

Solihull Statutory Homelessness 2015/16

This briefing note covers officially published data relating to households who seek housing assistance from local authorities on the grounds of being currently or imminently without accommodation.

Local Authorities have a legal duty to ensure that homeless people have somewhere to live if they are in priority need and are not intentionally homeless. A person or household is automatically in priority need when they are homeless due to an emergency (flood, fire etc), the household contains dependent children or a member is pregnant, in certain age groups (e.g. 16/17 year olds not owed a duty by Children's Services and those of pensionable age) or have a disability. People who have a background that could make them vulnerable (e.g. having been in care, institutions or a victim of violence) could also be deemed to be in priority need subject to the Local Authority's assessment. The assessment of vulnerability was the subject of a recent Supreme Court ruling (May 2015) which confirmed the applicant should be compared to an 'ordinary person' if rendered homeless (and not an ordinary homeless person) when determining whether any special factors make them more vulnerable to the effects of homelessness.

There is no duty to secure accommodation for all homeless people. For example, there is no statutory duty to secure housing for homeless single people and couples without children who are not deemed to be vulnerable for some reason. However, Local Authorities do have a duty to ensure that homeless applicants who are not in priority need are provided with advice and assistance to help them secure their own accommodation.

Official statistics on statutory homelessness as well as homelessness prevention and relief activity are published quarterly by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). These published figures do not include those who are homeless but who do not approach a local authority for assistance and those who do not meet the statutory criteria.

Eligible Homeless Decisions (Applications)

From April 2015 to March 2016 Solihull Council made decisions on 776 eligible applications for housing assistance under the homelessness legislation of the Housing Act 1996¹. This represents a fall of -31% (-342 applications) on the previous year and reverses a trend of five consecutive years from 2010/11 in which the number of applications in Solihull increased.

However, the number of eligible applications made in Solihull in 2015/16 was still much higher than the England average (8.8 per 1,000 households compared to 5.0 per 1,000). The table below shows a breakdown of the decisions made on these eligible applications in 2015/16.

¹ An additional 4 Solihull applications in 2015/16 were ineligible households

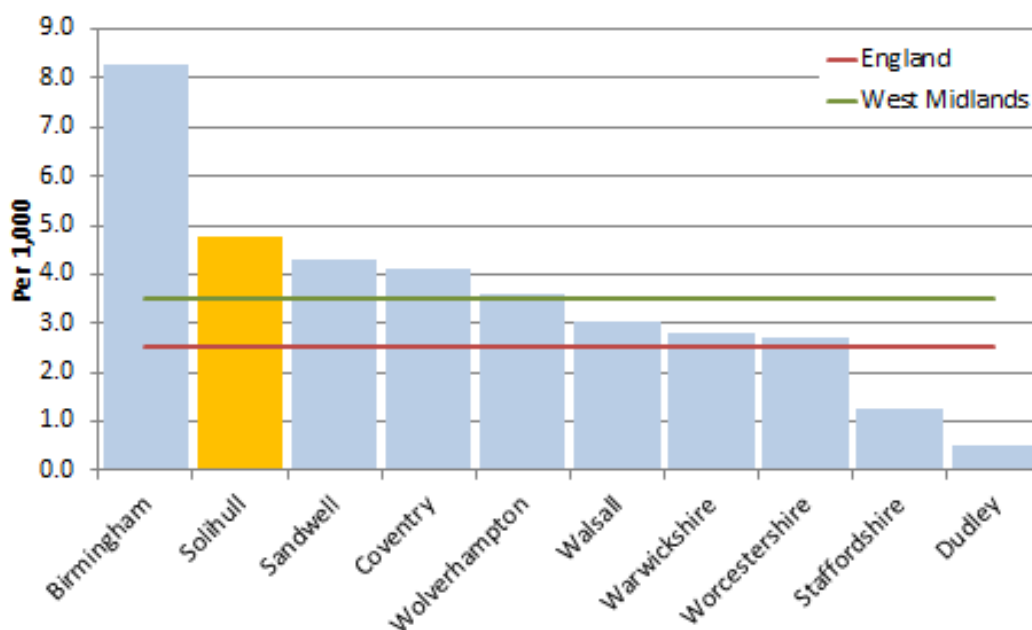
Eligible Homelessness Decisions (Applications) 2015/16					
	Number in Solihull	% of All Decisions		Rate per 1,000 Households	
		Solihull	England	Solihull	England
Homelessness Acceptances	419	54%	50%	4.76	2.52
Homeless and in priority need, but intentionally	35	5%	8%	0.40	0.42
Homeless but not in priority need	184	24%	17%	2.09	0.85
Not homeless	138	18%	24%	1.57	1.22
Total Eligible Decisions	776			8.82	5.00
Source: DCLG					

Homeless Acceptances

In 2015/16 419 households were accepted as being homeless and in priority need in Solihull and therefore classified as being statutorily homeless. This represents 54% of all homelessness applications made during the year compared to the England average of 50%.

The Solihull homelessness rate of 4.76 per 1,000 households was higher than the England average (2.5 per 1,000) and the 31st highest out of 321 Local Authorities in the country.

Statutory Homelessness Rate per 1,000 Household 2015/16



Source: DCLG

The number of Solihull households accepted as being homeless fell by -43% in 2015/16 (-180 households), with the rate per 1,000 households now lower than at any point since 2011/12. This follows a period in which the number of homelessness acceptance increased

in five consecutive years from 2010/11 and by a total of 134% (+343 households) over this period.

	Solihull Homeless Households	Rate per 1,000 Households		Solihull Rank out of 319 LAs (1 is highest)
		Solihull	England	
2009/10	256	3.05	1.86	38
2010/11	311	3.70	2.03	30
2011/12	330	3.93	2.31	34
2012/13	409	4.70	2.41	23
2013/14	510	5.87	2.32	12
2014/15	599	6.85	2.40	8
2015/16	419	4.46	2.52	31

Source: DCLG

The rising number of homelessness acceptances from 2010/11 through to 2014/15 reflected changes in national housing, homelessness and welfare policy as well as local demographic and housing market pressures, including:

- a growth in the number of single person households;
- a slowdown in housebuilding leading to a shortage of affordable and specialist housing and exceptionally high pressure on the social housing waiting list;
- a fall in the number of social rented lettings accompanied by an increase in the proportion of lettings to homeless households;
- average house prices and private rents that are markedly higher than the West Midlands region and;
- despite recent growth, a relatively small private rented sector in Solihull.

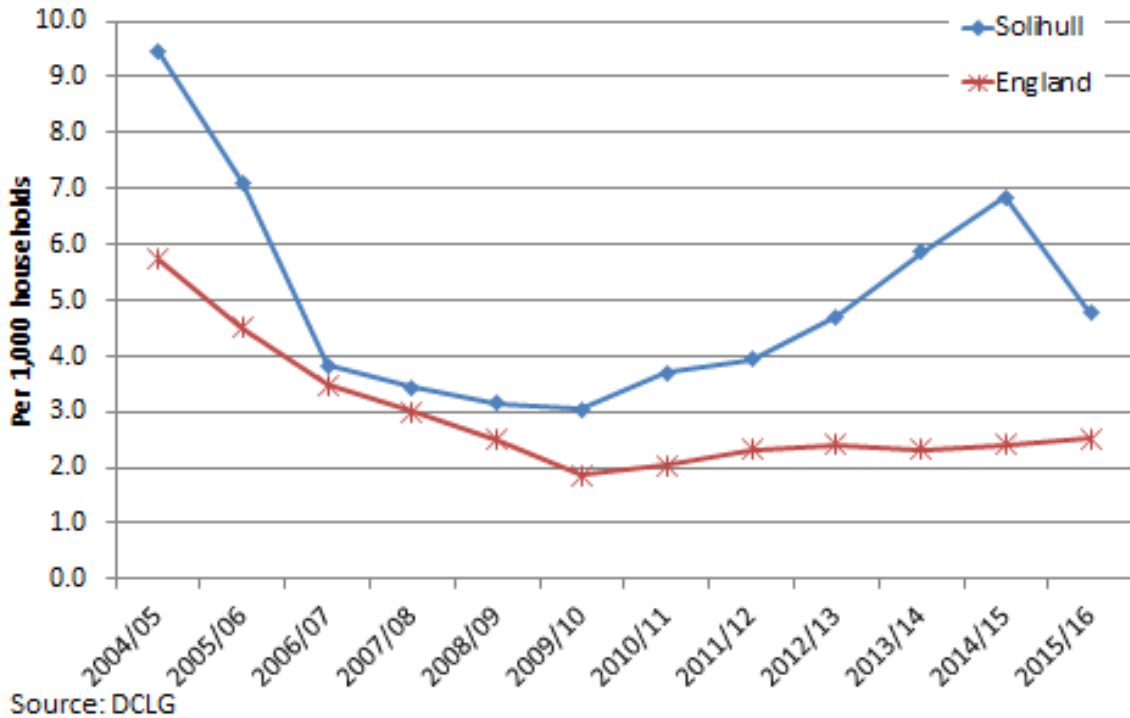
The causes of homelessness are often multi-faceted and it is rarely the result of just one factor. In addition to the aforementioned structural and societal factors there are a number of personal issues that make an individual more vulnerable to homelessness. These include, relationship breakdown, addiction and mental health issues and having been in care, prison or the armed forces. The rising number of acceptances in Solihull does therefore, in part, reflect the increasing vulnerability of certain groups who in turn are often less well equipped to deal with the structural challenges of the housing system.

Despite these long term pressures the following local actions contributed to the fall in the number of homelessness acceptances in 2015/16:

- A review of the way the homelessness and housing options service was delivered to improve case management, first point of response and to ensure consistency with the application of the legislation;
- an increased focus on homelessness prevention and;
- improved joint working with partner organisations and specialist services (e.g. specialist support for young people and those at risk of sleeping rough).

Although it is difficult to estimate the impact of external factors it is likely that on-going reductions in unemployment and low interest rates have also had a positive impact on the levels of homelessness experienced by Solihull residents.

Homelessness Rate

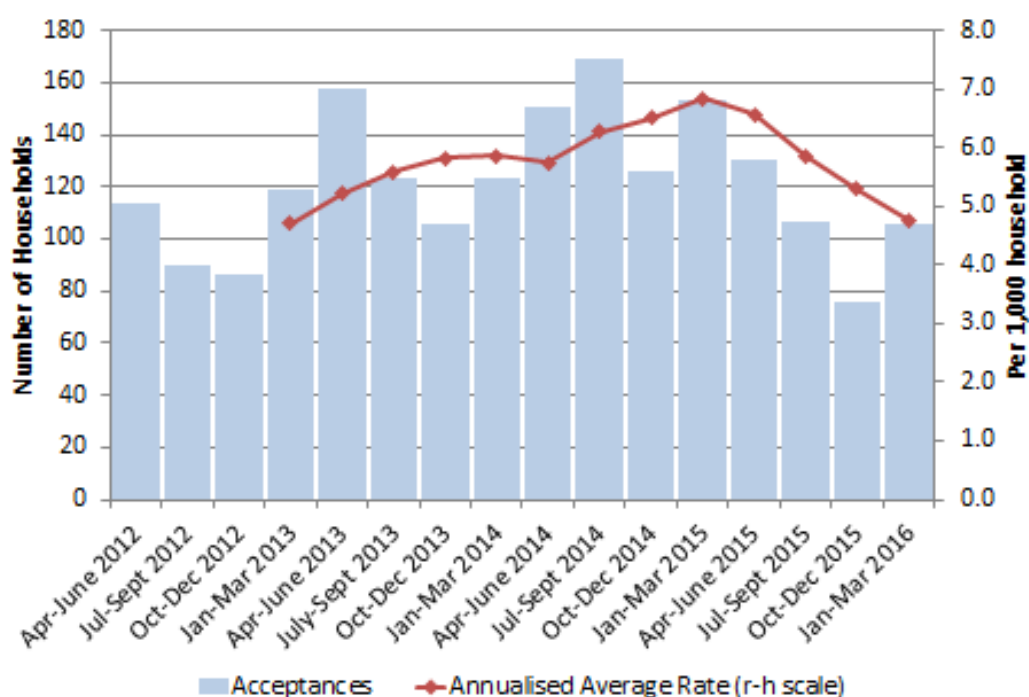


The most recent quarterly data shows that the number of homelessness acceptances and the homelessness rate in Solihull has been trending downwards since the first three months of 2015, with 31% fewer acceptances between January and March 2016 when compared with the same quarter in 2015 (106 compared to 153). By contrast, the England annualised average rate has been edging upwards since mid 2014.

	Quarterly Homelessness Acceptances in Solihull		Annualised Average Rate	
	Acceptances	Annualised Average	Solihull	England
Jan-Mar 2013	119	409	4.70	2.47
Apr-June 2013	158	453	5.21	2.43
July-Sept 2013	123	486	5.59	2.41
Oct-Dec 2013	106	506	5.82	2.38
Jan-Mar 2014	123	510	5.87	2.34
Apr-June 2014	151	503	5.75	2.31
Jul-Sept 2014	169	549	6.28	2.34
Oct-Dec 2014	126	569	6.51	2.37
Jan-Mar 2015	153	599	6.85	2.42
Apr-June 2015	130	578	6.57	2.42
Jul-Sept 2015	107	516	5.86	2.45
Oct-Dec 2015	76	466	5.30	2.49
Jan-Mar 2016	106	419	4.76	2.52

Source: DCLG

Quarterly Homelessness Acceptances in Solihull



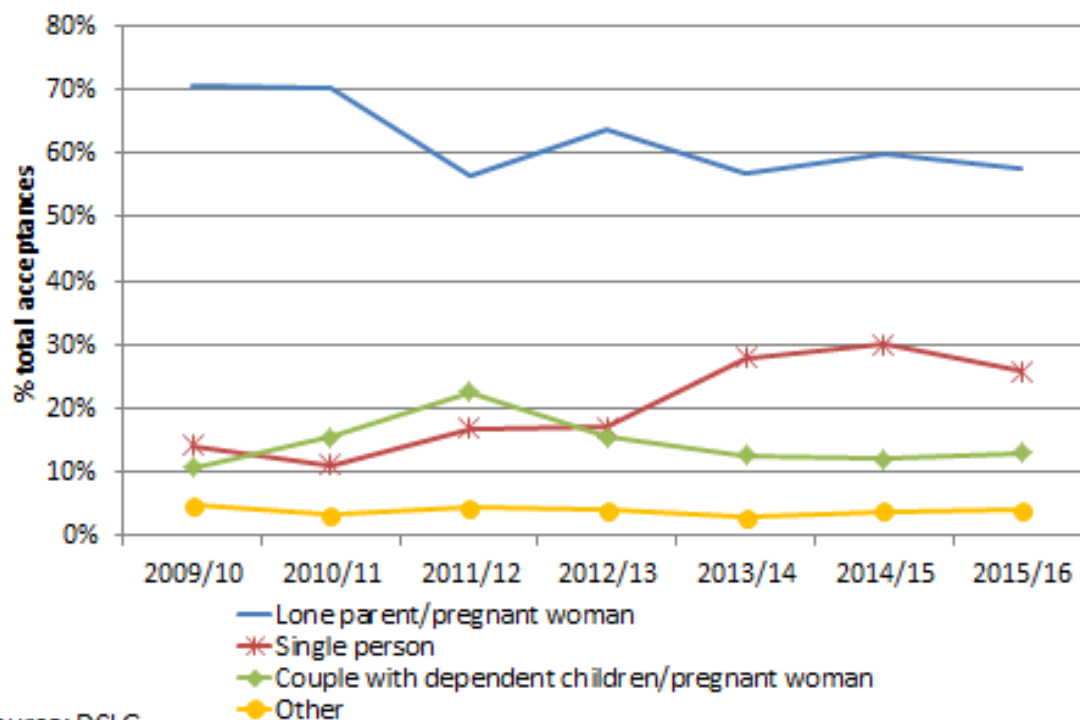
Household Characteristics of Homelessness Acceptances

In 2015/16 the largest group of homeless acceptances in Solihull by household type were lone parents or single pregnant women, accounting for 58% of the total (241 households). Vulnerable single people (26%, 108 households) were the next largest group, followed by couples with dependent children or where the woman is pregnant (13%, 54 households). One of the most significant patterns over recent years has been the increase in the number of vulnerable single people accepted as being homeless, with this group increasing from 17% of all acceptances in 2012/13 to 30% in 2014/15 (although the proportion fell back to 26% in 2015/16).

Homelessness Acceptances in Solihull by Household Type (% total in brackets)				
	Lone parent/pregnant woman	Single person	Couple - dependent children/pregnant	Other
2009/10	181 (71%)	36 (14%)	27 (11%)	12 (5%)
2010/11	219 (70%)	34 (11%)	48 (15%)	10 (3%)
2011/12	187 (57%)	55 (17%)	74 (22%)	14 (3%)
2012/13	261 (64%)	69 (17%)	63 (15%)	16 (4%)
2013/14	290 (57%)	142 (28%)	64 (13%)	14 (3%)
2014/15	326 (60%)	179 (30%)	72 (12%)	22 (4%)
2015/16	241 (58%)	108 (26%)	54 (13%)	16 (4%)
Change 2009/10 - 2015/16				
Households	+60	+72	+27	+4

%	+33%	+200%	+100%	+33%
Source: DCLG				

Composition of Solihull Homelessness Acceptances by Household Type



The table below shows Solihull homelessness acceptances for 2015/16 by the applicants' age. The majority of Solihull applicants (84%) were under the age of 45 years which is consistent with the pattern across England as a whole.

	Homelessness Acceptances by Age 2015/16		
	Solihull	% of Homelessness Acceptances	
		Solihull	England
Age 16-24 years	107	26%	23%
Age 25-44 years	243	58%	58%
Age 45-59 years	55	13%	15%
Age 60+ years	14	3%	4%
Source: DCLG			

In terms of priority need the largest single group in 2015/16 were households with dependent children, which when combined with households with a pregnant woman accounts for nearly 72% of Solihull's total (301 households). Other substantial contributions were made by people vulnerable because of a mental health condition (54 households, 13%), those with a disability (29 households, 7%) and those either subject to or at risk of violence (16 households, 4%).

Solihull Homelessness Acceptances by Priority Need 2015/16		
Priority Need	Households	% Total
Households with dependent children	277	66.1%
Households where a member is pregnant	24	5.7%
Vulnerable due to mental illness or handicap	54	12.9%
Vulnerable due to physical disability	29	6.9%
Vulnerable due to old age	6	1.4%
Vulnerable young person (in Care)	5	1.2%
Domestic violence	5	1.2%
Other Violence	11	2.6%
16-17 year olds	1	0.2%
Other	7	1.7%
Households Homeless in Emergency	0	0.0%
Source: DCLG		

One of the most notable trends in recent years was a sharp rise in the number of acceptances where the primary need is related to mental health, with the number in this group increasing from 25 households in 2011/12 (8% of total) to 97 households in 2014/15 (16%) of the total. Like other categories the number in this group fell in 2015/16, although at 13% of the total it remains a more prominent source of priority need than five years ago.

	Solihull Homelessness Acceptances by Priority Need					
	Dependent children/ pregnancy	Mental Health	Disability	Vulnerable (old age, young)	Violence	Other
2009/10	208	16	19	9	1	3
2010/11	267	15	16	7	4	2
2011/12	261	25	29	7	2	6
2012/13	324	43	20	9	4	9
2013/14	356	68	35	16	20	15
2014/15	401	97	45	13	33	10
2015/16	301	54	29	12	16	7
Source: DCLG						

Reasons for Homelessness

In 2015/16 26% of Solihull homelessness acceptances were due to domestic abuse in the form of a violent breakdown of a relationship with a partner or associated person, compared with 14% for England. The loss/termination of private rented accommodation (Assured Shorthold Tenancy), was the 2nd most common single reason in Solihull, although it accounted for a far smaller proportion of the total than across England as a whole (24% vs 31%). Parental evictions were also a relatively common reason for homelessness in Solihull in 2015/16 (19% of total compared to 15% for England).

Homelessness Acceptances by Reason 2015/16			
Reason	Solihull Count	% Solihull	% England
Violent breakdown of relationship	109	26%	14%
Loss/termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	101	24%	31%
Parents no longer willing/able to accommodate	80	19%	15%
Non-violent relationship breakdown	35	8%	5%
Other relatives/friends no longer willing/able to accommodate	29	7%	12%
Other [^]	19	5%	6%
Loss of rented or tied accommodation (other than termination of AST)	13	3%	6%
Harassment	13	3%	1%
Left an institution or care	11	3%	3%
Rent arrears	5	1%	3%
Mortgage arrears	4	1%	1%
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	1	0.2%	2%
[^] Other includes: homeless in emergency, sleeping rough in a hostel, returned from abroad			
Source: DCLG			

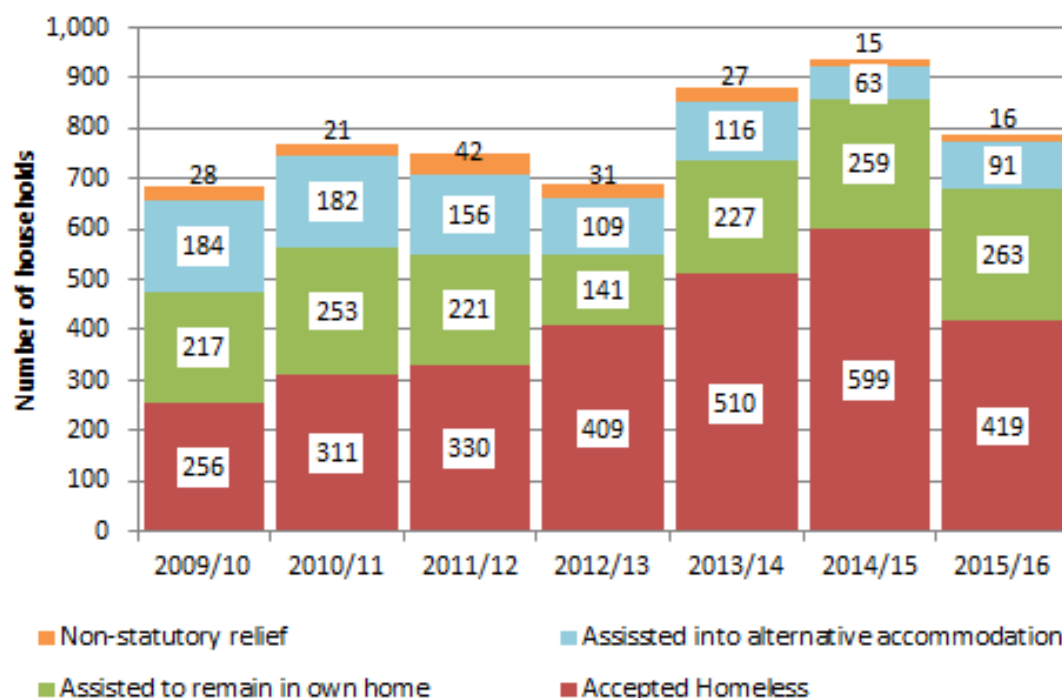
Homelessness Prevention and Relief

In 2015/16 a total of 370 Solihull households avoided homelessness due to positive prevention or relief action by the Local Authority. This represented an increase of 10% compared to 2014/15 and contributed to the reduction in homelessness acceptances in 2015/16. Of the 370 preventions 263 households were assisted to remain in their own home, 91 were assisted in to alternative accommodation and a further 16 received non-statutory relief².

	Homelessness Prevention & Relief in Solihull (Number of households)			
	Assisted to remain in own home	Assisted into alternative accommodation	Non-statutory relief	Total
2009/10	217	184	28	429
2010/11	253	182	21	456
2011/12	221	156	42	419
2012/13	141	109	31	281
2013/14	227	116	27	370
2014/15	259	63	15	337
2015/16	263	91	16	370
Source: DCLG				

² Non-Statutory Relief relates to the relief of homelessness through assistance to obtain alternative accommodation for those households found to be homeless but not accepted as owed a main duty under the homelessness legislation because they were not in priority need or were intentionally homeless

Solihull Homelessness Acceptances and Preventions



Source: DCLG

Temporary Accommodation

Households accepted as being homeless can be placed in temporary accommodation if a settled housing solution is not immediately available. The DCLG provides a snapshot of these temporary placements at the end of the relevant quarter for each return, this includes the end of each financial year (31 March).

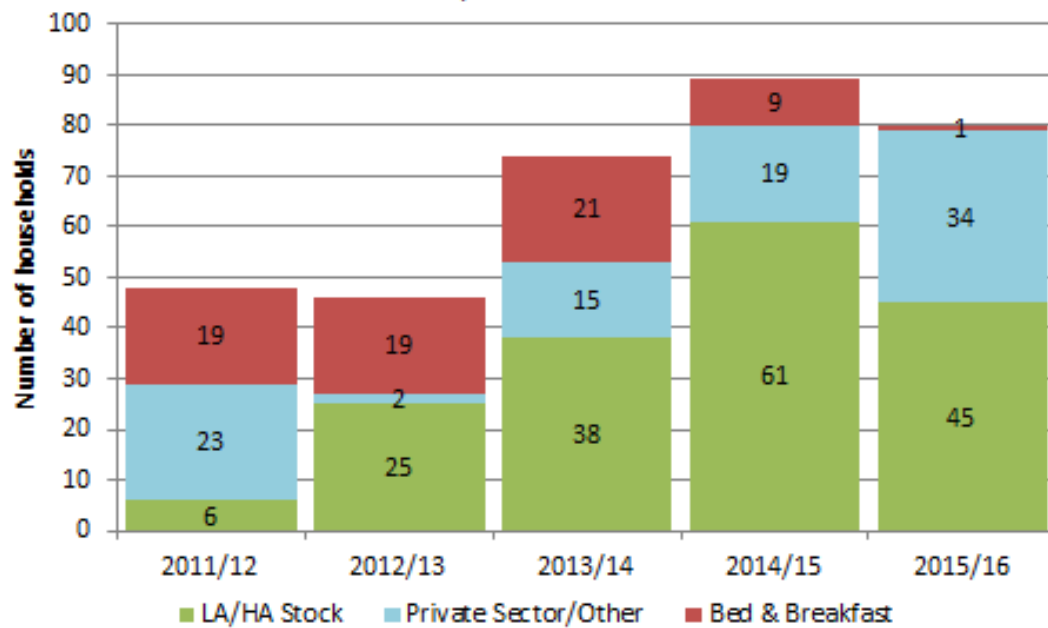
At the end of 2015/16 a total of 80 Solihull households were living in temporary accommodation. The majority of these (45 households) were placed in a Local Authority or Housing Association property, with a smaller number placed in accommodation leased from a private landlord (34). Just 1 household was in a Bed & Breakfast (which represent the least suitable form of temporary accommodation for most households, particularly those with families). This represents a sharp fall in the number of homeless Solihull households living in a Bed & Breakfast when compared with year end 2013/14. Given that the number of households requiring temporary accommodation has remained high compared to previous years the reduction in the use of Bed & Breakfast has been achieved through the expansion of both Local Authority stock and private sector leased properties that are set aside to meet demand from homeless households.

Solihull Homeless Households in Temporary Accommodation at End of Financial Year (31 March)					
	Bed & Breakfast	LA/HA Stock	Private Sector	Other	Total
2009/10	0	19	0	0	19
2010/11	0	30	0	0	30
2011/12	19	6	0	23	25

2012/13	19	25	2	0	46
2013/14	21	38	15	0	74
2014/15	9	61	19	0	90
2015/16	1	45	34	0	80
Source: DCLG					

Solihull Homeless Households in Temporary Accommodation

Annual Snapshot as at 31 March



Source: DCLG

Appendix 1: Definitions

Definition of Homelessness

The term "Homelessness" is often considered to apply only to people "sleeping rough". However, most of the statistics on homelessness relate to the statutorily homeless i.e. those households which meet specific criteria of priority need set out in legislation, and to whom a homelessness duty has been accepted by a local authority.

Such households are rarely homeless in the literal sense of being without a roof over their heads, but are more likely to be threatened with the loss of, or are unable to continue with, their current accommodation.

Statutory Homelessness

Each local housing authority is required to consider housing needs within its area, including the needs of homeless households, to whom local authorities have a statutory duty to provide assistance.

Housing Acts of 1977, 1985 and 1996, and the Homelessness Act 2002, placed statutory duties on local housing authorities to ensure that advice and assistance to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness is available free of charge. A "main homelessness duty" is owed where the authority is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a specified priority need group. Such statutorily homeless households are referred to as "Acceptances".

These households are consequently owed a main homelessness duty by a local housing authority which continues until a settled housing solution becomes available or circumstances bring the duty to an end.

Households in Priority Need

The priority need groups include households with dependent children or a pregnant woman and people who are vulnerable in some way e.g. because of mental illness or physical disability. In 2002 an Order made under the 1996 Act extended the priority need categories to include: applicants aged 16 or 17; applicants aged 18 to 20 who were previously in care; applicants vulnerable as a result of time spent in care, in custody, or in HM Forces, and applicants vulnerable as a result of having to flee their home because of violence or the threat of violence.

Where a main duty is owed, the authority must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the applicant and his or her household. The duty continues until a settled housing solution becomes available for them, or some other circumstance brings the duty to an end. Where households are found to be intentionally homeless, or not in priority need, the authority must make an assessment of their housing needs and provide advice and assistance to help them find accommodation for themselves.

Temporary Accommodation

Households in accommodation arranged by local authorities pending enquiries or after being accepted as homeless awaiting re-housing. This can include bed and breakfast hotels, self-

contained annexe style units, hostels/women's refuges, Local Authority and Registered Social Landlord stock and leased private sector stock.