

1. Homelessness Statistical Review

- 1.1. Under the Homelessness Act 2002, all housing authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district.
- 1.2. The current Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy was agreed in 2020 and expires this year. This strategy was proposed as a two-year document so that a new version could be established after the longer term implications of COVID-19 were fully understood.
- 1.3. Since this strategy was developed, there have been significant changes in the housing landscape, the cost of living and rising homelessness levels. Whilst many of the challenges the council currently faces are a continuation of existing issues, a review has been completed to determine whether the existing priorities continue to reflect the needs of our clients or whether they require updating to reflect our latest needs.
- 1.4. This paper sets out our review of the current situation in Lewisham. It provides a statistical review of trends in homelessness approaches and underlying causes, activity in preventing and relieving homelessness, cohorts that may be more likely to become homeless or be threatened with homelessness and the profile of households experiencing homelessness. The analysis focusses on data collected between 2019/20 and 2022/23 which is intended to provide a summary of any changes or trends since the publication of the councils last 'Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-22'. This is intended to act as an evaluative tool to be used alongside the review of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.

2. Summary

- Homeless approaches are increasing. Lewisham has seen a 31% increase in homeless approaches since the financial year of 2019/20.
- Single people continue to be the most represented in those applying as homeless (58% of all applications in 2021/22) followed by households with children (39% in 2021/22).
- People approaching the Council for assistance due to exclusion from 'family and friends' continues to be the major cause of homelessness, accounting for 28% of approaches in 2019/20 and rising to 32% of approaches in 2021/22.
- Domestic abuse homeless approaches are increasing locally and nationally. This accounted for 5% of all acceptances in 2019/20 which has increased to 7% in 2022/23 (year to date).
- When comparing current prevention rates to the pre-covid rate, successful preventions are 10% higher now than pre-covid.
- The rough sleeping count in November 2020 identified 12 people sleeping on the streets in Lewisham. This reduced to 7 in November 2021.
- Analysis of those applying as homeless since the publication of the last strategy shows greater proportions have a physical illness or disability, experience of domestic abuse, offending history and/or history of repeat homelessness. However, whilst statistically smaller a clear trend when reviewing change over time is the increase in the number of applicants for people with support needs related to young people and care leavers since 2020.

3. Approaches

- 3.1. Homelessness has increased during the last ten years and remains high, with 3,723 households approaching the council for homelessness assistance in 2021/22. This is an increase of 31% since the publication of the current version of the strategy in 2020.
- 3.2. During the publication of the existing homelessness strategy the number of

homelessness acceptances had increased significantly. Since then, we have succeeded in preventing a higher rate of households from becoming homeless and as a result seen a considerable reduction in the number of main duty acceptances being made. It is likely that this is also partially the result the moratorium on evictions introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.3. The below table shows the total number of homelessness approaches acceptances made in the past 4 financial years.

Table 1 – Approaches to the service, and main duty acceptances by year

Year	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23 (YTD)
Approaches	2,973	2,833	3,120	3,723	2,412
Acceptances	888	729	550	326	569

3.4. Whilst there have not been significant changes to the most common reasons for homelessness, these causes of homelessness have become more prevalent. These are primarily:

- **Family / Friends Eviction** – People approaching the Council for assistance due to exclusion from ‘family and friends’ continues to constitute the major cause of homelessness, accounting for 28% of approaches in 2019/20 and rising to 32% of approaches in 2021/22. Generally, family exclusions occur when adult children remain in the family home and as a result the household becomes overcrowded.

- **Private sector evictions** – There continues to be an increasing percentage of private landlords choosing to increase their rent in line with market prices, or choosing to no longer rent out their properties resulting in them disposing of the properties altogether. In 2019/20, this accounted for 19% of all acceptances which has increased to 26% in 2022/23 (year to date).

- **Fleeing violence / harassment** – There has been a national increase in the number of domestic violence and harassment cases reported leading to significantly higher levels of those fleeing their homes and seeking alternative secure accommodation. This accounted for 5% of all acceptances in 2019/20 which has increased to 7% in 2022/23 (year to date).

Table 2 – Most common reasons for homelessness by year

Most common reasons for homelessness	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
Family no longer willing or able to accommodate	645	699	1055	934	897
End of private rented tenancy – assured shorthold tenancy	681	463	315	555	689
Domestic abuse	118	154	229	291	247

4. Prevention & Relief

4.1. Since the publication of the last version of the strategy, 2,067 people have been

prevented from becoming homeless in Lewisham. The number of people prevented from becoming homeless peaked at 680 during the publication of the current strategy in 2019/20 and has decreased since then. However, it should be noted that this is likely owing to the governments ban on evictions during the Covid-19 pandemic resulting in a higher number of successful preventions than usual. When comparing current prevention rates to the pre-covid rate, successful preventions are 10% higher now than pre-covid.

Table 3 – Number of households owed a prevention duty, and positive outcomes by year

Year	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22
Prevention duty owed	1520	1482	1443	1311
Number of positive preventions	491	680	642	554

- 4.2. Since a return to 'business as usual' the success rate of prevention activity has decreased to from 51% in 2020/21 to a current prevention rate of 34%. Both the economic downturn in the last year and changing housing market are contributing factors. Given Lewisham's lack of availability of social and council housing, and record waiting lists for accommodation, by far one of the key tools that enables us to prevent homelessness is by supporting people to remain in their private rented sector properties, or supporting applicants to find alternative PRS accommodation.
- 4.3. As made clear in the councils new Accommodation Procurement Strategy, the council and London more widely are experiencing a recent sharp increase in rental prices and sharp decrease in the supply of private rented sector accommodation. The council's Accommodation Supply Team procured 95 PRS properties for move-on between April – September 2022, down from 182 over the same period in 2020 and 179 in 2021. Across London, the number of properties listed to rent in the first quarter of 2022 was 35% lower than the pre-COVID quarterly average.
- 4.4. This is significantly impacting on our services ability to achieve prevention outcomes through the private rented sector. Currently just 47% of applicants who are threatened with homeless due to eviction from a private rented sector property, are successfully prevented from becoming homeless (down from 58% in 2020/21). We have also observed a decrease in successful negotiation or mediation activity to prevent an eviction, which reduced from 120 in 2019/20 to 45 in 2020/21. This is linked to the fact that many landlords report that they intend to sell their properties due to reduced cash flow caused by higher interest rates. Additionally, many landlords took the opportunity of the strong sales market during 2021, supported by the Stamp Duty holidays, to sell their properties.
- 4.5. The continued increase in exclusion from 'family and friends' is another contributing factor to decreasing prevention rates. Of those prevented from becoming homeless, the most common reason for approaching the council for support was threat of eviction from family. Figures show that the positive prevention rate for this group reduced by 10% from 262 in 2020/21 to 171 in 2021/22. The Council's means to prevent this cause of homelessness are generally limited to an offer of private rented accommodation or rehousing through the Allocations scheme and this is likely a knock-on effect of low supply of PRS.
- 4.6. Other notable trends include the fluctuation in prevention outcomes for households with children. The recent drop in positive prevention outcomes is mainly owing to a drop in prevention for the number of households with children. Whilst the number of positive preventions only dropped by 40 between 19/20 and 20/21, overall there was

a net reduction of 136 positive preventions for households with children. However, it is likely that these figures are slightly skewed as there was a higher number of successful outcome for single people during this period due to the governments everyone-in initiative.

Table 4 - Reason for positive prevention outcome

Reason Prevention Duty ended	2019	2020	2021	2022
Secured alternative accommodation for 12 or more months	125	136	255	203
Secured alternative accommodation for 6 months	124	159	212	178
Secured existing accommodation for 12 or more months	89	101	31	48
Secured existing accommodation for 6 months	153	284	144	129
Total positive preventions	491	680	642	558

Table 5 – Most common activities taken to prevent homelessness

Positive Prevention Activity	No. positive preventions			
	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Accommodation secured by local authority or organisation delivering housing options service	95	93	154	147
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, with financial payment	103	109	150	87
Supported housing provided	35	43	63	76
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, without financial payment	41	46	73	75
Negotiation/mediation/advocacy work to prevent eviction/repossession	78	120	45	51
Housing related support to sustain accommodation	15	24	24	45
Negotiation/mediation work to secure return to family or friend	4	17	41	33

4.7. The trend of outcomes for households owed a relief duty differs slightly from the trend seen in prevention activity. Since the publication of the last version of the strategy, 4,224 people have been relieved from homelessness in Lewisham. Whilst the number of positive relief outcomes decreased in 2021/22, the success rate of relief activity is higher as a proportion of those owed a relief duty. This success rate increased from 38% in 2020/21 to 45% in 2021/22.

Table 6 – Number of households owed a relief duty, and positive outcomes by year

Year	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Relief duty owed	1,688	1,717	1,368	1,139
No. positive relief outcomes	411	506	582	451

4.8. The increase in positive relief outcomes in 20/21 is owing to a growth in the number of single people secured accommodation. One observable trend is an increase in the number of people being placed into supported housing. This had been enabled by the governments 'everyone-in' initiative, the implementation of a new grant-funded rough sleeping pathway, and improved working relationships with the single vulnerable adult's pathway. However, this trend has reversed more recently with the drop in

positive relief outcomes in 21/22 largely owing to a drop in outcomes for single clients.

- 4.9. The recent drop in the number of successful relief outcomes follows a similar trend to prevention activity, for example including a drop in accommodation secured by the local authority and a drop in help to secure accommodation found by applicants. This is likely a knock-on effect of low supply of PRS described above.

Table 7 – Most common activities taken to end the relief duty by year

Relief activity	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Supported housing provided	102	131	135	180
Accommodation secured by local authority or organisation delivering housing options service	164	176	264	149
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, with financial payment	33	91	99	54
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, without financial payment	16	22	25	24

5. Other areas of interest

- 5.1. Areas of change or significance since the publication of the last strategy are the change in the household composition and profile of support needs of those approaching Lewisham as homeless.

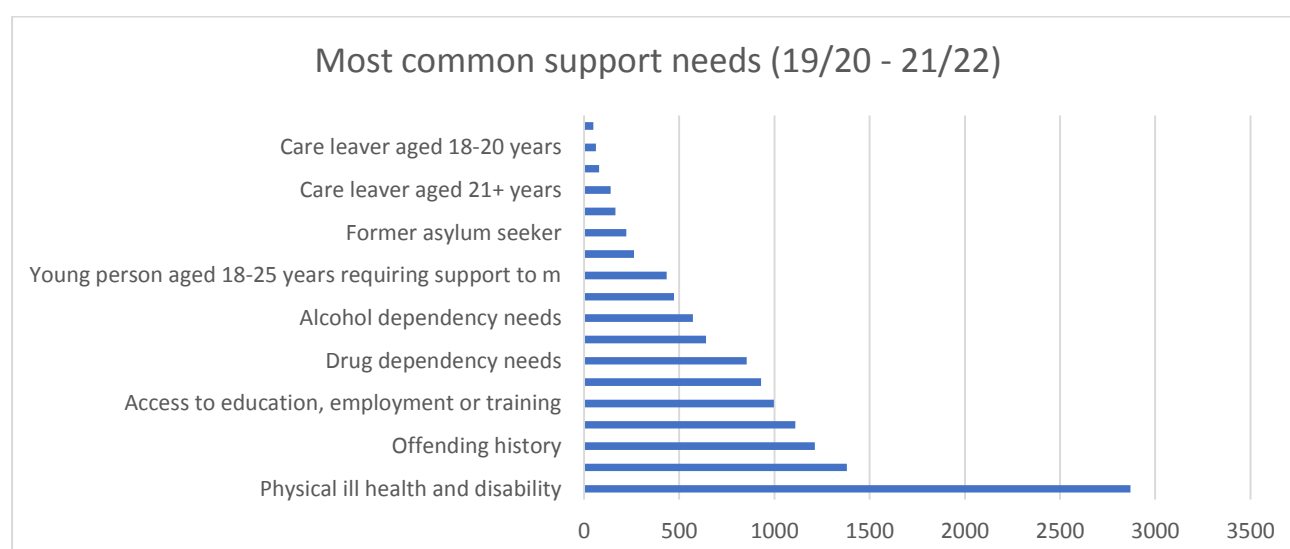
Support needs

- 5.2. The table below summarises the proportion of clients approaching the service who declared they had a support need during their application.

Table 8 – Number of applicants who declared a support needs by year

Year	19-20	20-21	21-22
Support Need Declared	1684	2005	2448
As proportion of all applications	59%	64%	65%

Most common support needs since last strategy



- 5.3. Analysis of those applying as homeless since the publication of the last strategy shows greater proportions have a physical illness or disability, experience of

domestic abuse, offending history and/or history of repeat homelessness.

- 5.4. Whilst statistically smaller, a clear trend when reviewing change over time is the increase in the number of applicants for people with support needs related to young people and care leavers since 2020 (as shown in table X). This has prompted more partnership opportunities and new ways of working with children's social care, including the implementation of a joint working protocol for young homeless people and supporting people leaving care to access social housing. The council also commissions a The Young Persons Pathway, which is made up of 134 units, 58 of which are 24 hour support. This pathway includes an assessment centre for homeless 16 and 17 year old, and dedicated Care Leaver provision.

Table 9 - Largest increases in support needs by year

Support Need	19-20	20-21	21-22	% change
Young parent requiring support to manage independently	17	27	35	106%
At risk of/has experienced abuse (non-domestic)	151	213	277	83%
Young person aged 16-17 years	43	48	73	70%
Young person aged 18-25 years requiring support to manage independently	115	134	184	60%
Care leaver aged 21+ years	42	36	62	48%
At risk of/has experienced domestic abuse	395	470	515	30%

Profile of applicants

- 5.5. The table below shows approaches to the homelessness service by household composition per year.

Table 10 – Most common household types by year

Household Type	19-20	%	20-21	%	21-22	%
Single Person	1,453	51%	2,036	65%	2,175	58%
Household with children	1,261	45%	994	32%	1,463	39%
Adults with no children	67	2%	35	1%	83	2%
Unknown	52	2%	55	2%	2%	0%

- 5.6. There are no statistically significant changes in trends of household compositions applying for homelessness assistance. Whilst proportions vary year on year, single people continue to be the most represented in those applying as homeless (58% of all applications in 2021/22) followed by households with children (39% in 2021/22). When looking in more detail, the two most common type of applicants are single adult males and single female parents with dependent children. This ratio skews more heavily towards households with children when reviewing numbers in temporary accommodation, due to the priority need status give to households with dependent children.
- 5.7. A more detailed breakdown of the service-user profile for those applying for housing support and currently accommodated in temporary accommodation is available in the strategies accompanying 'Equalities Analysis Assessment' (Appendix 3).

6. Rough Sleeping

- 6.1. The number of people seen sleeping rough in Lewisham has fluctuated over the last year.

6.2. During the annual rough sleeping snapshot in 2021, Lewisham had the second lowest rough sleeping single-night snapshot figure in London.

Table 11 – number of people sleeping rough on a single night in autumn, by year

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
RS Snapshot	22	5	16	12	7	8

6.3. Concerningly, the total number of people rough sleeping across London is increasing compared to the same time last year, with 3,570 people sleeping rough from October – December 2022 - an increase of 21%.

6.4. A Rough Sleeping Taskforce was launched in response to Covid-19 when LBL, the NHS South East CCG and partners came together to provide an effective multi-agency response to the covid-19 pandemic. This work is now being taken forward through the work of the Rough Sleeping Strategic Group.

6.5. The causes of rough sleeping are complex and interconnected. Key trends and challenges in Lewisham currently include:

- **Repeat rough sleeping:** Analysis of the number of accommodation placements for our most complex clients demonstrates long-term and re-occurring instances of rough sleeping. Of the 13 clients we currently support who meet this description, there are sustained instances of rough sleeping with 227 individual bedded down contacts. This is despite all client having been referred into existing provision, of which this group have had 87 separate supported housing or temporary accommodation placements.
- **Gap in provision for complex needs clients:** Supported housing in Lewisham is structured into four separate pathways of funded and non-commissioned provision. Analysis of those engaging with supported housing pathways in Lewisham suggests a gap in support models for clients with the most complex needs. On average, 20% of referrals into existing pathway services result in a refusal by the service, reasons including support needs being too high for what is available. At the same time, of all moves within the pathway that were planned, 25% of these were moves into 24 hour support provision, suggesting a high level of need for intensive support in Lewisham.
- **Restricted eligibility:** Some people have no recourse to public funds (NRPF), which prevents them accessing statutory support or welfare. Many non-UK rough sleepers also refuse offers of support away from the streets as they are sleeping rough in London temporarily while seeking (frequently informal) work. There are currently 35 NRPF clients supported by Lewisham Council to regularise their status.