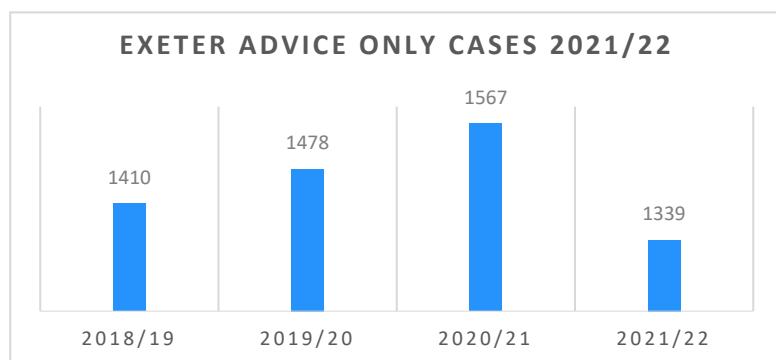


Scrutiny Committee – Customer Scrutiny Task and Finish Group - Evidence Information

Session 1 – 27.09.22:

- 1. Patterns – Exeter & National**
- 2. Pandemic & Policy – impact on homelessness**
- 3. Causality – referral sources**
- 4. Early Intervention & Prevention strategies**

1. Patterns – Exeter & National

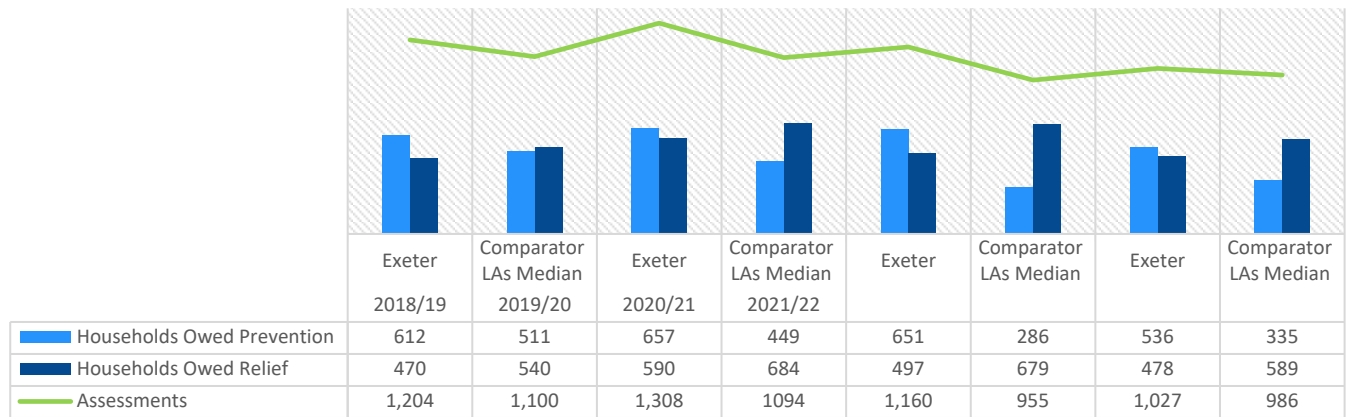


“Advice only” are where households approached the Council’s Homelessness team regarding potential risk of homelessness but where the case either did not reach homeless application status (i.e. within the 56-day at risk of homelessness) or the household did not return to make a homeless application.

The above graph shows an increasing profile of advice need which peaked in 2020-21 and has since curtailed. The peak was attributed to the number of households approaching as a result of the pandemic; threat of S21 notices (though suspended), affordability (mainly due to job loss) and people without secure tenancies being asked to leave households due to alleged health risks (Covid-19). The reduction during 2021-22 is likely to be on account of the increased availability of online advice combined with reduced capacity for drop-in advice.

National “Advice only” data not available (data from internal reports not published data set)

2018 to 2022 HOMELESS APPROACHES



“Homelessness Approaches” records cases that actually reached the status of a homeless application either at prevention stage (where the household is currently housed) or relief stage (where the household has no available accommodation).

“Assessments” is the total of cases where a Housing options case officer has taken the homeless application. Not all assessments reach either a prevention stage or relief stage as a result of circumstances such as further information or verification arising or the application being withdrawn.

2. Pandemic & Policy

The assessment totals reflect a similar profile to advice cases with increases between 2019-19 and 2019-20. However numbers reduce in the following two years. This underlines the peak in advice only cases in 2020-21 suggesting the risk or threat of homelessness was comparatively high across that year but the actuality reduced. Other key risks besides suspended S21 notices were the increase of presentations as a result of household income reductions (e.g. through wage loss or benefit loss such as withdrawal of UC £20 uplift) and changed eligibility under the Domestic Abuse Bill.

The sustained reductions into 2021-22 most likely reflect the ongoing preventions of homelessness as a result of various household support schemes and the deployment of short-term government grants e.g. Household Support Fund, Vulnerable Renters Fund. It is too early to determine whether these “arrested” cases are temporary.

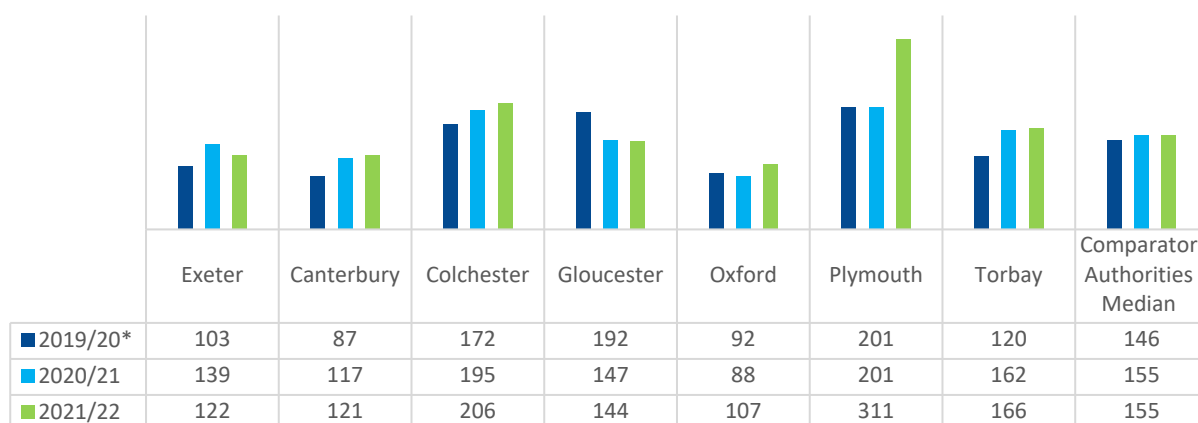
National comparators

Exeter consistently takes more assessments than comparator areas.

Early intervention and prevention work is consistently higher in Exeter compared with comparator median. This is particularly stark in 2020-21 where Exeter managed to maintain high rate of early intervention in spite of all the challenges of that year. Exeter continues to buck the trend with less households reaching relief need as a result of successful homelessness prevention work.

Temporary Accommodation

HOUSEHOLDS IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION AT FINANCIAL YEAR END 2019 - 2022



*2018/19 data unavailable.

Emergency temporary accommodation numbers in Exeter have been generally stable. The 'Everyone In' rough sleeping relief directive in March 2020 and follow-on impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak caused numbers to increase to a peak by the end of the year before falling again as many individuals successfully moved on to more settled accommodation.

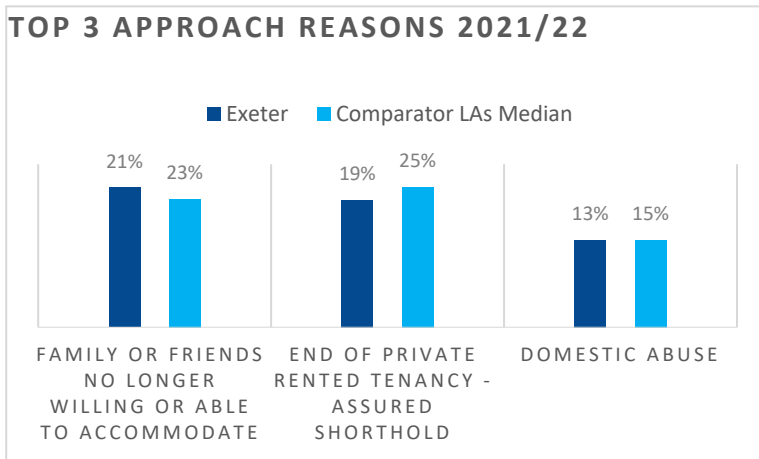
However the number of households requiring emergency accommodation or a move-on offer (from emergency and / or supported housing) has increased over the last two years. The development of additional capacity in the city through various schemes has helped keep a lid on the Council's TA placements. These additional housing schemes include the Council's rough sleeper programme investment, Exeter City Community Trust housing, and developments under other 3rd sector partners such as YMCA Exeter, Julian House and BCHA. Despite the new capacity demand for emergency accommodation has unfortunately been on the increase again through 2021 into 2022.

Exeter's figures remain generally lower than those of its comparator authority areas. The below median number of households in TA in Exeter reflects the higher proportion of prevention cases successfully achieved.

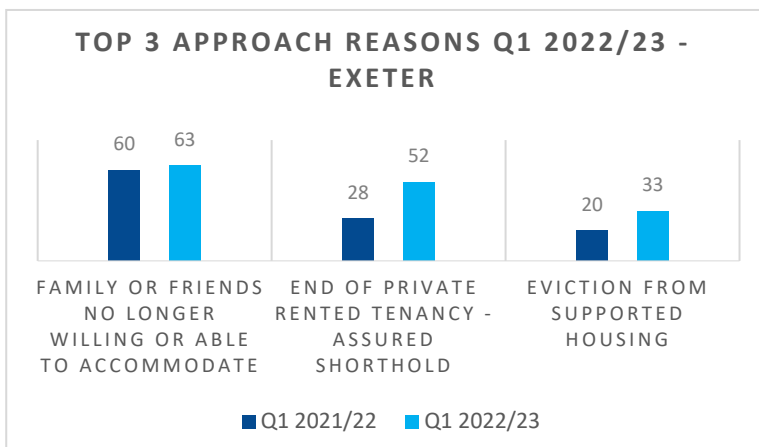
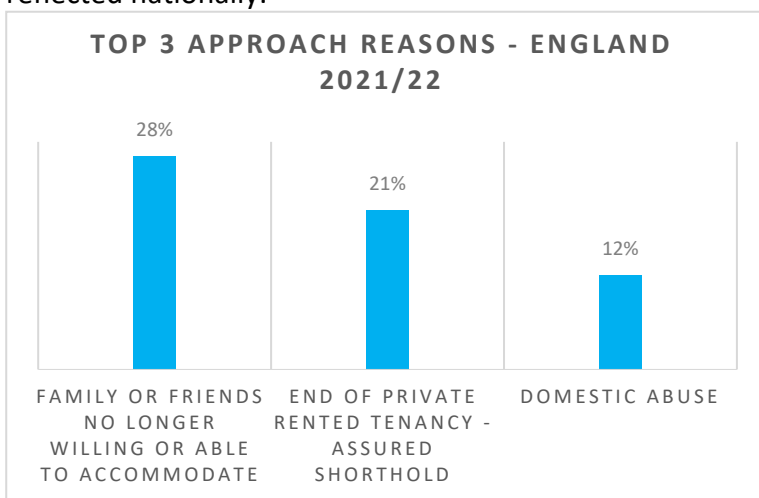
3. Causality

Exeter's top three reasons for homelessness approaches to the Council are:

1. Family or Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate
2. Private Rented tenancy loss / end
3. Domestic Abuse



Whilst 1 and 2 are reversed with comparator areas, the same top 3 approach reasons are reflected nationally:



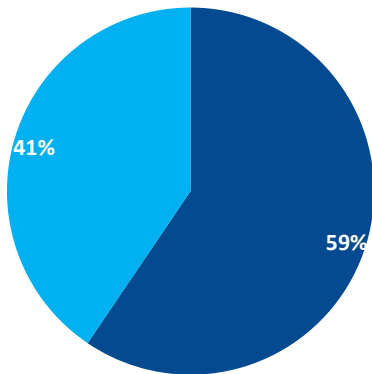
Top three homeless approach reasons in Exeter 2022/23 Q1 show a change in the third source issue being loss of supported housing placements.

Of note is that 17% of the approaches due to AST end relate to affordability (arrears). 63% are due to landlords wishing to sell or re-let the property. This may also reflect the cost of living crisis as well as the buoyant housing market.

Referrals

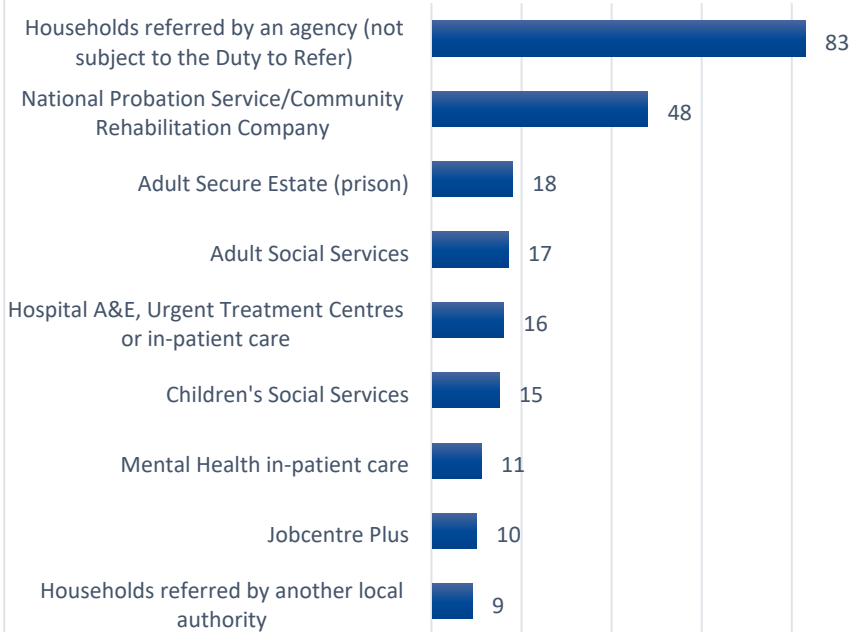
REFERRALS INTO HOUSING NEEDS 2021/22

■ Statutory referrals ■ Voluntary referrals



Overview of referrals into Housing Needs 2021/22 due to homelessness/risk of homelessness. 3/5ths proportion of referrals from agencies with no statutory duty to refer. This is likely to support the early intervention/prevention work.

BREAKDOWN OF REFERRALS RECEIVED 2021/22 - EXETER



The above top referral number includes referrals from supported housing providers including homelessness and mental health housing. Referrals from NPS primarily reflect those coming from HMP Exeter and other SW prisons via the Homeless Prevention Taskforce panel which started in 2020.

4. Prevention & Early Intervention

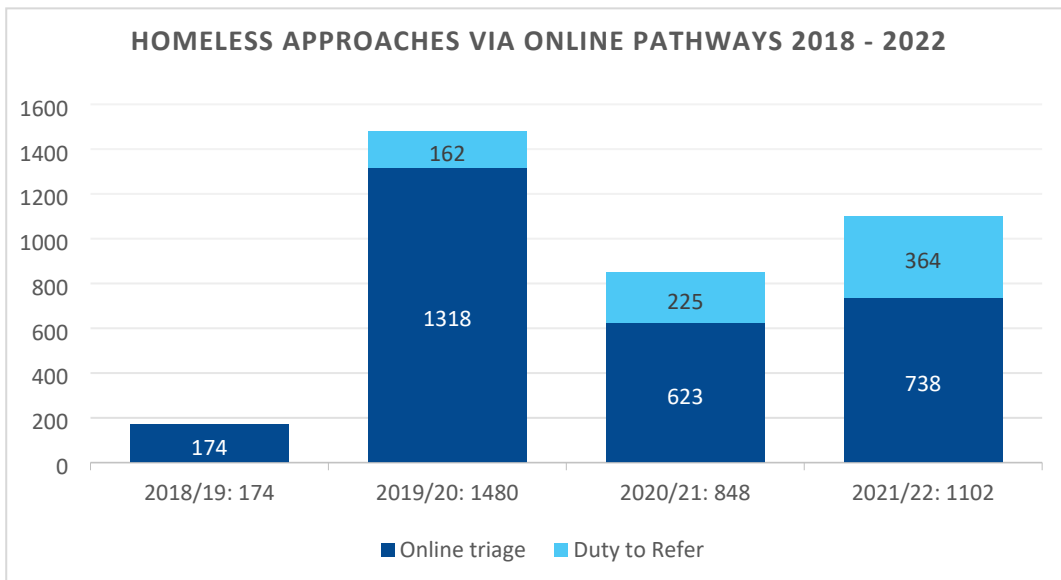
Key Activities / Strategies

1. To raise the levels of **homelessness awareness** in terms of risks of homelessness as well as the challenges of the housing market. This will be in the form of **increased**

information and material distributed amongst all existing homelessness stakeholders. But more importantly to **reach out** to those services in closer contact with the potential homeless of tomorrow e.g. church and community groups, schools, colleges, health centres, youth centres and libraries. The use of creative messaging and social media channels will be vital especially for connecting with the younger population.

2. To increase **early identification** of homelessness cases by identifying and targeting local potential need for information and advice. This includes local hotspots such as the lowest income / socially deprived wards. Also those groups with higher risk characteristics e.g. troubled families, recurrent offender / criminality issues, households with assessed high adverse childhood effect (“ACE”) need and / or health needs
3. To continue building meaningful **information exchange** with existing early intervention services e.g. Early Help, Children’s’ services, Youth Offender Team, Police. This will include a pro-active programme of promoting duty to refer responsibilities as well as building opportunities for joint budgeting and pooled / devolved spend to save funds
4. To expand the number of targeted **outreach-based / co-location** housing advice in the community (including the above closer contact services) with statutory agencies such as DWP (Job Centre Plus) and voluntary services such as Exeter CAB and other local service hubs.
5. To deliver **home-based advice** and assistance through visits to household homes either at early referral stage or early risk (56 days). This would also include home assessment for those with accessibility issues and also for a number of households in priority need on the social housing register.
6. To train and increase **mediation** skills, knowledge and experience within the sector. This will be to better equip staff to negotiate with partners, parents and landlords of potential homeless individuals or families. This will include maximising assistive prevention tools such as money services (income maximisation), debt advice, supporting payments and follow-up tenancy rescue and sustainment support.

Online accessibility



The creation of earlier information channels for customers to access advice and also register their situation online (via self-referral or 3rd party referral) has improved triage and filtering of approaches. This has enabled clearer and earlier information and opportunity to intervene to prevent homelessness.

The high number of online approaches in 2019/20 was driven by the high volume of form testing and development during that year. A more credible baseline was established in 2020/21 under the pandemic with fewer customers accessing the customer service centre and being directed to the online triage form. Of note is the increasing profile of duty to refer referrals since its inception in late 2018 and the increasing online approaches over the past two years.