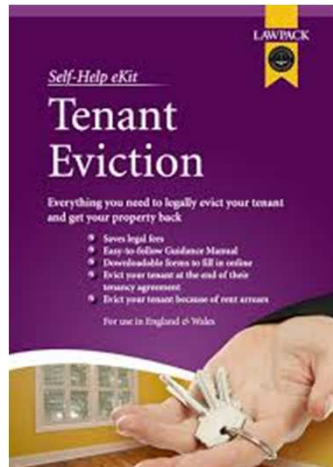


Current Pressures on the Housing Options Service



The national picture



People become homeless for a variety of complex reasons, however the common factors that can make it more likely, include relationship breakdown, leaving care, physical and mental health problems and fleeing violence.

Solving homelessness often involves a partnership approach to provide a suitable home with appropriate support services in place to reduce the likelihood of repeat homelessness.

In **England** local authorities have a duty to house some homeless people who meet a strict set of criteria. Every year thousands of people apply to their local authority for homelessness assistance. The majority of single people who approach their local authority will not meet the homelessness criteria.

- § **112,070 households applied** to their local authority for homelessness assistance in 2013/14, a 26 per cent rise since 2009/10.
- § **Just over 52,000 were accepted as homeless and in 'priority need'** - a 31 per cent rise since 2009/10
- § Government statistics show that 2,414 people slept rough in England on any one given night during 2013, a **37 per cent rise on 2010**
- § Housing supply has not kept pace with demand for many decades. Almost **125,000 new houses were supplied in 2012-13**. This was below the estimated 250,000 required to keep up with demand and was **10,000 lower than the previous year**

The picture in Swale



In **Swale** the number of households contacting the Housing Options Team for help is increasing:

§ The main causes of homelessness in Swale are parental evictions, friends and family evictions, relationship breakdown and domestic abuse

§ The number of **homeless** applications has increased from **104** in 2009/10 to **217** in 2013/14

§ The number of Households living in **temporary accommodation** has increased from **57** in 2009 to to **76** in 2013/14

§ The number of households placed into Bed & Breakfast has increased over the past three years resulting in net expenditure rising from **£69,373** to **£222,046**. This is due in part to the reduction in the amount of Housing Benefit that can be claimed back on B&B costs

§ The total number of **enquiries** to the Housing Options service has **increased** in the last year by almost **3,000** to around 18000 enquiries

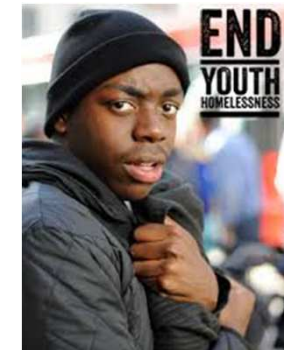
§ In 2013/14 we **prevented 496 households** from becoming homeless, an increase of more than **100** in the last year

§ The number of **households affected by the benefit cap** has risen from **21 cases** in 2012/13 to **61 cases** in 2013/14

§ **745** households were **awarded a Discretionary Housing Payment** to help with their rent last year

§ The total number of **affordable homes** built is decreasing year on year with only **73 delivered** last year

§ In **July** this year the Housing Options Team had **142 face to face appointments booked**



Housing and homelessness issues in Swale

Increasing numbers of households presenting as homeless to the Council.

The increasing number of complex cases of homeless young people.



Inadequate supply of suitable temporary accommodation in Borough and lack of alternatives to Bed and Breakfast.

Lack of move-on accommodation within the Borough, meaning homeless households having to spend longer in temporary accommodation.

High costs of private renting and decline in number of private landlords willing to accept benefit dependent households.

Welfare reform changes leading to local residents being unable to meet their housing costs.



Low levels of new affordable housing delivery leading to a lack of move-on accommodation for households in temporary accommodation and those who cannot meet the costs of the private rented sector.

Continuing reduction in public funding for Swale Borough Council and its partners, leading to rationalisation of local public services and lower levels of new social homes.



There are several types of temporary accommodation used however Bed & Breakfast is nearly always the first type of emergency accommodation provided. Alternative temporary accommodation is provided to each household as soon as it is available.

Legislation dictates that families with children/pregnant should only be placed in B&B as a last resort but recognises that when a placement is unavoidable these families should not exceed a 6 week stay. Unfortunately Swale as well as many other LA's are seeing the numbers remaining in B&B over 6 weeks increasing.

- 43 families over the 6 weeks between October 2013 to August 2014
- 1 x single person
- 20 x pregnant or with 1 child
- 13 families with 2 children
- 5 families with 3 or more children



Complex cases

The number of complex cases is increasing, requiring depth and intelligent working with our partners.

Violence & Harassment cases



High Risk Domestic Violence



Mental Health

Alcohol and drug dependency



Young People



Prevention is a key aim for the service

The Housing Options Team work to prevent homelessness in the majority of cases:

- Service strengthened by dedicated Housing Benefit officers working in the Housing Options Team specifically to prevent homelessness
- High quality housing advice and options
- Conciliation to help resolve family disputes
- Resolving rent arrears
- Landlord liaison and partnership working
- Enabling the search for alternative housing normally in the private rented sector
- Helping people affected by welfare reform to retain their existing tenancies
- Processing DHP as quickly and effectively as possible
- Ensuring customers are receiving the most appropriate welfare benefits
- Provision of the Deposit Bond Scheme

2013/14

£92K of Homelessness Prevention Grant to deal with homelessness

£323K of Discretionary Housing Payments

2014/15

£92K of Homelessness Prevention Grant

£345K for Discretionary Housing Payments



Housing Options



With a shortage of available social homes and reduced building of new affordable homes we launched the new Housing Allocations Policy on the 28th April.

This means that we now operate a register for local people who are in housing need, who do not have the financial means to secure suitable housing for themselves.



Our register had more than 5,000 applicants, however it has now reduced to 1,650. There are approximately 168 social homes let each year.



We continue to manage expectations and generational beliefs that social housing is available for all. There is a strong emphasis on the private sector as a viable housing option for Most people who seek our help.



Last year we assisted 254 households to secure a private tenancy.



ANY QUESTIONS

