



Housing Policy Sub-Committee 12 November 2018

Homelessness Update

Purpose of report

This report advises Members of the current position in respect of homelessness in the District following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into effect on 3rd April 2018. The Act placed significant new duties on the council, most notably to:
- prevent and alleviate homelessness for 'non-priority' applicants
 - provide all applicants with Personal Housing Plans
 - prevent homelessness once a household is threatened with homelessness within 56 days (previously 28 days).
- 1.2 Under the new legislation, if someone makes a homelessness application the council has the following duties:
- 1) **The Prevention Duty** – the council has to take reasonable steps to help an applicant who is threatened with homelessness secure that accommodation does not cease to be available for occupation (this can include providing alternative accommodation)
 - 2) **The Relief Duty** – if the homelessness cannot be prevented, or if the applicant is homeless at the time of the application, the council has to take reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure that suitable accommodation becomes available for occupation for at least 6 months
 - 3) **The Main Homelessness Duty** – if the homelessness cannot be relieved and the applicant is eligible for assistance, is in priority need (e.g. has children, is elderly or disabled), is not intentionally homeless and has a local connection to the district, the council has a duty to secure accommodation for the applicant. If the applicant is intentionally homeless they should be provided with suitable temporary accommodation for a reasonable period.
- 1.3 The council has received additional government funding to assist in the delivery of its additional duties as follows:

Funding Pot	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Flexible Homelessness Support Grant	£45,521	£48,403	£68,735
New Burdens Funding	£15,056	£13,791	£17,784
Total	£60,577	£62,194	£86,519

- 1.4 The council agreed that the New Burdens Funding should be held in reserve to cover the costs of the new software needed to meet the new monitoring and Government reporting requirements in respect of the homelessness caseload. This software currently costs £8,000 per annum. There will be no further New Burdens Funding after 2019/20.

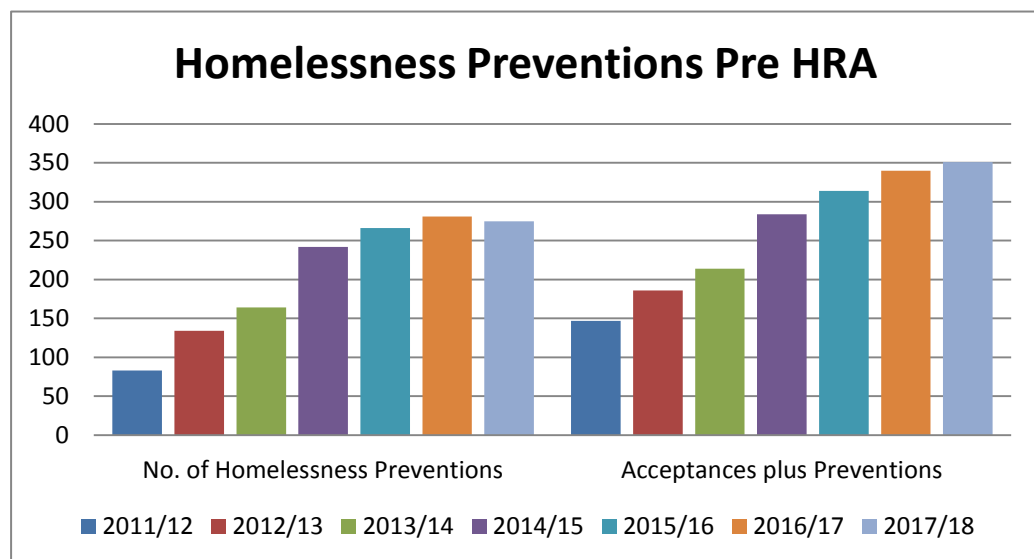
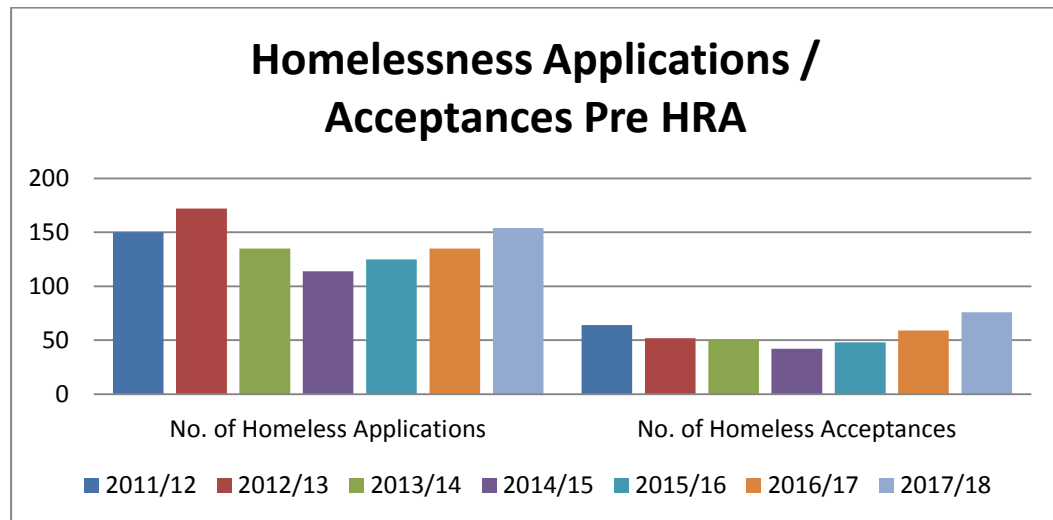
- 1.5 The council further agreed that the ring-fenced Flexible Homelessness Support Grant for 2017/18 and 2018/19 should be allocated to
- provide an additional Homelessness Prevention Officer for the Housing Options Contract
 - cover the cost of necessary alterations at the Homes Direct offices to provide extra office and interview space
 - provide a contingency fund in case additional Bed and Breakfast costs were needed
 - establish a Homelessness Prevention One-Off Payment Scheme.

A further report on homelessness spending and funding will be brought to Members for consideration early in 2019.

2.0 Homelessness Applications

- 2.1 The graphs below show the numbers of homelessness applications made to East Northamptonshire Council prior to the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, the numbers of acceptances i.e. those to whom the council accepted a full duty to provide accommodation, as well as the number of homelessness preventions undertaken through the Housing Options Contract.

2.2



- 2.3 Under the old legislation, homelessness preventions were recorded by Homes Direct whenever advice and assistance was provided irrespective of whether a formal application for assistance under the homelessness legislation was taken. Such cases would include if a Discretionary Housing Payment was secured from Housing Benefit which enabled a tenant to remain in their property, or if Homes Direct's negotiations with a landlord or mortgage company led to an arrangement to repay rent or mortgage arrears. No formal homelessness application was taken but homelessness was nevertheless prevented.
- 2.4 Under the new Homelessness Reduction Act, Homelessness Preventions have to be recorded and reported to the Government. However, they are only to be reported where a formal homelessness application has been made. New Performance Indicators have been introduced to track applications, those whose homelessness was prevented or relieved and those to whom the full duty was owed. These figures cannot be directly compared with those at 2.2 above as they are recording different things and applying different legislation - in spite of the similar wording.
- 2.5 Under the new recording system the figures for the first 6 months of operation of the HRA can be seen in the table below:

2.6

Homelessness Applications Post HRA			
Performance Indicator (tracking only, not targets)	Apr-Jun 2018	July-Sept 2018	Total Apr-Sept 2018
No. of households who made an initial approach for assistance under the HRA	194	144	338
No. of households whose homelessness was successfully prevented	11	39	50
No. of households whose homelessness was successfully relieved	7	12	19
No. of households to whom the full homelessness duty was owed	1	0	1
No. of households living in temporary accommodation (snapshot at end of quarter)	3	1	N/a
Of which in 'paid nightly' accommodation	1	1	N/a

- 2.7 Whilst the figures cannot be directly compared, the following table may help to explain some of the substantial differences before and after the introduction of the HRA:

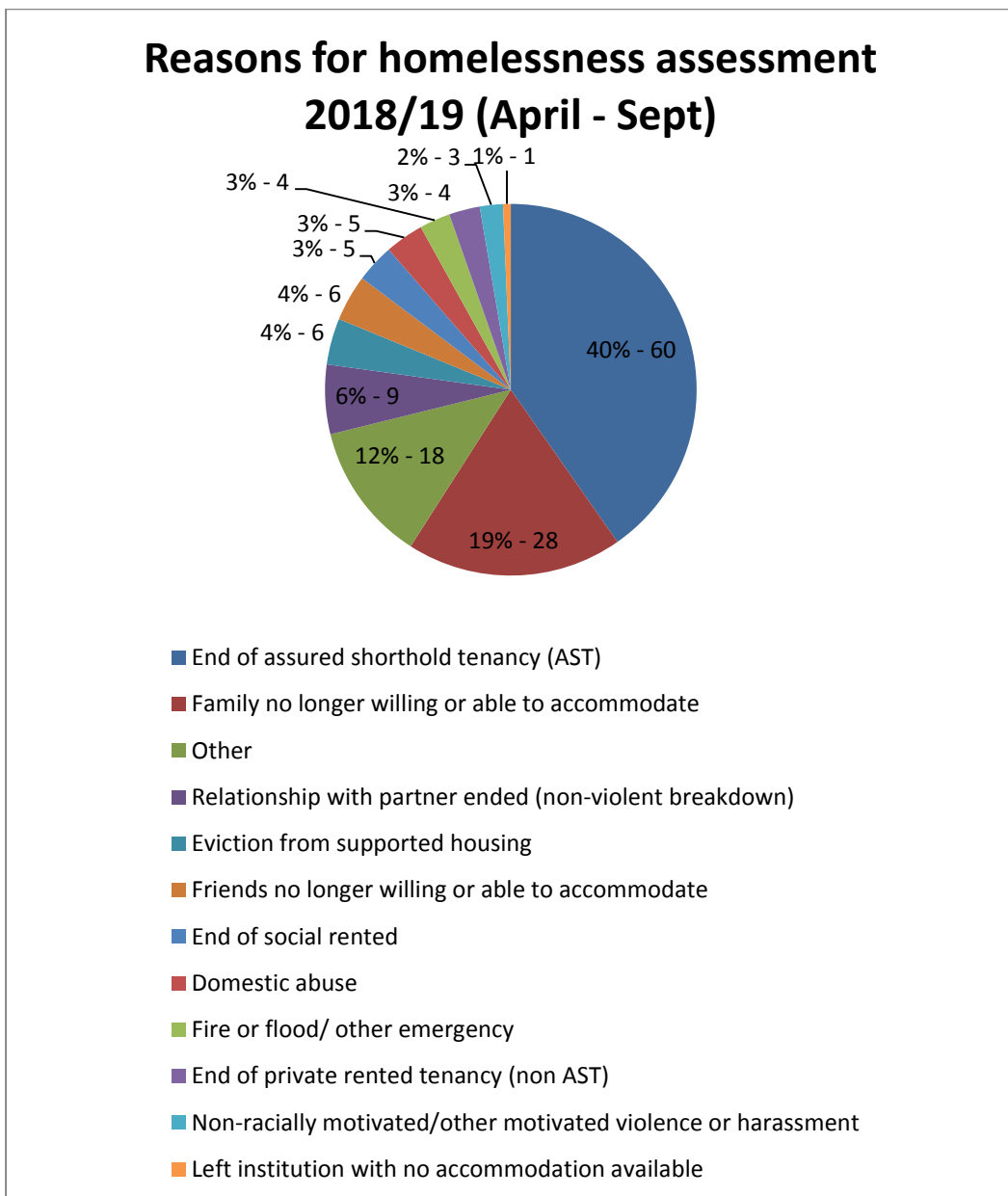
Difference	Reason
Number of applications is substantially higher than before HRA	More formal applications need to be taken and at an earlier stage. Many would previously have been dealt with informally as prevention cases
Number of preventions is substantially lower than before HRA	This figure doesn't include those cases where no formal application is taken. Also it will be an accumulative figure as more prevention cases complete successfully. Many applications under the new Act have not yet completed
Number of relief cases is low	This is a new recording category and these cases may have previously been dealt with as preventions or they may have been acceptances of the full duty under the old legislation. Also it will be an accumulative figure as more cases are

	successfully relieved. Many applications under the new Act have not yet completed
Number owed the full duty is low	The full duty is now only owed if all attempts to prevent and relieve the applicant's homelessness have failed, so this number should be low
Number in temporary accommodation is low	We have always managed to keep our use of temporary accommodation low as a result of our successful homelessness prevention strategies

3.0 Reasons for homelessness

3.1 Reasons for homelessness are varied. The following table shows the reasons recorded for those cases which have completed through the process. Loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancy remains the highest cause, followed by family and friends no longer being able or willing to accommodate:

3.2



4.0 Bed and Breakfast

4.1 Use of Bed and Breakfast and other nightly paid accommodation has remained low in the district, particularly in comparison to other areas in the county. The table below itemises the council's spend on nightly paid accommodation since 2011/12.

4.2

Financial Year	Total Cost of B&B	Where Part Subsidied by DWP	Where Part Subsidied by ENC (HB payments)	Where Fully Costed to ENC (Homelessness budget)	Total Cost to ENC	Number of cases subsidised	Number of cases no subsidy	Total number of B&B Cases
2011/12	£2,711	£898	£698	£1,115	£1,813	4	3	7
2012/13	£7,964	£3,678	£4,286	£0	£4,286	14	0	14
2013/14	£22,923	£10,153	£12,515	£255	£12,770	22	2	24
2014/15	£17,291	£6,460	£10,801	£30	£10,831	17	1	18
2015/16	£9,213	£3,694	£4,806	£713	£5,519	11	4	15
2016/17	£23,764	£8,337	£13,812	£1,615	£15,427	24	0	24
2017/18	£38,435	£15,488	£20,814	£2,133*	£22,947	33	0	33
2018/19 (to 30.9.18)	£20,162	£10,510	£9,579	£73*	£9,652	16	0	16
TOTAL	£142,463	£59,218	£77,311	£5,934	£83,245	141	10	151

*Estimated

5.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

5.1 This report is purely for information and requires no decision from committee. There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

6.0 Privacy Impact Implications

6.1 This report is purely for information and requires no decision from committee. There are no privacy impact implications arising from this report.

7.0 Legal Implications

7.1 The council has a statutory obligation to provide advice and assistance under the Homelessness Reduction Act. The council's duties towards the homeless have increased under the legislation.

8.0 Risk Management

8.1 There is a risk that homelessness will increase in the district and that the council will have to pay the additional costs associated with the risk. The council's risk register includes RM PLN 014 'Increase in Homelessness Applications'. Early indications from the new legislation are that whilst homelessness applications are higher, this is related more to how cases are dealt with rather than an actual increase in numbers of cases. The extra funding provided by the council for the additional Homelessness Prevention Officer has helped to minimise the impact of the increased duties towards the applicants.

9.0 Resource and Financial Implications

9.1 This report is for information only and there are no resource or financial implications arising directly from it. A further report will be brought to this sub-committee to consider future homelessness funding and the additional resources available through the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant for 2019/20. It is anticipated that the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant will continue after 2019/20, although it is likely that an allocation will be made to the proposed unitary authority rather than to East Northamptonshire Council.

10.0 Constitutional Implications

10.1 There are no constitutional implications arising from this report.

11.0 Implications for our Customers

11.1 The council needs to ensure that adequate services are provided to meet our statutory duties towards people who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

12.0 Corporate Outcomes

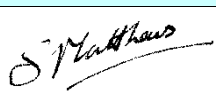
12.1 The prevention and relief of homelessness contributes to the following corporate outcomes:

- Good Quality of Life – the reduction of homelessness improves quality of life and reduces the health and social problems associated with homelessness
- Good Value for Money – homelessness prevention saves the council money in the longer term by limiting the costs of temporary accommodation

13.0 Recommendation

13.1 The Committee is recommended to note the effects of the new legislation and the current levels of homelessness in the district.

(Reason – to accord with legislation)

Legal	Power: Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
	Other considerations: Homelessness Code of Guidance
Background Papers:	Finance Sub Committee 26 June 2017 Item 11 Finance Sub Committee 13 th November 2017 Item 5
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