



South Derbyshire Homelessness Review 2020 Executive Summary

Report for
**South Derbyshire
District Council**

November 2020

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires every local authority to carry out a review of homelessness every five years, to develop and publish a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy based on this review and to consult with other local statutory and voluntary organisations.

Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping is a key priority for South Derbyshire District Council and its partner organisations. The comprehensive Homelessness Review will provide a sound evidence base to inform the Authority's Homelessness Strategy. The homelessness review will provide a basis for a strategic approach to prevent homelessness and provide the services to support and accommodate those in housing need.

This Executive Summary provides an outline of the main findings of the review, an analysis of future trends and identifies key issues for the Strategy to address.

1.2 South Derbyshire's Approach

Whilst South Derbyshire District Council as part of its statutory duty has produced this document, it is not simply a review of the services provided by the Council. There are multiple and complex issues that can cause homelessness, therefore in compiling this review, Homeless Link together with the Council has worked closely with a variety of other statutory and voluntary agencies to gain a detailed understanding of homelessness across South Derbyshire.

The review is a multi-agency document, which recognises that partnership working is key to preventing homelessness and developing sustainable housing and support solutions.

1.3 Methodology

The homelessness review is required to cover:

- An analysis of the past, current and future levels of homelessness
- An audit of the services aimed at preventing, accommodating and supporting people who are or may become homeless
- A review of the resources available to spend on homelessness within the District

The review process has drawn upon a wide range of sources, including homelessness statistics, H-CLIC data, outreach data, and a series of consultation exercises.

There are many complex issues that can give rise to homelessness, many of which are outside the scope of the Local Authority. Therefore, in compiling this review, the Council has worked closely with a variety of other statutory and voluntary agencies.

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Consultation with staff, partners and customers was critical to the review process, and will continue to inform the development of the strategy and improvements to existing Council services. We have consulted extensively with service users and stakeholders through a range of methods to ensure that the Review directly reflects the experiences of those who have been homeless and those working in the sector.

2. Homelessness in Figures

638 approaches to the Housing Solutions Service in 2019/20	318 homeless assessments in 2019/20	Domestic Abuse was the main cause of homelessness
64% of people had a support need	Mental health is the most prevalent support need	56% of households are families with children
64% of people had their homelessness successfully prevented	64% of people had their homelessness successfully relieved	The majority of clients were helped by accessing social housing
152% increase in annual temporary accommodation placements over the last 3 years	816 households on the Housing Register	44% of people on the Housing Register need 1 bedroom accommodation

Change above to infographics

2.1 Demand on the Housing Options Service

- Over the last two years there have been approximately 630 approaches to the service annually.
- The majority (81%) of clients approach the service in person
- Approximately 50% of all approaches are for advice and assistance only; the remaining 50% were homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

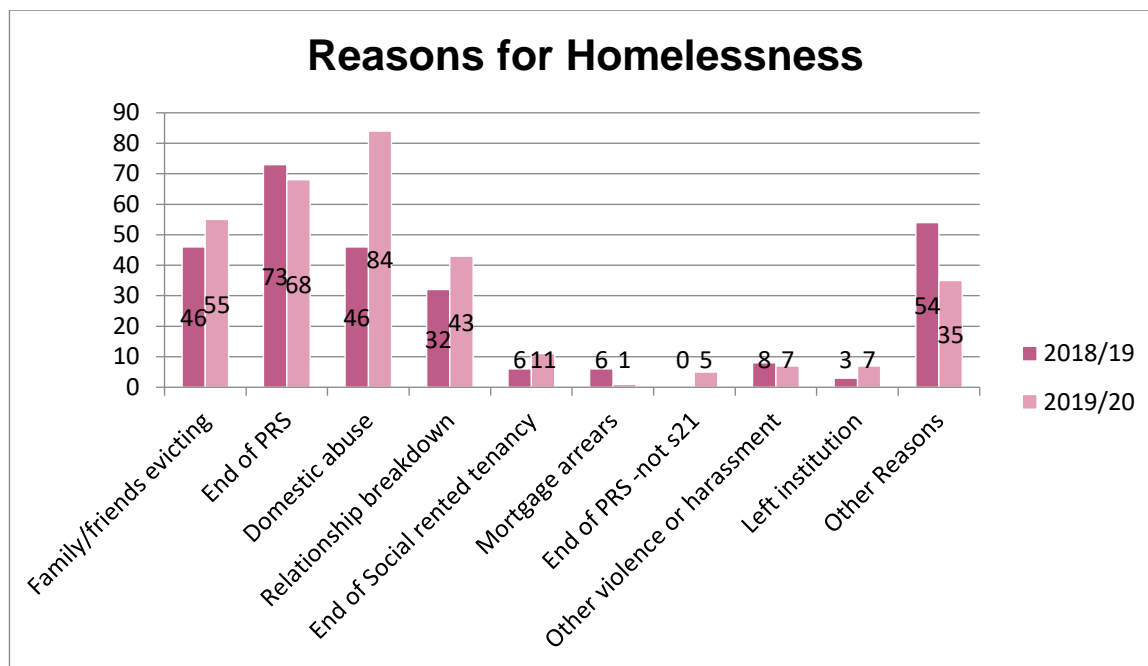
Consideration should be given as to how demand can be more effectively managed, and resources focused on cases where there is a threat of homelessness.

2.2 Profile of Homelessness

- Of those owed a duty in 2019/20 a higher percentage of clients were owed a relief duty (55%) than a prevention duty (45%), suggesting that work may need to be done to encourage clients to access the service earlier to enable opportunities for prevention to be maximised.
- In total singles account for 38% of all households owed a prevention or relief duty, and families with children account for 56%.
- 64% of clients had a support need
- The most frequently occurring support need is mental health. Other frequently occurring support needs include physical ill health, and domestic abuse.

There is a need to raise awareness of the service with customers and partner agencies to encourage clients to access the service at an earlier point in order for opportunities for early intervention and homeless prevention to be maximised.

2.3 Reasons for Homelessness



Source: MHCLG HCLIC data

- The main reason for homelessness in 2019/20 was due to domestic abuse accounting for 26% of all cases, followed by end of private rented accommodation (21%), family/friends no longer willing to accommodate (17%) and non violent relationship breakdown (14%).
- Homelessness due to domestic abuse increased by 45% between 2018/19 and 2019/20.
- There are low levels of evictions from social housing

There is a need to ensure that there is a range of prevention tools in place targeted at the main causes of homelessness.

2.4 Prevention and Relief Outcomes

- Homelessness was successfully prevented for 64% of households threatened with homelessness, which is above the national average of 58.5%
- Homelessness was successfully relieved for 64% of households who were homeless, which is above the national average of 43%.
- The service is more successful at helping households to secure alternative accommodation (89%) than enabling them to remain in their existing accommodation (11%).

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- The majority of prevention and relief outcomes were achieved by accessing social housing. There was some success in accessing private rented accommodation.
- Housing Associations assisted the Council considerably in achieving prevention and relief outcomes.
- There is a heavy reliance of social housing when preventing and relieving homelessness.

There needs to be an increased focus on helping people to maintain their existing accommodation.

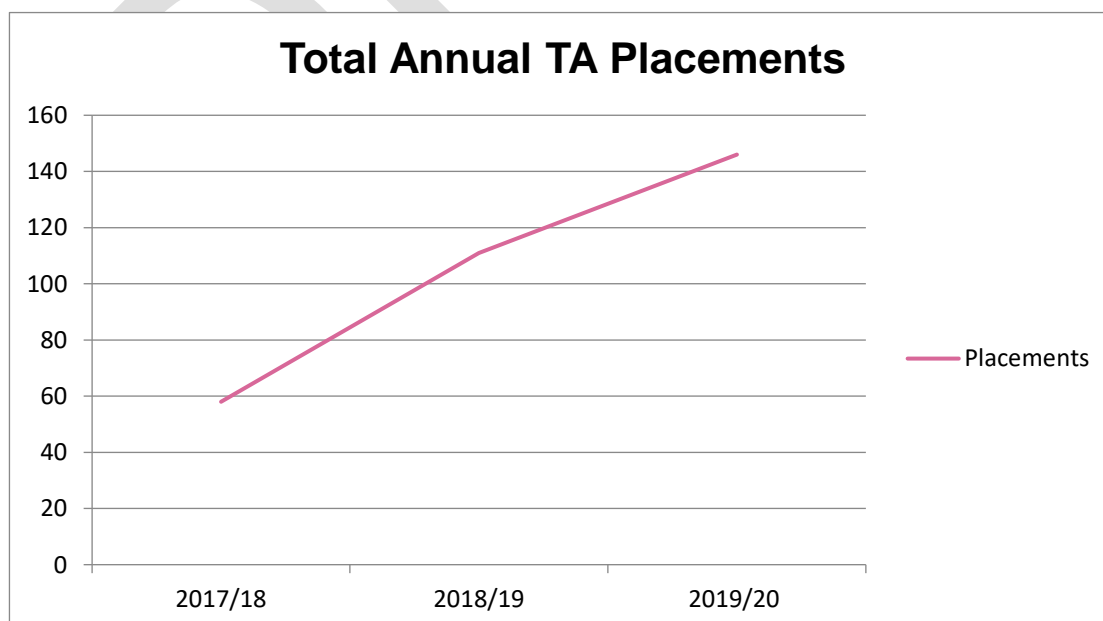
The Council needs to make better use of the private rented sector for preventing and relieving homelessness.

2.5 Main Duty Decisions

- In 2019/20 of the original 318 households owed a prevention or relief duty 37 households (12%) went on to have a main duty decision.
- Of the total 318 households 25 households (8%) went on to have the main S193 duty owed. This is a positive and indicates that prevention and relief work is successful.
- For those households owed the main homeless duty, the majority had the duty discharged through an offer of social housing under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996.

There may be an opportunity to increase the use of private rented accommodation to enable the Council to successfully discharge its duty and move households out of temporary accommodation.

2.6 Temporary Accommodation



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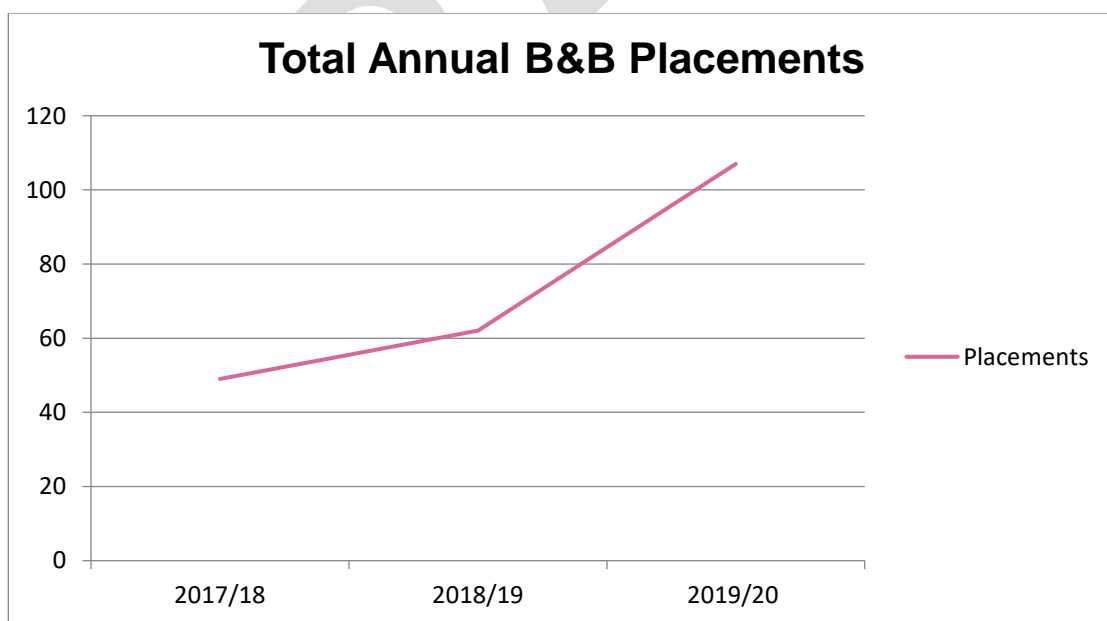
Source: South Derbyshire Housing Options

- There was a 152% increase in the number of annual TA placements over a three year period.
- Between 2018/19 and 2019/20 there was a 32% increase in the total number of annual placements,
- The average length of stay in temporary accommodation increased in 2019/20 to 97 days.
- While an increased focus on homeless prevention should help to stem the flow of new households into temporary accommodation, the impact of the global pandemic is likely to lead to a rise in homelessness and potentially temporary accommodation.

There is a need for an increased focus on move on from temporary accommodation.

There is a need to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of temporary accommodation, of the right type and in the right place. This will be essential to avoid the high use of B&B.

There is a need to fully understand the current and future demand for temporary accommodation through a detailed temporary accommodation review, which will also consider an options appraisal for future delivery and management arrangements



Source: South Derbyshire Housing Options

- The number of annual B&B placements has increased by 118% over the three year period.
- The average length of stay for all households in B&B was just under 3 weeks in 2019/20.

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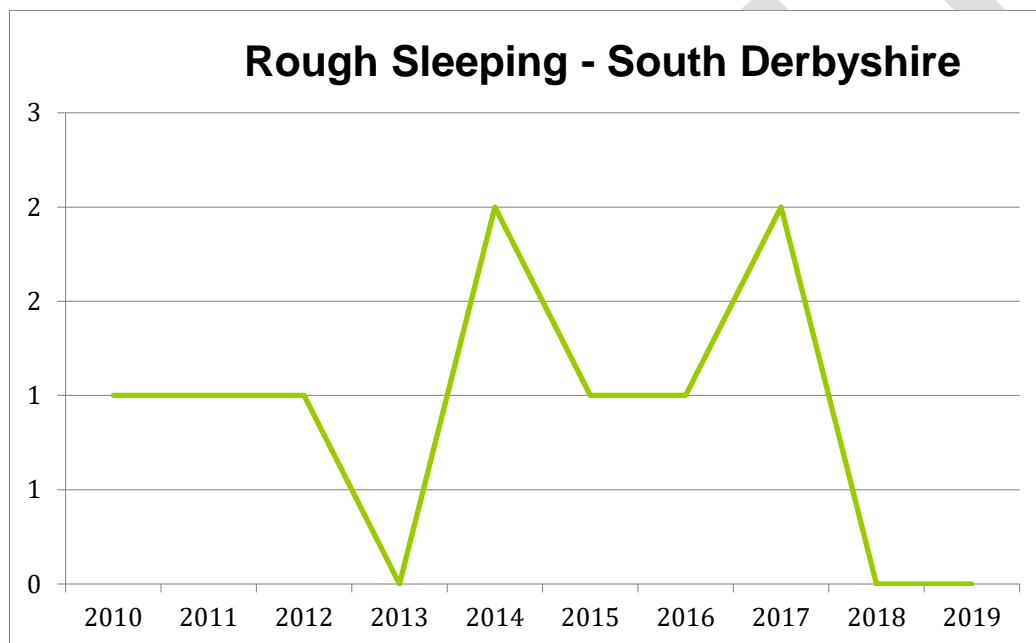
- Homeless households raised concerns in relation to the upheaval that a stay in B&B caused including moves between multiple B&B accommodation premises, lack of cooking facilities and difficulty getting children to school.

There is a need to source alternative emergency accommodation that provides self-contained provision.

2.7 Rough Sleeping

Rough sleeping levels are low in South Derbyshire, although it is recognised that homeless and rough sleeping can be more hidden in rural areas.

Each Authority is required to submit an official figure of numbers of rough sleepers found per year or to submit an estimate, on a typical night. The graph below details the number of rough sleepers found/estimated since 2010.



Source: MHCLG Rough Sleeping Data

- While rough sleeping remains low across South Derbyshire the outreach service has seen an increase in outreach contacts during the summer of 2020.

2.8 Issues specific to South Derbyshire

- The scale of hidden homelessness across South Derbyshire is unknown but is considered to be a significant issue.
- There is a small, but significant number of clients with very complex needs who repeatedly become homeless. The existing accommodation options do not meet their multiple needs.
- There is a need to explore alternative options for meeting the needs of these clients, including Housing First.

3. Homelessness Prevention and Support Services

3.1 Housing Solutions Service

- While the service is very focused on achieving sustainable and person-centred customer solutions, the demand on the services, operational practice and available resources has meant that the service has become largely reactive, with limited opportunities for early intervention and prevention.
- A number of posts within the service are grant funded; lack of long term funding security presents challenges in terms of recruitment and staff retention.
- An increasing number of customers contact the service when they are already homeless or homelessness is imminent. Where customers do present when threatened with homelessness limited capacity within the team means that prevention and early intervention work can be limited
- The service is seeing an increased complexity of need amongst customers.

A more detailed operational review of the Housing Solutions Service would help to understand what resources are needed to manage demand and how improved customer outcomes can be achieved.

Work is needed to ensure that homelessness is not seen as the route to access social housing this would involve managing customer expectation and ensuring the allocations policy promotes planned moves

Learning from how services have been delivered through the pandemic can inform how services can evolve to better meet demand including through the increased use of technology and telephone assessments

- The rural nature of the district presents challenges in both service delivery, and also being able to find sustainable and affordable housing options in areas that clients have a connection with.

Moving forward the services needs to have a greater focus on prevention and early intervention including those that enable clients to keep their existing accommodation.

There is a need to develop a joint protocol with Housing Management and other social landlords with the opportunity to learn from good practice.

There is a need to ensure that prevention tools are targeted at these main causes.

- **Domestic Abuse**

Timely access to a range of options, including emergency provision and support, floating support, planned moves, taking action as a landlord against perpetrators and target hardening may assist in helping to prevent and resolve homelessness.

- **Loss of Private Rented Accommodation**

There is a need to ensure that there is a much more targeted approach to preventing people losing their home in the private rented sector. Both landlords and tenants need to be able to access immediate support and advice as soon as difficulties arise in the tenancy. Landlord and tenant liaison/mediation alongside a dedicated resource to resolve any difficulties at the outset will provide an important prevention tool.

- **Family/Friends Evicting**

There is also a need to ensure a much more targeted and pro-active response for households who are being asked to leave by family or friends. Effective and timely mediation, together with home visits or virtual online meetings using Zoom/Teams, and planned moves into alternative accommodation should be introduced. Ensuring that the Allocations Policy supports planned moves can assist in reducing homelessness due to family eviction.

- **Non-violent Relationship Breakdown**

Access to mediation and relationship counselling services may assist in preventing homelessness, and buying time to enable planned moves into alternative accommodation.

There is a need to develop a competitive landlord offer to increase access to the private rented sector for Housing Solution's clients.

There is a need to update the website to increase the amount of information and advice available to customers increasing the amount of self help information available and potentially reducing the demand from advice only cases.

The Housing Management service is very focused on homeless prevention and achieving sustainable tenancies.

3.2 Other Services

- There is a wide range of services across South Derbyshire that provides an array of advice and support services.
- South Derbyshire District Council effectively responds to gaps in provision by commissioning new services using innovative funding approaches.
- The P3 Homeless Prevention Service is an essential service in meeting the increasing need for support with mental health for clients who are threatened with homelessness.
- Predicated increases in homelessness linked to Covid are likely to place increased pressure on many of these services.

3.3 Covid

In anticipation of the impact of the pandemic on homelessness levels there is a need to:

- Ensure that there are sufficient resources in place to manage any increase in demand.
- Ensure that easily accessible information is available on the Council's website for both private landlords, tenants and home-owners detailing all of the support and help available in relation to arrears
- Ensure an adequate prevention fund in place to cover private rent arrears linked to lost earnings due to Covid-19
- Ensure that there is an increase in the availability of specialist income and money advice teams
- Put in place a local publicity campaign to ensure that tenants, landlords and home-owners are aware of the assistance available, including through social media.

4. Settled & Supported Accommodation

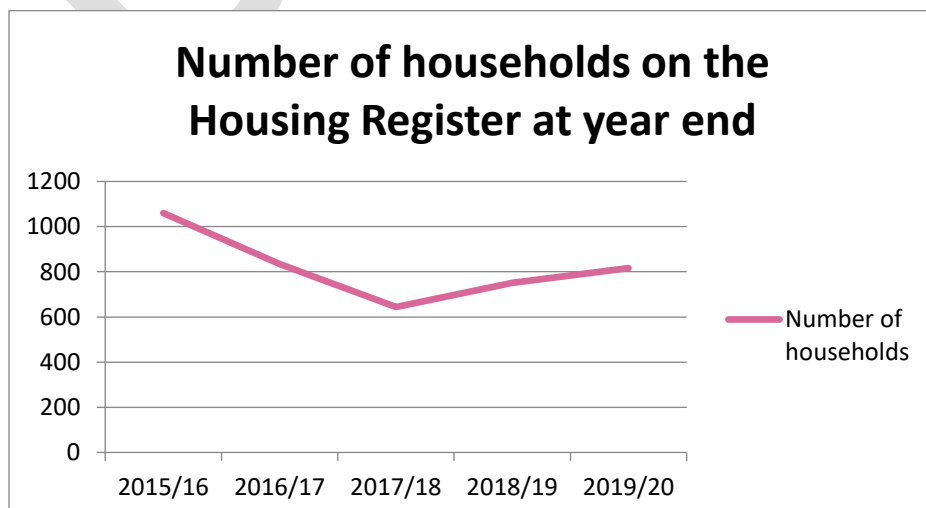
4.1 Supported Accommodation

- The hostel managed by P3 is an important resource in meeting the needs of single homeless people, however the way in which it is funded means that there is no funded support to meet the needs of clients with the highest support needs.
- There is a gap in provision for meeting the accommodation and support needs of the most complex clients with multiple needs.
- Housing First is a potential solution to meeting this gap, but will require a commitment from a range of key partners to ensure it's success.

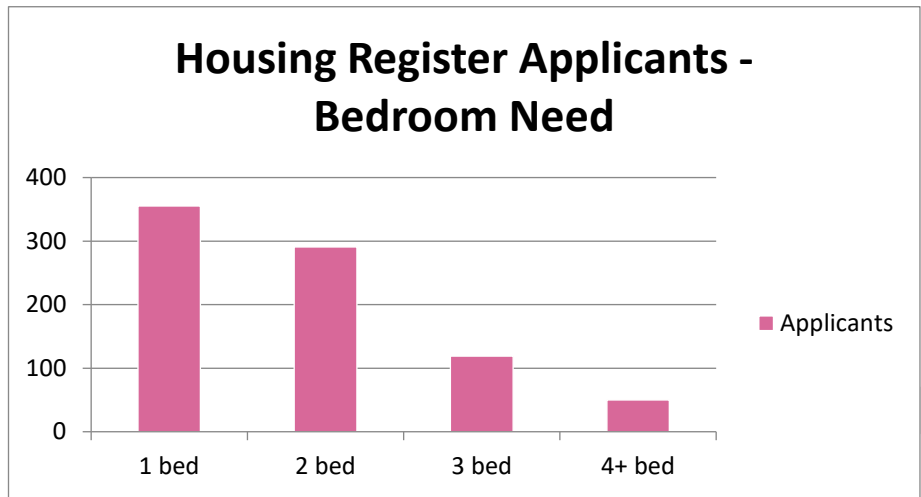
There is a need to develop supported housing provision for clients with multiple and complex needs, Housing First could be part of this solution.

4.2 Social Housing

- There demand for social housing is high, and has increased over the last three years.

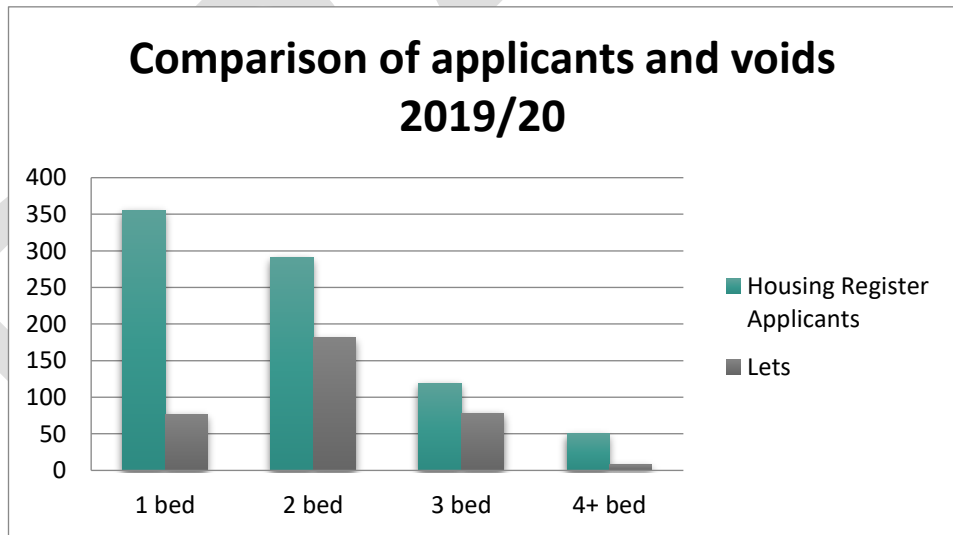


- The greatest demand is for one bedroom accommodation, accounting for 44% of all applicants, followed by two bedroom accommodation (36%) and three bedroom accommodation (15%).



South Derbyshire District Council

- The annual number of lets decreased annually until 2019/20, where there was a notable increase, this was linked to new build schemes creating an increase in lets.



Source : South Derbyshire District Council

- The graph above compares households on the Housing Register with annual lets by bedroom size. Demand exceeds supply for all property types, however the greatest unmet need is in relation to one bedroom accommodation.
- The majority of applicants who receive an offer of social housing have been waiting for less than 6 months, with 49% being allocated in less than 6 months and 24% within 7-12

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months of joining the Register. The vast majority of these general needs applicants will be in urgent or high housing need.

Given the very high demand for one bedroom accommodation on the Housing Register the number of new one bedroom properties being developed needs to increase or the re-designation of existing stock if demand is to be met.

4.3 Private Rented Sector

- The private rented sector is largely unaffordable with market rents in most areas being higher than Local Housing Allowance.
- There is a need for the Council to make better use of the private rented sector to meet the needs of Housing Solutions Clients.

A comprehensive landlord offer needs to be developed to increase access, and as part of this the Council may wish to explore leasing schemes and the development of social lettings agency, this could be explored on a sub-regional basis.

There is a need to develop a greater range of options and provision for single people specifically for people under the age of 35.

5. The Needs of Specific Client Groups

- Of all Housing Solutions Customers who had a self-identified support need, 50% of these had a support need in relation to their mental health. The Homelessness Prevention Service for people with poor mental health is seen as a crucial service.
- Stakeholders identified mental health as a re-occurring issue, with a lack of supported housing provision for clients with very high and complex needs including dual diagnosis. There was a view amongst partners that many people were not getting access to mental health services and support at the point at which they need them.
- A third of Housing Solutions customers with a support need had a support need in relation to their physical health.
- There has been a slight increase in the number of clients seen by the Housing Solutions team who have a support need in relation to a learning disability.
- Young people are over-represented in the homeless population in South Derbyshire when compared with the population data.
- There is a gap in the provision of supported accommodation for young people with the most complex support needs, including young people leaving care who's needs are too high for Step Up provision, but do not meet the threshold for accessing adult services.
- Domestic abuse was the main cause of homelessness in South Derbyshire in 2019/20, and increased significantly from the previous year. There will be a need to ensure that there is a range of options available to meet this increasing need.

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- Homelessness amongst single people is an increasing issue, with limited affordable housing options available in the District.
- There is an increase in the complexity of issues that homeless households, both singles and families are presenting with, and challenges in finding appropriate and sustainable solutions for these households.
- There is a need to ask the 'Veteran Question' to ensure that veterans can be identified in order to be able to signpost them to the wide range of help and support available to veterans and their families.
- There is no data captured to identify clients from the LGBTQ community by the Housing Solutions service.
- It is important that residents from different ethnic groups are aware of the help and assistance that is available through the Housing Solutions team and other services.
- Homeless Approaches from rural areas accounted for 13% of all approaches. The rural nature of the district presents challenges in being able to find affordable housing options in rural areas where people have connections. Homelessness is often hidden within rural communities.
- Homelessness amongst home owners has the potential to increase due to the pandemic.

6. The Views of Staff, Stakeholders and Customers

Consultation was a central component of the review and a summary of the views of Staff, Stakeholders and Customers is detailed below.

6.1 Views of Staff

- Consultation identified that there was a need for a more joined up approach across the Local Authority, with a commitment from all departments to work together to prevent homelessness.
- The pandemic has resulted in an increased demand on the service, alongside impacting upon Council tenant's ability to manage financially.
- An increase in the support needs of Council tenants has been identified, particularly in relation to mental health. Challenges in being able to access support for these clients was identified.
- There is very good working between the Housing Solutions service and partner agencies, with partner agencies viewing the service positively.

6.2 Views of Stakeholders

- Partner agencies identified the need to raise awareness of the help that is available including updating the website.
- Partner agencies identified the need to focus more on prevention and early intervention, with the need for a more pro-active approach.
- The need for increased access to money advice and assistance with budgeting was identified.
- The issue of the lack of appropriate accommodation and support for the most complex customers was a re-occurring theme throughout consultation.

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- The pandemic has negatively impacted upon client's mental health, with an increase in self harm and suicide attempts, however statutory services are even more difficult to access, including face to face support.
- Covid has resulted in stronger partnership working between health and housing.
- Issues were identified in relation to B&B placements, which are usually out of area, and away from amenities and support.
- There has been an increase in clients with alcohol related care and support needs, including alcohol related cognitive impairment.
- The need for an online directory of services across South Derbyshire was identified.
- An action focused complex case group is needed to find solutions for the most complex cases.
- Person centred solutions need to be developed, including Housing First.
- Repeat homelessness is a significant issue in South Derbyshire.

6.3 Views of Customers

- Customer consultation identified high levels of satisfaction with the Housing Solutions service, with the majority rating the service as good or very good.
- Where lower levels of customer satisfaction were identified, customers raised the need for an empathetic and compassionate response, with the need for regular updates on cases.
- Some customers identified the need for the Housing Solutions service to keep them updated more frequently.
- Customers identified the need to raise awareness of the service, so that people know where to go to access help.
- Feedback from customers was very positive in relation to the quality of temporary accommodation, and in particular in respect of the Temporary Accommodation Officer.
- There is a strong expectation amongst customers that they will be provided with social housing, work needs to be done to address this ensuring that customers have realistic expectations.

7. Resources

- The homelessness budget has remained fairly static and has therefore not increased with higher demand on services and homelessness levels.
- The true cost of delivering homelessness and prevention services across the Authority is not fully understood.
- Expenditure on temporary accommodation and B&B has increased significantly.
- Financial support from Government through the Homelessness Prevention Grant has an uncertain future and the potential for further pressure on Council budgets should this funding be reduced or cease.
- There is reliance on enhanced housing benefit to fund intensive housing management to provide supported accommodation. Any potential changes to this would impact upon provider's ability to continue to provide supported accommodation.

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- The impact of Covid is likely to lead to increased homelessness levels at a time when future public funding seems precarious. Investment in homeless prevention is essential if the impact of the virus on homelessness levels is to be mitigated.

8. Future Levels of Homelessness

- While the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is likely to lead to increased homeless prevention and relief activity and improved positive outcomes for clients, the broader pressures within the wider housing market, anticipated changes to private rented sector tenancies and data from Wales following the implementation of their new legislation suggests that demand for homelessness services will continue to rise for the foreseeable future.
- The Planning White Paper published in August 2020 proposes the removal of the use of Section 106 Agreements (which the Councils uses to collect contributions from developers and require the provision of affordable housing) and replaced with the new Infrastructure Levy. There is risk that the new Levy could negatively impact upon the delivery of affordable housing in the District, compared to existing provision, which if imposed could unfortunately have a knock-on effect on homelessness
- The impact of the pandemic is likely to lead to very significant increases in homelessness and targeted early prevention needs to be in place to mitigate this as much as possible.

9. Homelessness Strategy Development

Following this review the Council will produce and publish a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. This will ensure a strategic approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping across South Derbyshire, ensuring that local solutions can be developed to meet the needs of its community.

South Derbyshire's Homelessness Forum will be fundamental to the development of this strategy, and the implementation and monitoring of the targets agreed within the action plan.

The Strategy must reflect the joint approach by agencies to tackle and prevent homelessness in the Borough and therefore it is appropriate that a multi-agency approach is taken to: -

- Agreeing priorities.
- Identifying key actions.
- Agreeing an action plan.
- Jointly delivering the action plan.

The Council is committed to working with its partners to preventing homelessness and ending rough sleeping across South Derbyshire.

About Homeless Link

[Homeless Link](#) is the national membership charity for services working directly with people experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness with housing, health, care and support needs.

Representing over 700 organisations across England, we work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and to promote policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

We aim to bring about positive policy change as well as providing practical support to individual organisations. Our Innovation and Good Practice (IGP) Team runs a range of special projects including focuses on welfare reform; the future of supported housing rents; the Homelessness Reduction Act; Housing First; Ending Women's Homelessness and Youth Homelessness.

We are a leading training provider delivering both public and in-house courses around the country to local authorities, registered housing providers, third sector and charitable organisations and service user groups across housing, homelessness, support, health & social care and criminal justice services.

We have a strong consultancy service; our staff and bank of associates nationwide support members across the spectrum of their activities from the strategic - strategy development, business planning, service evaluation, commissioning and workforce development - through to the operational, such as policies and procedures and rent setting. Our team brings many years' operational and consultancy experience as well as a strong understanding of the sectors in which we work, and an empathy with the daily challenges that staff face. We have experience of working with large and small providers from local authorities to the smallest charities, and with commissioners and service providers.



What we do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for services working directly with people experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness with housing, health, care and support needs. We work to improve services and campaign for policy change that will help end homelessness.

Let's end homelessness together

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