

**BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MIDSUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL**

<b>From: Corporate Manager – Housing Options</b>	<b>Report Number: JSC/16/15</b>
<b>To: Joint Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting: 16 December 2015</b>

**HOMELESSNESS**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide members of the Joint Scrutiny Committee with information requested regarding homelessness in the two districts.

**2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 Members of the Committee are asked to note the contents of this report.

**3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications to this report

**4. Risk Management**

- 4.1 This report is not closely linked with any of the Councils' Corporate / Significant Business Risks.

**5. Consultations**

- 5.1 Members of the Homelessness Team

**6. Equality Analysis**

- 6.1 Not applicable

**7. Shared Service / Partnership Implications**

- 7.1 An integrated Housing Options Team includes officers who manage the two council's legal responsibilities towards people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

**8. Legal Obligations**

- 8.1 The Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 sets out the legal responsibilities which local housing authorities have with regards to homelessness in their area. They are required to provide advice and information about homelessness and prevention of homelessness free of charge to anyone in their district.

- 8.2 Each local authority is required to submit separate quarterly returns to central government. Although there is an integrated team, most of the information in this report is presented separately for Babergh and Mid Suffolk. The data also highlights some differences in the levels and reasons for homelessness in the two districts.

### 8.3 Definition of homelessness

If a local authority has reason to believe that someone applying to the authority is homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days it must make enquiries to determine what duty is owed to that person.

### 8.4 Enquiries and decisions

The enquiries made into the homeless household's circumstances enable a number of decisions to be made:-

- Is the applicant eligible? – this relates to immigration status
- Is the applicant homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days?
- Is the applicant in priority need?
- Is the applicant intentionally or unintentionally homeless?
- Does the applicant have a local connection to the district?

The duty owed depends on the decision made as shown in the table below:-

Decision of the Council	Duty of the Council		
	Temporary accommodation	Advice and assistance to find a new home	Provision of a social housing or private sector tenancy
Not homeless	No	No	No
Homeless but not in priority need	No	Yes	No
Homeless, in priority need but intentionally homeless	Yes for a limited period	Yes	No
Homeless, in priority need and not intentionally homeless	Yes	Yes	Yes
Homeless, in priority need, not intentionally homeless but no local connection	Yes but Referral to an area where they have a connection unless they would be at risk of violence in that area	Yes	No Unless there is a risk of violence if they were referred to another area

### 8.5 Priority Need

There are several categories of priority need including:-

- Having dependent children, pregnancy
- Being 16 or 17.

- Vulnerability due to old age mental illness, physical disability, having been in the forces, having been in prison, having fled violence, being homeless due to an emergency such as a fire or flood or having been in care.

Case law has changed the definition of vulnerability very recently. A applicant is now to be considered vulnerable if the person:-“When homeless, is significantly less able to fend for themselves than an ordinary person if made homeless, so that injury or detriment to them will result, when a less vulnerable [ordinary] person would be able to cope without harmful effect.”

The test that local authorities now apply is whether a homeless applicant is more vulnerable than “an ordinary person if made homeless” rather than an “ordinary actual homeless person” and is likely to increase the number of people deemed to have a priority need.

## 8.6 Intentionality

An applicant is considered to be intentionally homeless if:-

- He or she deliberately does or fails to do something which results in the loss of accommodation and
- The accommodation would have been available and reasonable for them to occupy

## 9. Homelessness in Babergh and Mid Suffolk – Decisions Made

	Accepted		Intentional		Non priority		Not homeless		Ineligible		Total		Percentage accepted	
	B	M	B	M	B	M	B	M	B	M	B	M	B	M
April – Sept 15	45	27	5	0	10	8	27	12	0	0	87	47	52	57
2014/15	86	56	6	4	10	16	43	15	0	0	145	91	59	62
2013/14	86	58	6	3	10	20	32	13	0	0	134	94	64	62
2012/13	100	51	3	4	7	9	19	23	1	0	130	87	77	59
2011/12	78	50	10	6	11	17	9	19	3	0	111	92	70	54

The percentage accepted in other districts in Suffolk varies from 34% in Waveney to 61% in Ipswich.

### 9.1 Reasons for loss of accommodation for those accepted

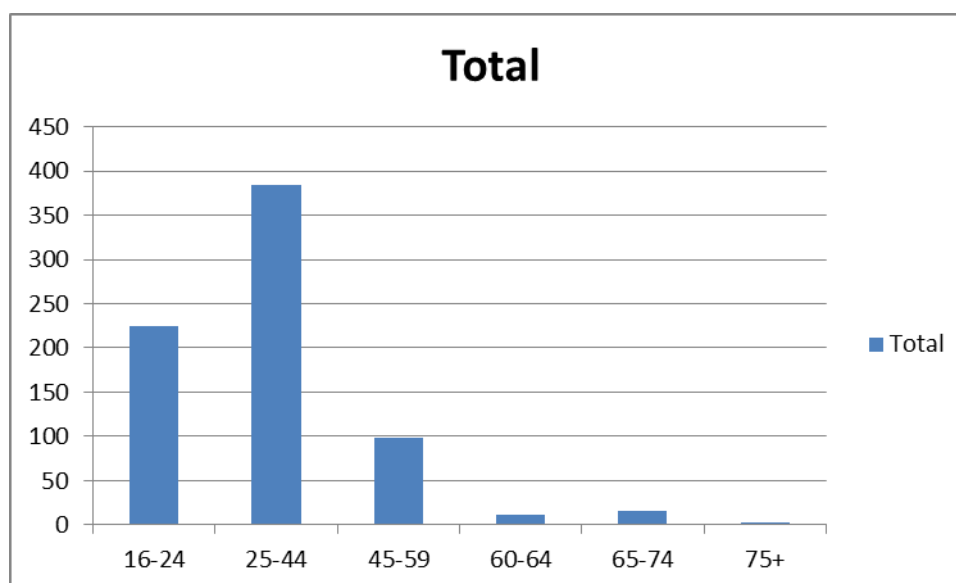
	2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15		April – Sept 15	
	B	M	B	M	B	M	B	M	B	M
Loss of private rent	28	25	29	16	24	16	38	23	21	12
Excluded by family/friends	21	5	34	9	33	9	15	15	10	5
Violence/harassment	10	6	11	10	7	11	8	6	6	4
Relationship breakdown	7	9	13	6	10	10	7	2	8	1
Rent arrears	4	1	6	0	3	2	6	0	0	1
Mortgage arrears	3	1	1	6	0	4	1	3	0	1
Other	5	3	6	4	9	6	11	7	0	3
Totals	78	50	100	51	86	58	86	56	45	27

The main differences between the two authorities in recent years is the higher number of people becoming homeless in the Babergh area due to the end of a private tenancy or being excluded by friends or family.

## 9.2 Priority need of those accepted

	2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15		April - Sept 15	
	B	M	B	M	B	M	B	M	B	M
Children	52	39	62	37	51	42	39	41	22	21
Pregnancy	9	3	19	5	16	1	11	4	6	2
16/17	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mental Health	6	2	6	4	10	4	13	5	5	4
Physical disability	3	2	9	0	2	5	10	3	5	0
Emergency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Old Age	1	3	1	1	2	1	9	0	1	0
Violence	4	0	3	1	2	2	1	1	4	0
Other	3	1	0	2	3	3	3	2	2	0
Total	78	50	100	51	86	58	86	56	45	27

## 9.3 Age groups of those accepted (Babergh and Mid Suffolk)



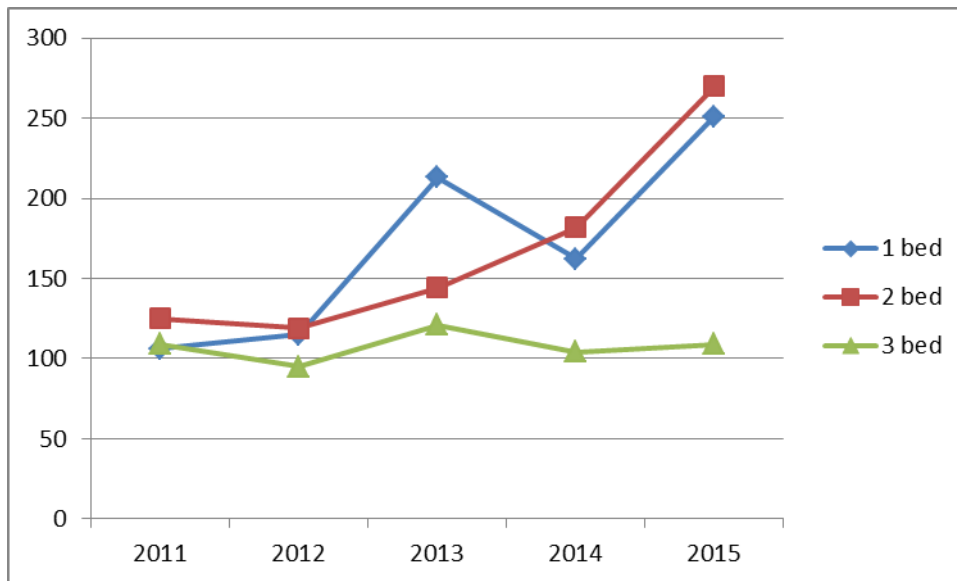
## 9.4 Time taken to permanently house accepted homeless households

9.5 The tables below show the average time in days to house households who have been accepted under the homelessness legislation. One and two bedroom properties are in high demand which has resulted in a longer wait for a permanent home.

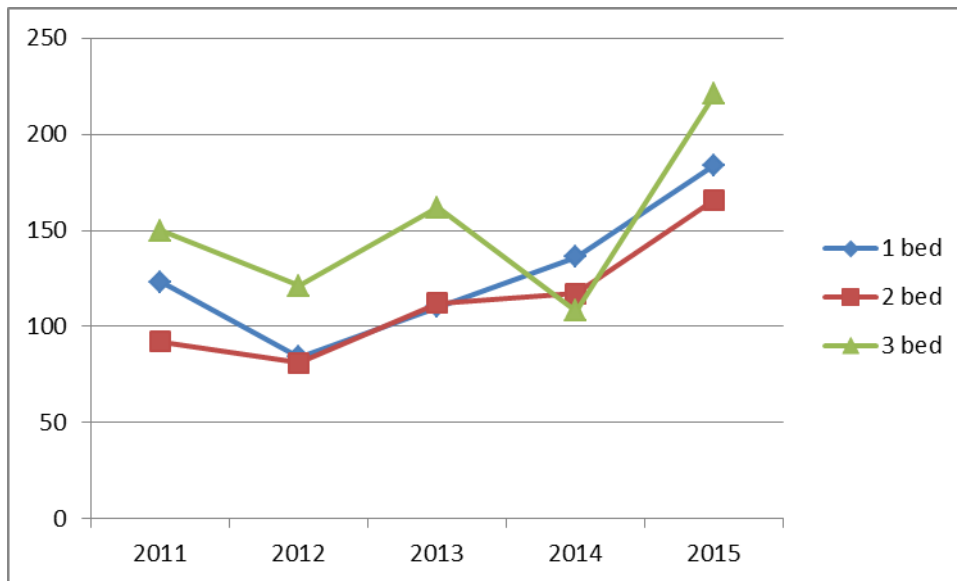
9.6 The waiting time for a three bedroom property in Mid Suffolk has been affected by the redevelopment schemes in Woolpit, Haughley and Stowmarket which has involved demolition of three bedroom houses and rehousing a number of existing tenants prior to the provision of new properties on those sites.

9.7 In Babergh the longer wait for a one bedroom property reflects the higher number of people in the district who have been given the highest priority to move on from supported housing and in 2015 the number of two bedroom vacancies has been lower than in previous years.

### Babergh



### Mid Suffolk



## 10. Homeless Prevention

Whenever possible we try to prevent homelessness. The main ways in which homelessness has been prevented is by negotiating with friends or families who are asking someone to leave, assisting vulnerable single people and young parents to apply for supported housing and providing assistance from the rent deposit scheme to access a private tenancy.

Since April 2015 a dedicated part time member of staff has been employed to administer the rent deposit scheme. Since April 2014, 78 households have been assisted to find a private tenancy, either with or without financial assistance.

## 11. Temporary Accommodation

- 11.1 Both Councils have temporary housing in their districts and use bed and breakfast when it is fully occupied.
- 11.2 Babergh has 22 units in Sudbury and 4 in Hadleigh. Mid Suffolk has 7 in Stowmarket and also uses three ex-scheme manager's flats in sheltered schemes.
- 11.3 The cost of bed and breakfast accommodation after housing benefit has been received was:-

	Total expenditure		Income from Housing Benefit		Net expenditure	
	B	M	B	M	B	M
2013/14	54,230	69,211	39,128	42,170	15,102	27,041
2014/15	107,294	63,376	75,292	38,842	32,002	24,534

- 11.4 Priority for vacancies which arise in the Council's own temporary accommodation is given to families who have children or a pregnancy.
- 11.5 In 2014/15 121 households in Babergh were provided with temporary accommodation. The average stay was 42 days. In Mid Suffolk 56 households spent time in temporary housing for an average of 77 days.
- 11.6 Since April 2015 there have been 100 households in Babergh and 43 in Mid Suffolk provided with temporary accommodation.

## 12. Domestic Violence

- 12.1 Homelessness Officers attend regular Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC). Organised by the police and attended by a number of different agencies, the purpose of the meetings is to share information about victims and perpetrators and to find the best solution for individuals who are at risk.

## 13. Rough Sleeping

Information about rough sleepers comes from members of the public, parish councils or other agencies. There is also a government funded website and phone line called StreetLink which allows people to report rough sleeping. StreetLink forward information to the relevant local authority.

Officers respond to any reports of rough sleepers, including people sleeping in cars, assess the individual's circumstances and offer advice and assistance and temporary accommodation if it is considered that they might be in a priority group. The number of cases is low. Appendix A gives case studies from the last eighteen months.

Each autumn local authorities submit a return to central government giving an estimate of the number of rough sleepers on a particular day. Last year both Babergh and Mid Suffolk had a nil return. This year each authority reported two as at 18<sup>th</sup> November. To inform the estimate a number of local agencies are contacted such as the police, the Citizen Advice Bureau, the Health Outreach Project, voluntary agencies such as SNAP (a support provider), Town Councils and some supported housing providers.

#### 14. Appendices

Title	Location
(A) Rough Sleeper Case Study	Attached

Authorship:  
Sue Lister  
Corporate Manager – Housing Options

01449 724758  
sue.lister@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

## **Rough sleeper case studies**

### **Babergh**

Summer 2014. A man was sleeping in a car with his dog. He had previously been renting a property but when he lost his job due to depression he was unable to pay the rent. He was offered temporary accommodation and for the dog to be looked after but he declined. The Housing Options Team were made aware of a private rented bedsit becoming available and provided assistance via the Rent Deposit Scheme to enable him to access this property. He is still there.

October 2015. Police reported a man aged 69 sleeping in a car in the local area. He said he had been homeless for two years. He declined the offer of temporary accommodation and an offer of a permanent sheltered flat. He was given contact details and advised he can reconsider the offer of temporary accommodation.

August 2015. A 70 year old man was sleeping in his van following relationship breakdown. He was offered but declined temporary accommodation and has refused offers of permanent sheltered properties.

November 2015. A member of the public and a member of the parish council alerted the Housing Options Team to a woman and children living in a tent in a field outside a village. Following a visit by an officer with the parish council member it was discovered that there was a warrant for her arrest. We understand the children are now with another family member.

June 2015. We were alerted by members of the public and Streetlink to a couple sleeping in a tent on the edge of Ipswich. They were provided with temporary B & B accommodation whilst their situation was investigated. They had been evicted by a social landlord due to anti-social behaviour and following enquiries regarding their health a non-priority decision was made. They were given a date to leave the temporary accommodation which included time to allow them to look for other housing. However they were asked to leave the B & B before the date due to their unacceptable behaviour.

### **Mid Suffolk**

October 2015. The Housing Options Team were contacted by the Town Council about a lady sleeping rough. Officers have not always found her when they have tried to see her but have spoken to her twice and arranged for the Health Outreach Team to make contact with her. She has not accepted any help offered to her. It is believed she came from the Cambridge area. The Health Outreach Team is visiting her once a week to try to build up a relationship with her but she is not engaging with them. The police are aware but as she is not considered to be a risk to herself or others they cannot take any action. We will continue to monitor the situation.

November 2015. Police contacted us regarding a man living in a tent. He had been living in a shared house in another area but had been forced to leave there following an incident. Following a court hearing this restriction was lifted and he was allowed to return.