

2017 Homelessness Reduction Act

Safer Neighbourhoods and Active
Communities Scrutiny Board



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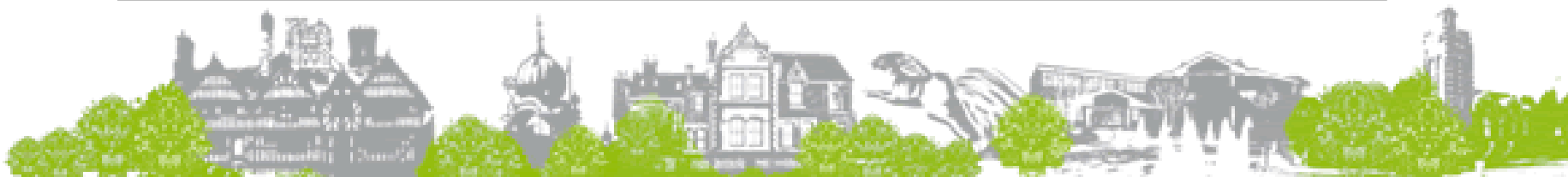
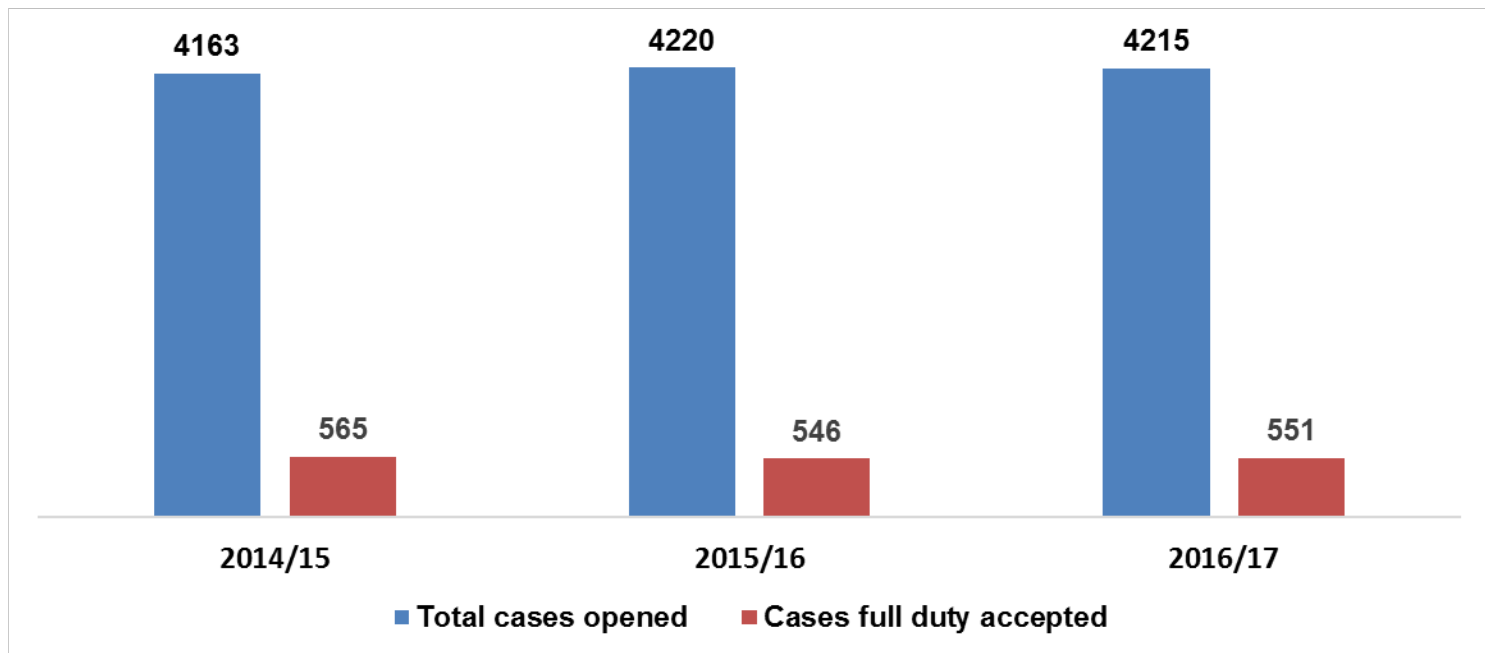
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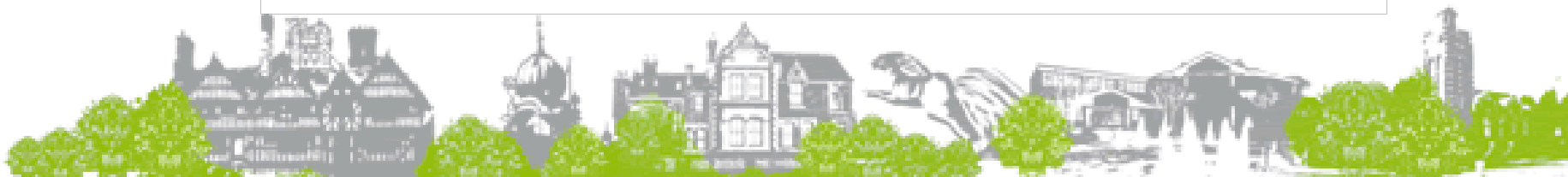
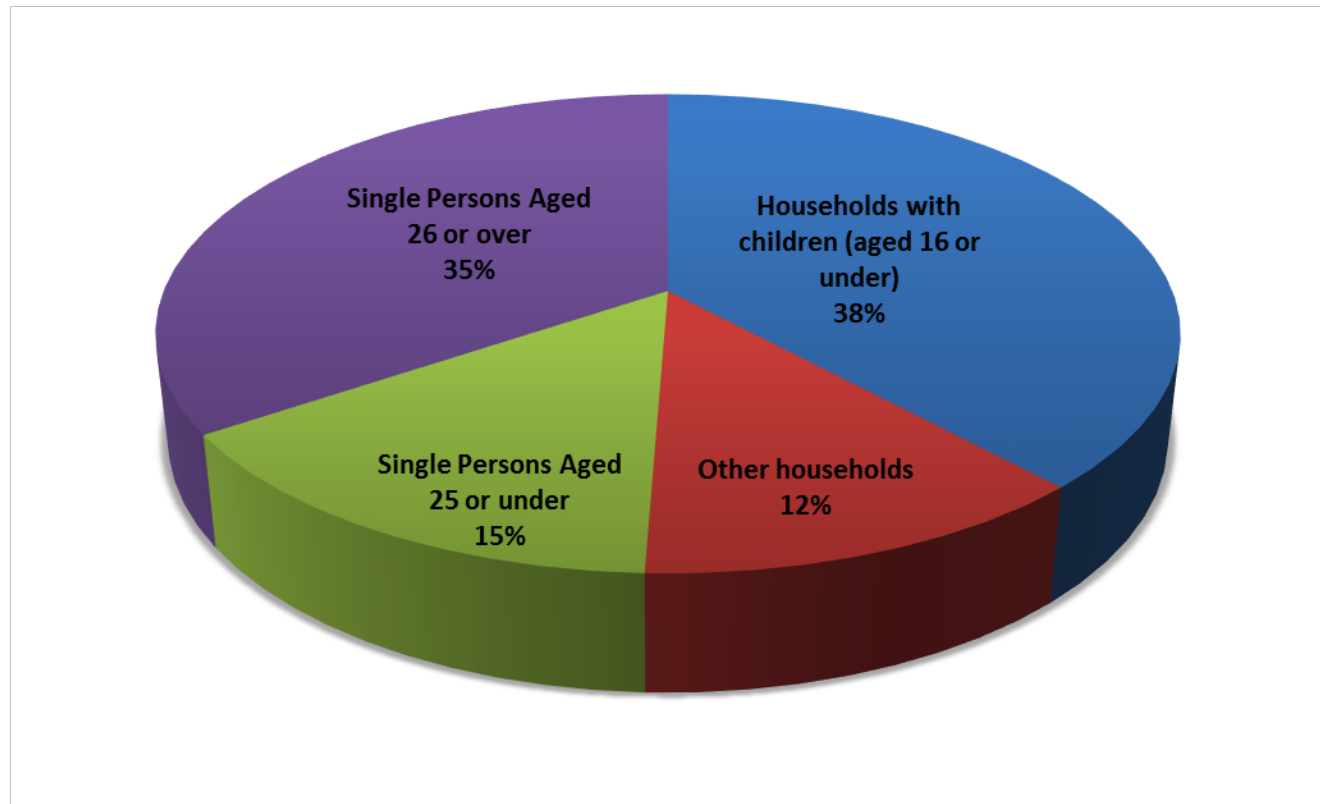
Homelessness in Sandwell

***Total cases opened & cases where 'full duty' accepted
2014/15 to 2016/17:***



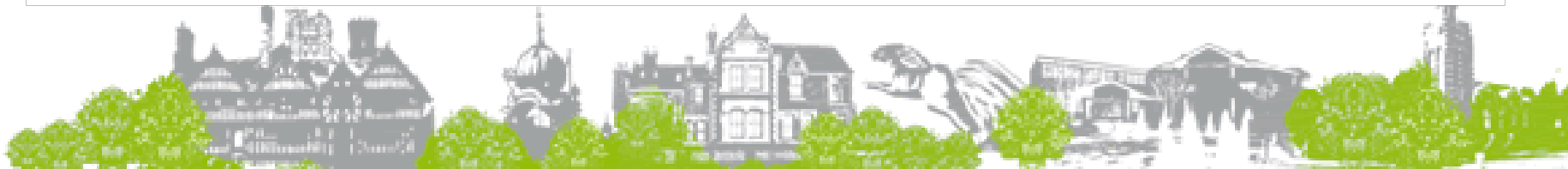
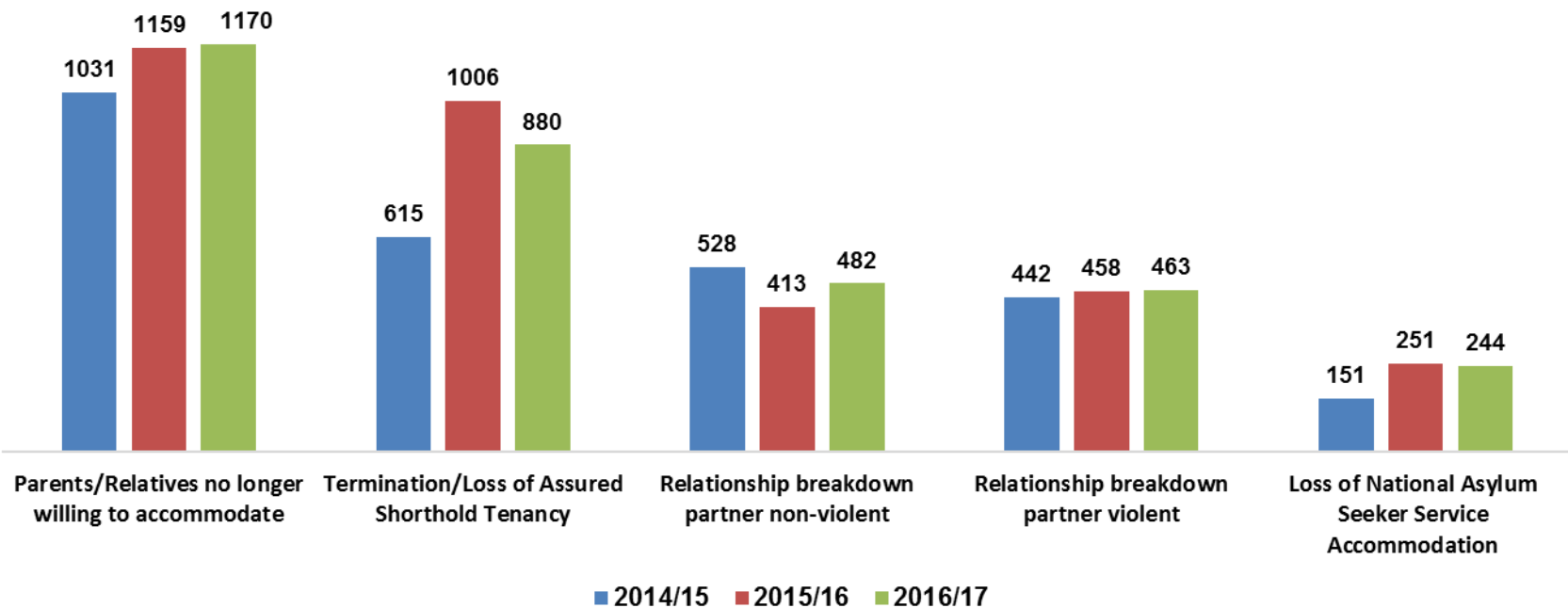
Homelessness in Sandwell

Cases opened by household type 2016/17:



Homelessness in Sandwell

Main causes of homelessness (opened cases) 2014/15 to 2016/17:



Purpose of the presentation

- To provide an overview of the main elements of the Act
- To understand the implications on both our business & our customers
- To understand the policy context
- To ascertain the channel shift required and likely outcomes



The main elements of the Act

- Act to take effect from 03 April 2018. Introduces three major new duties:
 - **assess** all eligible applicants and agree an individual Personal Housing Plan
 - to take reasonable steps to **prevent** homelessness
 - to **relieve** homelessness by helping the applicant to secure accommodation.
 - **Duty to refer** – deferred until October



The main elements of the Act

- **Prevention Duty** applies to applicants threatened with homelessness within 56 days (previously 28)
- **Relief Duty** lasts for a period of 56 days. Can come to an end before that time if applicant:
 - has suitable accommodation likely to last for at least six months
 - refuses an offer of suitable accommodation
 - deliberately and unreasonably refuses to cooperate with the relief process

The HRA in summary...

PREVENTION DUTY

Duty to help prevent homelessness (Prevention Duty)

Applies to all eligible applicants who are *defined as 'threatened with homelessness within 56 days'*

Duty to assess and provide a PHP

ENDS:

If the prevention help works

After 56 days

If the applicant becomes homeless

Eligible applicants who become homeless then fall onto the RELIEF DUTY

RELIEF DUTY

Duty to 'help secure accommodation' (Relief Duty)

Applies to all eligible applicants who are defined as homeless with same duty to assess

ENDS:

If the relief help works

If applicant unreasonably and deliberately refuses to cooperate

If applicant refuses a suitable offer of accommodation

If applicant refuses a suitable offer of a 6 month tenancy

Priority Need applicants fall onto the main duty if they remain homeless after 56 days

MAIN DUTY

Existing Section 193 Housing Act 1996

Applies to Priority Need applicants only, although they are precluded from the main duty if they

- Deliberately and unreasonably refuse to cooperate – in this case they are still entitled to a final offer of a six month suitable tenancy

- Refuse an offer of suitable accommodation at relief stage – in this case they get no further help

Main duty is a settled accommodation offer;

- Either (i) a two year accommodation duty of minimum 12 month suitable PRSO (ii) social housing.

- TA must be provided where needed

Implications for SMBC...

- Cultural change, restructures - possible job evaluations and recruitment
- Likely increase in demand on services in both number of presentations & time/resource needed for each case
- Cost.....some Government funding
- IT development/acquisition to administer the day to day operation of the Act



Implications for SMBC...

- Member training and wider Council training of new approach
- Design of new Personal Housing Plans (upwards of 10 variations needed)
- Review current SMBC website
- Train partner organisations to assist customers including completion of Personal Housing Plans (PHPs)



Implications for customers...

- ❑ Customers can present earlier and can now expect help within 56 days of being threatened with homelessness
- ❑ Shift towards customer self-help and responsibility for relieving their situation (as set out in their PHP)
- ❑ Better informed customers in terms of their housing options



Policy and cultural shift....

PRACTICAL SHIFT

- Staff training and structuring
- Recruitment of individuals with 'lived' experience of homelessness
- Flexible Homeless Support Grant
- Transforming welfare provision – Universal Credit roll out/Discretionary Housing Payments

CULTURE SHIFT

- Adapting to customer self help/responsibilities and changing role of officers to support/enforce this
- Prevention, prevention, prevention – already embedded but there will be more
- Stronger focus on use of private rented sector for both discharge and prevention

POLICY SHIFT

- New Statutory Code for Prevention of Homelessness
- Revised Homelessness Strategy
- Age restricted stock
- Refresh policy to discharge Homeless Duty into the Private Rented Sector



Our key challenges..

- A significant cultural shift
- An increase in demand on services
- Additional costs
- IT – HCLIC GDPR compliant
- Training
- New Personal Housing Plans
- Structured outreach provision



What have we done so far...

- Secured LGA Advisor
- External and internal workshops
- DCLG Advisor – staff briefings
- IT assessment
- Delivery Plan
- WMCA Task Force
- Reviewed Homelessness Strategy



The Southwark experience

- HRA Trailblazer – last 12 months
- Improved customer experience and more positive outcomes.....
 - Customer Presentations UP
 - Homeless Acceptances DOWN
 - Homelessness Reviews DOWN
 - Preventions UP



The Southwark experience

- Partnership working is crucial
- Customers, partner agencies & staff design the new service – must be on-going
- Implement in stages if possible
- It requires change, its resource intensive, its not without challenge BUT the outputs are positive!!!!!!



Looking forward.....

- How do we shape our homelessness services going forward?
 - Secure ‘buy-in’ from all parts of the Council
 - Develop ‘whole borough approach’ working in partnership with the third sector, registered providers and other council directorates (e.g. Adult Social Care) and Children’s Trust
 - Secure sufficient accommodation from the private sector and social housing sectors

