



People and Health Scrutiny Committee

Date: Monday, 20 July 2026
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: Meeting Room 1, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

Members (Quorum: 3)

Toni Coombs (Chair), Jane Somper (Vice-Chair), Bridget Bolwell, Sally Holland, Carole Jones, Chris Kippax, Robin Legg, Andy Skeats, Andy Todd and Carl Woode

Chief Executive: Catherine Howe, County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

For more information about this agenda please contact Democratic & Governance Services
Meeting Contact 01305 224185 - george.dare@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting, apart from any items listed in the exempt part of this agenda. If you would like to attend this meeting and have any specific requirements please contact the Democratic Services Officer named above.

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Agenda

Item	Pages
1. APOLOGIES	
To receive any apologies for absence.	
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
To disclose any pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interest as set out in the adopted Code of Conduct. In making their disclosure councillors are asked to state the agenda item, the nature of the interest and any action they propose to take as part of their declaration.	
If required, further advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.	
3. MINUTES	5 - 10

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2026.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Representatives of town or parish councils and members of the public who live, work, or represent an organisation within the Dorset Council area are welcome to submit either 1 question or 1 statement for each meeting. You are welcome to attend the meeting in person or via Microsoft Teams to read out your question and to receive the response. If you submit a statement for the committee this will be circulated to all members of the committee in advance of the meeting as a supplement to the agenda and appended to the minutes for the formal record but will not be read out at the meeting. **The first 8 questions and the first 8 statements received from members of the public or organisations for each meeting will be accepted on a first come first served basis in accordance with the deadline set out below.** For further information read [Public Participation - Dorset Council](#)

All submissions must be emailed in full to george.dare@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by 8.30am on Wednesday, 15 July 2026.

When submitting your question or statement please note that:

- You can submit 1 question or 1 statement.
- a question may include a short pre-amble to set the context.
- It must be a single question and any sub-divided questions will not be permitted.
- Each question will consist of no more than 450 words, and you will be given up to 3 minutes to present your question.
- when submitting a question please indicate who the question is for (e.g., the name of the committee or Portfolio Holder)
- Include your name, address, and contact details. Only your name will be published but we may need your other details to contact you about your question or statement in advance of the meeting.
- questions and statements received in line with the council's rules for public participation will be published as a supplement to the agenda.
- all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

5. COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS

To receive questions submitted by councillors.

Councillors can submit up to two valid questions at each meeting and sub divided questions count towards this total. Questions and statements received will be published as a supplement to the agenda and all questions, statements and responses will be published in full

within the minutes of the meeting.

The submissions must be emailed in full to george.dare@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by 8.30am on Wednesday, 15 July 2026.

[Dorset Council Constitution](#) – Procedure Rule 13

6. URGENT ITEMS

To consider any items of business which the Chairman has had prior notification and considers to be urgent pursuant to section 100B (4)b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The reason for the urgency shall be recorded in the minutes.

7. CQC INSPECTION UPDATE

To receive a verbal update from the Director – Adult Social Care on the outcome of the CQC Inspection.

8. HOUSING STRATEGY - ANNUAL REVIEW 11 - 322

To consider a report by the Interim Service Manager for Housing Strategy.

9. HOUSING VOIDS - PROCESS AND PROCEDURES 323 - 372

To consider a report by the Strategic Property Adviser.

10. 2025/26 QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REPORT 373 - 388

To consider a report by the Strategic Performance, Intelligence & Risk Lead.

11. CHILDREN SERVICES - YOUNG CARERS SERVICES AND SUPPORT 389 - 396

To consider a report by the Head of Service – Birth to Settled Adulthood.

12. COST OF LIVING IMPACT REPORT 2025-26 397 - 440

To consider a report by the Business Partner for Communities and Partnerships.

13. ANNUAL COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY REPORT 441 - 458

To consider the report by the Service Manager for Community Safety.

14. COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME AND EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLANS 459 - 490

To consider the committee's Work Programme and the Executive Forward Plans.

15. EXEMPT BUSINESS

To move the exclusion of the press and the public for the following item in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph x of schedule 12 A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). The public and the press will be asked to leave the meeting whilst the item of business is considered.

There are no exempt items scheduled for this meeting.



PEOPLE AND HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 16 APRIL 2026

Present: Cllrs Toni Coombs (Chair), Jane Somper (Vice-Chair), Sally Holland, Carole Jones, Chris Kippax, Andy Todd and Carl Woode

Present remotely: Cllr Robin Legg

Apologies: Cllr Bridget Bolwell

Also present: Cllr Nick Ireland, Cllr Steve Robinson and Cllr Clare Sutton

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

George Dare (Senior Democratic and Governance Officer), Paul Dempsey (Executive Director - Children's Services), Jen Furnell (Corporate Director for Education and Learning), Julia Ingram (Director - Adult Social Care), Dean Spencer (Place Director - Dorset), Sue Evans (Head of Specialist Services) and Chris Highway (Strategic Performance and Risk Lead)

Officers present remotely (for all or part of the meeting):

Iain Sim (Interim Corporate Director for Housing)

58. **Apologies**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Bridget Bolwell.

59. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

60. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2026 were confirmed and signed.

61. **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

62. **Councillor Questions**

There were no questions from councillors.

63. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

64. **2025/26 Quarter 3 Performance Report**

The Strategic Performance and Risk Lead introduced the report and the Executive Director of Children's Services outlined the performance for the key lines of enquiry in the report. The Sufficiency Strategy aimed to increase the number of children in care living with their families. Some of the children in care placed outside of the Dorset Council area were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children or were placed with family members. It was normally within the child's best interest to be placed outside of the county, but for those that it is not in their best interest, the council aims to place them in Dorset.

The Committee discussed the key lines of enquiry and the children's performance indicators. The following points were raised during the discussion:

- There were 2 children in unregistered provision, but the council was planning to move them into regulated provision. There was robust risk management in place for this.
- There was a strategy for increasing the number of placements in the Dorset Council area.
- A number of children from outside Dorset would be placed in Dorset by other local authorities, which was to do with the market and where a child can be placed.
- The enhanced regional fostering imitative means there was a regional hub for marketing and enquiries, before being put in contact with a local authority. The work of regional hubs would be extended to manage the assessment of foster carers.

The Committee discussed the performance indicators for the Adults & Housing directorate. The following points were raised:

- There had been an increase in Section 21 notices ahead of the Renters Rights Act being introduced. A variety of homelessness prevention options were available, and officers would look at the best option available for each individual case.
- There was a consistent number of homeless older people and additional support was given to over 65s. Sheltered accommodation and over 55s accommodation was available to older people.
- The Corporate Director for Housing updated that accommodation had now been found for the pregnant woman and 2 of 3 families in B&B accommodation, which was reported in the data.
- There were currently 40 void houses, and the housing and assets teams were working to include this. A report on Housing Voids would be brought to the next committee.

The Committee noted the Quarter 3 Performance data.

65. EHCP Working Group - Final Report and Recommendations

The Chairman introduced and presented the report of the committee's EHCP Working Group. The working group was established in October 2024, following the committee raising concerns about the timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). She outlined the processes that the working group took to investigate the issues. This included establishing an inquiry day, followed by further meetings with parents of children with an EHCP, and with NHS representatives. The Chairman thanked everyone who took part in giving evidence to the working group and thanked the panel members for their involvement. The Chairman outlined the recommendations in the report.

The Executive Director for Children's Services responded to the report and made the following points:

- He believed that there should be more nuance in the report, particularly around what parents say, because not all parents give the same feedback.
- He did not believe that council's rate of tribunals were high.
- Many of the issues captured in the report reflected national issues, which was caused by a system which was not financially sustainable, leading to children's experiences not improving.
- The council's performance in the percentage of EHCP's issued within 20 weeks had improved from 22% in September 2025 to 54% in March 2026. There was an aspiration for issuing all EHCP's within 20 weeks, but this was not likely to be achieved.
- It was a professional decision by the Executive Director for the working group to not speak directly with children. However he offered working group an opportunity to work with the Youth Voice team, which was not accepted by the working group.

The Chairman responded to the Executive Director for Children's Services. She agreed that there should have been more context in the report with regards to national issues, however the report reflected the evidence the working group received. The working group wanted the best outcomes for Dorset children and felt that most issues that were raised were caused by communication.

Members of the committee asked questions discussed the report. The following points were raised through the questions and discussion:

- A member noted that children who had an EHCP were not afraid to express their opinions.
- Good improvements had been made over the past several months, but was progress slowing down? The Executive Director for Children's Services responded that progress was due to remodelling the locality model to increase capacity, although the full change had not been made yet. Using AI in EHCP's was also being introduced which created improvements in other local authorities, therefore further improvements to timeliness were anticipated.

- In response to a question about the form of communication the council receives from families, the Executive Director explained this often included written, legal, or challenging communication to him. All families had a named caseworker and communication with the caseworker would take a variety of forms. A phone line with booked appointments had been trialled in a locality and had very limited take up.
- Dorset Council could make its own improvements to communication, however was the council limited due to communication improvements also being needed in the NHS? The Place Director for Dorset, representing the Integrated Care Board, accepted their part in needing to make improvements to communication. He also explained that changes were being made around waiting lists and the processes for assessing it.
- During the 20 weeks to issue an EHCP, it could be very challenging to complete all the administration, organisation, and getting the responses required from organisations to contribute to the EHCP. It could also be challenging to respond to some frequent communication from some families.
- At 20 weeks, it was the end of the beginning for children with an EHCP. It was good that schools were being recognised as the front line, which was critical for meaningful improvement.

The Executive Director for Children's Services commented on the Schools White Paper. He explained that the white paper had caused some anxiety for parents, however it had been quite well received by most parties involved. The council had received notification that it would receive some Government funding for creating an 'expert at hand service' in mainstream provision. The Council would develop a SEND Reform Plan which would set out how the council would use the funding.

Proposed by Cllr J Somper, seconded by Cllr C Jones.

Upon being put to the vote, the committee unanimously agreed the report and recommendations and that they be submitted to Cabinet for response.

Decision:

That the report and recommendations be agreed and submitted to Cabinet for a response.

ADJOURNMENT

The Committee adjourned for a 10 minute comfort break.

66. Children out of School or in Home Education

The Corporate Director for Education and Learning introduced the report. The rate of children missing school or home education was lower than average, particularly across the South-West. The council was aware of all the young people in the report and there was some oversight of them.

The committee asked questions and discussed the report. During the discussion the following points were raised:

- How confident were officers that all the children out of school has been identified? The Corporate Director for Education and Learning responded that the council knows about all the children within the report. The council is notified by a school or another local authority if they are removed from a school's register.
- There were concerns with increased pressure on teams caused by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.
- Mental health was the most requested reason for home schooling. Mental health support teams were in more than 50% of schools.
- There were concerns about children being permanently excluded from primary schools. 34 children had been permanently excluded across all schools in this academic year. Although there had been an overall decrease each year, there had been an increase in primary school exclusions. The VSEND implementation would ensure that schools had information about children before they start the school, so schools were prepared. There was not as much alternative provision available for primary aged children.
- Officers advised that the council's Best Start Local Plan, for school readiness, had been submitted to the Department for Education. A proposal in this was that each family hub would have a SEND practitioner.
- It was likely that some children leave home education without qualifications, however if young people decide to take up post-16 education, then this presents them an opportunity to gain qualifications.
- There were 118 children and young people on reduced timetables, which was intended to be short term. Officers work with schools to ensure that reduced timetables are kept to a minimum and that they can be used positively to introduce young people into education or if they at risk of exclusion.

Following the discussion the committee noted:

1. The current position regarding children missing education, children missing out on education, and children who are electively home educated, and Children's Services approach to supporting these children, and,
2. The strong possibility that the imminent Children Wellbeing and Schools Bill will result in additional responsibilities being placed on local authorities with regards to the above cohorts of children and that this is highly likely to require additional resources.

Councillors S Holland, C Kippax and C Woode left the meeting at 1pm.

67. Continuing Health Care and Joint Funding (Adults) Performance in Dorset

The Director of Adult Social Care introduced the report. The report was developed following a request from the committee's Chairman and Vice-Chairman and after a number of questions from members of the public. It was recommended to commission a joint deep dive with the NHS. The Head of Specialist Services gave a presentation to the committee to understand the Continuing Health Care (CHC) and Joint Funding performance in the Dorset Council area. The presentation is attached as an appendix to these minutes.

The Place Director – Dorset, representing the NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB), responded to the presentation. He explained that the ICB was put under special measures following an investigation conducted by NHS England into how the ICB was running CHC. This may have been a cause for improvement, as Quarter 4 data showed levels had improved.

The Chairman suggested that it would be useful for the committee to talk to someone with lived experience of CHC as a part of the deep dive process. A final report on the deep dive should be brought to the committee on October 2026.

The Committee agreed to commission the deep dive into Continuing Health Care.

Decision:

That a deep dive be carried out into the CHC and Joint Funding arrangements in the Dorset area.

68. Committee's Work Programme and Cabinet's Forward Plan

The Committee agreed to extend the meeting beyond 3 hours to complete the remaining items of business.

The Chairman reported that two items had been raised: NHS Community Transport and Registered Providers' disposal of housing stock.

The Place Director for Dorset explained that it was the Integrated Care Board's responsibility for transport and that the council did not provide funding for this. A discussion would take place to see whether scrutiny would be able to have impact on this topic.

A discussion would take place with the Corporate Director for Housing regarding the request to scrutinise registered providers' disposal policies.

The committee noted its work programme.

69. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 1.40 pm

Chairman

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People and Health Scrutiny Committee 20 July 2026

Housing Strategy – Annual Review For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:

Cllr G Taylor, Housing and Homelessness

Local Councillor(s):

Senior Leadership Team:

S Crowe - Executive Director, Housing, Prevention and Communities

Report author and job title: Sarah Smith – Interim Service Manager for Housing Strategy

Email: sarah.smith@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public [Choose an item.](#)

1. Executive summary

1.1 This report provides an overview of the actions taken to meet the aims and objectives set out in the Dorset Council Housing Strategy 2024-2029.

1.2 The Strategy (Appendix 1) was approved in December 2023. It is a high-level document that sets out our vision, aims, and objectives for housing in Dorset. It focuses on residents' needs, health and wellbeing, supporting rural communities, and protecting Dorset's natural environment, landscape, and heritage.

1.3 The Housing Strategy has four main objectives:

- Housing Need – Helping residents to live safe, healthy, and independent lives in homes that meet their needs.
- Housing Supply – Increasing the delivery of homes that people need and can afford.
- Housing Standards – Raising the quality, condition, and safety of homes.
- Prevention of Homelessness – Providing timely support to people in crisis to prevent homelessness.

1.4 As part of the Council's leadership review and goal to be a modern, sustainable unitary authority, the Housing Service is now an integral part of the new Housing, Communities and Prevention Directorate. Together with the creation of a new Housing Delivery Board, which strengthens the cross Council ownership for

meeting the Housing Strategy aims & objectives. The new directorate will provide emerging opportunities to embed closer working relationships with our Communities, Commissioning and Health partners. There is a growing requirement to align housing supply with Adult Social Care commissioning intentions, particularly in relation to supported living, extra care, and accommodation with support. Future delivery will need to respond to specific needs including people with learning disabilities, autism, mental health needs, and complex physical disabilities.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 To review progress in delivering the Housing Strategy and provide feedback and comments on the progress made and the work still to be done.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 To provide oversight and scrutiny to ensure the successful delivery of the Housing Strategy's aims and objectives.

4. The report

4.1 The Housing Strategy is a council-wide plan to ensure residents have access to affordable, suitable, and secure homes. The Home in on Housing (HIOH) programme plays a key role in achieving these aims, delivering over 130 work streams through defined projects and ongoing activities.

4.2 Resources: The HIOH Programme team was recruited in November 2024 and consists of a Programme Manager, a Project Manager, and two Home in on Housing Delivery Officers.

4.3 HIOH Governance Boards: The programme is overseen by a Housing Delivery Board (replacing the previous Officer Board and chaired by Jan Britton with Sam Crowe as Vice Chair) and an advisory Member Board supported by Task and Finish Groups.

4.4 Overview: The HIOH programme successfully launched phase one in January 2025.

4.5 Phase One – Research and Recommendations Phase

Phase one identified 14 projects, each requiring detailed research to provide insight and identify actions to meet the Strategy's aims. A key aim was to ensure future decisions are based on data, reflect local needs, and consider national trends and best practice. Detailed recommendation reports have been completed for 12 of the 14 projects, supported by Task and Finish Groups.

The two projects not yet finalised are:

- Principal Residence – Reviewed by a Task and Finish Group in May 2026. It will be among the first reports to be presented to the new Housing Board.
- Data and Insight – Delayed due to technical resource pressures. The first dashboard is in development and due for delivery by mid-July 2026.

Phase 2 is underway, and 16 Phase 3 projects have been approved and are starting now.

4.6 Phase One – Projects and Outcomes

4.6.1 Accessible Housing Policy (Appendix 2)

The report reviewed existing data, strategies, and policies relating to homes for older and disabled people. It found no legal requirement for a standalone accessible housing strategy but confirmed strong existing strategic commitment. It recommended that Housing, Adults, and Children's services engage with the Local Plan to ensure accessible design requirements are included. Recommendations were approved and officers are now working with Planning colleagues to take this forward.

4.6.2 Affordable Housing Info and Guidance (Appendix 3)

Following feedback from residents during the Housing Strategy consultation, the report recommended the language Dorset Council should use when communicating about affordable housing. Following public engagement, a report was produced identifying our resident's preferred language. A Member Task and Finish Group gave full support in February 2026, and the recommendations were approved. These will be delivered through Phase 3 and language changes are already being implemented by the Communities and Engagement service.

4.6.3 Affordable Housing Targets (Appendix 4)

The report improved understanding of how affordable housing targets are set and established new targets. In 2025/26, 423 homes were delivered against a target of 450. Shortfalls were due to weather-related delays at Bridport, Marnhull and Crossways, and site-specific delays at Royal Mannor, Portland (41 homes) and Holly Court, Weymouth (37 homes). The target for 2026/27 is 500 homes, with a proposed increase of 50 homes per year for the next five years, reviewed every two years.

4.6.4 Brownfield Sites (Appendix 5)

The report provided a detailed analysis of brownfield sites and identified seven actions to support affordable home delivery, including assessing six co-owned sites and three fully owned sites for New Models of Housing Delivery projects. A single tracking system was recommended. Delivery of recommendations sits with the Planning service, pending Local Plan work. The HIOH programme will monitor progress.

4.6.5 Data Insight and Development

This project aims to develop an interactive data set to identify housing needs, predict future trends, and evaluate the impact of initiatives. Progress has been delayed due to resource pressures. The first dashboards are in development and have received positive feedback from the Commissioning Service. Delivery is expected by mid-July 2026.

4.6.6 Dorset Private Landlords (Appendix 6)

The report reviewed Dorset Council's support packages for private landlords and benchmarked them against neighbouring councils. Whilst financial incentives are competitive, landlords were unclear about how to access them. Four improvement areas were identified: awareness and access to support; landlord engagement and communication; support for property adaptations; and data monitoring. Actions are being delivered through the HIOH and Housing Programme, many linked to the Renters' Rights Act.

4.6.7 Empty Homes

Dorset Council's first Empty Homes Strategy was developed and adopted by Full Council. Two dedicated empty homes officers are now in post. In 2025/26, 27 properties were returned to use through direct action – up from 16 in 2024/25. Over half were identified proactively from Council Tax lists, demonstrating a strong preventative approach. The strategy is supported by capital funding enabling Compulsory Purchase Orders as a sanction. The team is currently targeting four CPO cases, with one already in progress.

4.6.8 Grant Funding (Appendix 7)

The report identified opportunities to increase access to external grant funding. It recommended a central Grantfinder subscription to identify opportunities as they arise, and closer collaboration between departments to maximise funding. Work to implement these actions is ongoing.

4.6.9 Housing Register Downsizing Initiative (Appendix 8)

The report found that under-occupancy in social housing in Dorset is higher than previously thought. It recommended matching under-occupying households with those in housing need, including matching downsizers with overcrowded households, and those in adapted homes they no longer need with those who require adaptations. This is expected to reduce waiting times and make better use of existing stock.

4.6.10 Move-On Accommodation (Appendix 9)

The report identified gaps and inconsistencies in housing advice and move-on pathways from supported accommodation, as well as barriers to accessing private

rented accommodation. Recommendations fell into five areas: strategic direction; data and outcomes monitoring; pathways and move-on planning; housing supply and allocations; and private rented sector options. There is an opportunity to develop clearer ASC-aligned pathways, including step-down from high-cost care settings and hospital discharge routes into supported accommodation. Many actions are being addressed through the new Supported Housing Strategy (Phase 2), with remaining actions in Phase 3.

4.6.11 New Models of Housing Delivery

The report was presented to Cabinet in March 2025 and recommended five delivery models: temporary accommodation; specialist accommodation using Council land; settled accommodation for housing register applicants; a development partnership with Registered Providers; and use of Homes Dorset. Temporary and specialist accommodation models were approved. Cabinet endorsed the approach on the remaining models and requested detailed reports, which are being progressed in Phase 2.

Link to Cabinet decision and report -

<https://moderngov.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=4996>

4.6.12 Principal Residence (Appendix 10)

The report provides feedback on principal residence policy decisions from other local authorities. It recommends maintaining the Council's current position and continuing to use second home council tax levies to manage second home ownership. The report was reviewed by a members Task and Finish Group in May 2026 and will be presented to the Housing Board before going to the full Member Board.

4.6.13 Registered Provider Comparative Research – Strategy and Policy

The research highlighted inconsistencies in policies and strategies among registered providers in Dorset. This data will be used to develop key performance indicators to assess provider performance, supporting the Registered Provider Performance project in Phase 3.

4.6.14 UK Shared Prosperity Fund

A feasibility study explored the creation of a ring-fenced Local Housing Fund. The report recommended working within the First Homes scheme framework to increase delivery, reduce the impact on S106 social housing, and improve discounts for target households. The fund was to be supported through the devolution deal; without that funding, no further action can be taken at this stage.

4.7 Phase Two

Phase two shifts focus from research to active delivery.

4.8 Phase 2 Projects and Updates

4.8.1 Temporary Accommodation Lease Model

This model responds to the need to reduce reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation, which is generally unsuitable for families and creates avoidable financial pressure. The proposal is to lease up to 100 self-contained homes, including accessible, one-bedroom, and family-sized properties – providing better-quality accommodation with improved control over standards and location. The project is approved but is currently subject to financial due diligence on the proposed lessor. Active delivery of new accommodation is expected within 2026.

4.8.2 Settled Accommodation Lease Model

This larger-scale proposal aims to secure up to 400 homes per year for three years for households whose needs are not met by existing affordable housing or the private rented sector. Priority groups include care leavers, young people at risk of homelessness, those requiring adapted homes, and those with urgent housing need. The project is in the options and assurance stage, with specialist legal advice commissioned. A preferred delivery route, including the potential use of Homes Dorset, will be brought to Cabinet.

4.8.3 Development Partnership Model

This medium to long-term model would use Council land to create a pilot programme of up to six sites with registered providers, seeking social rent wherever possible. It addresses the mismatch between current delivery and housing register need, particularly for one-bedroom homes, larger family homes, bungalows, and accessible properties. The project has been paused and reframed to align with the Council's wider asset strategy. Housing and Assets and Property are now progressing the report jointly, with a return to Cabinet expected in the latter half of 2026.

4.8.4 Asset-Led Development Model

This model focuses on small, complex, or vacant Council assets that could deliver high social value for specific households, such as care leavers, those needing adapted homes, or supported housing. It provides a significant opportunity to deliver bespoke supported living schemes on small sites, aligned to Adult Social Care commissioning priorities and enabling people to live independently in community-based settings. A pilot using two small land sites and two vacant properties is intended, supported by an external provider with development and grant-funding expertise. Phase 1 viability work is underway, and the Procurement Initiation Document has been signed off.

4.8.5 Homes Dorset

Homes Dorset is a private company wholly owned by Dorset Council, incorporated in 2018 as a potential housing delivery vehicle. Cabinet requested an options appraisal, which has been completed. The report is linked to the Settled Accommodation Lease Model, as decisions on corporate structure may determine whether Homes Dorset becomes the delivery vehicle for part of that programme.

4.8.6 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan

In line with the National Plan to End Homelessness, a consultant has been instructed to carry out a full needs assessment and co-produce a new strategy with key stakeholders, fully funded through the Homelessness Prevention Grant. A revised Action Plan will be published in Autumn 2026, with the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy due in July 2027.

4.8.7 Supported Housing Strategy

The Supported Housing Regulatory Oversight Act requires all local authorities to produce a Supported Housing Strategy by 31 March 2027. Dorset has received £55,409 in New Burdens Funding for 2025/26. Housing LIN has been commissioned to carry out a needs assessment and develop a first draft through co-production with specialist groups and stakeholders.

4.9 Phase 3

Phase 3 comprises 16 projects in the early stages of scoping and development, with the majority starting late summer 2026. Projects will deliver on the recommendations from Phase 1 reports and include a review of the Housing Strategy in preparation for a new version when the current strategy expires in 2029.

4.10 Delivery Summary: Where the Strategy is Delivering and Where Focus is Needed

The following summary is provided to assist Scrutiny Members in assessing overall progress against the Housing Strategy's four objectives.

Areas of Strong Delivery:

- **Empty Homes (Housing Supply):** The adoption of Dorset's first Empty Homes Strategy and the appointment of two dedicated officers have delivered immediate results. 27 properties were returned to use in 2025/26, up from 16 in 2024/25, through a proactive approach combining advice, incentives, and the credible use of Compulsory Purchase Orders.
- **Programme Delivery and Evidence Base (All Objectives):** 12 of 14 Phase 1 research projects have been completed and approved through governance, providing a strong, data-driven foundation for future housing decisions. Task and Finish Groups have ensured effective member engagement throughout.

- Governance and Partnership (All Objectives): The creation of the Housing, Communities and Prevention Directorate and the Housing Delivery Board strengthens accountability and enables closer working with health, commissioning, and communities' partners.
- Accessible Housing (Housing Need and Standards): Recommendations to embed accessible design requirements into the Local Plan have been approved, ensuring future homes better meet the needs of older and disabled residents.
- Affordable Housing Delivery (Housing Supply): 423 affordable homes were delivered in 2025/26, with delivery increasing year-on-year since the formation of Dorset Council, supported by strong registered provider partnerships.

Areas for Improvement and Focus:

- Affordable Housing Targets (Housing Supply): 423 homes were delivered against a target of 450 in 2025/26. Whilst delays were largely outside the Council's control, focus is needed to meet the new 500-home target for 2026/27 and the proposed year-on-year increases.
- Data Insight and Development (All Objectives): The delayed data dashboards are critical for monitoring housing need and evaluating the impact of the Strategy. Delivery of the first dashboard by mid-July 2026 is a priority.
- Temporary Accommodation Lease (Homelessness Prevention and Housing Supply): Completing financial due diligence and completing contract arrangements and property acquisition procedures must be prioritised to reduce reliance on costly bed and breakfast placements.
- Settled Accommodation (Housing Supply and Housing Need): Completing financial and taxation due diligence and presenting the options to Cabinet must be delivered to enable the delivery of homes that meet the needs of our residents with the most urgent need to move.
- Development Partnership (Housing Supply and Housing Need): Presenting a Housing and Asset & Property co-authored options paper to Cabinet is essential to delivering new homes on Council land at social rent rates that meet the needs of our residents.
- Asset-Led Models (Housing Supply): Appointing a provider is essential to unlock Council land for specialist housing delivery.
- Private Landlord Engagement (Housing Standards and Housing Need): Raising awareness of available support packages and access to useful information is a priority. Continuing engagement and communication with landlords, building on the actions already delivered to engage and inform them about Renters' Rights Act, is needed to retain landlords and improve standards.
- Move-On and Supported Housing Pathways (Homelessness Prevention and Housing Need): Gaps in move-on pathways from supported accommodation

have been identified. The new Supported Housing Strategy and Phase 3 projects must address these to improve outcomes for vulnerable residents.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 During the scoping, research and development stages of every project we consider potential alternative options and choose the ones that most meet the aims and objectives of the strategy.

6. Legal considerations

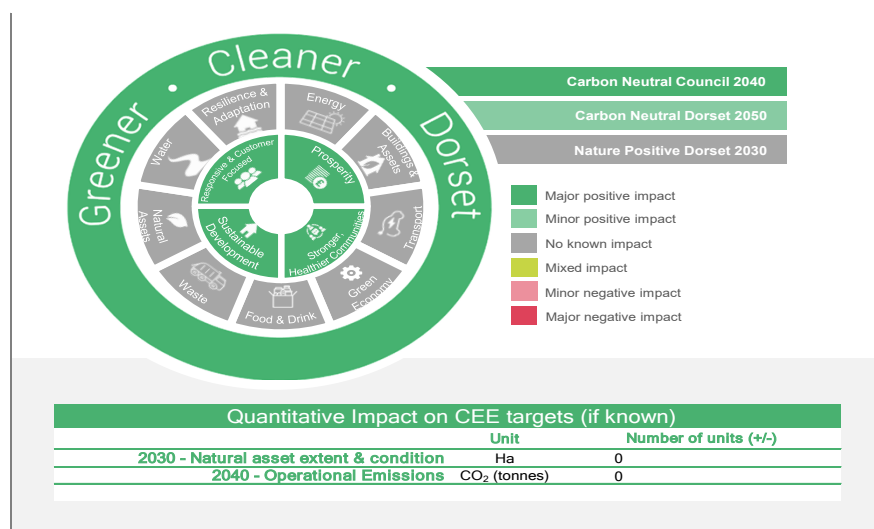
6.1 Many of the projects require detailed legal advice, support and oversight. Where specialist knowledge has been needed, our Legal Services have sought advice from external experts.

7. Financial implications

7.1 The programme is running within budget with minimal expenditure, outside of grant funded spend.

8. Natural environment, climate and ecology implications

8.1 Overall, the strategy seeks to have a positive impact by supporting improving standards of existing homes and the delivery of houses which are energy efficient, meet accessible housing standards, and the actions set out in the Natural Environment, Climate and Ecological Strategy.



ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	No known impact

Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Prosperity	strongly supports it
Stronger healthier communities	strongly supports it
Sustainable Development & Housing	strongly supports it
Responsive & Customer Focused	strongly supports it

9. Well-being and health implications

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 Housing quality has a significant impact on both physical and mental health, with people who live in poor quality homes experiencing more ill health. Inadequate housing contributes to health inequalities, particularly affecting people on lower incomes and the most vulnerable.

9.2 As well as the condition of housing, the health impact includes overcrowding and whether homes meet the physical needs of occupants. Concerns about security of tenure, bills, and the threat of homelessness have all been shown to negatively impact health, especially for children.

9.3 By focussing on prevention, improving the condition and standards of existing homes, meeting specific property needs, and ensuring future developments support health, we can create healthy and thriving communities.

10. Other implications

10.1 None

11. Risk implications

11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Medium

12. Equalities

12.1 See Appendix 11

13. Appendices

- 13.1
1. Housing Strategy
 2. Accessible Housing Policy
 3. Affordable Housing Information
 4. Affordable Housing Targets
 5. Brownfield Sites
 6. Dorset Private Landlords
 7. Grant Funding
 8. Housing Register Downsizing Initiative
 9. Move-On Accommodation
 10. Principal Residence Policy
 11. EQIA

14. Background papers

14.1

15. Report sign-off

- 15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

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Dorset
Council

Dorset Council
Housing Strategy
January 2024 – January 2029

Our vision is to ensure our residents have access to affordable, suitable, secure homes where they can live well as part of sustainable and thriving communities.

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce Dorset Council's Housing Strategy. This sets out our priorities for housing over the next five years. It shows how we intend to bring our vision to life, and I am delighted to have been part of its development.

We know that homes that are safe, warm, and suitable can result in a better quality of life. We want this for all our residents because good housing can improve our health and financial well-being to help us feel safe and secure. It can help support thriving communities and reduce the impact on our environment. Housing can give children the best start in life and help us access education, skills, and employment.

National and local housing shortages have created challenges for our residents. Although Dorset has become a popular place for people to move and retire to, some of our working-age residents are struggling to afford to live here as house prices rise.

Our most vulnerable residents also find it difficult to find suitable homes. We work hard to support them when they face barriers. Without this extra support, people in crisis or with extra needs, spend more time in unsuitable accommodation.

Working with partner agencies we can improve access to good housing in our area. This Housing Strategy aims to identify and enable solutions to tackle these challenges.

I would like to say thank you to all those across our Council teams who do so much for our residents. Together with our partners in the social housing sector, private rented sector, and voluntary organisations, they are making a positive difference to the lives of people in Dorset. This strategy aims to support them to continue to do so.

Cllr Graham Carr-Jones, Lead Member for Housing

1 Introduction

Our vision is to ensure our residents have access to affordable, suitable, secure homes where they can live well as part of sustainable and thriving communities.

The following strategy sets out our priorities and approach we will take as a Local Authority and working with partners to meet local housing needs and objectives. Dorset Council has statutory duties relating to housing, which will be referred to in this document. It also has a key role in encouraging, supporting, and enabling partners and other organisations to deliver good and effective housing solutions.

The Strategy is broad and recognises the fact that good housing is essential for a good life, and enables people, families, and communities to thrive. This Strategy is an important guide to what we will do as a bold and ambitious Housing Authority but also in laying down our objectives for others such as registered providers of social housing and developers to deliver and setting the tone for this to be done well for Dorset residents. The Housing Strategy is not the Local Plan, and it does not set out planning policies.

It provides:

- a framework to guide us and our partners in tackling housing issues facing our area.
- a clear strategy set in local, regional, and national context.

This strategy is for up to five years, but it is a living document, which supports effective delivery of housing outcomes over that period. This means that plans will be applied or adapted to meet national or local policies as needed and stay relevant and effective to local needs. We will set out delivery plans to make sure that objectives are achieved and kept under review where improvements or adaptations are introduced.

This strategy was developed with the community, organisations and residents who contributed to our public consultation and elected councillors who were involved in individual and group discussions and webinars. It was also developed with assistance from Dorset Council's housing services, adult social care, children's services, and planning services as well as housing association and health partners.

To support the consultation, we provided information from:

- the 2021 Census
- the Icen Housing Needs Assessment (a report outlining the number of homes needed in Dorset)
- NOMIS (Official Census and Labour Market Statistics)
- partner organisations (Registered Providers of Social Housing, Public Health Dorset, Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership, Dorset NHS, and the Homelessness Forum)
- Dorset Council knowledge and data
- internal and external engagement activities

The ten-week consultation took place from 3 July 2023 to 2 October 2023. Key findings from this supported the development of the strategy.

Following the consultation, our State of Dorset data set is now being updated to include housing information. In addition to this, we have provided some supplemental information setting out housing data in Dorset.

This strategy is not a stand-alone document. It supports our Council Plan and sits alongside other key strategies and plans. These include the following:

- A Better Life Strategy
- Birth to Settled Adulthood Programme
- Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy
- Economic Growth Strategy
- Domestic Abuse Strategy
- Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy
- Children's Services Sufficiency Strategy (pending)
- Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Dorset Council Planning for Climate Change - Interim Guidance and Position Statement
- Local Transport Plan

Dorset Council will be developing a new Local Plan setting out our planning policies and proposals for new developments. Findings from the consultation will be fed into the Local Plan team. During the development of this Housing Strategy close engagement with our Planning service has been carried out to ensure its objectives can be supported and that the approaches are aligned.

2 Summary

The Housing Strategy has identified a range of actions for Dorset Council and other public bodies, housing associations, and community organisations to improve access to housing that meets identified need in the local area. It promotes working outside organisational boundaries and prioritising actions to meet the needs of our residents. The framework of actions will be further supported and monitored against a more detailed delivery plan. The delivery plan will be focused on achieving the most effective outcomes and updated to meet any new or changing regulatory or legislative requirements.

3 National Context

Nationally, it is common that demand for affordable and accessible homes exceeds the supply. The government recognises this as a priority. Several policies and initiatives aimed at addressing these pressures have been implemented:

3.1 Affordable Homes Programme (AHP)

In December 2020, the Government launched the Affordable Homes Programme. It aimed to provide 180,000 new affordable rent and shared ownership homes by March 2026.

This has now been revised with a focus on funding to support the development of new homes at a social rent, which are lower than the affordable rent model, which can be up to 80% of market rates.

3.2 First Homes Scheme

The 'First Homes scheme', was launched in 2021. It provides a discount of at least 30% on the market value of a new-build home for first-time buyers. The scheme aims to make home ownership more accessible for first-time buyers.

3.3 Building Safety Act

In July 2021, the government introduced the Building Safety Bill. It aims to improve the safety of high-rise buildings by:

- a new regulatory regime for building safety.
- a new Building Safety Regulator.
- a new system for managing safety risks in high-rise buildings.

ensuring that new high-rise buildings are constructed to the highest safety standards.

3.4 Social Housing (Regulation) Act

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act received Royal Assent in July 2023. It aims to enhance regulatory powers and improve housing conditions for tenants. It will do this by holding poor performing landlords to account.

The Act supports these aims by:

- giving more power to the Regulator of Social Housing including increased inspections and issuing fines.
- giving more power to the Housing Ombudsman including publishing best practice guidance to landlords following investigations into tenant complaints.
- setting strict time limits for social landlords to address hazards. For example, damp and mould.
- setting new qualification requirements for social housing managers.
- introducing stronger economic powers to follow inappropriate money transactions outside of the sector, such as money laundering.

3.5 Home Energy Performance Retrofit

The Government has a goal for housing to be zero carbon by 2050. They recognise that this means significant investment to achieve this within existing homes.

Funding has been made available to local authorities and registered providers. These are the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and Sustainable Warmth initiatives.

Funding supports:

- energy efficient homes
- smart technologies
- moving to low-carbon heat

- homes that are thermally comfortable
- tackling fuel poverty by reducing energy bills
- economic resilience and green jobs

3.6 Unleashing Rural Opportunity

The government aims to support improvements in the quality of life for rural residents. They have 4 main aims which are:

- growing rural economy: supporting rural areas to prosper by boosting opportunity through jobs and skills.
- connectivity: delivering gigabit broadband and mobile coverage in rural areas and increase access to public transport.
- homes and energy: facilitating the building of more homes for local people to buy where local communities want them, powered by secure and resilient energy supplies.
- communities: improving access to high quality health and social care and take further action to tackle rural crime.

4 Future policy change

These are the housing policies which will come in to force during the lifetime of this strategy:

4.1 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

This Bill is expected to make significant changes to the planning system. It centres around:

- providing more power to local leaders.
- creating beautiful places and improving environmental outcomes.
- delivering infrastructure.
- regeneration.
- market reform.
- wider improvements to planning processes.

4.2 The Renters' Reform Bill

This Bill proposes changes to the private rented sector and centres around:

- ending fixed term tenancies.
- increasing notice periods for rent increases.
- increasing tenants' right in relation to pets.
- a new ombudsman to cover all private landlords.
- considering the removal of Section 21 'no fault' evictions.

5 Our Local Context

Dorset has a unique landscape that has:

a coastline which is classified as a UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site

one of the largest areas of protected lowland heath in Europe

approx. 10,000 listed buildings

More than half of the area is classified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Dorset has a mix of coastal, rural, and urban areas.

Dorset is a popular place to live and visit. Buying or renting a home can be competitive and availability limited. Some working age residents and young people are affected. Over 80% of the households currently on our social housing register are of working age (16 – 64 years). Half of the applicants on the register are employed or self-employed in paid work.

Home Ownership is the largest tenure type in the Dorset Council area with 71.3% owning either outright or with a mortgage. The second largest proportion are households renting privately at 16.3%.

During 2022/23 the number of households losing their private rented accommodation increased by 50% in Dorset following national trends. This accounted for 17.8% of all homeless approaches, where households were unable to find other rental properties, and impacts the council's ability to discharge its homeless duties.

Median rents in Dorset are average for the southwest but are increasing in line with the national trend. There are geographical variations in rental costs in Dorset. The national capping of local housing allowance (LHA) and the gap between rent levels and local wages impacts on tenants' ability to pay their rent and meet the shortfall.

Other opportunities such as the Airbnb model have risen in popularity. At the peak of the 2022 summer season there were 6,498 holiday let properties available in the Dorset Council area. This represents 3.8% of the total residential accommodation but less than half were let all year round and many are peak season lets only.

On the 7th of September 2023 the Government published further guidance on understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in homes. The Renters Reform Bill is expected to be passed in 2024. It will set out how Decent Homes Standards will be applied to privately rented properties and provide enhanced protections for both landlords and tenants. Some landlords are anticipating additional costs managing their properties.

Social housing in our area makes up approximately 12% of the total homes. These are provided by locally active Housing Associations, also known as Registered Providers of Social Housing. There are approximately 23,000 social homes of which, 72.7% are general needs housing; 20.8% are either sheltered, older peoples or supported accommodation; and 6.4% is low-cost home ownership or shared ownership housing.

In Dorset the Affordable Homes Programme has helped increase the number of new affordable homes in the area. The new Homes England strategic partnership approach with registered providers was brought in at this time. Due to longer term funding commitments, this has given registered providers greater certainty over grants for projects which has increased their ambitions in terms of the numbers of new homes they can build. In Dorset there have been several sites delivering homes entirely at affordable rates, ranging from 20 – 80 homes that would not have been possible without the H It was also developed with assistance from Dorset Council's housing services, adult social care, children's services, and planning services as well as housing association and health partners.

New homes provided through this route are affordable homes with a range of rental types. In Dorset most have been affordable rent or shared ownership with smaller numbers of social or intermediate rent. In February 2023 the guidance was changed to give social rented homes a higher priority. Since this time the number of social rented homes being built has increased.

There are a small number of First Homes currently under construction in the area, although none are yet ready to be marketed. More First Homes will be built as new developments progress through the planning process. The take up from developers for First Homes has been limited but may grow as this becomes a more established housing tenure.

Dorset Council is continuing to work with registered provider partners to encourage them to bid for funds to improve on energy efficiency of their stock. Several registered providers with stock in Dorset were successful in recent Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding bids. Both Stonewater and Sovereign were awarded over £9m each to support decarbonisation of their stock across their operating region and some of this will help to improve the housing stock in this Dorset Council area.

The State of Dorset document provides information about our population and will be an important ongoing reference point for data supporting the delivery of this Strategy.

We know that housing in Dorset must be suitable to meet the range of needs in our population. Our information tells us children and young people who need support, families, low-income households, essential service workers, older people with age and health related needs and single vulnerable people all have housing needs to be met.

Some employers in our area are stating that they experience recruitment challenges because employees are unable access housing to relocate or be close to their work. The evidence to support this position is being analysed, with strategies across major employers being developed to make sure that housing options are available to support the local economy, the service sectors, and all employers. This includes access to home ownership, as well as rental properties.

Some areas have higher levels of deprivation which leads to poor health, reduced economic prosperity, and educational achievement. Our State of Dorset information provides detail of where that highlights the need to adapt approaches to meet need. Many people live in areas that are remote, with access to services being more

challenging that those living in towns. Wider strategies to support rural communities are linked to this fact, to support people being able to live independently and well in the villages of Dorset. Around 23% of Dorset's households are not on mains gas and in 2021 11.5% were estimated to be fuel poor and expected to rise to 12.6% this year. This position is in line with the region.

The demand for 'general needs' social housing outstrips supply in Dorset in line with national trends. In response to this demand, and by working with a range of social housing providers, the number of new homes has risen each year since the formation of Dorset Council. This has been a successful partnership, and supports the enabling approach taken by Dorset Council to date – working with others to deliver housing. This Strategy looks to support that partnership and to achieve more from its enabling role.

6 Natural environment, climate, and ecology

We understand that the environment plays an important role in our quality of life.

We have a Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy. This sets a clear ambition for a carbon neutral, nature positive, resilient Dorset. New housing will need to support our ambitions on:

- Climate: cutting greenhouse gas emissions for a carbon neutral Dorset by 2050.
- Biodiversity: Helping nature recover by protecting and enhancing our land, rivers, and seas for a nature positive Dorset by 2030.
- Resilience: Adapting for the impacts of unavoidable changes for a resilient Dorset.

7 Our role

The Council has a range of statutory duties, powers or obligations relating to accommodation:

- prevent and relieve homelessness (Part 7 Housing Act 1996 (as amended)) and Homeless Reduction Act 2017
- manage and maintain a social housing register (Part 6 Housing Act 1996 (as amended)).
- provide accommodation to care leavers up to age 25 depending on circumstances (Children Act 1989) and Children Leaving Care Act 2000.
- a general duty to meet the needs of a person who needs care and support (Care Act 2014).
- to review, identify action and enforce housing conditions (Housing Act 2004).
- as the local planning authority (The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000) and (The National Planning Policy Framework).

To meet broader housing objectives in support of the Council Plan, Dorset does much more than this as a non-stock holding council with a strategic role to deliver

through partnerships. Our housing enabling function supports our Registered Providers (Housing Associations) to deliver new homes. We do this by:

- allocating government grants.
- identifying suitable development sites.
- providing guidance and support.
- Supporting community led housing.
- supporting landlords to rent their homes.

We agree nomination agreements with local registered providers to make sure that new social rented housing goes to those with the greatest need.

This Strategy recognises the key role of the council and partners supporting and ensuring housing is available for all our residents and reflects their needs.

We have developed four key objectives that will help drive improvements in focused areas. These objectives are best delivered jointly with other key partners. Bringing our work on housing together will enable us to achieve this.

8 Key objectives

8.1 Objective 1

Housing Need - Enabling residents to live safe, healthy, independent lives in homes that meet their needs.

8.2 Objective 2

Housing Supply - Driving the delivery of homes people need and can afford to live in.

8.3 Objective 3

Housing Standards - Improving the quality, standard, and safety of homes.

8.4 Objective 4

Prevention of Homelessness - Support, at the right time, to people in crisis to prevent homelessness.

Responses to our public consultation told us these key themes are important (not ranked in order of importance):

- affordability
- meeting the needs of local people
- environmental sustainability
- energy efficiency
- accessible services
- infrastructure
- green spaces
- good quality homes
- safety

- good standards that are enforced
- early intervention to prevent homelessness.
- right support
- settled housing for homeless households.

A full report of responses to the public consultation is at appendix B.

9 Meeting these objectives.

9.1 Increasing Housing Supply

The central challenge for Dorset is delivering homes which are affordable for our residents to acquire and to live in.

To address affordability issues, we need to increase the supply of new housing whilst also ensuring that existing homes are put to good use.

Whilst growth in housing supply is a priority, it is essential that delivery is not just about numbers. Providing homes which are the right type, the right tenure and in the right place are also key.

Whilst we do want to increase the supply of homes, we need to consider and address the challenges facing our partners. Development costs, labour and materials shortages, land costs, and nutrient neutrality mitigation issues create barriers for developers.

Whilst we have less control or influence over labour shortages, we encourage developers to take on apprentices and employees from the Dorset area and promote education in trade skills and qualifications. We encourage and support innovation in building and development, providing homes at a good value and by utilising initiatives such as modern methods of construction or modular building.

It is important that we maximise opportunities to increase availability of the right homes in addition to newly built homes. This includes exploring how we bring properties back into use, to seek partnerships with organisations and landlords who will provide new settled accommodation and to consider how we make the best use of existing buildings, homes, and land.

9.2 Right place

Our residents have told us that they want us to make sure that any new development is sensitive to their needs and that we prioritise local homes for local people. Community engagement on proposed developments, the delivery of new homes by community land trusts, co-housing, and neighbourhood plans are ways that we already do this.

The protection of our green spaces is also a priority for our residents.

Our area includes, urban, coastal, and rural settings, and is diverse geographically. It is important to ensure that there is sufficient infrastructure and services tailored for

each diverse location to meet identified local needs, and to sustain effective development of housing.

9.3 Right property

A property can be considered 'right' in terms of size, cost, design and attached support. Providing the right property ensures residents can access homes that meet their needs. Having a well-designed home, sensitive to its surroundings, is also a key component of a successful, sustainable home.

Delivering homes and support services that meet current needs but also future needs, means we, and our partners, use resources wisely. We acknowledge and encourage the positive support of our partners in ensuring developments are closely linked to local need.

Some residents need support they can access easily either in their home or community. The reasons for support vary but include age or health related care, support linked to homeless or young people who we have looked after and continue to support.

The right homes can help with recovery and independent living and can reduce non-essential delays in health-related rehabilitation at home. Residents are better able to live independently and maximise their own choices. Expensive care and residential placements could sometimes be avoided if the right home was available, and this would also help reduce these costs.

9.4 Data Insight & Development

Dorset aims to meet local housing needs and objectives with our partners in a data informed way. We will make best of all relevant data including independent sources.

The council and our partners provide a wide range of services to residents. Housing needs are routinely captured by departments within the council, and by our external partners. Our Housing Register plays an important part in capturing the detail of housing need and the number of people who require affordable housing to rent.

It is important that we:

- i. bring our data insights together – including the Housing Register - and use it to make decisions, prioritise and make best use of our resources.
- ii. mature our housing need data insights related to residents who are:
 - older residents who need property adaptations and/or support to help them to live independently for longer.
 - disabled residents (adults and young people) who require property adaptations to meet their specific needs.
 - residents who need supported housing, for example people with mental ill-health needs, special educational needs, autism, learning

difficulties, people leaving care, people leaving hospital, young people (16–17-year-old) and people who are homeless.

- victims of domestic violence and abuse.
- women and children.
- people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- specific housing for identified groups of people such as essential local workers (key workers), refugees, unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, current and former armed forces personnel and their families, gypsies and travellers, students, young single adults and low-income families, prospective foster families, and adopters.
- living in a rural location and in housing need.

9.5 Homes for Dorset Residents

The impact of second homes, and inward migration, on the availability of housing for local residents is identified as an area of concern in the public consultation – due to this being perceived as reducing the availability of homes for local people. Making sure that enough is available for local people is a theme of this strategy, whilst balancing the accommodation needs for visitors and tourists.

Through partnership working with our registered providers, and the housing allocations policy, we already ensure that affordable housing is only allocated to those people who meet the local connection criteria or are excepted. We cannot control those who move into the area through the social housing mutual exchange process, but this is a system which also benefits residents by supporting moves when necessary.

Dorset has a strong record supporting housing development through Community Land Trusts (CLT). These arrangements are led by our communities and bring forward new affordable homes needed by local communities. The groups are supported by us and our registered providers. We are committed to continuing and strengthening the support we offer CLTs and rural enabling work. We aim to work with external enabling partners by maximising opportunities for joint arrangements, government initiatives and funding opportunities.

9.6 Dorset Landlords

As of September 2023, just over 360 landlords have joined our Landlord Forum and we are encouraging new members from across the whole Dorset Council area. Whilst this is a sizeable number, membership is mostly landlords with properties in the west of our area, who have been established as a group since before Dorset Council became a Unitary Authority in 2019.

The Landlord Forum provides an opportunity for landlords to engage with Dorset Council, and each other, through regular meetings, updates, training, and quarterly newsletters. Members also have access to a dedicated contact and receive a discount on licencing fees for houses in multiple occupation.

In a survey of Dorset landlords, 25% of respondents said that they were planning to leave the market or reduce their number of rental properties, within the next 5 years.

Our landlords' biggest concerns are:

- The impact of the capped local housing allowance on tenants' ability to meet their rent costs.
- The increased costs needed to meet any new property, energy efficiency or Decent Homes standards.
- Their ability to meet these standards based on the age and construction of their properties.
- That confusion over standards might lead to landlords being asked to complete unnecessary and costly works.

We are already working with our private landlords to provide useful support and guidance to help them meet new standards, understand their obligations and to encourage and support those who provide homes for our residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

People's housing needs change and sometimes existing homes no longer meet their needs but could with some adaptations. This strategy has identified that households who privately rent their home can face barriers to having adaptations installed and this can result in a need to move. Due to the demand for housing, finding suitable accommodation can be a lengthy and challenging process. Supporting tenants to remain where they are often provides a better solution.

Our landlords told us that they welcome opportunities to work more closely with Dorset Council and are keen to find solutions which will support both residents and landlords.

Working together with our private landlords, we aim to ensure our range of options is effective and positive.

It is important that we value and promote our private landlords by continuing to offer support, guidance, and advice and by seeking to expand the number who work with us to meet the needs of our residents.

9.7 Empty Properties

Dorset has a strong record of positive work in relation to empty properties. We already offer support to property owners to bring empty homes back into use and will acquire homes, when necessary, affordable, or available.

We will refresh our empty homes policies and identify opportunities to enhance our role. The Local Government Association's Empty Homes Report identifies areas of best practice which should be applied to Dorset, to increase the numbers of empty properties being brought back in to use.

This Strategy recognises and supports our work to bring empty homes back into use. The complex nature of the work means this is a long-term activity but is beneficial to many and continues to be supported.

9.8 Building healthy communities

Housing quality has a significant impact on both physical and mental health with people who live in poor quality homes. Inadequate housing contributes to inequalities in health, including families as well as single adults.

As well as the condition of housing, the health impact of housing includes whether homes are overcrowded and whether they meet the physical needs of the occupants. Concerns about security of tenure, not being able to pay bills, and the threat of homelessness have all been shown to have a negative impact on the health of adults and children.

Problems caused by substandard housing are more likely to affect low-income households and are compounded when there may be difficulty in paying household bills.

The need to improve availability of good quality housing is recognised by partners across the Dorset Integrated Care System (ICS). Reducing health inequalities is a core purpose of the ICS. Doing so requires the ICS to act on opportunities beyond improving healthcare access, experience, and outcomes. It requires action to improve the environment in which people live, including housing, to enable more people to enjoy good health for longer.

Our consultation identified shared support from the local NHS Trusts regarding the impact housing has on health, our objectives and how we can deliver them.

Working in partnership with the NHS we aim to strengthen housing expertise in health settings, improving patient housing pathways, promoting access to mental health support that prevents and relieves homelessness and improves outcomes for residents within our communities.

Our NHS Trust in Dorset tell us our community hospitals have a small percentage (5%) out of 208 beds of people who cannot be discharged due to housing related issues. The reasons include:

- Housing is not fit to return to.
- People don't have a home base but were staying with friends or relatives previously and are not fit enough to return there.
- Life changing physical conditions that require a change in housing provision.
- Properties not on national grid and therefore equipment cannot be used that requires power.

We are already working closely with our health partners to support successful discharge and will continue to use our expertise and explore opportunities. We are also working with health and other public service employers to explore options to support employees to find and sustain tenancies or buy homes in the area.

9.9 Best use of Council Assets

Dorset's Council Plan includes a commitment to make the best use of our land and assets. The transformation vision states that we will be "reviewing the council buildings and properties to ensure best use and value of assets and help drive prosperity whilst adopting a focus on places and spaces".

Our Property Strategy & Asset Management Plan (2020 – 2024) supports this commitment through its aim to "work in collaboration with other public sector partners to utilise assets to: -

- Create economic growth (new homes and jobs)"

If a Council asset or piece of land is suitable for new homes, then it will be considered as part of a robust appraisal of what provides the best outcome for Dorset Council and its residents.

9.10 Social Housing

There are 52 providers of social housing in Dorset and together they own 12% of the homes in our area.

We do not have our own social housing stock and rely on our registered providers, and other organisations, to build new homes. Dorset Council is a Registered Provider in our own right, but this is limited to acquiring temporary accommodation to alleviate homelessness and our approach does not seek to compete with other registered providers. Our role is to support and enable our partners to develop affordable housing on land they acquire, using funding from Homes England.

We welcome Homes England's move towards providing funding for properties developed under the social rent model which supports this and aim to work with our partners to maximise their opportunities to deliver homes at a social rent.

It is important that we support our partners to deliver higher numbers of new affordable housing meeting local need.

Whilst most Dorset social housing tenants have the right number of bedrooms to meet their households needs, 38% said that they have at least one bedroom more than they need. 6% said that they don't have enough rooms and are living in overcrowded conditions which can have a negative impact on the development of children which can lead to health and educational challenges.

Our registered providers tell us that, whilst they support and promote downsizing, they have limited resources to financially incentivise this. Instead, those wishing to move are often signposted to our housing register, or to mutual exchange sites like Homeswapper.

In mutual exchanges all tenants 'swap' their properties with other tenants of social housing providers and offer an opportunity to look outside of their own landlord's stock.

Using the data available to us, we have the potential to match existing social tenants on our housing register with each other. We plan to match downsizers with those who are overcrowded, and those living in adapted homes they no longer need, with

those who need homes with adaptations. This is expected to reduce the waiting time for some households and assist social landlords to make best use of their stock.

9.11 Supporting Sustainable Tenancies

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping strategy identified a need to develop pre-tenancy training and a qualification to equip **homeless** households to become tenancy ready. This includes advice on saving for rent in advance, resolving former tenancy debts, or demonstrating sustained improvement in behaviour which would normally be a barrier to being offered a tenancy.

Once finalised, we plan to extend this service to our residents who have applied for housing through our **housing register**, in particular those who have never had a tenancy before or who have previously lost one.

Having tenancy ready accreditation will provide a show of good faith to landlords and our registered providers indicated this would be a welcome initiative.

Our work with children, young people, care leavers and adults with a higher level of support needs already helps them to access support to sustain and manage tenancies and we have been developing these initiatives.

It is important that we support all households to support a tenancy ready status that will help them access both social and private rented homes to solve their housing need.

9.12 Enhancing our temporary accommodation offer

Despite the innovative approaches our homelessness services **have** taken to prevent and resolve homelessness, the increasing levels of approaches mean this is not always possible. When homelessness cannot be prevented, some households find themselves in need of emergency accommodation.

This can often take the form of expensive bed and breakfast accommodation, before a move to either a new home or more settled temporary accommodation.

Reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation is vital, to reduce the financial burden on the council and to find settled homes for people and families.

Temporary accommodation plays an important role in providing short-term access to housing until a more permanent solution can be found. To reduce the cost of bed and breakfast accommodation we are working to increase the levels of more financially sustainable temporary accommodation and continue to build on the existing programme of work which is already happening.

9.13 Sustainable Homes & Developments

We are committed to working with our partners to ensure that all new housing is designed and built to the highest standards and that they are sympathetic to their surroundings, to enhance the quality, character and integrity of Dorset's unique environment and heritage.

Good design and construction will prevent environmental damage, make homes healthier and cheaper to run, and protect owners from future retrofit costs. All new builds should therefore aim to be net zero, nature positive and resilient in their location, orientation, design, and construction. It can:

- Enable sustainable construction methods that are resource and energy efficient.
- Enable homes to better reduce, reuse and recycle.
- Support homes to enjoy opportunities for community growing.
- Enable homes that better protect and enhance nature and provides opportunity for residents to enjoy nature – through nature-positive development, wildlife-friendly gardens & green infrastructure, and well-maintained rights of way & public greenspace.
- Ensure our homes are resilient and well-adapted for climate risks from extreme weather and other climate pressures.

As a local authority we have an important role, working with landlords, enabling the retrofitting of existing housing stock, including further supporting home retrofitting through our Healthy Homes Dorset programme, continuing to work through our Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) project to drive progress in the private rented sector, and further supporting retrofit grant funding for our social housing providers.

Sustainable development is a lever to nurture more prosperous, stronger, healthier communities. It is an opportunity to ensure that future homes are healthier and cheaper to run, better connected, and creates new skilled jobs.

9.14 Accessible Homes

With a higher number of people aged 65 or above, when compared nationally, the provision of appropriate housing for older and disabled people is an important factor in the supply of housing. Our ageing population will see the numbers of disabled people continuing to increase and it is important we plan early to meet their needs and to avoid the need to retrofit accessibility measures. This Strategy links to wider strategies relating to accommodation with care and support for older people, and those with disabilities, when these are needed.

Including specialist occupational therapists further into design and development can help to ensure homes meet any identified local need at the earliest stage.

New homes are built to the latest national building regulations, meaning that they are more energy efficient and tend to be more accessible than older homes. However, we wish to seek further improvements in the quality of new homes. We are committed to increasing the supply of accessible homes and wheelchair friendly properties. We will continue to work with developers to increase accessibility of new developments.

9.15 New Models for Housing Delivery

Currently most delivery of new affordable housing is done in partnership with registered providers, with them leveraging in their own private finance and Homes England grant.

In addition to the existing and valued ways we supply new homes, exploring other ways to increase supply is key for Dorset and will make a significant contribution to meeting resident's housing needs. Key homes are:

- low cost settled accommodation.
- temporary accommodation.
- supported accommodation.

The delivery plan to this Strategy will explore new models of delivery when this is necessary. This is to recognise the need to stay alert to economic and social trends and to provide cost-effective and sustainable solutions, in delivering our Strategy and responsibilities.

9.16 Funding

Acting on opportunities and tackling housing challenges in our area requires effective financial planning to be at the core of our work. We can bolster support and extend this to partners and residents by ensuring we promote existing grant funding, exploring joint funding opportunities and promoting uptake of new initiatives.

10 Delivering the housing strategy.

Successful delivery of the strategy will rely on strong partnership working with many of our partners, including our registered providers, private landlords, developers, health agencies, third sector agencies and our residents. There are already many existing groups, boards, and forums, which can help to support the delivery of the strategy we aim to actively engage with these throughout its lifetime.

The strategy will be supported by a themed high-level plan (with detailed plans sitting underneath. This thematic plan will require the support and contribution of a range of council services and compliments existing delivery of the Council Plan and key strategies. It will continue to be scrutinised and monitored by Members and Senior Officers within the Council, but also be the centre of ongoing dialogue with partners, residents and other stakeholders with an interest or role in housing.

It is important to note that the strategy is not a standalone document, sitting alongside many of other strategies. It is also influenced by both national and local policies and, as such, is a living document with regular reviews and updated delivery plans.

The council has set up a new housing board and will help to drive the governance route for the delivery of this strategy and to support the Cabinet and operational teams in this process. Our detailed delivery plan will identify appropriate council services and partner representation to deliver the intentions of the housing strategy and keep this Strategy dynamic, effective and live.

11 Monitoring & Review

The strategy delivery will be monitored regularly at our Housing Board(s) and will feed into existing corporate plan delivery monitoring mechanisms. An annual report

will be considered by the Council's People and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

12 Themes for the Delivery Plan

How we frame our Housing Strategy objectives. This shows a set of headlines for the plan, and set of subsidiary plans, which will drive the delivery of the Housing Strategy.

For the 2024/25 financial year, from March 2024, we will publish a new set of performance expectations to sit with the delivery plan for the Housing Strategy. This will be overseen by the Housing Board and delivered by the associated responsible people and organisations – both inside and outside of the Council.

Preventing homelessness
Providing options and guidance for those in housing need
Increasing Housing Supply – enough homes for local needs
Right Place – homes in the right location
Right Property – homes of the right type
Data – informed by data and intelligence
Homes for Dorset Residents – policies to support local need
Dorset Landlords – supporting landlords and promoting good standards
Empty Properties – bringing empty homes back into use
Building Healthy & Thriving Communities
Best Use of Council Assets and Resources
Social Housing & Making the Best Use of Social Housing – achieving the best from partnership with Registered Providers
Supporting sustainable tenancies
Temporary Accommodation – cost effective and decent accommodation
Greener Homes & Developments
Accessible Homes
New Models for Housing Delivery – Projects to support transformation
Funding – maximising funding and income

13 References and Sources

Section	Link
3.1 Affordable Homes Programme	Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme 2016 to 2021: guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
3.2 First Homes Scheme	First Homes scheme: discounts for first-time buyers - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
3.3 Building Safety Act	Building Safety Act 2022 (legislation.gov.uk)
3.4 Social Regulation Act	Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (legislation.gov.uk)
3.5 Home Energy Performance Retrofit	Home Energy Performance Retrofit: funding for local authorities and housing associations to help improve the energy performance of homes - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
3.6 Unleashing Rural Opportunity	Unleashing rural opportunity - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
4.1. Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill	Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
4.2 Renters Reform Bill	Guide to the Renters (Reform) Bill - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
7. Council plans and strategies	• A Better Life Strategy Commissioning for A Better Life as People Age in Dorset 2023 to 2028 - Dorset Council • Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021 to 2026 - Dorset Council • Economic Growth Strategy Dorset's Economic Growth Strategy 2020 to 2024 - Dorset Council • Domestic Abuse Strategy Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy - Dorset Council • Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023 to 25 Refresh - Dorset Council • Children's Services Sufficiency Strategy (pending) • Corporate Parenting Strategy Dorset's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020 to 2023 - Dorset Council • Dorset Council Planning for Climate Change - Interim Guidance and Position Statement Dorset Council Planning for climate change - Interim Guidance and Position Statement - Consultation • Local Transport Plan Local Transport Plan 2011 to 2026 - Dorset Council
9.2 Iceni Housing Needs Assessment	caac9843-8acc-66bd-91f3-554b75c70091 (dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)
9.2 Draft Local Plan	Dorset Council Local Plan - Dorset Council
9.5 Housing Allocations Policy	Housing Allocations Policy 2021 to 2026 - Dorset Council
9.5 Community Land Trusts	Affordable housing - Dorset Council
9.6 Landlord Forum	Landlord Forum - Dorset Council
9.6 Landlord Incentives	Landlord Incentive Scheme - Dorset Council
9.8 Public Health Dorset Housing data	Housing quality - Public Health Dorset - Dorset Council
9.8 Integrated Care Board	NHS Dorset – Integrated Care Board
9.8 BRE Report on Housing	The cost of poor housing to the NHS - BRE Group
9.9 Property Strategy & Asset Management Plan	Property Strategy Asset Management Plan.pdf (dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

14 Glossary of Terms

Affordable Housing	Affordable housing is housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers)
Affordable Housing: Social Rent	Social Rent should be managed by a Registered Provider (e.g., a Housing Association) or alternative organisation approved by the Council. Social rented housing is homes let on assured or secure tenancies (as defined in Section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes and Communities Agency.
Affordable Housing: Affordable Rented	Affordable rented housing is let by Local Authorities or private registered providers of social housing or alternative organisation approved by the Council to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).
Affordable Housing: Intermediate and low-cost home ownership	Intermediate is an umbrella term for homes for sale or rent at a discount below market rates but above social and affordable rented products. It includes (but is not limited to) shared ownership, discounted market sale, starter homes, discounted market sale, intermediate rent (but not affordable rented housing), starter homes, and self-build housing were provided as affordable housing.
Community Land Trust	Are democratic, non-profit organisations that own and develop land for the benefit of the community.
Community-led Housing	People and communities playing a leading role in addressing their own housing needs
Decent Homes standard	Policy which aims to provide a minimum standard of housing conditions.
Disabled Facility Grant	A Disabled Facility Grant can be applied for through the Council if you're disabled and need to make changes to your home to suit your needs i.e., a ramp installed, access to bathroom facilities.
Extra Care Housing	Extra care housing describes a purpose-built housing environment where varying levels of care and support services are provided to meet the individual resident's needs.

Homes England	Homes England is the non-departmental public body that funds new affordable housing in England. It was founded on 1 January 2018 to replace the Homes and Communities Agency.
Housing Allocations Policy	A policy that describes how social housing is allocated through Dorset Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme, how the scheme operates, its processes and how to use the service.
Iceni Housing Needs Assessment	Produced by Iceni, this is a document which sets out the housing needs assessment based on the Government standard methodology and needs projections.
Local Housing Allowance	Local housing allowance (LHA) are rates set by the Department for Works and Pensions and are used to work out how much housing benefit can be received by a private tenant.
Local Plan	The Local Plan is a planning document that guides decisions on future development proposals and addresses the needs and opportunities of the area.
Median Rent	Median rent is the figure which sits at the midpoint between the lowest and highest rent levels.
National Planning Policy Framework	The National Planning Policy Framework sets out government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
Neighbourhood Plan	Neighbourhood Plans help local communities play a direct role in planning the areas in which they live and work. Policies included in Neighbourhood plans are related to the use of land in the area, or to spatial matters (i.e., aspects that affect how a place works). They will be used to consider all planning applications in the respective areas, alongside the Local Plan.
NOMIS	NOMIS is a service provided by the Office for National Statistics and looks and data relating to employment, education levels and earnings.
Owner Occupation	Owner-occupancy or homeownership is a form of housing tenure where a person, called the owner-occupier, owner-occupant, or homeowner, owns the home in which they live.
Registered Providers	Providers of housing who are registered with and regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing
Shared Ownership	Shared ownership homes are provided through a housing association. They work by offering first-time buyers a share of the property ownership. A share of between 25% and 75% can be bought, with rent paid on the remaining share.

Social Housing	Housing provided for people on low incomes or with particular needs, by government agencies or non-profit organisations.
Temporary Accommodation	Temporary accommodation is provided to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

15 Appendices

- A. Supplementary Data
- B. Consultation Report
- C. Equality Impact Assessment

December 2023

Housing Strategy and Performance: Accessible Home Policy and Strategy

Home in on Housing Programme – Phase 1 project

Summary Report

Version control:

Version	Date	Changes	Circulated to	Produced by
0.1	05.06.2025	No changes	Sharon Attwater and Sarah Smith	Louise Capaldi-Tallon
	18.06.2025 23.06.2025	No changes	Andrew Billany and Gary Messenger Adam Fitzgerald	
	18.09.2025		HIOH member's board	

Purpose:

1. Review existing data, strategies and policies in place relating to the development of homes for older and disabled people.
2. To recommend as to whether the council should develop a stand-alone accessible homes strategy for approach and delivery to include all council services.

What we did:

- Researched accessible homes and development of homes for older people and people with disabilities.
- Researched other local authorities within the Southwest and nationally to identify if other authorities have a standalone accessible homes policy or strategy.
- Reviewed Dorset Council resources to identify strategies and policies already in place that focus or identify the development accessible home.

Government guidance

In the UK, government guidance on accessible homes is primarily governed by Building Regulations Part M (Access to and Use of Buildings), which sets out the minimum standards for access to and the use of buildings.

Part M is divided into categories that define different levels of accessibility:

- M4(1): Visitable Dwellings, this is the minimum standard for all new homes. It ensures basic accessibility features like:
 - Level access to the main entrance
 - A flush threshold
 - Sufficiently wide doorways and circulation space
 - A toilet at entrance level
- M4(2): Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings, this is a higher standard, similar to the Lifetime Homes Standard. It includes features that make homes more easily adaptable for a wide range of occupants, including:
 - Step-free access
 - Wider doorways and hallways
 - Accessible bathroom layouts
 - Potential for future adaptations (e.g., stairlifts)
- M4(3): Wheelchair User Dwellings, this is the highest standard, designed for full wheelchair accessibility. It includes:
 - Step-free access throughout
 - Larger circulation spaces
 - Fully accessible kitchens and bathrooms

M4(2) and M4(3) are optional standards that local authorities can enforce through local planning policies, based on identified local needs and development viability.

The government has consulted on raising minimum accessibility standards in new homes, including:

- Making M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable dwellings the default minimum standard for all new homes. Reflecting the growing need for accessible housing due to an ageing population.
- Requiring local authorities to justify when lower standards M4(1) are acceptable.

These proposals are part of the “Raising accessibility standards for new homes” consultation, which concluded in 2020, although implementation has been delayed with no definitive implementation date being announced¹.

¹ [Government finally set to act on housing accessibility standards – Disability News Service](#)

Building Regulations were most recently updated in May 2025, although the revision made several changes it did not include any changes to increase accessibility standards of new homes.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a national policy document that sets out overarching planning principles for England. It addresses accessible homes primarily under the section 'Delivering a sufficient supply of homes', this includes:

- Meeting the needs of all including, older people, people with disabilities and families with children.
- Accessible and adaptable standards, encouraging local plans to include policies that require a proportion of new homes to meet accessible and adaptable standards (as defined within Building Regulations M4(2) and M4(3), where there is evidence of need.
- Inclusive Design to support independent living, community integration as well as accessibility.
- Plan-making and evidence, local authorities must use evidence to justify requirements for accessible housing in local plans.
- Design quality, accessible homes are also included in the broader goal of achieving well designed places which includes ensuring that developments are functional, inclusive and sustainable.

As well as Building Regulations and the NPPF, the Government provides guidance for local authorities on planning policies for housing older people and disabled people. This includes identifying housing requirements, accessible and adaptable housing, and specialist housing for older people².

Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents

A Local Plan is prepared by local planning authorities in consultation with local communities and must align with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This document outlines the planning strategy and priorities for an area, including site allocations for housing, employment, infrastructure, and environmental protection.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are often used to support Local Plans, providing detailed guidance and advice on how specific policies in an adopted Local Plan should be implemented. They do not create new policy, their purpose is to provide detailed guidance and the information necessary to help implement strategy and policies objectives. They detail how planning policy will be implemented and delivered. SPDs can take the form of design guides, area development briefs and form

² [Housing for older and disabled people - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-for-older-and-disabled-people)

part of a series of documents aligned and linked within a master local plan. For example:

Purbeck District Council produced a Housing Strategy as well as a suite of new affordable housing policies, along with an 'Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document' to support the delivery of the strategy.

The Affordable Housing SPD:

- *Sets out how the Council supports different ways to bring forward affordable housing. For example, it details the Council's support for self-build rural exception sites;*
- *Provides information on enabling significant numbers of affordable homes by allowing a small number of market houses on rural exception sites;*
- *Makes developers aware of their obligations when they are required to provide affordable housing; and*
- *Details the Council's process for dealing with financial viability. This will enable a streamlined, faster planning process for developers and the Council.*

This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is one part of a series of documents that link into the Council's Housing Strategy. This is illustrated below.



SPDs are utilised by developers to help guide the design and delivery of development proposals in line with local planning policies. They help developers understand local expectations, pre-application preparation, design and in negotiation with planners.

Dorset Council Local Plan

Dorset Council is currently working on a Dorset wide Local Plan with the most recent consultation taking place between January and March 2021. The plan is to be adopted in May 2027. Up until this time the Local Plans and SPDs for former council areas are in place.

Dorset Council SPD

Dorset Council has a range of SPDs that provide additional guidance on specific planning issues. There is no dedicated SPD solely focused on accessible home, or homes for older and people with disabilities, supported or specialised housing. These topics are however addressed in broader terms within Affordable Housing SPDs for the former Purbeck and East and Christchurch areas.

These Affordable Housing SPD outline how a mix of housing, including affordable housing, will be sought on development sites to meet local needs. This includes provisions for accessible homes and homes suitable for older and disabled people.

Dorset Councils SPDs in relation to affordable housing and special needs housing below:

Dorset Area(s)	Adopted SPD Name & Link	Guidance
Purbeck	Affordable Housing SPD	Housing Strategy 2012- 2027
East	Housing and Affordable Housing SPD (Revised) 2018	

In addition, the council has numerous design SPDs and guidance³ to support adopted SPDs for different locations across Dorset.

Dorset Council published in March 2025 a 'Guide to the new planning system'⁴, which indicated proposed changes to the planning system suggest that SPDs will not form part of the new planning framework. Instead, the detail in SPDs will be incorporated within Local Plans. Highlighting that SPD will only now only be updated or produced where there is a pressing need to do so. They are however planning to utilise SPDs in relation to internationally important wildlife sites, Chesil and Fleet as a 'special area of conservation' and mineral safeguarding.

Dorset Council overarching existing strategies

There are several overarching Dorset Council strategies that relate to the development of homes for disabled and older people:

Housing Strategy 2024 -2029:

The Housing Strategy aims to ensure residents have access to affordable, suitable, and secure homes where they can live well and be part of sustainable and thriving communities.

The strategy aims to deliver a range of housing types and tenures, including meeting the needs of people with disabilities, older adults, and others requiring accessible living environments. It identifies four main objectives:

³ [Supplementary planning documents and guidance - Dorset Council](#)

⁴ [Guide to the new planning system](#)

- Housing Need - Enabling residents to live safe, healthy, independent lives in homes that meet their needs.
- Housing Supply - Driving the delivery of homes people need and can afford to live in.
- Housing Standards - Improving the quality, standard, and safety of homes.
- Prevention of Homelessness - Support, at the right time, to people in crisis to prevent homelessness.

The strategy makes a commitment to increase the supply of accessible homes and wheelchair friendly properties, through continued work with developers.

Table below shows a summary of the relevant extracts from the Housing Strategy:

Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029				
Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities				
Strategy Name	Issue Date	Updated Date	Service Area(s)	Document Summary
Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029	Jan-24	05-Aug-24	Dorset Council	The strategy sits alongside the Council Plan, draft Local Plan and Our Future Council and links to wider strategies relating to accommodation with care and support for older people, and those with disabilities. The

				vision is to ensure our residents have access to affordable, suitable, secure homes where they can live well as part of sustainable and thriving communities. Key Objectives: • Housing Need: Enabling residents to live safe, healthy, independent lives in homes that meet their needs. • Housing Supply: Driving the delivery of homes people need and can afford to live in. • Housing Standards: Improving the quality, standard, and safety of homes. • Prevention of Homelessness: Support, at the right time, to people in crisis to prevent homelessness. The document references: • Right Property • Data Insight & Development • Building Healthy Communities • Accessible Homes These collectively addresses the development and support of housing for older and individuals with disabilities.

Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029

Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities

Right Property: (Page 14) Emphasises the importance of providing homes that are the right size, cost, design, and have the necessary support services. The need for well-designed homes that are sensitive to their surroundings and meet both current and future needs.	Data Insight & Development: (Pages 14 - 15) Outlines the importance of using data to understand and meet local housing needs. To bring together data insights from various sources, including the Housing Register, to make informed decisions and prioritise resources of maturing housing need data insights related to specific groups, such as older residents, residents with disabilities, and those needing supported housing.
Key Outcomes • Provision of the Right Property: Ensuring homes are the right size, cost, and design to meet residents' needs. Delivering homes that support independent living and reduce health-related rehabilitation delays. • Collaboration with Partners: Working with partners to ensure developments are linked to local needs. Encouraging the use of resources wisely to deliver homes that meet both current and future needs. • Cost Savings: Potential from avoiding expensive care and residential placements by providing the right homes.	Key Outcomes • Data-Driven Decision Making: Using comprehensive data insights to understand and meet local housing needs. Prioritising resources based on data from the Housing Register and other sources. • Enhanced Data Utilisation: Bringing together data insights from various sources to make informed decisions. Maturing housing need data insights for specific groups, such as older and residents with disabilities, to better meet their needs. These collectively aim to ensure that housing developments are well-designed, data-driven, and meet the specific needs of the community, contributing to better living conditions and independent living for residents.

Building Healthy Communities: (Pages 16-17) Emphasises the significant impact of housing quality can negatively impact on both physical and mental health. The need to improve the availability of good quality housing to reduce health inequalities and the role of the Dorset Integrated Care System (ICS) in reducing health inequalities by improving housing conditions and identifies housing-related issues as a barrier to successful hospital discharge.	Accessible Homes: (Page 20) Emphasises the importance of providing appropriate housing for older and people with disabilities. The need to plan early to meet these needs and avoid retrofitting accessibility measures and commitment to increasing the supply of accessible homes and the importance of working with developers to enhance the accessibility of new developments.
Key Outcomes • Improved Housing Quality: Recognising the impact of housing quality on health and aiming to improve housing conditions to reduce health inequalities. • Partnership with the ICS: Collaborating with the Dorset Integrated Care System to act on opportunities to improve housing conditions. Engaging with local NHS Trusts to align housing objectives with health improvement goals. • Enhanced Collaboration with Health Partners: Strengthening partnerships with the NHS and other health agencies to address housing-related health issues. Improving patient housing pathways and promoting access to mental health support. • Support for Hospital Discharge: Addressing housing-related barriers to successful hospital discharge to ensure patients can return to suitable living conditions. These points collectively aim to improve housing quality, reduce health inequalities, and ensure that housing conditions support the health and well-being of residents.	Key Outcomes • Increased Supply of Accessible Homes: Commitment to building more homes that are accessible. Ensuring new homes meet the latest national building regulations for energy efficiency and accessibility. • Early Planning and Inclusion: Emphasising early planning to meet the needs of older and residents with disabilities. Avoiding the need for retrofitting accessibility measures by including specialist occupational therapists in the design and development stages. • Collaboration with Developers: To ensure new housing developments are accessible. Encouraging improvements in the quality of new homes to meet accessibility standards. • Integration with Wider Strategies: Linking the housing strategy to other strategies related to accommodation with care and support for older people and those with disabilities. Ensuring homes meet identified local needs at the earliest stage of development. These collectively aim to ensure housing for older and individuals with disabilities is well-planned, accessible, meets their specific needs, and contributes to their ability to live independently and comfortably.

Better Life plan:

Dorset Adult Social Care have developed the 'A Better Life' plan which aims to deliver a new future for Adult Social Care and Housing. Identifying 5 priority areas:

- Strong, Healthy communities
- Staying Safe and well
- Suitable Housing
- Economic Growth
- Unique Environment

To support this plan there are four strategies:

- Commission for A Better Life for Adults in Dorset 2023 to 2028
- Commissioning for A Better Life as People Age in Dorset 2023 to 2028
- Commissioning for A Better Life for Carers in Dorset 2023 to 2028
- Better Commissioning for Better Lives 2023 to 2028

With exception to 'Commissioning for A Better Life for Carers in Dorset', each of the other strategies refer to the design and accessibility of homes and advocate that homes are designed or adapted to meet the needs of older people, especially for adults with disabilities or long-term conditions. This includes barrier-free environments, assistive technology and flexible layouts that can evolve with changing needs. Emphasising co-production for those people needing accessible housing and flexible adaptive services that can accommodate changing needs over time.

Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement 2024 to 2039:

The Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement has been developed through collaboration with housing, adult care services, and planning to advance the priorities of the council's "Commissioning for A Better Life as People Age" strategy. The document outlines commissioning intentions, principles, and proposals to enhance Dorset's extra care housing offer for older people and those with long-term support, care, and health needs.

Extra care housing is tailored and designed to accommodate evolving care needs, serving individuals with disabilities, those facing social exclusion, and people with long-term health conditions. Unlike sheltered housing or care homes, extra care housing offers tenants their own fully accessible flats, allowing them to select their own personal care providers. Additionally, communal spaces and professional areas are integrated to enhance tenant well-being and foster social interactions.

Tables below show a summary of the relevant extracts from A Better Life as People Age strategy Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement:

Commissioning for a Better Life as People Age in Dorset 2023 to 2028

Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities

Strategy Name	Issue Date	Updated Date	Service Area(s)	Document Summary
Commissioning for a Better Life as People Age in Dorset 2023 to 2028	2023		Housing , Adult Social Care & Health Services	• More Extra Care Housing: Increase in extra care housing options for both rental and ownership. • Improved Accessibility: Enhancing accessibility in high streets and fostering supportive communities. • Home Adaptations and Care Technology: Expanding the offer for equipment, adaptations, and care technology to support independent living. • Strengthening Home Care Sector: Strengthening the home care sector and its workforce to support older people living independently. Key Outcomes: • Inclusive Communities: Ensuring vibrant community activities that keep older people well-connected. • Independence at Home: Providing excellent care and support at home, focusing on independence and the use of assistive technology. • High-Quality Residential Care: Offering a good range and choice of high-quality residential care to meet the complex needs of the older population. • Preventive Care: Emphasising preventive care to reduce or delay the development of care and support needs.

Commissioning for a Better Life as People Age in Dorset 2023 to 2028	
Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities	
Accommodation with care for older people: (Page 2) Increase Extra Care Housing.	Improving accessibility: (Page 2) Improving high streets' accessibility for older people and fostering connected and supportive communities.
Key Outcomes: • Development of Extra Care Housing: Collaborate with housing developers to increase the availability of extra care housing. Ensure a mix of rental and ownership options to cater to different needs. • Community Integration: Work with local organisations and councils to integrate extra care housing into supportive communities. Promote community activities and services that support independent living. • Enhanced Independence: Older people can live independently with the support they need. • Reduced Care Home Admissions: Fewer avoidable admissions to care homes through better housing options.	Key Outcomes: • Support for Independent Living: Emphasises the importance of helping people stay in their own homes for as long as possible. • Use of Technology: Highlights the role of care technology in supporting independent living. • Preventive Measures: Focuses on preventing the need for long-term care through early interventions. High Streets: • Improving Accessibility: Collaborating with local organizations, businesses, town, and parish councils to enhance high streets' accessibility for older people. • Fostering Connected Communities: Encouraging supportive communities through local initiatives. Flexible Day Opportunities: • Community-Based Offers: Transitioning from fixed location day services to networks of community-based day opportunities. • Specialist Day Services: Maintaining specialist day services where complex care and support needs can be met.

Commissioning for a Better Life as People Age in Dorset 2023 to 2028	
Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities	
Home adaptations and care technology: (Page 2) To improve the offer for equipment, adaptations, and care technology to help people live independently in their own homes	Strengthening home care sector: (Page 2) Focuses on strengthening the role of the home care sector and its workforce to support older people living independently.
Key Outcomes: • Home Adaptations and Care Technology: Expanding the offer for equipment, adaptations, and care technology to support independent living. • Reducing Care Home Admissions: Aiming to reduce avoidable care home admissions by self-funders through improved home adaptations.	Key Outcomes: • Inclusive Communities: Ensuring vibrant community activities that keep older people well-connected. • Independence at Home: Providing excellent care and support at home, focusing on independence and the use of assistive technology. • High-Quality Residential Care: Offering a good range and choice of high-quality residential care to meet the complex needs of the older population. • Preventive Care: Emphasising preventive care to reduce or delay the development of care and support needs.

Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement 2024 to 2039				
Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities				
Strategy Name	Issue Date	Updated Date	Service Area(s)	Document Summary Information sourced from: Our new Extra Care Housing Strategy - Dorset Council
Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement 2024 to 2039	13-Jun-24	13-Dec-24	Housing, Adult Social Care & Planning	Five key strategic priorities in the Extra Care Strategy: • Providing more well designed and fully accessible extra care homes. • Progressing current council led extra care housing developments at Bridport and Wareham. • Prioritising development of a further two council commissioned extra care sites in Weymouth and East Dorset. • Reviewing current sheltered housing schemes to consider suitability for refurbishment or redevelopment as Extra Care Housing. • Commissioning and funding a 24/7 onsite support and care model for new and existing schemes that provides both a safe and enabling background support offer but also supports residents to live life to the full, engage with their local community, and develop or maintain their social and leisure interests.

Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement 2024 to 2039	
Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities	
Ambition: (Page 2 & 3): The council aims to transform the lives of Dorset's older residents with health conditions, focusing on independence, attractive homes, community integration, high-quality care, and a skilled workforce.	Extra Care Housing: (Page 3): Extra care housing is designed to adapt to changing care needs, offering homes for older people and people with disabilities, long-term health needs, complex needs, and social exclusion. There is no single model of extra care housing.
Key Outcomes: • Independence: People remain in control of their lives, living independently in a home of their own. • Adaptable Homes: Designing and providing attractive homes that can easily adapt as lives change or needs grow. • Community Integration: Building homes in communities where residents can easily get around and access what they need to live well. • High-Quality Care: Offering high-quality, person-centred, and outcome-driven care and support in extra care housing. • Strengths-Based Support: Care and support that utilises each person's strengths and assets, as well as those of their communities. • Skilled Workforce: Delivering a sustainable, well-trained, and highly skilled workforce motivated to achieve the best outcomes for each person living in Extra Care Housing.	Extra Care Housing is different from others forms of specialist accommodation with support for older people with care needs. There are defining features which distinguish it from other forms of housing or accommodation for older people, such as sheltered housing or care homes and general needs housing. Key Outcomes: • Independence: Extra care housing promotes independence by being a person's individual home, not a care home. Extra care tenants have their own flats usually provided under a tenancy or lease and have their own fully accessible bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and living room. • Choice: Whereas a core care and support service is available on-site 24/7. Tenants can choose who provides their direct personal care. • Community: In addition to the tenant flats, there are communal spaces and professional areas on-site designed to promote tenant well-being, reduce isolation, and support community development. • Nutrition and Social Interaction: Many schemes provide shared kitchens, communal dining facilities, and onsite meal services to ensure access to nutritious meals and support positive social interactions. These outcomes aim to create a supportive, inclusive, and adaptable living environment for older and residents with disabilities.

Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement 2024 to 2039	
Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities	
Development and Commissioning Priorities: (Pages 4 & 5): The council plans to develop well-designed housing for people with care and support needs, including innovative support models, clear design briefs, and strategic locations for new extra care housing.	Supply Analysis: (Pages 11-13): There is a current deficit of extra care housing units, with significant variations across Dorset. The council aims to develop additional units to meet future demand.
Key Outcomes: • Vibrant Community Activity: Dorset aims to be a great place to grow older, with vibrant community activities that keep people well-connected and engaged. • Excellent Care and Support: People will have access to excellent care and support in their homes, both for short-term reablement and longer-term care, always prioritising independence, utilising equipment and assistive technology. Proposals: • Housing Plans: Development of well-designed and high-quality housing for people with care and support needs, including those with complex conditions. • Support and Care Model: An innovative and responsive model that maximises independence and choice through extra care design features, new technologies, and a skilled care workforce. • Development Plans: Clear design briefs, assessment of current provision, and identification of locations for new extra care housing. • Market Stimulation: Providing options for older homeowners and households, especially those not eligible for council-funded provision. • Partnerships: Establishing effective partnerships with social housing providers, health, and other key partners to secure investment and deliver high-quality extra care housing. To create a supportive environment where residents with extra care needs can live independently, with access to excellent care and vibrant community activities.	Key Outcomes: • Addressing Deficit: Dorset needs to develop 1,805 additional extra care housing flats or 33 new (55 unit) schemes by 2038 to meet the growing demand. • Benchmarking: At least four new extra care schemes (220 units) are needed to align with benchmark averages. • Affordable Housing: The development of new extra care housing is challenged by the need for more affordable homes and the availability of a skilled workforce. • Remodelling Sheltered Housing: The council will work with social housing providers to assess and potentially remodel or redevelop current sheltered housing to meet modern standards. These outcomes highlight the urgent need for strategic planning and development to address the growing demand for extra care housing in Dorset.

Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement 2024 to 2039		
Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities		
Support and Care Model: (Pages 14-15) Aims to avoid unnecessary hospital and care home admissions. The council proposes a flexible 24/7 onsite support and care services focusing on prevention, independence, and crisis response	Overall Conclusions: (Page s15-16) Forecasting models suggest a need for additional extra care housing units over the next 15 years. The council plans to develop new extra care housing in specific towns to maximise benefits.	Development & Commissioning: (Pages 16-17): The council's strategic document outlines priorities for housing development, focusing on accessibility, community integration, and sustainable development.
Key Outcomes: • Accessible and Affordable Housing: Development of accessible, attractive, and inclusively designed affordable housing for low-income tenants and localised extra care workforce. • Support and Care: Innovative and cost-effective support and care approaches for low-income tenants, ensuring they remain in their communities. • Financial Assistance: Robust support and financial advice for middle-income homeowners to maintain their housing assets and fund long-term care. • Mixed Development: Effective partnerships to develop mixed sites that offer both affordable and market housing options, generating cross-subsidies. These outcomes emphasise the need for tailored housing solutions and support services to meet the diverse needs of Dorset's residents.	Key Outcomes: • Housing Development: Focus on accessibility strategic town-based and mixed development sites, within neighbourhood's design accessibility to amenities, transport and can be supported in a broader community context and access a social care workforce. • Advise: Information on financial options and products, to assist homeowners meeting their needs. • Support and Care: A responsive and flexible support and care model is essential, with substantial annual investments and potential cost savings. • Strategic Partnerships: Collaboration with various stakeholders is crucial for successful housing and care service delivery. These outcomes highlight the importance of strategic planning, investment, and partnerships to meet the growing demand for extra care housing and support services in Dorset.	Key Outcomes: • Enhanced Housing Development: Prioritising the development of well-designed, accessible housing in strategic locations to meet residents changing needs. • Robust Partnerships: Building strong partnerships to secure investment and ensure the successful development of extra care housing. • Effective Support and Care: Implementing a comprehensive support and care model that leverages technology, skilled workforce, and strong leadership to improve outcomes for residents. • Strategic Alignment: Incorporation of extra care design principles, long term need and medium-term plan in the Planning Framework and Local Plan. These priorities and outcomes emphasise the importance of strategic planning, collaboration, and innovation in developing extra care housing and support services in Dorset.

The Inclusive Housing Design Guide 2024 Extra Care⁵ supports the Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement. The guide describes the design considerations that should be considered to ensure that new homes for people with care and support needs in Dorset achieve excellence in terms of quality and desirability. Ensuring the right homes to enable people to live independently for as long as possible.

Other Southwest Local Authorities⁶

To generalise, other local authorities do not maintain separate, standalone strategies for accessible homes. Instead, they incorporate accessible housing considerations within their broader housing strategies and documents to support the development of accessible homes, including specific Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), guidance notes and documents focused on housing and design.

Cornwall Council has a Housing strategy to 2030⁷ and Cornwall Supported and Specialist Housing Strategy 2023 to 2050⁸ which aims to ensure the provision of specialist, supported, and accessible homes for various groups, including people with physical disabilities, older people, and those with long-term conditions and sets out the requirements for specialist and supported housing in Cornwall. This strategy incorporates various portfolios including Housing, Planning Policy, Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Community Safety and Homelessness. This strategy forms part of a broader housing framework that focuses on delivering the right homes in the right places to meet the needs of all residents.

It is intended that these strategies will inform the next iteration of the Local Plan to ensure housing requirements are embedded in planning policy.

The strategy covers the requirements for specialist, supported and accessible homes for:

- People at risk of homelessness
- People with learning disabilities and/or autistic people
- People with serious mental health needs
- Older people (people aged 55+)
- People with physical disabilities/long term conditions

Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole integrate accessible homes as a broader topic within their Housing Strategy 2021 to 2026, which outlines their plans and priorities for housing development and management.

Devon County Council integrates the development of accessible homes into a broader housing and social care strategy rather than having a separate standalone strategy or

⁵ [Inclusive-housing-design-guide-2024-extra-care](#)

⁶ See for details [LA Links.docx](#)

⁷ [Housing Strategy for Cornwall 2030](#)

⁸ [Cornwall Supported & Specialist Housing Strategy 2023-2050](#)

policy. The council's approach is outlined in, People to Live Independently in Devon 2020 to 2025⁹. This strategy aims to increase the supply of accessible homes through new developments or adaptations to existing homes. Devon has district councils, which some have their own strategies for example North Devon Council have their own Housing strategy, with other district councils using Supplement Planning Documents (SPD) in relation to accessible homes.

Somerset Council incorporates accessible homes into the Somerset Housing Strategy¹⁰ 2019 – 2023 and the Local Development Scheme (LDS)¹¹ which outlines the timetable and framework for producing planning policy documents, including those relating to housing accessibility. The LDS emphasises the importance of creating well-designed places that cater to the needs of all residents, including older and disabled people.

The development plan, which is part of the LDS, includes policies aimed at ensuring new housing developments are accessible and adaptable.

Conclusions

There are multiple Dorset Council strategies and a plan (A Better Life) already in place which reference and make commitments around delivery and design of accessible homes. The Dorset Council Housing Strategy, A Better Life Plan and Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategy each emphasise integrated and collaborative working as key in delivery, along with promoting a shared vision where colleagues work to shared values.

These strategies have been developed and adopted as part of Dorset Council. The present Local Plans and SPDs in use are specific to district areas. Therefore, the Dorset Council newly adopted strategies from 2023 are not referenced or applied within any current adopted area specific Local Plan or SPD.

Typically, strategic priorities around accessible homes are incorporated into wider Housing Strategies or SPDs which focuses specifically on the delivery of affordable housing or accessible homes. However, proposed changes to the NPPF whilst maintaining the role SPDs place more emphasis on having a streamlined and plan-led system. It seems therefore unlikely that this will be the approach going forward. Dorset Councils indicate in their March 2025 report, 'Guide to the new planning system' that they do not intend to review or produce new SPDs with exception to those discussed above.

Recommendations

⁹ [People to Live Independently in Devon 2020 to 2025 - Adult Social Care](#)

¹⁰ [Somerset Housing Strategy \(2019 – 2023\)](#)

¹¹ [Appendix 1 Somerset Council LDS FINAL Feb 2025](#)

It is not recommended that the council develops a stand-alone accessible homes strategy because this is not necessary. There is already substantial strategic commitment to deliver accessible homes, improve design and work in collaboration to do so.

However, it will be important for the Housing Service in collaboration with Adult Services to participate in consultation for the Local Plan. To ensure housing and adult services requirements regarding general housing and subsets of affordable and accessible homes are encompassed within the Local Plan. To ensure their requirements are met within planning policy and sets expectations for developers to future proof housing developments. This is to ensure that the strategic commitments made in relation to the development of accessible homes and are reflected and given adequate weight within the new Local Plan.

As part of the consultation for the Local Plan the Housing Programme Board may consider recommending that an SPD specifically relating to accessible home be developed. This would incorporate details on how strategic objectives will be achieved from each of the strategies and include applicable design guides.

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Housing Strategy and Performance: Affordable Housing Information & Guidance

Home in on Housing programme

Subject of Report	Affordable Housing Information & Guidance
Purpose of Report	Information / Recommendations / Decision Making
Background Papers	Housing Strategy - Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council Council plan - https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-council-plan-2024-to-2029?p1back_url=%2Fsearch%3Fp1back_url%3D%252Fsearch%253Fq%253DHousing%252Bstrategy%26q%3Dcouncil%2Bplan Housing Strategy Consultation Report Appendix B - Consultation Report 30112023 People and Health Overview Committee.pdf Joseph Rowntree – How to talk about housing A framing toolkit: How to talk about homes Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Version control:

Version	Date	Changes	Circulated to	Produced by
0.1	03 January 2026	Small adjustments to sentence structures	Sharon Attwater Tony McDougal	Sarah Smith
0.2	26 Jan 2026	Addition of clarifying wording on critical framework	Cllr Gill Taylor	Sarah Smith

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Summary and project purpose

Summary and project purpose

This project objective is to produce a report and recommendations on affordable housing language as part of phase 1 of the 'Home In on Housing' programme to deliver Dorset Council's Housing Strategy January 2024 – January 2029.

This report presents comprehensive research into housing terminology and communication challenges faced by Dorset Council, centred around language associated with affordable housing and housing affordability. It presents analysis of Dorset residents' views and opinions, based on two rounds of engagement surveys totalling 335 responses, analysis of current Dorset Council housing webpages, and integration of best practices from the housing sector including Joseph Rowntree Foundation research.

The engagement analysis confirms significant confusion among residents regarding housing terminology, with "affordable housing" scoring 2.50/5 for clarity (57.1% find unclear) and "housing affordability" scoring 2.75/5 (48.6% find unclear). Additionally, 50.4% of residents cannot distinguish between these two terms.

A critical discovery emerged from website analysis: comprehensive local connection criteria exist within Dorset Council's Housing Allocations Policy, but this information is buried in policy documents and not prominently communicated to residents. This creates a paradox where residents believe housing doesn't prioritise local people, when it does through detailed local connection requirements.

This report will support the development of a new communication strategy for Dorset Council and adoption of enhanced language for both internal and external communication, addressing the action plan requirement to "Review current information about affordable (all types) housing terms and design new campaign to raise awareness."

Project Background

This project was initiated in direct response to resident feedback received during Dorset Council's housing strategy consultation. Residents expressed significant confusion around the term "affordable housing" and its relationship to "housing affordability." This confusion stems from the disconnect between government definitions and residents lived experiences of housing costs in Dorset.

The Government defines affordable housing as "housing provided to those whose needs are not met by the market," including social rent, affordable rent, and affordable routes to home ownership. However, with average house prices in Dorset at £335,000 and average rent at £1,023 per month (October 2025)ⁱ, even properties

offered at 20% below market rate often remain unaffordable to residents on median local wages of £31,444ⁱⁱ

1.2 Project Aims and Objectives

Primary Aims:

1. To gain a better understanding of residents' views on affordable housing terminology
2. To recommend how the council communicates more efficiently on affordable housing guidance
3. To provide correct, understandable, and targeted information to residents
4. To identify whether there is a need for new, local definitions for affordable housing.
5. To address the communication gap regarding local connection criteria

Specific Objectives:

1. Research to understand affordability terminology confusion through resident engagement.
2. Identify residents' current understanding and communication preferences.
3. Analyse current Dorset Council housing website language and messaging
4. Research best practices from other Local Authorities and housing sector experts.
5. Develop evidence-based recommendations for improved communication approaches.
6. Create implementation plan for enhanced housing communication strategy.

1.3 Project Scope

This research focuses specifically on language and terminology recommendations for communicating with residents about housing. It does not include analysis of what is financially affordable for Dorset residents in financial terms, which will be addressed in a separate piece of work.

In Scope:

- Dorset Council information and guidance terminology
- Dorset Council website pages relevant to affordable housing
- Resident engagement and feedback analysis
- National research on communication best practices
- Government definitions and terminology analysis
- Campaign recommendations around affordable housing definitions.

Out of Scope

- Financial affordability analysis for Dorset residents

- Housing allocation policy changes
- Planning policy recommendations
- Detailed housing needs assessment

What we looked at

Throughout the course of this project, we have considered and included information from the following sources:

Resident Engagement Research

- Round 1 Survey (July 2025): 55 responses from Dorset residents
- Round 2 Survey (August 2025): 280 responses from Dorset residents
- Total responses: 335 (89.3% general public, 10.7% council employees)
- Previous consultation feedback: Housing Strategy consultation responses highlighting terminology confusion.

Dorset Council Website Analysis

- Main Housing Page (<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/housing/housing>)
- Register for Housing (<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/housing/register-for-housing>)
- Affordable Housing (<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/affordable-housing>)
- Homelessness and Housing Advice (<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/housing/homelessness>)
- Housing Allocations Policy documents
- Local connection criteria documentation

Best Practice Research

- Joseph Rowntree Foundation: "How to Talk About Homes: A Framing Toolkit" - research-backed communication framework.
- Local Government Association: Good practice guides on housing communication
- Tendring District Council: Housing jargon guide and plain English approaches
- Local Authority examples: Communication approaches from comparable councils

Policy and Strategic Context

- Dorset Council Housing Strategy January 2024 – January 2029
- Dorset Council Plan 2024 – 2029
- National Planning Policy Framework 2024
- Government affordable housing definitions and guidance
- Housing allocation policies and local connection criteria

Data Sources

- Survey response data and statistical analysis

- Website content analysis and user journey mapping
- Comparative analysis of local authority communication approaches
- Academic research on housing communication effectiveness
- Resident feedback and consultation responses

The comprehensive nature of these sources ensures that recommendations are grounded in both resident preferences and established best practices, creating an evidence-based approach to improving housing communication.

Key Findings

Resident Survey Results: Significant Terminology Confusion

The resident engagement surveys revealed substantial confusion around housing terminology that directly impacts residents' understanding of available housing options.

Clarity Scores (1-5 scale, where 5 = very clear):

- "Affordable Housing": 2.50/5 average (57.1% find unclear)
- "Housing Affordability": 2.75/5 average (48.6% find unclear)
- 50.4% of residents cannot distinguish between the two terms.

Key Statistical Findings:

- 335 total responses across two survey rounds (409% increase from Round 1 to Round 2)
- Consistent confusion across both survey rounds
- Strong preference for plain English alternatives
- Clear demand for "homes for local people" messaging
-

Resident Preferences:

- Replace "affordable housing" with terms like "lower rent homes" "lower cost homes", "below market rate homes", or "housing association homes for local people" and "government-supported homes" when specifically referencing how new homes were financed.
- Replace "affordability" with terms like "homes people can afford to live in".
- Emphasise local connection and priority for local people.
- Use clear, honest communication about housing allocation.
- Focus on community benefits rather than individual benefits.

Critical Discovery: The Local Connection Paradox

Website analysis revealed a significant communication paradox that undermines resident trust and understanding:

The Paradox:

- Residents believe: Housing doesn't go to local people.
- Reality: Comprehensive local connection criteria exist and are actively applied.
- Problem: Local connection information is buried in policy documents and invisible to residents.

Existing Local Connection Criteria Include:

- Residency requirements (2-3 years out of last 5 years)
- Employment criteria (16+ hours per week for 1+ year)
- Family connection requirements (parents, siblings, children with 5+ years residency)
- Various other local ties and connections

Impact of Hidden Information:

- Residents frustrated that housing "doesn't go to local people."
- Missed opportunities to build trust and support.
- Confusion about housing allocation priorities.
- Negative perception of the councils housing policies.

Website Communication Analysis

Current Website Issues:

- 1. Terminology Problems:**
 - All pages use "affordable housing" terminology that 57.1% find unclear.
 - Technical definitions without context or explanation
- 2. Hidden Local Connection Information:**
 - Comprehensive criteria exist but are buried in policy documents.
 - No prominent messaging about local priority on main pages.
 - Local connection criteria not explained upfront to residents.
- 3. Inconsistent Messaging:**
 - Some excellent local messaging exists (especially on affordable housing page)
 - Not consistently applied across all pages
 - Mixed approach to plain English communication
- 4. Missed Trust-Building Opportunities:**
 - Doesn't acknowledge resident concerns about terminology.
 - Doesn't explain existing local connection criteria.
 - Misses chance to reassure residents about local priority.

Positive Elements Found:

- Some strong local messaging: "Local people struggle to afford to live in the area."
- Community Land Trusts section: "build affordable homes for local people within their communities."
- Good structural design and navigation

Best Practice Research Integration

Joseph Rowntree Foundation Framework (JRF): Research-backed communication principles that align strongly with resident preferences:

1. Health and Wellbeing Focus: Connect homes to community health rather than economic arguments.
2. Responsibility: Build collective responsibility for ensuring everyone has decent homes.
3. Foundations Metaphor: "Decent homes provide the foundation for strong communities"
4. Critical Tone with Solutions: Name problems but provide specific solutions to build efficacy.

Alignment with Resident Research:

- JRF emphasis on "homes" vs "housing" aligns with resident preference for clearer language.
- JRF community focus aligns with resident desire for "homes for local people."
- JRF plain English approach matches resident communication preferences.
- JRF solution-focused approach addresses resident frustration with current housing system.

Local Authority Examples:

- Tendring District Council: Comprehensive housing jargon guide with plain English explanations
- Various councils: Examples of prominent local connection messaging
- Best practice themes: Simplicity, resident focus, acknowledgment of confusion, clear communication

Resident Voice: Key Themes from Survey Responses

Direct Resident Feedback Themes:

1. **Frustration with Misleading Language:**
 - "Affordable housing isn't affordable for local people."
 - "The terms are confusing and don't mean what they say."
 - "Need honest language about what housing actually costs."

2. **Strong Desire for Local Priority:**

- "Housing should go to local people first."
- "People with local connections should get priority."
- "Local families need to be able to stay in their communities."

3. **Preference for Plain English:**

- "Use normal language that people understand."
- "Explain what things actually mean"?
- "Stop using government jargon."

4. **Community Focus:**

- "Housing affects the whole community."
- "Local housing keeps communities strong."
- "When local people can't afford homes, communities suffer?"

These findings demonstrate clear alignment between resident preferences and best practice research, providing a strong foundation for enhanced communication recommendations.

Recommendations

Based on analysis of resident feedback, website review, and best practice research, the following recommendations provide a framework for enhanced housing communication that addresses both clarity and persuasiveness.

Enhanced Communication Framework

Core Principles Integration:

1. **General Principles**

- Use the word homes instead of housing
- Replace 'affordable housing' and 'affordability' with messaging led by residents' preference.

2. **Health and Community Wellbeing**

- Connect local homes to community health and wellbeing.
- Show how local homes strengthen entire communities.
- Move beyond individual benefits to collective impact.

3. **Responsibility for Local Communities**

- Frame housing as collective responsibility.
- Use "we," "us," "our" language for community ownership.
- Connect local connection to dignity and community values.

4. Foundations for Strong Communities

- Use "Foundations" metaphor for local community strength.
- Show how local homes provide foundation for thriving communities.
- Connect individual housing to community resilience.

5. Critical Analysis with Local Solutions

- Point out where our communication about local connection isn't working.
- Provide specific solutions for local housing challenges.
- Show how system can be redesigned for local communities.

Priority Website Improvements

1. Main Housing Page - CRITICAL PRIORITY

Current Problem: Uses confusing "affordable housing" terminology with no prominent local connection messaging.

Enhanced Opening Statement:

Decent, affordable homes provide the foundation for strong, healthy communities in Dorset.

Our homes are fundamental to our health and wellbeing. When local people have access to decent, affordable homes, it strengthens our entire community - supporting local schools, shops, and services that we all depend on.

As a community, we have a responsibility to ensure that local people can access the homes they need to thrive. That's why Dorset Council's allocations policy prioritises people with strong local connections to the area.

Enhanced Local Connection Callout Box:

Callout boxes, also known as pull quotes, sidebars, or highlight boxes, are visual

Strong Foundations for Local Communities

Decent homes provide the foundation for thriving local communities. In Dorset, we prioritise local people because:

- *Local families strengthen our schools and communities*
- *Local workers support our economy and services*
- *Local connections create the social bonds that make communities resilient*
- *Everyone deserves the dignity of a decent home in their community*

Our housing system is designed to support people with local connections, including those who live, work, or have family in Dorset.

Find out more about local connection criteria →

elements used to draw attention to specific pieces of information within a larger document or webpage. It might look something like this:

Enhanced Navigation Links:

- Current: "Register for housing" → Enhanced: "Join our housing register - supporting local people"
- Current: "Affordable housing" → Enhanced: "Lower cost homes for local communities"

2. Register for Housing Page - CRITICAL PRIORITY

Enhanced Opening Section:

Housing Register: Building Strong Foundations for Local Families

Our homes are fundamental to our health and wellbeing. When local people have decent, affordable homes, it creates strong foundations for thriving communities across Dorset.

As a community, we have a responsibility to ensure local people can access the homes they need. That's why our housing register prioritises people with strong local connections - because local homes strengthen local communities.

Right now, over 6,000 local people are on our register. We're working to redesign our housing system to better serve local communities, but we need your help to understand local housing need.

Enhanced Eligibility Framework:

Building Strong Foundations: Who Can Join Our Register

To join our housing register, you need to show both local connection and housing need - because decent homes provide the foundation for strong local communities.

Local Connection - Why This Matters:

When local people have decent homes, it strengthens our entire community. Local families support our schools, local workers contribute to our economy, and local connections create the social bonds that make communities resilient.

You may have a local connection if you:

- Live or work in Dorset (contributing to our local community)
- Have family in the area (part of our community network)
- Have other strong local ties (connected to our community)

Housing Need - Everyone Deserves Dignity:

As a community, we have a responsibility to ensure everyone has access to a decent home. You may qualify if:

- You cannot afford to buy or rent suitable housing at market prices
- Your current housing is unsuitable for your needs
- You are homeless or at risk of homelessness

3. Affordable Housing Page - MEDIUM PRIORITY

Enhanced Opening:

Lower cost homes: Strong Foundations for Local Communities

Our homes are fundamental to our health and wellbeing. Decent, homes that people can afford to live in provide the foundation for strong, thriving communities across Dorset.

Right now, we're facing a housing issue that threatens the foundations of our local communities. Local people struggle to afford homes, with average house prices at £335,000 and average rent at £1,023 per month. This isn't just about individual hardship. When local people can't access decent homes, it undermines the health and wellbeing of our entire community.

As a community, we have a responsibility to ensure local people can access decent homes. That's why we're working to increase the number of lower cost homes in Dorset, to prioritise local communities and provide the strong foundations everyone needs for a decent life.

Terminology Standards

Core Language Replacements:

- "Affordable housing" → "Lower cost homes"
- "Housing affordability" → "Housing costs you can manage."
- "Property" → "Homes"
- "Housing market" → "Housing system"
- "Housing" → "Homes"

Enhanced Messaging Patterns:

Opening Pattern (All Pages):

1. Health/wellbeing statement: "Our homes are fundamental to our health and wellbeing."
2. Local community connection: "When local people have decent homes, it strengthens our entire community."

3. Responsibility: "As a community, we have a responsibility..."
4. Local connection criteria: "That's why our housing allocations policy prioritises people with local connections."

Critical Analysis Pattern:

Note: This is an example of a critical analysis pattern from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. This example is not about Dorset Council.

1. Name the crisis: "We're facing a housing crisis that threatens local communities."
2. Point to responsibility: "The government has failed to build enough homes for local people."
3. Show redesign possibility: "Our housing system can be designed to prioritise local communities."
4. Provide specific solutions: "Through [specific solutions], we can create strong foundations for everyone."

Risk Management

Identified Risks and Mitigation:

1. Staff Resistance to Change
 - *Risk:* Reluctance to adopt new messaging approach
 - *Mitigation:* Comprehensive training, clear evidence of effectiveness, leadership support
 - *Responsibility:* Housing leadership and communications teams
2. Resident Confusion During Transition
 - *Risk:* Temporary confusion as messaging changes
 - *Mitigation:* Clear explanation of improvements, gradual implementation, feedback mechanisms
 - *Responsibility:* Communications team with resident engagement
3. Inconsistent Implementation
 - *Risk:* Mixed application of new framework
 - *Mitigation:* Clear guidelines, regular consistency checks, refresher training
 - *Responsibility:* Project coordinator and communications team
4. Resource Constraints
 - *Risk:* Insufficient time or staff for full implementation
 - *Mitigation:* Phased approach, priority focus, external support if needed
 - *Responsibility:* Project management and housing leadership

Expected Outcomes

Immediate Benefits (1-3 months):

- Reduced terminology confusion affecting 50%+ of residents.
- Increased awareness of local connection criteria
- Enhanced trust through transparent communication
- Improved resident satisfaction with housing information

Medium-term Benefits (3-12 months):

- Increased community support for local housing policies
- Enhanced engagement in housing consultations
- Stronger sense of collective responsibility for housing
- Improved staff confidence in housing communication

Long-term Benefits (12+ months):

- Transformed housing discourse focused on community wellbeing.
- Model communication approach for other council services.
- Stronger community foundations through better housing understanding
- Enhanced advocacy for local housing needs

This comprehensive approach addresses both the immediate clarity issues identified by residents and the broader communication challenges revealed through best practice research, creating a foundation for more effective housing communication that serves both residents and the council's strategic objectives.

Conclusion

This comprehensive research project has revealed both significant challenges and clear opportunities for enhancing Dorset Council's housing communication. The findings demonstrate that current terminology confusion affects residents, while comprehensive local connection criteria exist but remain hidden from public view.

Appendix A - Implementation Plan

Phase 1: Critical Changes (1-2 weeks)

Priority: Address most urgent communication failures

Actions:

- Replace "affordable housing" terminology on main pages.
- Add prominent local connection messaging to main housing page.
- Create local connection callout boxes.
- Update navigation language.

- Integrate health/wellbeing framing.

Success Criteria:

- All critical terminology updated.
- Local connection criteria prominently featured.
- Consistent messaging across high-priority pages

Phase 2: Comprehensive Integration (2-4 weeks)

Priority: Full framework implementation

Actions:

- Complete integration of enhanced messaging framework
- Update all linked documents and pages.
- Implement systematic critical analysis with solutions.
- Create coherent narrative across all pages.

Success Criteria:

- Complete framework integration
- Staff training materials developed.
- Coherent messaging strategy implemented.

Phase 3: System-Wide Enhancement (4-8 weeks)

Priority: Organisational integration

Actions:

- Update all housing-related communications.
- Train staff on enhanced communication approach
- Implement monitoring systems.
- Create feedback mechanisms.
- Create communication style playbook for use across organisation.

Success Criteria:

- Complete organisational alignment
- Staff confident in enhanced messaging
- Monitoring systems operational

Phase 4: Monitoring and Refinement (Ongoing)

Priority: Continuous improvement

Actions:

- Monitor clarity and persuasiveness metrics.
- Track community engagement and support.
- Refine approach based on feedback.
- Share best practices with other services.

Success Criteria:

- Improved resident understanding scores
- Enhanced community support for housing policies
- Ongoing refinement based on feedback.

Success Measurement Framework

Quantitative Metrics:

- **Clarity Measures:** Terminology understanding, confusion reduction (target: 50% reduction in confusion)
- **Engagement Measures:** Website usage, application rates, consultation participation (target: 25% increase)
- **Community Support:** Policy support surveys, community feedback (target: 30% increase in support)

Qualitative Metrics:

- **Resident Feedback:** Both clarity and persuasiveness elements
- **Community Discourse:** Shift toward community-focused language
- **Staff Feedback:** Confidence in using enhanced messaging.
- **Case Studies:** Examples of enhanced understanding and engagement

Monitoring Schedule:

- **Weekly:** Website analytics and response tracking
- **Monthly:** Customer service query analysis
- **Quarterly:** Performance review including persuasiveness measures
- **Bi-annually:** Resident satisfaction and policy support survey
- **Annually:** Full communication effectiveness assessment

ⁱ [Dorset Rental Prices & Market Trends 2025](#)

ⁱⁱ [Earnings and hours worked, place of residence by local authority: ASHE Table 8 - Office for National Statistics](#)



Home in on Housing Programme – Phase 1 project

Version control:

Version	Date	Changes	Circulated to	Produced by
V0.1	04.09.25	Amendments made based on recommendations	Sarah Smith	Paul Derrien
V.02	29.10.25		Sharon Attwater & Sarah Smith	Paul Derrien

Subject of Report	Affordable Housing Targets/ Registered Provider Performance
Purpose of Report	Information / Recommendations / Decision Making
Background Papers	Housing Strategy - Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council

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Affordable Housing Targets – Dorset Council

Summary

Project Purpose

This preliminary summary report explores and provides an analysis; status report regarding affordable housing targets to aid the delivery of new affordable housing. This project is incorporated within phase 1 of the 'Home in on Housing' (HIOH) programme, and the delivery plan related to Dorset Councils' Housing Strategy January 2024 – January 2029¹.

Aim

To understand how the Housing Enabling and Delivery Team reached a target figure and how it ties in with the RPs targets.

Objectives

The project objectives are:

- To establish a baseline of information and data.
- To understand the basis for the current target figure.
- To identify how the current target figure has been calculated.
- To explore the methodology behind the current target figure.
- To understand target tenure and location options, target use and development.

Current Target

Annual Target: 450 affordable homes

Affordable Housing Completions by Year

Year	Rented	Intermediate	Total Completions
2016/17	99	80	179
2017/18	120	34	154
2018/19	93	80	173
2019/20	156	118	274
2020/21	191	110	301
2021/22	355	174	529
2022/23	358	306	664
2023/24	365	148	513
2024/25	241	203	444

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Housing Targets

2018 Target: 1,793 homes

¹ [Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council](#)

2024 Target: 3,219 homes

Total Housing Completions (Open Market + Affordable)

Year	Total Completions
2021/22	1945
2022/23	1771
2023/24	1483

General Comments on 2024/25 Delivery

The current target is 450 homes per year. This year 444 affordable homes were delivered. The main reason for the lower number of completions are delays that were caused by nutrient neutrality. This issue is slowly being resolved. There have also been delays on some open market sites slowing down and a particular issue with one contractor.

The targets for new housebuilding, which are set by Government, have increased significantly for Dorset Council. The new target is 3,219 per year. Suitable sites are being identified as part of the local plan process. The higher targets will mean that the Council will not have a five-year land supply after November 2025 which may lead to an increase in speculative planning applications. This will lead to an increase in the numbers of homes being delivered. The new target is over twice the number of homes that was built in 2023/24 and more than has ever been delivered in a single year. Over the three years from 2021 to 2023 the percentage of all homes that was delivered that were affordable was in the range of 27% to 35%. If 3,219 homes were delivered a year and 30% of these were affordable then 965 affordable homes will be delivered. This does indicate the number of affordable homes being delivered will increase but this is likely to be incremental and take several years.

Tenure Split

New affordable homes are made up of different tenures. These are generally two rented products, social and affordable rented, and three types of low-cost home ownership, shared ownership, first homes and discounted market homes.

Over the last few years there have mainly been affordable rent and shared ownership homes delivered. Recently there has been an increase in the number of social rented homes and this may continue. There has also been the introduction of First Homes, but it is not clear how many of these will be built in the future due to changes in planning legislations.

To create a better picture of affordable housing delivery the completions could be reported by tenure split. The reporting software will need to be checked to make sure this is possible. The type of housing delivered will be affected by Government and policy so a target for each tenure would not be appropriate.

Location of Homes

The target is not split according to any geographic areas. To have targets for individual areas would be difficult to manage and could lead to opportunities in some areas not being pursued. The Enabling and Delivery Team work across the whole of the Dorset Council area.

Understanding the Target

Purpose: Internally set to motivate the Housing Enabling and Delivery Team and to indicate potential delivery.

Basis: Past performance, sector assessment, and future delivery predictions.

Dependencies: Delivery relies on Registered Providers (RPs) and developers.

External Factors: Nutrient Neutrality, Housing Market, Planning Policies, Government funding.

Use of the Target

Used internally and reported in performance reports to councillors and council meetings.

Not intended to reflect or meet total housing need in the Dorset Council area.

Target Development

Targets, and the number of affordable homes delivered, have increased over time, especially with the Homes England Strategic Partnership.

Based on historic performance and forecasted delivery levels.

Target Scope

Applies to the entire Dorset Council area.

Not broken down by location, tenure, or type. A breakdown by tenure with a split of affordable and social rent can be included.

Includes acquisitions (e.g., RSAP/SHAP), not just new builds – if we start leasing homes will these be included?

Does not account for losses due to disposals or redevelopment.

Review Cycle

Targets are typically reviewed every two years.

A review is currently timely due to delivery uncertainty and evolving targets.

Need-Based Targeting

Targets based on housing need would be unrealistically high.

Could negatively impact staff morale and public perception.

Recommendations

- Target to be kept at 450 for 2025/26 and increase to 500 for 2026/2027.
- The target should be for all tenures but broken into different tenures for reporting and information purposes.
- This takes account of the fact that several sites have been delayed due to nutrient neutrality issues and will only start delivering in 2026/27.

- The new affordable housing programme will come into effect in April 2026. There has been significant funding allocated to this programme. Though the detail is not expected until the Winter there is commitment to deliver 180,000 new social rent homes in the next ten years as set out in the [Decade of Renewal Report](#). This will increase the number of homes delivered by RPs. The RPs who develop homes in Dorset also build these in other areas. They will set targets for their programme but not for individual areas.
- The Dorset Council Local Plan will also set new, increased targets for housing development. This will come into effect in 2027, but it will take some time to increase the delivery rates. From October this year the Council will not have a five-year land supply which is likely to lead to an increase of planning permission.
- Delivery of affordable homes should increase of the next few years, but it is difficult to predict as there are continued challenges with housing developments. It is proposed to increase the target by 50 homes per year for the next 5 years, these targets should be reviewed every two years.
- Proposed Targets:

2025 / 26	500
2026 / 27	550
2027 / 28	600
2028 / 29	650
2029 / 30	700

Housing Strategy and Performance: Brownfield Sites

Home in on Housing programme

Version control:

Version	Date	Changes	Circulated to	Produced by
0.1	10.03.2025	Recommendations added	Sharon Attwater and Sarah Smith	Louise Capaldi-Tallon
0.2	21.03.2025		Sharon Attwater and Sarah Smith	Louise Capaldi-Tallon
0.3	01.04.2025		Andrew Billany, Gary Messenger and Paul Derrien	Louise Capaldi-Tallon
0.3	23.04.2025 29.04.2025	Referencing updated More LA's added to comparison session	Nick Cardnell and Planning policy team Carly Galloway	Louise Capaldi-Tallon
0.4	19.05.2025		HIOH officer board	Louise Capaldi-Tallon

Subject of Report	Brownfield Sites
Purpose of Report	Information / Recommendations / Decision Making

Background Papers	Housing Strategy - Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council Council plan - https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-council-plan-2024-to-2029?pl_back_url=%2Fsearch%3Fpl_back_url%3D%252Fsearch%253Fq%253DHousing%252Bstrategy%26q%3Dcouncil%2Bplan

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Summary and project purpose

This preliminary report provides a detailed analysis of Brownfield sites held within Dorset Council area. It is to establish a baseline of information, to enable consultation, site option choices and informed decisions to be made, with a view to identify and support potential development of these site in relation to housing needs priorities and locations requirements.

This project forms part of phase 1 of the 'Home In on Housing' programme to deliver Dorset Councils' Housing Strategy January 2024 – January 2029¹.

This preliminary report will assist phase 2, an intermediate report to identify new funding streams available to support and to promote new opportunities for housing development and delivery within brownfield sites.

Strategic context

The Housing Strategy mentions brownfield sites in the context of increasing housing supply and making the best use of existing developed land.

Increasing Housing supply

The strategy emphasizes the importance of increasing the supply of new housing while ensuring that existing homes are put to good use. This includes exploring how to bring properties back into use and making the best use of existing buildings, homes and land which encompasses brownfield sites.

Right Place

The strategy highlights the need to ensure that new developments are sensitive to local needs and prioritise local homes for local people. This includes community engagement on proposed developments and the protection of green spaces, suggesting development of brownfield sites to preserve natural areas.

Best use of Council Assets

The strategy mentions that if a Council asset or a piece of land, which may include brownfield sites, is suitable for new homes, it will be considered as part of an appraisal to provide the best outcome for Dorset Council and its residents².

Overall, the strategy supports the use of brownfield sites as part of a broader approach to increasing housing supply, protecting green spaces and making efficient use of existing land and assets.

¹ [Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council](#)

² [Appendix - Dorset Council Strategic Asset Management Plan 2024 - 2030.pdf](#)

Dorset Council Plan 2024 –2029³ does not explicitly mention ‘brownfield sites’, however the plan does highlight the importance of sustainable development and the need to increase the availability of affordable housing.

Some key points include:

Affordable Housing

The Council aims to increase the availability of affordable homes, improve existing housing stock, and ensure sustainable development. With a plan to use owned land and assets to increase the amount of housing supplied to residents, including affordable housing.

Economic Growth

The Council plan highlights the need to support and diversify the economy, which could involve the development of underused or derelict sites. There is a focus on regeneration projects, such as the regeneration of Weymouth which includes the use of brownfield sites.

Sustainability

Throughout the Council plan there is a clear commitment to tackling climate change and ensuring sustainable development, which can often involve the development of brownfield sites reducing the pressure on the use of greenfield areas.

Themes from both the Housing Strategy and Dorset Council Plan are also emphasised within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024⁴, which sets out planning policies for England and how these should be applied in decision-making. The framework sets out the principle that planning policies and decisions should promote the effective use of land to meet the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Encouraging local authorities to make as much use as possible of previously developed or ‘brownfield’ land⁵. It highlights that planning policies and decisions should give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs⁶.

Lastly emphasising local planning authorities should take a proactive role in identifying and helping to bring forward land that may be suitable for meeting development needs. This includes sites held on the brownfield register or held in public ownership⁷.

³ https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-council-plan-2024-to-2029?p%20back_url=%2Fsearch%3Fp%20back_url%3D%252Fsearch%253Fq%253DHousing%252Bstrategy%26q%3Dcouncil%2Bplan

⁴ [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

⁵ [National Planning Policy Framework](#) para 124

⁶ [National Planning Policy Framework](#) para 125c

⁷ [National Planning Policy Framework](#) para 126

What we looked at

Throughout the course of this project, we have considered and included information from the following sources;

- Dorset Brownfield Land Register 2020
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) database
- Assets Team Allocation of Assets Excel
- Assets Priority Disposal Tracker Capital Strategy and Asset Management Group (CASM)
- Disposals 1st January 2020 as recorded on Civica Property Management (CPM) extracted 4th February 2025
- Land Register
- BCP, Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Wiltshire Brownfield Land Registers

Brownfield sites, the Brownfield Land Register and SHLAA

Brownfield sites are previously developed land that is not currently used, these sites were once used for industrial or commercial purposes but have since been abandoned or are underutilised. Land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings is excluded along with other exceptions⁸. The redevelopment of brownfield sites is often encouraged to revitalise urban areas, reduce urban sprawl and make efficient use of existing infrastructure.

Councils have been required to maintain a Brownfield Land Register since April 2017. This requirement was established under the Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017⁹. The register aims to identify brownfield sites suitable for residential development. The register acts as a ledger of land identified as being suitable for new housing once the environmental, amenity and heritage value has been considered. Local planning authorities will be able to trigger a grant of permission in principle for residential development on suitable sites in their registers following required procedures¹⁰.

The Brownfield Land Register is divided into two parts: part 1 includes all brownfield sites appropriate for residential development and part 2 includes sites granted planning permission in principle¹¹.

⁸ [National Planning Policy Framework](#) – Annex 2: Glossary; 'Previously developed land' excludes, land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where there are provisions for restoration, land in built up areas such as gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments or where the remains of a permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended with the landscape.

⁹ [The Town and Country Planning \(Brownfield Land Register\) Regulations 2017](#)

¹⁰ [National Planning Policy Framework](#) – Annex 2: Glossary

¹¹ [Brownfield land registers - GOV.UK](#)

In addition to the Brownfield Land Register there is a requirement for local planning authorities, as outlined in the NPPF to complete a 'Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The SHLAA is an essential part of the evidence base for Local Plans, providing information on the availability, suitability and likely economic viability of land that could be used to meet housing need but does not allocate sites for development or grant planning permission.

Through the SHLAA the Council must identify sites and broad locations with potential for housing development, this includes both previously developed brownfield sites and undeveloped greenfield sites. It helps local authorities to understand where and when housing could be built in the future.

The Brownfield Land Register and the SHLAA are both tools used to identify and assess land for potential development, but serve different purposes with distinct characteristics;

- The Brownfield Land Register focuses solely on brownfield sites, while the SHLAA includes both brownfield and greenfield sites
- The Brownfield Land Register aims to promote the redevelopment of previously developed land, whereas the SHLAA provides an assessment of all potential housing sites to inform Local Plans.

In summary, the Brownfield Land Register focuses specifically on previously developed land suitable for residential use, while the SHLAA is a broader assessment tool for potential housing sites.

What Brownfield sites are there in Dorset?

Public authority owned sites

According to the Brownfield Land Register for Dorset 2020¹² there are 83 sites, with 26 (31%) being Public Authority (PA) owned:

Below shows the breakdown of public authority sites by planning status

Ownership	Planning Status	Percentage	Qty Total
PA	Permissioned	2%	2
PA	Not Permissioned	22%	18
Mixed	Not Permissioned	7%	6

% Total	31%
PA & Mixed Ownership Sites Total	<u>26</u>

The 26 public authority owned sites are predominantly located within Bridport, Dorchester, Weymouth and Wimborne Minster areas:

¹² [Brownfield land register - Dorset Council](#)

- 2 public authority owned permissioned sites located within Dorchester and Weymouth
- 18 public authority owned not permissioned sites, 10 in Weymouth, 2 in Wimborne Minster and 6 single sites spread across Dorset
- 6 mixed ownership not permissioned sites, 3 in Bridport and 3 single sites spread across Dorset

Below shows the total public authority sites by area

Public Authority Owned Sites Areas							
Ownership	Planning Status	Brid	Dorch	Wey	Wim	Other Area	Qty Total
PA	Permissioned		1	1			2
PA	Not Permissioned			10	2	6*	18
Mixed	Not Permissioned	3				3**	6
Sub Totals		<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>9</u>	

PA & Mixed Ownership Sites Total 26

*6 sites within Bere Regis, Blandford, Bridport, Colehill, Gillingham and Wareham

**3 sites within Dorchester, Sherborne and Sturminster Newton

Non-public authority owned sites

The register identifies a total of 57 non-public authority owned sites equating to 69% of all Brownfield sites;

Below shows the breakdown of non- public authority sites by planning status

Ownership	Planning Status	Percentage	Qty Total
Not PA	Permissioned	22%	18
Not PA	Not Permissioned	47%	39

Not Public Authority Sites Total 57

The 57 not public authority owned sites are predominantly located in Dorchester and Weymouth areas:

- 18 not public authority owned permissioned sites, 1 in Dorchester, 3 in Weymouth and 14 sites spread across Dorset

- 39 not public authority owned not permissioned sites, 6 in Dorchester, 9 in Weymouth and 24 sites spread across Dorset

Below shows the total non-public authority sites by area

Not Public Authority Owned Sites Areas						
Ownership	Planning Status	Dorch	Wey	Wim	Other Area	Qty Total
Not PA	Permissioned	1	3		14*	18
Not PA	Not Permissioned	6	9	3	21**	39
Sub Totals		<u>7</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>35</u>	

Not PA Owned Sites Total 57

*14 total not public authority owned permissioned sites spread across Dorset:

- 4 sites, 2 sites per area, Gillingham and Sturminster Newton
- 10 single sites within, Alderholt, Blandford, Blandford St Mary, Cerne Abbas, Ferndown, Hazelbury Bryan, Mosterton, Shaftesbury, Stalbridge and Swanage

**21 total not public authority owned not permissioned sites spread across Dorset:

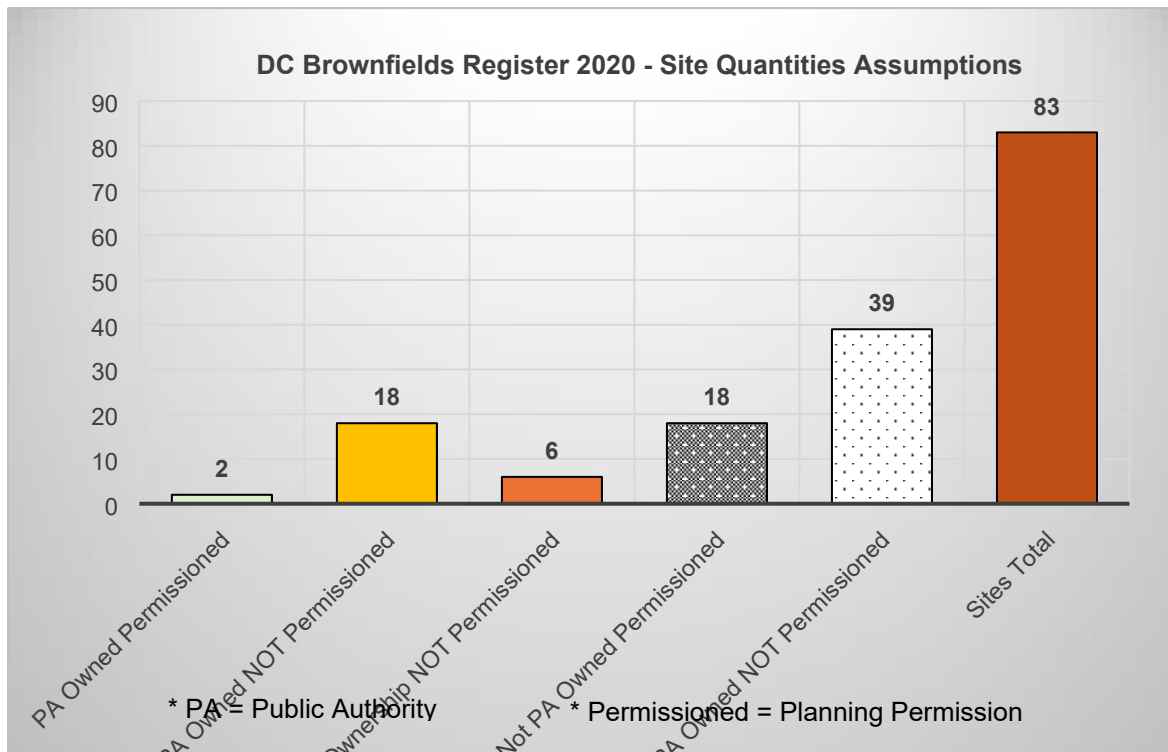
- 8 sites, 2 sites per area, Bridport, Colehill, Portland and Swanage
- 13 single sites within, Broadmayne, Chickerell, Corfe Mullen, East Stoke, Ferndown, Hazelbury Bryan, Lyme Regis, Pamphill, Sturminster Newton, Verwood, Wareham, West Knighton and Winterborne Abbas

In summary the majority of brownfield sites are privately owned with almost half of the private sites being held without planning permission.

Table below shows a of all brownfield sites by ownership and planning status

Ownership	Planning Status	Qty	Percentage
PA	Permissioned	2	2%
PA	Not Permissioned	18	22%
Mixed	Not Permissioned	6	7%
Sub Total		<u>26</u>	<u>31%</u>
Not PA	Permissioned	18	22%
Not PA	Not Permissioned	39	47%
Sub Total		<u>57</u>	<u>69%</u>

A total of 76% of all sites, across all ownership held without planning permission. Of the 20 permissioned sites, 90% are not public authority owned.



These Dorset figures are based on the current Brownfield Land Register April 2020, and it should be noted it is a tolerated service risk for 'Place', spatial planning, that a new register has not been prepared or maintained from April 2020.

Brownfield sites post 2020

Since the publication of Dorset's last Brownfield Site Register in April 2020, the Council has published its 'Strategic Asset Management Plan 2024 – 2030'¹³, which sets out how Dorset will use its asset base to support service delivery and drive change and innovation. As part of this strategy there is a regular review of all the Councils 1539¹⁴ asset sites via a rolling programme of work, reviewing all assets every three years. The process identifies opportunities for future use, assessing the potential to retain, repurpose, develop or dispose of sites.

Following this work several of the authority owned brownfield sites have been disposed. This is not reflected in the current Brownfield Site Register. Comparison of

¹³ [Appendix - Dorset Council Strategic Asset Management Plan 2024 - 2030.pdf](#)

¹⁴ The estate is made up of operational assets - numbering circa 682 sites, infrastructure assets - numbering circa 105 sites, commercial assets - numbering circa 333 sites, non-operational assets - numbering circa 369 sites

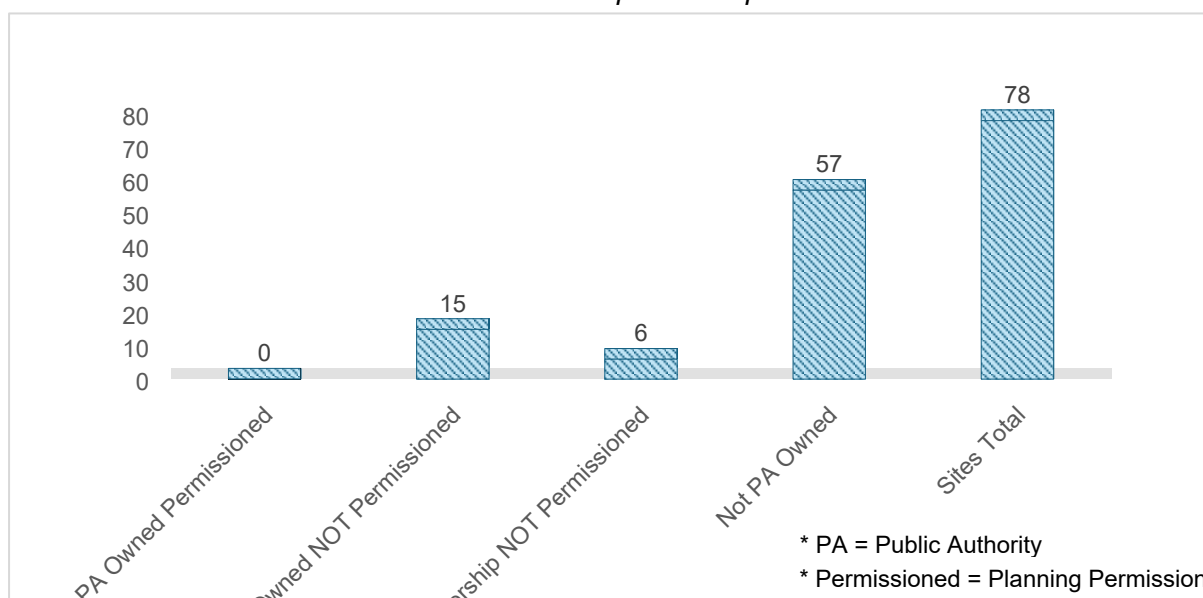
the two data sets indicate that there has been 5¹⁵ disposals taking the total sites to 78 brownfield sites opposed to 83 with 21¹⁶ of these being public authority/mixed ownership.

Below shows the breakdown of public authority sites after disposal by planning status

Ownership	Planning Status	Percentage	Qty Total
PA	Permissioned	0	0
PA	Not Permissioned	19%	15
Mixed	Not Permissioned	8%	6

% Total 27%
PA & Mixed Ownership Sites Total 21

Table below shows the distribution of ownership after disposal.



In summary of the 78 assumed sites there is no public authority owned or mixed ownership sites with planning permission. There are 18 not public authority owned sites with planning permission distributed across Dorset:

¹⁵ Former Bere Regis school in progress of being disposed - with legal. Within assets priority disposal 23-26

Former Nordon Council Offices, Blandford Forum (Nordon Lodge) - completion date 29/03/2021, buyer Aster group

Former Damers School Site and Former Damers First School -leased from the Duchy to the former DCC, but this was surrendered on 24/04/2017 (as is recorded on the leasehold record). Site is now in the ownership of Dorset County Hospital.

Land at Queen Street (former St Martins Grange, Bungalow & Adult Learning Centre), Gillingham - completion date 09/04/2021, buyer Magna Housing Ltd

Newton's Road Car park - Freehold registered title Newton's Road Car Park - DT480946

Site is disposed, no information recorded on system in relation to Assets.

¹⁶ To see the full breakdown of sites by area see appendix A

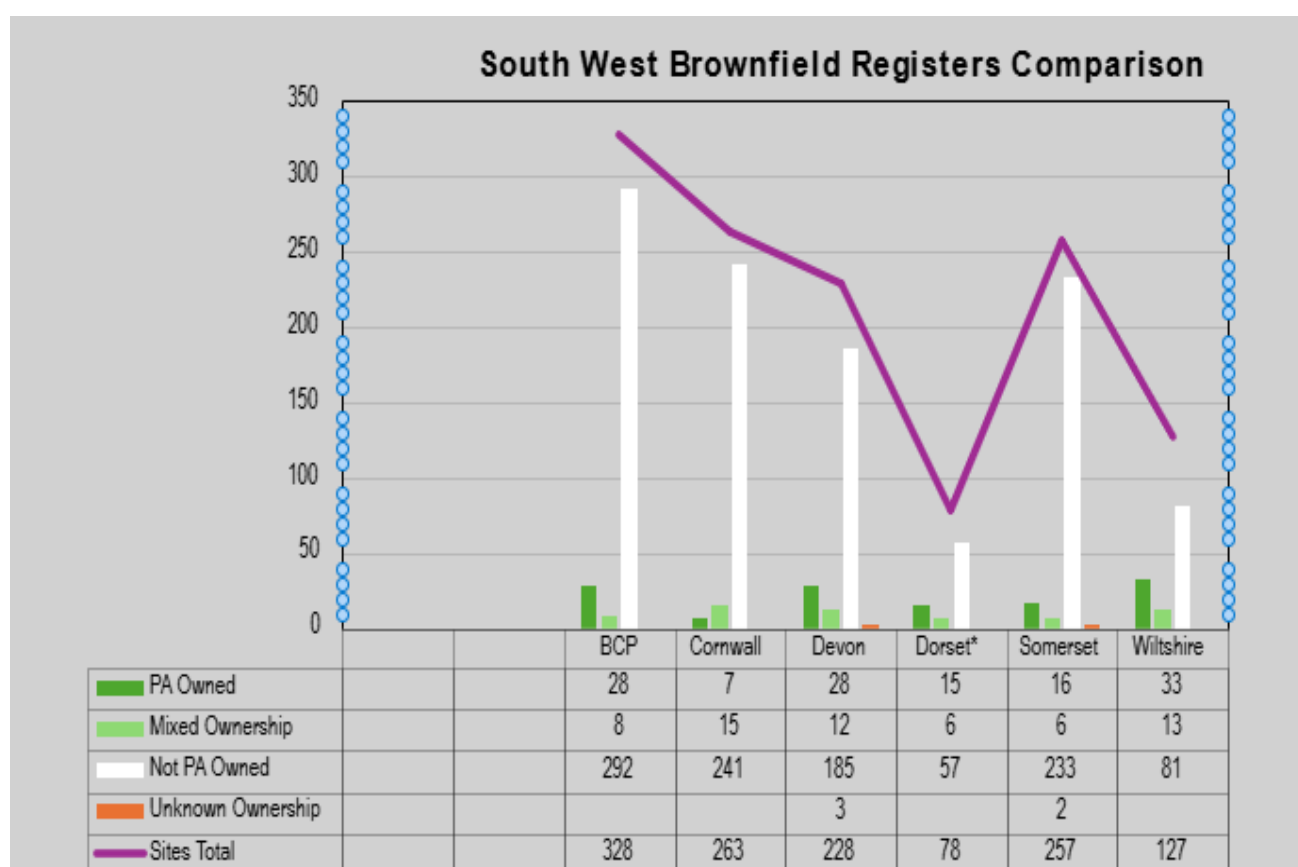
- Aldersholt, Blandford, Blandford St Mary, Cerne Abbas, Dorchester, Ferndown, Gillingham (2), Hazlebury Bryan, Mosterton, Shaftesbury, Stalbridge, Sturminster Newton (2), Swanage, Weymouth (3).

Dorset Council Brownfield Sites compared to neighbouring authorities

In comparison to other neighbouring authorities Dorset Council has a significantly lower number of total Brownfield sites.

Table show and graph below shows South West comparison of Brownfield sites:

South West Brownfield Registers Comparison						
Authorit y	BC P	Cornwall	Devon	Dorset*	Somerset	Wiltshire
PA Owned	28	7	28	15	16	33
Mixed Ownership	8	15	12	6	6	13
Not PA Owned	292	241	185	57	233	81
Unknown Ownership			3		2	
Sites Total	<u>328</u>	<u>263</u>	<u>228</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>257</u>	<u>127</u>



Dorset has a total of 78 sites across all ownership types, compared for example to Cornwall who have 268, which equates to a 185¹⁷ additional sites, a 237 % increase compared to Dorset Council.

Table shows the comparison Dorset Council and Cornwall Council total brownfield sites:

Authority	Ownership	Percentage	Qty Total
Dorset Council	PA	19%	15
	Mixed	8%	6
	Not PA Owned	73%	57

Sites Total **78**

Authority	Ownership	Percentage	Qty Total
Cornwall Council	PA	3%	7
	Mixed	6%	15
	Not PA Owned	91%	241

Sites Total **263**

Graph below gives a breakdown of total sites by ownership and other neighbouring local authority areas. [OBJ]

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

Dorset Council published their updated SHLAA in October 2024¹⁸. The Council carried out a 'call for sites' in October 2019 to identify sites that may have potential for development over the next 15 years and beyond. SHLAA were carried out and published in 2020, with an update published in 2021, A further call for sites took place in 2023, and sites submitted by July 2023 have now been assessed and published in October 2024. Assessments for sites submitted after July 2023 will be published in 2025.

The SHLAA is available in a live database¹⁹ and as GIS interactive mapping²⁰.

Whilst SHLAA data includes both brownfield and greenfield sites, the data below is a summary of only the brownfield sites identified within the SHLAA data.

¹⁷ For full detailed comparison see appendix D

¹⁸ [Land availability - Dorset Council](#)

¹⁹ [Search - Shelaa](#)

²⁰ [Planning Public](#)

Public Authority owned sites

The latest SHLAA data indicates that there are 25²¹ publicly owned identified sites, 5 with planning permission and the remaining 20 without permission:

Table shows the total number of brownfield sites by ownership and planning status:

Ownership	Planning Status	Percentage	Qty Total
PA	Permissioned	9%	5
PA	Not Permissioned	37%	20

% Total	46%
PA owned Sites Total	<u>25</u>

The 25 public authority owned sites are predominantly located within Blandford, Sherborne and Weymouth:

- 5 public authority owned permissioned sites, single sites located within Blandford, St. Leonards and St. Ives, Sturminster Newton, Swanage and Weymouth.
- 20 public authority owned not permissioned sites, 3 in Blandford, 3 in Sherborne, 2 in Wareham, 5 in Weymouth, 2 in Wimborne Minster and 5 single sites in Charminster, Chickerell, Verwood, West Moors and Winterbourne Monkton.

Although the data indicates that there are 5 brownfield sites with planning permission research suggests that 2 of the 5 sites are unlikely to be available for development or plans are already made for the site:

- Comparison with the information held on asset disposals shows the site in St Leonards which is St Leonards Hospital has since been disposed.
- The site identified within Weymouth is the Pavilion and Ferry terminal²² which is already highlighted within the Councils plans to regenerate Weymouth as a site for development²³. It is proposed that the site may include residential properties, a hotel, destination restaurant as well as retail and commercial units.

Non- public authority owned sites

The SHLAA identifies a total of 29²⁴ non-public authority owned sites equating to 54% of all identified sites:

²¹ For the full breakdown of sites by area see appendix B

²² [Site details for LA/WEYM/048 - Shelaa](#)

²³ [d0e69fac-ba18-84fc-ec8d-fde3e17b0c72](#)

²⁴ For the full breakdown of sites by area see appendix C

Ownership	Planning Status	Percentage	Qty Total
Not PA	Permissioned	11%	6
Not PA	Not Permissioned	43%	23

Not Public Authority Sites Total

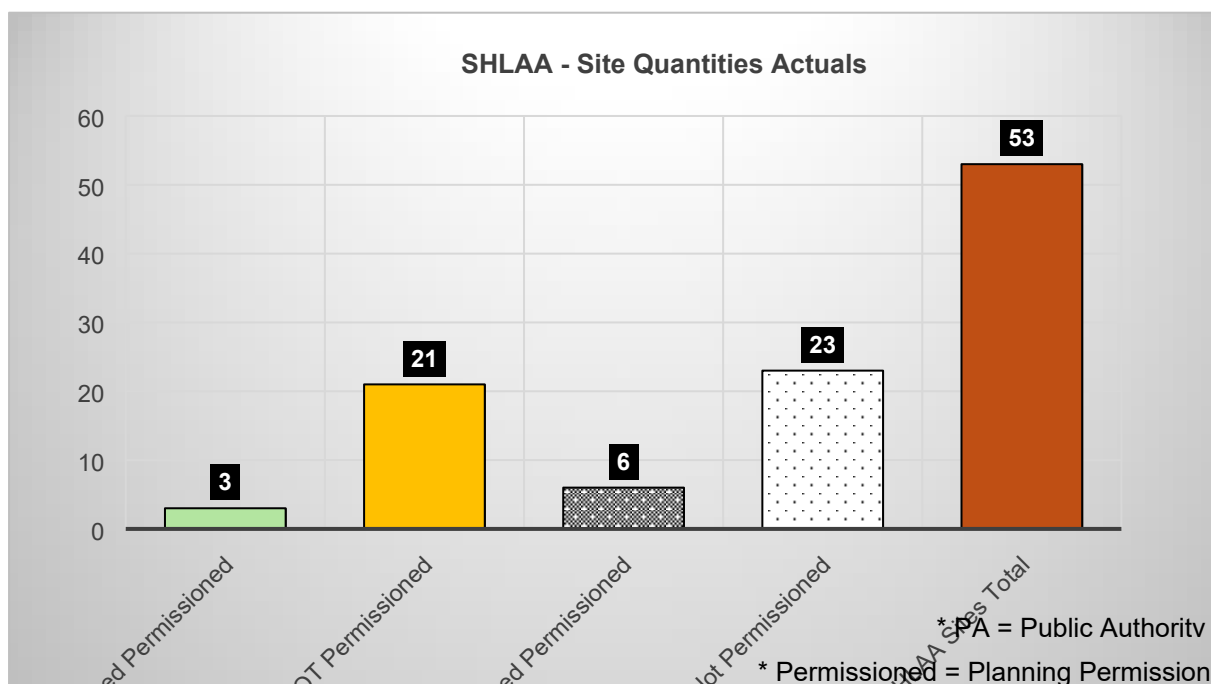
29

The 29 not public authority owned sites are predominantly located in Gillingham, Iwerne Minster and Winterborne Minster areas:

- 6 not public authority owned permissioned sites, single sites in Bridport, Chickerell, Gillingham, Lytchett Matravers, Milborne St. Andrew and Okeford Fitzpaine
- 23 not public authority owned not permissioned sites, 4 in Gillingham, 2 in Iwerne Minster 4 in Wimborne Minster and 13 single sites spread across Dorset.

Table and graph show the breakdown of brownfield sites within SHLAA by ownership and planning status (after disposal and planned development)

Ownership	Planning Status	Qty	Percentage
PA	Permissioned	3	6%
PA	Not Permissioned	21	40%
Sub Total		24	46%
Not PA	Permissioned	6	11%
Not PA	Not Permissioned	23	43%
Sub Total		29	54%



In summary 83% of the SHLAA sites are without planning permission, of the 9 sites with permission, 6 are not public authority owned with the remaining 3 being owned

by Dorset Council. The 3 local authority owned sites with planning permission are in three areas of Dorset and have been considered within each of the area's relevant neighbourhood plans.

Table below lists 3 public authority brownfield sites within SHLAA:

SHLAA				
Asset Name	Planning Status	Location	Anticipated Housing Delivery	Site Ref & SHLAA Link
Blandford Depot Site	Lapsed Planning Permission	Blandford	6-10 years	LA/BLFO/011
Sturminster Newton Library	Local or Neighbourhood Plan Allocation	Sturminster Newton	6-10 years	LA/SNEW/012
Kings Court Business Centre	Local or Neighbourhood Plan Allocation Excluded	Swanage	Subject to policy change	LA/SWAN/011

Blandford Depot Site

The Blandford Depot site is a brownfield site with lapsed planning permission that is currently in use as a council depot. The site offers a potential housing yield of 19 units and is in a development boundary within a designated neighbourhood plan area. If the site became available, it would be suitable for a town centre residential scheme as it could be compatible with the surrounding residential use.

On the 28 January 2025, cabinet approved²⁵ recommendations to award a contract to construct and develop a new waste management centre in Blandford. The construction of the new facility is planned to start in February 2025 with completion in Autumn 2026. The new Blandford waste management centre includes a yard for contractors however the needs of the depot did not pass the requirements for development within an area of natural beauty.

Therefore, the Blandford Depot site services will need to be accommodated elsewhere before this is a viable site.

Sturminster Newton Library

The Sturminster Library site is a brownfield site with a single storey library and police station buildings with associated hard standing car park. It is located within a conservation area with a grade II listed cottage across the immediate road. It is identified for residential development within the town centre, offering a potential

²⁵ [Blandford Waste Management Centre Update final includes App2.pdf](#)

housing yield of 4 units. The neighbourhood plan for Sturminster Newton²⁶ identifies the library building as 'locally important community building' and indicates development of it may be dependent on the relocation of its facilities.

The site is within the development boundary of a neighbouring housing allocated site 'Clarks Yard' ²⁷ , this a privately owned brownfield site with planning permission for 29 units. The development of Clarks Yard is highlighted as supported regeneration in the neighbourhood plan provided along with other criteria that community buildings (library) are retained or relocated²⁸.

There is potential where the landowner of Clarks Yard develops the sites as per the current planning for the council owned library site to be incorporated into this development.

Kings Court Business Centre

The site in Swanage is Kings Court Business Centre, this is a brownfield site within the settlement boundary of Swanage. The site currently has 12 industrial/employment units in poor condition with a car park and hardstanding. It lies within an area of outstanding natural beauty and is within 5k of Dorset Heathlands. The site has a potential housing yield of 20 units; however, the delivery of housing is subject to policy change and flood risk assessment.

The neighbourhood plan indicates that the site lies partially within two flood zones which will determine the type and level of development²⁹. The plan goes on to suggest that the sites could potentially accommodate employment, and/or some residential development. Any redevelopment of the site is subject to it no longer being needed for employment purposes.

Conclusion & Recommendations

To summarise:

- Dorset Council's most recent Brownfield Register is April 2020.
- After disposal are considered the Brownfield Register identifies 78 sites across all types of ownership.
- Dorset Council does not own (according to the Brownfield Register after disposal) any brownfield sites with planning permission. It holds 15 sites without planning permission and has 6 mixed ownership sites also without planning.

²⁶ [with working links SNNP Referendum version 20190114 - page 7 ok reduced](#)

²⁷ [Site details for LA/SNEW/010 - Shelaa](#)

[Site details for LA/SNEW/012 - Shelaa](#)

²⁸ Policy 22 [with working links SNNP Referendum version 20190114 - page 7 ok reduced](#)

²⁹ Policy KCD [03066a91-1cba-5650-e977-d3496777041e](#)

- Dorset's largest proportion of brownfield sites, at a total of 57 are owned privately. Almost 68% (39 sites) of these sites are held without planning permission.
- Of the 18 sites within the Brownfield Register that have planning permission, 100% are privately owned.
- Dorset has the lowest number of brownfield sites across the South West region.
- SHLAA identifies (after disposal and planned development) 53 brownfield sites.
- 83% of the SHLAA brownfield sites are held without planning permission.
- Dorset Council owns (according to SHLAA after disposal and planned development) 3 brownfield sites with planning permission and 21 without planning permission.
- The 3 council owned sites with planning permission are in Blandford, Sturminster Newton and Swanage.
- SHLAA identified 6 privately owned brownfield sites with planning Permission and 23 without planning permission.
- Internal consultation identifies 14 brownfield sites for potential development. Whilst all these sites feature on the SHLAA, 4 are not classified as brownfield sites and 1 has been disposed.

Recommendations

Improve information and best use of brownfield sites

- To eliminate the need for cross checking multiple data sets, Dorset Council revises and maintains an up-to-date Brownfield Register.
- Include a tracking mechanism and/or enhanced technology to allow for version control identification and interaction with other data.

Increase housing supply & affordable housing

- Undertake a consultation with all the private landowners who hold brownfield sites in Dorset to better understand the appetite and barriers for housing development and how development can be supported³⁰.
- Consult and engage separately with the owners of the 24 (18 Brownfield Register and 6 SHLAA), privately owned sites held with planning permission that have not been developed to explore why these have remained undeveloped despite planning permission being granted.
- Carry out further research and consolidate information on funding opportunities to support the development of these sites.

³⁰ [Dorset Council Housing Delivery Test Action Plan](#); For sites in the private ownership category the Dorset Council Housing Delivery Action Plan makes some suggestions but also recognises that there are limited options that can influence a business decision to 'land bank' sites.

- Develop and launch a campaign to promote of the use of Brownfield development aimed at the private ownership category.
- Assess the viability of the 6 mixed ownership sites.

Making best use of Council assets

- Using a cross-departmental approach, assess if the 3 council owned sites with planning permission identified within SHLAA, would suit the needs for 'new models' development partnership pilot or asset-led pilot.

Appendix

Appendix A

Brownfield sites post 2020 by ownership and area

This table shows the breakdown of Brownfield sites post 2020 by ownership and area

Brownfield Sites post 2020 by area									
	Bridport	Colehill	Dorchester	Sherborne	Sturminster Newton	Wareham	Weymouth	Wimborne Minster	Total
Owned by Public Authority WITH permission									0
Owned by Public Authority NOT permissioned	1	1				1	10	2	15
Mixed Ownership NOT permissioned	3		1	1	1				6
Sub Total									21

Appendix B

SHLAA publicly owned sites by area

This table shows the breakdown of sites identified within SHLAA that are publicly owned by area

Public Authority Owned Sites Areas								
Ownership	Planning Status	Blandford	St Leonard s & St lves	Sherborn e	Sturminster Newton	Weymouth	Other Area	Qty Total
PA	Permissioned	1	1		1	1		4
PA	Not Permissioned	3		3		5	10*	21
Sub Totals		<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>10</u>	
PA Sites Total								<u>25</u>

*4 sites, 2 sites per area within Wareham and Wimborne Minster with an additional 6 singles sites in Charminster, Chickerell, Swanage, Verwood, West Moors and Winterbourne Monkton

SHLAA - Brownfield Sites post 2020 disposal								
	Blandford	Sherborn e	Sturminster Newton	Wareha m	Wimborne	Weymouth	Other Areas *Single Sites	Total
Owned by Public Authority WITH permission	1		1			1		3
Owned by Public Authority NOT permissioned	3	3		2	2	5	6	21
Sub Total								<u>24</u>

*6 singles sites in Charminster, Chickerell, Swanage, Verwood, West Moors and Winterbourne Monkton

Appendix C

SHLAA not publicly owned sites by area

This table shows the breakdown of sites identified within SHLAA that are not publicly owned by area

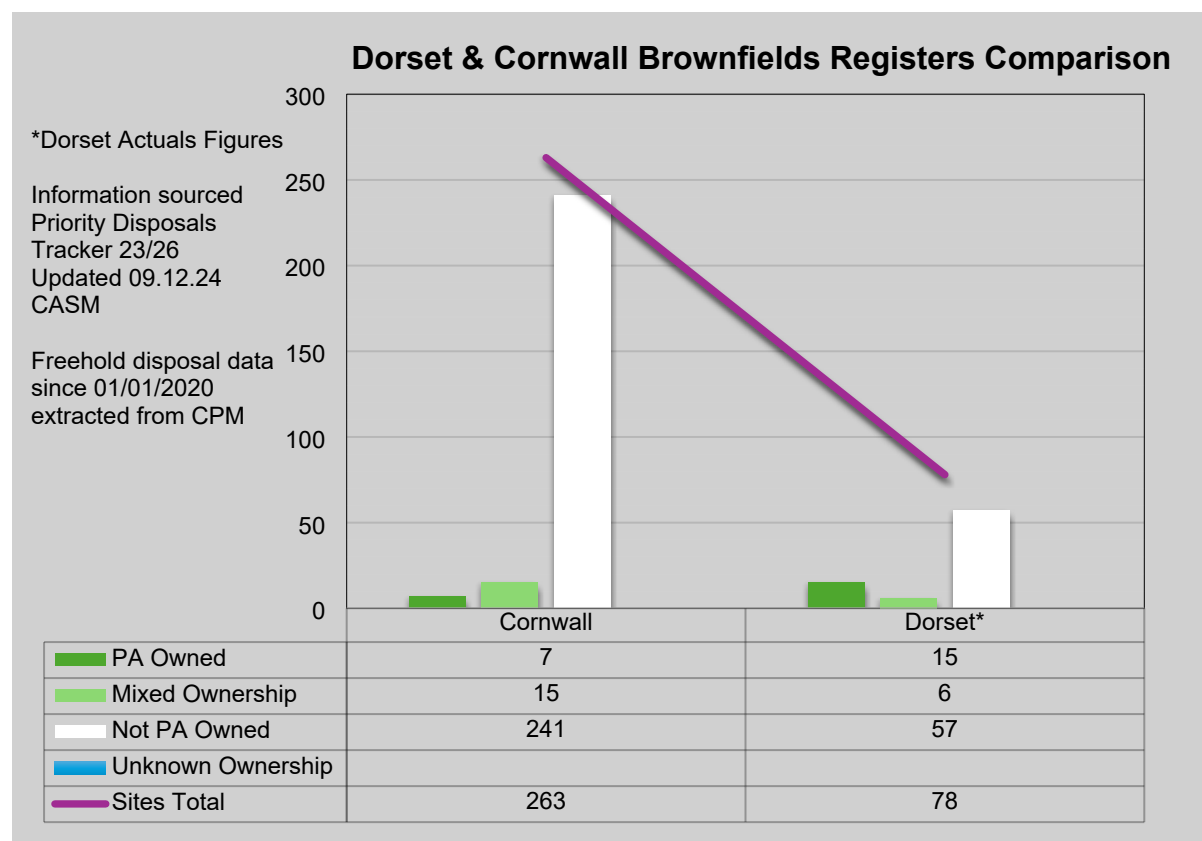
Not Public Authority Owned Sites Areas										
Ownership	Planning Status	Bridport	Chickerell	Gillingham	Lytchett Matravers	Milborne St Andrews	Okeford Fitzpaine	Wimborne	Other Area	Qty Total
Not PA	Permissioned	1	1	1	1	1	1			6
Not PA	Not Permissioned			4				4	15*	23
Sub Totals		<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>15</u>	
Not PA Owned Sites Total										<u>29</u>

*15 total not public authority owned not permissioned sites spread across Dorset:

- 2 sites in Iwerne Minster
- 13 single sites within Chickerell, Child Okeford, Dorchester, Langton Matravers, Lyme Regis, Lytchett Matravers, Pimperne, Portland, Shillingstone, Sturminster Marshall, Swanage, Wareham and Weymouth.

Appendix D

Dorset and Cornwall Brownfield sites compared



Brownfield Land Registers	Dorset Council	Cornwall Council	Qty Site Difference	% Difference
Site Totals	78	263	185	237%

Breakdown	Dorset Council	Cornwall Council	Qty Site Difference	% Difference
PA	15	7	8	-53%
Mixed	6	15	9	150%
Not PA Owned	57	241	184	323%

Appendix E

Internal consultation on potential development sites

DC LP Site Ref	DC LP Site Name	DC LP Site Area	Brownfield Land Register Listed Sites	SHLAA within spreadsheet *Additional brownfields sites not listed in Register	SHLAA Database Sites Listed within	SHLAA Link	Comments
LA/BRID/007 Page 117	Land North Flood Land & Fisherman's Arms Site	Western	No	No	Classified: Not Brownfield	LA/BRID/007	LA/BRID/001, adjacent to site LA/BRID/007 Within SHLAA, LA/BRID/007 Public Authority Owned, No Permission Within Register & SHLAA, LA/BRID/001 Public Authority Owned, Not Permissioned
LA/SYMO/010 LA/SYMO/011	Land Broomhills Site 3 & 4	Western	No	No	Classified: Not Brownfield	LA/SYMO/010 LA/SYMO/011	Within SHLAA, LA/SYMO/010 Not Public Authority Owned, No Permission Within SHLAA, LA/SYMO/011 Mixed Ownership, No Permission
LA/SHAF/007	Wessex Sale Ground, north of Salisbury Road	Northern	No	No	Classified: Not Brownfield	LA/SHAF/007	Within SHLAA, Not Public Authority Owned, No Permission (subject to policy change)
LA/SHER/010	Yeatman Hospital Site	Northern	No	Yes	Classified: Brownfield	LA/SHER/010	Within SHLAA, Public Authority Owned, No Permission

LA/SHER/011	Aldhelmstead East School	Northern	Yes	No	Classified: Brownfield	LA/SHER/011	Within Register & SHLAA, Mixed Ownership, Not Permissioned
LA/CHTR/008	Forston Clinic	Central	No	Yes	Classified: Brownfield	LA/CHTR/008	Within SHLAA, Public Authority Owned, No Permission Excluded – (subject to policy change)
LA/CHTR/017	Charminster Depot	Central	No	No	Classified: Not Brownfield	LA/CHTR/017	Within SHLAA, Public Authority Owned, No Permission
LA/CHIC/011	Former Training Camp	Central	No	Yes	Classified: Brownfield	LA/CHIC/011	Within SHLAA, Not Public Authority Owned, No Permission
LA/DORC/004	Damers School Site, Trust HQ and West Annex Dorset County Hospital	Central	Yes	No	Classified: Brownfield	LA/DORC/004	Lease of the former Damers First School site on Damers Road was surrendered back in April 2017 and the Council no longer have any property interest in the site. The site is now owned by Dorset County Hospital who have subsequently demolished the former school building, and the site now forms part of their redevelopment plans for the Hospital. Site is disposed, currently identified, listed within Register and SHLAA.
LA/DORC/012	Wessex Water Site	Central	Yes	No	Classified: Brownfield	LA/DORC/012	Within Register & SHLAA, Not Public Authority Owned, Not Permissioned
LA/PORT/003	Portland Hospital	Central	No	Yes	Classified: Brownfield	LA/PORT/003	Within SHLAA, Not Public Authority Owned, No Permission
LA/WEYM/006	Westhaven Hospital	Central	No	Yes	Classified: Brownfield	LA/WEYM/006	Within SHLAA, Public Authority Owned, No Permission
LA/WEYM/033	Lakeside Super Bowl, St Nicholas Street	Central	Yes	No	Classified: Brownfield	LA/WEYM/033	Within Register & SHLAA, Not Public Authority Owned, Not Permissioned
LA/WEYM/059	Park & Ride (Dorset council)	Central	No	Yes	Classified Brownfield	LA/WEYM/059	Within SHLAA, Public Authority Owned, No Permission

Appendix F

Combined Brownfield, SHLAA and Assets data set

[DC Brownfield Register Findings.xlsx](#)



Housing Strategy and Performance: Dorset Private Landlords

Home in on Housing programme

May 2025

Version control:

Version	Date	Changes	Circulated to	Produced by
0.2	12.06.2025		Sharon Attwater Sarah Smith	Louise Capaldi-Tallon
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	18.09.2025		HIOH members board	

Subject of Report	Dorset Private Landlord
Purpose of Report	Information / Recommendations / Decision Making

Background Papers	Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council dorset-council-plan-for-web

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Summary

This report provides a detailed analysis of Dorset Councils' offer and incentives to private landlords. It considers current ways of working and makes recommendations for new and/or alternative ways of working with Private landlords.

The project is cross departmental with scope beyond that of services offered by Housing Services.

This project forms part of phase 1 of the 'Home In on Housing' programme to deliver the Housing Strategy.

Project Purpose and strategic context

The Dorset Council Housing Strategy 2024-2029 identifies objectives for Housing Services and recognises Dorset Private Landlords as important in meeting the 4 key objectives: housing need, housing supply, housing standards and homelessness prevention.

Over the last decade the private rented sector has expanded considerably. Between 2008-09 and 2023-24 the number of households across England in the sector rose by 52% from 3.1 million to 4.7 million households. The private rented sector is now the second largest tenure in England and is home to 19% of all households¹.

This is reflected in Dorset, with home ownership being the largest tenure and the second largest proportion being households who are renting privately at 16.3%. During 2022/23 the number of households losing their private rented accommodation increased by 50% in Dorset. This accounted for 17.8% of all homeless approaches. Data for 2024 shows this upward trend is continuing with increased number compared to 2022 and 2023.

The private rented sector offers variety, serving different types of households across all incomes, including an increasing number of families. In 2023-24, 34% of households in the sector had dependent children, amounting to 1.6 million households. The sector experiences high turnover rates, with significantly more house moves compared to the owner-occupied and social rented sectors, both within the sector itself and between it to other sectors².

Since 2010, various policy changes have impacted private landlords, including tax adjustments, changes to Stamp Duty Land Tax, stricter lending criteria for Buy-to-Let mortgages, and the rise of the Build to Rent sector. Most recently, the Government's announcement to introduce the Renters' Rights Bill is set to provide a major overhaul of the sector. The Bill is now some way through the parliamentary process with most recent timelines indicating, the House of Lords report stage and third reading for final debate are set for 1-15th July 2025³. If the timeline proceeds on this bases, there will be seven days before recess for Royal Assent to be granted with a potential implantation date in October 2025. The Renters' Rights Bill intends to:

- abolish assured shorthold tenancies, replacing them with periodic assured tenancies.
- abolish section 21 'no fault' evictions
- reform and expand the grounds for possession
- limit rent increases to no more than once per year and place requirements on the service of notice

¹ [English Private Landlord Survey 2024: main report - GOV.UK](#)

² [English Private Landlord Survey 2024: main report - GOV.UK](#)

³ [Renters \(Reform\) Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

- prohibit the practice of 'rental bidding'
- give tenants the right to request a pet
- make it illegal for landlords to discriminate against tenants who receive benefits or who have children when letting their property
- introduce a new ombudsman service for the private rented sector
- create a new private rented sector database containing key information for landlords, tenants and local authorities
- introduce a decent homes standard to the private rented sector and apply Awaab's Law to the sector
- expand rent repayment orders and strengthen local authorities' enforcement powers.

In the most recent survey of Dorset landlords, 25% of respondents said that they were planning to leave the market or reduce their number of rental properties, within the next 5 years.

Their biggest concerns were:

- the impact of the capped local housing allowance on tenants' ability to meet their rent
- the increased costs needed to meet any new property, energy efficiency or Decent Homes standards
- their ability to meet these standards based on the age and construction of their properties
- the confusion over standards might lead to landlords being asked to complete unnecessary and costly works

The housing strategy also identified that households who privately rent their home can face barriers to having adaptations installed and this can result in a need to move. Due to the demand for housing, finding suitable accommodation can be a lengthy and challenging process. Supporting tenants to remain where they are often provides a better solution.

As of March 2025, the Dorset Landlord Forum had just over 355 registered landlords. Whilst this is a sizeable number, membership is mostly landlords with properties in the west of Dorset, who have been established as a group since before Dorset Council became a Unitary Authority in 2019.

A wide range of directorates and services need to access properties in the private rented sector on behalf of the people they are working with. If the council can act as one organisation and mitigate cross-departmental competition for the same properties this would help services, landlords and customers.

Project aims and objectives

- carry out a cross departmental review of Dorset Council's packages of support for private landlords.
- conduct a bench marking review of Dorset Council private landlord incentives against other neighbouring local authorities.
- research new or alternative ways to incentivise private landlords.
- follow up on the previous landlord survey and engage private landlords around new or revised incentivised ways of working.

- make recommendations and where necessary business case for, changes (including barriers to accessible adaptations), new or alternative ways of working with private landlords.

What we looked at and what we did

Throughout the course of this project, we have considered and included information from the following sources:

- researched other local authorities within the southwest and nationally to identify incentive packages
- conducted stakeholder engagement with Dorset private landlord's forum
- reviewed council service information in relation to incentive packages.
- considered the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published English Private Landlord Survey (EPLS)
- considered Renters (Reform) Bill

The national picture

In December 2024 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published the English Private Landlord Survey (EPLS). The EPLS is a national survey of landlords and letting agents acting on behalf of landlords who own and/or manage private rented properties in England. It offers unique insight into the sector with large scale surveys carried out in 2001, 2003, 2006, 2010, 2018, 2021 and 2024.

The report makes 8 key findings⁴

- just under half of all landlords own one rental property, 17% of landlords with five or more properties represent 49% of all tenancies.
- around three in five landlords have some form of borrowing on at least one of their properties
- around a quarter of landlords reported that they had identified damp and mould in at least one of their properties in the last year.
- more than half of landlords requested either a guarantor or rent in advance for their most recent letting. 7% asked for both.
- landlords were more likely to increase rent on new lettings than when renewing or extending a tenancy. 58% of landlords increased the rent the last time they let to a new tenant with a median increase of 11%. Around a third (35%) of these landlords increased the rent for new tenants by 15% or more. 52% of landlords increased rent the last time they renewed or extended a tenancy with a median increase of 8%. This is twice as high in 2024 as it was in 2021 and 2018. 20% of these landlords (one in five) increased rent by 15% or more.
- tenants were more likely to initiate ending a tenancy than landlords. 44% of landlords reported their last tenancy ended because the tenant gave notice at the end of their periodic tenancy. Around a quarter said the tenant came to the end of their tenancy period and decided not to renew and 13% reported having the tenant leave before the end of the tenancy. 8% (fewer than 1 in 10) of landlords said they asked the tenant to leave. 6% evicted the tenant and 4% chose not to renew the tenancy.

⁴ [English Private Landlord Survey 2024: main report - GOV.UK](#)

- landlords generally reported complying with required legal and health and safety actions for their most recent tenancy. 91% provided the new tenant with a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). 47% of landlords had at least one property with an EPC rating of D or below. Of these, 35% said they were planning to improve the energy efficiency or some or all of their properties.
- more landlords in 2024 reported planning to decrease the size of their portfolio than in 2018 and 2021. In 2024, 31% of landlords reported planning to decrease the size of their portfolio in the next two years, with 16% planning to sell all their properties.

The report goes on to highlight two prevalent reasons as to why landlords first decide to enter the market with 42% seeing it as pension contribution and 42% preferring to invest in property versus other investments. Around 4% originally joined wanting to let properties on a full-time bases. Over half of surveyed landlords viewed their role as a landlord as ‘a long-term investment to contribute to their pension’, this is higher than ‘pension contribution’ as their initial reason for becoming a landlord.

The report considers the employment and economic circumstances of tenant which showed the most common employment for tenants who landlords currently let to is;

- white collar, clerical or professional (59%)
- blue collar or manual workers (36%)
- people in receipt of Housing Benefit or Local Housing Allowance (18%)
- people in receipt of Universal Credit (16%)
- retired people (16%)
- student (10%)
- non-UK workers (10%)
- with 16% of landlord indicating that they do not let to any of these types of tenants.

The report goes on to consider ‘willingness to let’, which demonstrated that 90% of landlord were unwilling to let to tenants with a history of rent arrears and those with county court judgements (CCJs) against them (78%). It also highlighted 38% of landlords had unwillingness to let to people in receipt of housing related support including universal credit, citing a perceived greater risk of delays in payment or unpaid rent. Almost half at 47% were unwilling to let to people who would require adaptations.

Less than one in five landlords said a current or new tenant has requested an adjustment to the property. Almost all landlords (97%) who received a request for reasonable adjustments said that they had carried out the request. When asked how these adjustments were funded, the majority of landlords (87%) said they had paid for these in full. With 2% indicating social services and 1% citing Disabled Facilities Grant to have covered the costs.

80% of landlords reported having no tenants in rent arrears over the past two years.

Landlords who let to tenants on housing benefit were more likely to report having two or more tenants in arrears than those that did not. Only 3% of landlords said that they had gone on to pursue a guarantor for unpaid rent in the last two years.

50% of landlords used a letting agent to find the tenant for their most recent letting, with next most common route being through letting websites like ‘Gumtree’ or ‘OpenRent’ at 28%.

The most common factors to influence rent setting for landlord's who increased the rent on their most recent new letting was to 'keep in line with market rents', with 40% indicating their 'agent advised' them to. It was more common in 2024 at 29% for landlords who increased rents to cite 'mortgage costs' as a reason.

The most common way for a landlord to evict a tenant was via a Section 21 notice at 70% with 36% issuing a Section 8 notice⁵ and 24% indicating that they asked the tenant to leave informally. The most common reasons for the landlord initiating the end of a tenancy was 'property not cared for' (43%) and 'tenant in arrears' (42%). Almost one in ten (9%) landlords in 2024 said they ended the last tenancy because they 'wanted to let the property at a higher rate' compared to 2021 when 2% of landlords gave this as a reason.

Landlords were asked in the most recent 2024 survey about their awareness and understanding of recent or planned legislative changes. Which concluded awareness around changes to the way a tenant can be evicted and the right to request a pet were high at 75% and 61% respectively however other changes like the introduction of the Decent Homes Standard and Private Rented Sector Ombudsman were less known.

When asked about future plans 59% of landlords said next time one of their rental properties become vacant that they would relet it. Landlords were more likely to say they were planning to decrease the number of properties they let opposed to increasing their portfolio, with 'recent tax and legislative changes' being the most common reason given for this decision.

Reviewing Dorset Councils' Private Rented Sector Offer

The purpose of providing a comprehensive private rented sector (PRS) offer for a local authority is multifaceted:

- tackling Homelessness – a PRS offer can be used to fulfil the local authorities' statutory duties⁶ helping to prevent and relieve homelessness by providing suitable accommodation for those in need. This includes reducing pressures on temporary accommodation and improves the health and wellbeing of those placed in this type of accommodation.
- expands housing options – by incorporating a PRS offer, the authority can offer a wider range of housing solutions, this is particularly important for areas like Dorset with limited access to social housing.
- reduces pressure on social housing – a PRS offer helps to alleviate the demand on social housing.
- ensures quality and standards – local authorities can work with private landlords to ensure that rental properties meet safety and quality standards, improving living conditions.

⁵ A Section 8 notice is a formal legal document that a landlord in the UK can serve to a tenant to begin the process of eviction due to a breach of the tenancy agreement. It is typically issued when a tenant has failed to uphold their responsibilities, such as falling behind on rent payments or damaging the property.

The landlord must serve a tenant with a valid Section 8 notice, stating the grounds for eviction these grounds can be mandatory or discretionary

⁶ Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

- flexibility and responsiveness – it can help the authority to respond more flexibly to housing needs providing a quicker and more adaptable solutions.

Dorset Council offers five separate packages of support to the private rented sector. These are across five different service areas in three different directorates, each used to serve a different purpose.

Housing Services

Housing services offer three packages of support which are used for working with the private rented sector:

The housing advice and homelessness service offers the 'Key4Me' scheme. This scheme is intended to help households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to secure accommodation in the private rented sector. Features of the scheme include:

- Financial assistance in the form of rent in advance, deposit bonds and rent deposits.
- Pet bond up to £400 to cover additional costs incurred due to tenant owning a pet.
- Landlord cash incentives based on the size of property, up to £4,250.00.
- Free tenancy agreements and inventories.
- Support services for both tenants and landlords.
- Compliance checks to ensure landlords meet all legal requirements.

The temporary accommodation and supply service offers a 'residential property direct leasing scheme'. This scheme looks to secure long term leases to be utilised as temporary accommodation. These leased properties are managed within the Council, with the landlord benefiting from:

- Guaranteed rent regardless of whether the property is let.
- No management fee
- Regular property visits
- A professional property management service
- Peace of mind
- Full repair service on any damage caused by the tenant

The scheme allows for a cash incentive up to £4,250.00 this paid usually in one lump sum although arrangements can be made to stagger payments.

The housing standards team offers a wide range of loans which are available to homeowners, tenants and landlords to carry out works of repair, improvements or adaptations. The loans are funded by Dorset Council and administered by the Councils partner, 'Lendology' a Community Interest Company (CIC):

- **Home Improvement Loan:** homeowners and landlords can access this loan when a property needs essential repairs or improvements to make the property safe and decent. Eligible works are wide ranging with loans available up to £25,000
- **Empty Property Loan:** this can be used where a property has been classified as 'empty' for more than 6 months and needs essential repairs or improvements. Loans are available up to £25,000.
- **Energy Efficiency Loan:** homeowners and landlords can access this loan to cover costs associated with large scale energy efficiency improvements. Eligible works are

wide ranging and could include installation of solar panels, solar thermal systems, air source heat pumps, ground source heat pumps, biomass heating systems or solid wall insulation. Loans are available up to £15,000.

Typically, one loan is given per property although in some circumstances more than one can be considered. For example, where there is three flats in one property there is potential to offer a loan per flat.

Children's Services

The 'Leaving Care' team within children's services has an offer for landlords who provide accommodation for care experienced young people. The incentives include:

- Dorset Council as a rent guarantor for up to 12 months
- 1 month rent in advance
- payment of 12 months' rent up front to be held in a separate account⁷
- a top-up towards the rent if the Universal Credit element is lower than the private rental cost.
- personal advisor as a contact point with regular updates and meetings with the young person
- personal advisor visits to the home every 8 weeks
- a 'setting up home' grant up to £3,000⁸

The team also build in regular reviews to show support, oversight and accountability. Children's services do not offer any type of bond or cash incentive to secure properties.

Adult Services

Adult Services do not have a specific package of support although funds can be made available to pay rent in advance and deposits which is offered on a case-by-case basis. Adult services do not offer any cash incentives or bonds.

Below Table A. shows a summary of the packages of support offered across all the Dorset Council services

⁷ The young person pays rent – this is intended to be as a security should the rent not be paid.

⁸ This is supervised funds that is award to the care leaver and spent with authorisation of the personal advisor

Table A.

Directorate & Team	Incentive amount	Bond	Rent in advance	Deposit	Extras	Grant (non-repayable)	Policy
Housing – Homelessness Prevention and Housing Advice	1 bed - £4000 2 bed - £2250 3 bed - £3250 4 bed – £4250 No rent increases for 18 months. Paid in instalments	Up to 12 weeks rent	Up to 5 weeks rent	Up to 5 weeks rent	- Pet bond up to £400 - Landlord support - Tenancy support - Tenancy agreement - Inventory - Landlord compliancy test	No	Yes
Housing - Housing Supply (Temporary Accommodation)	Maximum £4250 (value determined case by case) Paid in 2 instalments	No	No	No	- Tenant support - Landlord support - Property compliancy checks - Lease agreement - Repairs and maintenance	No	Yes
Housing - Housing Standards	No	No	No	No	- Homes Improvement Loans from Lendology CIC – up to £25000 - Empty property loan from Lendology – up to £25000 - Energy efficiency loan from Lendology – up to £15000	No	Yes
Adults Services	No	No	Yes	Yes	Rent can be paid on a case-by-case basis. No set terms required.	No	No

Children's Services	No	No	Up to 5 weeks rent Can offer 12 months rent	Up to 5 weeks rent	• Rent guarantor up to 12 months • Can offer 'top-up' rent (if rent is above UC element received) • Support via Personal Advisor	Setting up home grant (up to £3000)	Yes

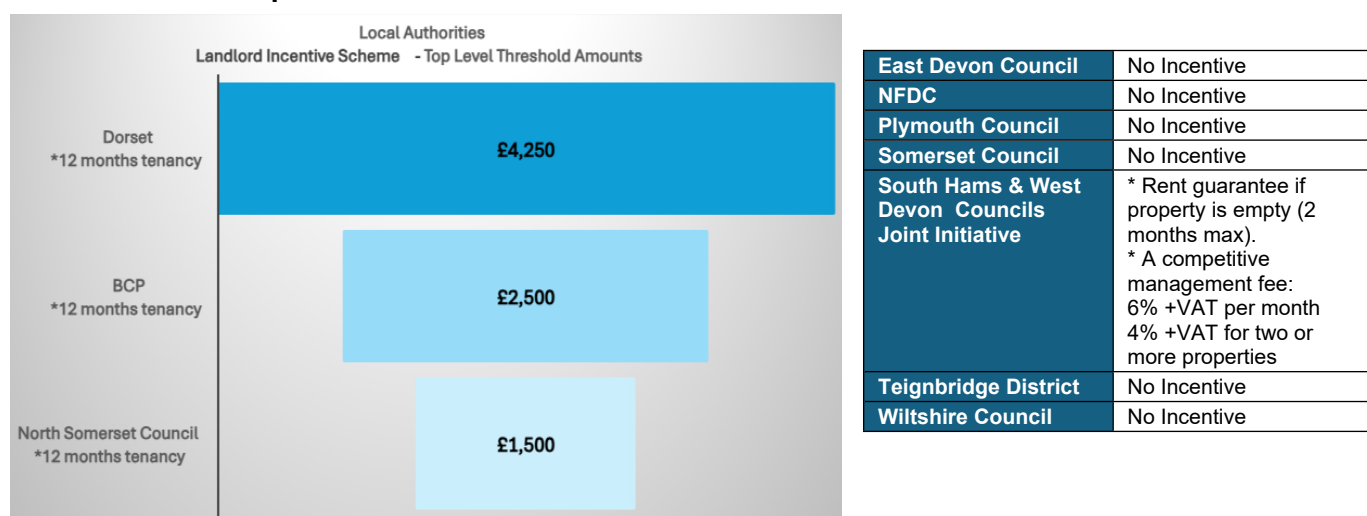
Dorset Council incentive compared to neighbouring authorities

Local authorities frequently offer an incentive package to private landlords. We have compared the incentives package offered by Dorset and all the neighbouring authorities below. The data for these comparisons have been gathered from information available in the public domain. It is possible some authorities do offer incentives but the information on these is not made available or advertised.

Dorset Council's Key4Me incentive to secure 12-month tenancies in the private rented sector has the highest financial amounts compared to all other Southwest local authorities.

Below Table & Graph B. Shows the top-level threshold amounts for neighbouring authorities

Table & Graph B.



Dorset's Key4Me incentives are 100% higher in the payable amount compared to Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) and 150% higher compared with North Somerset Council.

This is shown in Table C below.

Table C.

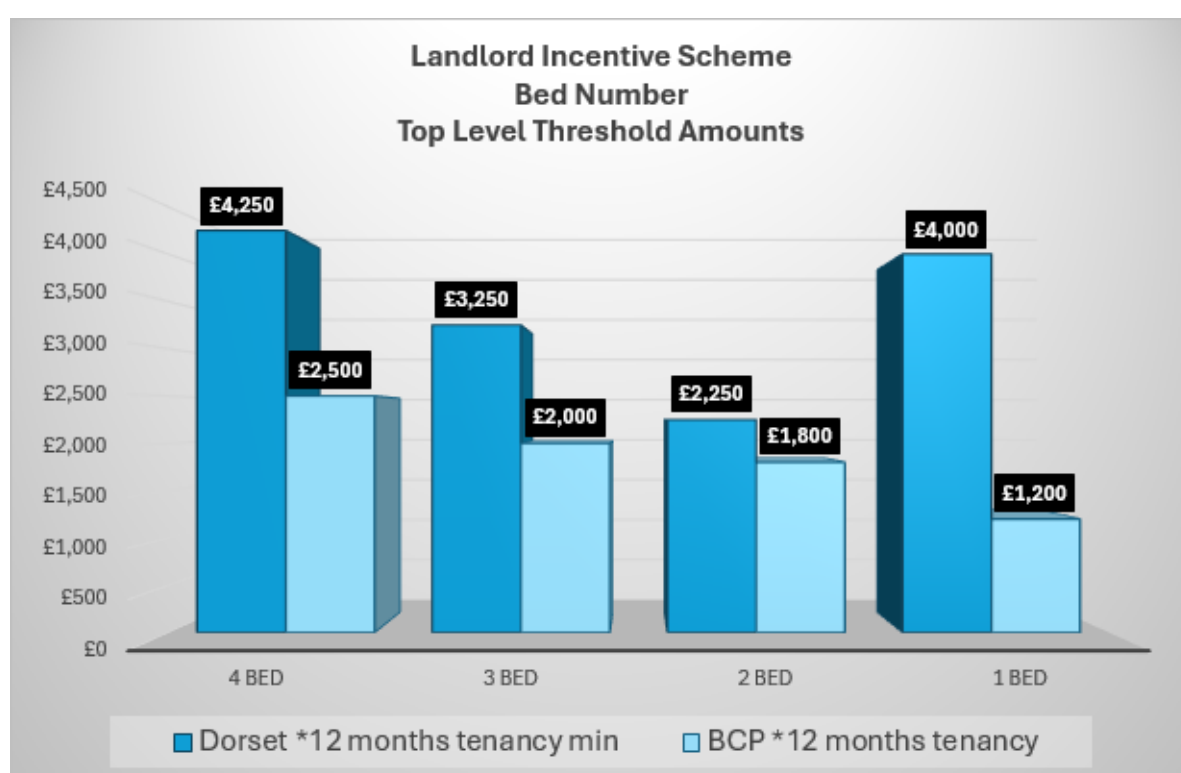
Authority Comparison Price Threshold Difference				
Landlord Incentive Scheme				
Top Level Threshold Amounts				
Dorset Council *12 months tenancy min	BCP Council *12 months tenancy	North Somerset Council *12 months tenancy min	£ Difference	% Difference
£4,500	£2,500		£2,000	100%
£4,500		£1,500	£3,000	150%

The incentives operating in Dorset and BCP work on a tariff, with more payable depending on the size of the property. For 1- and 4-bedroom properties, Dorset Council's incentive is 100% higher than BCP's.

Table and Graph D. below shows the full comparison of incentive amounts paid per bedroom.

Table and Graph D.

Landlord Incentive Scheme Bedroom Number Top Level Threshold Amounts				
	Dorset Council	BCP Council	£ Difference	% Difference
1 Bed	£4,000	£1,200	£2,800	100%
2 Bed	£2,250	£1,800	£700	64%
3 Bed	£3,250	£2,000	£1,250	100%
4 Bed	£4,250	£2,500	£1,750	100%



Whilst the landlord incentive for Dorset is payable at the highest rate in the Southwest region it can still prove to be a cost-effective solution, especially when used to move applicants out of bed and breakfast accommodation.

From the 1st November 2024 to 30 June 2025 the council has paid 56 private landlord incentives through the Key4Me scheme. Of the applicants to receive the incentive 19 had a placement in council temporary accommodation. With 13 of those during their application being placed in Bed and Breakfast, with an average stay of 41 days. Some received the incentives whilst still placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation while others had been moved on to other types of council temporary accommodation. The range of incentive paid for the 19 applicants was from £675 to £4250 with an average payment of £3114.47.

For example: for an applicant who is placed in bed and breakfast accommodation for 41 days at a cost of £95.00 per night amounts to a weekly charge of £665.00. The applicant will

always need to pay a weekly service charge (£26.41) and any charges that are ineligible for housing benefit. Assuming the applicant is eligible for full Housing Benefit, they will be awarded Housing Benefit at £638.59 per week. The Department for Work and Pensions will pay the council £114.23 per week toward this, and the balance of the housing benefit award (£524.26 per week) is paid by the council. In this example, for a stay of 41 days, £3070.90 is paid by the council.

These same financial savings do not apply to council owned or leased temporary accommodation. There are however secondary savings when the incentive is used to moved applicants out of council owned or leased temporary accommodation in that a vacancy is created allowing for other applicants to be moved out or avoid bed and breakfast accommodation.

Table E. below shows the full details of the Dorset Council 'Key4Me' scheme in comparison to other neighbouring authorities

Table E. Full incentive details for neighbouring authorities⁹

	Dorset Council	BCP Council	North Somerset Council	East Devon Council	NFDC	Wiltshire Council	Plymouth Council	Somerset Council
Landlord incentive scheme	Key4Me Scheme: Cash incentive up to £4250. (12 months tenancy min). 1 bed - up to £4000. 2 bed - Up to £2250. 3 bed - up to £3250, 4 bed - up to £4250.	Help to Let Scheme: cash incentive up to £2500 (12 months tenancy) Studio/1 bed - £1200. 2 bed - £1800. 3 bed £2000. 4 bed - £2500	Cash incentive: up to £1500 (12 months tenancy min)	No incentive scheme	No incentive scheme	Wiltlets: tenant finding service only.	Own ethical letting agent. No cash incentive.	Keyring Lettings: Tenant finding service only
Bond	Up to 12 weeks	Arrears bond only, valid for 12 months.	Up to 5 weeks	Amount negotiable	Yes	Up to 6 weeks		Unknown
Rent in advance	Up to 5 weeks	Up to 5 weeks	Up to 5 weeks	Up to 5 weeks	Up to 3 months	Up to 5 weeks		Unknown
Deposit	Up to 5 weeks	Up to 5 weeks	Up to 5 weeks	Up to 5 weeks	Up to 3 months	Up to 5 weeks		Unknown
Extras	Tenant support services, landlord support, tenancy & inventories, pet bond £400	HMO license fee reimbursement (nomination rights for 12 months), tenancy support & landlord liaison service.	Tenant finding service, property inspections, tenancy agreements, financial assistance to join or renew.	Tenancy sustainment support	Tenant support service	Tenant support services		No

⁹ See appendix A for South Hams, West Devon and Teignbridge

Other Statutory and Non statutory organisations

Other statutory and non-statutory organisations such as the Probation service and local charities also do work to secure accommodation for their service users in the private rented sector. These tend to be less competitive and focus more on access to funds/grants for the individual to secure a property rather than an incentive amount in exchange for a property. The offer is to the service user rather than the landlord.

Table F. is a summary of some local and national organisations with an offer to help access the private rented sector.

Table F.

Page 137

Item	Organisation						
	Probation	St Martin in the Fields	St Mungos	SSAFA	The Lantern	Veterans Hub Weymouth	PATH (Plymouth Access to Housing Ltd)
Scheme	Accommodation offer only	Vicar's Relief Fund	Support based schemes & help finding accommodation only	Housing support & Advice for military personal and their family	No cash incentive	Community project - lottery funded. Support for veterans.	PATH - relieve poverty by providing assistance to those in housing need. PRAS - Private rented access service.
Bond	No	No	No	Yes - no cap as long as property is affordable	Yes, case by case	No	Yes, most commonly offered. No upper limit but must be affordable property.
Rent in advance	No	Up to £500	No	Yes	Up to £500	No	They apply to charities for RIA, they do not offer themselves. Except: they have YP pot of money where they can offer RIA or offenders - separate

							offenders pot where they offer RIA
Deposit		N/A	No	Yes	No	No	No - except for offenders (this funding comes from LG)
Extras	Community Accommodation Service. Provides housing for up to 12 weeks for offenders at risk of homelessness on release. Often referred to LA alongside this.	Grants of up to £350 to cover rent arrears	Support with addictions, signposting, finding accommodation	No cash incentive. Rent and deposit is means tested - less than £500 surplus income. Affordability checks conducted; property must be affordable. Turn-over is 3-4 weeks. SSAFA reach out to various military charities and then approach RBL as a last resort. Can also help with household items - fridge, washing machine, cooker and carpets - quotes needed. The items are bought on claimants' behalf.	Tenant support	Community café, events, mental health support - psychotherapy	Plymouth Council can refer people in. Housing advice, support for rough sleepers, resettlement support. Refers people to Plymouth Homes4Let. Refugee integration support.

Private Sector leasing and housing standards

Dorset Council is one of only three Southwest authorities offering a private sector leasing scheme and the only authority to offer an incentive with this.

South Somerset are offering a similar level of loan support for home improvements as Dorset. South Somerset offer this in conjunction with grants. Both Dorset and South Somerset offer the highest amount through loan.

Table G is a summary of the private sector leasing schemes and loans offered by neighbouring local authorities

Table G:

Local Authorities	Private Sector Leasing Offered	Private Sector Leasing Incentive	Housing Standards - Grants/Loans/Incentives
Dorset Council	Yes	Yes Up to £4250	Yes (Housing Standards) Homes Improvement Loans from Lendology CIC – up to £25000 Empty property loan from Lendology – up to £25000 Energy efficiency loan from Lendology – up to £15000
BCP Council	No	No	Yes – Property Improvement Grant Studio - £1500 1 bed - £2000 2 bed - £2500 3 bed - £3000 HMO - £3000 Rent must be no higher than LHA + 10% Nomination rights
NFDC	Yes	No	No (only advertise external schemes)
Wiltshire	No	No	No
East Devon	No	No	Lendology – smaller repair works up to £1000
Devon & Cornwall	Yes	No	Responsible Landlord Scheme
	No	No	Safe, Warm and Secure Grant – up to £15000 Empty Home Grants – up to £15000

South Somerset			HMO grant (to upgrade and make new units) Loan assistance with Lendology, up to £25000 Landlord loans – up to £25000 - 4% interest
North Somerset Council	No	No	Grants for property improvements up to £1200 Interest free loans up to £5000 12 month nomination rights

Landlord Engagement

As part of the project the 'Dorset Private Landlord Roundtable' event was held as a way of engagement and to gain a better understanding of how we can better work with the sector. The event consisted of 15 local landlords and agents, with small, medium and larger (estate) residential landlords in attendance.

There were five main themes that came out of the event, these themes generally align with the national picture (discussed above) and the large-scale survey carried out by MHCLG.

Financial

There was a general feeling amongst smaller landlords (those with one or two properties) that recent changes in taxation and borrowing made the return on investment no longer viable and they were considering exiting the market. This was less of a concern for larger landlords.

Resources

Most landlords told us that they were unaware of all the packages of support available through Dorset Council. The leasing scheme, loans for property improvements and Disability Facilities Grants were largely unknown. Many do not find the Dorset Council website to be user friendly and have not been able to find any information related to being a landlord in Dorset. They felt the website was particularly lacking in information about events or news.

Many of the landlords source their information from National Residential Landlord Association (NRLA), British Landlords Association (BLA), or a local landlord association. With agents using SMS and WhatsApp to communicate with their landlords. Landlords told us that they enjoy landlord forums and find this a useful source of information, support and networking.

Support

Generally, there is a lack of awareness around what support is available through the Council. Landlords told us that they want to have answers to issues and enquiries promptly. It was especially important for them, that they are updated frequently regarding any tenant issues. They told us they do not always feel acknowledged and delays in support and bad communication can often put them off working with the Council.

For those that had received support from the Council, many reported positive interactions and found this helpful, particularly from the Benefit and Revenues department and the housing's landlord liaison service. There was suggestion that the new incentive packages are generous financially, which is a nice to have, however, they would exchange this extra financial support for early intervention/support, for tenants they are experiencing difficulties with. One agent gave an example of the Afghan resettlement team providing wrap around support and this being very helpful at the start of a tenancy. Landlords deemed tenant support and early check-ins for new tenants as very important.

For many landlords the process of applying to court for possession is a complicated and a lengthy process that they would rather avoid where possible.

The landlords were unanimous in saying the most important thing for them is being able to choose their own tenant. They explained they generally have a good choice of prospect tenants and tend to go with how the person presents and if they have a good rapport. There was a consensus amongst landlords that rent top-ups are not so much of an issue as had initially been anticipated. A tenant being in receipt of benefits, having a pet or poor credit rating is not necessarily a barrier. Landlords told us that they do not have any objections to working with the Council, they simply do not have a need to. They told us that they do not need to work with the Council to get a tenant, they prefer to pick a tenant themselves and have plenty of choice, with some operating a waiting list.

Standards

The impending changes likely to be brought in by the Renters Reform Bill and changes that will be required in terms of property standards is of huge concern to Dorset landlords. Many explained that if the changes are brought in as proposed which would require the property to be EPC rating C or above, it would force them to leave the market. They told us that it is relatively easy for them to bring a property up to a D or E rating but achieving a C is difficult. This is especially difficult for those landlords with older or listed properties. The schemes and loans available through the Council are largely unknown, these were however of interest. Many landlords talk of being weary of schemes to improve energy efficiency, some describing receiving a poor service in relation to cavity wall insulation, with poor tradesman and conflicting information about which products are best to use. Most landlords have heard of 'Ridgewater Energy' and find this a helpful resource.

Some of the landlords who attended had experience of tenants receiving a 'Disability Facilities Grant' (DFG). They told us that this was an easy process, no extra costs to them and generally a good experience. The negative comments related to sometimes poor workmanship and the products not being removed or recycled when no longer required. Ideally, they would like the option to have these works removed, the property made good, and items removed when a tenant moves out.

For existing tenant's landlord all agreed that they have and would agree to adaptation within a limit, they are more cautious about major adaptations such as 'motorised kitchens' whereas stair lifts and wet rooms where the property allows were mostly accepted and had been allowed when requested.

Legislative requirements & changes

The main concern of proposed changes from the Renter's Reform Bill relate to tenancies and no longer being able to use a fixed term assured shorthold tenancy. Landlords told us that they feel unhappy that the EPC requirements do not apply to holiday lets and because it will be difficult to achieve the proposed C rating that the option of moving over to a holiday let is more appealing. They would like to see local government lobbying central government about this issue. Particularly as Dorset has lots of older properties and is a desirable tourist area.

The Roundtable landlords told us that they would welcome a landlord accreditation scheme. Sometimes they feel they get tarnished by a general view that all landlords are 'bad'.

New, additional and or alternative ways of working

The Local Government Association's 'Improving the Private Rented Sector – A guide for councils'¹⁰ discusses various offers and initiatives to optimise work with the private rented sector. In summary the guide makes the following suggestions:

- Landlord Accreditation Scheme – These schemes encourage landlords to maintain high standards by offering recognition and support for good practices.
- Property Management Services – Providing services such as social lettings agencies to help manage properties and ensure they meet required standards
- Financial Support – This includes bonds, rent deposit schemes and guarantee schemes to help tenant secure housing and support landlord in managing financial risks.
- Tenant Support – Tenancy advice and support for tenants' groups aim to empower tenants and ensure they are aware of their rights and responsibilities
- Partnership working – Collaboration with various stakeholders, including fire and rescue services, HMRC, tenant groups to address issues effectively

Looking at other local authority schemes across the country it seems most offer similar services which include financial incentives, rent in advance, deposit, bonds, tenancy support and tenant finding services. Some offer rent guarantee for the first 12 months, reimbursement of landlord insurance and a few offer energy efficiency grant funding.

The 'Options for the new Private Rented Sector Offer'¹¹ report by Andy Gale¹² 2024 discusses approaches to maximise access to the private rented market. The guide aims to help Councils access the private rented sector in greater numbers and provide sustainable housing solutions to tackle homelessness

The report indicates to effectively access the PRS and tackle homelessness; realistic landlord incentives are necessary. Suggesting a cost-benefit analysis should be considered, comparing the cost of temporary accommodation and potential incentive payments for landlords.

Key Points of the report include:

- **Flexible Packages:** Officers should have the flexibility to create packages that meet landlords' varying needs, such as guaranteed rent, market rent, additional incentive payments, rent security, or support services.
- **Geographical Sourcing:** Councils should source private rented properties across a broader geographical area to increase the number of available properties.

This suggests offering an incentive scheme which is tailored and specific to the landlord rather than an upper fixed amount. With any scheme there clearly must be an upper limit however there are benefits to not advertising this and allowing negotiations for an equitable payment.

The report goes on to give steps to take when implementing an offer to private landlords:

¹⁰ [5.85 Local Authority private rented sector main report_02FINAL.pdf](#)

¹¹ See Appendix B

¹² Andy Gale is a highly respected housing and homelessness expert in the UK, with a career spanning over three decades. Awarded an **OBE in 2008** for his work on homelessness prevention and housing options

1. Basics to Put in Place:

- Assign a responsible team for property acquisition.
- Recruit officers with lettings experience.
- Promote the scheme to private landlords and maintain relationships.
- Prepare marketing packs for landlords and agents.
- Inspect properties to ensure they meet standards.
- Establish a single point for Housing Benefit claims.
- Ensure support is provided where needed through contracts with floating support providers.
- Respond to tenants' and landlords' enquiries.
- Encourage tenants to participate in savings schemes.

2. Review and Revise Marketing Material:

- Create and finalise marketing packs for landlords and letting agents.
- Develop flyers for distribution.

3. Develop a Marketing Strategy:

- Use word of mouth, flyers in public access points, landlord forums, and Housing Benefit mailings to promote the scheme.
- Seek access to landlord mailing lists, ensuring data protection compliance.

Adaptations

As discussed above the Housing Strategy indicated that households who privately rent face barriers to having adaptations installed often meaning the individuals must move. Between 1st April 2024 to 31 March 2025 there were 352 applications made to the Housing Register, where the applicant cited needing to move because adaptations are required. Of these applications, 64 were made from those living in the private rented sector. 34 of the 64 applications are live with 30 not completing the whole application process required to be accepted on to the Housing Register. The MHCLG survey identified nationally that 97% of private landlords who received a request for reasonable adjustments had carried out the request with most landlords at 87% funding these entirely themselves. This data matched the local information given to us at the Dorset Private Landlords Roundtable. Where all the landlords in attendance agreed they have or would agree to adaptations (some caution around major adaptations such as motorised kitchens).

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are financial aids provided by local councils to help disabled individuals make necessary adaptations to their homes. These grants are designed to support people in living more independently and safely in their own homes. In 2024/2025 there were a total of 433 DFG (works over £1000) awarded in Dorset for major adaptations. Of these, 21 were awarded to individuals living in the private rented sector, accounting for just under 5% of all major adaptations funded by Dorset Council via DFG.

As part of the research for this project we looked at the Council processes used when an individual living in private rented accommodation applies to the Housing Register indicating that they need to move because they require adaptations. It was identified that within the assessment process there is no engagement with private landlords. Investigations are carried out to check the applicants medical need for adaptations. However, there is no process to investigate if the landlord has received a request for adaptations or whether this would be considered.

Conclusion

Dorset Council offers five separate packages of support to the private rented sector. These go across three directorates, five services, with each used to serve a different purpose. Dorset Council packages of support provide the most generous landlord incentive packages in the Southwest, particularly through the Key4Me scheme. However, awareness amongst landlords is low, and many are unaware of the full range of support available, including improvement loans and leasing schemes.

Exiting the market is still a consideration for landlords for reasons relating to taxation, legislative changes, and property standard requirements (e.g. EPC rating C). Dorset landlords value having choice when selecting a tenant, early support, and communication over financial incentives alone.

There is a gap in the process for engaging landlords when tenants in private rentals request adaptations. Although most landlords are open to adaptations, only 5% of major adaptations funded by DFGs were in the private rented sector.

The upcoming Renters' Reform Bill is a major concern, particularly the removal of fixed-term tenancies and stricter EPC requirements. Landlords feel disadvantaged compared to holiday lets, which are not subject to the same EPC standards.

Landlords appreciate forums and direct engagement but find the Council's website and communication channels lacking. There is a desire for a centralised information hub, one point of contact and regular landlord forums.

Recommendations

These recommendations are linked to the project aims and findings:

1. Improve awareness and accessibility of existing support:
 - Create a centralised online landlord portal or platform. The online space should include accessible information on all Dorset Council schemes, incentives and support services. Alternatively, the Dorset Council website be redesigned to include a single landing spot and supporting pages of information specifically for landlords. Opposed to service specific information sitting within individual service pages.
 - Establish a cross-departmental private rented sector working group to align strategies, share data and avoid duplication.
2. Strengthen landlord engagement and communication:
 - Reinstate and maintain a schedule of regular forums to engage with private landlords. These forums provide a platform for updates, feedback, and relationship-building. The last forum was held on 8th May 2025 with the previous forum being held in May 2023. Create a single point of contact for all queries, support and feedback. This will work to streamline and coordinate contact with landlords. Develop a cross-departmental marketing strategy to promote all the schemes, offers and incentives available across the Council.
 - Create a shared landlord database accessible to all relevant services that tracks engagement and support.

3. Enhance support for adaptations:
 - To encourage better take up of DFG's, offer a "make good" service post-tenancy to remove adaptations and restore the property.
 - Develop a clear process which includes investigations with private landlords when a tenant applies to the Housing Register because they require adaptations. This would ensure opportunities to adapt existing homes are not missed and better outcomes for tenants who can remain in their homes longer.
4. Monitor, evaluate and expand data driven insights:
 - Introduce KPIs to track landlord retention.
 - Conduct an annual landlord survey to assess satisfaction and gather feedback.
 - Publish an annual private rented sector impact report detailing; number of landlords engaged, properties secured and adaptations completed.

Appendix

Appendix A

	Dorset Council	South Hams & West Devon Councils Joint Initiative	Teignbridge District Council
Landlord incentive scheme	Key4Me Scheme: Cash incentive up to £4250. (12 months tenancy min). 1 bed - up to £4000. 2 bed - Up to £2250. 3 bed - up to £3250, 4 bed - up to £4250.	Joint scheme between South Hams & West Devon. Works with landlords and developers. Rent guarantee if property is empty (2 months max). A competitive management fee of 6% +VAT per month (4% +VAT for two or more properties).	SPRINT: tenant finding service only
Bond	Up to 12 weeks	Unknown	No
Rent in advance	Up to 5 weeks	6 weeks	Up to 5 weeks by DHP
Deposit	Up to 5 weeks	Damage deposit	Up to 5 weeks by DHP
Extras	Tenant support services, landlord support, tenancy & inventories, pet bond £400	Property management for low fee 6% - in exchange for a lower monthly rental price. Tenant selection, credit checks and referencing. Tenancy agreements & associated legal documents. Conducting quarterly management inspections including all outdoor spaces. 6 week rent and damage deposit guarantee . A 100% guarantee of the rent when the property is empty (maximum two months). Arranging and paying for your EPC. Access to affordable finance packages for property improvements. Rent account management.	Tenant finding service, property inspections, tenancy checks, landlord training.

		A comprehensive inventory. In-house support from the Council.	

Appendix B

[Landlord Deal for PRS 2024 Andy Gale .docx](#)

Housing Strategy and Performance: Grant Funding

Home in on Housing Programme – Phase 1 project
Version control:

Version	Date	Changes	Circulated to	Produced by
V0.1	14.08.25	Amendments made based on recommendations.	Sharon Attwater & Sarah Smith	Louise Turner
V0.2	16.09.25	Added additional information UKSPF and DCA.	Sharon Attwater & Sarah Smith	Louise Turner
V0.3	18.09.25	Amendments made to: Enabling and Delivery Section, amended contents, figures and data charts. Economic, Growth and Infrastructure Government Funding Utilised section, amended contents and added Devolution Deal information. Accommodation with Support section, terminology updated. Private-Public Partnerships (PPS) section added Energising Dorset and Weymouth 2040. Foundation and Trusts section added Community Land Trusts (CLTs) information. Sponsorship section added social value information. Conclusions and Recommendations added reference to Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) 2024–2030, Local Plan and Local Transport Plan.	Paul Derrien, Vikki Jeffrey, Melissa Johnson, Steven March, Adam Fitzgerald, Rachel Anderson-Holson, Harriet Hallett, Carly Galloway, Edward Kopecky, Elspeth Bridges, Helen Heanes, Helen Priest and Ian Wells	Louise Turner
V.04	10.11.15		Sharon Attwater & Sarah Smith	Louise Turner

Subject of Report	Grant Funding
Purpose of Report	Information / Recommendations / Decision Making
Background Papers	Housing Strategy - Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council

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Summary

Project Purpose

This preliminary report explores the use and availability of existing external grant funding for the delivery of new affordable housing. It provides an analysis, status report on current external grant funding streams and potential new funding options.

This project is incorporated within phase 1 of the 'Home in on Housing' (HIOH) programme, and the delivery plan related to Dorset Councils' Housing Strategy January 2024 – January 2029¹.

Aim

To establish a baseline of information which details existing external grant funding for housing services and to consider how the council is currently utilising external grant funding opportunities, to identify potential new funding possibilities to support the delivery of new affordable housing.

Objectives

The project objectives are:

- To identify if there is reliance on one single funding grant scheme, and/or funding source provider(s) and if this reliance can be minimised by expanding funding sources.
- To identify other external funding grant and model options.
- To explore what the council would need to do to maximise grant funding sources.

¹ [Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council](#)

- To explain current internal working and collaboration and identify any opportunities for improvement.
- To enable informed decisions and planning for future external funding options.
- To identify where there is potential for co-produced funding bids that will help to align directorates shared priorities.

What We Did

Scoped and researched

- Desktop funding research by utilising the non-subscription Government grants search engine and the internet².
- Scoped whether the council holds a centralised document listing existing funding sources and grants/funding received.
- Scoped whether the council has a subscription(s) to funding search engine(s).
- Scoped whether the Communications and Engagement service holds a funding database and clarify if it exists and the function, to explore the option for the housing service to either duplicate or integrate.
- Scoped the viability for a Business Intelligence (BI) dashboard as a suitable data management tool to manage housing services and the entire councils existing and future funding information and data.
- Scoped the option for the housing funding BI dashboard to integrate with a centralised funding database, if this existed.
- Scoped the longer-term options to develop a centralised funding BI dashboard for the entire council.

Grant Funding Search Resources

There are numerous funding opportunities for local councils to secure external funding to help aid the delivery of affordable housing. Funding information on grants available can typically be sourced through various online sources via the internet and online funding search engines. The leading search engine in this field is GrantFinder which covers regional, national and international funding. Access to this search engine requires a subscription, and Dorset Council does not currently subscribe.

GrantFinder³ holds an up-to-the-minute database supported by a team of expert researchers who monitor, digest, verify and report daily on thousands of funding sources including charitable trusts, societies, research councils, national government, and corporate sponsors. GrantFinder collaborates with councils on their own projects including a 'policy match' function and returns policies and white papers which can be used to strengthen bids. Multi-year licences offer the best savings and are eligible for annual invoicing.

GrantFinder subscriptions costs are:

² [HIOH P22 Grant Funding Project Findings.xlsx](#)

³ [Funding For Businesses, Local Community Projects & Charities](#)

Cost	Duration	Per Annual
£9,040	1 Year	N/A
£16,531	2 Years	£8,265
£23,763	3 Years	£7,921

The costs shown above are calculated and based on the voting electorate, which determines how GrantFinder cost bandings work. The subscription fee options show what Dorset Council would be paying in relation to the cost banding group the local authority falls within.

The council's Communication and Engagement service via the Communities and Partnerships team, manages a community grant programme via a five-year agreed budget providing grant awards and grant information to support voluntary and community sectors (VCS) organisations. The team has also supported Community Transport, Local Alliance groups and individual council officers to review, and refine council grant processes by utilising the Communities and Partnerships grants protocol to promote good practice.

The Communities and Partnerships team promotes the use of the [Dorset Council Fund Finder](#), a funding search engine, paid annually by the Council.

Any service or individual within the council or voluntary and community sector (VCS) or partner can use this tool to research funding opportunities and its free to the user. The Dorset Fund Finder is generally not utilised by housing services, all directorates and/or services to identify funding opportunities.

Government Grant Funding Utilised

Housing and Delivery government funding utilised

Government grant funding to deliver affordable housing is accessed across the Council by the following directorates: Adults and Housing, and Growth & Economic Regeneration team (Place Directorate).

Housing Enabling and Delivery

The Housing Enabling and Delivery team, work with council colleagues, local communities, developers and registered providers (RPs), Homes England and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to plan and deliver affordable housing schemes across the Dorset Council area.

The team source capital funding for a mix of affordable housing schemes from Government and utilising the council's capital fund from borrowing, which needs to be repaid and can be used to leverage match funding.

Schemes must generate sufficient rental income or cost savings to cover the borrowing costs for long-term sustainability. Sometimes, borrowing costs are

supplemented with Section 106⁴ money or right-to-buy receipt money, along with government grants, to ensure the scheme is financially viable.

This team also source capital grants when they relate to the development of temporary accommodation. Funding sources include:

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)⁵

MHCLG aims to shape an economy that delivers tangible growth across all regions and communities and is committed to building a country where everyone has access to a safe, affordable, and decent home. Its priorities also include creating vibrant places supported by modernised local government, sustainable public services, and high-quality infrastructure.

MHCLG operates with departmental budgets approved by Parliament. These funds support a broad spectrum of initiatives across the UK, including:

- Local Government Finance
- Housing and Regeneration
- Local Growth and Economic Development
- Infrastructure and Public Services
- Community Empowerment
- Capital and Resource Budgets⁶

These investments are designed to strengthen local governance, improve living standards, and foster inclusive growth nationwide.

The Enabling and Delivery team from 2022 to 2025 has generated a total £6,446,186 external capital grant funding from MHCLG via the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) and the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP).

Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)⁷

This fund is aimed at creating long lasting, affordable housing assets that alleviate housing pressures and contribute to wider social and affordable housing system. This is a £1.2 billion initiative aimed at helping local authorities secure housing for resettled refugees and homeless individuals.

To date, the fund has been divided into three rounds:

- **Round 1:** £500 million to provide housing for families arriving through Ukrainian and Afghan resettlement schemes.

⁴ [Planning obligations - GOV.UK](#)

⁵ [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government - GOV.UK](#)

⁶ [committees.parliament.uk/publications/48048/documents/251258/default/](#)

⁷ [Local Authority Housing Fund - GOV.UK](#)

- **Round 2:** £250 million, primarily for individuals on Afghan resettlement schemes currently in temporary accommodation, and to address broader homelessness issues.
- **Round 3:** £450 million to improve the quality of temporary housing and support those on Afghan resettlement schemes who have not found permanent housing.

The enabling team have successfully bid for LAHF rounds 1 and 3. Funding from Round 1 enabled the delivery of 30 properties purchased by and in the ownership of Dorset Council. 26 of these were for Ukraine refugee families and 4 are for Afghan refugee families. Ultimately, they will become available to the Council to use as temporary accommodation. Funding from round 3 will enable the delivery of 7 properties for Afghan refugees and 3 properties for temporary accommodation (TA). These properties are delivered by Bournemouth Churches Housing Association (BCHA) on behalf of the Council.

A further round 4 is anticipated later in 2025 and is expected to continue to focus on temporary accommodation. Dorset will be monitoring the grant announcement and consider how it can best utilise the grant.

Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP)⁸

This scheme has been aimed at addressing homelessness and rough sleeping and is part of the broader government Rough Sleeping Strategy⁹. Launched in 2022, the national programme value has been £200 million to deliver up to 2400 homes and support services, for individuals experiencing or at risk of rough sleeping.

SHAP focuses on providing:

- Supported housing for adults with complex needs and a history of rough sleeping.
- Housing First and housing-led accommodation for young people aged 18-25 at risk of homelessness.

The programme includes funding for both accommodation and tailored support services to help individuals transition to stable housing and recovery.

A further £107.3 million was made available to successful areas through SHAP cycle 5 applications. This was included in an update published on 28 February 2024 by the UK Government following the £148.4 million made available through previous cycles 1-4 applications.

Funding cycle 5 is the final funding cycle. All funding cycles have now been completed, and the bidding window is closed.

MHCLG also allocates funding to Homes England to deliver specific programmes, such as the Affordable Homes Programme (AHP). MHCLG and Homes England working partnership summary is shown below:

Government	Role	Funding Source	Delivery Role

⁸ [Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme - GOV.UK](#)

⁹ [Rough Sleeping Strategy August 2018](#)

MHCLG	Government Department	Direct from Treasury via Parliament	Sets Policy, Allocates Funding
Homes England	Executive Agency	Receives funding from MHCLG	Delivers Housing Programmes

While Homes England administers large-scale housing programmes, MHCLG retains its own funding streams and can fund schemes independently of Homes England.

Homes England¹⁰

Homes England the national housing and regeneration agency, aims to accelerate the delivery of affordable, quality homes and create well-designed places that improve people's lives. They work in partnership with both public and private sectors to bridge gaps and support housing development across the country.

Key initiatives include:

- Affordable Homes Programme (AHP)
- Help to Buy Equity Loan
Assistance for first-time buyers to purchase new-build homes.
- Home Building Fund
Direct lending and investment solutions to support small and medium-sized housebuilders.

These initiatives focus on sustainable development, promoting modern construction methods, and ensuring building safety.

The Enabling and Delivery team from 2022 to 2025 has generated a total £361,700 external capital grant funding from Homes England Affordable Homes Programme.

Affordable Homes Programme (AHP)¹¹

This programme aims to increase the supply of affordable housing across the UK. The current programme runs from 2021 to 2026, with a budget of £11.5 billion.

Key objectives of the programme include:

1. Delivering up to 180,000 new homes, with 50% for affordable rent and social rent, and the other 50% for affordable home ownership.
2. Provisions for supported housing, rural housing, and homes built using modern methods of construction (MMC).
3. A portion of homes will be delivered through strategic partnerships, which involves Registered Providers working together to make bids for funding to Homes England with one RP acting as the lead partner to maximise efficiency and impact.

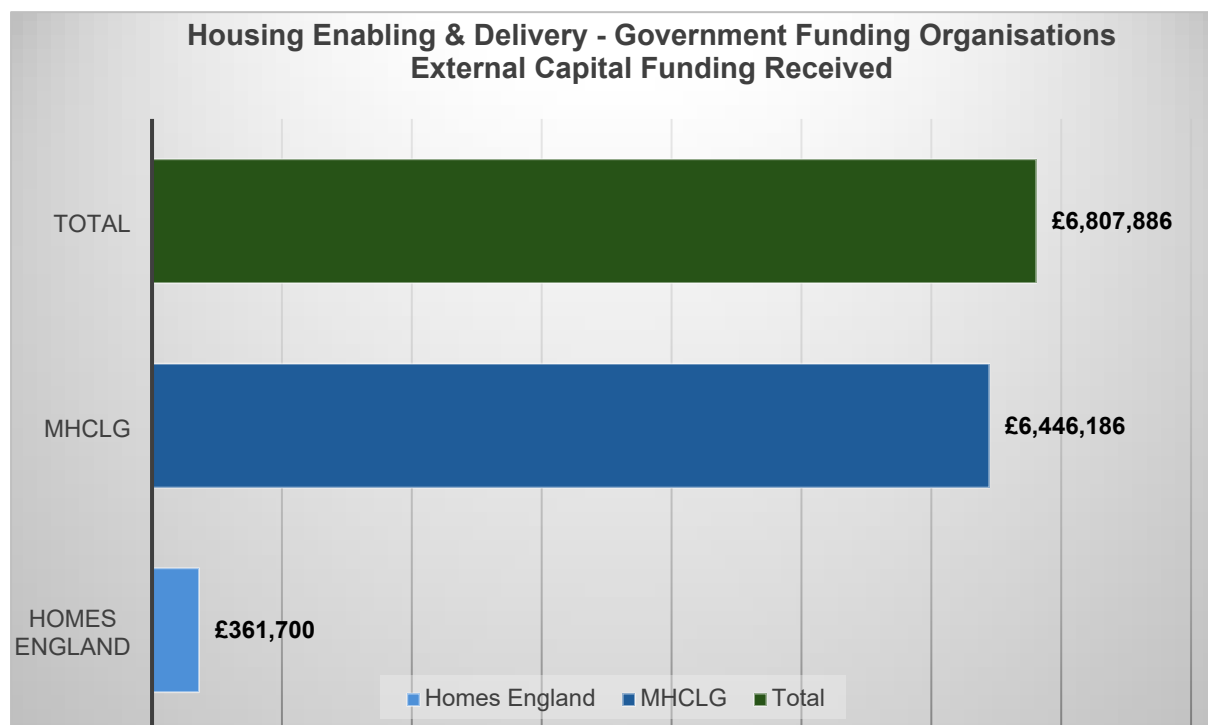
¹⁰ [Homes England - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/homes-england)

¹¹ [Affordable Homes Programme 2021 to 2026: information for partners - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/affordable-homes-programme-2021-to-2026-information-for-partners)

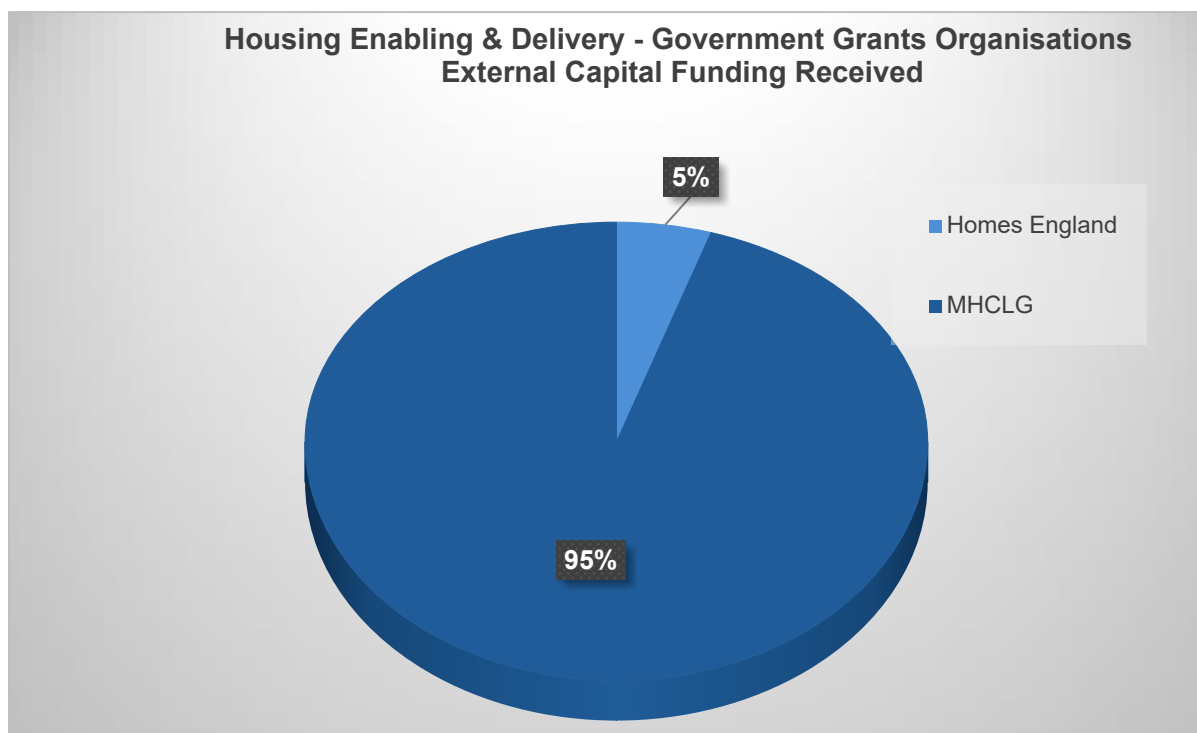
The AHP is designed to address housing affordability challenges and support diverse housing needs across the country.

Dorset Councils registration with MHCLG and Homes England and participation in various funding rounds enhance the council's capacity to secure the necessary capital funds for housing initiatives.

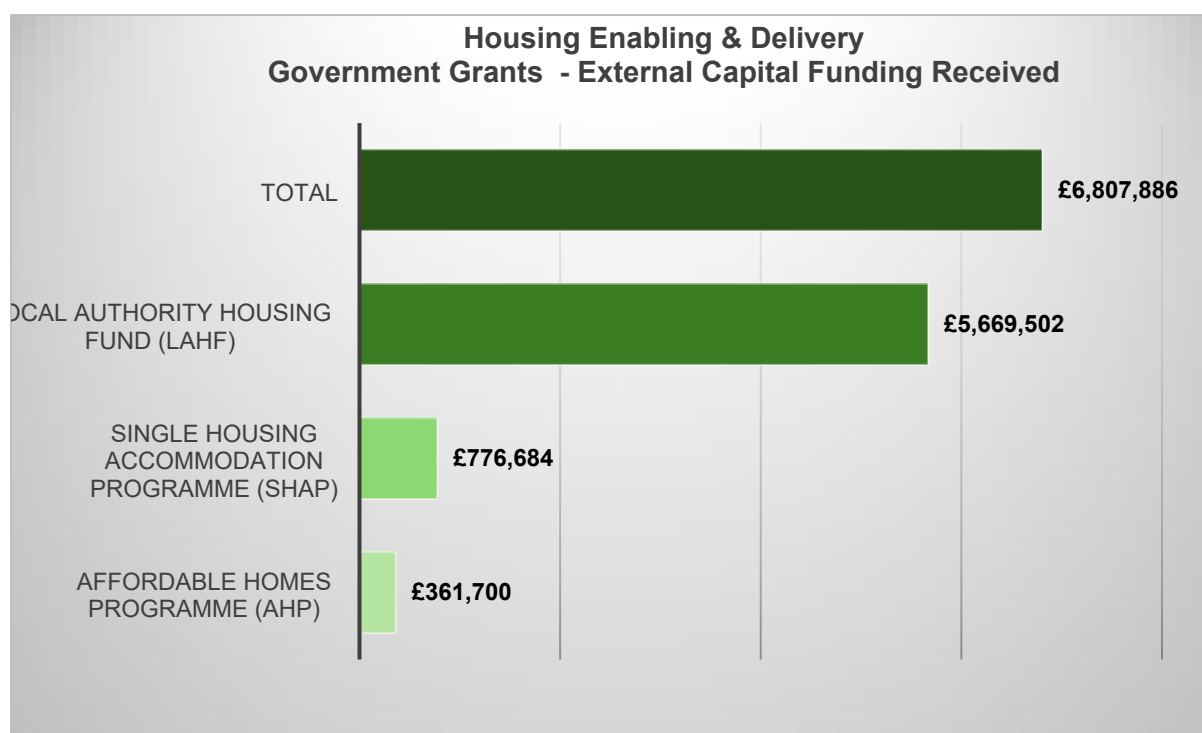
The Enabling and Delivery team from 2022 to 2025 has generated a total £6,807,886 from government grants. The table below shows the amount of MHCLG and Homes England government grant funding obtained.



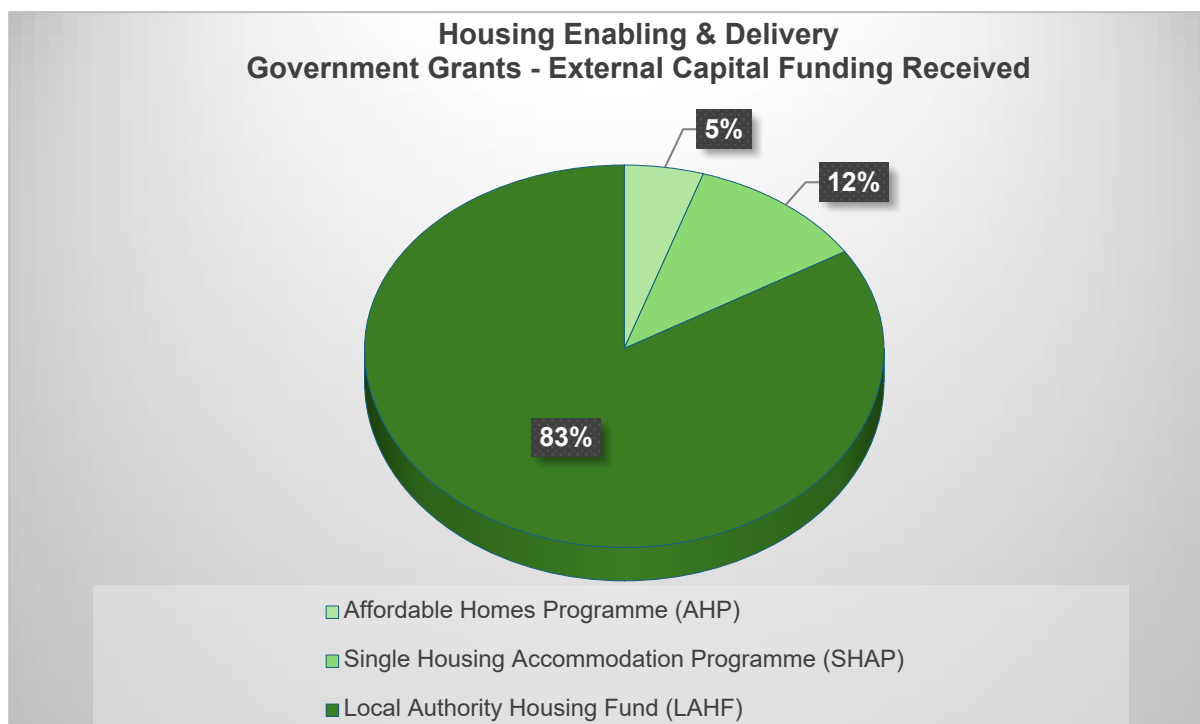
For Dorset Council, MHCLG has generated the maximum external capital funding grant value of £6,446,186, 95% of the total capital income. Followed by Homes England £361,700 grant value. The chart below shows this in percentages of the total grant funding received.



The table below shows the amount of government grant funding schemes obtained.



For Dorset Council, the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) has generated the maximum external capital funding grant value of £5,669,502, 83% of the total capital income. Followed by SHAP and AHP funding in descending grant value order. The chart below shows this in percentages of the total grant funding received.



The Enabling and Delivery team have utilised the LAHF, SHAP and AHP external government funding programmes for different initiatives as shown below:

Housing Enabling & Delivery Team		
Initiative	Grant	External Capital Value Received
Ukrainian & Afghan Resettlement Schemes	LAHF	£ 3,895,081.00
Afghan Resettlement Scheme	LAHF	£ 1,774,421.00
The Haven - Women's unit	SHAP	£ 300,000.00
The Bus Shelter - self-contained & modular flats	SHAP	£ 239,184.00
Dispersal Flats	SHAP	£ 142,500.00
West Farmhouse	SHAP	£ 95,000.00
Hardy House	AHP	£ 361,700.00
External Capital Received Total		<u>£ 6,807,886.00</u>

See appendix A for the percentage breakdown and funding amounts for each initiative.

To access external funding grants, the council has also provided funding through internal capital borrowing. The associated borrowing costs needs to be covered by generating rental income, achieving cost savings, and sometimes supplemented with Section 106 contributions to ensure schemes are viable.

Additionally, the Enabling team works in partnership with the Housing Programme on targeted projects that require capital investment for the acquisition, construction, or refurbishment of assets. To support these projects, the Enabling team provides match funding through internal capital borrowing which is incorporated into external funding bids. These bids are often complemented by the Housing Programme's revenue funding applications to cover the projects operational costs.

Housing Programme

The Housing service has an internal programme delivering projects covering three areas of focus:

- Housing service improvements.
- Temporary accommodation.
- Homelessness and rough sleeping.

The programme focuses on revenue funding via rough sleeping grants, to contract external providers and support services for homeless prevention. These revenue grants sustain services which are crucial in helping individuals transition from temporary accommodation to more stable, affordable housing.

The revenue funding is externally sourced through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). MHCLG grants currently in use is shown below:

Housing Programme Government External Grants		
Funding Grant	Acronym	What for
Accommodation For Ex-Offenders	AFEO	A small revenue only grant, for one caseworker and some funds for rent in advance and personal budgets for offenders.
Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme	RSAP	On-going grant to provide support to 32 RSAP properties.
Rough Sleeper Initiative	RSI	On-going grant to deliver services to those rough sleeping.
Single Homeless Accommodation Programme	SHAP	3 grants bids split into *Capital and Revenue funds. Revenue funding has been used to provide housing management and council housing management resources for the 3 projects: The Bus Shelter, The Haven and West Farm.
Next Steps Accommodation Programme	NSAP	Grant to provide support to NSAP properties.

* Where there is a need for capital funding, the Housing Programme collaborates with the Enabling and Delivery team to source capital funding from Homes England.

Accommodation for Ex-Offenders (AFEO)

The aim of this funding is to create a stable living environment for ex-offenders, making it easier for them to reintegrate into society. To reduce reoffending and homelessness by providing financial assistance, such as rental deposits, landlord incentives, and dedicated support staff.

The scheme is designed to support ex-offenders who are at risk of homelessness by helping them access new private rented sector tenancies.

Local authorities receive funding to implement these schemes, which often include partnerships with probation services, community accommodation services, and homelessness outreach programmes. The fund has completed its second phase between April 2023 to March 2025.

Dorset Council received a total £135,190 allocated for Phase 2 from 2023 to 2025¹²

AFE0 is no longer a standalone grant from 2025 to 2026 and has been absorbed into a broader funding scheme called the Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant (RSPARG)¹³. This new grant streamlines multiple homelessness-related funding programmes and includes the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI), Housing First and support for prison leavers (formerly AFE0).

Dorset Council received a RSPARG allocation total £600,496, from 2025 to 2026¹⁴

The Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP)¹⁵

A programme aimed at reducing rough sleeping by providing long-term accommodation and support services to those in need. Launched in 2020, the programme is backed by £435 million and has aimed to support up to 6,000 rough sleepers into longer-term housing.

The programme focuses on providing "Move-On" homes intended to be a pathway to settled accommodation. These homes come with support services to help occupants with mental health, substance abuse and complex needs, and ultimately moving towards training and employment.

The Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI)¹⁶

This national programme has run from 2022 to 2025 with a value of up to £500 million.

The scheme has been aimed at reducing the number of people sleeping rough. It provides funding to local authorities to support services that help rough sleepers find accommodation and access support. The scheme includes funding for emergency hostels and accommodation, outreach services, and other forms of assistance to address the complex needs of homeless individuals.

¹² [Accommodation for Ex-Offenders scheme: LA funding allocations July 2021 and March 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

¹³ [Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant allocations 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁴ [Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant allocations 2025 to 2026.ods](#)

¹⁵ [Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme 2021-24 - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁶ [Rough Sleeping Initiative: 2022 to 2025 funding allocations - GOV.UK](#)

Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP)¹⁷

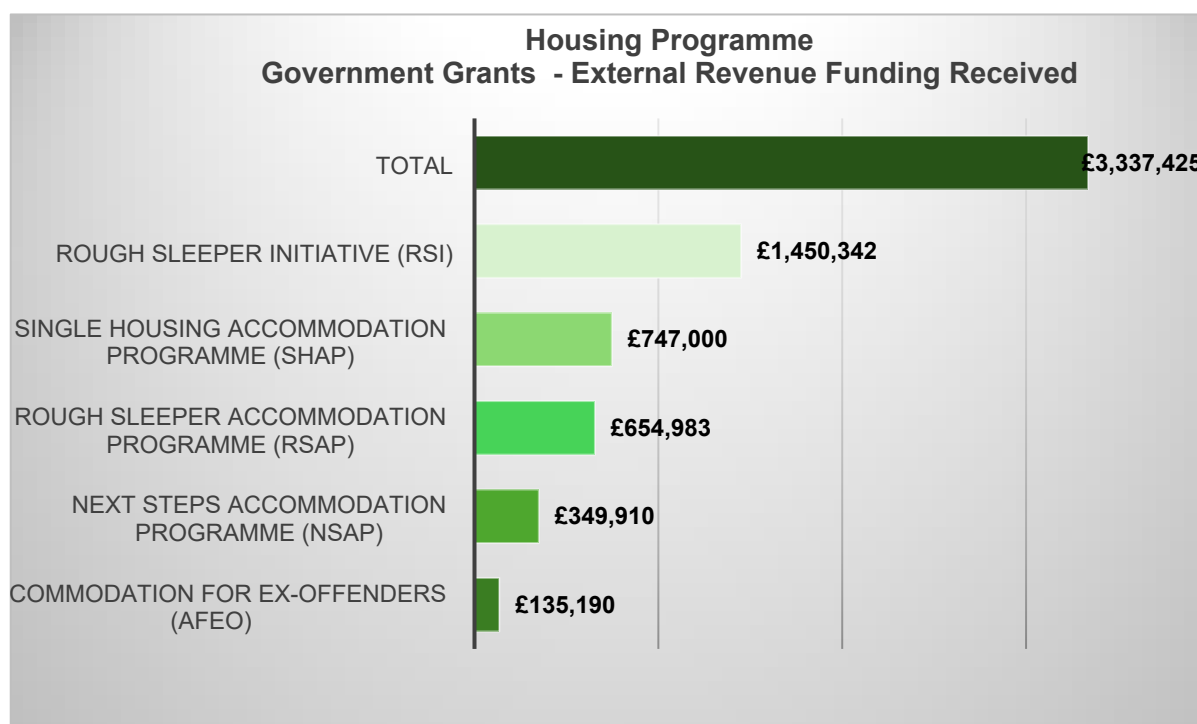
Launched, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to address increased homelessness and rough sleeping. The national programme provides financial resources to support local authorities and their partners in preventing people from returning to the streets.

Key features include:

- Providing emergency accommodation during the pandemic, which saw around 15,000 people placed into emergency accommodation.
- The programme offers both short-term and long-term funding to support housing and related services.
- Providing intensive, personalised support to help individuals maintain their accommodation and transition to permanent housing.

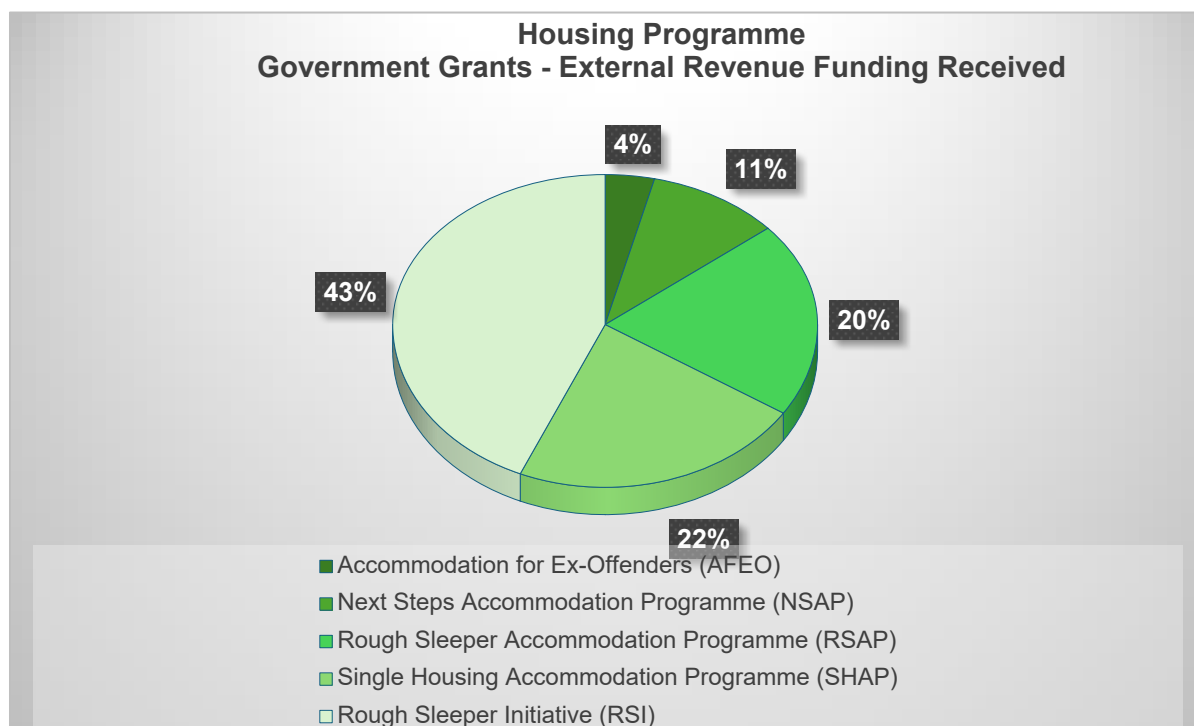
The council's Housing Programme has generated a total £3,337,425 external revenue funding from 2021 to 2028 via MHCLG.

The table below shows the amount of government grant funding obtained by the Housing programme.



The Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) has generated the maximum external revenue funding grant value of £1,450,342, 43% of the total revenue income. Followed by SHAP, RSAP, NSAP and AFEO funding in descending grant value order. The chart below shows this in percentages of the total grant funding received.

¹⁷ [Next Steps Accommodation Programme - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/programmes/next-steps-accommodation-programme)



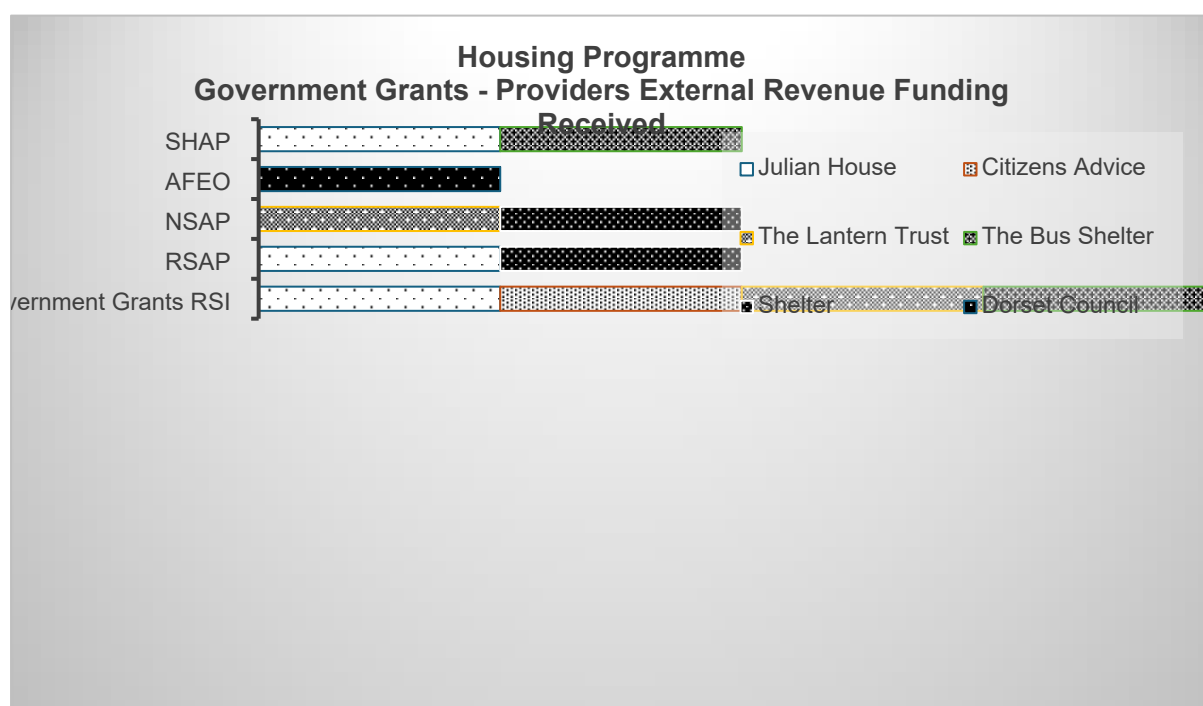
The Housing Programme has utilised external government funding programmes for different homeless prevention initiatives shown below:

Housing Programme	
Initiative	External Revenue Value Received Total
Debt & Benefit Advice	£ 143,642.00
Education, training and employment (ETE)	£ 127,199.00
Housing First (NSAP)	£ 293,996.00
Housing First Service (RSAP)	£ 378,398.00
Navigator Service	£ 560,734.00
New private rented sector tenancies for ex-offenders	£ 135,190.00
Support for Roundhayes, Weymouth	£ 276,585.00
Supported Lettings	£ 55,914.00
The Bus- Self-contained, modular flats	£ 123,000.00
The Bus Shelter pod support	£ 281,074.00
The Haven - Women's unit	£ 624,000.00

Wellbeing Accommodation and Support Project (WASP)	£ 337,693.00
External Revenue Grants/Funding Received Total	£ <u>3,337,425.00</u>

See appendix B and C for the percentage's breakdown and the external revenue funding received based on schemes.

The Housing Programme manages the providers contracts for each initiative, and these are funded by the MHCLG external government grants programmes shown below:



The providers revenue value amounts received by these MHCLG funding programmes is shown in appendix D and the timeline is shown in appendix E.

Accommodation with Support Programme

Accommodation with Support Programme is a housing service programme with the aim of improving the wellbeing of people and communities by developing care and health services and affordable homes in key locations across Dorset.

This programme has previously bid for funding in relation to the One Public Estate funding (OPE) and NHS England Transforming Care Grant (NHSE). The Accommodation with Support Programme have not made any recent bids.

The One Public Estate (OPE) programme¹⁸

¹⁸ [One Public Estate | Local Government Association](#)

The OPE programme is a collaborative initiative that supports and brings together public sector bodies to collaborate around their public service delivery strategies, estate needs and optimises the use of public land and buildings. To repurpose surplus public estates for housing, regeneration, and other locally determined uses.

Recent funding rounds have supported over 160 projects across England, aiming to create 19,000 jobs and 17,000 new homes¹⁹.

The programme has delivered significant benefits, including around £500 million in capital receipts, £112 million in running cost savings, over 31,000 jobs, and land for over 25,000 homes²⁰.

The Accommodation with Support Programme have bid for One Public Estate funding in conjunction with Assets and Property (Place) which secured funding in Feb 2019 for Feasibility and Master Planning activity for the Purbeck Gateway project²¹.

The OPE occasionally releases other funding rounds although there does not appear to be anything in the pipeline within the near or medium term. The council continuously consults with an OPE representative to scope further funding opportunities.

NHS England Transforming Care Grant (NHSE)²²

The NHSE is part of the broader Better Care Fund²³ (BCF). This programme aims to integrate health, housing, and social care services to provide person-centred care and improve outcomes for individuals and carers. The BCF supports local systems in delivering these integrated services effectively.

The NHS England Transforming Care Grant is a capital grant, which specifically focuses on improving care for people with learning disabilities and autism (complex needs). Ensuring they receive appropriate support in their communities rather than in institutional settings. The grant helps set up specific accommodation, often where the specification is bespoke.

It involves collaboration between local authorities, Integrated Care Systems (ICS)²⁴ and NHS England Specialised Commissioning hubs involved within the Learning Disability and Autism Programme²⁵.

The Learning Disability and Autism Programme oversees local plans for health and care and make community services better to ensure that people at risk of admission to long-stay hospital can be appropriately supported in their local community near their family and friends. They do this by making sure that health, social care and education professionals work together and listen to what children and young people need. Its

¹⁹ [New funding aims to create 19,000 jobs and 17,000 homes - GOV.UK](#)

²⁰ [Government Property Strategy - GOV.UK](#)

²¹ [Cabinet Report - Purbeck Gateway - March 2022 v3.pdf](#)

²² [Transforming Care overview and reminder of key finance and funding issues: July 2018](#)

²³ [NHS England » Better Care Fund](#)

²⁴ [NHS England » What are integrated care systems?](#)

²⁵ [NHS England » Learning disability and autism](#)

focus is on people with Learning Disability and/or Autism who are supported in long-stay hospital settings, or who are at risk of admission to long-stay hospital.

Dorset Council successfully secured an NHSE grant to support existing projects from the council's legacy period. At present, the Accommodation with Support Programme is not aware of any new funding opportunities available for bidding.

The Local Authority and the Integrated Care System (ICS) involving the Accommodation with Support Programme are working together with the Learning Disability and Autism Programme who must endorse funding bids. There is a possibility this could include funding for key worker accommodation, to support care services for people with complex needs to live in their communities rather than in institutional settings.

The Accommodation with Support Programme and the council may consider this through the system-wide meetings set up to keep the Learning Disability and Autism Programme agenda under review. The Accommodation with Support Programme will utilise the meetings process to identify future funding opportunities.

Housing Standards

Housing standards monitor and regulate standards in rented accommodation, park homes, caravan sites, long term empty properties and assist in the administration for the Disability Funding Grants (DFG)²⁶ via the Better Care Fund.

DFGs are funds provided to help disabled individuals of all ages to make the necessary adaptations, improve accessibility to their homes either rented privately from a social landlord, or owner-occupiers. Enabling disabled people to live safely, independently and remain in their current residence and minimise additional pressure to source alternative housing.

The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996²⁷ provides the legislative framework for DFGs.

Housing Standards works alongside the Market & Partnerships Service Commissioning Manager who manages the contract for major and minor adaptations.

The council receives a £3,800,000 annual capital grant.

DFGs central government funding for 2024-25 totalled £3,775,680, with an additional £376,000 to help top up large extensions and £150,000 awarded towards cost-of-living issues. These awards towards the cost of living can be used for example if someone needs a boiler replacing or other energy efficiency work needed, this can be carried out as part of their Disabled Facilities Grant.

Growth & Economic Regeneration Team (Place Directorate) government funding utilised

²⁶ [Disabled Facilities Grant \(DFG\) delivery: Guidance for local authorities - GOV.UK](#)

²⁷ [Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996](#)

The Growth & Economic Regeneration Team (Place Directorate) has sourced external government grants via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), and the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)²⁸

UKSPF was a central pillar of the previous Government's Levelling Up agenda, aiming to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK.

For the period 2022-2025, Dorset Council has been allocated just over £6 million²⁹, comprising just over £4.44 million capital and revenue funding from the Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) for the UKSPF.

The UKSPF supports Dorset Councils investment priorities:

- Communities and Place
- Supporting Local Business
- People and Skills

Projects are funded or part funded where the goals are:

- Empowering local leaders and communities to target their priorities.
- Improving employment opportunities and life chances within communities.
- Supporting community projects, local businesses to foster economic growth.

The UKSPF allocation enabled £30,000 for a feasibility study to assess potential options for a local housing initiative supporting young working people in Dorset.

Additionally, the UKSPF allocated £558,458 capital and revenue funding to support the Healthy Homes Dorset (HHD)³⁰

Healthy Homes Dorset, delivered by Ridgewater Energy is a long-standing scheme funded by Dorset Council, BCP Council, and Public Health Dorset. HHD has a strong customer Dorset resident focus with the aim to improve housing standards and reduce fuel poverty across Dorset and works in collaboration with public, charitable, and third-sector organisations.

HHD continues to offer a holistic and impactful service including home visits, telephone advice, and access to additional funded schemes such as LEAP (Local Energy Advice Partnership). This includes exclusive access to LEAP's boiler scheme, heating tune-ups, and appliance support across Dorset.

HHD delivered the final year of the Home Upgrade Grant 2 (HUG2)³¹, securing £4.3 million in funding and improved properties with insulation, heating, ventilation, and

²⁸ [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK](#)

²⁹ [UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2022 to 2025 - Dorset Council](#)

³⁰ [Healthy Homes Dorset | Home](#)

³¹ [Home Upgrade Grant: Phase 2 \(closed to applications\) - GOV.UK](#)

renewable technologies. These upgrades targeted low-income households in off-gas areas with poor EPC ratings.

HHD has secured a new partnership with Scotia Gas Networks (SGN) and launched the 'SGN Dorset Help for Warmth' scheme, expanding in-person energy advice and offering additional support like gas boiler servicing, Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs), thermal imaging, and heat-the-person resources (e.g., heated throws, blankets and jackets).

HHD supported a joint bid for the Warm Homes Local Grant³², securing an additional £3.8 million for further retrofit measures over three years. Other initiatives included free appliance distribution via the Household Support Fund, educational booklet reprints, and targeted marketing funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Dorset's Cost-of-Living fund.

In response to the cost-of-living crisis, HHD during 2024-2025 supported over 3,700 resident calls and 1,200 online contact forms this year. HHD also engaged with numerous community groups, councils, health networks, and social care organisations through events and meetings.

Healthy Homes Dorset intervention data for 2024-25 shows:

- 672 households took up energy efficiency measures.
- 598 households received support to reduce the cost of living.
- 131 households had direct improvements made including loft insulation, new boilers, cavity wall insulations, solar PV (panels) and boiler upgrades.

Analysis showed 85% of recipients were pensioners, 34% were receiving benefits or allowances and 88 individuals reported having health conditions.

Additionally overseen by the council's Growth & Economic Regeneration team, the Communication and Engagement service via the Communities and Partnerships team, manages an allocation from the Dorset Council UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The Communities and Partnerships team manages grants for the community element to improve and sustain community facilities, aiding community infrastructure.

The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)³³

For the period 2022- 2025, the Rural England Prosperity grant £2.07 million capital funding from Defra is a top up to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), to help address the additional needs and challenges facing rural areas. The REPF is supported by the UK Government's 'Missions and Farming and Countryside Programme' to support economic growth under investment priorities, Community and Place and Supporting Local Business.

³² [Dorset Warm Homes Local Grant | Reduce your Energy Bills](#)

³³ [Rural England Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK](#)

Capital funding was available for small scale investment within micro and small enterprises and community projects, for example to support new and improved community infrastructure that provides essential community services and assets for local people and businesses to benefit the local economy.

Dorset Council in 2025-26 has an allocation of £619,966³⁴. This will deliver interventions that improve productivity, strengthens rural economy and benefits rural businesses and communities.

Many projects awarded³⁵ funding through Dorset's 2023/25 UKSPF and REPF allocations require match funding. The following grant schemes specify match funding thresholds³⁶:

- Communities and Place – Small One-Off Capital Grants: Minimum 20% of total project cost (fully allocated).
- Supporting Local Business Grants: 100% match funding.
- Enterprise Culture and Startup Support Grants: Minimum 30% of grant value.
- Upskilling Grants: Minimum 30% of grant value.
- REPF Business Grants: 100% match funding.

For the period 2025-2026, following the change in government the UKSPF programme (including REPF) has been extended by an extra year from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, with an additional UKSPF £900 million provided across the country.

Dorset Council funding allocation £1.4 million from UKSPF, includes £200,000 to support the Healthy Homes Dorset Programme and £620,000 for REPF. As REPF funding is capital only, grants should be spent on lasting assets such as buildings or equipment.

Dorset Councils UKSPF programme grants³⁷ are only available for activity between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026 and projects must be fully delivered and paid for within the 2025/26 financial year.

Dorset Council Investment Plans (IPs)³⁸ for the UKSPF and REPF, outlines how the funding will be used to target local priorities or in pursuit of specific, measurable goals that has been agreed by Dorset Council's Cabinet.

By March 2026, UKSPF and REPF will have provided approximately £8.1 million capital and revenue funding to Dorset Council priorities: Communities (33%), Business (50%), People & Skills (12%), Admin (4%), with a focus on productivity and growth.

These funding schemes represent a significant investment in local economic development across rural and urban businesses, communities, individuals, Town and Parish Councils.

³⁴ [Rural England Prosperity Fund \(REPF\) - Dorset Council](#)

³⁵ [round-1-to-4-award-web-summary](#)

³⁶ [UKSPF Scheme Doc - 09 March 2023](#)

³⁷ [UKSPF 2025-2026 Grants Scheme Document](#)

³⁸ [Cabinet 28th Jan 2025 Appendix 2.pdf](#)

The March 2026 UKSPF and REPF extension allows the government to review the benefits and outcomes from the initial three-year period and to align with new revised government priorities moving forward. The Growth & Economic Regeneration team do not know what comes beyond March 2026 regarding UKSPF and REPF funding and await news within the Chancellor's Autumn Budget Statement to enable the Growth & Economic Regeneration team to forward plan.

Devolution Deal³⁹ with Government

In 2024, Dorset Council began initial discussions with the Government on devolution opportunities. Dorset Council worked jointly with BCP, Somerset, and Wiltshire councils and developed the Heart of Wessex Devolution Proposal aimed to establish a mayoral combined authority with powers over transport, housing, and economic development.

The housing-related ambitions in the proposal included:

- Wessex Joint Growth Plan coordinating economic development, housing, and infrastructure investment across local authority boundaries.
- Long-term investment plans for critical infrastructure.
- Referenced a revolving funds project idea to support local housing provision.

The revolving funds concept is designed to provide upfront capital funding for housing projects, which is then repaid and reused for future development creating a sustainable financing mechanism model for example:

- Cornwall Council Revolving Loan Fund (UK)⁴⁰ offers loans up to £1.5m for community-led affordable housing projects, repayable within 12 months of completion.

In February 2025⁴¹, the Heart of Wessex Devolution proposal was not accepted by the Government and was excluded from the government's Devolution Priority Programme. Dorset Council and its partners have signalled intent to continue discussions with Government and explore future opportunities for devolution.

The Heart of Wessex Devolution revised proposal aims to demonstrate the benefits of devolution for the region. The proposal references several project ideas and priorities⁴², which emphasises creating a mechanism to attract private sector investment and deliver housing and infrastructure at scale.

³⁹ [Decision - A Devolution Deal for Dorset - Dorset Council](#)

⁴⁰ [Community-led Affordable Housing Revolving Loan Fund - Cornwall Council](#)

⁴¹ [Wessex not accepted into Devolution Priority Programme - Dorset Council](#)

⁴² [Wessex Leaders support regional projects in push for devolution - Dorset Council](#)

Government Funding Forecast

Spending Review 2025

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP presented her first multi-year spending review⁴³ to parliament on 11th June 2025. This outlined the government's commitment to increase economic growth and living standards for all.

The Local Government Spending Review settlement provides an additional £3.4 billion of grant funding for councils along with over £5 billion of new grant funding for local government services and will support councils to deliver the vital public services that communities rely on.

This includes:

- An increase to the NHS's contribution to adult social care via the Better Care Fund; making available over £4bn of additional funding for adult social care in 2028-29 compared to 2025-26.
- £100 million to support adults with complex needs (community help partnerships).
- £560 million from the Phase 2 settlement to refurbish and expand children's homes and provide more foster care placements.
- £100 million to prevent homelessness through investing in early intervention measures.
- £39 billion a 10-year Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP)⁴⁴ from 2026 to 2036. SAHP is the successor to the Affordable Homes Programme (AHP). SAHP will be administered by Homes England, who will provide bids information during autumn with an expected bid opening in winter 2025-26. The announced 10-year SAHP grant worth £3.9bn a year on average could provide 50,000 homes a year, based on an overall grant of around £80,000 per home. The overall average grant rate in England outside London in the current AHP is around £52,000⁴⁵.
- £950 million for the Local Authority Housing Fund.
- £4.8 billion in financial transactions for house building.
- £840 million for consolidated funding to transform the Household Support Fund into a new Crisis and Resilience Fund for households, incorporating discretionary housing payments and funding councils to support some of the poorest households.

In addition to the spending review announcement the government has backed a 'National Housing Bank'

"The National Housing Bank, a subsidiary of Homes England, will be publicly owned and backed with £16 billion of financial capacity, on top of £6bn of existing finance to be allocated this Parliament, in order to accelerate housebuilding and leverage in

⁴³ [Spending Review 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

⁴⁴ [Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing - GOV.UK](#)

⁴⁵ [£39bn AHP could support 500,000 new homes, says JLL | News | Housing Today](#)

£53 billion of additional private investment, creating jobs and delivering over 500,000 new homes”⁴⁶.

This means that the bank will be owned and operated by the government, rather than private entities. The government will have full control over the bank's operations and policies, ensuring that its activities align with national housing goals and public interests.

Homes England can issue government guarantees directly and have greater autonomy and flexibility, flexible capital to make long-term investments. The primary goal is to accelerate housebuilding with plans to deliver over 500,000 new homes.

“The Bank will deploy some of the £2.5 billion in low-interest loans announced at the Spending Review to support the building of social and affordable homes”⁴⁶.

The national housing bank will be able to function as a partner to the private sector and support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with new lending products.

By investing in housing, the bank aims to create jobs and stimulate economic growth and supports the government's broader infrastructure and housing strategies. To enable developers to unlock large, complex sites through infrastructure finance.

A new National Housing Delivery Fund will be fully operational from April 1, 2026, and will complement capital investments from the newly established National Housing Bank.

The Housing Delivery Fund includes £5 billion specifically allocated for grant funding intended to support the development of essential infrastructure and the preparation of land for housing projects, making it easier and more cost-effective to build new homes. This comes ahead of the government's 10 Year Infrastructure Strategy⁴⁷ published June 2025. The strategy sets out a plan with £725 billion allocated to bring together economic, social and housing infrastructure.

Funding Challenges

Dorset Council's funding challenges include limited government initiatives for example, SHAP, NSAP, RSAP and LAHF due to a combination of changing government and financial factors, political and strategic priorities. Challenges also include limited financial resources, inconsistent income streams, stringent application requirements, time restricted and short bidding windows, match funding requirements for capital grants, and the need to align organisational objectives with funder priorities, which can be effectively managed through the development of diversified funding models and income streams.

⁴⁶ [Over 500,000 homes to be built through new National Housing Bank - GOV.UK](#)

⁴⁷ [CP 1344 – UK Infrastructure: A 10 Year Strategy](#)

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

A public-private partnerships (PPPs) is a collaboration arrangement with a private company to finance, build and operate public infrastructure or services. PPPs are often used within transportation, healthcare, utilities, education, housing development and infrastructure⁴⁸.

For example, The Millbay, Plymouth⁴⁹

An urban regeneration project transforming Plymouth's historic docks, once a derelict brownfield site into a mixed-use neighbourhood with residential, commercial, leisure, and public spaces. A strategic joint venture led by Plymouth City Council in partnership with the English Cities Fund (ECF)⁵⁰ and between Muse Developments, Homes England, and Legal & General. Delivering over 600 new homes, a creative arts school, office and retail spaces, a marina and improved infrastructure. Plans for the next five years include an additional 400 homes, hotel, and an 80 unit home extra care facility.

For example, Energising Dorset⁵¹

A transformative scheme led by Dorset Council and the Growth & Economic Regeneration Team (Place Directorate) aims at turning the region into a national leader in clean energy, innovation, and sustainable economic growth as part of a broader Economic Growth Strategy (2025–2040)⁵². A key component of Energising Dorset is working in collaboration with the Dorset Clean Energy Super Cluster (DCESC)⁵³, which brings together private sector organisations to increase investment opportunities and aims to unlock £28 billion international investment to leverage Dorset's strategic assets and increase local impact for example Weymouth 2040⁵⁴ a strategic regeneration of Weymouth's waterfront and infrastructure.

Weymouth 2040 priorities include:

- Affordable housing for local residents and key workers.
- Job creation and support for local businesses.
- Environmental protection, including green spaces and climate resilience.
- Improved accessibility and transport connectivity.

The regeneration programme focuses on four key sites around the harbour and town centre:

- North Quay a former council offices site is now cleared for redevelopment.
- Weymouth Bowl is planned for housing and mixed-use development.

⁴⁸ Accountinginsights.org/public-private-partnership-examples/how-they-work-in-key-sectors

⁴⁹ [About Millbay, Plymouth's historic docks transformation | Millbay](#)

⁵⁰ [Millbay - ECF](#)

⁵¹ [Prospectus 15 MAY 2025 DIGITAL COPY KW_CP\(1\).pdf](#)

⁵² [Dorset's Economic Growth Strategy 2025 to 2040 - Dorset Council](#)

⁵³ [Dorset Clean Energy Super Cluster | Invest in Dorset](#)

⁵⁴ [Energising Dorset's Economy - Dorset Council](#)

- The Peninsula's future includes a waterfront leisure complex, new homes, and public realm improvements.
- The West Marina has potential for residential and commercial development.

PPPs key features include:

- Generally, involves long-term contracts often spanning 20-30 years or more.
- The private sector provides upfront capital for the project, while the public sector may offer incentives like tax breaks or partial ownership rights.
- Both parties share the risks and rewards. The private sector brings innovation and efficient project execution, while the public sector ensures the project aligns with public interests.

PPPs Challenges include:

- Potentially can be more expensive due to the private sector's higher borrowing costs.
- Raises concerns about cost overruns, contract complexity and risk management.

For example: London Underground PPPs⁵⁵.

In the early 2000s, the UK government used a public-private partnership to upgrade the London Underground.

Private firms handled infrastructure while the public sector ran operations. One major partner, Metronet collapsed financially forcing the government to provide financial assistance costing taxpayers hundreds of millions. The case raised concerns about accountability, transparency, and value for money.

Dorset and Cornwall examples for Affordable housing development public-private partnerships (PPPs) are shown below:

Wyatt Homes' Rivers Edge Development⁵⁶, Wimborne Dorset

This project involves hundreds of new homes including affordable housing units. Supported by funding from Homes England and private sector capital from HSBC UK⁵⁷. Developers contribute funds or land as part of planning obligations (Section 106 agreements). Contributions are supplemented by Homes England grants.

Cornwall Community Land Trust (CLT) Projects⁵⁸

Cornwall CLT in partnership with housing associations has developed affordable housing schemes totalling 34 homes, primarily for affordable rent. Involving cross-subsidy schemes where affordable housing projects incorporate an element of open

⁵⁵ [NAO Report \(HC 512 2008-2009\): The Department for Transport: The failure of Metronet](#)

⁵⁶ [Gov.uk/funding Homes England & HSBC UK supports-Wyatt-homes](#)

⁵⁷ [Funding from Homes England and HSBC UK - Wyatt Homes deliver houses across the south - GOV.UK](#)

⁵⁸ [Councils.coop/CORNWALL-CASE-STUDY](#)

market housing and the market-rate homes sale profits help fund the affordable units. Cornwall Council⁵⁹ offers the Revolving Loan Fund⁶⁰, which provides loans up to £1.5 million per scheme to CLTs for affordable housing development and the loans cover costs like land purchase, construction, and conversion.

PPPs can effectively address the need for affordable housing by leveraging private sector investment and expertise while ensuring public oversight and benefits.

The table below lists the different PPPs partnership types:

General Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) Financing Models⁶¹		
Type	Description	Example
Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT)	The private sector builds the housing units, operates them for a specified period, and then transfers ownership to the public sector.	Often used in large-scale housing projects where the private developer manages the property before transferring it to the government.
Public Sector Loans and Guarantees	The public sector provides loans or guarantees to private developers to reduce their financial risk and encourage investment in affordable housing.	Government-backed loans and guarantees are common in PPPs to ensure project viability and attract private investment.
Design-Build-Finance-Operate (DBFO)	The private sector designs, builds, finances, and operates the housing project, often with long-term contracts to ensure sustainability.	Private developers are responsible for the entire lifecycle of the project, from design to operation, supported by government subsidies.
Lease-Develop-Operate (LDO):	The public sector leases land or property to a private entity, which then develops and operates the housing project.	Allows for efficient use of public land while leveraging private sector expertise.

Leveraging private sector investment can help to bring forward affordable housing projects that meet a public need while reducing financial burdens on local authorities. As part of the new model's pilot programme, a range of innovative exploration and delivery approaches which includes the Settle Accommodation Lease Model, the Short Lease Model, and the Asset-Led Model. These pilot models present a strategic opportunity to identify and unlock the potential of collaborative public-private partnerships. By leveraging private sector capital investment, they offer alternative routes to private capital funding that can support the development and acceleration of

⁵⁹ [Cornwall Council/case-studies/affordable-housing-proactive-enabling-programme](https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/case-studies/affordable-housing-proactive-enabling-programme)

⁶⁰ [Cornwall.gov.uk/housing/affordable-housing/community-led-affordable-housing-revolving-loan-fund](https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/housing/affordable-housing/community-led-affordable-housing-revolving-loan-fund)

⁶¹ [Worldbank.org/AHI-lp-Successful-affordable-housing-PPPs-v0-1-230529.pdf](https://www.worldbank.org/AHI-lp-Successful-affordable-housing-PPPs-v0-1-230529.pdf)

new affordable homes. This approach not only contributes to meeting housing demand but also promotes long-term sustainability and resilience in housing delivery.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

A Housing Revenue Account (HRA)⁶² is a financial account used by local housing authorities in England to record income and expenditure related to their own housing stock and associated services.

A HRA would enable more borrowing and longer-term tenancies. Dorset Council does not have its own housing stock and thus consequently does not have an HRA. Instead, it works with various social landlords, including housing associations and community land trusts to provide social housing.

Key features of a HRA include:

- Local housing authorities with 200 or more social dwellings are required to maintain an HRA.
- Designed to manage the costs and revenues for local authorities that provide Housing accommodation.
- It includes costs, expenses like management, maintenance, major repairs, loan charges, and depreciation.
- Its primary sources of revenue, income are rents and service charges paid by tenants.
- It is a ring-fenced account within General Funds, meaning it is separate from other local authority finances. This ensures that housing revenues are used solely for housing purposes.

Recent research from the Local Government Association⁶³ highlights significant financial pressures on HRAs, including rising costs of capital investment and increased regulatory requirements.

Foundations and Trusts

To date, the Housing service has not pursued funding opportunities from foundations and/or trusts, nor has it fully leveraged internal and external partnerships to bridge the gap and cultivate these potential funding partnership opportunities.

Due to funding high demand, some foundations and trusts are closing their grant programmes and increasingly selecting legacy partners, who are nonprofit organisations and charities they have previously worked with, who have a proven track record of consistently delivering the foundations or trust's strategic objectives.

Nonprofits organisations can diversify their capital and revenue streams by applying for grants from multiple sources, partnering with local businesses, a local authority, regional and national foundations and trusts.

⁶² [Housing Revenue Account - GOV.UK](#)

⁶³ [Housing Revenue Account research update | Local Government Association](#)

For example:

Dorset Community Action (DCA)⁶⁴

DCA aims to empower communities to develop local solutions for social, economic, and environmental challenges and focus areas includes:

- Community Employment & Training
- Affordable Housing & Rural Infrastructure
- Health & Wellbeing Hubs
- Third Sector Development & Support

DCA funding streams include government contracts and grants, trusts and foundations streams, and earned income from consultancy services, training and workshops, memberships, donations and legacies. DCA partnerships include Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)⁶⁵, NHS Integrated Care System (ICS), Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE), Dorset Council, Parish Councils, Housing Associations, Health & Social Care Providers, community groups and volunteers.

DEFRA, funds rural housing initiatives via the Rural Housing Enablers (RHEs) Programme⁶⁶. RHEs are specialists who help rural communities consider the need for affordable housing locally, connecting them with landowners, housebuilders and planners to bring about suitable schemes. DCA may access DEFRA funding directly or via national programmes like those coordinated by ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England)⁶⁷ a national charity that supports rural communities in England.

DCA works with ICS partners to develop community-led health and wellbeing hubs. These hubs often operate from village halls or community centres and provide services like mental health support, social prescribing and housing-related health interventions.

DCA helps local groups access funding from Dorset-based and national trusts. Some also fund DCA directly or through Dorset Community Foundation⁶⁸. While DCA itself may not list every trust it receives funding from, it is closely connected to and supported by the following:

- Talbot Village Trust
- Valentine Charitable Trust
- Alice Ellen Cooper Dean Charitable Trust
- Sir Samuel Mico's Charities
- Dorchester Relief in Need Charity
- Westham Support Fund
- Weymouth Town Charities

⁶⁴ [DCA Home » Dorset Community Action](#)

⁶⁵ [About us - Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs - GOV.UK](#)

⁶⁶ [Enabling affordable rural housing - ACRE](#)

⁶⁷ [Action with Communities in Rural England - ACRE](#)

⁶⁸ [Home - Dorset Community Foundation](#)

- Blandford Forum Charities
- The Chesil Trust
- Joan Turner Foundation
- The Redlynch Charitable Trust

This nonprofit organisation demonstrates a collaborative model, multi-source funding, and how community-led approaches can help sustain housing and homelessness initiatives in Dorset.

Community Land Trusts (CLTs)

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are non-profit, community-led organisations that acquire and hold land in trust for the benefit of local people. They play a vital role in delivering permanently affordable housing and safeguarding community assets. By separating land ownership from property ownership, CLTs ensure homes remain affordable in perpetuity, supporting long-term community resilience. Foundations and trust funding often underpins these projects, enabling feasibility studies, land acquisition, and development partnerships.

Dorset CLTs case studies examples:

Broadwindsor Group Parish CLT – Northcombe Lea⁶⁹

Delivered 15 affordable homes in Drimpton through a mix of funding sources, including feasibility grants from Homes England and support from community housing advisors. Working with Abri Housing Association, the CLT secured land in trust and ensured homes remain affordable for families with strong local connections.

Powerstock & District CLT – Forge Orchard⁷⁰

Developed eight affordable homes near Bridport after seven years of volunteer-led effort. Funding came from community fundraising, grants, and partnerships with Hastoe Housing Association. The homes are let at below-market rents to people with local ties, helping sustain village life and demonstrating how trust-based funding can transform rural communities.

This highlights the need to scope, establish and collaborate with external working partners. To achieve a shared vision, outcomes and benefits identified for each working partner encompassed within the overarching delivery output.

⁶⁹ [Home | Broadwindsor Group Parish Community Land Trust](#)

⁷⁰ [Powerstock's Forge Orchard | Bridport and Lyme Regis News](#)

Sponsorships

Sponsorship opportunities can vary widely depending on goals and the type of event, content, or organisation involved. Social value can be integrated with sponsorship as social value refers to the positive impact an initiative has on society beyond financial returns. Such as improving community well-being, supporting sustainability, or promoting equality. When combined with sponsorship, it transforms a simple marketing exercise into a purpose-driven partnership.

Sponsorship opportunities involve partnering with local businesses to increase and create sponsorship opportunities for community projects, which can be encompassed within the overarching affordable housing theme.

Sponsorships include:

- Researching companies to identify aligned values, audiences, aims and objectives.
- Nonprofit sponsorships where nonprofits organisations can seek sponsorships from corporations that align with their organisational aims and objectives. These sponsorships can help fund programmes, events, or operational costs.

For example:

Shelter UK Corporate Partnerships⁷¹

Partners include IKEA, B&Q, Marks & Spencer and the HSBC UK, who support stock donations (e.g., furniture and home goods), employee fundraising and volunteering. This also includes campaign sponsorships and awareness drives to help increase funds raised to support Shelter's housing advice services, emergency helpline, and outreach.

Kingfisher PLC& Habitat for Humanity GB

Kingfisher PLC⁷², a leading home improvement retailer operates across eight European countries under brands like Screwfix, B&Q, and Castorama, has partnered with Habitat for Humanity Great Britain⁷³ to tackle the UK housing crisis. This two-year corporate sponsorship from 2025-2027 focuses on:

- Empty Spaces to Homes converts vacant buildings into affordable housing for vulnerable groups.
- Housing to Home provides upcycled furniture to households in need.

⁷¹ [Corporate Partners help us achieve our aims - Shelter England](#)

⁷² [Kingfisher PLC - Habitat for Humanity GB](#)

⁷³ [Corporate Partnerships: Sponsorships & Fighting Poverty](#)

This partnership leverages Kingfisher's role utilising their home improvements expertise and provides funding and employee volunteering. Habitat for Humanity GB's role delivers housing transformation projects focused on affordability and sustainability. This corporate partnership aids to improve living conditions, enhance community resilience, and supports those at risk of homelessness.

Lloyds Banking Group & Crisis UK⁷⁴

A 2-year strategic corporate partnership from 2023 to 2025 with a funding commitment of £2 million to improve access to affordable housing for people experiencing homelessness. This partnership supported the launch of a non-profit letting's agency to improve access to safe rentals and supports the Crisis' Changing Lives Grants Programme⁷⁵ helping people into education, employment, and entrepreneurship. The partnership has been extended to 2026⁷⁶ and the impact has generated:

- £4M+ raised by staff and customers
- 8,300+ volunteer hours
- 110+ grants awarded
- Staff trained to support vulnerable customers

Other corporate partners supporting Crisis UK include:

- Virgin Media O2 & Good Things Foundation
Provide free devices and mobile data to people experiencing homelessness, enabling access to essential services.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)⁷⁷
Staff volunteer to assess grant applications and mentor individuals starting businesses through Crisis programmes.

These collaborations are a strong example of how corporate sponsorship can go beyond financial support to include skills-based volunteering, sustainable practices, and community engagement, all aimed at tackling housing inequality in the UK.

Social Impact Bonds (SIBs)

Social impact bonds (SIBs) involve private investors who fund public projects aimed at achieving specific social outcomes and receive returns based on the project's success.

How they work is shown below⁷⁸:

Social Impact Bonds (SIB):	
Stage	Description

⁷⁴ [Corporate Partnerships | Crisis UK](#)

⁷⁵ [Changing Lives grant programme | Crisis UK](#)

⁷⁶ [Crisis partnership - Lloyds Banking Group plc](#)

⁷⁷ [About us - PwC UK](#)

⁷⁸ <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-impact-bond.asp>

Funding	Private investors provide the initial capital to fund a social project, such as reducing homelessness or improving educational outcomes.
Implementation	The project is conducted by service providers, often non-profits organisations or social enterprises.
Evaluation	The project's success is measured against predefined targets.
Returns	If the project meets or exceeds these targets, investors receive a return on their investment from the government or another public entity. If the targets are not met, investors may lose their investment.

SIBs are also known as "pay-for-success" bonds because the repayment and return on investment are contingent upon achieving the desired outcomes. They are designed to encourage innovation and efficiency in addressing social issues, as they align financial returns with positive social outcomes⁷⁹.

Currently there are no specific examples of Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) being used for affordable housing projects in Dorset. However, SIBs have been successfully implemented in other regions in the UK, for example:

Life Chances Fund (LCF)

The fund aims to promote outcomes-based commissioning through Social Impact Bonds (SIBs), providing top-up payments to local government commissioners in England⁸⁰.

This fund supports various SIB projects across the UK, focusing on areas such as early years, young people, health and social care⁸¹. It aims to improve the lives of vulnerable people by funding innovative projects that deliver measurable social outcomes.

A £70 million fund established by the UK Government in July 2016. To support people facing significant barriers to leading happy and productive lives. The fund supports projects aimed at tackling complex social problems across policy areas including child and family welfare, homelessness, health and wellbeing, employment and training, criminal justice, and education. Since its inception, the LCF has funded 29 projects, aiming to reach over 53,000 service users.

A Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) example, Greater Manchester Homes Partnership⁸²

This project focuses on reducing homelessness by providing stable housing and support services to individuals at risk. Launched in December 2017 through a government-funded three-year SIB. The project has been successful, surpassing all targets set.

Key achievements include:

⁷⁹ <https://www.financestrategists.com/wealth-management/bonds/social-impact-bonds-sibs/>

⁸⁰ <https://golab.bsg.ox.ac.uk/about/outcomes-based-contracting/life-chances-fund-lcf-evaluation/>

⁸¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-outcomes-partnerships>

⁸² <https://www.gmhomespartnership.org/post/greater-manchester-homes-partnership>

- 305 people moved into accommodation, with 236 securing long-term housing.
- 44 people sustained a home for 12 months.
- 23 individuals entered employment, education, or volunteered.
- 54 and 57 people sustained treatment programs for drugs and alcohol and mental health issues, respectively.

This partnership has been recognised for its outstanding results and received additional funding to continue its work⁸³.

Development Impact Bonds (DIBs)

DIBs⁸⁴ are performance-based contractual arrangements and the purpose is to raise funds for specific development programmes with targeted outcomes.

They include private investors, donors, the UK government and attract investors with Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) mandates. Returns are linked to verifiable, pre-agreed outcomes. Payments to investors are made if these outcomes are met.

DIBs are not dependent on global capital market performance. Returns are based on the underlying contract, with pricing aligned to the risk level and the track record of intermediaries and service providers.

Historically, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) relied on government grants and long-term bank loans. Recently, there has been a rise in bond issues by UK-based RSLs due to reduced government grants and banks' reluctance for long-term fixed-rate lending.

Bonds issued by RSLs appeal to long-term investors like pension funds and insurers due to the stability of rental income from social housing, secured by large property portfolios and government benefits.

Development Impact Bonds (DIBs) have been primarily used in international contexts⁸⁵ rather than specifically for UK housing projects. How they work⁸⁶ is shown below:

Development Impact Bonds (DIBs)	
Category	Details
Stakeholders Involved	Investors: Provide the upfront capital needed to fund the project. Service Providers: Implement the interventions or projects aimed at achieving specific social or environmental outcomes. Outcome Funders: Organisations or government agencies that agree to repay the investors. If the project meets its predefined success metrics. Intermediaries: Facilitate the design, structuring, and management of the DIBs. Ensures all parties are aligned and the project is effectively monitored

⁸³ <https://gmhousing.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-homes-partnership>

⁸⁴ [Impact bonds](#)

⁸⁵ [Findings from the first DFID development impact bonds evaluation report](#)

⁸⁶ [Development Impact Bonds \(DIBs\) | Definition, Pros, & Cons](#)

Process	Identification of Social Issue: Requires intervention. Stakeholder Engagement: Relevant stakeholders, including investors, service providers, and outcome funders, are brought together. Agreement on Metrics: Quantifiable metrics are established to measure the success of the project. Funding and Implementation: Investors provide the necessary capital by purchasing the bonds, and service providers use these funds to implement the project. Evaluation: At the end of the project term, an independent evaluator assesses whether the predefined outcomes have been achieved. Repayment: If the project is successful, the outcome funders repay the investors with a return on their investment. If the project fails, the investors do not receive a return.
Benefits	Risk Transfer: Shifts the financial risk from donors and governments to private investors. Focus on Results: Ensures that funds are allocated to interventions that have a demonstrable impact. Innovation: Encourages innovative solutions to social and environmental challenges.
Challenges	Complexity: Setting up DIBs involves multiple stakeholders and complex agreements. High Risk: Investors bear the risk of not receiving a return if the project fails.

Difference between SIBS and DIBS

SIBS and DIBS have similarities regarding structure, stakeholders and focus on outcomes, but a key difference⁸⁷ is the outcome payer, shown below:

Similarities			
Theme	Description	SIB S	DIB S
Structure	- Performance-based financing mechanisms. Private investors provide upfront capital for social projects. - If the project achieves its predefined outcomes, the investors are repaid with a return on their investment.	✓	✓
Stakeholders	Involve investors, service providers, and outcome funders.	✓	✓
Focus on Outcomes	Bonds emphasise achieving measurable social outcomes. Shifting the focus from inputs to results.	✓	✓

Key Difference: Outcome Payer

⁸⁷ <https://www.financestrategists.com/wealth-management/bonds/social-impact-bonds-sibs/>

Outcome Payer:	Description	SIB S	DIB S
Government	If the project is successful, the government repays the investors.	✓	
Private donor or an aid agency	Rather than the government.		✓

This distinction is important because it reflects the contexts in which these bonds are used within private-public partnerships.

SIBs are more common in high-income countries where governments are willing to fund social programmes.

DIBs are used within development contexts where private donors or international organisations are more involved.

The UK employment sectors has used DIBs within the Innovation Fund Project, which supports disadvantaged young people in the UK to find and sustain employment. This project is included within the impact bond dataset⁸⁸. The dataset is part of the INDIGO initiative and provides an interactive map to enable exploration on projects, initiatives, schemes using impact bonds at various development stages around the world.

While there are numerous examples of social impact bonds (SIBs) in various sectors, and specifically within homelessness and housing projects. Using DIBs is currently less common within housing and affordable homes development.

These diverse funding models approaches helps increase financial stability, resilience and builds financial partnerships.

Conclusions

Strategy, Performance, and Sustainability

Following a recent restructure, the Corporate Policy and Performance Officer position has been discontinued. This position was previously responsible for managing information on grants and funding streams sourced from the non-subscription Government grants search engine. This information was then distributed out to relevant directorates and business areas.

Currently, the new policy and strategy function:

- Does not hold a centralised funding list as this does not exist.
- Are unaware of any subscriptions to funding search engines within the council.
- Does not track and monitor the release of central government grants, or other external funding streams, grants received and distributed internally and externally.

⁸⁸ [Impact Bond Dataset](#)

However, in the longer term, they plan to review this and may consider implementing monitoring grants centrally.

The council does not hold a central search engine GrantFinder subscription to scope grant funding opportunities for affordable housing. Whilst the council does hold a subscription in the form of the Dorset Funder Finder, this does not provide scope for strategic funding opportunities and tailor funding searches for affordable housing and infrastructure funding.

Services using government grant funding

The Children's service does not directly apply for grant funding in relation to the overarching affordable housing theme.

The Growth & Economic Regeneration team from 2022 to 2025 has accessed external government grants and been allocated £6 million from UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and £619,966 from the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). Following the change in government, both programmes have been extended to March 2026, and projects must be fully delivered and paid for within the 2025/26 financial year.

By completion in March 2026, UKSPF and REPF will have provided approximately £8.1 million to Dorset Council.

Overseen by the Growth & Economic Regeneration team (Place Directorate), the Communication and Engagement service via the Communities and Partnerships team, manages an allocation from the Dorset Council UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The Communities and Partnerships team manages grants for the community element to improve and sustain community facilities, aiding community infrastructure.

The Communities and Partnerships team manages a community grant programme via a five-year agreed budget providing grant awards and grant information to support voluntary and community sectors (VCS) organisations. The team also offers support via the grants protocol to promote good practice. Currently, this team's function:

- Does not hold a centralised funding database.
- Does not manage or record external grant funding schemes.

This is because of the vast number and frequent changes within funding schemes; there is not capacity to keep this updated. The service has faced challenges in consolidating grant data due to capacity and skill shortages specially in relation to power BI and automation.

An upcoming project to map grants is on the forward plan for the Transformation, Customer & Cultural Service. The project will develop a BI dashboard utilising the Communities and Partnerships team's funding data already held.

The Heart of Wessex Devolution Proposal exclusion from the Government's Devolution Priority Programme, means no immediate transfer of powers or funding and the region could miss out on significant investment opportunities and sustainable

financing mechanism models for example via the revolving funds concept designed to provide upfront capital funding for housing projects, which is then repaid and reused for future development.

The Growth & Economic Regeneration team (Place Directorate) via Energising Dorset involves linkage with the Dorset Clean Energy Super Cluster (DCESC) and Weymouth 2040. This provides an opportunity for collaboration for cross-directorate projects, activities and to exploit new funding streams and leverage public-private investment.

The Enabling and Delivery team, Housing Programme, Housing Standards and the Accommodation with Support Programme, has accessed external funding opportunities from government grants through various funding programmes.

The Enabling and Delivery team and the Housing Programme from 2021 to 2028 has generated a total £10,145,311 inclusive of capital and revenue external funding via government grants.

The Enabling and Delivery team receives external capital funding from both the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Homes England. This funding supports the development of affordable housing through 3 key programmes:

MHCLG:

- Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)
- Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP)

Homes England:

- Affordable Homes Programme (AHP)

These funding streams enable targeted investment in housing solutions that address local needs and national priorities.

The Housing Programme external revenue funding source comes from the MHCLG via the funding programmes mentioned above. This funding supports operational posts and specialised support services for rough sleepers, as well as preventative measures against homelessness. Where there is a need for capital funding the Housing Programme collaborates with the Enabling and Delivery team to source capital funding from Homes England.

The Accommodation with Support Programme has established funding links with the One Public Estate (OPE) programme and the NHS England Transforming Care Grant (NHSE). The Accommodation with Support Programme have not made any recent bids and have no immediate funding bids in the pipeline. However, they will facilitate their established funding routes for both funding programmes if new funding opportunities came available.

The Housing Standards service provides administration assistance for the Disability Facilities Grants (DFG) a £3,800,000 annual capital grant via the Better Care Fund. This service works in conjunction with the Market & Partnerships Commissioning Manager, who manages the contract for major and minor adaptations for accessibility

for residents of Dorset. DFGs provides funds to help disabled individuals of all ages to make the necessary adaptations, improve accessibility to their homes either rented privately from a social landlord, or owner-occupiers. Enabling disabled people to remain in their current residence and minimise additional pressure to source alternative housing.

The Housing service are heavily reliant on government grants on a recurring basis, minimising funding resilience and have limited diverse funding streams and models.

The Housing service and other directorates are reactive to newly launched government grant funding programmes, which usually run in cycles or rounds, and have time-bound restrictions to submit a bid. This minimises collaboration opportunities for cross-directorates to plan and develop co-production funding bids, submitted for a specific funding programme within the identified time restriction.

Dorset Council and the Housing service primary funding source comes from government grants with limited or no other alternative funding resources or models. This needs to be considered due to how fluctuating economic conditions, changes in government, and regional and national competition for limited funding via government grant programmes and funding cycles can impact on long-term sustainability.

Although different directorates and the housing service has established government funding working partnerships. Internal partners and different service areas for example, housing, adults and social care are duplicating efforts and are/will be competing for the same external government funding sources.

To overcome funding challenges there is a need for active internal stakeholder engagement. To enable a more strategic coordinated approach for cross directorate and the entire council collaboration to facilitate co-production funding bids. This will maximise government funding opportunities from different government funding programmes for capital and revenue funding and prevent internal competition by directorates working in silos. While still enabling directorates flexibility to access government funding streams independently.

Internal working strategic partnerships will provide more diverse cross directorates funding opportunities and longer-term can expand to establish external working partnerships.

Established working partnerships can increase opportunities to diversify funding sources and exploit funding models via public and private partnerships to reduce the councils and housing dependency on any sole funding source and to mitigate the risk of potential government funding decreases.

There is currently no strategic overview regarding external funding opportunities or cross directorate collaboration.

Each directorate is working in silos to develop their own funding options and holds their own funding data in different formats for external capital and revenue (or both) grants either awarded or allocated to partners. This includes commissioning for new

or awarded grants and monies allocated through contracts. Grants and contracts are different, and amounts may vary from awarded grants to allocated contracts amounts.

Whilst mapping all council grants generically to create a centralised Funding Grants BI dashboard and automation would be beneficial, there are identified barriers in bringing this forward:

- Directorates are at different stages developing their own BI funding grant dashboards or waiting to achieve this with the appropriate support.
- Each directorate will require very different data headings to drive data collection, making it almost impossible to align all the data into a single BI dashboard or source/format, as there's no standardisation.
- The Housing service will need to formally request BI and automation resources, if the service wants to develop their own BI funding dashboard. This will require allocated resources within the service to ensure data remains current and not stagnant.

There is no internal process or procedure in place to communicate successful funding bids or cross directorate funding opportunities where there are shared priorities, aims and objectives, and where there are under utilised funding that needs to be returned, leads to missed opportunities.

This minimises cohesion of future affordable housing projects, site allocations and funding streams. As future projects will need to align with the emerging Local Plan⁸⁹ and the Local Transport Plan.

Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation 2025⁹⁰ is currently underway and will shape development across the Dorset Council area for future years. The Local Plan will set housing and infrastructure priorities and will guide planning decisions and developer obligations. Site allocations will reflect adopted planning policies, and opportunities for developer contributions through Section 106 agreements. Funding for site-specific obligations (e.g., affordable housing, junction improvements).

The draft Local Transport Plan 2026–2041⁹¹ sets out long-term goals for improving transport across Dorset. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) can be used for the provision, improvement, replacement, operation, or maintenance of infrastructure. Strategic funding for infrastructure across an area. This gives council flexibility to direct funds where they are most needed to support sustainable growth.

Dorset Council's Local Plan and Local Transport Plan ensures consistency with strategic growth priorities.

Recommendations

Strategy, Performance, and Sustainability

⁸⁹ [Dorset Council Local Plan consultation report.pdf](#)

⁹⁰ [Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation 2025 - Dorset Council](#)

⁹¹ [Local Transport Plan consultation - Dorset Council](#)

The Housing service to liaise and have ongoing dialogue with the Strategy Performance and Sustainability service, to understand how and when they will monitor grants centrally moving forward. To enable the housing service to forward plan and identify how the service can dovetail into this centralised grant monitoring.

To scope the viability of a funding search engine; a GrantFinder subscription.

Funding search engines benefits are:

- Up-to-date funding information increases external funding opportunities and deadline awareness.
- Minimises missed funding opportunities.
- Funding searches are tailored to requirements.
- Increases more strategic funding opportunities for the Housing service and the entire council to enhance cross directorate collaboration.
- To tailor affordable housing and infrastructure funding searches to support future-proofing housing developments.

Services using government grant funding

- The Housing service to liaise and have ongoing dialogue with the Growth & Economic Regeneration team (Place Directorate):
 - To scope and access new potential funding streams for affordable housing.
 - To scope potential future opportunities arising from the Government's Autumn Statement on 26 November 2025, to inform strategic planning beyond March 2026 for the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF), with particular focus on the anticipated restructuring of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), which is unlikely to continue as a single, unified funding stream.
 - To follow up on the Heart of Wessex Devolution Deal and specifically the revolving funds project idea, to clarify if this has been included within the new revised proposal. As the revolving funds project provides upfront capital funding opportunities to support local housing development provision and could influence how the Home In on Housing programme and specifically the new models programme is delivered in the future.
 - To collaborate with Growth & Economic Regeneration team (Place Directorate) and harness the Weymouth 2040 opportunity to deliver affordable homes. By attracting and utilising public-private investment and new funding streams via the Energising Dorset and Dorset Clean Energy Super Cluster (DCESC).
 - To enable the housing service to forward plan and identify how the service can dovetail into the Councils development Investment Plans (IPs) for funding redirected into existing or new funding schemes aligned to existing and new government priorities.
- The Housing service to have ongoing dialogue with the Accommodation with Support Programme:
 - To scope future opportunities for One Public Estate funding in conjunction with Assets and Property (Place) to repurpose surplus public estates aligned

with the Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) 2024–2030⁹², which sets out how the council will manage its land and property portfolio to support corporate priorities and deliver better public services

- To scope and access new potential funding streams via the Learning Disability and Autism Programme and the NHS England Transforming Care Grant for example NHS key workers' affordable housing development
- To actively seek and secure multiple diverse funding sources, including government grants, trusts, foundations, and private investments opportunities.
- To continuously monitor the funding landscape to identify new funding opportunities and reduce dependency on any sole source.
- Form strategic partnerships to plan, develop and submit joint funding applications, while enabling best fit partner to apply for standalone funding bids to achieve the shared priority, vision and objective. To increase diverse funding streams and funding bids success chances.
- Create a centralised council funding forum (consortium) which sits within the new Strategic and Enabling model as part of Our Future Council.
 - To dovetail internal services and activities across the council to facilitate funding collaboration opportunities, maximise resources and expertise.
 - To reduce duplication of efforts and internal competition for funding due to identified shared priorities.
 - To provide funding strategic oversight to support, increase and deliver internal and external funding opportunities to aid financial sustainability for services across the council. A centralised strategic oversight pros and cons are shown within appendix F.
- Investigate and scope public-private partnerships (PPPs) options.
- Investigate social impact bonds (SIBs) and Development Impact Bonds (DIBs) options with PPPs, regarding target setting and returns based on the project's success.
- Investigate Sponsorships
 - Research companies to identify aligned values, audiences, aims and objectives
 - Use Sponsorship Platforms.
 - Utilise internal and external partnerships to exploit sponsorship opportunities.
 - Approach companies directly.
- Link and engage with the Local Plan consultation to aid future projects.
 - To consider implications for infrastructure, affordable housing, and sustainable transport.
 - Engage with planning officers during consultation to influence policy wording for funding flexibility.
 - Section 106 and CIL funding contribution opportunities for affordable housing delivery.
- Align future affordable housing projects with the emerging Local Plan and Local Transport Plan.
 - Reference Local Plan policies in all project proposals and funding bids.

⁹² [Strategic Asset Management Plan 2024 to 2030.pdf](#)

- To ensure site allocations reflect current planning policies.
- To identify opportunities for Section 106 contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), potential to fund strategic projects such as schools, health facilities, park-and-ride schemes, and road safety upgrades and sustainable transport.
- Identify sites where developer contributions can offset infrastructure costs.
- To use these frameworks to strengthen funding bids and meet local priorities.

To maximise the government's spending review 2025 funding opportunities. The Housing service along with other directorates need to work in collaboration. This will create a more centralised strategic approach and create benefits that exploit capacity, skill sets, and expertise.

It would be beneficial for the Housing service in the longer-term to explore and establish external new partners.

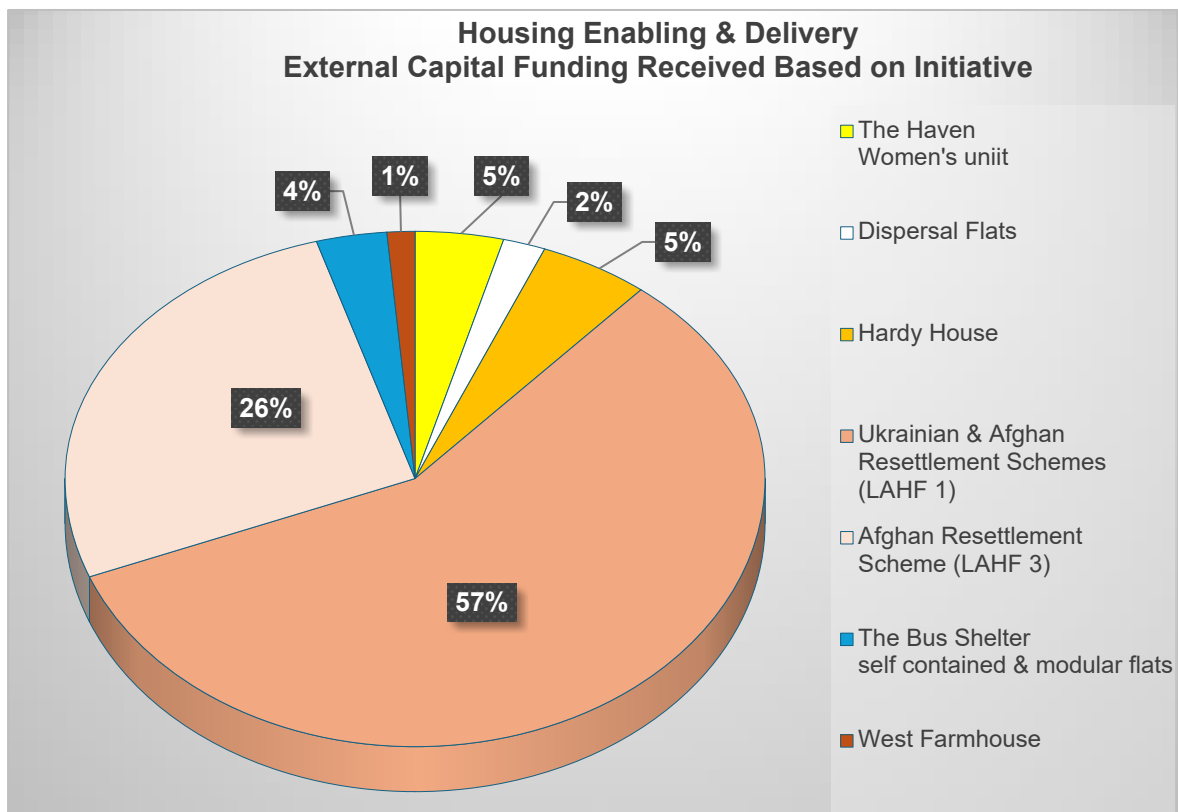
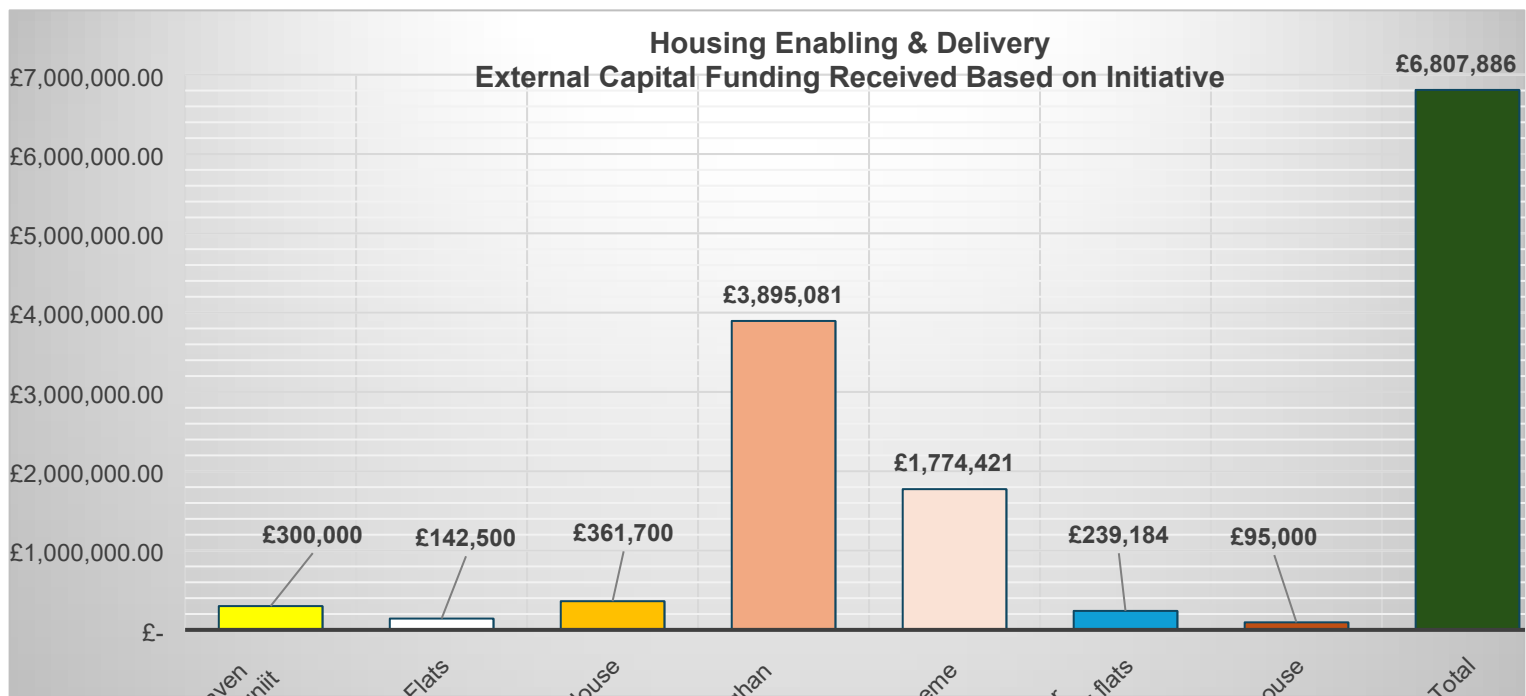
This could incorporate Community Land Trusts (CLTs), community, voluntary, charities, businesses, private and enterprise sectors forming public-private partnerships (PPPs). Additional to already established external partnerships with Registered Providers, Housing Associations, CLTs and support services to enable access to diverse funding sources, programmes and funding models to deliver new affordable housing. A stakeholder partnerships working example is shown in appendix G

By implementing these recommendations, the Housing service can improve its strategic approach to funding new affordable housing, to ensure long-term sustainability and growth.

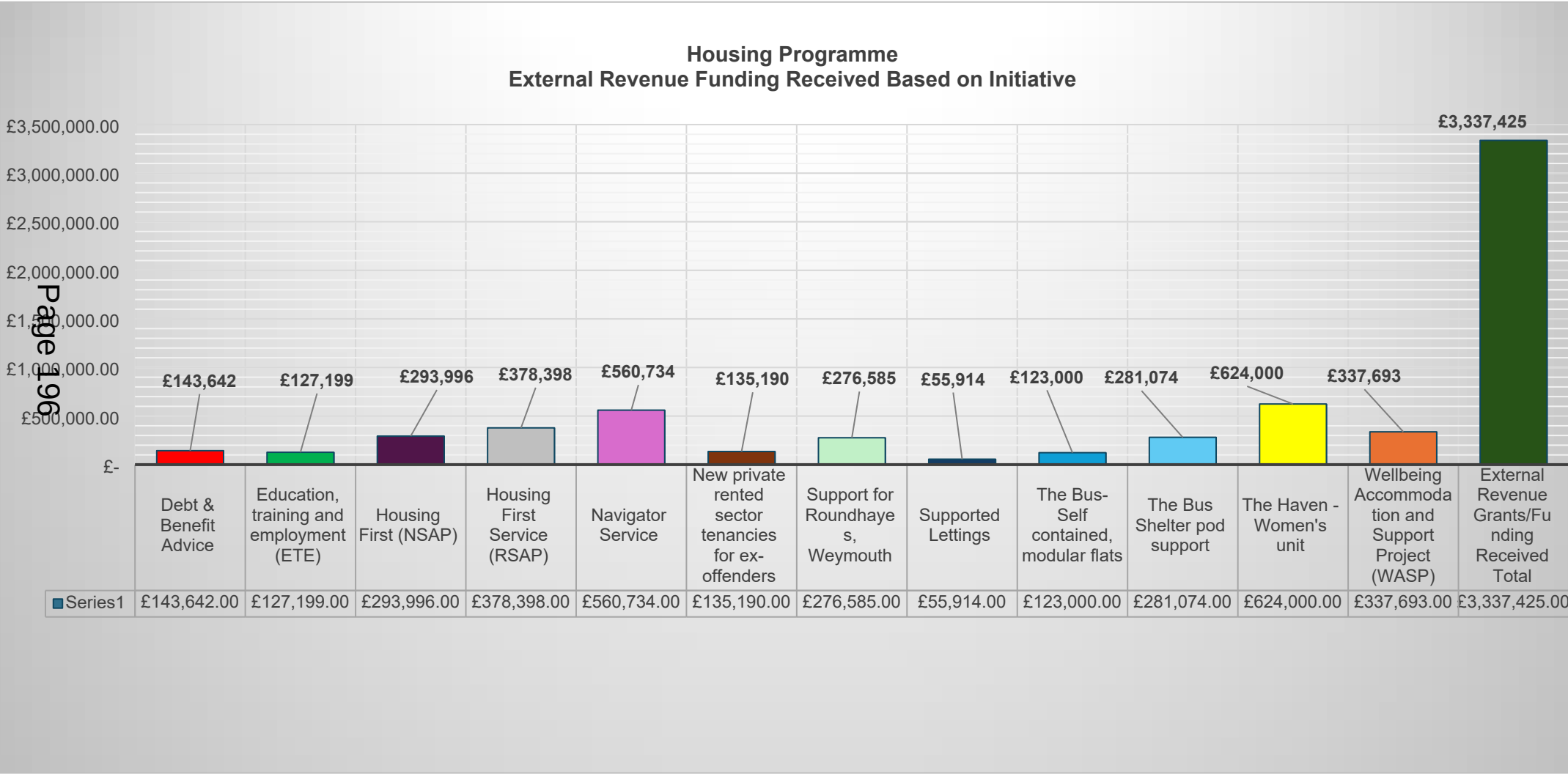
This report endorses Phase 2, aiming to strategically bolster and optimise our internal partnerships to leverage cross-directorate collaborations. To maximise benefits for directorates and the council, while potentially exploring external partnerships options. Thereby increasing diverse external funding opportunities to expand the delivery of new affordable housing to address housing needs, by adopting a unified one council-wide strategic approach.

Appendix

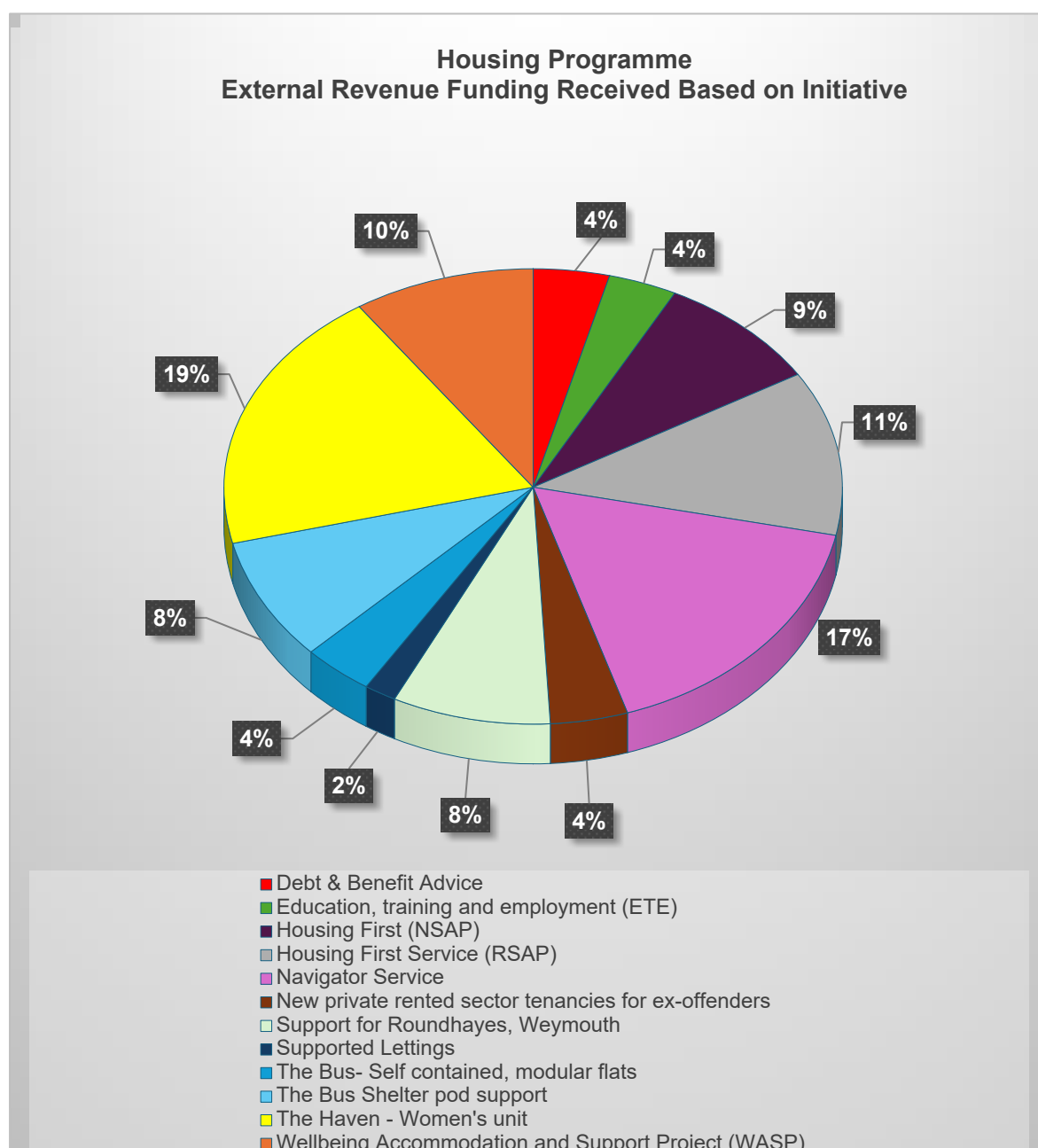
Appendix A - Enabling and Delivery Capital Funding Received Based on Initiative



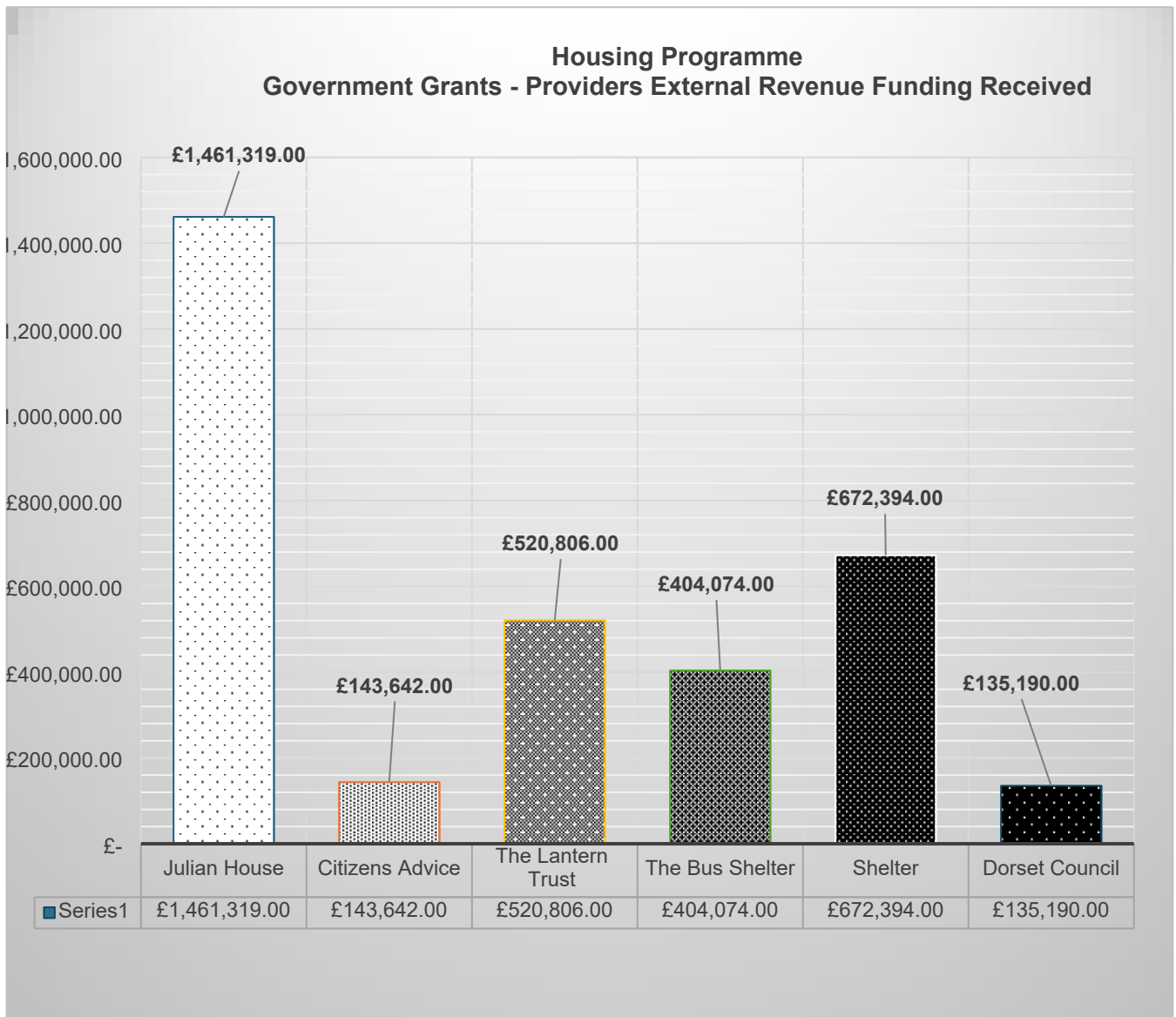
Appendix B - Housing Programme Revenue Funding Received Based on Initiative



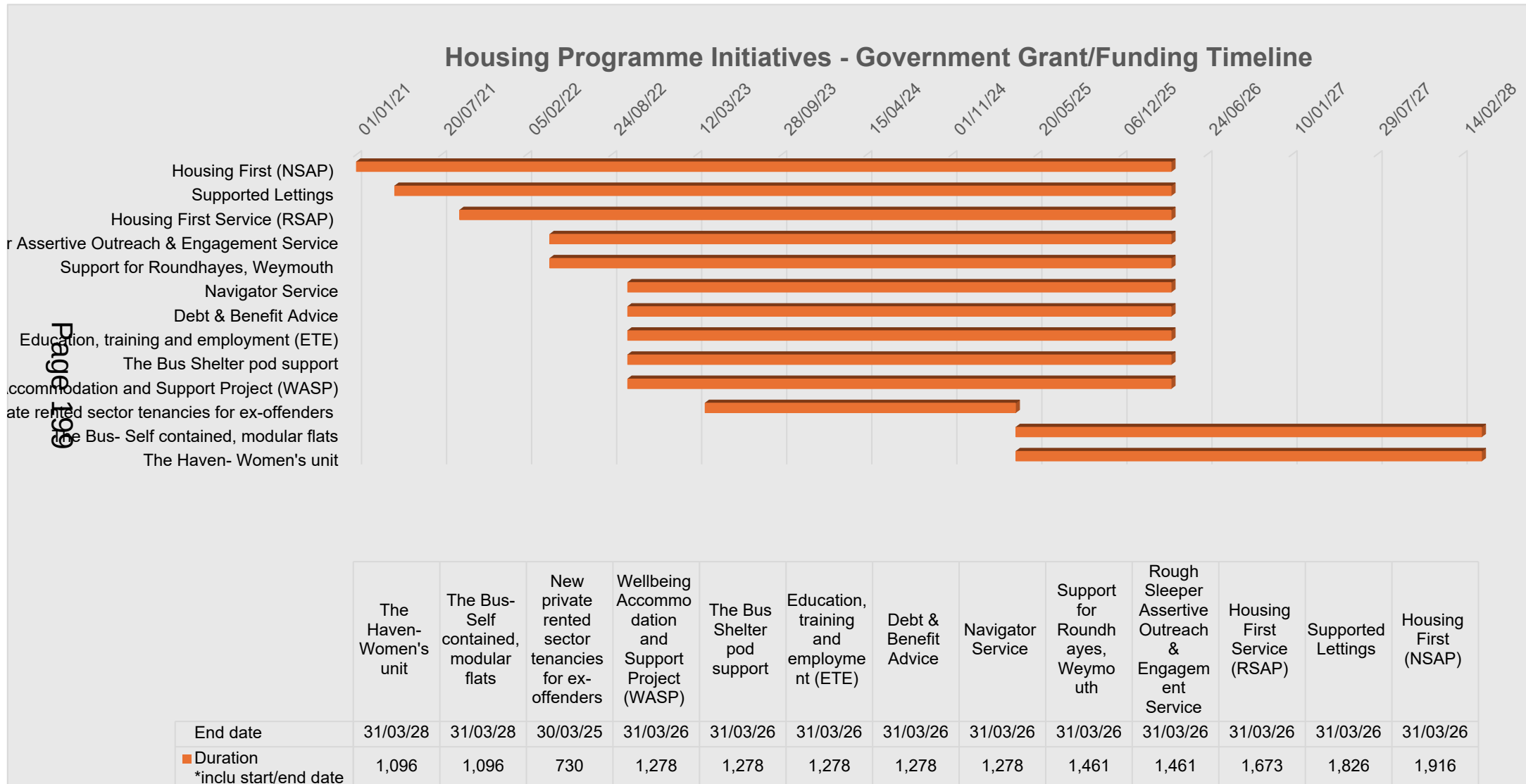
Appendix C - Housing Programme Revenue Funding % Received Based on Initiative



Appendix D - Housing Programme Providers Revenue Grants Amount Received



Appendix E - Housing Programme Revenue Grants Received - MHCLG Grants Timeline



Appendix F – Centralised Strategic Oversight Pros and Cons

Pros	Cons
Strategic Alignment: - Centralised oversight ensures that all activities and initiatives align with the council's strategic objectives, leading to more coherent and focused efforts. - Example: A centralised strategy team or forum can ensure that all funding applications support the council's long-term housing strategy.	Potential for Bureaucracy: - Centralised oversight can lead to increased bureaucracy, slowing down decision-making processes and reducing flexibility. - Example: Departments may face delays in getting approvals for funding applications due to additional layers of oversight.
Improved Coordination: - Centralised oversight ensures that all departments and directorates align with the overall strategic goals of the Council. This improves coordination and reduces duplication of efforts. - Example: A centralised funding forum can coordinate grant applications, ensuring that different departments do not compete for the same funding sources.	Risk of Centralised Control: - Excessive centralisation can lead to a concentration of power and decision-making authority, potentially stifling innovation and initiative at the departmental level. - Example: Departments may feel disempowered and less motivated to pursue innovative solutions if all decisions are made centrally.
Enhanced Efficiency: - By centralising oversight, the Council can streamline processes, reduce redundancies, and improve the efficiency of resource allocation and project implementation. - Example: A centralised team can manage funding applications more efficiently, reducing the time and effort required by individual departments.	Implementation Challenges: - Implementing centralised oversight can be challenging, requiring significant changes to existing processes and systems, and may face resistance from departments. - Example: Departments accustomed to operating independently may resist the shift to centralised oversight, leading to implementation difficulties.
Improved Communication: - Centralised oversight facilitates better communication and information sharing across the council, leading to more informed decision-making. - Example: Regular meetings and updates from a centralised team can keep all departments informed about funding opportunities and strategic priorities.	Reduced Flexibility: - Centralised oversight can reduce the flexibility of individual departments to respond quickly to emerging opportunities and challenges. - Example: Departments may miss time-sensitive funding opportunities if they must wait for centralised approval.
Better Resource Management:	Resource Intensive:

Pros	Cons
• Centralised oversight allows for better management and allocation of resources, ensuring they are used where they are most needed and can have the greatest impact. • Example: Centralised budgeting can prioritise funding for high-impact projects, ensuring optimal use of limited resources.	• Establishing and maintaining a centralised oversight body can be resource-intensive, requiring additional staff, systems, and processes. • Example: The costs associated with setting up a centralised team/forum and the necessary infrastructure may be significant.
Enhanced Accountability: • Centralised oversight provides a clear framework for accountability, ensuring that all departments are held to the same standards and performance metrics. • Example: A centralised oversight body can monitor the progress of projects and ensure compliance with funding requirements.	One-Size-Fits-All Approach: • Centralised strategies may not always account for the unique needs and circumstances of different departments, leading to a one-size-fits-all approach that may not be effective. • Example: A centralised funding strategy may not fully address the specific needs of specialised housing projects.

Appendix G - Hazelmead Stakeholder Partnership Example

Hazelmead ⁹³ , Bridport Cohousing: Affordable Housing Partnership Development Example	
Category	Details
Funding Sources	Homes England Grant: Provided funding for social housing.
	Community Loan: Launched in January 2018 to purchase land.
	Government's Help to Buy Scheme: Supported low-cost shared ownership.
Partners	Bridport Cohousing CLT⁹⁴: Secured the land and managed the project.
	Bournemouth Churches Housing Association (BCHA): Delivered 39 homes (26 for social rent, 13 for shared ownership).
	Dorset Council: Collaborated to provide homes at social rent levels.
	Barefoot Architects: Partnered for planning and design.
	C G Fry & Son Ltd: Contracted for infrastructure and construction.
Financial Contributions	Homes England: Grant funding for social housing.
	Community Loan: Raised funds for land purchase.
	Government's Help to Buy Scheme: Supported shared ownership.

⁹³ [HousingLINCaseStudy_175_BridportCohousing.pdf](#)

⁹⁴ <https://bridportcohousing.org.uk/about/our-story/>



Home in on Housing Programme – Phase 1 project

Version control:

Version	Date	Changes	Circulated to	Produced by
V0.1	12-09-2025	Minor amendments	Louise Capaldi-Tallon	Jenny Howard
V0.2	23/10/25	Minor amendments	Sarah How Martin Short Lee Hardy	Jenny Howard
Vo. 3	4/11/25	Amendments, further research	Sharon Attwater	Jenny Howard

Subject of Report	Housing Register Downsizing Initiative
Purpose of Report	Information / Recommendations / Decision Making
Background Papers	Housing Strategy - Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/dorset-council-housing-allocations-policy-2021-to-2026-revised-august-2024-duplicate-3

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Summary

Project Purpose

This project forms part of phase 1 of the 'Home in on Housing' (HIOH) programme to deliver the Housing Strategy (2024-2029).

A property can be considered 'right' in terms of size, cost, design and attached support. Providing the right property ensures residents can access homes that meet their needs and having a well-designed home, sensitive to its surroundings, is also a key component of a successful, sustainable home.

The 2021 census data, cited in Dorset Council's Housing Strategy, states that whilst many Dorset social housing tenants have the right number of bedrooms to meet their household needs, not all do. Approximately 38% said that they have a least one bedroom more than they need and 6% stated that they're living in overcrowded conditions. According to the National Housing Federation and The Health Foundation, overcrowded conditions are linked with development issues for children. It can worsen mental health and physical conditions and can significantly impact air quality by increasing humidity and promoting mould growth which is linked to respiratory conditions. Our registered providers tell us that, whilst they support and promote downsizing, they have limited resources to financially incentivise this. Instead, those wishing to move are often signposted to our housing register, or to mutual exchange sites like Homeswapper. Home swap sites are where tenants can 'swap' their properties with other social housing tenants regardless of which social housing provider is their landlord. This means tenants have the opportunity to look outside of their own landlord's stock.

The Housing Strategy identified that there might be social housing tenants looking to downsize to smaller properties, and already on the housing register, which could lead to the matching of existing social tenants with each other. The housing register does have a category for social tenants who are under-occupying, but it is possible that many of these tenants do not actively seek to downsize. Phase 1 of this project will research the downsizing issue and make recommendations. There could be an opportunity to have a further phase to look at our current housing system, Huume, to

see if a matching system between under-occupiers and over-crowded households is viable and needed.

Aim

The aim of this project is to research and identify the scale of under-occupying households in social housing. This is done using data from the housing register and work with tenants and registered providers to identify households who are not on the housing register, but are under-occupying, and to understand the barriers to downsizing. It is also an opportunity to research what other local authorities are doing and schemes that work well.

Objectives

The project objectives are:

- Review housing register data for under-occupying residents
- Review registered housing providers data for under-occupying residents
- Cross reference data
- Research existing housing provider schemes/initiatives, locally & nationally
- Resident engagement
- Review and report of current data

What We Did

Scoped and Researched

- Desktop research on other local authority downsizing incentive schemes
- Desktop research on other local authority allocation policies for under-occupancy bandings
- Engagement with Hull City Council & Islington City Council to discuss their downsizing initiatives

- Scoped Dorset Council's Housing Allocation Policy for under-occupancy banding & the new version's consultation closed in August 2025 with 713 responses
- Engagement with local housing providers via email, phone and Teams meetings
- Resident engagement through Facebook posts, newsletters, posters and town parish communications
- Resident survey & analysis
- Benchmarking review for downsizing schemes
- Review of housing register data for those registered as wanting to downsize

Over-crowding & under-occupying

The national picture

As of 2022 there are 4 million social rented households in England, with a higher proportion being housing association homes, compared to local authority homes, according to the English Housing Survey 2021-22 by the Department for Levelling Up (Housing & Communities). Levels of overcrowding and under-occupation are measured using the bedroom standard this is the difference between the number of bedrooms needed to avoid undesirable sharing and the number of bedrooms available to households. Those who are overcrowded are those that have one or more bedrooms below standard and those who under-occupy have one or more bedroom above standard.

Dorset Council's Housing Allocation's Policy 2021-2026 assesses over-crowding based on bedroom entitlement (local housing allowance), ages and composition of household occupants, as defined in the Housing Act 1985. A notional number of bedrooms are allocated to each household in accordance with age, sex and status compared to the actual number of bedrooms available. The Dorset Council Draft Housing Allocation scheme 2026 to 2031 proposes to assess bedroom entitlement in a similar way, using the 'bedroom standard' bedroom criteria, which allows a separate bedroom each for:

- a) any adult/couple

- b) a person aged 21 years or more
- c) two persons of the same sex aged 10 years to 20 years
- d) two persons (whether of the same sex or not) aged less than 10 years
- e) two persons of the same sex where one person is aged between 10 years and 20 years and the other is aged less than 10 years
- f) any person aged under 21 years in any case where he or she cannot be paired with another occupier of the dwelling so as to fall within c, d or e above.

Data from the English Housing Survey 2021-2022 looked at overcrowding and under occupied properties according to tenure, for their survey they based under-occupying criteria as **having 2 or more bedrooms** above standard. The report highlights that:

- Those in social housing are more likely to be overcrowded, with the national average being at 8%
- It is estimated that 10% of social renters live in under-occupied accommodation, nationally

Why is under-occupying a problem?

There's a housing crisis and there are not enough social homes to meet the needs of people, locally and nationally. Under-occupied homes can reduce the overall availability of social housing and making it harder for families who need larger homes to find suitable accommodation. It is thought that the proportion of under-occupied homes increases with age (of the lead tenant) with reluctance to move from long-term homes. The Housing Learning and Improvement Network (LIN) states that 40% of under-occupied homes are older tenants (65+). Their research states that 1 in 10 (10%) general needs properties are under-occupied. Like other research they class under-occupation as having 2+ spare bedrooms. Legally, downsizing cannot be forced if the original tenant still lives there, even with some succession cases on secure tenancies. Another study, in 2011, by the Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research looked at 8 local case studies to understand the reasons for under-occupation. They concluded that under-occupation was a national problem and recognised the need for under-occupation to be addressed. They discuss how downsizing schemes can be successful, alongside support, to free up family-sized

homes. They note that persuading tenants to downsize is challenging and how dedicated, long-term partnership working with local housing providers is key. They acknowledge that having a good supply of bungalows is attractive for downsizers. Right-sizing can be an effective step forward in addressing the housing crisis, by freeing up larger properties and increasing the overall supply available to residents on the housing register.

The local picture

The 2021 Census data tell us that there is a large proportion of older people within the Dorset local authority area, and that a large proportion of older people under-occupy homes, both owner-occupied properties and social rented homes. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) 'Populations Projection' Report's key findings for Dorset suggest that population for Dorset (2022-2032) is set to increase by 13.2% and that the population will continue to age, with a significant increase in those over state pension age by 13.8%. It is thought that the ageing population leads to the increase in under-occupied homes and is a contributing factor in the housing crisis (Intergenerational Foundation Research 2023). This is because staying put in under-occupied homes reduces the supply of family homes and pushes further demand onto homelessness services and waiting times on the housing register. This could also lead to increased demand and prices in the private sector too.

According to the 2021 Census, across the Dorset local authority area approximately:

- 12.3% of residents live in social housing, 16% live in private rented and 71% own their own home
- For all tenures only 20.5% of households are adequately housed, 44% of residents are under-occupying (2 or more spare bedrooms), and 1.5% of residents are living as overcrowded
- There are currently 825 overcrowded applications on Dorset Council's housing register

We looked at data in the Statistical Data Return (SDR) reports, provided by the Regulator of Social Housing, and compared this with data from the 2021 Census. The data tells us that:

- There are 23,687 social housing properties in Dorset

- These are made up of general needs properties, supported housing, housing for older people and low-cost-homeownership (see appendix Table 4)
- It is estimated that there are 2011 under-occupied 2+ bedroom social housing properties and 5938 under-occupied 1+ bedroom social housing properties, totalling 7949 under-occupied social properties in Dorset

For the purposes of this calculation and accuracy we have removed 'low-cost homeownership' from the total amount of social housing units which reduces the stock to 21,984 social rented housing properties in the Dorset local authority area. This data was compared to the 2021 Census which can be found in the Appendices.

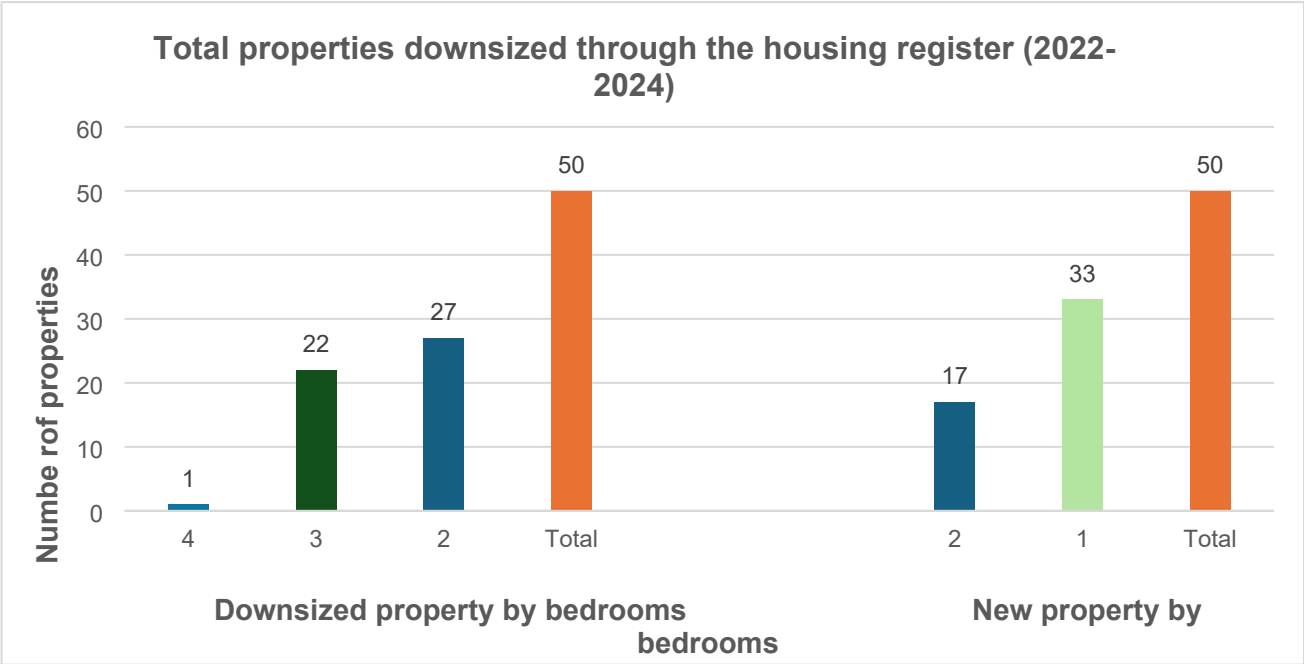
The English Housing Survey reports 2+ spare bedrooms as under-occupancy, which estimates the national average of under occupancy in social housing at 10%. Their data does not filter on those living with just 1 spare bedroom. The 2021 Census data for Dorset records under occupancy of 2 or more spare bedrooms in social housing at 9% and 1 spare bedroom at 27%. Based on the Census data the combined under occupancy rate across Dorset for any spare bedrooms in social housing is 36%.

Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy

The Dorset Council Housing Allocation policy currently stipulates that people who are existing social housing tenants can apply to the housing register if under-occupying, attributing to a band B, high housing need to these applications. In Dorset Council, between 2022 and 2024 there were a total of 50 applicants who successfully downsized following their application to the housing register.

The graph below shows the breakdown of downsizers by property size and where they moved to. The majority downsized from a 2 bed, into a 1 bed property. Over the 2-year period 22 households downsized their 3-bed property and only 1 household downsized from a 4-bed property.

Graph A shows the total amount of downsizers by property size



Downsizing schemes and initiatives

During the development of this report, we researched national downsizing schemes and incentives that other local authorities or housing providers have. Several local authorities provided in-depth details of their schemes & incentives and provided information relating to how successful they have been. Further information can be found in Table 2 in the Appendix.

Islington City Council

Islington City Council are a local authority who have their own council housing stock, approximately 25,300 council owned properties, alongside local registered housing providers for social housing. They identified under-occupying as a problem and developed an initiative to tackle the issue. Islington told us that the average age range of under-occupiers in their area were thought to be a mixture of ages, including working-aged people. Their solution was to introduce a matching service called Smart Move whereby they match their own tenants (Council housing) who are under-occupying with tenants that are overcrowded, offering support and assistance to move. Matching was done through direct lets, outside of the normal nomination

process. The scheme is for Islington Council tenants only and is funded through their Housing Revenue Account which means that the swaps must only be within their own council stock.

The scheme proved very successful in the beginning, especially when the spare room subsidy was introduced, they developed and sent out a 'Smart Move Catalogue' to residents, which advertised available properties. Over time the scheme slowed down, mainly due to entrenched under-occupiers. They identified the main reasons for tenants not downsizing is because residents want very specific properties in specific locations such as a bungalow; rental cost differences and some tenants expressing that they needed that extra bedroom for family members to stay. In addition to the Smart Move Catalogue, their scheme also pays tenants incentives of £700 per room plus up to £500 for removals. The scheme permits applicants with a 3 or 4 bed property wishing to downsize to bid on 2 bed properties.

For the Smart Move scheme Islington trialled a digital application called 'Swap Tracker' as a mutual exchange programme. They reported that this method did not work well, and reverted to using Home Swapper software, which can generate reports for them around over and under occupying and they reported finding this was simpler to use. Islington reported Swap Tracker was difficult to use, costly and not able to provide the level of reporting that Home Swapper already does.

Alongside the Smart Move scheme Islington offer general downsizing, where residents of Islington can join the housing register to downsize, and this can be between their own council stock and registered provider stock. This option allows only the *council tenant* the ability to claim the incentive though, which is £500 per room. Priority is given on the housing register for those downsizing. Islington hold active campaigns and events around downsizing, and these events prove successful and raise resident knowledge of the schemes available. They regularly send newsletters to all residents which have details of their schemes. With regards to staffing, Islington have 3 dedicated under occupying officers, 1 over occupying officer and 1 mutual exchange officer.

Hull City Council

Hull City Council are a stock-holding local authority and have created their own under occupation scheme. The scheme sits outside of their allocations policy, and

this is because the council themselves approach the under-occupying households and encourage them to downsize, rather than it being in response to their requests to move due to a housing need. The scheme does not operate on a first come first served basis because the council's objective is not just to assist people but it's also to release a property that is in high demand. The scheme will support any households in a 4-, 5-, 6- or 7-bedroom property who wish to transfer to a smaller home. The scheme was developed because Hull Council recognised that there is a limited supply of large family accommodation in their area and that are many existing tenants living in properties with more bedrooms than they need. They also recognise that current options available, within their Allocations Policy for singles, couples and those with adult families is not sufficient to encourage people to move out of their large houses (because they would only be eligible for a one bed accommodation or a flat/maisonette). Properties released by this scheme are allocated to families who need them the most, e.g. people in temporary accommodation.

To be eligible tenants must be willing to give up a larger family home and downsize to a maximum of a 3-bedroom property, excluding 2-bedroom bungalows where a medical assessment is needed. The current home must be left in a good, clean state. The scheme will not accept applications that will cause a member of the existing household to become homeless. The amount given depends on any arrears owing and condition of property.

Table 1 shows the incentive amount offered by Hull City Council

Number of bedrooms in new home

Current number of bedrooms		1	2	3	4
	Incentive amount				
	4	£2,500	£2,000	N/A	N/A
	5	£3,000	£2,000	£2,000	N/A
	6	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£2,500
	7	£4,000	£3,500	£3,000	£2,500

In addition to the financial incentive Hull offer moving assistance on a case-by-case basis and this could include packing assistance, disconnection of gas, washing machine, dishwasher, telephone, cooker, broadband and reconnection of these services. Help organising removals and transporting property, setting up TV aerials, new carpets and blinds. The removal cost may be reimbursed. In 2024 Hull assisted 35 downsize moves, many residents moving from a 4-bed property. Incentives, totalled £36,278. Over half of the residents moving had arrears (totalling £6721) and this amount was deducted from the incentive amount. Three of the larger family homes went to families who were in emergency B&B, the cost of which was over £36,000 in B&B costs alone. The scheme has been very successful, and funding has been confirmed for a further year. Hull have a yearly budget of £100,000 which comes from the housing revenue. The scheme benefits both tenants and the council, especially from a financial point of view, as well as helping tenants who are in large houses who can no longer afford to live in their current properties due to mobility/financial issues. Some tenants in large properties are subject to the Social Sector Size Criteria (SSSC) or (bedroom tax) as well as having to pay large utility bills/council tax. Hull City Council say that when speaking to their tenants they have helped move, this scheme has been a huge practical help and to some, a lifeline especially from a financial point of view.

Some local authorities, such as Wiltshire, whilst they have no incentive scheme, actively encourage and campaign about downsizing to their residents. East Devon Council offer financial assistance with moving costs, prioritising those who are releasing a 3- or 4-bedroom property. Somerset Council offer a grant of up to £2,000

to households downsizing regardless of property size. Manchester City Council offer a specific age 50+ scheme.

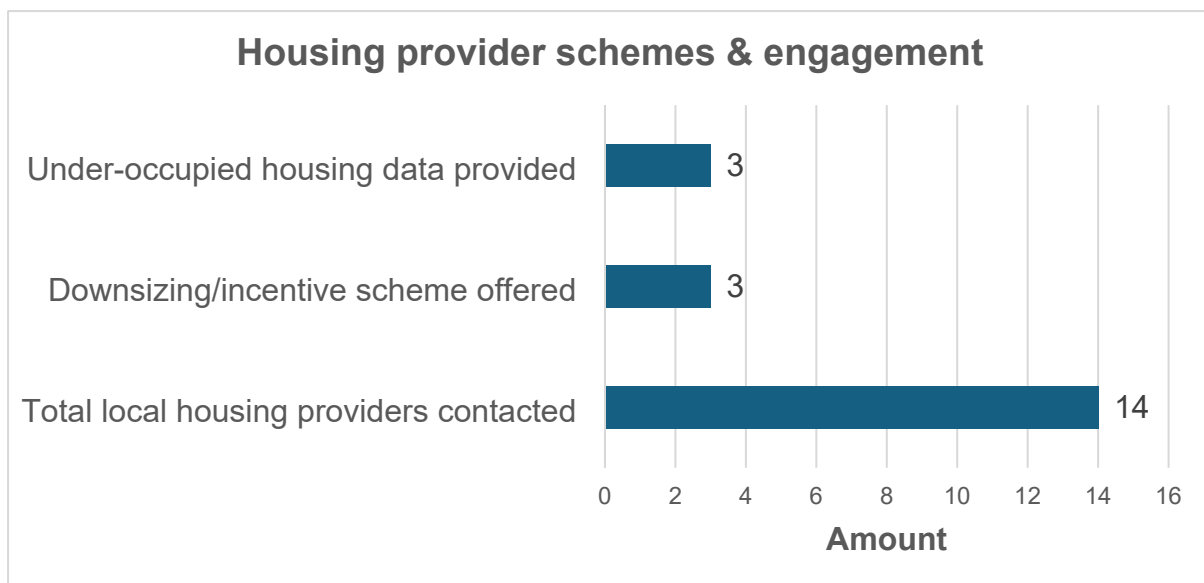
Summary

The common factor with other local authorities who are actively campaigning around downsizing, offering schemes and incentives is that they are mostly stock-holding local authorities. They have control over their stock and therefore have a good understanding about the scale of downsizing in their area. Dorset Council is a registered provider and a stock holding authority having received small numbers of property transfer from predecessor authorities. It does not, however, offer social housing and works with registered providers who supply social housing for allocation to households on the housing register. This means we rely on housing providers to provide us with insight into the scale of the under-occupying problem, and to maximise and make best use of their stock. With many schemes, and downsizing in general, there are often restrictions in place that apply to households who wish to downsize but have rent arrears. This may be a barrier for households who are in arrears because they are likely to be experiencing affordability issues or benefit reductions in their current home which can exacerbate their rent arrears. A few of the schemes we reviewed, Hull City Council for example, consider paying off arrears or using their financial incentive offer to do so to encourage tenants to move, but for the most part downsizing is not an option if there are arrears.

Registered providers have said they support and promote downsizing but have limited resources to financially incentivise this activity. We contacted some of the registered providers with stock in the Dorset Council area as part of our engagement work. We asked for details on their downsizing schemes, incentive packages offered and whether they record under-occupying and downsizing data that they would be able to share. We contacted 14 local registered providers, 3 were able to offer us under occupying data, 3 told us they have a downsizing scheme and 1 is currently developing a scheme.

The project was able to obtain detailed data from Magna and Sovereign Network Group (SNG) and partial information from Abri, which is examined below. The appendices show the full list of housing providers and their engagement.

Graph B shows housing provider engagement



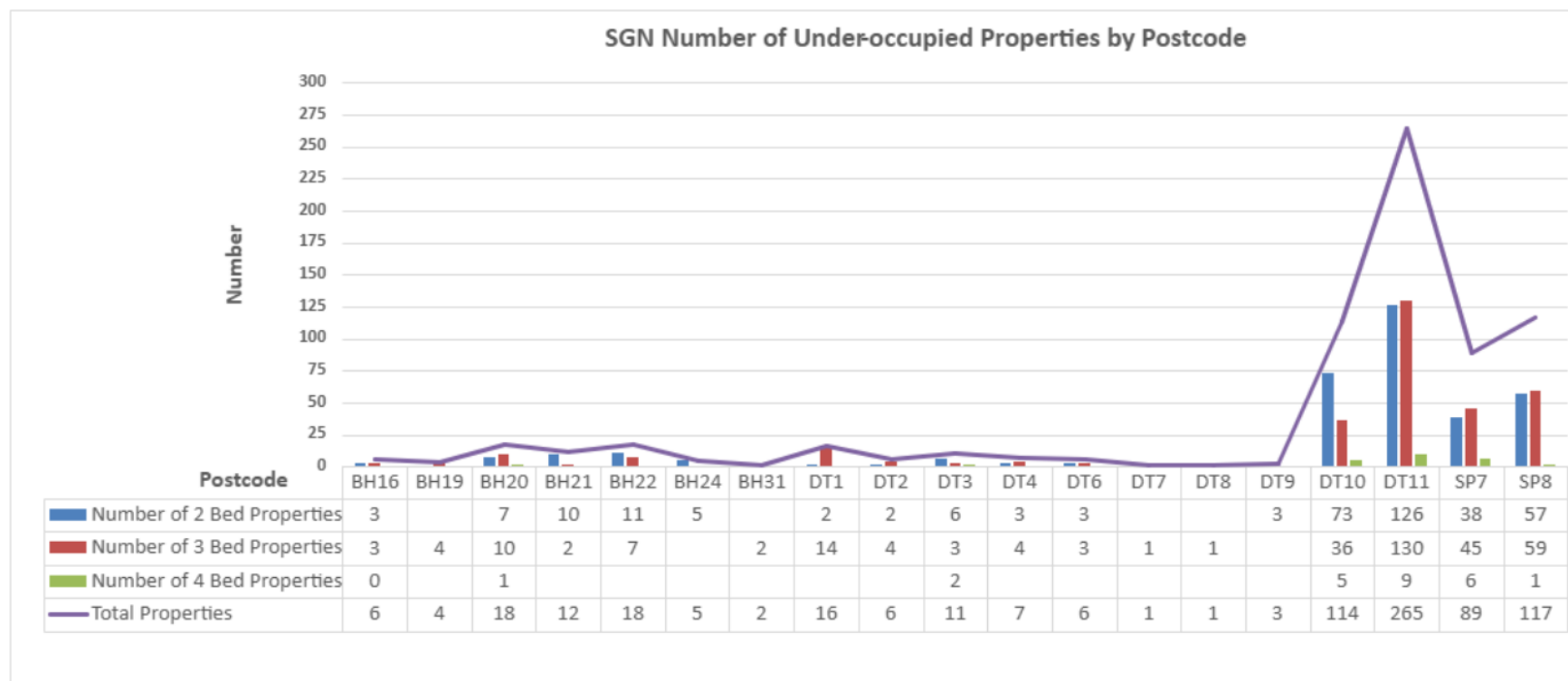
Housing Provider under-occupying schemes & data

Sovereign Network Group (SGN)

SNG's offer is called the 'Rightsizing Initiative'. To be eligible tenants must be over housed, have no arrears and no savings to cover moving costs. The initiative is aimed at those who cannot afford to move and will be releasing at least a 2-bedroom property. There is no upper limit on the incentive amount that can be spent, and it is done on a case-by-case basis, but each claim has cost between £1,000-£2,000. No cash amount is paid direct to the claimant; it covers costs such as cleaning services or removal services and SNG pay the suppliers directly. The scheme allows for services to be paid for, such as removals, carpets and any other costs associated with moving. The whole organisation budget is £50,000 per annum and the aim is to assist as many tenants as possible, so awards are kept as low as possible. Although downsizing is mentioned on their website, information is minimal and there are no ongoing active campaigns around downsizing. Officers only speak to residents about downsizing when the issue is raised through associated rent arrears or resident engagement. Not everyone who applies for the downsizing incentive is successful, if the household has a good income and can afford the cost of moving, they are rejected or if they are not giving up 2 or more bedrooms. SNG do hold a list of residents who are currently under-occupying but state that the information is not always correct because they rely on residents telling them about changes in

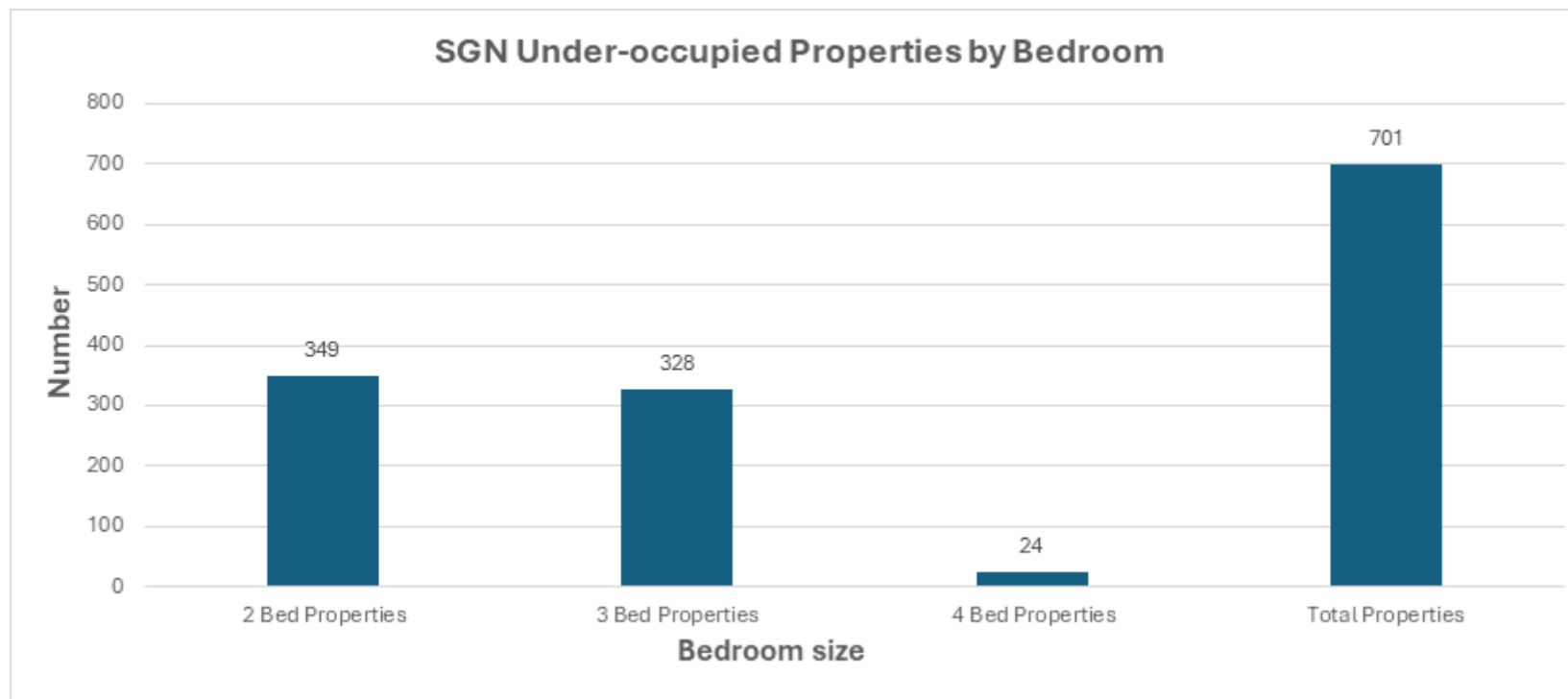
circumstances to households. Since February 2024 they have assisted 18 customers to downsize and spent £23,339 (from 175 residents who applied).

Graph C shows SNG's under-occupied properties by postcode & bedrooms in properties.



From the data there is a total of 701 under-occupied SNG properties within the Dorset local authority area. The data shows most of SNG's under-occupied properties fall into 4 principal areas: DT11, DT10, SP7 and SP8 postcodes. Chart D below showing the total number of under occupied properties by bedroom size.

Graph D shows SGN's under occupied properties

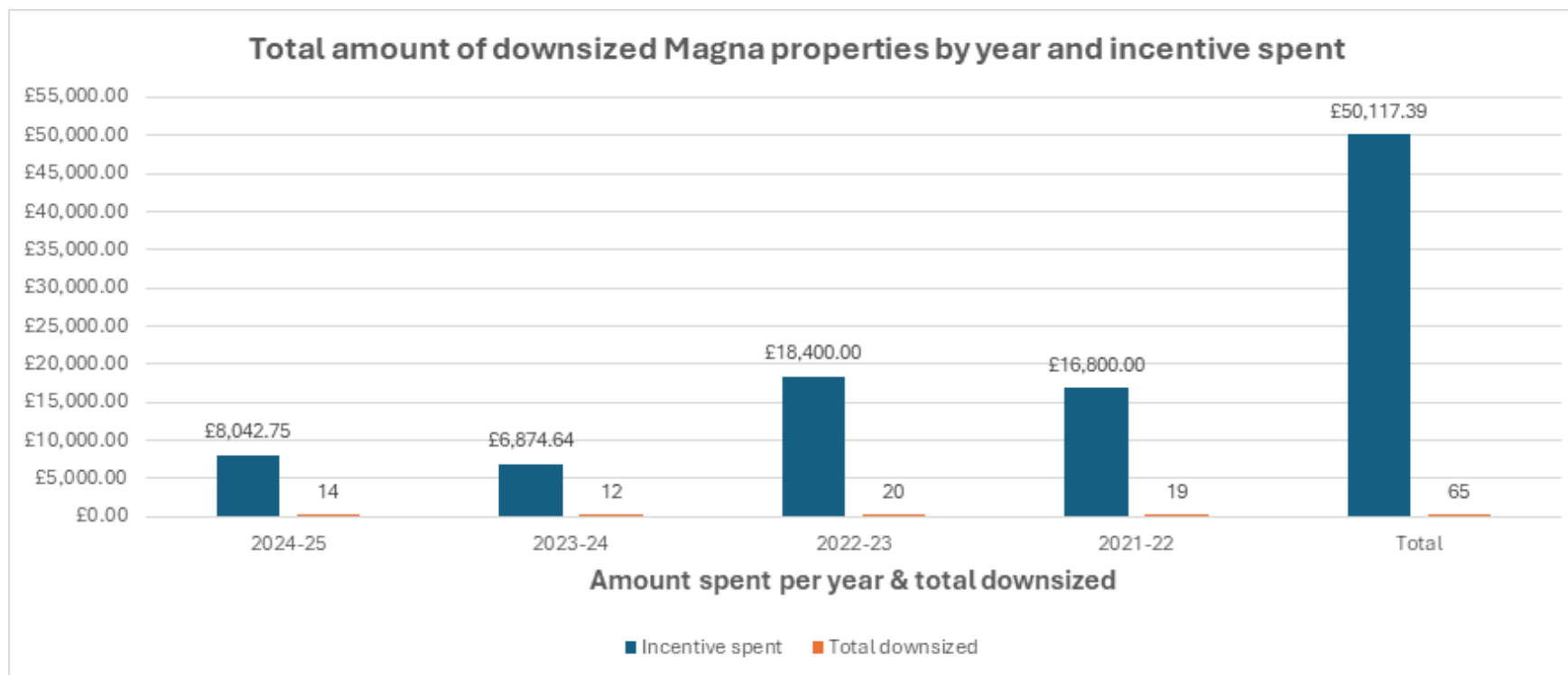


Magna

Magna has a downsizing incentive scheme, offering rent in advance up to £600, for those downsizing into general needs stock. Magna confirmed there is no minimum bedroom criteria to access to their incentive. For complex cases that meet the criteria there is an 'additional costs' budget of up to £1,600 to cover deep cleaning, rubbish clearance, removals etc. but this is only in extreme cases where the tenant is deemed vulnerable. Magna formally employed a Home Move Officer, but this post ended in 2023

following budget cuts. This coincides with there being fewer downsizing moves and incentives spent from 2023 onwards, according to the data provided, shown in Chart E below.

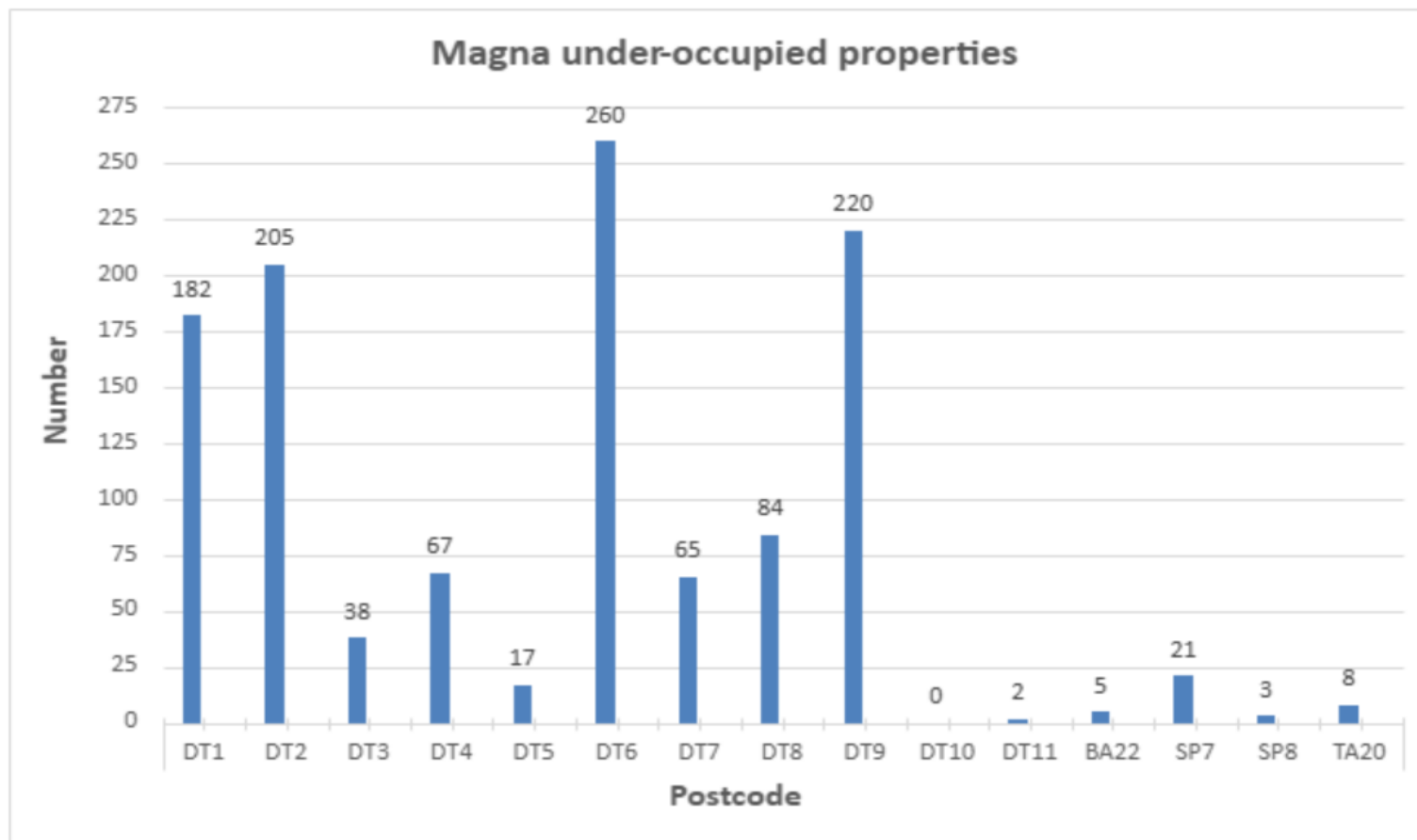
Chart E shows Magna's downsizing numbers and amount spent per year from 2021 – 2025



Magna residents can find about the downsizing scheme/incentive through their housing officer or from the website. Magna confirmed tenancy information is not currently reviewed regularly, and that they require residents to declare any changes in circumstances. This means the data provided, showing under-occupation, could be underrepresented. Also, for residents that self-fund (do not claim any housing-related benefits), may not declare such changes. This might not be isolated to only Magna but could represent a wider problem throughout other housing providers. Magna told us barriers to downsizing include residents viewing the property as their home and not wanting to move to other locations. Another barrier is the cost associated with moving, with little financial help available. Especially if the property they are moving to needs updating/modifying or adapting. Magna confirmed that all successful downsizes are met through the housing register or home swapper and not direct lets.

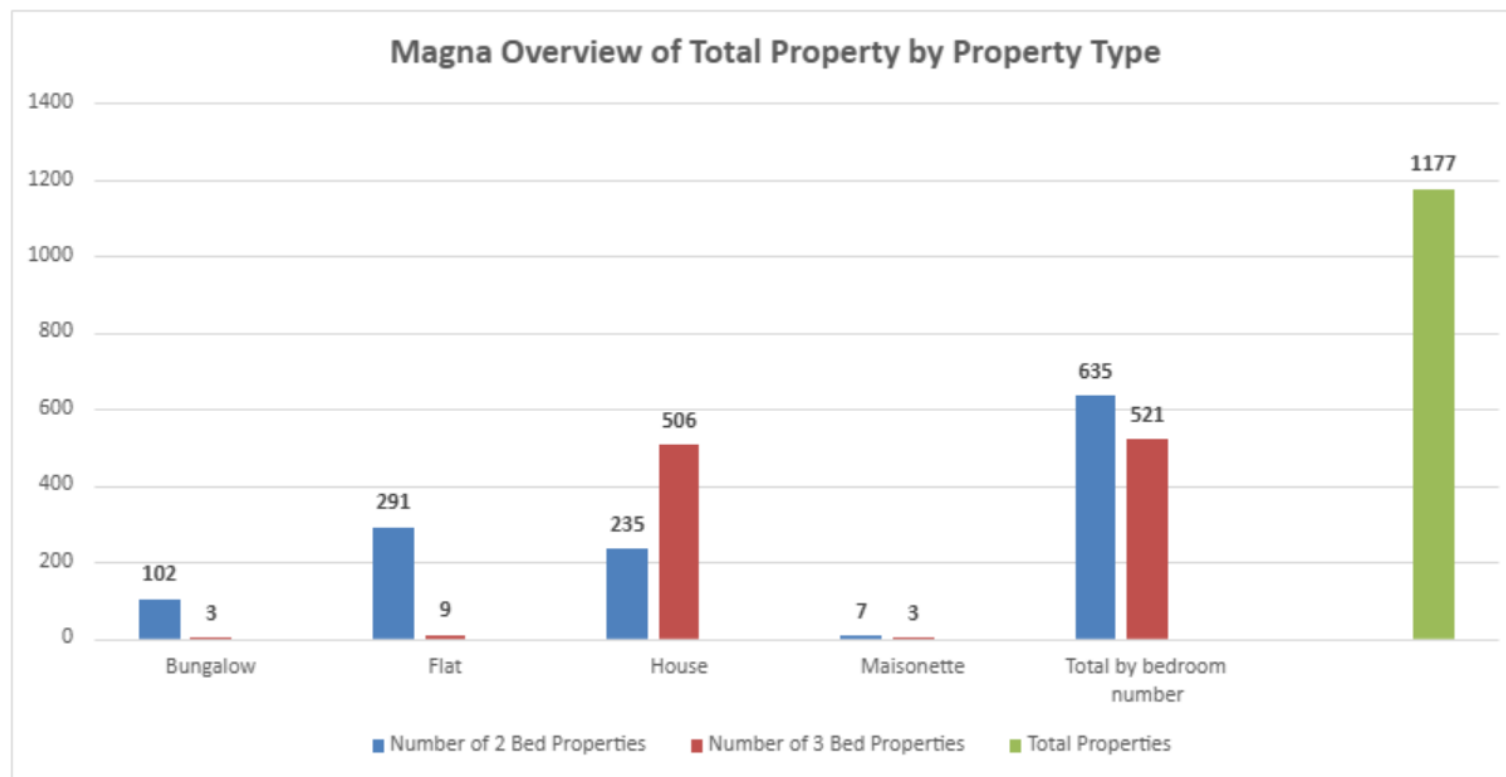
Magna provided information relating to their estimated under-occupying cohort shown below. Magna, estimate they have about 1,177 under-occupied properties. The most common areas are DT1, DT2, DT6 & DT9.

Chart F shows Magna under-occupied property by location



The data shows the breakdown of property type, with 46% of under-occupied properties being flats and 37% being houses. The majority of under-occupied two beds were flats and the majority of under-occupied 3 and 4 beds were houses.

Chart G shows total Magna under-occupied properties by property type.



Other local

housing providers

Stonewater

Stonewater were not able to provide us with a full data set but were able to confirm 10 customers had been downsized via direct re-lets and 59 customers downsized through mutual exchanges during 2023/24. Over the next 12 months, Stonewater aims to directly approach customers wishing to downsize, to see whether mutual exchanges can be facilitated with customers needing bigger homes.

Abri

Abri responded with limited information. They have no specific reporting or reviewing of tenancies in place, therefore information provided is an estimate.

Abri estimates that within Dorset (local authority area) they have 114 under-occupying properties, approximately 18% of their stock. They could not provide a breakdown on specific areas within Dorset or by property type. According to the Regulator of Social Housing Report 2024, Abri owns 530 general needs properties in Dorset therefore 114 properties equate to 21.5% of their Dorset stock.

Their website encourages residents to get in touch so they can help people apply to the housing register or apply for DHP (Discretionary Housing Payments).

Bournemouth Churches Housing Association (BCHA)

BCHA confirmed that they have no current downsizing scheme as they have very little general needs stock. They do not currently hold information on which of their tenants are under-occupying but advise that they are currently 'undertaking customer profiling' to obtain this information. They do not advertise or promote downsizing to their tenants currently. BCHA did state that a downsizing incentive scheme is something they would be interested in promoting, in future. They could not provide any statistics or further information.

Guinness Trust

Guinness stated that they do not currently operate any downsizing schemes, but they are in the process of designing one. The scheme will include a cash incentive per bedroom released plus help with carpets and removals. They do support downsizing and promote this on their website. They also give priority to internal transfers for under-occupying and overcrowded. They stated they have some reporting on under-occupying and were able to confirm that they have (recorded) 106 properties as under-occupying and 58 as overcrowded but did not provide any further details.

Legal and General Affordable Housing (Landgah)

Landgah state that as a new registered provider, much of their stock is newbuild (since 2019) and has been allocated based on housing need. Therefore, it is unlikely there is much under-occupying currently. Their Allocation Policy supports and includes an 'Under Occupation Incentive' although they state they have not had any cases for consideration yet. The incentives would be assessed on a case-by-case basis such as removal costs/decorating incentives and for people downsizing by at least 2 bedrooms. They have not run any specific campaigns promoting the incentive, the policy & information is available for customers on their website. Landgah state that under occupation will be an area that will be reviewed further in preparation for the Renters Rights legislation. Their original policy offered households a fixed term assured shorthold tenancy that was 6 years in length initially, and the process of renewal was further engagement and assessment of the household, making the best use of homes available and exploring potential downsizing.

Mutual Exchange – Home Swapper sites

Phase one research includes exploring mutual exchange websites and the information they hold. Home Swapper confirmed that *nationally* in 2024 there were 21,333 swaps recorded. Breaking these down into bedroom size:

Table 2 shows national swaps recorded

Bedsit/studio	0.7%
1	17.9%
2	43.8%
3	32.6%
4	4.7%
5	0.3%
6+	0.1%

When asked for a breakdown by local authority area and housing provider this information was not possible to obtain. It is recorded by 'county' only, which means 'Dorset' includes the BCP area for this data set. Below is the breakdown of swaps, by bedroom, in the *county* Dorset. There were 135 recorded swaps via HomeSwapper within Dorset in 2024.

Table 3 shows recorded swaps within the county, Dorset, in 2024

County	Bedroom	Swaps
Dorset	0	1
Dorset	1	20
Dorset	2	66
Dorset	3	38
Dorset	4	9
Dorset	5	1
Total		135

Other home-swap organisations were also contacted, including Brighter Places, UK Home Swap and Home Swaps.co.uk but none of these were able to offer any information or did not respond to our engagement.

Housing Register Priority

The project looked at Dorset Council's banding on the housing register for downsizing and compared this with other local authorities to benchmark.

Table 4 below shows that Dorset Council bands under-occupiers as a band B, high housing need. Any higher banding would be an emergency banding A. There is a new allocation's policy, just finishing consultation, and the under-occupying banding is proposed to stay the same but note that the banding will be band 2 instead of band B, this means the priority for under-occupying will stay the same. When we compare this banding to neighbouring local authorities some offer a higher banding. For example, North Somerset Council offer a band A if the applicant is offering an under-occupied property with at least 2 spare bedrooms, and band B if under-occupying by 1 spare bedroom. BCP and East Devon are like Dorset Council and offer under-occupying a band B – a band below emergency banding. Wiltshire, like North Somerset offer under-occupiers the highest banding, band 1. Birmingham City Council have different bandings for the number of spare rooms an applicant has, for example, if someone has 3 bedrooms spare, they are eligible for the highest band, band A. If they have 1 spare bedroom, they are eligible for a band C. Some councils offer direct lets outside of the normal bidding site; this means the usual nominations or bidding process is bypassed.

Table 4 shows Dorset Council's housing register banding for under-occupying compared with other local authorities

Dorset Council	North Somerset	BCP	Wiltshire Council	East Devon	Somerset Council	Birmingham City Council	Manchester City Council	Hull Council	Nottingham City Council	Islington City Council
Band B	Band A if under occupying by 2+ rooms and band B under occupying by 1+ room	Gold band (1 below emergency)	Band 1	Band B - high housing need. Must have at least one extra bedroom	Gold band for those downsizing from a 4+ bedroom property (and 3 bed with a parlour)	Band A for those under-occupying 3 bedrooms or more Band B Under-occupying by 2 bedrooms Band C – under-occupying by 1 bedroom or more	Band 1 – strict criteria: must have at least a 3 bedroom and not move to another family sized home	Direct Lets are made outside of the normal bidding system. Band C but points increase with each spare bedroom	A13	Points based system with extra 100-150 points or direct lets with matching scheme

Housing Register Review

One of the objectives in the project brief was to review the current housing register data and identify how many people on the housing register are under-occupying, bidding and whether their details are still up to date. A hybrid review was conducted, and each under-occupying household was contacted and asked to update/review their application data. There are 185 live applications awarded banding for under-occupying. The review revealed 8 applicants, although registered, had not placed any bids on available properties. All the applications who are not bidding were contacted and offered to take part in our resident under-occupying survey, to understand the reasons why they were not placing any bids. Some of these form part of the resident engagement survey responses.

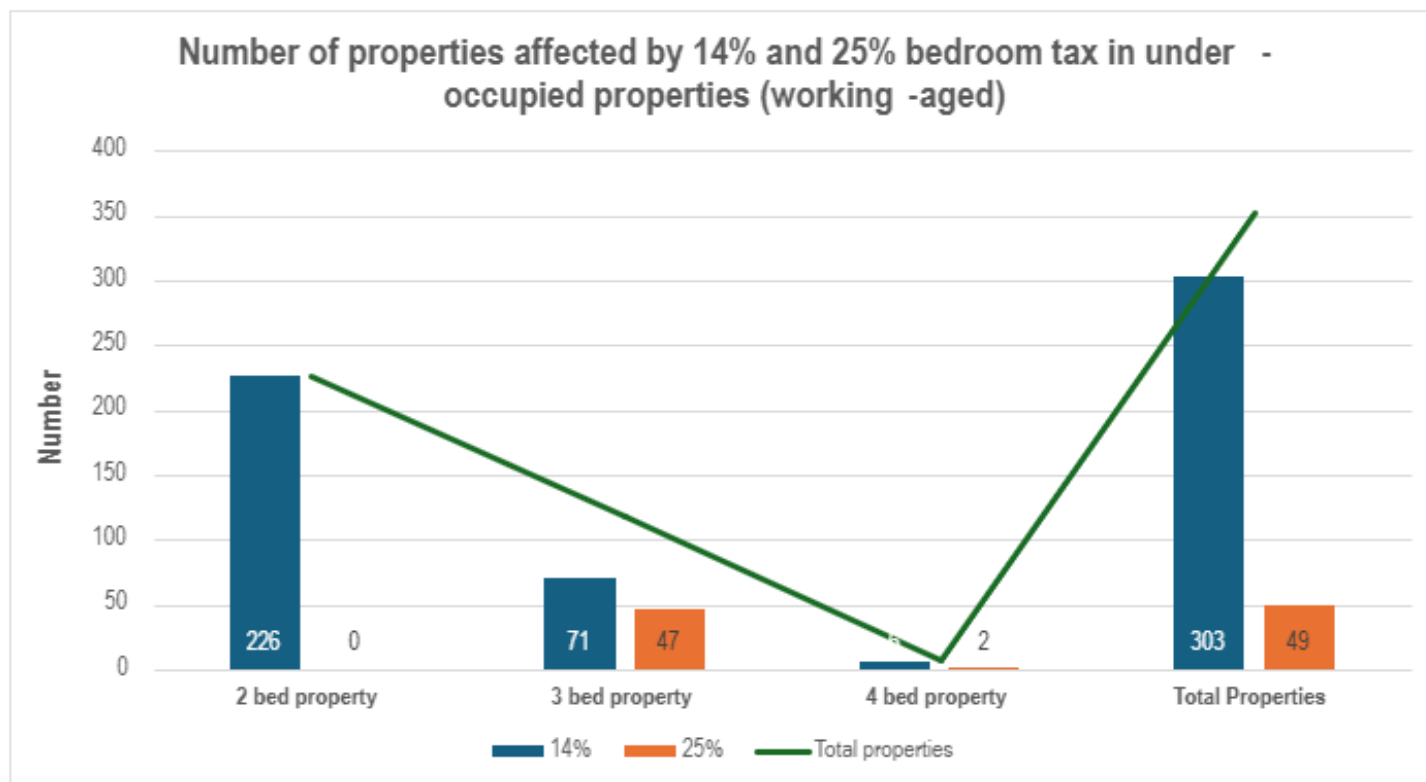
Data indicates that there are 7,949 under-occupied properties in the Dorset local authority area (1+ spare room) with 185 households on the housing register. This data suggests only 2.33% of under-occupiers are on the housing register to downsize.

Under Occupancy charge (bedroom tax) data

Information from the Revenue & Benefits team regarding under-occupancy and housing benefit have been provided to show a snippet of under-occupancy within Dorset. The information below relates to working-aged people who are in receipt of housing benefit and council tax benefit but subjected to '*under-occupancy charge*', which is also known as '*bedroom tax*'. The under-occupancy charge, or bedroom tax is where someone is of working-age and claiming housing benefit but has a reduction in benefits because their home has more bedrooms than needed. It applies to people who rent from the council, housing associations or other registered social landlords. If you have one spare bedroom the reduction of benefit is 14% and if you have two or more spare bedrooms the reduction is 25%. The data below shows residents in Dorset, who are of working age, and have not (yet) migrated over to Universal Credit or do not claim for other reasons. The data below rules out anyone in temporary accommodation

as they would not be eligible or live in exempt rent properties. The Council does not hold information relating to Universal Credit claimants who are affected by the under-occupancy charge.

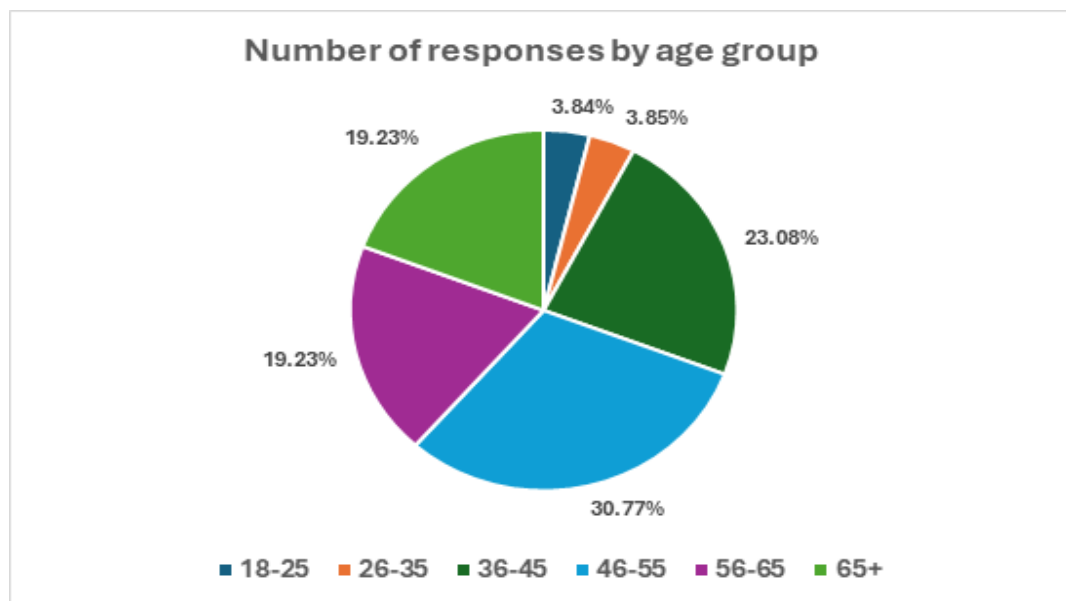
Chart H shows the number of 4,3 and 2 bed properties within Dorset affected by the under-occupancy charge/bedroom tax (HB only)



The data shows approximately 352 working-aged households under-occupying and affected by the under-occupancy charge. The breakdown below shows 303 properties affected by having one bedroom too many and a 14% reduction to benefits and 49

properties affected by 25% reduction to benefits, having two or more bedrooms too many. Whilst this data is useful in showing under-occupancy for those in receipt of housing benefit it only provides a small representation into the problem and does not provide a reflection of under-occupancy for those on Universal Credit. This data is accurate from the date received, March 2025.

A 2014 study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation investigated the effects of spare room subsidy in its first year of operation and found that it failed to deliver the savings expected. Councils made full use of DHP payments to help tenants adjust to the changes to benefits and in the first 6 months 6% of affected households moved to avoid the size criteria.



this project. A survey, specifically directed at those in social housing who are under-occupying, went live between 25th March 2025 and 30th June 2025. The survey was accessible through Dorset Council's social media

Resident survey & feedback

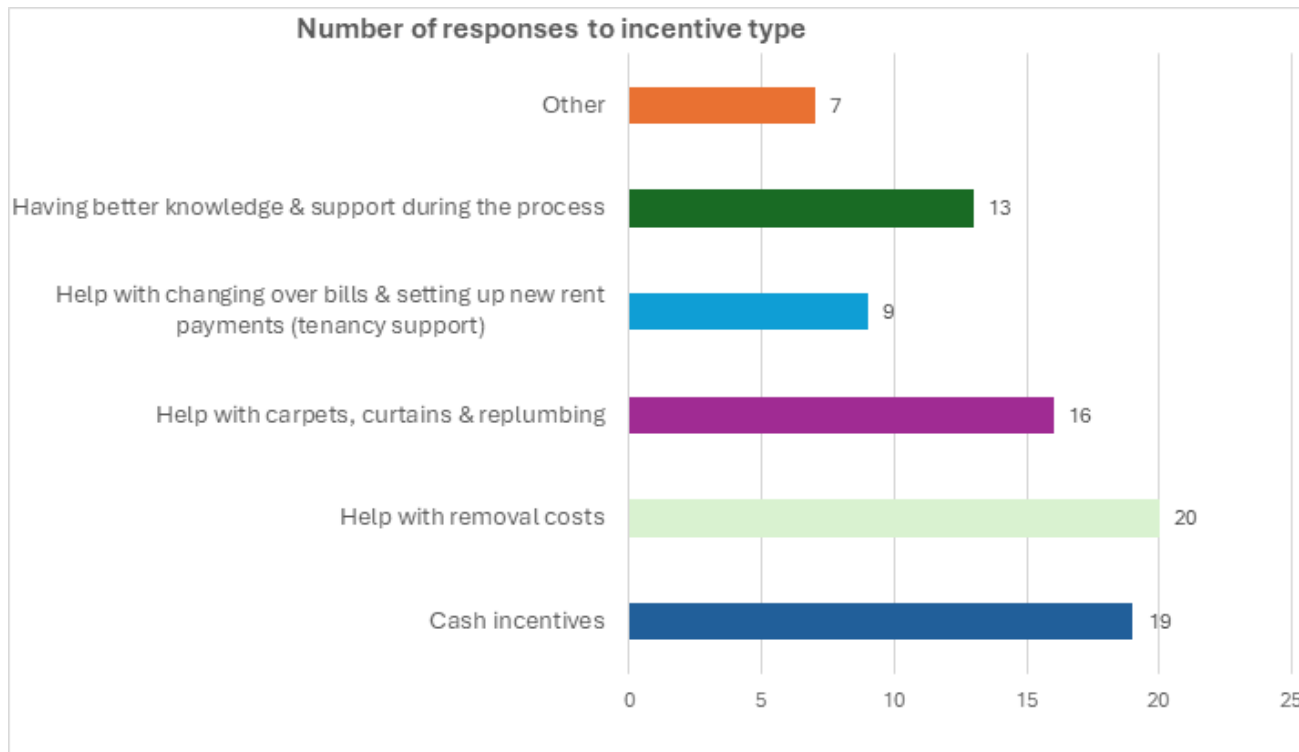
Resident engagement was one of the objectives of

There were a variety of age ranges from respondents, with the most responses coming from 46–55-year-olds. The least responses came from the younger age brackets, as expected they are less likely to be under-occupying. It is thought that there are more older people under-occupying, and we would like to have seen a greater number of representations from the 65+ age group.

where it was posted on 3 separate occasions, a poster with the survey link was emailed to Parish Councils to display, CAB hubs and all Dorset Council libraries in poster form. Local housing providers agreed to put a copy of the poster in their newsletters. Despite this only 26 responses were collected.

The most common under-occupied property, according to the survey data is 3 bed properties, followed by 2 bed properties with 73% of respondents having 1 spare bedroom in their home. 19% had 2 spare bedrooms and 8% answered 'other' because they use their spare room for visiting family/children. Most participants had a current 3 bed property with 1 spare bedroom. Most participants with a 3-bed property were in the 46-55 age group. Further information can be found in the appendices.

When asked about whether they had thought about downsizing before, 85% said that they had and 15% said they had not. When asked why they had not thought about downsizing they responded to say that they keep a spare room in case their children return home, they need more space and have had a disabled partner who was no longer in the home. Out of the 85% of people who are interested in downsizing only 45% were on the housing register. The reasons listed for not joining the housing register include, there being nothing suitable in their location, not knowing they could join the housing register, not having the knowledge to do so, it being too long-winded and there not being any incentive to do so. 92% of residents said their housing provider had not approached them about downsizing. The 'other' included 'being able to have a choice of property to go to', 'new build property only', 'opportunity to move to a suitable property and not be constantly bumped for others', 'a change to move to a suitable property', 'a way to move my vulnerable daughter to a safe place', 'a bigger priority and moving in a realistic time frame', 'priority in a similar area',



When asked about whether any reward/incentive would support people in their downsizing journey the results show that help with removal costs was most important closely followed by a cash incentive and having help with carpets, curtains & replumbing. Having better knowledge & support during the moving downsizing process was also important.

The data shows that when it came to

the frequency of bidding (for those on the housing register) 6 participants had never bid. The most common reason why is that they say there are no suitable properties to bid on, particularly bungalows in specific locations. Other reasons include affordability – moving from social rent to affordable rent being unaffordable to them. Not having enough priority on the housing register, being bumped down the list when a higher priority bid is placed. Out of the 6 participants who are not bidding 5 falls into the under 65 age group.

Participants were asked if they knew about home swapper websites and 85% said yes, 15% said no. Out of the 85% who have heard of home swap websites 71% had registered with one. There is no age correlation for those participants who are registered on a home swap website, with there being a variable age range registered. Out of the participants who do not know about home swap sites 50% are 65+ and 50% are 46-55 age bracket. The feedback from people who had used the home swap sites suggest that it can be a good alternative to bidding on the housing register, but it can take a long time for a suitable property to match to, some properties are not in decent condition and there can be timewasters, which is demoralising.

Reports & Research

A study by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) in collaboration with Hackney Council in May 2022 '*Rehousing Programmes for older social housing tenants in Hackney, London*' looked at how well rehousing (under-occupied) programmes work. The study included surveys to residents, photovoice for older residents, in-person interviews with older tenants who had decided against downsizing and interviews with professionals. The key findings of the study include a list of *disincentives* for moving, which includes:

- There not being enough suitable housing stock for their preference
- Being reluctant to give up a spare room
- Wanting to stay close to family, support networks and surroundings
- The prospect of a move daunting
- Attachment to their current home
- Concerns about switching to a new landlord and there being higher rent

Their research explored tenants' experiences of moving and found that there were mixed views about how well they were supported during the downsizing or moving process. One of the schemes is called 'Seaside and Country Homes' whereby residents aged 55+ who live in London are offered a bungalow or flat on the South Coast or East of England, in return for freeing up their London property. The feedback from this scheme was positive. The key messages from this study highlighted the biggest obstacles to rehousing/downsizing as not having enough personalised support. The report also states the need for better communication with tenants around rehousing options and implications of a move.

Another pilot study through Reigate & Barnsley Borough Council in March 2025 describes how they ringfenced £68,000 from the Homeless Prevention Grant to host a 12-month pilot social housing downsizing scheme. The scheme allowed the council to assist under occupying social tenants into smaller homes. This came about because of the shortage of family-sized social housing, and it is causing a costly backlog in emergency and temporary accommodation, with longer waiting times on the housing

register. The pilot employed a part-time member of staff, and the aim was to downsize 10 households. During the 12-month period 14 households were successfully downsized, freeing up 14 family homes – six 3-bedroom houses (4 had dining rooms), three 2 bed houses and five 2 bed flats. They amassed 83 households registered to the scheme and ready to downsize in future when appropriate smaller properties become available. The offer they gave to tenants included a packing and removal service, furniture disassembly and reassembly and disposal of unwanted item. The offer included access to a handy person service for small household tasks, limited to 5 hours per household. A one-off payment of £1,000 was offered per bedroom released and there was support by the dedicated Under Occupancy Transfer Officer. The officer helps with ensuring the move goes smoothly, liaises with removers, helps with clearance, benefits and utilities. All these things were highlighted as barriers in their previous research. The study says that the pilot was so successful that they extended it for another 6 months. A March 2025 update states they have over 100 households on their downsizers list and have moved a further 15 households within a 4-month period.

Barriers

Resident engagement told us that 85% had thought about downsizing. Our research, data & resident engagement shows the main barriers to downsizing in the local area are:

1. Social rent to affordable rent – the rent cost difference:

Our research and engagement with residents tell us that for some households they are resistant to downsizing if their current property is a social rent and the properties available are affordable rents. The weekly average social rent for general needs (2024) is £113.56 compared with the average weekly affordable housing rent of £158.44, with a difference of £44.88 per week. See Appendices for further information.

2. Priority on the Housing Register:

Despite households being in a band B, high housing need, our research suggests that people feel they are being 'out-bid' or 'trumped' by emergency housing band A and feel disenfranchised. Some other local authorities, as shown earlier, offer the highest banding (gold/A/1) for households wishing to downsize and in some cases the criteria varies but the reason for this banding would be to allow more successful bids for those releasing properties desperately needed.

3. Location/property type

Our research shows that location and property type is a huge reason why some households choose not to downsize. Some residents wish to stay in the same town/village but find there are no suitable properties to bid on. Another common factor is people wishing to downsize, but only to a 2-bed bungalow in the same village, and in some locations these properties simply do not exist or do not become available to bid on. This means there is little to no chance they will downsize their property. Some residents, according to feedback, say that they have thought about downsizing but want to keep their spare bedroom in case a family member wants to move back home – such as an adult child.

4. Lack of knowledge, awareness & housing provider communications:

Our research shows that many residents who are eligible to downsize are not being targeted for discussions about options & opportunities. Less than half the residents we engaged with are on the housing register and 92% of residents we engaged with said their housing provider had not approached or discussed downsizing with them. Our research tells us that with the 'estimated under-occupancy cohort in Dorset' that less than 3% are on the housing register. This shows there is a huge gap in communications and engagement (about downsizing) with our residents in social housing.

5. Incentives & support services:

Some of our local housing providers offer downsizing schemes and incentives. These schemes often come with a strict criterion, and little is done to communicate to residents about these schemes. There is very little active campaigning into downsizing amongst residents from our local housing

providers and no joint working with Dorset Council to promote downsizing. National research suggests these schemes can be very successful in encouraging people to downsize. Other local authorities who offer schemes and incentives, combined with dedicated officers and housing provider engagement, show that partnership working is a successful approach. When it comes to support services for tenants wishing to downsize the practical support, such as financial assistance and having a case-by-case approach to each situation, could be very beneficial.

6. Lack of reporting

One of the biggest concerns is the lack of reporting by housing providers about their own under-occupied stock and the lack of accountability about the scale of the problem. Only Magna and Sovereign provided in-depth data about their under-occupying stock with the disclaimer that the data is only as accurate as what residents report to them about change in circumstances and household make-up. There is no mandatory obligation to report on under-occupying or to tackle this problem. Our research has shown that the scale of the problem is much larger than thought.

Conclusion

This project has told us that the scale of under-occupying in social housing in the Dorset Council area is much larger than previously thought. Our research has shown that housing providers have no legal obligation to tackle the under-occupancy issue as it does not affect them unless there are arrears. Through resident engagement, reports and research the barriers to downsizing became clear and suggest multi-faceted reasons why households choose not to downsize. The reasons include the lack of support and incentive, there not being available, suitable properties for them to move to, lack of awareness about their options, rent differences and not being successful on the housing register due to higher bandings. It is concerning that there are no legal duties that require accurate reporting by our local housing providers, nor the obligation to tackle the problem. National research has told us that downsizing schemes and dedicated officers can have a huge impact on creating movement and freeing up family-sized homes and having this resource would be very beneficial to

Dorset residents. It is clear from our data and research that there is a need for campaigning alongside such a dedicated officer. Further work with our older residents who, as our research says, might occupy many of the under-occupied properties would be beneficial, too.

Recommendations

1. Reporting on under-occupying:

Encourage housing providers to conduct resident/household reviews and provide reports on under-occupying to understand the scale of under-occupying within their own stock

2. Campaigns & partnership working:

Have a dedicated Dorset Council Downsizing Officer/s who engages with local housing providers and works in partnership to promote downsizing. Actively campaign about downsizing to residents. Therefore, increasing the number of households joining the housing register and home swapper sites to increase the number of eligible households wishing to downsize. The funding and budgets for such posts are out of scope for this project and would require further discussions or further phases of the project.

3. Incentives & support:

Offer an incentive, support & guidance package for those who wish to downsize and have no means to pay for removals, house redecoration, carpets etc. This could be in partnership with local housing providers. The housing providers could contribute to a central pot of money to fund this. The finer details are not in scope of this project and further work is needed to explore funding avenues

4. Housing register:

Larger households (5, 4, 3 bedrooms) to be considered for band A (1) to prioritise family homes being released to those most in need. These could be offered to those in temporary accommodation.

5. Lobbying:

Lobby to central government about housing providers taking more accountability with reporting on under-occupation and actively tackling the problem or there being a legal obligation to do so.

Appendices

List of local housing providers, their engagement with us and any downsizing schemes or incentives offered.

Housing Provider	Incentive/initiative	Details
Abri	No specific schemes or incentives.	Offer tenancy support & support under-occupiers to apply to HR & Mutual Exchange sites Tenancy support
Aster	No specific schemes or incentives	Offer support to those who reach out. Website & Mutual Exchange Handbook Aster-MutualExchange1016.pdf
SNG	Yes – Downsizing/Rightsizing scheme & initiatives. Specific criteria apply.	SNG – Have a Right Sizing Project for those with 2 or more spare rooms are offered help with moving such as removals, carpets, arrears, white goods. Will not clear arrears or provide monetary support. Applicants must have completed an eligibility assessment and have scored highly in our 3 priority areas - Financial, Health and Maintenance of the Home. There is a budget of £50k to support this work. <u>Our RightSizing offer includes:</u> Advice on best housing options Register for an internal move through Sovereign Home Transfer (where we have nomination rights). Provide customer focussed support to help be move ready Financial support up to £4,000: 3 bedroom - £2,500 4 bedroom - £3,000 5 bedroom - £3,500 6 bedroom - £4,000. Our RightSizing offer SNG
BCHA	No specific schemes or incentives	BCHA-GNCH-v1.5.1 (1).pdf
Betterment	No specific schemes or incentives	
EBHT	No response	
Guinness	No specific scheme in place but they are working on one currently (waiting for approval)	This will be advertised on their website and priority given for over/under occupiers (transfer applications). The proposed scheme will include a cash incentive per bedroom released plus removal costs, carpets and redecoration.

		Moving out - The Guinness Partnership
Hastoe	No response	
Landgah	No specific schemes or incentives	LGAH-Allocation-Policy.pdf
Places for People	No specific schemes or incentives	Places for People Exchange your Rented Home - Places for People
Sage Homes	No specific scheme in place	Mutual Exchange Policy 2-0 fqv1mx.pdf
Sanctuary	No specific scheme in place	
Magna	Yes, downsizing scheme in place.	Downsizing incentive scheme but only for rent in advance up to £600 (downsizing general needs only) No bedroom criteria. For complex cases that meet the criteria there is an 'additional costs budget' of up to £1600 to cover deep cleaning, removals etc. This is not paid to applicant, paid to trades person or service. There used to be a FT Home Move Officer post but that ended 2023 with budget cuts. It was successful role. There is no active advertising or promotion of downsizing to residents, they would rely on getting knowledge through website or local housing officers. Tenancy information isn't regularly reviewed, so the numbers of under-occupied is thought to be under-reported. Successful downsizes are met through the housing register or Homeswapper. Home Moves Incentive Scheme Magna
Stonewater	No direct response from Stonewater but they do have a downsizing scheme	Help to move project whereby there is incentives of up to £500 per household if one is downsizing and another is overcrowded. Your home - Here to help Spring newsletter 2025 Stonewater

National downsizing schemes & initiatives

Housing Provider/Local Authority	Incentive/initiative details
Thrive	Downsizing scheme: • Cash incentive Mutual exchange - Thrive Homes
Birmingham City Council, Wise Move Team	Downsizing scheme: • Organising & paying for removals • Decorating new property • Curtains • Disconnecting & reconnecting cooker and washing machine • Rent help whilst improvements are made • Carpets, white goods & furniture • Join Housing Register and bid on properties. How we can help Move to a smaller council home Birmingham City Council
Manchester City Council, Manchester	Move rightsizing service: • 50+ and live alone or with a partner • Tenant of a 'Manchester Move' landlord • Cash incentive up to £2500 • Dedicated Rightsizing Officer homes.manchestermove.co.uk/choice/content.aspx?pageid=12
Hull City Council	Under occupation scheme: • enhanced scheme for those with 4+bedroom house looking to downsize • Cash incentive dependant on size of property being released • Actively campaigning – tenant newsletter • People signposted to houseexchange.org.uk • Practical help package: paid removals, disconnection/reconnection of white goods, boxes and

	packing help, reconnecting broadband, carpets, TV aerial, re-fitting blinds, 2-week rent-free period Housing News Summer - 2023
Nottingham City Council	Downsizing scheme: • Grants up to £2500 • Under occupying on register gets band A (releasing a high demand property) housing-allocations-policy.pdf
Islington City Council	This LA have two downsizing schemes: • Smart Move is a downsizing scheme that is only for their own stock and is a matching service. (Islington Council stock only). • Under-occupying tenants are matched with over-crowded. Scheme was more successful in the beginning, when bedroom tax was introduced. Still being used but has slowed down. Incentive is paid - £700 per room plus up to £500 for removals. • Preference on properties is given to those wishing to downsize and is in the allocations policy. Applicants with a 3 or 4 bed property to downsize can also bid on 2 beds. • Islington's second downsizing scheme only allows council tenants to claim £500 per room & with priority on the housing register. • Islington hold active campaigns and events. They send newsletters to all residents. • They have tried a chain-letting scheme – but that didn't work well. They also tried their own in-house 'Swap Tracker' but found it didn't work well. • Work closely with HomeSwapper, which can generate reports on over-occupying - under occupying. • They have specific HRA funding for the Smart Move project and this is for Islington council stock/residents only. • They have 3 dedicated under occupying officers, 1 over occupying officer and 1 mutual exchange officer. Swapping homes Islington Council

Regulator of Social Housing SDR data 2024: Breakdown of social housing provision.

 **Regulator of Social Housing**

Select Local Authority area: **Dorset**

Region: South West [Click for help on the search function](#)

Provision Type (including Affordable Rent units in GN, SH and HOP)

highlighted figures are included in the chart

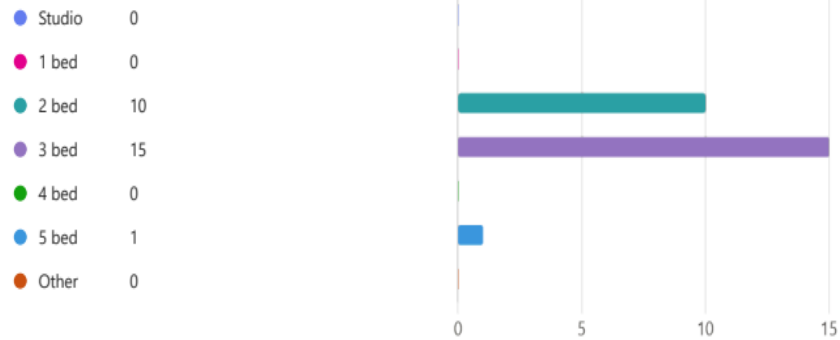
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Low cost rental	General needs	15,426	15,710	15,907	15,954	16,276	16,344	16,477	16,679	16,886	17,221
	General needs self-contained	15,364	15,659	15,868	15,915	16,237	16,328	16,451	16,663	16,870	17,221
	General needs non-self-contained	62	51	39	39	39	16	26	16	16	-
	Supported housing	559	563	697	758	759	582	757	780	804	789
	Housing for older people	4,399	4,374	4,130	4,215	3,935	4,177	3,985	3,986	3,982	3,884
Low cost home ownership (LCHO)		831	921	970	1,010	1,124	1,211	1,310	1,467	1,681	1,793
Total		21,215	21,568	21,704	21,937	22,094	22,314	22,529	22,912	23,353	23,687

Rent differences between social & affordable housing

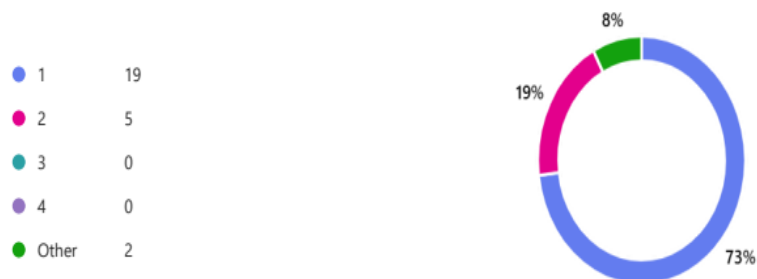
Provision	Average weekly rent in Dorset 2024	The difference
General needs	113.56	
Supported/older people	105.01	
Affordable rent - general needs	158.44	£44.88 per week
Affordable rent - supported/older persons	185.72	£80.71 per week

Resident survey information on current property size and spare bedroom

5. What size property do you currently live in?



6. How many spare bedrooms do you have? (Bedrooms not being used)



2021 Census social housing under-occupying information

Tenure of household	Total	Occupancy rating of bedrooms: +2 or more	Occupancy rating of bedrooms: +1	Occupancy rating of bedrooms: 0	Occupancy rating of bedrooms: -1 or less
Total	169,262	74,824	56,974	34,653	2,811
Owned	120,775	67,349	40,050	12,559	817
Owned: Owns outright	77,561	48,295	23,308	5,635	323
Owned: Owns with a mortgage or loan or shared ownership	43,214	19,054	16,742	6,924	494
Rented	48,487	7,475	16,924	22,094	1,994
Rented: Social rented	20,836	2,011	5,938	11,675	1,212
Rented: Private rented or lives rent free	27,651	5,464	10,986	10,419	782

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References

- Research briefing: Rehousing programmes for older social housing tenants in Hackney [PowerPoint Presentation](#)
- [Seaside and Country Homes scheme | London City Hall](#)
- [Older tenants in social housing make up 40% of under-occupied homes - Blogs - Housing LIN](#)
- Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research [research-report_0.pdf](#)
- [Right place, right home, right size? Increasing housing mobility for social housing tenants in North Wales. - Resource Library - Resources - Housing LIN](#)
- [English Housing Survey 2021 to 2022: social rented sector - GOV.UK](#)
- [Housing benefit size criteria: impacts for social sector tenants and options for reform | Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)
- [Assisting tenants to downsize their home: Reigate and Banstead Borough Council | Local Government Association](#)

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Housing Strategy and Performance: Move-on Accommodation

Home in on Housing programme

November 2025

Version control:

Version	Date	Changes	Circulated to	Produced by
0.1	20/11/25	Update community safety property details for Weymouth. Distinction added to Adults service to reflect short and long term provision.	Adam Fitzgerald Michael Smith Ian Grant Kerry Mellor Miriam Smith Sarah Deville Sean Brown Ben Pascoe Susan Holden Edward Kopecky Julie Oliver Chris McDermott	Louise Capaldi-Tallon & Jenny Howard
0.2	04/12/25	HR stats updated	Sharon Attwater Sarah Smith Sarah How	Louise Capaldi-Tallon

Subject of Report	Move-on Accommodation
Purpose of Report	Information / Recommendations / Decision Making
Background Papers	Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council dorset-council-plan-for-web
Acknowledgements	

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Summary

This report provides detailed analysis of supported accommodation commissioned by Dorset Council. It identifies barriers faced by residents in securing settled accommodation when they are ready to move on to independence. It considers current ways of working and makes recommendations for new and/or alternative ways of working to improve move-on from supported accommodation.

The project is cross departmental with scope beyond that of services offered by Housing Services.

This project forms part of phase 1 of the 'Home In on Housing' programme to deliver the Housing Strategy.

Project Purpose and strategic context

The Dorset Council Housing Strategy 2024-2029¹ identifies four key objectives for Housing Services. The first objective relates to 'Housing Need' seeking to enable residents to live safe, healthy, independent lives in homes that meet their needs. The strategy goes on to

¹ [Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029 - Dorset Council](#)

identify 15 areas of focus in achieving these objectives. These areas of focus include ensuring residents have access to the 'Right property'.

Delivering homes and support services that meet current and future need means the Council must use resources efficiently. Some residents requiring support, need to be able to access this either in their home or the community. The reasons residents require support vary and can include age, disability or health-related care, homelessness or young people.

In meeting this need across the People and Children's directorates Dorset Council provides a wide range of supported accommodation services. These services are intended to meet specific support needs with each service having its own pathway for access. Providing services in this way is well established and an effective way to meet support needs within the community. However, the model is not without its challenges. Common challenges include:

- There not being enough move-on accommodation from supported housing
- People remaining in supported housing, when they no longer have a support need.
- Ensuring that residents are skilled to move on with independence meaning they stay beyond maximum length of stay.

Project Objectives and what we looked at

The 'Move-On' project and the conclusion within this report seeks to gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by Dorset Council commissioned supported accommodation.

A clear understanding of the scale of the problem and who is affected.

Understanding the barriers affecting residents moving to and from supported accommodation and options to overcome this.

Recommending options on how to reduce the number of people in supported accommodation that do not need to be there & enhance independent living.

Provide recommendations for a clearer pathway to and from move-on accommodation.

For this report the project has:

- Conducted a cross departmental review of all commissioned supported accommodation.
- Reviewed why residents, who are ready to move on, are unable to do so.
- Gap analysis
- Reviewed co-ordination, processes and the allocation policy.
- Provide a clear definition of what is meant by supported & specialist accommodation.

Throughout the course of this project, we have considered and included information from the following sources.

- Joint report from Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government and Department for Work and Pensions; Supported Housing Review 2023.

- University of York, York Policy engine and Health Determinants Research Collaboration Bradford; How Could Local Authorities improve Supported Housing, January 2025.
- Local Government Association; Support Housing Guidance for local authorities in England, August 2025.
- Loughborough University, Centre for research in social policy; Living or surviving? Benefits, barriers, and opportunities for young people transitioning out of homelessness, February 2023.
- YMCA report; Impossible homes, March 2021.
- Women's aid; From Safety to Stability, access to move-on accommodation after refuge, 2025.

For the purposes of this report the following is out of scope and not discussed:

- procurement processes,
- service design,
- hospital discharge,
- contract management of providers,
- temporary accommodation,
- provisions for children,
- supported accommodation that is not commissioned by Dorset Council (e.g. Pivotal)
- procurement of individual care packages or support attached to the individual.

What is meant by supported accommodation

There are multiple and interchangeable definitions of what constitutes supported housing used by national government, local authorities, regulatory bodies and providers². Broadly, when taken together they refer to a 'specific form of accommodation where care, support and supervision are offered to tenants as part of their tenancy; the goal being to support people with specific needs to live as independently as possible.'³

In general, short term and transitional supported accommodation typically caters to a range of client groups, including individuals who have experienced homelessness, young people, those at risk of domestic abuse, people with substance misuse challenges, ex-offenders, refugees, asylum seekers and armed forces veterans. Long-term supported accommodation for working-age adults generally focuses on three core groups: individuals with mental health conditions, those with learning disabilities and people with physical or sensory impairments.

Supported accommodation is provided by a wide variety of landlords, delivery models and funding mechanisms. There are two elements to supported accommodation that require funding:

1. the accommodation, and
2. the care and support.

² [Supported Housing Review](#)

³ [Supported Housing Report Jan 2025 - For Comms Review](#)

Where the resident is eligible⁴, the Housing Benefit system funds the accommodation element with housing related support services funded separately, often through services commissioned by the local authority.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) 'Supported Housing Review of 2023'⁵ published in November 2024 provides the most recent review of supported housing. The review evaluated supply, demand, funding and commissioning across Great Britain. In their review MHCLG and DWP considered what issues impact on the supply and demand for supported housing. They found difficulties in sustaining or expanding the supply of supported housing has occurred, alongside increasing demand for supported housing provision. The increase in demand has been seen across all client groups particularly homelessness, young people, mental health provision and people with learning disabilities and autism. The complexity of need across client groups is also increasing. Which has required a more intensive and higher level of specialist support for complex needs which has directly increased costs. They found that there is a high demand for move-on accommodation which is not being met which leads to 'blockages' within a limited supply of supported accommodation.

It estimates by 2040, between 361,700 and 640,700 additional units of supported housing will be needed to meet overall demand⁶. Their research concluded that 'there is significant long-term challenges in sustaining the current supply of supported housing as well as numerous barriers in developing new provision'.

Dorset Council supported and specialist accommodation

Dorset Council have 49 commissioned supported accommodation provisions. Within each scheme there are different units of accommodation held, offering varying levels of support, pathways into and out of the schemes.

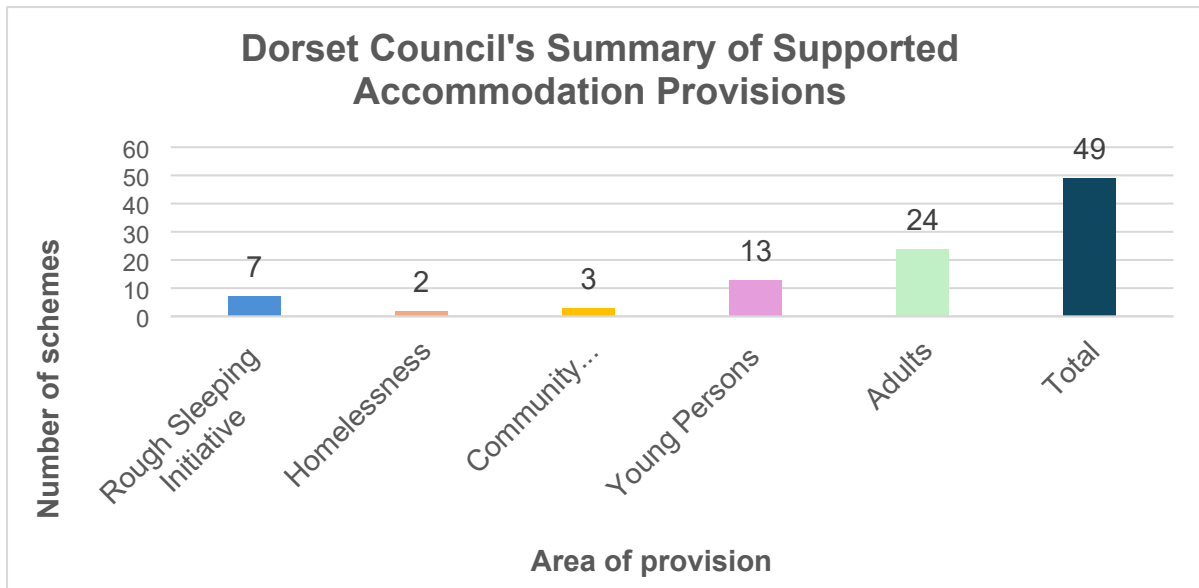
Graph A: Shows the breakdown of supported accommodation across services

Graph A:

⁴ Housing Benefit requirements for supported housing relate to the type of landlord, whether care, support or supervision is being provided and by whom. These rules determine how the eligible rent and service charges for the Housing Benefit claim are calculated.

⁵ [Supported Housing Review](#)

⁶ 91,100 for working age people and between 88,600 and 297,000 for older people.



Graph B: Shows the number of units of accommodation per service area

Graph B:

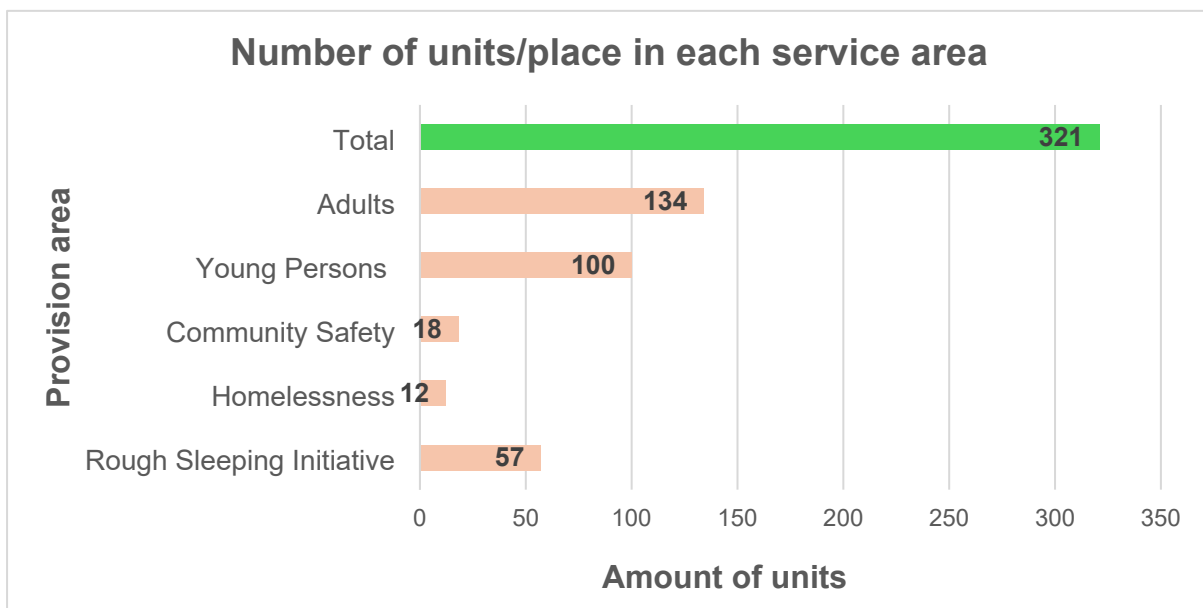


Table C: Lists the levels of support offered within each service area, the pathways in and out.

Table C:

Service area/department	Support level	Pathway in	Pathway out
Rough Sleeping Initiative	Medium-High	Referral	Social housing, private rented accommodation or further supported
Homelessness	Low-medium	Referral	Social housing or private rented accommodation
Community Safety	Low-medium	Referral and/or assessment	Social housing or private rented accommodation
Young Persons	Low, medium & high	Referral and/or assessment	Social housing, private rented accommodation or further supported
Adults	Low, medium & high	Referral and care & need assessment	Social housing, private rented accommodation or further supported

Dorset Council is across all the relevant services are offering occupants of supported accommodation either assured shorthold tenancies (AST) or licenses. The Renter' Rights Act will come into force in May 2026. This act introduces significant reforms to the private rented sector in England. The changes brought by this act will apply to all existing and new private tenancies. Under the Act, individuals with assured shorthold tenancies will benefit from additional rights including, the abolishment of Section 21 notice or eviction⁷, all assured shorthold tenancies will automatically become periodic assured tenancies⁸, new grounds for possession, new private rented sector ombudsman and a protected 12-month period at the start of any tenancies. The Renters' Right Act is primarily concerned with forms of assured tenancies with license relatively unaffected however a key feature of the Act, 'decent homes standard' will be extended to include temporary accommodation.

Adult Services

Adult social care supported accommodation commissioned by Dorset Council includes a range of housing and care options designed to support individuals who need help with daily living, including supported specialist accommodation. This comprises of 24 commissioned supported provisions across the local authority area equating to 134 units. These are a mixture of low, medium and high support accommodation. Each scheme differs in terms of housing type, tenure and number of units. For example, Grosvenor Road a mental health scheme offering low support has eight single flats, offered on assured shorthold tenancy, compared with Ramsbury Transitions a mental health and autism scheme offering 24-hour support, set in a shared house scheme with three units offered on a license.

Within the portfolio of adults supported accommodation there are four shared houses, two offered under a license and two offered under assured shorthold tenancies. Thirteen flats

⁷ This is often referred to as 'no fault' eviction as it does not require the landlord to give a reason for taking the property back. The landlord will now be required to give legal reason for seeking possession.

⁸ This will provide the tenant with more security of tenure.

and one two-bedroom house and six bungalows offered on assured shorthold tenancies. The pathways into a provision is through brokerage teams and usually requires a care needs assessment and referrals from a social worker.

The length of stay and the need to move-on varies depending on the service design. There are two predominant services:

- Short-term or transition services this would include crisis accommodation
- Long-term services where someone would only need to move on when either their needs change or because they have chosen to move somewhere else.

For some schemes, particularly those catering to individuals with learning difficulties or long-term supported living provisions there is no expectation that the individual will move on, the expectation is for the residents to stay as long as they need. For other provisions, such as Grosvenor Road, or Dorchester Road Transitions, there is the expectation that people will move on within 12 – 36 months.

In April 2024 a new provision to support young adults with learning disabilities, mental health and autism launched, Dorchester Road Transitions. This is a four-bedroom shared house with 24-hour support. Residents are offered a licence with an intended stay of between 12-24 months to develop skills for independence. All residents at Dorchester Road have a person-centred plan which includes ensuring the individual has applied to Dorset Housing Register. All four of the original residents who moved in during April 2024 remain resident with two individuals deemed ready for move on to independent living.

Table D: gives a summary of adults supported accommodation

Table D:

Provision name	Unit/bed number	Support level	Property type	Tenure
Grosvenor Rd	8	Low	Single flat	AST
Dorchester Rd	4	High	Shared house	Licence
Ramsbury	3	High	Shared house	Licence
Red Oak	12	High	Single flat	AST
Peter Grant Way – Crisis accommodation	1	High - TCP	Single unit	AST
Fleet Cottage – Crisis accommodation	1	High - TCP	Single unit	AST
Albany Cottage	6	High - TCP	Single unit	AST
Albany Close	7	High	Single unit	AST
Elizabeth Court	16	High	Single flat	AST
Fox Court	18	High	Single flat	AST
Orchard Court	15	High	Single flat	AST
Digby Court	10	High	Single flat	AST
Coburg Court	4	Low	Single flat	AST
Cranford Ct	6	High	Share house	AST
Cranford Ave	2	High TCP	Single house + sleep room	AST
Trinity Rd	3	High	Share house	AST
Cambridge Ct	7	High	Single flat	AST
Prince George Hse	5	High	Single flat	AST
Arnold Way	1	TCP	Bungalow	AST
Bear Cross	1	TCP	Bungalow	AST
Bear Cross	1	TCP	Bungalow	AST
Vernalls Close	1	TCP	Bungalow	AST
Hayward Ave	1	TCP	Bungalow	AST
Astral Cottage	1	TCP	Bungalow	AST
TOTAL	134			

Children and Young people services

Children's services accommodation, for the purposes of this project, includes only commissioned young people's supported accommodation. This type of accommodation is designed to meet the diverse needs of young people aged between 16-25 who cannot live with their families. Dorset Council commissions 13 schemes with a total of 100 units all of which are offered on a license.

The schemes vary in terms of size, type and level of support, with most accommodation being shared. With exception of Fiergen Court which offers a mix of both shared living and self-contained flats. Generally, most of the accommodation offers between 5-10 hours

support per person, with some having overnight sleep in support during weekdays and weekend call out support. There are some schemes which offers support off site on an ad-hoc basis.

The expected length of stay is up to 18 months (547.5 days) with flexibility for this to be extended to meet additional needs. The average lengths of stay show that most residents move on within this time frame;

Lennox Street – 616 days, Dorchester Road – 269 days, Derby Street – 677 days, Waterloo – 288 days, Pottery Lane – 435 days, Woolston – 264 days, Woolston Road – 373 days, Station Road- 349 days, Stonewater – 313 days and Fiergen Court – 352 days.

Whilst the average length of stay gives some indication as to the journey for the resident it does not necessarily help to identify individual cases and blockages. For example, the average length of stay considers those who have just entered the provision which brings the overall average down. For example, one young person has been in supported lodgings for 6 years (2190 days), and another young person who is ready for move on has been in Pottery Lane for 2.8 years (657 days).

Pathways into the provision include referral by social worker or the leaving care team and for those aged 18-21 a joint housing assessment. Pathways out include social housing via the housing register or private rented accommodation.

Table E: gives a summary of young peoples supported accommodation

Table E:

Provision name	Unit/bed number	Support level	Property type	Tenure
Lennox St	4	7-10 hours per person per week, overnight cluster-based support	Shared house, furnished	License
Dorchester Rd	7	7-10 hours per person per week, overnight cluster-based support	Shared house, furnished	License
Derby St	5	7-10 hours per person per week, overnight cluster-based support	Shared house, furnished	License
Waterloo	10	7-10 hours per person per week, overnight cluster-based support	Shared house, furnished	License
Pottery Lane	20	7-10 hours per person per week, sleep-in weekdays, w/e on-call	Shared building (ex-Foyer), furnished	License
Woolaston	4	7-10 hours per person per week, sleep-in weekdays, w/e on-call	Shared house, furnished	License
Woolaston Rd	7	7-10 hours per person per week, sleep-in weekdays, w/e on-call	Shared house, furnished	License
Station Rd	9	7-10 hours per person per week, sleep-in weekdays, w/e on-call	Shared house, furnished	License
Stonewater	9	5-7 hours per person per week on-site, no sleep-in	Shared house, furnished	License
Fiergen Court	8	5-7 hours per person per week on-site, no sleep-in	Shared house / self-contained flats combi	License
Kirtleton Ave	12	Off-site ad hoc advice & guidance from the Leaving Care Team	Shared flats in a town house, with a Care Leaver Hub on the ground floor	License
Clarence Rd	2	Off-site ad hoc advice & guidance from the Leaving Care Team	Shared house	License
Leon House	3	Off-site ad hoc advice & guidance from the Leaving Care Team	Shared house	License
TOTAL	100			

Community Safety

Dorset Council community safety service commissions refuges to provide essential support, accommodation and advocacy for individuals and their families who are experiencing domestic violence and abuse. There are three provisions within Dorset, one four bed house, one ten bed property and one three bed house, totalling eighteen units. Each property comprises shared facilities which can be adapted to suit single people or families. The Weymouth refuge offers low support, for those who are imminently ready to move on, compared to the North Dorset and East Dorset refuges where a higher level of support is offered, including help applying to the housing register and courses around confidence building and self-esteem. The expected stay is between 3-6 months, the average length of stay overall is 6.5 months across all accommodation and all three provisions are offered on a license agreement. Magna and Sovereign provide housing management for these provisions. The pathway in is through a specialist referral and the pathway out is either through the housing register or to private rented, with some residents choosing to return to their previous accommodation.

Table F: gives a summary of community safety supported accommodation

Table F:

Provision name	Unit/bed number	Support level	Property type	Tenure
Weymouth refuge	4	Lower support	Shared house, shared bathrooms	License
North Dorset Refuge	10	Medium support	Shared house, shared bathrooms	License
East Dorset Refuge	3	Medium support	Shared house, shared bathrooms	License

Homelessness and Housing Advice

Supported accommodation within the homelessness service provides supported accommodation for those who have sought homelessness and housing advice. The accommodation differs from ordinary temporary accommodation which does not typically offer any additional support. There are two provisions one in Blandford, and the other in Shaftesbury.

West View House is owned by Dorset Council and managed by the Housing Solutions team with the Tenancy Sustainment team providing support. West View House is a six-bedroom house with each bedroom having its own kitchenette and communal bathrooms. The average length of stay is between two – four months. Lyra House, owned and managed by Sovereign as temporary accommodation for individuals with low-medium support needs. Lyra House has 6 furnished bedsits each with ensuite shower rooms. The intended length of stay is up to six months with the average stay of up to eight months.

Pathways into the accommodation are made through referral completed by the homelessness service. Pathways out include social housing or private rented accommodation.

Table G: gives a summary of homelessness supported accommodation

Table G:

Provision name	Unit/bed number	Support level	Property type	Tenure
West View House	6	Low-medium support	Rooms in a share house	License
Lyra House	6	Medium support	Self-contained bedsits	License

Rough Sleeping Initiative

Dorset Council's Rough Sleeping Initiative is part of a broader strategy to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. As well as outreach services there is support and guidance on how to access accommodation and support services. The rough sleeper's initiative consists of 7 provisions, which make up 57 units, with the majority being in Weymouth. The level of support differs with each provision, ranging from medium-high support which can include intensive 1-2-1 support or floating support as and when needed. The average length of stay is 632 days (excluding Roundhayes). For the Roundhayes provision, where there has been move-on into registered provider properties outside of the rough sleeping pathway, the average stay is 414 days.

The accommodation type depends on the provision; the Bus Shelter phase 1 is individual pods with a communal kitchen whereas the Bus Shelter phase 2 is completely self-contained units. There are further self-contained flats and studios and a shared property. Most tenures are non-secure occupancy agreements apart from the Bus Shelter provisions and the Haven provisions, which are licenses. Referrals are considered either through a panel or by completing another phase (such as Bus Shelter phase 1). Most people within the rough sleeping schemes move on via social housing, although some individuals have found move on into the private rented sector.

Table H: gives a summary of the rough sleeping initiative supported accommodation

Table H:

Provision name	Unit/bed number	Support level	Property type	Tenure
Bus Shelter - phase 1	12	High	Pods, own bathroom, shared kitchen	Licenses
Bus Shelter - phase 2	5	Medium	Self-contained units	Licenses
Roundhayes	6	Medium	Self-contained studio flat. Shared communal area	Non-secure occupancy agreement
Shelter IFS	18	High	Self-contained properties	Non-secure occupancy agreement
Lantern Supported Lettings	2	Medium	Self-contained properties	Non-secure occupancy agreement
TSO/RSAP properties	8	Medium	Self-contained properties	Non-secure occupancy agreement
Haven	6	High	Shared property	License
TOTAL	57			

Barriers to moving on from supported and specialist accommodation

The exit strategy for the majority of Dorset Council supported accommodation is for the resident to secure accommodation through the Housing Register or the private rented sector. A few schemes (Rough Sleeper and Young Persons) offer some limited spaces to move on in a stage way from shared living in to forms of semi-independent self-contained units, with these residents ultimately supported to move into social or private rented accommodation.

The current Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy 2021 – 2026⁹ allows eligible applicants to join the housing register and bid on a choice based letting system for social housing. There are two reasonable preference categories given to individuals living in supported accommodation:

- band B – high housing need for those in “supported housing and ready to move on”

⁹ [Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy 2021 to 2026. Revised August 2024 - Dorset Council](#)

- band D – low housing need for those in “supported housing or care leaver not ready to move on”

Band A, emergency housing need being the highest priority and band D – low housing need being the lowest band. Applicants may be awarded additional reasonable preference categories based on other assessments, such as welfare, medical need or statutory homeless duties. Where two or more reasonable preference categories apply the applicant will be placed in the highest band that applies. Banding assessments do not have a cumulative effect.

Following recent consultation there will be a new housing allocation policy in April 2026 which will go until 2031¹⁰ which proposes some changes to the reasonable preference categories. Under the new draft policy reasonable preference band two will be awarded to:

- People who need to move on welfare grounds, due to being ready to make a planned move from supported housing (commissioned by Dorset Council), where they are provided with care, support or supervision on:
Resettlement accommodation; or
A managed property; or
A hostel for homeless people.

Band four, general housing need will be awarded to:

- People not ready to make a planned move from supported housing (commissioned by Dorset Council), where they are provided with care, support or supervision in:
Resettlement accommodation; or
A managed property; or
A refuge for people who have left their home as a result of domestic abuse; or
A hostel for homeless people

Similarly, to the current policy, applicants can be assessed as meeting other reasonable preference categories and will be awarded the highest band applicable. A similar level of priority for those in supported accommodation can be seen across the allocation policies of other neighbouring authorities¹¹.

Securing social housing provides applicants with a good long-term housing solution, offering secure tenure, affordable rents and good support. However, the demand for affordable social housing in Dorset far outweighs the supply, with 6658 households on the housing register and around 500 new applications received each month. 3826 households on the housing register, 57% require a one bedroom or bedsit size property.

The total number of studio and 1 bed general needs properties allocated between April 2024 -2025 was 200. The average number of bids placed before an allocation for all general needs properties was 136. With studio and 1 bed properties having overall highest bid count:

Property Size	Average bid count

¹⁰ [Dorset Council draft housing allocation scheme 2026 to 2031 - Dorset Council](#)

¹¹ See appendix A

Studio and one bed	217
Two bed	88
Three bed	144
Four bed	97
Five bed	13

There are 1631 households under 55's (sheltered housing age) that can bid on studios and 1 bedroom properties. However, being over 55 does not prevent someone from bidding for this type of property, so the total number that can bid is 3857. 123 households are in band B as in supported housing and ready for move on, 119 of these have a one bed need. 43 applicants are currently awarded band D as in supported housing and not ready for move on, totalling 169 applicants. This is around 51% of those placed in supported accommodation.

Between April 2024 – 2025 there were 26 applicants housed through the housing register who had band B, high housing need in supported housing and ready to move on applied to their application. For 24 of these this was their primary banding reason. Of the 26, 2 applicants had band A urgent housing need as being statutory homeless and owed a full housing duty. They were awarded this in addition to band B. For these applicants the total average length of time from application to being housed was 703 days, this includes time that the applicant is likely to have been placed in band D not ready for move on. The average length of time from the date they were moved into band B ready to move was 442 days. When the two applicants who were awarded band A are removed, the average length of time from application is 645 days and 456 days once placed in band B ready for move on.

There was a total of 423 one-bedroom properties allocated through the housing register between April 2024 – 2025. 230 of these were allocated for general needs with the remaining being for those over 55. Of the 230 general needs properties, 107 were allocated to those in band A with 65 going to those in band B. The 26 properties that were allocated to those in band B ready for move on represented 40% of all the band B allocations. Overall, 29% of all the one-bedroom allocations went to band B. The average wait for an allocation to someone in band B was 375 days. 58 one-bedroom properties in this period were allocated to those awarded band C or band D.

Band	Number of allocations	Percentage of total allocations
Band A	107	46%
Band B	65	28%
Band C and D	58	25%
Total	230	

Once a property is advertised all the bids placed are used to generate a shortlist, this ranks all the bids in order of the highest band with the longest award date. Officers then use this shortlist to allocate the property working from the top down. The Housing Register operates as a choice based letting scheme, this allows applicants the choice to bid for available social housing properties that are advertised to all those registered. The choice based letting scheme means that applicants must actively participate in bidding on available properties. If an applicant is registered with an active application but does not place bids on available properties, they will not be considered in the shortlisting of the allocation of the property. There is a process where requests for automatic bidding on behalf of an applicant can be

made. For this to be applied there must be sufficient reasons as to why the applicant is unable to bid for themselves or cannot be supported to do so. This is a separate request and would not automatically be applied at the point of registration.

226 of the supported accommodation throughout Dorset Council across all services are located in Weymouth or Dorchester, this is almost 70 % of all supported accommodation.

Provision	Total units	Weymouth & Dorchester total	% of total stock per service
Adults	134	80	60%
Young Persons	100	81	81%
Community Safety	18	5	27%
Homelessness	12	0	0
Rough Sleeping Initiative	57	51	89%
Total	327	226	69%

Many residents who have been able to progress to the stage of being tenancy ready, express a desire to remain in the area where they have been supported and started to settle. These are popular areas within in Dorset and generally demand out strips supply. The average waiting time for a one bedroom/studio social property in Dorchester is 1 year 3 months and 1 year 6 months for Weymouth¹². People are encouraged to broaden their search outside of these areas, but often for many there would be a significant impact on their progress if they were to move away from their support networks.

Generally, the process for choice-based lettings is used to allocate available social let properties. However, there are times when 'direct lets' are utilised to ease pressure on a specific accommodation. These circumstances include:

- Urgent management moves, when a housing provider needs to move a tenant for operational or management reasons (these are done by the social landlord)
- Emergency cases, where individuals or households require immediate accommodation due to homelessness or other urgent housing needs.
- Specific needs used when a property is needed to meet the requirement of a disabled applicant or someone with particular support needs.

The policy emphasises that these are the exception and not standard process. In 2023 a small cohort of individuals accommodated in supported accommodation through the rough sleep er initiative who were identified as being tenancy ready but continuously unsuccessful on the housing register whilst bidding. Utilising direct lets in these circumstances proved to be successful and help this cohort to be rehoused easing pressures on the supported accommodation.

¹² [Housing wait times - Dorset Council](#)

Once an applicant has bid for a property and if successful in being shortlisted for the property their application will be put forward to the landlord (registered provider), ultimately it is their decision to offer or not to offer the applicant a tenancy. Some services describe frequently that even where their residents are ready for move on that they are refused tenancies. Particularly services who are supporting those with a history of rough sleeping, substance abuse and care leavers. Reasons given by the providers are broad and normally specific to the persons previous housing history but may include, the applicant previously losing a social tenancy, anti-social behaviour or existing rent arrears.

In addition to the Housing Register being a vehicle for allocation of social housing, the data it collects is critical in determining and understanding the housing need in Dorset. Most delivery of new affordable housing in Dorset is done in partnership with registered providers. These developments are supported by the Councils housing enabling service. The Housing Register plays a critical role in supporting housing enabling by providing data, insights and moulds strategic direction. The register provides real-time data on the number of people needing housing, their household type and their specific needs. This information helps to inform housing enablers as to the type of development needed. Data from the register feeds into Housing Needs Assessments and Strategic Housing Market Assessments supporting evidence-based decisions for Local Plans, planning applications and funding bids. However, this data is limited, in that it only captures the needs of those registered.

Access to accommodation in the private rented sector can be competitive with demand for more affordable properties high. As well as higher rents the private rented sector requires funds up front to secure a property. Typically, there will be a deposit and around five weeks rent in advance payable prior to the start of tenancy. For example, on an average one-bedroom self-contained flat in Weymouth the rent will be around £750.00 per month, to secure a property at this rent the tenant is likely to need funds of approximately £1600.00. Many of the residents in supported accommodation will not have access to these types of funds. Some residents may be able to access borrowing through rent deposit schemes but access to these schemes are limited to specific services and with some requiring an affordability assessment. The Homelessness Service also offers a cash incentives to private landlords who are willing to offer tenancies to their service users. This can be an attractive offer to landlords and helps to acquire more access to private rented properties. Although access to the landlord incentives is limited to those individuals working with the Homelessness and Advice service. Tenancies offered in the private rented sector differ to those usually offered in the social housing sector. Tenancies are typically offered as assured shorthold tenancies which do not offer the same level of security of tenure or support as a social tenancy.

A YMCA led investigation exploring the barriers young people in supported accommodation face when trying to move on to independent living. They interviewed 268 young people across England & Wales exploring life in YMCA supported accommodation and the challenges to moving on. Fourteen in-depth interviews were conducted with young people about their experiences of moving from supported accommodation into independent living. Young people are wary of private rented and it's often unaffordable. The study found that the top 3 personal reasons preventing move-on include not having money saved, being unemployed and still requiring support. The most common external factors include the costs associated with private renting, there not being available social housing and not receiving enough housing allowance to cover rent. Two fifths of young people expected to move into

social housing after leaving supported accommodation and stated that private rented should not be an option and social housing was the option that could provide them with a secure home in which they can lay foundations for independence. Despite the desire to move to social housing it was noted that the supply is not there.

Residents get 'stuck' and demotivated when they are ready to move on but are unsuccessful when bidding for properties on the housing register or when looking for accommodation in the private rented sector. With some residents showing a lack of motivation to find further accommodation when already living in a self-contained property. For other residents there is little expectation to move on (can be seen particularly in adults supported accommodation which is intended for those with learning difficulties), it is expected that they will stay as long as they need and sometimes this could be for many years. For others it can be difficult to get to a stage where they are tenancy ready and likely to be accepted by a landlord. For example, individuals with a history of rough sleeping often have trauma and their support needs are complex which can make their progress to independent living slow and for some they are not able to get to the stage of ever being tenancy ready.

There is a better understanding across services that work within or alongside Housing Services. The officers that support residents to move on generally have a better understanding of how to access and utilise the Housing Register, how to identify incorrect bandings, what schemes are available to help access the private rented sector and access to more contacts. For other services this can result in late or incomplete housing register applications, limited understanding of the bidding process and no active engagement with the private rented sector.

Solutions to improve move-on from supported accommodation

Supporting adequate and efficient move-on from supported accommodation is essential for residents, provider and local authority. The impact of little to no move can have far reaching consequences such as stalling the residents progression to independence, preventing the provider from giving the services they are commissioned for and a knock on effect to other Councils other strategic priorities such as improved hospital discharge.

In August 2025 the Local Government Association published 'Supported Housing'¹³ guidance which aims to support councils to prepare effective implementation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act (SHROA). The guidance draws on examples of existing good practice and sets out steps that councils can take as well as action in the short, medium and long term.

The guidance highlights the importance of collaborative partnership in move-on pathways and proactive market shaping. Noting this is essential not only for anticipating demand but also for ensuring the effective daily delivery of services. When partnerships are strong, residents are placed in environments that best suit their individual needs and supported appropriately. This alongside a well-defined supported housing strategy which is equally important.

¹³ [Supported Housing Guidance for local authorities in England](#)

The guidance suggests that Council should establish clear processes for working with internal departments, housing providers, and care and support organisation to ensure a coordinated approach. The guidance goes on to give examples of best practice:

Kirklees council has a collaborative move-on pathway (C-MOP) where those in supported housing ready to move-on to the private rented sector can be referred into the housing solutions service (HSS) to help with finances to secure a property they have viewed. In exchange, HSS have first refusal on the void space in the supported housing scheme.

A 2024 case study from Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing (MTVH) highlights how the shortage of social housing is making it harder for people to move on from supported housing. Residents often end up in expensive and unstable private rentals, where they are more likely to lose tenancies without the support available in social housing. In response, MTVH worked with local authorities to set clearer pathways into social housing for residents ready to move on, including securing quota agreements and advocating for tailored allocations through local housing registers.

The LGA acknowledges the complexity of developing sustainable move-on pathways and recognises in achieving this level of coordination it requires navigating diverse organisational priorities, resource constraints, and the unpredictable nature of housing availability, which can make aligning placements with individual needs particularly challenging. Urging councils to work proactively in shaping the market based on local needs.

For example, Leicestershire County Council has adopted a market-shaping strategy through its investment prospectus¹⁴, outlining local housing needs to attract suitable providers to the region. This strategic approach helps Leicestershire shape the local housing market, inviting providers aligned with council goals.

Finally, the LGA notes, local authorities that proactively engage with private landlords and developers can gain valuable insights into their local housing economy, helping to identify opportunities for supported housing provision. Forums, surveys, and direct engagement can reveal trends in property availability and rental pressures, allowing councils to plan strategically for the future.

The Oldland Common specialised supported housing Scheme in South Gloucestershire is one example of this approach. The scheme was developed on a privately owned site acquired at open market value, highlighting the importance of engaging with the private sector to secure suitable land. Led by Elim Housing Association, with joint commissioning from three local authorities, the scheme provides bespoke homes for people with learning disabilities and autism, offering robust design, community integration, and 24/7 support. This collaboration was underpinned by a joint agreement on nominations and void costs, demonstrating how councils can shape, and de-risk supported housing delivery through active market engagement and partnership.

Conclusions

Across the three directorates, five services managing supported accommodation there is a total of 321 bed spaces.

¹⁴ [ERP Programme options](#)

A total of 169 residents who are currently living in supported accommodation are registered on the Housing Register (123 band B and 46 band d).

There is a geographical concentration of supported accommodation in Weymouth and Dorchester. 69% of supported accommodation is located in Weymouth and Dorchester, this matched with the desire of individuals to remain in areas they have been supported creates high demand and long waiting times for move-on properties in these areas.

Nearly all schemes operate an exit strategy for the resident to secure alternative independent accommodation from either the housing register or private rented sector.

Of the 230 one-bedroom general need properties allocated between April 2024 – 2025, 26 went to applicants who were awarded band B, high housing need in supported housing and ready to move on applied to their application. This is 40% of all the allocations of one-bedroom properties that were allocated to band B.

The average length of time from the date residents were move into band B ready to move was 442 days.

A previous Home in on Housing report¹⁵ concluded that whilst Dorset Council has various incentive packages to help access properties in the private rented sector these do not apply to all services. For example, Adult Social Care services do not have a specific package of support although funds can be made available to pay rent in advance and deposits which is offered on a case-by-case basis. Adult services do not offer any cash incentives or bonds.

There is no consistent approach for support to access housing advice and support. Knowledge gaps among staff in some directorates lead to incomplete housing register applications and missed opportunities for private rental options. Extended stays beyond intended timeframes can lead residents to be demotivated and hinders progress toward independence.

Data from the Housing Register is used to assess housing need, this data is then used to determine local plans, planning applications and strategic direction for the delivery of new homes. However current figures taken from the register indicate that this data does not fully represent the needs of those living in supported accommodation. The figures indicate the housing register currently captures around 51% of those residents living in supported accommodation. This follows the findings in the MHCLG latest supported housing review which identified evidence gaps at both a local and national level. Noting local authorities and county councils commonly have difficulty accessing readily available and robust data to inform understanding of demand, supply and cost. It is widely acknowledged that there is no single comprehensive or systematic national data source which captures the scale, scope, diversity costs of the sector¹⁶. Secondly, administrative and regulatory data sources are generally the most robust data sets available. However, these only provide a picture of various aspects of the supported accommodation and not the sector as a whole. The national data is relatively high-level aggregate data which treats the sector as a generic subset of all social housing.

¹⁵ [Private Landlord report v3 .docx](#)

¹⁶ [Supported Housing Review](#)

While successful in easing pressure for rough sleeper cohorts, use of direct lets on the Housing Register are limited and not widely applied as a strategic tool.

Recommendations

Strengthen strategic direction

Develop a Supported Accommodation strategy that aligns with other broader council strategies¹⁷ which outlines clear targets, timelines, and responsibilities for increasing move-on options across all service areas. This should include a supported housing commissioning plan in line with LGA guidance, to create a cross-sector commissioning plan that maps current and future demand, identifies gaps, and aligns with health, care, and the housing strategy.

Consider joint commissioning agreements for specialist schemes (similar to Oldland Common example).

Use planning policy and enabling functions to influence location of new developments.

Undertake an exercise which targets those in supported accommodation but not registered or registered and not bidding on the Housing Register. With the aim of gathering full data on supported accommodation residents (currently only 51% registered) to inform Local Plans and strategic housing delivery.

Establish a cross directorate supported accommodation working group to foster collaboration between directorates to streamline pathways and unblock barriers.

Enhance data and outcomes monitoring

Utilising existing directorate databases to create a centralised dashboard for supported housing. Linking with the NHS and voluntary sector partners to integrate outcome indicators across health and wellbeing. Creating a live, shared database of all supported accommodation units, residents' status, and move-on readiness to improve coordination, forecasting and contract management.

Adopt as suggested by the LGA an outcomes framework which is based on national standards that:

- Measure resident progress, that focuses on core principles that are person centred, safe, effective, respectful and well-led.
- Include benchmarking for continuous improvement using model indicators, case studies, and shared local intelligence to guide performance evaluation.
- Are preventative and represent value for money.

This work to be facilitated through the Home in on Housing 'Support Accommodation Strategy' project.

¹⁷ Housing Strategy, A Better Life Strategy, Birth to Settled Adulthood Programme, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy, Economic Growth Strategy, Domestic Abuse Strategy, Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy, Children's Services Sufficiency Strategy (pending), Corporate Parenting Strategy, Dorset Council Planning for Climate Change - Interim Guidance and Position Statement and Local Transport Plan

Improve pathways and Move-On planning

Introduce move-on planning discussions from day one ensuring all supported housing placements include a clear, time-bound move-on plan that is co-produced with residents. This aligns with LGA's emphasis on outcome-focused support.

Embed making a housing register application and active bidding as a standard part of person-centred planning for all residents in transitional schemes.

Offer tenancy training to residents approaching being move-on ready ensuring they receive tailored support in budgeting, tenancy rights, independent living skills and housing options.

Offer training for staff on housing register processes, banding, and private rental options.

Expand the use of intermediate semi-independent housing models e.g. step-down flats to bridge the gap between high-support schemes and full independence.

Target new supported and move-on accommodation in under-served areas that still offer good access to amenities that are outside of Weymouth and Dorchester.

Housing Supply and Allocations

There are three suggested recommendations to make use of tools available within the allocation policy, it is unlikely that these would all be required and used together.

Utilise the 'Dorset Housing Allocation Scheme 2026 – 2031' to introduce quotas (paragraph 11.6-11.9) for those in supported housing and ready to move on (MTVH example).

Develop a process that sets out the strategic use of direct lets for cohorts who are tenancy ready but unsuccessful through bidding.

Expand private rented sector options

Actioning the recommendations from the Home in on Housing 'Dorset Private Landlord'¹⁸ report will help to bolster private landlord engagement and improve cross directorate working in this sector.

Adult Social care to consider developing a financial support package for those ready to move on without access to necessary funds.

¹⁸ [Private Landlord report v3 .docx](#)

Appendices

Appendix A

Neighbouring authorities' allocation policies reasonable preference categories for living in supported accommodation

Local Authority	Details of Move-on from supported
New Forest District Council	Applicants who are in supported housing within the Council's district area and have been assessed as ready to move on will be placed in Band 2: Serious Need to Move. This includes young people leaving care who have been assessed by Children's Services as ready for independent living. There is no standard definition of supported accommodation, and the Council will determine whether accommodation is to be treated as supported accommodation for the purposes of the Scheme.

	Applicants not assessed as ready to move on will not qualify for this Band but may qualify for another Band depending on their Housing Need. Applicants whose supported accommodation is being decommissioned will only have their application placed in Band 2 if they have been assessed as ready to move on.
Bournemouth Christchurch & Poole Council	The Housing Allocations Policy provides specific provisions for individuals moving on from supported accommodation. If you have recently moved, or are about to move, from supported accommodation, a care placement, hospital, or rehabilitation facilitated by the Council and you are assessed as able to sustain an independent tenancy, you may be eligible for a Gold band. For young people aged 25 or under who have been looked after, fostered, or accommodated by BCP Council between the ages of 14 and 18, for a period amounting to at least 13 weeks in total, and the council has a duty of care accepted under the Children Act, you may be eligible for Gold Band – Care Leavers Move-On, if your care placement is coming to an end or has ended recently and you have been assessed as being able to manage a tenancy. For vulnerable individuals with support needs who are ready to move on to independent housing following a stay in hospital or a period of living in Council-commissioned supported accommodation, you may be eligible for Gold Band – Supported Housing Move-On. This will involve a multi-agency approach to plan, assess, and review your particular needs, which may include a funded support package beyond your housing-related support needs. In cases where your assessment shows you are not yet ready to sustain an independent tenancy; you may be referred to supported housing or other housing for a period of time dependent on your individual needs. Your application will not be made live until an appropriate officer has assessed you as ready to move on to independent living.
Somerset Council	Applicants who are ready to move on from supported accommodation in Somerset can be placed in the Gold Band if they meet the following criteria: 1. Resided in Short-Term Supported Housing: The applicant must have lived in a short-term supported housing project within Somerset. 2. Deemed Ready for Independent Living: The Project Manager of the supported housing scheme must complete and sign the Homefinder Somerset move-on form,

	confirming that the applicant is ready for independent living. This Gold Band status will last for 3 months. After this period, a review will be conducted to ensure that the applicant has been effectively bidding for homes and pursuing other housing options. If the applicant has not been actively bidding or pursuing other options, their application may be downgraded to the Bronze Band. If there were no suitable homes available during the initial 3 months, the Gold Band status may be extended for another 3 months. Care leavers who meet similar criteria and are ready for independent living will also be placed in the Gold Band under the "Ready to move on from Supported Housing" category.
Wiltshire Council	Move on from supported accommodation applies to applicants in shared or supported accommodation where there is a move-on protocol in place with the council. The applicant must have been assessed as ready to move into independent living accommodation by both the support provider and a housing officer of the council. This falls under Band 2 (High Need) in the Wiltshire Council Allocations Policy.
North Somerset Council	Supported Housing 'Move-On' Applicants who live within a Supported Housing project in North Somerset and are seeking to 'move-on' into independent accommodation. This does not apply to applicants whose placement is to receive treatment or rehabilitation of any kind for any kind of dependency. This only applies to applicants who met the local connection criteria in paragraph 2.2.1 at the time of the original referral and acceptance into the supported housing project. The Project Manager must confirm in writing that the applicant is ready for such a move and has acquired reasonable skills to sustain a tenancy or has the necessary support in place to do so. The case will then be considered by the Housing Assessment Manager as to whether the applicant meets all the criteria to move into Band B. Applicants who live in residential or nursing care settings and are seeking to 'move-on' into independent accommodation. This does not apply to applicants whose placement is to receive treatment or rehabilitation of any kind for any kind of dependency. This only applies to applicants who met the local connection criteria as set out in paragraph 2.2.1 at the time of their move into their current accommodation. The Adults' Support and Safeguarding team leader responsible for that service user must confirm in writing that the applicant is ready to live independently and has the necessary care and support in place to do so. The case will then be

	considered by the Housing Assessment Manager as to whether the applicant meets all the criteria to move into Band B.

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Housing Strategy and Performance: Principal Residence Policy

Home in on Housing Programme

Summary Report – **Confidential for internal distribution only**

Version control:

Version	Date	Changes	Circulated to	Produced by
0.1	06.01.2026		Sarah Smith Sharon Attwater	Louise Capaldi-Tallon
			Iain Sim	Louise Capaldi-Tallon
			Paul Derrian Chris McDermott (Housing Enabling)	Louise Capaldi-Tallon
	28.05.2026		HIOH Members Board	Louise Capaldi-Tallon
	03.06.2026		Christopher Lee (Planning Policy)	Louise Capaldi-Tallon
0.2	30.06.2026		HIOH follow-up task and finish	Louise Capaldi-Tallon

Purpose

To provide feedback of positive principal residence policy (PRP) decisions in other local authorities. To report the findings. Increased insight available to support Dorset's decision.

Dorset Council's Local Plan second homes background paper

In preparation for the Local Plan, Dorset Council has considered PRP's and their use. The planning policy team produced a 'Dorset Council Local Plan second homes background paper'¹ in January 2021 which looks at the Purbeck District Council Local Plan of 2018²,

¹ [9e6c81c7-b186-cad3-b5c9-99dab34d40f7](#)

² The Purbeck District Council Local Plan includes a principal residence policy at Policy H14 [Purbeck Local Plan \(2018 - 2034\) Adopted 2024](#)

second home ownership and to what extent the planning system can be used to restrict this. This report concluded with several key points:

- There are specific coastal and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)³ areas of Dorset that have high rate of second home ownership.
- A PRP can negatively impact affordability and may shift second home demand to other parts of Dorset or existing housing stock.
- Research indicates that a PRP does not effectively reduce second homes demand.
- Using the policy may bring many negative externalities that could outweigh the positives.
- Insight from Cornwall Council shows taxation on second homes to be more appropriate and has the added benefit of generating income for the Council.
- In areas of particular concern Neighbourhood Plans may/can be used to address the issue.
- Dorset Council does not recommend the inclusion of a PRP within the Dorset Council Local Plan.
- If more research and evidence is presented to show a beneficial impact the Council will reconsider its view.

What we did

Undertook a comprehensive review of principal residence policies implemented by other local authorities.

Reviewed Dorset Council's second homes background paper and analysed council tax data to understand the prevalence of second homes across Dorset.

Explored the effectiveness of principle residency policies compared to alternative measures such as council tax premiums.

What are Principal Residence Policies?

A principal residence policy (PRP) is a planning policy that requires new dwellings within a defined area to be occupied as the occupier's sole or main home. It is one of a family of occupancy-restriction tools that may also include, in some circumstances, a local connection test. A principal residence test and a local connection test are related but distinct: the former controls the use of the dwelling as a main home, while the latter controls eligibility by reference to a defined connection with the local area.

Policies requiring a 'local connection' or 'principal residence' may be included in local plans or neighbourhood plans where there is an evidenced issue caused by their prevalence. Both local and neighbourhood plans form part of the 'development plan' for an area. Applications for planning permission must be determined in line with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

³ 'National Landscapes' is the rebranded name for areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs). This name change is not statutory.

The policies only apply to new homes, and cannot apply to homes that already exist, or to homes that are constructed to replace a single existing dwelling. The purpose is to prevent new build homes from being used as second homes or holiday lets.

LPAs have two ways to implement 'local connection' or 'principal residence' policies, they can:

Attach planning conditions to planning permissions for new developments. LPAs can impose planning conditions when granting planning permission for new developments. These conditions must meet tests set out in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): they must be necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects (paragraph 57).

Or

Using planning obligations (section 106 agreements) with developers. Planning obligations, also known as section 106 agreements, are legally binding agreements made under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. They are made between a developer and the LPA.

Planning obligations must meet three tests set out in the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010. A planning obligation must be:

- necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms
- directly related to the development
- fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development

Planning obligations are registered as local land charges; they are enforceable both against the person who entered the section 106 agreement initially and against any future owners of the land.

An LPA may choose to use a PRP to:

- Prevent holiday home over-saturation that is having a damaging impact on a local community
- Stop house prices being pushed beyond local affordability
- Prevent ghost-town conditions in off-peak months
- Encourage year-round occupancy
- Avoid the loss of local services and schools due to falling permanent populations

When is a principal residence policy used?

Typically, a PRP is used where there is a disproportionate number of homes being used as second or holiday homes and this is having a negative impact on the local community or housing affordability that can be evidenced.

To justify a PRP, an LPA will need to demonstrate that a high proportion of homes are being used as second homes or holiday lets. This proportion would only include homes that could normally be used as residential dwellings, not including homes that are restricted to holiday use by way of a planning condition. The LPA would then need evidence to demonstrate harm arising from the high levels of second homes and holiday home ownership and a clear public interest rationale backing the restriction.

The High Court case, *RLT Build Environment Ltd R (on the application of) v Cornwall Council and Anor* [2016] EWHC 2817⁴, determines key principles for the implementation of PRP's:

The claimant (RLT) a company specialising in residential development and planning in Cornwall, challenged the council's decision to hold a referendum on St Ives Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). The St Ives NDP included policy (Policy H2) which required new open market housing to be restricted to principal residences. St Ives being a coastal town with a high proportion of holiday homes.

RLT argued that Policy H2 was not compatible with Human Rights Article 8 ECHR (Right to a home) and was not compliant with the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) directives by not evaluating alternative policies. Other arguments were made around non-compliance with National Planning Policy Framework etc, these however were dropped before trial.

The High Court made some key findings:

Article 8 does not guarantee a right to second home. Interference can be justified if proportionate to the public interest for example preserving community sustainability. The St Ives NDP aimed to address the economic and social harm caused by excessive second homes.

The St Ives NDP had sufficiently considered the alternative: implementing Policy H2 or taking no action. The alternative proposed by RLT of increasing housing supply was dismissed as it did not address the specific harm from second homes.

The court went on to emphasise that any PRP must allow for flexibility in enforcement of these policies, considering e.g., unforeseen change in residency need before enforcing restrictions.

In supporting their arguments, the council demonstrated harm caused by second homes which included data on unaffordability and depopulation. St Ives NDP cited evidence of over 25% of dwellings as second homes and destabilising the local economy.

There are several examples of Dorset neighbourhood plans where the inclusion of a principal residency policy has been both successful and unsuccessful when presented to the independent examiner. Where the policies have been unsuccessful there has been insufficient evidence to support its inclusion.

Neighbourhood plan	% second homes	Successful?	Notes
Bridport	4.2%	No	
Charmouth	12.5%	Yes	

⁴ [RLT Built Environment Ltd, R \(on the application of\) v The Cornwall Council & Anor \[2016\] EWHC 2817 \(Admin\) \(10 November 2016\)](#)

Chesil Bank	11.2-14.9%	Yes	Plan covers 4 parishes. Policy includes Abbotsbury, Fleet and Langton Herring. Excludes Portesham (6.1%)
Portland	3.4%	No	
Weymouth	3.1-8%	No	Policy was only going to cover town centre area with the highest number of second homes (c. 8%). However, this was not considered high enough.
Swanage	16.3%	Awaiting	First draft of plan recently published. See Swanage Neighbourhood Plan

What are second homes

In the council tax system, a second home is defined as a property that is “occupied periodically”, for which “there is no resident of the dwelling, and the dwelling is substantially furnished”⁵. These properties are not used by the owner as their only or main home. These are different to ‘empty homes’ and ‘property being used as a holiday let’.

Empty homes are properties that are “unoccupied and substantially unfurnished”⁶.

For property being used as a holiday let, the Valuation Office Agency will decide whether a holiday let should be listed for Business Rates (rather than Council Tax) based on the following criteria:

- in the last 12 months the property has been available to let commercially for short periods of at least 140 nights; and
- the property will be available to let commercially for short periods of at least 140 nights in the next 12 months; and
- in the last 12 months the property has actually been let commercially as self-catering accommodation for short periods of 70 nights or more.

Second homes nationally and in Dorset

The English Housing Survey 2021 to 2022: second homes⁷ collected information on households with second properties, and of those how many use them as second homes. The survey looked at the number of second homes, their location as well as the characteristics of household who have second homes.

In 2010-11, 2.1 million households reported having at least one second property. Most of these households let their second property out in the private rented sector, with just over a third 712,000 using their property as a second home. In 2021-22 there were 809,000 second homes reported which is an increase of 13%. The overall dwelling stock in England grew by 8.5% between 2011 and 2021.

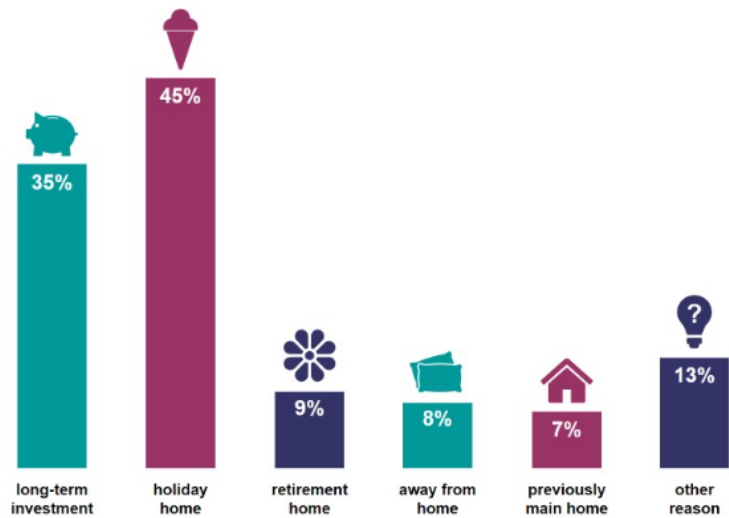
⁵ Section 11c Local Government Finance Act 1992

⁶ Section 11b Local Government Finance Act 1992

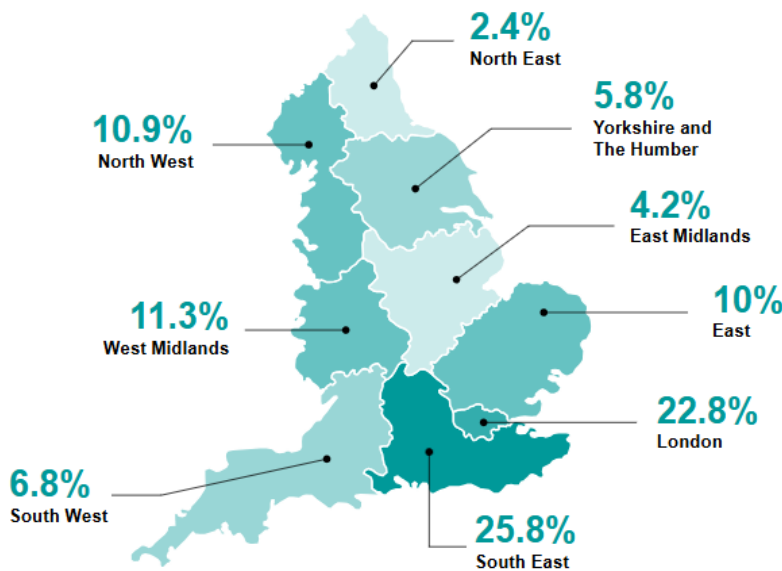
⁷ [English Housing Survey 2021 to 2022: second homes - fact sheet - GOV.UK](#)

The survey asked respondents their reasons for having a second home, with the most common reasons given for it to be used as a holiday home. In 2021-22, 60% of second homes were located in the UK with the remaining being outside the UK. 26% of households with access to a second home live in the Southeast and a further 23% live in London.

Most households have a second home to use as a holiday home and/or for investment.



Most households that have access to a second home are located in the South East or London.



Dorset council tax data from 4th July 2025 shows the highest proportion of second homes to the total number of dwellings is Studland at 27%. The absolute highest number of second homes is in Swanage (982, or 16%). Council tax estimates that there are 5,633 second homes across the whole council area, which is 3% of the total number of dwellings.

Table 1 below shows the top twenty Dorset parishes with the highest percentage of second homes. The information is from 2025 and is based on our Council Tax data.

Table 1

Rank	Parish	Total number of dwellings	Number of Second Homes	% Second Homes
1	Studland CP	263	72	27%
2	Catherston Leweston CP	28	7	25%
3	Leweston CP	8	2	25%
4	Toller Fratrum CP	8	2	25%
5	Hanford CP	14	3	21%
6	Whitcombe CP	21	4	19%
7	Kimmeridge CP	55	10	18%
8	Worth Matravers CP	408	69	17%
9	Lyme Regis CP	2376	391	16%
10	Swanage CP	6009	982	16%
11	Puncknowle CP	268	42	16%
12	Burton Bradstock CP	581	90	15%
13	Bettiscombe CP	33	5	15%
14	Langton Herring CP	87	13	15%
15	West Lulworth CP	334	49	15%
16	Langton Matravers CP	514	74	14%
17	Up Cerne CP	7	1	14%
18	West Compton CP	22	3	14%
19	Stoke Abbott CP	133	18	14%
20	Fleet CP	37	5	14%

Table 2 below shows the bottom twenty Dorset parishes with the lowest percentage of second homes.

Table 2

Rank	Parish	Total number of dwellings	Number of Second Homes	% Second Homes
212	East Stour CP	262	2	1%
213	West Moors CP	3702	28	1%
214	Sturminster Marshall CP	812	6	1%
215	Lytchett Matravers CP	1641	12	1%
216	Chickerell CP	3145	21	1%
217	Bourton CP	452	3	1%
218	Tarrant Keyneston CP	154	1	1%
219	Blandford Forum CP	5031	32	1%
220	Winterbourne Abbas CP	170	1	1%
221	Colehill CP	3134	18	1%
222	Winterborne Whitechurch CP	350	2	1%
223	Lytchett Minster and Upton CP	3876	22	1%
224	Hinton CP	182	1	1%
225	West Parley CP	1761	9	1%
226	Gillingham CP	5756	27	0%
227	Verwood CP	6752	31	0%
228	Alderholt CP	1368	5	0%
229	Blandford St. Mary CP	1148	4	0%
230	Stourpaine CP	300	1	0%
231	Corfe Mullen CP	4409	14	0%
232	Tarrant Monkton CP	452	1	0%

For the full list of all Dorset parishes see Appendix A

Whilst Dorset Council is working on preparing a new Dorset Council Local Plan, the adopted local plans for the former council areas are in place; this includes Purbeck Local Plan (2018-

2034)⁸ which was adopted 18 July 2024. The Purbeck Local Plan includes policy H14 to restrict new housing permitted in the AONB⁹, on small sites (as set out in policy H8) and on rural exception sites (as set out in policy H12) to be occupied only as a principal residence.

The policy does not apply to new homes which are commercially let for holiday makers. Occupiers of such homes will be required to keep evidence that they are meeting the condition or obligation by verifiable evidence which could include, being registered on the local electoral register and being registered with a local GP. Before implementing the policy, Purbeck undertook a review of second homes in the area “Reviewing the plan for Purbecks future”¹⁰, which concludes a general trend for a higher proportion of second homes in the districts areas of outstanding natural beauty and coastal villages. Estimating around 91% of the districts second homes to be in AONB. The proportions in the AONB were almost entirely above the national and regional levels. The report considers the impact of a policy on affordability and housing supply.

For a full list of other local authorities who have implemented a PRP, see Appendix B.

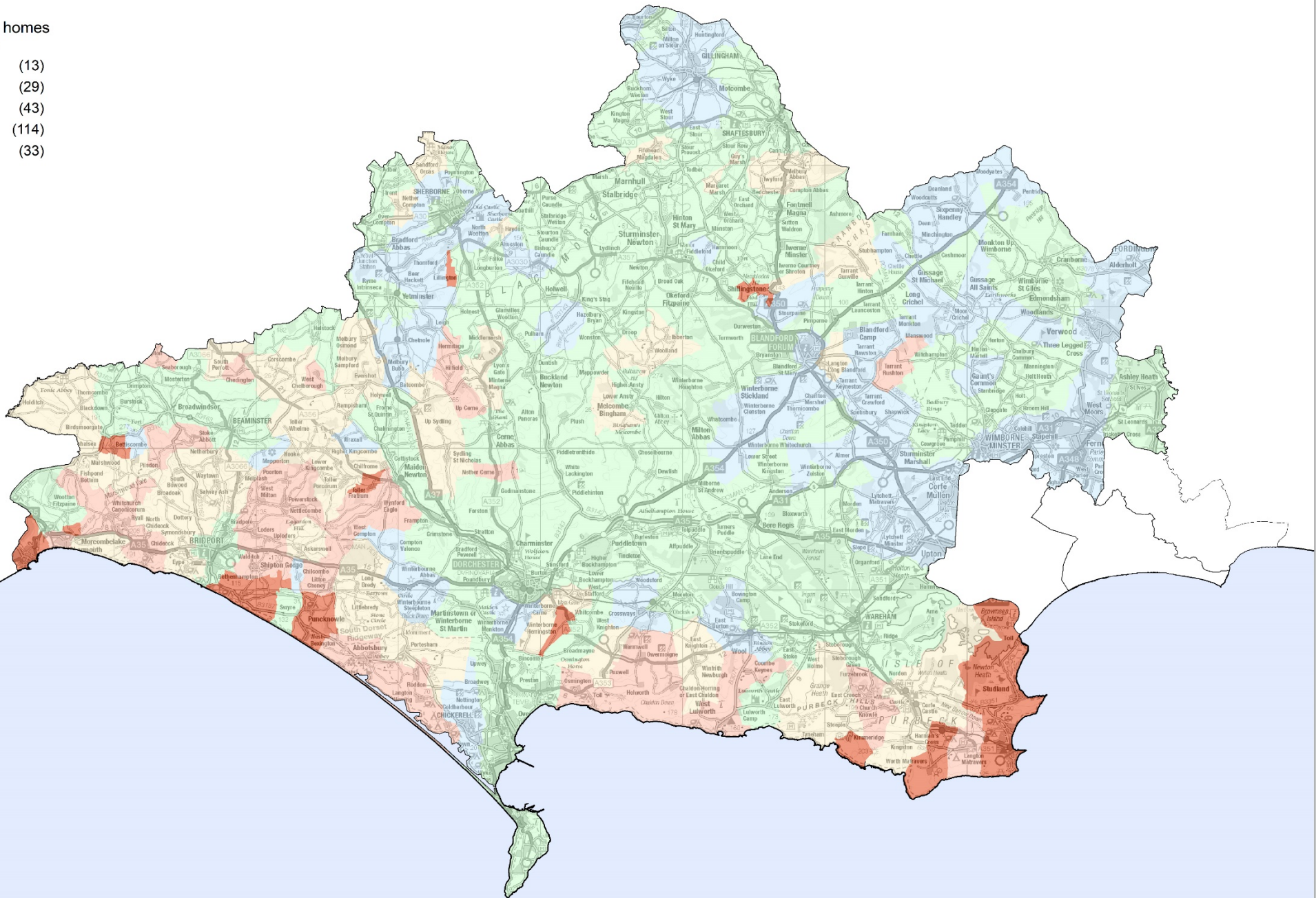
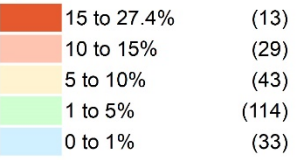
Map below shows percentage of second homes by parish across Dorset

⁸ [Purbeck Local Plan \(2018 - 2034\) Adopted 2024](#)

⁹ ‘National Landscapes’ is the rebranded name for areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs). This name change is not statutory.

¹⁰ [Second Homes Background Paper \(November 2017\)](#)

Percentage of second homes
by Parish across Dorset



Percentage of Second homes by Parish across Dorset

Please note some of the smaller parishes may have a higher percentage as they have low number overall properties

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Council Tax

From April 2025, councils have been able to use new powers to charge a premium of up to 100% additional council tax on second homes¹¹. The powers to charge the second homes premium is discretionary, and it is for councils to decide whether to charge the premiums in their area and at what rate, up to the statutory maximum. Dorset Council formally approved the introduction of a 100% Council Tax premium on second homes in February 2024. The premium came into effect on 1 April 2025, meaning owners of second homes now pay double the standard Council Tax rate.

As of December 2025, within the Dorset Council area, there are 4,775 properties that are classified as a second home generating approximately £10.3 million in Council Tax revenue.

The total number of second homes has fallen since April 2025, when the Council Tax Premium was introduced, from 5,491 properties (a 13% reduction). This could be due to several factors:

- Some of these properties have become main residences
- Some of these properties are exempt from the premium
- Some of these properties have been reclassified as businesses, such as a short-term holiday let

The reduction in second homes following the introduction of the premium may be partly influenced by households updating their declared main residence status. Determining which property qualifies as a primary residence can be complex, as there is no straightforward way to verify this in all cases. This challenge is particularly relevant in areas like Dorset, where Council Tax rates are comparatively high.

Additionally, the premium may create incentives for some households to designate their Dorset property as their main residence, especially if their other property is located in an area where the premium does not apply. While the Council Tax premium is an effective mechanism for generating additional revenue from second homes, it is not without limitations, and there is potential for inconsistencies in how properties are classified.

The Council Tax premium may be used in conjunction with PRPs. For example, St Ives has used a PRP since 2016 which since April 2025 is used alongside a 100% Council Tax Premium on second homes.

Holiday lets

As discussed above, second homes are not short-term or holiday lets¹².

In November 2025 the Office of National Statistics (ONS) published a bulletin 'Short-term lets through online collaborative economy platforms from July 2024 to June 2025'¹³ which investigates short-term lets (rentals) such as apartments or rooms that are booked through the three large online collaborative economy platforms; Airbnb, Booking.com and Expedia

¹¹ Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023

¹² Currently at second reading in the House of Commons is 'Short-term Lets (Planning Permission) Bill which would introduce a requirement for a grant of planning permission to change a residential home to a short-term let in England. [Short-term Lets \(Planning Permission\) Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

¹³ [Short-term lets through online collaborative economy platforms, UK - Office for National Statistics](#)

Group. The bulletin provides aggregated data on the number of guest nights, nights, and stays spent in short-term lets offered via online platforms.

The number of guest nights accounts for the number of nights spent during a stay multiplied by the number of visitors in the travel party. This can be influenced by guest group size and length of stay. For example, a group of four staying for two nights would be eight guest nights, but one guest staying for two nights would be two guest nights. The number of nights refers to the number of nights a property or room offered by the platforms was occupied during a stay; whereas the number of stays refers to the number of times a facility offered by the platforms was occupied by a single booking, regardless of length of stay.

The data shows:

There were 93,823,780 guest nights spent in short-term lets in the UK from July 2024 to June 2025. This was an increase of 10.2% from the previous 12-month period, July 2023 to June 2024 (85,157,810).

The distribution of guest nights across the year in the UK was strongly affected by the seasons. August being the most popular month.

National highlights include:

- Westminster saw the largest increase among the top four local authorities (+16.7%)
- Edinburgh was the only top 15 local authority with a decline of 1.4%.
- Cornwall had the biggest seasonal variation, with guest nights being the highest of all the local authorities, peaking in August 2024
- Across all English regions, the East Midlands saw the largest increase (two most recent periods) and the Southeast saw the smallest increase
- Four local authorities with the highest total number of guest nights in short-term lets between July 2024 and June 2025 are Westminster, Cornwall, City of Edinburgh and Highlands.

The table below shows the total number of guests nights available in Dorset Council and other neighbouring local authorities.

Table 1 compares number of guest nights per area

Local Authority Area	Guest nights for month July 2023	Guest nights July 2024	Guest nights June 2025 (data for July not currently available)
Dorset	135,480	153,820	118,350
Somerset	88,800	104,620	80,450
East Devon	43,020	47,030	30,200
BCP	126,890	136,210	88,740
Wiltshire	60,630	68,560	52,340
Cornwall	565,700	595,550	401,110

According to data from Airbitics and AirDNA it is thought the occupancy rate for short-term holiday lets within the Dorset Council area is between 53% and 63% over the course of a year (November 2024-October 2025).

There are 2231 business rates assessments in Dorset which have a description or part-description of 'self-catering holiday accommodation'. Each assessment can comprise of one or multiple units. This number could include guest houses that have self-catering units, which make it difficult to obtain an accurate holiday let number for Dorset. The 2021 Census tell us that there are approximately 2490 holiday let homes in Dorset, with areas like Swanage, Lyme Regis and Corfe being hotspots.

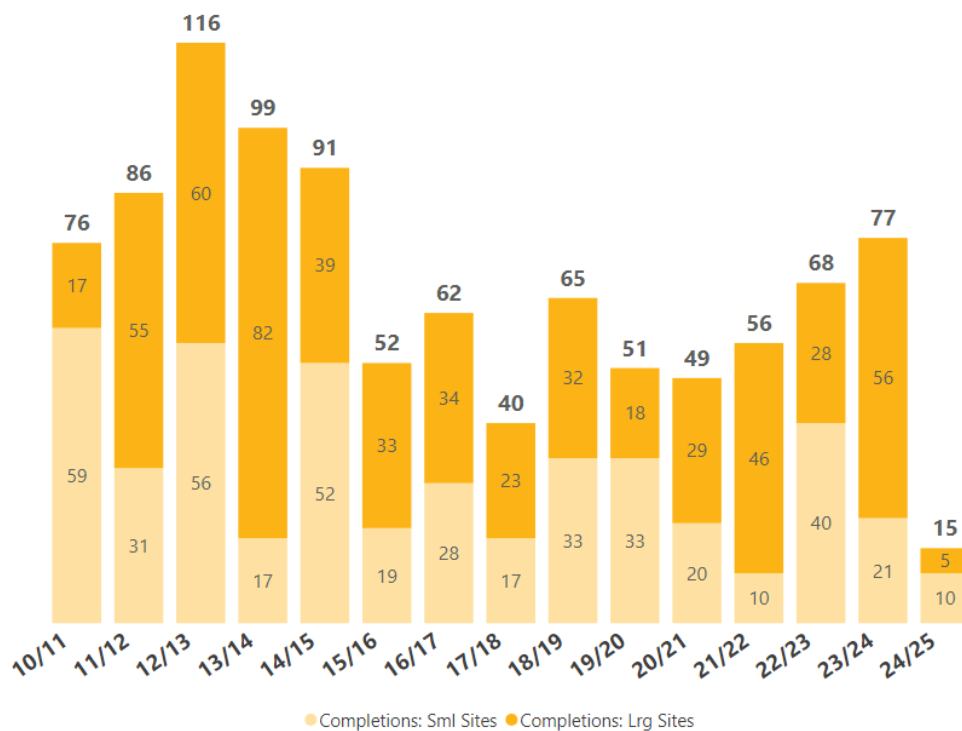
Impact of principal residence policies

There is limited data on the impact of the second homes policy, locally and nationally.

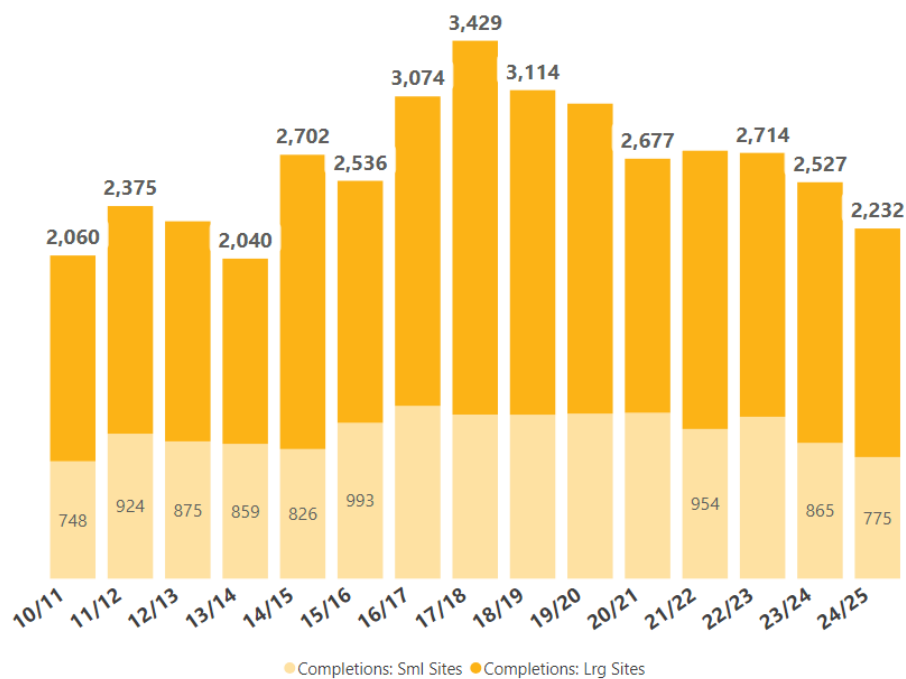
Below is data for the number of housing completions for St Ives, where a PRP is adopted. The first graph shows data for St Ives and the second chart data for Cornwall as a whole. The policy was introduced in 2016, after which there is a fall in annual completions compared to years previous. However, it is not known if this is entirely down to the policy because there may also have been an increase in planning applications prior to the adoption of the plan to avoid the new restrictions. There has been an increasing trend in completions over the last few years, suggesting that numbers may be increasing again.

St Ives also introduced council tax premium to second homes from April 2025, alongside PRP legislation.

Graph A shows housing completions for St Ives



Graph B shows housing completions for Cornwall as a whole



Conclusion

PRPs are necessarily limited in scope as a strategic response to Dorset's current second-home concern because they apply prospectively to new homes and cannot retrospectively address the existing stock of second homes or the wider holiday-let market. They may help prevent new dwellings from becoming second homes and can support community sustainability in appropriate, evidence-based locations, however they are not a comprehensive tool for reducing existing second-home ownership. There is limited data to show the effectiveness of the policy, and the data existing is limited, showing that while PRPs can help preserve community sustainability they do not significantly reduce second-home demand.

Previous data & reports by Dorset Council's Planning Team concluded that PRP may negatively impact affordability, by pushing up the price of existing homes which do not have these planning restriction placed on them. Whilst at the same time reducing the viability of new homes (because their sales price is reduced due to the restriction). PRP's may also shift second home demand elsewhere bringing unintended consequences. It was concluded Council Tax Premiums would be considered more effective and generate revenue without the same risks.

Council Tax Premiums are already delivering measurable impact. Since April 2025 Dorset Council applied a 100% premium on second homes, generating £10.3 million annually.

The number of second homes has fallen since the premium was introduced, suggesting the implementation of the premium tax has triggered changes to occupancy and/or property status.

Overall, Dorset has a relatively low proportion of second homes (around 3%), though this varies significantly between areas. In locations with higher concentrations of second homes, there is generally limited housing development either underway or planned. However, exceptions include places such as Lyme Regis and Swanage, which are likely to be identified as 'tier two' towns in the emerging Local Plan's settlement hierarchy. As a result, these areas are expected to accommodate some future growth and development.

Data gaps. There is limited evidence nationally and locally on the long-term impact of PRP, second-home taxation and holiday let trends within Dorset.

Recommendations

Maintain the current position of not adopting a PRP in the Dorset Local Plan

Evidence from Dorset Council's background papers and national case studies shows that PRPs have limited effectiveness in reducing overall second-home demand, particularly where demand may be displaced to existing stock or neighbouring locations.

PRPs apply prospectively to new homes, therefore they cannot address the existing 4,775 recorded second homes or the wider holiday-let market; this supports the need to consider complementary interventions such as Council Tax premiums, monitoring, affordable housing delivery and community-led housing.

Potential negative impacts including reduced affordability, displacement of demand, and administrative complexity—outweigh the likely benefits at present.

Continue prioritising the Council Tax Premium as the primary tool for managing second homes

The 100% premium on second homes is generating measurable revenue and appears to have influenced the number of properties recorded as second homes.

Ongoing monitoring will help determine the long-term effectiveness of this measure.

This approach avoids the risks associated with PRPs while providing a flexible, scalable mechanism to influence behaviour.

Strengthen monitoring and analysis of second homes, holiday lets, and housing market impacts

Establish a consistent monitoring framework covering:

- Second-home prevalence and geographic distribution
- Holiday-let activity
- Housing completions and affordability indicators in high-pressure areas

Improved data will support future policy decisions and help identify emerging hotspots.

Support local communities exploring PRPs through Neighbourhood Plans

While a district-wide PRP is not currently recommended, some parishes may wish to consider localised policies in exceptional circumstances where:

- Second homes exceed a clear threshold
- Evidence of community harm is robust (e.g., school closures, loss of services, depopulation)

Explore a range of housing interventions to support local housing needs

Consider targeted interventions in high-pressure areas, such as:

- Increasing delivery of affordable and social housing
- Supporting community-led housing schemes
- Encouraging build-to-rent or key-worker housing models

Appendices

Appendix A

Dorset Council, council tax data from 4 July 2025 showing the total number of dwellings and second homes per parish

	Parish	Total number of dwellings	Number of Second Homes	% Second Homes
1	Studland CP	263	72	27%
2	Catherston Leweston CP	28	7	25%
3	Leweston CP	8	2	25%
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5	Hanford CP	14	3	21%
6	Whitcombe CP	21	4	19%
7	Kimmeridge CP	55	10	18%
8	Worth Matravers CP	408	69	17%
9	Lyme Regis CP	2376	391	16%
10	Swanage CP	6009	982	16%
11	Puncknowle CP	268	42	16%
12	Burton Bradstock CP	581	90	15%
13	Bettiscombe CP	33	5	15%
14	Langton Herring CP	87	13	15%
15	West Lulworth CP	334	49	15%
16	Langton Matravers CP	514	74	14%
17	Up Cerne CP	7	1	14%
18	West Compton CP	22	3	14%
19	Stoke Abbott CP	133	18	14%
20	Fleet CP	37	5	14%
21	West Chelborough CP	15	2	13%
22	Nether Cerne CP	8	1	13%
23	Charmouth CP	857	107	12%
24	Church Knowle CP	153	19	12%
25	Powerstock CP	195	24	12%
26	Chaldon Herring CP	84	10	12%
27	Loders CP	263	31	12%
28	Chedington CP	52	6	12%
29	Owermoigne CP	245	28	11%
30	Abbotsbury CP	249	28	11%

31	Coombe Keynes CP	36	4	11%
32	Hilfield CP	36	4	11%
33	North Poorton CP	9	1	11%
34	Osmington CP	316	35	11%
35	Litton Cheney CP	211	23	11%
36	Shipton Gorge CP	211	23	11%
37	Chideock CP	349	38	11%
38	Frome Vauchurch CP	93	10	11%
39	Tarrant Rushton CP	47	5	11%
40	Whitchurch Canonicorum CP	350	37	11%
41	Seaborough CP	30	3	10%
42	Wynford Eagle CP	30	3	10%
43	Corfe Castle CP	687	66	10%
44	East Holme CP	21	2	10%
45	Iwerne Stepleton CP	11	1	9%
46	Woolland CP	44	4	9%
47	Batcombe CP	33	3	9%
48	Melbury Osmond CP	89	8	9%
49	Minterne Magna CP	91	8	9%
50	Stoke Wake CP	23	2	9%
51	Steeple with Tyneham CP	46	4	9%
52	Winterborne Came CP	26	2	8%
53	Fifehead Magdalen CP	53	4	8%
54	Netherbury CP	611	46	8%
55	Sydling St. Nicholas CP	214	16	7%
56	Sandford Orcas CP	94	7	7%
57	Winfrith Newburgh CP	331	24	7%
58	Toller Porcorum CP	167	12	7%
59	Chilfrome CP	28	2	7%
60	Stanton St. Gabriel CP	59	4	7%
61	Hooke CP	60	4	7%
62	Symondsburry CP	534	35	7%
63	Long Bredy and Kingston Russell CP	107	7	7%
64	Melcombe Horsey CP	63	4	6%
65	Askerswell CP	79	5	6%
66	Portesham CP	374	23	6%
67	Ibberton CP	51	3	6%
68	Warmwell CP	51	3	6%
69	Corscombe CP	244	14	6%
70	Nether Compton CP	157	9	6%

71	Littlebredy CP	35	2	6%
72	Evershot CP	106	6	6%
73	Tarrant Gunville CP	124	7	6%
74	Margaret Marsh CP	18	1	6%
75	Haydon CP	18	1	6%
76	Poxwell CP	18	1	6%
77	South Perrott CP	109	6	6%
78	Melbury Abbas CP	146	8	5%
79	Marshwood CP	150	8	5%
80	Melbury Sampford CP	19	1	5%
81	Rampisham CP	57	3	5%
82	West Stafford CP	153	8	5%
83	Compton Abbas CP	98	5	5%
84	Langton Long Blandford CP	59	3	5%
85	Thorncombe CP	335	17	5%
86	Poyntington CP	61	3	5%
87	Affpuddle and Turnerspudde CP	227	11	5%
88	Frome St. Quintin CP	83	4	5%
89	Farnham CP	104	5	5%
90	Hilton CP	234	11	5%
91	Wimborne St. Giles CP	153	7	5%
92	East Chelborough CP	22	1	5%
93	Oborne CP	44	2	5%
94	Piddletrenthide CP	333	15	5%
95	Stour Provost CP	268	12	4%
96	East Orchard CP	68	3	4%
97	Iwerne Minster CP	340	15	4%
98	Arne CP	663	29	4%
99	Turnworth CP	23	1	4%
100	Hermitage CP	47	2	4%
101	Buckhorn Weston CP	165	7	4%
102	Bridport CP	7465	314	4%
103	Swyre CP	48	2	4%
104	Beaminster CP	1736	72	4%
105	Wootton Fitzpaine CP	145	6	4%
106	Folke CP	146	6	4%
107	Fontmell Magna CP	368	15	4%
108	Cattistock CP	246	10	4%
109	Tincleton CP	74	3	4%
110	Bincombe CP	25	1	4%
111	Dewlish CP	126	5	4%

112	Manston CP	77	3	4%
113	Holnest CP	79	3	4%
114	East Lulworth CP	80	3	4%
115	Purse Caundle CP	54	2	4%
116	Holwell CP	190	7	4%
117	Broadwindsor CP	679	25	4%
118	Durweston CP	167	6	4%
119	Burstock CP	56	2	4%
120	Winterborne Stickland CP	256	9	4%
121	Kington Magna CP	174	6	3%
122	Portland CP	6299	214	3%
123	Burleston and Tolpuddle CP	236	8	3%
124	Over Compton CP	90	3	3%
125	Piddlehinton CP	212	7	3%
126	Ashmore CP	94	3	3%
127	Milton Abbas CP	283	9	3%
128	West Orchard CP	32	1	3%
129	Weymouth CP	26755	826	3%
130	Godmanstone CP	65	2	3%
131	Ryme Intrinseca CP	65	2	3%
132	Maiden Newton CP	525	16	3%
133	Fifehead Neville CP	66	2	3%
134	Todber CP	66	2	3%
135	Cheselbourne CP	139	4	3%
136	Buckland Newton CP	318	9	3%
137	East Stoke CP	214	6	3%
138	Hinton St. Mary CP	108	3	3%
139	West Stour CP	108	3	3%
140	Cerne Abbas CP	438	12	3%
141	Winterborne St. Martin CP	374	10	3%
142	Mappowder CP	76	2	3%
143	Iwerne Courtney or Shroton CP	199	5	3%
144	Moreton CP	163	4	2%
145	Bradford Peverell CP	164	4	2%
146	Bloxworth CP	87	2	2%
147	Winterborne Houghton CP	88	2	2%
148	Gussage St. Michael CP	93	2	2%
149	Bradford Abbas CP	423	9	2%
150	Wareham St. Martin CP	1176	25	2%
151	Wareham Town CP	2959	62	2%
152	Stinsford CP	144	3	2%

153	Horton CP	253	5	2%
154	Marnhull CP	1014	20	2%
155	Witchampton CP	203	4	2%
156	Morden CP	154	3	2%
157	Spetisbury CP	258	5	2%
158	Cranborne CP	320	6	2%
159	Lydlinch CP	219	4	2%
160	Sherborne CP	5180	93	2%
161	Pamphill CP	171	3	2%
162	Dorchester CP	11142	186	2%
163	Athelhampton and Puddletown CP	733	12	2%
164	Chalbury CP	62	1	2%
165	Winterborne Kingston CP	311	5	2%
166	Silton CP	63	1	2%
167	Halstock CP	254	4	2%
168	Motcombe CP	638	10	2%
169	Charminster CP	1535	24	2%
170	Milborne St. Andrew CP	513	8	2%
171	Winterborne Zelston CP	68	1	1%
172	Mosterton CP	347	5	1%
173	Bere Regis CP	837	12	1%
174	Broadmayne CP	568	8	1%
175	Alton Pancras CP	73	1	1%
176	Okeford Fitzpaine CP	512	7	1%
177	Hazelbury Bryan CP	516	7	1%
178	Holt CP	672	9	1%
179	Pimperne CP	524	7	1%
180	Trent CP	150	2	1%
181	Shaftesbury CP	4653	61	1%
182	Frampton CP	233	3	1%
183	Tarrant Launceston CP	159	2	1%
184	Longburton CP	244	3	1%
185	Edmondsham CP	83	1	1%
186	Tarrant Hinton CP	85	1	1%
187	Bryanston CP	171	2	1%
188	Shillingstone CP	529	6	1%
189	Sturminster Newton CP	2130	24	1%
190	Yetminster CP	639	7	1%
191	Child Okeford CP	553	6	1%
192	Cann CP	277	3	1%

193	Glanvilles Wootton CP	93	1	1%
194	West Knighton CP	191	2	1%
195	Stratton CP	287	3	1%
196	Stourton Caundle CP	192	2	1%
197	St. Leonards and St. Ives CP	3668	38	1%
198	Stalbridge CP	1449	15	1%
199	Sutton Waldron CP	99	1	1%
200	Ferndown Town CP	8482	84	1%
201	Thornford CP	414	4	1%
202	Wool CP	2181	21	1%
203	Pulham CP	104	1	1%
204	Bishop's Caundle CP	209	2	1%
205	Gussage All Saints CP	105	1	1%
206	Winterbourne Steepleton CP	105	1	1%
207	Crossways CP	1287	12	1%
208	Sixpenny Handley and Pentridge CP	660	6	1%
209	Leigh CP	233	2	1%
210	Wimborne Minster CP	5497	46	1%
211	Charlton Marshall CP	603	5	1%
212	East Stour CP	262	2	1%
213	West Moors CP	3702	28	1%
214	Sturminster Marshall CP	812	6	1%
215	Lytchett Matravers CP	1641	12	1%
216	Chickerell CP	3145	21	1%
217	Bourton CP	452	3	1%
218	Tarrant Keyneston CP	154	1	1%
219	Blandford Forum CP	5031	32	1%
220	Winterbourne Abbas CP	170	1	1%
221	Colehill CP	3134	18	1%
222	Winterborne Whitechurch CP	350	2	1%
223	Lytchett Minster and Upton CP	3876	22	1%
224	Hinton CP	182	1	1%
225	West Parley CP	1761	9	1%
226	Gillingham CP	5756	27	0%
227	Verwood CP	6752	31	0%
228	Alderholt CP	1368	5	0%
229	Blandford St. Mary CP	1148	4	0%
230	Stourpaine CP	300	1	0%
231	Corfe Mullen CP	4409	14	0%
232	Tarrant Monkton CP	452	1	0%

Appendix B

Review of Principal Residence Policies adopted or being introduced in Cornwall

Local Authority Neighbourhood Plan Area	Policy	Stage	Threshold / Trigger	Other Evidence	Community Impacts Identified	Method of Implementation
St Ives Area Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015 – 2030 (covering St Ives and Carbis Bay)	H2 – Principal Residence Requirement Proposals for holiday accommodation will not be permitted unless it is located on an established holiday complex (this aspect of the policy was requested to be added by the examiner)	Made plan December 2016	2011 Census showed that St Ives and Carbis were in the top 5 settlements in Cornwall with the highest proportion of second homes and holiday lets (25%).	Between 2001 -2011 the number of dwellings not occupied by a resident household grew by 67%. Housing stock rose by 684 but the number of resident households grew by 6%.	The socioeconomic effects of such a high proportion of holiday properties are being felt by local community consultation responses.	100% Principal residence occupancy on new open market housing, excluding replacement dwellings without price controls or any local connection requirement. Implemented by condition or obligation. Occupiers required to keep proof that they are meeting the obligation verifiable evidence (e.g. Local electoral register and attend local services) and obliged to provide this proof if/when requested by Cornwall Council. Does not impose an arbitrary limit on minimum number of days of occupation.

Local Authority Neighbourhood Plan Area	Policy	Stage	Threshold / Trigger	Other Evidence	Community Impacts Identified	Method of Implementation
Other Cornwall Parishes Various Neighbourhood DPs as of April 2021: Parishes within St Minver, Rame Peninsula, Roseland Peninsula, Crantock, Pough, St Agnes, Trevagissey	Similar to H2 above	Made NPs		A range of data sets set out in this briefing note produced by Cornwall: Second Homes in Cornwall	Loss of community facilities, decline in school numbers and closure of seasonal facilities – from local knowledge and consultation	Similar policy to St Ives

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Appendix C

Review of Principal Residence Policies adopted or being introduced in Devon

Local Authority Neighbourhood Plan Area	Policy	Stage	Threshold / Trigger	Other Evidence	Community Impacts Identified	Method of Implementation
South Huish Neighbourhood Plan – a parish in the South Hams district,	Policy SH H2 Principal Residence	Adopted May 2021	Two thirds of the properties in the parish are second homes	More than 40 per cent of the parishioners are retired, the 2011 census reported that 38.1 per cent of	Housing Needs Survey	New open market housing, excluding replacement dwellings, will only be supported where there is a restriction to ensure its

Devon a coastal community in AONB				the population was 65 and over - one of the highest in England		occupancy as a principal residence guaranteed through a planning condition or legal agreement. New unrestricted second homes will not be supported at any time
Salcombe Neighbourhood Plan Area, Devon	SALC H3	Made 2019 but seeking to modify the plan policy SALC H3	The level of second homes in Salcombe was quoted in 2017 by South Hams District Council as 38.45%. The NPG calculated in 2016 the figure to be 57 %.	NPG undertook a review of the electoral register and the database of residential addresses in the parish and analysis of properties rated for business rates and registered as holiday homes. 65% of survey respondents supported the PRP	The consequence of the high value placed on market housing which attracts primarily second homeowners is the lack of supply of properties for younger working people and families. the aim is to help local people purchase a home in the Parish.	The modification relates solely to policy SALC H3 Principal Residence requirement for new housing, and replaces the requirement for a planning condition, S106 agreement or other legal agreement, with a requirement for a S106 agreement only.

Local Authority Neighbourhood Plan Area	Policy	Stage	Threshold / Trigger	Other Evidence	Community Impacts Identified	Method of Implementation
Lynton and Lynmouth Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2028	Policy H3 - Open market housing without a restriction to ensure its occupation as a principal	Made in 2013	Census data 28% of all household spaces in the parish have no usual residents; this is a significant proportion of the housing stock and is	Consultation responses; legal advice on appropriateness of policy	Principal residence housing is supported by the Plan only in order to provide cross subsidy for affordable housing or other development	Planning Condition

	residence will not be permitted.		almost 3 times higher than the percentage for North Devon as a whole		directly benefiting the community	
Exmoor National Park Authority Local Plan 2011-2031	HC-S4 Principal residence Housing following the example of PRP implemented in the Lynton and Lynmouth NP	July 2017	19.2 % of homes in the National Park with no usual residents, at the parish level Lynton and Lynmouth have 28.5% no usual residents	During 2001 – 2011 some 263 dwellings were built within the National Park, however the population recorded in the Census for these dates demonstrates a decline in the National Park population by 600. Viability assessment agents and developers who advised the Authority on the viability assessment of the Plan agreed that a 5% reduction in the value of new dwellings subject to the principal residence requirement would be likely. This would have a small positive impact on affordability.	Brendon, where 33% of homes have no usual residents has no convenience store. Other effects are said to include the closure of local schools and shops and a general decline in social wellbeing. The intention is to ensure that any new market homes are lived in by people who will contribute to the local area.	Will only apply to new dwellings within the National Park and principally where they enable the delivery of local affordable homes. Through condition. Principal Residence housing will also apply to any new dwelling units created through the subdivision of existing dwellings (HC-D14) and the conversion/change of use of hotels/guesthouses to dwellings and in accordance with the tests set out in policy RT-D3 Safeguarding Serviced Accommodation

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Before completing the EQIA please have a look at the [Dorset Council style guide](#) and also use the [accessibility checker](#) to make sure your document is easy for people of all abilities to read.

Use the [Hemingwayapp](#) to check the readability of your document, to do this, click the edit button on the top right of the hemminwayapp screen, paste your text and the app will highlight if there are any problem areas.

Some key tips

- avoid tables and charts, if possible please provide raw data
- avoid pictures and maps if possible.
- avoid using bold, italics or colour to highlight or stress a point
- when using numbering or bullet points avoid using capitals at the beginning unless the name of something
- date format is dd month yyyy (1 June 2021)
- use clear and simple language
- where you need to use technical terms, abbreviations or acronyms, explain what they mean the first time you use them
- if using hyperlinks, make sure the link text describes where the link goes rather than 'click here' Please note equality impact assessments are published on the Dorset Council [website](#)

Before completing this form, please refer to the [supporting guidance](#). The aim of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to consider the equality implications of your policy, strategy, project or service on different groups of people including employees of Dorset Council, residents and users of our services and to consider if there are ways to proactively advance equality.

Where further guidance is needed, please contact the Inclusion Champion or the [Diversity & Inclusion Officer](#).

1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Housing Strategy

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

New Strategy

3. Is this (please delete those not required):

Both internal and external

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

The strategy sets out the Council's aims and objectives for housing for five years from January 2024. These are:

Housing Need: Enabling residents to live safe, healthy, independent lives in homes that meet their needs.

Housing Supply: Driving the delivery of homes people need and can afford to live in.

Housing Standards: Improving the quality, standard, and safety of homes.

Prevention of Homelessness: Support, at the right time, to people in crisis to prevent homelessness.

5. Please provide the background to this proposal.

Every local authority must have a housing strategy which sets out its vision for housing in its area. The Dorset Housing Strategy sets out the priorities and approach we will take as a Local Authority and by working with partners to meet local housing needs and objectives. The strategy is not the Local Plan, and it does not set out planning policies.

It provides:

- a framework to guide us and our partners in tackling housing issues facing Dorset.
- a clear strategy set against current national climates.

This strategy is not a standalone document. It supports our Council Plan and alongside other key strategies and plans:

- A Better Life Strategy
- Birth to Settled Adulthood Programme
- Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy
- Economic Growth Strategy
- Domestic Abuse Strategy
- Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy
- Children's Services Sufficiency Strategy (pending)
- Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Dorset Council Planning for Climate Change – Interim Guidance and Position Statement
- Local Transport Plan

Dorset Council will be developing a new Local Plan setting out our planning policies and proposals for new developments. Findings from the consultation will be fed into the local plan team. During the development of this Housing Strategy close engagement with our Planning service has been carried out to ensure its objectives can be supported and that the approaches are aligned.

Evidence gathering and engagement

6. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

This strategy was developed with assistance from Dorset Council's housing service, adult social care, children's services and planning services as well as housing associations and health partners. We also used data from:

- research and analysis of the local and national housing context
- 2021 Census
- NOMIS (Official Census and Labour Market Statistics)
- Icen Housing Needs Assessment 2021 (a report outlining the number of homes needed in Dorset)
- Council strategies and plans
- information from partner organisations (Registered Providers, Public Health Dorset, Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership, NHS and Homeless Forum)
- Information from internal and external engagement

- national policies and trends
- best practice research
- housing sector trends
- local housing data
- Government studies and research
- Public Consultation

7. What did this tell you?

Research and data.

Our data and research told us residents are experiencing a gap between income and housing costs. Current national caps on financial assistance (Local Housing Allowance) available to help pay rent, are set at 2011 rates and rental costs are rising. Dorset house prices are on average 11 times higher than average wages making home ownership more difficult.

The standard of homes has been the focus of legislative changes seeking to improve the condition of rental homes. Dorset provides help, guidance and assistance to private landlords to meet decent homes standards and carries out enforcement action when needed. Dorset's social landlords work closely with the Council to address any issues in homes they own.

A drive to support rural communities was announced by the Government this summer. This aims to boost the supply of new affordable housing to buy or rent, grow the rural economy, improve connectivity, support home energy and thriving communities.

Local NHS Trusts recognise the impact of poor housing on health and Dorset's need for more supported accommodation to improve positive recovery at home.

Dorset's 65+ year old demographic is higher than the national average and means there is a growing need for care services. Increasing age related conditions means Dorset will need more extra care accommodation. This is a type of housing that meets design standards and includes the provision of care.

Dorset also needs more specialist supported housing accommodation for adults and young people who have medical or welfare related housing needs. Access to supported accommodation helps residents to continue to receive the right support and services whilst living in a community.

Dorset needs more temporary accommodation to tackle homelessness. The supply of temporary accommodation is outstripped by demand in Dorset in line with national trends.

Increasing the supply of all types of housing is key to meeting local housing pressures. This should be linked to the needs of our residents and communities. Including the specific needs of the following groups:

- older residents and those who will require additional support and property adaptations to help them to live independently.
- disabled residents who require properties adapted to their specific needs.
- residents who need supported housing. Including those who have learning difficulties, mental ill-health issues, autism, special educational needs, people leaving care, people leaving hospital, young people (16-17 years), and looked after children and people who are homeless.
- victims of domestic violence and abuse.
- women and children.
- people who are at risk of homelessness or who are homeless.
- identified groups of people such as essential local workers (key workers), working aged people, young people, current and former armed forces personnel and their families, gypsies and travellers, prospective foster carers and adopters, refugees, asylum-seekers, unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people,
- rural communities.

Research also told us the number of new affordable homes being built has risen incrementally since 2019. The council and it's partners are working together in response to nutrient neutrality planning requirements, but this is expected to impact on the number of new homes built in the short term.

Our research also told us that the impact of housing on health is widely understood. The council and other organisations want to strengthen working together to improve housing expertise in health settings and the supply of housing with support options.

Public consultation

A full report of our public consultation responses is available at appendix B.

2137 responses were received and 84.3% were from members of the public and tells us our residents have views about housing in Dorset.

Other public consultation respondents are:

- Affordable or social housing provider
- Community group or charity representative
- Development, construction or planning professional
- Elected members
- Housing support, care or other housing related support provider
- Neighbourhood plan group member
- Parish or Town Councillors
- Private rented sector landlord or agent
- Voluntary organisations
- Community Land Trusts
- Charities

Most respondents agreed with the Housing Strategy vision to ensure our residents have access to affordable, suitable, secure homes where they can live well and be part of sustainable and thriving communities. The total agreement percentage was 86.6%.

The top 5 things most important to respondents in summary are (not in order of priority):

- Building more social and affordable housing for rent.
- Infrastructure to support new housing development (road improvements, school places and GP capacity).
- Supporting affordable home ownership for first time buyers and working aged people.
- Design of new homes (to improve energy efficiency, reduce environmental impact, protect natural environment, and to be easier to adapt to changing needs).
- Homelessness

The consultation asked whether our objectives are right. Their responses told us:

Objective 1 - 86.8% agreed.

Objective 2 – 84.3% agreed.

Objective 3 – 86.5% agreed.

Objective 4 – 82.6%agreed.

From those who engaged with the consultation 84.4% described themselves as white British and 15.6%% stated they were from a BME background.

14.4% of respondents said that they were disabled, which is high compared to an approximate figure of 4.6% based on those claiming either Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments or Attendance Allowance.

There were more female respondents than male (a slightly higher percentage than the Dorset population generally).

There was a wide range of ages of respondents and a good geographical spread. It is noted that responses from younger residents is lower than expected.

Age	Percentage
19-24	0.9%
25-34	4.9%
35-44	9.6%
45-54	13.4%
55-64	24.9%
65 or over	37.3%
Not answered	1.8%
Prefer not to say	7.1%
Under 18	0.1%

8. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

Pre-consultation strategy development engagement phase

Extended Leadership Team

Elected Members

Staff members both from an employee and personal perspective, as well as specific groups or representatives including Housing Services, Adult Social Care & Housing Leadership Forum, Low Carbon Dorset, Adults Services, Children's Services, Planning Services.

Public Health Dorset

EDI Reference Group

Landlord Forum

Consultation Phase Responses Include:

Elected Members

General Public

Registered Providers

Integrated Care Strategy Group

Health Agencies

Developers

Town and Parish Councils

Community Groups

Charities

9. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

No further information is required to inform the strategy.

The high-level themed delivery plan identifies future work to formulate, share and apply data so that future decisions to deliver the strategy will be data led.

Is an EQIA required?

Not every proposal will need an EqlA. The data and research should inform your decision whether to continue with this EqlA. If you decide that your proposal does not need an EqlA, please answer the following question:

This policy, strategy, project or service does not require an EqlA because (provide details):

Yes

Assessing the impact on different groups of people

For each of the protected characteristics groups below, please explain whether your proposal could have a positive, negative, unclear or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is and if unclear or negative please explain what mitigating actions will be taken.

- use the evidence you have gathered to inform your decision making.
- consider impacts on residents, service users and employees separately.
- if your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option.
- see guidance for more information about the different [protected characteristics](#).

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	• the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	• protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against

Neutral Impact	• no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	• not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Positive Impact	By improving access to suitable, affordable housing, of the right type in the right place. By improving access to specialist accommodation required to meet needs. The Strategy, together with associated policies and documents, recognises the need for greater provision of housing for our aging population. This is outlined in the need to increase numbers of extra care and residential care properties. The strategy also reflects the need for new developments to meet enhanced building regulation standards, making them more accessible and easier to adapt. It also looks to support our working age, low-income, residents by increasing affordable housing options. By supporting developments which meet the needs of our rural communities, reducing the need for residents to move away from their communities and the risk of social isolation.
Disability	Positive Impact	By improving access to suitable, affordable housing, of the right type in the right place. By improving access to specialist accommodation required to meet needs. The strategy recognises the need for more bespoke housing and specialist housing options to meet the needs of our disabled residents. The strategy also reflects the need for new developments to meet enhanced building regulation standards making them more accessible and easier to adapt. Through carrying out current and future needs projections to ensure that housing is developed to meet the needs of our residents.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Positive Impact	Whilst the strategy does not specifically identify housing for this group, it aims to improve to suitable, affordable housing, of the right type in the right place for all residents. Also by improving access to specialist accommodation required to meet needs.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral Impact	Whilst the strategy does not specifically identify housing for this group, it aims to improve to suitable, affordable housing, of the right type in the right place for all residents.
Pregnancy and maternity	Positive Impact	By improving access to suitable, affordable housing, of the right type in the right place. By improving access to specialist accommodation required to meet needs.
Race and Ethnicity	Positive Impact	By improving access to suitable, affordable housing, of the right type in the right place. By improving access to specialist accommodation required to meet needs. The strategy seeks to identify ways to make best use of existing social housing stock, including facilitating moves which would see larger currently under-occupied housing being used for those with a need for larger family sized homes. The report Meeting the housing needs of BAME households in England: the role of the planning system (.Bristow-Final-report.pdf (hw.ac.uk)) recognised a need for larger homes for BME households and that increasing the availability of bigger properties would have a positive impact. Through mapping housing needs we will be able to identify the number of homes needed to meet need.
Religion and belief	Neutral Impact	Whilst the strategy does not specifically identify housing for this group, it aims to improve to suitable, affordable housing, of the right type in the right place for all residents.
Sex (consider men and women)	Positive Impact	Whilst the strategy does not specifically identify housing for this group, it's aims are to increase access to housing for all residents and to identify where there is a need for specialist accommodation. This is likely to include the need to accommodation for those who are fleeing domestic abuse and violence as well as single sex accommodation for rough sleepers.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		By supporting the delivery of social rent housing which is more affordable for low-income families and single parent households. Identifying and projecting housing need, to influence housing delivery which meets with bedroom needs, ensuring children have the space to develop and mature.
Sexual orientation	Neutral Impact	Whilst the strategy does not specifically identify housing for this group, it aims to improve to suitable, affordable housing, of the right type in the right place for all residents.
People with caring responsibilities	Positive Impact	By improving access to suitable, affordable housing, of the right type in the right place. By improving access to specialist accommodation required to meet needs. The strategy recognises the need for more bespoke housing and specialist housing options to meet the needs of our residents. The strategy also reflects the need for new developments to meet enhanced building regulation standards making them more accessible and easier to adapt. By identifying the current and projected future needs of our households with residents requiring care, we can support the development of homes to meet needs and reduce the impact on carers more easily.
Rural isolation	Positive Impact	By improving access to suitable, affordable housing, of the right type in the right place. By improving access to specialist accommodation required to meet needs. The strategy also highlights the need to support developments in rural areas which have the support of community land trusts and community housing groups.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		Its aim is to increase housing options for rural areas with a view to encouraging local people to remain in the area, thereby building the local community and decreasing the risk of social isolation. The strategy also recognises the need to ensure that housing developments have the right infrastructure to support communities, including access to services, digital connectivity, and travel.
Socio-economic deprivation	Positive Impact	By improving access to suitable, affordable housing, of the right type in the right place. By improving access to specialist accommodation required to meet needs. Improving access to affordable accommodation by encouraging greater levels of social rent housing development in the Dorset Council area. By working with private sector landlords to increase the provision of housing for homeless and vulnerable applicants. By providing tenancy accreditation training to support residents to understand how to sustain their tenancy. The strategy reinforces the need for increased housing standards, particularly linked to energy efficiency and renewable energy sources, which are designed to make homes more affordable.
Single parents	Positive Impact	By improving access to suitable, affordable housing, of the right type in the right place. By improving access to specialist accommodation required to meet needs. By supporting the delivery of social rent housing which is more affordable for low-income families and single parent households.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Armed forces communities	Positive Impact	By improving access to suitable, affordable housing, of the right type in the right place. By improving access to specialist accommodation required to meet needs.

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

Overall, the housing strategy is likely to have a positive impact by increasing and improving access to housing which meets the current and projected needs of Dorset residents. By supporting, and enabling, the delivery of more homes which meet accessible homes standards, specialist supported and extra care accommodation, and housing which is genuinely affordable. Developing needs maps will ensure that we are focusing delivery on the right type of properties, in the right place, to provide access to homes for all our residents.

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Data Intelligence	Housing needs maps to be developed and used to support decisions to deliver the aims and objectives of the housing strategy	To be confirmed	To be determined by the housing board.

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: Sarah Smith

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: Sarah Smith, Sharon Attwater, Andrew Billany

Date of completion: 17 October 2023

Version Number: 5

EqlA review date: January 2025

Inclusion Champion Sign Off: TBC

Equality Lead Sign Off: TBC

Next Steps:

- the EqlA will be reviewed by Communications and Engagement and if in agreement, your EqlA will be signed off.
- if not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqlA, to get a better understanding.
- EqlA authors are responsible to ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to [Diversity and Inclusion Officer](#)

[Appendices](#)

[A – Housing Strategy](#)

[B – Consultation Report](#)

People and Health Scrutiny Committee

20 July 2026

Housing Voids – Process and procedures For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:

Cllr G Taylor, Housing and Homelessness

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:

S Crowe - Executive Director, Housing, Prevention and Communities

Report author and job title: Julian Wain, Strategic Property Adviser

Email: julian.wain@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public

1. Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

- 1.1 This report summarises Dorset Council's current approach to the management of void properties and looks at future developments.

It examines the definition, scope and background to the process, void categorization and the important allocations process.

The report looks at targeting and monitoring and work to date on costs.

The report is a joint report between Housing and Assets and Property and therefore is also from Cllr Richard Biggs Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Property Assets and Economic Growth.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to review and consider the contents of the report and make recommendations as appropriate.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 Scrutiny Committee has asked for a report on the process for dealing with empty housing properties; to consider the approach taken and reflect on performance and issues arising. The report sets out the policy background,

the process and identifies matters currently relevant to improvement and ways forward for the future.

4. The report

This report covers the Council's approach to managing voids across the temporary accommodation and wider housing portfolio, including hostels, supported and specialist housing, shared accommodation and self-contained units.

The Council's draft Void Policy is attached at Appendix A. This is due to be submitted for Member approval shortly.

4.1 Purpose and Aims

Dorset Council is committed to:

- Delivering safe, clean, and secure accommodation
- Ensuring legal and regulatory compliance
- Achieving value for money and efficient use of available housing stock
- Applying a transparent and consistent approach to working.

The efficient processing of voids maximises the availability of Dorset Council accommodation and reduces the cost of other more expensive temporary accommodation.

4.2 Definition of a void

The currently adopted definition of a void is a property which is not occupied and for which no legal interest is still in place. Rent cannot legitimately be charged.

For the purposes of this report, the focus is principally on empty residential properties used for Temporary Accommodation. Due to the nature of temporary placements, these properties are frequently vacated and require varying levels of work between each occupation.

The Council has a small number of additional residential properties acquired historically by the predecessor authorities. The management of these and the approach to void turnover is under review and will be subject to agreed processes in due course. Similarly, a small number of properties for care leavers do not go through this process as a result of the nature of the tenancies.

Void properties typically arise from:

- Planned moves or end of licence/tenancy

- Transfers, decants, or move-on
- Lease expiries, property hand backs, or contract terminations
- Evictions, abandonment, or legal possession
- Enforcement actions, death of a tenant, or safeguarding/legal intervention

4.3 Legislative Background

There is a significant body of legislation relating to the condition of, repairs to and work on housing properties and thus to void properties.

By no means an exhaustive list, this includes:

- Housing Acts 1985, 1986
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use Regulations) as amended 2018
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (England) Regulations 2005
- Electrical Safety Quantity and Continuity Regulations 2002
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (Awaab's Law)

4.4 Scope

This policy applies to the various types of properties used or managed by Dorset Council across its accommodation portfolio. This includes:

- Properties owned by Dorset Council
- Properties leased or licensed from private landlords
- Properties managed in partnership with housing associations or commissioned support providers

The policy applies to a wide range of accommodation types, including:

- Hostels (self-contained or shared rooms with communal facilities)
- Shared accommodation (e.g. with shared kitchens and/or bathrooms)
- Self-contained accommodation (exclusive use of all living facilities)
- Supported housing schemes, specialist housing, or Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) properties

4.5 Void Process

The current void process is set out at Appendix B. This is subject to regular review and was most recently reviewed in early June. This section of the report summarises that process.

As the property becomes void, the initial work is carried out by housing, ensuring the property is clear and suitable for contractors and that the Council's housing record system is updated.

The property is then passed to Assets and Property who schedule the work required, assess the appropriate category for the void and pass to the contractor for work to be carried out. For hostel accommodation where there has been a quick turn around after the housing officer inspection it may not need to go to the void works contractor and may simply be cleaned and relet. Where works are required, the normal process is followed.

At present the Council's Void Contractor is Generation One Ltd who were appointed with the approval of Cabinet for a period until the new repairs' arrangements are in place. Members will be aware that the long-term repairs contracts are expected to be in place by the New Year. The Void works contract is being re-procured as part of that process.

On return from the contractor, the surveyor in Assets and Property inspects the work and deals with any quality issues including returning to the contractor if necessary. Work is checked against the scheduled items, and sample checks are made on measurements to enable cost checking against invoice.

4.5 Void Categorisation

The lettable standard which all voids should meet is set out at Appendix C. This standard has been established following detailed discussion and is based on the legislative requirements and good practice. The lettable standard is kept under review.

The Void Categorisation document is part of the policy at Appendix A.

Voids categories for Dorset Council are as follows:

Minor	Minor voids refer to short-term voids that require minimal repairs or no repairs at all. These voids typically involve straightforward tasks that can be completed quickly to prepare the property for new tenant/client.
Major	Major voids refer to voids that require significant repairs or renovations to meet the void standards. These voids involve more extensive work compared to minor voids and typically include the replacement or upgrading of major components within the property.
Exceptional	Exceptional voids involve complex or expensive works that are likely to take longer than standard void repairs. These voids typically do not initially have a known timeframe for completion

	due to the nature and extent of the work required. Examples include major structural repairs, fire damage, subsidence, and reinvestment in planned maintenance programs such as re-plastering, replacement of ceilings and floors, and internal redesigns.

The detailed Voids Categorisation is included in the policy document.

Exceptional Voids are limited in number, but it is important to retain the category because of the potential circumstances which may arise.

4.6 Allocations

As these properties are designated for use as temporary accommodation the allocation is not through Dorset Homechoice but rather via internal process. Whenever Dorset Council have reason to believe that an applicant is eligible, homeless and in priority need then it becomes subject to the duty under S188 (1) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) which is to secure that accommodation is available for the applicant's occupation. The S188 (1) may become what is known as the Main Duty under S193 and Dorset Council must secure that accommodation is available for occupation until one of the specified events detailed in the Act brings it to an end. Requests to accommodate under either duty will be made directly to the Housing Solutions team.

Properties in the voids process will be checked and potential occupancy considered for those applicants that have already been accommodated in emergency B&B provision as well as those that have remained temporarily in the accommodation that they approached from.

One of the first criteria for consideration will be the size of the accommodation against household size. A single person household will in the main only be considered for studio or one bedroom accommodation. Under occupation for this group will only be considered in specific circumstances such as accessibility. Family sized accommodation may be under or over accommodated depending on the number of household members and the size related criteria of the property.

Families with dependent children who are already accommodated in B&B will be considered for any void property before those applicants who have remained temporarily in their own home. However, households with specific needs such as a property with some adaptation or location close to specialist educational establishments are likely to be prioritised over those households in B&B.

Accommodation offered under either S188 or S193 must be considered to be suitable for occupation by the applicant. Suitability encompasses a number of factors decreed by both statute and the Homelessness Code of Guidance. One of the

biggest issues in terms of suitability is in relation to the location of the accommodation. S208 of the Housing Act stipulates that as far as reasonably practicable local housing authorities should secure accommodation within its own district. The Code of Guidance suggests that accommodation should be sourced as close as possible to where an applicant was previously living.

Due to the geographical size of Dorset and the location of the designated temporary accommodation there are often challenges made as to the suitability of the accommodation due to the location. Applicants from the west of the county are reluctant to accept an offer in the east and vice versa. These challenges may result in delays to sign up either whilst the nomination is reconsidered and progressed or where the outcome is for a new nomination entirely.

Hostel style accommodation can be difficult to fill depending on the cohort of applicants. Those applicants who have identified risks such as predatory sexual behaviour or violence will not be appropriate for placement in this type of scheme.

The Supported Housing schemes such as RSAP accommodation is subject to a different process for Allocation. Applicants for any potential vacancy will need to be referred and assessed under the relevant pathway. An Allocations panel for RSAP meets monthly to review referrals and agree who will be nominated. This process is important to optimise potential outcomes for these applicants and that includes significant consideration as to the accommodation on offer. As a result, the void time between occupancies is likely to be significantly longer than for generic temporary accommodation.

4.7 Targets

Dorset Council monitors voids across all council-managed accommodation using the following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These targets have been benchmarked and are broadly commensurate with national targets and performance, although slightly more challenging.

The key-to-key targets include all aspects of the void process including the pre-work, the repairs and the allocations process. The contractor repairs turnaround monitors the performance of the void contractor.

Indicator Target or Monitoring Aim		
Key-to-key turnaround (overall)	30 working days (Minor)	45 working days (Major)
Contractor repairs turnaround	20 working days (Minor)	35 working days (Major)

Rent loss per void	Minimise and report monthly	

The numbers of properties void at any one time is of itself a limited measure of performance as a significant influence on this is the number of voids becoming available. This can be affected by various factors and of course it is important that properties do turn over so they can be relet.

The targets quoted above are much more significant in assessing void performance as these are the key tasks that have to be performed each time. It is, of course, true that slow performance in these areas will lead to growth in the numbers of properties void and unavailable for letting.

4.8 Monitoring

The end- to -end void process is subject to monitoring on a daily basis. Housing staff ensure that voids are checked and passed to Assets and Property. The relevant housing surveyor monitors incoming voids, and following inspection monitors the progress of the contractor. On return the housing team monitor progress with allocations as described above.

Monitoring is carried out at both a summary performance and an individual property level.

On a weekly basis senior staff of both Departments examine the figures and a report is made to the relevant Cabinet Members.

The Council's monitoring has been developing over recent months and is significantly more thorough through the implementation of improved reporting and through improved role clarity.

There are three key aspects to void management, each of which needs careful examination to ensure good performance. These are firstly, the work up to the point when the property is passed to the contractor, which must be done promptly. As an example, Assets and Property staff are requested to complete works scheduling within 24 hours. Secondly, the performance of the contractor is critical as without prompt attention to works and tight management of any additional contractors, void targets will be at risk. The third element is the allocation process after works are finished as described above. If there are refusals, or delays to the allocation process, this again can impact void performance.

This is the first Scrutiny report on this matter, but such performance is a legitimate and not unusual subject for regular scrutiny if members so wished.

4.9 Current Figures

The current figures as at 29th June 2026 are attached as Appendix D.

The figures show a considerable improvement since the problem at the turn of the year, caused by slow inspection performance leading to an excess of void properties.

The number of open voids is decreased and consequently the percentage of the stock void.

Performance against target is improving although there remains work to do.

4.10 Future issues

Going forward there are a number of factors that will improve performance still further.

The reporting and monitoring will be further developed to interrogate trends better and produce stronger data on costs and on performance. A future report to Scrutiny can provide better data on trends and performance in particular.

There is a need to improve understanding of the costs of this part of the service and work will be devoted to this.

As part of the procurement of the new repairs solutions the Voids contract is being retendered. The appointed contractor will have a four- year contract with potential to add two one -year extensions, With the benefit of that length of contract there is the opportunity to work in partnership with the contractor for new initiatives and approaches to improve quality and performance. Contractors may also be prepared to make additional investment over that time period given the potential for return.

We would expect to receive competitive prices based on the length of contract.

Assets and property are working on improvements to the IT systems. All such improvements reduce bureaucracy and demands on time offering opportunity for improved performance.

4.11 Void costs

Current sampling suggests an average void cost of circa £3450.

This is broken down as an average cost of a minor void at circa £1,000.00 and a major at £5800.

Void costs are determined by the amount of work required, the lettable standard and the contractor's pricing.

The lettable standard is kept under review but given the issues described under the allocations section it would not be recommended to lessen this at this stage.

It is expected that the long -term voids procurement will offer competitive prices due to the length of the contract.

Monitoring and understanding of void cost will be further developed.

Last year's lost income as a result of void properties amounted to approximately £300,000 which illustrates the importance of swift void turnaround. It is budgeted and anticipated that this year's figure will be considerably less. The monitoring and benchmarking of this figure is currently under development.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 The approaches outlined in this report have been the subject of considerable debate and refinement over a prolonged period. They are kept under review. Alternative approaches to the processes may be possible and Members views are welcomed. The key to effective void management is adherence to the process and the quality of staff activities and management monitoring.

There is no alternative to a clear process that delivers safe and compliant void turnaround.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 As described in the report section 4, the Council in its policy, process and arrangements is required to comply with a significant body of legislation relating to the condition of, repairs to and work on housing properties and thus to void properties.

By no means an exhaustive list, this includes:

- Housing Acts 1985,1986
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use Regulations) as amended 2018
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (England) Regulations 2005
- Electrical Safety Quantity and Continuity Regulations 2002
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (Awaab's Law)

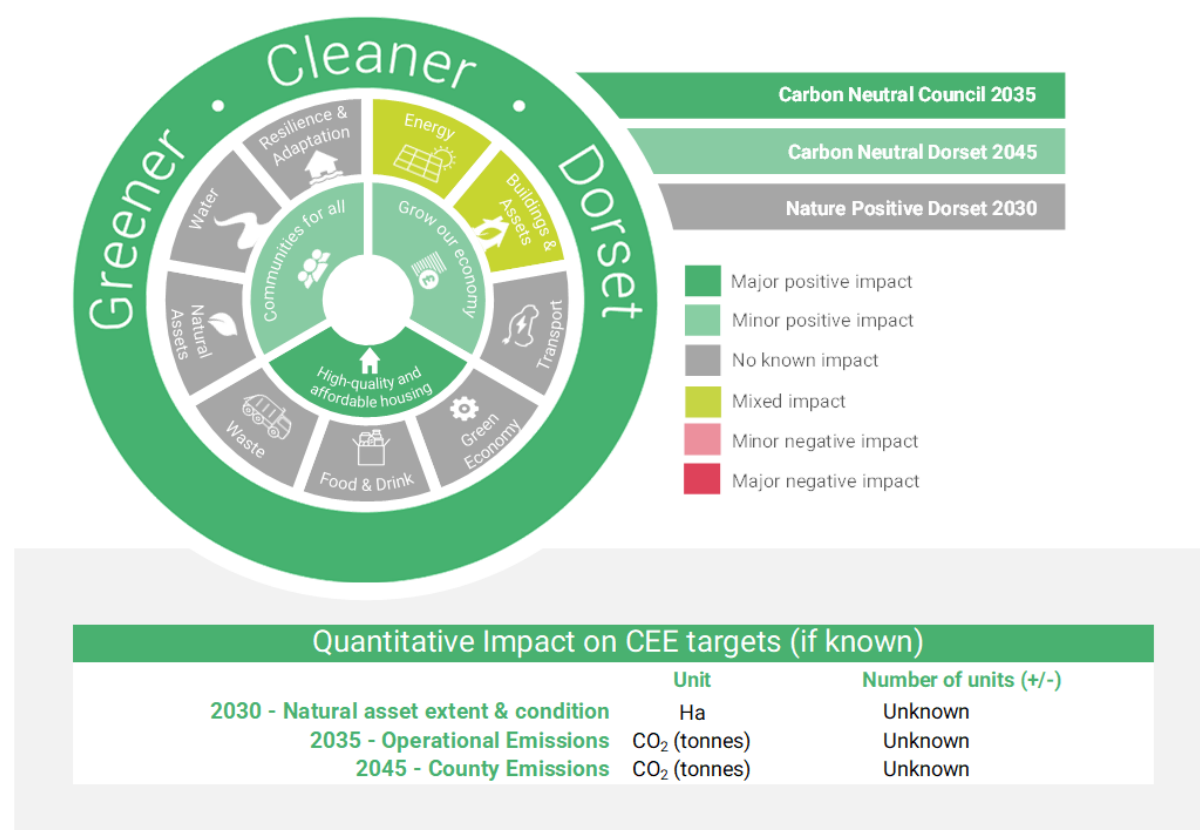
7 Financial implications

7.1 Officers are working to better understand the average cost and to refine the figures based on the current sampling. As noted above current sampling suggests an average void cost of circa £3450, broken down as an average cost of a minor void at circa £1,000.00 and a major at £5800. Monitoring of these costs against allocations and the lettable standard will determine whether this is an acceptable level of cost in the long term.

The importance of good void performance is demonstrated by the fact that if 12.1% of property is void, this means lost rent & displacement into spot purchase arrangements, but more importantly lost capacity for people that need it most.

8. Natural environment, climate and ecology implications

8.1



Those items that have come on the climate wheel as mixed impact are doing so because the purpose of this process is not per se to improve buildings materials or energy performance. However, where it is necessary for example to renew a boiler, modern technology will be used and there will be a positive impact. Modern environmentally friendly materials and technologies are used where possible as a matter of course.

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments

Impact

Energy	Mixed impact
Buildings & Assets	Mixed impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact
Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	Minor positive impact
High-quality and affordable housing	Major positive impact
Communities for all	Minor positive impact

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 The provision of quality, well maintained temporary accommodation is a key part of delivering the housing service provided by Dorset Council. The link between health and housing is long established and the ability to call upon a ready supply of accommodation helps mitigate stress and potential effect on health caused by homelessness or spending time in other less secure forms of accommodation. An efficient and effective void process that leads to swift turn- around of empty properties is an important component of ensuring properties are available.

10. Other implications

10.1 None at this time.

11. Risk implications

11.1 There are three key risks associated with this process:

- a) Failure to deal with void properties in an appropriate timetable.
- b) Failure to deliver a safe and compliant property
- c) Rent loss and increased TA costs as a result of the above

All will be mitigated by establishing an effective process and by staff adherence to process and regulation and quality management and monitoring.

At this time current and residual risk would be low but failure to adhere to the principals and process, and lack of management control would swiftly raise the risk level.

12. Equalities

12.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix E.

13. Appendices

Appendix A: Dorset Council Void Policy including categorisation

Appendix B: Void Process Flow Chart

Appendix C: Lettable Standard

Appendix D: Current Figures

Appendix E: Equalities Impact Assessment

14. Background papers

14.1 None

15. Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Dorset Council
Void Policy
Housing Management
May 2026



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1. Introduction
2. Purpose and Aims
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 - A. Statutory Legislation
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Appendix A – Void Categorisation Guide



1. Introduction

This policy outlines the Council's approach to managing voids across its Temporary Accommodation (TA) and wider housing portfolio, including hostels, supported and specialist housing, shared accommodation, and self-contained units.

This policy supports Dorset Council's commitment to:

- Delivering **safe, clean, and secure accommodation**
- Ensuring **legal and regulatory compliance**
- Achieving **value for money and efficient use of available housing stock**
- Applying a **transparent and consistent approach to working**

To support, this policy should be read alongside additional documentation (not exhaustive):

- Housing Voids Technical Specification: Dorset Council: Property & Housing Repairs
- Void Procedure (Temporary Accommodation)
- Placement and Suitability Procedures (in development)
- Lettable Standards Guidance
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement – Dorset Council
- Health and Safety Policy (Property and Premises)

2. Purpose and Aims

Dorset Council's Voids Policy establishes a consistent and strategic approach to managing empty housing across its portfolio. It ensures that when properties become vacant, they are recovered, inspected, repaired, and re-let efficiently while meeting all legal, safety, and quality standards.

The policy is designed to minimise void turnaround times, reduce rental income loss, and support the Council's statutory duties - by making suitable accommodation available as quickly as possible. It emphasises providing safe, clean, compliant homes and adopting a person-centred approach that takes into account vulnerability, accessibility, and household needs.

The policy applies to all council-managed, leased, and partner-provided housing and covers the full voids process from tenancy termination and inspection through to repair,



compliance checks, and re-letting. It is underpinned by key legislation and regulatory standards.

Through defined lettable standards, categorisation of void types, and robust performance indicators, Dorset Council aims to ensure consistency, accountability, and value for money while continuously improving services through monitoring, reporting, and feedback.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all properties used or managed by Dorset Council across its accommodation portfolio. This includes (But not limited to):

- Properties owned by Dorset Council
- Properties leased or licensed from private landlords
- Properties managed in partnership with housing associations or commissioned support providers

The policy applies to a wide range of accommodation types, including:

- Hostels (self-contained or shared rooms with communal facilities)
- Shared accommodation (e.g. with shared kitchens and/or bathrooms)
- Self-contained accommodation (exclusive use of all living facilities)
- Supported housing schemes, specialist housing, or Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) properties

This policy applies to voids arising from:

- Planned moves or end of licence/tenancy
- Transfers, decants, or move-on
- Lease expiries, property hand backs, or contract terminations
- Evictions, abandonment, or legal possession
- Enforcement actions, death of a tenant, or safeguarding/legal interventions



4. Legal and Regulatory Framework

The following legislation, regulatory standards, and national frameworks underpin void property management and the provision of high standard, suitable, accommodation.

A. Statutory Legislation

This policy and the way in which the council manages its void process complies with the contractual, statutory, regulatory and health and safety requirements as set out in the following (This list is illustrative and not exhaustive):

- Housing Act 1985
- Localism Act 2011
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982
- Housing Act 1996 (Part 6)
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (GSIUR) as amended 2018.
Approved Code of Practice and guidance
- Health and Safety Legislation including Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (England) Regulations 2005
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH)
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Regulations 2015 and Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendments) Regulations 2022
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 2018
- Electrical Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002/2665
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR
- Equalities Act 2010
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995

B. Regulatory Standards and National Guidance

- Regulator of Social Housing – Home Standard
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (Awaab's Law)
- Decent Homes Standard (2006 – pending update)
- Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Practice Guidance



5. Performance Indicators

Dorset Council will monitor voids across all council-managed accommodation using the following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). *Please refer to Appendix A for outline explanation of void categories:*

Indicator	Target or Monitoring Aim
Key-to-key turnaround (overall)	30 working days (Minor) 45 working days (Major)
Contractor repairs turnaround	20 working days (Minor) 35 working days (Major)
Rent loss per void	Minimise and report weekly

6. Monitoring Responsibilities

Housing Management Staff (Team Leaders, Seniors and Housing Officers) are responsible for overseeing all voids, progress, and turnaround times. Performance will be monitored through systems such as Huume and internal dashboards/systems.

Asset Management and Surveyors are responsible for monitoring the progress of void works and notifying the Helpdesk and Housing Management team of any blockages, delays, or access issues impacting turnaround, and initial categorisation of works required.

Team Leaders will:

- Review KPI performance on a weekly basis
- Report key performance trends or concerns to the Service Manager
- Escalate any voids exceeding agreed turnaround thresholds to senior management for intervention
- Reporting periodically to elected members

7. Internal Reporting

The Void Performance Dashboard will be reviewed weekly by Housing Management Leads.

Persistent contractor delays or repeated Lettable Standard breaches will be reviewed weekly, and consulted with Dorset Council Assets Team – who lead on works raised and contractor delegation.

A weekly review of average turnaround, spend, and property void time will be carried out to inform asset planning, contract performance, and service delivery strategy.



8. Policy Review and Update Schedule

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years, or sooner if triggered by any of the following:

- Significant changes to legislation, regulatory requirements, or government guidance
- Evidence of systemic delays or proven poor performance through KPI monitoring,
- Introduction of new accommodation types, service delivery models, or contractual arrangements
- A formal request from senior management, internal audit, or the Regulator of Social Housing

The review will be coordinated by the relevant Service Manager responsible for Temporary Accommodation and Housing Supply, in consultation with operational teams, contractors, and other stakeholders.

The latest version of this policy will be made available to staff, partners, and stakeholders via Dorset Council's intranet.

9. Document Control

Field	Details
Policy Owner	Service Manager – Temporary Accommodation and Housing Supply
Version	1.0
Status	Complete
Date Approved	01.06.2026
Next Review	April 2029 or earlier if required
Approved By	(Interim)



Appendix A – Void Categorisation Guide

1. Purpose

This guide sets out how Dorset Council classifies temporary accommodation voids to ensure:

- Consistent assessment of void works
- Clear performance targets and expectations
- Efficient prioritisation of resources

Void categorisation supports:

- Faster turnaround of low-complexity properties
- Effective planning of major repair works
- Accurate performance monitoring and reporting

2. Principles of Categorisation

Void categorisation is based on:

- Property condition at inspection
- Extent and complexity of repairs required
- Health and safety risks
- Estimated time to bring the property to lettable standard

Categorisation will be confirmed following the initial void inspection and may be reviewed if circumstances change.



3. Void Categories

Void Category	Description	Typical Findings	Works Required	Target Timing
Minor Void	Property requiring minimal work and quick turnaround Routine repairs: no structural issues	Generally good condition No significant damages No major compliance issues Moderate wear and tear	Cleaning and Waste Clearance Minor Repairs Small Replacements Safety Checks Joinery Repairs Minor Kitchen/Bathroom works Redecoration Fixture Replacement	Up to 30 days - unless escalated, and/or specialist services required (Plasterers, listed building works etc)
Major Void	Significant works required	Major damage Structural issues H&S risks	Full replacements Electrical/plumbing works Damp/structural works Cyclical upgrades Specialist clearance	Up to 45 days – allowance for longer periods if additional departments or untypical practice applies. Examples (not limited to) of insurance claims and planning permissions.
Exceptional Void	Property requiring extensive, complex or non-standard works involving multiple stakeholders and/or specialist interventions	Extensive damage or deterioration Complex structural failures Fire/flood/major incident damage Full property refurbishment or rebuild	Specialist fire, asbestos or environmental works Major structural repairs	Typically 60+ days – subject to complexity, statutory approvals, funding, and multi-agency coordination - Review at reasonable periodic timescales. Timescales may extend significantly depending on planning, legal or insurance requirements. Examples (Not limited to) of community impact reporting, closure orders, dilapidation.

4. Categorisation Process

Categorisation will be determined:

- At initial void inspection
- By the appointed scheduler or other relevant officer

Categorisation will be:

- To be recorded on huume/relevant housing management system for the relevant property details
- Linked to expected timescales and contractor instructions

Re-categorisation may occur where:

- Additional defects are identified
- Works become more complex than originally assessed upon review and feedback from attending contractors, or revisit from surveyors/housing officers

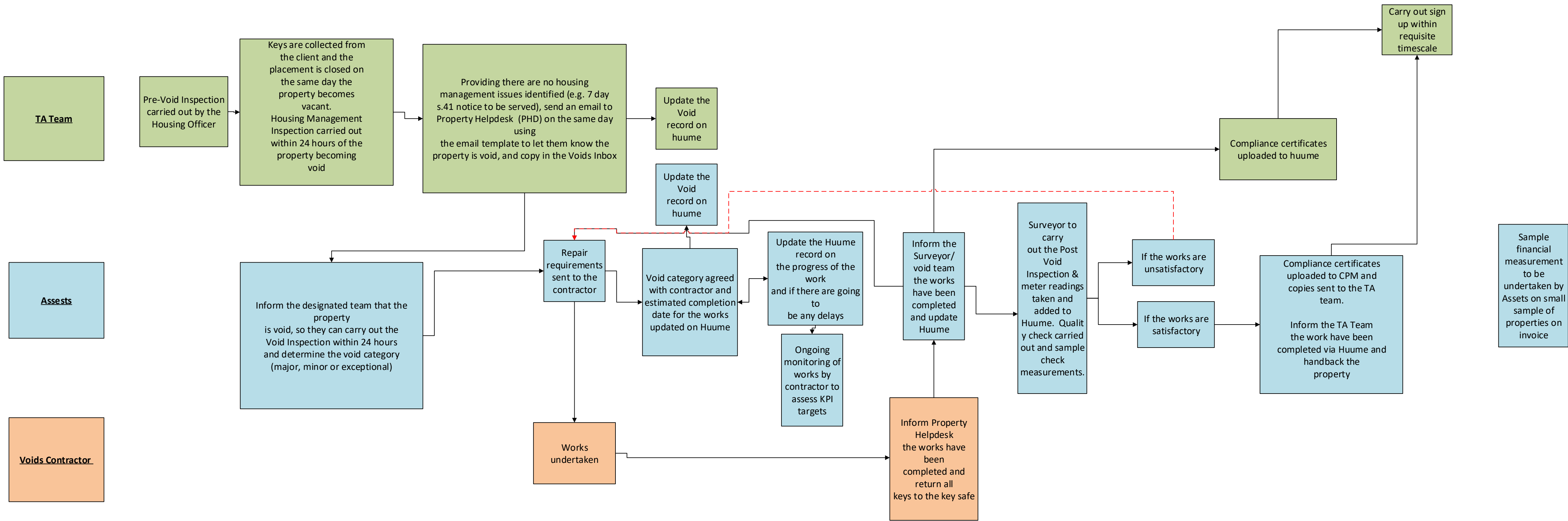
5. Performance Monitoring

Void categories will be used to monitor:

- Turnaround times
- Contractor performance
- Cost of works

Persistent delays or mis-categorisation will be reviewed through:

- Weekly performance monitoring
- Contract management processes via Dorset Council Assets Management Team



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Dorset Council

Lettable Standard

Document Control

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1.INTRODUCTION

Before residents move into their new temporary accommodation, Dorset Council will make sure the property is safe, clean and in a reasonable state of repair.

This document sets out the lettable standards that Dorset Council to ensure that:

We are consistent in the quality and standard of all properties managed through the relet process.

We provide safe properties at an acceptable standard for residents to start living in their new home.

We achieve value for money in the repairs and investments that we make.

We achieve an efficient relet time and minimise rent loss through the relet process.

Dorset Council will ensure there is a balance between ensuring the property is safe, clean and in a reasonable state of repair and letting the properties as quickly as possible to reduce income loss and to allow us to house people in need of housing as quickly as possible.

Dorset Council will endeavour to undertake all works before the client moves into the property, but where works are not of an urgent nature, we may give an undertaking to carry out any outstanding repairs after the resident has moved in.

2.LEGISLATION & REGULATORY REFERENCE

This Lettable Standard is underpinned by the following statutory and regulatory requirements:

- Housing Act 2004 (HHSRS)
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (repair obligations)
- Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations 2022
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- The Electrical Safety Standards in the PRS (England) Regulations 2020
- Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) Regulations 2015
- Decent Homes Standard (and proposed Decent Homes 2)

3. GENERAL

Any domestic gas works are to be undertaken by a separate gas contractor employed by Dorset Council (DC); however, DC may request the void repairs contractor to carry out this work.

The voids contractor is, required to manage specialist contractors providing services within the scope of void refurbishment works, such as gas services and asbestos works

The void contractor will install a key safe on the outside wall of each void unless there is a key-safe in existence

Each key-safe must have a unique, secure 4-digit code, ideally generated using a standard format such as the property ID or a rotating monthly code.

The Housing Officer must log and circulate the current key-safe code securely via the agreed internal system (e.g. Huume or designated housing management system). A full set of void keys must be left in the safe **at all times during works**, to allow access for authorised contractors and council officers.

Dorset Council reserves the right to use a separate grounds maintenance contractor for garden clearance, particularly where the scale or nature of the work exceeds standard void responsibilities (e.g. large overgrown areas, tree removal, or fly-tipping). These works may therefore fall outside the core void specification and be commissioned separately.

The purpose of the Lettable Standard is to ensure that a consistent standard of work is carried out by Dorset Council and its contractor to all empty properties before they are re-let.

All properties must meet the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) requirements and have a valid EPC. Properties with a rating below **Band E** must be improved to meet this minimum standard before re-letting, in line with the **Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) Regulations 2015**.

Where grant conditions apply (e.g. RSAP or LAHF funding), a **higher EPC target (Band C)** may be required. In such cases, improvement works (e.g. insulation, heating upgrades) must be completed before occupation or agreed as part of a funded works programme.

The Lettable Standard outlines the condition that a property should be let based on the principles of:

- Safety
- Security
- Cleanliness
- All services in working order

4.SHARED ACCOMMODATION / ROOM-ONLY

Where a void relates to a room within shared accommodation or hostel, all individual room standards apply as listed. Shared areas (kitchens, bathrooms, communal exits) must also meet hygiene, fire, and safety standards prior to reoccupation. Certificates should be displayed in communal areas where relevant.

5.GENERAL STANDARDS

Property must be clear of all personal possessions, rubbish and furniture left by the previous occupant.

Property at handover will be clean to a lettable standard.

The property will be secure.

Access to the property will be safe.

All doors and windows will operate as intended

Any watermarks from past leaks should have stain blocker applied and painted over.

Gas and electrical supplies and systems will be checked for safety and will be in good working order. (A copy of the electrical and gas certificate will be issued to the Tenant/client at during the sign up).

Internal glazing will be intact and will comply with safety standards.

Banisters, balustrades and stairs will be safe.

The property will be structurally sound, wind and watertight.

Roofs will be intact and in good repair, If a roof is close to the end of its life expectancy, replacement should be considered during the void period. This will prevent excessive repairs, damp and mould issues from occurring.

Any provided furniture must comply with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 and bear the appropriate fire safety labels.

The expectation is that any property offered as temporary accommodation meets the Decent Homes Standard.

6. GENERAL CLEAN/CLEARANCE/FLOORING

All furniture, rubbish, remaining goods, personal effects, loose electrical equipment, clothes, and loose floor coverings will be removed. The property will be cleared of all discarded drugs or sharps and needles. All waste material will be removed from the property and taken on the day of removal to a licensed disposal or storage site as appropriate.

All surfaces/walls/units/light fittings/sockets/switches should be free of dirt.

Where floor coverings are defective (e.g. ripped vinyl or threadbare carpet), they must be removed and replaced with a clean, durable, and cost-effective alternative, typically vinyl. Carpets will not normally be provided.

Window frames/glazing should be clean.

If the property shows signs of vermin or insect infestation, then fumigation or other appropriate treatment will take place.

All cleaning should be completed using appropriate and safe cleaning equipment and materials.

All floors and stairs should be swept and wet mopped where possible.

Bathroom and WC floors should be disinfected.

All scuffs (where possible) and paint splashes should be removed.

All doors (internal and external), doorframes, windows, window frames, windowsills, skirting boards, radiators and pipe works should be washed down and wiped cleaned

7. GENERAL REPAIRS

The property will be in good repair.

Skirting boards (where present) should be fitted securely, with any gaps filled in. Walls and ceilings will be secure and safe, and without visual signs of damp.

Fittings and fixtures etc will be removed and made good prior to decorating.

Plaster to walls and ceilings will be in reasonable condition at handover. Small areas of loose or blown plaster will be made good/patch repaired; Small cracks will be filled with flexible resin filler; large cracks/movement cracks will be scrim-taped and patch-repaired.

Any Polystyrene tiles/covings will be removed from ceilings and walls and made good.

Attic space, where present, will be clear of rubbish and debris and insulated.

Any signs of damp or mould must be investigated and treated in line with Awaab's Law and HHSRS Category 1 hazard guidance. No property may be re-let where Category 1 damp or mould is present.

8. DECORATION

The property will not always be redecorated before each let.

Walls and ceilings will be free from graffiti or dark colours following works to remove damp.

Decorations will be in fair condition, substantially clean and free from scuffs and stains, with no loose paper.

Existing wallpaper will be left in situ if in good condition and of appropriate design for letting.

Rooms where patch repairs to woodwork or walls/ceilings have occurred will be routinely redecorated.

Other rooms will be redecorated as necessary to bring the property to a lettable standard of decoration.

There will be no holes and cracks in the walls.

9. FURNISHING (where provided)

In properties that are provided as furnished (including supported housing, shared accommodation, or temporary accommodation where furniture is supplied), the following items must be present and in good condition:

- A bed with clean, intact mattress
- A wardrobe or similar clothes storage unit
- A table and chair(s), suitable for dining or desk use
- Curtain poles or blinds fitted to all windows

All furnishings must be clean, free from damage or staining, and suitable for continued use. Upholstered items must display intact fire safety labels. Any damaged, missing, or unsafe items must be removed and replaced prior to re-let.

Fitted furniture, where present at handover, will be in good condition with all doors, drawers etc working properly and all handles/knobs etc in place and secure -in furniture must be intact, secure, and functional.

Any loose, non-fixed or unauthorised furniture must be removed unless approved and risk-assessed.

10.FRONT DOOR

The Door should open and close freely.

Door numerals should be present.

Any signs of damage caused by forced entry should be repaired and decorated to match neighbouring properties.

Letterbox should be operational.

Mains operated doorbell or intercom should be operational where relevant.

A new lock will be installed either by way of interchangeable core/master key system, mortice lock or other designated system.

11.INTERNAL DOORS

All doors on the inside of the property will present and in good condition with secure hinges and will open and close freely, with standard handle (not lockable).

The bathroom and toilet doors will have suitable privacy locks.

All internal glazed doors shall be glazed to current safety standards.

All door furniture shall be present, securely fixed and operating properly.

Doorstops should be present throughout.

12.FLOORS AND STAIRS (where relevant)

Vinyl Flooring

Clean, washable, and slip-resistant vinyl (or similar non-carpet flooring) must be provided in the kitchen, bathroom, and WC. Flooring must be secure, level, and free from trip or slip hazards.

In other areas, where existing carpet or floor covering is damaged, unhygienic, or likely to discourage occupation, it must be removed and replaced with cost-effective, low-maintenance vinyl flooring, except on stairs where carpet may still be appropriate.

This approach supports hygiene, ease of cleaning, and reduces pest control risks. Any exceptions should be agreed with the Housing Team.

Floors and skirting boards

All floorboards will be in a safe condition.

Damaged or loose floorboards will be fixed or replaced as necessary. Damaged or missing sections of skirting/architrave will be replaced and painted to match the existing.

Where carpet is in existence it should be clean and in good condition without signs of excessive wear.

13.STAIRS

There should be at least one handrail per staircase. Handrails, steps, balustrades, newel posts and treads should be securely fitted.

14.WINDOWS

All glazing should be free of cracks/breakages and broken windows will be re-glazed. Security locks to windows on the ground floor. Glazing intact and secure. Windows will be easy to open and close and safety catches operational.

Window restrictors to be fitted to all casements above first floor level. Keys to be available at letting.

15.LOUNGE

Redundant fireplace (if applicable) should be covered/sealed.

16.KITCHEN

All units and utilities should be free of grease.

Cupboard doors should be aligned and hinges adjusted where required.

Cupboard draw handles should be fitted securely.

Any blown worktop/shelving/carcasses/unit doors/drawers/plinths caused by water penetration should be renewed with acceptable close match.

Worktop edges should have a cover bead fitted.

Sinks should be free of dents/rust/scale and sealed to worktop.

Taps should be of standard design, operational and free of scale/corrosion.

Taps to be secure and in good working order with no dripping or leaks.

Chain and plug should be fitted in sink.

Splashback tiling should be present behind sink and hob, tiles should be secure and not cracked/broken, with grout free from grease.

Where tiling needs to be replaced, standardised white tiles should be used, or the nearest match to those in situ.

Worktop/sink/flooring should be sealed, and sealant should be clean.

Cooker points: Gas: clean and capped off with bayonet removed, ready for cooker to be fitted by a Gas Safe engineer.

Electric: power points supplied and clean, ready for cooker to be put in.

Where a waste disposal unit is fitted it will be in good working order.

Where an extractor fan is fitted it will be in good working order. Where no openable windows are present, mechanical ventilation must be provided. Extractor fans must be tested and left in working order, and any covers or filters cleaned or replaced as required.

The area behind the cooker space and the sink/drainer shall be tiled, all tiling and grouting will be clean and intact and free from mould.

Where the layout permits space shall be provided for a washing machine with plumbing and drainage.

There should be a minimum of two double 13A sockets above the worktop level and appropriate electrical/gas connections for appliances below worktop level.

All joints between e.g. worksurfaces and walls/floors shall be sealed with a mastic sealant.

17.BATHROOM

Bathroom door shall be fitted with a privacy lock.

WC/WHB and bath/shower unit should be disinfected and free from corrosion/scale.

WC/WHB pan/cistern should be securely fixed to the floor/wall and be free of cracks/chips.

WC/WHB/Bath/Shower wastewater should drain freely.

WC flush handle/button to be securely fitted and operational.

WC seat should be renewed or deep cleaned as reasonably practicable.

Toilet roll holder should be provided by WC.

WHB/Bath should have chain/plug fitted.

WHB/Bath taps should have Hot/Cold clearly identifiable.

WHB/Shower/Bath should have appropriate and functionable splashbacks fitted.

Where tiling needs to be replaced the nearest match to those in situ will be selected.

Tiles and grout should be clean.

WC/WHB/Shower/Bath Unit/Flooring should be sealed, and sealant should be clean.

Extractor fan should be functional and clean.

Lighting should be bulkhead design and operational.

An extractor fan, switched by the bathroom light switch, but with a separate isolator switch, shall be fitted and in good working order.

Shaver light (if applicable) should be operational.

Pull cord should be renewed where necessary.

A mirror or mirror cabinet should be provided.

18.COMPLIANCE

18.1Electrical Test:

An electrical test and inspection will be carried out by a NICEIC registered electrician. All non-compliant fittings will be removed. All deficiencies identified by the electrical test and inspection will be rectified.

Any sockets and switches which are cracked or loose from the wall will be replaced or repaired; all rooms will have either recessed, surface mounted or wall light fittings and switches in good repair with working bulbs.

The electrical test and inspection certificate together with a record of recommended works carried out will be provided to the tenant (self-contained and copy displayed in communal areas for hostels and shared accommodation).

18.2 Gas Test:

A gas safety check will be carried out on any gas appliances and pipework and a service will be carried out on any gas boiler installed within the property by a Gas-safe registered engineer.

A Safety certificate (CP12) issued by a Gas Safe registered engineer will be provided to the tenant (self-contained and copy displayed in communal areas for hostels and shared accommodation).

18.3 Water services:

The plumbing and water system will be tested to ensure that it works, and visual checks will be made to ensure there are no leaks.

A main stop valve will be provided to the water main entering the property. The main stop valve shall be in good working order. Where the main stop valve is not readily accessible isolation valves will be fitted in kitchen and bathroom.

Where cold water tanks are fitted, they will be in sound condition, clear of debris and with secure lids.

Hot water cylinders shall be free of significant corrosion, properly lagged to current standards and in sound condition.

The Property will have a user-controlled central heating system with independently controllable radiators in each habitable room plus the bathroom and kitchen.

All radiators to be in good condition and free of any significant corrosion estimated. Operating instructions for the central heating system and its controller will be delivered at handover.

Where alteration works to kitchens or bathrooms occur as part of refurbishment works prior to handover, pipework will be inspected and any dead ends or dead legs will be removed to reduce the risk of colonisation by legionella bacteria.

Plumbing and water system checks will be carried out as part of void preparation.

This includes **flushing all outlets**, running taps and showers, and cleaning showerheads to minimise the risk of **Legionella bacteria**.

Checks will cover all tanks, pipework, cylinders, stop valves, baths, showers, basins, toilets, and sinks. All systems will be tested to ensure they are in working order and free of leaks or blockages.

Cold drinking water from the mains must be available to the kitchen sink. All taps and stopcocks should operate easily. Wherever possible hot taps will be installed on the left and cold on the right to support accessibility.

18.4 Asbestos:

The property will be checked for Asbestos.

Where Asbestos has been identified this will either have been removed or made safe. A copy of the report will be provided at sign up, left in the property or on request.

19 ADAPTATIONS AND ACCESSIBILITY

Where present, adaptations and accessibility features (such as grab rails, lever taps, level access showers, or stairlifts) must be safe, clean, and in full working order. All equipment must be securely fitted and appropriate for continued use.

Adaptations must not pose a safety risk or obstruction and should be checked for signs of damage or wear. Any loose, broken, or unsafe equipment must be removed or repaired prior to handover.

Where applicable, stairlifts, hoists, or other mechanical adaptations must be serviced and safe to use, with any required certificates available on file.

20 PAT TESTING / WHITE GOODS

Where white goods are provided (such as fridges, freezers, cookers, washing machines, or dishwashers), all appliances must be clean, safe, and in full working order.

- Appliances must be PAT tested and approved before re-let.
- Any items that are missing or not functioning correctly must be replaced.

All items must be fit for use at the point of handover and meet current safety standards.

21 ENERGY PERFORMANCE

An Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for the property will be provided at handover. The minimum rating must be **Band E**, in line with the **Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) Regulations 2015**, unless grant conditions (e.g. LAHF or RSAP) specify a higher standard (e.g. Band C). Where the Property is rated “D” the Landlord will evidence to the occupier at handover (for self-contained and displayed in communal parts for shared and hostel accommodations) that it has spent an amount at least equivalent to the cost cap under the 2018 Regulations on raising the energy performance of the Property.

Fire Doors and Escape Routes

Where required by fire risk assessment, **FD30-rated fire doors** must be installed on rooms opening onto shared escape routes — for example, bedrooms in hostels, kitchens in HMOs, and flats opening onto communal corridors.

These doors must include **intumescent strips, smoke seals, fire-rated hinges, and self-closing devices** (e.g. Perko-style closers).

In addition:

- All fire detection systems must be functional and tested prior to re-let
- **Emergency lighting** and **signage** (where required) must comply with the property's Fire Risk Assessment
- Smoke and CO alarms must be interconnected and positioned in line with current regulations

22 GARDENS (where applicable)/ EXTERIOR

Should be free of rubbish.

Any overgrown trees, plants, grass or foliage should be cut back.

Gate should be operational.

Paths/Paving should be free of trip hazards.

Footpaths, drives and concreted or gravelled areas within the boundary of the property shall be free from obstructions, weeds and trip hazards.

Sheds should be clear and in reasonable state of repair.

All rubbish left in gardens, garage and outbuildings should be removed.

Any outbuildings remaining at handover should be watertight and in structurally sound condition.

External walls of the Property will be free of graffiti.

Air bricks and vents will be free from obstruction.

Drains, gutters, downpipes and overflows will be made safe and secure, and free of leaks or blockages.

Boundaries should be safe, secure and in sound repair.

23.REVIEW

This Lettable Standard will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if required by law, regulation, or internal review. Contractors are expected to deliver works in accordance with this standard.

Any deviation must be approved in writing by the Service Manager for Temporary Accommodation and Supply or designated Asset Management Contract Lead.

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Void Property Management – Definitions, KPIs and Performance Measures

1. Current figures week ending 28th June 2026



Headlines For June 29th 2026 -

Number of Open VOIDS – 29 (18 Minor, 4 Major, 3 Exceptional, 2 Disposal, 2 Awaiting inspection)

Open Voids with Housing – 12 (9 Minor, 1 Major, 1 Disposal, 1 Awaiting inspection)

Open VOIDS with Assets - 17 (9 Minor, 3 Major, 3 Exceptional, 1 Disposal, 1 Awaiting inspection)

Open VOIDS over KPI – 10 (9 Minor over 30-day K2K target, 1 Major over 45-day K2K target)

2. Summary

2 No type, (1 came in 26/06, being inspected 30/06, 1 to Fumigate prior to inspection)

12 properties currently with GenOne

8 Properties allocated or ready to rent

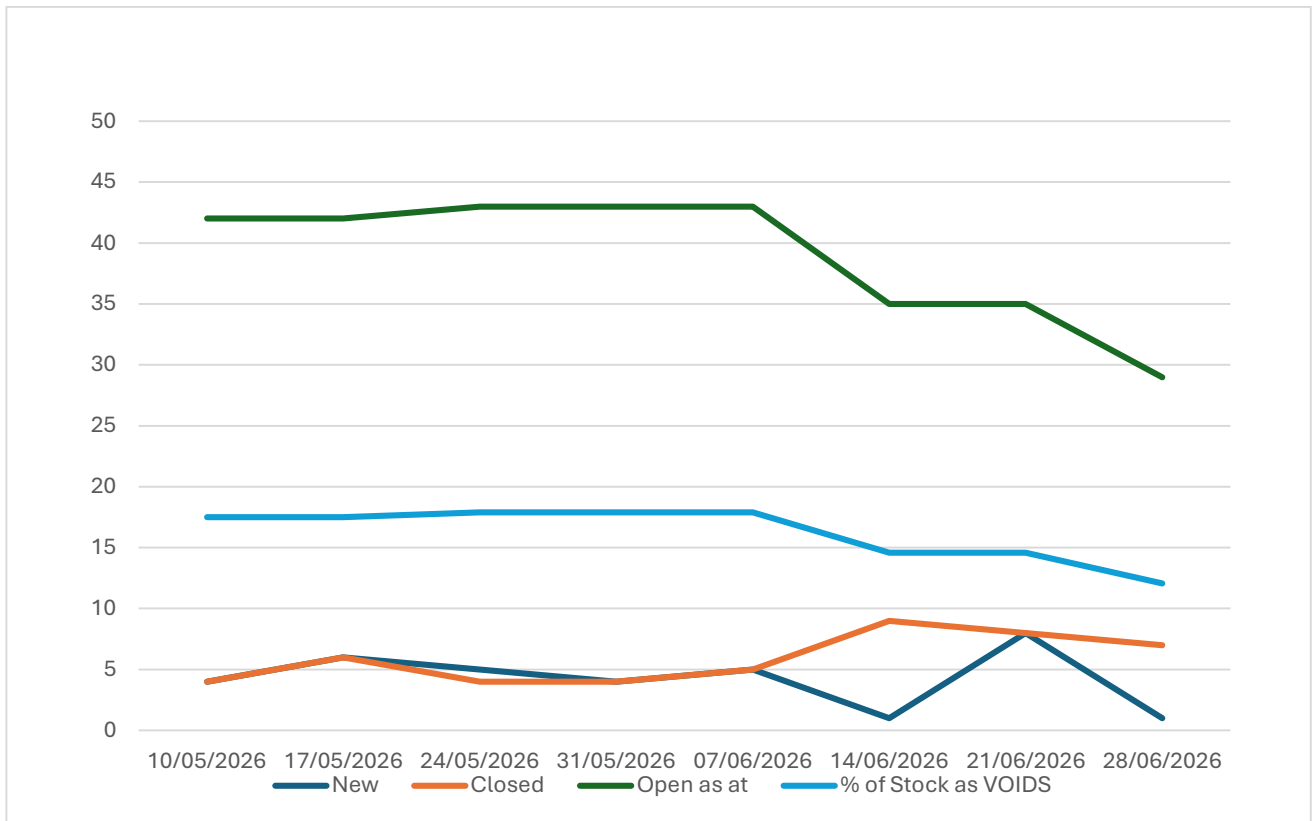
4 with A&P (2 awaiting freeholder works, 1 Roof Works)

2 Disposal (1 Housing, 1 A&P)

Expecting hand back of 4 properties this week.

There are regular meetings taking place with GenOne to discuss certain service areas where it is felt results are taking too long. This will be monitored on an ongoing basis.

3. Trends (Weekly)



Headlines (22/06/26-28/06/26):

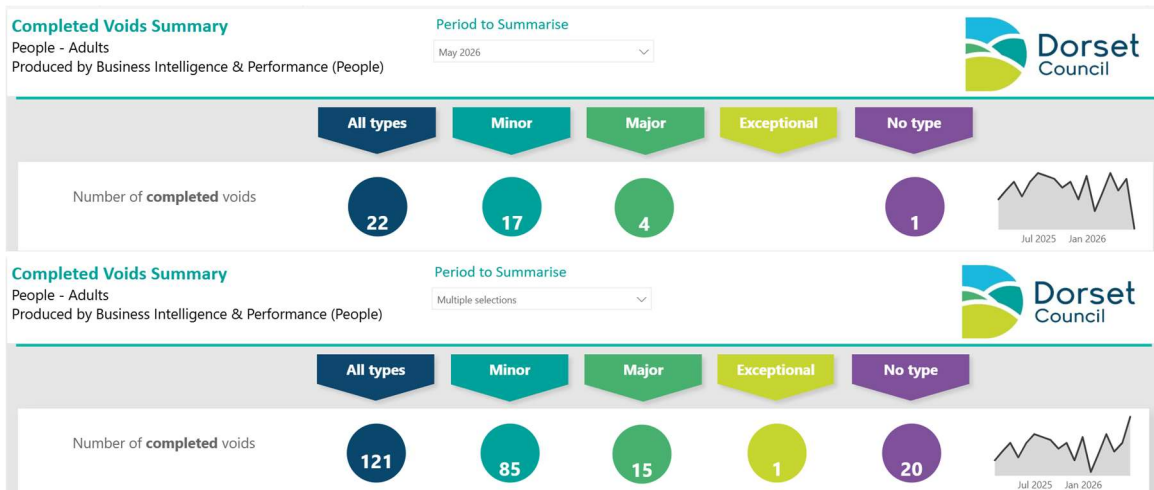
Completed VOIDS weekly – Total of 7 VOIDS completed over period

New VOIDS weekly – Total of 1 New VOIDS received over period

Percentage of total stock as VOID – Down to 12.1%

Total open VOIDS – Down to 29

4. Completed VOIDS – May 2026 & 2026 to Date



5. Introduction

This report provides a definition of void properties, explains the concept of key-to-key performance, and sets out the classifications and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) used by Dorset Council in the management of temporary accommodation voids.

6. Definition of a Void Property

A *void* is defined as a property which is not occupied and for which no legal interest is still in place. Rent cannot legitimately be charged. This may occur when a previous tenant has vacated the property, or where the property is awaiting allocation to a new tenant.

For the purposes of this report, the focus is on empty residential properties used for Temporary Accommodation. Due to the nature of temporary placements, these properties are frequently vacated and require varying levels of work between each occupation. The Council aims to minimise the time properties remain empty in order to meet demand for temporary accommodation. To support this, performance is measured against defined key-to-key (K2K) targets.

7. Key-to-Key (K2K) Performance

Key-to-key void KPIs measure the total period a property is unoccupied. This period runs from the point at which keys are returned by the outgoing tenant, to the point at which keys are issued to the incoming tenant.

These KPIs provide a comprehensive measure of performance and include: Time taken to identify required works, Completion of repairs and remedial works, Completion of statutory compliance requirements and Allocation and placement of a new tenant/client.

8. Void Classifications

Void properties are categorised based on the scope, complexity and duration of works required.

Minor Voids

Minor voids refer to short-term void periods that require moderate or no repairs. These typically involve straightforward tasks that can be completed quickly to prepare the property for the next tenant or client.

Major Voids

Major voids involve more significant repairs or refurbishment works required to meet void standards. These usually include the replacement or upgrading of major components and require longer completion times than minor voids.

Exceptional Voids

Exceptional voids involve complex, high-cost, or high-risk works that are likely to exceed standard void timescales. These voids often have no fixed completion date due to the nature of the issues involved.

Examples of exceptional voids include: Decants due to loss of contract or end of lease, Major structural repairs, Serious safeguarding concerns, Police investigations or closure orders and Extensive reinvestment works linked to planned maintenance programmes, such as: Re-plastering, Replacement of ceilings and floors, Major internal redesigns

9. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Dorset Council measures performance against the following targets:

Key-to-Key Targets

Repair Timeframes

Minor voids: 30 working days

Minor repairs: 20 working days

Major voids: 45 working days

Major repairs: 35 working days

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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Voids

1. Initial information

Housing Voids

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

Review of policy, project, strategy, project or service

3. Is this (please delete those not required):

External (residents, communities, partners)

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

The report is an overview of the voids process for People and Health Scrutiny overseeing the process and offering members the opportunity to consider its aims, operation and performance.

5. Please provide the background to this proposal?

Members wish to scrutinise the process following a 'blip' in performance at the turn of the year. The policy and process itself is kept under constant review.

Evidence gathering and engagement

6. *National benchmarking. External discussions. External advisers*

7. What did this tell you?

Included in the assessment below

8. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

Assets and Property, Housing, external advice.

9. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

No

Is an EQIA required?

Not every proposal will need an EqlA. The data and research should inform your decision whether to continue with this EqlA. If you decide that your proposal does not need an EqlA, please answer the following question:

Because this is largely a process driven report and because there are no significant policy changes, it is arguable whether an EqlA is required. However, given that the subject matter is housing and that this impacts on all sections of the community, consideration of equality impact remains worthwhile.

Assessing the impact on different groups of people

For each of the protected characteristics groups below, please explain whether your proposal could have a positive, negative, unclear or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is and if unclear or negative please explain what mitigating actions will be taken.

- use the evidence you have gathered to inform your decision making.
- consider impacts on residents, service users and employees separately.
- if your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option.
- see guidance for more information about the different [protected characteristics](#).

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	• the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	• protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against

Neutral Impact	no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Neutral	While the swift turnover of void properties has a positive impact on everyone requiring accommodation, there is no specific benefit for this group.
Disability	Neutral	While the swift turnover of void properties has a positive impact on everyone requiring accommodation, there is no specific benefit for this group. The carrying out of work to void properties does allow for installation of aids and adaptations. and works to mitigate disability where required which would be a positive benefit.
Care Experience	Neutral	While the swift turnover of void properties has a positive impact on everyone requiring accommodation, there is no specific benefit for this group. Some properties designated for care leavers do not go through this process

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Neutral	While the swift turnover of void properties has a positive impact on everyone requiring accommodation, there is no specific benefit for this group.
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral	While the swift turnover of void properties has a positive impact on everyone requiring accommodation, there is no specific benefit for this group.
Pregnancy and maternity	Neutral	While the swift turnover of void properties has a positive impact on everyone requiring accommodation, there is no specific benefit for this group.
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral	While the swift turnover of void properties has a positive impact on everyone requiring accommodation, there is no specific benefit for this group.
Religion and belief	Neutral	While the swift turnover of void properties has a positive impact on everyone requiring accommodation, there is no specific benefit for this group.
Sex (consider men and women)	Neutral	While the swift turnover of void properties has a positive impact on everyone requiring accommodation, there is no specific benefit for this group.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Sexual orientation	Neutral	While the swift turnover of void properties has a positive impact on everyone requiring accommodation, there is no specific benefit for this group.
People with caring responsibilities	Neutral	While the swift turnover of void properties has a positive impact on everyone requiring accommodation, there is no specific benefit for this group.
Rural isolation	Neutral	While the swift turnover of void properties has a positive impact on everyone requiring accommodation, there is no specific benefit for this group.
Socio-economic deprivation	Positive	The provision of housing is well known to have a positive impact on socio-economic deprivation, and the provision of temporary accommodation will have a similar effect. More availability of accommodation and less use of bed and breakfast will improve life chances and reduce deprivation, although at the scale of these numbers the effect will be small.
Single parents	Positive	Given the likely over representation of single parents in need of temporary accommodation, this policy,

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		process and its' efficient use will be of positive benefit
Armed forces communities	Neutral	While the swift turnover of void properties has a positive impact on everyone requiring accommodation, there is no specific benefit for this group.

Please provide a summary of the impacts: Assessed impacts are generally neutral with some positive impacts.

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
None	N/A	N?A	N/A

People & Health Scrutiny Committee

20 July 2026

2025/26 Quarter 4 Performance Report

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:

Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:

S Ford, Assistant Chief Executive, Chief Executive's Office

Report author and job title: Chris Heighway, Strategic Performance, Intelligence & Risk Lead

Email: chris.heighway@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: N/A

Report status: Public Choose an item.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report provides the People & Health Scrutiny Committee with an overview of key performance trajectories, indicators and exceptions for Quarter 4 of 2025/26 (January – March 2026). It builds on the Quarter 3 2025/26 performance report (presented to the Committee on 16 April 2026).
- 1.2 Across Adult's Social Care & Housing, Communities and Prevention and Children's Services, Quarter 4 performance remained broadly positive. Across the 81 indicators, 40 were rated Green, reflecting current performance against target, and 59 showed stable or improving trends, reflecting direction of travel over time. As these measures assess different aspects of performance, indicators may be counted in both categories and totals are not directly cumulative.
- 1.3 The report and appendices presents red-rated performance indicators, alongside amber indicators showing a worsening trend, with narrative context and improvement actions. The committee's key area of focus this quarter relates to temporary accommodation and void management, emerging from discussion of red performance indicators at committee on 16 April 2026.

- 1.4 Performance has been contextualised using a mix of quantitative data (trends, benchmarking, demand) and relevant resource context, providing a rounded and meaningful narrative to support scrutiny discussion.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee:
- notes the Quarter 4 (January–March 2026) performance overview, available via the Scrutiny dashboard, with an accompanying exceptions extract provided in Appendices 1 and 2.

3. Reason for the recommendations

- 3.1 To support the council's commitment to robust governance, transparency and continuous improvement by adhering to the reporting mechanisms set out within Dorset Council's Strategic Performance Reporting Framework.

Specifically, this approach:

- aligns with the council's constitution, particularly provisions relating to performance monitoring, decision-making, transparency, and democratic oversight
- promotes public transparency by ensuring performance-related information is accessible, clear, and reported consistently
- supports effective tracking and oversight of the scrutiny committee's discussions and focus, reinforcing accountability and enabling timely follow-up
- supports the council's wider performance management framework by ensuring the committee's work is integrated into quarterly reporting mechanisms

4. The report

- 4.1 The scrutiny dashboard now includes Quarter 4 (January–March 2026) performance data, alongside historic trends where available, enabling Members to interrogate key metrics and emerging issues. The dashboard is publicly accessible via the following [link](#).
- 4.2 Across People, Housing and Public Health, performance in Q4 remained broadly positive, with 40 of 81 indicators rated Green and 59 of 81 indicators showing either static or improving trends, demonstrating continued progress despite demand and financial pressures.
- 4.3 RAG status and trend measure different aspects of performance: indicators showing stable or improving trends include a mix of Green, Amber and Red

indicators, as trend reflects direction of travel over time rather than whether current performance is meeting target.

- 4.4 Adult's services are showing a broadly positive operational picture, with 1,401 older people (65+) supported to remain living independently at home through preventative approaches and technology, and permanent admissions to residential and nursing care for older people now back within the monthly target.
- 4.5 Children's services performance is stable, with average social worker caseloads at 12.85 against a target of 16.6. Care leavers' outcomes are notably strong and consistently above the 60% target, with 69% of 19–21 year-olds and 72.15% of 22–25 year-olds in education, employment or training, meeting the Council Plan target measure to be the best corporate parent that we can for our children.
- 4.6 Housing, Communities and Prevention indicators show generally good outcomes, with 67% of Year 6 children at a healthy weight compared with a 62% England average and adult physical activity levels close to the national average (62.4% vs 63.7%).
- 4.7 Housing operational performance remains strong despite a significantly challenging operating environment. The service has seen increased demand, driven in part by a rise in Section 21 notices ahead of the implementation of the Renters' Rights Act. In response, caseworkers are working proactively to mediate and negotiate with landlords in a difficult housing market. This is reflected in the continued high number of homelessness prevention cases achieving positive outcomes, demonstrating resilience and effectiveness across the quarter.
- 4.8 The areas of focus for today's committee arose from previous scrutiny of the Council's temporary accommodation performance indicators. During that review, Members noted that 51 single-person households were being accommodated in bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation, alongside one family that had remained in B&B accommodation for longer than the statutory six-week limit. In response, the Committee requested further information on the Council's approach to temporary accommodation provision and void property management. A separate report addressing these matters has been prepared by Julian Wain, Strategic Property Advisor, and is included later on the agenda for the Committee's consideration.
- 4.9 Quarterly performance reporting provides a comprehensive overview of progress against delivery of the Council Plan. Quarter 4 represents the first full year of reporting against Council Plan delivery, offering a year-end view of

performance across all priorities. The overall position is available within the Council Plan performance [dashboard](#).

- 4.10 Within the priority “Provide high quality and affordable housing”, two target measures are assessed as off track at year-end (red RAG). These are:
- Bring forward new housing supply of 100 new accessible homes and 90 larger family homes at affordable rents per year
 - Deliver 450 new affordable homes every year through the housing association development programme

- 4.11 These are set out at the top of Appendix 1, alongside detailed narrative outlining the corrective actions in place.

Quarter 4 Exceptions Extract 2025/26

- 4.12 The Quarter 4 (January–March 2026) performance overview is available via the Scrutiny Dashboard, with supporting exceptions extracts provided in **Appendices 1 and 2**.
- Appendix 1 provides red-rated indicators and council plan measures accompanied by narrative context and improvement actions.
 - Appendix 2 presents amber-rated indicators, with a worsening direction of travel, also supported by narrative and improvement actions.

Quarter 4 Risk Update

- 4.13 The performance dashboard incorporates strategic risks to acknowledge their critical role in influencing overall performance. Strategic risks are those that, if realised, could have the most significant impact on delivering the Council Plan or other key organisational priorities. Strategic risks may be considered by the Scrutiny Committee within the context of performance.
- 4.14 It is important to note that the responsibility for assessing the adequacy of risk controls and management rests with the Audit and Governance Committee, which holds the authority to make recommendations on the effectiveness of the council’s risk management arrangements.
- 4.15 Whilst this is the case, it is acknowledged that the committee has an overarching interest in Risk ID 200, rated Very High:

“As a result of health service reform, Dorset Council may incur additional unprovisioned responsibilities, leading to increased resourcing & budgetary pressures, unmet health needs and potential harm to individuals”.

- 4.16 This risk is scheduled for consideration at the Audit and Governance Committee on 29 June. A verbal update will be provided to this Committee, highlighting those aspects of the discussion most relevant to its scrutiny role, while maintaining a clear and appropriate distinction between the respective responsibilities of the two committees.

Quarter 1 Performance Report

- 4.17 The next performance report, presenting Quarter 1 data 2026/2027 (April-June 2026), will be brought to the Committee on 5 October 2026.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 Not applicable. The report presents information on past performance and does not recommend any change to council policy or new action.

6. Legal considerations

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report; however some indicators are based on statutory returns, which the council must make to the Government.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 There are no financial legal implications arising directly from this report.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 8.1 The report does not have direct climate change implications.

9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 The People and Health Committee scrutinise performance within its area of expertise and any improvement actions resulting from this process may improve the well-being and health outcomes of our communities.

10. Other implications

- 10.1 None.

11. Risk implications

- 11.1 Not applicable. The report presents information on past performance and does not seek a decision.

12. Equalities

- 12.1 There are no direct equality, diversity or inclusion implications resulting from this report. Equality impact assessments are carried out, when necessary,

across the council to ensure service delivery meets the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

13. Appendices

- 13.1 **Appendix 1:** Summary of performance exceptions (red RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 4 2025/26 (January–March 2026)
- 13.2 **Appendix 2:** Summary of performance exceptions (Amber and ‘worsening’ RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 4 2025/26 (January–March 2026)

14. Background papers

- [Dorset Council’s Strategic Performance Reporting Framework](#)
- [People and Health Scrutiny Committee, 16/04/2026 – 2025/26 Quarter 3 Performance](#)
- [People and Health Scrutiny Committee, 21/01/2026 – 2025/26 Quarter 2 Performance](#)
- [People and Health Scrutiny Committee, 17/11/2025 – 2025/26 Quarter 1 Performance](#)
- [People and Health Scrutiny Committee, 30/07/2025 – 2024/25 Quarter 4 Performance](#)

15. Report sign-off

- 15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Assurance and Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).

Appendices

Appendix 1. Summary of performance exceptions and Council Plan measures (red RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 4 2025/26 (January–March 2026)

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Provide high quality and affordable housing	Council Plan Target Measure: Bring forward new housing supply of 100 new accessible homes and 90 larger family homes at affordable rents per year	0	190	Red		The Council's ability to achieve this target will be dependent on the identification of council owned assets which can go to market for housing development. A joint report is currently being produced on the feasibility of a Strategic Development Framework which would give the council complete control over site development and mix of units. The framework requires a sufficient supply of sites. Alternative options will need to be agreed with the Assets & Property Services if supply is insufficient and appropriate recommendations agreed. The recommendation to Cabinet on the Large Scale Lease model and Homes Dorset is still progressing and is expected in 2026 but recognises there is additional expertise and resource required to achieve this.
Provide high quality and affordable housing	Council Plan Target Measure: Deliver 450 new affordable homes every year through the housing association development programme	423	450	Red		The annual total delivered is 423. This is made up of 179 homes at affordable rent, 28 homes at social rent, 169 shared ownership homes and 9 under the first homes scheme. Completions have been affected by weather delays when key sites in Bridport, Marnhull and Crossways were significantly impacted in January and February 2026. Several sites expected to complete in Q4 are now due to complete in Q1 26/27. Despite challenges the pipeline for 26/27 is relatively strong with 596 homes in the pipeline although this is open to change and impacts including weather. Homes England Social and

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
						Affordable Homes Programme is expected to increase registered provider delivery capacity in the medium to longer term and all main registered providers working in Dorset express continued commitment to Dorset. There has been an increase in all affordable schemes.
Education & Learning	Rate of permanent exclusions from schools (all schools)	0.84%	0.00%	Red	Worsening	In Quarter 4, permanent exclusions primarily related to a small number of schools and individual cases, with exclusions recorded across both primary and secondary age groups. The January figure (1.06%) reflects the highest monthly rate within the quarter. Action continues through the inclusion and early-intervention agenda, with a focus on supporting schools to manage behaviour earlier, reducing escalation to permanent exclusion, and maintaining oversight of exclusion patterns through regular multi-agency review. Ongoing work includes strengthening the use of inclusion pathways and ensuring consistent data oversight to support timely intervention where exclusion risk is identified.
Education & Learning	Number of independent special school places taken up by children and young people	562	355	Red	Improving	During Quarter 4, the number of children and young people with an EHCP attending independent or non-maintained specialist schools remained broadly stable. There were 565 children in January, 567 in February, and 562 in March, meaning the quarter ended with a similar number to where it began. Looking across the year, the Quarter 4 figure of 562 is slightly higher than earlier quarters but remains in line with recent patterns and is lower than the position at the same time last year (567). Despite continued growth in the overall number of children and young people with EHCPs, the proportion placed in independent and non-maintained settings has stayed fairly consistent, with around 11–12% of the EHCP cohort educated in these settings. This reflects ongoing work to ensure that independent

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
						placements are used appropriately and proportionately, based on children's individual needs, while maximising opportunities for children to be supported in local maintained and mainstream provision where this meets their needs. The council continues to focus on strengthening local provision, including developing inclusion hubs and increasing capacity in maintained and mainstream schools. This work reflects the direction of travel outlined in the white paper, 'Every child achieving and thriving' and is aimed at helping more children and young people have their needs met closer to home, while ensuring that specialist independent placements remain available for those who need them most.
Commissioning & Partnerships	Percentage of 16 and 17 year olds not in education, employment or training	4.20%	3.00%	Red	Improving	Quarter 4 remain broadly stable. While levels were steady in January and February, March saw fewer young people identified as NEET, reflecting successful re-engagement into education, training and work. Dorset continues to perform well compared with other areas. When considering both young people who are NEET and those whose circumstances are not yet known, Dorset's combined position remains better than national levels, the South West average and statistical neighbour authorities. Overall, Quarter 4 provides reassurance that Dorset knows its young people well and is supporting many back into positive destinations. Work continues with colleges, employers and partners to strengthen transitions and help more young people stay engaged at key points of change.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Commissioning & Partnerships	Rate of early help open cases at month end	171.86	200.00	Red	Improving	Across Quarter 4, the rate of children open to Targeted Early Help (TEH) showed a modest but positive upward trend, increasing from 166.20 in January to 170.96 in February and 171.86 by the end of the quarter. While performance remains below the local target of 200, the direction of travel has improved. This suggests improving access to Early Help support and early signs of rebalancing within the system. The annual picture indicates that Early Help demand has remained strong, as detailed we are starting to see a slight increase, the trajectory going back up. CIN numbers are slowly reducing which is positive and Targeted Early Help rising alongside which is the picture we want to see. The Family Support and Advice Line monitor the decisions made by them in relation to Early Support required by families, this number is good and continues to grow, indicating we are offering early support to many families and supporting them at the earliest opportunity.
Regulatory Services	Percentage of deaths registered within 5 calendar days	86%	95%	Red	Improving	Councils with large geographies often suffer with this indicator as registration offices are more difficult to access. Performance improved slightly during March, despite the higher seasonal death rate, due to an increased emphasis being placed on making customers aware of the target when booking appointments and dynamic diary management to prioritise death registration appointment capacity. Looking ahead, the national civil registration transformation project will see a move away from the current in-person requirements for registration with a move to telephone and on-line services. This will resolve this issue.

**Appendix 2. Summary of performance exceptions (Amber and ‘worsening’ RAG-rated measures) – People and Health
Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 4 2025/26 (January–March 2026)**

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Adult Social Care	Adults - Number of overdue 12 month reviews (Care Act)	1370		Amber	Worsening	Activity remains high with 4,872 reviews completed; however, demand continues to increase and is increasingly driven by deterioration in individuals living in the community. This has required resources to be realigned to manage immediate risk and unplanned activity. As a result, although a significant number of reviews are being completed, these are not always the most overdue, contributing to a worsening position within the wider overdue review cohort. This pressure is compounded by lower-than-expected volumes of provider-led reviews, which is limiting overall system capacity. Engagement with providers will be strengthened to address this and improve performance. Plans include maintaining a risk-led approach to allocating reviews, ensuring resources continue to prioritise individuals experiencing deterioration or safeguarding concerns. Strengthening oversight and engagement with providers to improve the timeliness and volume of provider-led reviews and relieve pressure on council-led capacity remains a priority.
Adult Social Care	Adults - Number of outstanding assessments (Care Act)	879		Amber	Worsening	The overall position on overdue assessments continues to deteriorate as sustained growth in demand and increasing case complexity within locality services outstrip available capacity. While system improvements are evident, with Adult Access Team resolving 67% of cases and PEI reducing the volume progressing to localities by 31% since October, these have not been sufficient to offset rising pressure. Despite strong productivity, with 3,263 assessments completed last

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
						year, increasing demand from known adults with escalating needs has required resources to be diverted to unplanned reviews and risk management. Localised staffing challenges have further constrained capacity, contributing to continued growth in the wider cohort of overdue assessments.
Adult Social Care	Adult Safeguarding Feedback - individuals that felt listened to during the safeguarding intervention (%)	98%	100%	Amber	Worsening	This figure has remained consistently high throughout the year which is positive but we continue to strive to be 100% in this area.
Housing	Number of rough sleepers on a single night this month	16		Amber	Worsening	Although there has been a significant increase in the single night figure, the monthly figure (number of people met sleeping rough over the course of a month) is only 1 higher, at 24. A higher single night figure compared to the monthly figure often reflects the timing of contacts rather than underlying trends.
Care & Protection	Rates of children in care per 10,000 (as at the end of the month)	70.74	68.00	Amber	Worsening	The number of children in care in Dorset remained largely stable, with 472 children in January and February, increasing slightly to 475 in March. The rate of children in care at month-end was 70.74 slightly above the local target of 68, reflecting continued pressure on the system. Compared with Q4 last year (65.89), the rate has increased, indicating higher demand over time. We continue to review each child's circumstances through regular children in care reviews and permanency planning meetings to consider whether it is safe and appropriate for them to return home. Where a return home may be possible, we identify the support needed to make this sustainable, ensuring that children are cared for outside their family only when necessary and for no longer than needed. We are also using

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
						valuing care to identify further opportunities for children to exit care under special guardianship orders.
Care & Protection	Percentage of children in care in foster placement	70.53%	71.00%	Amber	Worsening	Across Quarter 4, the percentage of children in care living in foster homes has remained broadly stable, sitting at 70.53% by the end of the quarter. While the Q4 position is just below the local target of 71%, it remains comfortably above both the national average (55.71%) and Good and Outstanding statistical neighbours (67%), providing reassurance about Dorset's relative performance.
Care & Protection	Rate of children with a child protection plan per 10,000 (open at the end of the month)	43.78	41.40	Amber	Worsening	We have seen a gradual increase in the rate of children subject to Child Protection Plans this quarter, rising from 40.21 in January to 43.04 in February and 43.78 by the end of the quarter. While this places us above our local target, the rate remains within the agreed tolerance and reflects appropriate safeguarding responses rather than a concern about practice. We continue to maintain strong oversight of all children subject to Child Protection Plans. Each case is monitored through the Quality Assurance service, with themes and trends regularly reported to and discussed at the multi-agency child protection operational board. Overall, while CPP rates have increased during Quarter 4, this reflects appropriate and proportionate safeguarding activity.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Care & Protection	Percentage of children with a new child protection plan who have been on a child protection plan within the last two years (rolling 12 months)	11.86%	10.00%	Amber	Worsening	The percentage of children becoming subject to a repeat Child Protection Plan within two years has remained stable, at 11.86. While this remains slightly above the local target of 10%, it represents an improvement compared with earlier in the year and is lower than at the same point last year (13.43%), which is reassuring. Looking across the year, repeat CPP rates have shown fluctuation rather than a clear upward trend, with levels peaking in Q2 (16.22%) before reducing in Q3 (11.93%) and stabilising in Q4. This pattern suggests that actions taken earlier in the year are beginning to have an impact, and that repeat planning is not increasing unchecked. All repeat Child Protection Plans continue to be actively reviewed and monitored by the Quality Assurance service, with cases escalated to Service Managers where additional scrutiny or challenge is required. A follow-up assurance audit is planned within the next 6 months to test whether learning has been consistently implemented.
Care & Protection	Percentage of children in care for 12 months or more with Annual Health Assessment completed on time	83.74%	90.00%	Amber	Worsening	Timeliness of health assessments declined gradually month-on-month, from 87.54% in January to 83.74% in March. Most delays were linked to out-of-area placements, appointment availability, or changes in placement. We continue to work closely with health partners, actively follow up delayed appointments, prioritise under-5s, and ensure that missed or rescheduled assessments are rebooked promptly with management oversight.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Care & Protection	Percentage of Section 47 investigations completed within 10 days	83.95%	90.00%	Amber	Worsening	Across the quarter, completion of Section 47 enquiries remained consistently high, reflecting continued timely child protection action. February demonstrated particularly strong performance at 97% completed within 10 days. End of Q4 performance was 83.95%, which although lower than 90% target represents the strongest performance achieved this year and continues a consistent upward trajectory across all quarters, improving from Q1 (82.47) through to Q4. This sustained quarter-on-quarter improvement reflects effective stabilisation and gradual strengthening of performance, with Q4 showing the most notable uplift.
Commissioning & Partnerships	Percentage of 3 and 4 yr olds benefitting from funding EY education in Met/Good/Outstanding setting	95.90%	100.00%	Amber	Worsening	The Early Years Lead holds a monthly meeting to discuss settings performance including those we are required to statutorily support. There is a coaching circle held monthly to explore the elements and complexities of each case of 'less than good' settings or those where quality is a concern. Ofsted outcomes are monitored and settings are RAG rated. Less than good settings receive tailored in-person support. 16% are waiting for an inspection.
Education & Learning	Number of special educational needs (SEND) tribunals against the authority	10	5	Amber	Worsening	SEND tribunal appeals against the local authority varied month to month. There were 14 appeals in January, reducing to 9 in February, before increasing to 10 appeals in March. A proportion of SEND tribunal appeals are resolved without progressing to a final hearing, either through further consideration by the local authority or where appeals are withdrawn by families.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
						Learning from tribunal cases continues to inform practice, with ongoing work to strengthen decision-making, improve communication with families and resolve concerns at an earlier stage. Supporting early resolution and reducing escalation to formal tribunal routes remain key priorities moving forward.
Education & Learning	Average (%) school attendance (attendance feed)	92.30%	95.00%	Amber	Worsening	Average school attendance remained stable, with rates of 92.6% in January, 92.8% in February, and 92.3% in March. Attendance levels were broadly consistent across the quarter and remained above the red threshold, though below the target of 95%. Looking across the year, the Quarter 4 position of 92.3% is broadly in line with Q3 (92.9%) and above Q1 (92.5%), indicating that attendance has been maintained over time without deterioration. Attendance in Quarter 4 is also consistent with Quarter 4 last year (92.8%), demonstrating stability despite wider pressures affecting attendance nationally. Work continues with schools to support consistent attendance and to build on this stable position through early engagement and targeted support where attendance concerns are identified.

People and Health Scrutiny Committee

20 July 2026

Children Services - Young Carers Services and Support

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:

Cllr C Sutton, Children, Families & Education

Local Councillor(s):

All

Senior Leadership Team:

P Dempsey - Executive Director, Children's Services

Report author and job title:

Louise Ryan, Head of Service, Birth to Settled Adulthood

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Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public [Choose an item.](#)

1. Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Committee on the young carers support services that are available following the implementation of the All-Age Carers Support Service provided by Help & Care in November 2025.
- 1.2 The All-Age Carers Support Service provided by Help & Care/MYTIME Young Carers contract began on 22nd November 2025 and supports carers aged 5 years and over. Help & Care is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance, identification, registration, training and enhancement of carer wellbeing on behalf of Dorset Council. MYTIME Young Carers are a specialist young carers charity based in Dorset and they actively support young carers whatever the level of need, providing activities and, education and employability support between the ages of 5 and 25. The service seeks to assist the Council in completing duties of carer registration and providing advice, information and support. It is providing preventative support to reduce the need for carers needing a statutory assessment where appropriate.

1.3 Help & Care and MYTIME Young Carers work in a coordinated way with the young carers team and adult carers service for those young carers who need a statutory assessment from Dorset Council. There were 511 young carers registered with the service as of 30/4/2026 and it is expected that the number of young carers registered with the service will increase over 2026/27. There are 78 young carers being supported by the young carers team in Dorset Council as of 10/06/2026.

1.4 The identification and support for young carers is monitored by OFTSED. The transition arrangements for young carers to be supported by Adult Social Care are monitored by CQC.

2. **Recommendation(s)**

2.1 This report on young carers is provided for the awareness and oversight of committee members and does not include any formal recommendations.

3. **The report**

3.1 In the UK, a young carer is defined in law (primarily under the Children and Families Act 2014 and related guidance) as: 'a person under the age of 18 that provides, or intends to provide, care for another person'. The care provided is usually for a family member such as a parent or sibling. The cared for person may have a disability, a chronic or physical illness, a mental health condition, a neurodivergent condition or a substance misuse issue. Meeting the person's care needs may involve practical assistance with tasks such as cooking, cleaning and shopping; personal care, emotional support, managing medication or accessing health appointments. A child is regarded as a young carer if the caring responsibilities are significant and regular, or impact on their wellbeing, education or development.

3.2 On 17/11/2025 a report was provided to the People and Health Overview Committee to provide information about the new 'All-Age Carers Support Service' commissioned by Dorset Council. The contract was awarded to Help & Care who work in association with MYTIME Young Carers who take a lead in specific support for young carers and links with schools. These support services work closely with the young carers team within the Birth to Settled Adulthood Service (B2SA) within Childrens Services and adult carers team within Adult Social Care within Dorset Council.

3.3 The service supports young carers aged 5 -25. Key service delivery requirements:

- Identify carers, including seldom heard and young carers.
- Registration of carers on behalf of Dorset Council.
- Information, advice and guidance which empowers carers.

- Training to help carers to understand what support is available and care safely.
- A focus on wellbeing which includes supporting carers to have a life outside their caring role. Young carers can access activities for social and emotional wellbeing through MYTIME and the young carers service following a young carers assessment.
- Help & Care shall support carers with information and advice for periods of transition in their life including but not limited to when a young carer or parent carer is likely to have needs for support when they, or the person they care for transitions to the adult care system.

3.4 The service delivery for young carers also includes these specification requirements for young carers:

- involve carers in service development and have regular opportunities to have their voices heard.
- provide signposting and referrals to relevant services on their behalf.
- work directly with individuals to build relationships, providing practical support with applications when required.
- support young carers who are not sure about their next steps to adulthood and independence, or who are in transition stages of their life to support them to plan.
- signpost/make referrals for young carers who struggle with their mental health to have someone appropriate to talk to.
- identify opportunities, and provide local activities to meet peers, learn life skills, take time out from their caring role online and in person, including transport where required.
- provide carer awareness sessions to professionals and organisations.
- support schools to identify Young Carers and raise awareness amongst peers.
- inform carers of their rights.
- share information and work collaboratively with existing services for young people aged 16 – 18 who are NEET (not in education, employment or training).

- have a clear method to understand when a young carer has a significant caring role to advise and support them to access a carer assessment from Dorset Council.
 - have a whole family approach with support where financial hardship, or other needs within household are identified.
 - encourage the adult receiving support to access the right support to alleviate caring responsibilities on the child.
 - advocate for the young person to ensure their wishes are understood by other professionals. (young carers aged 16+ can access a commissioned advocacy service).
 - recognise that young adult carers may wish to live independently and support them to do so, whilst recognising their changed caring role.
- 3.5 It is recognised that awareness of young carers needs to be increased in Schools and with GP practices. MYTIME deliver a whole school education programme raising awareness across teaching staff and pupils helping young carers to identify and access support. A meeting has been held with Dorset Council's communications team about an awareness campaign and resources that can be developed for professionals and for families help identify young carer and explain the support services available. The largest number of referrals to the young carers team within B2SA for young carers assessments are made by other professionals within Childrens Services.
- 3.6 Since the All-Age Carers Support Service began with Help & Care on 22/11/2025, 30 new young carers have been registered with Help & Care since the new service up until 31/03/2026. There were a total of 482 young carers registered with the service until 31/03/2026. As of 30/04/2026 this total had increased to 511. This is reported to Dorset Council on a monthly basis. It is expected that young carers will continue to be identified and the number registered with the All-Age Carers Support Service will increase. The registration of a young carer is voluntary and generally needs the consent of parents unless the young carer is over 16. There are some young carers supported by the young carers team in the B2SA that are not registered with Help & Care due to the lack of parental consent.
- 3.7 Referrals for young carers assessment are received through the Family Support and Advice Line. The purpose of the assessment is to understand the nature of the young carer's caring role and to ensure that it is appropriate given the age of the young carer. The team works closely with adult social care teams to ensure the adult being cared for has had advice and information and a social care needs assessment under Care Act 2014. This

will help to increase the support available to adults and reduce the reliance on young carers. The young carers team will also consider any safeguarding concerns and ensure that the young carer is being cared for appropriately. Young carers can also access support for social and emotional wellbeing, one to one support, and small group work following a young carers assessment from the young carers team.

- 3.8 As of 10/06/2026 there were 78 young carers receiving support from the young carers team at Dorset Council. This has reduced from 103 in September 2025. Some young carers have been closed due to no contact, no longer needing the service or transferring to the adult carers team. The numbers have reduced but the contacts per young carer have increased. The young carers team see young carers at least once every 3 months. The visits focus on 1:1 support for the young carer for their emotional, social and mental health. The support also focuses on supporting them to access the range of support and social activities that are on offer. Once young carers are able to access these independently, if appropriate they can be closed to the young carers team at Dorset Council. Young carers are still able to access the support from Help & Care/MYTIME Young Carers and the range of support that is offered if they are closed to young carers team.
- 3.9 The young carers team also have use of the beach hut in Swanage in partnership with Swanage Town Council and the Commissioner to provide social opportunities for young carers. National Trust have also given an annual pass to be used for young carers. The young carers team support young carers to attend the annual Young Carers Festival. The Young carers Festival is an annual event arranged by YMCA in partnership with the Children's Society which takes place in Botley, Southampton. It is a space for young carers to connect and have their voices heard, influence policymakers and drive change for young carers. 10 young carers were supported to attend this year. The team can facilitate information at higher education open day events.
- 3.10 Independent advocacy is available for young carers aged 16 and over and a Dorset Council Carer Friendly ID Card Scheme offering discounts and special offers are offered to young carers aged 10 and over through contracts commissioned by Adult Social Care.
- 3.11 Out of 78 young carers currently open to the young carers Team, 7 young carers have an EHCP and 6 are recorded as having their own disability. The age range of children referred to the team for assessment is between 6 and 17. An assessment was undertaken for a child who was 6 however it was found that the child did not have a significant and regular caring role and so did not need ongoing support. The largest group of young carers young carers team are aged 12, with 13 young carers in this age category. 4 young carers

that have additional support through a child in need plan which is reviewed regularly, with a further young carer having a child in need plan developed. The young carers team is managed by a Social Work Team Manager who will ensure that any safeguarding concerns are addressed for young carers. The team will also ensure that children are safe and their needs are met, by their parents within their family network. Since the young carers team work with all of the Children's Services locality teams to ensure that parents undertake their parental responsibility for these children and they are not undertaking inappropriate caring tasks. A whole family approach is used to consider the needs and offer support to the whole family. This has been strengthened further by the joint working between young carers team, disabled children social workers and the adult social care teams who can provide support to reduce the impact of the caring role on young carers.

- 3.12 There is improved joint working between Help & Care, MYTIME, the young carers team and adult carers service. There are regular meetings about identification routes, referral pathways and the resources needed for external professionals and families. Internally there are regular meetings between young carers team and the adult carers service to ensure that young carers who are turning 18 are well supported if they continue to have a caring role as an adult. A carers assessment under the Care Act 2014 is offered and warm handovers to introduce the new team members who will be supporting them. In the next phase the plan is to align adult and young carer assessments. Regular meetings are greatly improving the joint working, reducing the silos between services and improving shared knowledge.
- 3.13 The Bridgit tool is an online AI tool that is used for adult carers across Dorset I area. The young carers component is not in use currently. Children's and Adult Services and commissioning would need to work together to understand the benefits of this for young carers and the AI tool could complement the young carers service. Young carers would need to be involved in the shaping of the offer and learning from other local authorities who have used this for young carers would also assist in this process. Children and adult services can take this forward over the coming year. The contract for the Bridgit tool is due to come to an end on 31/3/2027 and there will need to be a new procurement process.
- 3.14 Further work to strengthen the service over the coming year would be to work on the Bridgit Tool with adult social care and commissioners to understand how it can benefit young carers. As well as the work with Dorset Council's communications team to deliver an awareness campaign and resources that can be developed for professionals and for families help identify young carer and explain the support services available.

4. Alternative options considered

4.1 None

5. Legal considerations

5.1 None

6. Financial implications

6.1 The all age carers contract is delivered by Help and Care, who sub contract My Time to deliver services to young carers. My Time have accessed additional funding through Local Alliance Groups and the Youth Fund to deliver additional support to young carers.

7. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

7.1 None

8. Well-being and health implications

8.1 The service is provided to young carers to improve the health and wellbeing of young carers.

9. Other implications

9.1 None

10. Risk implications

10.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk:

Residual Risk:

11. Equalities

11.1 The service provided by Dorset Council seeks to reduce the inequalities faced by young carers and to ensure that they have access to the support to reduce any negative impact on their wellbeing, education or development.

12. Appendices

12.1 None

13. Background papers

13.1 None

14. Report sign-off

- 14.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

People and Health Scrutiny Committee 20 July 2026

Cost of Living Impact Report 2025-26 For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:

Cllr M Bell – Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention & Communities

Senior Leadership Team:

S Ford - Assistant Chief Executive

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Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public [Choose an item.](#)

1. Executive summary

1.1. This paper provides an update on the impact on the projects funded in April 2025 - March 2026. The projects were agreed by Cllr Ryan Hope, lead Cabinet Member and the Section 151 Officer. A mid-year report was approved by members of the People and Health Scrutiny committee in November 2025. This report outlines the impacts and outcomes that have been achieved through targeted use of the cost-of-living fund.

1.2. These outcomes include:

- **155** households have been financially supported to prevent homelessness
- Tenancy sustainment Officer targeted support kept **57** residents with complex needs in accommodation. **31%** of these reported a reduction in anxiety /depression as a result
- Targeted incentives and training have strengthened landlord engagement, resulting in **131** privately rented lets secured, helping prevent homelessness and reduce reliance on temporary accommodation.
- **99** Households received **135** essential appliances, **49** of the recipients declared as having a disability
- **71%** of Citizens Advice debt and energy support project declared as having a disability/long term health condition
- DHP uplift meant a total of **783** households were supported either with 1 one-off or longer-term support preventing homelessness.
- Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) supported an additional **10** energy improvement grants including broken boilers.

- **28** grants were given to Community Transport organisations
- **11** sustainable and affordable food projects were supported helping to move away from emergency food provision.
- **1038** older people received face to face support to apply for entitled welfare benefits
- **1000** additional Holiday and Activity Food places were funded contributing to improved food security and supporting children's health and wellbeing during the school holidays

1.3. Overall, the Cost-of-Living Programme continues to demonstrate strong value for money and clear preventative impact, reducing pressure on higher cost statutory services while improving outcomes for residents. Crucially, it provides a robust operational and partnership foundation for the delivery of the council's Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) going forward, supporting a strategic shift from short term crisis response towards longer term household resilience.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 That members review and comment on the progress and impact of the Cost-of-Living Programme during 2025/26, including the use of preventative and reactive funding and its role in supporting delivery of the Crisis and Resilience Fund.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 The Place and Resources Overview Committee requested that regular updates on cost-of-living funded projects are reported to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee to support oversight of delivery, impact and emerging risks.

4 Background

4.1 The Dorset Together: Cost of Living Programme was established in 2022 in response to rising living costs and their impact on Dorset residents. Delivered in partnership with statutory organisations and the voluntary and community sector (VCS), the programme is informed by data insight and intelligence from grassroots partners. It has been designed to operate flexibly, enabling targeted support to respond to emerging need.

4.2 Following three years of delivery, the Cost-of-Living Programme has become an established part of Dorset Council's support offer. What began as time limited investment has now transitioned into the council's base budget, reflecting a sustained commitment to supporting vulnerable residents and recognising that cost of living pressures are increasingly linked to longer-term structural challenges rather than short-term shocks.

4.3 In 2025/26, the programme continued to operate alongside national funding, including the Household Support Fund (HSF), with activity focused on filling identified gaps in local and national provision. Projects and spend have been agreed through established governance arrangements, with oversight from Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

4.4 A full list of authorised projects and expenditure is provided in **Appendix 1**. Infographic in **Appendix 3**. A full background of the programme to date can be found in the **background papers**.

4.5 The cost-of-living challenge continues to have a significant impact on Dorset's most vulnerable residents. A proactive, evidence-led and preventative approach has enabled the council to support households to stabilise their circumstances, reduce escalation into crisis and build longer term resilience.

5. Importance of the Programme

5.1 The Cost-of-Living Programme plays a critical role in alleviating financial pressure on vulnerable households. Support has included direct assistance alongside advice and early intervention, helping residents to meet essential needs, reduce the risk of debt, eviction and food insecurity, and mitigate the wider health and wellbeing impacts associated with financial hardship.

5.2 This partnership-based model not only enhances short-term impact but also strengthens community resilience. Continued investment remains important for supporting residents through ongoing economic pressures and addressing longer-term structural vulnerability.

5.3 With the introduction of the Crisis and Resilience Fund from April 2026, the cost-of-living fund will continue to work alongside the national government support to identify local gaps in support.

6. Key Outcomes of the Cost-of-Living Programme

6.1 A comprehensive evaluation of activity, outputs and outcomes across all funded projects is provided in **Appendix 2**, including quantitative performance data and qualitative learning.

6.2 Overall, the Cost-of-Living Programme successfully delivered all agreed projects within the planned timeframe during 2025/26. Ongoing alignment with national funding streams, including the Household Support Fund, enabled flexibility in delivery, avoided duplication and maximised value for money. The programme continued to complement national provision by addressing locally identified gaps and responding to emerging need, ensuring support was targeted where it could have the greatest preventative impact.

7. Continuation and Transition to the Crisis and Resilience Fund

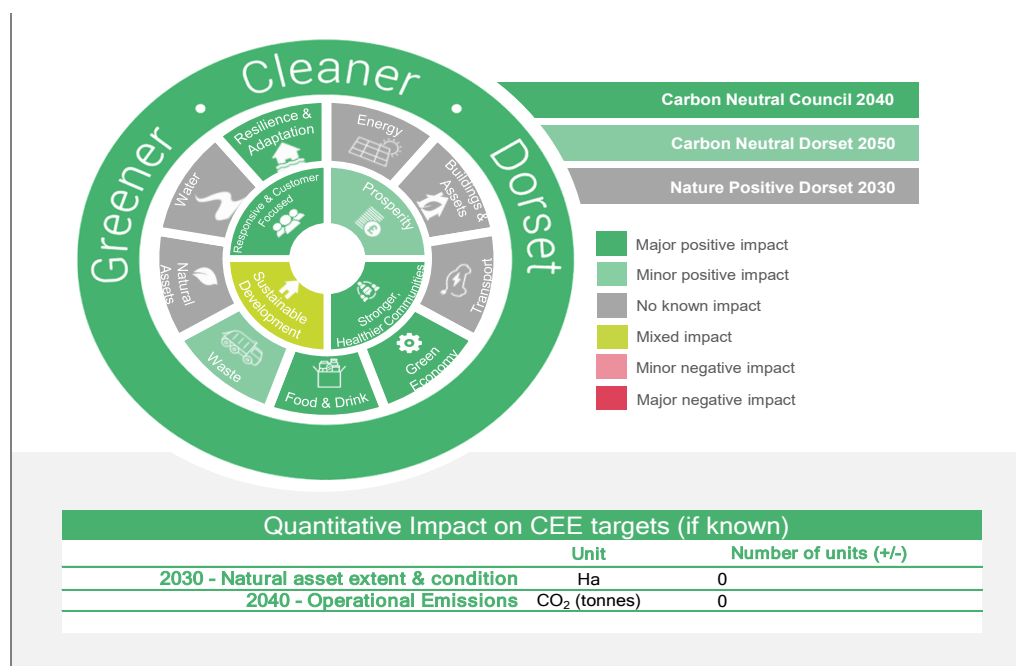
- 7.1 As agreed at Cabinet, ongoing funding of £500,000 per year has been built into the council's base budget to support cost of living related activity. This provides financial stability and reflects a longer-term commitment to prevention and early intervention.
- 7.2 The Cost-of-Living Programme provides the operational and partnership foundation for the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF). Strong delivery infrastructure, established VCS partnerships and effective referral pathways place Dorset Council in a strong position to deliver the CRF, including immediate "day-one" crisis support and the phased development of longer-term resilience services.

8. Financial implications

The Household Support Fund has now been replaced by the **Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF)**, providing Dorset Council with a three-year funding settlement of **£4.1** million per annum. While this allocation is slightly lower than previous Household Support Fund levels, the certainty of a multi-year settlement provides a significant opportunity to plan more effectively over the longer term and to reshape support in a more strategic way.

Combined with the council's ongoing **£500,000 annual base-budget investment**, the CRF enables a deliberate shift from short-term crisis response towards resilience-focused provision, supporting households to stabilise their circumstances, reduce future dependency and build longer-term financial security.

9. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications



ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	major positive impact
Food & Drink	major positive impact
Waste	minor positive impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major positive impact
Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Prosperity	minor positive impact
Stronger healthier communities	strongly supports it
Sustainable Development & Housing	neutral
Responsive & Customer Focused	strongly supports it

10. Well-being and health implications

This programme of activities has been designed to positively support the well-being and health of Dorset Council's residents with a range of targeted, preventative activities for those hardest hit by the high cost of living.

11. Risk implications

HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Medium

12. Equalities

Equalities Impact Assessment included in background papers

13. Appendices

- Appendix 1 – List of agreed projects and total spend for 2025-26
- Appendix 2 – Full outcomes impact report for projects 2025-26
- Appendix 3 – Infographic of project outcomes 2025-26
- Appendix 4 – Citizen's Advice (project 3) full impact report
- Appendix 5 – Community Transport grant fund (project 6) project breakdown
- Appendix 6 – Cost of Living and CRF 2026-27 project breakdown

14. Background papers

- [Cost of Living Challenge Cabinet paper 23rd February 2023](#)
- [Cost of Living Challenge People and Health Scrutiny Paper 7th March 2024](#)
- [Cost of Living Challenge Cabinet paper 11th June 2024](#)
- [Cost of Living Place and Resources Overview Committee 11th July 2024](#)
- [Cost of Living People and Health Scrutiny Committee 14th November 2024](#)
- [Cost of Living People and Health Scrutiny Committee 19 June 2025](#)
- [Cost of Living update – People and Health Scrutiny Committee 17th November 2025](#)
- [Crisis and Resilience Fund – Cabinet – 3rd March 2026](#)

15. Report sign-off

This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director, Assurance and Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Appendix 1 – List of funded projects for financial year 2025/26

Project no.	Project	Original budget		Total Spend	Remarks / Differences in spend
		CoL	HSF		
1	Homelessness Prevention 1.Arrears/Rent in advance & deposit payments. This will support the team to negotiate with landlords to stop evictions from taking place or help to find new suitable accommodation. 2. Tenancy Sustainment. To maintain existing capacity of one of the tenancy sustainment officers to keep proactive negotiations with landlords 3. Media and information awareness – To run a media campaign to continue to raise awareness of the importance of asking for housing help earlier in the process with us and VCS agencies, before eviction 4. Food vouchers – These will continue to be used for when a resident/s present with nothing and can immediately be given by members of the housing team whilst other emergency support can prepared	£167,000	£200,000	£367,000	

2	Invest in the Healthy Homes Dorset scheme. White goods only (previously funded by HSF) – other funding sources for insulation and boilers.	£0	£60,000	£70,000	Budget increased by 16% due to demand (£10,000)
3	Maintain x4 Citizens Advice Debt caseworkers + increased volunteer supervision. To extend the Cost of Living (debt and energy) caseworkers and add a further 0.5FTE to assist with increased demand. Additional resource for volunteer training and supervision	£100,000	£110,000	£210,000	
4	Discretionary Housing Payment Allowance Increase the amount from national government grant available to R&B teams to support residents from being made homeless.	£48,000	£0	£73,000	Additional £25,000* funding due to demand = £73,000 *£25k taken from Cost of Living underspend 2024/25
5	Disabled Facilities Grant	£0	£50,000	£50,000	
6	Community Transport This was funded by both funds; however, the impact is significant as the sector has been under funded for several years so propose a further to continue this funding at a lower level	£30,000	£30,000	£60,840	Overspend £840

7	Emergency and Affordable food security Demand for emergency and affordable food projects such as social supermarkets and foodbanks continues to increase beyond current capacity. This funding will allow 2 targeted rounds of support funding during this financial year.	£120,000	£125,000	£245,000	
8	Food security – wider sustainable and affordable projects The work that was started last FY, has really identified the gaps and now looking to invest support in more proactive projects to try and take the burden off the emergency food projects	£0	£70,000	£70,000	
9	Older People's Benefit Support - The majority of this work is physical assistance in completing applications for Attendance Allowance; Personal Independence Payments (PIP); Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Pension Credit.	£5,000	£55,000	£60,000 (HSF)	
10	HAF Programme The holiday activities and food (HAF) programme (25/26) received a significant cut to their budget from National Government, so this funded attempts to mitigate this.	£30,000	£0	£30,000	
	TOTAL SPEND	£500,000	£700,000	£1,235,840	

Homeless Prevention

Project: Homelessness Prevention and Support (£167,000)	
About the project:	The funding has been spent in four areas: 1.1. Arrears/Rent in advance & deposit payments 1.2. Tenancy Sustainment 1.3. Media and information awareness 1.4. Emergency Food vouchers (for residents not eligible for other schemes)
Impact:	1.1 Since April 2025, 155 households benefited from financial aid to prevent homelessness and sustain their existing housing with the help on offer with arrears payments or to secure accommodation in the private rented sector through rent in advance and deposits to relieve homelessness. 1.2 Tenancy sustainment officer – providing additional targeted early intervention support to prevent people becoming homeless. The tenancy sustainment role has supported 57 clients, achieving 21 mutually agreed positive exits and preventing homelessness for individuals with complex needs, including supporting rough sleepers into accommodation. The project has delivered wider social and wellbeing outcomes, including improved mental health (31% reduction in anxiety/depression), progression into employment, training and volunteering and stabilisation of tenancies from temporary accommodation. Practical harm reduction and cost-of-living support (e.g. Swap to Stop, Naloxone, smoking cessation) has resulted in measurable financial savings and positive client feedback, demonstrating strong preventative impact. 1.3 The Early Help and Prevention campaign continues to support homelessness prevention by encouraging residents, families and landlords to seek advice at the earliest opportunity. A wide range of channels has been used to maximise reach, including high visibility advertising on waste collection vehicles, bus stops and bus rears, alongside targeted digital activity via Dorset Council social media, Google Ads and Facebook and Instagram advertising. Further promotion has taken place through internal staff communications and targeted distribution of materials to Community Mental Health Teams, libraries, foodbanks, job centres, Family Hubs and

	schools, working closely with Children's Services. Engagement has increased, with higher web traffic to the dedicated homelessness prevention webpage during February and March 2026, and a preventative case study video achieving over 20,000 views on social media. The Key4Me scheme continues to play a key role in prevention by increasing access to the private rented sector. Promotion included Christmas card mailouts to letting agents and engagement through the March Landlord Forum, attended by over 120 landlords. Targeted incentives and training have strengthened landlord engagement, resulting in 131 privately rented lets secured, helping prevent homelessness and reduce reliance on temporary accommodation. 1.4 Funding allocated for Emergency Food and Energy Vouchers supported households not eligible for other schemes; however, underspends were identified in both areas as demand was lower than anticipated. In response to emerging need, this funding was flexibly reallocated to meet increased Removals and Storage costs, an often unforeseen but critical consequence of homelessness. Rising costs linked to wages, fuel and insurance have particularly affected larger and more vulnerable households, and this agile re-prioritisation ensured essential belongings were protected and tenancies sustained where possible. A total of 477 households received emergency food vouchers, including 145 households with children, 32 containing pensioners and 187 disabled households, with recipients living in temporary accommodation (244), the private rented sector (8) and 45 individuals experiencing rough sleeping.
Outcomes:	• Early Intervention Success: Targeted support enabled issues to be identified and addressed early, preventing escalation into homelessness and reducing evictions. • Increased Housing Stability: Financial assistance and sustainment support helped households remain in their homes or secure settled accommodation, reducing homelessness risk. • Targeted and Personalised Support: Tailored interventions addressed individual needs, strengthening tenants' ability to sustain tenancies.

	• Improved wellbeing: Access to food, energy and practical support reduced stress and improved physical and mental wellbeing for vulnerable households. • Economic Benefits: Preventative interventions reduced reliance on costly emergency accommodation and crisis services. • Increased Awareness: Expanded prevention messaging improved awareness of available support, encouraging earlier engagement and timelier assistance.

Demographics

Area	Number of households	%
North Dorset (Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury, Sherborne, Sturminster Newton)	26	17
East Dorset (Wimborne, Verwood, Ferndown)	14	9
Purbeck (Wareham, Swanage)	10	6
West Dorset (Dorchester, Bridport, Lyme Regis)	26	17
Weymouth & Portland	64	41
Outside Area	14	9
Not known/recorded	1	>1
Total	155	100%

Types of households	Number	%
Households with Children	54	35%
At risk of/experienced domestic abuse	18	12%
Care leaver	3	2%
History of offending	15	10%
History of rough sleeping	3	2%
Victim of modern slavery	1	> 1%
Disability	97	63%
Served in HM Forces	1	> 1%
Over 60 years of age	16	10%

Age	n=	%
18-24	20	13
25-34	54	35
35-44	36	23
45-54	19	12
55-64	17	11

2. Provision of white goods and appliances – Ridgewater Energy

Project: Provision of white goods and appliances, focusing on geographical areas of disadvantage (£70,000)

About the project:	Working with our partner, Ridgewater Energy , to provide white goods and appliances to eligible residents in crisis or high-need situations, focusing on geographical areas of disadvantage.
Impact: Key Achievements:	Ridgewater Energy, our delivery partner, managed the project cycle of raising awareness, handling enquiries, assessing eligibility and suitability requirements (space, power, plumbing, etc.) and delivery plus removal of old/broken appliances during delivery (if safe to do so). During this period 99 home appliances were delivered.
Demographics:	• A total of 99 households benefitted. 135 appliances were delivered. • All households were low income. • 49 (49%) households had a someone claiming a disability benefit. • Tenure – 82% social housing, 9% owner occupiers, 8% private rental • Top 5 areas 1 – Weymouth (n=30); 2 – Portland (n=10); 3 – DT2 villages (n=9); 4 – Wimborne (n=7); 5 – Sherborne (n=7) • Most requested items were Cookers 43% (n=58), Washing machines 28% (n=38) and Fridge freezers 21% (n=29) • Average household order value: £700.72 • Average annual household income of clients = £16,289.17
Outcomes:	• Targeted Support for Vulnerable Residents - up to two replacement appliances for broken or unsafe items. • Improved energy awareness and access to wider support: Ridgewater Energy have been able to deliver an expert energy advice home visit through their SGN Help for Warmth scheme advice on money saving and scams awareness and provide onward referrals for external wall insulation, new boilers and white goods delivered via another funding source.

3. Citizens Advice – additional capacity to support increased demand.

Project: To extend the Cost-of-Living caseworkers to assist with increased demand. Additional resource for volunteer training and supervision (£210,000)

Citizens Advice have demonstrated significant increase in need and the impact of these officers which supports our Revenue & Benefits teams	
Impact: Key Achievements:	• Clients Supported: 1,001 individuals assisted with 2,799 issues. • Income Gains: £443,033 achieved for clients. • Debt Written Off: £834,238 successfully cleared. • £1,365,180 in financial outcomes for residents
Services Provided:	i. Energy Support: ○ 2 full-time caseworkers helped residents with energy-related issues, including heating solutions, government support and resolving supply problems. ○ Guidance on energy efficiency, reducing consumption and accessing grants for home improvements. ii. Cost of Living Outreach: ○ 1.5 full-time caseworkers focused on deprived areas (North Dorset and Bridport and district). ○ Services included home visits for vulnerable residents, welfare benefits advice, debt management and promoting financial resilience. iii. Volunteer Support: ○ Funding enabled 60 hours/week of supervision for 219 volunteers, recruiting and training 35 new volunteers. ○ Volunteers provided 9,600 hours of advice services across all Dorset Council wards.
Demographics:	• Client Profile: 71% of clients were disabled or had long-term health conditions. • Where household type data was recorded, 30% had dependent children.
Outcomes: <i>See appendix for more detail</i>	• Increased financial stability for clients through income gains, debt relief and energy cost reductions. • Improved well-being and reduced anxiety for residents during the cost-of-living crisis.

4. Revenue and Benefits – provide additional capacity for the Discretionary Housing Payment Allowance scheme

Project: To continue to support the Discretionary Housing Payment Allowance (£73,000)	
Impact:	- Discretionary Housing Payments are government-funded financial awards, allocated annually, to support residents receiving Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Costs who are struggling to meet their rent. Demand for DHPs exceeds available government funding and the additional £73,000 top-up helped extend essential support to residents during periods of financial difficulty, contributing to improved housing outcome. - DHP awards are temporary and can be made as one-off payments or for a defined period. Support may include help with rent shortfalls, rent arrears, rent deposits, rent in advance, and where essential, limited moving costs to secure more suitable accommodation. - Government funding for 2025/26 was £458,298, giving a total DHP budget of £531,298. All funding was fully allocated. Total spend in 2025/26 was £551,837.37, resulting in an overspend of £20,539.37, which was covered through a contingency budget.
Key Impact:	In total, 783 households received DHP support: 234 households received one-off payments to: - Clear rent arrears and sustain tenancies - Secure accommodation through rent in advance or deposits - Assist with essential moving costs 549 households received periodic awards to help meet the shortfall between rent charges and Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Costs: 467 awards for up to 26 weeks 82 awards for between 26 and 52 weeks 231 applications were declined, primarily where households were assessed as having sufficient income to meet their housing costs without additional support.

Outcomes	• Improved housing stability: Financial support enabled households to remain in their homes or secure suitable accommodation, reducing the risk of eviction and homelessness. • Improved wellbeing: Reduced financial pressure and housing insecurity contributed to improved mental wellbeing for supported households. • Economic benefits: Sustaining tenancies and preventing homelessness reduced the need for emergency accommodation and associated costs.

Disabled Facilities Grant

Project: To continue to support the Disabilities Facilities Grant to enable energy efficient improvements to be included as part of their building adaptations programme (£50,000)	
About the project:	• The Energy Improvement Grant (funded from the Cost-of-Living funding) is designed to enable disabled homeowners and tenants to quickly access financial assistance towards a wide range of energy improvements around the home • The grant, delivered by the Dorset Accessible Homes Service (DAHS), promotes independent living and assists people coping with the ongoing cost of living crisis. It enables disabled residents to remain living at home, in warmer, more energy efficient homes, saving them money and making their homes safer and healthier. • The DAHS provide an 'end to end' works delivery process, from specifying works, appointing contractors and checking the quality of the final job.
Impact:	This tranche of funding in 2025/2 of £50,000 has delivered a further 10 Energy Improvement Grants. The average grant was £5,048. Works undertaken include replacement of broken boilers, heating improvements, insulation, replacement doors and windows.
Demographics	• Most (80%) of the recipients of the grant were aged between 50 and 90+. • 30% of households with children under 18 • 40% households with pensioners • 100% of households with a member who has a disability

Outcomes:	Lower energy bills – with new boilers, improved heating systems and better insulation individuals are likely to see a significant reduction in their heating bills Improved health and wellbeing – improved air quality, reduction of accidents and overall improved health

6. Invest in the sustainability of Dorset's community transport network

Project: Invest in community transport network via the Dorset Community Transport grant (£60,000)	
About the project:	The funding enabled the Community Transport team to deliver the Dorset Community Transport (DCT) grants programme. Two types of grants were available: • Revenue grants of up to £2,500 (no match funding required) • Capital grants of up to £5,000 (20% match funding required)
Impact: Key Achievements:	16 Community Transport schemes received funding through the DCT programme. In total, 28 grants were awarded (2 capital and 26 revenue), with some schemes receiving more than one grant. Funding supported a wide range of activity, including: • Purchase of a minibus from a ceased community transport scheme • Licensing fees for ticket machines to improve payment accessibility, running costs for multiple car schemes and website and database subscriptions to support trip planning • Electronic devices to support route planning and volunteer coordination • Introduction of a new bus route in Gillingham following the loss of NORDCAT services • Marketing to recruit volunteer drivers • Establishment of new Community Transport schemes in areas with limited or no provision • Continued delivery of services in areas with limited public transport • Additional vehicles to increase capacity on existing routes

Outcomes: More detail available in appendix 4	Volunteer recruitment and retention: Grants supported recruitment of volunteer drivers, helping to maintain essential services. Improved efficiency: Investment in digital tools and communication systems improved coordination and route planning. Sustainable service delivery: Revenue grants helped cover essential running costs, including insurance, maintenance and phone contracts. Improved fleet sustainability: Capital funding enabled vehicle purchase or upgrades, supporting longer-term viability. Reduced social isolation: Transport access enabled residents to attend medical appointments and participate in social activities. Expanded service coverage: New and enhanced schemes improved transport access across more areas of Dorset.

7. Invest in emergency and affordable food security that has a referral system

Project: Continue to invest in emergency and affordable food security that has a referral system (£245,500 in 25/26 funded from both the Cost-of-Living Programme and the Household Support Fund – (CoL £120,000 and HSF £125,000))	
About the project:	• A targeted grant programme (2 tranches throughout the 2025/26 financial year) for foodbanks and social supermarkets. Proportionate funding based on need was distributed to 15 foodbanks and 5 social supermarkets who were able to demonstrate a referral process.
Impact:	• Funding has enabled Foodbanks and Social Supermarkets to provide emergency and affordable food support to vulnerable residents • Work has been ongoing with food projects to develop robust referral mechanisms to ensure residents who use those projects have access to wraparound support as needed.

Demographics:	Funded Foodbanks and Social Supermarkets provided support for 3274 households* in August 2025, this number fluctuates every month according to need but demonstrates the numbers of household that <i>funded</i> food projects support. (* Households can be families with children, all adult households, single person households, pensioner households)
Outcomes:	Targeted Support for Foodbanks and Social Supermarkets: The grant programme provided proportionate funding based on need. Strengthened Referral Systems: The referral system ensured that those in need were efficiently directed to appropriate resources, improving access to food support Support for Refuges: Emergency food support for refuges across Dorset helped address the specific needs of those needed to seek refuge, providing them with essential resources during difficult times in partnership with Paragon. As part of this workstream we are working with projects to improve referral pathways and help people to a place of better resilience whilst ensuring the longer-term sustainability of these projects (see project xxx – reference the food networks)

[Food Security – wider sustainable and affordable food](#)

8. Invest in more VCS led sustainable and affordable food security (£70,000) - During the year we invested in 11 food projects:

8.1 Community Cooking and Skills courses – Westham, Weymouth

Community cooking sessions delivered in Westham, Weymouth (£9,047)	
About the project:	The Friendly Food Club, an established partner of Dorset Council, were contracted to deliver Community Cooking and Skills courses – (4 x 6 week sessions – total 24 sessions). Average number of six people per session, with maximum of 9 people in one session. Followed a 6-week rolling programme that features a range of skills, ingredients and topics, including batch cooking, energy

	efficient cooking, shopping tips, storage and reducing waste, as well as eating for health and basic nutrition messages
Outcomes:	• Share cooking and healthy eating skills and how to eat well on a limited budget. • Gain knowledge regarding budget cooking, reducing food waste and make the most of ingredients available. • Build confidence and resilience amongst attendees • Build social networks amongst attendees

8.2 Community Cooking and Skills courses – Portland

The Friendly Food Club - engagement with community cooking sessions – Portland £5,000)	
About the project:	Friendly Food Club delivered a community-focused engagement project on Portland, prioritising trust-building, local relationships and readiness for delivery rather than short-term activity. The project worked with over 15 local organisations, community venues and services, using face-to-face engagement, demonstration sessions and pilot youth and older people's cooking activities to embed work within existing networks.
Outcomes:	• Strengthened community connections and increased trust in Friendly Food Club as a local partner • Built confidence and readiness among residents, young people, families and delivery partners • Reduced barriers to participation by using trusted settings and relationships • Established sustainable pathways for future youth, family and community cooking provision

8.3 Get Dorset Cooking

Get Dorset Cooking – community cooking capacity-building project across Dorset (£19,813) - The Friendly Food Club	
About the project:	Get Dorset Cooking was funded by Dorset Council and delivered by The Friendly Food Club to support community organisations across Dorset to develop and deliver inclusive cooking activities. The project combined training, hands-on support, relationship-building and use of Community Cooking Kits, focusing on

	people experiencing food insecurity, social isolation and barriers to healthy eating. Delivery emphasised confidence-building and practical support rather than training alone.
Outcomes:	• Increased confidence and sustainable delivery where organisations received hands-on, practical support • Two weekly community cooking sessions successfully established and embedded (Salvation Army Wimborne and Open House Shaftesbury) • Positive participant outcomes including improved routine, wellbeing, healthier eating and reduced isolation • Clear evidence that training alone is insufficient, and that early, supported delivery unlocks long-term, volunteer-led provision • Improved understanding of barriers and a clear model for scaling community cooking sustainably across Dorset

8.4 Basic Food Hygiene Certificates

300 licences for the Basic Food Hygiene Certificate via virtual college distributed by Volunteer Centre Dorset (VCD) (including administration costs) (£5100)	
About the project:	To distribute online food hygiene courses to voluntary and community sector organisations operating in the Dorset Council area who bring their local community together for food-based initiatives – including, but not exclusive to, foodbanks, social supermarkets, community fridges, lunch clubs, youth clubs and so on
Outcomes:	VCD have allocated 547 licences, they can offer a range of three food-related modules including: • Level 1 Food Safety and Hygiene • Level 2 Food Safety and Hygiene for Catering • Food Allergy Awareness Training A wide range of organisations have taken this offer up including foodbanks, social supermarkets lunch clubs and a community pub. The offer is part of the support VCD can offer food projects across the county. The 300 funded licences release an additional 300 licences at no cost.

	Volunteer Centre Dorset is the commissioned provider of VCS infrastructure support across Dorset, offering training, support and development for the voluntary and community sector and the training licences enable organisations to improve their skills and knowledge around food related practices – as well as access to a wider range of online training.

8.5 Food Security Network Meetings

Project: Invest in more VCS led sustainable and affordable food security projects in areas of most need – Food Security Network Meetings (£5,000)	
About the project:	Dorset Council supported the coordination and development of local food networks to strengthen collaboration between community food, advice and health partners. Activity included hosting 15 network meetings in 2026 , attended by 140 participants , alongside representation at West Dorset Community Links and Reconnection meetings. Monthly updates were shared throughout the year to highlight learning, funding opportunities and local developments, and four Steering Group meetings were held to drive priorities emerging from local networks.
Outcomes:	Reduction in foodbank referrals: Foodbank referral numbers have reduced from 2024/25. With the launch and aims of the Cost of Living Response Fund (CRF), this reduction is expected to continue throughout 2026 as partnerships are further supported to work together to build household resilience. Enhanced partnership working: There is clear evidence of strengthened collaboration between projects, including partnerships between Christians Against Poverty (CAP) and affordable food clubs; joint working between Wimborne and Corfe Mullen Foodbanks around debt support; development of a voucher scheme between Portland Foodbank and the community larder; and person-centred approaches in North Dorset, where projects are coordinating pathways tailored to individual households. Citizens Advice is also attending more community food spaces to provide energy advice and financial support.

	Identification of gaps in local provision: Networks have identified gaps in provision to help Dorset Council target funding more effectively. This includes gaps in Wareham around ‘move-on’ options from foodbank services; a need for de-escalation training addressed through policy support, links with the Community Safety Team and training provision; and the expansion of Access Wellbeing services within foodbank spaces, reflecting the growing recognition of mental health needs among residents requiring food support. Promotion of food project models: Work has supported clearer communication and understanding of food project models that are not always well understood, particularly social supermarkets. Examples include Swanage developing a poster promoting local community food offers, East Dorset projects sharing each other’s activity through social media, and features in Dorset Council publications and social media channels. The Steering Group plays a key role in bringing issues from grassroots projects to the forefront, driving critical areas of work, supporting positive and consistent communication, and providing ongoing guidance to projects and their teams.

8.6 De-escalation training for Food Projects

De-escalation training for foodbank staff and volunteers – delivered by Better Minds (£1,900)	
About the project:	In late 2025, foodbanks reported an increase in violent and aggressive behaviour. Alongside policy support and links to Community Safety teams, this funding enabled tailored de-escalation training so staff and volunteers could prevent escalation, respond safely and feel more confident managing challenging situations.
Outcomes:	Outcomes: • Three online de-escalation training sessions delivered in March, with 10 staff and volunteers attending live • Sessions recorded and, alongside the workbook, will be hosted on the Volunteer Centre Dorset website, creating a lasting, on-demand training resource for current and future volunteers • Increased confidence in managing challenging behaviour and prioritising staff and volunteer safety

	Learning already informing practice changes, including clearer signage, improved risk assessment of spaces and strengthened volunteer boundaries Participant feedback highlighted the value of sharing learning across teams to ensure supportive environments remain safe for staff and volunteers alike.

8.7 Introduction to affordable food – Spring project

Affordable Food Club access for supported clients in Weymouth and Portland – Christians against Poverty (£1,100)	
About the project:	This project supported clients working with a debt-help charity (CAP) to move from crisis-based foodbank support into more resilient, preventative provision by introducing them to local affordable food clubs. Using vouchers and gentle encouragement, clients were supported to build a regular routine of attending over a month, easing financial pressure, improving access to healthy food and increasing social connection. This approach directly aligns with the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) aim of supporting households to move away from crisis models towards longer-term resilience.
Outcomes:	- Positive client response, with appreciation for the support and welcoming experiences at food clubs - First-time engagement with affordable food clubs in Weymouth and the Portland pop-up, with several clients planning to attend regularly - Café vouchers supported social participation, including family outings during school holidays - Early evidence that supported introductions help people transition from foodbank use to more resilient food provision - The project provides a replicable model to strengthen resilience and reduce long-term reliance on crisis support, in line with CRF priorities

8.8 Affordable food and community meal provision in Wareham

The Welcome Table, Not Just Sundaes, Wareham (£5,000)	
About the project:	The Welcome Table, delivered by Not Just Sundaes in Wareham, provides a weekly, free two course community meal for people experiencing food insecurity and cost-of-living pressures. Alongside meeting immediate need,

	the project includes a linked Cook Club, delivered in partnership with the Friendly Food Club, to build longer-term resilience by increasing confidence and skills in preparing affordable, nutritious meals at home. The project is promoted through foodbanks, schools, the community fridge and family hub.
Outcomes:	Outcomes: • 659 meals provided over 17 weeks, supporting 189 households experiencing food insecurity • Reduced pressure on household food budgets and improved access to nutritious meals • Strong social impact, with guests reporting reduced isolation, increased confidence and improved family connection • A 6-week Cook Club built practical skills and confidence in affordable home cooking • High satisfaction (96% would return; 95% would recommend), demonstrating the value of combining immediate support with longer-term resilience building

8.9 Community Cook-up and affordable food access pilot – Bridport

Bridport Community Cook-up – Ripple Workshop (£1,760)	
About the project:	The Cost-of-Living Fund enabled Ripple Workshop CIC to pilot the Bridport Community Cook-up , delivering free, inclusive community cooking sessions alongside outreach activity. The project aimed to reduce isolation and cost-of-living pressures by bringing people together to prepare and share food, build skills, and access creative activities. Outreach was delivered across key local venues to engage residents who are isolated or hard to reach and to shape sessions around community needs.
Outcomes:	• Two free Community Cook-ups delivered, with 20+ participants at each, plus outreach engaging over 150 residents • Improved access to nutritious food for low-income households • Reduced isolation and improved wellbeing, with increased confidence and social connection reported • Strong peer support and inclusion across families, people with disabilities, pensioners and refugee households • A flexible, co-designed model that supports ongoing community resilience

8.10 Emergency support and affordable essentials provision – Open House, Shaftesbury

Emergency support and affordable essentials provision - Open House Shaftesbury (£5,000)	
About the project:	Open House Shaftesbury used Cost of Living Fund support to provide emergency aid and essential household items to residents facing poverty, homelessness and unstable housing. As a rural town without a foodbank operating locally , residents often need to travel to nearby towns to access support, which is costly and difficult for those without transport. This project therefore focused on meeting immediate needs locally through food parcels, energy top-ups, and cleaning and toiletry packs, alongside providing a warm, welcoming space and access to advice and employment support.
Outcomes:	• Weekly support provided to 30–40 residents per session, including families, pensioners and disabled people • Local emergency aid delivered through food parcels, energy top-ups and essential cleaning and toiletry packs • Reduced hardship for residents unable to travel to neighbouring towns for foodbank support • Improved dignity, wellbeing and access to a trusted warm space with advice and employment support • Fortnightly on-site DWP Work Coach sessions strengthened routes beyond crisis support

8.11 Pathways to Resilience event – April 2026

Pathways to Resilience partnership event – Dorset (£2,500)	
About the project:	Pathways to Resilience was a joint event with Citizens Advice, bringing together community food, health and advice partners from across the Dorset Council area following the launch of the Crisis and Resilience Fund. The event focused on sharing learning, strengthening partnerships and exploring how projects can move from crisis response towards longer-term resilience. It featured three practical workshops: • <i>From Crisis to Resilience</i> (Citizens Advice Central Dorset) • <i>Cooking for Resilience</i> (Friendly Food Club) • <i>Resilient Projects, Resilient Communities</i> (Volunteer Centre Dorset)
Outcomes	• Nearly 100 attendees registered, with a balanced mix of food, health and advice organisations • Strong focus on celebration, shared practice and partnership working across Dorset • Workshops provided practical tools to embed resilience within services and communities • Feedback gathered on the future shape of local networks, alongside an online survey, to inform next steps

9. Older People's Benefit Support

Project: Invest in information, advice and guidance services for vulnerable older residents to ensure they are receiving all the income they are entitled to (£60,000).	
About the project	This project targeted potentially vulnerable older people. We worked with six organisations who could add additional capacity – particularly with home visits to housebound residents. They met our governance criteria in that they all currently offer an advice service and had the necessary DBS and lone working policies in place. • The Lantern Trust (£10,000) • Age UK NSW (£7,500) • The YOU Trust (£10,000) • Island Community Action (£7,500) • Age Concern North Dorset (£10,000) • Citizens Advice Purbeck and East Dorset (£15,000) The majority of this work is physical assistance in completing applications for Attendance Allowance; Personal Independence Payments (PIP); Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Pension Credit. There is a focus on <u>home visits</u> to most vulnerable older people to maximise benefit claims, improve financial stability, enhance referral pathways and increase awareness of entitlements and reduce need for crisis intervention.
Demographics	1,038 older people have received face to face support (mostly) within their own homes to access benefits they are entitled to – each visit takes an hour+ to complete - often longer.
Outcomes	To date, a large majority of these applications have been successful and released more than £1,501,968 of annualised income to Dorset residents (with additional claims still awaiting decisions).
Key outcomes from the	• Maximised benefit claims: Full entitlement checks and practical support with benefit applications.

support provided by the funded organisations	• Improved financial stability: Targeted assistance has enabled individuals to receive their full entitlement, significantly improving household incomes. • Enhanced professional capacity: Training and best-practice sharing have strengthened organisations' ability to support complex benefit claims. • Strong referral pathways: Improved links into dementia care, social prescribing, GP services and other trusted agencies, including signposting to services that reduce isolation. • Holistic support: Embedded advice within wider services, including help with debt reduction, rent arrears, housing access, community networks, health support, utility priority services, careline installations and food bank referrals.
Impacts	• Improved service delivery: Proactive follow-up has improved claim outcomes and identified additional support such as council tax relief and reduced utility costs. • Stronger sector knowledge: Best-practice sharing and training have improved wider understanding of the benefits system and strengthened partnership working. • Enhanced community engagement: Closer working with Primary Care Networks and community services has supported more targeted and integrated approaches. • Increased awareness of entitlements: Outreach activity has reached people previously unaware of available support, particularly those with limited digital access. • Earlier intervention: Improved identification of people at crisis point has enabled timely referrals and prevented escalation. Overall, the project has had a clear positive impact on financial stability, service coordination and early intervention for vulnerable older residents.

10. Children's Services - targeted priority programmes that support low-income families

Project: Increased food offer for children attending the holidays activities and food (HAF) programme (£30,000)	
About the project:	The additional funding had a significant positive impact on the delivery and reach of the Summer Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme. It enabled the creation of 1,000 additional places , directly responding to growing demand and helping to ease pressure on providers who were operating waiting lists for their camps.

	In total, just under 16,000 places were offered to children eligible for benefit-related free school meals, substantially increasing access to high-quality holiday provision for families who need it most. This scale of delivery helped ensure more children could benefit from structured, safe, and enriching activities during the summer holidays. Children engaged in a wide and diverse range of activities, including forest school sessions, football camps, performing arts workshops, and watersports. This variety supported physical health, creativity, confidence, and social development, while also enabling children to try new experiences they might not otherwise access. Crucially, every participating child received a hot, nutritious meal each day, contributing to improved food security and supporting children's health and wellbeing during the school holidays. For many families, this reduced financial pressure at a time when household costs are often higher.
Outcomes:	Overall, the project expanded capacity, increased inclusion, supported wellbeing, and responded effectively to local demand, delivering meaningful benefits for children and families across the programme area.

Appendix 3 – Infographic of the Impact of the Cost-of-Living Projects 2025-26

Cost of living support for Dorset residents in 2025/26

An additional **£50,000** invested to make **10** homes warmer and energy efficient for our disabled residents



£60,840 invested in **16** community transport schemes



We support an emergency and affordable food network and put **£245,000** into **15** foodbanks and **5** social supermarkets



We supported **477** households to buy food with emergency food vouchers



We provided **135** appliances such as cookers, washing machines and fridge freezers to **99** low-income households



1038 older people received face to face support to apply for entitled welfare benefits



We added £73,000

to provide **£531,298** to **783** households through the discretionary housing payment scheme

We supported **11** community food projects including community cooking and skills courses



We have helped **1,126** households facing homelessness



We funded an additional **1,000** places for children to enjoy free holiday activities through the holiday activities and food programme

We funded Citizens Advice specialist debt and energy advice support to help **1,001** clients with **2,799** issues



Income gains: **£443,033** achieved for clients
Debt written off: **£834,238** successfully cleared

* Households can be families with children, all adult households, single person households, pensioner households

*June 2026

Appendix 4 – Citizens Advice end of grant report 25-26 (project 3)

Report attached separately as a PDF

Appendix 4 – Community Transport Grant breakdown

Car Scheme	Area	Grant amount
Community Connections	North Dorset	£5,000
Cerne Abbas Voluntary car scheme	Mid Dorset	£300
Share & Care	Purbeck	£780
Wimborne Neighbour Car (Prima Life)	East Dorset	£2,400
SEDCAT	East/West Dorset & Weymouth & Portland	£5,000
Blackmore Stroke Club	North Dorset	£2,000
Gillingham Community Bus group - The Three Rivers Group	North Dorset	£2,500
Alderholt Parish Council	East Dorset	£2,500
Marnhull Village Care	North Dorset	£830
Bere Regis Parish Council	Mid Dorset	£2,500
T.R.I.P & Axe Vale	West Dorset	£2,500
Sherborne Town Council	North Dorset	£2,350
Friends of Penny Hill Practice Ferndown	East Dorset	£350
Wriggle Valley	North Dorset	£2,500
Dial a ride Wimborne	East Dorset	£2,500
Ealing Community Transport / Blandford Army Camp	North Dorset	£4,000
Ealing Community Transport	County Wide	£1,850
Ealing Community Transport	County Wide	£2,500
Ealing Community Transport	County Wide	£2,400
Ealing Community Transport	County Wide	£1,850
Ealing Community Transport	County Wide	£2,400
Ealing Community Transport	County Wide	£1,850
Ealing Community Transport	County Wide	£2,500
Ealing Community Transport	South Dorset	£1,500
Ealing Community Transport	South Dorset	£1,500
Ealing Community Transport	North Dorset	£1,500
Ealing Community Transport	North Dorset	£1,500
Ealing Community Transport	South Dorset	£1,500
		£60,860

Appendix 5 - Cost of Living and Crisis and Resilience Fund spend – 2026/27

No.	DC Directorate /VCSO lead	Project detail	Amount spent 2025-26	Amount 26-27		Total 2026/27
				CRF (Agreed)	Cost of Living Request 2026/27	
1	Adult Services - Housing – Homelessness prevention	1.Arrears/Rent in advance & deposit payments. This will support the team to negotiate with landlords to stop evictions from taking place or help to find new suitable accommodation. 2. Tenancy Sustainment. To maintain existing capacity of one of the tenancy sustainment officers to keep proactive negotiations with landlords 3. Food vouchers – These will continue to be used for when a resident/s present with nothing and can immediately be given by members of the housing team whilst other emergency support can prepared	£167,500 (CoL) + £200,000 (HSF) £377,500	£202,000	£157,000	£359,000
2	Citizens Advice	Continue funding x3.5 Debt caseworkers + volunteer support and supervision. To continue to fund the Cost of Living (debt and energy) caseworkers to support increased demand. Additional resource for volunteer training and supervision CA have demonstrated significant increase in need and the impact of these officers which supports our Revs & Bens teams	£210,000	£113,500.00	£103,200	£216,700
3	Corporate Services - Revenue and Benefits	Enhance Housing Payment Allowance Fund element of the Crisis and Resilience Fund Increase the allocated amount from national government grant available to R&B teams to support residents struggling with housing issues and threatened homelessness.	£73,000	£458,298	£89.800	£548,098

		Last year the £48,000 was spent by January due to increased demand. This support stops people from needing much more expensive interventions from the Homelessness Teams. <i>We are proposing an increase from last year of £31,800 (Note: in 24/25 we funded this area £100,000)</i>				
4	Corporate Development - Communities and Partnerships & VCS	Emergency and Affordable food security Demand for emergency and affordable food projects such as social supermarkets and foodbanks continues to increase beyond current capacity. This funding will allow continued support during this financial year to provide stability whilst we work alongside foodbanks to assist them to offer a broader range of wraparound support, helping residents build long-term financial resilience. This approach is closely aligned with the new Crisis and Resilience Fund.	£125,000 HSF + £120,000 CoL	£125,000	£100,000	£225,000
5	Older people's organisations supporting applications	Much of this work is physical assistance in completing applications for Attendance Allowance; Personal Independence Payments (PIP); Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Pension Credit, often in their own homes. We propose carry on with this work with the following organisations (subject to satisfactory monitoring requirements): • Age UK NSW Dorset • Lantern Trust • Island Community Action • Age Concern North Dorset • You Trust	£75,000	£56,760	£20,000	£76,760

		Citizens Advice East Dorset and Purbeck				
6	Children's Services & VCSO	FY 25-26, funding enabled the provision of an additional 1,000 places as part of the summer HAF programme. Participants engaged in a diverse range of activities, including forest school sessions, football camps, performing arts workshops, and water sports. Every child received a hot, nutritious meal each day. We want to continue the pride additional support to this programme to increase capacity, particularly in rural and underserved areas.	£30,000		£30,000	£30,000
		Totals:		£955,558	£500,000	£1,455,558

Citizens Advice Cost of Living funding from Dorset Council

End of Grant Report: April 1 2025 to March 31 2026

Over the past year, Citizens Advice has been at the front line in delivering a targeted response to the problems faced by our residents. Our team of volunteers and paid staff have helped local people deal with the challenges as identified by them and worked with them to find real solutions. Our range of locations and channels of advice has delivered an accessible service where it is needed most. We remain that trusted brand whereby residents in need come to us first for help. Our focus has been on providing specialist support with energy-related issues, helping individuals manage rising bills, access energy-saving solutions, and secure relevant government assistance. In addition, we have offered tailored advice on maximising income, finding debt solutions, and improving financial resilience, ensuring that individuals and families are supported in managing the financial pressures they face. This funding has allowed us to increase our capacity whilst maintaining the maximum support for residents.

Key statistics: in 2025/2026 our Cost of Living caseworkers helped a total of **1,001 clients** deal with **2,799 issues** and achieved **income gains of £443,033. Total financial outcomes were £1,365,180***.

Dorset Energy Unit

The 2 full-time equivalent (FTE) Energy Unit caseworkers have continued supporting residents across the Dorset Council area with a range of energy-related issues. They have helped off-grid clients overcome challenges by advising on cost-effective heating solutions, applying for government support, and ensuring they are prepared for a warm and affordable winter. In addition, they have assisted with broader energy supply problems, liaising with suppliers to resolve issues like outages, incorrect billing, and supply interruptions, ensuring

a reliable energy supply for all residents. In addition, we help to maximise income through benefits checks and to help clients manage debt and are successful in writing debt off, where possible.

The caseworkers have also provided specialist support to improve energy efficiency in homes. This includes advising on reducing energy consumption, optimising heating systems, installing energy-saving appliances, and accessing grants for home improvements. Through this tailored guidance, our caseworkers help clients lower energy bills, reduce their carbon footprint, and make long-term improvements to their living conditions.

Cost of Living Outreach

The 1.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) Cost of Living outreach caseworkers have allowed us to target advice and support to residents in the most deprived areas of Dorset. Currently, these targeted areas are North Dorset and Bridport and District. They focus on those most at risk of financial hardship, offering a vital lifeline during difficult times. A key part of their service is the home visit programme, which ensures vulnerable residents—such as the elderly, those with disabilities, or people with limited mobility—receive the support they need in the comfort of their own homes. This personal approach allows residents to discuss sensitive financial matters in a confidential, supportive environment. Caseworkers also undertake outreach working at community locations such as Family Hubs and Foodbanks to ensure advice is accessible to those in need.

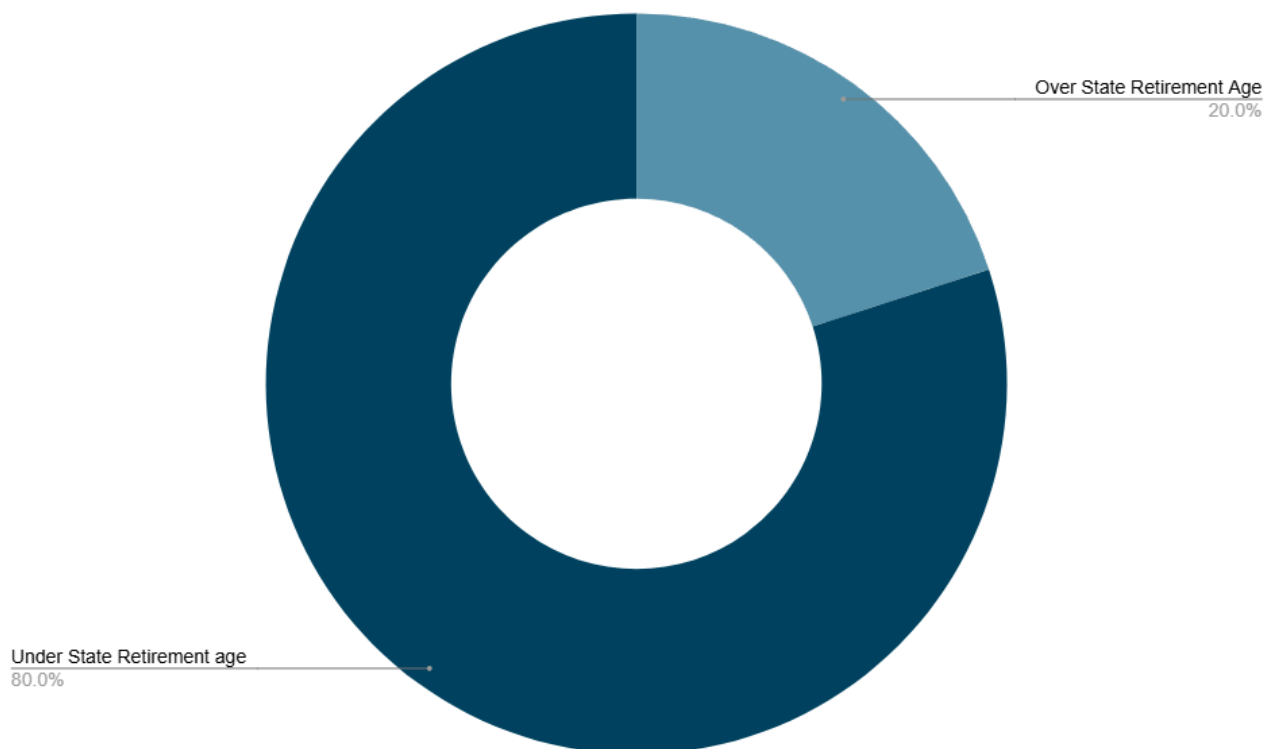
The caseworkers help maximise residents' income by guiding them through the process of claiming welfare benefits, including Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment, and offering advice on challenging benefit decisions. They also support individuals dealing with debt by negotiating with creditors, setting up payment plans, and referring clients to our specialist debt advice service. By addressing both immediate financial concerns and promoting long-term financial resilience, the caseworkers help residents regain control of their finances, reduce anxiety, and improve their overall quality of life.

Advice Session Supervisors

The funding for increased advice session supervisor support has been instrumental in supporting our volunteers, enabling them to continue delivering vital services to residents. Our volunteers remain at the centre of our delivery model and they come from our community which gives them extra insight when helping others. With the supervisors' guidance, our volunteers are equipped to provide high-quality, timely advice, ensuring that local residents receive the support they need to navigate various challenges. This funding not only sustains the volunteers' efforts but also helps maintain the smooth running of our advice services, making a real difference in the community. This extra support covers every Dorset Council ward as it helps delivery of our core service.

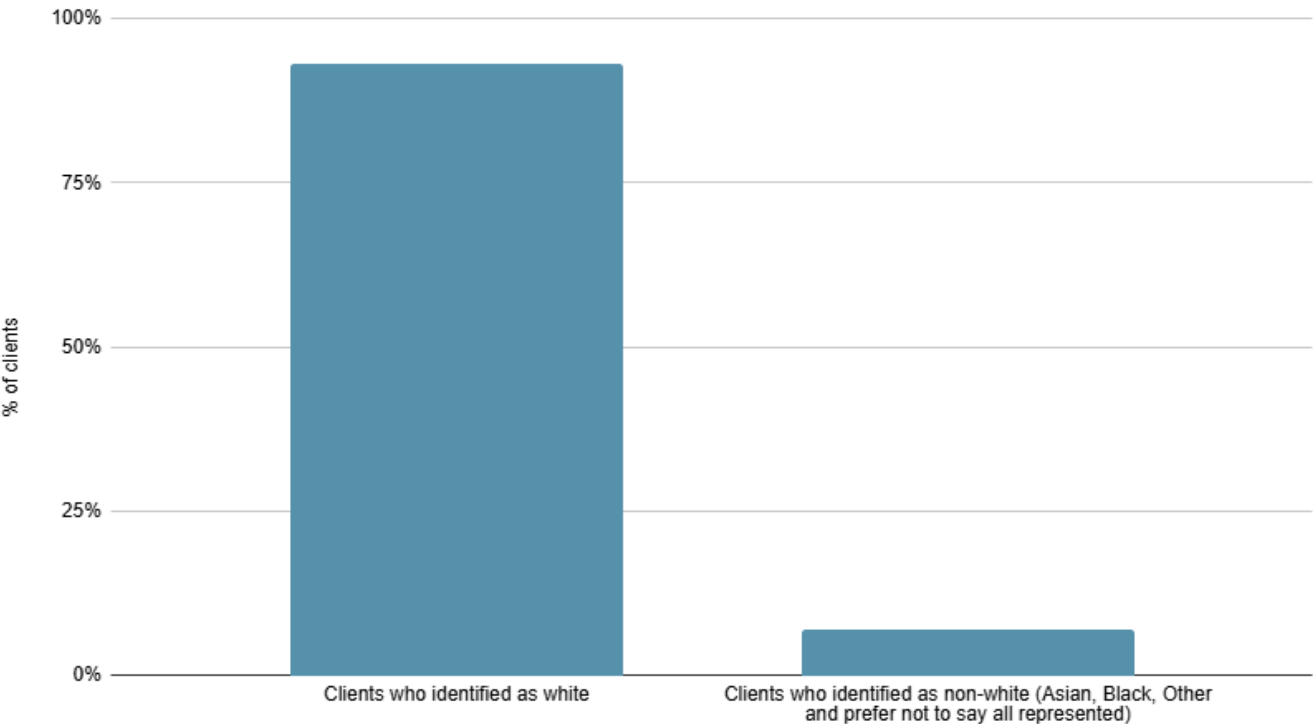
This funding supports our **219 volunteers**, the funding has assisted us to recruit and train an **additional 35 volunteers** into the service. By funding 60 hours per week of supervision, this has supported an additional **9,600 hours of advice volunteering** over the year.

Demographics

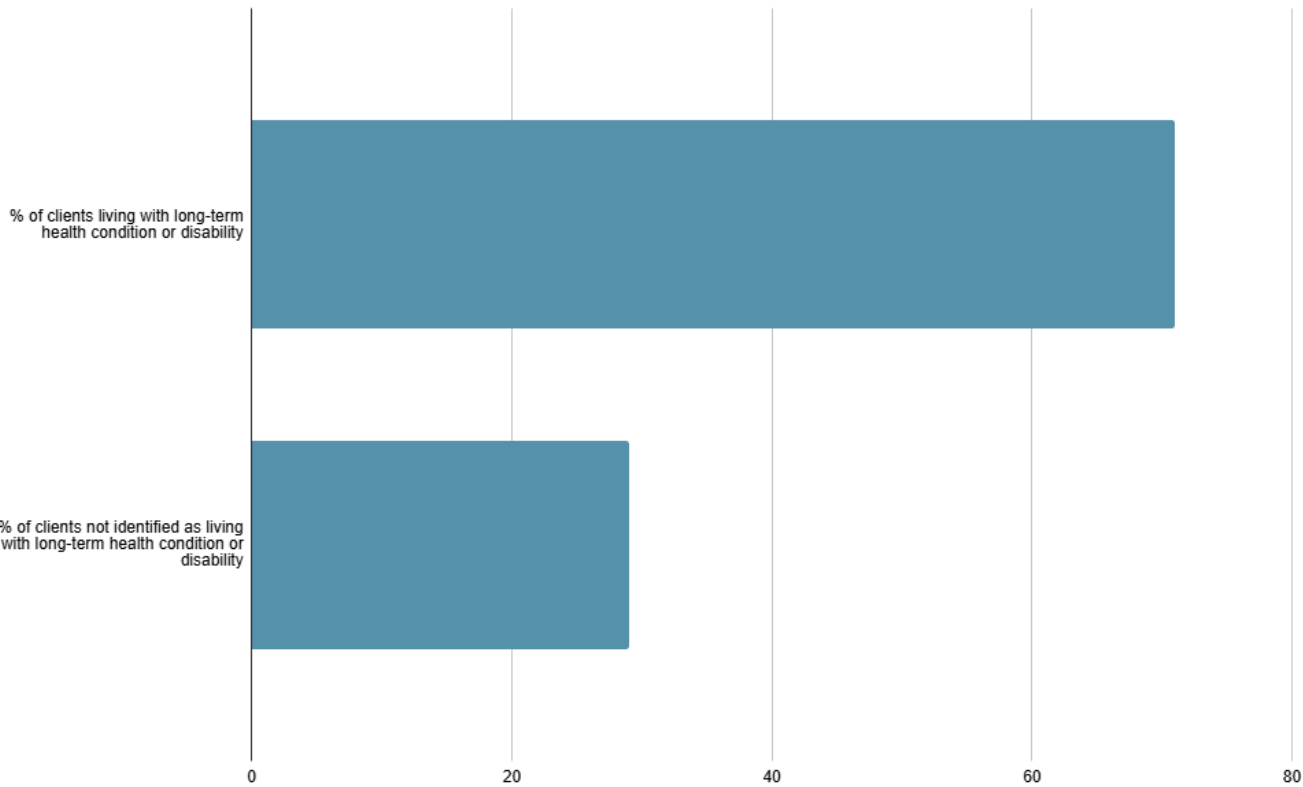


The chart above shows the percentage of clients over state-pension age that we supported.

Ethnicity data



The chart above shows the breakdown of our clients by ethnicity. 93% of clients identified as White.



In 2025-2026, 71% of clients were either disabled or suffering from a long-term health condition.

Where household type data was recorded, 30% had dependent children.

Outcomes*

In the past year, our dedicated caseworkers have helped increase client income by a total of **£443,033**. As well as this, staff helped clients successfully write off **£834,238** in debt. In addition, we helped with debt rescheduled, reimbursements and other income gained such as grants received. In total, we achieved **£1,365,180 in financial outcomes for residents**. Through expert guidance on claiming welfare benefits, accessing financial support, and managing debt, they have empowered individuals and families to maximise their financial resources. Additionally, our energy caseworkers have played a key role in helping clients reduce their energy costs by advising on cost-effective heating solutions, applying for government support, and advice on improving energy efficiency in homes.

Case Studies

1. Joe* is a single parent of 4 children ranging in age from a few months old to 12 years old. Joe lives in a privately rented property and is struggling to meet essential expenditure and to purchase essential items. Joe's income is Universal Credit, Disability Living Allowance for one child and Council Tax Support.

Joe was put in touch with a Cost of Living Caseworker to discuss short and long term solutions. The immediate need was for a new mattress for Joe's disabled child and a fridge freezer as theirs is broken. Long-term concerns are the cost of high heating bills in the winter.

With our support, Joe was referred to the Volunteer Centre for small energy saving devices, including heated blankets to stay warm in winter. An application to Ridgewater was completed successfully for a new fridge freezer and an application to ELA for a new mattress was also successful.

A full benefit check was conducted, confirming Joe is receiving all they are entitled to. Joe was also given advice on how to save energy around their home and on other avenues for cost of living support. The total value of the support given to Joe is £950.

2. Peter, a 67-year-old man, was referred to us by the local social prescribing team for assistance with his benefits following a hospital admission. Peter had become increasingly frail over the last 6 months and we undertook a home visit. We helped Peter claim Attendance Allowance and he was awarded the higher rate (worth £110.40 per week) after a 3 month wait. We kept in touch with Peter as he was anxious about the length of time the decision was taking and were able to assist him further with a Blue Badge application and then enquiries about the effect on his benefits if moving into a care home.

Impact: improved financial resilience (increased income worth £5741 annually), wellbeing and independence

3. John, is a single former Forces member with multiple health conditions, was living on Universal Credit in an electric-only property. He approached us after building up debt on his electricity prepayment meter and receiving gas bills for a supply he didn't have. We discussed full energy efficiency advice with John and we supported him to apply for Council Tax Support, securing £26.35 per week (£1,370 per year). Alongside this we helped John apply for the Limited Capability for Work element of Universal Credit (decision pending).

We also assisted with a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application, resulting in an award at the enhanced rate for daily living and mobility (£187.45 per week / £9,747 per year), plus a backdated payment of £3,963.

We referred John to the Wessex Water Champion scheme; he was accepted onto Assist & Restart, reducing payments to £1 per month, with £1,586 to be written off in 2027. We also referred John to the local foodbank for immediate support. John said that the energy team and the volunteers who helped complete the benefit applications were worth their weight in gold.

***names changed to protect Page 438's identity.**

Client Wards

Ward	Clients
Beacon	15
Beaminster	13
Blandford	83
Blackmore Vale	29
Bransgore, Burley, Sopley & Ringwood East	1
Bridport	162
Burton & Grange	3
Chalk Valleys	2
Chesil Bank	13
Chickerell	11
Colehill & Wimborne Minster East	10
Corfe Mullen	8
Cranborne & Alderholt	6
Cranborne Chase	7
Dorchester East	1
Dorchester Poundbury	5
Dorchester West	3
Eggardon	2
Ferndown North	7
Gillingham	111
Hill Forts & Upper Tarrants	13
Littlemoor & Preston	2
Lytchett Matravers & Upton	16
Lyme & Charmouth	38
Marshwood Vale	12
Melcombe Regis	10
Not recorded/not applicable	25
Portland	4
Puddletown & Lower Winterborne	1
Radipole	1
Rodwell & Wyke	4
Shaftesbury Town	41

Sherborne Rural	1
Sherborne West	4
South East Purbeck	5
St Leonards & St Ives	7
Stalbridge & Marnhull	23
Stour & Allen Vale	7
Sturminster Newton	38
Swanage	29
Upwey & Broadwey	2
Verwood	12
Wareham	36
West Moors & Three Legged Cross	27
West Parley	14
West Purbeck	19
Westham	4
Wimborne Minster	28
Winterborne & Broadmayne	1
Winterborne North	2
Yetminster	1

Use of the grant

We can confirm that we used the total grant by 31 March 2026.

People & Health Scrutiny Committee

20 July 2026

Community Safety Annual Report

For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr M Bell, Public Health, Prevention and Communities

Local Councillor(s):

Senior Leadership Team:

S Crowe - Executive Director, Housing, Prevention and Communities

Report author and job title: Andy Frost, Service Manager for Community Safety

Email: andy.frost@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Dorset Council

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Under the Police & Justice Act 2006, local authorities are required to have Crime & Disorder Committees that review and scrutinise partners' community safety work. The committees should formally review progress at least once a year. In Dorset Council, the function of the Crime & Disorder Committee is fulfilled by the People & Health Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2 This annual scrutiny report provides information on the Council's and partners' work against their statutory community safety functions. Any observations or recommendations from the Committee will be considered by the Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and used to help develop its work.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That members of the Committee consider and comment on the community safety annual report.

3. Reason for the recommendation

- 3.1 To ensure the Council complies with its legal duties relating to community safety.

4. Background

- 4.1 Local authorities are required to have Crime & Disorder Committees that scrutinise the Council's and its partners' delivery of their shared statutory community safety functions. The committees should formally review progress at least once a year.
- 4.2 The Council's and partners' work on community safety is co-ordinated through the Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The CSP is a statutory partnership under the Crime & Disorder Act 1998. It brings together the following responsible authorities who must work together to understand and address community safety issues in their area:
- Dorset Council
 - Dorset Police
 - NHS Dorset
 - Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Authority
 - The Probation Service
- 4.3 Although many of the responsible authorities work across the pan-Dorset area, CSPs are organised around local authority boundaries and there is a separate CSP for the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council area with its own scrutiny arrangements.
- 4.4 Although separate, the Dorset and BCP CSPs work together on joint initiatives and share best practice where relevant and beneficial.
- 4.5 CSPs are responsible for numerous statutory functions. This annual scrutiny report looks at progress and compliance against these.

5. Dorset Community Safety Plan 2023-2026

- 5.1 CSPs are required to produce three-year Community Safety Plans that are revised annually. The plans must be informed by needs assessments and local people's views on community safety issues.
- 5.2 The Dorset CSP's last Community Safety Plan ran from 2023 to 2026 and included the following priorities:
- Domestic Abuse and Stalking
 - Sexual Offences
 - Serious Violence
 - Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Rural Crime

5.3 These were complemented by the following cross cutting issues:

- Mental health
- Substance misuse
- Complex cases / multiple needs
- Violence against women and girls

5.4 Partnership activity to deliver the Community Safety Plan undertaken since the last scrutiny report includes:

- the provision of a wide variety of services aimed at supporting victims of domestic abuse. Services have been provided and commissioned by various partners covering a wide range of needs, from emergency safe accommodation to information and advice. Partners have a Pan Dorset Domestic Abuse Commissioning Group in place to help bring commissioning activity for domestic abuse services and interventions together.
- joint working arrangements relating to domestic abuse including the High Risk Domestic Abuse (HRDA) approach that brings partners together to discuss individual cases, share information and develop joined up responses.
- programmes and initiatives aimed at addressing domestic abuse offending. It is the Council's and partners' ambition to stop people becoming victims of domestic abuse. Addressing offending behaviour is key to achieving that aim.
- regular communication and awareness raising campaigns relating to domestic abuse and sexual offences. These are timed to coincide with wider national campaigns such as the 16 Days of Action Against Domestic Abuse.
- training on a wide range of community safety issues across agencies including domestic abuse, Modern Slavery and Preventing Violent Extremism (training on Modern Slavery and Prevent is mandatory for all Dorset Council staff).
- a range of activities and initiatives to help tackle cases of anti-social behaviour (ASB).
- a wide variety of multi-agency initiatives aimed at addressing violent crime and sexual offences including in the night-time economy.

5.5 Cross cutting issues set out in the Plan are addressed through the delivery of activities relating to specific priorities. For example, violence against women and girls is addressed through the delivery of actions relating to domestic abuse, sexual offences, serious violence etc; substance misuse is addressed through the delivery of actions relating to anti-social behaviour and serious violence etc.

5.6 The CSP monitors and manages the delivery of its Community Safety Plan at each of its quarterly meetings. This includes using performance information to assess impact and direct activity. A summary of performance is provided below with further detail at Appendix 1:

- Since 2018, total crime in Dorset has reduced.
- The proportion of domestic abuse victims that are repeat victims has steadily reduced since June 2022.
- The proportion of domestic abuse perpetrators that are repeat perpetrators has reduced in the last year.
- The number of reported domestic abuse related stalking crimes has steadily increased since 2020/21.
- The number of sexual offences reported to the Police has plateaued over recent years.
- After a significant reduction in ASB reports to the police between 2021 and 2025, the volume has recently started to increase.
- The number of rural crimes has remained stable.
- The volume of fly tipping reports registered by Dorset Council declined between 2018 and 2022 and, after an increase during the following two years, continues to fall.
- There has been a decline in the annual volume of reported violent crime (local definition) and repeat perpetrators of serious violence.
- The volume of knife crimes recorded in Dorset has dropped noticeably since the start of 2024.

* Please note, performance indicators are used to guide partners' work but trends can be influenced by and reflect numerous factors

5.7 In addition, the CSP monitors volumes of hate crime so it can respond to any issues of concern.

5.8 At their meeting on 18 June 2026, members of the CSP agreed their new Community Safety Plan for 2026-29. The Plan retains the same priorities but hate related crime has been added as a cross cutting issue. Including hate related crime in the latest plan ensures partners respond to the prevalence and impact of issues and link with related areas of work including community cohesion and Preventing Violent Extremism.

5.9 It is a requirement for Community Safety Plans to be formally adopted by the local authority for the area and the latest Plan will be taken to People & Health Overview Committee on 21st September 2026.

6. Other plans and strategies

Reducing Reoffending

6.1 In accordance with the Policing and Crime Act 2009, CSPs are responsible for developing reducing reoffending strategies. Locally, partners have traditionally developed pan-Dorset reducing reoffending strategies because organisations and issues are common across the area.

6.3 Partners are in the final year of their current strategy which sets out their vision to reduce reoffending:

‘To cut crime, reduce harm and protect victims by reducing re-offending through joint working and rehabilitation’.

6.4 The strategy contains information on the reasons for reoffending and the services and programmes operating in Dorset to address issues and includes several strategic principles and objectives, including activity around early intervention and targeted support, efficient resource allocation and integrated approaches, and outcome-orientated monitoring.

6.6 The Strategy is delivered by the pan-Dorset Reducing Re-offending Strategy Group. The group will shortly commence work to produce a new strategy for 2027-2030. The new strategy will be brought to Dorset Council to adopt in due course.

Dorset Serious Violence Strategy

6.7 The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 places a duty on the Council and its partners to produce an evidence-based analysis of serious violence and develop and implement a strategy in response.

6.9 The partners responsible for the duty are the same as those responsible for CSPs with the addition of Youth Offending Teams. It is recognised that Education, Prisons and the Young People’s Estate also have a key role to play under the Duty. In Dorset, partners agreed to lead their response to fulfilling the duty through the Dorset CSP and published their first Serious Violence Strategy in January 2024.

6.10 The needs assessment used to inform the Serious Violence Strategy was last updated in January 2026. It identified the same priorities as previous years supporting a continuation of the agreed strategic approach.

- 6.11 The Strategy includes a local definition of serious violence, as required under legislation. This allows partners to ensure their work on serious violence reflects local need. A list of the offences included in the local definition is provided in the appendix along with two further indicators mandated by the Home Office (recorded knife crimes and volume of murder). Figures relating to serious violence in this report reflect the local rather than national definition and are for the Dorset CSP area.
- 6.12 Initiatives undertaken through the Serious Violence Strategy in 2025/26 include a:
- Specialist nurse providing targeted and tailored approaches to prevent highly vulnerable young people being drawn into or becoming a victim of serious violence.
 - Healthy relationships and mentors in violence prevention programme providing universal to focused activity delivered through schools, dealing with relationship and behaviour management, deploying bystander and mentoring approaches.
 - School based level-up project targeting those at high risk of exclusion, which is proven to raise vulnerability to being drawn into or becoming a victim of serious violence.
 - High harm perpetrator tool to identify and secure most appropriate interventions for High Harm Perpetrators.
- 6.14 All projects made significant strides forward during the year, recording successes against their individual project's identified outcomes framework.
- 6.15 The Serious Violence Strategy is closely aligned to and complements partners' Community Safety Plan. Progress against the Strategy is monitored regularly by the CSP.
- 6.16 Partners have been awarded central government funding to cover the costs of responding to the serious violence duty and implementing initiatives in their serious violence strategies. Funding has been channelled through Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and partners in Dorset have worked with the Dorset PCC to determine the allocation and use of funding locally.

Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy

- 6.17 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places duties on local authorities to establish a Local Partnership Board (LPB) for domestic abuse and produce a needs assessment and strategy relating to support for victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation.

- 6.18 The Dorset CSP took on the functions of the LPB for the Dorset Council area and its terms of reference and membership were updated accordingly.
- 6.19 Dorset Council, in conjunction with the CSP, revised its Domestic Abuse Strategy in 2025 with details presented to Cabinet in October 2025. The revision incorporated the findings of an independent audit of the Council's previous strategy, conducted in October 2024.
- 6.20 Activity under the revised Strategy focuses on prevention, supporting victims, and tackling offending. Key highlights following publication include:
- Partners' commitment to the High-Risk Domestic Abuse (HRDA) multi-agency information-sharing process, including the allocation of additional resource to ensure the model remains effective and sustainable.
 - Progress to formalise the Pan-Dorset Stalking Clinic.
 - Exploration of options to diversify the local safe accommodation offer.
 - Establishment of the Pan-Dorset Domestic Abuse Commissioning Group.
 - Work to develop a lived experience group.
 - Continued collaboration between partners in response to changes in local processes and policy.
- 6.21 In the Strategy, there is an increased focus on ensuring services are accessible to better meet the needs of all members of the community.
- 6.22 The Domestic Abuse Strategy is closely aligned to and complements partners' Community Safety Plan. Progress against the Strategy is monitored regularly by the CSP.

7. Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)

- 7.1 The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 requires that following a domestic homicide, the local area should organise a multi-agency review. This requirement came into force on 13th April 2011. Reviews should be undertaken on both homicides and suicides.
- 7.2 The statutory responsibility for coordinating Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) lies with the local CSP.

- 7.3 The purpose of a DHR is to consider the circumstances that led to a death and identify where responses could be improved in the future. Reviews aim to ensure agencies are responding appropriately to victims of domestic abuse by offering and putting in place appropriate support mechanisms, procedures, resources and interventions with an aim to avoid future incidents of domestic homicide and violence.
- 7.4 DHRs are not inquiries into how a victim died or who is culpable; that is a matter for coroners and criminal courts to determine as appropriate. DHRs are required to be anonymised to protect individuals' identities.
- 7.5 Dorset CSP has conducted numerous DHRs. Where appropriate, reviews have been published on the CSP pages of the Dorset Council website.
- 7.6 Lessons learned from DHRs are formulated into action plans, which are disseminated across all partners and any additionally involved agencies, and progress against recommendations is monitored by the CSP.

8. Prevent and Channel

- 8.1 The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on local authorities to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Although not a CSP function, there is a requirement for the Council to work closely with key partners in the delivery of Prevent.
- 8.2 The Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales (updated in March 2024), sets out the requirements for local authorities which include to:
- Work in partnership with other agencies to co-ordinate Prevent activity.
 - Carry out work to understand the risks in the local area and have plans in place to respond.
 - Assess the risk of individuals being drawn into terrorism and ensure there is a referral pathway in place for those people susceptible to radicalisation.
 - Ensure staff are appropriately trained.
 - Carry out work that reduces permissive environments, including ensuring council resources are not used to provide a platform for extremists or to disseminate extremist views.
 - Collaborate with other councils on Prevent issues.
 - Work with other agencies and organisations supporting children.
 - Monitor and quality assure Prevent delivery.

- 8.3 Officers assess progress against Prevent duties each year using the Home Office's Prevent Duty Toolkit for Local Authorities and through an annual benchmarking exercise with the Home Office's Regional Prevent Advisor. Dorset Council's most recent benchmarking results demonstrate it continues to be compliant in all areas and exceeding in most. Within the results there are some suggestions for development which will be taken forward with partners through the relevant structures.
- 8.4 Channel Panels are multi-agency practitioner groups that come together when someone is identified as being at risk of being drawn into extremism. Panels put support packages in place to steer individuals away from extremist activity.
- 8.5 The Channel Duty Guidance, sets out expectations for local authorities in carrying out their functions in relation to Channel.
- 8.6 The Dorset Channel Panel meets monthly and is Chaired by the Corporate Director for Care and Protection, and Deputy Chaired by the Director of Adult Social Services.
- 8.7 The Home Office recognises that local authority elected members play a key role in local Prevent delivery. They have published a 'Prevent Elected Members Handbook' that explains the Prevent programme in-depth, helps build understanding and can be used in meetings and when engaging with local communities.
9. **Alternative options considered**
- 9.1 Not applicable, statutory requirement.
10. **Legal considerations**
- 10.1 Legislation dictates that the Council's formal Crime & Disorder Committee should scrutinise partners' community safety work at least once a year.
11. **Financial implications**
- 11.1 The Dorset CSP does not receive funding directly, however partners' plans and strategies clarify where they will focus their time and effort and their broad activity to meet priorities.
- 11.2 New Burdens funding has been made available to Dorset Council to deliver statutory duties relating to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Central government has made available funding to partners to deliver the serious violence duty.

- 11.4 From time to time, central government makes available one-off funding opportunities to support community safety work such as tackling domestic abuse. When possible, partners apply for such funds.

12. Natural environment, climate and ecology implications

- 12.1 None.

13. Well-being and health implications

- 13.1 Tackling crime and the fear of crime has a significant impact on health and wellbeing.

14. Other implications

- 14.1 Community safety as set out in the report.

15. Risk implications

- 15.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

16. Equalities

- 16.1 EqlAs have been completed on the CSP's various plans and strategies.

- 16.2 The EqlA for the Community Safety Plan covered serious violence issues drawing on findings from the serious violence needs assessment work. Given that, a separate EqlA was not needed for the Serious Violence Strategy.

- 16.3 The EqlA process identified opportunities which have been used to help steer the delivery of the Plans and Strategies.

17. Appendices

Appendix – Performance Report

18. **Background papers**

[Community Safety Plan 2023 - 2026 \(2025-2026 Refresh\)](#)

[Pan-Dorset Reducing Reoffending Strategy 2024 to 2027](#)

[Dorset Serious Violence Strategy](#)

[Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025 to 2028](#)

[Domestic Homicide Reviews](#)

[Prevent Elected Members Handbook](#)

19. **Report sign-off**

- 19.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director, Governance and Assurance (Monitoring Officer), the Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

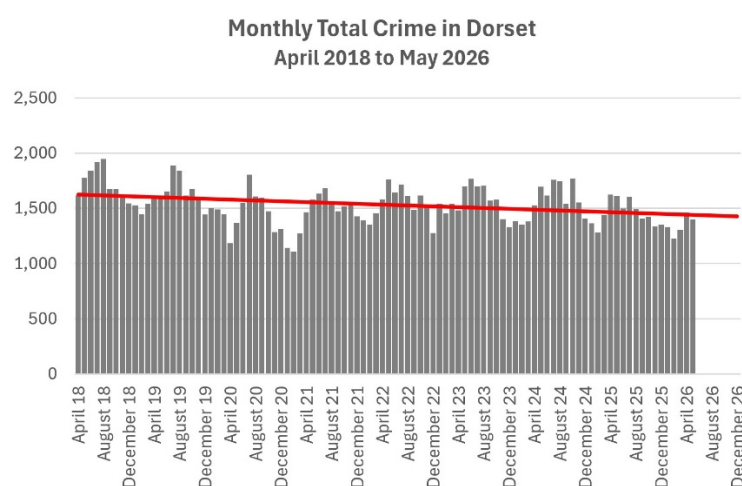
Introduction

The Dorset CSP monitors its progress through a series of performance indicators.

The graphs below illustrate the recent changes observed in CSP priority areas. Two graphs are shown for each indicator – the first indicates the monthly indicator value/volume, the second illustrates the monthly rolling average value for each¹. All data relates solely to instances recorded within the Dorset CSP (Dorset Council) area.

Monthly volumes of total crime are shown as a bar chart, with each month distinguished as a separate vertical bar.

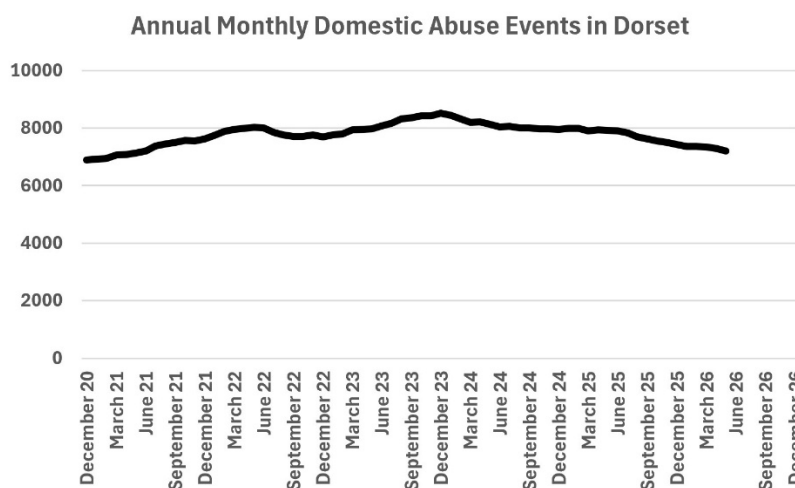
Total Crime (2018 to Present)



Priority One: Domestic Abuse

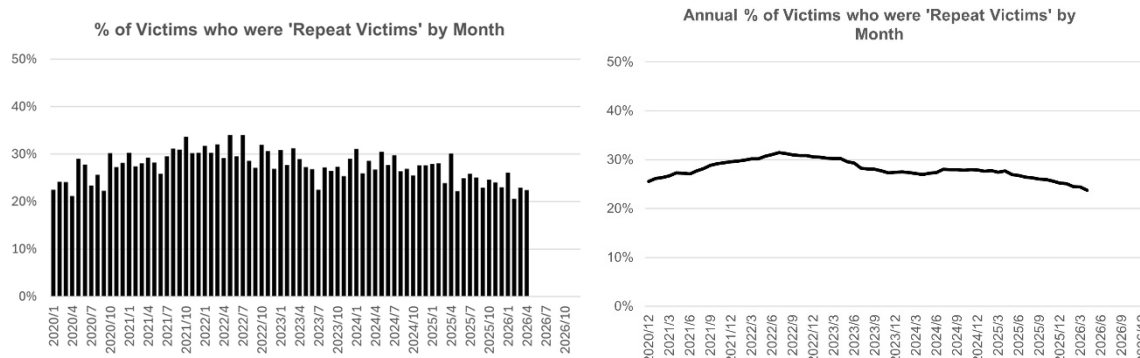
The graph below shows the 'monthly annual' volume of domestic abuse events (a combination of crimes and non-crime incidents) reported to the Police in the Dorset CSP (Dorset Council) area. The map illustrates the relative distribution of domestic abuse events.

¹ For individual priorities, a 'monthly annual' figure has been used. These figures represent, for each month, the total number of crimes recorded during the preceding twelve months. This approach removes any seasonal variations, allowing a clearer identification of any long term trend in the changing volumes of crime.

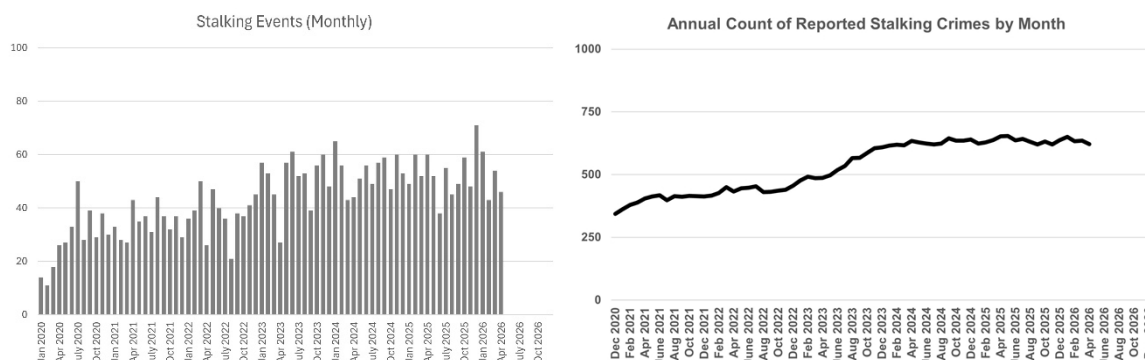


The Dorset CSP has three performance indicators related to domestic abuse and stalking:

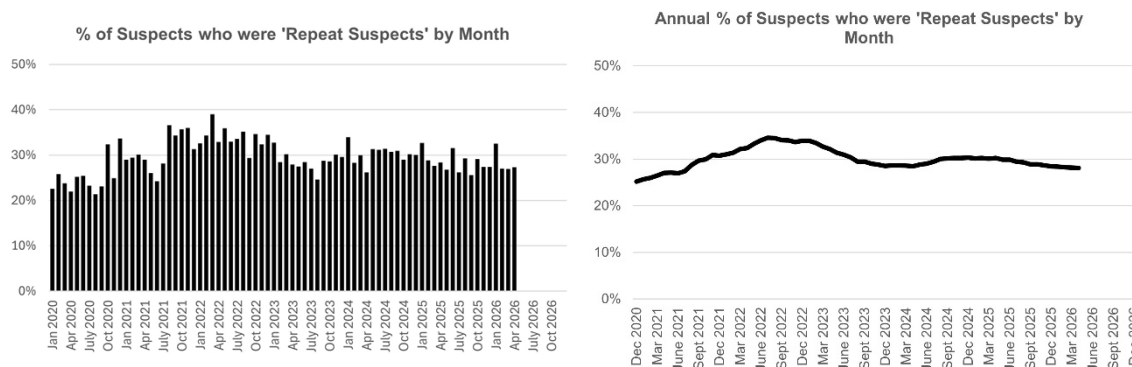
Measure 1.1 - *A reduction in the annual proportion of all domestic abuse victims which are identifiable 'repeat' victims.*



Measure 1.2 - *A reduction in the number of domestic abuse related stalking crimes reported annually.*



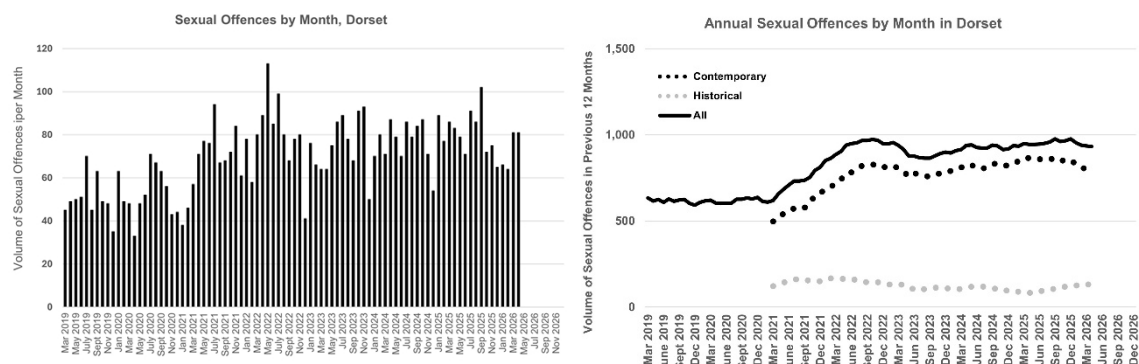
Measure 1.3 - A reduction in the annual percentage of domestic abuse perpetrators identified as 'repeat' perpetrators.



Priority Two: Sexual Offences

The Dorset CSP has one performance measure for sexual offences:

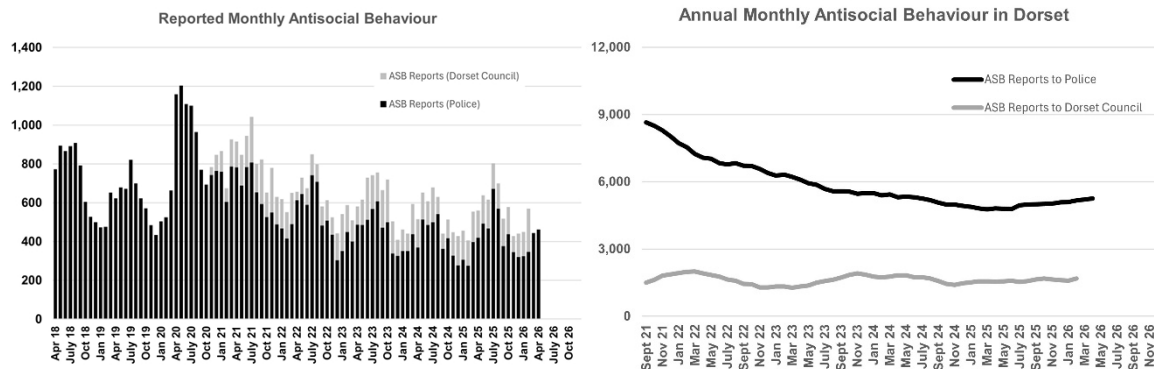
Measure 2.1a - An annual reduction in the number of sexual offence crimes recorded by the Police.



Priority Three: Antisocial Behaviour

The Dorset CSP has adopted two measures for performance for antisocial behaviour. One is shown here. The other is a series of measures each based on a specific local area where antisocial behaviour was thought to be a particular priority.

Measure 3.1a - An annual reduction in the number of antisocial behaviour crimes recorded by the police, countywide.



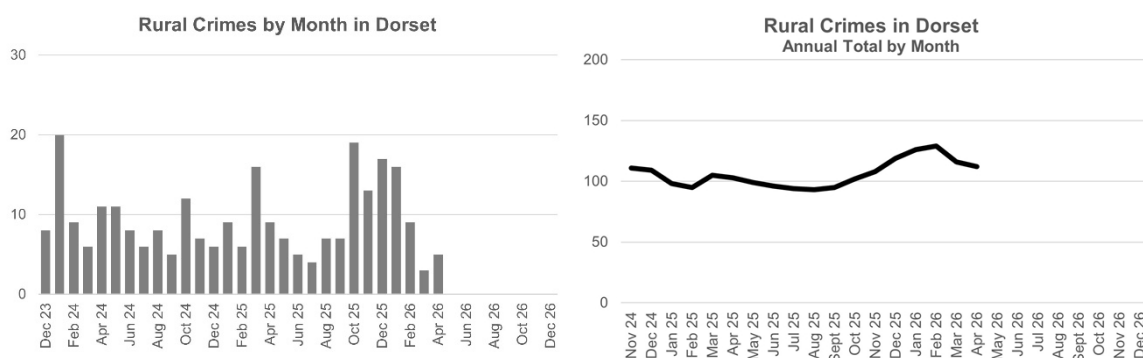
Priority Four: Rural Crime

Dorset Police's definition of 'rural crime', which has also been adopted by the Dorset CSP, includes the following crimes:

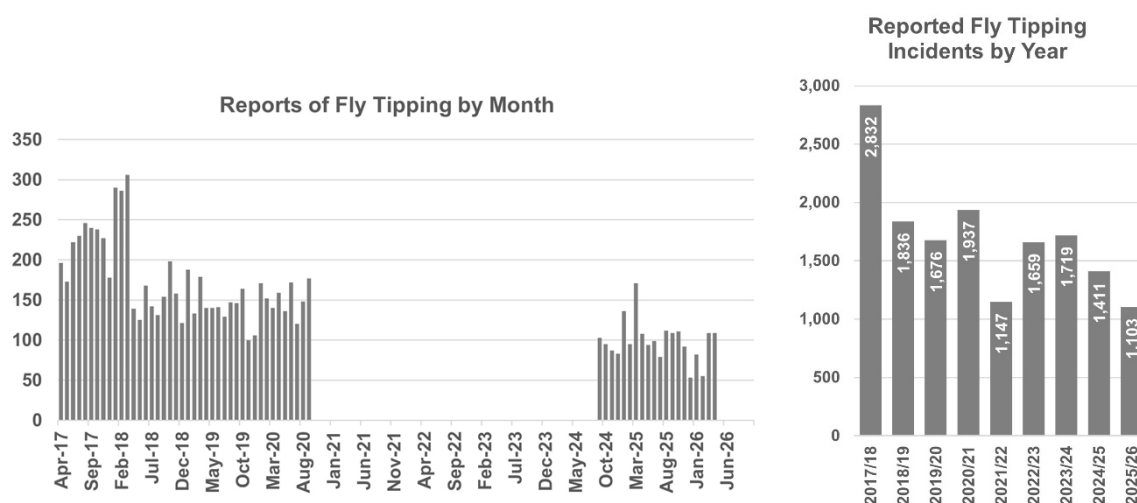
- Equine crime
- Theft of farm machinery
- Theft of fuel
- Theft of livestock
- Livestock worrying
- Theft of plant
- Poaching

Two performance measures have been adopted under this priority:

Measure 4.1 - A reduction each year in the total number of rural crimes, as defined by Dorset's Rural Crime Unit.



Measure 4.3 - An annual reduction in the volume of reported incidents of fly tipping



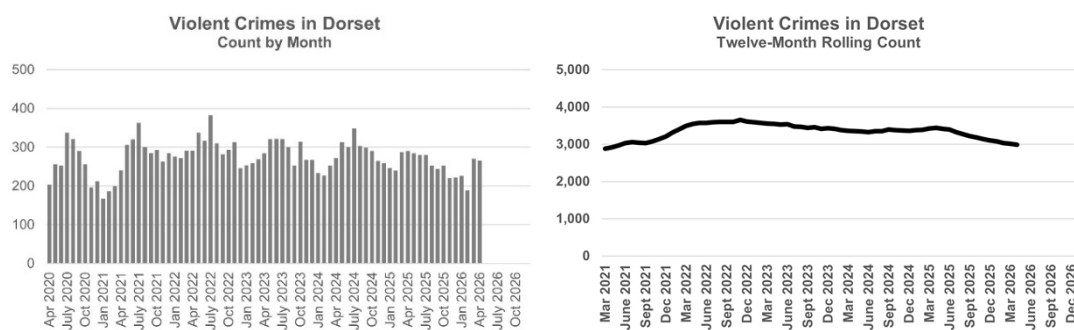
Priority Five: Violent Crime

The Dorset CSP's definition of 'serious violence' includes:

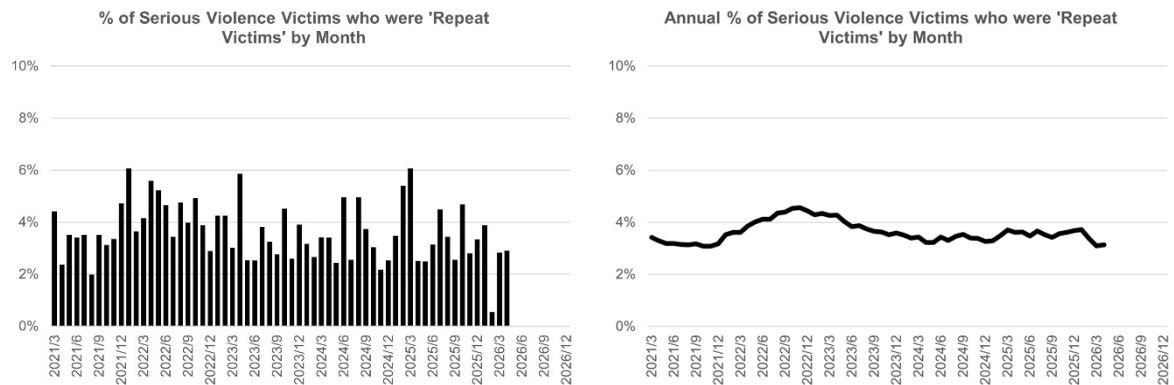
- Violence against the person (excluding harassment; non-injury violence against the person; malicious communication; and stalking)
- Knife and gun crime
- Possession of weapons with intent
- Aggravated burglary
- All sexual offences
- Domestic violence with injury
- Robbery
- Arson with the intent of danger life

There are five performances indicators which track the CSP's progress:

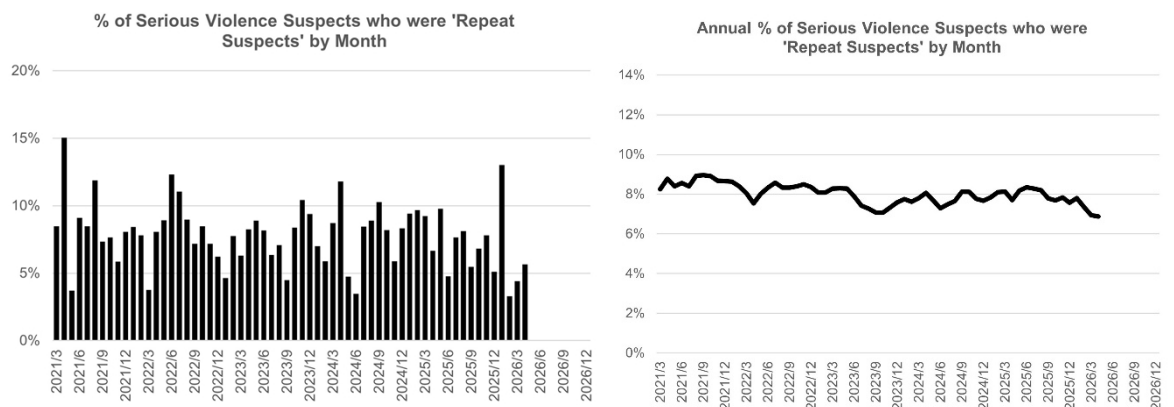
Measure 6.1a - An annual reduction in recorded violent crimes throughout the Dorset Council area.



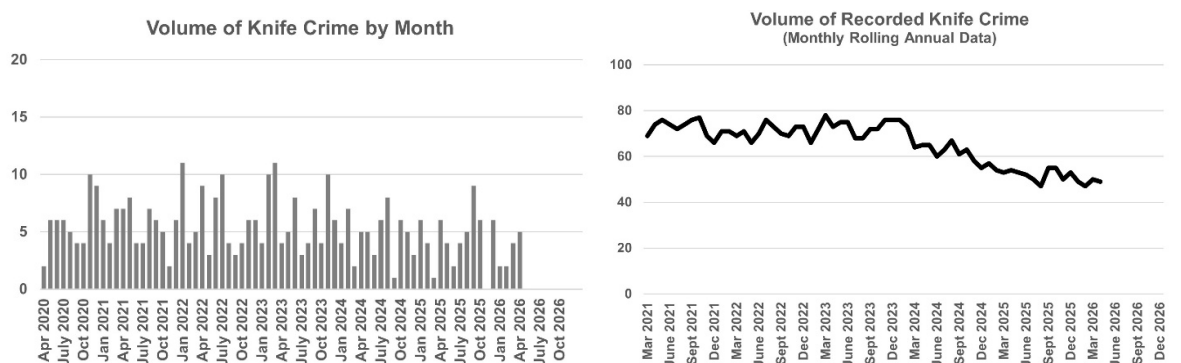
Measure 6.2 - A reduction in the proportion of victims of serious violence that are identified as 'repeat victims'



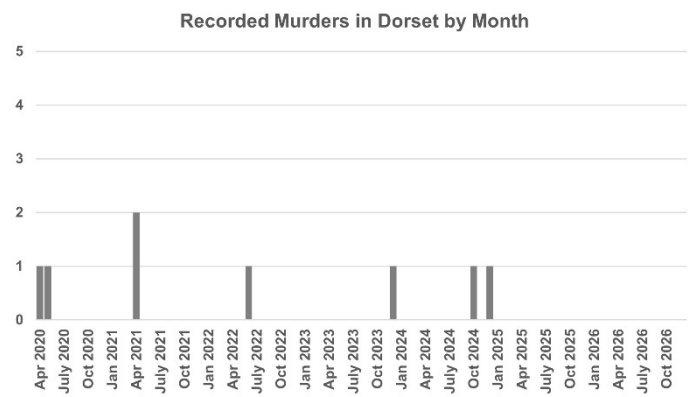
Measure 6.3 - A reduction in the proportion of perpetrators of serious violence that are identified as 'repeat offenders'



Measure 6.4 – Monthly count of recorded knife crimes



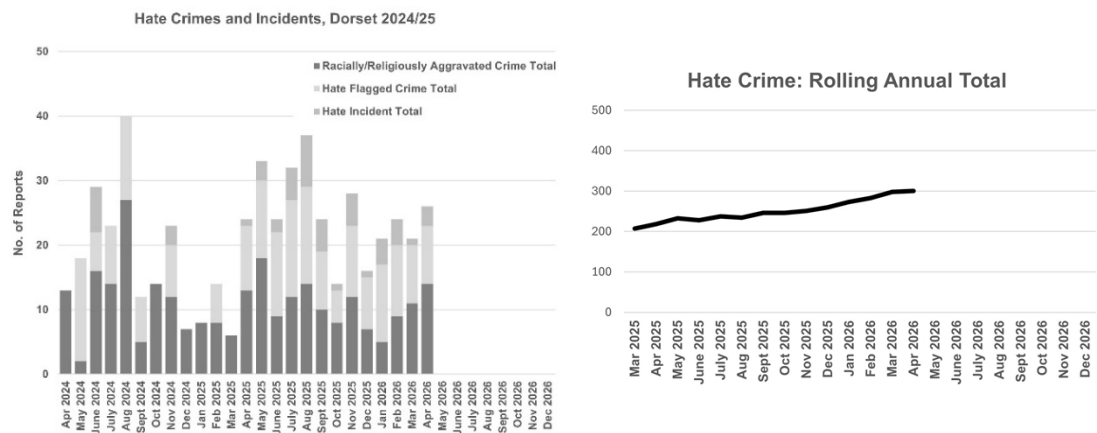
Measure 6.5 – Volume of murder



Cross Cutting Issue – Hate Crime

The volume of reported hate crime in Dorset is shown in the graph below

Hate Crime Data



People and Health Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Meeting Date: 20 July 2026

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
Young Carer Support	To review support available for young carers.	Cllr Clare Sutton – Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education	• Raised at meeting on 17 November • Summer 2026
CQC Inspection Outcome	Feedback from the CQC Inspection	Cllr Steve Robinson – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health Julia Ingram – Director, Adult Social Care	
Housing Strategy	To scrutinise and review the Housing Strategy.	Iain Sim – Interim Corporate Director for Housing Cllr Gill Taylor – Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	
Quarterly Performance Monitoring	• To review the most recent performance information and use this to agree items to add to the committee work programme for further analysis.	Chris Heighway – Performance and Analytics Team Manager Cllr Nick Ireland – Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Communications, Performance and Safeguarding	

Annual Community Safety Scrutiny Report	It is a legal requirement to provide a report on community safety activity to the Council's statutory Crime & Disorder Committee at least once a year.	Andy Frost – Service Manager for Community Safety Cllr Gill Taylor – Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	
Housing Voids	To review the current performance and processes for void housing.	Julian Wain – Strategic Property Adviser Cllr Gill Taylor – Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	

Meeting Date: 5 October 2026

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
Children and Young People's Mental Health		Cllr Clare Sutton – Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	- Raised at the meeting on 22 September 2025. - To review the changes to CYP Mental Health services after 12 months
Quarterly Performance Monitoring	To review the most recent performance information and use this to agree items to add to the committee work programme for further analysis.	Chris Heighway – Performance and Analytics Team Manager Cllr Nick Ireland – Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	

Deep Dive into CHC	To receive the deep dive report that the committee commissioned in April 2026.	Julia Ingram – Director, Adult Social Care Cllr Steve Robinson – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health	

Meeting Date: 30 November 2026

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report			
Complaints Annual Report			

Meeting Date: 26 January 2027

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan		Sean Cremer – Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer)	
Quarterly Performance Monitoring	To review the most recent performance information and use this to agree items to add to the committee work programme for further analysis.	Chris Heighway – Performance and Analytics Team Manager	

		Cllr Nick Ireland – Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	

Meeting Date: 5 April 2027

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
Quarterly Performance Monitoring Page 462	To review the most recent performance information and use this to agree items to add to the committee work programme for further analysis.	Chris Heighway – Performance and Analytics Team Manager Cllr Nick Ireland – Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	

Meeting Date: 10 May 2027

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information

Meeting Date: Unscheduled Committee Items

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
Integrated Neighbourhood Teams		Cllr Steve Robinson – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	•
Better Care Fund		Sarah Sewell – Head of Commissioning for Older People, Home First and Market Access Cllr Steve Robinson – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	•
Reablement service performance		Cllr Steve Robinson – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	• Raised at meeting on 17 November • TBC 2026

Informal Work of the Committee:

Date	Topic	Format	Members	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
May 2026	Annual NHS Quality Accounts		People & Health Scrutiny Committee	George Dare – Senior Democratic Services Officer	To provide a response to local NHS Trust Quality Accounts.

Quarterly	Review of the committee's performance and risk dashboards.	Informal Meeting	People & Health Scrutiny Committee	Chris Heighway – Performance and Analytics Team Manager	Review of the dashboards to identify potential future areas for review by the committee.
In progress	Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)	Enquiry Day / Working Group	Cllrs Coombs, Somper and Bolwell	Kath Saunders – Head of Locality and Strategy (North)	Decision to establish an enquiry day was made at the People & Health Scrutiny Committee on 24 October 2024.

Annual Items:

Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report – November

Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report

Complaints Annual Report and statutory children's services complaints reporting

Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan – January

Community Safety Annual Report

Birth to Settled Adulthood – Independent Chair's Annual Report

The Cabinet Forward Plan - July to October 2026 (Publication date – 23 JUNE 2026)

Explanatory Note:

This Forward Plan contains future items to be considered by the Cabinet and Council. It is published 28 days before the next meeting of the Committee. The plan includes items for the meeting including key decisions. Each item shows if it is 'open' to the public or to be considered in a private part of the meeting.

Definition of Key Decisions

Key decisions are defined in Dorset Council's Constitution as decisions of the Cabinet which are likely to -

- a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates (**Thresholds - £500k**); or
- b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority."

In determining the meaning of "*significant*" for these purposes the Council will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000 Act. Officers will consult with lead members to determine significance and sensitivity.

Cabinet Members and Portfolios 2026/27

Nick Ireland	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding
Richard Biggs	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth & Strategic Assets
Jon Andrews	Place Services
Shane Bartlett	Planning
Simon Clifford	Resources & Finance
Matt Bell	Public Health, Prevention & Communities
Steve Robinson	Adult Social Care & Health
Clare Sutton	Children, Families & Education
Gill Taylor	Housing & Homelessness
Ben Wilson	Transformation, Customer & Workforce

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
2026					

July

End of year performance report Key Decision - No Public Access - Open Dorset Council Annual report End of year report on council plan delivery and broader organisational health.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026		Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding	<i>Liz Crocker, Head of Strategy</i> <i>liz.crocker@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Chris Heighway, Performance and Analytics Team Manager</i> <i>chris.leighway@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Chief Executive</i>
DFT rental E-scooter trial Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Seeking Cabinet approval to enable two areas of Dorset to introduce an e-scooter rental service trial. The two areas are: 1) Upton and Corfe Mullen 2) Weymouth, Portland, Chickerell and Dorchester.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026	Place and Resources Overview Committee 4 Jun 2026	Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>Christopher Whitehouse, Projects Team Manager</i> <i>christopher.whitehouse@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Kate Tunks, Service Manager for Infrastructure and Assets</i> <i>kate.tunks@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Crisis and Resilience Fund Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Following the authorisation of the Crisis and Resilience fund “day 1” offer in March Cabinet, this paper seeks authorisation for the next iteration of support projects as part of the programme.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026	People and Health Overview Committee 6 Jul 2026	Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement	<i>Executive Director - Modernisation and Customer Delivery (Lisa Cotton)</i>
Review of Financial Assessment and Care Contributions Policy Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The policy was due to be reviewed and to update the policy in line with some legal challenges to the Care Act 2014 since its implementation. In doing so we have also amalgamated the Financial Assessment and Care Contributions policy and the Deferred Payment Agreement Policy and the two impact significantly on each other.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026	People and Health Overview Committee 6 Jul 2026	Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health, Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding	<i>Nicola Fowler, Financial Assessments Team Manager nicola.fowler@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031 - First Review Key Decision - No Public Access - Open Item relating to the making (adoption) of the neighbourhood plan review following an independent examination of the plan.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026		Cabinet Member for Planning	<i>Ed Gerry, Community Planning Manager</i> ed.gerry@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)</i>
Endorsement of Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan Key Decision - No Public Access - Open Dorset Council approval of the Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan, prepared in collaboration with Dorset's key visitor economy stakeholders.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026	Place and Resources Overview Committee 9 Jul 2026	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth & Strategic Assets	<i>Jon Bird, Service Manager for Economic Development and Skills</i> jon.bird@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)</i>
Dorset Council Local Plan Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Progression of the Dorset Council Local Plan.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026		Cabinet Member for Planning	<i>Mike Garrity, Corporate Director for Planning</i> mike.garrity@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, <i>Terry Sneller, Strategic Planning Manager</i> terry.sneller@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
SEND Reform Plan Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open All Local Authorities were required to submit a Local SEND Reform Plan to the DfE by 19 June 2026. The plan is an important first step for local areas to set out how they will lay the foundations for SEND Reform, and design an approach tailored to their local context.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026		Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education	<i>Jen Furnell, Corporate Director for Education and Learning</i> jen.furnell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>
Update from Shareholder Committee for Dorset Centre of Excellence on 15 June 2026 Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Fully exempt To consider an update report from the Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centr of Excellence.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026		Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education	<i>Ross Bowell, Head of Service - Health, Education & SEND Commissioning</i> ross.bowell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>
Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Working Group - Final Report and Recommendations to Cabinet Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The EHCP Working group completed its inquiry and took a report to the People & Health	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026		Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education	<i>George Dare, Senior Democratic and Governance Officer Tel: 01305 224185</i> george.dare@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Scrutiny Committee on the 16 April 2026. It was agreed to take forward the recommendations to Cabinet. The author of the EHCP report is Cllr T Coombs, as the Chair of the People & Health Scrutiny Committee.					
Procurement - Dorset highways Contractor Resource (Labour Top Up) Framework Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The procurement of the Highways Contractor Resource (Labour Top up) was approved by Cabinet as part of the Procurement Forward Plan Report considered at its meeting on 12 March 2024.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026		Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>Neil Turner, Service Manager for Network Operations</i> <i>neil.turner@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)</i>
Youth Justice Plan Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To approve the Youth Justice Plan for 2026/27.	Decision Maker Dorset Council	Decision Date 22 Oct 2026	Cabinet 28 Jul 2026 People and Health Overview Committee 6 Jul 2026	Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education	<i>David Webb, Head of Service - Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service</i> <i>david.webb@bcpcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>
September					

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
July 2026 (period 4) financial management report 26/27 Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider the Period 4 financial management report.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 8 Sep 2026		Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance	<i>Sean Cremer, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i> <i>sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Sian Hedger, Deputy s151 Officer</i> <i>sian.hedger@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i>
October 2026					

Dorset Community Safety Plan 2026 - 2029 Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open New statutory three-year community safety plan for the Dorset Council area. The plan has been written and agreed by the Council and partners through the Dorset Community Safety Partnership and now requires formal adoption by Dorset Council.	Decision Maker Dorset Council	Decision Date 22 Oct 2026	Cabinet 6 Oct 2026 People and Health Overview Committee 21 Sep 2026	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	<i>Andy Frost, Service Manager for Community Safety</i> <i>andy.frost@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director - Housing, Prevention and Communities (Sam Crowe)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open This is the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership's Annual Report 25/26 detailing the Partnership's activity from April 2025-March 2026 and is for Cabinet's information.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 6 Oct 2026		Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education	<i>Megan Cameron-Brown, Head of Quality Assurance and Partnerships megan.cameron-brown@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>
Household collection of plastic film and flexible packaging Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To set out the legal requirements, operational, financial and environmental considerations associated with the statutory requirement to collect plastic film and flexible packaging from April 2027, and to seek approval to proceed with implementation.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 6 Oct 2026		Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>Louise Bryant, Service Development Manager louise.bryant@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Lisa Mounty, Service Development Manager lisa.mounty@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)</i>
Parking Review and Strategy Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Part exempt To consider the Parking Strategy for Dorset Council.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 6 Oct 2026	Place and Resources Overview Committee 9 Jul 2026	Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>David Rosselli, Transport & Parking Strategy Lead david.rosselli@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Jack Wiltshire, Corporate Director for Highways and Engineering jack.wiltshire@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
November 2026					
Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To consider the adoption of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 10 Nov 2026	Place and Resources Overview Committee TBC	Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>Russell Goff, Senior Ranger</i> <i>russell.goff@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)</i>
September 2026 (period 6) financial management report 26/27 Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider the period 6 financial management report 2026/27.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 10 Nov 2026		Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance	<i>Sean Cremer, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i> <i>sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Sian Hedger, Deputy s151 Officer</i> <i>sian.hedger@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i>
Crisis and Resilience Fund Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The policy to back up the Crisis and Resilience Fund Governance.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 10 Nov 2026		Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention & Communities	<i>Laura Cornette, Business Partner - Communities and Partnerships</i> <i>Laura.cornette@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director - Modernisation and Customer Delivery (Lisa Cotton)</i>
December 2026					

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Midyear performance update Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To provide an update on mid-year progress in council plan delivery and broader organisational health.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 8 Dec 2026		Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding	<i>Liz Crocker, Head of Strategy</i> <i>liz.crocker@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Chris Heighway, Performance and Analytics Team Manager</i> <i>chris.heighway@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Chief Executive</i>
February 2027					
December 2026 Quarter 3 financial management plan 2026/2027 Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider the Quarter 3 financial management plan 2026/27.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 2 Feb 2027		Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance	<i>Sean Cremer, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i> <i>sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Sian Hedger, Deputy s151 Officer</i> <i>sian.hedger@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i>
Budget & Medium term financial plan strategy report (MTFP) Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To consider the medium Term Financial (MTFP) and budget strategy.	Decision Maker Dorset Council	Decision Date 11 Feb 2027	Cabinet 2 Feb 2027	Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance	<i>Sean Cremer, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i> <i>sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Sian Hedger, Deputy s151 Officer</i> <i>sian.hedger@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, Corporate Development - Section 151 Officer</i>

Private/Exempt Items for Decision

Each item in the plan above marked as 'private' will refer to one of the following paragraphs.

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the shadow council proposes:-
 - (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

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The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE) Forward Plan June to September 2026 (Publication date – 14 MAY 2026)

Explanatory Note:

This Forward Plan contains future items to be considered by the Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence. It is published 28 days before the next meeting of the Committee. The plan includes items for the meeting including key decisions. Each item shows if it is 'open' to the public or to be considered in a private part of the meeting.

Definition of Key Decisions

Key decisions are defined in Dorset Council's Constitution as decisions which are likely to -

- a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates (**Thresholds - £500k**); or
- b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority."

In determining the meaning of "*significant*" for these purposes the Council will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000 Act. Officers will consult with lead members to determine significance and sensitivity.

Committee Membership 2026/27

Cllr Nick Ireland – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Cllr Richard Biggs – Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth

Cllr Simon Clifford – Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Strategy

Cllr Clare Sutton – Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education & Skills

Cllr Gill Taylor – Cabinet Member for Health and Housing

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
June 2026				

Dorset Council Delegated Decisions (if required) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note any decisions taken under delegation.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 15 Jun 2026	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>
Dorset Council Commissioner's Report Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an overview of the current position in relation to delivery by the Dorset Centre of Excellence against the commissioning agreement.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 15 Jun 2026	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Ross Bowell, Head of Service - Health, Education & SEND Commissioning ross.bowell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>
DCoE - Report of the Chair of the Board Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an update of the	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 15 Jun 2026	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Chair, Dorset Centre of Excellence Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
current situation at the Dorset Centre of Excellence and the Coombe House School, including progress made in relation to governance, leadership, staffing, estate, community use and finance.				
Review of Terms of Reference Key Decision - No Public Access - Open Do note the shareholder committee terms of reference.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 15 Jun 2026	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	<i>Grace Evans, Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer</i> <i>grace.evans@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i>
Future site options Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Fully exempt To consider future options for the site.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 15 Jun 2026	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	<i>Chief Executive, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer), Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey), Executive Director - Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth (Jan Britton)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
September 2026				
Dorset Council Delegated Decisions (if required) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note any decisions taken under delegation.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 14 Sep 2026	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>
Dorset Council Commissioner's Report Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an overview of the current position in relation to delivery by the Dorset Centre of Excellence against the commissioning agreement.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 14 Sep 2026	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Ross Bowell, Head of Service - Health, Education & SEND Commissioning ross.bowell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>
DCoE - Report of the Chair of the Board Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an update of the current situation at the Dorset	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 14 Sep 2026	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Chair, Dorset Centre of Excellence Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
Centre of Excellence and the Coombe House School, including progress made in relation to governance, leadership, staffing, estate, community use and finance.				
Annual Reports				

Review of Terms of Reference (June) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note the shareholder committee terms of reference.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	<i>Grace Evans, Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer</i> <i>grace.evans@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i>
Annual Performance Report (December) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider the Coombe House Annual Performance Report.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>

Private/Exempt Items for Decision

Each item in the plan above marked as 'private' will refer to one of the following paragraphs.

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the shadow council proposes:-
 - (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.



Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd Forward Plan - June to September 2026 (Publication date – 21 MAY 2026)

Explanatory Note:

This Forward Plan contains future items to be considered by the Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd. It is published 28 days before the next meeting of the Committee. The plan includes items for the meeting including key decisions. Each item shows if it is 'open' to the public or to be considered in a private part of the meeting.

Definition of Key Decisions

Key decisions are defined in Dorset Council's Constitution as decisions which are likely to -

- (a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates (**Thresholds - £500k**); or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority."

In determining the meaning of "*significant*" for these purposes the Council will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000 Act. Officers will consult with lead members to determine significance and sensitivity.

Committee Membership 2026/27

Cllr Nick Ireland – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance, Communications and Safeguarding

Cllr Richard Biggs – Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth and Strategic Assets

Cllr Steve Robinson – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Cllr Gill Taylor – Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness

Cllr Ben Wilson – Cabinet Member for Transformation, Customer and Workforce

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
June 2026				

Dorset Council Delegated Decisions (as required) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note any decisions taken under delegation.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 29 Jun 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health	<i>Director - Adult Social Care (Julia Ingram)</i>
Dorset Council Organisational Update Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To present the developments on the part of the Council relevant to Care Dorset.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 29 Jun 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health	<i>Sam Poole, Interim Corporate Director for Commissioning & Improvement samuel.poole@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Director - Adult Social Care (Julia Ingram)</i>
Care Dorset Update Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an update for shareholder members on matters relating to Care Dorset.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 29 Jun 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health	<i>Managing Director, Care Dorset Director - Adult Social Care (Julia Ingram)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
Review of Terms of Reference Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note the shareholder committee terms of reference.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 29 Jun 2026	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding	<i>Grace Evans, Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer grace.evans@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i>
Trading Company proposal Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Fully exempt To propose to establish a new trading company.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 29 Jun 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health	<i>Managing Director, Care Dorset Director - Adult Social Care (Julia Ingram)</i>
September 2026				

Dorset Council Delegated Decisions (as required) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note any decisions taken under delegation.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 28 Sep 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health	<i>Director - Adult Social Care (Julia Ingram)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
Dorset Council Organisational Update Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To present the developments on the part of the council relevant to Care Dorset.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 28 Sep 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health	<i>Sam Poole, Interim Corporate Director for Commissioning & Improvement</i> <i>samuel.poole@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Director - Adult Social Care (Julia Ingram)</i>
Care Dorset Update Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an update for Shareholder members on matters relating to Care Dorset.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 28 Sep 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health	<i>Managing Director, Care Dorset</i> <i>Director - Adult Social Care (Julia Ingram)</i>
Care Dorset Annual Performance Report Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider the Care Dorset Annual Performance Report.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 28 Sep 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health	<i>Managing Director, Care Dorset</i> <i>Director - Adult Social Care (Julia Ingram)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
Annual report and Year end accounts Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To receive the annual financial report.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 28 Sep 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health	<i>Managing Director, Care Dorset</i> <i>Director - Adult Social Care (Julia Ingram)</i>
Annual Reports				

Care Dorset Annual Business Plan (March) Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Fully exempt For the Shareholder Committee to consider progress in delivering the 5 year business plan, and any review of the plan as necessary.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health	<i>Managing Director, Care Dorset</i> <i>Director - Adult Social Care (Julia Ingram)</i>
Review of Terms of Reference (June) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note the shareholder committee terms of reference.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding	<i>Grace Evans, Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer</i> <i>grace.evans@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
Care Dorset Annual Performance Report (June) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider the Care Dorset Annual Performance Report.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health	<i>Managing Director, Care Dorset Director - Adult Social Care (Julia Ingram)</i>
Annual report and Year end accounts (June) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To receive the annual financial report.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health	<i>Managing Director, Care Dorset Director - Adult Social Care (Julia Ingram)</i>

Private/Exempt Items for Decision

Each item in the plan above marked as 'private' will refer to one of the following paragraphs.

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the shadow council proposes:-
 - (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

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