

HOMELESSNESS

REVIEW 2014



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SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background

The Homelessness Review 2014 forms part of Crawley Borough Council's response to its statutory duties under the Homelessness Act 2002, whereby all local authorities are required to conduct a review of homelessness in their district, then develop and publish a strategy setting out how services will be delivered to tackle homelessness.

1.2 Aim

The Review aims to be a comprehensive assessment of homelessness and the services available to prevent and tackle homelessness in the Crawley area. It seeks to learn from the improvement measures put in place over the past five years, and guide and inform the Homelessness Strategy 2014 – 2019.

The review assesses the factors leading to homelessness and identifies key client groups and issues. Trends in homelessness are identified and assessed. It also maps the services available to deal with homelessness and identifies gaps that exist.

1.3 Key issues

The overriding issue affecting housing and homelessness in Crawley continues to be affordability and the availability of housing. A combination of high market prices (driven by demand) and low median wages continues to leave many people unable to access independent accommodation.

The infrastructure of housing in the town means that there are few two bed properties (only 22.8% of the total housing stock), however over half of the households in Crawley (59.5%) are made up of only one or two people (who are likely to want a two bed property). Therefore the supply of housing is not able to meet the demand placed upon it. This can lead to young people remaining at home for longer (as they cannot access affordable independent housing), increasing the pressure on families, and leading to relationship and family breakdown, this in turn generates homelessness. Downsizing as a result of welfare reforms (such as the spare room subsidy) is also increasing the demand on two bed properties.

A variety of services exist for homeless people in the town, from initial advice to accommodation and intensive support to enable independent living. However, some client groups are not sufficiently supported and the inaccessible housing market makes it difficult for vulnerable people to secure appropriate accommodation.

A range of measures can help to address and prevent homelessness, including improved access to private rented accommodation, help to stabilise families, advice and support for vulnerable groups, especially young people, and increased availability of short term accommodation.

1.4 Trends

Overall, the financial and housing market issues which affect the town mean that homelessness is not likely to significantly improve in the short term. However, the effects of unaffordable accommodation can be mitigated (to a certain extent) by ensuring access to a range of services and advice which can prevent and reduce homelessness.

Local organisations are capable of contributing greatly to the work on homelessness, and the council needs to continue to take a strategic role in directing resources and enabling projects that will assist those in greatest need.

SECTION 2: CONTEXT & LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

2.1 Legal Requirements

As the local authority, Crawley Borough Council has a responsibility to consider approaches from people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and our Housing Options Team deals with these enquiries. Over 2000 people approached the council for advice in 2013, 391 of which went on to make a formal homelessness application; 181 of those applications were accepted.

The council has a responsibility to find accommodation for households who can demonstrate that they:

- Are eligible for assistance, **and**
- Are homeless, or threatened with homelessness within 28 days, **and**
- Are in priority need, **and**
- Are homeless through no fault of their own, **and**
- Have a local connection

2.2 National Agenda

In August 2012, two papers were published that highlighted the importance of homeless at a national level: "Vision to end Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out Nationwide" and "Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness". The latter document listed the following ten challenges for local authorities to adopt to help prevent homelessness:

- Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services.
- Actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.
- Offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients.
- Adopt a 'No Second Night Out' model or an effective local alternative.
- Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support.
- Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords.
- Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
- Have a homelessness Strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs.
- Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
- Not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency, and then for no longer than six weeks.

The development of our strategy has also been informed with due regard for the other national priorities for tackling homelessness, including:

- Increasing the percentage of households prevented from becoming homeless.
- Welfare reform; to make work pay and to close the gap between social housing and private rented sector tenants.
- Breaking the link between homelessness and securing social housing by introducing the power to discharge a homeless duty into the private rented sector.
- The Health Work and Wellbeing programme aimed at the working age population, aims to prevent people becoming injured or ill, keep them healthy in work, and provide accessible support to enable them to remain in or return to work more quickly.

2.3 Local Context

Crawley is a compact new town with a strong economy and a population of 106,597 of which 20.2% come from Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) groups (Source: Census 2011).

There are approximately 43,000 dwellings in Crawley. 60% of the town's housing is owner-occupied, 25% is affordable (social or affordable rent or part ownership) and 15% is privately rented. Almost 97% of the affordable housing stock is rented, with the remainder being part-owned (shared-ownership).

There is a mismatch between the size of homes available in the town and the size of households, as demonstrated in Figure 1. Over half of the homes in Crawley have three bedrooms or more (64.1%), and yet the majority of households (59.5%) comprise of only one or two people (who require smaller properties). Terraced housing makes up the largest share of the stock (42%), with the rest comprising flats (23%), semi-detached (21%) and detached housing (14%).

Table 1: Size of households in Crawley Borough compared to property size.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Households (%)	28.4	31.1	17	15.2	5.6	2.1	0.4	0.2
Bedrooms (%)	12.9	22.8	48.5	13.1	2.5	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: Census 2011

In May 2012 the unemployment rate stood at 6.6%, however a significant proportion of the work available locally is insecure, low paid or seasonal due to the impact of Gatwick Airport on the local labour market. Public sector workers also experience difficulties with comparatively low incomes in comparison to others within the South East. This affects people's ability to access the housing market.

Crawley is affected by the high house prices which remain a feature of the housing market in the South East. The ratio of house prices against earnings continues to rise, leaving many people without the means to purchase a property. As a result, the private rented sector is growing and in 2011 formed 15% (Source: Census 2011) of the housing market within Crawley (compared with 6% in 2001). This, coupled with a shortage of smaller properties, has driven up rent levels so that entry level accommodation that was around £120 per week in January 2008 was £158 per week in December 2013 (Source: www.zoopla.com).

The impact of affordability issues on family life means that children are often staying longer in the parental home, and many of the households who approach the council as homeless are having to move out of their parental home and cannot afford to access housing on the open market. Parental eviction is the second most common reason given for homelessness in Crawley. The most common reason being the loss of rented accommodation, and this could be due to the individual's inability to pay the rent and being served notice by the landlord.

SECTION 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Elements

The review consists of four main elements:

Analysis of Statistics

Crawley Borough Council collects information quarterly about those who make a homeless application and these figures were assessed to look at the main issues affecting homeless people in the borough. Statistics collated by other organisations were also gathered and used for the purpose of helping to identify relevant trends within the borough.

User satisfaction surveys

A questionnaire was sent to all the households who had applied to the Council as homeless in 2013, to assess the perceived quality of the service and gather qualitative information about people's experiences of homelessness.

Liaison with other organisations

Information was gathered from other organisations that deal with homeless people or people threatened with homelessness, either as their main function or as part of wider work. This helped to build a picture of service provision as a whole within Crawley, and the resources available for tackling homelessness within the borough.

Member of the public surveys

A simple one question survey was placed on the council's website to assess the public's perception of homelessness in the town.

SECTION 4: Achievements since the Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013

4.1 Prevention of Homelessness

- ✓ The Crawley Deposit Service has been re-branded and has facilitated 1707 tenancies to date and 1252 tenancies since 2008
- ✓ We responded to over 4,428 approaches for housing advice during 2012/2013 and the homeless prevention agenda focus has achieved over 1665 homeless preventions since 2008
- ✓ We reconfigured our Housing Options Service to ensure customers receive specialist advice from back office staff at first contact whether the enquiry is made in person, by email or by telephone
- ✓ We have provided Discretionary Housing Payments to households totalling over £205,000.00 so far in 2013/14 to prevent homelessness for over 435 families
- ✓ The Homeless Prevention Fund has facilitated 30 households to remain in their homes rather than have to make a homeless application to the council
- ✓ A specialist service for young people and their families across West Sussex was launched in 2011 with partner agencies following a successful pilot scheme in Crawley and has prevented homelessness for over 220 young people to date.
- ✓ 53 households have been assisted to remain in their homes by the council's 'Safe at Home Scheme'
- ✓ A jointly funded post with CAB delivering Debt Advice and Mortgage Rescue Scheme Services has helped 132 households remain in their home
- ✓ A jointly funded post with the probation service continues to provide tailored housing options for ex-offenders and those people still in detention and secured settled accommodation for over 24 households in 2013 alone

4.2 Supply of Accommodation

- ✓ Crawley Homes have developed a Private Sector Leasing (PSL) Scheme providing properties as temporary accommodation and have acquired nine properties into the scheme to date
- ✓ Three hostels have been demolished and rebuilt into self contained temporary accommodation units in partnership with a local Housing Association
- ✓ A full time Private Sector Lettings Officer to increase the supply of private rented accommodation has been recruited
- ✓ Property acquisitions in partnership with local housing associations to increase the temporary accommodation portfolio are actively being sought.

4.3 Support

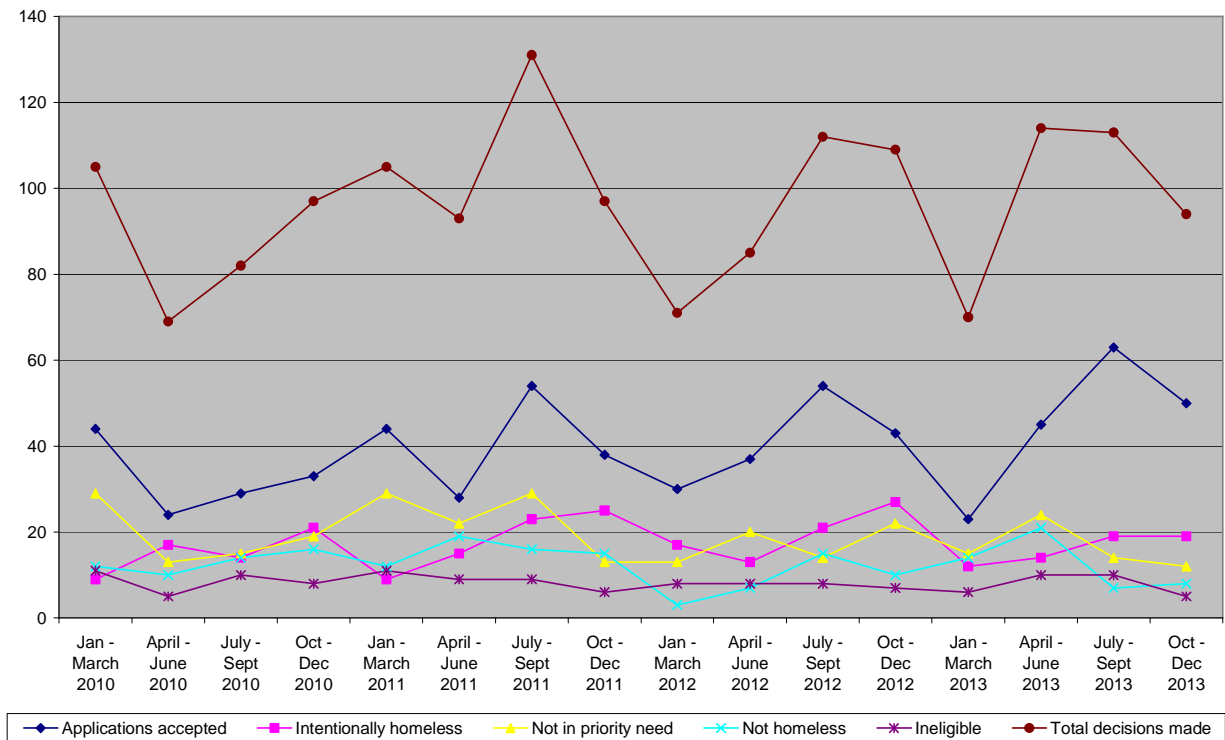
- ✓ A specialist floating support service in partnership with a local housing association to provide support to households in temporary accommodation and sustain tenancies in Crawley Deposit Service properties has been commissioned
- ✓ The Crawley Deposit Service has been reconfigured to develop tenancy sustainment
- ✓ The Credit Union has been established and located in the Town Hall to provide low cost affordable banking facilities and financial advice to vulnerable households to enable their financial empowerment and self sufficiency

SECTION 5: PROFILE OF HOMELESSNESS

5.1 Extent of Homelessness

Data from monitoring homelessness applications was analysed to identify trends. Figure 1 shows that the number of applications to the Council peaked in July to September of 2011 however has been fluctuating since, with between approximately 70 and 115 applications every quarter, and a mean of 96.7. The number of households in respect of whom the council has accepted the full homelessness duty has also fluctuated over the last four years, but on the whole is increasing, with a mean of 39.9 per quarter.

Figure 1: Comparison of applications received from 2010 – 2011 to 2013 – 2014.



Source: Crawley Borough Council

For the last four years decisions that applicants were deemed intentionally homeless (and therefore not entitled to temporary accommodation) peaked during October to December each year. The reasons for this are not known, and it is recommended that this be subject to further monitoring.

An outcome of the Homelessness Review carried out in 2007 was the recognition that BME communities were disproportionately affected by homelessness in Crawley. Table 2 shows how the number of BME homeless applicants has changed, and that a greater understanding of why certain ethnicities appear to be disproportionately affected is required.

Table 2: Homeless applicants by ethnicity compared to percentage of population.

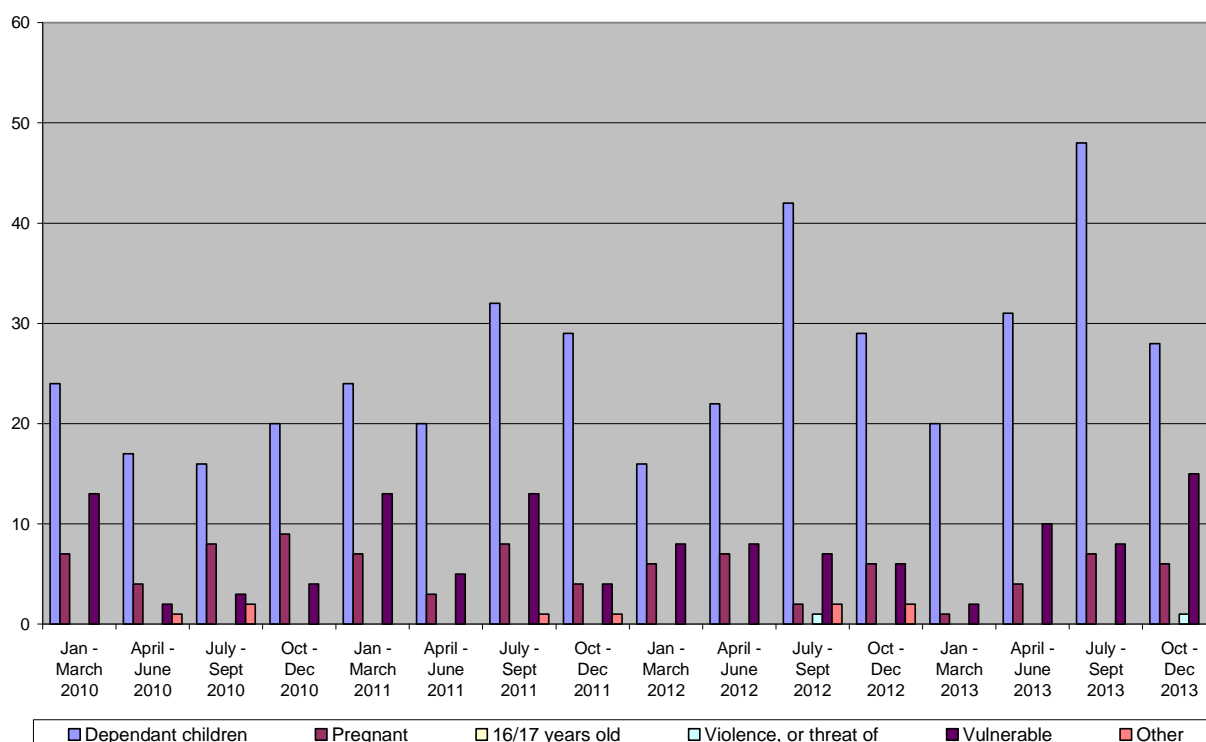
	White	Black (British, African, Caribbean, other)	Asian (Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi)	Mixed /multiple	Other Ethnic Origin	Unknown/ not given
Census 2011 population (for Crawley)	79.8%	3.3%	13%	2.9%	1%	0%
Applicants in 2013	57%	10%	9%	1%	3%	20%
Applicants in 2012	58%	12%	7%	1%	3%	19%
Applicants in 2011	63%	12%	12%	1%	5%	7%

Source: Crawley Borough Council

5.2 Client Groups

One of the considerations for whether a household is eligible for emergency accommodation and a secure home is if they are considered to be in a “priority need” category. The key “priority need” categories are shown in figure 2 below. Figure 2 demonstrates that households with dependent children (families) continue to form the most significant proportion of acceptances.

Figure 2: Applicants by priority need.



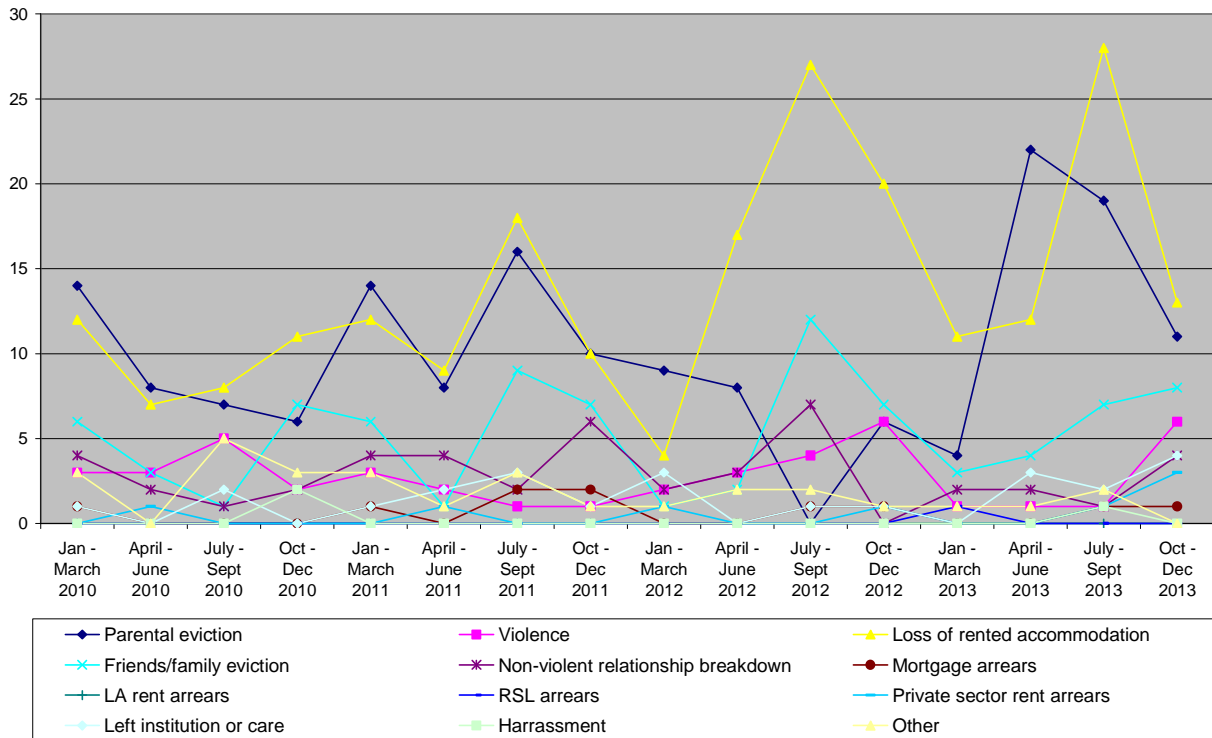
Source: Crawley Borough Council

5.3 Reasons for Homelessness

5.3.1 Monitoring Data

Information is recorded regarding the primary reason for homelessness from those who have been accepted for assistance by the council. Figure 3 shows that the two most prevalent reasons given are due to loss of rented accommodation and parental eviction, both of which are increasing. Eviction by friends and family is also on the rise.

Figure 3: Reason for homelessness.



Source: Crawley Borough Council

5.3.2 Information from Local Organisations

Local organisations responding to a questionnaire on homeless services identified a wide range of reasons for housing and homelessness issues in Crawley, including eviction (and parental eviction), rent arrears, and relationship breakdown. Background issues such as mental health, substance misuse and domestic violence and abuse were raised as key issues in conjunction with those reasons given above.

5.4 Housing Register

The council maintains a register of housing need for Crawley. In January 2014, there were over 2000 households on the Housing Register, a breakdown of demand by property size and banding is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Housing Register demand by Band and Property Size.

	Band A+	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Total
Studio/one bedroom	1	99	165	159	265	689
Two bedroom only	1	156	348	24	195	724
Two or three bedroom	0	18	138	15	102	273
Three bedroom only	0	18	120	14	69	221
Three bed + dining room or four bedroom	0	23	57	4	21	105
Sheltered/retirement (applicants over 60)	3	140	221	12	26	402
Total	5	454	1049	228	678	2,414

Source: Crawley Borough Council

The revised Allocations Policy that came into force on 16th December 2013 resulted in no new band C or D applications being accepted, and existing households in bands C and D being contacted and advised that they are unlikely to be successful in bidding for a property and should seek accommodation by other means (such as the private rented sector).

The number of properties available for letting by Crawley Homes to people on the housing register has not kept pace with demand. During 2013, 1301 new applications were made however only 215 properties became available for letting on secure tenancies through Crawley Homes, showing that demand is far greater than the supply in Crawley. Of the 215 properties that were let:

- 26 (12.1%) were let to people who had been assessed as statutorily homeless by the authority.
- 61 (28.4%) were one bedroom properties, 74 (34.4%) were two bedroom properties, and 80 (37.2%) were three bedroom properties.
- 91 (42.3%) were flats/maisonettes, and 118 (54.9%) were houses/bungalows.
- 14% was to people in full time work, 19% was to people working full time, 12% to people claiming job seekers benefits, 28% was to people not seeking work, 17% was to people on long term sick/disability, and 11% was to people classified as other.

SECTION 6: FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO HOMELESSNESS

6.1 Income levels and Employment

Crawley is the largest economic centre in the northern West Sussex sub-region, and also the largest economic area of the Gatwick Diamond. Employment levels are high in Crawley with total employment in the town being around 94,000, of which approximately 30,000 are net in-commuters. 70% of working age people, who live in Crawley, also work in Crawley. While Crawley salaries are among the highest of the Gatwick Diamond, many residents are employed in low skilled industries; with only 11% of working age residents in Crawley working in managerial and professional occupations; and on average people who travel into Crawley for work earn more than local people. Around 10% of the working residents have no qualifications, and many firms are concerned about skill shortages.

The economy of Crawley is buoyed by the presence of Gatwick Airport. 75% of Crawley's employment is in distribution, hotels, transport, communications, banking and finance of which Gatwick Airport accounts for approximately 25,000 jobs directly. Crawley is the main place of residence for airport employees with 26.9% of the workforce living in Crawley.

Mean average incomes in Crawley have risen from £32,479 in 2008, to £34,017 in 2013 (source: Annual Survey of Earnings and Hours 2013), and are higher than the surrounding areas. However, many employees are earning below this average, and the median average income in Crawley has risen from £25,000 in 2008 to £27,910 in 2013 (source: Annual Survey of Earnings and Hours 2013).

6.2 Rent Levels and Housing Benefit

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is based on the number of bedrooms needed and not how much the rent is. Entry rent levels in the private rented sector have gone from around £120 per week in January 2008 to £158 per week in December 2013 (source: www.zoopla.com). Figures from the Department of Work and Pensions show that in August 2013, the council had 9,263 people in receipt of housing benefit and of these the average weekly award was £101.37. This is £56.63 short of the entry rent levels in the private rented sector in Crawley. This equates to a deficit of £2,944.76 over the course of a year, making the private rented sector difficult to access for those solely dependant on housing benefit. The effect is such that more people are not able to afford to live independently, and will either have to pay the difference themselves, move into shared housing, or apply to the Council as homeless.

An efficient housing benefit system is essential for low income households to secure and maintain a tenancy. Promptly paid housing benefit is not just important to pay rent and avoid arrears, but the reputation of a good Housing Benefit system can help more people access tenancies as landlords become more willing to let to people in receipt of benefit. It is estimated that there are around 6,214 households living in the private rented sector in Crawley. This equates to 15% of households in the borough. Within these households, 2,656 people are in receipt of housing benefits and therefore it is important that housing benefit payments are made on time.

The Housing Benefit team at Crawley Borough Council has been improving its performance and the time taken to process new claims fell from just under 19 days in 2004 to an average of 12.5 days in 2013 (with the averages for 2011 and 2012 being under 11 days).

6.3 Landlord Perception

Many private landlords and letting agencies continue to refuse to accept tenants on Housing Benefit, with some landlords now choosing to serve notice on existing tenants in receipt of housing benefit. Work continues to be undertaken to develop links with private sector landlords to improve relations with the council and assist more people to access private rented accommodation.

The Crawley Deposit Service was set up in 2003 (formally known as the Rent Deposit Scheme) and offers private landlords a bond in place of a cash deposit, in order to help people who are in receipt of benefits or on low incomes secure accommodation in the private rented sector. Table 4 shows how many tenancies have been assisted through this service.

One of the key benefits of using this service is the requirement to open a savings account with West Sussex Credit Union. Once the equivalent of the deposit has been saved for, the money is paid to the landlord (as a deposit) and the council no longer have any involvement with the tenancy. At the end of the tenancy the tenants then have a sum of money available to use as a deposit to remain within the private rented sector and move to an alternative private rented property independently of the council's scheme.

Table 4: Tenancies assisted through the Crawley Deposit Service

Year	Number of tenancies
2010 – 2011	178
2011 – 2012	144
2012 – 2013	168
2013 – 2014 (not including Jan, Feb and Mar 2014)	122

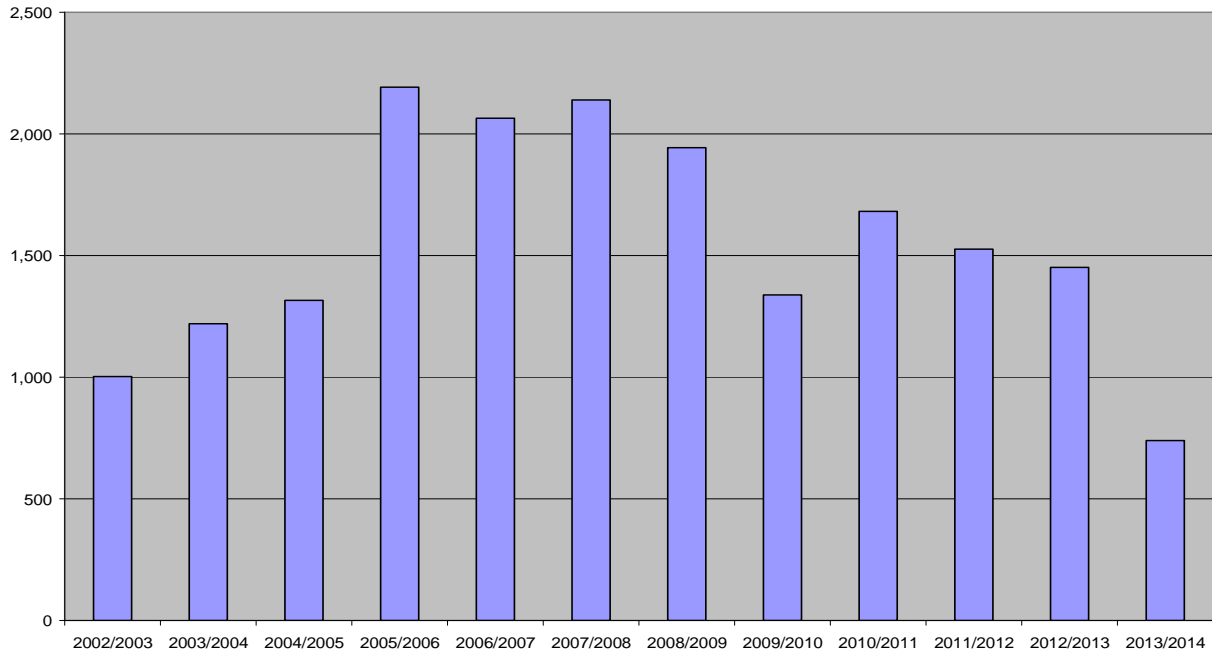
Source: Crawley Borough Council

The private rented sector is an important resource in terms of meeting the demand for housing within the borough, but also in being able to discharge the full homelessness duty into. That is why work is being undertaken to improve the relationship with local landlords in order to increase access to this sector.

6.4 Changing Demographic

National insurance (NINo) applications provide insight into the migration of people into the UK.

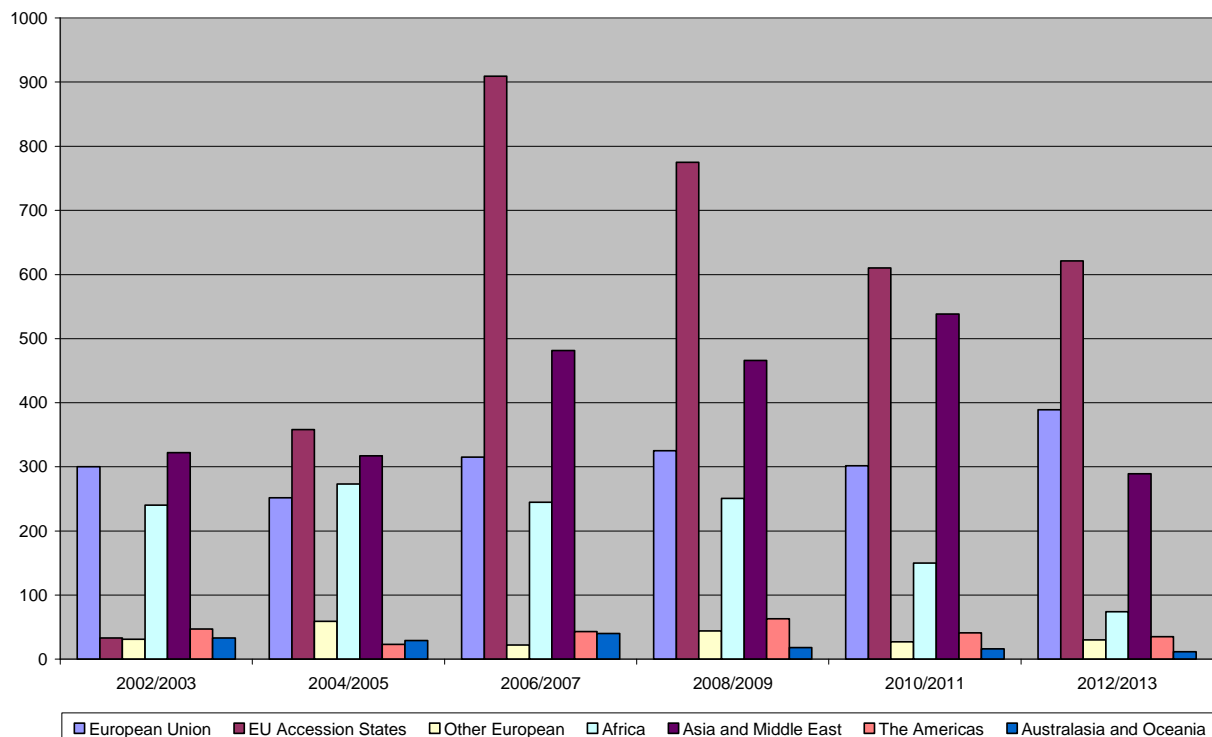
Figure 4: NINo registrations for adult overseas nationals in Crawley



Source: Department for Work and Pensions

Figure 4 shows that the number of NINo registrations in Crawley peaked in the year 2005/2006, however decreased from 2008/2009 onwards (likely to be due to the impact of the financial crisis). Note: 2013/2014 does not contain data for quarter four (January, February and March 2014).

Figure 5: NINo registrations for adult overseas nationals in Crawley by world region



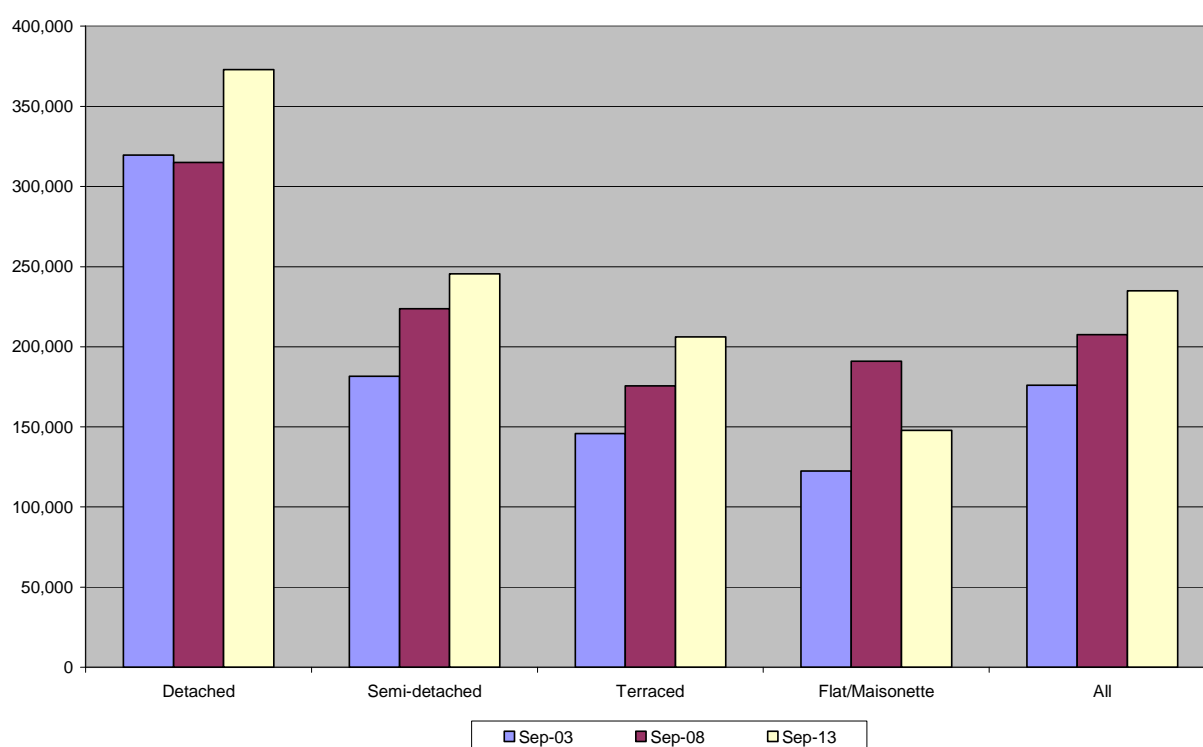
Source: Department for Work and Pensions

Although the total number of overseas nationals migrating into Crawley is decreasing (as seen in figure 4), figure 5 shows that the number of migrants from EU accession countries remains significant, as does the number of people from within the European Union and Asia and the Middle East. This continues to put pressure on the housing available in Crawley.

6.5 House Prices

Crawley benefits from slightly lower than average house prices than many of the surrounding areas; however this must be seen in the context of the high prices which affect most of the South East of England. In addition the low proportion of smaller homes impacts on the ability of newly forming households to access the market. Figure 6 shows how average local house prices have changed since 2003.

Figure 6: Average residential property prices in Crawley, 2003, 2008 & 2013



Source: www.Home.co.uk

On average this represents an increase of £58,803 over the course of 10 years, and £27,215 between 2008 and 2013. However incomes have not risen at the same rate, with mean and median incomes only rising between £1,500 and £3,000 from 2008 to 2013.

According to data from the Department of Communities and Local Government (taken from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings), the ratio of median house prices to median earnings has grown over the last decade (2001 – 2011) from 4.47 to 6.65 in England, although the economic downturn has reduced this figure from a 2007 high of 7.23. At a South East regional level the affordability ratio also peaked in 2007 (8.45) but has since fallen to 7.98.

Therefore as house prices continue to rise in excess of income, the number of people who find themselves unable to access home ownership also increases. Table 5 shows the upper range of borrowing available based on a first time buyer household with one or two people earning the median income in Crawley. It is evident that without significant savings, a single person would not be able to access home ownership (given the average house prices in Figure 11), and that a couple on median incomes would have limited options available to them.

Table 5: Upper lending range (December 2013)

Household (Income)	Upper lending range
One Person (£27,910)	£90,700 to £126,000
Two People (£55,820)	£140,000 to £195,000

Source: www.moneysavingsexpert.com

The upper lending range given is based on a typical bank's criteria, which sees less 'risk' attributed to those in long term permanent employment, who are not in debt, and whose credit history is good. People who are self employed, who have changed jobs frequently, have significant levels of debt, or who have a poor credit history will find it more difficult to obtain a mortgage. Given the economic changes of the last five years and its impact on households, increasing numbers of people are finding themselves in situations that will affect their ability to access a mortgage.

Since 2002 the banks willingness to lend has changed dramatically, as demonstrated by Table 6. This reflects the financial crisis and the subsequent restrictions on lending introduced by the banks, as discussed above.

Table 6: Gross mortgage lending in the UK

Year	Total (£m)
2002	220,737
2003	277,342
2004	291,249
2005	288,280
2006	345,355
2007	362,758
2008	253,980
2009	143,825
2010	135,342
2011	141,290
2012	142,981

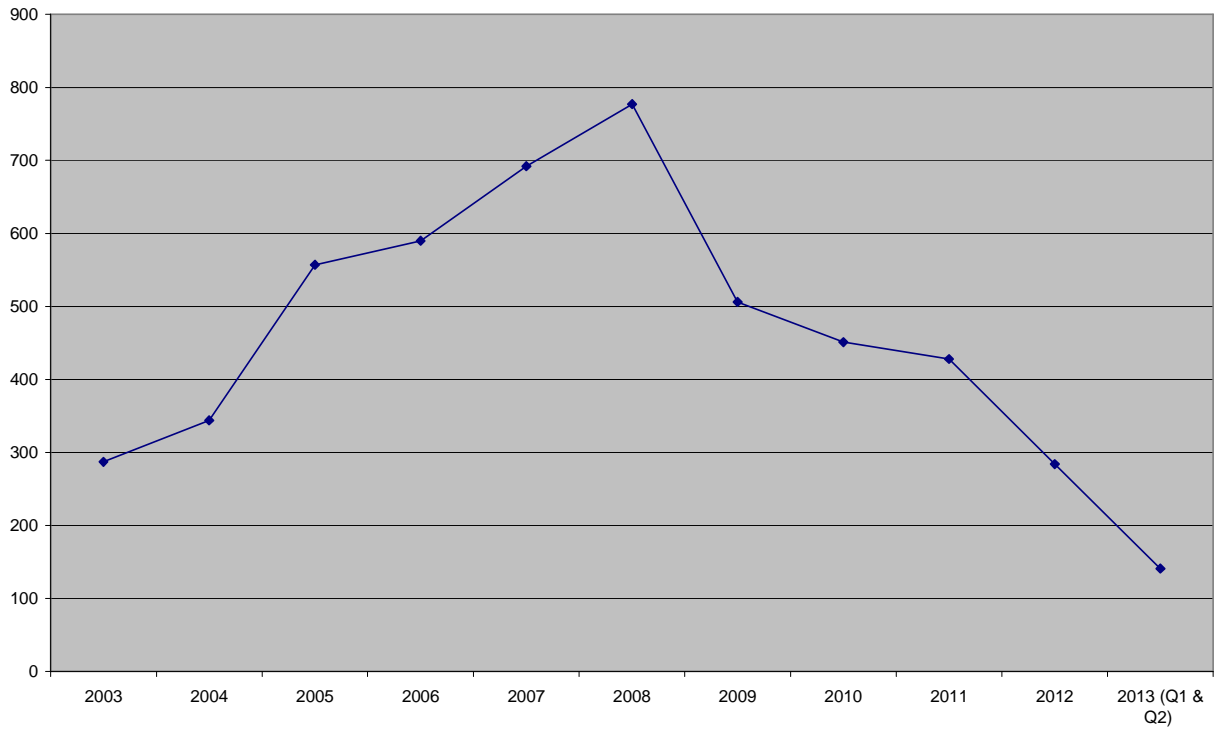
Source: Council of Mortgage Lenders

6.6 Interest Rates

Mortgage interest rates affect the ability to access and pay off a mortgage and are linked to the Bank of England's base rate. At its ten year peak in 2007 the base rate was in excess of 5.5%, but has remained at 0.5% since February 2009. This low base rate has resulted in attractive low interest rates. However, the rise in the base rate (and therefore interest rate) will result in a noticeable increase in monthly mortgage payments for many households, and could lead to an increase in payments defaulting, arrears, repossessions, and ultimately homelessness.

Figures collated by the Ministry of Justice show that the number of repossessions in Crawley (see Figure 7) steadily increased until it peaked in 2008, and declined steadily since. This tallies with the drop in interest rates on mortgages since the financial crisis, which would have reduced monthly mortgage payments and had the knock on effect of less people defaulting, going into arrears, and being subject to repossession.

Figure 7: Homes taken into possession in Crawley



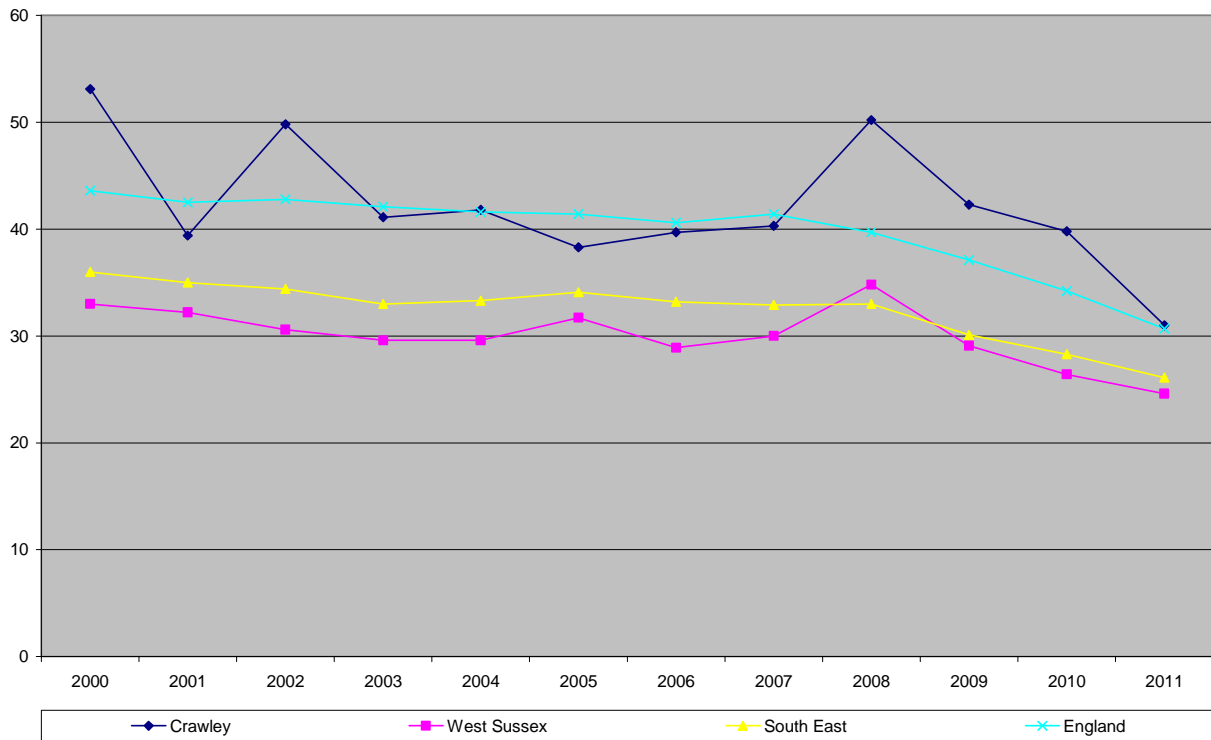
Source: Ministry of Justice

6.7 Teenage Pregnancy

Tackling and reducing teenage pregnancy can alleviate pressure on families, reduce homelessness, and alleviate the pressure on (and cost of) temporary accommodation and social housing.

Historically, teenage pregnancy has been higher in Crawley than in surrounding areas and remains so, however data published by the Office of National Statistics (see Figure 8) shows that the conception rate for under 18's in Crawley is decreasing and is coming closer to the English average.

Figure 8: Under 18 conception rate per 1,000



Source: Office of National Statistics

6.8 Welfare Reform

The government is introducing a range of measures designed to reform welfare benefits. These include:

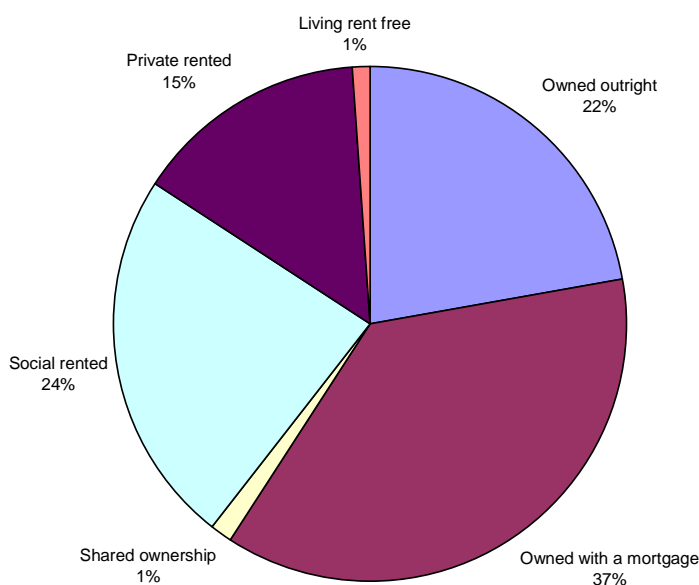
- A reduction in the level of Local Housing Allowance (the levels of benefit have been reduced to the 30th percentile of local market rents from the previous 50th percentile level).
- The Local Housing Allowance shared room rate for people under 25 was extended to people under 35. This is likely to mean that people of this age who are dependent on benefits will be unable to afford private self-contained accommodation and could result in an increase in the use of houses of multiple occupation.
- Limits have been placed on the Housing Benefit for working age households in under-occupied social rented housing. This is designed to encourage them to downsize, releasing larger properties for those who need them.
- The phasing in of Universal Credit over the period 2013-17, with caps set on the overall levels of benefit received, which will impact on larger families in particular.
- Future increases in Local Housing Allowance will be linked to movements in the consumer price index, rather than actual rents, which is likely to result in Local Housing Allowance lagging well behind actual rents.

SECTION 7: PROFILE OF ACCOMMODATION

7.1 Total Stock and Tenure Breakdown

Data from the 2011 Census showed that there were 42,727 dwellings in the borough, the majority of which were owner occupied (59% in total). Figure 9 shows the breakdown of tenure.

Figure 9: Tenure breakdown in Crawley



Source: Census 2011

7.2 Social and Affordable Housing

Social housing stock forms a comparatively large proportion of housing in Crawley (24% not including the 1% shared ownership). Prior to the previous Homelessness Review, 'right to buy' sales had reduced the number of council homes by 50-80 properties per year. In 2012-2013, 175 'right to buy' applications were received, 72 sales proceeded subject to the usual discounts. Table 7 shows a decrease in the number of Crawley Homes stock by 137 in the last five years.

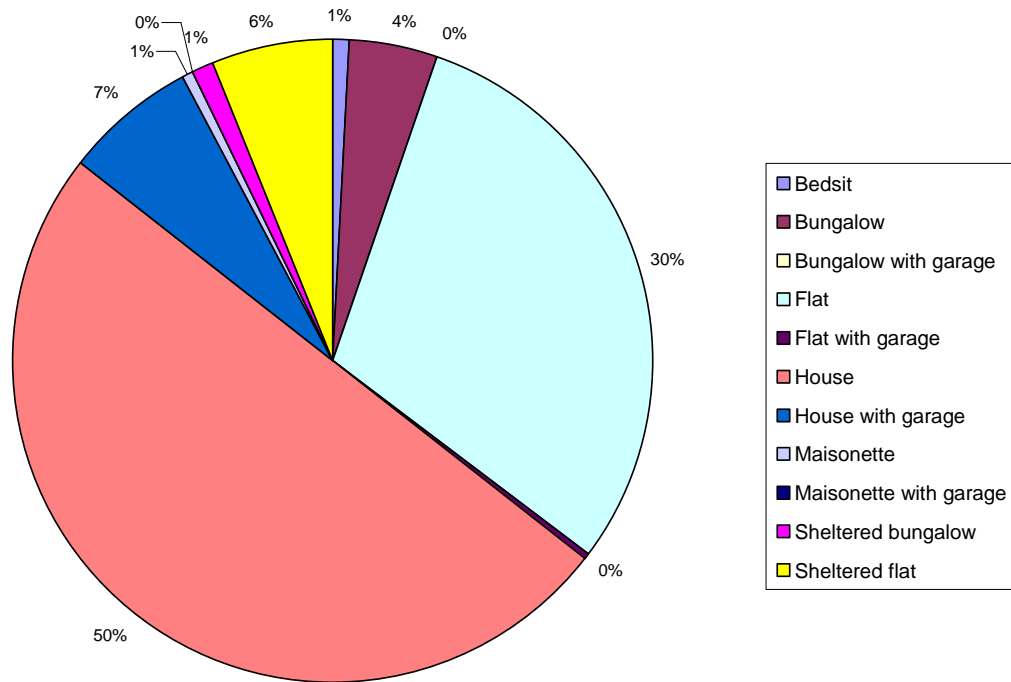
Table 7: Crawley Homes stock

Year	Number of Crawley Homes Properties (on 1 st April 2013)
2013	8015
2012	8110
2011	8114
2010	8135
2009	8152

Source: Crawley Homes

Figure 10 shows the breakdown of the properties owned by Crawley Homes. During 2012/2013, only 2.7 per cent of the total Crawley Homes stock became available for letting, a total of 215 properties. It is clear that the supply of housing does not meet with demand (as demonstrated in Table 3). Table 3 shows that 59% of people on the housing register wanted one or two bed properties (the majority of which are likely to be flats) and Figure 10 shows that only 30% of social housing stock is flats. This demonstrates the need to increase the supply of one and two bedroom properties.

Figure 10: Breakdown of Crawley Homes Properties by Type

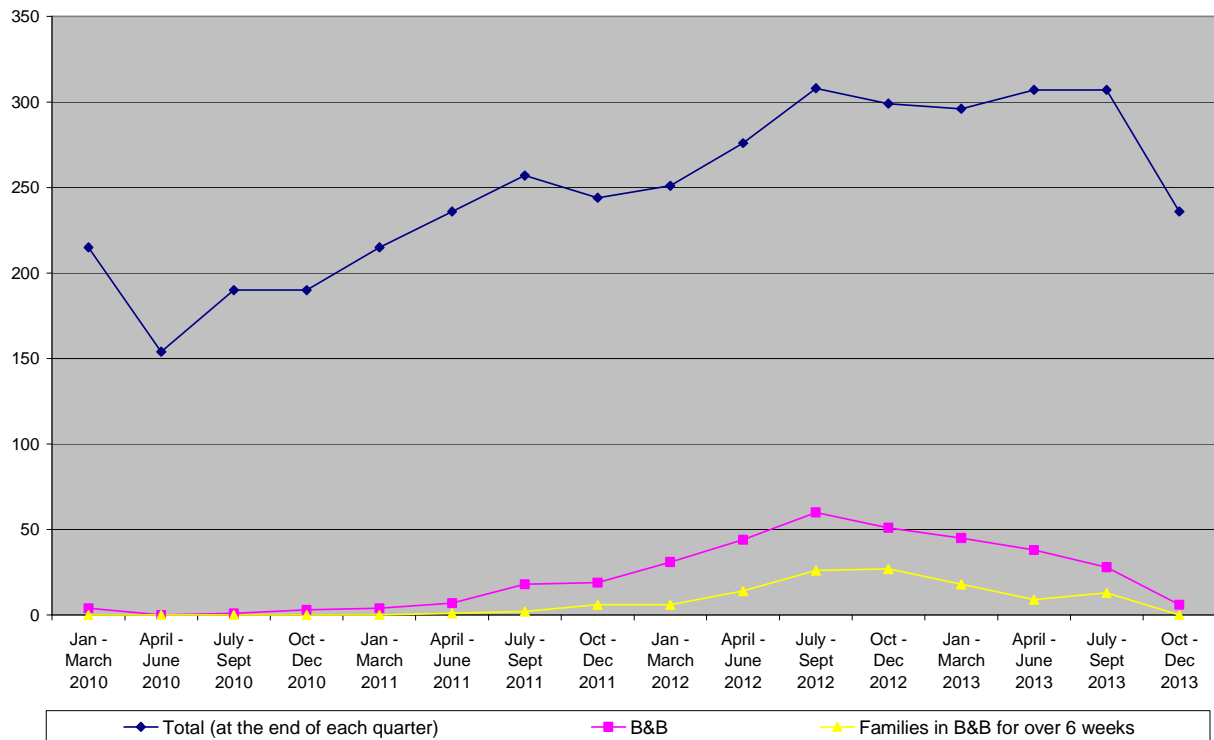


Source: Crawley Homes

7.3 Temporary Accommodation

The council have a duty to provide temporary accommodation in certain circumstances to those that are homeless. The type of temporary accommodation provided varies and Figure 11 shows the total number of households in temporary accommodation over the last four years.

Figure 11: Total households in temporary accommodation



Source: Crawley Borough Council

The use of bed and breakfast accommodation is expensive, and as a result should be kept to a minimum.

In the past, the council has had high levels of homeless households in temporary accommodation. The council has reduced these numbers by homelessness prevention initiatives. However, due to the levels of homelessness in Crawley and the legal duty to provide temporary accommodation in certain circumstances, there will always be a need for a flexible and high standard temporary accommodation portfolio to meet needs and aspirations of the households assisted under the homelessness legislation.

7.4 Private Rented Sector

The needs analysis of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (updated in 2012) gave a snapshot picture of affordability issues. A critical factor is that the ability to meet housing need is determined to a notable extent by the level of existing affordable housing, which in turn reflects past investment decisions. It should also be noted that the private rented sector plays a growing role in meeting housing need supported by housing benefit (particularly over the short term period given the challenging housing sales market and economic situation). In Crawley, this has resulted in higher private rental costs as landlords seek to take advantage of higher demand.

The 2011 Census found 14.5% of people living in the private rented sector in Crawley (compared with 6% at the 2001 Census). The private rented sector has expanded in Crawley but is still below the national (16.8%) and regional (16.3%) average. A large proportion of privately rented homes are managed through letting agencies, and this has implications for people who are in receipt of Housing Benefit as many agencies will not consider them for accommodation.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2012 update) concluded that 59% of households are now unable to afford to rent at market levels and 69% of households are unable to purchase, based on the difference between local prices and rent levels relative to local incomes. This situation has deteriorated since 2009 when the Assessment was originally undertaken.

There are 286 houses in multiple occupation (HMO) recorded in the Councils database, the majority of which are shared houses. As housing benefit is capped and the impact of welfare reform (designed to tackle under-occupation) is felt, more people are likely to move into shared houses. Therefore there may be an increasing demand for good quality HMO accommodation in the future.

SECTION 8: SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS

A survey was sent to organisations that have a presence in Crawley and are known to be involved in supporting people with housing/homelessness issues. The following section summarises some of the feedback received.

8.1 Advice & Prevention Services

The chief source of housing advice in the town is Crawley Borough Council, supported by organisations such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB), along with specialist agencies such as Crawley Open House, Worth IDVA Services and the Crawley Foyer.

Some agencies have a high level of client contact, for example CAB and Open House. Other organisations are more specialised and see fewer people, such as Worth IDVA Services (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) who deal with over 1000 referrals a year and Southdown Housing who deal with over 500 clients a year.

Worth IDVA Services offer advice and support to victims of domestic abuse, and in September to December 2013, more clients came from Crawley than any other town, city or village in West Sussex (23%). Worth Services assist victims to find suitable accommodation (away from their abuser), and so are acutely aware of the issues surrounding housing supply and demand that affect the South East.

Since the previous review took place, Crawley Open House have developed an outreach service to go out into the community areas frequented by rough sleepers and street communities, and direct them to support services including its hostel and day centre.

The Council have also made changes to the way it delivers support and advice services, by creating specialist Advice and Prevention Officers within the Housing Options Team, that are able to provide advice to resolve housing issues and prevent homelessness. These officers also provide a drop-in service within the Housing Help Point (in the Town Hall) alongside a telephone and email service.

8.2 Accommodation services

Crawley has one direct access hostel for homeless people, Crawley Open House, which has 24 bed spaces. Open House also runs a variety of associated activities including a day centre, health services, housing advice, canteen, food bank and support services for life skills, substance misuse and mental health. One of the organisations contacted said that it would be beneficial if Open House had more rooms.

There is a women's' refuge in Horsham that provides 7 units of accommodation for women fleeing domestic violence and abuse. There is no refuge provision in Crawley and one of the organisations contacted did raise this as an issue.

Southdown Housing offer housing management and tenancy support to people moving towards independent living, offer advice to prevent people from becoming homeless and assist with finding alternative accommodation if they have become homeless.

The lack of sheltered accommodation in the town was mentioned in regard to gaps in service provision, as was the need for supported accommodation for people with mental health issues. A need for accommodation for young parents to support a family unit was also identified. These needs require further assessment before any recommendations or actions could be made.

8.3 Access to Accommodation and Housing Benefit Issues

As identified throughout the research, many groups of people suffer from limited access to accommodation due to low incomes, limited availability of affordable accommodation, poor life skills or other issues such as substance misuse. Reliance on Housing Benefit also severely limits the housing choices of households on a low income.

Welfare reforms such as the housing benefit cap, spare room subsidy and changes in criteria for statutory services were all listed as issues affecting clients that are trying to access accommodation in the area. Southdown Housing also said that it had noted an increase in people approaching them with debt arrears, and are actively looking to assist their clients by employing their own benefits specialist and are working to increase access to the private rented sector.

Delayed housing benefit payments can cause problems to tenants, especially those in the private rented sector. The Finance, Revenues and Benefits Division have improved their performance since the previous Homelessness Review in 2008, and tenants on benefits should be less of a risk for private landlords. The Housing Options Team continues to develop links to letting agents and private landlords to facilitate this. The process of improving these links will take time to come to fruition, but can have direct positive effects in improving access to housing for people on low incomes.

8.4 Support services

There is a wide range of support available to vulnerable and homeless households.

Support ranges from the work of the Housing Options and Housing Needs Teams at the Council, to advice from organisations such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau, to more specialised personal support for independent living, provided by a variety of voluntary and statutory agencies such as Crawley Open House.

When asked to identify gaps in services, local organisations mentioned the following client groups in need of additional support:

- Support for those with Asperger's and for clients with dual diagnosis (severe mental illness and substance misuse issues)
- Young parents, accommodation to support family units
- Higher needs supported housing for people with mental health problems
- Debt services
- Shelters for vulnerable people
- Further refuge provision

8.5 Referral networks

Of the referral networks that exist between organisations in the town, the level of inter-agency working remains encouraging, and shows they are continuing to work together to provide the wide range of services required by their clients.

SECTION 9: ASSESSMENT OF CBC HOMELESSNESS SERVICE

9.1 Public Survey

A one click survey was posted on the Councils website to ascertain the perception of homelessness in Crawley. The results were that 50% thought it was high, 27.7% thought it was average, and 22.3% thought it was low. The sample size was low so little statistical significance can be attributed to it; however it demonstrates that people perceive that Crawley does have homeless issues.

9.2 Service User's Questionnaire

In order to assess the quality of homelessness services and identify the issues which are most important to homeless people themselves, a postal survey was conducted among all those people who had made a homeless application during 2013.

9.2.1 Awareness of services

52% of respondents contacted the council when they were first threatened with homelessness. Those who had not approached the council in the first instance had sought help from a variety of sources; including friends and family (33%), CAB (5%), Shelter (5%) and mental health workers (5%).

Of the information and advice services offered by the council, the housing help point was clearly the most utilised service, followed by seeking advice by telephone.

9.2.2 Quality of advice services

Table 8 shows the responses on questions regarding the quality of the advice services provided by the council. Opinion was divided, with one client saying "we received excellent help and support and could not have asked for better service", whilst another client said "their understanding and helpfulness could have been so much better/was very poor".

Table 8: Quality of CBC Advice Services to Homeless Clients

	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
Was the advice you received from the council: quick?	11	2	7
Was the advice you received from the Council: useful?	8	3	6

57% of respondents said that when they approached the council for housing advice their situation was not resolved. 43% did resolve their situation and this was achieved by the information and advice provided to them.

9.2.3 Prevention of homelessness

When asked to suggest improvements that could be made, 50% of respondents said additional affordable housing, 50% said additional council/social housing, and 33% said improved support and advice.

Comments that came back included better advertising (as not everyone has access to a computer or telephone), and the provision of a night shelter.

9.2.4 Qualitative data on experience of homelessness

Respondents were asked to identify the worst aspects of being homeless. They were also asked about how their experience could have been improved. The following table gives a general summary.

Table 9: Summary of qualitative responses

What concerned you most about being homeless?	Response
Insecurity	14
Lack of facilities	3
Feeling isolated	5
Lack of advice/assistance	6
Waiting for news/accommodation	4
Language problems	1
Feeling unsettled	6
Living in one room	2
Lack of money	4
Feeling scared	9
Sleeping rough	8
Lack of options	5
Other	1
What single thing could have improved your experience of the advice and support offered by the Council?	
More staff/shorter waiting times at housing help point	2
Not having to make an appointment	2
More detailed information on the phone	1
Quicker decision time	7
More information on webpage	0
Webpage easier to use	0
Others	7

It was not the more tangible issues that respondents highlighted as the worst things about being homeless with 67% said that feeling insecure and 43% said that feeling scared were the worse things about being homeless.

A wide variety of suggestions were received for improving services, the most notable (44%) being for a quicker decision on their homeless application.

Of the respondents, the majority (29%) said that they were still in temporary accommodation, 14% said that they were staying with friends or family, 14% were renting via a private landlord, 10% were privately renting having been assisted via the Crawley Deposit Service, and 10% were still homeless, with one respondent saying that they remained homeless, and one saying that they were "waiting to see if I lose my home".

SECTION 10: MEETING THE NEEDS OF CRAWLEY

10.1 Housing Provision

The number of dwellings built each year has varied considerably in the last ten years. House building peaked in 2007/8 at nearly 700 units, largely due to the development of the Apple Tree Farm site in Ifield. Since then, despite a considerable number of planning permissions, there has been a significant reduction in completions, largely due to the economic downturn. 204 dwellings were built in the year 2011/12, mostly through redevelopment of the former Leisure Centre ('Pembroke Park'), whilst only 67 dwellings were completed in 2012/13. This downturn, along with an increasing number of permissions lapsing and completion of some of the larger development opportunities in the town, will have significant implications for housing supply in the immediate future.

Crawley's population profile is very different to most neighbouring areas and this places its own special demands upon the local economy and local services. The population reached 106,600 in 2011 (an increase of about 22% since 1991). Crawley has a greater proportion of younger people (between the ages of 25 and 34) and a lower percentage of elderly, compared with the rest of the South East; with about two-thirds of Crawley's population less than 45 years of age. Inward migration is greater than out-migration, contributing towards population growth. Therefore future demographic change, particularly as the younger population have families, will intensify demands upon the need for housing. By 2030, to meet the needs of its growing population, the Locally Generated Housing Needs Assessment 2011 identified the housing need for Crawley as needing approximately 8,100 new dwellings.

10.2 Affordable Housing

There have been significant changes in the way in which affordable housing is funded. Currently, grant funding is no longer available for affordable housing secured through s106 planning agreements and an affordable rent model, at 80% of the market rental values has been introduced, which is expected to be the norm for most new affordable housing being secured in association with market developments.

The council favours social rent at target rent levels as being more affordable to those in housing need, but accepts that this form of tenure requires significant levels of subsidy that cannot be borne by the developer and/or land vendor alone. In the absence of any additional forms of subsidy, affordable rent tenure will be acceptable and will be the minimum expectation in the first instance.

While the majority of households on the register require smaller properties, those in need of larger properties often have to wait much longer for a home, reflecting the limited current supply of larger properties and lower turnover rate. Provision of larger family sized affordable housing meets both this need and allows social housing provision to better use existing stock by creating a 'chain of lettings' to right size households to meet their housing requirements.

SECTION 11: FUTURE TRENDS IN HOMELESSNESS

11.1 Nature and Extent of Homelessness

The review has highlighted that large numbers of people in the town remain excluded from the private rented sector or from purchasing a home. This can lead to young people living with their parents for longer, family relationships can become strained and lead to parental eviction. Young people are particularly vulnerable to both these homelessness drivers, and can be further marginalised by low incomes and reduced benefits. With house price increases continuing to outstrip wages, the number of people affected by these issues is likely to rise. Projects to mitigate housing problems, such as family mediation, rent deposit schemes and greater information on housing options makes an impact, but because of house prices and rent levels, it is probable that homelessness among this group will grow.

Data on repeat homelessness is limited, and there is a need to monitor this more closely. Reducing the amount of repeat homelessness and supporting households to sustain their accommodation will assist in preventing homelessness both now and in the future.

The level of teenage pregnancies in Crawley has decreased but is still high. It is highly probable that those young women particularly vulnerable to teenage pregnancy are also likely to be faced with housing problems due to low incomes or difficult family circumstances and may still face homelessness.

Households feeling the effect of the financial recession (especially home owners on low incomes) present challenges to homeless services in the town and may increase pressure on advice services and could ultimately push up homeless applications.

Overall, due to the local housing market, demography and stock and tenure profile, it seems likely, based on the evidence collected in this review that homelessness will increase. However, targeted projects can minimise some effects of the local housing pressures, and improve circumstances for those people who do face a housing crisis. Continued monitoring of homelessness levels and housing issues across agencies and client groups will enable the council to maintain its strategic view and direct resources to the areas of greatest need.

SECTION 12: PROGRESSION

12.1 Actions

The review has generated a large amount of data to inform the council's homelessness strategy 2014 - 2019. From this we have identified key actions that will enable us to support those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in Crawley:

Provision of advice and prevention of homelessness:

- Focus on projects and early interventions through partnership and multi-agency working to ensure those that are at risk of homelessness are identified quickly and receive early specialist advice and support to sustain their current accommodation or obtain alternative accommodation that is affordable and sustainable and prevents homelessness.
- Support financial inclusion and access to regulated and ethical lending services such as the Credit Union.
- Ensure that the effects of ongoing welfare reforms are understood and develop appropriate responses to ensure understanding by those affected by it and their options to plan for the longer term.
- Consider alternatives to the Mortgage Rescue Scheme which ends on the 31st March 2013 to assist homeowners.
- Review the council's 'Safe At Home Scheme' to ensure that those at risk of violence can choose to remain safely in their home where appropriate rather than be forced to move.
- Develop services under the 'No Second Night Out' agenda to single rough sleepers to whom the council may have no statutory duty to provide accommodation but who will be severely affected by sleeping rough and who impact upon wider agencies and communities.

Supply of affordable housing:

- Increase the supply of affordable private rented accommodation to prevent homelessness and discharge the homeless duty into as introduced by the Localism Act 2011.
- Increase the supply of housing across all tenure types within the borough.

Temporary accommodation:

- Extend and develop a varied and flexible portfolio of temporary accommodation to enable the council to fulfil its statutory duties where required and minimise the use of unsuitable and expensive bed & breakfast accommodation

Discharging the homeless duty:

- Discharge the homelessness duty by way of a Private Rented Sector Offer (PRSO) as introduced by the Localism Act 2011.
- Participate and feed into the reviews and consultation on the Council's Allocation's Policy ensure that those who need to access social housing are able to do so.