

Review of homelessness in North Hertfordshire

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Local housing authorities are required by legislation to conduct periodic reviews of homelessness in their areas in order to inform their homelessness strategies. Reviews should consider:
- the levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in the area;
 - the activities which are carried out to prevent homelessness, and to secure accommodation and support for those who are or may become homeless; and
 - the resources available to support these activities.
- 1.2 Further information about these requirements are contained with the [Homelessness Code of Guidance](#).

2. Homelessness in North Hertfordshire

2.1 Levels of homelessness

- 2.1.1 Homelessness is defined in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and has a much wider meaning than being roofless or street homeless. The 1996 Act determines that a person is homeless if they do not have accommodation which is available for their occupation and which they have a legal right to occupy. A person is also homeless if they have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it or where it would be unreasonable for them to continue to occupy that accommodation. A person is deemed to be threatened with homelessness if they are likely to become homeless within 56 days.
- 2.1.2 Homelessness, or risk of homelessness, therefore covers a range of scenarios including where someone:
- is staying informally with a series of different friends or relatives ('sofa surfing');
 - is at risk of domestic abuse or other violence if they remain in the accommodation;
 - is living in temporary accommodation;
 - is living in a property that is unsafe or its condition is adversely affecting their health;
 - has been given notice to quit by their landlord.
- 2.1.3 Levels of homelessness in North Herts are summarised in table 1, which sets out the numbers of households approaching the Council for assistance and who are owed a homelessness duty, as set out in [legislation](#) (and very briefly summarised in the box below). In addition, the Council also provides housing and homelessness advice to a large number of households, well over 1,000 a year.

Table 1. Council homelessness duties

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (Q1&Q2)
Households assessed as owed a duty	494	614	475	416	193
<i>of which:</i>					
Households owed a prevention duty	275	229	194	175	69
Households owed a relief duty*	219	385	281	241	124
Households owed a main housing duty#	65	90	128	123	64
<i>of which:</i>					
Single households ⁽¹⁾	14	33	53	43	21

* at initial assessment.

upon expiry of relief duty.

Source: Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables, DLUHC and (1) NHC analysis of case level data (note also data for Q2 2023/24 are not yet published).

- 2.1.4 The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is clearly visible, from the large spike in households owed a duty in 2020/21¹, owing to the “Everyone In” directive from government which required local authorities to provide immediate emergency accommodation for all those sleeping rough or at risk of rough sleeping. Whilst overall levels of homelessness have returned to more usual levels, there have been some marked underlying changes. Notably, a significant proportion of households continue to approach at the point of homelessness (relief duty) and the number of main housing duties owed by the Council is almost double that in 2019/20. This has been driven largely by a newly emerged cohort of single homeless people, many of whom have significant support needs. Section 2.5 provides further information about single people placed into temporary accommodation.

The Council, as a local housing authority, has duties contained within homelessness legislation to provide advice and support to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and to provide accommodation for specific groups of homeless households. These duties include:

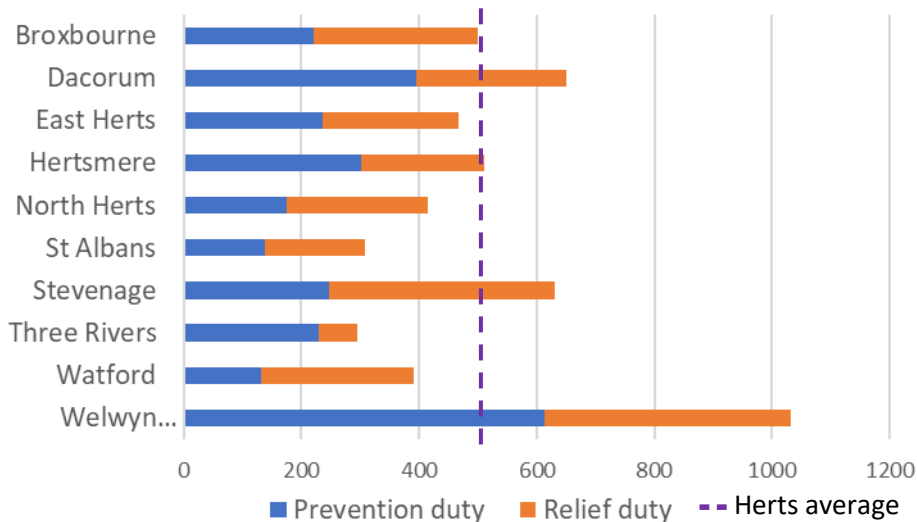
- **a duty to carry out a homelessness assessment** where an eligible applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness;
- **a prevention duty** to take reasonable steps to help eligible applicants avoid becoming homeless. This duty continues for 56 days;
- **a relief duty** to take reasonable steps to help eligible homeless applicants to secure accommodation for at least six months. This duty continues for 56 days;
- where homelessness is not successfully prevented or relieved, a **main housing duty** may be owed to secure settled accommodation for applicants deemed to be in priority need – typically families with dependent children or those who are vulnerable;

¹ And to some extent at the very end of 2019/20 as “Everyone In” directive issued 26 March 2020.

- an **interim accommodation duty** to secure accommodation where there is reason to believe that an applicant may have a priority need.

2.1.5 In terms of local comparison, levels of homelessness in North Hertfordshire are below average levels for Hertfordshire as a whole, as the figure below illustrates. The proportion of households assessed as initially owed a relief duty is however relatively high in comparison with some of our local neighbours. In North Herts, 58% of those assessed as owed a duty in 2022/23 were owed a relief duty, compared to a Hertfordshire average of 48%.

Figure 1. Households assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty (2022/23)



Source: Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables, DLUHC.

Table 2. Homeless households per 1,000 households (2022/23)*

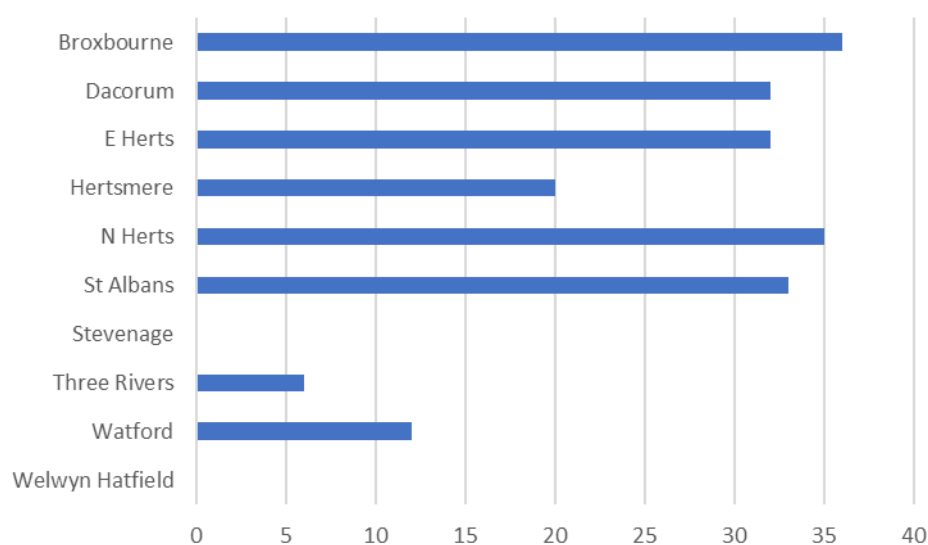
Broxbourne	7.11
Dacorum	3.88
East Herts	3.59
Hertsmere	4.93
North Herts	4.20
St Albans	2.90
Stevenage	10.31
Three Rivers	1.73
Watford	6.54
Welwyn Hatfield	8.49

* Households assessed as being owed a relief duty on initial approach.

Source: Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables, DLUHC

2.1.6 Specified public bodies have a duty to refer service users who they think may be homeless, or at risk of homelessness, to local authority homelessness teams. Figure 2 below shows the number of households which have been assessed following a referral under this duty. Table 3 breaks down these referrals for North Herts.

Figure 2. Households assessed following a referral under Duty to Refer (2022/23)



Source: Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables, DLUHC.
No data available for Stevenage or Welwyn Hatfield.

Table 3. Duty to Refer by public body (North Herts)

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (Q1&Q2)
Total referred under DTR	22	41	34	35	20
<i>of which:</i>					
Prison	4	11	3	1	0
National Probation Service	3	9	9	17	7
Hospital	3	4	4	4	4
Mental health services	0	2	1	1	3
Jobcentre Plus	1	6	7	1	1
Adult Social Services	3	3	3	2	1
Children's Social Services	3	4	4	6	4
Children's Early Help Services/children's centres	-	1	0	3	0

Source: Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables, DLUHC (note data for Q2 2023/24 are not yet published).

Note: not all components of the total are included in this table.

2.2 Reasons for homelessness

- 2.2.1 Friends or family being unable or unwilling to accommodate is consistently the most commonly cited reason for homelessness or threat of homelessness in North Herts, accounting for 23% of cases² in 2022/23 (table 4 below refers³). Homelessness due to the ending of a tenancy in the private rented sector is also very prevalent (also 23% of cases in 2022/23), although this tends to be sensitive to changes in policy at national level. In the majority of cases where assured shorthold tenancies are being ended – 60% in 2022/23 – this is because of landlords wishing to sell or re-let the property.
- 2.2.2 Whilst the ending of social housing tenancies is also an important factor behind threat of homelessness (39% of prevention cases in 2022/23), this reflects the active early intervention protocols that exist between the Council and local housing providers, and the vast majority of these cases are successfully resolved. The high number of social tenancies at risk due to tenant rent arrears (89% of cases in 2022/23) is however indicative of increasing challenges around affordability of tenancies.

Table 4. Main reasons for loss of last settled home

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (Q1&Q2)
Households owed a prevention duty					
Family/friends unable to accommodate	45	40	31	26	7
End of private rented tenancy	66	43	69	61	30
End of social rented tenancy	80	54	59	69	26
Domestic abuse	12	13	2	4	0
Households owed a relief duty					
Family/friends unable to accommodate	68	119	91	71	41
End of private rented tenancy	23	31	36	33	17
End of social rented tenancy	10	12	10	7	7
Domestic abuse	22	45	41	57	24

Source: Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables (note DLUHC data for Q2 2023/24 are not yet published).

Note: not all components of the total are included in this table.

- 2.2.3 There has also been a notable increase in domestic abuse cases over the last few years, most presenting at the relief stage and making up 15% of cases in 2022/23.
- 2.2.4 Family and friends being unable or unwilling to accommodate is a significant factor in homelessness and is indicative in part of the unstable and short-term living arrangements that many applicants face (a proportion will also be due to relationship breakdown for instance). This is borne out further by the data summarised in table 5 below which shows a significant proportion overall of homeless applicants (ie those

² Households assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty.

³ This sets out absolute numbers to give a better representation of the scale of causes of homelessness by different duties owed.

owed a relief duty) approaching from situations of rough sleeping, of no fixed abode or following departure from institutions.

Table 5. Accommodation at time of application (2022/23)

	% of households owed a prevention duty	% of households owed a relief duty
Private rented sector	35%	12%
Social housing (including supported)	43%	9%
Living with friends/family	17%	24%
Temporary accommodation	1%	7%
No fixed abode	0%	23%
Rough sleeping	0%	12%
Refuge	0%	3%
Homeless on departure from custody	2%	5%
Homeless on departure from hospital	0%	4%

Source: Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables, DLUHC.

Note: not all components of the total are included in this table, so may not sum to 100%

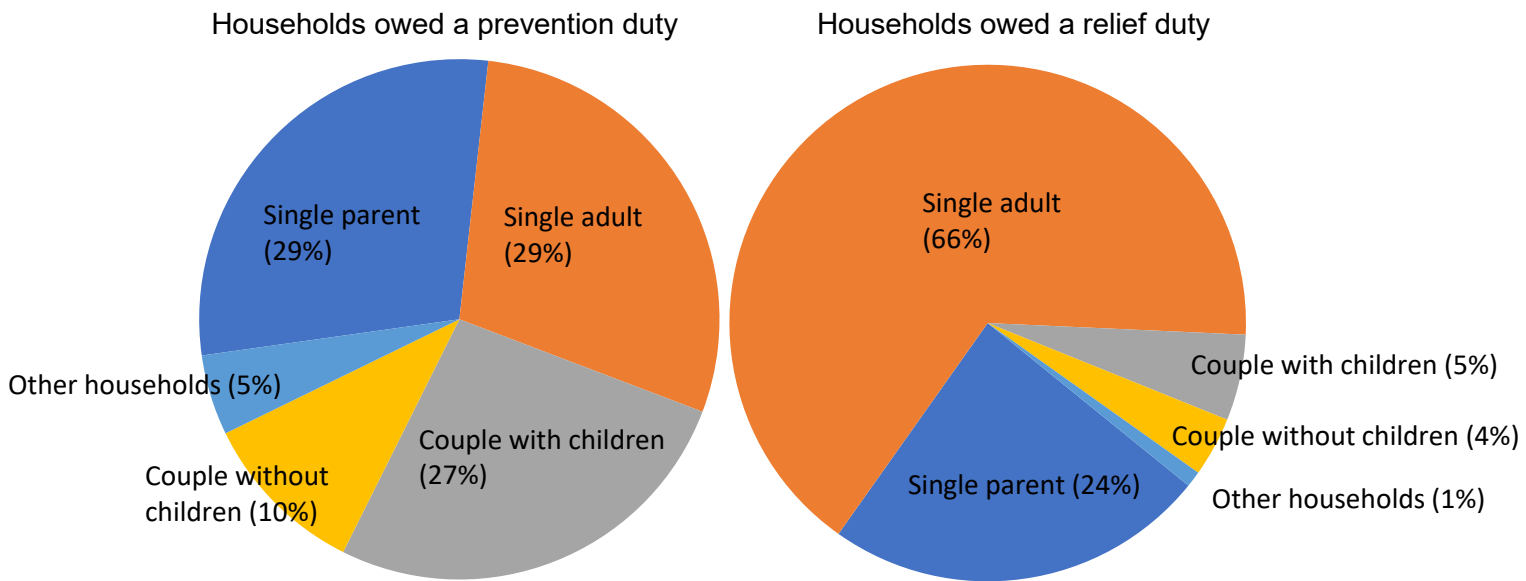
2.2.5 Without doubt, a lack of accommodation in the district that is affordable to local households is a contributory underlying reason for homelessness. With local house prices over nine times average annual earnings⁴ and the private rented sector small and in high demand, affordability is a real constraint for many households and housing options are limited. Further information on affordability is available in our [Tenancy Strategy](#). Furthermore, evidence from our latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment (to be published shortly on our website) suggests that almost 30% of newly forming households in North Herts will be unable to afford their housing costs.

2.3 Characteristics of households owed a duty

2.3.1 The type of household approaching the Council for assistance varies dependent on duty owed. Families with dependent children make up over half of households owed a prevention duty whilst single adults make up two-thirds of households owed a relief duty (see figure 3 below). Over half of households owed a duty are in the 25-44 age range with a further 25% aged 45-64 and 15% aged 18-24 (see figure 4 below).

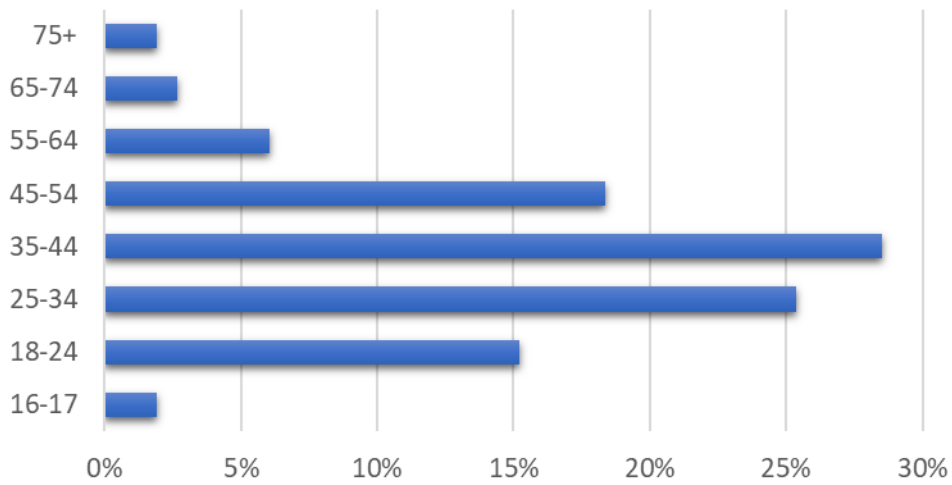
⁴ ONS house price to residence-based earnings ratios 2022

Figure 3. Household composition of households owed a duty (2022/23)



Source: Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables, DLUHC. Data may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 4. Age of main applicants owed a duty (2022/23)



Source: Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables, DLUHC.

- 2.3.2 Whilst one-quarter of households are unemployed or seeking work, a similar proportion (25%) are in either part-time or full-time work. A further one-fifth are not working due to long-term illness or disability and 4% are not seeking work (due to caring responsibilities for instance).
- 2.3.3 The vast majority of households to whom the Council owes a duty are British nationals, 93% in 2021/22⁵. Table 6 below sets out the ethnicity of main applicants and compares this with ethnicity of residents in the district as a whole. This would suggest that, in common with evidence nationally, ethnic minority households are more likely to face homelessness although relatively small numbers are involved so the figures should be treated with some caution⁶. Approaches from gypsy and traveller people are very rare (only one assessment in 2022/23).

Table 6. Ethnicity of homeless applicants and North Herts residents

	% of main applicants owed a homeless duty ⁽¹⁾	% of all North Herts residents ⁽²⁾
White	80%	88%
Black/Black British	8%	2%
Asian/Asian British	5%	5%
Mixed ethnic group	5%	4%
Other ethnic group	1%	1%

(1) Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables (2022/23) DLUHC. % of known responses (7% of responses unknown)

(2) Census 2021

Data may not sum to 100% due to rounding

- 2.3.4 Data are also collected on sexual identity of main applicants. The latest data show that 76% of main applicants owed a duty identify as heterosexual whilst 5% identify as LGBTQ+, however a significant proportion – 20% - prefer not to say.
- 2.3.5 A significant and growing proportion of households owed a duty have some kind of support need, 60% of households by 2022/23. Furthermore, an increasing proportion have two or more support needs, well over one-third of households by 2022/23. The most common support needs are mental health issues, followed by poor physical health and those who are at risk of or have experienced abuse, of which domestic abuse is the most prevalent.

⁵ Latest available published H-CLIC data.

⁶ And H-CLIC data are for main applicant only, not each member of the household.

Table 7. Support needs of households owed a duty (% of total)

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Households with any support need	51%	56%	55%	60%
Households with 2+ support needs	30%	33%	34%	38%
History of mental health problems	31%	31%	34%	34%
Physical ill health or disability	20%	21%	19%	23%
At risk of/has experienced domestic abuse	10%	11%	13%	14%
Learning disability	9%	10%	10%	12%
Offending history	6%	9%	8%	8%
History of repeat homelessness	7%	12%	11%	7%
History of rough sleeping	7%	9%	8%	6%
Drug dependency needs	4%	7%	6%	3%
Alcohol dependency needs	4%	5%	6%	6%
Care leaver	3%	3%	3%	2%

Source: Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables, DLUHC.

Note: not all support needs are included in the table and households may have more than one support need meaning totals will not sum to 100%

2.4 Rough sleeping

- 2.4.1 Most recent data suggest that over 10% of households accepted as owed a relief duty by the Council were rough sleeping at the time of application (table 5 refers). For this cohort, the reason for homelessness is more likely to be friends or family eviction (38%), relationship breakdown (17%) or fleeing violence or harassment (10%).
- 2.4.2 Data from the district's rough sleeper outreach service shows that over the past year (2022/23), the number of individuals verified as sleeping rough in the district has ranged from 0-1 in the winter months (when the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol is typically in operation) to 8 individuals sleeping rough at any one time⁷. On average over 2022/23, 5 people have slept rough over the course of any one month⁸. The latest annual rough sleeper count, for Autumn 2023, found 9 people sleeping rough. This compared with 1 individual in each of the previous two annual counts.
- 2.4.3 For some individuals, a period of rough sleeping will be a one-off episode before their homelessness is resolved but our data show that there are many others for whom rough sleeping is a repeated experience. Some of these individuals will have had multiple spells of street homelessness, interspersed with spells of sofa surfing and other temporary accommodation arrangements. Analysis for the Council's successful bid to the Rough Sleeping Initiative (2022-25) found that about half of the identified target priority group⁹ had been recently refused entry or evicted from local supported

⁷ Source: submissions to DLUHC for monthly rough sleeping survey.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Individuals rough sleeping or with histories of rough sleeping, with two or more support needs.

housing schemes or social housing as a result of their behaviour and complex support needs. This group typically has multiple support needs with mental health issues (90% of the cohort), substance misuse (48%), offending history (43%), poor physical health (38%), and abuse (38%) extremely prevalent.

2.5 Temporary accommodation

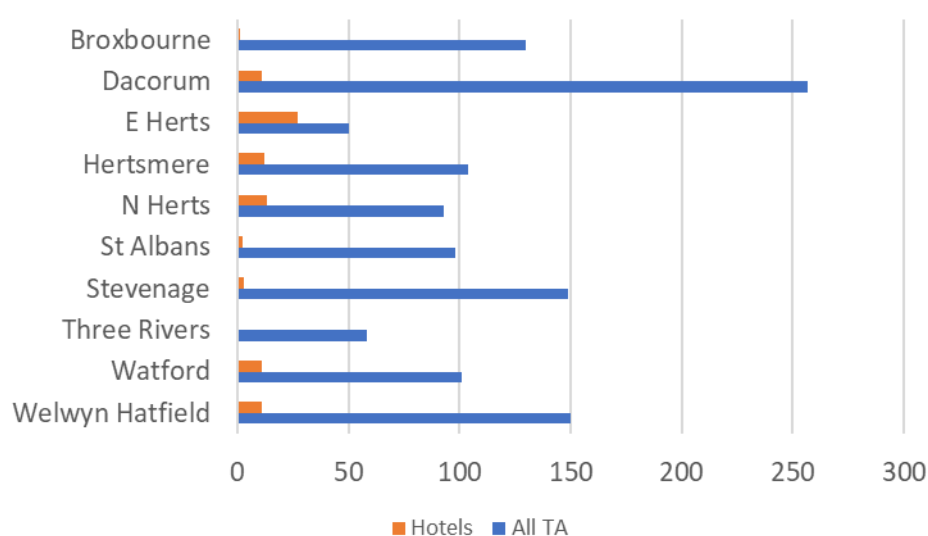
2.5.1 Households who have had a main housing duty accepted will be placed into temporary accommodation (TA) until the Council is able to discharge the duty with an offer of settled accommodation. Households owed an interim housing duty will also be placed into temporary accommodation until a main duty decision is made. The impact of Covid-19 is once again evident in the figures presented in table 8 below, with a significant spike in numbers in TA at the end of 2020/21. This was driven by a large increase in numbers of single people accommodated, many of whom had to be placed in hotels (often outside of the district) due to the lack of other available accommodation options. Single people (which includes a small number of childless couples) continue to make up around one-third of households placed in TA, a much higher proportion than before the pandemic, and the Council remains reliant on hotel placements to fulfil its legal duties to local residents.

Table 8. Households in temporary accommodation (snapshot)

	31/3/19*	31/3/20	31/3/21	31/3/22	31/3/23	30/9/23
Households in TA	85	93	135	98	93	98
<i>Of which:</i>						
single households	15	30	64	37	28	23
hotel placements	4	19	55	12	13	11

Source: Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables, DLUHC and *NHC analysis of case level data

Figure 5. Number of households in TA (as at 31 March 2023)



Source: Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables, DLUHC.

2.5.2 Total placements¹⁰ into temporary accommodation are set out in table 9 below, which illustrates the scale of total demand in each year. Placements to single households in 2022/23 were double those of 2019/20, as were hotel placements.

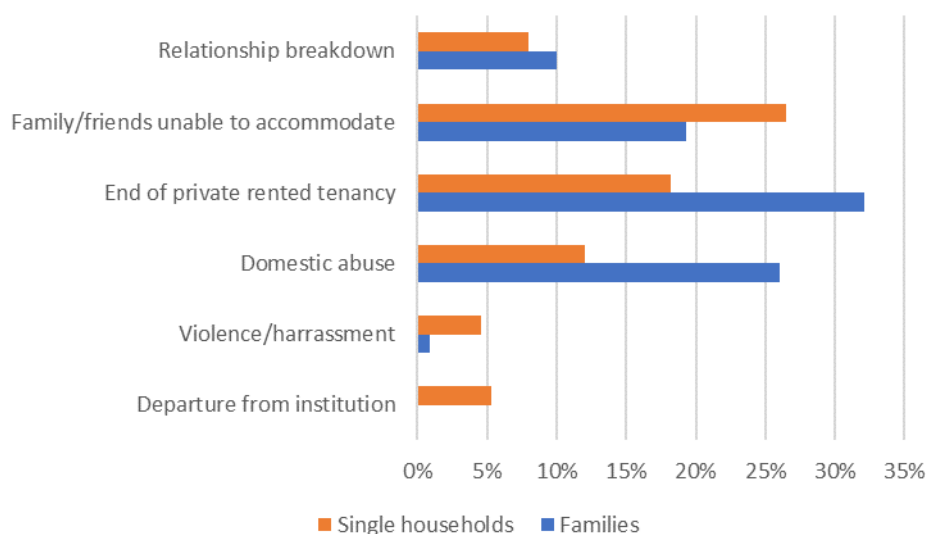
Table 9. Temporary accommodation placements

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (Q1&Q2)
No. placements made during the year	213	437	363	409	202
<i>of which:</i>					
to single households	112	333	251	248	111
hotel placements	102	317	215	248	117

Source: NHC analysis of case level data

2.5.3 The following charts and tables provide more information on the 240 households placed into TA in 2022/23, of which 140 were single people (58% of households).

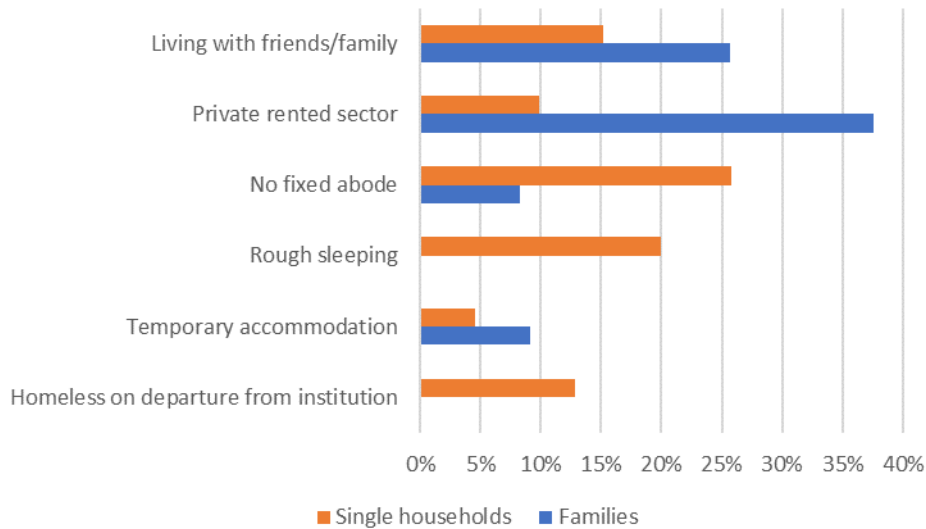
Figure 6. Reason for homelessness for households placed into TA (2022/23)



Source: NHC analysis of case level data

¹⁰ Note that many households will have multiple placements in any given year.

Figure 7. Accommodation at time of application, households placed into TA (2022/23)



Source: NHC analysis of case level data

2.5.4 Single people placed into temporary accommodation will, by definition, comprise some of the most vulnerable cohorts. Data for 2022/23 show that almost 80% of single people had a support need with over half (55%) having two or more support needs. The most common support needs were:

- history of mental health problems (55% of single households);
- physical ill health or disability (31%);
- at risk of / has experienced abuse including domestic and sexual (23%);
- history of repeat homelessness and/or rough sleeping (19%);
- offending history (18%);
- alcohol dependency (14%);
- learning disability (12%);
- care leaver (8%).

2.5.5 Those aged 18-25 were most likely to have a support need, with 83% of the cohort having at least one support need. This cohort was also amongst the most likely to have multiple support needs, with 65% of the cohort having two or more support needs. The same proportion of those aged 45-54 also had two or more support needs, with only those aged 65-74 having a higher proportion with multiple support needs (100% of the cohort).

2.5.6 Just over one-third of single households were women. 78% of women had a support need whilst 58% had two or more. The most common support need was poor mental health, affecting 60% of the cohort, followed by abuse with 42% of the cohort having experienced, or at risk of, some form of abuse, most commonly domestic abuse. Women were more likely than single people as a whole to have alcohol dependency needs (22%) and to be a young person requiring support (11%) but less likely to have a history of rough sleeping or offending.

2.5.7 In comparison, of families in temporary accommodation, just over one-quarter of family members had a support need with risk of domestic abuse, poor mental health, poor physical health and learning disabilities making up the majority of reported needs (26%, 20%, 14% and 13% respectively of total reported needs).

2.6 Outcomes

2.6.1 A prevention or relief duty will be successfully ended when suitable accommodation is secured for the applicant and it is likely that the accommodation will be available to them for at least six months. Outcomes can fluctuate significantly from quarter to quarter, being dependent upon the availability of accommodation options at the time and also on the complexity of individual cases – for example whether there are support needs, and whether other services outside of the Council are involved.

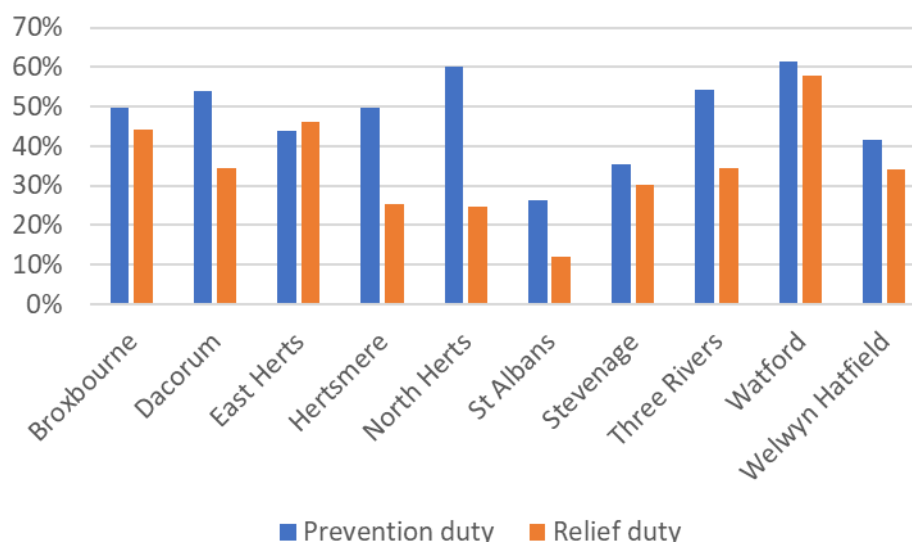
2.6.2 Table 10 nonetheless presents successful outcome rates on an annual basis (plus the first half of 2023/24). On average over the past four complete years (2019/20 – 2022/23), 63% of prevention duties have ended with accommodation being secured for the applicant whilst 26% of relief duties have ended with accommodation being secured.

Table 10. Prevention and relief duties ending in successful outcomes

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (Q1&Q2)
No. households whose prevention duty ended	271	261	185	205	79
% prevention duties ending with accommodation secured	63%	71%	57%	60%	48%
No. households whose relief duty ended	249	423	350	310	156
% relief duties ending with accommodation secured	25%	30%	25%	25%	20%

Source: Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables (note DLUHC data for Q2 2023/24 are not yet published).

Figure 8. Proportion of homeless duties ending successfully (2022/23)



Source: Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables, DLUHC.

2.6.3 Figure 8 presents data for other Hertfordshire authorities and shows that whilst North Herts does well with prevention success rates, it performs less well in successfully securing accommodation at the relief duty stage. This is partly a factor of a challenging local housing market, with a small and in demand private rented sector (comprising 15% of households) and high demand for social housing.

2.6.4 Table 11 below sets out accommodation outcomes for North Herts for those households whose prevention or relief duties successfully ended with accommodation. This illustrates the instability of available accommodation outcomes but also highlights the reliance on social sector accommodation which on average accounted for almost 70% of successful prevention outcomes and just over half of successful relief outcomes. The high proportion of prevention duties successfully ended into the social rented sector reflects the work we undertake with social housing tenants and providers to maintain tenancies as noted at paragraph 2.2.2. The private rented sector is challenging across Hertfordshire where on average, in 2022/23, 32% of successful prevention outcomes were into private rented sector accommodation whilst the private rented sector accounted for just 25% of successful relief outcomes.

Table 11. Accommodation outcomes 2022/23 (% duties where accommodation secured)

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (Q1&Q2)
Prevention duty outcomes					
Private rented sector	22%	28%	24%	16%	24%
Registered Provider/Council tenancy	54%	59%	64%	75%	71%
Supported housing	13%	3%	4%	6%	0%
Family or friends	8%	6%	5%	2%	3%
Relief duty outcomes					
Private rented sector	39%	30%	21%	27%	32%
Registered Provider/Council tenancy	13%	6%	7%	14%	26%
Supported housing	37%	48%	36%	44%	35%
Family or friends	11%	13%	9%	12%	3%

Source: Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables (note DLUHC data for Q2 2023/24 are not yet published).

Note: not all components of the total are included in this table, so may not sum to 100%

2.6.5 Another contributory factor behind lower relief duty success rates is likely to be the larger number (and proportion) of these households who have a support need. Of those assessed as owed a prevention duty in 2022/23, 46% had a support need compared to 72% of households assessed as owed a relief duty.

2.6.6 The majority of households whose relief duties are not ended with accommodation being secured will go on to be owed a main housing duty, although a small number will choose to withdraw their applications before this point. Table 12 below summarises total main duty decisions made at the end of the relief duty.

Table 12. Main duty decisions

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (Q1&Q2)
Total main duty decisions	143	211	194	176	92
Homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless (main duty owed)	65	90	128	123	64
Homeless, in priority need but intentionally homeless	16	14	7	17	9
Homeless but no priority need	59	106	56	34	19
Not homeless	3	1	3	2	0

Source: Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables (note DLUHC data for Q2 2023/24 are not yet published).

2.6.7 In 2022/23, 70% of main duty decisions were accepted ie a main housing duty was owed to the applicant whilst 19% were found to have no priority need and a further 10% were assessed to be intentionally homeless. The proportion of main duties accepted has increased since 2019/20 when only 45% of decisions were accepted.

2.7 Likely future levels of homelessness

2.7.1 Homelessness is to a large degree dependent on macroeconomic drivers at the national level and government policy. These can significantly influence households' incomes and the availability and affordability of accommodation (in public and private sectors) amongst others. In particular, the current cost of living crisis, challenges around the provision of truly affordable social housing and the consequences of repeated freezes in Local Housing Allowance¹¹ (in contrast to rising private sector rents) will continue to exert upward pressure on homelessness figures.

2.7.2 Locally, the data show us that the following groups in particular are more likely to be at risk of homelessness:

- women and children fleeing from domestic abuse;
- those living in private rented accommodation, who face insecurity from short-term tenancy arrangements, high rents and lack of affordable properties;
- people facing mental health challenges; and
- people experiencing multiple disadvantages, most likely single people, many of whom are already living in unstable accommodation arrangements including with friends or family, of no fixed abode and rough sleeping.

2.7.3 Of this latter group, two cohorts in particular are increasingly presenting to the Council and whilst numbers may currently be relatively small, cases can be very complex to manage due to the involvement of multiple different services and challenging support needs:

- people who are leaving hospital or prison (also identified as priorities for action in Hertfordshire County Council's Commissioning Prospectus for North Hertfordshire); and
- those who are fleeing violence from other areas of the country.

2.7.4 Ensuring successful outcomes for single people with multiple disadvantages is particularly challenging for the Council because it requires the timely and close involvement of other statutory support services including adult social care, probation/criminal justice and the range of health services. Unfortunately, whilst the Council has immediate duties towards homeless households, many of our clients struggle to access or do not meet thresholds of need for other support services which may also be over-stretched, under-resourced and facing competing priorities.

2.7.5 The number of approaches from households outside of North Herts make it increasingly difficult to predict future levels of homelessness. As well as individuals fleeing violence from other areas, there is also upward pressure from in-migration from London and from refugees and asylum seekers following recent changes in government dispersal policy.

¹¹ The 2023 Autumn Statement announced that LHA rates would be restored to the 30th percentile of local rents from April 2024. However current indications are that LHA will again be frozen the following year.

3. Homelessness prevention, accommodation and support

3.1 Homelessness prevention

3.1.1 Prevention work is key to tackling homelessness and its causes in North Herts. The Council undertakes or funds the following services:

- negotiation and/or mediation with private and social landlords over potential evictions including family/friend exclusions;
- advice on housing options and affordability issues including benefit entitlement and debt issues, providing a signposting service to specialist assistance where appropriate;
- an affordable loan service provided by the [Black Squirrel Credit Union](#);
- specialist advice, support and crisis intervention (including emergency accommodation, 'Safe Space' units, see below), provided by [Survivors Against Domestic Abuse](#);
- a homelessness prevention service providing advice, support and free legal representation for those threatened with eviction and homelessness, provided by [Citizens Advice](#);
- homelessness education prevention work, provided by [Herts Young Homeless](#); and
- a support service to help people into private rented housing and employment, provided by [Beam](#).

3.2 Accommodation and support

3.2.1 The Council no longer owns any housing stock and temporary accommodation in the district is owned and managed by settle housing¹² in accordance with a transfer of stock agreed in 2003.

3.2.2 Purpose built temporary accommodation owned by settle consists largely of units for families which are mostly self-contained and a small number of units for single people. This accommodation is only suitable for people with no / low support needs. In addition, settle also provides a small number of vacant units (currently 6) due for redevelopment for use as temporary accommodation as an interim measure. The Council also works with a number of other housing providers to try to ensure the provision of accommodation and support for local people with high support needs and/or multiple disadvantage. Note that the Council will not always have exclusive access to schemes, dependent on the funding arrangements in place. Table 13 summarises provision in North Herts.

¹² Formerly known as North Hertfordshire Homes.

Table 13. Temporary accommodation provision in North Herts

Accommodation schemes	Client group
<p>settle temporary accommodation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 units at Grove Road, Hitchin • 24 units at Ridgeways, Royston • 16 units at Nevilles Court, Letchworth (shared kitchen and bathroom) • 2 units at Woodland Way, Baldock • 4 rooms at Woodland Way, Baldock (shared kitchen and bathroom) • 2 rooms at Thatchers End, Hitchin (shared kitchen and bathroom) • 2 emergency rooms at Thatchers End, Hitchin 	<p>Mostly families (no/low support needs)</p> <p>Single males (no/low support needs)</p> <p>Females only (single or with young children)</p> <p>Females only (single or with young child)</p>
<p>Intensive accommodation and support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 units at former Lord Lister hotel, Hitchin (Keystage Housing)[#] • 19 units at 20 High Street, Baldock (OneYMCA)* • 5 rooms at Sanctuary, Hitchin (OneYMCA) 	<p>Single people with multiple disadvantage (medium/high support needs)</p>
<p>Transitional accommodation and support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 rooms at Willian Way and Blackmore, Letchworth (Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing) • 15 rooms at Jubilee House, Hitchin (Peabody Housing) • 6 rooms at Sun Street, Hitchin (Peabody Housing) 	<p>Single people with low level mental health support needs</p> <p>Single people aged 18-25</p> <p>Young mums aged 18-25</p>
<p>Stepdown / move-on accommodation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 x 1 bed units at Millstream Close, Hitchin (OneYMCA) 	<p>Single people</p>

[#] North Herts Council has exclusive use of these units until 2031.

* Planning permission for change of use to supported housing obtained until 2025. Permission has also been granted for 10 additional units at this scheme.

3.2.3 As table 9 illustrates, the Council is still reliant on hotel placements, particularly for single people with multiple disadvantages. Provision of this type of accommodation is much needed in the district and work is being progressed to secure additional units/new schemes.

3.2.4 Households owed a main housing duty are provided with preference on our [Common Housing Allocation Scheme¹³](#). The Allocation Scheme is also used as a prevention tool against friends/family eviction, incentivising households with dependent children who are sharing facilities with another household to register for social housing rather than approach as homeless.

¹³ Administered jointly with settle housing.

- 3.2.5 The private rented sector also offers another accommodation option although it is in high demand and affordable options are scarce. The Council now has a dedicated officer resource for securing private rented properties.
- 3.2.6 In terms of support for vulnerable applicants, the Council funds a rough sleeper outreach service, provided by [OneYMCA](#) which provides advice, support and emergency accommodation to those sleeping on the streets.
- 3.2.7 Hertfordshire County Council also provides the following housing related support services, available to North Herts residents:
- floating support services for those in settle temporary accommodation;
 - assertive outreach to those experiencing high level mental health needs and/or drug and alcohol needs (currently a two year pilot scheme);
 - specialist support and intervention for young people, provided by Herts Young Homeless, including access to 9 emergency 'crashpad' bed spaces for 16-17 year olds (for the whole county);
 - support for residents struggling with the rising cost of living via the Hertfordshire Household Support Fund;
 - floating support for those with low level mental health and other needs, provided by [Turning Point](#);
 - floating support to help those with complex needs sustain tenancies and live independently in the community, provided by [Emerging Futures](#).
- 3.2.8 Survivors Against Domestic Abuse operate Safe Space emergency accommodation, available to those fleeing domestic abuse, with a total of 16 properties across the county, available to Hertfordshire referrals.

4. Resourcing

- 4.1 The Council receives annual [Homelessness Prevention Grant](#)¹⁴ from central government to support its delivery of services to prevent and tackle homelessness. Ad hoc top ups to the Grant have also been allocated to local authorities to help with additional burdens arising from extra winter provision, domestic abuse duties and demand from Ukrainian refugees. The Council uses this grant to fund (wholly or in part) services detailed in section 3.
- 4.2 The government has also made available several additional funding opportunities in recent years to support its commitment to ending rough sleeping by the end of this parliament (2024). The Council has been successful in securing funding from the [Rough Sleeping Initiative](#), the [Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme](#) and the [Next Steps Accommodation Programme](#).
- 4.3 As an additional resource, the Council's Housing team has access to Discretionary Housing Payments to help with its work to prevent evictions.

¹⁴ The latest allocation is unusually for two years, 2023/24 – 2024/25.

- 4.4 Hertfordshire County Council's continued funding of support services for homeless people, especially those with complex needs, and its support of district specific services is critical to ensuring successful outcomes for our clients.
- 4.5 Whilst there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of government grant received in recent years which has of course been very welcome, the fragmented and short-term nature of the funding makes it extremely difficult to plan for and secure service provision. Additional funding pots are typically announced without warning and involve significant time resource to complete bids to sometimes extremely tight timescales. The recent two year allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant does however suggest that government is beginning to recognise this as a key hindrance to the successful strategic planning of homelessness services.