

# A Review of Homelessness in Sefton

July 2018

Commission by: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
Carried out by: Neil Morland Housing Consultant Ltd



Neil Morland

HOUSING CONSULTANT LTD

### Sefton Council

Sefton Borough Council, a metropolitan district, was founded in 1974. The Council is led by a Mayor and Leader. The Council is currently administered by Labour, with opposition from Conservatives, Liberal Democrats and Independents. The Council is a member of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority, and Merseyside Police & Crime Panel. Elections are held every four years using a multiple member first-past-the-post voting system.

### Neil Morland Housing Consultant Ltd

Established in 2011, Neil Morland and his team of associates provide specialist advice on homelessness and housing allocation to public authorities, voluntary organisations, and others, throughout Great Britain. Our ethos is to provide efficient and quality services that are value for money. Our ambition is to reduce housing inequalities by improving social policies and practices.

### Acknowledgement

This report was commissioned and funded by Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council. Our thanks go to Neil Davies and Alastair Malpas from the local authority for their invaluable assistance. We are grateful to everyone who generously inputted into this report. We wish to acknowledge the important contributions made by Kate Gascoigne and Liz Griffiths.

Disclaimer: All views and any errors contained in this report are the responsibility of the author. The views expressed should not be assumed to be those of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council or any of the persons who contributed to this review

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## Executive summary

### Current and future likely levels of homelessness

The number of decisions over the six-year period preceding this review (2012/13 – 2017/18) has remained consistent, at about 180 applications for assistance per year. The majority of decisions taken over the last five years relate to whether people do or do not have a priority need for accommodation. The ethnic origin of applicant households is predominately white and aged between 25-44. Single male applicants are the majority household type.

Of all children living throughout the 22 Wards in Sefton, 13,603 (24.48%) have been identified as living in child poverty. Of all 16-64-year olds living in Sefton, 41,900 (26%) are recorded as economically inactive. Of household living in Sefton, there is a ratio of 6.59 times house price to gross annual earnings. These factors are the key drivers for future levels of homelessness.

### Preventing homelessness

Early homelessness prevention activities for people leaving secure estates are patchy. There are some homelessness prevention activities for people leaving care. The Council provides funding support to Sefton Veterans, who provide some limited Homelessness prevention activities for former members of regular armed forces. A domestic and sexual abuse strategy was published by Sefton Council in 2015, but link with homelessness prevention initiatives could be better. There are homelessness prevention activities for people leaving hospital. Homelessness prevention activities for vulnerable adults could be substantially improved. The extent and prevalence of homelessness prevention activities for other persons likely to become homeless are unclear.

Sefton Council has good joint working between homelessness officers and children services employees, to prevent 16 and 17-year-old children from becoming homeless and needing to be looked-after.

Only a limited amount of pre-crisis homelessness prevention casework is carried-out by Sefton Council's Homelessness Service, with an over reliance on helping people to obtain alternative accommodation, rather than remain in their existing home.

### Securing accommodation for people who are homeless

There has been a 24% increase in the number of households being provided temporary accommodation by Sefton Council, although actual numbers remain low and almost everyone moves-on within six months. More than a quarter of the households who have temporary accommodation secured for them are single males, which is significantly out of sync with national trends.

Sefton Council do not record any activities for relieving homelessness. Some people are helped to secure private rented sector accommodation, but issues about affordability and quality means there is not a readily available supply of homes in this tenure. Social rented housing remains a popular housing option. The arrangement for administering the housing

register have been in place for more than a decade, so need reviewing. The allocations policy doesn't properly adhere to the requirements of the law.

### Providing Support to people who are, or have been homeless

The number of statutory homeless applicants who are vulnerable due to physical disability or mental illness/disability is disproportionately high compared to the national rates.

There are a range of housing support services commissioned to help relieve and/or prevent the re-occurrence of homelessness for single people experiencing homelessness. Most of the accommodation used could not be described as a psychologically informed environment. There is a light-touch performance monitoring and contract management regime.

People experiencing street homelessness can benefit from a mixture of initiatives to help them while they sleep rough and come inside. A great deal of anti-social behaviour, such as begging and street drinking, takes place in Southport, which makes an impression that the levels of rough sleeping are much higher than perhaps what they actually are.

There is no specific service commissioned to assist people experiencing hidden homelessness, although Life for Life, a local voluntary organisation, do provide support for people in such circumstances.

### Resources for tackling homelessness

Sefton Council allocates just over £1.4m per year from its own budgets to fund local homelessness projects. While the UK Government continues to reduce the overall amount of money its allocates to local authorities, the portion awarded to Sefton Council for tackling homelessness has increased by 32%.

Sefton Council has established twelve full-time posts to administer and take homelessness applications and oversee temporary accommodation. More posts might be needed following the enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Sefton Council have invested in a new software system for the Homelessness Service. This will help make the administration of casework efficient, plus allow for more in-depth analysis of homelessness statistics.

### Consultation

People who had experienced homelessness and stakeholders agreed that more needed to be done to prevent homelessness. Both groups concurred that social rented housing was the best housing option for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

### Findings

More needs to be done to monitor the current and future levels of homelessness, and this information needs to be better shared, recent investment in IT software should help.

Increases in activities to prevent homelessness are needed

Additional accommodation is needed for people who are experiencing homelessness

Extra support is required to help people who are, or have been, homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Suitable resources are required to properly tackle homelessness.

## Glossary of Terms

Bosco Society	A voluntary organisation providing accommodation and support to people who are homeless
Care Act 2014	The statute which determines the legal duties of public authorities to assist people with social care needs
Choice-based lettings	A method letting social housing, where people express a preference of properties available to let, which informs allocations offered by a local housing authority or a social housing provider (e.g. a housing association such as One Vision)
Citizens Advice	A voluntary organisation providing information, advice and assistance on consumer and welfare rights, including housing matters
Department for Work and Pensions	UK Government department responsible for formulation and administration of welfare benefit policy
DISC	A voluntary organisation providing accommodation and support to people who are homeless
Excel Housing	A voluntary organisation providing accommodation and support to people who are homeless
Eligible	A person who is homeless and has the right to enter and remain in the UK without any restriction
Hidden homelessness	A form of homelessness where due a person having no fixed abode, they occupy friends' sofas or stay in unsupported temporary accommodation, for example bed and breakfast hotels
Homeless	A person who has no accommodation to occupy, or they have accommodation but are unable to enter it/place and reside in it, or it is not reasonable to occupy
Homelessness application	A request for help to apply for and obtain accommodation from a person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness
Homelessness prevention	Helping a person to remain in existing accommodation or assisting them to obtain alternative accommodation prior to homelessness occurring
Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	Statute which has amended the Housing Act 1996, Part 7, by enhancing existing duties, and introducing new duties to tackle homelessness
Homelessness relief	Assisting a person to obtain accommodation once when they are homeless, prior to or after a determination of whether they are owed a public law duty to be offered accommodation by a local housing authority
Homelessness service	The delivery of public law functions administered by a local housing authority (e.g. Sefton Council)
Homelessness strategy	A plan designed to coordinate activities and resources for tackling homelessness
Housing Act 1996, Part 6 and 7	The primary statute which determines the legal duties of local housing authorities to allocate social housing and tackle homelessness
Housing advice	Information on available free of charge to any person on preventing homelessness, securing accommodation, rights when homeless, help when homeless and how to access it.
Housing options	A person centred approach which looks at an individual's housing choices by exploring all possible tenure options
Housing Benefit	Welfare assistance than can be claimed by people on low incomes to help pay housing costs
Housing Allocation Policy	The rules to determine who is eligible and qualifies to rent social housing
Housing Register	A list of persons who are eligible and qualify to rent social housing
Intentionally homeless	A person who is homeless due to deliberately doing or failing to do anything, of which the consequence was the loss of accommodation that was available and reasonable to occupy
Light for Life	Voluntary organisation providing advice and support to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority	Public authority responsible for administering transport and economic policy delegated from the UK Government, plus powers over housing, planning and policing
Mainstay	A software-based allocation scheme for determining which persons should be offered supported housing
NHS Trust	An organisation within the English NHS, serving a specific geographical area or providing a specialised function.
National Probation Service	A public authority responsible for supervising offenders in the community
New Start	A voluntary organisation providing accommodation and support to people who are

	homeless
North West Property Custodians	A voluntary organisation providing accommodation and support to people who are homeless
Office of National Statistics	Public body responsible for publishing UK Government data, including homelessness statistics
One Vision Housing	A housing association registered to provide social housing, created following voluntary transfer of social housing by Sefton Council
Outcome Star System (Homelessness Star)	A series of tools that aid the assessment of needs and formulation of a plan to satisfy needs identified. The tool is purposely designed to concentrate on an individuals' current strengths and future ambitions. The tool is intended to be used. A specific version exist for people are experiencing homelessness
P1E	Statistical monitoring form local housing authority complete and return to the Office of National Statistics
Private rented landlord/sector	Accommodation to rent from a private individual or company, let a market rental rates.
Priority need	A person is homeless and vulnerable and therefore has a priority need for accommodation
Property Pool Plus	A common method of registering people who are seeking to rent social housing, combined with a joint policy for allocating social housing properties available to rent, which used a choice-based method to make offers of accommodation. The scheme is specific to five of the six local authority areas that constitute the Liverpool City region, which includes the Sefton local authority area
Psychologically informed environments and services	An approach to supporting people who have experienced homelessness that use a evidence based design to the physical environment and social spaces that people live. This is combined with specific training and support for staff, that allows them to best manage relationships with people who have challenging behaviour. This is backed-up with frequent evaluation of policy, service provision and individual outcomes. Underpinning all of this is a psychological framework that informs they way a service operates.
Safer Communities Partnership	A public body, constituted of numerous public authorities, responsible for making policy and delivering strategy to reduce crime in the Sefton local authority area
Sefton Council	Local housing authority responsible for administering public law homelessness duties in Sefton
Sefton Supported Housing Group	A consortium of voluntary organisations consisting of Bosco Society, Excel Housing, New Start and Venus, which provide accommodation and support to people who are homeless
Social housing	Accommodation to rent or buy from housing associations, for people whose needs cannot met by the general housing market, due their income, characteristics, or other circumstances
Statutory homelessness	A person who is homeless, eligible, has a priority need for accommodation and is not intentionally homeless. A local housing authority is obliged to secure suitable accommodation for a person in such circumstances
Street homelessness	A form of homelessness where a person sleeps rough on streets or other places not intended for human habitation, for example disused commercial buildings
Supported housing	Accommodation based and floating support that helps people to gain the skills they need to live independently. Some people who have a long-term vulnerability (e.g. a learning disability) might remain living in supported housing for the whole of their life. Other people who have short-term vulnerabilities (e.g. homelessness) might remain in support housing a period of months or only a couple of years
Temporary accommodation	Accommodation provided to people who are homeless and have a priority need, while efforts are made to relieve their homelessness. People who have a priority need and are not intentionally homeless, are entitled to temporary accommodation until they no longer want or need it. People who have a priority need and are intentionally homeless, are entitled to temporary accommodation for a reasonable period
Threatened homelessness	A person who is likely to become homeless within 56 days
Venus	A voluntary organisation providing accommodation and support to people who are homeless
Whitechapel Centre	A voluntary organisation providing support to people who are homeless



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Preamble

This review considers all of the activities being carried out to tackle homelessness in the local authority district of Sefton. This encompasses services that Sefton Council deliver, plus those also provided by other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons.

The decision by Sefton Council to appoint an independent consultant to carry out this homelessness review ensured impartiality and transparency in the findings.

The aim of this homelessness review has been to identify if the activities for tackling homelessness in Sefton are effective, of a quality standard, and offer value for money.

The recent commencement of new homelessness legislation is an important contextual factor to this review. The enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 brings about the most significant change to homelessness law in 40 years, vastly improving the rights of people who are at risk of homelessness.

The ambition for this Homelessness Review is to identify key priorities for tackling homelessness in Sefton, which can be carried forward to form a new homelessness strategy for the borough.

## 1.2 Definition of homelessness

The legal definition of homelessness can be found in section 174, part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. A person is homeless if s/he has no accommodation for which:

- They have a right to occupy accommodation
- Are able to access
- Is suitable to occupy (e.g. due to it being unaffordable, unfit, overcrowded, being victim of domestic abuse, or another special reason)
- Is available for the whole household

The law defines a person as being threatened with homelessness, if they will not have any accommodation within 56 days.

There are considered to be four forms of homelessness<sup>1</sup>. A person might experience only one of these forms, but could encounter some or all of them:

- statutory homelessness - persons owed a duty by a local housing authority
- single homelessness - persons living in supported housing (including hostels, refuges and also supported lodgings), usually commissioned by a local authority
- street homelessness - persons sleeping rough, places not designed for habitation

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<sup>1</sup> Suzanne Fitzpatrick (2005), 'Explaining homelessness: a critical realistic perspective', *Housing & Society*, 22(1): pp.1-17

- hidden homelessness - persons accommodated in insecure arrangements often with relatives or friends, but just as often with people not previously known to them.

The UK Government has defined street homelessness, as 'people sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or 'bashes')'<sup>2</sup>.

Homelessness law and policy for England is formulated by the UK Government (for the other three UK nations, this responsibility is devolved to the respective governments for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales). All English local housing authorities (this includes the City of London, all London Boroughs, Metropolitan Boroughs, plus Unitary Councils, but excludes Combined Authorities, County Councils and the Greater London Authority), have a public law<sup>3</sup> responsibility for administering homelessness functions, these include:

- Homelessness prevention, housing advice and options
- Homelessness strategy, services and applications
- Temporary accommodation procurement and allocation

### 1.3 Methodology

Our approach to carrying out this homelessness review complies with the obligations explained in the Homelessness Act 2002<sup>4</sup>. This legislation requires that a review must be carried out at least every five years. This review covers the period of April 2012 to March 2013 through to April 2017 to March 2018.

On this occasion, an essential part of the Review is to consider the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and what service gaps this new law may create. The Review provides an analysis of the potential future impact on the levels of homelessness presentations and subsequent prevention work, plus provides recommendations to inform how homelessness services may need to change and adapt to meet these new duties.

When undertaking this Review, we assessed the levels and patterns of homelessness and identified any gaps in knowledge and services.

The core activities underpinning the steps to produce the Review were to identify:

- Homelessness prevention actions
- Accommodation for people who are homeless
- Support for people who are, or have been, homeless

Throughout the duration of the Review, we worked closely with the housing, adult care and children's services operated by the local authority, plus numerous voluntary sector organisations. We gathered information and evidence from these services, all of which helped to shape the conclusions of this Review.

<sup>2</sup> Department for Communities & Local Government (2010), 'Evaluating the extent of rough sleeping', London, UK Government

<sup>3</sup> Housing Act 1996, Part, as amended by Homelessness Act 2002, and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

<sup>4</sup> Homelessness Act 2002, sections 1 - 3

Local social housing providers co-operated with the Review. We sought to understand how social landlords have embedded homelessness prevention work and tenancy sustainment into their businesses.

Throughout the duration of the Review, we sought to build a strong relationship between departments and agencies. We were especially keen to ensure involvement from the voluntary sector, along with co-operation from a wide-range of public authorities. The involvement of commissioners of housing support services was crucial. We undertook consultation with public authorities (e.g. National Probation Service, Sefton Clinical Commissioning Group,) and voluntary organisations (e.g. providers of housing support and advice services). We also spoke with people who had experience of being homeless, to get their views about what works, possible barriers to services and any suggestions for improvements.

When carrying out this Review, the local authority's own allocations scheme and tenancy strategy, plus health and wellbeing strategy and regional housing strategies were considered.

The Review audited the local:

- Levels and likely future levels of homelessness
- Activities carried out for preventing homelessness, securing accommodation and providing support
- Resources available for carrying out the above activities

The Review focuses on those who have previously been homeless, or are homeless at the time of the review, and might be homeless in the future. All forms of homelessness were considered as part of the review, including statutory, single, street and hidden homelessness.

Primary research was carried out with public authorities and voluntary organisations. Quantitative data was sought from a wide range of local public authorities and voluntary organisations. However, there was limited statistics on pre-crisis homelessness prevention outcomes. Subsequently, qualitative data was collected from local public authorities and voluntary organisations activities to prevent homelessness

To ascertain the current levels of homelessness, and to predict what these levels might be in the future, we accessed records and statistics held the local authority and voluntary organisations. This included homelessness case records and estimates of people sleeping rough. To help forecast future levels of homelessness, we drew up profiles of those who have experienced homelessness, alongside considering borough-wide child poverty rates and local labour and housing market factors.

Our interrogation of resources available to tackle homelessness looked at those available to the local authority, but also to other public authorities, voluntary organisations, and others. For this report, resources are not the purely financial, but include infrastructure (e.g. employee) and physical (e.g. I.T.) resources.

When considering the activities being carried out for tackling homelessness, we considered services of all the various agencies and organisations, across all sectors, which are contributing towards preventing homelessness, supplying accommodation, and/or providing support. This included an emphasis on the supply of accommodation available, the steps being taken to increase the supply, and also took into account the demand for housing.

The results of this Review are being used to inform a new Homelessness Strategy for the locality. The Strategy will have specific objectives for:

- Preventing homelessness
- Securing suitable accommodation for those who are, or may become homeless
- Providing support to those who are, or used to be, homeless, to prevent them from becoming homeless again

A range of recommendations have been identified for the local authority, along with any other organisation involved with tackling homelessness. Specific conclusions have been included for people whose risk of becoming homeless is more likely.

#### 1.4 Structure of the report

Chapter two reviews the current and future likely levels of homelessness. Chapter three reviews the activities for preventing homelessness. Chapter four reviews activities for securing accommodation for people who are homeless. Chapter five reviews the activities for supporting people who are, or might be, or have been homeless. Chapter six reviews the resources available to carry out the aforementioned activities. Chapter seven sets out the conclusions and recommendations from the review.

Below is a summary outcomes achieved from the current homelessness strategy for Sefton.

#### 1.5 Outcomes from Sefton Homelessness Strategy for 2013 - 2018

The Homelessness Strategy spanned a five-year period commencing September 2013. The Action Plan was reviewed and revised throughout the delivery of the strategy.

A number of the Actions within the Homelessness Strategy were completed as part of the 2015 Homeless Services commissioning exercise relating to part of the Housing Related Support budget (formerly Supporting People). The contracts and contracting arrangements place greater emphasis on resolution and prevention of homelessness, which reflect the recommendations of the Homelessness Review undertaken as part of the last Strategy refresh process. Actions relating to a peer review exercise of the Council's Housing Options service were added to the Action plan as approved by Cabinet Member in August 2015.

Of 21 actions in the most recent version of the plan, 11 were completed, 5 were imminently pending, and a further 5 were not completed. All the actions for year 1 of the plan were completed with the exception of one, which was imminently pending. Of the actions for year 2 and 3 of the plan, three were imminently pending, two were not completed and four were completed. None of the actions for year 5 of the action plan were completed.

Actions that were completed have been summarised below:

- Annual training updates on primary legislation and all new case law was provided to all local authority officers employed who undertake inquiries as to what duty, if any, is owed to a homeless person.
- A review and revision current service offered for people sleeping rough took place
- The range of prevention tools deployed by the Council for priority and non-priority homeless applicants was reviewed
- Support people who are homeless to obtain private rented sector (PRS) accommodation was accomplished in the form of a Bond Scheme
- A review of all supported accommodation took place, which resulted in recommissioning services
- A central access gateway that controls the allocation of all supported housing and housing related support was implemented
- Tenancy support provision was assessed and reviewed as part of recommissioning of housing support services
- Operational practices for helping people threatened with homelessness due to domestic abuse or because a person is aged 16/17 was reviewed
- Links with mortgage lenders and landlords was maintained to prevent repossessions and evictions
- A relationship between the Housing Options Team and the local HomeBuy agent was established
- The range of information materials (including on-line information) provided or available to customers was reviewed

## 2. Current and future likely levels of homelessness

Data was sought from a wide range of local and national public authorities and voluntary organisations. Sefton Council and Light for Life were able to supply statistics on the current local levels of statutory, single and street homelessness. Authoritative sources, such as the Office for National Statistics, were used to forecast future levels of homelessness.

There is no coordinated collection of statistics on the levels of hidden homelessness from either public authorities or voluntary organisations, however, this is not uncommon. It is predicted that the levels of hidden homelessness are thirteen times higher than street homelessness<sup>5</sup> People who are more likely to experience hidden homelessness are more likely to be of a young adult, identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender, and/or escaping domestic abuse<sup>6</sup>.

Criminal justice agencies monitor the number of offenders who leave prison with no fixed abode. While this data is shared with national government, local authorities do not benefit from having this intelligence shared with them.

### 2.1 Current levels of homelessness

The number of decisions over the six-year period preceding this review (2012/13 – 2017/18) has broadly remained consistent. The majority of decisions taken over the last six years relate to whether a person experiencing homelessness does or does not have a priority need for accommodation. The ethnic origin of applicant households is predominately white and aged between 25-44. Single male applicants are the majority household type.

The table below shows that the majority of applications for assistance resulted in a decision that the person was eligible for homelessness assistance, has a priority need for accommodation and was not intentionally homeless and therefore they were owed the main homelessness (housing) duty, as prescribed in law. At a ratio of 39%, this is lower than the national average of 52%.

**Table 1: Outcomes from homelessness decisions, Sefton, 2012/13 to 2016/17**

Decision outcome	Percent
Eligible, unintentionally homeless, in priority need	39 %
Eligible, homeless and in priority need, but intentional	5 %
Eligible, homeless, but not in priority need	43 %
Eligible, but not homeless	10 %
Ineligible households	3 %

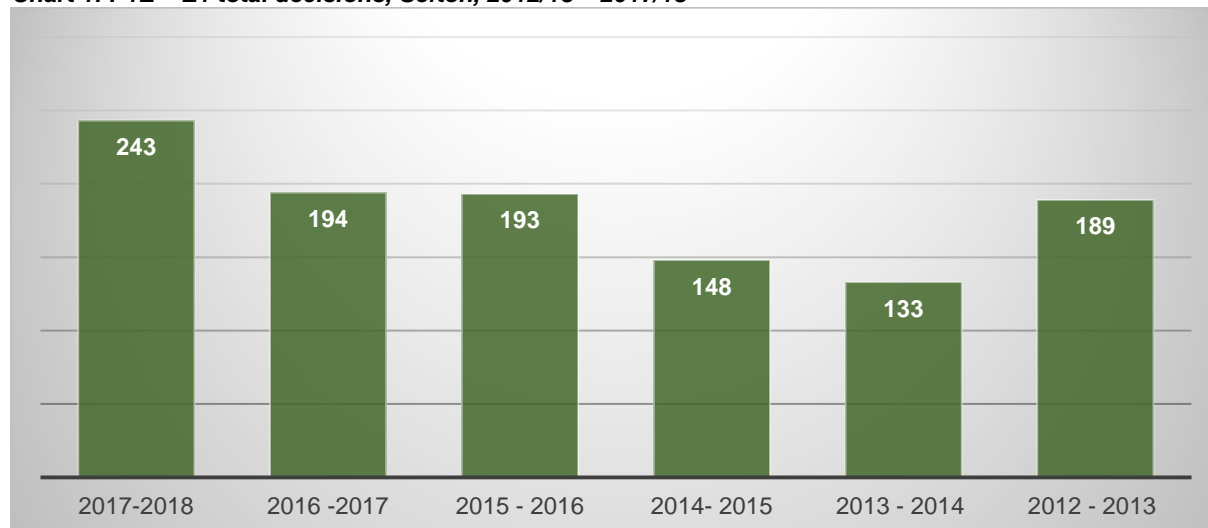
Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

<sup>5</sup> London Assembly Housing Committee (September 2017), *Hidden homelessness in London*

<sup>6</sup> London Assembly Housing Committee (September 2017), *Hidden homelessness in London*

The chart below shows the total number of homelessness decisions taken by Sefton Council over the last six years. The numbers of total decision have remained relatively stable, although there was a large increase in 2017 – 2018. The average number of decisions over the six-year period is 183.

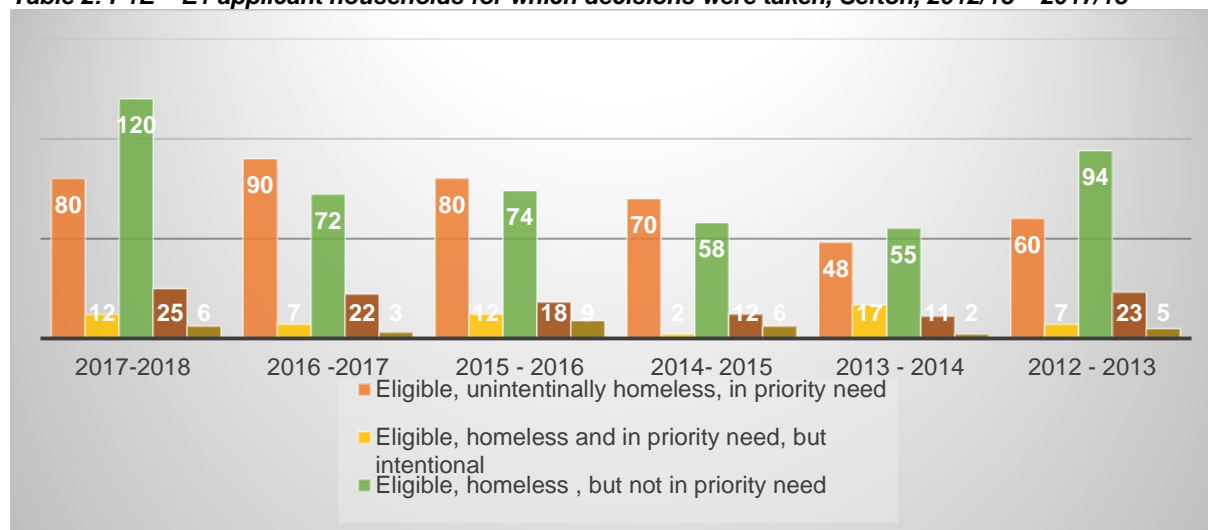
**Chart 1: P1E – E1 total decisions, Sefton, 2012/13 – 2017/18**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

The majority (80%) of decisions taken over the last six years relate to households that are eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need, or eligible but not in priority need. Almost as many people are found to have a priority need, as those who are judged not have a priority need.

**Table 2: P1E – E1 applicant households for which decisions were taken, Sefton, 2012/13 – 2017/18**

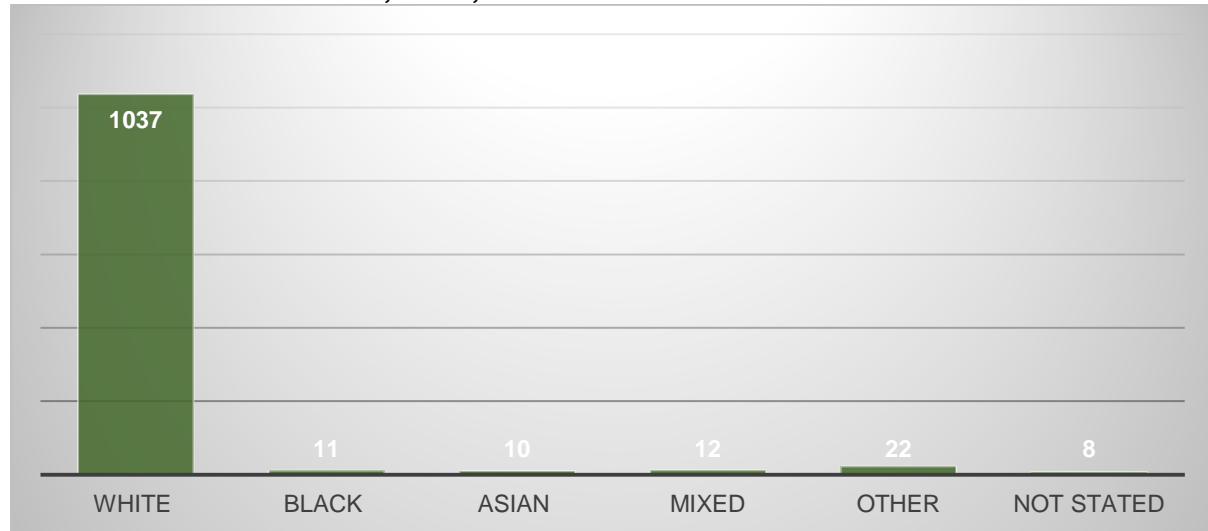


Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Over the six-year period 2012 – 2018, the ethnic origin of applicant households that a decision was taken on was predominately white, at the rate of 94%. The number of households from a black or other minority ethnic communities equalled 2%, which correlates with the black or other minority ethnic households that were recorded living in the borough at

the last Census. There is a perception amongst providers that the population is more ethnically diverse in Southport, than elsewhere in the borough.

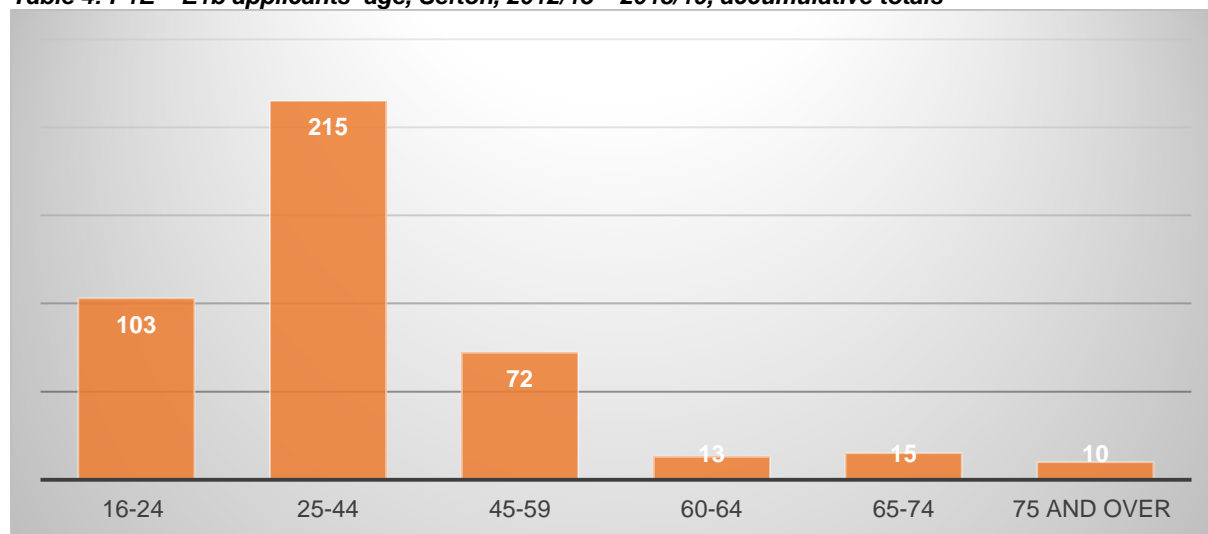
**Table 3: P1E – E1 total decisions, Sefton, 2012/13 – 2017/18**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

The age profile of those accepted as eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need were those aged 25-44, with all other age categories put together numbering almost half. However, people aged 16-24, are significantly represented.

**Table 4: P1E – E1b applicants' age, Sefton, 2012/13 – 2018/19, accumulative totals**

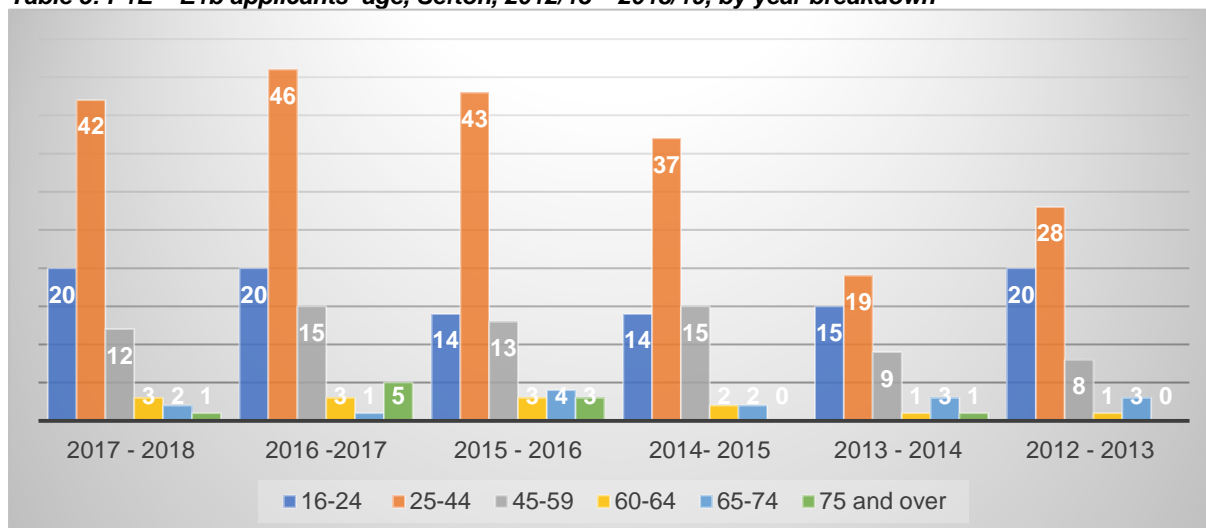


Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Over the six-year period, the number of people aged 25 to 44 years increased by 36% whereas those aged 16-24 years remained mostly stable. There was also an increase by 33% of applicants aged 45-59 years. Over a six-year period those applicants aged between 25 – 44 have steadily increased, although as have the numbers of total applications, hence 50% of applicants are from this age category. There has also been an increase in applicants aged between 45-59, but again this has only risen in line with the raise of total applications received.



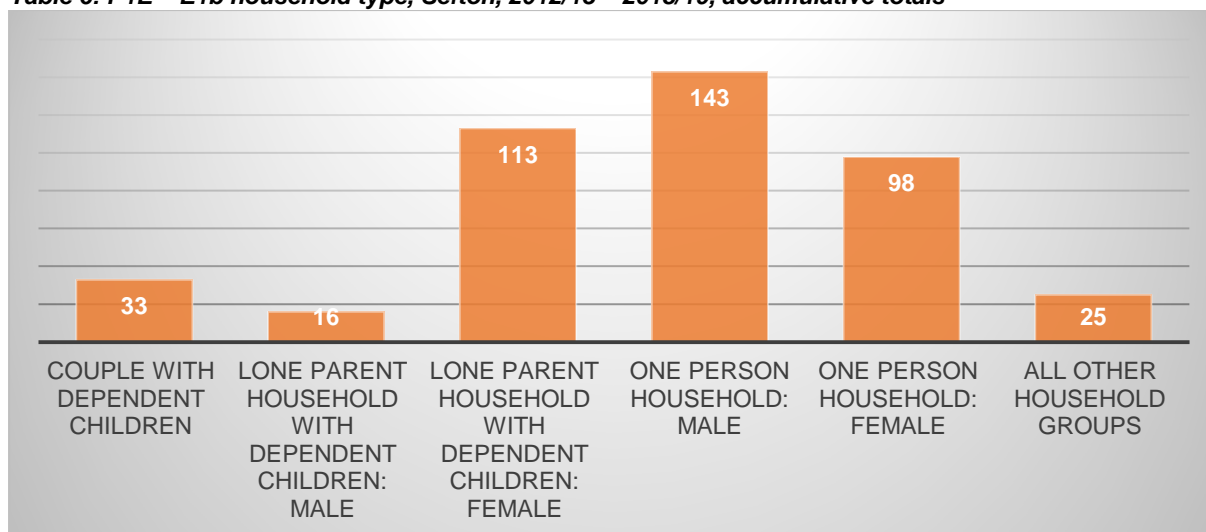
**Table 5: P1E – E1b applicants’ age, Sefton, 2012/13 – 2018/19, by year breakdown**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Of the total decisions made over six years, the configuration of household types found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need are foremost male one-person households (33%). This is followed by female lone parent households with dependent children (26%) and then female one-person household (22%).

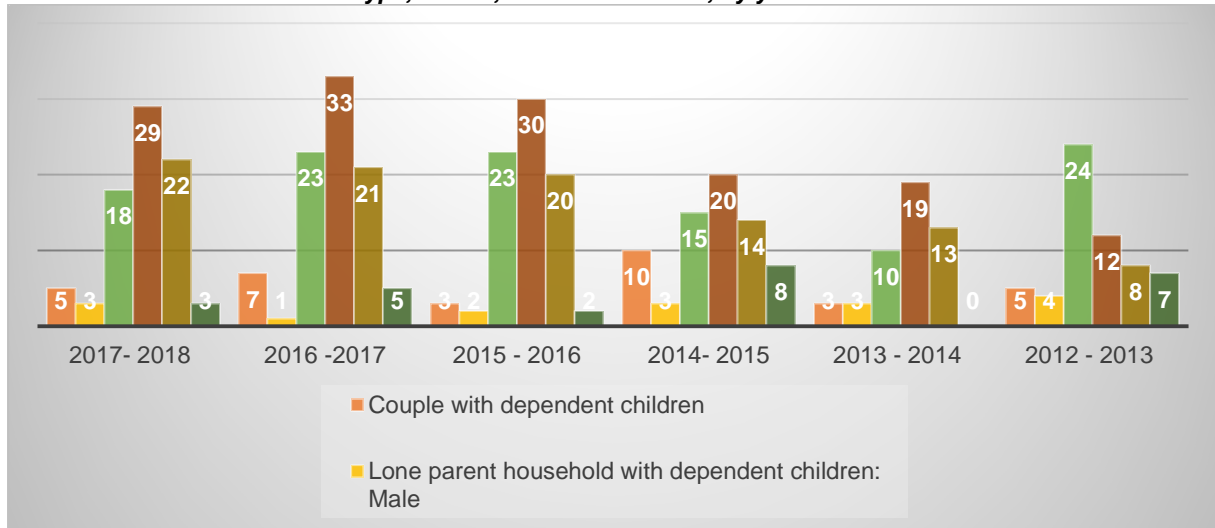
**Table 6: P1E – E1b household type, Sefton, 2012/13 – 2018/19, accumulative totals**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Over the six-year period, one-person male applicant households increased by 59%. There was also been an increase in one-person female applicant households, by 64%. Over the six-year period, one-person male applicants have increased from 20% (2012/13) of all households to 36% (2017/18) of all households. One-person female applicants have increased from 13% (2012/13) of all households to 27.5% (2017/18) of all households.

**Table 6: P1E – E1b household type, Sefton, 2012/13 – 2018/19, by year breakdown**

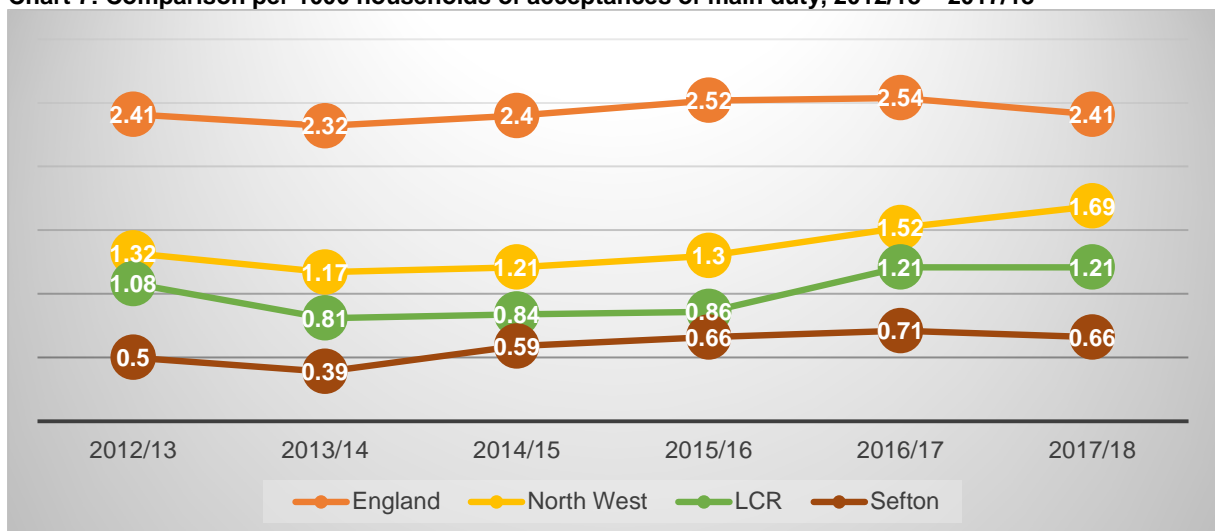


Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Contextual understanding of homelessness levels in Sefton can be gained from comparing key trends per 1000 households. For the purpose of this report, Sefton has been benchmarked alongside the Liverpool City Region, the North West, and England.

Between 2012-2013 and 2017-18, the number of applicants accepted as having a priority need and not intentionally homelessness has increased in Sefton by 29%. Elsewhere there were increases of 10% across the Liverpool City Region, 13% across the North West and 5% across England. In 2016/17, Sefton had a lower rate of acceptances than all of the comparator areas by 42%, 53%, and 72%, compared to the Liverpool City Region, the North West and England respectively.

**Chart 7: Comparison per 1000 households of acceptances of main duty, 2012/13 – 2017/18**



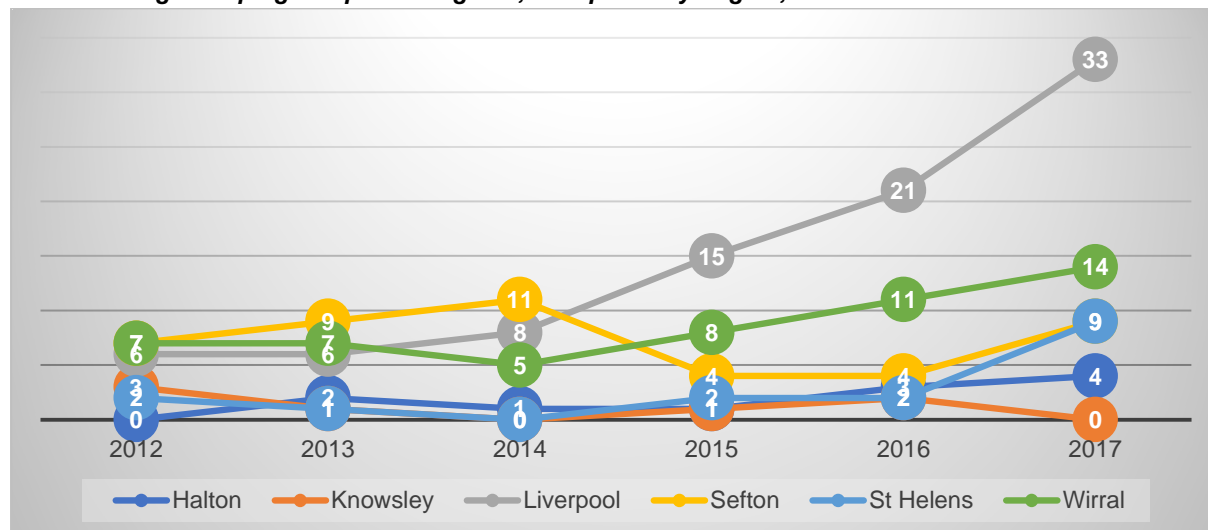
Source: Office for National Statistics

An evaluation of the levels of rough sleeping is carried out annually in accordance with national guidance<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6009/1713784.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6009/1713784.pdf)

The levels of rough sleeping in Sefton have increased by 23%, up from 7 in 2012 to 9 in 2017. Elsewhere in the Liverpool City Region, the levels of rough sleeping have increased by 82% in Liverpool, 78% in St Helens, 50% in Wirral and 100% in Halton. Whereas in Knowsley there has been a reduction of 100%. In 2012 Sefton had the joint highest number of rough sleepers, in 2017, the borough had the third highest level. In 2017, levels of rough sleeping in Sefton was 3.7x lower compared to Liverpool but 9x higher than Knowsley.

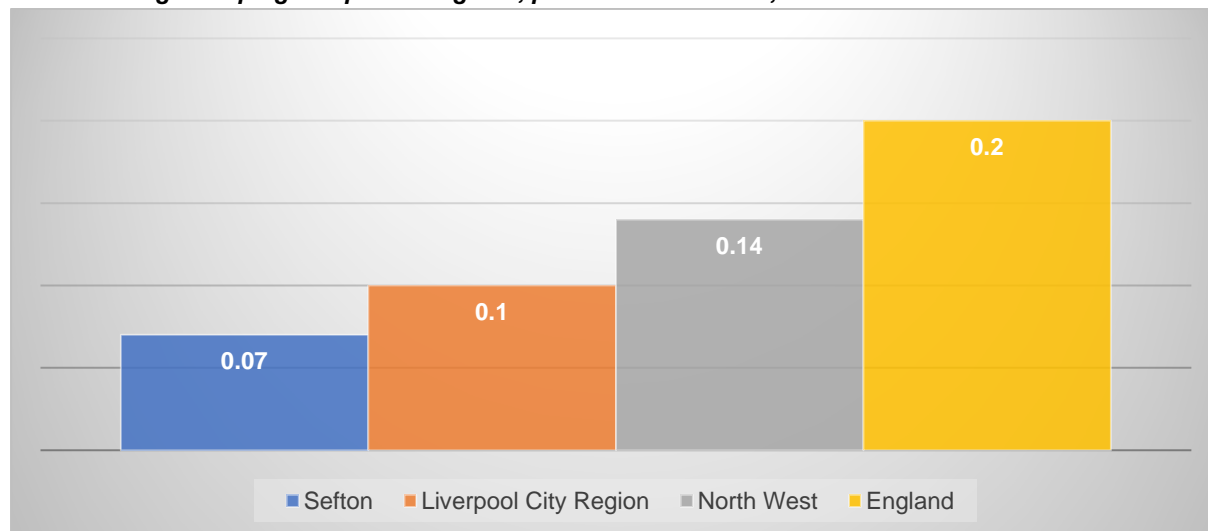
**Chart 8: Rough sleeping comparison figures, Liverpool City Region, 2012 - 2017**



Source: Office for National Statistics

In 2017, the rate of rough sleeping recorded for Sefton is 30%, 50%, and 65% lower than rates recorded for the Liverpool City Region, the North West and England.

**Chart 9: Rough sleeping comparison figures, per 1000 households, 2017**



Source: Office for National Statistics

The most recent estimate of people sleeping rough, done in November 2017, showed 9 people to be street homeless, all of which were found in Southport. This is double the levels found in 2016. Eight were male and one was female, eight were UK nationals, one of was European national. Counts done at the same time elsewhere in the Liverpool City region showed an increase of people sleeping rough for the whole of the combined authority areas,

as well as all other local authority areas, with the exception of Knowsley, where nobody was found to be sleeping rough.

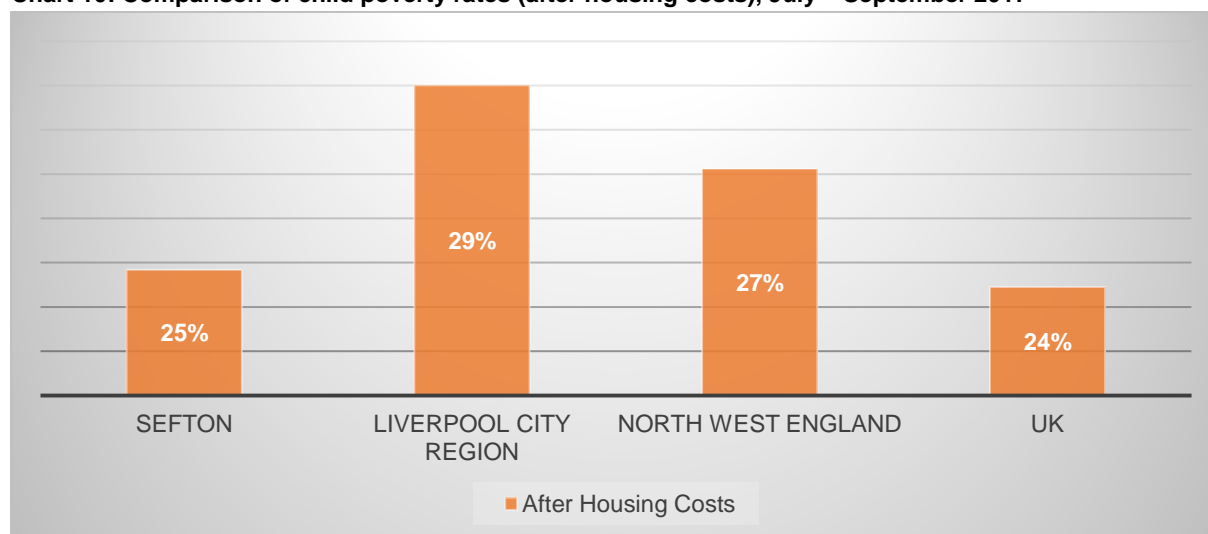
## 2.2 Future levels of homelessness

Research<sup>8</sup> published in 2017 shows that the primary cause of homelessness is childhood poverty. This is closely followed by the secondary causes, labour and housing market factors. To forecast future levels of homelessness, we have taken account of trends shown in homelessness statistics analysed in section 2.1 of this chapter, plus used other sources of data relating to the main causes, to create an as accurate forecast as is possible.

Latest child poverty figures (2016) state that 3.9 million children are living in poverty. Housing and childcare are the two primary factors that have been identified as putting pressure on family budgets<sup>9</sup>. Figures published by the UK Government state that the percentage of children living in poverty increased (1%) from 2015 to 2016 and this put them at the same levels as those seen in 2009/2010. Children are more likely, compared to the overall population, to be living in low income households<sup>10</sup>.

Child poverty rates in Sefton<sup>11</sup> are lower than the Liverpool City Region (by four percentage points), North West England (by two percentage points), but higher than the UK (by one percentage points).

**Chart 10: Comparison of child poverty rates (after housing costs), July – September 2017**



Source: End Child Poverty Coalition

The real terms of children in poverty in Sefton (after taking housing costs into account) is the third highest in the Liverpool City Region. This is 58% lower than Liverpool, and 27% lower than Wirral, but 20% higher than Knowsley, 24% higher than St Helens and 39% higher than Halton.

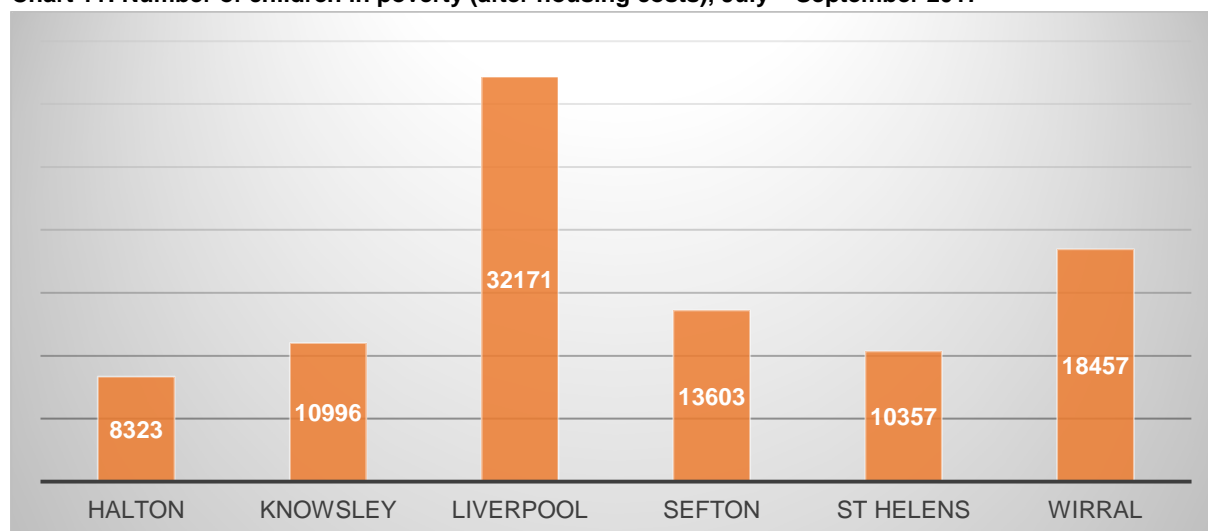
<sup>8</sup> Professor Glen Bramley & Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick (July 2017), 'Homelessness in the UK: who is most at risk', Housing Studies Journal, pp1-21

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.cpag.org.uk/child-poverty-facts-and-figures>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/600091/households-below-average-income-1994-1995-2015-2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/600091/households-below-average-income-1994-1995-2015-2016.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Valadez, L.; Hirsch, D. (2016) 'Child Poverty Map of the UK', End Child Poverty, London

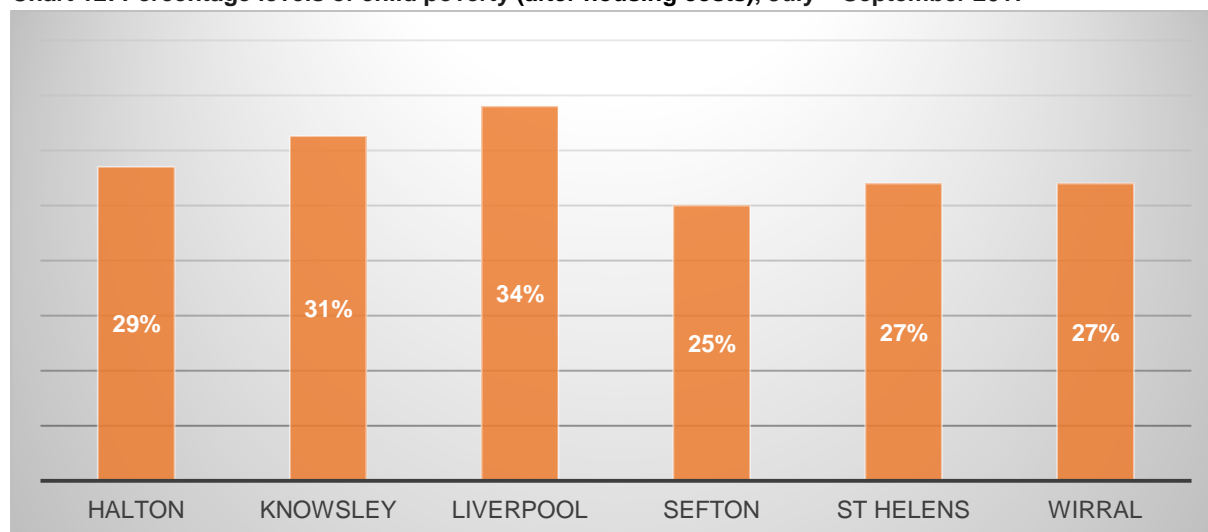
**Chart 11: Number of children in poverty (after housing costs), July – September 2017**



Source: End Child Poverty Coalition

In relative terms, Sefton has the lowest levels of child poverty (after taking housing costs into account). This is 2 percentage points below both St Helens and Wirral, the joint second lowest, and 9 percentage points below Liverpool which has the highest relative rate of child poverty.

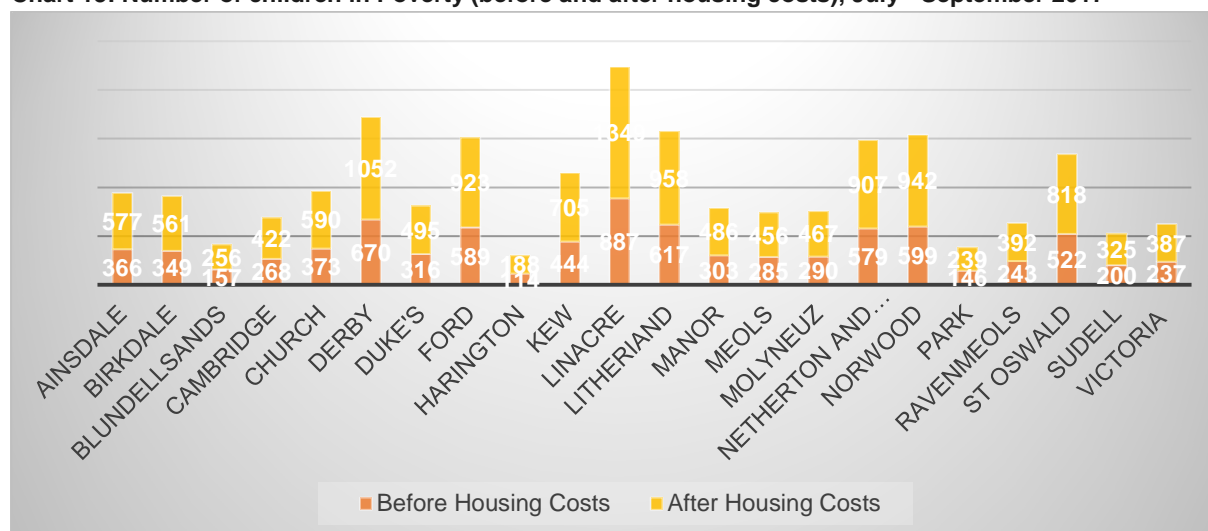
**Chart 12: Percentage levels of child poverty (after housing costs), July – September 2017**



Source: End Child Poverty Coalition

At a local level, before Housing Costs a total of 8,574 children (15.66%) living throughout the 22 Wards in Sefton were identified as living in child poverty. This number increases to 13,603 (24.48%) (rounded up to 25% in the chart above) when housing costs are included, an increase of 5,029 (9.18%). Linacre is the Electoral Ward with the highest child poverty rates at 887 (29.62%) before housing costs increasing to 1,349 (45.06%) when housing costs are added. There is a higher concentration of child poverty levels in the parliamentary constituency of Bootle, where the three wards with the highest rates are situated, compared to the Sefton Central, where there is a lower concentration of child poverty levels, and in which Harrington, ward the lowest levels, is located.

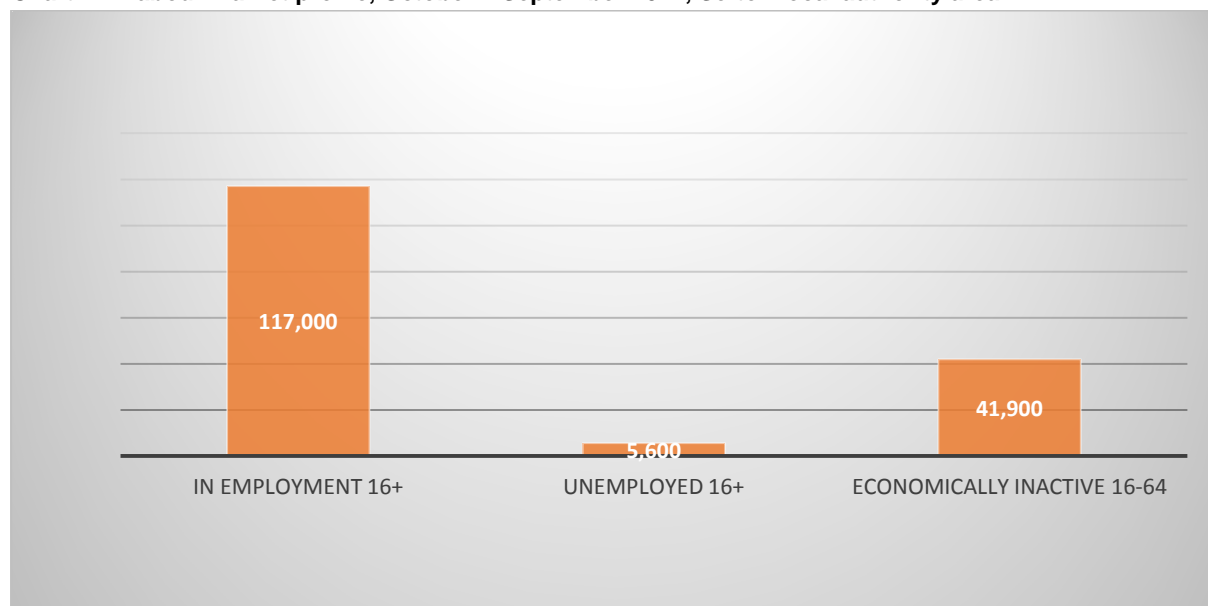
**Chart 13: Number of children in Poverty (before and after housing costs), July - September 2017**



Source: End Child Poverty Coalition

Sefton has a resident population of 274,300 of which 164,400 (59.9%) are aged between 16-64. 123,900 (74%) of 16-64-year olds are recorded as economically active, 117,000 (69.8%) of which are in employment. 5,600 (4.6%) are unemployed. A total of 41,900 (26%) of 16-64-year olds are recorded as economically inactive of which 38.2% is due to long term sickness, 24% are recorded as being in further education, 23% are recorded as looking after family/home and 12% retired. 76% of this group are recorded as not wanting a job<sup>12</sup>.

**Chart 14: Labour market profile, October – September 2017, Sefton local authority area**



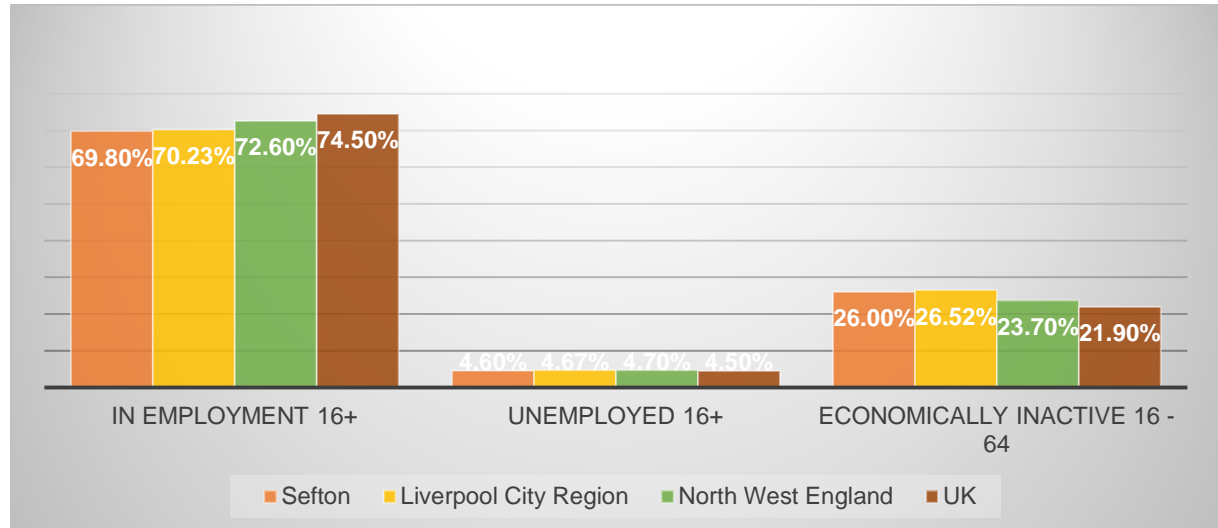
Source: Office for National Statistics

The percentage of 16-64-year-olds in employment is in line with Liverpool City Region, 2.8% and is 4.7% lower compared with North West England and the UK. Unemployment figures are both regionally and nationally inline, however the percentage of unemployed economically males (7.4%) is average compared with a UK average of 4.6%. The

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

percentage of 16-64-year-olds recorded as economically inactive is in line with the Liverpool City Region, and 2.3% and 4.1% higher respectively compared with North West England and the UK. Compared with the UK average student numbers are 3% lower and long-term sickness is 7.7% higher in this area<sup>13</sup>.

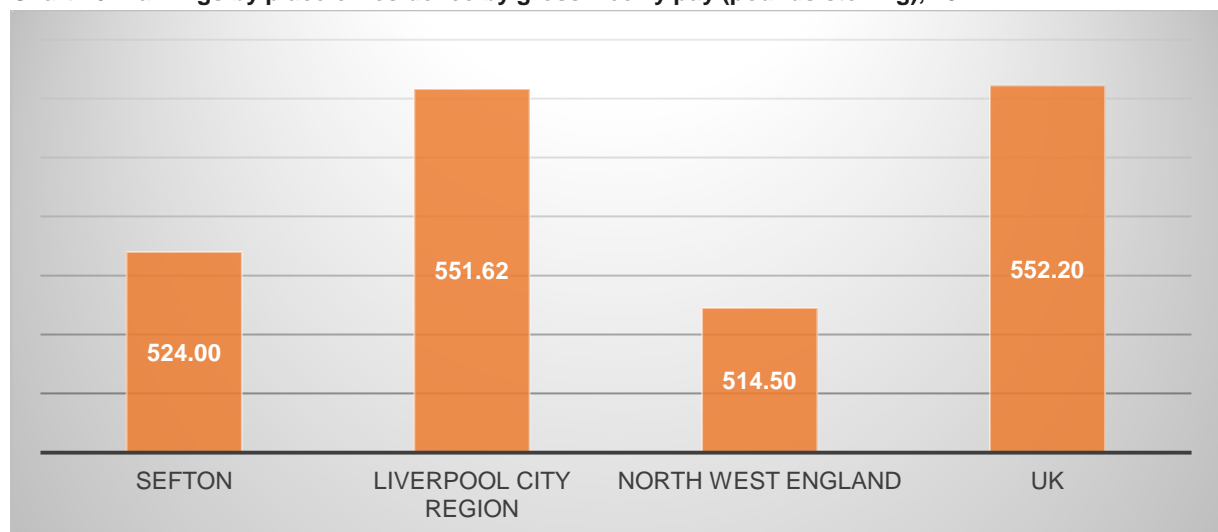
**Chart 15: Comparison of labour market profile, October 2016 – September 2017**



Source: Office for National Statistics

Gross weekly pay by place of residence is on average 1% higher compared to North West England and 5% lower than the Liverpool City Region and the UK. Excluding overtime, male hourly pay for Sefton is on average 10% higher compared to female pay. Gross weekly pay figures for Sefton show men earn an average of 20% more than women, both local and nationally throughout the UK. Hourly pay for Sefton at £14.04 for men and £12.81 for women is an average of 79% and 71% respectively above National Living Wage at £7.83 since April 2018.

**Chart 16: Earnings by place of residence by gross weekly pay (pounds sterling), 2017**

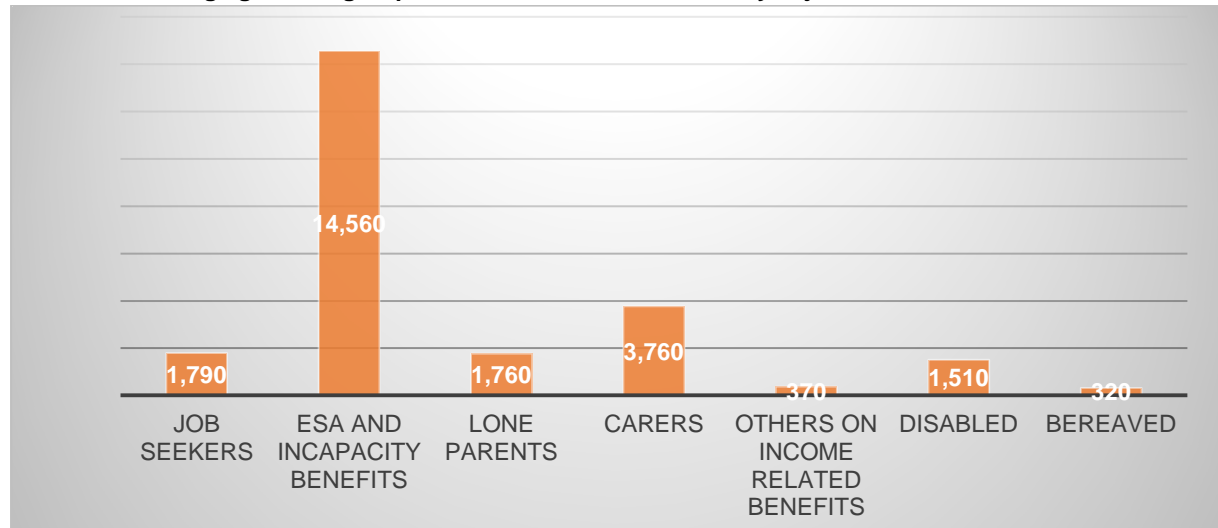


Source: Office for National Statistics

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

Employment and Support Allowance and Incapacity benefits make up 60% of all benefit claims with 8.9% of the resident population aged 16-64 claiming. Comparatively, this is 1.1% and 2.8% higher than North West England and UK numbers. Out of work benefits make up 77% of all benefit claims with 11.2% of the resident population aged 16-64 claiming, again in comparison 1.1% and 2.8% higher than North West England and the UK.

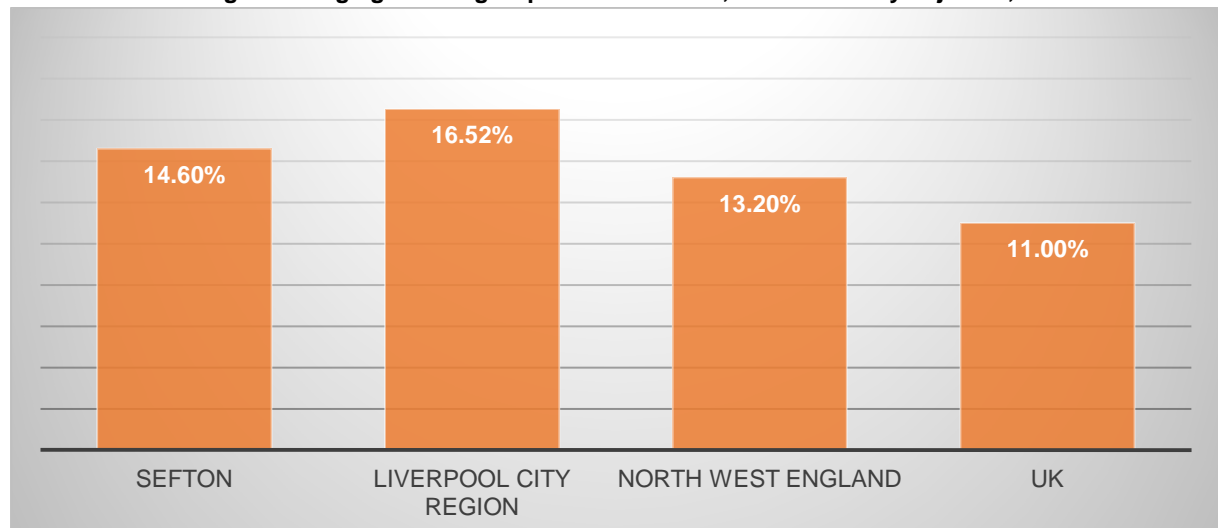
**Chart 17: Working age client group main claimants, not seasonally adjusted, November 2017**



Source: Office for National Statistics

With 14% of the resident population aged 16-64 in receipt of benefit, Sefton is lower than compared to the Liverpool City Region average, but higher than the North West England and UK average.

**Chart 18: Percentage working age client group main claimants, not seasonally adjusted, November 2016**



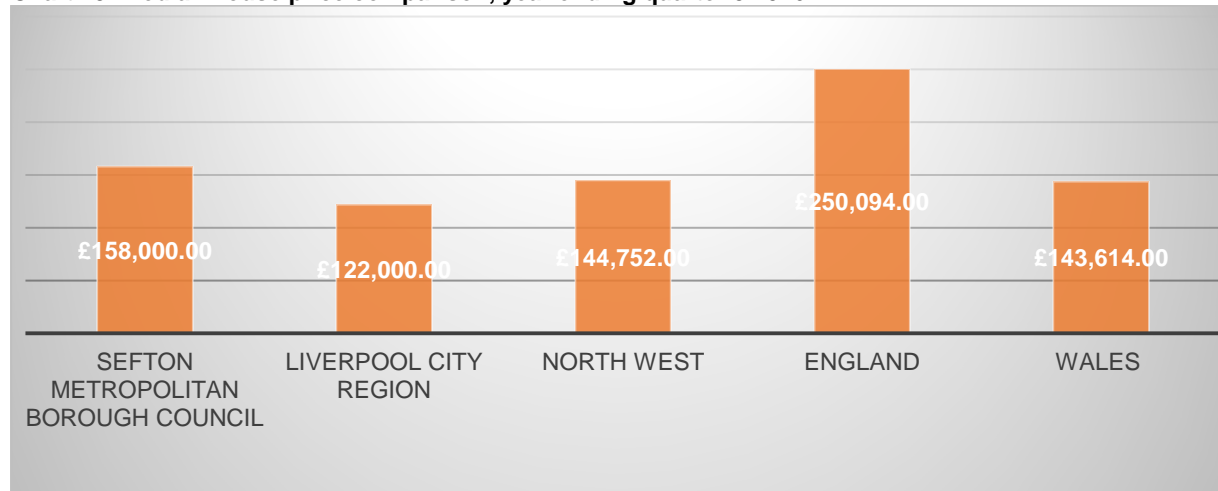
Source: Office for National Statistics

Median house prices in Sefton are 23% higher compared to the Liverpool City Region and 9% higher compared to the North West region. House prices in England are on average 84% higher than Sefton in comparison. Between 2015 and 2016 house prices in Sefton have increased by 6.76%, comparable with the England at 7.5%, but higher compared with the North West average of 3.17%. Comparing the 5 years between 2011 and 2016 house prices



in Sefton have increased by 12.86%, comparable with the North West region at 13.62% but lower compared to England at 29.54%. Analysis of data between year ending Q3 1997 and Q3 2016 shows an average annual increase of 6% in Sefton, Liverpool City Region and the North West, compared with 8% average annual increase for England<sup>14</sup>.

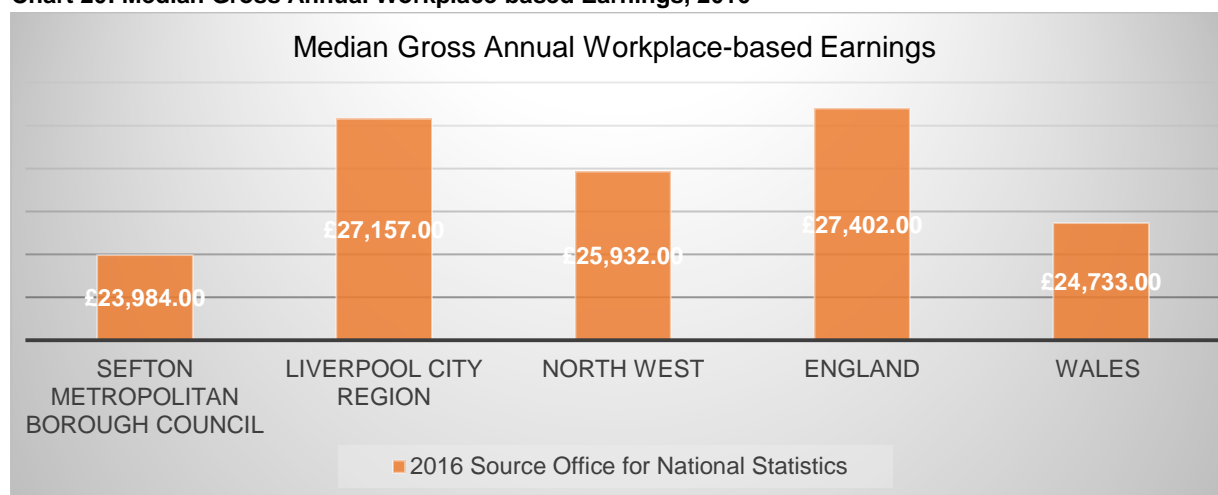
**Chart 19: Median house price comparison, year ending quarter 3 2016**



Source: Office for National Statistics

Median gross annual earnings in Sefton are 12% lower compared to the Liverpool City Region and 7.5% lower compared to the North West region. Median gross annual earnings in England are, on average, 12% higher than Sefton in comparison. Between 2015 and 2016 average earnings in Sefton increased by 0.33%, earnings for Liverpool went down by - 1.43%, despite which regionally North West earnings show an increase of 2.19%. in line with England at 2.16%. Comparing the 5 years between 2011 and 2016, earnings in Sefton have increased by 2%, significantly lower than the North West and England at 8% and 6% respectively. Analysis of data between year ending 1997 and 2016 shows a local and regional average annual increase of 2.5%, in line with England.

**Chart 20: Median Gross Annual Workplace-based Earnings, 2016**



Source: Office for National Statistics

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing>

A ratio of 6.59 times median gross annual earnings to median house prices is 19% above average compared regionally and 26% lower compared with England. Between 2015 and 2016 the house price to earnings ratio increased by 6.46% compared to an increase of 1% regionally and 5.18% in England. Comparing the 5 years between 2011 and 2016 the house price to earnings ratio for Sefton have increased by 10%, twice the regional average of 5%. In England the house price to earnings ratio increased by 21% over the five-year period. Analysis of data between year ending 1997 and 2016 shows a local and regional average annual increase of 3-4%, over the same period England reported a 5% increase.

**Chart 21: Comparison of ratio of house prices to earnings, 2016**



Source: Office for National Statistics

### 2.3 Conclusions about the levels of homelessness

More could be done with data held by local and national public authorities to identify people likely to be at risk of any form of homelessness by, for example, characteristic and/or electoral ward area. Interrogation of such data, held by the local authority, voluntary organisations and others, would help to inform the design and delivery activities for preventing homelessness, securing accommodation and providing support.

Levels of homelessness in Sefton have remained unchanged on average during the past six years (acknowledging a recent increase), whereas increases have been recorded across the Liverpool City Region, the North West and England. The statistics don't reveal sufficient reasons for these differences in trend. The levels of rough sleeping have increased, as is the case elsewhere across the Liverpool City Region. It is important to note that wider housing markets factors, such as housing prices, annual earnings and ratio of earnings to prices adverse in Sefton compared to the Liverpool City Region and the North West. This, therefore, may have a negative causative effect on the levels of homelessness. Less than half of people making an application to Sefton Council for assistance, due to being homeless or threatened with homelessness, are found to have a priority need for accommodation (e.g. owed a statutory homelessness duty). The dominant characteristics of people applying to Sefton Council for assistance are persons aged 25-44 years of age, of a white ethnic origin, who are male. This profile is not reflective of whom the statute currently is more likely to afford assistance and is distinctive to elsewhere.

When the current levels of homelessness are taken into account, alongside a range of predictive factors, we forecast future levels of homelessness to increase, albeit at a lower rate than across the Liverpool City Region, the North West and England. The expected increase will primarily be due to childhood poverty rates. A secondary driver for this predicted increase, is local higher than average rates of unemployment and persons of a working age who are not economically active. Especially high is the rate of people claiming out work benefits, along with the lower than average earnings. Housing market factors, are likely to push up the levels of homelessness in the future, due to more adverse housing price affordability problems when compared to the Liverpool City Region, the North West and England.

### 3. Preventing homelessness

The chapter considers activities carried out in Sefton by public authorities and voluntary organisations to prevent homelessness.

There are three strands of homelessness prevention activity<sup>15</sup> and these have been used to inform the focus of this review:

1. early prevention – those most at risk are identified and services provided to prevent problems escalating
2. pre-crisis prevention – advice services, mediation or negotiation with landlords to avoid the imminent loss of a home
3. preventing recurring homelessness – tenancy sustainment services are provided to address other support needs

Homelessness legislation<sup>16</sup> requires local housing authorities to help people who are threatened with homelessness in order to prevent them from becoming homeless. Previously, the assistance provided to a person at risk of homelessness was limited to 28 days prior to losing their home. Furthermore, the type of assistance provided would vary depending on whether someone had a priority need for accommodation, or if they were intentionally homeless. From April 2018, all persons threatened with homelessness are entitled to the assistance for up to 56 days. To inform the assistance provided, local authorities are now obliged to carry out an assessment and formulate a personalised plan. It has been a policy of the UK Government for more than a decade to encourage local authorities to prevent homelessness<sup>17</sup>.

#### 3.1 Early Homelessness Prevention Activities

Early homelessness prevention activities focus on those most at risk of homelessness. By providing targeted services at an early stage, homelessness can be stopped from occurring. Homelessness legislation<sup>18</sup> recognises six types of characteristics when a person has a heightened risk of homelessness. This review has concentrated on those identified in law, plus common experiences of adults who are homeless.

There is mostly an absence of quantitative evidence to demonstrate outcomes being achieved from early homelessness prevention activities. Qualitative evidence however, was plentiful.

Homelessness prevention activities for people leaving secure estates are patchy. There is no statistical monitoring specific to Sefton about of the number of people leaving prison, young offender institutes, etc. It is forecast by local criminal justice agencies that 2 people per week are released from custody with no accommodation. An interview will take place within two or three days of arriving into prison, via Shelter who have been commissioned by Liverpool Prison service to provide 'through the gate' housing advice. While in prison, people

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<sup>15</sup> Hal Pawson, Gina Netto, Colin Jones, Fiona Wager, Cathie Fancy, Delia Lomax (2007), Evaluating Homelessness Prevention, London, Department for Communities & Local Government

<sup>16</sup> Housing Act 1996, Part 7, sections 195 - 196

<sup>17</sup> Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005), Sustainable Communities: settled homes, changing lives, London, UK Government

<sup>18</sup> Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Clause 2

will be helped to complete applications to the Mainstay system for supported housing, and/or an application to Property Pool Plus to join the social housing register. Approved premises are available in the community for offenders who should no longer be in custody, but whom still pose a risk to the community. At any given point it is forecast that one-quarter of people under the supervision of the National Probation Service, from the Sefton area, are experiencing homeless. Prisons and the National Probation Service work to secure supported accommodation from a range of voluntary organisations but demand for such provision often exceeds the supply available. In such circumstance, people will be able to use a sit-up service in Bootle or in Southport. Moving on from supported accommodation or bail hostels can be difficult, due to the disqualification criterion of local housing allocations schemes, typically due to previous criminal behaviour (more about this matter will be covered in chapter four).

There are some of homelessness prevention activities for people leaving care. No specific statistics are collected about the number of care leavers who become homeless in Sefton, although this information is available on a case-by-case basis. The local authority does monitor post-care housing sustainment, until people reach the age of 21, but this information isn't usually shared with housing policy makers. Children leaving care are afforded preference under the rules of local authority's housing allocations scheme. However, those looked after children who have been placed in the area by another local authority can often be disqualified from joining the local housing register, due to not being able to demonstrate connection to the local area (the local housing allocations policy will be explored in more detail in chapter four). Planning for move-on with looked after children takes place, but this could be better as some children don't plan ahead early enough. Supported housing (for further details see chapter five) is promoted as a move-on option and this a popular choice for many children and young adults leaving care. Private rented sector accommodation is sometimes an option, but this tenure is unaffordable for many care leavers. A leaflet jointly written by Children Services and the Homelessness Service provide advice on housing options for young people leaving care.

#### *Good Practice Example*

Sefton Council has a joint working protocol between homelessness officers and children services employees, to prevent 16 and 17-year-old children from becoming homelessness and needing to be looked-after. An integrated approach is taken to performing duties under children and homelessness legislation, by carrying out a single assessment of needs. A range of discretionary initiatives are used to help young people to remain in their existing home or, when this is not safe or possible, to secure alternative accommodation. When a person cannot be prevented from becoming homeless, a holistic package of support is provided to ensure their housing and support needs are suitably satisfied.

Sefton Council also operate a respite unit that affords young people and their parents a breathing space. While staying at the respite unit, social workers and support staff are able to mediate with young people and their parents on issues that are causing dispute. Having this 'breathing space' can allow both parties to reach a mutual agreement for the young person to return to the family home.

Homelessness prevention activities for former members of regular armed forces are limited. Some specific activities are known to be carried out locally, by Sefton Veterans, a local voluntary organisation, which provides support to former armed forces personnel, including assistance to apply for and obtain accommodation. However, the extent of people becoming homeless due previously serving in the armed forces is unknown, as detailed recording or monitoring does not take place. It is worth noting that there is no Armed Forces base located in Sefton. Nevertheless, the local authority has adopted an Armed Forces Covenant, which includes a commitment from local social housing providers to prioritise armed forces personnel when allocating social housing. There seems very limited number of former armed forces personnel who are experiencing homelessness in Sefton, but when some has come into contact with services from this background, assistance is usually sought from national armed forces charity SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors Armed Forces Association). Emmaus opened a new housing scheme in August 2017 in Sefton. While there is no local evidence on the background of people who have begun to move into this scheme, Emmaus have previously reported that nationally circa 25% of their 'companions', as their service users are known, are ex-services personnel.

A domestic and sexual abuse strategy was published by Sefton Council in 2015. The delivery of the strategy is overseen by Safer Communities Partnership, which consists of numerous public authorities and voluntary organisations, and is steered by Sefton Council. It is estimated that 696<sup>19</sup> domestic abuse crimes took place in Sefton over a 12-month period. The previous homelessness strategy is briefly referenced in the strategy, but there are no specific references to local activities for tackling homelessness (or more generally housing advice and options) (with the exception of the refuge) furthermore there is no data about the number of victims of domestic abuse who were homelessness or threatened with homelessness. Therefore, the impact of homelessness prevention activities for victims of domestic abuse are uncertain. The primary support available for victims of domestic abuse is the Sefton Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) Team. They provide information, advice and assistance to adult male and female victims, including advice home security improvements. A Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference takes place twice monthly, at which action plans are agreed to assess and reduce the risk of domestic abuse. Local solicitors, Morecrofts, provide free legal aid (to those are entitled to it) for victims of domestic abuse. Sefton Women's and Children's Aid (SWACA) provide a number of services including refuge accommodation for up to three households, plus support to families remaining in their own home. Light for Life carryout some target hardening work with police and people experiencing domestic abuse to get support from specialist domestic abuse services. Statistics produced by Sefton Council (see section 3.2 below) show a complete absence of any successful homelessness prevention casework using sanctuary scheme measures, which helps victims of domestic abuse to remain in their existing accommodation, unlike nationally, whereby 3% (circa 5,000 households) are assisted by this method. With no reference to sanctuary scheme in either the strategy or preceding review, it can only be assumed that there is no sanctuary scheme, or if there is one, it is of little relevance or important. Likewise, it is unclear if statistics recorded on the P1E under the heading other support provided to help to remain in their own, includes the assistance offered by SWACA.

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<sup>19</sup> Sefton Domestic & Sexual Abuse Strategy 2015 – 2018, 2018

There are homelessness prevention activities for people leaving hospital. There has been a formal protocol agreed to promote a partnership approach to discharging people from hospital who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, joint pathways have been embedded between Sefton Council and the two Hospital NHS Trusts. Light for Life will also undertake housing needs assessments in hospital.

There is a strong perception among numerous stakeholders that commencement of the Care Act 2014 appears to have made very little difference to who get social care assistance. It is important to acknowledge that Sefton Council commission a range of care and support from a mixture of providers for vulnerable adults with a wide array of characteristics. This provision helps to promote wellbeing and prevent care needs from escalating, it is safe to assume this also prevents homelessness occurring from some people whom without such provision might otherwise experience one or more forms of homelessness. However, there is no specific provision to prevent, reduce or delay the onset of social care needs of people who are more likely to be at risk of homelessness, such persons experiencing anxiety and/or depression, or being admitted into hospital due to a mental health issue, attempted suicide, or engage in deliberate self-harm<sup>20</sup>. Stakeholders reported that it was common for people with a dual diagnosis of substance dependency and mental ill health to face eviction due to the effects of these conditions. There is no specific information and advice for vulnerable adults who are more likely to become homeless, nor is there any integrated partnership working agreements. Homelessness prevention activities for vulnerable adults could be substantially improved.

The extent and prevalence of homelessness prevention activities for other persons likely to become homeless are unclear. There are no apparent specific homelessness prevention initiatives to respond to the common characteristics of adults who experience homelessness, such as alcohol dependency, street drinking, use of hard drugs, begging, injecting drugs, being charged with a violent criminal offence, abuse of solvents/gas/glue, engaging in sex work, being a victim of a sexual assault<sup>21</sup>. Sefton Public Health commission MerseyCare NHS Trust to provide community and residential substance misuse services for young people and adults. This provision helps to break inter-generational substance misuse, plus works with Job Centre Plus to enable people to maintain their welfare claim commitments. There was insufficient evidence to demonstrate how these services contributed to preventing homelessness, although there is no doubt the successful interventions made by the service provider do help to prevent homelessness. Policy making around these matters are either jointly or separately, the role of public health and/or community safety officials. Their efforts to prevent homelessness are either not captured properly, are unknown, or possibly nothing is in place.

Notwithstanding this there are numerous services that are commissioned and/or provided by the local authority, each which contribute towards the early prevention of homelessness. These include universal services to help children keep fit and well, enhanced services to work with vulnerable/teenage parents, young people not in education, employment or

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<sup>20</sup> Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Sarah Johnsen, Michael White (2011), 'Multiple Exclusion Homelessness in the UK: Key Patterns and Intersections', *Social Policy & Society*, 10(4), p501-512

<sup>21</sup> Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Dr Sarah Johnsen, Dr Michael White (2011), 'Multiple Exclusion Homelessness in the UK: Key Patterns and Intersections', *Social Policy & Society*, 10(4), p501-512

training, living well and community resilience initiatives, food banks, community shops, emergency loans, and many more schemes.

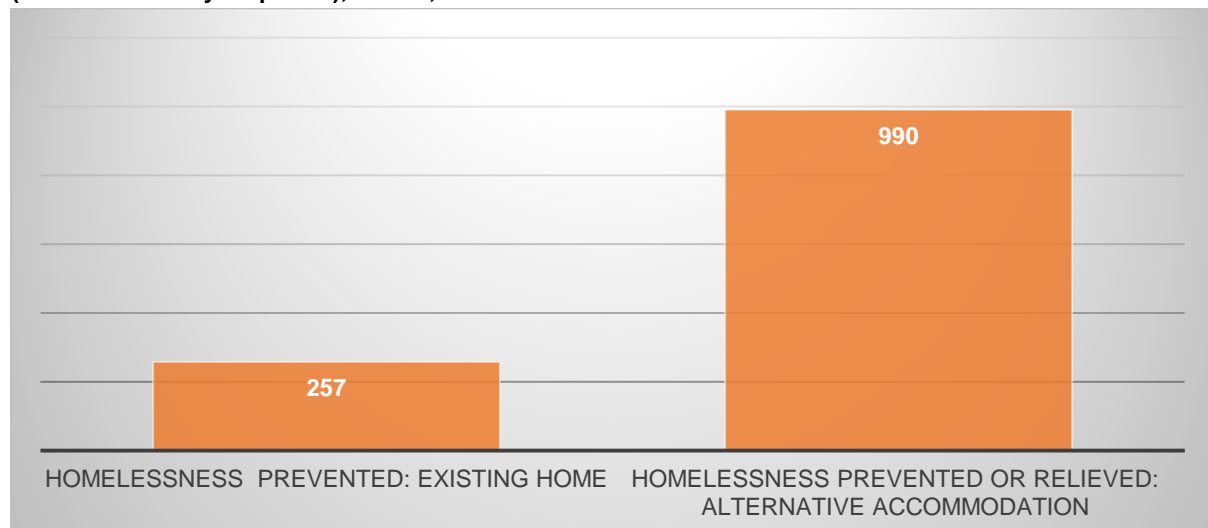
### 3.2 Pre-crisis homelessness prevention activities

Pre-crisis homelessness prevention activities are primarily carried out by Sefton Council's Housing Advice Service, sometimes with assistance from colleagues at other public authorities.

Pre-crisis homelessness prevention activities can be divided into two broad areas: assistance that helps people to remain in their existing accommodation (providing it is suitable for them to do so) or, when this is not safe or possible, help to obtain suitable alternative accommodation. These activities are typically carried out anytime between one day before a person might become homeless, and up to two months prior to someone potentially losing their home, and occasionally even further ahead in time. Prior to April 2018, it was at the discretion of individual local authorities as to how much homelessness prevention activity was carried out. Post April 2018, when the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 commenced, it is mandatory for local authorities to carry out homelessness casework.

Over the last six years the authority prevented homelessness by finding alternative accommodation in 80% of cases and in 20% of cases by ensuring households remained in their existing homes. This is a significant contrast to the national split, which has always been more of an equal split of outcomes against both headings.

**Chart 22: P1E – E10 all cases where positive action succeeded in preventing or relieving homelessness (total over a five-year period), Sefton, 2012/13 – 2017/18**

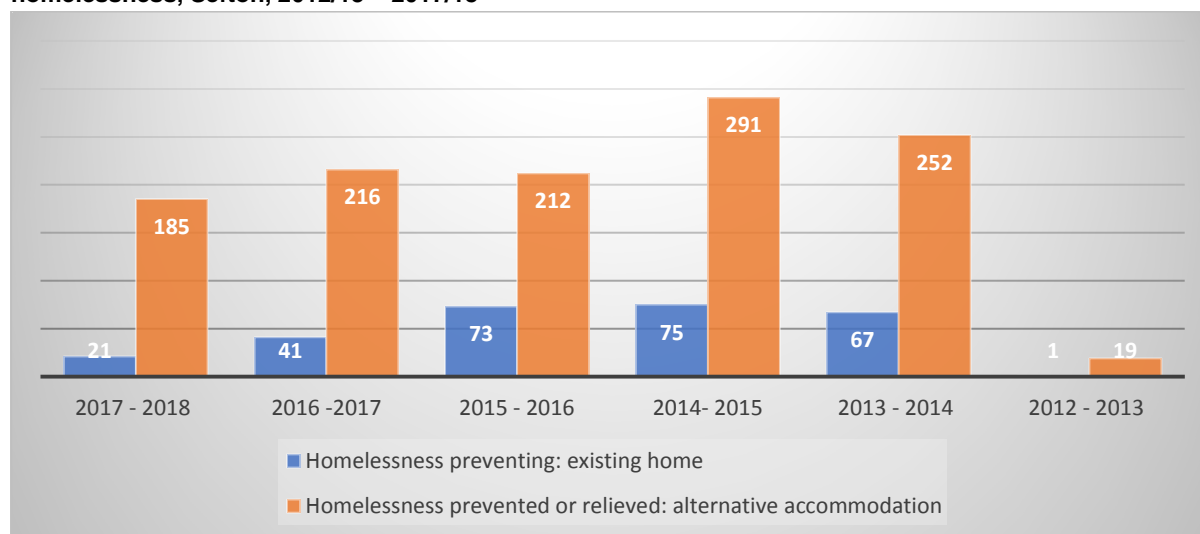


Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

In 2012/13, almost no pre-crisis prevention casework outcomes were recorded by Sefton Council, which makes the local authority an extreme outlier for that year. Since 2013/14 up to 2017/18, rates have remained between 185 (2017/18) at the lowest and 291 (2014/15) at the highest.



**Chart 23: P1E - E10 all cases where positive action succeeded in preventing and/or relieving homelessness, Sefton, 2012/13 – 2017/18**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Statistics for 2017/18, the most recent complete year available, shows only five ('other' not included) out of twelve types of initiatives used nationwide were applied in Sefton. Assistance provided to help people to remain in PRS accommodation was the most common used intervention, which equated to almost 28% of all casework. This reflects the national picture, where the same type of intervention is also the most commonly used and equates to only 22% for the whole England. The second most common used method nationally is resolving housing benefit problems, which accounting for 23% of all casework activity locally.

**Table 2: Sefton Council homelessness prevention activities to remain in existing home 2017/18, by number of outcomes**

Mediation using external or internal trained family mediators	0
Conciliation including home visits	0
Financial payments from a homelessness prevention fund	0
Debt advice	0
Resolving housing benefit problems	5
Resolving rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sectors	6
Sanctuary scheme measures for domestic violence	0
Crisis intervention – providing emergency support	2
Negotiation or legal advocacy to ensure someone can remain in accommodation in the private rented sector	0
Providing other assistance that will enable someone to remain in the private rented sector	4
Mortgage arrears interventions or mortgage rescue	1
Other	3

Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Sefton Council's Homelessness Service offers financial assistance via a Homelessness Prevention Fund. Typically, this money is used to paying paying-off arrears, for this there were 8 outcomes recorded in 2016/17. Additionally, Sefton Council operates a fund that people can apply to in times of financial assistance. Individuals are entitled to make one application per year. It unclear whether payments from this fund directly help to prevent homelessness or not, but these outcomes aren't being added to locally collected homelessness statistics.

Sefton Council's Homelessness Service refer people to the local Citizens Advice for help with debt, budgeting, and other money matters. There is no fast-track referral agreement between the two parties. Any outcomes that Citizens Advice might be achieving to prevent homelessness are not being captured in local homelessness statistics. Citizens Advice collect and analyse data about their own casework, this has shown no rise about homelessness matters, but there has been for housing allocation matters. Citizens Advice commonly help people to maximise their income, defend action from landlords and lenders who wish to secure possession of renters and homeowners properties, make claims for welfare benefits, and assist with appeals against adverse decisions. Additionally, workers from Liverpool Community Advice (who hold the legal aid contract for the area), holds surgeries at Sefton Citizens Advice. An Area of work that is increasing include appeals against adverse housing allocation decisions (e.g. because it is believed the applicant is not eligible to rent social housing, or they fail to satisfy the qualification criterion for joining the housing register). Other work Sefton Citizens Advice are involved with is helping people to improve their financial capability and adjust to making and maintain a claim for Universal Credit.

Housing Benefit administrators at Sefton Council collaborate with the Homelessness Service to prevent homelessness. The Discretionary Housing Payment budget allocated to the local authority by the Department for Work & Pensions is always fully spent, and some years overspent, meaning the local authority top it up with their own funds. The money spent from this budget allow thousands of people each year to remain in their existing accommodation, and yet this this not being captured in local homelessness statistics. A Housing Benefit administrator is also based at One Vision Housing, the post holder fast tracks claims and generally works closely with the housing management staff to help tenants make and maintain claims to help pay for their housing costs.

Sefton Council's Homelessness Service receives notifications from lenders who are seeking possession of homes due to mortgage arrears. The local authority writes to any homeowner who are due to be affected, offering information, advice and assistance. Given that no successful interventions have been recorded, it can only be assumed that people either aren't receptive of the support on offer or are getting assistance from elsewhere. All mortgage possession cases are heard at Liverpool County Court, legal aid is available to those who are entitled to it from Liverpool Community Advice. Up-to-date statistics on possession cases at a local authority or combined authority basis are not available, making it difficult to gauge the level of possession activity in Sefton or the wider Liverpool City Region.

Recent data (2017/18) shows that the action taken to assist households in finding alternative accommodation focused around securing social housing through a part 6 offer (24%) or PRS scheme (without landlord incentive) (25%). A smaller amount (20%) of cases, were resolved through assisting households find a PRS scheme (with landlord incentive). All other methods combined equate to 31%. Nationally, 27% of activity is related to obtaining social rented housing through a part 6 offer, 18% of activity is to obtain supported housing and 13% is obtaining private rented sector accommodation with landlord incentive scheme.

Aside from the main intervention (obtaining social rented housing), there is a distinct difference between the prevention activity taking place locally and nationally. Sefton Council is able to secure accommodation in PRS without a landlord incentive scheme more readily

than national trends show. However, the Homelessness Service reports that this is becoming increasingly more difficult in Sefton, especially where people rely on Universal Credit, which was rolled out to full service in November 2017. Sefton Council intend to make revisions to the local PRS Bond scheme, and set aside an annual budget of £10,000 from the Flexible Homeless Support Grant to mitigate against claims against bonds issued. Officers will develop a better private rented sector 'offer' for Landlords, to improve the prospects of homeless applicants being found accommodation in the PRS.

Nationally, more success is had with helping people to obtain supported housing, compared to local outcomes recorded. The borough operates a common supported housing allocations scheme, called Mainstay, that enable a greater control over who can secure supported housing. The Mainstay assessments place clients into priority bands. Those assessed by Housing Options as homeless are placed in higher priority bands, so improving their chances of accessing supported housing.

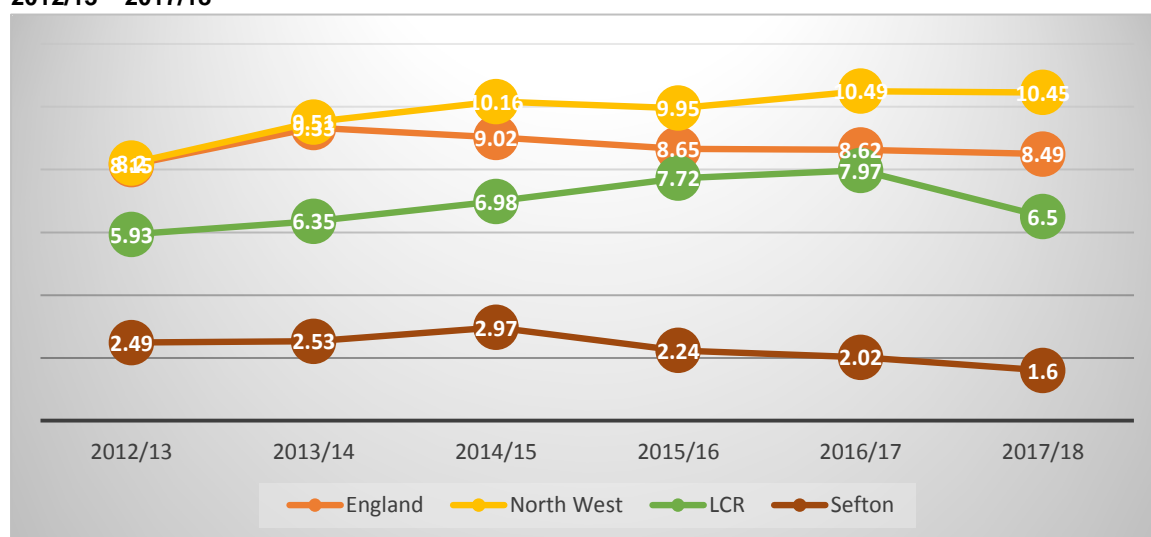
**Table 3: Sefton Council homelessness prevention activities to obtain alternative accommodation, 2017/18, by number of outcomes**

Any form of hostel or house of multiple occupation with or without support	32
Private rented sector accommodation with landlord incentive scheme	35
Private rented sector accommodation without landlord incentive scheme	43
Accommodation arranged with friends or relatives	0
Supported housing, including supported lodgings schemes	3
Management move of an existing social housing tenant	0
Housing register offer or nomination of accommodation to a social landlord	42
Negotiation with social landlord outside housing register or nomination arrangement	17
Low-cost homeownership scheme or low-cost market housing solution	0
Other	1

*Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council*

The rate (using a measure of per thousand households) of homelessness prevention casework is lower in Sefton than the Liverpool City Region, the North West and England. Rates have increased in the North West where rates are now above the national average (this likely due to less challenging housing market factors in the North West allowing for more prevention activity to take place), yet in Sefton rates have reduced. The rates of prevention casework activity are 76%, 85%, and 82% higher across the Liverpool City Region, the North West and England respectively, when compared to Sefton.

**Chart 24: Comparison by per 1000 households of pre-crisis homelessness prevention casework activity 2012/13 – 2017/18**



Source: Office for National Statistics

### 3.3 Preventing the reoccurrence of homelessness

Prevention of the reoccurrence of homelessness is typically carried out by a mixture of public authorities and voluntary organisations. This might involve providing information, advice and assistance about economic, social, housing, or legal matters. Local statistical evidence on the volume of activity being carried out and outcomes being achieved is variable in terms of reliability. There is plenty of anecdotal material that has been considered as part of this review. An in-depth evaluation of this can be found in chapter 5 of this document. Section 5 reviews the activities being carried out to support people at risk, who are, or have been homeless.

### 3.4 Conclusions about activities to prevent homelessness

The extension of duties owed to persons who are threatened with homelessness from April 2018, means that the local authority now must ensure there are a comprehensive range of activities in place to prevent homelessness. An improved system of evidencing outcomes from homelessness prevention activities needs to be put in place. Efforts made by public authorities and voluntary organisations all need to be recognised. Policies, procedures, process charts and paperwork templates for the whole array of prevention schemes, will all need to be reviewed and updated.

Efforts to improve homelessness prevention activities for people leaving secure estates should be encouraged. Sufficient time and commitment needs to be made by both the local authority and criminal justice agencies to establish a pathway that guarantees nobody leaves prison to no fixed abode. Sefton provide a range of homelessness prevention activities for people leaving care, however these practices and protocols could be improved. A better understanding is needed of what, if anything, could be done better to prevent homelessness for armed forces personnel. This would be best accomplished on a city-regional level. Preventing homelessness prior to discharge from hospital should comply with practices promoted by the Department of Health, a short-life joint working group should be established between the local authority housing services and local NHS bodies to transform local procedures. Activities to prevent homelessness due to domestic abuse need to read

across into the local domestic abuse strategy. Outcomes achieved from domestic abuse commissioned services should be shared where relevant with those responsible for the forthcoming new local homelessness strategy. Activities to prevent vulnerable adults from becoming homeless need to be developed, with better links being made between duties arising from the Care Act 2014 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Specific interventions for those most at risk of homelessness (e.g. adults experiencing mental ill health) need to be developed, along the lines of those already in place for 16 and 17-year-olds at risk of homelessness. Likewise, activities to prevent other persons more likely to become homeless, such as people with a substance dependency, committing criminal offences, or involved in sex work, all need to be developed, with primary responsibility being taken by public health and police officials, supported by Sefton Council.

Sefton Council is reliant on a small number of initiatives to carry out pre-crisis homelessness prevention activity. Locally, there is too much of an emphasis on helping people to obtain alternative accommodation, and not enough focus on helping people to remain in existing accommodation. This could be as a result of the local authority not developing enough initiatives, equally it could be due to people not seeking assistance early enough for remaining at home to be viable.

Conclusions about activities to prevent the reoccurrence of homelessness can be found in section 5 of this report.

## 4. Securing accommodation for people who are homeless

This chapter of the report reviews the activities being carried out to help people who are homeless to secure accommodation. The usage of local authority temporary accommodation is first considered, followed by the wider range of housing options available.

Homelessness legislation<sup>22</sup> requires that local authorities must provide accommodation for an interim period when a person has an apparent priority need for accommodation. Those who have a priority accommodation are shown below:

- 16 and 17-year-olds
- 18-20-year-olds previously in care aged 16 or 17
- Pregnant women
- Persons whom dependent children reside
- Persons whose homelessness was caused by an emergency (e.g. fire, flood, etc)
- Persons vulnerable due to:
  - Age
  - Mental illness or disability
  - Previously being in care (at any age prior to 16)
  - Formerly being in the armed forces
  - Being discharged from prison
  - Fleeing domestic abuse

Homelessness law also stipulates that local authorities must provide people who become intentionally homeless but have a priority need for accommodation, with temporary accommodation for a reasonable period, so they can obtain their own accommodation.

People who have a priority need for accommodation who are not intentionally homeless, must be provided with suitable accommodation for as long they need it. A number of circumstances can bring this duty to an end, most commonly, people are offered a social rented tenancy, or sometimes a private rented tenancy.

All temporary accommodation provided by the local authority must be suitable. Regulations stipulate that bed and breakfast accommodation is never suitable for 16 and 17-year-olds, and only suitable for pregnant women and households with dependent children for up to 6 weeks. Other household types should only be accommodated in bed and breakfast hotels for the shortest time possible. Temporary accommodation should be within a local authority boundary, or if outside of this, as near as possible to the Council area.

For people whom don't qualify as having a priority and/or are intentionally homeless, once any period has ended for them being entitled to temporary accommodation, they might seek housing from social or private landlords, supported housing providers, at hostels, or with family/friends. When a local authority successfully obtains accommodation for a person in such circumstances, this can be classified as homelessness being relieved, when this occurs within 56 days of a person first seeking assistance.

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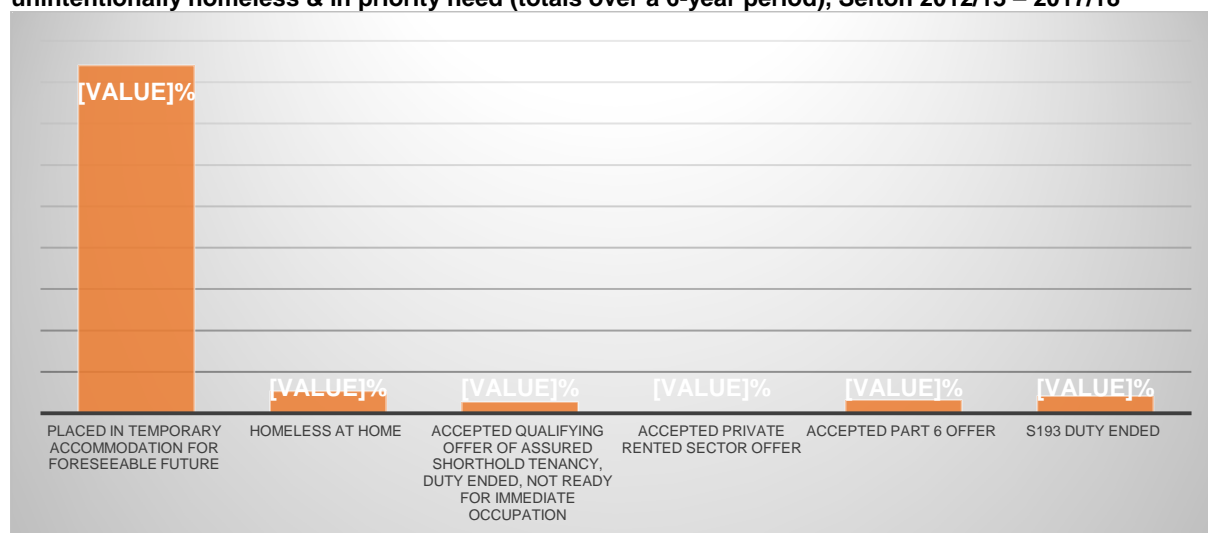
<sup>22</sup> Housing Act 1996, Part 7, sections 195 - 196

#### 4.1 Temporary accommodation

Sefton Council have access to 16 units of temporary accommodation, all of which are located in the Bootle area of the borough. The local authority manages 11 units of temporary accommodation in Bootle, which consists of flats and bedsits, one of which is fully adapted for people who have a physical disability. A further five units of temporary accommodation, all of which are bedsits are managed by Excel Housing. Details about staffing of temporary accommodation can be found in section 6 of this report.

Statistics recorded by Sefton Council show from 2012/13 – 2017/18, the immediate outcome where the applicant household is found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need (owed the main homelessness duty) is that they are placed in temporary accommodation for the foreseeable future (84%). All other categories accounted for 16% of the total cases over the five-year period.

**Chart 25: P1E - E5 immediate outcome where the applicant household found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless & in priority need (totals over a 6-year period), Sefton 2012/13 – 2017/18**

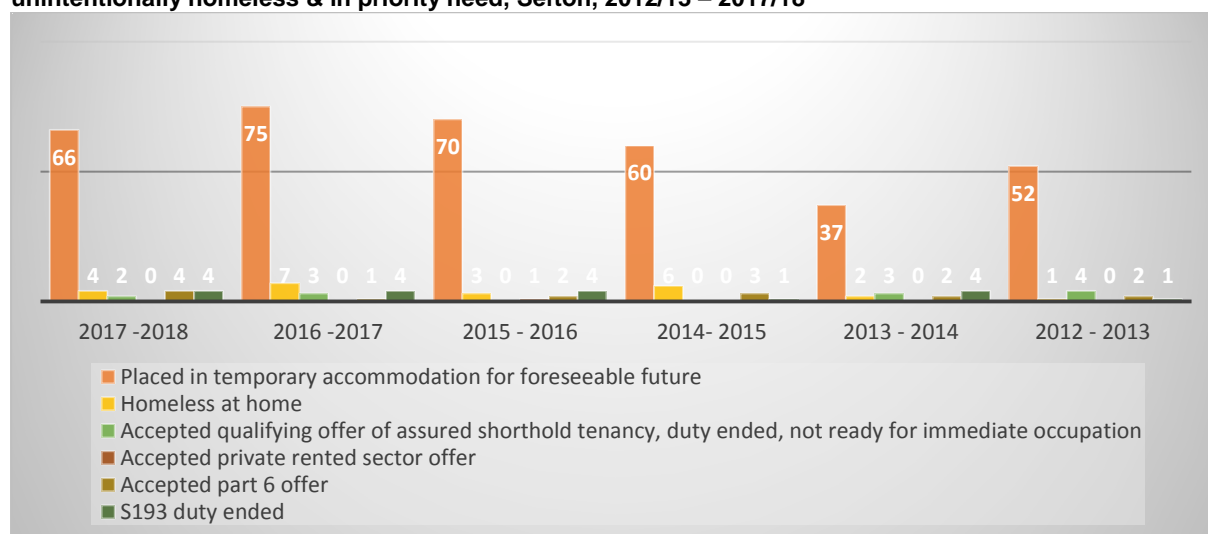


Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Alongside an increase in temporary accommodation placements, there was a small rise in the number of households who are remained homeless at home in 2016/17 (e.g. although the household is overcrowded and entitled to temporary accommodation, they have chosen to remain in their existing home until suitable accommodation has been secured).

Private rented sector accommodation is frequently obtained to prevent homelessness, however no households accepted an offer of private rented sector accommodation to bring the main housing (homelessness) duty to an end. The option of make an offer of suitable private rented sector accommodation to discharge the main homelessness duty has been available to local authorities since 2011. An offer of social rented housing can still be made, nationally this remains the most common method to bring the main homelessness duty to an end.

**Chart 26: P1E - E5 immediate outcome where the applicant household found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless & in priority need, Sefton, 2012/13 – 2017/18**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

While nationally and regionally, other types of temporary accommodation are the most common method used to accommodate homeless households (e.g. nightly paid self-contained annexes) (33% for England and 39% for the North West<sup>23</sup>), in Sefton use of other types of temporary accommodation is the least common method used to accommodate homeless households and accounts for only 0.6% of all households provided with temporary accommodation in the six years covered in the table.

The second most common form of temporary accommodation used nationally is via private sector leasing arrangement (via a local authority or a social landlord), accounting for 31% of temporary accommodation. Locally this form of temporary accommodation is also the second most used form of temporary accommodation, equating to only 15% of all temporary accommodation. In Sefton there is an agreement in place (starting in 2016) with Excel Housing Solutions who procure and manages properties from the private rented sector for use as temporary accommodation.

Local authority or housing association stock, taken out from general needs provision and used specifically for use as temporary accommodation, is the third most common form of temporary accommodation nationally, the second regionally, but the most locally. This equates to 18% for England and 23.5% for the North West, and yet 66% of all temporary accommodation placements made by Sefton Council.

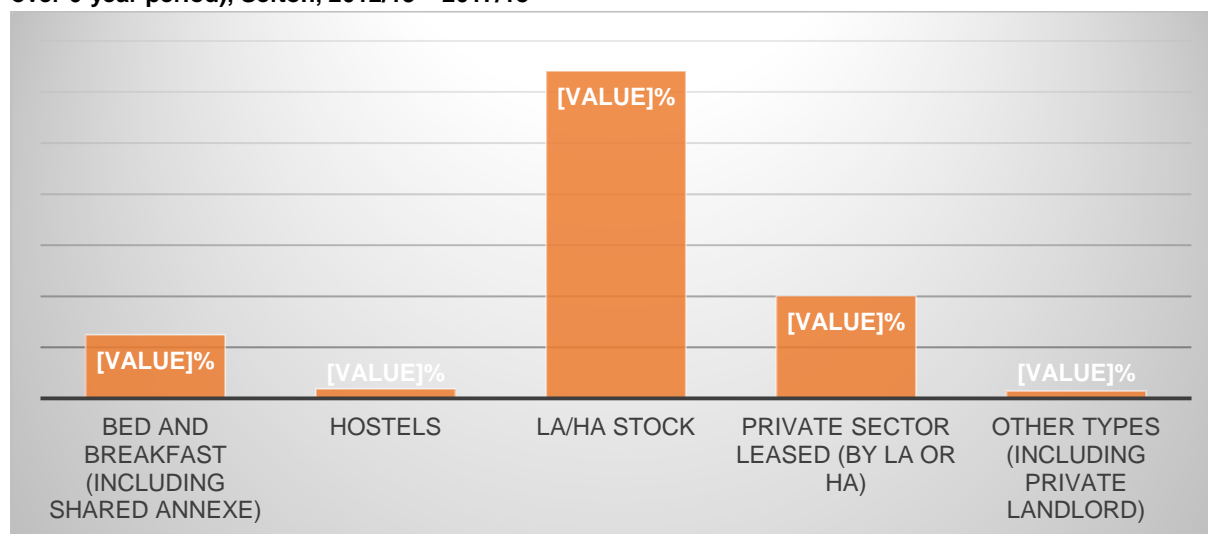
Bed and breakfast is the fourth most common form of temporary accommodation used nationally and regionally, but third locally. This equates to 18% for England and 23.5% for the North West, and 12% in Sefton.

The least common form of temporary accommodation used nationally, but the third most common regionally, and fourth most common locally, are hostels. This equates to 7% for England and 22.5% for the North West, but 2% in Sefton.

<sup>23</sup> Homelessness live tables, UK Government



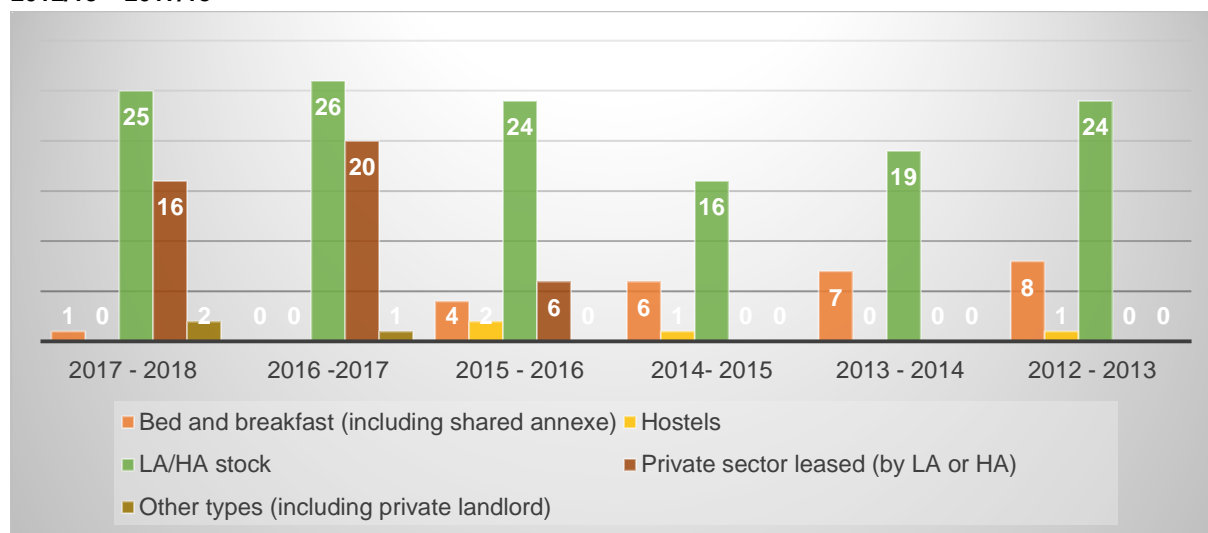
**Chart 27: P1E - E6 homeless households accommodated by type of temporary accommodation (totals over 6-year period), Sefton, 2012/13 – 2017/18**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

In recent years, as temporary accommodation levels have increased, there has been a rise in the use of the private sector leased accommodation (Excel Housing on behalf of Sefton Council). At the same time there has been a reduction in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. Hostel accommodation has been used rarely during the six years covered in the table.

**Chart 28: P1E – E6 homeless households accommodated by type of temporary accommodation, Sefton, 2012/13 – 2017/18**

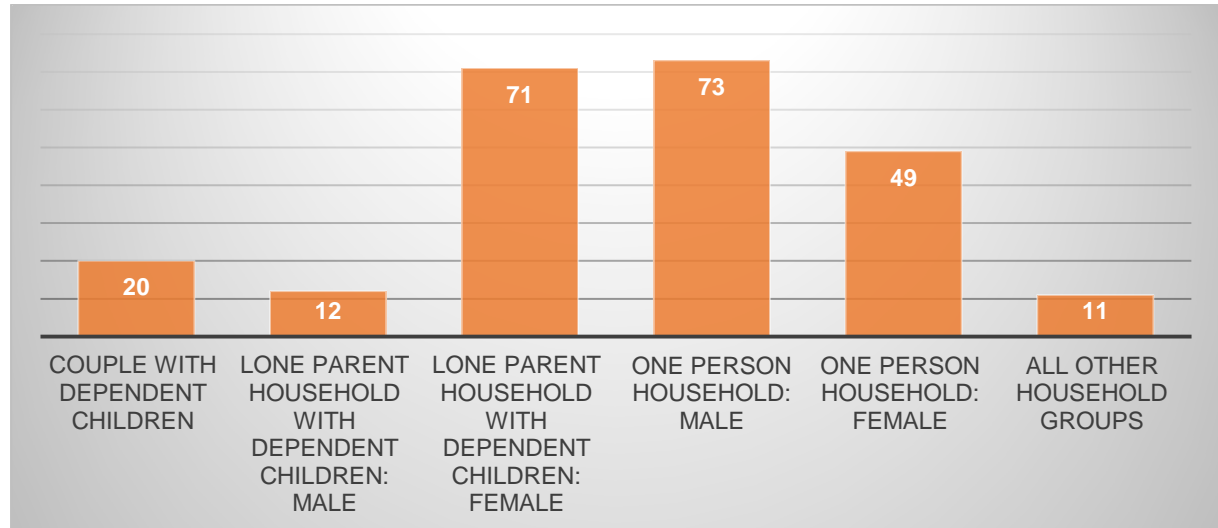


Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Section E6a of the P1E homelessness statistics identifies the household type of homeless households accommodated by the authority. Between 2012 – 2018 the main household types accommodated were one-person household (male) and lone parent household with dependent children (female) at 31% and 30% respectively. A significant proportion, 21%, of the households were one person (female). All other categories number significantly less. This is a significant departure from national trends whereby the main household type accommodated were lone parent household with dependent children headed by a female

application, equating to 56% of all households provided with temporary accommodation. Conversely, one-person male applications are the least common household type provide temporary accommodation nationally, equating to just 2% of the total.

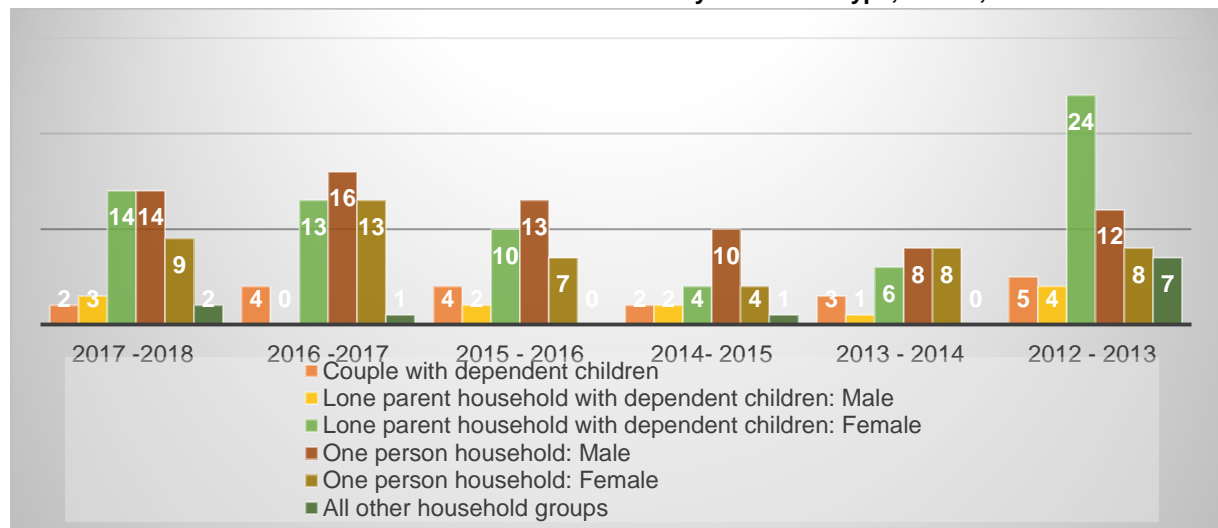
**Chart 29: P1E – E6 homeless households accommodated by household type (total for six year period), Sefton, 2012/13 – 2017/18**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

During the six-year period covered in the chart below, the number of female lone parent households with dependent children provided with temporary accommodation reduced by half. At the same time, one-person male households provided with temporary accommodation increased. One-person female households also increased. Couples with children has reduced.

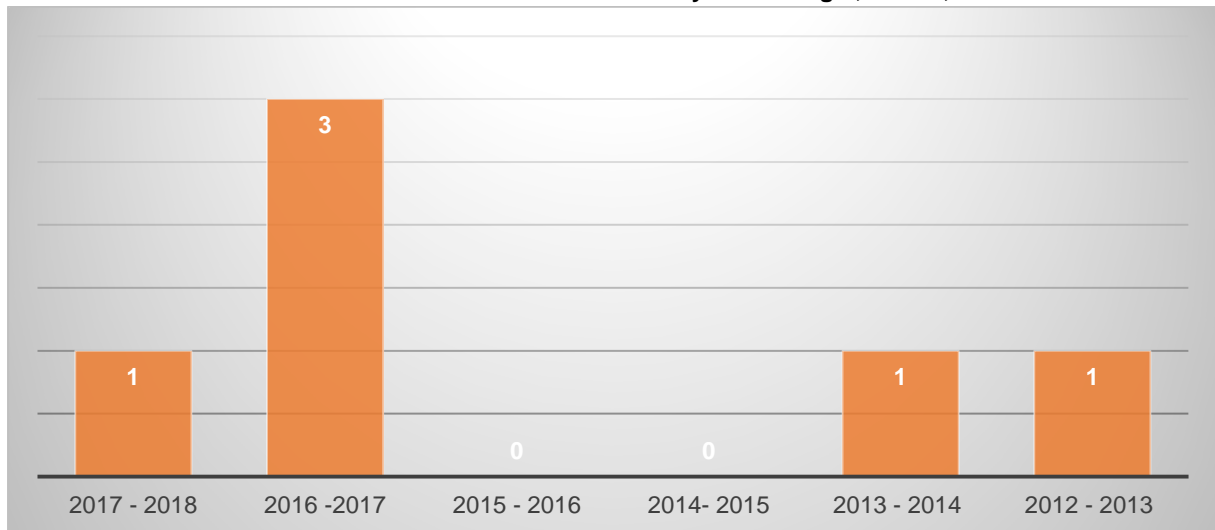
**Chart 30: P1E - E6a homeless households accommodated by household type, Sefton, 2012/13 – 2017/18**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Over the six years 2% of households accommodated have been from a black or other minority ethnic origin. In some years there was none of the households provided with temporary accommodation were of a black or other minority ethnic origin.

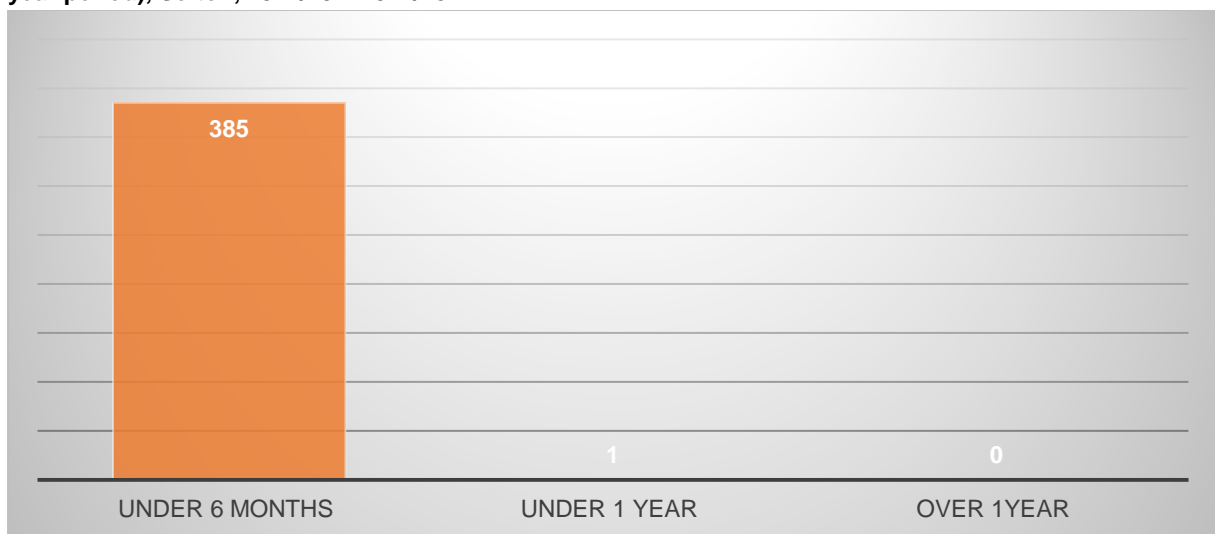
**Chart 31: P1E - E6a homeless households accommodated by ethnic origin, Sefton, 2012/13 – 2017/18**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

The majority (99%) of those accommodated in temporary accommodation leave in under 6 months. Less than 1% leave within a year and none remain after more than a year.

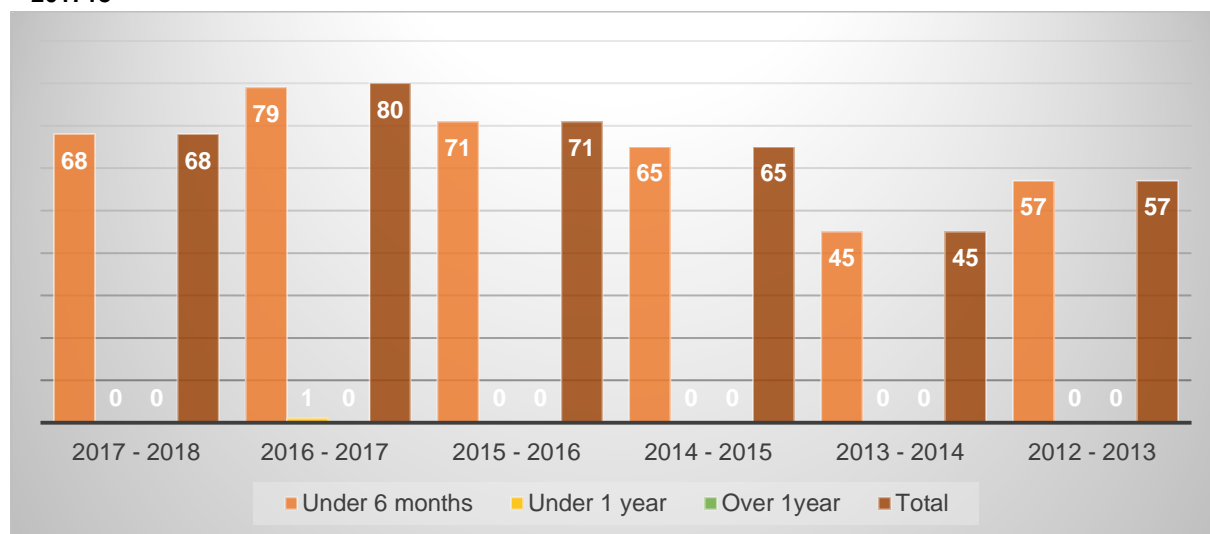
**Chart 32: P1E - E7a households leaving temporary accommodation secured under S.193 (totals over 6-year period), Sefton, 2012/13 – 2017/18**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

During the six-year shown in the graph below, in only one year and on only one occasion did a household remain in temporary accommodation for more than six months, and even then, this was less than one year. This is because in the vast majority cases the main homelessness duty is discharged within six months.

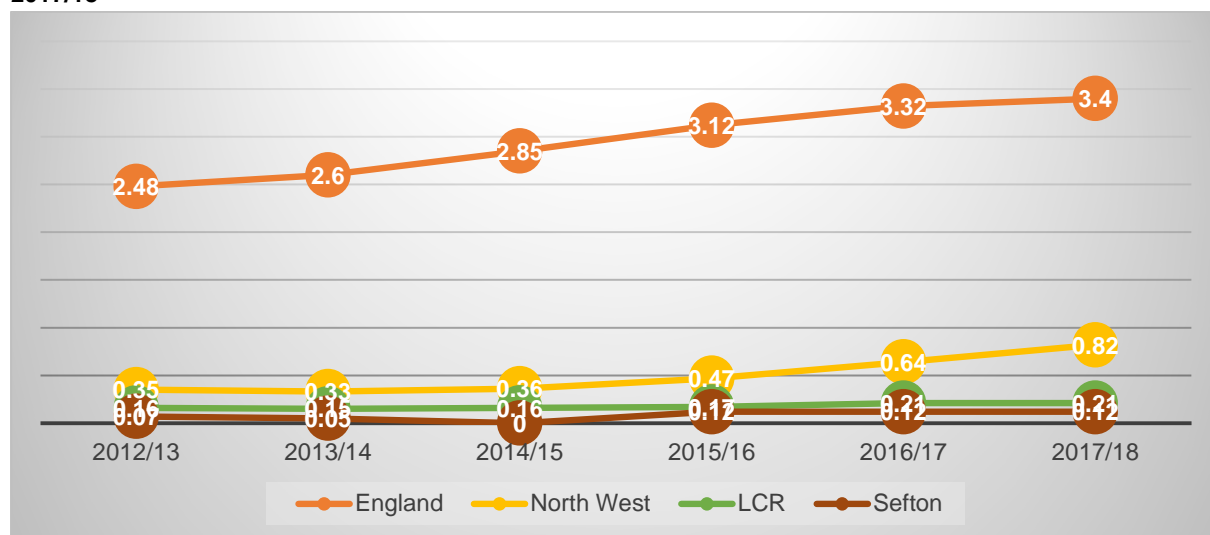
**Chart 33: P1E - E7a households leaving temporary accommodation secured under S.193, Sefton, 2012/13 – 2017/18**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Comparison of temporary accommodation levels by per 1000 households, show over the past five years, levels have increased by 26% in England, 47% in the North West, and 24% across the Liverpool City Region and 42% in Sefton. Nevertheless, relative (and actual) rate of households in temporary accommodation in Sefton has always remain lower than the comparator areas. Given the lower rate of homelessness decisions and acceptances in Sefton compared to the other three areas, this should be expected.

**Chart 33: Comparison by per 1000 households, of households in temporary accommodation, 2012/13 – 2017/18**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

#### 4.2 Other accommodation – activities to relieve homelessness

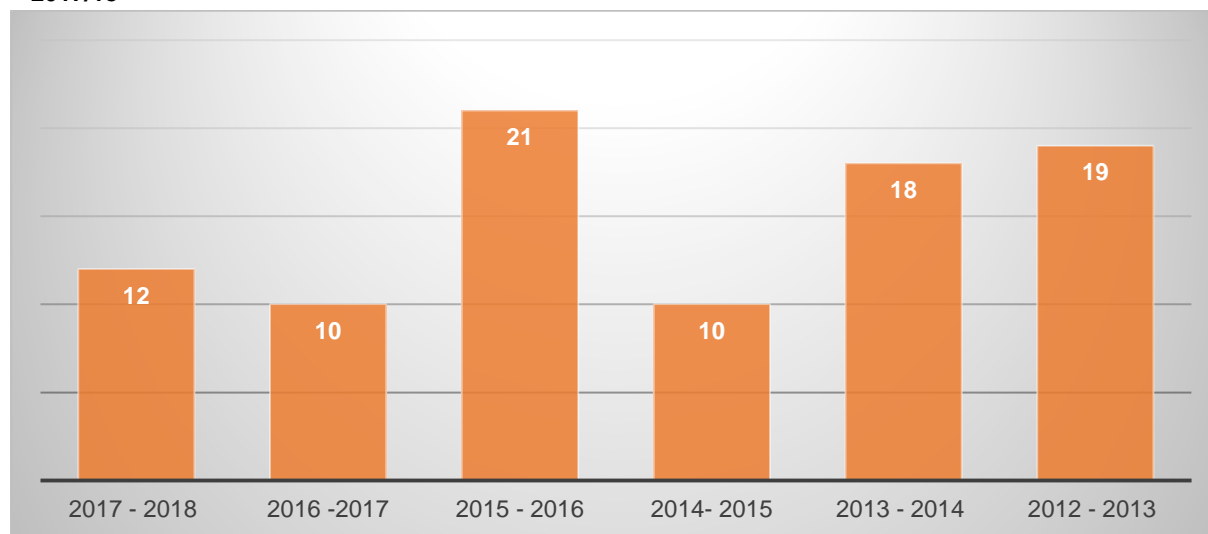
Homelessness relief activities should be carried out by Sefton Council’s Housing Advice Service, sometimes with assistance from colleagues at other public authorities.

Homelessness relief activity is helping people who are homeless to obtain suitable accommodation. These activities are typically carried out anytime between the day a person

seeks assistance from a local authority up to 56 days later. Prior to April 2018, it was at the discretion of individual local authorities as to how much homelessness relief activity was carried out. Post April 2018, when the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 commenced, it is mandatory for local authorities to carry out homelessness relief casework.

Sefton Council has recorded only a small (90) amount of homelessness relief casework 2012/13 to 2017/18. From the start to end of the period, there was a downward trend in the number of relief cases.

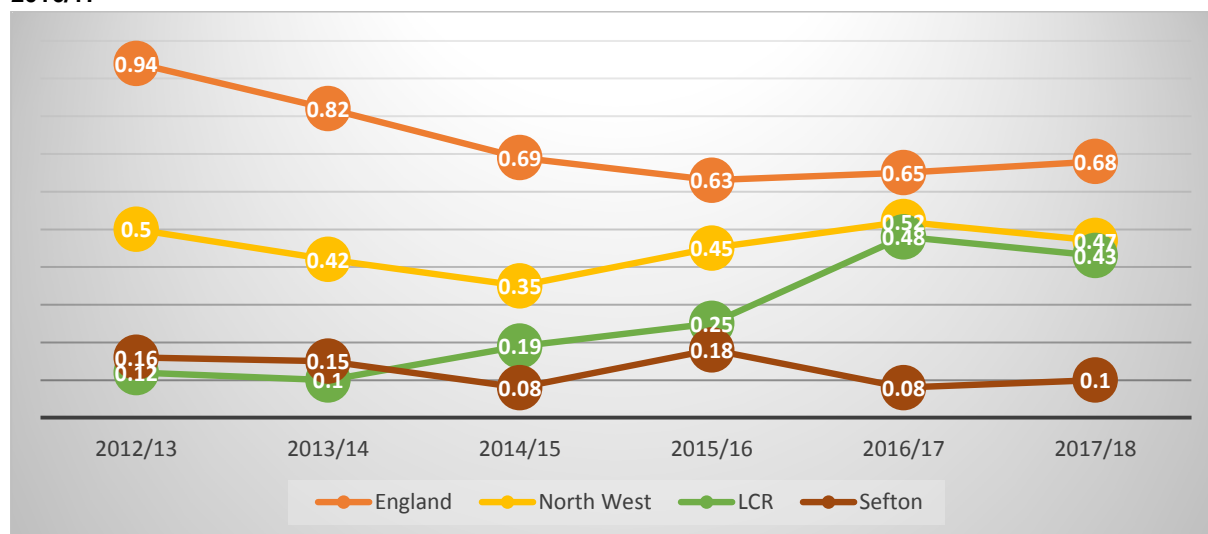
**Chart 34: P1E - E10 all cases where positive action succeeded in relieving homelessness, Sefton, 2012/13 – 2017/18**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

From the start to the end of the period of time shown on the chart below, relief activity in Sefton reduced by 37.5%, increased across the Liverpool City Region by 27%, reduced by 4% across the North West, and reduced 28% across England. Throughout England, relief casework accounts for 6% of all activity carried out by local authority homelessness services. During the past six years, the rate of relief casework in Sefton has fallen below that of the Liverpool City Region. The rate of relief casework levels in Sefton is 4.3x lower than the Liverpool City Region, 4.7x lower than the North West and 6.8 times lower than England.

**Chart 35: Comparison by per 1000 households of homelessness relief casework activity, 2012/13 - 2016/17**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

In Wales, where legislation similar to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has been in force for nearly three years, the rate is 51% of all casework activity. Based on the experience of Welsh local authorities, homelessness relief casework could increase by up to one-third following the commencement of the new relief duty.

Homelessness statistics show Sefton Council to have relieved homelessness for 12 households during most recent year data is available for, 2017/18. Supported accommodation was the relief activity most commonly applied by the local authority.

**Table 4: Sefton Council homelessness relief activities to obtain accommodation, by number of outcomes, 2017/18**

Any form of hostel or house of multiple occupation with or without support	1
Private rented sector accommodation with landlord incentive scheme	1
Private rented sector accommodation without landlord incentive scheme	1
Accommodation arranged with friends or relatives	0
Supported housing, including supported lodgings schemes	6
Management move of an existing social housing tenant	0
Housing register offer or nomination of accommodation to a social landlord	1
Negotiation with social landlord outside housing register or nomination arrangement	2
Low-cost homeownership scheme or low-cost market housing solution	0
Other	0

Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

These initiatives can be divided into three common forms of accommodation used to relieve homelessness, (i) supported housing, (ii) private rented sector accommodation, and (iii) social rented housing. Demand for all types of accommodation exceeds the supply available.

### *Housing Support*

Nationally, hostels or supported housing (including supported lodgings) are the most common method of obtaining accommodation to relieve homelessness, totalling 33% of

cases of homelessness relief. A detailed analysis of supported housing in Sefton can be found in chapter five of this report.

### *Private Rented Sector*

Nationally, obtaining accommodation in the private rented sector is second most common method to relieve homelessness, either with or without use of a landlord incentive, totalling 27% of all cases.

Locally, there is a landlord accreditation scheme, which is used by Sefton Council to coordinate a range of incentives to encourage private landlords to offer accommodation for people who need their homelessness relieving. Over 1,000 properties have been accepted onto the scheme. One of the incentives available to landlords is the option to advertise their vacant accredited properties via the sub-regional choice-based lettings scheme, known as Property Pool Plus. Southport based voluntary organisation, Light for Life, carry out a range of engagement activities with private landlords who have properties located in the Southport area. These events provide training to help landlords understand the full range of responsibilities they have, and the rights their tenants are entitled to. This work was previously funded by the local authority, but this funding has ceased. The Local authority support and participate in the landlord forum Light for Life run. The Council also undertook a lot of engagement and consultation with PRS Landlords in the run up to the introduction of our PRS Licensing schemes in March 2018. The licensing schemes themselves should improve engagement with PRS Landlords. Sefton Council is intending to commence a programme of stakeholder events in the year ahead.

Rent in advance via a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) can be applied for, although very little DHP is spent in this way. A Bond can be secured from the Council's Homelessness Service, but this is limited specifically to damages and is only available to households with dependent children. Light for Life also operate a Bond scheme, funded by donations from local churches. Criterion to be awarded a Bond requires a person to be local to Southport, be unable to obtain social rented accommodation and can't raise their own deposit.

Private rented sector (PRS) accommodation is more affordable in the south of the borough (e.g. Bootle), compared to elsewhere. Whereas, demand for PRS accommodation is higher in other areas of the borough, for example Southport. A selective licencing regime commenced in the Bootle area from March 2018, to work with private landlords to address problems caused by anti-social behaviour, crime, deprivation and poor housing conditions. In the Southport area, not enough private landlords are willing to accommodate people who have experienced homelessness. This is due to a number of factors, including but not limited to prevailing local housing allowance rates falling below average market rents, plus concerns about housing cost being paid directly to people claiming Universal Credit. Persons under the age of 35 years find more difficult than most to secure PRS accommodation.

### *Social Housing*

Nationally, securing social rented housing, is the third most common method of relieving homelessness, equalling 26% of cases. This encompasses (i) management move of an

existing social housing tenant, (ii) housing register offer or nomination of accommodation to a social landlord, and (iii) negotiation with social landlord outside housing register or nomination arrangement.

During the past five years, the number of households in local authorities' housing waiting lists has reduced locally, sub-regionally, and nationally. Data published by the Office of National Statistics show:

- 56% reduction in Sefton, from 8,283 in 2013 down to 3,720 in 2017
- 9% reduction across Merseyside, from 40,178 in 2013, down to 36,173 in 2017
- 32% reduction across England, from 1,685,804 in 2013 down to 1,155,285 in 2017

Data held by Sefton Council shows the number of households accepted on the common sub-regional housing register in December 2017 had increased to 4546, and by March 2018 it was 4760.

In 2016, the number of households on the housing register Sefton Council operates with One Vision Housing, went to 3,178 the lowest level since current records began in 1997. This was a reduction of 81% compared to the record high of 16,646 in 2010. In the past year, levels have increased again by 15% to 3,710 in 2017, and 43% to 4546 by March 2018. There is no apparent reason from analysis of statistics.

It's important to note that although Sefton Council has chosen to transfer its housing stock, it cannot absolve itself of the legal responsibility to<sup>24</sup>:

1. have an up-to-date housing allocations policy
2. make arrangement to receive applications for an allocation of social housing.

Sefton Council has a choice of:

- Having a joint allocations policy with one or more social landlords, but separate housing register
- Having a joint allocations policy and joint housing register one or more social landlords
- Having separate allocations policy and separate housing register

The local authority has the following options available to facilitate the administration of its housing allocations duties.

**Picture 1: Options for administering housing allocation public law functions**

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Option 1</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Formulation of allocations policy in-house Receipt of housing register applications in-house</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Option 2</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Formulation of allocations policy in-house Receipt of housing register applications contracted-out</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Option 3</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Formulation of allocations policy contracted-out Receipt of housing register applications in-house</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Option 4</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Formulation of allocations policy contracted-out Receipt of housing register applications contracted-out</p>

<sup>24</sup> The Local Authorities (Contracting Out of Allocation of Housing Accommodation and



The rules which govern such arrangements, require local authorities to undergo a re-tendering exercise a minimum of every 10 years. The Council first outsourced the operation of its allocations scheme when stock transfer from Sefton Council to One Vision Housing took place in 2006.

Sefton Council has opted for a common register and a joint allocations policy, with four other local authorities (Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Wirral) and 24 registered providers of social housing. This scheme is known as Property Pool Plus. One of the social landlord members is One Vision Housing, who administer the receipt of applications to join the housing register on behalf of Sefton Council. The scheme uses a choice-based system to let properties, which allows people accepted on the common housing register to express a preference of the property they are offered, by placing a bid via a dedicated website that is supported by an external software system. Some frustration was expressed by stakeholders and services users about the bidding arrangement, as often the number of people waiting for a property to be allocated far exceeds the number of homes available to let. Therefore, often bids placed are less likely to be successful, as in one case where 125 people made a bid for one property. People accepted on the housing register viewed this scenario as being the opposite of choice. However, this reflects of the supply and demand position for some social housing properties

The law stipulates that the certain persons must be afforded a reasonable preference for an allocation of housing accommodation. The list below has extracted the circumstances when those who are at risk homelessness must be afforded a reasonable preference for an allocation of housing accommodation:

1. People who are homeless - includes people owed s.189(B)(2) relief duty but not exclusively, so extends to any other person who is homeless as defined by Part 7 Housing Act 1996 (as amended)
2. People who are owed any of the following duties
  - a. s.190(2) intentionally homeless and has a priority need
  - b. s.193(2) not intentionally homeless and has a priority for accommodation
  - c. s.195 (2) threatened with homelessness

The current Property Pool Plus's allocations policy became effective from October 2017<sup>25</sup>. The policy prioritises applicants for an allocation of housing accommodation across six bands, those with the most housing need are placed in Band A, those with the least housing need are placed in Band F.

Persons whose circumstances reflect point 1 above are not clearly afforded a reasonable preference.

Persons whose circumstances reflect point 2a above are afforded 'medium priority' and awarded Band C status, unless they are guilty of unacceptable behaviour in which case they will be awarded Band F status. This latter rule appears to be incompatible with the law, as it

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[https://www.propertypoolplus.org.uk/Data/Pub/PublicWebsite/ImageLibrary/PPP%20Policy%20Final%202%2010%202017%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.propertypoolplus.org.uk/Data/Pub/PublicWebsite/ImageLibrary/PPP%20Policy%20Final%202%2010%202017%20(2).pdf)

doesn't afford such applicants with a reasonable preference when social housing is allocated. However, the policy does allow for homeless circumstances to override other issues.

Persons whose circumstances reflect 2b are afforded urgent priority and are awarded Band A status. This goes beyond what the law requires, as are benefiting from having an additional preference above many other persons who are entitled a reasonable preference when social housing is allocated.

Persons whose circumstances reflect 2c above are clearly not shown in the policy, meaning the policy is not compliant with the law.

Persons who have been assessed by a Housing Options Team and require homelessness prevention assistance are awarded Band B status, therefore many people entitled to a reasonable preference because they are owed s.195(3) duty might be covered within this opaque description, however is far from certain that this is the case.

Persons who are homeless, eligible but not in priority need of accommodation are afforded 'medium priority' and awarded Band C status, even though the law doesn't entitle people in these circumstances to have a reasonable preference for the allocation of social housing.

Section 166A(3)(a) of the Housing Act 1996, Part 6 (allocation of housing accommodation), stipulates that persons who are homeless must be afforded a reasonable preference when social rented housing is allocated. For a person to awarded this status, they need to demonstrate they are homeless, as defined in Part 7, (homelessness). There is no requirement for a person to have made an application for homelessness assistance, nor for a local authority to accept an application for homelessness assistance. Simply, that the person can evidence they are homeless within the legal meaning of the term. Since April 2018, all persons owed the new s.1989(B)(2) duty (to relieve homelessness), that qualify to join the housing register, will be entitled to a reasonable preference because they are homeless. It is also possible that other persons that are homeless, not owed the s.1989(B)(2) duty, who also qualify to join the housing register, will entitled to afforded a reasonable preference due to being homeless. For example, a person who has not made an application for assistance, or for whom a local authority has taken an application for assistance, or whom the s.1989(B)(2) duty has expired, and no further duty is owed, all might entitled to a reasonable preference due to being homeless. Therefore, it's important to note the s.1989(B)(2) duty and an entitlement to a reasonable preference due to being homeless, are not mutually exclusive. Common practice is that a housing allocation policy affords people in these circumstances an additional preference beyond the reasonable preferable, they are entitled to.

Section 166A(3)(a) of the Housing Act 1996, Part 6 (allocation of housing accommodation), stipulates that persons who are owed s.190(2) duty (accommodation for a reasonable period), 193(2) duty (main housing duty), or s.195(2) duty (to prevent homelessness) must be afforded a reasonable preference when social rented housing is allocated. Because these households are (usually) accommodated in some way, even they remain at a risk of homelessness. Common practice is that a housing allocation policy affords people in these circumstances a reasonable preferable, but no additional preference.

The administrators of the Property Pool Plus scheme have recognised the need to review and update the common housing allocation policy, which needs to take account of the HRA duties, and it also provides an opportunity to clarify any confusions about legal requirements.

There is a light touch contract management and performance monitoring regime between Sefton Council and One Vision Housing. There is no routine sharing of data on, for example applications to join the register, number of people accepted on to the register, the number of offers or allocations agreed. Nevertheless, there is some data sharing between Sefton Council and its neighbouring authorities regarding the housing register. Quarterly statistics on the housing register, as well as levels of lettings, which is broken down by each local authority area are shared. Sefton Council also gets annual data on lettings in Sefton, broken down by sub areas, showing numbers of properties advertised, total numbers of bids and average level of bids. Employees of One Vision Housing who are responsible for administering the housing register functions are due to shadow Sefton Council's Homelessness Service, as part of an initiative to improve joint working. There is a common perception that homeless applicants can be unfairly disqualified from being accepted on to the Housing Register due to spent convictions (such action if it occurs would be unlawful under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974).

Social landlords that own stock in the Sefton area all contribute to tackling homelessness, by allocating social housing to people on the Council's housing register. Social housing is a common move-on option for many seeking to leave supported housing. Information is submitted by the social landlords to the UK Government and the Social Housing Regulator, however this data isn't routinely shared with the local authority or the public. Therefore, the impact social landlords are having on tackling homelessness is unreported and most likely underreported.

#### 4.3 Conclusion about activities to secure accommodation

The fact that most of people who are owed the main homelessness duty, are provided temporary accommodation, shows Sefton Council understand what is required of them in law. The local authority has a portfolio of its own stock for use as temporary accommodation, however this isn't always nearby to where peoples last settled address. Nevertheless, the lack of use of bed and breakfast accommodation is very positive. The appointment of Excel Housing to procure and manage private rented sector properties from private sector landlords is very positive, this private sector leasing arrangement is very positive and has huge potential as part of a future model of temporary accommodation. A better understanding is needed as to why there are exceptionally high levels of lone male applicants in temporary accommodation, relative the number of households with dependent children. The discrepancy between the number of black or other minority households for whom a homelessness duty is accepted, and then provided with temporary accommodation, must be clarified. The highly successful move-on rates from temporary accommodation, with almost everyone departing within six months must be praised. This might partially explain why relative rates of temporary accommodation usage in Sefton is lower than elsewhere. The rising demand for temporary accommodation needs to be monitored.

Following the enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Sefton Council must rapidly develop a comprehensive range of initiatives to carry homelessness relief casework. The lack of relief activity will result in people continuing to experience street or hidden homelessness for longer than they otherwise would have to.

Sefton Council must work harder to forge relationship with private rented sector landlords. The local authority must work in tandem with Light for Life to make a concerted effort to the make the best use of the private rented sector, and ensure landlords get the help they need to manage their properties.

Sefton Council need to update and review the contractual terms agreed with One Vision Housing to ensure these arrangements are compliant with the law, plus reflect best value. The Property Pool Plus Housing Allocations Policy, needs to amended to reflect what is required in law for homeless applications who are accepted on to the common housing register. Social landlords should do more to highlight the work they do to tackle homelessness, through letting homes to people in housing need, and beyond in terms of general housing management functions that help to prevent homelessness.

## 5. Providing support to people who are, or have been homeless

This chapter reviews the support provided to people who are homeless or have been homeless.

Previously local housing authorities were not obligated to carry out an assessment or formulate a plan for people who are homeless. However, following the enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, a new duty came in to force requiring councils to undertake such a process for every person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness and eligible (as defined by law) for assistance. The assessment must cover:

- Causes of homelessness
- Housing needs
- Support needs

The findings from the assessment must be carried forward to formulate a personalised plan that satisfies a persons' housing and support needs. People have a right to expect plans that are revised as needs or circumstances change. Local authorities will be required to discharge this duty for up to a continuous period of 56 days.

Prior to the commencement of this new duty, which is the period covered in this report, people experiencing homelessness might receive an assessment of their needs from various public authorities (e.g. adult social care) or voluntary organisations (e.g. housing support providers). The conclusions of these assessments are used to formulate a package of support, sometimes offered in response to a legal duty (e.g. arising from the Care Act 2014), or in accordance with contractual requirements laid down between a local authority commissioner and service provider.

### 5.1 Support for people experiencing statutory homelessness

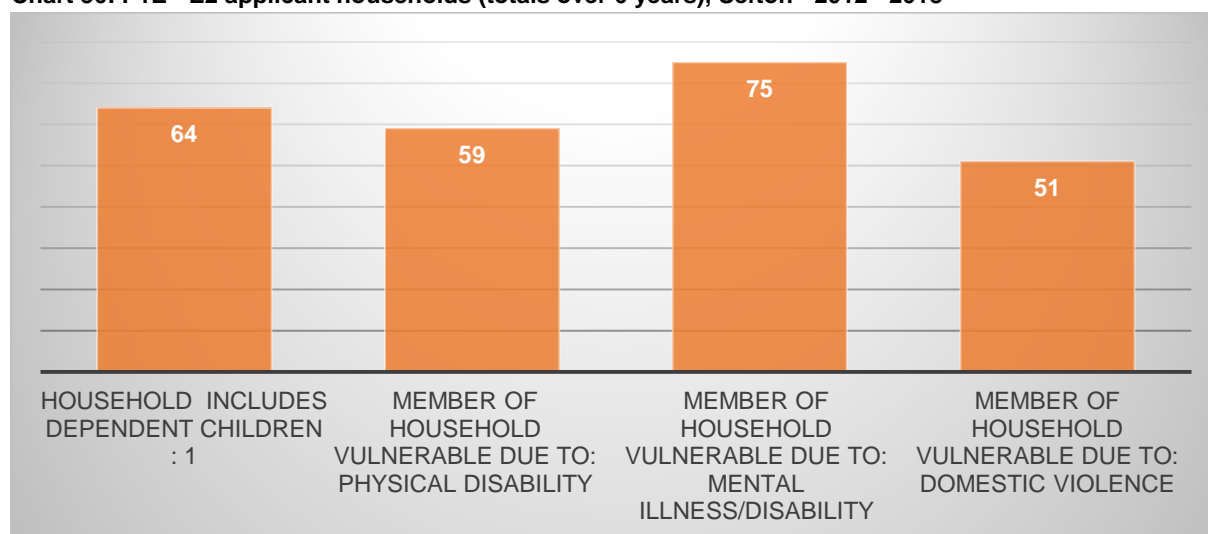
The reasons why people become statutory homeless offer an indication as to the support people require. Sefton Council collects some information on these factors, which has been analysed for the purpose of this review.

An analysis of P1E data shows that applicant households found eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need were predominately those with at least one dependent child, or had a physical or mental disability or had suffered domestic violence. Every other category<sup>26</sup> had less than 40 applicant households over the six-year period. The number of applicants who are vulnerable due to physical disability or mental illness/disability is disproportionately high compared to the national rates. For example, people vulnerable due to mental illness equates to 18% of all applicant households in Sefton, whereas this figure is only 9% nationally. The same relative difference is also true for application households vulnerable due to physical disability.

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<sup>26</sup> Homeless due to emergency, pregnant (no other dependents), 16 & 17 year-olds, formally in 'Care' aged 18-20, member of household vulnerable due to: old age, member of household vulnerable due to: drugs, member of household vulnerable due to: alcohol, member of household vulnerable due to: asylum seeker, member of household vulnerable due to: been in 'care', member of household vulnerable due to: HM Forces, member of household vulnerable due to: custody/remand

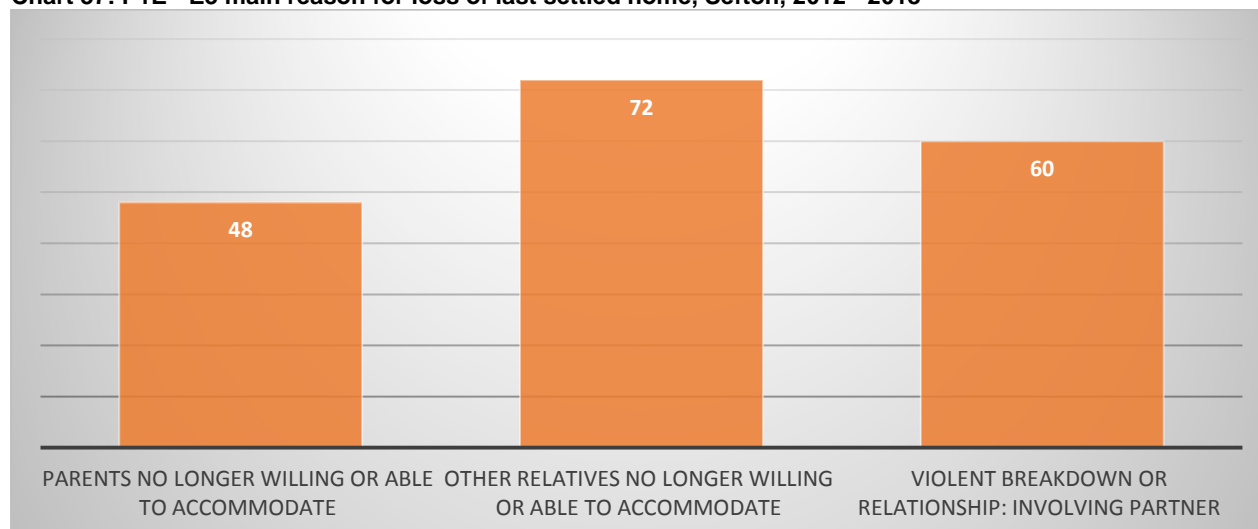
**Chart 36: P1E - E2 applicant households (totals over 6 years), Sefton - 2012 - 2018**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Analysis of P1E data has identified three main reason for loss of last settled home: other relatives no longer willing to accommodate (16%), violent breakdown of the relationship: involving partner (14%) and parents no longer willing to accommodate (11%). These reason account for 41% of cases over the last six years. 10% of households have been categorised under 'other' over the last six years. All other categories<sup>27</sup> equate when combined to less than 50%.

**Chart 37: P1E - E3 main reason for loss of last settled home, Sefton, 2012 - 2018**



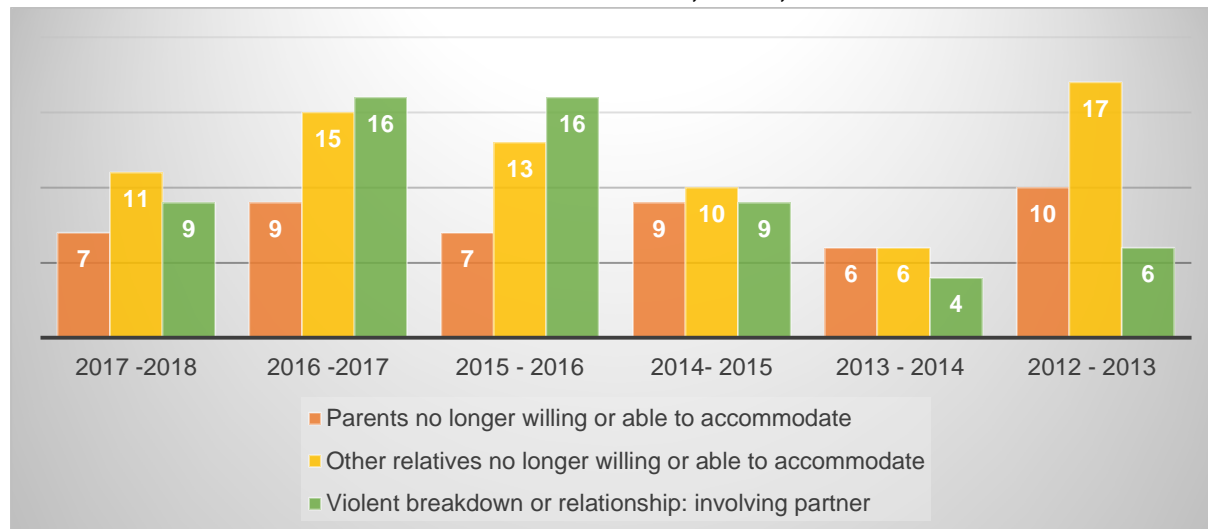
Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

The main reasons for the loss of last settled home locally differ from those nationally - 30% of people making an application for homelessness assistance, loss of their last settled home due to the termination of an assured shorthold tenancy. However, this factor isn't featured as

<sup>27</sup> Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner, Violent breakdown or relationship: associate person, Violence: racially motivated, Violence: other, Racially motivated harassment, Violence: other, Racially motivated harassment, other harassment, Mortgage arrears, Rent arrears: local authority/public sector dwelling, Rent arrears: social landlord or housing association, Rent arrears: private sector, Loss of rented or tied accommodation: termination of short hold tenancy, Loss of rented or tied accommodation: other reason, Required to leave National Asylum Support Service accommodation, Left institution: prison/remand, Left institution: hospital, Left institution: other, H M Forces.

a significant one in Sefton. At 13%, parents no longer willing or able to accommodate is the second most common reason nationally, at 11% other relatives no longer willing or able to accommodate is the third main reason nationally, and at 1% violent breakdown of relationship involving partner is the fourth main reason nationally.

**Chart 40: P1E - E3 main reason for loss of last settled home, Sefton, 2012/13 – 20/1718**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Other factors drive the support needs of persons experiencing statutory homelessness. The commencement of Universal Credit in the local authority areas has led to some struggling to make and maintain their claim. Furthermore, employees of the Sefton Council’s Homelessness Service reported at the time of the report being written that they had only recently received any training on Universal Credit. There is a perception from some stakeholders that criminal exploitation takes place in the borough, especially towards younger and more vulnerable people, which can result in the loss of housing for some people. Homelessness staff recognised the need for improved working relationships with adult social care services.

Sefton Council intends to integrate the Homelessness Service into a new locality-based working model. This will see a range of services from across the local authority co-located into three neighbourhoods, that will be situated in Southport, central Sefton (Netherton) and Bootle. Under this model, staff will be directed to where the greatest demand for assistance is apparent. Employees from the Homelessness Service will be able to work more closely with, for example colleagues from the Youth Offending Service, allowing both teams to pool resources and align the discharge of any public law responsibilities that might be applicable.

## 5.2 Support for people experiencing single homelessness

Sefton Council commissions a range of social landlords and voluntary organisations, to provide housing related support from a variety of hostels and supported accommodation. People are supported on a short-term basis until they have gained the skills needed to maintain their own home. People apply for support directly to service providers who use a common index assessment, known as Mainstay, to determine qualification for support. Support is usually provided for up to two years. People in receipt of support must pay for their accommodation, and any associated personal charges. A claim for help to pay housing

costs can be made to the local authority housing benefit department, but this excludes any charges for heat, water, food, and other service related charges. The cost of the support is paid for by Sefton Council, via contractual arrangement between the local authority and contracted support providers, which are renewed or re-tendered on a periodical basis.

Support is commissioned by the local authority’s adult social care department for people with long-term needs, for example due to having enduring mental ill health, a learning disability, or being of an old age. Those with short-term needs are also catered for, with specific services for those who are escaping domestic abuse, are of a young age, are teenage parents, have a drug problem, or are at risk of offending. All of these schemes contribute indirectly towards the relief of homelessness, by accommodating people that would otherwise have nowhere to live.

There is specific supported housing commissioned directly to relieve homelessness, typically for those who are not owed any duty of assistance under homelessness law. The support provided by such projects also prevents the reoccurrence of homelessness. Much of the accommodation-based housing support services are provided in properties built more than 30 years ago, with some having been developed prior to the First World War. As such the standard of accommodation varies considerably. While an older property such as Bosco House can be described as a psychologically informed environment<sup>28</sup>, due to extensive capital improvements that took place a decade ago (and have been well maintained ever since), other properties are at risk of falling below what might be considered a suitable standard. A summary of provision is shown below:

**Table 5: Supported housing provision commissioned by Sefton Council as of July 2018**

Number of units	Client Group	Service Provider
70	Single homeless	Sefton Supported Housing Group (Bosco Society, Excel Housing Solutions, New Start, Venus)
10	Substance misuse	DISC
4	Single women – complex needs	Excel
8	Offenders	North West Property Custodians (NWPC)
30	Floating support	DISC
45	Floating support (offenders)	DISC

Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

The Sefton Supported Housing Group (SSHG) was formed to bid for the single homeless contract, as a direct result of Sefton Council's preference for a consortium to provide this provision of short-term accommodation-based services. SSHG is managed by Bosco Society who act as the prime contractor with the local authority. Three other providers, Excel Housing Solutions, New Start, and Venus, all have the status of sub-contractors. The thinking behind Sefton Council's ambition for a consortium, was to drive up the quality and effectiveness of provision, while at the same time drive down the cost to achieve better value for money for the local authority. SSHG have an ambition to ensure the highest standards of support work, one of the ways this done is ensuring all staff are qualified up to level three (equal to an A Level) on the Educational Attainment Framework in health and social care.

<sup>28</sup> Psychologically informed services for homeless people good practice guide, 2012, Community and Local Government



Of the 70 units the SSHG are commissioned to provide, half (36) are provided by Bosco Society, an additional three units are also provided on top of what is commissioned by the local authority. 26 units are provided across two sites, Bosco House and Bosco Lodge (referenced as SEAD project in data supplied by Sefton Council), with a further 10 units being provide in accommodation dispersed across the south of the borough. In addition to the single homelessness services Bosco provide, the organisation has also purchased a property to accommodate Syrian refugees, as part of nationally coordinated resettlement programme. Beyond this, Bosco Society have an ambition to become a registered provider of social housing.

Excel Housing Solutions provide 14 shared flats dispersed across the borough, plus a further 4 units for females and 5 units which are used by Sefton Council's Homelessness Service to fulfill temporary accommodation duties. All residents have access to ensuite facilities. Excel provide trauma informed support to their residents. The Homelessness Star<sup>29</sup> is used to help people priorities their goals and measure their progress. Collaboration takes place with mental health and substance misuse services. Staff support between a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 9 people at any one time, which allows for intensive work to take place with service users. Support workers are available outside of office hours via a dedicate on-call team. Staff attend regular training in subjects such as psychologically informed environments.

Venus operate 2x four-bedroom shared houses, one for men and another for women, plus 7 flats dispersed across the community, all of which are in Bootle. Residents remain with the service from anywhere from two up to 18 months. People living in the dispersed units achieve better outcomes, compared to those living in shared properties. Support is offered with matters such as finding employment, help to use local services, and engaging in community projects. Move-on from this accommodation can be difficult due to upfront fees required by private landlords, the lack of affordable properties to rent, plus the long waiting time for social housing.

Applications for housing support services are made via a common allocations system known as Mainstay. The software system that underpins the system is administered by YMCA Liverpool on behalf of the six local authorities that are members of the Liverpool City region Combined Authority. Each provider takes responsibility to take applications for housing support, assessing the extent of a persons' housing support needs. While no formal analysis has been carried-out recently, based on what was reported by numerous stakeholders throughout this review, the demand for housing support provision exceeds the number of units that the local authority commissions. The idea of the Mainstay system is that it should ensure housing support services available in Sefton are put to best use. This is achieved by prioritising those who are most in need of the support. There are benefits to both service providers and people seeking supported housing, as the Mainstay system enables a common approach to apply for supported housing. Assessments are carried-out using the Homelessness Star, which is embedded into the Mainstay system. Support providers receive and administer applications on to the Mainstay system on a rota basis, although Light for Life and Sefton Council's Homelessness Service will undertake this task every-day of the week. There was concern from some stakeholders about inconsistency in the

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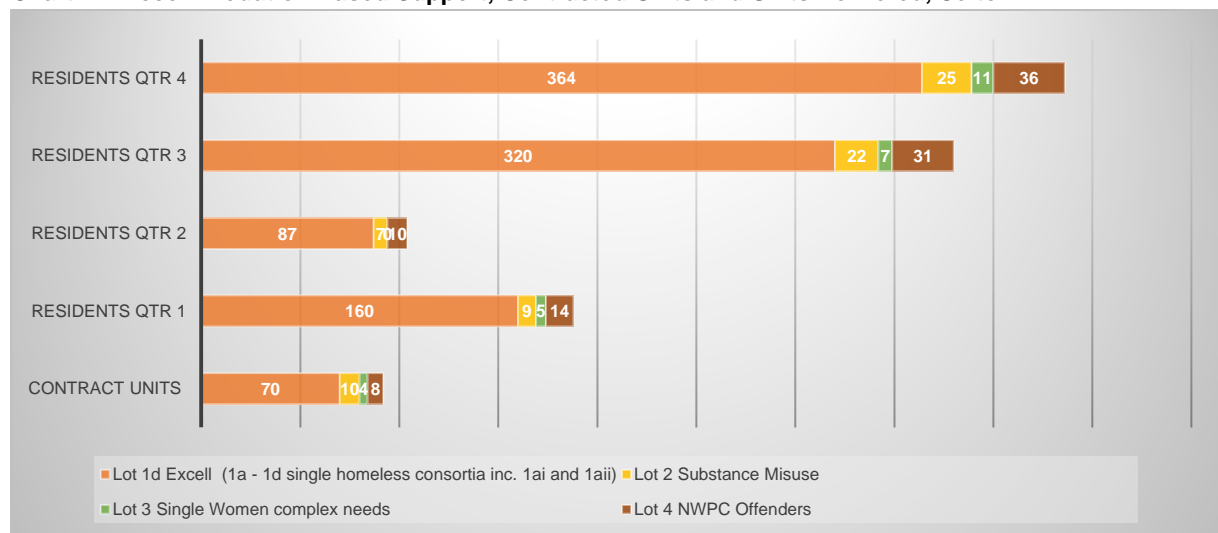
<sup>29</sup> <http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk>

completion of Mainstay assessment, with some support providers being interested in ensuring outcomes of the assessment match the vacancy available or the characteristics of their service.

The Council operates a performance monitoring regime that requires support providers to submit data on a quarterly basis about the outcomes and result achieved. However, the quantitative analysis isn't complimented any qualitative analysis of service performance, such as evaluation of services against contractual terms. Anecdotal feedback has been that for too many people it's difficult to obtain supported housing due to providers not being able to offer the right type of accommodation and support due the complexity of a persons' needs. A summary of headline outputs is shown below.

56% of the budget<sup>30</sup> commissions 92 units of accommodation-based support, 76% of which is delivered under the SSGH consortia. Resident numbers identify a high demand in quarter 4 (April, May, June) and reduced demand in quarter 2 (Oct, Nov, Dec.) numbers delivered exceed contract requirement throughout the year. SSHG reported a total of 176 single people leaving support throughout the reporting year, the average length of support time was 129 days.

**Chart 41: Accommodation Based Support, Contracted Units and Units Delivered, Sefton**

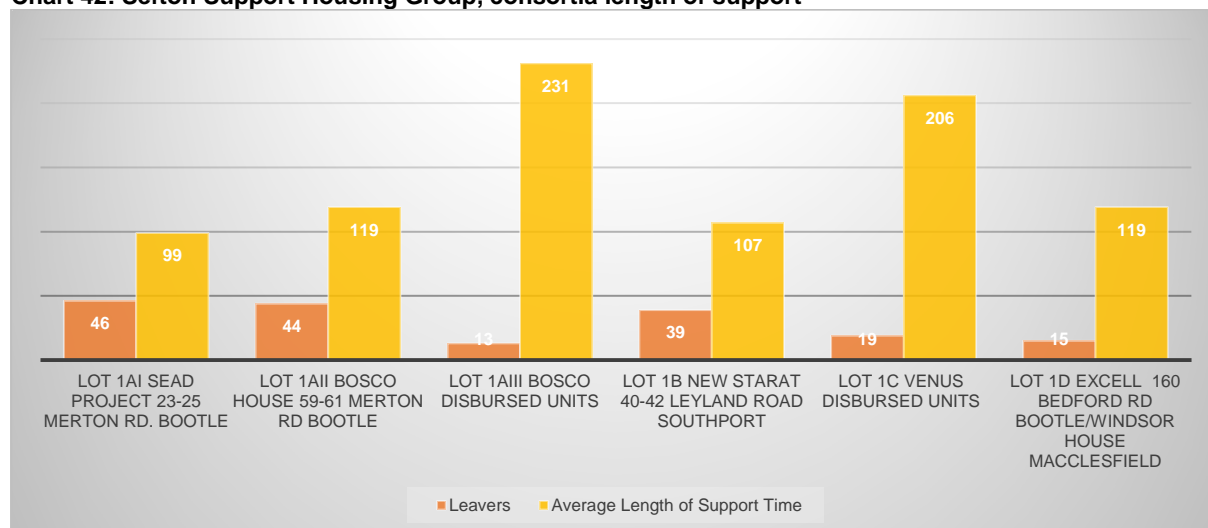


Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Bosco provided 46 units of accommodation at the Bosco Lodge project, where residents were supported for an average of 99 days, by comparison the same organisation provided 13 units of disbursed accommodation with residents supported for an average of 231 days.

<sup>30</sup> Current Budget £1,196,160

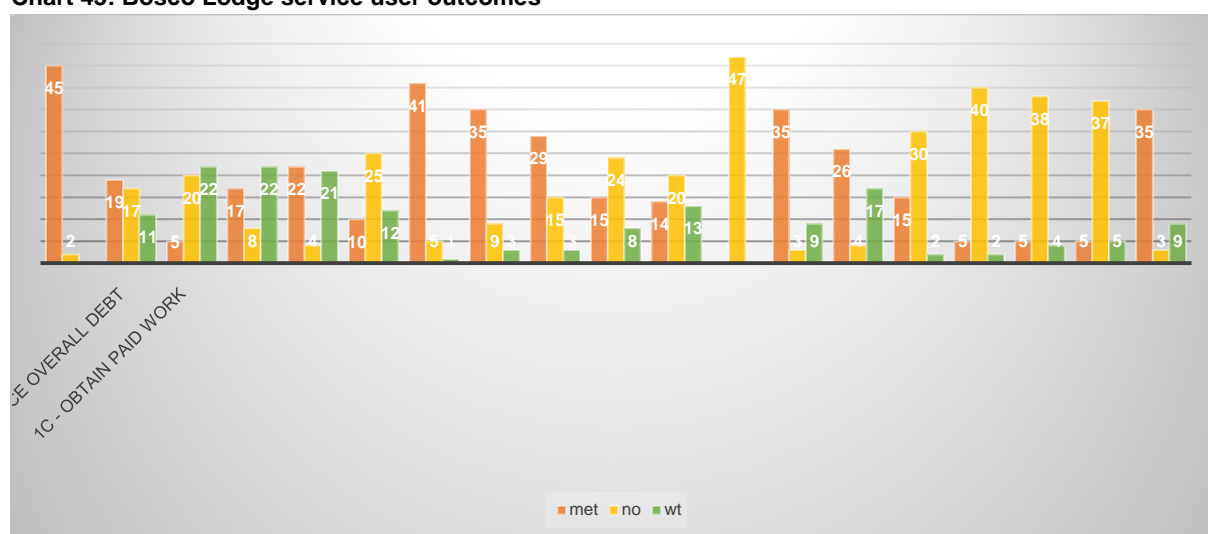
**Chart 42: Sefton Support Housing Group, consortia length of support**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

A Comparison of outcomes reported for the two projects showed a higher number of outcomes met for the disbursed units at 66% compared with 42% of outcomes met reported for the Bosco Lodge project. This might be reflective of the severity and complexity of the support needs of people using the two projects. Those staying at Bosco House, an accommodation based supported housing scheme, are more likely to have higher support needs, compared to those in receipt of floating support.

**Chart 43: Bosco Lodge service user outcomes**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Trends in support outcomes were mostly mirrored for both schemes. Maximising income is the factor that had been met for most people. None of the service users required help with assistive technologies or aid and adaptations to maintain independent living. The most common factor that most service users reported included; working towards was obtaining paid work. Minimising harm or risk of harm from others was the factor the service users had least met. At the Bosco Lodge project, establishing contact with friends and family was the factor service users were least likely to be working towards, whereas in the disbursed units it

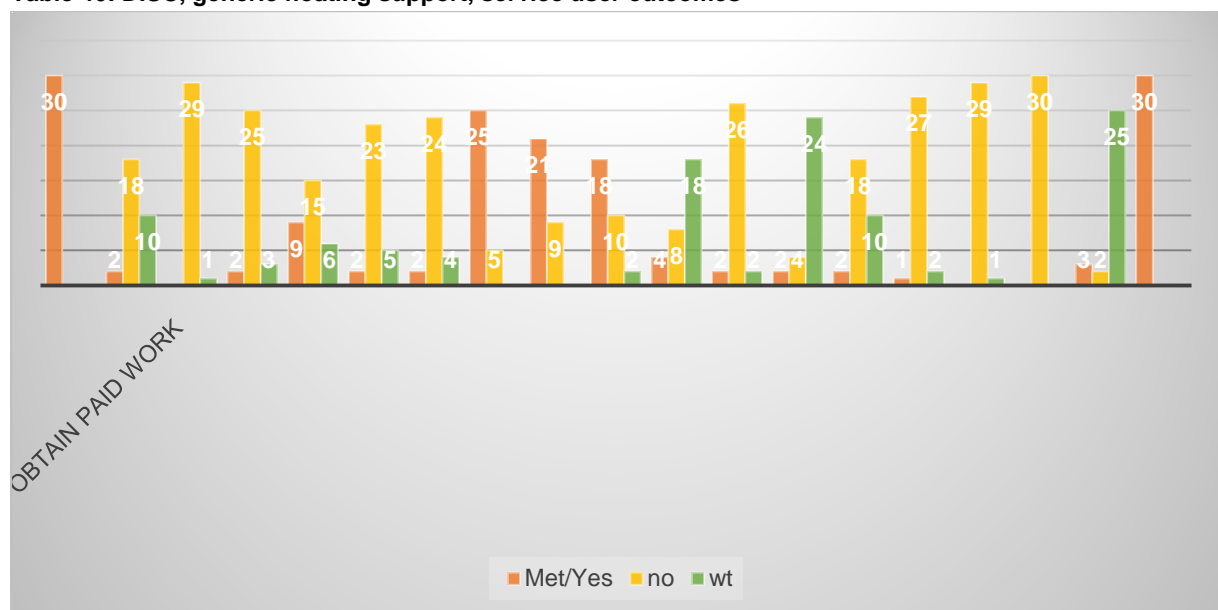


of outcomes met. Data shows an increased length of support time in accommodation-based support produces a higher number of met outcomes on exit.

33% of the budget commissions 135 units of floating support, 3% 20 units of outreach and 8% housing advice.

Of the 30 people supported by DISC's generic floating support service in the north of the borough, 27% had met identified support needs, 20% were working towards meeting their need and the remaining 53% had no identified a support need. Average support time for those in support (to 30.6.16) was 110 days. DISC's generic floating support service in the north of the borough recorded 4 exits throughout 2015/16, who had received an average of 90 days support and achieved 37% of met outcomes.

**Table 46: DISC, generic floating support, service user outcomes**



Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Of the 46 people supported by DISC's offender floating support service, 34% had met identified support needs, 15% were working towards meeting their need and the remaining 51% had no identified a support need. Average support time for those in support (to 30.6.16) was 326 days. DISC's offender floating support project recorded 6 exits throughout 2015/16, who had received an average of 342 days support and achieved 38% of met outcomes.

All support providers mentioned that move-on from accommodation-based services can be frustrated due to a number of factors, such as former tenant rent arrears, history of anti-social behaviour, plus a requirement to pay some rent in advance. The shortage of properties generally and specifically at an affordable rent further impair support providers ability to help people move-on when they are ready to do so. These challenges are equally apparent in both the social rented sector as well as the private rented sector. There was also criticism about the condition of some properties, again in both sectors. There is also concern that social landlords are taking account of spent convictions when determining whether a person qualifies for an allocation of a property, contrary to existing legislation.

There was a lot of appreciation for the services provided by Crisis, such as education courses and therapeutic activities, as this helped the people they support to have a structured day and something meaningful to do. There was enthusiasm for the ‘Housing First’ approach, although many organisations said they’d like to learn more about the model. Support providers were troubled about a perceived lack of mental health services, citing that people would use accident and emergency services (in lieu of existing mental health services) to access the help they needed.

The Mental Health Housing Team, based at Crosby Housing Association was universally praised by stakeholders. Set-up 16 years ago to prevent delayed discharge and bed blocking on mental health wards, a team of three workers, supervised by a manager help find accommodation and provide support to people ready to return to the community. 300 referrals are commonly made to the team each year, the overwhelming majority of these come from community mental health services or ward. Many who are referred are or were sleeping rough prior to getting assistance from mental health services, other have a physical disability alongside their mental illness. The team help people to obtain accommodation, this is often in social or private rented accommodation, but can be with family or friends. Securing accommodation is difficult due to some landlords declining to offer a tenancy due to perceptions about a persons’ supports needs. Help is also given to make a claim for welfare assistance, and secure support under the Care Act 2014. Typically, the team work with each person for a year, but the limited capacity of the team means this isn’t always possible. The team use their own in-house assessment to evaluate a persons’ housing and support needs. This evaluation document compliments other statutory plans under the Care Programme Approach.

Support providers, especially Bosco, demonstrated their resourcefulness by the number of initiatives provided by numerous public authorities and voluntary organisations, that they help people access. Examples of these include Talent Match, an eight-week course that helps people to prepare for work, Sefton Adult Learning Service, and Recovery Inc. music studio. Residents also benefit from workshops on housing options and choice-based lettings, as part of planning done to help people make a positive and informed move-on. Of particular note is the Market Garden Project where people in receipt of housing support can help to grow and sell produce and flowers, the profit of which are recycled back into the project.

### 5.3 Support for people experiencing street homelessness

People experiencing street homelessness are able to get help from the local authority, as well as voluntary organisations.

Sefton Council commissions Light for Life to provide a number of services to people who are experiencing street homelessness or are risk of doing so. A summary of the provision is shown below.

**Table 6: Summary of street homelessness provision funded by Sefton Council**

Number of clients	Client Group	Service Provider
10	Rough sleeper outreach	Light for Life
10	Rough sleeper (community services)	Light for Life
50	Housing advice (Southport)	Light for Life

Source: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Light for Life are a Southport based voluntary organisation who operate an advice centre in the town. The charity provides an assertive street outreach at various times throughout the day and night, across the whole borough. Southport has visible population of people who are engaged in anti-social 'street' behaviours, such as begging and street drinking. This can give a perception that scale of street homelessness larger than perhaps what it actually is. While many of the people involved in the activities described above might have previously experienced street homelessness, and could do so again in the future, not all of them are experiencing street homelessness at the time that they are begging or street drinking. Some of the individuals will already be in receipt of accommodation-based or floating support, which gives rise to the adequacy of such provision for some people.

Light for Life employ a specific person to carryout daily outreach work in Southport, to go out twice a day whenever possible to find people who are sleeping rough. Joint work is undertaken with Merseyside Police to identify people who are involved with crime or activity such as begging, street drinking, shoplifting, etc. This collaboration with police has allowed for close working with dedicated officers to address these issues, leading to Criminal Behaviour Orders or other outcomes, should individuals not take-up the advice and support being offered by Light for Life. In some circumstances, when it safe to do so and a person agrees, they are helped to reconnect to their home area, by means of being helped financially to pay for travel. Accommodation is always secured prior to someone commencing their journey.

Light for Life's advice includes budgeting, tackling social isolation, signposting, completing application forms, accessing GPs and other health services, and help with job searches and job matches. Due to Sefton Council's Homelessness Service being based in the far south of the borough (Bootle), many other people use the advice centre beyond those experiencing street homelessness, but instead are experiencing the other three forms of homelessness covered in this chapter. The advice is an invaluable resource for Southport and the whole of Sefton, as it allows for a far greater number of people to have their homelessness prevented or relieved than otherwise would be the case without it.

One source of referrals to Light for Life is the national reporting service for people seen sleeping rough, known as Streetlink. This initiative is funded by the UK Government, Greater London Authority and Welsh Government, operated by in partnership by Homeless Link (the membership body for providers of homelessness services), and St Mungo's (a London-based provider of accommodation and support services for people who are or have been homeless). A telephone and website (including app for mobile phones) are available for members of the public to make reports of people they believe to be sleeping rough. Streetlink receives the reports and forwards them on to local authorities and voluntary organisations throughout England and Wales, for local service providers to respond to the reports. Light of Life are the nominated recipient for the borough of Sefton. Outcomes of a referrals are acted upon and the outcomes are fed back to Streetlink. Light for Life find that many such referrals are inappropriate, for example because the person identified is not actually sleeping rough. Such occurrences are common and take-up the vital limited resource that Light for Life has to help people who are experiencing street homelessness.

Examples of typical support that Light for Life provide includes helping people to obtain support from NHS health services, criminal justice agencies, plus JobCentre Plus. Enabling dignity is also a key element of the support offered, ensuring people are also offered help with satisfying basic needs such as eating, washing, clothing, etc.

The SSHG operate a sit-up service for people experiencing street homelessness, which is an obligation of the contract held with the local authority. The sit-up service is available at Bosco Society's property on Merton Road, plus at New Start's property on Leyland Road in Southport. Usage of this service varies throughout the year, with uptake being higher during the winter. Therefore, some nights the demand for the service exceeds spaces available, whereas on other nights there can be fewer people than the potential full capacity allows. The Sit-up service is available to access from 8pm until 8am. People are provided with a hot meal and are able to use shower facilities.

The Whitechapel Centre are commissioned by the local authority to provide an intensive support service to people who have experiencing street homelessness with complex and enduring support needs. The interventions made by the Whitechapel help to prevent the repeat occurrence of street homelessness. This service continues to receive more referrals, but it's unclear whether this is due to rising levels of needs or increased awareness of the service, or both. People typically receive support for six months, with matters such as mental illness, substance dependency, offending behaviour. People are helped to attend appointments, link into services, and deal with debts. Funding for a Liverpool City Region initiative is currently financed until September 2018, which supports a small number of clients from Sefton. Sefton have supplemented this service by commissioning a similar service dedicated to Sefton clients only, with the Whitechapel Centre.

The local Salvation Army church have offered a daytime drop-in service for more than 14 years, to people who are experiencing homeless or at risk of doing so. The aim of the service is help people meet their basic needs, by providing meals and washing facilities. Donations of food and money, along with numerous volunteers resource this provision. During 2017 nearly 9000 people took advantage of the assistance offered by the Salvation Army, primarily men aged 25 -55 years, this level of footfall has remained fairly constant throughout the past decade. People are typically seeking assistance with finding or maintaining accommodation, mainstay assessments are carried-out one day per week.

#### 5.4 Support for people experiencing hidden homelessness

Sefton Council do not commission any specific services to tackle hidden homelessness. However, Light for Life is one of the few services (regionally) that are consciously offering support to people experiencing hidden homelessness. This support is provided via the advice centre, as part of the general service provision. Light for Life are beginning to collect specific intelligence on the prevalence of hidden homelessness, plus characteristics and support needs of those persons who experience this form of homelessness. It is likely that many people access the daytime drop-in at the Salvation Army are also experiencing hidden homelessness, but because the term isn't widely used or known, and no service promote themselves as being a response to this form of homelessness, people might report their circumstances as being that of another form of homelessness, for example street or single homeless.



## 5.5 Conclusions about activities to provide support

Further investigation is needed into why the rate of people becoming homeless who have mental ill health is so much higher than it is nationally.

Sefton Council's plans for locality-based working should ensure that the support statutory homeless households receive from various departments of the local authority, will be able to reach more people and be better coordinated. Hosting homelessness, social care and other public service together in three key locations should increase the success rate of preventing the re-occurrence of homelessness. This should be especially beneficial to families, young people and victims of domestic abuse.

Sefton Council commissions a range of supported accommodation for single homeless people. The Council's should be applauded for their decision to procure a consortium to provide the accommodation-based single homeless support, as this has helped to drive-up quality and consistency of practice, while also improving value for money. All of the service providers are offering creative support, which helps people to feel empowered to make changes to their lives. As would be expected residents of accommodation-based support identified a higher number of support needs compared to floating support, the disbursed units of accommodation-based support recorded the longest length of support (231 days) and highest number of needs met however a link between length of support time to outcome was not reflected in the outcomes reported for floating support. Nevertheless, the many of the accommodation-based schemes that are currently commissioned are unable to be truly personalised due to being institutional in design. They therefore fail to foster integration with the wider community. There are higher-costs to residents associated with staying in accommodation provision, making it difficult for someone to enter into employment whilst resident. A significant reliance on accommodation-based support, is out-of-step with up-to-date evidence of what works when providing housing and support for people who are homeless, such as supported lodgings schemes or initiatives using the Housing First approach, for which accommodation can be sourced from social and/or private landlords. Furthermore, much of the existing hostel type accommodation fails to satisfy the principles of being a psychologically informed environment, which is now the common expected standard of hostels for people who are homeless.

The outreach support available for people who are street homeless is an essential activity for ending the need for people to have to sleep rough. The joint working with Merseyside Police, is commendable. Alongside a street homeless population, there are a significant number of people who are involved in criminal and anti-social behaviour around Southport town centre, with stakeholder views being much of it is connected to drug use and/or dealing, or street drinking. These activities distort the picture of how many people are truly sleeping rough, and distract from efforts to reducing the levels of rough sleeping. There are other activities that are not taking place in Sefton, that would help to further reduce street homelessness, such as peer mentoring and awarding people personalised budgets.

It is likely that a significant number of people using services, such as drop-in centres, sit-up provision and advice centres are experiencing hidden homelessness. However, because of a lack of awareness about this form of homelessness, and there being no specifically commissioned services, people are reporting as experiencing another form of homelessness.

## 6. Resources for tackling homelessness

This chapter reviews the resources available to carry out activities to tackle homelessness. For the purpose of this review, resources being considered are the money, people and I.T. available to the local housing authority.

### 6.1 Money

The local housing authority invests substantial sums of its own money into activities carried out by voluntary organisations to tackle homelessness. This money is administered by numerous directorates throughout the local authority. Schemes benefiting from this investment have been referred to throughout the previous chapters of this report.

Sefton Council is legally obliged to funding the homelessness duties the law requires it to discharge. The Homelessness Service carries out an array of activities, including providing housing advice, homelessness prevention and advice, delivering the local homelessness strategy, commissioning and monitoring homelessness services and taking homelessness, plus procuring and administering temporary accommodation.

UK Government funding cutbacks since 2010, has meant the number of officers employed to administer the supported housing revenue grant programme have been significantly reduced, no longer is there a specific post holder to have oversight of the policy for and performance of the housing support services. This has resulted in a light touch approach to performance monitoring, and an end to of service reviews. Nevertheless, Sefton remains committed to funding housing related support services. Looking ahead the local authority will be required to carry out a supported housing needs mapping exercise under future funding arrangements proposed by the UK Government.

Sefton Council allocated just over £1.4m per year from its own budgets to fund local homelessness projects. The breakdown of spending for the current financial year (2017/18) is shown below:

- £478,350 – Homelessness Service
- £99,550 – Temporary Accommodation
- £873,100 – Supported Housing
  - £569,772 – accommodation-based support
  - £161,841 – floating support
  - £101,999 – housing advice and outreach

From 2012/13 – 2015/16, the UK Government awarded £405.6m for tackling homelessness across England. £351k was awarded directly to Sefton Council, out a total of £3.8m awarded to the six local authorities that make up the LCR. Of the latter sum, £1.3m was for initiatives covering the whole city region, of which an unknown amount of spending would have benefited persons from Sefton.

**Table 6: UK Government Homelessness Funding, 2012/13 – 2016/17, breakdown for Liverpool City Region and Sefton.**

Budget	Years	National total pot	LCR total allocation	Sefton allocation
Homelessness Prevention Grant	2012/13-2015/16	£315,000,000	£3,200,000	£345,311
Homelessness Transition Fund <sup>31</sup>	2011/12 – 2013/14	£20,000,000	£916,000*	£0
Homelessness Social Impact Bond <sup>32</sup>	2012	£5,000,000	£0	£0
Hospital Discharge Fund <sup>33</sup>	2013/14	£10,000,000	£196,000*	£0
Domestic Abuse <sup>34</sup>	2014/15 – 2015/16	£10m	£288,000	£0
Help Single Homeless Fund <sup>35</sup>	2014/15 – 2015/16	£8,000,000	£196,000*	£0
Fair Chance Fund <sup>36</sup>	2015/16 – 2017/18	£15,000,000	£550,000	£0
Homelessness Change Programme <sup>37</sup>	2015/16 – 2016/17	£15,000,000	£1,654,000	£0
Platform for Life <sup>38</sup>	2015/16 – 2016/17	£7,600,000	£0	£0
<b>Total</b>		<b>£405,600,000</b>	<b>£3,800,000</b>	<b>£346,311</b>

Source: Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government. Initiatives that benefited the whole of the LCR. All amounts have been rounded to nearest 000

Monies awarded from the Homelessness Transition Fund, the Hospital Discharge Fund and help Single Homeless Fund were awarded for the benefit whole city region including people from and in the Sefton local authority area, but were not specifically allocated to Sefton Council. There is no public record of how many people from Sefton benefited from these monies, nor how they benefited.

Monies from the Fair Chance Fund and Homelessness Change Programme, were awarded to some local authority areas in the LCR, but none of this was intended to benefit Sefton local authority area. No grant funds were awarded to any LCR local authorities from the Homelessness Social Impact Bond, nor Platform for Life.

While the UK Government continues to reduce the overall amount of money its allocates to local authorities, the portion awarded for tackling homelessness has increased by 59% from the previous spending period (2012/13 – 2015/16) when compared to the current spending

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/All%20HTF%20Grants%20to%20Date%20with%20Project%20Type.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/london-homelessness-social-impact-bond-evaluation>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ten-million-pound-cash-boost-to-improve-the-health-of-homeless-people>

<sup>34</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/410137/150305\\_List\\_of\\_successful\\_ar\\_eas.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/410137/150305_List_of_successful_ar_eas.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/384582/141127\\_Single\\_Homeless\\_Fund\\_List\\_of\\_Successful\\_Projects.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/384582/141127_Single_Homeless_Fund_List_of_Successful_Projects.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/660575/Fair\\_Chance\\_Fund\\_interim\\_report\\_Year\\_One.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/660575/Fair_Chance_Fund_interim_report_Year_One.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-change-and-platform-for-life-funds-2015-to-2017-allocations>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-change-and-platform-for-life-funds-2015-to-2017-allocations>

period (2016/17 – 2019/20). From the four years from 2016/17, the money UK Government has directly allocated Sefton has increased by 32%:

- Homelessness Prevention Grant £346,311
- Flexible Homelessness Support Grant £505,476
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 New Burdens Grant £163,909
- Total £505,476

Sefton Council has received a Homelessness Prevention Grant since 2003, the purpose of which is to aid the delivery of activities set-out in the Council’s homelessness strategy. The amount awarded by the UK Government has remained broadly consistent since this funding stream was created 15 years ago, even though in real terms the costs have increased. The funding can be used for initiatives carried out by the local authority or invested into projects operated by voluntary organisations. The current funding is guaranteed until March 2020. It is not guaranteed that this funding stream will continue in the next spending period starting from April 2020, but it is possible that it will.

Sefton Council has the second largest allocation from the national Homelessness Prevention Grant fund. The amount equals 10% of the total amount allocation to the six local authorities that make-up the Liverpool City Region. The amount is 56% higher than the smallest allocation, made to Halton and St Helens and 84% lower than the largest allocation, made to Liverpool.

**Table 7: Homelessness Prevention Grant 2016/17 – 2019/20 Liverpool City Region allocation comparison**

Amount	Area
Halton	£196,000
Knowsley	£224,000
Liverpool	£2,058,000
Sefton	£344,000
St Helens	£196,000
Wirral	£260,000
Liverpool City Region	£3,278,000

Source: Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government. Amounts have been rounded to nearest 000

The Flexible Homelessness Support Grant allocated by the Ministry for Communities & Local Government, replaced the Temporary Accommodation Subsidy regime previously administered by the Department for Work & Pensions, for more than a decade until March 2017. Under the previous system, Sefton Council claimed no (nil) subsidy; therefore, the local authority is a net beneficiary under the new grant funding rules. The new funding arrangement replaced a tightly controlled subsidy system to procure and manage temporary accommodation, which could only be used once a person had become homeless. The new grant system enables flexibility to spend the funding on preventing homelessness, in addition to assisting those who are homeless. This funding is guaranteed until March 2020, it’s uncertain if this funding stream will continue in the new spending period starting from April 2020.

Sefton Council has been awarded the second largest allocation from the national Flexible Homelessness Support Grant fund. The amount equals 15% of the total amount allocation to the six local authorities that make-up the Liverpool City Region. The amount is 61% higher

the smallest allocation and made to St Helens and 70% lower than the largest allocation, made to Liverpool.

**Table 8: Flexible Homelessness Support Grant 2017/18 – 2019/20, Liverpool City Region allocation comparison**

Amount	Area
Halton	£344,000
Knowsley	£388,000
Liverpool	£1,633,000
Sefton	£503,000
St Helens	£199,000
Wirral	£273,000
Liverpool City Region	£3,340,000

Source: Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government. Amounts have been rounded to nearest 000

The UK Government has made the new burdens grant available to help meet the requirement of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. An example of this is the homelessness service upgrading their data system to allow a better understanding of how the new legislation is changing homelessness prevention in the area. This funding is guaranteed only two years and will not be available in the new spending period starting April 2020.

Sefton Council has been awarded the third largest allocation from the national Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 New Burdens Grant fund. The amount equals 13% of the total amount allocation to the six local authorities that make up the Liverpool City Region. The amount is 43% higher than the smallest allocation, made to Halton and 75% lower than the largest allocation, made to Liverpool.

**Table 9: Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 New Burdens Grant 2017/18 – 2019/20, Liverpool City Region allocation comparison**

Amount	Area
Halton	£94,000
Knowsley	£142,000
Liverpool	£462,000
Sefton	£163,000
St Helens	£123,000
Wirral	£200,000
Liverpool City Region	£1,184,000

Source: Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government. Amounts have been rounded to nearest 000

Since 2016/17, The UK Government has distributed £160m funding from a number of grant programmes, none of these monies have been awarded to Sefton, nor any other local authority area in the LCR combined authority area.

In 2018/19, the LCR Combined Authority was allocated £7.7m<sup>39</sup> to pilot the Housing First approach across Merseyside and Halton) in parallel with the Combined Authorities for Greater Manchester and the West Midlands). Some of this funding is likely to be targeted towards people experiencing homelessness in Sefton but at the time of writing precise details are yet to be agreed.

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/housing-secretary-james-brokenshire-awards-funding-to-reduce-rough-sleeping>

## 6.2 People

Sefton Council has established 13 full-time posts to administer homelessness functions, including temporary accommodation. Three of these posts have been established in addition to the usual number of employees, in anticipation of an increase in workload due to the new enhanced and extended duties coming into force, following the enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The position of manager, which controls the service budget, carries out staff meetings and supervision and oversees team performance, liaison with internal and external partners at various local and sub-regional forums, has been vacant since December 2017. The role is being integrated into the overall establishment of managers that will oversee the new locality-based working model. This post requires a thorough understanding and knowledge of homelessness law and analytical understanding of homelessness policy.

The post of team leader oversees the quality of casework practice, along with carrying a small caseload.

A total of nine housing options officers are responsible for homelessness prevention, housing options and advice, plus homelessness applications. The employees cover a mixture of pre-booked appointments, plus walk-in presentations. The team work standard daytime office hours throughout the week. Officers receive training on homelessness law and practice from the National Homelessness Advisory Service and other independent providers of training.

The temporary accommodation at Lonsdale Road is managed by two members of staff, both of which carry out building management tasks, provide support to residents (including help to move-on), plus respond to applications made for homelessness assistance outside of standard office hours. The two staff work a rota system, whereby for one week they are on day duty at the hostel and for a second week they provide the out-of-hours emergency homelessness assistance.

A structure chart for the team is shown below.

**Picture 2: Sefton Council Homelessness Staffing Structure, April 2017**



Following the enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 it is widely expected there will be an increase in the number of people making an application for homelessness assistance, potentially by one-third of current levels. Furthermore, the typical time period a case will remain open will increase to twice as long as presently. Therefore, even with three extra staff it is questionable as to whether existing staff levels will be adequate.

The number of people employed to oversee the commissioning and monitoring of homelessness support housing services has dramatically reduced following cutbacks to supported housing. At the time of carrying out this review, not one person was employed to administer the supported housing programme, which had formerly been done by an entire team. As a result, only limited activity can take place to re-commission services, update and renew contractual terms, monitor and manage performance, and carry out evaluations and reviews of services. This means the local authority cannot be certain that what it is commissioning is good value, effective, or of a decent quality.

### 6.3 I.T.

Sefton Council's Homelessness Service until recently has used a Microsoft Access Database to record case work outcomes. However, due to the age and limitations of the product, an agreement has been reached for a new software system to be introduced. This system delivers a range of automated efficiencies, that will help the local authority to deliver to discharge all duties arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, including receiving referrals from public authorities. The cloud-based system is designed to help the Council to easily compile statistical data for return to the UK Government and will ensure compliance with the GDPR.

### 6.4 Conclusions about resources for tackling homelessness

Budgets for the funding of activities to prevent homelessness, secure accommodation and provide support are carried out by different people across various sections of the local

authority. While it is positive that various departments of the council commission services that tackle homelessness, the separate arrangements for commissioning and contract management doesn't foster consistent practice, nor allow the sharing of intelligence. Achievements accomplished from expenditure of the UK Government funding awards must be evidenced to demonstrate how Sefton Council is able to deliver more effective, better quality or greater value outcomes for local housing authority and persons who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Securing assurances of funding arrangements from April 2020 is essential. With homelessness levels forecast to increase during the next five years, current funding levels will need to be at least maintained, and ideally increased.

Current staffing levels are unlikely to be adequate, with future levels of homelessness forecast to increase, further staffing resources are going to be needed. The additional burdens arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 will result in the increase of workloads, meaning more staff will be required or existing localities staff used more effectively. The requirements of the duties mean that current splits in responsibilities should be reconsidered. The out-of-hours element of the staffing rota for arrangements for Lonsdale House is relatively expensive and doesn't make best use of the staffing resource. The two temporary accommodation posts should be retained, however the out-of-hours responsibility for the roles should be removed and transferred to the homelessness officers. This would allow the accommodation support posts to be refocused on providing a floating support type of model to occupants of temporary accommodation. More staffing resource is needed to better commissioning and contract management of homelessness services.

The updated I.T. software system will prove to be invaluable, creating time efficiencies for staff, as well as controlling the consistency and quality of the work of the team.



## 7. Consultation

This chapter shows the results from two surveys carried out with service users and stakeholders. The surveys were carried out to gather quantitative data on people's attitudes, opinions and experiences of homelessness in Sefton.

### 7.1 Service user consultation

On 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2018 a total of 10 face-to-face interviews were undertaken to with people who were experiencing homelessness. 6 of the interviewees identified as male, 4 as female. Their ages ranged from twenty up to fifty-five years, with majority being in their thirties. Interviews took place at Bosco House, Leyland Road and Southport Housing Advice Centre. Interviews typically took 45 minutes.

The interviews were semi-structured around the following five key questions:

1. What caused you to become homeless?
2. What could have prevented your from becoming homeless?
3. What help did you get to secure accommodation?
4. What support are you getting to avoid a repeat occurrence of homelessness?
5. What could be done to better tackle homelessness?

In response the first question, interviewees revealed varied reasons for why they had become homeless. Half of all interviewees said their use of drugs and involvement in crime caused them to become homeless. One-third said being a victim of domestic violence and abuse caused them to become homeless. Another interviewee reported that being convicted of for sexual exploitation resulted in loss of employment and housing. One other person said eviction due rent arrears caused them to be evicted.

In terms of preventing homelessness, all interviewees who had previously been in prison unanimously agreed that more could be done before discharge. The lack of accommodation to go to upon release meant that many people quickly ended-up committing in crime again. Common complaints were that being released from Prison on a Friday lunchtime was unhelpful, as this didn't allow enough time to secure accommodation. Interviewees who had previously been in the care a social services authority said more needed to be done to explore housing options before their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, along with better support after they'd left care. Those who were victims of domestic abuse didn't believe that anything could have prevented them from becoming homeless. Others also said that more secure employment and better pay would have helped to prevent homelessness. More support and understanding from social landlord was the opinion of another interviewee. More readily available social housing to rent would have helped to prevent homelessness was also a common view.

When seeking to secure accommodation, all interviewees first tried to help themselves, secondly sought advice from friends or family, thirdly went to voluntary organisations for assistance, and only approached the local authority when all else had failed. The majority of

people described experiences of being hidden homeless before they went on to be single homeless, with also becoming street homeless. Some people moved back and forth these three forms of homelessness over a period of months or in some cases years. People were very reluctant to live in a hostel. While some interviewees reported that the standard of supported accommodation had been better than what they expected, especially at Bosco House, others didn't like having to share facilities or having no choice about who they lived alongside. Some people complained that repairs took longer than they thought necessary. Some described being ready to move-on from temporary or supported accommodation, but not really being sure how to go about achieving this. Many had only received help to apply for social housing and hadn't considered any other options. Almost everyone expressed frustration with the choice-based letting scheme, Property Pool Plus. Reasons for varied but included there not being enough properties to bid on, too many people bidding on the same property, and perceptions of being unfairly excluded due to former convictions and/or rent arrears. Generally, those interviewees who had used the sit-up service, did so reluctantly. They described unhappiness about not having anywhere to go all day, and thought the sit-up was better than being outside (especially in cold weather), but only just. There was some complaints about rules concerning when and who could visit.

Interviewees described that mixed experiences of the support they were in receipt of. Some reported that they were pleased with frequency of contact with their support worker, felt their support plan was truly personalised and appreciated the opportunity to attend residents' meetings. Some said non-accommodation-based support ensured their dignity was upheld and were genuinely non-judgemental. Sourcing clothes, food, a place to talk was very much valued. Help with practicalities such as claiming welfare benefits, arranging property viewings, organising appointments, and attending meeting with other professionals (e.g. GP, social worker) was highly welcome. Others said that they would have liked a choice of support worker. For as many people who wanted support into medium and long-term, there was an equal number who believed they only required support for a short-term. Some viewed the support they currently received as intrusive and unwelcome. Many talked about how the support they were getting, was helping them to recover from their experience of being homeless. This was allowing them to make changes about their drug use, offending behaviour, relationships, and how much responsibility they took for themselves.

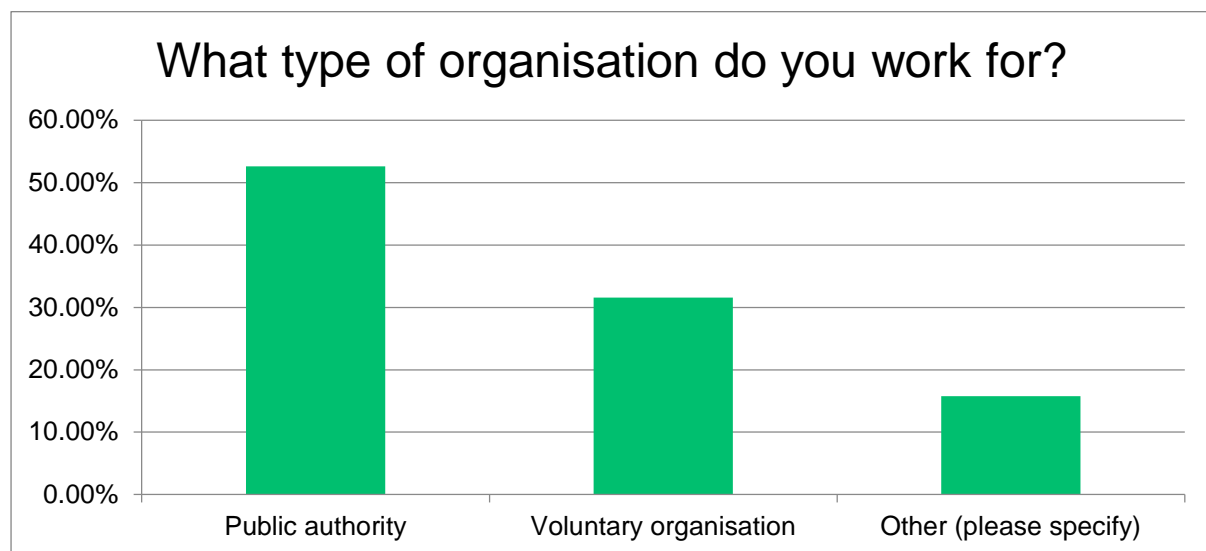
Things that could be done better to tackle homelessness included:

- Better support before, during and after leaving care
- More accommodation generally, and specifically social rented housing
- Less shared housing and more self-contained accommodation
- Support that can continue for as long as needed and vary in intensity depending on level of needs at any given time.
- Enough housing so there is no need for the sit-up service
- Easier access to housing advice
- Bring empty homes and commercial building back into use
- More funding for voluntary organisations that provide housing and support to tackle homelessness
- Housing costs being kept outside of Universal Credit

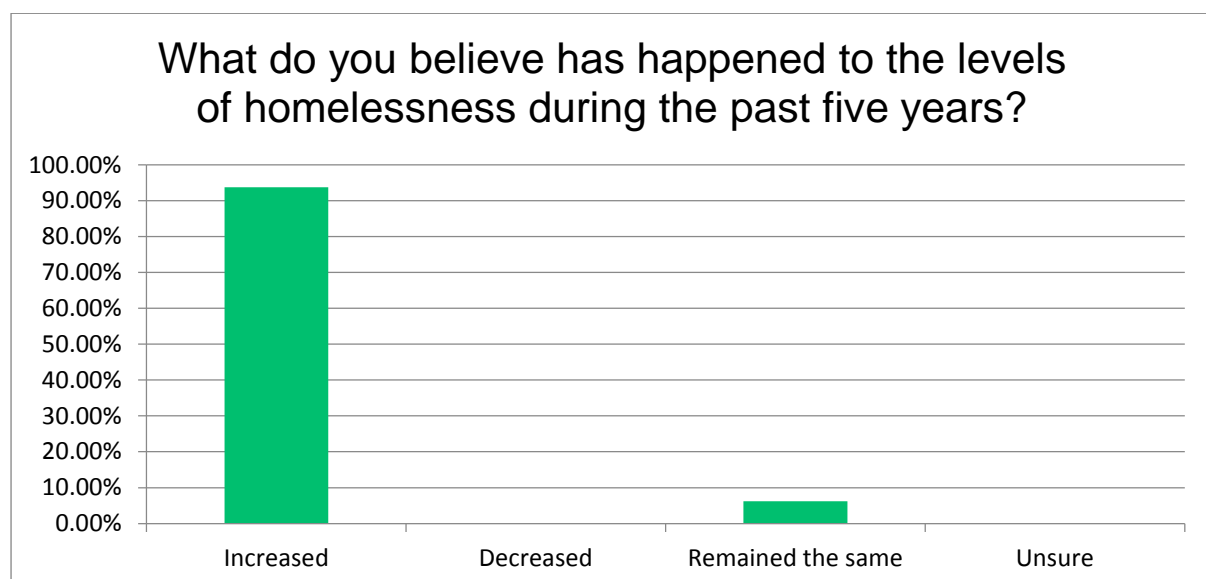
### 7.3 Stakeholder consultation

On 13 March 2018 a total of 48 email invitations to complete the Sefton Homeless Strategy 2018 – 2023 Stakeholder Consultation were sent out. When the survey closed a total 19 responses had been received – a 39% response rate. Out of the 19 that responded 3 skipped all but the very first question - so the highest response rate we see in the survey 84% - equating to 16 actual responses. You should therefore assume a response rate of 84% unless otherwise stated.

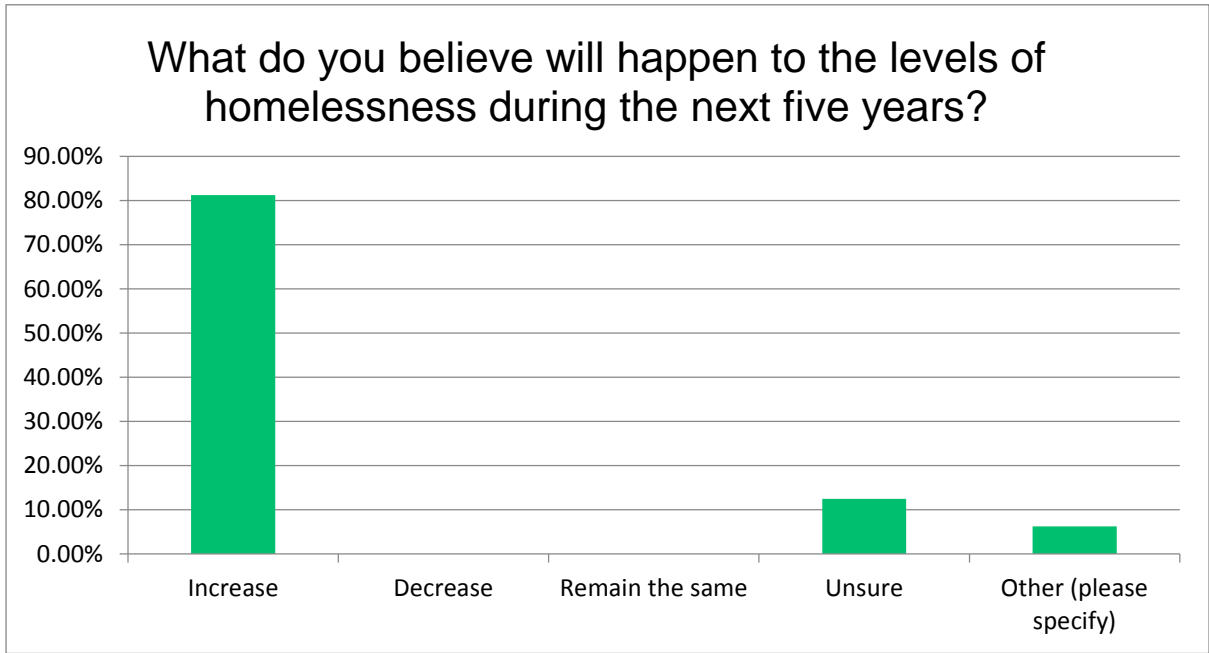
53% of responders were from a public authority, with the majority from employees of Sefton Council, 31% of respondents were from voluntary organisations (e.g. Light for Life, Bosco). The remaining 16% were from other organisations (e.g. social landlords).



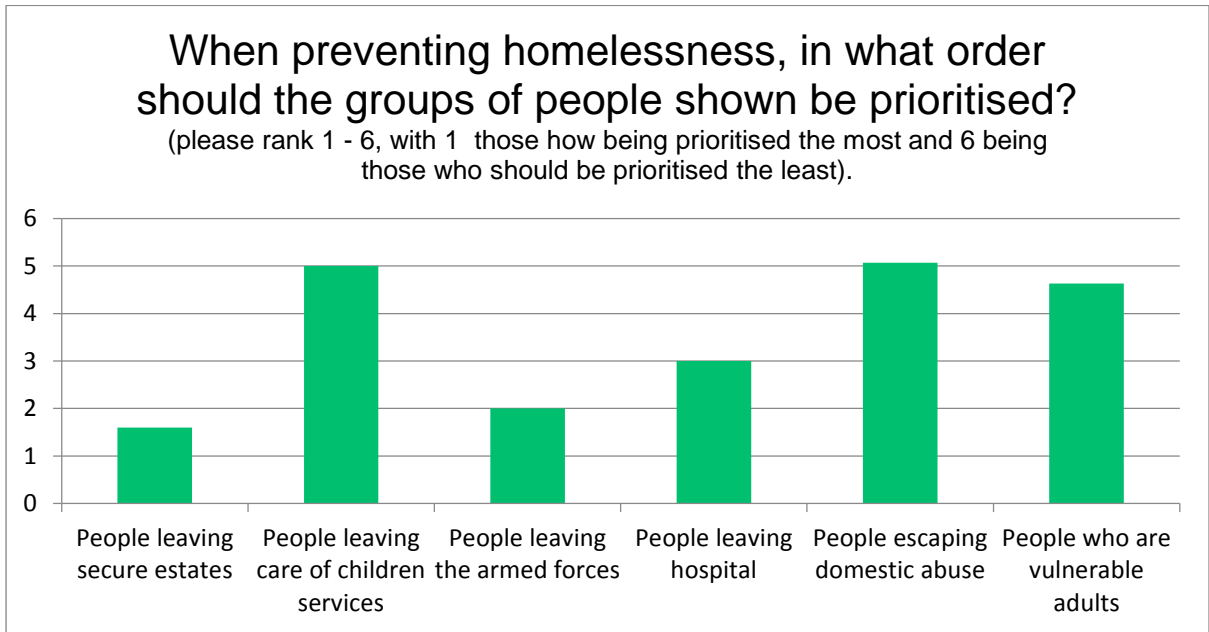
All but 1 of the 16 respondents (94%) stated that they believed homelessness had increased over the last five years, 1 respondent felt the level of homelessness had remained the same.



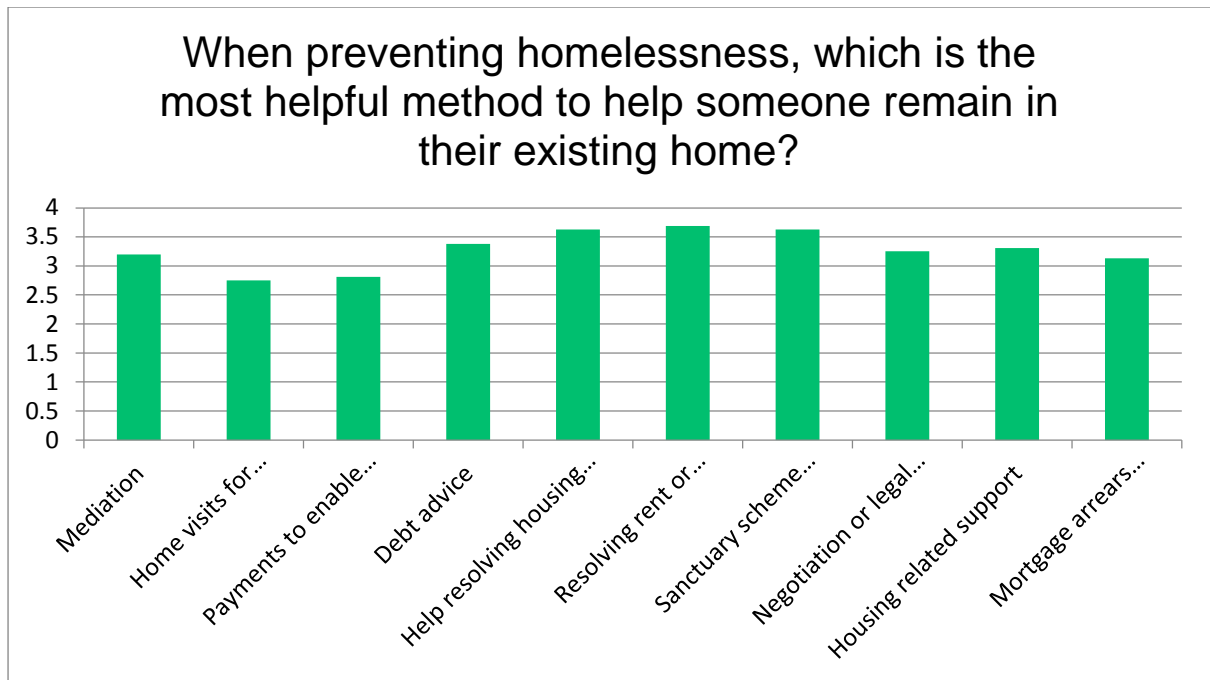
When asked what they believed would happen to the levels of homelessness during the next five years 68% believed levels would increase and 16% were unsure.



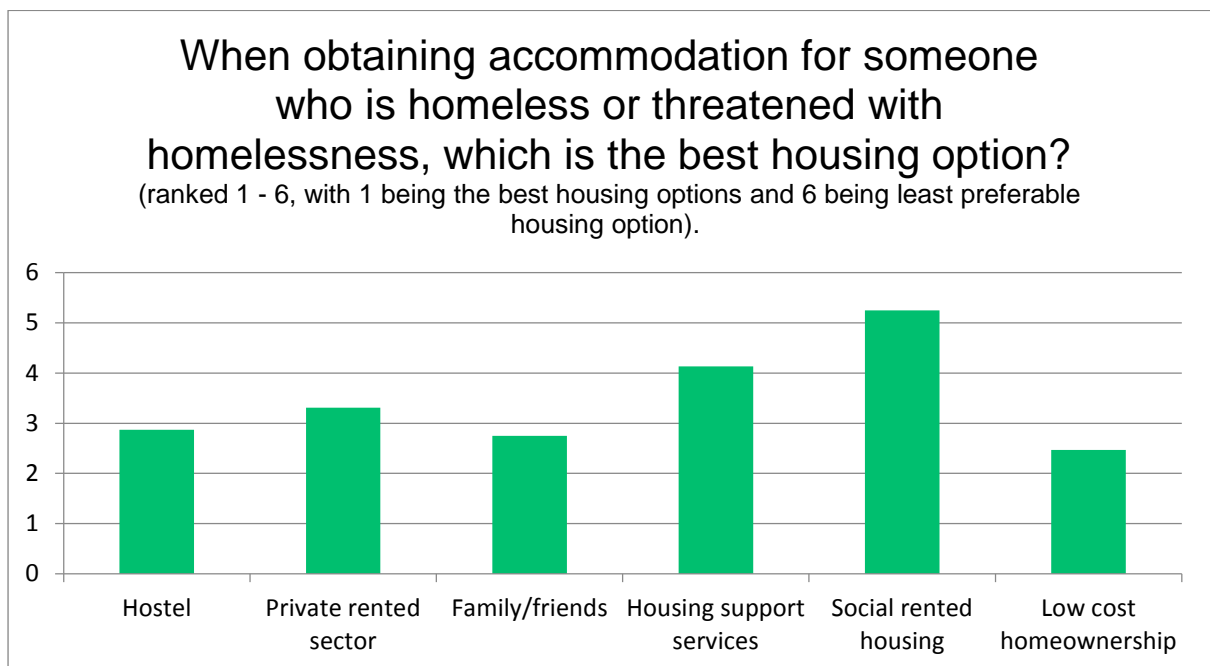
People escaping domestic abuse, leaving care of children’s services and vulnerable adults received the highest and almost equal ranking from respondents. Those leaving hospital were ranked next. Ranked significantly lower were those leaving the armed forces and the lowest priority was given to those leaving secure estates.



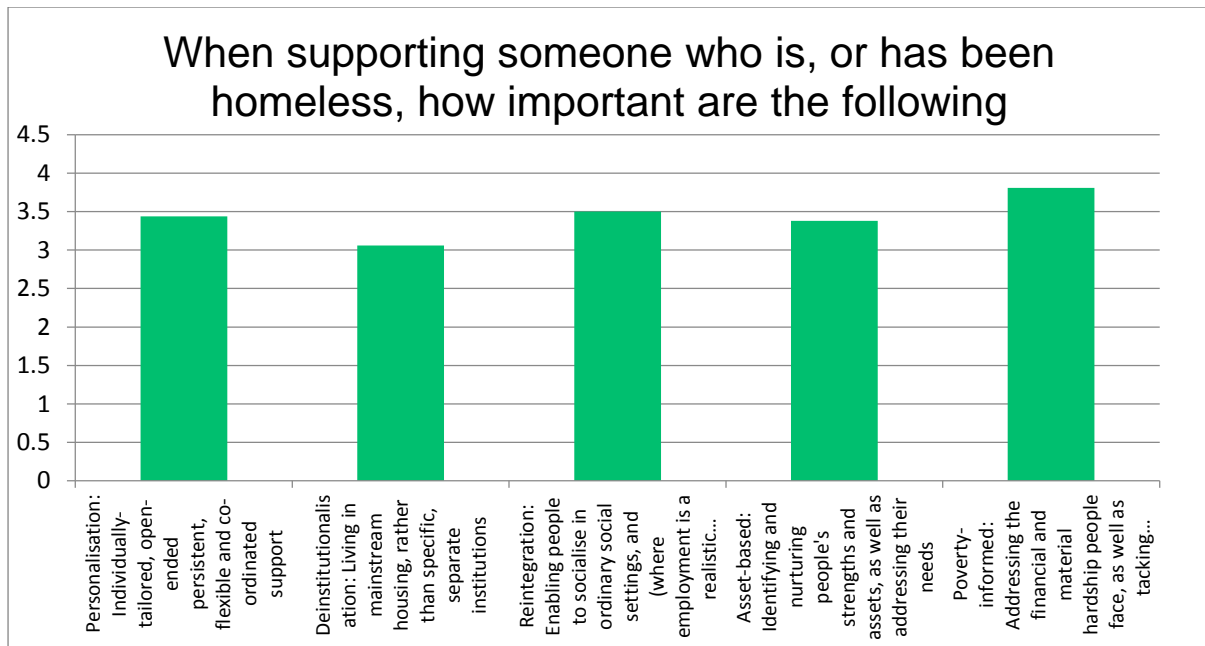
The wide range of prevention methods listed were weighted fairly equally by those who responded. This highlights the complexity of homelessness and array of prevention methods required.



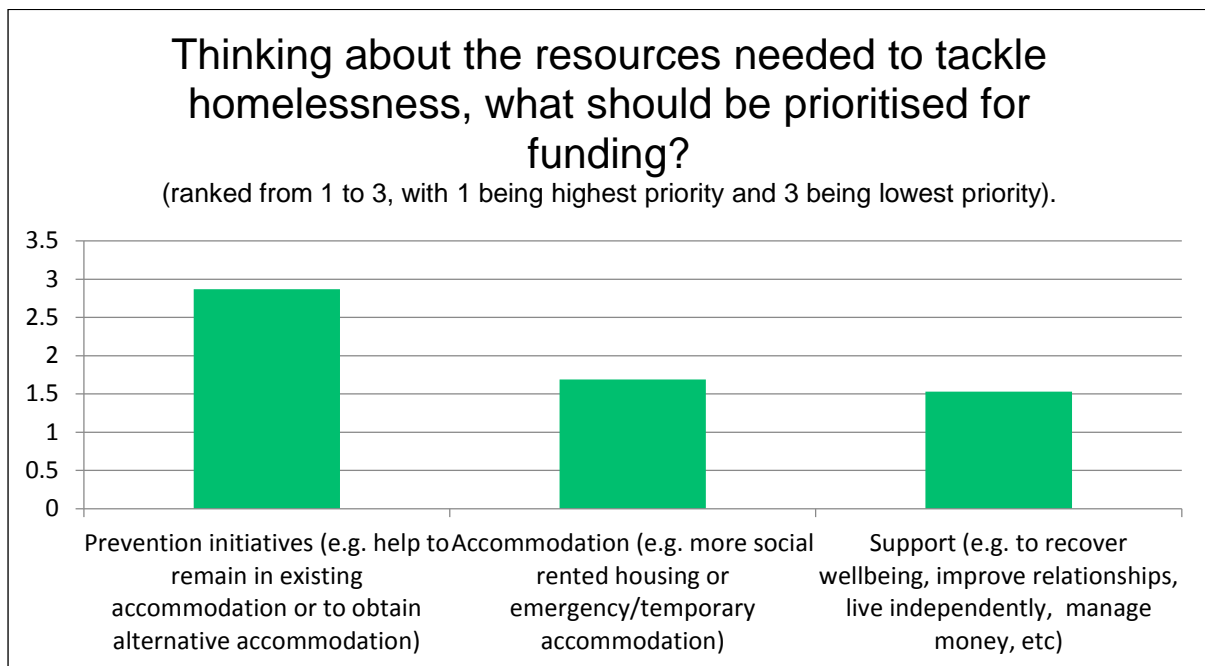
Social rented housing was clearly seen as the best option for someone who is or is threatened with homelessness, followed by housing support services. Accommodation in the private rented sector was ranked in the middle. Ranked equally low were hostels, staying with family/friends and low-cost homeownership.



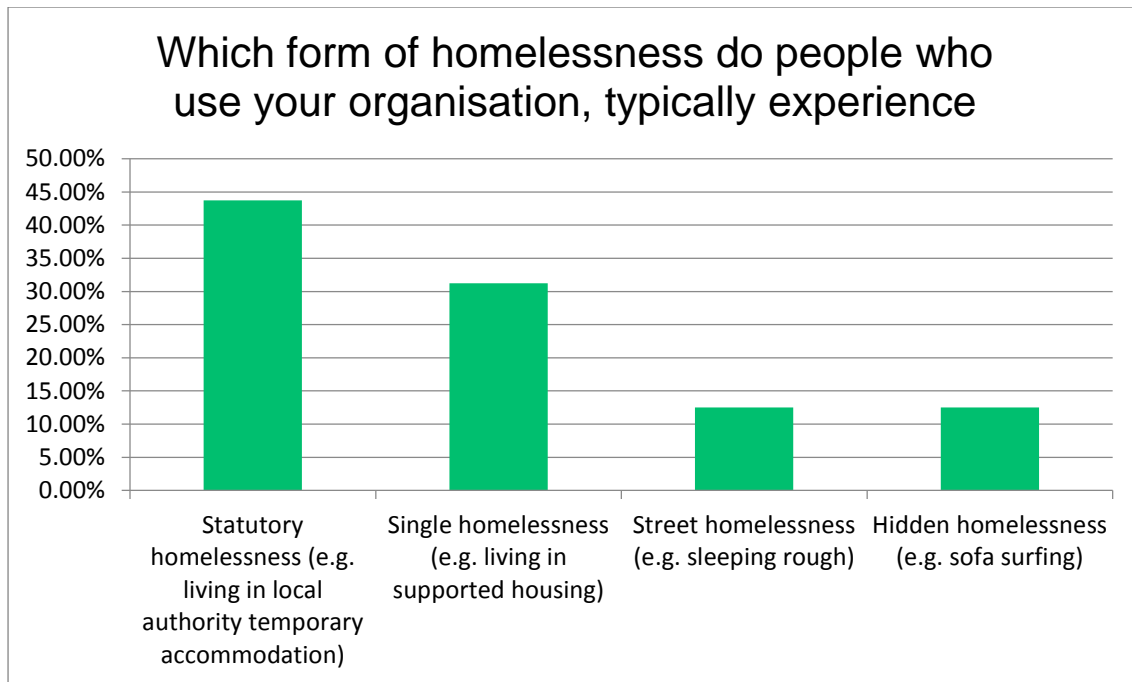
Individually tailored support, mainstream housing, ordinary social settings and asset-based support were weighted fairly equally by those who responded. Respondents identified that dealing with issues around poverty and personalisation as the most important factor when supporting those who are or have been homeless.



When asked what resources were needed to tackle homelessness 81% of the respondents ranked prevention initiatives as the highest priority for funding. With just 13% and 6% of respondents respectively ranking Accommodation and support initiatives as a priority to fund.



Nearly half, 44%, of respondents were dealing with cases of statutory homeless and 31% single homelessness. Responding organisations are dealing with fewer cases of street and hidden and homelessness.



#### 7.4 Conclusions about consultation

Service users reported that the causes of their homelessness were primarily due to social factors foremost and structural issues secondarily.

Service users agreed that more could and should be done to prevent homelessness, especially by public authorities.

Service users agreed that more accommodation is need to help people exist homelessness. There was a strong preference for social rented housing.

Service users reported that support has worked best when it was personalised and persistent.

Stakeholders agreed that the levels of homelessness have increased even though statistics collected by Sefton Council show that the number of persons becoming homelessness has not really changed over the past five years (as reported in chapter two of this document). The majority of stakeholders thought homelessness levels would continue to rise over the next five years, aligning with forecast we made in chapter two of this report.

Stakeholders agreed that housing-led options, such as social housing and community-based support housing were preferred options above hostel accommodation. This is reflective of the fact that much of the hostel accommodation is institutional, a finding made in chapter five of this report.

Stakeholders believed it was tackling poverty was the most important thing service uses needed support with. This is reflective of the fact the poverty is the main cause of homelessness, as discussed in chapter two of this report.

Stakeholders agreed that prevention of homelessness was viewed as a more important activity to fund than securing accommodation and providing support. The preference for this activity aligns with the fact the majority of survey respondents were from public authorities, where prevention is already a common aspect of much public-sector policy.



## 8. Findings

This chapter re-visits the conclusions set out at the end of each chapter of the report. As a direct response to the conclusions are a series of recommendations. These recommendations are for the use of the local authority to prioritise actions for the next homelessness strategy.

### 8.1 Conclusions

1. More could be done with data held by local and national public authorities to identify people likely to be at risk of any form of homelessness by, for example, characteristic and/or electoral ward area. Interrogation of such data, held by the local authority, voluntary organisations and others, would help to inform the design and delivery activities for preventing homelessness, securing accommodation and providing support.
2. Levels of homelessness in Sefton have remained unchanged during the past five years, whereas increases have been recorded across the Liverpool City Region, the North West and England. The statistics don't reveal sufficient reasons for these differences in trend. The levels of rough sleeping have increased, as is the case elsewhere across the Liverpool City Region. It is important to note that wider housing markets factors, such as housing prices, annual earnings and ratio of earnings to prices are adverse in Sefton compared to the Liverpool City Region, the North West and England. This, therefore, may have had a positive causative effect on the levels of homelessness. Less than half of people making an application to Sefton Council for assistance, due to being homeless or threatened with homelessness, are found to have a priority need for accommodation (e.g. owed a statutory homelessness duty). The dominant characteristics of people applying to Sefton Council for assistance are persons aged 25-44 years of age, of a white ethnic origin, who are male. This profile is not reflective of whom the statute currently is more likely to afford assistance and is distinctive to elsewhere.
3. Taking into account the current levels of homelessness, alongside a range of predictive factors, we forecast future levels of homelessness to increase, albeit at a lower rate than across the Liverpool City Region, the North West and England. The expected increase will primarily be due to childhood poverty rates. A secondary driver for this predicted increase, is local higher than average rates of unemployment and persons of a working age who are not economically active. Especially high is the rate of people claiming out work benefits, along with the lower than average earnings. Housing market factors, are likely to push up the levels of homelessness in the future, due more adverse housing price affordability problems when compared to the Liverpool City Region, the North West and England.

4. The extension of duties owed to persons who are threatened with homelessness from April 2018, means that the local authority now must ensure there are a comprehensive range of activities in place to prevent homelessness. An improved system of evidencing outcomes from homelessness prevention activities needs to be put in place. Efforts made by public authorities and voluntary organisations all need to be recognised. Policies, procedures, process charts and paperwork templates for the whole array of prevention schemes, will all need to be reviewed and updated.
5. Efforts to improve homelessness prevention activities for people leaving secure estates should be encouraged. Sufficient time and commitment needs to be made by both the local authority and criminal justice agencies to establish a pathway that guarantees nobody leaves prison to no fixed abode. Sefton provide a range of homelessness prevention activities for people leaving care, however these practices and protocols could be improved. A better understanding is needed of what, if anything, could be done better to prevent homelessness for armed forces personnel. This would be best accomplished on a city-region level. Preventing homelessness prior to discharge from hospital should comply with practices promoted by the Department of Health, a short-life joint working group should be established between the local authority housing services and local NHS bodies to transform local procedures. Activities to prevent homelessness due to domestic abuse need to read across into the local domestic abuse strategy. Outcomes achieved from domestic abuse commissioned services should be shared where relevant with those responsible for the forthcoming new local homelessness strategy. Activities to prevent vulnerable adults from becoming homeless need to be developed, with better links being made between duties arising from the Care Act 2014 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Specific interventions for those most at risk of homelessness (e.g. adults experiencing mental ill health) need to developed, along the lines of those already in place for 16 and 17-year-olds at risk of homelessness. Likewise, activities to prevent other persons more likely to become homeless, such people with a substance dependency, committing criminal offences, or involved in sex work, all need to be developed, with primary responsibility being taken by public health and police officials, supported by the Sefton Council.
6. Sefton Council is reliant on a small number of initiatives to carryout pre-crisis homelessness prevention activity. Locally, there is too much of an emphasis on helping people to obtain alternative accommodation, and not enough focus on to helping people to remain in existing accommodation. This could be as result of the local authority not developing enough initiatives, equally it could be due to people not seeking assistance early enough for remaining at home to be viable.
7. The fact that most of people who are owed the main homelessness duty, are provided temporary accommodation, shows Sefton Council understand what is required of them in law. The local authority has a portfolio of its own stock for use as temporary accommodation, however this isn't always nearby a persons' last settled address. The Council should consider reviewing it's model and approach for provision of it's own temporary accommodation. Nevertheless, the lack of use of bed and breakfast accommodation is very positive. The growing use of private rented

sector properties via Excel Housing Solutions is also very positive. A better understanding is needed as to why there are exceptionally high levels of lone male applicants in temporary accommodation, relative the number of households with dependent children. The discrepancy between the number of black or other minority households for whom a homelessness duty is accepted, and then provided with temporary accommodation, must be clarified. The highly successful move-on rates from temporary accommodation, with almost everyone departing within six months must be praised. This might partially explain why relative rates of temporary accommodation usage in Sefton is lower than elsewhere. The rising demand for temporary accommodation needs to be monitored.

8. Following the enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Sefton Council must rapidly develop a comprehensive range of initiatives to carry homelessness relief casework. The lack of relief activity will result in people continuing to experience street or hidden homelessness for longer than they otherwise would have to.
9. Sefton Council must work harder to forge relationship with private rented sector landlords. The local authority must work in tandem with Light for Life to make a concerted effort to make the best use of the private rented sector, and ensure landlords get the help they need to manage their properties.
10. Sefton Council need to update and review the contractual terms agreed with One Vision Housing to ensure these arrangements are compliant with the law, plus reflect best value. The Property Pool Plus Housing Allocations Policy needs to be amended to reflect what is required in law for homeless applications who are accepted on to the common housing register. Social landlords should do more to highlight the work they do to tackle homelessness, through letting homes to people in housing need, and beyond in terms of general housing management functions that help to prevent
11. Further investigation is needed into why the rate of people becoming homeless who have mental ill health is so much higher in Sefton than it is nationally.
12. Sefton Council's plans for locality-based working should ensure that the support statutory homeless households receive from various departments of the local authority, will be able to reach more people and be better coordinated. Hosting homelessness, social care and other public service together in three key locations should increase the success rate of preventing the re-occurrence of homelessness. This should be especially beneficial to families, young people and victims of domestic abuse.
13. Sefton Council commissions a range of supported accommodation for single homeless people. The Council's should be applauded for their decision to procure a consortium to provide the accommodation-based single homeless support, as this has helped to drive-up quality and consistency of practice, while also improving value for money. All of the service providers are offering creative support, which helps people to feel empowered to make changes to their lives. As would be expected residents of accommodation-based support identified a higher number of support

needs compared to floating support, the disbursed units of accommodation-based support recorded the longest length of support (231 days) and highest number of needs met however a link between length of support time to outcome was not reflected in the outcomes reported for floating support. Nevertheless, many of the accommodation-based schemes that are currently commissioned are unable to be truly personalised due to being institutional in design. They therefore fail to foster integration with the wider community. There are higher-costs to residents associated with staying in accommodation provision, making it difficult for someone to enter into employment whilst resident. A significant reliance on accommodation-based support, is out-of-step with up-to-date evidence of what works when providing housing and support for people who are homeless, such as supported lodgings schemes or initiatives using the Housing First approach, for which accommodation can be sourced from social and/or private landlords. Furthermore, much of the existing hostel type accommodation fails to satisfy the principles of being a psychologically informed environment, which is now the common expected standard of hostels for people who are homeless.

14. The outreach support which is available for people who are street homeless is an essential activity for ending the need for people to have to sleep rough. The joint work with Merseyside Police, is commendable. Alongside a street homeless population, is a significant number of people who are involved in criminal and anti-social behaviour around Southport town centre, much of it connected to drug use and/or dealing, or street drinking, These activities distort the picture of how many people are truly sleeping rough, and distract from efforts to reducing the levels of rough sleeping. There are other activities that are not taking place in Sefton, that would help to further reduce street homelessness, such as peer mentoring and awarding people personalised budgets.
15. It is likely that a significant number of people using services, such as drop-in centres, sit-up provision and advice centres are experiencing hidden homelessness. However, because of a lack of awareness about this form of homelessness, and there being no specifically commissioned services, people are reporting as experiencing another form of homelessness.
16. Budgets for the funding of activities to prevent homelessness, secure accommodation and provide support are carried out by different people across various sections of the local authority. While it is positive that various departments of the council commission services that tackle homelessness, the separate arrangements for commissioning and contract management doesn't foster consistent practice, nor allow the sharing of intelligence.
17. Achievements accomplished from expenditure of the UK Government funding awards must be evidenced to demonstrate how Sefton Council is able to deliver more effective, better quality or greater value outcomes for local housing authority and persons who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Securing assurances of funding arrangements from April 2020 is essential. With homelessness levels forecast to increase during the next five years, current funding levels will need to be at least maintained, and ideally increased.

18. Current staffing levels are unlikely to be adequate, with future levels of homelessness forecast to increase, further employees are going to be needed. The additional burdens arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 will result in the increase of workloads, meaning more staff resource will be required. The requirements of the duties mean that current splits in responsibilities should be reconsidered. The hour-of-hours element of the staffing rota for arrangements for Lonsdale House is relatively expensive and doesn't make best use of the staffing resource. The two temporary accommodation posts should be retained, however the out-of-hours responsibility for the roles should be removed and transferred to the homelessness officers. This would allow the accommodation support posts to be refocused on providing a floating support type of model to occupants of temporary accommodation. More staffing resource is needed to better commission and contract manage homelessness services.
19. The updated I.T. software system will prove to be invaluable, creating time efficiencies for staff, as well as controlling the consistency and quality of the work of the team.
20. Service users reported that the causes of their homelessness were primarily due to social factors foremost and structural issues secondarily.
21. Service users agreed that more could and should be done to prevent homelessness, especially by public authorities.
22. Service users agreed that more accommodation is needed to help people exist homelessness. There was a strong preference for social rented housing.
23. Service users reported that support worked best when it was personalised and persistent.
24. Stakeholders agreed that the levels of homelessness have increased even though statistics collected by Sefton Council show that the number of persons becoming homelessness has not really changed over the past five years (as reported in chapter two of this document). The majority of stakeholders thought homelessness levels would continue to rise over the next five years, aligning with forecast we made in chapter two of this report.
25. Stakeholders agreed that housing-led options, such as social housing and community-based support housing were preferred options above hostel accommodation. This is reflective of the fact that much of the hostel accommodation is institutional, a finding made in chapter five of this report.

## 8.2 Recommendations

1. To provide an annual report explaining the current levels of homelessness to elected councillors and chief officers, in order to aid decision making.

2. Commission an external audit of the Council's own homelessness service, to ensure it represents best value, is efficient in the administration of its statutory duties and offers quality advice and assistance. The inspection should focus on the following themes:
  - a. Accessibility
  - b. Diversity
  - c. Homelessness prevention, housing advice and options
  - d. Homelessness applications and decisions
  - e. Temporary accommodation
  - f. Resources
3. Carry out a homelessness impact assessment on any policy adopted by public authorities in Sefton, to ensure all local plans actively contribute to the reduction of homelessness, by way of tackling poverty, labour market problems, or housing market issues.
4. Introducing a monitoring system for capturing homelessness prevention outcomes achieved from other departments of the local authority, along with other public authorities and voluntary organisations.
5. Increase early homelessness prevention activities by
  - a. Adopting a pathway to prevent homelessness for people leaving secure estates, akin to the one in already in force throughout Wales (this would benefit from being done on a city-regional basis).
  - b. Review the local Armed Forces Covenant to ensure the prevention of homelessness is suitably reflected as a priority in the document. Look to develop a city-regional approach to this matter.
  - c. Improve existing protocols for the prevention of homelessness for people leaving care, by adopting a pathway similar to the arrangements put in place by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council.
  - d. Re-affirm the pathway to prevent homelessness for people ready to be discharged from hospital, using the template protocol published by Homeless Link and endorsed by the Department of Health & Social Care
  - e. Better links to services provided locally for tackling domestic abuse to those for homelessness.
  - f. Align the duty to prevent homelessness introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, with the duty to prevent social care needs, found in the Care Act 2014, by creating a common approach to assessing needs.
  - g. Introduce activities to identify the risk of homelessness among people who have poor health and prevent it, minimise the impact on health from people who are already experiencing homelessness, and enable improved health outcomes for people experiencing homelessness so that their poor health is not a barrier to moving in to a home of their own.
6. Improve the range of pre-crisis homelessness prevention activities by introducing homelessness prevention initiatives that can help people to remain in existing accommodation.

7. Carry out a casefile audit of homelessness cases to:
  - a. check the rational, legality and adherence to public law procedural requirements of homeless at home decisions.
  - b. Investigate whether the local authority can satisfactorily meet the housing needs of black and other minority ethnic communities.
8. Undertake a strategic review on the type and location of temporary accommodation available to the local authority for discharging statutory duties, to ensure the provision is suitable and reasonable. A move towards temporary accommodation being dispersed across the community instead of centralised in one location (Lonsdale) is encouraged. This will fit better with the locality model, plus allow people to stay nearer to existing support networks.
9. Develop a comprehensive range of homelessness relief initiatives, to help discharge the new relief duty that has commenced following the enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
10. Increase the work Sefton Council's does to engage with private rented sector landlords.
11. Commission an independent review of the arrangements for administering the local authority's housing allocation functions, focusing on the (i) cost, (ii) efficiency and (iii) legality of the current organisation for the (a) housing register, (b) housing allocation policy and (c) method used to offer choice to applicants.
12. A peer led benchmarking exercise should be established with local social landlords, to better demonstrate the impact they have on tackling homelessness.
13. Ensure that Homelessness Service is integrated into the locality based working arrangements, that the team have their own dedicated manager, and retain their own specific identity. This help to mitigate against the risk of claims for judicial review being made against Sefton Council.
14. Recommission supported housing services for people experiencing single homelessness (and also incorporate other short-term services such those for offenders and floating support) to be more housing-led. This should involve scaling back the amount of hostel and shared housing provision available, and scaling-up the Housing First approach (see appendix two). In future All hostel type accommodation adhere to the principles of psychologically informed environments, an example of such provision is Bosco House.
15. Design and commission a multi-disciplinary outreach service for making contact with people experiencing street homelessness, to help them obtain accommodation to relieve their homelessness and to get the support they need to avoid a repeat occurrence of homelessness. This service should form part of a wider range of tactics to engage with people carrying out anti-social street behaviours.

16. Discourage the provision of day centres as this becomes a barrier to integration into the wider community. Instead help people to use mainstream services, with support from peer mentors and community befrienders. Alongside this, continue to ensure there is dedicated advice and support for people who are experiencing hidden homelessness.
17. Spending by the Council should be better coordinated and outcomes better evidenced. This can be achieved by:
  - a. Pooling existing budgets across the local authority, and with other public authorities, to commission homelessness prevention initiatives and support services for people experiencing homelessness
  - b. (Re)-introduce a more comprehensive performance monitoring and management regime for all services commissioned to tackle homelessness
  - c. Ensure the budget for the Council's own homelessness service is aligned to the levels of homelessness, with a commitment existing grant funding awarded by UK Government will be picked-up the by the local authority for the lifetime of this strategy should these funding streams cease after 2020
18. The current staffing levels and structure should be reviewed no later than a year after the commencement of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, to ensure there is sufficient number of employees to satisfactorily administer public law homelessness duties. The responsibility of the temporary accommodation support officers should be remodelled to provide a floating support service to occupants of temporary accommodation.
19. An additional post of homelessness strategy officer should be created to oversee the delivery of the strategy. This role should encompass the collection and analysis of statistics about the levels of homelessness. The role should also extend to the commissioning and contract management of homelessness services (e.g. short-term supported housing services). The post-holder should also have oversight of expenditure from homelessness grants awarded by the UK Government. There is also scope the post-holder to take responsibility for have a similar scope of functions in relation housing allocation law and practice.
20. Staff should be equipped with I.T. hardware to allow them to work in a more agile way. This will foster opportunities to take the homelessness service into key locations where other public authorities provide services to those who are more likely to be at risk of homelessness.
21. An annual consultation exercise should take place with people who are or have experienced homelessness or the threat of homelessness, to ensure their knowledge of what works helps shape local policy and practice.
22. Service users and stakeholders should be involved the design, commissioning and contract management of homelessness services.



23. Stakeholder enthusiasm should be harnessed by ensuring that the existing homelessness services forum, made up of strategic council officers and service providers, continues to meet quarterly.

## Appendices

### Appendix One – Record of Contributors

The following persons generously gave their time to contribute evidence to this Homelessness Review:

Helen Armitage – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
Jenny Barnes – Excel Housing  
Neil Baynes – New Start  
Lisa Boylan – Bosco  
Carol Carter – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
Andrea Coffey – DISC  
Paul Cousins – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
Neil Davies – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
Jason Duffy – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
Rob Farnos – Whitechapel Centre  
Kate Farrell – Liverpool City Region Combined Authority  
Greta Feaney – Light for Life  
Trish Galloway – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
Allan Glennon – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
James Heller – Bosco  
Shelia Howard – Bosco  
Margaret Jones – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
Katherine Kelly – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
Pauline Killen – Citizens Advice  
Jan Leonard – South Sefton NHS Clinical Commissioning Group  
Alan McGee – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
Carlie Machell – Venus  
Alistair Malpas – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
Sharron Mitten – Light for Life  
Alisa Nile – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
Anna Nygaard – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
Angela Parker – New Start  
Colm Quinn – Crosby Housing Association  
Stephen Read-Moore – DISC  
Alan Roper – Salvation Army  
Stephen Roper – Merseycare NHS Trust  
Cathy Rudge – New Start  
Eliéen Streets – Merseycare NHS Trust  
Clare Taylor – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Katie Taylor – Merseycare NHS Trust  
 Mark Waterhouse – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
 Lorraine Webb – Venus  
 Melanie Wright – South Sefton NHS Clinical Commissioning Group

### Appendix Two – Supported Housing Homelessness Services

The current provision of supported housing services is not personalised enough. The model relies on specific separate institutions which segregates people away from the wider community. This approach often dwells on people’s deficits, and negatively focuses on the challenging behaviour sometimes associated with being homeless, rather than addressing the poverty people are experiencing. Sefton Council’s commissioning arrangements has segregated floating support away from accommodation-based services.

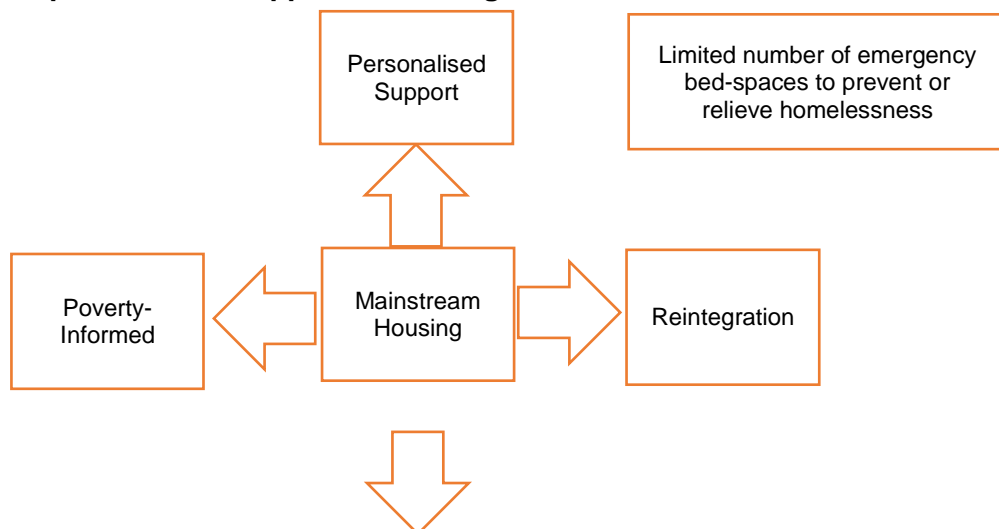
**Diagram 3: Current supported housing homelessness services**

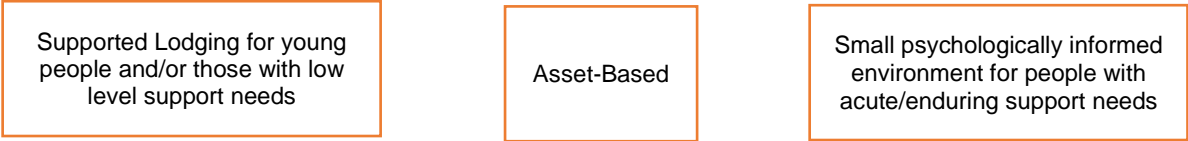


proposed future provision of supported housing homelessness specific services, would be housing-led, primarily based around the housing first approach, but having mixed range of accommodation to cater for all types of needs, sourced from social and/or social landlords. The method is based on what works to tackle multiple exclusion:

- Personalised support – individually-tailored support that is open-ended, persistent, flexible and co-ordinated
- Mainstream housing – social or private rented housing as an option as far as possible
- Reintegration – Support to socialise and work in ordinary mainstream social settings
- Asset-based – Identifies and nurtures people’s strengths and assets, as well as addressing their needs
- Poverty Informed – Directly tackles the financial and material hardships that cause homelessness

**Diagram 4: Proposed future supported housing homelessness services**





**Appendix Three – Street Homelessness Provision**

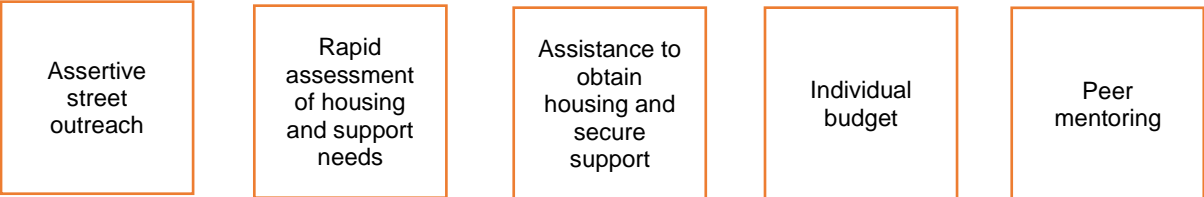
The current provision of services for people experiencing street homelessness in Sefton has developed over the past five years to include a number of responses.

**Diagram 5: Current provision for people experiencing street homelessness**



The current provision has too much of a reliance on volunteers who are seeking to improve the dignity of people sleeping by offering free food, clothing, bedding and showers. While this helps people to feel more comfortable when sleeping rough, it doesn't always help to end the need for people to sleep rough. The day services on offer are well intentioned but often create a dependency and distract from the real goal of getting people off the streets. The accommodation being offered to people sleeping rough isn't appealing to many, and even when there is a wiliness to be referred, rules on exclusions can prohibit them from access this provision.

**Diagram 6: Future proposed provision for people experiencing street homelessness**



A multi-disciplinary team of professionals from voluntary organisations will be best able to make contact and diagnose the support needs of people experiencing street homelessness and to assist them to broker access to mainstream services. This should include workers who have specialist knowledge or skills in homelessness law and housing advice, mental illness, substance dependency, offending behaviour and sexual health. Initial help should focus on securing short-term emergency accommodation (for a couple of days or weeks at the very most), until more mainstream accommodation be obtained, in which they can recover from their experience of being homeless. Awarding each person an individual budget that they control the spending of, will help them to purchase the items they need to help off the streets and remain indoors. Enabling assistance from a peer mentor, will provide the additional encouragement to live a more sustainable a way of life.

This package of support could be funded via the integration of housing, health, social care, and criminal justice budgets. Alternatively, or additionally, funds could be raised by issuing a social impact bond, which has proven successful in Greater London.

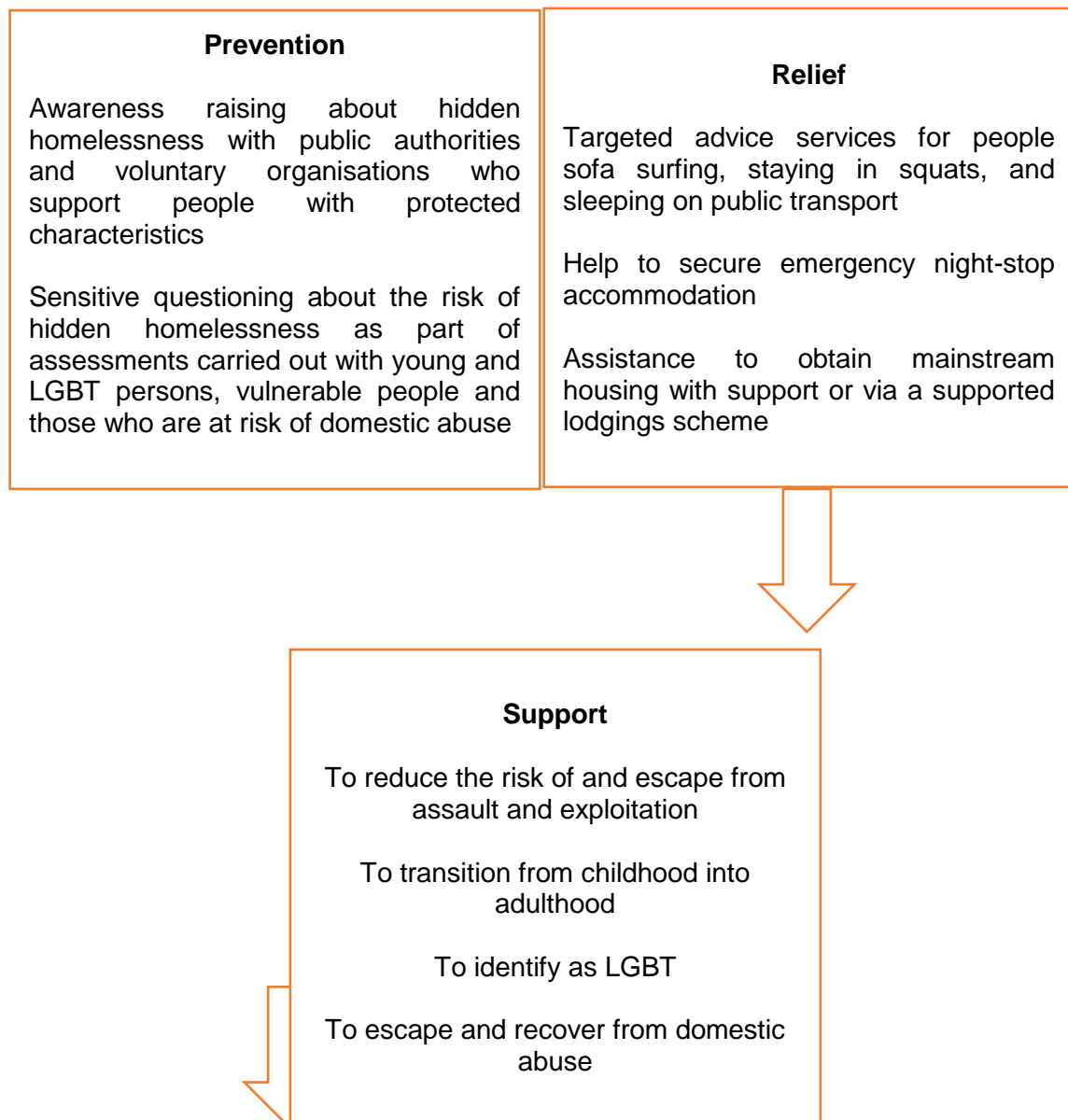
#### Appendix Four – Developing A Response to Hidden Homelessness

No official statistics are collected in Sefton, or elsewhere in the UK, about the number of people experiencing hidden homelessness. However, the London Assembly has forecast that the levels are 13 times greater than those who are street homeless.

Light for Life is one the few services that consciously offers services to those experiencing hidden homelessness, plus collects some intelligence on scale of this form of homelessness.

The local response to hidden homelessness should be formalised so that better solutions can be put in place to prevent and relieve it for people from Sefton.

**Diagram 7: Hidden Homelessness Pathway**





# Neil Morland

HOUSING CONSULTANT LTD

*Specialist advice on homelessness and housing allocation*

**[neil@neilmorland.co.uk](mailto:neil@neilmorland.co.uk) 0781 693 5620 [www.neilmorland.co.uk](http://www.neilmorland.co.uk)  
[www.linkedin.com/in/neilmorland/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/neilmorland/)**

Registered Office: 78 Borough Road, Altrincham, Greater Manchester, WA15 9EJ  
Company Number: 7776084  
VAT Number: 135466214