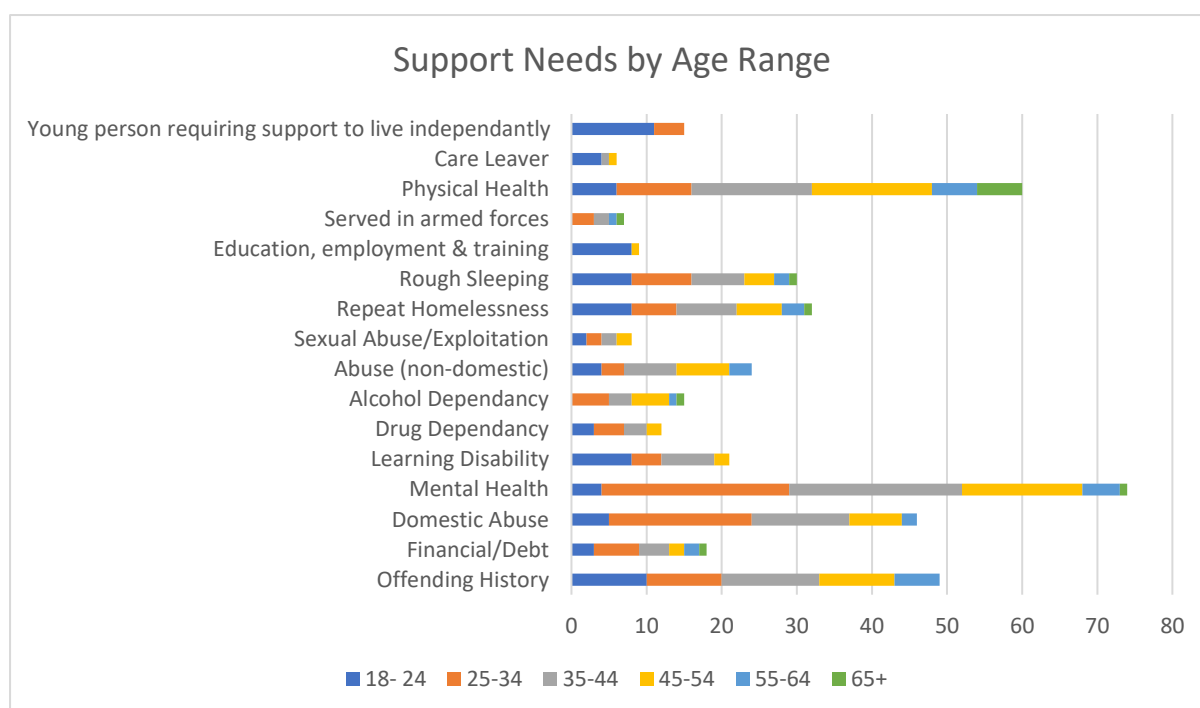


Homelessness and housing related support in the Eden district, Cumbria

Eden Housing Association (EHA) is contracted to carry out the statutory homeless function on behalf of Eden District Council. This commission, most recently subject to open tender during 2019, is a role we have undertaken for over 20 years. Our approach has adapted and expanded over the years to comply with changes in legislation and to focus far more on prevention. The current service, in addition to providing the statutory homelessness function, also includes complimentary support services including housing related and specialist Domestic Abuse support.

Whilst the Eden District has a relatively low level of visible rough sleeping and homelessness, there remains a significant issue with households often sofa surfing between friends and family or hidden away in very rural and isolated areas.

68% of homeless presentations in Eden are from single people primarily aged between 18 and 34. The chart below demonstrates the wide variety of support needs by age range of some of our applicants.



(01 April 2018 – 31 March 2019)

In Eden there is a continuing high demand for affordable rented housing and insufficient supply. In the private rented sector, there is limited availability as well as higher than average rents, for example 1 bed properties are rented within a range of £375 - £500p/m. This may be affordable for some young people who are working in well paid jobs, however for those who are single and under the age of 35 who are only entitled to £295 of Local Housing Allowance the private rented sector is just not an option.

Whilst we are proud of our record on achieving homeless prevention and relief (74% success in prevention, 75% relief), one of our main challenges in this rural area is access to supported housing. In Eden we have only 5 units of accommodation for young people and 8 units for those with alcohol and substance misuse and/or offending behaviour all of which is located in Penrith, the largest market town in the District.

This often causes issues for those living in more rural areas across the district, where there's no regular or affordable transport to and from Penrith. This poses significant issues when individuals require support to live independently, but still want to remain close to family and friends.

With funding from the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government, Eden Housing Association has been able to develop a small, but flexible supported lettings scheme for those who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping with limited housing options and support needs. We have a person-centred approach, and support can now be delivered anywhere across Eden HA's properties allowing us to be flexible in where the property is located helping individuals to remain as close as possible to family and friends too.

An example of where this new way of working has helped considerably is a situation involving a young person (we'll call Jack), living in a rural area with his grandfather who sadly passed away. Jack was forced to vacate the property and was unable to live with any other family member. Jack had never lived alone, presented with Autism and Dyspraxia, and also had some history of substance misuse. Jack clearly required supported accommodation but wished to remain close to his family. EHA set Jack up in one of our community properties and provided intense support, including independent living skills, applying for benefits and budgeting advice, sought assistance from Unity (Drug & Alcohol services) and instigated a Care Act assessment which resulted in additional support from the County Council. Jack has been in his supported tenancy for almost a year, and will soon move on into a starter tenancy to begin his journey into independent living.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of people requiring temporary accommodation. We have needed to make use of local Bed & Breakfast accommodation, as well as sourcing additional properties from within our stock holding to use as Temporary Accommodation. We intend to convert these in to supported lettings, allowing those households to remain in the properties and benefit from having settled accommodation.

It would be extremely difficult to sustain this type of flexible project without effective collaboration and also the grant funding received from our partners.

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