



Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Review 2019-2024

May 2024

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Introduction

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local housing authorities have a statutory duty to conduct a Homelessness Review at least every five years, in order to formulate a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy that tackles and prevents homelessness in their borough. Spelthorne Borough Council last carried out its Homelessness Review in 2019 with a strategy for 2020 to 2025.

The purpose of a Homelessness Review is to establish the housing need in the borough and outline current and likely future levels of homelessness. It identifies what is currently being done to prevent and tackle homelessness and who the key stakeholders are in these activities. The review also considers what resources are available to the Council and its partners to support households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The last Homelessness Strategy outlined six key strategic priorities that we wanted to achieve in the last five years:

- End the use of private sector emergency accommodation.
- Reduce the length of stay in temporary accommodation.
- Nobody sleeps rough in Spelthorne.
- Increase use of the private rented sector for homelessness prevention and relief.
- Invest in staff training and development in order to improve the customer journey within Housing Options service.
- Improve partnership working to prevent and relieve homelessness.

The following Homelessness Review highlights what we have achieved as a local housing authority and identifies gaps and key areas for improvement to inform the next Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Data analysed

This Homelessness Review has considered both national and local statistics to help inform the current levels and likely future levels of homelessness in Spelthorne. It has considered the current activities which are preventing homelessness in the borough and identified support for households who are experiencing or are threatened with homelessness. The review has also given some thought to the availability of securing temporary and settled accommodation for households threatened with homelessness. We have also considered the resources that are available to us for the activities noted above.

The following data has been used to help inform this Homelessness Review:

- Both national and local context of homelessness.
- Spelthorne Borough Council's casework records and locally recorded figures on homelessness approaches between April 2019 and March 2023. This includes information on the number of households that approached the council for help and the underlying reasons for the approaches. The figures also identify which duty, if any, was owed to the clients under homelessness legislation and how temporary or emergency accommodation was utilised (where applicable).
- Spelthorne Borough Council's recorded local statistics on housing register figures between April 2019 and March 2023. This indicates how social housing has been allocated by property type and bedroom size. It also gives an insight in to what proportion of social housing has been allocated to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- Local context of the private rental sector including information on our Spelthorne Rent Assure scheme for private lettings.
- Recorded statistics on rough sleeping locally, and the options available to rough sleepers in the area; including the implementation of the Rough Sleeper Initiative in Spelthorne.
- Existing data on the resources available to use which includes expenditure on homelessness prevention activities. This is broken down by associated revenue costs and the workforce delivery costs.
- Contract performance and stakeholder data to highlight the local services available to assist homeless applicants with their wider and ongoing needs.

National context

Levels of and reasons for homelessness

Statutory duties have been placed on local housing authorities by the Housing Act 1977 and Housing Act 1996 to ensure advice and support is available to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 marks one of the biggest changes in homelessness legislation in 30 years. Local authorities are tasked with determining whether a household who has approached for help is homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days. They must decide if the household is eligible for assistance from the Council and if they are eligible, take reasonable steps to help either prevent or relieve their homelessness.

In the last 5 years, just over 1.5m people have approached local authorities for housing or homelessness assistance in England. In 2020/21, there were fewer people approaching at a point where their homelessness could be prevented within 56 days meaning they were approaching when they had already become homeless. An increase in proactive prevention work has since followed in the following years. However, many households still approached at the point of already being homeless rather than seeking earlier assistance. It is much more challenging for local authorities to help, when a homeless application is made at the point of crisis; earlier indication of future homelessness allows more time for the authority to offer planned support to prevent eviction.

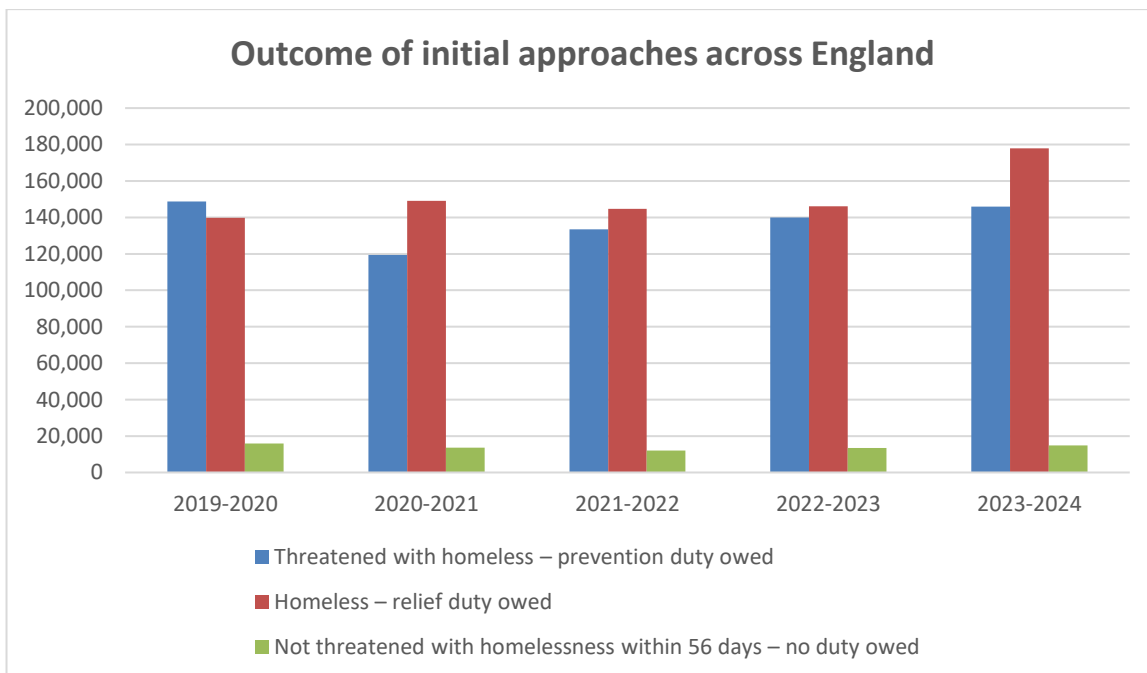


Figure 1: Outcome of initial homelessness approaches across England 2019-2024

The main causes of homelessness in England are outlined in figures 2 and 3, highlighting that the main cause for households approaching at the prevention stage (with 56 days of becoming homeless) is due to the ending of a private rented tenancy and the main cause for households approaching at the relief stage (already homeless) is due to friends or family no longer willing or able to accommodate.

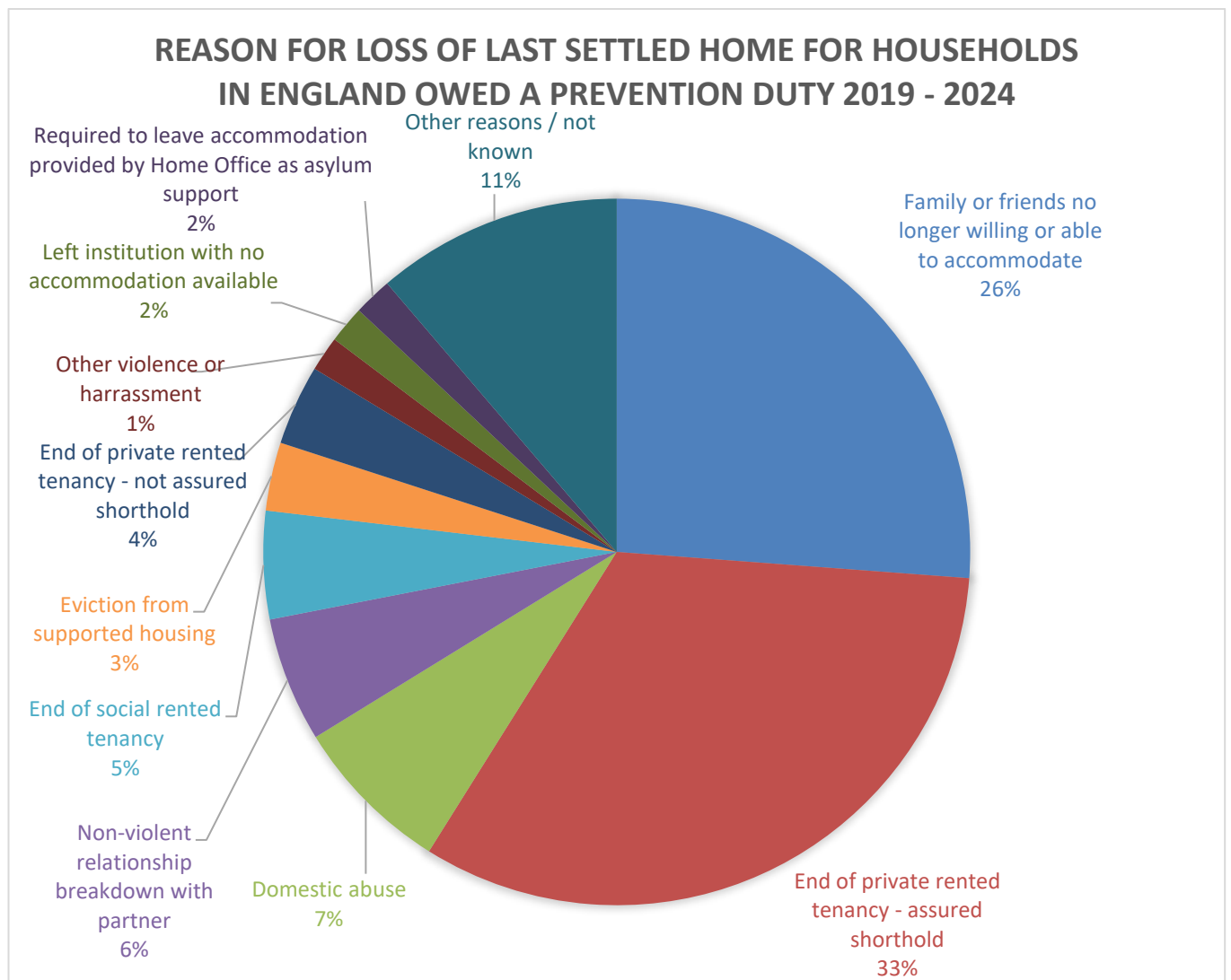


Figure 2: Reason for loss of last settled home for households in England owed a prevention duty 2019 - 2024

REASON FOR LOSS OF LAST SETTLED HOME FOR HOUSEHOLDS IN ENGLAND OWED A RELIEF DUTY 2019 -2024

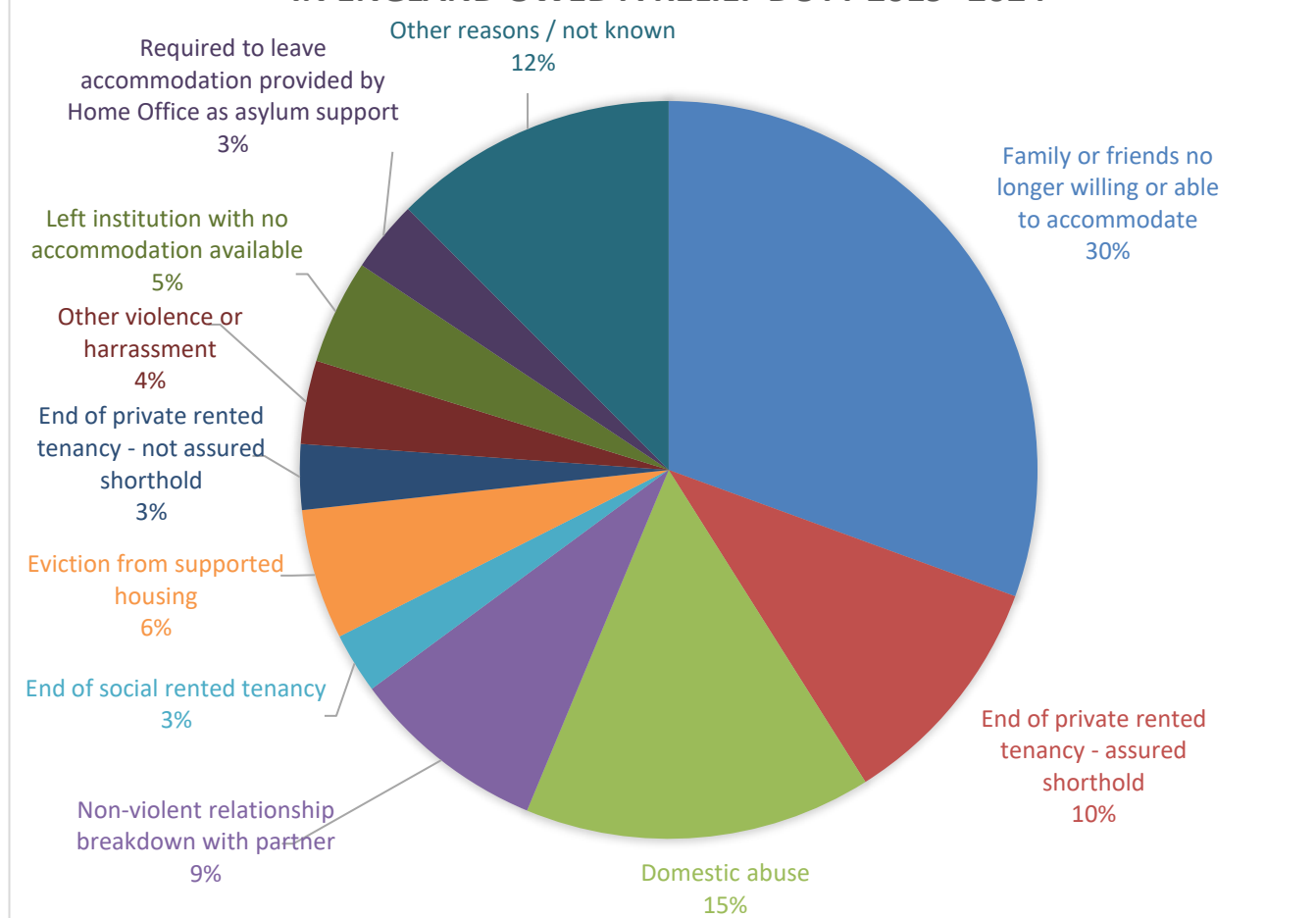


Figure 3: Reason for loss of last settled home for households in England owed a relief duty 2019- 2024

Local Housing Allowance, private rents and Discretionary Housing Payments

As indicated by table 1, the local housing allowance rates for Spelthorne Borough Council marginally increased in 2020/21 and then remained the same for the following three years.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) monthly rates for Spelthorne	1 st April 2019 – 31 st March 2020	1 st April 2020 – 31 st March 2021	1 st April 2021 – 31 st March 2022	1 st April 2022 – 31 st March 2023	1 st April 2023 – 31 st March 2024
Shared Accommodation	£390.04	£476.72	£476.72	£476.72	£476.72
One Bedroom	£797.20	£850.02	£850.02	£850.02	£850.02
Two Bedroom	£989.60	£1,100	£1,100	£1,100	£1,100
Three Bedroom	£1,198.90	£1,349.98	£1,349.98	£1,349.98	£1,349.98
Four Bedroom	£1,658.11	£1,769.99	£1,769.99	£1,769.99	£1,769.99

Table 1: Local Housing Allowance rates for Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

LHA rates were frozen between 2020-2024, despite rental prices in the private housing rental sector increasing over the last 5 years¹. Spelthorne in particular has median rents that are higher than the national and South East average but lower than London, making Spelthorne an appealing area for commuters which causes additional housing demand pressures.

Accommodation Type	Average Private Housing Rental Price (Spelthorne)				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Room Only	£550	Not Given	£650	£680	-
Studio	£775	£798	£810	£850	-
One Bedroom	£925	£950	£950	£975	£1,079
Two Bedrooms	£1,175	£1,175	£1,250	£1,260	£1,403
Three Bedrooms	£1,400	£1,350	£1,450	£1,550	£1,628
Four+ Bedrooms	£1,680	£1,800	£1,800	£1,900	£2,257

Accommodation Type	Average Private Housing Rental Price (South East)				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Room Only	£425	£450	£450	£525	-
Studio	£590	£600	£625	£650	-
One Bedroom	£725	£725	£775	£800	£884
Two Bedroom	£895	£900	£950	£1,000	£1,142
Three Bedroom	£1,100	£1,100	£1,200	£1,250	£1,394
Four+ Bedrooms	£1,650	£1,625	£1,733	£1,800	£2,038

Accommodation Type	Average Private Housing Rental Price (England)				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Room Only	£400	£412	£425	£460	-
Studio	£550	£575	£615	£625	-
One Bedroom	£625	£650	£700	£725	£1,050
Two Bedroom	£695	£700	£769	£800	£1,178
Three Bedroom	£795	£800	£850	£900	£1,314
Four+ Bedrooms	£1,300	£1,350	£1,450	£1,500	£1,957

Table 2: Average private housing rental prices for England, South East and Spelthorne 2019-2024

In the 2023 Autumn Statement, central Government announced that LHA rates were to be increased to the 30th percentile of local market rents from April 2024.

The number of rental enquiries has tripled nationally since 2019² as outlined below in figure 4 and there has been a net decline in the number of private rental properties available in the last 5

¹ Source: ONS Private Rental Market Summary Statistic in England

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/privaterentalmarketsummarystatisticsine nland> and [Price Index of Private Rents, UK: monthly price statistics - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/priceindexofprivaterents)

² Source: Rightmove Enquiries <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-66246223>

years due to landlords selling their properties as indicated in table 3³. These highlight increased housing pressures on the market and the deflation of private rental available. An increase in landlord sales can be attributed to several factors including increased mortgage interest rates, higher rate taxes on landlord's mortgage interest payments, uncertainty around new Energy Performance Certificate laws, and concerns around the potential implications from the Renters Reform Bill.

Rental enquiries have more than trebled

Enquiries per rental property in May 2019, 2022 and 2023

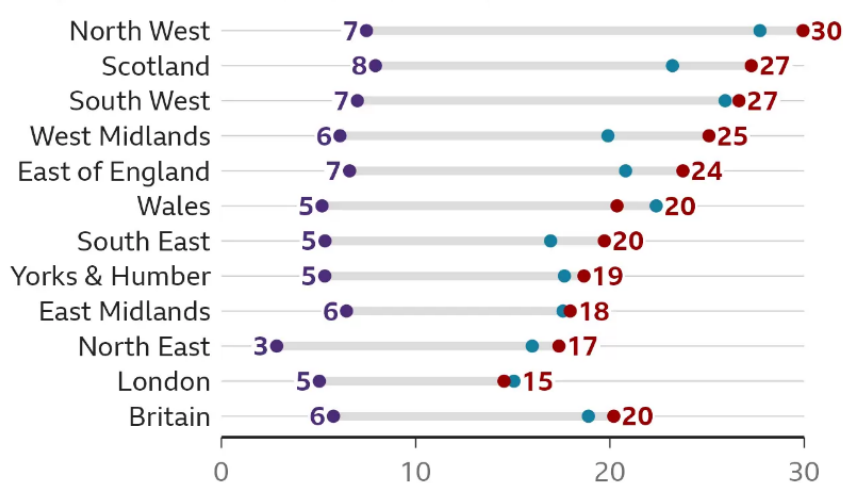


Figure 4 Private sector rental enquiries per property for 2019, 2022 and 2023

Year	Number of landlord purchases	Number of landlord sales	Net gain/loss
2019	123,750	160,380	-36,630
2020	110,920	132,190	-21,270
2021	172,060	201,640	-29,580
2022	145,880	192,650	-46,770
2023	112,510	143,060	-30,550

Table 3: Number of landlord purchases vs sales 2019 - 2023

Local Housing Allowance rates continue to remain below average rents causing a shortfall for many and a lack of local affordability in Spelthorne. Where a household is unable to top-up the full shortfall between the LHA and market rent from other income sources, they can make an application for Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP). Spelthorne Borough Council is granted a DHP budget by the Government each year, which can be allocated to claimants who need further help with their housing costs. DHPs are at the discretion of the Council and are administered by the Housing Benefit department. DHPs are one method of supporting residents

³ Source: ONS & Hamptons [Why are more landlords selling their properties? We look at the four main reasons \(msn.com\)](https://www.msn.com)

for a temporary period to prevent rent arrears and consequently eviction. Table 4 outlines Spelthorne Borough Council's total expenditure on DHP for the last 5 years.

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Budget	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Central Government Contribution	£234,682	£343,844	£286,321	£198,812	£202,932
Spelthorne Council additional top-up	£165,318	£56,156	£113,679	£201,188	£197,068
Total DHP budget	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000
Total DHP expenditure	£360,443	£475,716	£440,329	£381,443	£429,523

Table 4: Discretionary Housing Payment expenditure in Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

From 2020, data has been captured on the number of referrals made by Housing Options staff requesting DHP for homelessness prevention. In total, 105 referrals were made and accepted between 2020-2024 with the vast majority being for families with one or two children who were struggling to afford their rental payments either due to the benefit cap or because their rent was above the LHA rate, and they could not afford the shortfall. Many residents self-refer for DHP assistance and the table above highlights the high demand for this fund.

Universal Credit Migration

In 2019, DWP announced a managed migration of applicants claiming legacy benefits to Universal Credit with initial pilots. Universal Credit was introduced as a one monthly payment to replace Child and Working Tax Credits, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, and Employment and Support Allowance. DWP have extended the deadline for final migration across several years, but it is expected that most applicants will be migrated by 2025.

COVID-19

In 2020, the global pandemic caused increased housing challenges and increased living costs. It also had an impact on new build and affordable housing supply. In response to the lockdown, the Government introduced the 'Everyone In' initiative placing a duty on local authorities to move all those at risk of sleeping rough into accommodation to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 (including those who would not normally be entitled to assistance under homelessness legislation); approximately 15,000 people were placed into emergency accommodation. University College London research estimated that the preventative measures imposed might have avoided over 266 deaths, 338 ICU admissions, 1,164 hospital admissions and 21,000 infections among the homeless population during the first wave⁴. The Government set up a rough sleeping taskforce to help support rough sleepers accommodated under Everyone In to find suitable move-on accommodation. Throughout the pandemic, the

⁴ Source: UCL, COVID-19: Emergency homeless accommodation saved hundreds of lives: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2020/sep/covid-19-emergency-homeless-accommodation-saved-hundreds-lives>

Government provided several waves of additional short-term funding to support rough sleepers which totalled to over £700m in 2020/21 and £750m in 2021/22.

Following the pandemic, the UK entered a cost-of-living crisis in late 2021 where the cost of everyday essentials increased more quickly than the average household income. With increased rent levels, household bills and necessities, the Government introduced a temporary support package in the May 2022 budget announcement. The energy price guarantee capped the unit of cost of energy for households and the Government introduced cost of living support payments, including a Cost of Living payment for those with a qualifying low income benefit or receiving tax credits, a Disability Cost of Living Payment for those receiving a disability benefit, and a Pensioner Cost of Living Payment for those who received a Winter Fuel Payment. The Government also introduced the Energy Bill Support Scheme which gave every household a £400 discount on their energy bills for winter 2022/23.

COVID-19 and the cost living crisis has had a direct impact on the housing sector, the cost of building materials inflated, interest rates increased and there was a work skill shortage in the building sector. This has had a huge detrimental impact on the delivery of affordable housing both nationally and locally.

In response to the pandemic, Spelthorne Borough Council launched the Support4Spelthorne community hub where over 17,223 welfare calls and checks were made to vulnerable residents⁵ and the community helpline supported 29,629 calls to residents. During the pandemic, Spelthorne Borough Council assisted 35 rough sleepers into settled accommodation.

Refugee and Asylum Seeker Crisis

There was a record level of net migration in 2022 where 606,000 more people migrated to the UK than emigrated. This was attributed to the aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic, refugees from Ukraine, Hong Kong and Afghanistan; and 7% of immigrants were asylum seekers⁶.

- **Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas)** – welcome programme route opened January 2021 providing the opportunity for British National (Overseas) status holders from Hong Kong and their dependents to come to the UK to live, study, and work, on a pathway to citizenship. This is for Hong Kong nationals who chose to retain a form of British nationality by taking up BN(O) status at the point of Hong Kong's handover to

⁵ Source: Spelthorne Council Annual Report 2020/21

⁶ Source: J. Perry (2023). 'The Refugee and Asylum Crisis is also a Housing Crisis' in 2023 UK Housing Review Autumn Briefing Paper. <https://www.cih.org/media/2hrbusok/ukhr-briefing-2023-final-version.pdf>

China in 1997. Since its launch, over 160,000 applicants have been supported via this visa route⁷.

Sadly, there have been several countries with humanitarian crises in the last several years. Consequently, the UK has offered resettlement assistance under various refugee schemes including:

- **Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme** – launched in January 2014 to resettle 20,000 Syrians in need of protection by 2020. Resettlement was paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic and final arrivals recommenced December 2020 – February 2021. A total of 20,319 refugees were supported under this scheme⁸.
- **Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy** and **Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme** – schemes opened January 2022 prioritising those who had assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan working with the UK Government as well as vulnerable people or members of minority groups at risk. Many Afghans were supported into bridging hotels by the Home Office and local authorities have assisted with longer-term resettlement plans. In Spring 2023, the Home Office announced a closure of the bridging hotels which were housing around 8,000 Afghan refugees.
- **Ukraine Family Scheme** – a visa scheme that opened March 2022 for people fleeing Ukraine who were the family member of either British Citizens or people with settlement rights in the UK. **Homes for Ukraine** – allowed people and organisations in the UK to become hosts and offer Ukrainians fleeing the war a home through sponsorship. In return, the Government offered monthly thank you payments to hosts.
- **Conflict in Israel and Gaza** – In October 2023, emergency legislation was laid out to ensure British citizens and those eligible for support fleeing the violence in Israel, or the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights or Lebanon were exempt from the habitual residence test and therefore, able to access benefits and services faster on arrival in the UK.

In February 2023, the Home Office introduced a ‘streamlined’ asylum processing model to address the backlog of asylum claims (applications made by people from Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Eritrea before June 2022)⁹. The aim of the model was to speed up decision making, for example, a positive decision could be taken based on evidence available without a personal interview. The Prime Ministerial commitment was to clear the legacy decision backlog by the end of 2023. The Home Office also changed their policy around application decision

⁷ Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-a-third-year-of-support-to-help-hong-kongers-settle-into-life-in-the-uk#:~:text=Since%20its%20launch%20at%20the,on%20a%20pathway%20to%20citizenship>.

⁸ Source: UK Visas and Immigration <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-resettlement-schemes-factsheet-march-2021/vulnerable-persons-and-vulnerable-childrens-resettlement-schemes-factsheet-march-2021>

⁹ Source: Home Office <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/streamlined-asylum-processing>

making for asylum seekers. Once a person has their refugee status accepted, they are giving notification to leave their asylum accommodation. This notice period used to be 28 days but from mid-2023, this period was reduced to 7 days. A reduction in the notice period allows less time for local authority intervention to prevent and relieve homelessness.

Figure 5 indicates the flow of households required to leave accommodation provided by the Home Office as asylum support. There has been an increase in the number of households approaching as homeless in England following the withdrawal of home office asylum accommodation, with a particularly notable increase in 2023/24.

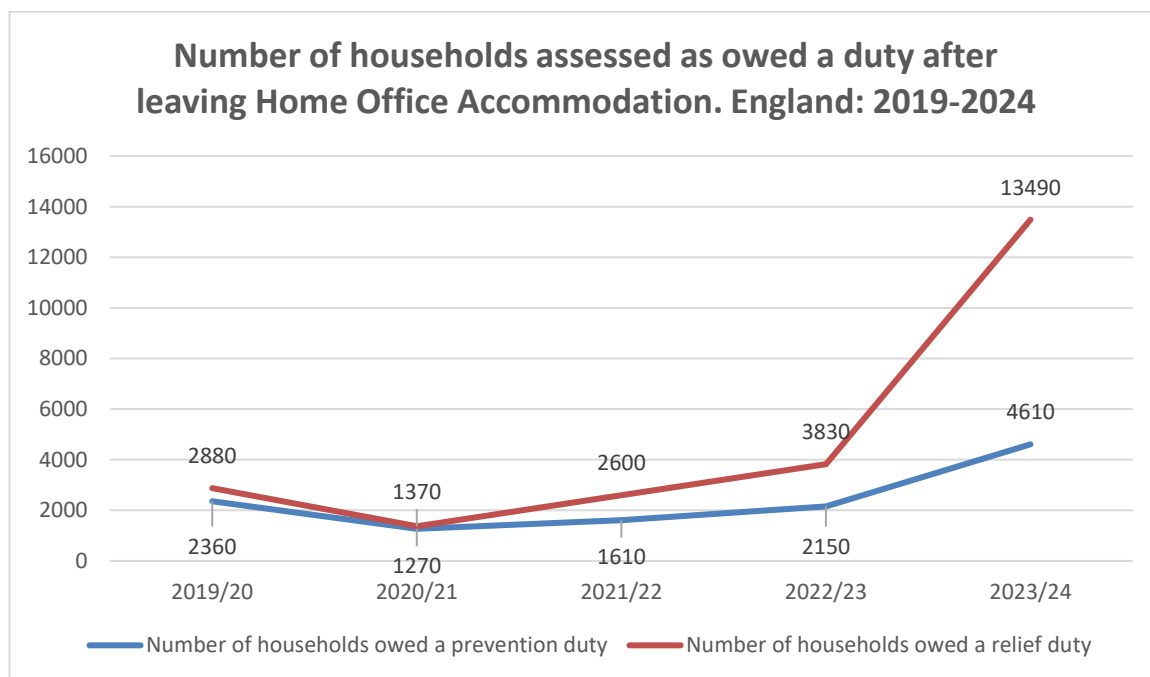


Figure 5: Number of households owed a homeless duty after leaving Home Office accommodation in England 2019 - 2024

National Policy

Tenant Fees Act

From 1 June 2019, the Tenant Fees Act was introduced in the private rented sector to ban most lettings fees and reduce the costs that tenants can face at the outset and throughout a tenancy. The only payments that tenants can be asked to make includes: rent, a refundable tenancy deposit capped at no more than 5 weeks rent, a refundable holding deposit capped at no more than 1 weeks rent, payments to change the tenancy when requested by the tenant capped at £50, payments associated with early termination of the tenancy by the tenant, payments in respect of utilities and council tax, and default fees for late payment of rent or loss of keys.

Brexit

From January 2020, the UK withdrew from the European Union. New immigration rules meant EU nationals who wished to remain in the UK had to submit an application to the EU resettlement scheme by June 2021 in order to remain eligible for housing assistance and benefits. Brexit caused further challenges around labour shortages on top of increasing material costs and limited supply chains which has created barriers to housing delivery in the UK¹⁰.

From Harm to Hope

In 2021, the Government launched a 10-year plan 'Harm to Hope' with the aim of breaking drug supply chains whilst reducing the demand for drugs by supporting people suffering from addiction into treatment and deterring recreational drug use. From 2022-2025, the Government allocated up to £53 million to 28 local authorities across England as part of a housing support fund strategy. The funding was allocated to provide housing workers to support people in drug and alcohol treatment to find suitable accommodation and maintain a tenancy. Spelthorne / Surrey were not identified by the Government as an area for funding allocation.

Social Housing Regulation Act 2023

From July 2023, the new law strengthens the Regulator of Social Housing to carry out regular inspections of social housing providers. It also introduces additional Housing Ombudsman powers to publish best practice guidance to landlords following investigations into tenant complaints and gives powers to strict time limits for social landlords to address hazards. Social Housing Managers are also required to undertake housing qualifications. The Government has revised consumer standards, taken forward Awaab's law, made changes to the Decent Homes Standard and looked to professionalise the sector.

Renters Reform Bill

The Renters Reform Bill aims to deliver improved standards in the private rented sector. The Bill proposes to (1) scrap section 21 'no fault' evictions; (2) make it illegal for landlords/agents to refuse renting to tenants who receive benefits; (3) create a national landlord register through a new property portal and introduce a Private Rented Sector Ombudsman; (4) reform landlord possession grounds.

¹⁰ Source: W Wilson & C Barton (2023). Tackling the under-supply of housing in England. House of commons: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7671/>

Spelthorne context

Spelthorne is located on the south-west edge of London and in the north-west of Surrey, neighbouring the boroughs of Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead, Runnymede, Elmbridge, and the London boroughs of Richmond-Upon-Thames, Hounslow and Hillingdon. The north of the borough borders London Heathrow airport. Spelthorne is densely populated and has five main urban areas: Ashford, Shepperton, Staines-Upon-Thames, Stanwell and Sunbury. Outside these urban areas:

- 65% is green belt,
- 30% of the total area is either floodplain or reservoir, and
- We have 12 miles of river Thames frontage.

As of the 2021 census¹¹, Spelthorne has a population of 103,000 and is the 14th most densely populated of the South East's 64 local authority areas, with 2,295 of residents per square kilometre.

Spelthorne has a slightly lower population of under-30s (33%) compared to the rest of the country (36%), and a slightly higher population of 30-69 year olds (53%) compared with the national average of (51%), The number of residents age 70+ is 14%, which is broadly in line with the rest of the nation.

According to the Indices of Deprivation 2019, the most deprived borough in Surrey is Spelthorne. Spelthorne has the highest number of lone parent families and the highest level of child poverty in Surrey; it also has the highest under-18 conception rate in the county. The Indices of Deprivation have not been updated since 2019. However, the recent 2021 Census highlights that Spelthorne has the highest level of hardship in Surrey; 33.6% of households experienced at least one category of deprivation in either employment, education, health or housing. That said, residents are largely healthy, with life expectancy for both males and females slightly above the national average.

Spelthorne has a relatively low rate of unemployment: 3.3% of those economically active aged 16 to 64, compared to the South East (3%) and UK as a whole (3.7%). Average wages are £709 per week for full-time employees, slightly above the South East average of £685.

Whilst house prices remain well above the national average, most residents are owner-occupiers (68%), followed by private rent tenants (18%) and social rent tenants (13%).

¹¹ Source: ONS – Population and household estimates, England and Wales: Census 2021.

Homelessness in Spelthorne

Approaches for housing advice

The Homelessness Reduction Act places three specific duties on local authorities, this includes:

- **Prevention duty** – a 56 day prevention duty may be triggered when a client is threatened with homelessness within 56 days. This means the Council will try to prevent the client from becoming homeless within a 56 day period.
- **Relief duty** – if a client is already homeless or the Council has not been able to prevent a client from becoming homeless, a 56 day relief duty will commence. This means the Council will try to relieve homelessness by supporting the client to find alternative accommodation.
- **The ‘main’ duty** – if the Council has been unable to relieve a client’s homelessness the Council will consider whether a ‘main’ duty may be owed under homelessness law to help the client on a longer term. The Council will assess if the client is eligible, homeless, has a local connection, and has a priority need and whether the client has become homeless unintentionally. These are the original five tests undertaken prior to the Homelessness Reduction Act coming into force and were unchanged by the new legislation.

Between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2024, a total of 7,185 households approached Spelthorne Borough Council seeking assistance as they were either homeless or threatened with homelessness. This is broken down in figure 6.

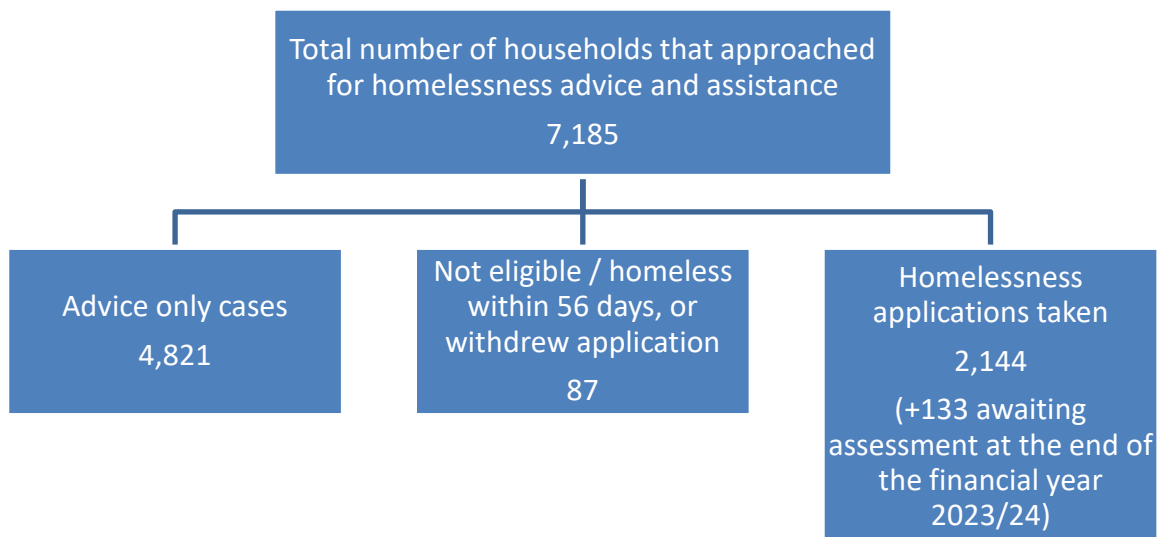


Figure 6: Number of households approaching Spelthorne Borough Council for housing or homelessness advice 2019 - 2024

Under s179 of the Housing Act 1996, the Council is required to provide free advice and assistance to residents who need help with their housing. Where we are approached and the issue is resolved purely through the provision of this s179 advice and assistance, we refer to these cases as 'advice only cases'. This will also include cases where we have carried out non-statutory preventative work, for example before the 56 day trigger we may request a discretionary housing payment to help cover the shortfall in rent as a temporary measure.

Once the trigger for taking a homelessness application is met, we carry out the assessment of circumstances and needs. From 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2024, a total of 2,181 applications were taken. Table 5 and figure 7 breaks down how each client was assessed upon acceptance of application.

Assessment of Circumstances on Approach 2019-2024	Total
Not threatened with homelessness within 56 days	37
Prevention duty owed	1,322
Already homeless, relief duty owed	787
'Legacy cases' assessed prior to the homelessness reduction act	35
Total	2,181

Table 5: Household assessment of circumstances following approach to Spelthorne Borough Council 2019 - 2024

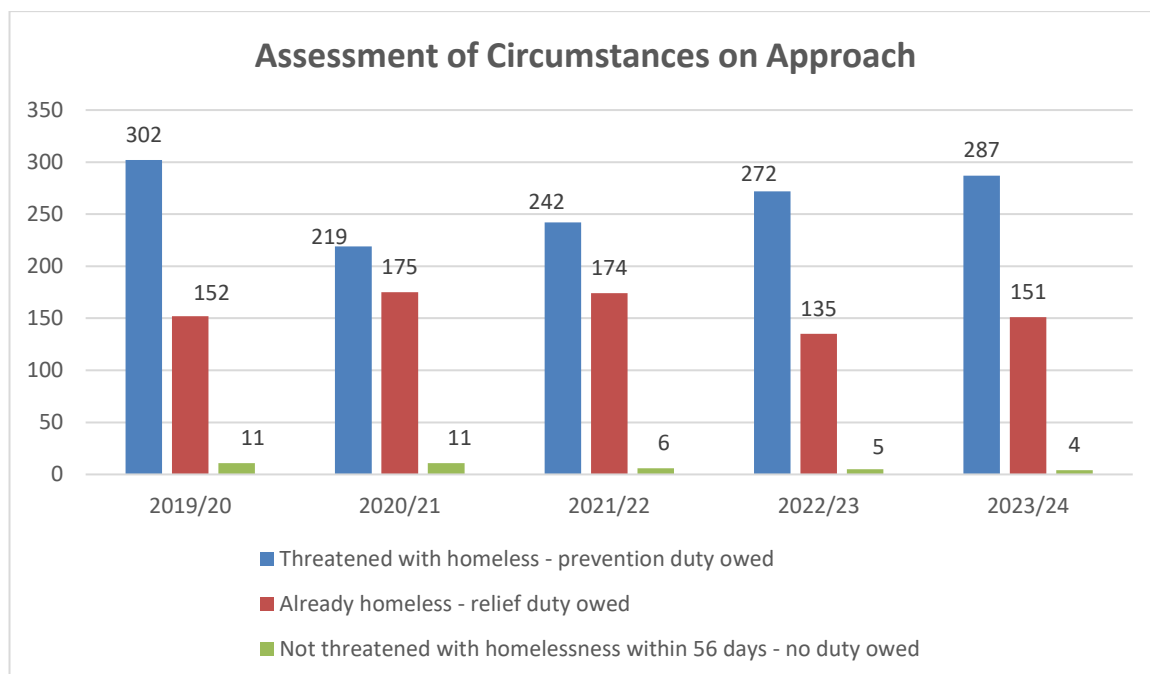


Figure 7: Household assessment of circumstances following approach to Spelthorne Borough Council - annual breakdown

Compared to the national data where more people were approaching at a point of already being homeless (relief stage). The picture is different in Spelthorne where applications are being made earlier at the point of prevention (homeless within 56 days) allowing more time for officers to mitigate an eviction or loss of accommodation.

The household make-up of households owed either a prevention or relief duty by Spelthorne Council is shown in figure 8. The majority of homeless households that approach for assistance are single adults followed by single parents with dependent children; with 71% aged 18-44.

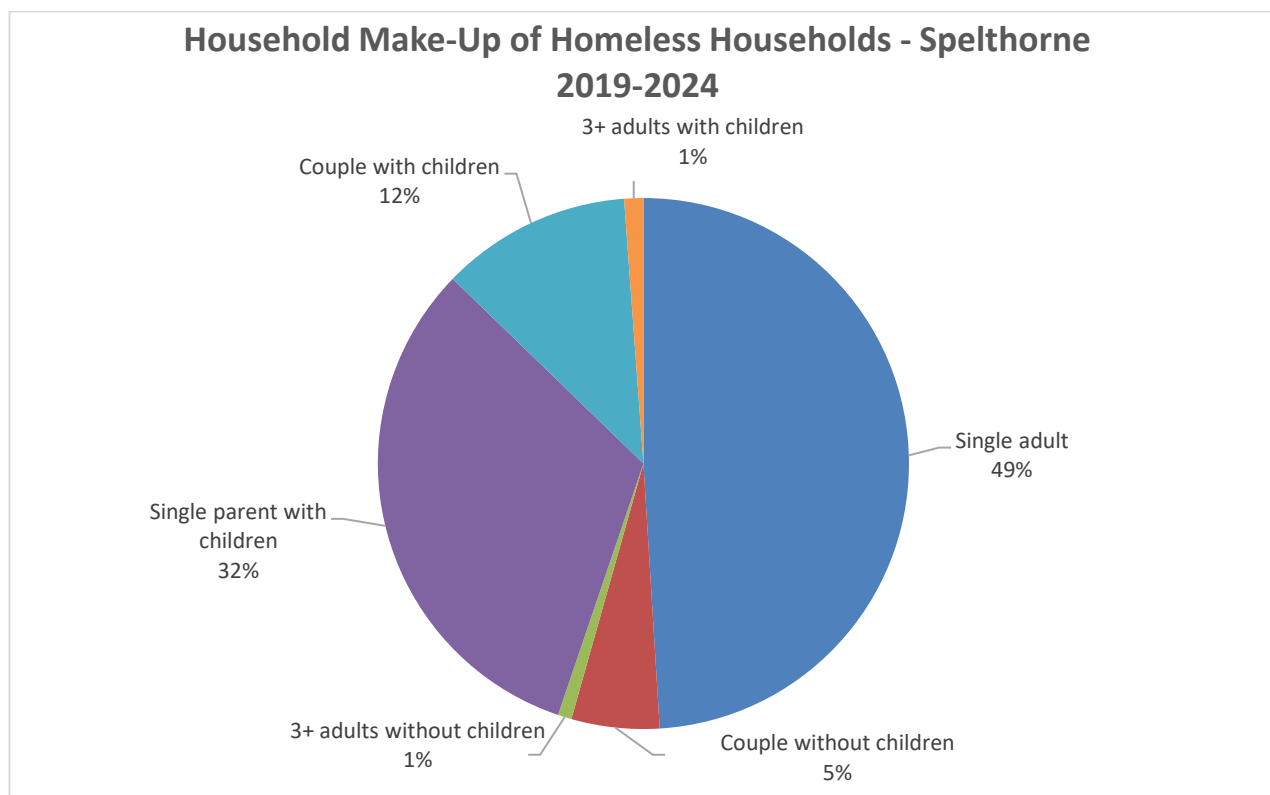


Figure 8: Household make-up of homeless households in Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

AGE OF MAIN APPLICANT OWED A HOMELESS DUTY - SPELTHORNE 2019-2024

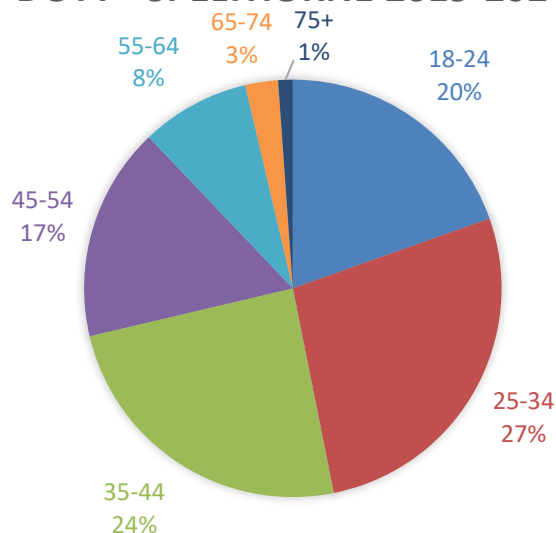


Figure 9: Age of main applicant owed a homeless duty in Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

As shown in figures 10 and 11, the main reason for the loss of a household's last settled address for those owed a prevention duty (homeless within 56 days) was due to the ending of a private rented tenancy - assured shorthold tenancy, with the main cause for households approaching at the relief stage (already homeless) due to friends or family no longer willing or able to accommodate. This is similar to the national picture.

In both figures, examples for 'other reasons' include (non-exhaustive): property disrepair, emergencies such as fire or flooding, or mortgage repossessions. Another notable example for 'other' includes unsuccessful placements / exclusions from resettlement schemes or sponsorship. In 2019-2023 this accounted for 5 cases across the years, however, in 2023/24 this reason accounted for 28 cases. Similarly, there has been an increase in the number of cases opened due to applicants being required to leave accommodation provided by the Home Office; across 2019-2023 this was the reason for only 2 applicants approaching, however, in 2023/24 a total of 21 cases approached due to this reason. These figures highlight an increased homelessness demand as a result of increased resettlement support for refugees both nationally and locally but also the increased pressures from the Prime Ministerial commitment to speed up the decisions on the backlog of asylum seeker applications awaiting decision.

REASON FOR LOSS OF LAST SETTLED HOME FOR HOUSEHOLDS OWED A PREVENTION DUTY IN SPELTHORNE

2019/2024

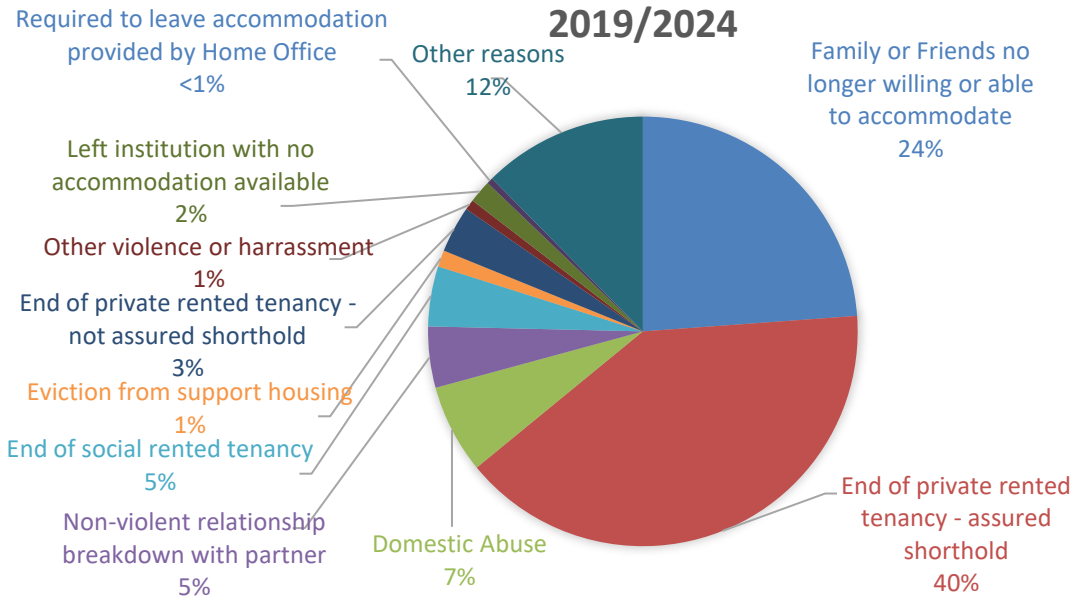


Figure 10: Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a prevention duty in Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

REASON FOR LOSS OF LAST SETTLED HOME FOR HOUSEHOLDS OWED A RELIEF DUTY IN SPELTHORNE

2019/2024

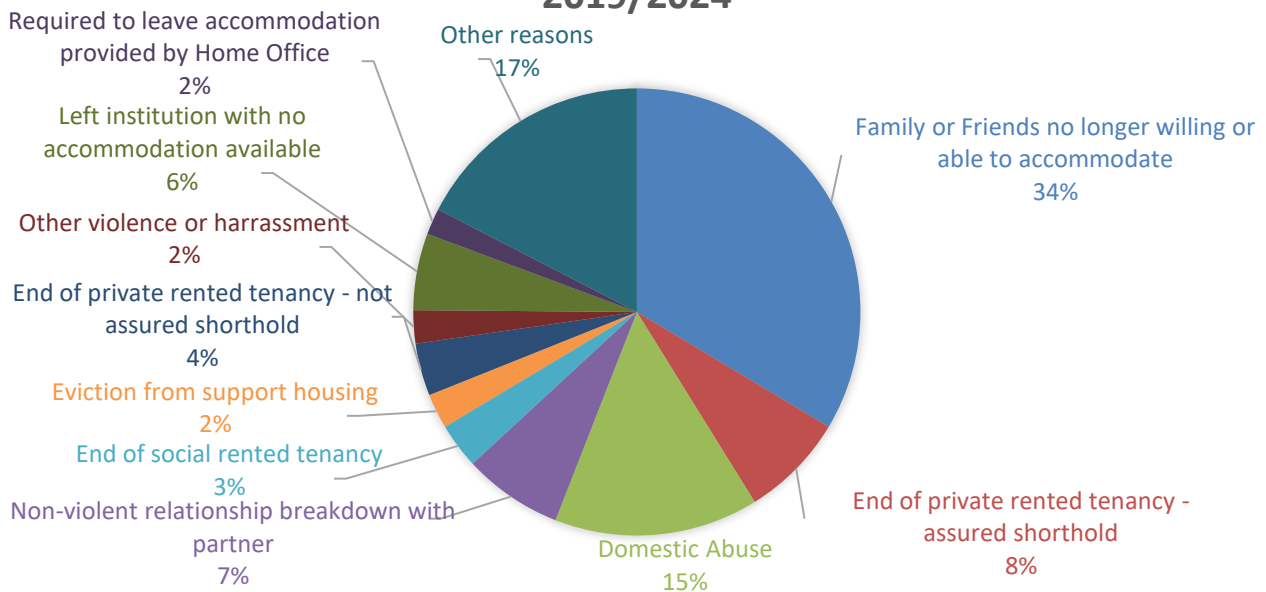


Figure 11: Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a relief duty in Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

Meeting the support needs of homeless households

Throughout the course of 2019-2024, Spelthorne Council assisted a number of households with support needs. In total, 688 households owed either a prevention or relief duty had one or more support needs. Figure 12 below highlights a variety of support needs that a household may have, the most common support need over the last few years has been a history of mental health closely followed by physical ill health and disability.

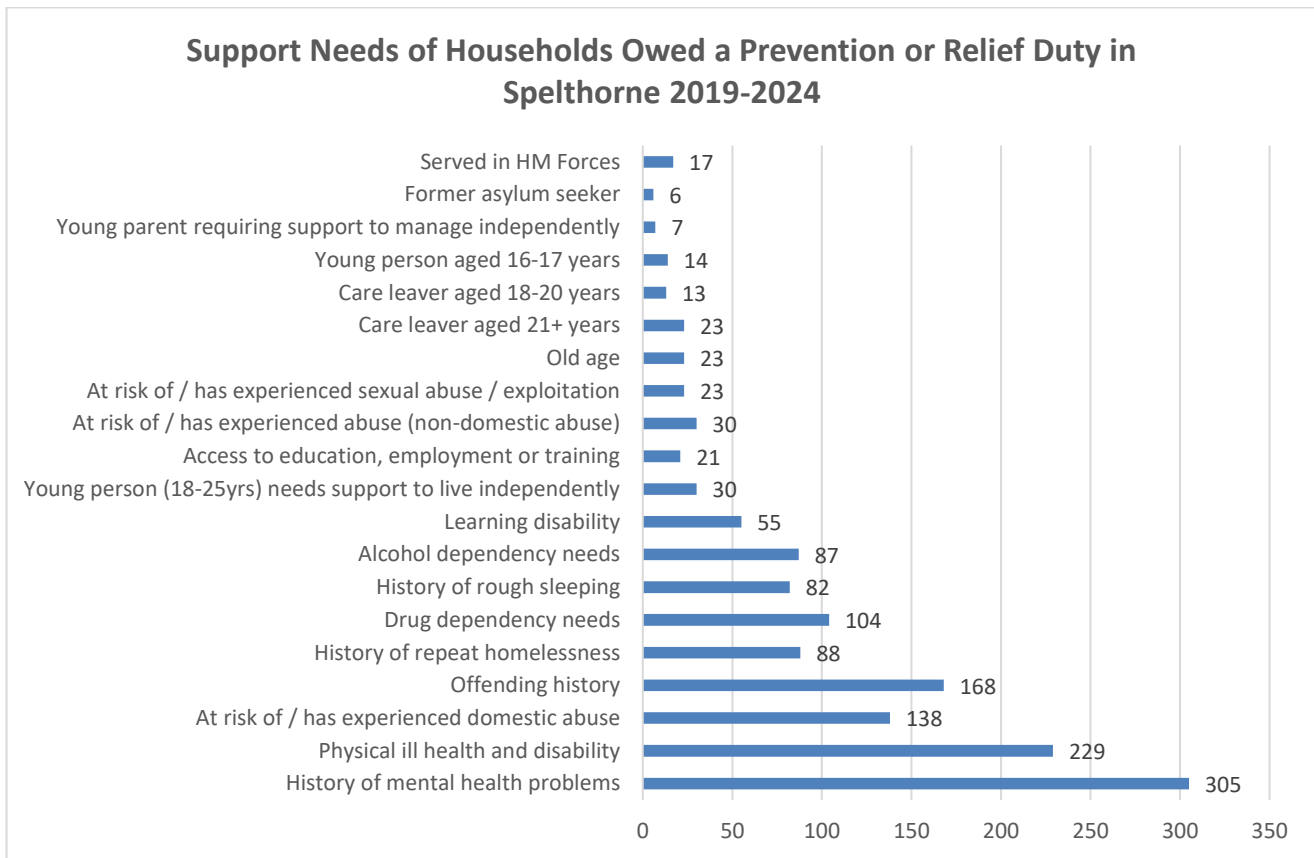


Figure 12: Support needs of households owed a prevention or relief duty in Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

Nationality and ethnicity of households

We continue to serve a diverse range of ethnicities in our community; however, the vast majority of households owed a duty were habitually resident UK nationals. Figures 13 and 14 shows this data in more detail.

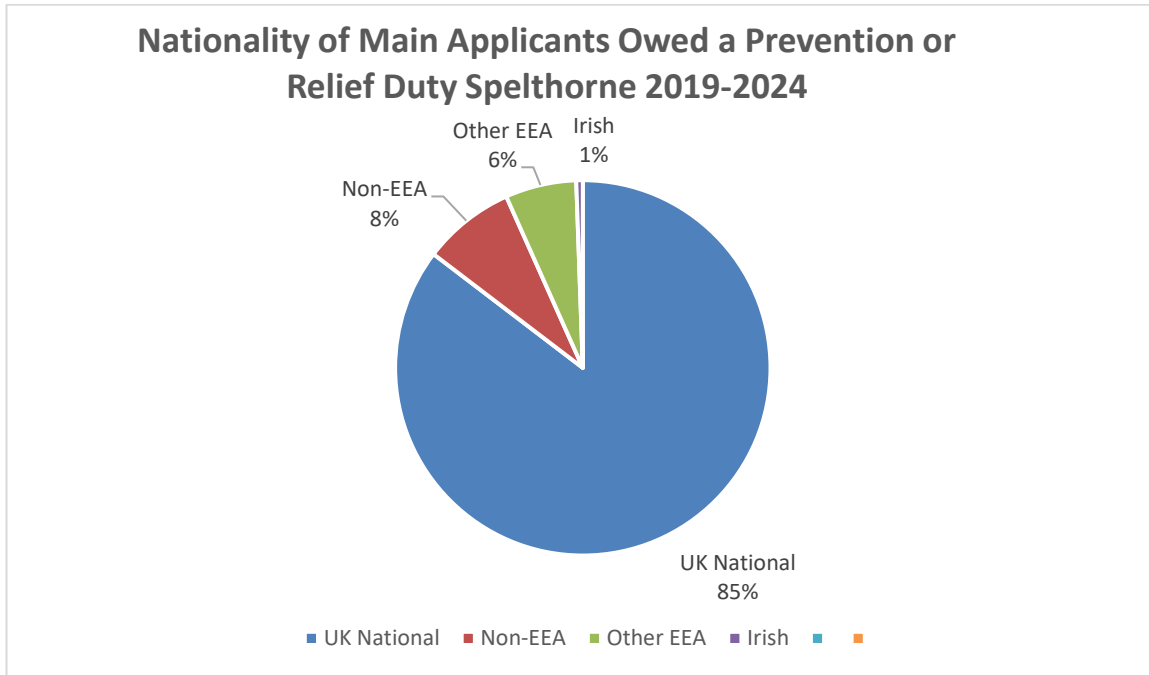


Figure 13: Nationality of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty in Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

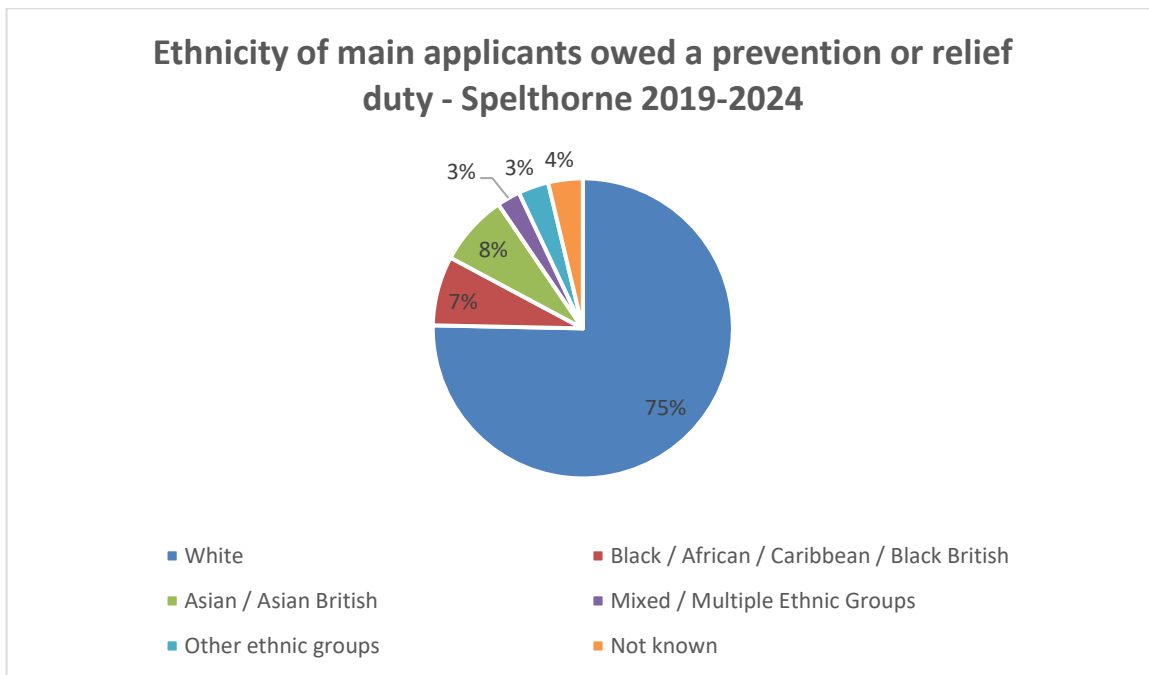


Figure 14: Ethnicity of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty in Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

Employment status of households

The majority of households who approached us for assistance were unemployed, with approximately 28% in either part-time or full time employment. Figure 15 breaks down the employment status of households.

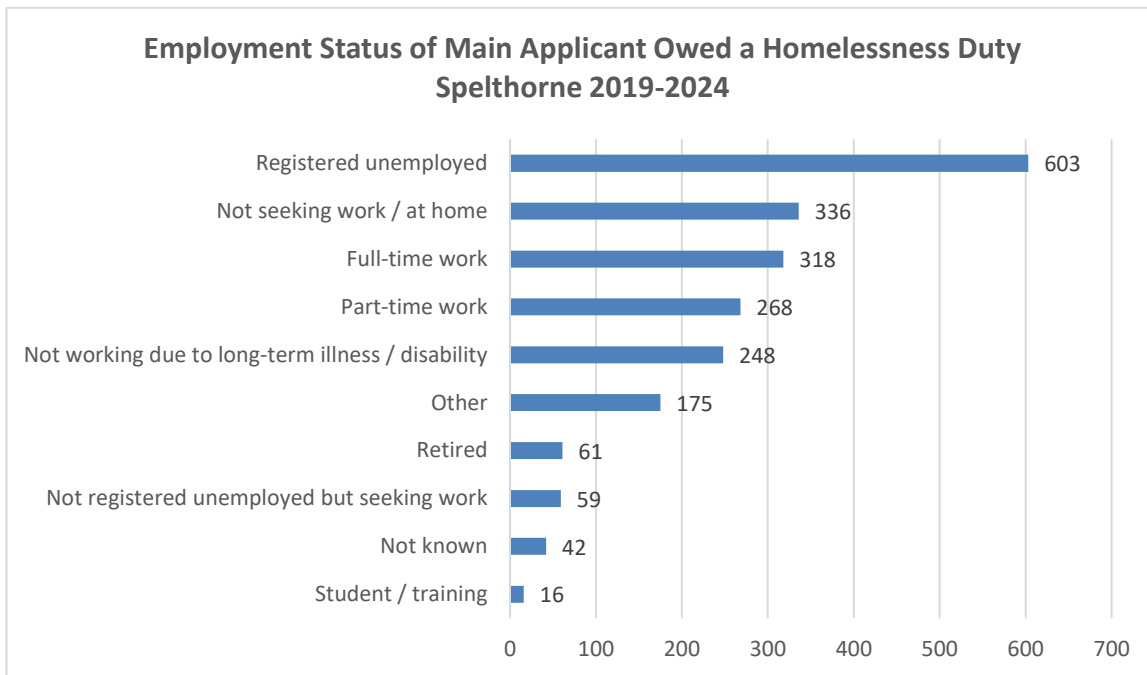


Figure 15: Employment status of main applicant owed a homelessness duty in Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

Outcomes of applications

The outcomes of these homelessness applications accepted are broken down by three main duty types: Prevention Duty in figure 16, Relief Duty in figure 18 and Main Duty in figure 19. The categories in green suggest a positive outcome for the applicant. This highlights that a significant proportion of households are assisted to either remain in their existing accommodation or are helped to secure alternative accommodation. However, it also indicates that we are still losing contact or applications are being withdrawn in many cases.

In summary:

- We successfully prevented homelessness in 55% of cases, with 64% of the accommodation secured for clients being in the private rented sector.
- We successfully relieved homelessness through securing suitable accommodation for clients in 38% of cases. 44% of the accommodation secured for clients was in the private rented sector.

- The Main Duty was discharged successfully in 91% of cases due to an offer of accommodation, with 24% of discharges into the private rented sector and 76% into social housing.

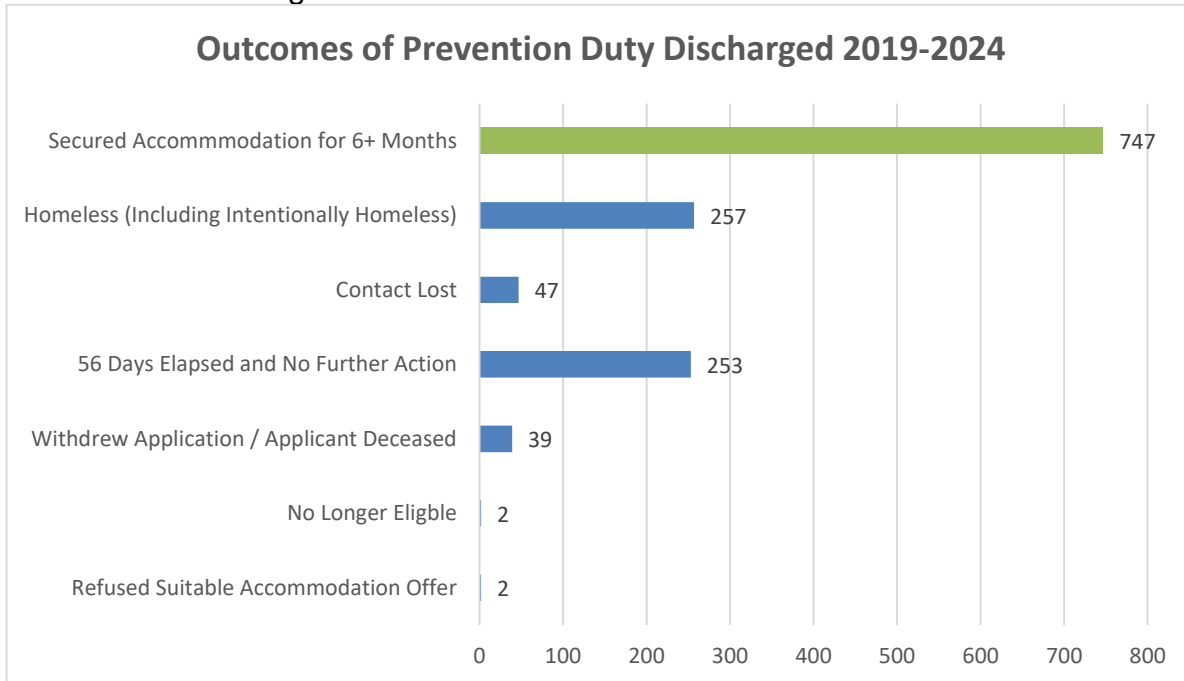


Figure 16: Outcomes of prevention duty discharged in Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

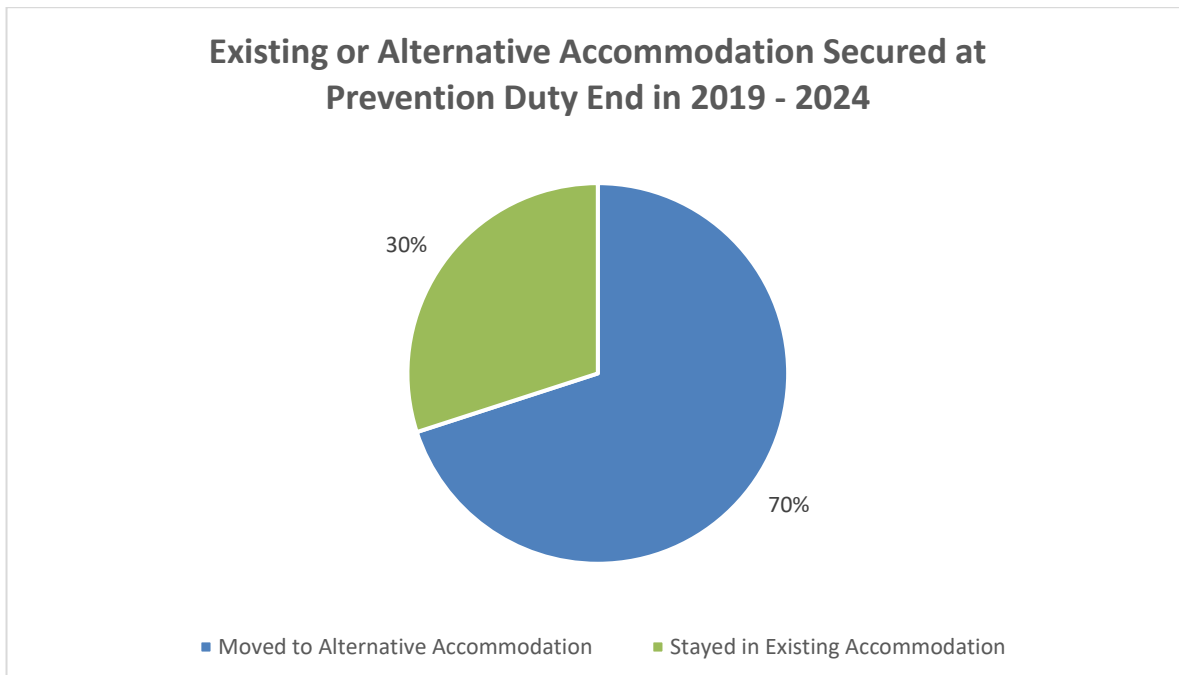


Figure 17: Breakdown of existing or alternative accommodation secured at prevention duty end in Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

Outcomes of Relief Duty Discharged in 2019-2024

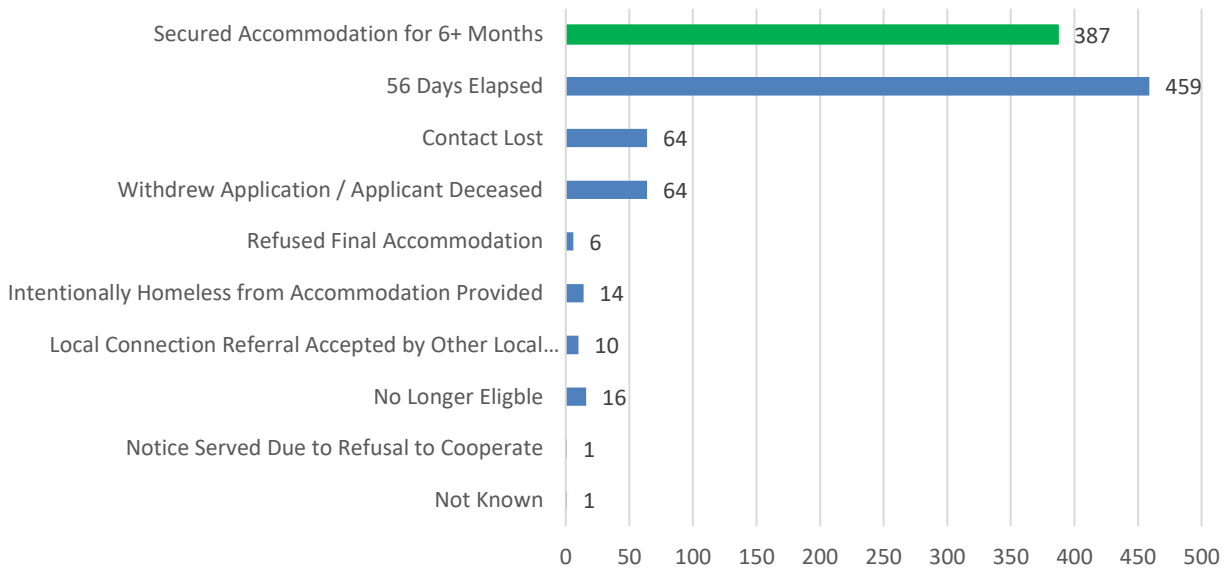


Figure 18: Outcomes of relief duty discharged in Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

Outcomes of Main Duty Discharged in 2019-2024

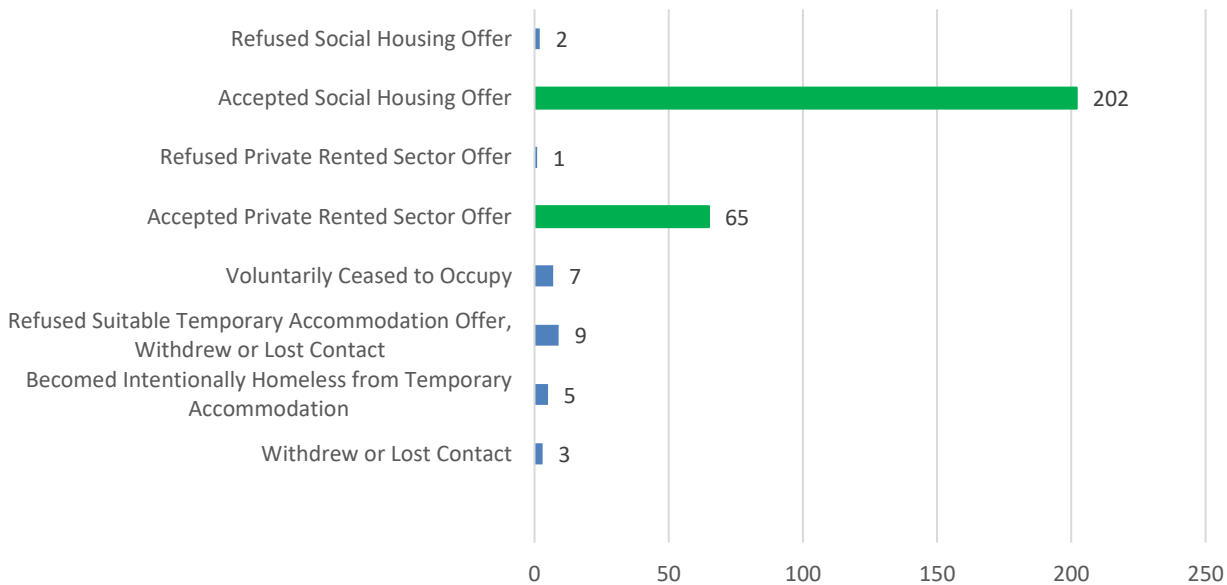


Figure 19: Outcomes of main duty discharged in Spelthorne in 2019 - 2024

Where we were unable to successfully relieve homelessness, we considered whether the household were owed the Main Duty under s193 (2) Housing Act 1996. This assessment involved considering whether the household was eligible, homeless, in priority need, had a local connection to Spelthorne, and that they had not become homeless intentionally. This assessment was carried out in 454 cases, and we accepted the Main Duty in 70% of cases. Where the Main Duty was accepted, 74% were in priority need because of dependent children within the household.

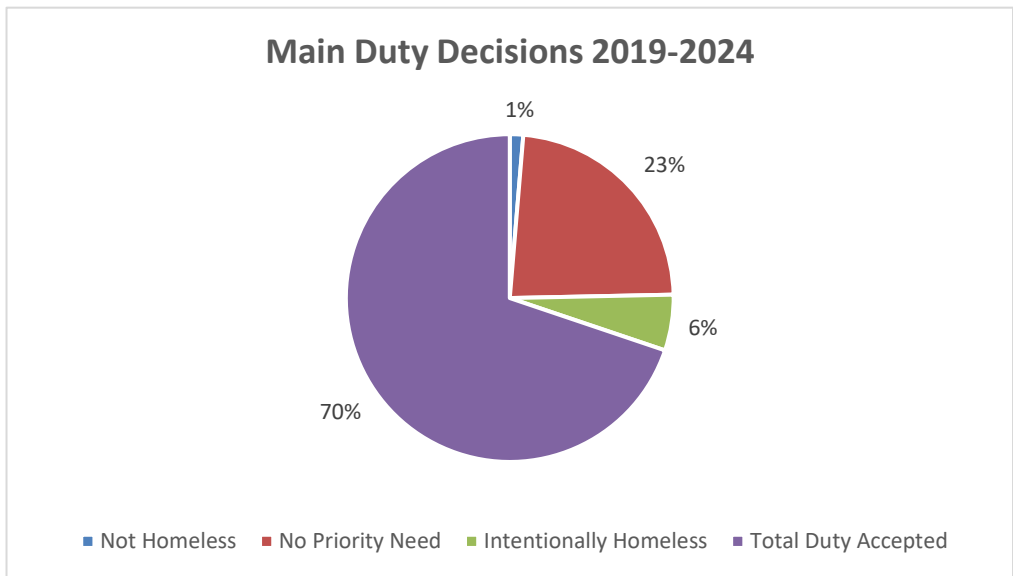


Figure 20: Main duty decisions in Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

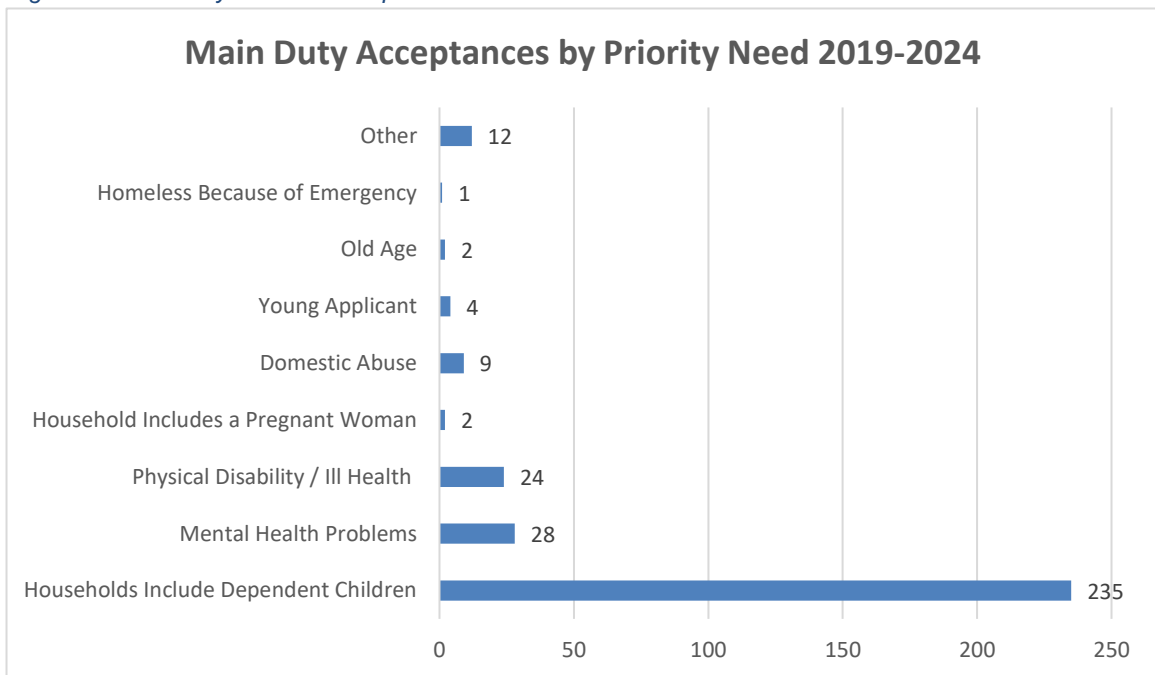


Figure 21: Main duty acceptances by priority need in Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

Supply vs demand of affordable and social housing

Spelthorne Borough Council does not own its own housing stock so instead works closely with housing associations in the borough who offer social rented accommodation. Spelthorne Council transferred its housing stock in 1996 to A2Dominion Housing Group. Social housing is extremely limited due to the high demand for affordable rented properties in the borough and nationwide. For residents to access social housing they must register with the Council's housing register by completing an online application on the Homes4Spelthorne Website: www.homes4spelthorne.org.uk. By joining the housing register, applicants can bid for properties in the local area. However, demand significantly outweighs the supply of social housing. Most applicants on the housing register will be unlikely to ever receive an offer of social housing.

Housing register

Spelthorne Borough Council participates in a choice-based lettings scheme (i.e. a system allowing housing applicants to choose from a selection of available to let vacancies advertised openly or made known to registered applications in housing need).

Looking at the annual snapshot in figure 22, the number of households registered on the Spelthorne housing register has increased over the last 5 years, with a notable decrease in 2023/24 due to a reregistration process. A new Housing Allocations policy was introduced with a subsequent software update requiring all applicants to reregister to be assessed against the new policy. Generally, housing need and the demand for social and affordable housing has increased in Spelthorne over the last 5 years.

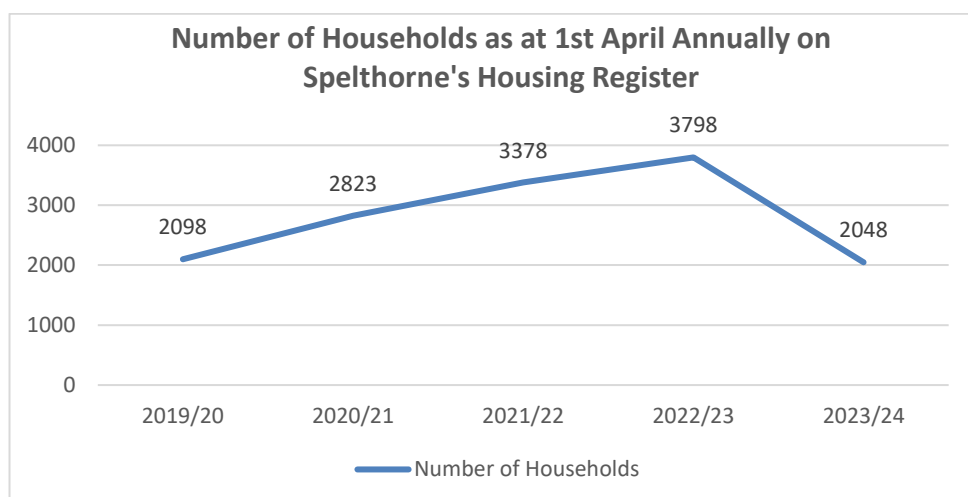


Figure 22: Annual snapshot of the number of households on Spelthorne Borough Council's Housing Register 2019 - 2024

Of the total number of applicants on the housing register, a consistent pattern from the last 5 years shows the majority require a one-bedroom property closely followed by demand for two-bedrooms. The 2023/24 data is the most recent data we have following the reregistration process and demonstrates that the demand for one bed homes is only slightly higher than the demand for two bed homes.

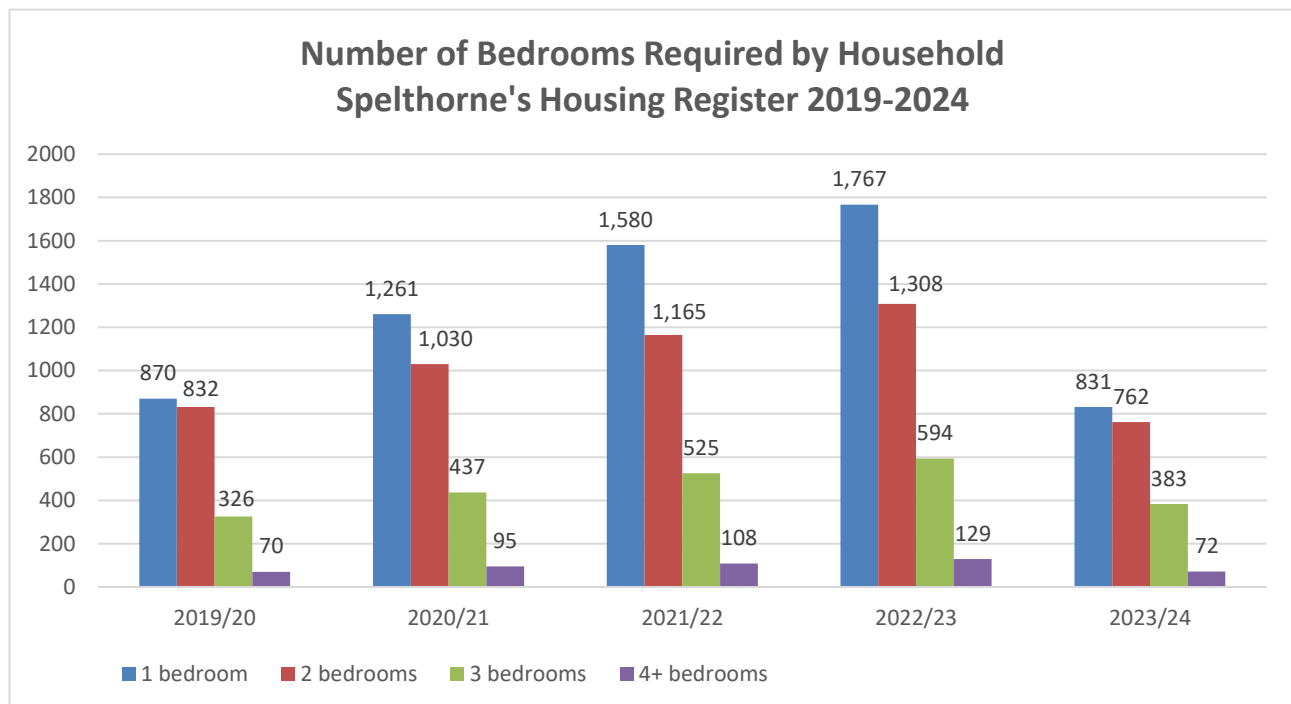


Figure 23: Number of bedrooms required by household on Spelthorne Borough Council's housing register 2019 - 2024

Supply of affordable and social housing

Nationally, there is a shortage of homes being delivered, specifically, social and affordable rent. The number of new affordable properties being delivered in the borough of Spelthorne has fluctuated in the last 5 years as highlighted in figure 24. There is a huge lack of new affordable rented properties being delivered in the borough, with affordable housing delivery predominantly being made up of shared ownership units. This impacts on homelessness levels as there is a lack of suitable and affordable housing available for rent.

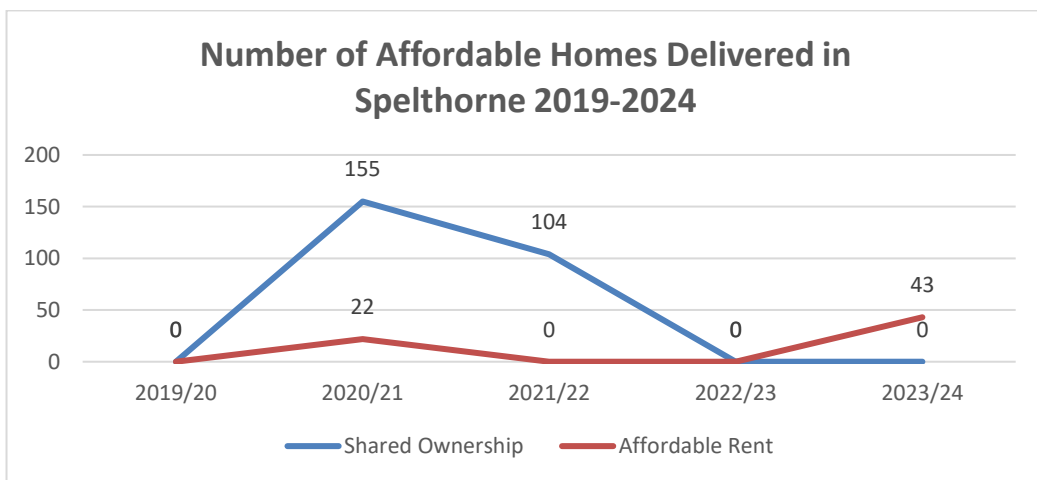


Figure 24: Number of affordable homes delivered in Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

Spelthorne Borough Council's Authority Monitoring Reports highlight an increasing trend for developers to seek to reduce on-site provision of affordable housing on the grounds of viability and to promote off-site provision or an in-lieu financial contribution.

As Spelthorne Borough Council is a non-stock holding authority, lettings are only made through nominations to private registered providers with stock in Spelthorne. Over the last 5 years, a total of 889 properties were let via Spelthorne Borough Council, either through the previous website SEARCH Moves or new website Homes4Spelthorne. As shown in figure 25, Social lettings have fluctuated slightly in the last 5 years with a decline in 2020/21 and 2021/22 which could be an impact from the pause on evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic and lack of tenant movement across stock. There was also a decline in social lettings in 2023/24 (the lowest in the last 10 years), this is attributed to the break in lets due to the reregistration process but also due to housing providers needing to retain more stock for decanting existing tenants whilst necessary repairs were undertaken.

Of the 889 lettings, 89 properties were reserved for working households only. However, a total of 322 working households were let a property in the last 5 years, of which 97 were identified as key workers.

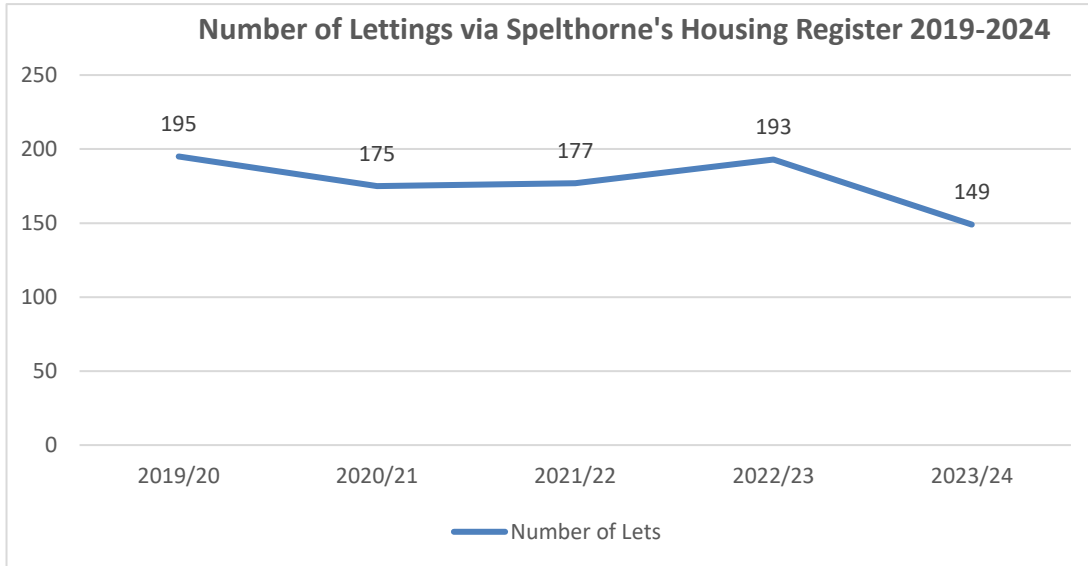


Figure 25: Number of lettings via Spelthorne Borough Council's housing register 2019 - 2024

Figures 27 and 28 identify the total number of Spelthorne lettings by bedroom size and property type between the financial years of April 2019 to April 2024. Just over 50% of the properties let, were one bedroom properties, this was the highest number of bedroom size let. Out of the total number of properties let, 296 were recorded as age restricted. Age restricted properties accounted for 66% of our one bedroom lets. The smallest number of properties let through Search Moves were 4 bedroom properties. This is mainly due to the limited availability of this property size. The vast majority of properties let were flats, which make up approximately 70% of the total number of lets between the financial years of 2019 to 2024.

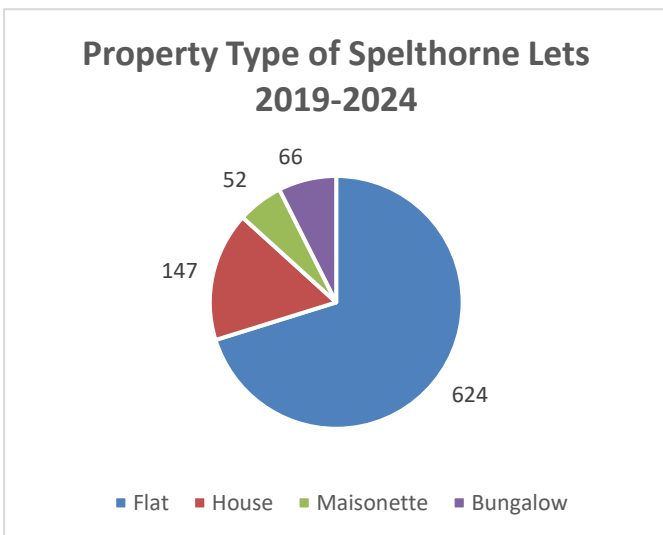


Figure 27: Property type of Spelthorne lettings 2019 - 2024

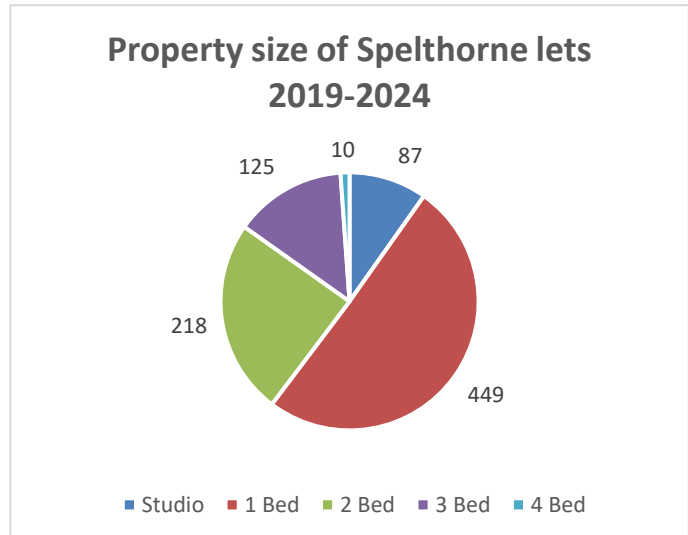


Figure 26: Property size of Spelthorne lettings 2019 - 2024

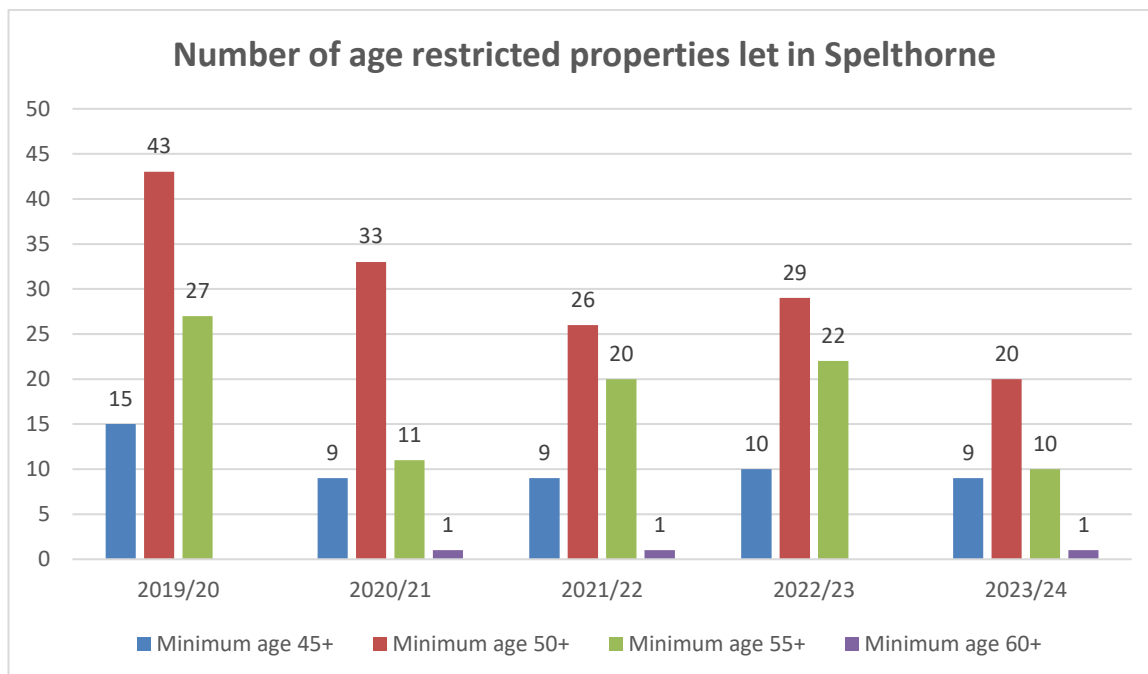


Figure 28: Number of age restricted properties let in Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

To illustrate the demand for age restricted properties, table 6 highlights the most recent snapshot of housing register applicants as at 31st March 2024 and the age band for applicants requiring a one-bedroom home. In 2023/24, a total of 149 lettings were made, of which 40 were age restricted. All of the age restricted properties were 1-bedroom flats meaning 48% of all 1-bedroom lets had age restrictions in place for that year.

Age Band of Main Applicant	Number of Applicants
Under 25	163
Between 25 and 39	254
Between 40 and 44	69
Between 45 and 49	40
Between 50 and 54	67
Between 55 and 59	65
60 and Over	173
Grand Total	831

Table 6: snapshot of the age band of one-bedroom housing register applicants in Spelthorne as at 31st March 2024

Usually, the minimum age for sheltered or extra care accommodation is 50 or over. Out of the 831 households waiting for a one-bedroom property as at 31st March 2024, 305 households were aged 50 or over. This means that approximately 63% of one-bedroom households would not be eligible for age restricted accommodation. However, it is worth noting that some of the

property age restrictions are reduced to aged 45+ for reasons including if they are 'hard to let'. Where this is considered for the year 2023/24, approximately 58% of 1-bedroom households were not eligible for properties with age restrictions of 45+. As noted, approximately half of one-bedroom properties let for 2023/24 were age restricted which further limits one-bedroom households aged 44 or under.

Overall, despite 889 properties being let in the last 5 years, there has been a large number of households registered on Spelthorne Council's housing register requiring affordable decent homes. There is an extremely limited number of social housing available in comparison to the number of households seeking assistance; demand continues to significantly outstrip supply.

The allocation of affordable and social housing to homeless households

The allocation of social housing is one way of helping households that are facing homelessness. Due to its limited availability and high demand, it is not a realistic option to resolve a homelessness crisis. The number of housing register lettings to homeless households when compared with all other households on the housing register between the years of April 2019 to April 2024 is demonstrated in figure 29.

The data is broken down by those threatened or duty accepted as homeless versus all other households that were generally bidding for properties. A total of 266 homeless households were let properties through Spelthorne's housing register over this date period. This makes up approximately 30% of persons let properties in the last 5 years. Anyone who has an accepted homeless duty with Spelthorne Borough Council and is eligible to join the Spelthorne housing register, is set-up on auto bidding to ensure all bids on suitable properties are maximised.

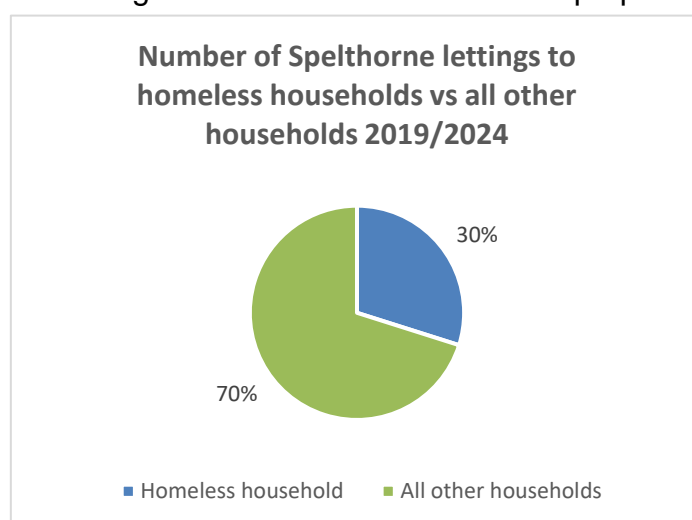


Figure 29: Lettings to homeless households vs all other households on Spelthorne's housing register 2019-2024

Knowle Green Estates

Knowle Green Estates (KGE) was established in 2016. KGE is a private housing company owned by Spelthorne Borough Council for the purposes of delivering homes to meet local housing need. The Council borrows funds from the Public Works Loan Board at a low interest rate fixed for 50 years and then lends the money with interest to KGE who buy and manage properties on a long-term basis. Funds generated are invested in more homes, regeneration opportunities and front-line services.

To date, a number of developments have been delivered and are being managed by KGE as shown in figure 30. KGE deliver a mixture of tenures including private rent, affordable rent and key worker homes. KGE operate a policy whereby affordable rent means either 80% of the market rent or capped at the local housing allowance (whichever is the lowest at the time of setting rent levels).

Tenants are referred to KGE from the Council's Housing Options team which includes both homeless households and those on the Council's housing register who are deemed to have a housing need.



Figure 30: Developments managed by Knowle Green Estates 2018-2021

Since initial delivery shown in figure 30, 23 properties have been re-let between 2022-2024 to applicants who are either on the housing register or who have a homeless application accepted by the Council.

KGE's aim is to provide local affordable homes for residents to help meet the demand for affordable housing which is not currently being met by other developers.

However, COVID-19 and the cost living crisis has had a direct impact on KGE's housing delivery plan. The inflated cost of building materials, increased interest rates and the work skill shortage in the building sector has had an impact on the delivery of affordable housing in Spelthorne. In October 2023, Council voted to suspend the Council's housing development programme following a report by officers outlining the increasing risks associated with residential development because of rising interest rates and construction inflation. As part of the new Corporate Plan, the Council are now exploring opportunities for joint housing delivery ventures to help meet the demand for local affordable housing. The Council is seeking to maximise the provision of affordable homes through the planning process via viability assessments and Section 106 agreements, and secure nomination rights for new development schemes to increase the range and variety of affordable homes.

The Council receive very few offers of affordable housing from developers and many developers challenge the requirements for affordable housing delivery on viability grounds. This leaves Spelthorne with very few new homes being delivered each year in parallel with increasing demand for affordable homes. The Council has also experienced further challenges with registered providers not wanting to take over the affordable rented units on sites subject to Section 106.

Emergency and temporary accommodation

There are some instances where we as a Council are unable to prevent homelessness. A duty to provide interim accommodation arises where an applicant is assessed as homeless and there is a reason to believe that they are in priority need. This duty continues until the Council decides what further duty, if any, is owed to the household. There are two particular types of accommodation Spelthorne Borough Council use:

- **Emergency accommodation** (e.g. Bed and Breakfast): usually procured by the Council on a nightly basis. Although the Council has exclusive access to Harper House in Ashford, private providers are also used to help meet demand.
- **Temporary accommodation (TA)**: let on a longer term, although still temporary in nature. The Council owns 1 property which it uses as temporary accommodation; let on a non-secure weekly tenancy. We also have access to 40 properties owned by A2Dominion which are reserved exclusively for use as temporary accommodation. These properties are let on six-monthly assured shorthold tenancies.

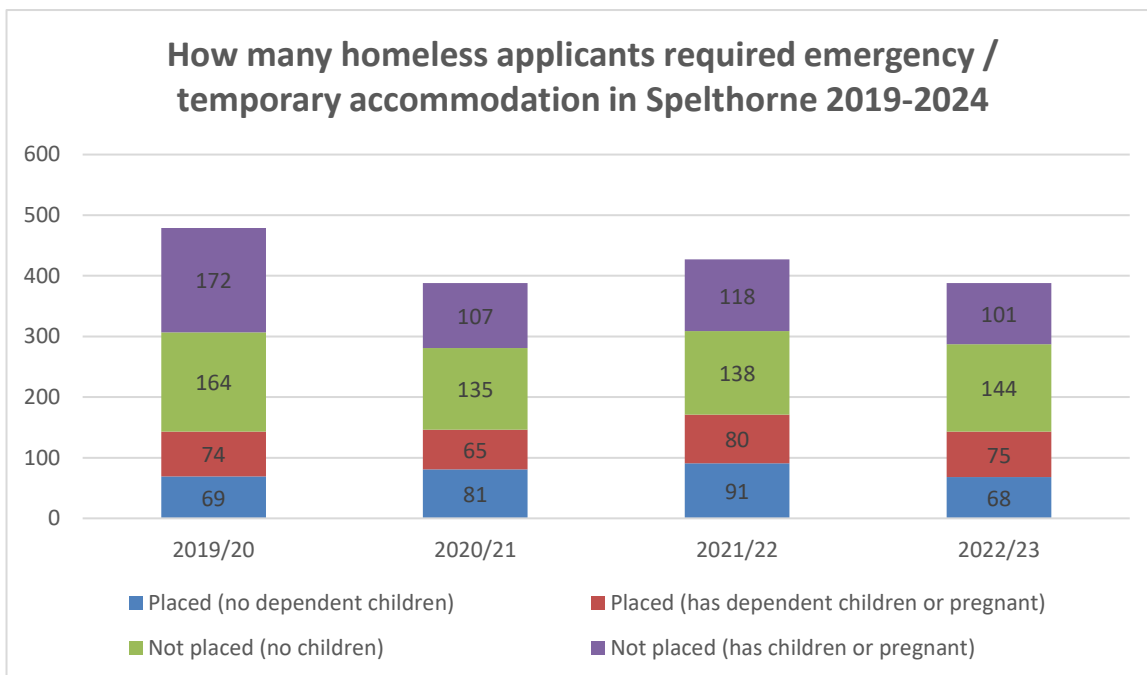


Figure 31: Number of homeless applicants who required emergency or temporary accommodation from Spelthorne Borough Council 2019 - 2024

Type of emergency and temporary accommodation used

To give an indication of how Spelthorne Borough Council uses interim accommodation, the data in tables 7 and 8 gives a snapshot as at the 31st March 2024 to demonstrate this.

Accommodation type for properties within Spelthorne	Studio	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4-bed	Total
B&B (Travelodge)	-	3	1	-	-	4
Other nightly paid (shared)	-	7	1	-	-	8
Other nightly paid (self-contained)	-	33	17	-	1	51
Directly with a private sector landlord		19	-	-	-	19
Temporary accommodation (registered provider)	2	26	6	4	-	38
Temporary accommodation (Spelthorne Council)	-	7	11	-	1	19
Total	2	95	36	4	2	139

Table 7: Emergency accommodation type for properties within Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

Accommodation type for properties outside of Spelthorne	Studio	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4-bed	Total
Other nightly paid (shared)	8	-	-	-	-	8
Other nightly paid (self-contained)	3	3	2	1	-	9
Directly with a private sector landlord	-	2	3	8	1	14
Total	11	5	5	9	1	31

Table 8: Emergency accommodation type for properties outside of Spelthorne 2019 - 2024

As at 31st March 2024, the largest accommodation type that the Council arranged for eligible homeless applicants is self-contained nightly paid accommodation which was provided to 60 households. Under the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 2003, B&B accommodation with shared facilities is not considered suitable for families with children or those who are pregnant where the placement is beyond six weeks. Therefore, this partly influences the number of self-contained accommodation units required.

Location of emergency and temporary accommodation used

Where suitable, the Council aims to use accommodation within Spelthorne to reduce disruption to households and their community links to the borough. In 2024, the Council sourced over 30 units of good quality local temporary accommodation within Spelthorne to reduce the number of placements made out of borough. However, there are some instances where this is not possible or not suitable, so some households are placed out of borough. Figure 32 indicates that as at the 31st March 2024, the majority of households were placed within the borough of Spelthorne.

Location of emergency and temporary accommodation placements as at 31 March 2024

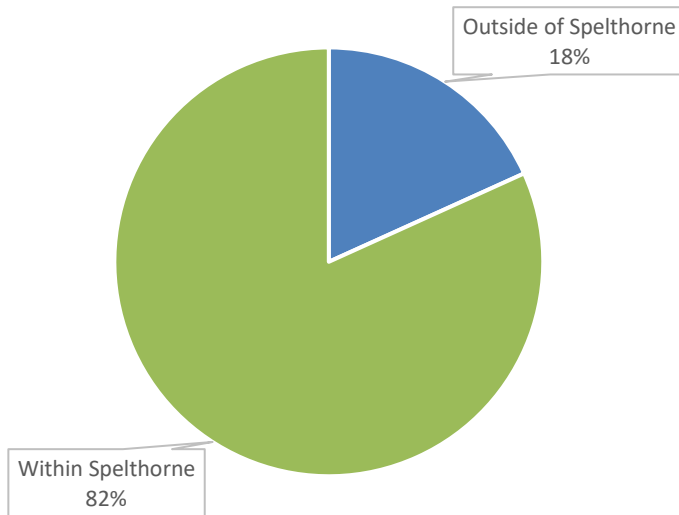


Figure 32: Location of emergency and temporary accommodation placements as at a snapshot of 31st March 2024

Figure 33 shows households in emergency and temporary accommodation as at the snapshot date of 31 March 2024, households were made up of predominantly families with one child.

Emergency Accommodation Household Make-Up as of 31st March 2024

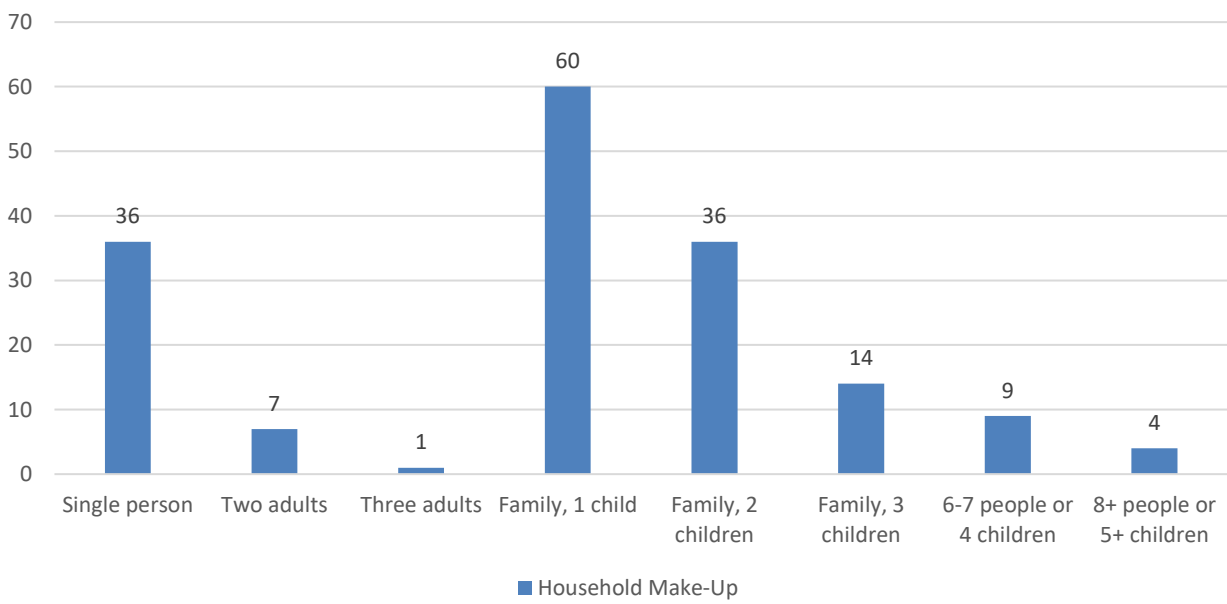


Figure 33: Make-up of households in emergency accommodation as at a snapshot of 31st March 2024

Length of stay in emergency and temporary accommodation

We aim to minimise the length of time a household may have to live in emergency or temporary accommodation. However, this is strongly dependent on the availability of settled accommodation that meets the housing needs of the client to enable them to move-on. The average length of stay in temporary accommodation is shown in figure 34. Across the last five years, households have spent, on average, 38 weeks in emergency accommodation. This is based on 717 placements and the total length of stay after the household exited their temporary accommodation.

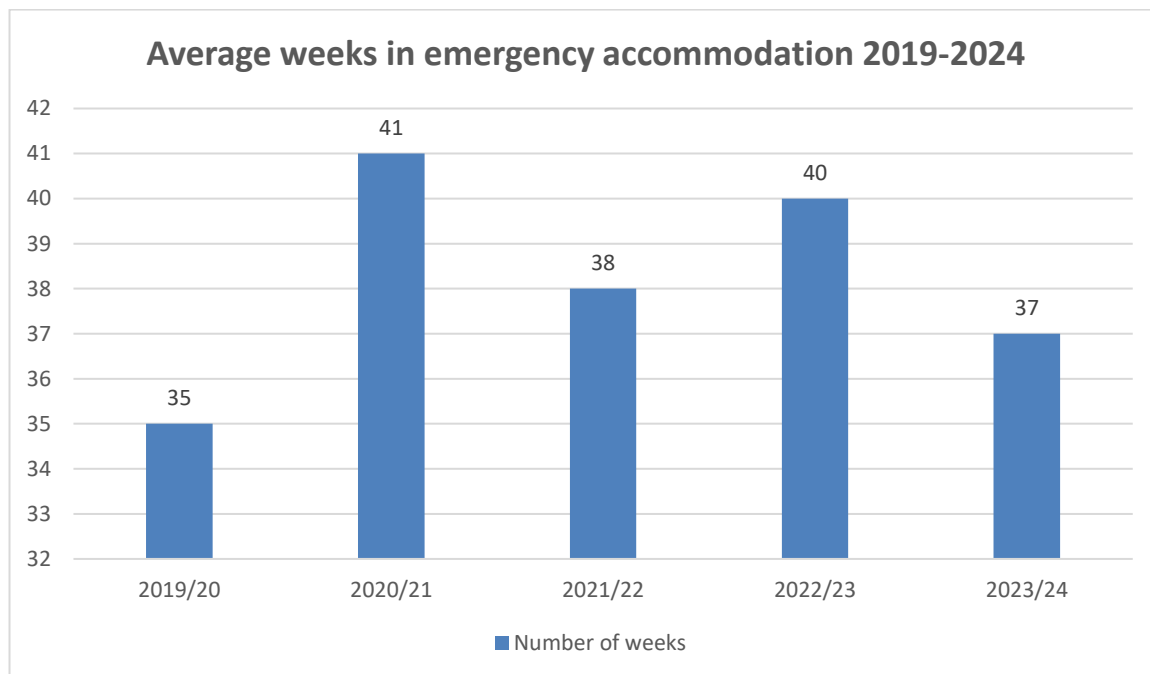


Figure 34: Average number of weeks spent in emergency accommodation 2019 - 2024

The average number of weeks accommodated in temporary accommodation has initially increased since 2019 but then fluctuated annually. This may be attributed to the various economic housing pressures caused by COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis, which have severely limited the number of affordable and suitable move-on options available to homeless applicants.

Access to the private rented sector

Privately rented accommodation is our primary route to help relieve homelessness in the borough and is what we will use in the first instance to help prevent or relieve homelessness. One of the main issues our applicants have when securing privately rented accommodation is the large costs incurred up front by the tenant. This is usually one month's rent in advance and a 5 week deposit. When facing the threat of homelessness, these costs can cause pressures on households who may not be in a position to afford this.

To help our homeless applicants find and secure privately rented accommodation, Spelthorne Borough Council offers two main methods of support.

1. **Homeless Prevention Fund** – Central Government allocate a proportion of funding for the purpose of helping local authorities in managing homelessness pressures and supporting those at risk of homelessness. The fund is flexibly used but intended to enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act, reduce family temporary accommodation numbers, and eliminate the use of unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation for families. Spelthorne Council utilise the fund to help assist applicants in securing suitable accommodation through a grant or loaned deposit and rent in advance. If it's a loan, the applicant enters into an affordable repayment plan with the council to pay this money back. In the last 5 years, Spelthorne Borough Council has spent just under £1.95m towards homelessness prevention using allocated Government funding this includes £671,961 for rent in advance, deposits, rental and mortgage support payments.
2. **Spelthorne Rent Assure Scheme** – Introduced in December 2016, the scheme offers a rent guarantee to landlords for up to 2 years in exchange for the Council nominating a homeless family directly to the property.

The scheme offers:

- Rent paid directly to the landlord at a fair market rent for up to 2 years
- A 5 week security repair bond agreement (operates like a deposit)
- Free preparation of tenancy agreements
- Free professional inventory service
- Free tenancy support service with ongoing support for landlord and tenant
- Free tenant training programme upon placement

Spelthorne Rent Assure scheme

In the last 5 years, there have been 238 landlords enquiring about the scheme with 71 landlords signing up to the Rent Assure Scheme. The data below indicates the number of successful tenancies formed between homeless families and landlords. Spelthorne Council has demonstrated its good working relationships with landlords as it's noted that landlords who have started on the scheme have returned with other properties to rent through the scheme.

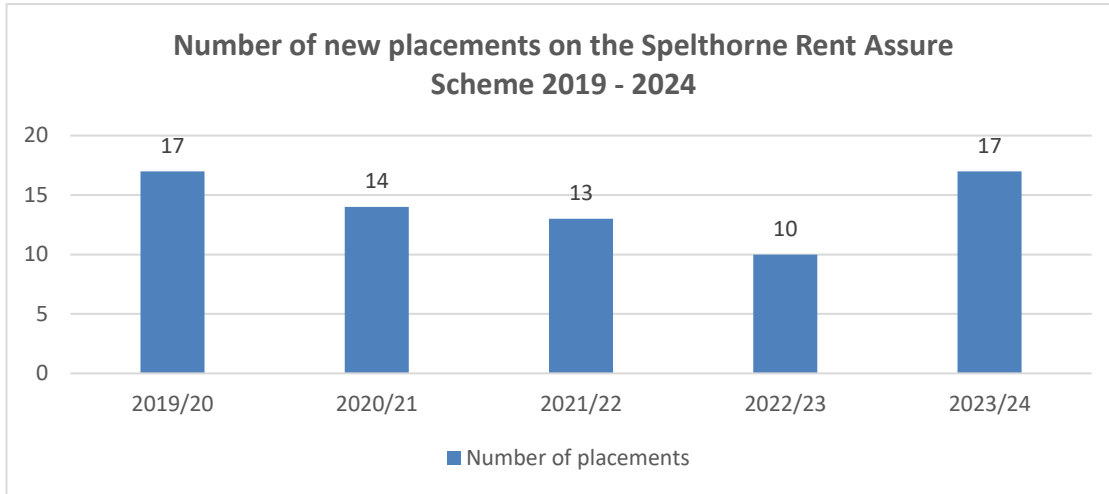


Figure 35: Number of new placements on the Spelthorne Rent Assure Scheme 2019 - 2024

Figure 35 details the number of placements which have been made under the scheme. There was a slight decline across 2020-2023 as the scheme was placed on hold for 6 months during the COVID-19 pandemic and there was an increase in market rents during 2022/23 which were unsustainable to set-up. However, 2023/34 has seen a steady increase in the number of placements.

In the last 5 years, 71 tenants have finished the scheme, and the outcomes are highlighted in figure 36. The majority of tenants continue to sustain their tenancy beyond the initial 2 years.

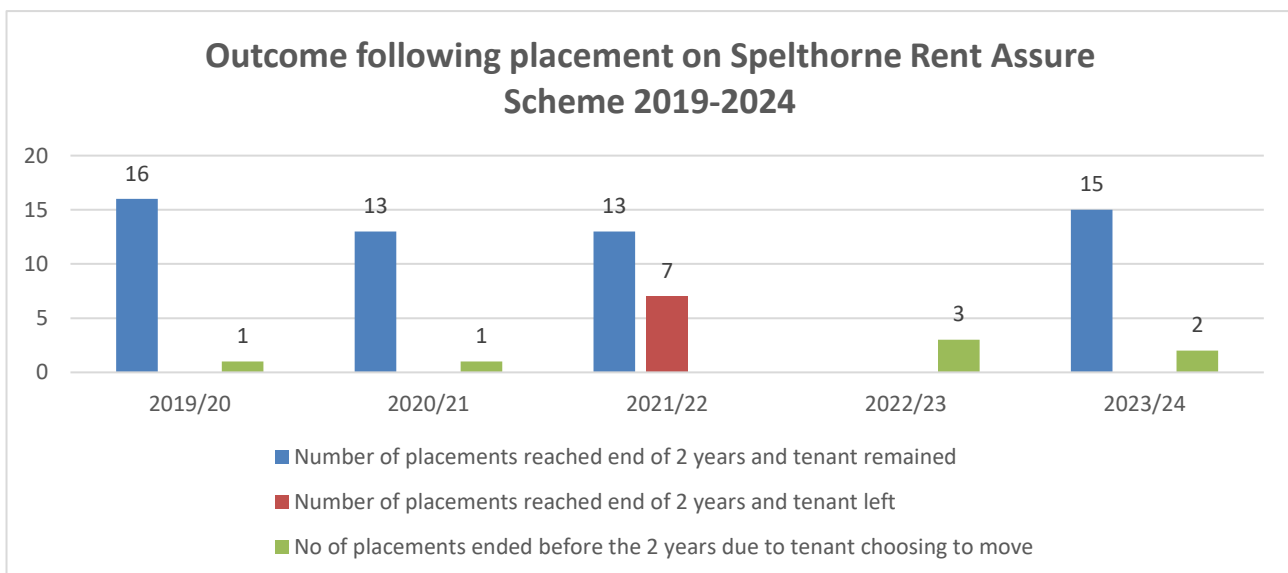


Figure 36: Outcome following placement on Spelthorne Rent Assure Scheme 2019 - 2024

Spelthorne Rentstart

Whilst the Rent Assure scheme helps families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, Spelthorne Council works closely with a local charity called Spelthorne Rentstart who are able to offer support to single persons and couples without children. Rentstart offer incentives to landlords and help tenant's secure privately rented accommodation through wholly or part funding a rent deposit through their deposit guarantee scheme and offer ongoing tenancy sustainment support. As highlighted in figure 37, Rentstart have successfully assisted a total of 2,056 clients between 2019-2024. Assistance was given through housing advice which was provided to 1,644 clients and an additional 412 were supported into accommodation through the deposit scheme.

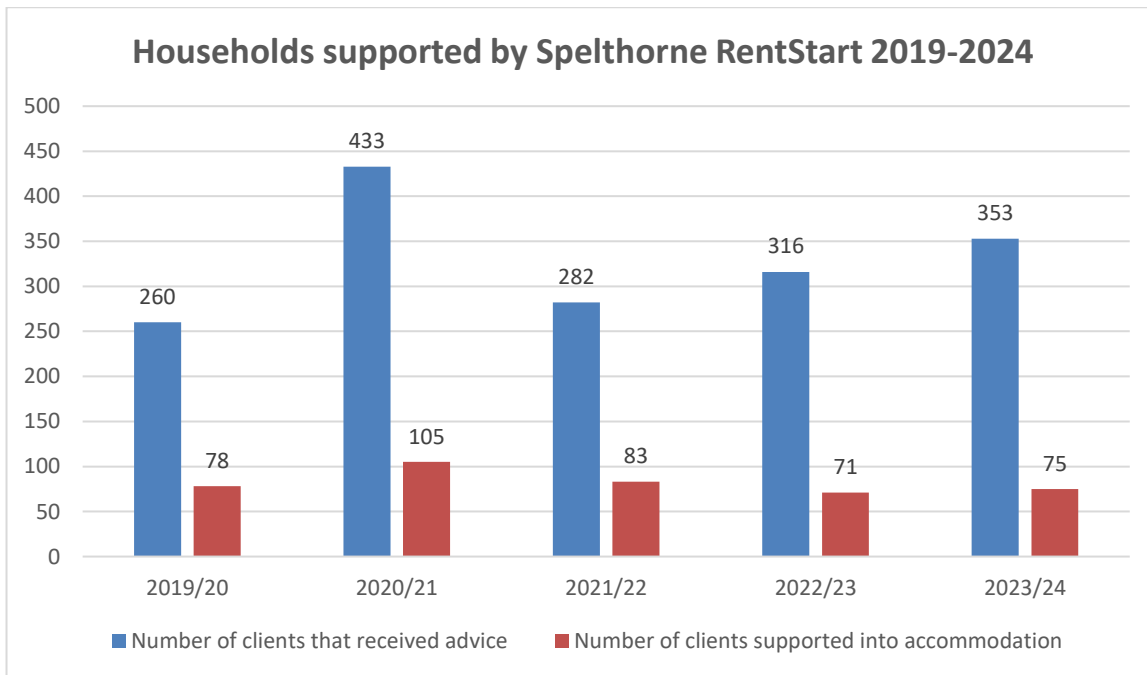


Figure 37: Total number of households supported by Spelthorne Rentstart 2019-2024

Rough sleeping

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) conduct an annual snapshot of people rough sleeping on a single night. The snapshot uses street or spot counts and evidence-based estimates.

Figures 38 and 39 breakdown the number of rough sleepers recorded in England, South East and Spelthorne. The graphs show an initial reduction in the number of rough sleepers during 2020 and 2021 which may be attributed to the Government's 'Everyone-In' initiative during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, there has been a slight increase in the numbers recorded which may be a direct impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the Government's plan to speed up the backlog of asylum seeker decisions.

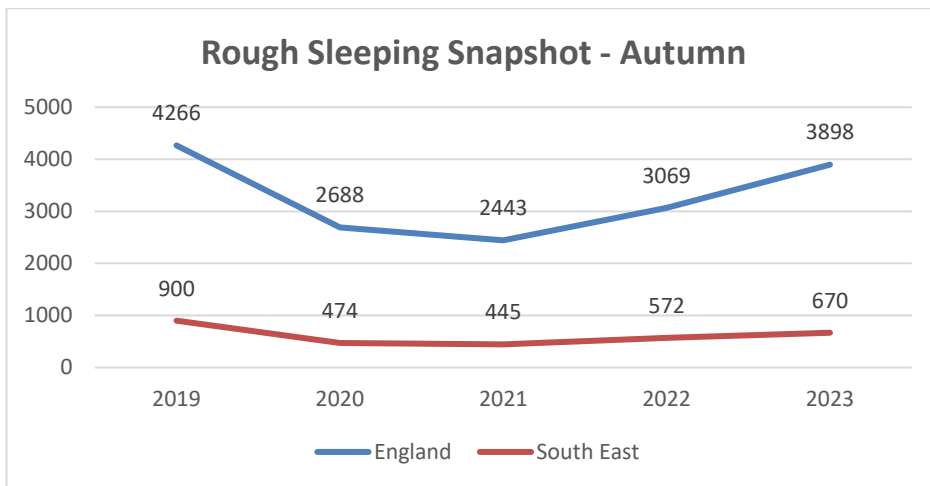


Figure 38: Annual snapshot of rough sleepers in England and the South East 2019-2023

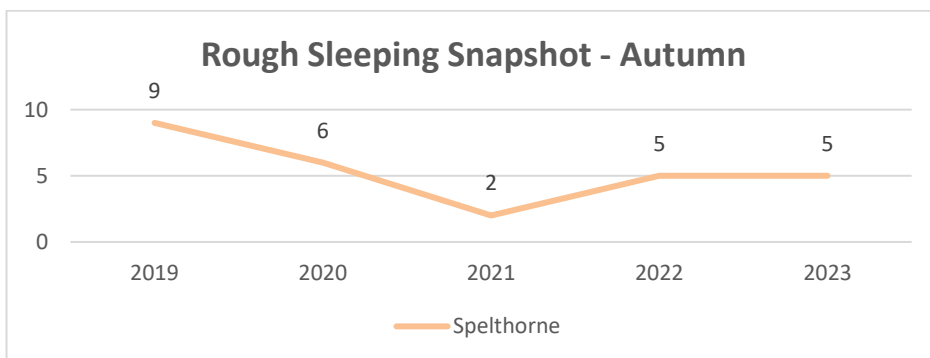


Figure 39: Annual snapshot of rough sleepers in Spelthorne 2019-2023

It is worth noting that the nightly count does fluctuate and, in some instances, Spelthorne has seen a nightly figure of 0 in the last 5 years. Spelthorne has also been able to eradicate entrenched rough sleeping (repeat homelessness for long-periods) in Spelthorne within the last 5 years and where possible, has adopted a 'no second night out' approach.

Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI)

In December 2019, the Conservative Manifesto committed to ending rough sleeping by the end of the next Parliament through an extension of RSI which began in 2018. Local authorities were invited to bid annually for funding where £203 million had been allocated to provide local support those sleeping rough. In September 2022, the Government committed to a further £500m for RSI across 3 subsequent years.

Spelthorne Council made a successful bid for RSI funding in 2020/21 for £146,500 and in 2021/22 for £212,650 to set-up and sustain our rough sleeper outreach service. Spelthorne Borough Council made another successful bid of £568,300 for 3-year funding across 2022-2025. The funding has been used to expand our rough sleeper outreach service to maintain a significant reduction in the number of rough sleepers. Initially, some of the RSI funding had been intended for a Housing First programme. However, due to market pressures and economic uncertainty, we were unable to procure a housing provider to deliver the housing element of this service. Therefore, this proportion of the RSI funding was repurposed to provide an intensive 'housing led' support officer who manages a smaller caseload to provide wrap-around support to those with multiple and complex needs. Additionally, RSI funding contributed towards a floating supporting service provided by Look Ahead. The service supports private renters with sustaining their tenancies and assists prison leavers to access the private rented sector. There is uncertainty on future funding available so there is no guarantee that the service can be extended which will impact the Council's current service provision.

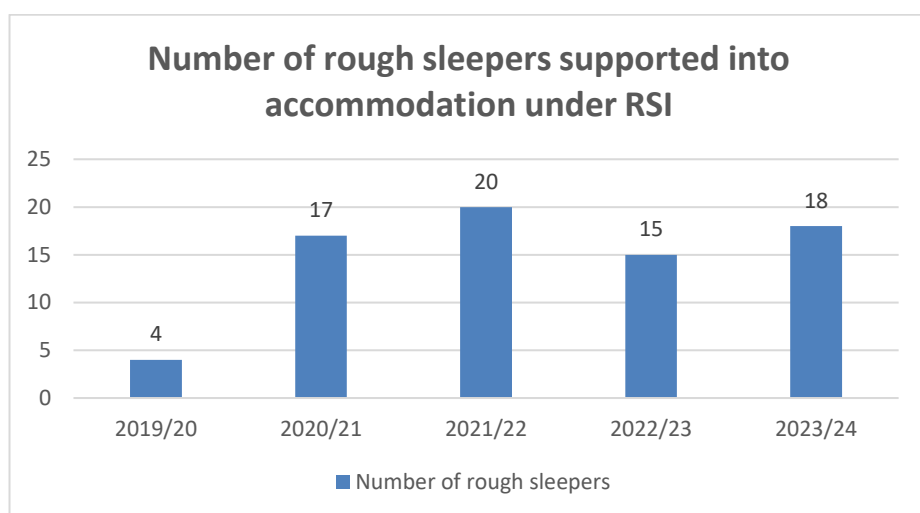


Figure 40: Number of rough sleepers supported into accommodation via RSI funding 2019-2024

As well as RSI, there have also been several other rounds of targeted Government funding over the last 5 years, including the following:

Accommodation for Ex-Offenders

In July 2021, the Government introduced funding to support prison leavers with access to accommodation. The funding allowed local authorities to provide support to ex-offenders entering the private rental sector, typically consisting of rental deposits and landlord incentives. As part of a Surrey wide bid made by district and boroughs, £268,00 was secured to support ex-offenders into private rented sector tenancies; Spelthorne received an allocation of £33,104. The scheme aims to build a pathway from prison into the private rented sector, a total of 13 ex-offenders were supported into accommodation via this route.

Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP)

In 2020, the Government launched NSAP in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to help support the move-on of rough sleepers accommodated in emergency accommodation under 'Everyone In'. The programme was set-up to safeguard and prevent those accommodated from returning to rough sleeping. Financial resource of £105 million was made available for initiatives to support move-on into the private rented sector and extending interim accommodation. With a further £161 million in 2020/21 to support local authorities and partners with capital for property costs to deliver 3,300 units of settled accommodation and long-term revenue for tenancy support.

Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP)

In 2020, the Government also introduced RSAP and allocated £435 million to support up to 6,000 rough sleepers into longer-term accommodation with additional support to assist with getting ready for independent living and move-on. The programme ran from 2021-2024. After a successful bid, Spelthorne Borough Council was allocated £360,000 towards the purchase of 6 one-bedroom flats and support provision. The funding was paid to Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing, and in return, the Council nominates residents to these supported homes for the next 80 years.

Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme

In December 2022, the Government announced a £200 million fund to deliver up to 2,400 homes and support services for rough sleepers with a focus on support housing, Housing First and housing-led accommodation. The target groups included young people at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping and for adults experiencing multiple disadvantages with a history of rough sleeping. Spelthorne Borough Council were not eligible to bid for this grant funding.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers – Increased homelessness demand

There has been additional housing demand pressures locally due to the influx of refugees and asylum seekers requiring support from Spelthorne Borough Council within the last five years.

Spelthorne pledged to support up to 12 households arriving locally under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme or Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy into privately rented accommodation.

The Home Office held a bridging hotel for Afghans within Spelthorne which closed in 2023. Prior to closure, the Family Support Team and Housing Options Team within Spelthorne Borough Council were assisting families with move-on plans to find settled accommodation. The Home Office introduced a 'Find Your Own' pathway for Afghans to support them in finding privately rented accommodation. Spelthorne Borough Council were able to support Afghan households with deposits and rent in advance and then claim back funding from the Home Office. Spelthorne Borough Council also utilised a rent guarantee scheme by paying for 12 months' rent in advance and setting up a contract with the tenant to repay the rent in monthly instalments up to the local housing allowance rate. Spelthorne Borough Council then subsidised the rent shortfall via Home Office funding. Prior to the closure of the hotel, the Council supported 6 families onto the Spelthorne Rent Assure Scheme and a further 4 households were prevented from becoming homeless as they were supported to secure privately rented accommodation.

Following the closure of the Home Office hotel in Spelthorne, Spelthorne Borough Council actively sourced additional emergency accommodation in preparation for the increased homelessness demand. In total, 22 households approached the Council for assistance following the closure of the Spelthorne bridging hotel. A further 5 households approached from bridging hotels that closed outside of the borough.

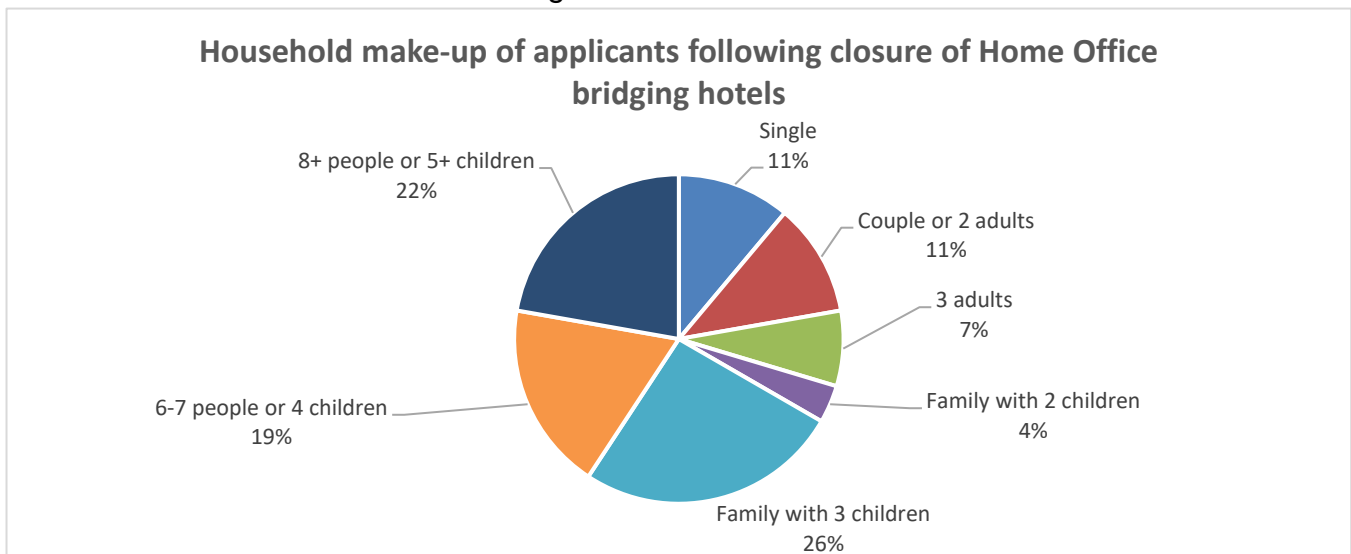


Figure 41: Household make-up of applicants approaching Spelthorne Borough Council following closure of Home Office Bridging Hotels in 2023

As shown in figure 41, these households generally had more household members, creating an additional challenge for the Council to find suitable move-on accommodation due to the severe lack of affordable larger sized properties available locally.

Since the hotel's closure, the Family Support team supported 38 families across emergency and privately rented accommodation. Families received a weekly contact (home visit / telephone call) to assist with identified needs and support to access community resources. The resettlement team ran a well-attended weekly women's group providing information and advice, a sewing class and Pilates. Additionally, they provided a weekly women's ESOL class.

The Council has also maximised move-on opportunities by identifying suitable MOD properties available and by utilising the Local Authority Housing Funding (LAHF) set-up by central Government. LAHF was introduced for the acquisition of properties for refugees which can then be later relet as affordable housing for general needs households. Spelthorne Borough Council were granted 40% of total capital costs to purchase 18 properties (which includes 14 for resettlement and 4 for temporary accommodation) under round 1 and round 2. The Council were also granted further funding under an extension of rounds 1 and 2 to purchase an additional 52 properties (50 for temporary accommodation and 2 for resettlement) and a further minimum of 8 properties (6 for temporary accommodation and 2 for resettlement) under round 3 funding. Round 3 funding enables the Council to purchase more properties than the indicated minimum number. This funding helps reduce the use of costly private emergency accommodation and allows the Council to purchase good quality local homes for use as temporary accommodation. The Council is currently awaiting the outcome of an expression of interest form submitted to DLUHC for further funding under round 3.

The Home Office also hold a hotel for asylum seekers and numerous dispersed accommodation within Spelthorne. In 2023, the notice period provided by the Home Office following a positive asylum seeker decision was reduced. Consequently, there has been an increase in the number of households approaching Spelthorne Borough Council for homelessness assistance following the withdrawal of Home Office accommodation. Figure 42 illustrates the trend in demand within the last 5 years and demonstrates a particular increased pressure within 2023/24.

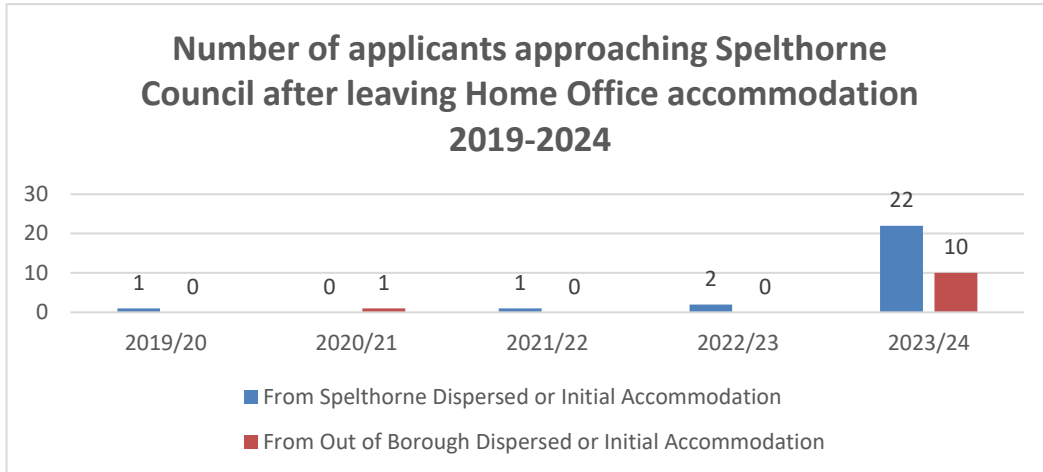


Figure 42: Number of applicants approaching Spelthorne Borough Council after leaving Home Office accommodation 2019-2024

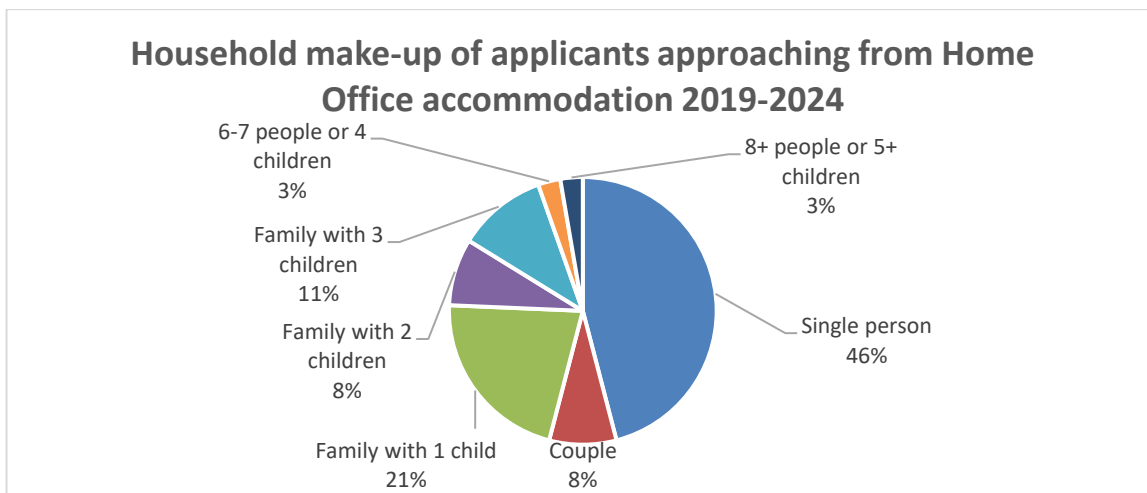


Figure 43: Household make-up of applicants approaching from Home Office accommodation 2019-2024

Spelthorne residents have also been supporting Ukrainians via the Homes for Ukraine Scheme by acting as sponsors. Spelthorne Borough Council supported sponsors and guests by issuing £600 monthly thank you payments (this is an increase to central Governments initial £350 payment to support higher living cost pressures in Surrey). As at 2nd April 2024, the total number of arrivals in Spelthorne was 258¹². In some circumstances, the sponsorship relationship broke down or the host was no longer able to accommodate, and the Ukrainian household approached Spelthorne Borough Council for homelessness assistance. Across 2022-2024, a total of 11 households approached the Council for homelessness advice via a Homes for Ukraine sponsorship route and 6 households from a Ukraine family scheme route.

¹² Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2024). Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme: Visa data by country, upper and lower tier local authority. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-visa-data-by-country-upper-and-lower-tier-local-authority>

Resources available to deliver homelessness services

Staffing revenue expenditure

A comparison of our staffing team in 2019 to 2024 is demonstrated in figures 44 and 45.

The Housing Options team at Spelthorne Borough Council has somewhat expanded and shifted over the last five years. This includes the specific creation of a strategy and data hub to improve data quality, lead on initiatives and manage performance of contracts with funded partners. There has also been an expansion to the rough sleeper support outreach team (due to an increase in Rough Sleeper Initiative funding), ensuring a well-resourced first approach team.

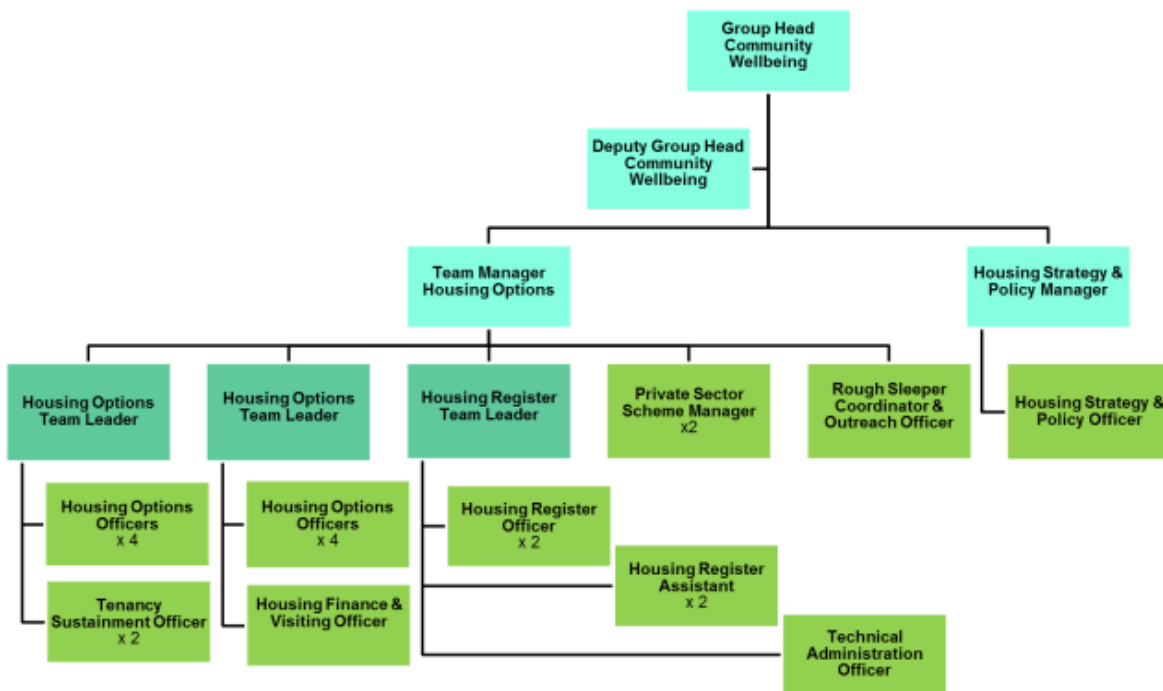


Figure 44: Spelthorne Borough Council Housing Options Staff Structure 2019

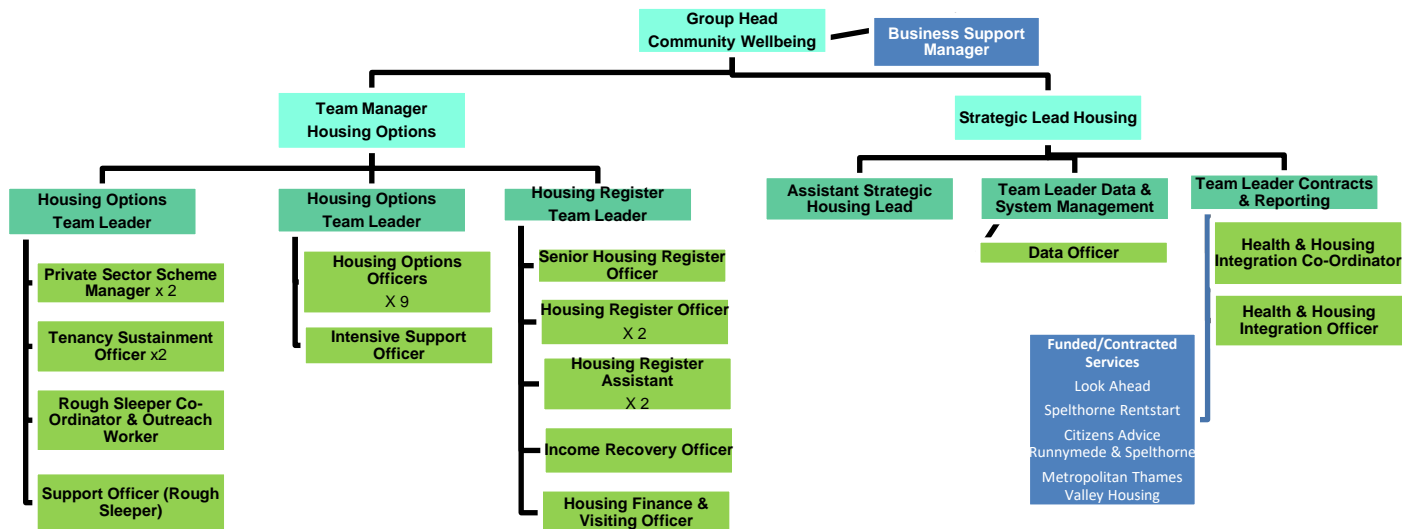


Figure 45: Spelthorne Borough Council Housing Options Staff Structure 2024

Total expenditure related to these costs are displayed in figure 46. This highlights a general increase in expenditure for staff related costs including salaries, insurance, pension, admin costs and essential allowance for home visits. Spelthorne Borough Council has aimed to meet the increasing demand for housing support, advice and assistance by ensuring our ability to deliver a well-structured and effective Housing Options service.

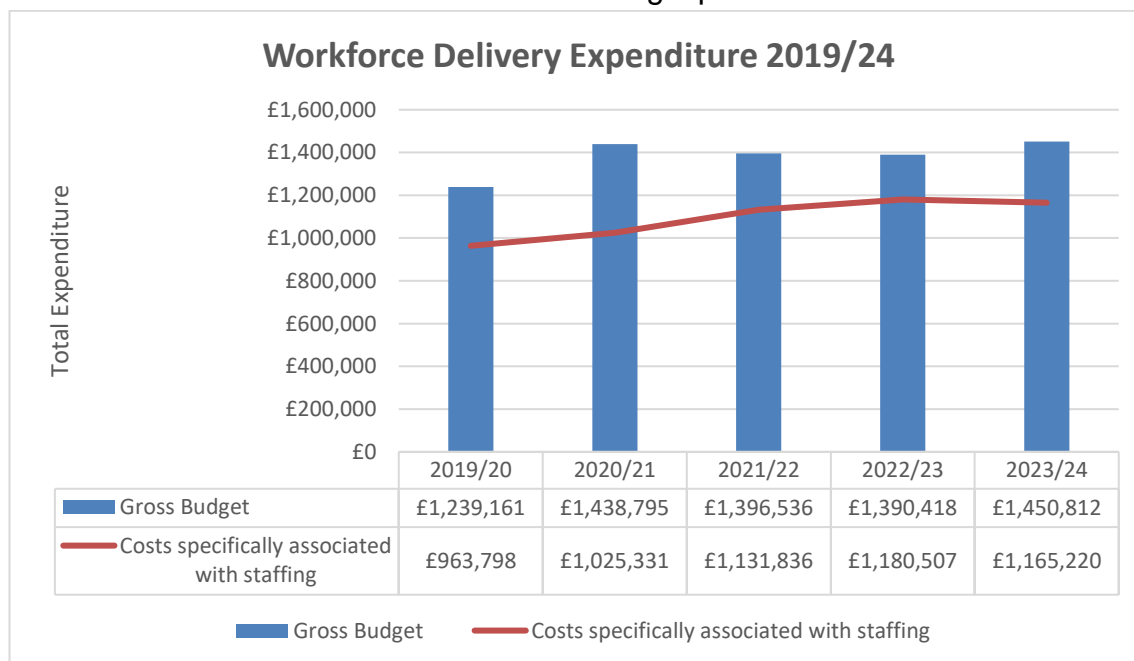


Figure 46: Workforce delivery expenditure for Spelthorne Borough Council Housing Options team 2019-2024

Non-staffing revenue expenditure

Spelthorne Borough Council has also seen a general increase in expenditure on homelessness prevention initiatives. The expenditure in figure 47 was funded using homelessness prevention and flexible support grant funding allocated by central Government.

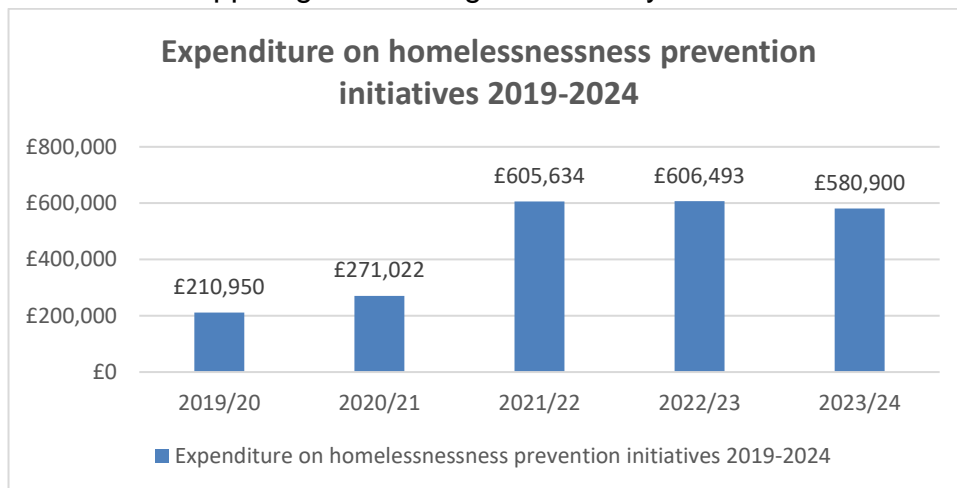


Figure 47: Expenditure on homelessness prevention initiatives in Spelthorne 2019-2024

Expenditure has been used to fund:

- £671,961 for the issue of rent in advance, deposits, rental and mortgage payment support payments, to assist homeless applicants with retaining their existing tenancy or securing new settled accommodation.
- A floating support service via Look Ahead to help residents sustain their tenancies.
- A dedicated Citizens Advice Spelthorne caseworker to provide housing, benefits, employment and accredited debt management advice to residents.
- A contribution towards Spelthorne Rentstart who support homeless single people and couples without children with housing advice and routes into accommodation.
- Furniture costs to enable move-on from emergency accommodation and minimise barriers in accessing accommodation.
- Administrative costs to support effective service delivery, for example, out of hours service, medical advisor to assess vulnerability, legal and court costs, translation services, ad-hoc prevention projects, essential transport and storage costs for clients.
- In 2021/22, £176,322 was granted to A2Dominion to help fund several advice services to support residents following the economic impact of COVID-19. This included 'project breakthrough' which provided tenancy support to those aged 18-30 including employment, skills, and training. Tenancy support was also commissioned for residents aged 50+ to assist with securing employment, training and skills. 'Advice Plus' was also commissioned as a borough-wide drop-in advice service for residents.
- In 2022/23, £100,000 was contributed to costs associated with the delivery of the homeless support schemes at White House and Harper House in Ashford.

Emergency accommodation expenditure

Given the high demand for emergency accommodation, a significant amount of money is spent by Spelthorne Borough Council to secure emergency accommodation for homeless households. Whilst some of these charges are recovered back in the collection of rent, there is still a shortfall which the Council pays for. Figure 48 identifies the total expenditure on emergency accommodation over the last five years. Whilst the figures fluctuate, there has generally been an increase in expenditure compared to five years ago, with a particular increase in 2023/24 due to the cost-of-living crisis.

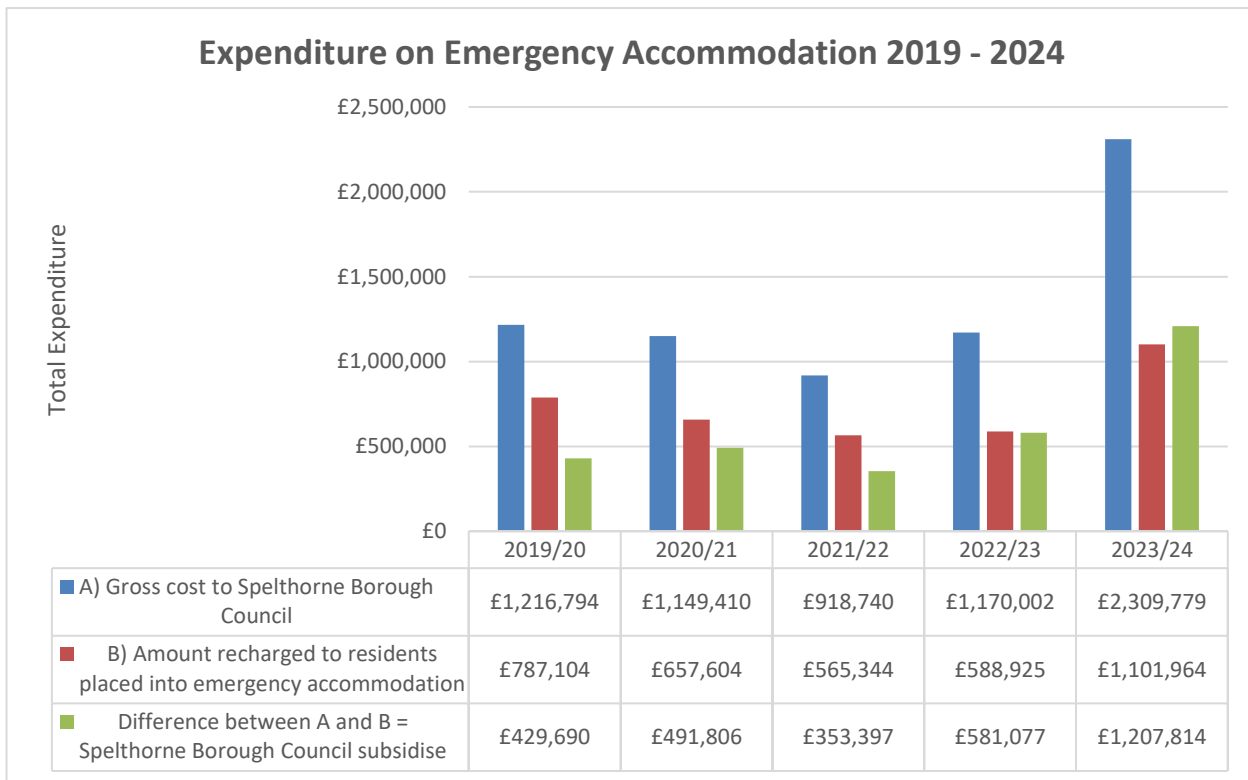


Figure 48: Emergency accommodation expenditure 2019 – 2024

In 2020, the Council sourced additional emergency accommodation to support an increased demand during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was an additional cost of £160,486 across 2020-2024 (£658,981 expenses minus £498,495 rent recovery).

Protection of property

Under section 211(1) and (2) Housing Act 1996 the local authority has a responsibility to ensure that where it has become subject to a duty to a homeless household, they have ensured their possessions are safely stored. Table 9 indicates the total expenditure on reasonable steps taken to prevent the loss or damage to any personal property of homeless households.

Financial Year	Storage expenses directly incurred by Spelthorne Borough Council
2019/20	£1,394
2020/21	£3,108
2021/22	£3,953
2022/23	£4,793
2023/24	£11,723
Total:	£24,971

Table 9: Total storage expenditure for client possessions 2019-2024

Spelthorne Rent Assure

Our privately rented scheme, whilst successful, is also initially costly as we enter into a two year guarantee rent period with the landlord. In the last 5 years, we have committed £3,117,404 up to April 2024. These costs are made up of the total market rents we have offered to pay for a period of 24 months. We collect back rent equivalent to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate and top up the remaining monies to make up the market rent. Therefore, whilst we have committed £3,117,404, providing we collect the full LHA rent back from the tenant, the total cost to the Council to top up these rents is £466,871. This is approximately 13% of the monies we have committed and is significantly lower than the costs that would be incurred by an emergency accommodation placement.

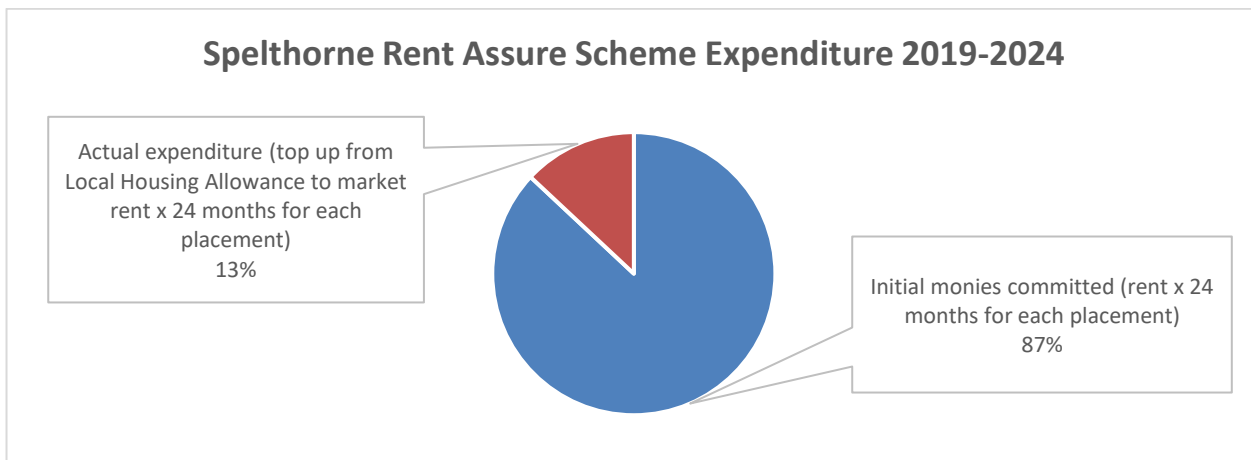


Figure 49: Spelthorne Rent Assure Scheme Expenditure 2019-2024

To ensure the scheme is marketed to landlords, a total of £1,043 has been spent to advertise the scheme and gauge landlord interest through a landlord forum. The scheme also offers the incentive of paying for an inventory by a professional company. These inventory costs have accumulated to £10,690 for all placements in the last 5 years.

As the scheme has been in place for several years now, some expenditure on deposit bond claims have been incurred. As part of the scheme's incentives, landlords are offered a bond deposit equivalent to 5-weeks rent which can be claimed on at the end of the tenancy for tenant damages and repair requirements. In total, £63,799 was spent on claims in the last 5 years.

Partnerships

Joint working is key to earlier intervention of preventing homelessness. Spelthorne Borough Council prides itself in working with its local partners to help reduce the levels of homelessness. To list but a few partnerships, Spelthorne Borough Council demonstrates some of the effective joint working relationships we have achieved so far and hope to continue building.

- **Social Services – e.g. mental health team, adult social care, SAM (Surrey Adults Matter), children's social services, and the family support team.** We have key partnerships to ensure that some of the most vulnerable groups in our society are offered specialist support and assistance. For example, our Family Support team has provided intensive support to 204 families experiencing multiple and complex challenges between 2021-2024. We have open opportunities to communicate with the various social services teams to ensure the wellbeing of households is being upheld when faced with homelessness. The introduction of the 'Duty to Refer' under the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 has also placed greater links between statutory services and the Housing Options team. By attending regular **MARAC** meetings with statutory and voluntary sector agencies, we are more informed about households who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. These meetings allow us to work together to ensure we are offering coordinated support to high-risk cases.
- **Surrey Police and National Probation Service** – By attending regular **MAPPA** meetings, we ensure that we are identifying clients under probation who are threatened with homelessness. These meetings give us deeper insight to the needs of this potentially vulnerable group.
- **Gypsy and traveller support** – to better understand the needs of this community and tailor the type of support we can give, we engage with Surrey Community Action Gypsy Support.
- **Citizens Advice Runnymede & Spelthorne (CARS)** – whilst we can offer limited budgeting advice, CARS are able to offer accredited financial and legal advice.

Spelthorne Borough Council has formed a direct fast track referral service with CARS and has a contract in place.

- **Job Centre Plus / DWP** – we work together to support clients with Universal Credit queries and support applicants into training and employment.
- **Applied Resilience** - if there is an emergency, there will almost certainly be a housing element involved. The applied resilience team have provided training sessions to staff at Spelthorne Borough Council in preparation for an emergency response e.g. to flooding.
- **Look Ahead** – the housing related floating support contract with Look Ahead offer residents tenancy sustainment and community integration support. Look Ahead specialise in delivering support services to those with mental health or learning difficulties. They also deliver assistance to young people and those facing homelessness.
- **Transform Housing** - we have worked with Transform Housing to ensure our cases with more complex needs are assessed for supported housing and are offered the assistance they need or require.
- **Homestart** – We work together to ensure families with young children who are experiencing challenging times are getting the additional support they may need.
- **Rentstart** - we have worked very closely with this charitable organisation for a number of years. Whilst our Rent Assure team mainly focus on supporting families into the private rented sector, Spelthorne Rentstart focus on assisting single people or couples without children. The two teams have run joint landlord forums and keep an open line of communication when new landlords enquiries arise.
- **Salvation Army** - operate a service in the borough of Spelthorne meaning an additional support service is available to help offer tailored assistance for those experiencing homeless. Our rough sleeper support team has worked with the Salvation Army to understand how we can offer a joint outreach service.
- **Children's centres** – By working with local schools in the area, we keep clear lines of communication open to ensure the welfare and well-being of vulnerable children are being monitored and addressed.
- **St Mungo's** - Our rough sleeper coordinator has particularly worked closely with St Mungo's to gain an insight on rough sleeping and the impact it has on overall health and wellbeing. By working together, both parties monitor rough sleeping more closely and work to provide outreach services to this vulnerable group of people.

- **Food banks** – in times of crisis, we complete referrals to local foodbanks in order to help households in a desperate time of need e.g. **Manna, Stanwell Food bank, St Saviours Church, Jubilee, and Surplus to Supper.**
- **Surrey Crisis Fund / Besom Project / Hounslow Furniture Recycling Project / Woking Community Furniture Project** - We work closely with charitable organisations and the Surrey Crisis fund to help clients set up homes with furniture and white goods where no other funds or resources are available for households.
- **Sanctuary Scheme** – Spelthorne Borough Council in partnership with Surrey Police and Citizens Advice Elmbridge (North Surrey Domestic Abuse Outreach Service) offer the sanctuary scheme to provide additional security to victims of domestic abuse where it is appropriate for them to remain in their own homes. The Council work closely with the **North Surrey Domestic Abuse Service (NSDAS)** to support domestic abuse survivors facing homelessness and there is a dedicated housing Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) working locally. In 2023/24, a total of 36 referrals were made to the Sanctuary scheme for Spelthorne residents requiring security measures and a total of 27 referrals were made to the IDVA for support.
- **Housing associations e.g. A2Dominion, PA Housing, Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing, London & Quadrant, Housing21** – As Spelthorne Borough Council does not own its own stock, it aims to work with housing associations that operate in the local area to ensure affordable housing is available. Our allocations team work effectively with the letting's teams of all housing association partners, to ensure that nominations are suitable and that lets are completed efficiently.

In July 2021, Spelthorne Borough Council launched a multi-agency Spelthorne Homelessness Prevention Forum to focus on partnership working, sharing updates and good practice. The forum has enabled us to foster food partnerships with new organisations and sustain existing ones. Clients with lived experience presented at two of our forums in 2022 and 2023 sharing details of their experience and offering direct feedback to service providers.

Contracted Services

We have a robust contract management system in place and within the last 5 years, we've recruited a Contracts and Reporting Team Leader to monitor performance.

White House and Harper House

Spelthorne Borough Council developed two high quality sites:

1. **White House** (opened October 2021) - provides specialist accommodation for single homeless people with multiple and complex needs. The development comprises 27 en-

suite rooms with shared kitchens and four self-contained studio flats. There is also an on-site learning suite / communal space for helping prepare residents for move-on. The communal space can also be utilised for Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP).

- 2. Harper House** (opened January 2022) – provides emergency accommodation for up to 20 homeless families while settled accommodation is found.

Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing (MTVH) are contracted to manage both sites. They provide 24-hour on-site cover for White House and have an on-site presence 10am-4pm daily at Harper House.

From opening in 2021 until 31st March 2024, 30 clients have been successfully supported on from White House and 34 clients from Harper House into settled accommodation. Personalised support plans for clients are drawn up within 48 hours of moving in and are reviewed every 28 days. Support outcomes are measured using the 'Star' model at White House which is underpinned by empowerment, collaboration, and integration.

Step-Down Programme

We are the lead authority for the set-up and management of a step-down project across North-West Surrey. The service delivers an integrated 'wrap-round' intermediate care package to support timely discharge of older residents from acute settings. It's a temporary solution whilst their existing home is made habitable or new accommodation (appropriate to the person's needs) is found. The service also supports any temporary mobility issues and care needs that patients have following discharge from hospital.

The service was initially introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic to free up hospital beds and is a partnership between Spelthorne Borough Council, A2Dominoin, Elmbridge Borough Council, Runnymede Borough Council, The Whitely Homes Trust and Woking Borough Council (Woking withdrew 2 properties from January 2023 but clients are still being supported from Woking into other scheme properties. Apex and Housing 21 are now part of the partnership and replaced the 2 properties). The service is commissioned by the NHS.

In April 2021, the North West Surrey Alliance Board funded a one-year project to fund seven units across North-West Surrey which take place in extra care / sheltered settings. When a patient is medically ready to leave hospital, they may not be able to return to their home if it's not fit for purpose. This can be for many reasons, for example they have been self-neglecting, the property is uninhabitable, or they may need care and support that cannot be delivered in their home. A referral can be made by the Discharge Health Coordinator or Adult Social Care to facilitate a discharge into a temporary step-down unit with either on-site care provided or with a package of care from Adult Social Care. The client is provided with a wrap-around service at one of the units for up to 6 weeks which will look at what support is required in order for them to return home in the most efficient and safe way.

The scheme's accommodation is also used for 'step-up' purposes to prevent hospital admission. For example, where a vulnerable client needs temporary emergency accommodation whilst their home is repurposed or a step-up to reintegrate into the community. This has worked particularly well for patients who were discharged into residential homes during the COVID-19 pandemic and who required support to gain skills for independent living. Consequently, they may have become institutionalised in the 24-hour care setting they were residing in, step-down offers the opportunity to work with the patient and help them to continue living as independently as possible.

In 2022, due to the success of this service and the difference it makes in the community, this initiative was extended indefinitely and expanded to a total of 9 units (6 of which are in Spelthorne).

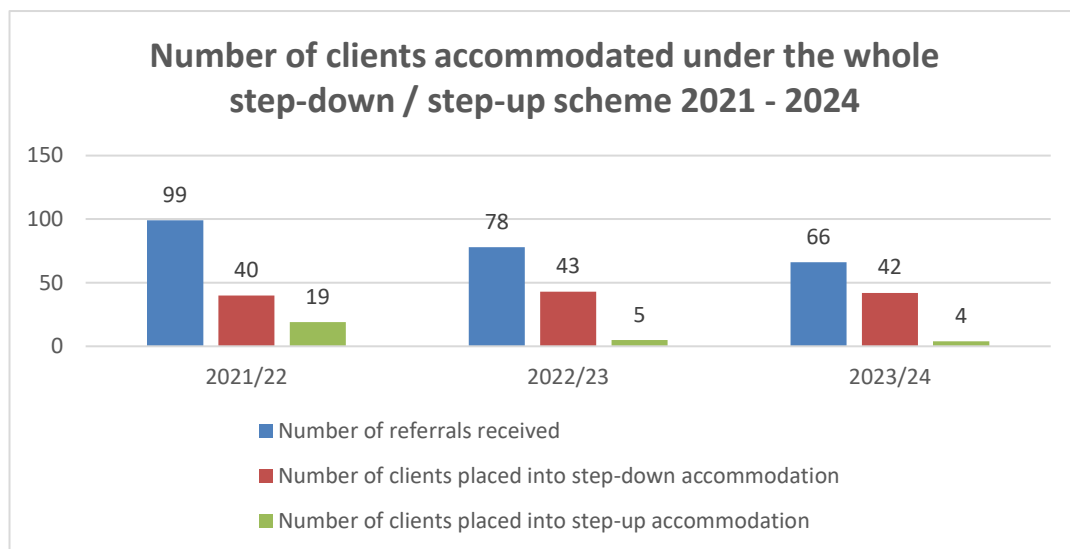


Figure 50: Total number of clients supported into the step-down / step-up scheme 2021-2024

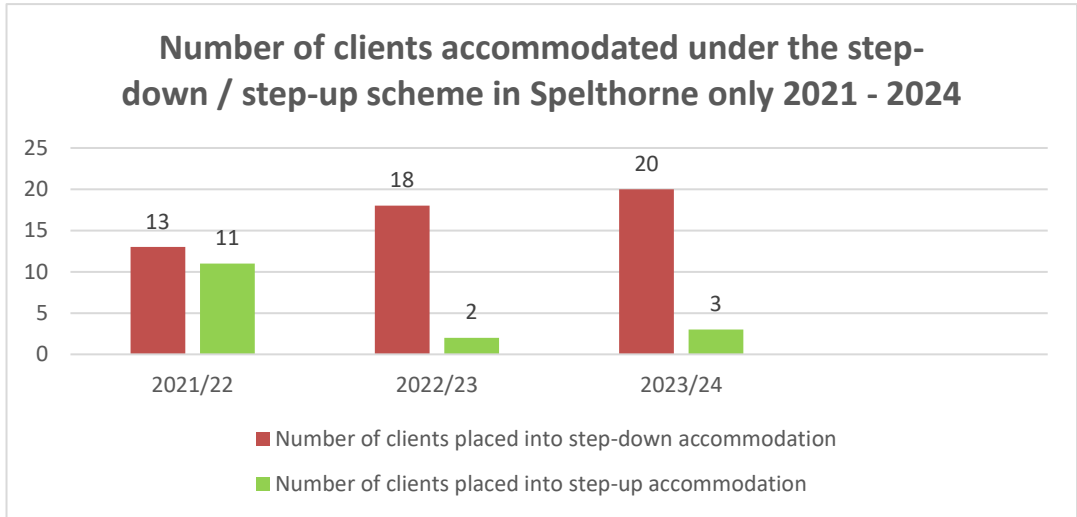


Figure 51: Total number of clients supported into the step-down / step-up scheme in Spelthorne 2021-2024

Browns Community Services

As noted earlier in the review, Spelthorne Borough Council repurposed RSI funding (initially intended for Housing First) to provide an intensive ‘housing led’ support officer who manages a smaller caseload to enable the provision of wrap-around support to clients with multiple and complex needs. Due to the support needs of these clients, we enabled a 24-hour service provision to ensure we maintain engagement and progression with clients. Browns Community Services were appointed as an out of hours contact and additional resource cover from Jan 2023 to March 2024. When the contract ended, the funding was repurposed to provide additional hours to in-house support staff and to cover emergency housing placements.

Look Ahead

Spelthorne Borough Council contribute a proportion of funding with other Surrey local authorities to refer clients for floating support. To create a specific additional resource, Spelthorne Borough Council used an allocation of RSI funding in 2022 for Look Ahead to appoint a specific Spelthorne case worker. The service supports private renters with sustaining their tenancies and assists prison leavers to access the private rented sector. Since the service was implemented from September 2022, a total of 66 residents have received floating support. This includes helping ex-offenders resettle into the community and sustain their tenancy. The housing-related support service have helped to enable service users to live independently as soon as practicable through support plans. These plans include helping clients with financial awareness and budgeting, meaningfully engaging with support services, addressing anti-social behaviour, and preventing re-offending, learning independent living skills and managing both mental and physical health.

Citizens Advice Runnymede and Spelthorne

Spelthorne Borough Council utilises the Homelessness Prevention Fund to provide contract funding to Citizens Advice who deliver advice on housing, benefits, employment and accredited debt management to Spelthorne residents. The Council pays for a specific Spelthorne caseworker to help meet some of the additional local demand. Since 2021, Citizens Advice have supported 7,811 individuals following a referral. There was an upsurge in demand in 2022/23 due to the cost-of-living crisis which consequently led to more residents needing advice and support.

Spelthorne Rentstart

Spelthorne Borough Council provides contract funding to Spelthorne Rentstart to provide private sector housing support to single people and couples without children. Rentstart are able to offer a deposit guarantee scheme to landlords in lieu of cash deposits and provide ongoing tenancy sustainment support to both tenants and landlords. Rentstart Extra was launched in 2018 to provide additional support to clients with multiple and complex needs to enable successful tenancies. As previously noted, Rentstart have successfully assisted a total of 2,056 clients between 2019-2024. Assistance was given through housing advice which was provided to 1,644 clients and an additional 412 were supported into accommodation through the deposit scheme.

Fraud and Financial Investigations (Reigate and Banstead Council)

The Council recognises the continued importance of collaborative working arrangements to help prevent, deter and investigate fraud. We have taken up counter fraud measures including enhanced proactive vetting of Housing Register Applications and a bulk data matching exercise with A2Dominion to target social housing fraud. Counter fraud measures to target illegal sub-letting and other types of social housing fraud contribute to the delivery of wider social benefits, enable more social housing to be available to members of the community who are genuinely in need a of home, lead to a reduction in housing applicant waiting times, and reduce temporary accommodation costs.

Since 2019, a total of 1,978 referrals have been made to the Reigate and Banstead Fraud and Investigations team for enhanced verification checks on applicants nominated for social housing or applicants who have made a homeless application. Figure 52 highlights that 174 positive outcomes were achieved where fraud activity had been detected. In total, this has seen notional savings of £1,098,320 and cashable savings of £3,814.18.

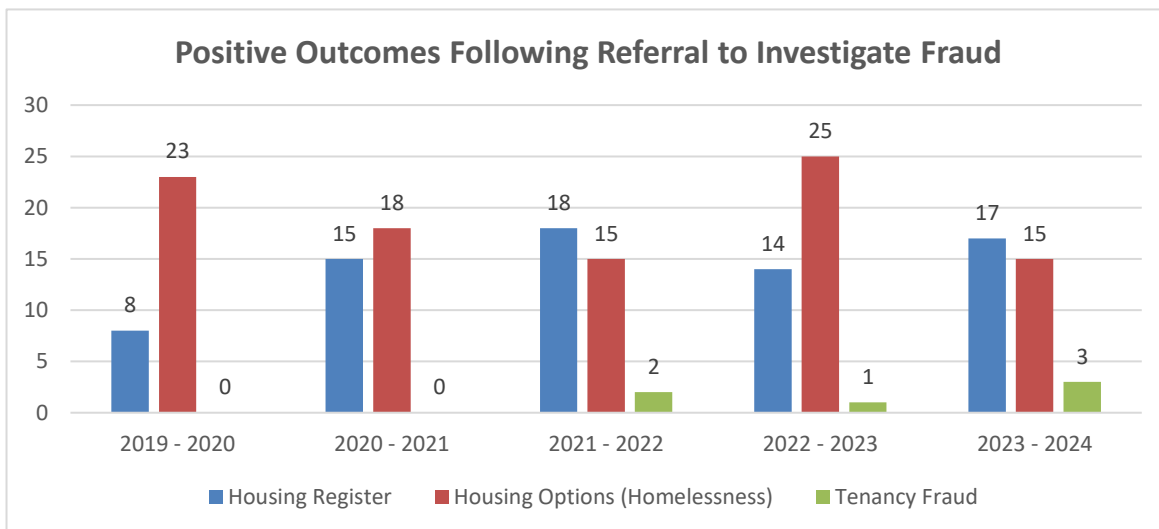


Figure 52: Total number of positive outcomes following fraud investigation referral 2019-2024

Monitoring and review

Strategic Housing Group

Strategic Housing Group (SHG) exists to ensure that Spelthorne Borough Council has a focussed strategic approach on housing matters that ensures the communities housing need is identified and met.

The objectives of SHG are:

- To decide priorities and focus of the group for the coming year.
- Develop strategies for dealing with issues (which may translate into projects to be reviewed).
- To ensure all housing strategies dove tail with other relevant strategies e.g. Asset Management Plan, Capital Strategy, etc.
- Develop and monitor the progress of both the Housing Strategy, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan and monitor the housing element of the Corporate Plan.
- Monitor key areas of concern (such as emergency accommodation and shortage of affordable housing) and make strategic decisions on approaches to mitigate the impact.
- To make decisions on operational matters which impact the delivery of strategic priorities.
- To share information on housing and housing-related issues (including legislation changes).
- To identify and allocate resources to help meet the priorities identified.
- To ensure key politicians and partners are effectively communicated with.
- To receive updates on Knowle Green Estates acquisitions and developments.
- To consider and agree corporate responses to Government consultations which directly or indirectly impact housing.

Membership of SHG includes:

- Deputy Chief Executive (s)
- Group Head Community Wellbeing
- Group Head Regeneration and Growth
- Group Head Assets
- Strategic Housing Lead
- Assistant Strategic Housing Lead
- Housing Options Manager
- Housing Benefits Manager
- Senior Environmental Health Manager
- Accountant (Housing)
- Representative from Legal

Implementation of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy action plan 2020-2025

Looking back at the six strategic priorities that were set out for 2020-25, we have achieved some of our targets, however, we have not been full successful in all. A reminder of these targets is outlined below in table 10.

Strategic priority	Did we accomplish it?
End the use of private sector emergency accommodation.	No - we have not ended the use of private sector emergency accommodation entirely due to increased demand from COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis. We have slightly reduced the number of out-of-borough placements and reduced the average length of time that clients spend in emergency accommodation. We also built White House and Harper House and sourced good quality local temporary accommodation to help us manage the surge in demand.
Reduce the length of stay in temporary accommodation.	Yes – 5 years ago, applicants were spending on average, 44 weeks in emergency accommodation. Over the last 5 years, the average placement has been just over 38 weeks.
Nobody sleeps rough in Spelthorne.	Partly - we have not been able to completely eradicate rough sleeping in Spelthorne. However, we have no entrenched rough sleepers and have recorded as few as zero on our nightly count snapshots. Our rough sleeper support team has been able to ensure low numbers of rough sleepers compared to 5 years ago where we were seeing 2-3 times as many people rough sleeping.
Increase use of the private rented sector for homelessness prevention and relief.	Partly – we have seen a reduction in the number of landlords on our Rent Assure Scheme due to many landlords selling their properties over the last 5 years. However, our homelessness prevention fund has been utilised well to secure move-on accommodation.
Invest in staff training and development in order to improve the customer journey within Housing Options service.	Yes - Several staff members within Housing Options have been able to complete their Chartered housing qualifications and the Council is preparing for the Government's competence and conduct standard requirements. The Housing Options team were successfully shortlisted for 3 awards in 2023 including the Local Government Chronicle award for Housing Project of the Year, The MJ Award for Best Council Services Team, and Affordable Housing Award for Homelessness Project of the Year.
Improve partnership working to prevent and relieve homelessness.	Yes - Several successful homelessness prevention initiatives have been implemented with partners and a multi-agency forum was set-up by the Council. There is robust contract management reporting in place to ensure KPIs are monitored.

Table 10: Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 measure of completion