

# **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2019 to 2023**

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## 1.0 Key findings

This review forms the basis upon which Crawley Borough Council have formulated its Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 to 2029. Headline data is as follows:

### Housing market

- in 2023 the median income in Crawley was £34,385 yet the median house price was £345,625, over 10 times as much. In five years median salaries increased by nearly £5,000 but median house prices in Crawley increased by over £55,500

### Private rented sector

- in May 2024 the average rent in Crawley was £1,333 per month, and the average monthly shortfall between rent and the Local Housing Allowance ranged from £276 (shortfall) for a room in a shared house to £961 (shortfall) for a four-bed house

### Social housing

- the annual supply of social housing for allocation via the housing register decreased by over 200 properties (from over 650 to less than 440), and in 2023 was the lowest it has been in ten years
- this was compounded by the delivery of new build social housing halving during that time, largely due to the impact of water neutrality restrictions on development locally

### Homeless approaches and referrals

- approaches from households who believed themselves to be homeless or threatened with homelessness increased by 74%, from nearly 1300 in 2019 to over 2230 in 2023
- the number of referrals into the service (from external agencies) rose from 25 in 2019 to 206 in 2023
- in 2022 the end of a tenancy in the private rented sector took over from parental eviction as the most common reason for homelessness and in 2023 being required to leave Home Office accommodation became the third most common reason for homelessness

### Temporary accommodation

- the average cost of hotel style temporary accommodation almost doubled, from £50 per night in 2019, to £92 per night in 2023
- the number of households in temporary accommodation rose from 158 to 467, and this upward trend is continuing
- 2019 saw 20 households placed out of borough, rising to 274 placements in 2023 (this is over a quarter of the placements made in 2023) and is a consequence of lack of supply of suitable accommodation in borough

### Rough sleeping

- The number of people sleeping on the streets halved

## 2.0 Review methodology

The review took place in 2024 and covers the period 2019 to 2023. It forms the basis of the 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 to determine the extent to which the population in the district is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, assess the likely extent in the future, identify what is currently being done and by whom, and identify what resources are available to prevent and tackle homelessness.

The homelessness code of guidance states that housing authorities must consult with public bodies, voluntary organisations and other relevant persons when adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy. In preparation for drafting the homelessness strategy, the council undertook a consultation process that involved the following:

- a survey of relevant stakeholder organisations that looked to gauge opinion on housing need in Crawley, who should be prioritised for social housing, the distribution of social housing, factors that contribute towards homelessness, priorities for the homelessness strategy, how to achieve government plans to reduce sleeping nationally, and what would have the greatest impact in tackling homelessness and identifying gaps in local service provision
- registered providers were sent a survey that combined the consultation for the Homelessness Strategy with the consultation for the Tenancy Strategy that is being redrafted and published in tandem with this homelessness strategy. Registered providers were asked about the nominations process, the application of pre-tenancy conditions, the provision of tenancy support, the tenancy renewal process, void management, housing management, and how they meet housing need in Crawley
- Strategic Housing staff within the council were involved in a consultation exercise that looked at identifying gaps in services locally, the biggest challenges to tackling homelessness in Crawley, what the priorities for the coming five years of the strategy should be, whether government plans to reduce rough sleeping are achievable within Crawley and how that might be achieved, and how the council should move forward in tackling homelessness in Crawley
- an event was held for elected members to get on their views on local housing need, who should be prioritised for social housing, the distribution of social housing, what factors contribute towards homelessness locally, and what would have the greatest impact in tackling homelessness in Crawley

The findings of the review form the basis of the homelessness strategy ('the strategy') and guide the work of the action plan. The strategy underpins the council's corporate priority to deliver affordable homes for Crawley and tackle homelessness.

### 3.0 Local context

**Demographic:** Crawley is a compact new town of 40km<sup>2</sup> with a population of approximately 118,500 across 46,709 dwellings. Crawley is the 10th most densely populated of the South East's 65 local authority areas, with 18.8 people living on each football pitch-sized piece of land (compared to 16.9 in 2011).

**Migration** – Crawley's buoyant economy and labour market attracts people wishing to move to and settle in the UK, with 28% of residents born outside of the UK.

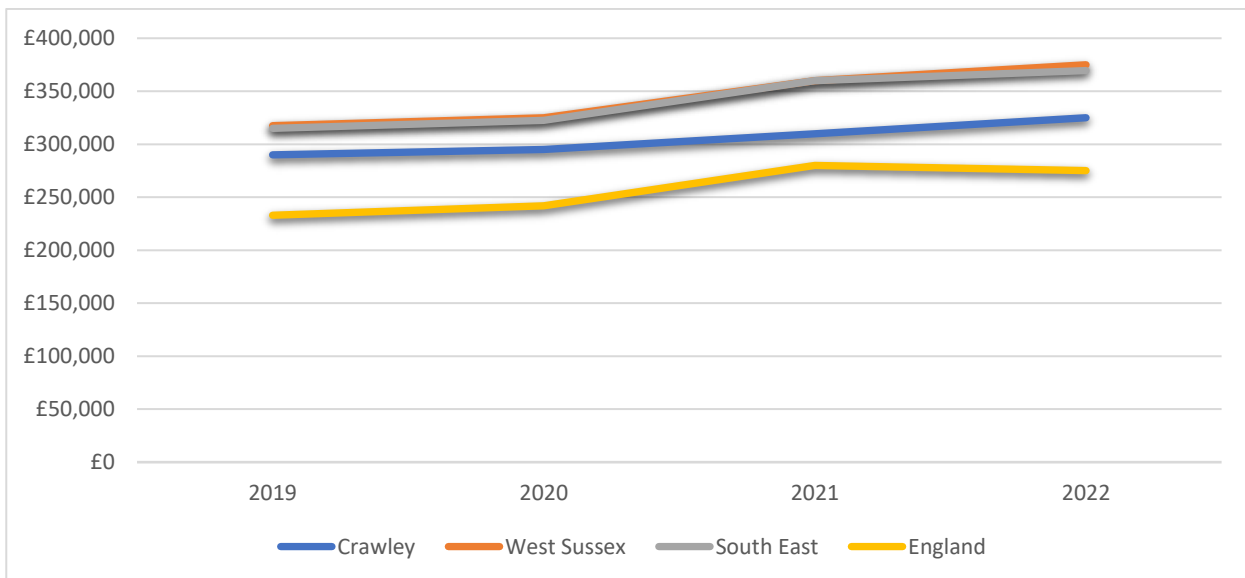
**Housing stock** – The 2021 census identified that terraced housing makes up the largest share of housing stock in Crawley (at 37%), with the rest comprising flats (24%), semi-detached properties (23%), detached properties (14%) and a small amount (2%) of other housing types (such as converted school or church).

**Tenure mix** – At the time of the 2021 Census, 55.7% of dwellings (over 26,000 properties) in Crawley were owner-occupied, 24.1 per cent (over 11,000 properties) were affordable (social rent, affordable rent or shared ownership), 19.8 per cent were privately rented (over 9,000 properties) and 0.3 per cent were living rent free.

**Economy and employment** – In 2023 the employment rate in Crawley stood at 72.3 per cent. Average annual earnings in Crawley were £34,385 in 2023, compared to £29,388 in 2019, an increase of nearly £5,000.

**Housing market** – Chart one shows how median property prices in Crawley have changed. Crawley's property prices are below the average for West Sussex and the South East, but £65,625 above the national average for England. Between 2019 and 2023 the median house price in Crawley increased by over £55,000.

Chart one: Median house prices



Source: <https://www.ons.gov.uk>

Table 1 compares the ratio of the median house price in Crawley to the median gross annual income. Whilst Crawley’s affordability is better than the average for West Sussex, it remains above that of the South East and England.

*Table 1: Ratio of median house prices to median gross annual income*

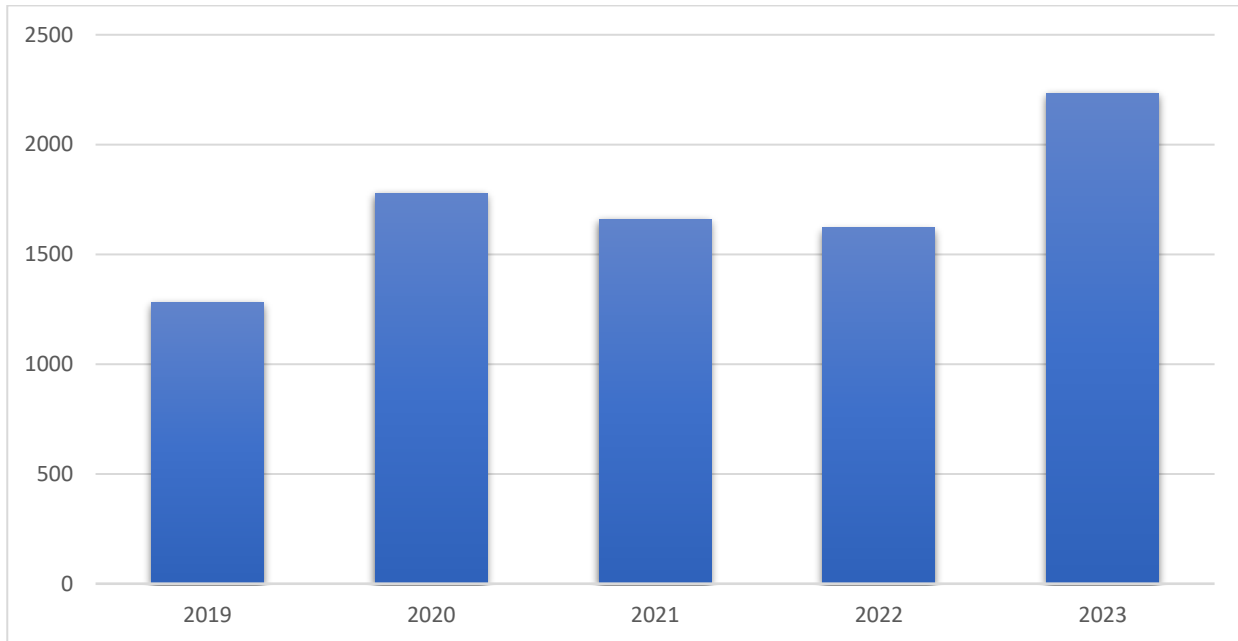
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<i>Crawley</i>	9.87	9.37	9.89	9.96	10.30
<i>West Sussex</i>	10.11	10.32	11.47	11.40	10.84
<i>South East</i>	9.43	9.43	10.61	10.36	10.13
<i>England</i>	7.59	7.61	8.90	8.28	8.18

Source: <https://www.ons.gov.uk>

## 4.0 Homeless approaches

Over 8,500+ households approached the council for homeless advice and assistance (see chart two), with approaches increasing by 74% between 2019 to 2023. Included within those approaches are referrals from external organisations (including those with a duty to refer) which increased by over 720% to over 200 in 2023.

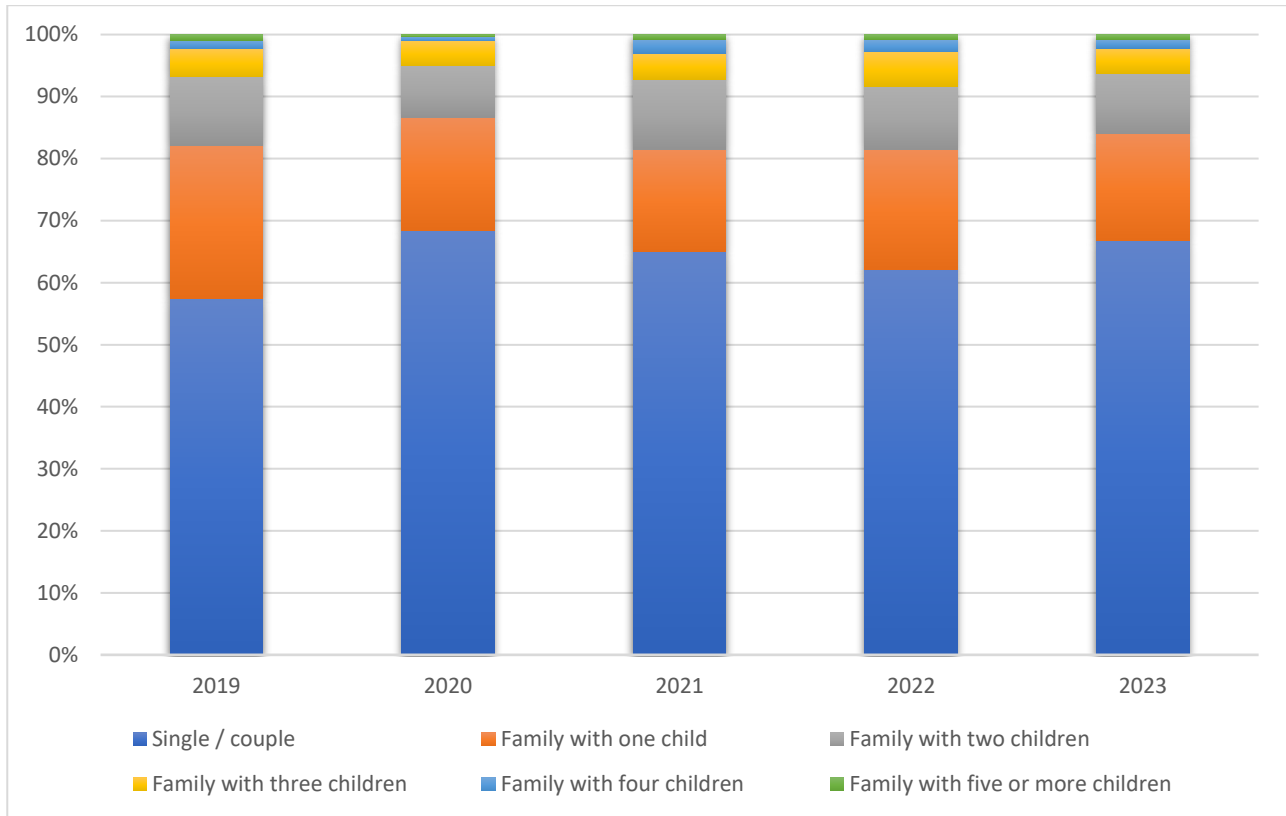
*Chart two: Homeless applications*



Source: *Crawley Borough Council*

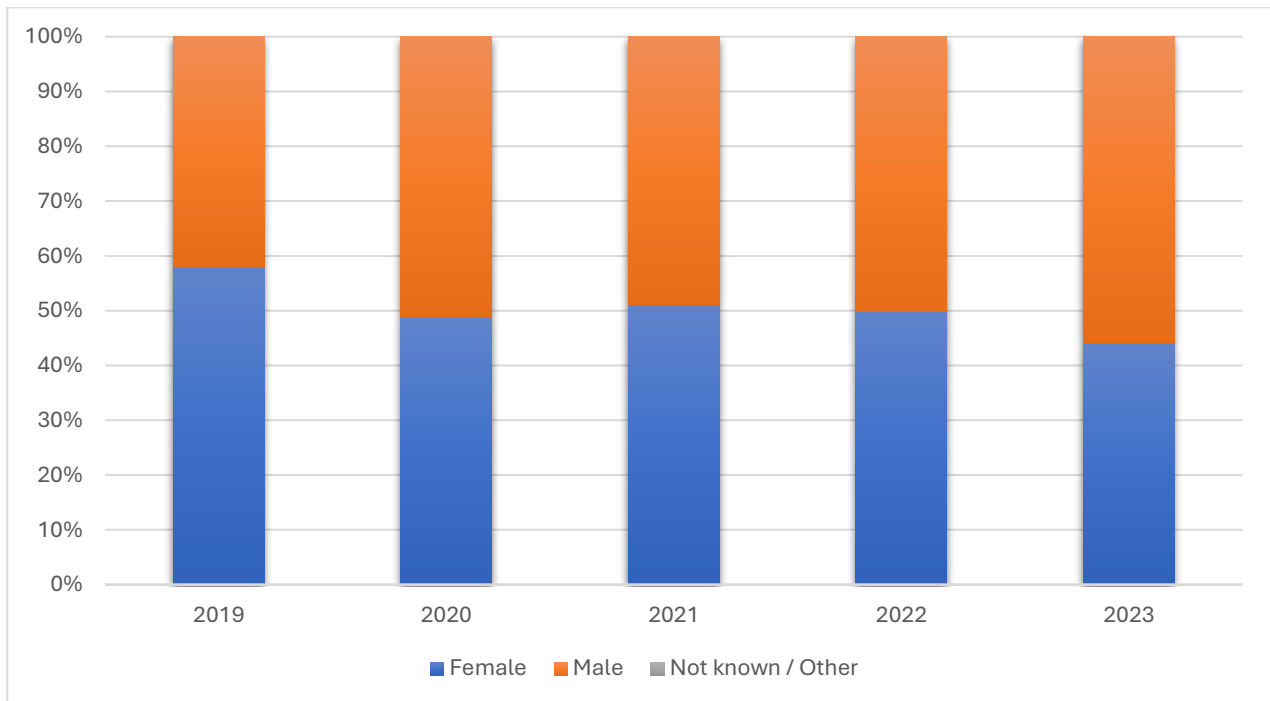
The composition of applicant households has changed over the five-year period covered by the review (see charts three and four), with an increase in approaches by single males brought on by the governments ‘Everyone In’ initiative, introduced as the Covid pandemic emerged to accommodate people who had been sleeping rough. However, chart three demonstrates that approaches from single people has always been high in Crawley (consistently over 50% of total approaches). This is mostly due to the historic trend of people approaching the Council where their family are no longer willing or able to accommodate them being one of the most common reasons for homelessness in Crawley.

Chart three: Composition of households applying as homeless



Source: Crawley Borough Council

Chart four: Lead applicant applying as homeless

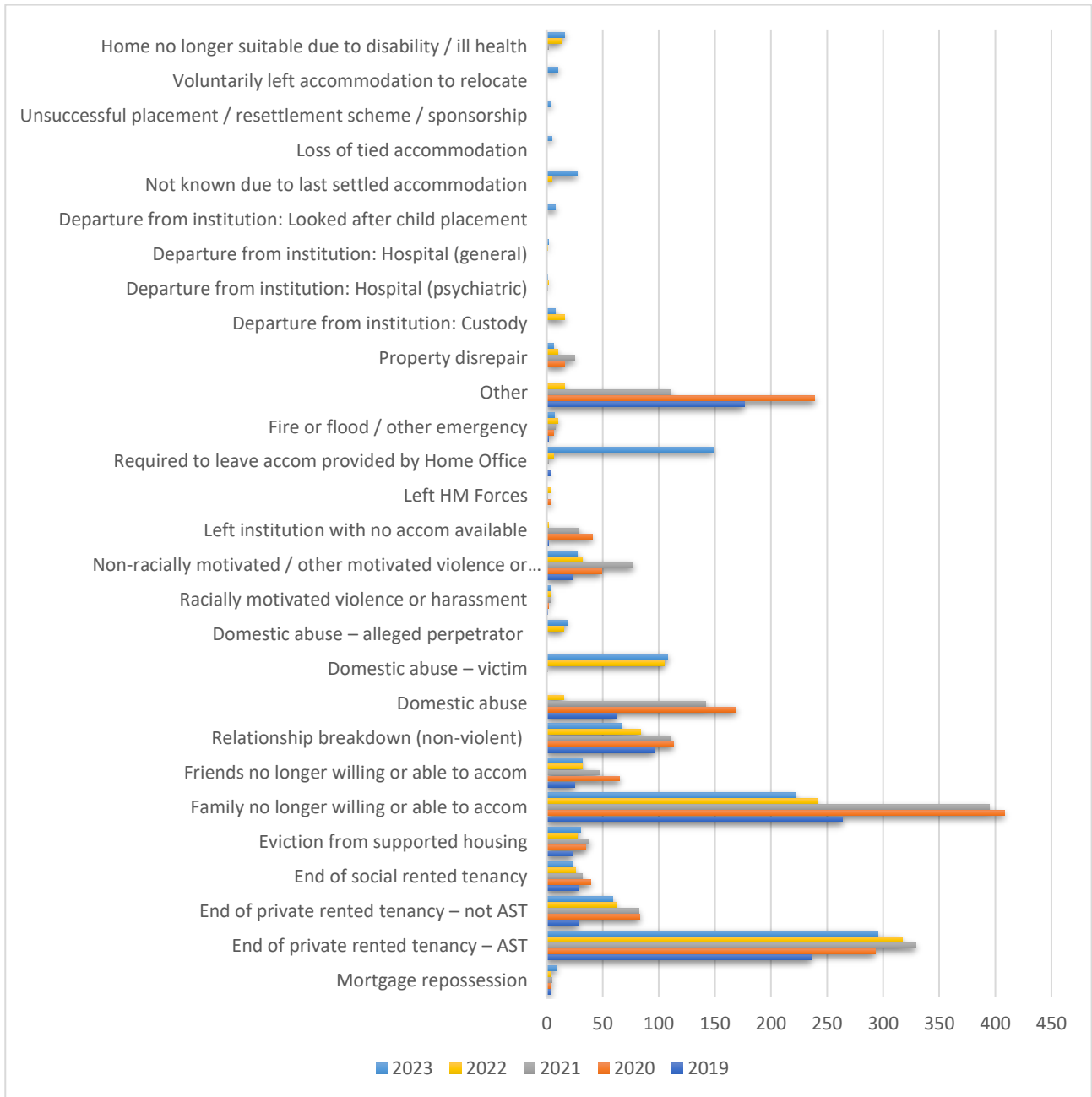


Source: Crawley Borough Council



The review period also saw a shift in the most common reason for homelessness, see chart five. Households required to leave Home Office asylum accommodation became the third most common reason for homelessness in 2023.

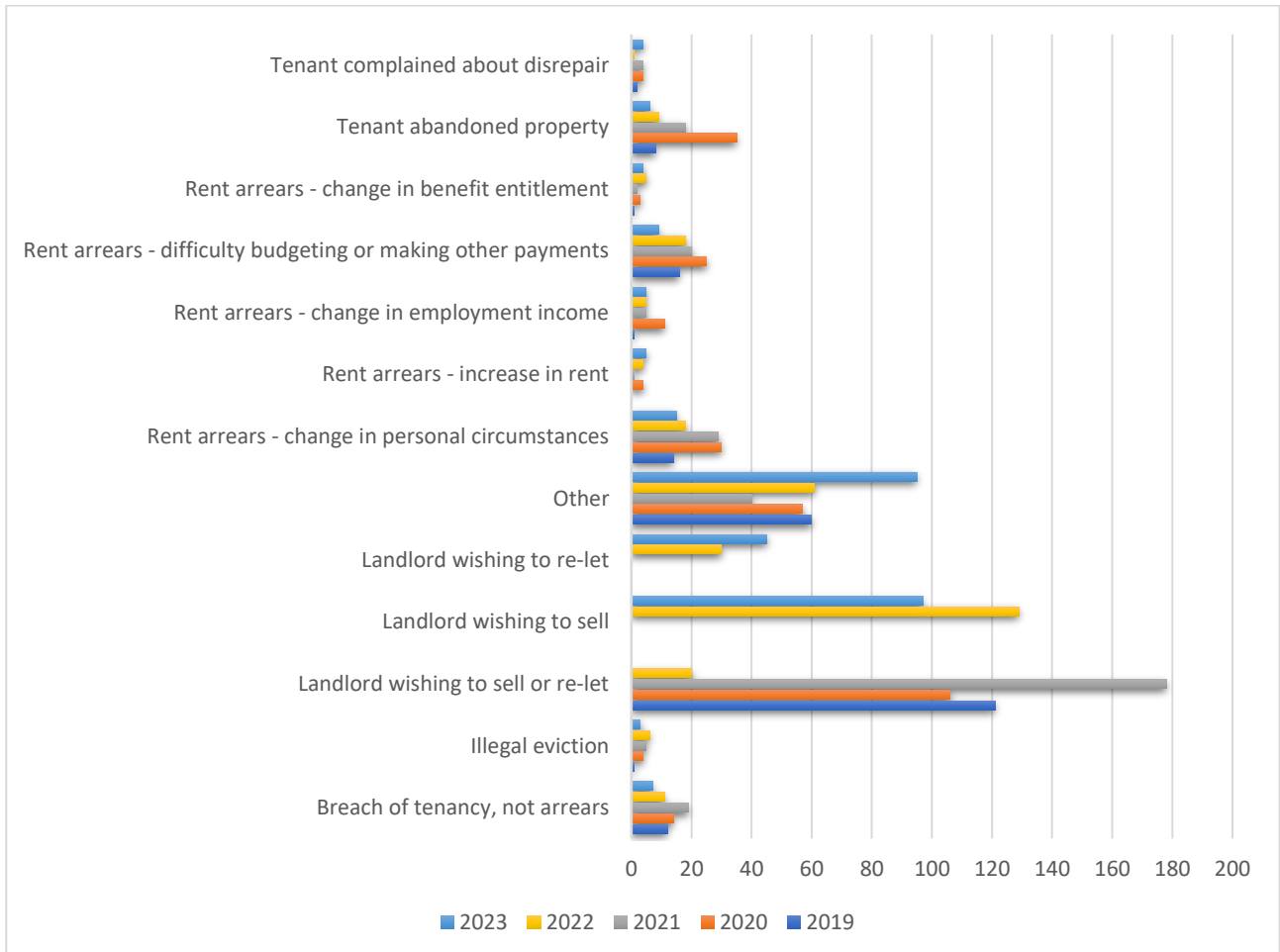
Chart five: Applicants reason for homelessness



Source: Crawley Borough Council

The end of assured shorthold tenancies in the private rented sector became the most common reason for homelessness in 2022 and 2023, the reason (in chart six) predominantly being that the landlord intended to sell the property. This is in line with national trends.

Chart six: Reason for loss of assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector

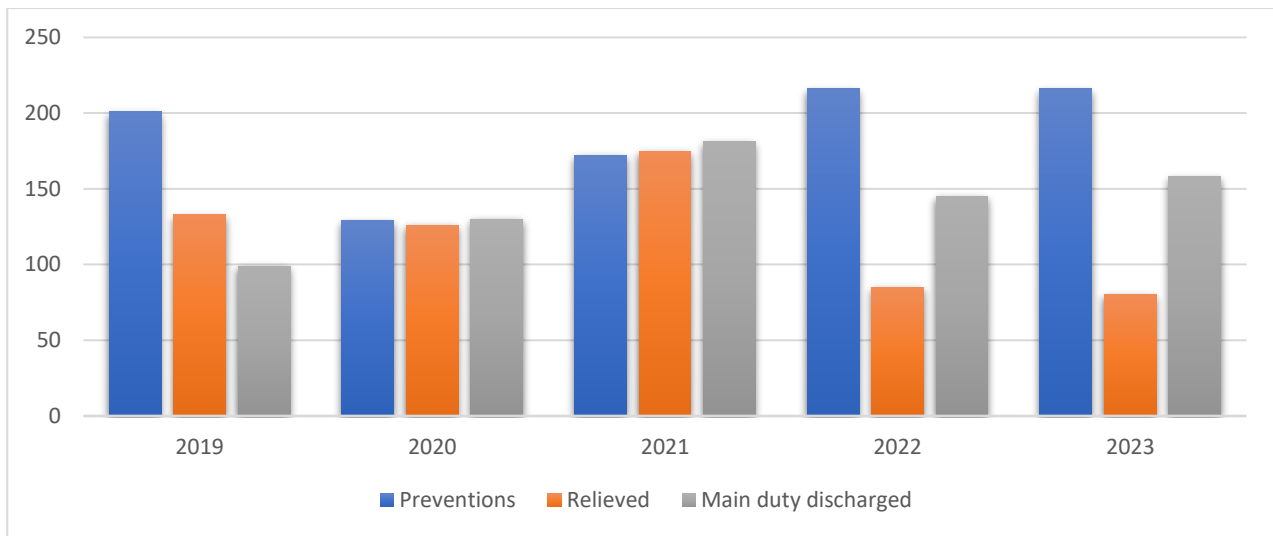


Source: Crawley Borough Council

## 5.0 Duty discharges

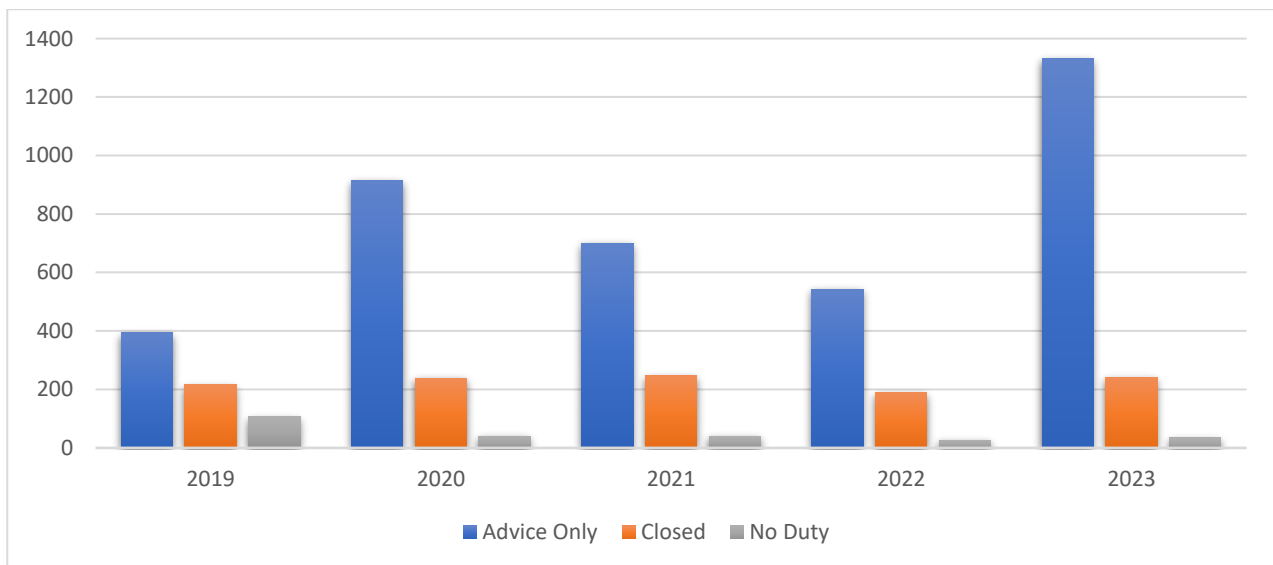
Despite the challenges of accessing housing during the Covid pandemic, over 1,500 households had their homelessness prevented or relieved (see chart seven) and over 700 had a main duty discharged into either private rented or social housing. Chart eight shows that Crawley receives a high number of applications from people whose application ends in the offer of advice only, often because of lost contact with the customer.

Chart seven: Households whose homelessness duty was discharged into accommodation.



Source: Crawley Borough Council

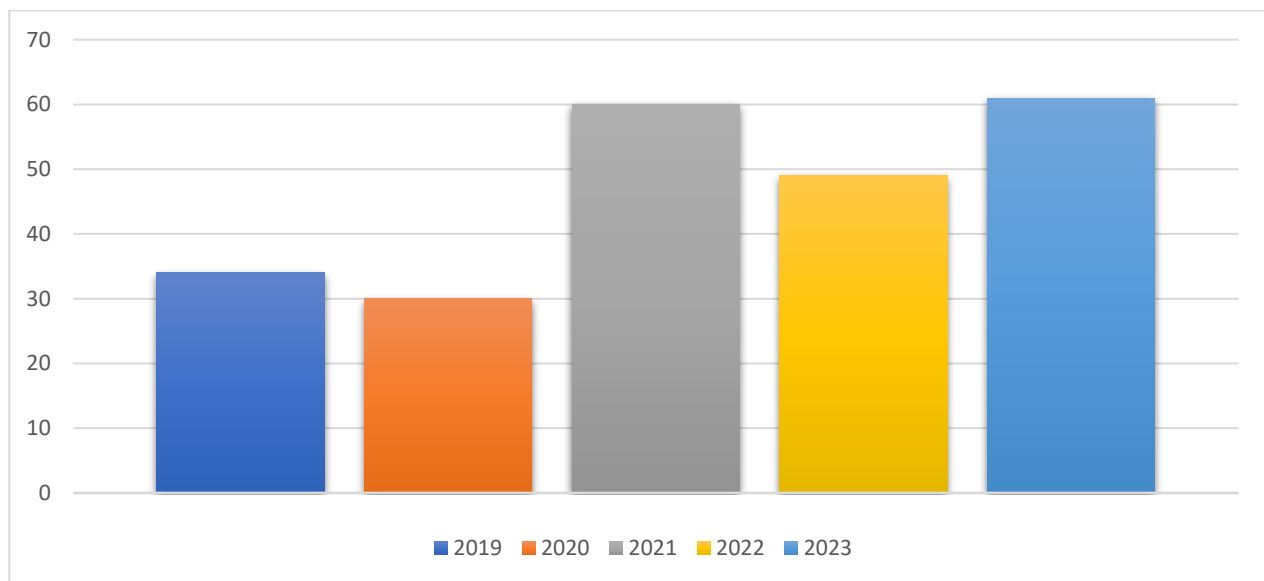
Chart eight: Application outcomes.



Source: Crawley Borough Council

Over the five-year period of the review the Council received over 230 requests for a review of a decision under section 202 of the Act (see chart nine). The most common reasons for reviews shifted from challenging intentionally homeless decisions in 2019, to the suitability of accommodation offered under Part VI in 2020 and 2021, to the suitability of temporary accommodation offered under section 193 of the Act in 2022 and 2033. Nearly half of all reviews were upheld and a quarter were overturned or rescinded back to the officer who made the decision. Where trends have identified a training need or shift in focus, these have been implemented accordingly.

Chart nine: Section 202 reviews received.



Source: Crawley Borough Council

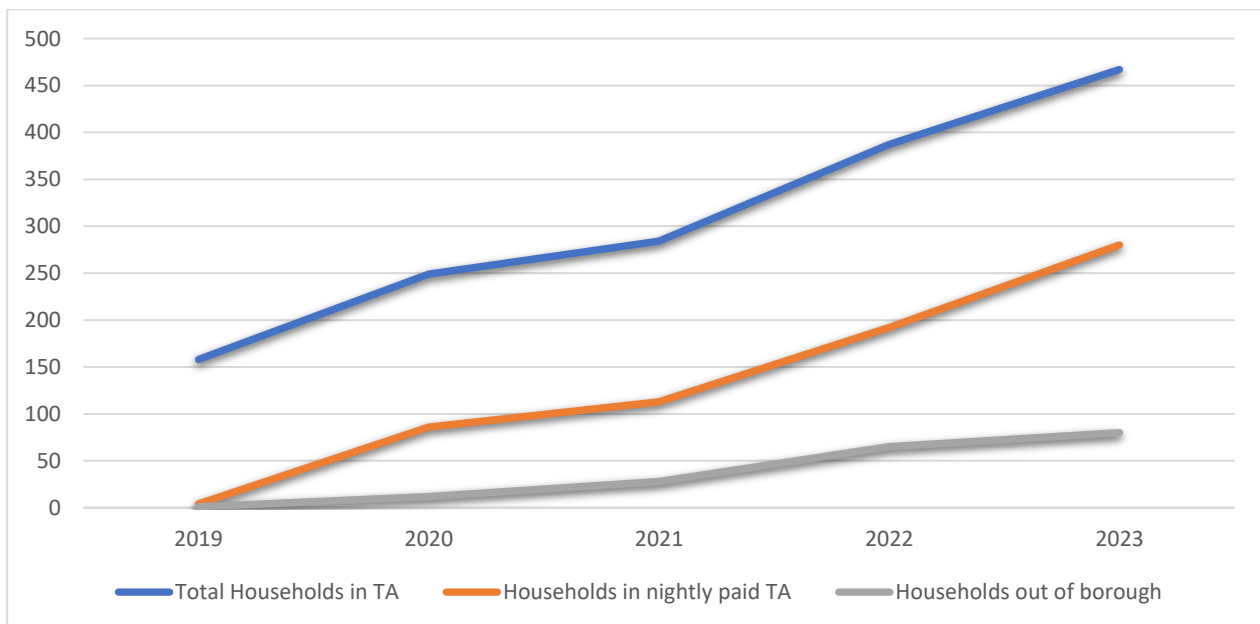
## 6.0 Temporary accommodation

The provision of interim accommodation is triggered on there being reason to believe a household is eligible for assistance, homeless and in priority need. The council own and manage hostel accommodation within the borough, which at the time of drafting the review was comprised of 93 rooms varying in size to accommodate single people through to families. The council are also able to access 127 self-contained properties owned or leased by registered providers that are used as temporary accommodation.

Due to the often unpredictable nature of homelessness and scale of demand, waiting for a vacancy to become available in Council or registered provider owned accommodation is not always possible. In these instances, households are initially placed into nightly paid options such as hotels. This type of accommodation is charged on a nightly basis and is expensive for the council who pay the difference between the nightly rate charged by the accommodation provider and what can be recovered from the customer (through housing benefit or employment income). The use of temporary accommodation and in particular nightly paid temporary accommodation options is shown in chart 10.

The council always seek to place households into temporary accommodation within the borough where possible, however this may not always be appropriate or possible for reasons of safety, specialised requirements or availability. Due to the increasing demand for temporary accommodation by local authorities across the South East (including London), accessing accommodation within the borough is not always possible and the use of out of borough accommodation has risen significantly, as shown in chart 10.

Chart 10: Households in temporary accommodation (end of year snapshot)

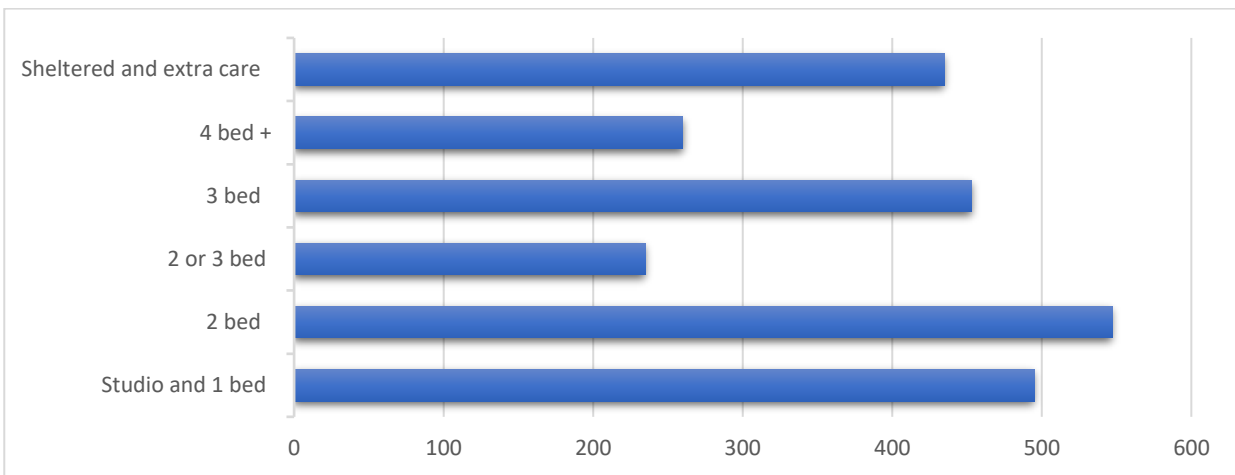


Source: Crawley Borough Council

## 7.0 Housing register

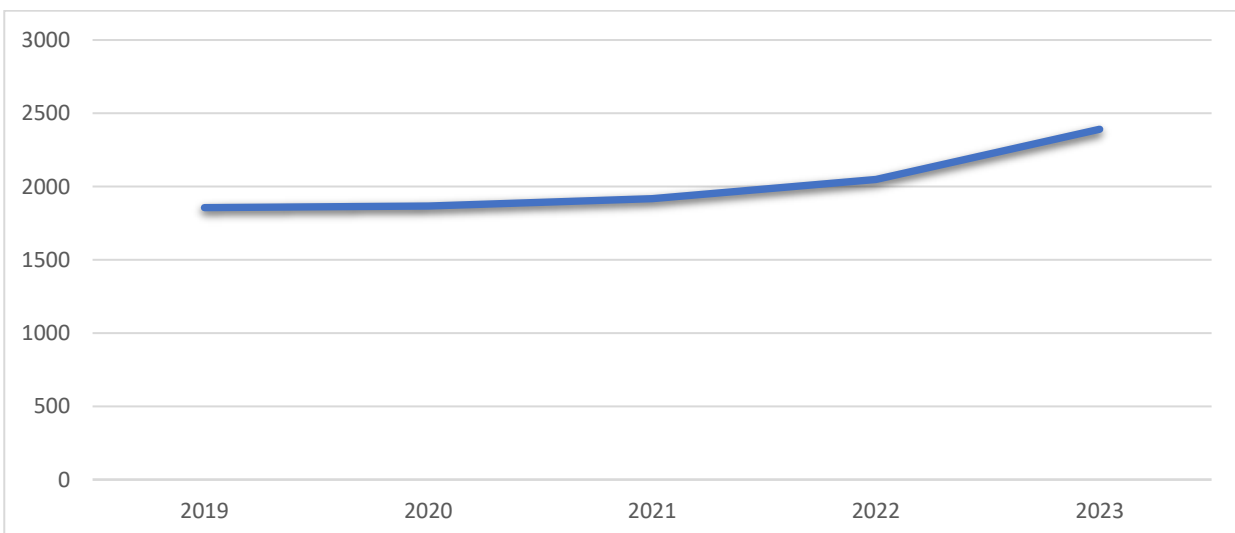
The council maintain a register of households in housing need, with their priority assessed using the banding system set out in the council’s Housing Allocation Scheme. A snapshot of households on the housing register at the beginning of March 2024 is shown in chart 11. Since the previous review, the demand for four or five-bedroom properties increased from 7% to 11% of total demand, showing that larger families are increasingly struggling to access affordable accommodation by other means. The total number of households on the housing register has increased by over 500 households (29%) in five years as shown in chart 12. An impact of wider housing and affordability pressures.

Chart 11: Households on the housing register by property size needed



Source: Crawley Borough Council

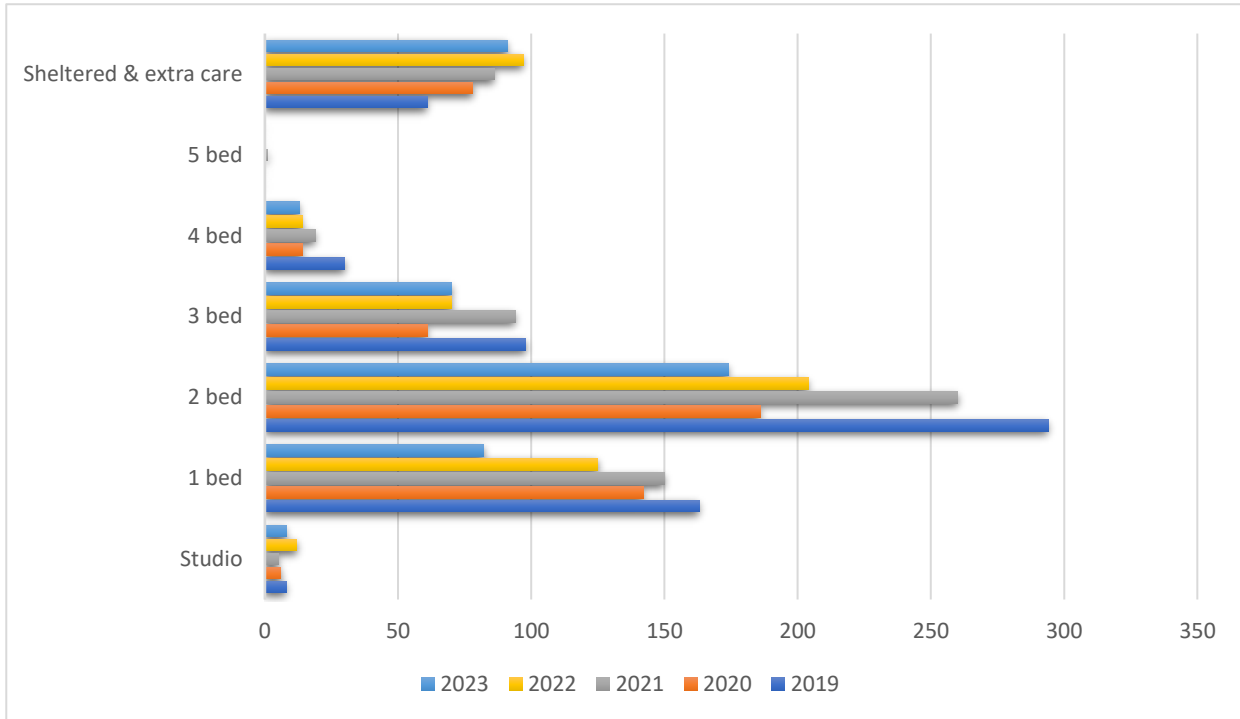
Chart 12: Households on the housing register



Source: Crawley Borough Council

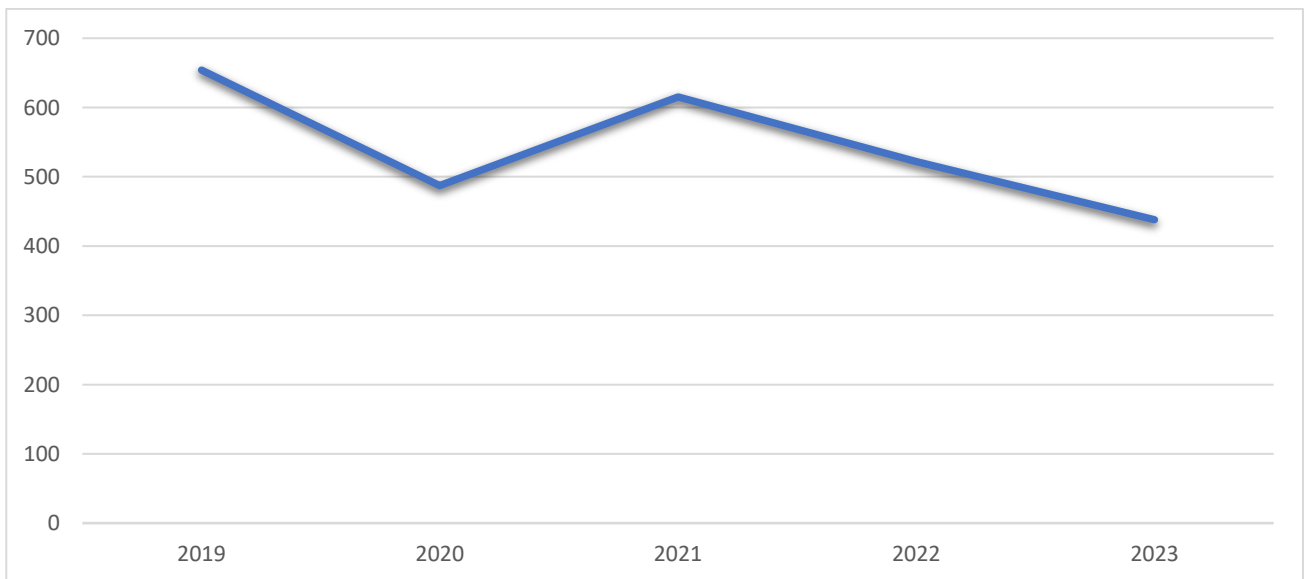
The supply of social housing available to allocate via the housing register over the past five years is shown in charts 13 and 14, with chart 14 showing over 200 fewer properties being available in 2023 compared with 2019.

Chart 13: A breakdown of the supply of social housing



Source: Crawley Borough Council

Chart 14: The supply of social housing to let via the housing register



Source: Crawley Borough Council

Whilst larger properties (with four + bedrooms) are not in the greatest demand by volume (see chart 11), the demand is disproportionate when compared with the supply of such properties shown in chart 13. For every four or five-bedroom property that became available in 2023 there were 20 households waiting for it. Whereas for every two-bedroom property that became available in 2023, there were three households waiting for it.

The length of wait for an offer of social housing is dependent on the households banding, priority housing date, the size and availability of the property they are eligible for, and any additional criteria that might restrict their options. The allocation scheme has to balance the competing demands of housing homeless households (often in temporary accommodation), existing social tenants looking to transfer (releasing their property for reallocation), and households who have applied to join the housing register for other reasons (such as overcrowding or having medical issues that affect their current housing situation). Due to increasing pressures on temporary accommodation (in terms of use and expenditure), this balance is closely monitored and measures (such as the temporary quota system in the Housing Allocation Scheme) are enacted where appropriate.

### **Accessing social housing**

It remains commonplace for registered providers and stock holding local authorities to utilise pre-tenancy commencement measures such as:

- making rent in advance payments and/or deposits a condition of tenancy sign-up
- carrying out affordability assessments
- a more considered approach to those who might struggle to sustain a general needs tenancy, unless a support package is in place
- requirements in local lettings plans on new developments for percentages of tenants to be in paid employment

It was also found that social housing providers continue to invest in their tenants and the wider community by offering a variety of support, examples of which include:

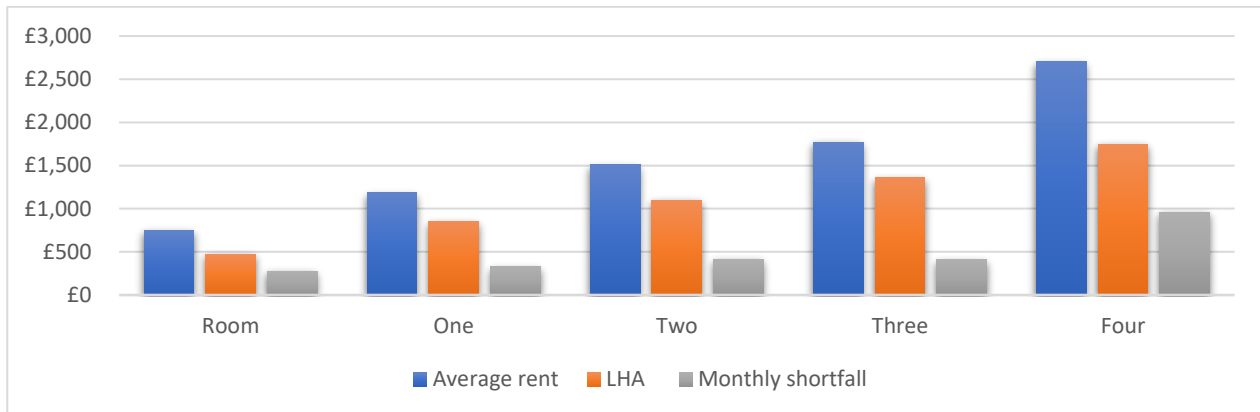
- supporting tenants into work (CV writing workshops, helping to search and apply for jobs)
- helping tenants to gain skills that will assist them in getting back to work
- wellbeing programs (addressing issues such as mental health, hoarding and anti-social behaviour)
- financial inclusion (supporting tenants with budgeting, managing debt, maximizing income, claiming benefits they are entitled to, creating support plans)
- providing access to funds for groups/organisations that work in the community
- tailored support aimed at younger and older people



## 8.0 Accessing the private rented sector

Crawley's location in the southeast and its proximity to London mean that rents in the private sector remain high, as shown in chart 15. Average rents in Crawley are frequently above £1,400, and the shortfall between rent and the local housing allowance (LHA) can range from approx. £280 per month for a room in a shared house, to £960 per month for a four-bed house. Office for National Statistics data from 2023 confirms that average rents in Crawley (then £1,150) are above the regional (£1,050) and national (£850) average.

Chart 15: Average private rents compared to Local Housing Allowance rate



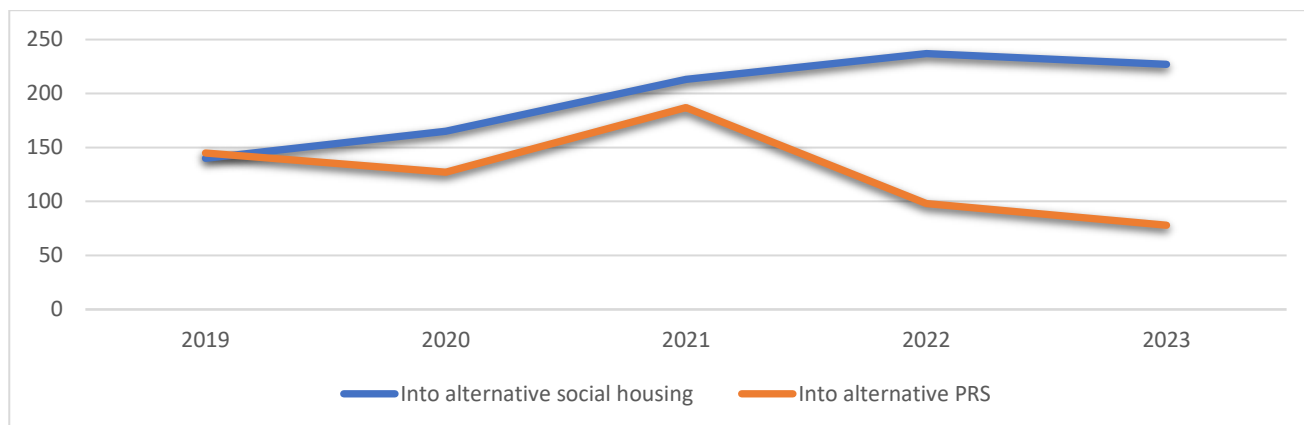
Source: Rent data from [www.rightmove.co.uk](http://www.rightmove.co.uk) on 31 May 2024 and <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/>

Accessing affordable private rented accommodation locally remains challenging:

- despite case law to the contrary, it can be difficult to find landlords and letting agents willing to let to households in receipt of benefits
- households on low incomes are frequently asked to provide a guarantor (who would be liable for the rent if the tenant failed to pay), however many households do not have anyone able to act in this capacity with the required minimum earnings to qualify
- whilst Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates were raised in April 2024, the gap between LHA rates and rents continues to make the private sector unaffordable to those on lower incomes and/or in receipt of benefits
- the Northern West Sussex Strategic Housing Market Assessment (published by Icen Projects in November 2019) found that any household with an income below £30,500 would not be able to afford the lower quartile rents in Crawley without subsidy
- there is increased competition for affordable private rented accommodation as other local authorities (including London boroughs) continue to utilise Crawley's private rented sector where it is cheaper than their own

The result of these challenges is that the council's ability to access the private rented sector has halved, increasing the pressure on social housing to meet the gap (see chart 16).

Chart 16: Homeless duty discharged into social housing and the private rented sector



Source: Crawley Borough Council

### The future of the private rented sector

At the time the review was being drafted the Renters Rights Bill was progressing through Parliament and was set to deliver:

- the end of section 21 notices and for assured shorthold tenancies to become periodic assured tenancies
- amendments to possession grounds to give tenants more security whilst ensuring landlords can recover their property where reasonable
- provide protection against illegal eviction by ensuring tenants are able to appeal above market rent increases
- introduce a private rented sector ombudsman to provide quick, fair, impartial and binding resolution for tenant's complaints about their landlord
- create a database to help landlords understand their obligations and demonstrate compliance, and tenants' access information to help make informed decisions
- give tenants the right to request a pet that cannot be unreasonably refused
- apply the decent homes standard to the private rented and social sectors
- apply 'Awaab's Law to set clear legal expectations about the timeframes within which landlords must take action to make homes safe
- make it illegal to discriminate against renting to those in receipt of benefits or with children
- strengthen local authority enforcement powers by expanding the use of civil penalties
- end rental bidding by publishing an asking rent which cannot be beaten
- strengthening rent repayment orders and extending them to superior landlords

## 9.0 The supply of housing

Housing need manifests itself in a variety of ways, such as increased levels of overcrowding, young people living with their parents for longer, acute affordability issues, impaired labour mobility resulting in businesses finding it difficult to recruit and retain staff, and increased levels of homelessness. The delivery of new build social and affordable housing is a crucial step in meeting this need.

The council's local plan sets the way forward for planning the future of Crawley and provides a clear indication of the council's approach to the development of the town, including how we have identified housing need within the borough and the work underway to meet this need. The Northern West Sussex Strategic Housing Market Assessment published by Icenl in 2019 identified that by 2040 Crawley would need a further 15,050 new homes to support the housing needs of the growing population of the town, 752 dwellings a year.

Due to land supply constraints, it is likely that a proportion of the towns identified housing need will need to be met within neighbouring boroughs. This includes properties to be let at social and intermediate rents, and properties for sale on the open market. The plan commits the council to positively consider all reasonable opportunities for maximising the effective use of land and increasing housing delivery by working closely with neighbouring authorities. Table two shows actual and forecasted housing delivery over the previous and coming five years.

Table Two: Actual and forecasted delivery of homes of social and intermediate tenures in Crawley

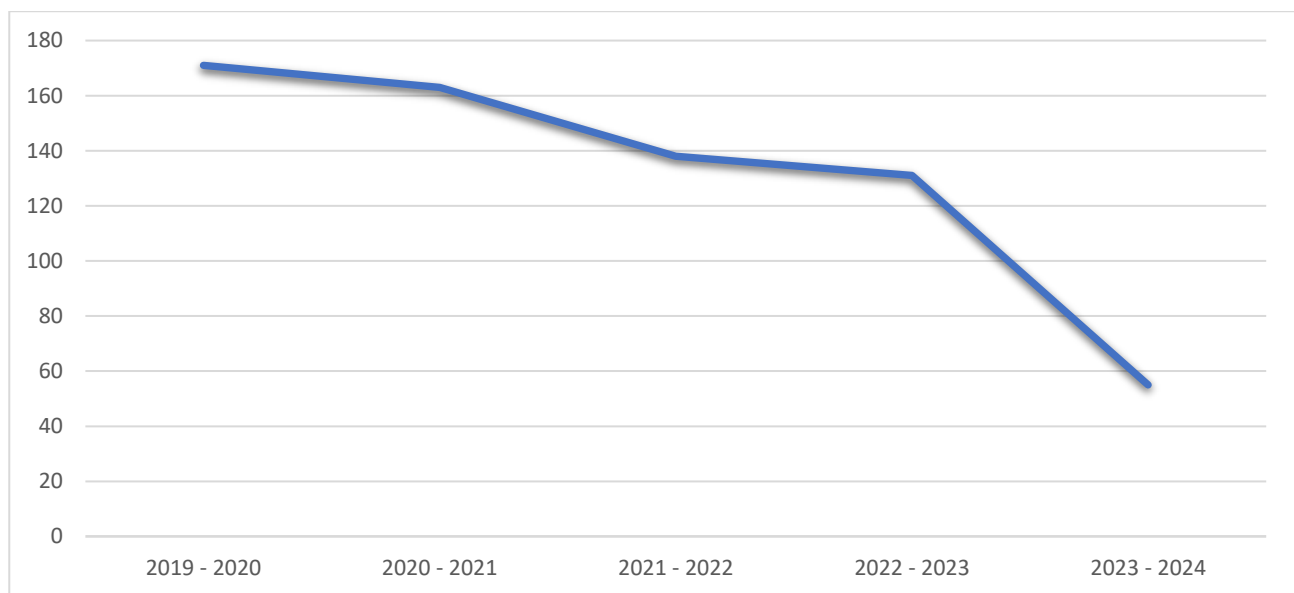
		Crawley Borough Council			Registered Providers			Total
		Social rent	Affordable rent	Total	Social rent	Affordable rent	Total	
Actual	2019 - 2020	69	96	165	0	6	6	171
	2020 - 2021	66	86	152	0	11	11	163
	2021 - 2022	55	1	56	0	82	82	138
	2022 - 2023	91	0	91	0	40	40	131
	2023 - 2024	0	20	20	0	35	35	55
	<i>Total</i>		281	203	484	0	174	174
Forecasted*	2024 - 2025	0	0	0	0	23	23	23
	2025 - 2026	33	12	45	0	23	23	68
	2026 - 2027	28	191	219	0	21	21	240
	2027 - 2028	62	161	223	0	18	18	241
	2028 - 2029	28	52	80	0	0	0	80
	<i>Total</i>		151	416	567	0	85	85

Source: Crawley Borough Council

\* Forecasted delivery is based on data available at the time and is subject to change.

The delivery of new build housing has been severely impacted by the declaration by Natural England of water neutrality restrictions in the borough (see chart 17). This means that where development is located within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone, it must demonstrate that it will not increase pressure on water resources (in that total water use after the development must be equal to or less than the water-use before the development). Due to water neutrality restrictions, 2023/2024 saw the delivery of new build social housing decrease by nearly 70% of 2019/2020 levels, resulting in the supply of housing for allocation via the housing register reduce by over 200 properties. This has decreased the discharge of homeless duties into social housing, increasing the use of and expenditure on nightly paid temporary accommodation.

Chart 17: The delivery of new build social housing



Source: Crawley Borough Council

## Empty homes

The code of guidance produced by what is now the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) encourages local authorities to make use of their powers and the incentives available to tackle long term empty homes within their districts.

The demand for property in Crawley is such that only a small number of long-term empty homes exist at any one time. In March 2024 the Council reported 35 long term empty dwellings (0.07% of total dwellings in the borough). Of those 26 have been unoccupied for between two and five years, five between five and 10 years and four properties have been empty for more than 10 years. Whilst the council work with empty homeowners to encourage them to bring their homes back into use, there also needs to be a disincentive to discourage owners from leaving property empty in the first place. In March 2024 the Council approved that from 1 April 2025, 100% Council Tax is applied to second homes and properties that have been empty for a year or more. The impact of this approach will be monitored to see what impact it has on the number of long-term empty homes in Crawley.

## **Disabled Facilities Grants**

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are mandatory grants issued by the council to private sector owners, private tenants and registered social landlords to assist eligible people with physical disabilities to remain living independently within their current home. The grant is subject to a maximum limit and is means tested to ensure that funding goes to those most in need. Whilst DFGs do not affect the supply of new homes, by allowing people to remain in their own homes it can help reduce the need to seek alternative housing (via the housing register for example) or potentially becoming homeless because their home no longer meets their needs. Over the course of five years (2019 to 2023) the council has assisted 600 households to remain in their own home through the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants.

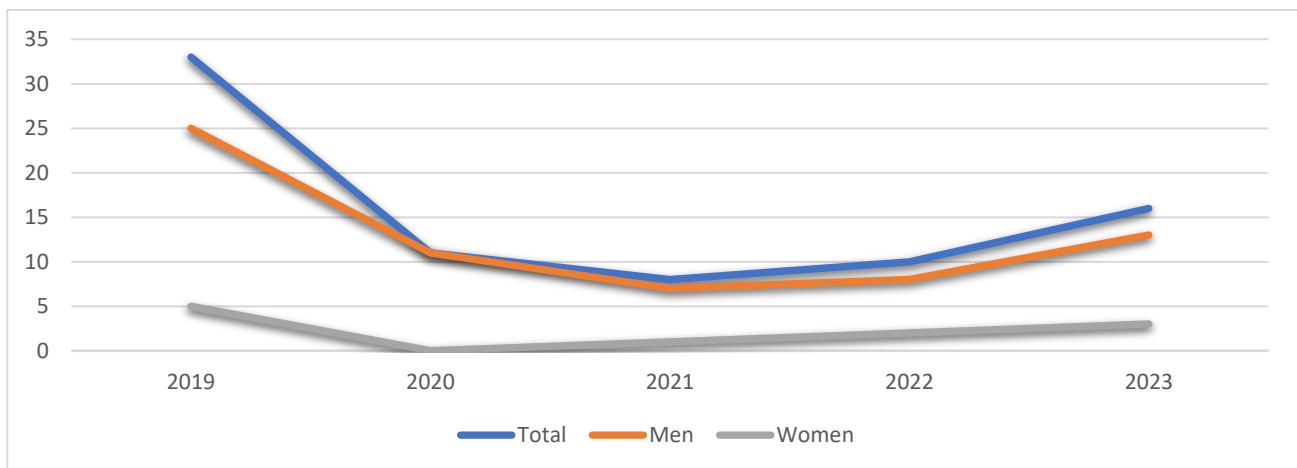
The council continues to work in partnership with West Sussex County Council and the district and borough council's in West Sussex to ensure a consistent approach to the provision of DFGs across the county. This allows local authorities across West Sussex to pool resources and increase access to grant funding for households who may otherwise have been ineligible and simplified the application process for others.

## 10.0 Rough sleeping

Rough sleeping is the most extreme form of homelessness and is defined as people either sleeping, about to bed down or bedded down in the open air (such as in the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters). People in buildings or places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, sheds, car parks and cars) are also included in this definition.

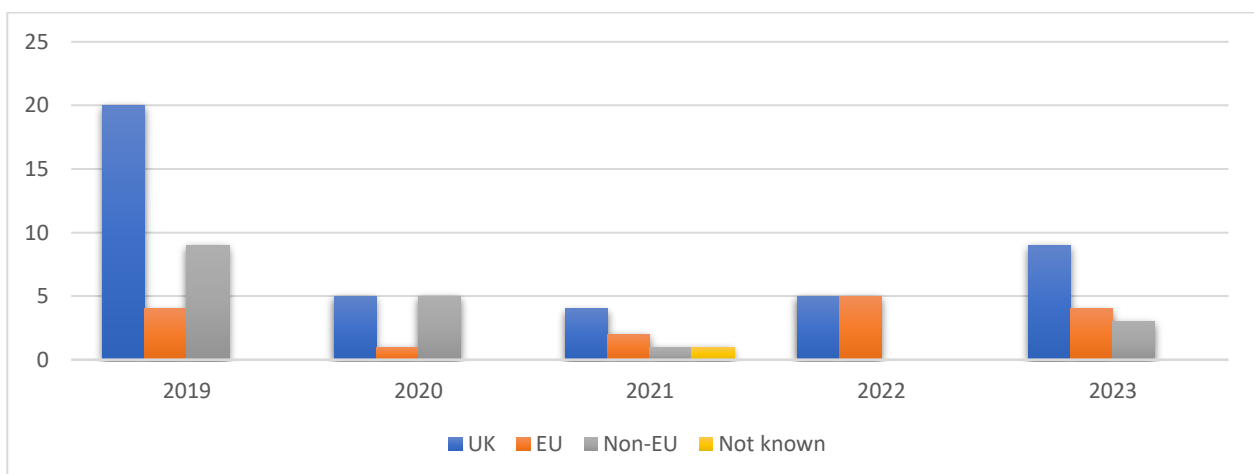
It can be difficult to obtain accurate data because many people hide in order to protect themselves and choose not (or are unable) to engage with services until they are ready. The government require local authorities to work in partnership with local agencies to submit an annual figure of people sleeping rough within their area on a typical chosen night between 1 October and 30 November, as a snapshot in order to monitor numbers at a national and local level. The results for Crawley are shown in charts 18 and 19. The drop in 2020 is due to the governments 'Everyone In' initiative introduced as a result of the Covid pandemic.

Chart 18: Annual rough sleeper figures for Crawley



Source: Crawley Borough Council

Chart 19: Annual rough sleeper figures for Crawley



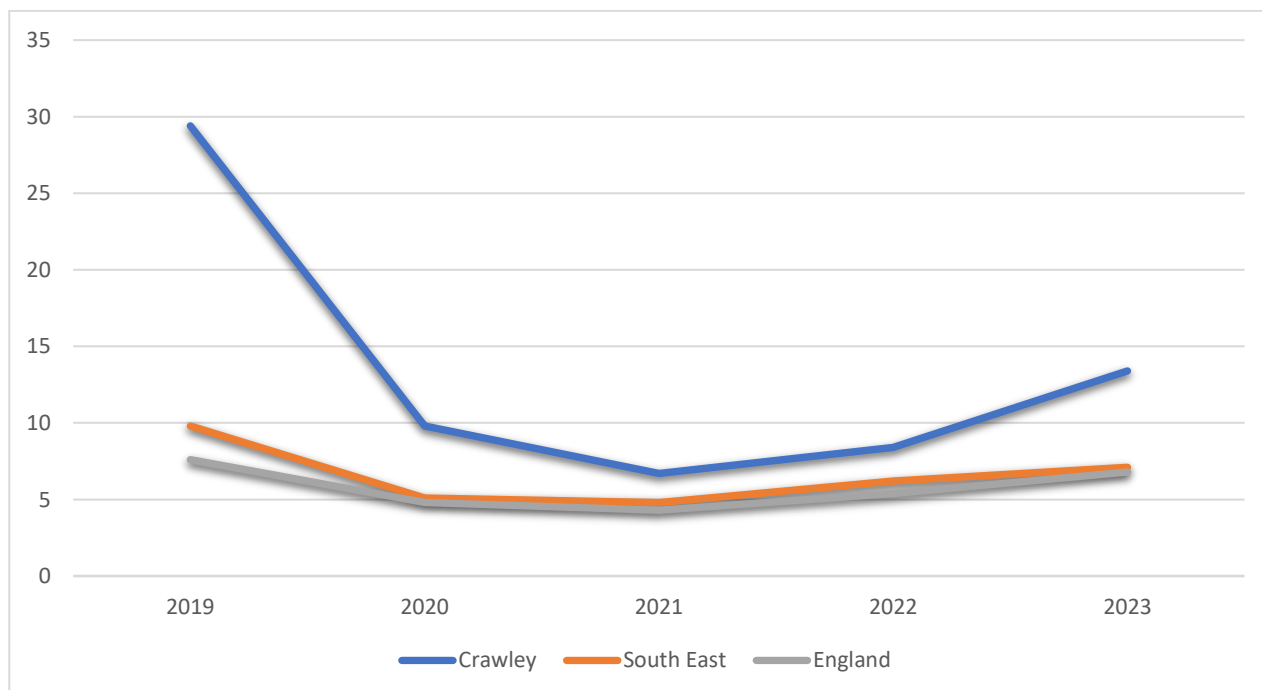
Source: Crawley Borough Council

Given the fluctuation in the number of people sleeping rough throughout the year, reporting annually only provides a small window into an issue that is impacted by weather, season, along with factors specific to an area. As well as the information above, during the pandemic all local authorities were required to collect and report information to DLUHC on a weekly and monthly basis, so that a more detailed understanding of the situation could be maintained. Monthly reports continue to be submitted to DLUHC and support the findings of the annual submissions that the majority of people sleeping rough in Crawley are male, UK nationals, over 25 years of age.

In comparison with the wider picture (see chart 20) Crawley has a high rate of people sleeping rough when compared with its population size, however this is impacted by the following factors:

- Crawley has Gatwick Airport within its borough boundary and people can arrive in the country with nowhere to go and no accommodation options available to them
- Crawley has externally provided services for rough sleepers within the town that can attract people from other areas who are wanting to access those services
- Crawley is seeing a rise in rough sleeper numbers as a result of asylum seekers being granted permission to live and work in the country but being asked to leave their hotel without any accommodation options available to them

Chart 20: Rate of people sleeping rough per 100,000 population



Source: Crawley Borough Council

The Council chaired a workshop inviting external partner organisations to attend and explore the fundamental issues that impact rough sleeping in Crawley. The findings are shown below.

What are the common factors in people sleeping rough / returning to rough sleeping in Crawley?

- lost accommodation (due to arrears, anti-social behaviour, alcohol/substance misuse, poor mental health, unaffordable, relationship breakdown, sent to/released from prison, or lost employment for example)
- no other options available (as friends/family are unable/unwilling to assist, unable to afford own accommodation, fled from another area/country)
- not able or received support to set up and sustain accommodation (due to poor money management, limited life skills, language barriers for example)
- issues (such as poor mental/physical health, alcohol/substance misuse, offending history) affecting willingness and ability to engage with services
- restricted access to services (such as doctors surgeries and banks) without a fixed address further isolates people
- inability to access services (such as mental health, adult social care, rehabilitation)
- behaviours become entrenched, further impacting willingness and ability to engage / accept an offer of accommodation)
- there have been examples of people arriving into Crawley via Gatwick Airport with no accommodation available to them or the means to fund their own accommodation
- having well known rough sleeper services in the town attracts people from other areas looking to use these services

Successes identified over the course of the review period:

- creation of the rough sleeper multidisciplinary team. A Rough Sleeper Coordinator (employed by the Council), Drug and Alcohol Outreach Worker (CGL), Mental Health Outreach Worker (Emerging Futures), Outreach/In-reach Worker, Resettlement Outreach Worker and Day Centre resettlement Work (Crawley Open House), who deliver holistic, person-centered services
- continued delivery of rough sleeper services throughout the Covid pandemic, including placements into emergency accommodation as part of the governments Everyone In initiative
- broadening the frequency, timing and extent of outreach service delivery
- A renewed focus on assisting people to sustain their accommodation, through the provision of home visits and additional sustainment focused staffing resources



- delivering 11 move on bed spaces in conjunction with Crawley Open House
- delivery of ten Council owned hostel rooms with targeted support in place
- Crawley Open House expanded to create a separate resource center and open the Laing rooms, eight self-contained flats for use as move on accommodation
- the introduction of a housing led pilot project utilizing five one-bedroom self-contained flats, with high level support provided by a Support Officer commissioned via Turning Tides
- engagement of Beam to assist ten people who have or are at risk of rough sleeping to access and sustain accommodation in the private rented sector
- linking in with roles funded by West Sussex County Council and delivered by Changing Futures, including the drug and alcohol treatment grant

#### Challenges over the review period:

- responding to Covid, the everyone in initiative and the challenges that evolved as the country emerged from the pandemic
- the presence of Gatwick Airport within the borough, the proximity to East Surrey hospital, the use by the Home Office of a number of hotels in and around the town as accommodation for asylum seekers. All can result in a transient population of people sleeping rough who do not have a local connection to Crawley
- uncertainty over rough sleeper funding beyond 31 March 2025
- recruitment and retention of staff within the multidisciplinary team
- the disparity between the Local Housing Allowance in the Crawley and Reigate Broad Rental Market Area and rental costs locally
- identifying and securing alternative severe weather accommodation. The Council moved away from communal shelter style accommodation during Covid towards nightly paid options such as hotels

#### An analysis of gaps within service provisions revealed the following:

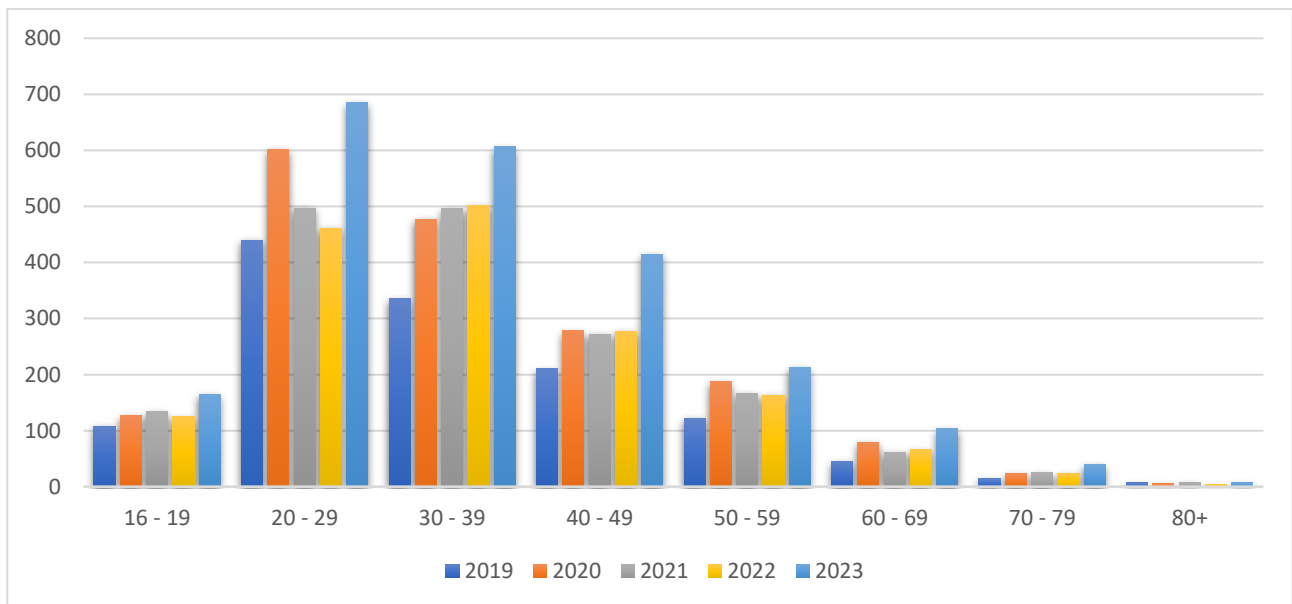
- partners organisations and service users can find it difficult to access NHS mental health services and adult social services through WSCC
- identifying and securing additional off the street accommodation provision
- identifying and securing move on options for people with medium/high support needs
- lack of accessible and affordable move on options for people who have received a positive decision on an asylum application and are being asked to leave Home Office funded hotel accommodation

## 11.0 Equality monitoring

The Public Sector Equality Duty (introduced through the Equality Act 2010) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people when carrying out their activities. We have assessed applicant data over the course of the review period and where necessary have recommended actions to address any issues identified.

**Age** – Chart 21 shows the age profile of applicants making a homeless application to the Council, showing a rising trend across all age groups approaching for advice and assistance, but with a marked increase in applicants in their twenties and forties between 2022 to 2023.

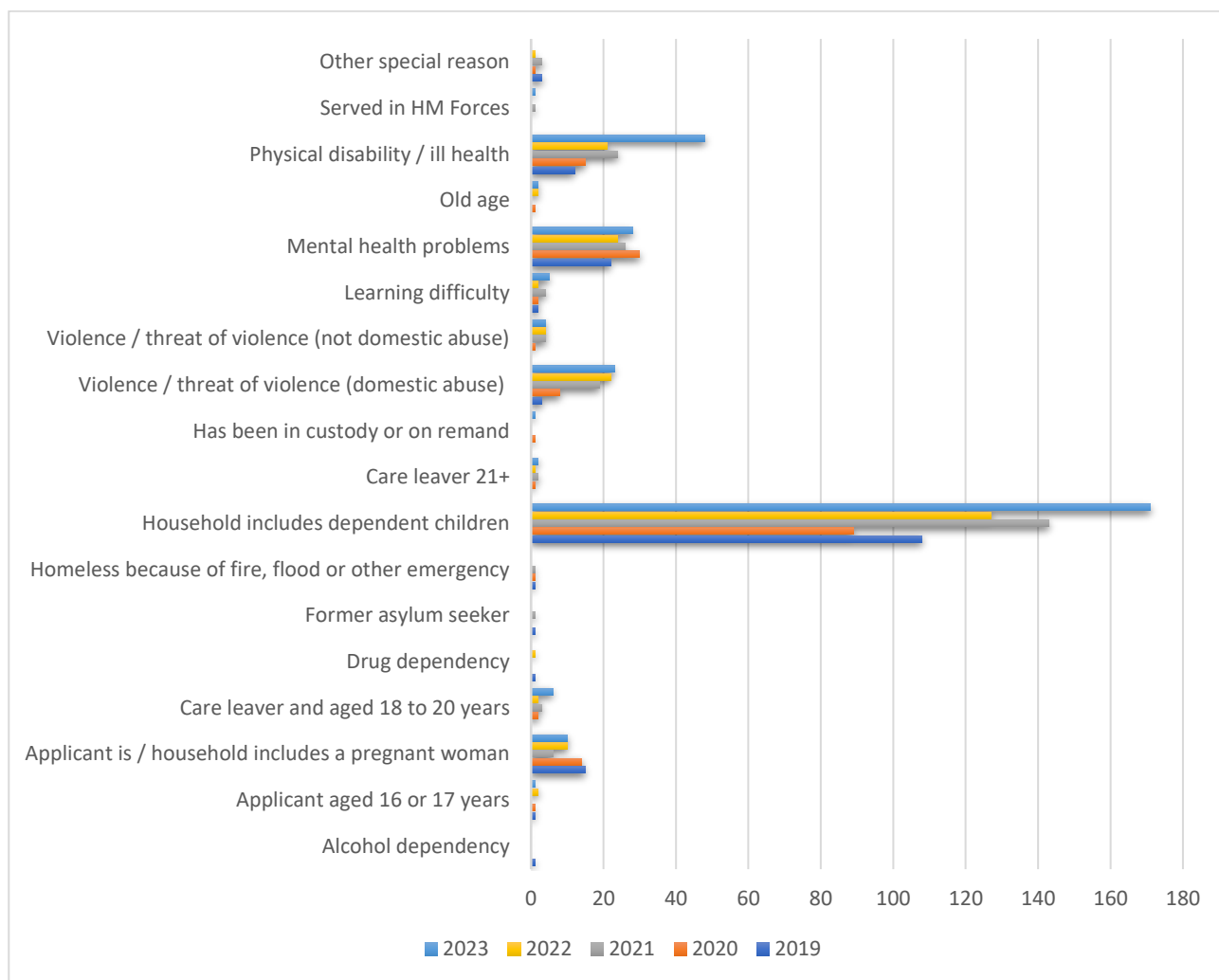
Chart 21: Age profile of lead applicant



Source: Crawley Borough Council

**Disability** – When assessing a homeless application, local authorities consider whether an applicant is in priority need (meaning they are vulnerable due to physical/mental ill health or for reasons connected to their circumstances). Disability can be a priority need under homelessness legislation (see chart 22), however the presence of dependent children within a household remains the most common reason for being in priority need. The data suggests that physical disability/ill health is increasing as a reason for being in priority need and is an emerging trend to be aware of.

Chart 22: Priority need of applicants owed a main duty

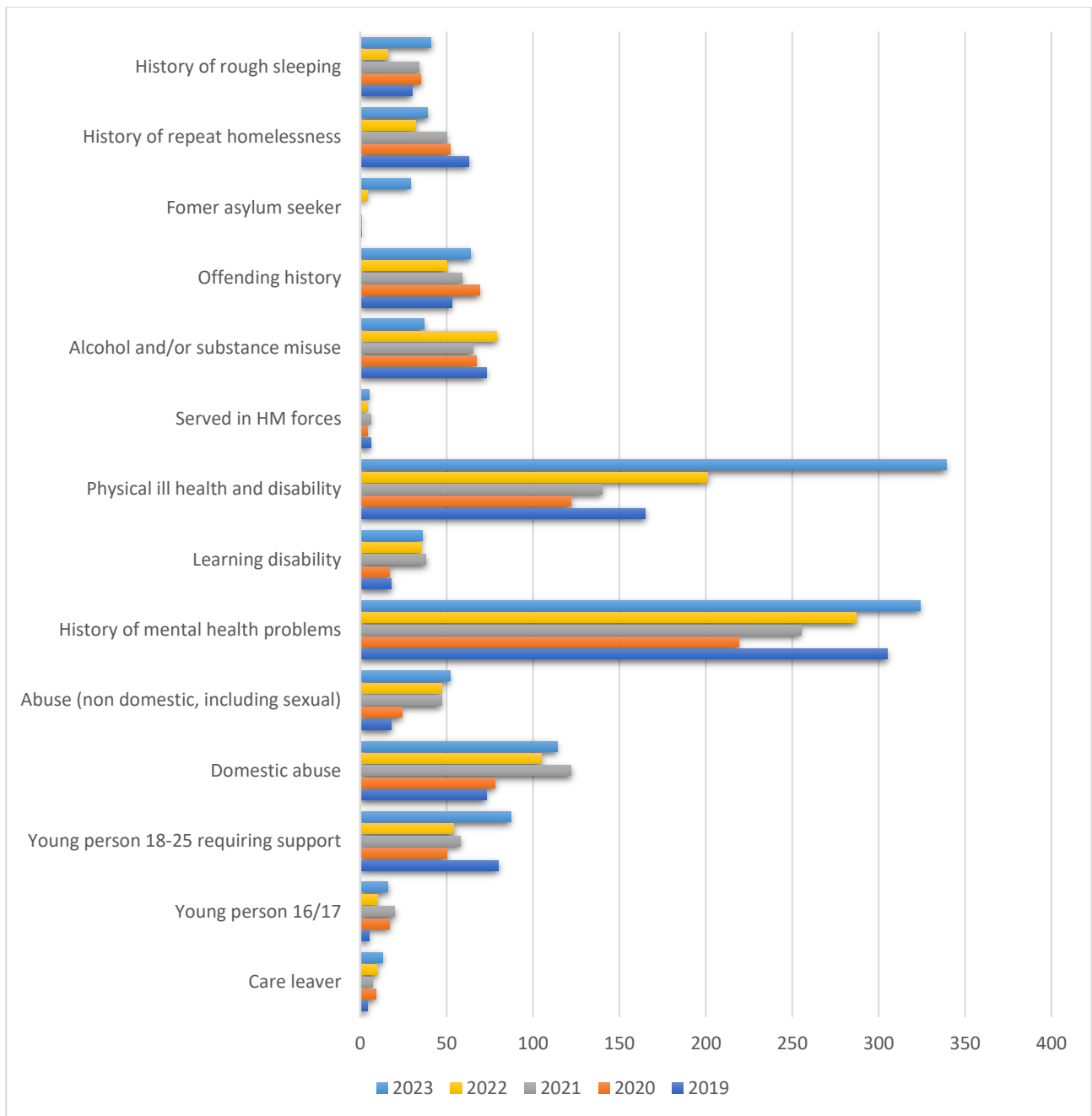


Source: Crawley Borough Council

This data may understate the scale of disabled applicants as applicants may have multiple reasons for being in priority need but only one is recorded and reported. In practice it is important that we know about all an applicants needs in order to put the relevant support in place where needed and to ensure offers of accommodation are suitable for the needs of the household.

Data regarding the support needs of applicant households is also collected and has been presented in chart 23, but will not include disabled applicants without an identified support need, therefore could also understate the scale of applications from people with a disability.

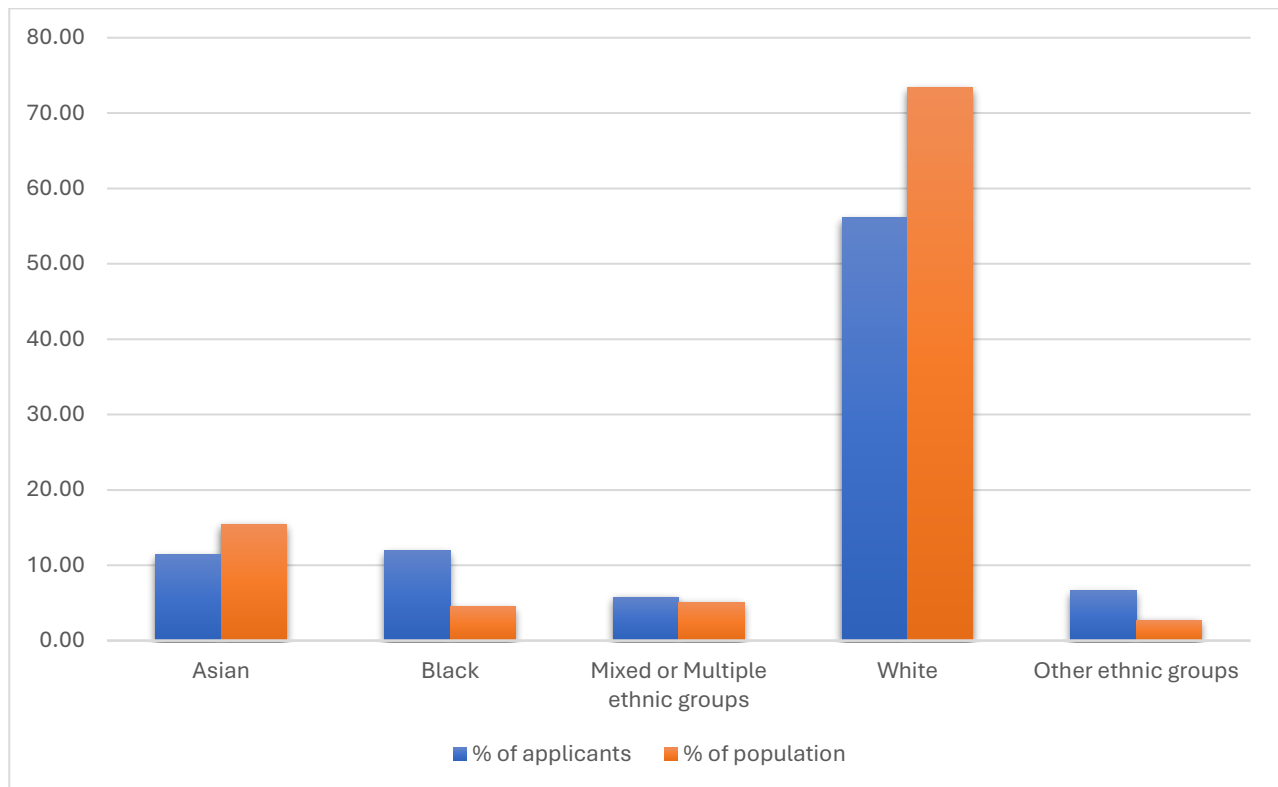
Chart 23: Support needs of all applicants



Source: Crawley Borough Council

**Race (Ethnicity)** – An outcome of the previous homelessness review was the recognition that certain communities were disproportionately affected by homelessness in Crawley in comparison with the general population. Chart 23 compares the ethnicity of homeless applicants with the population of Crawley and shows that people that black people remain disproportionately affected by homelessness in Crawley.

*Chart 23: Ethnicity of applicants in 2023 compared to the population of Crawley*

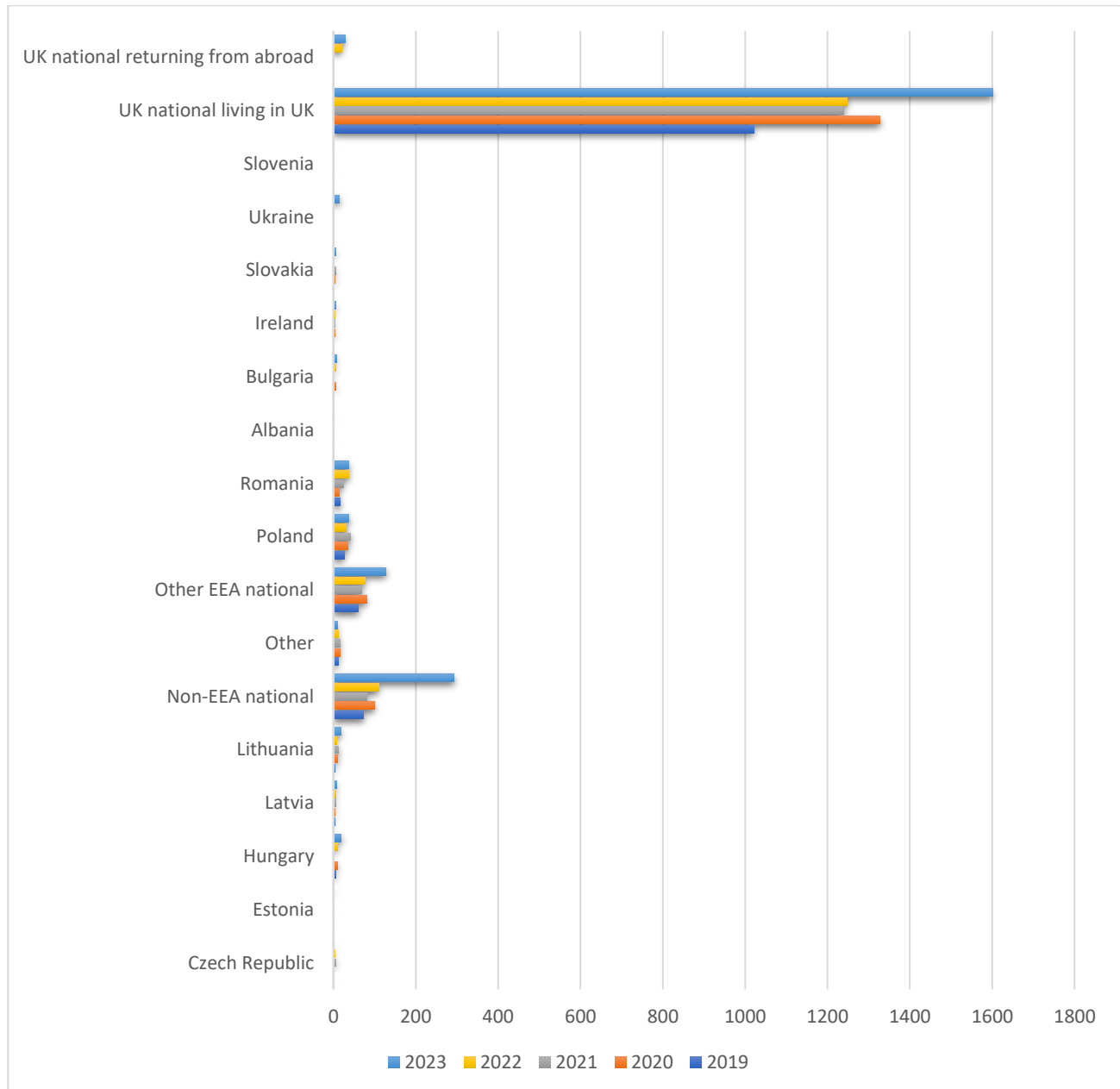


Source: Crawley Borough Council

A closer look at the data reveals that in 2023, this disparity was in part, due to migration into Crawley from people looking to start a new life in the UK. Crawley’s buoyant labour market and economy is attractive to people looking to live in the UK and there is a trend of households coming to the UK via Gatwick Airport (within the borough boundary) and choosing to settle and remain in Crawley. However, this does not explain the historic trend nor why it has continued. Further analysis of the data does not suggest or identify a cause for this trend.

**Race (Nationality)** – The demographic of applicants has changed over the past five years, with 2023 seeing a marked increase in applicants from non-EEA countries (see chart 24). As with ethnicity, this is predominantly due to approaches from people relocating from other countries who wish to live in the UK, including former refugees and asylum seekers who have been granted permission to remain in the country.

Chart 24: Nationality of applicants



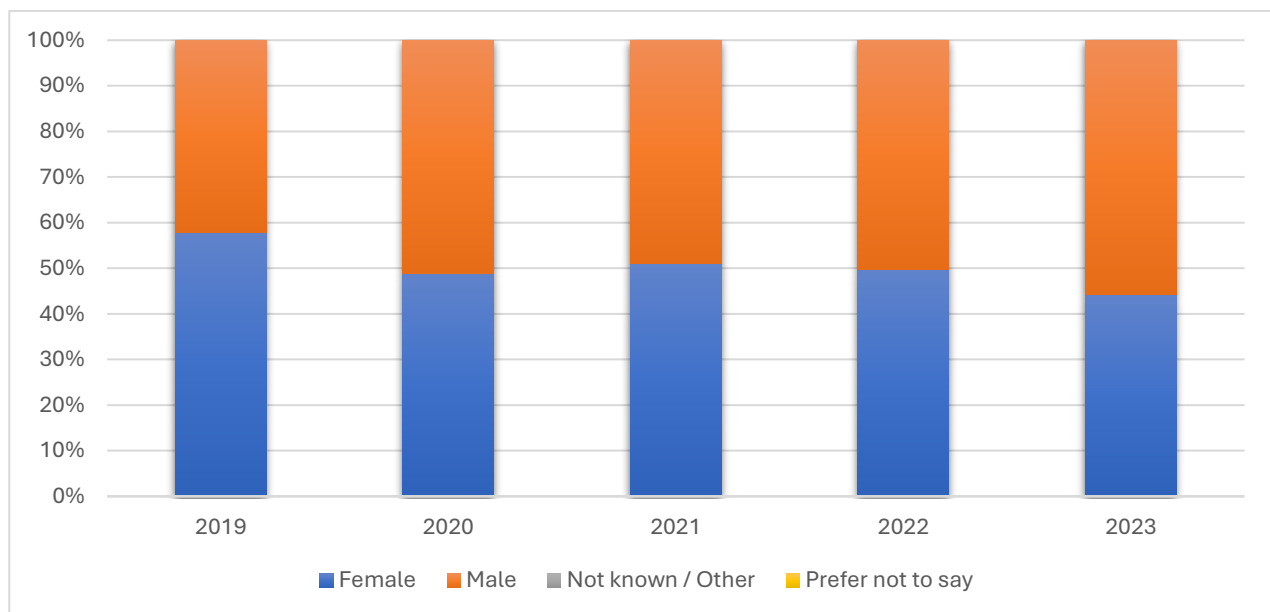
Source: Crawley Borough Council

**Race (Gypsy and traveler)** – The 2021 Census found 103 individuals who identified as ‘white: gypsy or Irish traveler’ and a further 337 individuals who identified as ‘White: Roma’ living in Crawley. Census 2021 data also suggests that 13 households within Crawley reside within a caravan or other mobile or temporary structure. This includes six gypsy and traveller households residing on three private sites in caravan accommodation, and three travelling showpeople households sharing a single site within the borough. The remaining individuals live in bricks and mortar accommodation.

Service users are under no obligation to provide information certain information. Only ten people identified as gypsy or traveler over the five-year period of the review, and therefore it is not possible to attach any statistical significance to the answers given. A person’s gypsy or traveler status would be considered in relation to an approach under homelessness legislation in accordance with the homelessness code of guidance and relevant case law.

**Gender** – Data on gender is collated using categories specified by Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) that give the options female, male, prefer not to say, not known/other. Chart 25 shows that the majority of applicants over the course of the review period identified as male. In 2020 this was impacted by the Everyone In initiative introduced by the government when Covid emerged, that encouraged local authorities to accommodate rough sleepers whilst the pandemic was most prevalent (as the majority of people sleeping rough in Crawley are male).

*Chart 25: Sex of applicants*



Source: Crawley Borough Council

**Gender re-assignment** – The data specification (issued by MHCLG) used to ensure consistency of data collection amongst local authorities was updated in April 2022 to ask whether the gender of the main applicant is the same as the gender registered at birth, however it is not yet possible to report on this data in order to assess this further.

**Religion or belief** – From April 2018 onwards this question was removed from the application form as it was not required for the quarterly data returns to DLUHC, therefore we do not hold this data.

**Sexual orientation** – Applicants are under no obligation to provide this information. A small percentage of people answer this question and therefore it is not possible to attach any statistical significance to the answers given, therefore no analysis of the results is presented in this review.

**Marriage and civil partnership** – Applicants are under no obligation to provide this information therefore the data we have is incomplete, therefore no analysis of the results is presented in this review.

**Pregnancy and maternity** – The presence of a pregnant women within a household constituted 5% of applicants deemed to be in priority need over the five year period of the review (see chart 22), whereas having one or more dependent children (which for the purpose of homelessness legislation is considered to be all children under 16 and all children aged 16-18 who are in or are about to begin full-time education or training or who for other reasons are unable to support themselves and who live at home) was the reason nearly 60% of applicants were found in priority need.



## 12.0 Funding services

Crawley Borough Councils finances are being put under increasing pressure:

- the Councils rough sleeping services, including the multidisciplinary team and outreach services, are funded by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local government administered funding streams, such as the 'Rough Sleeper Initiative' (RSI), that ends on 31 March 2025. At the time of drafting the review it is not known whether funding will continue beyond this point, and without it the majority of rough sleeping services would cease to operate as the Council and its partner organisations are not in a position to self-fund the work.
- the increase in the use and cost of nightly paid temporary accommodation has placed considerable strain on the Councils finances and is at a level that is not sustainable in the long term.
- the government decision to issue British citizenship to households formerly from the Chagosian islands has led to a significant increase in approaches in Crawley, affecting both the borough and county council. Whilst funding has been made available to local authorities in England and Wales, its timing and scope is limited and ultimately will not cover all costs incurred in supporting these households.
- Crawley, like many local authorities across the southeast, has a number of hotels in and near the borough that have been utilised by the Home Office for accommodating refugees and asylum seekers. This has resulted in an increase in approaches from people who have been granted leave to remain in the country. As each years homelessness prevention grant is based on previous years demand, this additional demand has not been calculated into the Councils funding, leaving the Council to tackle increasing levels of demand without the appropriate funding to do so.

The pressure from increasing homeless approaches and the resulting increasing use of and expenditure on temporary accommodation has placed unprecedented strain on the councils financial resources. In February 2024 Crawley Borough Council took the decision to declare a housing emergency. By declaring a housing emergency, the Council drew attention to the situation and highlighted the need for greater support and action from government who hold many of the key levers needed to address the crisis.

## 13.0 Local services

One of the functions of the homelessness review is to identify the resources available locally to assist in the prevention and relief of homelessness. In Crawley and the surrounding area there are a variety of services that support households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness (see below). Due to the geographically small area of Crawley, partnership working is essential in order to provide complimentary rather than duplicate services and work towards the shared purpose of preventing and relieving homelessness.

### Support services: -

- Crawley Open House – The resource center provides an accessible space for learning, education and support for rough sleepers in Crawley. Three roles commissioned through government funding and that form part of the multidisciplinary team are based here
- Turning Tides – Commissioned to support clients of the Councils housing-led pilot project
- CGL – The Drug and Alcohol Outreach Worker forms part of the multidisciplinary team that supports and works with rough sleepers in Crawley
- Emerging Futures – The Mental Health Outreach Worker forms part of the multidisciplinary team that supports and works with rough sleepers in Crawley
- Citizens Advice – Alongside the services they provide to the general public, they are commissioned to provide money advice to clients (such as debt advice, money management and budgeting, income maximisation for example)
- Transform Housing – Commissioned to provide floating support to households in temporary accommodation and tenancies created by the Council
- Employ Crawley – Help local people access employment support, advice, and guidance from specialist organizations in the town
- Pathways Home (Southdown Housing) – Commissioned to support clients to work towards building a pathway to independent living
- Changing Futures (via West Sussex County Council) - Commissioned to assist clients experiencing multiple disadvantage to receive flexible, trauma informed, person centered support when they need it

### Accommodation services: -

- Crawley Open House (hostel) – Providing hostel services to rough sleepers over the age of 18
- Turning Tides – Provide supported accommodation to homeless individuals needing additional support to move towards independent living
- Beam – Commissioned to support clients to access and sustain accommodation in the private rented sector.
- Camfield – Provides accommodation for single adults needing help to manage their lives and prepare for independent living
- Life House – Supported accommodation where young women who are pregnant or with a young child can the develop the life skills needed for independent living
- YMCA Downslink / Crawley Foyer – Supported accommodation for young people in crisis and facing homeless in Crawley

### Other services: -

- Childrens services (West Sussex County Council)
- Adult services (West Sussex Council Council)
- Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust – Co-location of a mental health housing specialist within the Councils homelessness services to facilitate and support joint working.

Crawley's Rough Sleeper / Street Community Group meet monthly to facilitate a multi-agency approach to support rough sleepers off the street and into long term accommodation, monitor the levels of rough sleeping and street community activity, share information and intelligence, reduce the level of risk and impact that they have on the local community, services and business through targeted support and enforcement (where unavoidable). The group includes representatives from Crawley Open House, Sussex Police, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Adult Social Care at West Sussex County Council, Gatwick Business Watch, and divisions across the Council including the Community Wardens and Strategic Housing.

Whilst the availability of support, services and partnership working in Crawley is strong, as part of the review, strategy and consultation, some gaps and opportunities for development have been identified. The strategy and accompanying action plan outline how the council will work with partner organisations and agencies towards meeting unmet need locally and filling these gaps.

## 14.0 Emerging trends

In 2024 the Council saw two trends emerge that will continue to affect the pressure on homelessness services going forward:

- a number of hotels within/near Crawley are being utilised by the Home Office to accommodate asylum seekers applying to remain in the country. If issued a positive decision, people are given little notice before they need to leave the hotel and are often not able to find alternative accommodation in that time. This has contributed towards an increase in approaches to the Council's homelessness services. Where a person is not believed to be in priority need, the Council have no legal duty to provide temporary accommodation to them under statutory homelessness legislation. This is increasing pressure on local services for rough sleepers.
- in 2022 the government announced the decision to give Chagosian citizens the right to apply to become British citizens. Any person/household that applies to a local authority as homeless or threatened with homelessness is assessed in accordance with homelessness legislation and statutory guidance. This includes the habitual residency test as part of the assessment of eligibility. British citizens that have entered the country but who fail the habitual residency test are ineligible for assistance. The Council are experiencing increasing volumes of applications from households who fail the habitual residency test. This is increasing pressure on homelessness services within the Council and Childrens and Adult Services at West Sussex County Council.

The increasing demand for and decreasing supply of temporary accommodation locally is increasingly leading to households being placed out of borough. Settled housing options for discharging homeless duties are also limited, as the supply of social housing decreases and the private rented sector becomes increasingly inaccessible. Customer expectations and aspirations however, do not always align with the realities of the housing crisis in Crawley. Managing customer expectations continues to be a significant challenge for the service.

## 15.0 Future levels of homelessness

Whilst it is difficult to accurately predict future levels of homelessness, given wider nationally led factors (such as the cost of living crisis) and the emerging trends outlined earlier, the following can be surmised:

- government plans to end rough sleeping will only be successful if long-term and sustainable funding is made available to local housing authorities and the wider national issues leading to people sleeping rough are tackled
- with high rent and property prices locally, many young people are living with family for longer or are returning to the familial home. Relationships can become strained and lead to eviction. This will remain a predominant cause of homelessness unless the fundamental causes of young people being unable to access affordable accommodation are tackled at a national level
- the end of an assured shorthold tenancy is likely to remain one of the predominant causes of homelessness, as the private rented sector continues to thrive in the wake of home ownership being unaffordable and inaccessible to many. Only action taken at a national level will address the issues within the private rented sector
- without the use of additional incentives, the council's ability to access the private rented sector is likely to remain limited. Given rising levels of homelessness, unlocking the private rented sector is key to reducing the pressure on social housing
- the delivery of new build social housing will remain stilted as the impact of water neutrality continues to be felt. This means lower levels of new build social housing becoming available via the housing register for a number of years
- multiple factors can lead to households being caught in a cycle of repeat homelessness. Introducing the right support at the right time to break the cycle is a key challenge for the future
- the profile of people approaching the council for assistance (age, gender, ethnicity and nationality for example) will continue to evolve in response to wider societal factors. Therefore, the services and support offered need to continue to evolve with it

By examining past and predicting future levels of homelessness, and factoring in local and wider pressures, four key priorities emerge. These provide focus for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 – 2029 and in turn will help shape the Tenancy Strategy 2025 - 2029:

**Priority one: Preventing homelessness and early intervention** – Addressing the risk of homelessness at its earliest stage is cost-effective (given the rising costs of temporary accommodation and limited access to affordable housing options) as well as less traumatic for the people involved. In order to achieve this the focus of Council services needs to shift upstream towards the delivery of prevention and early intervention-based model.

**Priority two: Accessing suitable and affordable accommodation** – The high demand for affordable housing in Crawley is characteristic of its location in the South East of England and its proximity to London. The council's ability to access suitable and affordable housing across multiple tenures is a priority for the future in order to continue to assist those in housing need.

**Priority three: Tackling rough sleeping and single homelessness** – The Council and its partner organisations will continue working towards ending rough sleeping in that it is 'prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurrent'.

**Priority four: Preventing repeat homelessness** – Sustaining accommodation can be really challenging for some people, especially if they have limited life skills/ experience and/or other issues that affect their ability to make sensible choices. Working in partnership with stakeholders across the Borough to help people break the cycle of repeat homelessness and access the support they need is therefore a priority for the future.