

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

11TH OCTOBER 2022, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors C.A. Hotham (Chairman), J. Till (Vice-Chairman), S. J. Baxter, R. J. Hunter, A. J. B. Beaumont, S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming and A. D. Kriss and H. Rone-Clarke (substituting for Councillor P McDonald).

Observers: Councillor S. A. Webb (present up to Minute 29/2022)

Officers: Mrs. S. Hanley, Mr. M. Bough (on Microsoft Teams), Ms. A. Delahunty (on Microsoft Teams), Mrs. P. Ross (on Microsoft Teams) and M. Sliwinski.

25/2022

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology was received from Councillor P. McDonald with Councillor H. Rone-Clarke attending as a substitute.

26/2022

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

There were no declarations of interest nor whipping arrangements on this occasion.

27/2022

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 5TH JULY 2022

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 5th July 2022 were considered.

The Chairman advised that a recommendation made by the Board with regards Air Quality Annual Update on 5th July 2022 (Minute No. 18/2022 refers) would be submitted to Cabinet at its meeting of 12th October 2022.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 5th July 2022 be agreed as a true and correct record.

28/2022

WORCESTERSHIRE HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager and the Housing Development and Enabling Manager presented a detailed presentation, included as an Appendix A to the minutes, on the development of the county-wide Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-25 and action plan. During a detailed presentation, the following matters were highlighted by the Officers:

- The Homelessness Act 2002 placed a statutory duty on all housing authorities to have a homelessness strategy in place, which had to be based on a review of all forms of homelessness in the county/district. The current Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy was due to expire on 31st December 2022.
- The new Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy set out how the Worcestershire local housing authorities and Worcestershire County Council would work together to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- In developing the new Strategy, a comprehensive assessment of the nature and extent of homelessness and rough sleeping across the County was carried out by analysing homelessness data and taking account of the views of customers and partner organisations.
- Subject to approval by Cabinet, there would be a public consultation on the draft Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-25 and action plan, from 17th October to 4th December 2022.

Following presentation of the report, Members discussed a number of areas and Officers responded to questions – this included:

- Typographical error in respect of data in Table 3 of the Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-25, detailing the temporary accommodation (TA) units in the District. Officers advised that the Council had an agreement in place with Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) to provide static units and temporary accommodation. In total, there were up to 50 units available. This provided flexibility in the system in order to meet demand, so there was a net surplus of units. Officers undertook to rectify the typographical error in the report.
- Explanation of the variance in funding allocated to councils through the Government's Homeless Prevention Fund for

2022/23 (for example £362,524 to Wychavon District Council in comparison to £163,348 to Bromsgrove District Council). It was explained that the amount of funding was based on level of incidence of homelessness. Compared with most neighbouring authorities, Bromsgrove District had a lower incidence of homelessness and lower number of people towards whom the Council had a relief duty (i.e., duty to take reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure suitable accommodation), which resulted in a smaller grant allocation.

- Clarification around the Relief Duty. Officers explained that local authorities had a duty to provide accommodation to residents who were in priority need group and unintentionally homeless, even if the housing was provided in another local authority area (i.e., the resident's home council had to cover the cost). It was noted, however, that Bromsgrove District Council would generally use its temporary accommodation to house Bromsgrove residents only.
- Reasons as to why the number of rough sleepers in the Borough declined during the Covid-19 pandemic period and what lessons were learned. Officers explained that initiatives such as No First and No Second Night Out accommodation, which provided support above statutory duty and targeted people who were sleeping rough year-on-year, were successful in reducing the number of rough sleepers and encouraged people to sustain settled accommodation. The targeted support provided on substance misuse also contributed to lowering the number of rough sleepers during the pandemic.
- It was explained that the County Navigator Service from Maggs Day Centre were occasionally deployed around the District to look for people who were rough sleeping and there were regular checks in rough-sleeper hotspots.
- It was clarified that when service users were placed out of area on a temporary basis, the Council would keep in contact and monitor the quality of service received. When support was provided permanently out-of-district, the Council would not monitor those service users. Officers confirmed, however, that there was currently no need for redirecting to out-of-district provision as enough capacity was available in Bromsgrove District to meet the demand.
- Ability of the services to respond to increased demand. Officers confirmed that a considerable increase in demand for temporary accommodation was anticipated as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. Despite the stalling rate of housing construction and large demand on the Council's Housing Register, Officers expressed

confidence in being able to deal with the anticipated increase in demand.

- Reciprocal arrangements with other authorities. The Housing Development and Enabling Manager explained that the Council had informal arrangements with other authorities, for example in terms of providing transport for people rough sleeping from other parts of the country back to their home local authority area where they could access support. It was highlighted, however, that there was a limited scope for any further cooperation as Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) had only six units of emergency temporary accommodation.
- Family or friends were no longer willing to accommodate was being cited as the main reason becoming homeless in the District.
- It was noted that in the post-Covid period there had been a considerable increase in number of people becoming homeless through being evicted from private sector accommodation due to the end of an embargo on Section 21 notice evictions.
- Reporting cases of rough sleeping. Some Members reported significant delays when contacting Streetlink via telephone to report rough sleeping. In response Officers advised to report the cases through the Streetlink website as any information submitted this way was logged on the central government website and alerted all local agencies, which enabled a coordinated, multi-agency response.
- Other avenues to report rough sleeping/homelessness. Members queried if there were other avenues for reporting cases locally which allowed for immediate response in urgent situations. Officers confirmed BDHT could be telephoned from Monday to Friday during working hours, and they would alert the local outreach team. The average response time for this service was 48 hours.
- Feasibility of a 24-hour helpline number. Some Members commented that there should an immediate support service available to telephone in cases of urgency. In response, Officers stated that it was not currently feasible for either the Council or the County to have a dedicated, staffed 24-hour helpline as there were not enough resources. However, there was an emergency, out of hours contact number for people who were homeless or rough sleeping. In addition, there was a Severe Weather Emergency provision available on immediate basis.
- Officers confirmed that the Council had a dedicated Housing Officer for the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and this was funded via a Government grant.

- Arrangements for custody leavers not to be released on Fridays. Members asked if the current HM Prisons policy of allowing prisoners to be released on Fridays had been reconsidered, given that custody leavers without prior housing arranged were at risk of being left homeless on the weekend as they had insufficient time to access local support services, especially if they had a long way to travel home. In response, the Officer undertook to provide Members with a response and explained that this was a serious issue as prisoners discharged on a Friday were likely to find it difficult to access services and may start rough sleeping as a consequence.
- Bidding for the Mental Health Grant. Officers reported that the County was not successful in the first round and there had been another bid submitted by the public health team at Worcestershire County Council. It was explained that, if successful, the grant would only provide enough funds for appointing one health worker, and there were other avenues for the Council to bid for larger amounts of funding.

Members requested that a Homelessness Services leaflet containing contact details of various support organisations be produced by Officers and that a local 24-hour contact number for reporting rough sleeping and homelessness cases be provided to Members.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and recommendations contained therein endorsed.

[Councillor S. A. Webb left the meeting after consideration of this item.]

29/2022

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman informed Members that there had not been a meeting of the Finance and Budget Working Group since the last meeting of the Board, as the September meeting was cancelled as a mark of respect following the death of Her Majesty the Queen. It was reported that the next meeting was scheduled for 20th October 2022.

RESOLVED that the Finance and Budget Working Group Update be noted.

30/2022

TASK GROUP UPDATES

Councillor R. Hunter, the Chairman of the of the Fuel Poverty Task Group, reported that the Task Group held a number of meetings over the

last month, which focused primarily on issues of signposting and access to support services and funding in response to the cost of living crisis. The Fuel Poverty Task Group had interviewed numerous stakeholders and had managed to gather a lot of evidence. The Task Group had now produced a draft version of the final report, which contained recommendations that would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Councillor R. Hunter explained that although he would be unable to physically attend the next meeting of the Board on 24th October, he hoped to appear via a video link to provide a more comprehensive update on the Fuel Poverty Task Group's activities.

RESOLVED that the Task Group Updates be noted.

31/2022

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

Councillor S. Baxter, the representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, explained that the September meeting was cancelled as a mark of respect following the death of Her Majesty the Queen. The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 17 October 2022.

RESOLVED that Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Update be noted.

32/2022

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was presented for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Cabinet Work Programme be noted.

33/2022

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman requested that the item on Climate Change Policy be added to the work programme for the January meeting of the Board.

Following a discussion around enforcement, Councillor A. Kriss reiterated his request from previous meeting that an item be included on the work programme which covered the effectiveness of enforcement

across the Council. It was envisaged that this would include such areas as litter picking, fly tipping and planning enforcement.

RESOLVED that subject to the pre-amble above the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.16 p.m.

Chairman

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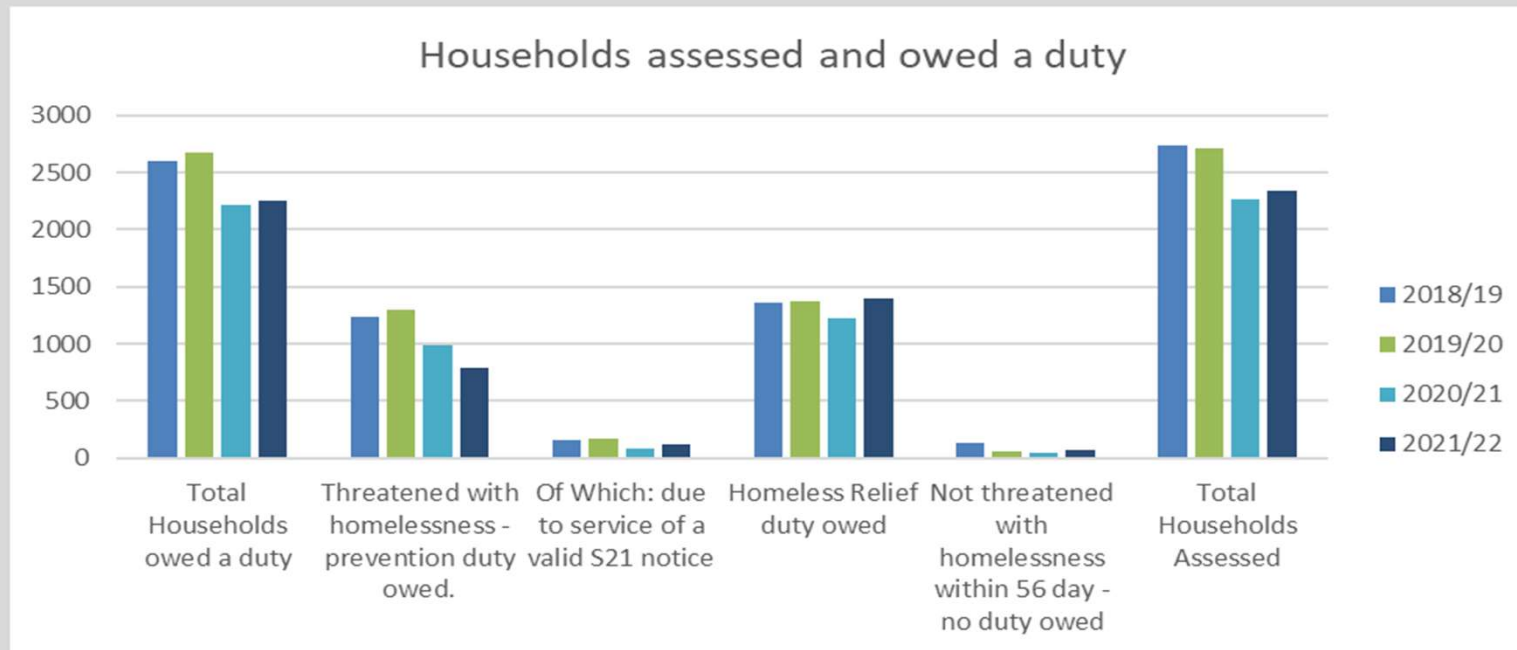
Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy

2022 -2025

Strategy Development

- Review of homelessness and related data
- Lived experience questionnaires
- Stakeholder questionnaires
- Review of national and local legislation, strategies and policies
- Stakeholder day - identification of actions
- Writing the strategy - four key priorities of prevention, intervention, recovery and increasing the supply of accommodation
- Consultation - 17th October until 4th December

Key Homeless Data - countywide



Main reasons for homelessness

Prevention

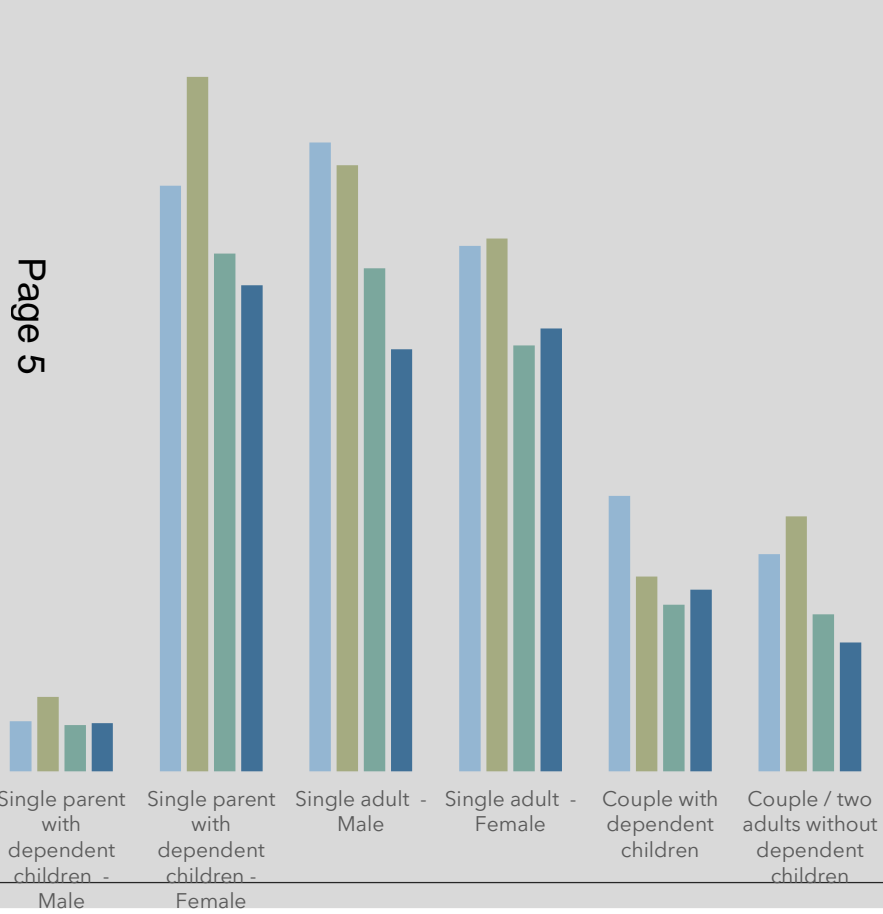
- Family / friends / relatives no longer willing to accommodate
- End of Assured Shorthold Tenancy
- Relation breakdown violent and non-violent
- Other

Relief

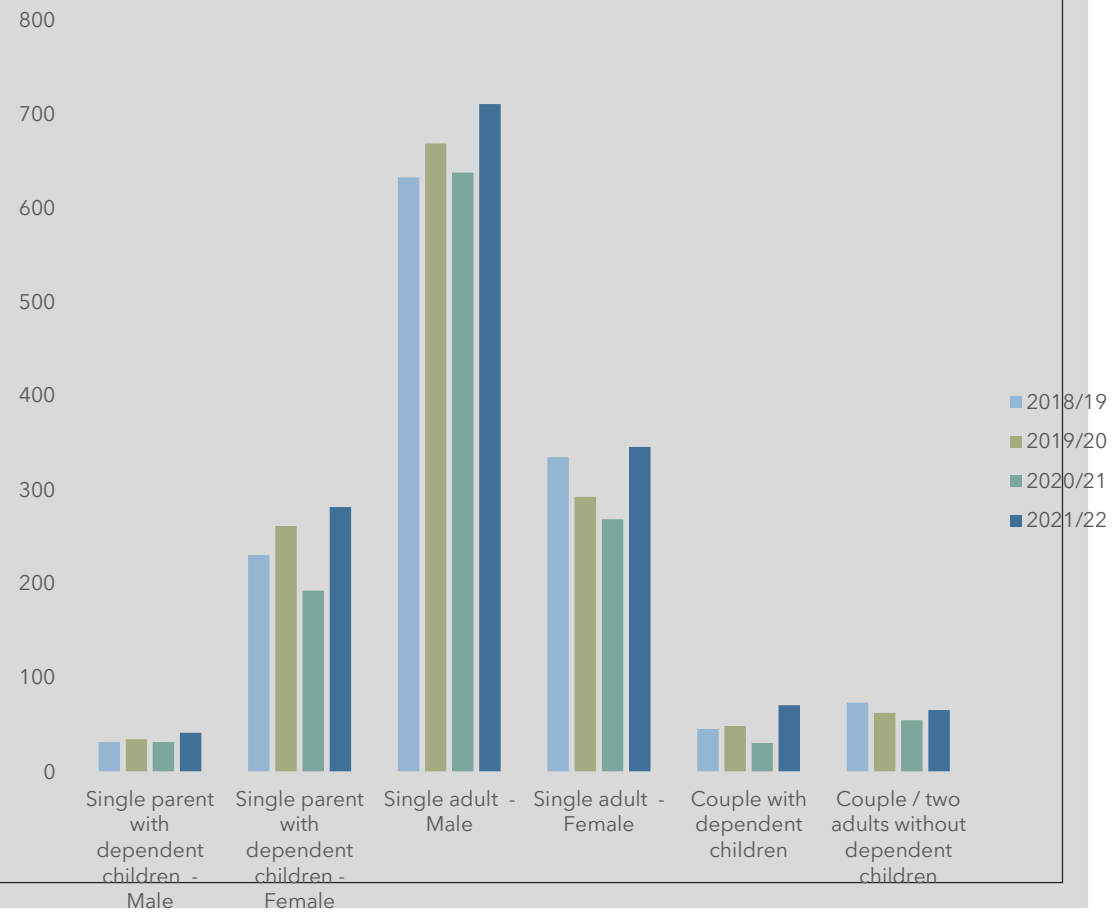
- As prevention plus;
- Left institution
- End of social housing tenancy

Household Composition

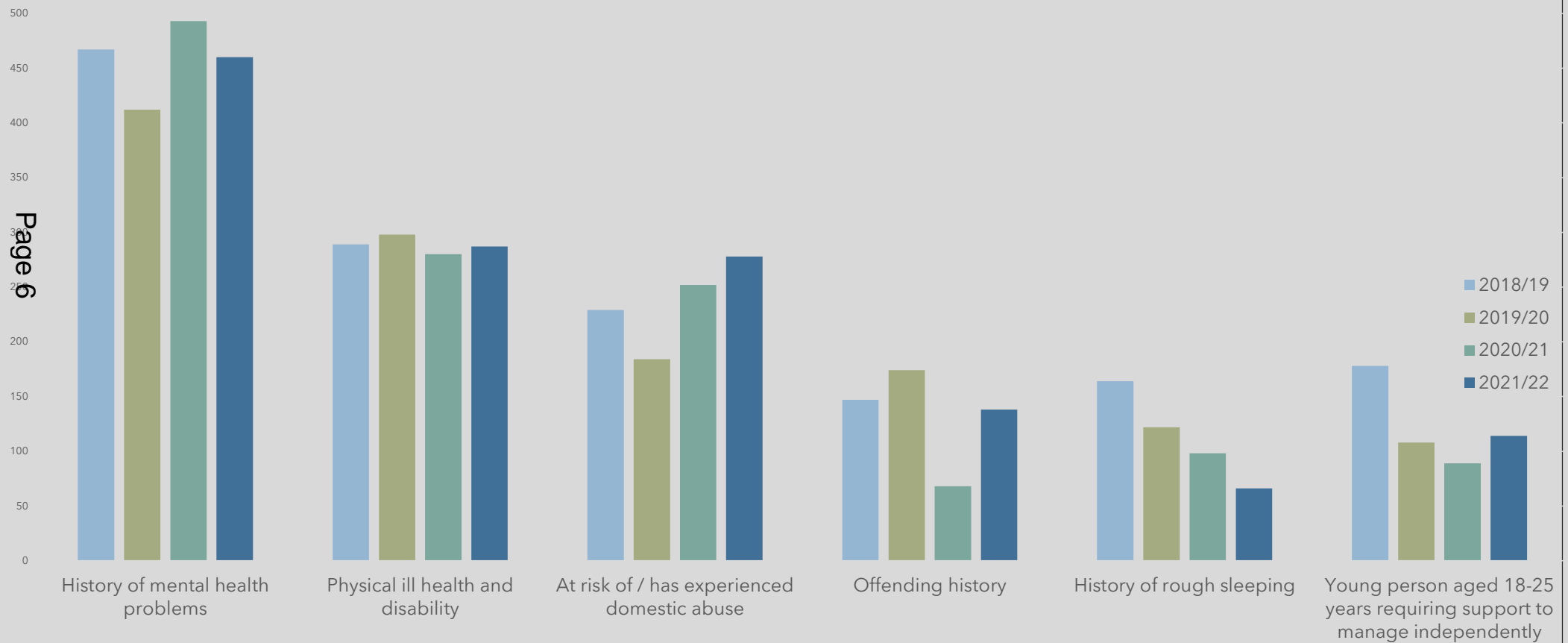
Prevention Duty



Relief Duty



Support needs of households owed a prevention or relief duty



Other key stats

- 13,000 households on housing registers across the county
- Over 50% are families
- Nearly 800 households are placed into temporary accommodation every year
- 23% of households we owe a duty say they have a support need due to mental health
- Rough sleeping numbers reducing (from annual count)
- Accessing Private Rented Sector has got harder since the last strategy
- Number of social housing lets have declined (particularly during covid)
- New build levels declined but returning to pre-pandemic levels
- Rise in benefit claimants in 2020/21

Questionnaire & interview outcomes

Service users (single people)

- Most people had experienced homelessness for more than six months
- More than 50% had a mental health problem and 25% a substance misuse issue
- Most people had a tenancy at some point, most became homeless due to relationship breakdown either with family or a partner (but lost original reasons)
- Most people received support from their Housing Advice Team staff
- Most people wanted support and connection to their family and friends but this was made harder by being homeless
- In most areas the TA was beneficial but they wanted more support whilst being accommodated and many wanted support to remain once housed
- Accessing benefits and/or employment was an issue for those in more rural Districts

Stakeholders

- What was good?
 - Outreach teams & day centres
 - Support provision from LAs and Navigators
 - Collaboration between partners
 - RS Co-Ordinator role
 - Housing initiatives like Housing Led/First, No First Night Out
 - Charity run services and funding
- What were the gaps?
 - Lack of accommodation across the board but especially for young people and those with complex needs
 - Better access to mental, physical and substance misuse services
 - Raising awareness of services and pathways
 - Sharing good practice, reducing duplication and increasing collaboration

Action Plan

- Prevention
 - Reducing homelessness for victims of domestic abuse including through tackling financial abuse and developing a country wide sanctuary scheme
 - Utilise data collection and improve quality
 - Develop the prison leavers protocol
 - Collaboration and outreach with partners including Health services and DWP
 - Developing prevention panels
 - Increase use of the commitment or duty to refer
 - Deliver on thematic review of rough sleeper actions
- Intervention
 - Tenancy sustainment and support
 - Staff training including PIE
 - Increase utilisation of harm reduction services
- Recovery
 - Meaningful activities
 - Peer mentoring
 - Access to education, employment & training
- Supply of accommodation
 - Increase supply of supported and step-down accommodation for range of needs
 - Identify demand for supported units for rough sleepers and increase supply if required
 - Provide 35 units of safe accommodation for victims of Domestic Abuse

Communication plan

Action	Outcome	Communication Channels	Target Audience	Responsible	Due date and frequency
To re-promote the Duty to Refer / Commitment to Refer message.	To increase the number of referrals to Homeless Teams through Duty to Refer from a wider range of agencies.	Existing joint meetings and publicity materials with public organisations.	Public organisations who may meet people who are potentially homeless.	District Councils	Dec-22
For organisations and agencies who have an interest in preventing homelessness to continue to meet on a regular basis to share information, develop best practices and current policy developments.	To have a cohesive and coordinated approach and response to homelessness.	Regular local homeless forums	Organisations and agencies who are involved in homelessness.	District Councils and voluntary/ statutory agencies	Quarterly or Bi-annually depending on local arrangements
To continue to review information on housing and homelessness on the district council websites to make sure it is up to date and accessible including through obtaining views on the information from People With Lived Experience (PWLE) To include case studies or videos to make messages more impactful.	For the public, organisations and people who are homeless or may become homeless to have easily accessible online information.	District Councils' Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who are homeless or may potentially become homeless General Public 	District Councils	Sep-22 and a six monthly review
To promote the services available to rough sleepers including Streetlink, Cold/Hot Weather Emergency Provision, new services plus the existing services both statutory and voluntary.	For the public to have an increased awareness of the services available for people who are homeless. All organisations to promote a jargon free, cohesive message.	Regular media campaigns to include local newspapers, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who are homeless or may potentially become homeless General Public 	District Councils, WSHOG and Homeless organisations	Quarterly as a minimum

Bromsgrove Data

	Prevention						Relief					
	18/19		19/20		20/21		18/19		19/20		20/21	
End of AST	34	20.2%	36	18.8%	13	11.1%	4	5.6%	7	7.9%	4	4.8%
Family/Friends no longer willing to accommodate	47	28.0%	57	29.7%	38	32.5%	21	29.2%	27	30.3%	29	34.5%
Other	26	15.5%	31	16.1%	29	24.8%	23	31.9%	20	22.5%	19	22.6%
Relationship Breakdown (non-violent)	20	11.9%	33	17.2%	19	16.2%	4	5.6%	12	13.5%	12	14.3%
Domestic Abuse	18	10.7%	17	8.9%	14	12.0%	12	16.7%	9	10.1%	14	16.7%

Local Action Plan for Year 1

Working with partners who attend the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group to develop local action plan

- Building partnerships with Health
- Supporting services who help those most affected by the cost of living crisis
- Review accommodation availability to meet need in respect of both temporary accommodation and longer term accommodation options
- Review the Domestic Abuse Officer role, the safe accommodation and the provision of sanctuary schemes.
- Ensure that there are options for Young People and Rough Sleepers (crash pad/NFNO)