommodation secured for households at either the end of the Council's prevention or relief duty.

| Type of accommodation secured for households at end of prevention duty: | 19/20 | 20/21 | 21/22 | 22/23 | 23/24 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Social rented sector | 41 | 31 | 152 | 49 | 29 |
| Private rented sector | 144 | 119 | 121 | 144 | 105 |
| Staying with family | 7 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| Staying with friends | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Owner-occupier | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Not known | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| Type of accommodation secured for households at end of relief duty: | 19/20 | 20/21 | 21/22 | 22/23 | 23/24 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Social rented sector | 59 | 58 | 131 | 114 | 153 |
| Private rented sector | 186 | 169 | 132 | 176 | 119 |
| Staying with family | 6 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 7 |
| Staying with friends | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 0 |

| | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|----|---|---|
| Owner-occupier | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Other | 1 | 2 | 10 | 6 | 6 |
| Not known | 3 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 1 |

| Outcome of households no longer owed a main duty: | 19/20 | 20/21 | 21/22 | 22/23 | 23/24 |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Housing Act 1996 Pt6 social housing offer - accepted | 31 | 18 | 41 | 39 | 99 |
| Housing Act 1996 Pt6 social housing offer - refused | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Private rented sector offer6 - accepted | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Private rented sector offer3 - refused | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Voluntarily ceased to occupy | 6 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 6 |
| Refused suitable TA offer, withdrew or lost contact | 4 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 6 |
| Became intentionally homeless from TA | 6 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Ceased to be eligible | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Not known | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

These tables demonstrate a considerable increase in the use of social housing to discharge homelessness duties, which in turn has an adverse impact on other households on the Council's Housing Register.

In summary, the main themes arising from this review of homelessness are:

- There has been a decrease in the proportion of cases where homelessness has been prevented
- There has been an increase in the number of cases where a main or full housing duty has been accepted
- There has been a significant increase in both the use of temporary accommodation and the length of stay in this accommodation
- There has been an increase in the use of social housing to discharge homelessness duties

CURRENT POSITION

Although not necessarily exhaustive, it is proposed to explore a number of activities as set out below to support the Council in effectively managing the financial / non-financial risks of the increasing homelessness challenge within the district.

These actions can therefore continue to be explored / developed, and subject to the recommendations above, updates will be presented / reviewed as part of the work of the proposed Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation working group.

Potential for increasing income streams

- Temporary accommodation charges

According to the Council's Temporary Accommodation Policy, households placed in temporary accommodation should have to make a financial contribution towards their housing costs whether they are working or are in receipt of benefits. This contribution usually covers

accommodation charges that are not eligible for Housing Benefit. In situations where a homeless household does not receive full Housing Benefit or Universal Credit due to eligibility, income or saving, the applicant will be responsible for paying the difference between their maximum benefit entitlement and the cost of the accommodation.

Due to the increased demand on staff caused by the volume of homelessness approaches and applications, this financial contribution towards housing costs from those placed in temporary accommodation is not currently being recovered. For the financial year 2023-2024, it is estimated that the amount that could have been recharged would have been in excess of £98,000. A possible solution to address this would be the recruitment of a Housing Solutions Support Officer whose sole focus would be the charging and recovery of these costs. In addition, the procurement of an additional module to the existing Housing Solutions and Allocations software currently in place would facilitate the recovery of charges from those in temporary accommodation and enable monitoring reporting and communication of rent and service charge payments

➤ Review of Tenancy Deposit Guarantee Policy

In January 2024, the Council's Cabinet adopted a Tenancy Deposit Guarantee which aimed to help those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness to move into privately rented accommodation via a written agreement – a Deposit Guarantee - rather than the cash deposit usually required to secure the tenancy of a property. However, since the implementation of this Policy there has been an unwillingness on the part of landlords to engage with this change of practice.

It is therefore proposed that, in line with the practice of a number of other housing providers including Colchester City Council, the Council investigates the payment of tenancy deposits and / or rent in advance payments as a loan to the tenant which is then recovered by the Council via monthly repayments. The additional capacity via a Housing Solutions Officer highlighted above could also support the recovery of these payments as necessary.

Reducing use of temporary accommodation

➤ Cabinet Office Test and Learn pilot

The Council is taking part in the Cabinet Office's Test and Learn project across Essex which aims to introduce innovative ways to reduce homelessness and end rough sleeping and test their impact with a series of trials and rigorous evaluations. This was commissioned by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and it aims to have interim findings from the trials from 2025

From the initial scoping work carried out, this project is looking at how the numbers in temporary accommodation can be reduced through behavioural interventions, such as revised communications guidelines for staff, pictorial / visuals to ease communications with customers and better online content.

The London Borough of Croydon has successfully employed these interventions at the pre and presentation stages of homelessness and has increased the number of homelessness preventions successfully prevented increased by 36 percentage points and saved £3.8m per year.

This project aims to build on the good practice in place across the sector and to develop a framework of these for local authorities to use.

➤ Early prevention work

Homelessness prevention is achieved through comprehensive advice and assistance covering the full range of housing options offered by the Council and other agencies to enable customers to find solutions to their housing issues. Whilst prevention work is still being achieved by the Housing Solutions officers currently in the team, they are unable to dedicate time to the more complex prevention cases due to the large number of cases that have gone past the prevention duty and are now at the relief stage and at a crisis point.

It is proposed that the review of the Homelessness Prevention Policy is delayed to take account of the learning from the Cabinet Office project as set out above.

It is also proposed that consideration is given to recruiting a Housing Early Intervention Officer on a fixed term basis with the aim of:

- Reducing some of the need for temporary accommodation and the associated costs
- Reducing the number of cases accepted at the relief stage
- Building positive relationships with private landlords and other accommodation providers

➤ Increase management capacity

The East of England Local Government Association Peer Review of the Council's housing service, carried out in 2023, and their subsequent deep dive into its homelessness services identified that the Council could benefit from increased management capacity within the Housing Solutions Team. The creation of a Senior Housing Officer post has since been agreed, as part of a minor restructure and the required consultation carried out. The implementation of this restructure has now been agreed and it is hoped that recruitment will take place in the very near future.

This post will provide oversight of cases and support the triage function and Housing Solutions Officers to make robust and timely homeless decisions meaning that households do not stay in temporary accommodation for any longer than we have a legal duty towards them.

Quality of temporary accommodation

➤ Review of Temporary Accommodation Policy

Also in January 2024, the Council's Cabinet also approved a Temporary Accommodation Policy. This sets out the Council's approach to placing homeless applicants in emergency and temporary accommodation both within the Tendring District and, where necessary, outside of the area. This policy is now due for review and it is proposed that its remit is widened to cover both placements as well as the ways the Council secures its temporary accommodation to ensure that:

- Temporary accommodation is obtained as a fair price and that costs are driven down whilst value for money is achieved
- Temporary accommodation is suitable, compliant with health and safety requirements and in a decent condition
- Residents in temporary accommodation are actively supported to access the full range of services around employment, training, financial and debt advice

- Reliance on nightly paid accommodation is reduced
- Mechanisms are put in place to collect service user feedback on their experience on living in temporary accommodation to inform any required service improvements or changes to the services provided

➤ **Availability of private rented sector accommodation**

To ensure a supply of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector, it is proposed that the Council investigates the feasibility of implementing a Private Sector Leasing Scheme or other form of landlord incentive to set out what landlords can expect from working with the Council to provide accommodation for homeless households and what is expected in return.

The Council is also due to hold a second Landlord's Forum in the Autumn of 2025 to help develop and maintain its relationships with private sector landlords in the District.

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

APPENDICES

None

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