

Homelessness in Kent & Medway

Marie Gerald & Stuart Clifton

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, effective from the 3rd April 2018
- Placed expanded duties on local housing authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness (irrespective of a persons' local connection)
- Introduced a new duty to relieve homelessness, regardless of whether a person has a priority need for accommodation or is intentionally homeless
- Duty to Refer commenced from 3rd April 2018, however public authorities were not obliged to make referrals until 1st October 2018 onwards.

Reminder of the main changes

- Focus on prevention – earlier and proactive (casework)
- New duty to prevent and relieve (up to, and longer in some cases, than 56 days)
- Threatened with homeless – extended to 56 days
- Duty to assess and produce Personal Housing Plans
- ‘Deliberate and unreasonable refusal to cooperate’
- New duties blind to priority need and intentionality
- Prevention stage is blind to Local Connection
- New rights to review
- Care Leavers – very specific new duty related to choice

Key messages reported to MHCLG from LA's

- MHCLG will complete a review of the Act by March 2020, which includes the resourcing of it and the additional burdens
- The purpose is to ensure the legislation is working and that local authorities and partners have the tools and support to effectively implement and operate the changes
- The Act represents a major shift in practice, organisation & culture which will take some time to bed in. Some areas are facing delivery challenges
- The administrative burden of the Act combined with new case management systems and the requirements of reporting H-CLIC data has also been challenging – MHCLG are interested in hearing what changes would help that would not detract from the Act's purpose
- Footfall has not increased significantly in most authorities but associated casework has, with more duties owed and cases held open longer for prevention and relief work

Key Messages reported to MHCLG from LA's

- Some LAS reported an increase in TA, partly due to improved assessment and offer for single people, but also because the strong focus on delivering the HRA led to less resource in the short term going into management of TA
- Duty to refer is working best in areas with strong partnerships in place. Most LAS reporting that referrals are generally valid i.e. people genuinely threatened with homeless, but not always made at the earliest opportunity
- Most (almost all) LA's have updated their websites to be HRA compliant and some have embraced opportunity to promote prevention opportunities through better and more accessible advice for customers

Key messages from MHCLG to LA's

- Advice and Information - Ensure your website is fully compliant with S179 and is genuinely helpful to residents wanting to understand their housing options.
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies - must be published and up to date by end of 2019, this is a commitment in the Rough Sleeping Strategy
- Duty to refer is working best where LAs have talked to and involved partners and less well in areas where they just have waited for the referrals to arrive.
- LAs must not reject a referral that does not come in preferred format or via a portal; a referral is made when the required information is provided – work together on referral arrangements wherever you can
- Customer Satisfaction – will be improved if the service focusses on customer care, engages partners and service users in designing and delivering services

Funding into Kent & Medway

Additional Funding

- New Burdens funding – Over £2.5 million
- Rough Sleeper Initiative funding – almost £1.5 million
- Rapid Rehousing Pathway funding & Private Rented Sector Access Fund – around £1 million each
- Flexible Homeless Support Grant also expected to be used.
- Some additional smaller pots received over the year

Future Funding

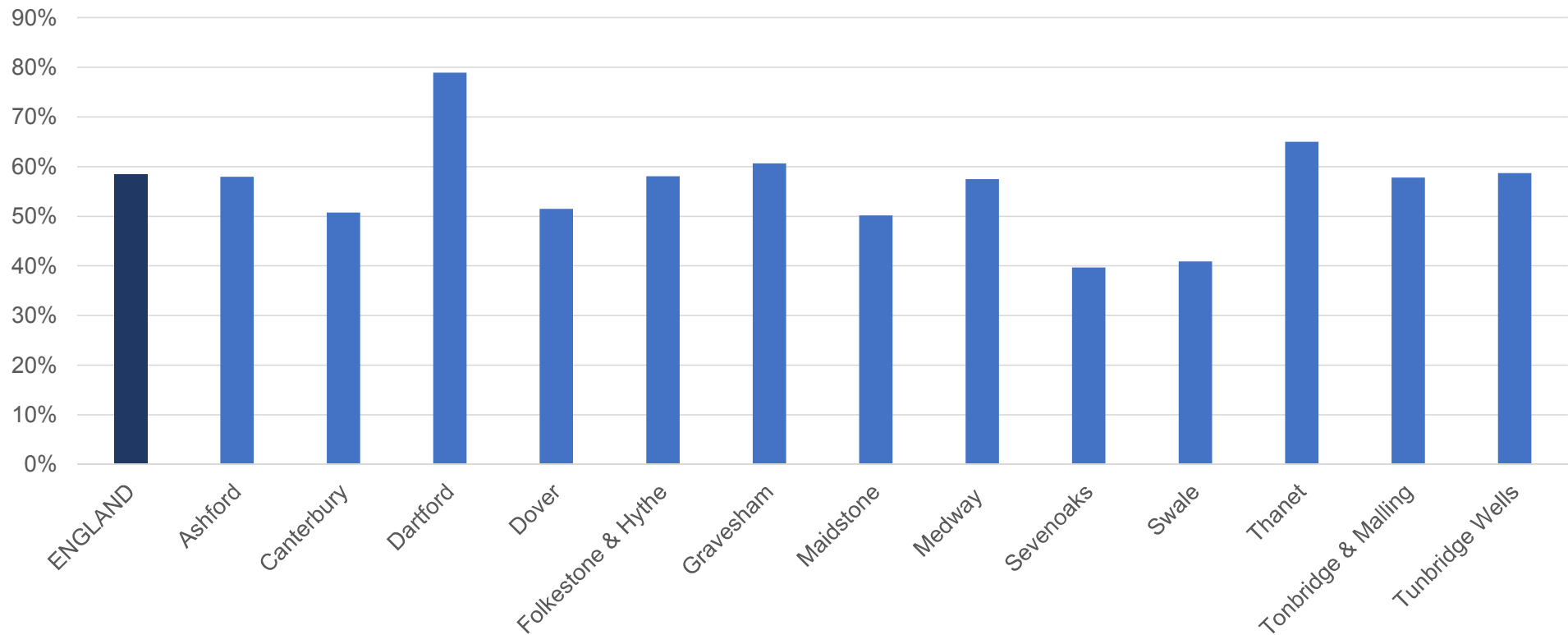
- The Chancellor has said that there will be a spending review this year. Decisions about the future of homelessness funding, along with all other government funding, will be made at this point, which includes FHSG.
- Ministers have made clear that homelessness and rough sleeping are a key priority and have committed to ending rough sleeping - which has been backed by £1.2 billion, so far.
- The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Directorate has been improving our evidence, including on how much TA costs, how it is being used to prevent and relieve homelessness, and how much funding LAs require.
- Information that has been provided to the MHCLG has helped to evidence a funding bid

Outcomes

How is Kent doing?

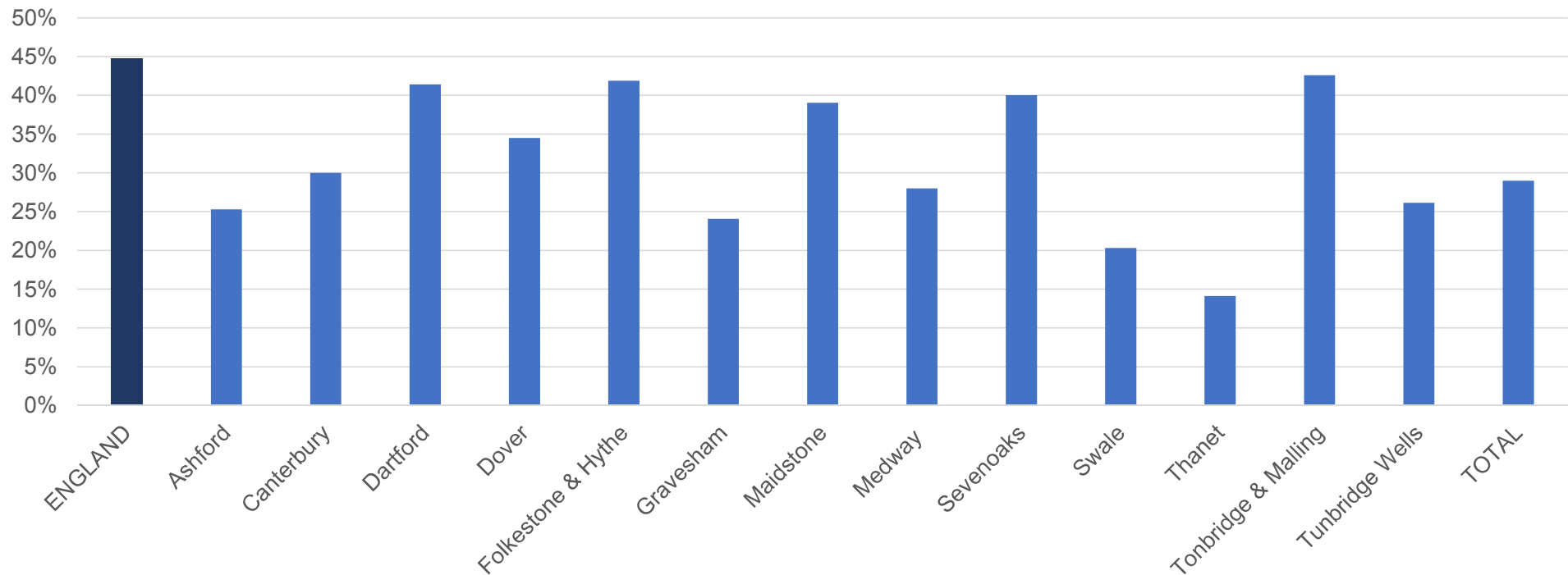
- MHCLG has published experimental statistics for the first 3 quarters of the HRA
- Total of 7663 households assessed
- Prevention duties were owed to 2647; and on cases where the duty had ended:
 - 58% were prevented from homelessness with a successful outcome
 - 1038 households were moved into alternative accommodation
 - 465 retained their existing accommodation
- Main duty acceptances were 819 – a drop of 37% in acceptances during the same period in 2017
- Non-priority homeless decisions made on 546 applications – also a big reduction on the same period of 36%

Percentage of preventions with successful outcomes in Kent



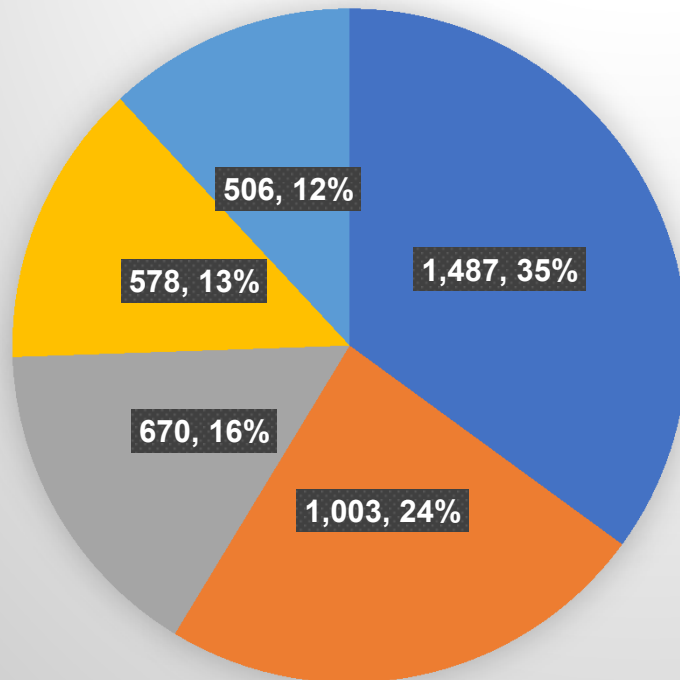
Percentage of reliefs with successful outcomes in Kent

Percentage of reliefs with successful outcome



Top support needs in Kent

Support needs of households owed a prevention or relief duty:



- History of mental health problems
- Physical ill health and disability
- At risk of / has experienced domestic abuse
- History of repeat homelessness
- History of rough sleeping

Kent – A beacon of good practice

Maidstone Borough Council - One View


Our new capability to help Maidstone's homeless

What is “One View”?

- “One View” **brings together unshared data** from across the council, to provide a single view of a household to support a better-informed assessment process
- It provides a **computer-generated summary** of a client's situation, helping to improve their interview appointments
- It helps identify factors that put people at risk of becoming homeless. **Earlier identification helps us prevent crises** and manage demand

What difference will it make?

- **Informed and targeted interventions** – having a single view of the whole household or family, not just the individual will allow staff to choose the most appropriate course of action, by understanding historic support and wider contextual factors
- **Reduce demand for housing services and generate savings** – the effect of early and targeted interventions should prevent problems from worsening and ultimately requiring costly crisis support
- **Improve resident outcomes** – all of the above will improve resident outcomes and quality of life by preventing the escalation of need, helping people help themselves



Maidstone Borough Council - One View

Operational Benefits:

Demand management

- Reduced number of homelessness presentations through earlier intervention
- Increased number of households accessing housing support before the point of crisis
- Increased number of households remaining in or accessing sustainable accommodation

Service provision

- Greater collaborative working and information sharing across teams and partners
- Supported and confident workforce with access to tools, increase in officer capacity, better insights, timely alerts and intervention analysis

Dartford's Multi-Agency Hub

- Used the New Burdens Funding to set up
- Embedded within the Housing Solutions Team with access with the wider Housing Team
- Use the Kent & Medway Sharing Agreement for data sharing concerns
- Agencies have access to a specific Wi-Fi, phones and a PC
- Also have use of the interview rooms & desks in the reception area
- Asked for 'a commitment of time' – non specific
- Have commissioned the complex debt advice but are not funding any of the other services

What does it mean to be a hub member?

- New IT system – shared digital workspace where hub agencies will be identified during the application process
- Joint interviews and one personalised plan for the client
- Agencies can also bring their own cases into the hub for discussion - if not on the system, will treat as new cases
- A lot of eavesdropping!
- Already a better understanding of each others roles and responsibilities
- Open to any agency joining the hub!
- Fast track Duty to Refer – opportunities to discuss
- Update to date legislative information
- Access to our new schemes

Hub Agencies

