



# **Results of the Homelessness Review 2013**

Final Version  
July 2013

## **Contents**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Duty to carry out a Homelessness Review
- 1.2 The Review process
- 1.3 The Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013

### **2. Levels of Homelessness in East Staffordshire**

- 2.1 Statutory Homelessness
- 2.2 At risk of homelessness
- 2.3 Rough Sleeping
- 2.4 Temporary housing circumstances
- 2.5 Mortgage Repossession
- 2.6 Young People in housing need
- 2.7 Citizens Advice Bureau Customers
- 2.8 Current levels of homelessness
- 2.9 Future levels of homelessness

### **3. Reasons for homelessness in East Staffordshire**

- 3.1 Main Duty Homelessness
- 3.2 Risk of homelessness

### **4. Activities – the Housing Options Service**

- 4.1 Accessibility
- 4.2 Prevention outcomes
- 4.3 New-tenancy Finance Scheme
- 4.4 Homelessness Prevention Fund
- 4.5 The Saving Homes Scheme
- 4.6 Interim and temporary accommodation

### **5. Other Activities**

- 5.1 Housing Benefit
- 5.2 Discretionary Housing Payments
- 5.3 Housing support
- 5.4 Reconnect
- 5.5 Other supported accommodation
- 5.6 Mortgage Rescue Scheme
- 5.7 Citizens Advice Bureau
- 5.8 Family Mediation Scheme
- 5.9 Schools Work
- 5.10 Social Housing Allocations
- 5.11 The Council's website
- 5.12 Mortgage Repossession Letters
- 5.13 Activities to increase housing supply

### **6. Resources**

- 6.1 The Council's Budget
- 6.2 Government Grant
- 6.3 Council Reserves
- 6.4 Staffordshire County Council
- 6.5 Other resources

### **7. Review comments**

### **Appendix: Actions from the Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013**



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Duty to carry out a Homelessness Review

As the Housing Authority for East Staffordshire, the Council is required by law to carry out a homelessness review every 5 years. The 2002 Homelessness Act states that a “homelessness review” means a review by a local housing authority of

- (a) the levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in their district;
- (b) the activities which are carried out for
  - 1) preventing homelessness in the district of the authority; .
  - 2) securing that accommodation is or will be available for people in the district who are or may become homeless; .
  - 3) providing support for people in the district
    - who are or may become homeless; or .
    - who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.
- (c) the resources available to the authority, the social services authority for their district, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons for such activities.

## 1.2 The Review process

The Council is grateful to partners for participating in the review and contributing ideas towards the strategy. The review process has included:

- Emails to partners and stakeholders in early October 2012 inviting them to participate and to attend a meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> November.
- A workshop on 9<sup>th</sup> November to agree the scope of the review and identify the key issues.
- Submission by partners and stakeholders of information and evidence
- Circulation of a first draft of the data in mid March
- A workshop on 22<sup>nd</sup> March to discuss the evidence and identify key issues for the strategy

## 1.3 The Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013

The last Homelessness Strategy covered the period 2008-2013. During that period there have been some significant changes in the context.

(a) Economic Environment

In around 2008 the economy entered a period of economic difficulty following serious problems in the financial sector.

The Government's 2010 Budget announced a number of reforms to Housing Benefit which began to be implemented in 2012.

(b) Institutional arrangements

The Council no longer has any part in commissioning housing support services in the Borough because the Staffordshire Supporting People Partnership has ceased, with government grant for housing support now part of mainstream County Council funding so that it takes all the decisions.

The Council has brought its Housing Options service back in house, having previously contracted it out. The Council is therefore now much closer to the front line of homelessness and is in a good position to base future actions on real conditions.

In 2009 the House of Lords emphasised that the Children Act 1989 has primacy over the Housing Act 1996 in providing for children in need, meaning that Children's Services Authorities have primary responsibility for accommodating homeless young people aged 16 and 17 rather than Local Housing Authorities.

(c) The 2008-2013 Action Plan

The 2008-2013 Strategy listed 35 actions cutting across a range of activities. A detailed update on all of these is given in Appendix 1

## 2. Levels of Homelessness in East Staffordshire

This section considers the levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in the Borough.

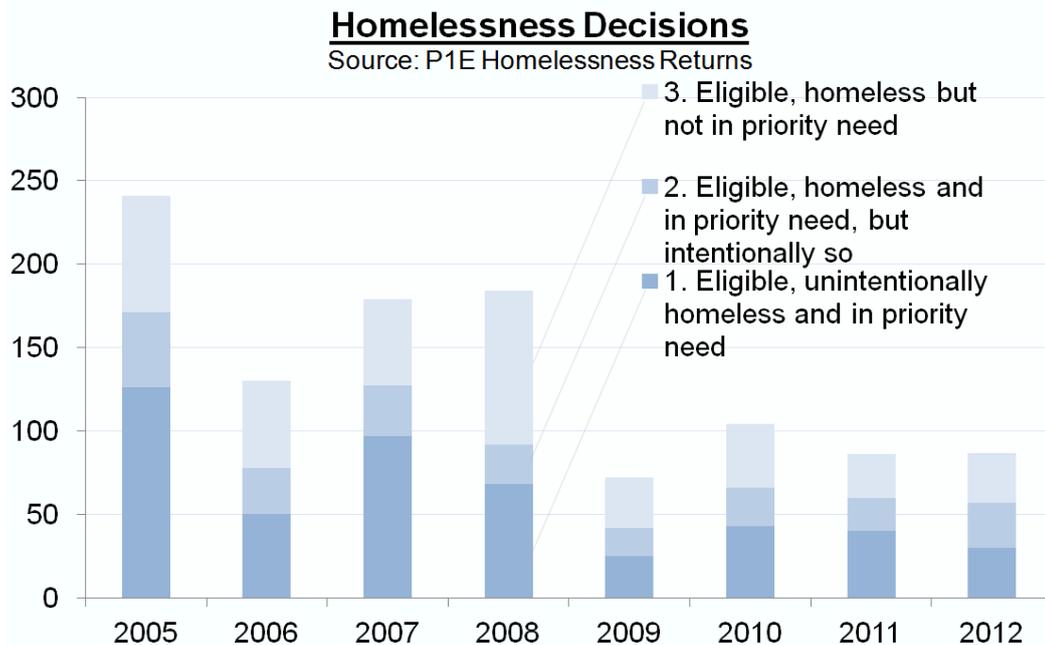
### 2.1 Statutory Homelessness

This subsection reports on homelessness decisions taken by the Council under the Housing Act 1996. This is the only formal measure of homelessness. The Council takes a homelessness decision where it has reason to believe that a person is already homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days and where that person consents to enable the Council to carry out enquiries and co-operates to enable a decision to be reached.

#### (a) Homelessness Decisions (Table)

Year	1. Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need	2. Eligible, homeless and in priority need, but intentionally homeless	3. Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	4. Not homeless	5. Ineligible	6. Total decisions
2005	126	45	70	130	0	314
2006	50	28	52	171	0	301
2007	97	30	52	83	1	263
2008	68	24	92	62	0	246
2009	25	17	30	54	1	127
2010	43	23	38	41	2	147
2011	40	20	26	45	0	131
2012	30	27	30	58	2	147

(b) Homelessness Decisions (Graph)

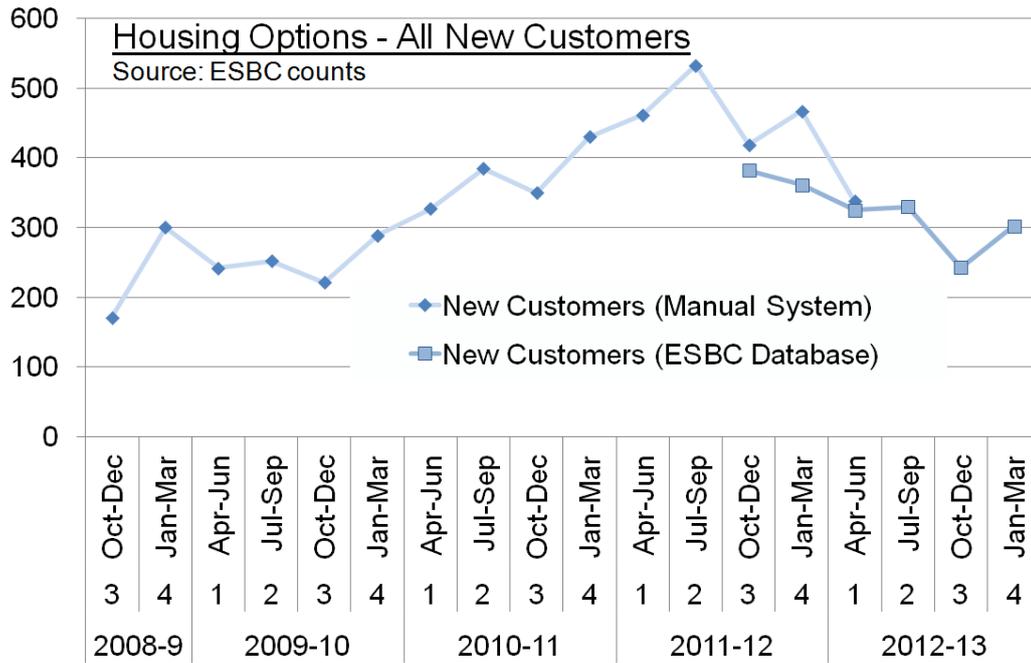


As shown, recorded homelessness in East Staffordshire has fallen since 2006. This has mirrored falls in recorded homelessness nationally, and is the result of a shift towards a housing options approach. In principle this means dealing with customers before the point of crisis so that they do not become homeless. In practice it means that the recorded statistics do not record the full number of residents losing their accommodation and having to find somewhere else to live. For example, if a person loses their previous accommodation but secures new accommodation before the Council reaches its decision, they are no longer homeless when the decision is taken and the recorded decision is that they are not homeless.

2.2 At risk of homelessness

The number of new customers approaching the Council’s Housing Options service for advice provides a more complete picture of the number of local people at risk of homelessness.

The following graph shows the number of new customers recorded by the Housing Options service. Note that a new database was introduced in October 2011 which recorded on a slightly different basis; the previous, manual system was discontinued in June 2012.

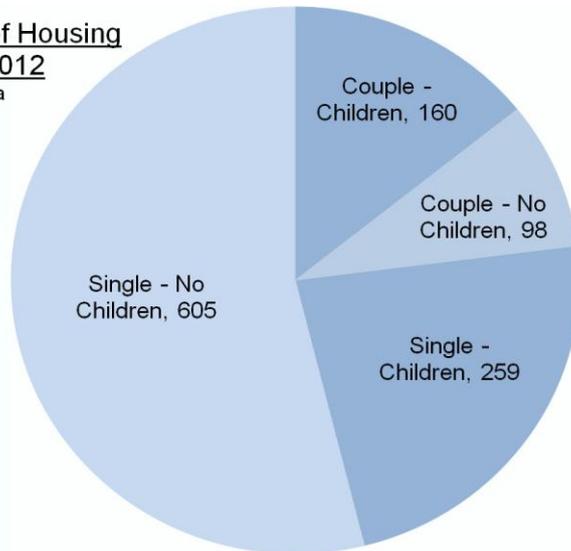


Hence a big increase was recorded up to the third quarter of 2011, whilst the Housing Options service was delivered for the Council by Trent & Dove Housing. Since the service moved back to the Council the numbers have fallen. The most likely explanation for this is that co-location with Trent & Dove meant that more housing applicants were seen by Housing Options, and the numbers have fallen now that customers have to visit a separate location to see Housing Options. Since those with a genuine concern about homelessness will presumably make the effort, the numbers since October 2011 are likely to be a more accurate reflection of those facing homelessness.

(a) Household Type

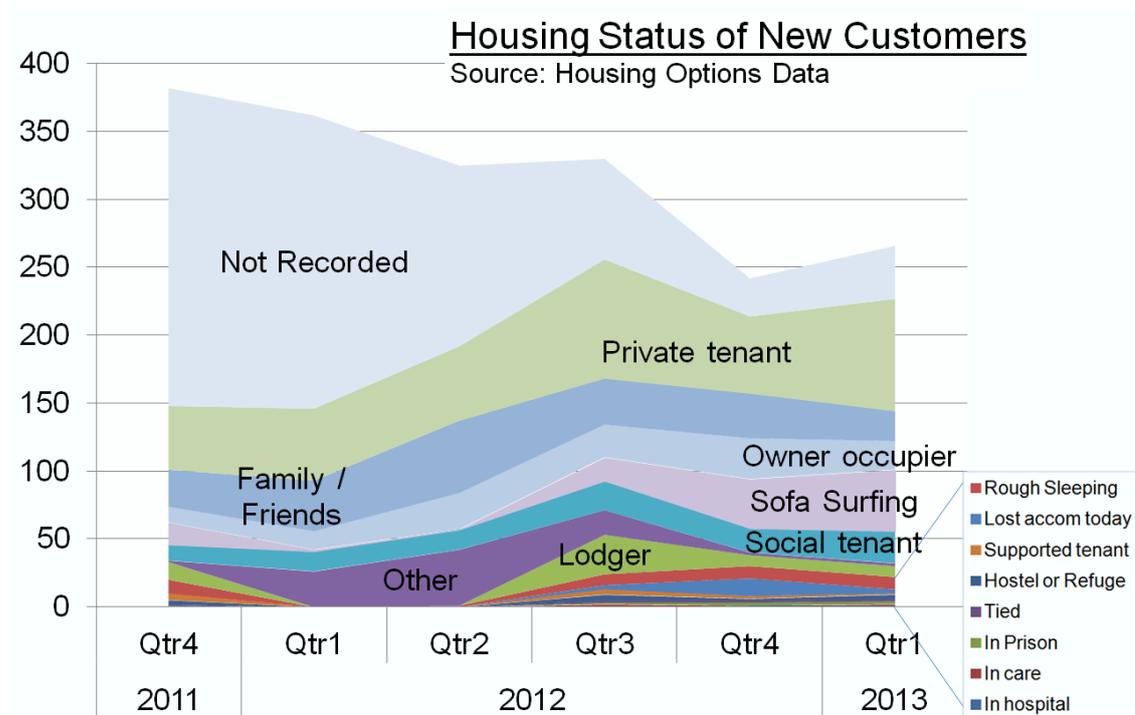
Single people are by far the biggest group approaching Housing Options. Of these, single people without children are the largest group.

Household Make-up of Housing Options Customers, 2012  
Source: Housing Options data



(b) Housing Status

Housing Status describes the housing circumstances the customer is living in. The largest recorded status is 'Private Tenant'.



The number of customers whose housing status was 'Not Recorded' was considerably larger in the first quarters because of database problems that prevented the housing status of all clients being recorded. Similarly Sofa Surfing was not an available option on the database during early 2012.

(c) Housing Status (Table)

This table gives exact figures for the graph above.

Years	Enquiry Date	In care	In hospital	In Prison	Tied	Hostel or Refuge	Supported tenant	Lost accom today	Rough Sleeping	Lodger	Other	Social tenant	Sofa Surfing	Owner occupier	Family / Friends	Private tenant	Not Recorded	Grand Total
2011	Qtr4		1		1	3	5		9	13	1	12	17	12	27	48	233	382
2012	Qtr1										27	15	1	14	37	53	215	362
	Qtr2								1		41	15		27	53	55	133	325
	Qtr3	2		1	2	4	4	3	8	29	18	22	16	24	34	88	74	329
	Qtr4		1	2	2	1	2	13	9	8	2	18	36	30	33	57	28	242
2013	Qtr1	1	2	2	3	4	1	3	10	11	2	25	54	21	30	93	40	302
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>1942</b>

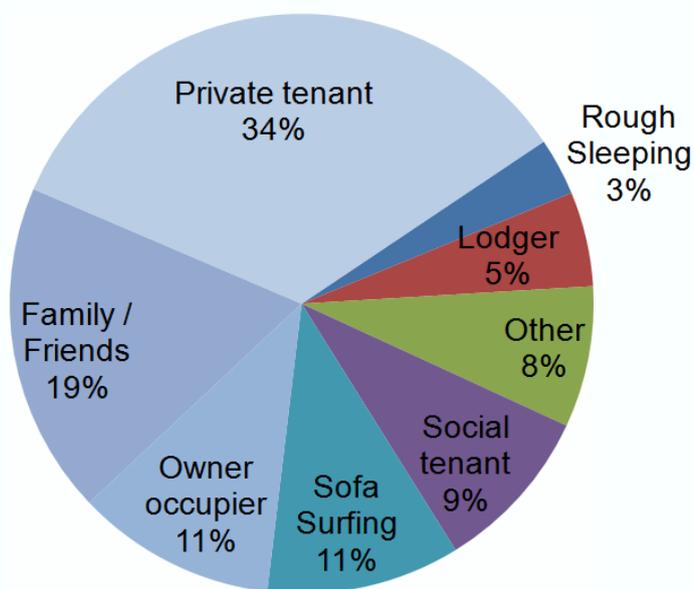
For the reasons given above the data does not accurately show trends.

(d) Main Housing Status

This pie chart extracts the top 8 recorded categories from the table immediately above.

Comparison of Main Declared Housing Status

Source: Housing Options Data 2011 (Quarter 4) to 2013 (Quarter 1)



Hence of all Housing Options customers since October 2013, the most common housing circumstance was living with a private tenancy.

### 2.3 Rough Sleeping

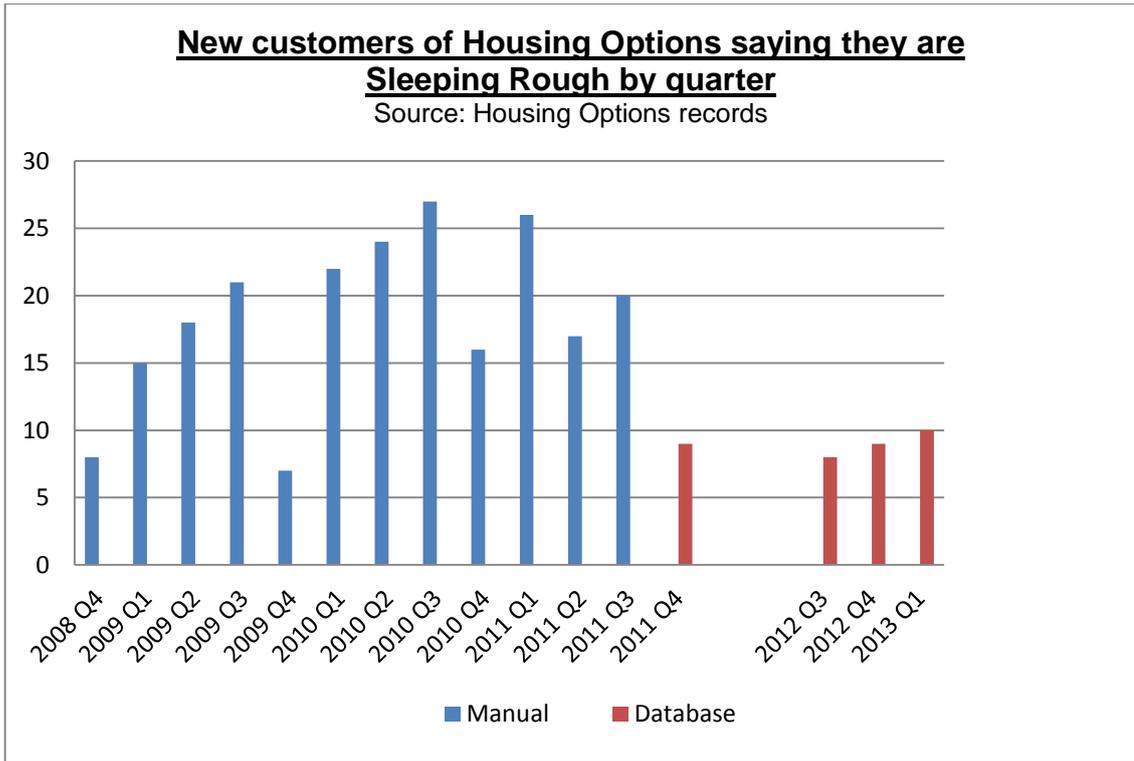
- (a) The common understanding of homelessness amongst the general public is sleeping rough. The formal definition of rough sleeping is

sleeping in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments) or in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or “bashes”).

- (b) Since 2010 the Government has asked the Council to submit an annual figure for the number of people counted sleeping rough on one particular night, or an estimate of the numbers typically sleeping rough on any one night. Previous to that councils could chose whether to carry out a count. The Council has submitted the following figures.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Reported number of rough sleepers</b>
2007 (Autumn)	7 (counted)
2010 (June)	4 (estimated)
2011 (Autumn)	4 (estimated)
2012 (Autumn)	7 (estimated)

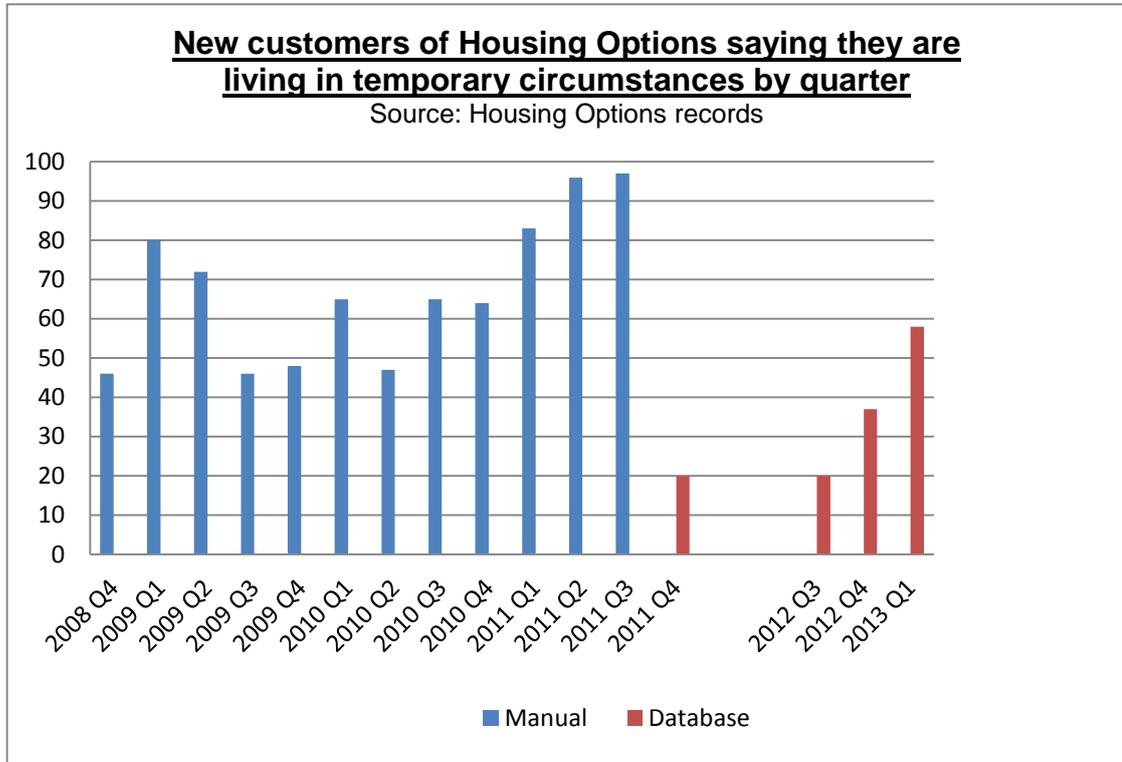
- (c) As shown below, the Housing Options service has recorded the number of customers saying they are sleeping rough (without having any means to verify this). It is noticeable that numbers recorded on the new database since October 2011 have been substantially lower, and it is assumed that this is because the same customer was sometimes counted more than once under the old manual system of recording. Data for the first half of 2012 is missing because it is incomplete due to database problems.



This data does not reveal any real trend.

2.4 Temporary housing circumstances

- (a) It is also possible to identify from Housing Options customer data the number of customers in temporary housing circumstances eg living in a homeless hostel or temporarily staying with friends including sofa surfing.

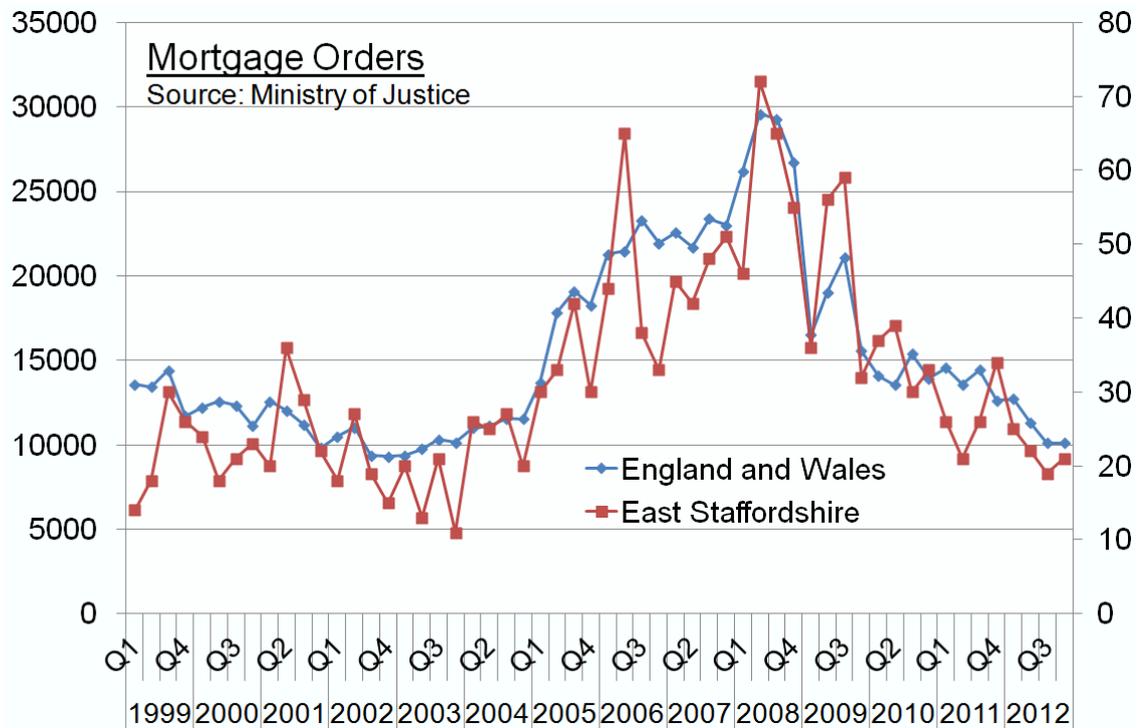


This data suffers from the same discontinuity and incompleteness as the data about rough sleeping. It appears to show a steep increase in numbers over the last two quarters, but this is too short a timescale from which to derive a definite trend.

Another source of information is the Council’s housing register. At the beginning of August 2012 there were 136 applicants for housing with no fixed abode and 60 in temporary accommodation, a total of 196 households in temporary housing circumstances.

2.5 Mortgage Repossession

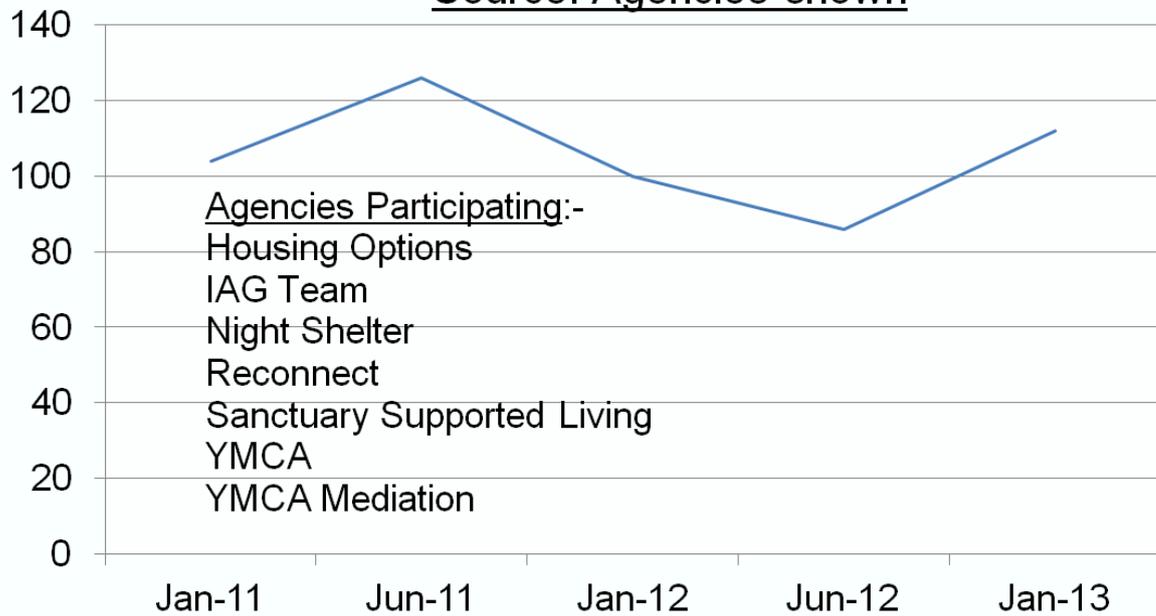
The Ministry of Justice records and reports the number of repossession orders issued for properties in each district.



The trend both in East Staffordshire and nationally has been downwards since a peak in early 2008.

2.6 Young People in housing need

**Total Presentations (Youth Homelessness) to Housing Agencies in East Staffordshire**  
Source: Agencies shown



(IAG Team is the Information, Advice and Guidance Team – Part of Staffordshire County Council’s front line service to young people)

The Youth Housing Forum consists of all the above housing agencies and some others involved in the provision of housing and support to young people age 16-24. Every January and June for the last 2 years, members of the Forum have recorded the number of such young people encountered during the month who had a housing need - including a need for support services as well as a need for different accommodation. This data has then been cross-referenced to avoid double-counting.

Overall numbers have been steady, showing relatively minor fluctuations over the period measured.

## 2.7 Citizens Advice Bureau Customers

East Staffordshire Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) records the number of people it advises who say they are homeless.

Approximate number of homeless households encountered by CAB

Year	2008-9	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Households	102	169	207	135	125

However, due to funding constraints the CAB has been able to advise fewer people of late and hence this may be the reason for lower numbers. The CAB will always encourage clients saying they are homeless to contact the Council.

## 2.8 Current levels of homelessness

According to the available data which is presented above East Staffordshire has not seen an increase in homelessness over the last 5 years. This is in spite of the country experiencing prolonged economic recession. It is also in spite of significant changes to Housing Benefit which it was feared might increase homelessness. It would be nice to think that this reflects the success of the actions taken by the Council and partners to prevent homelessness, although the evidence does not readily support that conclusion.

## 2.9 Future levels of homelessness

Hence there is no trend in the data suggesting that homelessness is likely to increase over the next few years. However, as already noted, the available longitudinal data has been subject to a number of procedural and technical changes and hence it does not provide an accurate picture of over time.

As the economy hopefully moves out of recession it might be that homelessness will fall. Alternatively, if it is in fact the case that homelessness has not increased during the economic recession this might mean that it will not fall as the recession ends.

There are also a number of factors which might yet lead to an increase in homelessness.

- Home-owners reaching the end of their two-year entitled to Support for Mortgage Interest may then face repossession
- If house prices increase, having been fairly static over the last 5 years, mortgage lenders are more likely to repossess for mortgage arrears because they will be able to recover more value
- If house prices increase reluctant private sector landlords – those who are only renting out property because they cannot sell it at an acceptable price, may decide to sell and hence will evict their tenants
- If the cost of borrowing increases from its 4-years of being historical low then more owner-occupiers may fall into mortgage arrears and become homeless

- Also if the cost of borrowing increases some landlords may fall behind with their mortgages resulting in repossession of the properties leaving the tenants homeless
- Agreed changes to welfare benefits are even more extensive than those previously seen and are widely expected to lead to higher levels of rent arrears and hence more evictions from rented accommodation
- Proposed changes to allow easier eviction for anti-social behaviour, although the Government predicts minimal impact
- If more work continues to become part-time, insecure or uncertain eg zero hours contracts, this may lead to increasing inability to pay for housing and thence to homelessness
- If earnings continue to increase less than inflation, increasing numbers of working households may struggle to pay for their housing and may become homeless
- As some households suffer falls in real income because of inflation and benefit cuts, there is evidence to suggest that this will lead to even higher levels of relationship breakdown resulting in additional homelessness.

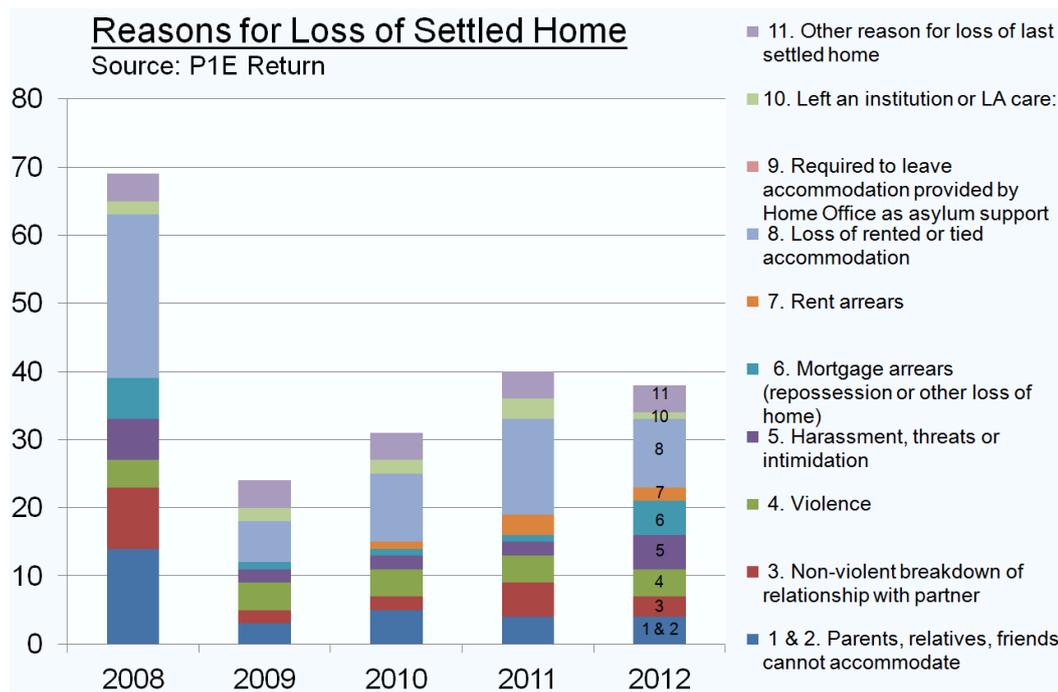
However none of this is certain.

### 3. Reasons for homelessness in East Staffordshire

An understanding of the reasons for homelessness is a necessary pre-requisite to evaluation of activities.

#### 3.1 Main Duty Homelessness

The following graph shows the reasons for homelessness of customers for whom Housing Options reached a homelessness decision accepting a main homelessness duty.

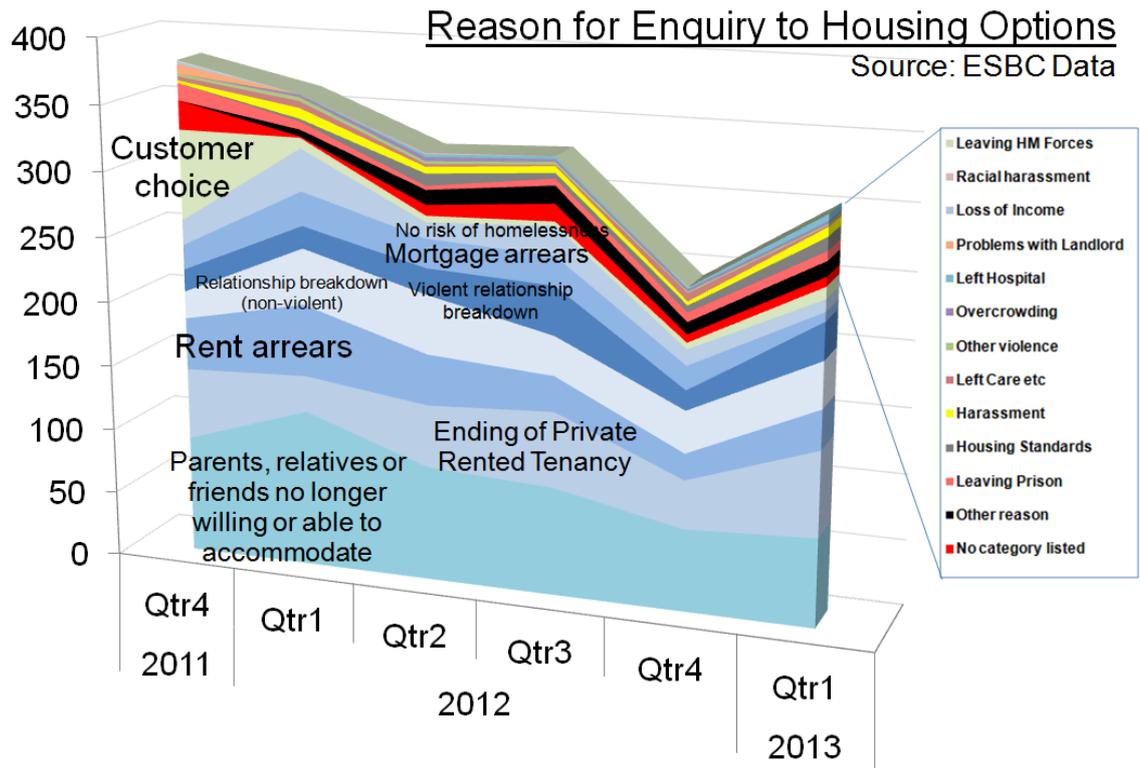


Numbers are very small and hence it is difficult to draw conclusions. One noticeable fact is that most categories have fallen since 2008 except for Violence.

#### 3.2 Risk of homelessness

The following information is for all Housing Options customers and identifies the main reason why they approached the service. It therefore identifies the main drivers of homelessness in the Borough.

(a) Stated reasons



This graph shows that there has been no major and consistent change over the last 18 months.

The main reasons are

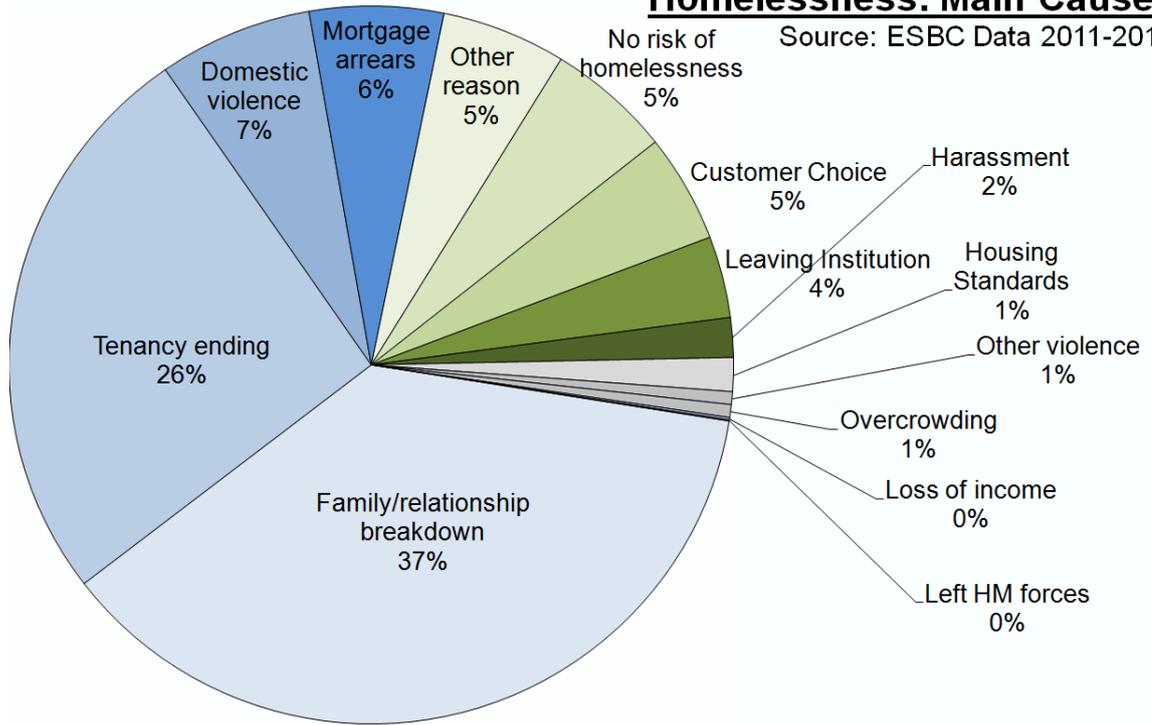
- (1) Parents, relatives or friends no longer wanting to accommodate;
- (2) The ending of private rented tenancies including for rent arrears;
- (3) Breakdown of relationship with a partner, in more cases non-violent than violent.

(b) Analysis of reasons

An alternative way of analysing the reasons is presented below.

**Homelessness: Main Causes**

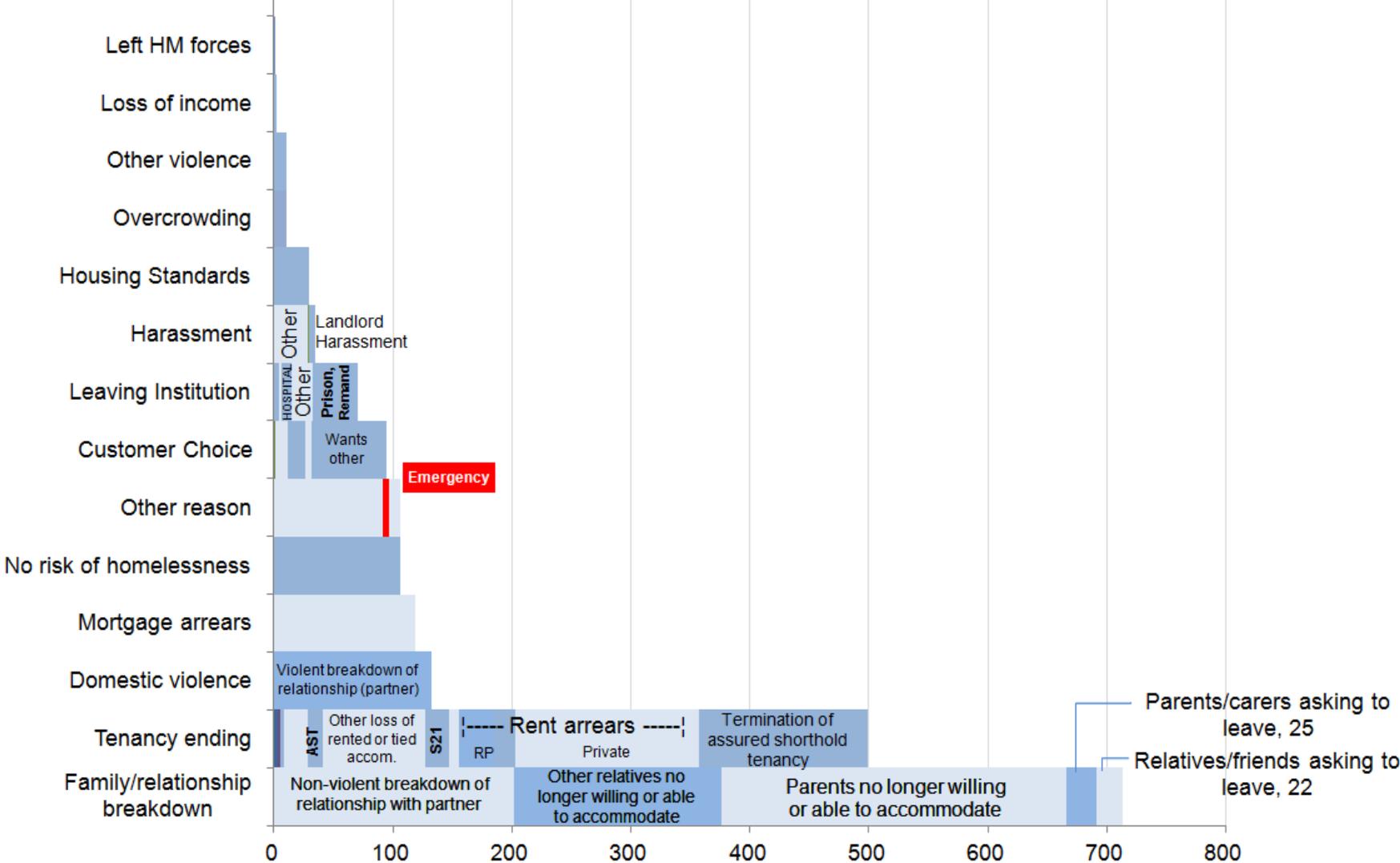
Source: ESBC Data 2011-2013



This clearly shows that relationship breakdown in the widest sense is the biggest likely cause of homelessness, accounting for over one-third of cases. The second biggest likely cause is the ending of a tenancy.

The graph on the next page shows the breakdown of these categories.

Anecdotally Housing Options report that the primary reason underlying all these causes of homelessness is financial difficulty.



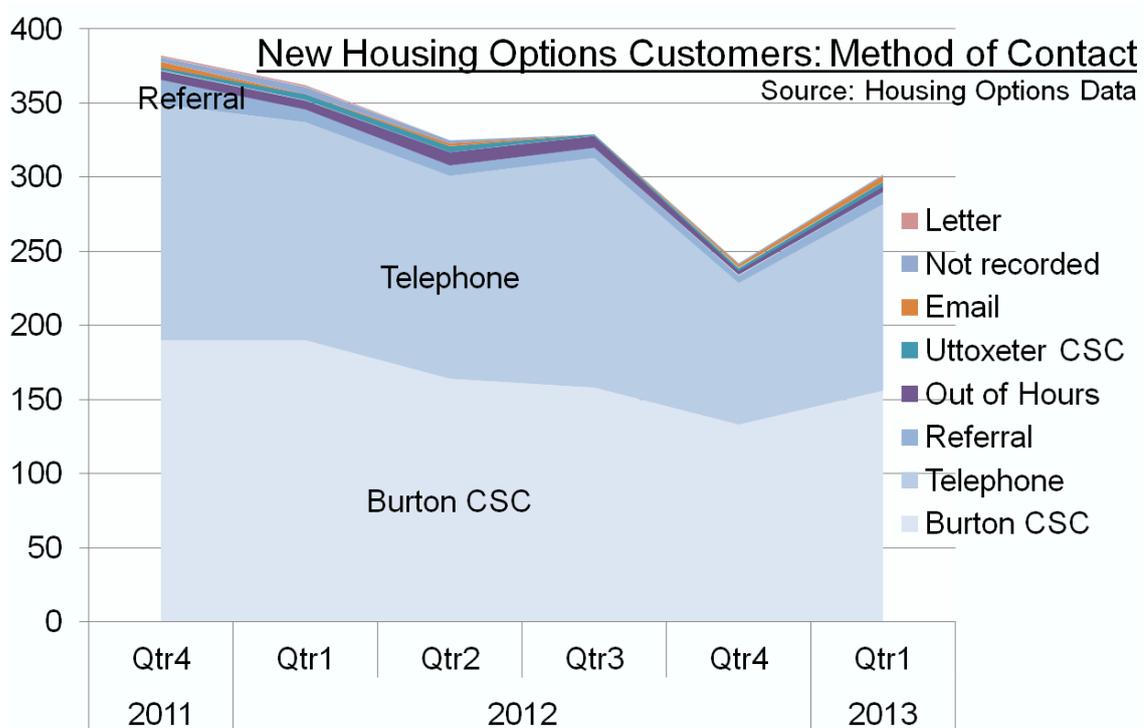
## 4. Activities – the Housing Options Service

The review has to consider activities for the purpose of preventing homelessness, securing accommodation, and providing support. In practice these purposes overlap. Hence accommodation is secured to prevent homelessness, or support is provided to prevent homelessness, or accommodation is secured with support.

The Council’s Housing Options service is the primary service to prevent and address homelessness in the Borough

### 4.1 Accessibility

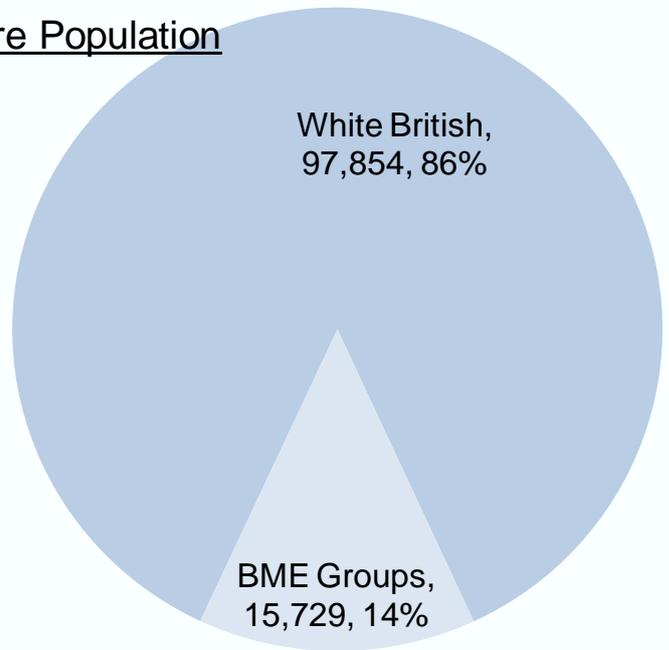
- (a) As can be seen in the following graph around half of Housing Options customers first make contact by telephone and about half via speaking to the duty officer at the Customer Service Centre in Burton town centre.



- (b) It is important to review whether the Housing Options service is accessible to all parts of the community. The following graphs indicate that a higher proportion of customers are people of Black and Minority Ethnic origin than the proportion of the East Staffordshire population.

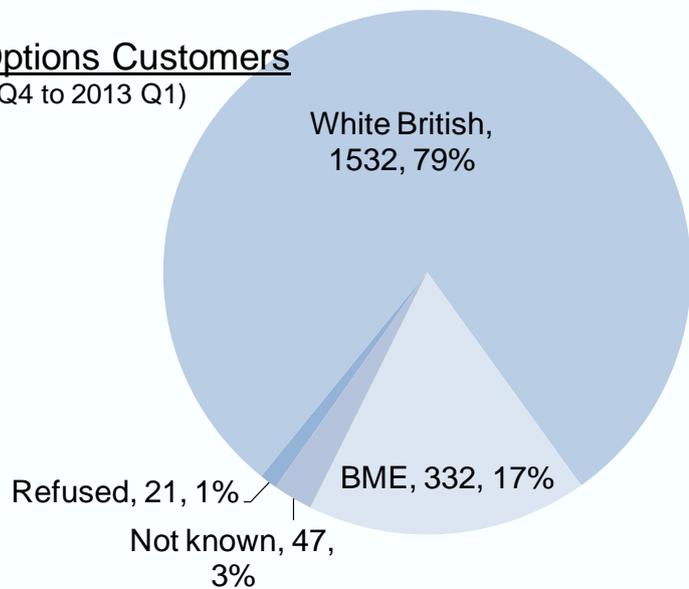
**Ethnicity - East Staffordshire Population**

Source: 2011 Census

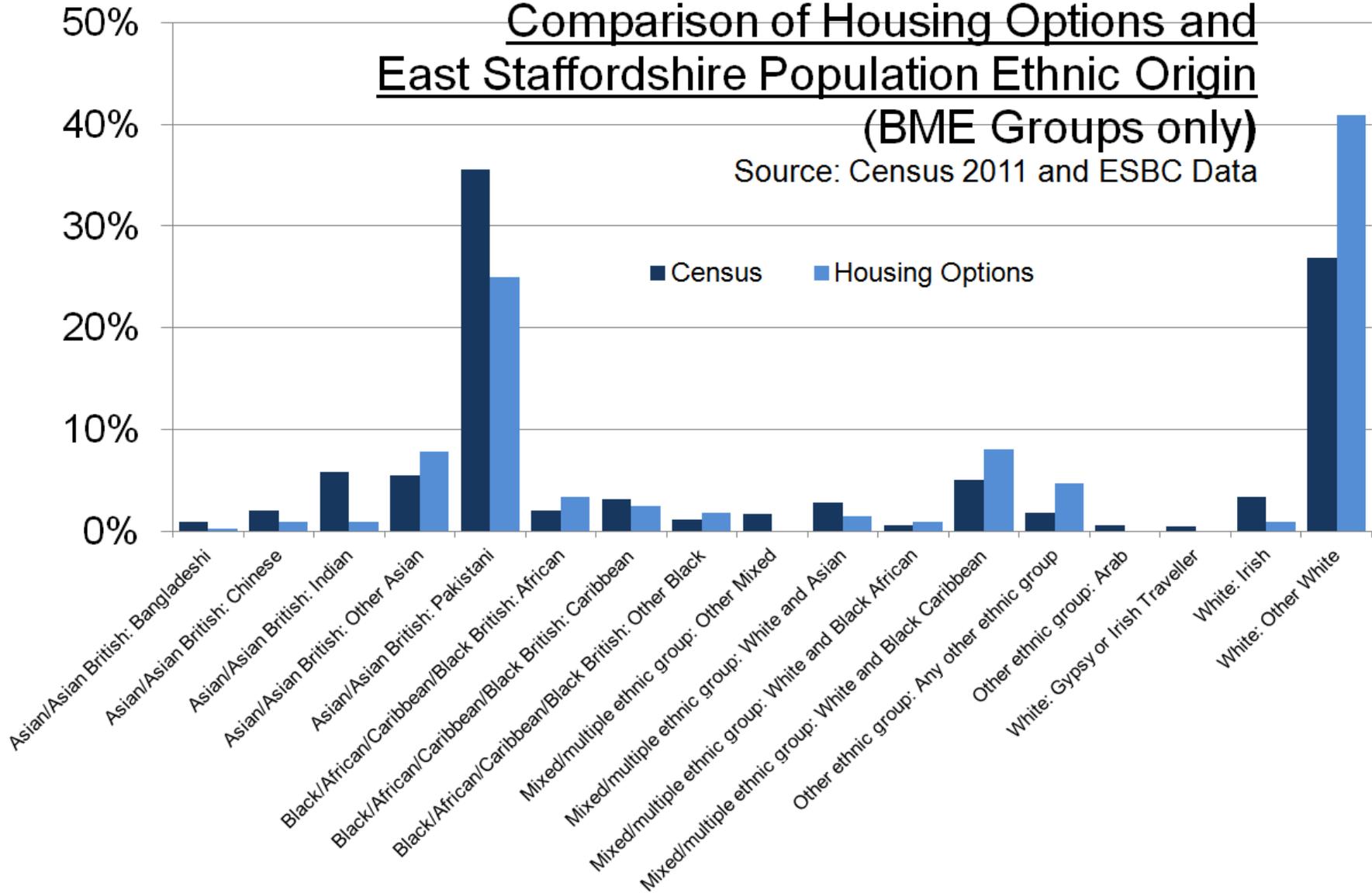


**Ethnic Origin of Housing Options Customers**

Source: Diversity Monitoring (2011 Q4 to 2013 Q1)

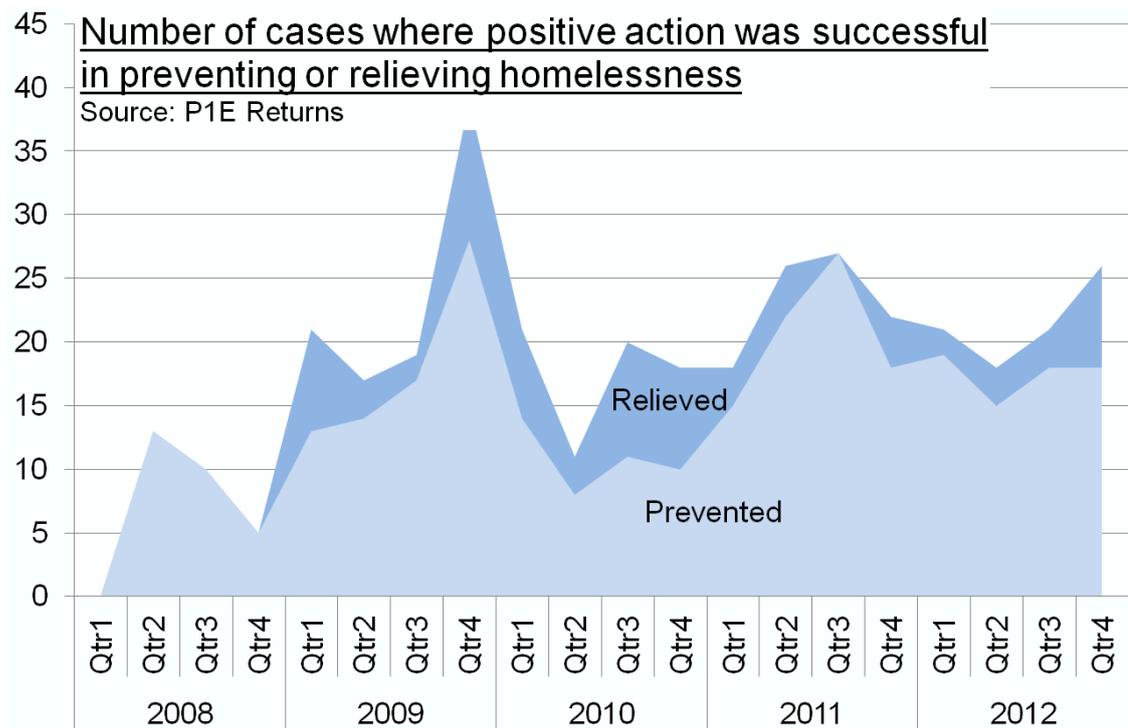


- (c) The graph on the next page shows the proportions of customers and population by individual recorded ethnicity. The Housing Options figures cover an 18-month period from 2011 (Quarter 4) to 2013 (Quarter 1). The data includes those customers who declared that they were part of a BME group, and is made up of 320 people. Because this is a small number it is necessary to exercise caution when analysing the way the figure breaks down by each ethnic group.
  
- (d) This data reveals fewer Housing Options customers of Pakistani origin than would be expected, and a higher number of Other White customers than would be expected from representation in the population. This is likely to reflect the facts that the Pakistani community is well-established with members often able to rely on family and friends for accommodation and support, whilst the Other White category includes people who have recently arrived from Eastern Europe who need to find housing for the first time or who live in precarious housing circumstances. All the other groups consist of 26 or fewer households (about 5 households per quarter) so reaching definite conclusions about representation is even more unreliable. However the data does not suggest that any particular community feels excluded or unable to utilise the Housing Options service.



4.2 Prevention outcomes

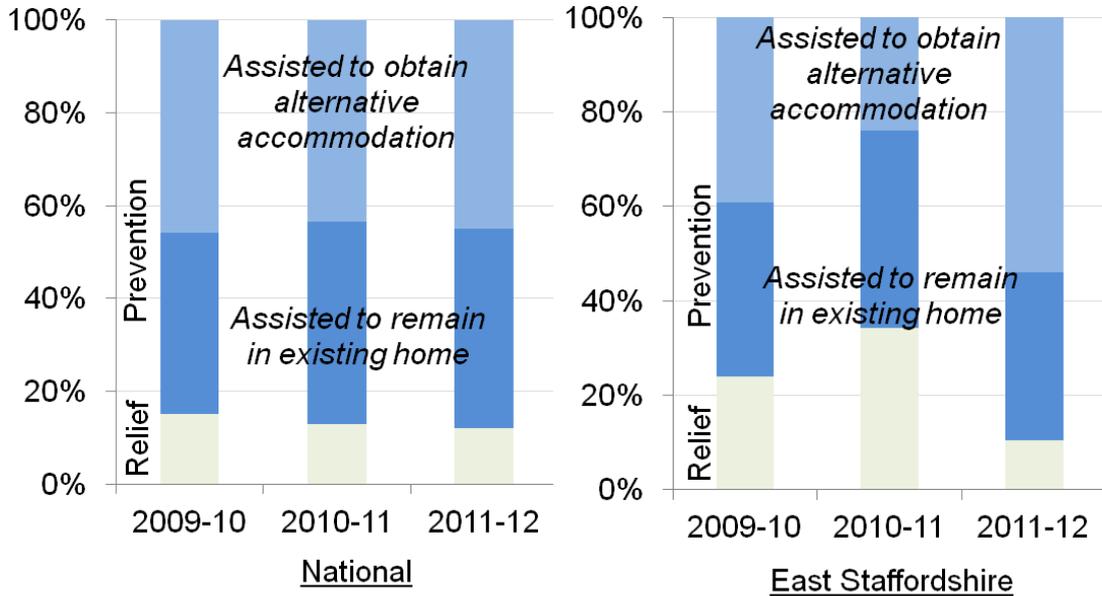
- (a) The Housing Options service records successful homelessness outcomes in line with Government requirements. *Homelessness Prevention* means assisting people either to keep their existing housing or to secure alternative housing before the Council reaches a homelessness decision. *Homelessness Relief* means assisting people to find alternative housing after reaching a homelessness decision finding them to be homeless but intentionally so or homeless but without a Priority Need.



The following graphs compare the mix of successful outcomes in East Staffordshire with those nationally.

### Homelessness Prevention & Relief ESBC Comparison with National Figures

Source: P1E Returns



- (b) The graphs illustrate that both nationally and locally more people are assisted to find new accommodation than are assisted to keep their existing accommodation. Clearly outcomes in East Staffordshire are more variable because numbers are so much smaller. It is also important to note that the data for East Staffordshire includes only outcomes resulting from Housing Options activity, whereas the national data includes outcomes resulting from activity by agencies other than councils but which councils fund.
- (c) The following table shows which interventions have achieved which outcomes since October 2011.

<b>Outcome and intervention</b>	<b>Clients who kept their home</b>	<b>Clients who moved</b>
Action unsuccessful		38
Move to Private rented sector accommodation with landlord incentive		28
Move to Private rented sector accommodation without landlord incentive		25
Move to Social housing through negotiation with a provider		23
Move to Social housing through nomination		15
Kept home through Mortgage arrears interventions or mortgage rescue	13	
Move to Supported accommodation		13
Kept home through Resolving rent or service charge arrears	7	
Kept home through Financial payments	4	
Kept home through Negotiation or legal advocacy	4	
Kept home - Other intervention	4	
Kept home through Conciliation	3	
Move to Accommodation arranged with friends or relatives		3
Move to a hostel		3
Move to other accommodation		3
Kept home through Debt advice	2	
Kept home through Resolving housing benefit problems	1	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>151</b>

- (d) These results demonstrate how difficult it has been to prevent people from losing their homes. Homelessness prevention has principally meant helping people to secure new accommodation. However it does indicate that when prevention activity was attempted it was successful in 80% of cases.

#### 4.3 New-tenancy Finance Scheme

The New-tenancy Finance Scheme is a partnership between the Council and Money Spider Credit Union and exists to help people secure private rented accommodation. As indicated above it has been the most successful single prevention activity.

Unlike the schemes operated by many councils which are only open to people with a Priority Need, the East Staffordshire scheme is open all groups of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. There are two components of the scheme, loans and bonds. Loans are provided to the client by Money Spider, guaranteed by the Council, to pay for the client's deposit, rent in advance and essential furniture and are repayable by the client over up to 28 months. Bonds are provided by the Council to landlords in lieu of a deposit from the tenant and last two years – which again is far longer than many such schemes. Hence the scheme is extremely inclusive and extensive.

Between December 2010 and January 2013 a total 38 loans had been made, of total value £22,478. Hence the average value of a loan was £592. £6,892 had been repaid to Money Spider by clients and Money Spider had not made any claims from the Council under the guarantee. Over the same period only 3 bonds were issued, and the Council had received claims for the full amount of each one of them, although two of those claims were not in accordance with the terms of the bond.

Hence on average the scheme had helped 1.6 households per month compared to originally predicted need to help 3 per month.

- The primary identified reason for this discrepancy is the reluctance of many landlords to accept a bond, despite bonds being common in other districts and considerable promotion of the scheme including through distribution of a Bond Pack.
- The other main limitation on use of the scheme is that landlords will only accept some clients – those with poor credit histories – as tenants if they have a financially secure guarantor – someone earning a reasonable amount - who will guarantee to pay the rent. If such clients do not have anyone who will act as Guarantor, the New-tenancy Finance Scheme is not sufficient to enable them to secure accommodation.

#### 4.4 Homelessness Prevention Fund

The Council also uses a Homelessness Prevention Fund to make cash payments to prevent homelessness or to enable certain customers who cannot be helped through the New-tenancy Finance Scheme to secure accommodation.

#### 4.5 The Saving Homes Scheme

The Saving Homes Scheme is a fund to clear mortgage or rent arrears in order to prevent homelessness. It can do this ideally by providing a loan administered for the Council by Money Spider Credit Union, but otherwise by a grant from the Council. Maximum assistance, in line with Government guidance, is £5,000 per household.

Usage of the scheme has been lower than expected because:

- In line with the Government guidance the scheme exists to help people who have built up arrears because of circumstances outside of their control. The vast majority of clients with rent arrears do not meet this criteria, and their landlords are not prepared to let them stay even if the rent arrears are paid.
- In most cases mortgage arrears substantially exceed £5,000 and lenders have not been willing to write off the remainder to enable the customer to keep their home

4.6 Emergency accommodation

- (a) Housing Options has a statutory duty to secure interim accommodation for a household it has reason to believe may be eligible, homeless and to have a Priority Need and temporary accommodation for households found to be eligible, homeless and to have a priority need. The Council currently leases 3 properties from Trent & Dove Housing for this purpose, but many households have to be housed in bed & breakfast establishments, numbers as follows:

Year	Households placed in B&B	Number of nights spent in B&B	Gross Cost
2010-11	32	130	£13,403
2011-12	30	275	£15,184
2012-13	68	575	£26,818

- (b) Housing Options also seeks to assist other customers to access emergency accommodation including finding hostel places and providing rail tickets. However more and more hostels in other places are now only available to people with a local connection to that place and hence are normally unavailable to people from East Staffordshire; one particular hostel at which clients were frequently assisted to secure accommodation is now no longer available.

## 5. Other Activities

### 5.1 Housing Benefit

The Council currently pays Housing Benefit to around 7,000 households in East Staffordshire.

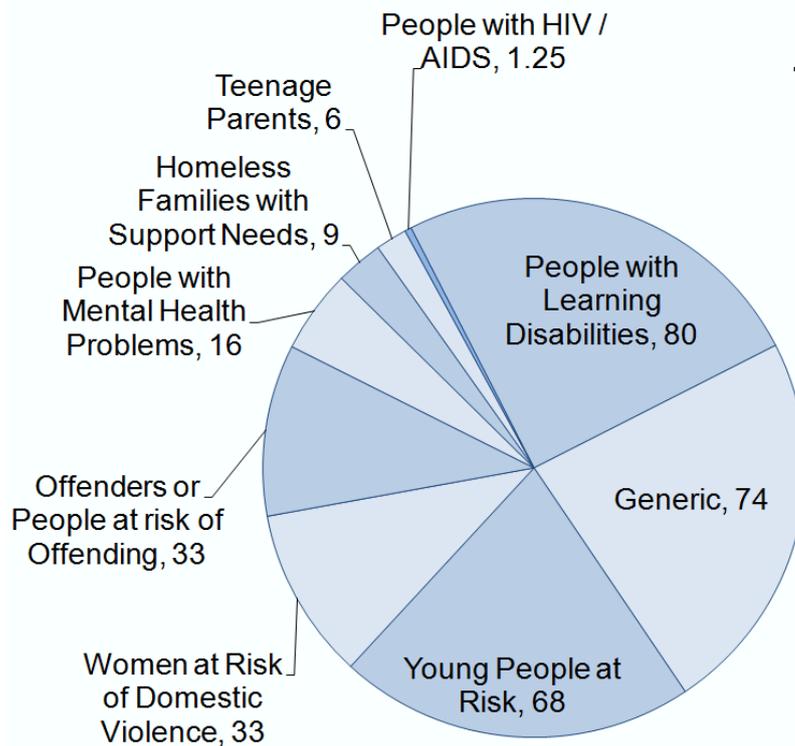
### 5.2 Discretionary Housing Payments

The Council also makes Discretionary Housing Payments to provide short-term (up to 13 weeks) assistance to households who cannot afford their rent whilst they find themselves alternative affordable accommodation.

### 5.3 Housing support

Staffordshire County Council commissions housing support in East Staffordshire.

Aside from support for older people there are 320 units of support as follows:



### **Other Client Groups: Number of Units of Support in East Staffordshire**

Source:  
Staffordshire County Council,  
March 2013

Total 320.25 units

This includes the following services providing floating support. Units shown are apportioned to East Staffordshire where appropriate – units are the number of clients being assisted at any one time.

*Floating support in East Staffordshire*

<b>Service</b>	<b>Provider</b>	<b>Client Group</b>	<b>Units</b>
Stafford and East Staffordshire Floating Support Service	Sanctuary Housing Association	People with Learning Disabilities	67
Refuge Asian Women's Floating Support	Refuge	Women at Risk of Domestic Violence	13
Kiaura Floating Support Service	Stonham	Women at Risk of Domestic Violence	14
East Staffs Floating Support Service	Sanctuary Housing Association	Generic	74
Staffordshire High Level Support Service	Adullam Homes Housing Association Ltd	Homeless Families with Support Needs	9
Staffordshire Countywide Offender Service	Heantun Housing Association Limited	Offenders or People at risk of Offending	19
Positive Housing Support	Staffordshire Buddies	People with HIV / AIDS	1

#### 5.4 Reconnect

Reconnect is a hostel and support service for rough sleepers which opened in Burton in early 2011 following completion of a new building. The service is operated by Burton YMCA in premises owned by housing association Midland Heart. The Council secured Government funding on behalf of Burton YMCA to enable Midland Heart to build the new building. Staffordshire County Council provides support funding for residents. Housing management costs are funded by rent, paid for most clients by Housing Benefit.

Reconnect was intended to provide emergency access accommodation but in practice this has not been achieved because the accommodation is continually occupied and hence not available at the point a person needs emergency access.

During the winter (December – March) on nights when forecast temperatures have been zero or lower, Reconnect has provided additional emergency accommodation for up to 3 people utilising mattresses on the floor. This has been in accordance with the Government's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP).

#### 5.5 Other supported accommodation

There is a range of other supported accommodation in East Staffordshire as follows.

##### *Supported housing in East Staffordshire*

<b>Service</b>	<b>Provider</b>	<b>Client Group</b>	<b>Units</b>
Epworth House	Sanctuary Housing Association	People with Learning Disabilities	13
Ladywell Close	Metropolitan	People with Mental Health Problems	9
Rethink Supported Housing	Rethink	People with Mental Health Problems	58
Burton Teenage Parents Accommodation Service	Stonham	Teenage Parents	6
Refuge Asian Womens Service	Refuge	Women at Risk of Domestic Violence	3
Burton DV Kiaura Women's Accommodation Service	Stonham	Women at Risk of Domestic Violence	3
Burton upon Trent YMCA Housing	Burton YMCA	Young People at Risk	68
Hawthorn House	Stonham	Offenders or People at risk of Offending	14

#### 5.6 Mortgage Rescue Scheme

This Government scheme is due to finish in the near future, when the current funding has all been used. In East Staffordshire Housing Options, Citizens Advice Bureau, Orbit Housing and Trent & Dove Housing have delivered the scheme and a total of 14 homes have been transferred, with a further 2 pending (at March 2013). In many potential cases the current standard of the property has been too poor so that it could not be brought up to standard within the budget available.

#### 5.7 Citizens Advice Bureau

East Staffordshire Citizens Advice Bureau offers free civil legal advice for people living or working in East Staffordshire. The CAB receives funding from the Council, from Staffordshire County Council and from the Money Advice Service Financial Inclusion Fund. It has 17 staff and 60 volunteers.

5.8 Family Mediation Scheme

Burton YMCA deliver a scheme providing mediation between young people and their parents with the aim of preventing homelessness. The Scheme has now obtained National Lottery funding. Outcomes reported in the 2012 annual report are as follows:

Remains living at home	20
Returned home after leaving	3
Planned move to YMCA	8
Planned move elsewhere	1
Mediation ongoing	10

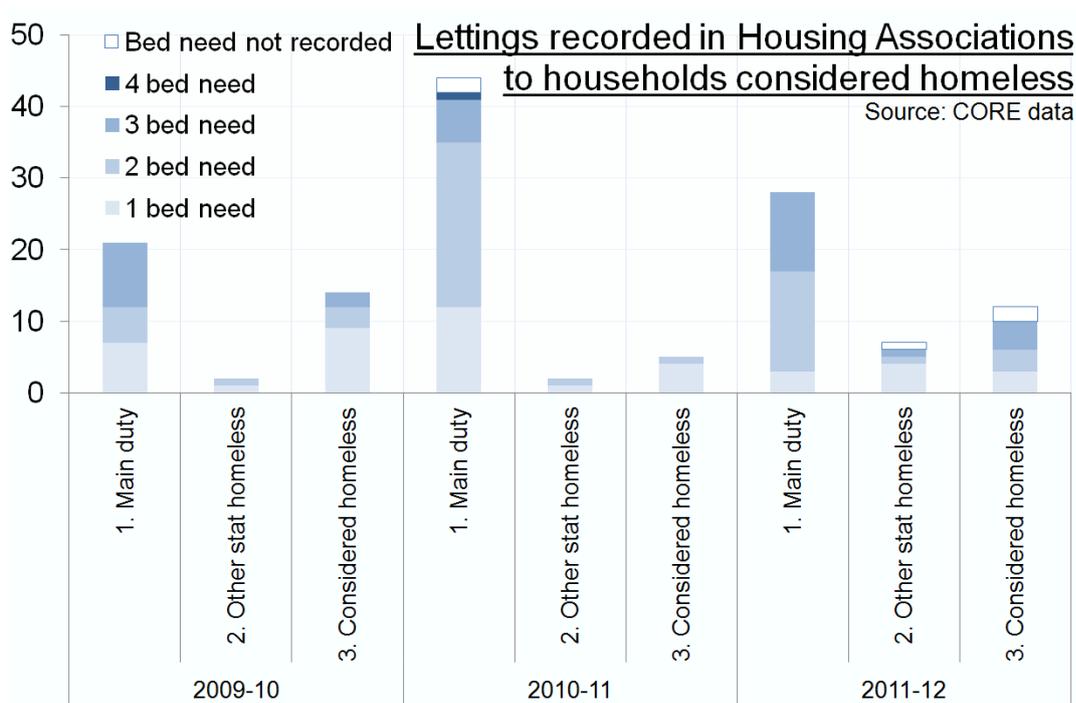
The Scheme reports that it needs to recruit and train volunteer mediators to continue the growth in the service and that it also needs to reach ethnic minority families.

5.9 Schools Work

The YMCA is also delivering a project providing sessions in secondary schools and in Burton College to inform young people about the realities of leaving home. Funding is in place for 5 years up to 2017. It is too early to assess an impact in numbers of young people facing homelessness.

5.10 Social Housing Allocations

The following graph shows the number of social housing allocations made to homeless households in East Staffordshire over the last 3 years.



### 5.11 The Sanctuary Scheme

The Sanctuary Scheme provides security enhancement works to the homes of people at risk of violence so that they are safe to stay living in the home rather than having to leave and become homeless. The Staffordshire Police Partnerships Sergeant manages the scheme. The Crime Reduction Officer and the Fire Service assess the property and identify what works are needed. The Partnerships Sergeant commissions the works from the contractor and the Council pays the contractor once works have been carried out. The scheme has received funding from the Staffordshire Strategic Partnership (and previously the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership) but there is no such funding for 2013-14. The scheme has typically assisted 20 households pa.

### 5.12 The Council's website

The Council's website contains an extensive range of information and advice about avoiding homelessness and finding accommodation.

### 5.13 Mortgage Repossession Letters

Mortgage companies are required to notify the Council whenever they have scheduled a date at court for mortgage repossession. They provide the name and address of the borrower and the date of the hearing. The Council writes to all borrowers with advice and encouraging them to contact Housing Options for assistance.

### 5.14 Activities to increase housing supply

The Council engages in a number of activities which aim to increase housing supply.

- Quarterly landlords forum meetings
- Periodic landlords newsletters
- Promotion of lodging
- Promotion of the bond scheme

## 6. Resources

The Homelessness Review is required to review the resources available to the local housing authority, the social services authority, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons for the activities reviewed.

### 6.1 The Council's Budget

The Council's budget for homelessness over the coming years is as follows:

	2012-13		2013-14	2014-15
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Budget
Staffing and running costs	£170,630	£172,797	£171,908	£176,549
Client costs - accommodation etc	£19,200	£37,592	£46,740	£46,840
Prevention schemes		£12,445	£39,000	£24,000
Accommodation charges	-£6,000	-£1,943	-£13,840	-£13,840
Government grant	-£50,000	-£49,620	-£50,000	-£50,000
Net transfer to(from) reserves	£20,000	£7,555	-£19,000	-£4,000
<b>NET COST</b>	<b>£153,830</b>	<b>£178,825</b>	<b>£174,808</b>	<b>£179,549</b>

### 6.2 Government Grant

The Government increased its annual grant to the Council for homelessness prevention from £30,000 to £50,000 in 2011-12 and it has said that it will provide the same for 2013-14 and 2014-15. The Council has historically budgeted to use this funding as follows:

- £25,000 towards staffing to carry out prevention work
- £5,000 towards the Sanctuary Scheme
- £10,000 for the Homelessness Prevention Fund
- £10,000 as budget cover for new liabilities under the New-tenancy Finance Scheme, with a projected need to take further monies from reserves

Use of the grant will be reviewed once the Homelessness Strategy has been finalised.

### 6.3 Council Reserves

At the end of 2012-13 the Council had around £100,000 in homelessness prevention reserves. This was because:

- Funding is held in reserves to cover liabilities under the New-tenancy Finance Scheme. At the end of March 2013 clients owed Money Spider £15,586 which is guaranteed by the Council. The Council aims to hold monies to cover 50% of the sum owed at any one time. The number of people helped and hence the amount guaranteed under the scheme has been a great deal lower than was projected.
- Funding is also held for the Saving Homes Scheme, including an additional £30,000 of Government grant provided in 2011-12. The number of people helped and hence the amount of spend needed under this scheme has also been a great deal lower than was projected.
- The Sanctuary Scheme did not request funding for 2012-13 which had been allowed for.
- The one Saving Homes Scheme loan was repaid towards the end of the year.
- The YMCA secured other funding for the Mediation Scheme.
- The Council has been saving money to fund new initiatives to improve access to private rented accommodation.
- The Council had earmarked funding with which to potentially commission financial advice to prevent homelessness during 2012-13 but decided in the event not to do so.
- A key consideration is the sustainability of projects in future years.

### 6.4 Council Staffing and Buildings

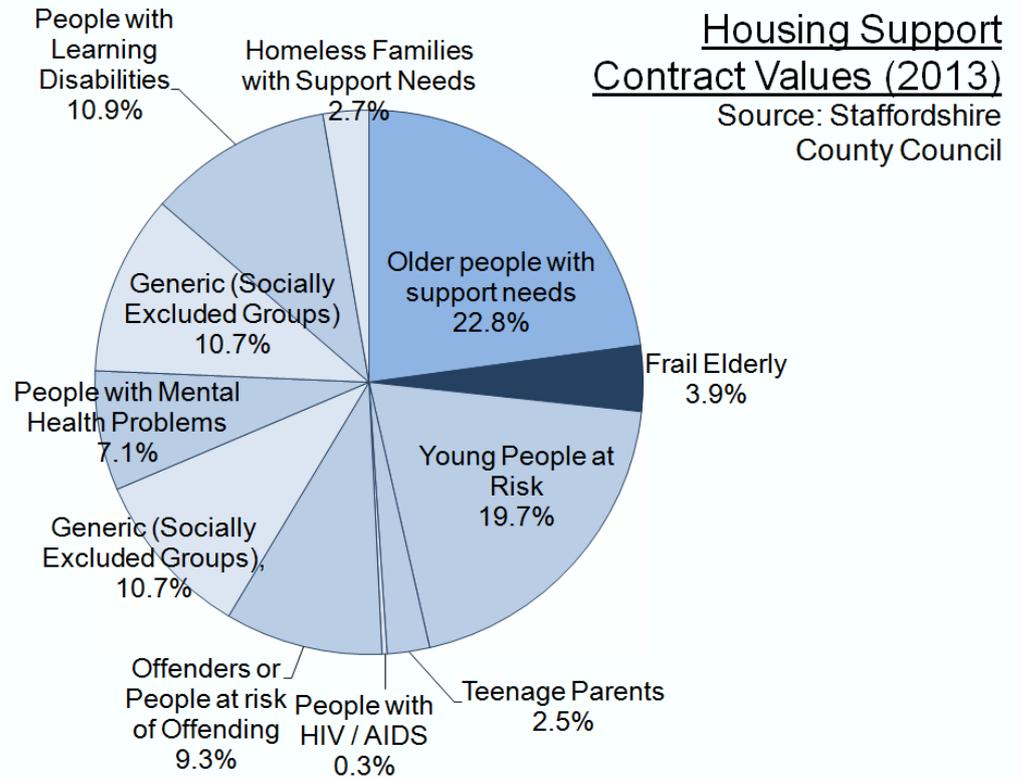
The Council's Housing Options team provides housing advice and homelessness services and comprises 4 full time staff.

The Council's Customer Service Centre in Burton hosts the Housing Options service, and Customer Service Centre staff in Burton and Uttoxeter support Housing Options in serving customers.

The Council's Housing Strategy team of 2 full time staff leads on homelessness strategy and implementation and assists with advising customers.

6.5 Staffordshire County Council

The County Council has advised that its budget for housing support in East Staffordshire is currently £1.86m pa and that this is spent as follows:



6.6 Other resources

The Council had hoped to compile details of the financial and non financial resources of partner organisations eg buildings, staff, volunteers, knowledge, but has not managed to secure this information.

## 7. Review comments

The following boxes record some of the comments made by partners at the Homelessness Review workshops.

***Comment from partners***

Reasons for Private Tenancies Ending

Practitioners report that there are very few cases of anti-social behaviour bringing Assured Shorthold Tenancies to an end. In some cases it is simply because the landlord needs to start using the property for their private use after a period of renting it out.

***Comment from partners***

Misconceptions about Housing Availability

There are widespread misconceptions among many clients approaching housing organisations about what is available in terms of alternative housing.

***Comment from partners***

Misconceptions about Mortgage Responsibilities

There are many misconceptions among clients about how straightforward it is to give up responsibility for a mortgage. These misconceptions need to be addressed.

***Comment from partners***

“Managing Expectations” about social housing

Managing expectations is a primary aspect of prevention work. Many people still believe they will be able to walk straight in to social housing. Some partners questioned whether people were being offered realistic advice when they first apply for housing. The introduction of the Choice Based Lettings system has made it difficult to advise the length of wait expected, because it depends on areas of choice. A significant number of people who are found to be homeless are still selective about where they live.

***Comment from partners***

Joint Tenancies: Advantages and Disadvantages

There was discussion about whether joint tenancies should be incentivised so that both partners are entitled to live in the home if they break-up. Housing associations reported that they usually sign people up for joint tenancies. In the private sector a tenancy will often be set up in a sole name because the other partner has a poor credit record. In any case one joint tenant can bring the tenancy to an end and hence the result may be two households homeless.

***Comment from partners***

Client Knowledge

Partners felt that client knowledge of a realistic range of options in the private sector or social sector may be a preventative measure, ie ensuring that people understand the options early before moving into a managed situation. Partners emphasise the importance of planned move-on rather than a crisis move-on.

***Comment from partners***

Availability of Shared Housing

Efforts through the Landlords Forum to encourage landlords to provide more Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) have not been highly successful so far. In certain areas of the Borough, for example where the main hospital is, rooms are frequently advertised. However, landlords often want professional tenants. Hence shared housing supply exists for people who work, but less so for people out of work; there is no known student housing.

***Comments from partners***

From the Citizens Advice Bureau

The CAB reported that most people who are facing homelessness have related complex problems including debt, housing, benefits, relationship or employment problems. The CAB addresses all the civil legal problems which are often root causes to homelessness. The CAB expects an increase in homelessness as a result of welfare reform.

***Comments from partners***

Impact of Welfare Reform and Housing Benefit Changes in 2013

Trent and Dove Housing estimated that 100 tenants will be affected by the housing benefit reduction of 25% of the rent, while 550 will be affected by the 14% reduction.

***Comment from partners***

Education about Homelessness

The YMCA's Schools Project works in Burton College but it was queried whether there was any way to engage with young people over the age of 18 who are contemplating leaving home.

A housing association suggested it could investigate the feasibility of sending information to its residents where they know there are 18-25 year olds living at home.

Benefits providers may be an alternative route. The implementation of "Bedroom Tax" might be a route to get information to people – for example, where there is a non-dependant, to give them info about their housing options.

***Comments from partners***

Support for parents

Support and advice is needed for parents on how to deal with problems which lead to youth homelessness. Parents may be able to tolerate difficulties with their children if they could see an end in sight.

Local Support Teams who work with families may need to understand better what the housing issues are in their area and the short- and long-term housing solutions available.

***Comments from partners***

From the Mediation Scheme

It would appear that 16 and 17 year olds are experiencing more problems at home.

***Comments from partners***

House Insurance

House insurers frequently ask if anyone in the household has a criminal conviction. Buildings insurance sometimes asks if anyone is receiving housing benefit. Although this will not be a matter on which the Homelessness Strategy can directly influence, policy recommendations to Central Government could be made.

***Comments from partners***

Private Landlords and Tenancy Management

A recurring problem is landlords allowing very large rent arrears to build up before evicting the tenant, despite advice being regularly given not to let this happen. However it can cost a landlord £1,000 to get a possession order. It has been known for the landlord to be unable to pay the mortgage because the tenant is not paying the rent and for this to lead to repossession by the mortgage lender.

***Comments from partners***

Mortgage Issues

Partners reported an increasing number of pensioners whose mortgage has not been paid off, perhaps because their endowment policy was not sufficient to pay off the mortgage at term.

***Comments from Partners***

Repossession

At the moment, for most mortgage lenders, there is nothing to be gained from repossession because they will not get enough money from selling the property and hence repossession figures remain low partly because of the depressed housing market.

## Appendix: Actions from the Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013

ACTION	Who By	By When	ESBC Resources	Outcome	2013 Update
<b>Cross-cutting actions</b>					
1: Promote the availability of information about avoiding homelessness.	ESBC in partnership with the Housing Options service	Quarterly starting March 2009	Corporate Communications Officer Trent & Dove contract	Households empowered to avoid homelessness	ES News has been used to promote homelessness prevention and the Housing Options service.
2: Provide individual housing needs assessment and one-to-one advice.	Housing Options service	December 2008	Trent & Dove contract	All customers empowered to avoid homelessness	All Housing Options customers are offered the one-to-one assessment. A large proportion of advice is now given over the telephone.
3: Integrate assistance to help households avoid homelessness.	Housing Options service	December 2008	Trent & Dove contract	Customers with Priority Need avoid homelessness	Housing Options officers provide assistance to prevent homelessness alongside statutory enquiries.
4: Develop and introduce a Deposit Guarantee Scheme.	ESBC	April 2009	Temporary worker CLG Grant	Guarantees help households secure tenancies	New-tenancy Finance Scheme now available.
5: Investigate the case for securing temporary accommodation from landlords and negotiate to secure such accommodation if value for money	ESBC in partnership with Trent & Dove	May 2009	Housing staff TA budget	Better value for money	The Council leases two units of temporary accommodation from Trent & Dove Housing.

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Who By</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>ESBC Resources</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>2013 Update</b>
6: Develop a fair charging policy for temporary accommodation so that funding can be redirected into prevention.	ESBC	June 2009	Housing staff	Funding redirected into prevention actions	With Housing Options now in-house they assess what level of contribution is fair on an individual case basis.
7: Provide customers in temporary accommodation secured by the Council with improved support.	Housing Options service	November 2008	Trent & Dove contract	Better service for customers	Housing Options keep in touch with clients in temporary accommodation and refer them to other support services where necessary.
8: Work to secure the provision of additional social rented housing	ESBC	On-going	Housing staff Planning Policy staff Planning Control staff	Additional social rented housing	Number of additional units secured since 2008, tbc
9: Review the impact of the Allocations Policy on homelessness on an annual basis and revised as necessary.	ESBC in partnership with Trent & Dove and other Housing Associations	Annually	Housing staff	Reduction in number of households needing to present as homeless	The Allocations Policy has been revised annually since 2008.

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Who By</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>ESBC Resources</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>2013 Update</b>
10: Monitor exclusions from the housing register and unsuccessful nominations	ESBC in partnership with Trent & Dove and other Housing Associations	Quarterly from October 2008	Housing staff	Impact on homeless households identified and addressed	Figures monitored at quarterly East Staffordshire Housing Forum – no problems identified to day
11: Engage with the Supporting People review of accommodation-based support	ESBC	On-going	Housing staff	Continued support for East Staffordshire secured	Review completed and support secured.
12: Engage with the Supporting People re-commissioning of Floating Support services	ESBC	On-going	Housing staff	Continued support for East Staffordshire secured	New contracts commissioned and support secured
13: Work with partners to make it easier to monitor the extent and nature of homelessness in the borough.	ESBC	October 2009	Housing staff	Consistent data collection	Alternative strategy implemented of referral to Housing Options
<b>Young People</b>					
14: Participate in the Staffordshire-wide youth homelessness partnership.	ESBC	On-going	Housing staff	County agencies play their part in prevention	This partnership was disbanded.

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Who By</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>ESBC Resources</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>2013 Update</b>
15: Work with the YMCA to convene an East Staffordshire Youth Homelessness Forum to take forward action on youth homelessness.	ESBC in partnership with the YMCA	October 2008	Housing staff	Forum up and running	Youth Homelessness Forum has met 6-monthly since 2009, regularly monitors youth homelessness and responds to it.
16: Introduce home visits in cases where young people report that they are being asked to leave the family home.	Housing Options service	October 2008	Trent & Dove contract	Home visits underway	Very low demand in practice. Clients can now be referred to the YMCA Mediation Scheme.
17: Work with the YMCA to develop, secure funding for, and implement appropriate family mediation provision.	ESBC in partnership with the YMCA	October 2010	Housing staff	Mediation being used and preventing homelessness	YMCA Mediation Scheme is now in place.
18: Work with partners to develop effective communication to young people about housing issues.	East Staffordshire Youth Homelessness Forum	July 2009	Housing staff	Young People aware of the issues	Schools work consisting of visits/talks in schools and colleges for 14-18 age group is being carried out by the YMCA.

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Who By</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>ESBC Resources</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>2013 Update</b>
19: Work with the YMCA to develop and implement emergency housing options for young people	ESBC	March 2010	Housing staff	16-17 year olds not placed in Bed & Breakfast	Case law has now determined that the County Council has primary responsibility for homeless people aged 16 and 17.
20. Work with partners to identify the best way of meeting the need for additional supported housing for young parents.	East Staffordshire Youth Homelessness Forum	December 2009	Housing staff	More supported accommodation for young parents	No change
21: Consider longer term options for providing housing advice to young people.	ESBC in partnership with Trent & Dove, Staffordshire Children's Trust and the YMCA	September 2010	Housing staff	Better and more easily accessible service for young people	No change
<b>Ex-Offenders</b>					
22: Work with partners to understand and prevent offender homelessness.	ESBC in partnership with the Housing Options service, Probation, YOS Stonham.	March 2010	Housing staff	An Action Plan to address issues.	The Council participates in regional NOMS training and arrangements

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Who By</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>ESBC Resources</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>2013 Update</b>
23. Work to understand and overcome the barriers Offenders face in securing private sector tenancies.	ESBC	April 2009	Temporary worker	More offenders secure private sector tenancies	As above. No specific barriers or solutions identified.
<b>Households suffering from Domestic Violence</b>					
24: Make the case to Staffordshire Supporting People for additional funding to maintain previous levels of Floating Support.	ESBC Stonham	On-going	Housing staff	Additional units of support	Outcome not known
25: Review domestic violence eviction policies at the East Staffordshire Housing Forum.	East Staffordshire Housing Forum	February 2009	Housing staff	Victims able to retain tenancy	Training held at the meeting in February 2009.

ACTION	Who By	By When	ESBC Resources	Outcome	2013 Update
<b>Private sector tenants whose tenancies are terminated</b>					
26: Review the Council's ways of working with the private rented sector.	ESBC	May 2009	Housing staff Benefits staff Legal staff Customer Services staff	Joined-up Services	Housing Standards, Housing Options and Housing Strategy now work more closely together.
27: Develop partnership working with landlords through the Private Sector Landlords Forum.	ESBC	April 2009	Temporary worker	Fewer private sector tenancies ended	Regular meetings of the Private Sector Landlords Forum, and a Landlords Newsletter also distributed to 600+ landlords regularly.
28: Raise the awareness of landlords and tenants about the options available to them to help sustain tenancies.	ESBC	April 2009	Temporary worker CLG Grant		Floating support services repeatedly promoted to landlords via the Landlords Newsletter. Temporary worker not employed.
29. Work with landlords so that they are prepared to make properties available to vulnerable and homeless households.	ESBC	April 2009	Temporary worker	More homeless and vulnerable households secure private sector tenancies	Carried out by existing staff.

ACTION	Who By	By When	ESBC Resources	Outcome	2013 Update
30: Develop fast-tracking of Housing Benefit claims for homeless households.	ESBC	December 2008	Housing staff Benefits staff		Fast track procedure in place and available to homeless households
<b>Actual and potential rough sleepers</b>					
31: Work with Supporting People on the future of an outreach service to rough sleepers.	ESBC	March 2009	Housing staff	Reduction in rough sleeping	The outreach service ceased with the opening of Reconnect.
32: Support and work with the YMCA, Midland Heart and other partners to implement the "Reconnect" project.	ESBC in partnership with the YMCA, Midland Heart and others	May 2009	Housing staff	Emergency access accommodation to prevent rough sleeping	Reconnect Project opened February 2011.
33: Work with partners to review how services for drug and alcohol mis-users can better contribute to homelessness prevention.	ESBC in partnership with others	December 2009	Housing staff	Possible further action	No progress.

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Who By</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>ESBC Resources</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>2013 Update</b>
<b>Households with Mortgage arrears</b>					
34: Monitor mortgage repossessions and respond accordingly	ESBC in partnership with the CAB	On-going from February 2009	Housing staff	Avoid further increase in mortgage repossession claims	Housing Strategy have continuously monitored mortgage repossession notifications.
35: Work with partners to respond to the risks of mortgage repossessions.	ESBC in partnership with the Housing Options service and the CAB	On-going	Housing staff Legal staff	Possible further action	All clients at risk are written to in order to offer help.