



# Social Housing Lettings Annual Report

2020/21



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## **Social housing lettings - April 2020 to March 2021**

This report provides information on the number, size, and type of social rented properties that Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) let to qualifying households in 2020/21. The figures include lettings to the Council owned stock, and successful nominations to housing associations (hereafter referred to as Registered Providers or RPs).

Supplementary information is also provided on; the number of applicants on the housing register, the number of mutual exchanges that have taken place and the number of properties that former tenants have purchased from the Council under the Right to Buy, between 2016/17 and 200/21.

## **Registering for housing**

The housing register is a list of home seekers who qualify for at least one offer of a council or RP property. The term 'home seeker' includes those applicants who have applied to the Council for housing, and existing Council or RP tenants who have been approved for a transfer to alternative accommodation.

Applicants are only accepted onto the housing register if they fulfil the local eligibility criteria specified in the Allocations Scheme.

Homeseekers on the housing register are awarded one of three priority bands; band A, band B, or band C. Band A represents the highest priority and band C represents the lowest.

## **Choice-based lettings and direct offers**

EFDC operates a choice-based letting (CBL) scheme to let vacant social rented housing to home seekers on the housing register. Home seekers actively search for available council and RP properties that are advertised on a database known as LOCATA.

Homeseekers access LOCATA via the HomeOption website ([www.homeoption.org](http://www.homeoption.org)).

Vacant properties are advertised weekly and home seekers can express their interest in the advertised properties by making a 'bid'.

The Council expanded the LOCATA functionality in April 2020 - to record and monitor households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, to comply with its statutory duties listed in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

## **Shortlisting**

When home seekers bid for an advertised vacant property HomeOption will automatically compile a shortlist of applicants.

Typically, the bid from a qualifying home seeker in the highest band with the earliest registration date will generate an offer to that household first.

## Housing Allocations Scheme - categories of need by band

All housing applications are assessed in line with the [Housing Allocations Scheme](#). The current scheme can be viewed in full on the EFDC website.

The following table gives a breakdown of the main categories of need within each priority band for a choice based letting within the current scheme.

Band	Main categories of need
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the Armed Forces with serious injury, illness, or disability</li> <li>• Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces</li> <li>• Downsizers seeking fewer bedrooms than current social housing property</li> <li>• Home seekers needing to move on urgent medical/welfare grounds</li> <li>• Home seekers living in insanitary, overcrowded, or unsatisfactory conditions</li> <li>• Home seekers with mobility problems</li> <li>• Home seekers needing two or more additional bedrooms compared to their current accommodation</li> </ul>
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home seekers sharing accommodation, lacking at least one bedroom</li> <li>• Home seekers needing to move to a particular locality</li> <li>• Home seekers needing to be one household but are having to live apart</li> <li>• Home seekers needing one additional bedroom</li> <li>• Existing council tenants living in 2/3-bedroom flatted accommodation needing houses</li> <li>• Existing council sheltered tenants wishing to move within their scheme or to another scheme</li> <li>• Existing council tenants over 60 living in 1 bed property wishing to move to sheltered accommodation</li> </ul>
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home seekers needing to be closer to their place of work</li> <li>• Home seekers sharing accommodation with another household</li> <li>• Members of the Armed Forces with no housing need, and the application is made within 5 years of discharge</li> <li>• Spouses and children of existing and former Armed Forces Personnel</li> <li>• Home seekers needing to move on moderate medical/disability grounds</li> <li>• Home seekers in the Council's interim accommodation awaiting homelessness decision</li> <li>• Home seekers demonstrating an exceptional need to move to the district</li> <li>• Home seekers to whom the Council does not owe a full homelessness duty, where there is a requirement to afford reasonable preference on the ground of homelessness</li> </ul>

The periodic review of the Housing Allocations Scheme is in progress and is due to be published in April 2022 (subject to statutory consultation and Member approval).

## Number of properties let by year between 2016/17 and 2020/21

Year	Total	EFDC General Needs	RP General Needs
<b>2020/21**</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>41</b>
2019/20	450		
2018/19	449		
2017/18	437		
2016/17	493		

Source: Local Authority Housing Statistical Returns (LAHS) 2015-2020. \*\*Provisional figures 2020/21

Fig.1

This table shows the number of properties that have been let to home seekers each year over the last five years.

From 2020/21 the table includes a breakdown of the number of lettings between EFDC stock and RP stock.

## Number of properties let by bed size in 2020/21

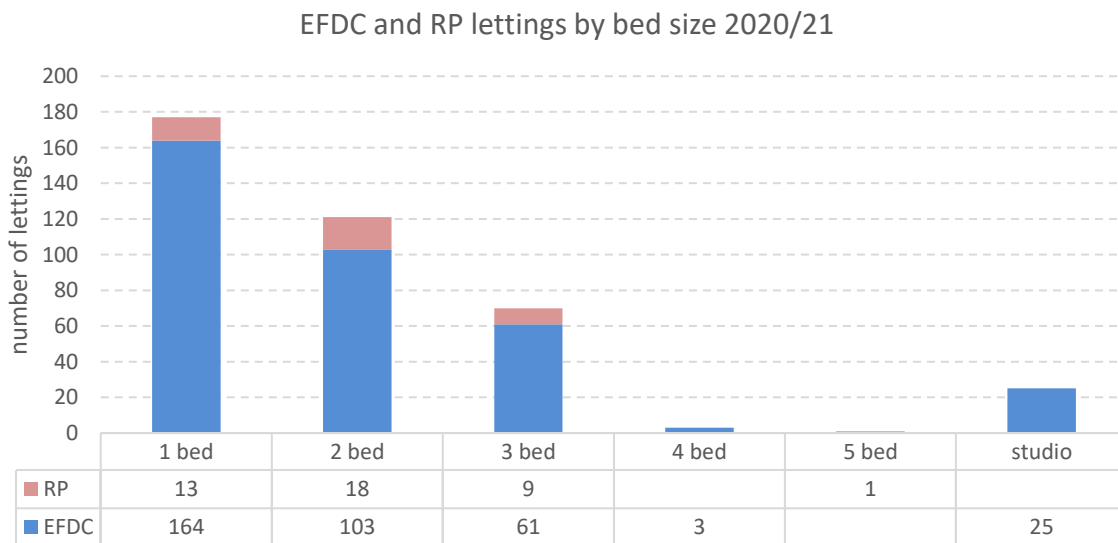


Fig. 2

Most lettings in 2020/21 were for 1-bed properties. These generally have the highest turnover of occupants and therefore become vacant more frequently than family sized accommodation.

## Percentage of properties let by age of main applicant in 2020/21

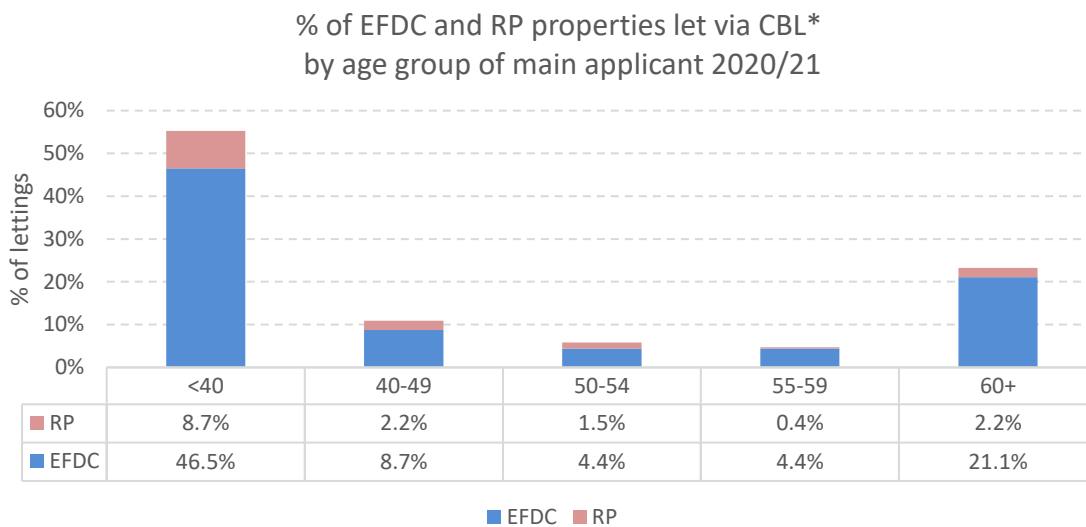


Fig.3

The majority of CBL lettings were to households where the main applicant was under 40 or over 60 years old.

## Number of properties let by bed size and age of main applicant in 2020/21

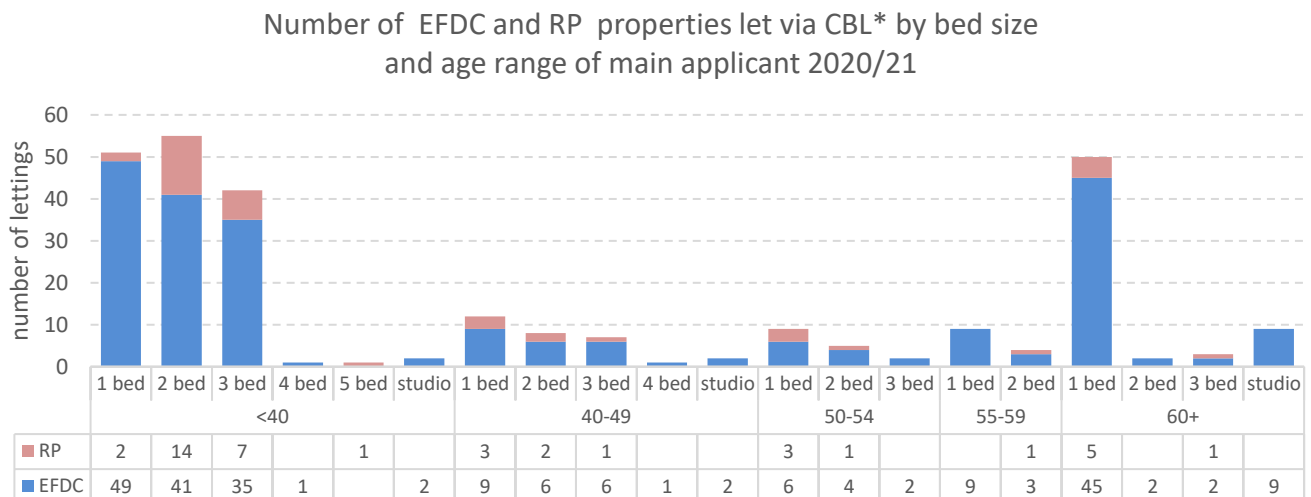


Fig.4

This comparison between the age of the main applicant and the size of the property is used to help with projecting the size, type and number of properties required to meet future demand.

\*The data in Fig 4 and Fig 5 relates to households that moved via CBL and does not include the 122 direct allocations that were made to management transfers and homeless households.

## Percentage of properties let by priority band in 2020/21

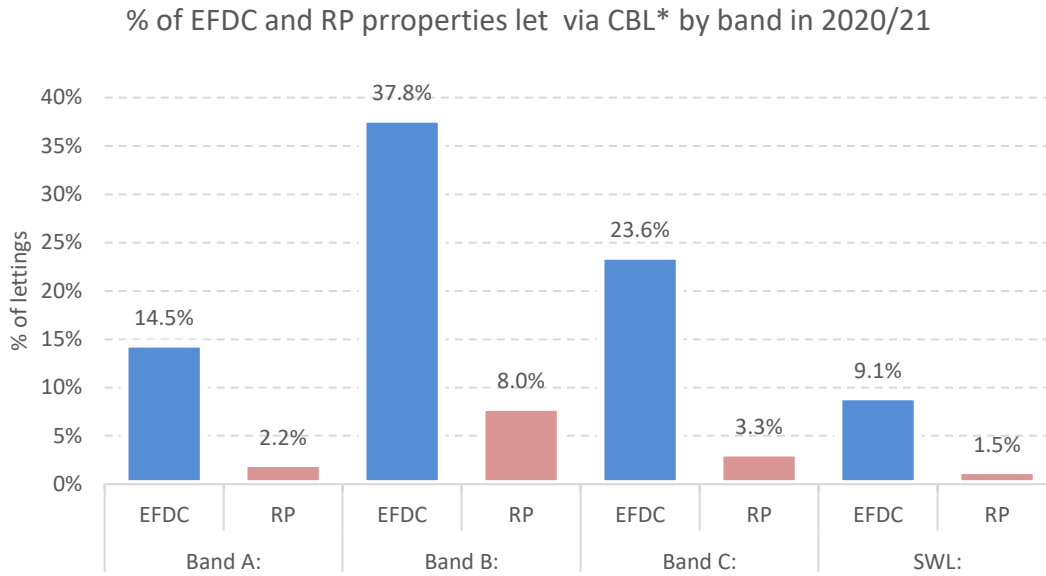


Fig.5

The majority of properties were let to applicants in band B.

## Applicant categories

Applicants fall into three categories:

**Direct applicants** – Homeseekers, the majority of whom are households currently renting in the private sector or living with their family.

**Transfer applicants** – Existing Council or RP tenants seeking a move to another property.

**Homeless applicants** – Homeless households that EFDC has accepted a legal duty to house, the majority of whom will be in temporary accommodation.

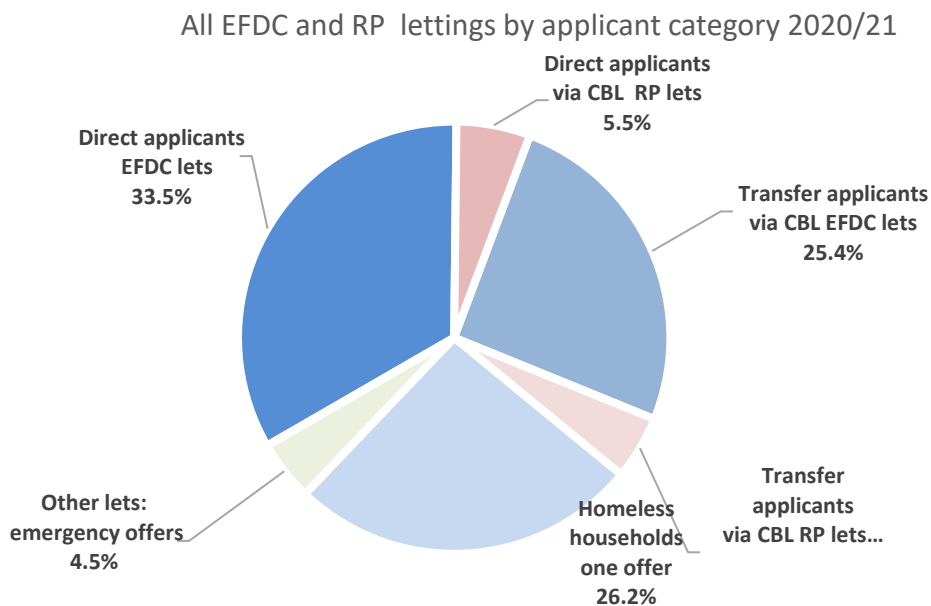


Fig.6

## Accessibility and adaptations in 2020/21

A significant number of households include one or more occupants with disabilities. Most commonly mobility is restricted, and a property is required with level access such as a bungalow or ground floor flat. Occasionally additional adaptations may be necessary such as a level-access shower, handrails, a stair lift or a fully wheelchair adapted property.

When adapted properties become available to let then households with an identified need for those specific adaptations are usually prioritised above households without that need.

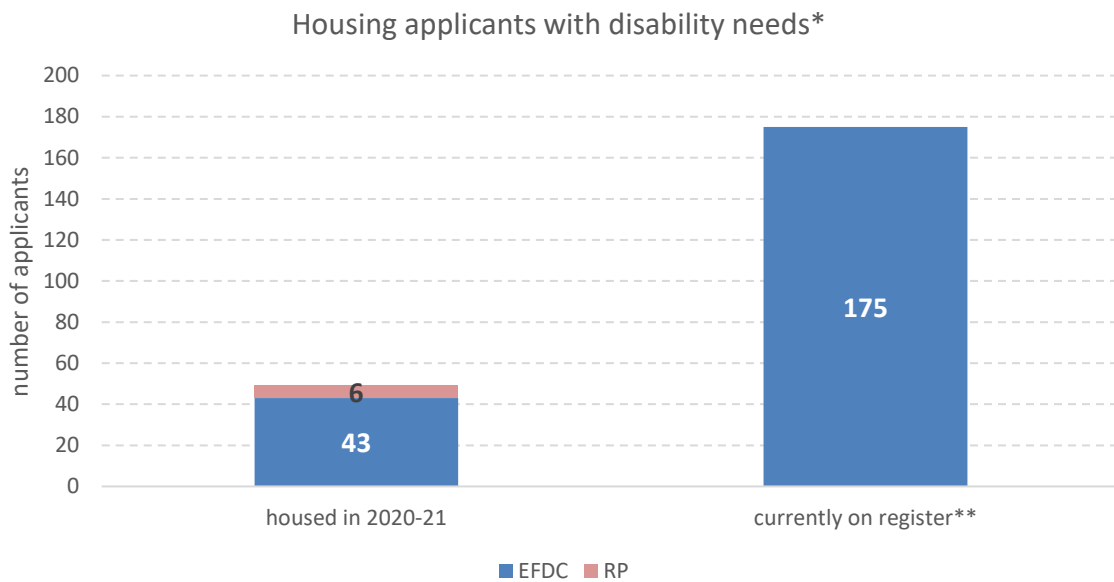


Fig.7

\*This data relates to all applicants who have identified a household member with a permanent physical disability including but not limited to those with supporting occupational health or medical evidence.

\*\* This data includes 35 applicants' households with a member who uses a wheelchair some or all the time.



## Waiting times to move via CBL by band in 2020/21

Waiting times for applicants to move to an EFDC or RP property via CBL in 2020/21

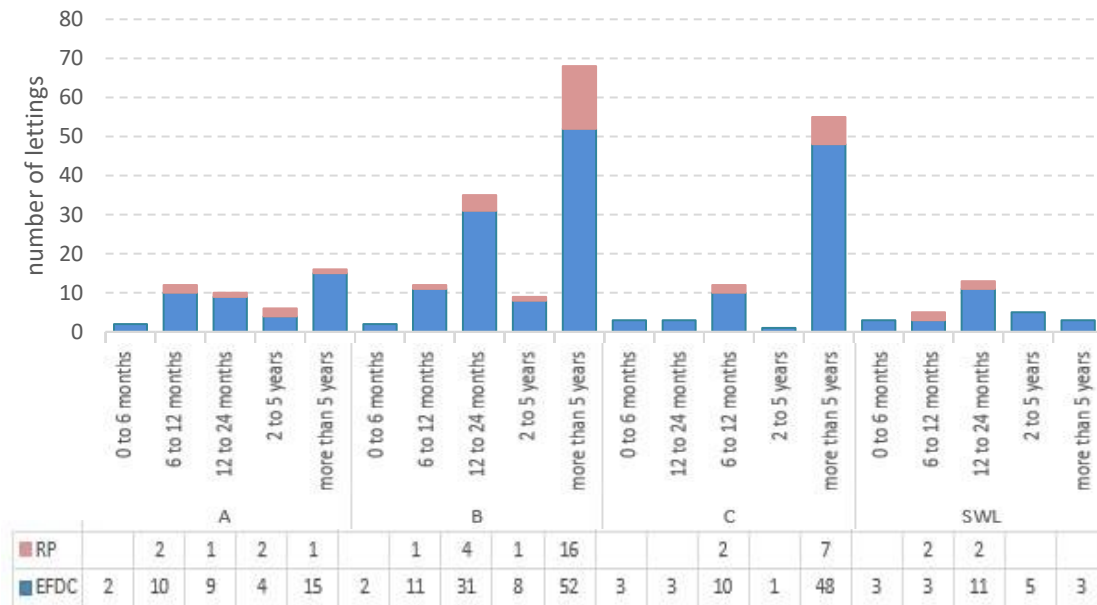


Fig.8

The above chart shows the number of months that households have waited to move to an EFDC or RP property via CBL.

The high number of households in band A that appear to have been waiting for longer than 12 months, and the very high number in band B waiting for longer than 5 years will have their applications reviewed to establish and (where possible) address the cause.

## Local connections in 2020/21

The following chart compares the percentage of lettings made to home seekers already living in EFDC with the percentage of lettings made to home seekers from other local authority areas.

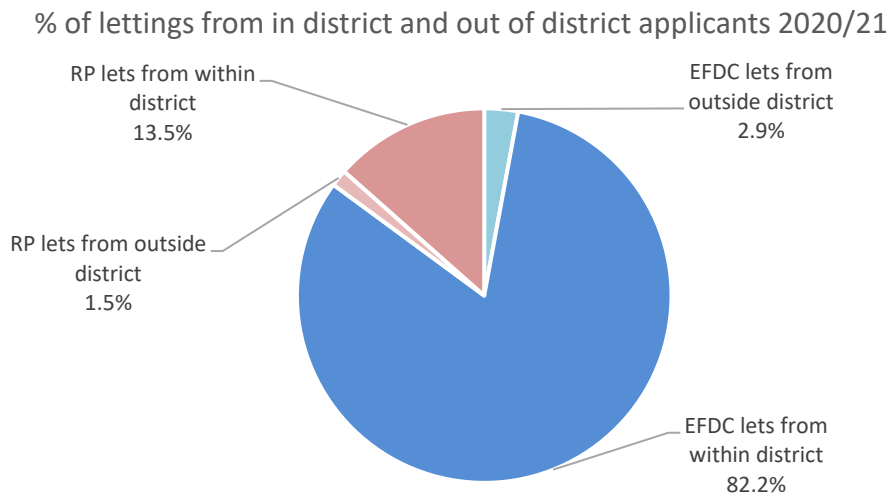


Fig.9

## Number of properties let via CBL by property type in 2020/21

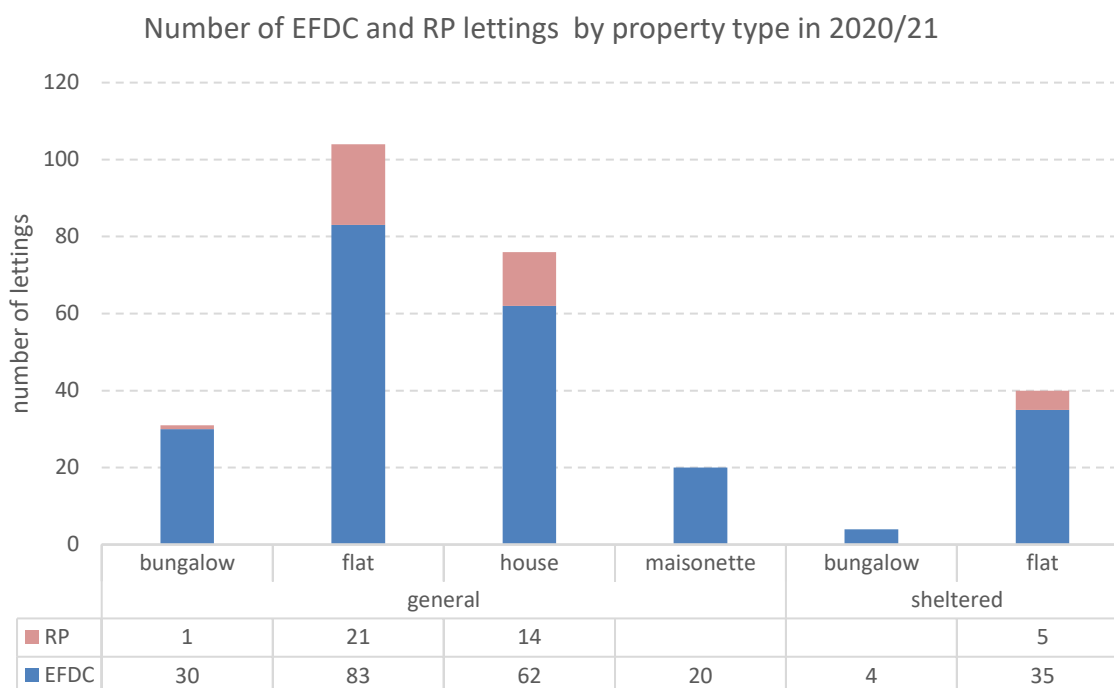


Fig.10

Most properties that were let via CBL in 2020/21 were flats, followed by houses then bungalows.

Invariably sheltered housing properties are flats in purpose-built schemes designed for older people, although the Council does have some individual properties (usually bungalows) that are linked to neighbouring sheltered schemes.

## Percentage of EFDC and RP new - build lets compared with re-lets in 2020/21

The graph below compares lettings of new-build Council and RP housing with the re-letting of existing Council and RP stock.

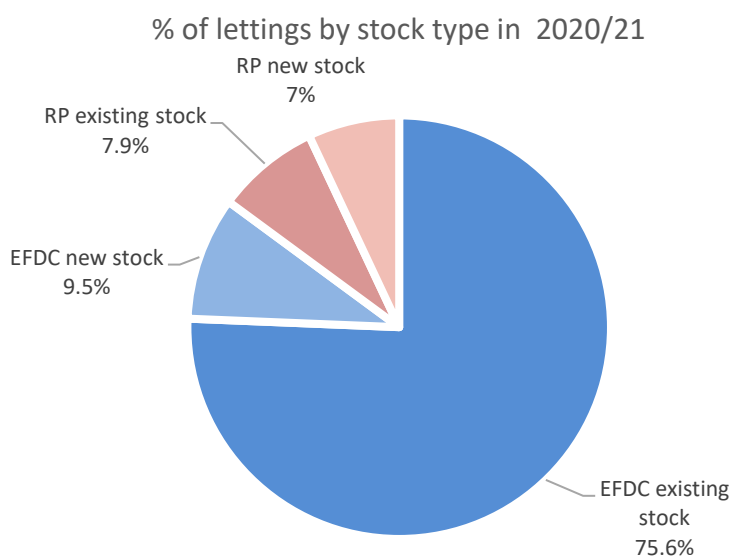


Fig.11

## Members of the Armed Forces or their bereaved partners

Number of members of the Armed Forces or their bereaved partners on the housing register or housed in 2020/21

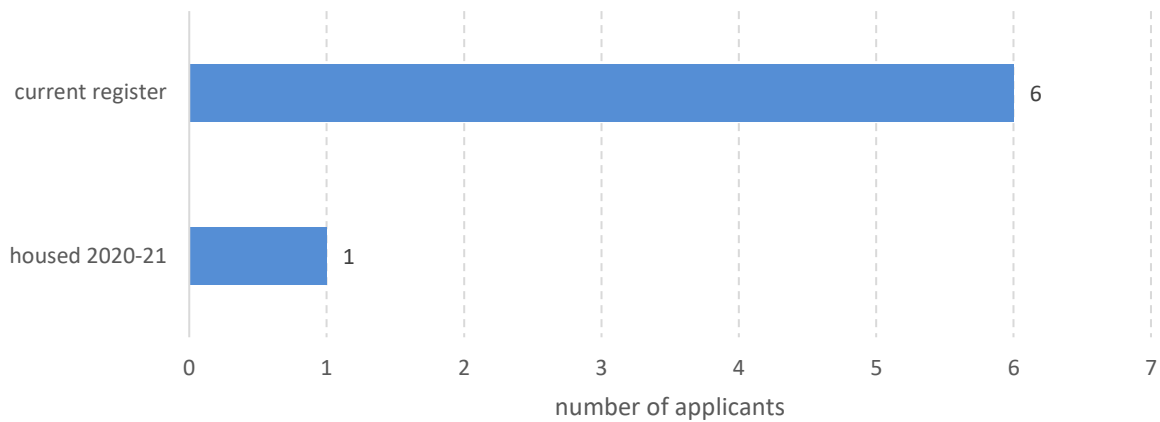


Fig. 12

Members of the Armed Forces and former members of the Armed Forces, or their bereaved partners are given specific consideration and priority is awarded based on their circumstances in relation to their service.

## Number of mutual exchanges by year between 2016/17 and 2020/21

Year	Total	Intra- district	Inter - district
<b>2020/21</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>10</b>
2019/20	74	63	11
2018/19	96	82	14
2017/18	92	82	10
2016/17	75	63	12

Fig.13

The vast majority of mutual exchanges over the last five years have been between tenants who already live in the district.

## Number of Right to Buy Sales by year between 2016/17 and 2020/21

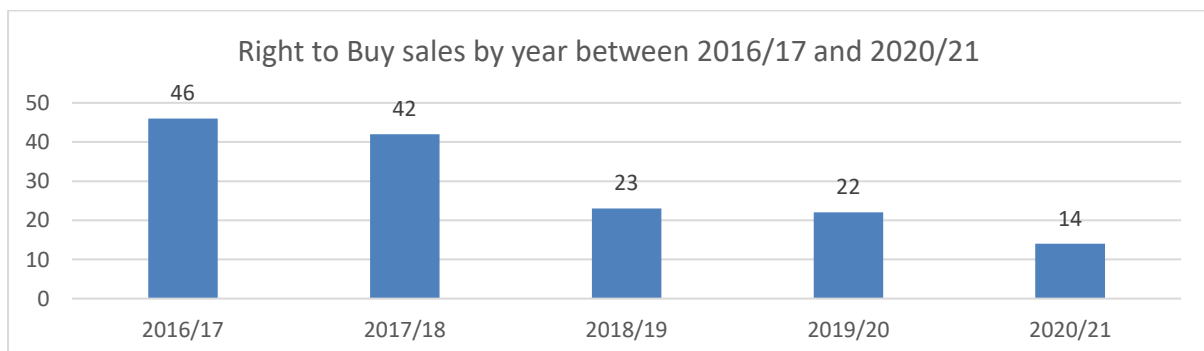


Fig. 14

There has been a steady reduction in the number of RTB sales per annum since 2016/17.

**Ethnic profile of households who moved via CBL in 2020/21 compared with the ethnic profile of the general EFDC population as recorded in the 2011 Census**

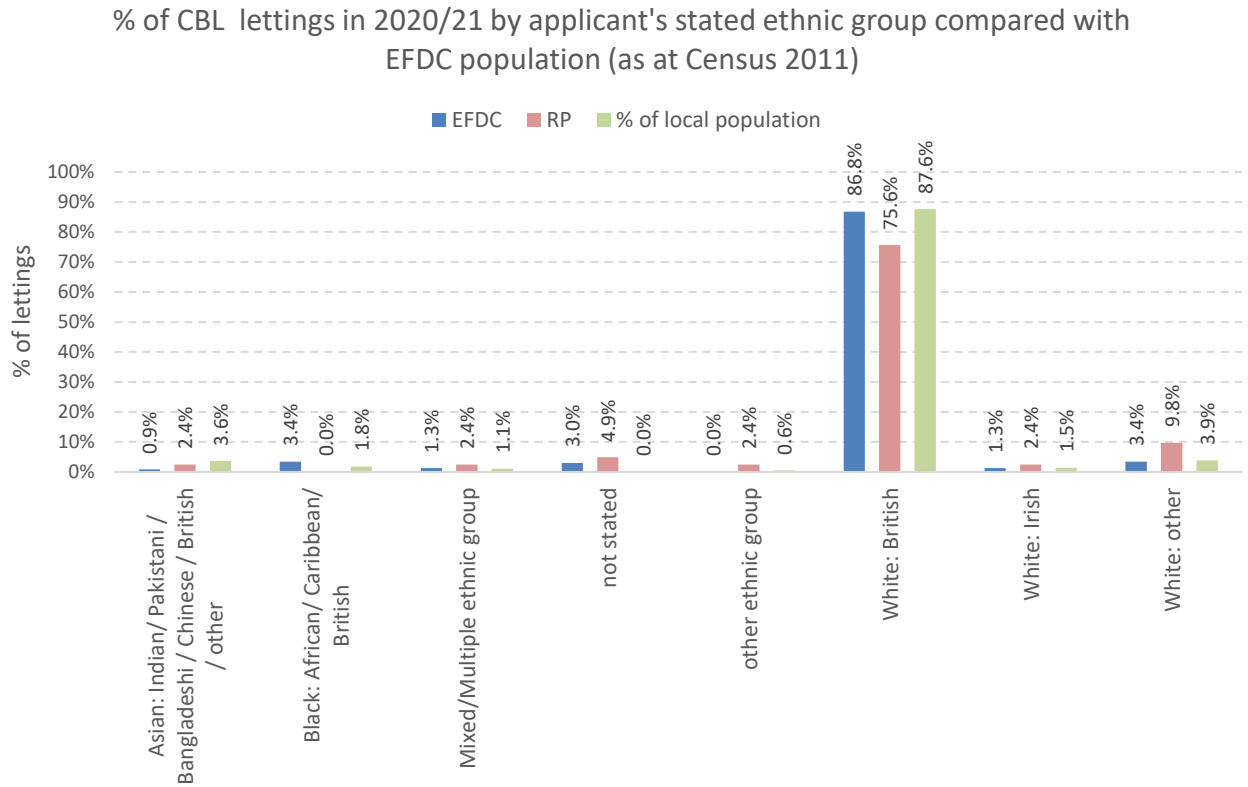


Fig.15

The ethnic profiling data comparison may not be robust enough to draw firm conclusions as the comparison is between current information for people who moved via CBL with 2011 Census statistics for the general population of EFDC.

More meaningful analysis can be undertaken once the 2021 Census data is published.

## Applicants on the housing register by year between 2016/17 and 2020/21

This is a snapshot per annum as at 1 April of the total number of active applicants on the housing register between 2016/17 and 2020/21.

Year	Total Active Applicants
2020/21	1,555
2019/20	1,291
2018/19	1,494
2017/18	1,376
2016/17	1,353

Fig.16

## Applicants on the housing register by band as at 1 April 2021

The chart below gives a snapshot as at 1 April 2021 of the number of home seekers in each band waiting to move, by the size of property that they require.

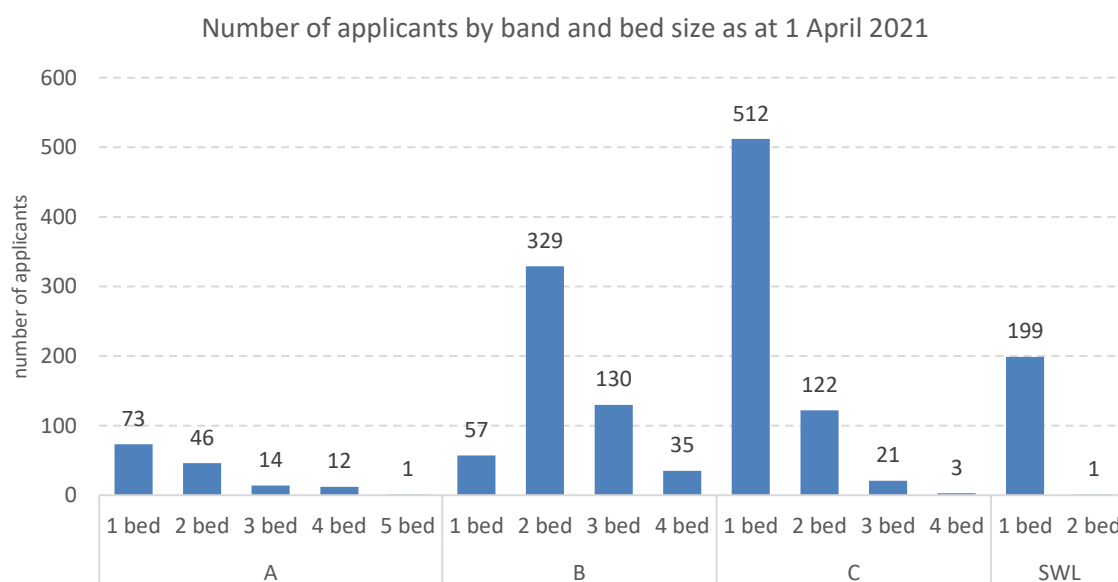


Fig. 17

There were 146 applicants in band A, 551 applicants in band B and 658 applicants in band C. An additional 200 applicants were on the Supplementary Waiting List.

The demand from band A applicants is mainly for 1 bed properties. The overwhelming demand from band B applicants is for 2-bed family sized accommodation.

Janice Nuth  
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