

Background

Our last Homeless and Rough Sleeper Strategy was developed in 2019 to encompass years 2019-2024. This is now coming to an end and a revised strategy is under development, in line with the Homeless Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which requires a local housing authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area before commencing their new strategy.

Our new strategy will be informed by the strategic review and the consultation undertaken with stakeholders, staff and members of the public. The new strategy will be for years 2024-29.

Headlines findings

1. The total number of households in Maidstone increased by 12.23% from 63,447 to 71,208 between 2011 to 2021 with a calculated local housing need of 1,214 homes per year. In addition, home ownership has decreased, while private renting has increased.
2. Since 2019 there has been as a steady increase in homeless approaches, which would correspond to the increase of households in Maidstone. However, from October 2022 to October 2023 the increase has been exponentially high at 44%. This is a common theme across England.
3. There's an increasing trend in homelessness cases where someone is a victim of domestic abuse, suggesting a strong link between personal safety and housing stability. Also, the new Domestic Abuse legislation which was enacted in 2021 has a very low threshold for a local housing authority (LHA) to provide Temporary Accommodation and support to those approaching.
4. Domestic abuse and family support issues, including households no longer willing or able to accommodate, are the leading causes for loss of housing.
5. There has been an increasing trend in the number of households in temporary accommodation year on year. This peaked in September 2022 at nearly 300. TA numbers have decreased since then and remain steady at c. 250 every month.
6. Household composition of those approaching is dominated by three groups i) single males 28% ii) single parents with dependent children (25%) iii) single females (21%). This is strongly aligned with the composition of those TA.
7. 25% of those approaching are unemployed and 17% are not working due to long term illness. Surprisingly those in full timework make up the third largest cohort at 15%. This could suggest that those working in lower paid jobs, are struggling to find affordable accommodation, without seeking support from MBC.
8. The main reasons households are approaching for homeless interventions is i) Domestic Abuse and ii) family and friends no longer or willing to accommodate. See page 17 of the report.
9. Maidstone outperforms all other Kent districts and CIPHA family neighbours in all comparisons, aside from Prevention duty ended positively in which MBC is second compared to Swale.

Development of new Strategy 2024-2029

- Priorities should remain the same i) **Homeless prevention** ii) **Accommodation** iii) **Support vulnerable people** iv) **Alleviate rough sleeping**. The strategy document will be updated to reflect the current environment.

- The new strategy will respond to the finding of the strategic review as well as current environmental factors, including limited TA and affordable housing, finally aligning these with last year's Housing Strategy which was agreed by Cabinet.

Maidstone Borough Council

Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Review
November 2023



Contents

1.	What is a homelessness review?.....	4
2.	Headline Results	4
3.	Definition of Homelessness	43.1 Prevention Duty 4
3.2	Relief Duty.....	5
4.	The Review Process.....	5
5.	National Context.....	5
6.	Local Context.....	6
7.	Profile of Maidstone.....	7
7.1	Population.....	7
7.2	Households & Housing Needs.....	9
7.3	Unemployment.....	9
7.4	Housing Tenure.....	9
7.5	Market Housing Costs.....	10
8.	Homelessness in Maidstone	11
8.1	Key Homelessness Statistics for Maidstone	11
8.2	Homeless applications	13
8.3	Prevention Duty	15
8.4	Duty Owed	17
8.5	Reason for Homelessness	17
8.6	Domestic Abuse	18
8.7	Not Homeless Decisions.....	20
8.8	Rough sleepers.....	20
8.8	Housing Register.....	21
8.9	Affordable homes	22
9.	Conclusions.....	23

1. What is a homelessness review?

The Homeless Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 place a requirement on the local housing authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area, which will inform and lead to their Homelessness Strategy. The review results must be published within a period of 5 years beginning with the day on which their last homelessness strategy was published.

The Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018 gives clear guidance of what should be considered in the Homelessness Review and included within the Strategy. In particular, the Code of Guidance states that a Homelessness Review should set out:

- The extent and risk of homelessness, now and in the future
- What is being done, by whom
- What resources are available for homelessness prevention & relief

This Homelessness Review has been undertaken in 2023 to inform the focus of Maidstone Borough Council's Homelessness Strategy 2024.

2. Headline Results

The total number of households in Maidstone increased by 12.23% from 2011 to 2021, from 63,447 to 71,208 with a calculated local housing need of 1,214 homes per year. Homeownership has decreased, while private renting has increased.

There has been a 44% increase in new homelessness cases from October 2022 to October 2023. Prior to that there was steady rise but in the last year this has exponentially increased.

There's an increasing trend in homelessness cases where someone is a victim of domestic abuse, suggesting a strong link between personal safety and housing stability. In addition, with the enactment of the Domestic Abuse Act in 2021 there is a low threshold for a local housing authority to offer advice, guidance and temporary accommodation.

Domestic abuse and family support issues, including households no longer willing or able to accommodate are the leading causes for loss of housing.

There has been an increasing trend in the number of households in temporary accommodation year on year.

3. Definition of Homelessness

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 significantly reformed England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires housing authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need'. These include:

- a. An enhanced prevention duty extending the period a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that housing authorities are required to work with people to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage; and
- b. A new duty for those who are already homeless so that housing authorities will support households for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.

Housing authorities have a duty to carry out an assessment in all cases where an eligible applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness. This will identify what has caused the homelessness or threat of homelessness, the housing needs of the applicant and any support they need to be able to secure and retain accommodation. Following this assessment, the housing authority must work with the person to develop a personalised housing plan which will include actions (or 'reasonable steps') to be taken by the authority and the applicant to try and prevent or relieve homelessness.

3.1 Prevention Duty

Housing authorities have a duty to take reasonable steps to help prevent any eligible person (regardless of priority need status, intentionality and whether they have a local connection) who is threatened with

homelessness from becoming homeless. This means either helping them to stay in their current accommodation or helping them to find a new place to live before they become actually homeless. The prevention duty continues for 56 days unless it is brought to an end by an event such as accommodation being secured for the person, or by them becoming homeless

3.2 Relief Duty

If the applicant is already homeless, or becomes homeless despite activity during the prevention stage, the reasonable steps will be focused on helping the applicant to secure accommodation. This relief duty lasts for 56 days unless ended in another way. If the housing authority has reason to believe a homeless applicant may be eligible for assistance, and have a priority need, they must be provided with interim accommodation.

The priority need categories are set out in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and these are:

- Pregnant women
- Households with dependent children
- 16- and 17-year-olds
- Care leavers aged 18,19 or 20
- People made homeless by an emergency
- People vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or physical disability, having been in care, having served in the armed forces, having been in custody, having to leave accommodation because of violence or abuse or vulnerable for some other special reason

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 amends Part 7 of the 1996 Act to strengthen the support available to victims of domestic abuse. The Act extends priority need to all eligible victims of domestic abuse who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse. The 2021 Act brings in a new definition of domestic abuse which housing authorities must follow to assess whether an applicant is homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse.

National guidance on homelessness is set out in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-localauthorities/overview-of-the-homelessness-legislation>.

4. The Review Process

Alongside a data-gathering exercise, the Council undertook a programme of consultation and engagement activities to inform the review of the current Strategy. This included:

- A survey, seeking feedback on the Council's Homelessness & Rough Sleepers Strategy. This was launched on 29 September 2023. It was open for eight weeks, closing on 26 November. It was promoted widely with key stakeholders, residents, Parish Councils and groups and organisations across the Voluntary and Community Sector in Maidstone who play a significant role in supporting the most vulnerable in the community. The consultation received 156 responses.
- Four stakeholder engagement sessions were delivered providing a forum for wider discussion alongside activities mirroring the survey questions.
 - Staff – 17/10/2023
 - Managers – 17/10/2023
 - Service Users (Cost-of living event at Trinity House) – 19/10/2023
 - Stakeholders – Homelessness Prevention Forum – 25/10/2023

5. National Context

A range of national policies and priorities, alongside legislation, have influenced and helped to shape the direction of the Council's Homelessness Strategy. Ending rough sleeping, reducing overall levels of homelessness and the eliminating the use of unsuitable emergency accommodation are national priorities. These are also linked to other strategies and initiatives relating to: reducing substance misuse, supporting victims of domestic abuse, reducing delayed hospital discharges, supporting looked after children and vulnerable families, supporting care leavers, and helping to rehabilitate those within the criminal justice system.

Key pieces of legislation and national policies include:

- The Criminal Justice Act 2003
- The Mental Health Act 2007
- The Health and Social Care Act 2012
- The Care Act 2014
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- HM Government Care Leavers Strategy 2014
- The Localism Act 2011
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- The Homelessness Code Of Guidance for Local Authorities 2018
- The Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018
- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, national levels of homelessness, rough sleeping and placements into temporary accommodation, including bed and breakfast style accommodation, had risen year on year over the last decade.

Thanks to temporary protective measures, particularly income protection programmes and eviction moratoria, the Covid-19 pandemic triggered no overall increase in homeless applications nationally. Temporary accommodation placements surged however, particularly of single homeless people, as the result of the emergency measures to protect those at risk of rough sleeping (Everyone In) during the pandemic.

The pandemic has also further exposed England's severe shortage of affordable homes. Access to long-term housing was the capacity challenge most widely seen as having been posed by the pandemic by local authorities according to research conducted by Crisis, a homelessness charity. A majority of councils surveyed said it had become harder to place homeless households in both social rented and private rented sector housing during the pandemic. (Crisis homelessness monitor 2021)

Since the pandemic and more recently in the last year, the rise in interest rates and the cost-of-living crisis has had a significantly increased the demand for more affordable housing. However, as interest rates rise many landlords are selling their properties on or increasing the rental charge to sums which households can no longer afford.

Local Context

At a district level, the key strategic plans linked to this strategy are:

- Housing Strategy 2022
- Strategic Plan 2019 – 2045
- Housing Allocation Policy 2022
- Economic Development Strategy 2022?
- Local Plan 2011 - 2031
- Maidstone Community Safety Partnership Plan 2022 - 2025

Maidstone being the County town of Kent, with a large general population, has a long history of having a significant homelessness population which straddles both those at risk of rough sleeping e.g. sofa surfing, and those living on the streets, rough sleepers. In 2018 Maidstone had a street population of 48, this has declined considerably, since then, but the Council still faces a huge flow of homeless households seeking help who are not in stable accommodation.

In 2022 Maidstone Borough Council opened the Community Hub, Trinity, to provide a direct front facing supportive response for those in the district facing homelessness and housing issues. The ethos of Trinity is to provide an exceptional service which households can easily access to receive advice, guidance and support in relation to their housing [and often wider] issues. Trinity has created a pinnacle for homelessness and housing

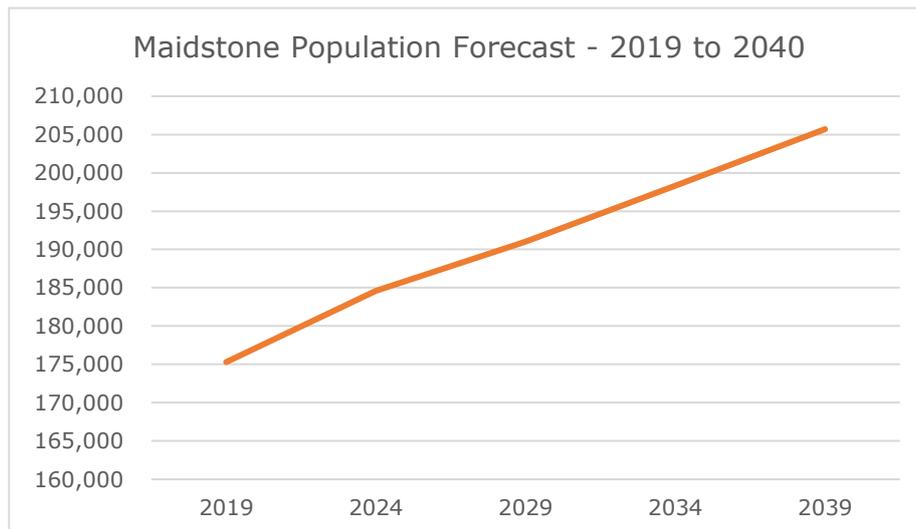
support, there is no other service alike across the whole of Kent, whereby a multidisciplinary team work together for the benefit of the local community in such an open and transparent manner.

6. Profile of Maidstone

7.1 Population

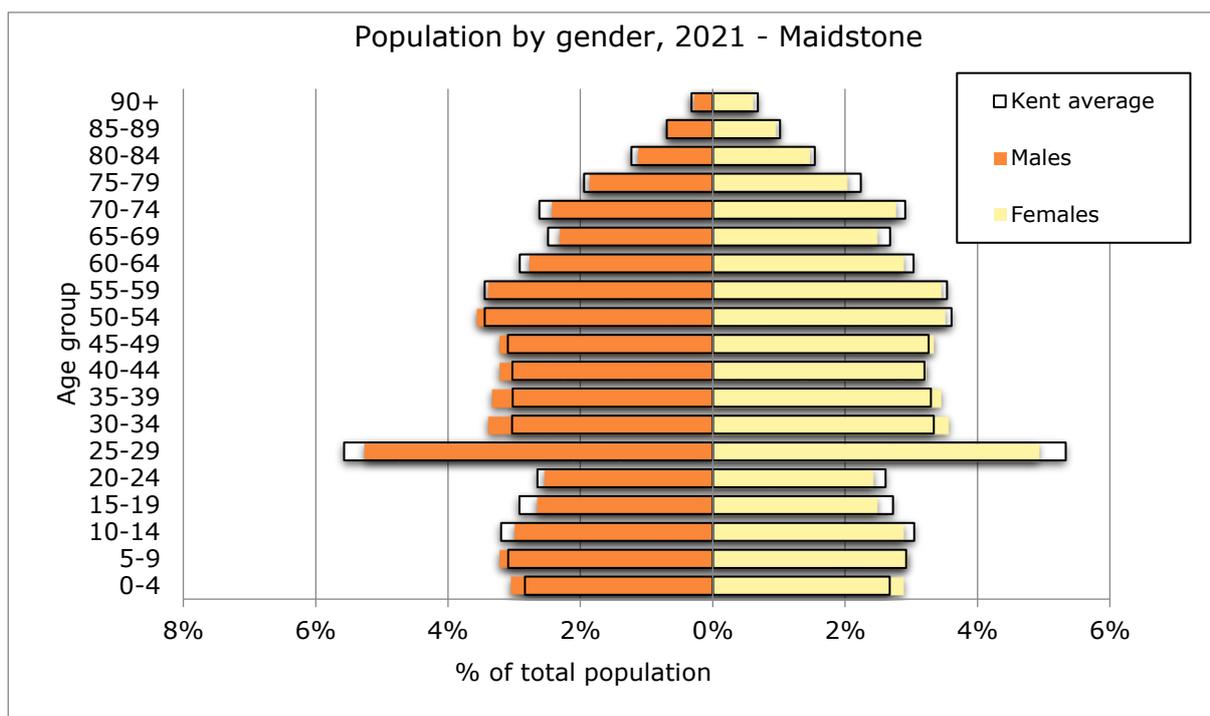
Maidstone is the largest local authority in the county of Kent and covers approximately 40,000 hectares, with 75% of its 176,700-population living within the urban area of the borough. The population at the 2021 Census was 13% higher than at the previous and is forecasted to reach over 205,000 by the year 2039.

Source: Kent County Council Housing Led Forecasts (2021), Kent Analytics



As of 2021, there is a density of 4.49 persons per hectare in the borough, which makes Maidstone the 7th least populated district in Kent, with Ashford ranking the least populated, at 2.29 persons per hectare, and Dartford ranking the most, with 16.06 persons per hectare.

The average age of a person living in Maidstone is 41 years old, with females averaging 41.9 years and males averaging 40.1 years. The most populous age 5-year bracket in Maidstone is aged 25 – 29 years old, accounting for 10.1% of the total population. The age distribution of residents is equally split between children and pensioners, with 19% in each of these categories.



Source: ONS Mid-Year Estimates

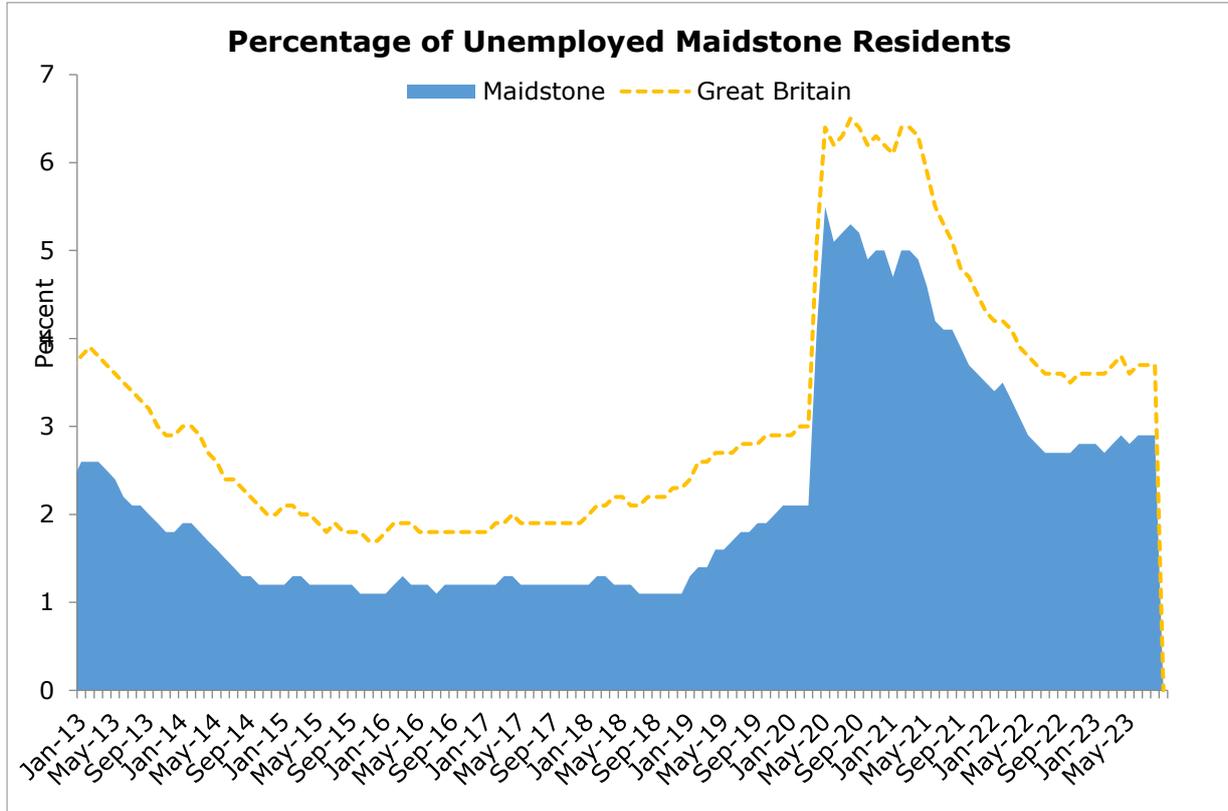
The Maidstone Borough is split geographically into 26 electoral wards. The most populous ward is High Street ward, with 6.8% of the Maidstone population residing here. The least populous ward is Barming and Teston, with just 1.4% of the population living here.

Ward	Population	% of total population
High Street (Maidstone)	11917	6.78%
Fant	10398	5.92%
North (Maidstone)	10285	5.85%
South (Maidstone)	10260	5.84%
Marden and Yalding	9494	5.40%
Park Wood	9399	5.35%
Shepway North	9227	5.25%
East (Maidstone)	8971	5.10%
Boxley	8734	4.97%
Bearsted	8352	4.75%
Coxheath and Hunton	8243	4.69%
Allington	7900	4.49%
Heath (Maidstone)	7443	4.23%
Harrietsham and Lenham	7087	4.03%
Bridge (Maidstone)	6714	3.82%
Staplehurst	6693	3.81%
Headcorn	6072	3.45%
Shepway South	5897	3.35%
Downswood and Otham	3364	1.91%
Detling and Thurnham	3249	1.85%
Sutton Valence and Langley	3111	1.77%
Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton	2910	1.66%
North Downs	2677	1.52%
Loose	2575	1.46%
Leeds	2422	1.38%
Barming and Teston	2389	1.36%

7.2 Households & Housing Needs

The number of households in Maidstone has increased from 63,447 households in 2011 to 71,208 households in 2021, an increase of 12.23%. The Maidstone Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2019) states that households in Maidstone will grow to 79,736 by 2029, a change of 855 households per annum. The strategy calculates that there is a local housing need of 1,214 homes per year.

7.3 Unemployment



Source: Kent Analytics

The pandemic significantly impacted the rate of unemployment across the Country, with Maidstone following that trend. Ten years ago, unemployment in Maidstone stood at 2.5% of the working-age population, however this declined over the decade down to around 1.2% and remained steady until 2019.

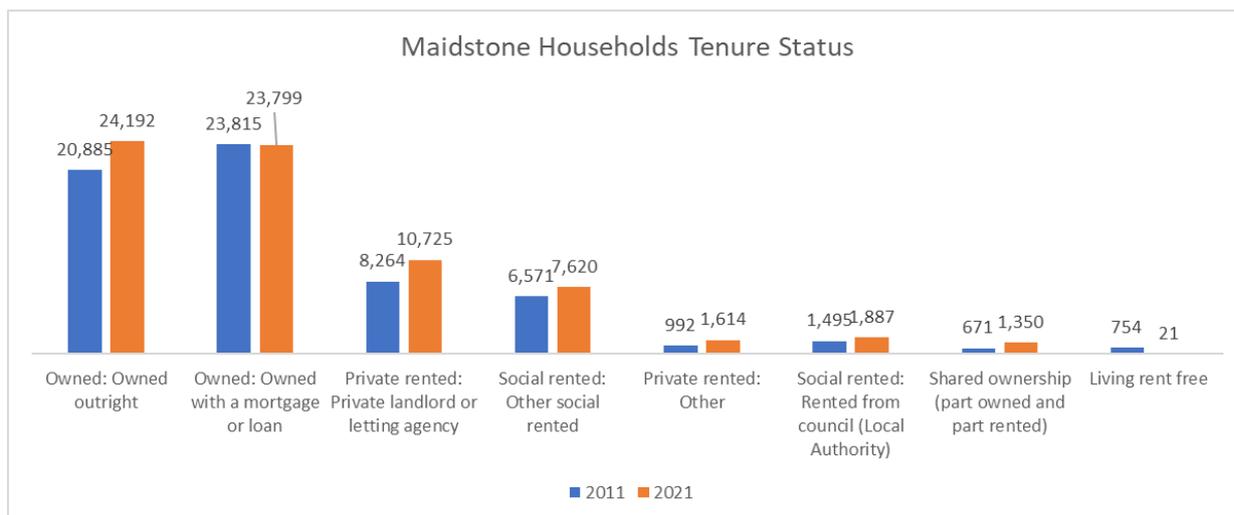
The rate then spiked at the beginning of the pandemic (May 2020) to 5.5% and since then has fallen down to around 2.8% since mid-2022. The rate has plateaued, and mirrored the rate seen Nationally, whilst remaining lower.

In August 2023, when comparing Maidstone to other district authorities in Kent, it ranks 9th out of 12 for unemployment rates. The highest level of unemployment is in Thanet (5.5%) and the lowest is in Sevenoaks (1.9%).

In August 2023, more males were unemployed than females, 1,745 compared to 1,435 respectively. The most unemployed age band was 50-64 years old, where 5.6% of the population were unemployed. The 25-49 years old age band has an unemployment rate of 3.3%.

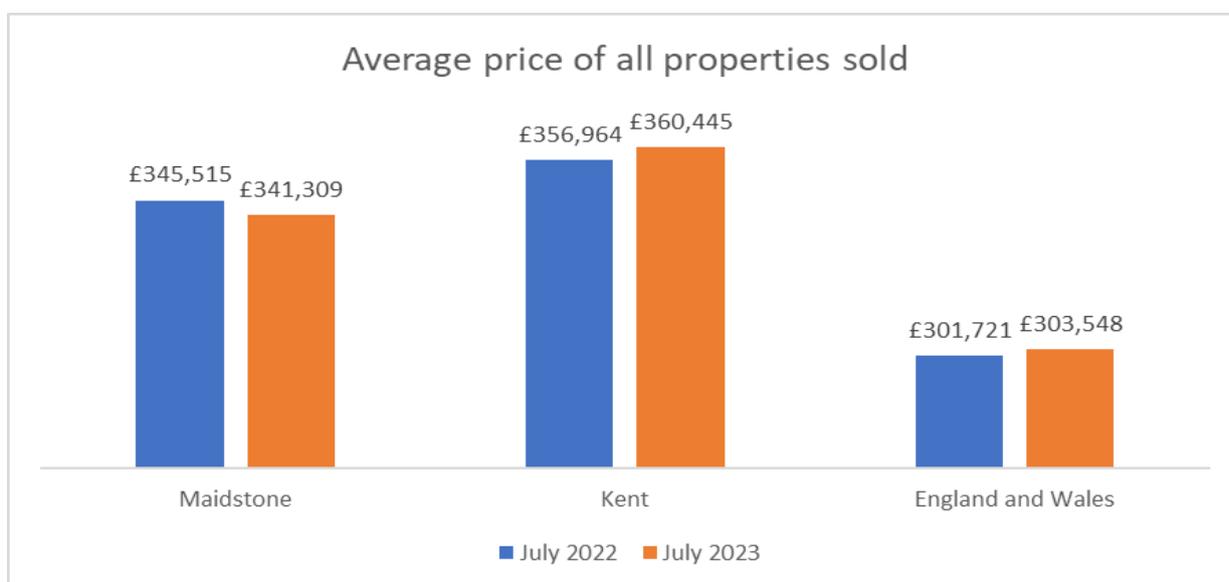
7.4 Housing Tenure

The proportion of households who own their home, whether mortgaged or owned outright, was 67.4% at the 2021 Census. This decreased from 70.4% in 2011. The proportion of households renting privately in 2021 was 15.1% (10,725 households), an increase from 13% in 2011.



Source: ONS Census 2021

7.5 Market Housing Costs



Source: Land Registry House Price Index

The average Maidstone house price in July 2023 was £341,309, which was a decrease of 1.2% from the same period in 2022. Compared to the average house prices in Kent, for the same period, Maidstone house prices are lower, with the average Kent house sale price being £360,445 in July 2023. However, Maidstone house prices are considerably higher than the average in England and Wales (£303,548 in July 2023).

The table below provides a summary of the median monthly rents in the private rental market in Maidstone compared to Kent and England, between March 2022 and April 2023.

Area	Room	Studio	One Bedroom	Two Bedrooms	Three Bedrooms	Four or more Bedrooms	All categories
England	£460	£625	£725	£800	£900	£1,500	£825
Kent	£450	£650	£725	£940	£1,175	£1,600	£900
Maidstone	£525	£650	£775	£950	£1,244	£1,600	£900

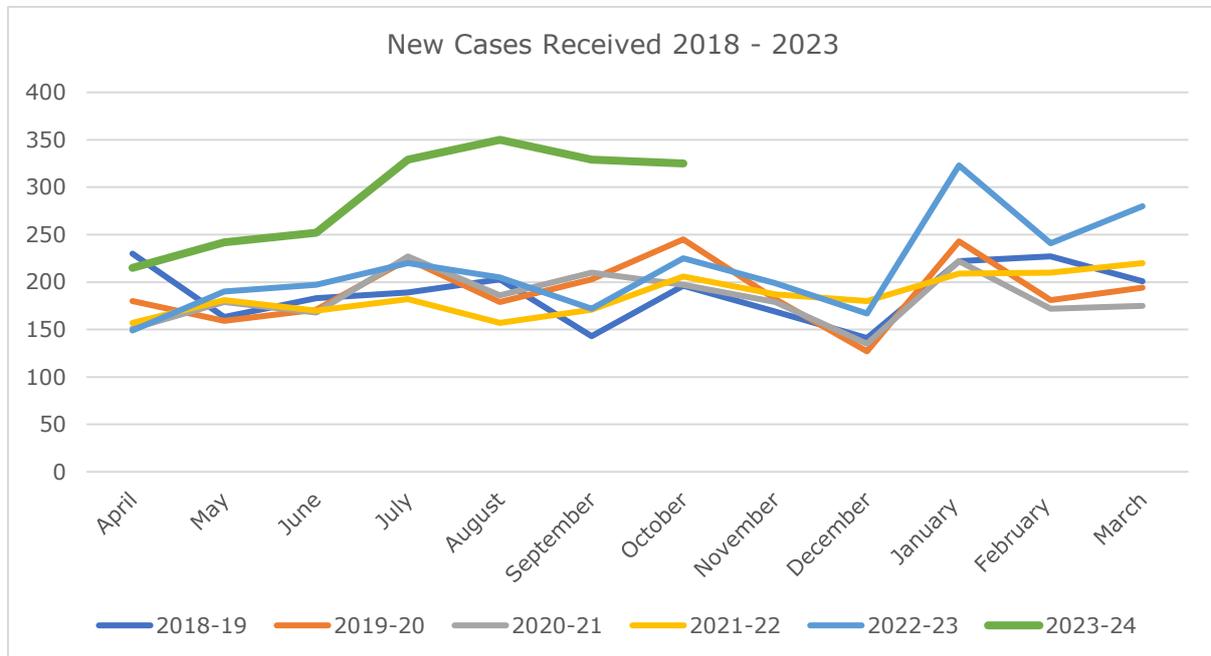
Source: ONS Private rental market summary

The median rental cost in the private sector is £900 per-month, which was an increase of £25 from the previous reporting period. It is generally more expensive to rent in Maidstone than it is in Kent, with the biggest variance seen in three-bedroom properties.

7. Homelessness in Maidstone

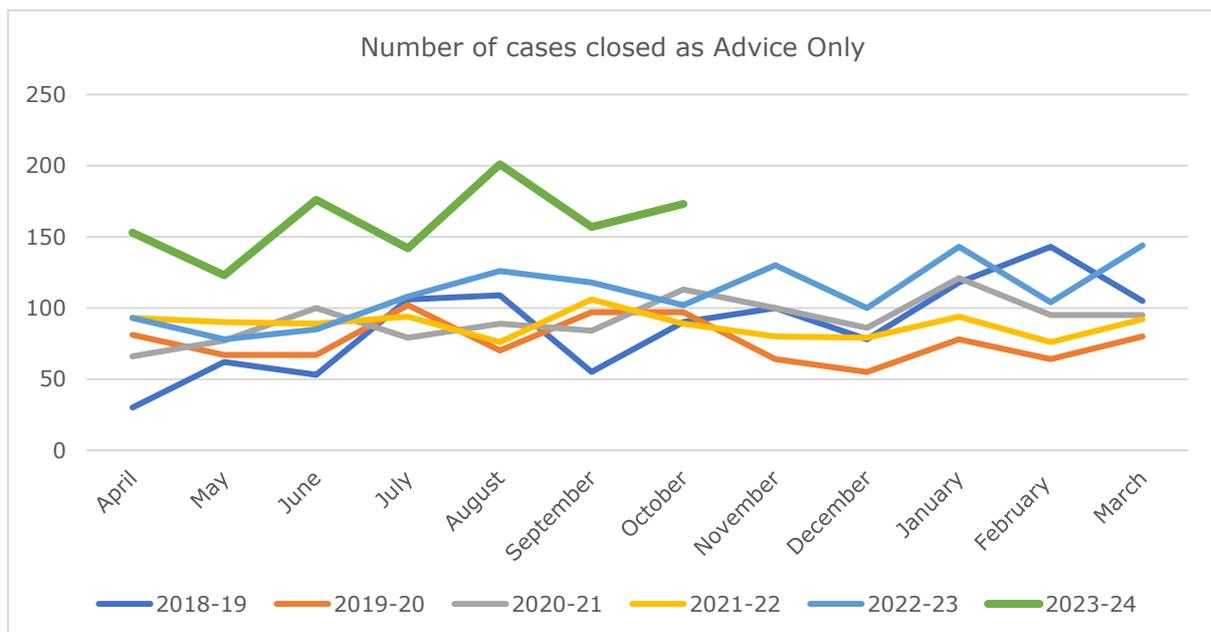
8.1 Key Homelessness Statistics for Maidstone

Since 2018 there has been a steady number of new homelessness cases received for the Authority. However, in the last twelve months, there has been an unprecedented growth in applications received. Comparing October 2022 to October 2023 we have seen a 44% increase in new cases.

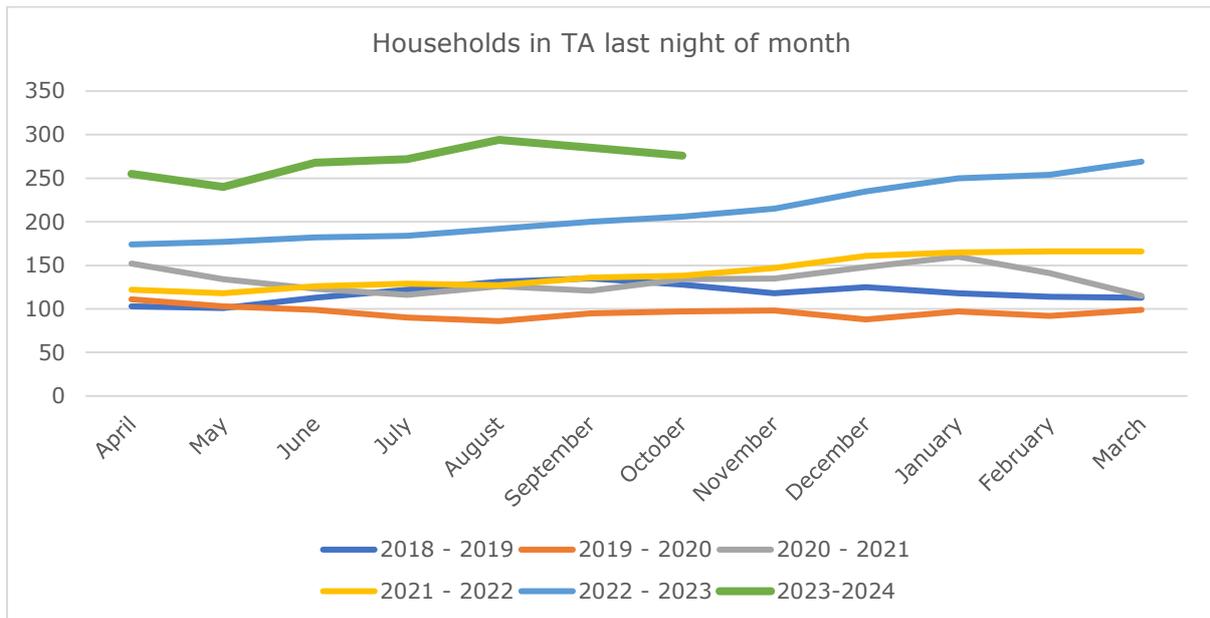


The chart below shows the number of cases received by the Housing Advice team that were closed due to being *advice only*. 'Advice only' is when a full homeless application is not taken, as an individual may not be homeless, or threatened with homeless, in 56 days but advice and assistance are offered.

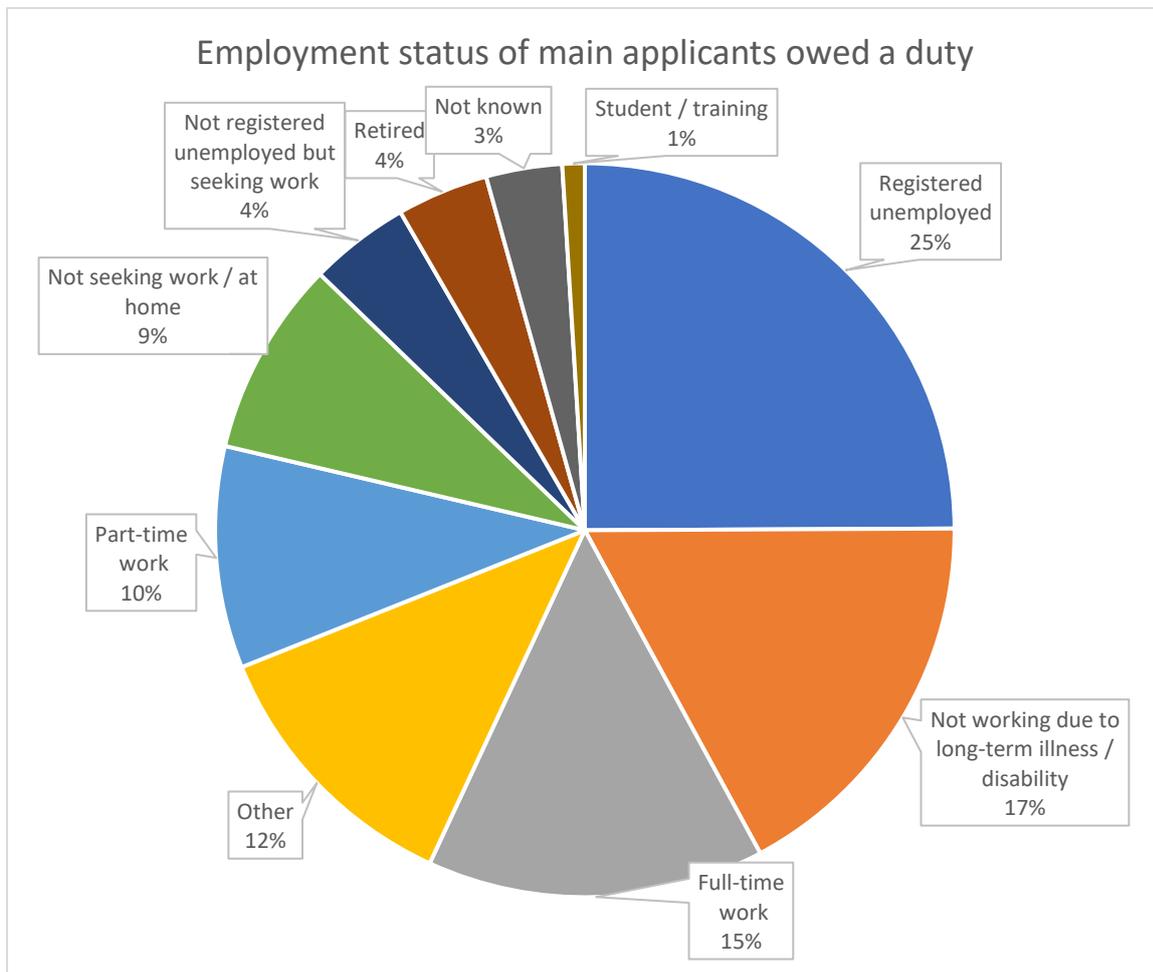
In line with the total number of cases received, *advice only* cases have also significantly increased since the end of 2022/23. Currently, only 7 months into the FY 2023/24, we have seen more cases than we did in total in the financial years leading up to 22/23.



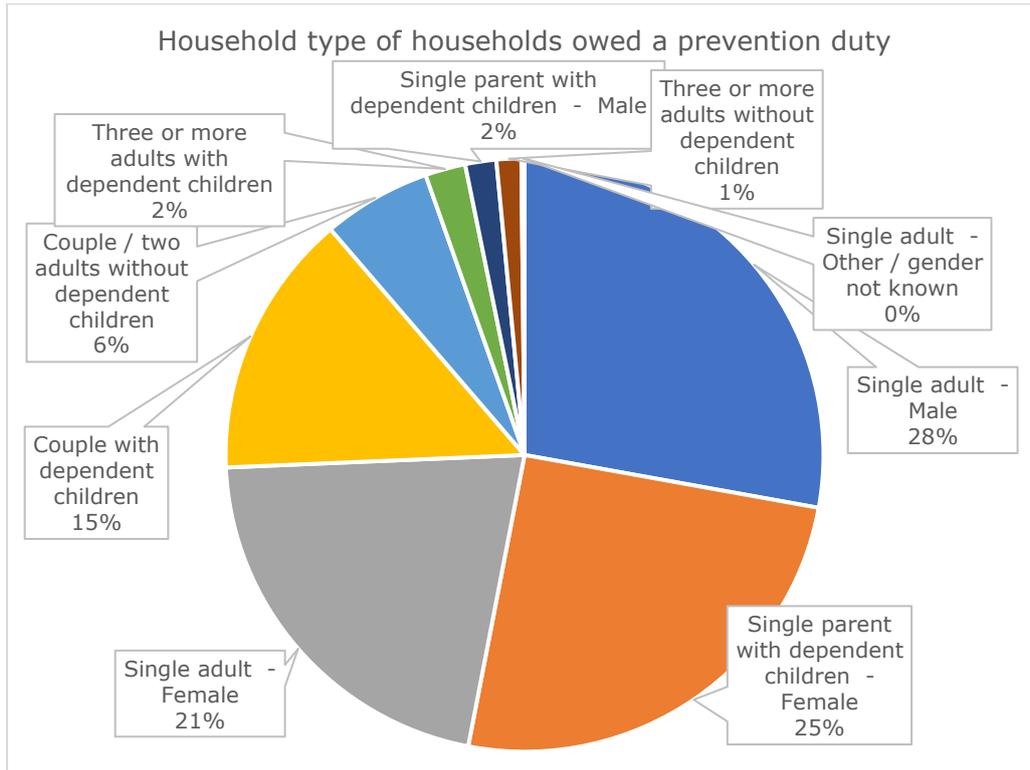
As the approaches and caseload numbers continue to rise, so has the number of households in Temporary Accommodation (as of the last night of the month) (TA). There is a clear increasing trend in the number of households in TA since March 2021, which looks to be steady in September/October 2023.



The chart below shows the economic status of applicants who came to the service in 2022-23 and were owed a duty. Most applicants were not working for various reasons, with 1 in 4 of the applicants being registered unemployed. 1 in 4 applicants were also working: 15% working full-time and 10% working part-time.



The chart below shows the household demographics of households who were owed a prevention duty.



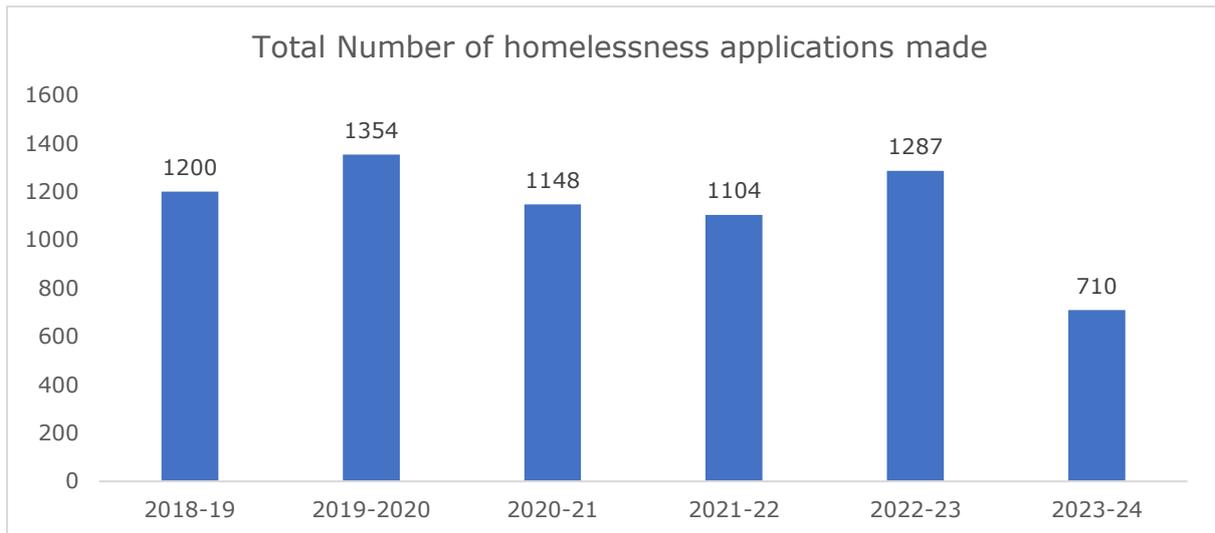
Over 1 in 4 households were single adult males, which was 166 in 2022/23. The second highest group was single parents (with dependent children) where the parent was female, which was 150 households.

This figure changes drastically when you look at the demographics of households that were owed a Relief Duty. Single adult males account for 49.88% (213 of 427) of those owed relief duty, suggesting that single males wait longer in their homeless journey to approach as homeless.

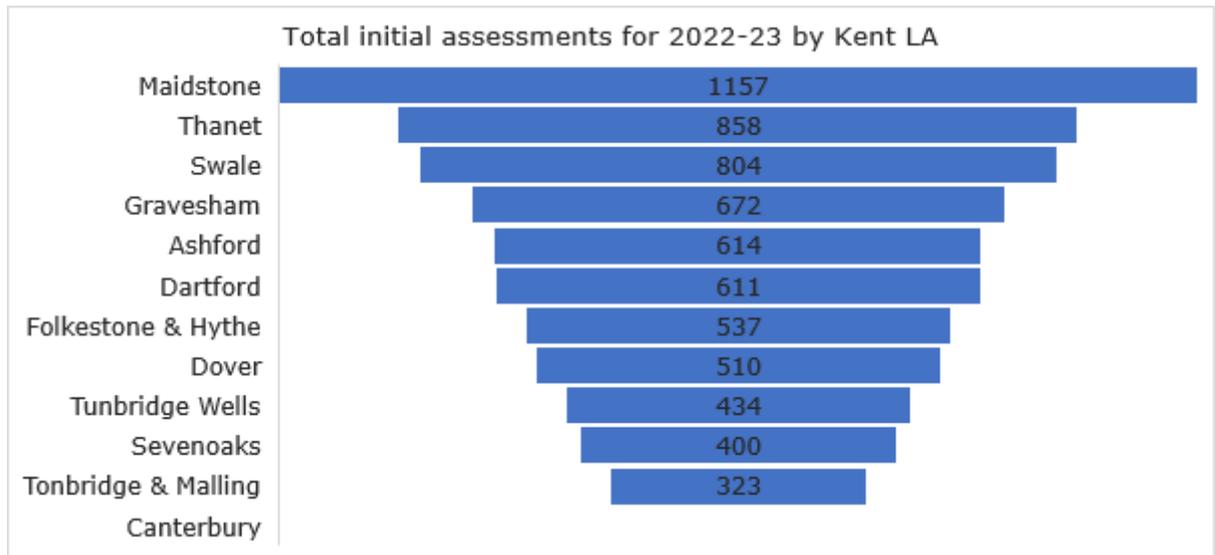
8.2 Homeless applications

The number of homelessness applications that have been made so far this financial year is on par with the number made by the same point last year (22/23). Note that the graph below shows 2023-24 data covering April to October.

Numbers have fluctuated since 2018/19 with the highest average figure being 112.9 applications per month in 2018/19. Currently average monthly applications this year are 101.4.

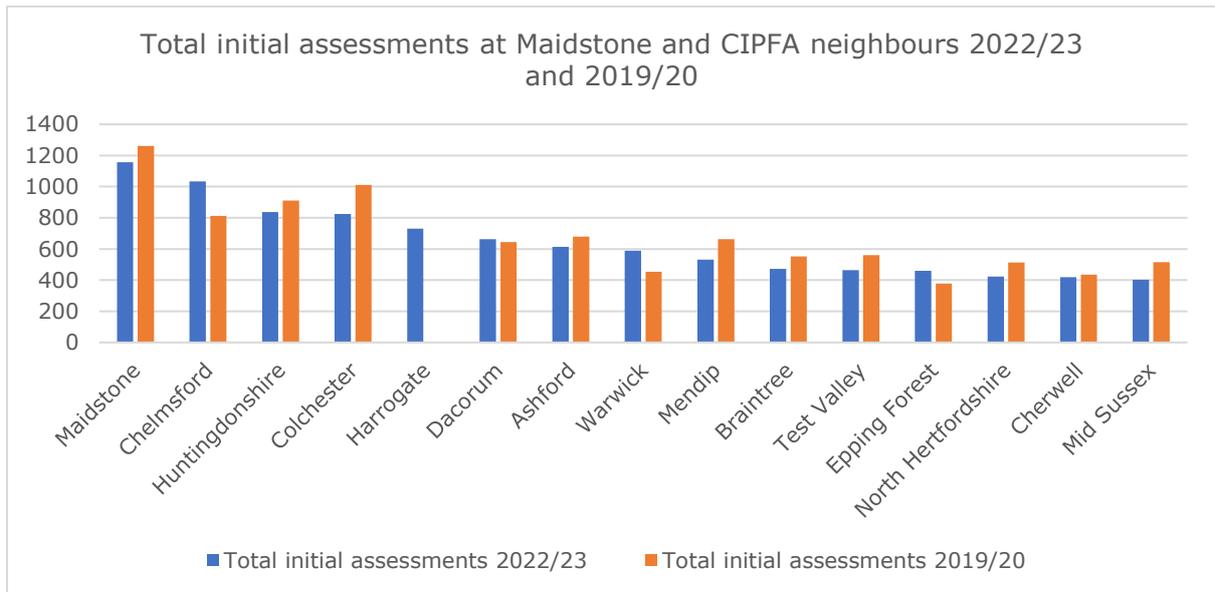


The graph below shows how we compared last year across the other Kent authorities. Note that data has not been provided for Canterbury City Council, who are anecdotally known to have a high level of homeless applications. Maidstone has the highest number of assessments, although it also has the greatest population.



Source: DLUHC statutory homelessness data

Due to the disparity in populations amongst the Kent authorities, it is important to understand how we compare to our statistically 'nearest neighbours' as proposed by CIPFA. The graph below provides a comparison of levels of assessments in 2019/20 with assessment levels in 2022/23 for Maidstone and its CIPHA nearest neighbours

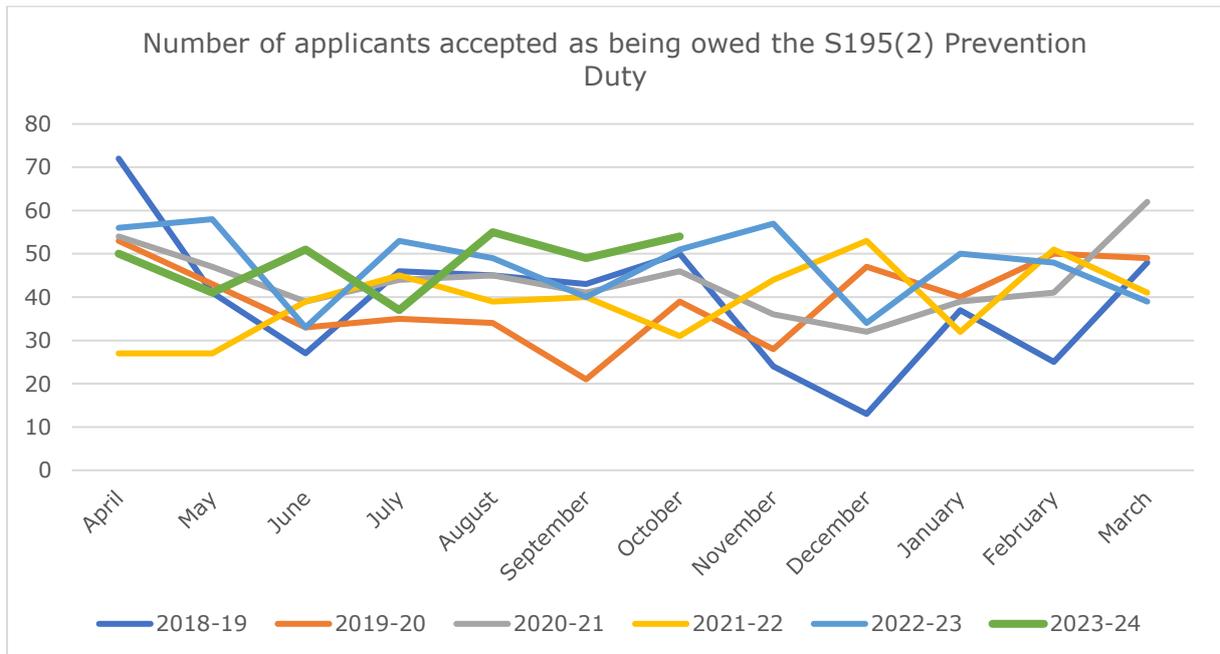


Source: DLUHC statutory homelessness data

Data shows that Maidstone received the highest number of assessments (homeless approaches) in both 2019/20 and 2022/23. Across the majority of the authorities, there was a decrease in the number of assessments from 2019/20 to 2022/23, with the exception in Chelmsford, Dacorum, Warwick and Epping Forest.

8.3 Prevention Duty

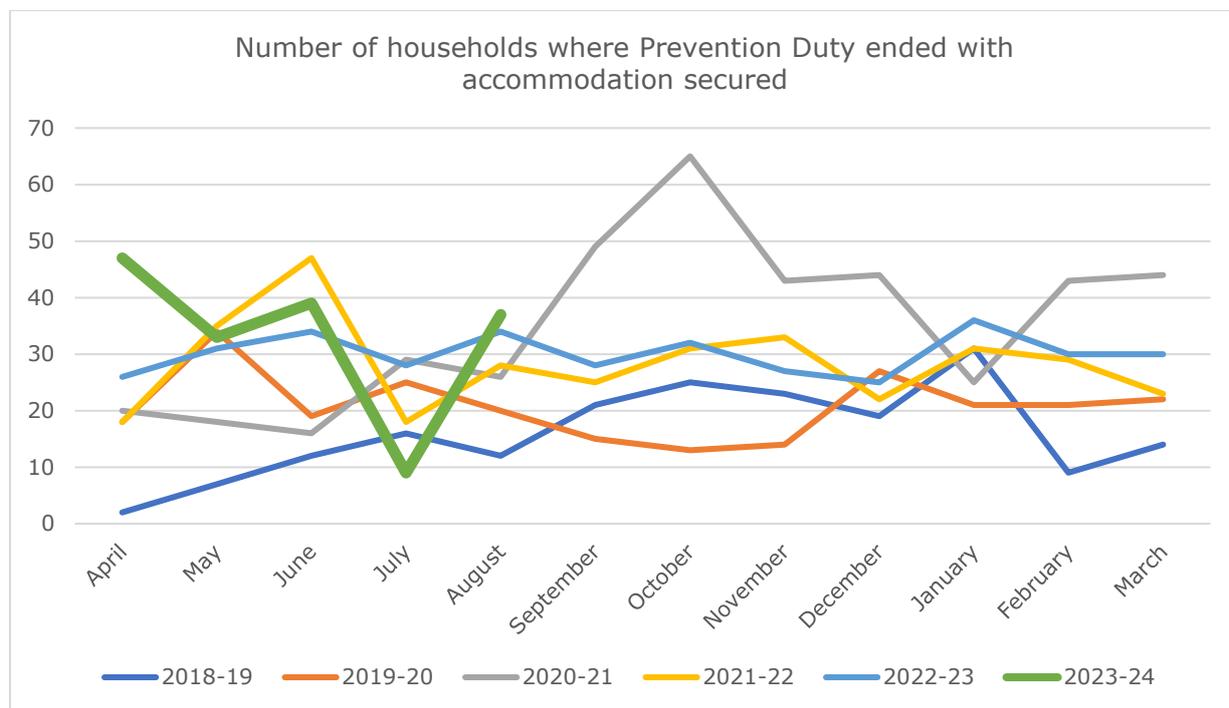
The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) came into effect from April 2018 and put the focus on local authorities to prevent homelessness or those who are at risk of losing their home in the next 56-days. The data below shows where Maidstone has accepted approaches from people under the prevention duty in the HRA act.



The data (above) does not identify trends or peaks in the the number of applicants accepted as being owed a prevention duty, however, there has been a general increase in the yearly totals, with 471 in 2018/19, rising to 568 in 2022/23.

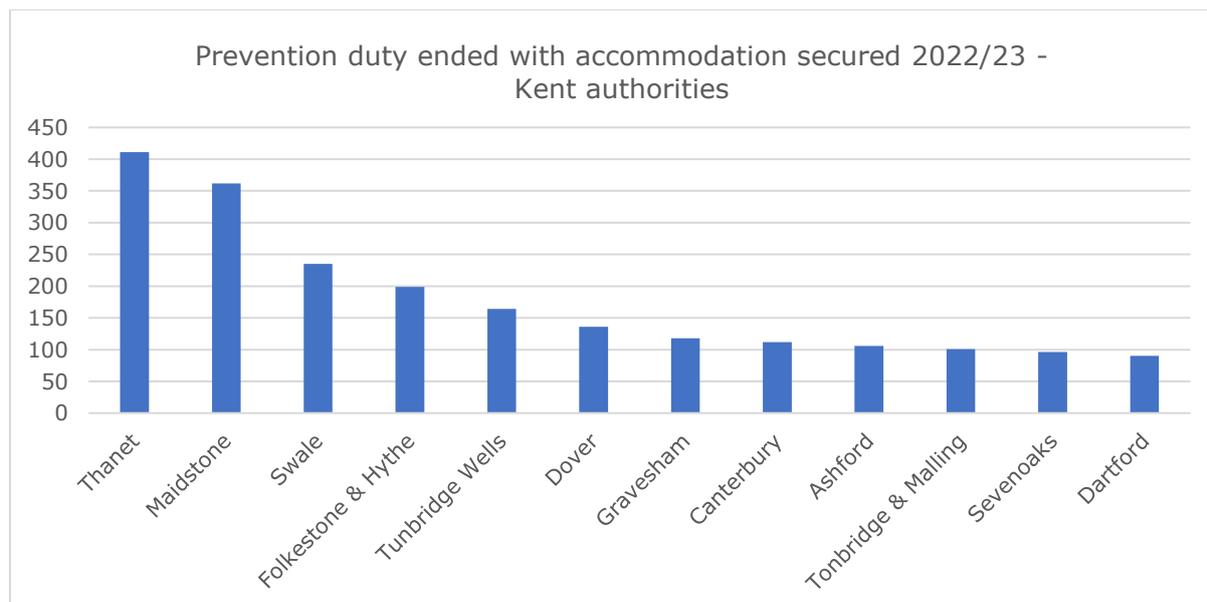
July to October 2023 the highest levels of applicants since the start of the Act, which is in line with the increase seen across all areas of the sector.

The graph below shows the number of applicants who had prevention duty successfully ended as a result of securing suitable accommodation for at least six months.



Once again, there has been an overall increase in the total yearly numbers of applicants, rising from 191 in 2018/19 to 361 in 2022/23. 2020/21 had a significant peak in October, likely due to Covid-19 impacts following the first national lockdown.

The graph below shows how Maidstone’s successful prevention duty outcomes compare to other Kent authorities. Maidstone has the second highest number of households, coming second to Thanet. Both Thanet and Maidstone have significantly higher numbers than the other authorities in Kent.

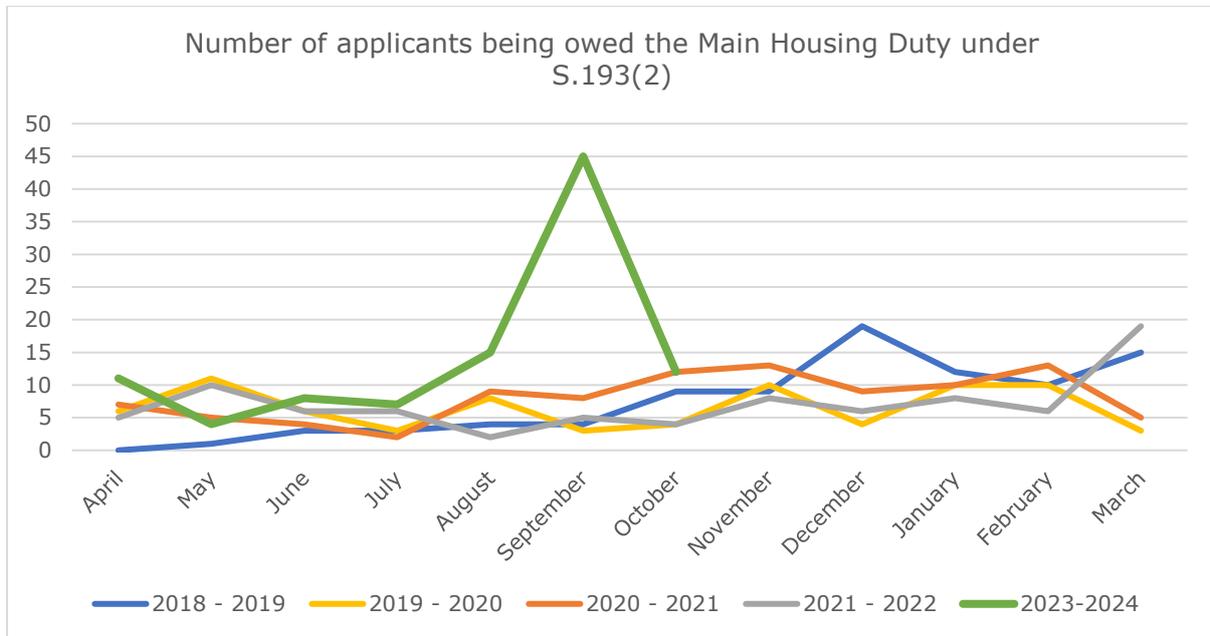


Source: DLUHC statutory homelessness data

The Graph included in section 8.4 (below) shows the different household types that were owed a prevention duty in Maidstone in 2022/23.

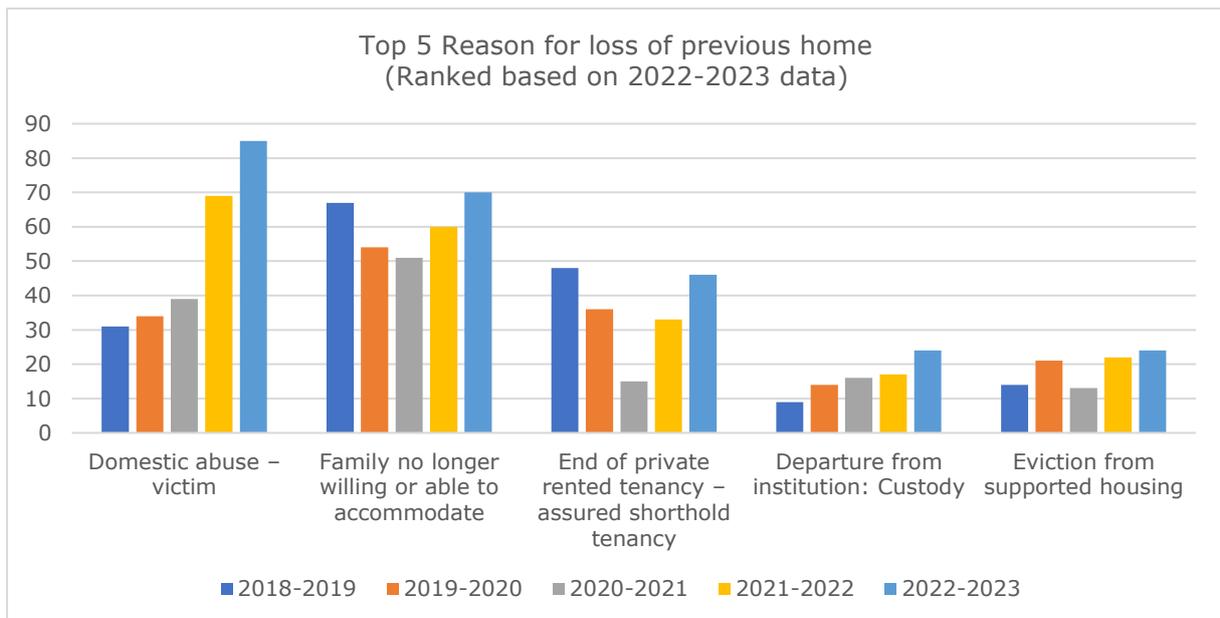
8.4 Duty Owed

The number of applicants being owed the *Main* housing duty (under s.193) has remained low since the introduction of the prevention act. Numbers have decreased slightly over the years, but with a notable spike in September 2023, which was owing to the introduction of a new system, meaning that cases were not closed.



8.5 Reason for Homelessness

The graph below shows the top five reasons people were becoming homeless in 2022-23, compared to the previous five years.



There is a significant increase in Domestic Abuse Cases; figures have more than doubled, rising from 31 in 2018-19 to 85 in 2022-23.

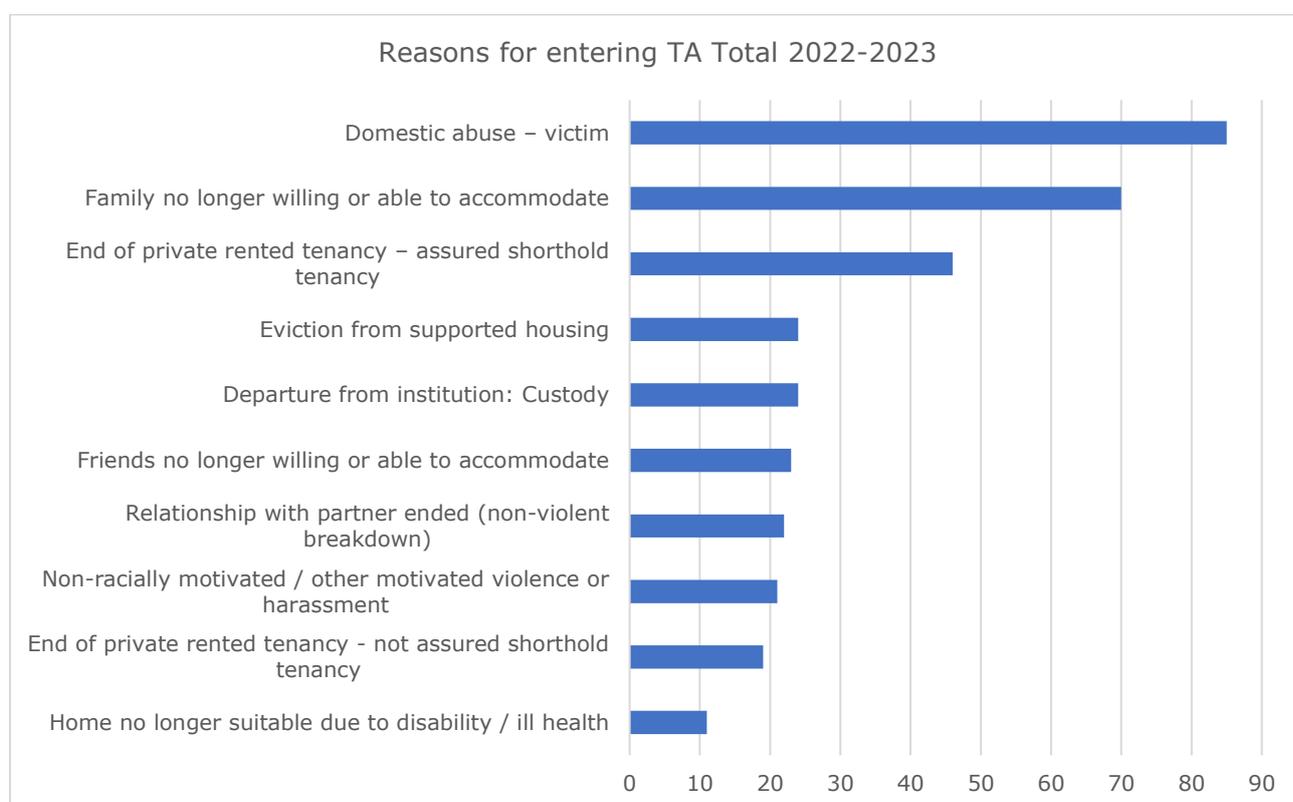
The second most common reason is that family are no longer being willing, or able, to accommodate the person/household. Although there was a decrease from 2018-2019 to 2020-2021, there has since been an increase in the last two years. The same pattern is also seen in those who were homeless due to the end of their privately rented home. However, the dip in figures in 2020-21 is skewed by the Covid-19 lockdown rules were evictions were placed on hold by the government.

Departure from institutions, such as custody, shows a consistent upward trend, although the numbers are relatively small compared to other categories.

Evictions from Supported Housing: Evictions from supported housing remained relatively stable, with a slight increase over the five-year period. There was a minor drop in 2020-2021 but the numbers have since risen to their highest point in 2022-2023, tying with departures from custody.

Overall, the data indicates that domestic abuse and the inability of families to accommodate relatives are the leading causes of homelessness in Maidstone, with both showing worrying increasing trends.

The graph below shows the full list of reasons a person/household entered into Temporary Accommodation in 2022-23.

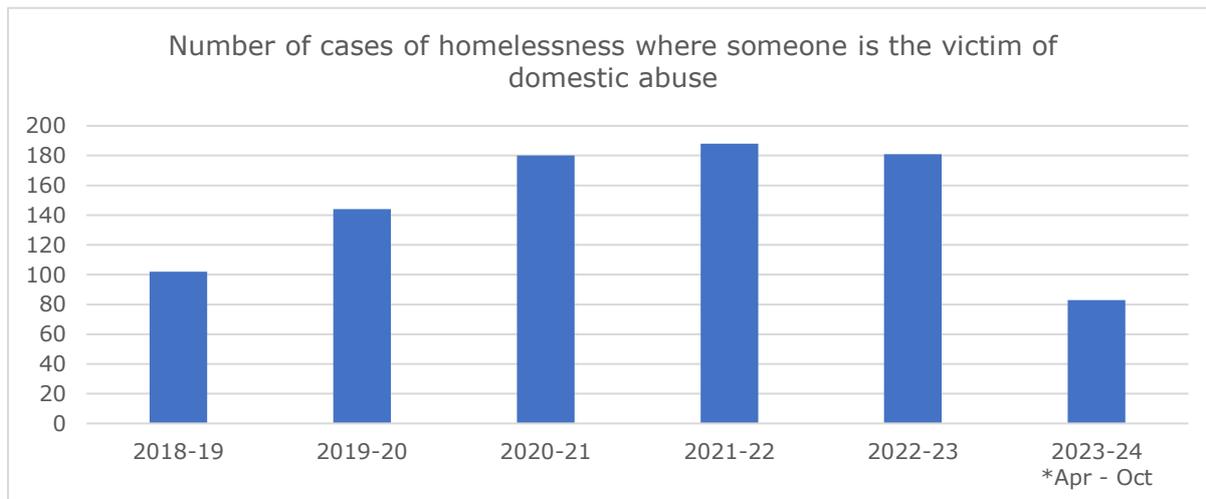


As before, Domestic Abuse is the predominant reason. The inability of family and friends to provide accommodation is the next most significant factor. Tenancy issues, including the end of both assured and non-assured shorthold tenancies, are major contributors, reflecting broader housing market and socioeconomic challenges. Institutional transitions from custody and hospitals also lead to housing loss, pointing to the need for better support structures for vulnerable populations.

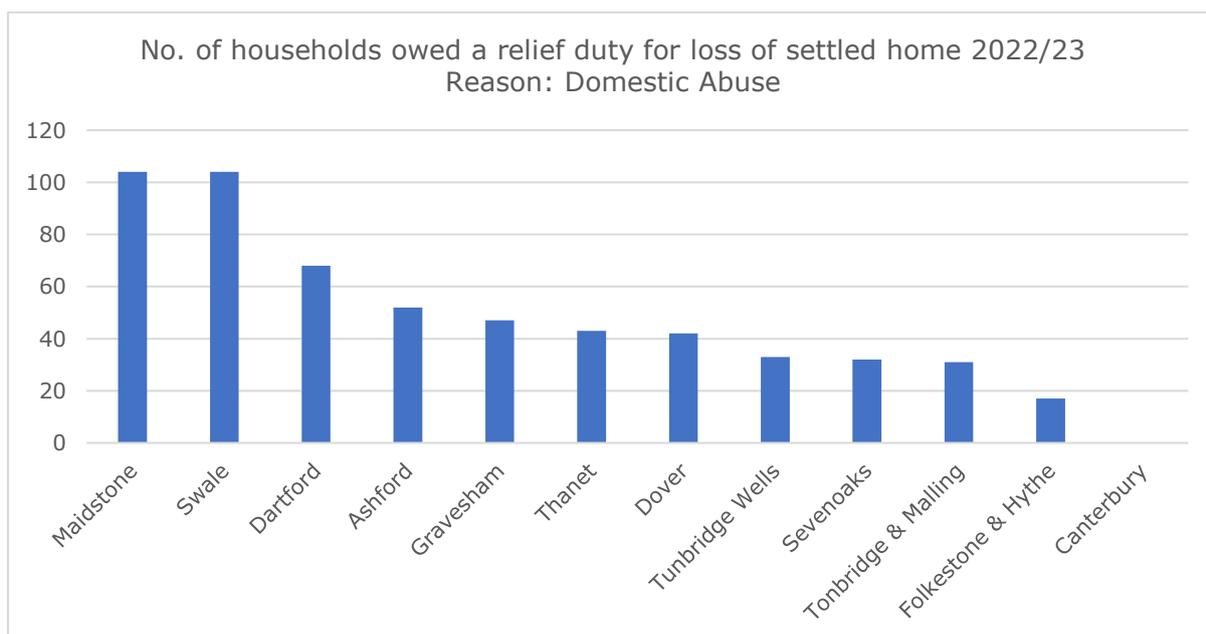
8.6 Domestic Abuse

The graph below shows the number of households that have approached as homeless because they have been a victim of domestic abuse. The total numbers each year have slowly increased, rising from 102 in 2018/19 to 181 in 2022/23.

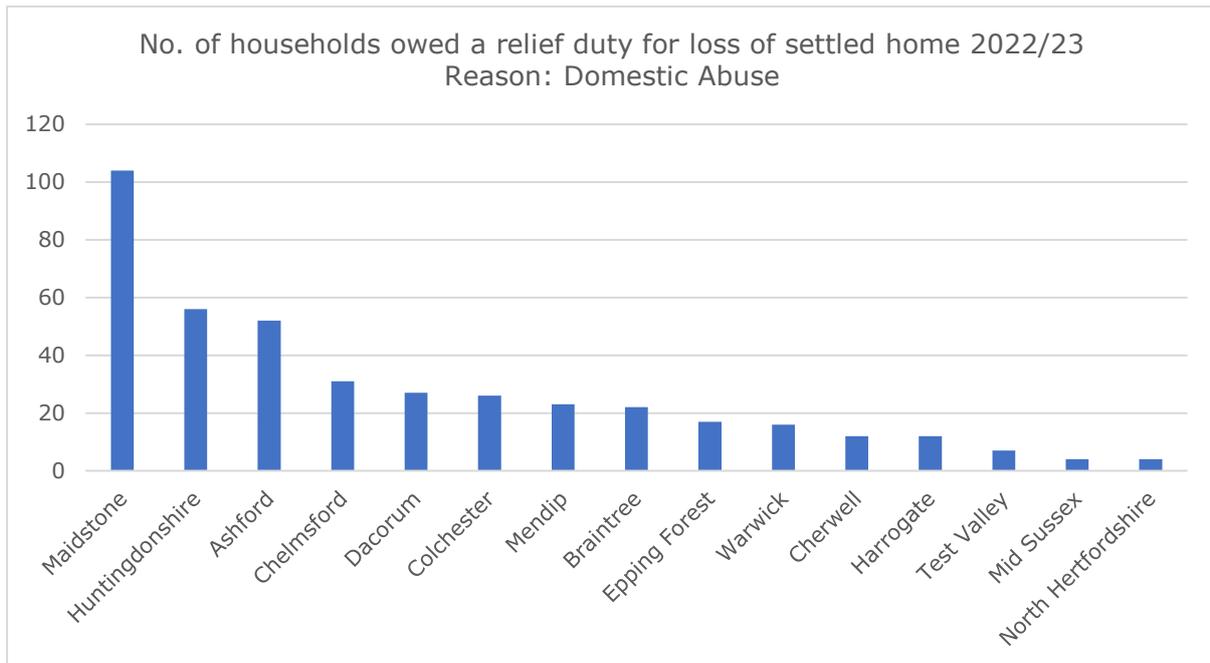
There appears to be a seasonal pattern when numbers are generally higher in January and March months, which suggests that there could be seasonal factors affecting the incidence of homelessness linked to domestic abuse.



The graph below shows the number of households across all the Kent authorities who have been owed a relief duty for loss (or threat of loss) of their last settled home, solely for the reason of domestic abuse. Data was not available for Canterbury City Council.



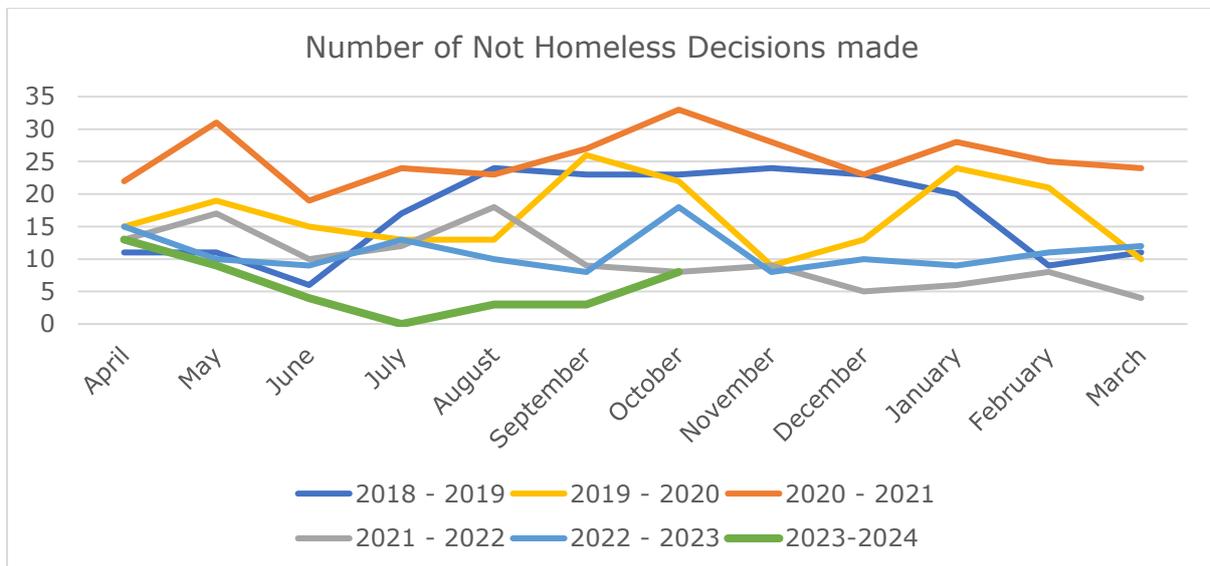
Maidstone is joint top for total households in the period 2022/23; over 50% more households than in Dartford, the next highest. To provide a fairer geographical comparison, the same comparison is provided below, this time comparison to our CIPFA nearest neighbours.



Once again, Maidstone has a significantly higher number than the comparing Local authorities, over 85% higher than the next highest (Huntingdonshire). This suggests that Domestic Abuse is higher in Maidstone, or that people travel to Maidstone to flee domestic abuse, more so than other authorities in our area and of a similar 'statistical' size.

8.7 Not Homeless Decisions

The graph below shows how many decisions of 'not homeless' were made by the Housing Advice team. Numbers in 2023-24 are so far, much lower than the previous years looked at. The peak of these decisions was throughout 2020-21.



8.8 Rough sleepers

The number of rough sleepers over the past few years suggests a consistently low trend, as detailed below in the annual street count figures. The street count is conducted annually, in November each year:

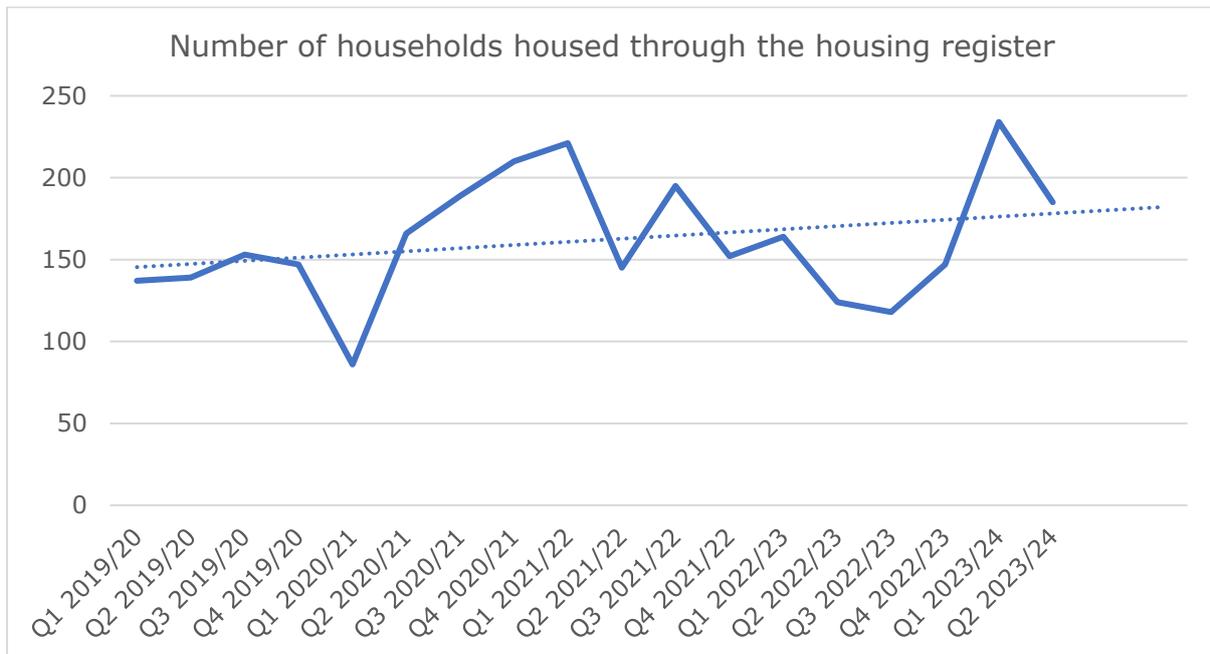
- In 2019, there were three individuals reported as rough sleepers.
- The count decreased to two in 2020.
- It slightly increased to three in 2021.

- Remarkably, there were no reported cases of rough sleeping in 2022.
- However, in 2023, this has increased to six which correspond with a much greater demand on our accommodation resources and the decommissioning of KCC homeless services.

8.8 Housing Register

Alongside the Council’s Housing Advice service is Maidstone’s Housing Options team. The team assist people with accessing the Housing Register, and social housing through the choice-based lettings scheme.

The below graph shows the number of households that were housed through the housing register.

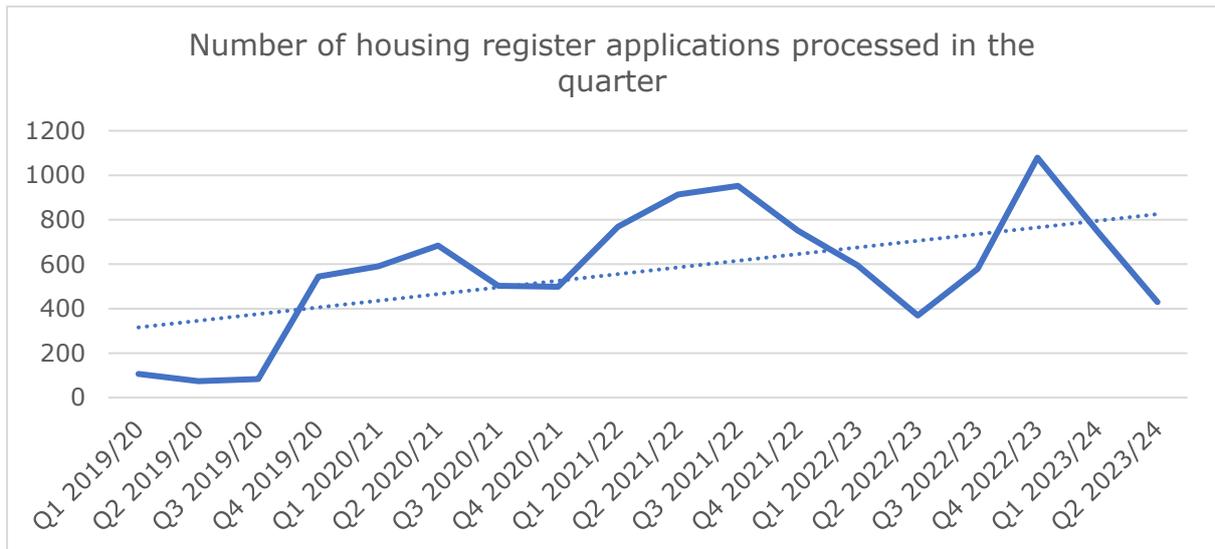


There was a noticeable dip in Q1 2020/21, where the number dropped significantly to 86, which is the lowest value across all quarters, however this would have been the impact of the first national covid-19 lockdown.

The following quarters saw a steady increase, peaking in Q4 2020/21 and continuing to rise until Q1 2021/22, which had the highest value until then at 221 households.

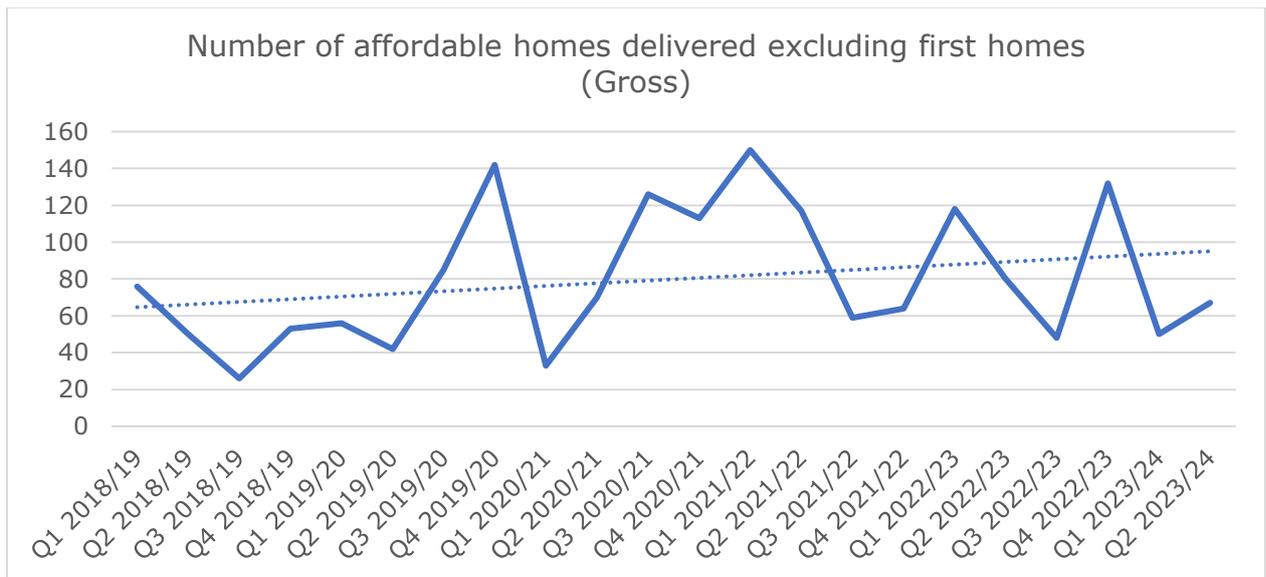
The highest number of households housed was in Q1 2023/24 with 234, showing a significant increase compared to previous years.

The below graph shows how many applications the team are receiving each quarter for people to join the Housing Register. As the trend line shows, this number is increasing substantially year on year. This indicates an increasing demand for housing this period.



8.9 Affordable homes

The graph below shows the number of affordable homes that have been delivered in the borough. There is a slight upward trend over the years, however this does not seem to continue in 2022/23. There is also a seasonal trend with peaks in numbers occurring in quarter four each year.



8. Conclusions

It is difficult to determine or predict with accuracy the future levels of homeless, given the factors that lead to homelessness, such as economic climate, welfare reforms and political appetite. However, based on the data within this review, it is clear that trends are growing and the need for the continued support operated from Trinity is growing also.

Reviewing the data above, especially in relation to the comparison information, we can see that Maidstone is exceeding all other Kent districts, and our CIPHA nearest neighbours, in relation to homelessness statistics and data markers. This may be perceived as negative by other authorities but in Maidstone, we pride ourselves on reaching the widest population as possible, to ensure our constituents are receiving an excellent and robust service. We do not shy away from the challenges that homelessness brings, but embrace those with innovation and passion, bringing a service which support all within Maidstone.

At Maidstone Borough Council we will continue offering an exceptional service from Trinity and from across the wider organisational realm, which meets the need of our local population. As this report clearly demonstrates the ever-growing demand on all our housing teams, it is suggested our next strategy will continue in the vein of the four priorities as listed below.

- Homeless Prevention
- Providing affordable and decent accommodation
- Support vulnerable households
- Alleviate rough sleeping in the district

This is a challenging time for housing departments across the country, but at Maidstone we are exceptionally well placed to work effectively to manage those challenges.