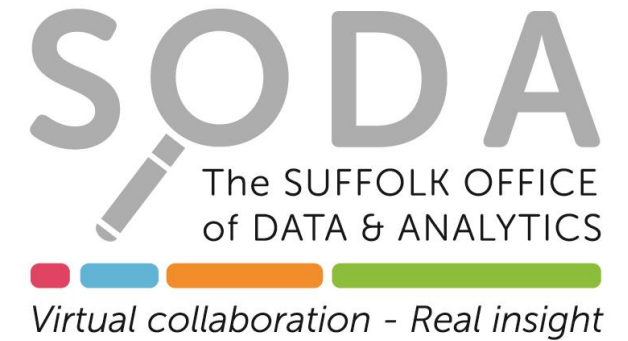




Youth Homelessness in Suffolk

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Background

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) conducted a review of the Suffolk System's prevention and reduction of youth homelessness efforts (2–3 April 2025)

- Findings
 - Suffolk lacks consistent data and monitoring on homeless 16/17-year-olds and care leavers.
 - District & Boroughs (D&Bs) collect some data via HCLIC, but County Children's Services' new 16/17 homelessness indicator is not widely known or used.
 - There is no automated oversight of homeless 16/17-year-olds, and many do not receive a Child in Need assessment, limiting understanding of demand and need.
 - No data sharing exists between D&Bs and Leaving Care. Neither uses national DfE/MHCLG data, which shows different volumes of homeless care leavers.
- Recommendations
 - Use HCLIC reports for local oversight of 16/17-year-olds and care leavers and review them via the Young Person's Housing Action Group.
 - Prioritise development of a dashboard using the new 16/17 indicator to track all homeless 16/17-year-olds including later presentations.
 - Increase awareness of the indicator across systems and teams.
 - Strengthen the Young Person's Housing Action Group as a shared forum to collect, share, and monitor youth homelessness and care leaver data across County and D&Bs, to:
 - understand volumes and need
 - forecast demand
 - ensure data aligns across services and supports planning and service provision

Suffolk's Response

The Suffolk Housing Board commissioned the Suffolk Office of Data & Analytics (SODA) to deliver data, analytics and evidence to support strategic commissioning, performance monitoring, and multi-agency work, with a focus on:

- youth homelessness
- care leaver accommodation
- move-on pathways from supported housing

SODA's Approach

To provide a suite of outputs, integrating quantitative and qualitative data and align with initiatives such as Staying Close, Housing Related Support, the Rough Sleeping Initiative, and MHCLG priorities. SODA's outputs will support the system to:

- Prevent youth homelessness
- Plan accommodation for care-experienced young adults
- Provide operational insights into demand and service use
- Deliver robust needs assessments
- Monitor performance and trends
- Support strategic commissioning and long-term planning
- Improve multi-agency understanding and joint commissioning
- Enable transparent reporting for governance and stakeholders

This report is one of the SODA outputs for the wider project, other products already delivered include: [Suffolk Observatory – Housing – Homelessness Dashboard](#). The following provides an overview of the national and local picture of youth homelessness, and the evidence on key risk factors. For this report SODA conducted evidence reviews, collated existing local evidence reports and profiles and used local data (HCLIC).

Note on data for Youth Homelessness

The official, quarterly Homelessness Statistics are published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), with a time-lag; the last two publications were on 25/02/2026 providing July – September 2025 data, and on 27/11/2025 providing FY 2024/25 data.

- This data is available down to district / borough level, and provides an [overview of homelessness assessments](#), outcomes and some other contextual information. While age breakdowns and ethnic categories are included for some of the information they are not comprehensive and cannot be cross-tabulated. Therefore, some demographic data is not available for this report.
- The data used by MHCLG for the official statistics is based on the quarterly HCLIC submissions from relevant local authorities (LAs). Suffolk's districts & borough have been providing the data directly to SODA since 2024, and SODA has created a Suffolk dashboard to give more immediate, better visual presentation of official statistics in Suffolk. As this data is only available from our local partners, the dashboard does not include regional or national comparators. We have used this data to provide the most-up-to date picture of Youth Homelessness in Suffolk (data to end of December 2025).
- While the official MHCLG data includes an age breakdown for 16-24s, locally we report on 16-25s.
- [The data is not always consistent because information is collected at different stages of the homelessness process, some of the data is based on what applicants disclose at the point of application, whilst other information is added later by officers during their statutory enquires. Not all fields are mandatory, so, applicants may choose not to provide certain details.](#)
- [Key data items are also collected at different points and do not always completely overlap \(e.g., Priority Need and Support Need\). Circumstances may change as a case progresses, and operational judgements made by officers can also evolve over time.](#)
- [Furthermore, local authority policies and approaches to prevention, assessment practice and recording can differ. Therefore, leading to potential variation in local data with differences reflecting process or policy difference rather than genuine differences in homelessness need. This means local data may not always be completely/directly comparable.](#)

Another dataset used for this report is the Centrepont Youth Homelessness databank, which tracks the number of young people (as main applicants) approaching their LA because they are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This is the only source to [understand presentation](#) to LAs, as opposed to the above-mentioned data, which provides assessments. The latest data from Centrepont was published on 25/02/2026 and covers FY 2024/25 (April 2024 to March 2025).

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA)

The possible journeys of a young person presenting to their local authority because they are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

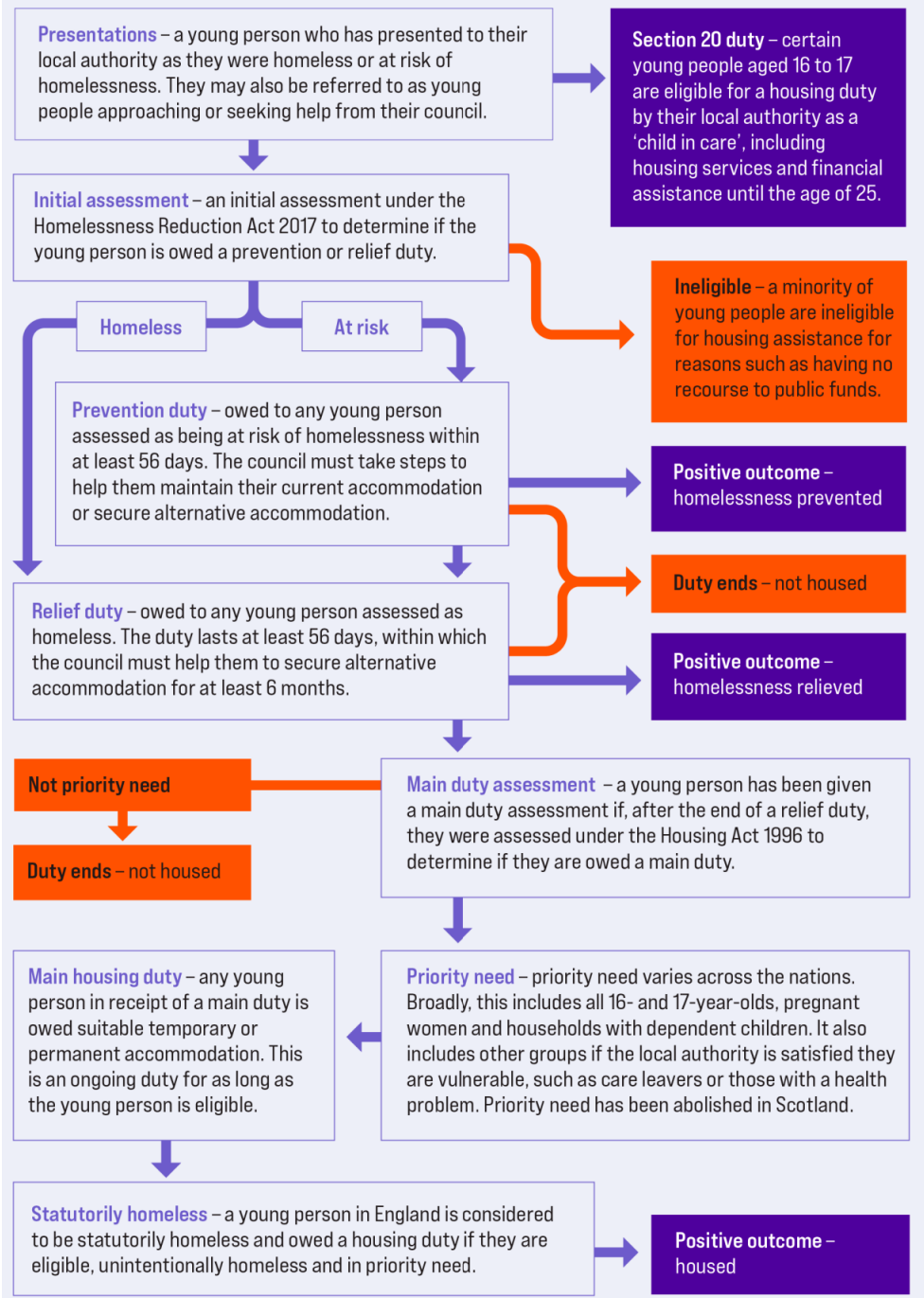
Relevant Definitions

Rough sleeping is the most visible and extreme form of homelessness. It includes people who are sleeping outside or in places not designed for people to live in, including tents, cars, doorways and abandoned buildings.

Hidden homelessness does not have a strict definition and can be applied inconsistently but most definitions consider it to include forms of homelessness that are not visible on the streets or in official statistics. This can include

- Sofa-surfing, in which people are staying on the floor, sofa or in the spare room of friends or family. These can be extremely temporary arrangements including moving on a nightly basis.
- Unsuitable accommodation, in which people may be in overcrowded, unsuitable, or dilapidated housing, or temporary accommodation like B&Bs and hostels.

Single homelessness is a term within homelessness legislation to define people presenting to their local authority without any dependents or as a family. The alternative to single homelessness is family homelessness. [Due to the way the homelessness legislation works, people presenting as single homeless may find it harder to access housing support.](#)



Executive Summary

Section 1: Risk Factors of Youth Homelessness

- There are many risk factors in a person's life that can threaten development, limit social and economic opportunities, increase the likelihood of mental and physical health problems, criminal involvement, substance misuse, or exploitation or abuse in later life. These risk factors exist at different levels, such as individual, interpersonal, communities and society, and interact in complex ways. There is a large body of research on factors that predict, i.e., those which can increase or limit social and economic opportunities.
- Homelessness shares similar risk factors to other issues, such as offending, anti-social behaviour, and substance misuse and will correlate with other poor life outcomes such as poor mental/physical health, low educational attainment, and unemployment. Low educational achievement is contextually important, since its impact can be seen throughout a person's life.
- Youth homelessness is associated with someone not being able to transition from the dependency of childhood to the self-reliance of adulthood, because they lack the emotional, practical and financial resources and supports that are available to most young people as they transition to adulthood.
- Key risk factors for homelessness are
 - **Family breakdown, abuse, and neglect** - 51% of young people with experience of homelessness say family breakdown was the main reason or one of several reasons they became homeless.
 - **Being social care-experienced** - Roughly 48% of young people at Centrepont have been in care, with other studies reporting homelessness rates of 31%–46% among care leavers. Children in Social Care are amongst the most vulnerable groups in society, and Abuse/Neglect, and Absent Parenting are the key reasons for children and young people being taken into care.
 - **Being involved with criminal justice system** - heightens CYP risk of homelessness due to abrupt transitions, inadequate support, and systemic barriers. And the motivating reasons for CYP people getting involved in gangs, criminal exploitation and violence overlap very much with homelessness risk factors, i.e. family/relationship breakdown, neglect, and abuse, being excluded from school and substance misuse.
 - **Mental health issues** - more than one-third of YP who use Centrepont's services experience mental health issues such as depression or anxiety. Poor mental health is consistently associated with deprivation, not having access to affordable housing, or living in poor housing, being social care-experienced, being involved in crime, less education, low income, and unemployment.
 - **Being of an ethnic minority background** - statutory homelessness data in England from 2020/21, found that YP from a Black ethnic background were over three times more likely to be at risk of or experiencing homelessness compared with YP from a White ethnic background.
 - **Being a refugee/asylum seeker** - Centrepont found that in 2024/25, 71% of YP who presented to their LA as homeless or at risk of homelessness were of UK nationality, 10% were non-EEA nationals, 3% were EEA nationals and the remaining percentage were unknown or not reported. Given that 89.9% of England's population are UK nationals, this would point to an overrepresentation of non-UK nationals amongst those experiencing youth homelessness.
 - **Gender** - in 2024/25, 53% of presentations to LAs were made by young women, and 43% by young men. Based on ONS population estimates for 2024, 51% of 16–24-year-olds are male and 49% are female. Therefore, young males are significantly under-represented in applications to LAs. For males, "friends no longer able to accommodate" is second most common reason for applying, suggesting that they are already experiencing some form of homelessness before they ask for support from their LA.
 - **Gender ID** - Centrepont estimates that LGBT+ young people make up almost a quarter of all homeless youth. 77% of LGBT+ homeless YP believe coming out was the main cause of their homelessness.

Section 2: Prevalence of Youth Homelessness Risk Factors in Suffolk

- Children in Social Care are amongst the most vulnerable groups in society.
 - Since 2020, the rate of Children in Need in Suffolk continues to be above the regional, but below the national average. The primary need of children assessed by social workers in Suffolk in 2025 is Abuse/Neglect (65%), which is above both regional and national averages. Other prominent needs being Absent Parenting (9%) and Child Disability/Illness (7%). Ethnic minorities are significantly over-represented among Children in Care, with Black children being the most over-represented group.
 - Looked After Children are assessed for emotional and behavioural difficulties, incl. emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behaviour through the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). On average over the past 5 years (2021-2025), 44% of Suffolk's children have a score which is a cause for concern, which is above both regional and national averages.
- Suffolk is above England averages for CYP needing specialist mental health support. And 11% of Suffolk's 15-19-year-olds are flagged with a mental health condition.
- Across Suffolk, individuals involved in Serious Violence (SV) Offences tend to be younger than the overall Suffolk population. In 2025/26, 29% were under the age of 19, though this group only makes up 20% of Suffolk's population. Under 19s are especially over-represented for Sexual Offences (34%), and Violence against the person offences (29%).
- The rate of 15–24-year-olds being submitted to hospital due to substance misuse in Suffolk is below the England average and the rates of many of our nearest statistical neighbours (NHS England).
- Low Educational Achievement is an important contextual risk factor, due to its long-term impact on a person's life. Historically, attainment levels for Suffolk have been lower than national averages. For example,
 - Foundation Stage (aged 5) pupils' attainment reduced in Literacy and Mathematics after the COVID-19 pandemic and has yet to recover. In Suffolk, pupils from Asian, Black and Other backgrounds have lower attainment than those from White or Mixed/Multiple backgrounds.
 - A-Level (aged 18) pupils' attainment has dropped after the COVID-19 pandemic and is yet to return to pre-pandemic levels. There is also a 5% gap in the proportion of pupils achieving AAB between the lowest (Babergh) and highest (Ipswich and Mid Suffolk) performing districts.

Section 2: Prevalence of Youth Homelessness Risk Factors in Suffolk cont'd.

- Poor educational outcomes can lead to employment issues as young people enter adulthood – overall leading to poverty.
 - In 2025, 5.2% of 16–17-year-olds were classed as Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) in Suffolk, which is in line with East of England averages and lower than the England average.
 - The rate of those classed as unemployed (i.e., those claiming Universal Credit for being unemployed or Jobseeker's Allowance) is much higher for young people aged 18-24 (4.4% for Suffolk) than for all those aged 16 and above (2.1% for Suffolk). Among the 18-24 age group, claimant rates are also higher for those living in East Suffolk (5.1%) and Ipswich (6.0%). Claimant rates for those aged 16 or above are also high in Ipswich (3.6%).
 - The proportion of 16-24s (as % of total 16-24 population) classed as unemployed has increased somewhat over the past 3 years locally, regionally and nationally. In 2025/26 so far, the proportion of 16-24s who are unemployed is 3.6%, compared to 3.8% regionally and 4.3% nationally.
 - Wages across Suffolk are consistently below those of England overall – in 2023/24 median gross weekly pay in Suffolk was £40 lower than the England average, and £72 lower than the East of England average.
 - Proportionally, households with children are more likely to be on Universal Credit, either due to being out of work, or because their income needs 'topping up' with benefits.
- Linked to poverty - housing affordability has become worse across England, but slightly more so in Suffolk than the national average. This is due to a combination of low incomes and relatively high house prices and rents in Suffolk. In Suffolk, for those in the lowest 25% of earners, housing is slightly less affordable than for those in the median income bracket (this is different to the national picture). The ratio across Suffolk for the past 5 years was 8.6, lower than the regional but higher than the national average.

Section 3: Prevalence of Youth Homelessness – Suffolk in a regional and national context

Centrepont estimates that across England, 107,585 16–24-year-olds presented to their local authority (LA) as homeless or at risk of homelessness between April 2024 and March 2025 (+6% on FY 2023/24 and +19% on 2022/23). This equates to 1.7% of the total 16-24 population in England.

- In 2024/25, across Suffolk, 1,491 YP presented to their LAs. This represents 2.2% of all of Suffolk's 16-24s and is therefore somewhat above the regional and national averages.
- Within Suffolk, 686 (or 4.9%) of Ipswich's 16-24s presented to Ipswich Borough Council. Presentations of 16-24s rose by 9% in Ipswich year-on-year.

In England, of the 107,585 young people (16-24 years old) who presented to their LA as homeless or at risk of homelessness only 65% were assessed in 2024/25.

- Across England, the rates at which young people presenting for homelessness support are assessed ranges from 48% in the South West to 83% in Yorkshire & Humber.
- The East of England average was 62% (up from 49% in 2023/24).
- While the Suffolk average was 71% (up from 34% in 2023/24).

In 2024/25, Suffolk had proportionally more 18-24s being owed a duty than regional and national averages (21% in Suffolk, 18% in the East of England, and 17% nationally). For Ipswich this stood at 26% in 2024/25.

In Q4 2023/24, 31% of households (HH) in Temporary Accommodation (TA) in Ipswich, had a main applicant between the ages of 18 and 24 (compared to an average of 15% across Suffolk, 13% regionally and 10% nationally.) In the same quarter, Suffolk's 18-24s stayed in TA for shorter periods of time than their counterparts across the region and England.

Section 4: The detailed picture of Youth Homelessness in Suffolk

- Over the past three financial years, homelessness assessments have increased across Suffolk. In absolute numbers, Ipswich and East Suffolk register the highest number of assessments.
- In 2024/25 so far, a total of 1,161 YP were assessed across Suffolk, which equates to 23% of all assessments undertaken by the districts/borough. Ipswich registered the highest number of YP (478).
- Between April 2022 and December 2025, assessments for YP have increased at a faster rate than those for over 25s (25% vs. 17.7%). The faster growth for 18-25s is driven especially by increases in East Suffolk and Ipswich and to a lesser extent in West Suffolk.
- In 2025/26 so far, the majority of 16-25s in Suffolk were owed a Prevention duty 53% vs. 42% being owed a Relief duty. Those assessed as already homeless and therefore owed a Relief duty are proportionally much higher in West Suffolk (65%), than the other areas.
- The majority (59%) of 16-25s were in a settled home before being threatened with or becoming homeless in 2025/26
- In line with national findings, 'family no longer willing / able to accommodate' is the most common reason in Suffolk for the loss of a Settled Home.
- On average across Suffolk, 13% were sleeping rough at time of application. This was highest in Mid Suffolk (18%), East Suffolk (17%), and 14% in Babergh.
- In 2025/26 so far, there were 35 18–20-year-olds listed as a 'Care Leaver' under Priority Need.
- Across Suffolk, in 38% of Prevention Duty and 31% of Relief Duty cases the applicant had an accommodation secured.
- On ending Relief Duty due to the 56-days limit reached, the majority (74%) of 16-25s were found to be unintentionally homeless, and in priority need and therefore due a Main Duty. 24% were found to be homeless but without a priority need and a small proportion (2.2%) were found to be intentionally homeless.
- In line with growing homelessness applications and assessments, the number of households (HH), where the main applicant is between 16 and 25, being housed in Temporary Accommodation has also risen. So far in 2025/26, 347 of these HH have been placed into TA.

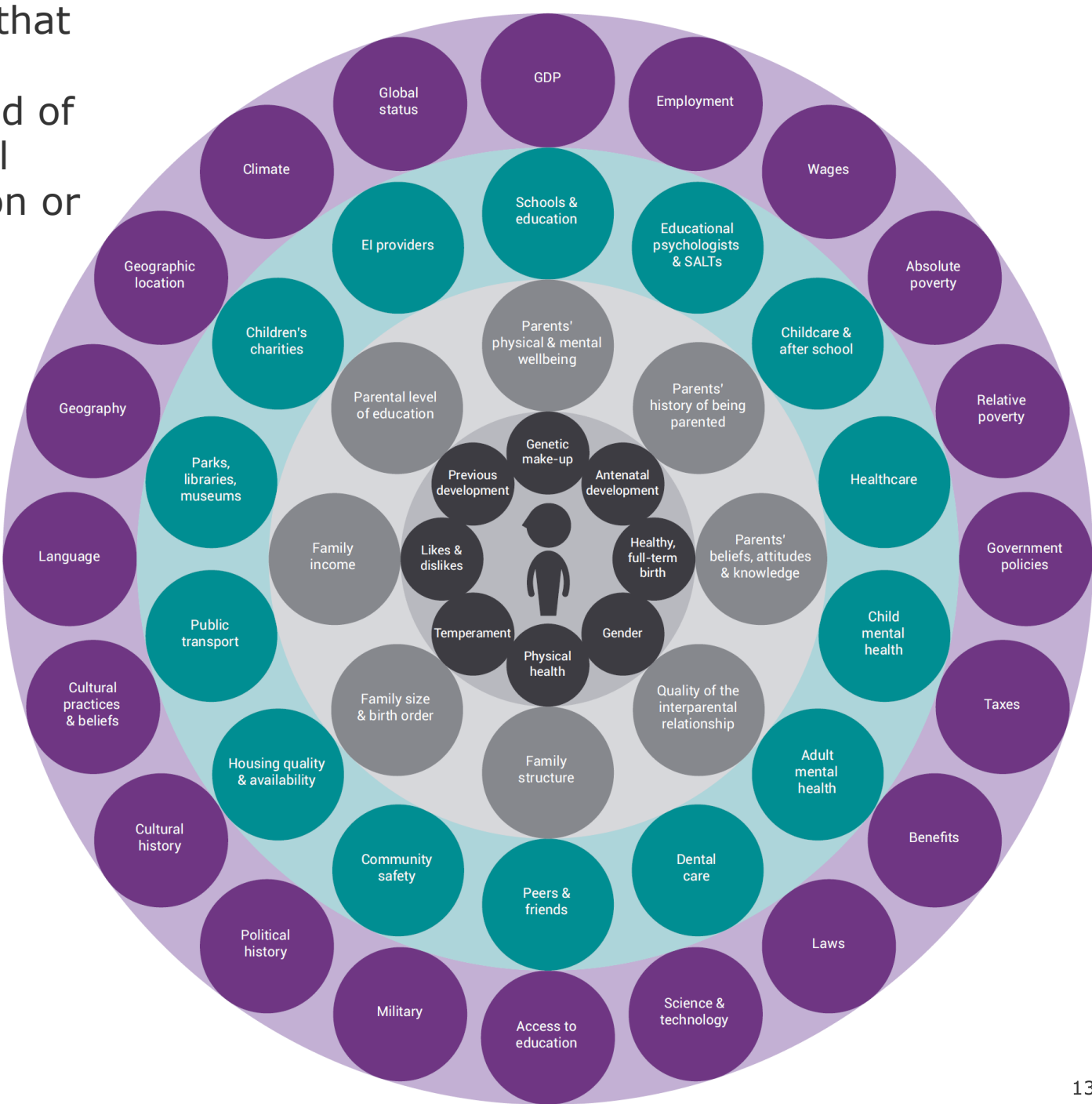
1. Risk Factors of Youth Homelessness

There are many risk factors in a person's life that can threaten development, limit social and economic opportunities, increase the likelihood of mental and physical health problems, criminal involvement, substance misuse, or exploitation or abuse in later life.

These risk factors exist at different levels, such as individual, interpersonal, community and societal, and they interact in complex ways.

There is a large body of research on factors that predict, i.e., those which can increase or limit social and economic opportunities.

Though the evidence base has limitations, as it is not always clear whether factors are predictors or are just markers.



Youth homelessness is associated with someone not being able to transition from the dependency of childhood to the self-reliance of adulthood, because they lack the emotional, practical and financial resources and supports that are available to most young people as they transition to adulthood.

Key risk factors for homelessness are

- Family breakdown, abuse, and neglect (*caution is needed against adopting a 'dysfunctional family' stereotype - the absence of family supervision and/or boundary setting may not constitute neglect but may indicate socio-economic factors, such as work commitments or difficulties monitoring children's activities away from the home environment*)
- Being social care-experienced
- Being involved with criminal justice system
- Mental health issues
- Substance misuse
- Being of an ethnic minority background
- Being LGBTQ+
- Being a refugee/asylum seeker

Homelessness shares similar risk factors to other issues, such as offending, anti-social behaviour, and substance misuse and will correlate with other poor life outcomes such as low educational attainment, poor (mental) health and unemployment. [Low educational achievement is contextually important](#), since its impact can be seen throughout a person's life. Attending and engaging positively with school gives CYP the opportunity to establish positive relationships with authority figures - attitudes which they take through to adulthood - and provides them with qualifications which decrease the risk of them becoming unemployed and falling into poverty.

Relationship breakdown, usually between CYP and their (step-)parents, is a major cause of youth homelessness. **51% of young people with experience of homelessness say family breakdown was the main reason** or one of several reasons they became homeless.

Relationship breakdown can be triggered by a range of different issues, including

- changes in household dynamics,
- high and complex support needs,
- violent or abusive relationships (domestic abuse for females is second highest reason for presenting as homeless), or
- financial pressure can result in young people being asked to leave the family home particularly when they are no longer eligible for child-related benefits.

Roughly 48% of young people at Centrepont have been in care, with other studies reporting homelessness rates of 31%–46% among care leavers.

Children in Social Care are amongst the most vulnerable groups in society, and **Abuse/Neglect, and Absent Parenting are the key reasons for children and young people being taken into care**. Young people transitioning out of children's services or institutions either because they have outgrown the support, or because they are transitioning to adult services are at greater risk of experiencing homelessness, because they

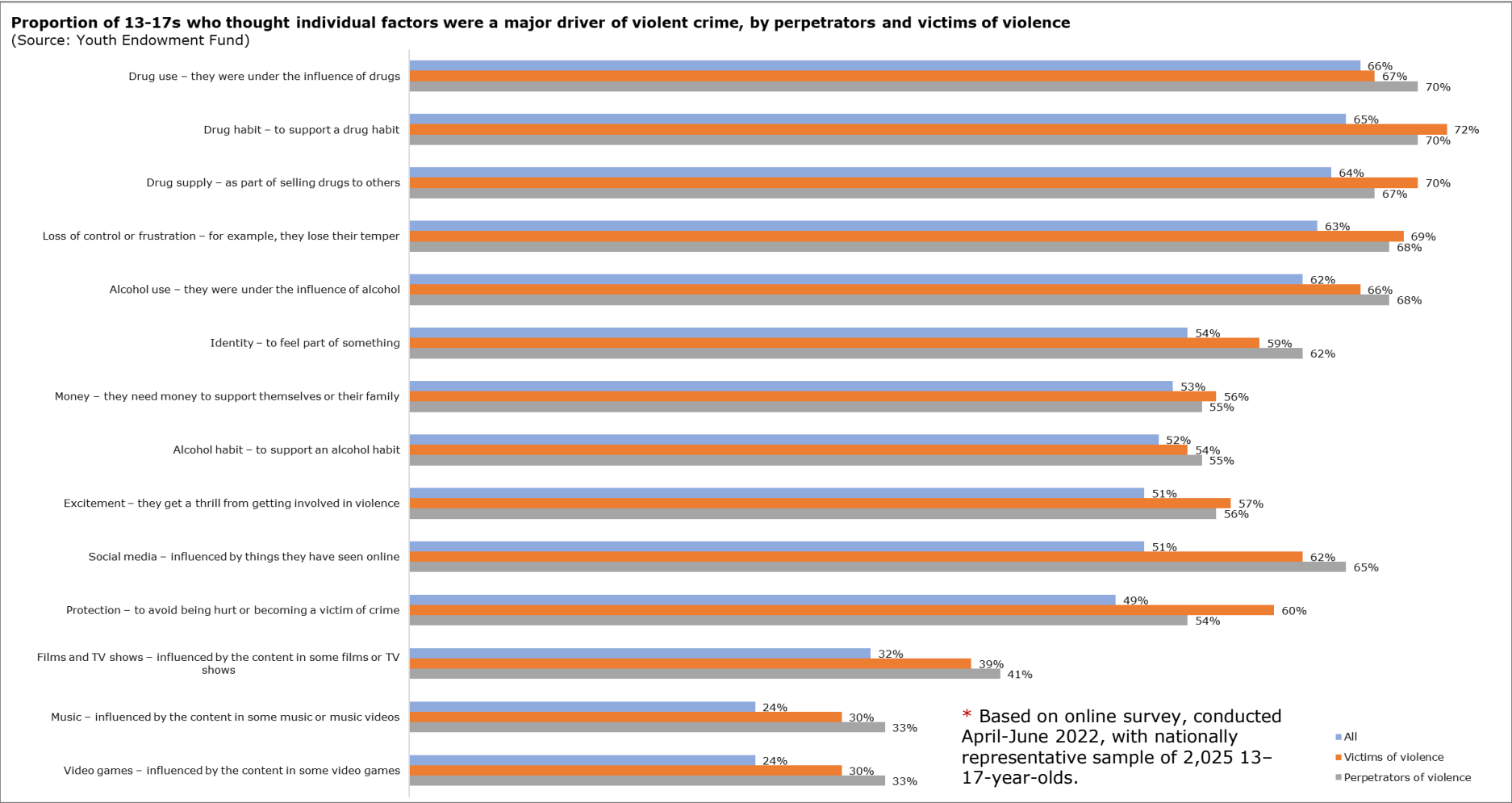
- face termination of support at ages 18–21, leaving them to navigate housing, employment, and life skills without the safety net available to most young adults.
- are often given insufficient aftercare support/transition planning.
- cannot access affordable/social housing.
- have experienced high rates of trauma, mental health issues, disrupted social networks, social isolation/exclusion and stigma.

Being involved with the Criminal Justice system, also heightens CYP risk of homelessness due to abrupt transitions, inadequate support, and systemic barriers.

And the motivating reasons for CYP people getting involved in gangs, criminal exploitation and violence overlap very much with homelessness risk factors, i.e. family/relationship breakdown, neglect, and abuse, being excluded from school and substance misuse. The latter is seen by 13–17-year-olds* as a major driver of crime. Involvement in crime and gangs gives CYP a feeling of being safe and loved, as well as earning money and being rewarded.

Centrepoint records that one third of homeless YP are tackling problems with substance misuse.

And gang crime and escaping violence is recorded as a cause of youth homelessness, when it is no longer safe for individuals to stay in their local area and they must move somewhere where they have no support network or safety net.



Sources: Youth Endowment Fund. Children, violence and vulnerability. 2022. Centrepoint, Databank 2025: The state of youth homelessness in the UK, 2024-25, February 2026. Action for Children, What are the main causes of youth homelessness in the UK? Taylor et al., 2024; Sanders et al., 2024; Lalonde et al., 2020; Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006; Frietsch et al., 2024; Toman, 2016; Bender et al., 2015; Yoshioka-Maxwell & Rice, 2020. Taylor et al., 2024; Sanders et al., 2024; Lalonde et al., 2020; Frietsch et al., 2024; Bender et al., 2015; Yoshioka-Maxwell & Rice, 2020. Sanders et al., 2024; Lalonde et al., 2020; Bender et al., 2015; Yoshioka-Maxwell & Rice, 2020. Essex County Council, Lived Experiences of County Lines, gangs and criminal exploitation in Essex Youth. January 2022.

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More than one-third of YP who use Centrepoint's services experience mental health issues such as depression or anxiety. Poor mental health is consistently associated with deprivation, not having access to affordable housing, or living in poor housing, being social care-experienced, being involved in crime, less education, low income, and unemployment.

- Common mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety are significantly more prevalent in deprived communities. This relationship is complex and bidirectional: experiencing deprivation increases the risk of developing ill mental health, while mental ill health can in turn contribute to a spiral of adversity, affecting employment, income, housing stability, and social relationships, and increasing the likelihood of further disadvantage.
- Looked after children (children in care) are among the most vulnerable groups for mental ill health, having often experienced trauma, abuse, neglect, or family breakdown before entering care.
- Children with learning or physical disabilities have an increased risk of developing mental ill health compared to the general population.
- The transition between children's mental health and learning disability services and adult mental health and learning disability services can be a particularly challenging transition to manage for those whose stability in maintaining their accommodation is reliant on the mental health support they are receiving.

Individual risk factors for homelessness also include ethnicity, nationality, gender and gender identity.

Ethnicity

Statutory homelessness data in England from 2020/21, found that YP from a Black ethnic background were over three times more likely to be at risk of or experiencing homelessness compared with YP from a White ethnic background. And in general, those from Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic background are overrepresented in homelessness statistics compared to overall population ratios.

Structural racism can also present challenges when accessing support. For example, Centrepont found that, young Black men experiencing homelessness are more likely to be diagnosed with a severe mental illness and sectioned under the Mental Health Act but the wider factors impacting upon them including poverty, racism and discrimination are often not taken into account.

Nationality; Refugee/asylum seeker

- Centrepont found that in 2024/25, 71% of YP who presented to their LA as homeless or at risk of homelessness were of UK nationality, 10% were non-EEA nationals, 3% were EEA nationals and the remaining percentage were unknown or not reported. Given that 89.9% of England's population are UK nationals, this would point to an overrepresentation of non-UK nationals amongst those experiencing youth homelessness.
- Around 11% of Centrepont residents are refugees, and roughly 10% are asylum seekers. This includes young people who have come to the UK as unaccompanied minors, fleeing violence or persecution in their own country. These vulnerable young people are sometimes granted asylum in the UK only to find themselves without anywhere to live and with little access to help or support, putting them at high risk of homelessness.

Gender

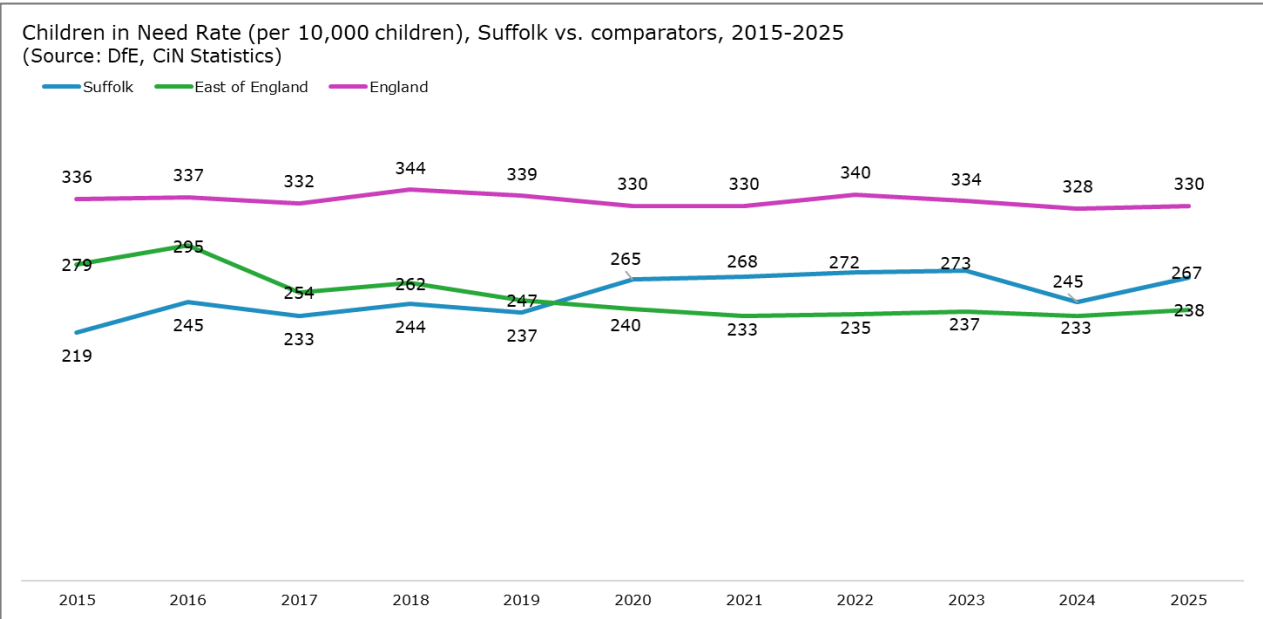
- In 2024/25, 53% of presentations to LAs were made by young women, and 43% by young men. Based on ONS population estimates for 2024, 51% of 16–24-year-olds are male and 49% are female. Therefore, young males are significantly under-represented in applications to LAs. For males, "friends no longer able to accommodate" is second most common reason for applying, suggesting that they are already experiencing some form of homelessness before they ask for support from their LA.
- There is an additional dimension to young women's experiences of homelessness when there are children involved. Centrepont found that young women are worried that they may lose custody of their children and therefore are less likely to seek help early enough to prevent their homelessness. It can also lead to young women with children as not being viewed through a youth lens despite having specific needs related to being a young person.

Gender ID

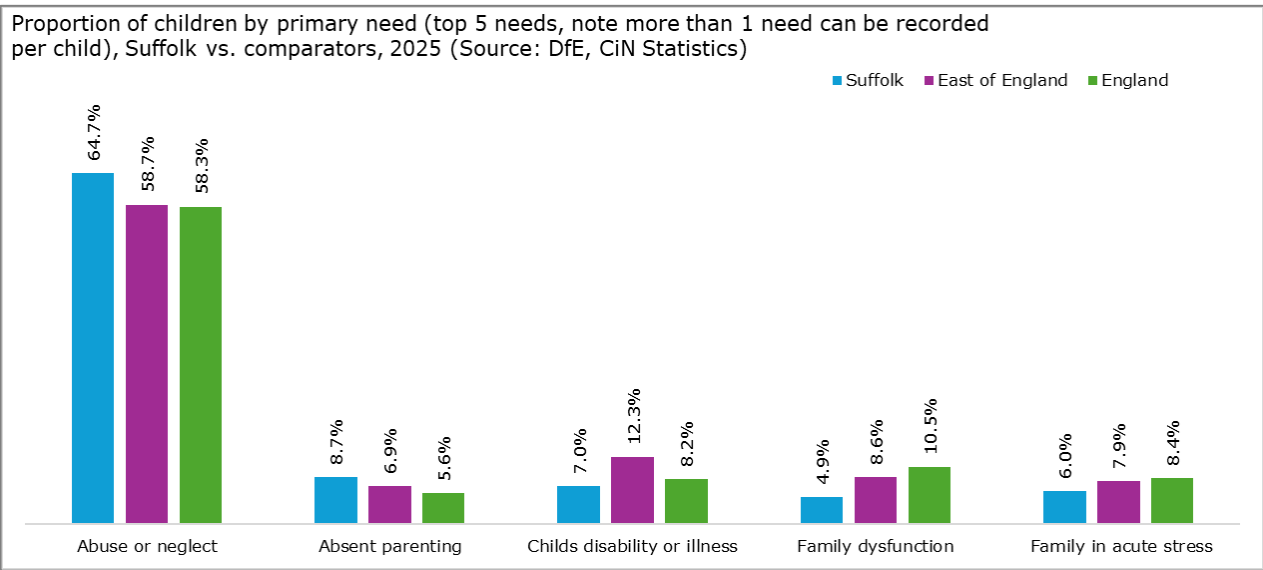
- Centrepont estimates that LGBT+ young people make up almost a quarter of all homeless youth.
- Many LGBTQ+ young people have reported experiencing abuse in the family home prior to becoming homeless as well as experiencing discrimination because of their sexuality or gender identity that led to them becoming homeless: 77% of LGBT+ homeless YP believe coming out was the main cause of their homelessness.
- Lack of family support is a significant issue for young LGBTQ+ YP, with just 13% feeling supported by parents or guardians whilst homeless.

2. Prevalence of Youth Homelessness Risk Factors in Suffolk

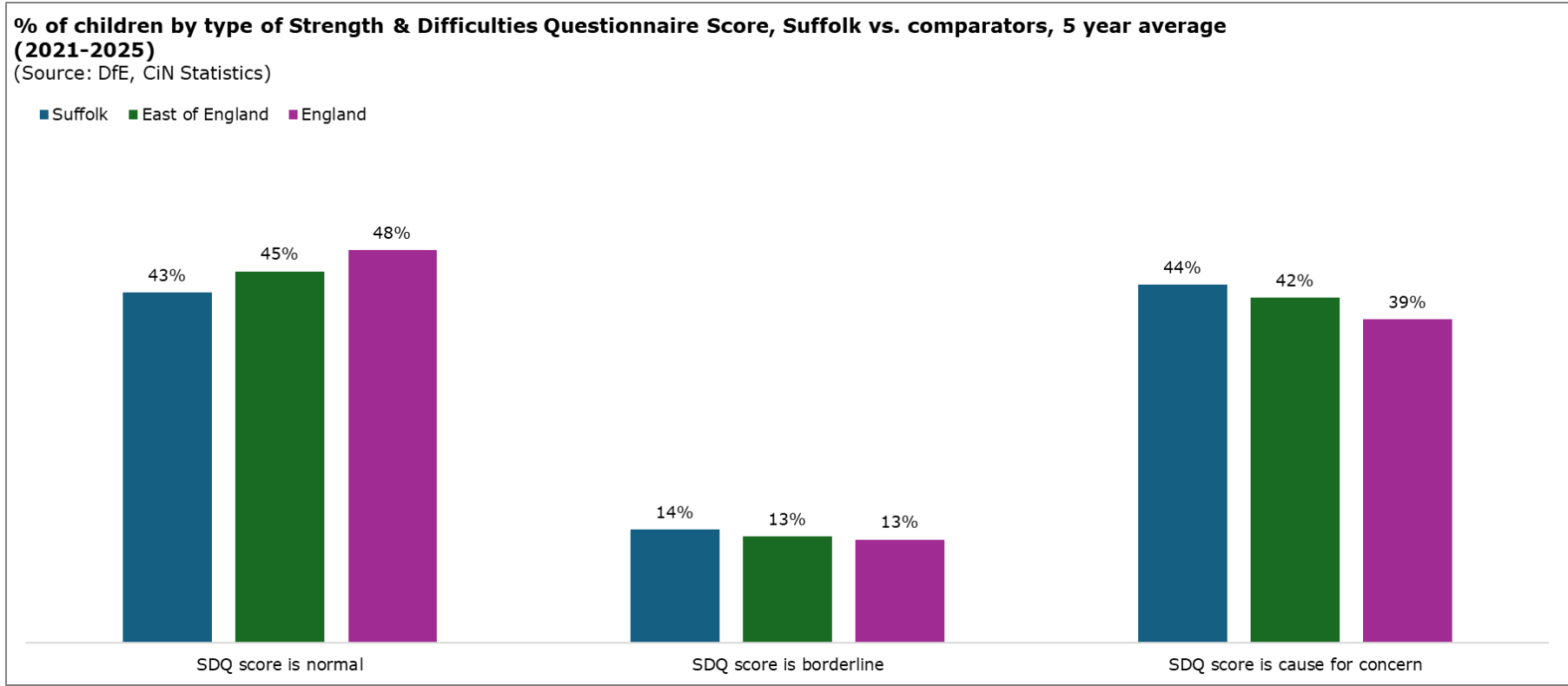
Children in Social Care are amongst the most vulnerable groups in society. Reasons for children and young people being taken into care vary, but most of these have been identified as risk factors for serious violence.



- Since 2020, the rate of Children in Need in Suffolk continues to be above the regional, but below the national average.
- The Primary Need of children assessed by social workers in Suffolk in 2025 is Abuse/Neglect (65%), which is above both regional and national averages. Other prominent needs being Absent Parenting (9%) and Child Disability/Illness (7%).
- Ethnic minorities are significantly over-represented among Children in Care, with Black children being the most over-represented group.



Looked After Children are assessed for emotional and behavioural difficulties, incl. emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behaviour through the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). On average over the past 5 years (2021-2025), 44% of Suffolk’s children have a score which is a cause for concern, which is above both regional and national averages.



There is often a link between the mental health of CYP and their parent(s), e.g., Suffolk social work assessments in 2024/25 identified 24% of CYP with mental health concerns and 44% raised concerns about a parent.

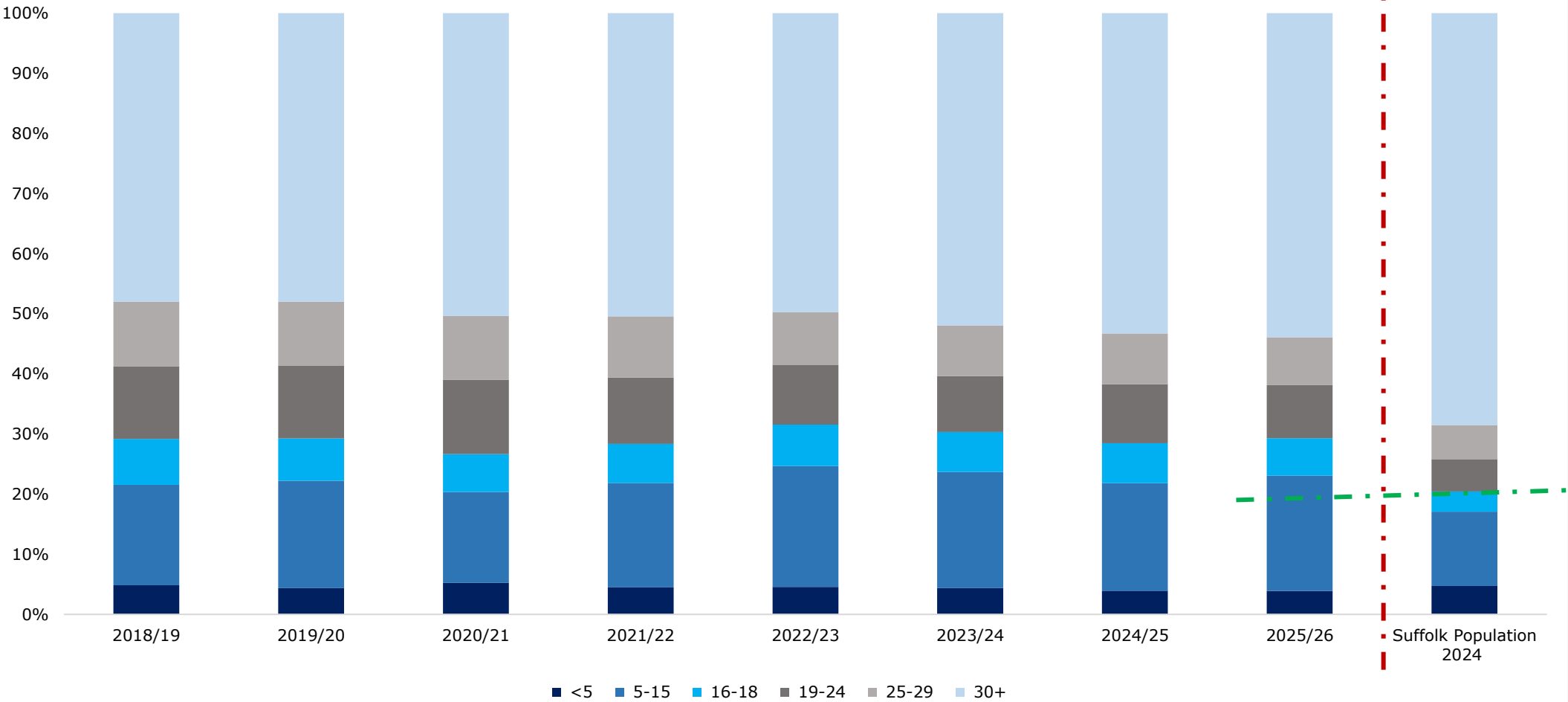
- Suffolk is above England averages for CYP needing specialist mental health support.
- 11% of Suffolk’s 15-19-year-olds are flagged with a mental health condition.
- Suffolk also has the highest rate of emergency self-harm admissions in the East of England.
- Higher levels of mental health need among CYP living in more deprived areas is also evident across Suffolk: attended contacts with community and mental health services were statistically significantly highest in the most deprived quintile, and more than 40% higher than the rate for the least deprived quintile in 2022/23.

Across Suffolk, individuals involved in Serious Violence (SV) Offences tend to be younger than the overall Suffolk population.

- In 2025/26, 29% were under the age of 19, though this group only makes up 20% of Suffolk’s population.
- Under 19s are especially over-represented for Sexual Offences (34%), and Violence against the person offences (29%).

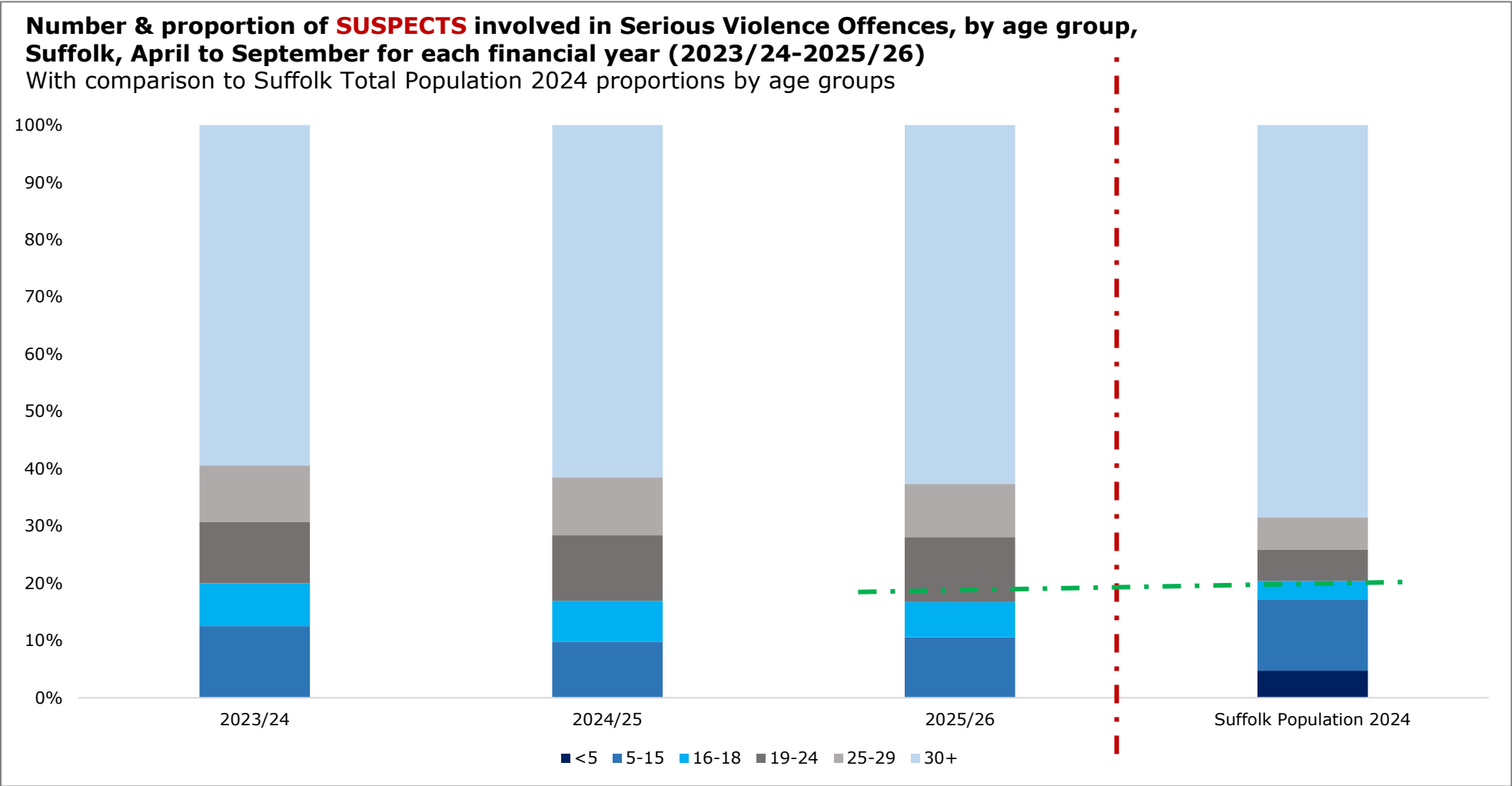
Proportions of people involved in Serious Violence Offences, by age group, Suffolk, April to September for each financial year (2018/19-2025/26)

With comparison to Suffolk Total Population 2024 proportions by age groups

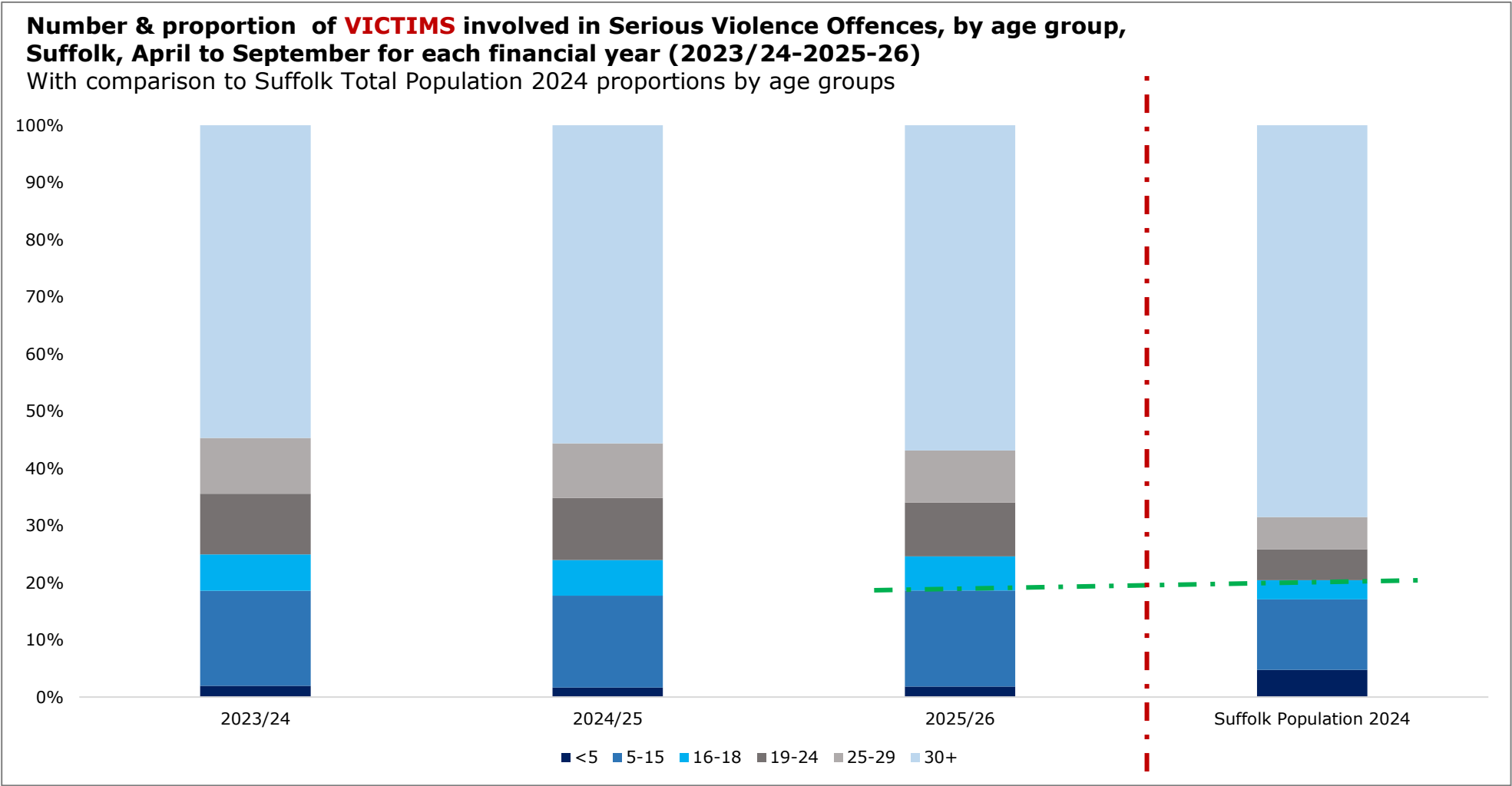


How to read this chart:
The first eight bars from left to right show the age breakdown of those involved in SV offences by year. The final bar shows the age breakdown of Suffolk’s total population in 2024. The green line indicates the current % of under 19s in the Suffolk population.

17% of Suffolk’s SV crime suspects were under the age of 19 between April and September 2025 (compared to 20% representation in overall Suffolk population).

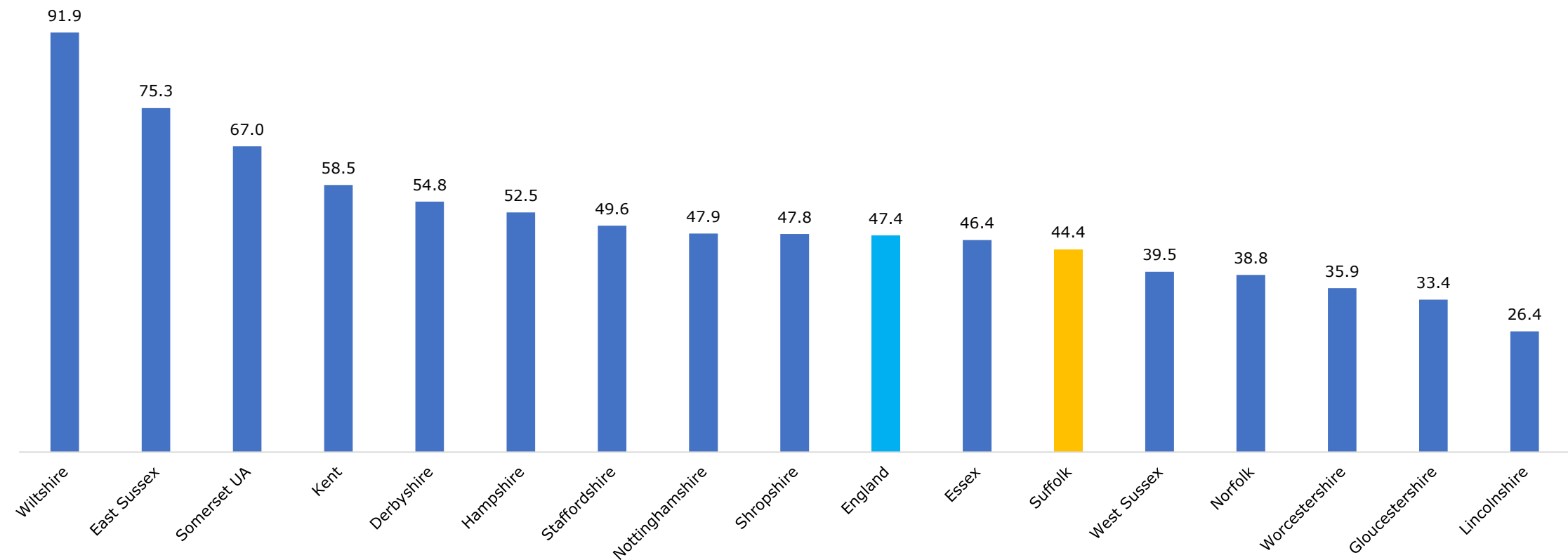


Across Suffolk, around 25% of SV crime victims were under 19 years old (vs. 20% proportion in Suffolk’s population).



The rate of 15–24-year-olds being submitted to hospital due to substance misuse in Suffolk is below the England average and the rates of many of our nearest statistical neighbours (NHS England).

Rates (per 100,000) of hospital admission due to substance misuse amongst 15-24s, Suffolk vs. comparators, 2021/22-2023/24
(Source: OHID)



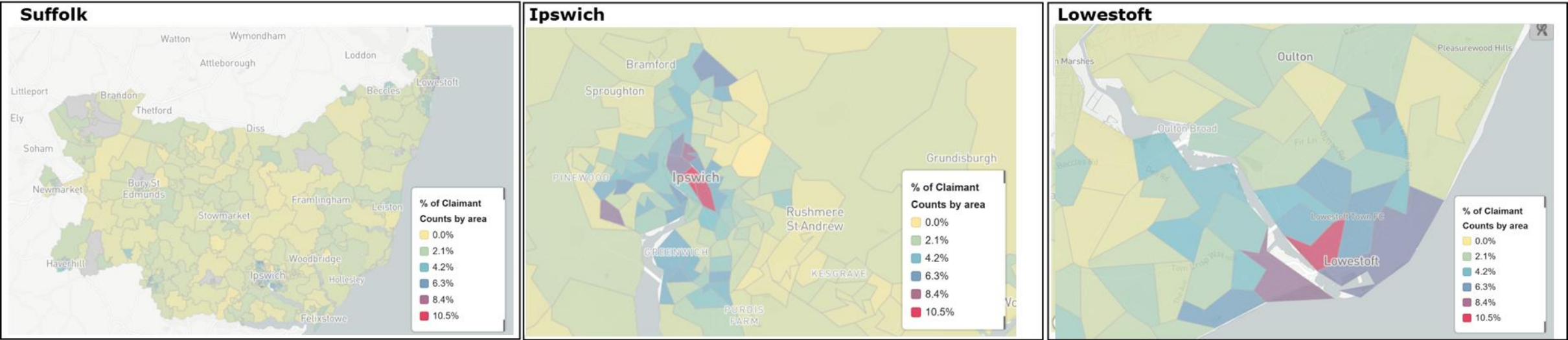
As mentioned on page 14, [Low Educational Achievement](#) is an important contextual risk factor, due to its long-term impact on a person's life. Historically, attainment levels for Suffolk have been lower than national averages.

- Foundation Stage (aged 5) pupils' attainment reduced in Literacy and Mathematics after the COVID-19 pandemic and has yet to recover. In Suffolk, pupils from Asian, Black and Other backgrounds have lower attainment than those from White or Mixed/Multiple backgrounds.
- For Year 6 (aged 11) pupils, there is a 6% attainment gap between the lowest and highest performing districts. The attainment gap for ethnicities with lower attainment has narrowed but not closed.
- GCSE (aged 16) pupils' attainment is lower in Suffolk than national averages. There is a 27% attainment gap between pupils from the highest (Asian) and lowest (Black) performing ethnic backgrounds.
- A-Level (aged 18) pupils' attainment has dropped after the COVID-19 pandemic and is yet to return to pre-pandemic levels. There is also a 5% gap in the proportion of pupils achieving AAB between the lowest (Babergh) and highest (Ipswich and Mid Suffolk) performing districts.
- Compared to other ethnic groups, pupils from 'Other' backgrounds are more likely to be permanently excluded, while pupils from White backgrounds are more likely to both miss school sessions and be excluded. Pupils in Ipswich and East Suffolk are also more likely to be excluded than pupils from other districts.
- Suffolk's population is generally less qualified than regional and national averages, with lower proportions of people with a degree level qualification or above.

Poor educational outcomes can lead to **employment** issues as young people enter adulthood. It can also limit the opportunities of young people to go on to attain further or higher educational qualifications. To track this across time, we measure the rate of 16- to 17-year-olds who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) as well as the overall Unemployment Rate for those aged 16 or above.

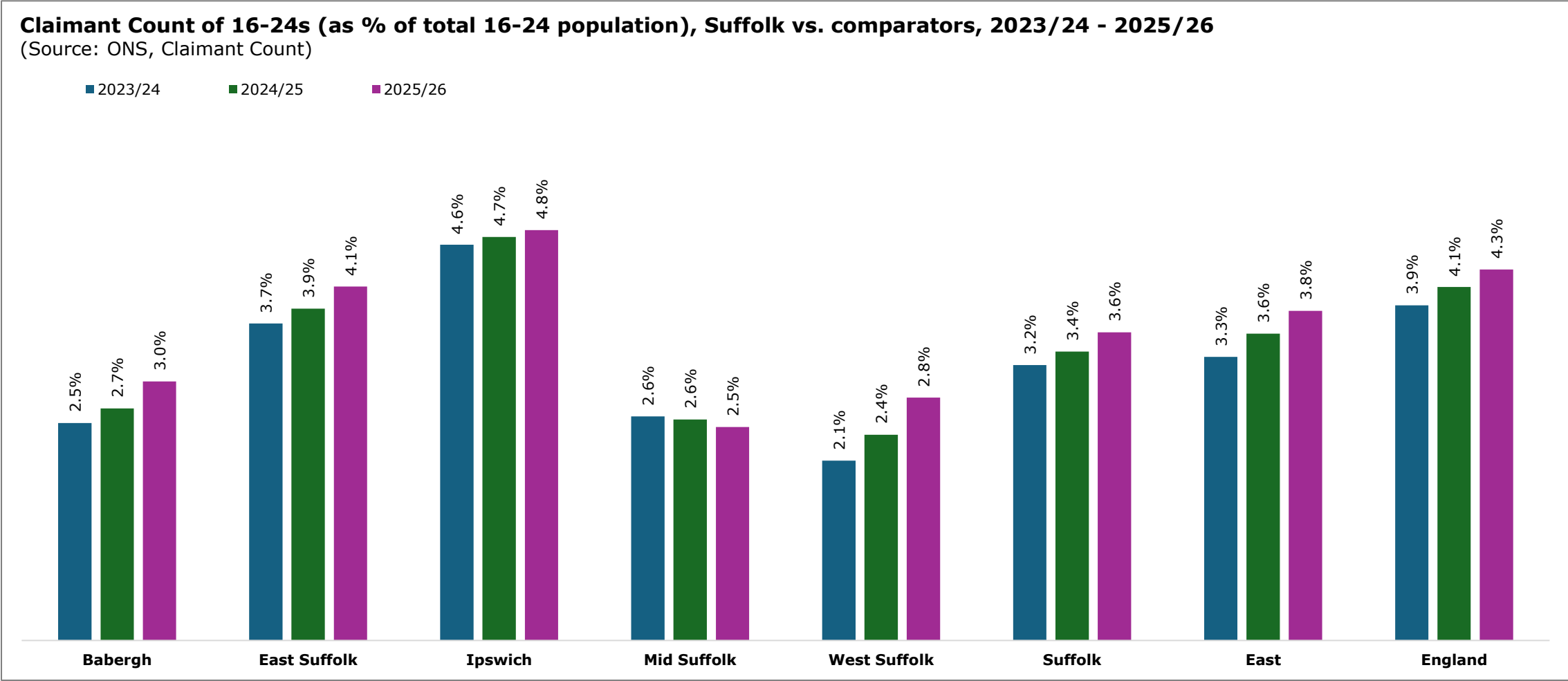
- In 2025, 5.2% of 16–17-year-olds were classed as NEET in Suffolk, which is in line with East of England averages and lower than the England average.
- The rate of those classed as unemployed (i.e., those claiming Universal Credit for being unemployed or Jobseeker's Allowance) is much higher for young people aged 18-24 (4.4% for Suffolk) than for all those aged 16 and above (2.1% for Suffolk). Among the 18-24 age group, claimant rates are also higher for those living in East Suffolk (5.1%) and Ipswich (6.0%). Claimant rates for those aged 16 or above are also high in Ipswich (3.6%).
- There is significant regional variation when we look at unemployment rates at the Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) level. In many of the most sparsely populated rural areas of Suffolk, unemployment rates for those aged 16 and above are at less than 1%. This is compared to areas of Ipswich and central Lowestoft where unemployment rates are much higher.

Maps of Claimant Count (16+), by LSOA, January 2026



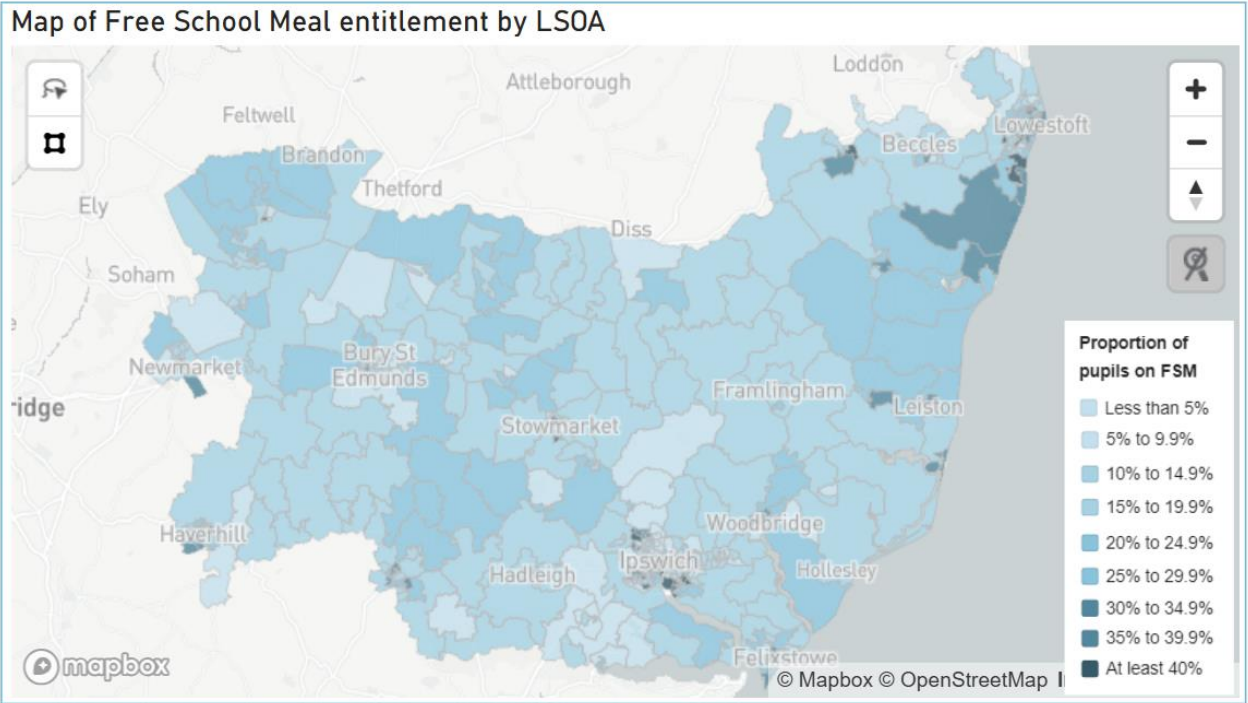
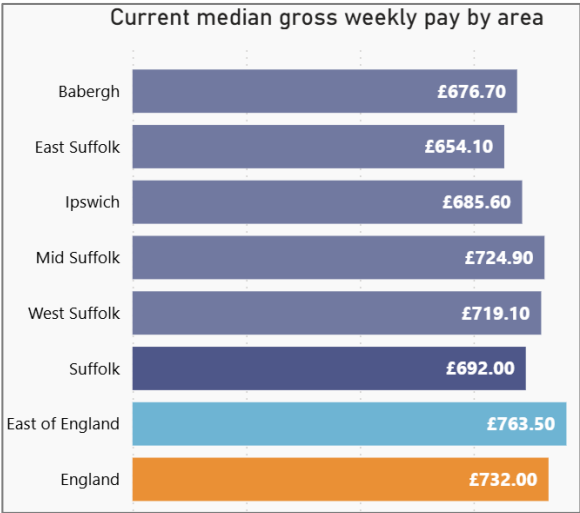
The proportion of 16-24s (as % of total 16-24 population) classed as unemployed has increased somewhat over the past 3 years locally, regionally and nationally. In 2025/26 so far, the proportion of 16-24s who are unemployed is 3.6%, compared to 3.8% regionally and 4.3% nationally.

Within Suffolk, Ipswich and East Suffolk have the highest proportion of young unemployed people (4.8% and 4.1% respectively).

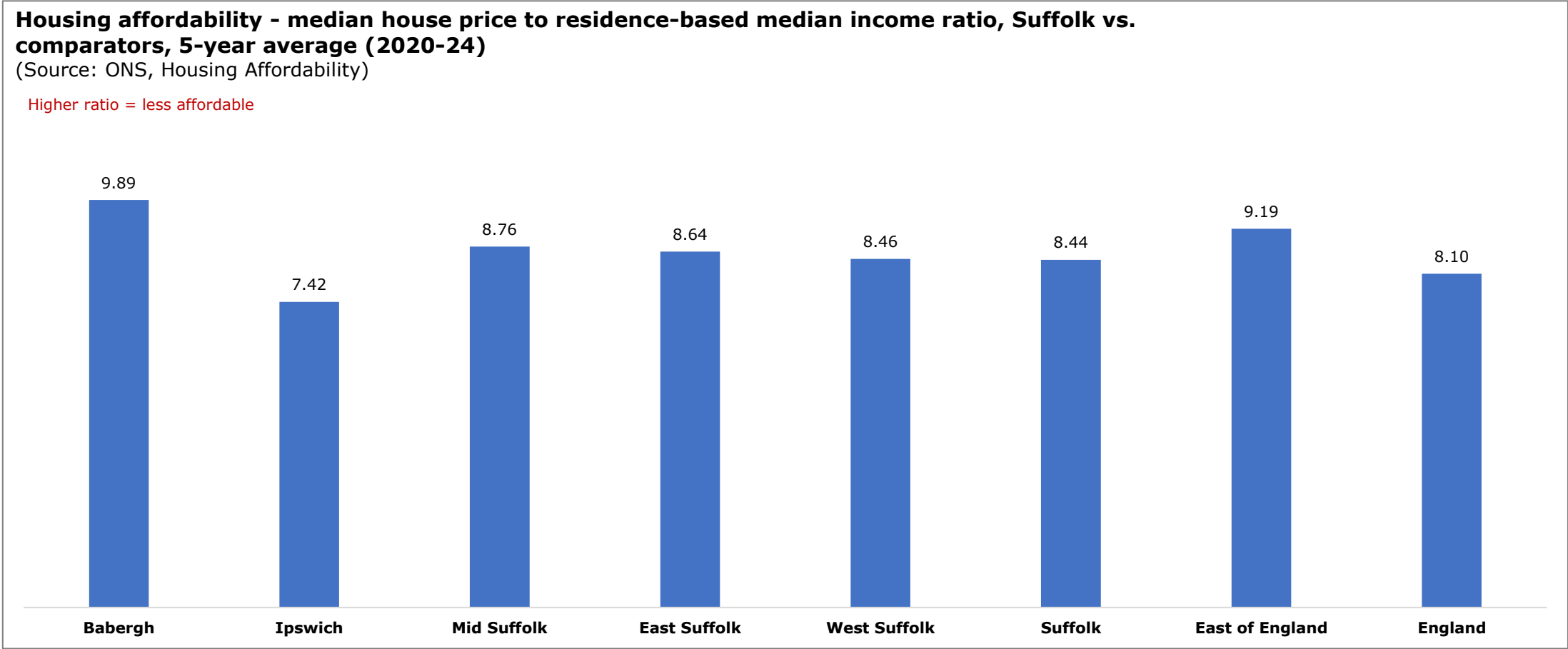


Poor educational outcomes, the potential impact on employment can lead to poverty and other poor outcomes.

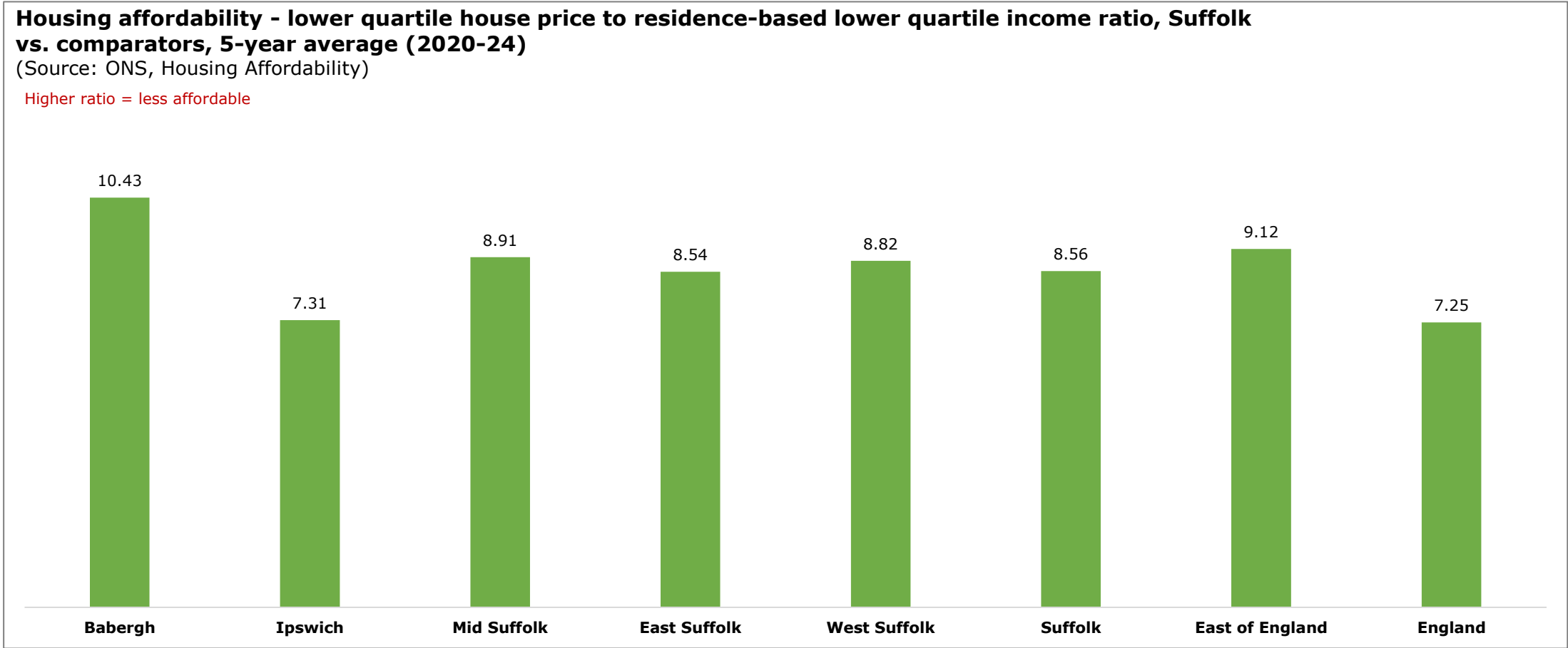
- Wages across Suffolk are consistently below those of England overall – in 2023/24 median gross weekly pay in Suffolk was £40 lower than the England average, and £72 lower than the East of England average.
- Proportionally, households with children are more likely to be on Universal Credit, either due to being out of work, or because their income needs ‘topping up’ with benefits.
- While around 33k of Suffolk’s children lived in relative low-income families 2023/24. The proportion of these families who are out of work has remained relatively steady over the past 10 years. The proportion of lone-parent families in relative low-income has increased over the past 10 years, compared to families with couples.
- In October 2024, on average 22.5% of Suffolk’s pupils (22,423) were eligible for Free School Meals, though in some neighbourhoods this can be over 40%.



Housing affordability has become worse across England, but slightly more so in Suffolk than the national average (8.4 vs. 8.1). This is due to a combination of low incomes and relatively high house prices and rents in Suffolk.

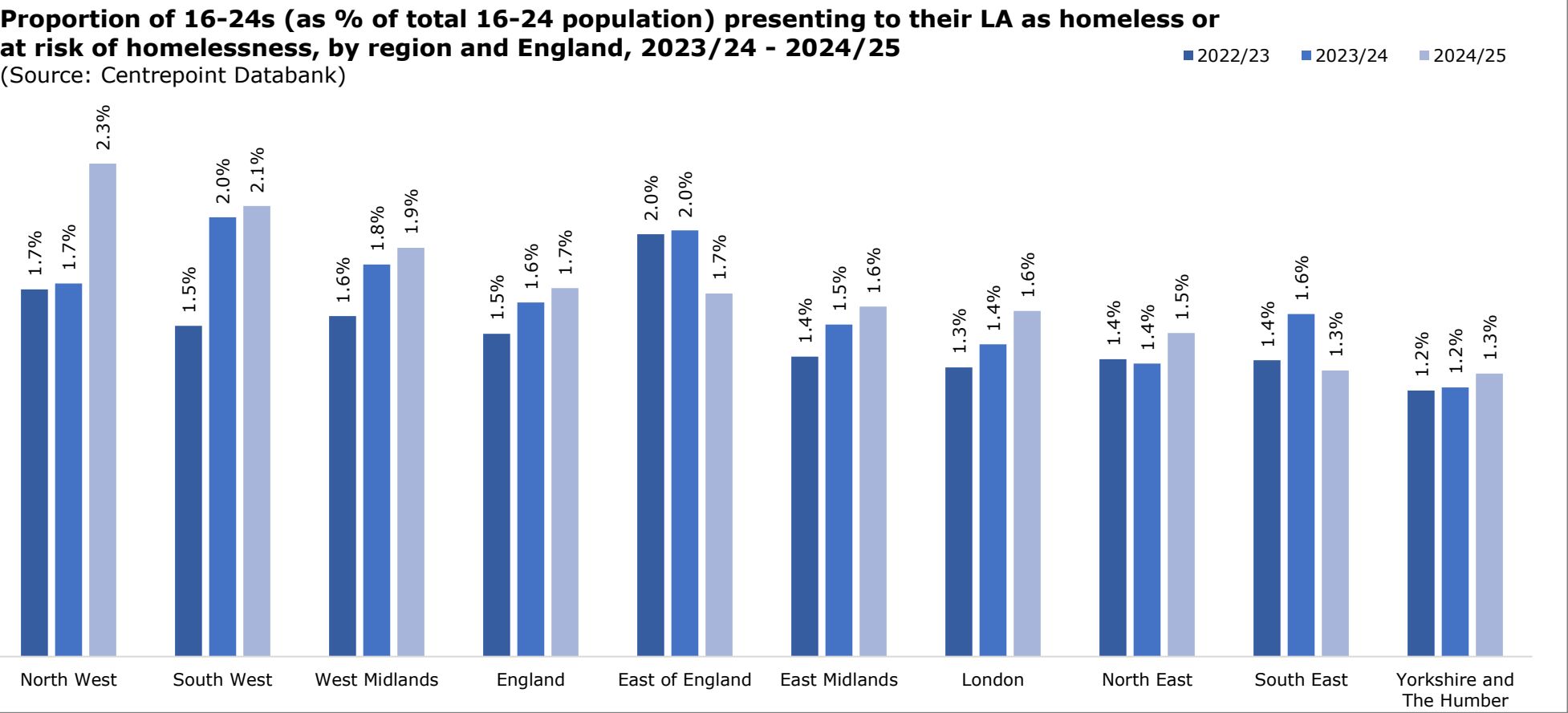


In Suffolk, for those in the lowest 25% of earners, housing is slightly less affordable than for those in the median income bracket (this is different to the national picture). The ratio across Suffolk for the past 5 years was 8.6, lower than the regional but higher than the national average. Within Suffolk, the range was 7.3 (Ipswich) to 10.4 (Babergh).



3. Prevalence of Youth Homelessness – Suffolk in a regional and national context

Centrepoint estimates that across England, 107,585 16–24-year-olds presented to their local authority (LA) as homeless or at risk of homelessness between April 2024 and March 2025 (+6% on FY 2023/24 and +19% on 2022/23). This equates to 1.7% of the total 16-24 population in England.

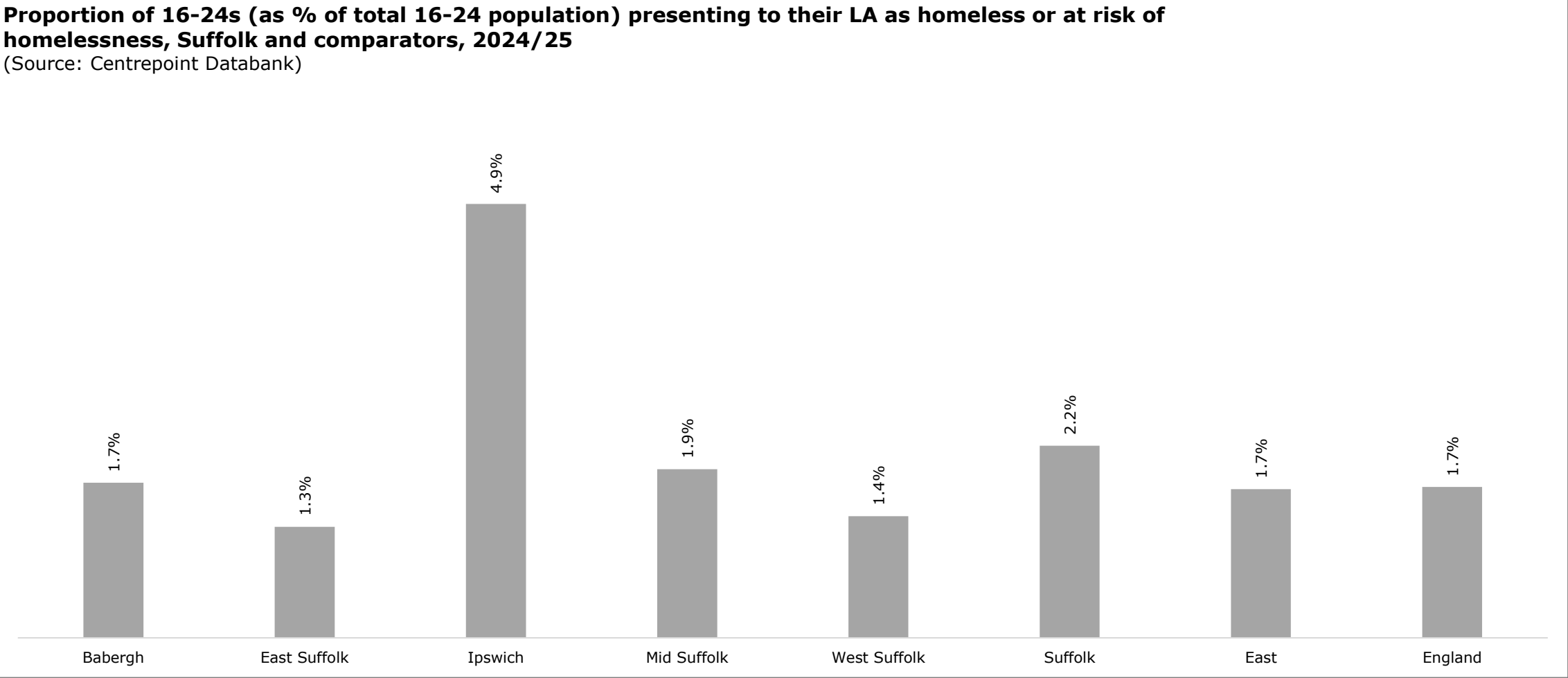


Compared to the England average, the proportion of 16-24s presenting to their LAs was higher in the North West, the South West, and the West Midlands, while it was the same (1.7%) for the East of England.

- Reasons for youth homelessness in 2024/25**
- Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate: 51%. For males, “friends no longer able to accommodate” is very high, suggesting that they are already experiencing some form of homelessness before they ask for support from their local authority.
 - Domestic abuse (mainly females): 11%
 - Evicted from supported housing: 7%
 - End of assured shorthold tenancy: 7%
 - Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support: 6%

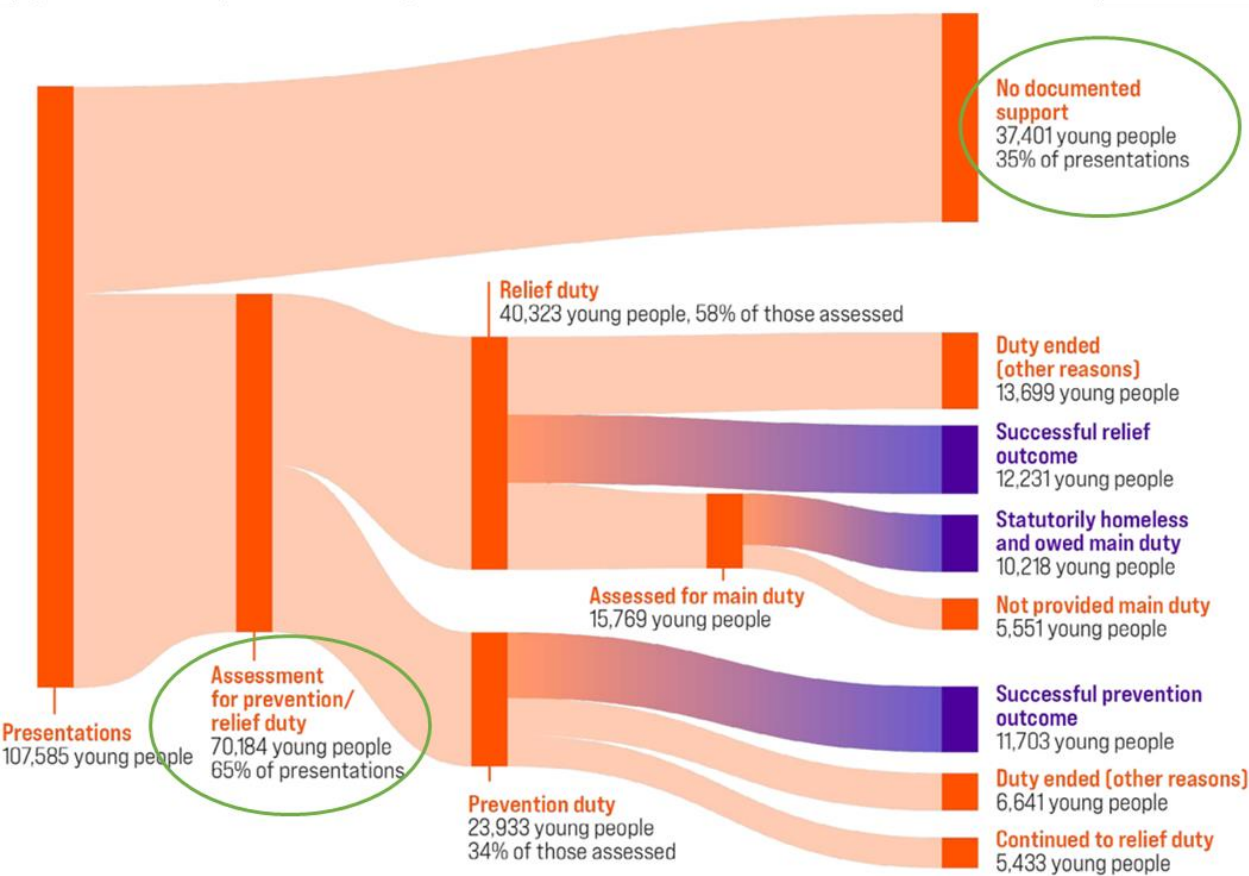
In 2024/25, across Suffolk, 1,491 YP presented to their LAs. This represents 2.2% of all of Suffolk’s 16-24s and is therefore somewhat above the regional and national averages.

Within Suffolk, 686 (or 4.9%) of Ipswich’s 16-24s presented to Ipswich Borough Council. Presentations of 16-24s rose by 9% in Ipswich year-on-year.



Across England, in FY 2024/25, of the 107,585 young people (16-24 years old) presented to their LA as homeless or at risk of homelessness **only 65% were assessed** (compared to 67% in 2023/24).

Pathways of YP through the HRA system, England, 2024/25
(Source: Centrepont Databank)



Across England, the rates at which young people presenting for homelessness support are assessed ranges from 48% in the South West to 83% in Yorkshire & Humber.

- The **East of England average was 62%** - up from 49% in 2023/24.
- While the **Suffolk average was 71%** - up from 34% in 2023/24.

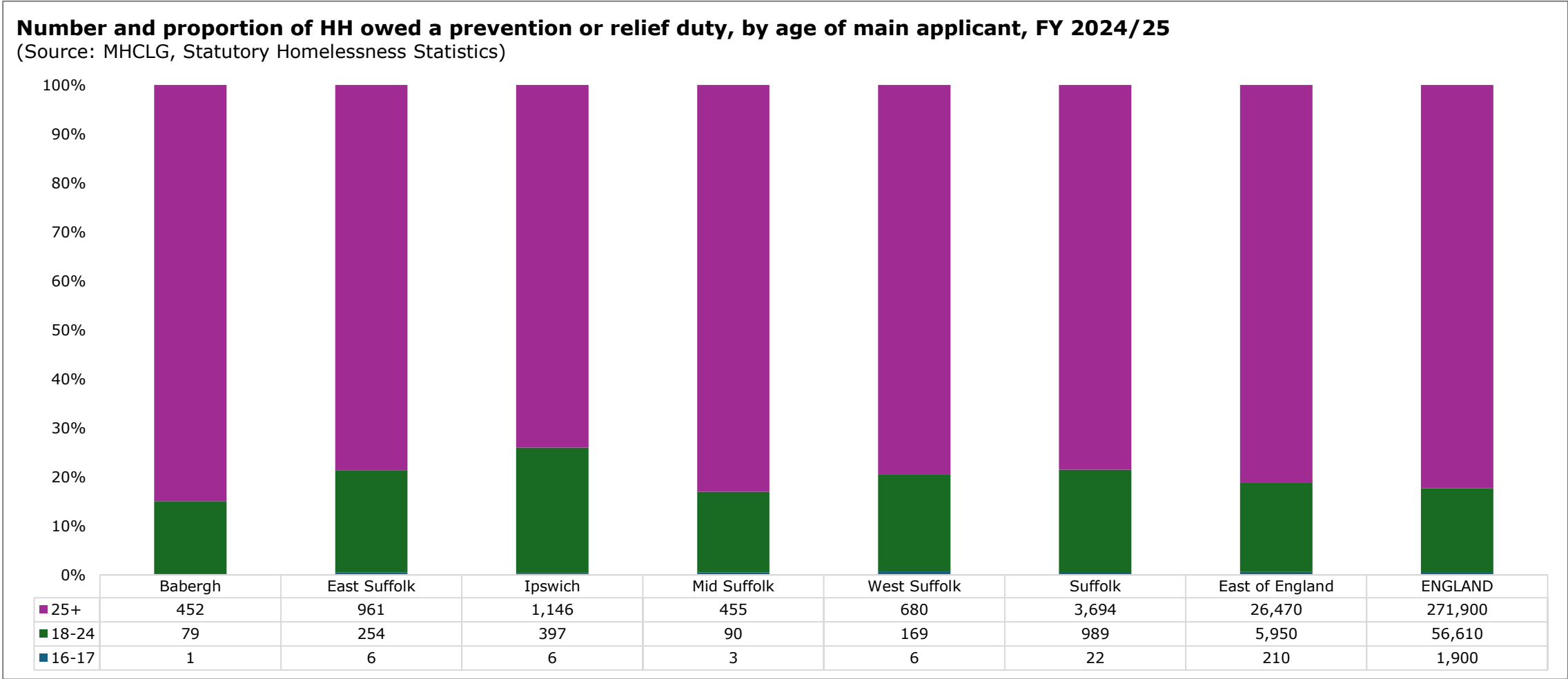
Centrepont found that YP did not receive an assessment due to:

- not being seen as priority need (31% of cases). This is unlawful under the HRA, as any person who presents as homeless or at risk of homelessness (in next 56 days) is entitled to an assessment, regardless of priority need.
- not being able to make initial/follow-up contact with their LAs (34% of cases). Centrepont’s highlights that LAs have been shown to limit service opening hours and staff capacity amidst a growing number of YP presenting.

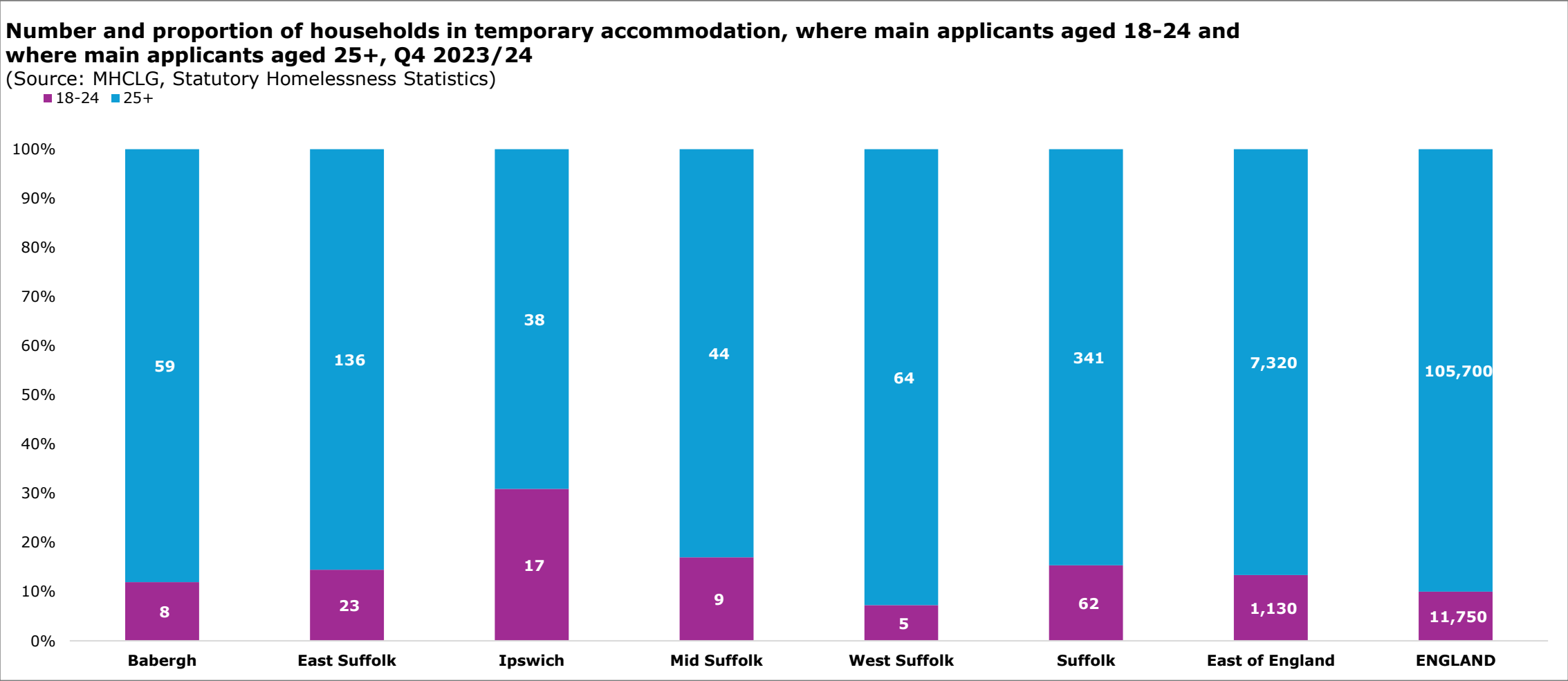
Furthermore, the report highlights how councils are “*requiring increasingly higher burdens of proof to administer assessments even if there is reason to believe that a young person may be homeless.*” For example, YP can be asked to provide proof of unintentional homelessness and/or priority need in cases of family breakdown and abuse. In certain cases, YP fleeing or being forced to leave home were asked to provide eviction letters from their parents to receive a housing assessment.

LA representatives Centrepont spoke to, pointed to prevention being the missing piece. For example, LAs have been found to use their Homelessness Prevention Grants (HPG) on temporary accommodation (TA) for households awaiting main duty support as opposed to services for those threatened by homelessness. In FY 2023/24, local councils used an average of 49% of their prevention grants on TA.

As stated above, official statistics are often published with delays; to allow comparison to regional and national figures, we have used the last full FY publication of MHCLGs homelessness statistics for 2024/25. While the proportion of Suffolk’s 16–17-year-old applicants was in line with regional and national averages, Suffolk had proportionally more 18-24s being owed a duty (21% in Suffolk, 18% in the East of England, and 17% nationally). For Ipswich this stood at 26% in 2024/25.



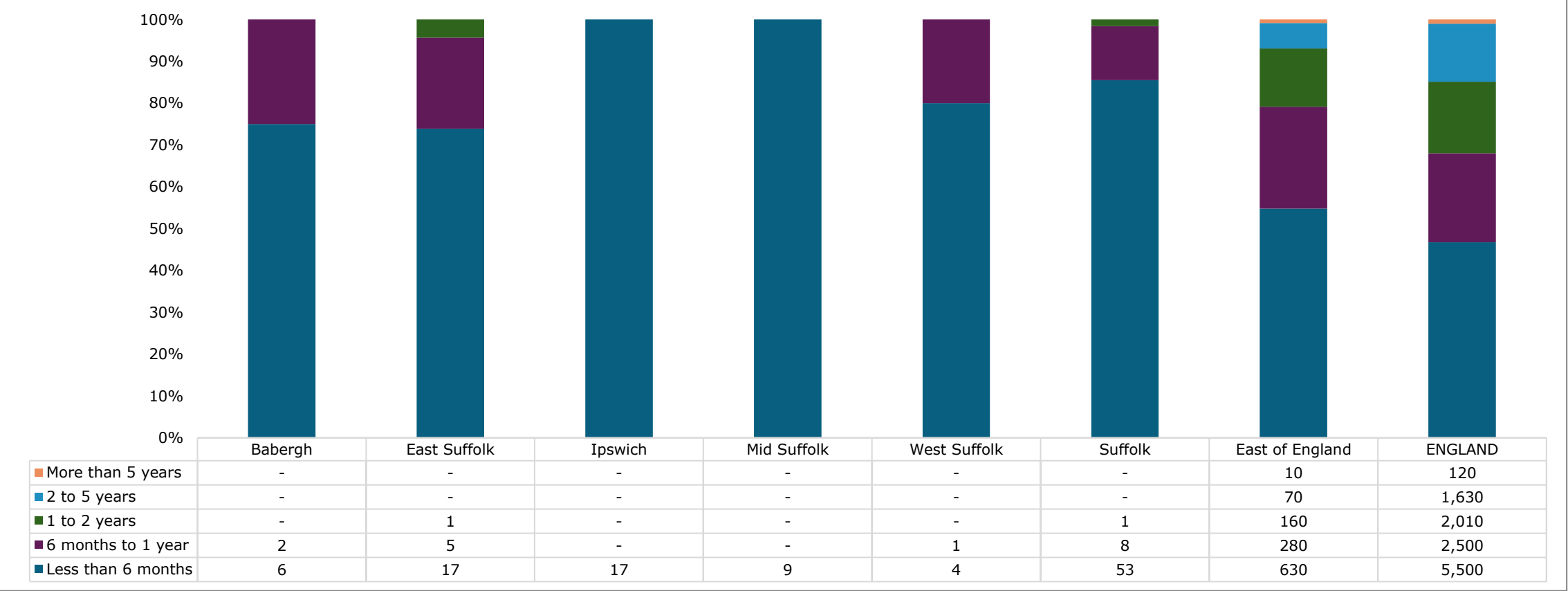
MHCLG provided some data on temporary accommodation (TA) for Q4 2023/24. At that time, 31% of households (HH) in TA in Ipswich, had a main applicant between the ages of 18 and 24. Compared to an average of 15% across Suffolk, 13% regionally and 10% nationally.



In Q4 2023/24, Suffolk’s 18-24s stayed in TA for shorter periods of time than their counterparts across the region and England.

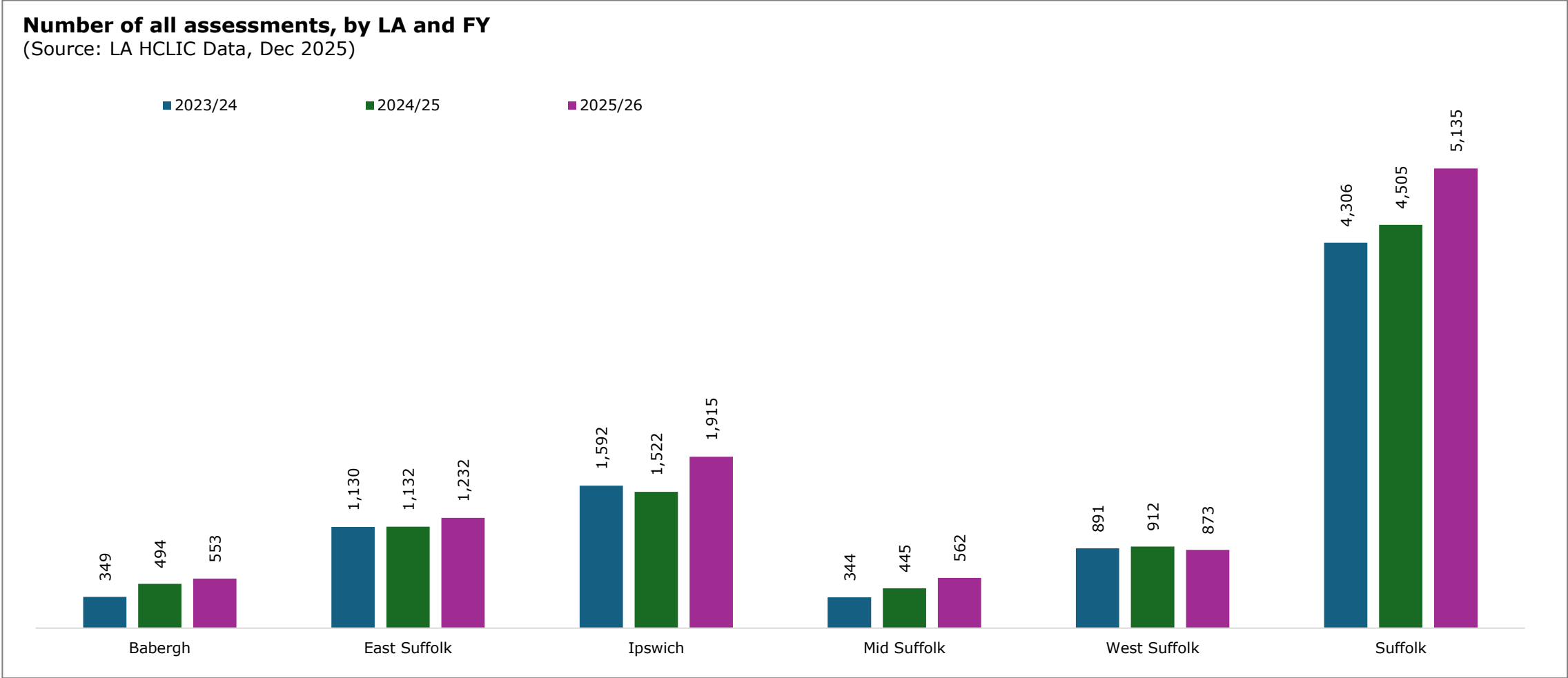
Number and proportion of households where main applicants aged 18-24 are in TA, by length of time in TA, Q4 2023/24

(Source: MHCLG, Statutory Homelessness Statistics)

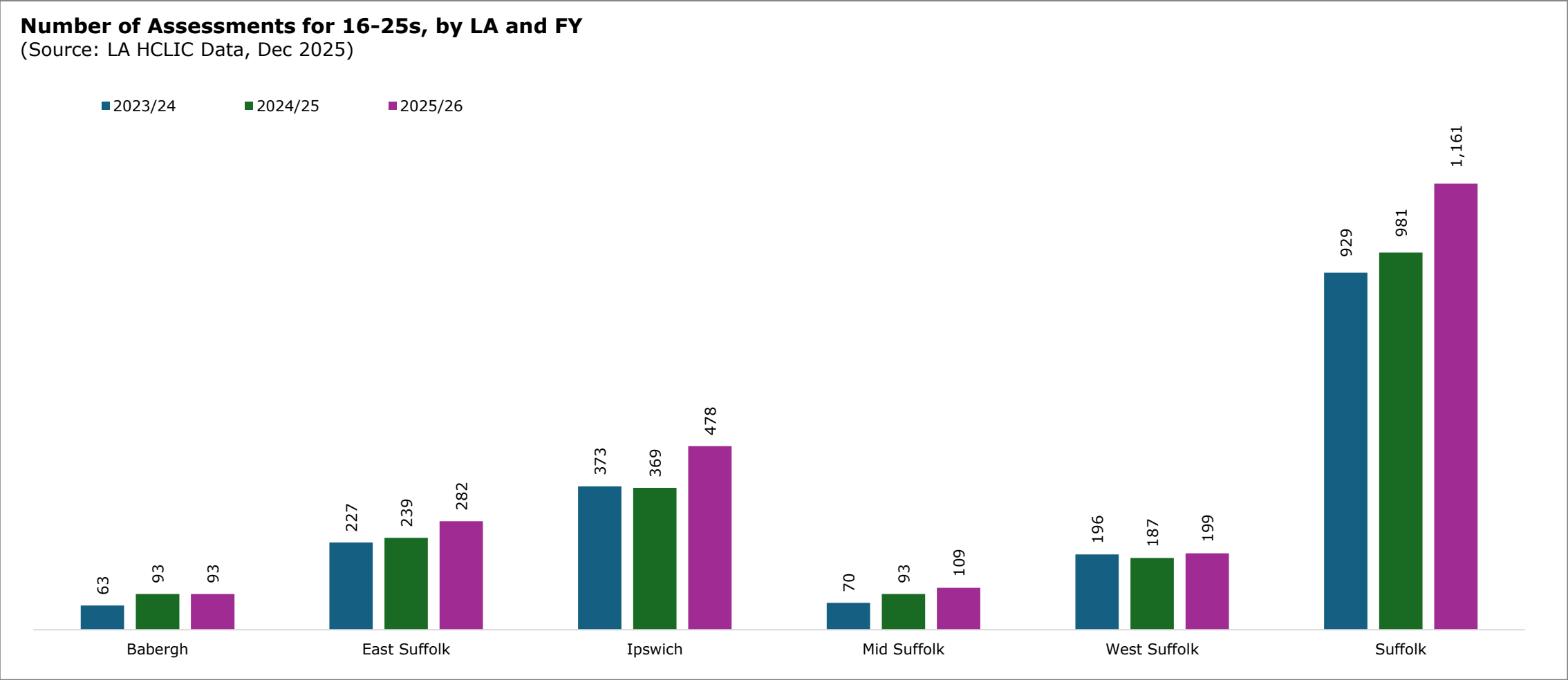


4. The detailed picture of Youth Homelessness in Suffolk

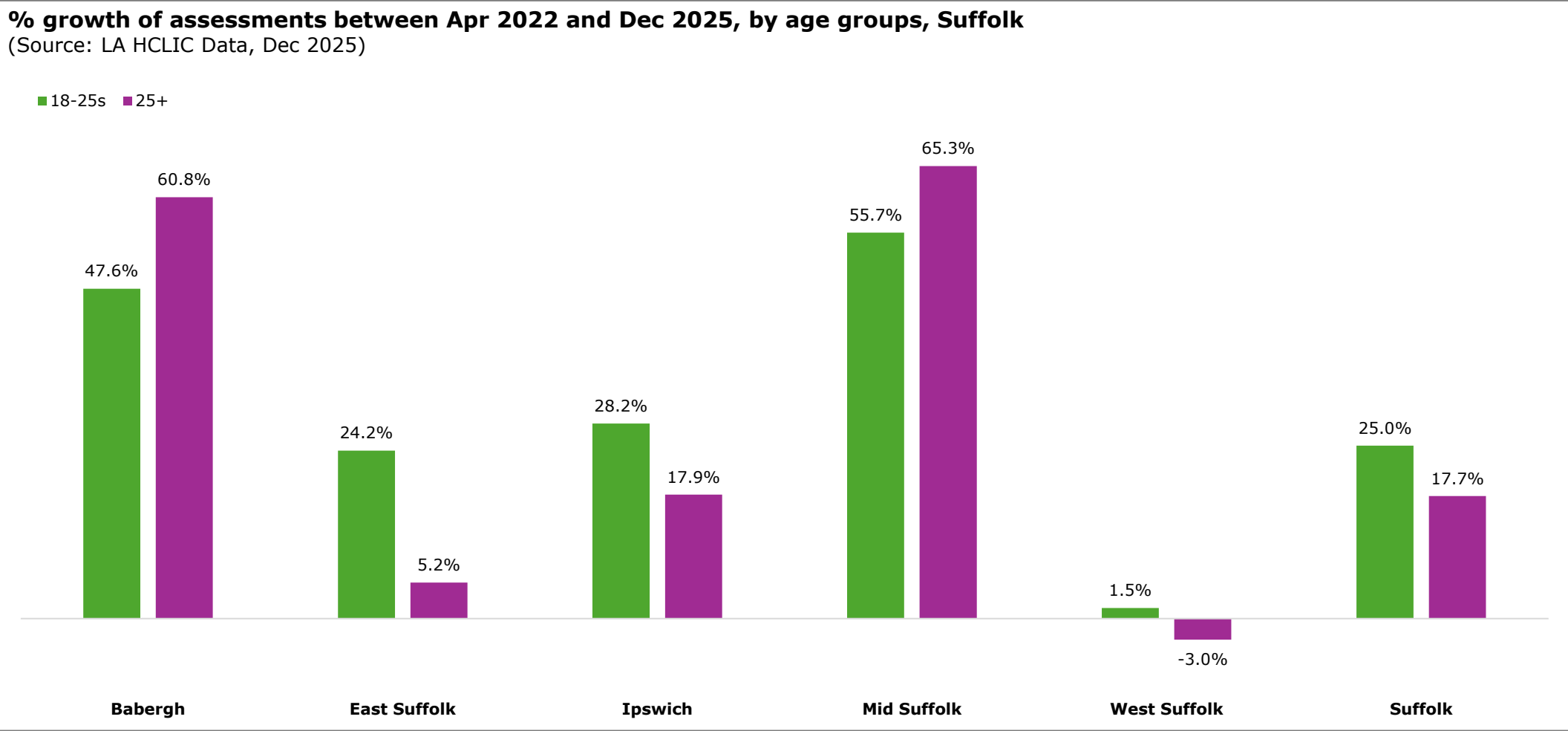
Over the past three financial years, in line with national trends, homelessness assessments have increased across Suffolk. In absolute numbers, Ipswich and East Suffolk register the highest number of assessments.



In 2024/25 so far, a total of 1,161 YP were assessed across Suffolk, with Ipswich registering the highest number (478). Over this period, 23% of all assessments conducted by Suffolk LAs were for 16-25s. Again, there is variation, with 25% of all assessments in Ipswich being for 16-25s, 23% in East & West Suffolk, 19% in Mid Suffolk and 17% in Babergh.



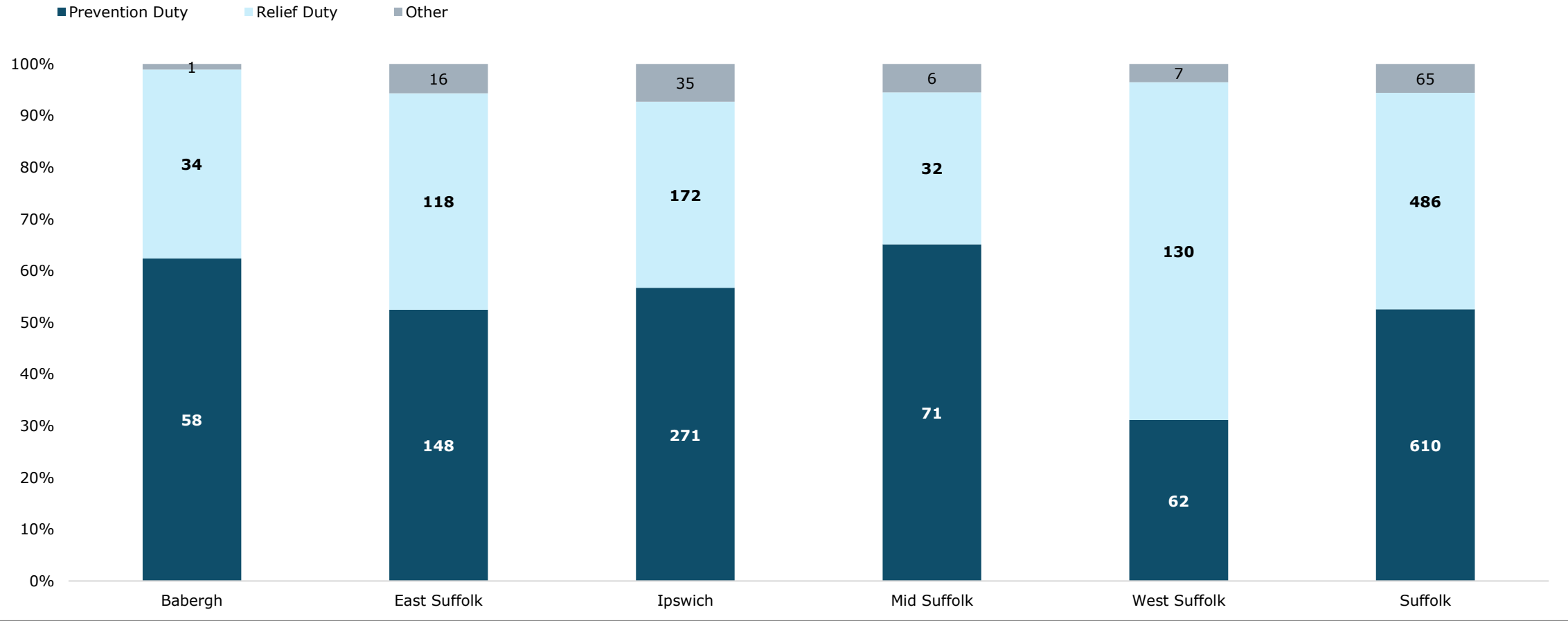
Between April 2022 and December 2025, assessments for YP have increased at a faster rate than those for over 25s (25% vs. 17.7%). The faster growth for 18-25s is driven especially by increases in East Suffolk and Ipswich and to a lesser extent in West Suffolk.



In 2025/26 so far, the majority of 16-25s were owed a Prevention duty 53% vs. 42% being owed a Relief duty. Those assessed as already homeless and therefore owed a Relief duty are proportionally much higher in West Suffolk (65%), than the other areas. Ipswich records the highest proportion of ‘Other’* outcomes.

Number & proportion of outcomes for assessments of 16-25s, Suffolk, Apr-Dec 2025

(Source: LA HCLIC Data, Dec 2025)

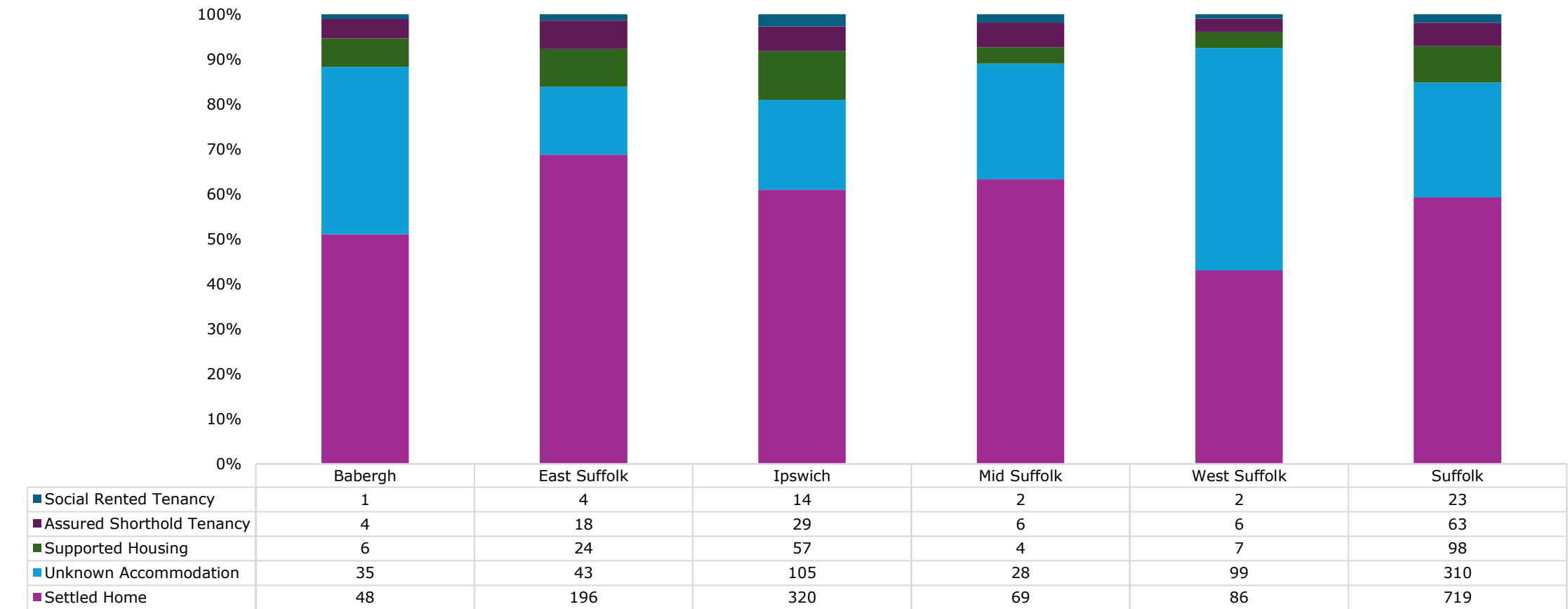


*Other = Not threatened with homelessness within 56 days, Legacy case, HRA case, Local connection referral (main duty accepted), Not/no longer eligible
Sources: Babergh & Mid Suffolk councils, East Suffolk Council, Ipswich Borough Council, West Suffolk Council, December 2025 (*FY 24-25 includes 1st Apr to 31st Dec 2025 data only).

The majority (59%) of 16-25s were in a settled home before being threatened with or becoming homeless in 2025/26. This is higher in East Suffolk (69%), Mid Suffolk (63%) and Ipswich (61%). In Ipswich there is also a higher proportion of 16-25s, who have previously been in Supported Housing (11% vs. 8% Suffolk average).

Type of last accommodation of 16-25s (numbers & proportion), Suffolk, Apr-Dec 2025

(Source: LA HCLIC Data, Dec 2025)



In line with national findings, ‘family no longer willing / able to accommodate’ is the most common reason in Suffolk for the loss of a Settled Home.

Reason for accommodation loss of 16-25s who were in a Settled Home, Apr-Dec 2025						
	Babergh	East Suffolk	Ipswich	Mid Suffolk	West Suffolk	Suffolk
Family no longer willing or able to accommodate	17	93	134	29	34	307
Eviction from supported housing	6	24	59	4	8	101
End of private rented tenancy – assured shorthold tenancy	4	18	28	6	6	62
Domestic abuse – victim	7	16	13	8	17	61
Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown)	4	14	12	6	7	43
Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	1	9	20	4	4	38
End of social rented tenancy	1	4	14	2	2	23
Non-racially motivated / other motivated violence or harassment	1	2	6	8	3	20
End of private rented tenancy – not assured shorthold tenancy	2	3	13	1		19
Not known due to last settled accommodation Not known	2	1	7			10
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support		3	5	1		9
Departure from institution: Custody		3	4		1	8
Domestic abuse – alleged perpetrator excluded from property	1	2	1		1	5
Home no longer suitable due to disability / ill health	1	3			1	5
Left HM Forces			1		1	2
Property disrepair			1		1	2
Departure from institution: Hospital (general)			1			1
Departure from institution: Hospital (psychiatric)			1			1
Fire or flood / other emergency		1				1
Racially motivated violence or harassment	1					1

Overview of reasons of accommodation loss for those in Supported Housing, Assured Shorthold Tenancies or Social Rented Tenancies.

Reason for accommodation loss of 16-25s who were in Supported Housing, Apr-Dec 2025						
	Babergh	East Suffolk	Ipswich	Mid Suffolk	West Suffolk	Suffolk
Other breach of tenancy or licence, not related to rent	3	12	20	1	5	41
No longer eligible for supported housing	3	6	26			35
Other		3	7	3		13
Rent arrears		3	4		2	9

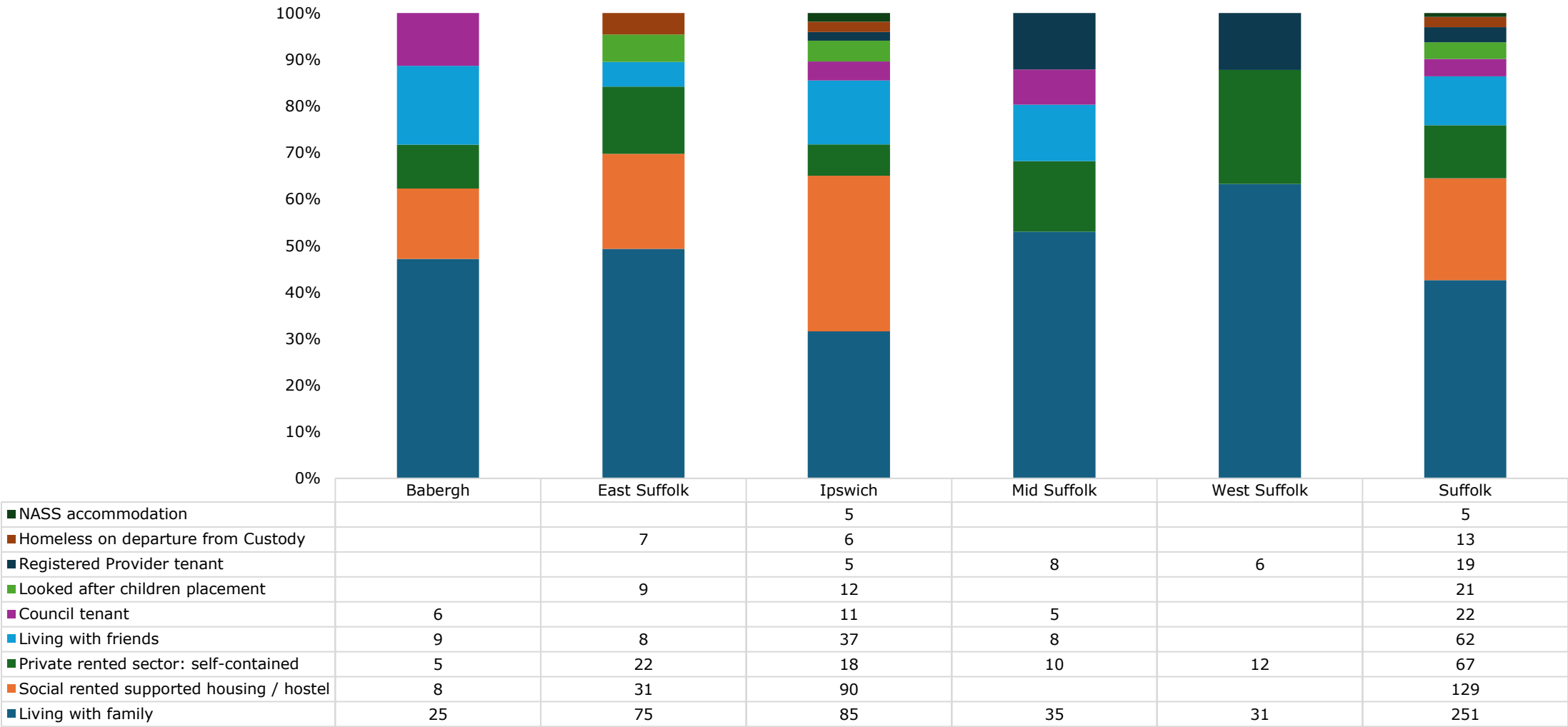
Reason for accommodation loss of 16-25s who were in Assured Shorthold Tenancy, Apr-Dec 2025						
	Babergh	East Suffolk	Ipswich	Mid Suffolk	West Suffolk	Suffolk
Other	3	6	11	3	3	26
Landlord wishing to re-let the property		2	6	2		10
Rent arrears due to change in personal circumstances		5	3		1	9
Landlord wishing to sell the property	1	4	3			8
Tenant abandoned property		1	3			4
Illegal eviction			2			2
Rent arrears due to tenant difficulty budgeting or tenant making other payment(s) or due to shortfall between benefit and rent			1		1	2
Tenant complained to the council/agent/landlord about disrepair				1	1	2

Reason for accommodation loss of 16-25s who were in Social Rented Tenancy, Apr-Dec 2025						
	Babergh	East Suffolk	Ipswich	Mid Suffolk	West Suffolk	Suffolk
Rent arrears due to change in personal circumstances		1	3	1	2	7
Rent arrears due to tenant difficulty budgeting or tenant making other payment(s) or due to shortfall between benefit and rent			6			6
Other		1	2	1		4
Breach of tenancy, not related to rent arrears		1	1			2
Tenant abandoned property			2			2
Rent arrears due to reduction in employment income		1				1
Rent arrears following changes in benefit entitlement	1					1

Another part of the assessment process records ‘accommodation at time of application’ and provides a breakdown between those owed a Prevention Duty (below) and those eligible for Relief (next page). In both cases, 16-25s tended to say they ‘lived with family’ at time of application.

Accommodation at time of application of 16-25s who are owed a Prevention Duty, Suffolk, Apr-Dec 2025

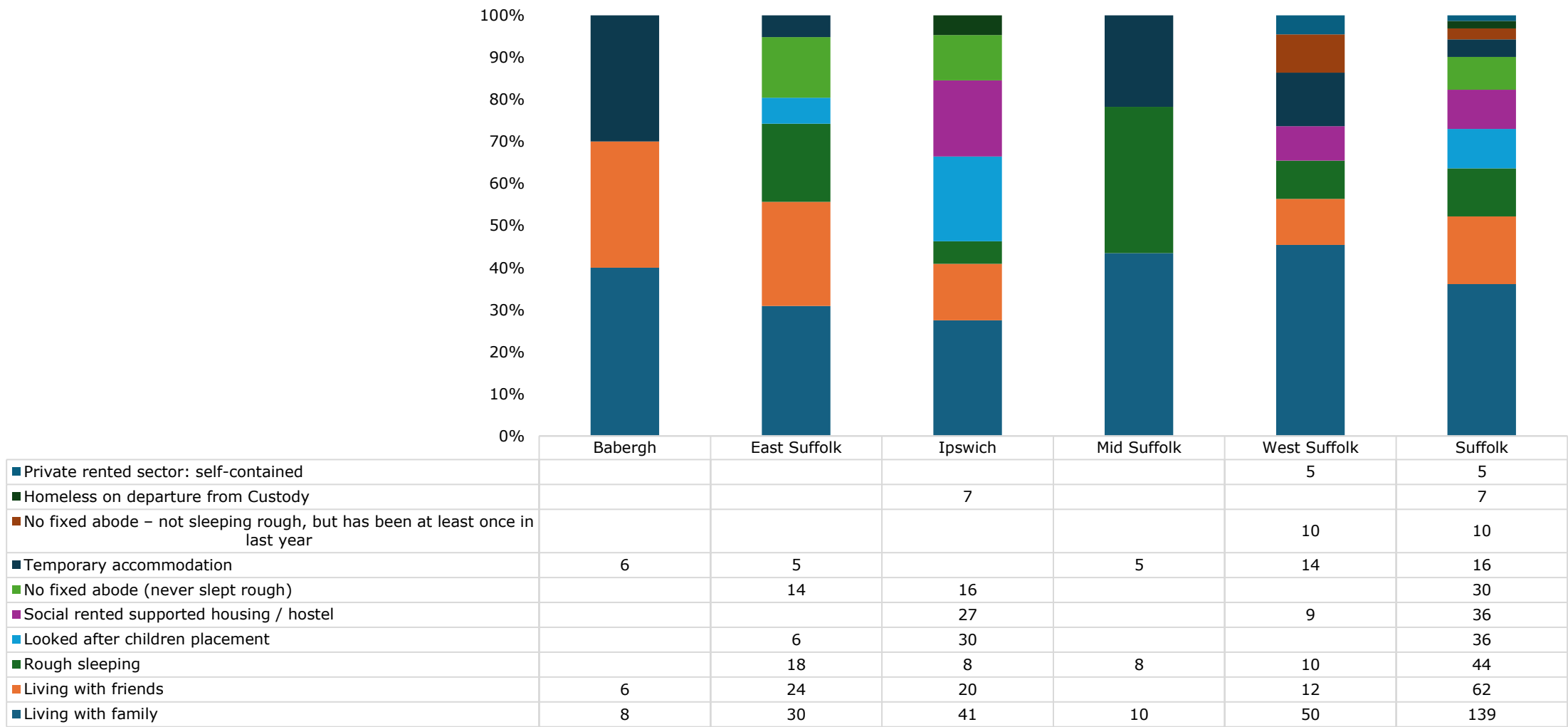
(Source: LA HCLIC Data, Dec 2025)



On average across Suffolk, 13% were sleeping rough at time of application. This was highest in Mid Suffolk (18%), East Suffolk (17%), and 14% in Babergh.

Accommodation at time of application of 16-25s who are owed a Relief Duty, Suffolk, Apr-Dec 2025

(Source: LA HCLIC Data, Dec 2025)



Understanding applicants' needs and identifying Care Leavers

LAs can record both 'Priority' and 'Support' needs as part of dispensing their duties, this includes information on whether an applicant is a care leaver. However, due to the recording requirements, this information is not always captured or present in the HCLIC data and does not provide a complete picture of need amongst applicants.

Priority Need

- Priority need is assessed at application stage either via:
 - information declared by the applicant during their application (with children, pregnant, care-leaver etc); OR
 - by housing officer enquiries; whether an applicant has a priority need, verify given information or apply legal tests.
- If an applicant is assessed as being already homeless or if there is a reason to believe the household has a priority need, then the household will be owed a S188 duty (temp/interim accommodation). However, if an applicant is not considered to be homeless, they will not be applicable for a S188 duty but may still have a priority need considered.
- Priority need only has to be formally considered under the legislation at the main duty decision stage.
 - Therefore, priority need is only recorded on HCLIC at the point a main duty decision is made. Cases that don't make the main duty decision stage (cases under triage, owed a prevention or relief duty or cases of successful prevention/relief) will not have the priority need reason added to their case.
 - Priority Need is a legal status that has to be assessed at the Main Duty Stage.
 - When a priority need is recorded in HCLIC data, officers at the Main Duty decision stage can only choose one and therefore officers will choose the value with the highest associated vulnerability.

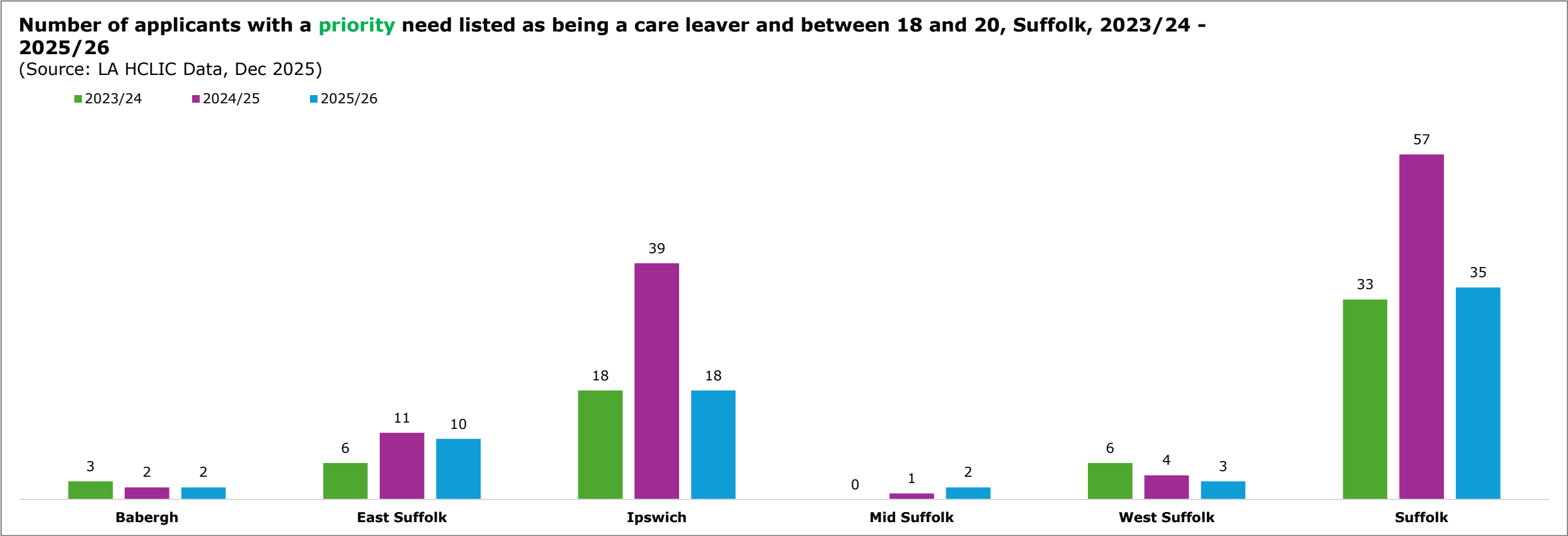
Support Needs

- Support needs are assessed as part of the initial assessment and added to HCLIC cases. Households may have several support needs recorded but this won't necessarily make them a priority need.
- Unlike 'Priority Need', 'Support Needs' are not a legal entitlement test and are instead an operational assessment.

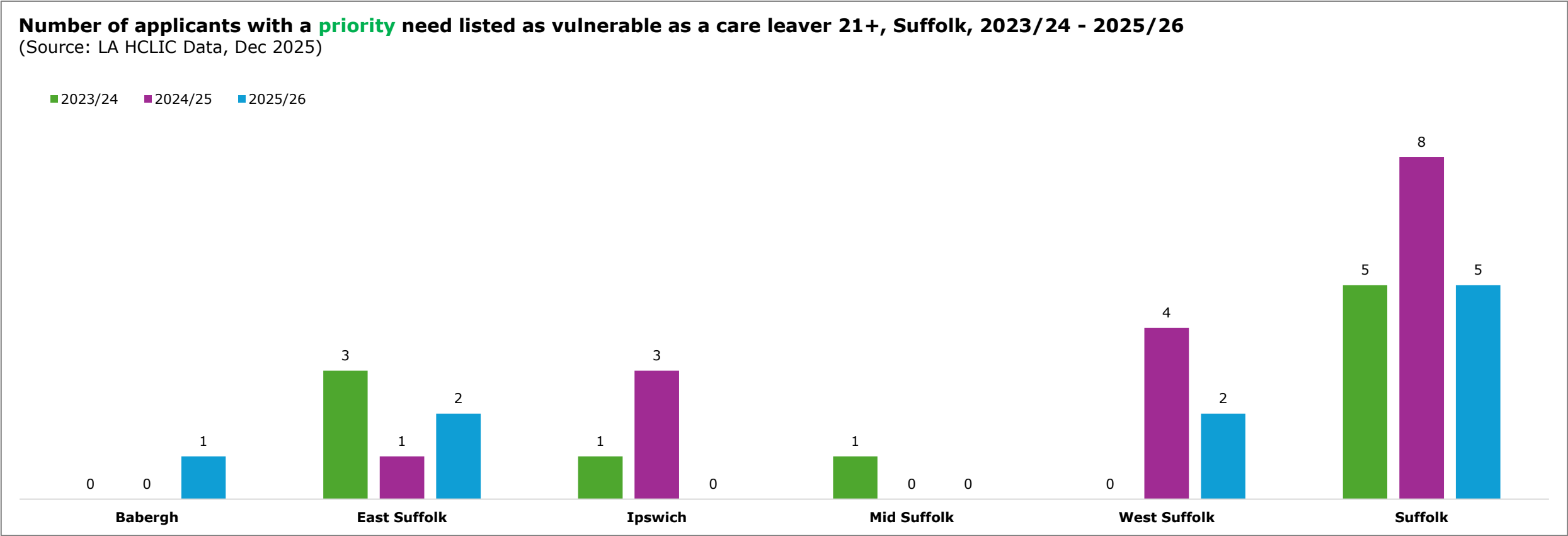
Implications for the evidence on need and numbers of Care Leavers

- Due to priority need not being mandatory until a main duty decision is due, there will always be a discrepancy between support needs and priority need in the data.
- Support needs can change over the time of an open case.
- "Care Leaver" is an automatic criteria for priority need; but does not automatically mean they require support and therefore have a support need.

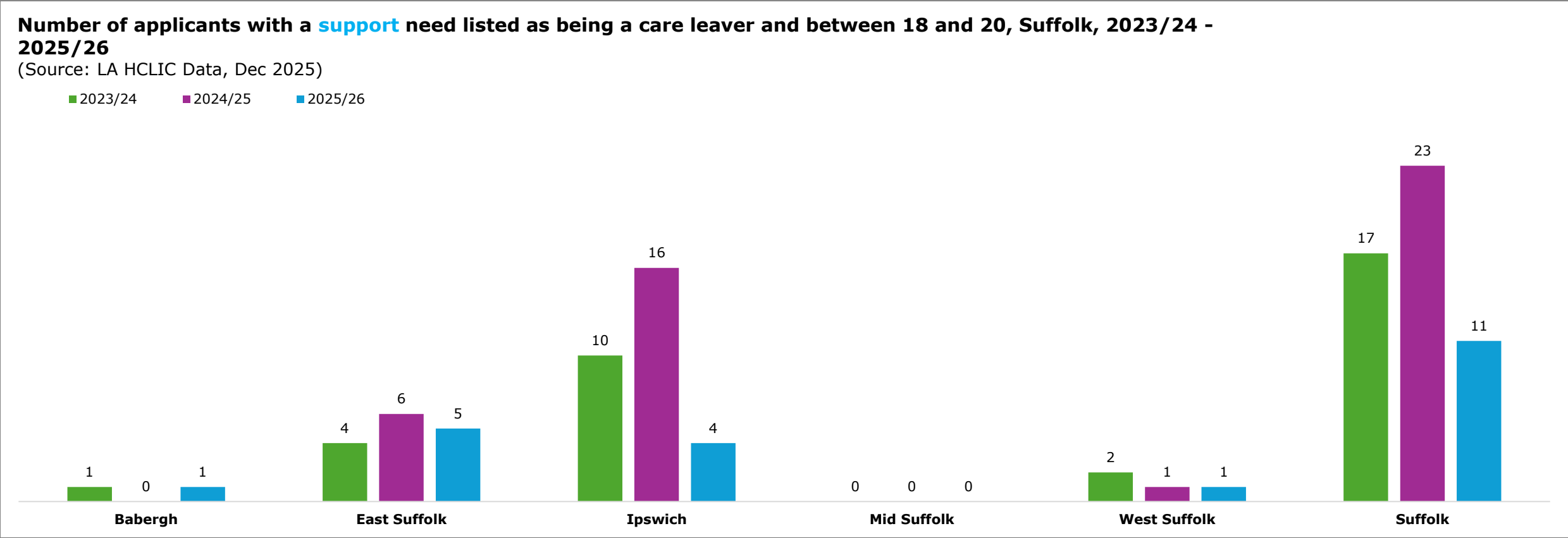
In 2025/26 so far, there were 35 18–20-year-olds listed as a Care Leaver under Priority Need. Half of these were in Ipswich.



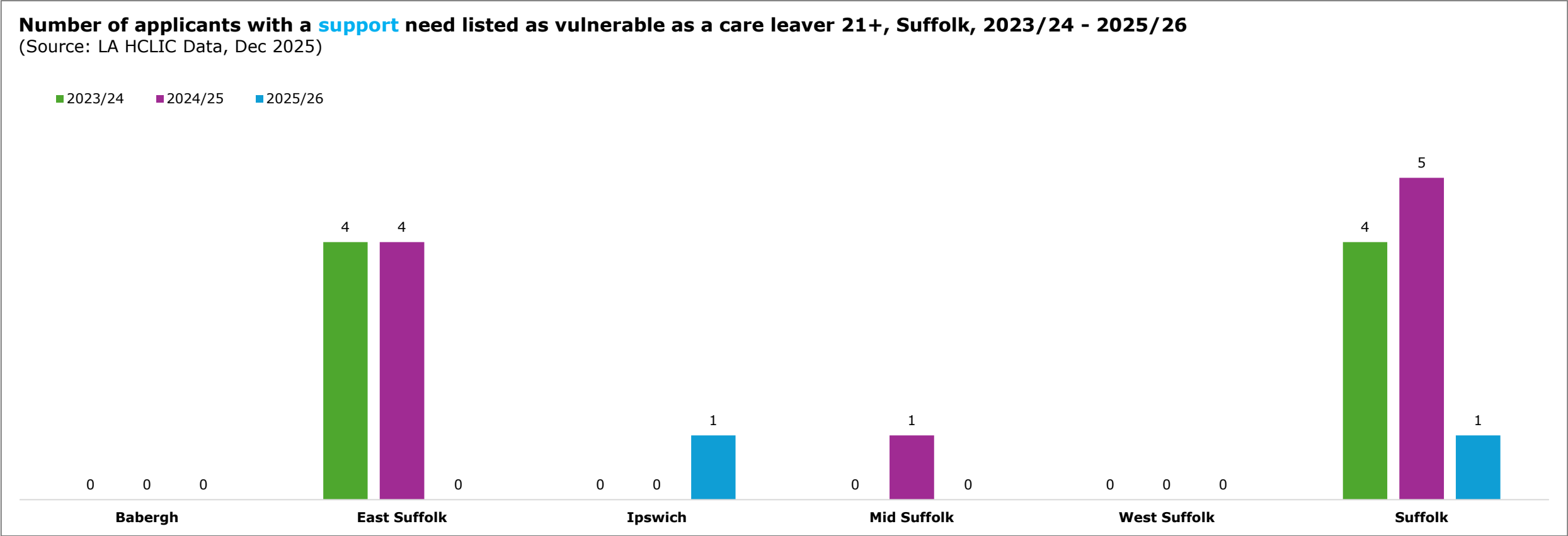
And in the same period, there were an additional 5 Care Leavers 21 or older listed under Priority Needs.



11 Care Leavers between the ages of 18 and 20 year were listed under Support Needs between April and December 2025.



And one further Care Leaver aged 21 or over, was listed under Support Need in 2025/26 so far.



In 38% of Prevention Duty cases the applicant had an accommodation secured, while the most common outcome for Relief Duty was unsuccessful attempt of securing accommodation (36%).

Prevention Duty Activity, Apr-Dec 2025	Babergh	East Suffolk	Ipswich	Mid Suffolk	West Suffolk	Suffolk
Prevention activity undertaken but not successful	5	15	65	9	10	104
Accommodation secured by local authority or organisation delivering housing options service	12	10	44	20	14	100
No activity – advice and information provided	7	44	33	10	1	95
Supported housing provided		14	12	2	7	35
Negotiation/mediation/advocacy work to prevent eviction/repossession	1	2	28		1	32
Negotiation/mediation work to secure return to family or friend	4	1	16	2		23
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, without financial payment		11	7		1	19
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, with financial payment		3	5	1		9
Housing related support to sustain accommodation	1	1	4	2		8
Financial payments to reduce rent service charge or mortgage arrears		1	2		2	5
Discretionary Housing Payment to reduce shortfall		1				1

- In 14% of cases negotiation/mediation and/or financial support was provided to keep applicant in current accommodation.

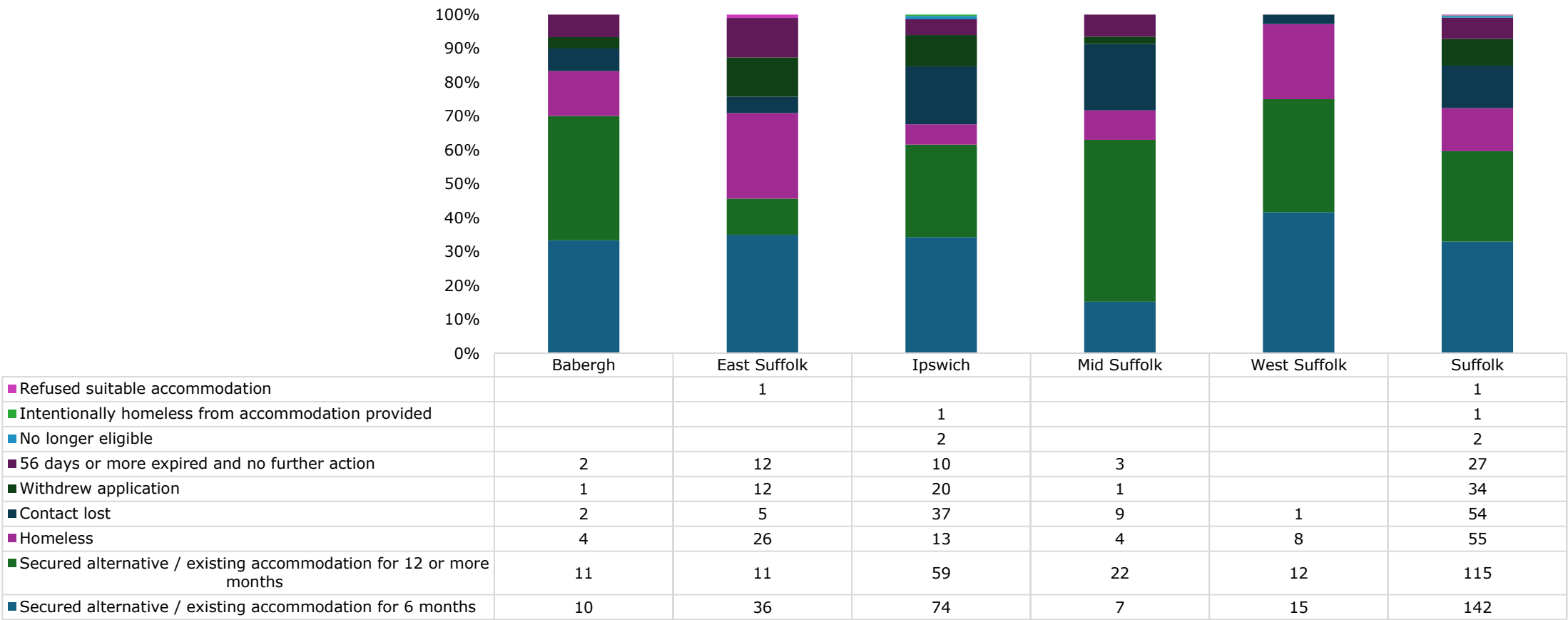
Relief Duty Activity, Apr-Dec 2025	Babergh	East Suffolk	Ipswich	Mid Suffolk	West Suffolk	Suffolk
Activities were attempted to secure accommodation but these were unsuccessful	8	40	59	11	36	154
No activity	6	71	27	15	6	125
Accommodation secured by local authority or organisation delivering housing options service	5	10	33	1	10	59
Supported housing provided	3	15	20	1	9	48
Negotiation/mediation work to secure return to family or friend		2	8	2	1	13
Other activity through which accommodation secured	3	3	3		1	10
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, with financial payment		1	5		1	7
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, without financial payment			1	1	5	7
Sanctuary or other security measures to enable return home			1			1

- In 31% of Relief Duty cases the applicant had an accommodation secured.
- And in 3% of cases negotiation/mediation/security measures were provided to keep applicant in current accommodation.

33% of Prevention Duties ended because alternative or existing accommodation was secured for 6 months and a further 27% ended with alternative or existing accommodation being secured for 12 or more months. 13% were found to be homeless, and with 13% of 16-25s contact was lost.

Reason for Prevention Duty of 16-25s ending (numbers & proportion), Suffolk, Apr-Dec 2025

(Source: LA HCLIC Data, Dec 2025)

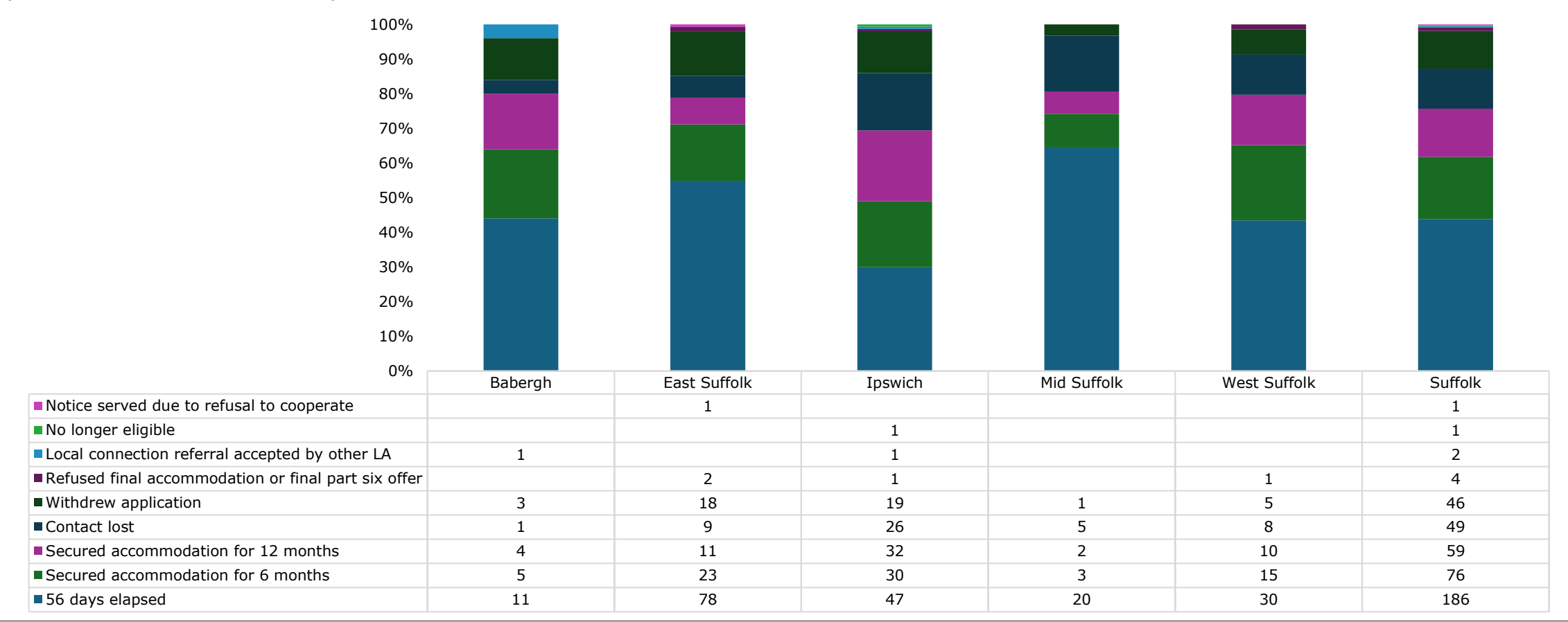


- The highest proportion of 16-25s for whom accommodation (6 or more months) was found were in West Suffolk, with the lowest in East Suffolk.
- Only 6% of 16-25s were homeless at the end of Prevention Duty in Ipswich, while 25% were recorded as such in East Suffolk.

In 44% of cases, Relief Duty ended because the 56-day limit elapsed, while for 18% of 16-25s an alternative or existing accommodation was secured for 6 months and for a further 14%, alternative or existing accommodation was secured for 12 or more months.

Reason for Relief Duty of 16-25s ending (numbers & proportion), Suffolk, Apr-Dec 2025

(Source: LA HCLIC Data, Dec 2025)

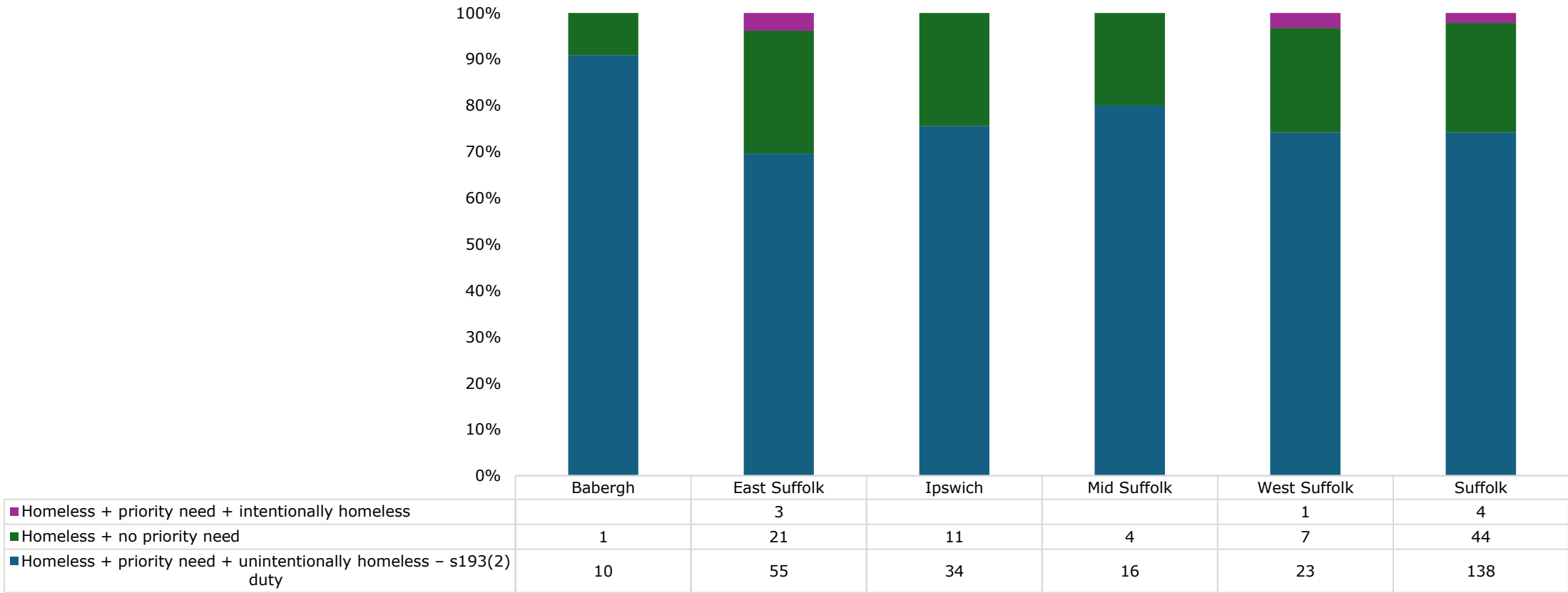


- Proportionally, the 56-days limit elapsed in more cases in Mid Suffolk (65%) and East Suffolk (55%) than in the other areas. And it is also in these two areas, that proportionally fewer 16-25s ended up in any type of accommodation.

On ending Relief Duty due to the 56-days limit reached, the majority (74%) of 16-25s were found to be unintentionally homeless, and in priority need therefore due a Main Duty. This was highest in Babergh (91%) and lowest in East Suffolk (70%). 24% were found the be homeless but without a priority need and a small proportion (2.2%) were found to be intentionally homeless.

Main Duty decision of 16-25s whose Relief Duty ended due to 56-days elapsing (numbers & proportion), Suffolk, Apr-Dec 2025

(Source: LA HCLIC Data, Dec 2025)



In line with growing homelessness applications and assessments, the number of households (HH), where the main applicant is between 16 and 25, being housed in Temporary Accommodation has also risen. So far in 2025/26, 347 of these HH have been placed into TA.

