

West Suffolk Council Homelessness Review

The purpose of this data and analysis is to support the development of the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping elements of this strategy. It is intended to determine the extent to which people in West Suffolk are homeless or at risk of homelessness, assess the likely extent of homelessness in the future, identify what is being done and by whom, and identify what resources are available, to prevent and tackle homelessness.

Data and information is provided under the following sections:

1. Outcomes of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 to 2023
2. Homelessness in West Suffolk
3. External factors influencing levels of homelessness and rough sleeping
4. Existing temporary accommodation
5. Reviewing activities carried out and resources required

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1. Outcomes of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 to 2023

1.1 The 2018 to 2023 strategy focused on the following five priority areas:

Priority one: Homelessness prevention

Priority two: Tackling rough sleeping

Priority three: Supporting vulnerable households

Priority four: Increasing accommodation options

Priority five: Supporting the implementation of welfare reform

1.2 Significant **progress** has been made against the previous Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy Delivery Plan and the key activities are listed below:

- a. Providing support with a focus on preventing and relieving homelessness to ensure that more people are able to maintain and secure a settled home. In West Suffolk (2023 to 2024), 49.0 per cent of those owed a duty had a successful prevention duty outcome (compared to 51 per cent across England) and 26.1 per cent had a successful relief duty outcome (compared to 32.1 per cent across England).
- b. In West Suffolk (2023 to 2024), 29.1 per cent of the successful prevention duty outcomes resulted in households staying in their existing accommodation (compared to 34.6 per cent across England).
- c. The number of rough sleepers across West Suffolk in the autumn 2023 rough sleeper snapshot was eight.
- d. Contributing to the development of the system wide approach to rough sleeping with a focus on prevention that is being led by the Suffolk Housing Board.
- e. West Suffolk was awarded £453,359 Rough Sleeper Initiative funding in 2020 to 2021 (as part of a joint bid with Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils) and £1,316,852 for 2022 to 2025 (in West Suffolk only) and this included additional funding in 2023 to provide rough sleeper beds and support staff on top of the existing provision.
- f. Providing effective advice, preventative and information services which has resulted in high homelessness prevention and relief rates and accommodating 196 individuals through the 'everyone in', the government initiative to ensure rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness were provided with accommodation during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, and
- g. As part of the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) (funding announced in response to the pandemic) £634,099 of capital and revenue funding has been granted to West Suffolk with additional funding of £131,220 to continue the support of this provision until March 2025. This has provided 14 units of accommodation for former rough sleepers.

- h. Alongside this NSAP funding, West Suffolk has received a further £30,000 funding from the former West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group to provide personalised care that will be delivered by the Marginalised and Vulnerable Adults (MVA) service. We are seeing positive outcomes from this innovative new way of providing personalised and coordinated health provision such as clients engaging with, and recognising the benefits of support, effective delivery of healthcare and communication between all agencies to provide a joined up approach.
- i. Working closely with colleagues across Suffolk to support residents who are at risk of homelessness due to the increased cost of living and those impacted by fuel poverty.
- j. Implementing pathways for tackling homelessness, identifying risks early and promoting self-help and resilience and working with partners to provide services with the aim of breaking the cycle of homelessness.
- k. Increasing accommodation options for vulnerable households including those who have experienced domestic abuse specifically two accessible bungalows in Brandon, 11 ring-fenced rough sleeper accommodation units and with Suffolk County Council purchased two units of accommodation for those with high support need.
- l. Purchased two units of temporary accommodation, repurposed two units and refurbished two units.
- m. £1,426,858 Local Authority Housing Funding to deliver ten units of accommodation in partnership with local registered providers for the resettlement of Afghans, Ukrainians and for general needs use.
- n. Responding to new requirements around the Domestic Abuse Act. West Suffolk has been allocated funding to provide a domestic abuse link worker and satellite provision.
- o. Ensured earlier identification of homeless applications with high support needs for example affordability concerns, homelessness and domestic abuse. Supporting residents through the cost of living crisis.
- p. Successfully advertised and shortlisted a high number of new build developments and supported the onboarding of new registered providers to the Cambridge Sub-region partnership to provide a smooth allocations process.
- q. Supported landlords to ensure properties are in a habitable and safe condition which has been achieved through engaging with the Safer Suffolk Renters project.
- r. As at January 2024, the total number of properties under the Guaranteed Rent Scheme was 107, the total number of properties under the Rent Deposit Scheme was 146.

- s. From January 2023, the total number of residents moved from temporary accommodation to private rented accommodation was 23.
- 1.3 West Suffolk Council continues to face some **challenges** in achieving the priorities set out in the current Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy Delivery Plan. A number of these are outside of our direct control but we continue to liaise with and influence our partners. We are working to address challenges in the following areas:
- a. working with registered providers and the voluntary sector to increase access to accommodation including lodging schemes, shared accommodation, temporary accommodation and tenancies to support move on; and
 - b. accessing accommodation options through private sector landlords in a competitive market. However, the team has been actively seeking opportunities to work with local landlords and estate agents about incentives with the aim of increasing the number of properties to meet demand in the local area. Despite the challenges, between January 2021 and October 2023, 87 new landlords started working with the West Suffolk Lettings Partnership and 145 properties were obtained.

2. Homelessness in West Suffolk

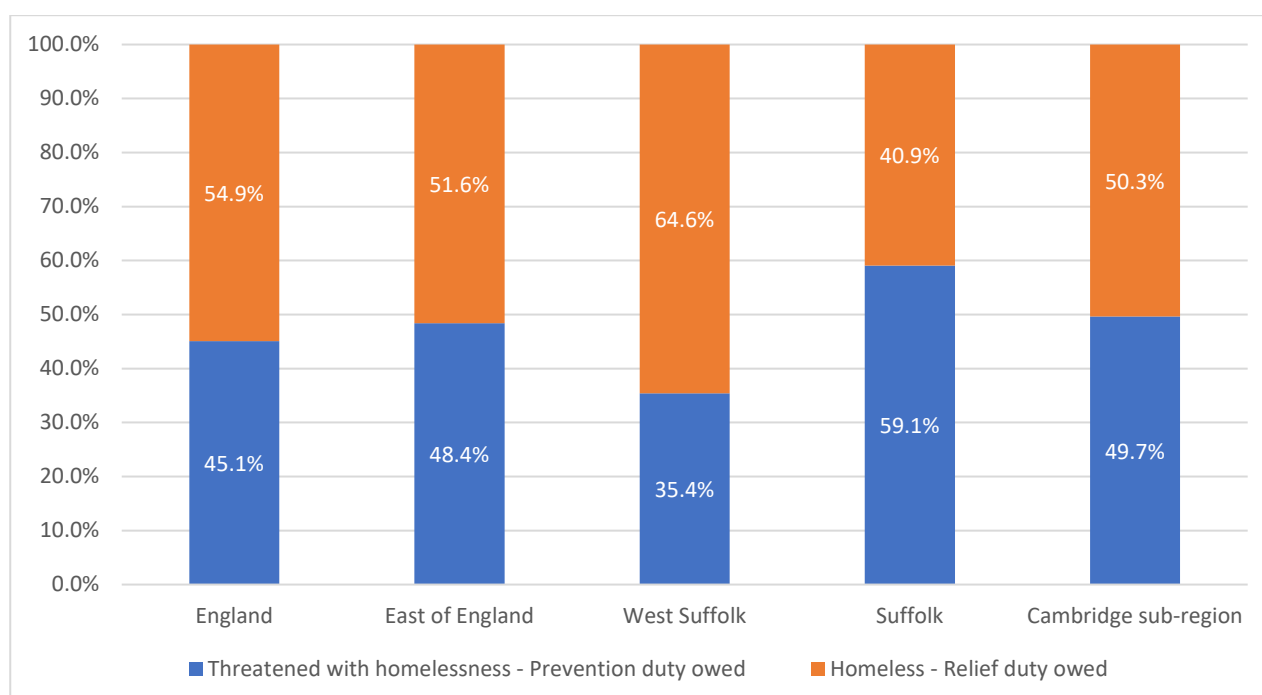
Current levels of homelessness

- 2.1 The following table shows the number of homeless assessments completed due to the applicant being homeless or at risk of homelessness. This has been relatively steady across the past five years and demand for the service remains high though anecdotally the main impact over recent years has been the complexity of cases.
- 2.2 Under the Homeless Reduction Act there are two stages to prevention, the first being 'prevention' prior to the applicant leaving the accommodation they are to become homeless from, and the second being 'relief', where homelessness is resolved after they have become homeless, but prior to a main duty decision being decided. Statistics are recorded at each stage.
- 2.3 Our aim is to see most clients at prevention stage, as the earlier we see them the more chance we have of being able to resolve their homelessness. **However, in the more recent years we have seen a shift towards more people seeking assistance when they are already homeless (relief stage).** This reflects the impact of Covid, where people have been unable to make or extend any temporary arrangements and needed emergency assistance.

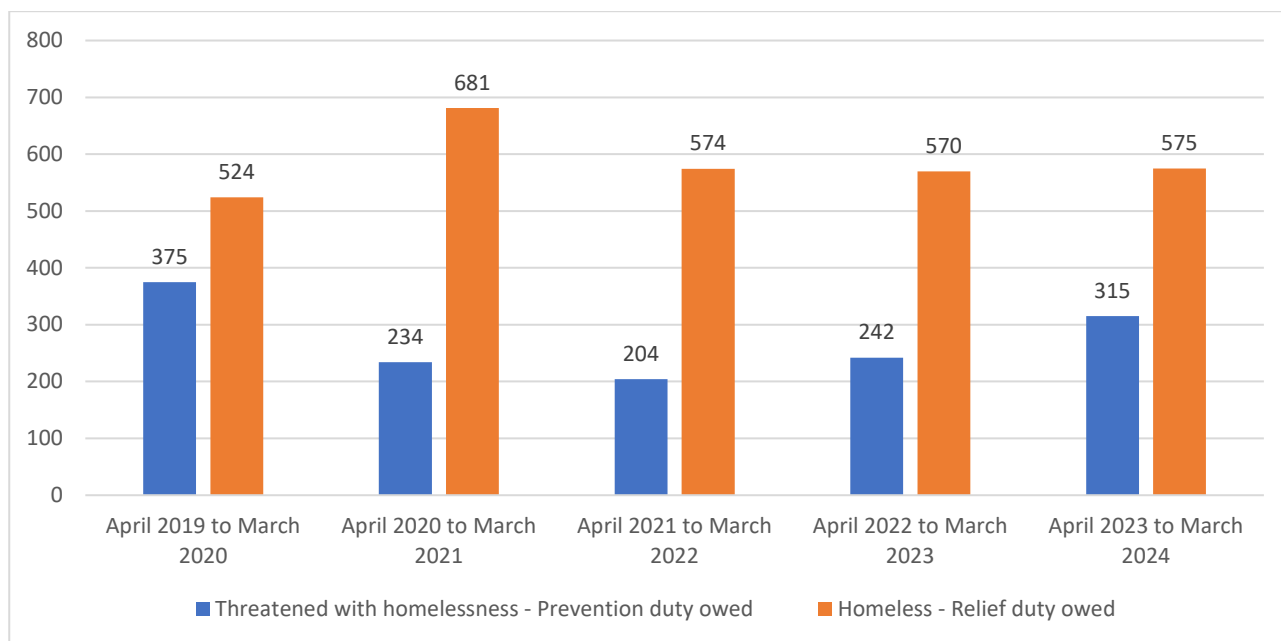
Table 1: Households assessed and duty owed – 2023 to 2024

Households assessed and duty owed: April 2023 to March 2024	England (per cent)	East of England (per cent)	West Suffolk (per cent)	Suffolk (per cent)	Cambridge sub-region (per cent)
Threatened with homelessness - Prevention duty owed	43.1%	44.5%	34.8%	54.9%	46.8%
Homeless - Relief duty owed	52.6%	47.5%	63.5%	38.0%	47.5%
Not homeless	4.3%	8.0%	1.7%	7.1%	5.7%

2.4 When we compare the figures for 2023 to 2024, with the exception of Suffolk, all areas see more relief duty owed than prevention). **West Suffolk has a significantly larger proportion of relief duties owed – this has been the case since April 2019.**

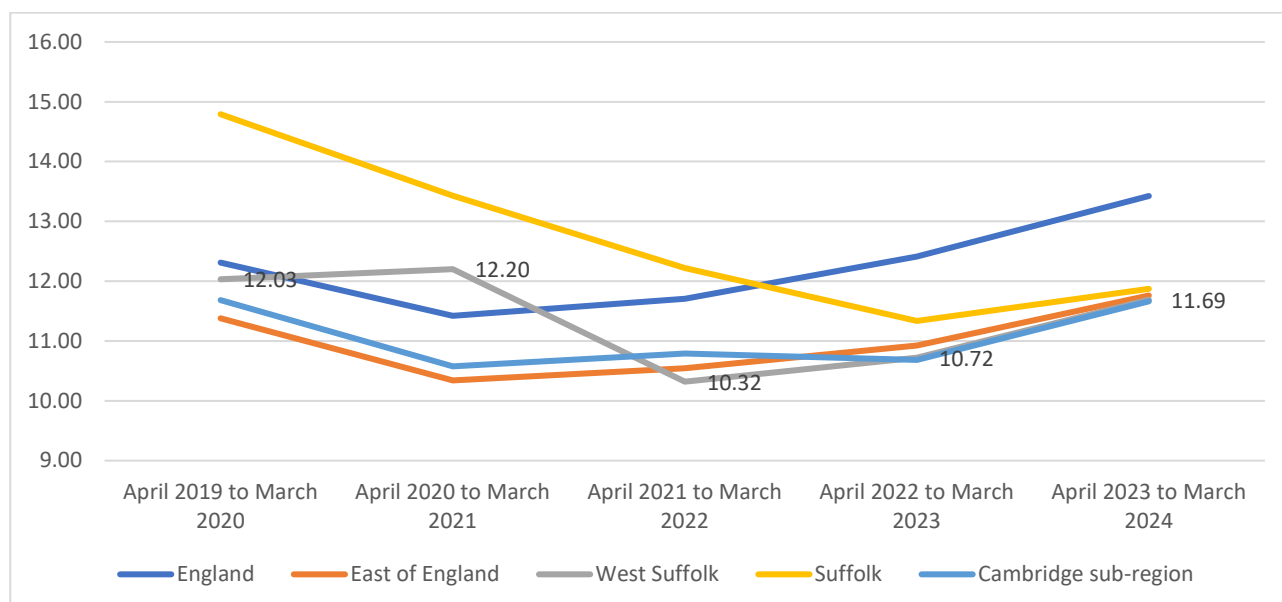
Graph 1: Percentage of households assessed and duty owed – 2023 to 2024

Graph 2: Initial assessment: Households assessed and owed a duty – West Suffolk



Comparison over time – rates

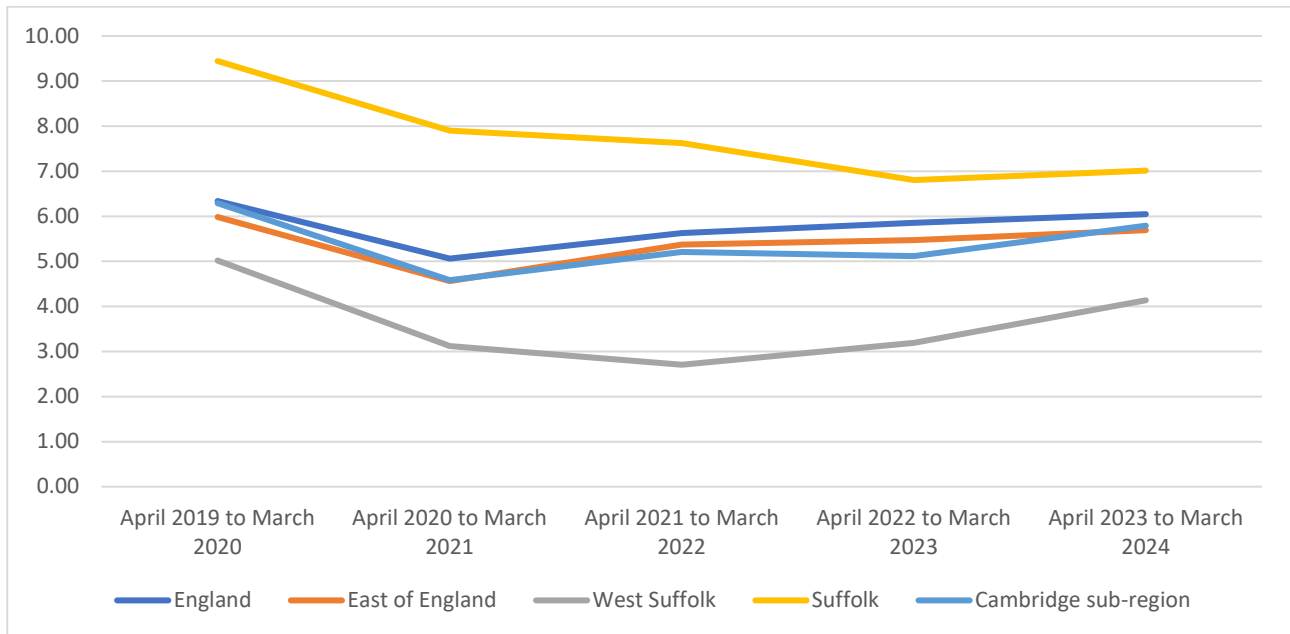
Graph 3: Households assessed and duty owed (prevention and relief): rate per 1,000 households



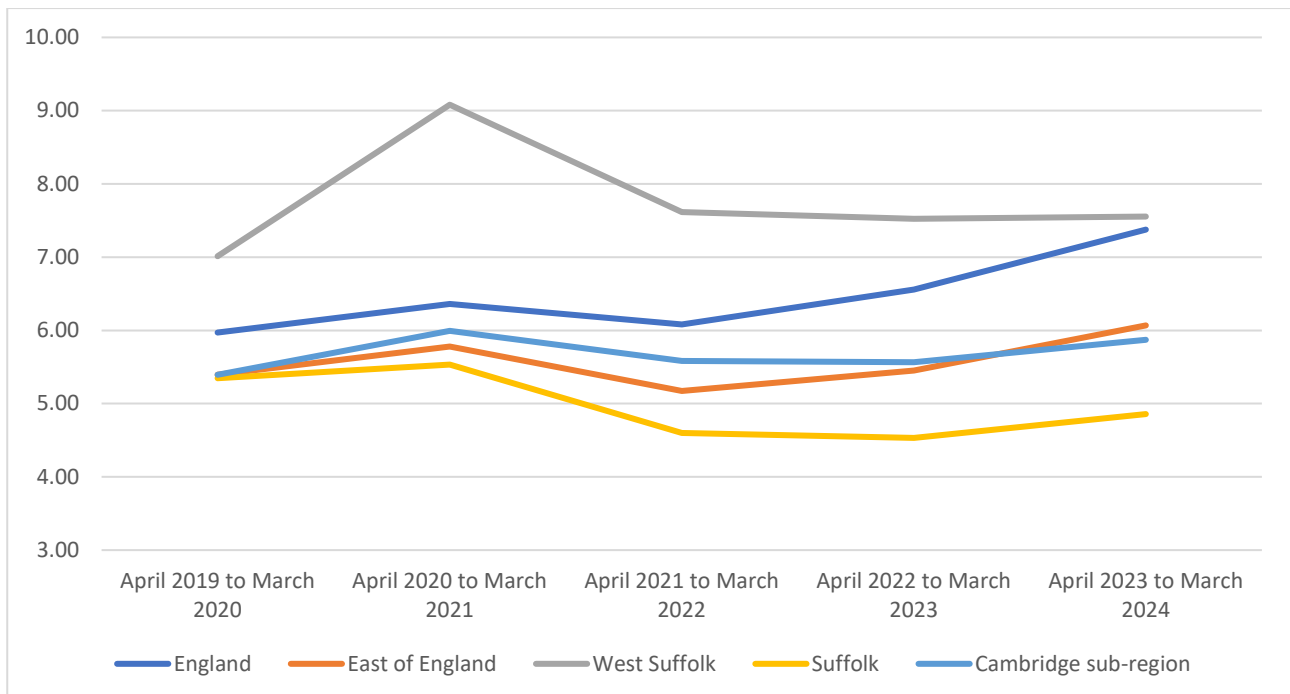
Over the last five years the rate of households assessed and owed a duty has fallen for Suffolk and West Suffolk. West Suffolk now has one of the lowest rates of households owed a duty having had the highest rate in 2018 to 2019, however we are now seeing an increase.

However West Suffolk does consistently have the highest rate of relief duty owed, although the lowest rate of prevention duty owed.

Graph 4: Households threatened with homelessness – prevention duty owed: rate per 1,000 households.



Graph 5: Households threatened with homelessness – relief duty owed: rate per 1,000 households



Reason for loss of last settled accommodation

The following tables and graphs show the main causes of homelessness at the prevention stage and the relief stage.

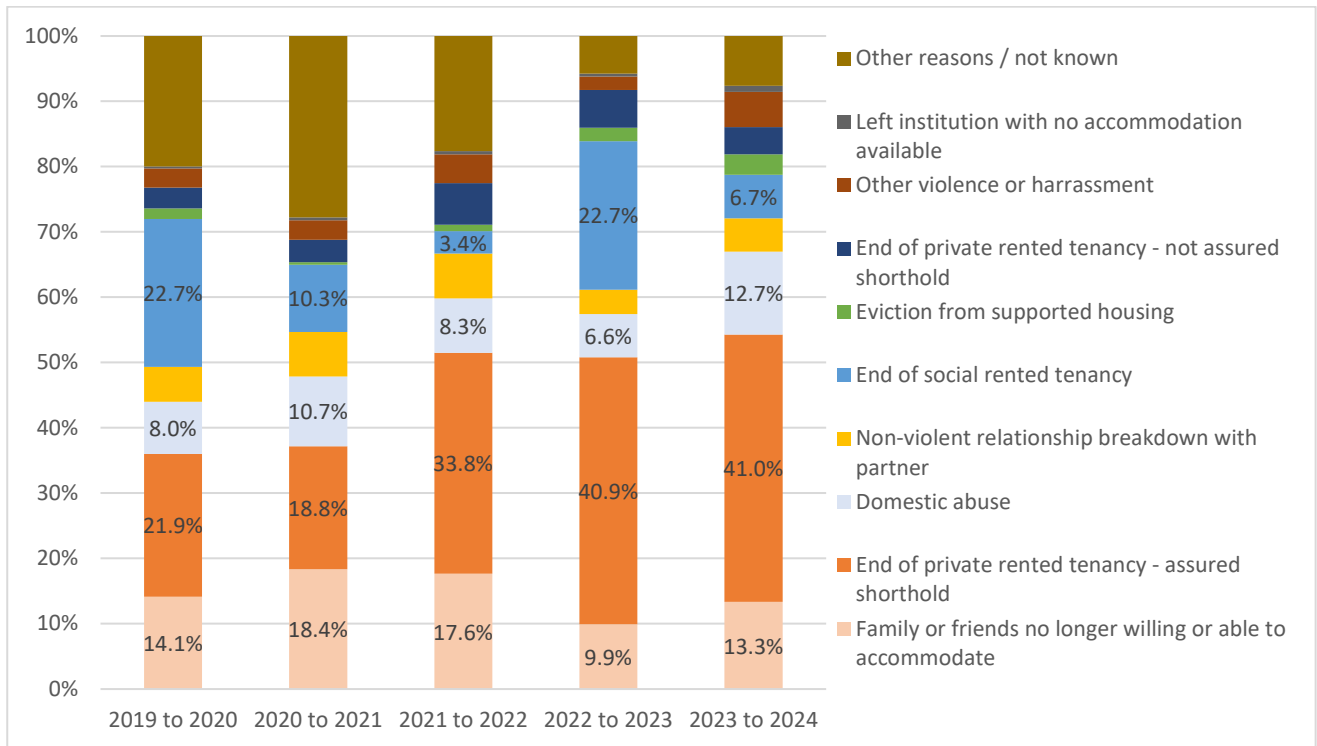
At the prevention stage the main cause is loss of an assured shorthold tenancy followed by domestic abuse which has increased, then family or friends no longer being able to accommodate.

At the relief stage, where clients are coming into us with more urgent housing needs the highest causes of homelessness is family and friends no longer being able to accommodate and domestic abuse both of which have increased over recent years. Again, this reflects the impact of the Covid pandemic and an increase in family breakdown.

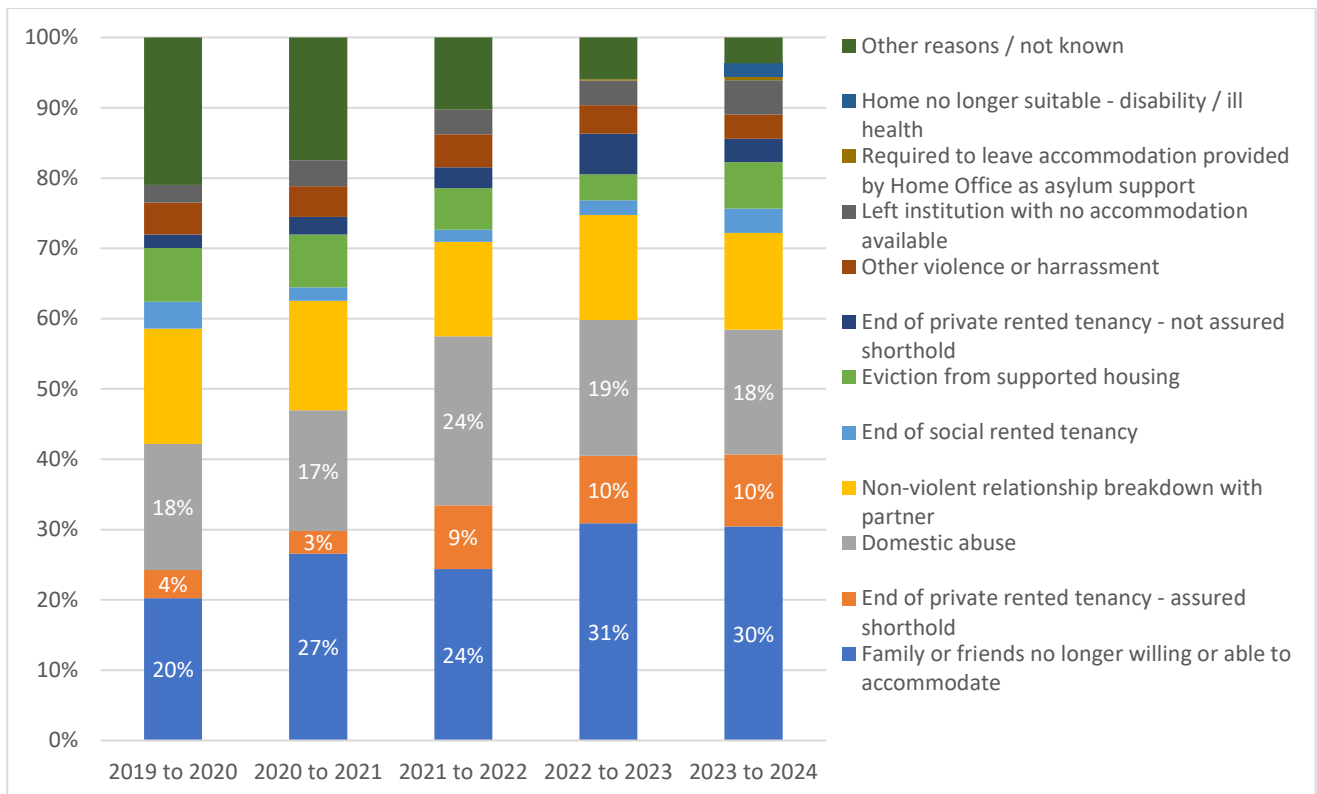
Table 2: Reason for loss of last settled home - West Suffolk

Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a relief duty:	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	106	181	140	176	175
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	21	22	52	55	59
Domestic abuse	94	117	138	110	102
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	86	106	77	85	79
End of social rented tenancy	20	13	10	12	20
Eviction from supported housing	40	51	34	21	38
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	10	17	17	33	19
Other violence or harassment	24	30	27	23	20
Left institution with no accommodation available	13	25	20	20	28
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0	0	0	1	3
Home no longer suitable - disability or ill health	-	-	-	-	11
Other reasons or not known	110	119	59	34	21

Graph 6: Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a prevention duty – West Suffolk



Graph 7: Reason for loss of last settle home for households owed a relief duty – West Suffolk



If we look at the figures for West Suffolk prevention and relief duties accepted during 2023 to 2024, we can see that, 'family and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate' is the highest reason for homelessness at relief stage followed by 'Domestic abuse' and 'Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner'. At the prevention stage, the 'End of AST' is the highest reason, followed by 'family and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate' and 'Domestic abuse'.

Table 3: Top three reasons for loss of last settled home – 2023 to 2024

AST – Assured shorthold tenancy

SRT - End of social rented tenancy

Area	Reason	Prevention per cent	Relief per cent
England	1	End of AST 39%	Family or friends 30%
	2	Family or friends 23%	Domestic abuse 16%
	3	Domestic abuse 7%	End of AST 12%
East of England	1	End of AST 39%	Family or friends 29%
	2	Family or friends 25%	Domestic abuse 18%
	3	Domestic abuse 7%	End of AST 12%
West Suffolk	1	End of AST 41%	Family or friends 30%
	2	Family or friends 13%	Domestic abuse 18%
	3	Domestic abuse 13%	Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner 14%
Suffolk	1	End of AST 36%	Family or friends 29%
	2	Family or friends 21%	Domestic abuse 17%
	3	End of social rented tenancy 9%	Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner 13%
Cambridge sub-region	1	End of AST 31%	Family or friends 27%
	2	Family or friends 23%	Domestic abuse 20%
	3	End of social rented tenancy 12%	Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner 11%

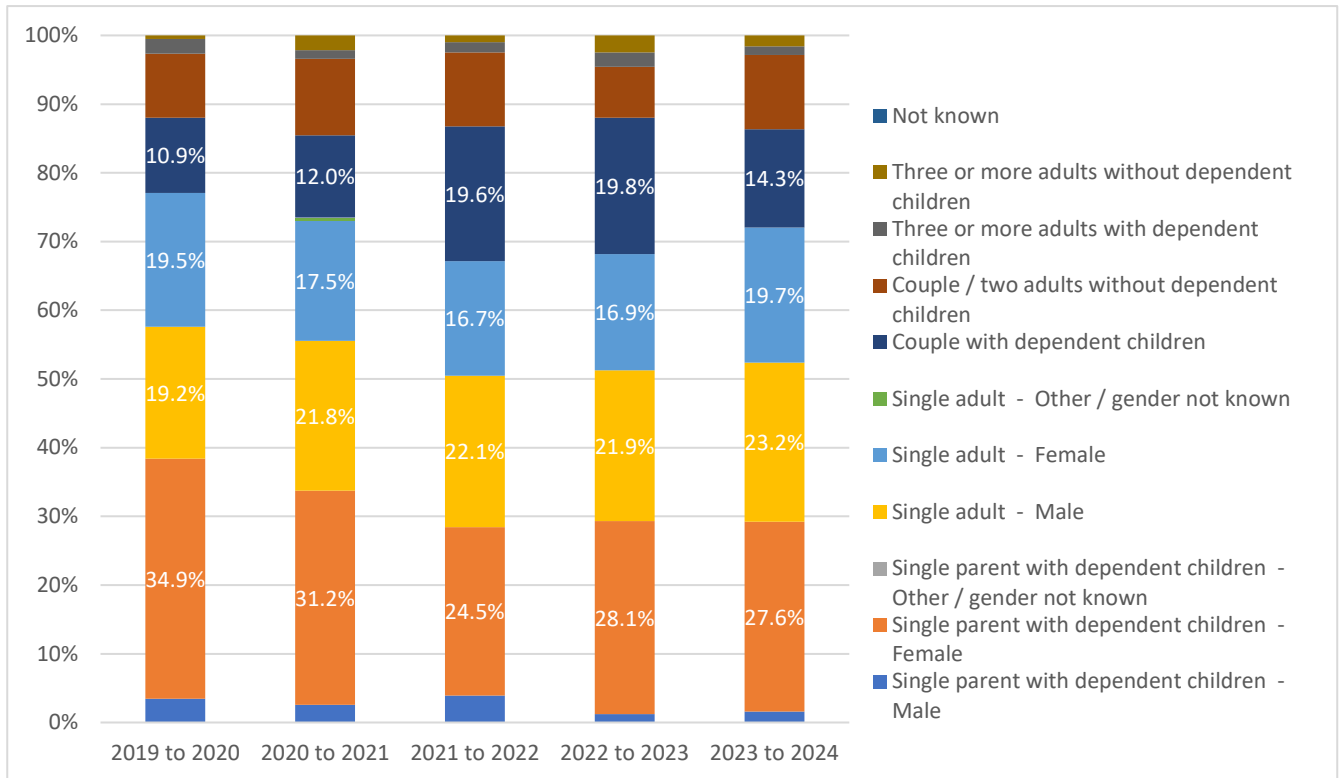
Household type

In the following graphs we can see that the family compositions are different in terms of those who contact us at the earlier stage of prevention and those who approach us at an emergency stage.

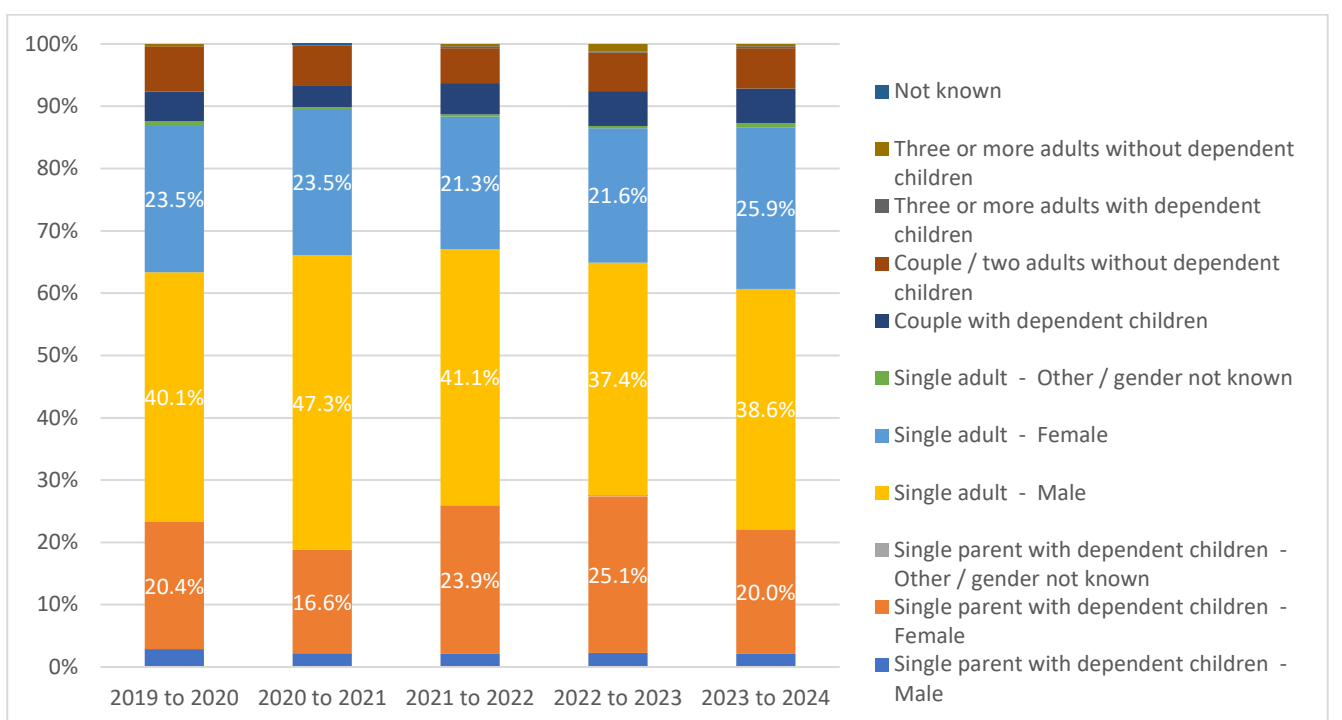
Single people are more represented at the relief stage (single men 38.6 per cent, single female parent with dependent children 20 per cent, single women 25.9 per cent) possibly reflecting more insecure living arrangements, where notice is either not required or very short term.

These groups also show high representation at the prevention stage along with couples with dependent children (single female parent with dependent children 27.6 per cent, single men 23.2 per cent, couple with dependent children 14.3 this has reduced from 20 per cent, and single female 19.7 per cent).

Graph 8: Type of household owed a prevention duty – West Suffolk



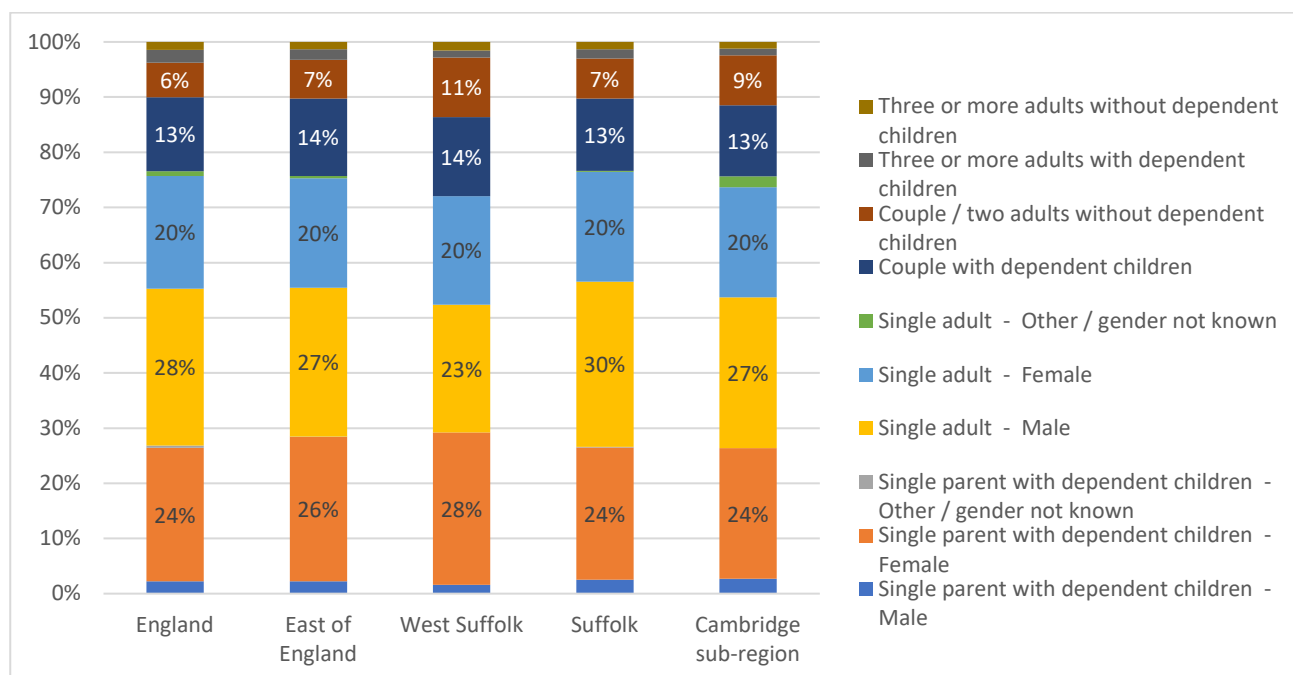
Graph 9: Type of household owed a relief duty – West Suffolk



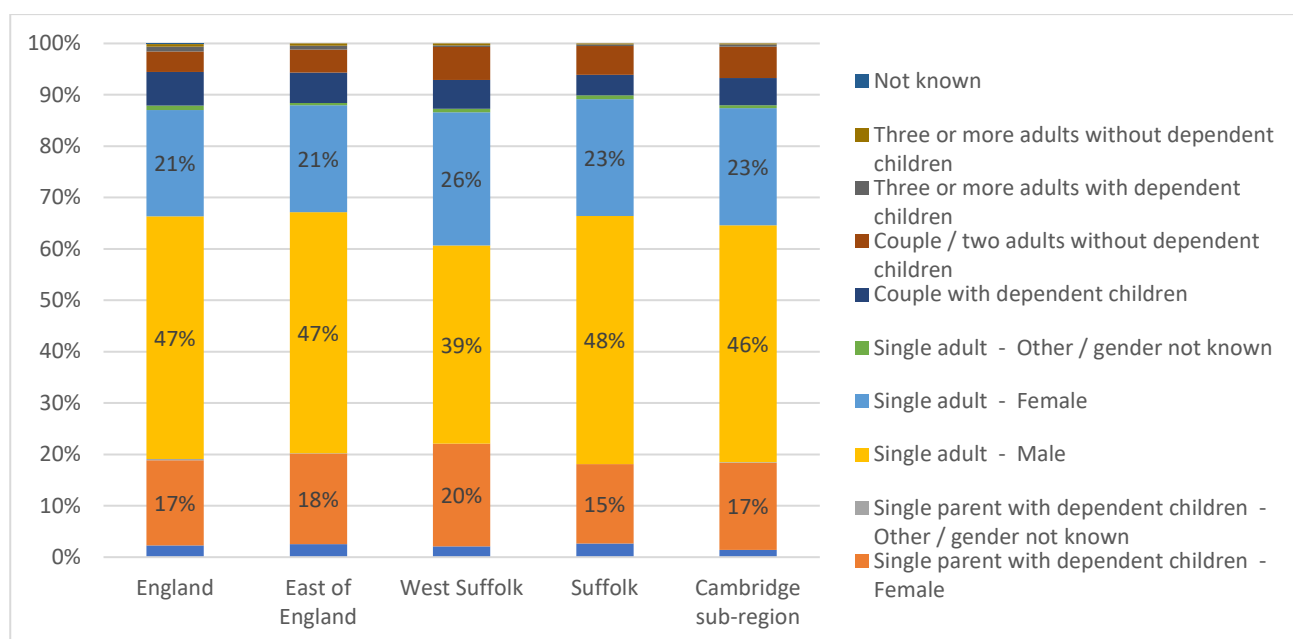
Single female parent with dependent children, single men, couples with dependent children and single females account for nearly 90 per cent of households owed a prevention duty. West Suffolk has a smaller proportion of single males than England, the East of England, Suffolk and the Cambridge sub-region.

Single men, single female parent with dependent children and single women represent over 85 per cent of household types owed a relief duty. West Suffolk has a higher proportion of single female parents with dependent children than England, the East of England, Suffolk and the Cambridge sub-region.

Graph 10: Type of household owed a Prevention Duty – 2023 to 2024



Graph 11: Type of household owed a Relief Duty – 2023 to 2024

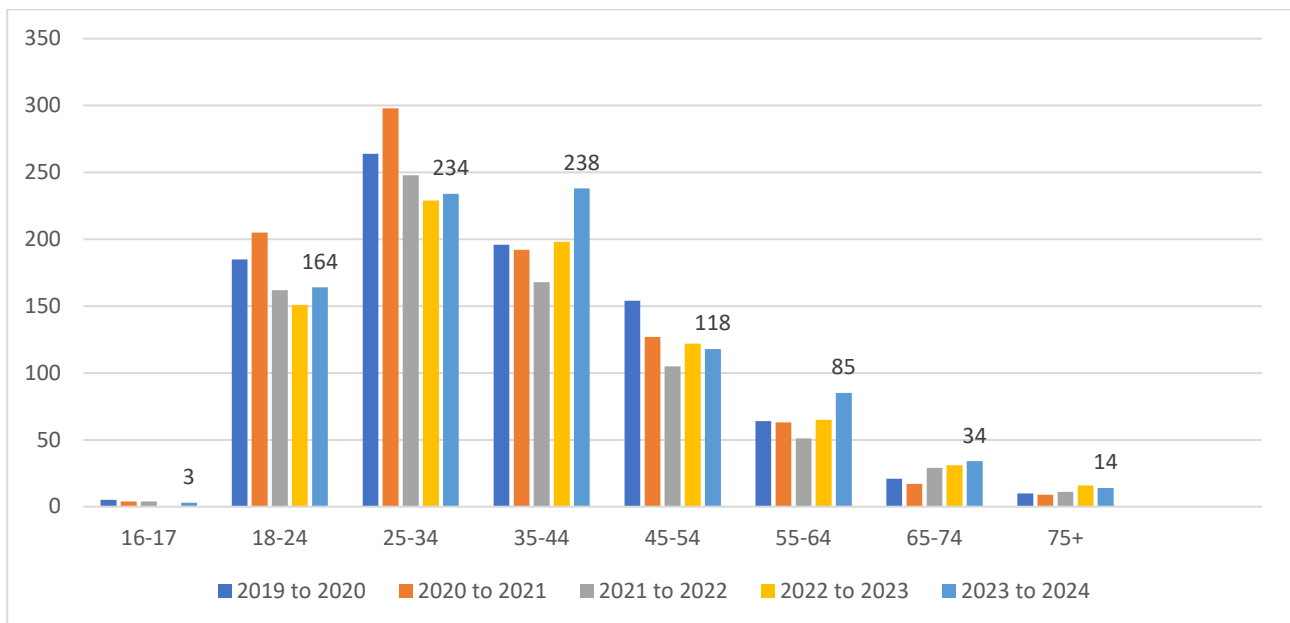


Age of applicants

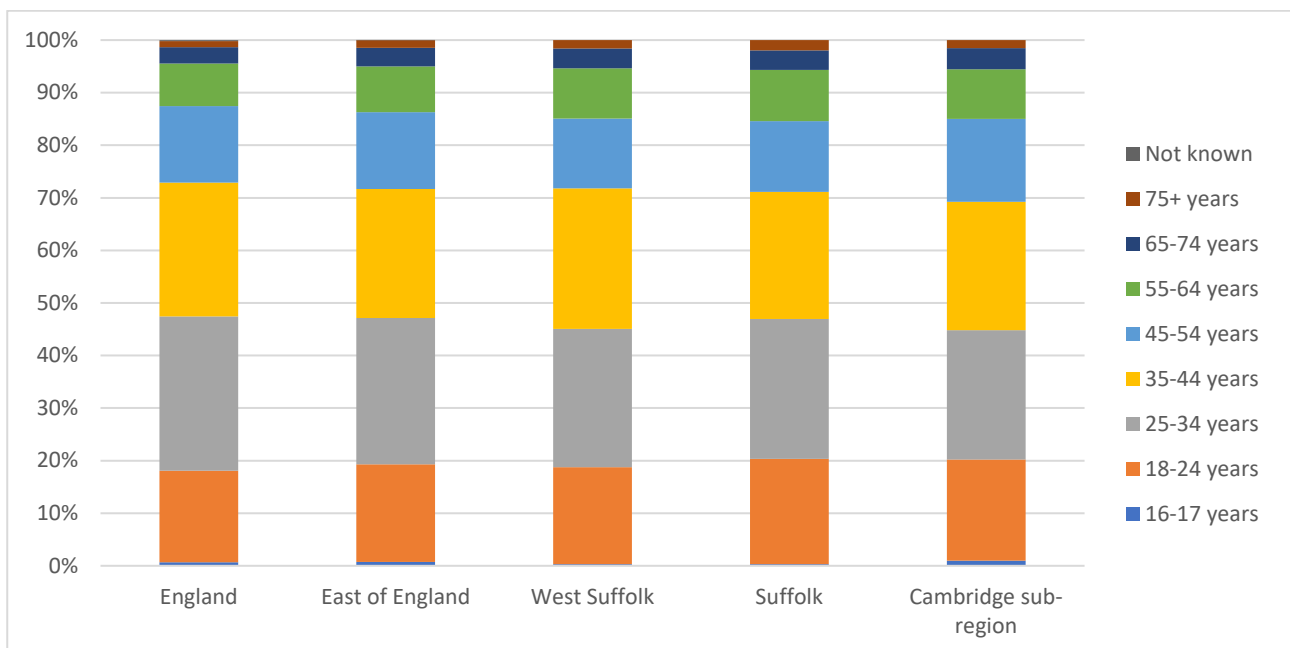
The following chart shows that the age of most applicants is within working age groups, with the highest numbers within the 35 to 44 age category. We receive a very small number of applications from the younger and older age range categories.

England, the East of England, Suffolk, and the Cambridge sub-region show similar profiles regarding the age of the main applicants.

Graph 12: Age of main applicant owed a prevention or relief duty - West Suffolk



Graph 13: Age of main applicant owed a prevention or relief duty - 2023 to 2024



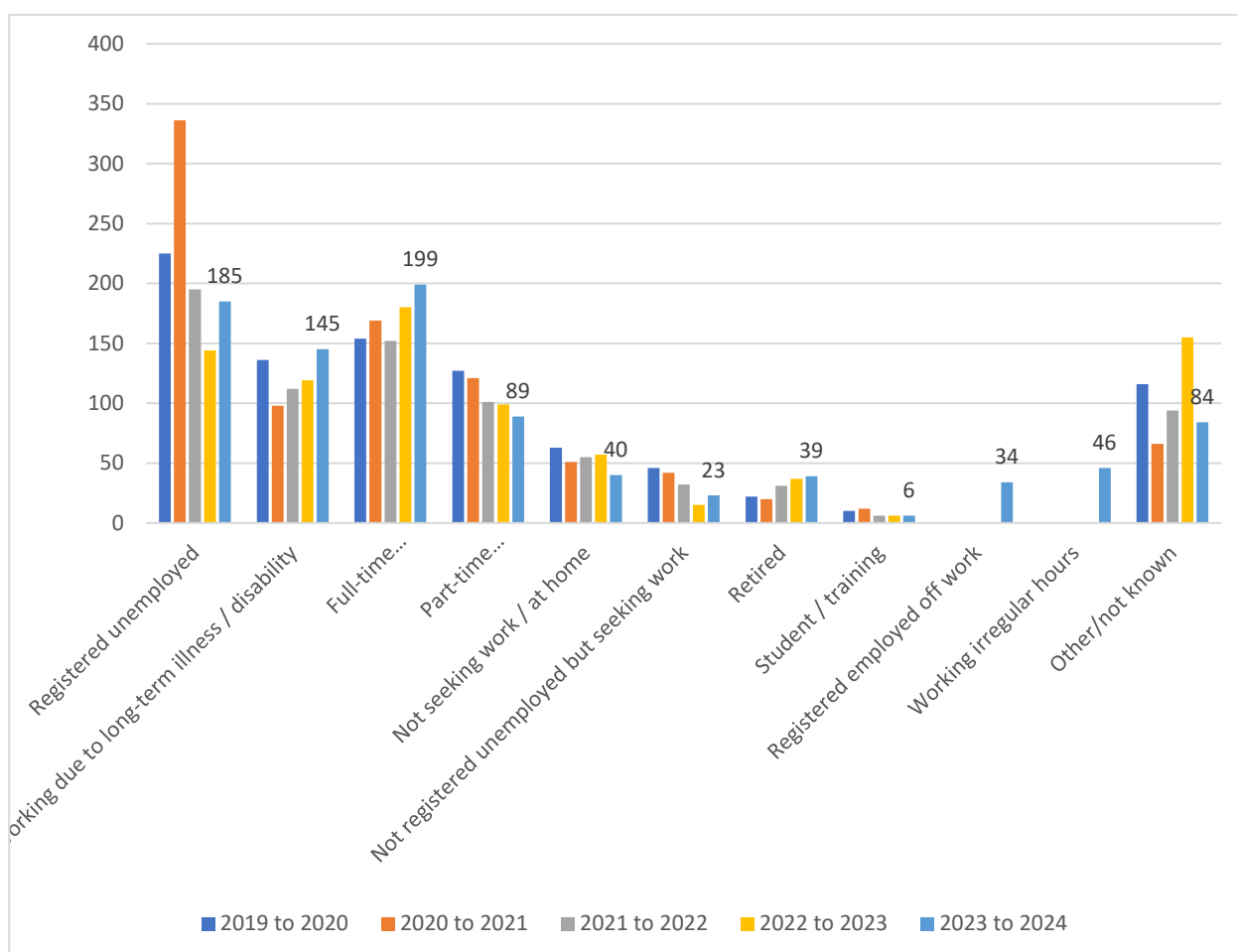
Employment status of those owed a duty

These figures vary over the previous five years, however, in 2023 to 2024, the highest employment status for those owed a duty is working full time.

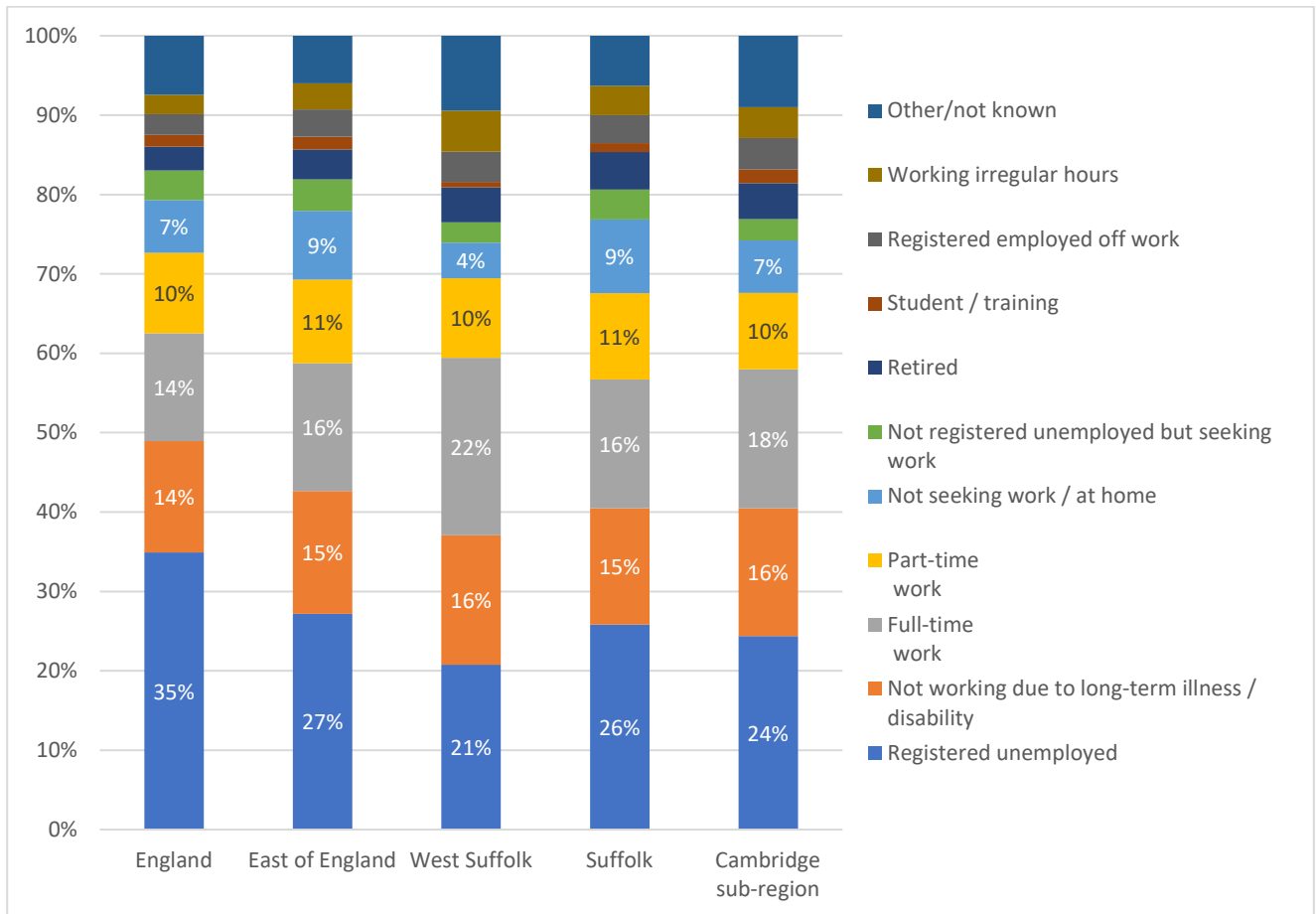
Employment status categories:

- Registered unemployed
- Not working due to long-term illness or disability
- Full-time work
- Part-time work
- Not seeking work or at home
- Not registered unemployed but seeking work
- Retired
- Student or training
- Other
- Not known

Graph 14: Employment status of main applicant owed a duty (prevention and relief) – West Suffolk

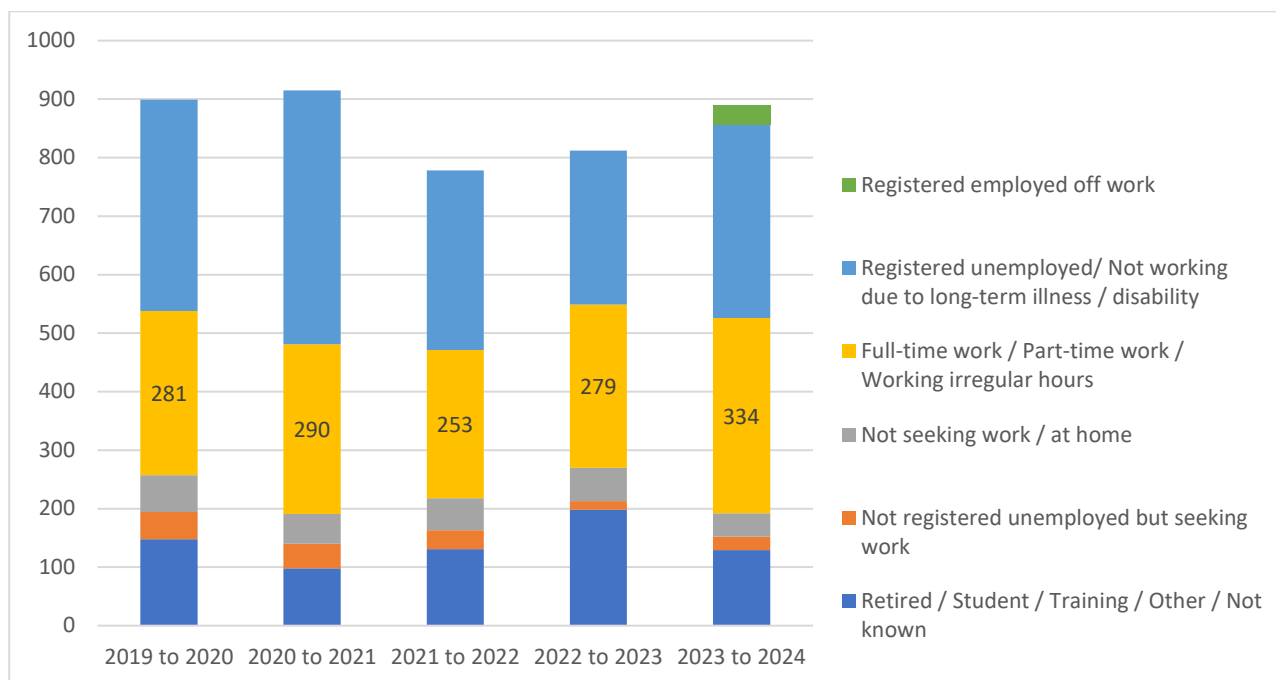


Graph 15: Employment status of main applicants owed a duty (prevention and relief) – 2023 to 2024



The main categories 'Registered unemployed' and 'not working due to long-term illness or disability' represent over 40 per cent of applicant's employment status in England, the East of England and Suffolk. Registered unemployed is significantly lower in West Suffolk with a larger proportion of applicants being in full-time work.

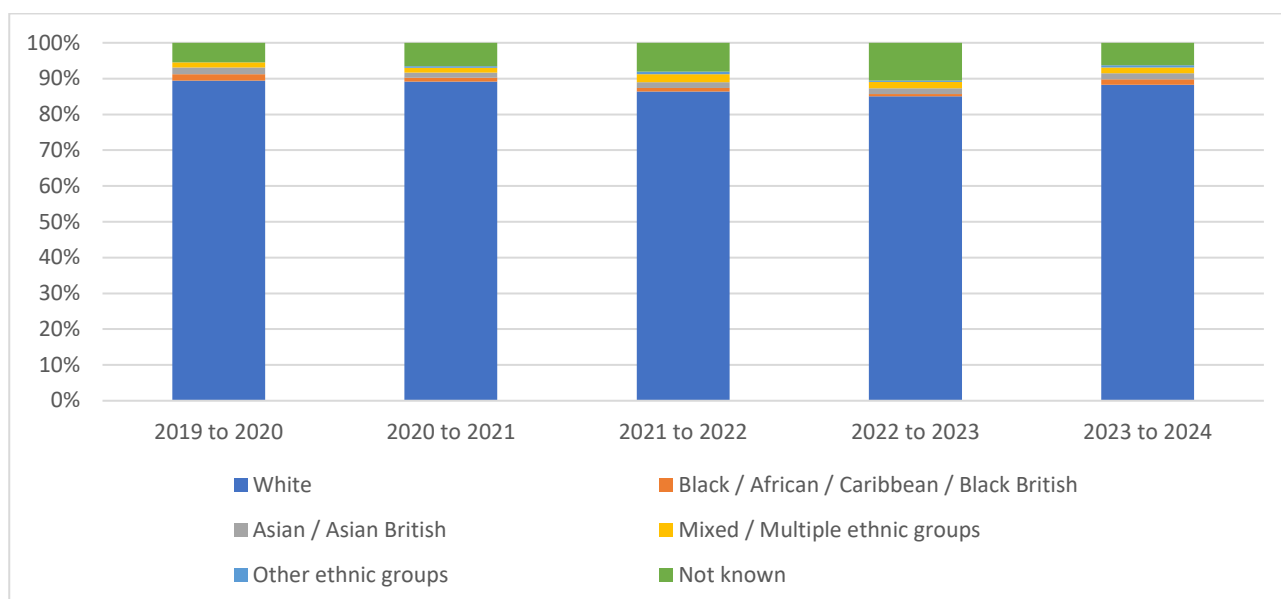
Graph 16: Grouped Employment status of main applicants owed a duty (prevention and relief) – West Suffolk



Ethnicity

The ethnic minority population in West Suffolk remains very small and this is reflected in the ethnicity of our applicants. In the 2021 census 92 per cent of West Suffolk’s population identified as ethnic group white. 85 per cent of those owed a homelessness duty identified as white, of the remaining 15 per cent, 10.6 per cent stated not known.

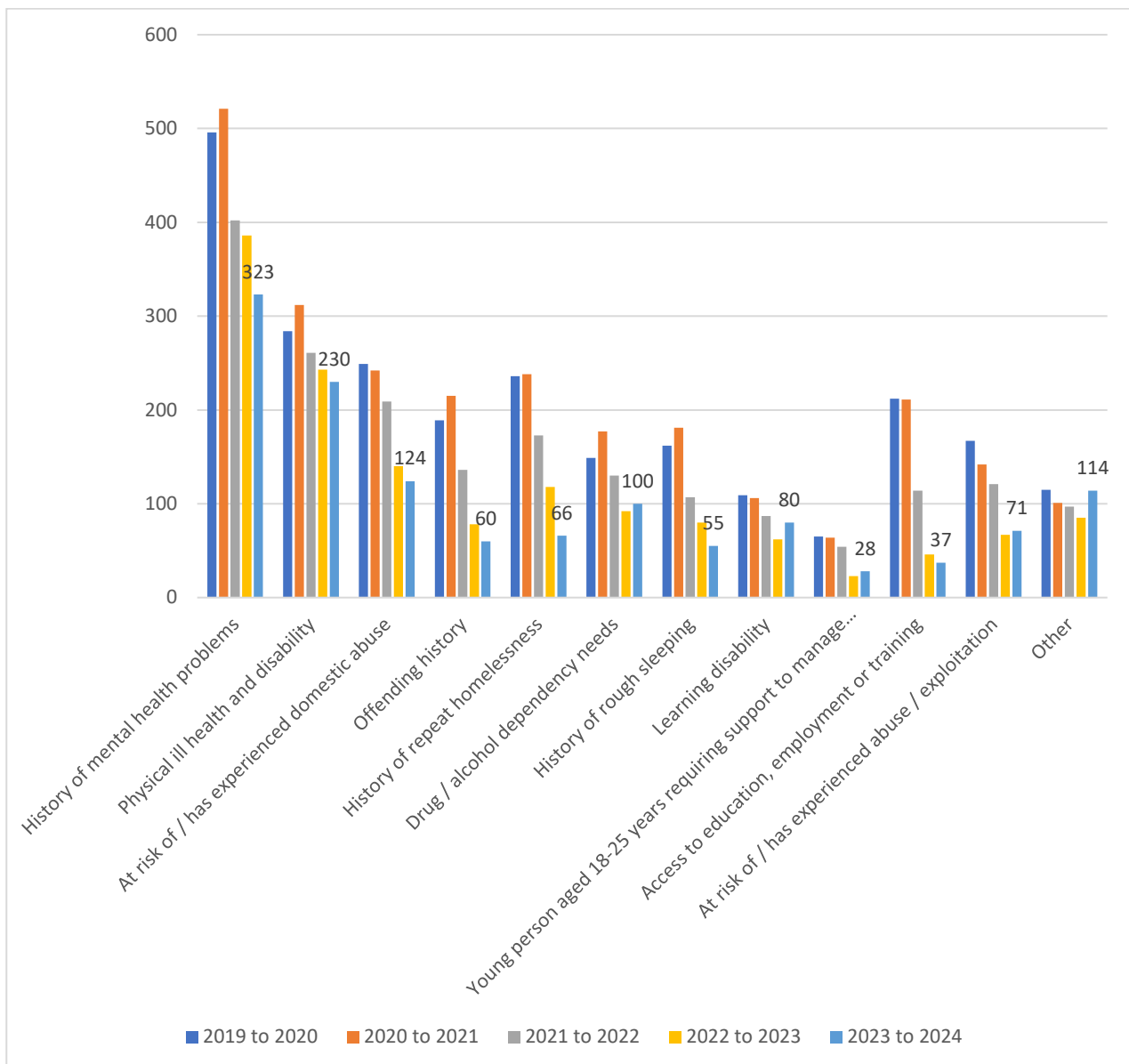
Graph 17: Ethnicity of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty – West Suffolk



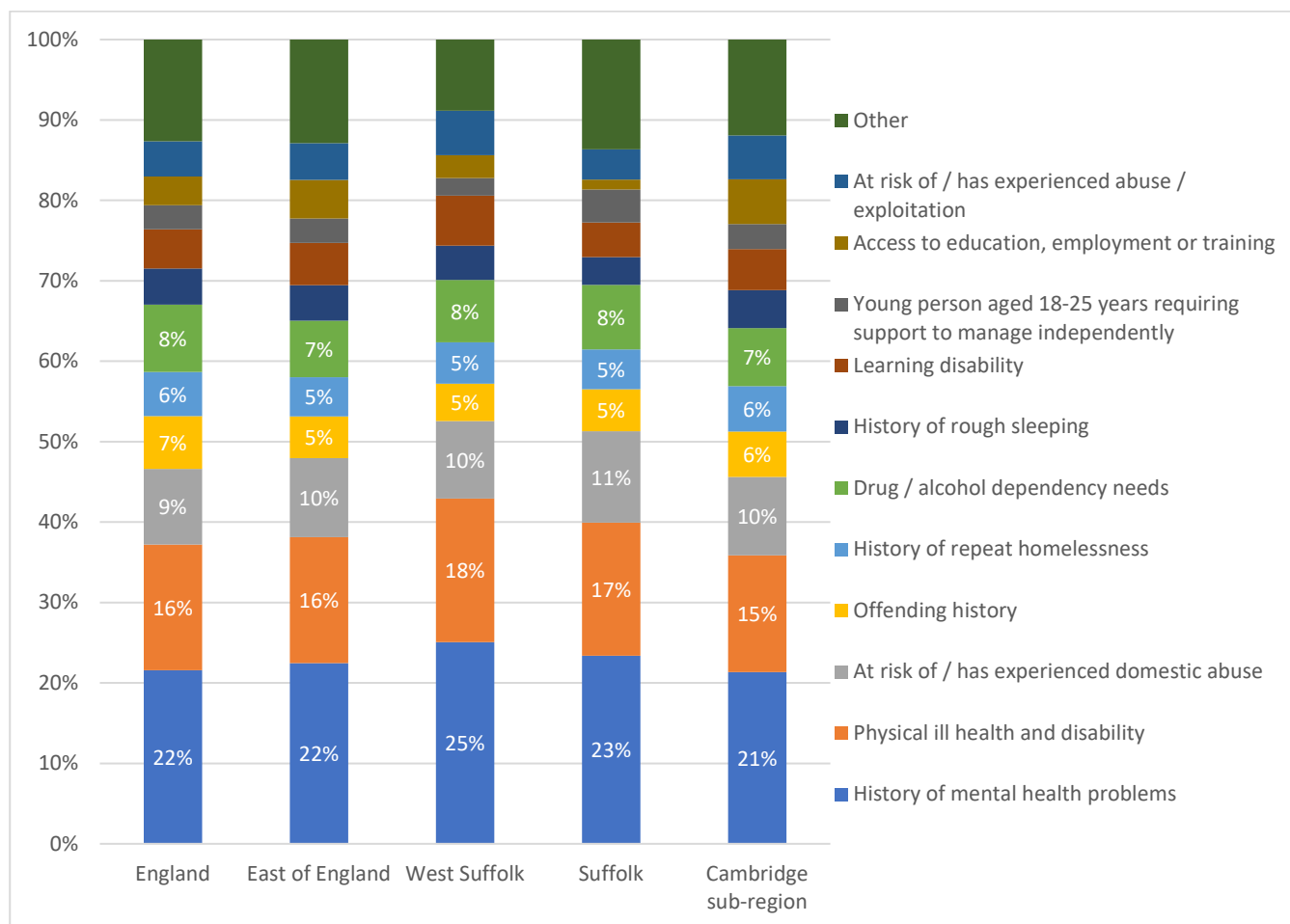
Support needs

The highest category of support needs is a history of mental health problems. This highlights the importance of mental health support for the many vulnerable applicants who need help with their housing. This is followed by physical health and disabilities showing the impact health can have on someone’s welfare. The third highest relates to domestic abuse and correlates with one of our highest causes of homelessness.

Graph 18: Support needs of households owed a prevention or relief duty – West Suffolk



Graph 19: Support needs of households owed a prevention or relief duty – 2023 to 2024



In 2023 to 2024, 25 per cent of support needs in West Suffolk relate to a history of mental health problems and 18 per cent relate to physical ill health and disability. These are higher percentages than we see across England, East of England, Suffolk or the Cambridge sub region.

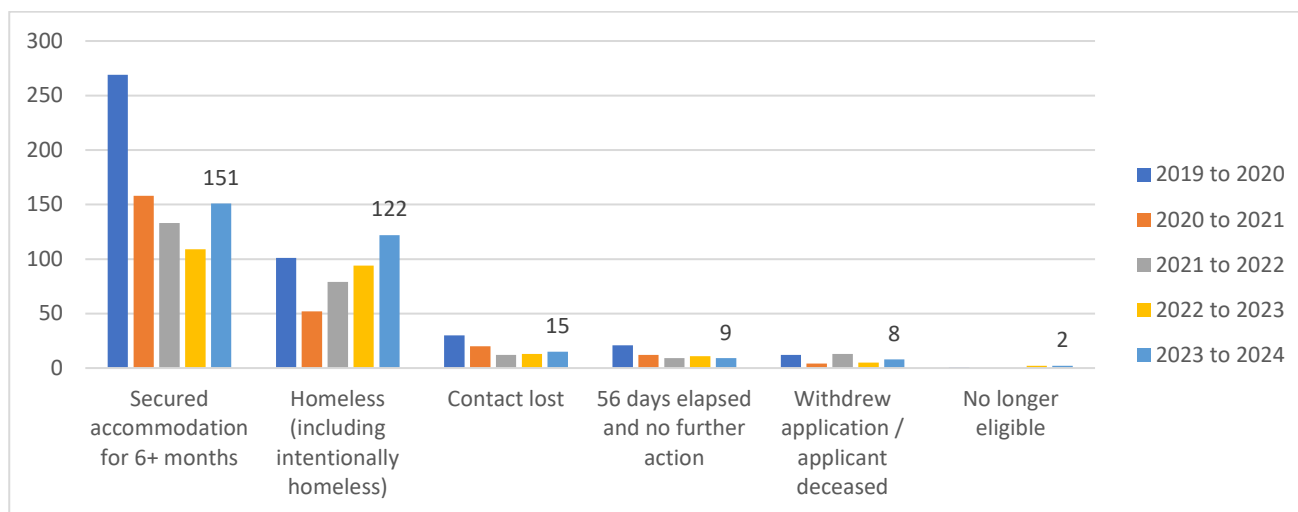
End of prevention and relief duties

We know that at the point of initial assessment West Suffolk has a much higher percentage of households assessed with relief duty owed than England, East of England, Suffolk and the Cambridge sub-region

Reason for ending prevention duty

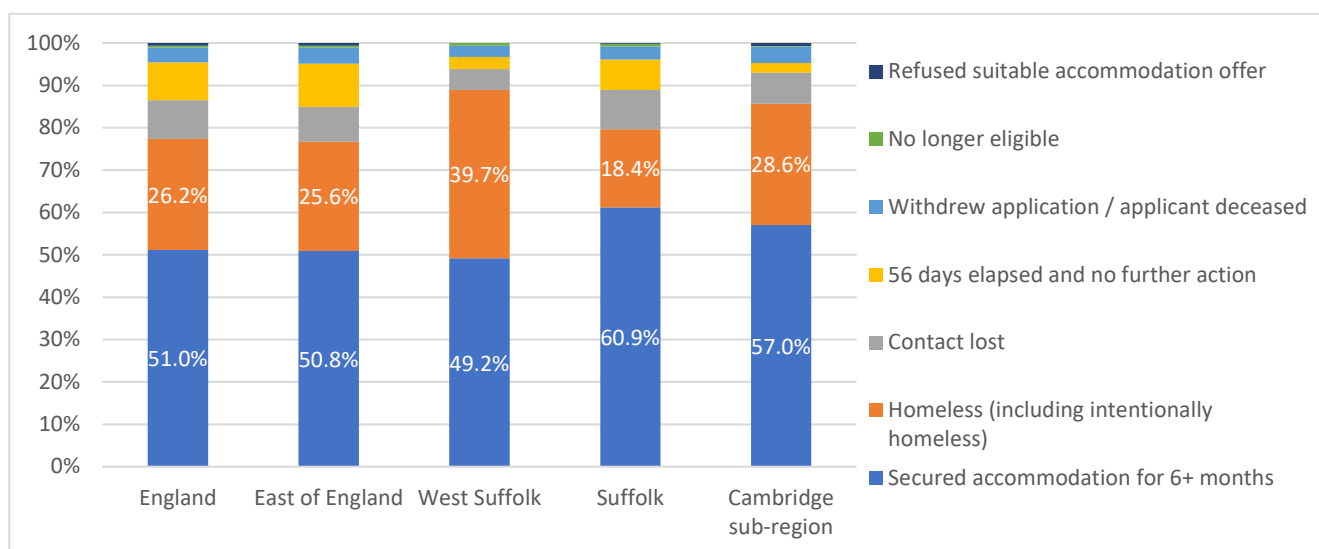
Over time, secured accommodation for 6+ months has previously fallen, and we are now seeing an increase. Homelessness is increasing.

Graph 20: Total number of households where prevention duty ended – West Suffolk



In West Suffolk in 2023 to 2024, there is a significantly higher proportion of households’ prevention duty ending due to being homeless than we see in England, the East of England, Suffolk or the Cambridge sub-region.

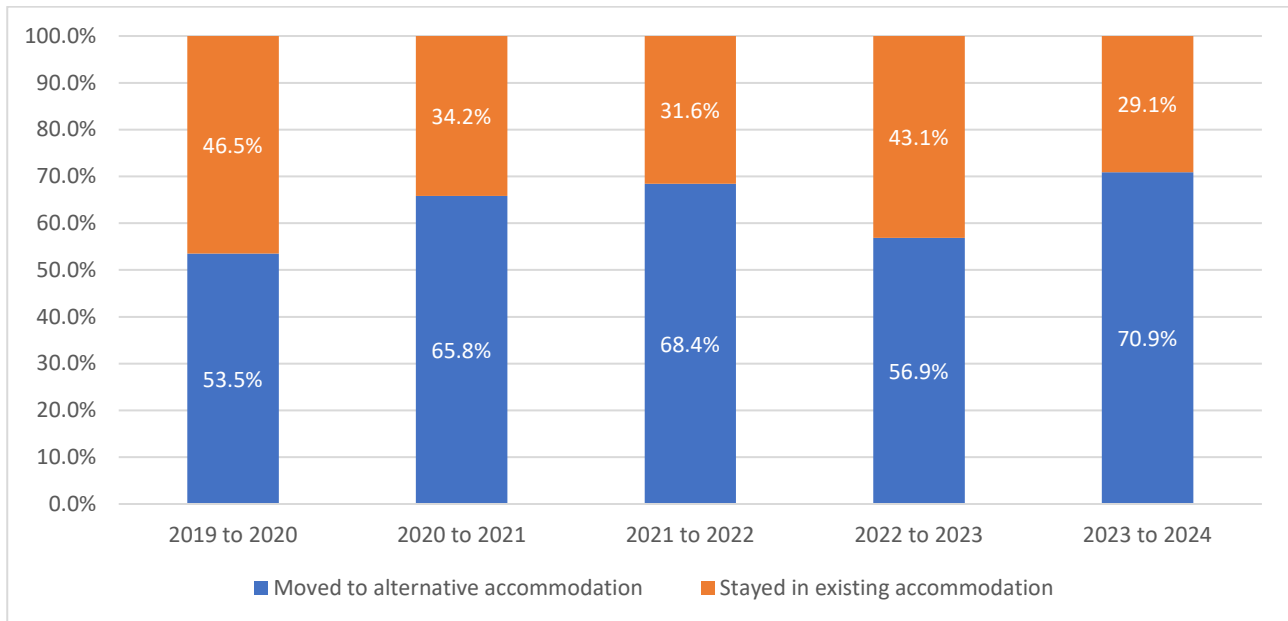
Graph 21: Reason for household’s prevention duty ending – 2023 to 2024



Existing or alternative accommodation secured

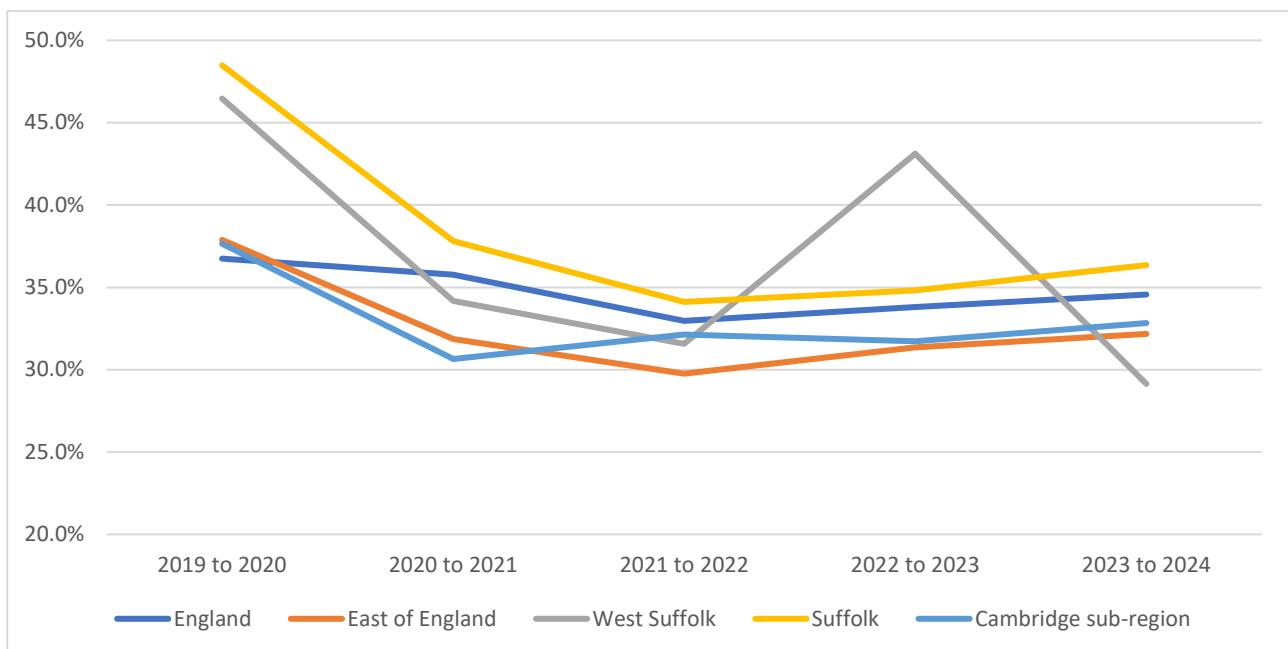
In most cases the best outcome would be to enable an applicant to remain in their current accommodation and ideally most incidents of homelessness would be prevented in this way. However, the below graph shows that in more cases than not homelessness is prevented through finding alternative accommodation. From 2019 to 2020 significantly more homelessness is prevented through moving to alternative accommodation. This reflects our experience through the pandemic where people approached us from more insecure accommodation that could not be maintained.

Graph 22: Existing or alternative accommodation secured at duty end – West Suffolk



This appears to be the case for all areas – that is a downward trend in applicants being able to remain in their existing accommodation.

Graph 23: Percentage of households where prevention duty ended by staying in existing accommodation – 2019 to 2024



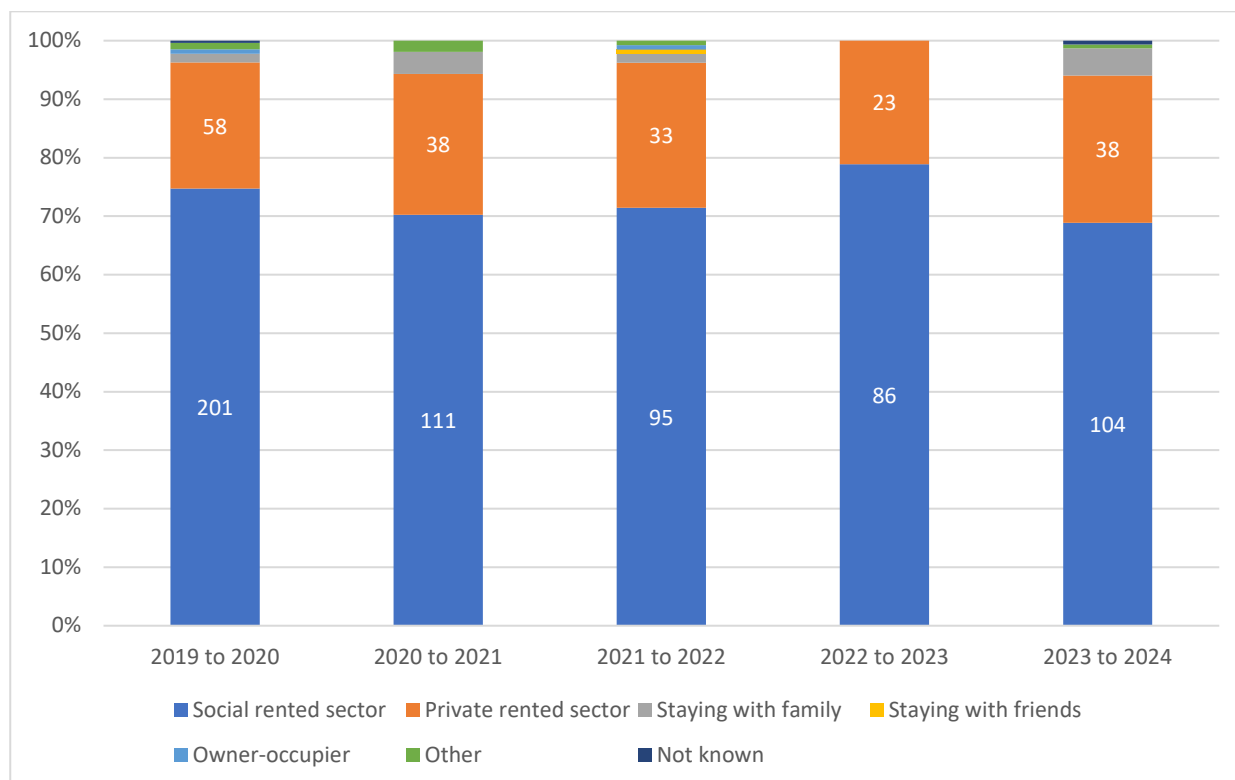
The following table shows how West Suffolk compares to England, the East of England, Suffolk and the Cambridge sub-region for 2023 to 2024. Figures show that, in the majority of cases, homelessness is prevented by finding an alternative solution to their current home.

Table 4: Percentage of households moving to alternative accommodation and staying in existing accommodation: 2023 to 2024

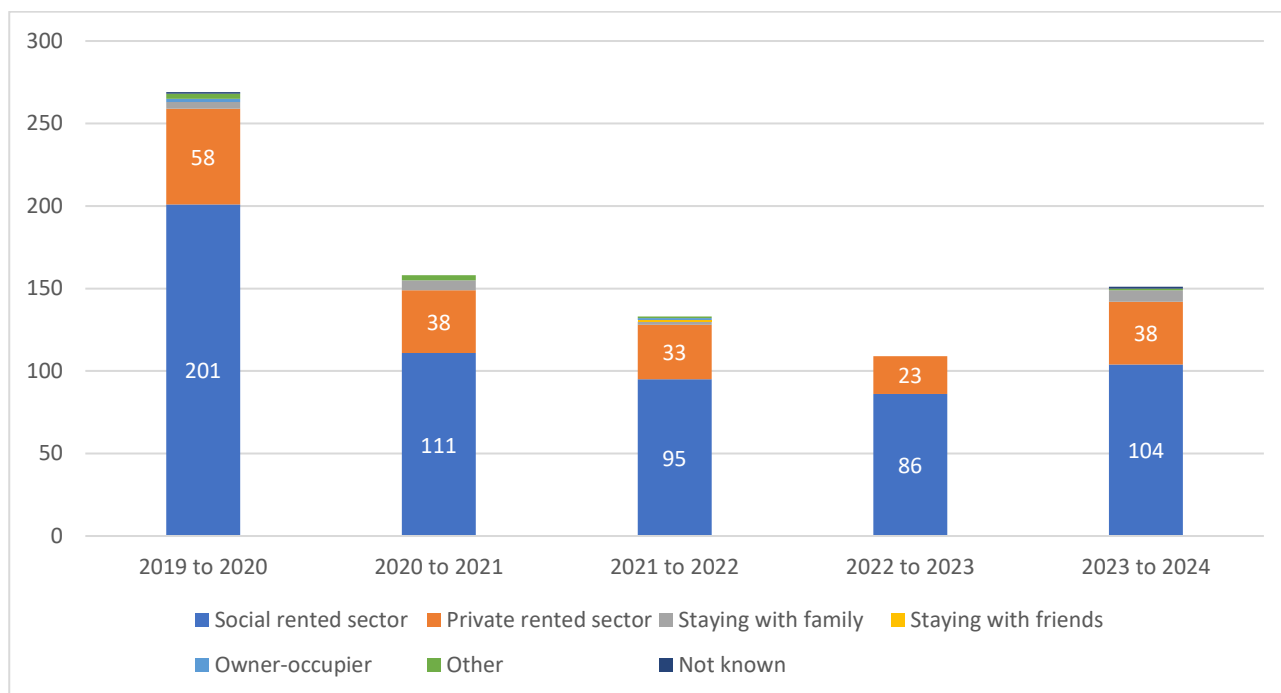
Area	Moved to alternative accommodation (per cent)	Stayed in existing accommodation (per cent)
England	65%	35%
East of England	68%	32%
West Suffolk	71%	29%
Suffolk	64%	36%
Cambridge sub-region	67%	33%

The following graph shows that social housing is the main means of preventing homelessness. This will involve an offer through Home-Link our choice-based lettings scheme, although this has reduced over the five-year period. Homeless applicants are awarded a Band B at prevention stage, to give them a level of priority at this stage, although it is by no means a guarantee of an offer. The private rented sector also plays an important role in preventing homelessness and we offer assistance through a rent deposit scheme and our private sector leasing scheme, Shire Homes Lettings.

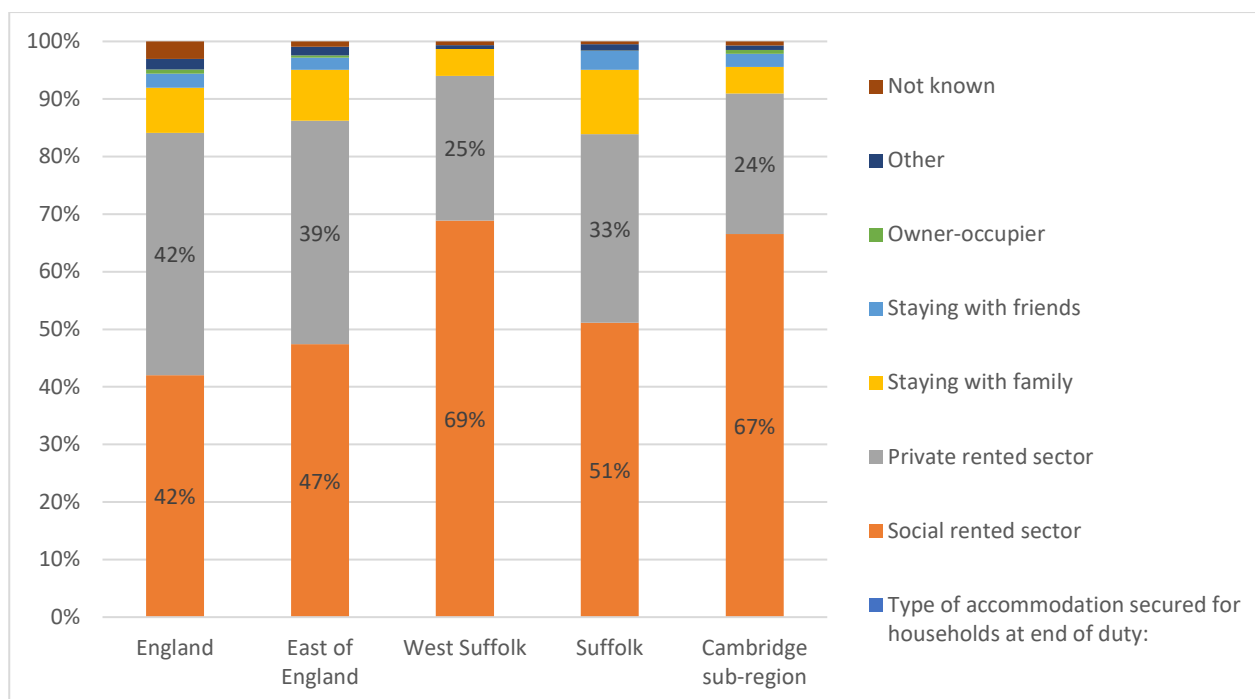
Graph 24: Type of accommodation secured for households at the end of prevention duty – West Suffolk



Graph 25: Number of households secured at the end of prevention duty by accommodation type – West Suffolk



Graph 26: Type of accommodation secured for households at the end of prevention duty – 2023 to 2024

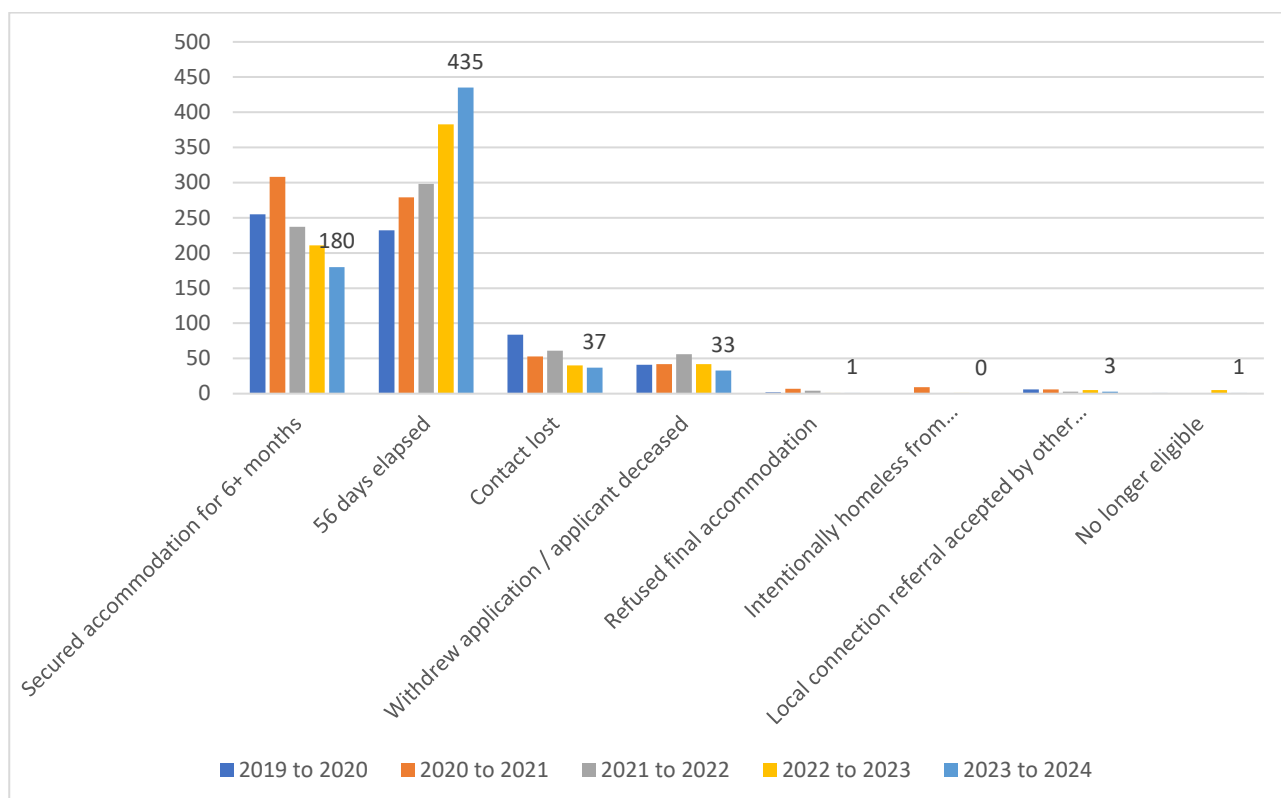


West Suffolk has a significantly higher proportion of households securing accommodation in the social rented sector than England, the East of England, Suffolk or the Cambridge sub-region.

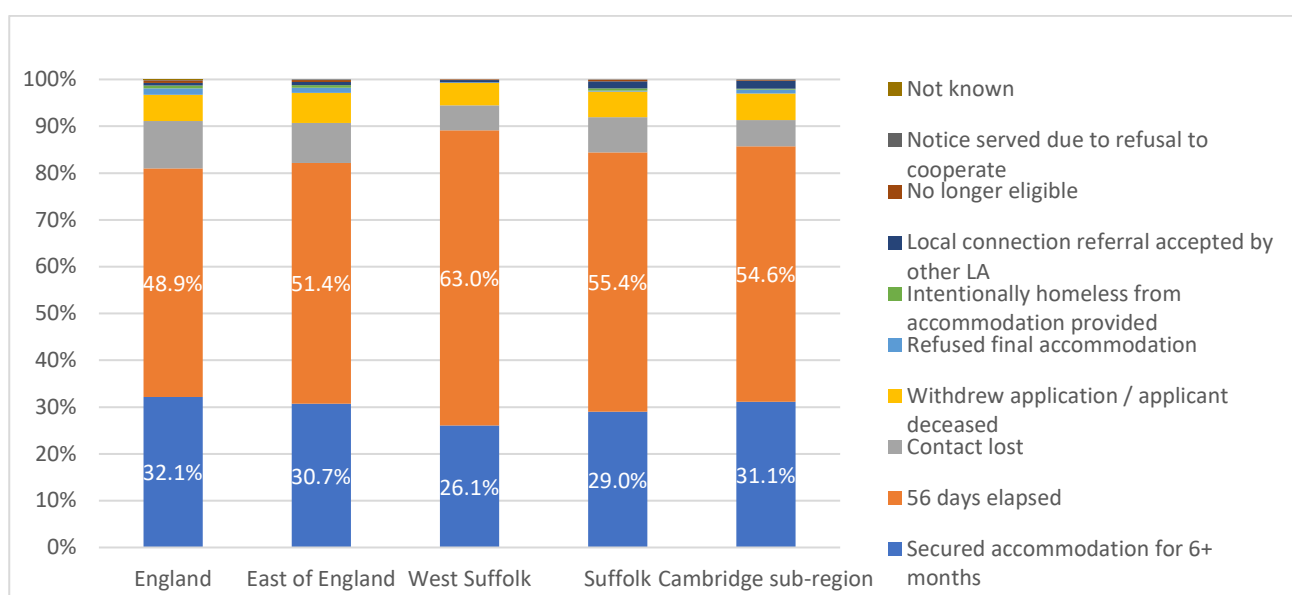
Reason for ending relief duty

Looking at the main reasons for ending the relief duty, a high proportion are ended through securing alternative accommodation. However, 56 days having elapsed is slightly higher in most years. Where we have been unable to assist the applicant into alternative accommodation within 56 days of the relief duty starting, we can then end the relief duty and continue to the next stage of their homeless application.

Graph 27: Reason for households' relief duty ending – West Suffolk



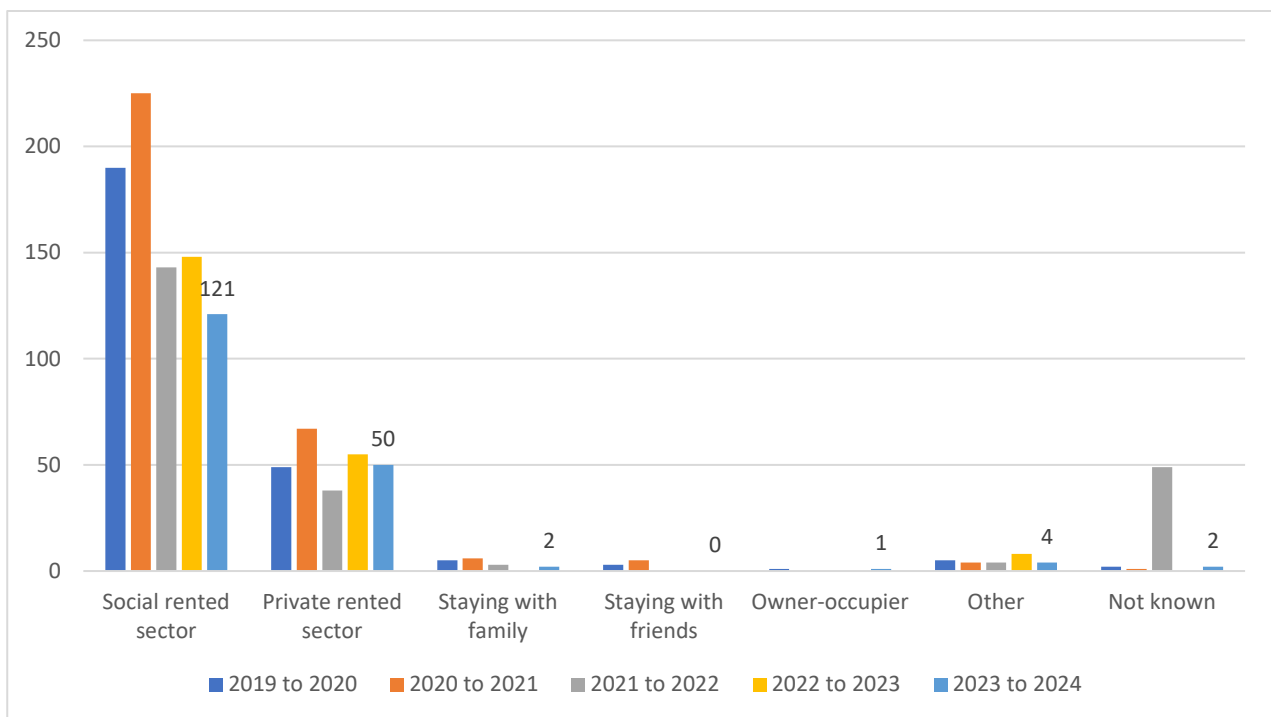
Graph 28: Reason for households' relief duty ending – 2023 to 2024



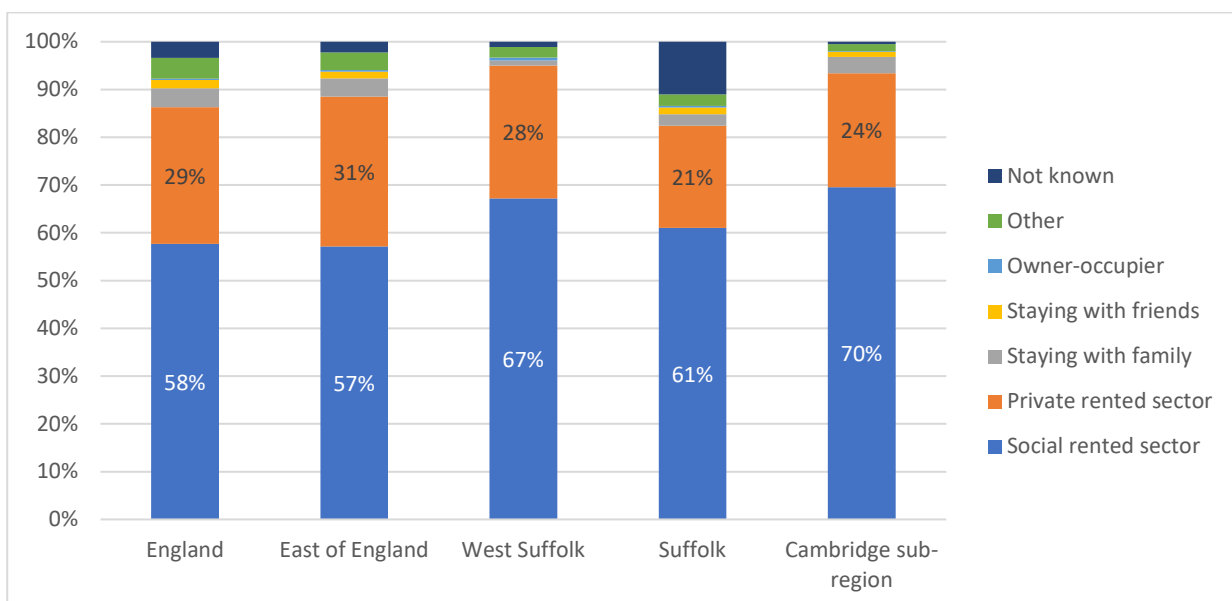
A larger proportion of West Suffolk’s households have a relief duty ending due to 56 days having elapsed than we see across England, the East of England, Suffolk, and the Cambridge sub-region.

Again, at the relief stage, the highest option for securing alternative accommodation is social rented housing through our Home-Link scheme, followed by private renting.

Graph 29: Type of accommodation secured for households at the end of relief duty - West Suffolk



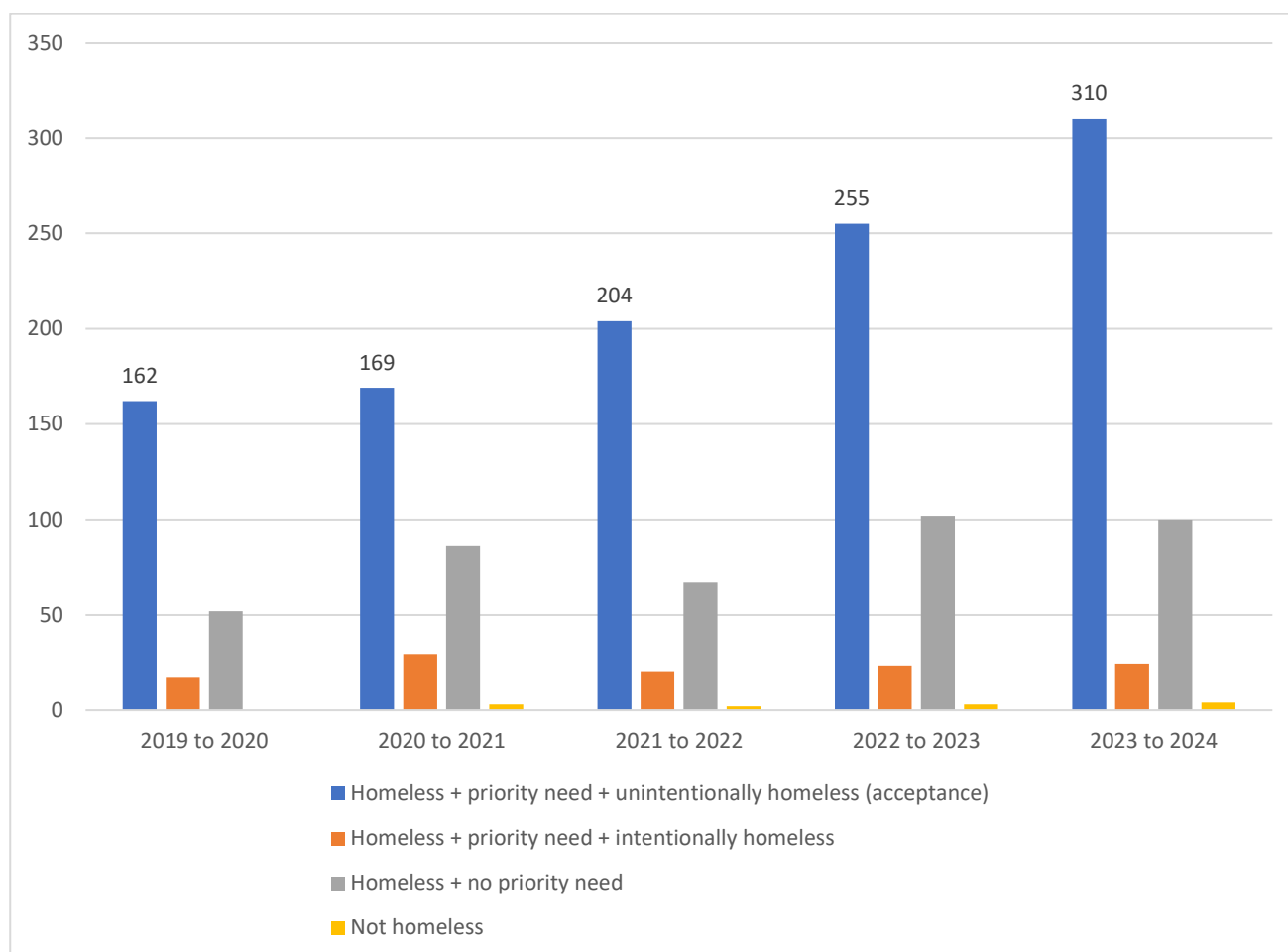
Graph 30: Type of accommodation secured for households at the end of relief duty – 2023 to 2024



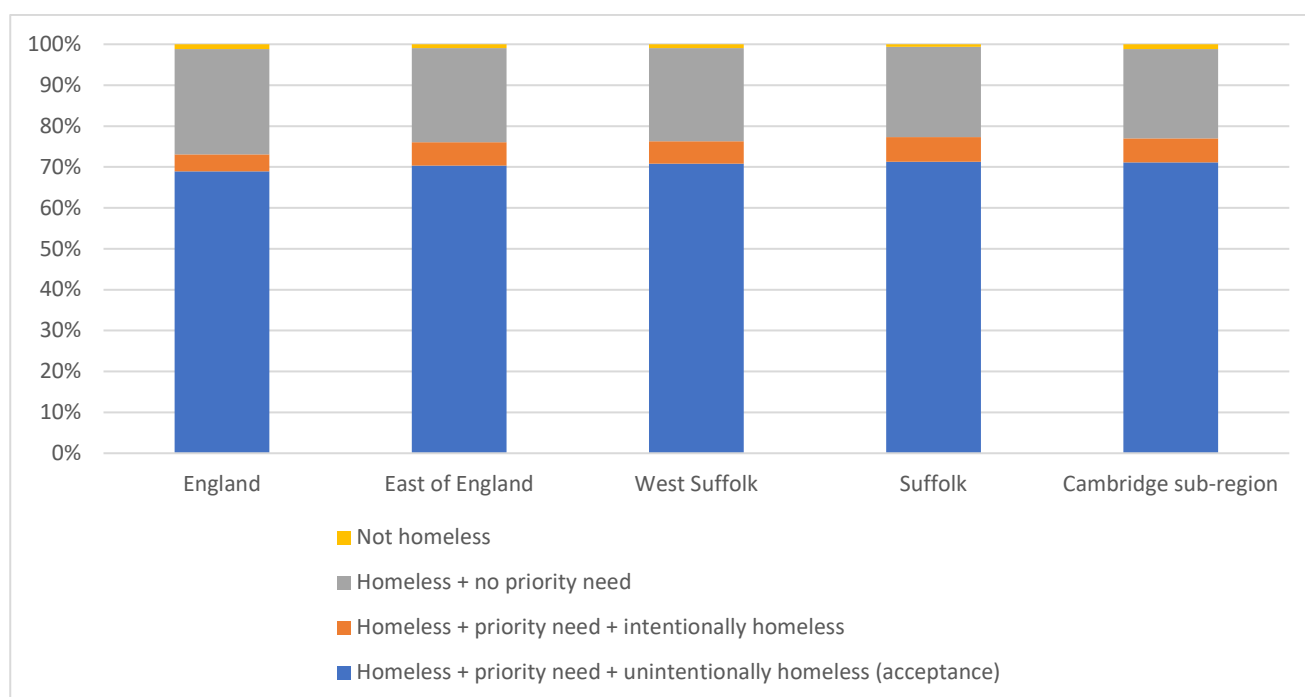
Main duty decisions

Where homelessness cannot be prevented or relieved, we will go on to make a main duty decision. This will include determining if the applicant has a priority need for accommodation, such as dependent children, pregnancy or an issue that makes them vulnerable within the meaning of the Act, such as mental or physical health issues, fleeing abuse or leaving care. We also need to determine whether they have become homeless intentionally where they have either done something or not done something that had resulted in their homelessness, such as not paying rent that was affordable to them or anti-social behaviour. As the table below shows, at this stage in the process, the full duty is accepted towards most applicants. This is because Housing Advice Officers are constantly advising their clients on the best options for them, investigating their circumstances and explaining the likelihood of any decision. Those who are likely to be assessed as not being in priority need, or intentionally homeless will not be owed an ongoing duty by the council and therefore alternative options are all the more important to them.

Graph 31: Outcome of main duty decision for eligible households – West Suffolk



Graph 32: Outcome of main duty decision for eligible households – 2023 to 2024

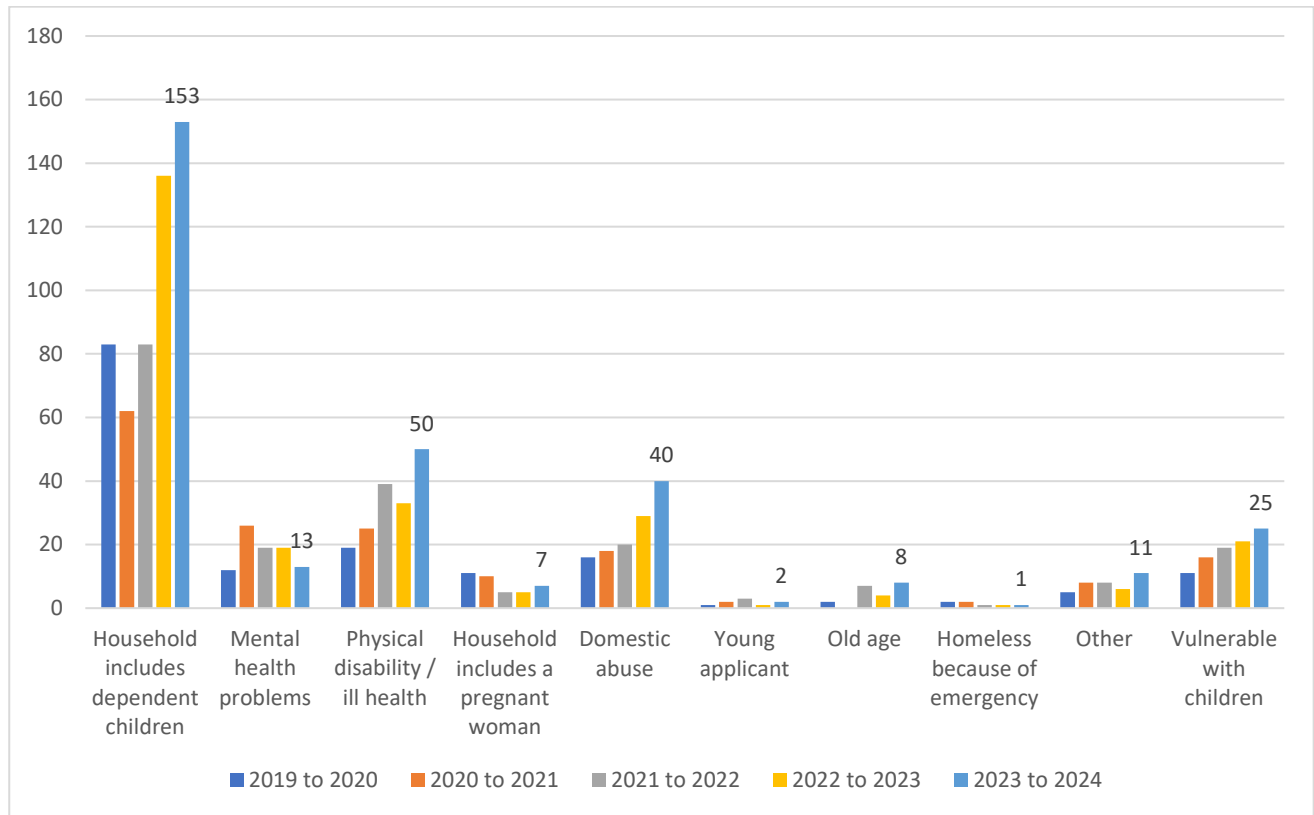


The following table shows the reason for priority need of those who go onto the main duty decision stage. In the majority of cases this is due to the family having dependent children. For those who don't have children the reason for priority need is largely down to physical disability/ ill health, closely followed by domestic abuse. Vulnerable with children has seen an increase in recent years.

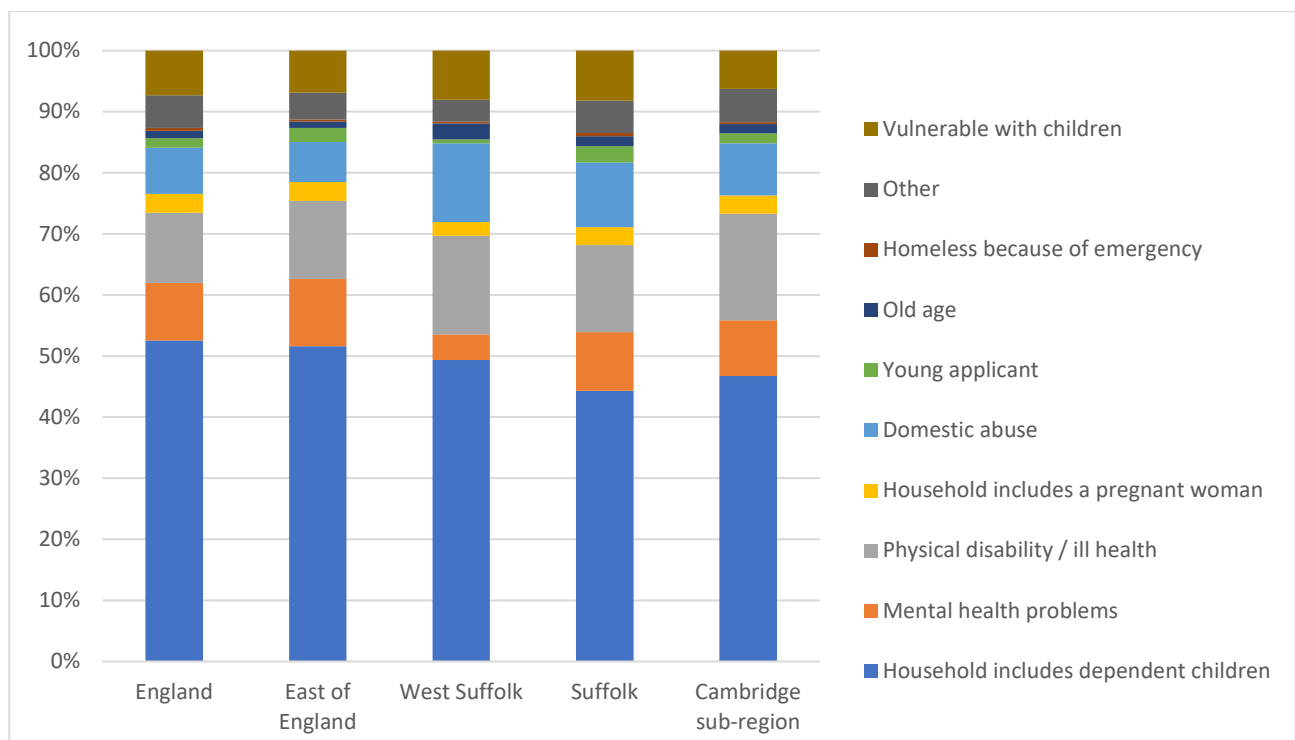
Table 5: Priority need of households owed a main duty – 2023 to 2024

Priority need of households owed a main duty	England (per cent)	East of England (per cent)	West Suffolk (per cent)	Suffolk (per cent)	Cambridge sub-region (per cent)
Household includes dependent children	53%	52%	49%	44%	47%
Mental health problems	9%	11%	4%	10%	9%
Physical disability or ill health	11%	13%	16%	14%	17%
Household includes a pregnant woman	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%
Domestic abuse	8%	7%	13%	11%	9%
Young applicant	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%
Old age	1%	1%	3%	2%	2%
Homeless because of emergency	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Other	5%	4%	4%	5%	5%
Vulnerable with children	7	7	8	8	6

Graph 33: Priority need of households owed a main duty – West Suffolk

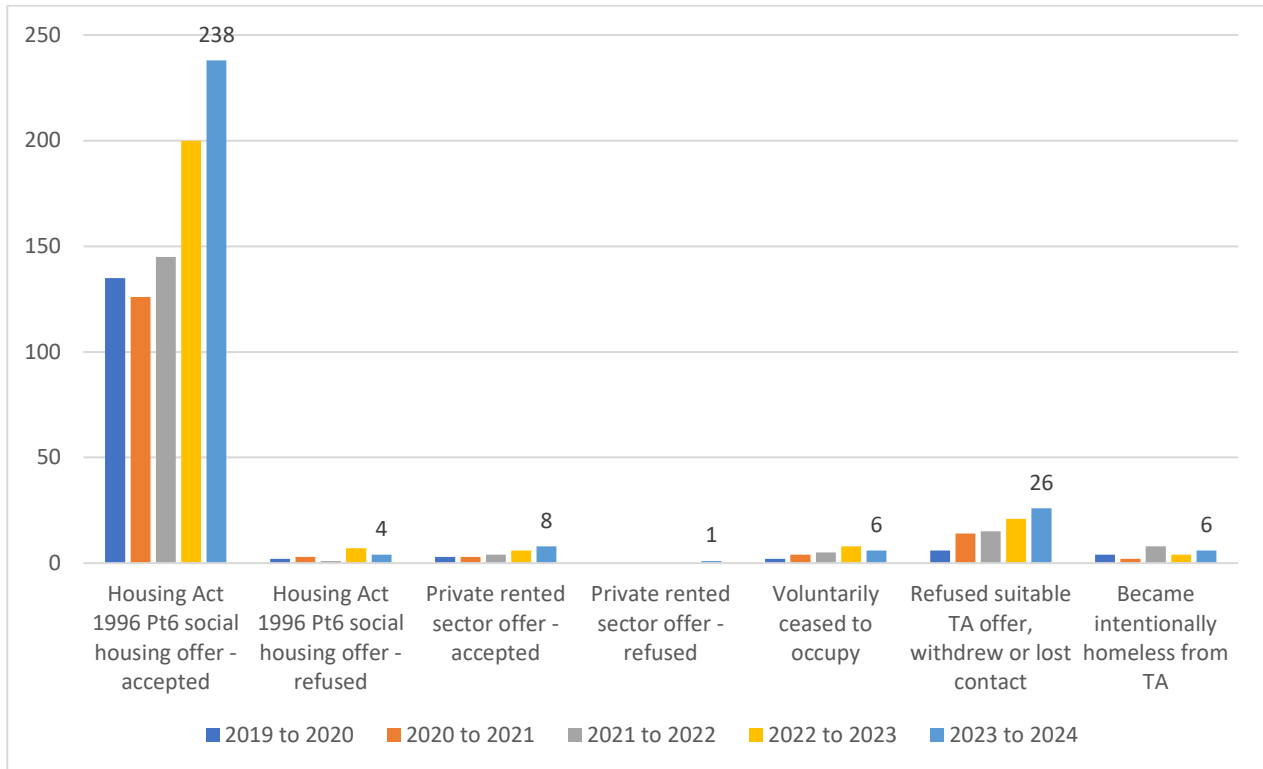


Graph 34: Priority need of households owed a main duty – 2023 to 2024

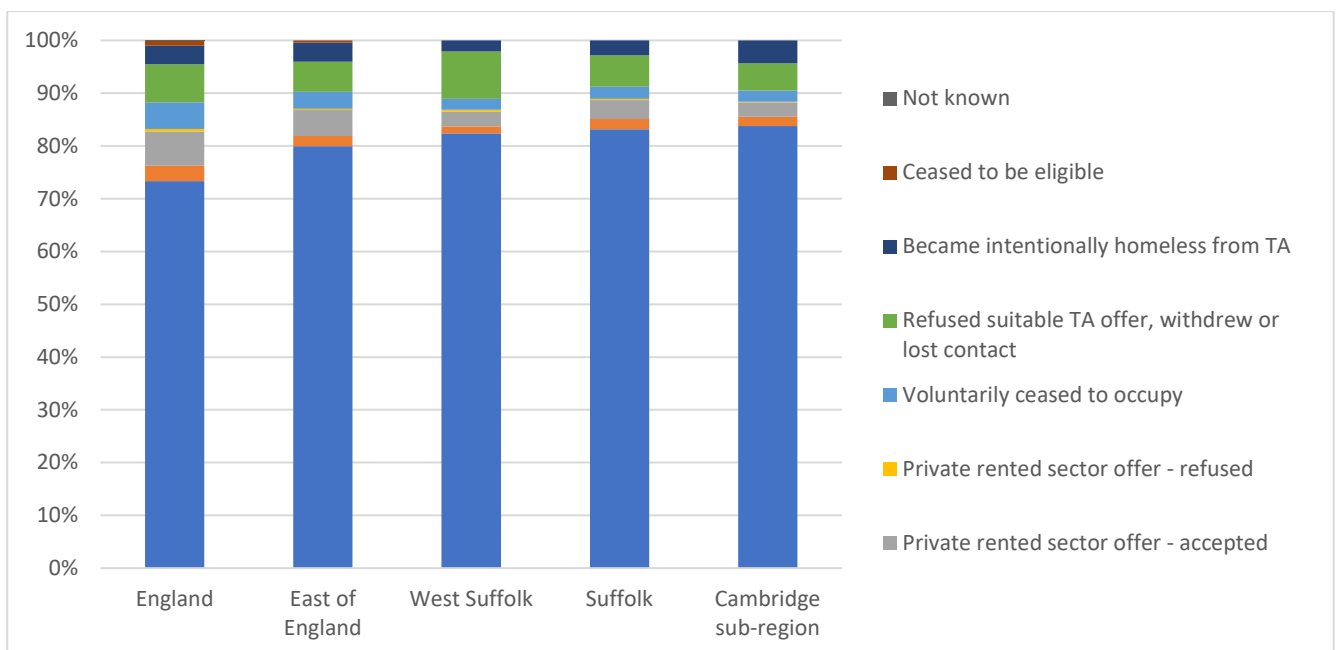


The main reason for ending main duty is due to the household receiving an offer of social rented housing. This is the case for West Suffolk and nationally.

Graph 35: Outcome of households no longer owed a main duty – West Suffolk



Graph 36: Outcome of households no longer owed a main duty – 2023 to 2024



Levels of rough sleeping

All local authorities are required to undertake a rough sleeping count every autumn, or provide an estimate each year to Government. Through the work of the council's rough sleeper team, local intelligence and working with partners, we have good knowledge of the number of rough sleepers in West Suffolk throughout the year. West Suffolk also takes part in the annual rough sleeper snapshot and the number of rough sleepers identified through the annual rough sleeper snapshot are as follows:

Table 6: annual rough sleeper snapshot

Date	Rough sleeper count
Autumn 2019	13
Autumn 2020	14
Autumn 2021	9
Autumn 2022	6
Autumn 2023	8

Contacts to the multi-agency safeguarding hub: domestic abuse

Table 7: Contacts to the multi-agency safeguarding hub: domestic abuse

Month	Number of contacts
April 2023	14
May 2023	14
June 2023	18
July 2023	28
August 2023	18
September 2023	27
October 2023	32
November 2023	23
December 2023	14
January 2024	29
February 2024	25
March 2024	23
Total	265 contacts

Discretionary housing payments

The gap between benefits received (where capped) and local market rents continues to increase. The Discretionary Housing Payment is a limited funding that we can access on a short term basis in exceptional circumstances.

Table 8: Level of discretionary housing payments

Year	Allocation to West Suffolk Council	Spend
2020 to 2021	£300,351	£300,351
2021 to 2022	£238,411	£224,936 (94.3 per cent of allocation)
2022 to 2023	£168,976	£143,691.32 (85 per cent of allocation)
2023 to 2024	£168,976	£158,255 (93.7 per cent of allocation)

3. External factors influencing levels of homelessness and rough sleeping

COVID-19

- 3.1 On 19 March 2020, authority given to the Housing Options team to block book and pay for self-contained accommodation as soon as it becomes available enabled the council to have options for temporary accommodation, especially for those who needed to self-isolate.
- 3.2 Following instruction from government to find and house all rough sleepers in the area within a 24-hour period, by 26 March all rough sleepers had been moved to temporary accommodation, with the team providing welfare checks over the phone in the short term so that arrangements could be made for sourcing appropriate personal protective equipment to enable face to face contact.
- 3.3 From 26 March to 7 April 2020, the council had 85 presentations for homelessness with 60 people being accommodated in temporary accommodation. To cope with the increase in demand at the same time as limited options for accommodation, the council - like other authorities across the UK - used hotels that were temporarily closed to the public but open to councils. This was supplemented with use of bed and breakfast where appropriate. In total, the team provided emergency accommodation for 141 individuals and households in the immediate weeks following the lockdown.
- 3.4 From early July 2020, all guest accommodation providers were allowed to reopen, which presented the team with a new challenge. With these establishments beginning to operate as a commercial business, there were fewer rooms available to use as temporary or emergency accommodation for rough sleepers. The team worked alongside accommodation providers to gradually reduce the number of rooms being used from July onwards. The team worked hard to find alternative accommodation for those families and

individuals affected through reconnection, working with registered providers and by sourcing longer-term options.

- 3.5 15 temporary units of self-contained accommodation were provided as an immediate solution, which were occupied from 13 July. These units were located on council-owned site on Olding Road. This meant that it was able to provide the utilities (water and electricity) needed and be staffed during the day with on-site security at nights and weekends. This accommodation was available until 31 December 2020.
- 3.6 The council successfully bid for £850,194 of Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) funding to deliver three units of temporary accommodation and 11 places for people with additional support needs in capital and revenue grant to fund support costs until March 2024. Furthermore, the council has secured £30,000 from NHS West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group to deliver personalised healthcare to the tenants with additional health needs.
- 3.7 Between 1 January and 30 September 2021, the council helped more than 1126 households, including a number of rough sleepers, by providing housing advice and support. As of 1 September, it had 77 households in temporary accommodation, including those who have previously been sleeping rough. Furthermore, 196 individuals have been accommodated through the government's 'Everyone In' initiative since March 2020.
- 3.8 The 14 units of temporary accommodation being provided for former rough sleepers through NSAP were completed and are being occupied by individuals. The team worked with Sanctuary Housing, a registered provider, to deliver support to those with complex and high needs being accommodated in the 11 units of accommodation. The remaining three units of accommodation were provided as move-on for clients with low to medium support needs.
- 3.9 The council was awarded £505,142 in Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding for 2021 to 2022 and £1,280,564 RSI funding for the period 2022 to 2025. This is being used to continue to fund the rough sleeper team, provide ring-fenced accommodation for rough sleepers and we are developing plans to introduce the Housing First model.

Cost of living

- 3.10 We know that cost of living pressures affected residents making affordability of housing and fuel even more challenging and increased the risk of homelessness for more households. This impacted both working and non-working households. The situation was monitored by the team with the following measures being put in place to support households:
- Working with the Suffolk-wide collaborative communities board to increase focus and support available.
 - Funding distributed to 40 different community groups.
 - Coordinating funding provided through the Government's Holiday Activities and Food Programme.
 - Signposting to funding and supporting provided by Government, partner agencies and charities.

Providing warm spaces across the district.

Refugees and asylum seekers in West Suffolk and how the council is addressing the issues being faced in the district

3.11 As a result of international crises there has been an increase in requests from government to support refugees and asylum seekers. In recent years, the council has responded and provided support in particular the Homes to Ukraine Scheme and the Afghan resettlement schemes. The council works alongside other organisations, such as Suffolk County Council, the Strategic Migration Partnership (part of the East of England Local Government Association), Home Office and the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to ensure that sufficient support is available to welcome new arrivals into the community. We are also working with the Ministry of Defence to utilise vacant accommodation, and one family has been accommodated in this way.

Local Authority Housing Fund

3.12 The council has worked with registered providers to secure nine additional social housing homes in the district using funding from the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) rounds 1 and 2. This is central government funding which provides part funding to purchase homes for Afghan and Ukrainian families, and is used as general needs social housing stock. The council has purchased a unit of temporary accommodation for general needs use. At the time of writing this report, the council is looking to utilise funding through LAHF round 3 to secure further units of temporary accommodation.

4. Existing temporary accommodation

Temporary accommodation

4.1 The council has 85 units of temporary accommodation available and 27 rough sleeper beds.

4.2 Since the introduction of the previous strategy, an alternative property to the house at College Heath Road has been sourced while the site is redeveloped. Improvements have been made to the temporary accommodation property at Newmarket Road in Bury St Edmunds. The amount of temporary accommodation available has been increased at Park Lane in Newmarket which is being brought back into use. As referenced at 3.13 above, one unit of temporary accommodation using part-funding available through the LAHF.

4.3 The following table shows the number of households that have been placed in temporary accommodation since 2021 to 2022 including emergency accommodation:

Table 9: number of placements in temporary accommodation

Number of placements	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Emergency accommodation including bed and breakfast	264	340	315
Temporary accommodation	254	205	180

Affordable housing units delivered by registered social landlord partners

4.4 Table 10 below shows the number of affordable housing units delivered by registered provider schemes, where 100 per cent is usually affordable housing, section 106 schemes and open market schemes where we usually achieve our target of 30 per cent affordable housing that is then managed by a registered provider.

Table 10. Affordable housing units delivered by registered provider schemes

	Registered provider lead schemes (units delivered)	Section 106 schemes (units delivered)
2019 to 2020	58	269
2020 to 2021	70	268
2021 to 2022	44	213
2022 to 2023	0	212
2023 to 2024	0	210

4.5 The number of **shared ownership schemes or shared equity housing completed**: 176 in 2019 to 2020, 120 in 2020 to 2021, 62 in 2021 to 2022, 75 in 2022 to 2023 and 67 in 2023 to 2024.

5. Reviewing activities carried out and resources required

5.1 In the course of undertaking this review and setting out our actions in the strategy to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping, the council has considered the factors set out below. This takes into consideration the public and stakeholder consultation that has been carried out and how we work with partners to support individuals and households at risk or homelessness.

- a. The current and projected housing need across West Suffolk
- b. Emerging national Government policy and legislation
- c. Households with the highest housing needs are being met
- d. There is a need for more adapted accommodation and for larger homes
- e. The [West Suffolk Lettings Partnership](#) is working to increase the supply of private rented accommodation through schemes and incentives for landlords.

- f. Working with registered providers to identify those experiencing issues with their tenancy at the earliest opportunity.
- g. Identifying properties that we could access for particular needs such as 16 to 17 year olds.
- h. Continuing to fund the Domestic Abuse key worker following Suffolk County Council ended funding in 2023 to 2024.
- i. Invested in two new tenancy sustainment officers to support households to maintain their tenancy resulting in more settled accommodation.
- j. More focusing on preventing rough sleeping with more investment in the navigator roles.
- k. Continually reviewing pathways and accommodation options for rough sleepers and looking to source accommodation options.

Housing related support

- 5.2 In January 2024, Suffolk County Council (SCC) made the decision to substantially reduce the Housing Related Support (HRS) service due to budgetary pressures. SCC will only be commissioning services for those to whom it owes a duty to provide support; that is care leavers until the age of 25 and those who have been assessed as having eligible care and support needs by adult services.
- 5.3 The current value of SCC's contract in West Suffolk is £963,191 per annum which provides support for 173 bedspaces. Services will be affected at the following accommodation settings in West Suffolk:
 - Lucy Adams House (formerly Tayfen House), Bury St Edmunds
 - YMCA, Bury St Edmunds
 - Acorn House, Bury St Edmunds
 - Coupals Court, Haverhill
 - Cangle Junction, Haverhill
 - Heazeworth House, Haverhill
 - The Limes, Haverhill
 - Properties in Springfield Road and Grove Road Bury St Edmunds
- 5.4 The above list includes 23 units for young families that are all currently occupied. All the young families currently housed were cases referred by the council's Housing Options Teams and all will be owed a statutory homelessness duty should they lose the accommodation currently in use. **Therefore, should the HRS service end, it is likely all 23 families will need temporary accommodation.** Around 20 per cent of these families have children on child protection registers.
- 5.5 Through working with SCC we understand that of the remaining 147 bedspaces only **25** were referred by Suffolk Housing Options Teams during 2023/24. The remaining 122 beds are occupied by people who have been referred by partner organisations or they are self-referrals and at this stage it is not possible to determine how many the council may owe a statutory duty to house. There is a risk that, should the service provider decide to exit the market, the council could face needing to accommodate people currently supported and accommodated through the HRS service and this could result in an increase in rough sleeping.

- 5.6 West Suffolk has a duty to accommodate 16 to 17-year-olds if they approach the council as homeless. Following the approach, a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) referral is made to request that a statutory assessment is carried out to determine the young person's needs. This is an agreed protocol across Suffolk.
- 5.7 The paragraphs above demonstrate that West Suffolk does have some requirements for accommodation with support. With current providers considering withdrawing from the market there is an opportunity to work with them to provide the services we need for the future. We also need to consider that accommodation for 16 to 17-year-olds is required to be Ofsted registered (currently only two providers offer this service).
- 5.8 We will explore in more detail with providers the additional capacity needed to enable the team to commission services in West Suffolk to cater for those with medium and high support needs. The team would need to talk to the market and understand their positions in respect of whether they will continue to be working in West Suffolk or planning to sell properties they currently own. The service provider could look to claim housing benefit to cover its housing management costs and there would be a need for contract management resource. By increasing the budget envelope to a maximum of £200,000 per annum the council could take the time needed to develop a more nuanced and local response that meets local demand and supports need and will be informed by the emerging Housing Strategy.
- 5.9 By directly commissioning HRS services to provide accommodation with support, the council will also consider (1) the impact on the current use of temporary accommodation; and (2) a system review of the current Supported Housing Options available to homeless people in West Suffolk including those in Rough Sleeper Initiative and Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme accommodation.
- 5.10 Given the future changes to the delivery of HRS, this section of the evidence base will be updated in reflect the new provision in 2025.

Predicting levels of homelessness

- 5.11 The council is seeing an increase in demand for services due to a range of factors. There is an increasing demand for temporary accommodation due to rising case numbers of families and individuals presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness, mainly due to the cost-of-living crisis. We are also likely to see increased demand due to a range of Government schemes including asylum dispersal, support for Afghans including those leaving bridging hotels and Ukrainians presenting as homeless. Government's decision to release prisoners early from summer 2024, to relieve overcrowding in prisons, will also impact on the demand for our services. At the time of writing, we are waiting to understand more about the Renters' Reform Bill and the implications the measures will have for services. As mentioned above, we are also working through the changes to how Housing Related Support services will be delivered across Suffolk and are in the process of developing the West Suffolk Housing Pathway.

- 5.12 The council has developed a model using historic data that helps to predict the future demand for services. We are currently estimating that demand for services in 2024 to 2025 will increase by 10 per cent which means the number of people approaching the council for advice in that year would be 2,460.
- 5.13 Despite these challenges and demands on our services that cannot yet be fully known or understood, the council is in a strong position to respond to increase demand. This is reflected in the actions being taken forward in the Housing, Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy, working to develop innovative ways to deliver services to residents and particularly the most vulnerable, by continuing to utilise data, keep up-to-date with the latest information from central Government and continuing to work in partnership with a range of agencies, registered providers, Suffolk local authorities and the Cambridge sub-region.