



# SEFTON COUNCIL'S HOMELESSNESS REPORT 2023/2024

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# 1 Introduction

Sefton's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018/2023 contains an action to:

'Publish an annual report explaining the current levels of homelessness, to aid elected Councilor and chief officer decision making, and

Carry out an in-depth analysis of data collected by the Homelessness Case Level Information Classification monitoring system (H-CLIC)'.

Producing an annual report will give Sefton a snapshot of all types of homelessness across the borough. Over time, this will allow us to benchmark where we are compared to previous years and will also enable us to help plan services for future years. This is Sefton's fourth Annual homelessness report since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, which provides the Council with useful insight into homelessness across the borough.

We also want to show the impact on homelessness, which Covid and the recent increase in cost-of-living has had, and continues to do so, by looking at the increase in demand for homeless services across the borough.

The report will also detail the external funding that the Council has been successful in bidding for in order to continue to improve homeless services and move to a point where rough sleeping in Sefton is ended for good.

The Report continues to highlight the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 on Sefton Council.

The data used in this release are from the Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (H-CLIC) data system. This system is used as a reporting requirement of local authorities to provide data on statutory homelessness for those approaching local authorities for help with homelessness in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA). H-CLIC collects detailed data on activities undertaken by local authorities to help prevent or relieve homelessness, and the outcomes of these activities.

Further, the report provides details of those services commissioned by the Council to provide homeless support services for single people. This report shows the demand for these services and the benefit of providing these to the 'Sefton purse.'

The statistics reported in this release show total activity over the 2023-24 financial year, except for data on supported accommodation which is data from the anniversary of the start of the contract with Sefton Supported Housing Group that starts on 1st July each year.

Statistics referenced from the accompanying tables on prevention and relief duties owed refer to the initial duties owed on assessment i.e., any references to relief duties owed do not include those who are owed the relief duty following an unsuccessful prevention duty.

The report helps to illustrate the increasing pressure that the Council is under in terms of the levels of people and families presenting to it for assistance to prevent and relieve their homelessness. This has largely occurred since the Covid pandemic and the increase in the cost of living.

# 2 Homeless Key Data Dashboard

Sefton Council

## Key Homeless Data 2023/24

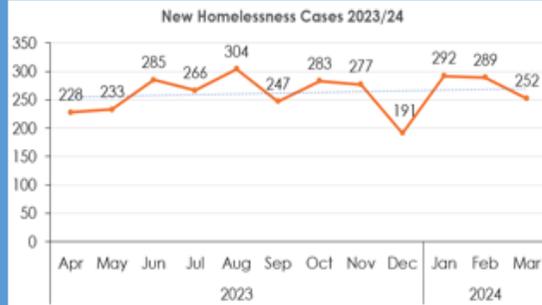


housingjigsaw  
**MainStay**  
A Gateway to Housing & Support

### 1) New Homeless Cases

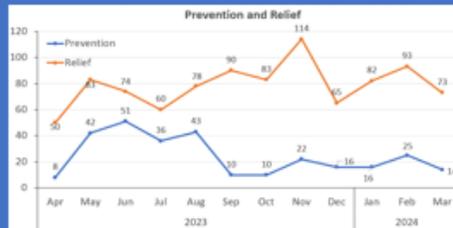
The total number of new households who have contacted the Housing Options Service for advice in 2023/24 was 3,147.

This represents a 14% increase in 2023/24 in new homeless cases compared to 2022/23 and represents a 25% increase compared to 2021/22



### 2) Prevention & Relief

There have been 1,238 households prevented or relieved from homelessness in 2023/24, which represents a 17% increase on the number in 2022/23 (1062) and a 36% increase on the number of households prevented or relieved from homelessness in 2021/22 (911)



### 3) Statutory Homelessness

The number of households accepted as statutory homeless (Main Duty) decisions in 2023/24 was 331.

In 2022/23 this number was 234, which represents a 41% increase in 2023/24 compared to the previous year.



### 4) Rough Sleeping

Sefton recorded 8 rough sleepers for the 2024, with numbers returning to levels last seen in 2018.



### 5) Case Study regarding a Sefton Homeless Psychology Service User

Concerns raised by hostel staff in relation to vulnerability from other residents.

Neuropsychological assessment & liaison with social care.

Referral to services to provide ongoing psychological therapy for mental health difficulties.

Expedited referral to the Autistic Spectrum Difficulties Assessment Team.

Assessment and liaison resulted in the provision of supported accommodation for people on the Autistic Spectrum, increased safeguards and reduced vulnerability.

### 6) Sit Up Services

Since 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023 until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024, a total of 426 people accessed our Sit Up services in Southport and Bootle, with the average stay being 5 nights

### 7) Homelessness Reasons

The key reasons for homelessness in 2023/24 are due to being asked by family to leave, being served a Section 21 Notice or due to a relationship breakdown.

Homelessness Reasons	2023/24				Total
	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	
Asked to leave by family	81	98	83	110	372
Section 21 notice	73	76	60	104	313
Relationship Breakdown	42	29	32	37	140

### 8) Planned Moves

Since 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023, 48% of accommodation placements have had a successful planned move

### 9) Floating Support

43% of people receiving floating support either completed their support plan successfully or were rehoused, from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023 until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024

### 10) Placements

Since 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023, 224 placements were made into temporary accommodation, with 95% having a local connection to Sefton. Since 1<sup>st</sup> July, on average the occupancy of our commissioned temporary accommodation was 93%.

### 11) Duty to Refers

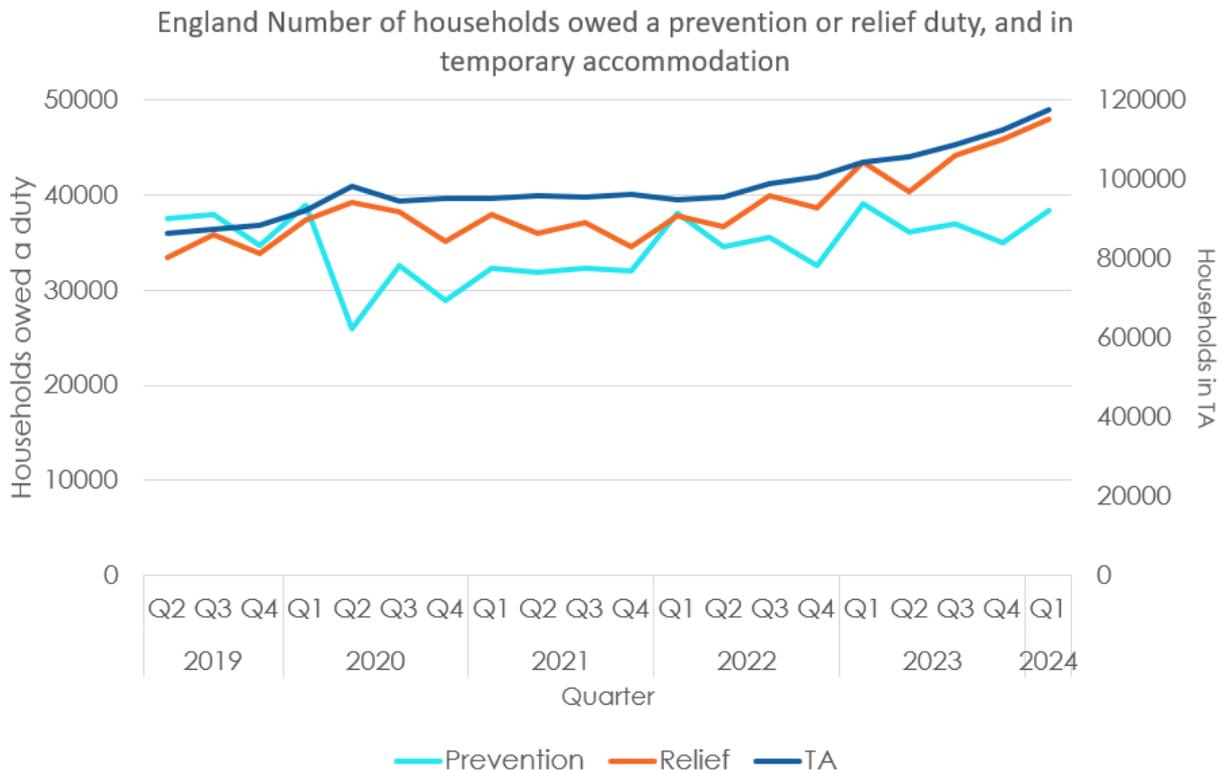
1209

The number of referrals in 2023/24 was 1,209, which is an increase on the number of Duty To Refers in 2022/23 which was 1095.

The Infographic gives a snapshot of key Sefton data from 2023/24, taken from the various data sources contained in the report. It uses headline data from the Housing Options service database (H-CLIC) and the Mainstay system.

### 3 Overall

**Figure 1:** Trends in prevention, relief, and temporary accommodation since 2019 Q2 to Q1 of 2023/24



**297** households were owed a prevention duty in 2023-24, up by **13.4%** from 2022-23. Of which there was:

- **42.9%** increase in households with children owed a prevention duty to a total of **150** households.
- **-6.4%** decrease in single households owed a prevention duty to a total of **147** households.

**889** households were owed a relief duty in 2023-24, up **15.3%** from 2022-23. Of which there was:

- **36.7%** increase in households with children owed a relief duty to a total of **120** households.
- **11.4%** increase in single households owed a relief duty to a total of **651** households

On 31 March 2024, 144 households were in temporary accommodation, and increase of 111.8% from 31 March 2023.

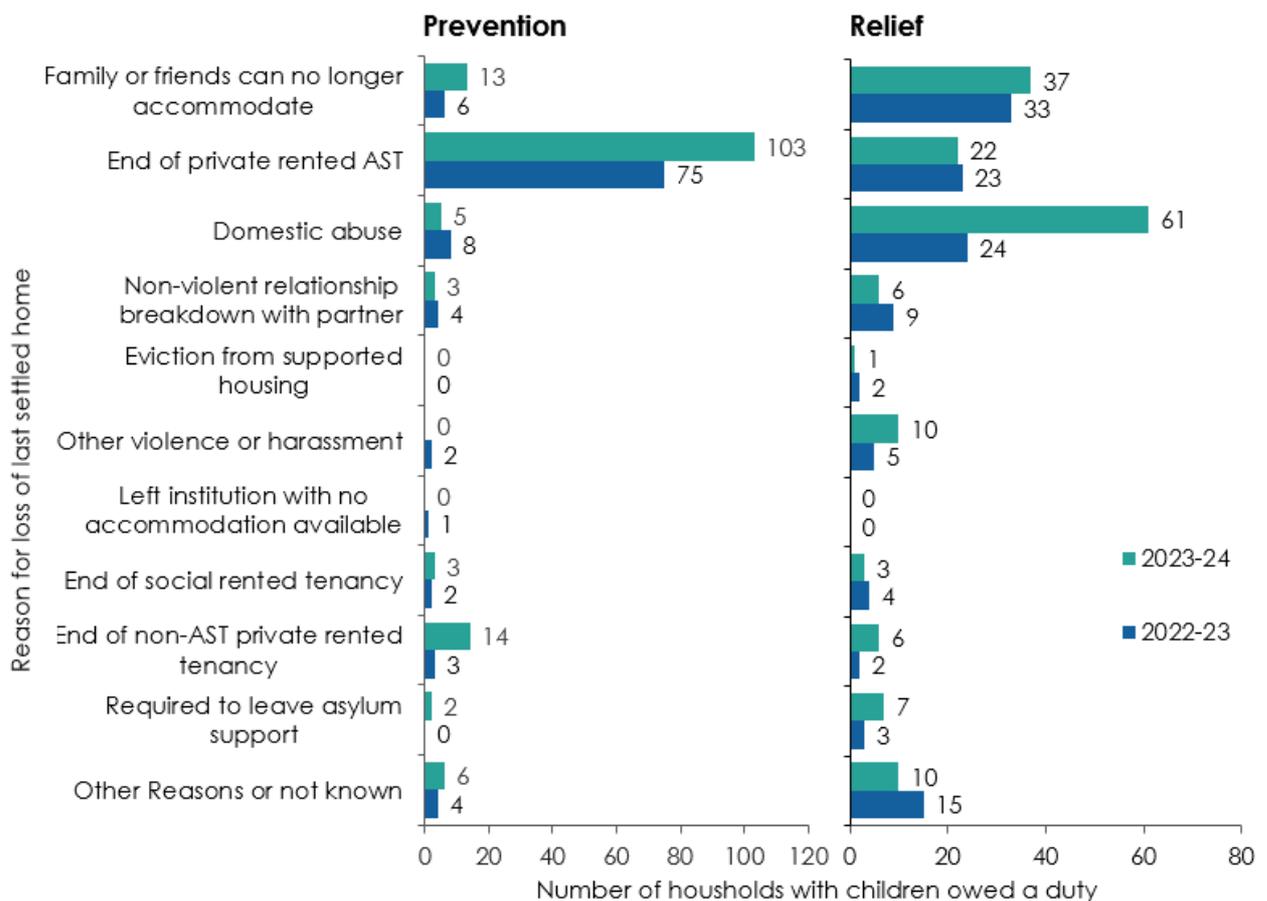
## 4 Households with children

**150** households with children were owed a prevention duty in 2023-24, up **42.9%** from 2022-23.

**164** households with children were owed a relief duty in 2023-24, up **36.7%** from 2022-23.

**47.8%** of households with children owed a prevention or relief duty in 2023-24 had at least one support need, compared to 39.6% of households in 2022-23.

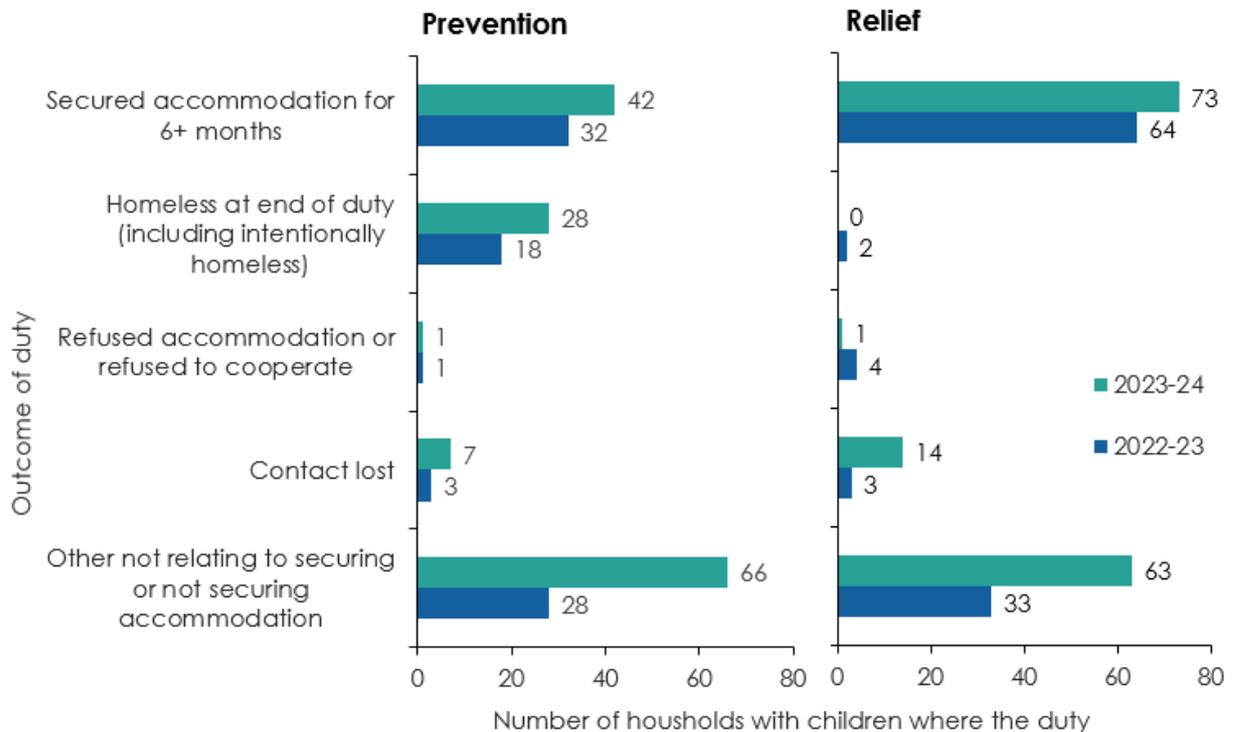
**Figure 2:** Proportion of households with children owed a prevention or relief duty, by reason for loss of last settled home.



For those owed a prevention duty, the most common cause was due to the end of their private rented assured short hold tenancy (AST) at **103** households, an **increase of over 37.3%** from 2022-23.

For those owed a relief duty, the most common cause was due to domestic abuse at **61**, up **154.2%** from 2022-23.

**Figure 3:** Proportion of households with children whose duty ended by outcome



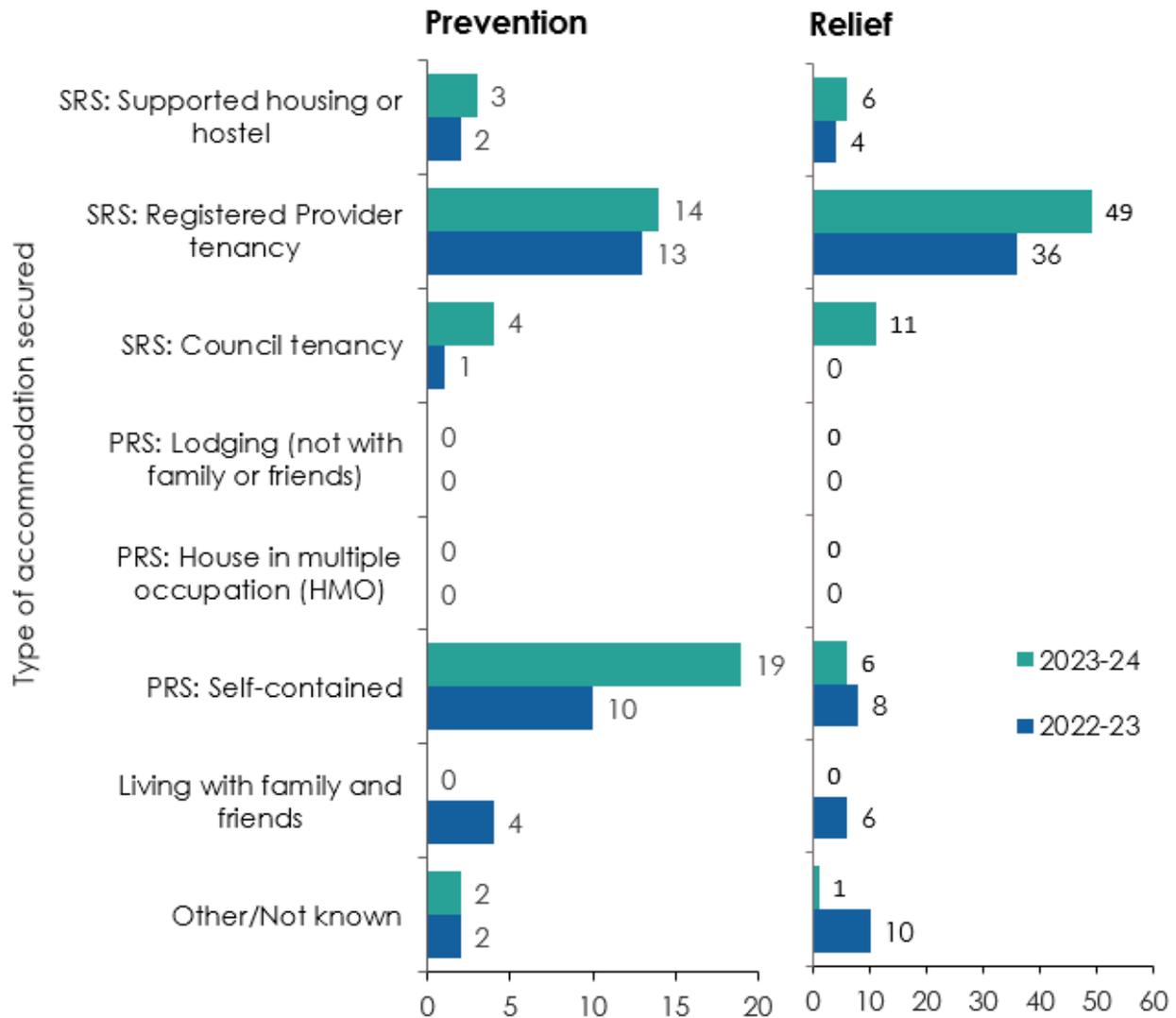
**144** prevention duties ended for households with children in 2023-24.

**29.2%** of households with children whose prevention duty ended **secured accommodation for 6 months or more** and were no longer threatened with homelessness, this is **lower than 39% in 2022-23**.

**152** relief duties ended for households with children in 2023-24.

**37.5%** of households with children had their relief duty end because their **homelessness had not been relieved within 56 days** and at this point the local authority would need to assess whether a main duty is owed to them.

**Figure 4:** Proportion of households with children who secured accommodation by type.



Of the households with children whose prevention duty ended and were able to secure accommodation, the most common accommodation secured was **self-contained accommodation in the private rented sector 45.2%**.

For those whose relief duty ended with secured accommodation, the most common accommodation secured was in a **registered provider tenancy in the social rented sector 67.1%**.

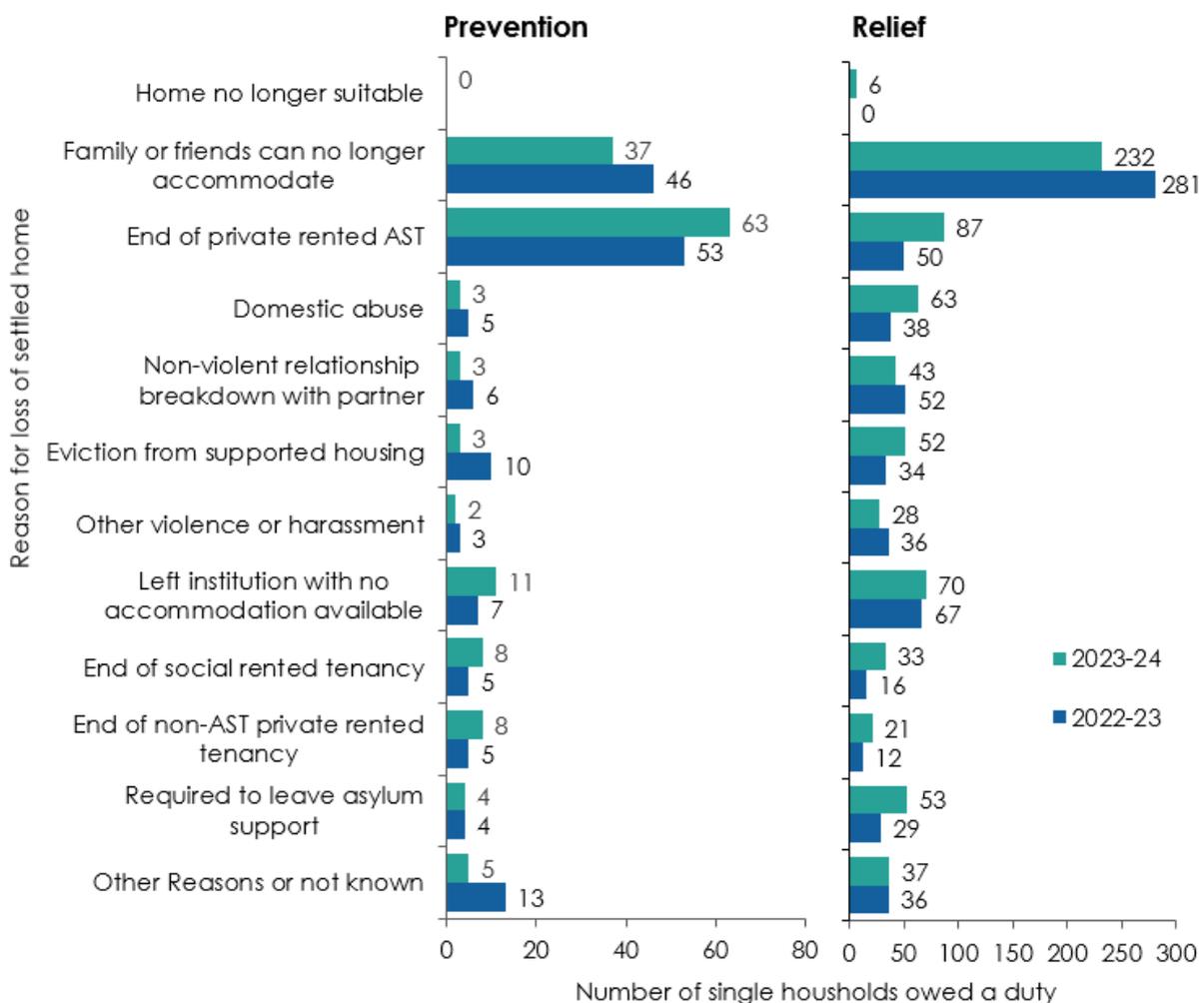
## 5 Single Households

**147** single households were owed a prevention duty in 2023-24, **down 6.4%** from 2022-23.

**725** single households were owed a relief duty in 2023-24, **up 11.4%** from 2022-23.

**65.1%** of single households had at least one support need, compared with **65.8%** in 2022-23.

**Figure 5:** Proportion of single households owed a prevention or relief duty, by reason for loss of last settled home.

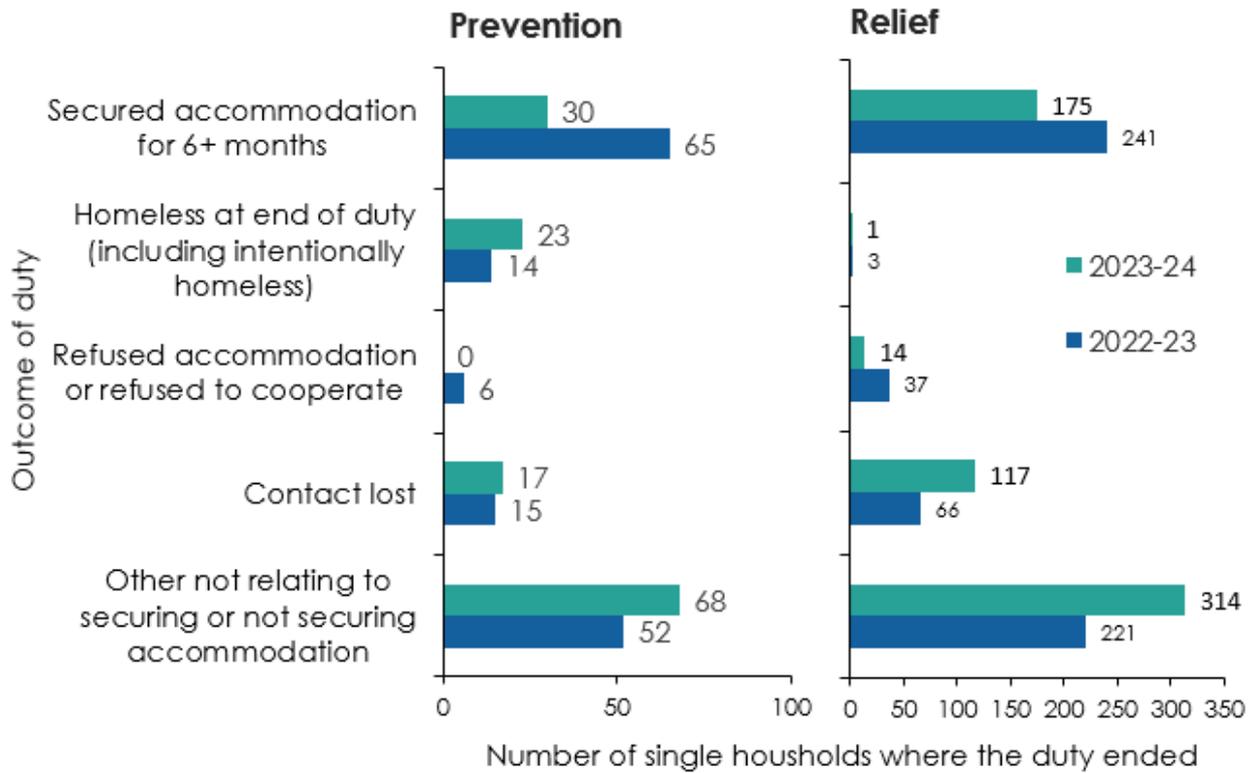


The most common reason for loss of last settled home for single households was end of private rented assured shorthold tenancy.

This accounted for **63 households or 43%** of single households owed a prevention duty, **up by 18.9%** from 2022-23.

For single households owed a relief duty end of private rented assured shorthold tenancy accounted for **87 households or 12%**, an **increase of 74%** from 2022-23. Family or friends can no longer accommodate accounted for **232 households or 31.3%** a **decrease of 17.4%**

**Figure 6:** Proportion of single households whose duty ended by outcome.



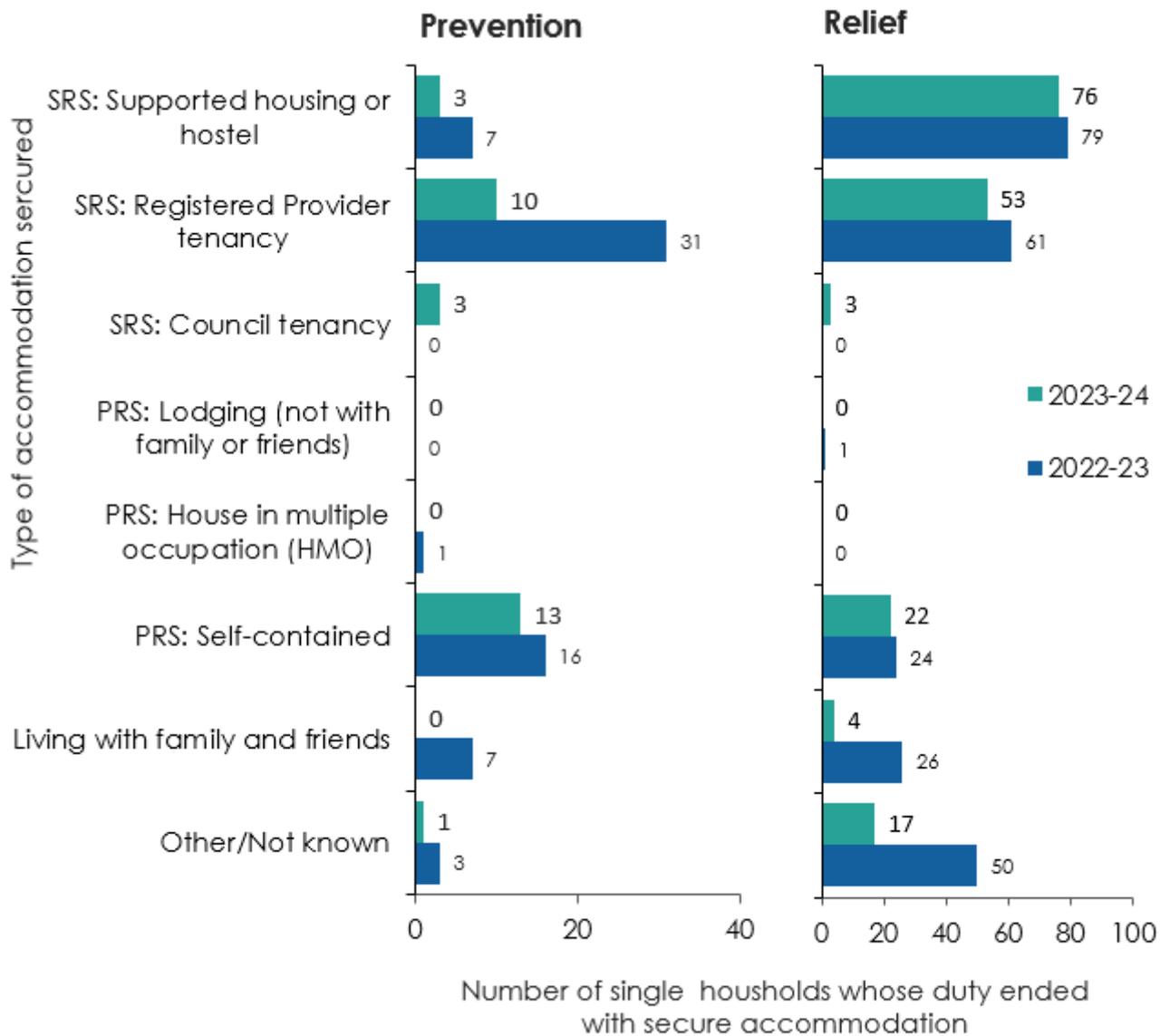
**138** prevention duties ended for single households in 2023-24.

**21.7%** of single households whose prevention duty ended **secured accommodation for 6 months or more**.

**622** relief duties ended for single households in 2023-24.

**28.1%** of single households whose relief duty ended **secured accommodation for 6 months or more**.

**Figure 7:** Proportion of single households who secured accommodation by type.



For single households whose prevention duty ended in accommodation secured, the most common type secured **was registered provider tenancy in the social rented sector at 33.3%**.

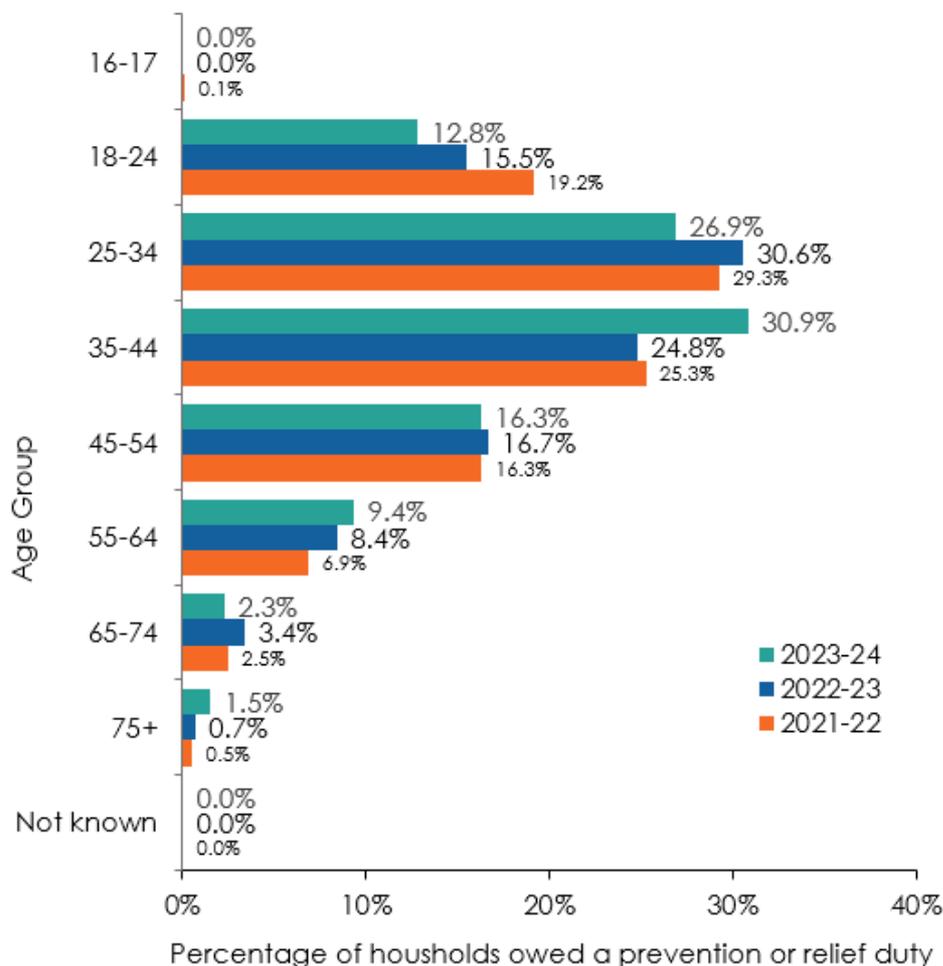
For single households whose relief duty ended in accommodation secured, the most common type was in **supported housing or hostel accommodation at 43.4%**.

## 6 Other demographics

### Ethnicity

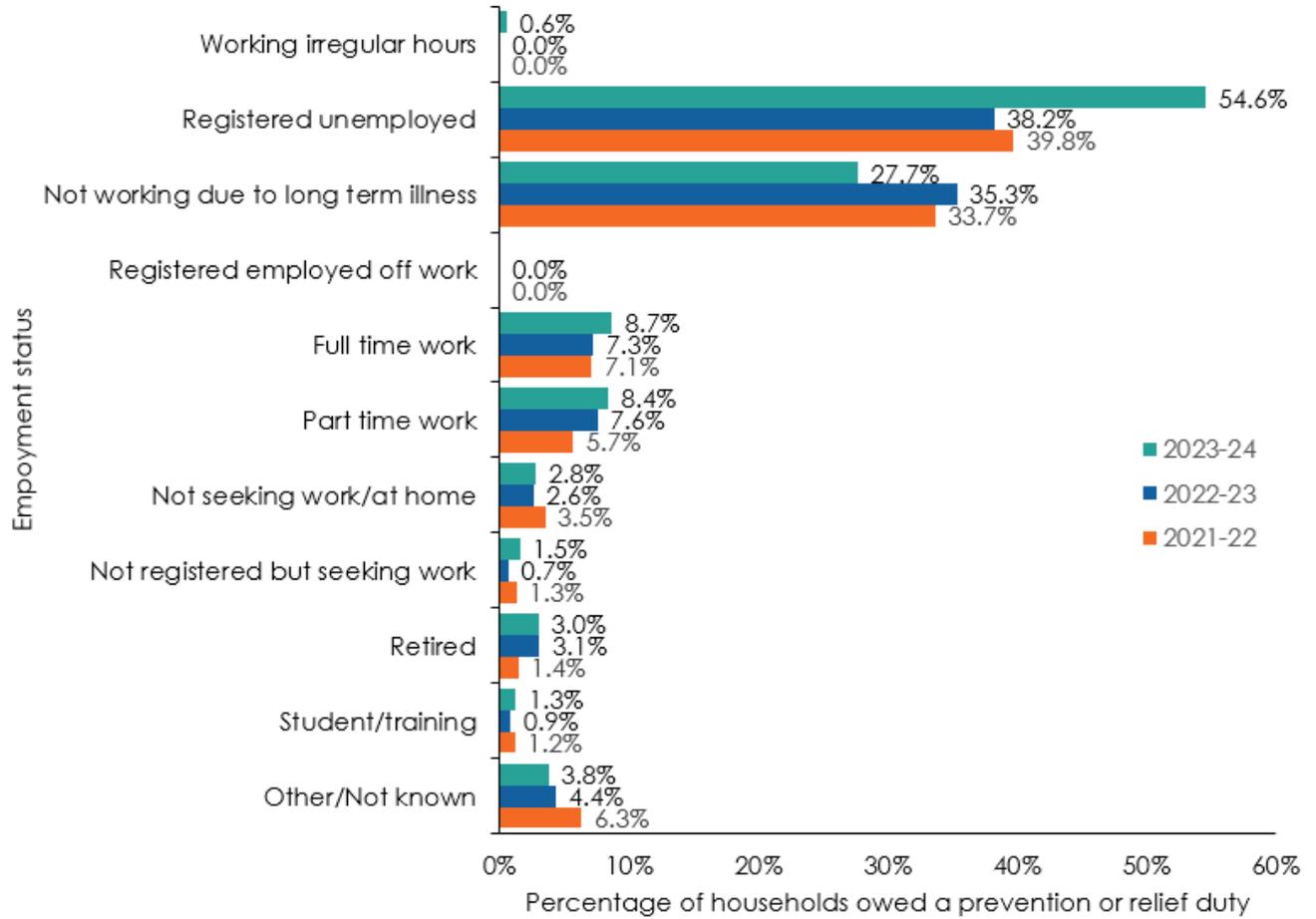
During 2023-24 **88.4%** of homeless households had a White lead applicant. Compared to England population estimates White households seem to be overrepresented in the those owed a homelessness duty. Households with an Asian/Asian British lead applicant are also underrepresented as they account for **1.6%** of those owed a homelessness duty. Conversely, households with a Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African lead applicant are most likely to be overrepresented as they account for **3.3%** of those owed a homelessness duty.

**Figure 8:** Age of lead applicant



In 2023-24, the most common age group of lead applicants was those aged between **35 to 44 years old**, making up **30.9%** households owed a prevention or relief duty.

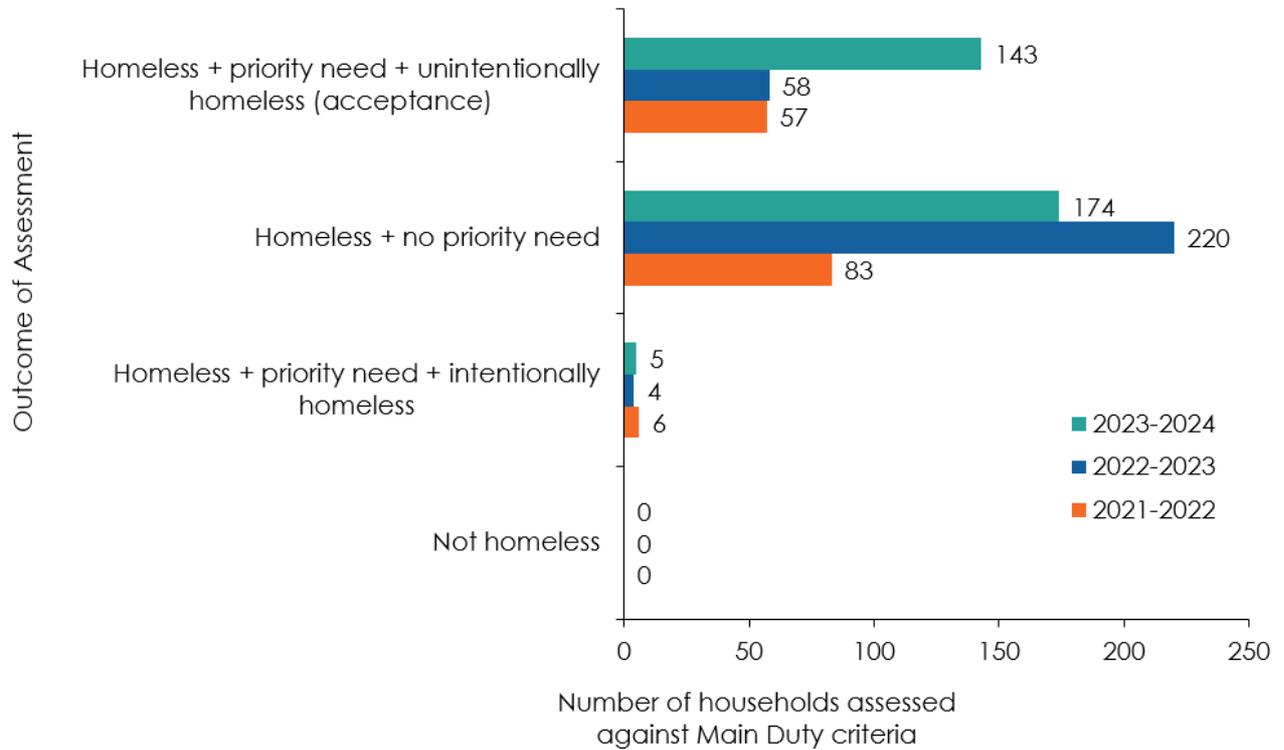
**Figure 9:** Employment status of lead applicant



The most common employment status for lead applicants of households owed a prevention or relief duty was **registered unemployed**, accounting for **54.6%** of households in 2023-24.

## 7 Main duty

**Figure 10:** Number of households assessed against a main duty decision, by outcome.

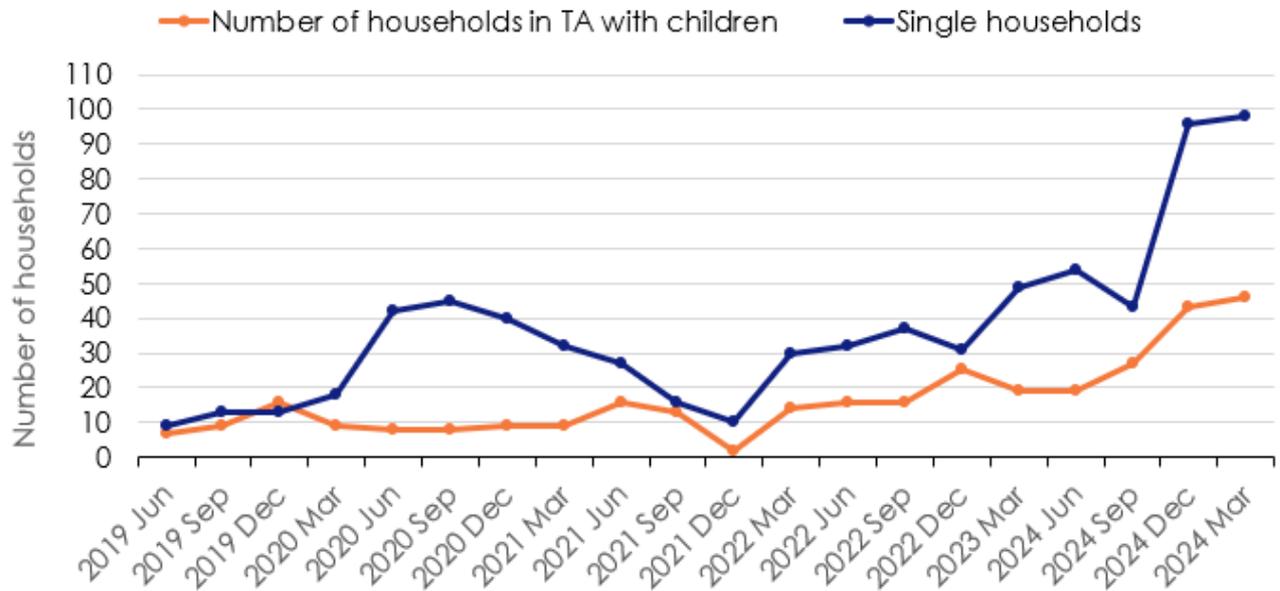


Sefton made **282** main homelessness duty decisions in 2023-24, **up 13.8%** from 2022-23.

This represented an **increase of 23.6%** compared to the proportion of main duties which were accepted in 2022-23.

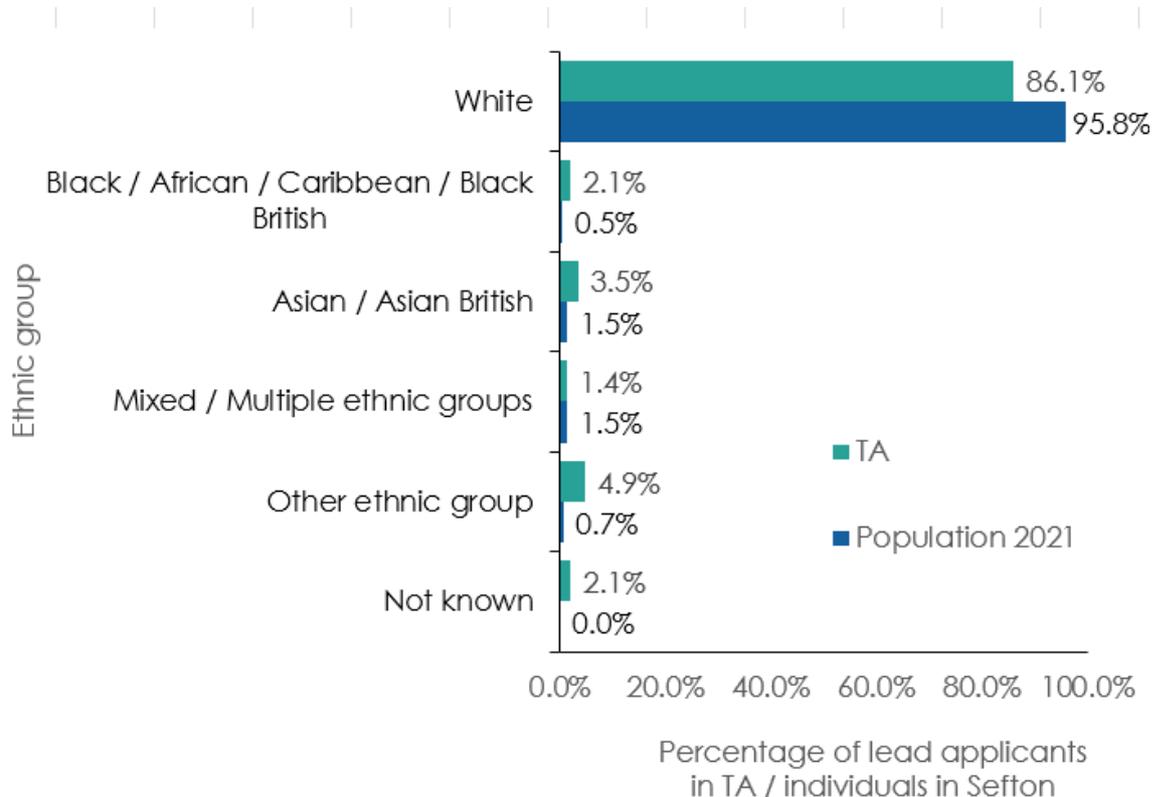
## 8 Temporary accommodation

**Figure 11:** Number of households in temporary accommodation since Q2 2019, by household type



On 31 March 2023, **144** households were in temporary accommodation, **up 111.8%** from the same period last year.

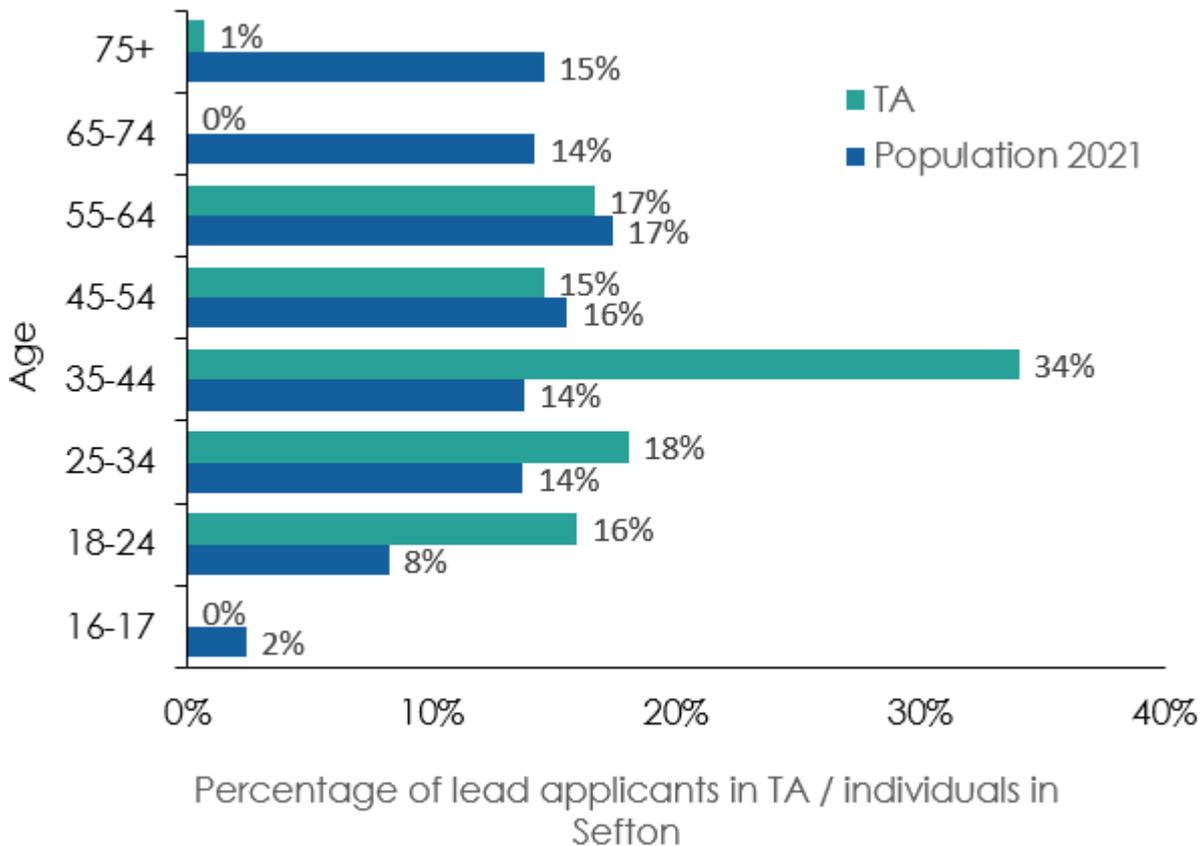
**Figure 12:** Households in temporary accommodation on 31 March 2024, by ethnicity of lead applicant.



The most common ethnic group for lead applicants in temporary accommodation is white, accounting for **86.1%** of households in temporary accommodation. **95.8%** of Sefton's population is white.

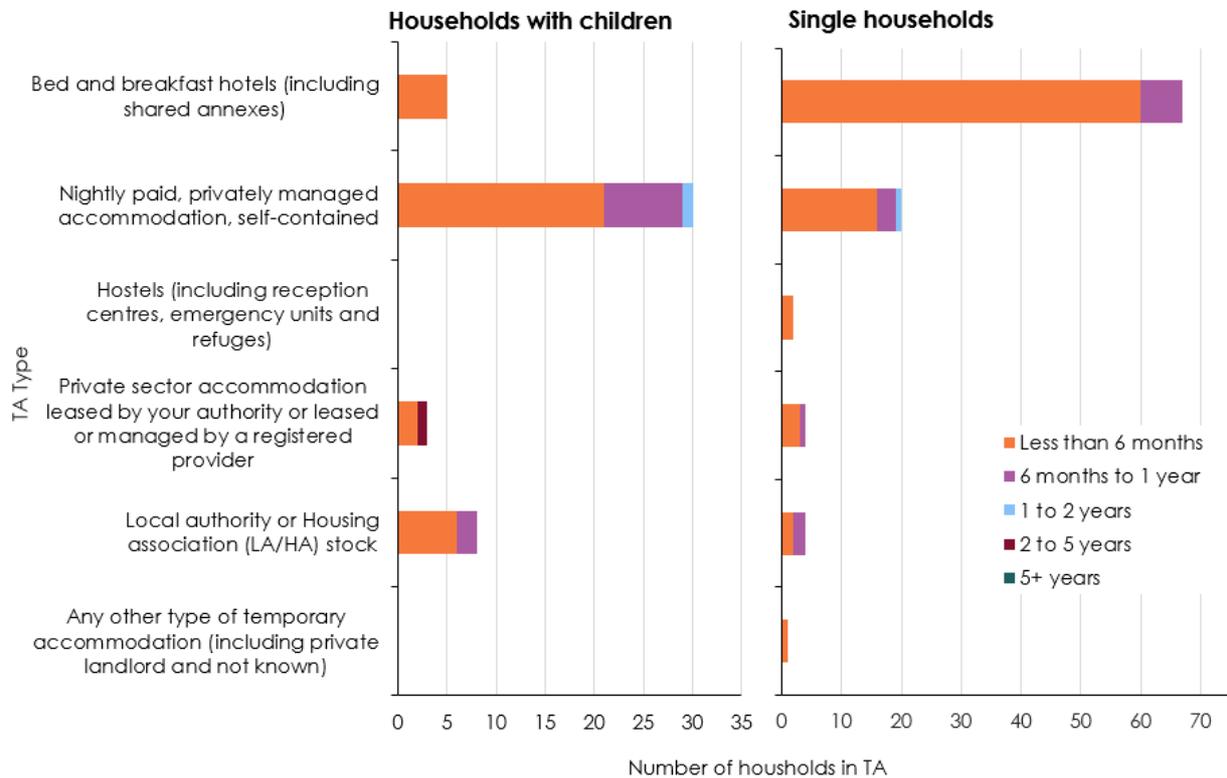
Households in temporary accommodation where the main applicant is Black/African/Caribbean/Black British is **2.1%** and are overrepresented compared to Sefton's population for this ethnic group which is **0.5%**.

**Figure 13:** Households in temporary accommodation on 31 March 2024, by age of lead applicant



The most common age for lead applicants in temporary accommodation was **35-44** which represents **34%** of those in temporary accommodation, followed by 25–34 year olds with 18%, 55–64 year olds with 17%, 18-24 year olds with 16%, 45-54 year olds with 15%, 75 plus year olds with 1%.

**Figure 14:** Type of accommodation for households in temporary accommodation on 31 March 2023, by length of stay and household type.



The most common length of time for households with children to be in temporary accommodation was for **less than 6 months** accounting for **73.9%** of households with children.

The most common length of time for single households to stay in temporary accommodation was **less than 6 months**, accounting for **85.7%** of single households.

Temporary accommodation has been in high demand during this period, compounded by the pandemic and exacerbated by the increase in cost of living. Pressures on households requiring temporary accommodation have continued to rise since the years of the pandemic.

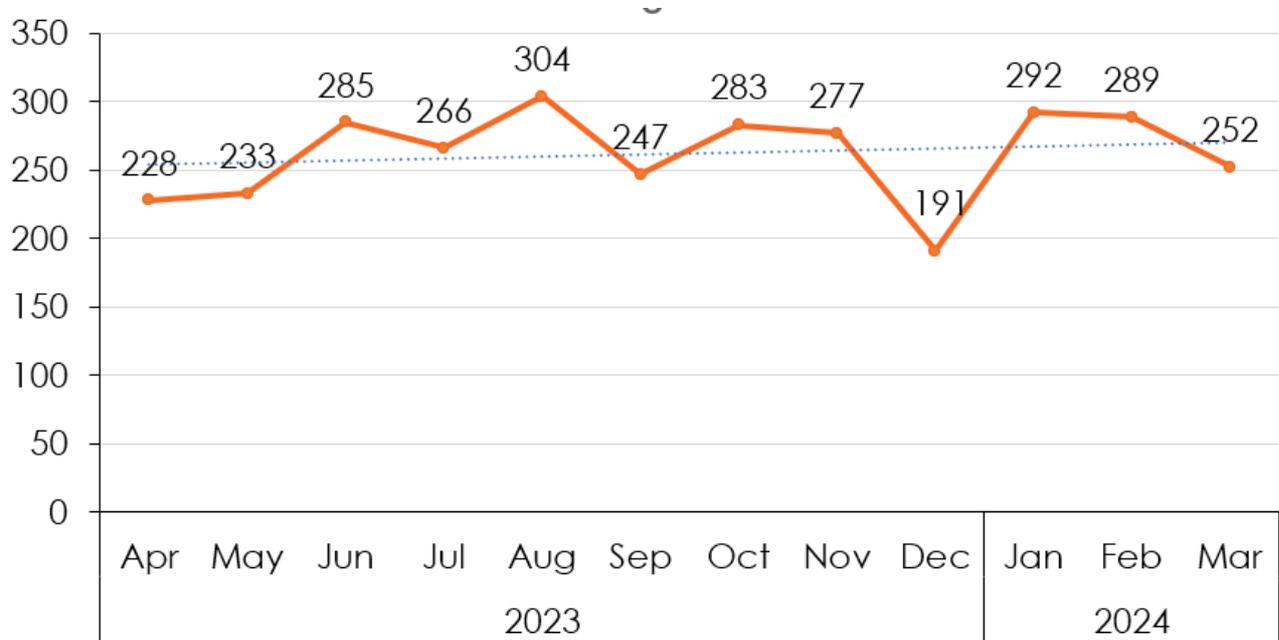
Younger single person households still remain the largest group in temporary accommodation over 2023/24.

## 9 Things to know about these statistics.

- Statutory homelessness concerns duties placed on local authorities to take reasonable steps to prevent and relieve homelessness to eligible houses.
- Each case included in this report is representative of a household, which includes households with children as well as single adult houses.
- This report only covers those owed a duty between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024
- All figures except for temporary accommodation are a cumulative count over the period of the reported financial year, temporary accommodation is a snapshot of the last day of the year.
- Data is collected via the Homelessness Case Level Information Collection, submitted quarterly by local authorities. This method of collection was introduced in 2018 alongside significant homelessness legislation; before this statutory homelessness was recorded in the PIE.
- Definitions and a comprehensive breakdown of the quality assurance process can be found in the technical note.

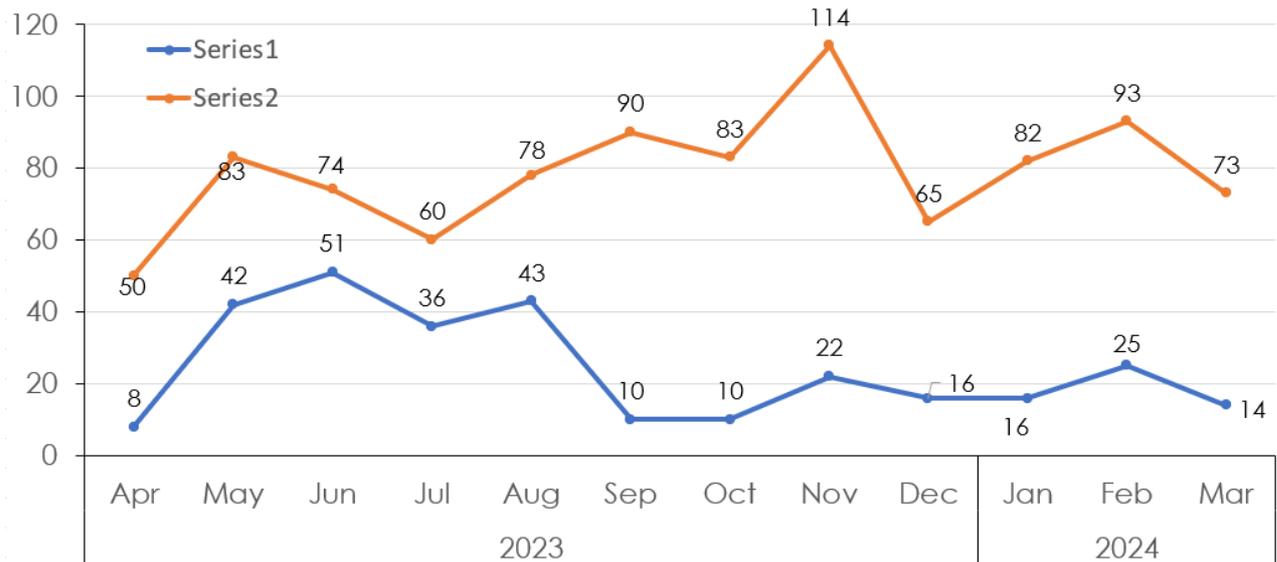
## 10 Overview of Homelessness in 2023-24

**Figure 15:** New Homeless Cases presenting to Sefton Housing Options Service



The total number of new households who have contacted the Housing Options Service for advice in 2023/2024 is 3147. This represents a 14% increase in new homeless cases compared to 2022/2023.

**Figure 16:** Homelessness prevention and relief.



There have been 1,238 households prevented or relieved from homelessness in 2023/2024. When compared to those prevented or relieved from homelessness in 2022/2023 (1062) this represents a 17% increase and when comparing this with the numbers prevented or relieved from homelessness in 2021/22 (911) this represents a 36% increase.

## 11 Outcomes After Prevention & Relief Duty

### Prevention Activity

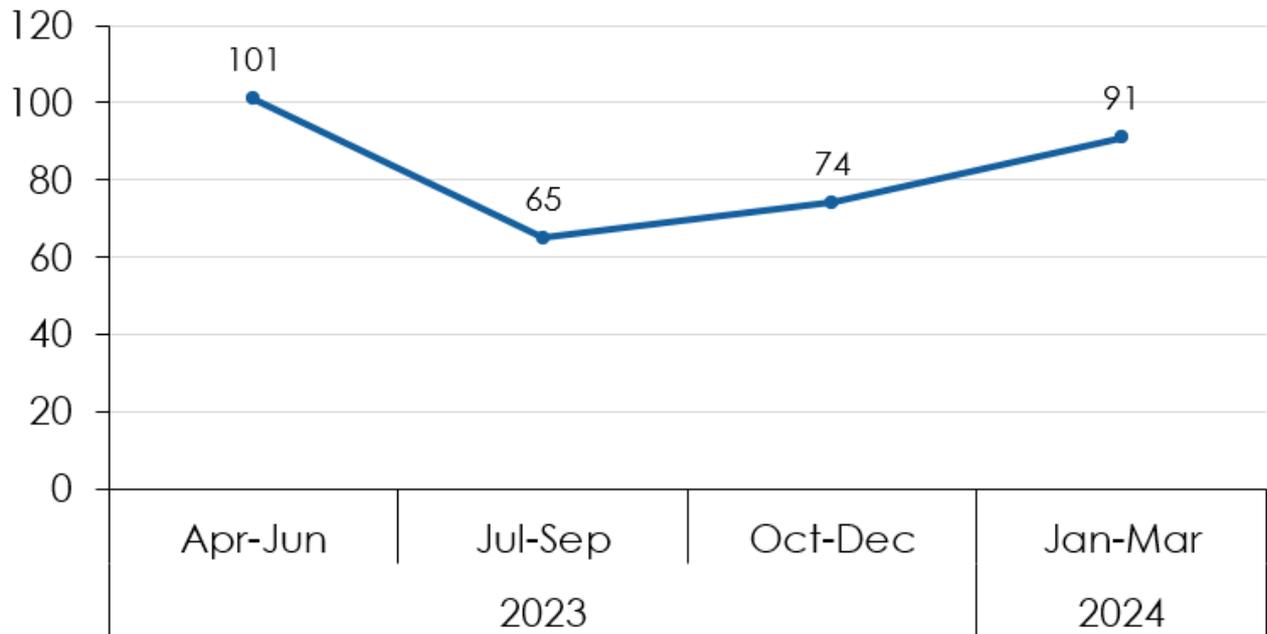
Of the 282 households where the prevention duty was ended, 65 households were secured accommodation for 6+ months by Sefton's Housing Options Team.

### Relief Activity

Of the 774 households where the relief duty was ended, 148 households were secured accommodation for 6+ months by Sefton's Housing Options Team.

## Statutory Homeless (Main Duty) Cases

**Figure 17:** Statutory Homelessness (Main Duty) Cases



The number of households accepted as statutory homeless (Main Duty) decisions in

- 2019/2020 - 65
- 2020/2021 - 132
- 2021/2022 - 144
- 2022/2023 – 234
- 2023/2024 - 331

Priority need breakdowns are suppressed for local authorities with fewer than 5 households owed a main duty within a quarter, to prevent disclosure.

## 12 Homelessness Reasons 2023-24

Homelessness Reasons	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Total
93-day notice (Armed Forces, cessation of entitlement)	1	0	0	0	1
93-day Notice (MOD, relationship breakdown)	1	0	1	0	2
Abandoned accommodation	2	2	0	3	7
Advice on Tenant / Landlord rights & responsibilities	1	0	2	2	5
Affordability	9	7	10	9	35
Asked to leave by family	81	98	83	110	372
Asylum Seeker	0	1	1	0	2
Asylum Seeker- Home Office Accommodation Ended	7	14	63	36	120
Bail Condition – unable to return home	2	9	4	3	18
Bereavement	3	0	2	0	5
Breach of Court Order	0	0	1	0	1
Care leaver	2	1	1	2	6
Current accommodation is detrimental to health	6	0	7	10	23
Discharge from Psychiatric Unit	6	5	9	2	22
Emergency (Fire/Flood/Disaster)	0	2	0	4	6
Evicted (NOT s21 or s8 notice)	9	21	13	16	59
Eviction from supported housing	11	15	13	12	51
Fleeing domestic abuse	21	37	27	48	133
Fleeing Harassment	14	19	10	15	58
Friend no longer willing to accommodate	20	16	17	18	71
Granted asylum through the Streamlined Asylum Process (SAP)	0	2	2	0	4
Hospital Discharge (Home not suitable to return to)	4	7	10	11	32
Housing register enquiry	1	1	0	1	3
Landlord harassment/unlawful eviction	4	2	3	5	14
Leaving bail hostel	15	10	16	13	54
Leaving prison	9	25	30	37	101
Looking to downsize due to bedroom tax	1	0	0	0	1
Loss of Benefits	0	1	0	0	1
Loss of employment	2	1	0	1	4
Loss of private rented - other reason	9	5	5	11	30
Loss of tied accommodation	2	0	1	2	5
Loss of tied accommodation (not HM Forces)	0	0	0	1	1
Mortgage Repossession- Applicant	1	1	2	2	6
Mortgage Repossession- Landlord	2	0	3	0	5
Mortgage repossession or sale of owner occupier property	3	3	1	1	8
Mortgage repossession proceedings	0	2	1	1	4

Homelessness Reasons	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Total
Overcrowding - asked to leave	11	8	4	4	27
Perpetrator of ASB	0	0	0	0	0
Property condition - damp and mould	0	0	0	1	1
Property condition - other	2	1	4	2	9
Property not fit for habitation	2	1	0	3	6
Racially motivated violence or harassment	1	1	0	1	3
Rehousing options	11	6	1	5	23
Relationship Breakdown	42	29	32	37	140
Removed from home by police	2	2	2	2	8
Rent arrear – local authority	0	3	0	1	4
Rent arrears- Private Sector	2	1	4	2	9
Rent arrears- Registered Provider	1	1	2	1	5
Requires adaptations/ground floor	1	0	0	0	1
Requires financial assistance	0	0	2	1	3
Rough Sleeping	18	22	27	29	96
Section 21 notice	73	76	60	104	313
Section 8 notice	9	6	5	9	29
Sofa surfing	29	35	30	36	130
Supported housing - ready for move-on	1	2	1	2	6
Threatened with eviction from a Privately Rented Tenancy but not homeless within 56 days	0	3	2	0	5
Victim of ASB	1	2	1	1	5
Violent breakdown of relationship	3	4	2	5	14
<b>Total with Reasons</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>517</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>2107</b>
(blank)	288	307	234	211	1040
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>3147</b>

Most common reasons for homelessness in 2023/2024:

- Asked to leave by families (372),
- Section 21 Notice (313)
- Relationship Breakdown (140),

## 13 Duty To Refer

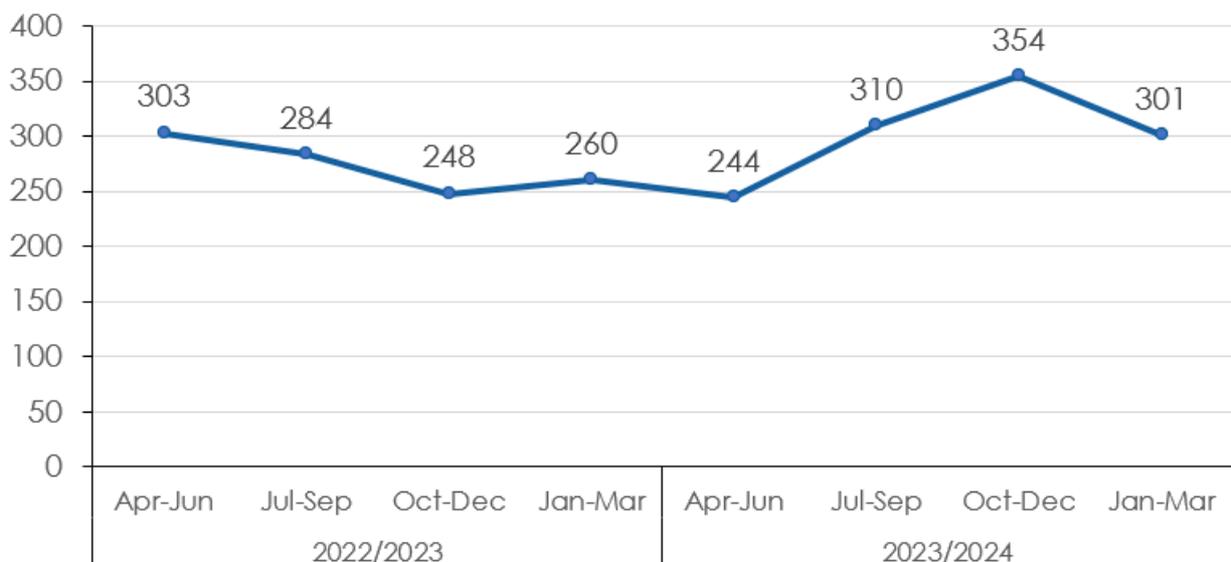
An introduction as part of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the new Duty to Refer is where a “specified public authority” considers that someone they are working with is or may be homeless or threatened with homelessness, they must refer that person’s details to a local housing authority but only if the person agrees to the notification being made.

The Duty to Refer effectively commenced from 1st October 2018 onwards. The number of referrals in 2019/2020 was 646. The number of Duty to Refers in 2020/2021 was 876, this was an increase of 36%. The number of Duty to Refers in 2021/2022 was 1154 an increase of 32% on the previous year. The number of Duty to Refers in 2022/2023 was 1,095 a decrease of 5% on the previous year.

The number of Duty to Refers in 2023/2024 was 1,209 – an increase of 10% on the previous year.

The increase in numbers of people referred to Housing Options can be seen as a positive (despite the increased workload) as these people will be assisted earlier and their homelessness hopefully prevented.

**Figure 18:** Duty to Refer



As the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) does not use the Alert portal for Duty to Refers, the Council records them separately and can report a total of **228** in 2023/24 (compared to 345 in 2022/23).

### Breakdown of Duty to Refers by Quarter.

	2022/2023					2023/2024				
	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Total	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Total
Jigsaw Alert Duty to Refer	187	196	188	179	<b>750</b>	205	264	264	248	<b>981</b>
DWP Duty to Refer	116	88	60	81	<b>345</b>	39	46	90	53	<b>228</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>1095</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>1209</b>

## 14 Use of Discretionary Housing Payments

A Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) is additional financial support that can be provided to a customer in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Costs. The customer needs to make a claim and demonstrate that they require additional support in meeting their housing costs.

The DHP funding is allocated annually by the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP):

Year	DWP DHP Funding
2019/2020	£659,531
2020/2021	£925,029
2021/2022	£698,914
2022/2023	£495,361
2023/2024	£495,361
2024/2025	£495,361

The service has consistently managed and monitored the DHP fund, in accordance with the Council's policy, to ensure that the DWP funding is fully exhausted to support some of the most vulnerable customers in the area. In previous years, an additional agreed overspend, of no more

than £2k was achieved.

The DHP position for 2023/2024 is that £496,649 has been paid; resulting an overspend of £1,288.

There has been a total of 1,641 DHP awards made during 2023/2024 with nearly 80% of awards supporting claimants affected by the social sector size criteria (bedroom tax); the majority of awards are now made to Universal Credit claimants.

The DWP have announced that the DHP fund for 2024/25 is £495,361 the same amount as previous year.

The forecast is that the demand on the DHP fund will remain high due to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

## 15 Domestic Abuse Accommodation Related Support

In 2023/24 228 adults and children were supported with accommodation-based needs. This includes:

- Sefton IDVA team -25 adults supported with target hardening measures (allowing victims to stay safety in their own homes) and accommodation support.
- SWACA -171 adults given accommodation support.
- Eva House Refuge - 20 individuals (8 adults and 12 children) supported in specialist domestic abuse refuge accommodation.
- Athena House -12 units of supported and trauma-informed accommodation for complex women with a history of domestic abuse.

Eva House is a 24-hour specialist domestic abuse refuge with 5 self-contained rooms, with 19 bedspaces accommodating a total of 5 adults and up to 14 children at any one time. It became operational in December 2023.

Given the average annual local authority expenditure for each Homelessness application is £3,189, which is the average one-off and on-going costs associated with statutory homelessness, then the total estimated saving by assisting these 228 families' properties is £727,092. The £3,189 cost is from The Greater Manchester Combined Authorities

Unit Cost Database.

## 16 Sefton’s Commissioned Temporary Accommodation for single people

In late 2021, the Council started a procurement process to replace the Homeless and Housing Related Support contracts with an Integrated Homeless Service from July 2022 onwards.

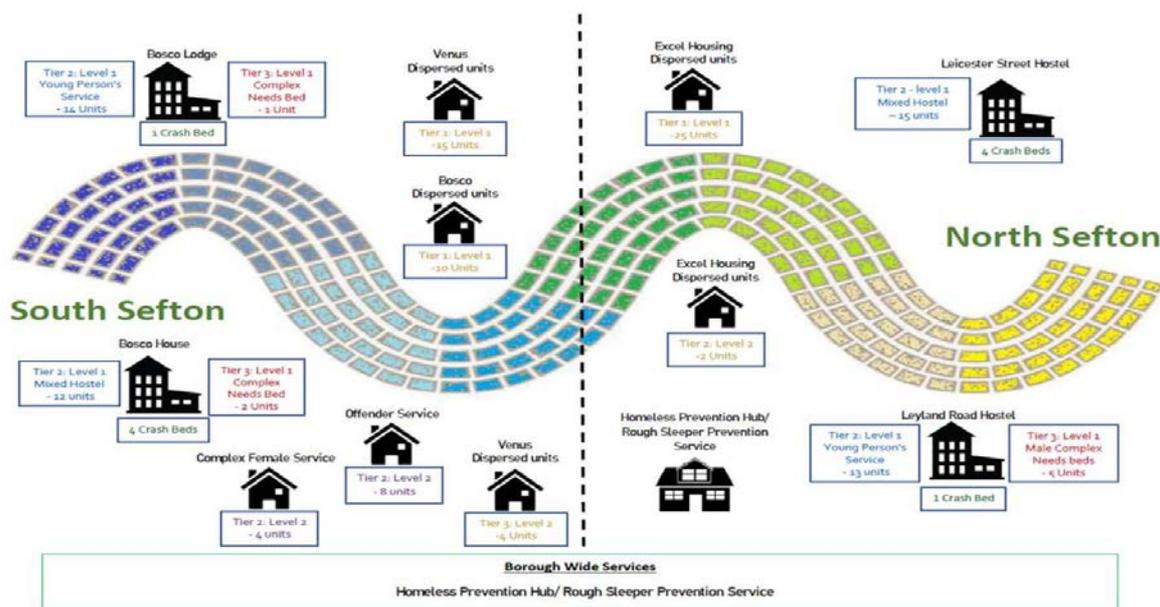
The initial contract term of five years to commence from 1st July 2022, with the option to further extend for a period of up to five years.

### Sefton Integrated Homeless Service

The new Integrated Homeless Services contract of four elements, which are:

- Rough Sleeper Prevention Service
- Supported Temporary Accommodation Service
- Navigator Support Service
- Floating Support Service

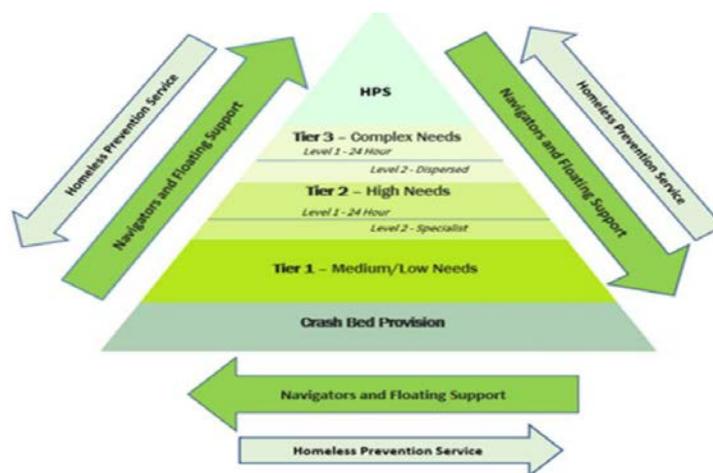
Following a procurement exercise, the successful bidder was the Sefton Supported Housing Group Consortium. This Consortium comprise of Bosco Society, Excel Housing, Light for Life, New Start and Venus.



The new Integrated Homeless Service is a range of Accommodation Options and Support Services that aim to work together to help people move away from rough sleeping, access accommodation, gain improved well-being, and eventually recover from homelessness.

All service providers use the Mainstay IT system to record client assessments, help match clients to suitable services, and track the support provided to clients. This system is used by homelessness services across the Liverpool City Region.

Sefton's Integrated Homeless Service now has a tiered approach, enabling people to access different tiers of services based on their complexity and needs.



## Strengths Based Practice

One of Sefton's commissioning priorities is to introduce a Strengths-Based approach within their homeless services and move away from the deficit-based 10-point star model. Services are geared towards enabling individuals to achieve their goals, with an increase in Well-Being being the ultimate outcome and indicator of success.

The support plans for clients in homeless services will be worked in partnership with individuals in order that the service enables and empowers the individuals to help their own personal goals in these areas in order to achieve an improved sense of wellbeing by using the 9 areas of wellbeing assessment and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) assessment tool as a measurement of that client's progress.

## Nine Areas of Wellbeing

1. Work, Education, training & recreation
2. Social & economic wellbeing
3. Personal dignity
4. Physical, mental & emotional health
5. Protection from abuse & neglect
6. Domestic, family & personal relationships
7. Personal contact
8. Individual contribution to society
9. Suitability of living arrangements

## 17 Social Housing Allocations

Sefton Council has been part of the Merseyside sub regional social housing allocations scheme known as Property Pool Plus since 2012 and in order to ensure that the scheme remains rational, legal and follows public law procedural requirements, and compliant with statute, statutory guidance, regulations, orders, court ruling and ombudsman decisions a review of the current policy was undertaken with a new draft policy produced which addresses these issues. This new policy was approved by Council in 2022.

At the end September 2024 there were a total of 3,396 applicants waiting for social housing in Sefton. This number is broken down by priority banding and bedroom need in the below table.

Priority Banding	Total Number	Bedroom Need					
		1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	6+ bed
Band A	506	287	134	38	34	12	1
Band B	1611	691	534	268	113	5	0
Band C	1279	601	473	191	14	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3396</b>	<b>1579</b>	<b>1141</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1</b>

The impact of the scarcity of affordable housing on the homelessness system can be seen in the above table as supply is not meeting demand.

Limited availability of private rented sector accommodation at Local Housing Allowance rates is also having a huge impact on Sefton's ability to discharge its homeless duty. As a result of the lack of property the Council had to introduce periods of direct matching of Registered Providers' properties to people it had placed in temporary accommodation in 2023/24.

## 18 Council Housing Programme

In January 2021, Cabinet agreed the strategic case for Sefton Council re-entering the social housing market through the provision of Council Housing for rent. The programme sets out an initial acquisition in 2024 of 18 homes for social rent from Sandway Homes at the Buckley Hill Lane development in Netherpton.



Work is also underway to develop related operational requirements including, the development of policies relating to the management and maintenance of socially rented housing, tenancy agreements for the letting of homes and future Governance arrangements.

The Council recognizes the need to build more homes that are available to local people at social rent level and the delivery of new council homes is one of the ways to support this.



## 19 Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding 2022/25

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities took the decision to award RSI funding for a three-year period to allow Councils to be able to plan more effectively.

Sefton have been awarded £1,157,533 Rough Sleeper Initiative funding for 2022/2025, for the following initiatives:

- Crash Bed Workers – Sefton Supported Housing Group
- Hospital In-Reach Worker – Sefton Supported Housing Group
- Housing Options Team Officer – Sefton Housing Options
- Resettlement Workers – Sefton Supported Housing Group
- Sefton Psychologist Service – Merseycare NHS Foundation Trust

One of the initiatives that Sefton received Rough Sleeper Initiative funding for was the Sefton Psychologist service.

The Sefton Homeless Psychology Service is an innovative collaboration between Merseycare NHS Foundation Trust and Sefton Council that aims to provide access to psychological support for adults in Sefton experiencing homelessness.

The Sefton Homeless Psychology Service provides training, consultation and reflective practice opportunities for the organisations and staff working within the homeless support and accommodation sector in Sefton.

The Sefton Homeless Psychology Service offer provides:

- Service operates with no exclusion criteria – accessible to all
- It provides access to appointments with a Clinical Psychologist for period of assessment, psychological support, and referral into established mental health services.
- Access to neuropsychological assessment to allow a consideration of possible alternative accommodation and specialist support because of intellectual impairment consistent with Learning Disability.
- Advocacy and support for referrals into existing services

- Liaison & joint working with other organisations within NHS, Criminal Justice, Social Care and Third Sector organisations
- Access to training, consultation and reflective practice for organisations providing housing and associated support services to people experiencing homelessness in Sefton.

### Reflective Practice

Since January 2023, Sefton Homeless Psychology Service has provided 110 reflective practice sessions to management and support staff at Bosco, Excel, Light for Life, New Start & Venus.

### Case Study – Client A

Two recent periods of attempted suicide leading to admission to psychiatric hospital. Upon making contact, it was clear that current accommodation provision was exacerbating mental health difficulties such as obsessional thoughts and behaviour in relation to keeping things clean, leading to lack of sleep, and an increase in risk of suicide.

Liaison with local Housing Options to explain situation and discuss alternatives. Alternative accommodation provided the next day leading to significant reduction in risk of suicide and period of relative stability in mental health.

Referral made to local service to provide ongoing psychological therapy.

## **20 Rough Sleeper Count**

Each Local Authority is obliged to advise the Government as to the extent of Rough Sleeping in the borough on an annual basis. The Council can do so by way of a formal Count; by way of an estimate, or an estimate based on a spotlight count.

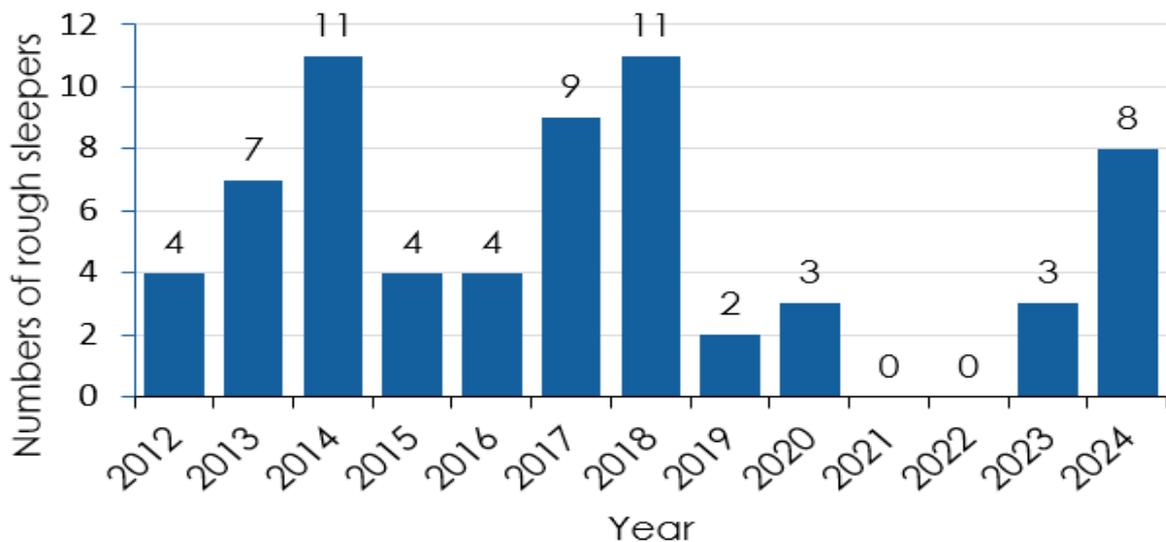
The estimate is based on a single, typical night between 1 October and 30 November, and as we have done in previous years, the Councils within the Liverpool City region coordinated our Counts on the same night. As it is undertaken on one night it can only demonstrate a snapshot of the extent of Rough Sleeping, which can change on a daily basis in reality.

The 'typical night' chosen for the estimate was the evening of the 12th November to the morning of the 13th November 2024, and was done by doing an Estimate Count based on a snapshot count, which is a physical count on the chosen typical night followed up with a multi-partnership data sharing meeting at which partners bring their evidence of people who are known to have slept rough on the chosen typical night.

Sefton's Rough Sleeper Count (people found to be rough sleeping) in November 2024 was 8.

The numbers of rough sleepers in Sefton in the years prior to 2024 were: 2012 (4), 2013 (7), 2014 (11), 2015 (4), 2016 (4), 2017 (9), 2018 (11), 2019 (2), 2020 (3), 2021 (0), 2022 (0), 2023 (3), 2024 (8).

**Figure 19:** Rough sleeper count



## 21 Use of Sit-Up Services/Crash Beds

Within the accommodation contract for "generic homeless people" is the requirement to provide a Sit-Up service.

This service provides an emergency overnight shelter to provide an alternative to Rough Sleeping. The provision of the Sit-Up service helps the Council to reduce the numbers sleeping rough and to offer a No First Night Out to our service users.

The number of people approaching the Council's Housing Options Team and then being placed into a Crash Bed to prevent rough sleeping has continued to increase over the last two years since the pandemic.

The number of individuals accessing either Sit-Up services or nightly crash-beds in Sefton from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024 was 426 with the average length of stay being 5 nights. This is an increase of 65 from the 361 users of Sit-Up in the previous year.

The crash-beds are helping to prevent rough sleeping in Sefton. The cases that are being found by the Council's Rough Sleeper Outreach Service are also being placed into Crash Beds.

Given the average annual local authority expenditure per individual rough sleeping is £10,074 (Figure from The Greater Manchester Combined Authorities Unit Cost Database), the **361** clients accessing Sit-Up rather than rough sleeping will have **saved the Sefton purse an estimated £4,291,524** over the year.

	<b>Bosco House Sit Up</b>	<b>Bosco Lodge Sit Up</b>	<b>Leicester Street Crash Beds</b>	<b>Leyland Road Emergency Room</b>	<b>Leyland Road Night Shelter</b>
Male	28	37	42	66	176
Female	16	12	41	8	0
Age 18-30	13	12	18	16	45
Age 31-40	14	18	22	18	57
Age 41-50	9	7	23	19	42
Age 51-60	6	12	15	12	23
Age 61+	2	0	5	9	9

## 22 Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires every Local Authority to carry out a homelessness review in its Borough every 5 years, to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy based on this review and to consult with other statutory and voluntary organisations. The scope of the review includes a comprehensive review of current and projected levels of homelessness in the Borough and a review of current homelessness services.

In 2023, researchers from Imogen Blood & Associates were asked to review Sefton's Homelessness services. In July and August 2023, the researchers:

- visited twelve different homelessness services.
- spoke in depth to around 40 people who had used these services.
- spoke to 32 professionals, and another 27 professionals filled in a survey.
- looked at lots of information about homelessness in Sefton.

Imogen Blood & Associates developed the Homeless Review from their research and produced the Strategy. The new Homelessness Strategy sets out the priorities recommended to Sefton Council and organisations it works with to tackle homelessness over the next 5 years.

The Strategy was also subject to a 12-week consultation period to gain the views from organisations and the public.

## Key Priorities and Actions

### 1. Improve Access to Accommodation

- Develop alternative housing models and pathways for those who are in or close to work, including younger people.
- Improve access to affordable housing, with housing strategy and development decisions to be informed by intelligence and priorities from the review.

### 2. Reduction of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

- Improve coordination of homelessness prevention activities across sectors, to include a focus on 'hidden' homelessness, tenancy sustainment and pre-eviction protocols.
- Continue to implement, evaluate, and develop new approaches to delivering Housing Options services across the whole system.

### 3. Focus on Support

- Improve accommodation and the provision and coordination of specialist support for people with high health and/or care needs.
- Implement housing-led oversight within the supported housing pathway and improve data reporting so this can be used to monitor whole system performance.
- Improve the quality of emergency bed and temporary accommodation provision and associated support.
- Sustain, further promote, and seek to expand floating support, tenancy sustainment and dispersed schemes, especially where there is potential to convert to general needs.

The consultants highlighted the key achievements from the 2018-2023 Strategy.

Sefton Council and its partners have responded to wider changes, including the Covid-19 pandemic, when we brought Everyone In from the streets; additional migration from Ukraine and Syria; and the ongoing impacts of welfare reform, austerity, and the cost-of-living crisis.

During this period, there have been a number of significant improvements to the approach to preventing and responding to homelessness in the borough, led by the 2018-23 Action Plan. This has, for example, included:

- Successfully commissioning an alliance of providers to deliver and continuously improve a pathway of supported housing for single households through a 10-year contract.
- Implementing a shared and centralised system for assessing and placing individuals in supported housing, in close partnership with the Housing Options Team (HOT) and using Liverpool City Region's MainStay case management system.
- Building strong working relationships across the system to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Duty to Refer processes so that partner agencies can refer those at risk of homelessness into Housing Options.
- Proactively and successfully seeking additional funding and resource from central government and the combined regional authority to test innovative approaches to preventing and tackling homelessness, including:
  - Appointing a dedicated lead for homelessness commissioning
  - Embedding a clinical psychologist within the supported housing group
  - Expanding the award-winning Riverside Dispersed Families project to benefit a further twenty families over a two-year contract extension.
  - Developing a hospital in-reach initiative in Southport through Light for Life
  - Funding a range of specialist and dedicated roles, including through HOT (Domestic abuse, Prison release, Homes for Ukraine, outreach worker) and through Light for Life (hospital discharge initiative in Southport).

- Commissioning assertive outreach/ 'navigator' services and significant emergency bed provision to tackle rough sleeping in the borough, which has helped to bring visible and officially counted rough sleeping in the borough to zero for the past two years.
- Over this period, the council's voluntary and statutory partners have also invested in and developed their response to homelessness. For example,
  - Light for Life has developed a Health hub in Southport, with funding from Rough Sleeper Initiative, Big Lottery funding, donations, and the Integrated Commissioning Board.
  - Department of Work and Pensions has appointed specialist homelessness workers and launched a partnership with Beam.

## 23 Homeless Prevention Trailblazers

Moving into its final year the Trailblazer programme has been supporting households to prevent homelessness since 2019. Two staff are funded from this programme who work to improve the chances of households sustaining their accommodation at the earliest sign of difficulties. These roles also work to improve early intervention initiatives and develop rehousing relationships in the private rented sector (PRS).

Trailblazer support includes:

- Supporting people who have been in custody
- Helping people to access drug and alcohol services
- Signposting to education support services
- Referring to services to help with financial support
- Providing access to health or mental health support
- Providing housing related support services
- Offering mediation
- Promote collaborative working

Upstream, homeless prevention will become a key focus for service delivery in the coming years where a more universal prevention offer to residents can help to address early indicators of potential homelessness from a multiagency perspective.

## 24 Housing First

The Housing First programme was established across the City Region in March 2018 with an initial phase of Test and Learn. One team of support workers was established to operate across the whole City Region and an initial cohort of 60 service users were identified for the Housing First support.

In early 2020, an evaluation of the programme was completed, and decisions were subsequently taken to move to a locality approach with 6 teams operating across the Local Authority areas: 2 teams operating within Liverpool City Council; 1 shared team between Knowsley Council and Halton Council and 1 team for each of Sefton Council, Wirral Council and St Helen's Council.

Both the Housing First team and Local Authority staff hold a pre-panel meeting where they are able to ensure all referral information is correct, this prevents any delays from occurring. Key to the success of the service within Sefton has been the willingness and response from Local Authority colleagues who have worked to help support and drive the implementation of the model. The Sefton panel continues to develop, and it is evident that the localised approach is responding and developing responses in partnerships with services to meet the housing, health, and care needs of the cohort.

Working together has enabled Sefton to be able to achieve a bespoke and flexible response, Sefton are leading on embedding a collaborative and collegiate culture across the panel that endorses challenge, values information-sharing and discussion, appreciates the value of integrated approaches towards prevention and of sharing expertise, and supports practitioners. Underpinning this approach is the promotion of a whole system approach rather than an individual service response.

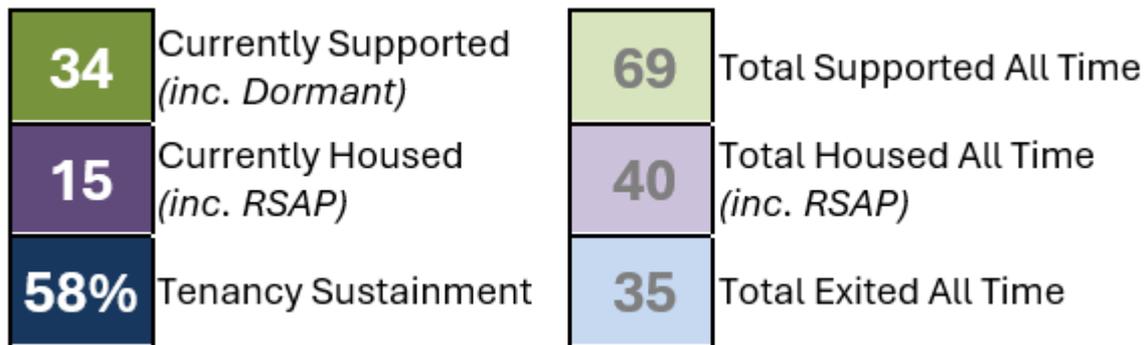
In late 2024, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authorities (LCRCA) provided assurance to all Housing First and LCRCA homelessness staff that they will remain in employment until at least the end of September 2025 as the Combined Authority has committed to underwriting the risk.

Confirmation from MHCLG on future funding is still awaited at the time of writing.

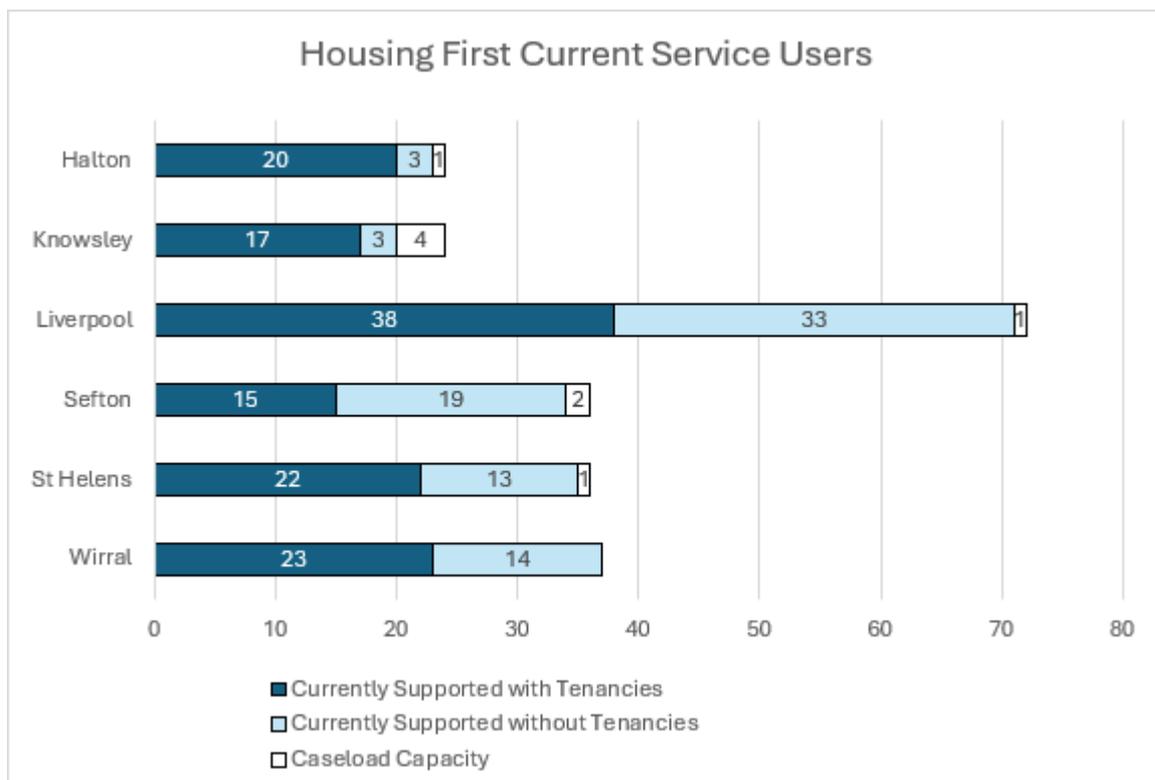
### Tenancies by Local Authority

As of December 2024, there has been a total of 37 people provided with their own tenancy in Sefton, with 15 of those people still in their accommodation.

Housing First cases breakdown for Sefton.



**Figure 20:** Housing First tenancies by Local Authority



## 25 Riverside Dispersed Accommodation

Since 2019, Riverside Housing Group have delivered an award-winning service for homeless families to provide intensive support in the first 12 months whilst accommodated. This service was found to be an exemplar in the recent Homeless Review in which it was recommended that the service be extended and replicated across different cohort also.

In early June 2024, a Soft Market test was carried out asking Registered Providers of social housing who have stock within the borough to express an interest if they were able to deliver the following services:

- Providing accommodation to families that have presented to Sefton's Housing Options, in order to support them within that accommodation for a minimum of 6 months and maximum of 12 months on license whilst they gain the skills to secure the tenancy after that time following this support.
- The service requires nine houses that must be within the borough of Sefton, either 2- or 3-bedroom houses per year, over the next three years (27 in total).
- An Intensive Floating Support service for families must also be available so that Sefton's Housing Options Team can refer up to ten additional families who are in social housing but struggling to maintain their tenancy, so that the Intensive Floating Support Service can stabilise that tenancy and prevent homelessness.

The new service was commissioned and began in late 2024.

## 26 Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme Units

In June 2021, Riverside Housing supported by Sefton Council to submit a bid for Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme funding and were subsequently granted the funding by the Department of Levelling Up Housing & Communities to provide seven properties exclusively for rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping.

The funding was a mix of capital and revenue in order to convert low-demand 2-bedroom properties into furnished 1-bedroom properties, and to provide three years of revenue funding to provide the support to these clients.



These seven units of accommodation have been extremely successful in being able to support some of Sefton's most entrenched rough sleepers into accommodation.

People are able to stay for a maximum of three years and are supported whilst in this accommodation by Riverside staff.

Since the seven properties have been available there has been a total number of 17 people with a history of rough sleeping accommodated into them.

One former entrenched rough sleeper has now been within his accommodation since March 2022, showing how successful this model is to sustaining people within them with the correct support in place.

## 27 Conclusions

Sefton's Housing Options Team and its commissioned homelessness Providers (Sefton Supported Housing Group) are facing increasing barriers in their ability to support people into secure, sustainable accommodation. Lack of enough social housing and the lack of private rented sector accommodation at Local Housing Allowance rate, are the two main barriers to move-on from homeless accommodation.

Further, the data shows the marked increase in presentations to Sefton's Housing Options Team in 2023/2024 of 3147 representing a **14% increase in new homeless cases compared to 2022/23**.

### Some key points to highlight:

- The total number of new households who have contacted the Housing Options Service for advice in 2023/2024 is 3147.
- Sefton has seen a year-on-year increase in numbers of presentations since 2018/19, which represents a **182% increase** in cases as of 2023/24 and shows the stark increase in homelessness within the borough since Covid and the **increase in cost of living**.
- Below shows the year- on-year increase in new presentations to Sefton's Housing Options Team:

2018/2019 – 1,095

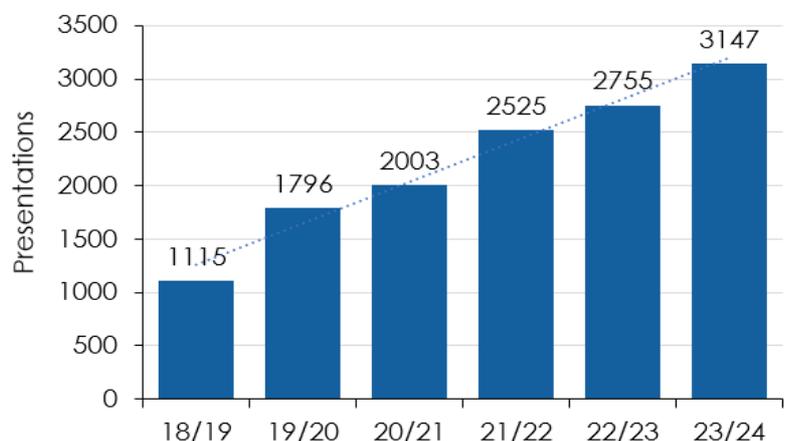
2019/2020 – 1,796

2020/2021 – 2,003

2021/2022 – 2,525

2022/2023 – 2,755

2023/2024 – 3147



- Of the 3,147 homeless cases, 282 were resolved at the Prevention stage, 774 at the relief stage, with 331 at the Main Duty stage.
- Of the 3,147 cases, 389 (12%) were assisted to secure accommodation.

- 389 clients were assisted to secure accommodation, 193 (49%) in social housing and 60 (15%) in the private rented sector.
- 190 service users were provided with temporary supported accommodation and 107 service users provided with floating support services via the Council's commissioned homeless services.
- Sefton's commissioned Supported Accommodation Providers are now seeing far less planned move-ons into accommodation than they ever have due to this lack of availability. Although it is hoped that the introduction of Band A on Property Pool Plus for clients in homeless hostels will help alleviate this issue.
- Sefton are beginning to see increased levels of rough sleeping as a result of the lack of move-on from supported accommodation.
- It is hoped that new services introduced to accommodate those entrenched rough sleepers with care needs will help fill a gap that is not met at this time.

