

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**ASSET MANAGEMENT, CULTURE AND HOUSING
CABINET MEMBER**

HOMELESSNESS UPDATE REPORT

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Cabinet Member with an update on the annual homelessness statistics for last year and the first six months of the current year.
- 1.2 To provide an overview of the national and regional figures for comparison and context.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 This report provides information on both the homelessness cases that fall within the statutory framework as well as those that fall outside the priority need but are nevertheless at risk and covered by our Homelessness Strategy.
- 2.2 In the context of the report, prevention refers to providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness. Relief refers to assisting people to find alternative accommodation when they have become homeless.
- 2.3 Contacts to the Housing Advice Team continue to be high. During 2013/14, they peaked at an all time high of 8828. The figures for the first half of 2014/15 are 4230 suggesting an out turn figure of 8460, which is slightly below last year's figure.
- 2.4 Initially, we thought the introduction of universal credit for new claimants would be in February 2015. It now looks more likely to be April or May. It is widely expected that the impact from universal credit will be far greater than for any of the preceding welfare changes, including the under-occupancy charge.

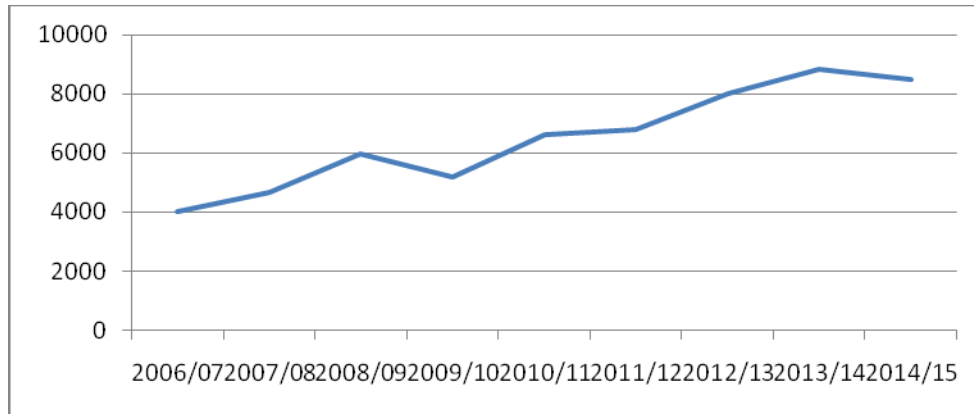


Figure 1 – Contacts to the HAT

3. HOMELESS ACCEPTANCES

- 3.1 Our homeless acceptances increased again in 2013/14 and we expect a further rise in 2014/15. On the face of it, this appears different to the national picture. Nationally, there was a 3% decrease in the number of households accepted as homeless. This follows a steady increase year on year from 2010 (when the figure was at a 12 year low).
- 3.2 Whilst our homeless acceptance figures appear to have bucked the national trend for 2013/14, as figure 2 below illustrates, the trend overall follows the national one, albeit the fact that any changes nationally are reflected in our figures a year or so later. Our acceptances decreased year on year until 2011/12 when the figures started to show a slow increase again. Our total number of acceptances for 2013/14 was 43. For comparison, North East Lincolnshire's homeless acceptances for 2013/14 were 117.
- 3.3 Currently, the number of acceptances for the first six months of 2014/15 is 49. This already represents an increase on the total number for last year. We think the increase this year is a reflection of the welfare changes and the disproportionate impact on our area. For comparison, North East Lincolnshire homeless acceptances for the first 6 months of 2014/15 are 58.

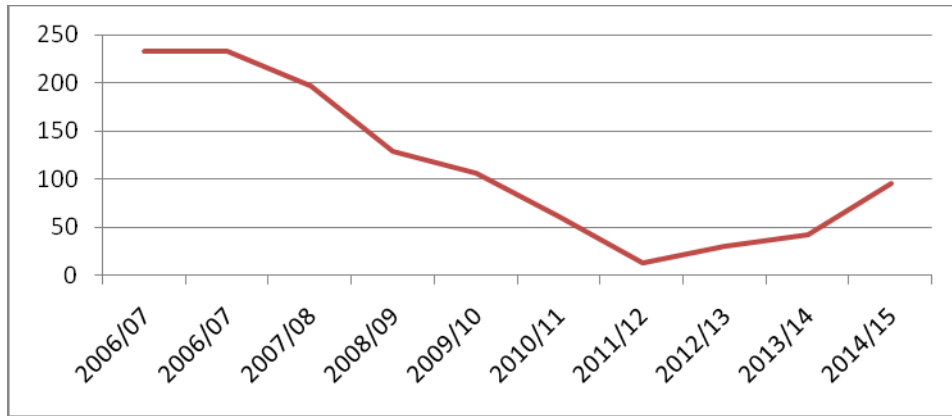


Figure 2 Homeless Acceptances

4. HOMELESS PREVENTON AND RELIEF

4.1 Under the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Code of Guidance published in July 2006, we are required to give advice and assistance to all those who seek help including those who are intentionally homeless. We use a combination of homeless prevention and homeless relief to achieve this.

4.2 During 2013/14, we had 887 cases of homelessness prevention and relief. During the first 6 months of this year, we have helped 499 people. The projected end of year figure is 998. Overall, we had a 10.7% increase in homeless preventions in 2013/14 as compared to 2012/13. The national figure for 2013/14 is 12%. Currently, we are showing a 12.5% increase on the previous year's figures.

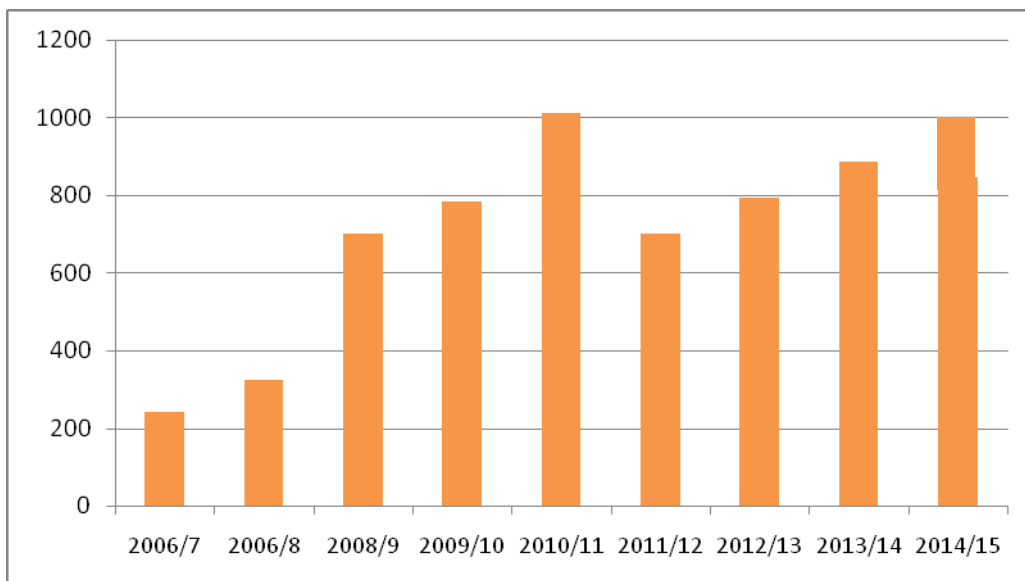


Figure 3 Homelessness prevention and relief cases

5. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

5.1 The Cabinet Member is asked to consider the contents of the update report.

6. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

6.1 Not applicable.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

7.1 The level of demand for the Housing Advice Team is at an all time high. We are trying to meet those demands despite a reduction in staff overall. If the introduction of Universal Credit creates the increase in need envisaged, the existing staff resource will struggle to cope.

7.2 The team have worked hard to reduce the number of households in bed and breakfast accommodation and over the last year or so have been very successful in doing so. This has significantly reduced the money the Council spends on providing short-term accommodation. However, Universal Credit has the potential to increase the need once again.

8. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

8.1 An integrated impact assessment is not required for this report.

9. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

9.1 Not applicable

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The Cabinet Member is asked to note the contents of the report and the continuing demands on the Housing Advice Team.

10.2 The Cabinet Member is asked to note the likely date for the introduction of universal credit and the potential impact on the Housing Advice Team.

DIRECTOR OF PLACES

Author: David Ricketts
Date: 28/10/2014

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: None