



# Homelessness Review 2016

## **CONTENTS**

	Page
1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT.....	5
3. PROFILE OF CANNOCK CHASE.....	8
4. REVIEW FINDINGS.....	20
5. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION.....	25
6. ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT PROVISION.....	32
7. SUMMARY.....	37

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 What is a homelessness review?**

The homelessness review process undertaken by Cannock Chase Council has been taken in accordance with Section 1(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002 (“the 2002 Act”), which gives housing authorities the power to carry out a homelessness review for their district and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review.

Under section 2(1) of the 2002 Homelessness Act a homelessness review means a review by the local housing authority of:

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

The purpose of the review is to establish the extent of homelessness in the district, assess its likely extent in the future, and identify what is currently being done, and by whom, and what level of resources are available, to prevent and tackle homelessness.

By undertaking this process the Council has been able to gain a clearer picture of homelessness and its associated problems in the District. A mapping exercise has taken place to ascertain the level of resources and services available to help prevent and tackle homelessness. Cannock Chase Council is committed to addressing the problem of homelessness in the District and will utilise any available resources to provide the best possible service for homeless people or people at risk of homelessness.

The review process has adhered to the following principles:

- To ensure homeless clients can make informed choices through appropriate advice and effective and efficient homeless procedures;
- A primary focus on the activities that may contribute to preventing the occurrence of homelessness;
- Taking a long-term strategic approach to the issues surrounding homelessness;
- To acknowledge the wider social issues affecting the District of Cannock Chase;

- Working in collaboration with a number of different organisations to ensure a cohesive approach to homelessness;
- To deliver holistic services that meet the needs of the client group.

## **1.2 Consultation**

In order to map the services available to homeless people, a detailed questionnaire was sent out to all the main providers in the area. The questionnaire requested information as to what homeless advice, accommodation and support agencies provide and to which client group. The questionnaire also identified what the main causes of homelessness were for the agencies' client groups and any contributory factors.

## **1.3 Methodology**

The Review process sought to identify the needs of all homeless people, and those likely to become homeless. This was to be achieved by compiling a detailed picture of the past, current and future nature and levels of homelessness across the District and in relation to other areas.

The Review pulls together available data from a wide range of sources including P1E returns and performance indicators. This information provides a detailed picture of the levels and causes of homelessness across Cannock Chase, and used together with demographic data, the review can identify unmet need and future trends.

This review forms the basis for the production of a new Homelessness and Housing Strategy. It will demonstrate the major issues and gaps in provision regarding homelessness in the District. The Strategy will build further upon these, with further consultation of partners, to set out plans to tackle homelessness over the next five years.

The Review will be sent out for consultation to agree on the main issues and priorities before writing the Strategy.

## **2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT**

### **2.1 National Strategic Context**

Since 2002, the Government has made homelessness prevention a priority through providing increased funding to tackle homelessness, setting challenging targets for the prevention of homelessness, and placing requirements on the local councils to produce Homelessness Strategies. The 2002 Homelessness Act extended the definition of priority need to include new groups of vulnerable people, whilst outlining the requirements placed upon local authorities to produce Homelessness Strategies. These strategies were to be informed by a review of performance, current service provision and estimated future need. The Act stated that the focus of these strategies was to be on prevention measures, as well as emphasising the importance of offering advice to all people in housing need.

The government is committed to tackling and preventing homelessness and to working in partnership with LA's, voluntary sector partners and Housing Associations to deliver a number of key policy aims. In 2010 a cross-Government working group on homelessness was established, bringing together ministers from 8 government departments, to prevent and reduce homelessness and improve the lives of those people who do become homeless.

In July 2011 the working group published its vision to end rough sleeping, 'No Second Night Out Nationwide', with the aim of rolling out the No Second Night Out (NSNO) model being delivered in London to all Local Authority areas. The focus of NSNO is on single homeless people who are not in 'priority need' including those who are living on the streets and those who are at the greatest risk of rough sleeping. The principle is that a service should be in place to ensure that anyone who does spend one night sleeping rough is immediately helped off the streets and does not have to spend a second night out and the working group recognises the importance of tackling the broader issues of access to stable housing in order to prevent homelessness and avoid the associated impacts in the longer term.

This was followed in August 2012 with 'Making every contact count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness' which turns attention up stream to look at how services can prevent all households, regardless of whether they are families, couples, or single people, from reaching a crisis point where they are faced with homelessness. The report brings together commitments across a number of departmental areas with a focus on tackling troubled childhoods and adolescence, improving health, reducing involvement in crime and improving skills through employment and financial advice with a focus on ensuring that every contact local services make with vulnerable people and their families is focused on improving outcomes and preventing homelessness.

In early 2016 Conservative backbench MP Bob Blackman introduced a Private Members' Bill aimed at reducing homelessness, this has since progressed to the Homelessness Reduction Bill, which at the time of writing was still going through Parliament and not yet passed as law. The aim of the Bill is to reform the homelessness duties placed on local authorities to ensure that at-threat households receive better help quicker. It will achieve this by making a number of amendments to the Housing Act 1996.

The Bill will amend Section 175 of the Housing Act 1996 in two ways. Firstly, the definition of threatened with homelessness will be extended from 28 to 56 days. This will enable local authorities to respond to the threat of homelessness at a much earlier point, and providing help such as mediation with landlord, payment by way of grant or loan, or debt management support. Secondly, local councils will have to accept a valid Section 21 eviction notice as evidence that the tenant is threatened with homelessness. This is a long-standing problem for landlords with tenants being advised to remain in the property until the bailiffs turn up because local authorities do not have to accept them as homeless until they are evicted.

The Bill also proposes to amend the Housing Act 1996 in order to:

- Create a stronger advice and information duty, as the current legislation provides very little detail about what actions local authorities need to undertake.
- Create a stronger prevention duty, for anyone who is threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance to ensure that homelessness is tackled at the earliest point.
- Introduce a new relief duty for all eligible homeless people who have a local connection, so local authorities must take reasonable steps to secure accommodation regardless of priority need status.
- Introduce a new duty to provide emergency accommodation for homeless people with nowhere safe to stay, for up to 28 days so they are not forced to sleep rough.
- Incentivise people to engage in prevention and relief work, by allowing local authorities to discharge their prevent and relief duties if an applicant unreasonably refuses to cooperate with the course of action that they and the Housing Options team have agreed to undertake.
- Introduce a right to judicial review, at the prevention, relief and main duty stages to ensure local authorities can be held to account.
- Collect data, in order to monitor the overall effectiveness of the new legislation.
- Explore options for further enforcement, such as through the creation of a regulator of housing and homelessness services.

In October 2016, the Government announced a new £40 million homelessness prevention programme to provide an innovative approach to tackling homelessness, with prevention at its heart. This includes: £20 million for local authorities to pilot new initiatives to tackle homelessness in their area; £10 million for targeted support for

those at imminent risk of sleeping rough or those new to the streets; and £10 million in Social Impact Bonds to help long-term rough sleepers with the most complex needs.

At the time of publication, the Council are working with neighbouring Staffordshire and Derbyshire local authorities to submit a bid to the £10m pot for targeted support for those at imminent risk of sleeping rough, to extend specialist accommodation and support provision for rough sleepers across the area.

## 2.2 Local Strategic Context

The Council's **Corporate Plan 2015-18** establishes a renewed mission for the Council: *"Leading our community to deliver better jobs and skills, more and better housing, cleaner and safer environments and better health outcomes"*. The fundamental elements of the mission are mirrored in the Council's revised priorities, namely:

- Better jobs and skills;
- More and better housing;
- Cleaner and safer environments;
- Better health outcomes;
- Customers.

For each of these priorities, a revised annual Priority Delivery Plan is developed. The Homelessness Strategy 2011-16 and overarching Housing Strategy 2011-16 contributed to delivery of the Corporate Plan.

The Council's **Housing Strategy 2011-16** set out the plans for the improvement of housing and support needs across Cannock Chase for the 5 year period. The key aims of the Strategy are:

- To increase the supply of Affordable Housing
- To support vulnerable households to live independently in their own homes
- To maintain the Council's housing stock to the 'Decent Homes' Standard

The Council will review and develop a new joint Homelessness and Housing Strategy for the 2017-2022 period.

### **3. PROFILE OF CANNOCK CHASE**

#### **3.1 Social Characteristics of the District**

Many of the communities in the District of Cannock Chase developed because of coal mining and the legacy it has left behind. The collapse of the coal mining industry had severe economic and social implications for the District and led to some areas suffering from the most acute concentration of multiple deprivation.

The District had an unemployment rate of 3.7 per cent at July 2016, which has decreased since the publication of the last review. Around 14,200 households have an income less than £20,000, whilst the average annual household income in the District is around £35,200 – lower than the national average at £40,000. From scores contained within the Indices of Deprivation 2015, Cannock Chase District is ranked 128th, on the average rank scores, out of 326 local authorities in England. It is the most deprived authority in Staffordshire (excluding Stoke-on-Trent).

Factors such as these can directly or indirectly contribute to homelessness and affect an individual's ability to maintain a tenancy. Education, skills and training in the District is the worst aspect of the Index, ranking 37 out of 326 LAs in England and Wales. Employment and Health indicators are also in the worst performing 100 local authority areas. With high levels of deprivation in Education, skills and training as well as Employment and Health, it will create negative impacts upon income and subsequently upon housing affordability and options.

The District has an estimated population of 98,500 according to the 2014 mid year population estimate and population projections suggest that this will increase to 101,900 by 2024. Approximately 18.2% of the population is aged under 16 years and the District has a teenage pregnancy rate of 37.4 per 1,000 women aged between 15 to 17 (which has reduced from the last review at 46.9 per 1,000), which is higher than the national average.

Youth unemployment (16 to 24 years) in the District (as a percentage of total unemployment) is over 25 per cent (at July 2016), with approximately 195 young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Significantly, only 46.6 per cent of pupils in the area achieve five or more GCSE/GNVQ qualifications at Grade A\*-C, much lower than the national average of 53.8 per cent. This may be one of the many factors that can help to explain why there are more than 10,000 adults (16.8%) with no qualifications in Cannock Chase, double the proportion of the national average. It is essential that young people in the District have their support needs met and can access relevant supported accommodation if necessary. Receiving appropriate help and advice can prevent homelessness occurring and also help with the wider social issues of crime, drug use, unemployment and early pregnancy.

Current homelessness policy has placed a greater emphasis on prevention. It is therefore essential that good quality, free and accessible housing advice is provided for those who need it. Cannock Chase Council endeavours to prevent homelessness occurring in conjunction with a range of services, including Social Services, Education, Probation and Voluntary Organisations. The causes of homelessness are often extremely complex and the Council's Homelessness and Housing Strategy will provide a strategic approach to inform these issues.

### **3.2 Our Current Services**

The Housing Division contains both the Strategic and Operational housing functions.

#### Strategic Housing

The Strategic Housing section consists of two functions: Housing Strategy and Housing Options.

#### *Housing Strategy and Service Improvement*

The strategic housing role requires the team to:

- assess and plan for current and future housing needs of the local population;
- make the best use of existing housing stock;
- plan and facilitate new supply;
- plan and commission housing support services which link homes to support and other services that people need to live in them;
- have working partnerships that secure effective housing and neighbourhood management.

By contributing to place shaping, strategic housing activity can help to deliver improved services (including health, education, social services); a safe environment; accessible transport; a strong sense of community; and a decent home for all at a price people can afford.

#### *Housing Options and Homelessness*

The Housing Options team performs the strategic housing function of providing and commissioning advice and assistance to help people in housing need to find suitable accommodation. It is often the case that people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness approach the Housing Options team directly. The Housing Options team provides advice on a number of housing issues including tenancy problems, illegal eviction and housing benefit entitlements. Various leaflets and booklets are produced that cover a range of housing issues and details of Registered Social Landlords and private landlords in the District are also available.

## Housing Services

Housing Services staff are based in the 'bungalow annex' next to the Civic Centre and at the Depot in Hawks Green. The Hednesford and Rugeley Area Offices remain open for customer service enquiries, but the Housing Service at these offices will be limited to advice and assistance offered by counter service staff. Housing staff have been split into teams covering: Tenancy Services; Housing Property Services; and Housing Maintenance.

- *Tenancy Services* – Allocations and Lettings; Rent Collection and Arrears Recovery; Housing Applications, Housing Register and Choice Based Lettings Scheme; Estate Management; and Supported Housing Services.
- *Housing Property Services* – Planned maintenance including kitchen and bathroom replacement; Cyclical maintenance including gas servicing; Disabled persons adaptations; Asset Management Strategy; Right to Buy applications.
- *Housing Maintenance* – Responsive repairs; Works to voids; Elderly persons decoration scheme; Supervision of minor works contracts; and Tenants' requests for improvements.

The Housing Strategy and Service Improvement, Housing Options and Allocations & Lettings teams meet regularly to discuss new initiatives, recent trends and any problems or recurring issues.

### **3.2.1 Homelessness Procedure**

Information on all homelessness cases is stored on a central computer system to obtain complete and accurate figures. The data held also records reasons given for homelessness which enables the Council to find out what services could be put in place to help prevent homelessness occurring. Under the Council's homelessness procedure if there is any doubt about a homeless application it is treated as a potential homeless application until the matter is clarified. At the earliest opportunity a personal interview is arranged. If a new or existing applicant visits the Council and states that they are homeless or will be homeless that night, they are interviewed the same day.

There is also a homeless callout procedure in place so that homeless people can contact someone out of office hours for immediate assistance. The homelessness officer on duty will ask a series of questions to the applicant and make a decision as to whether to accommodate them. If so, appropriate accommodation is found and the homeless person is instructed to contact the Council the next working day for further help and assistance.

Cannock Chase Council sets a target for making a decision on its homelessness applications of 90% in 33 days. In 2015/16 the Council achieved 96% of decision within 33 days. The service provided is therefore undertaken as quickly and efficiently as

possible to help the homeless applicant and enable them to access relevant support services.

### 3.3 Current Housing Provision

There are currently just over 41,800 dwellings in Cannock Chase District, of which approximately 2.1% are vacant. The majority property type is semi-detached, accounting for 47% of all properties. Detached properties make up 29.3% of the total, whilst there are smaller proportions of terraced (12%) and flats (9.9%). The District has larger proportions of both semi-detached and detached housing than both the region and England, and therefore smaller proportions of terraced houses and flats.

Property Type	Cannock Chase (%)	West Midlands (%)	England (%)
Detached	29.3	23.7	22.3
Semi-detached	47.0	36.8	30.7
Terraced	12.0	22.9	24.5
Flat/Maisonette	9.9	13.3	16.7
Other	1.8	3.3	5.8

Figure 1 – Accommodation type breakdown  
Source: Census 2011, ONS.

The majority of households in the District are owner occupiers, of which 38.7% own with a mortgage or loan and 30.5% of households own their property outright. This level of home ownership is slightly above both national and regional levels for the number of owners with a mortgage or loan, but level with England for outright owners. The District has higher levels of Council renters, due to the Council retaining its stock and therefore lower levels of HA/RSL renters. Overall social rented is on a par with national figures, but slightly lower than the West Midlands proportion. There is however a smaller private rented stock than both regional and national levels.

Tenure	Cannock Chase (%)	West Midlands (%)	England (%)
Owner occupied: Owns outright	30.5	32.3	30.6
Owner occupied: Owns with a mortgage or loan	38.7	32.6	32.8
Owner occupied: Shared ownership	0.6	0.7	0.8
Rented from: Council (local authority)	13.0	10.9	9.4
Rented from: Housing Association / Registered Social Landlord	3.9	8.1	8.3
Rented from: Private landlord or letting agency	11.1	12.8	15.4
Rented from: Other	2.3	2.7	2.7

Figure 2 – Tenure breakdown  
Source: Census 2011, ONS.

Cannock Chase Council is the main provider of social housing in the District and currently owns and manages around 5,400 dwellings. Since the introduction of the Right to Buy policy in 1980, over 5,000 council homes have been sold to tenants. This accounts for over 45 per cent of the Council's original housing stock. However, the number of Council houses that are sold each year had decreased. Ten years ago in 2005/06 77 properties were sold and reduced down to 10 in 2008/09, however as a result of Government encouragement for homeownership with increased RTB discounts, sales have been increasing and in 2015/16 43 properties were sold. The number of right to buy sales could increase further with measures contained within the recent Housing and Planning Act 2016 making purchasing a Council property more attractive.

There is also a small amount of housing stock in the District that is owned by a number of Registered Providers (also known as Housing Associations or Registered Social Landlords), as detailed in figure 3 below:

<b>RSL Name</b>	<b>General Needs</b>	<b>Supported Housing</b>	<b>Total</b>
Midland Heart	337	175	512
Bromford	285	7	292
Sanctuary	246	6	252
Waterloo	227	0	227
Housing Plus	81	75	156
Wrekin Housing Trust	30	63	93
Accord	61	7	68
Hopkins and Sneyd	8	35	43
Masonic	0	34	34
Housing 21	0	30	30
Anchor Trust	0	27	27
Heantun	4	12	16
Birch and Samson	11	0	11
Trident Housing Association	10	0	10
Bespoke Supportive Tenancies	0	3	3
Walsall Housing Group	2	0	2
Orbit	1	0	1
Golden Lane Housing	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1303</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>1778</b>

Figure 3 – RP Stock  
Source: HCA Statistics, October 2016

### 3.3.1 Lettings, Demand and Turnover

The following table (fig. 4) presents the number of general needs lettings made by the Council and the turnover that it equates to. These figures only include new lettings and do not include transfers or mutual exchanges. The second table (fig. 5) presents the combined total for all new general needs affordable housing lettings (Council and RP).

Year	No. of Lettings	Turnover (%)
2015/16	260	5.06
2014/15	180	3.49
2013/14	224	4.18
2012/13	224	4.16

Figure 4 – Council New Lettings and Turnover  
Source: Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS)

Year	Total No. of Lettings
2015/16	*
2014/15	485
2013/14	494
2012/13	509

Figure 5 – Combined Council and RP Lettings  
Source: CORE Lettings (DCLG)  
\*2015/16 not released at time of publication.

There is a high demand for social housing in the District. At the end of October 2016 there were 474 'live' applications from households on the Council's housing register. However, the average number of Council and RP lettings accounts for only 7.67% of the combined affordable housing stock on average.

The Council offers a Choice Based Lettings Scheme called 'Cannock Chase Housing'. It aims to provide people with more choice and control over where they live. There are four priority bands which people are placed in upon receipt of their application. Available properties are advertised on a regular basis and customers can then express an interest them. Both Council and RP properties are advertised and can be bid for in the same manner, the Council makes nominations for the RP properties. The CBL scheme further helps the Council to identify those households most in need and match them with appropriate housing. The CBL scheme also includes the provision for Local Lettings Plans in respect of specific areas or schemes.

#### *Lettings to BME Groups*

Lettings to BME tenants has historically made up a very small proportion of the total lettings each year. Figure 6 presents the number of lettings made by the Council and RPs

to BME households in the past 4 years. It should be noted that this has become more difficult to monitor as a number of households refused to specify their ethnicity.

Year	Lettings to BME households
2015/16	*
2014/15	3 / 37 refused
2013/14	8 / 9 refused
2012/13	11

Figure 6 – BME Lettings  
 Source: CORE Lettings (DCLG)  
 \*2015/16 not released at time of publication.

The number of BME lettings over the past 4 years has ranged from 3 to 11 lettings (not including refusals) which accounts for less than 2% of all lettings. However, this is representative of the size of the BME population in the District. The BME population according to Census 2011 data is approximately 3%.

*Aids and Adaptations*

A disabled adaptation can be minor or major works/adjustments made to a tenants home which enables them to live both independently and in improved comfort in spite of their disability. If required, the Council will work with the tenant to find alternative accommodation suitable to their needs of disability, thus reducing the threat of homelessness. If, following assessment, you are deemed to require major works then the Council prioritises the work based on the level of need and the length of time the tenant has been waiting. The Council will work in partnership with other agencies to ensure any specific needs are identified and ensure a high standard of adaptation is provided.

*Anti-social behaviour*

Council tenants and other residents should be able to live free from violence, disturbance or nuisance. The causes and effects of ASB are wide and varied and our work would not be effective in dealing with these issues without input from partner agencies, which include, Staffordshire Police, Environmental Health, Youth Offending Team, Street Wardens, Victim Support, Education Welfare and Mediation Services.

The Council’s approach to responding to ASB is one of prevention, diversion, enforcement and support. Cannock Chase Council will take a balanced approach recognising the importance of the benefits of prevention and rehabilitation through such things as diversionary activities and engaging with offenders and recognising the need to support vulnerable people (as victims and perpetrators), referring them to partner agencies for support where necessary to reduce the risk of homelessness.

### *Rent Arrears*

Cannock Chase Council adopts a fair but firm approach to rent arrears recovery. We understand that illness or unemployment can sometimes make it difficult to pay your rent. Our policy is therefore, to make contact at the earliest opportunity, rent accounts that are in arrears are monitored weekly and the first contact is made when an account is two weeks in arrears. The Council can offer advice on housing benefits, supply contact numbers for debt and welfare advice and will arrange repayment agreements that are affordable and sustainable.

### **3.3.2 Private Rented Sector**

The private rented sector in Cannock Chase has grown in recent years due to house price affordability and a lack of social housing in the District. According to 2011 Census data the private rented sector now accounts for 11.1% of the housing stock, which has grown from 4.5% in 2001. The growth in the private rented sector is a national trend but the District's PRS has increased at a faster rate than national and regional levels. The sector remains very buoyant in the current economic climate.

A healthy and high quality private rented sector has an important function within our local housing market by providing flexibility, transition and additional options for local residents. We will continue to work in partnership with local landlords. This partnership is strong and has been sustained over a number of years. The fruits of this partnership working have been significant, such as the use of a private property register to match those seeking housing options advice with vacant private rented properties. The Cannock Chase Churches Housing Coalition also assists a number of people into the private rented sector with a rent advance scheme and a loss and damage guarantee scheme available.

The table below presents the number of households that have been assisted by the Council to enter the Private Rented Sector through referrals to landlords using the private property register.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Households assisted to enter PRS</b>
2012/13	77
2013/14	58
2014/15	48
2015/16	54
2016/17(Apr to Oct)	42

Figure 7 – PRS referrals  
Source: CCDC Housing Options Team

The households referred would normally find it difficult to access the PRS using the traditional routes i.e. via Estate/Lettings Agents, mainly due to affordability in respect of costs up front or agents not accepting HB tenants/poor credit history; young people who are not currently working and under 35 for whom HB would be restricted to the Shared Accommodation Room Rate under Local Housing Allowance.

### 3.3.3 Affordable Housing Delivery

During the past five years the Council has enabled the delivery of 430 new affordable homes in the District. This has included new build schemes by RPs and the Council (general needs and Extra Care), and the purchase of existing dwellings from the private sector. A mixture of social rented, affordable rented and low-cost homeownership units (shared ownership and Help to Buy) have been provided across a range of housing types and sizes.

Period	Number Delivered
2015-16	22
2014-15	161
2013-14	102
2012-13	124
2011-12	21

Figure 8 – Affordable Housing Delivery  
Source: Housing Strategy Team, CCDC

### 3.3.4 Housing Market and Affordability

Although average house prices for the Cannock Chase District are high for many people, particularly first-time buyers and low income families, they compare favourably with the rest of Staffordshire. For the quarter ending March 2016 the average house price for Cannock Chase was £145,732, the second lowest average house price of all the eight Staffordshire local authority areas after Newcastle under Lyme. Cannock Chase also has a much lower average than the West Midlands at £169,541.

The average annual income of full time employed residents in the Cannock Chase District in 2015 was £28,489, whilst overall resident average income is £23,302. Comparing these annual income against average house prices can reveal how affordable property is in the District using an affordability ratio. As stated above the average house price in Cannock Chase is £145,732, which equates to 5.12 times the full time employed resident average, and 6.25 for all residents in the District. The West Midlands average incomes are £30,239 for full time employed residents and £24,886 for all residents, against an average house price of £169,541, affordability ratios work out at 5.61 and 6.81, slightly higher than the District.

Whilst Cannock Chase has lower affordability rates (i.e. is more affordable) than the West Midlands, the District's lower average incomes do increase the difficulty of purchasing a property on the open market.

Due to house prices being unaffordable for a large number of households in the District the private rented sector is now fairly buoyant in Cannock Chase. As a result of high house prices, many households have turned to the private rented sector for accommodation as it is more affordable and so, the demand for rental property is increasing. As previously mentioned, the size of the PRS housing stock has grown significantly over the past 10-15 years as it becomes the most affordable and accessible tenure type for a lot of households in the District.

The table below shows the average rental cost per calendar month (PCM) for the District compared to neighbouring local authorities and regional and national levels.

Average Rents PCM (£) by bed size						
	Studio	One	Two	Three	Four or more	Overall
ENGLAND	641	694	760	867	1,556	820
WEST MIDLANDS	414	484	584	672	1,072	607
Staffordshire	385	427	529	628	928	567
<b>Cannock Chase</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>771</b>	<b>517</b>
East Staffordshire	368	422	520	621	882	559
Lichfield	429	478	608	709	1,197	680
Newcastle-under-Lyme	..	404	492	579	906	519
South Staffordshire	331	466	585	676	1,040	654
Stafford	371	432	560	649	909	569
Staffordshire Moorlands	.	383	456	572	748	502
Tamworth	.	479	564	660	894	606

Figure 9: Average Rent PCM by bed size  
Source: VOA Private Rent Statistics, May 2016 release.

Cannock Chase has the second lowest overall average rent across Staffordshire, private rented tenants paying £517 per calendar month, only Staffordshire Moorlands is lower. Rent for each bed size in the District is lower than the Staffordshire, West Midlands and England average, with the exception of Studio accommodation slightly higher than Staffordshire. There is very little studio accommodation in Cannock Chase only around 10 properties were recorded - so with demand high, cost is ultimately high.

For those households on low incomes that require assistance with their housing rent the Local Housing Allowance amount for the District is set by the Mid Staffs Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA) amounts. Whilst rents in comparison to neighbouring authorities and regional and nation levels seem more affordable, tenants may find a deficit

between their rental costs and the LHA amounts that are available. This increases with the size of the property as shown in the table below.

Accommodation Size	LHA Amount per week	Average Rent Weekly equivalent	Difference per week
Shared Accommodation	£66.70	-	-
One Bedroom	£90.90	£91.38	£0.48
Two Bedrooms	£113.92	£115.69	£1.77
Three Bedrooms	£129.47	£136.38	£6.91
Four Bedrooms	£170.67	£177.92	£7.25

Figure 10: Average Rent PCM by bed size  
Source: VOA Private Rent Statistics, May 2016 release.

There is a small deficit in LHA amount for one and two bed accommodation of £0.48 and £1.77 respectively so households reliant on LHA to cover rent will be able to cover the cost of rent but with demand increasing, the availability of good quality rented accommodation is limited.

For three and four bed accommodation the LHA amount is approximately £7 per week or around £30 per month short of the average rent amount, which means households dependant on LHA will need to find accommodation at the lower price end and therefore quality of accommodation is not quite as good – this in turn may have an impact on a household’s health should the property not have sufficient heating or is damp.

There is little shared accommodation in the District so a comparable average rent is not able to be provided, however £66.70 per week or the equivalent of £289 per calendar month will not be enough to obtain private rented accommodation. Studio and One bed accommodation rents average just under £400 pcm. This is why there are increasing numbers of single people under 35 years old approaching the Council for housing assistance either as homeless, wanting to join the Housing Options private rented register or applying to Cannock Chase Housing.

### 3.3.5 Housing Needs

#### *Housing Needs Study and Housing Market Assessment*

The Council gathers as much information as possible about housing need in the District to inform both Housing and Homelessness Strategies. A Housing Market Assessment was undertaken jointly with the southern Staffordshire local authorities of Lichfield and Tamworth in 2011. The main findings from the survey were as follows:

- There is an affordable housing shortfall of 197 units per year in the District;
- Smaller affordable homes of 1 and 2 bedrooms are required within both the Cannock and Rugeley Housing Market Areas.
- 23% of existing households and 37% of newly forming households cannot afford existing social rent levels; and
- Some 30% of existing households and 48% of newly forming households in Cannock Chase cannot afford 80% market rent (affordable rent level).

An updated Housing Needs Survey and Housing Market Assessment will be undertaken in the next 2-3 years. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 has introduced a new affordable tenure of 'Starter Homes' and a number of other policy changes. A housing needs study will need to be undertaken once all the policies of the Housing and Planning Act have been implemented.

## **4. REVIEW FINDINGS**

### **4.1 What is homelessness?**

Homelessness is a term that is often associated with people living on the streets. This may be a more visible form of homelessness but the majority of homeless people are families or single people who are living with relatives or friends or are in temporary accommodation. There are a number of complex reasons that may cause a person to become homeless and often finding somewhere to live for an individual does not solve their homelessness. People often become homeless repeatedly and it is necessary to understand why they feel unable to maintain accommodation and establish the support needs they may require.

The Housing Act 1996 defines the help that local authorities must offer homeless people. This ranges from a main duty to secure accommodation to providing advice and assistance for example through housing advice or referrals to other housing providers.

Cannock Chase Council is required by law to provide temporary accommodation, until permanent accommodation is found for those people who are in priority need and have become homeless unintentionally. The priority need groups which are specified under Section 189 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 are:

- Pregnant women, or someone who resides with a pregnant woman;
- Households with dependant children;
- Anyone who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap, physical disability or other special reason, or someone who lives with a vulnerable person;
- Anyone who has lost his/her accommodation as a result of an emergency such as a flood, fire or other disaster.

Following implementation of the Homelessness Act 2002, the priority need categories have been extended to include the following:

- Young people aged 16 and 17 years old, unless they have left care, in which case social services are already responsible for ensuring they have accommodation;
- Young people aged 18 to 21 years old who have been looked after by social services;
- People who are vulnerable as a result of:-
  - Being over 21 years old and having been in care between the ages of 16-18;
  - Having served in the armed forces;
  - Having been in prison;
  - Being homeless because of violence or threats of violence which are likely to be carried out.

There are also those who lose their accommodation through their own actions such as failing to pay the rent, or being found guilty of behaving in an anti-social manner. These

applicants are deemed as intentionally homeless and the Local Authority does not have a legal duty to find accommodation, however the 2002 Act extended the existing duty to provide advice and assistance to any person presenting to the Council, including those households deemed intentionally homeless and not in priority need.

#### 4.2 Recent homelessness trends

The table below presents the number of decisions made by the Housing Options team on homelessness applications in the last four years and the Priority Need groups the homeless households fall into.

Priority Need Group	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Decisions Made	208	182	178	137
Priority Need	27	42	34	19
With Children	14	29	26	15
Pregnant	4	3	1	1
Old Age	0	1	1	0
Physical Disability	0	2	4	0
Mental Illness	4	4	2	0
Fled home because of violence - (of which Domestic Violence)	2 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)
Custody/Remand	0	0	0	0
Applicant aged 16/17	1	0	0	0
Applicant formerly in care and aged 18 to 20	2	3	0	2
Homeless because of emergency	0	0	0	0
Having been in 'Care'	0	0	0	0
Served in HM Forces	0	0	0	0
Other i.e. Drug/Alcohol dependency or Asylum Seeker	0	0	0	0

Figure 11 - Homeless cases investigated since April 2012

Source: P1E

The general year on year trend is for the number of decisions made to decrease, which has occurred in the period above. Figure 10 shows that of the 208 decisions in 2012/13, only 27 were deemed to be in priority need. There was an increase in 2013/14, and then decreases in Priority Need decisions dropping to 19 in 2015/16. A large proportion of Priority Need cases involve families with children or a pregnant woman. In 2012/13 and 2013/14 there were 8 priority need households homeless due to mental illness, this has decreased in the last two years.

The following table shows the reasons for homelessness of the Priority Need homeless households during the last four years.

<b>Reason for Homelessness</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
Parents unable to accommodate	4	8	4	3
Relatives/Friend Unable To Accommodate	4	0	2	0
Non-Violent Breakdown Of Relationship with partner	1	5	1	3
Violent Breakdown In Relationship involving partner	7	5	5	5
Violent breakdown of relationship involving associated persons	0	3	0	0
Racially motivated violence	0	0	0	0
Other forms of violence	1	0	0	0
Racially motivated harassment	0	0	0	0
Other forms of harassment	1	0	0	0
Mortgage Arrears	1	0	4	0
Rent Arrears On Local Authority/Public Sector	0	0	0	0
Rent Arrears on Registered Provider	0	0	0	0
Rent Arrears Private Sector	0	0	1	0
Loss Of Rented Accommodation	6	17	15	6
Left Institution or Care	2	4	1	2
Other (Left HM forces, returned from abroad, sleeping rough)	0	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>19</b>

Figure 12 - Reasons for Homelessness for those in Priority Need since April 2012  
**Source: P1E**

Analysis of the reasons given for homelessness cases can give the Council valuable information that can help to identify the major issues that are affecting the District and inform advice and prevention procedures, support needs and future housing requirements. Figure 12 shows that 'Loss of rented accommodation' followed by 'Violent Breakdown in Relationship involving partner' are the two most common reasons for homelessness in the past four years. 'Parents unable to accommodate' was also a common reason as a cause of homelessness.

Age of applicants	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
16 – 24	12	12	10	12
25 – 44	12	22	17	6
45 – 59	3	7	5	1
60 – 64	0	0	1	0
65 – 74	0	0	0	0
75 & Over	0	1	1	0
<u>Total</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>19</u>

Figure 13 – Age of accepted homeless applicants  
Source: P1E

Analysis of the age of applicants in recent years can show that the majority came from the 25-44 years age group, closely followed by the 16-24 years age group. These two age bands are the largest in population number, so it would be expected. In 2015/16 there were significantly more applicants under 25.

	Couple with dependent children	Lone parent household with dependent children		One person household		All other household groups	Total
		Male	Female	Male	Female		
2012/13	4	1	13	4	5	0	27
2013/14	5	1	26	7	2	1	42
2014/15	5	1	21	4	1	2	34
2015/16	1	1	14	1	2	0	19

Figure 14 – Household type of accepted homeless applicants  
Source: P1E

Figure 14 demonstrates the household type of accepted homeless applications. The table shows that the majority of applicants are female lone parents with dependant children, on average over 50% of all acceptances are female lone parents. This is followed by one person households (male and female) and couples with dependant children.

#### *BME Groups*

In 2015/16 only one accepted homeless applicant belonged to a BME group which accounted for 5% of all accepted applicants. Of the total homelessness applications there were only two applicants belonging to a BME group, which accounted for 1.46% of all applicants. This is similar for the three years previously, with only 1 BME household accepted as homeless in 2013/14 and no BME applicants in 2012/13 or 2014/15. It is

worth noting however that the BME population in Cannock Chase according to Census 2011 statistics is 2.2%. Therefore BME groups are under-represented

#### **4.3 Analysis of Homelessness Trends in Cannock Chase**

- The loss of private rented accommodation has become the most popular reason for homelessness in Cannock Chase. Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner (domestic violence) and Parents/family unwilling to accommodate were also common reasons for homelessness.
- Homelessness due to parents being unable to accommodate was historically the most popular reason for homelessness but this has decreased in recent years and could be put down to the successful mediation work now done by the Housing Options Team;
- The number of domestic violence cases has risen, and there have been 5 applicants/households accepted as homeless in each of the past three years, the proportion of domestic violence accepted cases can be seen to have increased but this is because the total accepted applications have decreased;
- The number of cases of homelessness due to mortgage arrears has significantly reduced. This could be put down to the good work of the Housing Options Team and the Mortgage Rescue Scheme which ran until 2014/15. Lately the national interest rate has been kept relatively low at 0.5% and recently down to 0.25%, meaning mortgage rates have been favourable over the last few years;
- The majority of cases involved younger people, those in the 25-44 were most common closely followed by 16-24 age groups. Most were homelessness acceptances were female and were lone parents of dependant children.
- The Housing Options and Allocations Teams, together with external agencies such as Social Services, still report a lack of direct access accommodation options. Households, mostly single people, are often referred to temporary accommodation which is some distance outside the area where their support networks are located;
- The introduction of Local Housing Allowance, combined with the lack of shared accommodation for under 35's in the District has meant an increasing number of approaches and contacts from young single people in need of assistance in obtaining accommodation;
- The demand, and limited supply, of private rented accommodation in the District has meant homelessness due to the end of assured shorthold tenancies has become a more common, as landlords have very little trouble finding new tenants.

## 5. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

### 5.1 Homeless Lettings

Figure 15 shows the number and proportion of lettings and nominations made to Priority Homeless households. Over the past 4 years almost 13% of all new lettings have been made to priority homeless households. Just over 7% of nominations to Registered Providers were made to homeless households. In 2015/16 only two nominations were made to Registered Providers where the household were priority need homeless.

Year	No. of Lettings	Homeless Lettings	As a % of all lettings to new tenants	LA Noms to RPs	Homeless Noms	As a % of all noms
2015/16	260	24	9.23%	87	2	2.30%
2014/15	180	34	18.89%	135	15	11.11%
2013/14	224	34	15.18%	98	7	7.14%
2012/13	224	22	9.82%	82	5	6.10%

Figure 15 - Council Lettings and Nominations to RPs  
Source: Allocations Team, CCDC

The proportion of homeless nominations is lower than the proportion of homeless lettings, however the RP stock is smaller and the timing of RP voids and nomination requests may not always coincide with the occurrence of homelessness and the need to make a nomination. Nominations to RPs should still be monitored to ensure they are assisting the Council in meeting the housing need of the District.

The immediate outcomes for applicants that the Council found to be homeless and in 'Priority Need' are demonstrated in Figure 16. The majority either accepted a 'Part 6' housing offer or remained in temporary accommodation awaiting a housing offer as they were owed a main duty.

	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
Applicant placed / or remains in temporary accommodation for the foreseeable future	17	13	11	0
Applicant accepted Assured Shorthold Tenancy offer	0	0	0	0
Applicant accepted "Part 6" offer (including LA nomination to a Registered Provider)	10	26	19	16
Authority regards its S193 duty as ended - e.g. applicant household made own arrangements, refused a suitable offer of accommodation, or made no further contact with LA	0	3	4	3
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>27</u></b>	<b><u>42</u></b>	<b><u>34</u></b>	<b><u>19</u></b>

Figure 16 – Immediate Outcome / Re-housing of priority need cases  
Source: P1E

The Council is committed to reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation in line with Government guidance. In December 2003 the Government introduced into legislation an Order that stated from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 Bed and Breakfast accommodation should not be used for families with children for longer than 6 weeks. All local authorities had to achieve this target by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004 and the Council complied with this. Ever since, the Council have tried to ensure that families are only placed in bed and breakfast accommodation when absolutely necessary and even then, for no longer than 6 weeks.

During the period from April 2015 to March 2016 bed and breakfast accommodation was used in 17 cases with an average stay of 25 days.

## 5.2 Homelessness Prevented/Relieved

Homelessness prevention means assisting people to address their housing and other needs in order to avoid homelessness. Prevention activities include those which enable a household to remain in their current home, where appropriate, or to enable a planned and timely move and help sustain independent living.

As recorded by the Housing Options team for the DCLG P1E return, the total number of cases where positive action was successful in preventing or relieving homelessness is presented in the table below for the last five years.

Year	Prevented	Relieved	Total
2015/16	551	513	1064
2014/15	412	503	915
2013/14	401	433	834
2012/13	379	459	838
2011/12	290	493	783

Figure 17: Homelessness Prevented/Relieved

Source: P1E Returns

There has been a notable increase in the number of cases of prevented and relieved in the last five years, particularly in respect of the number of preventions which can be put down to the proactive work of the Housing Options Team and partner agencies. This can help to explain why there has been a reduction in the number of homelessness acceptances in the last few years too, with more cases being either prevented or relieved.

### 5.3 DCLG Homelessness Prevention Grant - 2015/16

Since 2002 DCLG (the former ODPM) have allocated local authorities a certain amount of grant funding to enable Council's to tackle homelessness and its associated problems in their area. From 2014/15 the homelessness grant funding was rolled into the Business Rate Retention Scheme (BRRS) and so the amount was no longer ring-fenced for homelessness prevention. The Council decided on a budget of £64,000 for 2015/16; this was distributed between the following initiatives:

#### *Safe As Houses*

The Safe As Houses Scheme is based on the London Borough of Harrow's 'Sanctuary Project'. This scheme was launched in 2002 with the aim of providing security measures to victims of domestic violence and hate crime to enable them to remain safely in their home. Their scheme has proved to be very successful and is a recognised area of good practice that was recommended to local authorities by the former ODPM, now DCLG.

Every 'Safe As Houses' project is different to meet the needs and circumstances of the individuals involved and appropriate security recommendations are made by the Police.

During 2015/16 42 people received adaptations to their properties. This has increased since 2013/14 when 24 people received adaptations and in 2014/15 when 23 people had adaptations to their home.

#### *Churches Housing Coalition*

The Churches Housing Coalition is a charity based within the Council, and works closely with the Housing Options team, to assist young adults to secure accommodation in the Private Rented Sector. Four weeks rent in advance is offered and a loss and damages

guarantee to the Landlord. In 2015 (calendar year) the Coalition received 97 enquiries and assisted 31 people to access accommodation.

*Domestic Violence Outreach Worker*

395 referrals were received during 2015/16 to provide community outreach support in the Cannock Chase area, including support for children, for victims of both domestic and sexual violence, IDVA and ISVA.

*Citizens Advice Bureau – Fast-track Money Advice*

Contribution made to allow the continued use of fast track money advice project which allows people to receive specialist debt and financial advice within seven days of referral.

*Housing Options/Homelessness Assistant posts*

Extension for a further year to an existing 2 year fixed term contract for an additional Housing Options Assistant (at 20 hours per week) to act as an initial point of contact regarding housing options / homelessness queries, the post was vacated in October 2015 however and not re-filled. Extension of working hours of existing Homelessness Assistant post to 30hrs instead of 18.5hrs for a further period of 12 months. This assists with provision of homelessness prevention advice relating to potential repossessions of owner occupiers i.e. mortgage debt difficulties and preventing repossession of private sector tenancies where possible.

#### **5.4 Other Initiatives supported by the Council**

*Private Property Register*

The Housing Options Team operates a Private Property Register which applicants can apply to register their interest (and need) for private rented accommodation in the District. Private Landlords with property in the District also sign up to the scheme and inform the Housing Option Team when they have a vacant property (or room if House in Multiple Occupation) and then households that have registered their interest for property can be referred by the Housing Options Team to the Landlord to consider offering a tenancy to.

As previously mentioned, the households that are referred would normally find it difficult to access the PRS using the traditional routes i.e. via Estate/Lettings Agents, as a result of affordability issues in respect of costs up front or agents not accepting HB tenants/poor credit history; young people who are not currently working and under 35 for whom HB would be restricted to the Shared Accommodation Room Rate under Local Housing Allowance.

The Housing Options Team has recently developed an excellent relationship with a landlord of a HMO (House in Multiple Occupation). This has allowed referrals of single

people, in particular those under 35 years old who can only claim the shared accommodation LHA rate, to the landlord who has accepted all the referrals and housed 8 people. The landlord is also in the process of extending their portfolio with another HMO and would look to accept further referrals from the Housing Options Team which could allow referrals for up to 25 single people in the two HMOs.

#### *Private Landlord's Forum*

Cannock Chase Council holds a regular Landlord's Forum that attracts a good cross section of Landlords, with a varying portfolio of property. The Forum aims to encourage landlords to adopt good working practices, which in turn improves the quality of accommodation available and encourages the owners of empty properties to consider letting them out for residential purposes. The Forum is also an excellent vehicle for the dissemination of information concerning changes to legislation, for example alterations to Housing Benefits.

Importantly, the Forum enables the Council to establish a line of communication and consultation with the private sector, which it recognises, can make a significant contribution to meeting housing need in the District.

#### *Property Accreditation Scheme*

The Council also has a Property Accreditation Scheme, which has been designed to help promote a healthy private rented sector within the District and give public recognition to the well intentioned landlords who apply to join the scheme. The Scheme is designed to benefit both parties but in particular the landlords who recognise the advantages of receiving advice and practical help from the local authority, and who value the status, or the increased likelihood of attracting tenants, associated with being officially accredited.

Membership of the scheme is entirely voluntary and is open to any individual, letting agent or company managing residential accommodation within the bounds of the Cannock Chase District. Landlords wishing to apply for accreditation will need to complete an application form detailing the address of the properties they wish to put forward for accreditation.

The Property Accreditation Scheme and the regularly held Landlords Forums will continue to ensure that landlords engage with the Council and produce a beneficial working relationship for both parties. These initiatives with the private sector can only help to improve the situation for homeless or potentially homeless people in the District. The Churches Housing Coalition have identified a problem with landlords being unwilling for young single people to occupy their properties. Hopefully, with the knowledge of the support mechanisms put in place by the Council, landlords will become more willing for young people to rent their properties. The benefits for homeless people in the District will be access to more properties of a guaranteed high standard and the knowledge that tenancy support will be available if they require it.

### *Housing Options Checker*

The Council's Housing Service has recently introduced a new website [www.cannockchasehousing.co.uk](http://www.cannockchasehousing.co.uk) which promotes self service to current tenants, prospective tenants and other people in housing need. The website allows people to check their housing options online and quickly get basic information about what options are available to them and what actions they are recommended to take.

## **5.5 Other activities contributing to reducing homelessness.**

### *Housing Options Team*

As previously mentioned, the Housing Options team provide valuable advice to people at risk of homelessness. A Housing Options Officer will conduct an interview with the person/household member and advise them of their options, more often than not a solution can be found.

### *Debt and Financial Advice*

Early intervention to prevent the loss of your home is crucial. Cannock Chase Council supported a number of initiatives during the last 5 years that offered advice and assistance on all matters relating to repossession of your home. Both the Labour and Coalition governments responded to the 2008 economic downturn by introducing initiatives to strengthen the safety net from repossessions: Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI), which helps some low income households with their mortgage costs, was made more generous; the Preventing Repossession Fund enabled local authorities to help households struggling with arrears; and the Mortgage Rescue Scheme gave people a route out of ownership when it had become untenable, as well as improving access to much-needed advice.

The Council supported the Mortgage Rescue Scheme to great effect, providing a one-stop shop for the District and assisting 34 households to remain in their home. These schemes were rolled back as economic conditions returned to normal. The last to go was the more generous rules for SMI. From April 2016 borrowers have had to wait 39 weeks after losing a job to claim SMI, rather than the shorter 13 weeks introduced as an emergency measure. More significantly, SMI itself will change fundamentally from 2018 when it ceases to be a benefit (paid on top of benefits such as Income Support) and will instead become a loan secured against a property.

The Council also offer tenants who are struggling to pay their rent advice on how to pay their rent and manage their arrears. We can also offer advice on Local Housing Allowance and Council Tax benefits to see if tenants are claiming the correct benefits to help cover their rent and Council Tax.

The Citizens Advice Bureau offer comprehensive advice on legal, financial, debt and welfare issues. The Chase Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) has seen an increase in numbers approaching them for advice and assistance from the last few years.

## 5.6 Rough Sleepers

Local authorities are required by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to submit an annual figure indicating the numbers of people sleeping rough in their area. This can be done by means of an estimate or a formal count. Due to the geographic size and population of the District and reports of rough sleeping throughout the year, the Council has undertaken an estimate exercise for a number of years. Whereby the Council asked a number of organisations (including housing associations, drugs treatment services, Probation Service, Children’s Services, Housing Services, Youth Offending Service, voluntary sector etc.) to provide an estimate of rough sleepers on an agreed given night. The Council collates the information received and follows up any reports of rough sleeping to ascertain they are correct, before reporting to DCLG.

The table below shows the number of rough sleepers estimated for the past 5 years.

Year	No. of Rough Sleepers	Agreed Date
2015	4	12/11/15
2014	5	19/11/14
2013	2	21/10/13
2012	1	31/10/12
2011	2	22/11/11

Figure 18: Rough Sleepers Estimates  
Source: CCDC, Rough Sleeper Returns

As Figure 18 shows there is only a small number of rough sleepers identified on the given night for the past 5 years, whilst there is an increase in numbers it is from a very small baseline.

## 6. ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT PROVISION

### 6.1 Accommodation Provision

A mapping exercise has taken place of all types of accommodation in the District that is available for homeless people to utilise. This includes hostels, Registered Providers (Housing Association) stock and Council dwellings. This also includes specialist and/or supported accommodation.

The table below details the accommodation provision in Cannock Chase that is known to be available to households who are homeless or those at risk of homelessness.

Provider	Description of Provision	Units
Cannock Chase District Council Festival Court, Cannock.	Cannock Chase Council has 1 no. 3 bed flat that is kept specifically for emergency homeless accommodation.	1
Rugeley Foyer, YMCA Aelfgar House Church Street Rugeley	Foyer project for young homeless people 16-25 years, male and female. Offers 26 supported units.	26
Heantun Housing Supported Accommodation, Cannock	Daily support is provided to homeless, male ex-offenders (not sex offenders) aged 17 plus. An individual support plan is devised and includes life skills, budgeting skills, social skills and training advice. Tenants can stay for up to 12 months but are able to stay longer if support needs remain unfulfilled. Referrals to the project are made through probation. The scheme is owned by Heantun Housing Association.	4
Avalon House, Cannock Sanctuary HA	The project now provides accommodation and support for people with learning disabilities (previously mental health). It comprises of six self-contained flats, with a communal area which contains a kitchen, laundry room and office. Avalon House is staffed from 9am-9pm, Monday to Friday and there is a 24 hour call system for any housing related issues. Residents have six month assured shorthold tenancies, which are renewable. Staff at the project assists the residents in maintaining their tenancies and maximising their benefit entitlements.	6
Beau Court, Cannock. Derventio Housing Trust.	Accommodation scheme and support for single homeless people managed by Derventio Housing Trust. Adullam Homes currently lease the scheme to Derventio, and are looking at extending the lease after end of March 2017.	6 (12 bed spaces)
Victory 66. Rugeley	Victory 66 provide two units of HMO accommodation, one supported (4 bed spaces) and one for general needs rent (3 bed spaces).	2 (7 bed spaces)

### **Support Provision**

There are a number of support services available in the Cannock Chase area that can provide advice, assistance and specialist help for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Since the last Homelessness Review in 2009 the number of support services that are still in existence has reduced significantly. The economic recession from around 2008 forced the cessation of a number of support services in the area during the strategy period and the recent removal of Supporting People funding from the County has also meant a number of services were unable to continue operating in the District.

Support services are a vital component in the network of measures that are undertaken to try and prevent people becoming homeless. Specialist advice and support can enable people to be fully aware of the services available to them and hopefully enable people to access adequate housing or maintain the tenancies they already have. It is vital that homeless people fully understand their rights so they can make informed choices. Any advisory or support service should also be aware of its own limitations and be informed enough themselves to refer people to other agencies if necessary. The Council will continue to ensure that its own advisory service provides high quality, free and accurate information on a number of issues including homelessness.

The following table identifies the advice and support services which are known to be available in Cannock Chase District. These services have been divided into sub-groups as appropriate.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Service provided</b>
<b>Generic Housing Related</b>	
Cannock Chase Churches Housing Coalition	The Churches Housing Coalition is a charity that assists people to secure accommodation in the Private Rented Sector. Four weeks rent in advance is offered and a loss and damages guarantee to the Landlord. The areas covered are Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley.
Cannock Chase Advice Centre	Free Confidential Advice given on: Welfare benefits; All disability benefits; Housing benefit; Council Tax; Consumer matters; Personal family advice; Open for visitors and telephone enquiries – Mon, Tues and Fri 10am -2pm; Home visits can be arranged.
Citizens Advice Bureau (Staffordshire South West)	A free, independent service that offers confidential, impartial advice on a number of issues including housing, homelessness and debt advice. Will deal with everything from simple enquiries to representing clients at law courts and tribunals.

Cannock and District Foodbank	The Foodbank provide three days' nutritionally balanced emergency food and support to local people who are referred in crisis. Part of a nationwide network of foodbanks, supported by The Trussell Trust, working to combat poverty and hunger across the UK. The foodbank is a project founded by local churches and community groups, working together towards stopping hunger in the local area.
Pye Green Christian Centre	General homelessness advice and support. PGCC also have two units of accommodation which they use as temporary accommodation for their clients.
Council for Voluntary Service (CVS)	The CVS represent local voluntary and community groups and develop networking opportunities with voluntary and statutory agencies. They also provide advice on various subjects.
Street Link	Nationwide service that enables the public to alert local authorities in England and Wales about rough sleepers in their area. Funded by the Government as part of its commitment to end rough sleeping. Street Link aim to offer the public a means to act when they see someone sleeping rough, and provide the first step someone can take to ensure people sleeping rough are connected to the local services and support available to them.
Staffordshire Local Crisis Support Scheme	The Scheme will assist people in Staffordshire who are in exceptional need to address immediate hardship where they are unable to access other types of support. Awards will not be made in the form of cash, however if the applicant is assessed as needing help, support will be provided in the form of food parcels, heating and white goods. Successful applicants will not be expected to pay back any support which they receive. People who will be eligible to apply to the scheme will be those who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Aged 16 or over and;</li> <li>•without access to sufficient funds to meet needs e.g. savings.</li> </ul>
<b>Drug and Alcohol</b>	
One Recovery Staffordshire	Led by Addiction Dependency Solutions (ADS), One Recovery is an innovative substance misuse partnership, bringing organisations together to offer the best service for our clients. One Recovery Staffordshire operates Countywide, and is supported by Staffordshire NHS Combined Healthcare Trust, Changes, Brighter Futures and Arch Housing – workers are trained to treat primary addictions whilst considering the whole spectrum of clients lives, with a particular emphasis on mental health and housing, ensuring whole person care is available for all.
Staffordshire CRISP Floating Support Scheme.	Helps young people with alcohol and drug problems living in local authority or housing association accommodation. Self-referral or via other agency. Telephone 01827 56420.
BAC O'Connor Centres. Burton (Cannock)	The BAC O'Connor Centre provides rehabilitation and support to people with a drug and / or alcohol misuse problem. (The majority of clients are funded through health, social services and partnership programmes with probation, health & social services.) The main residential centre is in Burton but in

	Cannock there is a residential unit for people who have already completed rehabilitation and are alcohol and drug-free and would like to return to live in their home area. There is also a tea room (Langan's) that employs people who have completed their rehabilitation.
<i>Older People</i>	
Accord Housing Association - At Home Floating Support or Dementia Services	An 'at home' floating support service for sufferers of dementia.
<i>Domestic Violence – Women, Children and Men</i>	
Staffordshire Womens Aid	Various projects across the County to help sufferers of Domestic Violence with: Coping strategies; Benefit help; Housing advice; Legal Issues; Workshops – self esteem; Budgeting.
<i>Mental Health / Learning Difficulties etc.</i>	
Rethink	Mental health tenancy support for: Help in setting up and maintaining home & tenancy; Developing domestic/life skills; Support in improving wellbeing; Advice, advocacy and Liaison; Managing finance & maximising personal benefits; Emotional support and advice; Signposting & accessing other agencies; Finding other accommodation when ready to Move On; Maintaining the safety & security of the property; Support with shopping and good neighbour tasks; Working towards recovery.
Autism West Midlands	Floating support service for people / families with a range of autism issues.
Bid services	Support service for deaf, deaf blind, deafened and hard of hearing individuals, providing housing related support.
<i>Ex-offenders</i>	
Heantun HA Floating support for High Risk Offenders	Heantun Housing was also subject to a loss of funding for the previous County-wide Floating Support Offender Service. However, an offender based support project has been commissioned by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) which is at a reduced level from the previous support contract. The contract is to support 120 people County-wide on a floating support basis with a priority to support high risk offenders.
<i>Family and children</i>	
Cannock Children Centre	Outreach family support team for vulnerable young families and hard to reach families. Home visiting and individual support for families with a variety of needs. Family Support Workers and Social Workers link with other professionals to provide information and support for parents of young children both practically and emotionally.

<p>Gingerbread (the organisation for lone parent families)</p>	<p>Gingerbread is the leading support organisation for lone parents and their children. Many people contact the organisation when going through the changes brought about by becoming a lone parent and need to meet other families with similar experiences.</p> <p>The National Advice Line can advise on: Benefits, childcare, CSA, contact, divorce, employment, housing, maternity rights and lone parenthood.</p>
<p>South Staffordshire Family Mediation Service</p>	<p>Mediation is for any couple, whether married or not, who may or may not have children and have separated or have decided to separate. The mediator's role is to ease communication about arrangements for children and/or property and finance. Mediation is free to many on state benefits or low income.</p>
<p>Relate</p>	<p>Offers a confidential counselling service to people who are experiencing relationship difficulties.</p>
<p>Staffordshire Victim Support</p>	<p>Victim Support is a national charity offering free, confidential support to people affected by anti-social behaviour in Cannock Chase District. The service provides personal support from the Anti-social Behaviour Victim and Witness Champion and specially trained volunteers. They will also provide information from other organisations and specialists and support with mediation.</p>

## 7. SUMMARY

Homelessness is a complex issue with no easy solution. Homeless people have extremely diverse needs and the available services need to be able to meet these needs. Prevention work plays a crucial part in tackling homelessness and should be the primary focus of present and future initiatives.

### *Major Issues*

The review has identified the following issues:

- **Shortage of affordable housing** – well documented issue, annual need calculated as 197 additional units.
- **Level of domestic violence and violence generally causing homelessness** – level of homelessness applications and acceptances during the past few years has remained high due to domestic violence. Again, the economic climate could create a more pressured home environment for some households with the level of domestic violence and violence increasing as a result;
- **Accommodation and support provision** – the continued and now complete removal of Supporting People funding has meant the closure of a number of services and put pressure on the few services that are able to continue providing housing and homelessness related accommodation and support.
- **Young persons with housing need, particularly single homeless** – Currently, there are 75 young people (under 25) that have live applications with Cannock Chase Housing who need accommodation in the District. There are also a number of vulnerable young people in the District, who have approached other agencies. Accommodation provision for young single homeless is very limited, with shortages in the provision of move on accommodation and support and a shortage of private rented stock of one bed/studio units and shared houses.

### *Gaps in provision*

The review has identified the following gaps in provision:

- **Move-on accommodation** – There are a number of young people who have entered supported housing and become ready to live independently only to find their route is blocked by the lack of move-on accommodation and support. There are a lack of accommodation options as well as limited tenancy support schemes (such as a specialist vulnerable young persons support scheme);
- **Accommodation provision for single homeless** – There are very few temporary accommodation options in the District, with no direct access accommodation in the District and only Rugeley Foyer offering temporary accommodation for young single homeless people;

### *Potential Future Issues*

The following are potentially issues as a result of recent policy announcements:

- New homelessness statutory duties that will remove priority need categories. LA's may be required to provide everyone with 'meaningful support' rather than those just in priority need. This could have significant resource implications.
- Landlords further reducing the private rented supply for households claiming benefits as Universal Credit comes into force as they may not want to risk tenants not paying their rent, also further regulations and less attractive tax relief allowances laid down by Government which could put off would be landlords and force current landlords to reduce their portfolios.
- Households who depend on benefit payments could face affordability difficulties in light of the benefit cap (total amount of benefits they are able to claim) being reduced to £20k per annum.

### ***Next Steps***

Cannock Chase Council and its partners already do a great deal to prevent homelessness including the proactive work of the Housing Options team and third sector partners such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, as well as the commissioned/in-house tenancy support services and floating support schemes.

The next step will be the production of a new Homelessness Strategy for the 2017-2022 period. This review has demonstrated the major issues and gaps in provision regarding homelessness in the District and the Strategy will build further upon these and detail plans to deal with homelessness in Cannock Chase for the next five years.