

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

<i>Name of Meeting</i>	Brooke Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<i>Date of Meeting</i>	13 July 2017
<i>Report Title</i>	Review of Homelessness
<i>Ward Relevance</i>	All
<i>Contact Officer</i>	John Hier, Housing and Regeneration Manager, Tel: 01788 533620
<i>Summary</i>	The Homelessness Scrutiny Sub-Group was established in response to recent increases in homelessness in the borough. Following a number of meetings and workshops, the sub-group has made a number of recommendations to help reduce homelessness going forward. The draft review report is appended for the committee's consideration.
<i>Financial Implications</i>	There are no financial implications arising from this report.
<i>Risk Management Implications</i>	There are no risk management implications arising from this report.
<i>Environmental Implications</i>	There are no environmental implications arising from this report.
<i>Legal Implications</i>	There are no legal implications arising from this report.
<i>Equality and Diversity</i>	No new or existing policy or procedure has been recommended.

Public Report to the Brooke Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13 July 2017

Review of Homelessness

Summary

The Homelessness Scrutiny Sub-Group was established in response to recent increases in homelessness in the borough. Following a number of meetings and workshops, the sub-group has made a number of recommendations to help reduce homelessness going forward. The draft review report is appended for the committee's consideration.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were agreed by the sub-group:

1. There is a focus on early intervention through the Trailblazer project and work with partners to better understand the complex, multiple issues of people approaching the service.
2. An annual workshop with partners and organisations be introduced to promote joined up thinking and minimise gaps in services.
3. The council continue working with local landlords via the Private Sector Leasing Scheme to lessen the need for B&B accommodation.

2. CONCLUSION

The review report will be submitted for approval to Cabinet on 4 September.

The committee will be provided with a progress report in February 2018.

Name of Meeting: Brooke Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting: 13 July 2017
Subject Matter: Review of Homelessness

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Document No.	Date	Description of Document	Officer's Reference	File Reference
1.	October 2016 – February 2017	The agendas, reports and minutes relating to this review can be found online at www.rugby.gov.uk by typing in 'Homelessness Scrutiny Sub Group' into the search box.		



REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS

July 2017

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SUB-GROUP MEMBERSHIP

The sub-group consisted of the following members:

Councillor ***Jerry Roodhouse*** (Chair)

Councillor ***Claire Edwards***

Councillor ***Belinda Garcia***

Councillor ***Noreen New***

Councillor ***Neil Sandison***

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Group would like to thank the following for their valuable contribution to this review:

- Bill Basra, Priority Families Co-ordinator, Warwickshire County Council
- Fiona Palmer, Manager of Rugby/Bedworth/Nuneaton/North Warwickshire/Coventry Wellbeing Hubs, Coventry and Warwickshire MIND

Partners present at the scrutiny workshop on 23 November 2016:

- Claire Brindley-Taylor (Bromford)
- Emily Vincent (Chapter 1)
- Carol Gallagher (Doorway)
- Shona Mellor (Doorway)
- Sarah Simpkins (Home Group)
- Brian Coleman (HOPE4)
- Joyce Woodings (HOPE4)
- Esther Barrett (P3)
- Joanne Howes (Rugby Citizen Advice Bureau)
- Emma Brown (St Basils)

The Group are also grateful to John Hier who supported them throughout the review process.

CHAIR'S FOREWORD

To follow

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse
Chair

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Sub-group proposes the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1.	There is a focus on early intervention through the Trailblazer project and work with partners to better understand the complex, multiple issues of people approaching the service.
2.	An annual workshop with partners and organisations be introduced to promote joined up thinking and minimise gaps in services.
3.	The council continue working with local landlords via the Private Sector Leasing Scheme to lessen the need for B&B accommodation.

1.1 Alignment with the Corporate Strategy

The review relates to the following corporate priorities:

Portfolio: Communities and Homes

We will: Ensure residents have a home that works for them and is affordable

2. OBJECTIVES

2.1 Background

At the overview and scrutiny work programme workshop on 2 March 2016, members considered a proposal for a review about homelessness and rough sleeping. The overview and scrutiny chairs agreed this review should be included in the work programme for 2016/17 and this was approved by Brooke Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The one page strategy for the review was agreed by Brooke and Overview Scrutiny Committee on 14 July 2016. A sub-group was appointed and began its work in October 2016.

2.2 The One Page Strategy

The 'one page strategy' is the name given to the scoping document for the review. It defines the task and the improvements being aimed for and how these are going to be achieved. The review's one page strategy, noted by the sub-group at the first meeting in October 2016, is as follows:

What is the broad topic area?

Homelessness

What is the specific topic area?

Exploration of how the council can help to make an impact in the alleviation of homelessness. A particular concern that has prompted the review is the strain placed on night shelters during winter 2015/16.

What is the ambition of the review?

To reduce the pressure on accommodation for homeless people.

How well does the service perform at the moment?

The use of council's Housing Options Team's drop-in service has increased, resulting in an increase in the number of preventions of homelessness. The Private Sector Leasing scheme provides a cheaper and more satisfactory alternative to B&B, and is expected increase turnover in council housing stock. Members should recognise action that the council is taking but the review is not primarily about scrutinising the performance of existing council services. It is instead concerned with seeking new possibilities for improvements outside the present statutory framework: with the council possibly acting as a facilitator or community leader; but possibly as a direct participant too.

Who shall we consult about the current service and about how we can improve it?

Any organisations or individuals active in the field, together with homeless people past and present, will be potential sources of information. Hope4, Citizens' Advice, the Food Bank, Futures Unlocked, the Homelessness Forum and housing-related support providers would be particularly valuable participants.

What other help do we need?

Those described above plus relevant Housing Options staff.

How long should it take?

Report to committee on 8 December 2016 – though the review participants may be able to facilitate some improvements during the life of the review.

What will be the outcome?

This is hard to define beyond a general statement about making improvements to the management of homeless and prevention of rough sleeping during the winter. It is suggested that, at the end of its first meeting, the sub-group selects particular areas of focus where it seems that improvements can realistically be made.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

The sub-group met three times between October 2016 and February 2017. The group also held a scrutiny workshop in November 2016. The evidence that the group considered included:

- Introductory briefing setting out the context for the review
- Meeting with Manager of Coventry and Warwickshire MIND
- Workshop with partners and Council officers considering:
 - current issues and potential legislative changes
 - who is at risk of homelessness
 - key projects and work going on in the borough
 - any gaps in services that can be identified
 - ideas going forward to prevent and respond to homelessness
- Written brief from Warwickshire County Council's Priority Families Co-ordinator on linkages between Priority Families Programme and DCLG Homelessness Early Intervention Project.
- P1E statistics

3.2 Access to evidence

The sub-group review papers are available online at www.rugby.gov.uk/meetings in the section '*agendas, reports and minutes*', and can be found by selecting Homelessness Scrutiny Sub-Group.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Policy context

4.1.1 Homelessness duties

Housing Act 1997 – Part 7 – councils have a duty to provide suitable housing for priority need groups such as families with children, disabled households. If settled accommodation isn't available then accommodation must be made available in the short-term. This only applies to priority groups.

Homelessness Act 2002 – extended priority need groups to include care leavers, 16 and 17 year olds, care leavers, vulnerable as a result of leaving the armed forces, prison or custody and people fleeing violence.

Homelessness Reduction Bill (likely to come into effect in 2018) – emphasis on prevention of homelessness and the new duty to assist those threatened with homelessness within 56 days. New duties to assess, prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants, especially among non-priority households who are currently not entitled to rehousing.

4.2 Introduction

4.2.1 Subject Area

Increase in homelessness and how this can be addressed

4.2.2 Background

The council has seen significant increases in homelessness over the last couple of years. Homeless acceptances were 106 in 2013/14, this increased to 171 in 2014/15 and 179 in 2015/16. The figure is likely to be similar for 2016/17.

Preventing homelessness is key for the council and this is reflected in the Rugby Homelessness Strategy developed with the Homelessness Forum. Priorities are:

1. Understand housing need
2. Sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness
3. Provide more options in the private sector for people in housing need

In terms of figures, please see tables on pages 13 to 21.

4.2.3 Main Issues

- The Housing Options Team is seeing more single people with multiple issues including mental health and substance misuse.
- Large numbers of households losing private sector accommodation – served with Notice to Quit.
- Cost of private sector accommodation

- Limited supply of affordable housing
- Numbers of homelessness in Band 1 has increased to around 100 from around 30 a couple of years ago.
- Numbers in B&B at its peak was 26 in August 2016 and are now down to 10 due to the Private Sector Leasing Scheme.

4.2.4 What we are currently doing

- Introduced a 2-year funded scheme called the ASH Project – floating support for young people and those with mental health issues
- Tenancy Ready training – trained 22 young people so far in 2016
- Employed a Housing Officer in the Estates Team to support people in their tenancies looking at debt management, accessing employment, etc so vulnerable people can sustain tenancies.
- Introduced a Private Sector Leasing Scheme – which includes Houses in Multiple Occupation. We have 15 units of accommodation at present – more due in October and November.
- Using capital receipts (Right to Buy) to consider purchasing properties for using as temporary accommodation in private sector
- Working with partners such as the Citizen Advice Bureau who provide us with a prevention service that compliments ours as part of their Service Level Agreement with the council
- Hope 4 – drop in service we work with the users of the service to try and re-house them. Not always possible if ineligible for housing, history of arrears, anti-social behaviour, criminality.
- New Housing Related Support Providers Home Group, Chapter 1, St Basils and P3 – support for vulnerable groups at risk of homelessness
- Now analysing approaches to understand why they are approaching the service. A six week analysis is underway until end of October – working together with Warwickshire County Council and the other districts and boroughs.

4.2.5 Going Forward

- Prioritise the use of private sector properties through the Council's Private Sector Leasing Scheme.
- Look at options to provide additional units of accommodation through property purchase in the private sector which will include the provision of shared accommodation.
- Prioritise tenancy ready training to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness.
- Following the receipt of £865,000 government funding for Warwickshire, establish the Trailblazer Project by summer 2017 prioritising the top 3 reasons for homelessness in Rugby and across the county, which are: loss of private sector accommodation, being asked to leave parental home and domestic abuse.

- Given the significant numbers of households approaching the Housing Options Team who have a mental health issue, work with mental health services to increase the provision of mental health support services for households with mental health issues.

4.2.6 Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer

Government put £20 million into trailblazer pilots to come up with innovative ways to introduce the new legislation. The pilot will need to:

- Collaborate with other services to identify at-risk households and target interventions well before they are threatened with eviction - 56 days;
- Offer help to a wider group of people than just those owed the main homelessness duty; and
- Test new, innovative approaches to preventing homelessness

The Trailblazer bid secured £865,000 across the county for 3-years. Funding will cover 6 posts across the county based in Rugby and will also include new IT equipment and software.

We'll look at early intervention for households including those losing private sector tenancies, violent relationship breakdown, parents no longer willing to accommodate, people with rent arrears, affordability, health issues including mental health and substance misuse.

4.3 Workshop

A workshop took place on 23 November 2016 where representatives from a number of organisations were invited to discuss the following topics:

1. *Current issues and potential legislative changes*
2. *Who is at risk of homelessness*
3. *Key projects and work going on in the borough*
4. *Any gaps in services that can be identified*
5. *Ideas going forward to prevent and respond to homelessness*

The key messages of the workshop are:

- New homelessness legislation highlighted as changes to duty and prevention
- Caps on HB under 35s
- High costs of private accommodation including deposits
- More households with complex needs
- More accommodation for single people
- Mental health
- More support – pre tenancy work and vulnerable groups
- Joint funding approaches partnerships with third sector

The workshop has proven to be a useful tool to gather information and build stronger relationships with partners.

4.4 Linkages between Priority Families Programme and DCLG Homelessness Early Intervention Project

Bill Basra, Priority Families Co-ordinator at Warwickshire County Council, was invited attend the Group's meeting on 27 February 2017. Unfortunately, Mr Basra was unable to attend but provided a briefing paper which was circulated at the last meeting of the sub-group in February 2017. The following was highlighted:

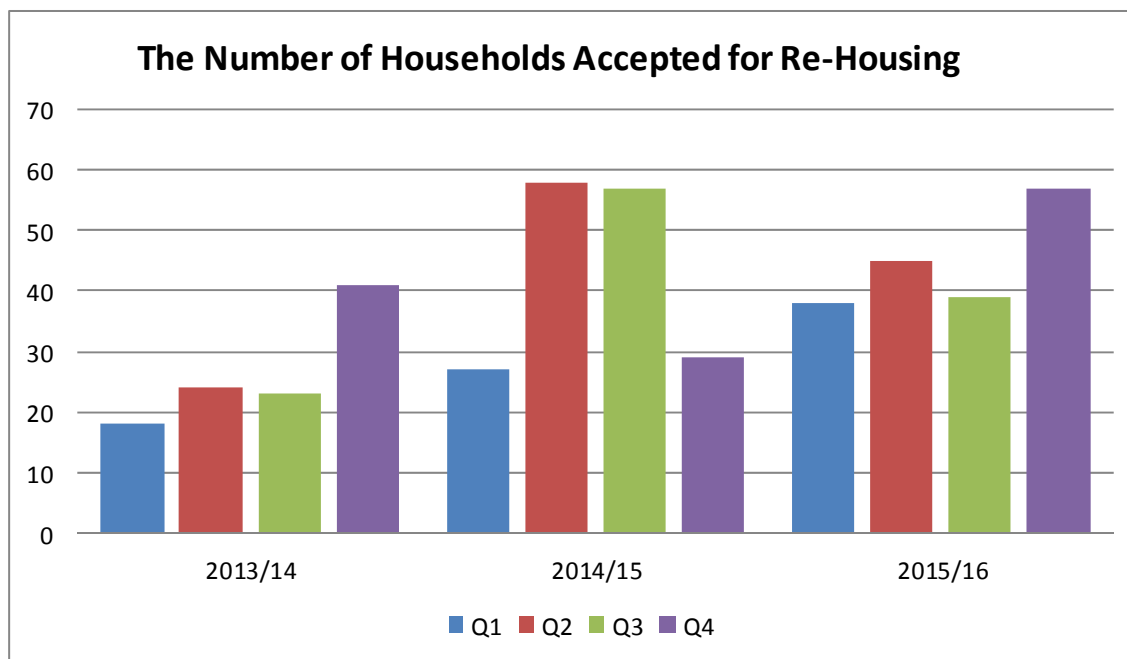
4.4.1 Links with the DCLG Trailblazer Project

Since January and the notification of the successful application, as Priority Families Co-ordinator, Mr Basra has attended the Project Implementation Group as a representative from the Children and Families Unit. The three priority areas:

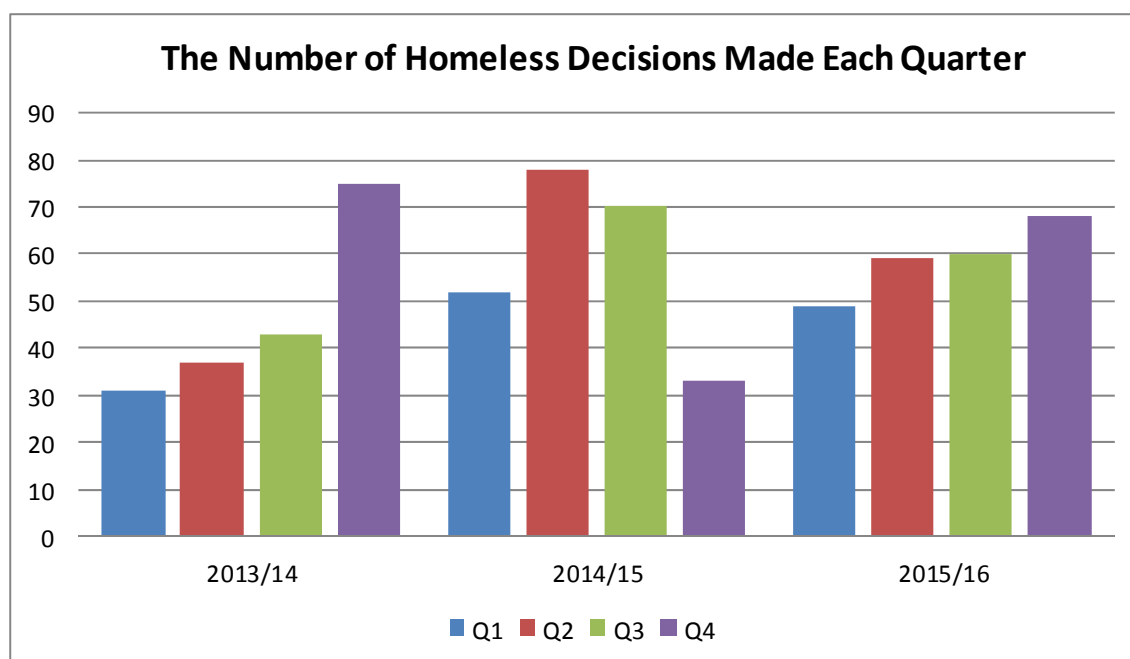
- Termination of Assured Shorthold tenancy
- Violent relationship breakdown, involving partner
- Parents no longer willing to accommodate

At least two of these have direct overlaps with both the Priority Families Programme and on a wider level with the business of the Children and Families Unit. Close co-operation, therefore, within the project is of mutual benefit and it is hoped will lead to a sustainable model of collaborative working in the future.

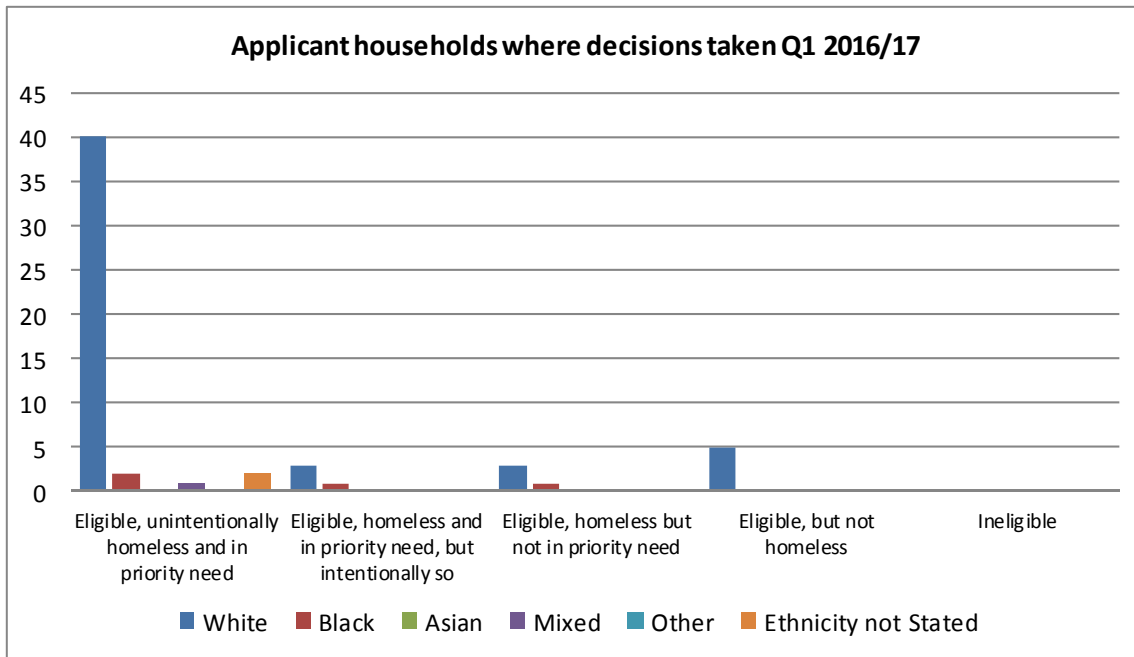
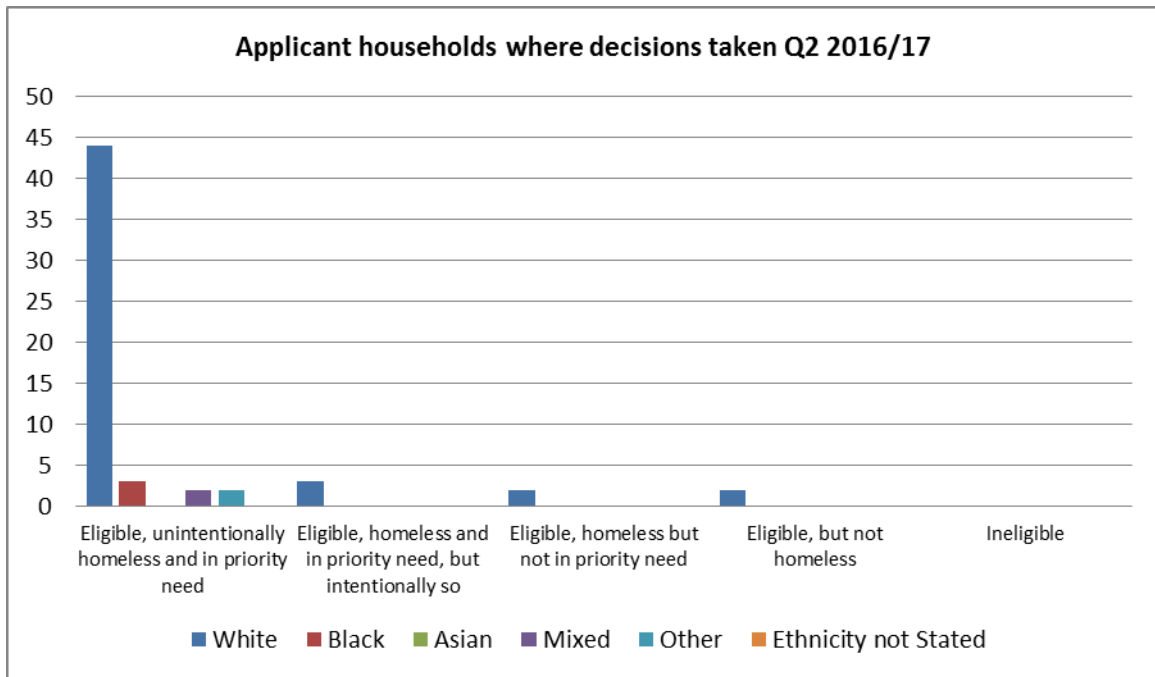
P1E Statistics



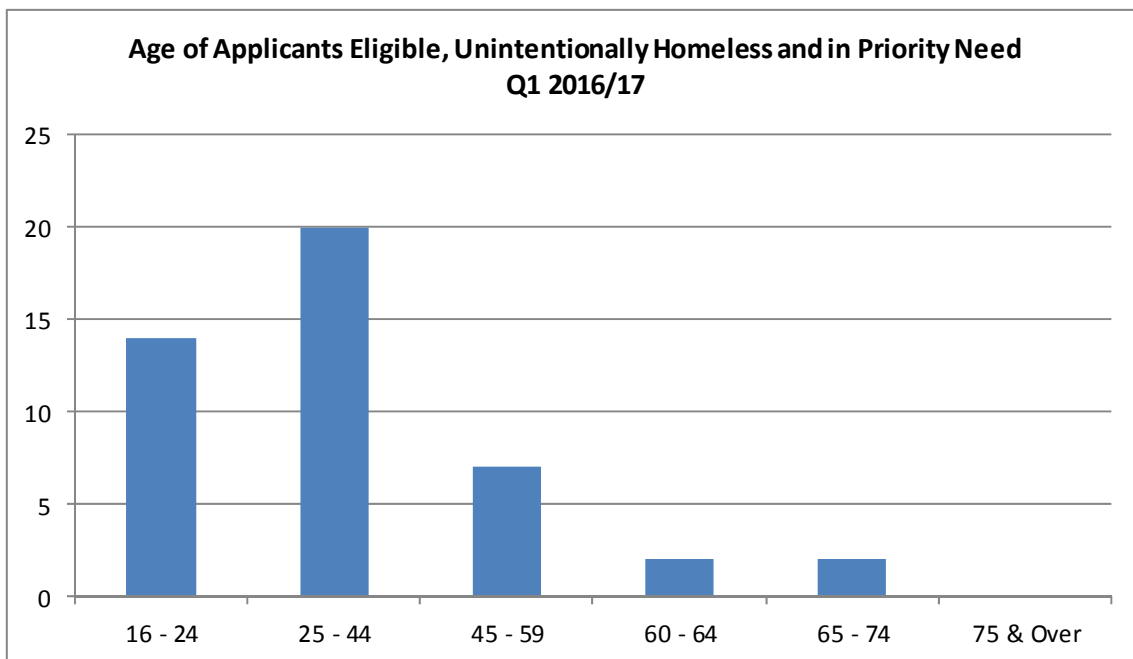
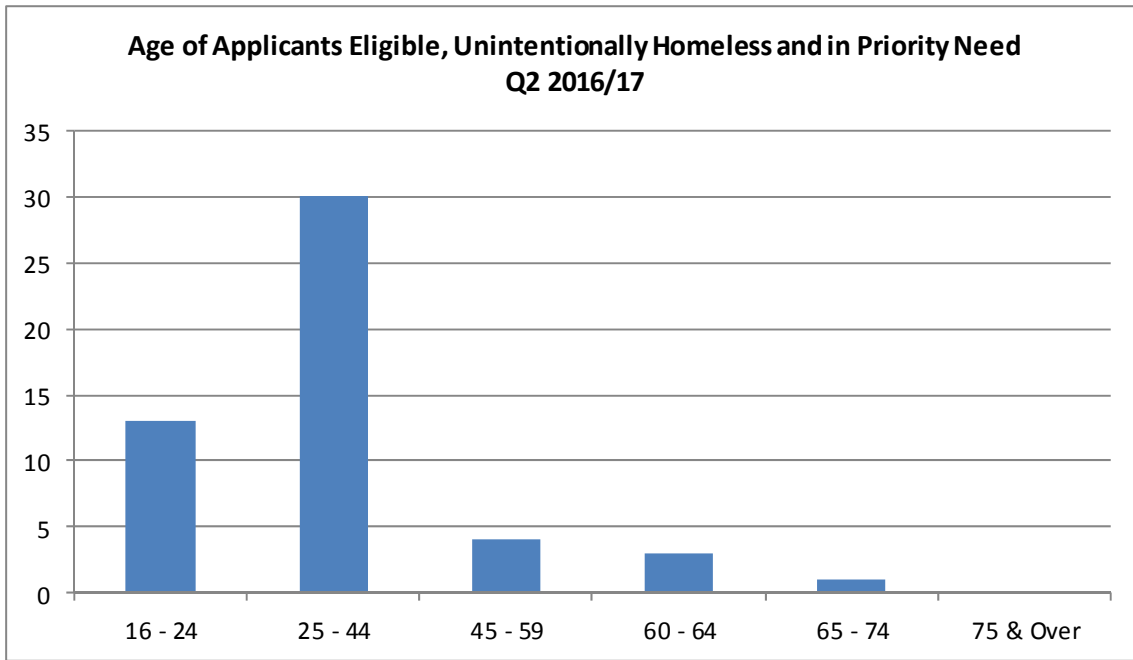
Over the past three years, there seems to have been a steady increase in the number of households accepted for re-housing, there has been spikes in all three years, most notably the double spike of Q2 and Q3 in 2014/15.



As with acceptances, there has been a steady increase in the number of homeless decisions made each quarter, Q4 on 2014/15 saw an unusual dip, bringing figures down to Q1 2013/14 levels, this dip subsequently recovered however.

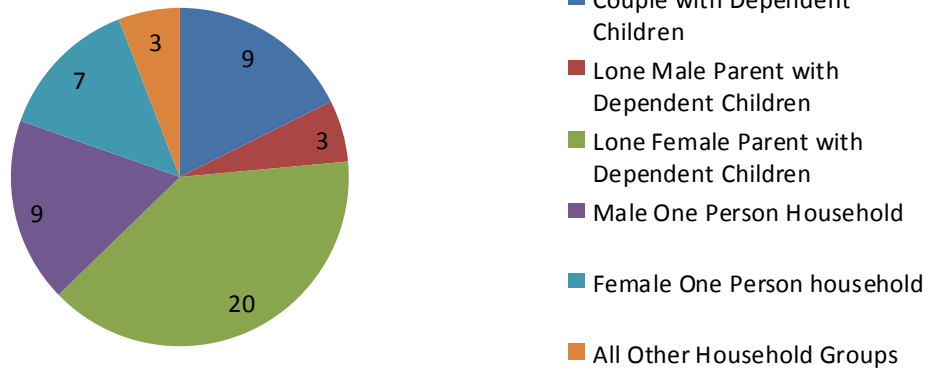


Looking at both of the previous quarters from 2016/17 it is safe to assume that decisions are being made at a steady and consistent pace with similar results and the exact same amount of decisions being made in both Q's – 58.

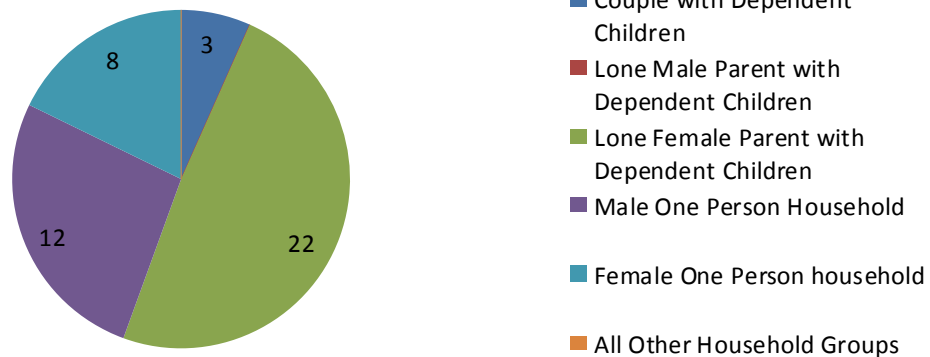


There has been a rise of 6 applicants in Q2 compared to Q1. The most significant change came within the 25-44 age group, there were ten more cases in Q2 than in Q1.

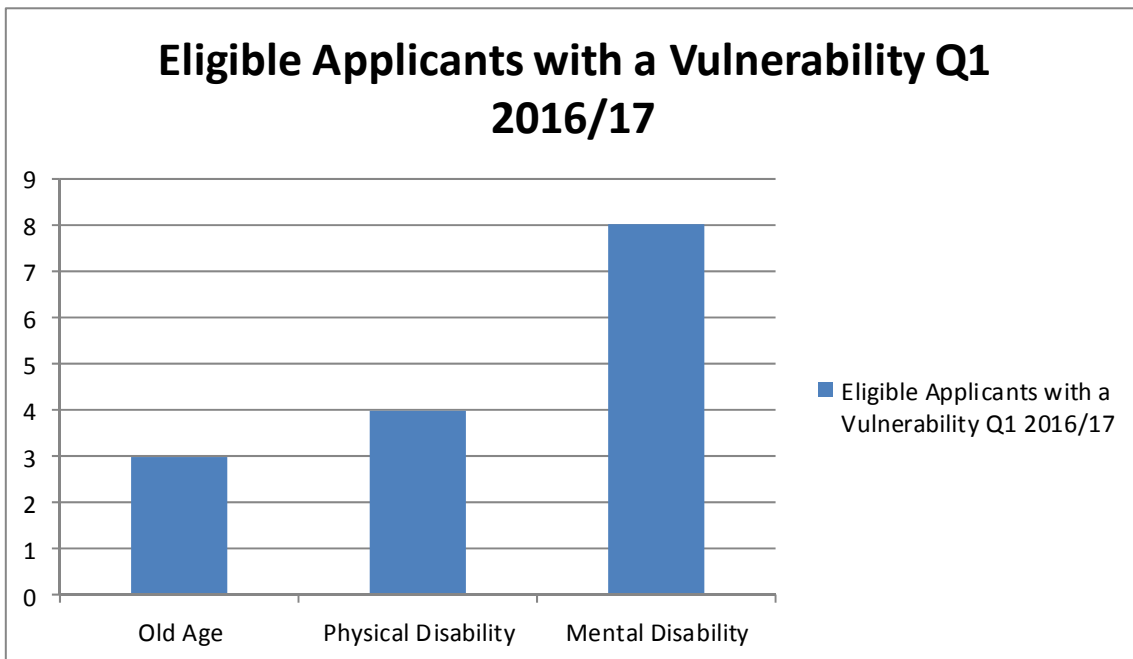
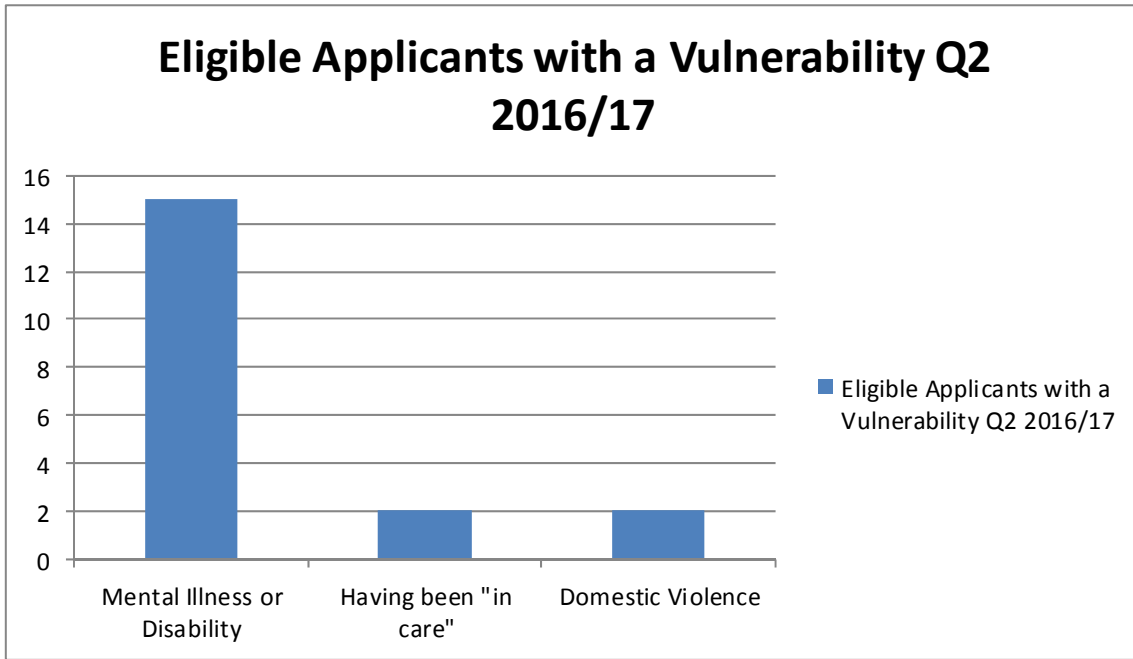
Applicant Households Eligible for Assistance, Unintentionally Homeless and in Priority Need by Household Type Q2 2016/17



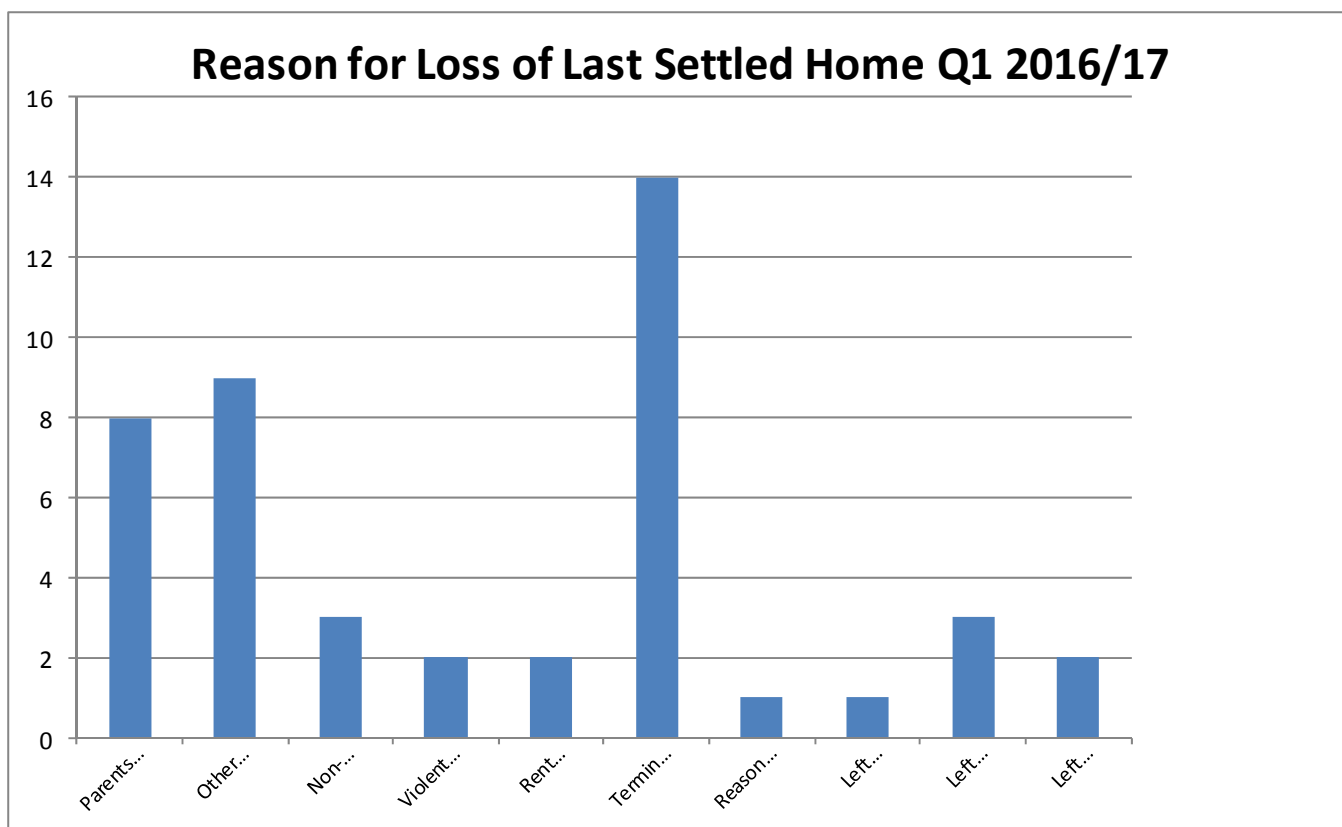
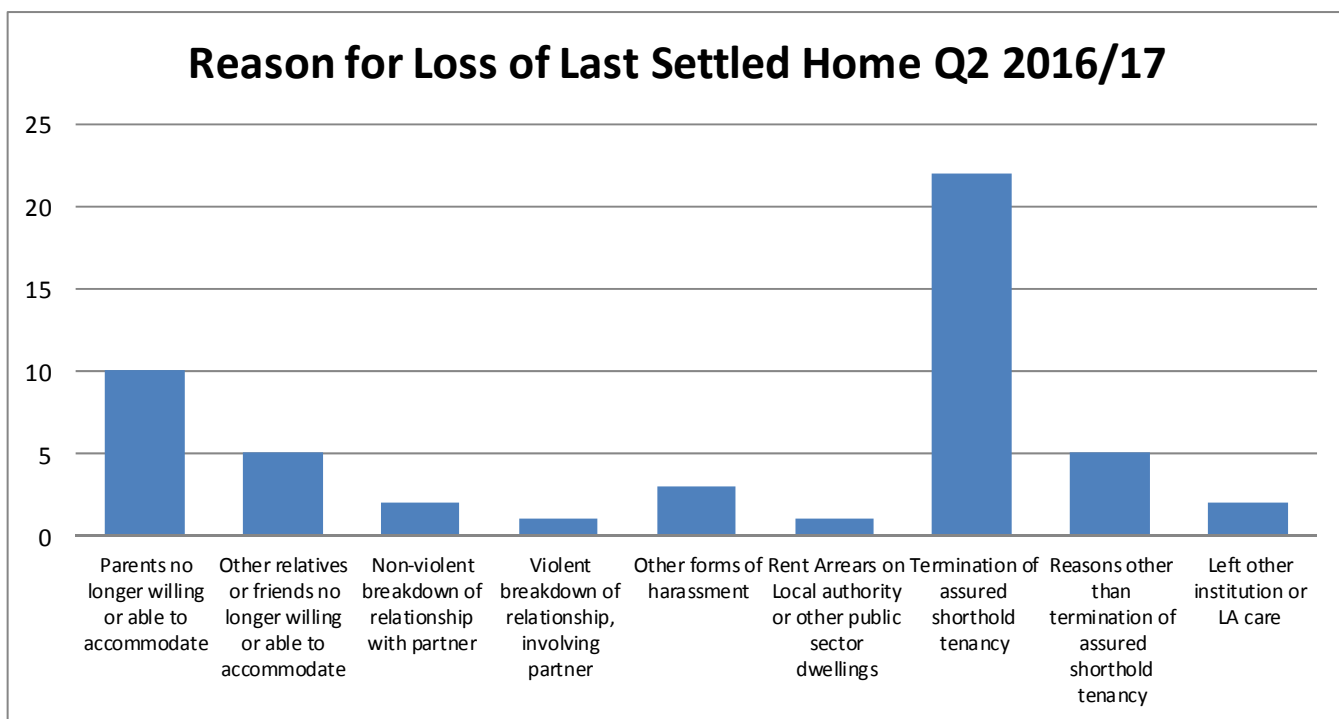
Applicant Households Eligible for Assistance, Unintentionally Homeless and in Priority Need by Household Type Q1 2016/17



Between Q1 and Q2 there has been a significant increase in the number of couples with dependent children who are eligible; there has also been an increase in lone male parents with dependent children.

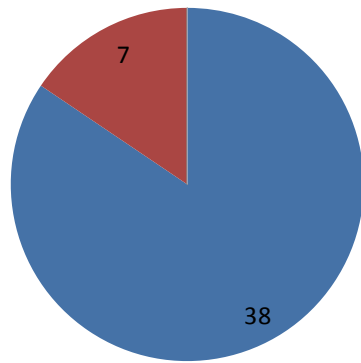


Looking at both Q1 and Q2, the mainstay seems to be applicants with mental illness, the number doubling between Q1 and Q2.



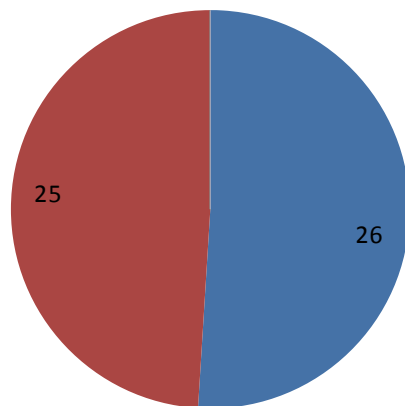
From looking at the period between Q1 and Q2, it is clear that Termination of assured shorthold tenancy is the major reason why people are losing their homes.

Immediate Outcome Where Applicant Household Found to be Eligible, Unintentionally Homeless and in Priority Need Q1 2016/17



- Applicant placed in temporary accommodation for the foreseeable future
- Applicant owed a main duty but either (a) remains in accomm from which accepted as homeless or (b) is making own arrangements for temporary accom (previously "Homeless at home")

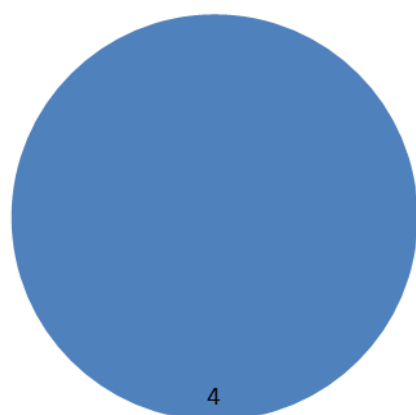
Immediate Outcome Where Applicant Household Found to be Eligible, Unintentionally Homeless and in Priority Need Q2 2016/17



- Applicant placed in temporary accommodation for the foreseeable future
- Applicant owed a main duty but either (a) remains in accomm from which accepted as homeless or (b) is making own arrangements for temporary accom (previously "Homeless at home")

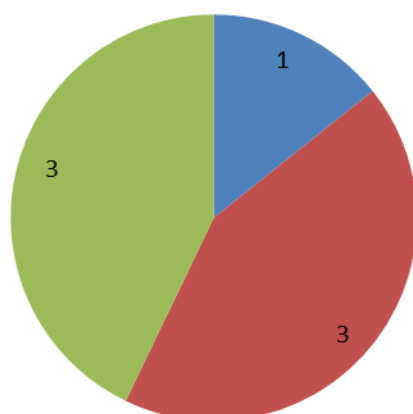
Over the first two Q's of 2016/17, there has only been two immediate outcomes of those found homeless – placed into temporary accommodation or they are owed a main duty, during the last Q the stats showed the two were near enough even.

Homelessness Prevented - Household Able to Remain in Home Q2 2016/17



- Providing other assistance that will enable someone to remain in accommodation in the private or social rented sector

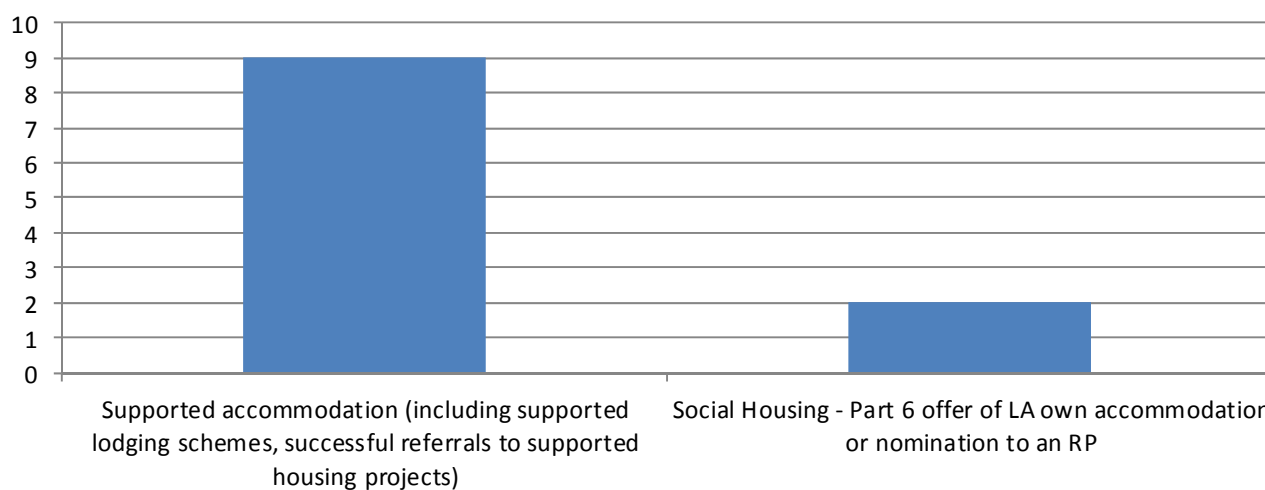
Homelessness Prevented - Household Able to Remain in Home Q1 2016/17



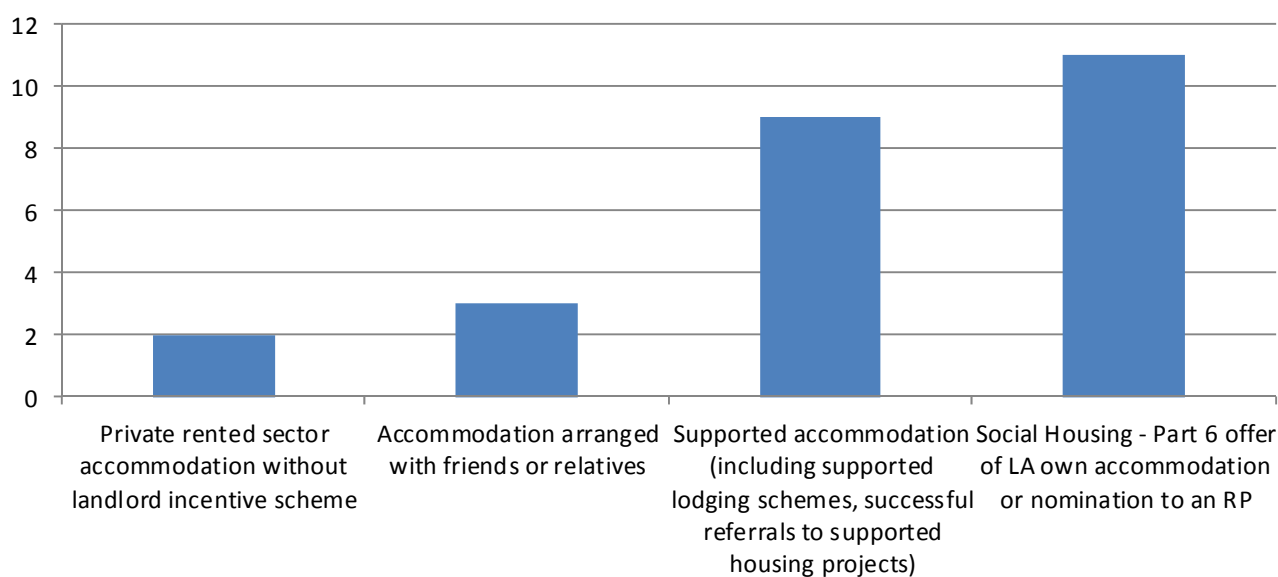
- Mediation using external or internal trained family mediators
- Resolving rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sector
- Negotiation or legal advocacy to ensure that someone can remain in accommodation in the private rented sector

Between Q1 and 2 of 2016/17 there has been a drop in the amount of cases of people being able to remain in their own homes, there now seems to be only one main reason however – the people are receiving other assistance to enable them to remain in accommodation.

Homelessness Prevented or Relieved-Household Assisted to Obtain Alternative Accommodation Q2 2016/17



Homelessness Prevented or Relieved-Household Assisted to Obtain Alternative Accommodation Q1 2016/17



There has been a drop in cases of homelessness being prevented via obtaining alternative accommodation, there is however now just two main ways that have been used – supported accommodation and social housing.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The group drew the following conclusions from the evidence that it gathered:

- *Concerns highlighted by partner organisations about the high costs of private rented accommodation, which is making this tenure inaccessible for many households in Rugby on low incomes.*
- *Limited numbers of affordable housing exacerbates the problems of affordability in the private sector.*
- *Increases in households approaching services with mental health issues and other complex needs.*
- *Changes to Benefit regulations including the under 35s Local Housing Allowance cap will restrict options further for younger single people.*
- *The council has seen significant increases in the numbers of homeless households and people accessing B&B accommodation. The council accepted 106 homeless households in 2013-14, by 2016-17 this had increased to 168.*
- *It was agreed that members will be kept informed of the progress of the Trailblazer project via the Housing Member Conversation.*
- *Recommendations and related actions will also be uploaded to the Rugby Performance Monitoring System to allow members to monitor ongoing progress.*
- *'Mental health support in housing' will be submitted as a review topic to the annual Overview and Scrutiny Workshop taking place on Wednesday 8 March.*
- *A report on the outcomes of the review will be submitted for consideration and to Brooke Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2017 and to Cabinet in September 2017.*