

Colchester's Housing and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Evidence Base 2019

This document contains the key data which provides the Evidence base for both Colchester's Housing and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies. The data used is the most up to date available at the time of collation.

The key information from the evidence base has been used to support the continued development of both strategies.

Background – Demographics

Colchester is the largest district in Essex, with a rapidly growing population and economy. Over the next 15 years Colchester is anticipated to experience one of the fastest growth rates within the county (ONS population projections)

Colchester has a population of 192,523 (mid-year estimate 2018) which is predicted to exceed a total of 200,000 residents by 2022.

As of 31 March 2019, the number of households in the borough was 82,055.

An estimated 45,550 young people (0-19 years) were living in the borough in mid-2018, which accounts for approximately 23.7% of the total population. This is a slight decrease from mid-2016 when young people accounted for 24% of the Colchester population.

In mid-2018 approximately 113,80 individuals were aged 20-64, equating to approximately 59.1% of the total population.

An estimated 33,113 people in Colchester were 65+ in mid-2018 accounting for an estimated 17.2% of the population. The percentage of older people in Colchester is expected to increase at a steady rate and it is predicted that by 2040 older people will form 21.6% of Colchester's population.

In the Government's Indices of Deprivation 2019, Colchester was ranked 181 (317 being the least deprived) and in 2015 Colchester ranked 185 (326 being the least deprived). Across Essex County, Colchester ranks as the 5th most deprived authority up one place from 2015 which means that deprivation has decreased slightly in Colchester.

The most deprived areas of the borough are: Magnolia, Forest and Salary Brook South (Greenstead Ward) and St Anne's Estate (St Anne's and St John's Ward) and the least deprived are: Bergholt (Lexden and Braiswick Ward) and Drury (New Town and Christ Church Ward).

Dwellings in Colchester

The table below shows the number of dwellings in Colchester by tenure as at 1st April 2018. There has been an increase in the total number of dwellings from 1st April 2017 when there were 79,520 and in 2016 when there were 78,610. However, there has been a decrease in the number of dwellings owned by the Local Authority from 6,040 in 2016 and 5,980 in 2017.

Table 1: Dwellings in Colchester by tenure

Local Authority (incl. owned by other LAs)	Private Registered Provider	Other public sector	Private sector	Total
5,950	5,150	20	69,450	80,570

Source: MHCLG live tables

Housing Development

Number of homes delivered

Between April 2017 and March 2018, a total of **1048** new homes were built in Colchester and between April 2018 and March 2019 there were **1165** new homes built.

Source: Colchester Borough Council Annual Position Statement 2019.

Number of affordable homes delivered

During the year April 2018 to March 2019 a total of **125** new affordable homes were completed in Colchester.

Table 2: Affordable homes delivered

Type of affordable housing	Number of homes completed
Registered Provider for renting	94
Shared ownership	23
Social Rent (CBC)	8
Total	125

Source: Colchester Borough Council Registered Provider returns

The areas where these homes were completed included Chesterwell (Northern Gateway), Axial Way, Factory Hill Tiptree, Warren Lane Stanway, Severalls Hospital site, The Garrison, Wyvern Farm and Halstead Road Stanway.

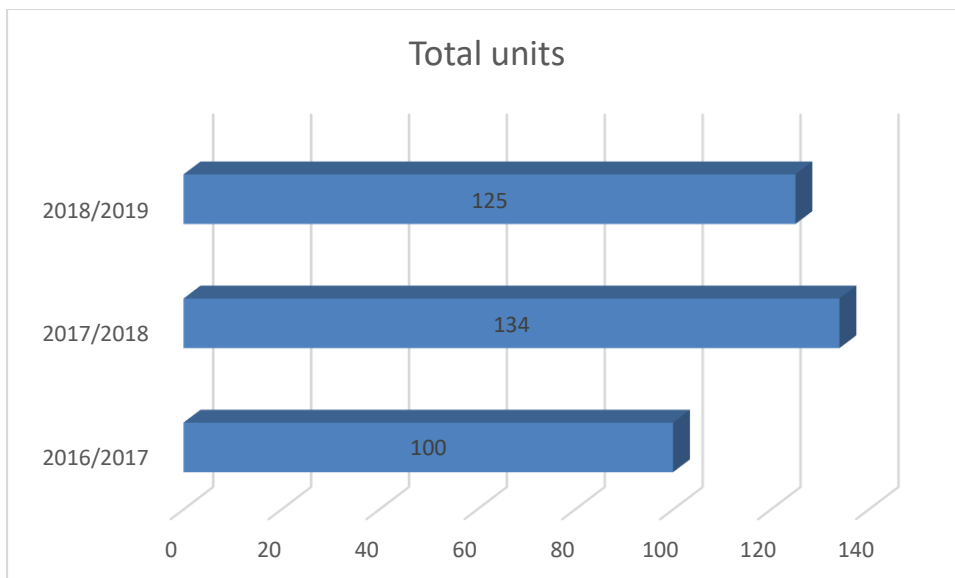
Colchester Borough Council also partnered with Haig Housing Trust on an open market purchase project where Haig acquired 7 homes for ex service

personnel. Colchester Borough Council also purchased back 8 ex local authority properties through the Right to Buy Back scheme. These properties were one and two bed flats, a two-bed house and some three bed houses. The wards in which these properties were situated in Colchester, includes; Castle, Berechurch, St Anne's, St John's, Rural North, Prettygate and Shrub End. All properties purchased back have been let at Social rent.

The graph below shows the total number of new affordable homes completed in each year since 2016.

The Housing Strategy's target for affordable housing delivery for 2015-20 is 426 units. The total number of units completed over the last 3 years is 469, exceeding the 5-year target.

Figure 1: Affordable Housing Completions



Source: CBC Registered Provider returns

House prices in Colchester

The table below compares the changes in both the overall average house price and the average lower quartile house price from the previous year. The lower quartile house price is the bottom of the market - usually smaller homes and flats.

Table 3: House prices

House prices in Colchester

Date	April 2019	April 2018
Average price of home	£291,855	£291,226
Lower quartile price	£210,000	£207,000

Source: Hometrack

The figures indicate that over the last year house prices have remained consistent.

The Private Sector

In Colchester the demand for private rented accommodation is high and rents continue to rise.

Table 4 below compares the weekly rents in the private and public sectors against the Local Housing Allowance rates in Colchester in 2019.

Table 4: Public and Private Sector rent comparison (weekly) 2016 vs 2019

Colchester (Borough) Rents £/pw	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Housing Association	87	103.8	120.1	not available
Private - 30th Percentile	132 (-7)	172 (+10)	213 (+6)	288 (+9)
Private - 80% Median (affordable rent definition)	110 (-6)	146 (+8)	184 (+6)	250 (+8)
Private – Median	138 (-7)	183 (+10)	230 (+7)	312 (+10)
Private - Upper Quartile	158 (+3)	206 (+16)	265 (-3)	351 (+8)
Local Housing Allowance	106.67 (103.56)	136.29 (132.32)	165.93 (161.1)	210.62 (204.49)
80% rents vs LHA	-£3.33	-£9.71	-£18.07	-£39.38

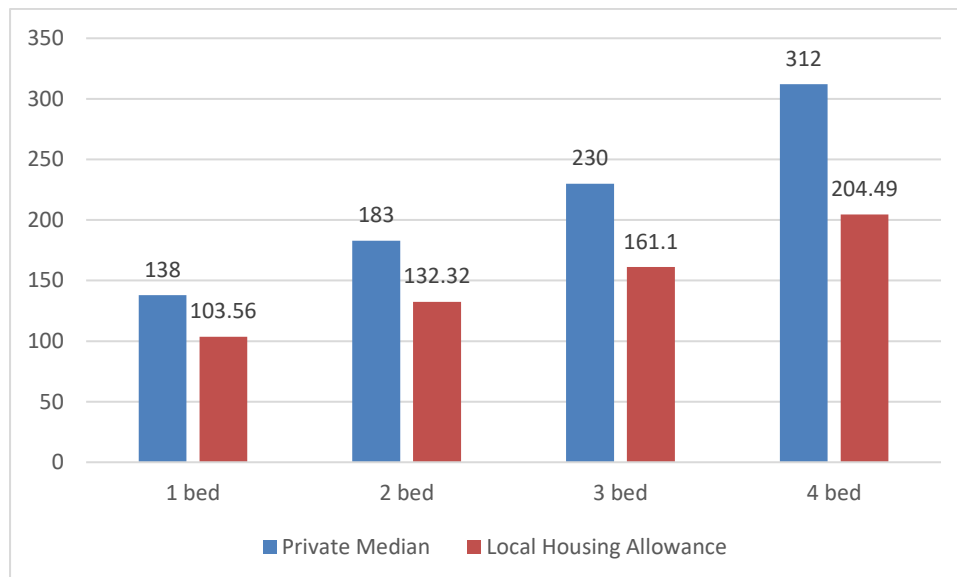
Source: Hometrack and compared to rents and LHA rate in March 2016. Figures in brackets show 2016 values.

The table indicates that although rents have reduced slightly for 1-bedroom properties they have continued to rise for 2,3 and 4-bedroom properties. The Local Housing Allowance (Housing Benefit in the private sector) has only risen slightly for all property sizes following a government-imposed freeze for four years.

Although the affordable housing providers in Colchester are charging rents within the local housing allowance, this is not the case in the private rented sector. Therefore, renting in the private sector continues to be unaffordable for those in receipt of welfare benefits.

Figure 2 below shows the difference between the weekly costs of renting a property in the private sector in Colchester compared to the Local Housing Allowance rate.

Figure 2: Local Housing Allowance vs Private Sector rents



Source: Hometrack

The Housing Register

Colchester holds a housing register of people interested in Council or Registered Provider homes. Households eligible to join the register are assessed according to need and 'banded' as to their priority for rehousing. There are five bands (Bands A - E), depending on the assessed level of housing need.

The table below shows the number of households on the Housing register according to band as at 30th April 2019.

Table 5: Households on the register according to band

Banding	Number of households on register
A	83
B	582
C	784
D	180
E	1478
Total	3107

Gateway to Homechoice, 30th April 2019

The table below shows the number of households on the register by the number of bedrooms required. The highest demand as at 30th April 2019 was for two-bedroom accommodation.

Table 6: Households on the register according to number of bedrooms required

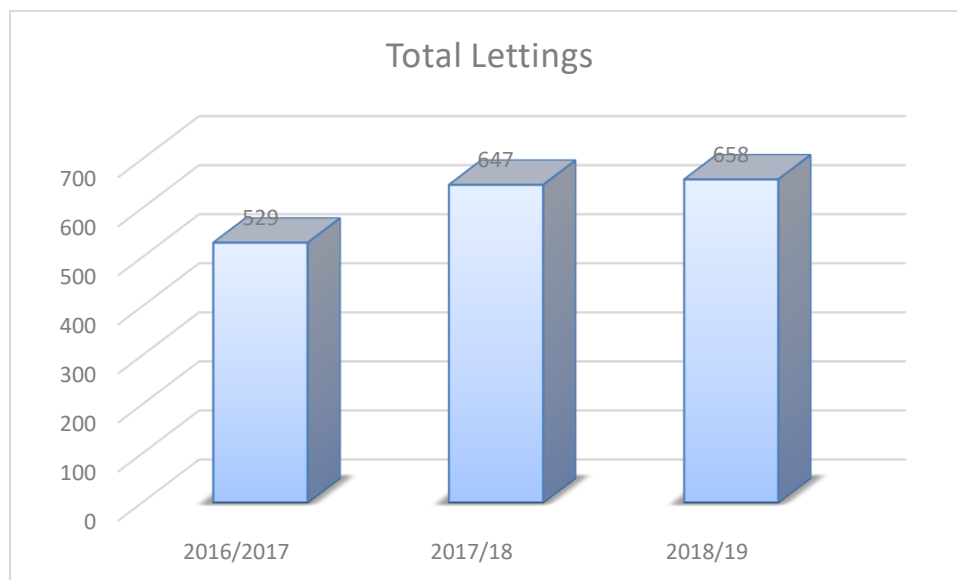
Number of bedrooms required	Number of households on the register
One	870
Two	1256
Three	796
Four or more	185
Total	3107

Gateway to Homechoice, 30th April 2019

Social Housing Allocations and Nominations

Figure 5 below shows the total number of lettings to Council and Registered Provider properties in Colchester in the last 3 years. (This figure includes lettings to transfer applicants but does not include applicants that have moved via mutual exchange).

Figure 3: Lettings to Council and Registered Provider Properties



Source: Civica

The number of lettings significantly increased by 22% between 2016-17 and 2017-18, with a slight increase in the last year. However, it should be noted that in 2016-17 there was a significant reduction in the number of lettings compared to the preceding years as in 2014-15 there were 803 and in 2015-16 there were 752.

The percentage of lettings by type of applicant has changed significantly in the last year as shown in the table below.

The percentage increase in transfer applicants will help create a ‘churn’ by freeing up properties for other households on the housing register. The main influence on this increase during 2018/19 was the closure of Maytree Court with 14 residents transferring during the year.

Other significant changes include a new Registered Provider development of 4 bed homes, providing scope for several tenants to transfer to a larger home, along with incentives (including priority on the housing register) to encourage tenants to downsize freeing up larger properties for families. In terms of the number of lets to transfers, these increased by 89 in 2018/2019.

Table 7: Percentage of applicants housed through Gateway to Homechoice

Type of applicant	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Direct	36	30	26
Homeless	39	38	29
Transfer	25	32	45

Source: Civica

Right to buy

Table 8 below shows the number of Council homes sold to tenants under the national Right to Buy scheme for the last 3 years. In the last year there has been a significant decrease (37%) in the number of homes sold under the scheme.

Table 8: Homes sold under RTB

Year	Total homes
2016/2017	51
2017/2018	46
2018/2019	29

Source: CBC data

Homelessness in Colchester

Detailed information on people that have made a homelessness application to Colchester Borough Council up until 2018-19 was recorded on the P1E returns that were sent to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) quarterly.

The P1E provided data on households who presented themselves as homeless to the Local Authority, and those who were accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need. Although information from the P1E provided an indicator of homelessness in Colchester it did not represent the whole picture.

The Homelessness Reduction Act

The new Act became law in April 2017 and came into force in April 2018. The government published a new code of guidance that set out in more detail how the changes should be implemented.

The new Homelessness Reduction Act includes two main duties:

The Prevention duty – requires councils to intervene to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage, when a household is at risk of losing their home in the next 56 days.

This includes private sector tenants who are served with an eviction notice.

The Relief duty - requires councils to offer more advice and support to anyone who is already homeless, regardless of whether they are in priority need and may involve offering accommodation.

Councils must also draw up personalised plans for people that are homeless and anyone who is at risk of becoming homeless.

In addition to these two main duties, public authorities that have contact with clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness will be required to refer them to local authorities with the person's consent.

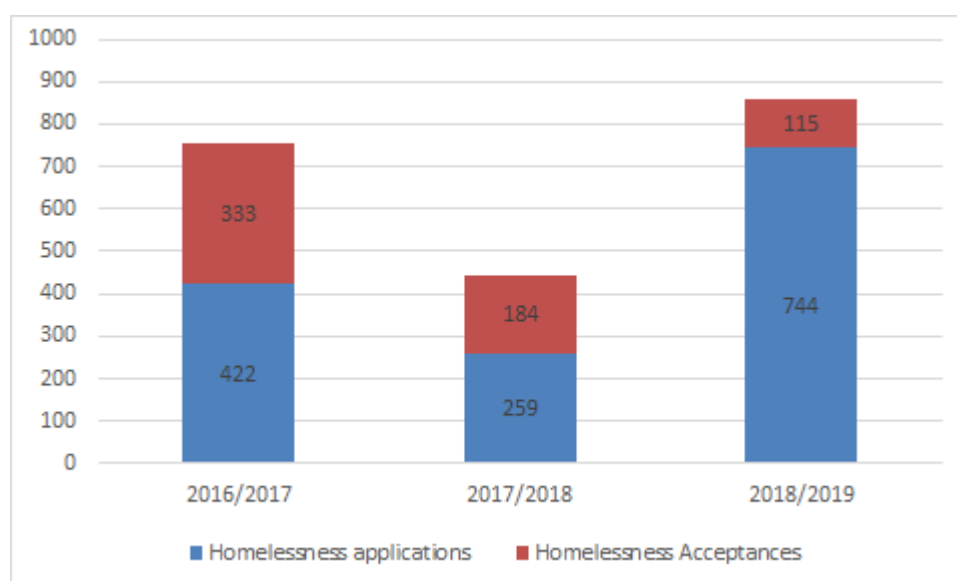
The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will also require additional information from Local Authorities on homeless clients in order to monitor the impact of the main duties. A new recording system has been set up to capture this information known as H – CLIC.

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act has had an impact on the way the Council's housing service is delivered. Actions to monitor the impact on homelessness have been incorporated into the Housing and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies Delivery Plans.

As the statistics are new and still at an experimental stage, we have only been able to provide the headline information. This is a national position and not unique to Colchester.

The graph below shows the total number of Homelessness applications and acceptances for the last 3 years.

Figure 4: Applications and Acceptances



Source: DCLG P1E/MHCLG H-CLIC

During 2017/18 the number of homelessness applications in Colchester decreased by 39% from the previous year. This follows the national trend as in England local housing authorities made 25,750 decisions on homeless applications in January to March 2018 which was 10% lower than in the same quarter of 2017 when there were 28,430 applications.

The number of homelessness acceptances also decreased by 45% in 2017/18 from the previous year. Between 1 January and 31 March 2018 local authorities in England accepted a homelessness duty to 13,320 households, which was down 9% on the same quarter of the previous year when the number of acceptances were 14,600.

The significant differences in the figures for 2018-19 from the previous year are due to the changes in legislation and are therefore not directly comparable.

Information from the MHCLG Statistical release states; “The 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act amendments to statutory homelessness duties mean that any household approaching a local authority for assistance on or after the 3rd April 2018 was assessed under different criteria than previously. Local authorities are required to make inquiries into a homeless application whenever they have reason to believe that an applicant household may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days. Applicants threatened with becoming homeless within 56 days who are eligible for assistance, will be owed a prevention duty. Those already homeless will be owed a relief duty. These duties are owed irrespective of whether the applicant may or may not have **priority need** or considered to be **‘intentionally homeless’**”.

Households in temporary accommodation

The table below shows the total number of households in temporary accommodation as at 31st March for the last 3 years. From 31st March 2017 to 31st March 2018 there was a significant decrease of 25% in the number of households accommodated and at the end of March 2019 there was a slight increase.

Table 9: Households in Temporary accommodation (TA)

TA snap shot as at:	31-Mar-17	31-Mar-18	31-Mar-19
Total	204	154	179

Source: DCLG P1E

Homelessness Prevention

Due to the change in legislation the information previously provided is no longer being recorded in the same way:

- Homelessness Prevention and Relief statistics from partner agencies can no longer be added to the Housing Solutions Team statistics, as they were previously, and the criteria for prevention has changed.

The timeframes used to measure prevention or relief of homelessness under the new legislation (56 days for prevention and a further 56 days for relief) mean that reliable statistics were not available for at least the first 9 months of 2018-19, this has been acknowledged by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The table below shows the total number of cases where homelessness was prevented by the Housing Options Team and partner organisations in Colchester, for the 3 years prior to 2018-19 when the Homelessness Reduction Act was introduced.

Table 10: Homelessness Prevention cases

Homelessness Prevention	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Total cases	572	648	869

Source: DCLG P1E

Table 10 above shows that since 2015 there has been a significant increase in the number of households that have been prevented from becoming homeless.

Table 11 below shows the number of cases where homelessness has been prevented or relieved for each quarter of 2018 – 2019 by the Housing Solutions Team at Colchester Borough Homes.

Table 11: Homelessness Prevention and Relief cases

	Qtr 1: April-June 2018	Qtr 2: July-September 2018	Qtr 3: October-December 2018	Qtr 4: January-March 2019
Homelessness Prevention/Relief	22 prevented 9 relieved	38 prevented 17 relieved	54 prevented 29 relieved	72 prevented 35 relieved

Source: MHCLG H-clic

In 2018 – 2019 the total number of households that were prevented from becoming homeless by the Housing Solutions Team were 186 and 90 households were relieved from homelessness.

Customer Support Team

The Customer Support Team provides support and guidance to our more vulnerable residents or those navigating complex situations. The team operates from the Library and Community Hub in Colchester Town Centre.

The team's specialist officers provide advice and support in the areas of Welfare Reform, Welfare Benefits and employment. The team also assess applications to discretionary funds. The team works very closely with Colchester Borough Homes Housing Solutions Team and other partners within the wider community.

Welfare Benefit Advice and Employment Support

Stabilising and then maximising income are key factors in securing or maintaining a tenancy. In 2018/19 the team assisted 537 residents in relation to Welfare Benefit and Employment advice.

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)

Each year Local Authorities receive a government grant, to support those receiving Housing Benefit or the Housing Element of Universal Credit, who need extra help with their housing costs. Colchester Borough Council contributes an additional £50k to this grant.

Table 12: Colchester Borough Council DHP grant allocations:

Year	Government Grant	CBC	Total
2018/2019	£394,224	£50,000	£444,224
2019/2020	£324,348	£50,000	£374,348

The Customer support team works with several partners and organisations locally to help with the decision-making process and deliver longer term solutions to residents to retain tenancies and prevent homelessness.

In order to maximise the support offered to the residents of Colchester, the team ensure that the Council's Discretionary Funds are fully allocated each financial year.

In 2018 the team awarded Discretionary Housing Payments to 718 residents.

Single Homeless and Rough Sleepers

There are a significant number of single homeless people in Colchester that the Council does not owe a main duty to house because they are not in priority need as set out by homelessness legislation.

Voluntary sector organisations in Colchester provide valuable advice, support and accommodation for the growing number of single homeless people.

The Youth Enquiry Service (y.e.s) offers support to young people between the ages of 16 to 25 who are faced with homelessness or are threatened with homelessness. Y.e.s also offers counselling, support with debts and benefit eligibility and a teenage pregnancy service offering support to young parents and young parents to be.

- Between April 2017 and March 2018, y.e.s supported 302 clients and helped 69 clients into accommodation to prevent them from becoming homeless.
- Between April 2018 and March 2019, y.e.s supported 317 clients and helped 59 clients into accommodation to prevent them from becoming homeless.

Colchester Emergency Night Shelter (CENS) provides emergency accommodation for homeless people aged 18 and over. The Night Shelter works with its residents to address any support needs and to assist them in finding secure housing.

- Between April 2017 and March 2018, CENS ran at 82% occupancy which equated to **5,972** bed nights. **209** clients stayed at CENS of which **97** moved on into accommodation
- Between April 2018 and March 2019, CENS ran at 79% occupancy which equated to **5,803** bed nights. **172** clients stayed at CENS of which **94** moved on into accommodation

Rough Sleepers

Local Authorities are required to provide a figure for the number of people rough sleeping in the area to the government on an annual basis; this can either be by way of a count or by providing an estimate from information gathered from local organisations.

In November 2018 a street count was conducted on one night in Colchester and 13 people were found to be sleeping rough. This is a significant reduction on the previous year when 20 rough sleepers were found.

In December 2016 Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council put in a joint bid for funding as part of the DCLG Rough Sleeper programme. CBC were the lead authority for the funding and Co-ordinated the bid. The amount of funding secured was £239,375.

The funding was used to provide an Early Response Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator in both Colchester and Tendring local authority's, in Colchester this was delivered by Colchester Borough Homes.

The funding provided an opportunity to retain a more co-ordinated approach to preventing homelessness and rough sleeping in each area. The Co-ordinators worked with local partner organisations who have the skills and expertise in this field, to develop a more targeted and assertive approach to rough sleeping and to support and help secure accommodation for people living on the street.

In May 2018 the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) identified Colchester as an area eligible to bid for additional funding during 2018/19 to further reduce rough sleeping. CBC in conjunction with CBH, were successful in securing £192,683 of funding. 4 key interventions were identified for the funding:

- To provide an assertive street outreach service, especially out of hours provision and helping those rough sleepers who have no local connection to Colchester return to the area where they do have a local connection.
- To provide an opportunity to pilot a 'Housing First' approach for 6 months with a Registered Provider that provides supported housing (The concept of Housing First is to provide a stable home and intensive personalised support and case management to homeless people with multiple and complex needs).
- To Increase bed spaces and support staff capacity at Colchester Night Shelter, specifically, for Colchester people at risk of rough sleeping.
- To provide continuous Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) from the end of October - mid March, with specialist support staff to prevent people moving back to the street once the provision ends.

Outcomes from December 2018 to the end of April 2019:

- 25 rough sleepers have been supported into emergency accommodation
- 7 rough sleepers have been supported into temporary accommodation
- 7 rough sleepers have been supported into long term accommodation
- 10 rough sleepers have been reconnected back to the area from which they came
- 4 people at risk of rough sleeping were supported into accommodation and prevented from living on the street
- The Housing First scheme has been successful in supporting 2 people to move on into more permanent accommodation.
- 21 rough sleepers have been referred and accepted into Colchester Emergency Night Shelter.

Colchester Borough Council were also invited to bid for further funding to continue the interventions for 2019-20. Further funding of £204,753 has been awarded.

In total **£517,123.50** of funding has been secured from the three government funding streams to prevent, reduce and support rough sleepers in Colchester.

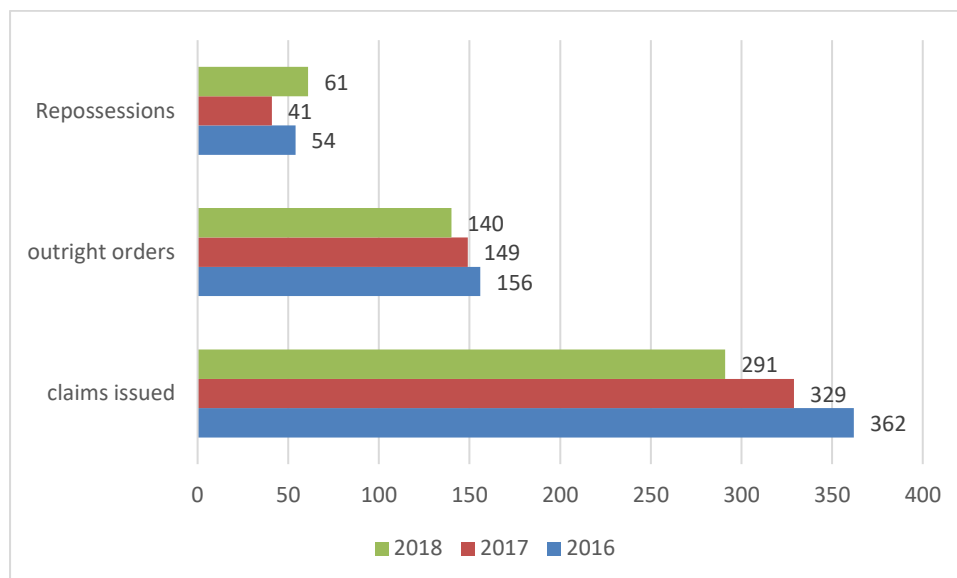
In addition to the annual rough sleeper street counts, areas that have received government funding are required to do counts every 2 months. On 31st May 2019 the count found 7 people sleeping rough which gives a good indication of the success that the interventions are having on rough sleeping in Colchester.

Possession actions in the private and public sector

Landlord possession actions

As shown in the graph below, there has been a significant decrease of 20% in the number of Landlord possession claims issued in the social and private rented sectors in Colchester, from 2016 to 2018. The number of outright orders has also slightly decreased over the same period. These figures are in line with the long-term decreasing trend nationally since 2014. However, the number of repossessions in the local authority area increased by 49% between 2017 and 2018.

Figure 5: Landlord Possession Actions



Source: Ministry of Justice statistics

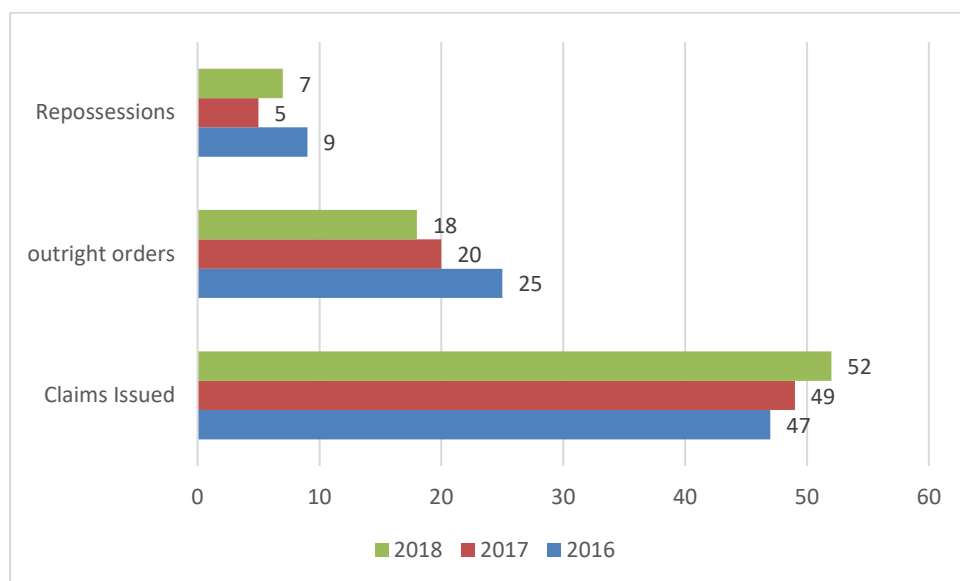
Mortgage Possession actions

The graph below shows that there has been a slight increase in the number of mortgage possession claims in Colchester since 2016. However there has been a slight decrease in the number of outright orders.

This follows the national trend which showed that claims for possession in October to December 2018 were up by 30% from the same quarter in 2017.

It is too early to establish if this is a reversal of the downward trend between 2009 and 2015 or a fluctuation in the number of claims received.

Figure 6: Mortgage Possession Actions



Source: Ministry of Justice (MOJ) statistics

The number of repossessions has fluctuated over the last 3 years.

Social Housing Evictions

The table below shows the number of evictions due to rent arrears and anti social behaviour (ASB) made by Colchester Borough Homes over the last 3 years. Since 2016 there has been a reduction in evictions for rent arrears alone but an increase in evictions for households due to rent arrears and ASB. Tenancy Sustainment Officers continue to help tenants sustain their tenancies and reduce the number of those losing their properties through eviction.

Table 13: Evictions – CBC properties

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
For Rent Arrears	10	8	7
For ASB	6	4	4
For Both	1	1	6

Source: Local Authority Housing Statistics

Housing Standards – Private Sector dwellings

The Private Sector Housing (PSH) team is responsible for ensuring that all properties not owned by CBC are safe and do not present unacceptable hazards to occupiers. This includes the Private Rented sector, properties owned by registered providers and owner-occupied properties.

The number of service requests from tenants complaining about disrepair in their privately rented property, over the last 3 years is as follows:

Table 14: Service requests from tenants

2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
208	195	174

Source: PSH data

Since 2014 the PSH Team has introduced a robust method of monitoring of hazards removed and homes improved. The following table shows the total number of serious hazards removed by the PSH team for the last 3 years.

Table 15: Serious hazards removed

2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
324	326	324

Source: PSH data

The table below shows the number of homes that have been improved in the private sector over the last 3 years.

Table 16: Homes improved

2016 -17	2017-18	2018-19
158	112	90

Source: PSH data

The following table shows the number of Improvement Notices served for Category 1 and 2 hazards on non-compliant landlords to secure compliance with housing standards, over the last 3 years.

Table 17: Improvement Notices served

2016 -17	2017-18	2018-19
7	9	15

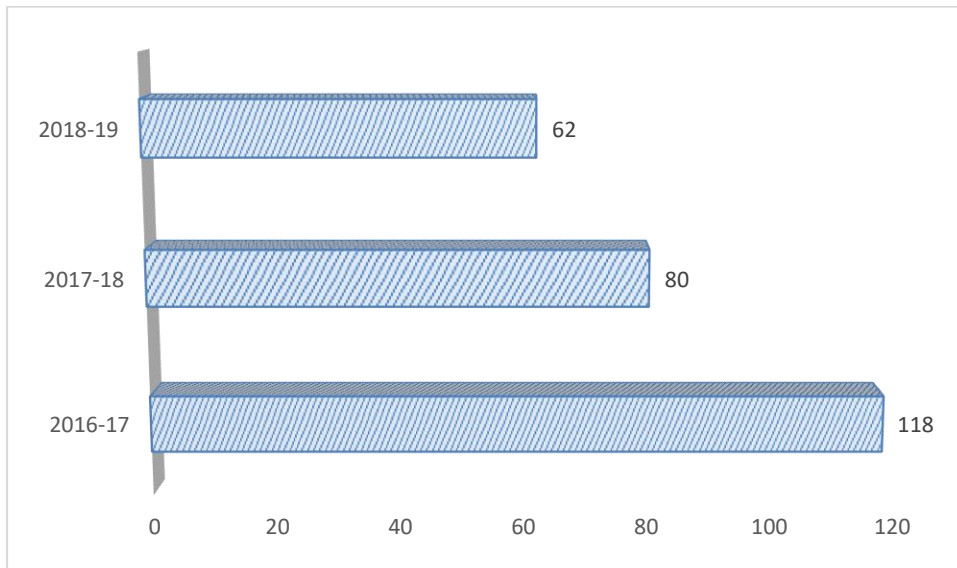
Source: PSH data

Disabled Facilities Grants

Colchester Borough Council administers Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to criteria set out by the Government. The grants are paid after completion of works to adapt properties to enable people with disabilities to continue to live in them.

The graph below shows the number of DFG's completed over the last 3 years.

Figure 7: DFG's completed



Source: PSH data

Colchester Borough Council awards Home Repair Loans which is an income based, 'means tested' loan, secured on the property, and is available to home owners and leaseholders to repair and maintain their property.

The table below shows the number of home repair loans awarded over the last 3 years.

Table 18: Home repair loans awarded

2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
5	10	6

Source: PSH data