Maidstone Borough Council

Homelessness
and
Rough Sleeper Review

December 2018

Contents

1. Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local housing authorities to carry out a review of homelessness within their borough and to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review.

In conducting the review of homelessness, and to formulate a new strategy, Maidstone Borough Council must take into account the new duties introduced through the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018.

2. Headline Results

During the course of the current Homelessness Strategy (2014-2019) there has been a significant increase in levels of homelessness within the borough.

Since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, the information recorded about households who become homeless is becoming more detailed. This will aid the Council in how best to respond to preventing homelessness.

Evictions by family, parents and friends account for over 30% of all cases, with the ending of private rented tenancies being the next most significant cause.

Homelessness applicants are fairly evenly split between males and females although in cases when the household is a single person, this increases to around two thirds male and females feature more greatly as the lead applicant amongst households with children.

The average age of homelessness continues to decrease with applicants under the age of 34 making up the majority of cases.

Applicants with a white ethnicity account for the vast majority of homelessness applicants although the percentage has decreased in the current year.

More than half of homelessness approaches are from single persons who have a 1 bedroom housing need. A further third of all households have a 2 bedroom need.

Previous street population estimates have indicated that there are between 35 and 50 people rough sleeping within the borough. However, with the implementation of the Rough Sleeper Initiative this has reduced considerably.

3. Levels of Homelessness

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Number of homelessness decisions made	426	622	626	665	675

The number of people approaching the council as homeless has increased significantly during the course of the current Homelessness Strategy. This is following on from further increases during the preceding years.

Since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) in April 2018, different duties arise at the 'Prevention, Relief, and Main Duty' stages, which makes a direct comparison of the data since April 2018 against previous years difficult.

The intention of the HRA is that fewer households end up in the 'Main Duty' stage, as people will be assisted at the earlier stages in the process. These figures will provide the focus of attention over the lifetime of the next Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

4. Reason for Homelessness

Since April 2018, the reason that a household has become homeless is recorded as set out in the table below:

Reason for Loss of last Settled Home – April to Oct 2018	Households
End of Private Rented Sector – Assured Shorthold Tenancy (see below for further breakdown)	200
End of Social Rented Tenancy (see below for further breakdown)	70
End of Supported Housing (see below for further breakdown)	68
End of Private Rented Sector – not Assured Shorthold Tenancy	42
Domestic Abuse	104
Parents / Family eviction	245
Fire / Flood / Emergency	5
Friend eviction	73
Left HM forces	1
Left institution	23
Mortgage Repossession	5
Non Racial harassment/violence	26
Other	199
Property Disrepair	10
Racially motivated violence/harassment	5
Non-violent parent relationship breakdown	122
Required to leave NASS accommodation	3
Not recorded	230

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The main reason that a household has become homeless is through a family/parental eviction, which accounts for 17% of all homelessness approaches. Including eviction from a friends and non-violent parent relationship breakdown, this rises to just over 30% (440 cases)

Domestic abuse, non-racial harassment / violence and racially motivated harassment / violence accounted for 9% of all approaches (135 cases) and represents an increase over previous years.

The second largest single cause of homelessness is the ending of private rented tenancies; the reasons for this are now available in greater detail as set out in the table below:

Reason for loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	Count
Breach of tenancy, not related to rent arrears	3
Illegal eviction	1
Landlord wishing to sell or re-let the property	122
Other	20
Rent arrears due to change in personal circumstances	24
Rent arrears due to increase in rent	1
Rent arrears due to reduction in employment income	8
Rent arrears due to tenant difficulty budgeting or tenant making other payment(s)	9
Rent arrears following changes in benefit entitlement	6
Tenant abandoned property	4
Tenant complained to the council/agent/landlord about disrepair	2

The main reason that a household has had their assured shorthold tenancy ended (61% of cases) was that the landlord wanted to sell or re-let the property.

A further 24% (48 cases) were due to rent arrears accrued for varying reasons.

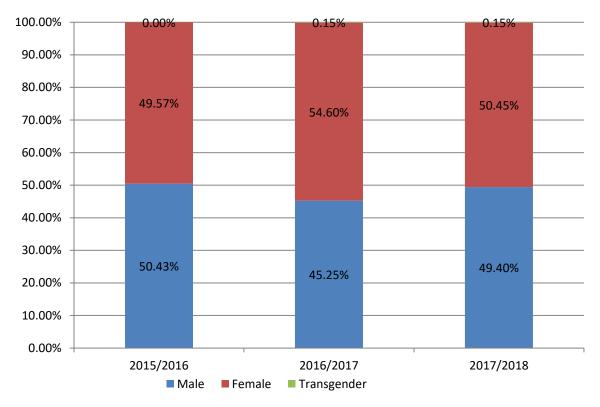| Reason for loss of social rented tenancy	Count
Breach of tenancy, not related to rent arrears	9
Other	10
Rent arrears due to change in personal circumstances	17
Rent arrears due to increase in rent	1
Rent arrears due to reduction in employment income	2
Rent arrears due to tenant difficulty budgeting or tenant making other payment(s)	18
Rent arrears following changes in benefit entitlement	12
Tenant abandoned property	1

In the vast majority of cases (71%) when a household has been made homeless from a social rented tenancy, it is due to rent arrears accrued.

Reason for loss of supported housing	Count
No longer eligible for supported housing	15
Other	15
Other breach of tenancy or licence, not related to rent	23
Rent arrears	22

The main reason given for the loss of supported accommodation was 'other breach of tenancy or licence, not related to rent,' which accounted for just under a third of all cases (32%)

5. Gender

Percentage of Cases by Gender

In 2015/16 by a narrow majority of around 1% most cases of those presenting as homeless were male. This changed significantly in 2016/2017 where most cases were female by approximately 10%. In 2017/2018 this has closed to a 1% majority for women.
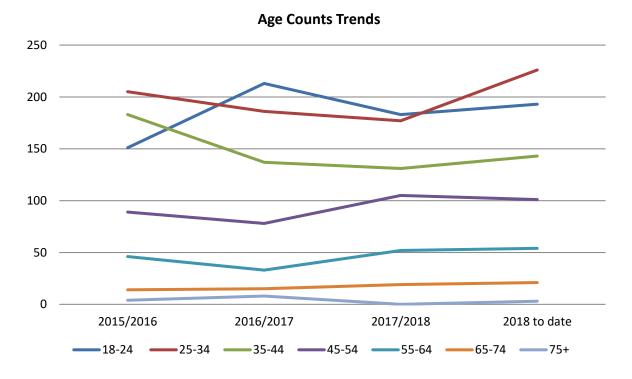
In 2015/2016 there were no one identifying as transgender presenting as homeless. In 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 there was 1 case in each year.

The 2017 mid-year population estimates for gender give proportions of 51% female and 49% male (there is currently no national data collection for transgender people). Therefore the data for applicants 2017/18 and 2018 to date reflects the population in Maidstone overall.

Data from 2018 to date shows that men are more likely than women to apply as a single person (67% compared to 33%). The average age of single person applicants is 37.6 years for males and 33.2 years for females. Female lead applicants represent the majority of households with children.

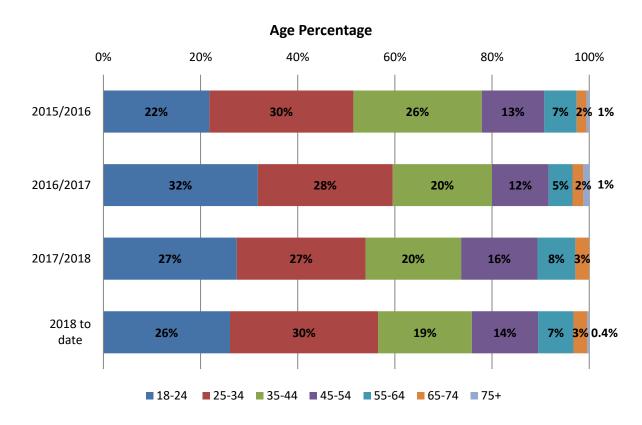## 6. Age

Age Counts Trends

Applicants under 34 years accounted for 51% of homelessness approaches in 2015/16. This has risen to 57% for the current year to date.

Between 2015/16 and 2017/18 there was a 21% increase in the number of 18 to 24 year olds approaching the Council as homeless.
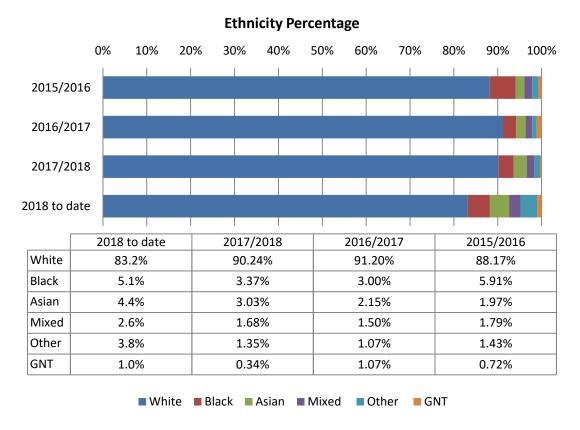
Applicants aged between 35 to 44 are the only age group where the proportion of approaches has decreased year on year. In 2015/16 they accounted for just over a one in four whereas now they account for less than one in five. There was a 25% decrease in the number of applicants in the 35 to 44 years group between 2015/16 and 2017/18.

The trend of homeless applicants getting younger between 2015/2016 and 2017/2018 also emerges when studying the average age. In 2015/2016 it was 36.0 years; in 2016/2017 it was 34.7 years and in 2017/2018 35.4 years. These differences are not significant because there was also an increase in approaches from people over the age of 45. If this trend were to continue, we would see a polarisation in demand between early and later life. This reflects various studies that have looked at the stability of different types of housing and the age cohorts of those occupying them.

Age Percentage

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
2015/2016	22%	30%	26%	13%	7%	2%	1%
2016/2017	32%	28%	20%	12%	5%	2%	1%
2017/2018	27%	27%	20%	16%	8%	3%	
2018 to date	26%	30%	19%	14%	7%	3%	0.4%

■ 18-24 ■ 25-34 ■ 35-44 ■ 45-54 ■ 55-64 ■ 65-74 ■ 75+

7. Ethnicity

Ethnicity Percentage

	2018 to date	2017/2018	2016/2017	2015/2016
White	83.2%	90.24%	91.20%	88.17%
Black	5.1%	3.37%	3.00%	5.91%
Asian	4.4%	3.03%	2.15%	1.97%
Mixed	2.6%	1.68%	1.50%	1.79%
Other	3.8%	1.35%	1.07%	1.43%
GNT	1.0%	0.34%	1.07%	0.72%

■ White ■ Black ■ Asian ■ Mixed ■ Other ■ GNT

The vast majority of homelessness approaches are from people whose ethnicity is 'White' however the proportion that they account for on the register has decreased in 2018 from the most recent data available.

The number of approaches from people who have indicated that they are from the Gypsy and Traveller community is relatively few. The housing need for the Gypsy and Traveller Community was identified in the Council's Local Plan and is largely being met by ongoing planning applications.
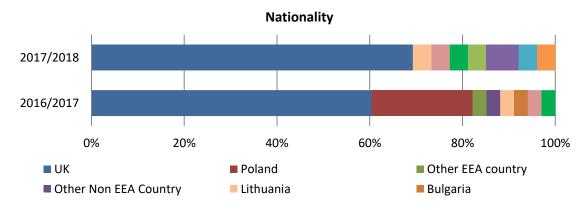
The number of approaches from Asian backgrounds has increased in proportional terms but fell numerically between 2015/16 and 2017/18. Data for this year suggests an expected increase in numbers compared to the 2015/16 levels.

The number of cases where people indicated that their ethnicity was 'Black' fell by 70% between 2015/2016 and 2017/2018. Again, the data for the year to date suggests there will be an increase of at least 12% on the 2015/16 numbers.

Census data for Maidstone dates back to 2011 and must therefore be used with caution but if the population trend has not altered greatly then this would suggest that BME groups are overrepresented as needing to make a homeless application.
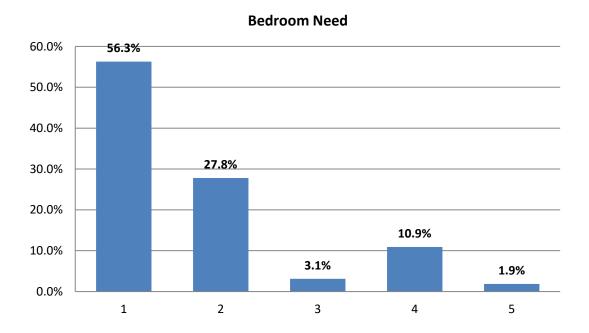
8. Nationality

Nationality

Nationality	2018	
Bulgaria	4	0.55%
Czech Republic	2	0.27%
Hungary	2	0.27%
Ireland	1	0.14%
Latvia	7	0.96%
Lithuania	3	0.41%
Non-European Economic Area country national	21	2.88%
Other European Economic Area country national	16	2.19%
Poland	15	2.05%
Romania	5	0.68%
Slovakia	1	0.14%
UK national habitually resident in UK	646	88.49%
UK national returning from residence overseas / in UK for first time	7	0.96%

In 2018, the proportion of people presenting as homeless that are UK nationals has risen to 88% from 61% in 2016/2017.

Poland represents the largest single nationality of applicants excluding the UK with 2.1% of applicants. Latvia represents the most applicants per head of origin nation's population at 1 applicant for every 280,000.

9. Household Bedroom Need

Bedroom Need

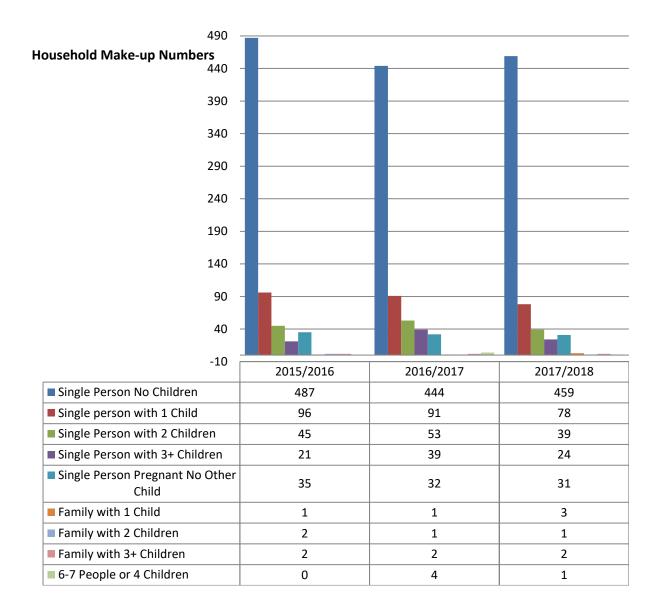More than half of all cases (417) have a 1 bedroom need.

- o The average age of this group is 36 years
- o 6% are couples and the rest are all single persons
- o 63% of this group is male and 36% are females (1% unknown).
- o 83% are from white backgrounds
- o 89% are UK nationals habitually resident in the UK or returning to the UK and 5% are from European Economic Area countries.
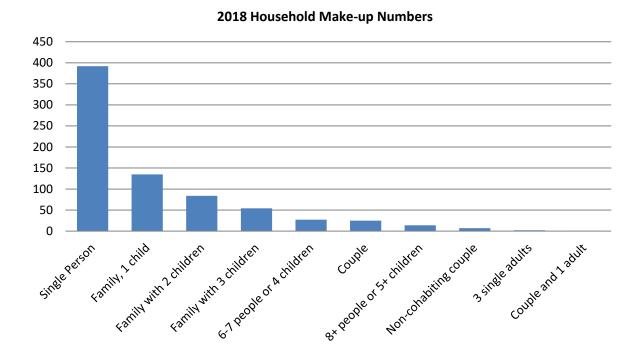
Just over a third of applicants have a 2 bedroom need.

- o The average age of this group is 32 years
- o 96% of this group have children.
- o In 83% of these cases the main applicant is female

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10. Household Size

Household Make-up Numbers

	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018
■ Single Person No Children	487	444	459
■ Single person with 1 Child	96	91	78
■ Single Person with 2 Children	45	53	39
■ Single Person with 3+ Children	21	39	24
■ Single Person Pregnant No Other Child	35	32	31
■ Family with 1 Child	1	1	3
■ Family with 2 Children	2	1	1
■ Family with 3+ Children	2	2	2
■ 6-7 People or 4 Children	0	4	1

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2018 Household Make-up Numbers

How household sizes are recorded changed in April 2018. Three new categories recognising couples have been introduced and this has had a significant effect as previously they would have been recorded as 2 single people. This should be noted when considering the below.

The number of single people has decreased substantially from 72% in 2017/2018 to 52.9% in for the first half of 2018/2019.

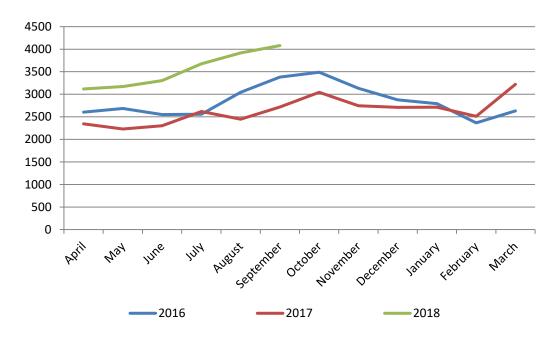Families with 1 to 3 children have increased substantially from 2017/2018 levels.

Between 2015/16 and 2017/18 the numbers of applicants in priority need due to pregnancy has decreased slightly year on year, accounting for 5% of all applicants in each year.

The average age of pregnant applicants in 2015/16 was 23.6 years and the average age for the year to date is 25 years.

11. Temporary Accommodation

Total numbers of nights in Temporary Accomodation per month

There has been an increase of 22% in the total number of nights in temporary accommodation in Quarter 1 between 2016/2017 and 2018/2019 and a 26% increase in the total number of nights in Quarter 2 over the same period.

There has been a peak in demand in October as this month had the highest number of nights stayed in temporary accommodation in both 2016/2017 and 2017/2018.

12. Rough Sleepers

Maidstone is an area in Kent that along with Canterbury has historically attracted a local and transient rough sleeper population that is bigger than other parts of Kent. The Council has tackled the issues through the provision of supported accommodation such as Lily Smiths House and an outreach service providing by the Council directly and the Kent Supporting People Programme funded by KCC.

Even with these interventions the rough sleeper population has seen a significant increase in the last few years as demonstrated below:

Year	Total	Men	Women	Non UK EU Nationals
2014	25	21	4	3
2015	38	32	6	6
2016	35	30	5	5
2017	41	37	4	0
2018 (September)	48	38	10	4

The increase in the number of rough sleepers is in line with the national trend and this was recognised within central government, which has led to the creation of the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI). The RSI has a number of funding streams that provides resources for work specifically for rough sleepers and Maidstone has benefitted from this initiative.

The Council established a larger outreach service, employed a rough sleeper coordinator, developed an assessment centre for emergency supported accommodation provision, contracted a treatment worker from Change, Grow, Live and extended the support at Pelican Court a low to medium hostel.

These interventions have had a significant and positive impact on the number of rough sleepers counted on the street during our official November 2018 count.

Year	Total	Men	Women	Unknown
2018 (November)	9	6	1	2

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Of those found, we know seven are UK nationals, but of the unknown two we are not aware of their origin.

Housing Register

	Number of households on the housing register	Number of households housed
2014 to 2015	1461	624
2015 to 2016	785	647
2016 to 2017	610	644
2017 to 2018	618	619
2018 – April to Sept	607	325

The number of households who are registered with the Council to apply for social housing has fallen significantly over the past 4 years. This is mainly due to applicants being contacted annually to confirm that they still want to be registered.

The number of households that obtain social housing accommodation through the register has remained fairly static. This reflects the number of vacant properties that are advertised from Housing Associations who own stock within the borough.

	Number of housing register applications received
2015 to 2016	2860
2016 to 2017	3981
2017 to 2018	4186
2018 – April to Sept	2585

Despite seeing a significant decrease in the number of households who are accepted onto the Council's Housing Register, there has been a large and sustained increase in the number of applications that the Council receives and has to assess in order to determine if someone is eligible to join the Housing Register.

13. Housing Provision

	Number of new affordable housing completions
2014 to 2015	303
2015 to 2016	139
2016 to 2017	163
2017 to 2018	174
2018 to 2019 (Qtr. 2)	97

The number of new affordable housing completions within the borough has slowed since 2014 / 2015 although a slight increase was seen in each of the past 3 years.