



GUILD F O R D  
B O R O U G H

## Homelessness Strategy 2018-2020 (Appendix 1)

Contents	
Foreword	2
Introduction	3
Achievements	4
The challenges we face	5
Our priorities	8
Prevention	8
Support	10
Supply	13
Action Plan	15
Appendix 2 – evidence base	18
Appendix 3 – consultation	36



## **Foreword**

The issues around homelessness must affect us all and are of great concern to me. We believe that every person matters and are committed to helping the vulnerable members of our community.

Preventing homelessness, which has been at the core of our approach for many years, remains our priority however the provision of a home in isolation is not an adequate solution for the most disadvantaged people who approach us for assistance. We need to ensure there are services providing timely advice and support to help people manage, promoting the importance of health and wellbeing and encouraging participation in local communities.

Our new two-year strategy outlines the challenges we face over the coming years. We have already reshaped aspects of our service to allow us to respond effectively and will review our action plans annually to gain a better understanding of the impact of the changes.

This strategy sets out our opportunities particularly how we intend to commission services that deliver quality and value for money. We can only achieve this working with our strategic and voluntary sector partners whose contribution is vital and greatly appreciated.

We have a strong track record in providing services for homeless people and rough sleepers and remain committed to developing these services to ensure we help those most in need.

### **Councillor Philip Brooker**

Lead Councillor for Housing and Development Management

## **Introduction**

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on housing authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their area at least every five years and to develop a strategy that provides direction for the delivery of homelessness services. Our last strategy covered the period 2013-2018 and has now reached its conclusion.

This refreshed strategy will cover the period 2018-2020 when the Homelessness Prevention Strategy will be aligned with the Housing Strategy to provide one over-arching vision to set out our housing and support ambitions for Guildford moving forward.

This document will not address in detail issues of supply and delivery of new housing as these are covered in the Housing Strategy.

Examination of our evidence base and customer and partner consultation has informed the development of our priorities and helped us to formulate our action plans. We will monitor, review and update the action plans in 2019. During the two-year life of this strategy we will gain a clearer understanding of the implications of current legislative and welfare reform change, which will help direct and inform our new strategy from 2020 onwards.

The Council would like to extend sincere thanks to our statutory and voluntary partners for their continued support. Effective joint working arrangements are key to our ability to offer options and opportunities to prevent and resolve homelessness at the earliest opportunity. We look forward to developing and refining our partnership arrangements to ensure that we maximise our resources and continue to meet the needs of people who use our service.

## **Achievements**

Our recent achievements include:

### **Managing the impact of welfare change**

- Effective use of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) ensuring the most vulnerable families have been able to sustain or secure suitable housing
  - total of £779,216 DHP spent between 2013-18
  - in 2017-18 we made 232 successful awards, spending a total of £258,233
  - helped fund rent in advance
  - helped top up LHA to meet rental shortfall
  - supported families affected by the benefit cap
- Joint work with Job Centre Plus (JCP+)
- Citizens Advice – Money Advice service in Guildford and Ash have generated £1.124m of income gain for clients
- Provided additional support to landlords dealing with benefit issues
- Our ETHOS service has assisted 32 individuals into employment or accredited training

### **Sustaining and creating access to accommodation**

- Homes 4U helped 421 households secure private rented accommodation from 2013-2018
- Homes 4U increased the number of households assisted in 2017-18 by improving landlord incentives and increasing support to tenants.
- Joint commissioning with Surrey County Council to continue the Riverside floating support service

### **Tackling rough sleeping and single homelessness**

- Effective multi agency Severe Weather Emergency Protocol arrangements in place 62 nights of emergency accommodation provided in winter 2017-2018
- Successful launch of the Indigo Project providing mental health support to rough sleepers and people at risk of homelessness
- Recommissioned the Homeless Outreach and Support Team (HOST) service and reduced cost

### **Service Delivery, strategic partnerships and communication**

- Prevented 2343 households from becoming homeless from 2013-2018 in partnership with Citizens Advice and HOST
- Minimised the use of Bed and Breakfast
  - average length of stay just over 3 weeks between 2013-18
  - only 42 placements on average per year between 2013-18
  - no families in B&B for more than 6 weeks since December 2015
- Successful introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act through service reconfiguration and work with partner agencies
- Completed a successful diagnostic peer review with support from the National Practitioner Support Service

## **The Challenges we face**

### **Welfare reform**

We anticipate that the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) in Guildford from October 2018 will present a range of difficulties for our customers. Tenants living in established UC areas report errors and delays in processing and receiving payments, communication difficulties with the DWP and difficulties managing money and meeting housing costs.

Registered Providers and Landlords have reported increases in rent arrears and evictions and noted that more time needed to be spent supporting tenants. These issues offer little encouragement to Landlords to let their properties to people claiming welfare benefits.

There is evidence that suggests that the effects of UC have had a wider social impact including increased use of food banks, personal debt and a negative impact on health and wellbeing primarily concerning mental health.

Further to the pilot feedback, concessions have been made by the Government. This includes the exemption of temporary accommodation from the housing costs element of UC meaning families in temporary accommodation are still able to claim housing benefit.

In November 2016, the benefit cap for families was lowered to £20,000 and we saw an increase in the numbers of households affected, particularly larger families (see figure 19). Although we have seen a decline in numbers since then, overall more families are affected now than when the cap was first introduced. Housing options for this group are extremely limited and families often choose to move to a smaller property so they can remain in the borough.

### **Private Rented Sector**

The 2001 census recorded the private rented sector at around 9% of housing stock in the borough. By the time of the 2011 census, this increased to nearly 16%, and this figure is expected to climb further for the next census in 2021. The sector provides a mix of high-end properties to more modest flats and houses plus approximately 1,290 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) many of which are occupied by younger working people.

From 1st October 2018, the HMO mandatory licensing scheme will be extended to include all multi-occupied properties where there are five or more occupants from two or more separate households (families) and where the building is either a converted building with living accommodation, or one that contains self-contained flats, but not a purpose-built block of flats. The new scheme imposes a range of standards and safety measures with the aim of improving the overall standard of accommodation in the sector. It is likely that Landlords will need to undertake a range of works to ensure that properties meet the new standards but some may choose to withdraw from the market, potentially reducing supply.

There have been a number of changes to taxation affecting Landlords. These include the 3% stamp duty surcharge on buy to let properties, loss of 10% wear and tear allowance and the gradual phasing out of tax relief on mortgage interest ending in 2020. These changes make the buy to let market less financially attractive, may discourage new investors from entering the market or prompt existing Landlords to leave.

The government intends to bring forward legislation banning Landlords and letting agents from charging private sector tenants and licensees fees for granting, renewing or continuing a tenancy and other fees associated with lettings. The legislation intends to provide a fairer, more competitive, affordable and transparent market however our concern is that Landlords may recoup these costs by increasing rents.

### **Affordability**

Guildford is an area of high cost housing in both owner occupied and private rented sectors. There is a high demand for all types of properties resulting in a competitive market, increased house prices and rent levels that are out of reach for most people on low incomes and those dependent on benefits. Rent levels also prevent people in better-paid employment from accessing suitable accommodation.

Local Housing Allowance has not kept pace with local rent increases. For example, the monthly median rent for a 3 bed property increased by 18.5% between 2013-2017. Over the same period, the LHA 3 bed rate increased by 2.1%. The difference between median rent and LHA for a 3 bed property in October 2017 was £340<sup>1</sup>. These differences place the majority of properties out of reach for people who are faced with a choice of moving into a smaller property or moving away from Guildford to a more affordable area.

The affordable housing schemes we develop offer families the opportunity to access housing with rent that is set within the Local Housing Allowance rate and does not exceed 80% of the market rent. We have experienced ongoing difficulties letting these properties as working families do not feel that this option is affordable or sustainable in the longer term and would prefer waiting for a social rent property. This challenges our ability to follow the lettings plans which we implement for all new affordable housing to ensure we create balanced communities.

Discretionary Housing Payment may be used to support households who cannot meet housing costs such as rent in advance or shortfall in rent due to the benefit cap. This is only a temporary measure and a longer-term solution such as finding employment to remove the benefit cap must be found.

### **Availability**

We have also seen registered providers become increasingly selective when considering offering accommodation and risk averse in relation to the more vulnerable individuals who are living with multiple disadvantages or reliant on benefits. The practice of requesting references is increasingly problematic and reduces housing options for those in greatest need.

### **Debt**

The challenges associated with securing accommodation are exacerbated when people have personal or housing related debts as these affect accessibility and affordability of housing. Any form of debt will, at some point, impact on a household's ability to maintain rent payments.

It is often customers in the greatest need who cannot meet the requirements of the private rented sector due to debt. This includes passing credit referencing checks and providing a guarantor (who would need to earn between 30-36 times the monthly rent and pass a check). This places a burden on the Council as landlords are reluctant to offer to people with outstanding debt and we

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 fig 15

have to improve our incentives to encourage landlords to accept higher risk tenants. We underwrite this risk by providing rent in advance, increasingly up to six months' rent in advance.

### **Future funding of supported housing and hostels**

In October 2017 the Government published a consultation document outlining their intention to introduce a new funding system for supported housing. The proposals for short-term supported housing (including night shelters, hostels and supported housing) are for these services to be commissioned at a local level, funded through a ring-fenced grant and underpinned by a new planning and oversight regime. This would mean that all costs for housing (including rent and eligible service charges) previously funded through housing benefit, would instead, be allocated to local authorities enabling them to commission services to meet local need. If implemented, this model would remove short-term accommodation costs from the welfare system. We do not yet know the outcome of the consultation however; the sector has expressed a number of concerns including the insecurity of ring-fenced funds, lack of certainty for providers and allocation of funds to upper tier authorities when the expertise and responsibility for housing rests with the lower tier (boroughs and districts).

Hostels and supported housing services are commissioned by Surrey County Council Adult Social Care. The County Council is facing significant ongoing financial pressures and in April 2018 the Housing Related Support budget for socially excluded groups was reduced resulting in a 10% funding reduction to supported housing and 50% to floating support. We anticipate this level of funding will continue until April 2020 but beyond this we do not have any certainty.

### **Leaving the European Union**

We do not yet know how our departure from the EU will impact; however, there is widespread concern that housing and social care could be affected as a direct consequence from our departure. Risks could include; reduced access to low cost finance affecting the building of new homes, an economic downturn leading to a rise in unemployment, interest rate increases making home ownership less affordable, difficulties in recruitment and retention of staff working in the health and social care sectors and further reductions to public sector budgets.

## Priorities

We have identified three priority themes to help us meet local challenges and Government priorities over the next two years.

1. **Prevention** – Effective and creative use of resources to prevent homelessness
2. **Support** – Provision of a range of support services to help people access and sustain accommodation
3. **Supply** – Ensuring there is an adequate supply of accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

Effective partnership working with statutory and voluntary sector organisations underpins all aspects of our work and is essential to our success.

## Prevention

The prevention of homelessness is the central objective of our Homelessness Strategy.

### Homeless Reduction Act

The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act has required us to review and change the way we work. We have restructured the team and implemented new posts to reflect our new duties. The new case management software supports the implementation of our new procedures, it provides the means to communicate effectively with our customers and enables us to record the information required to meet the new reporting requirements. We have developed pathways to provide direction and transparency about how we intend to work with people and will continue to work with our partners to refine joint working arrangements to improve the customer experience.

In recognition of the additional requirements that the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act places on councils the Government has provided additional funds until 2020. We have received £591,648 Flexible Homelessness Grant and New Burdens funding of £102,653 both of which are ring fenced for homelessness. This funding provides us with resources and flexibility to adapt as we implement the new legislation and given time, establish what the longer-term implications will be.

### Early Intervention

Identifying people who are vulnerable to becoming homeless early on enables us to promote support services, which reduce the risk of homelessness. Early intervention provides the opportunity to address issues and helps to prevent problems and debts increasing in scale and complexity.

Effective joint working with our partners is key to successful early intervention and we continually seek ways to raise the profile of housing with our partners to ensure homelessness is prioritised and recognised as an important factor contributing to an individual's health and wellbeing. We will ensure pathways and protocols promote these aims and recognise that small adaptations can have considerable impact. For example, when a council tenant has arrears the Estate Manager will make a referral to Citizens Advice. With the tenant's permission, the Homeless Prevention Team are included in the referral which enables officers to monitor the situation and step in early to provide advice and assistance if matters aren't being resolved.

It is often the most vulnerable people who do not seek help until problems escalate beyond their control and become difficult to resolve. There are many reasons why people do not seek help, these may include, a lack of awareness of support available, denial, fear, mental health problems or substance misuse issues. We will work with our partners, faith and community based organisations and the voluntary sector to ensure that our work and services are widely publicised and promoted as welcoming and non-judgmental.

### **Commissioning services**

We currently commission a range of services to support our homelessness prevention work.

Maximising income from eligible benefits and other sources is an important prevention activity as an increase in income can make the difference between a property being affordable or not. The Council commissions Citizens Advice to provide Money Advice Caseworkers to fulfil this role. In the past two years, the Guildford and Ash offices have worked with 480 clients and generated £1.124m of income gain for clients.

Our ETHOS service assists people to access employment, training, education and voluntary opportunities. For households struggling to secure or retain affordable accommodation, support to access work enables them to remain in their home or in the local area as employment can remove the household from the benefit cap.

Providing support to people and families to manage when they move into a new home or encounter issues during their tenancy is an important aspect of our homelessness prevention work. Problems can arise at any stage in a tenancy and it is important for us to be able to respond promptly to support tenants to resolve difficulties that could, if left unaddressed, result in them losing their home. We have adapted roles within the Housing Advice Service to provide this type of help to ensure we can support people effectively. We now jointly commission the Riverside Floating Support service with Surrey County Council in response to the reduction in funding from April 2018. This service has been redesigned to meet the requirements under Homelessness Reduction act and the Care Act.

The HOST service contributes to our prevention success through a wide range of activities from the provision of basic information, advice and signposting to responsive work including facilitating hospital discharge arrangements, negotiating with housing providers and families to sustain accommodation and multi-agency work to prevent people discharged from prison to rough sleeping. In some cases, complex casework is required and HOST is tasked to find creative solutions to overcome the many obstacles it encounters.

Mindful that funding constraints may lead other commissioning bodies into decisions that could have consequences for us, we recognise that the same environment is also driving organisations to seek opportunities to develop partnerships, maximise resources and explore joint commissioning opportunities. We support this approach and will contribute to the development of any new and existing provision, which assists us to prevent homelessness or increases access to accommodation.

## **Our key actions**

### **Homeless Reduction Act**

- Work with partners to evaluate the effectiveness of client pathways
- Raise awareness with public bodies about their duty to refer under HRA 17

### **Early intervention**

- Use data for early intervention opportunities
- Participate in the development of Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM)
- Work with partners to develop new and adapt existing procedures to promote early intervention

### **Commissioning**

- Develop a plan for future procurement and commissioning of services

## **Support**

While increasing access to accommodation remains an ongoing priority, the provision of accommodation on its own is not sufficient to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in our community. Appropriate and personalised support forms an essential part of our offer to help prevent homelessness and to secure and retain accommodation. Beyond housing or homelessness issues, we recognise the importance of people participating in and contributing to their communities and the wider benefits that addressing health and wellbeing can bring. With our partners, we will ensure that our services treat people with dignity and respect and take in account the strengths and interests of individuals rather than focusing on their problems. The provision of high quality support services providing information, advice and help to navigate through the many and varied processes and pathways is key to achieving long-term positive outcomes.

Support in Guildford is provided through a range of service provision including:

#### Single people

- Homeless Outreach and Support Service
- Nightshelter
- Day Centre
- Supported Housing and Hostels for a range of client groups
- Severe Weather Emergency Provision
- Mental Health support service

#### Families

- Family Support Programme
- Early Help approach
- Floating Support

#### Young People

- Care Leavers Service
- Families Service

#### Domestic Abuse

- Sanctuary scheme
- Refuges
- Domestic Abuse Outreach Service

## Generic support

- Money advice service
- Employment and training support service
- Rent deposit scheme with tenancy support
- Court desk – Access to justice
- Range of other generic and specialist advice services

## Welfare Reform

The introduction of Universal Credit will place greater responsibility on individuals requiring navigation of a new online benefit claim system and a proactive approach to communication, budgeting and tenancy management. These issues already present difficulties for the most vulnerable in our community particularly when a household's circumstances change and the provision of ongoing support will be essential to help prevent homelessness and sustain existing accommodation. We will continue to maximise the use of DHP and will promote access to our Money Advice, ETHOS and Court Desk services to ensure that risks are minimised.

## Rough Sleeping

Rough sleeping and single homelessness remain our most challenging areas of work. Single people are not normally a priority for housing and have limited options available. Single people under 60, make up 45% of the housing register and are the largest group waiting to be housed. We have seen an increase in the number of single people with mental health issues placed in Bed and Breakfast. In 2016-17, there were 10 single placements, this rose to 26 in 2017-18.

The nature of rough sleeping has changed considerably since we began work in this area. Public sector services including health and social care have faced severe financial constraints, services have increased eligibility thresholds and people previously eligible for support no longer qualify. Where previously the complexity label has been attached to the individual and their support needs current thinking suggests that it is the services and systems that create the complexities for people facing severe and multiple disadvantages.

Rough sleeping has increased nationally and areas are trialling a range of new approaches to support people away from life on the street. One such approach is the offer of permanent accommodation to people directly from the street alongside wrap around support to help people recover and sustain their tenancy. Intensive support is expensive to provide but balanced against reductions in contact with health, criminal justice and social care services can offer significant savings to the public purse.

The Government is leading a national effort to end rough sleeping and has formed a Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel to help develop a national strategy as part of their commitment to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminate it altogether by 2027. We will follow the development of this initiative and consider opportunities to apply for any additional funding available to support the implementation of the strategy.

## Indigo

In January 2017, in partnership with Waverley and Woking Borough Councils, we successfully secured funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for Homeless Prevention Grant for the Indigo Project. Indigo is a two-year project employing Mental Health Professionals and support workers with a remit to assist people with unaddressed mental health issues who are new to rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness. Although the project has

only been operating a short time it already having a significant impact, bridging the gap between statutory and community based services, providing information and support and ensuring that people with chaotic lifestyles are able to access the help they need and. With 58% of HOSTs caseload of rough sleepers and people at risk of rough sleeping identified as having mental health as their primary support need, specialist mental health support is an important part of our offer to this client group and an area we need to consider when considering future commissioning.

### **Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM)**

In 2017 Surrey County Council, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey and Surrey Police were successful in joining the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) programme. MEAM is an approach that helps local areas to design and deliver better coordinated services for people experiencing a combination of homelessness, substance misuse and mental health problems. These multiple disadvantages frequently result in people facing repeat contact with the criminal justice system, health and social care services. Securing or sustaining accommodation is a huge challenge for this client group and we recognise the importance of contributing to the development of new approaches and initiatives through membership of the steering group to ensure housing remains an important priority.

### **Commissioning services**

Our Voluntary Grants Panel provides funding to local organisations providing a range of support services to help vulnerable people in need. The Council intends to move towards a commissioning approach in future to ensure that resources promote effective joint working, are outcome focused and targeted to support the Councils strategic aims.

In keeping with the national picture, we have seen a number of changes in relation to single homelessness and rough sleeping such as the increase in female rough sleeping and working homeless people. The majority of our rough sleeper services were developed in the 1980s and 1990s and although the services have continuously evolved and grown since then, overall the service offer to this client group is now fragmented and outdated.

We will work with our commissioning and voluntary sector partners to develop a new service delivery model for rough sleepers and non-priority single homeless people and commission services to maximise the effectiveness of our resources and in light of our obligations under the new legislation. When commissioning services we will ensure that our approach reflects our aim not just to provide a quick fix solution but provision of tailored support that helps people to build resilience and acquire the skills and confidence to make sustainable changes to their lives.

### **Our key actions**

#### **Welfare reform**

- Prepare for the introduction of Universal Credit and support our customers and partners
- Maximise access to money advice and other support services to prevent homelessness

#### **Rough Sleeping**

- Monitor and support HOST's work, in particular the interface with the HRA17
- Develop the Indigo Project and evaluate the impact to inform future commissioning
- Participate in the development of Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM)

## **Service Delivery**

- Work with customers and partners to improve the customer journey
- Investigate the feasibility of implementing Housing First

## **Commissioning**

- Review service provision for rough sleepers and recommission services

## **Supply**

### **Private rented sector**

Our Homes 4U team works creatively to maximise access to the private rented sector. We have had to improve the financial incentives to Landlords and increase the support offered to tenants enabling faster resolution of issues as they arise. This has reduced the Landlord burden and maintains the attractiveness of letting through Homes 4U. We will need to continue to improve and adapt our offer to ensure that we can sustain and increase access to this competitive market.

### **Remodelling service provision**

We lease a number of properties to housing associations and providers who help us to meet a variety of housing needs. The HRA 17 places new duties on us to relieve homelessness where the person is likely to become homeless within 56 days and we need to increase access to provision that meets this need. To achieve this we will need to work with our partners to review the use of existing properties, identify schemes that no longer meet our needs and develop alternative service models that assist us to meet our duties. We will identify suitable properties in council stock to lease to Registered Providers to free up bed spaces in existing schemes and increase the availability of short-term placements.

### **Hostels and supported housing**

For a number of years our local supported housing providers have continued to deliver services without funding uplifts and more recently absorbing a decrease. Client's support needs have increased and support from statutory services has decreased due to rising eligibility thresholds reducing access to services. The Government proposals to reform short term supported housing funding offers little to support the stability of this sector and it is important to recognise the possibility that some providers may choose to withdraw from the market. We plan to work in close partnership with Surrey County Council Adult Social Care with whom commissioning responsibility sits to monitor service performance, ensure local needs are met and identify opportunities for joint commissioning. We will work with the hostels and supported housing providers to prepare for the new funding regime.

### **Bed and Breakfast**

We spot purchase bed and breakfast accommodation to meet the needs of single people and families in immediate or emergency situations. We have very limited access to bed and breakfast in the borough due to the reluctance of providers to accommodate higher risk cases and prohibitively high costs. It is important that we preserve the access to local placements we have for local families in emergencies such as fire or flood. We source emergency placements for higher risk cases further afield with providers who are willing to accommodate and equipped to deal with issues.

### **New Affordable Housing Development**

Developing new affordable homes is an ongoing challenge. Our Housing Strategy 2015-2020 has a target to deliver 150 new council homes by 2020. To date we have delivered 80 new affordable homes with 36 onsite and a further 76 have planning permission. Our new Local Plan was submitted in December 2017 for independent examination. When the plan is adopted, new homes meeting identified need will be built although these homes are unlikely to be delivered during the life of this strategy.

## **Our key actions**

### **Private rented sector**

- Seek to increase access to the private rented sector
- Review the range of landlord incentives
- Review the private rented sector policy

### **Leased to Housing Associations**

- Review the use of our existing resources
- Identify properties to provide additional accommodation

### **Hostels and supported housing**

- Work with providers to increase the availability of short term accommodation
- Work with Surrey County Council Adult Social Care to monitor performance of short term housing and seek opportunities to develop provision
- Review existing provision for rough sleepers and make recommendations for future commissioning

## Action plans

Action	Target date	Responsible officer	Resources
<b>Prevention of homelessness</b>			
<b>Homeless Reduction Act</b>			
Develop service delivery against evolving good practice guidance from the National Practitioner Support Service	2019	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources
Implement new data recording and reporting requirements of MHCLG. Develop new performance monitoring systems using Jigsaw [the new HRA case management software]	Ongoing March 2019	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources
Review use of Jigsaw in longer term pending wider Housing register software update	2019	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources
Monitor and review the impact of the HRA on use of Bed and Breakfast, and ensure resources are utilised effectively	Quarterly	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources
Work with public bodies to ensure they are aware of their duty to refer people at risk of homelessness	October 2018	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources
Evaluate the effectiveness of existing pathways for different client groups in consultation with referring organisations and other B&D's	2019	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources
Make effective use of MHCLG Flexible Homeless and New Burdens Grants to prevention activity	2019 2020	Housing Advice Manager	Homelessness Grant funding
<b>Early intervention</b>			
Use data gathered by new case management software to identify opportunities for early interaction with customers	2019	Homelessness Strategy Officer	Existing resources
Work with partners to identify early intervention opportunities when agreeing new procedures and through adaptation of existing protocols	2019	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources
Ensure that all organisations who may come into contact with homeless people know how and when to access help to prevent homelessness and identify new ways to engage with people at the earliest opportunity	Ongoing	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources
Develop a housing fact sheet for customers and partners to help inform and manage expectations Update biannually and publicise on website	December 2018	Homelessness Strategy Officer	Existing resources
<b>Commissioning</b>			
Develop a plan for future procurement and commissioning of services both directly and in partnership with SCC Adult Social Care and Families Services	2019	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources Homelessness Grant funding
<b>Support</b>			
<b>Welfare reform</b>			
Prepare for the introduction of Universal Credit, support our partners in managing change and customers in making claims	October 2018	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources

Maximise the use of Discretionary Housing Payments to ensure that the funding supports those most in need	Ongoing	Housing Advice Manager Private Sector Housing Officer Principal Exchequer Services Officer	Existing resources
Promote money advice and Court Desk services aiming to maximise access to such services Evaluate existing service delivery and feasibility of future tendering for service	Ongoing 2019	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources
Promote the ETHOS service aiming to maximise access Evaluate existing service delivery and options for future service delivery	Ongoing June 2018	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources
<b>Rough Sleeping</b>			
HOST <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and review pathways to interface with the HRA and support clients comply with Personal Housing Plans</li> <li>Support and monitor HOST contract</li> <li>Re-commission service</li> </ul>	December 2018  Ongoing 2020	Homelessness Strategy Officer	Existing resources
Review the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) annually and ensure that arrangements are in place and agreed with partners	September 2018	Homeless Strategy Officer	Existing resources
Develop Indigo project and evaluate impact to share learning with Health and Social Care	2019	Homelessness Strategy Officer	Preventing rough sleeping grant
Work in partnership with Public Health to undertake the Homelessness Health Needs Audit biannually	2019	Homelessness Strategy Officer	Existing resources
<b>Service delivery</b>			
Work with partners to improve the customer journey, avoid duplication and identify opportunities to streamline processes and procedures	2019	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources
Investigate the viability of implementing Housing First	2019	Homelessness Strategy Officer	Existing resources
<b>Commissioning</b>			
Review service provision for rough sleepers and prepare recommendations for future commissioning of services.	July 2019	Homelessness Strategy Officer	Existing resources Homelessness Grant funding
<b>Supply</b>			
<b>Private rented sector (PRS)</b>			
Review the use of landlord incentives and seek to improve the offer to increase the number of letting agents and landlords willing to work with us.	2019	Private Sector Housing Officer	Homelessness Grant funding
Review the Private Rented Sector Offer (PRSO) policy	2019	Private Sector Housing Officer	Existing resources
<b>Leased to Housing Associations</b>			
Review the use of existing premises leased to Housing Associations that are used to prevent homelessness [e.g. Rosebery, Riverside leased	2019	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources

accommodation] and explore potential for alternative use to meet identified need			
Seek to identify and acquire additional accommodation suitable to be leased to housing associations	2019	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources Homelessness Grant funding
<b>Hostels and Supported Housing</b>			
Work with providers to increase supply of short-term accommodation units in existing schemes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision for relief accommodation for 56 days</li> <li>Assessment beds for single homeless and those at risk of rough sleeping</li> </ul>	2019	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources Homelessness Grant funding
Explore opportunities to procure accommodation for customers with high support requirements	2019	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources
Work in partnership with Surrey County Council Adult Social Care to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>monitor the performance of hostels and supported housing providers</li> <li>Seek to ensure that we maximise access to such provision.</li> <li>identifying opportunities for future service development and joint commissioning</li> </ul>	quarterly	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources
Work with SCC, the hostels and supported housing providers to prepare for the implementation of the Government's new funding regime from April 2020	ongoing	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources
Work with Number Five night shelter to review model of service delivery to meet local needs and in anticipation of Government future funding arrangements post 2020	July 2019	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources
<b>Social Rented Housing</b>			
Maximise stock by encouraging under occupying households to downsize (promote mutual exchanges, incentives to downsize.)	ongoing	Transfer Officer	Existing resources
Monitor and review the impact of the HRA on use of Bed and Breakfast, and ensure resources are utilised effectively	April 2019	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources
Implement Fraud investigation arrangements for housing and homeless applicants	September 2018	Housing Advice Manager	Existing resources

# Overview of Homelessness in the Borough

## 1. Housing need and supply

### Affordability

The high cost of housing in Guildford is a major factor affecting supply. The high cost of housing in Guildford is apparent in both the owner-occupied and private rented sectors. In 2018, house prices were almost 70 per cent above the average for England and well above the average for the South East. There is an ongoing shortage of affordable housing, particularly for first time buyers.

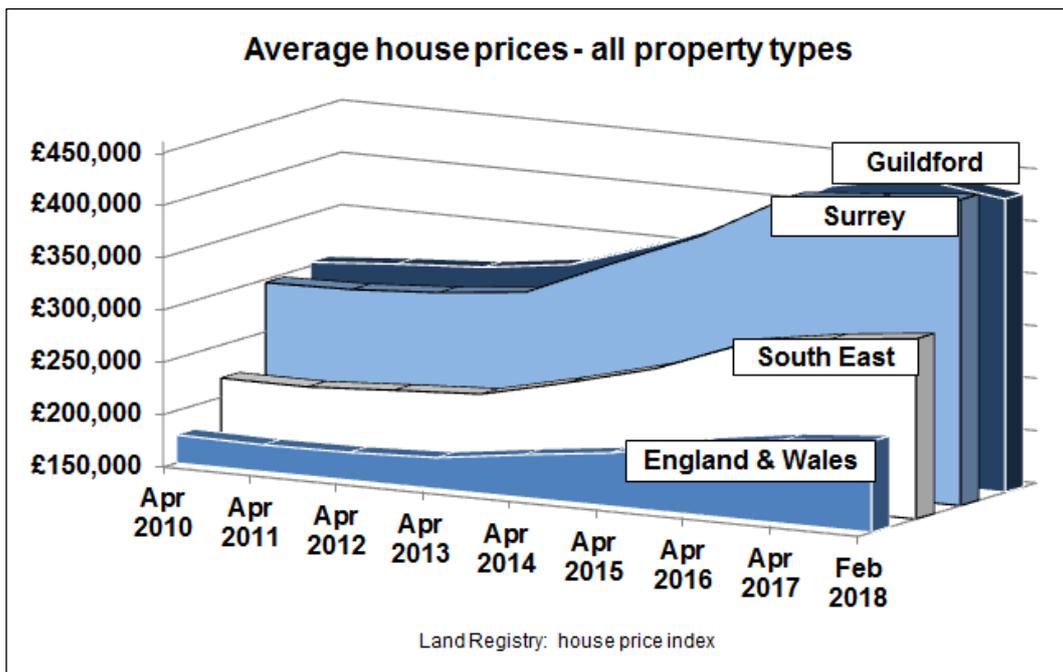


fig. 1

Private rents in Guildford are around twice the England average, well above rates in the South East and higher than the average across Surrey.

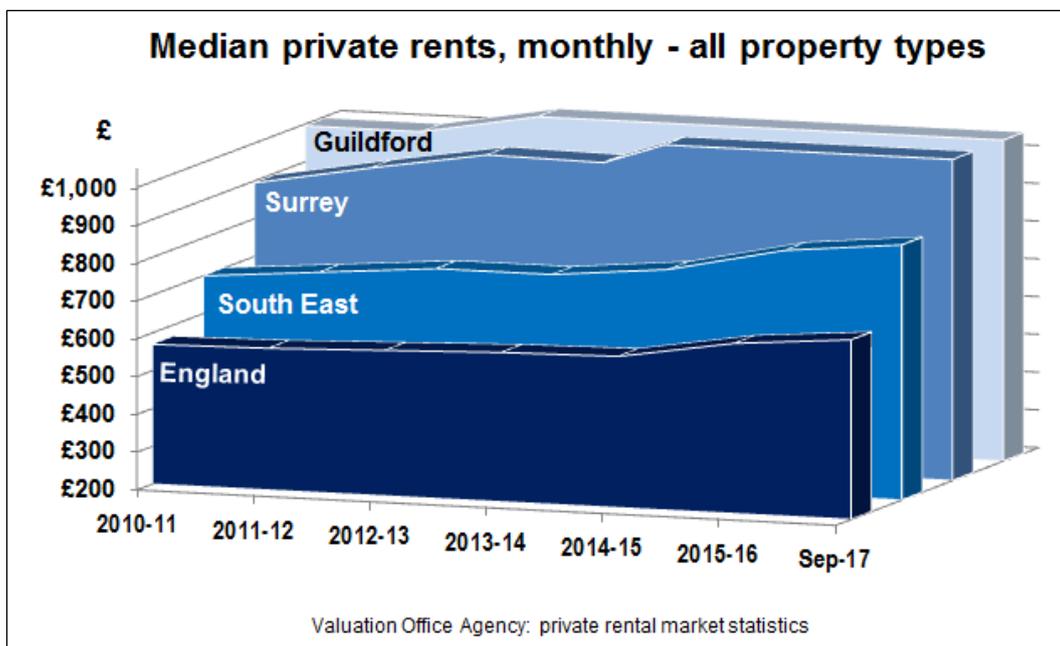


fig. 2

## Housing Register

There were 2752 households on the housing register in Guildford on 1 April 2018 of which 83.6% were in Bands A-C and considered to be in unsuitable accommodation and would meet the 'reasonable preference' criteria if they became homeless. In Bands A-C, households have a substantive local connection with the Borough through residence, employment or family connections.

The overall number of households on the housing register has reduced gradually following the Housing Allocations review in 2014, which strengthened local connection criteria and restricted eligibility, excluding some households from the register. Therefore the reduction in numbers was expected. In addition reminders to renew applications for those in Band E were discontinued.

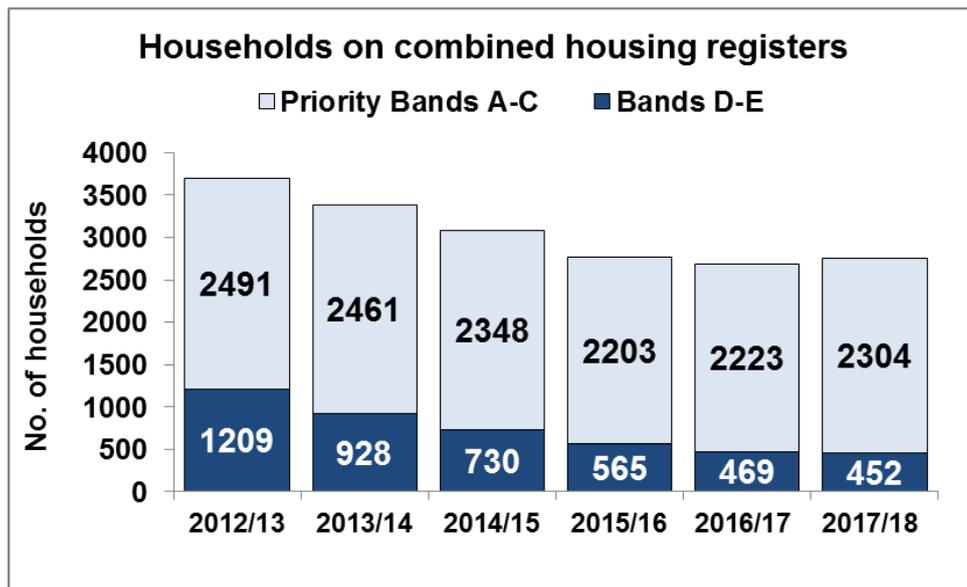


fig.3

Single people make up the largest group on the housing register with fewer older people and families needing larger homes registered.

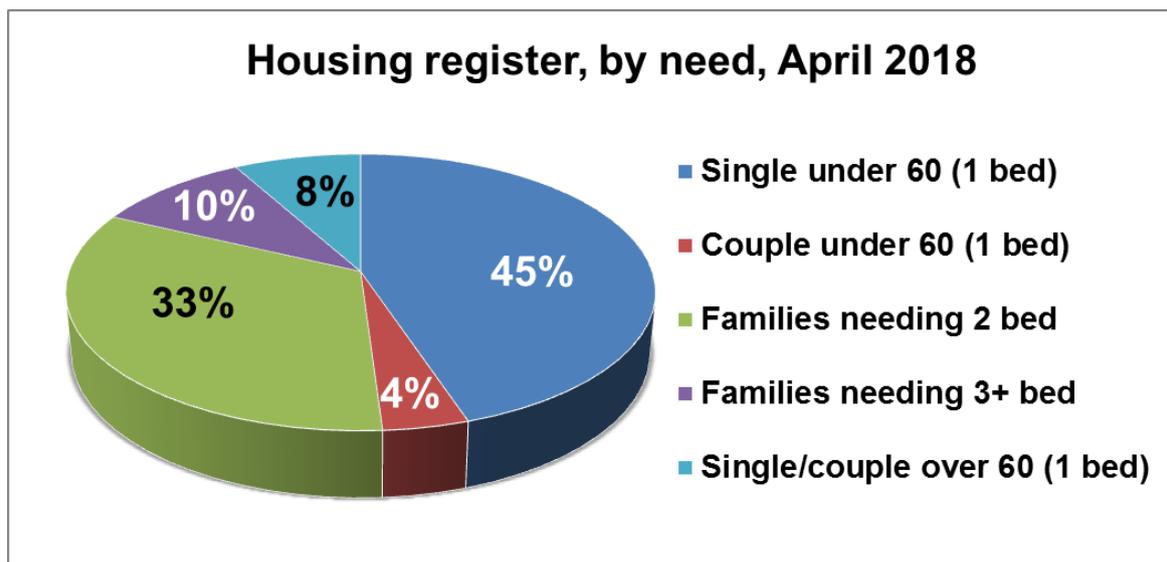


fig.4

There is a significant mismatch between housing need and supply, particularly for single people under 60 and couples and families needing two bedroomed homes.

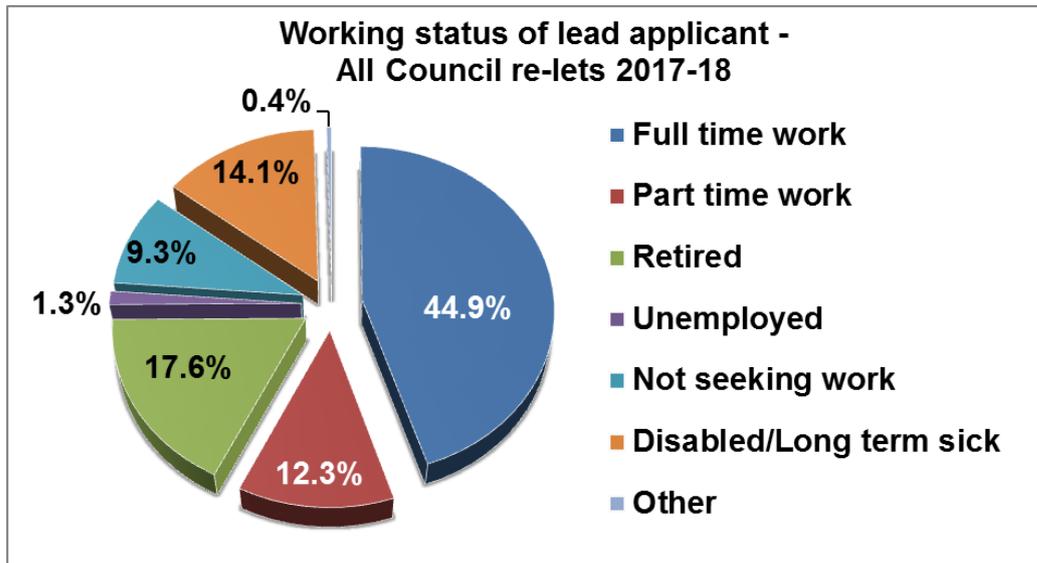


fig. 5

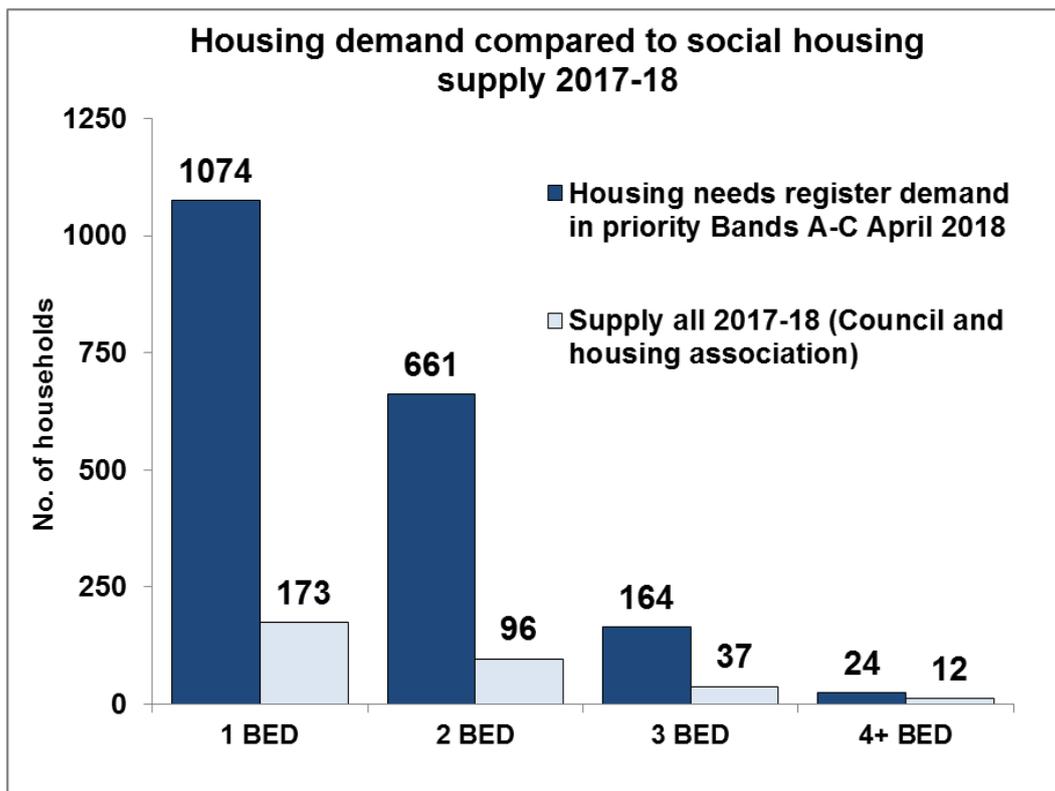


fig.6

The chart below shows the average waiting time to access Council social housing, for different bed size properties and overall. Those seeking family sized housing are now waiting well over 5 years. It should be noted that for different property types waiting times may be longer, reflecting the fact that for example, houses are more sought after than flats.

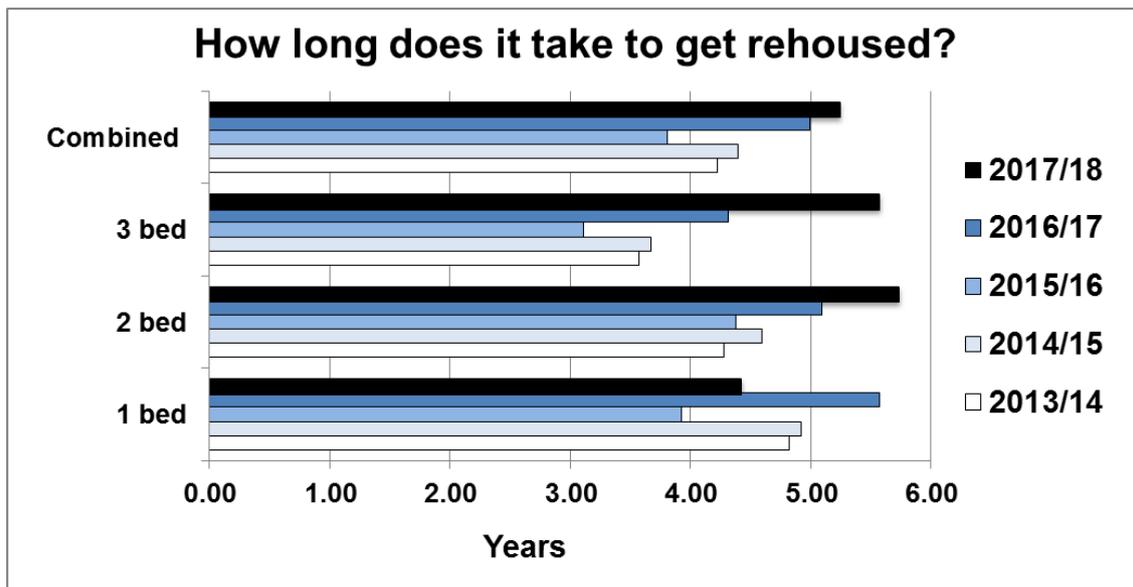


fig.7

Most housing applicants below pension age are working. The 'working status' chart illustrates almost half of applicants housed in Council accommodation during 2017-18 were in work.

With fewer than 350 vacancies in the social housing stock in each of the last two years, applicants must look at all options when considering their housing situation.

Year	Council stock	Housing Association	Homes 4U (Private Rentals)	Total	% change from 2013/14
2013/14	282	72	103	457	
2014/15	269	106	89	464	+ 1.5 %
2015/16	325	103	69	497	+ 8.7 %
2016/17	242	102	72	416	- 8.9%
2017/18	233	85	88	406	- 11.1 %

fig. 8

Total lettings by bedroom size 2017-18				
Type	Council stock	Housing Association	Homes 4U (Private Rentals)	Total
1 bedroom	124	49	35	208
2 bedroom	64	32	38	134
3+ bedroom	45	4	15	64
<b>Total</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>406</b>

fig. 9

## Affordable housing delivery

Developing new affordable homes in Guildford to boost the social housing stock is an ongoing challenge given high land values and difficulty accessing suitable sites. In the table below, overall completions includes all new homes, both private and affordable (gross figure including replacement housing). New affordable homes' is housing (for rent or part-rent/part-buy) provided at below market rates for people who cannot meet their housing needs on the open market. 2017-18 saw a good percentage (33%) of affordable completions, but this followed a low number for the previous year.

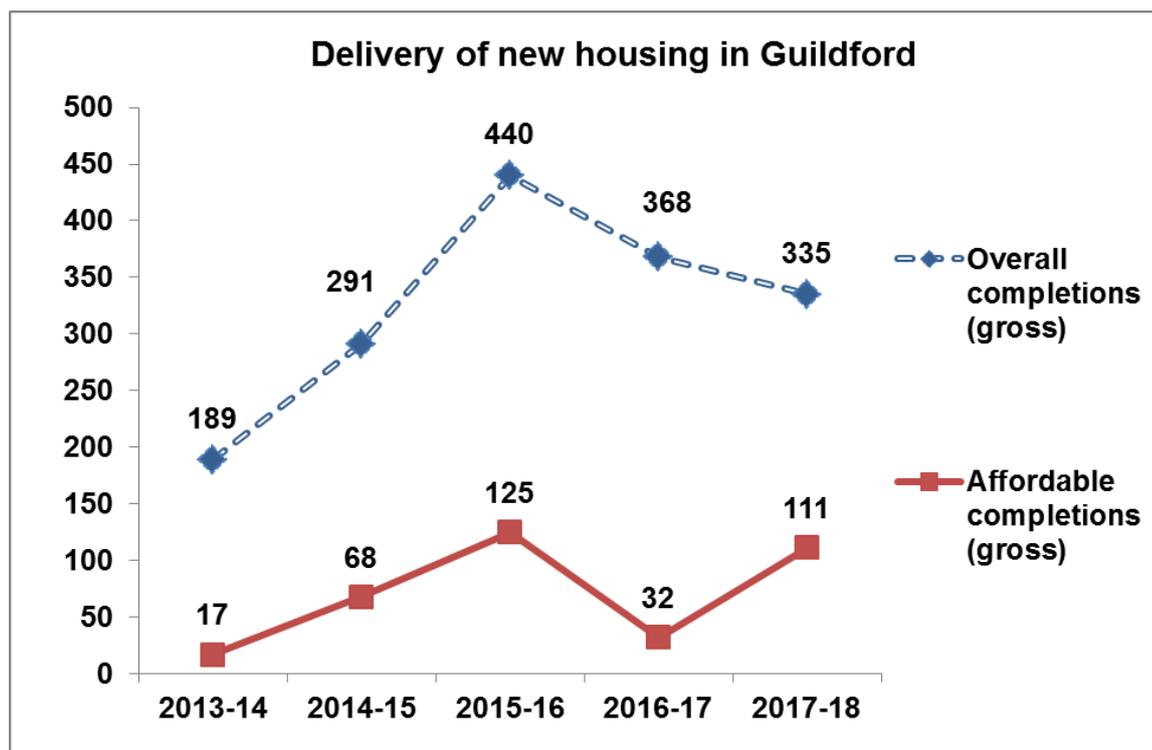


fig. 10

## Low Cost Home Ownership

We maintain a separate housing register for Low Cost/Shared Ownership applicants who want to part-buy a property. Many people even in comparatively well-paid employment find that they cannot afford to buy a home outright in Guildford. Often as a first step on the property ladder they can part-buy, part-rent with a housing association or the local authority owning the remaining share. We currently have 108 applicants on this register.

Year	Shared Ownership lets or relets	New build Shared Ownership units
2013/14	7	0
2014/15	29	20
2015/16	23	18
2016/17	32	8
2017/18	29	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>76</b>

fig.11

Size of property	Shared Ownership lets/relets 2017-18
1 bedroom	6
2 bedroom	22
3+ bedroom	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>

fig. 12

As part of our Affordable Housing policy in the near future, we aim to explore other ‘intermediate tenures’ including shared-equity.

### Use of the private rented sector

The private rented sector (PRS) plays an important and increasing role in the provision of housing accommodation. This sector has seen a growth of 30 per cent between census 2001 and 2011 and now exceeds the public sector stock. Property is seen as a reliable investment and it is likely, therefore, that the sector will continue to grow. In Guildford, over 16 per cent of homes are now owned by private landlords, approximately 9000 properties.

Homes 4U is a service provided by the Council to assist applicants to access private rented housing and includes the provision of rent deposit bonds. It is normally used to help households for whom the Council would otherwise have a statutory duty to secure a home.

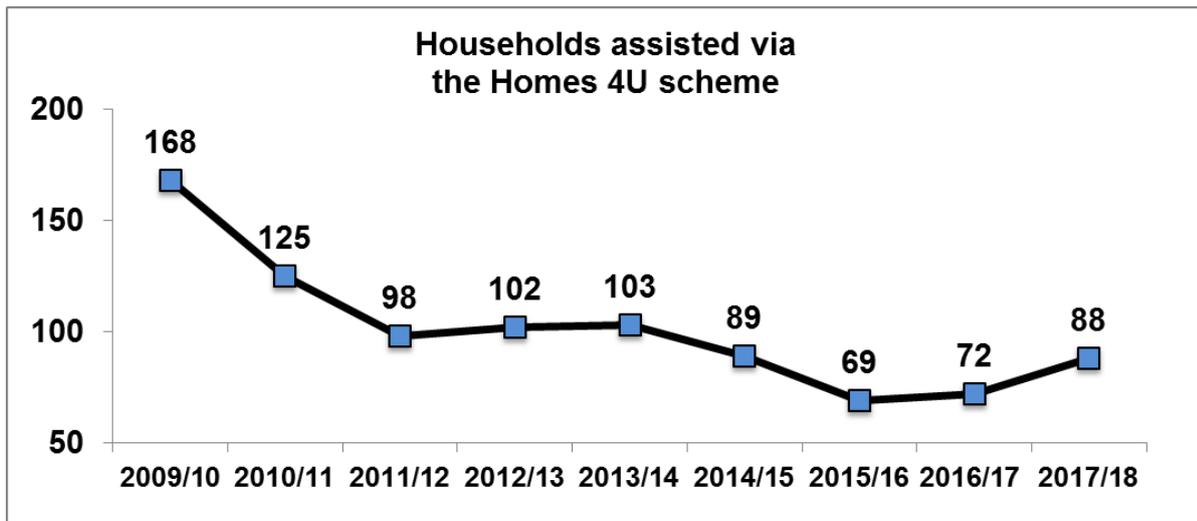


fig. 13

We have sustained access to the private rented sector thanks to successful marketing by the private rented sector team through the Homes 4U scheme. Members of the team have built relationships in the private sector and offer support to both landlords and tenants. During 2009/10 a peak of 168 households were assisted via Homes 4U. However, by 2017/18 this had fallen to 89, reflecting high rental costs, rising demand and issues around the rates of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) available. The table below shows the current rates.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates - 01/04/2017 - 31/03/2018		
	Maximum monthly amount (and % change from 2016-17 rate)	
Number of rooms	Guildford	Blackwater Valley
Shared accommodation	£376.12pm	£347.27pm
1 bedroom	£741.60pm	£613.72pm
2 bedroom	£968.81pm	£767.20pm
3 bedroom	£1199.59pm	£915.54pm
4 bedroom	£1545.042pm	£1355.71pm

fig. 14

Guildford Borough is split into two sub-regional housing market areas for LHA purposes, reflecting differing average rental costs. These market areas are Guildford and Blackwater Valley, the latter covering the western section of the borough including Ash, Ash Vale and Tongham.

The next two tables illustrate how the rates of LHA have failed to keep pace with average private rental increases in Guildford since the beginning of the Homelessness Strategy in 2013. For three bed properties, the divergence is particularly marked.

Guildford Local Housing Allowance rates/median monthly rents	April 2013	October 2017	% increase 2013-2017
3 bed median monthly rental (£)	£1300	£1540	<b>18.5%</b>
3 bed Guildford LHA rate (£)	£1175	£1200	<b>2.1%</b>
2 bed median monthly rental (£)	£1075	£1250	<b>16.3%</b>
2 bed Guildford LHA rate (£)	£920	£969	<b>5.3%</b>

fig. 15

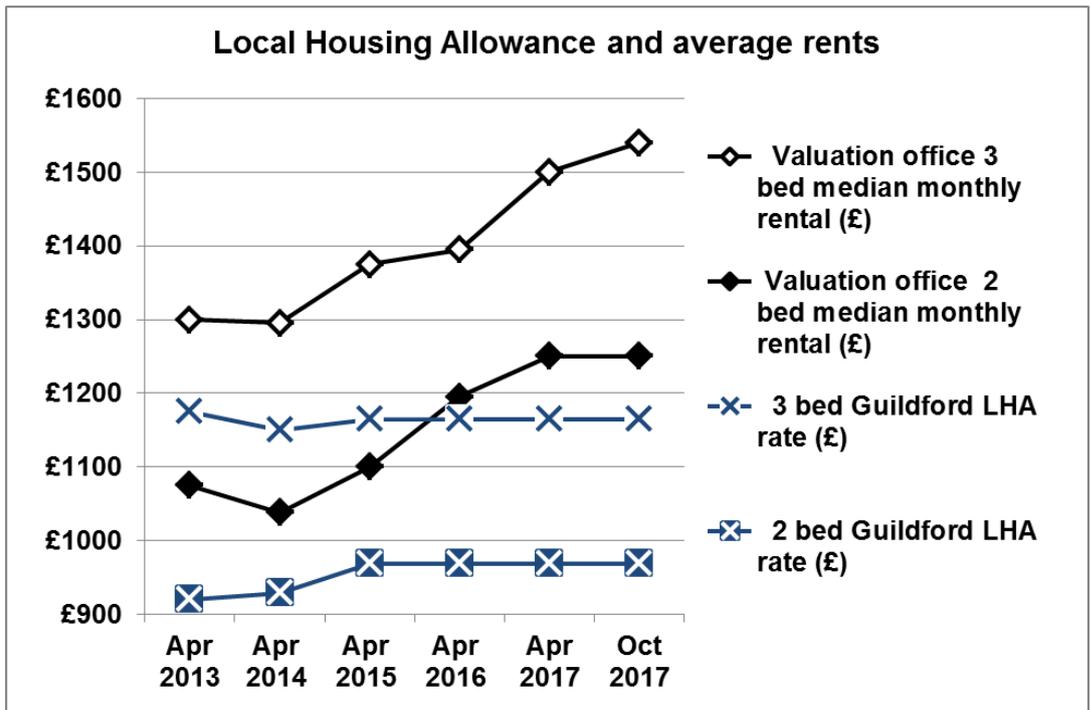


fig. 16

This issue with LHA rates well below average rental costs has inevitably seen a drop in available private rented properties. The graph below is based on market snapshots by the Homes 4 U team.

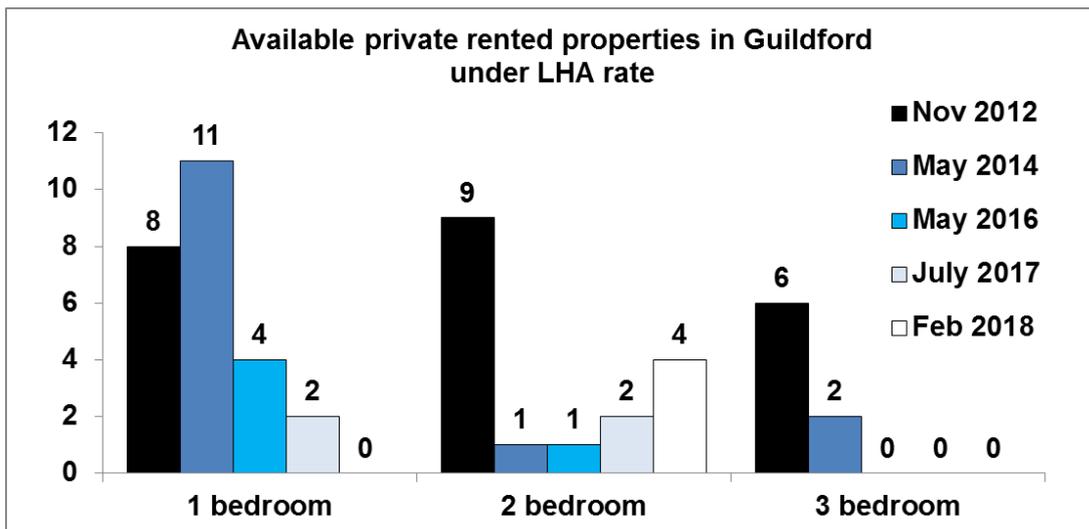


fig. 17

The graph below illustrates the level of benefit claims in Guildford that help residents with accommodation related costs. The number of private tenant claimants has risen sharply in the last ten years and overtook numbers of council tenant claimants in 2011.

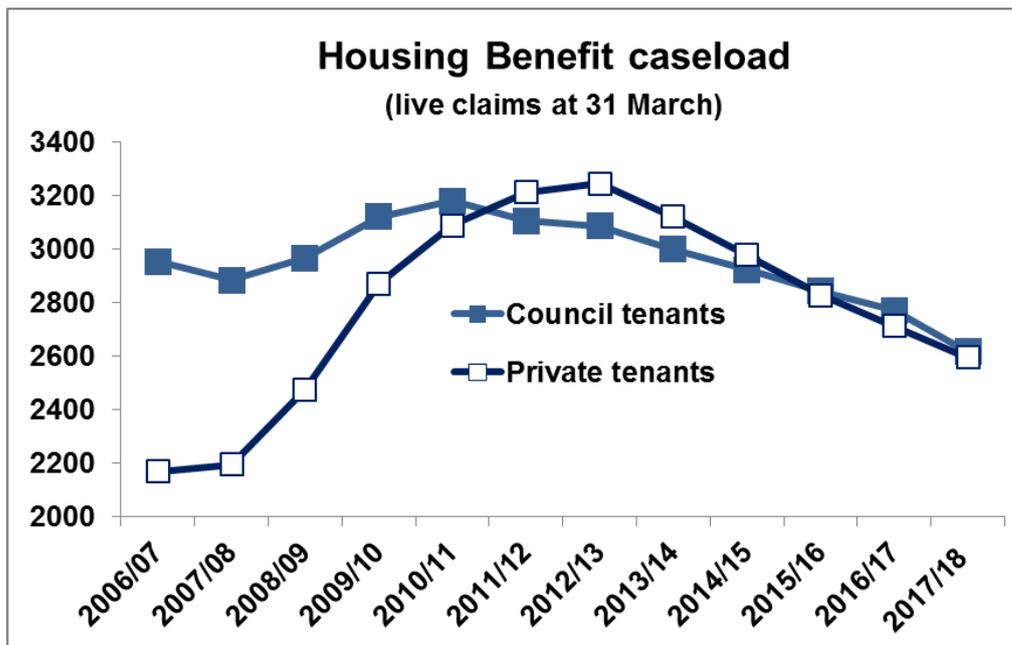


fig. 18

An issue for many tenants has been the lower benefit cap introduced in November 2016. This has hit many families, particularly those with more children, but the graph below shows the overall numbers affected is slowly declining. This is partly as a result of proactive work by council advisors by our partner organisations such as Citizen’s Advice.

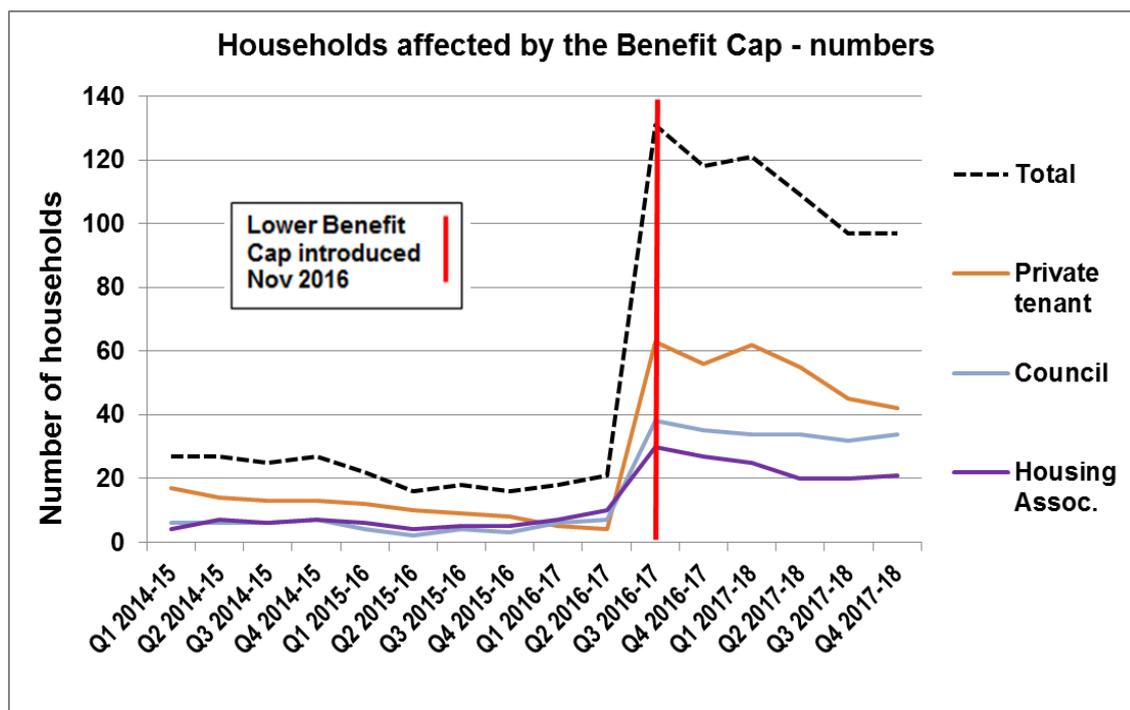


fig. 19

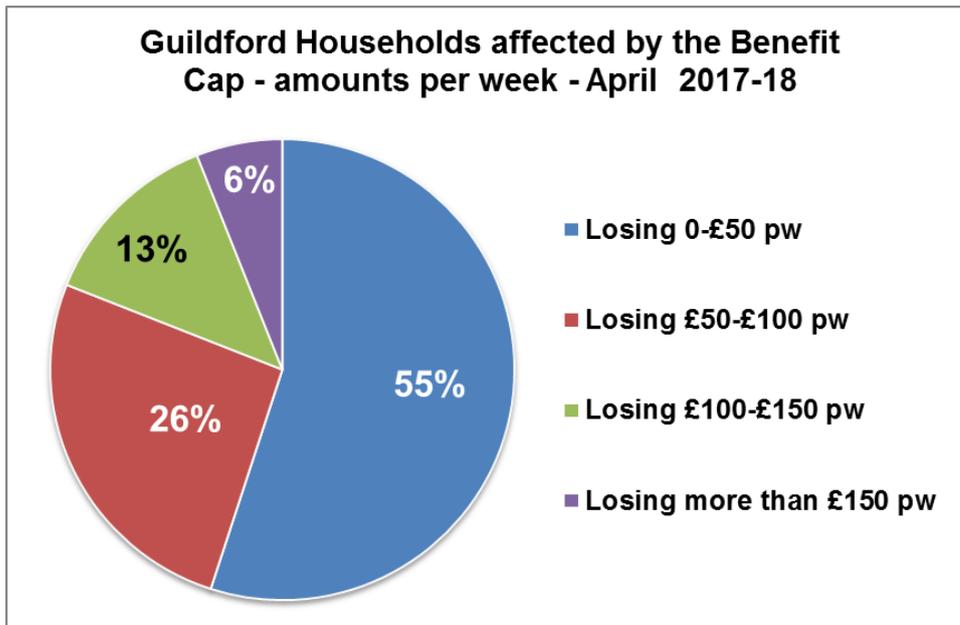


fig. 20

## 2. Housing options and homeless prevention casework

From early 2004-05, we changed the way we provided services following the implementation of our first homelessness strategy. This resulted in a dramatic reduction in statutory homeless applications. There has also been a big reduction in the overall number of homeless households where a full housing duty was accepted. However, this number has been higher in the last four years. We use a 'housing options' approach which, rather than dealing with homelessness as it arises, follows a four stage plan:

- increasing awareness and information about housing and the risk of homelessness
- providing general or specific housing advice for those with housing needs to prevent homelessness
- offering a range of housing options, direct support and intervention for those facing homelessness
- providing a safety net for those who do become homeless.

Year	Total homelessness preventions (Council, Citizens Advice, HOST)
2009/10	425
2010/11	484
2011/12	592
2012/13	466
2013/14	513
2014/15	504
2015/16	469
2016/17	393
2017/18	464

fig. 21

The principal causes of homelessness in Guildford recorded below are consistent with the situation nationally. Both locally and nationally there is a trend seeing an increase in loss of private rented accommodation as a homelessness trigger.

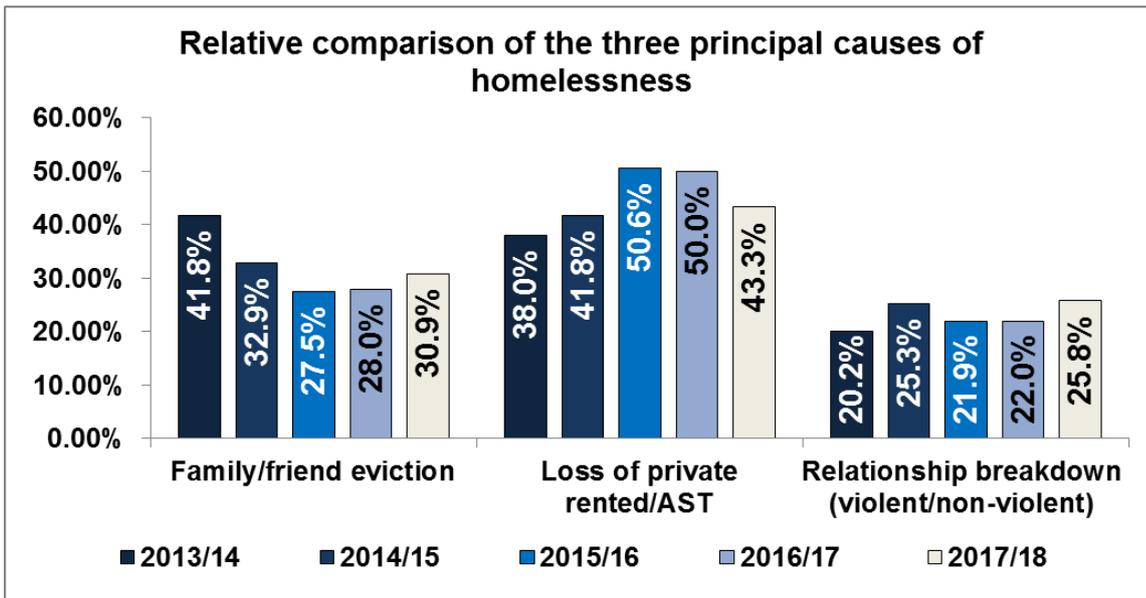


fig. 22

We do however assist people who are experiencing a wide range of issues and there are various factors that cause them to become at risk of homelessness. The table below sets out the reason for housing options interventions for the open caseload at the end of November last year.

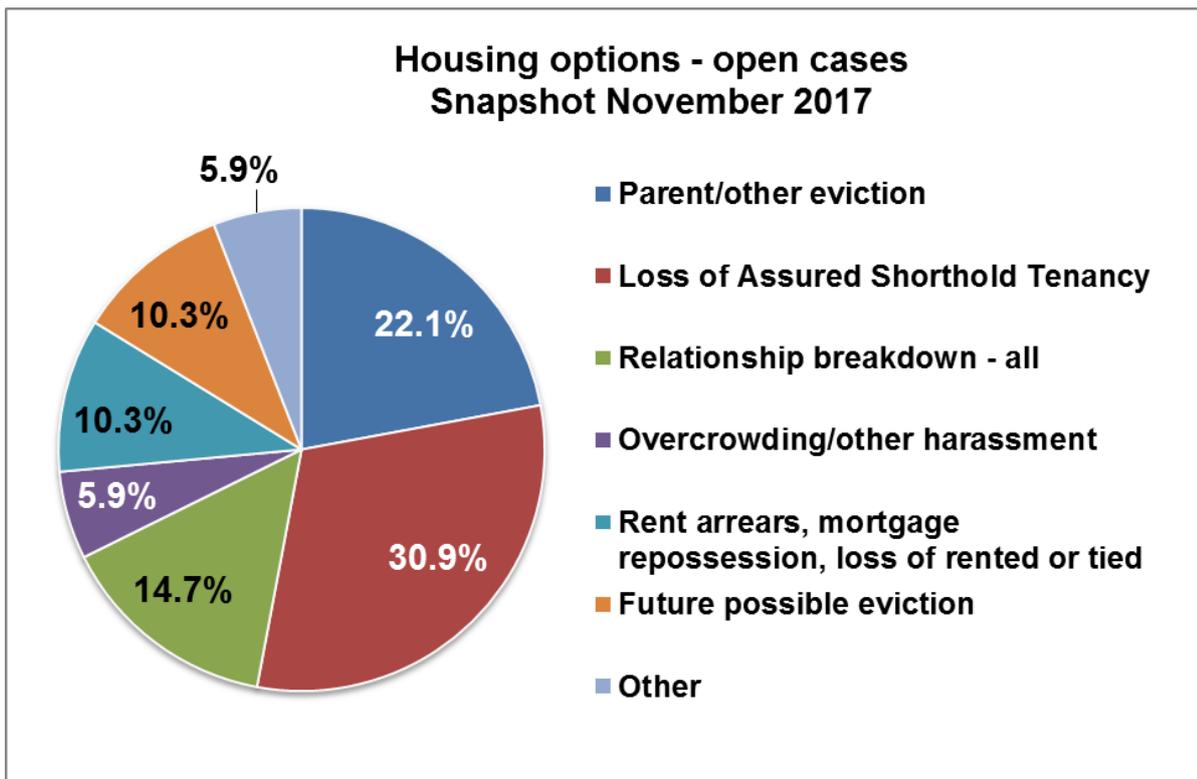


fig. 23

The age profile of housing options clients shows that while the majority sit in the 22-59 year old category, young people under-21 represent a significant proportion of our casework. The number of 16-17s has remained low since Surrey County Council Youth Support Services [now Family Services] became the primary service helping homeless young people under 18.

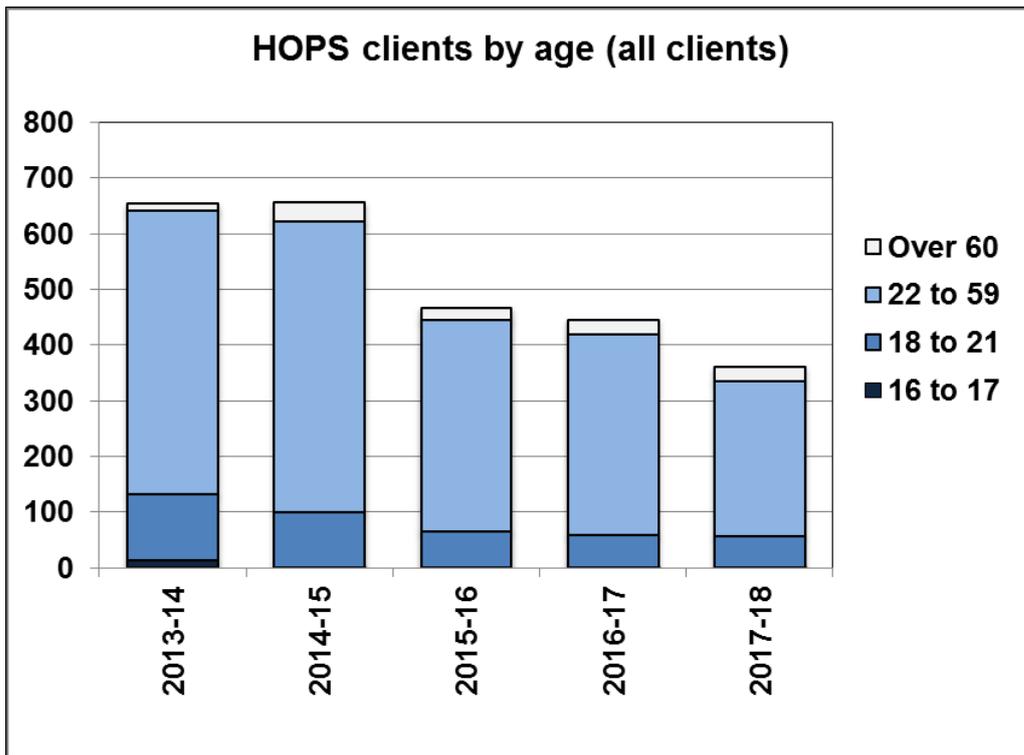


fig. 24

### 3. Statutory homelessness

Homeless applications and acceptances have declined somewhat from peaks in 2015 and 2017. However with introduction of the new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018, 2018-19's statistics are unpredictable.

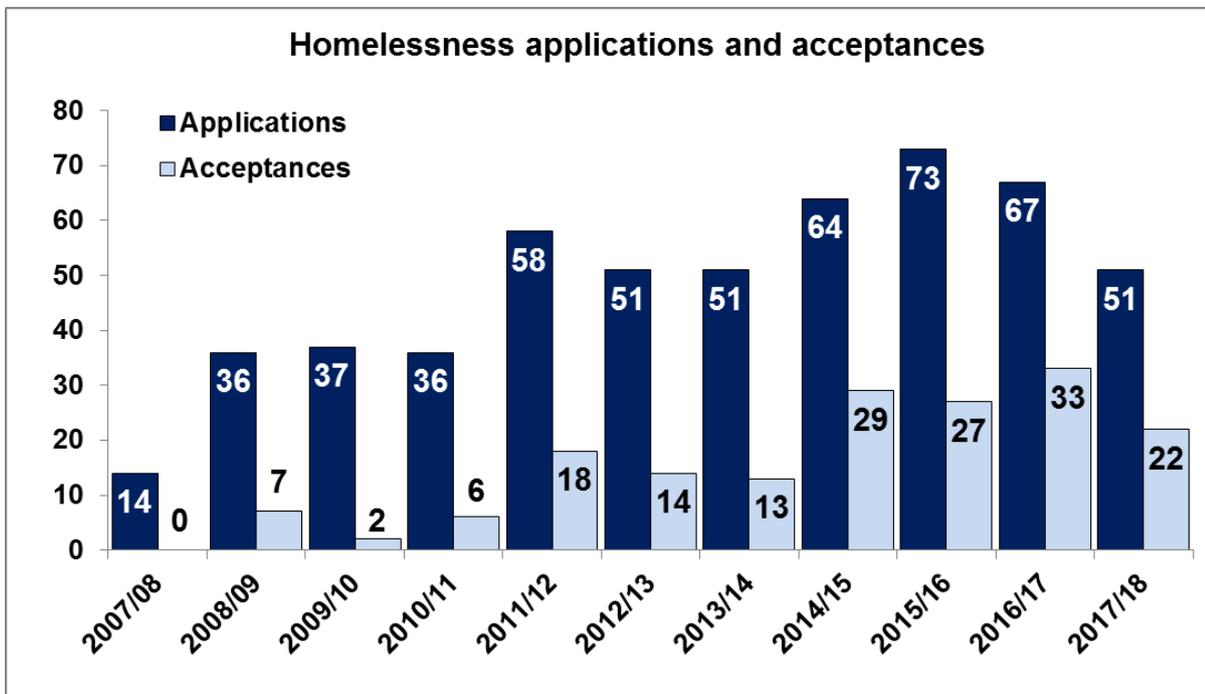


fig. 25

Where we accept a full housing duty until we can offer long-term housing, households will be housed temporarily. Normally this is in some accommodation provided by housing associations but in some instances we also have to use our own stock. The numbers in temporary

accommodation are also increasing and families can be in temporary accommodation for in excess of 2 years.

Temporary Accommodation	March 2013	March 2014	March 2015	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018
Numbers in temporary accommodation	25	27	34	46	61	57
Numbers in temporary in Council general needs accommodation	16	17	21	32	45	38

fig. 26

We use bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation as a last resort and in an emergency, for example if a household presents as homeless on the day. It is expensive and weekly costs are increasing, although average costs per placement have declined in the last three years.

Bed & Breakfast placements	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Number of placements	53	49	35	29	46
Average cost per night	£45	£52	£54	£52	£55
Average no. of nights	26.6	18.0	15.7	21.0	27.3
Average cost per week	£313	£361	£378	£364	£385
Average cost per placement	£1188	£928	£846	£1073	£1500

fig. 27

The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 states that families with dependent children should not remain in B&B for more than 6 weeks.

#### 4. Rough sleeping

We have invested in rough sleeping services for a number of years and this remains a priority area of our work. Our HOST service is very successful in helping to prevent rough sleeping and joint work with the town centre hostels and Guildford Action drop-in centre contributes to this success.

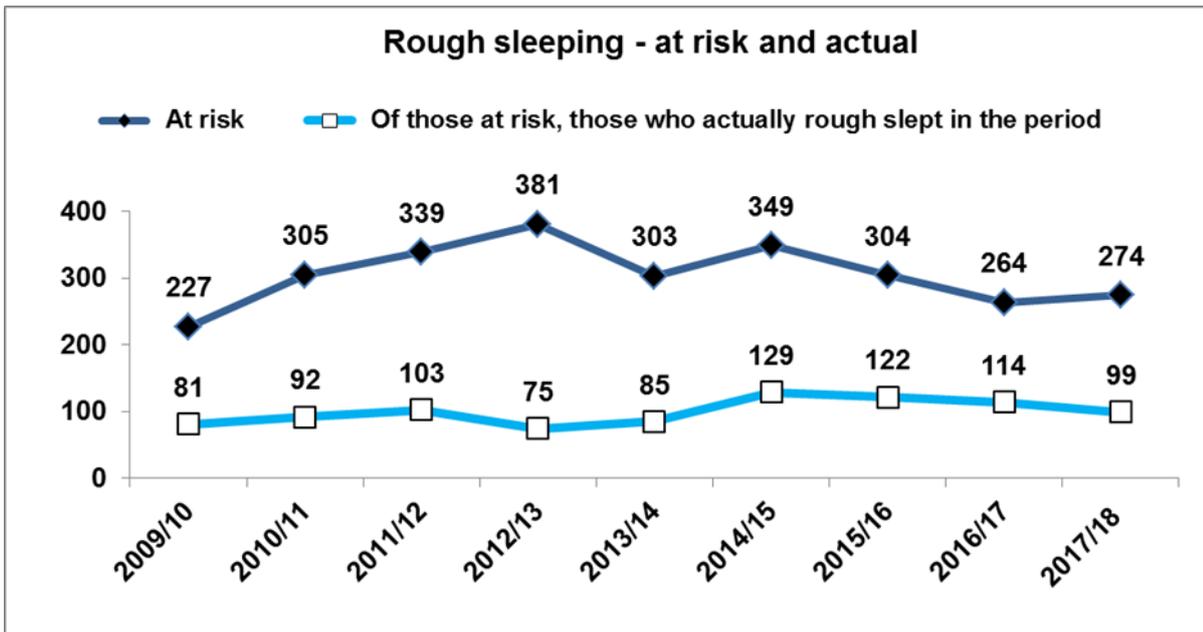


fig. 28

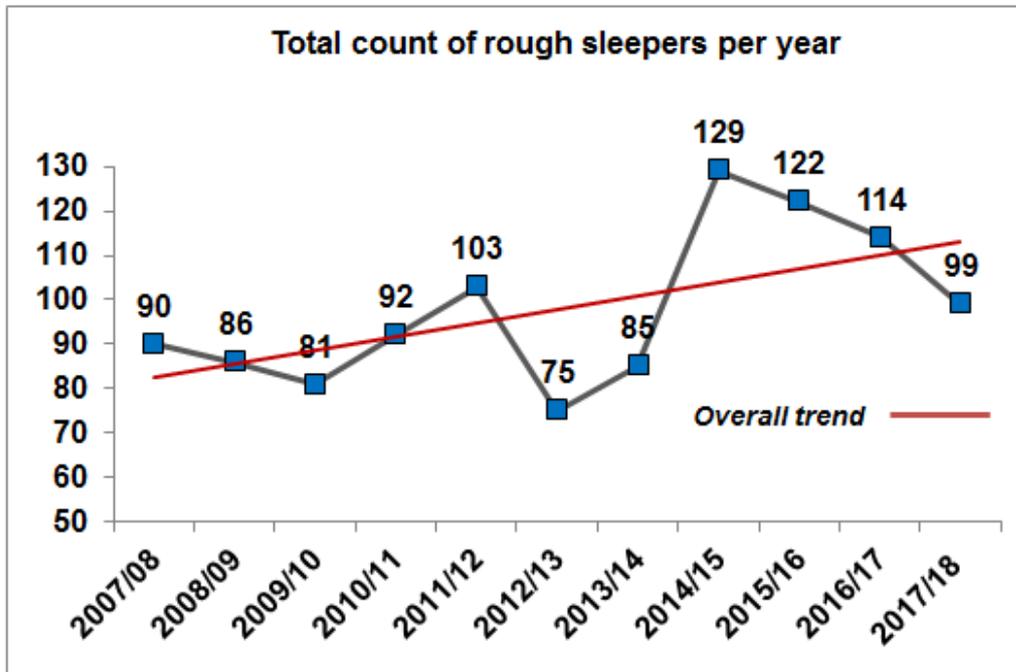


fig.29

There are many challenges in working with rough sleepers, in Guildford particular issues arise with:

- Access to hostel accommodation
- A shortage of assessment beds in the borough
- A regular influx of homeless people from outside the borough

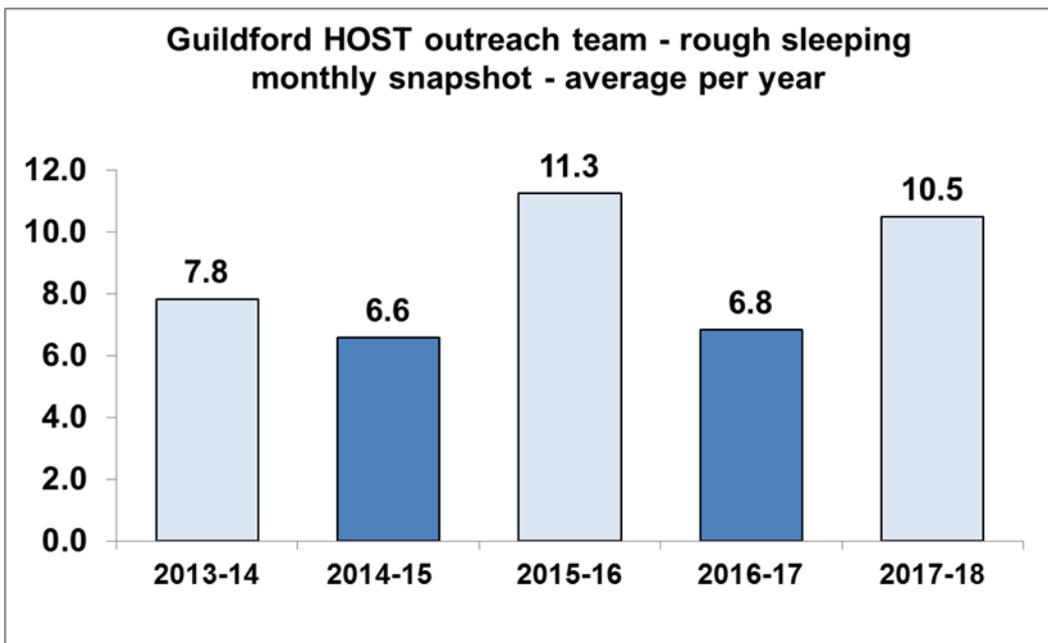


fig. 30

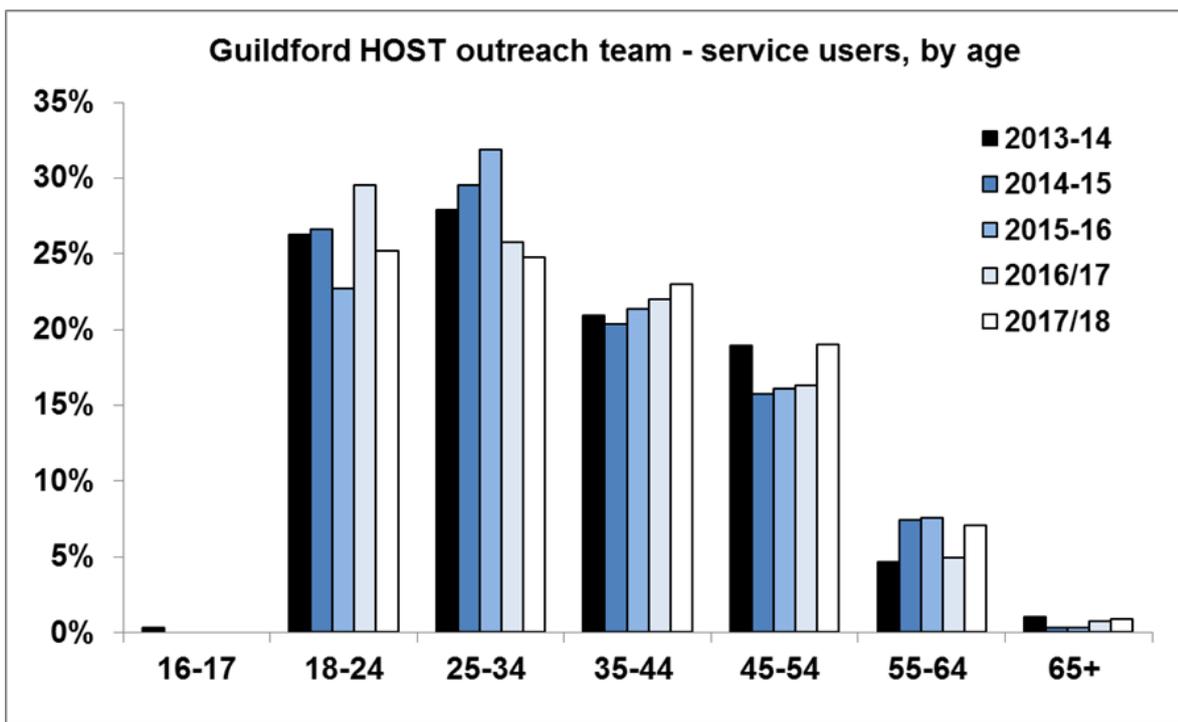


fig. 31

With effect from 2008/09 Guildford began monitoring rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping to determine the area's Streetflow profile. Street flow defines service users by how long they have been a rough sleeper: short stay service users, repeat or revolving door service users, and entrenched or long stay service users. This monitoring allows the agencies working to prevent and resolve rough sleeping in Guildford to target their services more effectively.

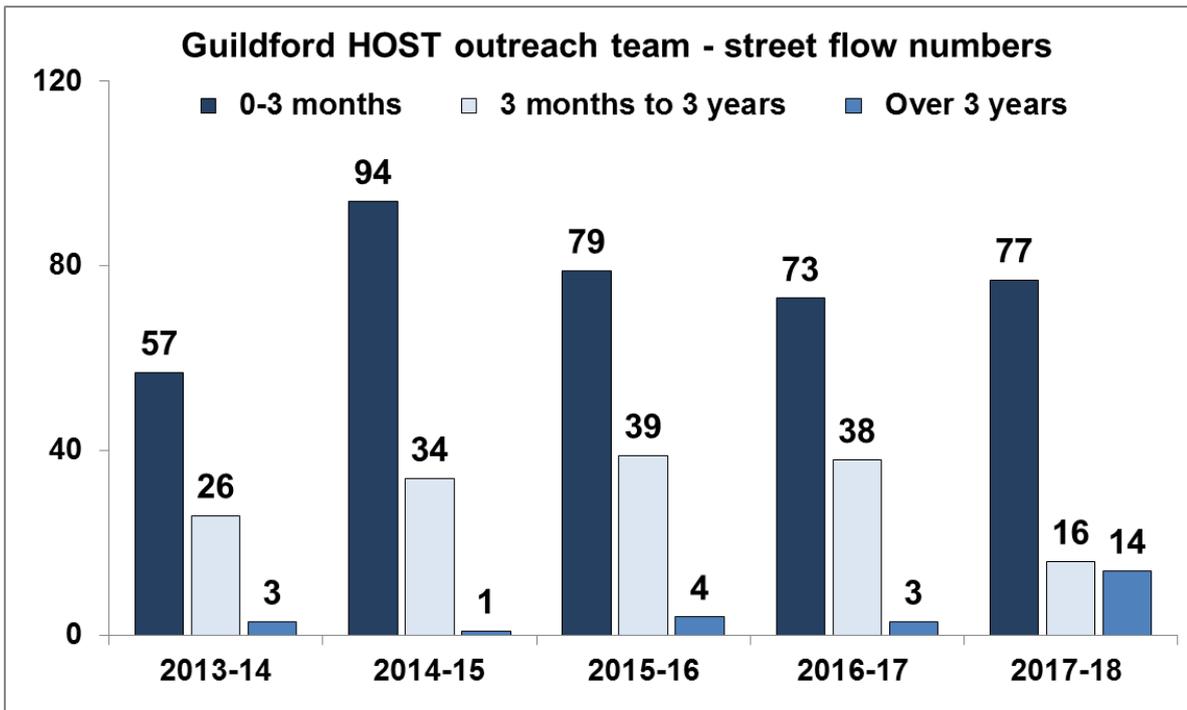


fig. 32

The chart below shows the numbers of HOST clients and their differing primary support need. The top six needs by relative percentage to each other are shown. In recent years mental health has emerged as the clearly predominant primary support need.

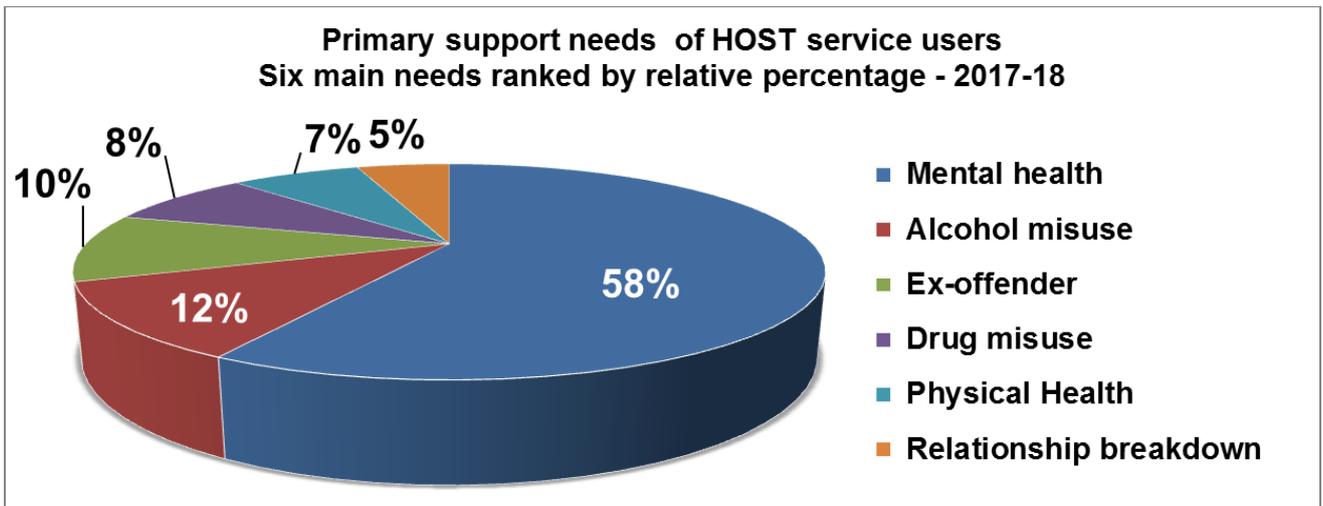


fig. 33

Some people sleeping rough or using homeless services in Guildford do not originate from the borough and HOST continues to support people from neighbouring council areas, London and elsewhere. Although the majority are classed as having a local connection with the borough, we apply the definition set in the homeless legislation that means a local connection can be achieved after being in the borough for six months out of the last twelve.

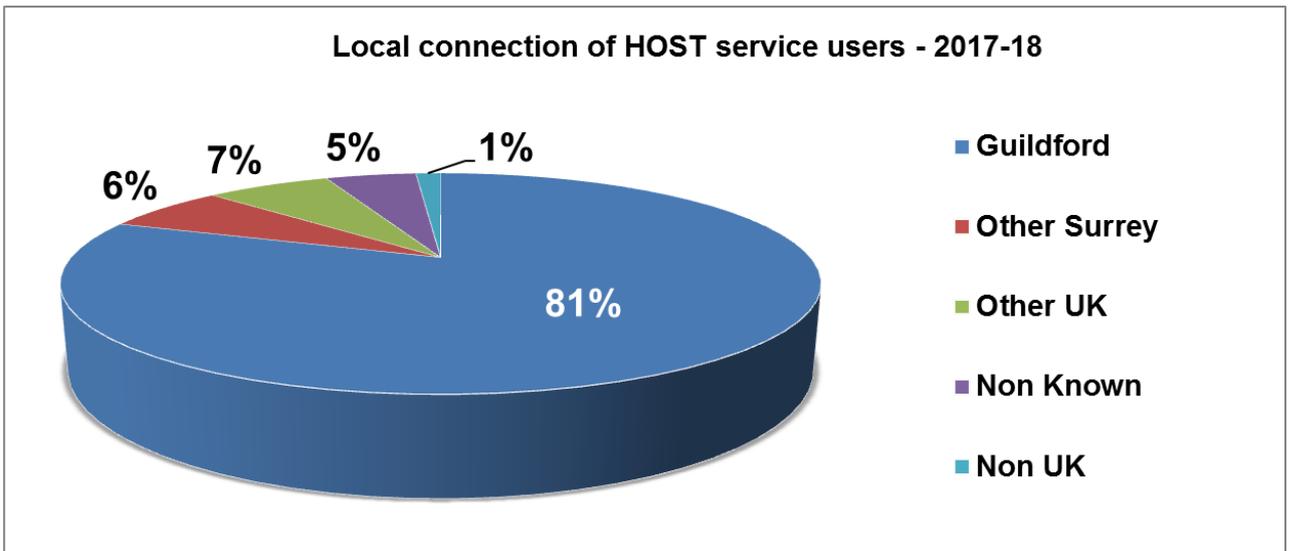


fig. 34

### 5. The ETHOS Project (Employment, Training, Housing Options Support)

The ETHOS Project began in 2012 as HELP (Housing and Employment, Local Partnerships). Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership became the delivery partner in summer 2013 and have been managing the project across parts of Surrey since. It operates in five borough/district councils (Elmbridge, Guildford, Mole Valley, Epsom & Ewell, and Tandridge), and three housing associations. ETHOS advisers work with individuals who are unemployed or working fewer than 16 hours a week.

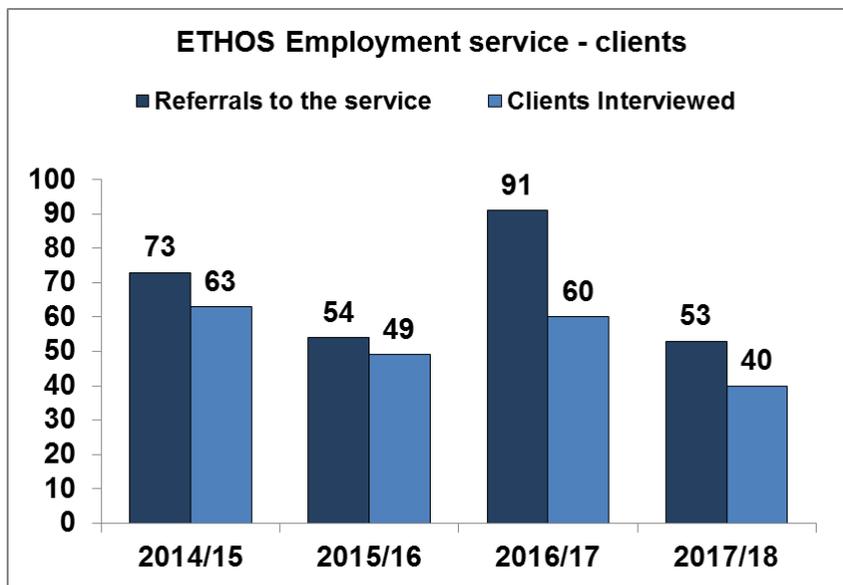


fig. 35

Typical clients could be dependent adults, someone capable of working but not working and therefore not contributing to the household, also those on Job Seekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance, or income support. They could be a lone parent, over 50 years old and recently redundant or those with mental health needs. A one-to-one appointment with an adviser leads to job workshops and ongoing support. This ongoing support and the one-to-one nature of the service is the key aspect of the ETHOS offer to jobseekers.

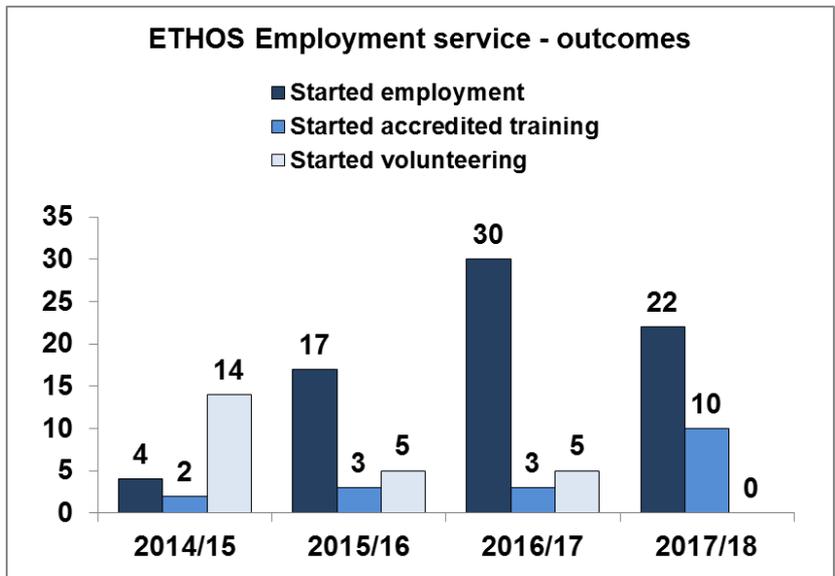


fig. 36

This support continues as long as clients show commitment to resolve their situation. In the last two year in Guildford, over 60% of those referred to the project have accessed employment, training or voluntary work. The need for this service is increasing as welfare reform changes escalate. Increasingly, for many finding employment is the only feasible option to avoid falling into financial hardship.

## Appendix 3 - Homelessness Strategy Consultation 2018

We used different methods to consult people about our Homelessness Strategy:

- Partner consultation at the Housing & Homelessness Forum event on 8 March 2018
- Client and customer consultation via paper survey in May 2018
- Partner consultation via online Survey May 2018

We consulted with our customers and partners including:

- Housing Advice customers
- Rough sleepers and non- priority single homeless people who use homelessness services or reside in local hostels
- Homelessness service providers
- Citizens Advice
- Housing Associations
- Police
- Probation
- NHS
- Surrey County Council
- Voluntary Sector
- Faith community
- Community organisations

When these activities were concluded the draft strategy was completed and published on the Guildford Borough Council website inviting comments from any resident. We sent copies of the draft strategy to partners involved in the earlier consultation. In addition to this we presented the strategy to Hostel Providers Liaison Group and the Overview and Scrutiny committee.

### 1 Partner consultation Guildford Housing & Homelessness Forum

57 people attended the forum on 8 March 2018 including representatives from:

- Registered Providers (housing associations)
- Landlords
- Letting agents
- Private Housing Companies
- Surrey Police
- Voluntary sector
- Surrey County Council
- Surrey and Borders Partnership Trust
- University of Surrey

Attendees were allocated to one of four workshop groups, each given the same questions to discuss. We asked four questions that were relevant to the Homelessness Strategy. The comments and feedback from the questions about the Homelessness Strategy and Rough Sleeping were collated together and organised into themes.

#### Question 1 – Homelessness Strategy priorities

Our current priorities under the homelessness strategy are:

- tackling single homelessness and rough sleeping
- managing the impact of welfare reform
- improving access to affordable housing
- partnership working

Are these priorities still the most relevant or are there new priorities that we should consider?

## Question 2 – Rough Sleeping

The Government has announced that it intends to end rough sleeping by 2027 and halve it by 2022.

- What could we be doing differently to hit this target?
- How should other agencies help?

## FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS FROM QUESTIONS 1 AND 2

### Early intervention and community intervention

- Duty to assist, but with early intervention it would be good to head off those facing homelessness before they get to the 'duty' level of need – 'early intervention ahead of prevention'
- Community-led approach is the way to deal sustainably with homelessness, research shows that family, friends, GPs often first point of call not Council
- Should be more work with faith-based organisations – church network has volunteer manpower and links into community organisations and charities. Could be a subject for Surrey Faith Forum to look at housing and homelessness issues. Potential for early intervention with established links into foodbanks, and scope for support/assistance e.g. befriending schemes for ex-rough-sleepers

### Support

- Danger of putting those in housing need into tenancies they cannot afford then there being insufficient support to help them sustain
- Extra support for high need individuals
- Support needed throughout tenancy to stop cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping
- Opportunities are being missed waiting for services, and support can fall away when client accommodated – need continuity of support
- Providing somewhere to live will not solve the problem for some people - intensive support services required, need more than just hostels like No.5, a place where people with more challenging behaviour issues can be supported
- Extra support for care leavers – e.g. Council Tax support, life skills, tapered rent provision
- 'Catch 22' - clients need housing to stabilise and be stabilised before being housed\*
- Is there scope for 'Housing First' model, to pick up people and house them regardless of their history etc. Approach has merits and has had some successes elsewhere, but can be problems with social isolation, peer abuse and 'cuckooing' etc.
- We need to respect rough sleepers rights to choose to rough sleep\*

### Prevention

- Evictions – some Housing Associations are finding with Affordable Rent that debt can spiral much quicker, and once they go through full procedure then can soon be £8/9k of arrears rather than the £3/4k of a few years ago
- Joint-agency visits when arrears identified will reduce evictions and arrears accrued.
- Helping people access employment is a key issue - could there be scope to allow social tenants reduced rents for a limited time while they establish themselves into (or back into) the work environment?

### Mental Health

- Mental Health such a key issue in relation to rough sleepers in particular, could perhaps be a separate theme within the Homelessness Strategy?
- New INDIGO project when fully established may help with the link to CMHRS (INDIGO successful joint bid for additional government funding to tackle mental health issues among local rough sleepers and people at risk of homelessness)
- Local issue of a disconnect between services and CMHRS generally but voluntary sector is strong and can help limit impact
- Should look at wider issues of the cause of homelessness, e.g. mental health?

- Working with MOD to help Ex Service staff who are struggling with homelessness and mental health
- Mental Health an increasingly difficult area as support services are being so cut back

**The comments and feedback from the questions about Private Rented Sector Access and Communication were collated and organised into themes.**

### **Question 3 - Private Rented Sector Access**

The private rented sector provides almost 20% of the housing in the borough therefore is vital to meet local housing needs.

How do we improve access to Private Rented Accommodation by those on low incomes and on benefits? Should we incentivise Landlords to:

- Offer longer tenancies?
- Keep rents affordable?
- Take tenants on benefits?

If so

b) What type of incentives might these be?

### **Question 4 – Private Rented Sector - Communication**

How do we ensure that there is effective communication with private rented tenants, Landlords and letting agents?

e.g. receive information about their rights and responsibilities, where to seek advice etc.

## **FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS FROM QUESTIONS 3 AND 4**

### **Supply - Improving access for those on low incomes and on benefits**

- Landlords don't want to be tied into tenancies for longer than 12 months. Longer tenancies take away market flexibility
- Simpler eviction process may encourage Landlords to offer longer tenancies – current process too complicated and long via county court
- Council could negotiate preferential rates with insurance companies for landlords taking housing benefit/Universal Credit tenants to cover rent arrears
- Amend benefits process, going back to paying landlords directly. Not paying in Arrears\*
- Promote use of Credit Union to tenants who maybe struggling with cash flow
- Address/change landlords perception of housing benefit tenants and taking on tenants referred by the Council
- Cash incentives for landlords to lease properties to Council not considered to be good practice - alternative view that funded incentives can work – if arrangement is suitably beneficial. Private Landlords want long tenancies with reasonable return and low risk. Local Authority can assist particularly with bearing some risk, i.e. if tenant on HB and let their claim lapse, Local Authority bridges gap while claim reinstated?

### **Improving communication with private rented tenants, landlords and letting agents**

- Providing information packs to tenants when they move into property
- Some Housing Associations visit tenant 6 weeks after moving in date to check how they have settled in and rent payment etc. is all in hand. This could be extended to PRS and encourage landlords to take tenants referred by Council assists tenants & prevents problems at early stage
- University give out snippets of info during the course of the tenancy to prevent information overload
- Greater use of social media & Apps

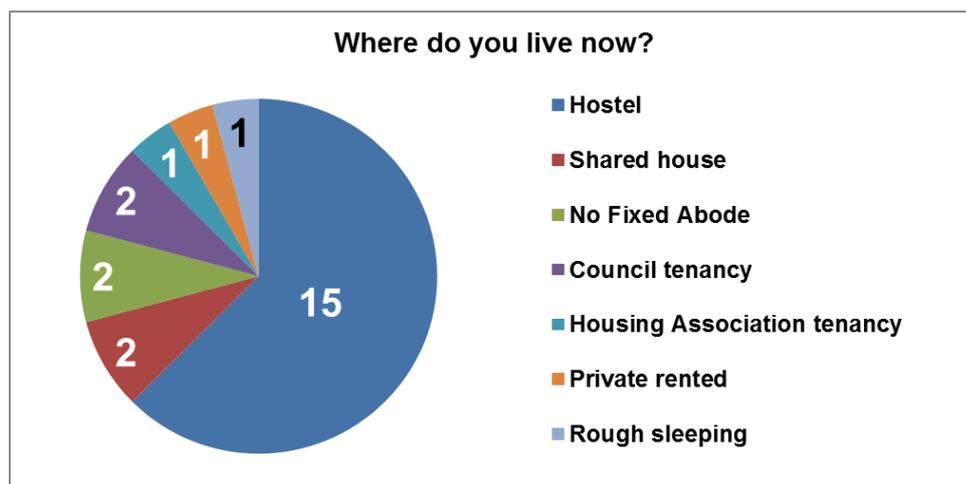
## 2 Client and Customer consultation

There were 24 responses from clients living in Guildford hostels and those using services for homeless people.

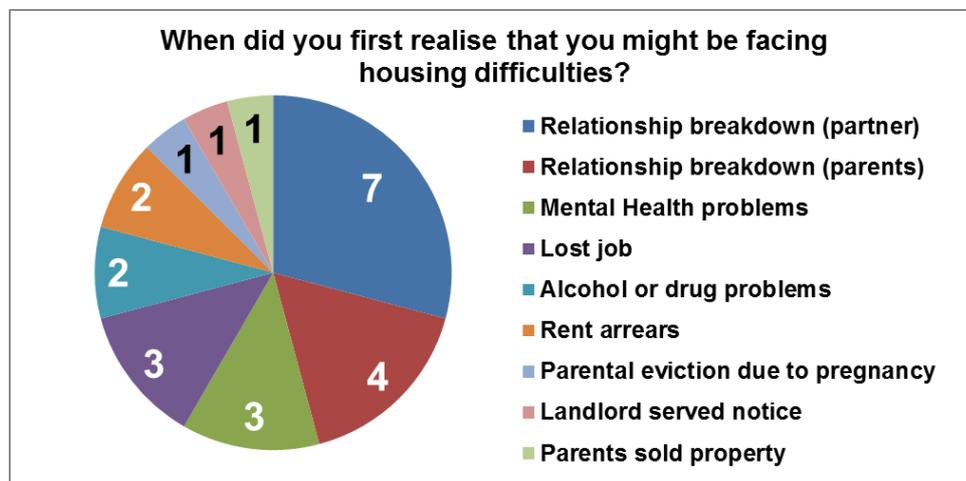
### Question 1 – what is your household type?

Answers were inconsistent in format. Some answered as requested, others answered as their previous household type (e.g. – married) and others answered using their current accommodation. The majority of respondents were single

### Question 2 – Where do you live now?



### Question 3 – When did you first realise that you might be facing housing difficulties?



### Question 4 – What was the main reason you were facing homelessness?

A number of respondents repeated their answer to question 3.

Other comments included:

“My own choice got in with the wrong crowd”

“I lost my job and couldn’t pay my rent”

“DWP screwing me over”

“No family that want to know, can’t deal with mental health and loads of people around me”

“Landlord selling property and substance problems”

**Question 5 – Looking back, do you think you sought help at the earliest opportunity?**

15 responded yes

8 responded no

The remaining respondent commented:

“Within the council there are no alternative help, its black and white pay rent or you out”

**Question 5a – If no, what stopped you from seeking help earlier?**

Those who responded no to question 5 commented

Comments included:

“I didn’t know how to get help”

“Denial”

“My problems”

“Thought would be able to stay with a friend”

“I panic and when I panic I drink and hide everything”

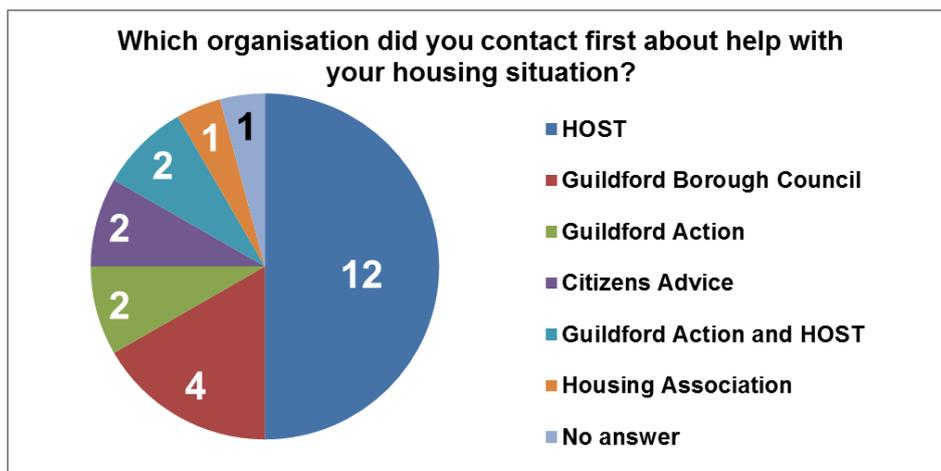
“Mental health problems”

“It wasn’t until I was homeless living rough that I got introduced to services such as Guildford Action, Safe Haven (both helped me stay alive)”

“The person I looked after has mental health problems”

“Not sure where to go”

**Question 6 – Which organisation did you contact first about help with your housing situation?**



**Question 6a – How did they help you?**

Comments included:

“They helped me find a property through Homes4U”

“Put me in contact with housing advice”

“Managed to get me into No. 5 Project then Vaughan House. Very helpful”

“They told me about No 5 York Road and that woz it”

“Got me in No.5, working with mental health team, benefits and keeping myself on the right path”

“Number 5 and advice”

### Question 7 - What could we (the Council) have done differently?

10 respondents said there was nothing the Council could have done differently

Comments included:

"I thought you gave me the help and support I needed"

"Provide more hostels/shelters or temporary accommodation"

"Show that they are interested in you and not just sweep it under carpet and hope you go away"

"In my case everything been done perfect"

"Given me meetings, explained what I need to do to be housed and take into consideration my mental health and that I'm trying and working on everything I can"

"Because of my substance misuse issues I could not maintain myself or temporary accommodation. Need specialist service"

"Have more shared properties in Guildford because some people are not suited to the hostel system"

"Keep in touch on a regular basis"

### Question 8 – Could you have done anything differently?

11 respondents said no

Comments included:

"I should have sort assistance much earlier"

"Yes, not got in with the wrong crowd"

"Not to run away from my problems"

"Been a bit more assertive"

"Yes, stopped drinking"

"Yes but things spiralled out of control very quickly and I felt alone it waz very depressing"

"Ask for help sooner"

"Yes worked with mental health when younger"

"I sort help sooner"

"I had a breakdown, I couldn't cope so I would have had the same outcome. Being homeless"

"No did not know what to do"

"Sought help quicker"

### Question 9 – Any other comments?

Comments included:

"I think everyone young or old should be given the same opportunities"

*"My experience with GBC was a poor one. It's like you're just a number not a person in need of help"*

"Be more understanding about the people you are meant to be helping"

*"Services provided need to be run by people that genuinely care and want to help. Guildford Action provide this open heartedly. Other services need to take lesson from this fantastic service. Without them a lot of service users/people with surely be dead. HOST need a shake- up. People running that service tend to use the rules to suit themselves not the people needing help. They will use that you need certain criteria to have help and support. Even when people are sleeping rough need/want help and rooms available but still will not help"*

"Great thank you to \*\*\*\* was all time on the phone with me to give support till he got place for me"  
(HOST)

*"More should be done for working homeless people, like night shelters and hostels. Paying the rent is impossible for working homeless people like at 5 York Road £15 a night for working homeless"*

### 3 Partner consultation

We received 16 responses.

#### Question 1 - How do you come into contact with homeless people?

“Through the support we offer in our churches or when they sleep rough in our porches or church graveyards”  
“Through A&E and the wards at the local hospital”  
“Have a good relationship with the homeless outreach team in the community and support services including homeless shelters and day centre”  
“I manage a supported housing hostel for homeless people for a period of up to 2 years”  
“Through my job and seeing persons when I am in Guildford Town Centre”  
“Running a nightshelter!”  
“By commissioning services for homeless people”  
“They attend our drop-in sessions and our food bank”

#### Question 2 - In what ways do you currently assist homeless people?

“Food, shelter, laundry, hot water, key working, support planning etc”  
“Assess presentation and medical need”  
“Provide advocacy”  
“Support to secure accommodation and provide emergency shelter prior to securing long-term accommodation”  
“Assessing social situation and need and signpost of directly get involved”  
“By referring them to HOST and Guildford Action, performing welfare checks, ensuring they are not missing persons or wanted persons and trying to safeguard them”  
“By commissioning support for homeless people in a hostel/night shelter setting”  
“With a weekly meal and by handing out food parcels”

#### Question 3 - What are the challenges or barriers you encounter when trying to assist people who are rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness?

“Understanding their full situation (you don't always get the whole story) and knowing exactly what support is available to them”  
“Stigma from colleagues and some statutory services”  
“Lack of support and help from statutory agencies”  
“Lack of resources to relieve the street homeless – managed better during SWEP”  
“Many clients very high needs, prevalence now of mental health alongside substance misuse. Many clients not wanting help from the streets or to access services. Services don't work effectively for a lot of these clients – can't keep to conditions of stay, lack of self- responsibility/willingness to face issues or change”  
“Levels of expectations too high amongst younger clients”  
“Risk of poor health, poor social outcomes including housing, risk of addictions and vulnerability”  
“Members of the public becoming abusive when I am speaking to them, lack of engagement and refusal of support”  
“Resource constraints”  
“Managing risk, high level need”, dual diagnosis or mental health and drug and alcohol issues that create barriers to engagement, entrenched lifestyle choices, unwillingness to change, non- engagement, inability to manage money, a range of ASB issues, unidentified learning difficulties, undiagnosed emotional and mental health disorders, lack of support from other agencies as support thresholds so high”  
“Clients who have no recourse to public funds”  
“Lack of trust by household”  
“We need single rooms to help more effectively – high safeguarding and risk issues with triple/double shared rooms”  
“Limited shelter spaces, No wet night shelter, Local connections can be difficult to prove”  
“There are varied challenges from providing documents and identification for benefits, housing and accounts to support from Social Services and CMHRS”  
Lack of ability to keep in touch – no mobile or credit and no internet”  
“Low Local Housing Allowance Rate related to local rental prices”

"Lack of engagement"

"Vulnerability leads to increased risk of muggings and violence as well as the person being taken advantage of"

"Complex issues, chaotic behaviour, mental health issues, addiction, substance abuse"

"Delays in processing benefit claims – change of circumstance"

#### **Question 4 - Do you have any suggestions for new initiatives or partnership/communication arrangements that would assist in improving outcomes for clients?**

"To use the Homelessness Reduction Act to help ensure that those who want support, access to appropriate services including suitable and sustainable housing"

"More affordable hostel options whilst working , hostels are more expensive than private rented"

"It would be good to have a clearer understanding of what's on offer..... and would be beneficial to know where to signpost them to, what the offer is and if there was someone we could contact to discuss the situation"

A far stronger stance that assistance is available, and by giving money to begging is being used for drugs/alcohol misuse.

"The possibility of a "support a homeless person campaign" whereby money is donated and issued directly to the homeless person to prevent the drug/alcohol misuse and provide treatment/rehab services -

Easier access to mental health support / more robust drug/alcohol intervention work and assertive outreach"

"Joint commissioning and best use of resources across all commissioners: SCC, GBC and the CCG"

"Advocates to support people in these situations to help communicate between agencies and to help the person engage and work with those providing specialist support"

"Additional resources in the benefit department to process claims quicker"

"Open the nightshelter during the day and have a one stop shop for rough sleepers"

"Partnership work between CMHRS, Social Services and Housing is needed"

"Support to clients who have moved into general needs or rented accommodation to prevent revolving door clients"

"Communications would appear to be good, either by telephone or email"

#### **Question 5 - What can we do to help you prevent or relieve homelessness?**

"Work with communities/vol, faith sector ore to help with the early intervention and signposting so we can effectively help on the ground and hopefully relieve the pressure on you"

"A wet house or hostel which didn't have such strict criteria/rules, long term than a night shelter would work well as an initial step for some of the most chaotic of clients"

"Continue to work together"

"More suitable accommodation that was open to homeless would be a benefit"

"Keep up the good work"

"Someone to support people making online claims in house as many of those seeking help are unable to access and use IT software without one to one support"

"always provide full information on a client from someone who knows them so informed decisions can be made with full and transparent disclosure"

#### **Question 6 - Do you feel sufficiently informed about when to seek assistance and who to approach when your client has a housing problem?**

12 respondents said yes

"I don't think our clergy do"

"Mostly. Removing clients from the housing register for having a debt and them not being able to re-join until the whole debt is clear is unfortunately all too common. Whilst I do understand that debts need to be repaid, getting a client to pay consistently towards the debt for a set period of time and then re-joining the register would be much better. Although this has been agreed on a few cases it is normally quite a batter for this to be agreed"

"Yes Guildford has a very good communication network"

"No as different projects have different criteria"

"Yes, the Housing Options Team at Guildford Borough Council are always helpful and provide solid advice and assistance"

"Yes – we have an excellent relationship with the housing and benefit department within the Council"

**Question 7 - Do you have any other comments?**

“More resources from local government to limit the impact of health and homelessness on the health and social economy – invest to see return on investment. Be proactive and not reactive”

“A partnership/whole system approach to preventing homelessness, trying to tackle the wider determinants of health”

“One key area of concern are those working towards employment or the employed homeless who often get caught or penalised in the support hostel process currently used as the cost of supported hostel are very expensive and not viable or needed by some employed clients”

“As with anything these days, it comes down to money and to have greater funding and appropriate facilities would greatly benefit those who are homeless on the streets”

“I often hear people tell me that they just want their own place (how small that might be)”

“Keep doing what you do, we know you genuinely care”