



Leicester  
City Council

## **MEETING OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

**DATE: TUESDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2015**  
**TIME: 5:30 pm**  
**PLACE: Meeting Room G.01, Ground Floor, City Hall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ**

### **Members of the Scrutiny Commission**

Councillor Newcombe (Chair)  
Councillor Alfonso (Vice Chair)

Councillors Aldred, Aqbany, Byrne, Cank and Joshi  
1 Un-allocated Non-Group Place

Members of the Scrutiny Commission are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business listed overleaf.

For Monitoring Officer

#### **Officer contacts:**

**Angie Smith (Democratic Support Officer):**

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Leicester City Council, City Hall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ

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## **PUBLIC SESSION**

### **AGENDA**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members are asked to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed.

**3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Appendix A**

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission held on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2015 are attached, and Members are asked to confirm them as a correct record.

**4. PETITIONS**

The Monitoring Officer to report on the receipt of any petitions received in accordance with Council procedures.

**5. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE**

The Monitoring Officer to report on the receipt of any questions, representations or statements of case received in accordance with Council procedures.

**6. AREA MANAGERS' BRIEFING - BRAUNSTONE AREA**

The Area Manager for Braunstone will deliver a presentation.

**7. HOUSING VOIDS PROGRESS REPORT**

**Appendix B**

The Director of Housing submits a report to provide an update on the Division's performance on the turnaround of empty council houses. The report details the steady progress being made against key performance indicators for routine and long-term voids since April 2014. Members of the Housing Scrutiny Commission are recommended to receive and note the report.

**8. IMPACT OF THE 1% REDUCTION IN RENTS REQUIRED BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

The Director of Housing will give a verbal update on the impact of the required rent reductions.

**9. UPDATE FROM CLEANSING SERVICE ON COMMUNAL CLEANING PROGRESS**

**Appendix C**

The Head of Facilities Management will provide information to the Housing Scrutiny Commission on a planned communal cleaning project, following the Communal Cleaning task group review.

**10. HOUSING TRANSFORMATION PROJECT**

The Programme Manager will deliver a presentation to the Housing Scrutiny Commission on the Housing Transformation Project.

**11. MONITORING HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY (12 MONTHS)**

**Appendix D**

The Director of Housing submits a report which seeks the views of Housing Scrutiny Commission Members on the first 12 months of the Homelessness Strategy being fully implemented.

**12. HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME**

**Appendix E**

The current work programme for the Commission is attached. The Commission is asked to consider this and make comments and/or amendments as it considers necessary.

**13. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**



Leicester  
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: MONDAY, 27 JULY 2015 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Newcombe (Chair)  
Councillor Alfonso (Vice Chair)

Councillor Aldred  
Councillor Aqban

Councillor Byrne  
Councillor Joshi

\* \* \* \* \*

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Ann Branson, Director of Housing.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any interest they had in the business to be discussed on the agenda.

Councillor Aldred declared that family members were council tenants.

Councillor Byrne declared that she and family members were council tenants.

Councillor Joshi declared that a member of the family was a council tenant.

Cllr Newcombe declared that family members were council tenants.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the interests were not considered so significant that they were likely to prejudice the Councillors' judgement of the public interest. Councillors were not therefore required to withdraw from the meeting during consideration and discussion of the agenda items.

**3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION 2015/16**

Members were asked to note the membership of the Housing Scrutiny Commission for 2015.

RESOLVED:  
that the membership be noted.

#### **4. DATE OF COMMISSION MEETINGS 2015/16**

Members were asked to note the meeting dates for Housing Scrutiny Commission meetings for 2015/16.

RESOLVED:  
that the meeting dates be noted.

Councillors Aldred and Joshi asked that their apologies for the meeting scheduled for 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015 be noted.

#### **5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

##### Minute 57, Declarations of Interest

Councillor Newcombe asked for an amendment to be made, as he was not a council tenant but members of his family were council tenants.

RESOLVED:  
that the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny commission held on 18 March 2015, subject to the above amendment, be confirmed as a correct record.

#### **6. PETITIONS**

In accordance with Council procedures, it was reported that no petitions had been received by the Monitoring Officer.

#### **7. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE**

In accordance with Council procedures, it was reported that no questions, representations or statement of case had been received by the Monitoring Officer.

#### **8. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Members were asked to note the Terms of Reference for the Housing Scrutiny Commission attached to the agenda for information.

RESOLVED:  
that the Terms of Reference for the Housing Scrutiny Commission be noted.

#### **9. COMMUNAL CLEANING: DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE**

The Director of Housing submitted a report which provided formal feedback to the Housing Scrutiny Commission on the recommendations made by the Communal Cleaning Task Group on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015. The Housing Scrutiny

Commission was invited to approve the steps taken and set out within the report, which was presented by the Head of Service, Estate Management and Tenancy Support.

The Scrutiny Policy Officer provided Members with a briefing note on the background of the review, what prompted it and the way in which it was undertaken, and it is attached to the minutes for information. A link to the task group report was included in the agenda. It was recognised the people were undertaking a difficult job in all hours. Management of the cleaning work had been strengthened, but had been badly stretched, and Members were sympathetic to the conditions cleaning staff had to work in. It was also felt that there had been a lack of investment in cleaning equipment, but problems had been exacerbated by the ending of deep cleaning of surfaces across many estates.

The Head of Service referred to the short and long-term recommendations contained within the report. The meeting was informed that the current contractor for cleaning was City Cleansing, and there was a charge for tenants for cleaning. It was also noted that there were some poor surfaces in communal areas, mainly concrete, which were difficult to clean. It had been agreed by the Assistant Mayor that a programme of works be undertaken to improve the surfaces of the worst blocks on a yearly basis through a combination of a programme of deep cleaning, and Environmental and Communal Area budget. A separate bid for Capital Investment, separate from other housing Capital Investment, would be made to the Council.

Members were reminded that many tenants did not know how much their charge for cleaning was. The meeting was informed that Housing would look at reintroducing a breakdown of rent and charges for tenants on rent cards under the new Northgate IT system when in place.

The Assistant Mayor had indicated there would be no increase in service charges for cleaning and a working group be established to look at a number of issues identified in the report. It would include representatives from Housing, City Cleansing and members of the Tenants Forum. It was also suggested that the drying areas also be looked at by the working group. The Chair said he would await the report from the working group, and if necessary, would reconvene the task group at that stage.

The Assistant Mayor thanked the Task Group for the useful piece of work. He said that the recent budget statement by Government to introduce a 1% reduction in rent would impact heavily on the Housing Revenue Account. He added that the forecast for 2016 would see a reduction of £2.2million in rent income, rising to an £11.8million reduction in four years. He added that difficult decisions and savings would have to be made to balance the budget.

The Chair agreed to the recommendations included in the report, and asked for a six-month update from the working party and officers. He requested that a representative from City Cleansing attend the next meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission to give their response to the review.

AGREED:

that:

1. the Scrutiny Commission approve the recommendation in the report;
2. a six-month update be brought to a future meeting;
3. a representative from City Cleansing be invited to the next Commission meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015 to give their response to the review.

## 10. RENT ARREARS

The Director of Housing submitted a rent arrears progress report for the financial year April 2014 to March 2015, and was presented by the Head of Service, and Income Collection Manager.

The Chair read out information reported online by the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), that rent reforms would cost councils £2.6bn over the next five years, and estimated that those funds could have been used to build 19,000 homes. The OBR also forecasted that social landlord rents in five years' time would be 12% lower than they had expected as a result of the changes, and that this could force some housing associations into insolvency and trigger writedowns of the value of their housing portfolios. Figures obtained from the Local Government Association indicated the move would also hit councils which own and manage social housing, and by 2019-20 the annual funding gap would hit £1bn, or 60% of the councils' total housing maintenance budget.

The Income Collection Manager reported that arrears were down by approximately £7k compared to the end of 2013-14 despite the welfare reforms. The number of cases of those in arrears increased by 1.4% over the previous year-end figure, but the number of more serious cases fell by 21.9%. It was reported that £1.34m in extra rent as a result of bedroom tax was collectable, and the arrears among those affected by the Bedroom Tax fell by just under £20k for the financial year 2014/15.

The meeting was informed there had been a 51% rise in evictions to 103 households for the financial year 2014-15. Of those evicted, 28 were family cases, 2 were childless couples and 73 were single people. Officers had looked at some benchmarking figures on evictions for local authorities in England, and Leicester's eviction rate was slightly higher than average. Members were informed that of those evicted, 34.5% single people had been in contact with the council for further housing need, but the figure was lower for families. 39 people sought assistance from housing options and 13 went into council hostels.

Members were informed that debt which remained following evictions was reported centrally, and those figures would be provided for Members' information. Members also enquired about a reported £6-7million overpayment, and were informed the figure would be reported separately by Revenues and Benefits team, and figures would be provided to Members.



The Head of Service said anyone could contact the housing options service after eviction. The authority had a duty to look at individual circumstances, and would provide temporary accommodation while an investigation took place. Each case would be judged on its own merits, but duty would vary between assistance for families, vulnerable people and single people.

Members drew attention to the glossary in the report and asked if the council would be penalised by Government for having a £2million void loss, and said it would be useful to know if the figure was up or down on the previous financial year. The Head of Service said there was no government penalty, just the council tax liability that had been introduced by Government last year. She added the Council had a remit to bring properties to standard in the shortest time possible to minimise rent loss to the authority, but some homes required more work than others. The council would undertake an inventory when tenants left a property and record malicious damage as a rechargeable debt. It was reported that a voids progress report would be brought to the Scrutiny Commission meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

Members asked how credible was the introduction of mandatory direct debits for new tenants, as a lot of people on benefits struggled with cash flow. The Head of Service said welfare reforms and the Chancellor's budget announcement to reduce rents by 1% were a serious challenge, and it would be harder to collect the same amount of money. She added that the rules for Universal Credit made it clear people must have a bank account for payment, paid on a monthly basis. The Council would engage with tenants to ensure they were aware of the issue. It was acknowledged that some people could not have a bank account and would be introduced to Clockwise at no cost to the tenant. A Clockwise account could also assist with the payment of some other bills. It was also noted that vulnerable people would be identified, and rent paid direct to the landlord on their behalf.

The Assistant Mayor said that as an authority there was some concern with mandatory direct debits. He said that in the pilots for the introduction of UC, rent arrears and evictions had risen. There was also less money to spend on housing.

The Chair requested a report be brought to a future meeting of the Commission on the impact of the 1% decrease in rents.

The Chair thanked officers for keeping rent arrears as low as possible through their hard work.

RESOLVED:

that:

1. the report be noted;
2. figures on debt remaining following eviction be provided to members;
3. a voids progress report be brought to the Commission meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015;

4. a report on the impact of 1% decrease in rent be brought to a future Commission meeting.

## **11. WORK PROGRAMME**

Members were asked to note the draft Housing Scrutiny Commission Work Programme for 2015-16, and the items to be timetable into the programme.

The Scrutiny Policy Officer asked if there were any issues Members wished to see included in the programme, to contact either himself or the Chair, and they would discuss the issues with officers.

The Scrutiny Policy Officer agreed to draft a letter to Members from the Chair.

Members mentioned that leaseholders had been billed with the repair element of the service charge removed. It was requested that the Scrutiny Policy Officer contact the responsible officer in the Finance Section for clarification on the service charge.

The Assistant Mayor said a report on evictions would go the Executive, and brought to the Housing Scrutiny Commission.

AGREED:

1. that the Scrutiny Policy Officer would write Members from the Chair asking for additional items for the Scrutiny Commission Work Programme.

## **12. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 6.57pm.

## Housing Scrutiny Commission

27<sup>th</sup> July 2015

### Communal Cleaning Review

#### **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To provide an introduction to new members about this review, what prompted it and the way in which it was undertaken, as well as a summary of future actions relating to the report's conclusions and recommendations.

#### **2. Current position**

- 2.1 A task group set up by this commission reported to the March 2015 meeting of the Commission. The report to tonight's meeting is the Housing Department's response to the report.

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1 A long-running concern of councillors, tenants and tenant and leaseholder representatives has been the quality of cleaning in common areas across the council's housing estates.
- 3.2 Complaints had been made about the frequency, quality and cost of the service, which was provided by the council's cleaning services team.
- 3.3 The Housing Commission agreed to look into the issue and set up a task group made up of councillors and tenant representatives, and taking evidence from a range of witnesses.
- 3.4 A key feature of the work done by the task group was the determination of the Chair and Vice chair that it would involve the active co-operation with and input from tenants throughout the course of its work.
- 3.5 The scope of the meeting was agreed in August 2014 and task group meetings were held in October and December 2014, and in January 2015, before the final report was agreed in March 2015.
- 3.6 The work of the task group included a number of visits to housing estates across the city, talking to tenants and estate management staff. The visits were also used to conduct surveys with tenants. The results of the survey formed part of the evidence to the task group.

#### **4. Conclusions and recommendations**

- 4.1 These can be found through the link to the Commission meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015. There were general concerns about the variable quality of the cleaning service. But this was in part due to the deteriorating surfaces on many estates.
- 4.2 The cleaning service itself was felt to be stretched, and during the review the management of the work was strengthened by the department.
- 4.3 There was also felt to be a lack of investment by the cleansing department in upgraded cleaning equipment. But the problems were made worse by the ending of deep-cleaning of surfaces across many estates.

#### **5. Looking ahead...**

- 5.1 The housing department will continue to develop its responses to the report and its findings. This is most likely to be through the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum, which has been seen as a key partner for the Commission and the department.
- 5.2 Update reports will continue to come to the Housing Scrutiny Commission over the next few months.

#### **6. One other thing...**

- 6.1 What is a task group? Task groups have been developed as a way for Scrutiny Commissions to conduct in-depth reviews outside the normal cycle of commission meetings.
- 6.2 They are held in private, but report to the Commission, both while the work is in progress and produce a final report for consideration by the Commission.
- 6.3 They take evidence, both in the form of written evidence and evidence from witnesses, who can be asked to provide a written paper as well.

Jerry Connolly  
Scrutiny Support Officer  
13<sup>th</sup> July 2015



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## ***Voids Improvement Project Update***

Housing Scrutiny Commission 8 September 2015

Lead director: Ann Branson

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## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Vijay Desor, Head of Property Service, Housing Division and Melanie Harris, Void Improvement Project Manager
- Author contact details: 375177/ 371609
- Report version number 3.4

### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Scrutiny Commission of the progress made in the Voids Improvement Project as requested.

### 2. Summary

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Division's performance on the turnaround of empty council houses. A regular update on void performance was requested when the initial Void Improvement Project report was presented to Housing Scrutiny Commission in December 2014.
- 2.2 Void times and costs increased greatly in 2013/14 because resources had to be diverted due to a problem with delivery of the kitchens & bathrooms programme. Although the situation is improving further work is required to return void times and costs to the levels they were at in 2012/13.
- 2.3 The report details the steady progress being made against the key performance indicators for routine and long-term voids since April 2014. The total amount of rental income lost and Council Tax paid as a result of properties being void has reduced despite more properties becoming void.

### 3. Report

- 3.1 The Housing Transformation Programme set two targets for the Void Improvement Project:
  - a) To reduce re-let times thereby increasing rental income.
  - b) To make savings through more efficient ways of working
- 3.2 The responsibility for re-letting Council housing properties once a tenancy has been terminated falls to two teams within the Housing Division's Property Services section;
  - The Property Lettings Team who manage the Choice Based Lettings system, allocate properties to housing applicants, inspect the vacant properties, specify the refurbishment works required, manage the decorating allowance scheme and collect garage rents

- The Voids Repairs Team who under take the refurbishment works in the void property as specified.

### 3.3 Re-let Performance

- 3.3.1 When a property is void there is a loss of rental income and council tax is charged. *Appendix A* shows that (excluding St Peters Tower Blocks) rent loss reduced by 18% from £1,079k in 2013/14 to £881k in 2014/15. Council tax charged on void properties reduced by 23% from £187k in 2013/14 to £144k in 2014/15. This was at a time when the number of properties let increased by 14%.
- 3.3.2 The average cost per void in terms of rent loss and council tax reduced by 29% from £1,015 in 2013/14 to £715 in 2014/15. The re-let time for all voids was 44.3 days in 2012/13, this increased to 67.6 days in 2013/14 due to the kitchen & bathroom issues. In 2014/15, it dropped back down to 64.8 days and currently stands at 65.9 days for 2015 year to date.
- 3.3.3 The main key performance indicator for the service is the void average re-let time. Efficiencies can be generated by reducing the average re-let time, as this will result in an increase in rental income and a reduction in Council Tax liability. In order to assist with internal performance management, voids properties are classified as either routine or long-term voids dependant on certain criteria e.g. major refurbishment works (licensed asbestos removal, structural work) or not available for let (used as decant, unlawful occupier)
- 3.3.4 The average re-let time at the end of July 2015 stands at 42.7 days for routine voids. This is a reduction of 14.4 days on April last year when it was 57.1 days. In 2013/14, void re-let times increased when craft workforce had to be diverted to the kitchen & bathroom programme following the loss of a contractor. *Appendix B* compares the average re-let time for routine voids against last year.
- 3.3.5 The re-let time for long-term voids, has reduced by 14.0 days from 98.0 days in April 2014 to 84.0 days in July 2015 as shown in *Appendix C*. This performance measure is affected by properties which require significant adaptation to meet the needs of disabled applicants. As part of the Void Improvement Project this process will be looked at to improve workflow between the Housing division and the occupational therapy team.
- 3.3.6 The combined average re-let time for all voids (Routine & long-term) was 56.7 days in July 2015, which had reduced by 6.5 days since April 2014 when it stood at 63.2 days (*Appendix D*).
- 3.3.7 *Appendix E* details the number of all voids held. The number held has decreased steadily from a peak of 315 in April 2014 to 188 in July 2015. The number of routine voids held has reduced from 253 in April 2014 to 110 in July 2015. The number of long term voids held has reduced from 62 in April 2014 to 78 in July 2015.

- 3.3.8 The current percentage of properties which are void is between 0.5% and 1.2% across the 6 management areas of the city excluding the St Peter's Tower Blocks. *Appendix F* shows the percentage of properties which are void at the end of June 2015 by area.
- 3.3.9 *Appendix G* shows that 1433 properties were let in total in 2014/15. At the end of July 2015, 410 properties had been let which compares to 470 properties at the same point last year. *Appendix H* contains a map of void properties let in 2014-15 and is overlaid on the new ward and constituency boundaries.
- 3.3.10 In 2014/15, 357 tenants were charged a total of £345k for some of the work that needed doing in the property after they left. These types of debts are hard to collect, but the allocation policy currently states that any applicant on the housing register who has a housing related debt will normally only be considered for re-housing under exceptional circumstances i.e. the applicant will not be allocated another property until their debt is cleared.
- 3.3.11 Staff are developing ways to get the message across that tenants will be charged for rubbish left and damage done. There is a growing problem with unauthorised work to homes and tenants are being reminded that they need permission to do improvement work. This will not be unreasonably withheld and the council may be able advise on how to do it properly.

#### 3.4 Voids Improvement Project

- 3.4.1 In January 2014, the Voids Improvement Project was launched with the aim of generating service improvement in four key areas; performance management, process, standards & specification and resources.
- 3.4.2 In October 2014, the Voids Improvement Project was one of the four major projects brought together under the umbrella of the Housing Transformation Programme.
- 3.4.3 Over the last 6 months the following milestones have been achieved
- Pilot and roll-out of service improvements in key control
  - Pilot and roll-out of improved delivery method of capital kitchen refurbishment programme within void properties via the in-house team
  - Overhaul of the system of work area target monitoring
  - Contribution towards efficiency savings
- 3.4.4 In March 2015, managers visited Nottingham City Homes to share best practice around voids and property lettings. Although both organisations measured their performance slightly differently there were many similarities in the challenges faced. Nottingham work to a combined target of 50 days for all voids (routine and long-term) and were achieve 60 days at the time we visited. Leicester are currently at 79 days year-to-date for 2015/16.

In Leicester, the voids and allocations processes are integrated, whereas at NCH the processes are split between the housing options staff at Nottingham City Council and the voids repairs and allocations staff at the ALMO.



This means that allocations staff are unable to start shortlisting until after the keys had been received, unlike in Leicester where this happens after notification of termination. A number of operational issues were discussed which will help us to reduce the time spent repairing voids.

3.4.5 In June 2015, 6 members of the Tenants & Residents forum arranged a visit to 3 ready-to-let properties in order to inspect the condition which properties were being let in. Each property was different in size and neighbourhood and allowed them to see the differences in Leicester City Council properties. They considered the work to be of a good standard and the decorating allowance granted to be reasonable. They were impressed with the workmanship of the kitchen refurbishments carried out by the in-house team as part of the capital programme.

The visits gave them the chance to see how a basic property can be allocated and then made into a home. They all agreed that the homes were in a suitable void condition but questions were raised regarding cleanliness of communal areas, the cutting back of overgrown gardens and the tidiness of neighbourhood homes.

3.4.6 Work planned for the next 6 to 12 months include:

- Further improvements to processes including design and implementation of a new operating model. This will involve inspecting properties as soon as a tenant gives notice, as well as discussing with applicant the work that will be done in the property after they move in. This should shorten the time the house is empty for repairs. Realistic targets for each phase of the process will be developed.
- This change in process should also allow for the applicant to be consulted on matters such as kitchen design where refurbishment is required but can be scheduled for after they move in.
- Development of voids IT software to enable greater mobile work and improvements to data quality, work scheduling and materials ordering

## 4. Financial, legal and other implications

### 4.1 Financial implications

Following the changes to the empty property discount in 2013/14 the Council Tax paid on void properties (excluding properties used for the St Peters Tower Block refurbishment decant) increased from £25k to £187k. However during the same period the average relet increased from 44 to 67 days. The 28 day council tax discount period begins from when the property becomes unfurnished not from the tenancy end date.

In 2013/14 the average re-let time was 67 days (Routine & Long-term) and the total associated rent loss and council tax was £1.3m, compared to £0.6m in 2012/13. The average re-let time in 2014/15 reduced to 64 days and the associated rent loss and council tax was £1.0m. The current forecast for rent loss and council tax in 2015/16 is £0.9m.

Pete Coles  
Principal Accountant – Housing  
x4077

#### 4.2 Legal implications

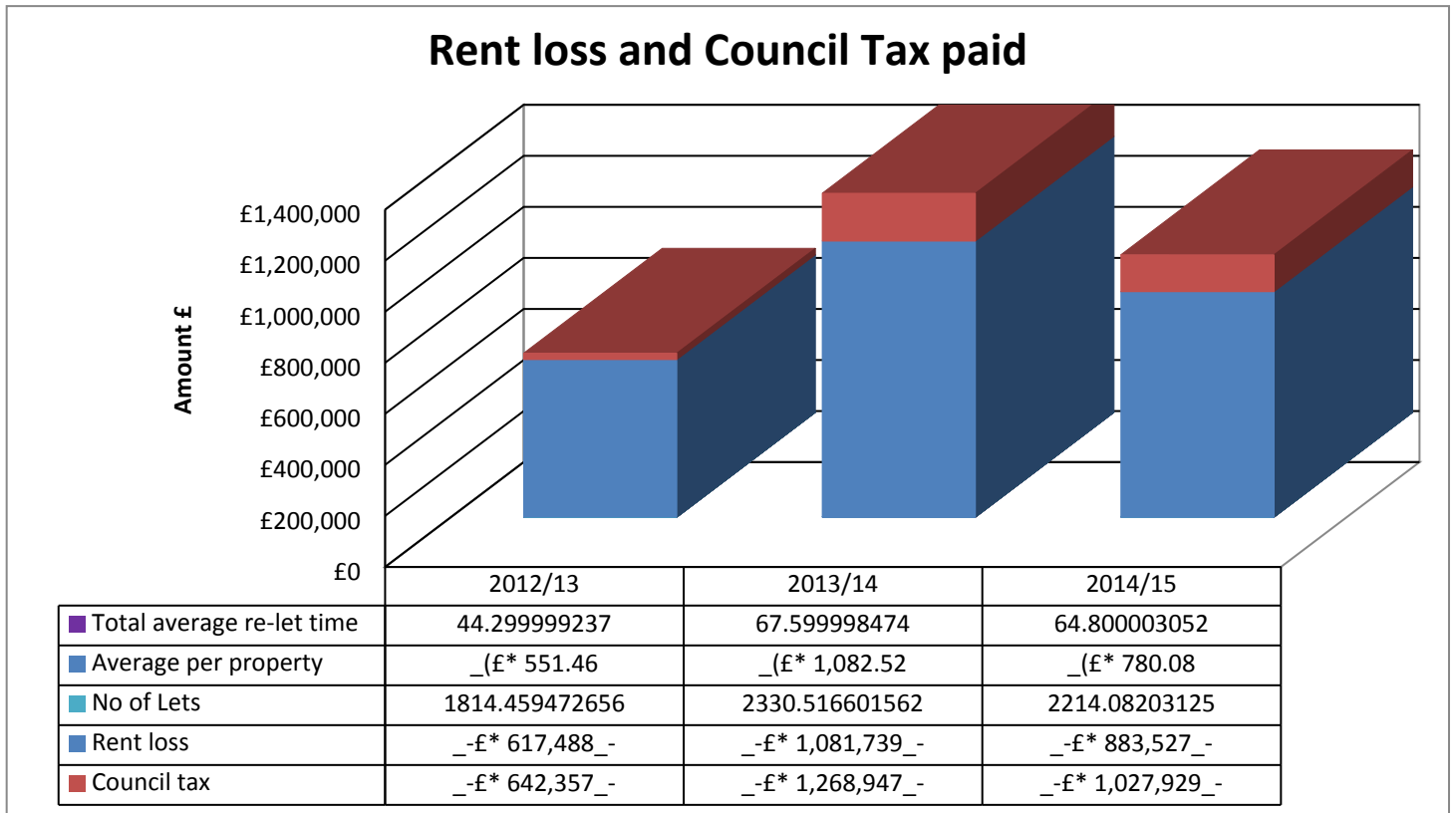
There are no legal implications relating to this report.

Jeremy Rainbow – Supervisory Legal Executive (371435)

#### **5. Summary of appendices:**

- A. Table of rent loss and council tax paid
- B. Table of average re-let times (Routine voids)
- C. Table of average re-let times (Long-term voids)
- D. Table of average re-let times (Routine & Long-term voids)
- E. Table of voids held (Routine & Long-term)
- F. Table of voids per area
- G. Table of properties let
- H. Map of voids let 2014-15

## Appendix A

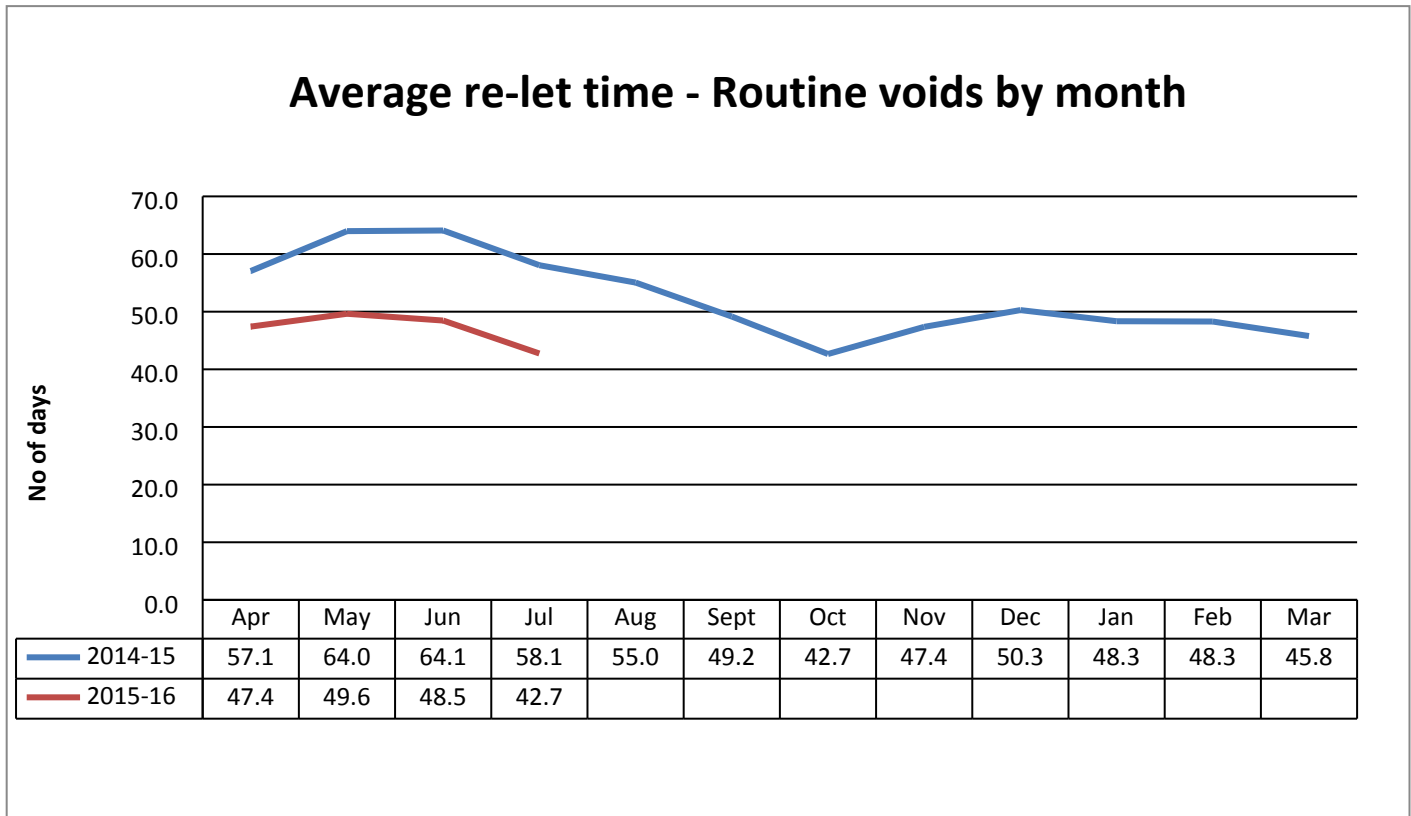


Source: Data provided by Finance/Void sub-status report

*n.b. excludes rent loss & council tax liability incurred as a result of the St Peters tower block programme*

- This chart shows the rent loss and council tax paid against the previous two years
- The amount of council tax charged increased in 2013/14 following the abolition of exemption class C for vacant properties in April 2013. This means that Council tax is now charged after 28 days rather than after 6 months.
- The void time increased in 2013/14 because craft operatives were diverted to the kitchen & bathroom programme after the loss of a contractor.
- The average re-let time for all voids was 44.3 days in 12/13, 67.6 days in 13/14 and 64.8 days in 14/15
- The average charge per property has reduced by 29% from £1014 in 2013/14 to £715 in 2014/15

**Appendix B**

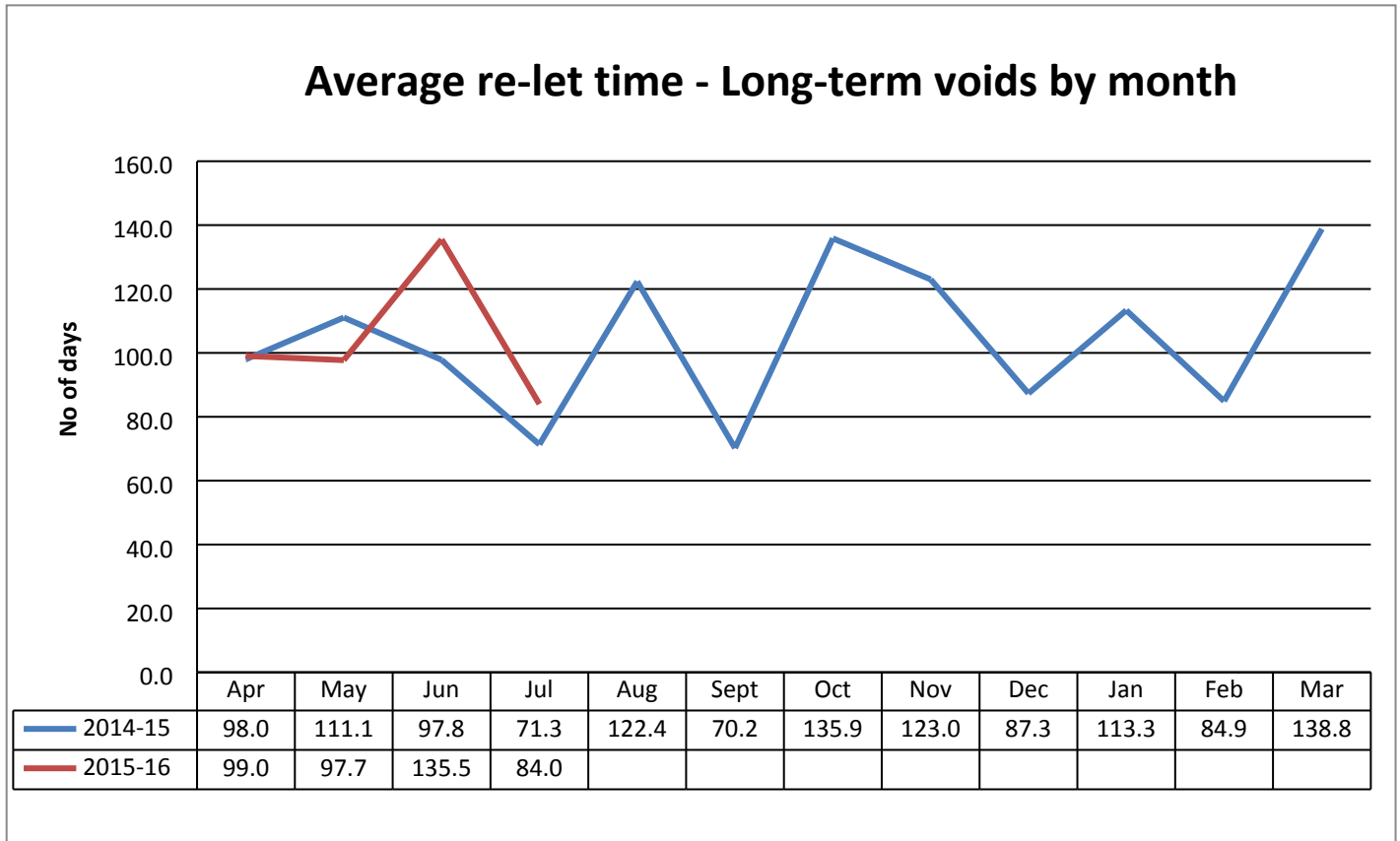


Source: Void sub-status report

*n.b. excludes properties which are void as a result of the St Peters tower block programme*

- This chart shows the void average re-let time for routine voids in 2015/16 in comparison to last year.
- The average re-let time as at July 2015 stands at 42.7 days for routine voids.
- This has reduced by 14.4 days since April 2014, when it was 57.1 days.

## Appendix C

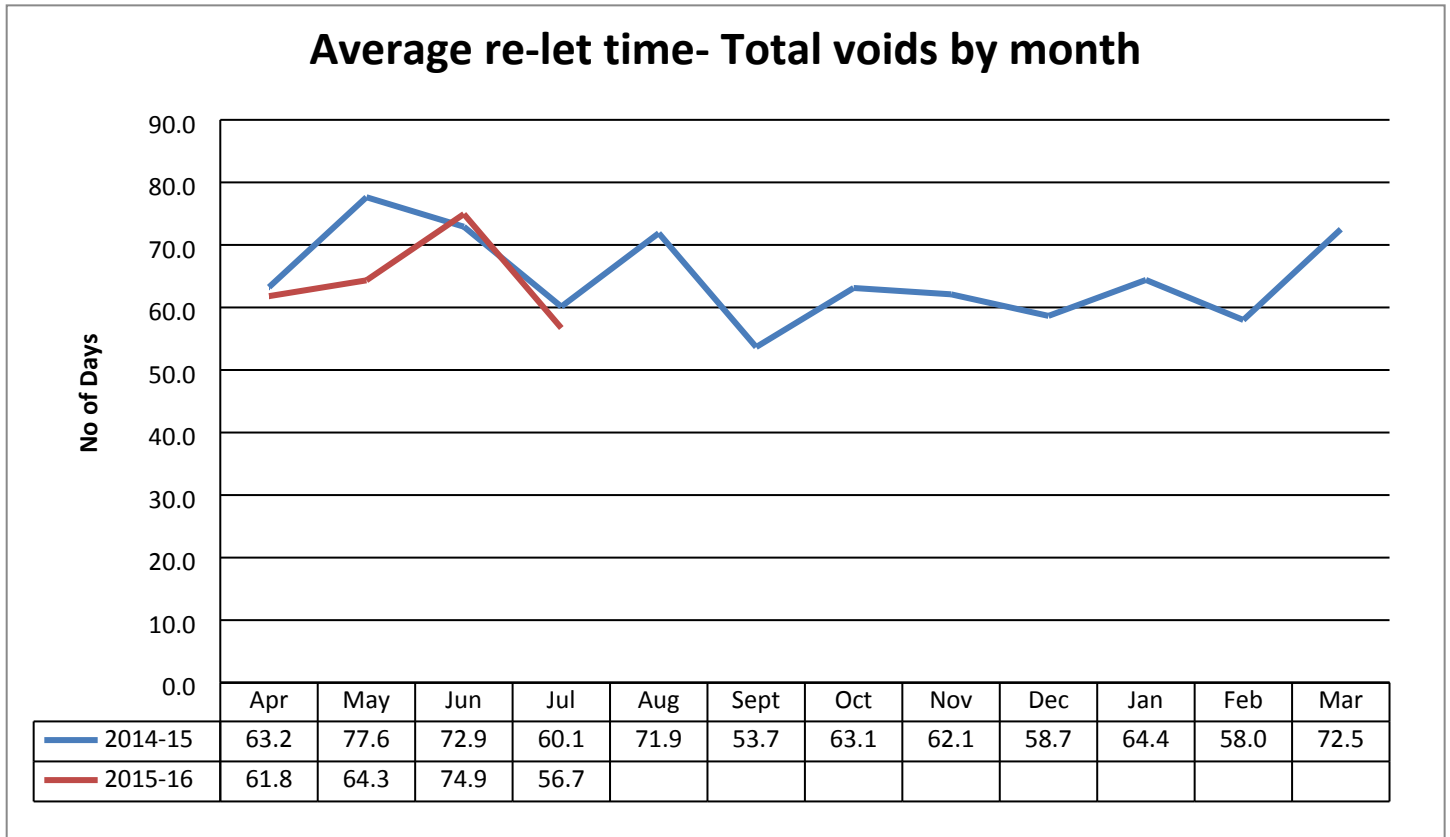


Source: Void sub-status report

*n.b. excludes properties which are void as a result of the St Peters tower block programme*

- This chart shows the void average re-let time for long-term voids in 2015/16 in comparison to last year.
- The average re-let time currently stands at 84.0 days for long-term voids.
- This has reduced by 14.0 days since April 2014, when it was 98.0 days.
- This performance measure is affected by properties which require significant adaptation for disabled applicants

Appendix D

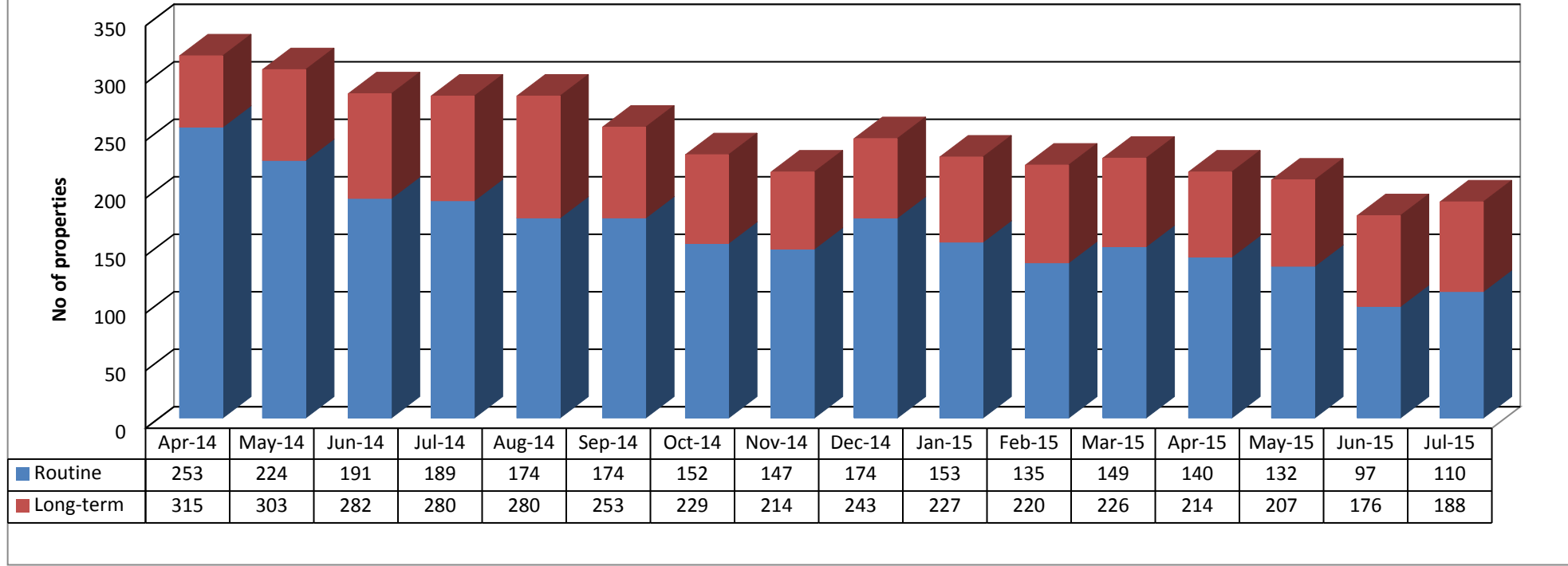


Source: Void sub-status report

*n.b. excludes properties which are void as a result of the St Peters tower block programme*

- This chart shows the void average re-let time for all voids in 2015/16 in comparison to last year.
- The average re-let time currently stands at 56.7 days for all voids.
- This has reduced by 6.5 days since April 2014, when it was 63.2 days.

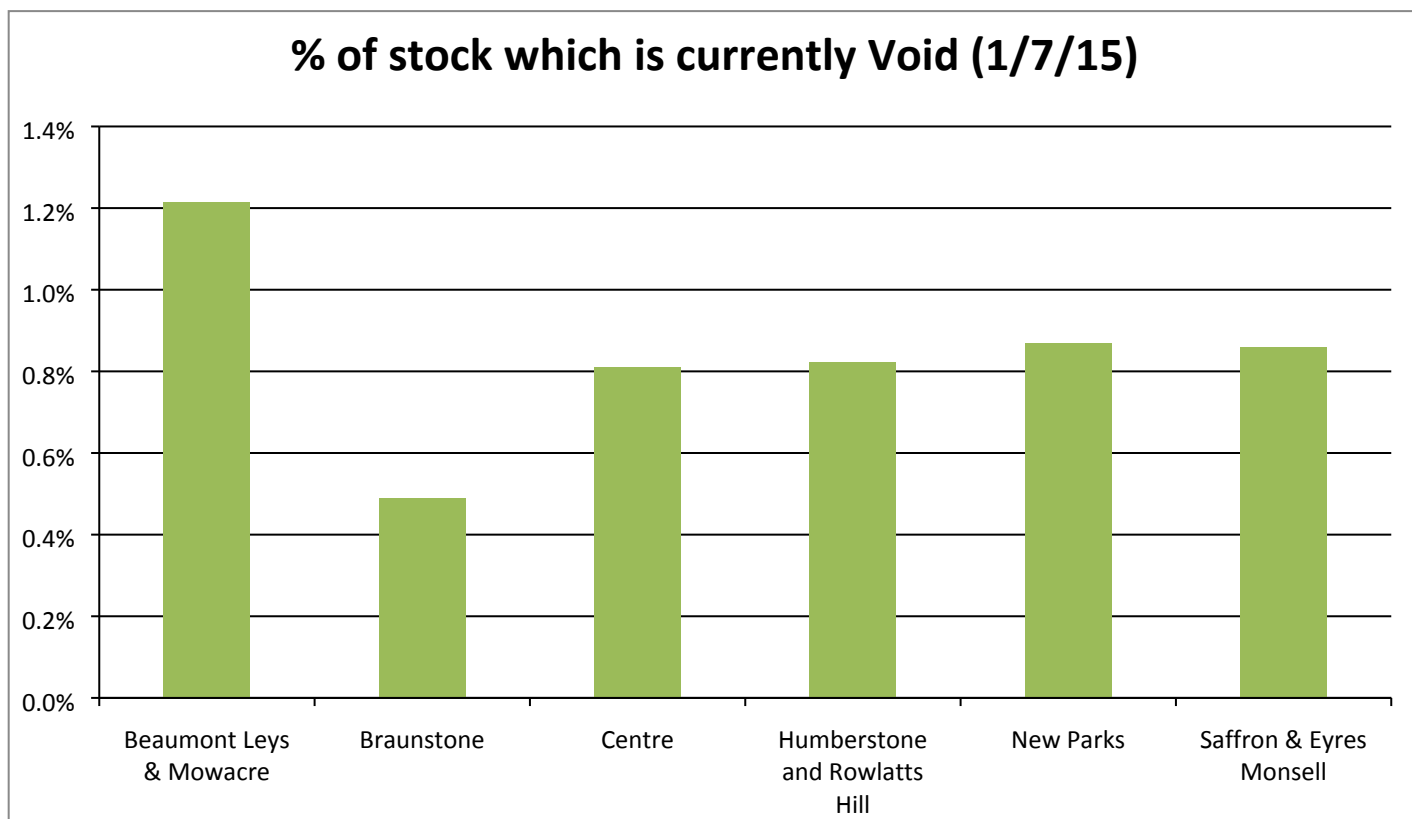
Snapshot of Routine & Long-term voids held each month



Source: Void properties & New Tenancies report  
 n.b. excludes properties which are void as a result of the St Peters tower block programme

- This chart compares the total number of voids (routine & long-term) held at the end of each month.
- The number held has been falling steadily since its peak of 315 (1.4% of stock) in April 2014 and now stands at 188 (0.8% of stock) in July 2015.
- The number of routine voids held has reduced from 253 in April 2014 to 110 in July 2015.
- The number of long term voids held has increased slightly from 62 in April 2014 to 78 in July 2015. This is due to normal fluctuations in demand for temporary accommodation from area offices.

## Appendix F



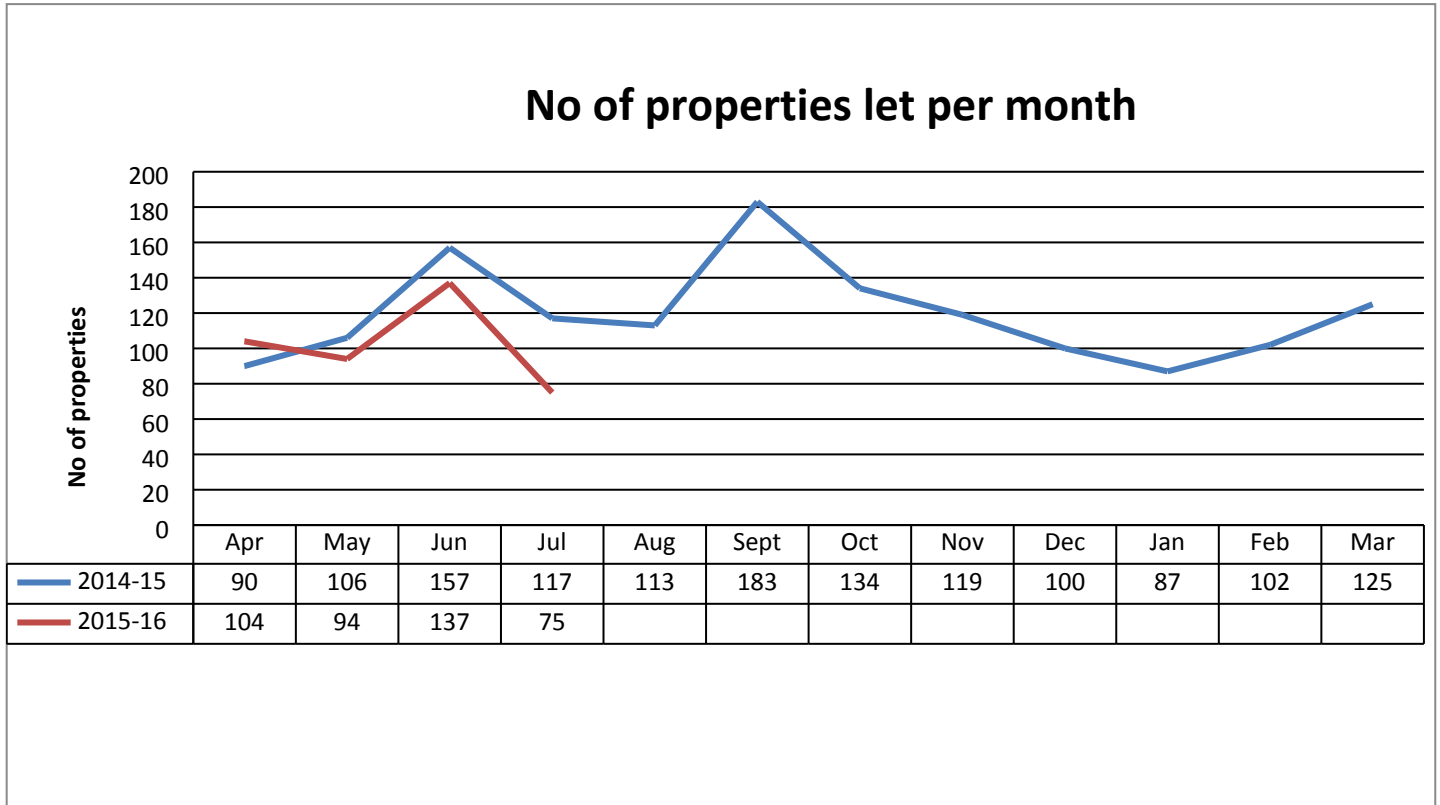
Source: Void performance report

*n.b. excludes properties which are void as a result of the St Peters tower block programme*

- This chart shows the percentage of properties in each management area which were void at the end of June 2015.
- Between 0.5% and 1.2% of stock is currently Void. Variances can be explained by the stock portfolios of each area.



**Appendix G**

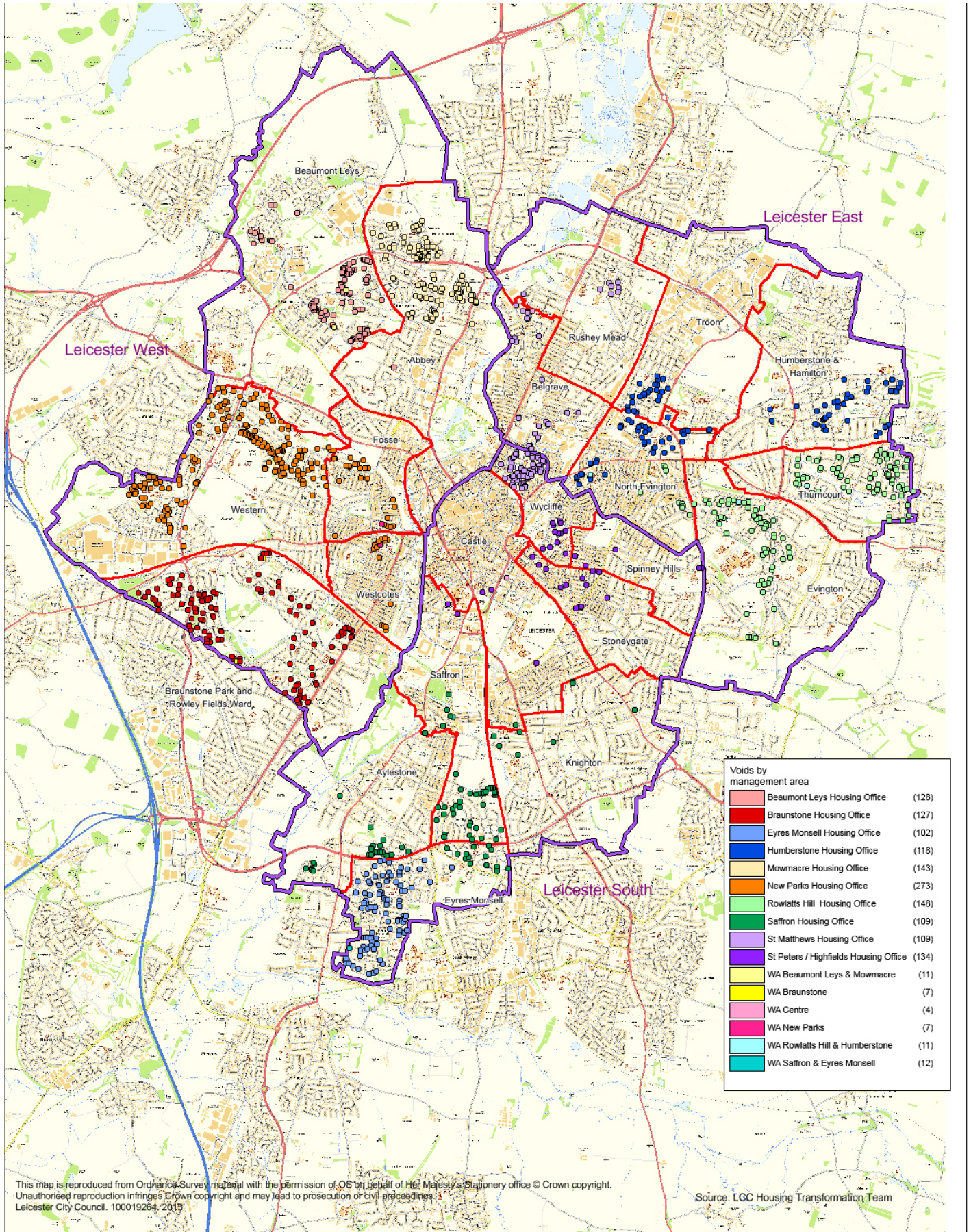


Source: Void sub-status report

- This chart compares the total number of properties let (routine & long-term) in 2015/16 to last year.
- 1433 properties were let in 2014/15
- 410 properties have been let in the first 4 months of this year compared to 470 in the same period last year



# Appendix H – Properties let 2014/15



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Source: LGC Housing Transformation Team



# Appendix C

## Estate Update

### Planned Cleaning Project

Carried Out By: Building Cleaning Management 2015

Item	Description	Action
1.	As we are all aware there are problems on the estates- Building Cleaning's management have had several meetings to discuss the concerns that have been highlighted and on-going and are now proposing to do the following to improve our services.	<b>Building Cleaning</b>
2.	<p><b>Better Communication:</b> It is now agreed that the supervisors will be in regular weekly contact with the Housing officers – this is to ensure that any problems we or the Housing Officers are experiencing on the estates can be dealt with – with little time delay and daily problems can also to be acted on by both parties. All of which is to be emailed to use as evidence that these have been dealt with and completed.</p> <p>Supervisors –will be contacting their contacts to set this up.</p>	<p><b>Catherine Mitchell</b></p> <p><b>Suzanne Blowfield</b></p> <p><b>Zoey Heatherley</b></p>
3	<p><b>What's happened so far:</b></p> <p>The supervisors and I have visited Beaumont Leys – St Matthews and St Peters Estates. We have look at the cleaning and are all in agreement that there is room for improvements with the cleaning.</p> <p>All estate cleaning staff are in the process of being re-trained in their cleaning tasks by the supervisors - this started in July with Beaumont Leys and St Matthews staff being first – we will then go to St Peters Estate.</p> <p>This training includes  <b>Wall washing</b>  <b>Floor cleaning – including the edges</b>  <b>Chemicals - correct usage</b>  <b>Damp wiping fixtures and fittings</b>  <b>Cob web removal</b>  <b>Health and Safety</b></p>	<p><b>Catherine Mitchell</b></p> <p><b>Suzanne Blowfield</b></p> <p><b>Zoey Heatherley</b></p>

4.	<p><b>Chemicals</b>  We have now decided to use bleach tablets for the cleaning of the floors which we have used in some areas before and these are proving to be very good in lifting build-up of dirt from the edges and the floors.  We are also trying another chemical that as a fragrance.</p>	<p><b>Catherine Mitchell</b>   <b>Suzanne Blowfield</b>   <b>Zoey Heatherley</b></p>
5.	<p><b>Trolleys</b>  New trolleys for staff to carry their water and equipment have also gone out on sites.</p>	<p><b>Estate cleaning staff</b></p>
6.	<p><b>Mops</b>  Mops are being sourced that are on the market with a light abrasive centre that enables some stubborn marks to be removed whilst mopping – we have a company looking into this for us.</p>	<p><b>Building Cleaning</b></p>
7.	<p><b>Cleaning staff</b>  We will be having a team of additional cleaning staff on St Matthews Estate – these staff will be used to carry out some deeper cleaning on the floors to bring them up to a better standard. Another team will be on to St Peters Estate week commencing 17<sup>th</sup> August to do the same on the vacancy areas (2) until we get more casuals on these areas.</p>	<p><b>Catherine Mitchell</b>   <b>Suzanne Blowfield</b>   <b>Zoey Heatherley</b></p>
8.	<p><b>Regular Areas - regular cleaners</b>  We will be putting in a team of staff from week commencing 17<sup>th</sup> August to cover regularly the following areas so that they have more consistency with the cleaning.</p> <p><b>West Courts</b>  <b>St Leonards Courts</b>  <b>Lombardy Rise</b>  <b>Martindale</b>  <b>Beaumanor Road</b>  <b>Neston Gardens</b>  <b>Rushey Mead</b></p>	<p><b>Building Cleaning</b></p>

9.	<p><b>Water</b></p> <p>Still a continuing problem but we hope this will be elevated by the additional team we are putting on the estates as they will have a vehicle which they will be able to either fetch additional water or take it with them. We would still like more water points in all areas – this would help with the times left to actually carry out the cleaning – as we know most blocks have between fifteen-twenty-thirty minutes per block and when the cleaning staff have to keep going back to a base for water the time is soon used up</p>	<b>Estates Managers</b>
10.	<p><b>AD HOC Cleaning – additional work carried out by Ace</b></p> <p>The additional cleaning carried out by Ace on behalf of Building Cleaning.</p> <p>Ace is used for any other cleaning requested that is in addition to the daily cleaning on the estates.</p> <p>This is for work like the removal of:</p> <p><b>Sick Excrement.</b></p> <p><b>Pigeon mess</b></p> <p>It was agreed at our meeting at St Peters on the 6<sup>th</sup> August that we need to ensure that this work is checked off and an e mail sent to the relevant persons requesting this work to acknowledge the works been completed.</p> <p>The Housing Officers also said that if they are out on site that they would also be able to see that the work is done.</p>	<p><b>Building Cleaning</b></p> <p><b>Housing Officers</b></p>
	<p><b>We really hope we can start moving forward with our services with us all working together to improve the standards on the Estates.</b></p> <p><b>In an ideal world we know that the cleaning would also improve if we had more time and the frequencies were more regular- but this comes at an additional cost.</b></p> <p><b>Regular maintenance and repairs – replacements of the flooring and surfaces is required.</b></p> <p><b>Periodic cleaning would also be a benefit - again additional costs</b></p>	<b>All</b>



## Housing Scrutiny Commission

Commission Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015

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### Monitoring the Homelessness Strategy (12 months)

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Andy Connelly

Lead director: Ann Branson

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**City Mayor**

## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: ALL
- Report author: Ann Branson, Director of Housing, Martin Clewlow, (Head of Service)
- Author contact details: 0116 454 (37) 5101
- Report version number: V1.9

## Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Executive seeks the comments of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on the first 12 months of the Homelessness Strategy being fully implemented.

## Summary

- 2.1 The Homelessness Strategy was fully implemented by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014. It focuses on moving from dealing with crisis to the prevention of homelessness, a reduction in the use of hostels and an increase in floating support. Overall the numbers of hostel bed spaces that the Council funds were reduced by 36%.
- 2.2 The Spending Review gave a planning guideline to achieve savings of £1.5m from £4.5m General Fund budget.
- 2.3 £700k of efficiency savings were agreed in September 2014 and have been implemented without the need to change the Strategy. These savings will be effective from the dates agreed. In addition, under a separate Spending Review, Council hostels were transferred to the Housing Revenue Account. The current General Fund budget for the Strategy is therefore £3.542m. In addition, the HRA spends £1.489m on services that support the Strategy.
- 2.4 In March the Executive considered a report on the impact of the Strategy after 9 months. The report described progress with prevention work, a reduction in rough sleeping and some reduction in repeat homelessness. It confirmed that the closure of bed spaces did not mean that current demand could not be met. Executive asked for a further report when 12 months data was available.
- 2.5 This report considers
  - a) Operational data for the full 12 months of 2014/15
  - b) Advice from internal and externally commissioned research on the nature of entrenched homelessness and the next steps to further reducing repeat homelessness amongst single people.
  - c) Lessons learnt from first year of opening the Single Access and Referral Service.
- 2.6 Not all data is directly comparable with previous years because prior to the Single Access and Referral Service we could not capture all data relating to VCS hostels and some government definitions for prevention data have changed. Officers are considering how prevention figures should be presented.



## Conclusions

- 2.7 The overall conclusion is that the progress reported in March has been sustained and the closure of bed spaces does not mean that current demand cannot be met and it may be possible to further reduce provision for single people, but this is not advised at this point.
- 2.8 The Summer Budget proposals for changes to Housing Benefit and other Welfare payments are very worrying and likely to be a major challenge to the Strategy. A green paper with details is awaited.
- 2.9 The demand for basic housing advice that is now provided by the Customer Services Centre has risen. Calls handled from 13<sup>th</sup> April 2015 – 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2015 showed that Customer Services had handled 11199 calls for the Housing Options Service compared with the same period last year when there were 9038 calls handled. This is a 19% increase.
- 2.10 The number of people who come to Housing Options saying they face homelessness has risen over the last 12 months by 5% to 2163 households, but this may be related to the closure of direct access hostels in the voluntary sector. (See Appendix 1)
- 2.11 For the same reason we cannot directly compare the number of families who had to go into hostels with the previous year. With the implementation of the Single Access and Referral Service we expected an increase and there has been a rise in the number of families whom we had to place in Border House or Bed and Breakfast (from 173 in 2013/14 to 238 in 2014/15) (See Appendix 2)
- 2.12 We placed 621 single people in temporary accommodation in 2014/15. Again, we cannot directly compare data. There are, however still too many single people who return to homelessness. 222 single people who came into Council funded hostels last year had experienced at least two previous stays in hostels. This is 30%, a reduction from the 37% previously identified in the Homelessness Strategy, though figures are not directly comparable. The number of very entrenched cases (four or more stays or rough sleeping) has reduced: 118 as at April 2012 and 52 as at end of March 2015. (see Appendices 3 and 3A)
- 2.13 Internal research and a consultant's report on "Next Steps to Reducing Repeat Homelessness" endorses the approach to prevention and support that is being taken in Leicester and in particular praises the Revolving Door Service. The consultants made a number of useful suggestions to further embed what is known as "Housing First".
- 2.14 If these changes reduce repeat homelessness and average length of stay, less hostel spaces for single people may be needed, so the Strategy should continue to be closely monitored and a further report made to Executive based on 18 months data.
- 2.15 Closing single hostels without these changes in place runs the risk of more rough sleeping.

- 2.16 The presence of beggars in the City Centre continues to be an issue, however recent joint work with the police has highlighted that many beggars are not rough sleepers and do actually have somewhere to live.

## **Recommendations**

2.17 It is recommended that:

1. The changes to working practices with single homeless people, including continued work on prevention and embedding the principles of “Housing First”, are supported.
2. The new ways of working are expected to improve the effectiveness of the current Homeless Strategy by helping to reduce hostel use and repeat homelessness. A further report in December 2015, based on 18 months data, will consider the amount of temporary accommodation that should be procured.
3. Further reports will be provided on the likely impact of the Welfare Reform proposals as detail becomes available.

## **3. Report**

### **Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention**

- 3.1 Housing Options have two main functions. They manage and maintain the Housing Register and provide housing advice and assistance to anyone who may be facing homelessness with the aim of prevention.
- 3.2 As at April 2015 there were 9461 applicants on the Housing Register. The number of families on the Housing register fell from 5946 to 5280 over the year. The number rehoused rose from 867 to 1159, partly because of the large number of new council and housing association homes that were completed during the year.
- 3.3 The number of single people and couples on the Housing Register also fell, from 5131 to 4181. 1020 were rehoused during the year, compared to 849 the previous year.
- 3.4 584 (27%) of all lettings were for the prevention of homelessness or to households who became homeless. The percentage is similar to previous years, but there was a big increase (27%) in the number of lettings.
- 3.5 The Housing Options Service moved to York House from April of this year, to embrace the ‘one stop’ approach for customers. The Customer Service Centre provide a triage service for housing advice. All crisis presentations (those who are saying they are homeless on the day) are referred to the Housing Options Service to be seen for immediate, specialist advice and assistance. Customer Services also refer anyone who may be facing homelessness for early

intervention and the more complex issues arising from Housing Register enquiries.

- 3.6 In the first quarter of 2014/15 9038 telephone calls were made to the service (when provided by Housing Options). Customer Services received 11199 calls in the same period this year, a 19% increase. The Customer Service Centre has longer opening hours. Working practices between the Centre and Housing Options are still being developed.
- 3.7 The demand for the homelessness services provided by Housing Options rose by 5% during 2014/15 from 2051 to 2163 households (975 families, 1188 singles and couples). The rise was anticipated due to the introduction of the Single Access and Referral Service and the decommissioning of VCS services which in the past customers may have approached directly.
- 3.8 The prevention of homelessness remains the main aim and objective for the Service. We can prevent homelessness by either sustaining the present accommodation (see Appendix 4) or by providing an alternative housing option. (see Appendix 5). The reasons for customers seeking assistance have remained consistent. They include termination of assured shorthold tenancies, fleeing domestic violence, required to leave National Asylum Support Service accommodation following a positive decision on their asylum application, and asked to leave by friends and relatives.
- 3.9 We are starting to feel the impact of welfare reform changes with more customers seeking help for affordability issues specifically in the private rented sector.
- 3.10 The most successful means of prevention were:
- Resolving Housing Benefit problems
  - Providing other assistance that will enable someone to remain in accommodation in the private or social rented sector.
  - Resolving rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sector
  - Mediation using external or internal family mediators
  - Negotiation or legal advocacy to ensure that someone can remain in accommodation in the private rented sector
  - Conciliation including home visits for family/friend threatened exclusions
  - Debt Advice

## **Welfare Reform**

- 3.11 Initial analysis of the impact of the Summer Budget on Leicester has highlighted issues of particular concern for the Homeless Strategy. These are:
- Lowering the benefit cap and reducing tax credits will affect many more families, including those with 2 or more children. This could cause a rise in homelessness from those unable to afford the private rented sector, or get into rent or mortgage arrears.

- The exclusion of most 18-21 year old from benefit could increase homelessness. Exemption of “vulnerable” households and those in hostels are expected, but details are awaited. There is concern that single parents will not be exempted. Exemptions are expected to be tightly drawn.

### **Family homelessness**

- 3.12 In 2014/15 975 families sought assistance when facing homelessness.
- 3.13 238 families went into temporary accommodation (through Housing Options) in 2014/15 compared to 173 in 2013/14, (a rise of 27%). As stated earlier, some of this rise will be because families previously went directly to voluntary sector hostels. The emphasis on prevention of family homelessness continues with admissions to a hostel or bed and breakfast being a last resort. (Appendix 2)
- 3.14 The rise in the number of families presenting has meant that more Bed and Breakfast has had to be used during 2014/15 (from 9 in 13/14 to 63 in 14/15), However, most families have only had to spend one night in Bed and Breakfast before being moved on to more suitable temporary accommodation. Some large families have had long stays. Nationally, good practice is that families should spend no longer than 6 weeks in Bed and Breakfast. We are closely monitoring the use of bed and breakfast and are looking at other options that may be available to reduce the usage e.g. using HomeCome private sector leasing properties and bringing one or two flats adjacent to Border House into use as part of the hostel.
- 3.15 Benefit changes from 9<sup>th</sup> February 2015 for European Nationals who have been claiming Income Based Job Seekers Allowance will be subject to further sanctions if they cannot demonstrate a genuine prospect of work. The withdrawal of these welfare payments could increase expenditure on bed and breakfast during 2015 if these people become homeless.
- 3.16 There is no repeat family homelessness as all who are rehoused as a result of being homeless are offered floating support to help them sustain their new accommodation, and the Family Support Service continues to work with those most in need.

### **Working with repeat single homeless and rough sleepers**

- 3.17 In 2014/15 1188 single people or couples sought assistance when facing homelessness.
- 3.18 There is clearly a number of people in the city at any one time whose lifestyle has led to them finding it very hard and sometimes impossible to make themselves a home. They become entrenched in a cycle of sleeping on friend’s sofas, returning to family who then cannot cope, going into prison or mental health hospitals, coming in and out of homeless hostels and sometimes, but by no means in all cases, rough sleeping. The consultant’s report on “Next steps to Reducing Repeat Homelessness” identified that “the complex characteristics associated with repeat homeless clients are universal and not unique to Leicester”.

3.19 The homelessness services do not believe anyone's behaviour is completely intractable, but it can become entrenched and difficult to address.

3.20 In recognition of this the Strategy includes

- **Monitoring of all repeat homelessness.** Last year 222 (14/15) 30% of single people who came into Council hostels had experienced at least two previous stays in hostel accommodation. In contrast the Council sees no repeat family homelessness. This is a reduction (from 37%) of the proportion identified prior to adopting the new Homelessness Strategy. We are concerned that of the 75 single people evicted from Council housing last year 13 came back into hostels.
- Measuring our success with those that we have most concern about. **The Repeat Homeless list** is used to target multi-agency work with those with the most entrenched homelessness lifestyle. It lists as a snapshot, those people receiving Council funded homelessness services who have been in hostels four or more times in the last two years or who repeatedly sleep rough. When the list was compiled for April 2012 there were 118 individuals who met this criteria. The number fluctuates as people join and leave the list. Since April 2012, 80 individuals have been helped into a settled lifestyle. At the end of March 2015 the number on the list was 52. Multi-agency casework with the people on the list is discussed at multi-agency meetings chaired by Inclusion HealthCare and strongly supported by the City Council's Revolving Door Team, Rough Sleepers Outreach Team and Housing Options. Hostel support is focused on trying to ensure no further returns to hostel accommodation.
- Continuing to fund the **Revolving Door Service** (STAR support workers with lower caseloads to work specifically with this group) which the consultants found was delivering positive outcomes.
- Continue to fund the **Rough Sleeper Outreach Service**. During 2014/15 124 individuals slept rough on the street. This is more than the numbers of individuals recorded in 2013/14 (98) but less than 2012/13 (143) when this data was first compiled. (Appendix 6). In 2013/14, the range in numbers on the street in any one year was a minimum of 5 and maximum of 12 in August 2013. The range in 2014/15 was none (over Christmas) to 16 and 17 in July and August 2014. Length of stay on the street is generally shorter. Most (51%) had 1 or 2 nights out. 16% had more than 6 nights.

3.21 Recent work with the police has highlighted again that many people who the public view as rough sleepers are actually beggars who do have somewhere to live. This can also include people who are staying in our hostels. The Rough Sleepers Outreach Team shares information with the Street Drinking Team and the City Centre police. At our first strategic meeting in March there were 16 prolific beggars. As at 1<sup>st</sup> July there were 12 prolific beggars, of which one was in a hostel and one rough sleeping. The others had tenancies (7) or were living with family and friends (3) The Police have served 4 Community Protection Notices and 1 Criminal Behaviour Order since April, (these replaced ABSO's and CRASBO;s). It's too early to know the outcome of these orders, however the Police have welcomed our joint agency approach and information sharing on whether the beggars are actually homeless. This approach gives the Police

more confidence that the Courts will support any actions that they may take against persistent beggars.

- 3.22 There appears to be some slow improvement in work with homeless single people. There have been some heartening individual success stories. However, this is a volatile area of work and continued work is needed on repeat homelessness.

### **Adopting new ways of working within the current Strategy**

- 3.23 We asked consultants (Janjer Associates) to advise us what our next steps should be to reduce repeat homelessness, The consultant concluded

- Repeat homelessness of those with complex issues remains a key challenge
- The complex characteristics associated with repeat homeless clients are universal and not unique to Leicester. A positive outcome is achieved in most cases dealt with by the Revolving Door Service and the way that service works is in line with the approach called “Housing First” which has been successful elsewhere.
- The capacity of the Revolving Door Team is not sufficient to work with all repeat homeless cases
- There are other changes we could make to our existing systems and processes to be more effective.

- 3.24 Leicester has already been adopting some elements of the approach which in the USA and elsewhere is called “Housing First”. The University of York have done a useful summary of how 9 English LAs have used the approach. The core philosophy is :

- Offer permanent housing with security of tenure
- Enable real choice for service users over all aspects of their lives, using a personalisation framework or an equivalent client led approach.
- A clear focus on long term and recurrently homeless people with high support needs.
- Using a harm reduction framework
- Offer open ended, not time restricted, access to intensive support with no expectation that support needs will necessarily fall steadily, or that any individual using Housing First might cease to require support.
- Separation of housing and care i.e. access to and retention of, housing is not conditional on treatment compliance.

- 3.25 The University of York evaluation was published in February 2015. It concluded “there is a clear case for extending the use of Housing First in England and the UK. Not only was there evidence of success within each individual service, there was clear evidence of consistent success across all nine services studied”. Success was measured against health, well being and social integration criteria and housing sustainment. It states that there is “enough evidence to be reasonably confident that adherence to the core philosophy has produced often unprecedented reductions in long-term homelessness”. They also conclude that

the approach “may not be successful with 5-20% of long term and repeatedly homeless people”.

- 3.26 The ‘Housing First’ model says that we need to get recurrent homeless people with high support needs into their own tenancy quickly and then offer open ended support (i.e. not limited by time or intensity, but adjusted to their needs). This is in contrast to the old model which saw hostels as a place to get people “ready” for independent living and that those with the highest needs had to stay there the longest.
- 3.27 This can best be achieved in Leicester by getting people into Council tenancies with HRA STAR support and is the approach adopted by the Revolving Door Service, currently to a restricted number of people.
- 3.28 We are looking carefully at all stages of the homeless pathway to refine how we work with those who repeatedly use hostels or rough sleep to remove unnecessary barriers to accommodation, provide the right psychological environment to encourage sustainable home making, and ensure appropriate ongoing support after move-on.
- 3.29 To further enable this approach the following changes are being made within our internal process
- reviewing the way all staff work with all those who return to hostels, from the client arriving at Housing Options, throughout their stay in hostels
  - using the principles of the “Revolving Door” Service with those who return for a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> time. We currently do this when someone returns for the 4<sup>th</sup> time. Staff have been transferred into the Revolving Door Service from elsewhere in STAR.
  - because we know that 43% of single people who come into hostels do not resolve their underlying housing problem, looking at how we keep in touch with those most likely to return and encourage people not to leave abruptly with no clear plan. This is part of meeting the Strategy’s aim to avoid crisis.
  - remove perverse barriers to rehousing. The Assistant Mayor recently approved an amendment to the policy of how former rent arrears are dealt with for rehousing.
  - use direct lets of one bedroom accommodation to those on the Register in homelessness categories, (instead of using HomeChoice) where this would greatly reduce the length of stay in a hostel or the need to go into a hostel.
  - closer working with Children’s Services on helping homeless 16/17 year olds
  - reviewing co-ordination with mental health and drug and alcohol services with the Directors of Public Health & Adult Social Care
  - focused use of our STAR Service once people leaving hostels are in council tenancies.
  - focused use of Private Sector STAR team and P3, the Commissioned Floating Support Service, if people go into Housing Association or private tenancies.

## **Supply and demand for temporary accommodation for single people and childless couples**

- 3.30 In confirmation of what was reported after 9 months data, the 12 months data shows that the current level of temporary accommodation, under the current eligibility criteria is still felt to be broadly sufficient to meet demand. More detailed work is being done on the balance of provision between specialist and general provision for single people.
- 3.31 Officers believe there will be scope for further reducing the demand for single person accommodation, if the new working practices achieve better outcomes for individuals. It is difficult to calculate what the combined impact of the actions will be. We spend £843k per year from the General Fund on single person hostels (i.e. in VCS) and £299k from the HRA. Our modelling suggests that closing single hostels without successfully reducing demand runs the risk of more rough sleeping.
- 3.32 However, officers also believe that assessment of single people against the eligibility criteria could be improved.
- 3.33 Category J is for those “rough sleeping or considered to be in immediate and high risk of rough sleeping (see Appendix 7). This is the most difficult category for Housing Option Officers to assess at the point of request and Category J makes up 33% of our hostel placements. Clearly we want to prevent any rough sleeping and it will always be the case that officers have to make a judgement. To meet all requests would return us to the policy of opening more and more hostels. However it can be seen that even though we did not place nearly 1 in 4 of those feared to be at risk of rough sleeping, few did. (see Appendix 8).
- 3.34 The challenge is to become more accurate in assessing on the day whether the person really does have no alternative to a hostel space.
- 3.35 We have recently introduced closer management of the use of this criteria and using what we know from recent research and better casework data to help inform the judgement of whether a person is at “immediate and high risk of rough sleeping”. Housing advice and other appropriate support will always be offered.

### **Day Centres (The Y Support Service and Centre Project)**

- 3.36 The Y Support Service which is based within the Dawn Centre is grant funded to see up to 60 clients a day on a drop in basis. For those people identified as being in need of support, but not receiving this from other agencies, the service will produce personal development plans with them. During 2014/15 the Y Support Service worked with 60 people to develop such plans of which 58 cases resulted in greater independence for the client. The Y Support Service has been recently reviewed and is achieving good outputs. They are able to provide support to help maximise income, manage debt, and working in conjunction with Leicestershire Cares to help service users achieve paid work. They can also establish contact with external groups and services, family and friends on behalf of the service user.



3.37 The Centre Project is less formal, but is felt to be a useful project for working with those at risk of homelessness.

### **Employment Project (LeicestershireCares)**

3.38 Leicestershire Care is grant funded to deliver a support programme to 40 people per year which aims to strengthen employment opportunities for those who are in temporary accommodation or those in the process of resettlement with a history of, or at greater risk of homelessness.

3.39 During 2014/15 53 referrals were made to the project of which 7 people failed to engage with the support offered. Of the 46 receiving support, 31 completed their programme and at the end of the year 15 continued to receive support. Of the 31 who completed their programme, 15 went in to either paid employment or work placements. The other 16 have been assisted with completing CVs and job applications.

### **Befriending Project**

3.40 This will be a new voluntary sector project created as a result of the first Spending Review. Submissions have been evaluated and a successful applicant, One Roof Leicester has been selected. One Roof Leicester is a consortium of faith groups from across the city and the funding will be awarded from August 2015.

### **Management, Administration and Contract Management**

3.41 With the reduction of VCS contracts it is possible to reduce the contract administration team, and with the closure of in-house hostels and introduction of the new Northgate IT system it is possible to reduce administrative support, giving a saving of £64k.

## **4. Financial, legal and other implications**

### 4.1 Financial implications – Peter Coles

4.1.1 Efficiency savings of £700k have already been approved by Executive (December 2014) and will be implemented over the period 2014 to 2017. Management will achieve further savings of £64k a year by reducing 2.5 FTE posts from the VCS contracts management team and the hostel admin teams. This brings the total savings identified as part of this spending review to £764k compared to a planning guideline target of £1.5m.

### 4.2 Legal implications

None at present.

### 4.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

None at present.

### 4.4 Equalities Implications

4.4.1 This report is not proposing any changes in Strategy or policy. All changes are designed to better help those who face homelessness, which include many with protected characteristics.

## **5. Background information and other papers:**

Monitoring Homeless Strategy Report to Executive – 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015

Homeless Spending Review Report to Executive 30 September 2014

University of York Centre for Housing Policy – Housing First in England: An evaluation of nine services. February 2015.

## **6. Summary of appendices:**

Appendix 1: The number of people who came to Housing Options saying they faced homelessness

Appendix 2: Homelessness: Family Households 01/04/13 – 31/03/15 15 (Graph)

Appendix 3: Singles, Couples & Others requesting Temporary Accommodation from 01/04/14 to 31/03/15 (Pie Chart)

Appendix 3A: Homelessness: Singles & Couples 01/04/13 – 31/03/15 15 (Graph)

Appendix 4: Prevention (ALL households) by Sustainment comparing 2013/14 & 2014/15

Appendix 5: Prevention (ALL households) by Rehousing comparing 2013/14 & 2014/15

Appendix 6: Number of Individual Rough Sleepers

Appendix 7: Current eligibility criteria for offer of emergency or temporary accommodation

Appendix 8: Supply and demand for temporary accommodation for single people

## **7. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?**

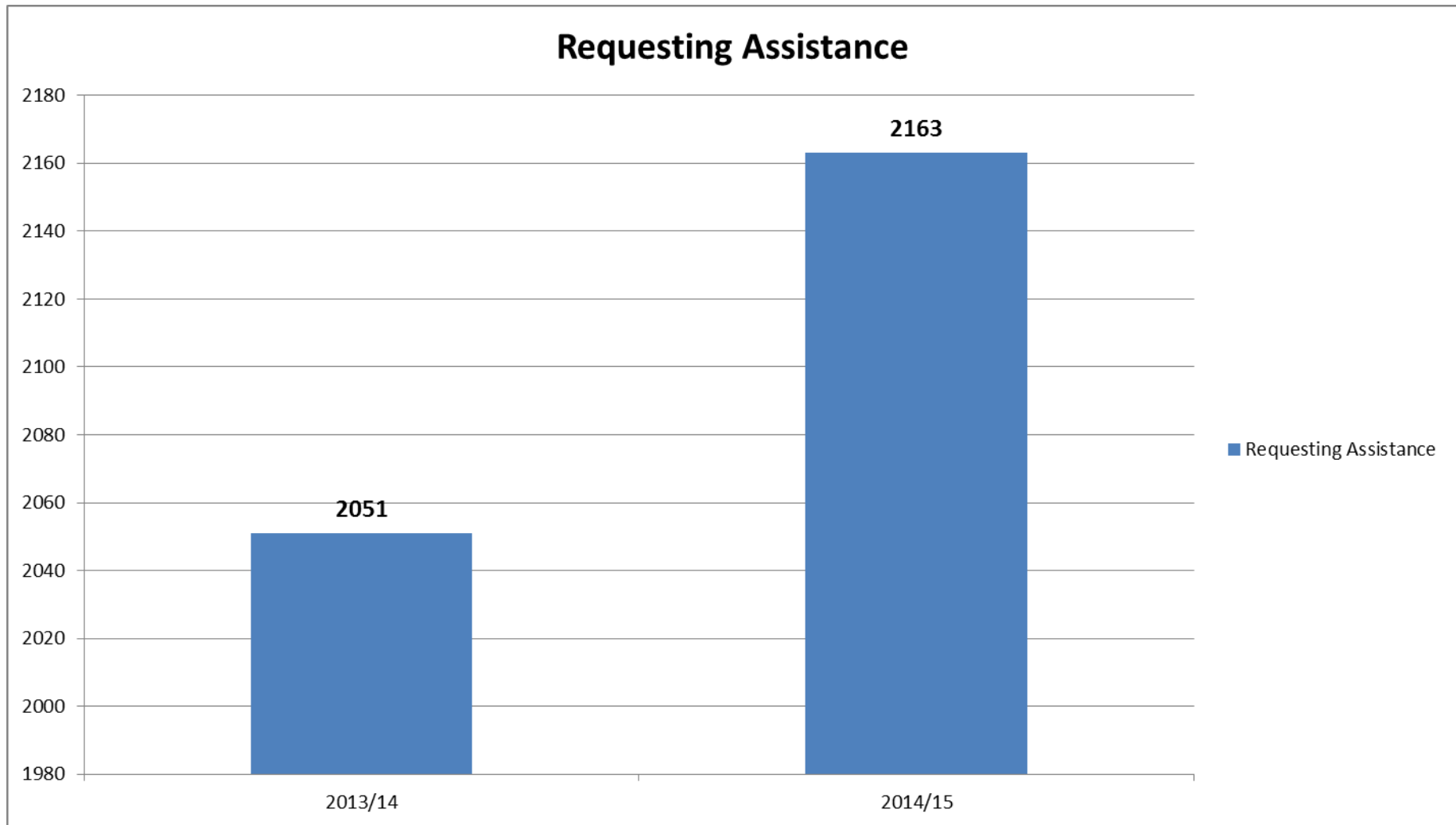
No

## **8. Is this a “key decision”?**

No

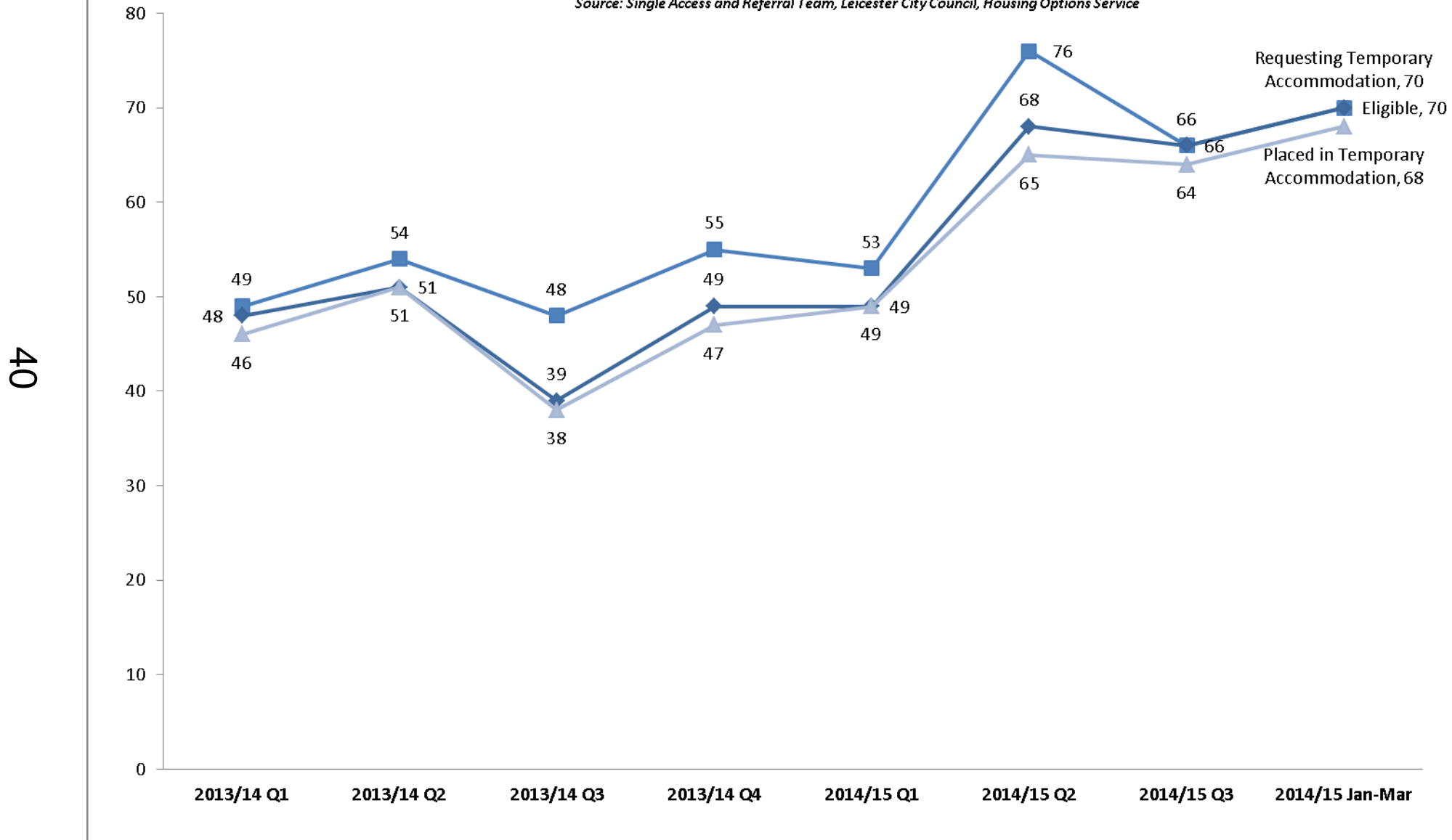
**Appendix 1: The number of people who came to Housing Options saying they faced homelessness**

39



## Appendix 2: Homelessness: Family Households 1st April 2013- 31st March 2015

*Source: Single Access and Referral Team, Leicester City Council, Housing Options Service*



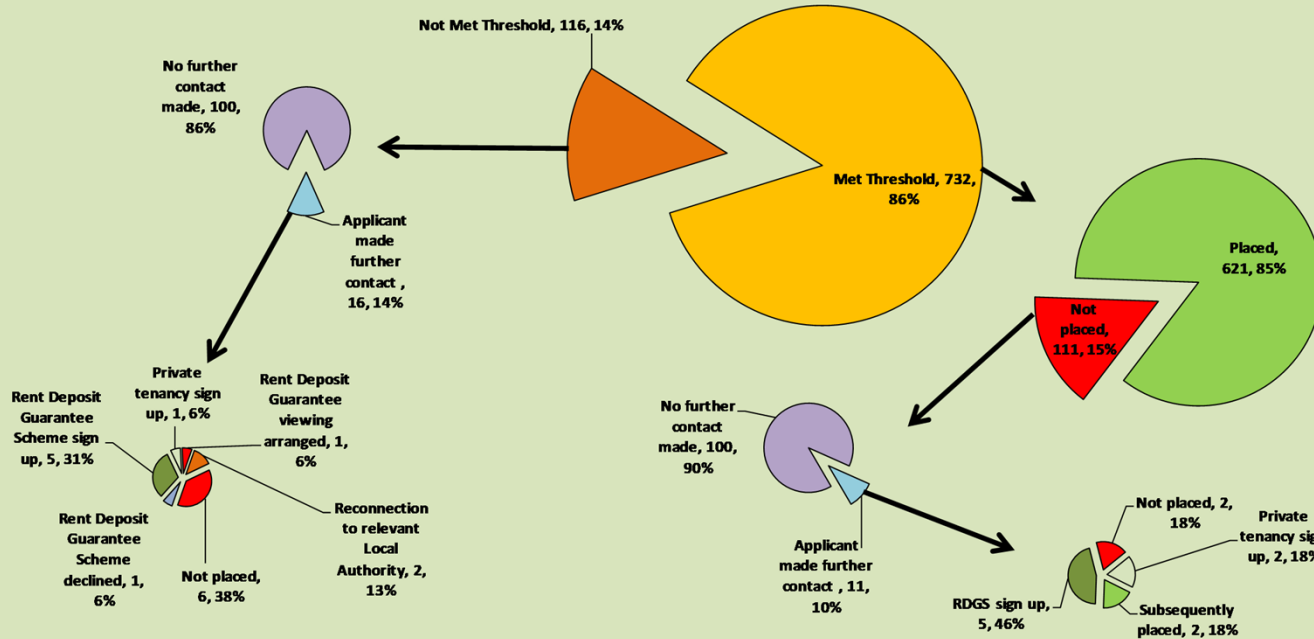
40

# Singles, Couples & Others Requesting Temporary Accommodation From 01/04/2014 to 31/03/2015:

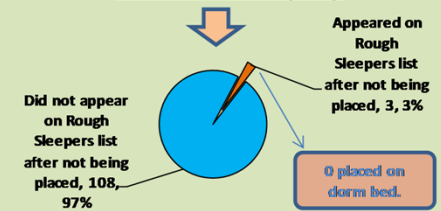
Version 2: 11/05/2015, Author: ZM, Source: LCC Housing Options.

## Total: 848 Unique People Requesting Temporary Accommodation :

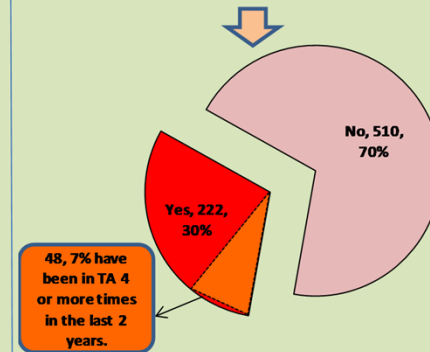
138 people requested TA in 2 different Quarters.  
27 people requested TA in 3 different Quarters.  
2 people requested TA in all 4 Quarters.



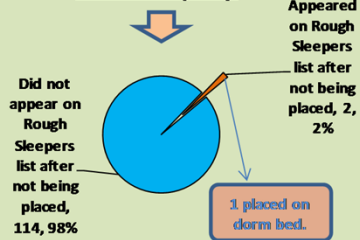
### Information On Those That Met Threshold & Were Not Placed (111):



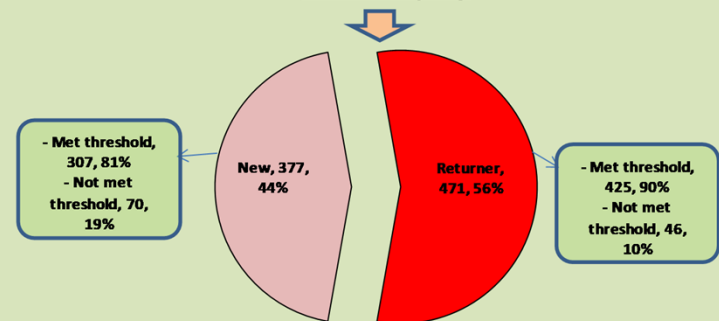
### Those That Met Threshold & Were Previously In Temporary Accommodation Within Last Two Years (732):



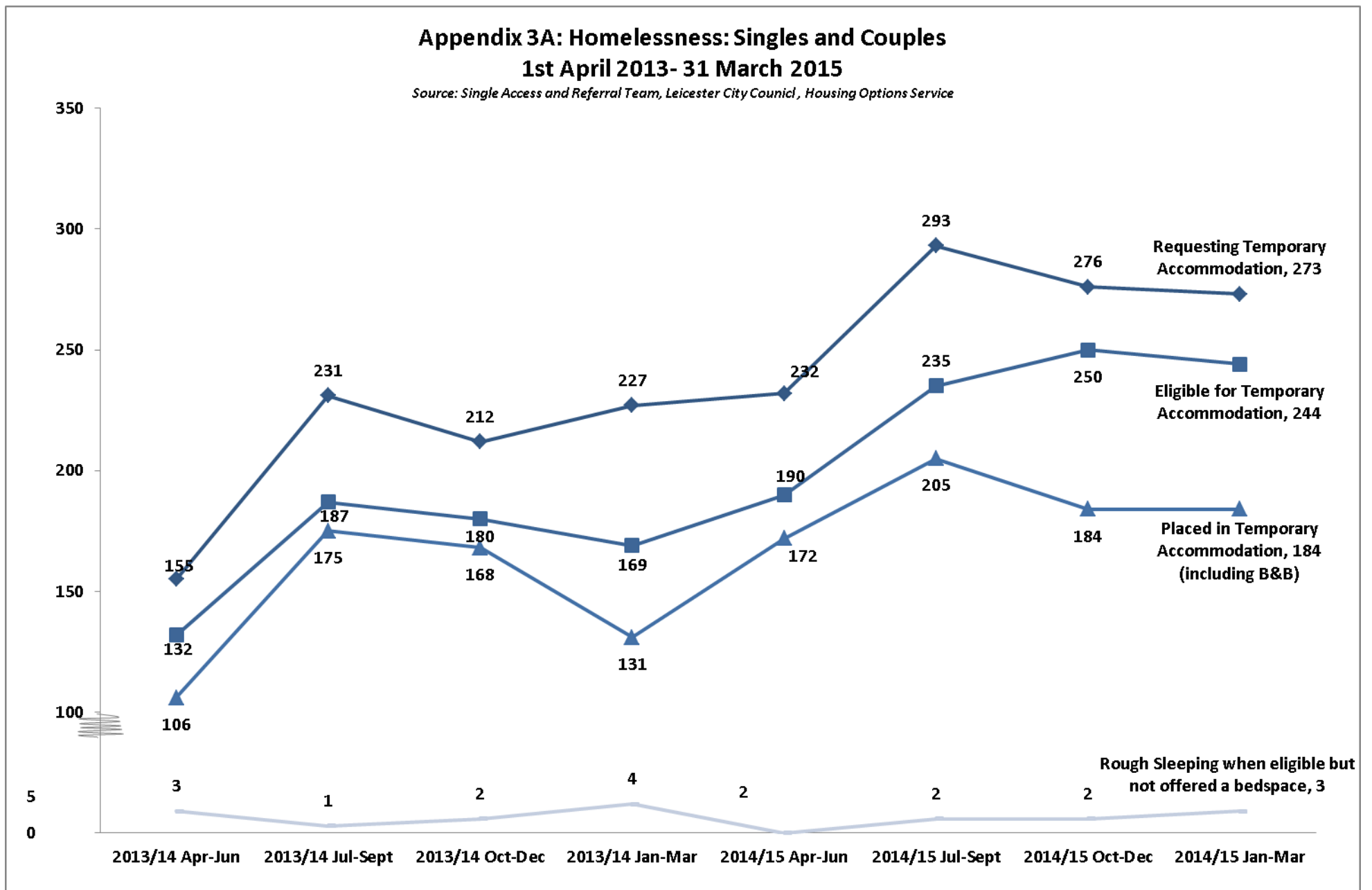
### Information On Those That Did Not Meet Threshold (116):



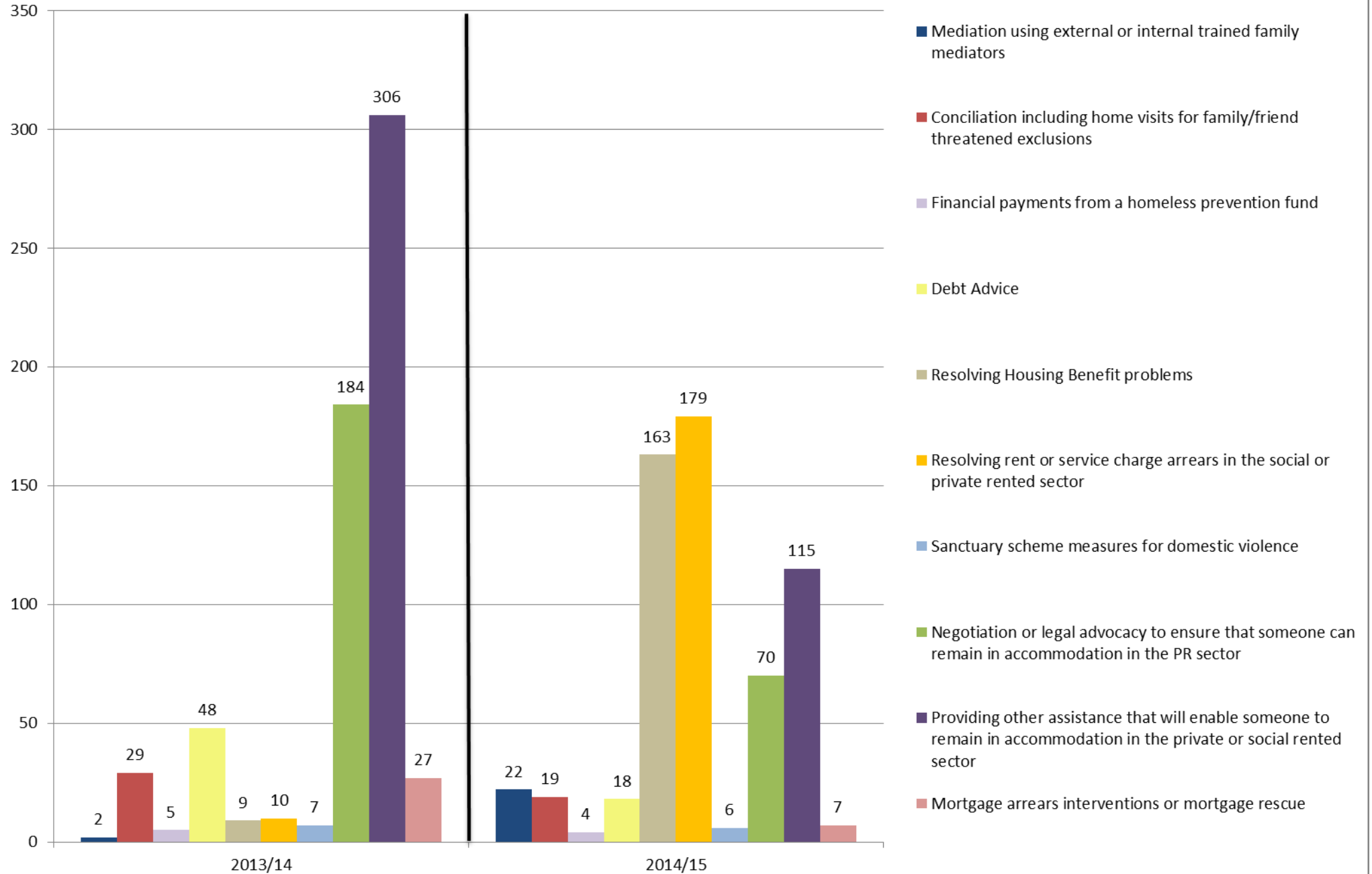
### All Unique People That Are New Presentations or Returners: (848):



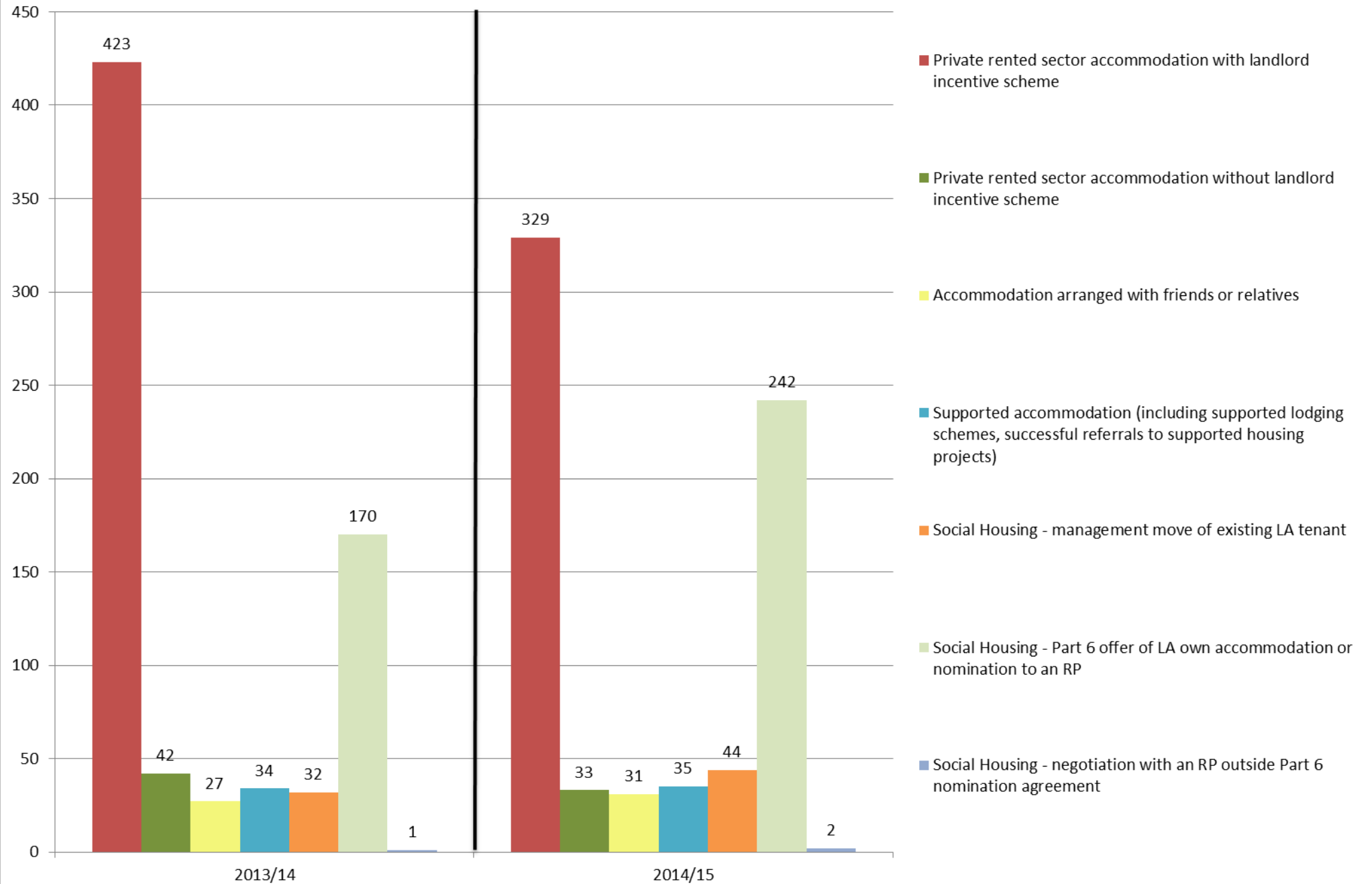
41



#### APPENDIX 4: Prevention (ALL households) by Sustainment comparing 2013/14 & 2014/15

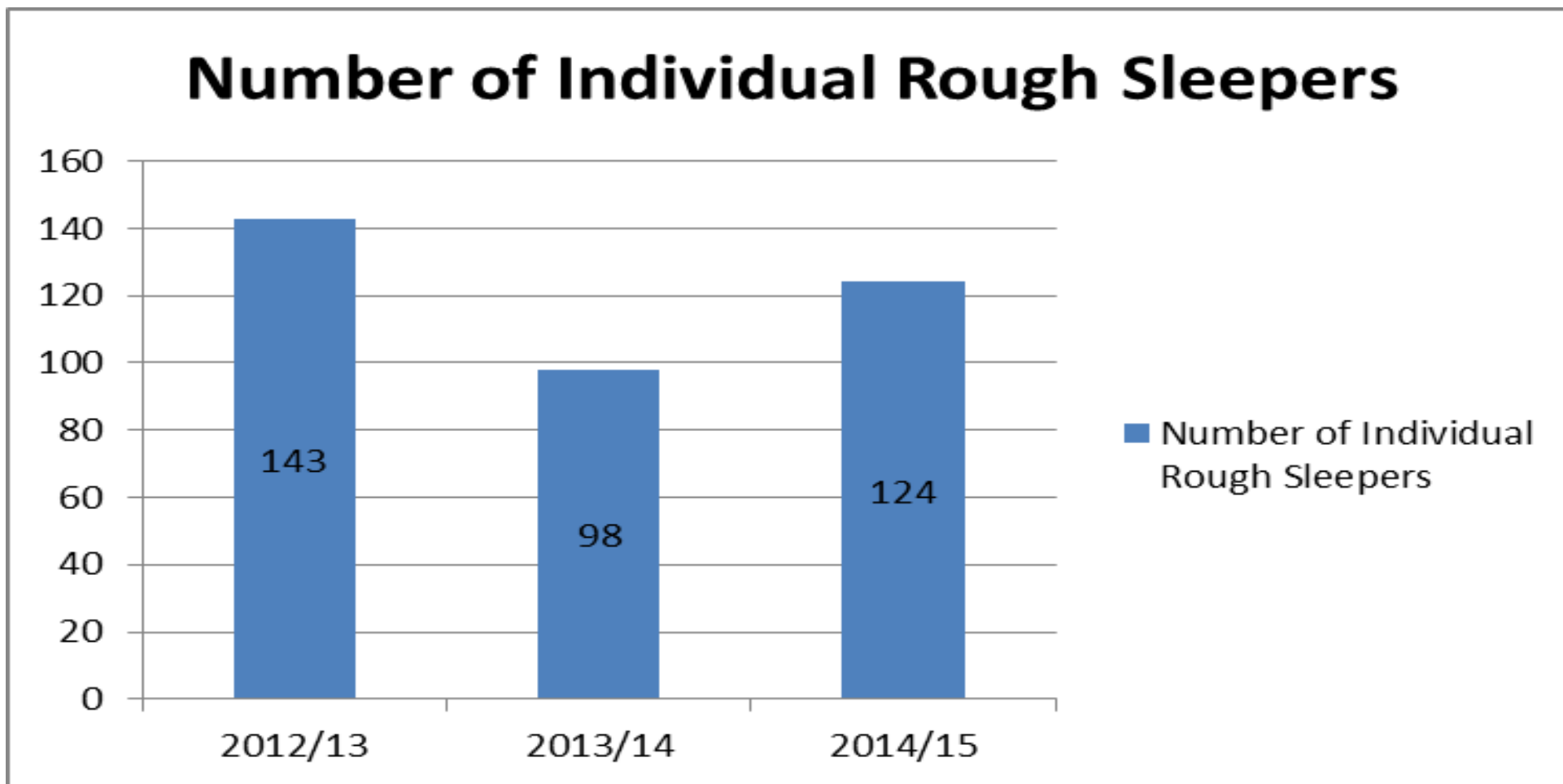


**Appendix 5: Prevention (ALL households) by Rehousing comparing 2013/14 to 2014/15**





45



## Appendix 7

### Current eligibility criteria for offer of emergency or temporary accommodation

Category	Duty arises from
a) Family, pregnant woman	Housing Act 1996
b) Vulnerable Adult	Housing Act 1996
c) Children leaving care	Children Act 1989 Referrals from Children's Division and Housing Act 1986.
d) High risk offenders	Criminal Justice Act 2003 Duty to co-operate with Police, Probation and Prison Services under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)
e) Ex-offenders leaving approved premises.	Criminal Justice Act 2003 Referrals from Probation Service.
f) Vulnerable adults and families	National Assistance Act 1948 Referrals from Adult Social Care Division.
g) Young offenders and ex-offenders	Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 referrals from Youth Offending Service.
h) Council tenants in an emergency.	Identified within Housing Division (payment made by HRA, most council tenants would be rehoused within council house stock).
i) People over 60.	Who do not fall within above category, identified by Housing Division.
j) People found rough sleeping or considered to be of immediate and high risk of rough sleeping.	Who do not fall within any other categories, identified by Housing Division and in support of No Second Night Out principles. Dormitory accommodation may be offered to people who are in this category, particularly in an emergency or where the person is not connected to Leicester( see note 3) or is ineligible for public funds
k) Other ex-offenders	Crime and Disorder Act 1998 General duty to prevent Crime and Disorder. Usually people approaching us within one year of leaving custodial sentence who do not fall within above categories a to i. Identified by Housing Division with Probation Service
l) People on identified drug and alcohol programmes or eligible for them and on waiting list	Who do not fall within categories a to i. Referrals from agencies identified by ASC Drug and Alcohol Services

## Notes

1. Categories a: and b: are homelessness duties.  
Categories c: to g: may be regarded as arising directly from other council statutory duties.  
Categories h: to l: support other high council priorities.
2. Access to emergency or temporary single homeless accommodation is primarily for those applicants that have had a settled address in the City of Leicester for the last 6 out of 12 months immediately prior to presentation (rough sleeping will not count towards this connection) or if the applicant has always been connected to Leicester but has been in prison/institution away from the City and is now homeless immediately post release/discharge.(exceptions to this policy will apply where there is a statutory homeless duty.)
3. The Council may refuse to provide a bed space when there are no vacancies and there is no statutory duty to do so. Advice will be given. Where there is a duty and there are no suitable hostel bed spaces, other temporary accommodation will be offered.
4. The Council imposes sanctions on homelessness service users who fail to comply with accommodation and other agreements (e.g. failure to comply with rent payments or arrears agreements, threatening behaviour etc.) These sanctions can include the need to meet specified requirements to gain re-entry to hostels.

Supply and demand for temporary accommodation for single people

Demand

		No	%
A	Single people asking for temporary accommodation	848	
B	Of which met eligibility criteria	732	86% of A
C	Those meeting Category J criteria (rough sleeping or risk of rough sleeping)	271	32% of A and 37% of B

Placed

D	All Placed	621	85% of B
E	Category J placed	206	33% of all placed D and 76% of those meeting Category J criteria (C above).

Outcome for rough sleeping

Number who rough slept after asking for temporary accommodation which we did not supply			
F	• Because met the threshold but no vacancy	3	
G	• Because did not meet threshold	2	







HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16			
MEETING DATE	MEETING ITEMS	LEAD OFFICER	ACTION AGREED
<p><b>8<sup>th</sup> September 2015</b></p> <p>Agenda Meeting : 18<sup>th</sup> August</p> <p>Papers to be submitted on 25<sup>th</sup> August</p>	<p>Area Managers Briefing – Braunstone Area</p> <p>Housing Voids Progress report</p> <p>Impact of required rent reduction on HRA</p> <p>Housing Transformation Project</p> <p>Monitoring Homelessness strategy (12 months)</p>	<p>Ellen Watts</p> <p>Vijay Desor</p> <p>Ann Branson (verbal)</p> <p>Charlotte McGraw</p> <p>Martin Clewlow</p> <p>Vijay Desor</p>	<p>Powerpoint Presentation (agree with Ann)</p>
<p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> November 2015</b></p> <p>Agenda Meeting : 14<sup>th</sup> October</p> <p>Papers to be submitted on 20<sup>th</sup> October</p>	<p>G&amp;T 6 month update</p> <p>Area managers' briefing</p> <p>Rent arrears – Quarterly Report</p> <p>Mandatory Direct Debits</p> <p>Council tenants and universal credit</p> <p>Individual meters for district heating tenants</p> <p>Tenant and leaseholder heating charges</p> <p>Bringing empty homes back into use</p> <p>Evictions – Housing 2014/15</p>	<p>Ian Craig</p> <p>Various</p> <p>Vijay Desor</p> <p>Vijay Desor</p> <p>Vijay Desor</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Simon Nicholls/Carole Thompson</p> <p>Vijay Desor/Mike Watson</p>	<p>Site visits to be arranged for members before the commission meeting</p>
<p><b>14<sup>th</sup> December 2015</b></p> <p>Agenda Meeting : 24<sup>th</sup> November</p> <p>Papers to be submitted on 1<sup>st</sup> December</p>	<p>Area managers' briefing</p> <p>HRA budgets – 2016/17</p> <p>Tenancy management improvement project</p> <p>Update on Communal Cleaning Action Plan</p>	<p>Various</p> <p>Ann Branson</p> <p>Suki Supria</p> <p>Suki Supria</p>	



<p><b>8th February 2016</b></p> <p><b>Agenda Meeting : 20th January 2016</b></p> <p><b>Papers to be submitted on 26th January 2016</b></p>	<p>Area managers' briefing</p> <p>Empty Homes Strategy</p> <p>Housing repairs improvement programme</p>	<p>Various</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Chris Burgin</p>	
<p><b>18th April 2016</b></p> <p><b>Agenda Meeting : 23rd March 2016</b></p> <p><b>Papers to be submitted on 5th April 2016</b></p>	<p>Housing Voids Progress report</p> <p>Rent arrears – Quarterly Report</p> <p>Area managers' briefing</p>	<p>Vijay Desor</p> <p>Vijay Desor</p> <p>Various</p>	