

Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013 - 2018

Preventing homelessness
is everyone's business



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Mansfield Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013 -2018

Preventing homelessness is everyone’s business

Executive summary

This Homelessness Prevention Strategy has been developed with local partners and forms the foundation for our homelessness prevention activity over the next five years. Since our last strategy was drafted in 2008 there has been considerable change in the economic climate and policy environment. Across England there has been an increase in homelessness. Keeping a focus on prevention of homelessness remains the most effective way of helping vulnerable households despite the fact that preventing homelessness is becoming more challenging.

Impact

We are working in partnership with our District Interagency Homelessness Forum and other key partners to deliver the following impact and outcomes:

- To help people at risk of homelessness will be come forward for help and advice before their housing situation reaches a crisis. As a result fewer people will become homeless in Mansfield.
- To house people who do become homeless as soon as possible and provide support so that they are less likely to become homeless for a second time.

National context

Since the last strategy (2008-12) was drafted there have been significant changes in the social and economic climate we are operating in.

In 2008 there was major shock to the British economy following the banking crisis and the impact on economic growth, national debt, employment, incomes etc is still being felt. Locally this has contributed to Mansfield being a hotspot for mortgage repossessions.

Following the election of the Coalition Government in 2010 there have been reductions in investment in public services to help meet deficit reduction targets which have impacted on local services, for example reductions in investments in Supporting People services funded by Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC). Equally important are the measures included in the Welfare Reform Act (2012) and the Localism Act (2011). Both these pieces of legislation are having, and will have, significant impact on households and individuals in Mansfield. For example, approximately 1200 households in social housing in the District are affected by the under occupancy charge which has the potential to further increase the numbers of households seeking advice and support with housing and homelessness issues.

Recent statistics (April 2013) ¹ indicate that the combined impact of welfare reforms in Mansfield will reduce household incomes by £41 million per year equating to £603 per annum for individuals of working age. We are facing a period of unprecedented change and it is not clear what the eventual impact on households in Mansfield will be.

¹ <http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/staff/christina-beatty>

Local intelligence headlines and context

Since 2008 the number of households approaching the Council for advice and support with housing and homelessness issues has risen steadily. In 2010/11 nearly 1100 households approached us and we are predicting that by the end of 2012/13 the figure will be closer to 1500 households.

Locally we have seen fluctuations in the numbers of households accepted as homeless and owed a duty under the relevant housing act. Figures for 2012/13 indicate that the number of households accepted as homeless rose to 180 (this is a 32% rise on the previous year).

Within that rising trend there have been some dramatic fluctuations in quarterly figures.

The main reasons households become homeless are:

- Loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancy
- Family and Friends no longer willing to accommodate, or
- Break up of relationships (including break up related to violence).

Partner organisations offering advice, support and housing have indicated that they are seeing increased levels of household debt and other factors that may contribute to an increase in the number of people becoming homeless, for example, as a result of rising levels of rent arrears.

The contextual data, our own data and feedback from partners and homeless people has led us to the conclusion that given the uncertainty in the environment there is the potential for a continued rise in the numbers of households seeking advice and support with housing and homelessness issues. We expect to see continuing fluctuations in demand linked to the ongoing introduction of welfare reform measures and the continued economic climate.

Rationale for prevention

We firmly believe that maintaining a focus on homelessness prevention remains the most effective approach to dealing with the current and potential demand for advice and support. While we cannot prevent all homelessness, keeping a clear focus on prevention has worked in the past and can continue to work if we and our partners remain proactive and innovative.

The economic and social argument for preventing homelessness is very clear, for example helping to avoid an eviction linked to rent arrears can save up to £6k per case² for the housing provider and the Council. The social cost for a family to relocate following eviction is immeasurable.

² Shelter 2008

Key outcomes 2013-18

Working closely with the Inter-Agency Homelessness Forum and other partners we will develop a detailed action plan to deliver the following key outcomes:

- Improve access to affordable housing in the private rented sector and in social housing
- Manage the impact of welfare reform so that the risk of homelessness is reduced
- Encourage more people to approach information and advice services for help at an early stage
- Ensure that fewer people become homeless as a result of debt
- Ensure that fewer young people become homeless or remain homeless
- Ensure that fewer people are rough sleeping
- Ensure that more people with complex needs are able to access the accommodation and support they need, and
- Help homeless people access the health services they need.

The Strategy

1. Introduction from Cllr Mick Colley, Portfolio Holder for Tenancy Services and Housing Needs and Ajman Ali, Corporate Director, Mansfield District Council

The provision of good quality housing which is accessible to those in greatest need can be a significant influence in the creation of stable communities. Community relations, neighbourliness, less nuisance and anti social behaviour, better health and increased community pride can all stem from stable communities. This is why a Homelessness Prevention Strategy, developed and supported by all our partners, can play an important role in maintaining stability in our communities.

Mansfield's 2008-2013 Homelessness Strategy delivered many successful outcomes and for the next five years we will continue to focus resources on preventing homelessness and helping people to remain in their homes. During the last five years a number of initiatives have been developed including a Direct Access scheme at Sherwood Street which has provided a much needed resource for rough sleepers in the area and the introduction of ASSIST (Advocacy, Supporting Independence and Safeguarding Team) a person-centred service for vulnerable people. The move to integrate Choice Based Lettings and the Council's Housing Solutions Service has improved customer service by providing a single point of access that meets the needs of the community.

Positive outcomes have been achieved by working with our partners and we will be continuing with this approach into the next five years. Although we will have to continue to work in an environment with fewer resources, it is vitally important for the Council to take the lead and work with our partners in the Inter-Agency Forum, building on the excellent services that are still available.

We are confident that the Inter-Agency Forum will be central to delivering the aims of this new Homelessness Prevention Strategy and will ensure that people at risk of homelessness can come forward for help and advice before their housing situation reaches a crisis point, that fewer people become homeless in Mansfield and that those that do are housed as soon as possible and less likely to become homeless again. In partnership and by looking at creative and innovative ways of combining services and programmes, we will be more successful in preventing homelessness and achieving the outcomes identified within the strategy with diminishing resources.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank HLG, who co-coordinated the review and compiled the Homelessness Strategy 2013 – 2018 on the Council's behalf and all the service users and our partners who actively contributed to the production of this excellent document. We hope that Mansfield's Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013 – 2018 entitled Preventing homelessness is everyone's business, is, as the title suggests, owned by everyone. It is a true reflection of our commitment to listening to our customers and will drive our continued work in ensuring their needs are met, that they get the best possible service at their time of greatest need and that collectively we work towards reducing homelessness in Mansfield.

Cllr Mick Colley
Portfolio Holder for Tenancy Services
and Housing Needs

Ajman Ali
Corporate Director
Mansfield District Council

2. Introduction

This Homelessness Prevention Strategy is designed to help us focus our efforts as lead partner in our local partnership with homelessness services, housing providers, support and advice providers via the Interagency Homelessness Forum.

While the Local Authority has to take responsibility for prevention of homelessness we can only deliver this if we do it as part of a partnership approach with other key organisations working with homeless people in Mansfield. We will also be working closely with Newark and Sherwood District Council on joint activities that help us to deliver the outcomes and changes we need to see.

Preventing homelessness and reducing the impact of homelessness on households that become homeless is an important part of delivering our corporate priorities, which are:

- Supporting the most vulnerable people in our District to help them live independent and fulfilled lives
- Ensuring there is an adequate supply of good quality, well managed housing which is accessible and affordable to those that need it
- Making the District a safer place to live, work and visit by working with partners to reduce crime and anti social behaviour, and
- Revitalising our District, town centres and neighbourhoods, encouraging inward investment and creating a climate for job creation and growth.

The evidence suggests that homelessness has multiple impacts on households, from dislocation of social and support networks through to poorer health and life chances. Homelessness affects local prosperity and has a direct and negative impact on people and the places they live in.

We believe that delivering effective homelessness prevention will make a significant contribution to our Corporate Priorities and we intend to work in partnership with our District Inter-Agency Homelessness Forum and other key partners to deliver the following results:

- That any person at risk of becoming homelessness will come forward for help and advice before their housing situation reaches a crisis and as a result fewer people will become homeless in Mansfield, and
- That people who do become homeless are housed as soon as possible and supported so that they are less likely to become homeless for a second time.

3. National policy context

Since our last strategy the national policy and financial context has changed dramatically. The environment in which we need to deliver homelessness prevention is now very challenging, partly as a result of the economic down turn post 2008 and partly as a result of reforms to a range of key policies relating to welfare and housing. The economic situation has placed increased pressure on household budgets, led to a tightening of the housing market, slowed the rate of new house starts and impacted on central and local government investment in services such as Supporting People. Local advice agencies are

reporting increased levels of personal and household debt for both households out of work and those in work.

A number of national policies will affect people in Mansfield. These are:

- The welfare and housing reforms, which have either come into force or are planned for the next 12 months. These are likely to have significant impacts on vulnerable households across the District, for example 1200 households in Mansfield were affected by the changes to Housing Benefit relating to under occupancy which came into effect at the start of April 2013.
- The removal of direct payments of rent under Universal Credit and other changes that are being rolled out during 2013, which have the potential to increase the risk of households getting into rent arrears.

Recent statistics (April 2013) ³ indicate that the combined impact of welfare reform in Mansfield will reduce household incomes by £41 million per year equating to £603 per annum for each person of working age. This comes on top of the broader negative impact of the recession on the Mansfield area.

A timetable of the major welfare reforms and changes that are likely to affect households locally can be found at Appendix 1.

4. Local Councils' homelessness duties

Broadly speaking, the law defines somebody as being homeless if they do not have a legal right to occupy any accommodation, or if their accommodation is unsuitable to live in. This can cover a wide range of circumstances, including but not restricted to, the following:

- Having no accommodation at all
- Having accommodation that is not reasonable to live in, even in the short-term (e.g. because of violence or health reasons),
- Having a legal right to accommodation that you cannot access (e.g. if you have been illegally evicted), or
- Living in accommodation you have no legal right to occupy (e.g. living in a squat or temporarily staying with friends).

The current duties to house homeless people are set out in the Housing Act 1996, amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, and place local authorities under a duty to re-house certain homeless people. However, it is important to note that not everyone who falls under the above definition of homelessness will qualify for accommodation.

The local Council has an immediate duty to provide interim accommodation for anyone they have reason to believe may be homeless and in priority need while they investigate the individual's circumstances. To access long-term housing under the homelessness legislation, a household must make an application to their local Council. The local Council has a duty to house individuals or households who meet the following criteria and are:

- Eligible for assistance – which will not apply to certain people who have lived abroad

³ <http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/staff/christina-beatty>

- Legally classed as homeless – by having nowhere that is available and reasonable to occupy, anywhere in the world (fitting the definition above)
- In priority need – which applies to all households that contain a pregnant woman or are responsible for dependent children, to some households made up of a 16- to 17-year-old or a care leaver aged 18 to 21 or where someone in the household is vulnerable, e.g. because of old age, mental or physical health problems, or has been in prison, care or the armed forces, or
- Unintentionally homeless – which applies to those who have not deliberately done, or failed to do, something that caused them to become homeless, such as failing to make rent or mortgage payments when they could have afforded to do so.

Local Councils have a duty to provide temporary accommodation for these households until settled accommodation can be found for them or until the authorities are deemed to have discharged their duty under the Act, which may occur if a household turns down suitable offers of accommodation.

Local Councils have a responsibility to offer advice and information to households who approach them for help who may not be regarded as homeless and in priority need under the Act.

5. Key policy and guidance changes that will impact on how we approach homelessness prevention

- Changes to Housing Legislation and the Localism Act are creating new options for the types and lengths of tenancy that can be offered in social housing and options for how duties under the relevant Homelessness Act can be discharged, in particular the use of the private rented sector to discharge a Homelessness Duty.
- The No One Left Out policy (2008) and the subsequent No Second Night Out policy (2011) set out clear expectations for local Councils about developing joint approaches to ending rough sleeping.
- Making Every Contact Count, published by the Government in 2012, sets out ten challenges for local Councils which are designed to ensure that homelessness prevention and support to vulnerable households is as effective as possible.
- The NHS and Social Care Act 2012 includes a new and important role for local Councils from April 2013 in delivering public health outcomes and establishing local Clinical Commissioning groups that will oversee the bulk of NHS investment in a local area.

These policy reforms and guidance create both a challenge and an opportunity for the Council and the Inter-Agency Homelessness Forum. The flexibilities offered by the Localism Act may open up new ways for us to respond to local housing need, whilst No Second Night Out and Making Every Contact Count offer us a framework for working in partnership with some of the most vulnerable households in our area.

The new NHS arrangements offer us an opportunity to influence the way that health care is delivered to vulnerable households and to improve health outcomes for homeless families and individuals.

The combined impact of these changes, current economic climate and public finances mean that we are entering a period of considerable uncertainty. All of these pressures and policy changes mean that there is the potential to see increased numbers of households at risk of homelessness coming forward for advice and support with housing and homelessness issues.

Our Strategy sets out our response to this challenge in the context of national economic and policy drivers. In the outcomes set out below we have tried to reflect these drivers and changes in a way that makes sense for households in Mansfield.

Gold Standard

We have committed ourselves to achieving the Gold Standard for homelessness services. The challenge is a local Council, sector led, peer review scheme designed to help local Councils deliver more efficient and cost effective homelessness prevention services. The challenge follows a ten step continuous improvement approach that starts with a pledge for local Councils aspiring to strive for continuous improvement in front line Housing Services and culminates in an application for the Gold Standard challenge.

The ten local challenges are:

1. To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which works across all local Council services
2. To actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
3. To offer a Housing Options prevention service to all clients, which includes providing written advice
4. To adopt a No Second Night Out model or effective local alternative
5. To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support
6. To develop a sustainable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord
7. To actively engage in preventing mortgage reposessions through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
8. To have a Homelessness Strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs
9. Not to place a young person aged 16 or 17 in bed and breakfast accommodation
10. Not to place families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than six weeks.

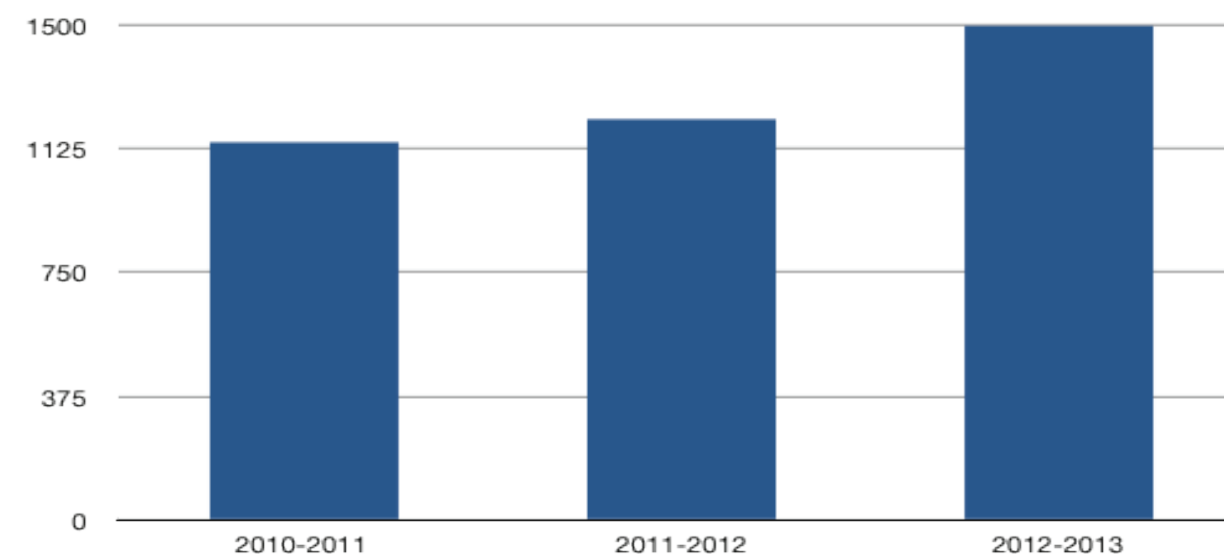
By working towards the Gold Standard we will help to ensure that the services we offer in Mansfield will be as effective as possible and help us and the Interagency Homelessness Forum to stay focused on the key outcomes for the Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

6. Local operational and policy context

This section sets out the data in a local context e.g. numbers of households, housing market, Supporting People changes etc (more detail is shown later in the strategy and in Appendix 2 Homeless Review Section).

Numbers of people approaching for advice and assistance

The Housing Solutions service has seen an increase in the numbers of households approaching us for advice and assistance with housing related matters over the past three years.



Graph one: Numbers approaching the local Council for housing and homelessness advice.

The graph shows a significant rise in the number of people approaching the local Council for advice and support with housing related matters. We discuss the changes to decisions and acceptance later in the strategy.

Reductions in services for homeless people

The rise in approaches comes at a time of considerable changes and disinvestment in services across Nottinghamshire, for example the reduction in investment in Supporting People funding. The table below summarises some of the recent changes to investment levels in Supporting People services funded by Nottinghamshire County Council.

Service	Reduction	Comment
Accommodation Services		
Quick access	Funding retained for Sherwood Street Centre	
Drug and alcohol	Service retained	Savings to be delivered through varying hourly rate and value for money savings
Temporary accommodation	Funding withdrawn for 43 units of MDC accommodation	
Offender accommodation	Funding withdrawn from 25 units of lower support accommodation	Further savings to be delivered through varying hourly rate and value for money
Mental health accommodation	Funding reduced by 40%	Service re-tendered
Refuge	Funding reduced by 25%	
Young peoples' services	Funding withdrawn for 35 beds	No plans to further reduce number of beds
Floating support services		
Domestic violence	Funding reduced by 25%	Service re-tendered
Generic	Funding withdrawn for 20 beds. Remainder reduced by 70%	
Substance misuse	Funding reduced by 70%	Now included in new Homelessness Prevention Service
Offenders	Funding reduced by 70%	Now included in new Homelessness Prevention Service
Young people	Funding reduced by 70%	Now included in new Homelessness Prevention Service
Gypsy and traveller	Funding reduced by 50%	Now included in new Homelessness Prevention Service
Vulnerable adults		Now included in new Homelessness Prevention Service
Older people	Funding reduced by 60%	Phased reduction completed in April 2013

Mental health	Funding reduced by 40%	Service re-tendered
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The closure and reduction of services was reported as a major issue for the Homelessness Strategy by both organisations and homeless people that we talked to as part of developing the strategy. People were particularly concerned about the loss of services for young people in the District.

Housing Market

Analysis of the housing register confirms the ongoing need for new social dwellings (Tenancy Strategy 2013). In 2010/11 the Council calculated (using CLG model for assessing requirements for affordable/ social housing) that an additional 557 affordable units were required per annum. Since 2008, 230 affordable units have been built in Mansfield.

During 2012/13, 656 Council properties were let via the Choice Based Lettings process and 18% of those were let to homeless families.

Our intelligence suggests that we need to make maximum use of both our own stock and private rented stock in order to meet the demands of families and single households at risk of homelessness.

Poverty

In 2012 it was estimated that 4700 children in Mansfield were living in poverty⁴ and Mansfield continues to be one of the more deprived areas of England with over 40% of the population being in the most deprived quartile for England. One ward in Mansfield is defined as being the 50th most deprived ward in England using the 2010 English Indices of Deprivation.

Mansfield has been acknowledged as a mortgage repossession hotspot and is one of the areas in the country predicted to experience longer-term negative impacts following the recession.

We have pledged to tackle child and family poverty as part of a county wide approach to this pressing issue. The pledges include co-ordination of inter-agency activity to raise income as well as providing outreach advice clinics, which we have started to deliver.

Incomes in Mansfield are on average lower than the rest of East Midlands (£427 per week compared with £470 per week) and lower still than the UK average of £500 per week.

Impact of pressures on homelessness in Mansfield

The impact of these local pressures and national pressures suggests that the number of households likely to experience homelessness or come under housing stress is likely to rise rather than fall.

The data we reviewed for the strategy about local homelessness (shown below) suggests that we are likely to see fluctuations in approaches for help over the coming period as welfare reform changes begin to impact on households.

⁴ Health Profile 2012 www.healthprofiles.info

7. Links to local plans and strategies

This Homelessness Strategy does not exist in a local policy vacuum but has important links and reliance on other strategic documents. When drafting this strategy we have taken account of the following key strategic plans:

Corporate Plan 2013 -14

The Mansfield District Council Corporate Plan sets out a number of key priorities for the Council which this strategy will contribute to. These are:

- Supporting the most vulnerable people in our District to help them live independent and fulfilled lives
- Ensuring there is an adequate supply of good quality, well managed housing which is accessible and affordable to those that need it
- Making the District a safer place to live, work and visit by working with partners to reduce crime and anti social behaviour, and
- Revitalising our District, town centres and neighbourhoods, encouraging inward investment and creating a climate for job creation and growth.

The Mansfield and Ashfield Sustainable Community Strategy 2010 – 2020

The Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2020 sets out our vision for making Mansfield a positive and vibrant place to live and work. The seven priorities are:

- A safer Mansfield - Reducing crime and anti social behaviour
- Children and young people - Achieving their potential
- Our economic prosperity - Prosperous and thriving economy
- Our town centre - Vibrant and successful
- A healthier Mansfield - Health and wellbeing for all
- Stronger communities - Confident and content, and
- Environmental sustainability - A greener Mansfield.

This Homelessness Prevention Strategy contributes and interacts with the big picture in a number of key ways, for example promoting better health outcomes for households at risk of homelessness and ensuring children in households at risk of homelessness experience minimum disruption so they can achieve their potential.

At the heart of the Sustainable Community Strategy is a commitment to Act Early: Most people agree that if we are to make a real difference in Mansfield we need to put more emphasis on preventing problems in the first place. By acting early, we can prevent future high levels of crime, poor health or people becoming unemployed. Our partners are committed to helping families and young people steer towards success and we will work together to make sure they have the best possible support.

This commitment supports the whole approach of this Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

Housing Services Plan

The Housing Services Plan sets out the Council's key outcomes for tenants and communities. The Homelessness Prevention Strategy will play a key part in delivering some of these outcomes for the most vulnerable households in the District for example providing housing related support to enable independence. Equally the implementation of the plan will have an impact on households at risk of homelessness via our approach to allocations, arrears etc.

Tenancy Strategy 2013

The Tenancy Strategy sets out our approach to ensuring that we get the best outcomes for households in social housing in the District. The Tenancy Strategy makes specific links to the needs of homeless households and its implementation will be crucial in helping us to prevent homelessness. The Council is not going to be taking up options such as fixed term tenancies and is keen to encourage other local social housing providers to work closely with us on the use of such tenancies.

Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2011- 14

This strategy will have an impact on helping to reduce homelessness and promote access to affordable accommodation in the District. The objectives are:

- To improve neighbourhoods through housing-led area regeneration
- To improve and adapt the homes of vulnerable households
- To reduce the number of private sector empty homes, and
- To increase home energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty.

Financial Inclusion Strategy 2013-15

The Financial Inclusion Strategy sets out how we will work across departments and agencies to develop a comprehensive approach to reducing financial exclusion in Mansfield. We recognize that financial exclusion is one major factor in sustaining poverty and limiting households' ability to make best use of their limited resources. We know that there are significant links between homelessness and financial exclusion so we will continue to prioritise this as part of our work with households. Current welfare reform means that this is a live issue for households in Mansfield and will continue to be so for some time.

The objectives of the Financial Inclusion Strategy are:

1. Prevention
2. Provision of advice and support
3. Supporting financially excluded households, and
4. Promoting and developing access to fair financial products.

These overlap and link with this Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

Service Veterans Charter

As a Council we are committed to supporting and working with ex-service personnel. Our Veterans Charter sets out our commitments, which are:

- Providing comprehensive joined up support services
- Contributing to a service veteran's returning home pack
- Provide signposting and information, and
- Ensuring that members of staff are briefed on key issues and have knowledge of where specialist charitable assistance may be available and of benefit to the veteran.

Armed Forces Community Covenant

In addition to the Veterans Charter the Council and its partners have signed an Armed Forces Community Covenant. This covenant compliments the principles of the Veterans Charter and aims to:

- Encourage the local community to support the Armed Forces and its personnel
- Promote awareness and understanding of issues affecting the Armed Forces community in the wider community
- Ensure that military personnel and their families can access the information they need to integrate into the local community
- Support military personnel and their families in resettling or relocating within the District of Mansfield and ensure that children from Armed Forces families are not disadvantaged
- Promote access to suitable employment and training opportunities for those in transition or preparing to leave active service
- Enable Armed Forces families to access social and affordable housing including home ownership
- Ensure the Health and Wellbeing Board takes account of the needs of Armed Forces personnel and their families in the provision of health care services, and
- Build on initiatives such as the provision of training in the construction of Council houses in Mansfield for those leaving the Armed Forces.

We also aim to take account of and influence the following strategic plans and bodies:

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

The JSNA sets out the key health issues that the new Clinical Commissioning Group and others will work towards and there is likely to be a section in the new JSNA on the health needs of homeless households. Via this strategy we will seek to influence and contribute to important decisions about the provision of health care and public health initiatives.

Mansfield & Ashfield Clinical Commissioning Group

The newly formed Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) (active from April 2013) will have a crucial role in setting the shape of health care delivery in the District. We will need to work closely with the CCG to ensure that the health needs of homeless households and vulnerable adults are taken account of in future commissioning decisions.

Nottinghamshire Child and Family Poverty Strategy 2012

The strategy aims to make a significant difference to the lives of children and their families and given the increasing rise in debt as an issue contributing to homelessness, it is crucial in helping us to prevent homelessness. The strategy sets out to:

- Target localities of Nottinghamshire with greater levels of poverty to ensure outcomes in these areas are improved and children and families thrive in safe, cohesive communities and neighbourhoods
- Increase educational attainment, employment and skills amongst children, young people and parents in Nottinghamshire and reduce dependency on welfare benefits and ensure that work pays
- Raise aspirations and improve the life chances for children and families so that poverty in childhood does not translate into poor experiences and outcomes
- Support families in acquiring the skills and knowledge to access responsive financial support services, money management and to avoid debt crisis, and
- Support families with complex problems compounded by poverty and disadvantage.

Youth Homelessness Strategy 2012

The Youth Homelessness Strategy is a countywide strategy and plan that is focused on how we work collectively with young people at risk of homelessness, in particular those in the 16 to 18 age group. Working in partnership with Children's Services has been a challenge in the past and we will need to continue to work closely with them in order to maximise the impact of this prevention strategy on youth homelessness.

Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board Plan 2013-16

This plan sets out how organisations across the County will work together to reduce the risks faced by vulnerable adults. This is a crucial area of work when we consider the priority we are giving to adults with complex needs across a number of key strategies in Mansfield. We will continue to play an active part on the Safeguarding Adults Board.

A major local development: The ASSIST Service

When cuts to Supporting People funding were announced by NCC, we had major concerns regarding the potential detrimental impact on elderly and vulnerable people, particularly with one of the corporate priorities being to 'support the most vulnerable people in our District to help them live independent lives'.

To ensure the Council could continue to respond to the needs of its customers, a Task and Finish Group (TFG) was established to review the Council's services for the elderly and vulnerable people across all age groups. The TFG's aim was to ensure that any future service proposals were designed to respond to customers' needs, be affordable, and that

sources of available funding were identified so that services could be delivered in accordance with the Council's corporate priorities. The review has informed and enabled the Council to remodel the service to reflect this approach.

The remodelled service aimed to move away from service levels and respond totally to the changing individual need. All customers' needs would be identified and the service would be tailored to meet them by providing a person-centred service, which would respond as and when the customer needed the service. The long and short-term services became integrated into one service under the overarching name of ASSIST (Advocacy, Sustainment, Supporting Independence and Safeguarding Team).

ASSIST was formally launched on 29 April 2013 and is Mansfield District Council's new person-centred housing support service, which will help residents in the Mansfield District lead independent lives. This is a very positive step forward and puts us in a position to continue to provide services to vulnerable people. Although the service has been remodelled, the focus has been on retaining the services that would enable people to maintain their independence.

The ASSIST Service offers a range of services for the most vulnerable people in the District.

Each individual can receive as much or as little of the service as they need. This ensures that they receive the right amount of support for their needs rather than receiving a set amount of support.

The short-term element of the ASSIST Service includes:

- A Housing Options Service focusing on allocations
- A Lettings Service
- An Advice Service about the MARS Scheme
- A Tenancy Sustainment Service
- A Needs Assessment Service
- A Welfare Reform Advice Service
- A Housing Solutions Service
- A Homelessness Prevention Service
- A Money Advice Service, and
- A Temporary Accommodation Service.

The long-term element of the ASSIST service includes three main areas of support; the Response Service, the Response and Support Service and the Enhanced Support Service.

The Response Service is purely a 24-hour emergency support service whereas the Response and Support Service includes short-term homeless support and prevention services and longer-term services that help people maintain independent lives. Some of the longer-term support services may involve a small cost but this will be assessed on an individual basis.

The Enhanced Support Service compliments the Response and Support Service and is an additional service that helps people maintain their independence. This service can be adapted to suit individual needs and individuals can decide which parts of the service they

require (the list is not exhaustive and additional services may be available.) The Enhanced Support Service is available at an additional cost (available upon request) but customers may be eligible for financial support.

The Response Service includes:

- A 24-hour emergency response service

The Response and Support Service includes:

- Access to a 24-hour Contact Centre
- Emergency visits from ASSIST workers
- Bespoke Monday to Friday planned visits
- A temporary accommodation service for people who are homeless
- A prevention, advice and support service for people at risk of becoming homeless
- A 24-hour emergency response service, which includes the Lifeline Service for an additional cost, and
- The ASSIST Handy Person Service

The Enhanced Support Service can include:

- Help with dusting and vacuuming
- Help planning visits and outings
- Respite visits
- Help visiting neighbours and friends
- Help with travel and transport arrangements
- Help with reading
- Help with washing and ironing
- Help with meal preparation and tidying up
- Light housekeeping
- An escort to appointments
- A companion to go to lunch or dinner with you
- A companion to attend plays, concerts, club meetings or sporting events with you
- Small household repairs, and
- Reminders to take medication.

8. 2008-12 Homelessness Strategy Review headlines

In the 2008 - 2012 Homelessness Strategy we set out to achieve two key aims which were supported by key actions. The aims and actions were:

1. Fewer people become homeless in Mansfield

- Everyone knowing where to get help and support before they need it
- Young people not leaving home so early and when they do it is in a planned way
- More people only leaving tenancies when they choose to
- People having more options for different types of housing, and
- No one having to sleep rough.

2. People who become homeless will be housed as soon as possible and are less likely to become homeless again. This will be achieved by:

- People getting the same service regardless of where they live
- Homeless people having better access to services
- Fewer people representing as being homeless
- People receiving information about education, training and employment as well as housing, and
- Services being joined up and relating to each other.

Following the publication of the 2008-2012 Homelessness Strategy we began work with the Inter-Agency Homelessness Forum on the above outcomes. However at the same time the economy suffered a significant shock as a result of the banking crisis, which has had wide and long lasting impacts on the local economy and housing market. In 2010 the new Coalition Government took up office and the policy agenda and levels of investment from Central Government shifted dramatically. For example countywide investment in Supporting People services diminished considerably after the first spending review in 2010 and this has had an impact on the range of services offered locally.

Both these factors made it more challenging for us to achieve the outcomes set out in the strategy and a number of the key actions had to be put on hold or changed to reflect the somewhat altered environment in which we were operating.

Despite those challenges we were able to achieve progress towards key outcomes, for example improving joined up work for homeless and potentially homeless households through closer integration of the Choice Based Lettings scheme and homelessness advice services. This has helped to improve access to accommodation and increase households' options.

The development of Direct Access services at the Sherwood Street Centre was a top priority for us and the work commissioned from Framework on the Rough Sleeper Outreach programme has helped us to improve the offer we can make to people with complex needs. We have been able to provide a more comprehensive service for rough sleepers than ever before.

We have been able to boost local Council investment in some key services, for example via our new ASSIST Service (noted above). However some of the scope and ambition of the 2008-12 Strategy had to be scaled down as other services and options funded by bodies other than the Council were cut or reconfigured.

We have been able to deliver significant parts of the agenda successfully, but there are issues that we need to continue to work on that we are going to be carrying forward into this strategy.

The changed environment and circumstances, welfare reform and other changes mean that we will invest significant time and effort in taking a lead role in our local Interagency Homelessness Forum as we feel this is the best way of delivering the homelessness prevention outcomes.

9. Review of Homelessness in Mansfield

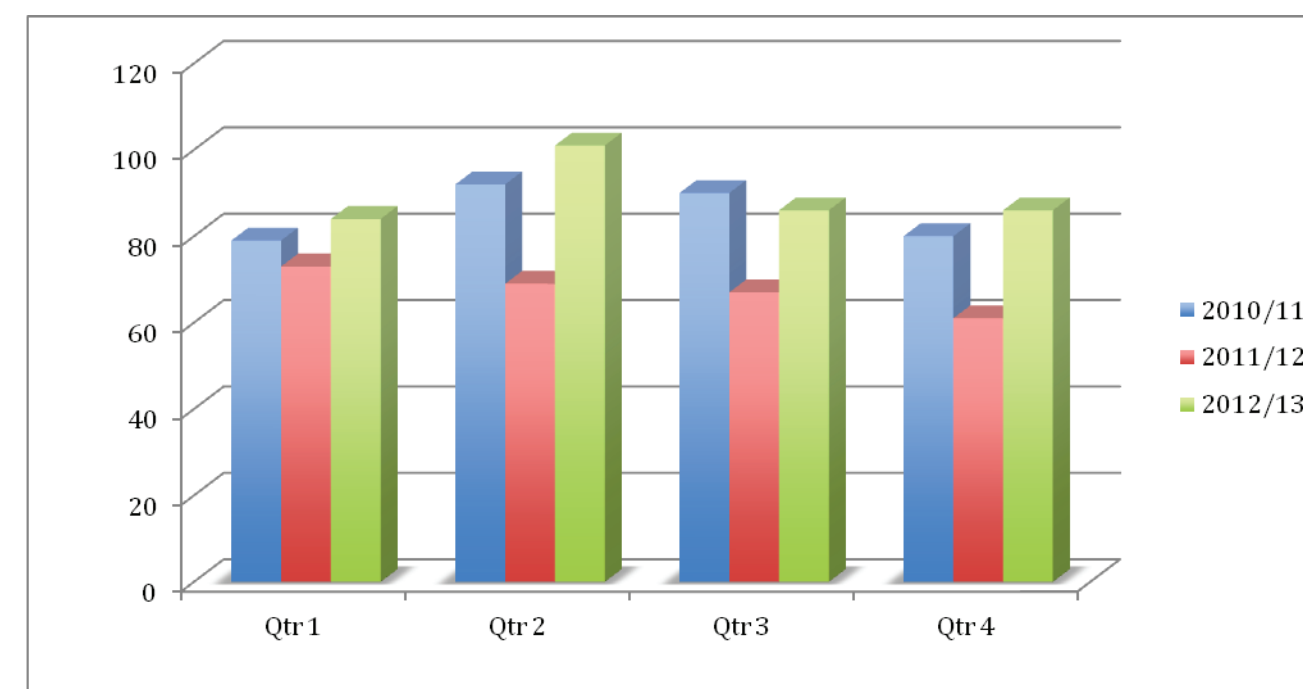
We have used a range of information to help us to develop a picture of homelessness in Mansfield. We have looked at the available data, talked to homeless people and had feedback from organisations that work with homeless people in the District. We also held a consultation event on 8 March, which was attended by over 50 people.

More detail about the information collected is shown in Appendices 2-4. This section picks out the key issues which have influenced the development of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy for Mansfield 2013-18.

The data

As noted above the numbers of households approaching the Council for advice and support with housing issues has risen consistently over the last four to five years (see graph one above). There has also been a rise in the number of decisions and acceptances under the relevant Homelessness Act, however we have managed to ensure that this has not grown at the same rate as the rise in numbers seeking advice and support.

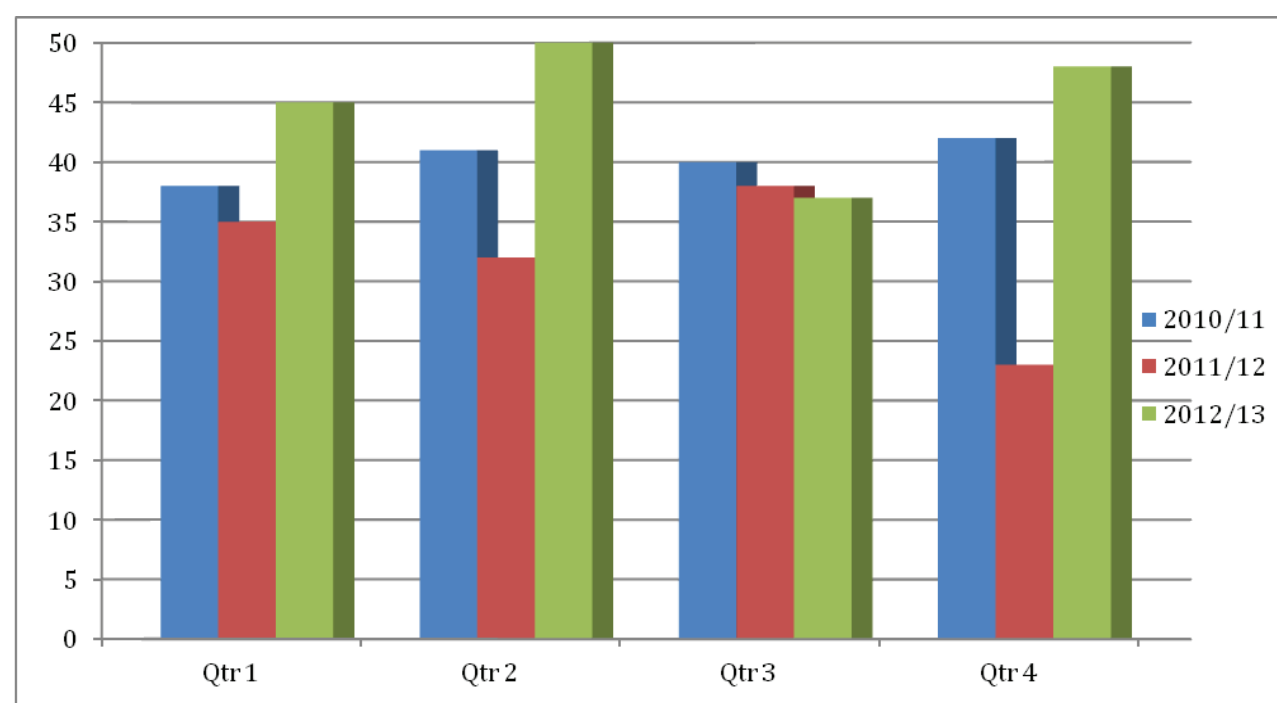
Homelessness decisions



Graph two: The number of decisions made re homelessness.

The number of decisions made regarding homelessness applications has fluctuated but overall numbers have risen with an increase from 270 decisions in 2011/12 to 357 in 2012/13, which is a rise of 32%.

Homelessness acceptances



Graph three: households accepted as being owed a homelessness duty.

There have been significant fluctuations, even allowing for seasonal variations, in the numbers of decisions and acceptances over the last two to three years. The graph above shows this pattern over the last three years. The figures for 2012/13 indicate that 180 households were accepted as homeless, which is a rise of 40% on the previous year.

Our conclusion is, that given the pressures in the environment and the changes to welfare reform, that this fluctuation is unlikely to reduce and we can expect to see increased pressure on services and increased housing related debt which could lead to an overall increase in the numbers of households accepted as homeless.

This analysis has led us to keep a focus on early prevention as one way of managing fluctuations in need and demand.

Reasons for approaches and homelessness

The reasons for approaches and homelessness have remained consistent with the three main reasons households seek help and become homeless being:

- The ending of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy
- Friends and family no longer willing to accommodate, and
- The break up of a relationship (including break up linked to domestic violence and abuse).

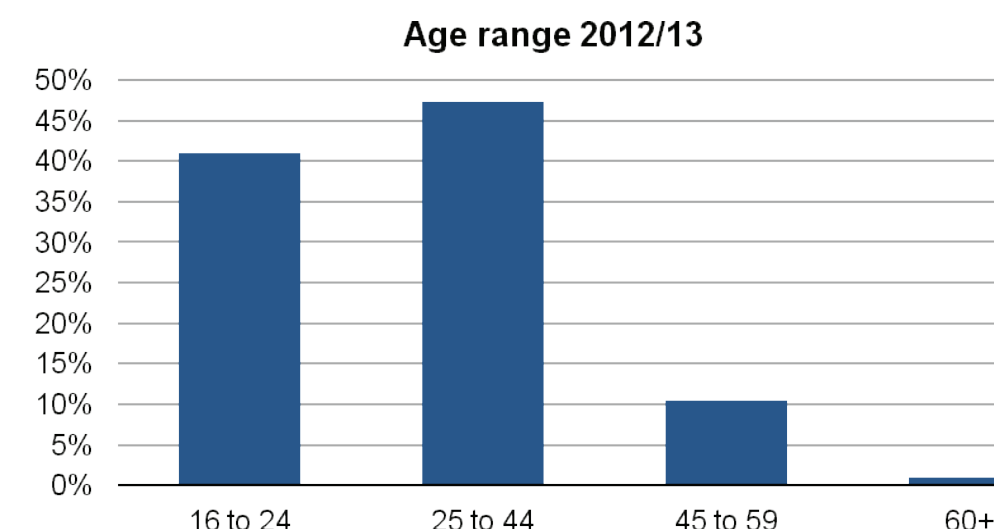
The homeless people who contributed to the development of the strategy said that they had become homeless because of:

- A relationship breakdown
- Anger issues
- People not caring

- Abuse
- Substance misuse
- Crime
- Arrears
- Released from prison with nowhere to go, and
- Mental health issues.

Age

The age range of people approaching the Council with housing issues is generally in line with the national picture.



Graph four: Age range of households accepted as homeless

Figures are no longer available nationally on the age ranges of those accepted as homeless so it is hard to make comparisons across a number of areas. However based on previous figures we are in line with the national profile. The proportion of people in the 16 to 24 age group presenting and being accepted as homeless is higher than other age groups, again this is not out of line with national trends. The 16 to 24 age group makes up 11.2% of the population in Mansfield and accounts for 40% of acceptances, the 25 to 44 age group constitutes 26.1% of the population and accounts for 48% of acceptances.

It is a concern that homelessness for single people aged 18 and over is often a hidden problem because of sofa surfing etc that is not adequately reflected in some of the data we collect and collate. However it is an issue which has come through the contextual data we have collected from other service providers.

Non-statutory homelessness data

The most recent Nottinghamshire Homeless Watch Survey (2012) data is, on the whole, in line with other data we have reviewed for this strategy. It is worth picking out the following highlights:

- More than 90% of households who presented themselves as homeless to various agencies and services in the District had a local connection

- Repeat homelessness continues to be an issue across the whole of the county, in Mansfield 52% of those who had presented to agencies had been homeless previously, and
- Rough sleeping continues to be an issue across many areas in the county including Mansfield.

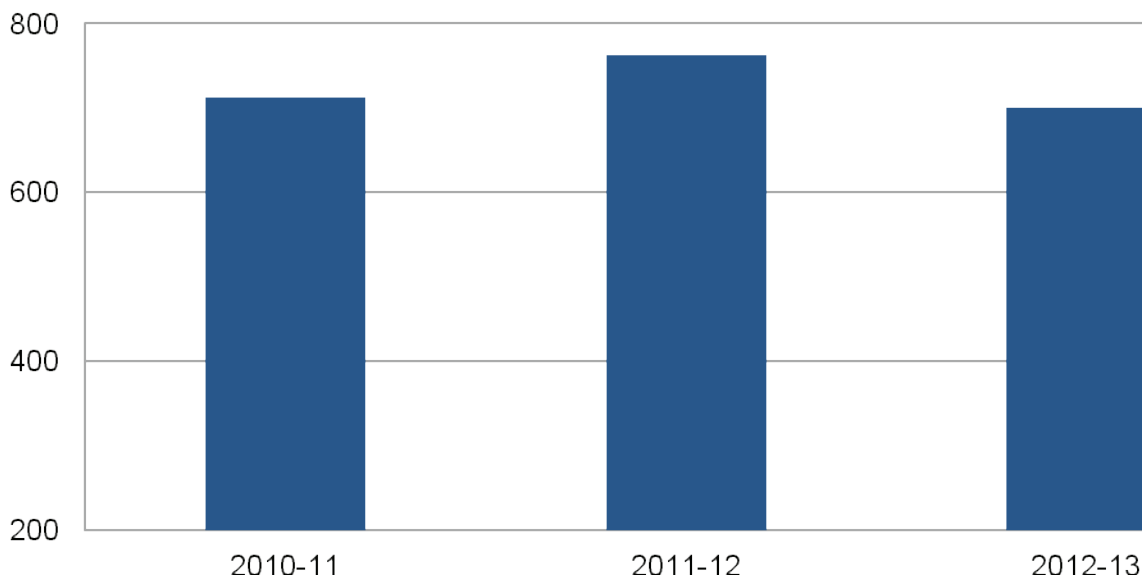
Homelessness prevention

Prevention of homelessness has been a key priority for the Council since 2004 and we have been successful in a significant number of cases. However the data and our direct experience indicates that it is getting harder to prevent homelessness.

This is because of a number of factors:

- Households are only seeking help and advice when their housing problem has escalated to crisis proportions which limits the options for prevention
- The range of options for relieving homelessness, such as access to a planned move into the private rented sector, is becoming harder to facilitate as the market gets tighter, and
- The needs of a number of households have become more complex at the same times as the number of support options via other services has been reduced.

Prevention of homelessness



Graph five: Numbers of cases on homelessness prevention and relief

The data indicates that the number of preventions in 2012/13 is likely to fall below the figure achieved in the previous year.

The MARS scheme has been successful in helping families with no to low support needs find suitable accommodation in the private rented sector. However the contextual evidence

indicates that it is now becoming harder to access private sector tenancies, which has a knock on affect on homelessness prevention.

We have appointed two Homelessness Prevention Officers whose role will be to focus on homelessness prevention and engage with relevant stakeholders to ensure that the actions from this Homelessness Strategy are implemented.

Recent changes to the Allocations Policy has made it easier for some customer groups to access social housing, although a number of agencies told us that the policy excludes a number of people who have former tenant arrears or an offending background. The new banding scheme has sped up access to tenancies for those in Band 1, which includes families in Temporary Accommodation. However it is slowing down access for other groups so we will need to monitor the impact of the new bandings in our CBL scheme to ensure that this does not have unintended consequences on households deemed to be not at immediate risk of homelessness.

Thirteen households with mortgage arrears have been helped via mortgage rescue or other interventions in first nine months of 2012/13. Any future changes to interest rates have the potential to increase pressure on low income households and lead to a rise in the scale of repossessions.

Any recovery in the housing market (house prices rising, more buyers) may encourage lenders who are currently holding off repossessing properties to proceed more vigorously once they can sell repossessed homes at a reasonable price.

Temporary accommodation

We have 43 units of specialist temporary accommodation (TA) for homeless households. Although numbers using TA are below the national average and people spend only short periods of time in TA (on average 22 days) we are keen to maximise the positive impact TA can have on vulnerable families. We do not use bed and breakfast accommodation to provide temporary accommodation.

Numbers set to be affected by welfare reform

Agencies are already reporting an increase in the number of people approaching them with debt problems and this is likely to increase as the changes are implemented. The main areas of concern are:

- The cap on benefits when Universal Credit is introduced
- Monthly payment of benefits
- Housing Benefit payments paid directly to tenants as part of Universal Credit
- Under-occupancy charges on Housing Benefit
- Council Tax contributions, and
- The replacement of the Social Fund by the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme.

The likely impact of the welfare reform changes on homelessness in Mansfield was one of the main concerns expressed by all organisations that work with homeless people. The data we have so far suggests that:

- 1200 households will be affected by the under occupancy charges. All the households affected are being approached by their respective landlords and the vast majority of tenants are reporting that they are planning to stay and pay rather than downsize. This is the picture across the country and there is concern across the sector nationally that a significant number of households who opt to remain in the current tenancy will be at risk of accruing arrears of rent over the coming months
- The Household Benefit Cap is likely to impact on 60 households and changes to the non-dependent deductions have affected 600 households, and
- The overall impact of welfare reform in Mansfield is predicted to be in the region of £41 million per year, which is an average impact of £603 per year on individuals of working age.

We have yet to establish the potential impact on households of further changes outlined in the welfare reform package such as the removal of the direct payment of rent as part of Universal Credit. Our analysis is that for a number of vulnerable households, the inclusion of direct payment of rent as part of Universal Credit is a risk factor which we will need to respond to in the future.

The introduction of the shared room rate for Local Housing Allowance (LHA) for single households up to the age of 35 has not had a major impact on recorded figures for homelessness but contextual evidence suggests that there is an ongoing issue with access to affordable accommodation that could lead to later issues with homelessness and rough sleeping.

Changes to Council Tax Benefit are unlikely to have a major impact as a single reform but in combination with other changes noted above they may have a cumulative effect for households on low incomes and contribute to a rise in debt problems for the most vulnerable.

We have appointed a Welfare Reform Officer who has a key role in helping to co-ordinate activity across the District.

Poverty and debt

A number of organisations reported that they are seeing more people who are in debt and that some of these are people who have not previously approached services for help. More people, including families who are in part-time or low paid work are developing debt problems as their living costs outstrip their incomes and more people who are housed are approaching services when their debt problems mean they are at risk of becoming homeless.

We are making referrals on a regular basis to local food banks, something we have not had to do until the last 12 to 18 months. As of April 2013 there are now five active food banks in the District.

Advice agencies reported that they are seeing more people with rent and mortgage arrears. Many organisations also said that often people approach them for help when they are already facing eviction. The ending of the Court Desk system in Mansfield and the reduction of the Duty Solicitor system has made it more difficult for people to get help at this very late stage.

Mansfield has made a pledge to address child poverty as part of the county-wide Child Poverty Strategy and we have started to offer outreach services for families in children's centres across the District.

Access to affordable accommodation

We know that there is not enough affordable accommodation in the District to support everyone who needs it. We have developed the MARS scheme to encourage more landlords to let to people who are homeless and this has had some success.

The MARS scheme has been successful in attracting new landlords, but this currently only works with families. Since it was set up in 2007, 207 tenancies have been created and 78% have lasted for more than 12 months. Over the last two years numbers of new lets have slowed (partly a function of improved sustainability of tenancies) and it is becoming much harder to attract new landlords and properties into the scheme.

The statistics and feedback from organisations working with older people suggest that there is an increase in homelessness amongst older people and this needs to be monitored by the Council and support organisations.

It is particularly difficult for people under 35 to find affordable accommodation since the introduction of the Single Room Rate and many of the projects for young people reported that it is becoming more difficult to move people on – both because of the shortage of shared accommodation and because young people do not want to share with people they do not know.

Access to information and advice

Advice and support organisations said that people tend to approach organisations for help with issues that may lead to homelessness very late and that this limits the actions that can be taken and the likelihood of those actions being successful.

Homeless people said that one of the things that contributed to their homelessness is that they did not know where to go for advice and support. Organisations also said that following the changes to services, they no longer felt that they knew what services are available and did not feel they could offer good advice to homeless people or people at risk of homelessness.

A large number of the homeless people we talked to stated they had not felt able to ask for help early on. This led to their situation becoming worse than if they had asked for help earlier. People also said that knowing where to go for help and advice was a key issue when needing to access support. A small number of homeless people also raised concerns regarding the lack of help there is available for those coming out of prison, particularly those who have been on a short sentence (less than 12 months).

We are working with the advice agencies in the District to co-ordinate our services better and to make sure that everyone who needs advice and information knows where to get it.

We are involved with the Prison Link service, which offers a drop-in service for prisoners who are due to be released to help them to look at their housing options and prevent homelessness on their release.

People with complex needs

As part of the Homeless Watch survey 2012, 71% of people reported support needs including mental health needs, alcohol misuse or being an ex-offender. Services that work with homeless people reported that they are seeing more people with multiple and complex needs and that it is becoming more difficult to find suitable accommodation and support services for them. Addressing complex needs was the issue given top priority at the consultation event on 8 March. Support needs to do with mental health and/or alcohol difficulties were the most widely reported.

Health needs

Public Health has recently undertaken a county-wide audit of the health needs of homeless people to provide data for the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) of homeless people. Unfortunately the results of the audit have not been published in time to influence the strategy, but the headlines from the strategy tell us that:

- Feedback from homeless people who contributed to the homelessness review was that they knew what health services to access if they were unwell and most people reported no difficulty in registering with a GP.
- Feedback from homeless people in Mansfield and from organisations that support them is that generally people are able to sign up with a GP and receive primary health care services. Some people reported that it is more difficult to get secondary healthcare services e.g. for mental health and drug and alcohol difficulties. Unfortunately the results of the recent countywide audit of the health needs of homeless people have not been published in time to contribute to the strategy. The initial findings at a county-wide level are that:

The most common physical health needs reported by homeless people were:

- Joint aches or problems with bones and muscles
- Chest pain/breathing problems
- Dental problems
- Difficulty seeing/eye problems

The mental health needs of homeless people related to:

- Feeling stressed
- Feeling depressed
- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts

Rough sleeping

In the late autumn we carried out an exercise to estimate the number of rough sleepers in the area and the figure we submitted to the Government (DCLG) was nine rough sleepers.

Our work with Framework, who provide outreach services in the District, is helping us to build a much more accurate picture of rough sleeping. The most recent number of rough sleepers found during the April street count was six. Over the winter period the severe weather provision had an average of six people staying per night.

This new intelligence suggest that we may have a diminishing issue with rough sleeping but we know it has to continue to be a priority if we are to achieve the No Second Night Out standard.

The national No Second Night Out initiative⁵ aims to prevent people from becoming entrenched in rough sleeping and offers members of the public a means to report people they see rough sleeping.

Young people

Homelessness amongst young people remains a concern in the District. A number of services for young people have closed or have reduced the amount of support they can offer. Other homelessness services report an increase in the number of young people approaching them for help. There have been some initial problems with the new county-wide youth homelessness protocol, and some services for young homeless people reported that there have been difficulties matching young people to the vacancies available.

Veterans and ex-service personnel

The Council has made supporting veterans a priority and we will continue working with local third sector providers to help ex-service personnel to manage the difficult transition into civilian life. This transition support is not just required during the first year post discharge but for much longer so we need to build long-term partnerships to support this.

Key issues for veterans are support in accessing and maintaining accommodation and access to services for those in distress due to mental health issues. The contextual evidence suggests that 50% of the 40 individuals supported last year, by one specialist support provider in the District, had significant housing / homelessness issues.

Women fleeing domestic violence

The information collected from groups working with women fleeing domestic violence indicates that this continues to be a priority issue for local women and services. The number of women coming forward to seek help is hard to establish however the contextual evidence indicates an increased willingness by women to come forward and seek help and there has been no decline in the numbers of women coming forward.

Services are seeing an increase in the number of women seeking help who have complex needs for example mental health issues, substance misuse issues as well as their experience of domestic violence.

Supporting women fleeing domestic violence will continue to be high on our priority list.. We will work closely with other agencies as part of the new Domestic Violence Strategy.

Migration

⁵ No Second Night Out : Vision to end Rough Sleeping DCLG 2011

At the moment the data tells us that only a small number of EU migrants are approaching us for advice and this is supported by the Homeless Watch data. We have recently employed a Polish speaking member of staff to help us to improve the service we offer to Polish people who do approach us. Data from the 2012/13 Winter Shelter showed that fewer people from EU countries used the shelter compared with the past few years. However we feel we need to monitor the needs of people from new communities in Mansfield to ensure that their needs are being met.

Conclusion

Our conclusion, from the range of data we have collected and reviewed, is that the Housing Solutions service has so far responded flexibly and effectively to some of the changing needs in the environment as the numbers of approaches has steadily risen over the recent past.

Over the next five years we need to focus on a range of possible groups and issues, from emerging new groups through to more traditional households with complex support needs.

10. Predicting future levels of homelessness

In the current climate accurately predicting the potential impact on numbers of households at risk of homelessness is a significant challenge. There are further changes to welfare benefits, which are yet to be implemented and it will take time for current changes such as the under occupancy charge to have a full effect on households.

So based on the level of uncertainty we are suggesting that:

- The number of households approaching us for advice will rise
- The fluctuations we have already seen in acceptances will continue for the foreseeable future
- The number of housing issues related to debt and low income will continue to rise
- Traditional customer groups with support needs will continue to require support at a time that other services are harder to access
- Young people will require a greater range of responses to their housing needs, and
- New groups of customers will feature more in our overall service user profile as more pressure is put on households that four or five years ago would have not been considered as potential customers.

The data on the potential impact on households due to the raft of welfare reforms being implemented suggests that households of working age could see significant reductions in income.

The overall trend we foresee is an increase in needs with more complexity, more debt issues and significant peaks and troughs in demand along the way.

11. Impact and outcomes

The key outcomes for the 2013-18 Homelessness Strategy for Mansfield are:

- To ensure that access to affordable housing in the private rented sector and in social housing is improved
- To ensure that the impact of welfare reform is managed so that the risk of homelessness is reduced
- More people approach information and advice services for help at an early stage
- Fewer people become homeless as a result of debt
- Fewer young people become homeless or remain homeless
- Fewer people are rough sleeping
- More people with complex needs are able to access the accommodation and support they need, and
- Homeless people are able to access the health services they need.

12. Rationale for action

The literature, research evidence and our own experience suggests that the factors that create homelessness fall into two main categories:

- Structural factors: Levels of employment, availability of affordable housing, levels of income, debt etc.
- Personal factors: Family break up, support needs related to poor mental health etc, lack of resources in a family or social network.

It is the combination of these factors that leads to a household becoming homeless in most cases. These factors are reflected in the priority action areas, which are outlined later in for action we outline later.

The literature, research evidence and our experience suggests that preventing homelessness almost always leads to better outcomes for vulnerable households, prevention is more effective in reducing repeat homelessness and makes best use of the investment in housing and homelessness services. For example the cost of evicting a tenant from social housing for arrears is in the region of between £3500 and £6000 depending on the size of arrears and complicating factors.⁶

Preventing homelessness, wherever possible, makes sense both socially and financially. We also know that preventing homelessness is multidimensional hence the sub-title for the strategy Preventing homelessness is everyone's business.

We will only be successful if we work with our key partners in co-producing innovative and flexible responses to potential homelessness.

We see prevention as having three dimensions, primary, secondary and tertiary:

- Primary prevention of homelessness: Stopping a household from becoming homeless.

⁶ Shelter 2008

- Secondary prevention of homelessness: Dealing with homelessness when it has occurred and ensuring the negative impact is minimised.
- Tertiary prevention of homelessness: Ensuring that homelessness is not repeated and that people with the most complex needs are in sustainable accommodation.

Some of the priority areas above will include actions that cover all three areas. For example achieving the outcome of preventing rough sleeping will include:

- Primary prevention to reduce the numbers of people who become rough sleepers.
- Secondary prevention to ensure people spend the minimum time on the streets (NSNO policy).
- Tertiary prevention to ensure that entrenched rough sleepers are helped off the streets and into affordable accommodation which they can sustain for at least 12 months.

Some of the priorities will focus on one or two types of prevention e.g. Improving access to and take up of early advice and information where the focus will be on primary and secondary prevention interventions.

13. Resources available to implement the strategy

We have limited resources available to invest in the outcomes we need to deliver and one of the first actions following this strategy will be to finalise our financial and resource allocation for the coming year.

We have already been successful in securing a major investment from the Council to develop and launch the ASSIST scheme noted earlier.

Currently we have the Homelessness Grant from Central Government as well as significant resources from the Council's own budget. We will need to attract further resources and expertise through our partners to help us prevent homelessness effectively.

In the short term Mansfield will receive some funding from shared investment across the North Nottinghamshire area via a one off grant of £350k from the Department of Communities and Local Government to prevent homelessness.

The current plan (Spring 2013) is that we will benefit from an investment of £109k to further develop access to the private rented sector for single people and rough sleepers across Mansfield and Newark and Sherwood. Mansfield has also received £35k towards the cost of the winter shelter (2012/13).

These investments are one off so if they are successful in preventing homelessness we will need to consider how we continue to fund them as part of our overall strategic investment.

14. How we will deliver the outcomes

We cannot deliver the outcomes we want from this strategy in isolation so a key part of delivering the priorities noted above will be through joint work with our partners overseen by the Interagency Homelessness Forum. The Council will retain overall responsibility for delivery but will co-produce the activities and interventions via the Homelessness Forum.

For each priority we will work via the Interagency Homelessness Forum to develop a detailed action plan with clear targets and clear lines of accountability for delivery. We want to do this in a collaborative way in order to maximise the ownership and commitment to delivery across a wide range of partners.

The outcome of the review and the feedback from services and from homeless people identified eight key areas where organisations and individuals need to work together to prevent homelessness and to minimise the impact of homelessness on individuals and communities.

- **Access to affordable housing in the private rented sector and in social housing is improved**

Access to affordable accommodation was seen as a key priority for the strategy by both organisations and by homeless people themselves. There is not enough social housing to meet all needs and the private rented sector is where any growth in accommodation for homeless people needs to take place. The shortage of housing for younger people under 35 is a particular concern and social and private landlords need to be encouraged to offer shared tenancies for this group.

What is the change	What needs to happen	Who will be involved	Who will lead
Homeless people and people at risk of homelessness have better access to tenancies in the private rented sector	Extend the operation of the MARS scheme to include single people, shared tenancies and people with higher support needs	MDC Private landlords	MDC
Young people have access to shared tenancies	Support to be provided to assist landlords in exploring and developing sustainable shared tenancies	MDC Social landlords Private landlords Support providers	MDC
Fewer people are excluded from accessing affordable housing	The impact of landlords' allocation criteria, including Homefinder, to be reviewed	MDC Landlords	MDC

What is the change	What needs to happen	Who will be involved	Who will lead
Homelessness amongst older people is monitored	Homelessness amongst older people to be monitored and if the trend continues, further prevention activities need to be developed	MDC ASSIST Organisations working with older people	MDC

- **The impact of welfare reform is managed so that the risk of homelessness is reduced**

The scale of the impact of welfare reform on homelessness in Mansfield is not yet known, but everyone we spoke to believed that there will be an increase in homelessness in the District as a result of the reforms. Everyone felt that whilst there is uncertainty about the future impact of the reforms it is essential that all agencies and homeless people are kept informed about the changes as they happen and that the impact of changes on local people and services is monitored. It was felt that the Inter Agency Homelessness Forum would be a good focus for the monitoring of the impact on individuals and on services.

What is the change	What needs to happen	Who will be involved	Who will lead
People and organisations who come into contact with homeless people or people at risk of homelessness are informed about the changes and actions they need to take	Information about changes and what actions need to be taken locally to be collated and distributed to organisations Organisations to provide information to people who use their services about the changes and the actions they need to take Information sharing sessions to be arranged through the IAHF	MDC Welfare Reform Officer and Prevention Officers IAHF Advice Services Accommodation and Support Services	IAHF
Other organisations and individuals that have contact with homeless people are informed about the changes so they can advise and support people they come into contact with	Information to be provided to front-line organisations, Councillors etc. about the changes and the actions that people need to take	MDC Welfare Reform Officer IAHF	MDC
People are able to access information and services via	The Council's Digital Inclusion Strategy to	MDC	MDC

What is the change	What needs to happen	Who will be involved	Who will lead
the internet as needed	include the impact of Welfare Reform		
The impact of the changes locally is monitored and reported	A Welfare Reform Monitoring Group will be established by the IAHF to monitor the impact of welfare reforms on local people	MDC IAHF	IAHF

- **More people approach information and advice services for help at an early stage**

Our ability to prevent homelessness is reduced when people approach services for help very late when they are facing eviction or repossession. Advice services in Mansfield are becoming more co-ordinated and a number of agencies are working together to develop an 'advice hub' which is based with Mansfield CAB. A number of advice organisations and the Council is considering using the Patchwork system to improve co-ordination of advice work with vulnerable people. Patchwork is an on-line system that enables all signed up organisations to find out which other organisations are working with an individual and to communicate and co-ordinate the support offered.

What is the change	What needs to happen	Who will be involved	Who will lead
Advice services continue to work closely together and co-ordinate their activities	The Advice Services Hub at Mansfield CAB is developed so that all advice services are linked in The Patchwork system is piloted in Mansfield	Mansfield CAB Advice agencies MDC	MDC/Advice Services Hub
Develop on-line directory of services that prevent homelessness	All agencies contribute their details to the new HLG online homelessness directory	MDC Advice agencies Accommodation and Support Providers HLG	HLG
People are actively directed to the service that meets	All advice hubs have information about other advice services and refer	Advice Services Hub	Advice Services Hub

What is the change	What needs to happen	Who will be involved	Who will lead
their needs best	people on by making appointments as appropriate		
Advice services use alternative methods to reach people who need information and advice	Information to be available on line and through social media	Advice agencies	Advice Services Hub

- Fewer people become homeless as a result of debt**

More people are already approaching services with debt problems and it is likely that more people will develop debt problems as welfare reforms start to take effect. We are already working closely with advice agencies in the District and with the Credit Union to encourage people to open accounts and to set aside money for key bills (known as jam jar accounts).

What is the change	What needs to happen	Who will be involved	Who will lead
People who might need information and advice are identified and offered help	Housing Providers and the Council will identify people who are at risk e.g. due to benefit changes, right to buy owner occupiers and encourage them to approach advice services, offer venues for drop ins etc.	Housing Providers MDC Advice Services Hub	MDC
People are able to access informal support with managing their finances	Seek resources to develop a money mentoring scheme in the District (Joint action with Newark and Sherwood)	MDC NSDC Advice Services	MDC NSDC
Support continues to be available for people in mortgage arrears	The ending of the current Mortgage Rescue scheme in 2014 will be planned for and alternative funding secured if possible	MDC Advice services	MDC

- Fewer young people become homeless or remain homeless**

Agencies felt it was more important than ever that young people receive good advice that is relevant to them and that all organisations that see young people are able to signpost them appropriately.

What is the change	What needs to happen	Who will be involved	Who will lead
Develop a no wrong door approach to advice for young people at risk of homelessness	All organisations working with young people signpost them to services providing information about homelessness prevention	MDC Advice agencies IAHF The Hall	IAHF
The Youth Homelessness Protocol works effectively in Mansfield	The operation of the protocol is reviewed regularly and changes made as needed	MDC Service providers Targeted Youth Support	MDC
Young people are supported to leave home in a planned way rather than in crisis	Develop shared models and protocols for working with young people and families	MDC Service Providers	IAHF

- Fewer people are rough sleeping**

Rough sleeping continues to be a major concern and the good start that has been made by the Street Outreach Team needs to continue. We need to raise awareness of the services available for rough sleepers and to encourage local people to report when they see people rough sleeping so that rough sleepers can be supported into services.

What is the change	What needs to happen	Who will be involved	Who will lead
Mansfield adopts the No Second Night Out principles	No Second Night principles will inform the development and delivery of services for rough sleepers	MDC Services for rough sleepers	MDC
People know how to report that someone is rough sleeping	The national phone line and website are publicised widely in Mansfield	MDC Services for rough sleepers	MDC
People who are rough sleeping have their needs identified and	All agencies will commit to working together to find	MDC	MDC

What is the change	What needs to happen	Who will be involved	Who will lead
met	solutions for and with rough sleepers through a multi-agency case conference	Services for rough sleepers	
Outreach work with current and new rough sleepers is sustained	Outreach work with current and new rough sleepers will be prioritised	MDC Services for rough sleepers	MDC

- More people with complex needs are able to access the accommodation and support they need**

Finding solutions for people with complex needs was identified as the top priority for the Homelessness Prevention Strategy at the consultation event. People with complex needs have often had failed tenancies in the past, developed former tenant arrears or come into contact with the criminal justice system, so have fewer housing options available to them. Some will join Mansfield's rough sleeping population.

What is the change	What needs to happen	Who will be involved	Who will lead
People with complex needs have access to affordable accommodation	Landlords will identify suitable accommodation for people with complex needs. A Housing First ⁷ Options will be offered to people who find it difficult to share	Landlords	IAHF
People with complex needs are able to sustain their accommodation	Support services, especially tenancy support will be targeted at people with complex needs A multi-agency approach is used to ensure that people with complex	MDC Landlords Tenancy support providers	IAHF

⁷ **Housing First** is an approach to helping rough sleepers, and others with complex needs, to make the move off the streets or out of chaotic situations and directly into tenancies (with support) . It is based on the assumption that for a significant number of rough sleepers etc the linear progression into hostel accommodation and then on to their own accommodation is not effective and in many cases can be counterproductive. It has been successfully used in a number of projects in the UK , Europe and North America.

http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/145853/GP_Briefing_Housing_First.pdf

What is the change	What needs to happen	Who will be involved	Who will lead
	needs receive the support they need	Commissioners	

- Homeless people access the health services they need**

Generally speaking homeless people feel they have good access to healthcare services, but some needs are not being met. The Homeless Health Audit will provide valuable information about the health needs of homeless people locally and we will work with our partners at the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to review the outcomes of the audit and the implications for health services in Mansfield.

What is the change	What needs to happen	Who will be involved	Who will lead
The needs of local homeless people identified in the Homeless Health Needs Audit are considered by Mansfield Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)	MDC will work with the CCG to review the findings of the audit	MDC CCG Health Service providers	MDC
Health services respond better to the needs of homeless people	Providers of health services review their services in the light of the findings of the Homeless Health Needs Audit	Health Service providers	IAHF

Improving Inter-Agency Working

The Mansfield Inter-Agency Homelessness Forum has been at the heart of partnership working for services for homeless people in Mansfield for many years. It took a strong lead in the development of the previous Homelessness Strategy and helped to co-ordinate the action plans that came from the strategy. There have been a number of changes to services in Mansfield and a number of people who took a lead in the IAHF have moved on. As part of the implementation of the strategy, there will be a review of the IAHF's terms of reference and membership so that the forum can take a lead in overseeing the implementation of the strategy. Officers from MDC will become more involved in supporting the forum. Homeless people told us that they would like to play a part in implementing the strategy and we will ensure that they are involved in developing the action plans.

What is the change	What needs to happen	Who will be involved	Who will lead

The Inter-Agency Homelessness Forum becomes the focus for planning and reviewing services for homeless people in Mansfield	Review the role and function of the IAHF Promote the work of the forum and invite new members MDC takes a lead in developing and supporting the Forum	MDC Services that work with or see homeless people	MDC
Homeless people are involved in developing the action plans from the strategy	A regular forum is established for homeless people in Mansfield and reps from the forum attend the IAHF	MDC Homeless People Services for homeless people	MDC

15. Monitoring the outcomes

To ensure that we stay on track, and can change direction or pace if needed, we will need to monitor our collective progress towards delivering the outcomes for this strategy.

As part of the co-produced action plans noted above we will set shared milestones, targets etc and we will review progress against these quarterly via the Interagency Homelessness Forum.

It will be the responsibility of the local Council, working with the Inter-Agency Homelessness Forum to ensure that we track actions, targets and outcomes effectively. To help this process we will ensure that those people or agencies that take on lead roles are supported to both carry out actions and to track their impact.

As part of the whole process we will carry out an annual review of the outcomes and actions to ensure that they are still relevant.

16. Appendices

Appendix 1: Welfare Reform Timeline

The timeline below sets out the major welfare and housing reforms which are likely to have an impact on homelessness, increased pressure on debt etc.

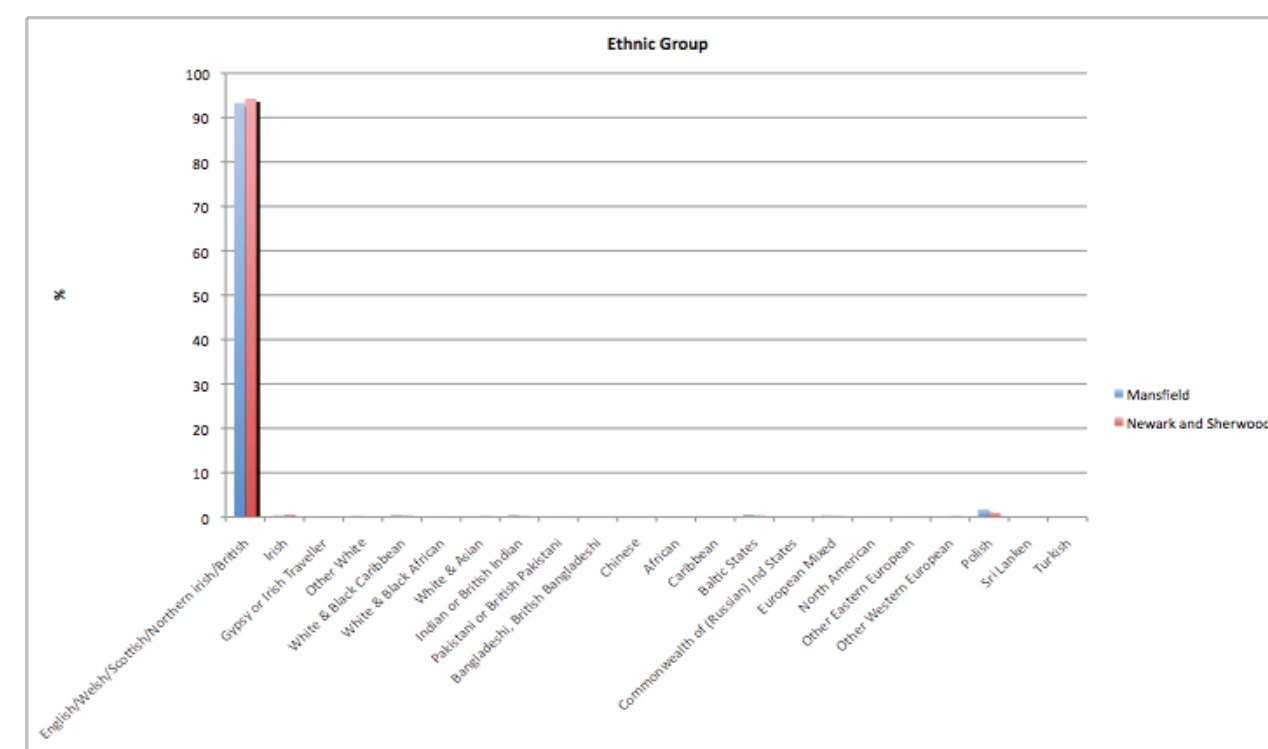
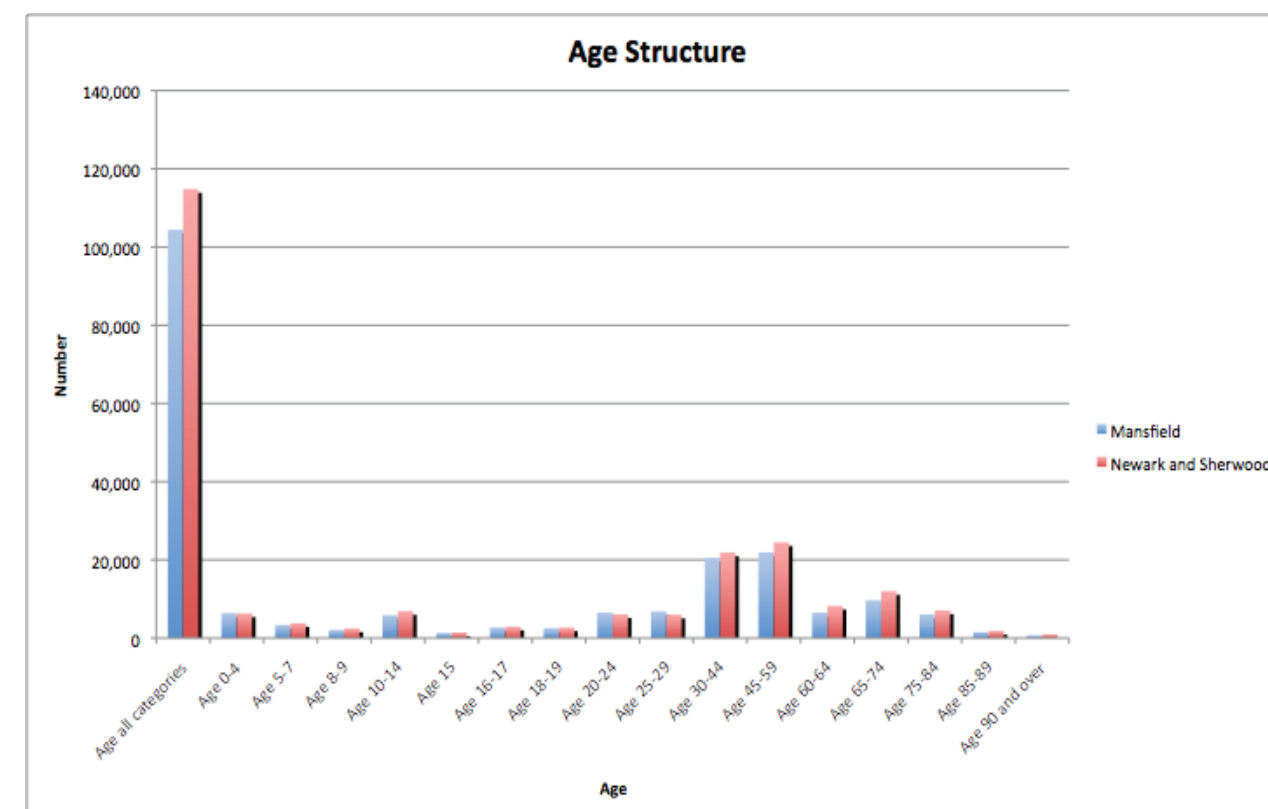
It is likely that the major impacts will not be felt until all the changes come into effect and households have time to accrue extra debts, arrears etc.

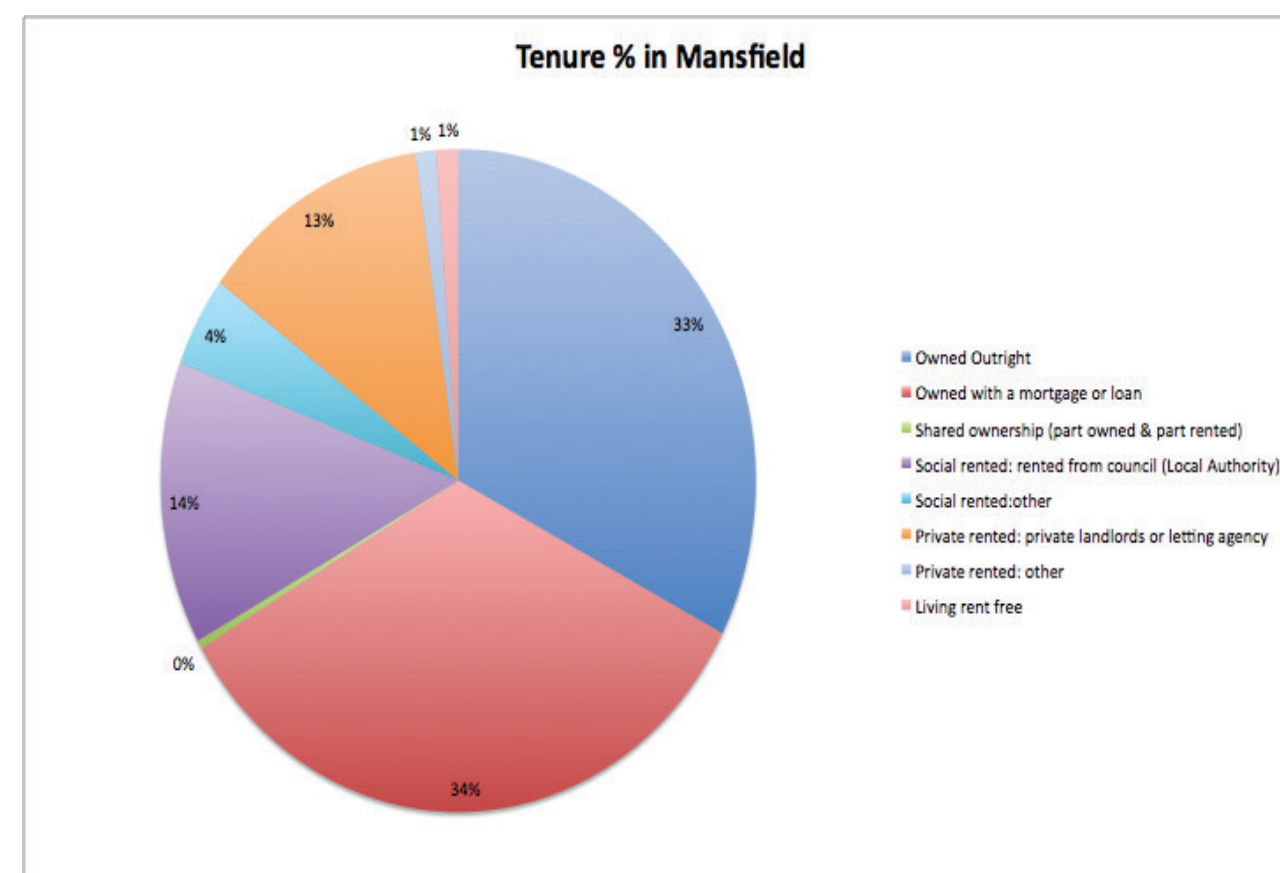
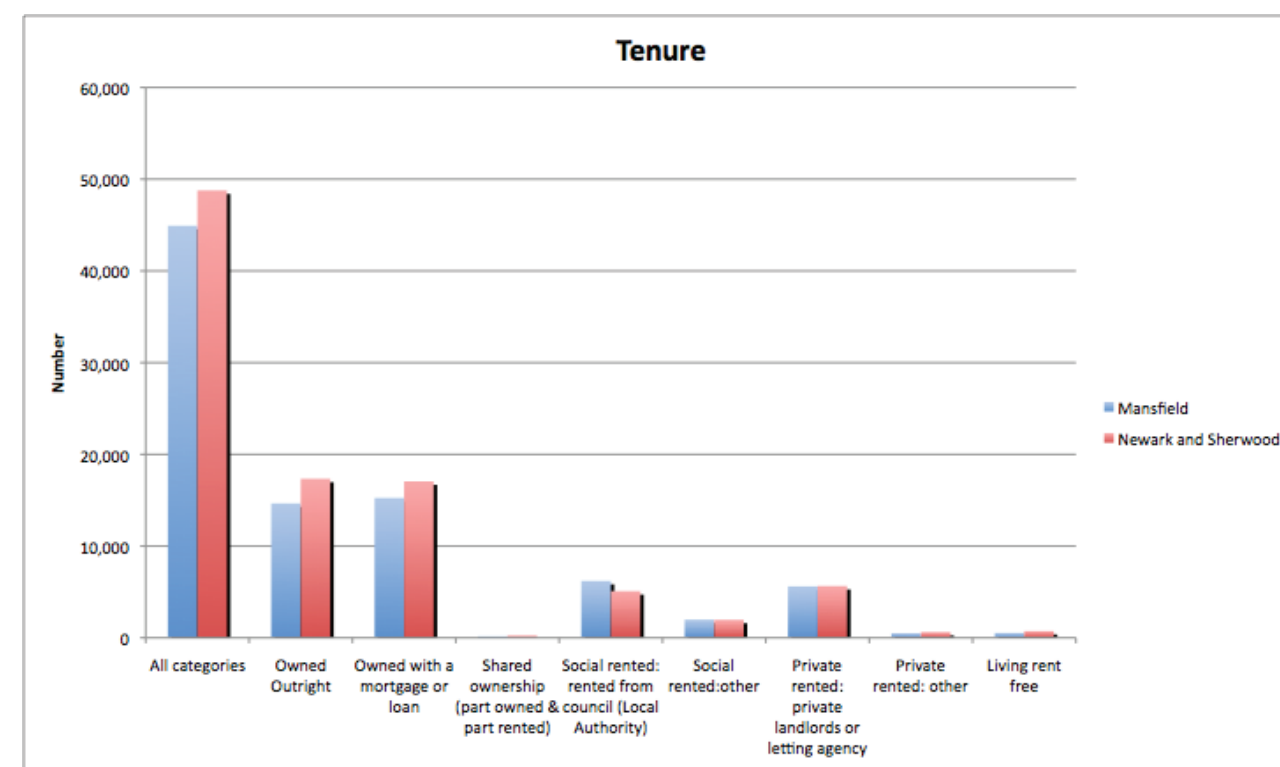
Timeline	Reform	Notes
October 2010	Education Maintenance Allowance abolished	These changes have had a mixed impact but at least some may have contributed to increased household debt
April 2011	Transfer from Incapacity Benefit to Employment Support Allowance ESA	
April 2011	Winter fuel payments reduced	
April 2011	Child Benefit frozen	
April 2011	Cap on Local Housing Allowance	Impact in some areas has been to price LHA claimants out of the local market
October 2011	LHA rates set at 30th percentile of market rents	
2011 thru to April 2012	Tax credits reduced and increase in the number of hours worked before claimant is eligible	
April 2011 (3 year phasing)	Uprating nondependent reductions	Impact not fully felt yet
January 2012	Shared accommodation rate for LHA increased from 25 to 35 years	Many areas are now responding by developing PRS shared housing offers with 3rd sector providers
April 2012	Lone parents transfer to JSA when youngest child reaches five years	Impact not fully felt until other changes (April 2013) start to take effect
April 2012	Power to grant flexible tenancies in social housing	See local tenancy strategies

October 2012	Sanctions introduced for those on working age benefits linked to work programme	We have yet to see the full impact of this on vulnerable households
November 2012	Power to discharge the homelessness duty into fixed term private rented tenancies	Areas are responding very differently to this new power and need to have a vibrant and reliable PRS sector to make it a viable option
January 2013	Child benefit reductions for families earning over £50k and removed for families earning over £60k	This may have limited impact on its own but taken with other changes may add to debt issues
April 2013	Cap on overall benefit entitlement set at £26kpa for families and £18k for singles	Includes HB/LHA and limits total of all benefits received to £500pw for families
April 2013	Up-rating of all benefits linked to CPI	This includes LHA rates
April 2013	Under occupation charge for tenants in social housing	These changes could have a major impact on numbers approaching for help with debt etc once the changes have been in place for three to six months
April 2013	Disability living allowance replaced by Personal Independence Payments (PIP)	
April 2013	Discretionary social fund abolished. Responsibility on LA to implement alternative if deemed necessary	
April 2013	Council Tax Benefit abolished with requirement to implement a local alternative	
October 2013	Roll out of Universal Credit including direct payment of HB to social housing tenants	

Appendix 2: Review of Homelessness Data

a. Basic demographics (All taken from 2011 census)



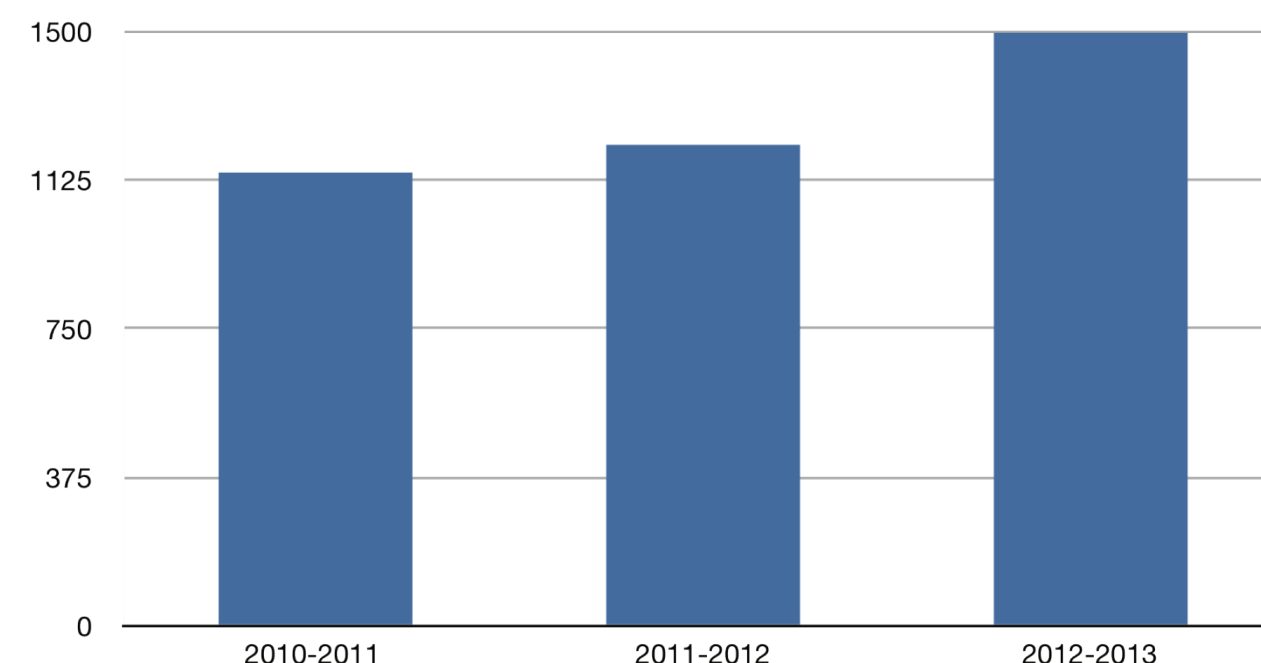


The housing market continues to be very tight with fewer options for households at risk of homelessness. There is likely to be continuing pressure on private rented stock from households who might have bought their own home as they remain in rented

accommodation and the potential impact of households down-sizing to avoid the impact of benefit changes.

Mortgage repossessions, whilst not as high as some hot spot areas continue to be an issue. Mansfield is in the top quartile for the number of repossessions in the region. Our analysis is that tracking repossessions for ex right to buy tenants might be useful.

Approaches to Housing Solutions for help



Numbers recorded as approaching for housing advice (2012/13 figure is an estimate based on half year data)

There is no evidence to suggest there will be a drop in the number of approaches for help and advice. The upcoming changes to Welfare Benefits, continuing lack of economic growth and a tight housing market suggest that there is a risk that the number of approaches will increase. This mirrors the national picture.

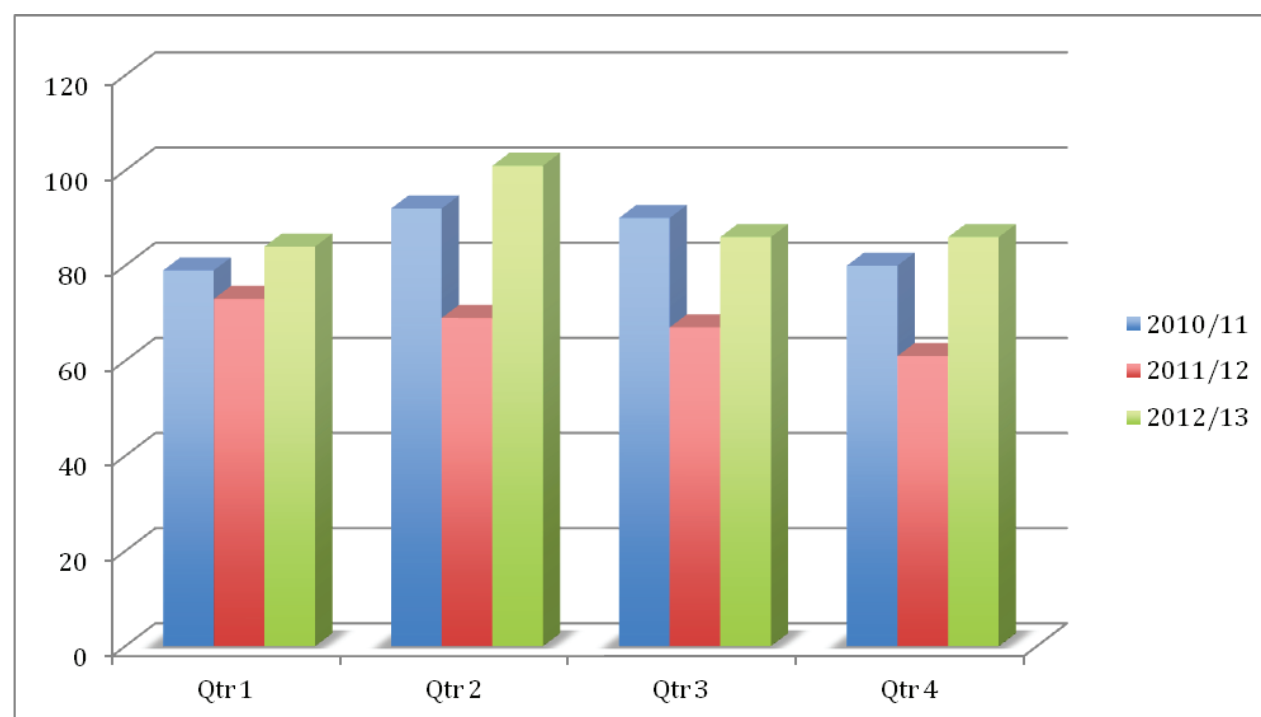
Contextual evidence suggests increased numbers of Eastern European (Latvian and Polish) households are seeking help and advice (no specific numbers on approaches).

Homelessness decisions

We have seen an increase in both decisions and acceptances over the last 12 months with decisions taken rising by 32% to 357 and acceptances by 40% to 180 households.

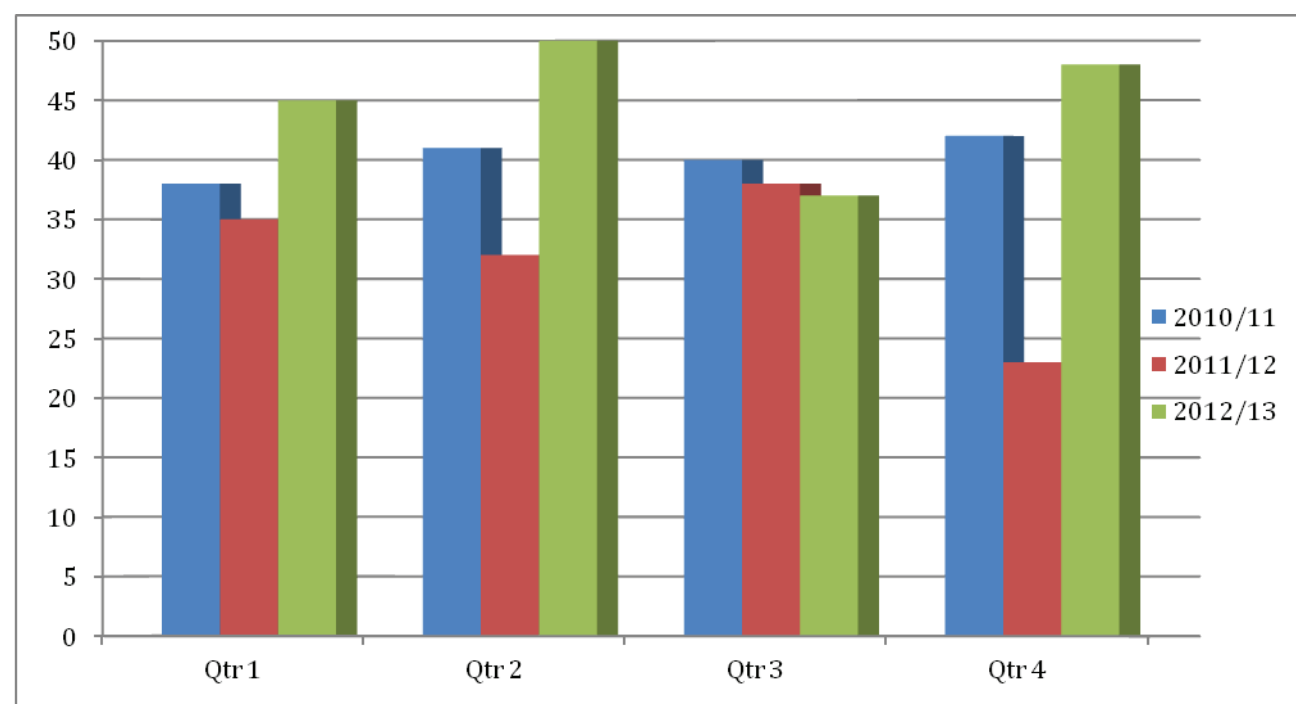
It would be foolish to discount the potential for a further increase in the number of people being accepted as homeless and owed a duty by the Council, given the risk of increased approaches and shifts in the types of households approaching for help. (See later note).

Homelessness decisions



Number of homelessness decisions made

Homelessness acceptances



The number of people accepted as being homeless and being owed a main duty by the Council

Reasons for homelessness

The reasons why households are approaching the Council for help and advice and being accepted as homeless matches the national trends with the three biggest reasons being:

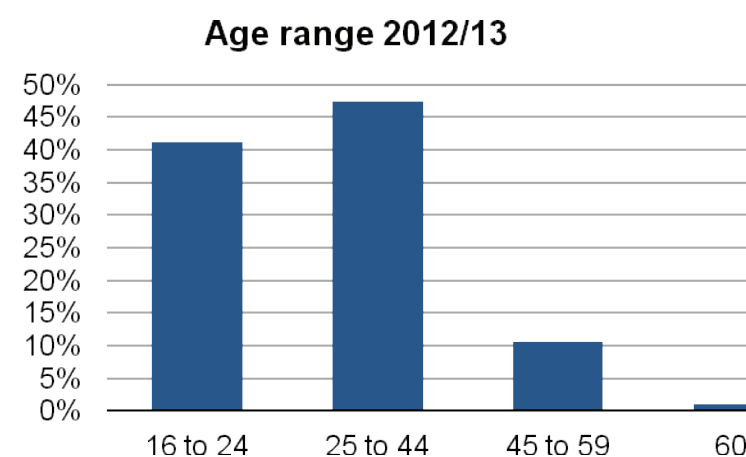
- Family and friends no longer willing to accommodate
- Relationship breakdown (inc people fleeing domestic violence), and
- The ending of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy.

Contextual evidence shows a rise in numbers of women seeking help following domestic abuse, which may reflect an increased drive to support households affected by domestic abuse rather than a rise in actual numbers of women being abused.

There is no indication that this mix of reasons for approaches/acceptances for homelessness will change dramatically in the short-term. However given the changes to welfare benefits there is the potential for an increase in the number of people facing debt-related issues and having increasing rent or mortgage arrears.

Services are reporting increased debt problems amongst traditional groups and amongst households on low income.

Age breakdown for households accepted as homeless



Figures are no longer available nationally on the age ranges of those accepted as homeless so it is hard to make comparisons across a number of analogous areas, however based on previous figures we are in line with the national profile. The proportion of people in the 16 to 24 age group presenting and being accepted as homeless is higher than other age groups, again this is not out of line with national trends. The 16 to 24 age group makes up 11.2% of the population in Mansfield and accounts for 40% of acceptances, the 25 to 44 age group constitutes 26.1% of the population and accounts for 48% of acceptances.

Rough sleepers

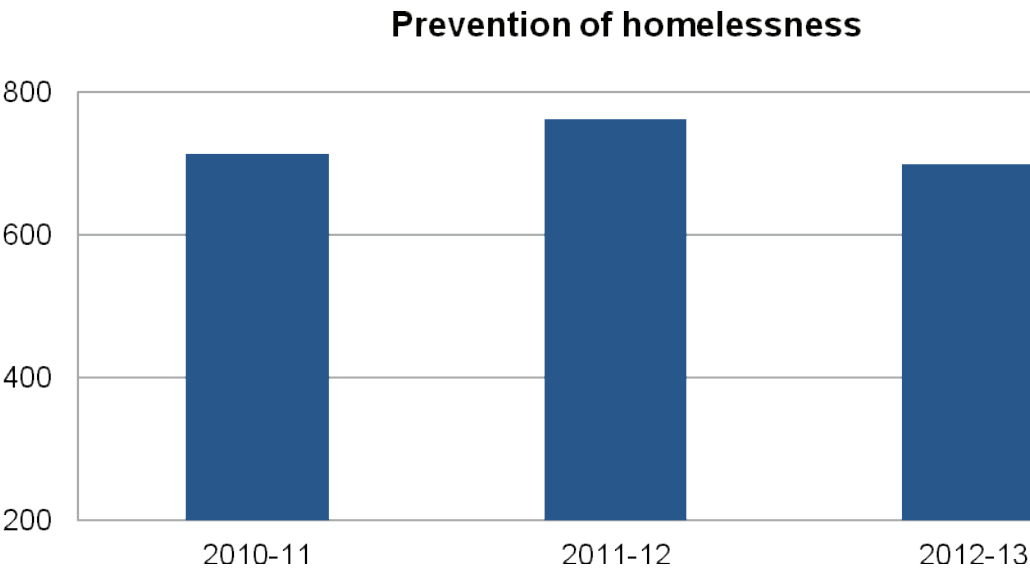
In the late autumn the Council carried out an exercise to estimate the number of rough sleepers in the area and the figure submitted to the Government (DCLG) was nine rough sleepers. The figure for the last few years has been estimated at this level.

Data collected over the winter from the severe weather provision indicated that on average six people used the provision each night it was open. The most recent street count carried out by Framework (April 13) found six people rough sleeping.

While numbers are not high there continues to be a ongoing issue with rough sleeping and the work already carried out needs to be continued.

By April 2013 there had been no referrals via the Streetlink Rough Sleeper line from the Mansfield area.

Homelessness preventions



Figures for 2012/13 estimation based on ¾ figures

The number of successful homelessness preventions has fluctuated and contextual evidence suggests that it is getting harder to get successful prevention outcomes. There is a risk that this has a knock on affect on the numbers accepted as homeless.

The MARS scheme has been successful in helping families with no to low support needs find PRS accommodation, but contextual evidence suggests that the flow of new properties is challenging.

The evidence suggests three things:

- Households often only seek help in a crisis and this means that the prevention options are fewer and harder to organise.
- The range of options open for people are becoming less effective e.g. Bond schemes are less useful as the housing market gets tighter.
- Households are presenting with more complex issues which require a wider range of prevention interventions.

Recent changes to the Allocations Policy have made it easier for some customer groups to access social housing, although it remains a challenge for households with arrears, recent offences etc.

Thirteen households with mortgage arrears have been helped via mortgage rescue or other interventions in first nine months of this year. Changes to interest rates etc have the potential to increase pressure on low income households and lead to a rise in the scale of repossessions. We think it will be worth keeping an eye on ex RTB households as a potentially vulnerable group of households.

Any recovery in the housing market (house prices rising, more buyers) may encourage lenders who are currently holding off repossession to proceed more vigorously with the prospect that they can sell repossessed homes at a reasonable price.

Non-statutory homelessness

Nottinghamshire Homeless Watch

The data collected as part of the Nottinghamshire Homeless Watch, which takes a snap shot survey over a two week period of people/households approaching a variety of agencies for advice and support, suggests the following: (Unless stated the data is specific to Mansfield.)

- Presentations: Presentations at organisations during the survey period by people seeking help were the same in 2012 as in 2011. This is at odds with the figures recorded by the Local Authority which indicates a rise in numbers approaching for advice. Homeless Watch data suggests approaches were 5.7 households per 1000 whilst P1E figures indicate a figure in excess of 8 per 1000 households for the same period. This suggests that a greater number of people maybe making direct contact with the Council rather than with other agencies. It may also reflect the smaller number of agencies operating in the area in 2012.
- Gender balance: The balance of men and women presenting during the survey period shifted from a split of 78% men (46) and 22% women (13) in 2011 to 65% men (39) 35% women (22) in 2012. This indicates an increasing number of women approaching agencies for help and advice during the survey period.
- Age distribution: This is in line with the age distribution shown for those accepted as homeless. Over the last three years there has been a consistent drop in the number of 16 -17 year olds presenting as homeless during the survey period.
- Household type: During the survey period the data indicates that the percentage of single people approaching agencies for help reduced but they remain the biggest group of people approaching for help by a considerable margin. (Nottinghamshire wide data).
- Support needs: There was a marginal increase in the percentage of people reporting that they had support needs on top of their housing need. The percentage reporting a mental health need increased and the percentage reporting drug misuse issues decreased. (Nottinghamshire wide data).
- Rough sleeping: During the survey period, 27 people were recorded as sleeping rough on the night before they approached the agencies for help and advice. This was up from 9 in 2011. See note on rough sleepers identified via Framework

services, which indicates a lower number of rough sleepers and is probably more accurate.

- Local connection: Of the 54 people seeking help in Mansfield during the survey period 48 were from Mansfield, five from Ashfield and one from Newark and Sherwood. There were seven people with a Mansfield connection presenting in Ashfield, five in Bassetlaw and one in Newark and Sherwood.
- Repeat homelessness: 52% of those presenting during the survey period had been homeless before. This is above the average for the county, but in the 2012 figures 30% responded as not knowing the answer to this question.
- Outcomes from contact following approaches: Of the people presenting in Mansfield during the survey period, 5% moved into permanent accommodation, 15% moved into temporary accommodation, 2% into emergency accommodation, 71% were given general advice and 17% were referred onto other agencies.

The figures for the county as a whole were: 2% in permanent accommodation, 14% in temporary accommodation, 9% in emergency accommodation, 67% seeking general advice and 27% were referred to other agencies.

EU migrants

The P1E data indicates a small number of EU migrants approaching for advice whilst Homeless Watch does not indicate an issue with EU or other migrants in the District. However the Council and service providers are identifying this as an issue which is bubbling under the surface and as such may require monitoring.

Temporary accommodation

The data shows that the use of temporary accommodation is steady. Households are moving out of temporary accommodation quickly, with an average stay of 22 days.

There is no one staying in bed and breakfast accommodation at present.

Welfare reform

Housing Benefit and other benefit changes are going to have an impact on significant numbers of people in the area. Current calculations indicate that between 1,100 and 1,200 households will be affected by the bedroom tax.

The change to how Housing Benefit is paid, i.e. the shift to direct payments, has the potential to increase rent arrears and increase evictions for rent arrears.

Single people aged 18 to 35 are already being affected by the introduction of the shared room rate which is reducing the range of accommodation they can sustain and whilst this group are rarely accepted as homeless and in priority need they do have significant needs for housing advice and new housing options e.g. access to good quality shared accommodation.

What these figures and intelligence indicate is that there is the potential for significant future demand on housing advice and options.

New customers

The evidence indicates that the types of households who have traditionally accessed housing support and have been at risk of homelessness will continue to be at risk at a time when the services they have accessed are being reshaped or are diminishing in capacity.

On top of that there is contextual evidence that a new group of customers are starting to seek help with housing issues in greater numbers. This group can be broadly described as being households on low incomes, often in work but in low paid jobs.

Polish households are making up a bigger proportion of the numbers seeking help with housing advice but at present we have no hard data on numbers approaching.

The pressures new customer groups face is:

- Reduction in working hours and/or the number of adults in work in each household
- Pay cuts or no pay increases at a time of rising costs such as fuel etc
- Direct rent payments
- Mounting debts
- Limited access to affordable housing

Support services

Support services for people and households with support needs are being either reshaped into new local services or have diminished capacity to respond. The changes in support need to be taken into account when considering the housing advice and home options services on offer.

Appendix 3: Feedback from service users

Services for Empowerment and Advocacy (SEA) were asked by HLG to lead on the consultation and engagement of homeless and vulnerably housed people, to help inform the review and development of the Mansfield Homelessness strategy for 2013-2018.

SEA initially met with a group of volunteers who wished to be involved with this piece of work, to look at previous homelessness strategies and consultations that had been carried out. We identified different ways in which we would offer to consult with people:

- 1-2-1 interviews
- Focus groups
- Make documents available via services so people could complete the consultation independently or with support, and
- Telephone interviews.

We then contacted 12 services in Mansfield, to inform them of the consultation work we were doing and why. Services were contacted via email and telephone to ensure that they had access to posters and information that they could share with the people who access their services. The consultation was also promoted on SEA's Facebook page.

We received a low response rate from some services and continued to try and make contact to encourage them to enable their service users to take part in the consultation. Other services were extremely keen to enable consultation to happen and we arranged focus groups, 1-2-1 interviews, and consultations to allow people to have their say. A number of SEA volunteers also helped to carry out consultation events.

We engaged with people who access Sherwood Street day centre (rough sleepers) as well as users of the service. We also spoke to people who live at YMCA. Some people also completed and returned the consultation document independently.

What did we find out?

Reasons for Homelessness

- Relationship breakdown
- Anger issues
- People not caring
- Abuse
- Substance misuse
- Crime
- Arrears
- Released from prison with nowhere to go
- Mental health issues

Asking for help at the earliest opportunity

- A large number of people stated they had not felt able to ask for help early on. This led to their situation becoming worse than it may have done if they had asked for help earlier.
- They also identified that knowing where to go for help and advice was a key issue when needing to access support.
- A small number of respondents also raised concerns regarding the lack of help there is available for those coming out of prison, particularly those who have been on a short sentence (less than 12 months).

Barriers faced

- Criminal record
- Lack of help regarding anger issues
- Substance misuse
- Paperwork
- Being over 25
- Lack of accommodation, and
- Mental health issues.

Current accommodation

- Rough sleeping
- Hostel
- Staying with friends and family, and
- Sofa surfing.

Experience of services – What works well

- Day centres and night shelters
- Asking for help
- Skilled staff who meet the needs of individuals and client groups
- Feeling comfortable, and
- 1-2-1 support.

Experience of services – What could be improved

- Less form filling
- Not looking at people as statistics.
- Communication
- Information and advice being more publicly available
- Activities
- More help to secure accommodation
- Opportunities to build on skills, and
- Education and employment opportunities.

Health services

- Majority of respondents are registered with GPs, and
- A high level of rough sleepers said they would not go to see their GP or go to the hospital if they were unwell.

Priorities for Mansfield for the Homelessness Prevention Strategy

- More housing choice
- Better communication between services
- More information and advice of where to go for help
- Services who empathise
- Access to anger management, mediation, CBT
- All day shelters
- Quicker access to services
- People feeling more able to ask for support
- More help to meet the needs of different aged people

Two thirds of respondents felt they had needs that are not currently being met. These are:

- Learning
- Housing

- Anger issues
- Substance misuse
- Mental health issues
- Offending, and
- Physical health issues.

Moving forward

SEA will arrange feedback sessions within services so that people who access services can hear what we have found out. We will also ensure that we provide further opportunities and support for those who are interested in remaining involved with the Homelessness Prevention Strategy for Mansfield. We will also look at ways in which people can get involved with SEA if they wish.

Appendix 4: Feedback from services for homeless people

Services that work with homeless people and services that see homeless people as part of their work were invited to contribute to the Homelessness Prevention Strategy in a number of ways:

- An online questionnaire was sent to a list of agencies known to work with homeless people
- Some agencies were contacted by telephone and the questionnaire was used as the basis for a more in-depth discussion
- Two meetings of the Mansfield Inter-Agency Homelessness Forum to discuss the priorities for the strategy, and
- Organisations were invited to attend the consultation event on 8 March 2013.

a. Trends in homelessness

Services working with homeless people and people at risk of homelessness reported a number of trends which they believed were contributing to an increase in homelessness in the District.

- **More people are in debt**

Many services reported that the number of people approaching them with debt problems is rising, and that they are also seeing new groups of people, such as people who are in part-time work and are experiencing debt problems. Services reported concerns that people were increasingly taking on accommodation they couldn't afford and that many people's response to the under occupation charge is that they will manage somehow. A number of food banks are starting up in Mansfield and this was seen as a further indication of the levels of poverty and debt in the District.

- **More people are losing their homes**

Advice agencies reported a particular problem with mortgage arrears. It is helpful that the Council provides a copy of the court list, but resources at the court have been cut, which is impacting on advice agencies' ability to resolve situations at a later date. The court desk

system has also ended and there is limited access to a duty solicitor. There is a feeling amongst advice organisations that some repossession cases could be avoided if more support was offered at the point at which cases go to court. Advice agencies also reported that a number of the repossession cases they were seeing were people who had bought their Council houses under the right to buy scheme and are now experiencing negative equity.

- **More young people and women are approaching services**

Accommodation and support services reported that more women and more young people are being referred to them. In particular, services reported the impact of the closure or reduction in the level of service at young people's accommodation projects in the District. This has resulted in more young people aged 18-25 being referred to generic homelessness services. Projects reported that when young people have to share accommodation with older people it can have a negative impact on both groups. The temporary Winter Shelter at Sherwood Street reported seeing more young people over the 2012/13 winter period.

- **More people are reporting family breakdown as a reason for their homelessness**

A number of services reported seeing more people who gave family breakdown as the reason for their homelessness, in particular young people. Services commented on the increasing pressures on families affected by the economic downturn and welfare reforms. Pressure on families may also be contributing to the rise in older people's homelessness. A support organisation that works with older people noted the increase in housing problems because of family difficulties.

- **More housed people are needing support**

Tenancy support services reported that they are receiving more referrals from people who are in accommodation, but who are at risk of homelessness. Tenancy support services are increasingly working in local communities to try and encourage people to come forward if they are experiencing difficulties.

- **More people have higher support needs**

A number of services reported that they are seeing more people with higher and more complex support needs and this was the issue that attendees at the consultation event felt should be the highest priority for the Homelessness Strategy. In particular services reported an increase in the number of people presenting with alcohol and mental health difficulties.

b. Challenges for Mansfield's Homelessness Strategy

- **Welfare Reform**

All services said they were very concerned about the impact of Welfare Reforms and the cumulative impact of a number of changes to benefits over the next few years (see Appendix 1). In particular people noted the impact of the under-occupation charge and the likely increase in levels of debt, the ending of the Social Fund and the impact of the changes to Housing Benefit for under 35s as likely to impact on people's ability to secure and maintain accommodation.

- **Services are closing down or reducing**

A number of services commented on the reduction in services locally as a result of budget cuts, particularly in the Supporting People budget. Some services have closed completely and others have reduced their staffing levels and so are not able to house people with higher support needs. There is particular concern about the number of beds for young people that are no longer available. Tenancy Support services reported that they are offering more group work rather than 1:1 support.

Organisations that see homeless people also reported that since the changes have started to come in, they do not know what services exist or what the criteria are for the services that do remain. They said that they do not feel able to offer homeless people good advice about services, when they do not know what is available themselves.

• **Access to affordable accommodation**

Access to affordable accommodation was seen as a major issue in the District. There was general agreement that work needs to be done to open up access to the private rented sector to vulnerable people and people on benefits and about the need to develop more options in shared accommodation for under 35s. The impact of the ending of Social Fund payments for rent in advance is cause for concern.

A number of people commented on the impact of the Homefinder allocations criteria on homeless people. People with former tenant arrears and ex-offenders were highlighted as being excluded from housing with social housing providers through Homefinder.

People at the consultation event raised the issue of empty properties in the District and felt that more should be done to bring them back into occupation.

• **People approach services very late**

Advice services reported that people are approaching them for help at a very late stage and that people were often at the point of eviction or repossession before they came forward.

• **Rough sleeping**

Rough sleeping is seen as a continued challenge for the Homelessness Strategy. Framework has started an outreach service for rough sleepers, based at the Sherwood Street Centre and this is already seen to be delivering positive outcomes for rough sleepers. Services felt that there needs to be a strategic commitment to addressing rough sleeping in the District which should be demonstrated by partners adopting the national No Second Night Out principles in Mansfield.

• **Communication and joint work between services**

Although most people commented on the good partnership work that happens in Mansfield, there was also a view that working relationships were not as strong as they had been in the past. The closure of some services and others changing as a result of tendering has had an impact on working relationships and co-operation. People said that in the past the Inter-Agency Homelessness Forum has taken a strong lead in co-ordinating services and promoting new developments and it was felt that this was less the case now. Improving joint working was seen as key to improving services for people with complex

needs. Non-homelessness organisations said they were finding it difficult to find out what services were available and what they do.

Health

Health services were generally thought to respond well to the needs of homeless people in Mansfield. People welcomed the new Recovery Partnership services for people with drug and alcohol problems and felt that this demonstrated good partnership working. Health services themselves reported difficulties in finding out what services are available for homeless people and how to access them.

Appendix 5

Mansfield and Newark and Sherwood Homelessness Strategies 2013-18

What is the change	What needs to happen	Who will be involved	Who will lead
The MARS scheme model is used to improve access to the Private Rented Sector across Newark and Sherwood	We will continue to work together to develop the MARS scheme in Newark and Sherwood (initially for families in the first pilot year).	MDC NSDC Landlords	MDC
Money mentoring schemes are established in Mansfield and Newark and Sherwood to help people to manage their finances and avoid debt	We will work together to develop the model locally and draw up a specification We will look at the possibility of joint commissioning a scheme	MDC NSDC Advice agencies	NSDC
Services for vulnerable people are better co-ordinated within and across Districts	We will explore the possibility of introducing the Patchwork scheme across the two districts and further using the First Contact Signposting Scheme.	MDC NSDC Service providers	MDC

People are able to access Council services across District boundaries	We will develop protocols so that people who live on the boundaries between the two Districts are able to access information and advice at their nearest Council office	MDC NSDC	NSDC
Out-of-hours services are effective and efficient	We will look at possibilities for sharing an out of hours homelessness service	MDC NSDC	NSDC

Meeting your needs

We can provide this information in larger print, in Braille, on audio tape, on CD or in another language. Please contact the Marketing and Communications team for more information on:

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Minicom: **01623 463 444**, or

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