



# Focus on Homelessness

The Midlands: Laois, Longford, Offaly  
and Westmeath

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Challenging homelessness. Changing lives.

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Ireland

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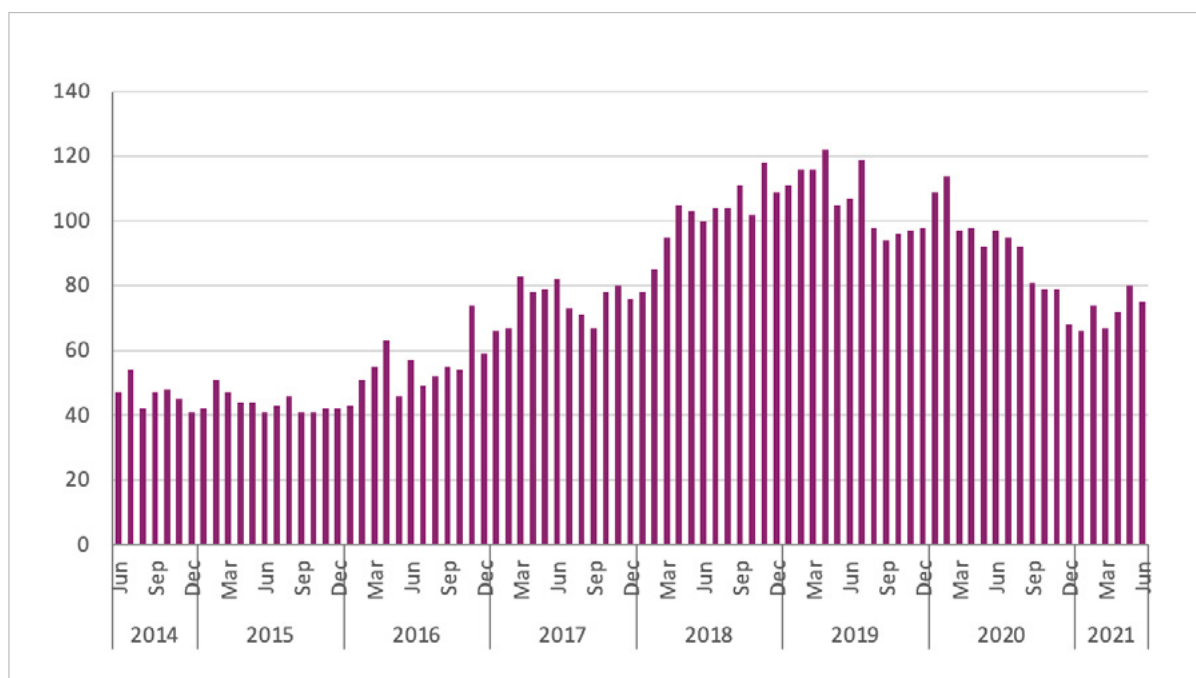
## Introduction

Focus Ireland and the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin have collaborated for over a decade to bring high quality and up-to-date research on homelessness to a wider audience and into the core of public policy formation. Since 2014, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) has published data on the number of adults and child dependents in Emergency Accommodation each month. In addition, over the same period, Quarterly Performance Reports and Financial Reports have contained data on the duration and cost of homelessness in Ireland. ‘Focus on Homelessness’ aims to make this substantial body of data available in an accessible and reliable format, and provides a detailed report on the extent, nature and duration of homelessness, in addition to the public expenditure on households experiencing homelessness in Ireland.

This new series in the Focus on Homelessness project will take a closer look at homelessness around the country by providing a detailed report for each region. There will be nine reports in total, following the nine regions under which the monthly data is published.

This report looks at homelessness in the Midlands of Ireland. The Midlands refers here to counties Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath.

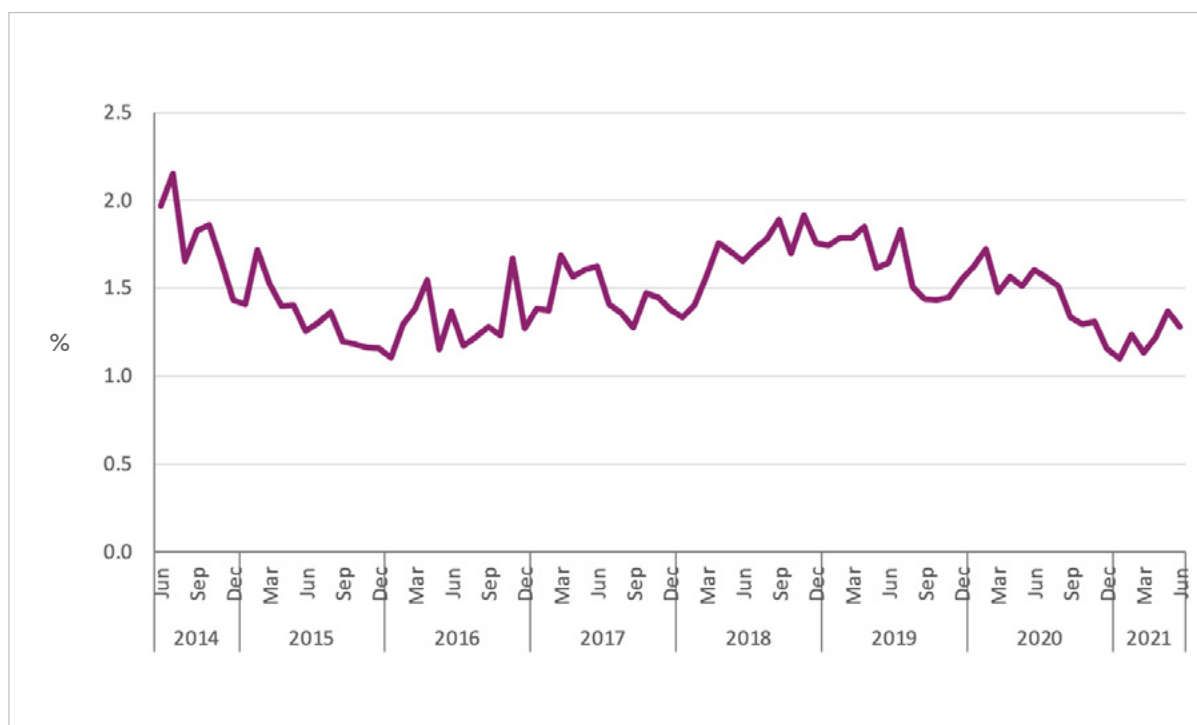
<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed description of these data sources, see Eoin O’Sullivan, Aisling Reidy and Mike Allen (2021) Focus on Homelessness: Significant Developments in Homelessness 2014-2021 (Dublin: Focus Ireland) and Eoin O’Sullivan and Thadee Mustafiri (2020) Public Expenditure on Services for Households Experiencing Homelessness (Dublin: Focus Ireland).

**Figure 1: Adults in Emergency Accommodation**

As of June 2021, there were 75 adults in emergency accommodation in the Midlands. This reached a peak of 122 adults in April 2019. Since these figures first became available in June 2014, the number of adults in emergency accommodation in the Midlands has grown by 28, an increase of 60%.

Breaking this down by county, the majority of adults in emergency accommodation in the Midlands are in Westmeath, the largest county in the region. As of June 2021, Westmeath accounts for 33% (25) of adults in emergency accommodation in the region, Offaly for 28% (21), Laois for 25% (19) and Longford for 13% (10). Longford tends to have a very small number of adults in emergency accommodation, regularly falling to less than 10.

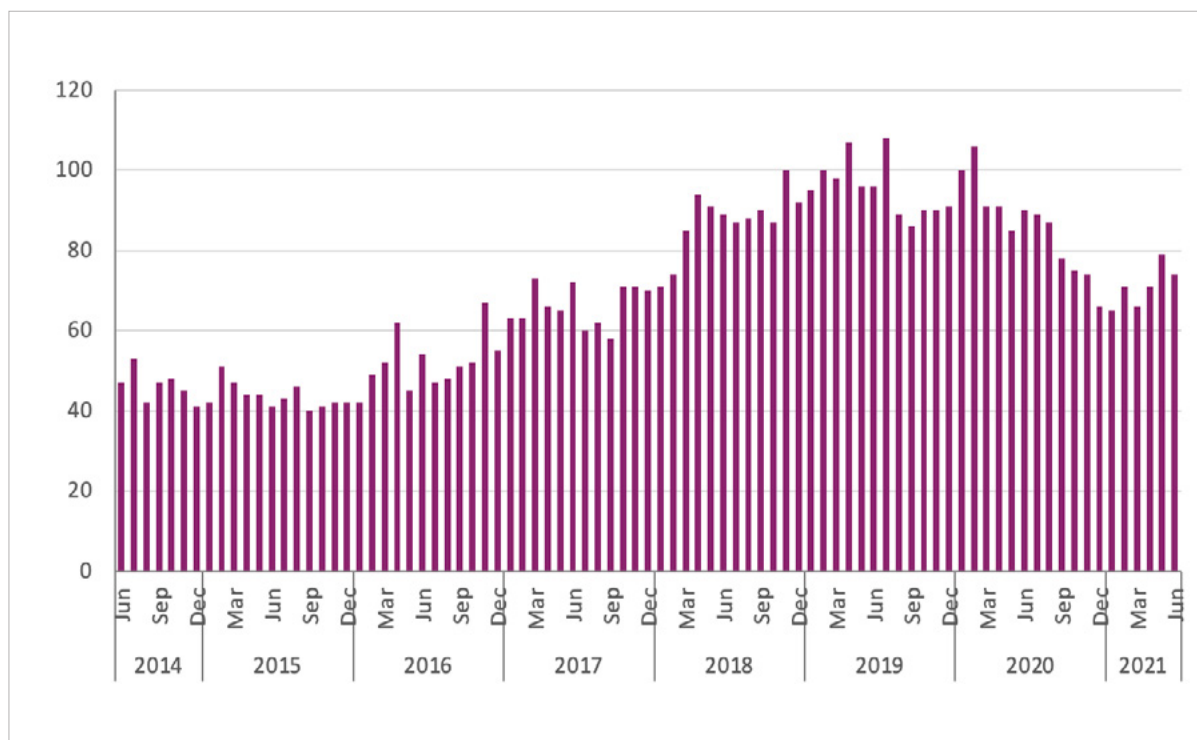
This figure includes all adults, whether they are single or in a couple, and whether or not they are accompanied by children.

**Figure 2: Adults in the Region as a Percent of all Adults in Emergency Accommodation**

Comparing the Midlands to the overall national figure, Figure 2 shows that the Midlands accounts for less than 2% of all adults in emergency accommodation. This figure has declined since its highest point of 2.15% in July 2014 as other regions – mostly those with large cities – have seen rapid growth in the number of people in emergency accommodation.

Since the beginning of 2020, this figure has decreased as the number of adults in the Midlands fell. After falling to its lowest point in January 2021, it has since started to increase again.

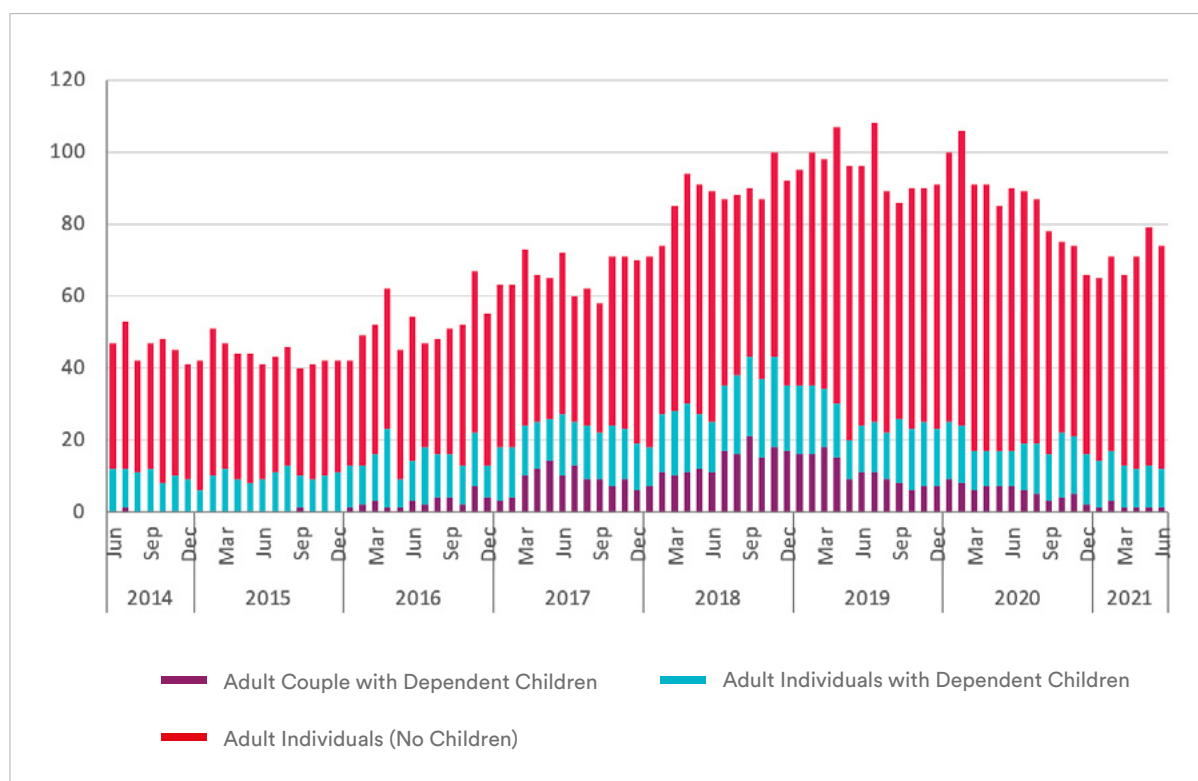
### Figure 3: Households in Emergency Accommodation



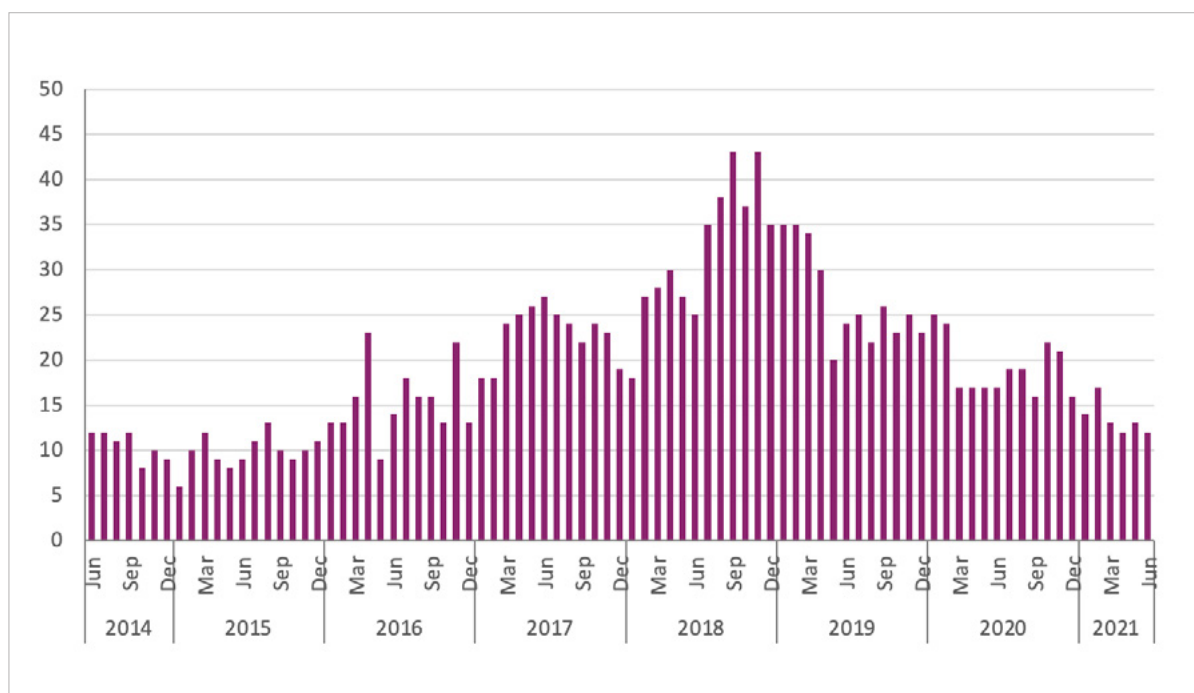
After increasing steadily since 2014, the number of households in emergency accommodation in the Midlands reached a peak of 108 in July 2019, after which it began to decline. Since the start of 2020, this decline has accelerated until it reached 65 households in January 2021, the lowest number since 2017. It has since started to rise again, and as of June 2021 there were 74 households in emergency accommodation in the Midlands.

Presenting the scale of homelessness in terms of the number of households affected shifts the focus towards providing solutions to homelessness, which are homes. This gives the clearest indication of the number of dwellings required to meet the needs of households currently in emergency accommodation in the Midlands.

Despite the decline observed since 2019, the number of households accessing emergency accommodation in the Midlands in June 2021 is 57% higher than the number of households in June 2014.

**Figure 4: Household Type**

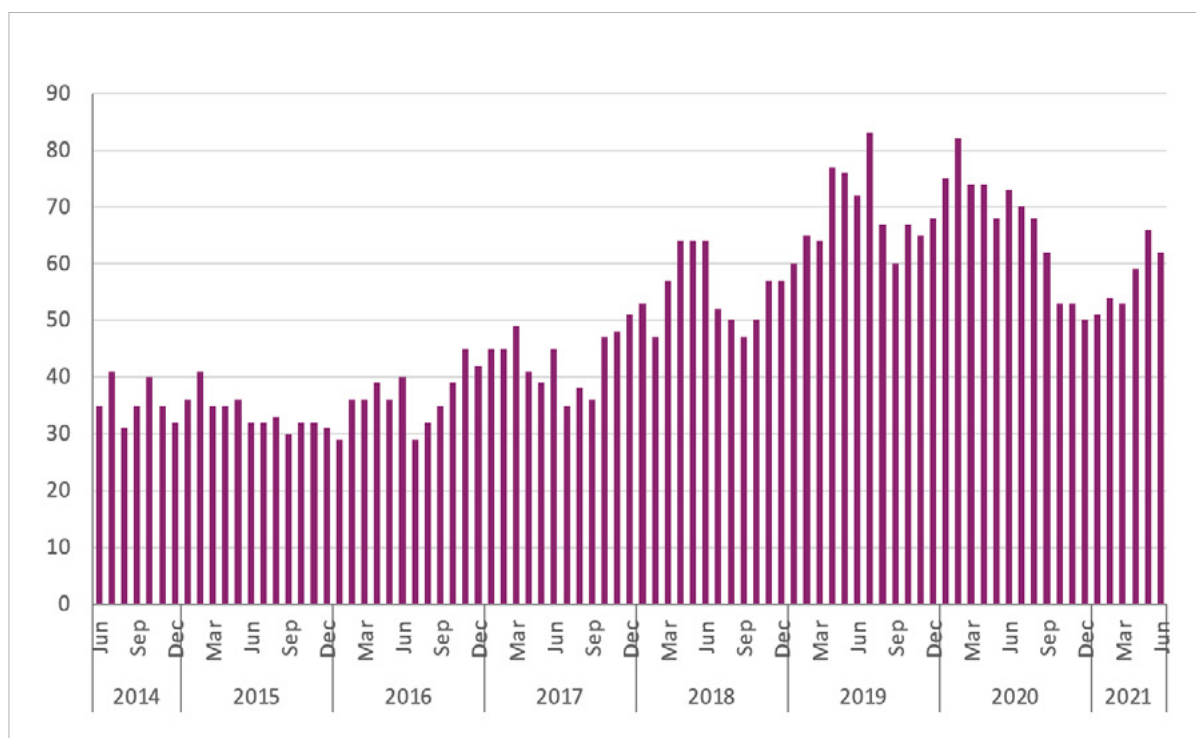
Adult individuals without accompanying children (often referred to as single homelessness) are the most common type of household in emergency accommodation in the Midlands. Of the 74 households in emergency accommodation in the Midlands in June 2021, 84% were adult individuals without accompanying children and 16% were households with children. Of the households with accompanying children, almost all are single-parent families.

**Figure 5: Families in Emergency Accommodation**

After rising rapidly throughout 2015-2018, family homelessness in the Midlands has now fallen back to 2014 levels. The highest number of families in emergency accommodation was 43, reached in September and November 2018. As of June 2021, there were 12 families in emergency accommodation in the Midlands.

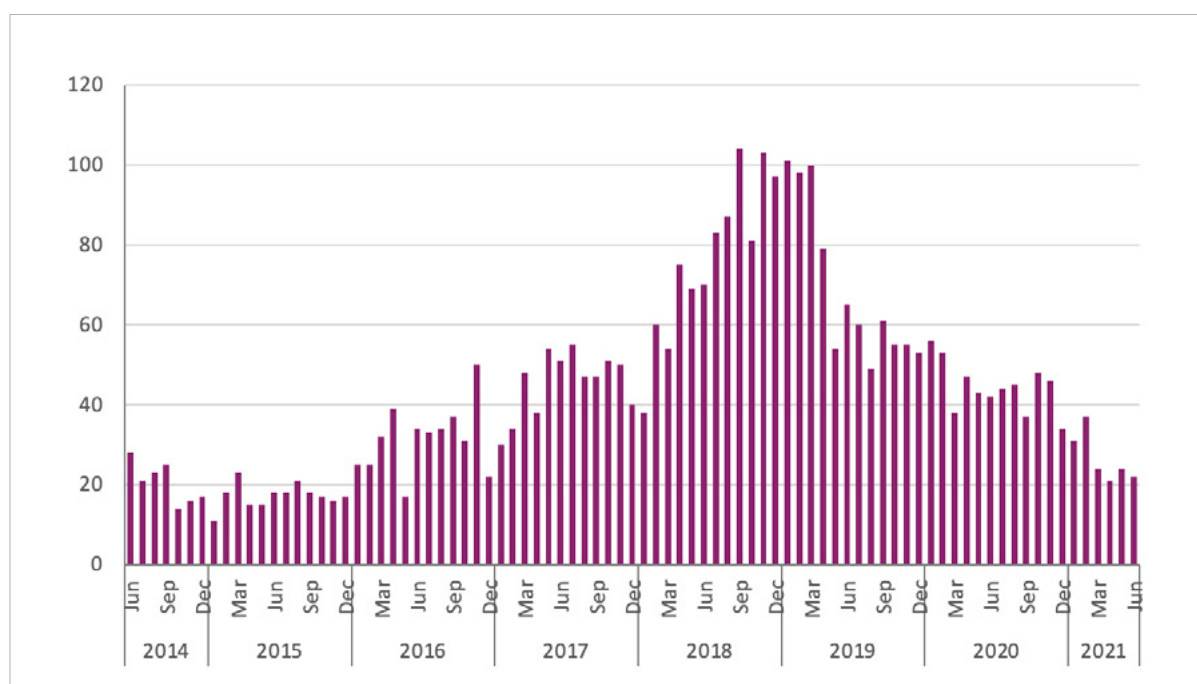
Since the beginning of 2020, there has been a sharp drop in family homelessness nationally, with the number of families in the Midlands halving in this period. While many other regions are now starting to see the number of families in emergency accommodation rise again, the continued decline in the Midlands is notable.



**Figure 6: Adult-Only Households**

Adult-only households are either single adult individuals or adults in couples without accompanying children. As of June 2021, there are 62 adult-only households in emergency accommodation in the Midlands.

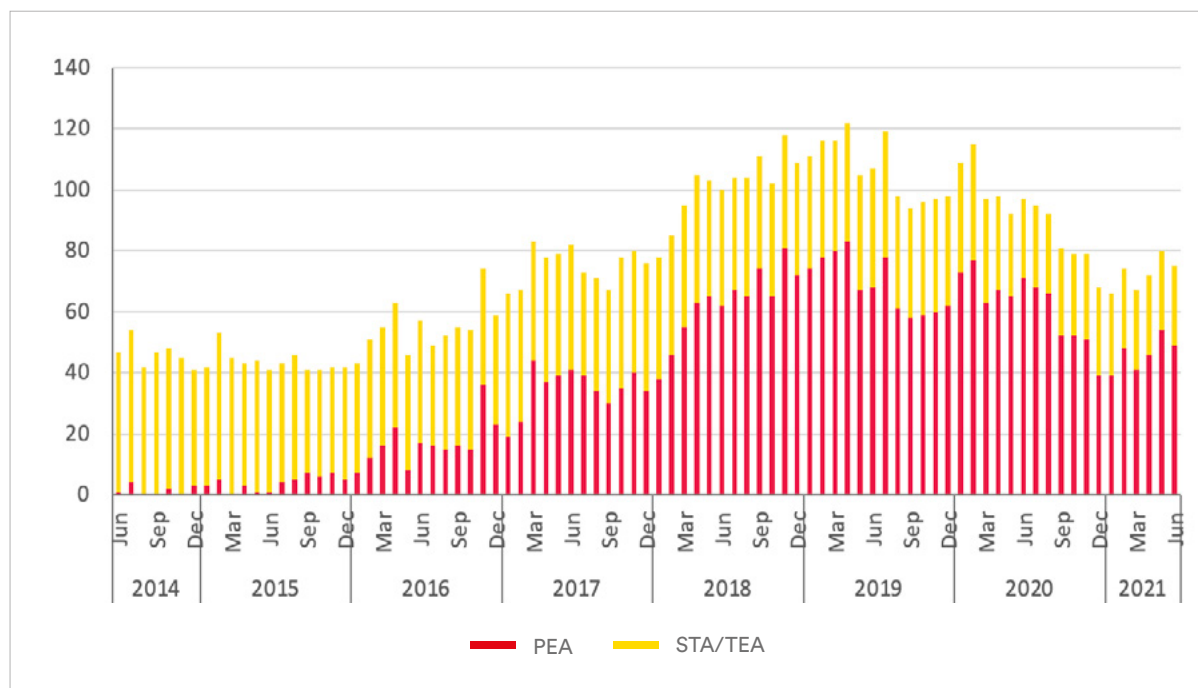
After increasing steadily since 2016, the number of adult-only households in the Midlands peaked in July 2019 at 83. It saw a sharp fall in mid-2020, but has since started to increase again, unlike the trend for families in the Midlands shown in Figure 5. In the first six months of 2021, the number of adult-only households in emergency accommodation in this region has increased by 22%.

**Figure 7: Child Dependents**

The number of children in emergency accommodation follows the trend of families in Emergency Accommodation shown in Figure 5.

In June 2021, there were 22 children in emergency accommodation in the Midlands. 2021 has seen the lowest levels of children in emergency accommodation in the Midlands since 2016.

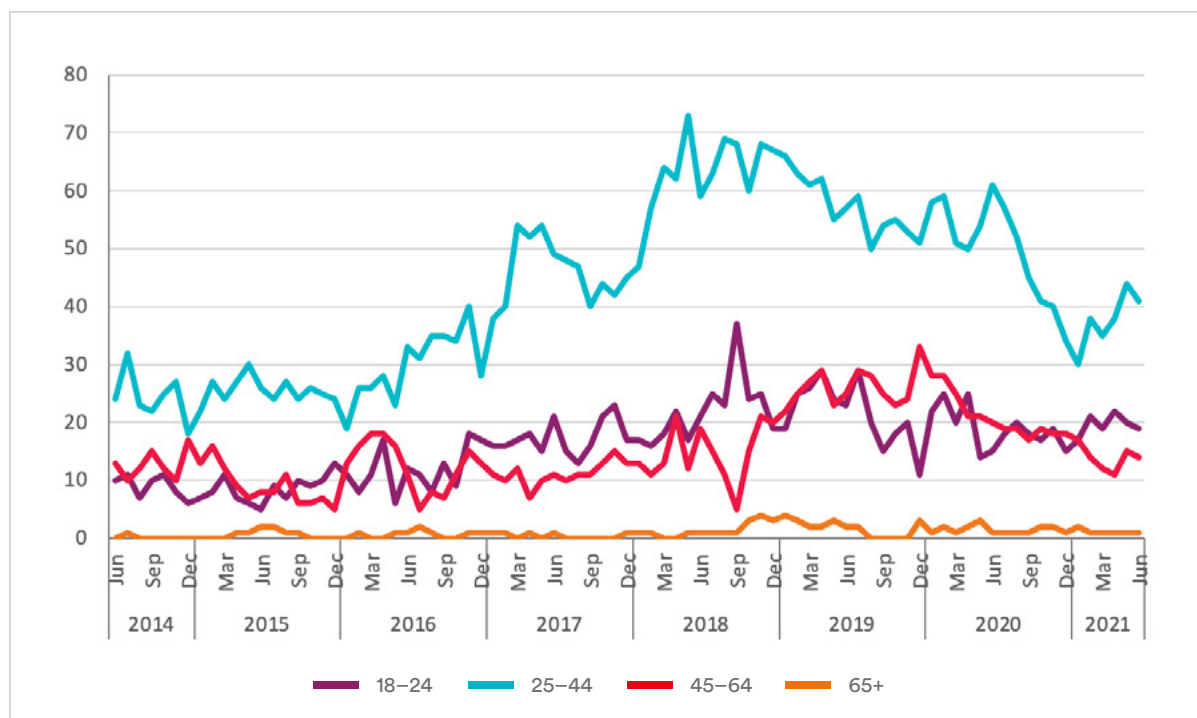
The highest number was reached in September 2018, with 104 children in emergency accommodation in this region. Since then, the number has fallen by 79%.

**Figure 8: Accommodation Type**

There are three types of Emergency Accommodation reported in the monthly reports. Private Emergency Accommodation (PEA) includes hotels, B&Bs and other residential facilities that are privately owned and are being used on an emergency basis. Supported Temporary Accommodation (STA) is Emergency Accommodation, primarily congregate shelters and Family Hubs, with onsite professional support, and operated by Non-Government Organisations fully or partially funded by Section 10 funding via the relevant local authority. Temporary Emergency Accommodation (TEA) is the smallest category and includes emergency accommodation with no (or minimal) supports, TEAs are operated both by NGOs and private operators. In the Midlands, the number of TEA is very low and so has been combined with STA.

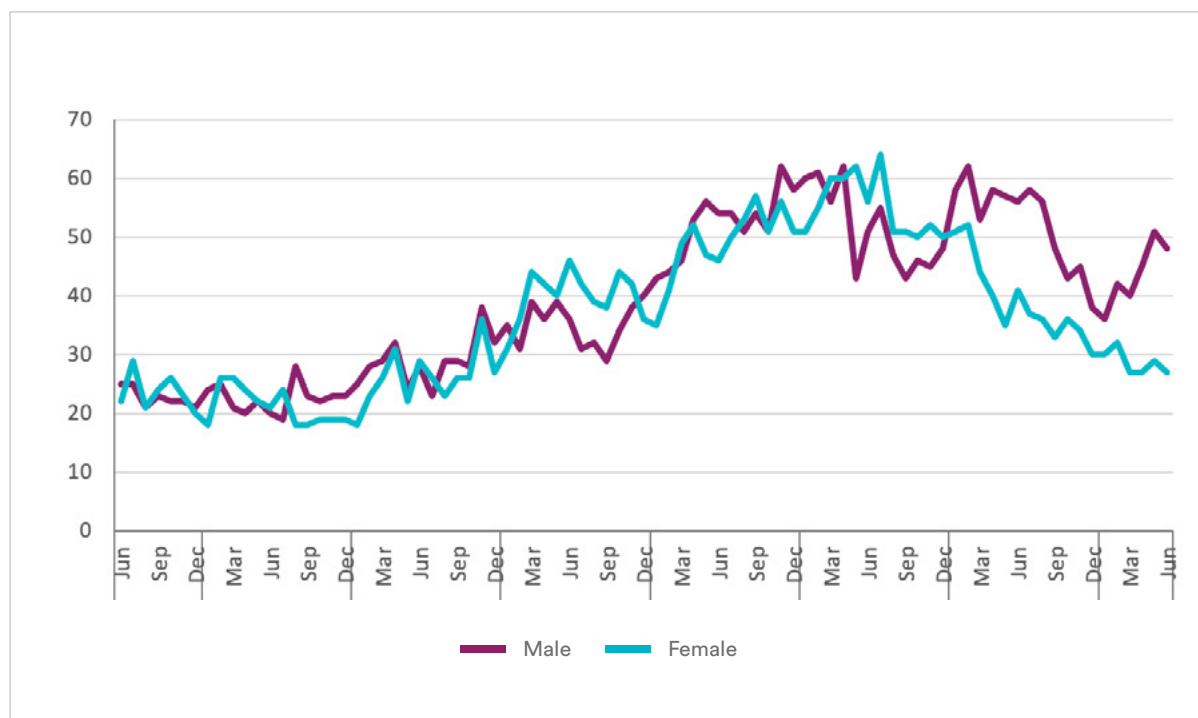
Up to the end of 2017, STA/TEA was by far the most common accommodation type in the Midlands but has since been overtaken by PEA. There were fewer than ten people in PEA in the Midlands until 2016, when the use of PEA began to rapidly increase. In June 2021, the ratio is 65% in PEA compared to 35% in STA/TEA.

PEA tends to be predominantly allocated to families, hence the increase in the numbers here as family homelessness increased up to 2018, as shown in Figure 5. However, the level of PEA has remained high even as the number of families in emergency accommodation in this region has fallen over the past three years.

**Figure 9: Age Profile**

25–44-year-olds are the largest age group, usually making up over half of all adults in emergency accommodation in the Midlands. The next largest groups are young adults aged 18–24 and 45–64-year-olds, both groups representing between 20–25%. People aged over 65 years make up less than 1% of all adults in emergency accommodation in the region, remaining below 10 people throughout this period.

All age groups have seen a rise in homelessness over the past seven years. The largest rise has been among the youngest age group, which has almost doubled since June 2014. Compared to other regions, there is a higher proportion of younger people in emergency accommodation in the Midlands.

**Figure 10: Adults by Gender**

The gender ratio in the Midlands has typically been much more even than in most other regions.

As of June 2021, there were 48 adult men in emergency accommodation in the Midlands and 27 adult women, a ratio of 64% men to 36% women. In June 2014, this ratio was 53:47 and remained close to 50:50 for much of the following five years up to 2019. However, since late 2019 the two trends have diverged as the number of men jumped during 2020 while the number of women continued to fall.

At the peak in April 2019, there were 62 men and 60 women in Emergency Accommodation in the Midlands. Since then, the number of women has fallen by 55% and the number of men by 23%.

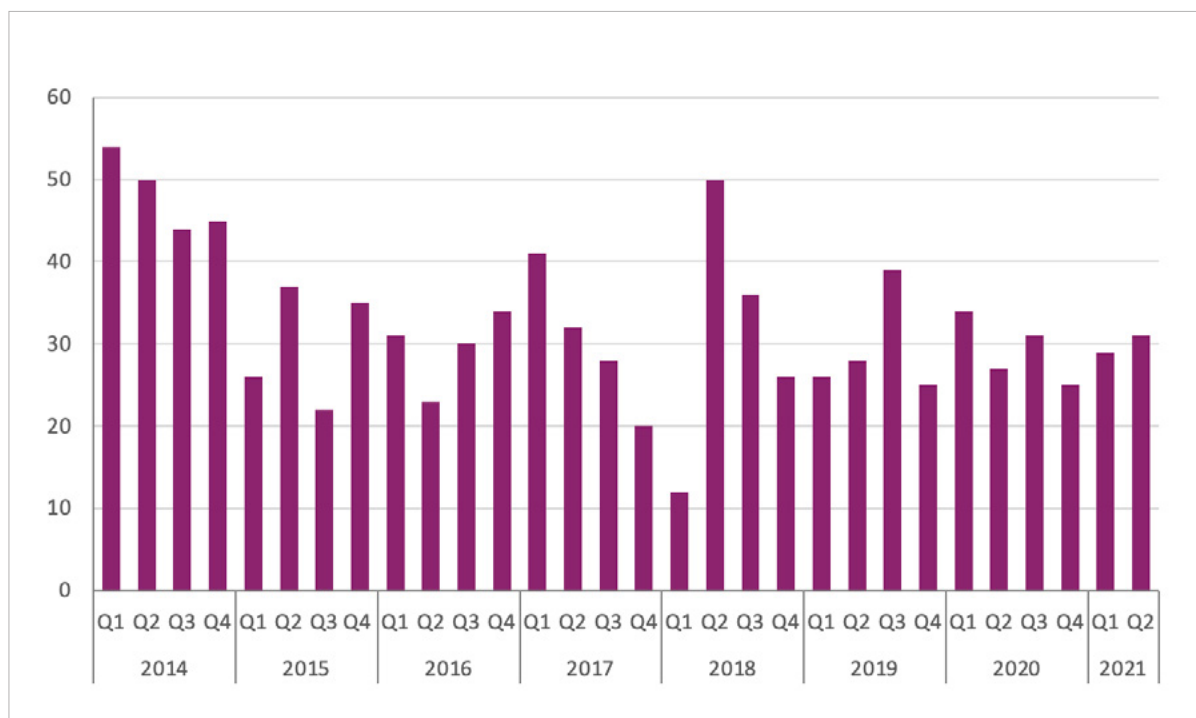
**Figure 11: New Presentations**

Figure 11 shows the number of adults presenting as homeless to Local Authorities for the first time in the Midlands and provided with Emergency Accommodation each quarter since Quarter 1 2014. At its highest, 54 individuals presented as homeless in Q1 2014. On average in 2020, 2.3 individuals presented as homeless each week in the Midlands, compared to 3.7 per week in 2014. During the first six months of 2021, 2.3 adults have presented as homeless each week.

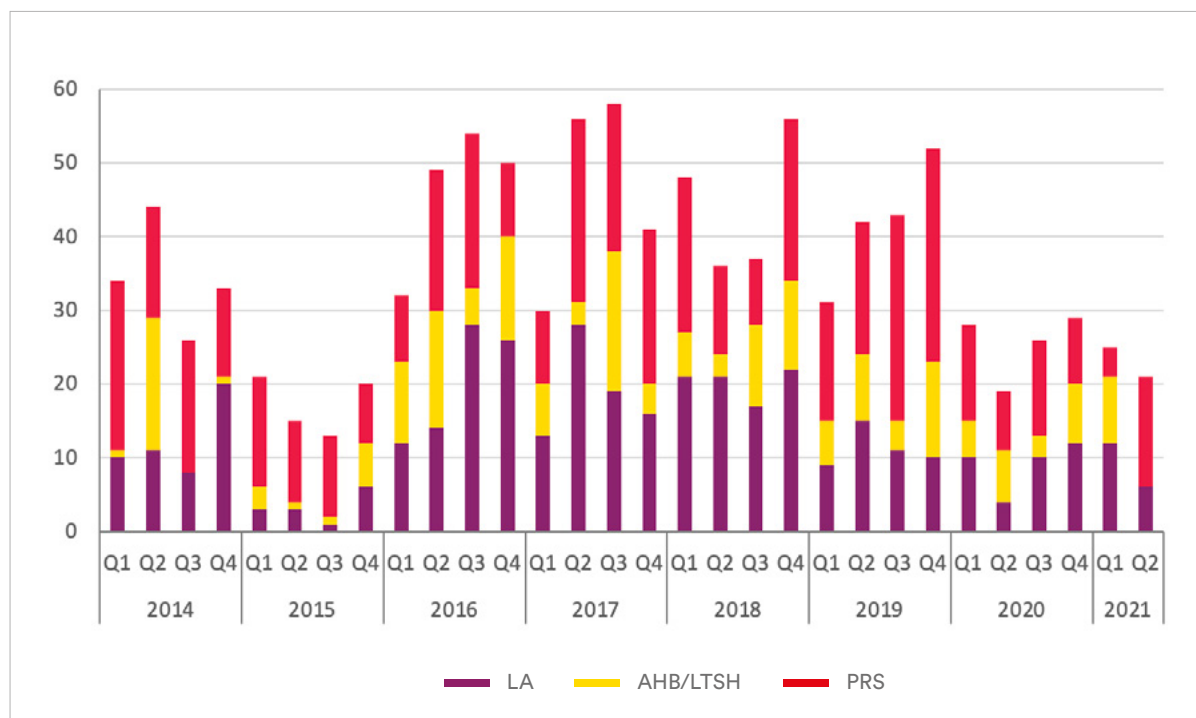
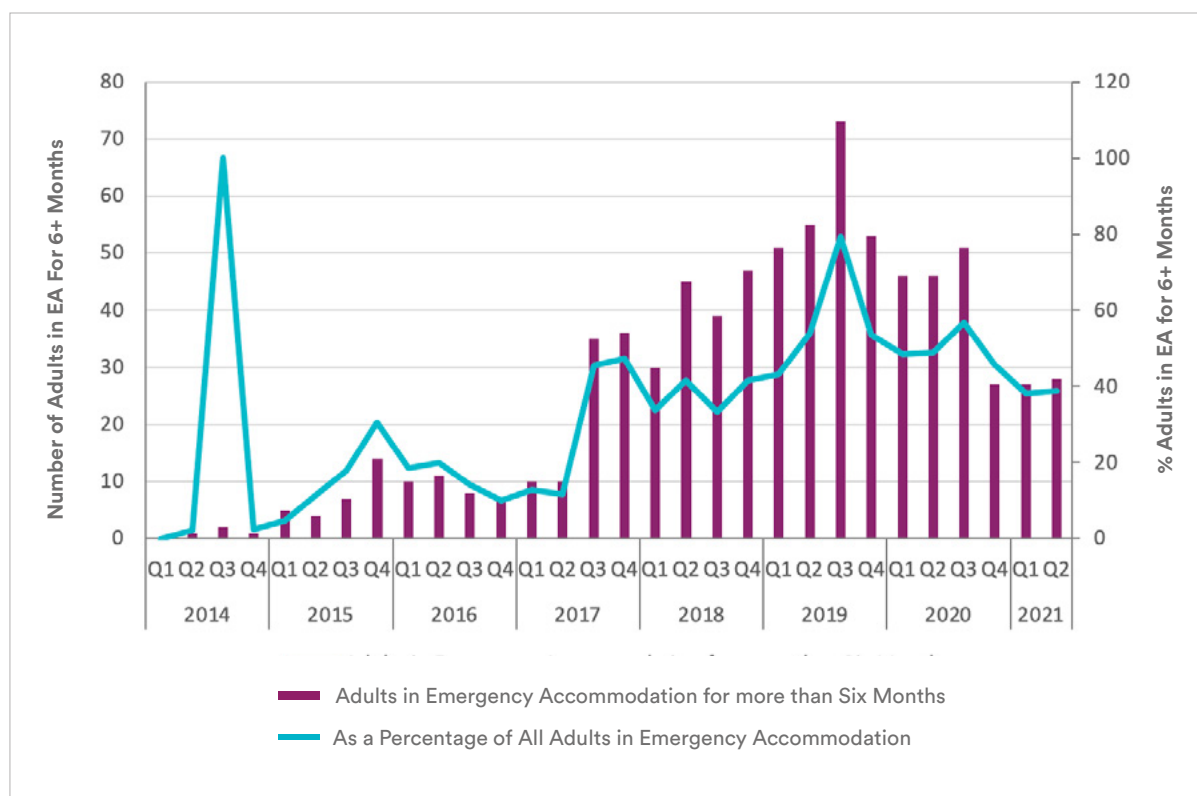
**Figure 12: Adult Exits to Housing**

Figure 12 presents the number of adults exiting emergency accommodation in the Midlands each quarter and their destination. LA is exits to Local Authority housing, AHB/LTSA is for housing provided by Approved Housing Bodies and PRS is exits to the Private Rented Sector, which are largely supported by HAP payments.

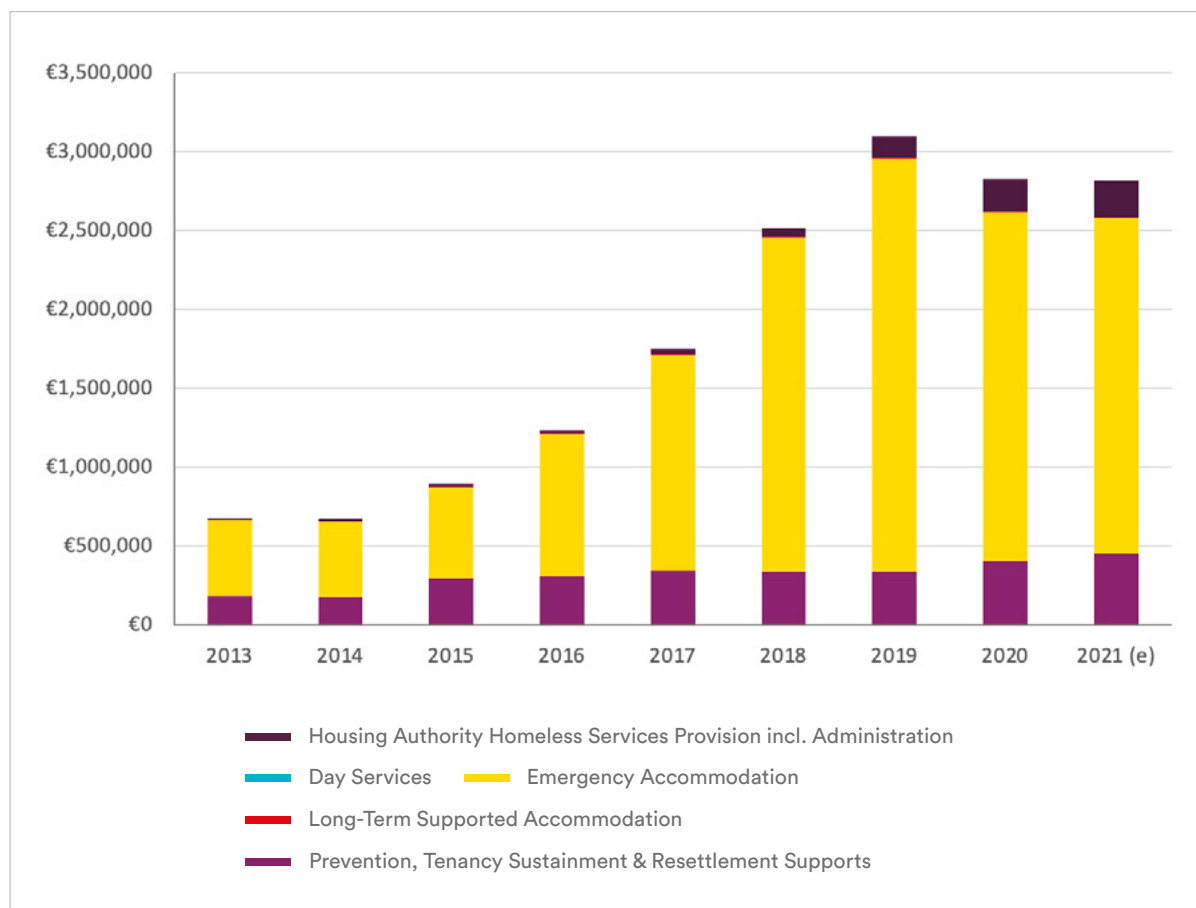
The highest number of exits in one quarter was 58 in Q3 2017. When compared with the data on presentations in Figure 11, 15 of the 30 quarters since 2014 saw more people exiting emergency accommodation than presenting as homeless.

Overall during the period Q1 2014 – Q2 2021, there were 1,069 adult exits from emergency accommodation to housing in the Midlands: 43% to the PRS, 19% to AHB housing and 37% to Local Authority housing.

**Figure 13: Adults in Emergency Accommodation for Over 6 Months**

The number of adults experiencing long-term homelessness, defined as over 6 months, is shown in Figure 13. As of June 2021, 28 adults, or 39% of all homeless adults in the Midlands, have now been in emergency accommodation for over 6 months. This reached its highest point in Q3 2019, at 73 people or 79% of all adults and has declined significantly since that date.



**Figure 14: Section 10 Expenditure**

Actual expenditure by central (DHLGH) and local government on services for households experiencing homelessness in the Midlands increased from €675,794 in 2013 to €2,826,078 in 2020. The Midlands estimates it will spend €2.8 million in 2021.

In 2020, expenditure on emergency accommodation in the Midlands was €2.2 million, or 78% of total expenditure. Prevention accounted for 14%, Housing Authority services for 7% and LTSA for 0.2%. While Day Services is one of the categories of expenditure reported, there has been no expenditure on Day Services in the Midlands during this period.

Between 2013 and 2019, 79% of total expenditure in the Midlands was on emergency accommodation. Housing Authority services is the category which has seen the biggest increase since 2014, rising from €11,903 in 2013 to €206,287 in 2020.

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