

Housing Board – 2nd December 2022

2021-22 Overview of Homelessness Across Peterborough, Cambridgeshire & West Suffolk

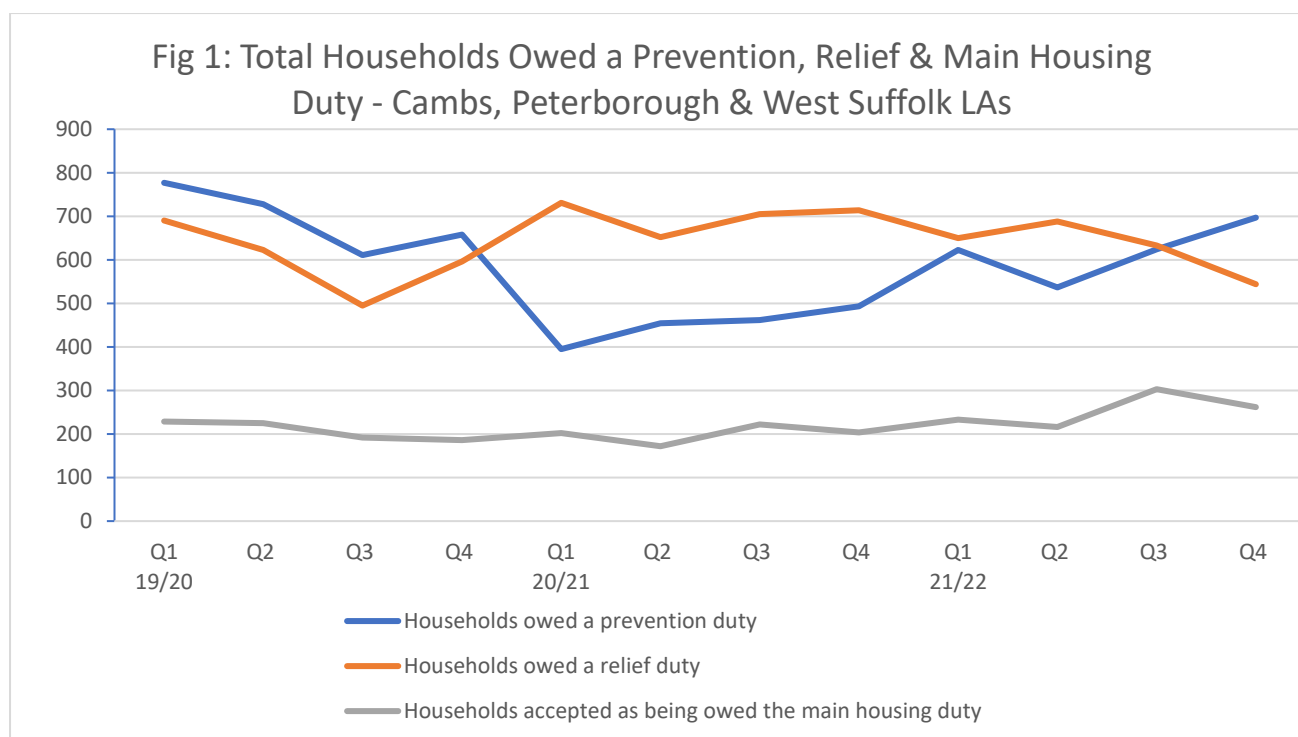
Throughout 2021-22 local authorities continued to respond to the pandemic following on from the Everyone In initiative which brought rough sleepers in off the streets the previous year. Further steps were introduced by the Government from December 2021 with another programme to help rough sleepers, called Protect & Vaccinate, being introduced as the omicron variant of Covid began to take a grip. The aim throughout this period was to ensure that rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping were protected and offered suitable emergency housing to help minimise the risk from the virus.

Although the moratorium on Court possession actions put in place during the earlier stages of lockdown in 2020 were lifted in September of that year, notice periods required of landlords to tenants when seeking possession of a residential property were increased between June 2021 and September 2021, to being at least four months except in the most serious cases. From 1 October 2021, all notice periods returned to the pre-pandemic position. Bailiff enforcement of evictions had been prevented throughout 2020-21 and this continued until the end of May in 2021.

Court rules for possession action continued to require landlords to consider how their tenant had been affected by the pandemic, particularly in cases of rent arrears, with judges able to adjourn proceedings where this information was not provided.

Overall across the local authorities within the sub region:

1. 2,481 households were threatened with homelessness and owed a prevention duty in 2021-22. This was a 38% increase over the position the previous year when measures had been put in place by Government to prevent homelessness during the pandemic. The figure for England as a whole only saw an 11% increase.
In terms of how this compared to the pre-pandemic picture, within the sub region and nationally in England the figure was still 11% below 2019-20. This indicated that the measures put in place during the pandemic to prevent homelessness were still having some effect throughout 2021-22.
2. The number of relief duties accepted by local authorities had increased in the previous year (2020-21) as a result of the higher number of rough sleepers that had engaged with councils and been accommodated under the Everyone In initiative during the early stages of the pandemic. In 2021-22 as we saw fewer rough sleepers being accommodated compared the previous year, 2,515 households were homeless and owed a relief duty in, down 10% from the 2,802 households in 2020-21. The national figure saw a 4% reduction over the same period.
The 2021-22 number did however remain 5% above pre-pandemic levels, with the national picture remaining 3% higher than pre-pandemic levels.



As shown in Figure 1, from July 2021 the number of households owed a prevention duty began to increase after periods of lockdown throughout 2020-21.

In contrast, the number of households owed a relief duty began to decrease from July 2021.

The number of households owed the 'main' housing duty (after all prevention and relief options have been exhausted) saw an increase from July 2021 although this number reduced in the final quarter of the financial year.

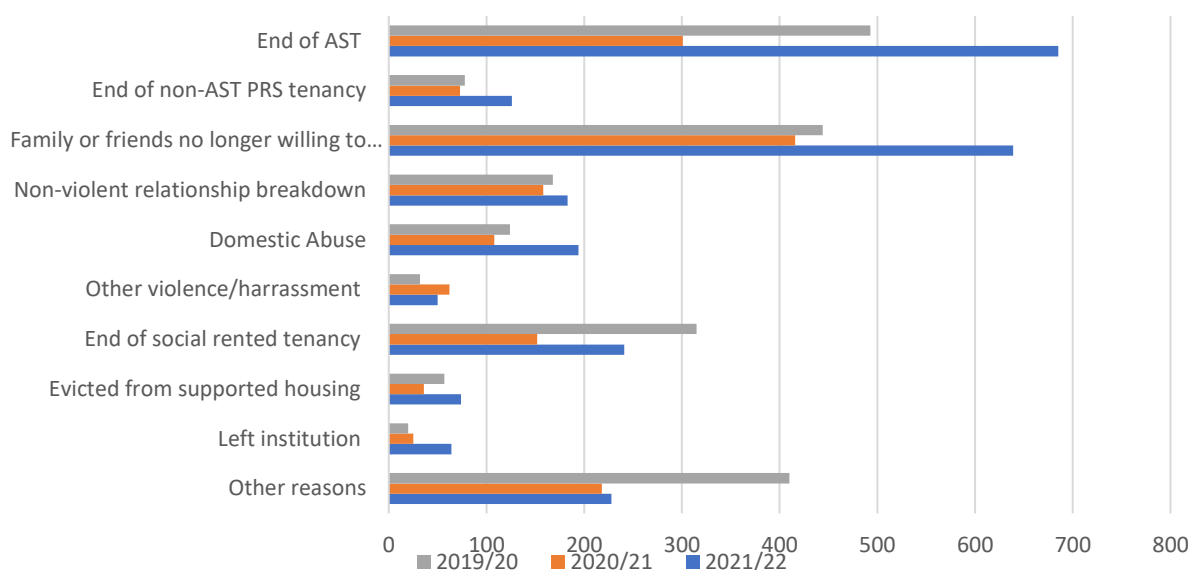
The reasons for homelessness are explored in more detail later in this paper.

Causes of Homelessness.

The reason for loss of last settled home is a good indication of the cause of homelessness for households assessed as being owed a duty.

All but one of the reasons for homelessness shown in figure 2 above saw an increase in 2021-22 over the previous year. Unsurprisingly large increases were seen with the threat of homelessness in the private and social rented sector where possession action had been suspended the previous year. Large increases were also seen where homelessness was as a result of a breakdown in relations with family & friends, as well as in cases of domestic abuse.

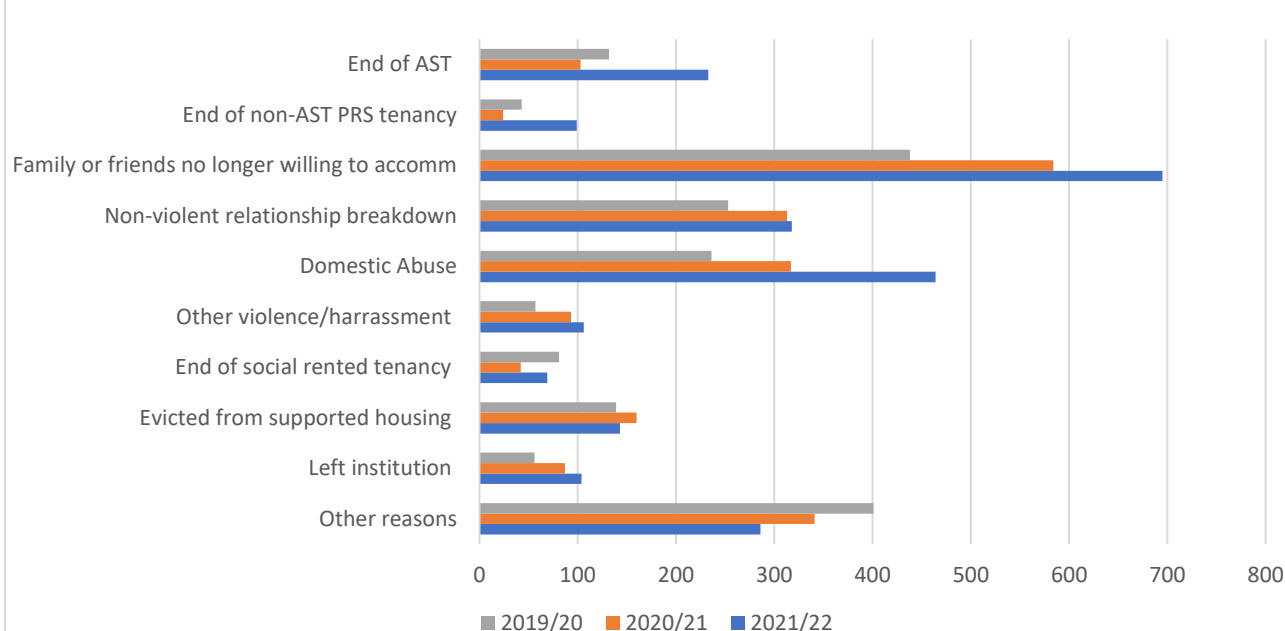
Fig 2: Reason for loss of last settled home - Prevention duty



In summary:

- Family or friends no longer willing to accommodate – a 54% increase on the previous year, and a 44% increase on the pre-pandemic level.
- End of Assured Shorthold Tenancy in the private rented sector - a 128% increase on the previous year, and a 39% increase on the pre-pandemic level.
- End of social rented tenancy – a 59% increase on the previous year, although this was still 23% below the pre-pandemic level.
- Domestic abuse - an 80% increase on the previous year, and a 56% increase on the pre-pandemic level.

Fig 3: Reason for loss of last settled home - Relief duty



A relief duty is triggered where the household approaches the local authority at the point of actual homelessness. The most common reason for homelessness at this stage was due to family or friends being

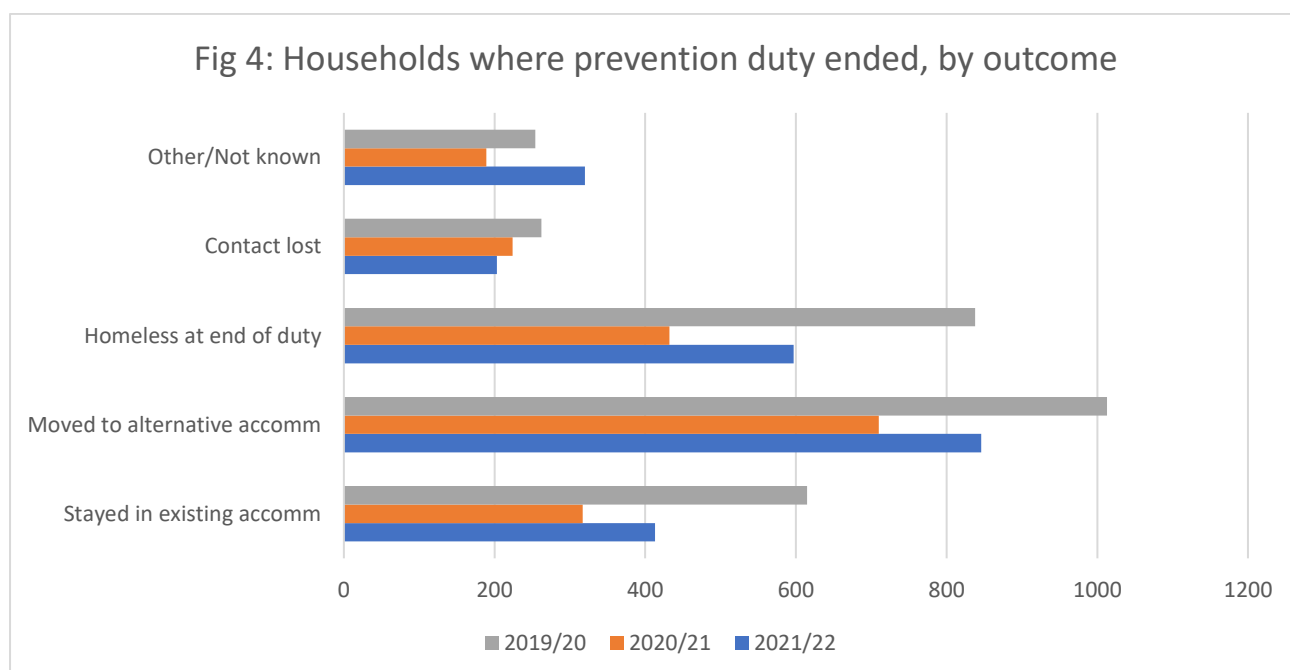
no longer willing to accommodate. This was the situation with 694 households or 28% of all households that were owed a relief duty. This is a 19% increase from the previous year and 59% higher than pre-pandemic levels.

Other notable trends include a large increase in instances of homelessness as a result of domestic abuse, showing a 46% increase on the previous year and a 97% increase on pre-pandemic levels. Domestic abuse accounted for 18% of all homelessness at the relief duty stage.

Also of particular note is that local authorities are accepting more instances of homelessness at the relief duty stage as opposed to at the prevention duty stage. The policy thrust of the Homelessness Reduction Act was that earlier intervention should take place at the prevention stage as opposed to dealing with a crisis situation when homelessness occurs. Although 2020-21 saw more 'approaches' at the relief stage, partly skewed by the number of rough sleepers assisted under Everyone In, 2021-22 also saw a higher number of applications taken at the relief stage compared to earlier prevention (2515 cases compared to 2481). The Sub regional Homelessness Group will look further into the detail of why this is the case.

Outcomes at the Prevention Duty Stage

The homelessness legislation requires local authorities to take reasonable steps to try to prevent or relieve a household's homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation for at least 6 months. These duties usually last 56 days each. The reasons for duties ending indicate the likely outcomes for these applicants.

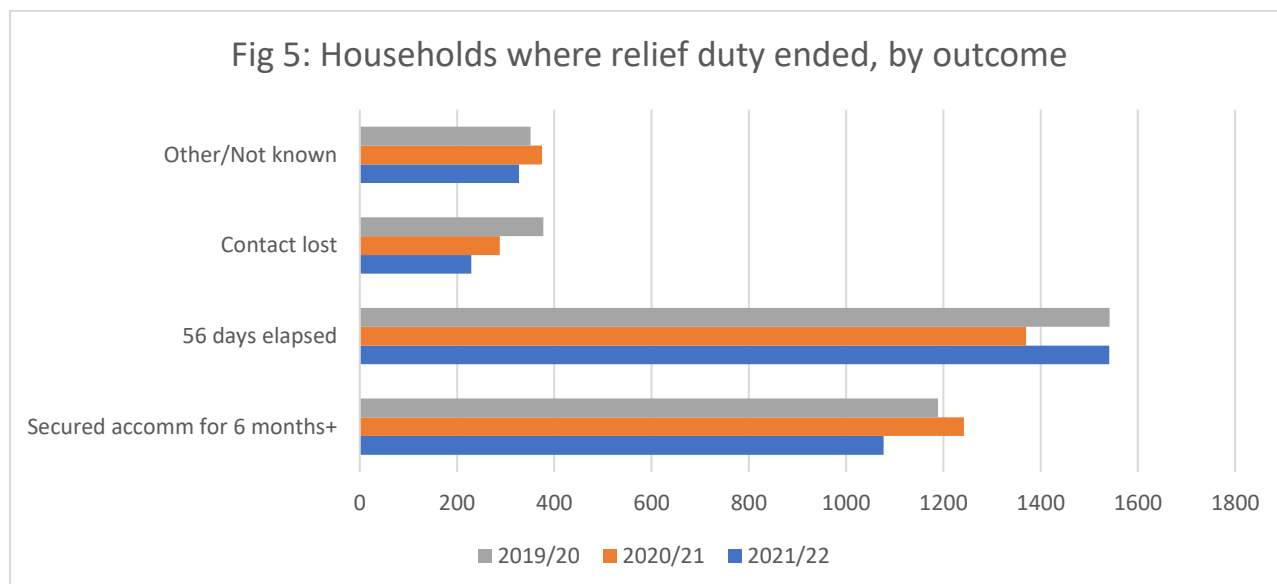


The number of prevention duties that ended increased by 27% on the previous year but remained below the pre-pandemic levels. The majority of households whose prevention duty ended was as a result of a successful prevention where accommodation was secured for 6 months or more (53% of cases had this successful outcome). This compares to 57% of outcomes being successful at this stage pre-pandemic.

Of those who secured accommodation 33% secured their existing accommodation, whilst 67% moved to alternative accommodation.

Of all households where a prevention duty ended, 25% became homeless, and were therefore owed a relief duty. This remained comparable to the previous year where in 28% of cases the household became homeless.

Outcomes at the Relief Duty Stage

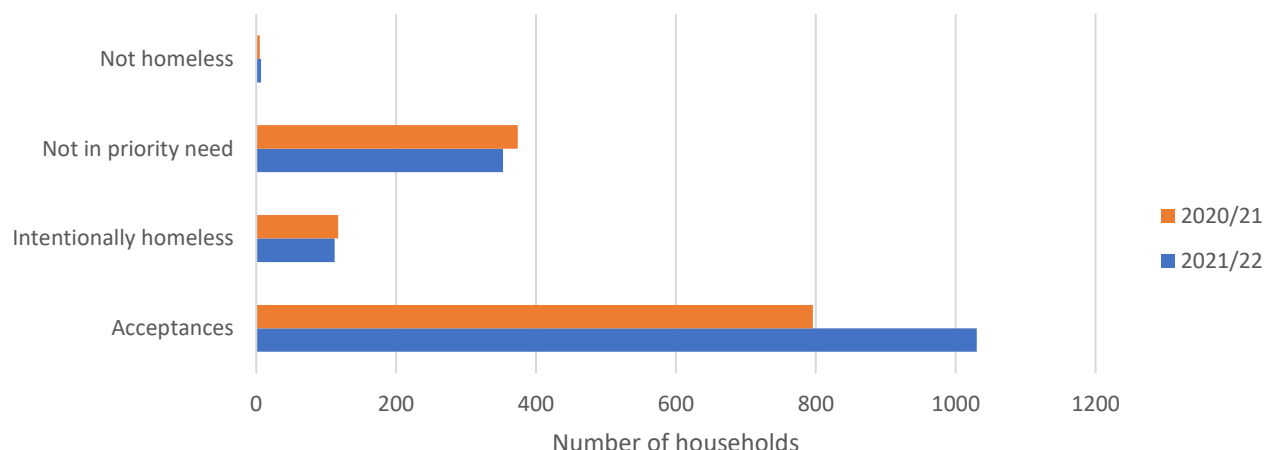


When the relief duty was brought to an end in 2021-22, in 34% of cases this was due to a successful outcome where accommodation had been secured for 6 months or more (compared to 38% in the previous year). However, in 49% of cases homelessness had not been resolved and at this point the local authority would move on to assess whether the main housing duty was owed to the household. This was an increase on the 42% of cases that moved on to be assessed at the main duty stage in the previous year.

Decisions at the Main Housing Duty Stage.

Across all the local authorities in 2021-22, there were a total of 1541 cases where homelessness was not resolved at the relief duty stage. Of this number, 1030 (or 69%) were subsequently assessed as being owed the main housing duty, with a commitment to help secure longer-term housing. This compared to 58% of cases the previous year.

Fig 6: Decisions at Main Duty Stage of Homelessness



Household Types Owed Prevention & Relief Duties.

Figures 7 & 8 below show the make up of households where a prevention or relief duty was accepted in 2021-22 (also shown broken down by local authority area).

At the prevention duty stage we can see that the two largest household types are single men (31% of all cases) and single parents with a dependant child (26%).

At the relief duty stage single men are largest household type approaching for housing assistance, this being 47% of all cases. This is more than double the next largest household types - single female (21%) and single parent (22%) households.

Fig 7: 2021/22: Household type owed a prevention duty

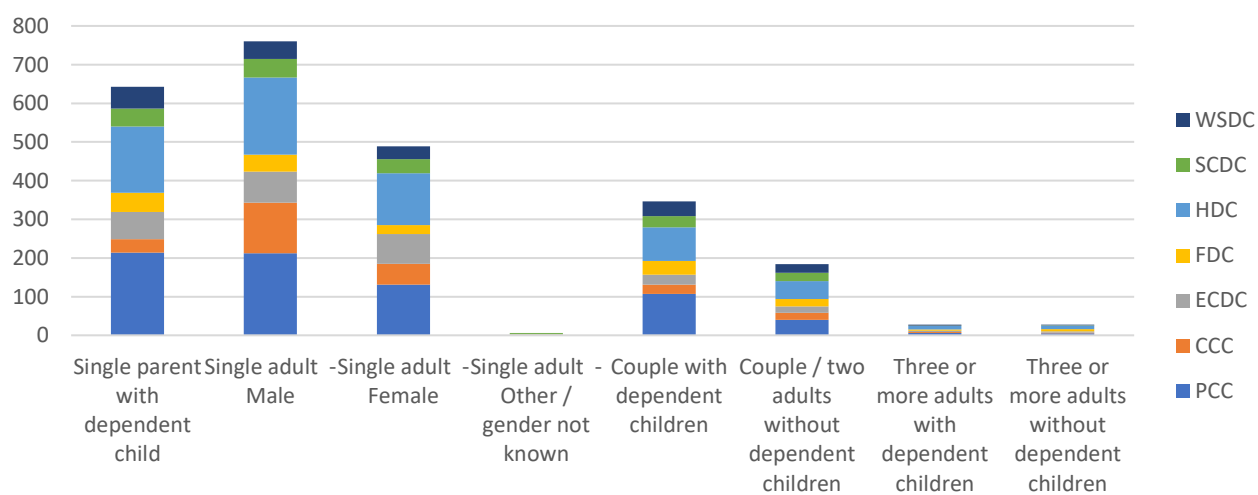
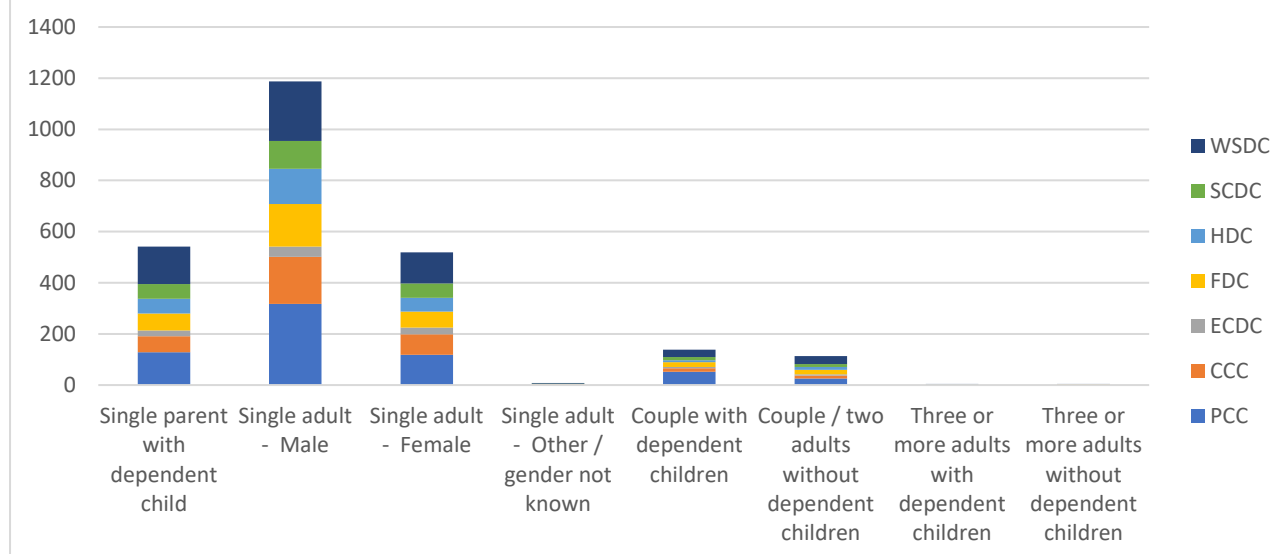


Fig 8: 2021/22: Household type of households owed a relief duty

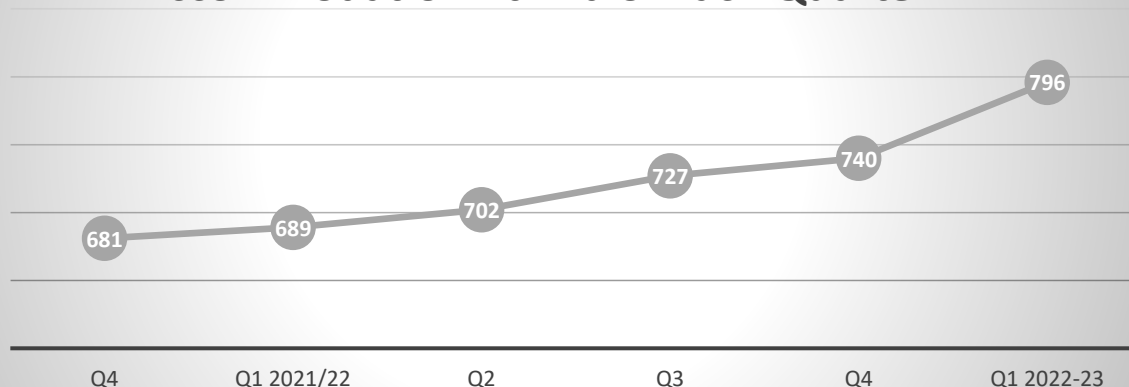


Households in Temporary Accommodation.

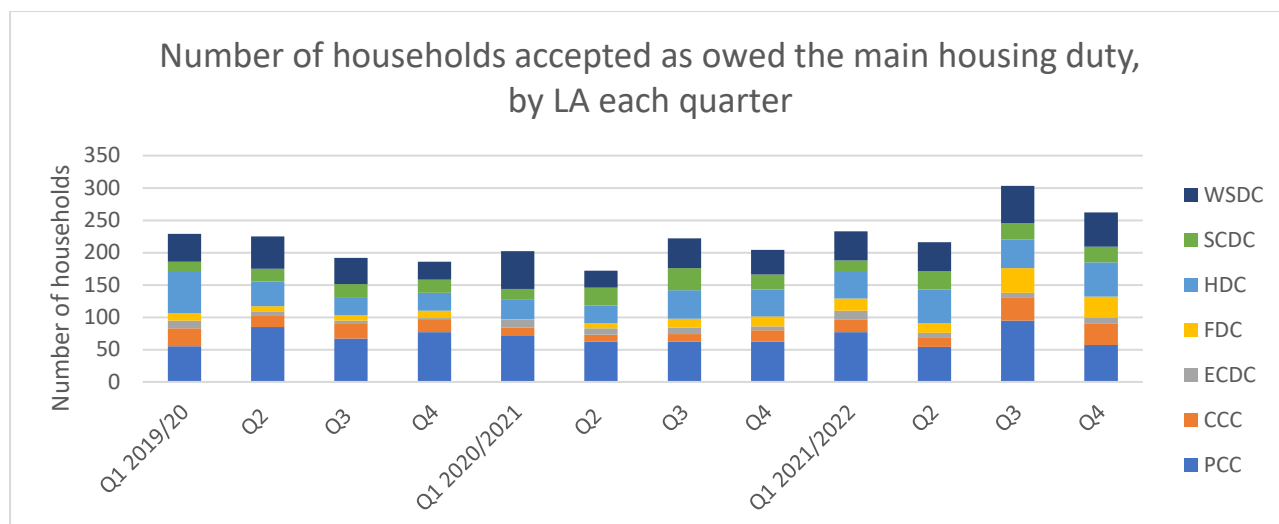
The number of households accommodated by LAs under a homelessness duty saw a steady increase throughout 2021-22, rising from 681 households at the end March 2021 to 740 households at the end of March 2022.

Although DLUHC have not yet officially published the figure for the end of June 2022, the figure has now risen to 796 households.

Total Number of Households In Temporary Accommodation At End of Each Quarter



The number of households being placed in temporary accommodation is affected by several factors. These include what proportion of those owed a relief duty are also owed a duty to provide emergency accommodation and how many households are subsequently owed the main housing duty. As the graph below shows, quarter 3 & 4 saw an increase in the number of households owed the main housing duty.



A further important factor is the ability of councils to make an offer of settled housing so that lengths of stay in temporary accommodation are kept to a minimum. Where this is not possible then 'blockages' in temporary accommodation may occur with households stays increasing and the total number growing. The movement of households through temporary accommodation is therefore vital.