

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report to Cabinet

30 July 2019

TITLE:	Homelessness Update Report
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Councillor Mike Bowen – Portfolio Holder for Communities
CONTACT OFFICER:	Mary Walker – Head of Customer Services
WARDS INVOLVED:	Non-Specific

Appendices Attached - Appendix A –Supporting Data and Information

1. Reason for the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update following the first year of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, with information relating to implementation and homelessness applications made during 2018/19.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That members note the contents of this report, no decision is required as the report is for information only.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has led to substantial change and significantly extends the statutory duties of local housing authorities.
- 3.2 There has been a substantial increase in homelessness applications (380% HPBC, 190% SMDC) which exceed estimations laid out within the Alliance wide Homelessness Review and Strategy 2018-2022.
- 3.3 The main reasons for homelessness and loss of settled homes are; ending of a private rented tenancy, family exclusion, non-violent relationship breakdown and domestic abuse.
- 3.4 The Act and corresponding support needs data collection brings opportunity for insight into the causes and problems facing people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Facilitating access to appropriate support, including tenancy related support in order to sustain accommodation is a strategic priority. The housing service continues to work with partners in order to mitigate the impact of Universal Credit and promote clear pathways of support

for vulnerable households, particularly those who may be at risk of homelessness.

- 3.5 There has been a longstanding focus on homelessness prevention prior to the implementation of the Act. The outcomes relating to new Prevention and Relief Duties show successful interventions achieved in 54% of Staffordshire Moorlands closed cases with 131 households assisted to retain or secure alternative accommodation. Similarly in High Peak, 60% successful interventions achieved, with 214 households assisted to prevent or relieve their homelessness.
- 3.6 IT based solutions have assisted with the implementation of new duties and caseload management. Internal staffing reviews have led to a new duty rota system and the establishment of two new posts. Partnership development has led to collaborative work to secure grant funding for services to prevent and address homelessness and establish protocols and joint working around homelessness. Commissioning has led to provider services to support customer access to accommodation, with rent bond assistance, pre-tenancy training and enhanced tenancy support availability. Also Call b4 You Serve bespoke landlord service with additional prevention officer capacity to support earlier intervention.
- 3.7 Future considerations include the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee inquiry into the Act and draft Domestic Abuse Bill 2019.

4. **How this report links to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 Contributes to the Corporate Plan 2015-19 aim of helping to create a safer and healthier environment for our residents to live and work.

5. **Options and Analysis**

- 5.1 Recommended - That members note the content of the report and receive further reports from officers at future meetings.

6. **Implications**

- 6.1 Community Safety - (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)
There are no specific implications with this report
- 6.2 Workforce
There are no specific implications with this report
- 6.3 Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment
The report has been prepared in line with Council policies
- 6.4 Financial Considerations
The Council has been awarded MHCLG time limited equivalent three years £68,360 New Burdens funding and £197,101 Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and £6,000 one off Homelessness

Prevention Top Up grant; to support delivery of the Act and homelessness prevention.
MHCLG awarded £9,202 to support upgrade of IT data systems and £3,207 to support HCLIC homelessness monitoring.
Further MHCLG grant funding outlined fig A12 (appendix 1).

6.5 Legal

The Homelessness Reduction Act significantly changes the statutory approach to homelessness and there are a number of additional duties placed upon local authorities.

6.6 Sustainability

There are no specific implications with this report

6.7 Internal and External Consultation

The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act is a Transformation Board project.

MHCLG consultation feedback provided in relation to draft Homelessness Code of Guidance and 'tackling homelessness together: a consultation on structures that support partnership working and accountability in homelessness' and Domestic Abuse questionnaire.

6.8 Risk Assessment

There are no current significant risks to this report.

Mary Walker
Assistant Chief Executive

Web Links and Background Papers

Homelessness Review and Strategy 2018-2022

Location

<https://www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk/article/1349/Housing-Strategy>

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7. Background and Detail

7.1 The Housing Options Service provides housing and homelessness advice and assistance. Households who are assessed as eligible for assistance and homeless or threatened with homelessness fall into our statutory function to take reasonable steps to prevent and/ or relieve homelessness.

7.2 The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 from 3rd April 2018 has led to substantial change and significantly extends the statutory function of local housing authorities. Key changes include;

- Extended definition of 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 days to 56

days.

- Requirements to provide Assessments (considering homelessness circumstances, housing and support needs) and Personal Housing Plans (detailing actions to be undertaken)
- New Prevention Duty - to assist all households who are eligible, threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need, intentionality or local connection.
- New Relief Duty - to take reasonable steps to secure accommodation for eligible, homeless households regardless of priority need or intentionality.

7.3 Homelessness approaches

7.3.1 A substantial increase in homelessness applications (380% HPBC, 190% SMDC) illustrated Fig A1 (Appendix A) reflect the new requirements and exceed estimations laid out within the Alliance wide Homelessness Review and Strategy 2018-2022.

7.3.2 The majority of homeless applicants (62% both authorities) initially owed a Prevention Duty, however over third (36% HPBC, 35% SMDC) approaches owed a Relief Duty, indicating that people are approaching at point of homelessness as opposed to an earlier opportunity.

7.4 Duty to refer

7.4.1 In effect from 1st October 2018, Government introduced a new 'duty to refer' households who may be threatened with homelessness upon specified public bodies, including for instance social services, prisons, health services and Job Centres. There is also discretion for other agencies to refer. During 2018/19 SMDC received 71 referrals and HPBC received 124, as illustrated fig A2 (Appendix A). These referrals led to a significant number of households accessing homelessness assistance and can be attributed specifically to 17% SMDC and 20% of HPBC homelessness applications.

7.5 Causes of homelessness

7.5.1 Fig A3 (Appendix A) considers the main reason for loss of settled home amongst 2018/19 homeless applicants and homeless applicants across England between April 2018 and June 2018. The main reasons for homelessness across the alliance reflect trends across England; however there is higher incidence of non-violent relationship breakdown. As demonstrated in previous years, the main reasons for homelessness during 2018/19;

- End of private rented tenancy (SMDC 20%, HPBC 17%)
- Family no longer willing to accommodate (SMDC 18%, HPBC 22%)
- Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown) (SMDC 18%, HPBC 13%)
- Domestic abuse (SMDC 11%, HPBC 8%)

7.6 Support needs and key information relating to homeless applicants

- 7.6.1 Fig A4 (Appendix A) compares the support needs of homeless applicants within 2018/19 and homeless applicants across England between April 2018 and June 2018. The Act and corresponding support needs data collected as part of Assessments brings opportunity for insight into the causes and problems facing people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Applicants may have more than one support need and have multiple support needs. Overall the support needs of applicants are similar to support needs across England, however the percentage of applicants with physical ill health/disability, at risk or / experienced domestic abuse and history of mental ill health are higher in High Peak. Applicants with complex needs, including substance misuse and mental health, are more challenging to assist and need a more social care or person centred type of approach. This requires increased efforts in partnership with other professionals and suitable options may be more difficult to secure. Facilitating access to appropriate support, including tenancy related support, is key to sustaining accommodation and is identified as a strategic priority within the Alliance wide Homelessness Strategy.
- 7.6.2 The Act provides new legal duties to provide meaningful help to secure accommodation for those homeless or at risk of homelessness, regardless of priority need. Single households are most likely to be non priority need households. Fig A5 (Appendix A) illustrates that single person households are now the predominant household type amongst homeless applicants (SMDC 54%, HPBC 61%).
- 7.6.3 The ethnicity of homeless applicants in fig A6 (Appendix A) shows that the largest ethnic group remains White British, representing 94% across both authorities.
- 7.6.4 Across the Alliance the predominant age range of homeless applicants is 25-35 years as shown in fig A7 (SMDC 36%, HPBC 33%), with homelessness occurring least frequently amongst older 60+ years.
- 7.6.5 Fig A8 shows that 28% SMDC and 29% HPBC homeless applicants employed at the time of approach. 22% SMDC and 26% HPBC on a long term sickness related benefit and 29% approaching capable of work in both authorities. The roll out of digital service for Universal Credit took place June 2018 Staffordshire Moorlands and September 2018 High Peak. From this point, the majority of new claims for housing costs need to claim Universal Credit and existing housing benefit claimant's transfer onto Universal Credit upon reporting a significant change of circumstances. Universal Credit claimants are required to complete a separate claim for Council Tax Reduction. The roll out of Universal Credit is the subject of greatest concern within the Homelessness Monitor 2019, with nearly two thirds of local authorities anticipating a significant homelessness increase as a result. The housing service continues to work closely with DWP, Benefit and Council Tax teams, Citizens Advice and housing providers in order to mitigate the impact of

Universal Credit and promote clear pathways of support for vulnerable households, particularly those who may be at risk of homelessness.

7.7 Temporary accommodation

7.7.1 A duty to provide temporary accommodation exists if households may have a priority need and in cold and extreme weather. The use of temporary accommodation is rising (fig A9), particularly in High Peak, which can be attributed to increasing homelessness applications and households previously found 'intentionally homeless' now under the Act become eligible for temporary accommodation for a longer period of time. The housing service continues to have a focus on minimising temporary accommodation use and securing suitable temporary accommodation options.

7.8 Rough sleeping

7.8.1 Published in August 2018, the governments Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out a strategy to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end rough sleeping by 2027. The most acute form of housing need, rough sleeping is used to describe those that are roofless and bedding down without adequate shelter. Levels of rough sleeping remain low (figs A10 & A11), however work is ongoing to ensure an effective response and outreach service provision (fig A12).

7.9 Outcomes

7.9.1 The Housing Options Service has had a longstanding focus on homelessness prevention prior to the implementation of the Act. The pie charts (figs A13-16) provide detail relating to Prevention and Relief Duty cases closed during 2018/19. As at the end of 2018/19;

- 68% of closed HPBC Prevention cases have a successful outcome, with 146 households assisted to secure existing or alternative accommodation (fig A13).
- 62% of closed SMDC Prevention cases have a successful outcome, with 92 households assisted to secure existing or alternative accommodation (fig A14).
- 47% of closed HPBC Relief cases have a successful outcome, with 68 households assisted to secure alternative accommodation (fig A15).
- 40% of closed SMDC Relief cases have a successful outcome, with 39 households assisted to secure alternative accommodation (fig A16).

7.9.2 Unfortunately it can be difficult to engage homeless applicants in casework, demonstrated in Prevention and Relief Duty cases closed due to 'contact lost'. The data shows that only 9% High Peak and 14% Staffordshire Moorlands Prevention Duty cases escalated to the Relief Duty stage. After Prevention and Relief Duty assistance a small number of cases progress onto Main Duty Decision stage (fig 17). Taken together successful Prevention and Relief Duty interventions achieved in 60% of High Peak cases, with 214 households assisted to retain or secure alternative accommodation. Similarly in Staffordshire Moorlands, 54% successful interventions achieved, with 131 households assisted to prevent or relieve their homelessness.

7.10 Service implementation

7.10.1 Recent Local Government Association research into the implementation of new homelessness duties reported that Councils found increased administration duties detracted from the ability to meet the needs of people at risk of homelessness. IT based solutions have assisted with increased caseload administration over longer time periods, including online enquiry/ application web forms, triage, Assessments, Personal Housing Plans, correspondence, casework management practice (including scheduled reminders and case alerts) and new monitoring requirements.

7.10.2 Internal staffing structure reviews have led to;

- An effective duty rota system, which provides continuity for customers with initial enquiries progressed by point of contact housing adviser and non duty casework days.
- Establishment of two new posts. One supports the implementation of the Act and the roll out of Universal Credit. Another provides Home Options housing register administration, which enables housing advisers to focus on homelessness casework.

7.10.3 The housing service is working to put in place effective prevention tools for customers to access, and staff to utilise, to prevent homelessness situations from escalating.

7.10.4 Partnership development has led to;

- Collaborative working groups to consider services and opportunities to prevent and address homelessness have secured grant funding outlined fig A12.
- Work with key partners to establish protocols and embed prevention and effective joint working around homelessness experienced including children social care, people with care leaver and adult social care needs, hospital discharge and prison release.

7.10.5 A main challenge in preventing and relieving homelessness is the availability of suitable accommodation options, which is identified as a strategic priority within the Alliance wide Homelessness Strategy. Work streams include work with Registered Providers around pre- eviction protocols, making best use of available social and council housing stock with allocation policy review and improving the Private Rented Sector Offer, also identified as a strategic priority within the Alliance wide Homelessness Strategy. Recent developments to improve private sector renting may however impact upon private sector supply. In April Government announced proposals to remove section 21 no-fault evictions. Currently under s21 Housing Act 1988 landlords are able to give 8 weeks notice to leave after a fixed term contract without explanation. From April 2018 landlords are no longer permitted to let homes which do not achieve a minimum energy efficiency rating of Band E. The Tenant Fees Act 2019 recently came into force 1 June 2019 and most of the fees that landlords charge will be banned. Private sector eviction is highlighted as one of the main reasons for homelessness however there are

opportunities to work with the private sector, to incentivise and ensure the sustainability of tenancies.

7.10.6 Commissioning has led to;

- Re-procurement of provider services to support customer access to accommodation, with rent bond assistance, pre-tenancy training and enhanced tenancy support availability.
- Call b4 You Serve bespoke landlord service with additional prevention officer capacity to support earlier intervention.

7.11 **Future considerations**

7.11.1 The Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee are currently conducting an inquiry into the implementation and impact of the Act. They will examine how local authorities have adapted services, additional costs placed on them, outcomes and whether reforms could be made to improve legislation.

7.11.2 On 21 January 2019 government published a draft Domestic Abuse Bill in response to consultation and research. The Bill aims to support victims and their families, pursue offenders and may change approaches to tackling domestic abuse.

Appendix A: Supporting Data and Information

Fig A1: Homelessness Applications

		SMDC	HPBC
2018/19	<i>Not threatened with homelessness within 56 days</i>	11	13
	<i>Threatened with homelessness – Prevention Duty owed</i>	186	274
	<i>Already homeless – Relief Duty owed</i>	105	160
	Total homeless applications	302	447
2017/18	Total homeless applications	104	93
2016/17	Total homeless applications	76	150
2015/16	Total homeless applications	89	129
2014/15	Total homeless applications	92	121

Fig A2: Homelessness Referrals

	HPBC	SMDC
Adult Secure Estate (prison)	1	1
Adult Social Services	12	5
Armed Forces / Veteran Support Service	2	0
Children's Early Help services / Children's Centres	0	1
Children's Social care	2	6
Community Rehabilitation Company	0	1
Debt Advice Agency	35	1
DWP – Jobcentre Plus	12	3
Families Intervention Programme	0	3
Further Education College	1	1
GPs	0	1
Hospital A&E or in-patient	1	1
Housing benefit /Welfare Assistance Service	0	2
Housing related (floating) support provider	33	16
Mental Health Service – Acute in-patient	3	2
Mental Health Service – Community based	5	4
National Probation Service	2	1
Other local authority service	0	4
Other service provider (not housing related)	1	5
Police	1	0
Private landlord	3	0
Private Registered Provider (Housing Association)	1	4
Refuge provider	4	0
Street Services for rough sleepers	1	1
Substance Misuse Treatment Service	0	3
Supported housing provider	4	5
Total	124	71
Resulting in homelessness applications	89	50

Fig A3: Main reason for loss of settled home

	SMDC - count	SMDC % of applicants	HPBC - count	HPBC % of applicants	England % of applicants
Domestic abuse	33	11%	37	8%	8%
End of private rented tenancy	59	20%	81	17%	24%
End of social rented tenancy	9	3%	12	3%	6%
Eviction from supported housing	4	1%	7	2%	0%
Family no longer willing or able to accommodate	55	18%	99	22%	18%
Fire or flood / other emergency	2	1%	4	1%	0%
Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	13	4%	26	6%	4%
Left HM Forces	0	0%	1	0%	0%
Left institution with no accommodation available	0	0%	7	2%	1%
Mortgage repossession	7	2%	3	1%	1%
Non-racially motivated / other motivated violence or harassment	3	1%	3	1%	2%
Property disrepair	2	1%	4	1%	0%
Racially motivated violence or harassment	0	0%	1	0%	0%
Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown)	54	18%	56	13%	7%
Other	49	16%	86	19%	25%
Not specified	12	4%	20	4%	

Fig A4: Support needs of homeless applicants

	Access to education, employment or training	Alcohol dependency needs	At risk of/has experienced abuse (non-domestic abuse)	At risk of/has experienced domestic abuse	At risk of/has experienced sexual abuse/exploitation	Care leaver aged 18-20 years	Care leaver aged 21+ years	Drug dependency needs	Former asylum seeker
SMDC - count	3	12	6	29	8	4	3	9	0
SMDC % of applicants	1%	4%	2%	10%	3%	1%	1%	3%	0%
HPBC - count	5	30	12	72	18	13	6	28	0
HPBC % of applicants	1%	7%	3%	16%	4%	3%	1%	6%	0%
England % of applicants	4%	4%	3%	9%	2%	1%	1%	5%	1%

	History of mental health problems	History of repeat homelessness	History of rough sleeping	Learning disability	Offending history	Old age	Physical ill health and disability	Served in HM Forces	Young parent requiring support to manage independently
SMDC - count	37	10	6	8	6	4	43	4	2
SMDC % of applicants	12%	3%	2%	3%	2%	1%	14%	1%	1%
HPBC - count	124	29	26	29	28	12	100	8	5
HPBC % of applicants	27%	6%	6%	6%	6%	3%	22%	2%	1%
England % of applicants	22%	7%	6%	4%	7%	1%	14%	1%	1%

Fig A5: Homeless applicant household type

	SMDC	HPBC
Childless Couple	21	11
Family with Children	115	158
Non-cohabiting Couple	3	3
Single person	163	275

Fig A6: Ethnicity of main applicant

	SMDC	HPBC
Any other Asian background	1	1
Any other ethnic group	2	0
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background	0	1
Any other White background	4	4
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	0	2
Don't know / refused	6	5
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian	2	1
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African	1	1
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean	0	4
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	283	421
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	2	0
White: Irish	1	7

Fig A7: Age of main applicants

Age range	SMDC	SMDC %	HPBC	HPBC %
16-17	5	2%	2	0%
18-24	52	17%	110	25%
25-35	110	36%	147	33%
36-44	62	21%	75	17%
45-59	57	19%	80	18%
60-64	8	3%	15	3%

65-74	4	1%	13	3%
75+	4	1%	5	1%

Fig A8: Employment status of main applicant

	SMDC	SMDC %	HPBC	HPBC %
At home/not seeking work (including looking after the home or family)	22	7%	32	7%
Don't know / Refused	23	8%	19	4%
Full-time student	6	2%	5	1%
Not registered unemployed but seeking work	24	8%	17	4%
Not working because of long term sickness or disability	67	22%	114	26%
Other	21	7%	31	7%
Registered unemployed	41	14%	79	18%
Retired (including retired early)	12	4%	19	4%
Training Scheme / apprenticeship	1	0%	1	0%
Working: 30 hours a week or more	45	15%	67	15%
Working: less than 30 hours a week	40	13%	63	14%

Fig A9 Number of households in temporary accommodation (performance indicator)

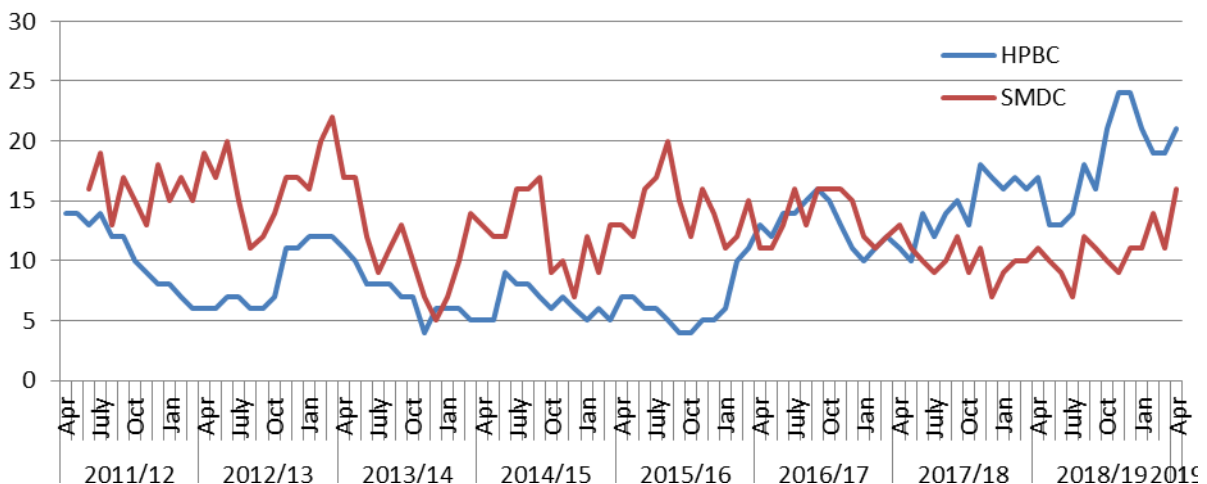


Fig A10: Annual rough sleeper counts and evidence based estimates

	HPBC figure and (per 1,000 households)	SMDC figure and (per 1,000 households)	East Midlands figure and (per 1,000 households)	West Midlands figure and (per 1,000 households)	England figure and (per 1,000 households)
2018	1 (0.02)	2 (0.05)	358 (0.18)	420 (0.18)	4677 (0.20)
2017	3 (0.07)	1 (0.02)	313 (0.16)	295 (0.12)	4751 (0.20)
2016	1	2	255	289	4134
2015	3	4	208	249	3569
2014	2	2	193	186	2744

Fig A11: Rough sleeping referrals

		2015	2016	2017	2018
Referrals received	SMDC	19	7	4	6
	HPBC	2	3	10	6
Leading to contact	SMDC	6	0	2	4
	HPBC	0	1	6	5

Fig A12: Grant funding secured to prevent and address homelessness

Funding programme	Partners	Key elements	Total funding secured
MHCLG 2018/20 Domestic Abuse Fund	Staffordshire North bid including SMDC, with SOTCC, NBC & ARCH (North Staffs) Ltd	Ensure Moorlands refuge bed spaces are not reduced (from Oct 2018 County wide core funding no longer funds refuge accommodation based provision). Maintain Moorlands refuge based specialised support for children and young people. Enhance accommodation with additional 2x2bh in each authority for families with complex needs/ male dependents. Domestic Abuse Advocate role; to support housing advice teams across authorities with training, Assessments, PHPs and timely access to appropriate accommodation and support.	£139,998
	DCC covering HPBC	Enable High Peak refuge providers to maintain accommodation and enhance support services. Derbyshire wide basis –support the Derbyshire domestic abuse phone line and add Police resource to allow for earlier targeting/ engagement in order to reduce escalation of domestic abuse to further higher risk incidents and crimes.	£529,799
MHCLG Private Rented Sector Access Fund	Derbyshire authorities including SMDC & Nottingham authorities	Extend Call B4 You Serve services across the authority areas and provide 3 homeless prevention officer posts to support and funding pot to provide one off homeless prevention payments.	£226,000
MHCLG Rough Sleeping Cold Weather Fund	HPBC	Assist with provision of new temporary accommodation (1x2b, 1x3b)	£12,085
	SMDC	Assist with provision of new temporary accommodation (1x4b)	£4,961
MHCLG Rough Sleeper initiative	Derbyshire authorities including SMDC	Across the authority areas; 2x rough sleeper co-ordinators, 5x street outreach workers.	£250,000

Fig A13: HPBC reason Prevention Duty ended within 2018/19

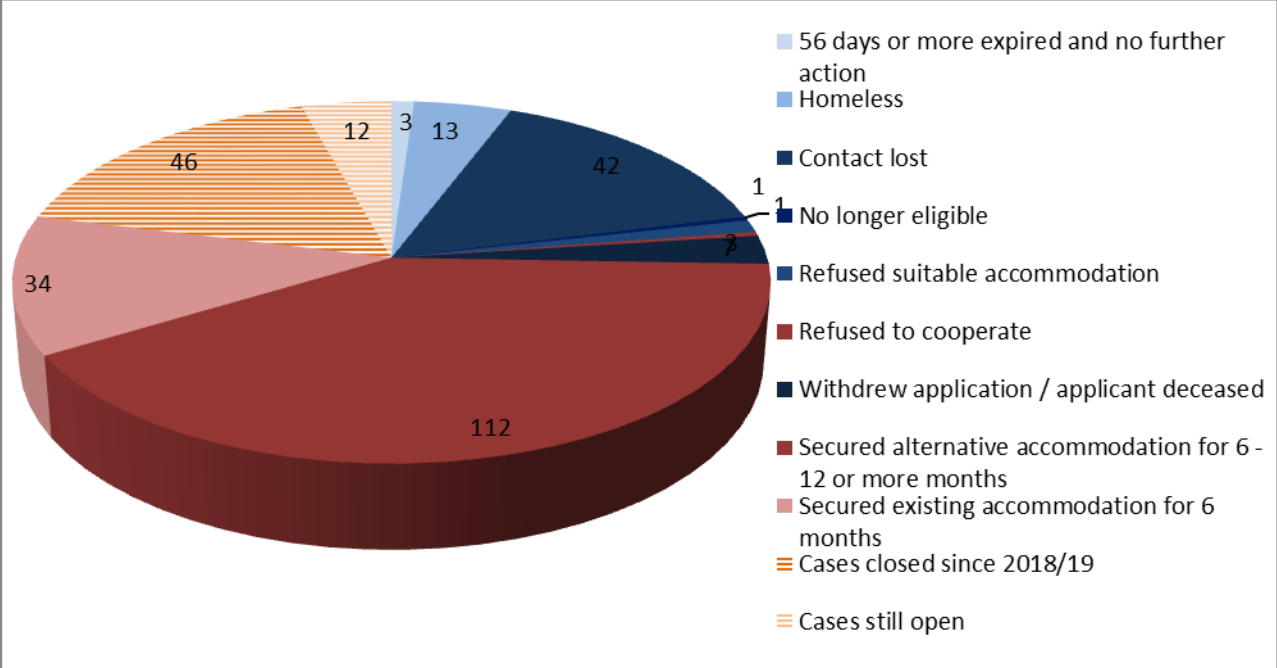


Fig A14: SMDC reason Prevention Duty ended within 2018/19

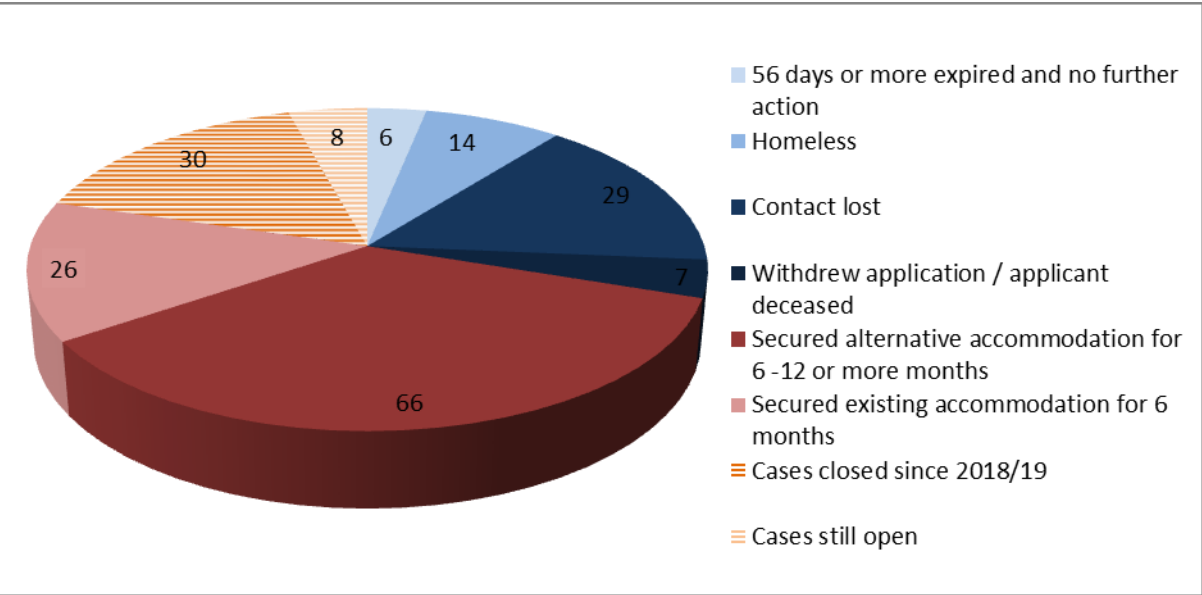


Fig A15: HPBC reason Relief Duty ended within 2018/19

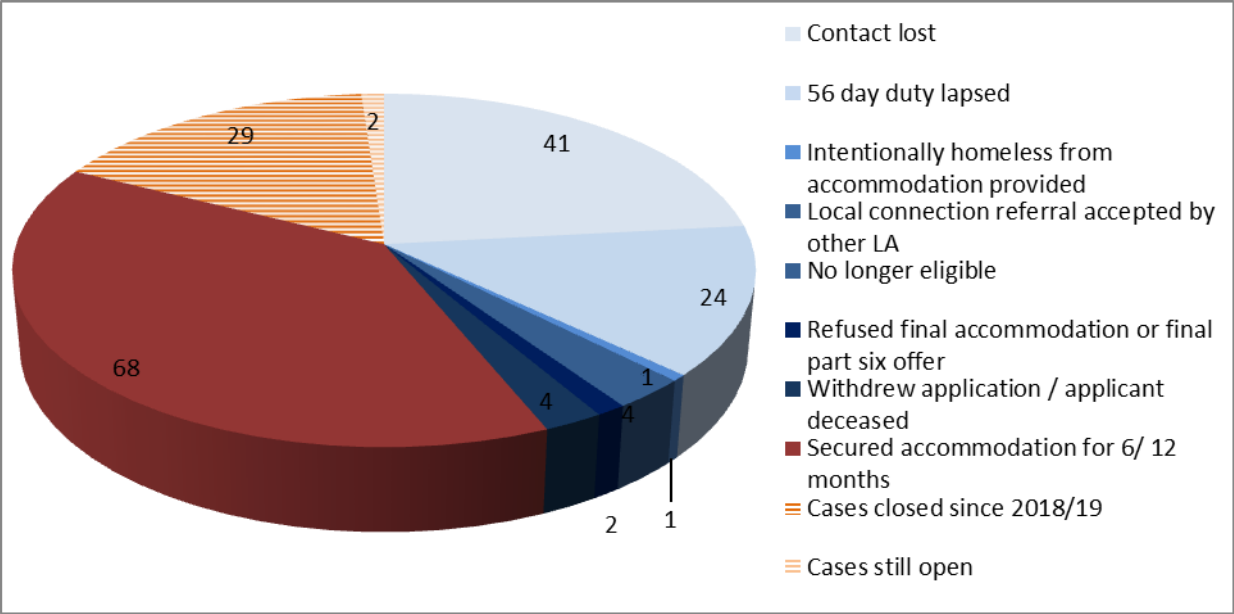


Fig A16: SMDC reason Relief Duty ended within 2018/19

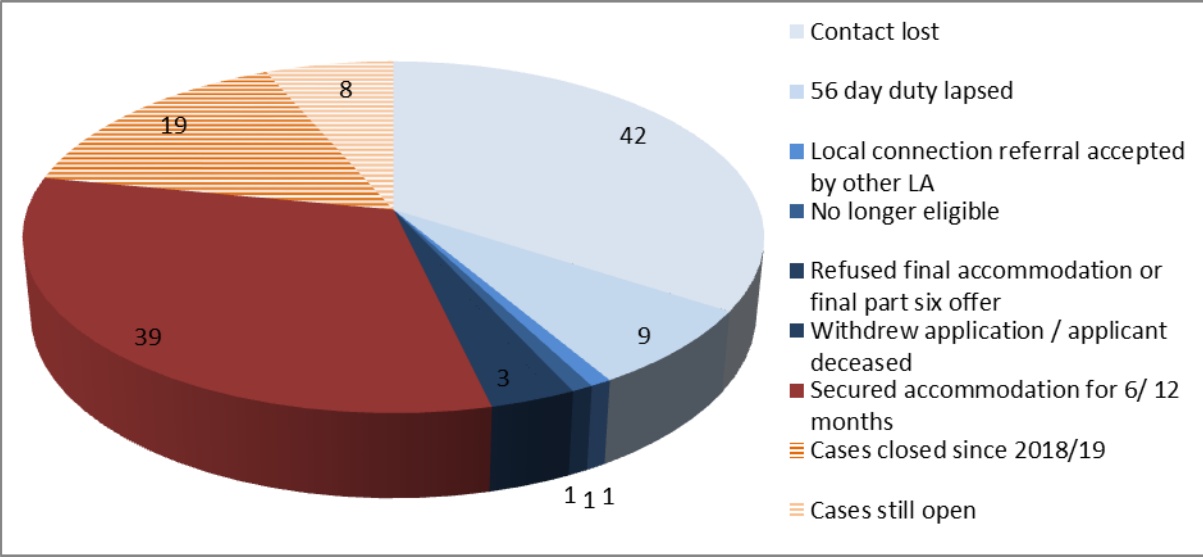


Fig A17: Main Duty decisions within 2018/19

	SMDC	HPBC
Homeless + no priority need	4	11
Homeless + priority need + unintentional	3	12
Homeless + priority need + intentionally homeless	1	2
Lost contact prior to assessment	1	1
Not homeless	0	1
Total decisions 2018/19	9	27

