

Homelessness in Eastbourne

Summer 2018



Eastbourne

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Some commonly used abbreviations in the report are:

UC—Universal Credit

LHA—Local Housing Allowance

HMO—House of Multiple Occupation

HB—Housing Benefit

DHP—Discretionary Housing Payment

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the individuals concerned and are not attributable to the organisations they represent or Citizens Advice Eastbourne.

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Introduction by Alan Bruzon, CEO, Citizens Advice Eastbourne

Homelessness is one of the single biggest problems which can affect a person's life, second perhaps to a major injury or major illness or death. Losing a home takes away the base around which someone's life is built and it can become difficult or impossible to rebuild a life without a stable home.

In the past few years, street homelessness has become increasingly visible in Eastbourne town centre, with people huddled in shop doorways, wrapped in sleeping bags, sometimes asking for help from passers by but other times seemingly fast asleep. During the winter, when the weather gets colder it is hard to imagine how it would feel to spend your days that way. As an Eastbourne resident, I was used to seeing this in Brighton or London and perhaps the occasional isolated individual on the streets here. This has now changed. In the short walk from my home to the local shops, I am now used to seeing one or more homeless people and I have spoken to many of them as I go by.

I've known a few people who have visited India in the past few years and one thing they have all mentioned is the rampant poverty and prevalence of beggars on the streets. It makes it hard to enjoy a luxurious holiday whilst surrounded by such hardship. They return home and rationalize these problems as caused by the sheer scale of a country with 1 billion people. In this country we think of ourselves as "civilized" but what is the difference between street homelessness in one country or the next?

At Citizens Advice Eastbourne we have helped hundreds of people over the years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and we know of the hard work other agencies put in to supporting those affected. Sometimes our work can prevent homelessness which has a hugely beneficial effect on the lives of those involved.

But to the general public, seeing homeless people on the streets can be alarming. They wonder why this is still going on in 2018 in the UK and they wonder how they can help. They wonder why it is that no one appears to be doing anything about it. They read headlines which tell them that homeless people aren't genuine and beggars live in comfortable houses and their sympathy changes. They see people drinking or causing trouble in the town centre and start to think homeless people cause their own problems or choose to live that way. The picture becomes unclear.

We decided to produce this report to help us understand homelessness in Eastbourne, looking at the local context against the backdrop of the national situation. We wanted to highlight the wonderful work which is being done by so many in the town, without whom it would be hard to imagine how much worse it would be. These groups work tirelessly and very quietly in the background and their efforts are not publicized as much as they should be.

We also wanted to produce a better picture of the varying and complex reasons which can cause people to become homeless so this can be better understood. In part this is to counter the misinformation from certain sources and talk to homeless people and those who work with them.

We also wanted to identify options to improve the situation in Eastbourne, whether that be through small things which we can achieve locally, or something which feeds in to national policy with the hope of a bigger change. We produced our list of recommendations at the end of the report.

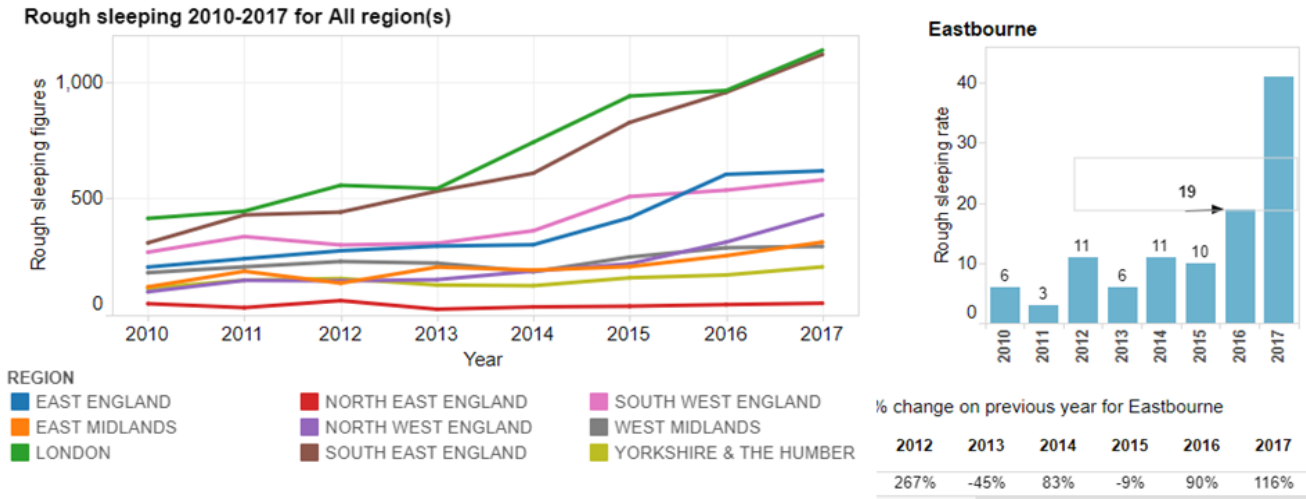
We hope you find this a useful document and I thank all those who contributed to it, the people we spoke to and the great team of volunteers who have helped to write it.

Alan Bruzon

Summary

Context

The general trend from official national statistics shows rough sleeping has doubled in the past 4 years in both London and the South East. In Eastbourne the figure has quadrupled since 2015 going from 10 people in 2015 to 40 people in 2017.



Source: Homelesslink.org.uk from figures produced by MHCLG

These figures only include people who are classified as rough sleeping based on the annual official count. Many people who become homeless do not show up in official figures. This includes people who become homeless but find a temporary solution by staying with family members or friends, living in squats or other insecure accommodation.

Research by the charity Crisis indicates that about 62% of single homeless people are hidden and may not show up in official figures. Local figures for hidden homelessness are more difficult to establish. Eastbourne Foodbank report 959 of their clients were categorised as homeless in 2017.

Research Method

In addition to the statistics establishing evidence of the rapid rise in homelessness, we wanted to investigate the situation in Eastbourne. To do this we collected anecdotal evidence from people who had found themselves homeless as well as from a series of agencies across Eastbourne that offer services to homeless people. Specifically, we interviewed four people who are homeless as well as the following organisations:

Local & Central Government / Public Sector

- Eastbourne Borough Council:
 - Councillors
 - Housing Needs team
 - Adviser for Business Crime
- Eastbourne JobCentrePlus (DWP)
- East Sussex County Council
 - Adult Social Services
 - Sussex Police
 - Sussex Rough Sleeping Prevention Project

Private Stakeholders

Eastbourne Chamber of Commerce
Sanctuary Housing
MasonBryant (Lettings Agent)
GetaRoom (Lettings Agent)

Voluntary & Charitable Organisations

Brighton Housing Trust (BHT)
Eastbourne Citizens Advice
Eastbourne Foodbank
Salvation Army
Winter Night Shelter
Matthew 25
Absolute Angels for the Homeless
Homeworks
Eastbourne Foyer
Fulfilling Lives
Seaview Project, Hastings

We wanted to gather data on the provision of direct services such as accommodation and food and indirect services such as advice and support services, to determine their views on the current situation and to understand what they think could be done to alleviate the rising numbers of homeless in Eastbourne.

We asked the agencies the following questions:

- Tell us about your organisation
- What kind of help do you provide to homeless people?
- How many people do you help a year?
- What do you think is the public perception of homeless people?
- What reasons do your clients give for becoming homeless?
- Have you seen changes in these reasons over the years?
- What barriers do your clients seem to face when trying to get back into accommodation?
- What needs to change?
- What are your recommendations/priorities to alleviate homelessness in Eastbourne?

Key findings

The various agencies had similar views on many of the subjects discussed and each brought their own special perspective based on their experiences of supporting homeless people over the years.

The causes of homelessness

The main themes identified were:

- Individual's lack of financial capability / budgeting skills / money management skills including getting spending priorities wrong
- Changes to the benefits system – Welfare Reform including the Local Housing Allowance. Additional financial pressures push many people into debt, especially those on benefits or on a low income. This is compounded by the rising cost of living and a changing employment environment, creating unstable earnings.
- Universal Credit. The “Full service” went live in Eastbourne in October 2017 although some single persons would have been on UC earlier in the town. The effect of Universal Credit on people's financial situation has been well documented elsewhere. In Eastbourne, UC has

created some problems but, so far, is unlikely to be the cause of the increase in street homelessness described above. Nevertheless, all agencies continue to see many people dealing with difficulties caused by the new benefit.

- Debt. Budgeting problems, poor choices in priority spending and increasing costs have meant that levels of debt in Eastbourne remain high, increasing the risk of homelessness for many.
- Relationship breakdown – people don't have enough savings put away to cover the costs of setting up a new home. Those without friends or family locally are at greater risk of homelessness when relationships come to an end. This includes those experiencing domestic abuse and this had led to an increase in homeless women.

Difficulties experienced when homeless

The first port of call for those anticipating homelessness is often Eastbourne Borough Council. With limited housing stock available many face long periods in temporary accommodation.

For those found not within the local authority's duty to house, many can end up staying with family, friends or acquaintances which is sometimes referred to as "sofa surfing".

For those who become street homeless, they can experience various difficulties such as:

- Reduced ability to self-care – food, cleanliness, general health
- Reliance on local charities – Salvation Army, Matthew 25, Foodbank, Winter Night Shelter etc
- Exposure to drugs and alcohol and crime
- In Eastbourne town centre they can find they have no place to go, leading to groups congregating in Terminus Road and being associated with street drinkers
- Temporary accommodation and other services have strict "no drugs or alcohol" rules which some find impossible to comply with and therefore walk away from or are ejected
- Problems accessing benefits, difficulty applying, communicating with the benefit agencies, maintaining a claim including the need to communicate via an online journal for Universal Credit.

Barriers faced in finding a home

Homeless people face various barriers which they will need to overcome in order to find a home, take up a tenancy, make it their home and remain within a stable environment. The key barriers were:

- Up-front costs – deposit, rent in advance, guarantors, fees for references etc.
- In recent examples criminal record checks have been requested
- Difficulty maintaining a tenancy – skills, budgeting, readjusting
- The need for "half-way" support for people with drug and alcohol problems
- Private Landlords are reluctant to rent to "benefit claimants". CA Eastbourne have found that less than 1% of properties being advertised to let would have the full rent covered by the Local Housing Allowance. Recent stories in the national press about long delays in payments of Universal Credit have made more landlords unwilling to rent to people on benefits.

Additional factors

There were two other major factors affecting homeless people which all agencies commented on: mental health difficulties and drug and alcohol dependence. Sometimes these two difficulties go together and sometimes are completely separate. The limited resources which provide support for either problem were mentioned by all the agencies we spoke to.

In some examples, people who become homeless have neither mental health difficulties nor drug or alcohol problems but develop them as part of being homeless. People experience depression and anxiety as well as low self-esteem and in some cases become suicidal as a consequence of homelessness. Similarly, drugs or alcohol become a coping method for some homeless people and can be part of the environment they find themselves in.

Many of the agencies we spoke to felt that there was a need for a significant increase in resources to support people experiencing both types of difficulties.

Homeless people—profile

All agencies reported a variety of clients seeking help as homeless. More than half were originally from Eastbourne and a high proportion had no previous connection with the town. The majority were men but there had been an increase in women seeking help. Women can be more vulnerable when homeless and at greater risk of exploitation. Some specific groups who face additional difficulties were also identified within current service users:

- Prisoners not receiving support prior to being released
- Women fleeing domestic abuse
- Ex-servicemen / women
- People discharged from DGH psychiatric unit or local secure units like Amberstone

Public perception

The agencies reported that public perception of homeless people was mixed. Some expressed the view that many people are sympathetic and try to offer support. Others are more negative towards homeless people and blame them for their situation, assuming they have brought the problem onto themselves or that they choose to be homeless. Some violence and abuse was reported. Overall it was felt that the public did not have a deep understanding of the issues involved and were often unaware of the type of support which is available in the town.

Statutory services

Statutory services have a central role to play in preventing homelessness and providing solutions in terms of alternative housing. The agencies all agreed that there are major restrictions imposed on local authorities by central government and they are aware of how the Council's capacity has been affected by changes over the years.

- Eastbourne Borough Council now has limited capacity to assist, which has been reduced over the years by central government.
- EBC has a Homelessness Strategy and a Housing Strategy (see further reading links) which includes actions by various agencies and progress against the strategy is reviewed on a regular basis.
- Eastbourne has a Homelessness forum which is now being redesigned by EBC.
- The Homelessness Reduction Act which came into effect from April 2018 has placed more responsibility on the Council in terms of preventing homelessness but only a limited amount of additional resources have been made available by central government for this. At the time of writing this report, the Council is recruiting new staff including an Outreach Worker and there are high hopes that this role will have a very positive impact on the town.
- The Jobcentre and Department for Work and Pensions (and for many, EBC Housing Benefit department) have a vital role in ensuring people receive the financial support they need from the benefit system. The introduction of Universal Credit is a major concern, having switched

to the “Full Service” from October 2017, meaning most new claims will now be for UC. Delays in the first payments have been widely reported and changes to this part of the system are underway, hopefully reducing the build-up of rent arrears. All agencies will be monitoring how this affects their service users in the coming months.

- Adult Social Care provide essential support for victims of domestic abuse, vulnerable people and fund homelessness prevention work through Homeworks. Proposed cuts to East Sussex County Council budgets are being considered at this present time with difficult decisions needing to be made.

Some of the factors described above are likely to make homelessness in Eastbourne worse over the coming years which is a major concern to all those we interviewed.

Local Charities

A huge amount of work is being carried out in Eastbourne by charities and volunteers and this has been consistent for a number of years. Direct support for street homeless people is provided by Salvation Army and Matthew 25 by providing food, clothes and other support on an ongoing basis. For many people this support is an essential lifeline. They are finding the demand for their services is increasing steadily and the work involved in helping people get back into accommodation is increasingly complicated, leading them into more complex areas of bureaucracy.

Similarly other faith based groups including the Winter Night Shelter, Foodbank, Sanctuary Housing and others continue to provide invaluable support to people with substantial numbers of local people volunteering to help.

Citizens Advice Eastbourne has seen an increase in enquiries from people at risk of homelessness including benefits problems, financial difficulties, rent arrears and debt. BHT Eastbourne Advice provides specialist housing advice for homeless people including at times, challenging decisions by Eastbourne Borough Council when they believe the Council does have a duty to assist.

All the voluntary and charity agencies have limited resources to help including limited funding and are often reliant on volunteers to create enough capacity to meet the demand for their services. Many have experienced cuts to their funding and this may continue during 2018. Despite this, they remain resolute in their willingness to help homeless people or those at risk and do whatever they can to assist.

Conclusion

Clearly, homelessness in Eastbourne is a highly complex subject and will require a number of separate approaches to start making improvements in the town. Some would say, at present it will be impossible to make significant improvements without major changes to national government policies.

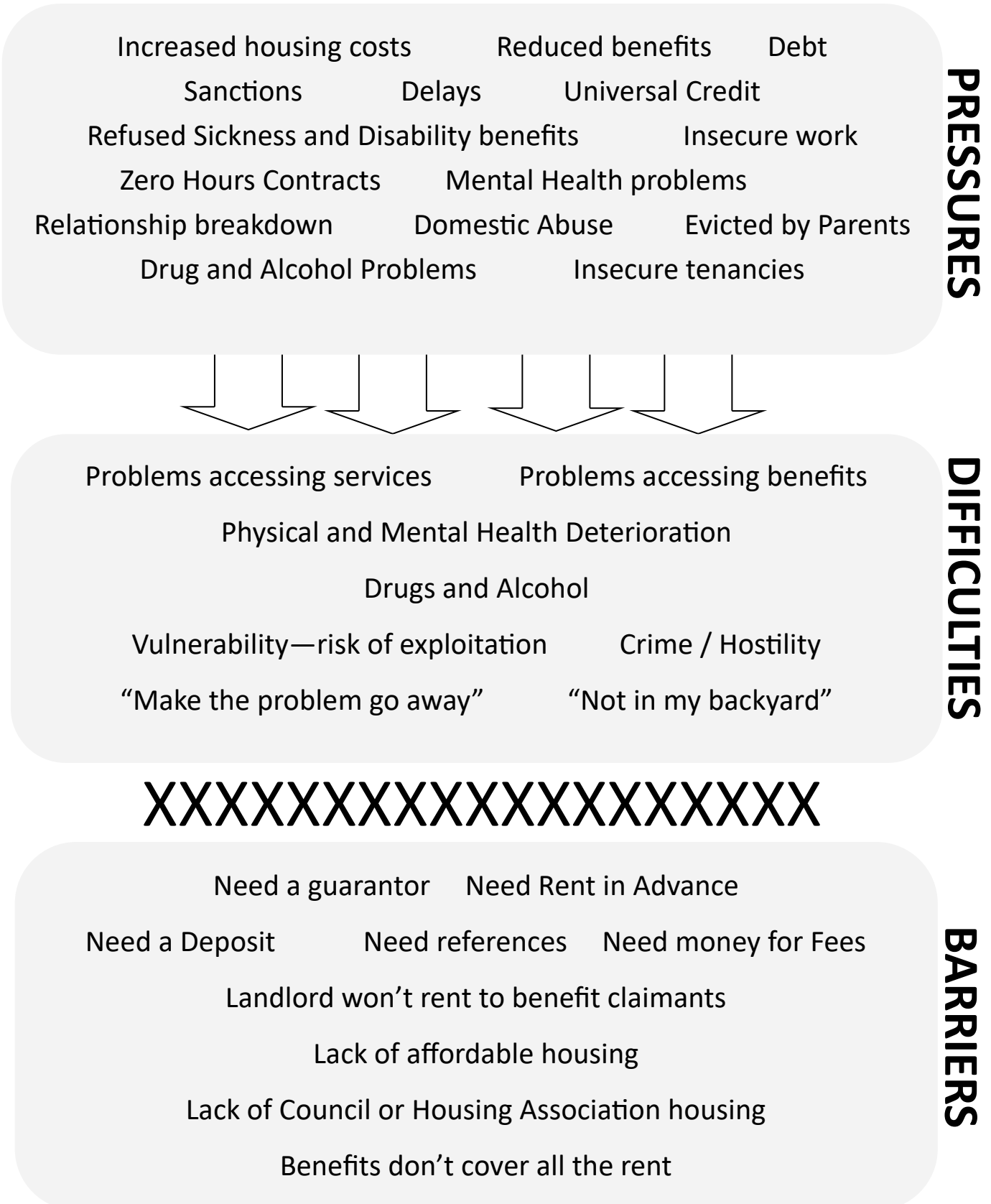
A wide range of people are at risk of homelessness and separate cohorts require very different approaches—preventative work for people at risk, improvements to people’s housing rights, effective support from the benefits system, support for those currently street homeless and strategies to enable people to be rehoused successfully. Our recommendations seek to address these.

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the potential scale of the problem and some factors appear to be likely to make the situation worse in the coming years. However, our research has shown the impressive work being carried out by the various agencies included in the appendices and this is a very positive aspect for the town, especially the size and scope of the work provided by charities and volunteers and the Council’s new initiatives.

The Homelessness Trap

One of the overarching themes this research has identified is how it is becoming increasingly easy to become homeless. Most people are only a few pay cheques away from homelessness. Once in that situation, there are many difficulties to contend with and it isn't easy to overcome the increasing number of barriers which prevent people from getting a home of their own.

This is the “Homelessness Trap” and dealing with the problems involved is key to improving things for homeless people.



Our Recommendations

National issues

1. We need more affordable housing in both the private sector and social housing.
2. We need benefit rates to equal rent costs.
3. We need to review the types of tenancies being used to give greater security of tenure to people who rent.
4. We need a benefits system which supports people at their time of greatest need and which doesn't adversely affect people's housing.

Local Issues

1. We need properly funded day care centres which build on the work of Salvation Army and Matthew 25.
2. Maximize the use of services for homeless people – somewhere to wash, do laundry, internet access, access to phones.
3. We need temporary housing options which will work for vulnerable single people, including people with drug and alcohol problems.
4. We need a housing first approach. See <https://hfe.homeless.org.uk/>
5. We need homelessness prevention work, to enable people to stay in their own home.
6. We need more private landlords to take on benefit claimants.
7. We need to remove the barriers people face accessing private rented accommodation – guarantors, deposits, rent in advance, high fees etc
8. We need a hostel and other local councils need the same.
9. We need supported housing options for people at major transition points such as leaving mental health institutions, leaving prison etc.
10. We need to raise awareness of the causes of homelessness, the amazing amount of work being done by local agencies and the barriers people face getting back into housing.
11. We need to explore the use of empty properties in Eastbourne.
12. People need to be able to learn "life skills" such as budgeting, managing a tenancy etc, especially young people.

Appendices

Case studies—4 homeless people's stories
Eastbourne Borough Council's Role
Cllr Shuttleworth update
Citizens Advice Eastbourne
BHT Eastbourne Advice
Homeworks
Jobcentre Plus
Matthew 25 Mission
ESCC Supporting People
Fulfilling Lives
Eastbourne Foodbank
Absolute Angels for the Homeless
Salvation Army
Winter Night Shelter
STAR
Eastbourne Borough Council and Sussex Police
Eastbourne Chamber of Commerce
Councillors Shuttleworth and Swansborough
Eastbourne Foyer
Sanctuary Housing
Sussex Rough Sleeping Prevention Project
Reformed East Sussex
Women's Refuge
Get A Room
Mason Bryant

Further reading

EBC Homelessness strategy

<http://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/resources/assets/inline/full/0/253885.pdf>

Eastbourne Borough Council Housing Strategy 2013-2020

<http://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/resources/assets/inline/full/0/220670.pdf>

Housing first

<https://hfe.homeless.org.uk/>

Case Studies

Mr A is in his late 20s. He was on universal credit but had been sanctioned. He has relatively low-level drug problems – cocaine and cannabis. He was living at home but had to move out a few months ago and has been homeless since then. He is not working at the moment. He has been to the Council and Brighton Housing Trust but did not feel that they offered much help. Brighton Housing Trust told him what he already knew – that he would not get any help from the Council except a month's deposit in advance. The Council has said that they could find accommodation but that this would be in North Kent. He said that Lift House was not helpful, as he was not seen as someone with complex needs. He felt it was wrong that people were playing the system and saying eg they had mental health problems when they did not. Also that there were people from outside Eastbourne who were getting support ahead of him. He used the night shelters and felt that these were fine. When these finish he will sleep rough, not in Eastbourne town centre as he feels it is full of beggars and where homeless people are abused by students and others. His priority now is housing and he wants this before he tries again for a job. He feels that he cannot use letting agencies as he does not have the cash and does not know which landlords to trust and who would take on homeless people. He is getting Salvation Army help with this and is hoping that they may secure a place in one of the flats that landlords have earmarked for Salvation Army clients. He uses both Salvation Army and Matthew 25. He thinks they both provide good basic support and said that no one needed to be hungry in Eastbourne. He has also used the Foodbank. He says he is aware that the longer his situation continues the harder it will be to get out of it. The two main things he thinks would help are better awareness of what services are available – eg Salvation Army - and more support to get into long term housing eg hostels or some kind of supported housing.



Mr B is in his 50s. He used to be an HGV driver but an accident meant that he could no longer work. Was on Employment Support Allowance but this was stopped when he missed an assessment appointment because he had no money to get there. He has no mental health or drug/alcohol issues. He had his own place for some time then stayed with friends until their tenancy ended. He has been sleeping rough since the summer in Eastbourne (not town centre). He does not use the night shelters as he feels that some of the people there are aggressive and disruptive. He feels that he is unable to work and Brighton Housing Trust (in their two weekly visit to the Salvation Amy centre) is helping him to apply for benefits. He does not feel able to apply for accommodation himself, as he would not know how to do it. He is hoping that the Salvation Army will help him to sort this. He would like support to get himself back into his own place. He also felt that some kind of hos-

tel or supported accommodation would be a good way to help him get back on his feet. He noted that there were many empty buildings in Eastbourne and that these could be used to house homeless people.

Mr C is in his 40s. He has worked for the last 6 or 7 years through agencies doing cleaning/warehouse/security jobs. He is not working at the moment. He had his own place until 2016 when he lost it due to problems with his universal credit payments partly caused by his fluctuating income and 5-week months. More recently he lived with family but felt he had to leave, as there was not enough room. He has been staying in the night shelters. He was quite anxious beforehand but has found these to be fine. He said that there was no suitable work in Eastbourne as it was mainly hotels and care work, but there was plenty in Brighton and Lewes. He could get a job and already had an offer. He revealed that he was homeless and was told that there would be a job when he found a place to live. The Salvation Army was helping and Homeworks was helping him find somewhere to live (after our meeting it seems that a place had been found for him). He said that he would find the whole process of finding accommodation himself very difficult especially as landlords did not want to offer tenancies to homeless people. He also felt that he needed someone to hold his hand. He was pleased with some of the support available through eg Salvation Army but felt that it was not publicised enough. He had not been aware, for example, of the night shelters.



Ms D had a tenancy but the flat was mouldy and in poor condition. She left and asked the Council for help but they refused as they said that she was intentionally homeless. She gets employment support allowance but would like to get back into work. She was not sure about the implications re: universal credit but Brighton Housing Trust is advising her on this. She has been staying with friends but since 1 January has been homeless. She tried the night shelters but was not happy there and she is now sleeping in her car. She felt that there was not enough respect shown to the few women there. She is getting help to look for work with People Matters. But getting housing was a priority and she was hoping that the Salvation Army would be able to help with this. She thought that they did a very good job. She was concerned to get a place soon. She felt that she was not 'typically homeless' and tried not to present as such. But her situation was wearing her down and she was becoming increasingly anxious.



What role does Eastbourne Borough Council play in relation to the issue of homelessness?

Local authorities such as Eastbourne Borough Council have the 'statutory duty' (i.e. a detailed set of responsibilities outlined in Acts of Parliament) to provide government support to people who are homeless. As Eastbourne Borough and Lewes District Councils now work jointly, this support is provided by a single, integrated management team. However, each locally elected council still decides their own housing strategy and local priorities.



Local authorities have only held this legal responsibility since the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act; however, today's duties are mainly found in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, which outlines to whom councils should offer emergency accommodation. This year, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 redefined what councils should do to help people who are not entitled to the council's 'full duty'.

The council then plays a number of roles in relation to homelessness:

Role 1: "Full duty to house" for certain people, the council has a 'full duty' to find or arrange temporary accommodation. This help can include:

- Providing council tenancy on a temporary basis only
- Financial help with deposits
- Referring people to specialist housing organisations

Councils are not necessarily obliged to provide a secure council tenancy or an assured tenancy in a housing association home – these types of tenancies are offered via the Housing Register waiting list.

Who is entitled by law to this type of help? Homelessness households must meet five criteria to be eligible for 'full duty' help. The households must:

- 1. be 'eligible for assistance':** ie UK citizens, commonwealth citizens with right of abode in the UK, EEA citizens, hold granted refugee status in the UK or 'leave to remain' status in the UK without any conditions relating to time or 'recourse to public funds'.
- 2. be homeless or threatened with homelessness in 8 weeks' time** – that means no accommodation available anywhere in the world that the household has a legal right to live or can reasonably or safely stay. People who are sofa-surfing or living under threat of violence are considered homeless.
- 3. be in 'Priority Need'** because they have or are: (a) a dependent child or children, (b) pregnant, (c) vulnerable because of old age; a mental illness or physical disability; 21 + and previously in care; fleeing violence in the home; being ex-forces or an ex-offender; homeless because of fire, flood or some other emergency; vulnerable for some other reason (d) aged 16 or 17 and the local authority is not involved or under 21 and was previously 'looked after' by the local authority.
- 4. not be intentionally homeless:** i.e. the household has lost their accommodation because they have deliberately made a nuisance or destroyed property or failed to pay the rent or the mortgage. If other criteria are met, the council will provide temporary accommodation for about four weeks and then help find other accommodation to follow on.

5. have a local connection: this means living in Eastbourne for a certain, having a permanent job here or needing help from family members who live in Eastbourne. If the household doesn't have a local connection, the council will liaise with the council of the area where they do have a local connection about their case.

Role 2: To help prevent and relieve homelessness – even if people don't have a 'priority need' or they have made themselves intentionally homeless, if they are eligible for assistance and they're homeless or threatened with homelessness, then the council is now obliged to assess their circumstances and needs and to develop a personalised housing plan. In a 'prevent' situation, the plan would include looking at how both the household and the council can prevent them losing their home in the first place, for example by intervening with the landlord, investigating benefit issues or helping in advance with getting an alternative tenancy in the private sector.

If already homeless, the plan will aim to relieve homelessness by helping people to access emergency housing such as a hostel, providing details of landlords who are willing to accept people on benefits, checking for help with rent costs for example, through the benefits system or helping with loan or grants to cover deposits or rent in advance.

In this role the council does not have a duty to provide accommodation, but to help people access accommodation by creating a plan and following up on it.

Role 3: Homelessness Strategy - Finally, each local council must have and regularly review their strategic plan to tackle homelessness. The current [Homelessness Strategy](#) for Eastbourne runs from 2017 to 2021.

How is the council's work around homelessness funded?

The council's work to alleviate homelessness is limited by the level of funds available. The funding to deliver the homelessness plan mainly comes from the Local Authority's General Fund and central government has provided local authorities with £108 million over 2 years to set up IT systems and working processes needed to deliver the new services outlined in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018. Other pockets of money available until 2020 include the Local Authority Homelessness Prevention Funding and the Flexible Homeless Support Grant.

Cuts to services provided by other public bodies may also have a serious impact on the extent of homelessness. For example, cuts of £2.5 million to Supported Housing and its floating groups, Homeworks and STEPS, reduce the support available to prevent individuals becoming homelessness in the first place.

Discretionary activity beyond the legal duty

The council also funds discretionary services outside its statutory duty. For example, whilst the council is required to provide warm room accommodation once the temperature reaches 0 degrees or below for 3 days or more (Severe Weather Emergency Procedures), this facility is kept open beyond the statutory timing when the reality of the weather is harsher than statistics portray. The council opened the shelter to those in Eastbourne, but not necessarily local to Eastbourne, so that anyone who wanted to could stay warm on those freezing nights.

Statement by Cllr Alan Shuttleworth, Deputy Leader Eastbourne Borough Council, Cabinet Portfolio holder for Housing.

The **national housing crisis** is reflected in a **massive increase in homeless families and people living in temporary accommodation here in Eastbourne**. There is a **desperate need for more social housing**, and genuinely affordable decent quality and **affordable rented housing** across the public and private sector. The national decline in council housing has led to enormous spending on housing benefit to supplement expensive rents instead of investment in genuinely affordable homes. The Government must act quickly to enable Councils to tackle this crisis.

Councils need to be able to **respond to local needs**, to set levels of Right to Buy locally, to borrow to invest in more social housing, and to stop threatening to punish local communities. Despite the efforts of many organisations and individuals, along with the Borough Council, there is an fast increasing number of people who find themselves homeless or threatened with becoming homeless.

Government policies are hitting the **most vulnerable in the community** the hardest, and more and more local people are getting into serious housing problems. The harshness of the welfare changes coupled with crippling cuts in a wide range of support services are leading to increasing demands for housing assistance.

Eastbourne Borough Council is finding innovative ways to invest in new house building, through the establishment of **Eastbourne Housing Investment Company and Aspirational Homes to find ways to provide affordable rented properties**.

Our priority is to help the large number of Eastbourne households who are living in temporary accommodation, or on our waiting list for accommodation. The Housing Needs team are working tirelessly against unprecedented demand and a **national crisis in affordable housing**, to support households in our community

Eastbourne Borough Council are also working in a joint project with Hastings Borough Council to tackle the enormous rise in the number of **rough sleepers**. Agreement has been made with **ESCC Adult Social Care, mental health services and the police** along with other providers, to implement **a multidisciplinary team of specialists** to change ways of working with homeless people and enable them to access these essential services and tackle multiple underlying support needs. The project is led by a Rough-Sleeping **Outreach Officer**, jointly funded by the Chamber of Commerce, police and Council to act as a single point of contact for rough sleeping, ensure multi-agency approach and coordinate the **Homeless Hub**.

Despite the best efforts of our **partnership approach in Eastbourne**, more and more people will be turning to agencies like the **Citizens Advice Bureaux** seeking help, and the underlying problems need to be addressed in a shift in Government policy with a recognition of the need to invest in more social housing and measures to support more good quality affordable private rented accommodation as well as a recognition that the most vulnerable in society need to be supported in order that they become more independent.

The housing crisis will only get worse until there is a real commitment to tackle the problem in a co-ordinated way by national Government.

Citizens Advice Eastbourne

John Mayes, Advice Session Supervisor



Citizens Advice provides a wide range of advice but the main topics cover benefits, employment, housing, debt and relationship breakdowns. In 2017 advice was given to a total of 2,607 clients. Of these 12% were housing queries and we advised 88 people on actual or threatened homelessness. Brighton Housing Trust has offices in the same building and many homeless clients are referred to them for their greater expertise and especially for legal advice. Clients are also sometimes referred to Home Works, Steps and to the Council. Many clients are provided with foodbank vouchers. Where appropriate, clients are also given relationship, benefits and debt advice.

How do people become homeless? The main reasons include:

- Evictions
- Zero hour contracts
- Mental health issues
- Relationship breakdowns
- Lack of affordable housing and problems with deposits
- Drug and alcohol problems

What has changed in recent years? There have been an increasing number of homeless people contacting Citizens Advice. These range from street homeless to clients threatened by eviction by landlords to family and relationship breakdowns. There is also an awareness of an increasing number of street homeless. Zero hours contracts have become more common. This has meant that some people's income is uncertain and so it is difficult to get and maintain a tenancy.

What is the public perception of homelessness? The perception appears to be mixed. Some people are concerned with what they see as an eyesore but others are more generous and offer food, money and other support. Sometimes people are not clear about how best to help and whether to give direct to homeless people.

What barriers do people face to get back into accommodation? There is the stigma attached to being homeless as well as the issues that face people generally on benefits – rent in advance, deposits, agent's fees and possibly guarantors. And some homeless people struggle to engage well with others and need support to speak with landlords or letting agents. Not all landlords will take on people who receive benefits. This is partly due to concerns about any initial delays in receiving benefits but also potential problems with overpayments and sanctions. The outcome is less choice for clients on benefits. A shortage of low cost social housing means that some clients are offered accommodation by the Council in other towns. This is not ideal for often vulnerable people.

How do agencies work together? There is awareness that there are many agencies that operate to support homeless people. But it is not always clear who is best placed to help in specific circumstances.

What action is needed to help prevent homelessness? One important issue is for people to know what advice is available and where to get it. A range of advice may be needed including helping clients to:

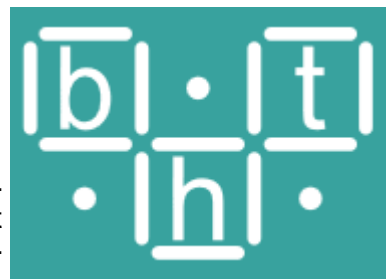
- deal with any eviction notices
- get access to Council homelessness support and possible financial support eg discretionary housing payment
- maximize income through benefit checks
- access grants
- access benefit advances
- appealing against benefit decisions
- manage debts
- budget

It would be helpful if a brief note or pamphlet could be produced and distributed widely and publicised. This could include what help is available from the Council and in what circumstances.

What action is needed to house the homeless? Affordability is one of the key issues as rents are significantly higher than the local housing allowance. Hostels might be a partial solution.

BHT Eastbourne Advice

Sue Hennell & Dan Saxby, Managers



BHT Eastbourne Advice provide specialist housing and benefits advice services in Eastbourne and the surrounding areas. They are based at Highlight House in St Leonards Road and share an office with Citizens Advice Eastbourne.

They receive legal aid funding for some subjects including advice for people who are currently street homeless, people staying with friends (sofa surfing) or threatened with homelessness - meaning they have been given notice by their landlord, in writing or verbally. They can also provide advice on serious disrepair in rented properties which are likely to present a risk to people's health. Advice can be provided to people facing mortgage repossessions and access is made via the central Legal Aid helpline which are then referred to the local office.

Legal Aid also provides funding for certificated work which usually involves court representation and will cover things like challenging decisions by the local authority for dealing with evictions. These cases are referred internally. Eligibility for legal aid is based on meeting the low income requirements and includes a number of passported benefits.

BHT also receive funding from Eastbourne Borough Council for people who have a local connection to the town. They can provide housing advice on any housing issue including homelessness prevention, problems with tenancy deposits, threat of eviction, noise and nuisance problems and lower levels of disrepair which can involve liaising with Environmental Health. The Eastbourne office employs 3 housing caseworkers and one solicitor.

“There needs to be a change in the balance of power because, at the moment, tenants do not have any power at all”.

The majority of clients in rented accommodation can be issued notice to leave of 2 months. It is a good idea for anyone who has received a Section 21 notice that they should seek advice. In some cases the notice can be challenged and eviction can be prevented. However, in many cases the advice is about preparing people for the need to move to a new property and this preparation can lead to future stability of housing.

What type of help do you provide?

Advice can involve explaining a person's rights and responsibilities and the legal framework around housing depending on the situation. This would enable the person to respond to the issues themselves if they are able to. Housing advisers can also liaise with third parties such as landlords, housing associations, the local authority etc. and negotiate on behalf of the client when this is felt necessary.

What are the main causes of homelessness in Eastbourne?

There is a lack of affordable housing available in the town which makes it difficult for people to maintain their existing homes and also makes it difficult for people to move out of homelessness back into accommodation. Renting a home in the private sector usually requires a guarantor, a month's rent in advance and a deposit and many landlords are unwilling to take on tenants who receive benefits.

Assured Shorthold Tenancies provide limited security as people can be given notice without any specific reasons if a landlord follows the proper procedure.

Mental health problems affect a high proportion of BHT's clients. Many people experience at least a low level of anxiety or depression. Mental health problems can either be as a result of pressures relating to housing or can exist for other reasons and lead to an increase risk of homelessness because of the difficulties involved in sustaining a tenancy where there are rent arrears. Despite this, BHT sometimes finds the main root of the tenant's problems is issues such as mental health, benefits problems. Sometimes the tenants themselves are not being cooperative with the landlords due to a lack of trust. Also, some tenants don't think that they will ever get evicted and therefore don't respond to the landlord's requests.

Martin Coll, Homeworks, Team Leader Eastbourne



Homeworks is provided by Southdown Housing and funded by ESCC Supporting People. They can work with any vulnerable person who has a housing need across the East Sussex area. There are a number of different aspects which can define a person as vulnerable but the client group is generally made up of people with mental health problems or some form of physical disability.

Typically, clients have rent arrears which are normally amongst other debts. Many of the clients have mental health problems or some form of relationship breakdown or a combination of factors currently affecting them. Sometimes people need practical help doing simple things to get more organised including opening the post and reading it through. Homeworks typically follow a coaching method to support people but also to enable them to support themselves in future.

Homeworks take referrals from a wide variety of agencies such as Eastbourne Borough Council, Children's Services, Adult Social Care, GP's, advice agencies including CAB. Anyone can refer including self referrals and in recent years the project has had no shortage of demand. In the last quarter of 2017 there were 245 referrals in Eastbourne and 893 referrals in the entire County. In a year the project would expect to help around 1,000 people in Eastbourne.

47% of clients have mental health problems and clients are presenting with increasingly complex needs. Previously the health service would have provided more help for people suffering from mental health problems. Reduction in services provided by Adult Social Care has also resulted in an increase in the need for Homeworks services. It is understood that existing statutory services are stretched and this means fewer services are able to visit people in their own homes.

“What we need is an alternative housing pathway for vulnerable single people.”

Homeworks are able to achieve a positive housing outcome for 89% of the people they see which usually means they are supported to remain in their existing accommodation and deal with problems such as rent arrears to make sure the tenancy is more sustainable. Other examples would be preventing eviction from social housing or enabling people to take up new accommodation. 11% of clients were able to take up new social housing tenancies. 12% were helped to go into supported accommodation. 29% are within the private rented sector.

In recent years the attitudes of landlords have changed to become more focused on the risks involved and often people who are in receipt of benefits are considered to be unreliable. The introduction of Universal Credit has caused a lot of concern about problems with rent being paid on time. Landlords are also concerned about the properties being damaged.

Renting in the private sector now is more difficult. Prospective tenants must have a guarantor usually earning over a certain level of income. Also some people are asked to provide 6 months rent in advance which is impossible for a lot of Homeworks clients.

The Council are understandably under increasing pressure to provide housing for homeless people and only have a limited duty to do so. Therefore they do direct a lot of people to the private sector. Homeworks are not able to act as advocates but can sometimes identify a decision which they think may be incorrect and then refer these clients to BHT for Specialist housing advice.

Homeworks staff are very aware that when people are facing housing difficulties there are fewer options available to offer people as solutions. For example in situations of overcrowding it is often necessary to explain the alternatives which are available and at present it's likely that these will not be better for cost reasons. Homeworks staff tend to take a very pragmatic approach and make sure they do not raise people's expectations. This is about weighing up the options and helping the client make a realistic decision on how to proceed.

Homeworks work closely with the DGH Department of Psychiatry and aim to provide support to people in mental health crisis. This requires the joined up approach between agencies which can at times be challenging.

www.southdown.org/homeworks referrals@home-works.org.uk 01273 898 700

Alternatively, text: 07773 377 754, fax: 01273 898 701 www.facebook.com/HomeWorks.SHA/ twitter @SouthdownHA

Sarah Noble Jobcentre Plus

Sarah is the manager of Eastbourne Jobcentre. There has been a significant increase in the number of homeless people and particularly rough sleepers over the past year in Eastbourne. This is partly because other towns in the SE region, such as Tunbridge Wells, do not provide any facilities whatsoever for homeless people so they come to places such as Eastbourne, Brighton and Hastings where there are communities of homeless people and facilities to provide specifically for their needs.



How do people become homeless? There are many reasons, but usually a combination of factors such as relationship breakdown, divorce, unemployment, domestic violence, lack of affordable housing, which can include chaotic lifestyle, and inability to budget on a low income. In addition there are refugees, people released from prison, and those discharged from the armed forces. People with mental health problems can end up on the streets and sometimes self-medicate with illegal substances which exacerbate their problems. Others who become homeless and sleeping rough find that drugs such as cannabis can help them cope.

What has changed in recent years? Rough sleepers in particular have a big impact on the Jobcentre and the wider community, as they are also dealing with a higher number of single parents and refugees, which is also impacting on local amenities such as school places, health and other services. Universal Credit places much more emphasis on the whole person and their specific needs to enable them to eventually acquire full independence, whereas under the previous system of Jobseekers Allowance, it was purely about getting people into work. Now the Jobcentre will address an individual's initial difficulties in terms of accessing meals, shelter, hygiene, health and substance misuse issues by referring to the appropriate agencies, rather than simply trying to get them to find work. The three stages are about one customer, one journey: – A, B, C: A. assisting into settled living, B. then getting paid work, and C. a career path.

What is the public perception of homelessness? Very varied, some people are very sympathetic, others cynical and dismissive. Some people give them money or buy them food and drink. However this can be counter-productive in a way in assisting a destructive lifestyle that should not be encouraged.

What barriers do people face to get back into accommodation? The main barrier is lack of affordable housing, the issues of getting into rented accommodation as they have to pay a deposit then at least a month's rent upfront. Also a lot of private landlords especially refuse to accept people on benefits. There is a perception they can be a problem because of chaotic lifestyles, and default on rent payment. DWP will not automatically pay rent direct to landlords as they want to encourage independent living and non-dependency on the state for budgeting and managing finances. But the Job Centre can and does pay rent direct to landlords in certain circumstances, provided it has been agreed by all concerned and the claimant is happy with this. There is a lack of temporary accommodation too to take them off the streets initially.

Now the Jobcentre will address an individual's initial difficulties in terms of accessing meals, shelter, hygiene, health and substance misuse issues by referring to the appropriate agencies, rather than simply trying to get them to find work.

How do agencies work together? Jobcentre liaises extensively with other agencies in Eastbourne such as the SA, the Foodbank, with charities to get bedding and clothing, EBC, Matthew 25 to get a cooked meal, MIND if they detect mental health issues, STAR drop-in service, the walk-in health centre in the station. They share information with each other to ensure these vulnerable people get what they need. People can also self-refer to these agencies.

What action is needed to help prevent homelessness? The main action the Jobcentre can take is to action rent direct from a claimant's UC, but they need their agreement for this. They can also identify if someone is at risk of losing their accommodation and take pre-emptive action by giving advice, liaising with landlords, and ultimately paying the rent direct.

What action is needed to house the homeless? Jobcentres liaise with support workers in the County Council and EBC, youth offending teams and together ensure that care leavers are catered for. They see councils as having prime responsibility for housing homeless people.

Jobcentre Plus Eastbourne St Annes House, 2 St Anne's Rd, Eastbourne BN21 3XX tel: 0800 169 0190

<https://www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus>

Matthew 25 - Tony Mottram and Graham Horsnell

Matthew 25 offers a day service for individuals with many and varied needs. It is a drop-in centre for the homeless and other marginalised groups including people with disabilities and those with mental health issues. It is a key support service.

What kind of help do you provide?

Matthew 25 operates Monday to Friday and offers hot meals (breakfast and lunch), emergency clothing, personal items, phone charging services and contact for other support services. 37% of those attending the centre are homeless. They serve as the contact for the winter night shelter

How many people do you help a year?

The organisation helps between 40-60 individuals a day. 12 months ago, there were only about 20% street homeless attending. Now they are seeing almost double that.

In your opinion, what are the main causes of homelessness?

Mental health difficulties and the manner in which mental health services are operating. Lack of suitable supported accommodation and general lack of housing. They have nine categories of causes. Graham saw the following as the most significant and the majority (90%) will have more than one of these:

Family breakdown, mental health problems, ex-offenders, suffered personal tragedy, eviction, financial hardship. He felt that financial difficulties – i.e. can't pay rent – are now a significant problem. He noted that almost all his clients suffer from depression with some suicidal.

Why do you believe more people are sleeping rough in Eastbourne now?

There are not necessarily more rough sleepers but that they are more noticeable. Until recently, for example, a large number of ex- servicemen, who were rough sleepers, were camping in Abbots Wood. Since they were discovered and moved on, they are now in town.

Graham felt there were more rough sleepers. He estimated that there were 10 people sleeping rough on the seafront and approximately 6-16 in the town centre (average about 20) He would expect an increase in the summer with 'migrating homeless' from other areas.

What kinds of problems do people need help with?

Personal hygiene and laundry services, internet access. Accessing food – especially hot meals, dry clothing and torches.

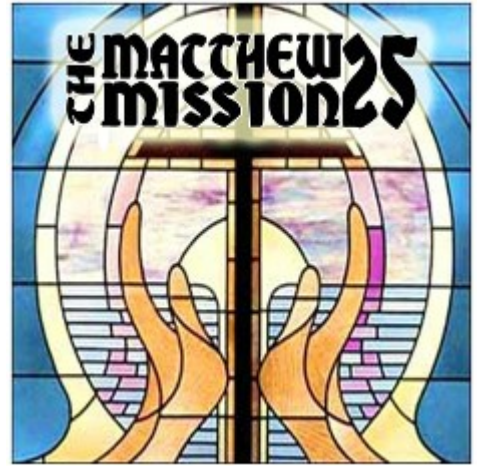
What are the barriers people face when trying to get back in to accommodation?

Lack of available accommodation. When night shelters close there is nothing. Perhaps councils don't try too hard, as they don't want to become a centre for the homeless.

Many homeless people are not ready for traditional forms of accommodation and need bridging accommodation – simple shelter and supported accommodation.

What kind of funding do you receive?

Grant funded and donations – needs £80,000 per year to run services



Supporting People, Jude Davies

In partnership with district and boroughs and Children's Services, Adult Social Care commissions a range of services that strive to prevent a crisis for people who have support needs and face housing difficulties. Historically these services were funded via the Supporting People initiative.

The current budget provides for both community based and accommodation based services



The **Community Based services** visit people where they are living to provide face to face support. Home Works supports single people and families aged 16 – 64. STEPS is for older people. Over a 12 month period these countywide services support over 5,500 clients. Approximately 27 % of both Home Works and STEPS clients are from the geographical area of EBC

Clients are supported to resolve their housing issue, better manage their health and wellbeing, maximise their income, retain paid work, stay safe, prevent a crisis and develop the resilience necessary to address personal crises as they arise.

The **accommodation based services** that are situated within EBC are:

1 x refuge	9 units
1 x service for homeless adults	9 units
2 x services for young people	57 units
1 x service for people homeless with mental health needs	19 units
1 x service for young mums	5 units

Accommodation services provide accommodation with on-site support. People usually move on within 12 months. Clients are supported to acquire the life skills necessary to move to independent living.

The main causes of homelessness

The most common reasons people give for losing their accommodation is that a friend or relatives are no longer able to provide support or because of relationship breakdown or domestic abuse. However some factors and experiences make people more vulnerable to homelessness and these include physical and/or sexual abuse, alcohol and drug issues, bereavement, poor mental health and poor physical health and unsafe environments

Wider structural factors interact with individual circumstances and these include poverty, inequality, housing supply and cost of housing and affordability. Currently at a national level there is a shortage of accessible housing, particularly for those on low incomes. The issues of some private rented sector landlords not wanting to rent to tenants on benefits, problems of providing guarantors and needing references can all have a negative impact.

Why has there been an increase in the number of rough sleepers?

Although unable to comment specifically on Eastbourne, research shows that the national increase is linked to lack of access to housing and a reduction in support services

What problems do people need help with?

People need intensive support to help them access a home and remain in that home. This includes help to look for and obtain a property, help with rent in advance, help with reference requirements, help with sorting out benefits, help with debt, help to access health services, help to address addiction issues, help with poor mental health, help to address trauma support to build resilience and to deal with those who would exploit them for their own gain

What are the barriers?

One difficulty faced is the "moving on" stage. Once someone has received initial help to get them off the streets, the pressure on temporary housing, lack of permanent accommodation and the potential complexity of other issues such as addiction, benefits, debt that need addressing mean that there are barriers that are neither quick or easy to deal with.

Fulfilling Lives - Sandra Sylvester, Giles, Glen, Kim



FULFILLING LIVES
South East Partnership

The South East Project, working in East Sussex, is one of 12 projects across England where Big Lottery Fund investment is supporting people with complex needs. As well as supporting people, the project will gather evidence of the need for more effective and efficient ways for designing, commissioning and delivering support services for this group in the future.

The purpose of this initiative is to bring about lasting change in how services work with people with multiple and complex needs; this funding is a vehicle to help bring about that change. The legacy of the eight year programme will be that systems and services in all three geographical areas will better meet the needs of this group.

The project is funded by the Big Lottery and led by BHT who are the overall accountable agency, and is made up of local delivery teams from different partner agencies; currently Equinox, and the Brighton Oasis Project), as well as a team of Project Consultants employed by BHT who work across Brighton & Hove, Eastbourne and Hastings.

Fulfilling Lives started in 2014 and is an 8 year project which covers Eastbourne, Hastings and Brighton. In Eastbourne it employs Giles and Alice who are caseworkers, providing direct support to individuals in what they describe as "assertive outreach". They are not based in one particular office (Giles and Alice are based at our Eastbourne office) and are usually meeting their clients in public spaces.

In order to access the support of Fulfilling Lives, people need to be experiencing what's referred to as multiple and complex needs - a combination of difficulties with housing or homelessness, drug or alcohol dependency, health problems including mental health and / or have a history of offending. There also needs to be a reason why the person is experiencing difficulty accessing other types of support which already exist in the town which will be picked up by the other aspect of the project which is to improve access to services.

The project aims to help people with the greatest need and as a result has a limited capacity - usually around 10 people receiving help from each of the two caseworkers at any one time. There is no time limit to the help available, so in some cases support has been ongoing for over two years, based on the needs of the individual. Bringing about changes can take a long time and the caseworkers follow a persistent approach which could mean having to try and track down people they lose contact with and helping them re-engage with the service. Some of their work is prevention, so the caseworkers are able to help those at risk of becoming homeless and help them maintain their housing.

The project has various ways to measure the success of its work and often this is about identifying specific areas of improvement such as a reduction in the number of visits to A&E or hospital admissions, reduced offending or court visits. There are also numerous "soft outcomes" where a person may report the improvement to their wellbeing, their state of mind and stability including people feeling less depressed or suicidal.

Anyone can refer into the project via a support worker/agency but because of the limited resources available the complexity of their needs will need to be assessed by a panel before help can be offered.

The project has another aspect which is about identifying gaps and barriers which prevent homeless people (people with multiple complex needs including the homeless) from accessing services and receiving help. This could be from statutory services like doctors or hospital services or also the local authority and other providers. Once an issue is identified the project will need to explore whether this was a one-off or whether this is likely to affect others in future. If so, the Service Improvement Officer (SIO) makes contact with the relevant agency and aims to bring about changes to prevent the problem recurring.

Eastbourne Foodbank -

Howard Wardle, CEO



About Eastbourne Foodbank

Eastbourne Foodbank is a Christian charity which was founded in 2011 after a local church which was operating a debt counselling project became aware of the extent of food poverty in the town. We are part of a nationwide network of foodbanks, The Trussell Trust, which is an NGO and charity. Eastbourne Foodbank has 4 paid members of staff and 90 volunteers. We are funded by grants and private donations.

The Foodbank offers the following support:

Nutritional Food Pack – The Foodbank provides three days' worth of food to people presenting a red voucher received from organisations such as social services, citizens advice, children's centres or health visitors.

Best Start project – provides items for new mums, babies, toddlers & children including a baby basket (a Moses basket with 'basics' including clothing, nappies, toiletries), a New Mum pack (sanitary items and hospital bag essentials) and ongoing help with baby and children's clothing, shoes, bedding and equipment.

Advocacy – the Foodbank also offers time to listen to issues our clients have with debt, benefit claims or relationship breakdown and can help by making phone calls, writing letters, attending benefits interviews with clients amongst other things.

Eastbourne Foodbank operates out of several locations across Eastbourne:

The town centre office in Grove Road is open every weekday offering food collection Tuesday to Friday 10:00 to 12:00 alongside general advocacy. All day Monday & Thursday afternoon the Foodbank offers PIP/DLA & ESA surgeries. BHT Housing Access project clinic runs here on Tuesday mornings and we partner with BHT Housing Access Project and Shinewater Shaftesbury Centre offers debt advice on Wednesdays.

Additional Foodbank sessions are held at Willingdon Trees Community Centre on a Wednesday morning and at St Elizabeth's Church Centre on Tuesday morning.

The Foodbank also distributes food via two partners: Community Wise in Old Town & Shinewater Shaftesbury Centre in Shinewater; both are open every day.

In 2017 the Foodbank helped 9,700 people with food in 2017 and provided 1,800 advocacy appointments. The number of clients coming to the Foodbank whose vouchers identify them as homeless seems to increase year on year:

850 clients were categorised as homeless in 2016

959 clients were categorised as homeless in 2017

In first quarter 2018, 245 clients were categorised as homeless

Relationship breakdown seems to be the main trigger for becoming homeless. The main barriers people face when trying to get back into accommodation include finding suitable, affordable properties, then finding the required deposits. This is often complicated by existing or previous debt.

What needs to change? What are your recommendations for homelessness in Eastbourne:

The Foodbank would like to see the provision of truly affordable homes as well as a mechanism for assisting with deposits. In addition, Howard suggests offering support and advice on all the elements of being responsible for a flat or house such as how to budget and pay household bills.

Absolute Angels for the Homeless Maria and Sarah

Absolute Angels for the Homeless started helping homeless people about 2 years ago. They provide food, hot drinks and other essentials to homeless people every Thursday between 7pm and 9pm in Terminus Road outside Poundland. Usually they help between 18 and 26 people each time and they have become familiar to many rough sleepers – in fact it was the homeless people who gave the group their name. They now have 6 volunteers.

The group is self-funded through donations and is active on social media which has produced a good level of interest amongst local residents. They are not yet a registered charity. All their donations are used to provide help to people directly and sometimes this is cash, other times local shops, cafés and restaurants and residents have donated food which would otherwise go to waste. People also donate clothes and bedding but the group do not have much storage space at present.

The group offer food and drink to anyone who approaches them on a Thursday evening. Most are homeless but some are not but they are in dire financial need or isolated. They signpost to various agencies such as Matthew 25, Salvation Army, The Winter Night Shelter and others.

Homeless people are very vulnerable on the streets and local people often abuse them verbally as they pass or physically assault homeless people, most often late at night when people leave pubs and clubs after drinking in the town centre.

They have helped homeless people of all ages including younger people who have been thrown out of their family home, to older people in their 70s. Many people have problems with drugs or alcohol and they use these to help mask problematic emotional issues they may have had for a long time, including a history of childhood abuse. They have seen people who are newly homeless become involved in drugs or alcohol, sometimes by associating with others who have and this has had a profound effect on their well-being. A large percentage of homeless people come from a military background and some suffer from PTSD which has made it very difficult for them to engage with existing support services. The group have regular contact with local police who inform them of any incidents and they have found the homeless people are very protective of their volunteers.

What is the public perception of homeless people ?

Although many people are helpful and supportive, there is also a lack of understanding of the difficulties homeless people go through and the things which lead them to become homeless. Many people dismiss homeless people as drunks and blame them for their problems. Homeless people are very vulnerable on the streets and local people often abuse people verbally as they pass or physically assault homeless people, most often late at night when people leave pubs and clubs after drinking in the town centre.

What causes people to become homeless?

Relationship breakdown is a major cause. Many people can support themselves financially in a couple by sharing the costs of renting a home and paying the bills. However, when relationships breakdown one partner is unable to cover the costs of finding a new home. Many people are only a few weeks away from homelessness, if they cannot afford their bills or rent. The benefits system doesn't provide adequate support because in many cases it doesn't pay the full rent and it can cause delays in payments leading to rent arrears. Universal Credit has made the situation worse and homeless people face various barriers to claiming. The expectation that the money will be paid to the person and not their landlord is a bad idea for a lot of people especially those with substance abuse problems or a poor grasp of how to manage their money. Other barriers include needing online access or a bank accounts. Some homeless people decide not to claim any benefits at all and try to find other ways to support themselves because they cannot face the bureaucracy involved.

What does Eastbourne need to improve homelessness in the town?

The town needs more services which are directed at supporting homeless people beyond what charitable groups can provide. This could take the form of a day care centre providing the essential basics which people need – food, clean clothes, washing facilities, health care. Existing charities like the Salvation Army and Matthew 25 do provide these but more is needed.

Life skills need to be taught from a young age and further education is needed for many people after school to help them manage their own tenancy and maintain a home by understanding the priorities and how to be organised. Not everybody grows up having these skills because they are not taught them by family or school.

Salvation Army –Pauline Peagam



Pauline is SA's Community Development Manger and this includes running Rebourne Corner, set up in 2010. Pauline is full time and paid and is supported at the centre by three volunteers. They have around 12,500 visits a year. These are single people, mainly street homeless but also some vulnerable people who need support. The Centre is open 5 days a week – 10-4. The Centre costs around £75,000. Income is mainly from SA shops plus a small Council grant and donations. They aim to assess all clients to understand their needs and how best these can be met. The main help given is:

- Free showers, drinks and cheap snacks
- Free clothes, laundry, food parcels, essentials and furniture
- Help with finding accommodation, benefits, cvs and jobs, dealing with landlords, IT access, hair-cuts, counselling.

SA also takes part in the winter night shelter (1 December – 28 February) by proving shelter one night a week to 15 people. Pauline thought that this was enough provision. Some people preferred to stay on the street, some because they found the shelter restriction difficult (need to stay in shelter 8pm – 6 pm and no alcohol). SA provides meals for homeless people on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Other agencies (Matthew 25 and Fatfleshed) cover the other five evenings.

How do people become homeless? The main reasons include:

- Homeless from out of area
- Eviction
- Zero hour contracts – difficult to sustain a tenancy
- Mental health issues
- Relationship breakdowns
- Fewer B&Bs due to health and safety rules and fewer offering long term stays
- Released from prison with no accommodation
- Lack of affordable housing plus problems with deposits/stigma of being homeless
- Fewer people prepared to have sofa surfers
- Drug and alcohol problems

Drug and alcohol are seen as secondary rather than primary causes.

What has changed in recent years? Relationship breakdowns appear to be increasingly significant and zero hours contracts have become more common and problematic. There is more pressure on services in Eastbourne as outside the winter months there is no emergency accommodation and homeless from other areas (especially Hastings, Brighton and London) are sent here, either just with travel warrants or with booked accommodation short term. Lack of affordable accommodation is more of an issue, together with resistance from landlords to take on homeless people. SA is finding more people sleeping in cars. These people are often in work.

What is the public perception of homelessness? This is mixed and there are some concerns with the number of 'incoming' homeless people. The public are often generous but this can cause problems. A number of people begging appear to be street homeless but do in fact have a place to live. It is possible to get up to £75 a night or £400 at the weekend. This generally does not help people with their underlying problems, which can be addressed if the homeless are in contact with agencies like SA. Similarly when people give food to the homeless. The position is exacerbated by ad hoc groups giving food and toiletries etc to the homeless when SA and others are already covering this. It would be much better if these groups could work with other established groups who are providing a wider range of services.

What barriers do people face to get back into accommodation? The first is availability, affordability and need for deposit and/or guarantor. As well as the stigma of being homeless one of the main difficulties is their lack of social skills and presenting themselves well to landlords. Even if tenancies are found these are often lost due to problems with drugs, alcohol or anti-social behaviour.

How do agencies work together? SA feels that they generally work well with others. There is a hub meeting once a month when agencies come along and homeless people can get advice.

Winter Night Shelter

David Barratt, Trustee of the Kingdom Way Trust



The Kingdom Way Trust was established in October 2010 to support homeless and vulnerable people in the Eastbourne area. Their work started with the Winter Night Shelter which is provided by 9 Town Centre churches and provides nightly accommodation between the 1st December and the 1st March each year. The night shelter has up to 15 beds per night available for homeless people and these are often full. People can be referred by various agencies such as Foodbank, Eastbourne Borough Council, Matthew 25, the Probation Service etc and the shelter also accept self-referrals. Homeless people are interviewed and a risk assessment is carried out before someone is admitted.

The night shelter is supported by a team of 270 volunteers from the church community, comprising 30+ churches in Eastbourne. Some people who come to the Winter Night Shelter decide not to stay because they find it difficult to cope with an environment which they consider to be too strict. The shelter has a no drugs and no alcohol policy and doesn't allow casual movement in and out during the night.

Kingdom Way Trust also provides a small amount of supported accommodation through The Bridge and offers places for up to six men. They are supported by a small team of three paid staff who provide key work services and mentoring. They also have additional support from experienced volunteers. The Bridge is not simply accommodation but also provides a programme of activities which help people move on from homelessness, including work related volunteering opportunities and support to assist residents to attend appointments. The aim of The Bridge is to help people out of homelessness and provide them with a safe, supporting environment which will hopefully lead to them taking up, and sustaining, their own tenancy elsewhere.

What has changed in recent years? The charity has seen an increase in people experiencing mental health problems and who have had limited support in the community. This is partly to do with the reduction in Support Services due to funding cuts. There have been examples of people being discharged from the DGH Psychiatric ward who contact the Winter Night Shelter because they know the person does not have a home to go to. There is a lack of affordable housing which has resulted in an increase in homelessness. Drug and alcohol problems affect many people in the homeless community and these can exacerbate mental health problems. Many homeless people have a lack of support from their family or have no family.

What is the public perception of homeless people? Although there are many people who are willing to help as volunteers, there is some prejudice against homeless people and a tendency to blame them for their own problems and assume that they choose homelessness as a lifestyle. These messages are sometimes propagated by the media. It is important to raise awareness of the issues around the subject and to consider more innovative solutions such as creating living spaces from buses and storage containers and actively supporting people housed there. However, these can only be short term solutions to a much wider problem.

“There needs to be a change in attitude at all levels towards homeless people based around the understanding that, if you treat people better this will make them stronger.”

What barriers do people face in order to get back into accommodation? The private rented sector has become more negative towards benefit claimants and this has become worse since the introduction of Universal Credit. This benefit usually expects payment to be made directly to the claimant and in many cases this will lead to rent arrears. Landlords have become aware of this and also the delays in benefit payments and are now refusing to take on new tenants who receive benefits. To access the Winter Night Shelter guests are invited to attend a short interview with the WNS referral team, Monday – Friday, 1pm – 3pm at Christ Church, Seaside, Eastbourne BN22 7NN. Specific interview times can be arranged by the referring agencies during these times on behalf of guests, or directly by guests, by calling the WNS telephone: 07932 407730.



STAR is a project run by Change, Grow, Live (CGL) offering free, dedicated drug and alcohol community recovery service. They are commissioned to deliver drug and alcohol services across East Sussex working with the local community and partnership agencies to achieve best outcomes for the service users. They offer opportunities for volunteers and peer mentors to enhance our service and service user experience. They work with people from the age of 18 upwards.

The service is funded by ESCC Supporting People and is contracted to run until March 2019. STAR employs 73 staff across the county with ??? in Eastbourne and offers services in partnership with a range of agencies such as:

- Specialist prescribing services
- GP shared care
- Community detox from drugs and alcohol
- Inpatient detox from drugs and alcohol
- Group work programmes
- Housing and benefits advice
- Drug and alcohol counselling
- Intuitive recovery
- SCDA employment support
- Foundations of recovery
- Carers support group

Anyone can make an appointment by ringing 0300 3038 160. Alternatively, people can drop in to their office in St Leonards Road, Eastbourne and see a specialist recovery worker who will provide some support and book an appointment for more extensive assessment and treatment if necessary. Referrals can be made by other agency workers.

Each year the service helps 1,300 people across the county with ??? in Eastbourne. Of these ???% are homeless. The homeless population tend to be quite transient some may be attracted to Eastbourne by the services and support which are available in the town. CGL also run café North which is in North street and provides a safe place for people who are recovering from addictions and provides support to prevent relapse.

A large proportion of homeless people who access STAR for help have a history of abuse or trauma which may go back to childhood. This may be combined with mental health problems meaning that they need a greater level of specialist support and medical treatment. Public perception of homeless people is mixed, with some actively offering help and a small proportion being directly hostile.

Genine has experience of working with homeless people in central London and can compare the level of support available in Eastbourne. There is limited help available for people with substance misuse problems who are sometimes assessed as being too chaotic or too complex for the types of support available including temporary housing. An alternative housing pathway for people with substance abuse problems is needed and the Council's new plans will go some way to address this. Genine was involved in the recruitment of their new Outreach Worker who will be based in Lift house and work alongside STAR. Genine anticipates that the problem is likely to work because factors that push people towards homelessness like cost of living and affordability of housing are getting worse. On the other hand new initiatives from the Council appear to be positive and will help counter their effect.

STAR, Lift House, 6 St Leonards Road, Eastbourne, BN21 3UH
0300 3038 160

<https://www.changegrowlive.org/content/east-sussex-drug-and-alcohol-recovery-service-star>

Adam Godden – Eastbourne Borough Council and Ed Ripley – Sussex Police



Adam is the Specialist Adviser for Business Crime at Eastbourne Borough Council role is focussed on dealing with Business Crime which includes dealing with anti-social behaviour problems in Eastbourne Town Centre. In 2017 there was a sizable increase in the number of complaints being received from shops and businesses in the town centre around anti-social behaviour caused by street drinkers. Although many of the street drinkers are homeless, not all are so there is a significant overlap between the two issues. Also, begging has been a problem in the town centre and businesses are concerned that these activities can intimidate people and discourage them from shopping there.

The Police work very closely with Eastbourne Borough Council on a number of initiatives to respond to these problems and Ed oversees a team of police officers and PCSOs who work in the main shopping areas of Terminus Road and the surrounding areas.

Inspector Ed Ripley is the Strategic and Engagement Inspector for Eastbourne, Lewes and Wealden District. Ed has worked with agencies in Eastbourne to redesign the Homeless HUB to provide a one stop shop to support rough sleepers and homeless people in Eastbourne. The Eastbourne HUB was relaunched around 3 years ago and has housed 15 people over that period. Unfortunately, some individuals have been unable to remain in their homes as they've struggled to adapt to life off the streets or withdraw from alcohol or substance misuse. Sometimes enforcement is needed to address a behaviour or curb certain activities, but this is balanced by positive engagement with the street community and signposting of individuals to agencies like Salvation Army, BHT or STAR or direct to the Eastbourne HUB for tailored support.

Adam works with EBC Neighbourhood First team who receive reports from the general public via Streetlink – a website set up to allow the public to contact support services and access help for a homeless person they are concerned about www.streetlink.org.uk Members of the Neighbourhood first team go out and speak to homeless people wherever they are in the town centre and see if they can offer support.

Eastbourne Borough Council is in the process of employing an Outreach Worker to help support homeless people, particularly rough sleepers in the town centre.

Through their work, both Ed and Adam have become aware of examples of individuals who are begging but not in genuine need. Their exact circumstances may not become known until contact is made by the Council or Police. Fake beggars make up a very small proportion of people in the street community.

What is needed to help homelessness in Eastbourne?

The EBC Outreach worker post has the potential to make a lot of difference, by providing some dedicated resource to help people directly on the streets. At the time of writing this report, this post is currently being advertised.

One of the things which the street community ask for is simply a place where they can go and not feel unwelcome. Some want to be able to drink or take drugs and not inconvenience anyone around them. Options for this are being explored but whilst local people may agree with this, the “not in my back yard” reaction is also common.

The Police have set up MASCOT - Multi-Agency Street Community Operations Team. This is an operational team made up of people from Police, Council, agencies and volunteers who help homeless people to access the support they need. It also investigates known hotspots in the town for anti-social behaviour and tackles problems before they escalate.

Chamber of Commerce—Christina Ewbank



Christina is the Chief Executive of Eastbourne Chamber of Commerce. She has been focusing on homelessness in Eastbourne since 2017 when the number of comments and complaints from local businesses increased. Being a seaside town, visible street drinkers and homeless people can have an adverse effect on tourism and Christina was told by two hoteliers that they had guests who ended their stay early because of this. Also, local businesses in the town centre, particularly Terminus Road, have been directly affected by people sleeping rough in shop doorways who don't always leave the place in a clean condition.

Christina has discussed these issues with various businesses and considered how a place can be found for the street community to congregate without someone objecting. This is clearly a challenge and she is in regular contact with the Council and the Police about this. She is also concerned about criminal activities and how vulnerable people can be targeted and exploited by criminal gangs. She is aware of the approaches which have been taken in neighbouring towns such as Brighton but isn't sure how effective these are as street homelessness seems to be on the increase there too.

The number of homeless people in Eastbourne has quadrupled in the last two years with the official figure being around 40 street homeless in the town. It is noticeable that some people have come to Eastbourne, perhaps attracted to a town with a warmer climate. Often it is a good idea to encourage or enable that person to return to the town where they have a support network of family or friends if that is possible. This would enable the limited resources available to focus on helping local people. However, some people do not have this type of support anywhere.

Overall the Eastbourne community seems well disposed to help homeless people and sometimes people try to prevent the Police from moving people on. Some local businesses are actively supportive by providing Caffè sospeso for homeless people—paying for an extra coffee. The public give money to homeless people but it is often a better idea to give the money to the agencies which support them instead.

What has caused the increase in homelessness?

Homeless people will not “evaporate” so local people need to find effective ways of helping them.

There seems to be an increase in the number of people coming to the town as mentioned above. This is common to many seaside towns. Local people in financial difficulty can struggle to maintain their housing because they aren't equipped with the skills needed to sort out their debts, negotiate repayment with the landlord, or sort out problems with benefits. This makes it very difficult for vulnerable people to protect themselves so they need access to specialist help.

Also it seems that money management is not taught in schools in the way that it used to be when it was known as Home Economics. This means some people leave school without a clear sense of what their financial priorities should be. Pressures to spend money on their appearance or other superficial things is strong from those around them.

What does Eastbourne need to help with the increasing problem of homelessness?

Firstly, the Chamber have recently contributed funding to the Council's Outreach worker post which is currently being advertised. This new postholder will engage with homeless people and identify their needs, facilitate contact with other agencies and try to enable people to get back into accommodation.

Secondly, they are supporting the preventative work which is carried out through debt advice, by seeking funding for Citizens Advice. This involves access to paid specialists but also providing support workers who can engage with people in their own homes and enable them to follow a plan of action.

Cllrs Shuttleworth and Swansborough

Eastbourne Borough Council's Policy

As a Council we published a Homeless Strategy document which describes the many ways in which we work with others in the prevention of homelessness.

Many of the Initiatives are about trying to increase the provision of Affordable rented housing and working in partnership with other agencies to help those who are threatened with homelessness or are indeed homeless.



Both Cllrs said they had a personal and long term interest in housing and was one of the reasons they took on the role of a Councillor. They said EBC were determined to do everything in its power to limit the number of individuals/households becoming homeless and to assist those to whom they have a statutory duty. EBC like other LA's has had severe Budget cuts forced upon them from National Government over a period of time and this has resulted in a lack of both money and staff resources.

They would like to have access to more Council owned accommodation, but Government policies over the years have diminished existing stock (e.g 'Right to Buy' Policies). Local Authorities have not been funded to build new stock. EBC recognises that homelessness is not just a housing problem, it is closely linked with all agencies who assist vulnerable people. Mental health services are critical in helping many of the people who need support.

What are the reasons for the increase in homelessness?

Councillors recognised the complex problems that led to homelessness and the 'spin off' issues that homelessness created. The problem is growing...due to welfare changes, radical cuts to services who support vulnerable people, too little investment in social and affordable housing.

The increase in homeless has led to increased costs to EBC by way of payment for temporary accommodation and shortage of good quality accommodation in the private sector

What role does EBC play in relation to the issue of homelessness?

EBC are using preventative work, such as Discretionary Housing Payments and incentives to landlords, but also using some government funding to introduce additional measures to extend the HUB offer and to explore a Housing First approach to help some people. This means looking to provide a home for people and then work with other agencies to provide "wrap around" services to help people cope.

Who does the council help, under their statutory role?

Cllrs are keen to give some support and advice to as many people who need help as they can, but this is severely restricted by cuts in funding. Funding for Housing provision in different areas has been cut in Eastbourne by ESCC and the Government. EBC has a statutory duty to prevent or relieve homelessness for anyone who is eligible and at risk of homelessness within 56 days

The impact of The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017

Cllrs supportive of intent of Bill to put more emphasis on preventing homelessness but drew attention to fact the Act does not extend the legal duty to provide accommodation to all eligible applicants – much as they would like to.

Discretionary Activity beyond the Legal Duty

Cllrs would like to do more than the legal minimum, but funding restrictions make this virtually impossible. However, they were proud that they were at least able to extend the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) during the extremely cold recent spell of weather.

Why is the Number of Rough Sleepers increasing in Eastbourne?

Cllrs repeated that this is not just an Eastbourne problem. It's been challenging to try and identify the reasons why Eastbourne and other seaside towns have experienced a rise in rough sleeping. It has been

difficult to give actual numbers and % numbers for Eastbourne. Estimate for 2016-7 estimated 40 rough sleepers. National statistics show this is about average for comparable towns (i.e. coastal town in Southern England) Recent article in Eastbourne Herald on 16 March 2017 suggested that EBC had a greater problem than many others, but Cllrs stressed this was a National problem – although there is a history of people being attracted to coastal towns and the coastal transport route between Eastbourne, Hastings and Brighton makes Eastbourne an easy ‘stop off’ place.

The statistics of people suffering from mental health difficulties and relationship breakdown has also led to increased numbers of people presenting as Homeless.

What are the Options to Reduce the Numbers of Rough Sleeping in Eastbourne?

Cllrs said the emphasis would have to be on prevention as unlikely to be any increase in funding for Housing – quite the opposite. Prevention means working more closely with other organisations such as the Street Community Partnership where one additional Outreach Worker has been employed. EBC already have strong links with the voluntary sector e.g. Salvation Army, BHT, CAB and the Hub and these would be maintained. Prevention also means trying to intervene and work with professionals to alleviate the potential outcomes of Homelessness such as increased mental health difficulties, unemployment and relationship breakdown.

And to Reduce the Number of People without a Home in General?

Cllrs are very aware of the number people needing housing advice in general how they will be impacted by cuts to external groups like Steps and Homeworks. People will also be directly affected by any reductions in LA Budgets.

EBC, working with Lewes District Council, has begun to introduce innovative solutions to fund and extend housing provision which they hope will help the situation. To date these are setting up the Eastbourne Housing Investment Company and Aspirations Homes (joint initiative between EBC and Lewes BC)

The main purpose of these companies is to allow the two LA's to take advantage of low borrowing rates in the market and maximising the use of Right to Buy receipts. LA's cannot do this directly and spending within the Housing Revenue Account etc is restricted. EBC hopes that by raising its own finances at a good rate

EBC looking to establish an Eastbourne Community Housing Trust as a new initiative to provide more affordable housing schemes.

EBC took the initiative to buy the old Bedfordwell Road Depot site from a developer to speed up the building of more than 100 new Units of social/affordable housing.

Potentially looking at pockets of land owned by EBC throughout the town e.g. old garage blocks which are currently underused and have a potential to be used for small projects.

Thinking about cheaper/quicker ways of constructing housing. EBC Cllrs and Officers have visited Newhaven where high quality system build units are produced. (Similar to old fashioned ‘prefabs’ but with modern build improvements). These are cheaper than traditional building and can be erected very quickly.

The range of initiatives taken by EBC have covered many projects including bring 80 units of private sector property back into use, including many empty properties. EBC have won awards for new housing projects which have been achieved despite funding restrictions.

There has been a high emphasis on preventative measures and this will increase as relationships are built with private landlords. There will soon be a new outreach worker appointed which will increase the Council's ability to co-ordinate initiatives across all those agencies and groups who are assisting in the fight against homelessness. However, as the Homeless Reduction Act is underfunded by the Government Councils are having to subsidise the resource to support people by taking away existing funds used for preventative work.

Eastbourne Foyer, Kirsten McCarthy, Senior Client Service Manager



The Eastbourne Foyer is located at 40 St Leonards Road, Eastbourne. It is for young people aged 16-25 who are at risk of being homeless or isolated. They may already be in education or training which is under threat due to problems with living arrangements or their financial situation. Referrals are accepted from Children's and Adult Social Services, Youth Offending, Youth Support and Eastbourne Borough Council. They are funded by ESCC Supported People through Adult Social Care Budget indirect income streams from Children's Services

The Foyer has a staff of 7 full time equivalent. It is owned by Home Group (a social landlord). It has 31 single rooms with small kitchen and bathroom facilities en suite with bedroom and living space. 2 rooms with shared facilities that would be ideal for crash pads. It is the only accommodation for single persons available locally, as opposed to accommodation with shared facilities. Rent is currently £163 pw per room to include bills and support package. (This compares to about £80-90pw in private sector for a room in a shared house.

Approx. 60 young people are helped in a year, with individual placements running from 0 -24 months. These young residents are provided with a support package to help develop independent living skills, e.g. budgeting, community living, gaining work, further education, healthy living, both physical and mental, reduction in re-offending and counselling. Like many similar Organisations, the Eastbourne Foyer is concerned about how any future funding cuts may affect its ability to help young people. Proposals are due to ESCC Cabinet soon that might recommend what would amount to a 40% cut in funding Young Peoples provision budgets. This could mean a cut in staff and beds provision at a time of increasing need.

What are the main causes of homelessness? The Foyer has experienced young people presenting with increasingly complex backgrounds – there is often more than one cause for the young person being vulnerable. Examples of these causes are: an increase in mental health difficulties amongst families (both diagnosed or undiagnosed); family breakdown; reduction in support services such as refuges/family services and difficulties in promoting services which can help particularly if accessed at an early stage

What kind of problems do the young people need help with? Ever changing family structures can mean that young people have not had the role modelling from a parent/responsible adult so need help with basic skills to a greater extent than before. Specific presenting problems are: social isolation, physical & mental health (with access to services such as CAMHS* becoming increasing difficult), learning to trust as they have been let down by individuals and the system and the practicalities of maintaining a tenancy

What barriers do people face when trying to get back into accommodation? Young people particularly can feel very much on their own if not supported through the maze of trying to 'get their own place'. The Benefits system has always presented a challenge for young people, but the advent of Universal Credit has resulted in difficulties such as Landlords refusing to take any UC claimants as tenants, whereas they used to accept Housing Benefit. This could be because of the delays in paying which can mean rent arrears building up and/or the fact that unless specific arrangements are made the UC Housing Element is paid to the claimant rather than direct to the Landlord (the Foyer have had some success in helping young people through the claiming process and have found the Jobcentre very helpful). Jobs are difficult to get for young people, particularly if they do not have a permanent address, appropriate clothing etc. The rents in both the social and private rented sector are generally high, with the cap on Housing payments for single young people causing a gap in affordability

<https://www.homegroup.org.uk/Care-and-Support/Our-Care-Services/Eastbourne-Foyer>

kirsten.mccarthy@homegroup.org.uk or calling: 01323 734760

Michelle Winch, Sanctuary Housing



Sanctuary housing provide supported accommodation for people with mental health problems and / or support needs. The route into the schemes is via Eastbourne Borough Council and is only available for people for whom the Council has a housing duty and who have secondary needs such as drug or alcohol problems or mental health problems such as schizophrenia, manic depression, bipolar disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or other forms of psychosis.

Sanctuary Housing operate in two locations in Eastbourne that provide support for homeless adults. At Hyde Gardens they have 19 self-contained flats. St Aubyns Road scheme have 8 rooms in a shared house and one one bedroom annexe.

The schemes provide the support and assistance for people to become independent and move into their own accommodation and usually people stay with Sanctuary for 9 months to a year at St Aubyns Rd scheme under a licence agreement and 2 years at Hyde gardens under a tenancy agreement. They provide a range of support for people to give them life skills training on things which will help them maintain a tenancy of their own such as budgeting and maintaining a tenancy. They work in conjunction with a number of other agencies such as STAR for drug and alcohol support, AA,NA ,Gamcare, The Independent Living Scheme, Homeworks, local NHS mental health teams etc. The accommodation is usually full and has a waiting list but the high success rate of people moving on, means spaces do become available throughout the year.

At the end of the year people are found housing either through the Council or the private rented sector. The success rate, for people moving on from the scheme into their own homes, is high. Ten people have moved into their own homes in the last year from the Hyde Gardens location and from St Aubyns 6 have moved on successfully.

Who are the people who receive help?

Most people who are referred are homeless or/and have long-term mental health problems and have been in and out of mental health institutions for most of their adult life. Michelle has noticed that people are being diagnosed with mental health problems when they are younger than in previous years. Sanctuary work with them to help build confidence and seek to enable the person to have a full and active life through things like volunteering, work placement and training. The knowledge and skills background for those who use the services can be varied.

What is causing street homelessness to get worse in Eastbourne?

Pressures from changes to the benefits system are contributing to homelessness and some of the thinking behind Universal Credit – direct payment to the claimant etc – are not always a good idea for vulnerable people with mental health difficulties and or substance abuse problems. The added pressure of taking responsibility for ensuring payment is made for rent can have a negative impact not only on their mental health but could also increase debt and financial strain in the long term.

A very small percentage of homeless people prefer to live on the streets because it gives them greater freedom and they find it preferable to living under strict rules and the financial burden of everyday life such as paying rent and bills etc, as long as they have some financial support from benefits they are able to tolerate the difficulties of rough sleeping.

Sanctuary find is necessary to identify people who are willing to engage with their approach to make sure that their limited resources give the maximum benefit as there is usually a waiting list to get into the scheme.

They work closely with the psychiatry teams at St Mary's House. Michelle has noticed a difference in the amount of help which is available for people with mental health difficulties including reduced care packages. She is acutely aware of the cuts which are affecting various agencies and is concerned about the impact this will have on service users and the service providers.

Sussex Rough Sleeping Prevention Project

Jane Healey (HBC) and Teresa Scott (Homeworks)

This project works across East Sussex and is funded by DCLG for two years. It is delivered by all the Local Authorities within the county in collaboration with Homeworks. The project aims to provide support to people who are threatened with eviction, where the local authority would have no duty to house. Referrals come from the local authority, the Jobcentre, Probation service and other agencies.



So far they have helped people in a wide variety of circumstances including relationship breakdown, parental evictions, drug and alcohol problems and young people reaching the end of their time within supported accommodation units.

People in receipt of benefits often experience difficulties finding affordable housing. The rental cost of a room in shared accommodation is between £80 and £100 per week. The Local Housing Allowance for a single person under 35yrs is £67 per week, meaning top-ups have to be made from a very limited income.

The Sussex Rough Sleeping Prevention Support worker (SRSP) is employed by Homeworks and works exclusively on this project. The support worker is mobile and able to work from Council offices or meet clients at other locations. Ordinarily, clients presenting as homeless, will complete a Housing Options assessment with the Council. The Housing Options Officer will refer to the project if the client meets the criteria. The SRSP Support worker has found that for a variety of reasons, that some people are reluctant to approach the council as homeless. Another referral route is via Work Coaches at local JobCentres. However, the Council is the first option for avoiding homelessness and clients can be supported to present with the SRSP. If the Council find that they do not have a duty to house someone, the SRSP can support people to explore other options, usually leading to housing in the private rented sector.

The support worker focuses on enabling the person to access private rented accommodation by liaising with local landlords and agencies to ensure they are able to access the most suitable accommodation. She will support clients in finding friends or family willing to act as a guarantor and/or provide references. In some cases, they have supported clients to access financial assistance for rent in advance and a deposit.

Covering rent in advance and deposit costs can often be the biggest barrier people face in finding alternative accommodation. Additional letting agent fees can vary widely and in some cases be up to £300.00. Again, the project has been able to access charitable funds which can help cover these costs. In some cases, having obtained the charitable funding, the person has been unable to provide suitable references and these costs are then not refundable.

The Project has been successful in obtaining rent in advance and deposits from the Council's Discretionary housing payment scheme. In some cases rent in advance is arranged as a loan through the council. This is a more cost effective option for the Council when compared to paying for temporary accommodation.

The project has supported 217 people across East Sussex in the first year and of this figure 88% were prevented from rough sleeping. 23% of clients were from Eastbourne. Of the 217 - 30% were women and 70% were men

The average support period from the project is 5-7 weeks, but if necessary the support can continue for up to 3 months. Many clients have been supported to find safe, affordable accommodation; others have had support to ensure they are able to remain in their homes where there was a significant risk of eviction. If further support is required once SRSP have closed the case then a referral is made to Homeworks who will continue support on a less intensive basis.

It is estimated that about 40% of the people supported by the project have drug or alcohol problems and around 90% of those helped have mental health problems such as anxiety or depression. The project can help clients to access appropriate mental health support services.

Reformed East Sussex - Charmaine Sewell

Charmaine set up Reformed East Sussex (R.E.S) to help people across the county who have a criminal record or substance abuse problem. A key aim is to help people to find ways back into employment. This also involves helping people who are homeless. The project is a Community Interest Company which employs 6 people (5 part-time) and has 2 volunteers. Most of their funding comes from East Sussex County Council and currently lasts until June 2019.



Their work is built upon and inspired by people using their personal lived experience surrounding the issues of offending and substance misuse. They work with community partners focused on intervention, prevention and reduction in offending and substance misuse. They provide support to either find employment or increase their employability through CV writing, finding volunteer opportunities, interview skills etc.

New Leaf

Charmaine is also working on setting up a new project called "New Leaf" which aims to provide housing for women who have been offenders and are now homeless. At the moment they are seeking funding and working on bids in collaboration with other agencies. They hope to set up housing which will be specifically for women.

As an Eastbourne resident, Charmaine sees the increased numbers of homeless people on a daily basis and this is even more alarming when the number of women has increased. Women are at greater risk of exploitation when they are street homeless and they need specific support to protect them and enable them to move out of homelessness.

The project attempted crowdfunding but this was unsuccessful meaning that at present, they can only signpost to other agencies around the town. However, they know that this is not always an effective solution unless people can actually access housing. They will continue to look for funding opportunities and other ways to get local support. The "New Leaf" Project will be a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centres on quickly moving women into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional support and services as needed.

What does the town need to help reduce homelessness?

Eastbourne is changing and the current regeneration will improve economic prosperity. However, it will also make the town more attractive for homeless people from elsewhere, so we will need additional support for homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless.

A housing first approach is essential because people cannot be expected to get back into work or overcome substance misuse problems when they are homeless. Housing provides the necessary base which people need so they can focus on rebuilding other aspects of their lives and recovery is made easier when housing and support are in place.

Reformed East Sussex are exploring new ways to make their funding more sustainable and are interested in working with local businesses to collaborate on new ideas.



**For women and children.
Against domestic violence.**

Women's Refuge

Refuge, the specialist domestic violence charity, operates five refuges within East Sussex, in the districts of Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Rother and Wealden. In total, these provide 47 units of accommodation, which vary in size and type. Some include shared facilities, while others are self-contained units. Refuge's East Sussex service was commissioned by East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Supporting People in April 2012. Refuge can offer temporary accommodation to women aged 16 and over, with or without non adult dependents, who are experiencing domestic violence / abuse.

In 2016-17, our East Sussex refuges provided safe accommodation and life-changing support to 130 women and their 181 children. Their local partnership work – and raising awareness of Refuge in the community – is integral to the success of the service. Two things are interesting to note are: 39% of women were from the local area; and a high number (40) of the referrals to the service came from local housing authorities.

Domestic violence is experienced by women of all ages, backgrounds and cultures. Some women also experience additional complex needs. For example, women may also have alcohol dependencies, often created as a consequence of experiencing domestic violence and used as a way to cope with the abuse. Refuge and ESCC are committed to supporting all women, whatever their needs. Refuge supports a high number of women with issues around mental health and/or issues around substance misuse and working in partnership with other agencies is key.

Refuge will work with clients to find independent accommodation; they will work to ensure that clients are protected from harm and will also seek to help the client to live independently and to be able to participate in the community. The average length of stay in a refuge is 19 weeks overall and in Eastbourne 32.6 weeks.

Where did women move from refuges to?

women's refuge	19%
Living with family or friends	18%
Housing association general needs tenancy	14%
moved to B&B	12%
private sector tenancy	10%
local authority general needs tenancy	7%
returned to previous home	5%
unknown or abandoned tenancy	5%
returning home without partner	5%
returning home with partner	4%
moved to sheltered housing	1%

Challenges with moving on from the refuges

'Move on' work with clients begins during the early stages of each client's stay. Women are encouraged to explore all available housing options with the expert support of Refuge's staff. 'Move on' within in the private sector has posed many challenges during the period, as the availability of properties with landlords willing to accept Housing Benefit claimants, or clients without a guarantor, has reduced. Only 13 women were able to secure private rented properties in the last 12 months (2016-17).

However, the team of staff are making good links with local estate agents in order to build relationships which will support more families with the challenges faced with privately rented housing.

Laura Morrow at Get a Room



Laura set up the business with her partner two years ago. She has around 300 tenants on her books and around 30 or 40 are on benefits.

HMO | RESIDENTIAL | PROPERTY LETTINGS & MANAGEMENT

What do tenants need to have?

- ID
- Rent deposit
- One month's rent in advance
- References (depending on circumstances and history)
- Guarantor (if on any benefits and renting a flat)
- Fees – (from website up to £200 admin fee for couple)

Do you accept people on benefits and/or homeless? Are UC and zero hours contracts a problem?

They do accept some people on benefits although a number of their clients have had bad experiences and do not. Two large-scale landlords have recently stopped – one with 50 units and one with 100. Landlords often report problems with tenants on benefits and Laura said that nearly all the problems she has relate to benefit tenants. This can include anti social behaviour and unsuitable friends visiting and damage to properties at the end of the period. Arrears can also be more of a problem.

The properties that are let to benefits clients tend to be in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) or serviced accommodation (the latter might include cleaning and breakfast). Landlords prefer this as it is easier to evict and so arrears are less of an issue. Serviced accommodation in particular is easiest for landlords to evict. HMOs are easier than self-contained flats but there are some grey areas. Benefits tenants and non-benefits tenants are housed in separate properties. She said that many people preferred these kind of properties eg a room in an HMO might be £500 a month compared to £500-£600 for a studio or one bed flat. But the HMO cost includes all bills such as CT, water, energy and Wi-Fi. Having the one payment also helps with budgeting.

Benefit clients can get flats but they would need guarantors. She said that this was very difficult as they often found that potential guarantors did not meet the requirements e.g. homeowner, good credit history and adequate net income.

Tenants have their rent paid direct to the landlord. Initially it was difficult for UC to be paid this way and people had to have complex needs, but it seems that this is being relaxed. She has been speaking recently to Stephen Lloyd about this and understands that he is pushing for this to be made more common. She has had feedback from tenants who have moved to UC that their housing cost support is less than they were getting in HB.

Laura has one landlord who is concerned about a client moving to UC and is considering issuing a Section 21 eviction notice. Generally landlords are concerned with delays in clients getting UC and she believes that it is pushing some landlords to stop taking benefit tenants. She had one tenant who had to wait 12 weeks to get UC.

She said that if applicants were on zero hours contracts they would need a guarantor if they wanted a flat. In practice, most rent a room.

It was often difficult for people on benefits to get the money for deposits, fees and rent in advance. She works with the Council who help people through Discretionary Housing Payment DHP or loans. Laura sometimes helped people with benefit claims.

Do you accept as tenants people who are street homeless?

Laura has helped around 50/60 street homeless people over the last two years. These may be offered a room in an HMO or serviced accommodation. Some of these have come direct and the Council has referred some after some vetting by them. She can point to some success stories eg one man who six months later is in work and thriving. But there have also been problems, with one tenant ending up being in the centre of a drug dealership. These cases can be difficult to resolve and are very time consuming.

Kay Smith at Mason Bryant



Kay has worked in the business around 20 years. She has around 200 tenants on her books and around 10% are on benefits.

What do tenants need to have?

- ID – e.g. passport, driving licence as per government regulations
- One month rent's deposit (+£100)
- One month's rent in advance
- References (depending on circumstances and history)
- Guarantor (if on any benefits)
- Fees - £90 for references and £90 agency fee

Do you accept people on benefits and/or homeless? Are UC and zero hours contracts a problem?

They do accept some people on benefits although a number of their clients have had bad experiences and do not, including one client with 40 properties. They see one of the problems as being that the Council advises tenants to stay put when there are arrears. The Council does not exercise its homelessness duty until the last minute and so any evictions that are made are protracted and difficult.

Most tenants have their rent paid direct to the landlord. At the moment she has 10-12 on Housing Benefit and 2 on UC (with a third soon). She said it appeared that paying UC direct to the tenant was not a great problem. They also had around 6 other tenants who were in work and received low levels of Housing Benefit. These tenants generally paid rent to the landlord themselves.

Kay has not had any landlords issuing Section 21 eviction notices as a result of tenants moving to UC. She said if a tenant has a decent history then she would work with the landlord and tenant.

She said that zero hours contracts were problematic as it made budgeting very difficult for tenants. This was why they required a guarantor in these cases.

It was often difficult for people on benefits to get the money for deposits, fees and rent in advance. She said she was aware that the Council could sometimes help but she felt that this was not widely known.

The other main issue for people on benefits was that Housing Benefit was based on the Local Housing Allowance but this has been frozen and is now much lower than market rents. As an example she said that a typical one bed flat had a rent of £600-£650 a month compared with LHA of £506.

Some landlords do not accept people on benefits because some mortgage companies do not allow it. She said she did not think that there was a problem with landlords' insurance companies. Kay sometimes helped people with benefit claims.

Do you accept as tenants people who are street homeless?

These are not excluded per se and it depends on the landlord. They would need a guarantor and they would be carefully vetted, as there can be concerns over problems related to drugs, alcohol or mental health and also the friends that may visit. She pointed to one successful case where a churchgoer had befriended a homeless man and offered to act as guarantor. They interviewed him and recommended to the landlord that she felt the risk was not too great. A place was found for him and he has maintained the tenancy and flourished.

What can you do to help people who are street homeless?

You could give them money but if you're unsure about this there are other options.

Buy them a hot drink or some food. Ask them first if this is a gesture that would be welcomed –sometimes it's not. Don't be offended if they say no and don't feel bullied into giving them money instead.

Ask them if know where to go for help in the town. Examples of agencies you could direct them to are:

- Citizens Advice Eastbourne, 8 St Leonards Road, BN21 3UH
tel: 03444111444
- BHT Eastbourne Advice, 8 St Leonards Road BN21 3UH tel: 01323 642615
- Salvation Army, Eastbourne Citadel, 141 Langney Road BN22 8AG,
tel: 01323 640382
- The Matthew 25 Mission, Brodie Hall/Christ Church Seaside BN22 7NN,
tel: 01323 726960
- Eastbourne Borough Council, 1 Grove Road BN21 4TW, 01323 410000

Donate directly to a local charity who gives help to the homeless (see above list)

You could donate money or goods to a charity shop or local agency

Or volunteer with one of the local charities

Use Streetlink.org.uk to inform local services

Citizens Advice Eastbourne

**Unit 6, Highlight House, 8 St Leonards Road
Eastbourne, East Sussex BN21 3UH**

Tel: 03444 111 444 fax 01323 412072

www.eastbournecab.co.uk

Charity registration No 1086163 Company registration No 4171801

Twitter: @EastbourneCAB facebook.com/CitizensAdviceEastbourne