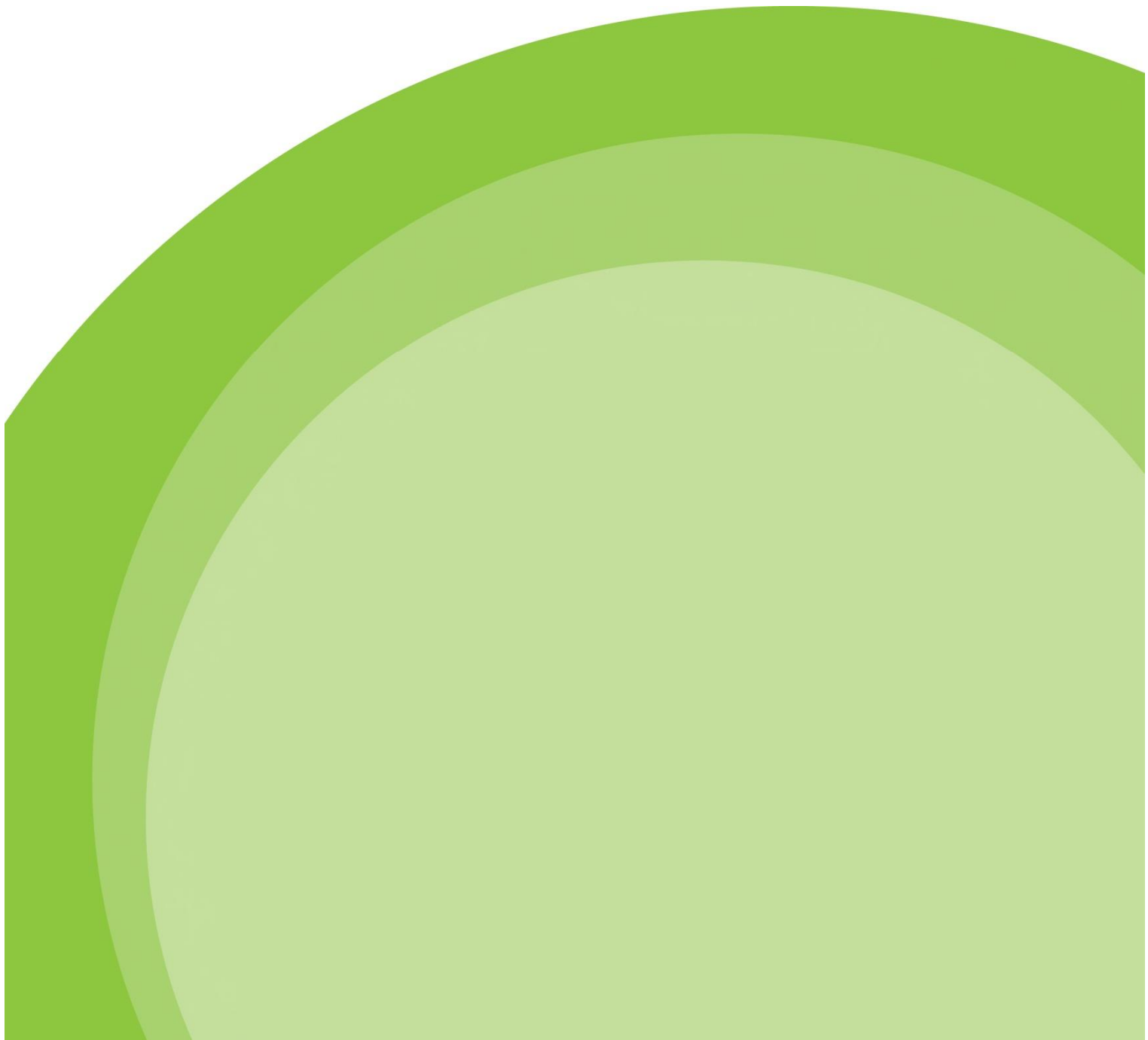




Homelessness Review 2014



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1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The Homelessness Review 2014 has set out a picture of homelessness in Central Bedfordshire. The review has considered the national legislative and policy context as well as national homelessness trends. A snapshot of the local housing picture and analysis of the policy context has been included as has an examination of demand for Central Bedfordshire Council's housing options and homelessness services. Priority groups have been identified and some of the services identified through desktop research to support these groups and prevent and relieve homelessness have been set out in this review.
- 1.2. The review has identified that since the current Homelessness Strategy was developed in 2010 there have been new opportunities to develop and improve services and challenges that have had an impact on demand and provision of services.
- 1.3. The changes to demand since the development of the current Homelessness Strategy include:
 - a) Demand for housing options advice and assistance has fluctuated greatly with a peak in 2012/13 of 2,373.
 - b) An 8% increase in housing register applications over three years to 2013-14.
 - c) A 42% increase in homeless declarations between 2011-12 and 2013-14.
 - d) The total number of homelessness decisions has decreased by 16% since 2010-11.
 - e) There has been a steady decrease in those not accepted because they were not homeless. This indicates that pro-active advice on eligibility has led to more realistic expectations of the homelessness application process since 2010.
 - f) The number of households accepted as homeless has reduced slightly in the four years to 124 households in 2013-14.
 - g) There has been a 55% increase in the use of temporary accommodation since 2010-11.
- 1.4. The profile of those accepted as homeless in 2013-14 was as follows:
 - The largest priority group for homeless acceptances in 2013-14 were lone females with dependent children at 40%. Other significant groups include couples with dependents at 12% and single women at 10%.
 - More than half (57%) of homeless acceptances in 2013-14 were from people aged 18-34.
 - Nearly a third (31%) of homeless acceptances in 2013-14 resulted because family or friends were not willing to accommodate them.
- 1.5. New opportunities have arisen or been created since the development of the last Strategy; this includes:
 - Introduction of the Localism Act 2011 power to discharge the homelessness duty to the private sector without the applicant's consent.
 - Bringing housing options services in the north in-house and merging with services in the south of Central Bedfordshire. In the past the different ways of

processing housing applications between the north and south have caused difficulties, particularly for women's refuge services.

- Improved working relationships between Central Bedfordshire Council's (CBC's) Housing Service, Children's Services and Adult Social Care as the new local authority established in 2009 has developed.

1.6. Challenges which have had an impact on housing options and homelessness services include:

- a) the impact of the economic downturn on residents
- b) the impact of welfare reform on residents
- c) impact of the Government Spending Review on local authorities and the organisations they fund
- d) Lack of security in the private sector and rising private rents
- e) The 16-64 year old Central Bedfordshire population continues to grow and is expected to increase 6.5% to 176,200 in 2021.

1.7. The review was circulated to a wide range of stakeholders with a survey to obtain feedback on the review. Engagement events were also held with external stakeholders and Central Bedfordshire Council colleagues in October 2014 to gather views on the effectiveness of homelessness service provision within Central Bedfordshire and to identify priorities for the future.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. The Homelessness Act 2002 places a legal duty on local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness prevention and support in their area and produce a Homelessness Strategy every five years based on the findings of the review. Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) carried out a review of homelessness in 2009 following its formation as a new unitary authority and published its first Homelessness Strategy covering the period 2010-15.
- 2.2. This first strategy provided a clear picture of homelessness in Central Bedfordshire both in terms of client group needs and the delivery of local preventative action aimed at supporting people to maintain or find secure accommodation. A number of strategic priorities were formed particularly around the ongoing demand for housing support services, greater need for financial inclusion and delivery of more preventative interventions for families and young people at risk of becoming homeless.
- 2.3. Since this time, significant socio-economic change has continued to take place both nationally and regionally as a result of the economic downturn and Government Spending Review decisions, particularly in relation to welfare reform. The combined effect of this change has in turn placed greater pressure on vulnerable households to maintain secure accommodation whilst also dealing with an increased cost of living, lack of security of tenure in the private sector, rising private rents and ongoing growth in house prices.
- 2.4. The Council's Housing Service is responding to the changes in demand and pressures felt by resident and colleagues. The Housing Service has recently been transformed to better organise the delivery of housing options for local residents and tenancy sustainment services for existing CBC tenants. This has corresponded with the refresh of strategic priorities across the Housing Service through a review of the accommodation needs of vulnerable people, new arrangements for managing housing allocations, development of the draft Tenancy Sustainment Strategy, and proposals to increase the options available to discharge our homelessness duty to a suitable home.

3. Scope

- 3.1. Within this broad context and activity, a review of homelessness within Central Bedfordshire seeks to update the existing understanding of local needs. In particular the review addresses how the Council is meeting its statutory duty to prevent homelessness, and establish whether the current homelessness relief provision is adequately supporting homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless. In this context, exploring the delivery of housing options and homelessness services is a key focus for the review.
- 3.2. The review includes the following components:

- a) Overview of government policy and priorities for tackling homelessness,
- b) High-level research using national sources into local performance on homelessness with comparison against statistically similar and neighbouring authorities,
- c) An understanding of homeless priority and non-priority needs using housing data and information from CBC's Meeting the Accommodation Needs of Vulnerable People (MANVP) report,
- d) An overview of preventative initiatives and action to tackle homelessness in CBC through housing advice and assistance, and
- e) Mapping current local initiatives and services to prevent or relieve homelessness and rough sleeping, and support people being accepted as statutory homeless.
- f) An examination of circumstances and needs of the priority homeless groups and those with characteristics that are often repeated in homelessness cases.

4. National legislative and policy context

4.1. Homelessness Duty

- 4.1.1. Legal provisions covering statutory homelessness prevention and relief are set by the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002. The legislation places a general duty on housing authorities to deliver advice and information on preventing homelessness along with providing assistance to priority need households that are threatened with or become homeless.
- 4.1.2. A 'main homelessness duty' is owed where the authority is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a specified priority need group. Such statutorily homeless households are referred to as 'acceptances'.
- 4.1.3. Where a main duty is owed, the authority must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the applicant and his or her household. The duty continues until a settled housing solution becomes available for them, or some other circumstance brings the duty to an end. Where households are found to be intentionally homeless, or not in priority need, the authority must make an assessment of their housing needs and provide advice and assistance to help them find accommodation for themselves.
- 4.1.4. The Housing Act sets priority need in relation to homelessness, which are households containing:
 - a) Pregnant women,
 - b) Dependent children,
 - c) Someone that is vulnerable in relation to age, mental illness or disability, and
 - d) Someone that is homeless as a result of an emergency or disaster.
 - e) Homeless young people aged 16 and 17,
 - f) Care leavers aged 18-21 and vulnerable people that have spent time in care,
 - g) Armed forces personnel and ex-personnel,

- h) Offenders and ex-offenders, and
- i) Vulnerable people fleeing violence and abuse at home.

4.2. National Social Policy Change

- 4.2.1. Since the last Homelessness Strategy was published in 2010 there has been a period of rapid social policy change, including significant reductions in local government funding and major welfare and social housing reform. In turn, this is affecting the most vulnerable households and individuals and is gradually bringing additional pressures on services for people who are facing homelessness.
- 4.2.2. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 is a key part of the Government's approach to social and economic reform and includes the following headline changes:
- a) Universal Credit to provide a single stream-lined benefit
 - b) Benefit cap on the total amount any one household can receive
 - c) Replacement of Disability Living Allowance with Personal Independence Payments (PIP)
 - d) Introduction of the underoccupancy penalty for Housing Benefit claimants in social housing.
- 4.2.3. In addition to this, in 2011 Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates in the private sector were decreased from the median of local market rates to the 30th percentile and national caps were introduced. Further changes were made to LHA in 2012 where there was an increase in the proportion of single people with no dependents restricted to the same rate as those renting a single room in a shared house due to a change in the age limit to 35.
- 4.2.4. The reductions in public spending has also seen the end of ring-fenced Supporting People funding to enable vulnerable people maintain secure accommodation and independence.
- 4.2.5. The Localism Act 2011 introduced a raft of local government reforms across finance, planning, governance and housing. The changes with direct relevance to homelessness include:
- a) The right for housing authorities to grant fixed-term tenancies,
 - b) A requirement for local authorities to produce a Tenancy Strategy,
 - c) Greater flexibility in the allocation of social housing,
 - d) Discharging homelessness duties using private rented accommodation.

5. National Homelessness Statistics

5.1. The broad national picture is of steadily increasing homelessness decisions and, importantly, statutory homeless acceptances since 2009. Figure 1 shows that for 2013-14 a total of 114,860 homelessness decisions were taken by local authorities across England, which represents an increase of 25,140 (22%) since 2009-10¹.

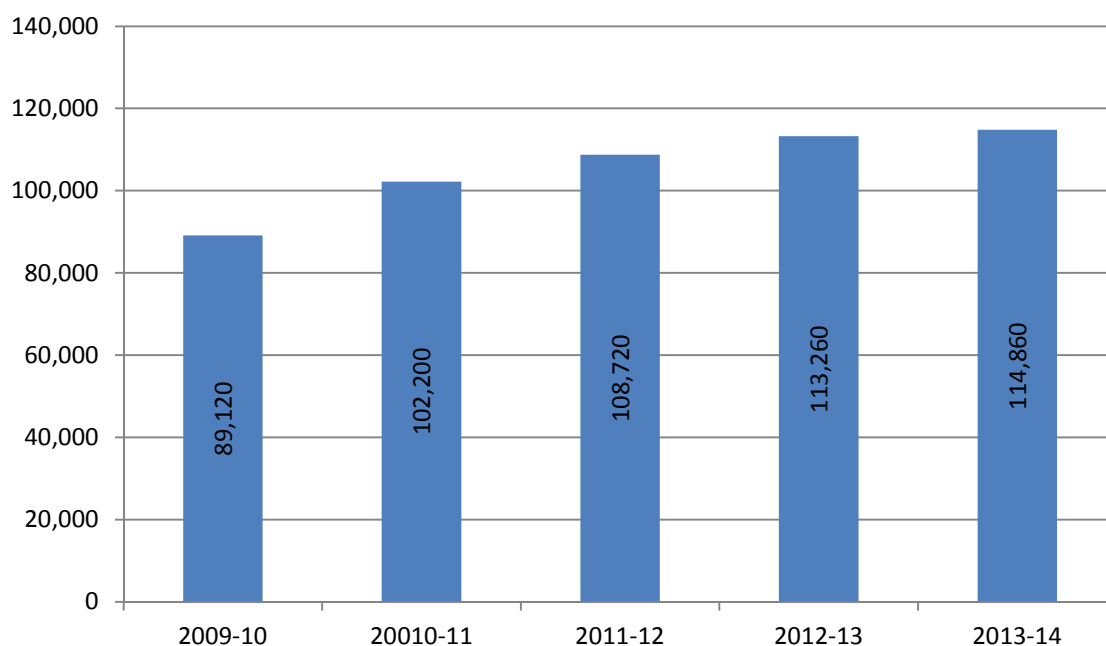


Figure 1: Statutory homelessness decisions for England 2013-14²

5.2. This overall increase in homelessness decisions also corresponds closely with a growth in the number of statutory homelessness acceptances. Figure 2 below shows that the proportion of acceptances has increased from 44.9% (40,020) in 2009-10 to 45.5% (52,260) in 2013-14, which represents an increase of 12,240 more households being recognised as homeless and owed a main duty to access secure accommodation. The increase in acceptances can be mapped alongside the reduction of both non-acceptances because of non-priority need or not being homeless.

¹ Detailed local authority level homelessness figures. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness#detailed-local-authority-level-responses>

² Live data tables on homelessness; Table 770: decisions taken by local authorities under the Housing Act on applications from eligible households

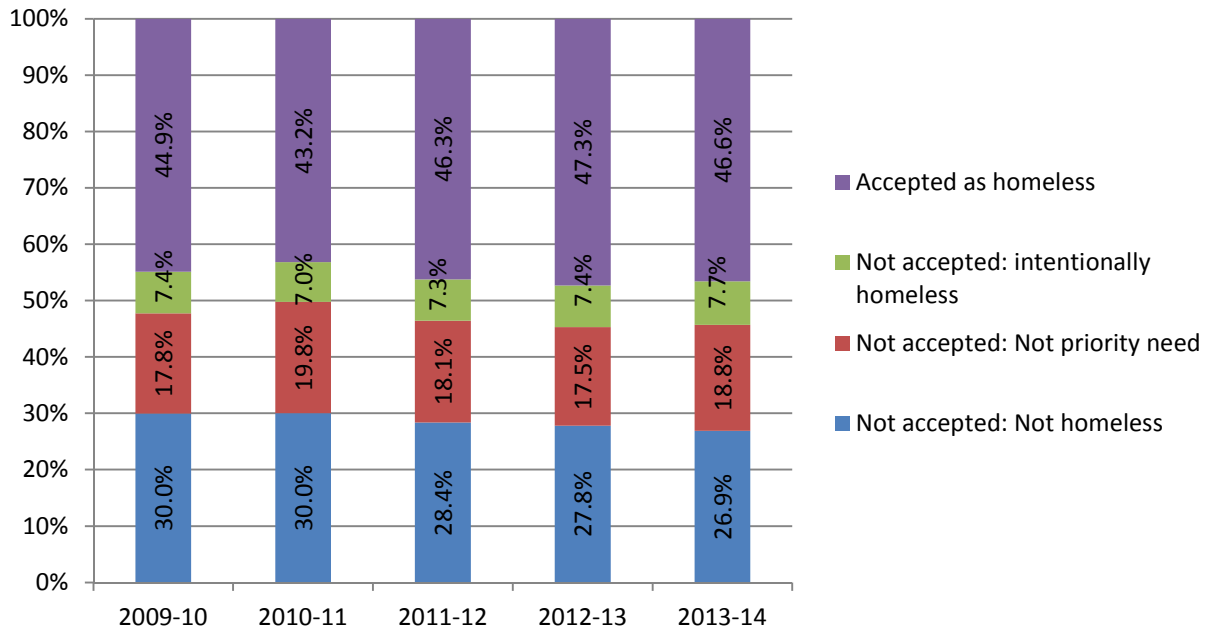


Figure 2: Breakdown of statutory homelessness decisions for eligible applicants for England 2013-14³

5.3. Of the 52,260 homelessness acceptances in 2013-14, female single parents with dependent children make up the largest client group at 46%. Couples with dependent children account for 20% of all acceptances followed by single males at 13%.

5.4. An examination of homelessness acceptances in 2013-14 by the reason for the loss of the last settled home (figure 3) shows that the ending of an assured short hold tenancy accounts for more than a quarter of all statutory homelessness in England. This cause of homelessness has increased by 31.7% (4,330 cases) since 2011-12. This indicates that greater pressure in the private rental sector could be making it more difficult for households to maintain a secure home. The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) recognised in early 2014 that *'loss of assured short hold tenancy has been the most frequently occurring reason for the loss of last settled home for the last seven consecutive quarters.'*⁴

³ Ibid

⁴ DCLG, Housing Statistical Release, 6 March 2014; Statutory Homelessness: October to December Quarter 2013 England

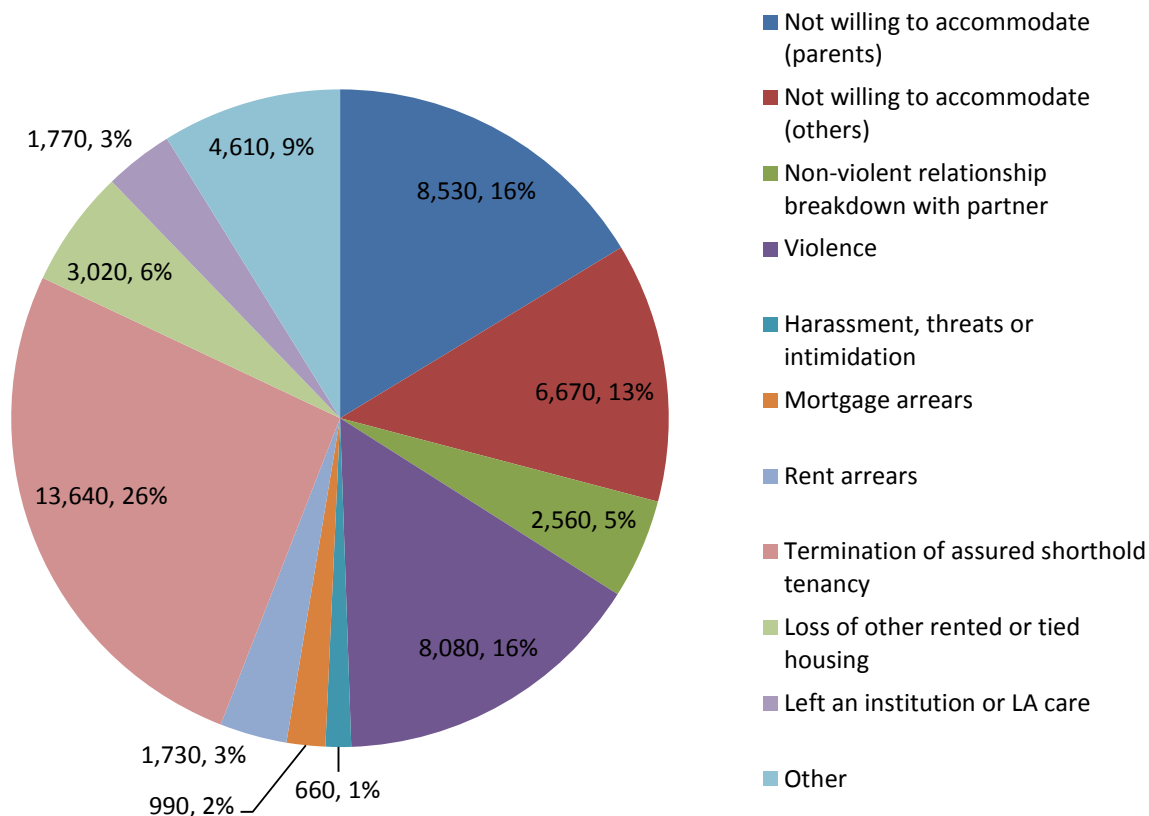


Figure 3: Homelessness acceptances by loss of last settled home for England, 2013-14 ⁵

6. National good practice

6.1. This review has undertaken a short examination of good practice in relation to homelessness prevention and relief across comparator authorities, national organisations and Government guidance. This identified the following:

- a) Local authorities clearly place an emphasis on prevention work.
- b) Most local authorities do not provide high levels of hostel accommodation.
- c) The majority of local authorities and partners have adopted the 'No Second Night Out' principles which are a commitment to ending rough sleeping.
- d) Many areas have a clear threshold for homelessness acceptances and a clear pathway showing how homeless people can access services.
- e) Some local authorities are using the private sector to discharge their statutory homeless duty, a power given in the Localism Act 2011.
- f) Prevention is delivered through strong partnership working between the local authority and voluntary sector.
- g) Multi-agency case panels are in place to discuss the most complex cases.
- h) Additional hostel beds are made available for rough sleepers, who would not normally qualify, during extreme cold weather.
- i) Shared databases are used by the local authority and other providers to monitor the location, progress and outcomes of homeless cases.

⁵ Live data tables on homelessness; Table 774: homeless households accepted by local authorities, by reason for loss of last settled home

- j) There is clear and effective management of EU rough sleepers, who ordinarily have no recourse to public funds.
- k) There is often a local homelessness champion who drives forward the homelessness agenda.
- l) Good governance is in place to monitor and drive forward homelessness strategies.

6.2. In August 2012, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published *Making Every Contact Count: a joint approach towards homelessness prevention*. The report, which was produced by the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness, states clearly that 'there is no place for homelessness in the 21st century'.

6.3. The report sets out the Government's approach to homelessness prevention by focusing on the contribution that a commitment around troubled families, health, crime prevention and employment and skills can make. The report calls for central Government, local authorities, government agencies and the voluntary sector to work together to support those at risk of homelessness.

6.4. It also gives an indication of the Government's direction and expectations for homelessness prevention. This emphasises a number of important factors, including; greater integration of local authority services (Housing, Adult Social Care and Children's Services, etc.); increased focus on a payment by results approach to funding; increased reliance on the private rented sector; and a focus on wrap-around services to tackle youth homelessness (such as those provided by Youth Hubs).

6.5. The report also set ten local 'Gold Standard' challenges, which the Government has recommended local authorities should take forward. To reach Gold Standard status councils need to meet key commitments including:

- a) offering a comprehensive prevention service, with advice and support for single people as well as families in need,
- b) working with local agencies to provide employment, education and training opportunities,
- c) helping householders facing the threat of repossession by providing access to mortgage debt advice and support such as the Mortgage Rescue scheme, and
- d) adopting a local No Second Night Out scheme to help prevent new rough sleepers from becoming entrenched into a street lifestyle.

7. Local policy context

7.1. Housing Strategy 2011-16

7.1.1. The existing Housing Strategy 2011-16 set out the Council's priorities for providing a comprehensive housing service, which aims to improve quality of life for all residents through effective housing need solutions and the development of stable communities across Central Bedfordshire. A large policy framework at national, regional, sub-regional and local government level directs the Council's strategic function in both housing and planning.

7.1.2. The Council has established four key priorities in order to meet its strategic housing responsibilities. This includes:

- a) Economic development and sustainable communities,
- b) Using council assets to aid the delivery of growth and housing,
- c) Meeting the accommodation and support needs of older persons and vulnerable people,
- d) Providing housing options for the whole community.

7.2. Homelessness Strategy 2010-2015

7.2.1. CBC's first Homelessness Strategy was developed in the context of a recession and an unpredictable socio-economic future. The strategy acknowledged that tackling homelessness could not be done in isolation and was dependent on effective joint working between the local authority and all organisations working to prevent and respond to homelessness.

7.2.2. The strategy introduced six strategic priorities:

1. Harmonise housing options services across Central Bedfordshire, following Local Government Reorganisation
2. Respond effectively to the recession, focussing on financial inclusion
3. Work with young people aged 16-24 to meet their needs more effectively
4. Embed the Think Family approach within all homelessness prevention activity and broader interventions to sustain families in permanent settled accommodation
5. Strengthen safeguarding practice for vulnerable adults and children cross all aspects of housing options and homelessness prevention
6. Investigate the particular problems and pathway journeys that are experienced by people with complex needs, including mental health and substance abuse.

7.2.3. A further four cross-cutting priorities were also identified:

- a) Strengthen equalities practice across all aspects of the service
- b) Make best use of private sector accommodation in meeting all other homelessness strategic priorities

- c) Sharing awareness and working in partnership with the community and between partner agencies
- d) Tenancy sustainment.

7.2.4. Key achievements of the Homelessness Strategy include:

1. Successful harmonisation of the north and south housing needs services to provide a consistent approach across Central Bedfordshire,
2. Development of the Let's Rent scheme to increase the housing supply available
3. Implementation of the Supporting Families programme for troubled families
4. Introduction of the Homelessness and Mediation Service for young people
5. Development of debt and budgeting information and advice provision
6. Development of a policy to enable the use of the power to discharge the homelessness duty to the private sector.
7. Establishment of emergency night shelter facilities provided through the No Second Night Out Initiative.

7.3 Housing Options Service

7.3.1 The Council's Housing Options Service is central to the provision of targeted housing advice and assistance to support local people in finding or maintaining secure accommodation and preventing the risk of becoming homeless.

7.3.2 The Housing Needs service, which includes the Housing Options team, prior to 2012 was split with services in the south run by the Council and services in the north which were contracted out. The service in the north was brought in house in April 2012 and merged with the south team. The consolidated Housing Needs Service now offers a standardised service irrespective of post code, greater operational efficiency and flexibility and an enhanced customer experience due to harmonisation.

7.3.3 The Housing Options Team is typically the first point of call for advice when local people start the process of looking for accommodation following a change in circumstances or where people need support to address difficulties within their current living arrangements. The core function of the service is to provide personalised advice and guidance on suitable housing options, facilitate access to a range of support services, liaise with a range of third parties and signpost or make referrals to other local agencies and partners. The following describes some of the key activities undertaken by Housing Options, not necessarily in chronological order, when supporting people that approach the Council for housing advice and assistance:

- a) Understanding the client's circumstances or difficulties and exploring a range of options to maintain their home or find alternative accommodation.
- b) Providing advice and assistance to help people to find suitable accommodation in the private sector or apply to be placed on the Housing Register and bid for social housing.

- c) Liaising and negotiating with landlords over rent arrears, tenancy issues or eviction notices to support tenants in maintaining their home or exercising their rights.
- d) Assisting with claims for Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowance along with advice on maximising benefit income.
- e) Offering advice and assistance to people affected by domestic violence, neighbour nuisance or anti-social behaviour, and unfit or unsafe properties.
- f) Providing financial advice with meeting mortgage payments or rent deposits including access to grants.
- g) Making referrals to other local agencies, voluntary sector organisations and legal advice.
- h) Referral to supported housing schemes.
- i) Managing homelessness applications and access to emergency temporary accommodation.

7.4 Allocations and Choice Based Lettings

7.4.1 In accordance with part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 local authorities and housing agents must provide a housing allocations scheme to enable the nomination and selection of eligible person(s) for a secured tenancy to social and affordable housing.

7.4.2 In 2013 the Council revised its existing housing allocations scheme to maximise the supply of affordable housing stock in Central Bedfordshire and ensure that it is appropriately targeted at households who are in genuine housing need. The new allocations scheme has been developed on the principles of fairness and transparency when allocating social or affordable lets and has simplified the banding system to prioritise housing needs and make eligibility clearer for local people to understand. The new allocations scheme seeks to meet the following objectives:

- a) Encourage applicants who are out of work to seek employment,
- b) Balance reasonable preference with local priorities,
- c) Provide support for low paid workers in the private sector,
- d) Deliver practical help for those threatened with homelessness,
- e) Support households who work locally, and
- f) Offer choice.

7.4.3 The CBC allocations scheme describes how the Council prioritises housing applicants to ensure that those with a genuine housing need, defined in terms of 'Reasonable Preference', are given access to the majority of available social and affordable housing lets. This scheme also sets out in detail who is and who is not eligible to become a member of the Housing Register, how applicants can apply for housing, how assessments are made and the level of service an applicant can expect to receive.

7.4.4 The Council is a partner within Bedfordshire Homefinder, which operates a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme to provide local people placed on the housing

register with the ability to choose, bid and secure suitable social and affordable accommodation. The scheme openly advertises tenancy vacancies and invites applicants to express interest in properties they would like to be offered and for which they are eligible based on their needs.

7.5 Discharge of homelessness duty into a suitable home policy

- 7.5.1 The Council's Housing Green Paper⁶ outlined plans to maximise the use of accommodation in the private rented sector to provide households that are accepted as being statutory homeless with suitable accommodation to meet their needs. This approach has been adopted following new powers given to local authorities through the Localism Act 2011, which allows offers of suitable private accommodation to be made without consent in order for authorities to meet their main homelessness duty.
- 7.5.2 The Council has carefully considered how it should use this power and has developed a Policy to Discharge the Homelessness Duty in to a Suitable Home to set out the criteria for a suitable home in the private and social housing sector. It is anticipated that this approach will underpin and strengthen existing housing advice and homelessness prevention activities to ensure that Private Sector Offers (PSO) are used effectively to ensure homelessness households are able to access suitable and secure accommodation within improved timescales.
- 7.5.3 It is expected that PSOs will offer greater flexibility to prevent and relieve homelessness, either by offering suitable private accommodation before a statutory application or acceptance is made or by placing homeless households in accommodation sooner. In addition, this policy approach will help to reinforce the housing register as the main route into social housing by dispelling the perception of queue-jumping by those who approach the Council as homeless.
- 7.5.4 A range of safeguards for households accepting a PSO will ensure that the Council continues to offer support and meet any on-going homelessness duty. Firstly, in making a PSO to end a homelessness duty the Council must provide a tenancy that is affordable and suitable to meet the household's circumstances. Secondly, where homelessness reoccurs within two years of accepting the PSO the Council's homelessness duty will continue and the household will be eligible to apply for another PSO or social housing tenancy. Finally, the Council will seek to provide support to help sustain the PSO tenancy and where appropriate make referrals to locally commissioned support services.
- 7.5.5 The Council recognises that creating a good supply of suitable private sector rental accommodation is critical to using PSOs as an effective option for the prevention and relief of homelessness. Work is underway to develop and improve the

⁶ Housing in Central Bedfordshire: what lies ahead? February 2013.

Council's offer to landlords and letting agents, which will involve, in part, greater use of the existing Let's Rent Scheme.

7.6 Tenancy Strategy 2013-18

7.6.1 In response to new tenancy arrangements introduced by the Localism Act 2011 the Council developed the Tenancy Strategy 2013-18 to outline its approach to flexible tenancies and delivering a new housing offer for local people. The strategy focusses on using tenancy arrangements to maximise the use of social housing stock for those in most need and incentivise employment, social responsibility and social mobility, and introduced:

- Five year fixed term tenancies across the CBC social housing stock for all new tenants from 1 April 2013;
- Guidance for Registered Providers to use fixed term tenancies and provide options advice as tenancies finish; and
- Criteria for assessing the renewal of tenancies based on changing circumstances (priority need and financial) and conduct.

7.6.2 The strategy recognised the need to provide support to the most vulnerable tenants, including homeless households, through the delivery of ongoing tenancies for those in need, effective housing options advice, and tenancy arrangements that enable households to progress up the housing ladder; freeing up capacity to meet other households in social housing need.

7.6.3 To support this aim the Council introduced a Tenancy Training Programme to offer all new Council tenants the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills to maintain their tenancy and become independent so that they can secure alternative accommodation when their circumstances change.

7.6.4 To underpin the delivery of the strategy the Council produced a Tenancy Policy to set out the priorities and governance arrangements for managing fixed term tenancies.

7.7 Tenancy Sustainment Approach

7.7.1 CBC is currently developing a Tenancy Sustainment Approach in response to changing priorities for social housing, and the need to prevent avoidable tenancy breakdowns. The new approach seeks to provide greater advice and support to help vulnerable tenants manage the underlying financial and social pressures associated with maintaining a secure home and tenancy.

7.7.2 The approach seeks to focus resources on prevention and proactive intervention in order to help tenants manage difficulties in their lives, take informed decisions and sustain access to safe and suitable housing that meets their needs. In addition, the approach recognises that vulnerable tenants are being directly affected by a number of welfare changes including the Benefit Cap, underoccupancy penalty and

introduction of the Council Tax Support Scheme. The planned roll-out of Universal Credit is also anticipated to have an impact on tenants. For those affected, the risk of rent arrears and indebtedness is likely to undermine their ability to maintain their tenancy in the long-term.

7.8 Housing Support Services Market Position Statement

7.8.1 The Market Position Statement (MPS) is currently being developed and it identifies the level and type of housing-support services that Central Bedfordshire Council currently wishes to see being available to vulnerable residents. These services are required in order to promote access to suitable homes and help people to remain in them.

7.8.2 The draft MPS, once finalised, will be for:

- Current and prospective providers of support services, to learn about the council's intentions as a purchaser of services, and our vision for shaping the market.
- People interested in local business development and social enterprise can find out about new opportunities in the market and let the council know what help is needed to enter the market and to offer innovative services.
- And people in need of services can see the council's thinking on services for Vulnerable People, and feed-in their views as to what is needed.

7.8.3 The evidence available to the Council suggests that there is unmet need for housing support services across Central Bedfordshire.

7.8.4 Further details on possible shortfalls in provision for some of these groups are included in Section 10 - Priority groups and support.

7.9 Care Act 2014

7.9.1 The Care Act 2014 introduced a statutory duty for local authorities to plan for the availability of preventative services that act to support health and wellbeing. The Care Act and its guidance clearly recognises the deep influence that the physical aspects of housing and the socio-cultural sense of home and community can have on the health and wellbeing of the population.

7.9.2 Central Bedfordshire Council is implementing the requirements of the Care Act through a project management approach and the Housing Service are involved in planning to meet the new duties. The Market Position Statement will also play a part in the Council's approach to discharging the 'wellbeing' duty and focusses on helping people, who for a variety of reasons, may require support in order to be able to find and maintain a stable and optimally independent life in a suitable home.

7.10 Welfare Reform Implications

- 7.10.1 The Coalition Government's Welfare Reforms programme is likely to impact most of Central Bedfordshire Council's social housing tenants at some point.
- 7.10.2 In April 2014 12,948 households were in receipt of Housing Benefit (approximately 12.3% of the Central Bedfordshire population⁷). 26.7% of Housing Benefit recipients were private tenants, 46.1% Housing Association tenants and 27.2% Council tenants.
- 7.10.3 Universal Credits will introduce direct payments to the tenant rather than the landlord. Some tenants do not feel that they engage in the rent paying process if they are on full Housing Benefit (HB) and not in arrears. This gives some the impression that they do not pay rent and so when these tenants start to receive direct payments to their own bank account to pay for their rent, some tenants will for the first time have to take an active part in ensuring their rent is paid. 1,035 (17.5%) of CBC tenants were on full HB in July 2014.
- 7.10.4 In April 2013, 494 CBC tenants had their Housing Benefit reduced as they were under occupying their property as a result of the introduction of the underoccupancy penalty. Those under occupying by one bedroom had their benefit reduced by 14% of the rent and those underoccupying by two or more bedrooms had their benefit reduced by 25% of the rent. It is estimated that this could have led to a shortfall of £9,323 per week from these tenants paying their rent.
- 7.10.5 The other major change that came in on 1 April 2013 was the local Council Tax Support Scheme. Many working age tenants who previously received full Council Tax Benefit now have to pay at least 25% of their Council Tax, unless they are in a protected group.
- 7.10.6 The impact of Council Tax Support is smaller than that felt by many affected by the underoccupancy penalty. In April 2013, the 319 CBC tenants that were affected by the underoccupancy penalty and the introduction of Council Tax Support on average had to pay an additional £4.45 each per week. In July 2014, 547 households were impacted by both the changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme and the underoccupancy penalty. This represented 6.1% of the 8,960 claimants in Central Bedfordshire living in social housing.
- 7.10.7 The Benefit Cap was introduced in August 2013 and as of July 2014 affected 44 households in Central Bedfordshire; 13 Council tenants, 19 Housing Association tenants and 12 private rented sector tenants. 13 tenants in Central Bedfordshire were affected by the Council Tax Support changes and the Benefit Cap in July 2014. An analysis of the initial impact of the Benefit Cap in August 2013 found that one CBC tenant was expected to receive 34p less per week, whilst another tenant would see a reduction of £296 in benefits per week, eclipsing their rent. The weekly cap is £350 for single people and £500 for couples or those with children. Although the number of tenants affected is relatively low, the cumulative effect of other changes will mean further financial pressures on some households and families.

⁷ Department for Communities and Local Government, Household projections, 2011.

8 Local housing picture - snapshot

- 8.1 Housing data and information from national and local sources show that as of 2011 there were approximately 104,400 occupied households across Central Bedfordshire⁸. An estimate of housing growth indicates that the local area will have a further 28,700 households by 2031.
- 8.2 Private home ownership accounts for 73% of all household tenure in Central Bedfordshire, and is made up of 42,704 (41%) privately owned through mortgage borrowing and 33,039 (32%) owned outright. As figure 4 below shows, approximately 13% of household tenure is social rent with private rents accounting for 12%.

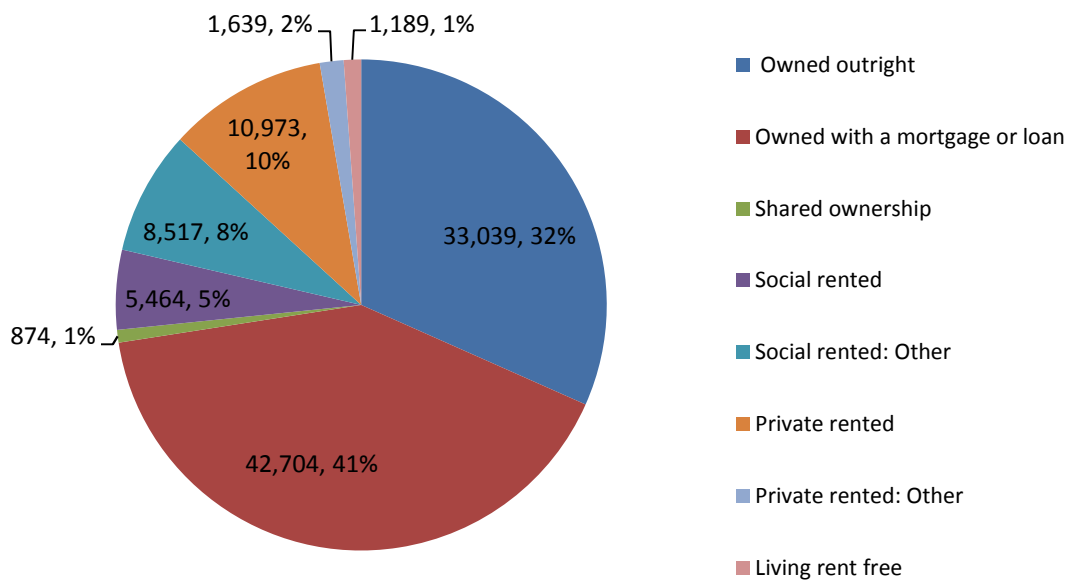


Figure 4: Central Bedfordshire households by tenure⁹

- 8.3 Census data in relation to household type in table 1 below shows that within Central Bedfordshire households are more likely to live in detached or semi-detached houses when compared to England as a whole. While 22% of households live in a flat or similar, approximately 3,500 (29%) of the extra household spaces developed between 2001 and 2011 were flats.

⁸ 2011 Census: Tenure, local authorities in England and Wales.

⁹ 2011 Census: Tenure, local authorities in England and Wales.

	Central Bedfordshire		England
Detached	30,700	28.2%	22.3%
Semi-detached	36,800	33.8%	30.7%
Terraced House	27,500	25.3%	24.5%
Flat/apartment/maisonette	12,800	11.7%	22.1%
Caravan/mobile/temp structure	1,000	1.0%	0.4%
All household spaces	108,700	100%	100%
Occupied households	104,400	96.0%	95.7%

Table 1: Central Bedfordshire accommodation type compared with England¹⁰

8.4 In December 2013 the average house price in Central Bedfordshire was £175,800. This was higher than the England and Wales average of £166,600. House prices in Central Bedfordshire have generally followed the national trend over the past few years¹¹.

8.5 CORE (The Continuous Recording of Lettings and Sales in Social Housing in England) enables examination of social lettings by the type of property and number of bedrooms. This shows that the majority of lettings are to flats and houses rather than shared accommodation, and that the number of lets to two bedroom homes is consistently higher than that for one and three bed properties (shown by Table 2). This emphasises the demand for two-bed social housing for both households that need more space and those looking to downsize.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
1 Bedroom	157	216	239	163	775
2 Bedrooms	319	386	279	251	1235
3+ Bedrooms	235	249	215	185	884
Total	711	851	733	599	2894

Table 2: Central Bedfordshire lettings by number of bedrooms¹²

8.6 Table 3 below also shows that the majority of social tenants are in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB) at 65.3% (1,889). While perhaps expected, this indicates that many households in need of low cost housing are still being assessed as not having the income to afford it.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
Housing Benefit	419	580	536	354	1889
Not in receipt of HB	125	131	95	98	449
Universal Credit	-	-	-	26	26
Unknown	167	140	102	121	530
Total	711	851	733	599	2894

Table 3: Central Bedfordshire lettings by Housing Benefit¹³

¹⁰ 2011 Census: Dwellings, household spaces and accommodation type, local authorities in England and Wales

¹¹ Central Bedfordshire Key Facts and Figures, April 2014.

¹² CORE

¹³ CORE

9 Homelessness in Central Bedfordshire

9.1 Headlines

1. Demand for housing options advice and assistance has. has fluctuated greatly with a peak in 2012/13 of 2,373.
2. A total of 1,337 housing register applications were made in 2013-14; representing an increase of 8% over the three year period.
3. Between 2011-12 and 2013-14 there was a 42% increase in homeless declarations.
4. The total number of homelessness decisions decreased by 16% between 2010-11 and 2013-14.
5. 124 households were accepted at homeless in 2013-14; a 22% reduction on the previous year.
6. The largest priority group for homeless acceptances in 2013-14 were lone females with dependent children at 40%. Other significant groups include couples with dependents at 12% and single women at 10%.
7. More than half (57%) of homeless acceptances in 2013-14 were from people aged 18-34.
8. Nearly a third (31%) of homeless acceptances in 2013-14 resulted because family or friends were not willing to accommodate.
9. There was estimated to be 13 rough sleepers in Central Bedfordshire in Autumn 2013, compared to the regional average of six¹⁴.

9.2 Analysis of the Local Picture

9.2.1 Since the last review of homelessness in 2009 Central Bedfordshire has seen increasing demand for housing options support to assist local people to maintain their existing accommodation and overcome difficulties and prevent people becoming homeless.

9.2.2 Figure 5 below shows the total number of housing options cases dealt with for each of the last four years. This highlights a demand peak in 2012-13 at 2,373 cases, which represents an increase of 387 (16.3%) cases from the previous year. Demand dropped slightly by 9% in 2013-14, which suggests some degree of fluctuation as also shown by preceding years.

¹⁴ Rough Sleeping Statistics, England 2013: table 1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rough-sleeping-in-england-autumn-2013>

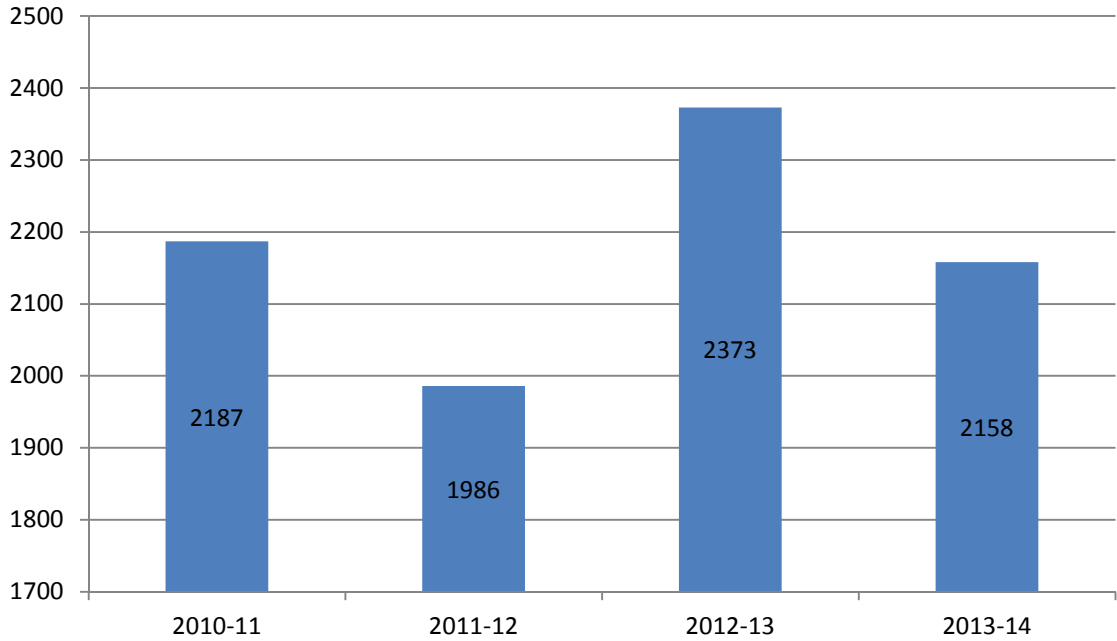


Figure 5: Central Bedfordshire Council's total number of housing options cases by year¹⁵

9.2.3 The number of housing register applications shows decreasing demand since 2011-12 as shown in figure 6 below. Since 2011-12 there has been a 25% reduction in applications.

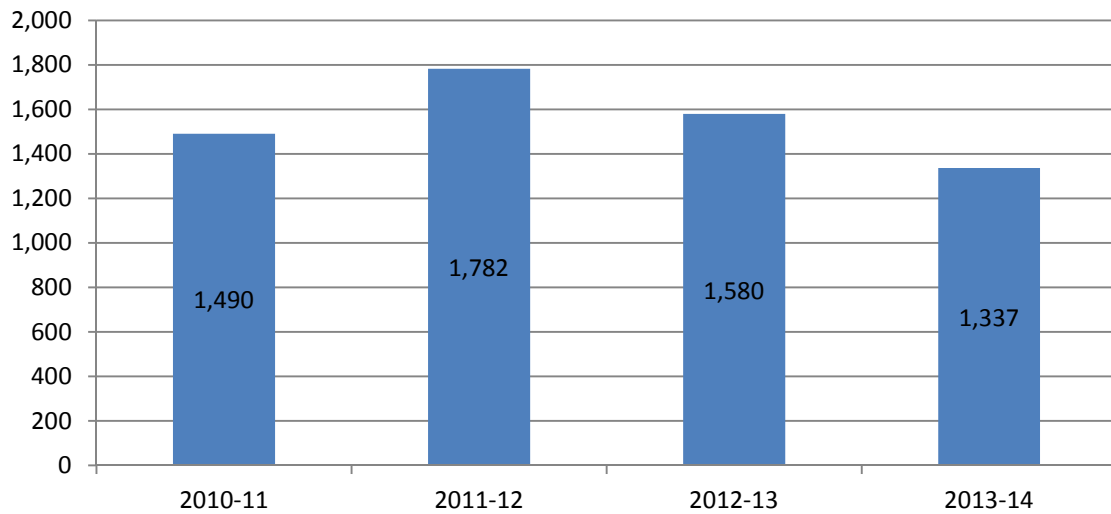


Figure 6: Central Bedfordshire Council's total number of housing applications by year¹⁶

9.2.4 Examining the demographic make-up of households applying to the housing register shows that the largest group making applications are lone women with dependent children. Couples with dependent children are the next largest group, with applications from both single men and women also featuring quite prominently. Lone men with dependent children account for the smallest number of applications. Further analysis of the make up of households accepted as homeless is detailed later in this section.

¹⁵ QL, CBC Housing Services

¹⁶ QL, CBC Housing Services

9.2.5 Housing options data capturing the number of people declaring themselves to be homeless also mirrors this increased demand trend. Figure 7 shows that over the last three years there has been an overall increase in homeless declarations of 74 (42%) with a significant rise in 2012-13 of 146 (82%); a demand picture that correlates with the housing options caseload peak in the same year. Data is unavailable for 2010-11.

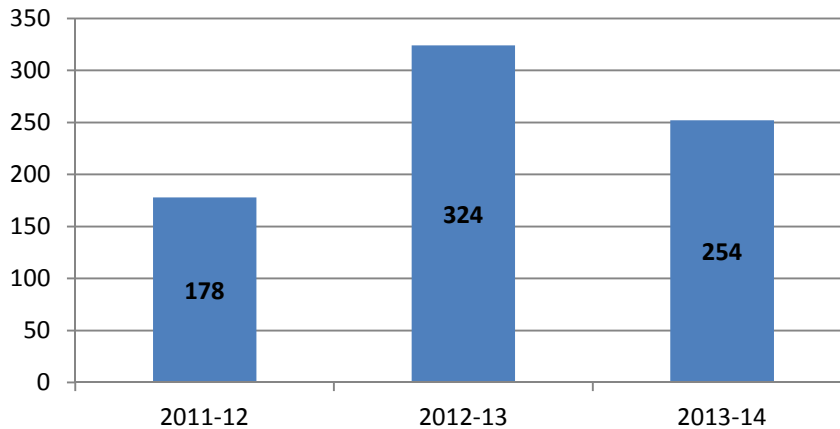


Figure 7: Central Bedfordshire homelessness declarations by year¹⁷

9.2.6 Analysis of the Council's homelessness prevention and relief statistical return to Central Government data (P1E) shows that the total number of decisions taken under the statutory homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1996 had been steadily rising until 2013/14. During the four year period 2010-11 to 2013-14 Housing Services had seen a 5% increase in demand from local people requiring a statutory homeless decision up to 2012-13 but due a significant reduction in 2013-14, there was a 16% reduction for the whole period. A total of 183 decisions were made in 2013-14; the lowest over the period. This is thought to be partly due to increased and better prevention activity including an increase in Let's Rent-facilitated tenancies. Figure 8 illustrates this step change in demand broken-down by the type of decision made.

9.2.7 While there was a clear rise in acceptances between 2010-11 and 2011-12 of 39 (23%) the number of people accepted as homeless has declined since this peak, although the proportion of applications accepted has increased.

¹⁷ QL, CBC Housing Services



Figure 8 – Decisions under statutory provisions of the Homelessness Act 2010-14¹⁸

9.2.8 A closer examination of statutory homeless acceptances in 2013-14 (figure 9) shows that 48 (40%) of all acceptances were from lone females with dependent children, making them the largest priority group. Couples with dependent children accounted for 14 (12%) of cases with single females making up 12 (10%) of acceptances.

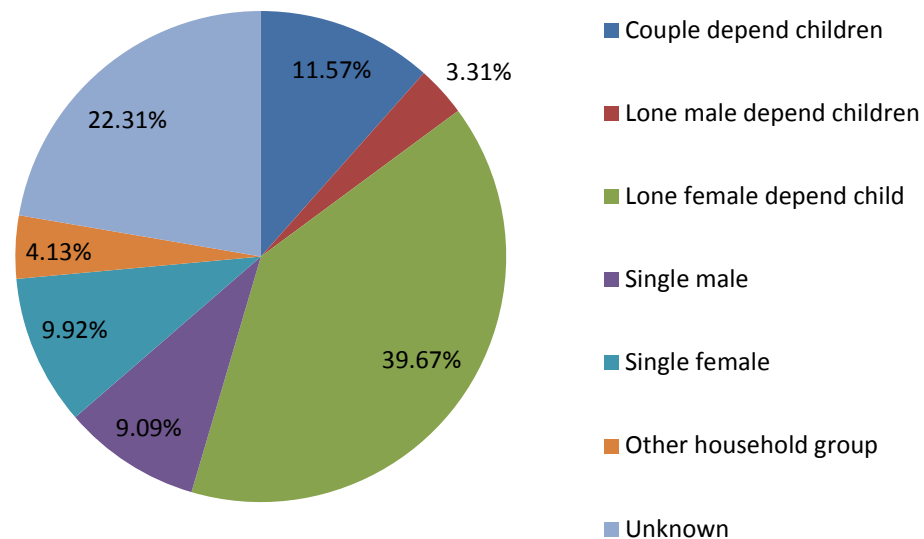


Figure 9: 2013-14 homeless acceptances by household type¹⁹

¹⁸ PIE return

¹⁹ PIE return

9.2.9 Figure 10 also shows statutory homeless acceptances by age. Significantly, young people aged 18-24 represent 32% (38) of all statutory acceptances in 2013-14 with those aged 25-34 accounting for 30 cases (25%). These groups combined make up more than half of all acceptances (56%), indicating that people from young or relatively young age groups are disproportionately affected by homelessness.

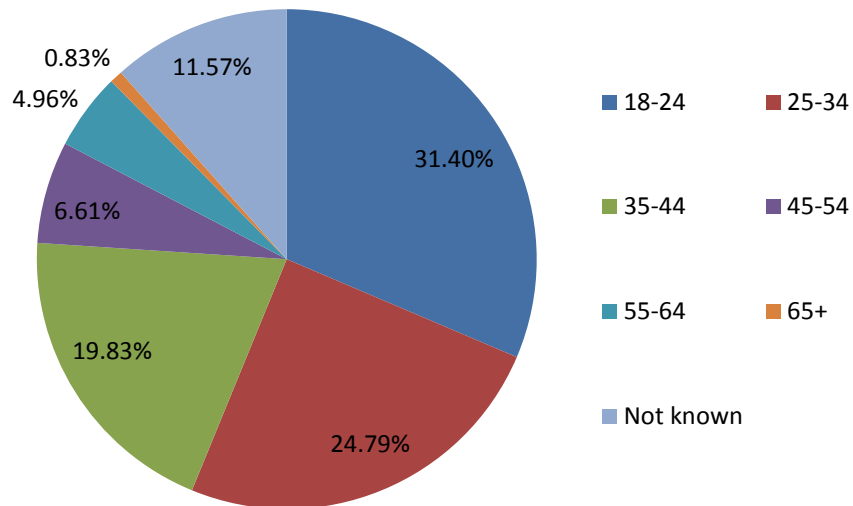


Figure 10: 2013-14 homeless acceptances by age²⁰

9.2.10 The reasons for statutory homeless acceptances in 2013-14 show that the majority (26 cases, 21%) were caused because parents were no longer willing to accommodate their child. Together with the 11 cases of relatives or friends not willing to accommodate, nearly a third of all homeless acceptances were caused because the individual could not be accommodated by their family or friends.

9.2.11 18% (22 cases) were made homeless because their assured shorthold tenancy (AST) was terminated by their landlord. The data indicates that all forms of relationship breakdown accounted for 7% (9 cases) of acceptances. It is important to recognise that there is a fairly low instance of people becoming homeless as a result of mortgage arrears at 6% or 7 cases (see figure 11).

²⁰ PIE return

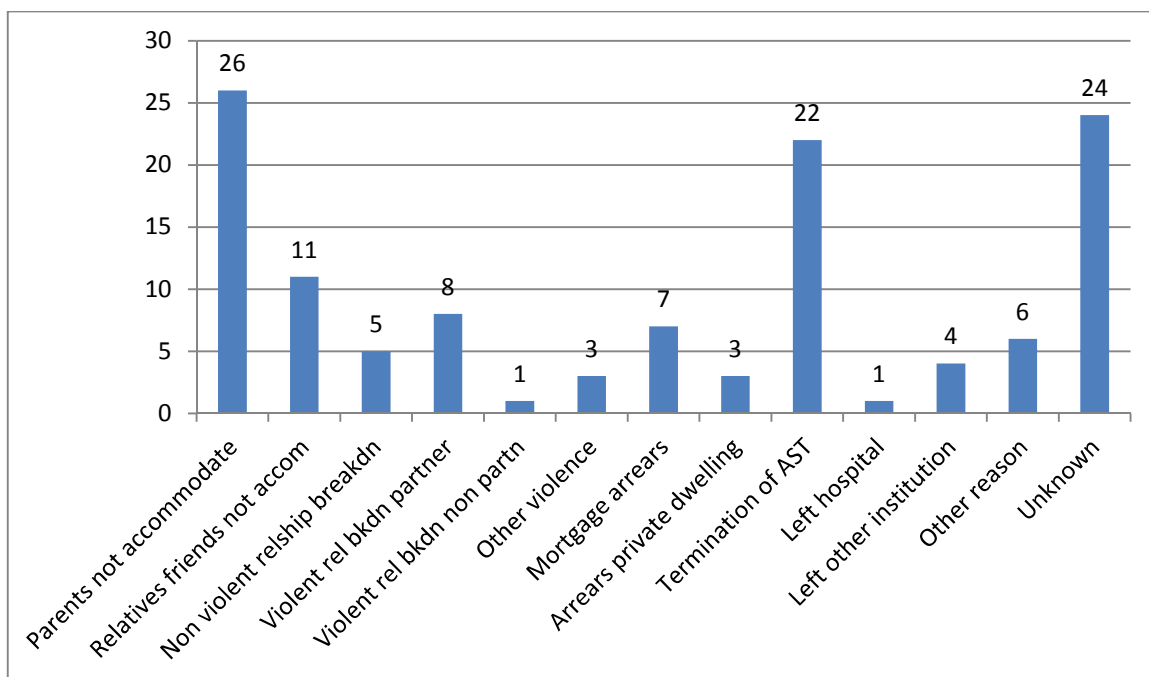


Figure 11: 2013-14 homeless acceptances by reason for homelessness²¹

9.2.12 There continues to be a steady proportion of people that the Council does not accept as homeless following a full investigation of individual circumstances. A total of 62 cases were not accepted as homeless in 2013-14, with 71 in 2012-13, 55 in 2011-12 and 89 in 2010-11; averaging approximately 69.3 cases per year over the period.

9.2.13 In the majority of these cases people are determined not to be homeless because of a range of factors that mean they are able to stay in their current home and overcome difficulties by accessing advice and other support services.

9.2.14 Importantly, P1E data shows that the majority of homelessness cases are determined within the required 33 working days but that a small number of very complex cases have impacted on this target. In 2011-12 95% of cases met this standard along with 86% in 2012-13. The performance for 2013-14 was 88%.

9.2.15 The DCLG also collects data from local authorities on homelessness prevention work. Prevention captures 'positive action' by a local authority or a partner agency that has provided a solution for at least six months for a household, whilst "relief" records action to assist non-priority and intentionally homeless households to secure accommodation – for example, through the use of a rent bond to gain a private rented sector tenancy.

9.2.16 Taking action to prevent homelessness forms the majority of the Council's activity. In 2013-14 Housing Services prevented 537 households from becoming homeless either by providing support to remain in the existing home (275) or assistance to find alternative secure accommodation (262). Figure 12 shows that there was a dip in preventative cases in 2011-12, which is primarily due to the lack of availability of information due to circumstances beyond the Council's control. Taking this into

²¹ QL, CBC Housing Services

account, the total number of homelessness cases prevented has stayed broadly flat during the period but with a reduction in 2013-14.

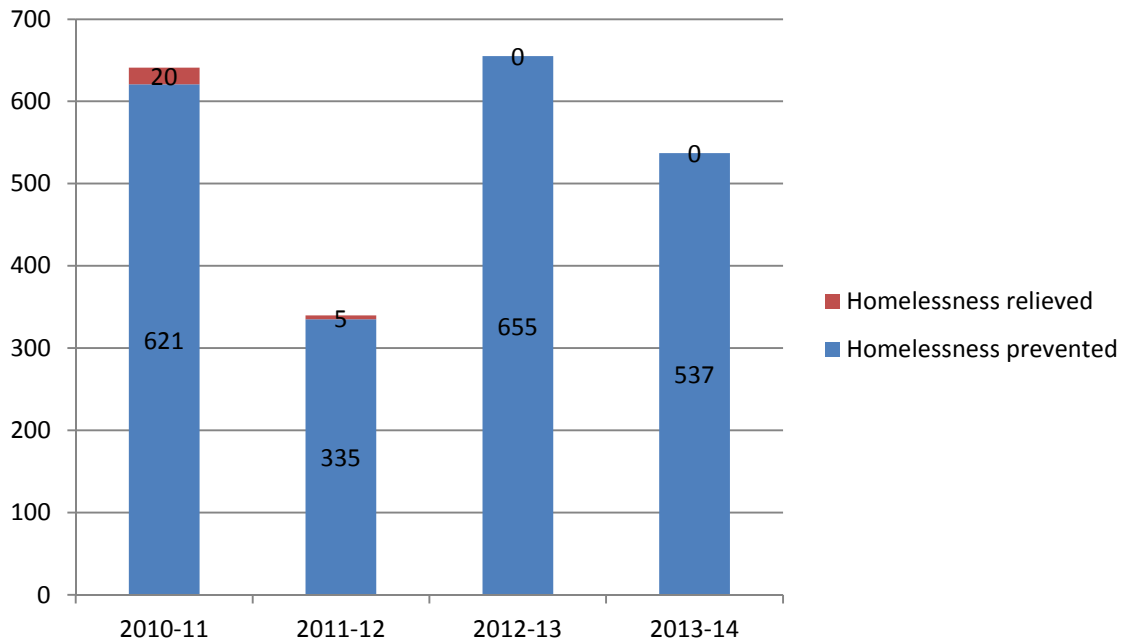


Figure 12 - Total reported cases of homelessness prevention and relief²²

9.2.17 The number of homelessness relief cases dealt with in Central Bedfordshire are low or zero because cases are typically recorded as prevention.

9.2.18 Housing Services' prevention data, shown in figure 13 below, reflects both the priority need (where a category has been recorded) and age breakdown of prevention cases in 2013-14. In total 281 prevention cases were given a priority need category.

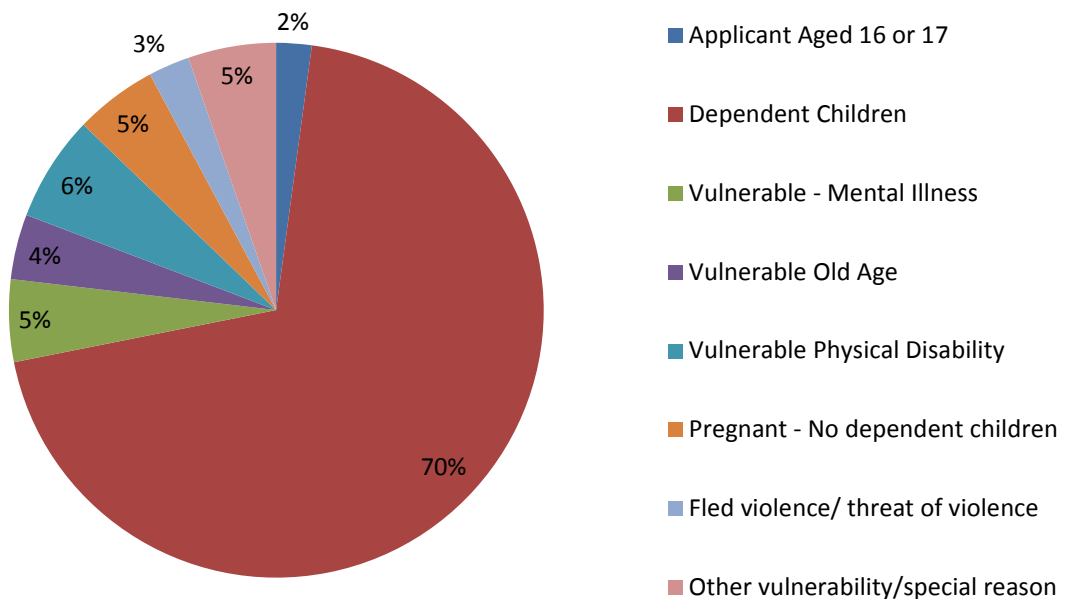


Figure 13: Priority need of homelessness prevention cases (base: 281)²³

²² PIE return

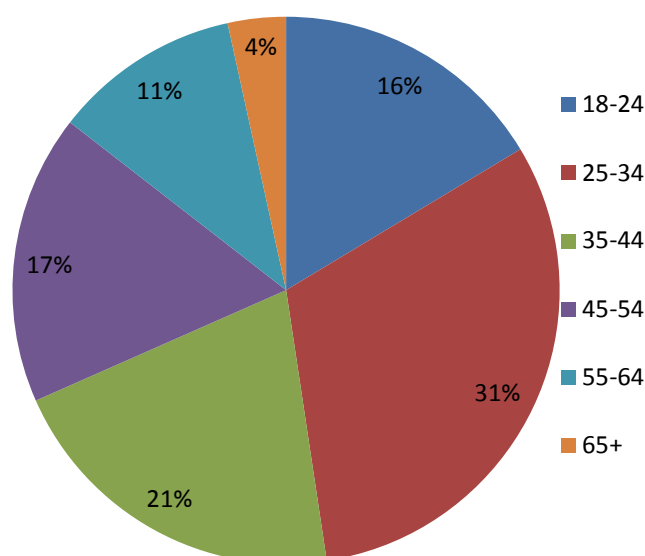


Figure 14 – Homelessness prevention by age 2013-14 (base 525)²⁴

9.2.19 Compared with statutory acceptances the proportion of prevention and relief cases by age is broadly the same. The proportion by household type slightly differs with a larger number of single males being affected by homelessness but not meeting the criteria to be owed a statutory duty. This could suggest two things; that the provision of prevention support for single men is sufficient to meet demand in the local area or that while many single men do not have access to a secure home and are considered homeless their actions or situation contribute to them not being accepted as statutory homeless.

9.2.20 Housing authorities have an interim duty to secure that accommodation is available for an applicant if they have reason to believe that the applicant may be homeless, eligible for assistance and has a priority need. The interim duty is in place while the decision as to what duty, if any, is owed to the applicant is determined.

9.2.21 Figure 15 shows that the number of TA placements increased from 2010-11 to 2012-13 with a slight reduction in 2013-14. Hostel accommodation makes up the largest proportion of placements at 56% for 2013-14. Bed and Breakfast accommodation increased significantly over the three year period to 2012-13 with a reduction in 2013-14. The cost of placing homelessness households in temporary B&B accommodation was £31,000 in 2011-12, £67,000 in 2012-13 and £71,000 in 2013-14.

²³ QL, CBC Housing Services

²⁴ QL, CBC Housing Services

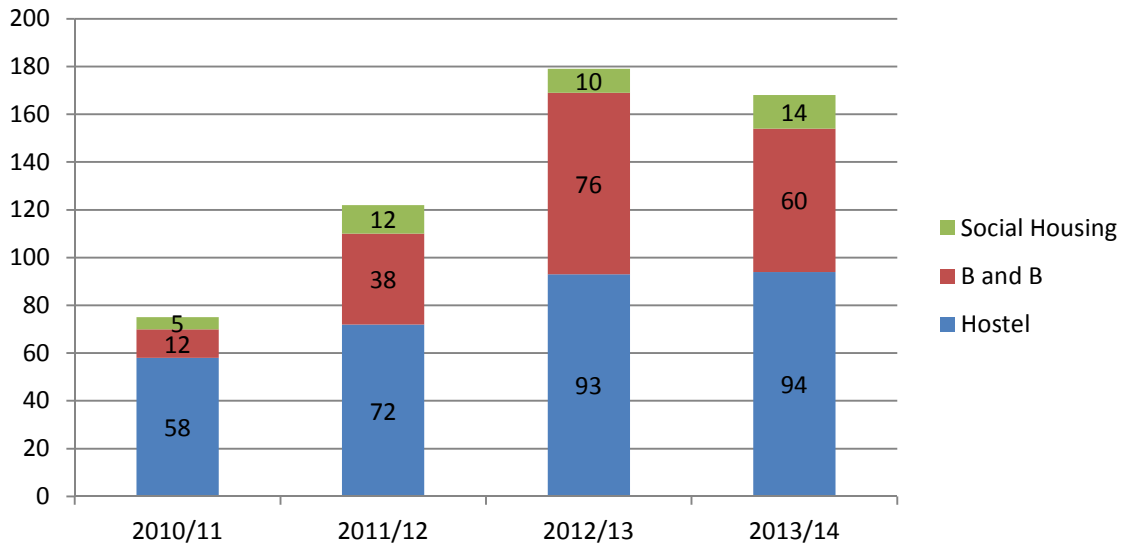


Figure 15 - Total in Temporary Accommodation 2010-11 to 2013-14²⁵

9.2.22 During 2013-14 there were an average of four households in B&Bs at the end of each month was 13.93 days.

9.3 Benchmarking

9.3.1 The following figures show the picture of both homeless demand and performance in Central Bedfordshire compared with that of statistical neighbours²⁶.

9.3.2 Central Bedfordshire is in line with many of its statistical neighbours for homelessness decisions (figure 16); however three of its neighbouring authorities Bedford, Milton Keynes and Luton have a higher decision rate, especially Luton.

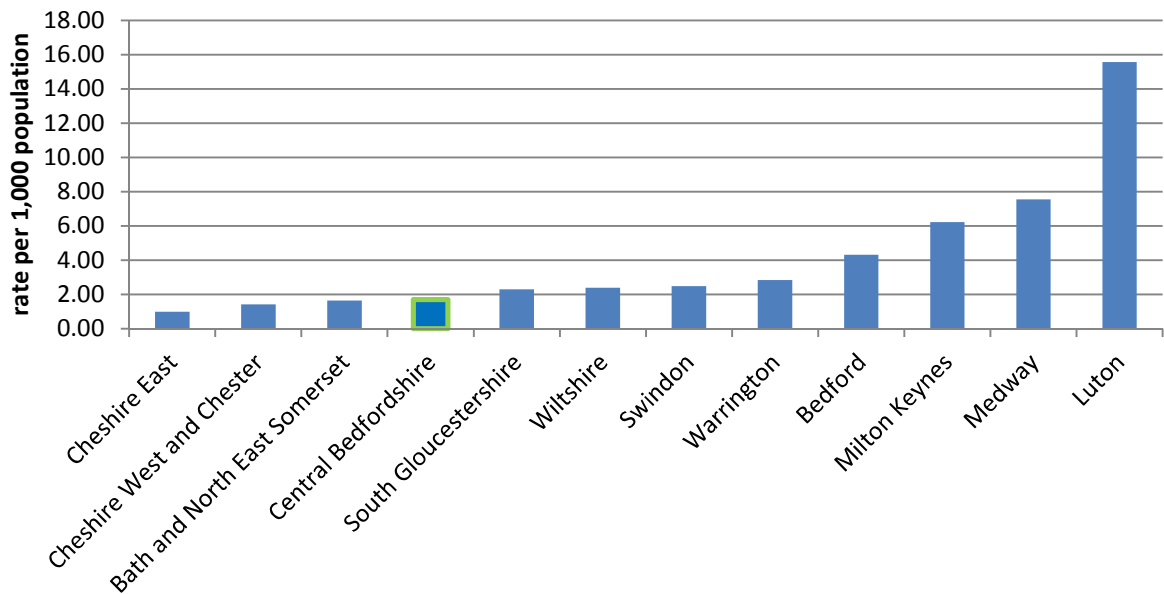


Figure 16 – Statutory homelessness decisions 2013-14²⁷

²⁵ QL, CBC Housing Services

²⁶ Taken from Live data tables on homelessness; <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

9.3.3 Figure 17 shows that Central Bedfordshire has neither a high nor low homelessness prevention/relief rate compared to its statistical neighbours. Cheshire West and Chester have the highest rate but also one of the lowest rates for statutory homelessness decisions indicating that they have an effective housing options service that pro-actively encourages customers to resolve their housing issues without taking the homelessness application route.

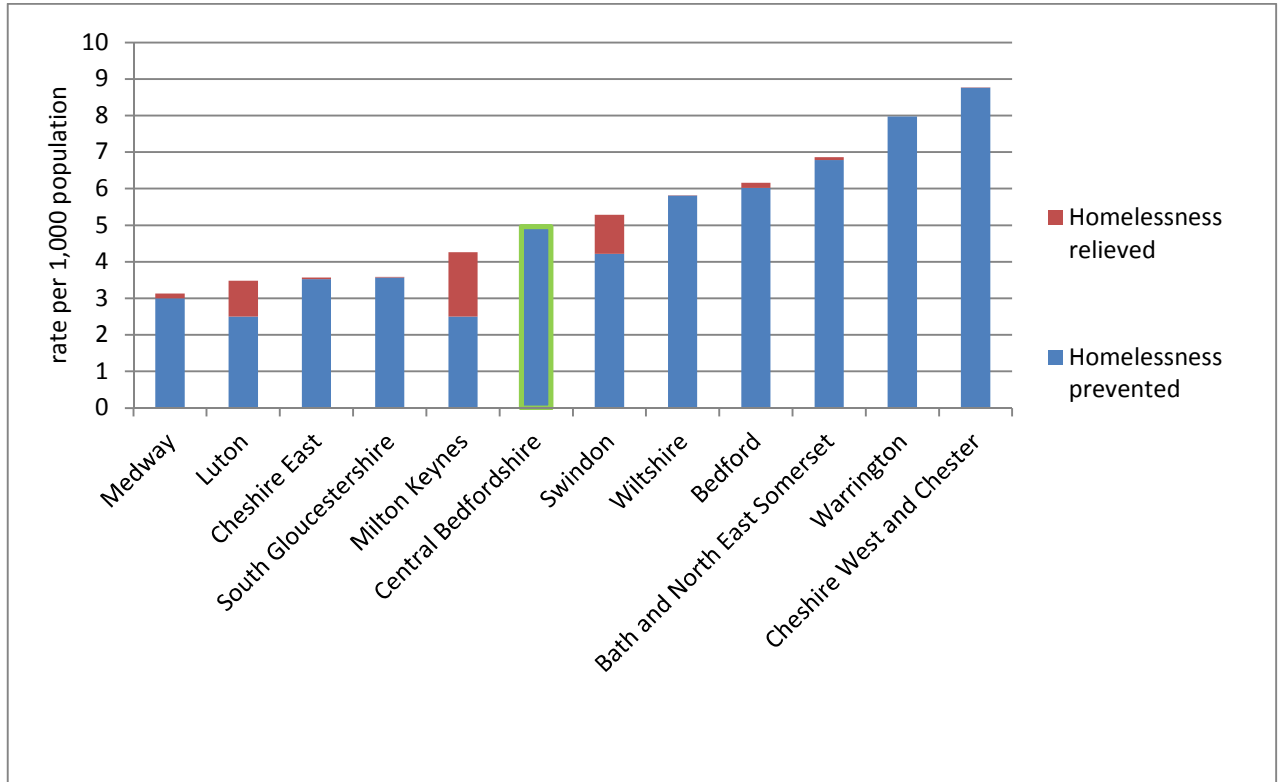


Figure 17 – Homeless prevention and relief 2013-14²⁸

9.3.4 Five of CBC’s statistical neighbours did not accommodate homelessness applicants in bed and breakfast in 2013-14. CBC was one of the authorities that did but was second lowest for the number of placements. Luton and Milton Keynes were the highest which is reflected in the number of homelessness decisions made in the year.

²⁷ PIE return

²⁸ PIE return

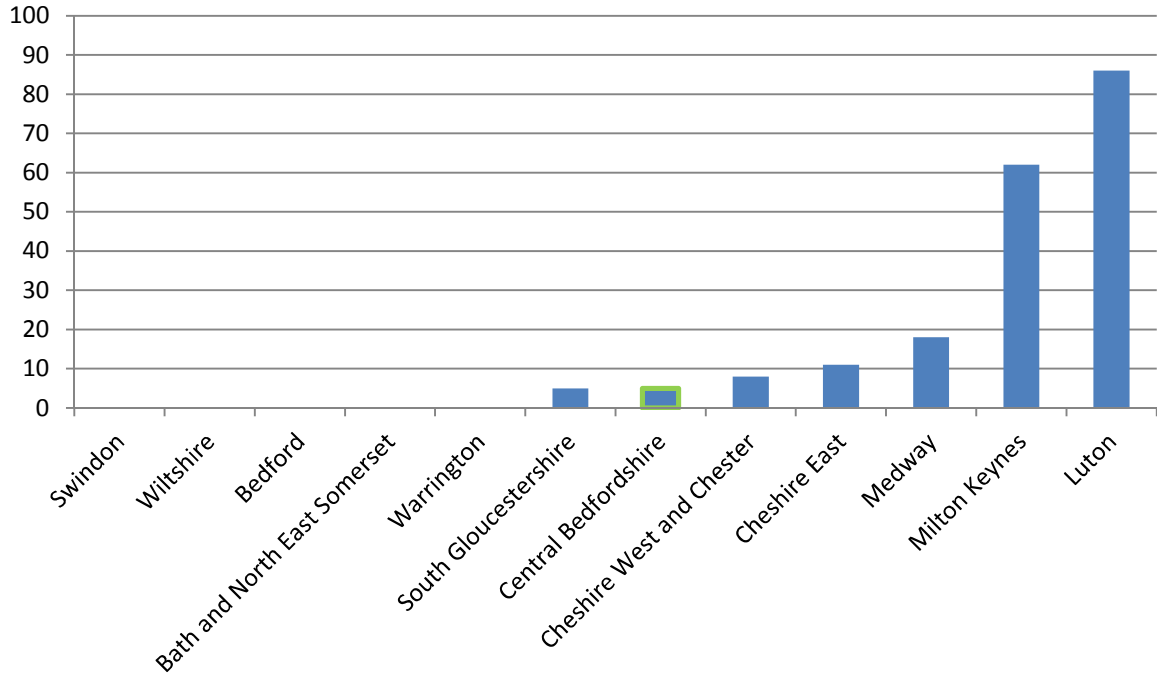


Figure 18: Applicant households accommodated in bed and breakfast by authority as at 31 December 2013²⁹

9.4 Homelessness and Health

9.4.1 A national Homeless Health Audit in 2014 found that 73% of homeless people reported physical health problems, 39% said they take drugs or are recovering from a drug problem and 80% reported some form of mental health issue. 35% had been to Accident and Emergency (A&E) in the past six months. A&E visits per homeless person are four times higher than for the general public.

9.4.2 The last Health Needs Assessment Report of homelessness and health in Central Bedfordshire³⁰ was published in 2009. This report on health and homelessness in Central Bedfordshire sought to provide an accurate representation of information from key agencies to create a joint vision for the ongoing development of health services which meets the complex needs of homeless people in the area.

9.4.3 In 2012 a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment report on Homeless People in Central Bedfordshire included an update on unmet health needs and service gaps with recommendations for improvement. These recommendation involved Public Health, Commissioning, Acute Trust Providers, Primary Care and providers of health improvement, mental health and substance misuse services.

9.4.4 Findings in the 2012 report in relation to health were as follows:

1. Homeless people can experience difficulty in accessing GP services because they do not have a fixed address and so cannot prove their identity. A Local Enhanced GP Service (LES) at Bassett Road, Leighton

²⁹ PIE return

³⁰ A Health Needs Assessment Report of homelessness and health in Central Bedfordshire, 2009.

http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Homelessness%20and%20health%203_tcm6-32217.pdf#False

Buzzard and a GP practice in Dunstable register homeless patients but there are no GP practices with specific responsibility for homelessness in the north of Central Bedfordshire.

2. There are no enhanced or specialist health visiting services for homeless families.
3. Mechanisms between agencies are to be implemented to highlight families that move in to temporary accommodation.
4. A Health Improvement Specialist (sexual health/mental well-being) exists for people up to the age of 25 years living in hostels.
5. A Health Improvement Team exists with expertise in smoking cessation and Chlamydia screening.
6. A Health Improvement Specialist (sexual health) exists for people up to the age of 25 years living in hostels.
7. A Health Improvement Team exists (Stop smoking, Chlamydia screening).

9.4.5 Unmet needs and service gaps were identified. In Public Health / Commissioning the report recognised that there was a lack of a family, mental health, substance misuse and single homelessness Health Needs Assessment refresh to identify local gaps in services. There was also a lack of training on homelessness and health for provider health staff, health and homeless standards were yet to be adopted and a local health and homeless leaflet was not available.

9.4.6 For Acute Trust Providers gaps included training in homelessness and health for nurses and doctors. The report also found that the local homelessness discharge protocol had not been incorporated in to local hospital discharge policies and hidden homeless people who access Accident and Emergency could not be identified.

9.4.7 In Primary Care a more integrated model of service provision was recommended to strategically join up primary and secondary care health services around the needs of a homeless person and case management which guides and supports homeless people through the organisational systems. The report also suggested that there should be clinical guidance and mentoring of staff working in homeless provision dealing with traumatic health crisis's which cause a homeless service crisis and may lead to eviction/rough sleeping. Addressing health need/health services in the homeless recovery period when re-housed to prevent relapse in to homelessness and funding the pharmacy enhanced services package to hostels were recommended.

9.4.8 Health improvement recommendations included the introduction of homeless services and homeless people health training programmes and sexual health and mental health support to over 25s in hostels.

9.4.9 Unmet needs and service gaps in mental health and substance misuse services are explained under these groups in section 10.

10. Priority Groups and Support

10.1 Summary

- 10.1.1 Homelessness has a deep impact on health, employment opportunities, educational achievement, and is linked to offending and substance misuse. For most people who become homeless their lack of accommodation is a symptom rather than a cause of their social exclusion.
- 10.1.2 Shelter³¹ identified that homelessness is likely to result from the complex interplay between structural and personal factors. Structural factors may include unemployment, poverty, housing market shortages and lack of affordable housing and social trends, such as the increasing incidence of relationship breakdown, and rising numbers of people living alone.
- 10.1.3 Personal and social factors relate to the individual, family or community and play a key role in people's vulnerability to becoming homeless. These may include one or more of the following:
- individual factors – including drug and alcohol misuse; difficulties at school; lack of qualifications; lack of social support; debts, especially mortgage or rent arrears; poor physical and mental health; and getting involved in crime at an early age,
 - family background – including family breakdown and disputes; sexual and physical abuse in childhood or adolescence; having parents with drug or alcohol problems; and previous experience of family homelessness,
 - an institutional background – including having been in care; the armed forces; or in prison.
- 10.1.4 The impact of homelessness is also wide. Firstly those that are homeless may have suffered distressing experiences such as domestic abuse, relationship breakdown, loss of their home or mental health problems. Homelessness can lead to feelings of disempowerment, isolation and poverty as many households need to move to temporary accommodation away from family and friends support networks, education services, childcare services and employment.
- 10.1.5 Access to health and education services may also be disrupted. Local and national health audits have found that homeless people are more likely to use Accident and Emergency services for health problems because they need a fixed address to register for primary care services such as the GP and dentist. The lack of access to health care at an early or preventative stage and the increased health risks that homelessness can pose also leads to an increase in health problems. A national health audit in 2014³² found that 41% of the homeless population had a long term physical health problem compared to 28% of the general population. 45% of the homeless population had been diagnosed with a mental health problem compared to 25% of the general population.

³¹ Homelessness factsheet, Shelter, 2007.

http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/66379/Homelessness_factsheet.pdf

³² The Unhealthy State of Homelessness: Health audit results 2014, Homeless Link 2014

<http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/The%20unhealthy%20state%20of%20homelessness%20FINAL.pdf>

- 10.1.6 The impact of education is detailed below within the families with children analysis.
- 10.1.7 The Central Bedfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment splits homeless people in to three domains³³:
- a) **Single homelessness** - This group include rough sleepers and those living in hostels, shelters and temporary supported accommodation.
 - b) **Statutory homelessness** - This group includes households that meet specific criteria of priority need set out in legislation such as the acutely ill; those fleeing violence or harassment; pregnant mothers; dependent children; 16-17 year olds not owed a duty under the Children's Act 1989; those aged 18-20 who, as children, were looked after, accommodated or fostered; those with certain types of disability and others who may be vulnerable for reasons set out in the Homelessness Code of Guidance. Such households are rarely homeless in the literal sense of being without a roof over their heads, but are more likely to be threatened with the loss of, or are unable to continue with, their current accommodation.
 - c) **Hidden homelessness/ at risk of homelessness** - In Central Bedfordshire, as well as nationally, this group is difficult to quantify. Many hidden homeless are 'sofa-surfers', residing temporarily with family or friends. Some may have no recourse to public funds.
- 10.1.8 Those at most risk of homelessness or who are disproportionately affected are:
- Families with children
 - Single homeless
 - Young people (16-17 year olds and 18-20 year old care leavers)
- 10.1.9 There are also characteristics that increase the likelihood of homelessness which are:
- a) People with mental health difficulties
 - b) People with alcohol and substance misuse problems
 - c) Offenders and ex-offenders
 - d) People suffering from domestic violence
- 10.1.10 In addition to this are clients that due to their vulnerability may be disproportionately affected by homelessness and may struggle to access the support they are eligible for. This includes people with learning disabilities, people with physical and sensory disabilities, those with poor literacy skills, older people and Gypsies and Travellers.
- 10.1.11 These categories are mostly captured in the P1E homelessness statutory return where there are 17 categories of priority need. Applicants with multiple needs will only be recorded under one category and so secondary needs are not captured. For example a pregnant care leaver may be recorded as 'household with pregnant member and no other dependent children' and therefore information on the applicant being a care leaver will not recorded.

³³ Homeless People in Central Bedfordshire, JSNA.

http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Homelessness%20-%20JSNA_tcm6-32213.pdf#False

10.2 Families with children

10.2.1 The majority of households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 in Central Bedfordshire were families with dependent children (77%, 96). As shown in Table 3 this was made up of 76% lone female parent families, 17% couples with children and 7% lone male parent families.

Couple with dependent children*	Lone parent household with dependent children		One person household		All other household groups	Total
	Male Applicant	Female Applicant	Male Applicant	Female Applicant		
6	1	16	3	0	0	26
3	3	22	4	1	0	33
2	2	15	4	5	3	31
5	1	20	2	3	3	34
16	7	73	13	9	6	124

Table 3: Households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need 2013-14

10.2.2 Applicants that were assigned the priority need of 'households with dependent children' were mostly made up of one child families (41, 53%), followed by two children families (30) and seven households had three or more children. 18 households were assigned the priority need of 'households with pregnant member and no other dependent children'.

10.2.3 At the end of 2013-14 there were 39 households in Temporary Accommodation of which 27 (69%) were households with dependent children or with a pregnancy. The average length of stay in bed and breakfast in 2013-14 was 14.4 weeks for pregnant/dependent households and 11.2 weeks for all other households.

10.2.4 Homelessness can have a negative impact on children that can have long-lasting effects. Children's educational attainment can suffer as can their emotional well-being leading to behavioural problems. Shelter carried out a survey involving 417 households living in temporary accommodation in 2004³⁴. The impact of living in TA was summarised as follows:

10.2.5 *Frequent moving and disruption associated with living in temporary accommodation makes it difficult for children to keep school places, maintain their attendance and do well at school. Two fifths of parents (43 per cent) reported that their children had missed school due to their housing situation. On average, children had missed 55 days of school equivalent to quarter of the school year. One in ten parents (11 per cent) said that at least one of their children did not have a school place at all for the term. Parents also said their children had long journeys to school and had problems with transport.*

10.2.6 *The trauma of becoming homeless and stresses associated with living in temporary accommodation affect children's mental and emotional well being. Over two fifths (42 per cent) of parents said that their child was 'often unhappy or depressed'. Children also experienced a lot of problems at school*

³⁴ Living in limbo: Survey of homeless households living in temporary accommodation, Shelter 2004.

including bullying and behavioural problems. One in ten parents (11 per cent) said that their child had been given a statement of Special Educational Needs and one in ten said their child had been suspended, excluded or expelled from school.

10.2.7 Access to child care was also cited as a problem that hindered parents from accessing employment or training to improve their circumstances.

10.2.8 Single parent families are one of the groups most vulnerable to poverty. Research has shown that single parents were well over twice as likely as all households to live in poverty, with two out of three single parents living in poverty³⁵. Single parents with few qualifications and skills, and often with limited hours available for work, can often find the type of work they can get is poorly paid, leading to them being caught in a poverty trap³⁶.

10.2.9 Recent welfare reforms have also had an impact on families with the three-year freezing of child benefit rates from April 2011, a reduction in the childcare element of working tax credit from April 2011 and replacement of Council Tax Benefit with Council Tax Support from 2013. 44 households have also been affected by the benefit cap in Central Bedfordshire (as of July 2014) and households with more than three children were most affected by this. The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimated that lone mothers would expect to lose 8.5 per cent of their annual income between 2011 and 2015 as a result of the reforms which was estimated to be three times the percentage amount the average childless couple would lose³⁷.

10.2.10 A health needs assessment of health and homelessness found that families were at particular risk from the following health issues:

- a) Homeless parents had higher risk of depression and substance misuse with correlating higher need for mental health treatment
- b) Many families living in TA are not registered with a GP
- c) Associated factors of children living in TA were higher Accident and Emergency attendance for infections, chronic illness and accident rates. Other factors are behavioural/mental health problems, physical health problems such as chest infections and malnourishment, development delay, immunisation delay and Children in Need/ of protection.³⁸

10.2.11 Table 4 sets out the services and support identified as available for this group locally.

Provider/ Service	Description
Health homelessness notification system	A notification system exists between Central Bedfordshire Housing Service, Child Health and 0-19 year Locality Teams for all families moving in and out of temporary accommodation in Central Bedfordshire.

³⁵ Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000.

³⁶ A Single Parent, Poverty and Social Exclusion, 2011. <http://www.poverty.ac.uk/living-poverty/personal-experiences/jennie-single-parent>

³⁷ The impact of tax and benefit reforms by sex: some simple analysis, Institute of Fiscal Studies, 2011. <http://www.ifs.org.uk/bns/bn118.pdf>

³⁸ Homelessness and Health in the Central Bedfordshire Council Area: A health needs assessment report, NHS Bedfordshire 2009. http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Homelessness%20and%20health%203_tcm6-32217.pdf#False

The 'think family' approach	The 'think family' approach has been embedded within all homelessness prevention activity and broader interventions in Central Bedfordshire Council services to sustain families in permanent settled accommodation.
Supporting Families Programme	<p>Supporting Families is the Central Bedfordshire programme for Troubled Families and provides a gateway to a range of additional support tailored to the needs of the family, such as keeping children in school, preventing youth crime or anti-social behaviour; getting back into work or overcoming substance misuse and domestic violence.</p> <p>Participation in the Supporting Families programme means a family will be allocated a dedicated worker who will work with the family offering practical and hands on support to enable the family to bring about lasting changes themselves.</p>

Table 4: Services and support available for homeless families with children

10.3 Single homeless

- 10.3.1 Many single homeless people are not eligible for housing support simply because they do not meet the 'priority need' criteria in order to be accepted as statutory homeless. Under the 1996 Housing Act, local authorities have a duty to find accommodation for households deemed to be homeless, eligible and in 'priority need'. Most commonly, 'priority need' applies to adults with dependent children and/or households with a vulnerable member.
- 10.3.2 Vulnerable single people may meet the 'priority need' criteria and this can include elderly or frail older people who are vulnerable, 16-17 year olds, care leavers, physically disabled people, people suffering from a mental illness, those dependent or misusing drugs or alcohol, former asylum seekers, or people facing threats of violence or domestic violence.
- 10.3.3 18% (22) of households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 were one person households. 13 (59%) of applicants were male and 9 applicants were female.
- 10.3.4 Analysis undertaken to inform the Market Position Statement for meeting the accommodation and support needs of vulnerable people estimates that there is a need for approximately 62 units of supported accommodation for single homeless people in Central Bedfordshire, and 75 units of floating support, to help re-settle back into mainstream accommodation.
- 10.3.5 Single homeless as a priority group is likely to be made up of single men with an underlying vulnerability, such as mental health, or drug and alcohol problem. People may spend extended periods 'sofa surfing' or seek crisis accommodation in a night shelter. The majority of people in this situation within Central Bedfordshire will not, however, meet the level of vulnerability which would lead to them being assessed as having a priority need.

- 10.3.6 Homelessness in this situation is tied in with the particular difficulties of accessing suitable accommodation for single people who are out of work and dependent on benefits. One bedroom council and housing association accommodation is in short supply.
- 10.3.7 Further, the restriction of Housing Benefit to the 'single room rate' for people aged below 35 has reduced the ability of the private rented sector to cater to this client group. Houses in Multiple Occupation, in which non-working clients can rent a room for which Housing Benefit can pay, are few and far between in Central Bedfordshire. Vulnerable single people may lack the social capital to find 'house shares' with friends, and be unwilling to consider accommodation out of the local area such as in Luton or Bedford.
- 10.3.8 Research to develop the draft housing support services Market Position Statement (MPS) found that the 'single homeless' group was mostly single men with underlying vulnerabilities associated with mental health problems and substance misuse. Worklessness and lack of social capital are barriers to finding alternative housing.
- 10.3.9 Analysis suggests that the amount of supported accommodation for single homeless people is about right. However, case-study data and anecdotal feedback suggest that the available services are not able to accommodate some people with complex and intensive support needs. Floating support services, funded by the council, are available to single homeless people resettling into mainstream accommodation. However, needs analysis indicates that increased capacity would support earlier intervention.
- 10.3.10 The category of single homeless people also includes rough sleepers of which there were 13 in the last count in Autumn 2013. Although this number is low compared to neighbouring authorities such as Bedford and Luton, 13 is high compared to many of our statistically similar authorities and the East of England average. Progress has been made on the provision of shelters for rough sleepers in the last five years but feedback gathered at the stakeholder engagement event highlighted that there remained a lack of emergency accommodation that provided adequate coverage across Central Bedfordshire.
- 10.3.11 Table 5 sets out the services and support identified as available for this group locally.

Provider/ Service	Description
Accommodation Based Services (ABS)	ABS currently available are based in the Signposts' service in Dunstable and Houghton Regis; the Bedfordshire Housing Link service in Sandy and the Mayday Trust service in Leighton Buzzard. Additionally, the Leighton Linslade Homelessness Service operates a night shelter in Leighton Buzzard.
Severe Weather Emergency Plan (SWEP)	CBC has developed and implemented a Severe Weather Emergency Plan (SWEP) to provide temporary shelter accommodation and aid to homeless rough sleepers during both extreme cold and hot weather conditions. The SWEP is delivered jointly with a number of local partners that support homeless rough sleepers and

vulnerable people into safe and secure accommodation. The plan outlines the action taken by specific areas across Central Bedfordshire to provide support following a severe weather alert.

Local partners provide a range of support in response to alerts including emergency accommodation from Leighton Linlade Homeless Service, Bedfordshire Housing Link and Bedford Salvation Army facilities.

Table 5: Services and support available for single homeless people

10.4 Young people

- 10.4.1 Young people are often forced to leave the family home during a crisis and have few life skills to effectively deal with this. They are typically unaware of the support that is available to them and as a result they need to be signposted to appropriate services that have a specialist understanding of their needs.
- 10.4.2 Young people are more likely to move between hostels and are more likely to accrue rent arrears, increasing the probability of becoming institutionalised as they face barriers to achieving independent living. There is also an increasing financial cost of youth homelessness the longer they remain homeless, which can include extra policing and increased demand for health and social care services.
- 10.4.3 Like all hostel residents, young people require a range of good quality accommodation with appropriate support that will enable them to access education, training, employment and also drug and alcohol support.
- 10.4.4 124 households were found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 of which two were given the need category of 'aged 16 or 17 years of age'. 48 (39%) were aged 16-24.
- 10.4.5 The Homeless Watch Report from Homeless Link (2011)³⁹ makes a number of recommendations to help prevent youth homelessness and reduce the impact that it has in local areas, which includes:
- a) Ensure changes to the welfare system do not cause higher youth homelessness,
 - b) Maintain cost effective advice and prevention services,
 - c) Maintain housing related support,
 - d) Ensure there is effective partnership working between Housing and Children's and Young People's Services to meet their legal duties to 16 and 17 year olds,
 - e) Improve access for young people to the private rented sector and provide support to enable them to maintain these tenancies,
 - f) Provide better access to education, training and employment for young people.

³⁹ http://homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/111202.Young_and_homeless.pdf

- 10.4.6 Looked After Children (LAC) are among the most vulnerable groups in society and are at an increased risk of poor outcomes. Evidence from studies shows that young people leaving care have to cope with the challenges and responsibilities of major changes in their lives – in leaving foster and residential care and setting up home, in leaving school and entering the world of work or, more likely, being unemployed and surviving on benefits, and in being parents – at a far younger age than other young people. In short, many have compressed and accelerated transitions to adulthood. During this journey to adulthood they are more likely than other young people to become young householders, be homeless, have poorer qualifications, lower levels of participation in post-16 education and higher levels of unemployment.
- 10.4.7 There is also evidence that looked-after young people, those leaving care and adults who had been in care were likely to experience mental health problems. Care leavers also have higher levels of drug use than other young people.⁴⁰
- 10.4.8 Three of the 124 households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 were given the need category of ‘in care and aged 18-20’. None were categorised as ‘been in care’. However these low numbers can be misleading as not every young person that has ‘been in care’ is give this priority need group as this may be see as secondary to another of the 17 categories.
- 10.4.9 44 (21%) of Looked After Children (LAC) in Central Bedfordshire in 2012 were aged 15-17.⁴¹ There were twice as many male LAC as female in this age group. Young people are supported to remain in foster care or in residential homes where this is consistent with their needs and wishes. A ‘staying–put’ policy is in place for young people who need to remain in a fostering household beyond 18. However for those young people who wish to move towards independence or for those who become looked after at age 16 or 17 a range of semi-independent and independent living provision is required.⁴²
- 10.4.10 Research to develop the draft housing support services Market Position Statement (MPS) found that there are significant gaps in the availability of Accommodation Based Support and floating support for young people. Accommodation Based Support is available for homeless and other vulnerable young people in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area. However, there are waiting lists to access these services, and applicants have to be prioritised according to their degree of vulnerability. There are no Accommodation Based Services that are particularly aimed at Young People in ‘north’ Central Bedfordshire. The needs analysis found that there is no accommodation that is particularly suitable for Teenage Parents anywhere in Central Bedfordshire.

⁴⁰ What works for young people leaving care?, Barnardo’s, 2004.

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_works_for_young_people_leaving_care_2004_publications_tracked.pdf

⁴¹CBC Looked After Children Placement Strategy, 2013.

http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/LACplacementstrategy_tcm6-40130.pdf#False

⁴²CBC Looked After Children Placement Strategy, 2013.

http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/LACplacementstrategy_tcm6-40130.pdf#False

10.4.11 Floating support services are available across localities but the MPS research found that they are not particularly aimed at young people and they do not have capacity to meet all of the estimated needs.

10.4.12 The case for specialist accommodation based support for young people was strongly made at the stakeholder engagement event. There was a preference for smaller schemes to house 4 or 5 young people with intensive support and eviction policies that accept that young people are more likely to make mistakes as they develop their life skills. There was also concern about housing vulnerable young people in schemes with ex-offenders and adults with substance misuse issues. The increased risk of sexual exploitation of young homeless people was also highlighted but the evidence base to support this is limited, an issue that the Community Safety Partnership is seeking to address.

10.4.13 Table 6 sets out the services and support identified as available for this group locally.

Provider/ Service	Description
Accommodation Based Services (ABS)	<p data-bbox="612 842 1386 1137">Eighteen units of ABS are available in Central Bedfordshire for young people, which are currently shared between care leavers and other vulnerable or homeless young people on an ad-hoc basis. In practice support tends to be prioritised towards prospective residents according to their age, taking the youngest applicants first, which partly explains why a larger proportion of the supply, approximately 13 units, has been apportioned to 16 and 17 year olds.</p> <p data-bbox="612 1178 1386 1576">ABS support is provided in three stages and in three separate residential buildings with gradually reducing levels of support. There is follow-on support to residents that have moved into mainstream accommodation. It is situated in the south of Central Bedfordshire, and in practice unavailable to young people from the 'north' of Central Bedfordshire. Currently Non-Accommodation Based Services (NABS) for Young People is provided as a dedicated service to teenage parents. The remaining supply is provided on an ad-hoc basis by generic floating support services, which is not specifically aimed at young people.</p>
CBC leaving care services	<p data-bbox="612 1621 1386 1749">For Looked After Children, CBC Children's Services give consideration to how young people aged 15 and above leaving care services can be prepared for independence and leaving care. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="612 1756 1386 1816">a) Completing a pathway plan which outlines the support and goals towards independence <li data-bbox="612 1823 1386 1854">b) Considering housing and accommodation options <li data-bbox="612 1861 1386 1881">c) Providing support in accessing university, further

	education, employment or training d) Developing independence skills. ⁴³
Supported Lodgings scheme	Central Bedfordshire Council operates a Supported Lodgings scheme offering eight places spread geographically across the council area. The supported lodgings scheme also operates three crashpad beds for young people who are homeless and need 'emergency short term accommodation' while assessments are undertaken. This service also offers a mediation service for young people aged 14+ to help prevent relationship issues that may lead to homelessness. ⁴⁴
Luton Accommodation and Move on Project (LAMP)	The charity supports young vulnerable and disadvantaged people between the ages of 16 and 25 in a homeless situation. LAMP provides a safe living environment for people in Luton and the surrounding area and works with clients to develop support plans which includes advice on careers, life skills and financial management.
4YP – Young People Services	The company operates drop-in services which are funded through CBC's Early Intervention Project and an intensive support and mentoring service.

Table 6: Services and support available for young homeless people

10.5 People with mental health difficulties

- 10.5.1 Ten of the 124 households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 were given the need category of 'mental illness or handicap'.
- 10.5.2 As at December 2013 SEPT, the mental health services provider for Central Bedfordshire, had a client list of 1,975. The Meeting the Accommodation Needs of Vulnerable People research estimated that the total population with mental health needs could be up to 2,758 when including those not in contact with secondary services.
- 10.5.3 A Central Bedfordshire health needs assessment of health and homelessness found that single homeless people were at particular risk of mental health problems:
- Homelessness is a trigger to mental health problems and exacerbates those that already exist.
 - Mental health is the leading cause of homelessness - in a third of cases losing a home was associated with mental health problems and homeless people had more mental health problems than any other group in society.

⁴³ Looked After Children. JSNA.

http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Looked%20after%20children%20-%20JSNA_tcm6-32039.pdf#False

⁴⁴ CBC Looked After Children Placement Strategy, 2013.

- c) People who sleep rough are thirty five times more likely to commit suicide than the general population. In one study 43% of rough sleepers had attempted suicide and 25% had tried more than once.
 - d) The prevalence of serious mental illness (including major depression, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder) is reported as being present in at least 25-30% of street homeless and those in direct access hostels.
 - e) In hostels and B&Bs the incidence of mental health problems is higher: eight times higher in hostels and 11 times higher in B&B accommodation compared to the general population.⁴⁵
- 10.5.4 A national Homeless Health Audit in 2014 found that the proportion of homeless people with diagnosed mental health problems (45%) is nearly double that of the general population (around 25%). In addition, 12% of participants diagnosed with mental health issues also reported drug and alcohol issues. This 'dual diagnosis' often restricts homeless people from accessing support, as services are unable or unwilling to provide support around mental health while still using drugs or alcohol.⁴⁶
- 10.5.5 In 2012 a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment report on Homeless People in Central Bedfordshire identified unmet health needs and service gaps and made recommendations for improvement. These recommendations included better links between Women's Refuges and mental health teams, a need to further explore the area of homelessness and those who have a dual diagnosis and complex mental health issues. The report recognised that there was no health input available to support hostel staff in complex health and homeless cases to reduce rough sleeping, prevent mental health crisis and reduce hospital admissions.
- 10.5.6 Young people aged under 25 years of age present a particular challenge as they report high levels of mental ill health and substance misuse. There is an acknowledged high overlap with care leaving services and youth offending teams. On their part, accommodation providers report difficulties in obtaining appropriate health services for this group as they fall into the transition between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and adult services. Additional difficulties can arise because of the difference in transition points with social care, education and health. The situation is further complicated by the co-existence of mental health and substance misuse issues which falls outside the remit of generic services.⁴⁷
- 10.5.7 The MPS needs analysis suggests that there are gaps in provision of housing related support services for this group, in particular the availability of specialist Accommodation Based Support for this client group. Floating support services provided by Bromford Support and funded by the council, are available to people with mental health problems, and are felt to be doing a good job of supporting people. However, needs analysis suggests that increased capacity would support earlier intervention.

⁴⁵ Homelessness and Health in the Central Bedfordshire Council Area: A health needs assessment report, NHS Bedfordshire 2009.

⁴⁶ The Unhealthy State of Homelessness: Health audit results 2014, Homeless Link 2014

<http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/The%20unhealthy%20state%20of%20homelessness%20FINAL.pdf>

⁴⁷ Understanding Homelessness and Mental Health, Communities and Local Government and the CSIP Housing Learning and Improvement Network.

http://www.housinglin.org.uk/library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Briefings/Briefing24_Homelssness.pdf

10.5.8 Table 7 sets out the services and support identified as available for this group locally.

Provider/ Service	Description
CHUMS	This is a short term early intervention emotional wellbeing service provided by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service for 0-18 year olds.
Mental health service for Looked After Children	Specialist CAMHS for looked after children for earlier intervention.
SEPT mental health services	SEPT are contracted by Central Bedfordshire to provide mental health services in the area.
Bedfordshire and Luton Mind	Mind provides mental health, well being and social care services across Bedfordshire in partnership with other local service providers and mental health service users.
Rethink	Services are available to help everyone affected by severe mental illness recover a better quality of life.
Empowa	Provides specialist support for people with mental health problems.

Table 7: Services and support available for homeless people with mental health issues

10.6 People with alcohol and substance misuse problems

- 10.6.1 None of the households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 were given the need categories of either 'drug dependency' or alcohol dependency'. Nevertheless alcohol and substance misuse is relatively high amongst the homeless population.
- 10.6.2 In 2018, 10,106 18-64 year olds in Central Bedfordshire are predicted to have an alcohol problem, men significantly more so (72%) than women.⁴⁸ In Bedfordshire, the proportion of adults in structured drug treatment is 3.54 adults per 1,000 population aged 18-74⁴⁹. The impact of alcohol misuse is widespread encompassing alcohol related harm and injuries as well as the social impacts of crime and violence, loss of work place activity and teenage pregnancy.

⁴⁸ Alcohol – (Adult, Older People and Young People), JSNA

http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Alcohol%20-%20JSNA_tcm6-31890.pdf#False

⁴⁹ Drug misuse, JSNA. http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Drug%20misuse%20-%20JSNA_tcm6-31891.pdf#False

- 10.6.3 National research has shown:
- a) Two thirds of homeless people cite drug or alcohol use as a reason for first becoming homeless and those who use drugs are seven times more likely to be homeless than the general population⁵⁰
 - b) Around a third of the homeless people who took part in a study reported high use of drugs and alcohol. While levels of substance use can vary widely depending on an individual's circumstances, this figure corresponds to findings from previous research which paints a similar picture of the prevalence of substance use among those using homelessness services.⁵¹
 - c) 39% of audit participants said they take drugs or are recovering from a drug problem, and 36% had taken drugs in the month before completing the audit. By comparison, only 5% of the general public took drugs in the past month. Cannabis appears to be the most commonly used drug by those experiencing homelessness. However, a quarter reported taking heroin and prescription drugs not prescribed for them.⁵²
 - d) 27 per cent of homeless people surveyed reported having or recovering from an alcohol problem⁵³.
- 10.6.4 The 2012 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment report on Homeless People in Central Bedfordshire identified the following as unmet health needs and service gaps:
- No protocols for the detox of homeless people.
 - The seven substance misuse recommendations in Homeless Standards of Care have not been adopted.
 - Support for homeless people with alcohol misuse problems is scarce. Alcohol services have poor uptake from females, elderly, those living in rural areas and black and minority ethnic groups.
- 10.6.5 Research to develop the housing support services Market Position Statement (MPS) considered the needs of a sub-group of people with Alcohol and Substance Misuse problems; those engaged with treatment services.
- 10.6.6 At present, the local drug treatment service provides floating housing support to help service users find and maintain suitable accommodation. However, there is no specialist Accommodation Based Support for people with Substance Misuse difficulties.
- 10.6.7 Table 8 sets out the services and support identified as available for this group locally.

Provider/ Service	Description
Plan B	Plan B is a service run by the CAN Partnership that offers a range of support, information and advice to young people aged between 5 and 18 who use drugs and/or alcohol and also supports young people affected by someone else's use.

⁵⁰ Homelessness amongst problem drug users: prevalence, risk factors and trigger events', Health and Social Care in the Community, 2006.

⁵¹ The Unhealthy State of Homelessness: Health audit results 2014, Homeless Link 2014

⁵² The Unhealthy State of Homelessness: Health audit results 2014, Homeless Link 2014

⁵³ The Unhealthy State of Homelessness: Health audit results 2014, Homeless Link 2014

Addaction – Leighton Buzzard	Offers drug and alcohol outreach services for adults, young people and families.
The CAN Partnership	The CAN Partnership provides an integrated drug and alcohol service for Bedfordshire. The service provides access to a full range of medical, psychological and social options. This supports service users throughout their treatment journey with an emphasis on the individuals' recovery from drug and alcohol misuse.
Community Alcohol Liaison Service (CALs)	The service offers advice and support to people experiencing problems with alcohol in the community.
Drug Intervention Programme	The Programme is run by Westminster Drug Project and provides support for people who come through the criminal justice system and are experiencing problems with drugs and/or alcohol.
Enhanced Care Service	The service is provided by SEPT and supports clients with complex needs which include problematic drug and alcohol use, with high social care needs. The team provides outreach support to clients across Bedfordshire and they carry out Community Care assessments for clients requiring dedicated drug and alcohol detoxification and residential rehabilitation.
Community Drug and Alcohol Service (CDAS)	SEPT provides substance dependency treatment services via their CDAS teams.

Table 8: Services and support available for homeless people with drug and alcohol misuse issues

10.7 Offenders and ex-offenders

- 10.7.1 Offenders are typically vulnerable adults with health, social care and educational needs, and face many challenges in order to take care of themselves. For example, upon release, the offender may have no accommodation and/or, employment and is expected to return to civilian life and re-settle. There may be issues of being accepted back into the community.⁵⁴
- 10.7.2 Many offenders suffer from an excessive burden of health, and in particular this group have higher rates of mental health problems, suicide, drug and alcohol misuse and learning disabilities. Problems of social exclusion, family relationships, truancy, exclusion from school, unemployment, and poor or no housing are all facets of a complex picture of social determinants throughout the life course which contribute both to offender and offending behaviour⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ Offenders in the Community, Central Bedfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Offenders%20-%20community%20-%20JSNA_tcm6-32237.pdf

⁵⁵ NHS Bedfordshire Health Needs Assessment 2008

- 10.7.3 Ex-offenders have difficulties finding housing once released from prison. 37% nationally have stated they needed help finding a place to live once released.⁵⁶
- 10.7.4 The Bedfordshire Probation Trust monitors the proportion of offenders living in settled and suitable accommodation at the end of their order or licence. In 2013-14 the proportion was 88%, which exceeded the target of 80%.⁵⁷
- 10.7.5 The Bedfordshire Probation Trust reported a caseload across Bedfordshire of 2,437 as of 31 March 2014. This was made up of 1,120 orders, 948 pre-release licences and 369 post-release licences. Compared to 31 March 2013, there was a 1% increase in all cases but with a 20% decrease in post-release licences⁵⁸.
- 10.7.6 None of the households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 were given the need category of 'been in custody/on remand'.
- 10.7.7 Research to develop the housing support services Market Position Statement found that housing support elements of the Integrated Offender Management Programme (prolific offenders) seem well aligned with the needs of that group. However, the research did not take into account the needs of non-prolific offenders.
- 10.7.8 Table 9 sets out the services and support identified as available for this group locally.

Provider/ Service	Description
Langley House Trust	The charitable organisation supports offenders once released from prison providing resettlement accommodation and support around health and social care needs for offenders with mental health or personality disorders, substance misuse, learning disabilities, and behaviour problems. The projects are based in Bedford and Luton.
Bedfordshire Integrated Offender Management Team and Probation Services	Support offenders leaving Prison.
Community Resettlement Support Project	This project works with offenders from prison released into the community. The voluntary organisation runs a befriending service with offenders both in Prison and in the community.
Mayday Trust	Provision of ten units of supported accommodation as part of the Integrated Offender Management Project. The service aims to reduce and prevent offenders experiencing

⁵⁶ Offenders in the Community, Central Bedfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

⁵⁷ 2013-14 Annual Report and Accounts, Bedfordshire Probation Trust.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/331085/HC59_Bedfordshire_AR_A_2013-14_web.pdf

⁵⁸ 2013-14 Annual Report and Accounts, Bedfordshire Probation Trust.

homelessness and provide a stable home at the crucial point of need as a first step towards wider outcomes-- including training, employment, drugs and alcohol control - using a combination of Integrated Management Partnership resources and resources from Mayday Trust.

Table 9: Services and support available for homeless people that are offenders or ex-offenders

10.8 People suffering from domestic violence

- 10.8.1 Men, women and children who experience domestic violence often face becoming homeless in order to keep themselves safe from their abuser. Research indicates that in up to 40% of cases, domestic violence is the main cause or a contributing factor towards women becoming homeless. 90% of young people leave home because of family conflict, including witnessing domestic violence or being a victim of physical or sexual abuse⁵⁹.
- 10.8.2 Women who have experienced domestic violence remain at risk of homelessness long after the relationship has ended, for example, due to having to move on if they are found or because the long-term impact of abuse on their emotional and psychological well-being means they find it difficult to maintain a tenancy⁶⁰.
- 10.8.3 Three of the households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 in Central Bedfordshire were given the need category of 'domestic violence'. 14 (11%) households found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need gave the violent breakdown of a relationship as the main reason for loss of their last settled home in 2013-14. 12 applicants cited the violent relationship breakdown involving a partner and two cited the violent relationship breakdown involving associated persons.
- 10.8.4 In 2013-14 there were 2,699 reported domestic abuse incidents in Central Bedfordshire which represented 23% of all recorded crime. Between April 2012 and August 2013, 81% of all Central Bedfordshire domestic abuse incidents reported to the police, the victim was female, with the most prevalent age group between 21-25 years (18% of all victims), followed by 26-30 years (16%) and 36-40 years (15%). This age pattern is also repeated for male victims with 14% of all male victims falling in the 21-25 years bracket.⁶¹
- 10.8.5 Two refuges are run by Stonham in Central Bedfordshire and between January 2011 and 2012, 61 female victims of domestic abuse were helped at the refuges. Six had mental health issues, four had substance misuse problems and five had alcohol related needs.⁶²

⁵⁹Domestic violence and housing, Against Violence and Abuse, 2011
<http://www.avaproject.org.uk/media/62315/idva%20policy%20briefing%20march.pdf>

⁶⁰Domestic violence and housing, Against Violence and Abuse, 2011

⁶¹ Domestic Abuse, JSNA. http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Domestic%20Abuse%20-%20JSNA_tcm6-32035.pdf#False

⁶² Homeless People in Central Bedfordshire, JSNA

10.8.6 Table 10 sets out the services and support identified as available for this group locally.

Provider/ Service	Description
Stonham North and South Central Bedfordshire Refuge	The refuges reduce the impact of homelessness and social disadvantage by providing both specialist housing with care and support to women and children fleeing domestic violence. Both refuges consist of furnished self contained flats. Staff provide advice, support and information services to encourage clients to live independently.
Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)	MARAC is a meeting where agencies talk about the risk of serious harm to people experiencing domestic abuse in their area, and make safety plans to support those most at risk. The aim is to increase the safety and well-being of the adults and their children involved, and to reduce the risk of them becoming repeat victims.
Sanctuary scheme	The scheme provides security measures to allow the survivor to remain in their home where they choose to do so, where safety can be guaranteed and the violent partner no longer lives within the home. The service is available across tenures and provides additional security to main entrance doors to the accommodation and locks to any vulnerable windows. Wherever possible safe rooms are provided.
Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA)	This IDVA service aims to deliver support that has not previously been available to victims of domestic violence who wish to press charges against their abuser. These workers provide specialist support throughout this process and will also be able to access other services depending on what the person wants or needs. They possess specialist knowledge of both criminal and civil courts and will be able to advise on a range of associated issues.

Table 10: Services and support available for homeless people that are survivors of domestic abuse

11. Homelessness prevention

11.1 Summary

- 11.1.1 Homelessness can have significant negative consequences on a person or family including health, education and employment. Enabling people to stay in their existing accommodation or find a suitably alternative home and avoiding the need for a formal homelessness assessment is beneficial both to those threatened with homelessness and agencies that could potentially support them.
- 11.1.2 Preventing someone from becoming homeless is not just about helping them to remain in their home or finding another but it is also about enabling access to family support, mediation, legal advice, education or training, benefits, debt advice and substance misuse support.
- 11.1.3 Central Bedfordshire places emphasis on early intervention and prevention initiatives to tackle homelessness in partnership with registered social landlords, the voluntary and community and private sector services.

11.2 Homelessness Prevention Grant

- 11.2.1 Local authorities are encouraged to use their Preventing Homelessness Grant allocation to support the development and enhancement of front line housing services to ensure the provision of high quality services for anyone homeless, threatened with homelessness, or rough sleeping in the local area.
- 11.2.2 Central Bedfordshire Housing Service has developed a draft expenditure plan for the Homelessness Prevention Grant, three of the key components included are detailed below.
- 11.2.3 A contribution to posts that directly contribute to the prevention of homelessness in Central Bedfordshire. It is planned that a proportion of the Senior Options Officer post will be focused on increasing prevention options, in addition to a dedicated Options Officer role. Also, some technical support assistance will be required to manage landlord accounts and help tenants sustain their tenancies. This approach will underpin the Council's strategy to promote sustainable tenancies, which is not only beneficial for the household but reduces the demand from repeat approaches.
- 11.2.4 Prevention funding to enable the establishment of an additional No Second Night Out (NSNO) facility in 2013-14. This use of funding has been approved by Homeless Link. The NSNO Action Group was re-established during the end of 2013 with a view to improving pathways for rough sleepers. Whilst this work is ongoing, it is likely that a proportion of homelessness prevention grant funding will be required for certain initiatives.
- 11.2.5 Client demand for the Let's Rent scheme is (see further details of the scheme below) growing with a current waiting list of around 60 cases across Central Bedfordshire. Expenditure on private rented sector incentives is anticipated to grow further in 2014/15. The average incentive per tenancy arranged is around £800 but this will vary between property types and market areas. Work is underway to develop relationships with letting agents in the north of

Central Bedfordshire and it is expected that incentives for properties in the north will be higher due primarily to higher rents.

11.3 Let's Rent Scheme

- 11.3.1 Central Bedfordshire Council's Let's Rent scheme is aimed at people who are either threatened with homelessness or in need of housing. The service has been developed by the Council in partnership with local landlords, licensed letting agents, the Council's Housing Benefit Service and local floating support services. It allows families or individuals to have a choice of good quality, well managed, private sector accommodation in the local area, which enables local people to make important decisions in relation to employment, education, health services and family support networks.
- 11.3.2 There are three main scenarios where the Let's Rent scheme can provide a cost effective solution in relation to homelessness prevention:
- Where the Council has a statutory duty to re-house an applicant in priority need. This is where the Council can discharge its homelessness duty into to the private rented sector.
 - Where the Council have accepted that someone is homeless but either intentionally so or where the applicant is not in priority need. The Government encourages local authorities to take steps to relieve homelessness for these cases. These steps could include arrangement of a private sector letting.
 - Where the Council has prevented homelessness. This activity is strongly encouraged by Government as it both reduces statutory duty cases and cases where homelessness is relieved. Included in the options for homelessness prevention is the arrangement of a private sector tenancy for the applicants concerned.
- 11.3.3 The strategic vision is to use the Let's Rent scheme to maximise the use of private properties in the local area, including encouraging renovation and change of tenure, in order to provide more options for people in housing need to find suitable accommodation that meets their needs. In this context, the most cost effective use of Let's Rent would be to increase access to the private rented sector where it results in reducing the need for temporary accommodation.
- 11.3.4 Let's Rent will also be used to bring empty homes up to standard on the proviso that CBC holds first nomination rights and offers the resultant vacancies to our homeless applicants. The rents will remain at the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates. This is considered as a way of influencing landlords to keep the rents low by providing grants and deposits.
- 11.3.5 With a rising trend in homelessness decisions and statutory acceptances there is likely to be an increased demand for temporary and permanent move-on accommodation. The costs per night per person for temporary accommodation is approximately £40. Therefore there is a greater need for the Let's Rent Scheme to facilitate the supply of good quality private rental properties as this will reduce the use of TA costs mainly through reducing the average time spent in TA.

11.4 Temporary Accommodation

- 11.4.1 The majority of the Council's Temporary Accommodation (TA) is provided through day time staffed hostels at Bedford Court, Houghton Regis and Hockliffe Street, Leighton Buzzard and a range of self contained short term lettings through the Council and Aragon Housing Association.
- 11.4.2 The overall increase in homeless acceptances has resulted in a similar trend for temporary accommodation use (as illustrated earlier in this review). The Council currently has use of 39 TA units. Demand in excess of this supply leads to an overspill in to B&B accommodation.
- Hostels units
 - Bedford Court, Houghton Regis – up to 20 units
 - Hockliffe Street, Leighton Buzzard - six units
 - Scattered properties:
 - Five units owned by CBC in Houghton Regis within various properties ranging from a one bedroom flat to a three bedroom house.
 - Seven units in three and four bed houses owned by CBC in Dunstable.
 - Three two and three bed houses owned by Aragon Housing Association in Sandy, Shefford and Biggleswade.

11.5 Emergency provision

- 11.5.1 Leighton Linslade Homeless Service (LLHS) act as the main local provider of No Second Night Out homeless accommodation in Central Bedfordshire and have facilities for emergency accommodation during periods of cold weather. LLHS are primarily established to tackle homelessness issues in the Leighton Linslade area but in times of severe cold weather, may be able to help on a wider area basis.
- 11.5.2 Bedfordshire Housing Link (BHL) has a small level of emergency provision in the Sandy area available during severe cold weather.
- 11.5.3 NOAH Enterprise operates an outreach service under No Second Night Out. It is possible that under a severe weather emergency the Council will work with NOAH to identify rough sleepers that they are aware of and potentially mobilise those at risk to emergency accommodation.

11.6 Floating support

- 11.6.1 Within Central Bedfordshire, Bromford has been commissioned to provide a floating support service for local people to access advice and guidance in order to overcome difficulties and remain in their home. Support to maintain accommodation, manage tenancies and prevent eviction is available for anyone aged 16 and over, that:

- a) Are at risk of losing their home and becoming homeless
- b) Need advice and guidance when claiming welfare or housing benefits
- c) Need help to reduce debt, budget finances and manage bills
- d) Are looking to find employment, education or training
- e) Need support to tackle physical/mental health, drug and alcohol problems
- f) Need to move out of temporary accommodation and find a secure and affordable home
- g) Leave supported housing or custody to move into independent living

11.6.2 The Mayday Trust also provides resettlement and floating support for their Supported Housing clients who have moved on to independent accommodation.

11.7 Homelessness Supported Housing

- 11.7.1 Signposts (Dunstable) provides residential and supportive services for 33 clients across three sites in Central Bedfordshire. Their client group is young single homeless people aged between 16 and 25 years old. Their aim is to ensure clients reach their own maximum potential in order to live and develop in the community.
- 11.7.2 Some clients that Signposts work with have complex needs which could include mental health, drug and alcohol misuse and offending. The service offers a 24 hour service to support young people in their steps towards independent living and gaining key life skills. This includes their Waking night team who offer that continuum of support and safety throughout the night, a night-time floating service across all Signposts projects and daytime programmes. These programme include activities that enable young people to access education/higher education, employment or volunteering.
- 11.7.3 Holland House in Houghton Regis provides accommodation and independent services to eight young people. These clients will have worked towards reintegration back into the community and Holland House is a bridging point between the end of their stay and securing their own accommodation or any other major life change they wish to make.
- 11.7.4 The Mayday Trust operates a 36-bedroom scheme in Leighton Buzzard catering for a mixed client group. Referrals include care leavers, ex-offenders, victims of alcohol/substance abuse and domestic violence, moderate mental health referrals and those with moderate learning difficulties.
- 11.7.5 The service provides long term (up to two years) housing and support services to clients including provision of individually tailored support, aimed at achieving positive outcomes for clients in terms of their independence, ability to maintain their own home or tenancy, confidence levels and skills to achieve education, training or employment.
- 11.7.6 Bedfordshire Housing Link, Sandy offers accommodation to up to 17 homeless people aged 16-65 and supports single homeless people to work towards independent living within various communities across Central Bedfordshire.

11.7.7 Aragon Women's Refuge South and North Central Bedfordshire are run by Stonham. The refuges take women, with or without children, fleeing domestic violence. Clients are supported to build the skills for independent living and are signposted to other agencies as appropriate to their needs. There are ten self-contained flats in South and North Central Bedfordshire.

11.8 Other services

11.8.1 Central Bedfordshire Council's Homelessness and Mediation Service (HAMS) is for young people aged 14-18 years old at risk of homelessness. The service offers housing advice and support, signposting to supporting organisations such as hostels and advice agencies and a mediation programme to help resolve problems at home.

11.8.2 Local Welfare Provision is an emergency funding service for eligible residents in crisis and provides larger payments or goods to help vulnerable people to live as independent a life as possible in the community. This includes resettlement following a period in care/prison or other institution or to ease exceptional pressures on families such as following the breakdown of a relationship or a disaster.

11.8.3 NOAH Enterprise runs 'The Furniture Store' as a social enterprise. The Luton-based store sells low cost new and donated second hand furniture and white goods.

11.8.4 Preen Furniture Services offers low cost household items including appliances, clothing, furniture, carpets, electrical, bedding, kitchen ware and curtains.

12. Engagement activity

12.1 A draft of the review was circulated to more than 170 stakeholders in September 2014 to give partners and colleagues the opportunity to comment on the data presented.

12.2 A survey was also sent to stakeholders and two engagement events were held to gather views on the effectiveness of homelessness services in Central Bedfordshire. The engagement events involved external stakeholders such as accommodation based supported housing providers and advice services and Central Bedfordshire Council colleagues from a range of services including Children's Services, Adult Social Care and Housing Services.

12.3 The aim of the engagement events was to find out what colleagues and partners felt was working, not working or missing from the current homelessness service provision in Central Bedfordshire within the themes of homelessness prevention, intervention and sustainment. The 30 delegates that attended were also asked to identify their priorities for the development of homelessness services over the next five years. Commissioning

colleagues attended the events to gather views on current supported housing provision and to gain better insight in to future needs.

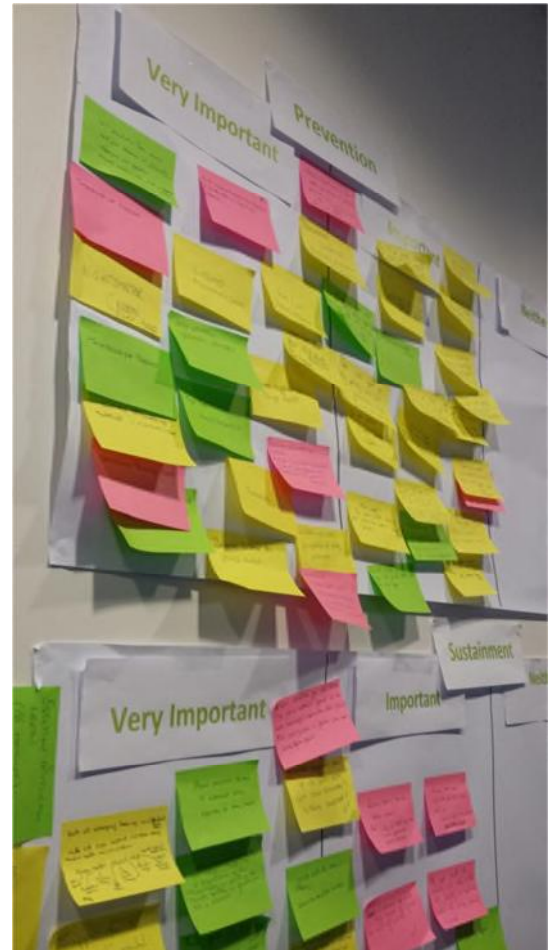
- 12.4 Feedback via table discussions and notes on the wall charts identified that the current support services provided via Personal Advisors, Bromford Support and Key Workers is a very important area that works well, however there is not enough of this support available to people. Cross service networking also works well when the opportunity is provided however there was consistent feedback that there is no formal process to enable this approach.

- 12.5 Communications between CBC services such as Housing and Children's Services and Housing and Adult Social Care were highlighted as improving. The mediation service within Children's Services was also praised, but there was concern over future funding for this service.

- 12.6 It was highlighted through discussions that information sharing within Central Bedfordshire Council could be improved to ensure that people were housed appropriately. Another consistent message was that the information provision within Central Bedfordshire Council with regard to service providers was out of date and could lead to people "falling out of the system". Stakeholders also identified the lack of communication between Central Bedfordshire Council and other Homelessness Support services as an issue.

- 12.7 A number of delegates raised concerns over hostels being available to a wide age range which could put young people at risk, especially when residing in the same hostel as ex-offenders. Housing vulnerable people in Bed and Breakfast accommodation was also raised as a concern.

- 12.8 The eviction protocol which ensures that housing providers adopt the same tolerance level to reduce eviction rates had mixed reviews. Many housing providers felt that this worked but many CBC colleagues felt that the number of breaches required for an eviction could be accumulated too quickly and could lead to eviction in one day. CBC colleagues felt that there should be



more emphasis on understanding why the client was behaving in a particular way rather than applying a series of sanctions.

- 12.9 A gap identified throughout the event by both CBC colleagues and external partners is the lack of emergency accommodation to assist homeless people. A number of people also suggested that practical educational support would be beneficial i.e. life skills including budgeting information and advice, cooking etc. across all age groups to support people to maintain a tenancy.
- 12.10 The need for services to be person-centred was raised. This ranged from case notes to be passed for better informed referrals and providing more personalised services that considered the individual and their personal needs rather than just their need to have a roof over their head.
- 12.11 The availability of suitable one and two bedroom properties was highlighted as an issue that impacted on homelessness.
- 12.12 A summary of the engagement event's findings was produced and made available as part of the consultation on the draft Homelessness Strategy.

13 Conclusion

- 13.1 Since Central Bedfordshire Council's first Homelessness Strategy was published in 2010 there have been many changes affecting local residents such as the welfare reforms and continuing economic challenges. This and other factors have led to an increase in demand for housing options and advice services, housing register applications, homelessness declarations and a substantial increase in the use of temporary accommodation. However service improvements and the early intervention and prevention agenda has led to a reduction in people approaching the Council as homeless and not being eligible under the homelessness duty. This indicates that people approaching the Council have a more realistic view of whether they can be rehoused through the homelessness route.
- 13.2 The data presented in the review has led to the identification of priority household types and priority groups. Those at most risk of homelessness or who are disproportionately affected are:
- Families with children
 - Single homeless
 - Young people (16-17 year olds and 18-20 year old care leavers)
- 13.3 Characteristics that increase the likelihood of homelessness have been identified and analysed. These characteristics are:
- a) People with mental health difficulties
 - b) People with alcohol and substance misuse problems
 - c) Offenders and ex-offenders
 - d) People suffering from domestic violence
- 13.4 The review also identified opportunities that have arisen or been created since the development of the last Strategy. This includes the introduction of the power to discharge the homelessness duty to the private sector without

the applicant's consent, which the Council is anticipated to put in to use in 2014.

- 13.5 These opportunities and the identification of key challenges for those impacted by homelessness and their service providers will inform the development of the Council's second Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020. Views from colleagues and partners were sought to ensure that the review provided a robust evidence base to enable the development of an effective strategy.



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