



Homelessness Strategy 2017 – 2022

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Homelessness Strategy for West Lancashire provides an opportunity for the Council to analyse recent homelessness trends and outline our objectives to tackle homelessness over the next three years. The strategy has been developed against a backdrop of unprecedented change in national policy including fundamental reforms to welfare benefits.
- 1.2 The purpose of the strategy is to provide prevention measures and services primarily for those living in or with a local connection to West Lancashire.
- 1.3 In order to inform this strategy, a review of homelessness was carried out in 2016. The purpose of the review was to:
 - Review the current and likely future levels of homelessness
 - Identify the people at risk of homelessness
 - Identify the main causes of homelessness
 - Review the homelessness prevention measures carried out by the Council
 - Review the accommodation and support options available for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- 1.4 The data used to carry out the homelessness review and in turn inform this strategy is from a number of sources:
 - West Lancashire Borough Council's Homelessness Database
 - P1E Returns (Government statistical return completed by local authorities)
 - Office for National Statistics
 - UK House Price Index
 - Shelter Databank
 - Liberty Centre
- 1.5 In developing this strategy, the Council has also consulted with partners and stakeholders to ensure that their views are represented.
- 1.6 The strategy also reflects the Council's vision of being ambitious for West Lancashire and the corporate priorities which are:
 - **Ambitious for our Economy**
Retain and grow jobs, increase skill levels and encourage business and wealth
 - **Ambitious for our Environment**
Enhance the built and physical environment and its cleanliness
 - **Ambitious for Health and Wellbeing**
Improve the health and wellbeing of local communities

- 1.7 In addition to the above, the following Council strategies have also been taken into account:
- West Lancashire Borough Council Housing Allocations Policy 2013
 - BRE Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database for West Lancashire Borough Council April 2016
 - West Lancashire Borough Council Housing Strategy 2014-2019
- 1.8 This document replaces the Homelessness Strategy 2007-2012.

2.0 Homelessness Review – Main Findings

- 2.1 The homelessness review 2016 found that despite the number of people presenting as homeless nationally increasing, locally, the number has been in decline since 2011. However, although the number of people presenting as homeless is in decline, the percentage accepted as being owed the full re-housing duty has increased from 37% in 14/15 to 57.8% in 15/16.
- 2.2 More homeless presentations are made by people aged 25-44, with lone female parents being the most likely to seek assistance; this again reflects the national trend.
- 2.3 The main cause of homelessness locally has consistently been the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy followed by parental eviction and domestic violence. These are also the main reasons nationally.
- 2.4 The main reason for a homeless applicant to have a priority need for assistance is having dependent children. This has been the main reason for the last 5 years. This is also the main reason nationally.
- 2.5 Locally, 94% of all homeless presentations are made by people classing themselves as White British with 98.4% of those being UK nationals. This reflects the small BME population of the Borough.
- 2.6 The use of temporary accommodation declined between 2011/12 and 2014/15 before increasing slightly in 2015/16, however, only 10 households were placed in temporary accommodation during 2015/16.
- 2.7 The number of children in those households placed in temporary accommodation has also reduced from 26 in 2011/12 to just 4 in 2015/16.
- 2.8 The number of households who were prevented from becoming homeless was at its highest in 2011/12 at 36. Numbers fell to 21 in 2013/14 but are now increasing with 29 prevention cases in 2015/16.

3.0 Key Objectives

- 3.1 The main findings of the homelessness review have been used to inform the key objectives of the strategy.

Objective 1: Enhance the depth and range of housing advice services to meet current and future challenges

Objective 2: Enhance the housing offer available to all homeless applicants in the Borough

Objective 3: Improving health and wellbeing

4.0 National Strategic Context

- 4.1 The Government's main policy initiatives in relation to homelessness were released in 2012. The No Second Night Out campaign aimed to end rough sleeping whilst Making Every Contact Count focussed on tackling the underlying causes of homelessness and preventing homelessness at an early age.
- 4.2 Both initiatives remain Government policy, however, a recent Select Committee Inquiry and a proposed Homelessness Reduction Bill may see changes to the way homelessness advice and assistance is provided by local authorities in the future.
- 4.3 New legislation introduced since 2012 has also changed the way homelessness services are provided.
- 4.4 **Localism Act 2011:** the Localism Act came into force in November 2012 and supports the improvement of local housing options. The Act contained a number of key provisions relevant to homelessness including the power to discharge the full homelessness duty with an offer of private rented accommodation.
- 4.5 **Welfare Reform Act 2012:** the Welfare Reform Act 2012, aimed to simplify the benefits system and help more people into work. The Act introduced the following changes that have had an impact on the availability and affordability of housing:
- changes to the local housing allowance rates left fewer tenants being able to meet their rental costs through housing benefit
 - the shared accommodation rate was extended to those aged 25-34 meaning fewer single people were able to afford to rent accommodation unless it was shared accommodation
 - the introduction of the under-occupation charge (bedroom tax) for working age social rented tenants

- the introduction of the council tax support scheme in place of council tax benefit meant all households now had to pay something towards their council tax bill
 - the introduction of a benefit cap, restricting the amount of benefits a household can receive
 - the introduction of Universal Credit
- 4.6 **Deregulation Act 2015:** the Deregulation Act 2015 introduced protection for private rented tenants against so called retaliatory evictions. Retaliatory eviction is where a tenant makes a legitimate complaint to their landlord about the condition of their property and instead of making the repair; the landlord serves them with an eviction notice. All new assured shorthold tenancies starting on or after 1 October 2015 will be covered by the provisions in the Act.
- 4.7 **Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016:** the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 reduced the benefit cap set by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 to £20,000 per year for couples and lone parents and £13,400 per year for single people. Under the Act, certain social security benefits and child tax credits have been frozen for four years from April 2016 and social housing rents have to be reduced by 1% per year for 4 years from April 2016.
- 4.8 **Housing and Planning Act 2016:** the Housing and Planning Act 2016 contains measures that could have an impact on social housing and homelessness including:
- the extension of the right to buy to housing association tenants
 - local authorities will be required to sell their higher value homes as they become vacant, impacting on the supply of social housing
 - local authority tenants with higher incomes will be required to pay a higher rent
 - measures to tackle rogue landlords in the private sector including banning orders, a national database of rogue landlords and the extension of when a tenant can apply for a rent repayment order
 - private landlords will be able to regain possession of a property they believe has been abandoned without a court order (a specific procedure is in place)
- 4.9 **Select Committee Inquiry into Homelessness:** in December 2015, a Government Select Committee launched an inquiry into homelessness following evidence that homelessness and in particular, rough sleeping was increasing. The Committee concluded that the Government must:

- take steps to improve homelessness data collection
- explore measures to give greater confidence both to tenants and landlords to encourage them to let to homeless people including reviewing local housing allowance levels and encouraging landlords to offer longer assured shorthold tenancies
- review the definition of affordable housing to reflect local needs
- recognise that many 18/21 year olds are at risk of homelessness and where they have lost their job, to have a 'grace period' before the housing element of Universal Credit is withdrawn
- allow all recipients of housing support to have their housing benefit paid directly to their landlord
- consider setting a statutory duty to provide meaningful support to single homeless people who can prove a local connection
- monitor the practice of housing homeless families away from their local area
- review the funding of mental health services for homeless people
- review the level of refuges for victims of domestic violence
- review the level of hostel provision for single homeless people
- exempt all supported accommodation schemes from the proposed rent cap

4.10 **Homelessness Reduction Bill:** following the Select Committee Inquiry, the Homelessness Reduction Bill was introduced as a Private Members Bill. The aim of the Bill is to reform the current homelessness duties to ensure that local authorities provide meaningful advice and assistance to those people who do not fall into a priority need category or who have been found to be intentionally homeless.

4.11 The Bill is currently going through the parliamentary process and is unlikely to become law before the publication of this strategy. The Bill proposes the following:

- The definition of being threatened with homelessness be extended from 28 days to 56 days
- Local authorities must accept a valid S.21 notice as evidence that the tenant is threatened with homelessness
- The creation of a stronger advice and information duty

- The creation of a stronger prevention duty for anyone threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance
 - Introduce a new relief duty for all eligible applicants who have a local connection meaning local authorities must take reasonable steps to secure accommodation regardless of priority need status
 - Incentivise people to engage in prevention and relief work by allowing local authorities to discharge their prevent and relief duties if an applicant unreasonably refuses to cooperate with the course of action proposed
 - Introduce a right to judicial review at the prevention, relief and main duty stages to ensure local authorities are held to account
 - Collect data in order to monitor the overall effectiveness of the new legislation
 - Explore options for further enforcement such as through the creation of a regulator of housing and homelessness services
- 4.12 The Council already takes steps at an early stage to assist those threatened with homelessness however; the additional requirements may require a re-design of the homelessness service.

5.0 Local Strategic Context

- 5.1 West Lancashire's geographical location in the North West of England is unique. It has a dual identity, being the southernmost borough in the county of Lancashire but also located within the Liverpool City Region. The borough comprises a mix of vibrant towns and villages sitting alongside tranquil countryside which covers an area of 38,109 hectares and contains the greatest proportion of Green Belt land in England.
- 5.2 The borough has a population of 110,700 with 49,219 dwellings. The majority of people live in the Borough's three main settlements, Skelmersdale, Ormskirk and Burscough. There are also three distinct rural areas; the Northern, Eastern and Western Parishes, containing a number of villages, the largest of which are in the settlements of Tarleton and Hesketh Bank.
- 5.3 The borough is also adjacent to a number of large urban areas including Southport to the west, Liverpool and parts of Knowsley to the South, St Helens and Wigan to the east and Chorley, Leyland and Preston to the north east.

- 5.4 Housing support services across Lancashire are currently funded through Lancashire County Council's (LCC) Supporting People programme. In January 2015, LCC announced the need to identify savings of £4.8 million from April 2017.
- 5.5 Following a public consultation, LCC agreed the following:
- a) To cease funding non-statutory supporting people services
 - b) To agree an annual budgetary provision from the Prevention and Early Help Fund of:
 - Up to £500k for crisis support
 - Up to £1.25 million for domestic abuse services including refuges
 - Up to £1.25 million for services for homeless people with complex needs
 - c) To utilise up to £1 million during 2017/18 to facilitate:
 - The reconfiguration of housing and support pathways/services for care leavers and young people who are homeless
 - The development of commissioning intentions and re-procurement of services for homeless households with complex needs
- The above changes will come into effect from April 2017.
- 5.6 Whilst services for victims of domestic violence, homeless young people and those with complex needs will still receive funding, the following services will not be funded and provision is likely to cease from March 2017:
- Housing related support in sheltered housing
 - Housing related support for people with mental health issues
 - Floating support services
- 5.7 Providers of housing related support services are currently exploring alternative funding options and have indicated that if alternative funding is not available, it is likely that those services will cease.
- 5.8 As housing related support services are provided to people who have accommodation, the loss of that support may increase the number of people becoming homeless due to their inability to independently manage their tenancies.

6.0 Legal Framework

6.1 The process of assessing an application for homeless assistance is governed by the following legislation and guidance:

- Housing Act 1996 (Part 7)
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation)(England) Order 2002
- Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003
- Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2006

6.2 The legal definition of homelessness is defined in Part 7 of the Homelessness Act 1996. A person is homeless if he or she

‘has no accommodation anywhere in the UK or elsewhere that is available for his/her occupation and which he/she has a legal right to occupy’

6.3 A person can also be homeless if they have accommodation but:

- He/she cannot secure entry to it
- It consists of a moveable structure and there is no place that he/she can place it to reside in it
- The accommodation is not reasonable to continue to occupy

6.4 Whilst many people will fall within the definition of homelessness, not everyone will qualify for assistance from the Council.

6.5 There are a number of legal duties and powers contained in the legislation ranging from a duty to provide advice to an obligation to provide accommodation.

6.6 In order to determine the duty owed, local authorities are required to make reasonable enquiries to determine whether the applicant is:

- Eligible for assistance
- Homeless or threatened with homelessness
- In priority need
- Homeless intentionally

- 6.7 Local authorities can also take into account whether the applicant has a local connection to the area.
- 6.8 The duty owed to a homeless person is dependent on the decision that is made following an investigation of the case. A person can be found to be:
- Homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need and unintentionally homeless
 - Homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need but homeless intentionally
 - Homeless, eligible for assistance but not in priority need
 - Homeless but not eligible for assistance
 - Not homeless
- 6.9 Local authorities only owe the main re-housing duty to people that are found to be homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless.
- 6.10 Local authorities may also carry out prevention and relief activities to assist a person whether they have a priority need or not.
- 6.11 Homeless prevention refers to positive action taken by the local authority to enable a person at risk of homelessness to either remain in their current accommodation or obtain alternative accommodation for at least the next 6 months.
- 6.12 Homeless relief refers to positive action to secure accommodation for households who are already homeless that bring that homelessness to an end.

7.0 Review of the Current Homelessness Strategy

- 7.1 The Homelessness Strategy 2007-2012 action plan set out a number of actions to tackle homelessness in the Borough. Since the production of the action plan, there have been a number of key achievements:

Customer Service Points

The Council created two Customer Service Points, located in Skelmersdale and Ormskirk. Both provide confidential interview rooms enabling clients to be assessed on a day and in a location that is suitable for them.

West Lancashire HomeFinder

A choice based lettings scheme called West Lancashire HomeFinder has been introduced, changing the way that Council tenancies are allocated. The scheme provides choice and transparency to those seeking Council accommodation, including homeless applicants.

Homelessness Database

A computerised homelessness data recording system has been introduced leading to more accurate data recording.

West Lancashire Landlord Accreditation Scheme

The Council launched the West Lancashire Landlord Accreditation Scheme in 2012. The aim of the scheme is to encourage private landlords to become accredited in order to raise both property and management standards in the sector.

Affordable Housing

New affordable housing continues to be built including the first new Council homes for nearly 20 years.

Council Website

A Council website has been developed which includes housing and homelessness advice.

Homelessness Decision Letters

Standard homeless decision letters have been implemented in line with good practice guidance.

Accessible Temporary Accommodation

A unit of temporary accommodation has been adapted to meet the needs of a disabled person.

Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme

The scheme, administered by the Homelessness Advice & Prevention Team provides assistance in the form of a bond to those qualifying applicants who are unable to fund a cash deposit to secure private rented accommodation.

Sanctuary scheme

The scheme, administered by the Homelessness Advice & Prevention Team and provided by Safe Partnerships, offers additional home security measures to victims of domestic abuse to enable them to remain living safely in their own home.

8.0 National Homelessness

- 8.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government produces a Housing Statistical Release on a quarterly basis that provides information on the number of households making homeless presentations.
- 8.2 The release published on the 30 June 2016 shows that the number of people presenting as homeless nationally has been in the increase since 2010. Between January and March 2016, over half of those applications were accepted as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need and therefore owed the main re-housing duty. This was a 2% increase on the previous quarter and 9% of the same quarter in 2015.
- 8.3 The main reason for homelessness was the end of an assured shorthold tenancy, followed by parental eviction and domestic violence.
- 8.4 The majority of those presenting as homeless were aged 25-44.
- 8.5 The main reason for a homeless person to have a priority need for assistance was having dependent children.
- 8.6 Lone female parents were the most common household type accepted as homeless.
- 8.7 60% of all those accepted as homeless classed themselves as White British.
- 8.8 The number of homeless households housed in temporary accommodation has been on the increase since 2011. On the 31 March 2016, 71,540 households were in temporary accommodation, an 11% increase since 2015 and up 49% on the lowest number recorded on 31 December 2010. The number of children in temporary accommodation nationally has also increased.
- 8.9 Local authorities took action to prevent homelessness for 198,100 households in 2015/16, down from 205,000 in 2014/15.
- 8.10 14,400 non-priority homeless people were helped out of homelessness (homeless relief) by local authorities in 2015/16, down from 15,700 in 2014/15.

9.0 Housing Supply and Demand in West Lancashire

- 9.1 Owner occupation remains the dominant tenure in West Lancashire with 36,543 of the 49,219 homes in the Borough being owner occupied.
- 9.2 The Borough retains a large social housing sector with 7,320 homes, 6,116 of these being Council owned properties.
- 9.3 The private rented sector is the smallest sector in the Borough with 5,356 homes.
- 9.4 Average property prices in the Borough are higher than both Lancashire and the North West. Private rents are also higher than both Lancashire and the North West meaning demand is high for social housing.
- 9.5 The number of people registering with West Lancashire HomeFinder, the Council's choice based letting scheme, has increased over the last 3 years from 1667 registrations in April 2014 to 2383 in April 2016.
- 9.6 Despite an increase in the number of people registering for accommodation with the Council, the number of Council properties let each year has decreased from 637 in 2013/14 to 493 in 2015/16.
- 9.7 New houses continue to be built within the Borough in an effort to meet demand. Table 1 shows the number of new home completions over the last five years.

Table 1: New Home Completions

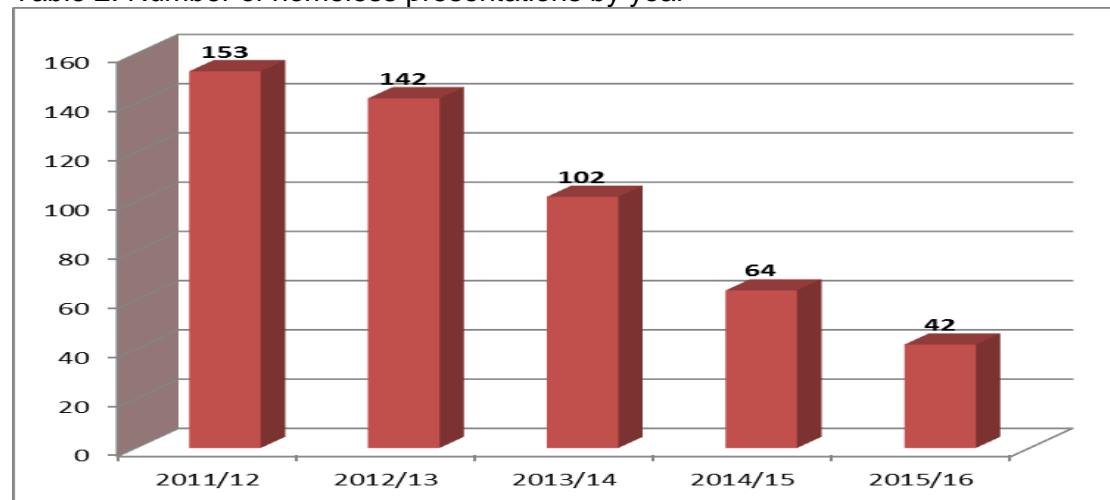
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Housing Association	10	30	60	20	60
Council	20	0	0	0	10
Private Developers	90	170	100	190	260

Source: Shelter Databank

10.1 Homeless Presentations

- 10.1. Between April 2011 and March 2016, the Council dealt with 503 homeless presentations. The number of presentations has declined year on year and was at its lowest in 2015/16.

Table 2: Number of homeless presentations by year

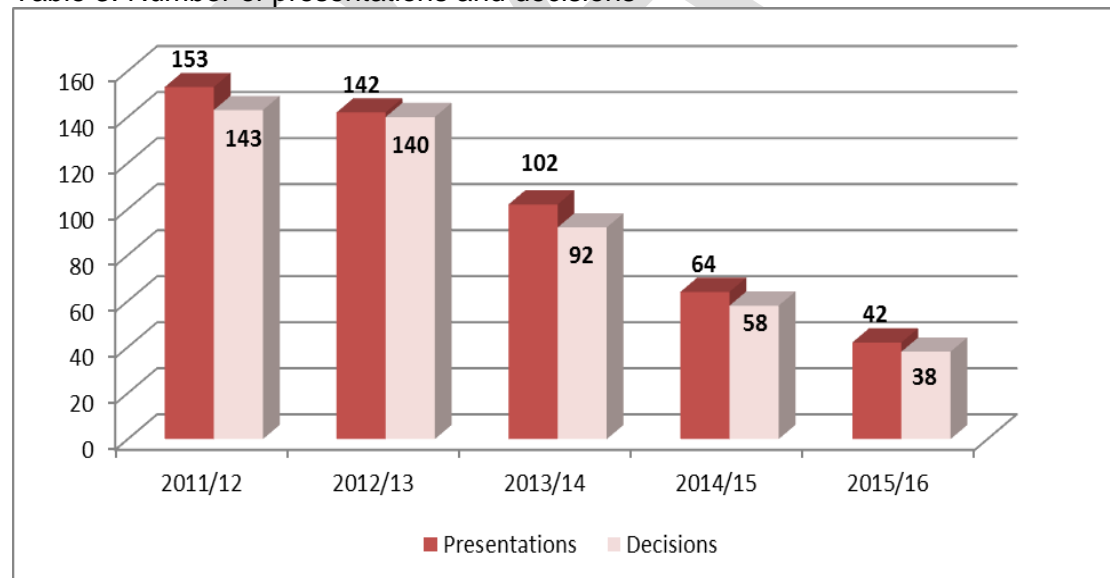


Source: WLBC Homelessness Data

10.2 Not all homeless presentations result in a decision being issued. There are many reasons for this, such as the applicant failing to make any further contact or their homelessness is resolved in another way.

10.3 Analysis of the data suggests that over the last 3 years, 90% of all presentations resulted in a decision being issued. This is a decrease from 93.4% in 2011/12 and 98.5% in 2012/13.

Table 3: Number of presentations and decisions



Source: WLBC Homelessness Data

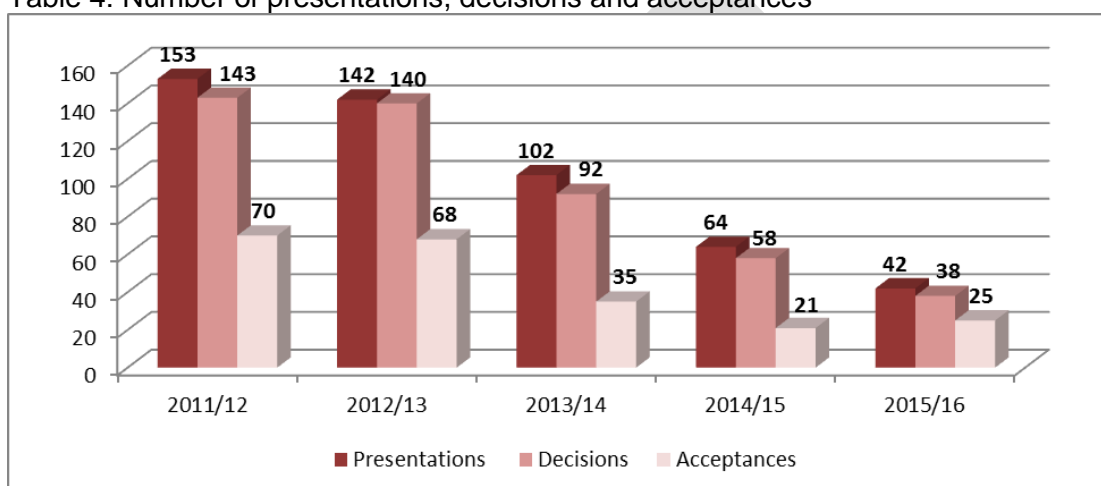
11.0 Outcome of Homeless Presentations

11.1 When a homeless application is received and an investigation is carried out, there are five possible decisions that can be reached. A person can be found to be:

- Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need
- Eligible with a priority need but intentionally homeless
- Eligible, homeless, but not in priority need
- Not Homeless
- Ineligible for assistance

11.2 The decision that is reached determines what further action if any the Council must take. Only those households found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need are owed the full re-housing duty. Those found to be intentionally homeless or not in priority need are only entitled to advice and assistance to help them secure alternative accommodation.

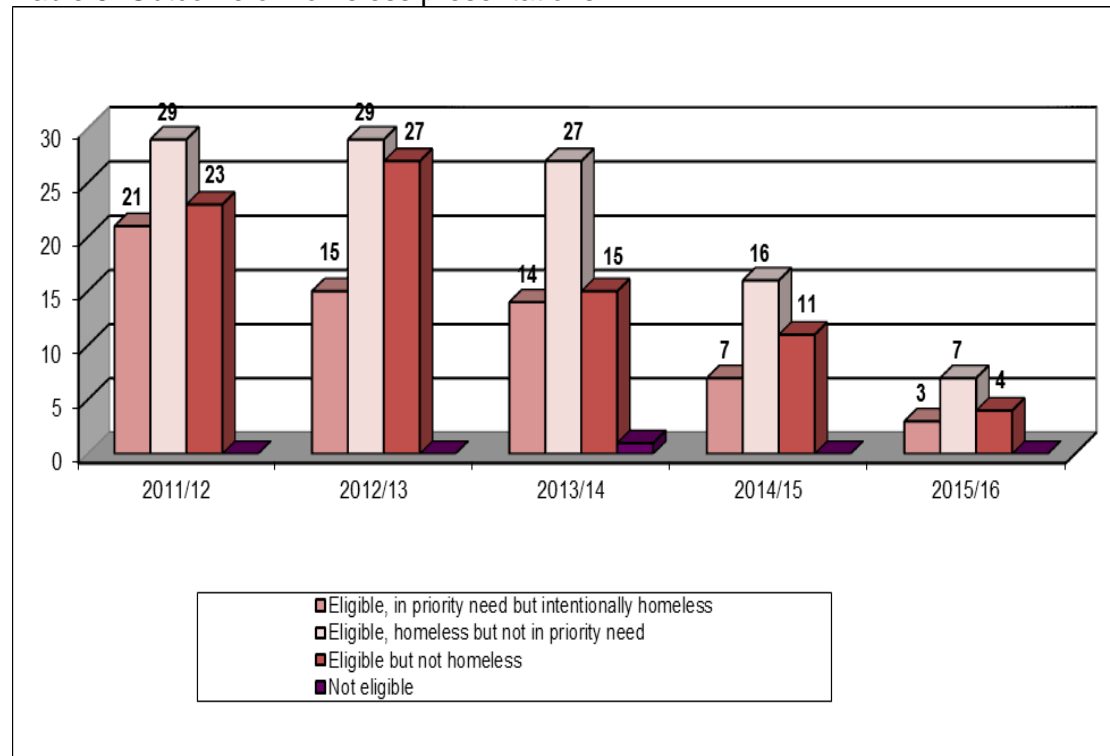
Table 4: Number of presentations, decisions and acceptances



Source: WLBC Homelessness Data

- 11.3 In 2011/12 and 2012/13, approximately half of all households who received a decision were accepted as being homeless and therefore owed the full re-housing duty. This reduced in 2013/14 and 14/15 to approximately 37% before increasing to 57.8% in 2015/16.
- 11.4 Although there was a percentage increase in the number of households being accepted in 2015/16, the actual number of decisions made was at its lowest at 38. The figures suggest that although less people are presenting as homeless, more of those presentations are resulting in a re-housing duty being owed.
- 11.5 As the number of acceptances is far less than the total number of presentations, it is interesting to note the outcome of the other cases.

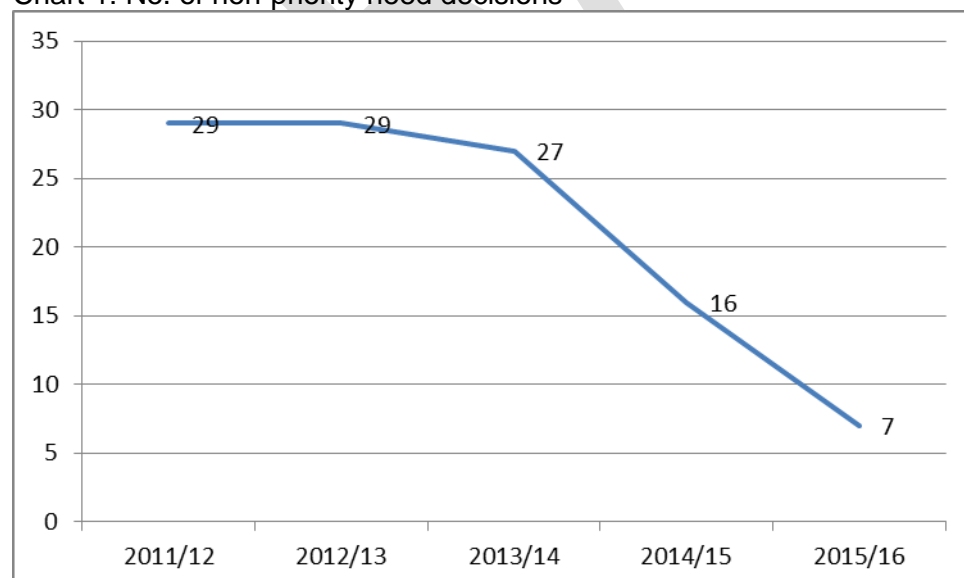
Table 5: Outcome of homeless presentations



Source: WLBC Homelessness Data

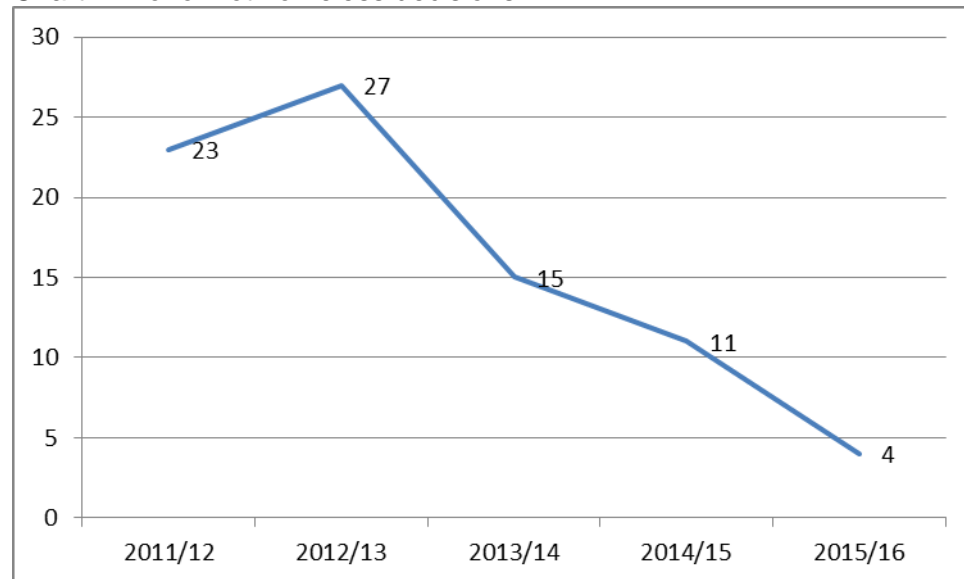
11.6 The number of households found to be homeless but not in priority need, whilst in decline, has consistently been second to the number of people accepted as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

Chart 1: No. of non-priority need decisions



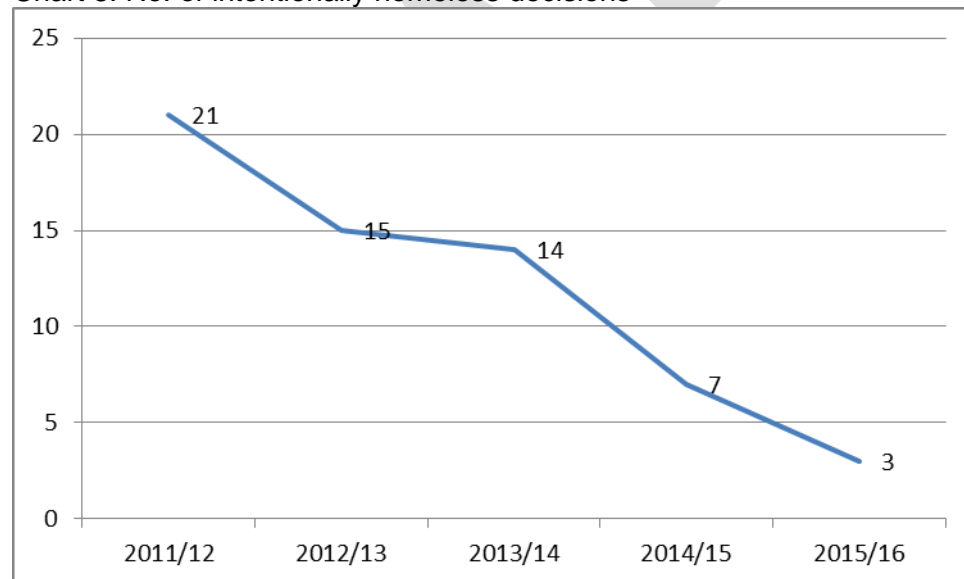
11.7 The number of people found not to be homeless increased between 2011/12 and 2012/13, then declined each year to its lowest ever number in 2015/16.

Chart 2: No. of not homeless decisions



11.8 The number found to be homeless intentionally has always been the lowest for each of the five years.

Chart 3: No. of intentionally homeless decisions



11.9 In the last five years, only 1 person has been found not to be eligible for assistance.

12.0 Homelessness Presentations & Age

12.1 The highest proportion of homeless presentations are made by applicants aged 25 - 44 with the second highest by applicants aged 16 – 24. Only 16% (81) of applicants were aged over 45.

Table 6: Number of presentations by age group

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
16-24	63	52	30	17	15
25-44	67	69	52	35	26
45-59	21	21	13	9	0
60-64	1	0	4	0	0
65-74	1	0	2	3	0
75+	0	1	3	1	1

Source: WLBC Homelessness Data

12.2 Data provided by the Liberty Centre mirrors the above data, with the highest proportion of people approaching the service being aged 25-44. In contrast with the Council's data, very few young people (16-24) approach the Liberty Centre for assistance.

Table 7: Approaches to the Liberty Centre

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
16-24	3	5	6	4	4
25-44	30	22	15	16	19
45-59	10	16	12	11	13
60-64	10	15	2	16	11
65-74	8	8	9	3	3
75+	2	2	2	0	0

Source: Liberty Centre

12.3 Population data as recorded by the 2011 Census shows that despite the largest number of homeless presentations being made by the 25-44 age group, when compared with the population totals, a higher percentage of 16-24 year olds presented as homeless.

Table 8: Population totals for West Lancashire by age group

Age	Population Total	% of homeless presentations
16-24	13,656	1.29
25-44	25,167	0.98
45-59	23,219	0.27
60-64	7,886	0.06
65-74	11,764	0.05
75+	9,111	0.06

Source: Office for National Statistics 2011 Census

12.4 A total of 18 young people aged 16/17 presented as homeless in the last 5 years. 2012/13 saw the highest number of presentations with 10 being made. Since 2012/13, numbers have significantly declined with only 1 presentation from this age group in both 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Table 9: Number of presentations by 16/17yr olds

2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
4	10	2	1	1

Source: WLBC Homelessness Data

Table 10: Outcome of presentations from 16/17 yr. olds

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Eligible, unintentionally homeless & in priority need	1	4	0	0	1
Eligible, homeless, in priority need but homeless intentionally	0	1	0	0	0
Not homeless	2	5	2	0	0
Withdrew application	1	0	0	1	0

Source: WLBC Homelessness Data

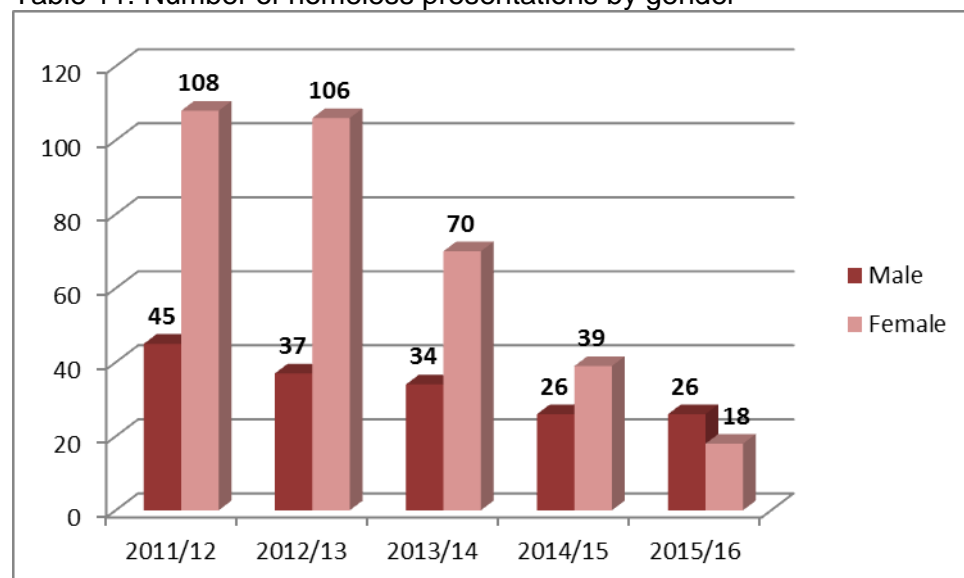
12.5 The decline in the number of presentations can be attributed to three factors:

- the ruling of the House of Lords in R (G) v London Borough of Southwark 2009 which stated that the primary duty to house a homeless 16/17 year old rests with Children's Social Care. The duty cannot be avoided by helping the young person to get accommodation through homeless legislation
- the development of a 16/17 Homelessness Joint Protocol between the Lancashire housing authorities and Lancashire County Council (Children's Social Care)
- the Council's Housing Allocations Policy reducing the application age from 18 to 16

13.0 Homelessness Presentations & Gender

- 13.1 Of the 503 homeless presentations made, 341 (67%) were from females with 168 (33%) being from males. More females than males have presented as homeless in four out of the last five years.
- 13.2 West Lancashire has a population total of 110,685 with 53,840 being male and 56,845 being female. Based on those figures, 0.31% of the male population presented as homeless with 0.59% of the female population presenting.

Table 11: Number of homeless presentations by gender



Source: WLBC Homelessness Data

14.0 Homelessness Presentations & Household Group

14.1 As the highest number of presentations were made by females, it is not surprising that lone female parents have been the largest group presenting as homeless for the last 5 years. This has been a consistent trend since 2004.

Table 12: Homeless presentations by household group and gender

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Lone female parent	63	60	41	23	23
Couple with dependent children or pregnant	15	16	8	5	4
Single male	31	27	28	20	13
Other	13	12	10	7	0
Single female	35	31	18	7	4
Lone male parent	5	3	2	3	3

Source: WLBC Homelessness Data

15.0 Homelessness & Ethnicity

15.1 West Lancashire Borough Council records the ethnicity of all homeless applicants for equal opportunities monitoring purposes. 94% (476) of all presentations were made by people classing themselves as white British.

Table 13: Number of presentations by ethnic origin

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Total
White British	149	132	95	61	39	476
White Irish	1	1	1	1	1	5
White: Any other white background	0	2	5	3	0	10
Mixed: White & Black Caribbean	1	1	0	0	0	2
Mixed: White & Black African	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mixed: White & Asian	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other mixed	0	1	0	0	1	2
Indian	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pakistani	0	0	0	0	1	1
Bangladeshi	0	1	0	0	0	1
Other Asian	0	0	0	0	0	0
Caribbean	0	1	0	0	0	1
African	0	1	0	0	0	1
Other black	1	0	0	0	0	1
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	1	3	1	0	1	6
Not known	0	0	1	0	1	2

Source: WLBC Homelessness Data

15.2 The 2011 Census recorded the population of West Lancashire as being 110,685. The following table shows the breakdown of the population by ethnic group.

Table 14: Percentage of presentations by population figures

	Population Figure	% of homeless presentations
White British	105,775	0.45
White Irish	584	0.85
White: Any other white background	2,236	0.44
Mixed: White & Black Caribbean	266	0.75
Mixed: White & Black African	140	0
Mixed: White & Asian	248	0
Other mixed	212	0.94
Indian	411	0
Pakistani	85	1.1
Bangladeshi	13	7.6
Other Asian	214	0
Caribbean	48	2.0
African	115	0.8
Other black	11	9.0
Chinese	190	0
Other	66	9.0

Source: Office for National Statistics 2011 Census

16.0 Foreign National Applications & UK Nationals from Abroad

16.1 The following table shows the number of homeless presentations broken down by the applicants' country of origin. The figures show that 98.4% of all homeless applications are made by UK nationals.

Table 15: Homeless applications by country of origin

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
UK National (habitually resident)	152	139	98	64	42
UK national (returning to UK or arriving in the UK for the first time)	0	0	1	0	0
Czech Republic	0	0	0	0	0
Estonia	0	0	0	0	0
Hungary	0	0	1	0	0
Latvia	1	1	1	0	0
Lithuania	0	0	0	0	0
Poland	0	0	2	0	0
Slovakia	0	0	0	0	0
Slovenia	0	0	0	0	0
Bulgaria	0	0	0	0	0
Romania	0	0	0	0	0
Other EEA National	0	1	1	1	0
Non EEA National	0	2	0	0	2

Source: Office for National Statistics 2011 Census

17.0 Primary Causes of Homelessness in West Lancashire

17.1 There are many reasons why a person can become homeless. The Council records all of the reasons given and reports these to Government on a quarterly basis.

17.2 Over the last five years, the main reasons given for homelessness have consistently been:

- end of assured shorthold tenancy
- domestic violence
- parental eviction
- non-violent relationship breakdown

Table 16: Main causes of homelessness 2011/12

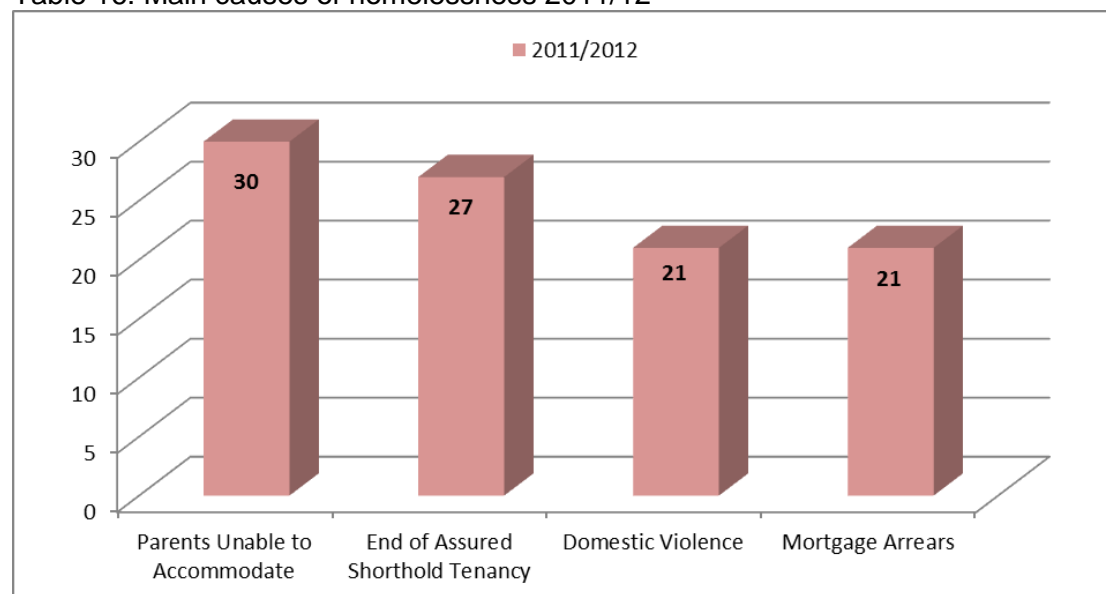


Table 17: Main causes of homelessness 2012/13



Table 18: Main causes of homelessness 2013/14

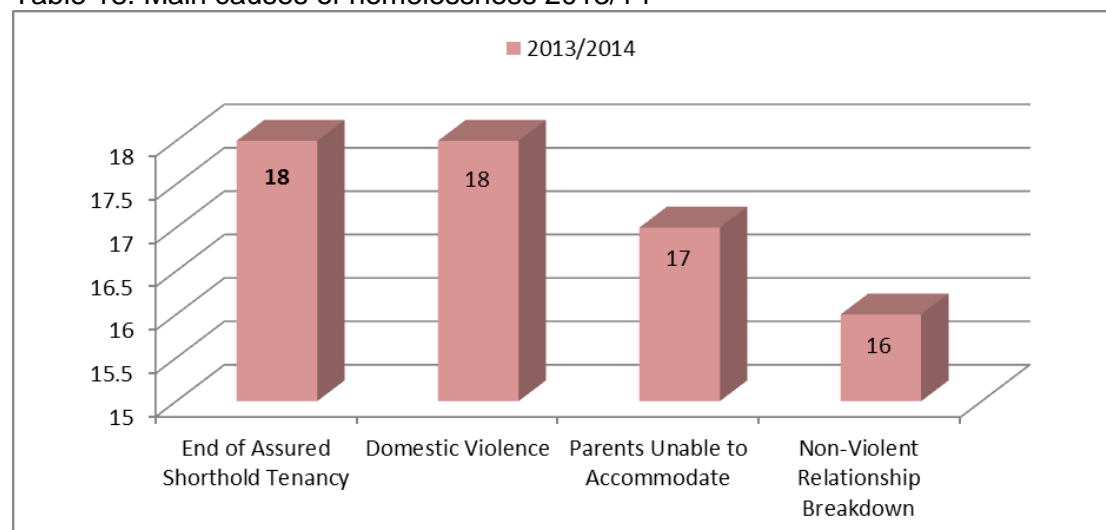


Table 19: Main causes of homelessness 2014/15

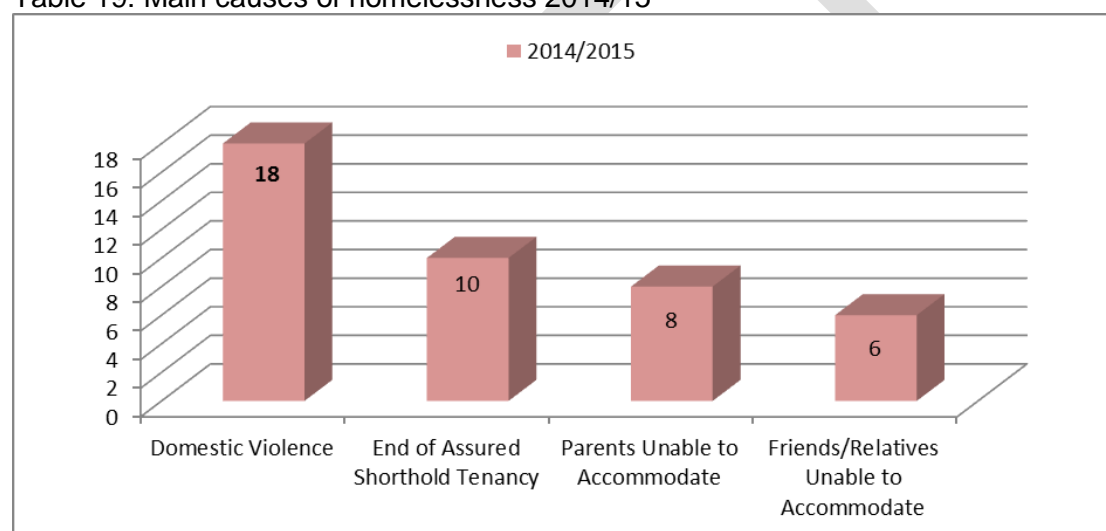
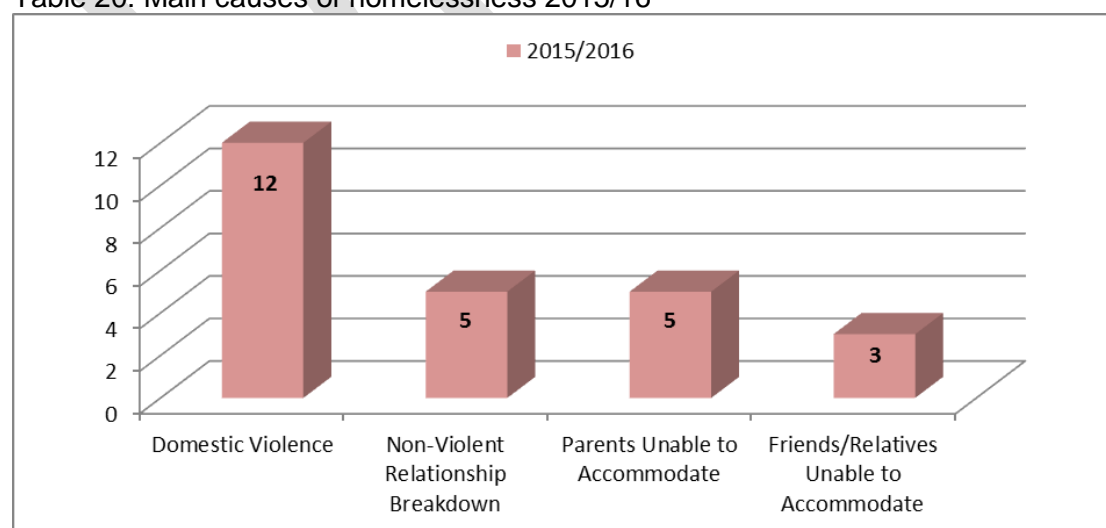


Table 20: Main causes of homelessness 2015/16



17.3 Table 20 shows all the recorded reasons given by applicants as the cause of their homelessness.

Table 21: Primary causes of homelessness

	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Parents unable/unwilling to accommodate	30	16	17	8	5
Other friends/relatives unwilling/unable to accommodate	11	15	7	6	3
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	16	16	10	4	5
Violent relationship breakdown involving partner	21	27	18	18	12
Violent breakdown of relationship involving associated persons	4	5	2	0	0
Racially motivated violence	0	0	0	0	0
Other forms of violence	0	1	1	2	2
Racially motivated harassment	0	0	0	0	0
Other forms of harassment	0	0	1	1	0
Mortgage arrears	21	11	6	4	3
Local authority rent arrears	1	2	3	3	0
Registered provider rent arrears	0	3	0	2	1
Private sector rent arrears	7	3	8	2	2
End of assured shorthold tenancy	27	34	18	10	0
Reasons other than end of assured shorthold tenancy	0	1	2	0	0
Termination of accommodation provided by the Home Office as asylum support	0	0	0	0	0
Left prison/remand	1	1	2	0	1
Left hospital	1	0	1	1	1
Left other institution or local authority care	2	0	2	2	0
Left HM forces	1	0	0	0	0
Other reason	10	7	5	2	1

18.0 Homelessness & Priority Need in West Lancashire

18.1 The Council has a duty to provide temporary accommodation to all applicants who they believe may be homeless and in priority need. This duty remains until a final decision on their case has been made.

18.2 S.193 (2) and s.195 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 set out the priority need categories.

18.3 If an applicant falls into one of the following categories, they will automatically have a priority need:

- A pregnant women or a person with whom she resides or might reasonably be expected to reside
 - A person with whom dependent children reside or might reasonably be expected to reside
 - A person aged 16/17 who is not a 'relevant child' or a child in need to whom a local authority owes a duty under s.20 of the Children Act 1989
 - A person under 21 who was (but is no longer) looked after, accommodated or fostered between the ages of 16 & 18 (except a person who is a relevant student)
 - A person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster
- 18.4 If an applicant falls into one of the categories below, they will only have a priority need if they are considered to be 'vulnerable' and it is for the local authority to make that decision.
- A person aged 21 or more who is vulnerable as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered (except a person who is a relevant student)
 - A person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reason or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably be expected to reside
 - A person who is vulnerable as a result of having been a member of HM regular naval, military or air forces
 - A person who is vulnerable as a result of:
 - a) having served a custodial sentence
 - b) having been committed for contempt of court or any other kindred offence; or
 - c) having been remanded in custody
 - A person who is vulnerable as a result of ceasing to occupy accommodation because of violence from another person or threats of violence from another person which are likely to be carried out
 - A person who is vulnerable for any other special reason, or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably be expected to reside
- 18.5 The main reason for a person to be found to have a priority need is having dependent children. This has been the main reason each year since the first review in 2002.

Table 22: Reasons for Priority Need

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Dependent children	48	50	25	18	17
Pregnant (no other children)	6	7	1	0	2
Emergency (fire, flood, other disaster)	0	0	0	0	0
16/17	1	4	0	0	1
Formerly in care and aged 18-20	4	0	1	2	2
Vulnerable due to old age	1	2	4	1	0
Vulnerable due to physical disability	7	5	3	0	2
Vulnerable due to mental illness/disability	1		1		1
Vulnerable due to drug dependency	0	0	0	0	0
Vulnerable due to alcohol dependency	0	0	0	0	0
Vulnerable due to being a former asylum seeker	0	0	0	0	0
Other	1	0	0	0	0
Vulnerable due to being in care	0	0	0	0	0
Vulnerable due to being in HM forces	0	0	0	0	0
Vulnerable due to being in custody/remand	0	0	0	0	0
Vulnerable due to fleeing violence/threats	0	0	0	0	0
Vulnerable due to domestic violence	1	0	0	0	0

19.0 Rough Sleeping

19.1 Rough sleeping is not a significant problem within West Lancashire. The last official rough sleepers count was conducted in 2015. This count recorded one rough sleeper in the Borough.

20.0 Homelessness Temporary Accommodation

20.1 Where a person makes a homeless presentation to the Council and there is reason to believe that the person is homeless and may have a priority need for assistance, the Council is under a duty to provide temporary accommodation until a final decision is made on the case.

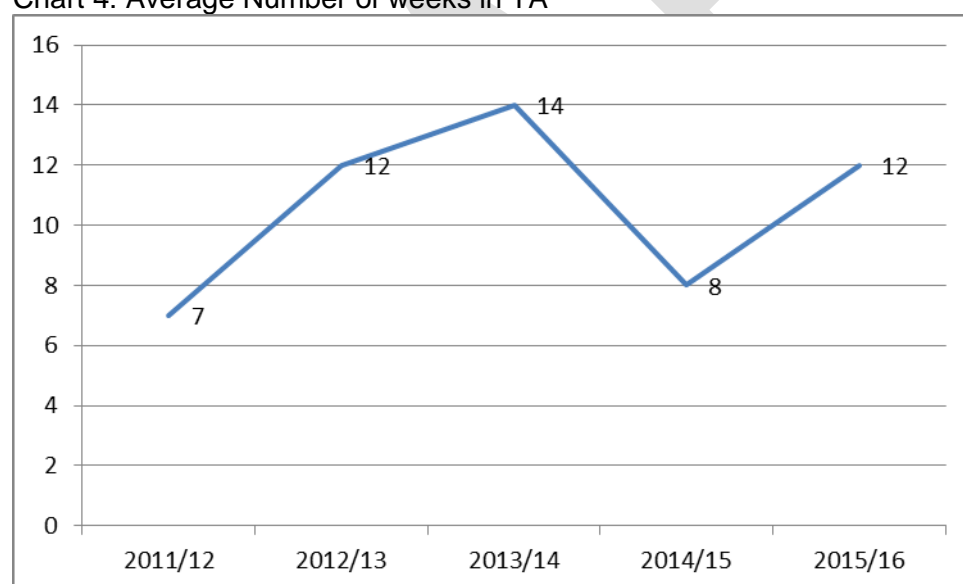
- 20.2 Government guidelines state that bed and breakfast accommodation should only be used in an emergency and families should not be placed in such accommodation for more than 6 weeks.
- 20.3 In West Lancashire, temporary accommodation for households that have presented as homeless to the Council is provided directly by the Council in the form of self-contained bedsits that are partly furnished. All of the accommodation is located in the Skelmersdale area. The Council has not had to place any homeless household in bed and breakfast accommodation in the last five years.
- 20.4 The following table shows the number of people placed in temporary accommodation by the Council between 2011 and 2016.

Table 23: Temporary accommodation placements

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
WLBC Temporary Accommodation	25	17	12	6	10

- 20.5 The following chart shows the average number of weeks a person was provided with Council owned temporary accommodation.

Chart 4: Average Number of weeks in TA

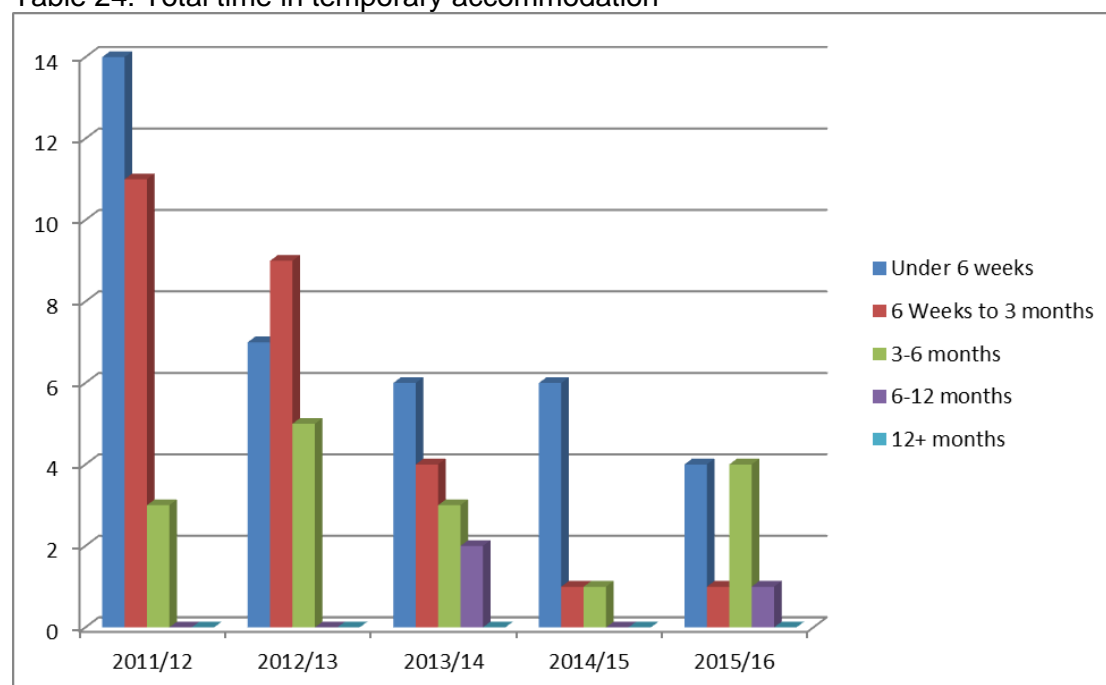


Source: WLBC Homelessness Data

- 20.6 The average length of stay in temporary accommodation provided by the Council peaked in 2013/14 before declining in 2014/15. Figures for 2015/16 show the average length of stay to be on the increase again.
- 20.7 The increase in the average length of stay in temporary accommodation can be linked to the introduction of West Lancashire HomeFinder, the Council's Choice Based Allocations Service.

- 20.8 To ensure that households who have been accepted as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need are able to exercise choice, they are able to bid for accommodation for a period of 8 weeks before bids are placed on their behalf in order to bring the homeless duty to an end.

Table 24: Total time in temporary accommodation



	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Under 6 weeks	14 (56%)	7 (41%)	6 (50%)	4 (66%)	4 (40%)
6 Weeks to 3 months	11 (44%)	9 (52%)	4 (33%)	1 (16%)	1 (10%)
3-6 months	3 (12%)	5 (29%)	3 (25%)	1 (16%)	4 (40%)
6-12 months	0	0	2 (16%)	0	1 (10%)
12+ months	0	0	0	0	0

- 20.9 In each of the last five years, the majority of households have spent less than 6 weeks in temporary accommodation, the exception being 2013/13 where the majority of households spent between 6 weeks and 3 months in temporary accommodation.

- 20.10 Data provided by the Liberty Centre shows that demand for their accommodation services also remains high.

Table 25: Households accommodated directly by the Liberty Centre

2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
63	68	46	50	50

Source: Liberty Centre

- 20.11 Of those households offered accommodation, the average length of stay was 6-12 months.

21.0 Children & Temporary Accommodation

21.1 The Council records the number of children in households that are provided with temporary accommodation. Between April 2011 and March 2016, 56 children were placed in temporary accommodation.

Table 26: No. of children placed in TA by quarter

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
April - June	3	0	8	2	1
July - September	4	0	2	0	0
October - December	11	6	4	0	0
January - March	8	2	2	0	3
Total	26	8	16	2	4

21.2 In contrast, the Liberty Centre places significantly more children in its accommodation.

Table 27: No. of children placed in the Liberty Centre

2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
67	76	52	60	56

Source: Liberty Centre

22.0 Homelessness Prevention & Relief

22.1 Under the Homelessness Act 2002, the Council must provide homelessness prevention advice to anyone in the Borough.

22.2 **Homelessness prevention** involves providing people with the means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness. This is done by either assisting them into alternative accommodation or enabling them to remain in their existing home.

22.3 **Homelessness relief** occurs when it has not been possible to prevent the homelessness but the person has been helped to secure accommodation, even though the Council is under no statutory obligation to do so.

Table 28: No. of cases prevented/relieved

	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Prevented	36	21	21	25	29
Relieved	7	3	7	5	0

22.4 The main way homelessness was prevented was by the installation of security measures for victims of domestic violence through the Council's Sanctuary Scheme.

Table 29: Homeless Prevention Tools

	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Conciliation	2	0	0	0	0
Sanctuary Scheme	29	18	15	18	25
Social housing offer of Council or RSL tenancy	4	1	5	3	4
Mortgage Rescue	1	1	0	0	0
Other	0	0	1	1	0
Rent Deposit Guarantee	0	0	0	1	0
Debt advice	0	0	0	1	0

22.5 Homelessness was relieved by the following means:

Table 30: Homelessness relief tools

	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Conciliation	0	0	0	0	0
Sanctuary Scheme	0	0	0	0	0
Social housing offer of Council or RSL tenancy	6	2	7	4	0
Mortgage Rescue	0	0	0	0	0
Other	1	0	0	0	0
Rent Deposit Guarantee	0	0	0	1	0
Debt advice	0	0	0	0	0
Social Housing Negotiation	0	1	0	0	0
Accommodation with friends/relatives	0	0	0	1	0

23.0 Homelessness & Private Sector Accommodation

23.1 West Lancashire Borough Council's Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme helps those who are homeless to access private rented accommodation if they are unable to provide a cash deposit.

23.2 The Council will provide security for the deposit in the form of an agreement between the Council and the landlord. The agreement can be in place for a maximum of 12 months. The tenant must use the guarantee period to save enough money to pay for future deposits.

23.3 A claim against the guarantee can be made if the landlord suffers loss or damage to their property during the period of the guarantee or at the end of the fixed term tenancy.

24.0 Housing Advice

24.1 In addition to assessing homeless presentations, the Council also offers housing advice to anyone resident within the Borough. Data collected over the last five years shows that the main reasons for people seeking housing advice have consistently been due to relationship breakdown (violent & non-violent), parental eviction and security of tenure.

24.2 It is important to note that many of the housing advice enquiries are made by telephone making recording data more difficult as many people do not wish to disclose much personal information at that time.

Table 31: Housing Advice Enquiries by Category

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Mortgage Arrears	13.8%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Rent Arrears	3.4%	0%	0%	5.9%	0%
Disrepair	0%	0%	10.0%	0%	0%
Relationship Breakdown	13.8%	16.7%	50.0%	11.8%	50.0%
Notice to Quit	3.4%	33.3%	10.0%	29.4%	0%
Repossession	3.4%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Security of Tenure	3.4%	33.3%	0%	17.6%	30.0%
Seeking Accommodation	20.7%	0%	60.0%	58.8%	80.0%
Fleeing Violence	51.7%	50.0%	0%	0%	0%
Parental Eviction	6.9%	0%	20.0%	11.8%	30.0%
Harassment/Eviction	0%	0%	0%	5.9%	0%
Homefinder	0%	0%	0%	11.8%	0%
Friends/relative eviction	0%	0%	0%	11.8%	0%

- 24.3 More females than men contacted the Council for housing advice, of those, the number of single females and lone female parents were virtually equal.

Table 32: Housing Advice Enquiries by Gender

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Total
Male	8	1	3	5	4	21
Female	21	5	7	12	6	51

Table 33: Housing Advice Enquiries by Household Type

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Total
Couple + dependents	2	1	0	0	1	4
Lone Female	0	0	2	8	4	14
Lone Female + dependents	2	0	4	3	4	13
Lone Male	0	0	1	5	2	8
Lone Male + dependents	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	2	0	0	1	0	3

25.0 Future Levels of Homelessness in West Lancashire

- 25.1 The consistent decline in the number of households presenting as homeless is an indication that future demand will continue to be low, however, further planned changes to welfare benefits and the potential closure of local services due to cuts in Supporting People funding may lead to an increase in these numbers.

26.0 Conclusions and Action Plan

- 26.1 Homelessness in West Lancashire has been in decline since 2011 and whilst this is a welcome trend, it is important that we build on this to ensure that this trend continues.
- 26.2 The review highlights that although the number of homeless presentations is in decline, more of the people that do present, are accepted as being owed the full re-housing duty. It is therefore important that we continue to work with providers of both social and private rented housing to ensure sufficient accommodation is available in the Borough.

- 26.3 With the highest number of homeless presentations being made by lone female parents aged 25-44, it is important to understand why this group are more likely to be threatened with or become homeless so that we can find ways to address those issues.
- 26.4 In looking at the main causes of homelessness, it is clear that the main cause of homelessness in the Borough has consistently been the ending of assured shorthold tenancies. We must work with local landlords to identify the reasons why they are bringing tenancies to an end in order to be able to offer workable solutions.
- 26.5 The number of cases where homelessness is prevented is on the increase, therefore it is important that we build on this and develop a homelessness prevention toolkit that encompasses the legislative changes that are likely to be implemented in 2017/18.
- 26.6 The key objectives of the strategy have been outlined as:
- Objective 1:** Enhance the depth and range of housing advice services to meet current and future challenges
- Objective 2:** Enhance the housing offer available to all homeless applicants in the Borough
- Objective 3:** Improving health and wellbeing
- 26.7 Delivery of the objectives will be achieved through the actions presented in the Action Plan. Given the context of rapid change, the action plan will be reviewed every year to ensure that the tasks remain relevant and are revised where appropriate. The action plan will identify who is responsible for the completion of specific tasks and appropriate timescales.

ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVE 1: ENHANCE THE DEPTH AND RANGE OF HOUSING ADVICE SERVICES TO MEET CURRENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

ACTION:	TASKS:	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	TIMESCALE:
Review the homelessness prevention measures offered	Develop a homelessness prevention toolkit	Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager	September 2017
Develop a housing advice offer to non-priority applicants	Research good practice and develop an offer tailored to the local housing market	Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager	September 2017
Improve the recording of prevention work to ensure reliable data is available	Produce a housing advice form to be used by officers to record client data and the outcome of any prevention work	Homelessness Advice & Prevention Officer	December 2017
	Update the homelessness database to ensure all prevention measures can be recorded	Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager	December 2017
Examine the reason for homelessness given by lone female parents aged 25-44	Extract the reason given for homelessness for all cases within this group over the last 5 years and identify any common themes	Homelessness Advice & Prevention Officer	September 2017
	Develop an advice offer in response to the issues identified	Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager	February 2018

Establish a homelessness prevention fund	Seek member approval for a homelessness prevention fund	Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager	January 2018
Review all advice and information provided to applicants	Ensure all homelessness advice and decision letters contain all the required information	Homelessness Advice & Prevention Officer	February 2018
Review homelessness pages on the Council's web site	Ensure all advice and prevention options are shown on the relevant web pages	Homelessness Advice & Prevention Officer	March 2018

OBJECTIVE 2: ENHANCE THE HOUSING OFFER AVAILABLE TO ALL HOMELESS APPLICANTS IN THE BOROUGH

ACTION:	TASKS:	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	TIMESCALE:
Develop a policy and procedure for discharging duty into the private rented sector	Develop a policy for discharging the main homeless duty into suitable private sector accommodation	Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager	April 2018
Work with private landlords to promote the private rented sector as a viable housing option	Establish a private landlord working group to establish the barriers in offering tenancies to homeless households and to find ways to reduce the number of evictions from private rented accommodation	Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Officer	September 2018
Work with private landlords to reduce the number of s.21 notices served	Encourage landlords to seek advice before serving a s.21 notice Work with landlords to find ways of resolving issues to prevent the tenant losing their home	Homelessness Advice & Prevention Officer Homelessness Advice & Prevention Officer	September 2019 September 2019
Review the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme	Work with private landlords to improve their acceptance of the scheme	Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Officer	September 2018
Assess the future need for temporary accommodation	Review the current and future demand for temporary accommodation in light of the proposals contained in the Homelessness Reduction Bill	Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager	December 2017

OBJECTIVE 3: IMPROVING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

ACTION:	TASKS:	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	TIMESCALE:
Implement a hospital discharge policy/procedure	Work with partners in the health and voluntary sector to ensure there is a clear process in place for homeless people discharged from hospital	Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager	February 2019
Develop a customer satisfaction survey to influence future service delivery	Create a customer satisfaction survey to gather the views of all clients who have accessed the service	Homelessness Advice & Prevention Officer	January 2019