

**Maidstone Borough Council
Homelessness Review
January 2014**

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Executive Summary

Under the 2002 Homelessness Act, it is a statutory requirement for all local housing authorities to publish a Homelessness Strategy at least every five years.

A prerequisite for this is conducting a review of homelessness in the borough. The Homelessness Review takes into account the current and likely future levels of homelessness in the borough, the activities carried out in the borough for the prevention and relief of homelessness, and the resources available in the borough for these activities (this can be found in Appendix C).

According to guidance from central government, the following elements are essential components of a homelessness review:

- a. The levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in the district;
- b. The activities which are carried out for any of the following purposes (or which contribute to achieving any of them):
 - i. preventing homelessness in the housing authority's district;
 - ii. securing that accommodation is or will be available for people in the district who are or may become homeless; and
 - iii. providing support for people in the district:
 - who are or may become homeless; or
 - who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again;
- c. The resources available to the housing authority, the social services authority for the district, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons for the activities outlined in (b) above (this can be found in Appendix C)

The Review Process

Much of the data required to undertake the homelessness review is held by Maidstone Borough Council (e.g. the P1E statutory return to central government). Other data is held by partner organisations (e.g. data held by the Supporting People Programme on their clients).

In addition to using the data outlined above, the Council set out to consult with as many organisations as possible who are engaged with working with those who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. The Council also consulted directly with service users of various homelessness services and with private sector landlords. This was carried out in several ways:

- A consultation for was sent out to partner organisations that work with the homeless and those who are at risk of becoming homeless; including Registered Social Landlords in the borough
- Requests for data were made to various Social Services departments at Kent County Council
- A survey was conducted of private sector landlords at a local meeting of the National Landlords Association
- A focus group was held before a pre-tenancy training session

- A survey was carried out on those presenting themselves as homeless at the Maidstone Gateway
- A survey was carried out on those who attended the Maidstone Day Centre, a day centre for rough sleepers

Headline Results

The headline findings from the review can be summarised below:

- The number of homelessness decisions (included in the council's P1E return) made by the council has increased significantly since April 2011 (see Table 1, page 10)
- The numbers of cases that are accepted as eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need have also increased since 2010
- The proportion of cases that are found to not be homeless has dropped, from a high of 85% in 2009/10 to 32% in 2012/13. In the main this is due to a change in how applications for assistance have been dealt with.
- This trend is similar to the national data supplied by other local authorities in their P1E returns, and follows advice given to local housing authorities by the Local Government Ombudsman that the previous approach of allowing homeless applications to remain undetermined until the person is provided with a housing solution be no longer pursued.
- The change in how applications for assistance are dealt with also explains the downward trend in homelessness preventions. Many households that would previously been dealt with as preventions are not being dealt with as needing a homelessness decision.
- The typical profile of someone who was accepted as having a full housing duty towards them is:
 - A female lone parent (47% of applicants);
 - Aged between 25-44 (82% of applicants), and;
 - With one child (46% of applicants).
- The most common reason for the loss of the last settled home, for cases where we owe the full housing duty, since 2008/9 has been parents no longer willing or able to accommodate (27.1%). The next most common reasons have been termination of an assured shorthold tenancy (18.9%), followed by other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate (12.4%)
- Before 2010/11, the main reason for loss of last settled home was parents no longer willing or able to accommodate. However since 2010/11, the proportion of cases that stated this as the reason for the loss of their last settled home has decreased. There has been a marked increase in breakdown of relationships with partners, both violent and non-violent, that has accounted for some of this increase
- Landlord repossession claims have been on an upward trend since 2005. Cases where a landlord has taken possession of a property doubled between mid-2008 and 2011.

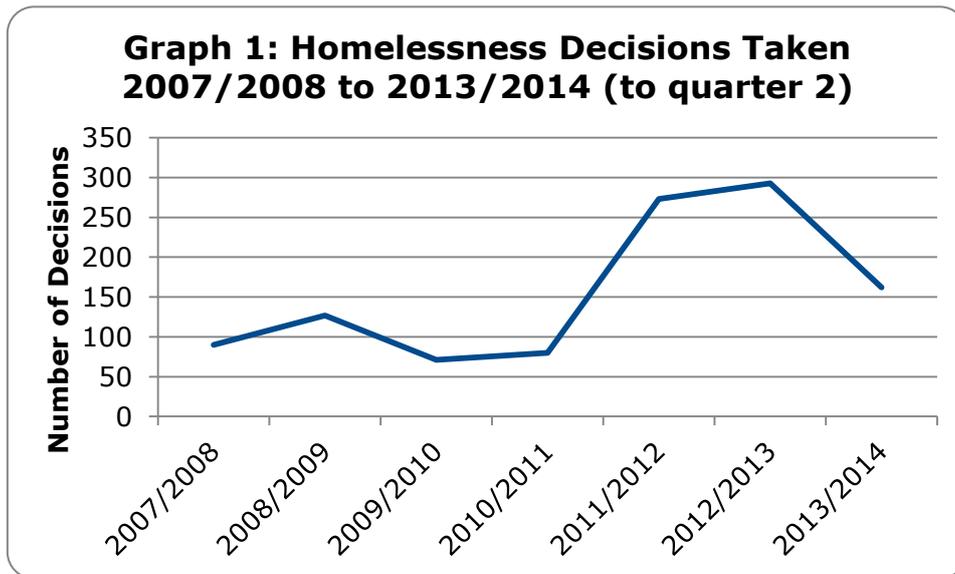
However the current trend is for landlord possessions to be on the decrease, despite repossession claims in the courts continuing to increase

- Mortgage repossessions have decreased since a high in 2009/10, however they remain at a higher rate than before the financial downturn. The relationship between mortgage repossessions and homelessness does not appear to have a strong direct relationship
- Between 2007 and 2010, 17 of the 20 households to whom we have owed a full housing duty and whose reason for the loss of last settled accommodation was mortgage arrears, 17 of these have been since 2010.
- The estimates for rough sleeping show that rough sleeping has dropped since 2010
- Data submitted from the Supporting People Programme has shown that a large proportion of clients where homelessness appeared within their needs are single homeless people. This has been decreasing over the last three years, and the proportion of homeless families with support needs has been increasing
- When consulted, there was a strong consensus amongst private sector landlords that the council should offer to guarantee the rent of housing benefit clients and that the council should offer to repair any damage tenants on housing benefit may cause to properties when they move out
- When consulted, those that were homeless and seeking accommodation in the private rented sector outlined the following barriers they faced to finding accommodation:
 - A lack of suitable, affordable housing
 - A perceived lack of security in the private rented sector
 - Negative perceptions of landlords of those receiving Local Housing Allowance
 - Difficulty in finding landlords that will accept tenants on benefits
- There are some specific gaps in provision that were identified by local partners during the consultation:
 - A lack of private sector housing provision for single people under 35
 - Partner organisations have experienced problems with the way 'Band D' (homeless) of the housing allocations policy operations
 - Multiple barriers to prison leavers finding accommodation after release
- There is a wide range of support available to those who are homeless in Maidstone; which is delivered by Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council and the local Voluntary and Community Sector. This varies from advice, to alcohol and drug treatment to providing places in temporary accommodation

Levels of Homelessness in Maidstone

Levels of homelessness have tended to fluctuate according to several factors such as local circumstances (e.g. the closure of a large local employer) and national and international circumstances (e.g. the vagaries of the national and international economy or changes in government policy).

The government requires all local housing authorities to complete a return (known as the P1E) every quarter on homelessness activity. This includes the number of people approaching the council as homeless. The overall numbers of those approaching the council as homeless between the 2007/2008 financial year and the 2013/2014 financial year (up to quarter 2) can be seen below.



For the purpose of this analysis, the last six full years of homelessness data (2007/2008-2012/2013) will be used, as well as the first two quarters of data for 2013/2014. This time period is the same as the timespan for the previous strategy.

As can be seen in the graph above, the number of people approaching the council as homeless has increased since 2010/2011. It is also worth noting that if those approaching the council as homeless carry on at the same rate in the final two quarters of 2013/2014 the number will be higher than 2012/2013. The reason for the spike in people presenting themselves as homeless is due to a change in the way homelessness decisions were taken following updated guidelines from central government. Previously, local authorities would allow homelessness applications to remain undetermined until the person is provided with a housing solution. Often, if the person was prevented from becoming homeless or a housing solution was found swiftly a decision was not taken on whether they were homeless or not. Now, a decision is taken before helping to provide someone with a housing solution. Therefore more decisions are taken, but it may not necessarily mean there has been a rise in homelessness.

Most of the data from the P1E return to central government only gathers detailed data on those who are eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need (the full housing duty, as this means the local housing authority must secure accommodation for the applicant and their family). Therefore to understand the context of the data from the last five years it is important to understand the trend in not only those presenting themselves as homeless, but also those that Maidstone Borough Council is owed a duty to house under legislation.

The table below details homelessness decisions for the last six years from the P1E return for Maidstone.

Table 1: Homelessness decisions taken in Maidstone between 2007/2008 and 2013/2014 (to quarter 2)						
Financial Year	Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need	Eligible, homeless and in priority need but intentionally so	Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	Eligible but not homeless	Ineligible	Total number of decisions
2007/2008	45.6%	16.7%	4.4%	33.3%	0.0%	90
2008/2009	29.1%	11.8%	6.3%	52.0%	0.8%	127
2009/2010	7.0%	8.5%	8.5%	76.1%	0.0%	71
2010/2011	33.8%	6.3%	8.8%	50.0%	1.3%	80
2011/2012	69.2%	9.2%	10.3%	10.6%	0.7%	273
2012/2013	67.6%	7.5%	14.3%	8.5%	2.0%	293
2013/2014 (to quarter 2)	56.8%	9.3%	13.6%	19.8%	0.6%	162
Total	53.7%	9.4%	10.7%	25.2%	1.0%	1096

Between 2007/2008 and 2009/2010 the proportion of those found not to be homeless increased year on year. In 2009/2010 this reached a high of 76.1%. However since 2010/2011 the number of people approaching the council as homeless increased; as well as the number of people who were found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need. At the same time, the proportions of those found not to be homeless or intentionally homeless have decreased. This is likely to be linked to the period when decisions letters were always issued for people receiving a negative decision, to enable them to request a review of the decision, but not necessarily to those for whom accommodation was secured.

Another trend to be noticed is the steady increase in the proportion of people who have been found to be eligible for assistance, homeless but not in priority need. This means that there are many people out there who are homeless through no fault of their own, but are not in priority need so we have no obligation to house them.

Since 2009/2010, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of applicants who are eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need. However the figures for 2013/2014 so far suggest that this proportion is dropping down again after hitting a peak of 69.2% in 2011/2012. However, as previously noted, the numbers of people approaching the council look set to continue to rise so it may well mean that the numbers of people who the council has a duty to house continues to remain high.

Ethnic background of those who approached Maidstone Borough Council as homeless

Table 2: Ethnic background of those who presented themselves as homeless and MBC made a decision between 2007/2008 and 2013/2014 (up to quarter 2). Source: P1E return

Ethnic Background	White	Black	Asian	Mixed	Other
% of those who gave an answer to the ethnic background question	92.9	2.1	2.3	1.4	1.3

As can be seen in the table above, the vast majority of those who approached the council as homeless and the council made a decision were from a White ethnic background. These figures can be compared with figures from the 2011 census to find out how closely they match with the ethnic profile of the borough as a whole. These figures can be seen in the table below.

Table 3: The ethnic composition of Maidstone Borough. Source: 2011 Census

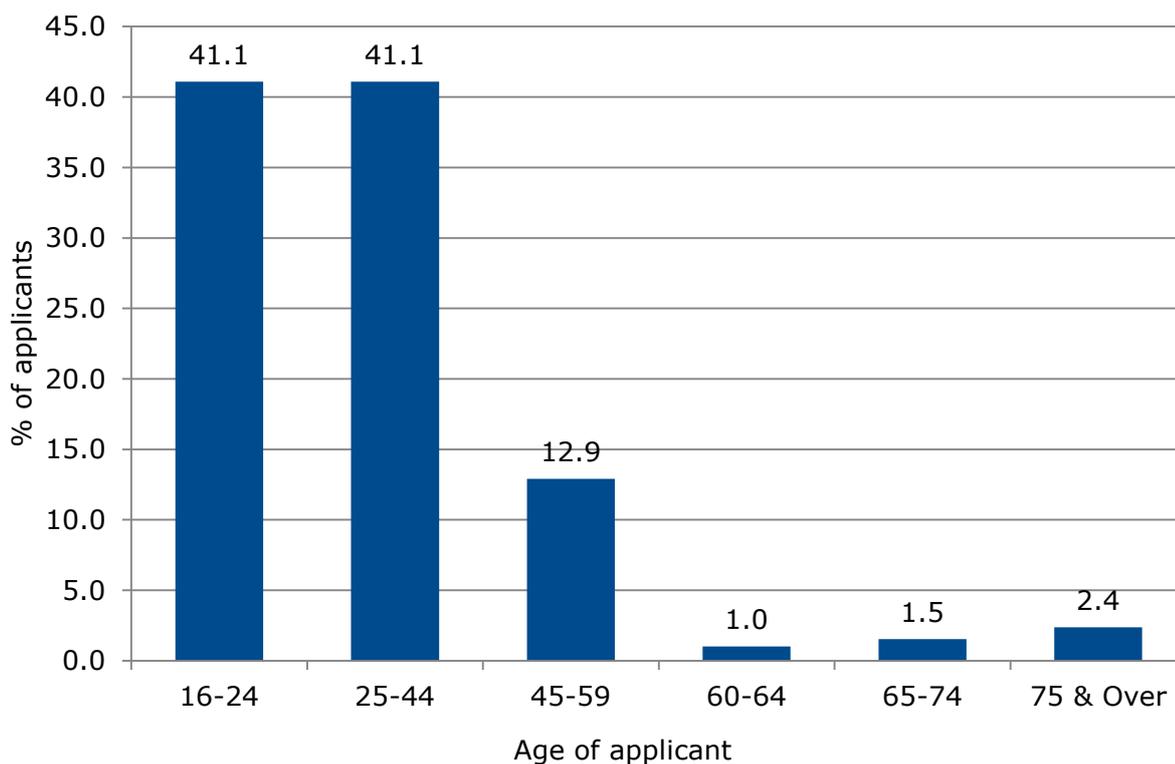
Ethnic Background	White	Black	Asian	Mixed	Other
% of residents in the borough of this ethnicity	94.1	0.9	3.2	1.5	0.3

When the two figures are compared, it appears that those of White, Asian or Mixed ethnic background are underrepresented in the homelessness figures, and those of a Black or Other ethnic background are over represented. However these figures should be treated with caution, as the numbers of those presenting themselves as homeless from Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) groups are low. For example, between 2007 and 2012 only 17 people of a Black ethnic background presented themselves as homeless.

Age

The vast majority of those who were accepted by the council as eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need are aged between 16 and 44 at the time of their acceptance. A chart showing the age of those who were accepted as eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need between 2007 and 2013 can be seen below.

Graph 2: The age of those who were found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need between 2007/2008 and 2013/2014 (up to quarter 2). Source: MBC P1E Return



Within the 16-44 age group, there is an equal split between those aged 16-24 and those aged 25-44. There is a very small proportion of those accepted as homeless aged 60-74, and a slightly larger proportion of those aged 75 and over.

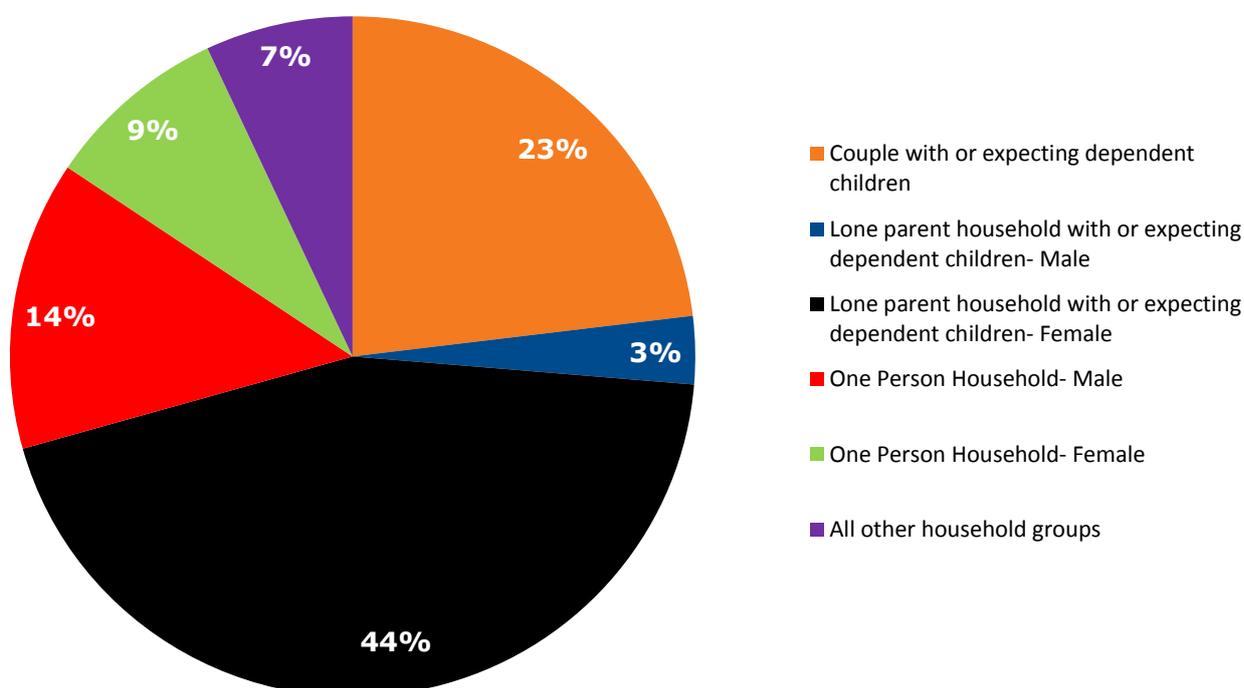
This demonstrates that those aged between 16 and 44 are the most likely to become homeless and be eligible for assistance from the council in the form of temporary accommodation.

This may be because one of the categories for priority need is a member of the household being pregnant, or including dependent children. Those aged under 44 are much more likely to have dependent children within their household, therefore are more likely to be in priority need. This also fits with evidence from the next section on family type.

Household Type

Between 2007/2008 and 2013/2014 (up to quarter 2), out of those who were accepted by the council as eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need, the most common family type was a female lone parent with or expecting dependent children (47%). The second most common family type in this group is couple with, or expecting, dependent children (24%), with single male households being the third most common family type (13%). The breakdown of family types can be seen on the chart below.

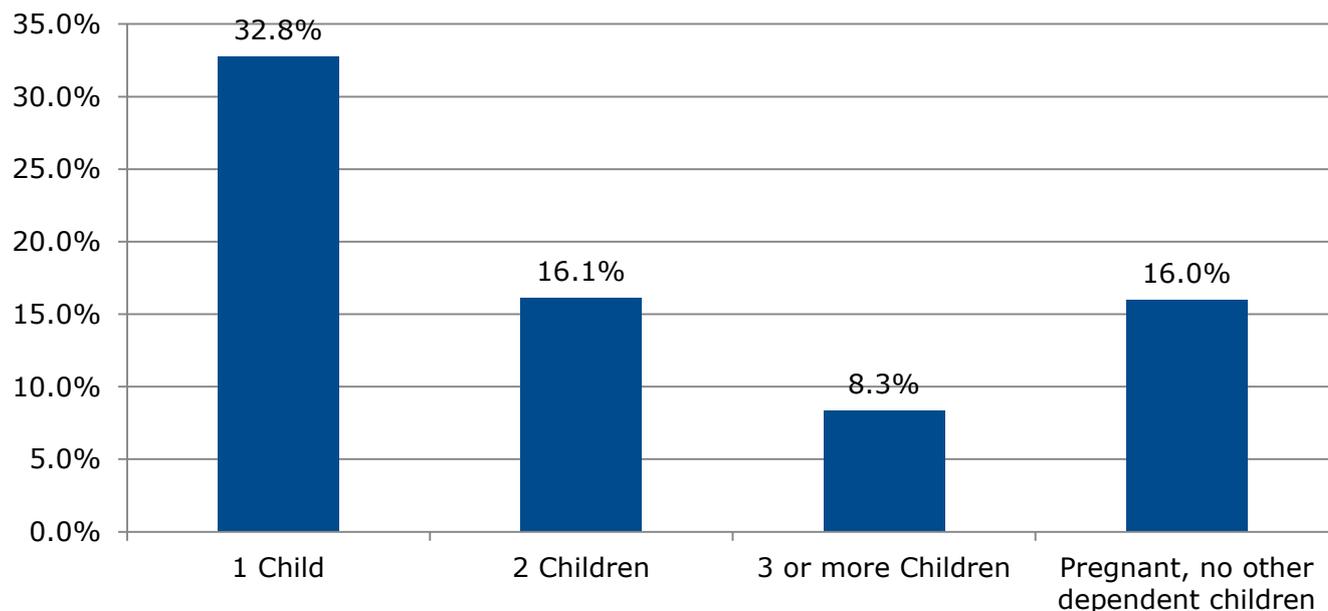
Graph 3: Applicant households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need, by household type between 2007/2008 and 2013/2014 (up to quarter 2). Source: MBC P1E return



Household Size

Out of those who the full housing duty is owed between 2007/2008 and 2013/2014 (up to quarter 2), 73% of households either had dependent children or included a pregnant woman with no other dependent children. The breakdown of the different household sizes can be seen below.

Graph 4: Applicant whose household includes dependent children, as a percentage of those found to be eligible, homeless and in priority need between 2007/2008 and 2012/2013 (up to quarter 2) Source: MBC P1E return



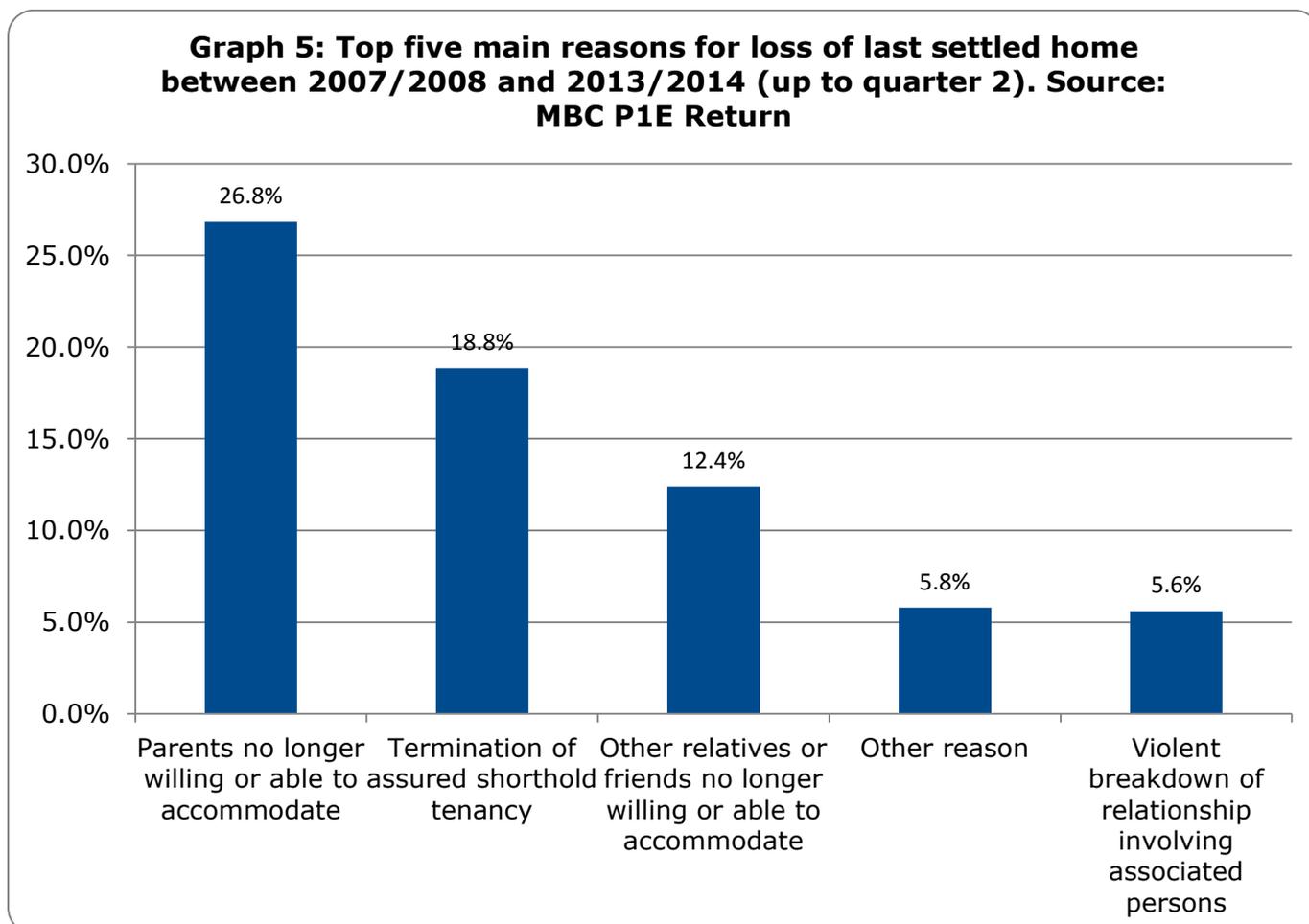
As can be seen in the graph, the most common family type is one child. However there is an almost equal split between 2 children and a household that includes a pregnant woman with no other dependent children.

The reason for the high proportion of applicants who we have a duty to house having dependent children, or containing pregnant women, is under homelessness legislation this is a priority need category. In Maidstone, the priority need category of having, or expecting, children in the household is the most common out of all the priority need categories.

After households having dependent children/containing a pregnant woman, the next most common categories of priority need are physical disability (10.2%), mental illness or disability (6.3%), applicant aged 16/17 years old (4.8%) and applicant formerly in 'care' and aged between 18 and 20 years old.

Reasons for loss of last settled home

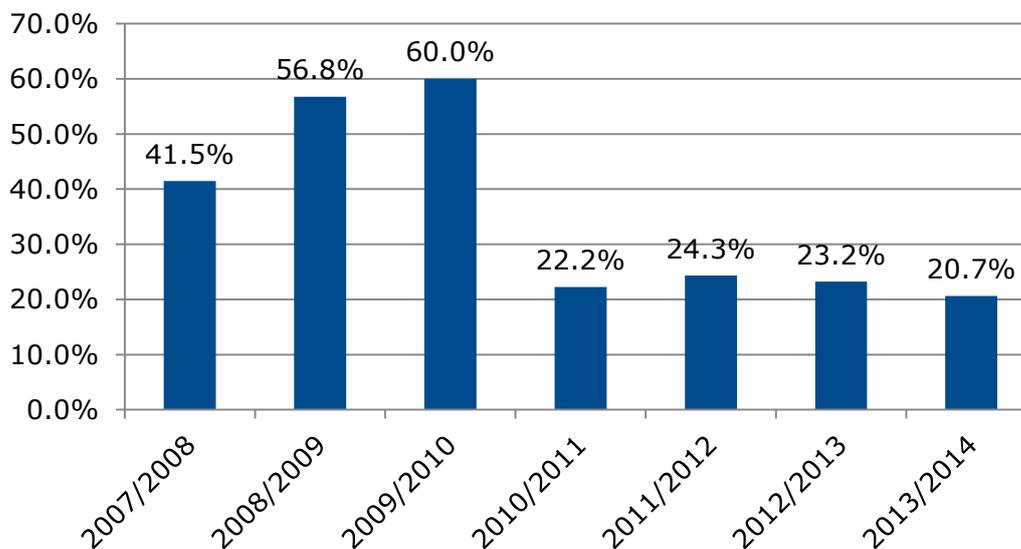
The graph below demonstrates the top five reasons for the loss of the last settled home. Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate (27.1%) was the biggest reason for homelessness in Maidstone between 2007/2008 and 2013/2014 (up to quarter 2). This finding, along with the fact that 41% of those accepted as eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need are aged 16-24, suggests that there are increasing numbers of young people who have been unable to leave the family home and set up their own household.



There are a number of trends in these figures throughout the years that will be further explored on the following pages.

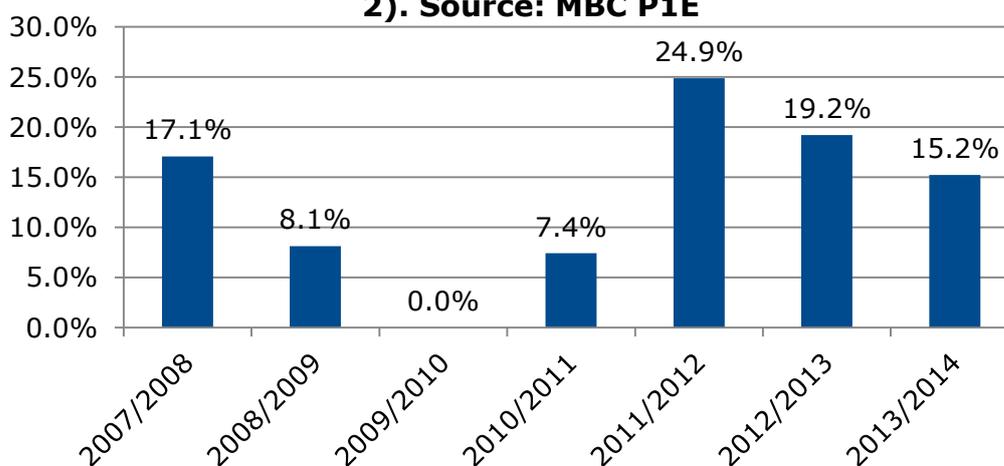
The following graph shows the proportion of people stating the reason for losing their last settled home as 'parents were no longer willing or able to accommodate'. There was a trend of increase between 2007/2008 and 2009/2010. Between 2010/2011 and 2013/2014 the proportion has dropped, and remained between 20 and 25 per cent ever since.

Graph 6: Reason for loss of last home given as parents no longer willing or able to accomodate, between 2007/2008 and 2013/2014 (up to quarter 2). Source: MBC P1E

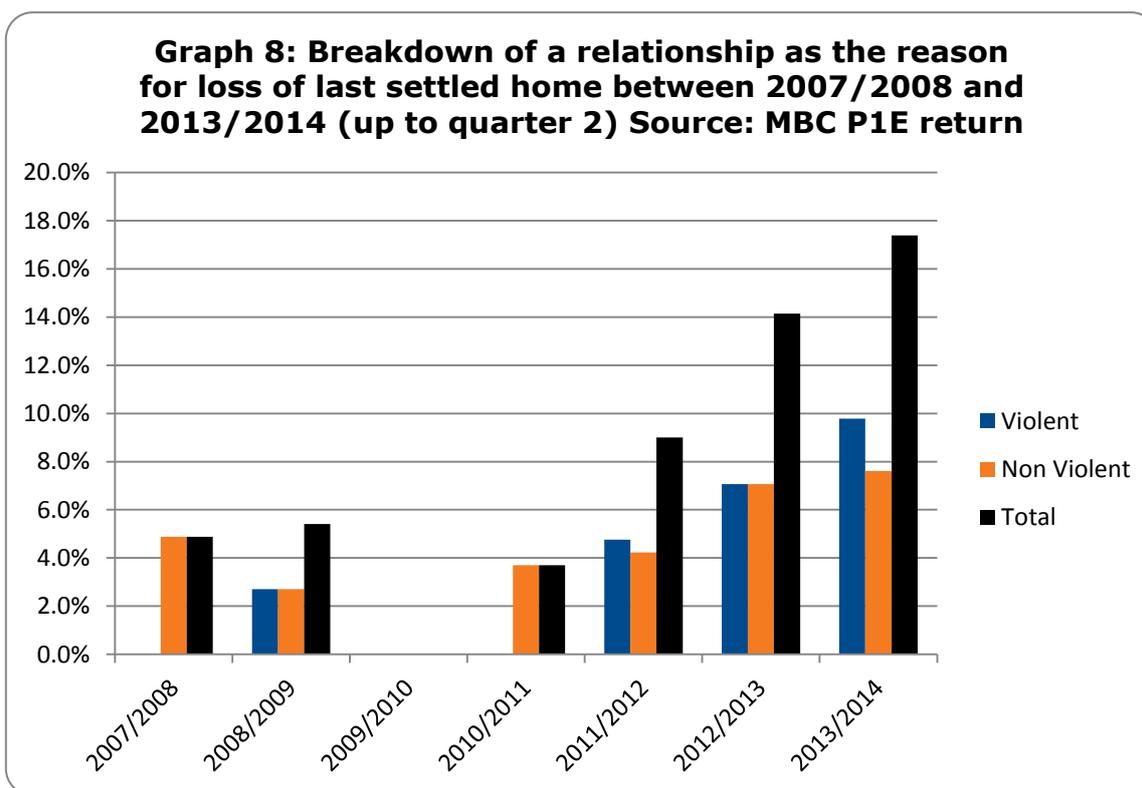


The main reason for loss of last settled home that has increased at the same time has been termination of an assured shorthold tenancy, this can be seen on the graph below. Although this reason made up 17.1% of the loss of last settled home in 2007/2008, it subsequently dropped between 2008/2009 and 2010/2011. Between 2011/2012 and 2013/2014 (to date), termination of an assured shorthold tenancy has remained relatively high. This suggests that people are losing homes in the private sector due to reasons other than not being able to afford rent, as rent arrears are a separate category in the P1E return and they have remained low throughout the same period.

Graph 7: Reason for loss of last home given as termination of an assured shorthold tenancy, between 2007/2008 and 2013/2014 (up to quarter 2). Source: MBC P1E



Violent and non-violent breakdown of relationships have also been on the increase since 2010/2011. This can be seen on the graph below.



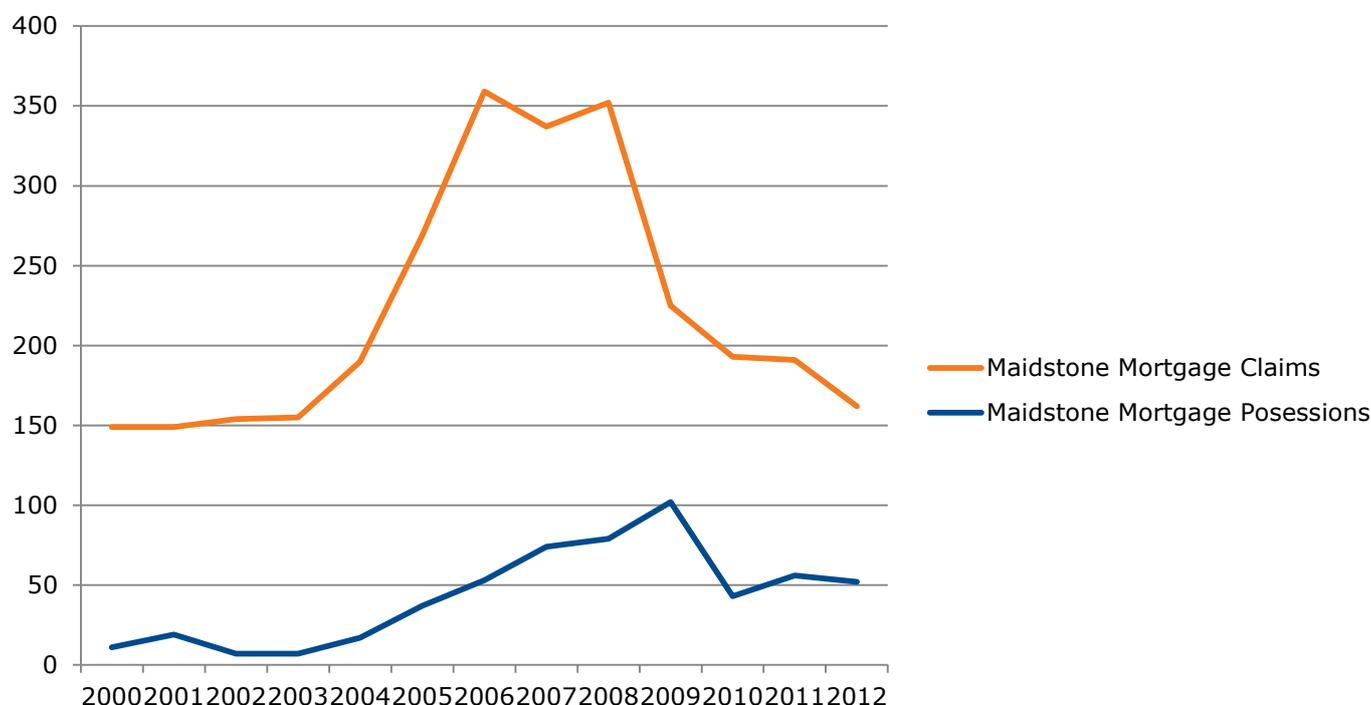
As can be seen in the graph, within the category of breakdown of relationship there doesn't seem to be a trend in violent or non violent breakdown of relationships. For the last three years there has been a roughly equal split between the two categories.

Repossessions

The level of repossessions, both landlord and mortgage, have increased over previous years. For both types of repossessions, there has been an increase in repossession claims in the courts since 2005. However for mortgage repossessions this number of claims has decreased dramatically since 2009, and is back at pre-2005 levels. This trend can be seen on the graph below.

Despite the level of mortgage repossession claims decreasing, the number of actual possession orders obtained has remained at a higher level than before the spike in claims for possession orders. This could suggest that mortgage companies have obtained possession orders but are waiting until the housing market improves before enforcing possession to realise the capital asset.

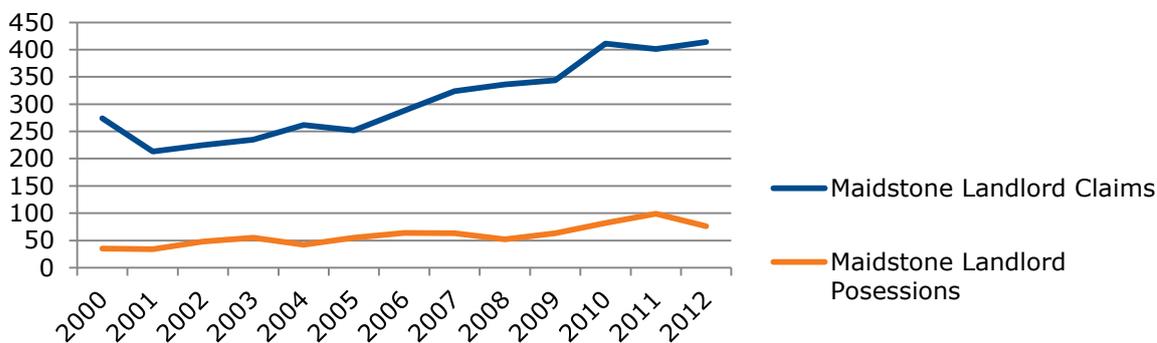
Graph 9: Maidstone Mortgage Repossession Claims and Possessions



Source: Ministry of Justice mortgage and landlord possession statistics

There is a slightly different trend for landlord repossessions. Although there seems to be an ever increasing number of claims for possession orders, the level of landlord possession orders obtained has not increased as drastically. However it is worth noting that possessions are seeing a trend of gradual increase. This can be seen in the following graph:

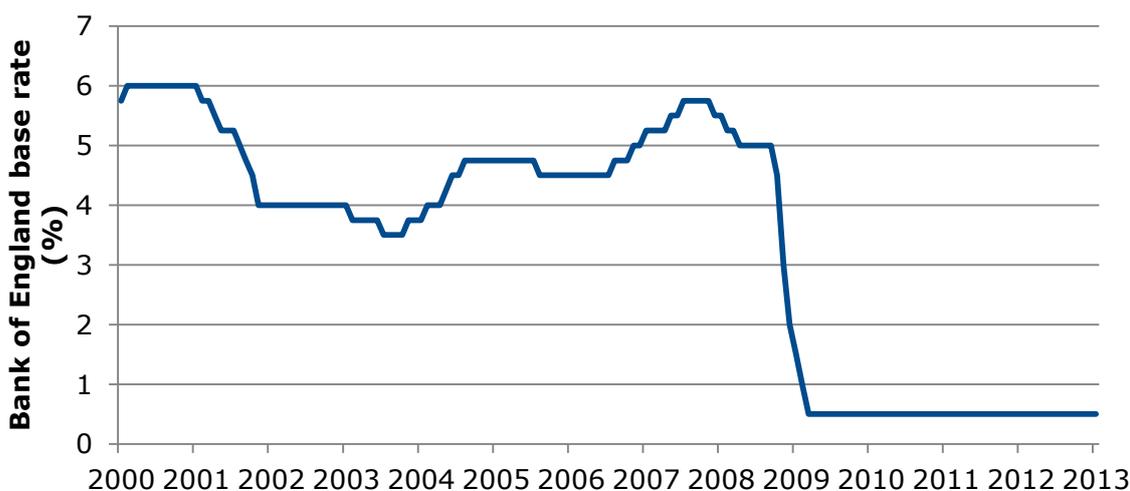
Graph 10: Maidstone Landlord Repossession Claims and Possessions



Source: Ministry of Justice mortgage and landlord possession statistics

The mortgage repossession statistics correlate relatively closely with the Bank of England base rate, and accordingly with the financial crisis. This is because mortgage interest rates are closely linked to the Bank of England Base Rate. As the base rate increased from a low of 3.5% in July 2003 to a high of 5.75% in July 2007, mortgage repossession claims increased accordingly. As the base rate began to fall from 5.5% in December 2007 onwards, and settled at an all time low of 0.5% in March 2009 mortgage repossession claims also fell.

Graph 11: Bank of England Base Rate



However, despite the number of repossession claims falling, the number of possession orders granted remains higher than the pre-2004 level.

Considering mortgage repossessions and how closely they link with the Bank of England base rate and the state of the economy, there are two risks for owner occupiers in the short to medium term that may result in increased levels of homelessness. The first is an increase in the bank of England Base Rate, which will increase the cost of mortgages. The second is if there is further pressure on the national and local economy resulting in residents finding it harder to continue paying their mortgage.

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

The bi-annual caravan count, carried out by the Department for Communities and Local Government, gives a good idea of the numbers of Gypsy and Traveller households living in caravans in the borough. The results for the last six published counts can be seen below.

Table 4: Bi-annual caravan count for Maidstone between 2010 and 2013

	No. of Socially Rented	No. on Private Land (with Planning Permission)	No. on Private Land (without Planning Permission)	Total
Jul 2010	31	188	102	321
Jan 2011	32	205	104	341
Jul 2011	32	278	104	414
Jan 2012	38	293	48	379
Jul 2012	41	307	52	400
Jan 2013	38	336	48	422

Source: Department for Communities and Local Government Biannual Caravan Count

The last six counts show an upward trend in the numbers of caravans in the borough. There is also a positive trend in the proportion of those caravans that are situated on private land with planning permission and socially rented pitches. This is a positive trend when considering homelessness, as those on unauthorised private sites are more likely to be evicted and be made homeless. Therefore the larger proportion of Gypsies and Travellers living on authorised sites, the less likely they will be to become at risk of becoming homeless through eviction.

The borough's Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (GTSAA), which was carried out in 2012, estimated the housing needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. The assessment estimated that the borough needed to provide the following numbers of authorised pitches in order to satisfy demand, detailed in the table below.

Table 5: Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Need

2011-2016	105
2016-2021	25

Source: Maidstone Borough Council Gypsy Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment; January 2012

As of January 2013, it is clear that there has been good progress on providing additional authorised pitches for the Gypsy and Traveller community. Since July 2011, the number of caravans sited on authorised pitches has increased by 58. Although this number does not translate exactly into the number of additional pitches provided, as multiple caravans may be sited on one pitch, it does show that progress has been made.

There are currently 5 applicants from the gypsy and traveller community who are on the housing register.

Homelessness Preventions

Maidstone Borough Council carries out homelessness prevention activities, carried out by the Housing Options Service. These preventions can range from giving debt advice, to sorting out housing benefit problems, to resolving problems with rent arrears. Homelessness prevention work can be carried out for any households that approach the authority for advice, regardless of whether they are statutorily homeless or not. The figures for homelessness preventions from 2008/2009 financial year onwards can be seen below. Please note these figures were only gathered from 2009 onwards.

Table 6: Homelessness Preventions	
Year	Number of Preventions
2008/2009 (Oct-March)	182
2009/2010	258
2010/2011	340
2011/2012	398
2012/2013	348
2013/2014 (Apr-Sept)	128

As can be seen by the figures, the number of homelessness preventions has been on the decrease. This may be due to the change in methodology that has meant that more people are given a homelessness decision, which then does not necessarily count as a prevention. However further analysis is required to determine what has caused this.

Rough Sleeping

Rough Sleeping remains the most visible and damaging manifestation of homelessness. The Department for Communities and Local Government defines Rough Sleepers as follows for the purposes of rough sleeping counts and estimates:

'People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes").'

Figures for rough sleeping are published annually, after a count or estimate is carried out across the country in the autumn. The count (or estimate) is a snapshot of the extent of rough sleeping in an area on one night.

The methodology of gathering these statistics changed in 2010, so data from before this time cannot be compared as it would be impossible to tell whether any changes were due to the change in methodology or due to other circumstances.

The estimates for rough sleeping in Maidstone, as well as neighbouring authorities can be seen in the table below.

Year	Maidstone	Medway	Ashford	Tonbridge & Malling	Tunbridge Wells	Swale
2010	27	7	2	1	9	0
2011	19	12	7	4	13	2
2012	19	17	4	3	10	6
2013	14	6	-	4	12	5

The estimates for rough sleeping in Maidstone show that although rough sleeping in Maidstone appears to have dropped since 2010, it has stayed at a steady level between 2011 and 2012.

Rough Sleeping in Maidstone appears to be higher than its neighbouring authorities. This could be linked to the number of services for single homeless people that are located in Maidstone and not found in the adjoining areas. The exception to this is Tunbridge Wells, which has single homeless accommodation and a higher number compared to Ashford, Tonbridge & Malling and Swale. For most neighbouring authorities, numbers of rough sleepers have increased between 2010 and 2012. For all neighbouring authorities, numbers of rough sleepers are higher in 2012 than in 2010.

However in Maidstone, the number of rough sleepers has almost halved between 2010 and 2013. This should be noted as all other neighbouring authorities (except Medway) for which we have data for have seen an increase over this time period. No other neighbouring authority (except Medway) have seen a decrease in homelessness between 2012 and 2013, whereas Maidstone has.

Housing Cost and Housing Provision

The Maidstone Borough Council area is an average housing cost area compared nationally, but fares well regionally and compared to Kent. The table below shows the average house price for the South East, Kent and Maidstone in April to June 2013.

Table 8: Average house prices, April to June 2013			
England	South East	Kent	Maidstone
£242,415	£281,148	£241,195	£229,099
Source: Land Registry			

According to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which was carried out in 2010, there are particular groups of people who are more likely to find it difficult to afford 'market' (the cost of housing on the open market, either renting or buying) housing. Those particular groups, and the likely percentage of those who would be unable to afford market rent, are:

- Lone parents (67.1%)
- Single, non-pensioner (34.1%)
- Household head not in employment (31.1%)

(Source: Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2010)

It is also worth noting that those in urban locations are more likely to not be able to afford market rent (29.0%) than those in rural locations (17.7%). Another noteworthy observation is the split between those households headed by someone employed in Maidstone Borough (22.6% of households unlikely to be able to afford market rent) compared to those households headed by someone employed outside Maidstone Borough (7.2% of households unlikely to afford market rent).

The SHMA noted that there was a consensus among registered social landlords and those dealing with homelessness that there is a shortage of accommodation in social rented housing for single households.

Maidstone Borough Council is committed to providing affordable housing to address the need for affordable housing in the Borough. The statistics for delivery of affordable homes can be seen in the table below.

Table 9: Number of affordable homes delivered	
Year	Number of Affordable Homes Delivered
2009/2010	399
2010/2011	228
2011/2012	284
2012/2013	244
2013/2014 (up to 30th September)	101
Source: MBC	

Housing Register

The number of those housed on the housing register has increased since 2007/2008, and in 2012/2013 it was at its second highest number for the period.

Table 10: Numbers on the housing register and numbers housed from the housing register between 2007/2008 and 2013/2014

Year	Housed	On Housing Register
2007/2008	402	2290
2008/2009	463	2863
2009/2010	709	3222
2010/2011	572	3442
2011/2012	607	3674
2012/2013	703	3187
2013/2014	330*	1289**

* Up to 31/10/13

** Number on register as of 13/11/13

There has been an increase in numbers of people on the housing register between 2007/2008 and 2011/2012. This started to decrease in 2012/2013 and then dropped drastically in 2013/2014. The reason for the large drop was that the new housing allocations policy was introduced in April 2013. This new policy made it harder for applicants to be on the housing register, with applicants having to prove a housing need *and* a local connection. This meant many people no longer qualified for social housing.

The numbers of those who have been housed from the housing register has been increasing since 2007/2008 as well. Between 2007/2008 and 2012/2013 there has been a 74.9% increase in households being housed from the housing register. This level of households being housed looks like it will continue at a steady rate for 2013/2014 as just past the six month mark 330 households have been housed.

However, it is worth noting that under the new housing allocations policy, those who are homeless are placed in Band D (the lowest priority band) unless they have other needs. Only 5% of homes from the register will go to those in Band D. This means that if the housing of households from the register continues at the same pace for the remainder of the year, then around 33 homeless applicants will be housed in social housing.

Supporting People Clients

The Supporting People Programme is a government programme to provide housing related support services such as homeless hostels, women's refuges and sheltered accommodation to help vulnerable people live independently. Supporting People in Kent is administered by Kent County Council on behalf of all Kent local authorities (except Medway). A Commissioning Body made up of representatives from each district council, Probation, Health and Social Services meets to take strategic decisions about the programme delivery. A range of providers, including housing associations, charities and some local authorities, deliver the service across Kent.

As part of the consultation, the Supporting People Programme in Kent submitted data on homelessness; activities they carry out around homelessness and resources available to them in Maidstone.

All the data is either extracted from the National Data Set held by the Centre of Housing Research at St Andrews University. Providers of services to Supporting People are required to make a submission to the centre on clients from the following services:

- Supported housing
- Women's refuge
- Foyer
- Teenage parent accommodation
- Direct access accommodation
- Floating support
- Outreach
- Resettlement
- Adult placement
- Supported Lodgings

The table below shows all of the clients entering into housing related support services from the Supporting People Programme in Maidstone over the previous three years; who spent the previous night in the Maidstone Borough Council area, where homelessness appeared within their needs.

Table 11: Clients entering into housing related support from the Supporting People Programme in Maidstone	
Year	Number of people
2010-2011	152
2011-2012	90
2012-2013	102
Grand Total	344

This shows that the number of homeless people supported by the supporting people programme has dropped by around 50% between 2010-2011 and 2012-2013. It is worth noting that no substantial changes in capacity, or approach by Supporting People during this period. Therefore this represents a genuine decrease in those who are homeless and are accessing the programme.

The gender split of clients supported by the programme is roughly a 2:1 ratio of Male: Female clients. The gender split over the last three years can be seen in the table below.

Table 12: Gender of clients supported by the Supporting People Programme							
Gender	2010-2011	%	2011-2012	%	2012-2013	%	Grand Total
Female	53	34.9	30	33.3	36	35.3	119
Male	99	65.1	60	66.7	66	64.7	225
Grand Total	152		90		102		344

The table below shows if clients of Supporting People have been accepted as requiring services under statutory framework over the last three years.

Table 13: Support needs of Supporting People Programme clients						
	2010/2011	% of total clients	2011/2012	% of total clients	2012/2013	% of total clients
Mental Health (Secondary)	15	9.9	6	6.7	4	3.9
Care Management (Social Services)	13	8.6	8	8.9	12	11.1
Probation/Youth Offending Team	19	12.5	11	12.2	10	9.8
Drug Intervention Programme	9	5.9	4	4.4	8	7.8

The proportion of clients with secondary mental health needs and clients requiring support from Probation or the Youth Offending Team has decreased over the last three years. At the same time, the proportion of clients with Care Management needs has increased.

The table below shows the breakdown of types of clients where homelessness appears in their support needs.

Table 14: Primary client group of Supporting People Programme clients							
Primary Client Group	2010-2011	%	2011-2012	%	2012-2013	%	Total
Single homeless with support needs	102	67.1	59	65.6	50	49.0	211
Rough Sleeper	45	29.6	23	25.6	26	25.5	94
Young people at risk	0	0	0	0	16	15.7	16
Homeless families with support needs	3	2.0	5	5.6	6	5.9	14
Mental health problems	0	0	2	2.2	2	2.0	4
Alcohol misuse problems	0	0	0	0	2	2.0	2
Offenders/at risk of offending	1	0.7	0	0	0	0	1
People at risk of domestic violence	0	0	1	1.1	0	0	1
Refugees	1	0.7	0	0	0	0	1
Grand Total	152		90		102		344

As can be seen from the table above, the majority of the supporting programme's clients are single homeless people; however this proportion has been declining over the last three years. The next largest proportion of clients for the Supporting People Programme were rough sleepers, however the proportion of clients for this group has also been declining over the previous three years.

A group of clients that have been increasing over the previous three years have been homeless families with support needs.

In 2012-2013 the programme supported a large proportion of clients that were young people at risk; whereas there were no clients in this category before. Using data gathered from their floating support service, the Supporting People Programme identified the clients who had been referred into the service in Maidstone and were living in temporary circumstances on an insecure basis. This is shown on the table below.

Table 15: Supporting People Programme clients in insecure accommodation				
Current Accommodation	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	Grand Total
Lodging with Parents/Relatives/Friends	56	36	18	110
Sofa surfing	56	47	36	139
Bed & Breakfast	17	8	2	27
Temporary Accommodation	1	0	0	1
Total	130	91	56	277

This shows that over the previous three years, there have been a significant number of vulnerable people living in temporary accommodation on an insecure basis who have been referred as homeless to the Supporting People Programme.

Appendix A- Welfare Reforms

Since 2010, significant reforms of the welfare state have been proposed, legislated for and taken affect. These will inevitably affect the levels of homelessness in the borough. Listed below are the main welfare reforms to have taken place since 2010 that have particular relevance to homelessness. The information on welfare reforms on the table below has been taken from a variety of sources, including the Department for Work and Pensions and Shelter. The information was correct as of November 2013.

Benefit	Change	Date
Housing Benefit	Capping of Local Housing Allowance rates for properties of specific sizes. Reduction of Local Housing Allowance rate from 50 th to 30 th Percentile	April 2011 (new claimants); rolling implementation over a year from January 2012 for existing claimants
Housing Benefit	The age threshold for the shared accommodation rate for Local Housing Allowance will be increased from 25 to 35	January 2012
Pension Credit	Rates for the savings credit part of Pension Credit reduced	April 2012
Crisis Loans	The maximum rate of a crisis loan will be at 30% of the appropriate benefit personal allowance rate. Maximum for householders or people who are homeless set at 60% of appropriate benefit personal allowance.	April 2012
Housing Benefit	Local Housing Allowance rates frozen ahead of April 2013 change where rates will no longer be linked to market rent	April 2012
Council Tax Benefit	Council Tax Benefit to be replaced by a locally devised scheme of Council Tax Support	April 2013
Housing Benefit	Size criteria will apply in the social rented sector, penalising tenants for under occupying social housing	April 2013
Benefit Cap	Cap on the amount of benefits out of work households can claim. Cap set at level of average earnings of a working family	April 2013
Universal Credit	The current system of working age benefits and tax credits (including housing benefit) are to be replaced by a new benefit called Universal Credit (UC). The process of moving all claimants onto UC will begin in October 2013 and be finished by October 2017. Claimants will be given one lump sum of benefits each month.	October 2013-October 2017
'13 week rule'	When Universal Credit is rolled out, the '13 week protection rule' will be removed. This rule allows the full payment of rent for up to 13 weeks if a claimant loses their job or falls ill; as long as they had not claimed Housing Benefit for the previous 52 weeks and could previously pay their rent when they signed the tenancy. Instead, the lower LHA rate will be paid immediately.	October 2013-October 2017
Housing Benefit	Local Housing Allowance rate linked to Consumer Price Index rate, rather than local housing market analysis	April 2013

In a report by Sheffield Hallam University¹; a selected number of welfare reforms were examined closely for their regional and local impact. The welfare reforms that were examined in the report were:

- Housing Benefit- Local Housing Allowance changes
- Housing Benefit- Under occupation penalties
- Increased non-dependent deductions
- Benefit Cap
- Council Tax Benefit- replaced with council tax support
- Disability Living Allowance- replaced by Personal Independence Payments
- Incapacity Benefit- replaced by Employment Support Allowance
- Child Benefit- three year freeze and withdrawal from higher earners
- Tax Credits- reductions in payment rates and eligibility
- 1 per cent up-rating- breaking the link between benefit up rating and inflation

The key findings of the report were:

- Some households, notably sick and disabled claimants, will be hit by several different elements of the reforms at once
- The financial impact of the reforms vary greatly across the country. At the extremes, the worst hit local authorities lose around four times as much, per adult of working age, as the local authorities least affected by the reforms
- Britain's older industrial areas, a number of seaside towns and some London boroughs are hit hardest
- Much of the South and East of England gets off comparatively lightly
- As a general rule, the more deprived a local authority, the greater the financial hit

The report supplied data tables that estimated the financial effects on each local authority for each of the reforms. In general, the data used was supplied by the DWP and HMRC.

It is difficult to predict anything other than the financial impact of the welfare reforms. Even when the Department for Work and Pensions carry out their impact assessments, only the financial impact of the reforms is considered.

This is because it can be difficult to measure the social impact, and other impact of these reforms elsewhere. It is also difficult to predict what changes in behaviour will take place as a result of the welfare reforms. For example, now that the under occupation penalty is in place, will people take a hit in their benefits to stay in their home, decide to downsize to avoid the penalty or chose to work extra hours to afford the penalty? If extra hours are worked, this may then affect the persons entitlement to other benefits, therefore would have unintended consequences on other benefits and on the other welfare reforms.

It is important that the consequences of the largest benefit changes are monitored closely. For example, when stricter criteria come in for the award of Personal Independence Payment (PIP, which will replace Disability Living Allowance) and Employment Support Allowance (the successor to Incapacity Benefit); will we see a rise in people who are sick or disabled (but not sick or disabled enough to claim these benefits) who are no longer able to pay their rent and then become homeless? These are questions that only time will be able to answer, and robust monitoring of the social effects of welfare reform in the borough will be needed in order to minimise the impacts of welfare reform on homelessness.

¹ 'Hitting the poorest places hardest: The local and regional impact of welfare reform'; Christina Beatty and Steve Fothergill, April 2013. http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/sites/shu.ac.uk/files/hitting-poorest-places-hardest_0.pdf

The report found that Maidstone would be affected in the following ways by welfare reforms:

Reform	No. of Households Affected	Estimated overall loss for the borough (£m per year)	Financial loss per working age adult (£ per year)	Average financial loss per affected household (£ per year)
Housing Benefit-Local Housing Allowance changes	2,600	3	26	1,153
Housing Benefit: Under occupation	700	0.6	6	857
Non-dependent deductions	600	1	6	1,666
Benefit cap	70	0.3	3	4,285
Council Tax Benefit	6,300	1	6	158
Disability Living Allowance	1,000	3	29	3,000
Incapacity Benefit	1,700	6	64	3,529
Child Benefit	19,300	8	77	414
Tax Credits	8,600	7	71	813
1 per cent uprating	-	6	64	-
Total	-	35	352	-

The findings of the report show that there will be around £35 million of benefits withdrawn from the borough of Maidstone. This will mean that the average financial loss per working age adult is £352 a year. However the range of different changes that are being made will mean that some households will see large reductions to their benefits. For example, those affected by the changes to Disability Living Allowance and Incapacity Benefit could be affected by between £3,000 and £3,529 per year. Whilst at the same time there will be a large amount of households that will be affected only a little and may not even notice welfare reforms. For example, the change to child benefit will affect 19,300 households but only by £414 per year each.

The welfare reform that will affect the most people in the borough of Maidstone is the changes to Child Benefit, followed by Tax Credits and then Council Tax Benefit. The welfare reform that will have the biggest impact across the borough, in terms of financial loss per working age adult in the borough, is Child Benefit. They are followed by Tax Credits, then Incapacity Benefit and the 1 per cent uprating.

The welfare reform that will have the biggest impact on the recipients of these benefits will be the benefit cap. However this is only estimated to affect around 70 households in the borough. This is followed by incapacity benefit and then Disability Living Allowance. The reason why these will cost so much per affected recipient is that reforms to these benefits bring in stricter criteria to pass in order to receive the benefit, so the number of recipients affected will be relatively low. However those that are affected will lose their full entitlement to the benefit. This is compared to some of the other welfare reforms that will affect all recipients by a small amount (e.g. 1 per cent uprating of benefits).

Appendix B- Consultations for the Review

As part of the review other important stakeholders were consulted to gather opinions:

- A focus group was carried out on a group of clients of Housing Options, who were homeless, before a pre-tenancy training session.
- A survey was carried out on Private Sector landlords at a local meeting of the National Landlord Association
- A survey was carried out on those using the Housing Advice drop in service at the Maidstone Gateway
- A survey was carried out on the users of the Maidstone Day Centre
- A consultation was carried out by email with important partner organisations in the voluntary sector and with Social Services at Kent County Council

The results of these consultations are outlined below.

Focus Group with Housing Options Clients

A focus group was carried out before a pre tenancy training session to consult on the views of those who were affected by homelessness. The focus of the consultation was on the barriers to accessing housing, particularly in the private rented sector. The following themes emerged from the focus group:

- Lack of suitable, affordable private housing;
- Up front costs- fees, deposits, rent in advance;
- The worry of going private, losing the house and having to go on the council list/through the homelessness process again;
- Lack of security in private rented accommodation;
- Being evicted, with landlords then not wanting to take you on as a tenant in the future;
- Lack of letting agents that list landlords willing to take those on benefits.

Those present at the focus group were then asked to think of solutions that may tackle these barriers. The following proposals emerged:

- Change perceptions of landlords;
- Introductory tenancies that give everyone a chance;
- A list of landlords that will accept tenants on benefits;
- Knowing where to get free advice;
- Negotiating directly with the landlord, helping to build a relationship with the landlord before moving in.

Consultation with users of the Maidstone Day Centre

A survey was sent to users of the Maidstone Day Centre. The service users of the Maidstone Day Centre tend to be rough sleepers.

The survey focused on two key themes, whether they are in a group perceived to be vulnerable to becoming homeless and whether they had a 'local connection' to the borough (that is, spent two or more of the last five years living in the borough). Due to the low numbers of rough sleepers who attend the centre, there was only a small number of

responses (11). However it is possible to spot some trends in the responses:

- All respondents were White British
- All but two respondents were Male
- Respondents' ages were spread relatively evenly between 18 and 64. However the age group most service users were in was 45-54 (five respondents)
- Three respondents had longstanding illnesses, disabilities or infirmities
- All but one respondents were single person households
- One respondent was in work, working full time
- All other respondents were not working, and were either on Jobseekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance, training from home or permanently sick/disabled
- Three respondents did not have a 'local connection'- they had previously been living in the South West, Medway and Northern England
- All respondents said that they had previously been homeless, or previously been a rough sleeper
- Four respondents had mental health problems
- Three respondents had previously served a custodial sentence in prison, with one respondent being a prison leaver
- One respondent had had contact with Drug and Alcohol services or had problems with alcohol or drugs

Therefore some common characteristics of those who are rough sleepers can be identified. Generally they will have previously been homeless or a rough sleeper, aged under 65, be a male single person household and from the Maidstone area with a 'local connection'.

Consultation with Housing Advice Service Users

Maidstone Borough Council offers a Housing Advice drop in service at the Maidstone Gateway. Those who attend this service may not necessarily be homeless, but will be seeking advice and guidance from the council as they may be at risk of becoming homeless. There was a low response rate for this survey, with only 8 returned. However of those returned:

- Five respondents were aged between 18-24
- Five were male, three were female
- Two respondents had a long term illness, disability or infirmity
- All of those that answered the question on ethnicity were white; with one respondent answering White Irish and White Gypsy or Irish Traveller; and six answering White British
- Two households included dependent children
- Two respondents were in part time employment, with the rest of respondents either being unemployed and available to work or permanently sick or disabled
- One respondent was a prison leaver, and one respondent was a single parent household
- Two respondents were currently rough sleeping, one respondent had been living on a caravan site and the rest of respondents were staying with family (five)
- The reasons for contacting the council were varied:
 - One respondent was fleeing domestic violence
 - Two respondents were facing family/parental eviction
 - Two respondents were rough sleeping, with one respondent also ticking 'leaving prison' and the other also ticking 'leaving accommodation provided by friends'
 - The respondent who had been living on a caravan site said that the situation had got heated at the site and the Travellers on the site had asked them to leave

- One respondent wrote on the sheet that 'ten years homeless is too long'

From the picture that can be built up with the limited responses that were received, it is interesting that some of the trends are similar to those seen on the P1E form responses. For example, it is skewed towards those under 24, with many previously staying with family or friends.

Consultation with Private Sector Landlords

Private Sector Landlords were strongly against the removal of direct payments of housing benefit to landlords when Universal Credit is introduced. There are fears that their tenants will spend rent money on other things and get into arrears.

There was a general negative perception of tenants in receipt of benefits, with landlords considering them a risk, rather than a safe bet.

There was a strong consensus that the council should offer to guarantee the rent of housing benefit clients and that the council should offer to repair any damage tenants on housing benefit may cause to properties when they move out.

Other suggestions that were made during the consultation that may be worth noting were:

- Help landlords to have less void periods;
- Regulate bad landlords; and
- Give incentives to landlords for improving neglected houses

Those who are particularly vulnerable to becoming homeless

As part of the review, consultation took place with various agencies and organisation that work with those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Within the consultation a question was asked about those who are most likely to be at risk of becoming homeless in their client groups. It is important to note that these groups identified were put forward by partner organisations, and are the opinions of these partner organisations that have been formed through their experience of working with these client groups. The table below details the groups that were highlighted, as well as commentary about these groups.

Group	Maidstone Borough Council Comments
Single unemployed men under 35	This is particularly the case due to the restriction of Housing Benefit to single room rate to those under 35. Maidstone Borough Council would not have a full housing duty towards these people unless they had other priority needs (e.g. having a disability).
Households with under-occupation penalties in housing benefit	We haven't seen any evidence of this yet, however it is something we need to monitor
Households with interest only mortgages and no repayment vehicle	We have not seen any evidence of this (see section on repossession statistics). However it is something we should monitor as the economy picks up, as we may see an increase in repossessions once house prices improve.

People with mental health problems	Having a mental health problem is a priority need category, therefore we would have a duty to house those who have mental health problems as long as they fulfil the other criteria (eligible for assistance, local connection and unintentionally homeless). Many rough sleepers have mental health problems (see the consultation with Maidstone Day Centre users).
Housing benefit claimants who have to seek accommodation in the private sector	There are numerous barriers for such claimants, which are further explored during the consultations with those in this group and private sector landlords. Maidstone Borough Council are working towards removing these barriers through programmes like the Homefinder Bond.
Large families that are benefit claimants	We haven't seen any evidence of this yet, however it is something we need to monitor
<p>Those who are leaving prison:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ They may not have a local connection ○ They may be told that by being in prison they are intentionally homeless ○ Those who cannot return to the area they came from due to restrictions on their licenses ○ Those with previous rent arrears ○ High risk offenders, sex offenders, those with substance misuse issues or mental health issues (or any combination of these circumstances) 	<p>These are all valid points that will need to be explored further in the homelessness strategy.</p> <p>There is accommodation available for ex-offenders after they leave prison in Maidstone, offered by HOPE Kent.</p>
16-18 year olds who are NEET	We haven't seen any evidence of this, however it is something we need to monitor
Older people (55-64) with a care and/or support need who may have been hit with an under occupancy penalty or affected by welfare reform	We haven't seen any evidence of this, however it is something we need to monitor
Armed Forces leavers	There were previously problems with Armed Forces leavers not being able to find accommodation after leaving the forces. This was due to them not being able to fulfil 'local connection' criteria due to them living in multiple locations, living abroad or spending a long time living in bases miles away from their friend and family support networks. This has now changed and Armed Forces leavers now have a local connection that is

	recognised anywhere in the country.
Severely overcrowded households	A severely overcrowded household would qualify as in 'Housing Need' under the housing allocation policy, therefore would be a priority for rehoming. They would also be in a higher band than those who are homeless, therefore having a higher chance of being rehoused.
Young Carers	We haven't seen any evidence of this
Short sentence (under 12 months) prisoners who usually have a range of accommodation difficulties, coupled with issues around drugs/alcohol, mental health or a mixture of both	We saw some evidence of this when looking at the results of the survey of users of the Maidstone Day Centre, with some of the service users being ex offenders. However only one respondent had issues around drugs or alcohol

Out of these groups identified as being particularly vulnerable, there was an emphasis (something in common to many responses from different organisations) on those with mental health problems; young, single unemployed people and those who may be affected by welfare reforms.

Significant gaps in provision

Consultation with partner organisations included a question on whether they thought there were any gaps in provision for those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. These gaps in provision can be divided into generalised gaps that are common across the UK or across Kent, and gaps specific to Maidstone Borough.

General Gaps

- Supporting people with mental health problems to find, secure and maintain accommodation. It is often difficult to prove priority need in these cases; and even harder to locate accommodation that will nurture rather than hinder their mental recovery
- It is hard to find permanent and emergency accommodation for single people
- There is a lack of general housing advice (i.e. advice for those who are not homeless, in priority need, and are not immediately threatened with homelessness); which impacts on other support services as they are relied on to provide generalist housing advice
- Move-on accommodation is almost completely unavailable in some areas (of Kent)
- Funding cuts mean floating support can only be provided for a short time, and housing providers will not accept nominations for housing unless this is in place
- Tenants who are arrested are unaware they can maintain Housing Benefit for 13 or 52 weeks depending on the circumstances, and therefore lose their homes unnecessarily
- Clients are not always told of any help they can get with rent deposits or rent in advance when approaching the council
- Homelessness among older people is overlooked. Promote models that enable independent living such as extra care, supported living and specialist housing

- Rent Deposit Schemes suffer from a lack of landlords willing to participate, leading those who sign up for such schemes into false hope. This can be helped by ensuring such schemes are available as cash
- There is a large street population in Maidstone, who are not necessarily homeless. Media attention has not adequately made the distinction between the two groups
- A night stop would be a useful addition to local provision but must include a support team or network of organisations that can get to know individual users and help them move on to more secure accommodation

Specific Local Gaps in Provision

- There are no appropriate local emergency placements for young people that are not in B & B/Premier Inn
- A lack of semi-independent supportive lodging accommodation that can be accessed by 16-18 year olds who need extra support
- Lack of private sector accommodation available in Maidstone for single people dependent on welfare benefits
- There is a large street population in Maidstone, who are not necessarily homeless. Media attention has not adequately made the distinction between the two groups
- Band D (on the housing register- homeless) needs revising. Band D is the lowest priority band in the housing allocations scheme
- The rigorous adherence to a quota for housing homeless people has meant that those in Band D effectively have no access to social housing. Most of the year no properties are offered to those in Band D, as the quota is often filled at the beginning of the year.
- Better communication between local organisations in this field- there is duplication in some areas and clarity about who is providing what would save valuable resources
- The community contribution needed to enter higher banding on the housing register is difficult for ex offenders to achieve, as there are often limited employment or volunteering opportunities for ex-offenders
- A lack of provision for those leaving prison, in particular agencies are not accessing these clients until they are released. This is often too late
- A lack of rough sleeper outreach support
- Often clients being released from Maidstone Prison or evicted from Fleming House often do not want to/cannot move away due to probation restrictions, but also do not have a local connection

Appendix C- Activities carried out in the borough to prevent homelessness and resources available for these activities

Maidstone Borough Council

Private Rented Sector

Maidstone Borough Council, as the local housing authority, has a responsibility to prevent homelessness in the borough. When people approach the council as being homeless, and we are satisfied they are unintentionally homeless, eligible for support and in priority need Maidstone Borough Council have a duty to house them. This may include placing people into temporary accommodation whilst trying to find suitable alternative accommodation. The Localism Act 2010 allows local authorities to discharge their duty to these people by providing them with a good quality home in the private rented sector. Maidstone Borough Council has a Private Sector Housing Team, part of whose role is to develop opportunities in the private rented sector for those who have barriers to accessing this sector normally. There are currently two schemes available to Private Sector Landlords/prospective tenants. These schemes are detailed below.

Homefinder Bond

This is a bond agreement for private sector landlords to enable prospective tenants without deposits to enter into tenancy agreements. The bond will be activated in the event of the landlord suffering financial loss caused by the applicant (e.g. rent arrears, property damage).

Eligibility

Eligibility extends to those applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness or Housing Register applicants who acquire PRS accommodation through a successful HomeHunt bid.

Bond Offered

Minimum bond offered at £1,250 to incentivise the provision of 1 and 2 bedroom properties to meet current housing need. For larger properties, the bond will be offered at a varying amount depending on household bedroom need with the maximum level of bond equivalent to 8 weeks of Local Housing Allowance rate.

Additional Incentives

- Free inventory for all new tenancies;
- Tenant 'reference' provided detailing risks associated with tenant;
- Tenancy Sustainment Visits;
- If a minimum 12 month tenancy - Gas safety certificate and smoke / carbon monoxide detectors installed.

The Homefinder Offer

This is a cash incentive for landlords offering suitable accommodation to enable private sector offer being made (to end housing duty).

Eligible Landlords

The incentive will be available where a landlord provides a private rented sector offer to the council, and the council successfully ends its homelessness duty in the case of a household accepted full housing duty.

Property Requirements

Property must meet suitability requirements (i.e. smoke detection, CO detector, free from Cat 1 hazard etc).

Finder's Fee

The finders fee – to include / replace current grant system based upon the following:

- £2,500 fee which will be used as a deposit and to ensure all suitability requirements are met for a period of 3 years
- Additional deposits provided for any subsequent tenants (equivalent to 6 weeks LHA rate) after the initial tenant has left if a valid claim has been made against the previous tenancy

Additional Incentives

- Free inventory for all new tenancies
- Tenant 'reference' provided detailing risks associated with tenant
- All successful applicants will be required to open and maintain a Kent Savers Account

The staff resources available for these schemes are two FTE posts, however only one FTE staff is currently in post as one FTE is on secondment until March 2014.

The finder's fee scheme has an agreed capital amount of £125,000.

Housing Options

Housing Options Team comprises of 3.5 FTE housing advice officers, 1.5 FTE homechoice officers and a temporary assistance of an outreach worker to support single homeless people.

Homeless legislation places a general duty on housing authorities to ensure that advice and information about homelessness and preventing homelessness is available to everyone.

The Housing Advice Officers are available to give general advice on housing issues, relating to mortgage repossession, termination of private rented tenancies including landlord harassment issues, relationship breakdown leading to break up of family members and debt advice. The team have joint working relationships with many statutory and charitable agencies, including mental health, social services, supporting people and homeless charities for single homeless people. The team are actively involved in tenancy sustainment, preventing homelessness or relieving the homelessness by using private rented accommodation through our Homefinder Scheme. The Homefinder Scheme is available to those leaving supported accommodation, ex-offenders and those who otherwise the authority would not owe a housing duty.

The housing team works closely with our supporting partners including Maidstone Mediation Service, Sanctuary Supporting People, Kenward Trust (Substance Misuse Support Agency) Maidstone Families Matter, (our Troubled Families Project) to name but a few, we have joint working relationships with Social Services for 16/17 year olds, Mental Health and Ex Offender Management. The housing team are piloting Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter in partnership with the Salvation Army, Maidstone Churches, Porchlight and Maidstone Day Centre.

The Homechoice Team processes and verifies applications for our Housing Register in line with our Housing Allocation Policy, working with our housing providers to assist people into suitable social housing within our borough.

The Private Sector Team assist with Homefinder assessments for assistance with private rented properties, some of which we are able to discharge our housing duty by offering suitable accommodation to homeless families.

Maidstone Borough Council- Resources

The following table shows the resources available overall for Housing Services at Maidstone Borough Council. The period shows the actual budget for 2011/2012 and 2012/2013; an estimate for 2013/2014 and a forecast for 2014/2015.

Budget	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014 (estimate)	2014/2015 (forecast)
Strategic Housing	1,017,220	1,184,328	514,380	514,380
Housing Register and Allocations	245,300	203,581	162,650	162,650
Housing Advances	3,202	1,969	2,340	2,340
Private Sector	1,672,063	571,871	1,642,760	1,609,760
Houses of Multiple Occuaton (HMO) Licensing	13,181	20,685	27,750	27,750
Caravan Sites	173,135	83,508	82,600	62,600
Homelessness and Housing Advice	673,577	635,231	918,140	734,640

Kent County Council

Kent County Council is responsible for Child and Adult Social Services, including administering the Supporting People Programme, so has an important part to play in preventing and relieving homelessness. Kent County Council supplied completed consultation forms for each of the areas that work with those that are, or are at risk of becoming, homeless.

Families and Social Care

Kent County Council Families and Social Care (FSC) is responsible for providing social care across the borough.

FSC carry out the following activities around homelessness:

- Prioritising, in collaboration with local housing authority, access to Extra Care Schemes for older people
- Administering the revenue funding for supported housing provision

The resources available for carrying out these activities are as follows:

- Care management staff and strategic commissioning staff
- Funding streams are available specifically for housing vulnerable groups
- Grant funding of voluntary groups that focus on supporting vulnerable groups who may face homelessness

West Kent Adolescent Support Team

West Kent Adolescent Support Team (AST) works closely with Maidstone Borough Council in responding to homeless 16-18 year olds.

West Kent AST carry out the following activities:

- Providing support to young people and their families to mediate, or find suitable solutions within the family/friends network
- Providing support to young people in semi-independent living to prevent placement breakdown and further homelessness
- Assessing young homeless people and determining what duty is owed under the Children Act including Section 20 accommodation to those young people identified as being a child in need
- Providing joint assessments with Maidstone Borough Council Housing Officers

The resources available to West Kent AST to carry out these activities are as follows:

- 2 Social Workers and some Social Work Assistant staff who carry out assessments and work directly with young people and their families
- Section 17 (of the Children Act- safeguarding vulnerable children) resources to provide accommodation and support
- Section 20 (of the Children Act- local authority care provision) placements

Info Zone

Info Zone is part of Kent's integrated Youth Service. Info Zone delivers information and advice to 16-24 year olds.

Info Zone carry out the following activities around homelessness:

- Providing homelessness advice from professional case workers
- Working in partnership with other agencies to support the housing situation of individuals
- Courses on life skills, including independent living skills and budgeting skills, that may help prevent homelessness
- Referral to appropriate agencies if required

Info Zone have professional caseworkers available to carry out advice work, as well as staff available to deliver their other activities.

Supporting People Programme

The supporting people programme submitted data on service users as part of the consultation. This data can be seen in the section on Supporting People Clients. They also submitted data on resources. In addition to administering funding for floating support, temporary accommodation and supported accommodation the Supporting People Programme funded a rent deposit scheme delivered via the local housing authorities. This scheme is specifically for those individuals who are leaving supported accommodation who cannot afford the deposit to begin a tenancy themselves. The scheme is detailed below.

Supporting People Rent Deposit Scheme for Maidstone	
How much Supporting People funding did your district receive for Rent Deposit Schemes?	£65,000
What eligibility criteria did you apply to the use of these funds?	Applicants wanting to move in to the private rented sector direct from supported accommodation in our Borough. Applicants in supported accommodation outside of the Borough but have a local connection to Maidstone.
What opportunities arose as a result of having these funds?	Some Landlords / Letting Agents do not accept the Council's Bond scheme. In these situations we have been able to offer a cash payment to the Landlord on behalf of the applicant in order for them to secure the tenancy.

Details of how the rent deposit scheme has operated for the last four years can be seen below.

Year	Number of households assisted	Number of service users that could have accessed RDS	Total amount spent
2009/2010	5	30	£3305
2010/2011	13	41	£9208.06
2011/2012	8	19	£5875.12
2012/2013	5	29	£3295

There is £43,316.82 remaining for the Supporting People Rent Deposit Scheme.

Social Landlords

Social Landlords who operate in the borough were consulted for the purpose of the review. Social Landlords are a vital partner when considering the issue of homelessness in the borough because Maidstone Borough Council do not own their own housing stock, but nominate those on the housing list to available socially rented properties in the borough. Two responses were received from Social Landlords- Golding Homes and Town and Country Housing.

Golding Homes

Golding Homes is the largest Social Landlord in the borough. Golding Homes carry out the following activities:

- Signposting clients to services provided by Maidstone Borough Council and Citizens Advice Bureau
- Pre-tenancy training courses delivered alongside MBC which helps clients to secure and maintain a tenancy; either in the private rented or socially rented sector
- Golding consider 'direct lets' (lets outside the usual allocation process) to properties offered to those that are homeless and in temporary accommodation
- Tenancy Support programme which introduces people to their tenancy and provides support up to six weeks with a designated officer. For the first 12 months of tenancy regular visits are maintained to tenants; and neighbourhood advisors hold regular meetings with tenants
- 'Rentsense' system; which, manages and predicts trends in rent arrears which will enable us to identify which tenancies are at risk earlier and try to resolve rent arrears before they become an issue
- Golding Homes provide a variety of supported living accommodation; including sheltered schemes for the over 50s and Willowbrook Place teenage pregnancy unit

Golding Homes has the following resources available:

- Signposting is part of normal staff duties
- An officer is provided once a month to do pre-tenancy training
- Direct lets in specific circumstances as part of their allocations process
- Designated tenancy support officer that provides assistance at the start of a tenancy
- Eight neighbourhood advisors to monitor and maintain tenant relationships in specific areas
- 'Rentsense' software
- A team of Officers who assist those who are in arrears to maintain their tenancy
- Supported living accommodation, including sheltered accommodation, with a team of staff who manage these schemes

Town and Country Housing Group

Town and Country Housing Group carry out the following activities in the borough:

- Tenancy support
- Tenancy training
- Money support
- Community Support that signposts those with support needs such as mental health substance misuse etc.
- Benefits advice and Learning, Skills and Employment support services
- Income Management Team who intervene to prevent homelessness
- Town and Country Housing report that Maidstone Borough Council has been able to maximise the use of their social housing in the borough. Since the beginning of the 2012/2013 financial year 100% of vacancies have been re-let by MBC

Town and Country Housing Group noted that they were unable to quantify or provide precise resource allocations for the activities they carried out to prevent homelessness in their clients.

The Voluntary and Community Sector

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) has an important role to play in preventing homelessness. The VCS was consulted by sending a consultation form via the Voluntary Action Maidstone network of voluntary organisation, as well as contacting organisations we had existing links with. Through this we were able to get responses from various organisations within the sector on activities carried out and resources available.

Porchlight

Porchlight are a charity supporting vulnerable homeless people in Kent, Medway and Croydon. Porchlight carry out the following activities:

- 24 hour 0800 helpline number, with dedicated staff providing a referral and advice service for all issues connected to homelessness
- Outreach and accommodation projects providing keyworker support
- Workers funded by the Crisis Private Rented Sector scheme tasked with sourcing private rented accommodation for under 35s in the private rented sector
- Delivering keyworker support, through contracts with the Supporting People Programme

HOPE Kent

HOPE Kent is a charity that was set up to provide supported accommodation for homeless ex-offenders or those at risk of offending throughout Kent. HOPE works in partnership with the Kent Probation Area of the National Probation Service.

HOPE carry out the following activities around homelessness:

- Providing accommodation to those with support needs
- Advice if required
- Floating support
- Assistance with benefits, financial planning, applying to local rent deposit schemes,
- Assistance with appeals
- Hostel and move on accommodation
- Food vouchers and other forms of direct aid to clients
- Floating support to maintain tenancies
- Liaison with outside organisations around substance misuse

To carry out these activities, the following resources are available:

- One member of staff for Maidstone, who is responsible for providing homelessness advice, assistance with maintaining tenancies, budgeting advice, helping clients with their Kent HomeChoice applications
- A project has been funded, with one part time member of staff, to enlist the services of volunteers to assist in the support process in some properties

- There is a budget open to clients that enables financial assistance with welfare and education

Crossroads Care- West Kent Young Carers Project

Crossroads Care delivers services for Carers and people with care needs. It has a particular focus on young carers. Crossroads Care has supported young carers to access assisted housing. It has no particular resources available for this activity, but it is part of the service delivered as personal support for individuals.

Citizens Advice Maidstone

Citizens Advice Maidstone is the local branch of the Citizens Advice Bureau. It provides free, confidential, impartial and independent advice on a wide range of issues affecting the people of Maidstone. This includes advice and signposting on issues around housing and homelessness. Citizens Advice Maidstone carries out the following activities around homelessness:

- Advice and advocacy for homeless people
- Debt management advice to maintain tenancies and mortgages
- Negotiations with landlords and lenders to maintain occupation of properties
- Advising and helping to prepare court papers and court applications
- Some representation and support at court to defend possession proceedings and prevent evictions
- Referrals to appropriate agencies as part of home search activities

Citizens Advice Maidstone have the following resources available:

- A legal aid solicitor
- Two specialist housing advisors; equal to one full time post
- Volunteer staff at the Maidstone Borough Council Gateway; their office at Tonbridge Road and also available by telephone
- Two welfare benefit advisors
- Two money and debt advisors
- One employment specialist advisor
- Some home visits are available if clients are not able to access help in any other way

Kenward Trust

The Kenward Trust is a charity that provides a number of health and social care services to help people transform their lives for the better. In Maidstone their main activities are based around drug and alcohol treatment and rehabilitation; and support for ex-offenders.

The Kenward Trust carries out the following activities around homelessness:

- 'Through the Gate' mentoring programme, run by volunteers, to provide support for those with substance misuse, homelessness and offending backgrounds
- Residential rehabilitation for those with substance misuse issues

- Community outreach service, providing education and support to young people and adults around substance misuse
- Community based support for those who had left rehabilitation
- Provides supported accommodation for those who have been through the rehabilitation programme and for high risk offenders in a crisis setting

The Kenward Trust has the following resources to carry out these activities:

- 2 rehabilitation centres in Yalding
- A 5 Bed property offering move on accommodation in Maidstone for those clients who are abstinent and need extra support once leaving rehab
- A 2 bedroom flat in Maidstone for high risk offenders in a crisis setting
- Volunteers to deliver some programmes (such as Through the Gate); as well as paid staff to deliver others
- All current accommodation projects are fully staffed
- Kenward receive funding for their 'Reset' and outreach projects from small pots of local authority funding and grant making bodies

Maidstone Christian Care

Maidstone Christian Care is the charity that runs the Maidstone Day Centre. Maidstone Christian Care deliver a range of valuable services to rough sleepers, those that are homeless or those that are threatened with homelessness. These include:

- Advice to those threatened with homelessness- advising on options such as finding housing the private rented sector or applying for social housing
- Referring to other agencies, as appropriate (for example, referring to the Citizen's Advice Bureaux for financial advice)
- Arranging periods of respite for homeless individuals because of health. For example if an individual is discharged from hospital with no home to go to, or if mental health problems are being exasperated. If this is the case a break from the streets is paid for.
- Maidstone Day Centre are currently investigating the feasibility of buying a property to run a short term/emergency accommodation service
- Maidstone Day Centre, along with other partner organisations in the town who work with the homeless, are supporting the winter shelter programme which will begin on the 31st December. The people attending the winter shelter will be cared for during the day at the Day Centre.

Appendix D- Accommodation, supported accommodation and floating support available in Maidstone

District	Provider Name	Service Name	Number of Units
County	KCC O.T. & Sensory Unit	D/deaf People Floating Support	20
County	KCC Adult Placement Scheme	Kent Shared Lives	49
County	Anchor Trust	Anchor Trust Sheltered Services	264
County	Hanover Housing Association	Hanover Sheltered Services - Capped	213
County	In Touch Support Ltd	In Touch Sheltered Services - Capped	102
County	English Churches Housing Group	English Churches Sheltered Services	72
County	Housing 21	Housing 21 Sheltered Services	218
County	Sanctuary Housing Association	Sanctuary Sheltered Services	69
County	North Kent Women's Aid	Women's Refuge	17
County	Casa Support	Swale Women's Refuge	9
County	Casa Support	Ashford Women's Refuge	16
County	Casa Support	Canterbury Women's Refuge	12
County	Oasis Domestic Abuse Services	Oasis Women's Refuge	12
County	Catch 22	Housing Support Services	12
County	Catch 22	16 plus Supported Lodgings	53
County	Casa Support	Dover Refuge	6
County	Casa Support	Shepway Refuge	7
County	Casa Support	Mid-Kent Refuge	5
County	Circle Support	Womens Refuge	7
Maidstone	West Kent Housing Association	West Kent Housing Association Mental Health Scheme	6
Maidstone	Carr-Gomm	Swan House	6
Maidstone	O'Shea Partnership LLP	O'Shea Services	42
Maidstone	MCCH Ho	Birnam Square	4
Maidstone	MCCH Ho	Hillary Road	2
Maidstone	MCCH Ho	Pelican Court	5
Maidstone	Golding Homes	Sheltered Service	783
Maidstone	Home Group Ltd	Terry's Court	7
Maidstone	Home Group Ltd	Link House	18
Maidstone	Home Group Ltd	Trinity Foyer	59
Maidstone	English Churches Housing Group	Lily Smith House	42
Maidstone	Home Group Ltd	Tumim House	9
Maidstone	HOPE (Kent) Limited	Hope Maidstone	4
Maidstone	Carr-Gomm	Bower Mount Road	6
Maidstone	MCCH Ho	West Kent LD Service	5
Maidstone	Golding Homes	Maidstone Teenage Parents service	6
Maidstone	Sanctuary Housing Association	Maidstone Housing Support Services	8

District	Provider Name	Service Name	Number of Units
Maidstone	In Touch Support Ltd	HIA	300
West	Rethink Sahayak	East Kent BME Floating Support Service	17
West	Rethink Sahayak	West Kent BME Floating Support Service	25
West	Sanctuary Housing Association	Generic Floating Support West Kent	451
West	Lookahead Care and Support	Mental Health Floating Support West Kent	80
West	West Kent Housing Association	Domestic Abuse Floating Support West Kent	80
West	West Kent Housing Association	Offender Floating Support West Kent	26
West	Lookahead Care and Support	Supported Living	8
West	Advance Housing Association	Advance Services	20
West	Porchlight	Rough Sleepers - West Kent	37
West	MCCH Ho	West Kent MH Service	15
West	In Touch Support Ltd	HIA	1500

Appendix E: Glossary

Term	Explanation
Assured Shorthold Tenancy	A legal agreement between a landlord and tenant; which allows a tenant to live in the landlord's property. This is the most common type of tenancy agreement.
Eligible for public funds	Eligibility for public funds will depend on immigration status; e.g. some people may have residence permits that state they have no recourse to public funds.
Homelessness Acceptance	<i>See Homelessness Duty</i>
Homelessness Decision	A decision taken on a homelessness case is a decision as to whether a local housing authority has a statutory duty to house the household or not.
Homelessness Duty	A local housing authority has a duty to house those who are judged to be eligible for public funds, unintentionally homeless and in priority need. They must also have a local connection the authority they present themselves to.
Homelessness Prevention	Providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness.
Intentionally Homeless	Someone is intentionally homeless if they did or didn't do something that caused them to leave accommodation which they could otherwise have stayed in and which would have been reasonable for them to stay in. For example, eviction for antisocial behaviour or leaving accommodation you could have stayed in for no good reason.
P1E Return	A statutory return to the Department for Communities and Local Government detailing homelessness decisions taken, outcomes of those decisions and homelessness preventions carried out.
Presenting as Homeless	A case where a household presents themselves to a local housing authority, informing them they are homeless and requiring assistance.

Priority Need	<p>A person is judged to have priority need if they fall under any of the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pregnant woman • A household with dependent children • Vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness, physical disability or other special reason • Someone homeless or threatened with becoming homeless as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster • 16 and 17 year olds • Aged under 21 years old who were in local authority care between the ages of 16 and 18 • Aged 21 and over who are vulnerable as a result of leaving local authority care • Vulnerable as a result of leaving the armed forces • Vulnerable as a result of leaving prison • Fleeing domestic violence or the threat of domestic violence
Repossession Claim	<p>An initial application to court, either from a lender or a landlord, seeking permission to repossess a property setting out the reasons for repossession. A court date is set to hear the case.</p>
Repossession Order	<p>If a judge decides that your home is to be repossessed, a possession order is granted and the current resident/tenant is given notice to vacate the property.</p>
Unintentionally Homeless	<p>If you are made homeless through no fault of your own. <i>See Intentionally Homeless.</i></p>