

# Homelessness and rough sleeping in Allerdale

Summary of review findings 2021

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## Introduction

The [Homelessness Act 2002](#) placed a duty on every Local Housing Authority to produce and publish a Homelessness Strategy no less than once every five years and to keep in under continuous review. The purpose of the strategy is to determine the main causes of homelessness and to put in place plans and operational actions for the Council to tackle them. Before we produce a strategy, the Council needs to carry out a homelessness review, to ensure that the strategy is relevant to the local community and any actions are effective to deal with homelessness in the area.

The [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#) was enacted in April 2018 and changed the way local authorities deliver homelessness services by placing duties on them to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. The key aim of the HRA is to reduce the risk of homelessness at an early stage and thereby reduce the number of households owed a main duty and being placed in temporary accommodation. The Act and associated guidance requires housing authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need' – i.e. authorities are now legally required to undertake a 'Prevention' and a 'Relief' duty in addition to the already legislated for 'Main' duty.

Local authorities must now:

- Assess all eligible households' cases and agree a plan if they are considered to be threatened with homelessness within 56 days or homeless.
- Prevention duty – the applicant and the authority agree 'reasonable steps' to take to help prevent the homelessness of all eligible households threatened with homelessness within 56 days;
- Relief duty - If homelessness cannot be prevented, the applicant and the authority agree 'reasonable steps' to take and agree a plan to help all homeless and eligible applicants to secure suitable accommodation for at least six months (subject to circumstances);
- Main duty - If homelessness cannot be prevented or relieved they will then be assessed as Local authorities in England have a duty to provide suitable temporary accommodation for those that have local connection for unintentionally homeless households who fall into a 'priority need' category under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

### **A note on the data:**

The Homelessness Reduction Act has led to a change in the way homelessness data is collected. This paper predominantly provides data from April 2018 to date from the Council's systems, but also outlines some historical trends to provide additional context. Please note that it is not possible to compare current data with historical data.

When reading the statistical tables and comparing figures across the years, it is important to remember the impact Covid-19 has had on many households and the knock-on effect on the Council's homelessness statistics for 2020/21. At first, the increase in presentations was driven by those who were already homeless, but not known to the local authority (e.g. sofa surfers). As the economic effects of the various lockdowns became clear, households who had been struggling financially before the pandemic could not afford to pay their housing costs. This is likely to continue to have an impact during 2021/22 as legislation to prevent private evictions ended in May 2021.

## Key findings

- Between April 2020 and March 2021, 329 households were assessed and identified as being owed a specific duty. This represented a slight increase on the previous year, but overall numbers have remained relatively steady since April 2018.
- The main reasons given for homelessness in Allerdale are: private rented tenancies ending, family/friends no longer willing to accommodate, relationship breakdown and domestic abuse.
- In terms of the age of the applicant accepted as being owed a specific duty, the highest proportion were in the 25 to 34 age range.
- Around a third of households owed a prevention duty (to prevent the applicant from losing their home) in 2020/21 contained single people, and just over half contained dependent children. Whereas nearly 70% of those owed a relief duty (to help the applicant find somewhere to live) were single person households.
- During 2018/19 and 2019/20 about half of applications came from households before they became homeless (prevention), but in 2020/21 this dropped to around 30% as a result of a halt on evictions and the 'Everyone in' approach during the height of the pandemic.
- 37% of those accepted as being owed a specific duty in 2020/21 were assessed as rough sleeping or were of no fixed abode at the time of their application.
- More of those presenting have complex, multiple support needs. The total number of support needs identified doubled between 2018/19 and 2019/20, and increased by a further 60% in 2020/21.
- The main support needs identified are mental health issues, physical ill health, an offending history, and repeat homelessness. Drug and alcohol dependency are also common issues seen.
- Domestic abuse cases have risen substantially since 2018/19.
- Allerdale's reported rough sleeping statistics are low compared with other areas of the country, but there are issues with 'hidden homelessness' as the number of those presenting with rough sleeping support needs far outnumber those recorded on the day of the rough sleeper counts.
- The number of households in temporary accommodation increased rapidly from 8 in February 2020 to over 40 households in May 2020 in response to the 'Everyone in' campaign. This meant a short term increase in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

## Homelessness acceptances

Between April 2020 and March 2021, 329 households were assessed and identified as being owed a duty. The table below shows that during 2020/21, there was a slight increase in the total number of assessments made, but that the numbers assessed have not risen significantly over the past three years.

**Table 1: Number of households assessed and owed a prevention or relief duty**

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Prevention	151	144	102
Relief	159	167	227
<b>Total</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>329</b>

The key difference is in the split of the numbers owed a prevention or relief duty. In 2018/19 and 2019/20 there was almost a 50:50 split. In 2019/20 46% of cases were assisted at the prevention stage, which is 3% lower than the national average, but in line with the Cumbrian average. However, in 2020/21 this changed to a 30:70 split (30% prevention, 70% relief) as we saw many more presentations from those already homeless during the pandemic – this included households who may previously have been staying with friends or family (including those referred to as ‘sofa-surfing’) who were not able to continue those arrangements once the pandemic took hold.

## Reason for loss of accommodation

The table below provides the main reasons for the loss of the last settled home of households owed a specific duty in Allerdale across 2018/19 to 2020/21.

**Table 2: Reasons for loss of last settled accommodation for households assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty**

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Family no longer willing or able to accommodate	50	56	87
Domestic Abuse	25	42	51
Relationships with partner ended no violent breakdown	50	47	49
End of private rented tenancy – assured shorthold tenancy	56	42	28
Left institution with no accommodation available	6	9	13
Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	5	8	12
End of Private Rented Tenancy – not assured shorthold tenancy	4	8	11
Property dis-repair	4	5	9
End of social rented tenancy	12	13	9
Eviction from supported housing	12	12	8
Non racially motivated other motivated violence or harassment	5	6	6
Fire flood or other emergency	1	1	2
Mortgage Repossessions	1	1	0
Left HM forces	0	0	0

Required to leave accommodation provided by home office as asylum support	0	0	0
Racially motivated violence or harassment	1	2	0
Other	48	61	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>329</b>

In 2018/19, the main reasons that settled accommodation was lost were; a result of private rented tenancies ending (assured shorthold tenancy), family no longer willing or able to accommodate, a non-violent relationship breakdown and unspecified other reasons.

In 2019/20, there was a substantial rise in the number of domestic abuse cases as a reason for losing settled accommodation. Whereas the number of those leaving accommodation due to the end of a private rented tenancy fell in comparison to the previous year.

As expected, in 2020/21 with the onset of the pandemic there was a reduction in the number of private rented tenancies ending and an increase in family being unwilling to accommodate.

### Support needs of households assessed as owed a specific duty

The table below provides a detailed breakdown of the types of support required of the households accepted as being owed a specific duty with support needs. Households can have multiple support needs so the total number of support needs is not equal to the number of households with support needs.

**Table 3: Support needs of households assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty**

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
History of mental health problems	59	144	202
Offending history	31	65	129
History of repeat homelessness	31	47	105
History of rough sleeping	24	36	68
Physical ill health and disability	32	72	97
At risk of – has experiences of domestic abuse	15	47	76
Drug dependency needs	19	49	56
Alcohol Dependency Needs	15	34	29
Learning disability	5	14	29
At risk of – has experienced abuse (non-domestic)	8	6	25
Care leavers 21+year	2	5	22
At risk of /has experiences sexual abuse/exploitation	2	8	17
Young Person aged 18-25 years requiring support to manage independently	4	12	17
Served in HM Forces	5	3	8
Care leavers 18-20 years	2	6	7
Access to Education Employment or Training	0	2	6
Old Age	3	2	5
Young Parent requiring support to manage independently	0	3	2
Legacy cases: support needs not known	4	6	1
Young Person aged 16-17 years	1	3	1
Former asylum seeker	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>902</b>

The total number of support needs identified doubled between 2018/19 and 2019/20, and increased by a further 60% in 2020/21. This shows that more of those presenting have complex, multiple support needs.

Across all years, the main support needs of those households owed a prevention or relief duty are:

- experiencing mental health problems
- with physical ill health
- with an offending history
- repeat homelessness

During 2019/20, drug dependency became one of the highest support needs and there were significant increases in those requiring support for alcohol dependency. In 2020/21, domestic abuse numbers increased.

Whilst the figures for young people requiring specific support are not high, the numbers are increasing each year.

## Type of accommodation at time of application

**Table 4: Accommodation at time of application for households assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty**

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
No Fixed Abode	63	80	83
Living with family	73	56	75
Rough sleeping in judgement of an assessor	11	24	38
Living with friends	43	35	32
Private Rented Sector – self contained	50	40	23
Homeless on departure from institution custody	4	14	20
Tied accommodation	0	1	12
Temporary accommodation	5	4	8
Caravan / house boat	9	2	7
Social Rented Supported Housing or Hostel	10	6	4
Registered Provider Tenant	13	15	4
Owner Occupier	10	14	3
Shared Ownership	0	0	1
Private Rented Sector lodging not with family or friends	2	4	2
Homeless on departure from institution – hospital/general	0	4	2
Refuge	0	0	1
Council tenant	1	1	0
Looked after children placement	0	1	0
Homeless on departure from institution – hospital/psychiatric	3	1	0
Other	13	12	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>329</b>

At the time of application, accommodation of households owed a prevention or relief duty was mainly:

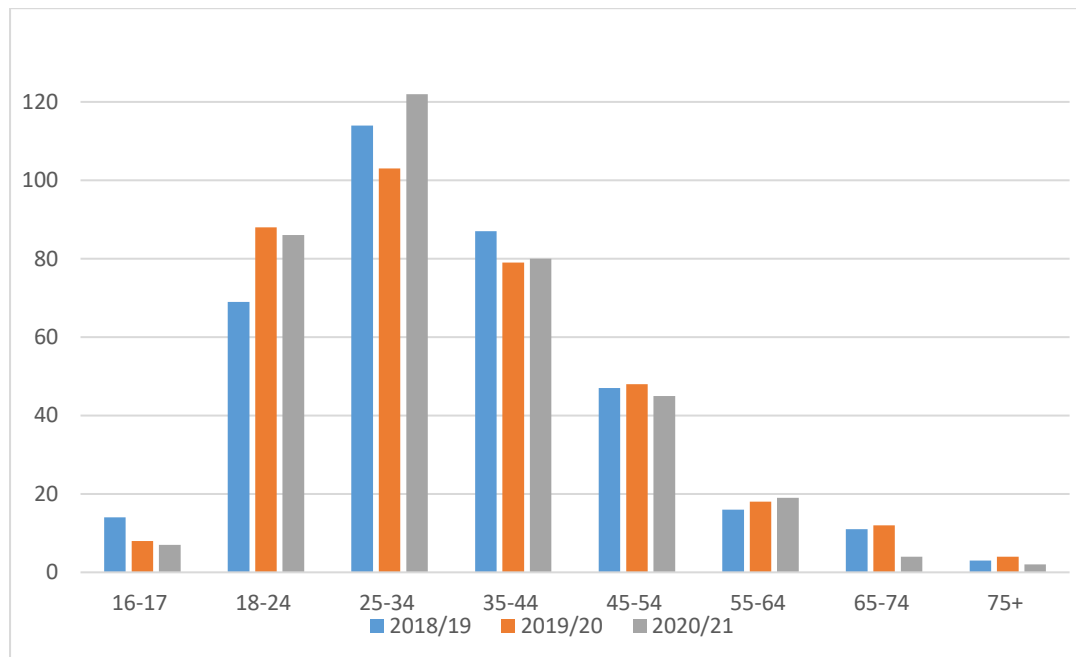
- living with family

- living with friends
- private rented sector (self-contained)
- No Fixed Abode (NFA)

During 2019/20, the number of households owed a prevention or relief duty on departure from a custodial institution rose by 10 households and households who were rough sleeping at the time of presentation doubled. In 2020/21, the number of households losing tied accommodation increased.

## Age of main applicants

**Figure 1: Age of main applicants assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty**



In each year, applicants of working age accounted for most main applicants. The number of applicants aged 25-34 was significantly higher than the other age groups.

## Household type at time of application

In all years, single person households made up the largest proportion of those owed a prevention duty. Numbers fell in 2020/21 which reflects the lower number of prevention cases in that year. Families with one, two or three children accounted for a high proportion of household types in all years.

In 2018/19, households of eight people or five children made up almost 10% of households assessed as owed a prevention duty, but this fell in later years. Similarly, households of six or seven people or four children account for 11% of households owed a prevention duty in 2019/20, a rise from 6% the previous year but this figure fell again in 2020/21.

The household type of those owed a relief duty was similar across all years. Single person households and families with one or two children made up the majority of households owed a relief duty. There was a fall in the number of larger households assessed as owed a relief duty in 2019/20, whereas the number of couples more than doubled. In 2020/21, the number of larger households increased again and the number of couples remained steady.



## Ethnicity and nationality of applicants

White British main applicants account for almost 95% of those assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty. This reflects the ethnic make-up of Allerdale, and the wider Cumbrian community.

In all years, most applicants were UK nationals habitually resident in the UK. In 2019/20 and 2020/21, there were a small number of UK nationals returning from overseas. This is potentially a result of Brexit.

## Employment status of main applicants

In 2018/19, most main applicants assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty were working less than 30 hours a week. In 2019/20, the largest number of applicants were registered as unemployed and in 2020/21, most were not working due to long term sickness or disability.

**Table 5: Employment status of main applicants assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty**

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Registered unemployed	65	126	113
Not working because of long term sickness or disability	47	88	105
Working 30 hours per week or more	46	53	38
Training scheme or apprenticeship	0	0	26
Not registered unemployed but seeking work	17	5	15
At home not seeking work including looking after the home or family	19	23	9
Retired including retired early	8	14	7
Working less than 30 hours per week	90	50	1
Full-time student	3	4	1
Other	4	13	5
Don't know / Refused	31	6	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>325</b>

## Prevention duty outcomes

In terms of the 'Prevention duty' housing authorities have a duty to take reasonable steps to help prevent any eligible person (regardless of priority need status, intentionality and whether they have a local connection) who is threatened with homelessness from becoming homeless. This means either helping them to stay in their current accommodation or helping them to find a new place to live before they become actually homeless. The prevention duty continues for 56 days unless it is brought to an end by an event such as accommodation being secured for the person, or by their becoming homeless.

There are a number of reasons why the prevention duty can be ended including:

- The applicant has suitable accommodation for at least six months;
- The applicant refuses a suitable offer of accommodation;
- The applicant becomes homeless intentionally;
- The applicant is no longer eligible for assistance;
- The applicant withdraws their homelessness application.

**Table 6: Reason for households' prevention duty ending**

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Secured alternative accommodation for 6 months	52	46	38
Secured alternative accommodation for 12 months	40	36	33
Secured existing accommodation for 6 months	14	26	11
Contact lost	4	7	8
Withdrew application, applicant deceased	5	1	3
Secured existing accommodation for 12 or more months	1	4	3
56 days or more expired and no further action	18	15	1
No longer eligible	1	1	0
Refused suitable accommodation	9	6	0
Refused to co-operate	1	0	1
Homeless	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>98</b>

In Allerdale the prevention duty was mainly ended due to the household having secured alternative accommodation for either six or 12 months (over 80% of cases in 2019/20 and almost three quarters of cases in 2020/21). Some households went through the 56-day period and required no further action, although this number decreased dramatically in 2020/21. This is higher prevention rate (for those owed a prevention duty) ending with secured accommodation than that for England.

In all reporting periods, most households had secured a registered provider tenancy at the end of the prevention duty, with a self-contained private rented tenancy the second most common type of accommodation secured. There were a number of households where the type of accommodation secured is not known, however this decreased during 2020/21.

**Table 7: Main prevention activity that resulted in accommodation secured for households at end of prevention duty**

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Accommodation secured by LA or organisation delivering housing option service	59	79	44
Negotiation/Mediation work to secure return to family or friend	5	4	11
Help to secure accommodation found by applicant with financial payment	6	4	11
Help to secure accommodation found by applicant without financial payment	26	11	9
Supported housing provided	9	13	5
Housing related support to sustain accommodation	3	11	3
Negotiation/Mediation advocacy work to prevent eviction/repossession	4	3	2
Financial payments used for other purposes not arrears or to secure new accommodation	2	0	0
Financial payments to reduce rent service charge or mortgage arrears	2	0	0
Debt advice	1	0	0
No activity advice and information provided	28	18	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>94</b>

The activities that resulted in accommodation being secured for a household owed a prevention duty are shown in the table below. In all years, the main prevention activity was accommodation secured by the Housing Options service. The 'no activity advice and information provided' option means that the household has not received a positive outcome although the Housing Options team has attempted to help.

## Relief duty outcomes

If the applicant is already homeless, or becomes homeless despite activity during the prevention stage, the reasonable steps the local authority must take will be focused on helping the applicant to secure accommodation. This relief duty lasts for 56 days unless ended in another way. If the housing authority has reason to believe a homeless applicant may be eligible for assistance and have a priority need they must be provided with interim accommodation.

There are a number of reasons why the relief duty can be ended including:

- The applicant has suitable accommodation for at least six months;
- The applicant refuses a suitable offer of accommodation;
- The applicant becomes homeless intentionally;
- The applicant is no longer eligible for assistance;
- The applicant withdraws their homelessness application.

**Table 8: Reason for households' relief duty ending**

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Secured accommodation for 6 months	85	73	121
Secured accommodation for 12 months	27	38	36
Contact lost	8	24	34
Withdrew application applicant deceased	12	9	11
Refused final accommodation or final part 6 offer	11	13	10
56 days elapsed	1	4	3
Local connection referral accepted by other LA	3	0	3
Intentionally homeless from accommodation provided	4	4	1
No longer eligible	1	0	0
Notice served due to refusal to co-operate	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>219</b>

In Allerdale the relief duty mainly ended due to the household having secured alternative accommodation for either six or 12 months. The number of households where contact was lost has increased significantly during 2019/20 and continued to increase in 2020/21.

The main ways that accommodation was secured in 2020/21 were: a third (31.9%) of the accommodation was secured through the Housing Options Service, 17.8% was through being accommodated in supported housing, 14.2% were helped to secure accommodation through the support of a financial payment, and another 11.4% were helped to secure accommodation without a financial payment.

In a small number of cases households have not received a positive outcome although the Housing Options team has attempted to help.

## Main duty decisions and outcomes

If homelessness is not successfully prevented or relieved, a housing authority will owe the main housing duty to applicants who are eligible, have a priority need for accommodation and are not homeless intentionally. Certain categories of household, such as pregnant women, families with children, and households that are homeless due to an emergency such as a fire or flood, have priority need if homeless. Other groups may be assessed as having priority need because they are vulnerable as a result of old age, mental ill health, physical disability, having been in prison or care or as a result of becoming homeless due to domestic abuse.

Under the main housing duty, housing authorities must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the applicant and their household until the duty is brought to an end, usually through the offer of a settled home. The duty can also be brought to an end for other reasons, such as the applicant turning down a suitable offer of temporary accommodation or because they are no longer eligible for assistance.

**Table 9: Outcome of main duty decisions for eligible households**

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Homeless + priority need + unintentionally homeless (acceptance)	4	8	4
Homeless Priority + intentionally homeless	9	9	9
Not homeless	3	1	1
Homeless + no priority need	31	32	35
Not eligible for assistance	1	0	0
Lost contact prior to assessment	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>49</b>

Numbers of main duty decisions represent a small proportion of presentations.

The table above shows the outcome for all households assessed for the main duty. Across all years shown the majority of households were not accepted during this time as being owed a main duty – i.e. they were homeless, but not in priority need. In other cases households were found to be intentionally homeless.

During 2018/19, of the households that were accepted as homeless (in priority need and unintentionally homeless) most received a social housing offer. In 2019/20 to date, applicants received either a social housing offer, became intentionally homeless from temporary accommodation.

**Table 10: Priority need category of households owed a main duty**

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Vulnerable – Domestic Abuse	1	1	1
Vulnerable – Other special reason	1	1	0
Includes dependent children	1	1	1
Includes pregnant women	1	1	1
Physical disability/ill health	0	2	2
Vulnerable – mental health problems	0	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>

The small numbers of priority need households were fairly evenly spread across the different categories.

## Households in temporary accommodation

The Council currently has 10 units of temporary accommodation. Two of these properties have additional security measures to support those in need of temporary accommodation as a result of domestic abuse issues.

Access to supported accommodation for young people is currently via a neighbouring local authority, but there are plans to create supported accommodation for young people in Workington (through Cumbria County Council).

The table below shows a snapshot of the number of households in temporary accommodation as at the end of each 6 month period between 2018 and 2021.

**Table 11: Snapshot of households in temporary accommodation**

30/06/2018	31/12/2018	30/06/2019	31/12/2019	30/06/2020	31/12/2020	30/06/2021	31/12/2021
6	10	5	5	22	30	31	20

The table shows the sharp rise in the number of households placed in temporary accommodation as the pandemic began (March 2020) and the council tried to accommodate all rough sleepers and those of no fixed abode as part of the government's 'everyone in' initiative.

Single person households were the most common household type placed in temporary accommodation in 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21. They accounted for around 87% of households placed in temporary accommodation.

In line with the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, the council recognises that Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation caters for very short term stays only and offers residents only limited privacy, and may lack or require sharing of important amenities, such as cooking and laundry facilities. Wherever possible, therefore, the council seeks to avoid using B&B accommodation for homeless households unless, in the very limited circumstances where it is likely to be the case, it is the most appropriate option for the applicant.

The unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic led to a significant increase in the number of homeless households accommodated in temporary accommodation: from 8 in February 2020 to over 40 households in May 2020, in response to the Government's 'Everyone In' initiative. This meant a short term increase in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation as most of these households were placed in hotels (bed and breakfast) given the urgency of the need.

## Rough Sleeping

Sleeping on the streets is the most visible and extreme form of homelessness.

People sleeping rough are defined, for the purposes of annual rough sleeping street counts, by the government as:

*'People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes" which are makeshift shelters, often comprised of cardboard boxes). The definition does not include*

*people in hostels or shelters, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protest, squatters or travellers. Bedded down: is taken to mean either lying down or sleeping. About to bed down includes those who are sitting in/on or near a sleeping bag or other bedding.'*

Local authorities are required to produce either a formal count or an estimate of the number of rough sleepers in the area. Counts are to be conducted between 1 October and 30 November each year.

The official annual rough sleeper figures and comparative homelessness figures reported to government are:

**Table 12: Total number of people sleeping rough by local authority and region**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
England	2,744	3,569	4,134	4,751	4,677	4,266	2,688
North West	189	220	313	434	428	349	226
Allerdale	3	0	3	1	3	8	1

Source: MHCLG Annual Rough Sleeping Snapshot [gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness#rough-sleeping-tables](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness#rough-sleeping-tables)

In terms of gender, the majority of rough sleepers tend to be men nationally and regionally (in the North West) based on the rough sleeping annual count. Numbers in Allerdale are too small to determine any trends in this data.

The table above shows that comparatively Allerdale’s rough sleeper count is low. However, whilst the numbers actually counted sleeping rough are very low, there is at the same time an acceptance that hidden homelessness (those sleeping on a friends floor or sofa for example) is an issue in our area. This has previously been hard to quantify, but the pandemic through 2020/21 has shown the potential scale of hidden homelessness in Allerdale when over 40 people were housed in a very short space of time who had nowhere to stay.

Allerdale has specialist officers delivering focused projects in relation to rough sleeping funded by the MHCLG/DLUHC, they are able to offer support with a range of interventions and issues via a new pathway model of integrated support to get off the streets in to longer term supported tenancies.