

A review of homelessness in the Dorset Council local authority area

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Neil Morland & Amber Christou



NEIL MORLAND CO
HOUSING CONSULTANTS

Dorset Council

Dorset Council is a unitary local authority that was founded on 01st April 2019, with a history dating back to ancient times. The Council's boundaries are largely co-terminus with those of Dorset Ceremonial County area. The Council's leadership consists of a Chair of the Council, a Leader of the Council and a Chief Executive. The Council has 82 seats. The Council is responsible for administering the whole range of local government functions, including adult social care, children services, housing services, and much more.

Neil Morland & Co

Neil Morland & Co are housing consultants, working throughout England, Scotland and Wales. Formed in 2011, we provide advice and assistance to national and local government, housing associations, voluntary organisations and others. We believe there should be adequate housing for everyone. Using authoritative evidence and our unique expertise, we improve the quality and potential of landlord, communitywide and specialist housing services.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	6
1.1 PREAMBLE.....	6
1.2 DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS.....	7
1.3 METHODOLOGY.....	8
1.4 NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS CONTEXT.....	17
2.0 LEVELS OF HOMELESSNESS.....	27
2.1 CURRENT LEVELS OF HOMELESSNESS	27
CHART 19: ROUGH SLEEPERS BY AGE GROUP, DORSET 2019	40
2.2 FUTURE LEVELS OF HOMELESSNESS.....	41
2.3 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE LEVELS OF HOMELESSNESS.....	48
3.0 PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS	50
3.1 EARLY HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION ACTIVITIES.....	56
3.2 PRE-CRISIS HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION ACTIVITIES.....	62
3.3 PREVENTING THE REOCCURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS.....	66
3.4 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT ACTIVITIES TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS.....	66
4.0 SECURING ACCOMMODATION	66
4.1 TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION	67
4.2 OTHER ACCOMMODATION	70
4.3 CONCLUSION ABOUT ACTIVITIES TO SECURE ACCOMMODATION	80
5. PROVIDING SUPPORT.....	82
5.1 SUPPORT NEEDS OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS	82
5.2 HOUSING SUPPORT	84
5.3 OTHER SUPPORT.....	85
5.4 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT ACTIVITIES TO PROVIDE SUPPORT.....	88
6. RESOURCES FOR TACKLING HOMELESSNESS	89
6.1 MONEY.....	89
6.2 PEOPLE.....	91
6.3 I.T.....	92
6.4 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT RESOURCES FOR TACKLING HOMELESSNESS.....	93
7. CONSULTATION.....	1
7.1 SERVICE USER CONSULTATION.....	1
7.2 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION.....	1
7.3 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT CONSULTATION	1
8. FINDINGS.....	3
8.1 CONCLUSIONS	3
8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS	6
APPENDICES.....	11
APPENDIX ONE – RECORD OF CONTRIBUTORS	12
APPENDIX TWO – SERVICE USER SURVEY RESPONSES.....	13

Answered: 30 Skipped: 0..... 14
Answered: 30 Skipped: 0..... 3
Answered: 30 Skipped: 0..... 5
Answered: 30 Skipped: 0..... 6
APPENDIX THREE – STAKEHOLDER SURVEY RESPONSES SUMMARIES..... 2
APPENDIX FOUR – STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW RESPONSES 11

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Executive summary

1. Levels of homelessness

The levels of homelessness in Dorset over the past five years have increased in line with the national trend. Factors including the current economic environment, housing market, and the impact of Coronavirus, strongly indicate that homelessness in Dorset is forecast to increase for the foreseeable future.

The main household groups becoming homeless in Dorset over the past five years are households aged 25 to 44 with dependent children and of White British origin, in line with national trends. During 2019-20, 1516 new households contacted, or were referred to Dorset Council Homelessness Service as they were threatened with homelessness or already homeless, and 1464 (96.6%) of these were found to be owed a homelessness duty.

This means that an average of 28 additional households are known to become homeless or at risk of homelessness each week in the Dorset Council area. The remaining 52 households assessed as not being owed a homelessness duty during 2019-20 are still at risk of homelessness in the medium term and may require a further assessment.

The number of rough sleepers counted for the same year was 19. During the Everyone-In response to the Coronavirus Pandemic, this number was greater, which is almost certainly due to hidden homeless households coming forward. Hidden homelessness is projected to be 12 times higher than rough sleeping nationally¹.

The main reasons for loss of last settled home is family and friends no longer able to accommodate, followed by loss of private rented assured shorthold tenancy.

2. Preventing homelessness

The number of households whose homelessness was prevented in Dorset during 2019-20 was 382.

There is a wide range of activity in place to prevent homelessness across Dorset; 234 households owed a prevention duty in 2019-20 were assisted to secure new accommodation for at least 6 months, and 78 were helped to remain in their existing home. The most successful recorded activity for 2019-2020 being mediation, negotiation, and advocacy, followed by financial support.

At the time of their application during 2019-20, 160 households owed a prevention duty were living in the social rented sector. This is a high level and must be address with partner housing associations. 243 households owed a relief duty had no fixed abode, 167 were living with friends and family and 46 were sleeping rough at the time of their application.

¹ London Assembly Housing Committee (September 2017), Hidden homelessness in London

Public authorities and non-public authorities, such as housing associations, referred 202 households who were homeless or threatened with homelessness, to Dorset Council during 2019-2020 including 73 made under the Duty to Refer².

Specialist activity to prevent homelessness for specific groups who have difficulty securing and maintaining accommodation is in place. These groups include 16 to 17 year olds and former and serving armed forces personnel for example. There are however other cases which require resourcing, such as offenders released from a secure estate such as prison or youth detention, to ensure they have the benefit of the early joint working required to prevent homelessness on release.

3. Securing accommodation

The Council Housing Options service were assisted in securing accommodation during 2019-20 with the use of financial assistance through rent in advance payments, rent deposits and deposit bonds and Discretionary Housing Payments are all used to help secure new or existing accommodation, and their use is increasing year on year.

Temporary accommodation use has increased in Dorset during the last five years. At the end of 2019-20 there were 263 Dorset households in temporary accommodation, and with 224 units of accommodation available to the Council some households had to be placed in other Council areas. A review of temporary accommodation is needed to ensure that provision meets the growing demand in the future.

Delivering more social rented housing in Dorset is essential, and one innovation through partnerships that can be replicated for both temporary accommodation and longer term accommodation is the East Boro Housing Trust housing scheme for adults with care needs using relocatable units on meanwhile land.

Social rented housing is still the main tenure used to prevent and relieve homelessness and is increasingly in use as temporary accommodation. There is a shortage of most types of temporary accommodation which inevitably leads to using accommodation in other local authorities.

The use of the private rented sector is increasing through the rent deposit/bond scheme(s), although many privately rented assured shorthold tenancies are supported but Discretionary Housing Benefit Payments (DHP) to make them affordable.

4. Providing support

Providing support to households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is now essential in many cases to help give the best chance of sustaining independent living and preventing homelessness from happening again. Almost half of those who Dorset Council owed a homelessness duty during 2019-20 require support to sustain a tenancy, and many have more than one support need, in particular mental ill health. 577 households owed a duty during 2019-2020, had a mental health support need, 354 had a physical health and

² Homelessness (Review Procedure Etc.) Regulations 2018, Part 4 Duty to Refer

disability support need, and 234 required support because they are at risk of or have experienced domestic abuse.

These types of support are specialist and often required to be regular and intensive. The Integrated Prevention and Support Services funded by Dorset Council and MHCLG are making a difference to homeless and vulnerable people, but they are all operating at full capacity and so are unable to meet the growing demand.

5. Resources

Financial resources for homelessness include MHCLG funding including: Homelessness Reduction Act Grant, Flexible Homelessness Support Grant, Rough Sleeper Initiative, and short and long term Next Steps Accommodation Programmes. These funding streams have conditions attached for specified purposes, and the councils general fund should cover the day to day costs of core staff for example.

As a public law function, the Dorset Council Homelessness Service has some experienced and proactive officers who are competent to legal homelessness decisions, but regular legal training is required to ensure that all homelessness officers are able to carry out these functions.

A greater level of benchmarking with similar local housing authorities is required to continually assess the range and scale of activity in place to prevent homelessness, to ensure the strategic approach to preventing homelessness covers the range and scale needed.

The homelessness Forum is an example of good practice, is well regarded by partners, and the level of joint working to tackle homelessness, is an excellent shared resource.

6. Consultation

The consultation included workshops with Elected Members, staff and stakeholder interviews and surveys of staff, stakeholders and service users with lived experience of homelessness. The main findings from consultation were:

- Social rented housing is still the preferred accommodation for people in housing difficulty due to the affordability and security of tenure.
- The number of single males and single females presenting as homeless with mental and physical health problems resulting in homelessness or exacerbating their difficulties in maintaining accommodation.
- The right support is successful in preventing and relieving homelessness, and local support services are delivering this, but they are too stretched and much more is needed.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Preamble

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on English local housing authorities, to formulate a homelessness strategy at least every five years. A review of homelessness in a local housing authority area must take place prior to a homelessness strategy being formulated and published. The legislation requires local housing authorities to take strategic responsibility for tackling and preventing homelessness in their local authority area. This duty complements other duties local housing authorities have to advise and assist persons who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The law requires that a homelessness review concentrate on:

- current and future likely levels of homelessness,
- activities to prevent homelessness,
- activities to securing accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- activities to provide support for people who are homeless, threatened with homelessness, or have previously experienced homelessness, and
- the resources available to deliver the above activities.

This Homelessness Review has been carried out following the creation of the new Dorset Council in April 2019. The UK Government agreed to the re-organisation of local government bodies for Dorset, resulting in the creation of two new unitary local authorities. Dorset Council has succeeded the following former local authorities:

- Dorset County Council
- East Dorset District Council
- North Dorset District Council
- Purbeck District Council
- West Dorset District Council
- Weymouth & Portland Borough Council

This Homelessness Review considers all of the activities being carried out to tackle homelessness in the local authority area of Dorset Council. This encompasses the public law homelessness functions that Dorset Council is responsible for, plus those also provided by various public authorities, housing associations, voluntary organisations, community groups and others.

The decision by Dorset Council to appoint Neil Morland & Co Housing Consultants to complete this homelessness review, ensured impartiality and transparency in the findings.

The aim of this Homelessness Review was to identify if the activities for tackling homelessness in the Dorset Council area, are reflective of good practice, delivering good outcomes for people experiencing homelessness, and are of value for money to the public purse.

There are two important contextual factors that have influenced Homelessness Review. The first of which is the commencement of new homelessness legislation from April 2018. The enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA17), brought about the most significant change to homelessness law in the past 40 years. The improved rights of people who are at risk of homelessness, are equally matched the additional responsibilities of local housing authorities. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020, has also had a significant impact, nationally and locally, on the strategies and services being delivered to households at risk of homelessness, especially people who are sleeping rough or likely to do so.

The ambition for this Homelessness Review is to identify key objectives and actions that should be pursued to tackle homelessness in the Dorset Council local authority area, which can be carried forward to form a new local homelessness strategy.

The structure of this Homelessness Review is shown below:

- Chapter two reviews the current and future likely levels of homelessness.
- Chapter three reviews the activities for preventing homelessness.
- Chapter four reviews the activities for securing accommodation for people who are homeless.
- Chapter five reviews the activities for supporting people who have previously been, are presently, or might be in the future, homeless.
- Chapter six reviews the resources available to carry out the aforementioned activities.
- Chapter seven sets findings from consultation with service users and stakeholders
- Chapter eight out the conclusions and recommendations from the review.

1.2 Definition of homelessness

The law³ defines a person being homeless or threatened with homelessness if they:

- Have no accommodation (e.g. sleeping rough);
- Have accommodation, but it is unavailable to them (e.g. due to an emergency or disaster);
- Have accommodation, but no right to occupy it (e.g. squatting, or informal arrangements with family, friends or others);
- Have accommodation, but it is unreasonable to occupy (e.g. due to it being unaffordable, unfit, overcrowded, being victim of domestic abuse, or another special reason);
- Have accommodation, but it will not be available within 56 days (e.g. due to being asked to leave, by ether family, friends or others, or from public authority institution);
- Have accommodation, but have been served a valid notice of eviction by their landlord (e.g. Section 21 notice to bring an assured shorthold tenancy to an end)
- Have accommodation, but it is not available for the whole household (e.g. due to a household member requiring an aid or adaptation to access and/or move around it).

Any usual household members of a person whose circumstances matches the above legal definition is also homeless or threatened with homelessness.

³ Housing Act 1996, Part 7, section 174

There is considered to be four forms of homelessness⁴. A person might experience only one of these forms, but could encounter some or all of them:

- statutory homelessness – persons owed the main duty of assistance by a local housing authority;
- single homelessness – persons living in supported housing (including hostels, refuges and also supported lodgings), usually commissioned by a local authority;
- street homelessness – persons sleeping rough in places not designed for habitation;
- hidden homelessness – persons accommodated in insecure arrangements often with relatives or friends, but just as often with people not previously known to them.

Rough sleeping

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) (the UK Government department responsible for homelessness policies and programmes), has defined street homelessness, as ‘people sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or ‘bashes’)⁵.

1.3 Methodology

This Homelessness Review has been carried out in accordance with the law⁶, statutory guidance⁷, national guidelines⁸ and national good practice⁹.

This Homelessness Review provides an accurate portrayal of homelessness in the Dorset Council area at the time of it being completed. This Review contains all the evidence that has been assessed, the conclusions reached and the resulting recommendations made.

This Homelessness Review has clear findings about:

- what is working well to tackle homelessness,
- what must be done better to tackle homelessness, and
- what needs to be the future priorities for tackling homelessness.

The following parties were invited to contribute to this Homelessness Review:

- Dorset Council’s housing services
 - homelessness,
 - allocations and lettings
 - private sector housing
 - housing strategy
- Dorset Council’s adult social care services
- Dorset Council’s children services
 - social care

⁴ Fitzpatrick, S. (2005), ‘Explaining homelessness: a critical realistic perspective’, *Housing & Society*, 22(1): pp.1-17

⁵ Department for Communities & Local Government (2010), ‘Evaluating the extent of rough sleeping.’

⁶ Homelessness Act 2002, sections 1-3

⁷ Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, published 2018 and most recent updated 31 December 2020 (as of the date this Homelessness Review was carried out).

⁸ Homelessness: applying All Our Health, Public Health England, November 2018

⁹ Morland, Neil. 2019. Making homelessness strategies happen: ensuring accountability and deliverability. Local Government Association. London

- leaving care
- youth justice
- housing associations
- various local and national public authorities, such as
 - prisons,
 - youth offender institutions
 - National Probation Service
 - Jobcentre Plus,
 - NHS Trusts and NHS Foundations Trusts
 - numerous others
- voluntary organisations, such as
 - registered charities
 - community groups
 - faith organisations
- any other interested person, such as
 - persons who have lived experience of homelessness

Representation from these bodies were at a sufficiently senior level of responsibility that afforded decision making powers, especially in respect of policy and/or budgets.

1.3.1 A review of the levels of homelessness

The first step was to analyse the current and future likely levels of homelessness in the Dorset Council area. A comparison was made to the neighbouring local authority area of Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole (BCP), and also a collective total of local authorities from South West England, England excluding London and the whole of England. Data was sought from Dorset Council together wide range of public authorities, private registered providers of social housing (housing associations) and voluntary organisations.

The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, with a greater emphasis on preventing and relieving homelessness, necessarily required a change in monitoring away from the P1E. The new annual and quarterly monitoring requirement is HCLIC (Homelessness Case Level Collection, which retains little exact detail of its predecessor P1E requirements and is not therefore always comparable.

In order to fully understand homelessness in the Dorset Council area, the analysis in this review covers the preceding five years (2015-16 to 2019-20), which requires collection and analysis of both the discontinued P1E and HCLIC data for each of the five former districts, therefore in some cases only two years HCLIC data or three years P1E data is available, and not both. MHCLG update and amend HCLIC data as new information is acquired, as it remains an experimental system for MHCLG and local housing authorities, so for the time being data is subject to minor amendment. The HCLIC data collected for this review was last checked by the authors on 29th November 2020.

An analysis of statistics from these data sets, was carried out to understand trends such as:

- numbers of applications for assistance,
- number of decisions made by outcome,
- characteristics of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness,

- household size,
- support needs assessed,
- reason for loss of accommodation,
- types of prevention activity,
- types of relief activity,
- types of decisions made,
- types of activities to end the main duty,
- assistance received by households with their support needs,
- local connection referrals made and received,
- number of households living in temporary accommodation (by type),
- length of stay in temporary accommodation,
- number and types of reviews requested and decisions made, and
- nationality of applicants.

Authoritative sources, such as the Office for National Statistics, were used to forecast future levels of homelessness, by looking at child poverty rates, labour markets factors, housing market factors and other any other relevant trends.

1.3.2 A review of activities to prevent homelessness

A review of the activities to prevent homelessness was divided into three strands, to inform the focus of the review:

1. early prevention – information and advice to prevent homelessness or a threat of homelessness (including those being at more risk of homelessness)
2. crisis prevention – assistance to help people remain in existing accommodation or secure alternative housing (including provision of temporary accommodation)
3. reoccurrence prevention – support to sustain accommodation (both accommodation-based and communitywide)

The Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government issued findings from an external evaluation of its £20m Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer programme, in March 2019¹⁰. The findings from this research was used to inform a local review of prevention activities.

The review of early prevention activities looked at the duty to provide advisory services¹¹. This focused on the advice offered by Dorset Council, plus also from other providers of housing advice. Concentrating on the quality, availability/accessibility, and accuracy of the advice provided. This encompassed arrangements for assistance to be available outside of usual working hours.

Many early homelessness prevention activities focused on those most at risk of homelessness. Homelessness legislation¹² recognises some characteristics and circumstances when a person has a heightened risk of homelessness, such as:

- leaving prison or youth detention accommodation,
- leaving care of a children services authority,

¹⁰ Knight, T., Purdon, S., Lloyd, R., Bryson, C. (2018) Evaluation of the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazers, Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government. London

¹¹ Housing Act 1996 (amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017), Part7 section 179

¹² Housing Act 1996 (as amended) Part 7 section 179(2)

- regular armed forces veterans,
- victims of domestic abuse,
- leaving hospital, and
- experiencing mentally illness.

The above list is not exhaustive, as many other persons have a heightened risk of homelessness, for example due to being a young adult, a victim of violence or sexual abuse, a victim of harassment, having a drug or alcohol addiction, being a victim of trafficking, or possessing any of the characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010. This Homelessness Review looked at local arrangements to provide information, advice and assistance to the above listed persons, to see whether they are fit for purpose. Identification of and analysis of joint working protocols, pooled budgets, share commissioning, and common service delivery arrangements were also carried out.

Duty to refer

In relation to early prevention activity, the impact of the 'duty to refer', which came into force from October 2018¹³, for specified public authorities, was also reviewed, with an analysis of the effectiveness of local arrangements being carried out. This has been carried out with reference national good practice¹⁴.

A review of crisis prevention activities focused on the duties to prevent or relieve homelessness¹⁵. This Homelessness Review seeks to understand how the new burdens arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act have impacted on the how the local authority administered its duties. There has also been scrutiny of the outcomes for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. This extends to how assessments and personalised plans are being completed, plus the effectiveness of these. This Homelessness Review has probed how people are helped to remain in their existing accommodation, or when this is not safe or possible, assisted to secure alternative accommodation. The effectiveness of joint working arrangements with housing benefit administrators, debt advice services, private rented sector enforcement officers, sanctuary schemes, housing possession court desks and pre-eviction protocols with private registered providers of social housing have all be reviewed.

A review of activities to prevent the reoccurrence of homelessness, has focused on the support, advice, assistance and counselling people receive to be able to sustain their accommodation. This includes activities carried out by Dorset Council, either via its own homelessness service, or as a commissioner of support services. Logically, a review of activities to prevent the reoccurrence of homelessness has also extended to those undertaken by numerous public authority, voluntary organisations, housing associations and others. Both community-wide and accommodation-based support has been investigated for its quality, effectiveness and impact.

1.3.3 A review of activities to secure accommodation

A review of activities to secure accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, has concentrated on:

- temporary accommodation provision,

¹³ Homelessness (Review Procedure Etc.) Regulations 2018, Part 4 Duty to Refer

¹⁴ Morland, Neil. 2018. Duty to refer: an opportunity to co-operate. Local Government Association. London.

¹⁵ Housing Act 1996, Part 7, sections 195 - 196

- social rented housing allocations to persons who are homeless or owed a homelessness duty of assistance, and
- private rented sector accessibility for persons who are homeless or owed a homelessness duty of assistance.

Temporary accommodation

A review of temporary accommodation provision has covered arrangements for procuring, allocating and managing temporary accommodation, to ensure they it is fit for purpose. An analysis of the types and suitability of temporary accommodation used (including use of bed and breakfast accommodation), length of stay, out-of-borough placement, characteristics of households placed in temporary accommodation (including those with children and/or a pregnant woman, 16/17-year olds) has also been carried out. This has been carried out with reference to national good practice¹⁶.

A review of how Dorset Council's housing allocation scheme helps people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, to secure social rented housing has been carried out. An analysis of data associated with applications to join the local housing allocation scheme from persons who are homeless, or owed a duty of assistance, plus lettings made to these groups of people was also carried out. This data was analysed over a period, of five years in order to clearly understand the trends. The UK Government publishes data about the lettings and sales of social housing in England, via its CORE website <https://core.communities.gov.uk>. This information is usually updated annually, sourced from housing associations, and is available on a local authority area basis. The statistics provided intelligence on trends in social lettings, characteristics of new tenants, the properties available, and more. Additionally, an analysis of MHCLG published tables showing numbers of households on local authorities' waiting lists was also carried out.

In regards to Dorset's Housing Allocation Scheme, a review was carried out of:

- the housing options available to persons who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance, who are not eligible for an allocation of social rented housing,
- how grounds for disqualification from joining a housing allocation scheme, might impact on persons who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance,
- the advice, information, and assistance on making an application for social rented housing, provided to persons who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance,
- the choice and opportunities of persons who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance, to express a preference of what social rented housing is allocated them
- the degree of reasonable preference afforded to persons who are homeless or owed a duty of assistance, and
- whether persons more at risk of homelessness (e.g. persons leaving prison, offenders, care leavers, persons leaving hospital, the armed forces, escaping domestic abuse, that are a vulnerable adult, or others) are regarded as having a reasonable preference for an allocation of social rented housing, or have been given additional preference.

A review was carried out on the trends associated with the types of tenancy agreements issued to persons who were homeless or owed a duty of assistance by housing associations. The UK

¹⁶ Gray, Tim., Messenger, Gary. 2018. Housing our homeless households. Local Government Association. London.

Government publishes data about the types of tenancy agreements, via its CORE website <https://core.communities.gov.uk>. This information is usually updated annually, sourced from housing associations and is available on a local authority area basis.

Having regard to the requirements of the tenancy strategy, a review was carried out of:

- The type of tenancies granted to persons who were homeless or owed a duty of assistance,
- The circumstances in which social landlords will grant persons, who were homeless or owed a duty of assistance, a tenancy of a particular kind,
- where social landlords have granted persons, who were homeless or owed a duty of assistance, tenancies for a certain length of term, and
- Circumstances where social landlords have granted persons, who were homeless or owed a duty of assistance, a further tenancy when an existing tenancy came to an end.

A review of private rented sector access schemes for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, has been carried out. This has focussed on the types and effectiveness of landlord incentives used. The use and impact of initiatives such as rent-in-advance, cash deposits, bonds, and other measures has also been probed.

In tandem with this Homelessness Review being carried out, Dorset Council is also formulating a Housing Strategy. This work will look at housing market supply and affordability factors. Separately a local housing needs survey, social and/or private sector stock condition survey, will be carried out in due course. This research will provide evidence about affordability of accommodation, not only of market rates but also how people pay for their accommodation, especially in respect of those who need to claim welfare assistance with housing costs. The findings from these projects will be taken account of once they have been published and will influence future updates of the local Homelessness Strategy.

1.3.4 A review of activities to provide support

A review of the support provided to people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or have previously been homeless has looked at the activities carried out to stop households becoming homeless and avoiding a repeat occurrence of homelessness in the future. This has included:

- the types and prevalence of support needs, the types of accommodation-based support services and the outcomes they are achieving,
- the types of non-accommodation-based support services and the outcomes they are achieving,
- support provided by public authorities under public law duties, and
- support provided by voluntary organisations, both commissioned and non-commissioned.

MHCLG with the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) published independent research on the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping^{17 18 19}, the findings from this research have been used to inform a local analysis of support needs.

A review of the types of accommodation-based support services (e.g. hostels, refuges) and the outcomes they are achieving has considered:

- the accessibility of this provision,
- the standard of accommodation,
- the staffing arrangements and support philosophy,
- the rules for exclusions and evictions,
- move-on support, and
- and other matters.

A review of the types of non-accommodation-based support services (e.g. floating support, Housing First provision) and the outcomes they are achieving, has considered matters such as:

- whether the support being provided is sufficiently personalised,
- the joint working arrangements between the support provider and the accommodation provider,
- the efforts being made to help people feel part of their community and take-up employment,
- whether the support is outcome focused and asset-based, and
- how people are being helped to increase their personal income and improve their wellbeing.

For both accommodation-based and non-accommodation-based support services, service users, staff and stakeholders have all been consulted. An analysis of performance results and outcomes has been carried out, where reliable data is available.

Response to rough sleeping during the COVID 19 pandemic review

We reviewed activities to house people who were rough sleeping and those at risk, during the COVID-19 pandemic, referencing national good practice²⁰.

We focused on steps taken to source accommodation and support, whilst also looking at the funding and procurement arrangements that were put in place. Particular attention was paid to how Dorset Council delivered its own homelessness services, involvement from health services, measures taken to safeguard people who were sleeping rough, and female specific issues when sleeping rough.

¹⁷ Alma Economics (2019). Homelessness: causes of homelessness and rough sleeping rapid evidence assessment. Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government and Department for Work & Pensions. London

¹⁸ Alma Economics (2019). Homelessness: causes of homelessness and rough sleeping review of models of homelessness. Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government and Department for Work & Pensions. London

¹⁹ Alma Economics (2019). Homelessness: causes of homelessness and rough sleeping feasibility study. Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government and Department for Work & Pensions. London

²⁰ Coombs, Jenny., Gray, Tim. 2020. Lessons learnt from councils' response to rough sleeping during the COVID-19 pandemic. Local Government Association. London.

When completing this aspect of the review, we follow the national guidance formulated by an NM&Co associate and issued by the LGA in November 2019, titled 'Lessons learnt from councils' response to rough sleeping during the COVID-19 pandemic'

A review of support provided by public authorities under public law duties, has looked at how a Dorset Council's homelessness service is working with:

- adult social care services to fulfil duties owed to vulnerable homeless adults owed a duty under the Care Act 2014,
- child social care services to fulfil duties owed to homeless 16- and 17-year olds and other cases involving homeless households where dependent children reside under the Children Act 1989,
- NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups, NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts to fulfil duties owed to adults who are mentally ill owed a duty under the Mental Health Act 1983, and
- Dorset Council's private sector housing colleagues to fulfil public law housing duties to various persons in specified circumstances.

When reviewing how vulnerable homeless adults are supported, there was scrutiny of joint working between Dorset Council's homelessness service and adult social care services in respect of²¹:

- using powers and duties to provide accommodation,
- carrying out assessments and care planning to meet support needs,
- preventing homelessness and promoting wellbeing, and
- supporting persons from abroad who are not eligible for homelessness assistance.

When reviewing how 16- and 17-year olds and other homeless households where dependent children reside are supported, there was scrutiny of joint working between Dorset Council's homelessness service and children services in respect of²²:

- assessment of causes of homelessness, housing and support needs, and whether a child needs services to achieve or maintain their health and wellbeing, or avoid it being significantly impaired,
- provision of services to meet a child's identified needs,
- support for children from abroad,
- individual children who have no parents or carers,
- young people who need care beyond the age of 18 years, and
- generally performing obligations under the Children Act 1989.

When reviewing how adults who are mentally ill are supported, there was scrutiny of joint working between Dorset Council and NHS authorities in respect of²³ those who are leaving hospital after having been unwell and need after-care.

MHCLG published an independent evaluation of the Skills, Training, Innovation and Employment (STRIVE) pilot, in August 2018²⁴. This programme was targeted at single people

²¹ Care and Support Statutory Guidance, Department of Health, June 2014

²² Working together to safeguard children, Department for Education, March 2015

²³ Code of Practice: Mental Health Act 1983, Department of Health, 2015

²⁴ ICF Consulting. (2018). STRIVE Evaluation: Final report. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. London

experiencing homelessness in London, who were claiming unemployment welfare benefits. Together with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (now known as Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) £297,000 of funding was provided. STRIVE was commissioned to pilot an alternative to the Work Programme, which had been identified as being unsuitable for the target cohort. The findings from this research was used to inform a local review of how support is provided to be people who are, or have, experienced homelessness to secure employment.

1.3.5 A review of resources available to fund activities for tackling homelessness

A review of the resources available to carry out activities to tackle homelessness covered money, people, and I.T.

A review of money looked at both a local housing authority's own spending on homelessness activities, plus also grants received from MHCLG and other UK Government bodies.

In terms of a local housing authority's own spending, scrutiny of forecast and actual spend of Dorset Council's homelessness service budget was carried out. There was also consideration of spending by Dorset Council on commissioning housing association, voluntary organisations and others to prevent homelessness, supply accommodation and provide support. Spending by other public authorities on activities to tackle homelessness was also be examined, as was funding available to housing association and voluntary organisations from philanthropic trusts, social enterprise trading, investment national bodies, non-governmental bodies and other public sector agencies.

In terms of grants received from MHCLG, inquiries were made about whether the total amount allocated is used for its intended purpose, the success of bidding for additional funding was also probed. The money available to a local authority was be benchmarked against that of other local authorities, to ascertain if income and expenditure is satisfactory.

The review also considered securing investment from the commercial sector, via a social impact bond, and using a payment by results arrangements with commissioned providers. MHCLG published an independent evaluation of its Fair Chance Fund programme, in April 2019²⁵. Together with the Cabinet Office and Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport, funding was provided via Social Impact Bonds (SIB), using a payment by results (PBR) approach to improve accommodation, education and employment for people aged 18 to 24 years, who were experiencing homelessness. The findings from this research was used to inform a local review of how private sector resources being secured for tackling homelessness.

A review of staffing looked at the employees of the local housing authority. There was consideration of the staffing structure, the procedures and processes in force and whether there is enough staff to cope with caseload levels. Additionally, the training that staff receive, both in terms of the specifics of homelessness legislation (e.g. knowledge of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the Housing Act 1996, etc.) and the general skills (e.g. providing advice, carrying out assessments, etc.) to undertake their role was also be assessed.

²⁵ ICF Consulting. (2019). Fair Chance Fund: Final Evaluation. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. London

A review of IT looked at the software and hardware available to help administer homelessness functions and assist people who are at risk of homelessness. This involved investigating the use and effectiveness of software for:

- self-service housing advice,
- receiving referrals for cases of homelessness
- formulating personalised plans,
- case management,
- data reporting (e.g. H-CLIC),
- temporary accommodation property and void management,
- controlling referrals and use of housing related support services, and
- other modules to help enhance the administration of homelessness functions, such as online forms, applications, reports, information packs, letter templates.

Connectivity to software for administering a housing register, mutual exchange schemes, and a social lettings agency was also reviewed. An appraisal of hardware available to deliver homelessness services was also undertaken, looking at the use of self-service housing advice.

1.4 National homelessness context

The UK Government is responsible for making decisions about homelessness law and strategy for England. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is charged with leading on policy formulation and programme delivery.

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities, to formulate a homelessness strategy at least every five years. A review of homelessness in a local housing authority area must take place prior to a homelessness strategy being formulated and published. The legislation requires local authorities to take strategic responsibility for tackling and preventing homelessness in their area. This duty complements other duties local authorities have to freely provide advice to anyone at risk of homelessness and assist persons in specified circumstances who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

1.4.1 Homelessness legislation

The current legal framework setting out the rights of people who are experiencing homelessness and duties local authorities must administer, has been in force since 1977²⁶, with significant amendments being made to it 1985²⁷, 1996²⁸, and 2017²⁹. The most recent adjustments have substantially increased the assistance local authorities must provide to people who are homeless and threatened with homelessness.

The legal definition of is set-out in section 1.2 of this Homelessness Review and is summarised again below.

Definition of homelessness

²⁶ Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977

²⁷ Housing Act 1985

²⁸ Housing Act 1996, Part 7

²⁹ Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Households (single persons, couples, families with dependent children are all covered by the term) who are homeless or threatened with homelessness include those who:

- are street homelessness,
- are hidden homelessness,
- have been illegally evicted,
- are living in accommodation that is unaffordable, unfit, overcrowded, are experiencing domestic abuse or threats of domestic abuse, and other exceptional circumstances,
- are at risk of becoming homeless due to parents/family/other no longer willing or able to accommodate, leaving care, prison the armed forces or escaping domestic abuse), and
- have been served a valid notice to quit their tenancy by their landlord.

All local authorities have a duty to ensure advice and information is available, free of charge to any household, about preventing homelessness, finding a home, rights when homelessness, and help available locally.

Any adult, or child aged 16-17, who believes they are homeless or threatened with homelessness, is entitled to make an application for assistance to any local authority.

A household who usually lives in the UK and has a right to enter and remain in the country without any restrictions, is normally eligible for assistance.

Local authority duties

When a household is eligible for assistance, local authorities must:

- Carry out an assessment of their housing and support needs and formulate a personal plan to meet these needs.
- Arrange temporary accommodation, when a local authority believes they have a priority need for accommodation due to them having a specified vulnerability.
- Attempt to prevent homelessness, for a them if they are likely to become homeless within 56 days of them making their application for assistance.
- Attempt to relieve homeless for up to 56 days, when they are already homeless, when making an application for assistance.
- Arrange short-term accommodation when they are intentionally homeless have a priority need.
- Obtain permanent accommodation they are unintentionally homeless and have a priority need.

Local authorities have discretion to consider whether the household has a local connection with the local authority to which they have made an application for assistance.

A household has a right to request review of certain decisions made their application.

When administering their public law homelessness duties, local authority housing services must co-operate with each other and can expect co-operation from housing associations and child social care services. Specified public authorities have a duty to refer a household who is at risk homelessness to a local authority.

1.4.2 Causes of homelessness

MHCLG with the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) published independent research on the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping³⁰.

An assessment of evidence concluded that for families there was strong evidence of domestic abuse, relationship breakdown, financial issues, poverty and lack of social housing being the causes of homelessness. For single persons there was strong evidence that relationship breakdown, mental health and substance misuse were the causes. In terms of rough sleeping, the strongest cause identified was relationship breakdown. Structural factors were more likely to cause homelessness for families, whereas, individual personal factors more often caused singles persons to become homeless, and individual health related factors was a more common cause of street homelessness.

The researchers went on to conclude that a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods need to be used to understand the current and future likely causes of homelessness, plus the impact policies are having, or might have, on preventing and reducing homelessness. It was recommended that MHCLG and DWP develop a range of sophisticated modelling tools, that produce detailed information to better understand the causes of homelessness, but which are easy to use and maintain by their in-house analysts.

1.4.3 Homelessness statistics

Official statistics published by the UK Government, for April 2019 – March 2020³¹, showed:

- Households with children are more likely to be owed a prevention duty at initial assessment than a relief duty
- Single adult households are the largest group of households owed a prevention or relief duty, representing 60.1% of all households who had a duty accepted.
- 57.6% of single adults are initially accepted under the relief duty.
- Of the households that were owed a duty in in 2019-20, those that were owed a prevention duty were more likely (58.5%) to have an accommodation secured outcome than households owed an initial relief duty (40.0%)
- Accommodation secured under the prevention duty is more likely to be in self- contained private rented sector accommodation at 36.3%, or in a social rented sector registered provider tenancy at 21.7%.
- Accommodation secured at relief is more likely to be a social rented supported housing or hostel offer at 26.6%
- Main duty acceptances have reduced by 29.3% over the past three years, due to the number of households who are prevented from becoming homeless or have homelessness relieved

Of all cases

- 54.8 of households secured accommodation for 6+ months,
- 26.3% lost contact or withdrew their application for assistance,
- 12.5% were owed a main duty, and
- 6.3% were deemed to be not homeless or not owed a main duty following relief.

³⁰ Alma Economics. 2019. Homelessness: Causes of homelessness and rough Sleeping: rapid assessment of evidence, London, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and Department for Work & Pensions

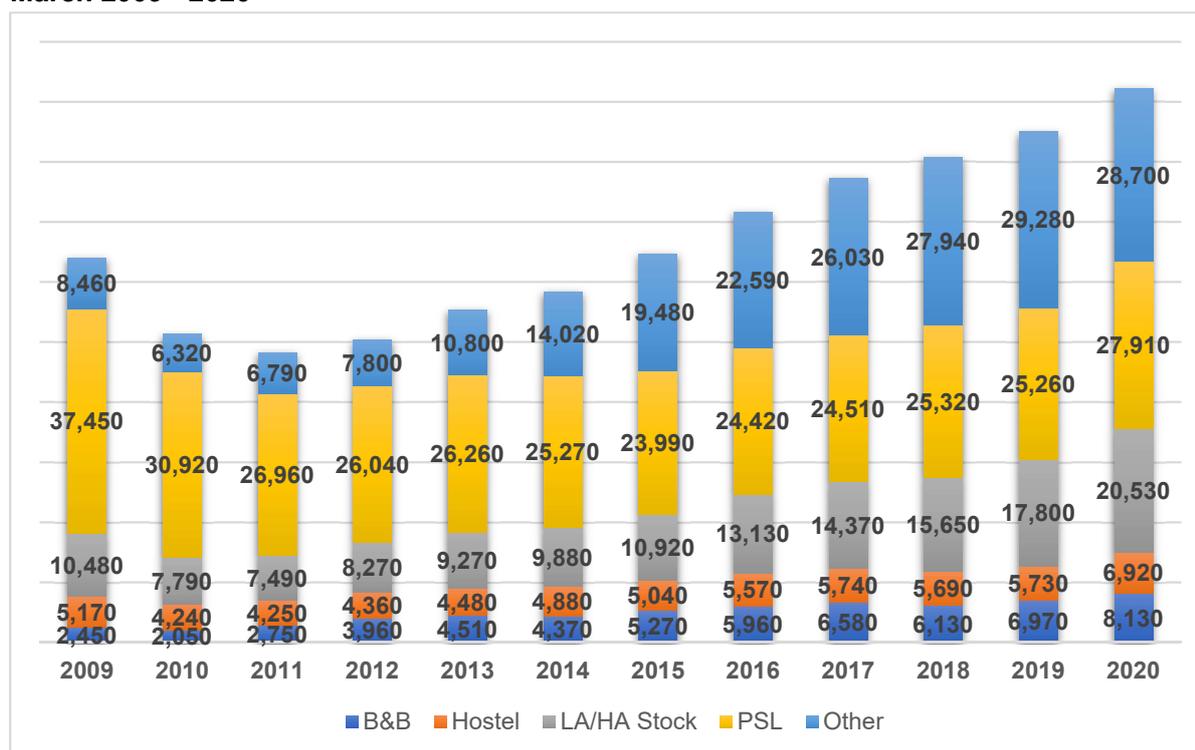
³¹ Statutory Homelessness Annual Report, 2019-20, England. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

- A greater proportion of households with children were owed a main duty (21.9% versus 12.5%).
- Fewer family households left the system for Other reasons (19.5% versus 26.3%).
- More single males aged 18-34 left the system for Other reasons (36.0% versus 26.3% overall)
- a greater proportion of single males were homeless and not owed a main duty following relief (11.4% versus 6.3% overall), most commonly as a result of having no priority need.
- For applicants sleeping rough on approach, 48.5% of duties ended without an accommodation secured outcome or main duty acceptance.

From 2017-18, before the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA 17)), to 2019-20 the number of households owed the main duty of assistance (obtain permanent accommodation for households that are unintentionally homeless and have a priority need) has decreased 29.3%, from 56,600 to 40,040. Despite more households being owed an initial prevention or relief duty, including priority needs groups such as households with children, there are fewer main duty acceptances as more households are receiving assistance at an earlier stage, through prevention and relief duties.

There has been a 9.4% increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation from 85,040 on 31st March 2019 to 93,000 on 31st March 2020, the highest level in almost 15 years. This is largely driven by single households, which have increased 41.2% from 22,870 to 29,390 households, while the number of households with children in temporary accommodation has remained more stable (a 3.3% increase from 62,170 to 63,610 households). The COVID-19 pandemic will inevitably adversely impact on the number of people experiencing homelessness, the amount many households occupying temporary accommodation and the levels of rough sleeping.

Chart 1: Households in temporary accommodation, England, annual snapshot taken on 31st March 2009 - 2020



Source: Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Demographics of homeless households

During 2019-20 69.8% of homeless households had a White lead applicant, while 84.6% of individuals in England are White, suggesting White households are less likely to be homeless. Households containing an Asian lead applicant are also underrepresented as they account for just 6.3% of homeless applications and for 8.1% of the population. Households with a Black lead applicant are the most disproportionately homeless as they account for 10.7% of those owed a duty while are only estimated to comprise of 3.6% of the population.

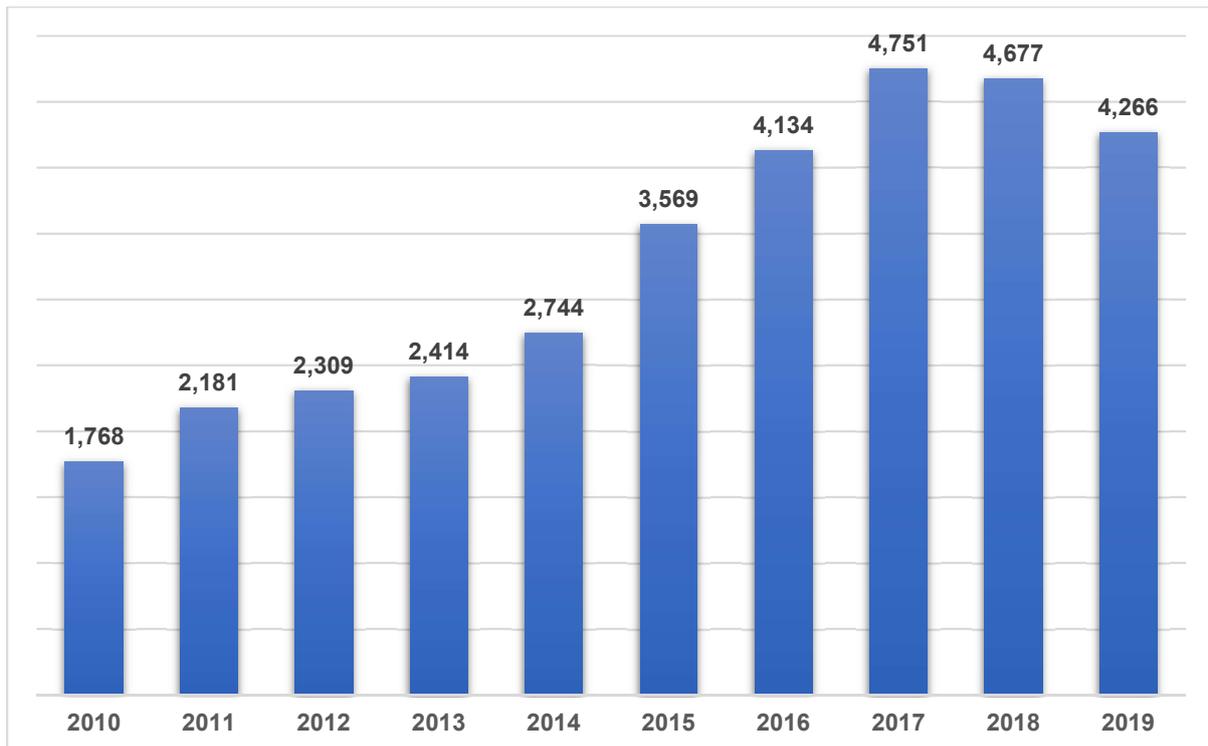
In 2019-20, the most common age group of lead applicants in households owed a prevention or relief duty were aged between 25 and 34 years old, making up 87,990 households or 30.5% of the total.

The most common employment status for lead applicants of households owed a prevention or relief duty were registered unemployed (88,030 or 30.5%) in 2019-20,

The latest rough sleeping snapshot statistics³² show that in 2019 there were 4,266 individuals recorded as sleeping rough on a single night in England.

Chart 2: Rough sleeping in England, England, annual snapshot taken Autumn 2010-2019

³² Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2019. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

In 2018-19, 15% of the 314,000 total new social lettings went to households that were classed as statutory homeless and owed a main homelessness duty³³.

In 2018-19, £144m was spent on prevention; £68m on support; £1bn on temporary accommodation (excluding non-housing revenue account accommodation)³⁴.

In 2018-19, according to the English Housing Survey, 541,000 (2%) households reported that they had someone living with them in the last 12 months who would otherwise be homeless (i.e. 'sofa surfing' or hidden homeless)³⁵. A further 1.6 million concealed households were reported, defined as households containing an adult who would prefer to buy or rent their own accommodation but cannot afford to do so, equating to 7% of all households in England. An additional 154,000 households were living in self-reported temporary or emergency accommodation, either provided by a local authority, housing association, or private landlord.

The latest figures from the Ministry of Justice, for 2018-19, show that 2,017 individuals were classed as 'Rough sleeping', and 5,206 individuals were classed as 'Other homeless' in England³⁶.

The Ministry of Justice also publishes quarterly statistics on Mortgage and Landlord Possession in England and Wales. Figures for 2019-20, show 13,637 social landlord possessions, and

³³ Social housing lettings: April 2018 to March 2019, England. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

³⁴ Local authority revenue expenditure and financing: 2018-19 final outturn, England. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

³⁵ English Housing Survey, 2018-2019. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

³⁶ Community performance quarterly release to March 2019. Ministry of Justice.

7,001 private landlord possessions, with 7,479 of all landlords using the accelerated procedure³⁷.

1.4.4 Homelessness Policy

The UK Government has an ambition of ending street homelessness by 2024³⁸.

From 2017-2019, the UK Government invested £1.2bn to tackle homelessness, which included £76m for an initiative to reduce street homelessness and £28m to pilot the Housing First approach. From April 2018 new legislation came into force ensuring more households got more help, at an earlier stage and over a longer period³⁹. In August 2018, the MHCLG published a Rough Sleeping Strategy⁴⁰.

Housing First

The Housing First Pilots in Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region and West Midlands, have helped more than 200 rough sleepers to-date. The Housing First approach supports vulnerable people into their own homes where they can rebuild their lives. The pilots are replicating the success seen across Europe, where Housing First projects have been successful in preventing repeat homelessness for at least eight out of 10 people in such projects.

MHCLG has published two evaluation reports, carried out by independent researchers on the Housing First Pilots. The first report⁴¹, provides key learning and recommendations both national and local government, regarding development, preparation and early delivery. The second report⁴² focuses on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Housing First Pilots, reporting findings from weekly calls during the lockdown period during Spring 2020.

Groundswell and the London Homeless Health Programme have produced 'My Right to Healthcare' cards for people experiencing homelessness which explain this population have a right to register with GP surgeries. NHS England have committed to rolling out the card nationally.

The UK Government appointed an independent advisor to lead a review into the causes of street homelessness, that will provide advice on additional action required to end street homelessness by the end of 2024.

Everyone In campaign

The UK Government's initial response to COVID-19 and rough sleeping in March 2020 was to bring in those people experiencing street homelessness to protect their health and stop wider transmission, particularly in hot spot areas, and those in assessment centres and shelters that are unable to comply with social distancing advice. This approach sought to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on people facing homelessness and ultimately on preventing deaths during this

³⁷ Mortgage and Landlord Possession statistics: April to June 2020. Ministry of Justice.

³⁸ The Conservative and Unionist Party, Manifesto 2019.

³⁹ Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

⁴⁰ The rough sleeping strategy, 2018, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

⁴¹ ICF Consulting Services, Heriot Watt University, Homeless Link, BPSR and IER. 2020. Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots: interim process evaluation report. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. London

⁴² ICF Consulting Services, Heriot Watt University, Homeless Link, BPSR and IER. 2020. Effects of the pandemic on the Housing First Pilots and service users. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. London

public health emergency. MHCLG asked local authorities to lead a local programme of actions. The UK Government put in place an exemption for hotels, hostels and B&Bs to open so they could offer accommodation to key workers and support rough sleepers.

This resulted in 5,400 people being helped off the streets by the end of April 2020. 90% of people known to local authorities as being street homeless at the beginning of the crisis were offered accommodation where they could self-isolate. By May 2020, a total of 15,000 people who were at risk of homelessness were reported as being helped to obtain accommodation. By September 2020, over 29,000 people were reported as being helped, with 10,000 into emergency accommodation and nearly 19,000 provided with settled accommodation or move-on support.

Following this, a new taskforce was created by the UK Government, to lead the next phase of support for people experiencing street homelessness during the pandemic. Businesses, faith groups and local communities have been encouraged to help the new Rough Sleeping Taskforce.

During summer 2020, the UK Government suspended for 12 weeks, rules that restricted the assistance local authorities could provide to EEA nationals who were experiencing street homelessness, to find employment, accommodation and facilitate a reconnection.

An eviction ban for six months was put in to force, subsequently the law was changed to increase notice periods to 6 six months. Bailiff enforcement action is not permitted during periods national restrictions.

A new scheme, the Protect Programme, was launched late autumn 2020, to run alongside the Everyone In campaign, concentrating on areas with high levels of people experiencing street homelessness. All local authorities were asked to update actions plans for tackling rough sleeping by the end of 2020, following which they have been expected to carry out a rapid assessment of need for everyone they assist who is experiencing street homelessness.

As new restrictions came into force in January 2021, MHCLG asked local housing authorities to once again make sure people experiencing street homelessness were helped to obtain accommodation and register with a GP.

A study published by the Lancet showed that the Everyone In campaign helped avoid 266 deaths during the first wave of the pandemic amongst England's homeless population, plus thousands of infections and hospital admissions.

An independent review of the HRA 2017⁴³, commissioned by MHCLG, concluded that the more people are getting help who previously would not. The review also identified improvements could be made to how the HRA is being administered, data collection and joint working.

⁴³ Knight, Tim., Greenstock, Jane., Beadle, Shane., Charalambous, Steph., Fenton, Catherine. 2020. Evaluation of the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act: Final Report. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. London.

MHCLG and the Department of Education published good practice advice⁴⁴ to support the development of joint protocols that can help local authorities meet the needs of care leavers, to prevent them from becoming homeless.

Research⁴⁵ carried out by MHCLG with over 500 people who had experienced street homelessness found that before sleeping rough most had not been in stable accommodation, had high levels of vulnerabilities, had experienced adverse childhood events, were not currently in employment, but were registered at a GP surgery and had previously sought help from a local authority. Half had been involved with the criminal justice system. The research estimated the annual cost of a person who is experiencing street homelessness was £12.2k, compared to £3.1k people at risk of homelessness who were not having to sleep rough.

1.4.5 Homelessness Funding

Since December 2019, The UK Government has allocated over £700m to local homelessness services, with over 300 councils across England receiving a share of funding to support people experiencing homelessness in their areas. Money distributed includes:

- £200m (2020-2021) for all local authorities to obtain accommodation for households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- £62.9m (2020-2021) for all local authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness
- £23m Cold Weather Fund (£13m 2019-2020, £10m 2020-2021) for people experiencing street homelessness, to provide more emergency accommodation during the winter.
- £3m to homelessness support funding for Jobcentres to help people experiencing street homelessness to claim benefits and find work.
- £433m to offer accommodation for up to 6,000 people experiencing street homelessness and those at most immediate risk of having to sleep rough, with the intention of 3,300 homes becoming available by May 2021. To-date, 276 schemes have been approved across England, which will provide 904 homes.
- £6m for voluntary organisations that provide, advice, accommodation and support to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- £700k for local authorities to support people leaving care at risk of homelessness
- £3.2m emergency funding to help people experiencing street homelessness self-isolate to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- £105m to support people experiencing street homelessness and people threatened with homelessness, to help them secure accommodation during the COVID-19 outbreak, which was allocated to 274 local authorities.
- £75m (£23m 2020-2021, £52m 2021-2022) substance misuse funding allocated to 43 areas, to help people experiencing street homelessness recover from alcohol or drug dependency
- £90k for St Basil's Youth Voice Programme, to ensure the voices of people with lived experience of homelessness inform and influence national and local homelessness policy and strategy.
- £2m Transformation Fund, administered by Homeless Link, for voluntary and organisations to make more self-contained emergency accommodation available.

⁴⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers-good-practice-advice>

⁴⁵ 2020. Understanding the multiple vulnerabilities, support needs and experiences of people who sleep rough in England. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. London.

- £15m allocated to 19 local authority areas with the highest levels of rough sleeping, to make sure they have accommodation, as new national restrictions start.
- £310m homelessness prevention grant for all local authorities, to deliver local strategies and services for preventing homelessness.
- £10m allocated to all local authorities to house people experiencing street homelessness and help them register with a GP, during the restrictions that came into force in early 2021.

DRAFT

2.0 Levels of homelessness

This chapter considers the current and future likely levels of homelessness in the Dorset Council area, comparing these to regional and national trends.

Dorset Council collects statistics on statutory homelessness, plus some intelligence on single and street homelessness. There is no coordinated collection of statistics on hidden homelessness from either public authorities or voluntary organisations, however, this is typical of elsewhere in the country. It has been predicted that the levels of hidden homelessness are thirteen times higher than street homelessness, with young people, persons who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender, and those escaping domestic abuse, being more likely to experience this form of homelessness⁴⁶.

Where data is available, Dorset Council's levels of homelessness have been compared with that of (i) Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole, (ii) South West England, (iii) England excluding London (iv) and all of England. Collectively these areas are referred to throughout the report as the benchmarking group.

Criminal justice agencies monitor the number of offenders who leave prison with no fixed abode. While this data is submitted to national governments, local authorities do not benefit from having this intelligence shared with them.

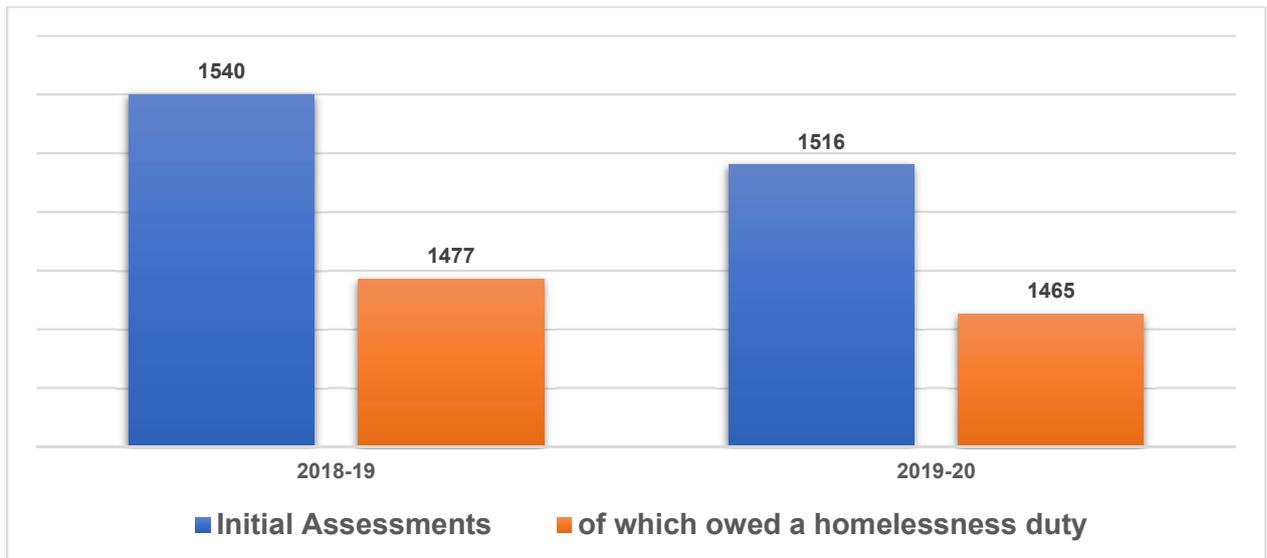
2.1 Current levels of homelessness

The number of households in Dorset who were provided with an initial assessment of their needs in accordance with the new duty imposed by HRA17⁴⁷ fell by 1.5% between 2018-2019 and 2019-2020. The numbers recorded equate to an average of just under 30 new initial assessments being carried out each week by Dorset Council to establish their eligibility and homelessness status, as well as what, if any duty is owed to each approaching household. 95.9% of those initially assessed in 2018-2019 and 96.6% were found to be owed a homelessness duty.

Chart 3: Homelessness Initial Assessments, Dorset Council, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020

⁴⁶ London Assembly Housing Committee (September 2017), Hidden homelessness in London

⁴⁷ Housing Act 1996 s.189A(1)

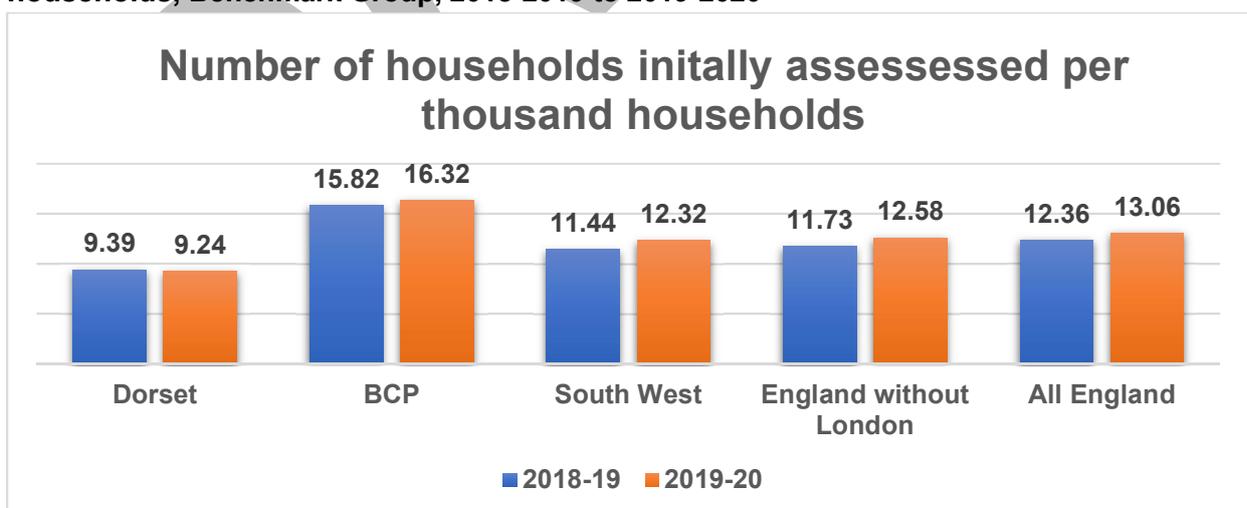


Source: Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The reduction in initial assessments shown in Chart 1 for 2019-2020 appears positive, although the new HRA17 statistical recording is mostly too young to analyse by itself and will require at least five years of data before trends will become clear. Additionally, the UK Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, in placing rough sleepers in temporary accommodation and banning evictions for a period, will impact on the homelessness service and the statistics, and this will inevitably take some time to resolve.

When comparing Dorset Council with the Benchmark Group, the local authority completed the lowest numbers of initial assessments per thousand households during 2018-19 to 2019-20, with BCP completing the most. Dorset was the only area which saw a reduction between the two years, at 0.15 per thousand households less for 2019-20 than 2018-19.

Chart 4: Number of households initially assessed for a homelessness duty per thousand households, Benchmark Group, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020

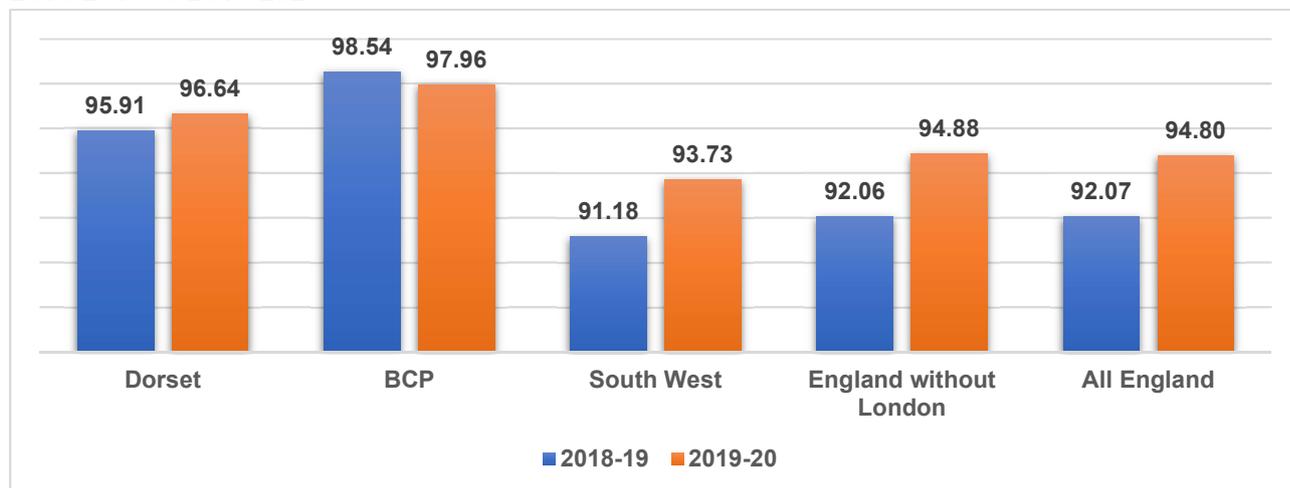


Source: Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The number of households found to be owed a homelessness duty by Dorset Council following the initial assessment, reduced by 12 between 2018-2019 and 2019-2020. The proportion of

households owed a homelessness duty following the initial assessment was above 90% for the two-year period 2018-19 to 2019-20 for all the Benchmark Group. Dorset Council accepted a greater proportion of homelessness duties than the Benchmark Group, following the initial assessment, for both years, with the exception of BCP. Dorset, the South West, England without London and All England saw a proportionate increase.

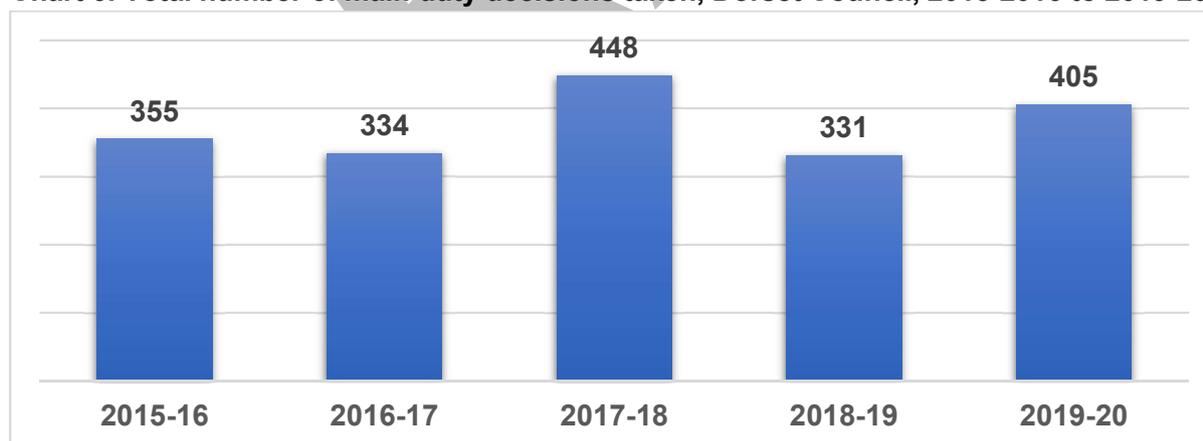
Chart 5: Percentage of assessed households owed a homelessness duty, Benchmark Group, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020



Source: Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The number of main housing duty⁴⁸ decisions made on homelessness applications by Dorset Council for the period 2015-2016 to 2019-2020, reached a peak in 2017-18, reducing by 25% the following year to the lowest number of the period. This followed national trend in 2018-2019, all showing significant reductions alongside the enactment of HRA 17.

Chart 6: Total number of main duty decisions taken, Dorset Council, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020



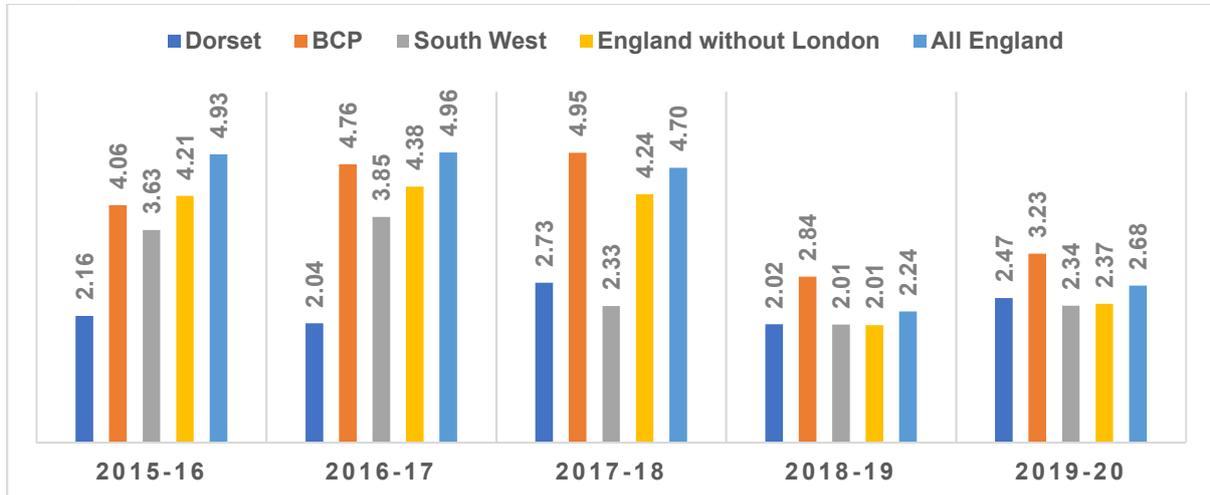
Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Dorset Council made the lowest number of main duty decisions per thousand households compared with the Benchmark Group for the period 2015-2016 to 2016-2017. As stated above, the reduction in main duty decisions at 2018-2019 reflects the national picture, likely due to the enactment of HRA 17 requiring prevention and relief decisions to be made prior to a main duty

⁴⁸Housing Act 1996, Pt VII s193(2)

decision. The numbers increased again in 2019-2020 for all the Benchmark Group, and although Dorset Council rate had its highest increase of 0.45 per thousand households between 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, this remains lower per thousand household than BCP and All England.

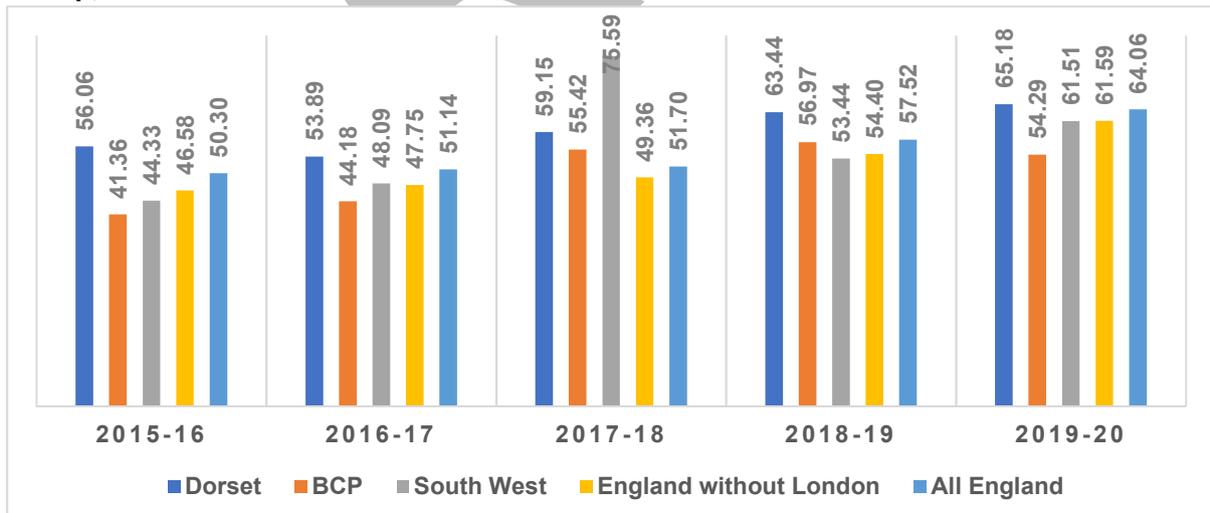
Chart 7: Total number of main duty decisions taken per thousand households, Benchmark Group, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Dorset Council accepted a higher proportion of main duty cases than all other benchmark areas for all years within the period except for 2017-18 when there was a spike in the South West Region. Dorset, England without London and All England had their highest rate of housing duty acceptances for 2019-2020, and Dorset Council continues to have the highest rate at 1.12% higher than the All-England average.

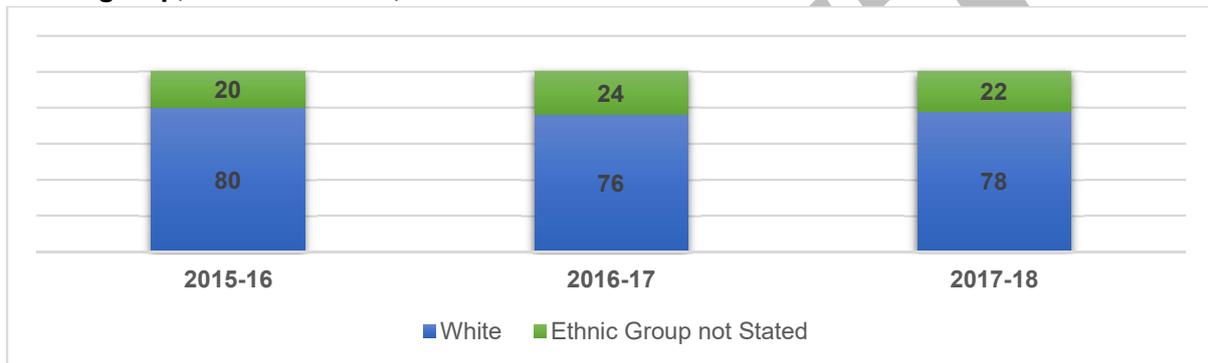
Chart 8: Main housing duty acceptances as a percentage of decisions taken, Benchmark Group, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

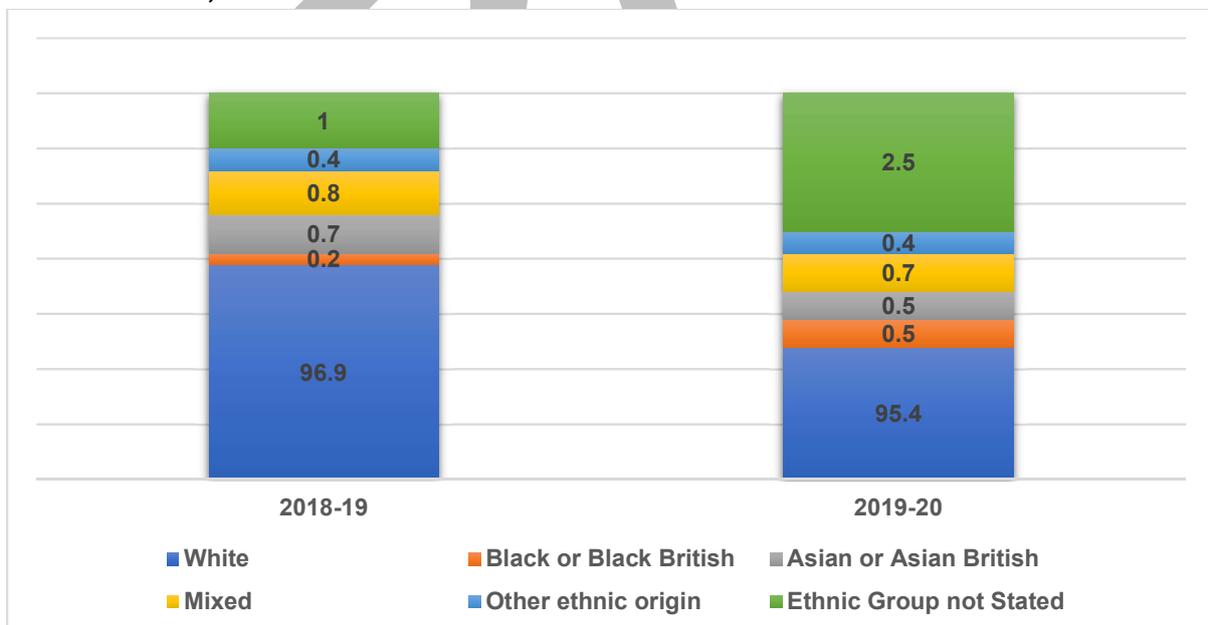
95.6% of Dorset residents are recorded as white British and 4.4% as Black and Minority Ethnic⁴⁹. An average of 22% of main applicants accepted for the main duty in Dorset for the period 2015-2016 to 2018-2019 were recorded as 'Ethnic Group not stated', with no recording of 'Black and Minority Ethnic' main applicants. This data provides insufficient evidence for comparison with the general population. Ethnicity data is now recorded in HCLIC at the stage of prevention or relief duty. For those owed a prevention or relief duty for 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, 'ethnic group not stated' is recorded as lower, at 1% and 2.5% respectively, but remains higher than other recorded ethnic groups. Those recorded as White British for 2018-2019 at 96.9%, and 2019-2020 at 95.4%, are 1.3% higher and 0.2% lower than the general population of Dorset.

Chart 9: Percentage of lead applicants accepted as being homeless and in priority need by ethnic group, Dorset Council, 2015-2016 to 2017-2018



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Chart 10: Percentage of lead applicants owed a prevention or relief duty by ethnic group, Dorset Council, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020



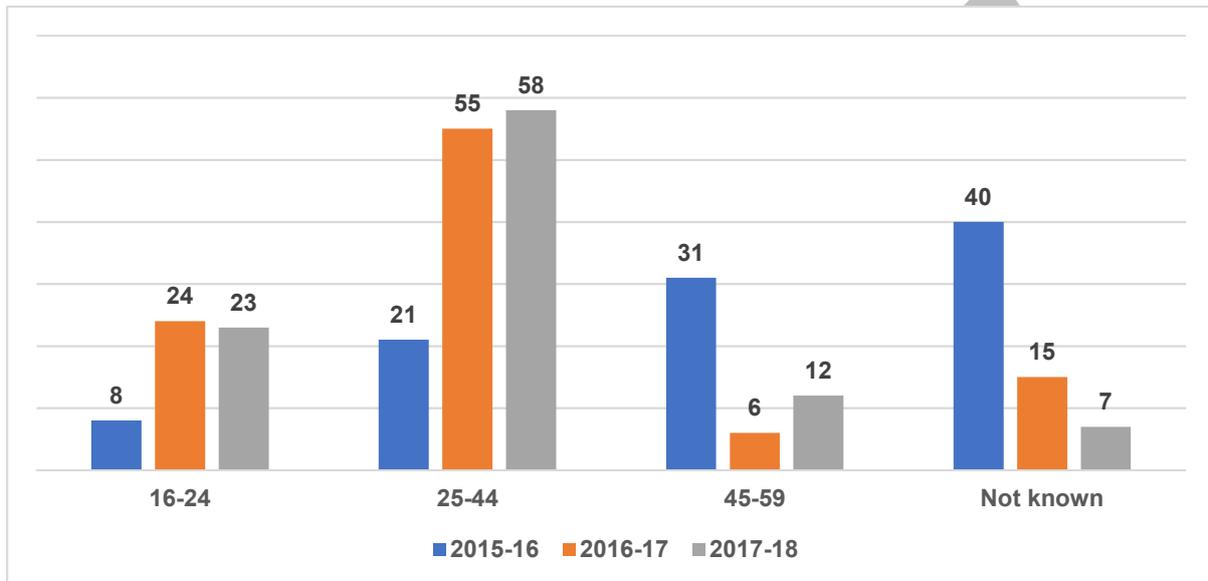
Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The age group of the main applicant most accepted for a main duty in Dorset for the period 2015-2016 to 2017-2018 was those aged 25 to 44 years. Age Group is no longer recorded for

⁴⁹ Office of National Statistics 2011 Census

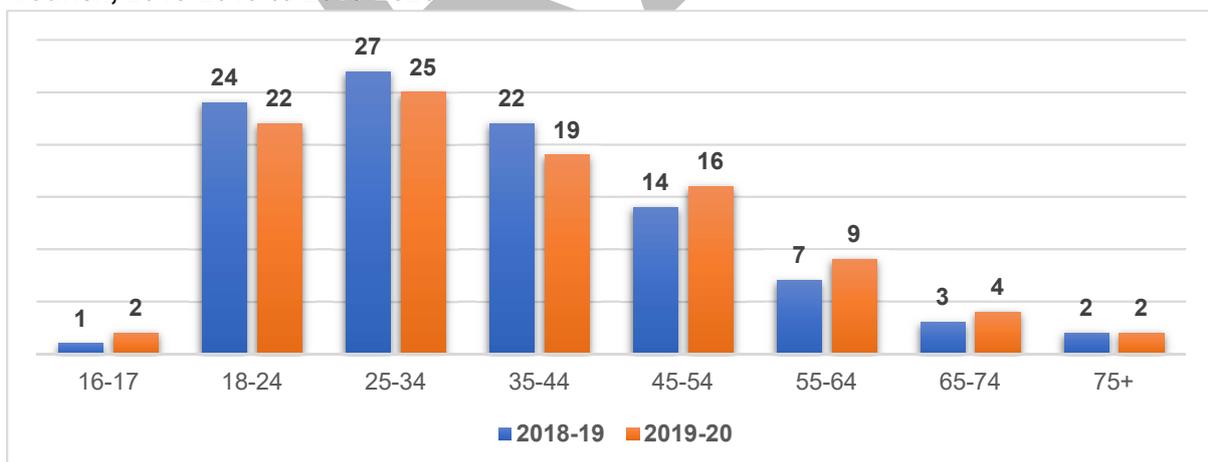
those owed a main duty but is now recorded for those owed a prevention or relief duty, and the age groups are broken down further. Chart 10 shows the age group of the main applicant accepted for a prevention or relief duty is 25 to 44, followed by 18-24. The 18-24-year old age group being the second highest age group is different to previous years for those owed the main duty, but when these are grouped together 25 to 44 years for those owed a prevention or relief duty there is little change between the years 2016-2017 to 2019-2020.

Chart 11: Age group of main applicants owed a main duty by percentage, Dorset Council, 2015-2016 to 2017-2018



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Chart 12: Age group of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty by percentage Dorset Council, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020



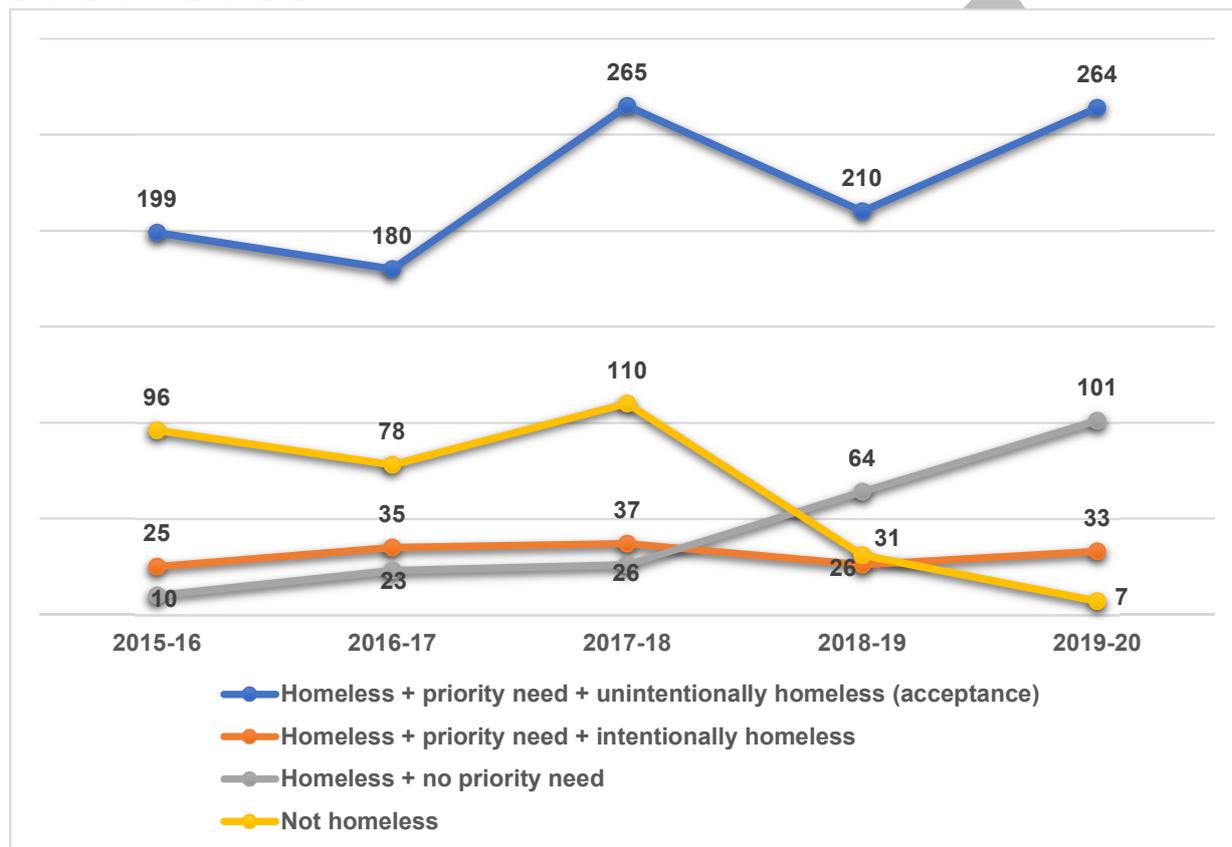
Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Of the 405 main duty decisions made by Dorset Council during 2019-2020, 65.18% were accepted as being eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need; owed the main homelessness duty to secure accommodation⁵⁰. This is an increase of 26% on the previous year and the second highest number of acceptances of all five years.

⁵⁰ Housing Act 1996, Pt VII s193(2)

Those who were found to be eligible but not homeless in 2018-2019 reduced by 93% from its highest level in 2017-2018 to just 7 households in 2019-2020, and the number who were found to be eligible, homeless but not in priority need, was more than ten times greater between 2015-2016 and 2019-2020, increasing to 101 households. The number of households found to be eligible, homeless and in priority need, but intentionally homeless, has remained relatively steady throughout the period, at 8% of all decisions for 2019-2020.

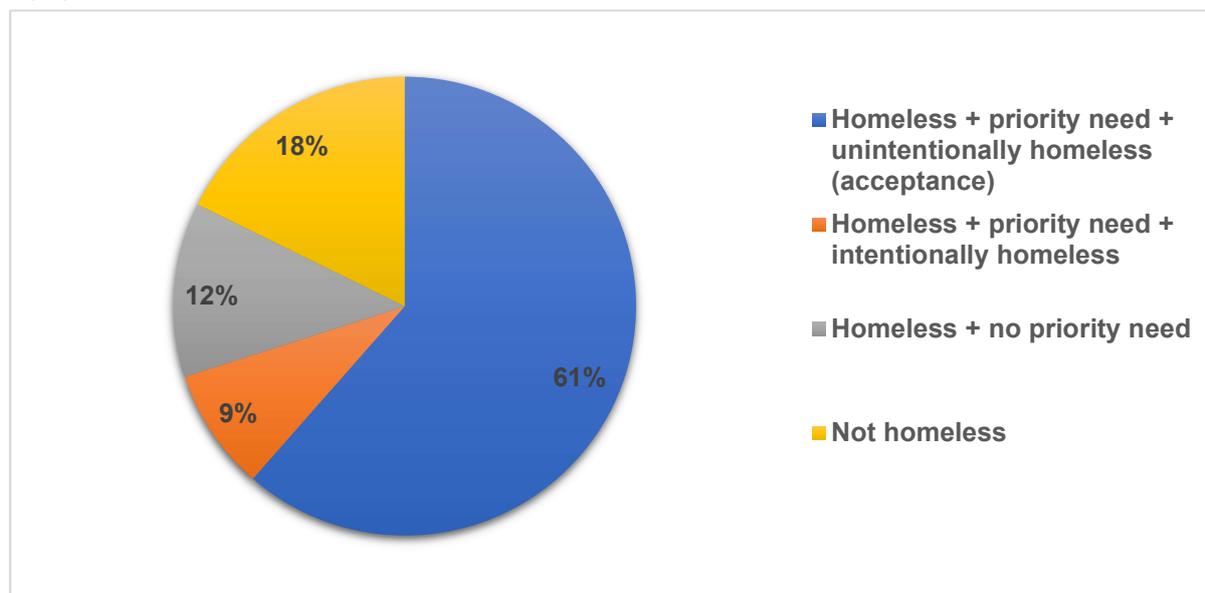
Chart 13: Outcome of main housing duty decision for eligible households, Dorset Council, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The cumulative number of households assessed who were found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period analysed for this review, at 1118 households, is 61% of all decisions across the five-year period, 4% lower than for 2019-2020. While the remaining 39% were not considered to be owed the main duty following assessment, there still a duty to provide advice and assistance*, and in some cases, further support to help resolve their homelessness difficulties, including those determined as 'not homeless'.

Chart 14: Cumulative main duty decisions by outcome, Dorset Council, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

All households with dependent children are required to be recorded as being in this priority need category, irrespective of any other priority need(s) they may have. All other priority need categories will therefore only include single persons, couples, or families with no dependent children. Most households in Dorset owed the main duty are recorded as being in priority need due to being a household which includes dependent children, with the exception of 2015-2016 when a greater number of households were recorded in the category 'Other'.

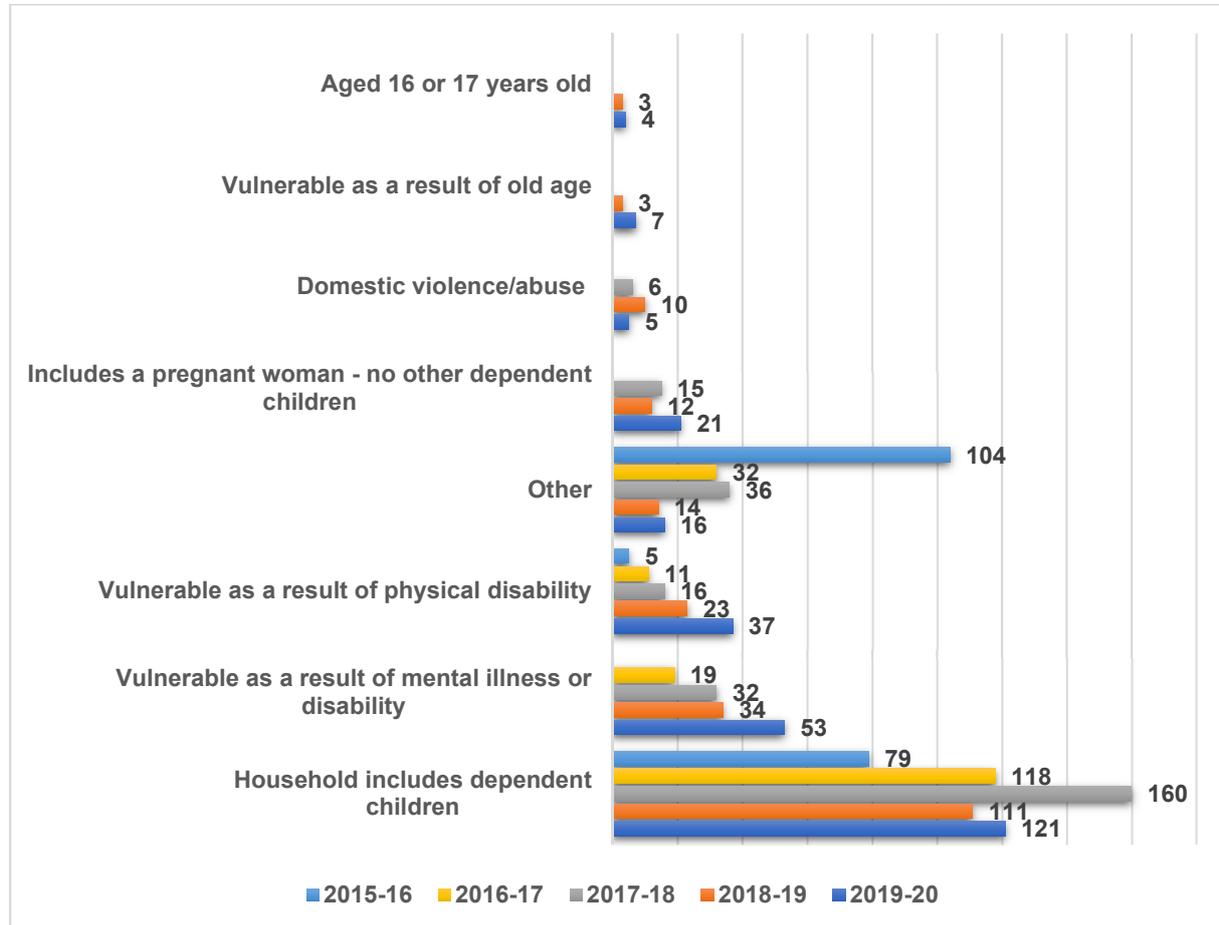
While the number of households which include a dependent child and are owed a main duty fell by 24% in 2019-2020 from its highest level of 160 at 2017-2018, the number households with no dependent children owed a main duty in Dorset with a priority need due to mental health problems has risen, from no recorded cases in 2017-2018, to the second highest priority need at 53 recorded cases in 2019-2020. This is also the case for those with priority need due to physical disability or ill health, which increased by 32 households to become the third highest priority need at 37 recorded cases in 2019-2020. For 2015-2016 to 2016-2017 there were no cases recorded under the priority need category, households which included a pregnant woman, although there may be households which include a pregnant woman among households, which include dependent child and therefore recorded as being in priority need for that reason.

Priority need due to domestic violence or abuse reduced by 50% to 5 households between 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, with no cases recorded within this category prior to 2018-2019. There will also be cases where domestic abuse is a priority need for a household with dependent children but will not be recorded within the domestic violence or abuse category as they are an automatic priority due to the dependent children. The reason for homelessness will however be recorded as being due to domestic violence or abuse.

No households were recorded as being in priority need due to an emergency, such as fire or flood, and the number of households in priority need due to being a young person, or due to old

age, are low at 3 and 7 respectively for 2019-20. Households recorded as 'Other' priority need category has reduced by 82% between in 2015-2016 and 2019-2020, to 16 households,

Chart 15: Households owed a main homelessness duty by priority need category, Dorset Council, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

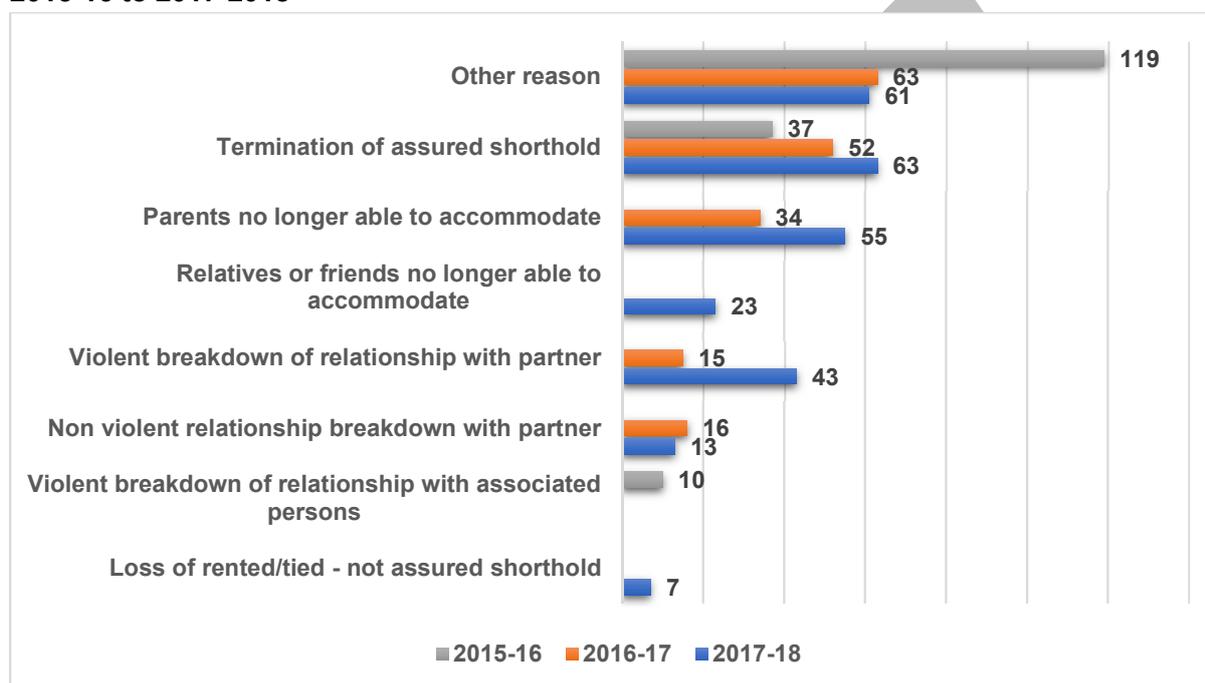
Additional priority need data collection categories with zero cases recorded include:

- Other violence/threat of violence
- Drug dependency
- Alcohol dependency
- Former asylum seeker
- Vulnerable as a result of having been "in care"
- Vulnerable as a result of having served in HM forces
- Vulnerable as a result of having been in custody/on remand
- Formerly "in care", and aged 18 to 20

As a result of the changes made by HRA 17, the 'reason for loss of last settled home' is now recorded for households owed a prevention or relief duty, and not for households owed the main duty. The chart below therefore only covers the reason for loss of last settled home for those households owed the main duty for the period 2015-2016 to 2017-2018. Other reasons' is the highest recorded reason for loss of the last settled home for those households owed a main

duty during 2015-2016, and just below 'termination of assured shorthold tenancy' during 2016-2017. 'Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate' and 'Violent relationship breakdown with partner, both had no recorded cases in 2015-2016 but recorded 55 and 43 cases respectively in 2017-2018. Other friends or relatives no longer willing or able to accommodate was also not recorded until 2017-2018, when 23 households gave this as their reason for losing their last settled home. The most common reasons nationally for these years are termination or loss of assured shorthold tenancy and parents or other family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate, it therefore stands to reason that some or many of the cases recorded as 'other' are in fact one of the most common reasons.

Chart 16: Main reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a main duty, Dorset, 2015-16 to 2017-2018



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Additional loss of last settled home data collection categories with zero cases recorded include:

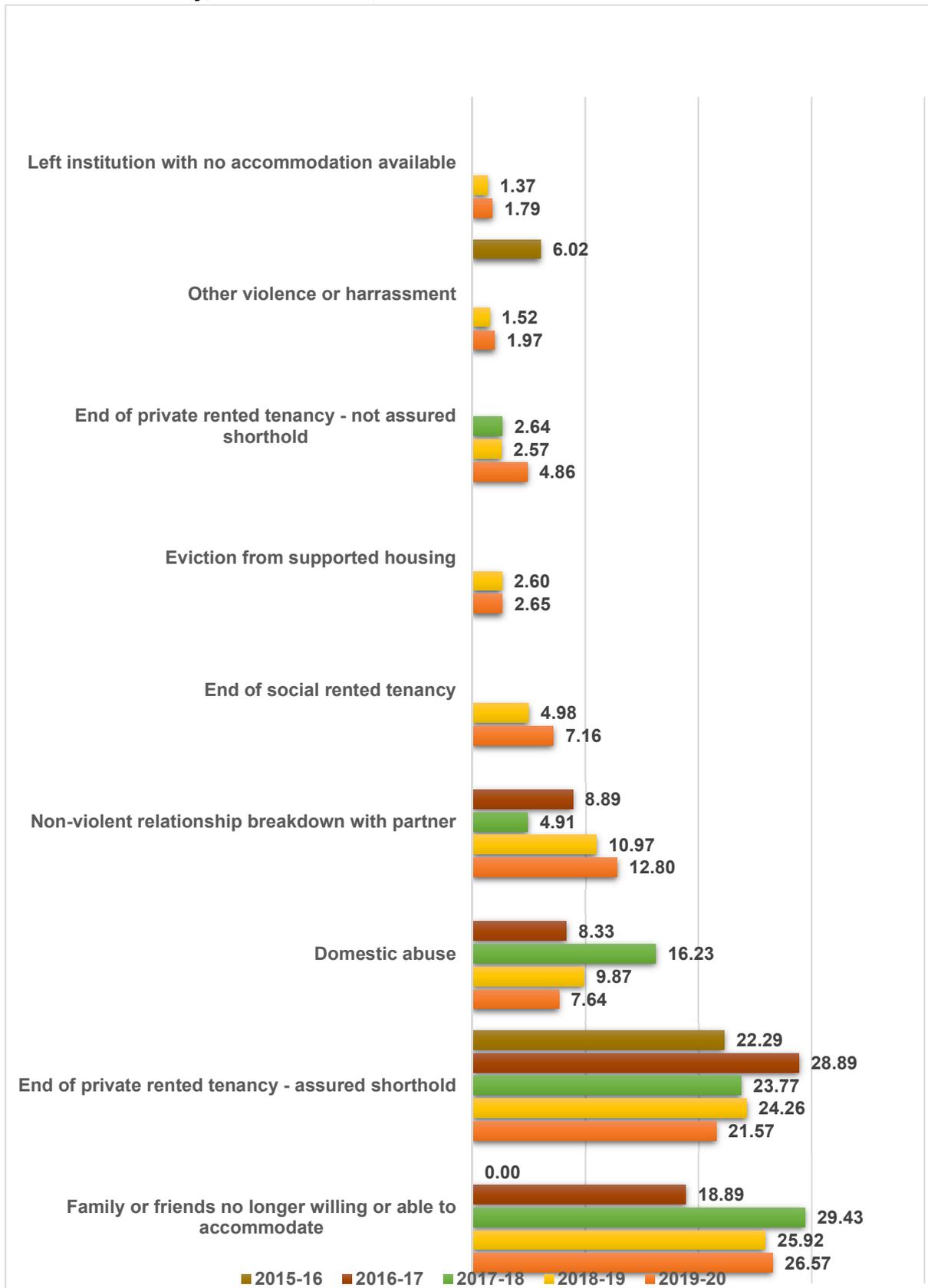
- Racially motivated harassment
- Other forms of harassment
- Mortgage arrears
- Rent arrears – all tenure
- Left an institution such as prison, hospital, or left local authority care
- Left HM forces

The highest proportion of households whose loss of their last settled home where a reason was recorded for 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 is end of private rented assured shorthold tenancy. Following this, family or friends no longer willing to accommodate is the highest recorded reason between 2017-2018 and 2019-2020, with end of private rented assured shorthold the second highest reason. Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner is increasing year on year, and while the proportion of domestic abuse being the reason for loss of last settled home has reduced to 7.64% of cases where a reason is recorded, this does not mean that these are the only cases where domestic abuse is or has been the main factor and specialist advice and

support is still essential. As all cases recorded within this data set have been accepted as unintentionally homeless, the end of social rented tenancy and eviction from support housing are both areas that require full investigation, particularly as these are recorded within the two most recent years, as in such cases the landlord is usually a local authority partner, where successful prevention activity should be completely embedded.

DRAFT

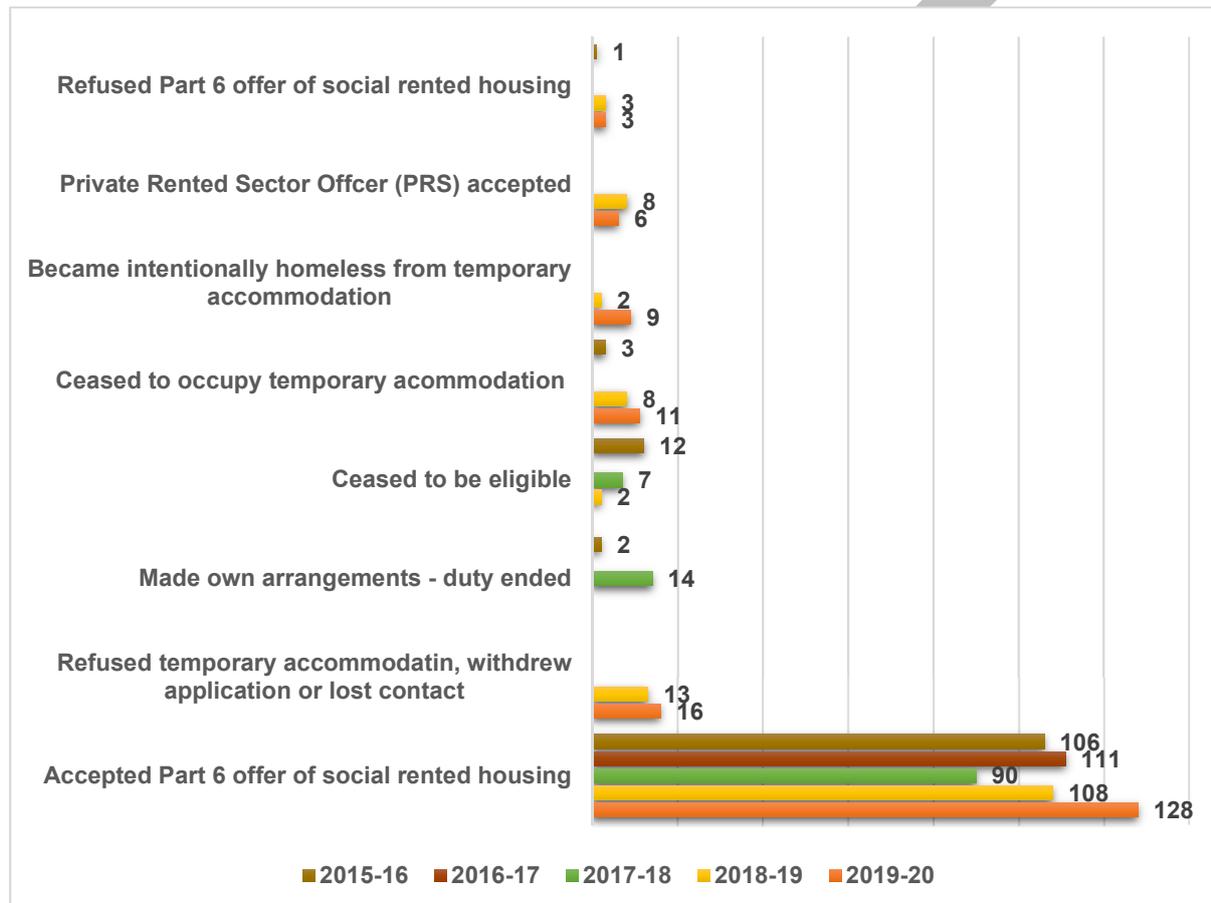
Chart 17: Reason for loss of last settled home by percentage of households owed a homelessness duty, Dorset Council, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The offer and acceptance of a social rented home was the main outcome each year for households no longer owed a main homelessness duty in Dorset over the period analysed, increasing by 76% between 2015-2016 to 2019-2020. During 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, 14 households accepted a private rented sector offer. All other households had negative or unknown outcomes, including refusing social rented housing or suitable temporary accommodation, becoming intentionally homeless from temporary accommodation, or ceasing to be eligible for assistance.

Chart 18: Outcome of households no longer owed a main duty, Dorset, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020

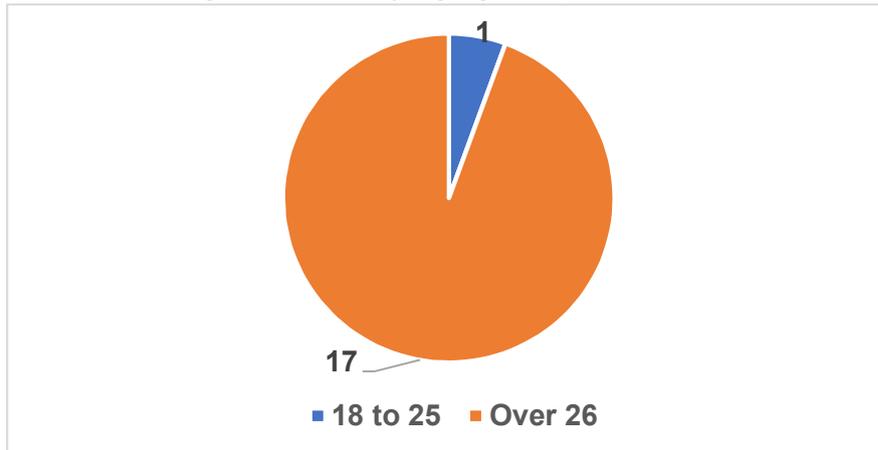


Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

An evaluation of the levels of rough sleeping is carried out annually in Dorset, in accordance with national guidance⁵¹ and in consultation with the voluntary sector, Police, outreach workers, plus mental health and substances misuse agencies. For the 2019 evaluation this group estimated that there were 18 people sleeping rough in the area in total, the majority of whom were males over 26 years of age.

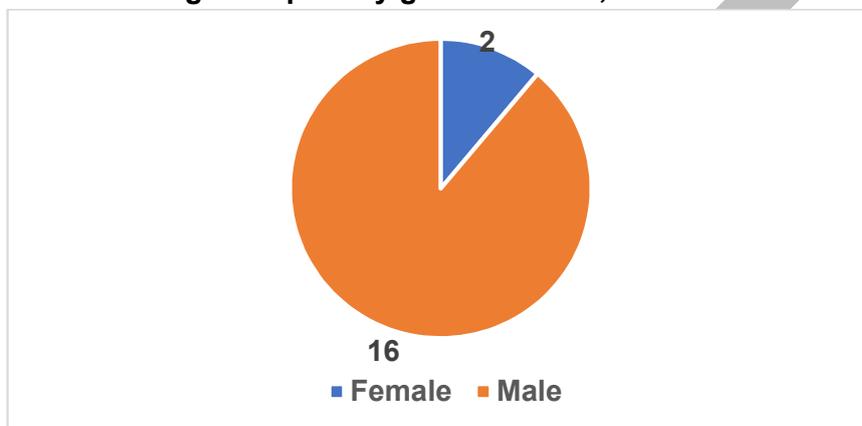
⁵¹ Department for Communities and Local Government. (2010). Evaluating the extend of rough sleeping: A new approach.

Chart 19: Rough sleepers by age group, Dorset 2019



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

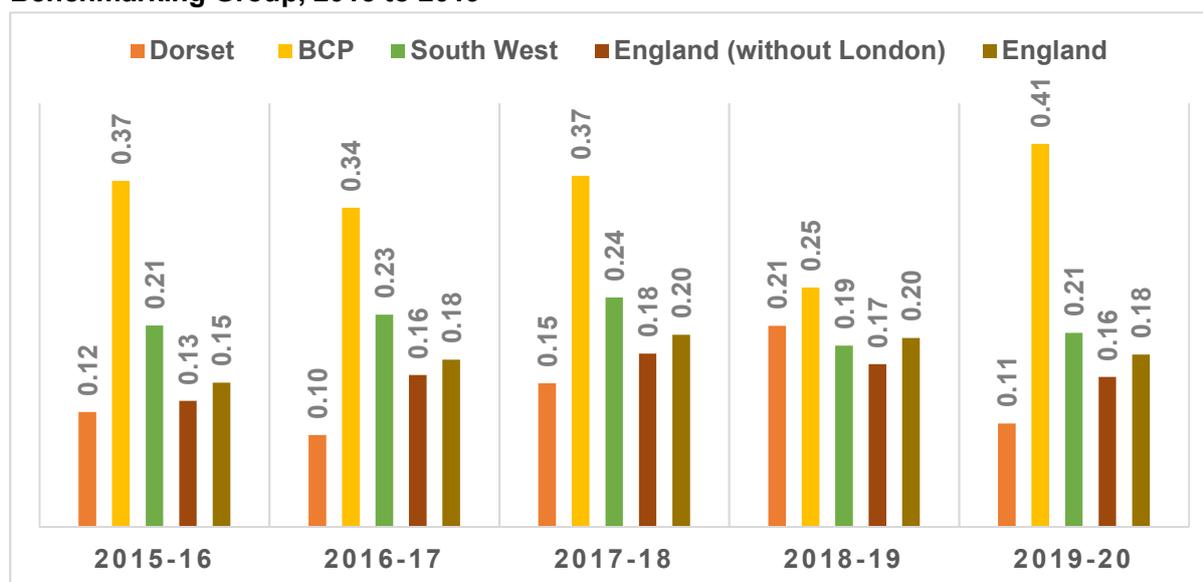
Chart 20: Rough sleepers by gender Dorset, 2019



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The numbers of rough sleepers in Dorset have been low compared with the other Benchmark areas each year from 2015 to 2019. The NHS Homeless Support Service sees rough sleepers migrate between Dorset and BCP so there can be crossover in caseloads.

Chart 21: Number of people sleeping rough (autumn count) per 1000 households, Benchmarking Group, 2015 to 2019



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

In 2019-2020, single households make up 66.2% of those owed an initial prevention or relief duty nationally, reflecting the changes brought in by HRA17. Households with children are more likely to approach a local authority at prevention stage, whereas single households are more likely to approach when they are already homeless. A greater proportion of single males who were homeless were not owed a main duty following relief, usually as they were assessed as having no priority need.

2.2 Future levels of homelessness

Research⁵² published in 2017 shows the primary cause of homelessness to be childhood poverty. This is closely followed by labour and housing market factors as secondary causes.

To forecast future levels of homelessness, we have taken account of trends shown in homelessness statistics analysed in section 2.1 of this chapter, plus other sources of data relating to the main causes, to create as accurate a forecast as is possible.

The latest child poverty figures, published July 2020, state that in the UK in 2018-19 there were 4.2 million children (30% of all UK children) living in poverty. Housing and childcare are the two primary factors that have been identified as putting pressure on family budgets⁵³. Figures published by the UK Government, showed the percentage of children living in poverty increased by 1% from 2015 to 2016 and have subsequently remained unchanged. This means current rates of child poverty are at the same level as seen in 2009/2010. Children are more likely, compared to the overall population, to be living in low income households⁵⁴.

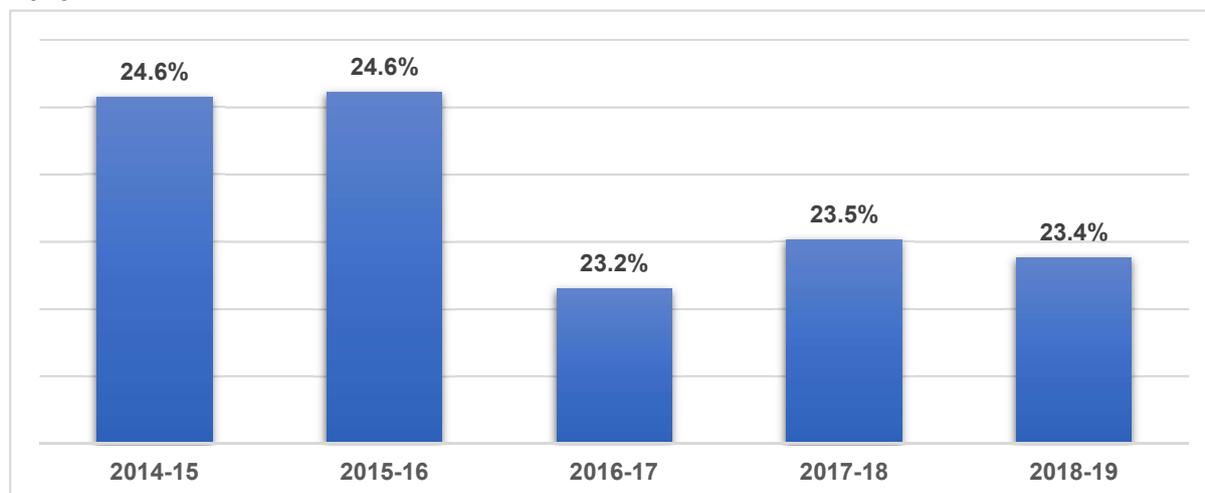
⁵² Professor Glen Bramley & Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick (July 2017), 'Homelessness in the UK: who is most at risk', Housing Studies Journal, pp1-21

⁵³ <http://www.cpaq.org.uk/content/child-poverty-facts-and-figures>

⁵⁴ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

The percentage of all children in Dorset living in poverty after housing costs are taken account of is lower than the UK as a whole, and reduced marginally to 23.4% in 2018-19.

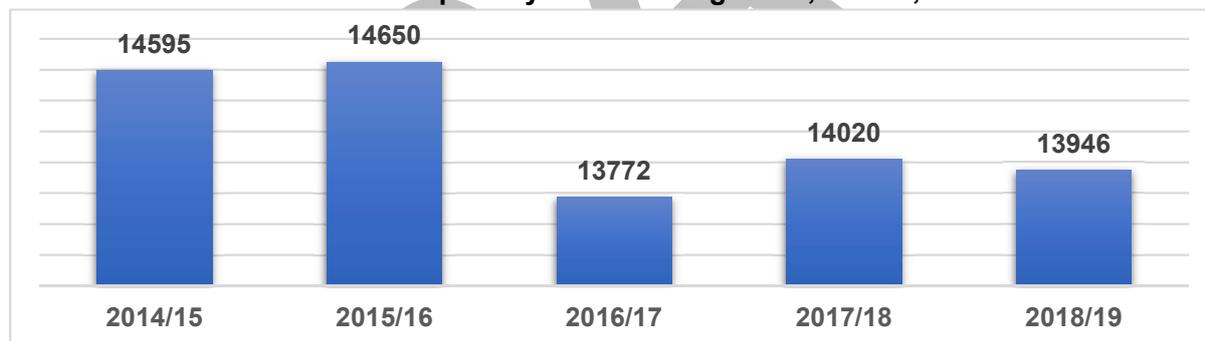
Chart 22: Percentage of children in poverty after housing costs, Dorset, 2014-2015 to 2018-2019



Source: Child Poverty Action Group. End Child Poverty

The most up to date figures show 13,946 children living in Dorset in households in poverty, after housing costs, in 2018-19.

Chart 23: Number of children in poverty after housing costs, Dorset, 2014-2015 to 2018-2019



Source: Child Poverty Action Group. End Child Poverty

Recently published research from Homeless Link⁵⁵ found that one of the barriers to homeless young people succeeding included difficulty in gaining access to education training and employment, and in sustaining it. According to the Research, appropriate, individual support by organisations that recognise the challenges young people face, is what is needed to help them thrive. The key recommendations for all tiers of government and service providers resulting from the research include several that Dorset Council could consider, such as

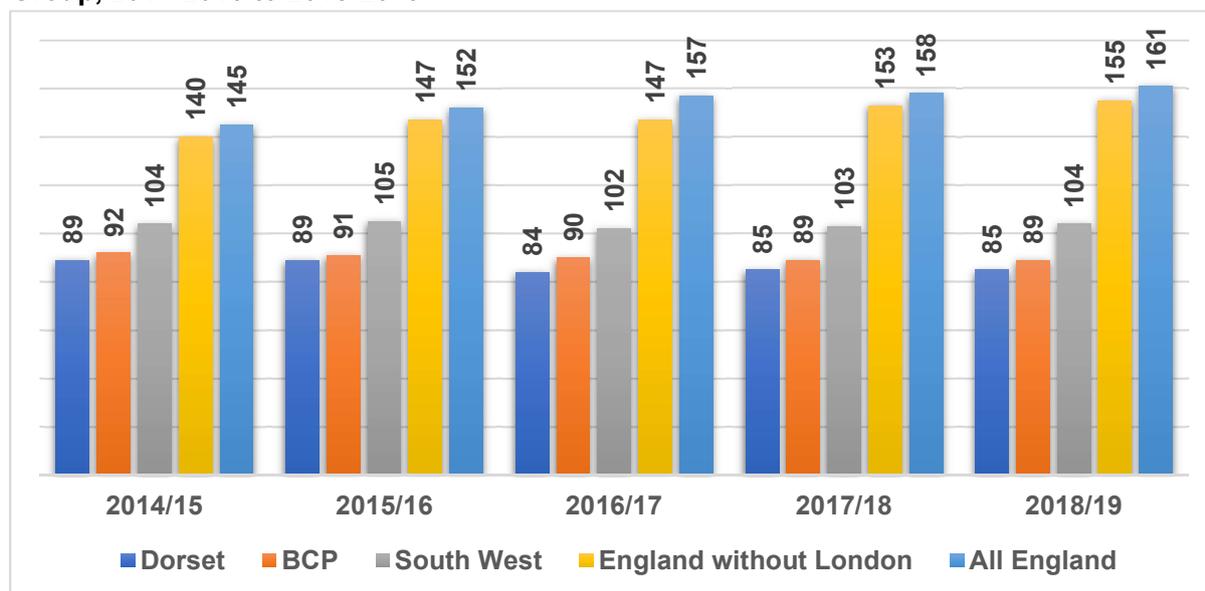
- recognise housing precarity within the responsibility for Children in Need
- fund schools to identify and support young people at risk of homelessness⁵²

The number of children living in poverty after housing costs per thousand households, show that Dorset had the lowest figures compared with the Benchmark Group for the five-year period

⁵⁵ Young and Homeless 2020, Homeless Link October 2020

2014-2015 to 2018-2019. The figures for BCP and the South West are slightly higher than Dorset, but also lower than the remaining areas. The All England and England without London numbers of children in poverty per thousand households have increased year on year, and for 2018-2019 are almost double that of Dorset.

Chart 24: Children living in poverty after housing costs per 1000 household, Benchmark Group, 2014-2015 to 2018-2019

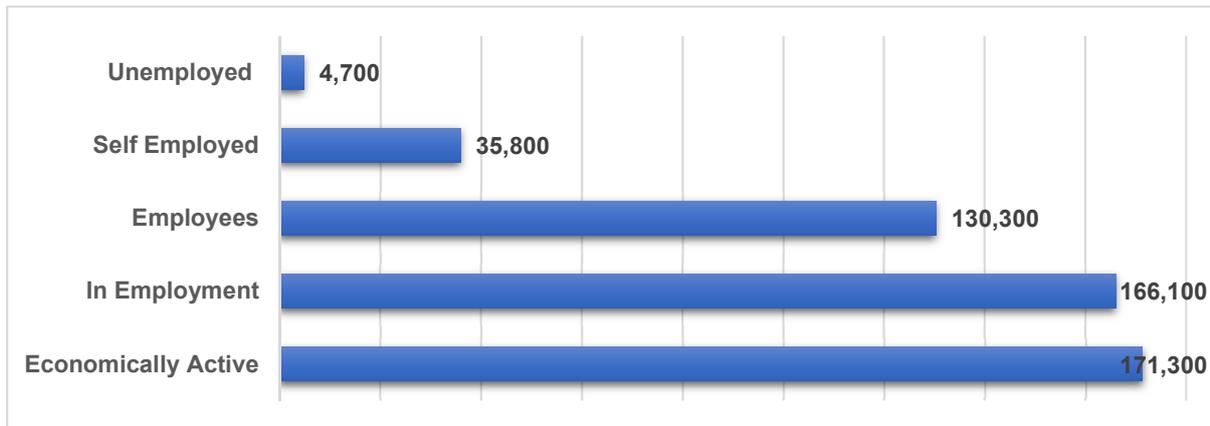


Source: Child Poverty Action Group. End Child Poverty

The number of people between the ages of 16 to 64 years who were unemployed in Dorset at June 2020 was 4,700, which is 2.7% of all economically active people. The proportion of the working age (16-64) population who are unemployed in Dorset is lower than all areas within the Benchmark Group and 1.1% lower than the All England 3.9% figure. The proportion of people in employment is higher than All England but lower than BCP and the South West, while the proportion of self-employed people in Dorset is higher than all the Benchmark Group. Dorset Council has prioritised economic growth⁵⁶ through raising career aspirations and improving skills, which may create additional job opportunities in the future.

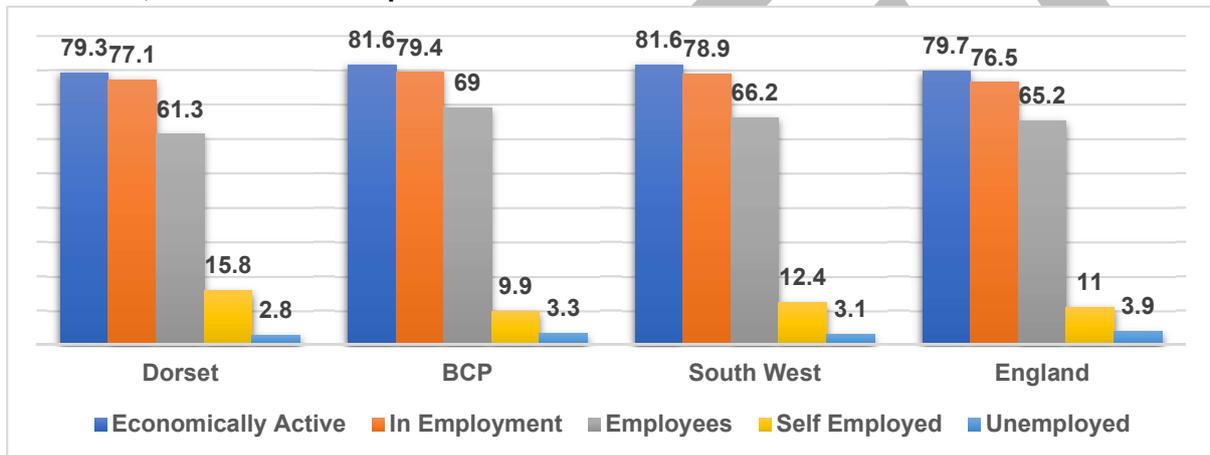
⁵⁶ ⁵⁶ Dorset Councils Plan 2020-2024, p4, Dorset Council

Chart 25: Employment and unemployment by number of 16 to 64-year olds, Dorset, July 2019 to Jun 2020



Source: ONS annual population survey

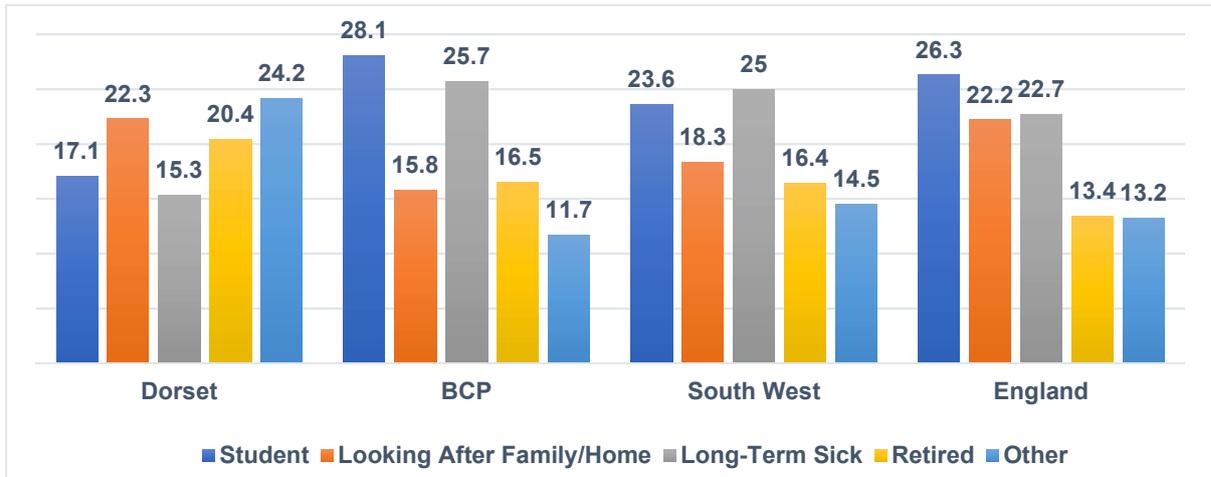
Chart 26: Employment and unemployment by percentage of 16 to 64-year olds, July 2019 to June 2020, Benchmark Group



Source: ONS annual population survey

The composition of households who are economically inactive by reason for inactivity in Dorset is not reflective of the national picture or any of the Benchmark Group areas. Dorset has the lowest proportion of people recorded as economically inactive due to long term sickness, 10.4% lower than BCP and 9.7% lower than the South West region, and the highest proportion of people recorded as retired at 20.4% of those economically inactive for those aged 16-64 years, 7% higher than England. Households recorded as 'other' reason for economic inactivity is also high in comparison with the other areas at 24.2%.

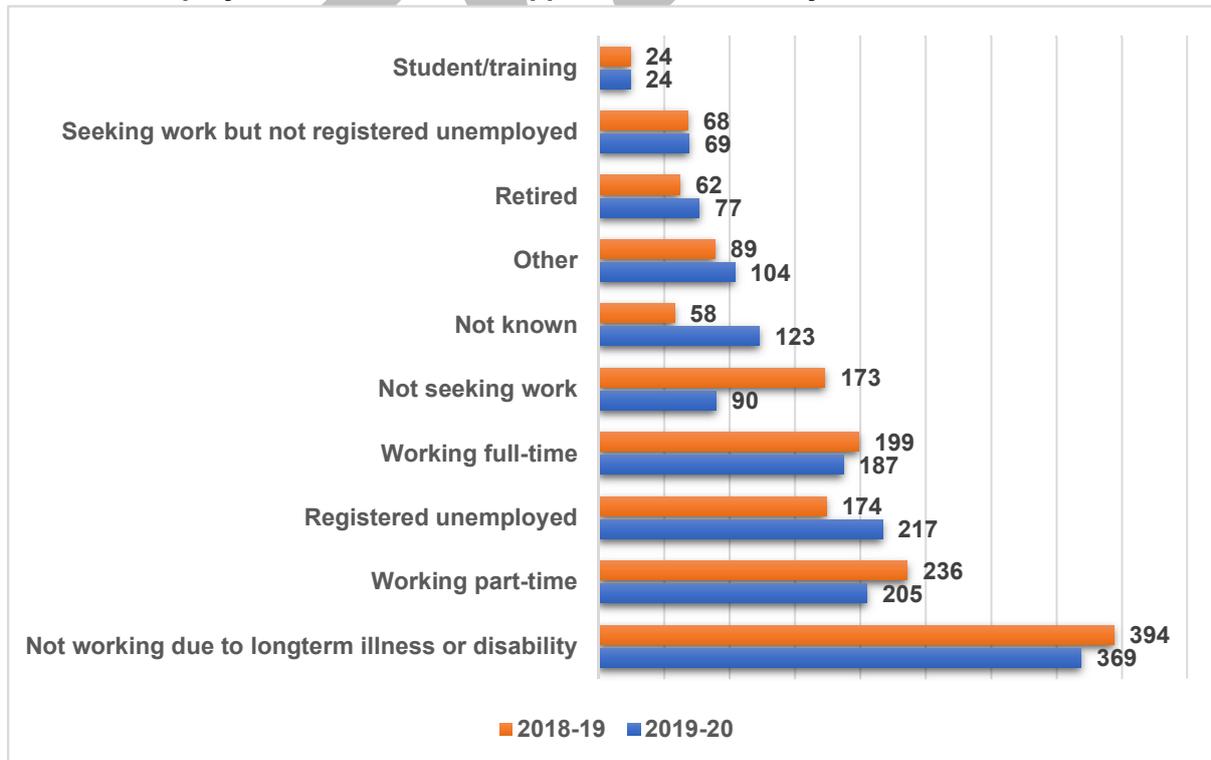
Chart 27: Economic inactivity by percentage of those aged 16-64, July 2019 to June 2020, Dorset



Source: ONS annual population survey

The most commonly occurring employment status of the main applicants owed a homelessness duty in Dorset is those not working due to long-term illness or disability for both 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, although these have reduced slightly by 6% during the two years. Of those main applicants who are working, there are a greater number working part time than full time for both years, and the number not seeking work has fallen by 52% between 2018-19 to 2019-20. The numbers for both 'other' and 'not known' have increased by 54% collectively. The number of applicants registered unemployed has increased by 25% to 217 between 2018-2019 to 2019-2020.

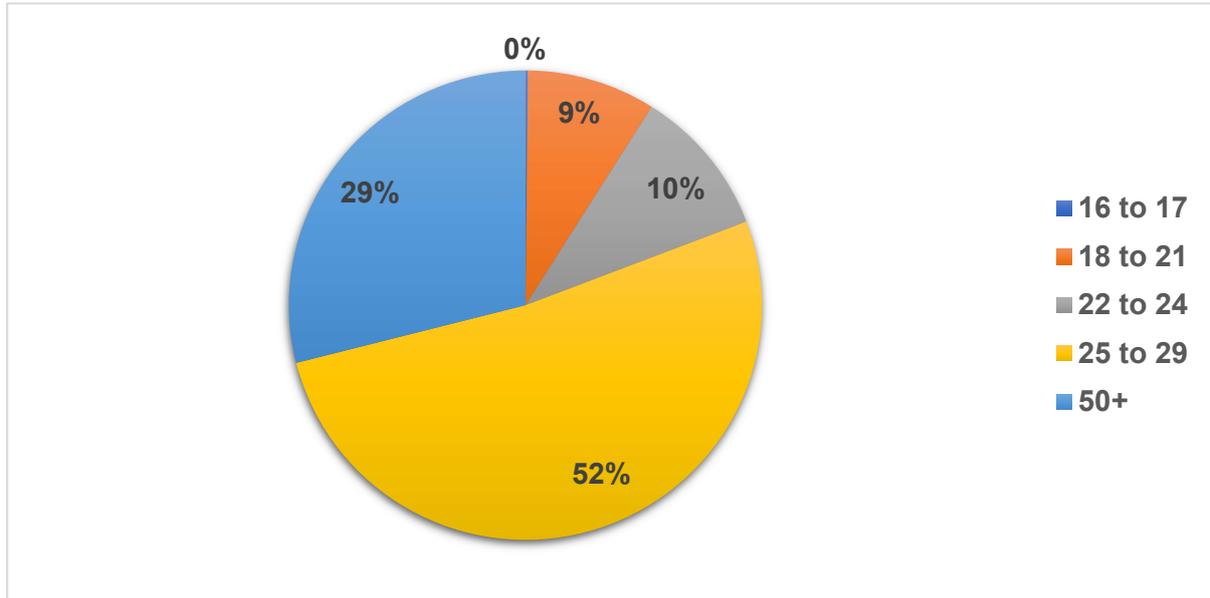
Chart 28: Employment status of main applicants owed a duty in Dorset



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The age group with the greatest proportion of claimants of out of work benefits in Dorset is the 25 to 49 years at 52% of all claimants, followed by the 50+ age group at 29%, with the fewest in the 16 to 17-year-old age group at 0.01%.

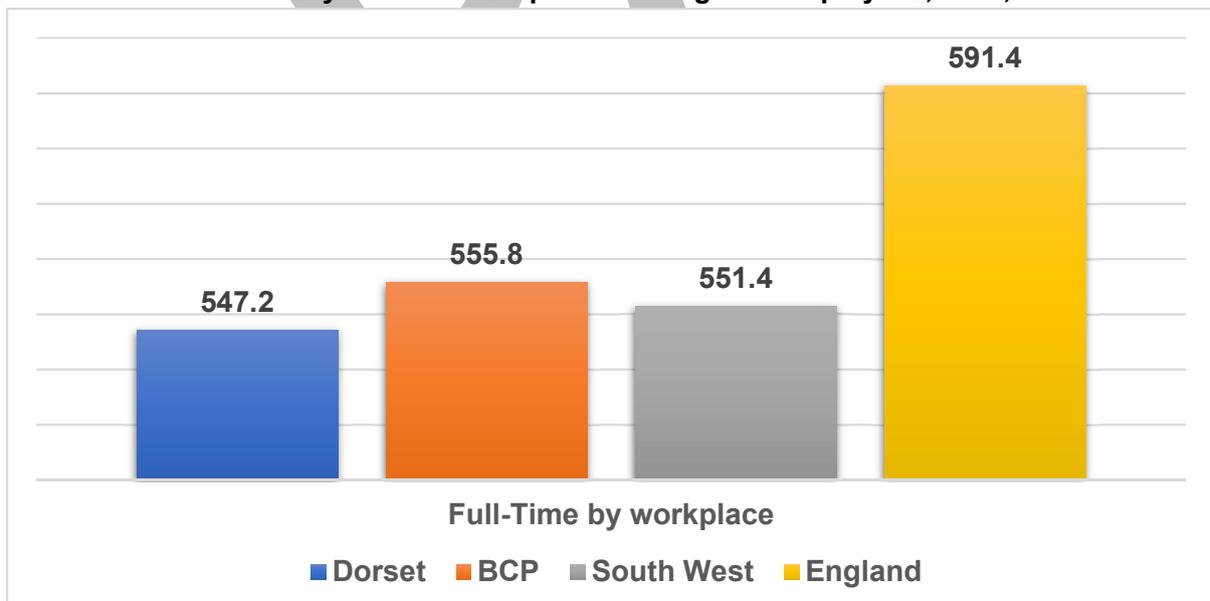
Chart 29: Claimant count by age group - not seasonally adjusted, September 2020, Dorset



Source: ONS Claimant count by sex and age

Median gross weekly earnings in Dorset by workplace is the lowest of the Benchmark Group at £547.20 per week; £4.20 lower than the South West, £8.60 lower than BCP, and £44.20 lower than All England.

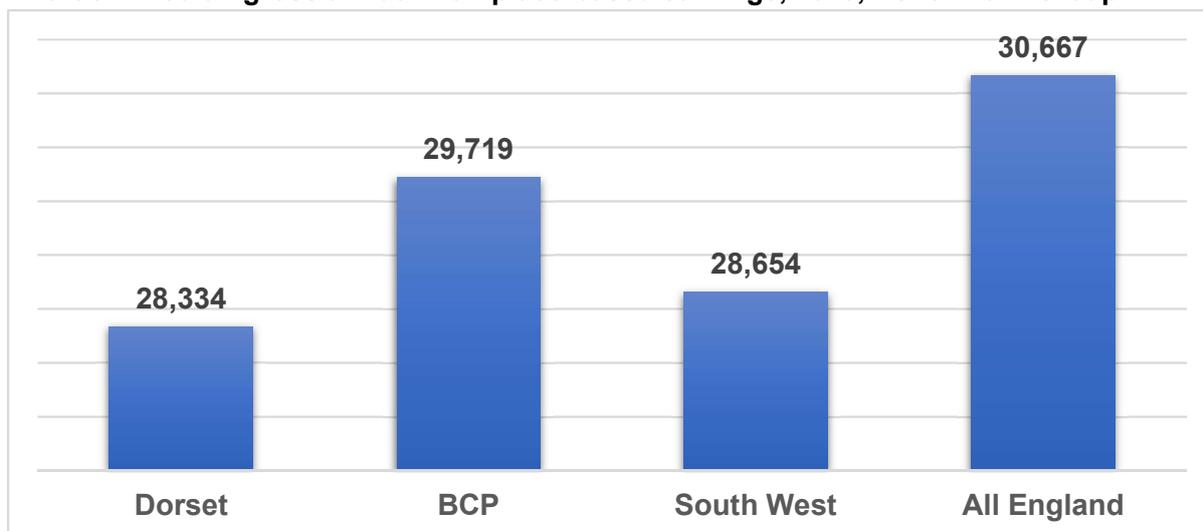
Chart 30: Median Weekly full-time workplace earnings for employees, 2019, Dorset



Source: ONS employment and labour market statistics

Median gross annual workplace earnings were the lowest of all Benchmark Group areas at 2019 including 8% lower than All England.

Chart 31: Median gross annual workplace-based earnings, 2019, Benchmark Group



Source: ONS Employment and Labour Market Statistics

Dorset median house prices at September 2019 were the highest of all Benchmark Group areas, including 19% higher than All England average.

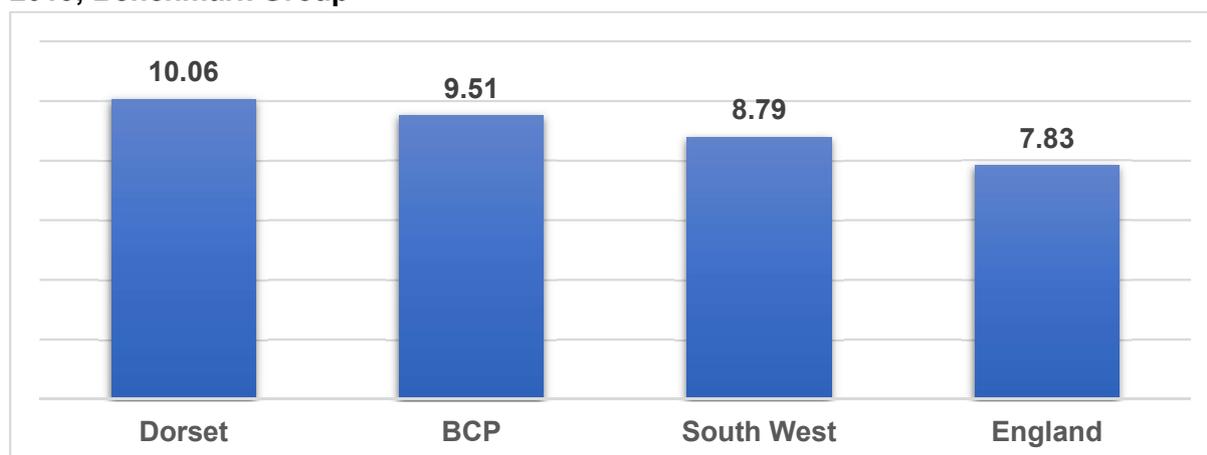
Chart 32: Median house prices at September, 2019, Benchmark Group



Source: ONS Median house price by local authority district, England and Wales

The ratio of median house prices to median gross annual workplaces earnings in Dorset is higher than all benchmark areas, with 10.6 times the average annual workplace salary needed to buy the average priced Dorset home. This is 0.55 greater than BCP, 1.27 greater than the South West and 2.23 greater than All England.

Chart 33: Median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings ratio, 2019, Benchmark Group



Source: Office for National Statistics: House Price to Earnings Ratio.

2.3 Conclusions about the levels of homelessness

Taking account of the current levels of homelessness alongside the range of predictive factors, and, considering the immediate and potential long-term impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the housing market, the economy, and households generally, the levels of homelessness in Dorset Council area are forecast to continue to increase across all groups, particularly families with dependent children, single males and single females with mental and physical health problems.

The dominant characteristics of people applying for assistance from Dorset Council are however in line with national trends; households with dependent children aged 25 to 44 and of a White British origin. The proportion of those seeking assistance recorded as 'ethnic group not stated', is greater than all other groups apart from White British. Disclosing which ethnic group a person belongs to, is rightly optional for the main applicant, however this important data set should be monitored to ensure that the Council can demonstrate that it fulfils its public equality duty to ensure equality of opportunity is provided to those who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act⁵⁷, including race, and those who do not.

The levels of homelessness in Dorset over the past five years reflect the overall increase in homeless decisions seen across England. The additional duties introduced by HRA17, appropriately designed to assist all eligible households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness to secure suitable, sustainable accommodation, have resulted in a greater amount of work for the Council, at each stage of homelessness. Single male and single female households are increasing in number, but the dominant characteristics of people applying for assistance from Dorset Council are in line with national trends; households with dependent children aged 25 to 44 years of age and of White British origin.

13,946 children living in Dorset (23.6%) are living in poverty after housing costs are taken account of. These households cannot afford the accommodation they are living in and will be unlikely to be able to afford alternative accommodation, with the possible exception of social

⁵⁷ Equality Act 2010, s.149

rented housing. Not all these children's families will approach Dorset Council for help to resolve their homeless situation and may therefore remain in poverty until the children become young adults, many of whom may be disadvantaged and repeat the cycle of poverty and homelessness unless they have access to effective advice, support and suitable housing.

Economic growth is one of five overarching Corporate Plan 2020-2024⁵⁸ priorities for Dorset Council and includes the aim 'enhance people's aspirations and skills to improve social mobility' 'work with schools, colleges, universities and businesses to raise career aspirations and improve skills'. This is encouraging in its aspiration and may help to encourage such institutions and employers to work with households living in poverty to offer the support and training of skills required to improve employment opportunities and household incomes to lift children out of poverty and stop this cycle.

The house prices to earnings ratio is a financial challenge that most of those not already in homeownership in Dorset cannot meet, and while shared or low-cost home ownership may be options to help some income earning households, affordable private rented and social rented housing needed to help prevent homelessness for all are the main tenure required for development.

The number of eligible but not homeless decision outcomes for 2015-2016 to 2017-2018 were high, and a recommendation of a sample audit of these cases would normally be of use to provide insight into the reasons for this. However, the number of such cases for 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 has reduced, as is to be expected with HRA17 prevention and relief duties, leaving only those whose homelessness could not be prevented or relieved to be assessed for a main duty decision. The increase in the number of cases assessed as non-priority is also to be expected as all prevention and relief cases have the potential to progress to an assessment for a main duty decision if prevention and relief activity are unsuccessful, and this includes those who do not fall within a priority category.

The increase in the number of households recorded as having a priority need due to mental and physical health is concerning, as while these may not be proportionally high, these households often face additional challenges in accessing and sustaining suitable homes. As with other priority need categories there are also likely be households which include dependent children with a household member facing difficult mental and physical health problems that are not included within the mental and physical health categories, but still require additional support in making the application and securing a suitable home.

The most common type of accommodation secured for those whose duty has ended in Dorset, is social rented housing, evidencing the need for greater provision. The reliance on social rented housing to end any homelessness duty will not be sustainable, should numbers of homeless households continue to increase as projected, and new social rented housing continue to be provided at a much lower rate. Starting to use the private rented sector is positive but it is becoming less affordable and cannot be sustained with enhanced housing benefits on a permanent basis.

⁵⁸ Dorset Councils Plan 2020-2024, Dorset Council

3.0 Preventing homelessness

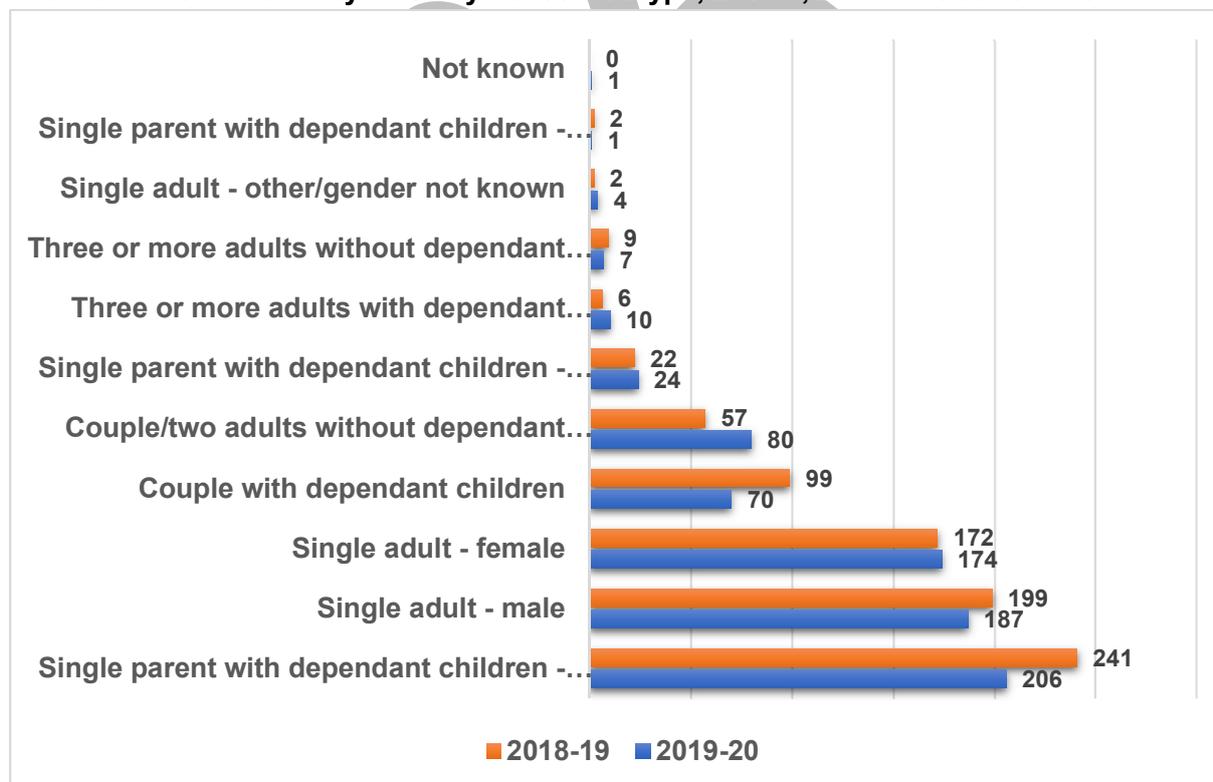
This chapter considers activities to prevent homelessness in Dorset and compares these activities regionally and nationally.

Homelessness prevention activity has been divided into three recognised strands⁵⁹ to inform the focus of this review:

1. Early prevention – those most at risk are identified and services provided to prevent problems escalating
2. Pre-crisis prevention – advice services, mediation, or negotiation with landlords to avoid the imminent loss of a home
3. Preventing recurring homelessness – tenancy sustainment services are provided to address other support needs

The main type of household recorded as being owed a prevention duty by Dorset Council is single parent females with dependent children. This fell by 15% to 206 households in 2019-2020 but remains more than 10% larger than the next largest group, single adult males. Single adult females increased by only two additional cases between 2018-19 and 2019-2020, though they are now the third most common household type owed a prevention duty, with over 100 more cases than couples with dependent children in 2019-2020.

Chart 34: Prevention duty owed by household type, Dorset, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020

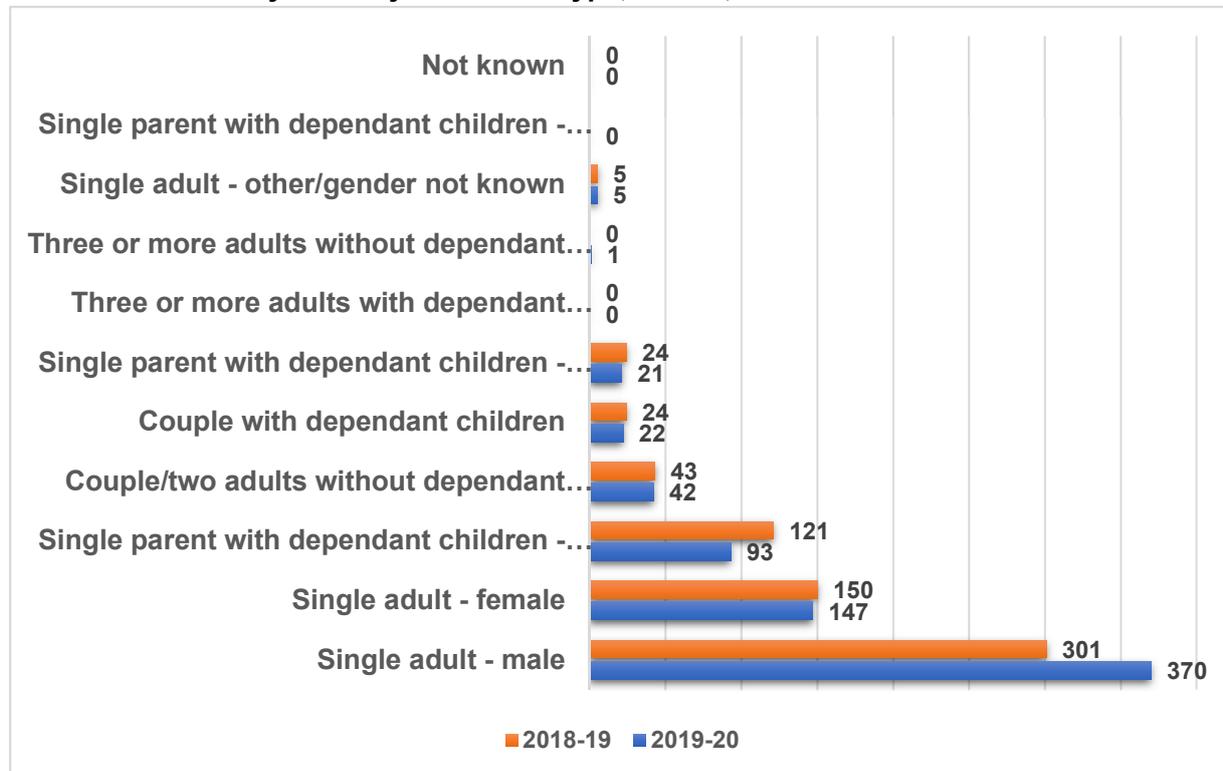


Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

⁵⁹ Hal Pawson, Gina Netto, Colin Jones, Fiona Wager, Cathie Fancy, Delia Lomax (2007), Evaluating Homelessness Prevention, London, Department for Communities & Local Government

The most common type of household owed a relief duty for the period 2018-2019 to 2019-2020 were single adult males, which increased by 23% to 370 households. This was followed by single adult female households, which reduced by 2% to 147 households. Couples with dependent children and single parent male households went down as did single parent female households, which reduced by 23% to 93 households.

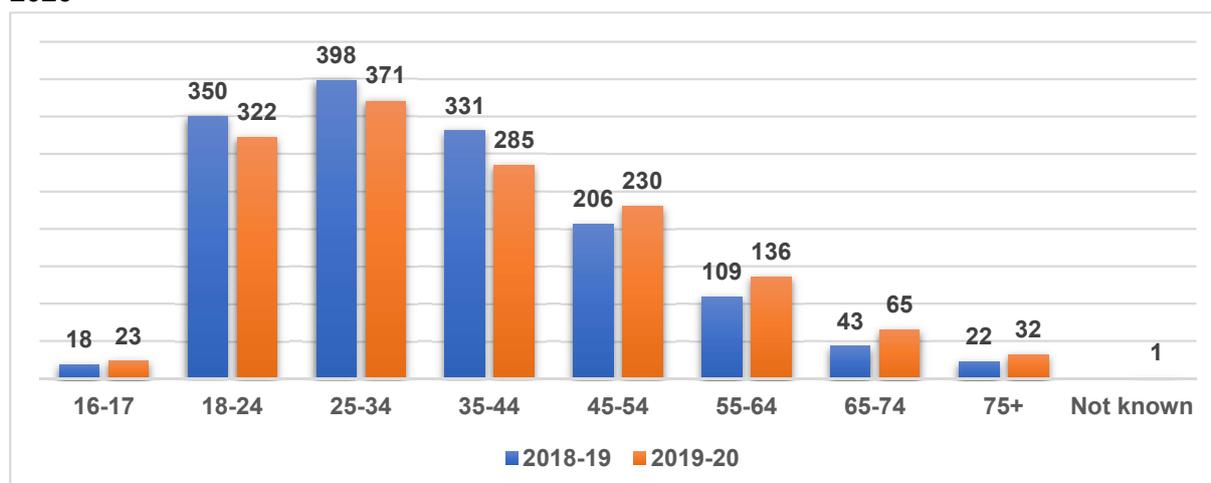
Chart 35: Relief duty owed by household type, Dorset, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Most main applicants of households owed a prevention or relief duty are between the ages of 25-34 for both 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, although the number of applicants in this age group did reduce by 3.8% to 371 households for the same period. The number of main applicants aged 18-24 also reduced by 8% to 222 households and those aged between 35-44 reduced by 14% to 285 households. The increases that balance these reductions are within all other age groups owed a prevention or relief duty for the period; including those aged 75+ which increased by 46% to 32 households and 16 to 17-year olds, the age group who are not yet legally responsible to hold a tenancy, which increased by 28% to 23 households.

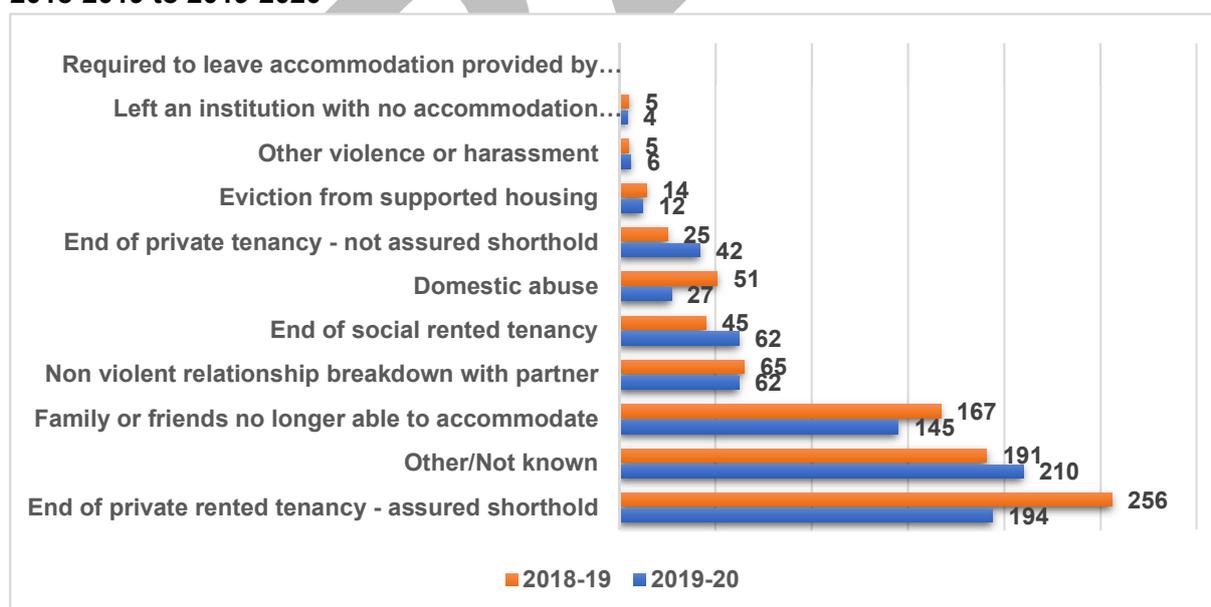
Chart 36: Age of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty, Dorset, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The end of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold is the most commonly specified reason for the loss of last settled home for the period 2018-19 to 2019-20, for those owed a prevention duty. This has reduced by 24.3% to 194 households, followed by family and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate, which fell by 13.3% to 145. The end of a social rented tenancy at 62 households during 2019-20 is an increase of more than 30% on the previous year. The number of households recorded under Other Reasons/Not Known for loss of last settled home for those owed a prevention duty in Dorset, increased by 10% to 210.

Chart 37: Reason for loss of last settled home for those owed a prevention duty, Dorset, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020

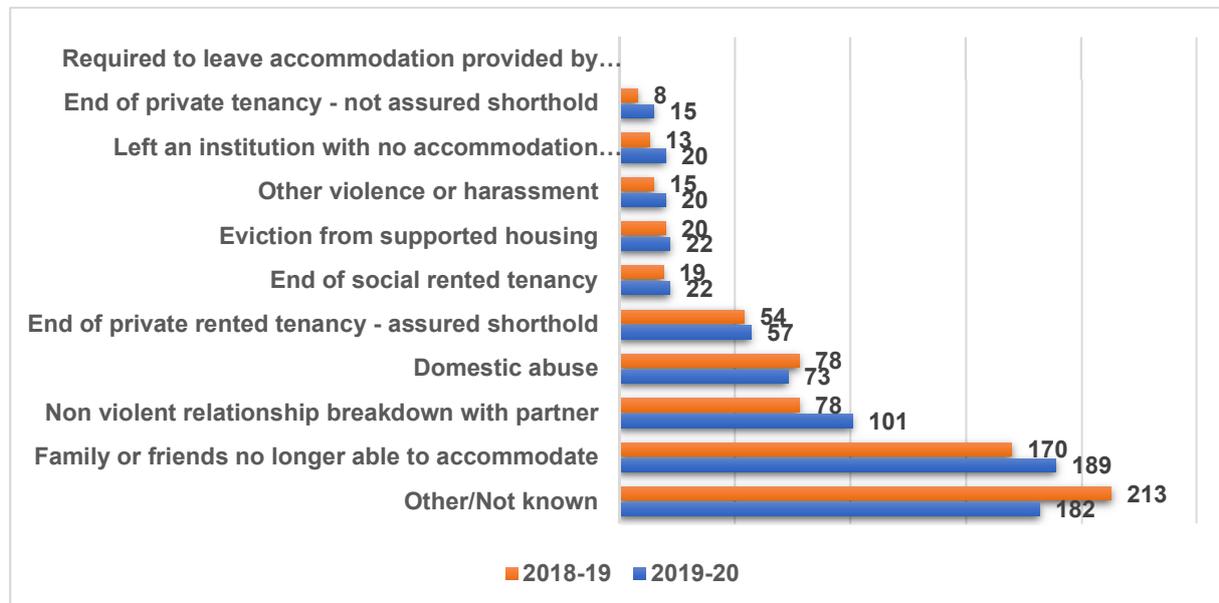


Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The most commonly recorded reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a relief duty is family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate which increased by 19 households to 189 for 2018-2019 to 2019-2020. Households owed a relief duty losing their home due to non-violent relationship breakdown with partner increased by 23 households 101.

Domestic abuse reduced as a reason for loss of last settled home by 5 households, while other violence and harassment increased by 5 to 20 households. Those recorded as 'other reasons/not known' reduced by 31 households but remains high and the number of households evicted from a social rented tenancy increased by 3 to 22, the same number as supported housing eviction.

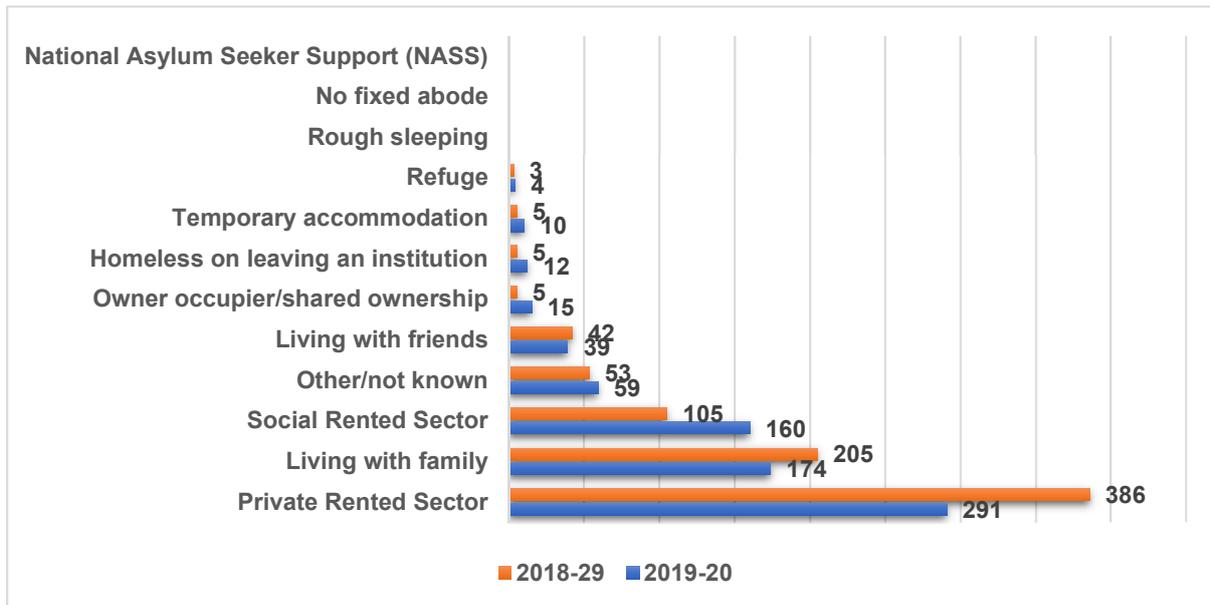
Chart 38: Reason for loss of last settled home for those owed a relief duty, Dorset, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The majority of households owed a prevention duty for 2018-2019 to 2019-2020 were living in privately rented accommodation at the time of application, although this reduced by 24.5%. The number of households living with family reduced by 15%, and those living with friends also showed a small reduction. The number of households owed a prevention duty who were living in the social rented sector at the time of application increased by 27% to 160 households.

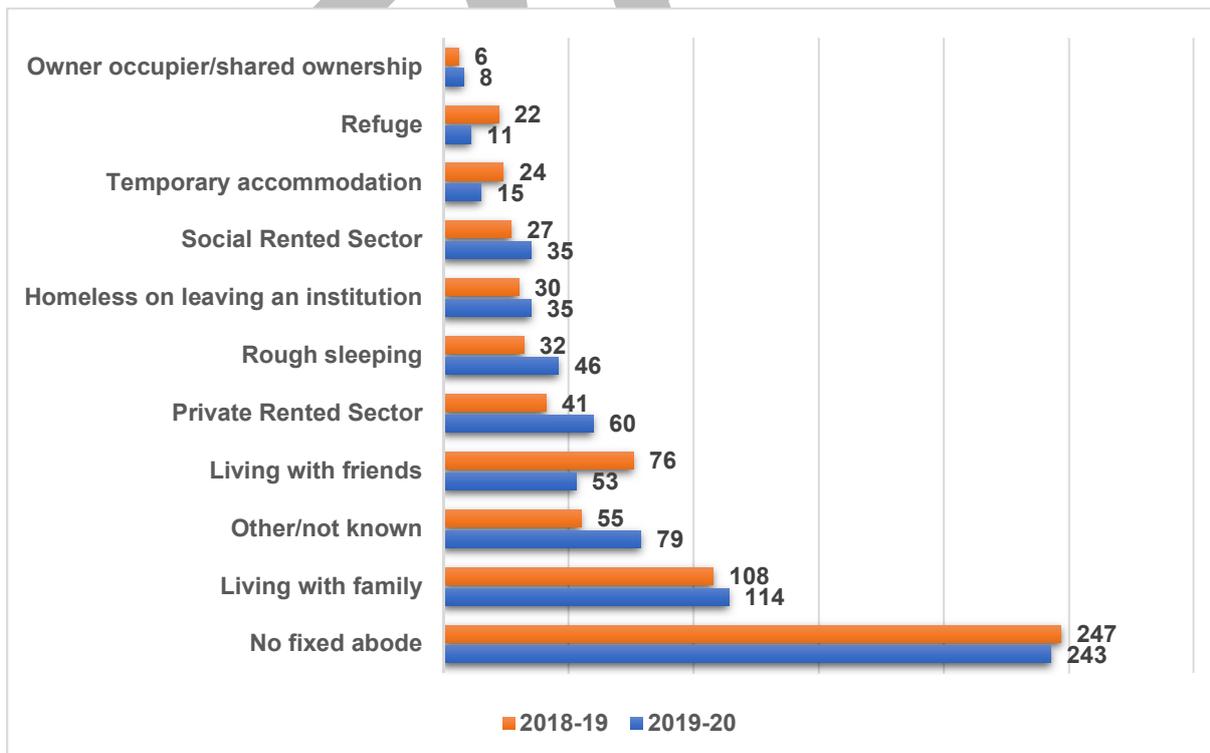
Chart 39: Accommodation at time of application for those owed a prevention duty, Dorset, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

No fixed abode was the most common recorded form of accommodation at the time of application for households owed a relief duty for 2018-19 to 2019-20, followed by living with family which increased slightly during the two years. The number of households living with friends reduced by 30%, and those sleeping rough increased by 33% to 46.

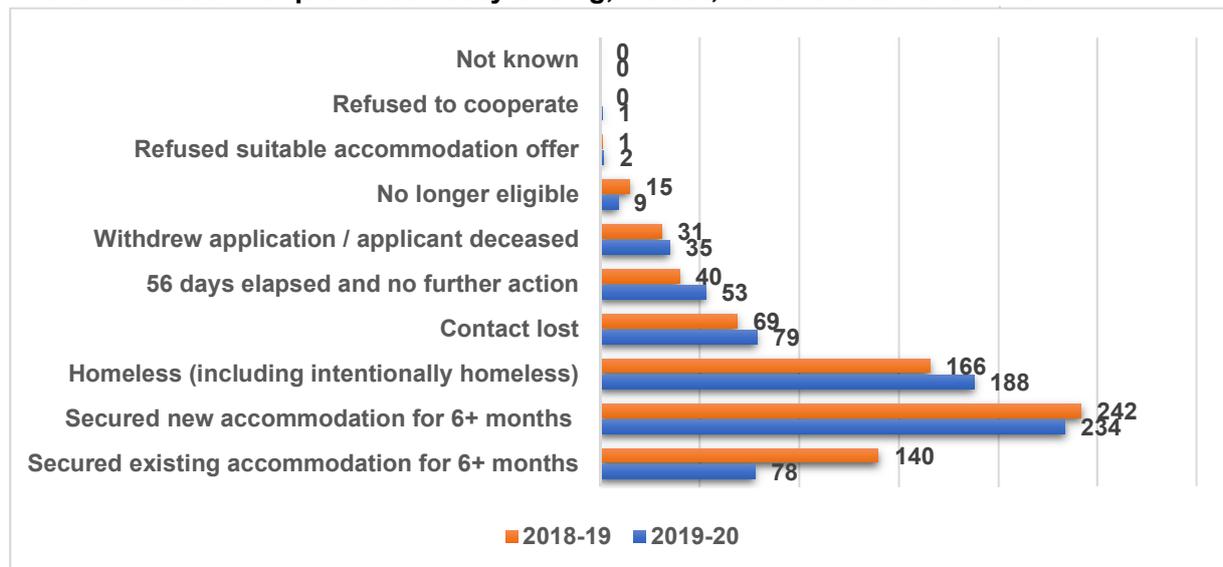
Chart 40: Accommodation at time of application for those owed a relief duty, Dorset, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

35% of all household's whose prevention duties ended in 2019-20 were due to new accommodation secured for at least 6 months, while those whose duty ended due to remaining in existing accommodation was 12%, a reduction of almost 45% of cases on the previous year. The remaining 53% of households whose prevention duties ended in Dorset were potentially negative outcomes, some of which would have progressed to the relief duty while others would have no further action from the council, which may not result in an unresolved homelessness situation for the household.

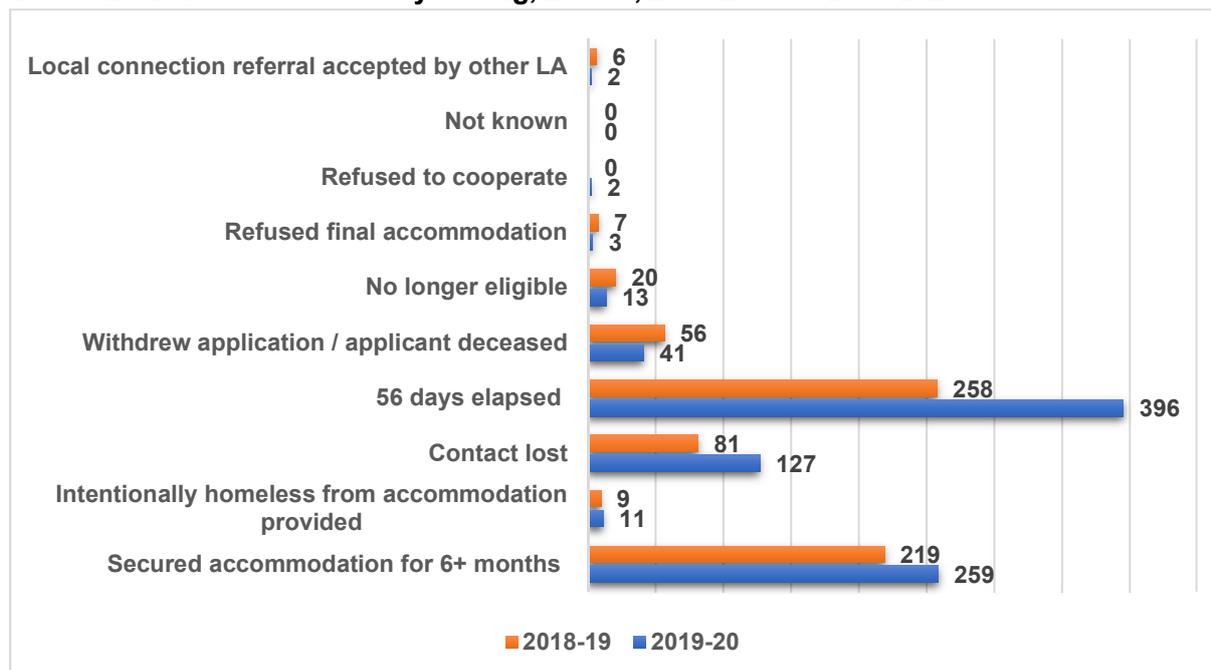
Chart 41: Reason for prevention duty ending, Dorset, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The most common reason for the relief duty ending in Dorset is 56 days elapsing, which increased by 138 households between 2018-2019 and 2019-2020. This is followed by accommodation secured for 6+ months, though this data set does not record the tenure of such accommodation. 127 households are recorded as contact lost as the reason for the relief duty ending, which leaves just 33% households owed a relief duty and 30% where homelessness is confirmed to have been resolved for at least 6 months, and the remaining 67% and 70% respectively, may still be homeless or at risk of homelessness in Dorset.

Chart 42: Reason for relief duty ending, Dorset, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

3.1 Early Homelessness Prevention Activities

3.1.1 Universal advice and information

A new 'duty to refer' came into force from October 2018⁶⁰. Specified public authorities are obliged to ask any person they believe might be homeless or threatened with homelessness if they wish to be referred to a local authority of their own choosing.

Dorset Council have made information available to relevant public bodies, such as probation services, prisons, social services, armed forces and local NHS Trusts, about how to make referrals of cases of homelessness. A joint Duty to Refer Protocol⁶¹ was established with Dorset and BCP District councils and this remains in place today, while a dedicated online referral form is available on Dorset Council website⁶², plus a specific email address has been set-up. There is also an online form for non-public authorities to make a referral for someone they are working with.

During 2019-2020, 202 referrals were made to Dorset Council, including 31% made under the new Duty to Refer. The majority of referrals made to the Council were made by non-public authorities, such as local support agencies, Citizens Advice offices and housing associations, who are not required to use the formal duty to refer process.

Table 1: Households assessed for homelessness as a result of a referral including under the duty to refer, Dorset, 2019-2020

Referrals made to Dorset Council including under Duty to Refer* 2019-20

⁶⁰ Homelessness (Review Procedure Etc) Regulations 2018, Part 4 Duty to Refer

⁶¹ Dorset Duty to Refer Protocol for Public Authorities, Dorset Housing Authorities, 1st October 2018,

⁶² Duty to Refer online form <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/housing/homelessness/duty-to-refer-for-public-authorities.aspx>

Organisation Type	Number of referrals
Agency not subject to Duty to Refer	93
Other organisation type/not known	36
Children's Social Services	17
National Probation Service	11
Adult Social Services	10
Hospital A&E, Urgent Treatment Centres of in-patient care	9
Mental health in-patient care	8
Adult secure estate (Prison)	5
Other local authority	5
Job Centre Plus	5
Community rehabilitation company	3

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Many housing associations that own social rented housing stock in Dorset Council area have signed up to the National Housing Federation's voluntary Commitment to Refer⁶³, including:

- Hastoe Housing Association
- Sovereign Housing Association
- Tamar Housing
- The Guinness Partnership
- Abri Housing Group

The prevention of homelessness often starts with good housing advice. Dorset Council manages housing advice in house, currently from across the former district areas. The responsibilities performed by Dorset Council include:

- Providing Housing advice,
- Taking applications for homelessness assistance,
- Determining eligibility for assistance,
- Providing accommodation for an interim period to people who might be homeless, eligible for assistance and have a priority need,
- Completing assessments and formulating personalised plans,
- Fulfilling duties to prevent and/or relieve homelessness, provide accommodation to people who are unintentionally homeless and have a priority need, plus provide advice and accommodation for a reasonable period to people who are intentionally homeless and have a priority need,
- Making referrals to other local authorities for persons who do not have a connection to Dorset Council.
- Completing reviews of decisions made about entitlements to assistance,
- Ensuring suitability of accommodation offered, protection of persons property, working with children services when cases involve children, receiving referrals from specified public authorities, and
- Detecting fraudulent applications for assistance.

In addition to housing advice, Dorset Council is also responsible for:

- Responding to requests for assistance from other local authorities to discharge their homelessness duties, and

⁶³ National Housing Federation. (2018). Commitment to refer: guidance for housing associations

- Completing a homelessness review and formulating a homelessness strategy.

The Council currently delivers the homelessness functions from the former local authority offices at each location. The Dorset Council website has a specific housing link which is easily identifiable on its homepage, with a visible tab leading to the dedicated homelessness page, which includes details about how to access the service in each location, plus information about:

- Where to get independent advice, with links to Shelter and Citizens Advice websites
- All voluntary and statutory services in each former district area that may be of help to the applicant
- The Rough Sleeper Assertive Outreach and Engagement Services
- Dedicated support for victims of domestic abuse.

The information on the Dorset Council website regarding threatened homelessness provides contact details for each homelessness service in the former council locations, and explains the assessment procedure, the personal plan, and the information and evidence required by Dorset Council from households threatened with homelessness. This is followed by information on the ways in which Dorset Council can help the service user remain in their current home such as mediation with landlord or mortgage lender, maximising income and helping to manage debt, and where this is not possible, how they can assist in finding an alternative home, such as helping to search the private sector and referral to financial assistance schemes. There are links to information on how the Rent Deposit and Bond Schemes works and who can access the schemes, plus the rent deposit or bond application form. There is also a link to a page which provides information on the homelessness relief duty, temporary accommodation, and the main duty.

The provision of much of this work is through commissioned services.

Dorset Citizens Advice operates a face to face triage service five days each week offering housing and debt advice casework. Advice is also available at other times via self-help and at other branches by telephone, email webchat, and video link. During the COVID-19 pandemic they have remained open offering face to face support and helped with a range of issues, including helping new tenants and some in TA with problems setting up gas and electricity services.

Case Study: Reach Out

Dorset Council and Dorset Citizens Advice are currently working together on the Reach Out⁶⁴ initiative to encourage people living in Dorset to seek financial, housing, health and wellbeing and employment advice as early as possible if they have been affected in any of these areas by the Covid-19 pandemic. This campaign is well promoted with simple webpages signposting to a wide range of support, all of which provides early help to prevent homelessness.

Shelter is working to keep people in their private rented sector homes including helping with disrepair. At present they have a DIY skills adviser, funded by Nationwide, who works with tenants to clear mould from condensation for example, and engages with landlords to work

⁶⁴ <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/emergencies-severe-weather/emergencies/coronavirus/reaching-out/reaching-out-financial-and-emotional-support-during-covid-19.aspx>

jointly with the tenant on improving the property. They also have a new community engagement worker in post, whose role is to get out into communities and understand the issues, find out what's going on for people with regard to housing, particularly those with multiple and complex needs. The officer will offer training, such as workshops for foodbank volunteers on referrals to support services and talking with foodbank users about basic issues like damp and mould to assist with early prevention.

Dorset Council's housing benefit administrators have an excellent relationship with the homelessness service. As the majority of those placed in TA do claim housing benefit they have worked together to redesign processes to address all the issues they have identified over the years and have a specific application designed just for the homelessness team to use. When procuring new accommodation both services work together to see what arrangements need to be put in place and any work doing to find alternative to B&B is supported by HB officers, including discussing benefit levels in very early stages and setting charges later on. Housing benefit and council tax benefit claims are applied for online but this is not yet fully automated. There are a lot of Discretionary Housing Payment applications from homelessness officers who are supporting people with arrears or threat of homelessness. Housing Benefits staff also work closely with Aster and Magna housing associations who have in-house money matters advisers working with tenants who have arrears.

3.1.2 Targeted action

There are specific homelessness prevention initiatives to respond to the common characteristics of adults who experience homelessness, such as alcohol dependency, street drinking, use of hard drugs, begging, injecting drugs, being charged with a violent criminal offence, abuse of solvents/gas/glue, engaging in sex work, being a victim of a sexual assault⁶⁵.

The You First Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Sexual Violence Integrated Service provides outreach support in the community and accommodation-based services in Dorset, including a safe house for those at significant risk of harm, and target hardening to help people remain in their own home.

Dorset Council's website for its children services pages include simple to access information for care leavers with details of the Dorset Local Offer⁶⁶, which includes information about accommodating care leavers. There is a link to apply to Dorset Homechoice for social rented housing and details of three specific housing options for care leavers including remaining in foster care at 16, until the age of 21, supported lodgings for 16 to 25-year olds, and the Supported Housing Alliance which may identify supported accommodation provision. The pages are clear and simple and the website explains that care leavers over 18 will have a personal adviser to assist them in finding suitable housing, which may include working with housing services, plus providing support to apply for benefits, utilities and help with budgeting. When a care leaver is found to be intentionally homeless it is usually more difficult for these young people to resolve their housing problem. They are less likely to have informal networks of support that can be available to the general population and without a safety net, can and do become part of the rough sleeper population very quickly.

⁶⁵ Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Dr Sarah Johnsen, Dr Michael White (2011), 'Multiple Exclusion Homelessness in the UK: Key Patterns and Intersections', *Social Policy & Society*, 10(4), p501-512

⁶⁶ <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/children-families/childrens-social-care/children-in-care/local-offer-for-care-leavers/accommodation.aspx>

Dorset Council's homelessness service and children's social care service, work with children aged 16 and 17 years, plus young adults aged 18, 19, or 20 years, each fulfilling any relevant duty owed. The children social care service facilitate the organisation of a personal adviser for each person leaving care, to provide support until their 21st birthday (or 25th if they remain in full time education). For 16- and 17-year olds there is a joint protocol setting out how officers from both services will work together to ensure that these children receive a seamless service from the first approach as homeless or threatened homelessness. Following the introduction of HRA17, new guidance was published jointly with MHCLG and the Department of Education (DfE) on the provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 years-olds who may be homeless and/or require accommodation⁶⁷ therefore a review of the current protocol is required. More recently, MHCLG DfE have published good practice advice on joint housing protocols for care leavers, which should be used to inform local practice⁶⁸.

Dorset Nightstop is accommodation provided for one to three nights for 16 to 25-year olds hosted by volunteers. This provision allows time for the agencies that are working with the young person time to find a solution to their homelessness while knowing they are in a safe environment. Those young people that do find themselves at risk of, or become, homeless often have multiple and complex difficulties that are not easily addressed. Some stakeholders shared that they have specific concerns about care leavers as they are often placed in accommodation they cannot manage and, as teenagers, they do not always have the emotional language to talk with services who often see them later as older adults sleeping rough.

Good Practice Example: Dorset Council

Children's Services and Housing Options working relationship is aided by the provision of a housing officer with responsibility as 'Care Leaver Champion'. The officer spent some time working in children's services to gain an understanding of their responsibilities and now acts as a conduit for children's services colleagues to coordinate with housing services for advice and guidance and liaison with housing colleagues across the County.

A combined Youth Offending Service works with young people across Dorset and BCP council areas, with both local authorities and the Dorset Police, the National Probation Service and local NHS Trusts. There is some referral data, but no statistical monitoring specific to the Dorset Council area about the number of people leaving prison, young offender institutes etc who are homelessness at the date of release. There is an early intervention protocol in place with Adult Services Occupational Therapy Service as some of those leaving The Verne Prison have a social care need and/or are disabled.

⁶⁷ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Department for Education. (2018). Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17-year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation. Guidance to children's services authorities and local housing authorities about their duties under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989 and Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to secure or provide accommodation for homelessness 16 and 17-year-old young people

⁶⁸ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Department for Education. 2020. Joint housing protocols for leavers: good practice advice

There are 58,000 armed forces veterans and 6,000 serving personnel resident in the county of Dorset⁶⁹. While there is no statistical monitoring specific to Dorset Council about the number of armed forces veterans who become homeless, there is a strong partnership between Dorset and BCP Councils, NHS, Police and Crime Commissioner, Royal British Legion, the Military bases and others under the umbrella of the Armed Forces Covenant Programme. Within the programme, there is no specific aim regarding homelessness, although improving health and wellbeing, improving access to information, services and support and being better equipped to integrate into communities are all identified outcomes⁷⁰. A housing provider located outside of the Dorset Council Area has designated a small amount of accommodation for use of armed forces veterans from Dorset and BCP. Royal British Legion and the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) provide access to welfare benefits, debt and money advice and other support to anyone who has served in the armed forces, including helping rough sleeping veterans off the street and into move on accommodation when they are ready.

The Lantern Trust in Weymouth help to prevent homelessness and support rough sleepers by mediating and advocating with landlords on behalf of individuals and assisting with rent deposits. The Lantern Trust have their own housing and benefits team and provide office space to Shelter Housing First. Citizens Advice has a drop-n service two days each week and a GP service is offered each Friday.

Dorset Healthcare NHS Trust have commissioned a review into working more closely with housing associations to support tenants and potential tenants with complex needs, delayed discharges from hospital and the provision of high-level supported accommodation, such as those with fire setting histories. The Mental Health Rehabilitation Services review⁷¹ in Dorset, has resulted in one of three inpatient rehabilitation units closing. The aim of the Trust is to use the savings from closing one of the units and replace it with a specialist rehabilitation team working with tenants in new mental health supported housing. 21 units of units of supported housing has been identified as needed for this group, across the whole of Dorset, and the Clinical Commissioning Group officer with housing responsibility is working to secure this.

The new community rehabilitation team will link up with other services, including homelessness services, to provide medical support for those with a serious mental illness. A three-year investment in the integrated care programme will also see mental health teams set up around primary care network to try and address the mental health of the local population. Staff will be trained to understand housing pathways, and there may be potential for co-location with council services.

There is not enough statistical monitoring specific to Dorset Council about the number of people with mental health who are homeless or the number of people being discharged from hospital who are homeless.

⁶⁹ Factsheet RUC 3: Background information and demographics, Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Programme

⁷⁰ Factsheet RUC 2: Introduction to the Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Programme

⁷¹ <https://www.dorsetccg.nhs.uk/mental-health-rehabilitation-services-update/>

3.2 Pre-crisis homelessness prevention activities

Pre-crisis homelessness prevention activities are carried out by Dorset Council Homelessness Service and commissioned services. These activities can be divided into two broad areas: assistance that helps people to remain in their existing accommodation or, when this is not safe or possible, help to obtain alternative accommodation. These activities are typically carried out anytime between when someone is homeless, and up to two months prior to someone potentially losing their home, and occasionally even further ahead in time. MHCLG's homelessness statistical recording from 2009/10⁷² (until 2017/18, following which recording methods were changed), detailed pre-crisis homelessness prevention activities typically carried out throughout England as shown below:

Homelessness Prevention Activities to Remain in Existing Home

Mediation using external or internal trained family mediators
Conciliation including home visits for family/friends threatened exclusion
Financial payments from a homelessness prevention fund
Debt advice
Resolving housing benefit problems
Resolving rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sectors
Sanctuary scheme measures for domestic violence
Crisis intervention – providing emergency support
Negotiation or legal advocacy to ensure someone can remain in accommodation in the private rented sector
Providing other assistance that will enable someone to remain in the private rented sector
Mortgage arrears interventions or mortgage rescue

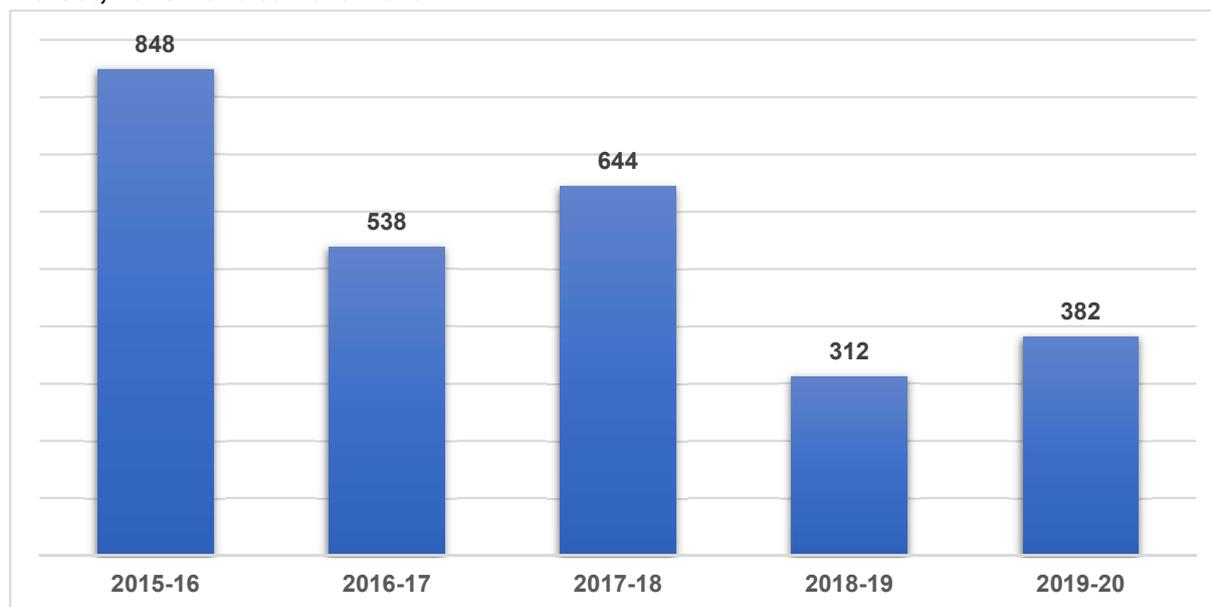
Homelessness Prevention Activities to Obtain Alternative Accommodation

Any form of hostel or house of multiple occupation with or without support
Private rented sector accommodation with landlord incentive scheme
Private rented sector accommodation without landlord incentive scheme
Accommodation arranged with friends or relatives
Supported housing, including supported lodging schemes
Management move of an existing social housing tenant
Housing register offer or nomination of accommodation to a social landlord
Negotiation with an RSL outside housing register or nomination arrangements
Low cost homeownership scheme or low-cost market housing solution

The number of cases where positive action succeeded in preventing homelessness set out in Chart 41 below includes both the actions recorded in the Dorset Council's P1E records for 2015-2016 to 2017-2018, and the actions taken to prevent homelessness recorded in the Dorset HCLIC statistical monitoring for 2018-2019 and 2019-2020. The number of cases where positive action by Dorset Councils prevented homelessness is highest in 2015-16, and subsequently reduced by 36.6%. The number of cases where positive action prevented homelessness was lower post enactment of the HRA17.

⁷² Department for Communities and Local Government. (2009). Recording homelessness prevention and relief at E10 of the P1E quarterly return: Further guidance for local housing authorities.

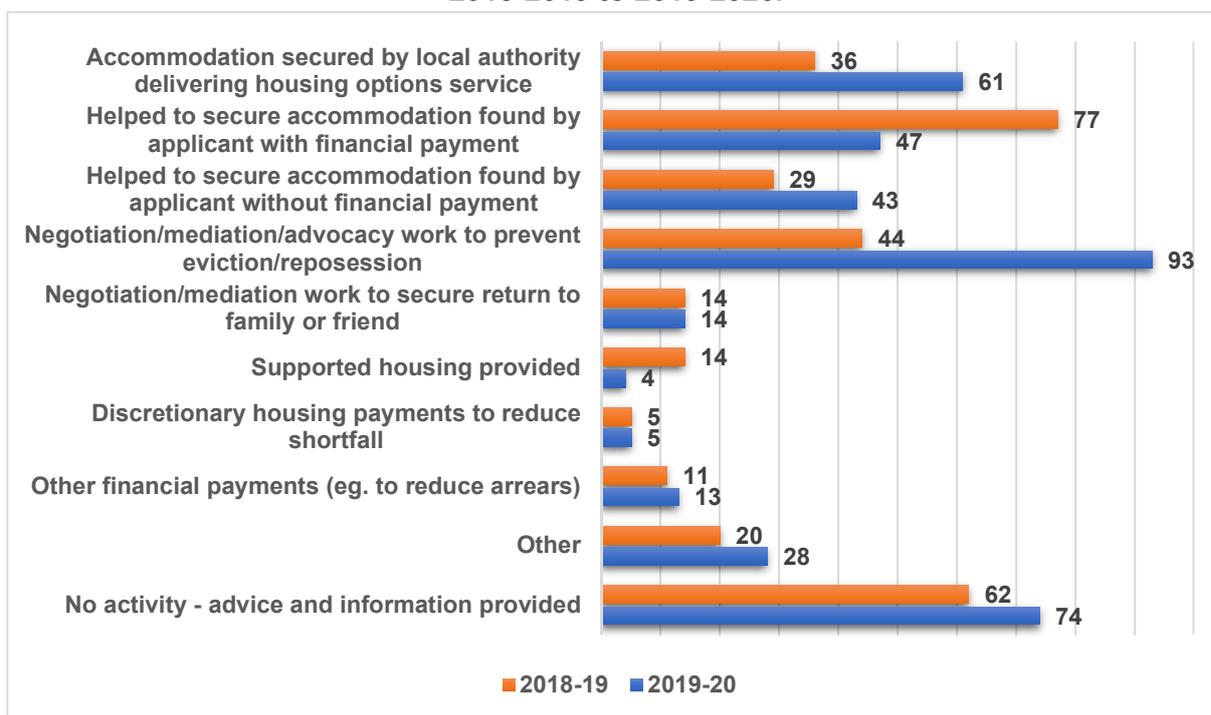
Chart 43: Number of cases where positive action succeeded in preventing homelessness, Dorset, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The most commonly recorded main prevention activity for 2019-2020 that resulted in accommodation being secured for households in Dorset was the negotiation and mediation/advocacy work to prevent eviction, though in 2018-2019 this was the third most common activity behind financial support for accommodation and advice and information provided. Council staff do not include trained mediators but the Dorset Council funded Citizens Advice, who provide debt advice and debt counselling and some legal advocacy work, and the council carry out informal negotiation with landlords. In 2019-2020, 20% of main prevention activity resulting in accommodation being secured was giving advice and information with no other action, this was an increase from 15.5%. The category 'Other' includes the H-CLIC fields: debt advice, resolved benefit problems, sanctuary or other security measures to home, not known, housing related support to sustain accommodation.

Chart 44: Main prevention activity that resulted in accommodation being secured, Dorset, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020.

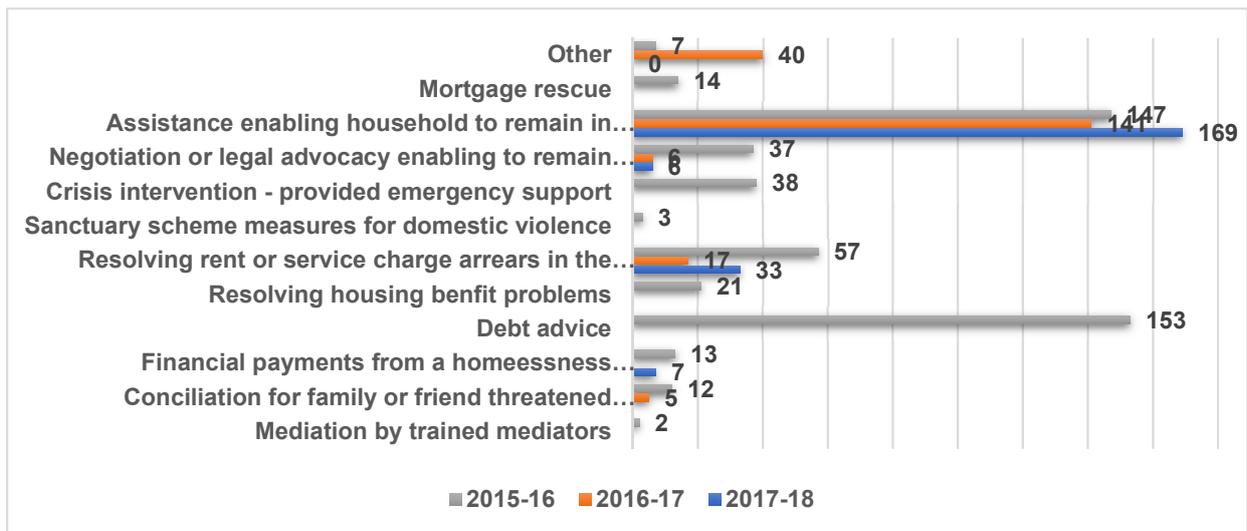


Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The following charts, provide information regarding activity to prevent homelessness recorded for the former P1E homelessness statistics, prior to the introduction of the HRA17.

The main activity preventing homelessness for 2015-2016 to 2017-2018 was to enable households to remain in the private or social sector, this data is not broken down further into the components of such enabling. In 2015-2016, debt advice was the most common activity, however this is also now recorded within 'Other' prevention activity category for HCLIC recording, so understanding the demand for this activity requires some further investigation. This is also true for (i) assistance to resolve housing benefit problems, (ii) sanctuary or other security measures to remain at home, and (iv) housing related support to sustain accommodation.

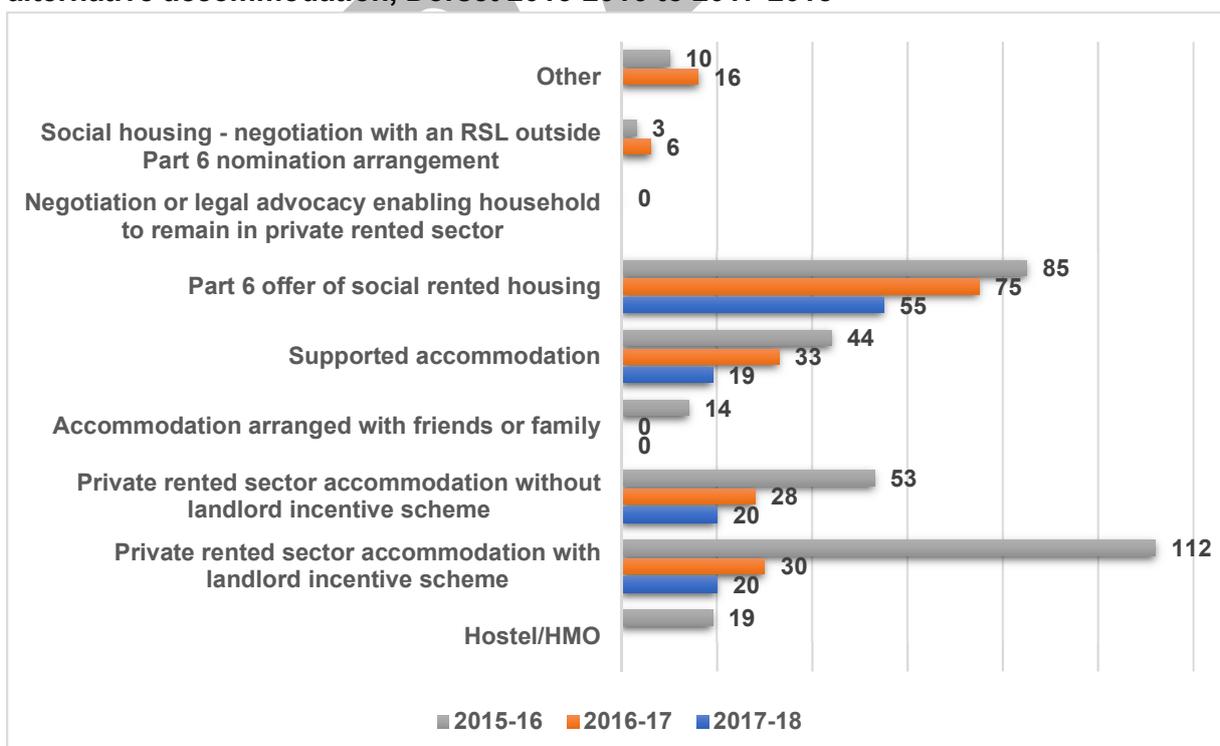
Chart 45: Homelessness prevented - households to remain in existing home, Dorset, 2015-2016 to 2017-2018



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The most common homelessness prevention activity leading to securing alternative accommodation for 2016-2017 to 2017-2018 was a Part 6 offer of social rented housing. In 2015-2016 the successful landlord incentive scheme was the most common activity, but this reduced to second most common activity, along with private rented accommodation without incentives, closely followed by supported housing.

Chart 46: Homelessness prevented or relieved – households assisted to obtain alternative accommodation, Dorset 2015-2016 to 2017-2018



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

3.3 Preventing the reoccurrence of homelessness

Prevention of the reoccurrence of homelessness is typically carried out by a mixture of public authorities, housing associations and voluntary organisations. This might involve providing information, advice, assistance or counselling about health, education, relationships, housing, money, employment and much more. There is variable local verifiable statistical evidence on the volume of activity being carried out, and varying outcomes being achieved. There is plenty of anecdotal material that has been considered as part of this review. An evaluation of this can be found in chapter 5 of this Homelessness Review.

3.4 Conclusions about activities to prevent homelessness

There is a good range of activities in place to prevent homelessness across Dorset, including those activities delivered by commissioned and non-commissioned services and other public agencies, although this is not always monitored or recorded as homelessness prevention activity.

For effective prevention activity, the route(s) to homelessness for people with multiple and complex needs, should be mapped. Such mapping will include all voluntary and statutory services they interact with, and the location of these services, to allow appropriate prevention intervention at the earliest time and place.

There is a lack of clarity over the route to housing when an offender is released from secure estates, although there is extensive multi agency working with Police and others as required.

There has been some effective prevention between Homelessness and Children's services due to effective training but this does need to be strengthened, as does joint working with adult services to develop a hospital discharge policy to prevent homelessness from hospital.

Alongside a strong Armed Forces Covenant there is provision for Armed Forces and former Armed Forces personnel who find themselves homeless, accessed through Royal British Legion and The Lantern, however identifying those former armed forces personnel can be difficult.

Applicants found to be intentionally homeless are proportionally low compared with the number of those where the main homelessness duty has been accepted. Where poor choices or deliberate action has led to homelessness, and is then deemed intentional, it can benefit both parties for the Council to provide at least a limited amount of assistance and support in order to help resolve their immediate housing difficulty and help to prevent them from becoming homeless again in the future.

The transience of rough sleepers who migrate between Dorset and BCP council areas may continue if the reasons for this are not understood and addressed.

4.0 Securing accommodation

This chapter focuses on activities to obtain accommodation for people who are or may become homeless. This includes temporary accommodation arranged by Dorset Council, for households

owed a duty of assistance and other accommodation secured to relieve homelessness from housing association and private sector housing.

4.1 Temporary accommodation

At the time writing this report, Dorset Council's portfolio of temporary accommodation currently consists of 224 units, using its own stock and also properties provided by housing associations and private sector landlords. Temporary accommodation is distributed across two areas of the local authority area and consists of a mixture of property types with varying numbers of bedrooms. Importantly Dorset Council has accommodation adapted for people with a physical disability.

Table 2: Temporary accommodation portfolio, Dorset Council, 2020

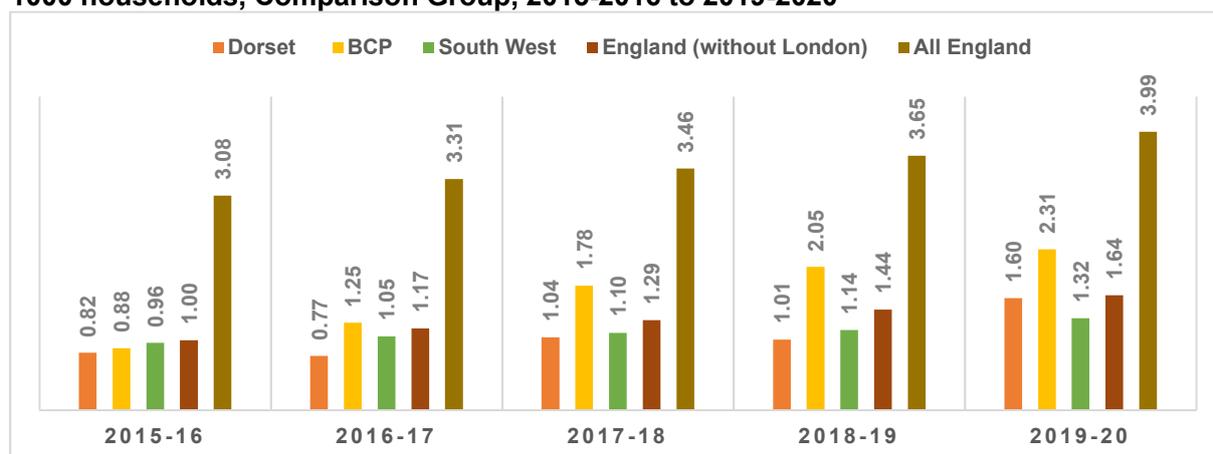
Location	Landlord	Number	Property size
East Dorset West Dorset North Dorset, Purbeck Weymouth & Portland	Dorset Council owned or leased	68	Room/Bedsit
		18	One bedroom
		36	Two bedrooms
		24	Three bedrooms
		6	Four/five bedrooms
East Dorset Purbeck West Dorset Weymouth & Portland	Housing Association or private sector housing Dorset Council	15	Room/bedsit
		9	One bedroom
		37	Two bedrooms
		10	Three bedrooms
		1	Four/five bedrooms
Total Properties		224	

Source: Dorset Council

Emergency accommodation in the form of bed and breakfast is also used in Weymouth and Bournemouth when necessary, and there is a longstanding arrangement with a caravan park in Swanage.

The count of households in local housing authority arranged temporary accommodation in England is taken on the last day of each quarter and published by MHCLG. The number per thousand households for those in temporary accommodation in Dorset has been lower than the other benchmarked areas for each year analysed until 2019-2020 when it increased by 0.59 on the previous year. This increase is higher than the increases for other benchmarked areas, however these areas also had steady year on year increases between 2015-2016 to 2019-2020.

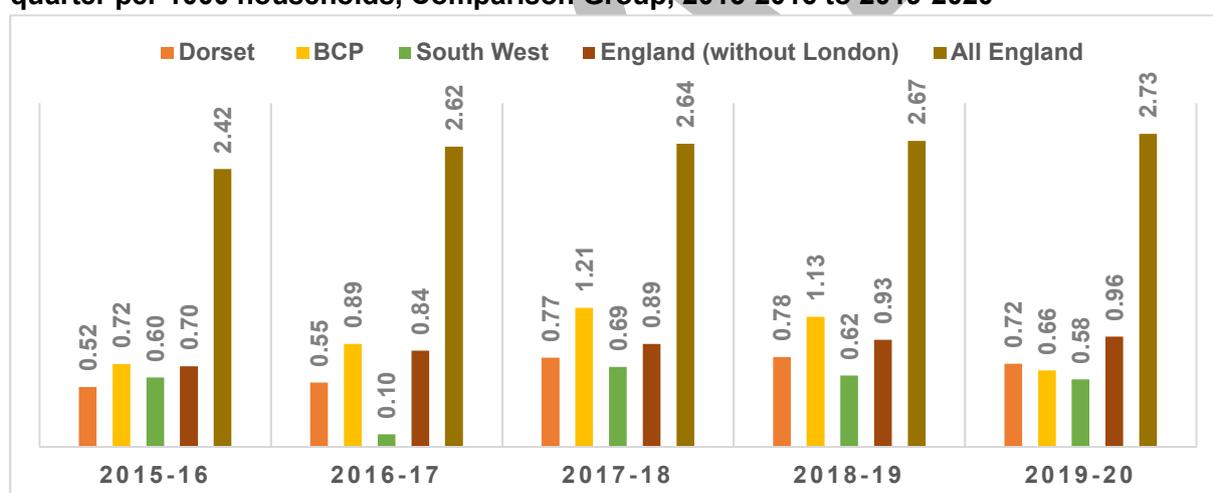
Chart 47: Number of households in temporary accommodation at end of final quarter per 1000 households, Comparison Group, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The number of households with children living in temporary accommodation per 1000 households is lower in Dorset than All England, which was consistently high compared to the other benchmarked areas. For 2019-2020, BCP had 0.06 fewer households with children in temporary accommodation, per 1000 households, than Dorset, but for each other year BCP numbers were greater.

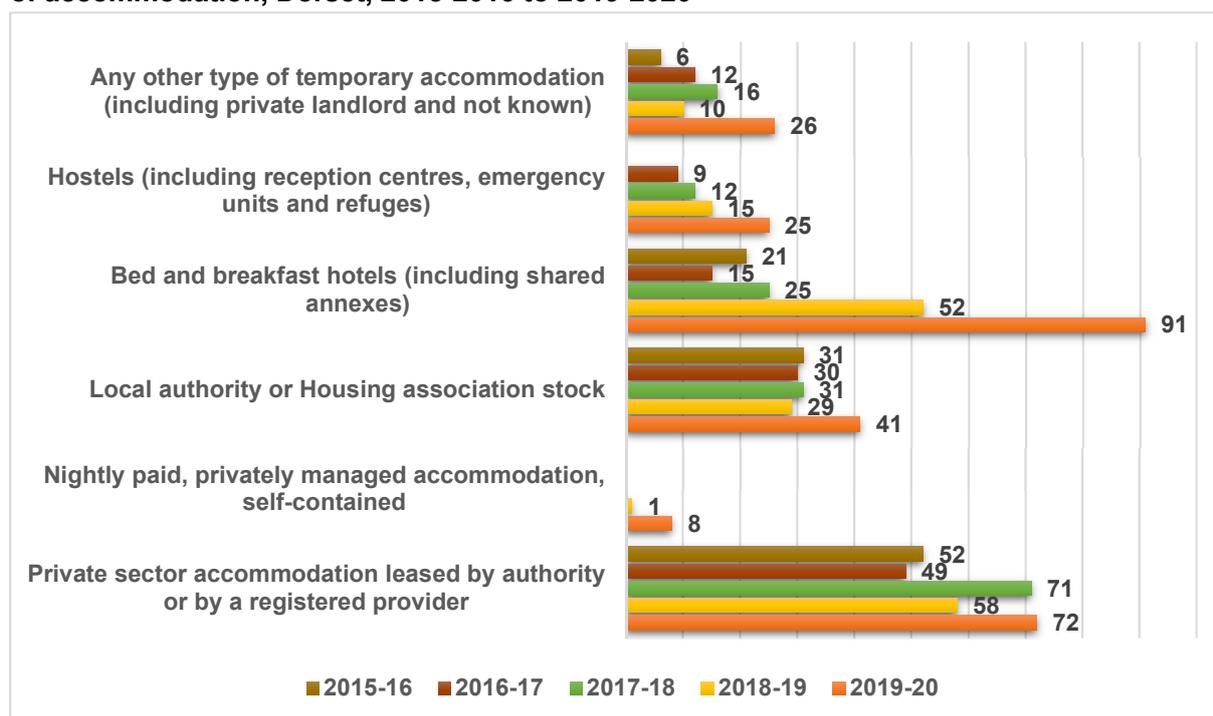
Chart 48: Number of households with children in temporary accommodation at end of final quarter per 1000 households, Comparison Group, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The use of all types of temporary accommodation have increased in Dorset for the period 2015-2016 to 2019-2020, in particular the use of bed and breakfast which for the last quarter of 2019-2020 was the most commonly used form of accommodation. The increase in the use of housing association stock as temporary accommodation is an indication of partnership working, where one of more local social housing providers is willing to support the Council in its efforts to provide additional and alternative temporary accommodation.

Chart 49: Number of households in temporary accommodation at end of final quarter by type of accommodation, Dorset, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Case Study: Dorset Council and East Boro Housing Trust

The relocatable social housing provision for 18 adults with care needs, supported with expertise from the LGA One Public Estate⁷³ team, has been placed on the Wareham Middle school site while plans are progressed for a new health, care and housing scheme in Purbeck. This innovative ‘meanwhile’ housing solution on public land will reduce the burden on homelessness and care services as well as help to improve the lives of the residents who will eventually be moved to the new scheme once built. The Wareham Middle School relocatable housing provides proof of concept for replicating this on other public sites. This has the potential to align with the 2020-2024 Property Strategy & Asset Management Plan, approved by Dorset Council in November 2020, which includes actions to re-establish the public sector body working group and review the ‘One Public estates’ opportunities plus to establish a legal and financial model for possible joint venture or joint working arrangements.

Relocatable units have come a long way from shipping containers and do not need to look temporary or stand out negatively in a community. These units provide the potential to deliver much needed decent, warm, affordable homes on public sites that may have several years consultation, planning and fundraising ahead before there will be shovels in the ground.

Some stakeholders identified that temporary accommodation can be of low quality and would like to see some quality assurance around this. Unstable accommodation can exacerbate difficulties with emotional wellbeing and physical health, and stakeholders would like to see alternatives to bed and breakfast being made available for ‘emergency’ accommodation, particularly for young people. At the 31st March 2020 count, 43% of homeless households form

⁷³ <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/housing-and-planning/one-public-estate/about-one-public-estate>

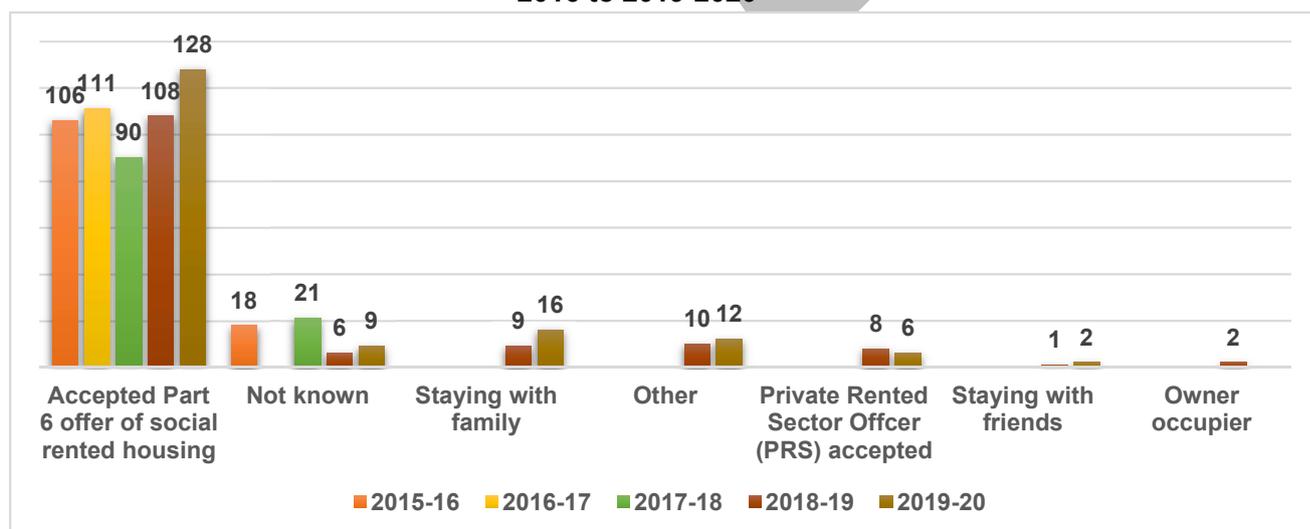
Dorset were in temporary accommodation outside of the Dorset Council area. This is an issue which is inherent with challenges for the placing and receiving Councils in addition to the homeless household, though does provide evidence to support the need for a review of a temporary accommodation.

The suitability of accommodation policy should resolve this for TA, but for private rented sector tenancies care leavers have a specific challenge in providing a guarantor and if this tenure is to be used to prevent or relieve homelessness for care leavers, a solution to this must be developed.

4.2 Other accommodation

In line with the England average, an offer of social rented housing was the most common type of accommodation secured to bring the main homelessness duty to an end at 74% of all accommodation types secured for 2019-20. The use of Private Rented Sector Offers is enabled by adoption of the Dorset Council Private Rented Sector Offer Policy in March 2018*, however the numbers of PRS offers are still in single figures as the private rented sector remains both expensive and relatively small.

Chart 50: Type of accommodation secured for households at end of main duty, Dorset, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The recent Everyone In campaign to help rough sleepers off the street has by many accounts strengthened joint working between housing and support partners and the Council. Abri Housing Association are working with Dorset Council to develop and test innovative solutions, including piloting the Housing First approach and assessing what can be offered to specific groups of residents, for example care leavers, and making sure this meets local needs.

Good Practice: Commitment to tackle homelessness, Abri Housing Association.

Abri Group Housing Association, recently formed through a merger of Yarlinton Housing Association and Radian Housing Association, demonstrate their commitment to working with local housing authorities to tackle homelessness in their corporate plan goals:

- tackling homelessness,
- fixing inequality,
- improving health and wellbeing in our communities and in the workplace,

- giving people opportunities to better their lives, and
- make a positive impact on the environment.

Abri Group Housing Association have identified urban Dorset as a community investment zone, which, alongside their own funding could help to attract additional investment to help local communities to succeed and thrive. Abri Group Housing Association will work in partnership with their tenants and other residents, the Council and other agencies where a bespoke local approach will be developed. The investment zone classification, one of 8 that Abri board members have committed to, is in the early stages of development and will be focussed on health and wellbeing, employment and community empowerment.

In December 2020 an article⁷⁴ by Abri Group Housing Association, published by Inside Housing, focused on commissioned nationwide research into the public attitude towards homelessness and the impact of Covid19. The research found that 38% of UK adults were worried about losing their jobs due to Covid-19 and 28% were worried about losing their homes. This research and the partnerships they have been involved with over the last nine months to help with the Covid-19 response, has led to Abri working on a homelessness prevention strategy, within which they want to include an immediate response to help rough sleepers off the street, and a long-term prevention strategy.

4.2.1 Activities to relieve homelessness

Homelessness relief activities are carried out by Dorset Council. Examples of homelessness relief actions, are shown in the box below.

Homelessness Relief Activities to Obtain

Any form of hostel or house of multiple occupation with or without support
 Private rented sector accommodation with landlord incentive scheme
 Private rented sector accommodation without landlord incentive scheme
 Accommodation arranged with friends or relatives
 Supported housing, including supported lodging schemes
 Management move of an existing social housing tenant
 Housing register offer or nomination of accommodation to a social landlord
 Negotiation with an RSL outside housing register or nomination arrangements
 Low-cost homeownership scheme or low-cost market housing solution

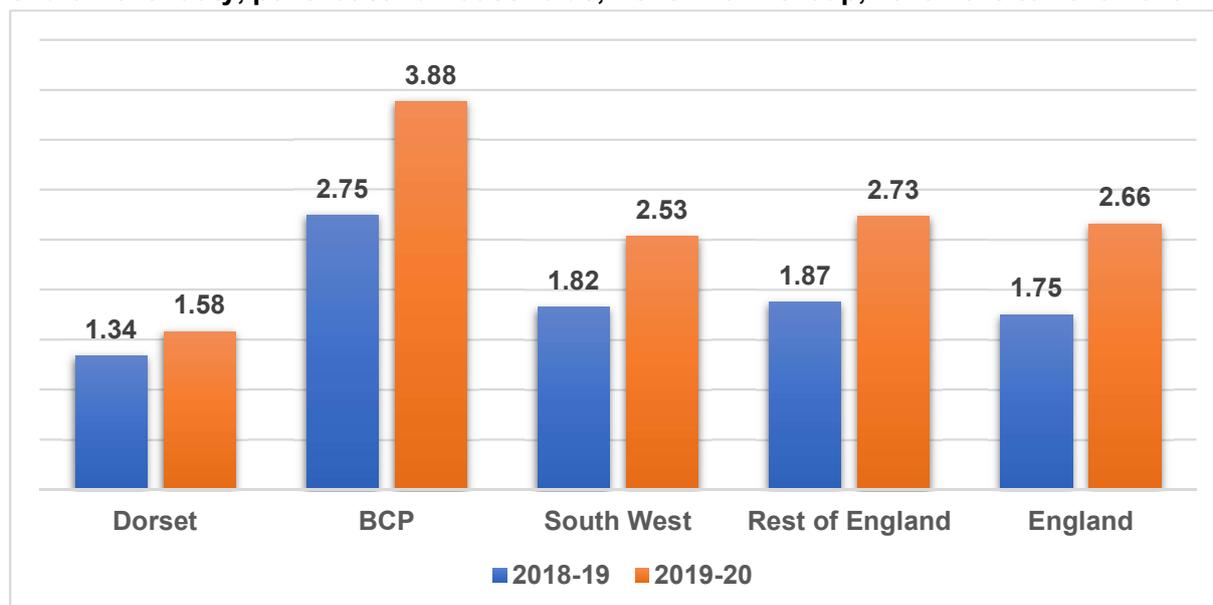
Throughout England, relief casework has historically accounted for 6% of all activity carried out by local authority homelessness services. In Wales, where legislation similar to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has been in force since 2015, the rate is 51% of all casework activity⁷⁵.

In the two years since the implementation of the relief duty, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, the number of households in Dorset, where activity to relieve homelessness resulted in accommodation being secured, increased by 0.24 per thousand households. Despite this increase Dorset remains the lowest in terms of successful relief activity per thousand households within the Benchmark Group for each year, with BCP the highest at 2.3 per thousand households higher than Dorset for 2019-20.

⁷⁴ <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/comment/comment/homelessness-is-still-a-crisis-68991#SurveyResults>

⁷⁵ <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness>

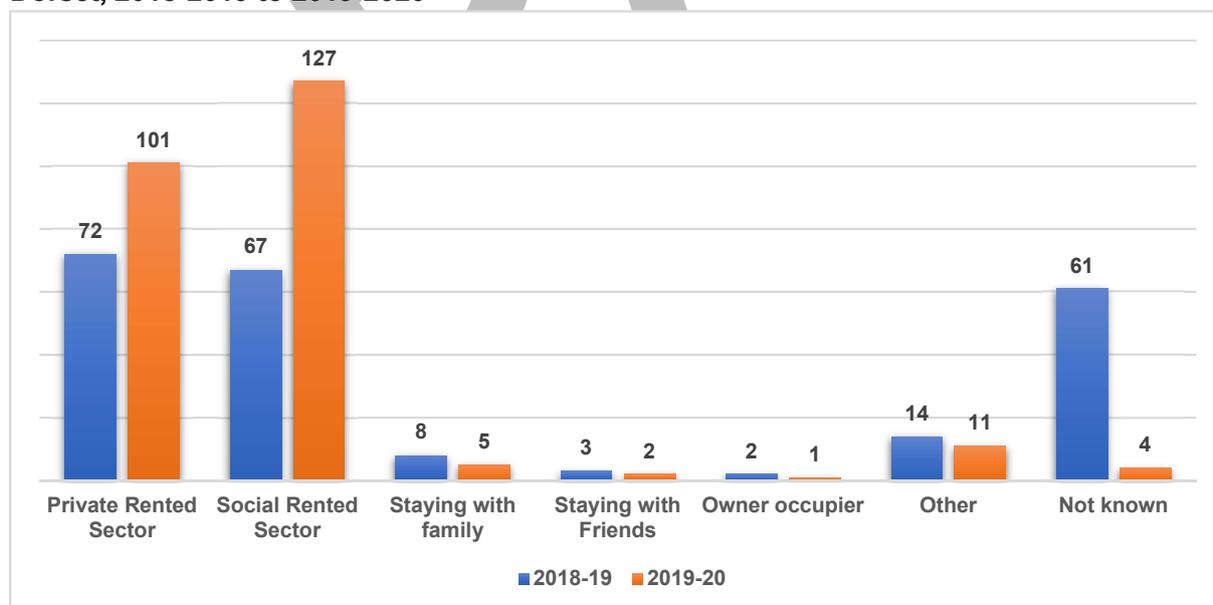
Chart 51: Number of households for whom activity resulted in accommodation secured at the end of relief duty, per thousand households, Benchmark Group, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The main type of accommodation used by Dorset Council to end the relief duty during 2019-2020 was social rented housing, followed by privately rented accommodation; the opposite of 2018-2019. The increased use of both types of accommodation accounts for the reduction in the not known category from 61 to 4 households across the two-year period. The use of staying with family or friends, owner occupier, and other categories have all gone down.

Chart 52: Number of households whose relief duty ended by type of accommodation secured, Dorset, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020

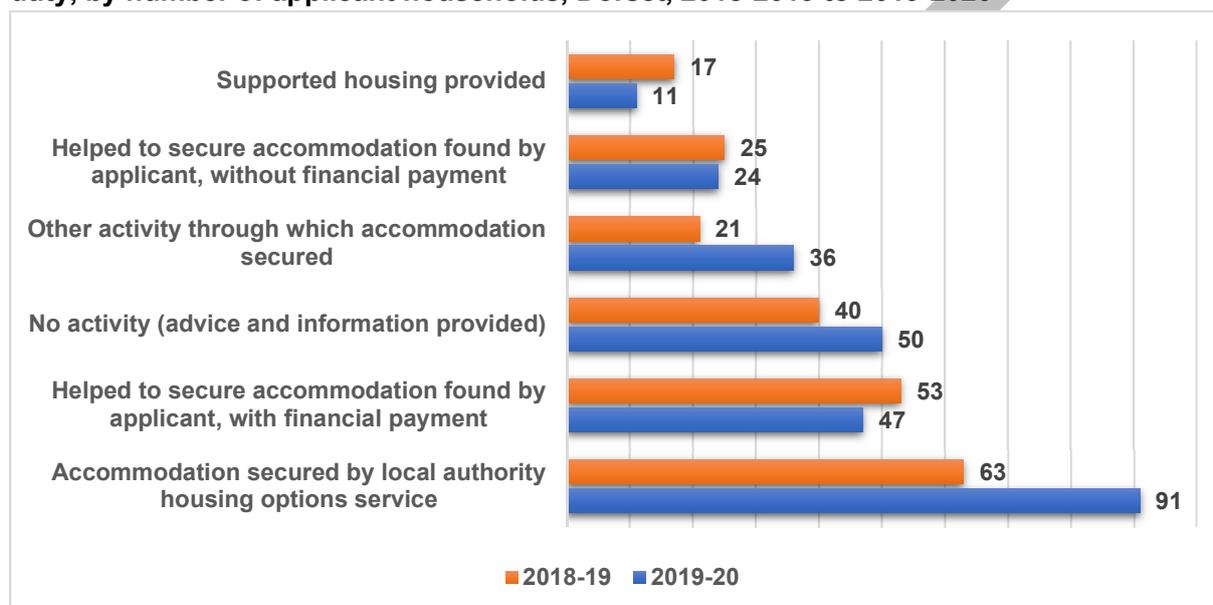


Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The main activity resulting in accommodation being secured at the end of end the relief duty was mainly that activity of the Dorset Council Housing Options Services for both years. While the second most common activity was through financial support by the Council, it is not clear

how many households also benefited from financial support where the Council found the accommodation, whether this was privately rented or social rented housing. 'No activity', where information and advice is provided, was the third and second highest outcome for ending the relief duty with accommodation, in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 respectively. The category 'other activity' includes negotiation/mediation work to secure a return to family or friend or a landlord, sanctuary or other security measures to enable return home and 'other'. As a group, 'other' saw an increase of 40% across the two-year period.

Chart 53: Main activity that resulted in accommodation being secured at the end of a relief duty, by number of applicant households, Dorset, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Demand for all of types of accommodation exceeds the supply available, including the three common forms of accommodation used to relieve homelessness, locally and nationally: (i) supported housing; (ii) private rented sector accommodation; and (iii) social rented housing. These are explored in more detail below.

4.2.2 Housing Support

Nationally, hostels or supported housing, including supported lodgings, are the most common type of accommodation obtained to relieve homelessness. A detailed analysis of supported housing during the past five years, and temporary accommodation usage for Dorset Council can be found in chapter five of this review.

Guidance for the National Statement of Expectations⁷⁶ was published in October 2020, to support local authorities in assessing the local need, with housing associations and other providers, and clarifying what 'good' looks like. This will be important for Dorset Council as there are very few supported housing units in the Council area.

4.2.3 Private Rented Sector

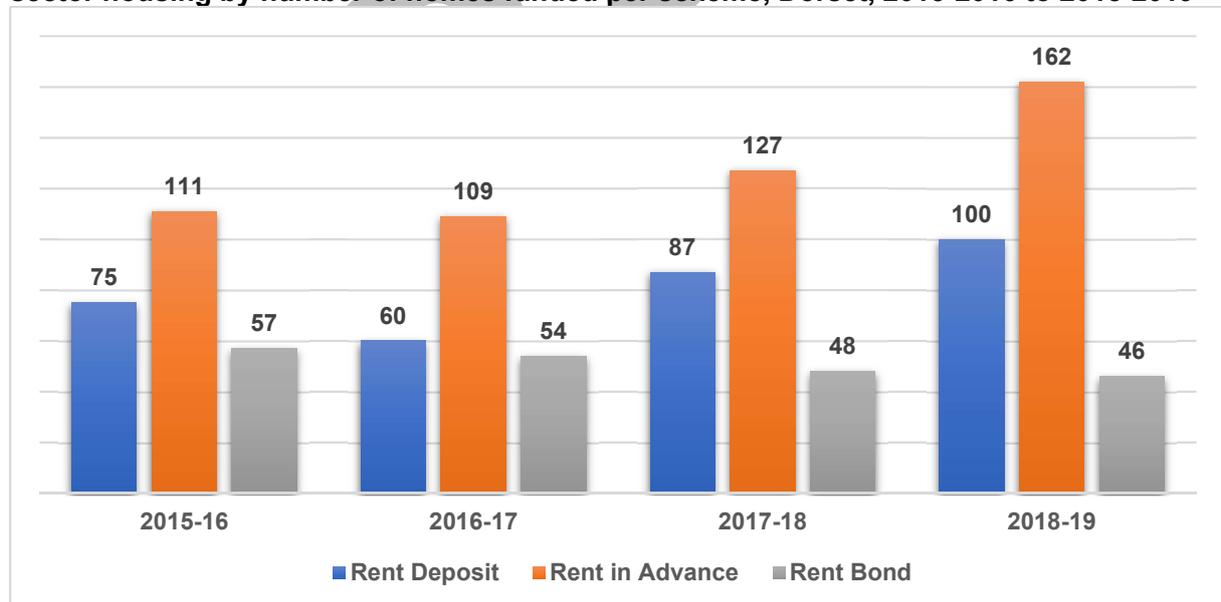
⁷⁶ National Statement of Expectations, DWP and MHCLG, October 2020

Nationally, obtaining accommodation in the PRS is second most common method to relieve homelessness, either with or without use of a landlord incentive.

Dorset Council provide financial assistance to help people into the private rented sector to either prevent or relieve homelessness using rent deposits, rent in advance, and deposit bonds. Rent in advance is normally a loan to the applicant, and rent deposits are normally paid to the landlord and claimed back at the end of the tenancy, less any deductions made for property damages or rent arrears. The rent bond is a type of insurance against damage or rent arrears and only paid out at the end of the tenancy if these occurred, rather than being paid up front like the rent deposit.

Between 2015-2016 and 2018-2019, 322 rent deposits and 509 rent in advance payments were made, and 205 rent bonds agreed to help secure privately rented accommodation in Dorset. The use of rent deposit and rent in advance payments have increased each year since 2016-2017, while deposit bond agreements are reducing year on year, indicating that landlords are not as willing to accept a bond agreement in place of a cash deposit, even where they must have the cash deposit registered under a deposit protection scheme. For 2018-2019 the average deposit bond agreed, at £909.89 was slightly higher than the average rent deposit paid at £897.50. The average rent in advance was lower at £780.05. There will be cases where a landlord requires both a rent in advance payment and cash deposit or deposit bond, and both funds will then be utilised. The Rent in Advance budget is also used to fund rent in advance for social housing tenancies where the social housing landlord requires this, and the ingoing tenant does not have the funds.

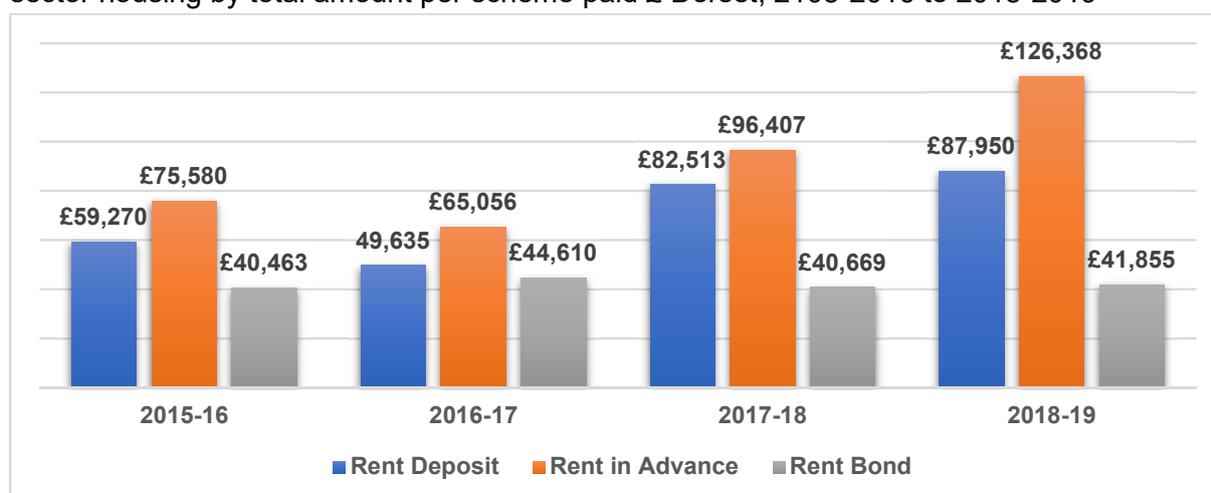
Chart 54: Financial Assistance to help prevent or relieve homelessness into private rented sector housing by number of homes funded per scheme, Dorset, 2015-2016 to 2018-2019



Source: Dorset Council

The total costs of each of the three schemes can be seen in chart 55 below.

Chart 55: Financial Assistance to help prevent or relieve homelessness into private rented sector housing by total amount per scheme paid £ Dorset, 2105-2016 to 2018-2019



Source: Dorset Council

4.2.4 Social Rented Housing

Nationally, a social rented housing offer, or nomination to a social landlord, is the second most common method of preventing or relieving homelessness, equalling 27.4% of cases⁷⁷.

Dorset currently has 182,677⁷⁸ homes, 12.3%⁷⁹ of which are social rented housing, which is 30% lower than England at 17.6%. The 2015 update to the Eastern Dorset Strategic Housing Market Assessment⁸⁰ (SHMA) which included East Dorset, North Dorset and Purbeck, along with the BCP districts, estimated a net annual housing need level of 558 affordable homes for the three Dorset Council districts. This was based on the backlog of housing need, estimated newly forming households and existing households falling into need, minus the supply of new lettings. This shortfall is considerable, even without the additional assessment of need for West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland. As charts 54 and 55 below show, the number of households recorded on the housing waiting list as being in housing need has increased since the 2015 SHMA, and new lettings of social rented housing have reduced, which combines to create a greater and increasing backlog of need. Dorset Council will assess and take account of up-to-date levels of housing need across the new council wide area within local and neighbourhood plans, and other policies requiring this evidence base, which includes projections of an increase in newly forming households and numbers of existing households falling into need.

There is much needed work being done to improve housing opportunities for vulnerable residents, such as the Dorset Council and Dorset CCG partnership; Building Better Lives scheme for health, care and housing across Dorset is actively delivering their programme of social care and housing solutions, including temporary housing for adults with a social care need, in partnership with East Boro Housing Trust, and planning older persons or housing for adults with disabilities alongside GP practices. This positive joint programme has active involvement and input from housing services, who are responsible for developing the delivery of

⁷⁷ Annual Statutory Homelessness Release 2019-20, Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government

⁷⁸ Office of National Statistics, Mid-Year Estimates 2019

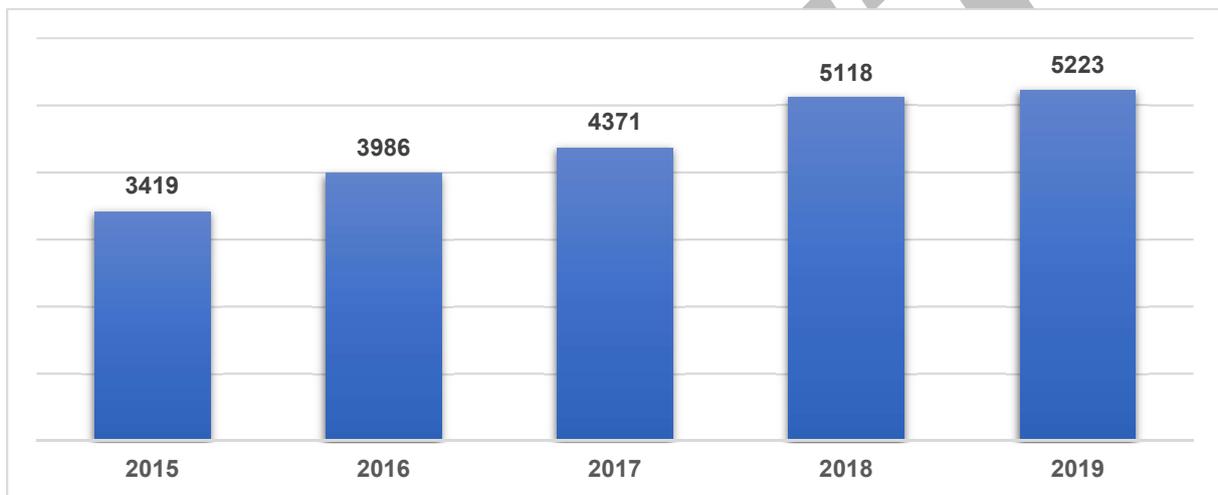
⁷⁹ Office of National Statistics, Mid-Year Estimates 2019

⁸⁰ Eastern Dorset Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015, GL Hearn

the Dorset Housing Strategy, including an assessment of housing need for all household groups, and providing expertise in enabling in partnership with housing associations.

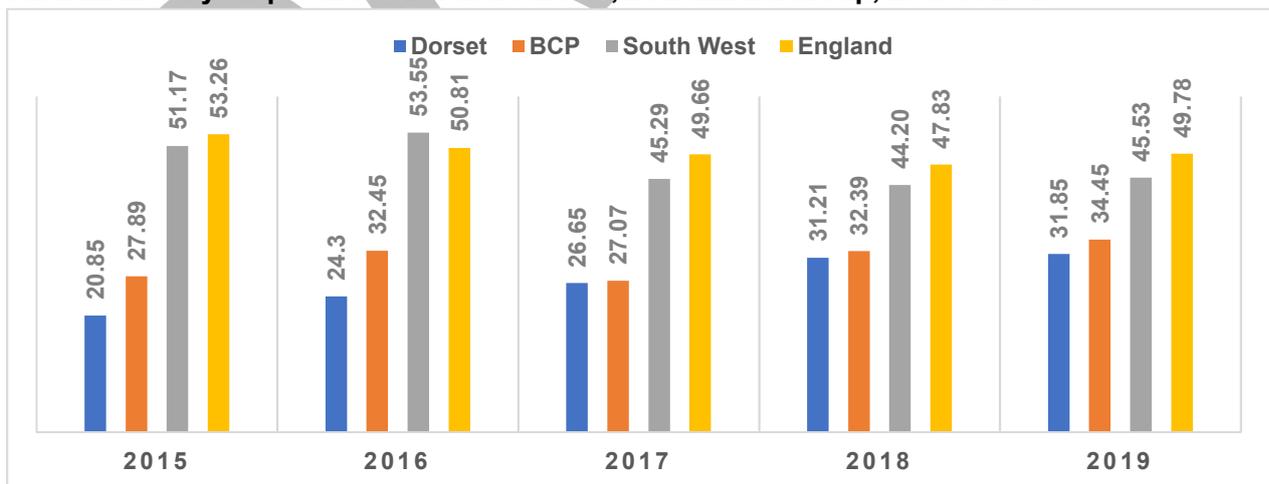
The number of households registered on the local authority housing waiting list has increased in Dorset year on year between 2015 and 2019. This is not in line with the local, regional, or national picture, whose numbers varied across the five-year period. Despite the annual increase, Dorset has fewer number of households registered per thousand households at March 2019 than all other areas in the Benchmark Group who have all seen increased household numbers on their waiting lists between 2018 and 2019, the greatest being that of BCP at 2.06 per thousand households increase, with Dorset having the lowest increase at 0.64 per thousand households increase.

Chart 56: Number of households registered for an allocation of social rented housing, Dorset, 2015 to 2019



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Chart 57: Number of households registered on local authority housing waiting lists at end of each financial year per thousand households, Benchmark Group, 2015 to 2019

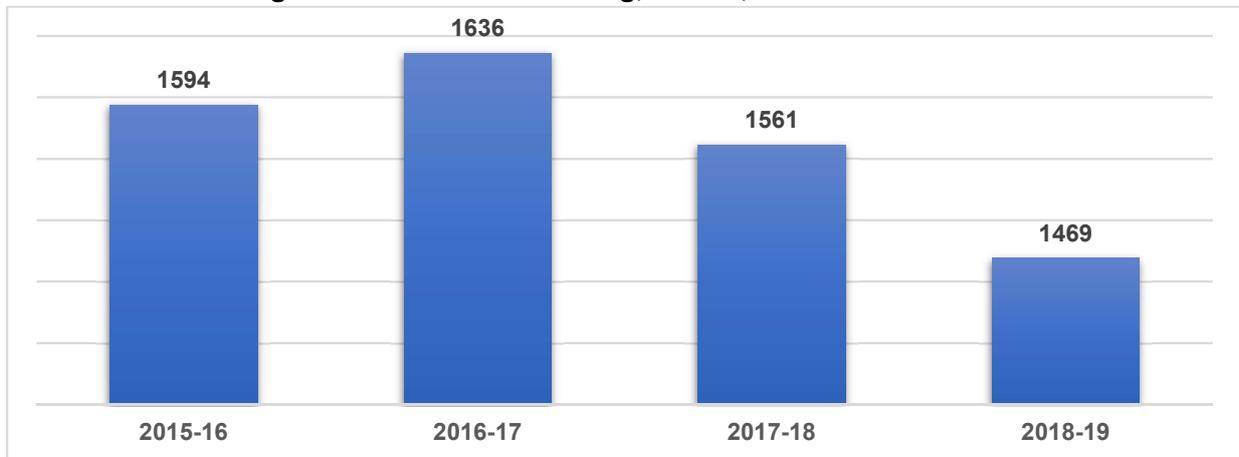


Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The number of new lettings of social rented housing in Dorset have reduced since 2016-17 by 167 new lettings in 2017-18. Unlike Dorset, the number of new lettings of social rented housing in England has increased each year since 2016-17 and remains higher than Dorset and BCP.

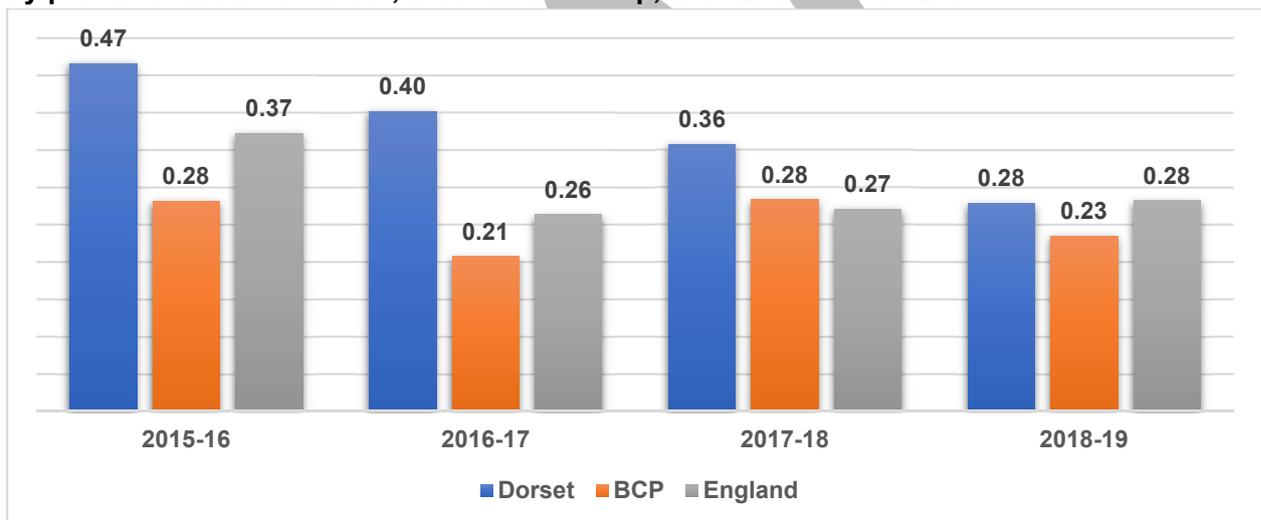
For 2018-19 England had 4.52 more social rented lettings per thousand households than Dorset.

Chart 58: New lettings of social rented housing, Dorset, 2015-2016 to 2018-2019



Source: ONS Social housing lettings in England.

Chart 59: Ratio of New lettings of social rented housing to number on housing waiting lists by per thousand households, Benchmark Group, 2015-2016 to 2018-2019



Source: ONS Social housing lettings in England.

It is important to note that although Dorset Council has chosen to transfer its housing stock, it cannot absolve itself of the legal responsibility to⁸¹:

1. Determine which persons qualify for an allocation of social rented housing,
2. Have an up-to-date housing allocation scheme,
3. Ensure allocations for social rented housing are made in accordance with the local scheme, and
4. Ensure information about the housing allocation scheme is readily available.

The administration of its public law housing allocation responsibilities include:

⁸¹ The Local Authorities (Contracting Out of Allocation of Housing Accommodation and Homelessness Functions) Order 1996.

- Determining which applicants are eligible and qualify for an allocation of social rented housing,
- Notifying applicants of decisions made about their application for social rented housing,
- Providing advice, information, and assistance about making an application for social rent housing,
- Determining which applicants have priority for an allocation of social rented housing
- Determining if an applicant has a local connection that qualifies them for an allocation of social rented housing,
- Providing a summary of the how the Dorset Home Choice scheme operates, and
- Detecting any fraudulent application made for an allocation of social rented housing

The law⁸² stipulates that a fairly good advantage for allocation of social rented housing must be given to any person who at risk of being homeless, this includes applicants in the following circumstances:

- Homeless⁸³ (including those owed a local housing authority duty to have their homelessness relieved⁸⁴, but also people for whom the relief duty has come to an end and no further duty is owed, plus those who have never made an application for assistance)
- Intentionally homeless, eligible for assistance, and have a priority need for accommodation⁸⁵ (owed a duty by a local housing authority to have advice and accommodation for a reasonable period)
- Not intentionally homeless, eligible for assistance and have a priority need for accommodation⁸⁶ (owed a duty by a local housing authority to be provided with suitable accommodation)
- Threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance⁸⁷ (owed a duty by a local housing authority to be prevented from becoming homeless).

Within the current Banding system, 73% of applications have been placed in two bands; Band 3: Silver, which includes households accepted for a prevention or relief duty; and Band 4: Bronze, which includes those threatened with homelessness as they have indicated on their application that they have been asked to leave their accommodation but have not been assessed for a homelessness duty. The 2% of applicants who are owed the main housing duty⁸⁸ are currently placed in Band 1: Emergency for a limited period for each of the former council areas.

82 Housing Act 1996, Part 6, section 166A Allocation in accordance with allocation scheme, subsection (3)(a)(b)

83 Housing Act 1996, Part 7, section 175 Homelessness and threatened with homelessness

84 Housing Act 1996, Part 7, Section 189B Initial duty owed to all eligible persons who are homeless

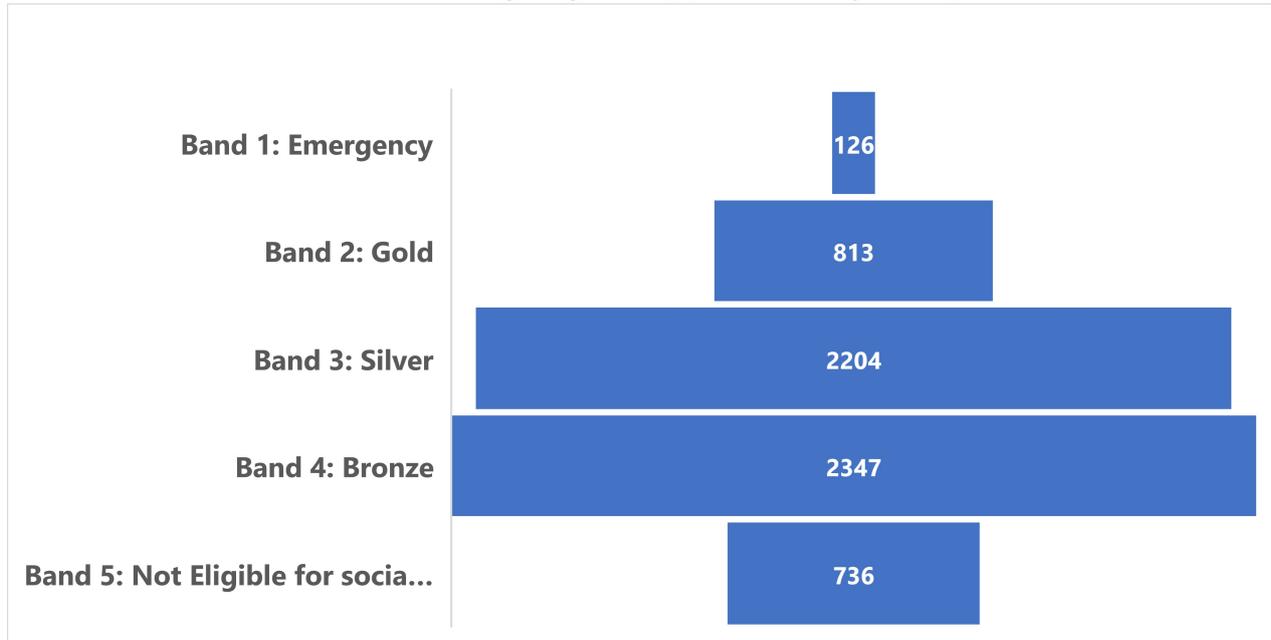
85 Housing Act 1996, Part 7, section 190 Duties to persons becoming intentionally homeless

86 Housing Act 1996, Part 7, section 193 Duty to persons with priority need who are not homeless intentionally

87 Housing Act 1996, Part 7, section Duties in cases of threatened homelessness

88 Housing Act 1996, Part 7, section 193 Duty to persons with priority need who are not homeless intentionally

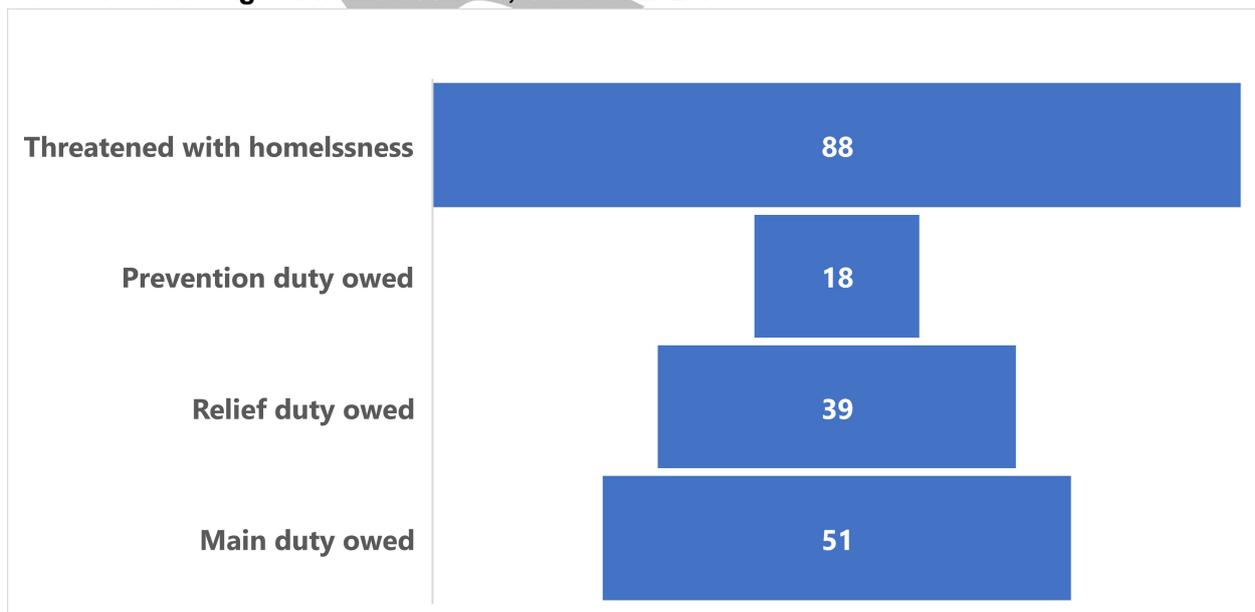
Chart 60: Number of Dorset Housing Register applications by Band, October 2020



Source: Dorset Housing Register, October 2020

The proportion of households who have indicated on their housing application that they are at risk of homelessness due to being asked to leave their accommodation is 1.4% of those on the housing register, and those owed a prevention duty, relief duty or main duty make up a further 0.3%, 0.6% and 0.8% of the housing register respectively. This suggests that only 3.15% of the current Dorset housing register has stated in their application that they are at risk or homelessness, are homeless, or have been identified as such when being assessed for the register.

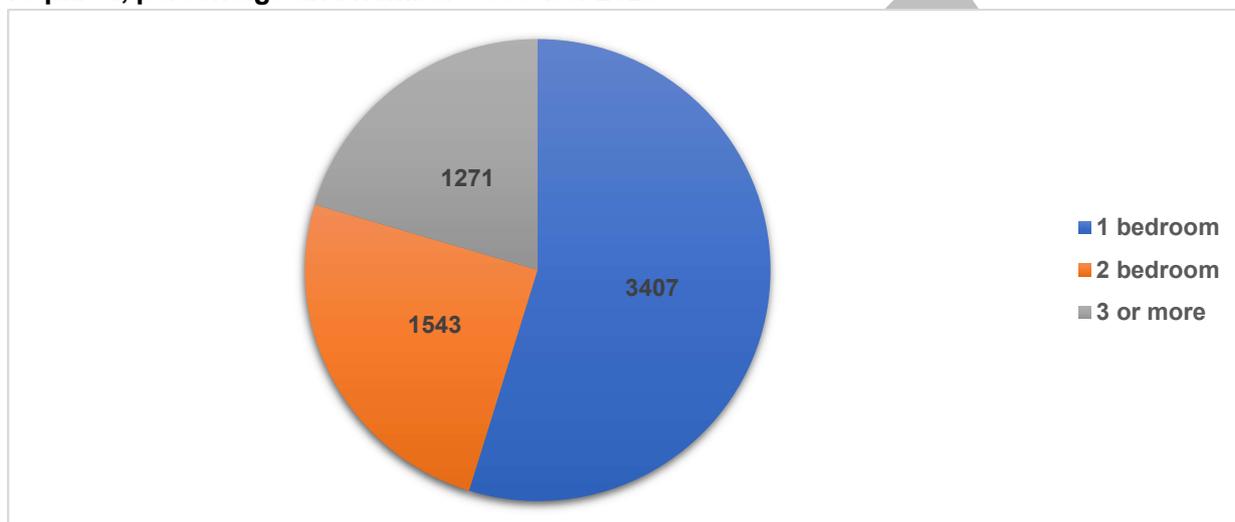
Chart 61: Homelessness indicated on Dorset Housing Register application, by number of cases at each stage of homelessness, October 2020.



Source: Dorset Council Housing Register October 2020

The largest proportion of households seeking social rented accommodation in Dorset through the housing register require one-bedroom accommodation. The growing numbers of single households with mental and physical health issues which can impact on the ability to secure and maintain appropriate accommodation is likely to increase further should the needs of these groups not be met.

Chart 62: Number of Households registered on Dorset Housing Register number of bedrooms required, percentage and number - October 2020



Source: Dorset Housing Register October 2020

Dorset Council is currently preparing for the implementation of the recently adopted Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy⁸⁹. The Statement on Choice within the policy confirms that the housing allocations ‘...scheme prioritises the need to reduce and eliminate homelessness...’⁹⁰, and goes on to explain the ways in which applications from households owed a homelessness duty will be managed with regard to bidding for properties⁹¹.

Homeless households owed a full housing duty⁹² will be placed in Band A⁹³, alongside exceptional housing need: disrepair, medical and welfare, and statutory overcrowding⁹⁴. Those owed a relief duty⁹⁵ will be placed in Band B, and those owed a prevention duty⁹⁶ will be placed in Band C.

4.3 Conclusion about activities to secure accommodation

Social rented housing is still the most sought after accommodation tenure and housing association partners have committed to building more of this. The increase in the use of social rented housing as temporary accommodation demonstrates that social housing providers are

89 Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy, 2021 – 2026.

90 Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy, 2021 – 2026, p.7, 4.4

91 Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy, 2021 – 2026, p.7, paras 4.6 – 4.10

92 Housing Act, 1996, Part 7, section 193 Duty to persons with priority need who are not homeless intentionally

93 Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy, 2021 – 2026, p.21

94 Housing Act 1985, Part X, section 324 definition of overcrowding

95 Housing Act 1996, Part 7, Section 189B Initial duty owed to all eligible persons who are homeless

96 Housing Act 1996, Part 7, section 195(2) Duties in cases of threatened homelessness

working more closely with the Council to support homeless households and provides a basis for increasing this provision.

It is somewhat inevitable that as homelessness has increased, the need for emergency and temporary accommodation has increased and as there is a shortage of most types of temporary accommodation this can also lead to an increase in the use of bed and breakfast and at times this is necessarily outside of the local authority area.

The number of Private Rented Sector Offer (PRSO) accommodation offers are currently low, but there is good use of the private rented sector evidenced by the rent deposit figures. The PRSO policy is not yet fully implemented county wide and this should be used in conjunction with a Dorset wide Suitability of Accommodation policy.

As an indicator of performance in reducing or maintaining the number of households in temporary accommodation, Dorset are performing well compared with the benchmark group, although there are clearly other councils in the South West and wider areas who have lower numbers of households in temporary accommodation per thousand households who could provide good practice examples.

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5. Providing support

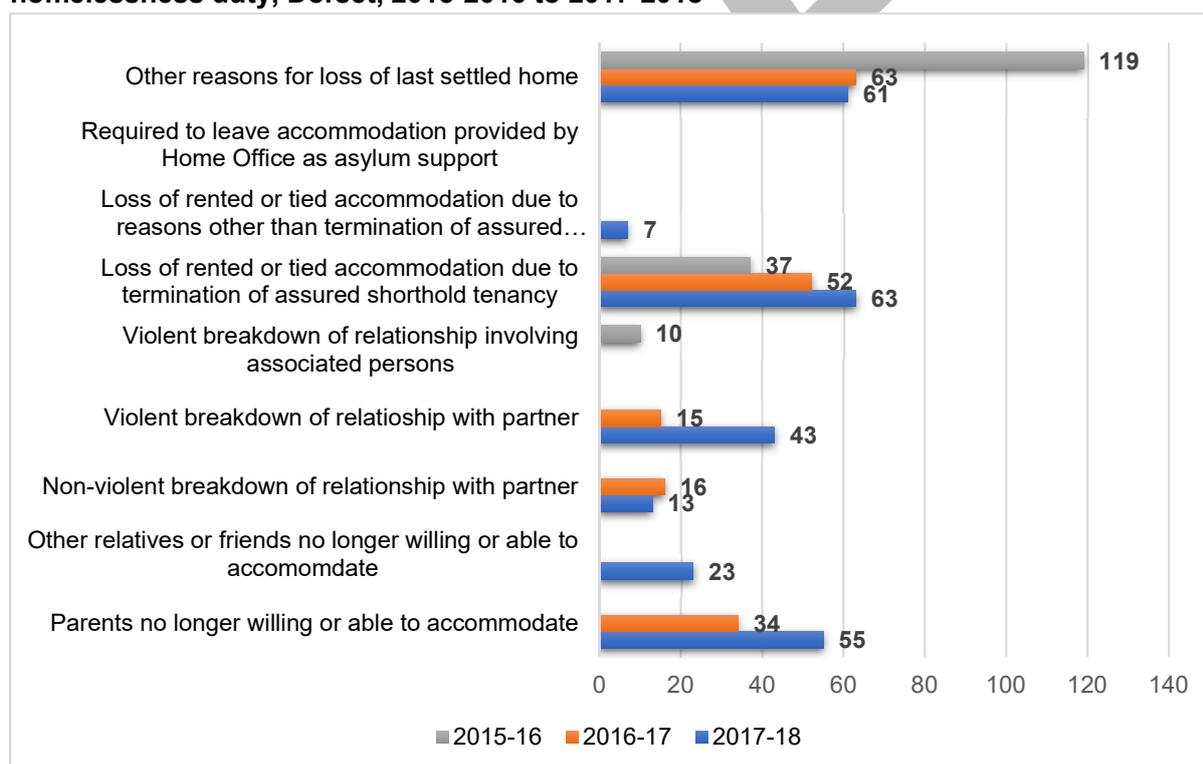
This chapter reviews the support provided to people who are homeless or have been homeless. Support can mean information, advice or assistance, all of which can help a person to stop being homeless, plus avert a repeat occurrence of homelessness in the future.

5.1 Support needs of people experiencing homelessness

The reasons why people become homeless offer an indication as to the support people require. Dorset Council collects some information on these factors, which has been analysed for the purpose of this review.

The main reason for the loss of the last settled home for those owed a main duty is termination of assured shorthold tenancy for 2017-2018. For the two years prior to this the main reason was recorded as 'Other', which for this data set includes left HM forces, homeless in emergency, sleeping rough or in hostel, or returned from abroad.

Chart 63: Main reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a main homelessness duty, Dorset, 2015-2016 to 2017-2018



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

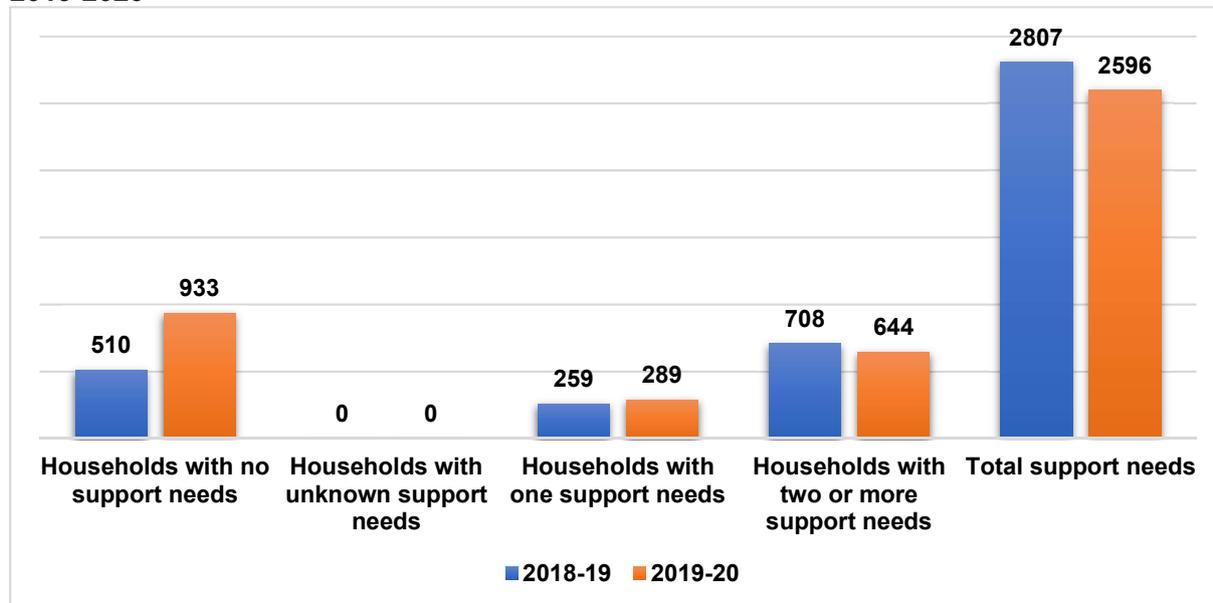
Table 2: Reason for loss of last settled home (for those owed a prevention or relief duty). England, April to June 2020

Family and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	74,130
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	22,650
Violent relationship breakdown with partner or associated persons	26,580
Loss of rented or tied accommodation	90,030
Other reasons	75,110

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

The number of households owed a homelessness duty with support needs reduced between 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, with a subsequent reduction in the number of support needs. Of the households owed a homelessness duty with support needs, almost 70% have more than one support need.

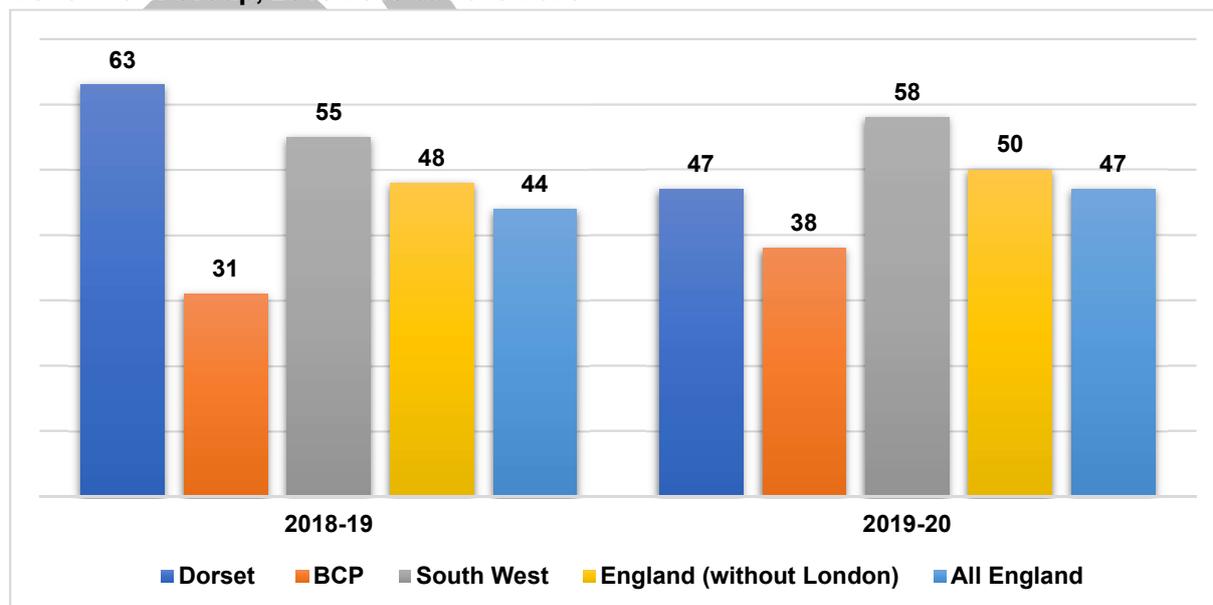
Chart 64: Households with support needs owed a homelessness duty, Dorset, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

When compared as a percentage, the only reduction in the percentage of households owed a homelessness duty for 2018-2019 to 2019-2020 who have support needs was in Dorset, which reduced by 17% to 47%, the same level as All England.

Chart 65: Percentage of households owed a homelessness duty that have support needs, Benchmark Group, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020

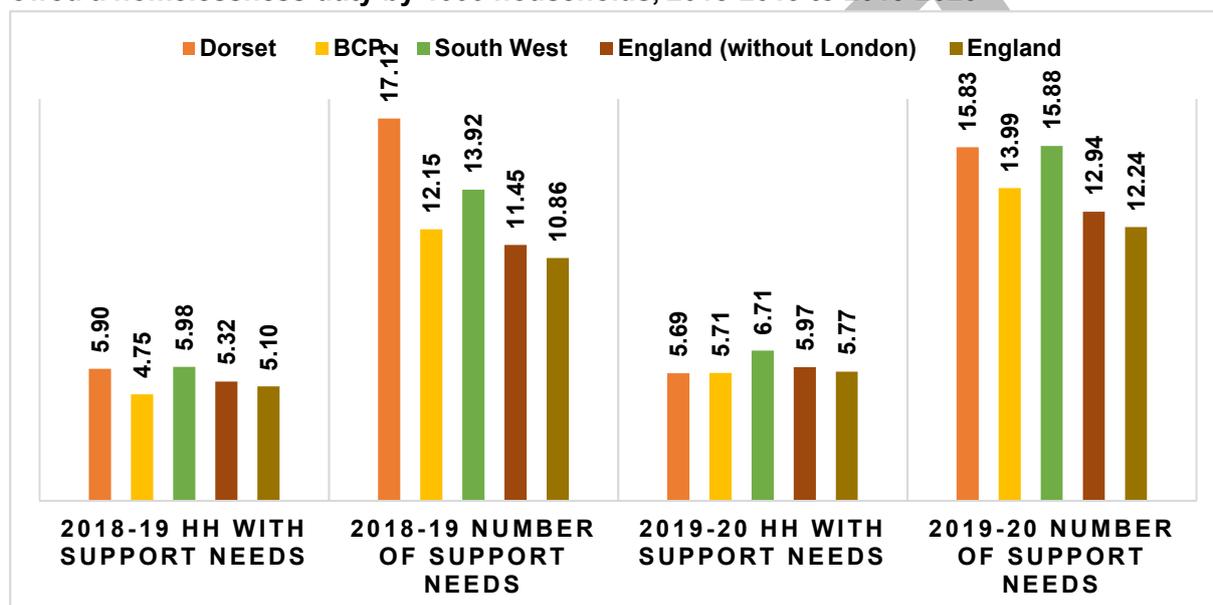


Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

The number of households with support needs per one thousand households has increased in each of the benchmarked areas, with the exception of Dorset which reduced by 0.21 per thousand households to 5.69.

Support needs per thousand households also decreased for Dorset by 1.34 per thousand households to 15.83 for the two years analysed, while all other benchmarked areas have increased. The South West region has 0.05 per thousand support needs greater than Dorset for 2019-20, while BCP has 1.84 fewer, England without London has 2.89 fewer and England All has 3.59 fewer support needs per thousand households.

Chart 66: Total number of households with support needs, and support needs among those owed a homelessness duty by 1000 households, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020

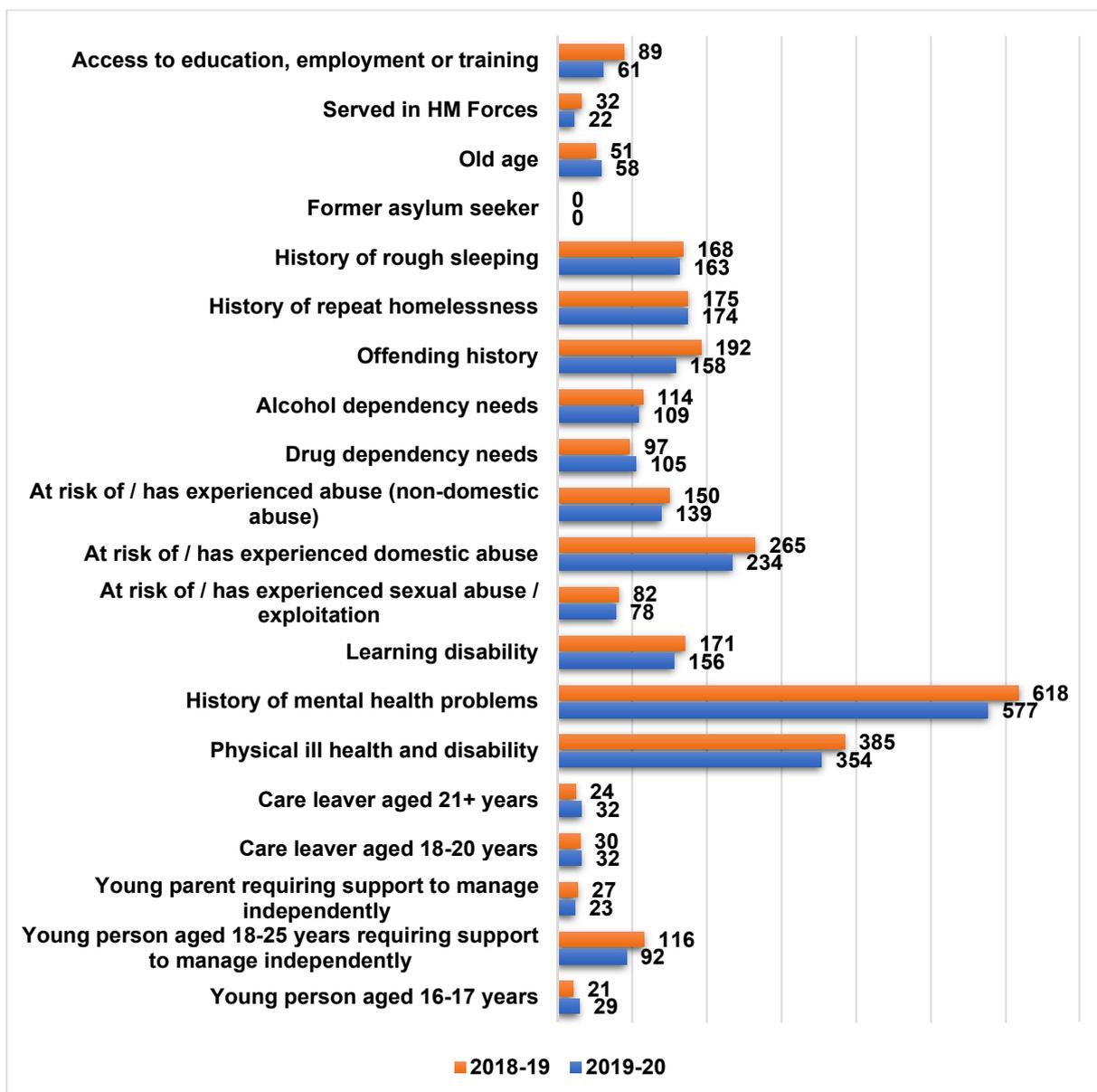


Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

5.2 Housing support

The most commonly required support need of households in Dorset who are owed a homelessness duty is due to a history of mental ill health at 577 households in 2019-2020, down by 41 in 2018-2019. This is followed by physical health and disability, down by 31 households from 2018-2019 to 354 in 2019-2020. Households requiring support because they are at risk or have experienced domestic abuse is the third most commonly required support need, at 234 households in 2019-20. Those requiring support due to a history of rough sleeping, offending, or repeat homelessness, or those with a learning disability are all at similar levels for both years but remain significant.

Chart 67: Households owed a homelessness duty by support need, Dorset, 2018-2019 to 2019-2020



Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

5.3 Other support

The Integrated Prevention and Support Services budget and commissioning is managed by Adult Services Commissioning Team. These services are focussed on housing and wellbeing and linked to emergency local assistance, which helps to prevent homelessness, and designed so that the money follows the individual. The following organisations are some of those that have been commissioned to deliver support services within this programme.

- First Point, a self-referral service in Weymouth, offers people over 16 housing related support to tackle housing related issues, including budgeting, eviction and court action as well as helping to secure suitable accommodation. First point will also assist people experiencing domestic abuse and provide the You First domestic abuse helpline for Dorset, part of The You Trust Charity.

- Shelter Housing First is funded by Dorset Council and because of extensive work with PRPs during the commissioning the support resources were at the right level for the residents. There are 3 support workers supporting 11 residents and there is close working with the Council Homelessness Service, NHS and The Lantern as well as increasing collaboration with registered providers. The scheme is to be evaluated financially as there is identified need and the potential, to expand. Shelter also have a legal aid contract for Dorset and are working to defend housing possessions but much of their work is because families feel that things are not going well with their housing or homelessness application or where people have been in B&B too long. Like other organisations Shelter worked closely with the Council's homelessness service during the Everyone In work and devised an assessment for people placed in the hostels which MHCLG commented was very thorough. As there is an appetite for this work to continue, they would like to build on this.
- Julian House has a dedicated assertive outreach service in Dorset that aims to help provide food, drug and alcohol treatment, mental health support and accommodation to people sleeping on the streets. Julian House started with just two part time staff in 2015 but took on the Dorset contract in December 2017 and have grown from there attracting other funding. The MHCLG Rough Sleeper Initiative paid for two full time outreach workers and a navigator. The navigator service works with people from the street, through B&B and into rented properties. Additional Rough Sleeper Initiative funding and Rapid Rehousing Pathway enabled three full time navigators and another one and a half outreach workers to cover the whole of the Dorset Council area, who helps to support some long-standing clients tucked away in wooded areas, who are very unwell.
- The Lantern receive funding from Dorset Council Integrated Prevention Support to fund the core running costs of the community resource centre, deliver outreach work in West Dorset, manage a micro-hostel and a supported lettings service for rough sleepers. Supported letting residents receive a personal budget of £800 funded through the MHCLG Rapid Housing Pathway which enables a fast tenancy set up purchasing white goods and other necessities. Some staff have lived experience of homelessness and understand the difference this type of support makes when starting a tenancy. The Lantern believe in mobilising support to meet people where they are at. They consider themselves an old school charity, who apply for pots of money that are really dynamic and flexible, for example, COVID-19 money bought PlayStations for people that had been on the street for a length of time and were now in their room alone. People that seek support from The Lantern are, in their words, very eclectic. As well as those living on the street, working people approach, for financial support. The Lantern find that there is a transience of service users that travel between Bournemouth, and Weymouth which needs addressing between the two councils to try and find more settled accommodation for those that migrate between the two areas.
- The Bus Shelter Dorset is based in Weymouth and works with rough sleepers and receives self-referrals and referrals from agencies such as Probation, with the aim of giving a dry place to sleep for the night, a hot meal, a PO box to enable registering with a GP and applying for benefits and some support if they are ready for it. The double decker bus did have 14 beds as shared accommodation, but at the beginning of the

COVID-19 crisis their residents were put into firstly a hotel, then a hostel, and are now living in a large house with self-contained units. These units have a shower and toilet and training room. Initially the idea of the Bus in Dorset was controversial as it is a new charity and there were local concerns with the bus being located on a corner of the beach car park. The charity proved it is well run, housing benefit staff visited to appraise the set up and the Council are now supportive, helping to secure funding and providing a direct line to a housing benefit officer as the residents are now in accommodation with an occupancy agreement. The Bus has been relocated close to the Park and Ride further out of town on Dorset Council Land. They have a wood workshop where one long standing resident teaches others woodwork skills, and another teaches cookery skills. They consider that the right support at the right time is the only thing that works; the route out of homelessness is different for everyone and some may never get off the bus. The charity is hopeful that they and others will be able to secure capital funding to improve opportunities for move on to suitable accommodation with a support worker as needed.

There are also several foodbanks across the county managed by various charities with access through CAB, housing associations, and Dorset Council.

Good Practice: Dorset NHS Trust Homeless Health Service

The Dorset Healthcare University NHS Trust Homeless Health Service⁹⁷ provides intensive support for rough sleepers who have a physical or Mental Health condition. During the 'Everyone In' programme this team of five, including two Mental Health Nurse Practitioners and two Physical Health Nurse Practitioners, worked with other services to provide much needed medical support, in hotels where rough sleepers were being temporarily housed. The team cover all Dorset, including BCP areas, and have a base in Weymouth but see patients in the community, even when they are sleeping rough. Many rough sleepers have complex mental health support needs and are not able to access mainstream services, so this is a vital service that any agency or individual can refer into. The service recently successfully supported Dorset Council Housing and Public Health, through strategic groups to secure £306,713 for substance misuse services from MHCLG as many homeless patients require detox services and intensive support to help them move towards living independently. The Service have found that rough sleepers need vocational support as well as practical, to help them sustain a life off the street. All have early trauma and substance misuse problems and do not know who to trust. The most entrenched rough sleepers in Dorset struggle with rules, procedure, routine, and don't like being told what to do. Many of this group have mental health disorders for which there is currently no medication or quick fix treatment pathway. The approach to this group needs to be very tailored and it has been recognised that this is an increasing issue. There is now a NICE guidance pathway for this and the Community Mental Health Team recognise the issue but are concerned that substances like spice are being used regularly, which makes it very difficult to help the rough sleeper.

In response to the national NHS Long Term Plan⁹⁸ Dorset Council and local NHS services are working in partnership through Our Dorset integrated care partnership to deliver a shared plan

⁹⁷ Homeless Health Service www.dorsethealthcare.nhs/homeless-health-service

⁹⁸ NHS Long Term Plan v1.2 August 2019, <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/nhs-long-term-plan-version-1.2.pdf>

to improve the health and wellbeing of residents. The plan acknowledges the influence of housing on mental and emotional health and wellbeing, as well as the lack of suitable affordable housing leading to high numbers of households in temporary accommodation. Joint aspirations include:

- Increasing the supply of new homes to meet local needs including affordable, sustainable housing
- Reducing dependence on bed and breakfast accommodation by increasing temporary accommodation.
- Helping those with specialist care and support needs to live independently
- Developing services to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping

The plan was tabled at the Dorset Health and Wellbeing Board on 30 October 2019. Following this Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group carried out the Mental Health Rehabilitation Review⁹⁹ which recommended:

- 2 Community Rehab Units (one east and one west of the county)
- Community Rehab and Assertive Outreach Teams working across the county
- Supported Housing available across the county
- 1 High Dependency Unit

5.4 Conclusions about activities to provide support

Almost half of all households owed a homelessness duty in 2019-20 have at least one support need. While this is a small reduction the previous year, it is significant and again demonstrates the need to ensure that it is available to prevent, relieve and stop the repeat of homelessness. Comparing support needs per thousand households provides further understanding of the scale of the issue. As neighbouring BCP has a lower number of households with support needs and fewer per thousand households, understanding the reasons for this may be useful for Dorset in commissioning the type and level of support activity required to bring this level down.

The support services commissioned by Dorset Council to help tackle homelessness are providing wide ranging and innovative outcomes and making a real difference to homeless and vulnerable people. These services are at capacity the majority of the time and are continually seeking resources to expand to meet the need.

The increase in the number of households recorded as having a priority need due to mental and physical ill-health has led to the NHS and adult services looking to assess needs and secure bespoke accommodation for their service users.

The remaining former supporting people budget is managed by Adult Services Commissioning Team to provide the Integrated Prevention and Support Services. These services are focussed on housing and wellbeing, linked to emergency local assistance and designed so that the money follows individual which all helps to prevent homelessness,

⁹⁹ The Mental Health Rehabilitation Review, 2019, <https://www.dorsetccg.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/09.6-Mental-Health-Rehabilitation-Review-170719.pdf> report 3.7.19

6. Resources for tackling homelessness

This chapter reviews the resources available to carry out activities to tackle homelessness. For the purpose of this review, resources being considered are the money, people and I.T. available to the local housing authority.

6.1 Money

Dorset Council is legally obliged to discharge the administration of homelessness and is responsible for funding this. The homelessness service carries out a range of activities including homelessness prevention, housing options advice and the provision and management of temporary accommodation. These activities are described in chapters three and four of this review. Alongside the money committed from Dorset Councils revenue budget, additional funding is awarded by MHCLG.

The UK Government has made the Homelessness Reduction Act Grant available to help fund the new burdens arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This has been used, for example to upgrade case management and data collection IT systems and to fund additional staff to assist with the newly introduced initial assessments. This funding is currently only guaranteed until 2021.

Table 3: MHCLG Homelessness Reduction Act Grant, Benchmark Group 2020-2021

Area	Amount	% of budget
England	£62m	100% of national budget
South West	£3,888,513	6.27% of national budget
BCP	£ 274,127	7.05% of regional budget
Dorset	£225,777	5.8% of regional budget

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

Flexible Housing Support Grant replaced the Temporary Accommodation Subsidy regime previously administered by the Department for Work & Pensions, for more than a decade until March 2017¹⁰⁰. The new funding arrangement replaced a tightly controlled subsidy system to procure and manage temporary accommodation, which could only be used once a person had become homeless. The new grant system enables flexibility to spend the funding on preventing homelessness, in addition to assisting those who are homeless.

Table 4: Flexible Homelessness Support Grant, Benchmark Group 2020-2021

Area	Amount	% of budget
England	£200m	100% of national budget
South West	£11,769,370	5.88% of national budget
BCP	£1,181,860	10.04% of regional budget
Dorset	£442,352	3.76% of regional budget

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

The new round of Rough Sleeper Initiative funding allocations announced in January 2020 was to help more rough sleepers into accommodation, designed to deliver 6,000 additional bedspaces and 2,500 support staff. The funding is to support or create street outreach

¹⁰⁰ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. (2017). Flexible homelessness support grant – funding allocations formula explanation

services, secure hostel and shelter type accommodation, and deliver specialist support to rough sleepers to help them remain off the street.

Table 5: Rough Sleeper Initiative, Benchmark Group 2020-2021

Area	Amount	% of budget
England	£112m	100% of national budget
BCP	£ 1,401,333	1.2% of national budget
Dorset	£472,470	0.42% of national budget

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

The Next Steps Accommodation Programme short-term funding is for interim accommodation and support for those rough sleepers accommodated during the pandemic, funding such activities as helping people into private rented accommodation or helping to reconnect them with their community, as well as the procurement of interim accommodation. This is revenue funding only and must be used in 2020-2021.

Table 6: Next Steps Accommodation Programme funding 2020/21 - Short term accommodation and intermediate support funding – revenue only, Benchmark Group 2020-2021

Area	Amount	% of budget
England	£105m	100% of national budget
South West	£7,398,160	7.05% of national budget
BCP	£1,884,766	2.06% of national budget
Dorset	£624,000	0.65% of national budget

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

The Next Steps Accommodation Programme capital funding, allocated to secure new units of accommodation, has also been made available for use during 2020-2021, to bring forward long term move-on accommodation as part of a four-year £433 million programme to secure 6,000 additional supported homes in England, 3300 to be delivered in 2020-2021. MHCLG guidance confirms that this funding allocation is for both capital and revenue based longer term accommodation provision, and that the deadline for delivering the new units of accommodation is 31st March 2021.

Table 7: Next Steps Accommodation Programme Capital Funding – Longer Term move on accommodation funding, Benchmark Group 2020-2021

Area	Amount	% of budget
England	£161,000,000	100% of national budget
BCP	£5,048,634	3.14% of national budget
Dorset	£1,556,730	0.97% of national budget

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government

As part of the £6million MHCLG Covid19 Emergency Response fund for small charitable organisations dealing with homelessness, several South West charities successfully bid for funding to help rough sleepers and other vulnerable people during the pandemic. While the successful charities are not located within the Dorset Council boundaries their services may still be accessible in Dorset and are therefore a potential additional resource.

6.2 People

The structure of the Housing Options and Homelessness teams in place following the merger of the former district and county councils into the new single Dorset Council, and at the time of writing this report, were under review following initial arrangements that were adopted. There are some vacant posts due to leavers and secondments, and the service still appears to be working as separate services. The teams are still mainly operating from the former district locations under three team leaders, while the homelessness accommodation function is being carried out separately. This has occasionally caused some issues with refusal of homeless placements where the Council have an interim accommodation duty, but the history and behaviour of the service user is seen as a risk if they were placed in temporary accommodation. These issues may be easily resolvable if there was no physical or managerial separation of these functions.

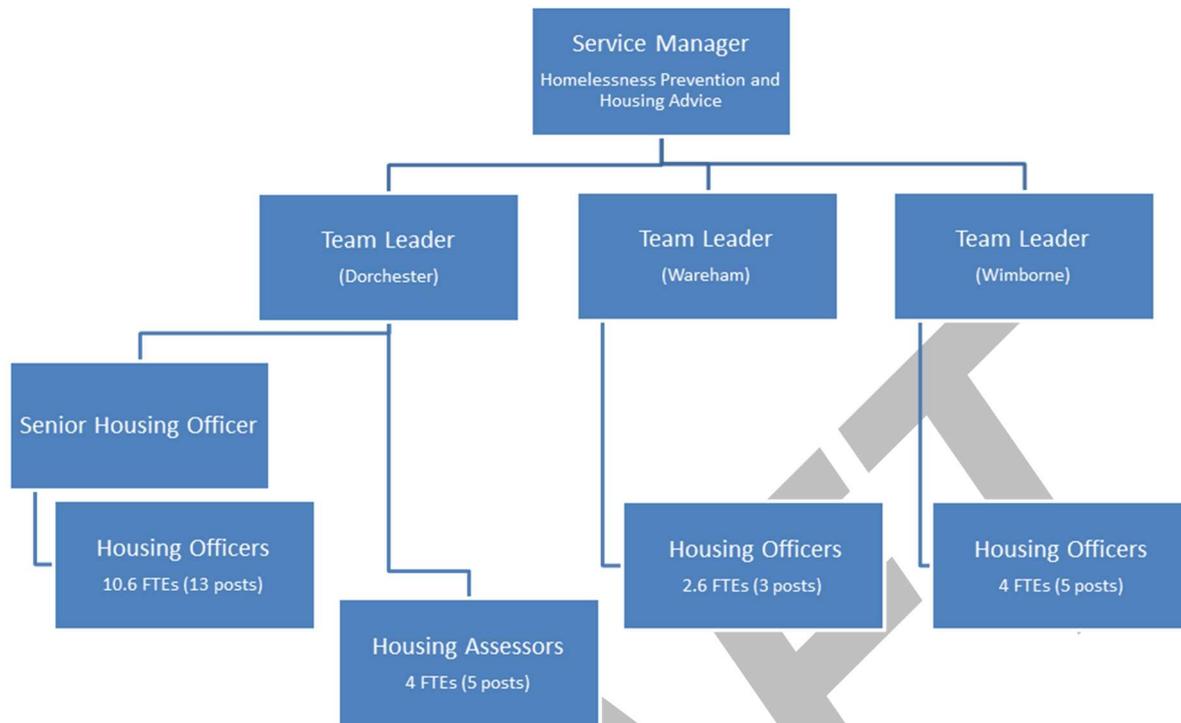
There is a great deal of experience within the service, both in local government housing and homelessness as well as from related external organisations. A concern was expressed by officers that there have been a number of secondments of homelessness team members which have destabilised teams a little, and although it is seen as positive that staff have such opportunities, it would be best to let the service settle and new structures and working practices embed after the many changes, before offering placements elsewhere.

Officers consider that homelessness casework is good, but that training is not yet coordinated which means, for example, that caselaw updates have not been disseminated. Some additional staff are needed to ensure casework is thoroughly completed every opportunity is taken to prevent homelessness. A dedicated review officer will be coming into post shortly.

The merger of Dorset councils has left some strategic gaps within the Housing Service and this is evidenced when looking at the housing enabling function, which is currently being resolved in order to enable a great deal more affordable and supported housing, and this expertise and support would benefit the Building Better Lives Programme.

A current structure chart for the team is shown below.

Diagram 1: Dorset Council Homelessness Service staffing structure, November 2020



6.3 I.T.

The current IT system used across Dorset Housing Service is a modular system with components to support the functions of advice, initial assessment including PHP, prevention and relief, main duty, and temporary accommodation as well as housing register.

There is an online portal within which all able service users are required to apply and self-serve. The system components have not been fully integrated across Dorset as the original commission for the software was for the former individual districts. The procurement of a single, integrated IT system to support the service will take place during 2021-22.

The current statistical collection provided to MHCLG each quarter is still termed 'experimental' by MHCLG in this third year of usage, and there is anecdotal evidence at local level, including in Dorset, that there are still concerns about the accuracy of data collection which should be addressed. There have been concerns from MHCLG regarding the numbers of households who are recorded as having been evicted from supported housing. It is probable that these are general needs social housing evictions and not supported social housing evictions, but some service users have not always understood the terms used and recorded their former accommodation incorrectly. These are both social housing, and eviction is a serious concern generally, but eviction from supported housing, where a person with support needs is being helped to sustain a tenancy and this has failed, is a far more complex issue. Ensuring accurate data requires time spent on case management and effective verification. This investment in time will help to ensure focussed, targeted prevention services will be more effective and help to reduce additional time and costs through the homeless process.

The data collected through H-CLIC is relevant and comprehensive and useful to underpin evidence-based policy decisions. There are still additional datasets which are not recorded on H-CLIC which would be of use to Dorset in planning and delivering services, which should be collected outside of the system.

6.4 Conclusions about resources for tackling homelessness

Performance management, including the recording and analysis of performance data needs to be accurate and supported by regular audit to ensure accuracy. Benchmarking the range and success of activities currently in place to prevent homelessness against other local housing authorities is not currently completed regularly.

Local housing authority homelessness service is a public law function, and as part of this function homeless decisions must be made, usually following a thorough investigation of the facts of the case. To be competent to fulfil this duty, appropriate and regular training in housing and homelessness law is required.

All policies and procedures should be reviewed with the exception of the newly adopted Housing Allocations Policy to ensure that they are up to date and adhered to.

The homelessness Forum is an example of good practice and could be used to bid for external resources or effectively engaging with service users.

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7. Consultation

This chapter shows the results from two surveys carried out with service users and stakeholders. The surveys were carried out to gather quantitative data on people's attitudes, opinions and experiences of homelessness in Dorset Council.

7.1 Service user consultation

Between 14/11/2020 to 8/12/2020 a total of 30 responses were received by people who had experienced homelessness and homelessness services in Dorset by way of an online survey to complete the Dorset Council Homeless Strategy April 2021. The survey was made up of 12 questions and achieved an 100% response rate.

27% of these described themselves as currently homeless, including two people describing themselves as currently sleeping rough, 20% as being threatened with homelessness and 43% as formerly homeless, now in settled housing.

12% of respondents had been homeless on at least one previous occasion and 46% believed being helped up to two months before crisis would help them prevent homelessness.

53% thought that the best housing option when homeless or threatened with homelessness was social rented housing. 70% felt that when homeless or threatened with homelessness, the most important matter to get help with was to find a house and 67% of service users agreed that homelessness funding should be used to secure additional accommodation.

57% of service users completing the survey were female, and 51% were aged 25 to 54 years. 43% lived alone and all who stated an ethnic group were of a white ethnic origin.

The full survey and summary responses can be seen at Appendix 2.

7.2 Stakeholder consultation

Councillors including members of the People and Health Overview Committee were consulted on two occasions before and after this Homelessness Review and helped to develop the strategy and action plan.

Interviews of 22 stakeholders and staff were carried out to inform the review and strategy. A summary of responses to stakeholder interview questions can be seen at Appendix 3

There was also an online survey were made available for stakeholders. A total of 8 responses were received, an 11% response rate. The number of respondents was insufficient to provide information on the remaining questions within the survey however, the summary of survey responses can be seen at Appendix 4.

7.3 Conclusions about consultation

The response to the service user survey was good, with a range of household types and reasons for homelessness.

The Elected Member Workshops were also useful and Member input helped to formulate the Strategy and Action Plan.

The Stakeholder survey response rate was low however the stakeholder interviews were comprehensive and provided much useful information and recommendations.

The overriding findings from the consultation were:

- Social rented housing is still the preferred accommodation for people in housing difficulty due to the affordability and security of tenure.
- The prevalence of single males and single females presenting as homeless with mental and physical health problems, resulting in homelessness or exacerbating their difficulties in maintaining accommodation.
- The right support is successful in preventing and relieving homelessness, and local support services are delivering this, but they are too stretched and much more is needed.

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8. Findings

This chapter re-visits the conclusions set out at the end of each chapter of the report. As a direct response to the conclusions are a series of recommendations. These recommendations are for the use of the local authority to prioritise actions for the next homeless strategy.

8.1 Conclusions

8.1.1 Levels of Homelessness

1. Over 24% of children in Dorset are living in poverty, at risk of homelessness, and the repeat cycle of poverty.
2. Ensure that effective information, advice and support is available at points across Dorset that are naturally accessed by all households, such as schools, DWP, supermarkets, sports clubs, foodbanks, GP surgeries and hospitals etc, to alleviate real poverty and prevent the threat of homeless at every possible opportunity.
3. Enable the teaching of homelessness awareness in primary and secondary schools, plus provide teaching resources and training for teachers to deliver within curriculum.
4. The housing register application process relies on the applicant's online entry or assessment officer validation to identify households that are threatened with homelessness or at risk of homelessness. This could be resulting in many missed opportunities to provide early intervention to prevent homelessness.
5. Some housing associations are refusing nominations, including those of homeless households, as they do not meet their lettings criteria. This is mainly due to a high level of rent arrears or previous anti-social behaviour.
6. Most referrals to the homelessness service were not required to be sent under the Duty to Refer but it is hoped that these will increase over time.
7. There is an increasing number of single adults with poor mental or physical health becoming homeless, as well as those with problems with drugs and alcohol. The NHS is targeting this issue and remodelling its rehabilitation services across Dorset in response to this need.

8.1.2 Activities to prevent homelessness

1. Homelessness prevention is being achieved by other agencies in addition to the Council and the commissioned services, including early prevention activity that is not commissioned as a homelessness prevention service such as housing association tenancy support. This data should be recorded and shared to inform services.
2. The flow and numbers from the prevention duty owed stage to other duty owed stages is not yet clear.
3. The Homeless Services still appears to be working as separate local authority areas, due to the geographical scale of Dorset. This can cause difficulty for staff who do not yet have wider knowledge of Dorset
4. The commissioned support services require recommissioning in 2022, which provide an opportunity for Housing and Homelessness Services to engage more fully in defining their requirements.
5. The number of offenders recorded as becoming homeless from secure estates is small, but there are reportedly a greater number rough sleeping or sofa surfing as they were homeless following release.
6. A housing officer trained by Children's services to liaise between the two services is an excellent resource for both services. There is still a complex area of work that would benefit from additional focus to help care leavers and other young people to resolve their housing difficulties.

7. There are a range of prevention activities available to members or former members of the Armed Forces delivered by voluntary and statutory agencies, but it is reportedly difficult to identify former serving personnel who are in housing difficulty, to refer into those services.
8. There are a small number of people discharged from hospital following illness or injury, who are unable to access their former rented home, and have no alternative accommodation. The shortage of adapted temporary or permanent housing can result in substantial costs to the council in funding an inpatient bed.
9. The Dorset Tenancy Strategy requires a review and a new strategy formulated.
10. The end of an assured shorthold tenancy is one of the main reasons recorded for the loss of the last settled home in Dorset, and although housing association tenancies coming to an end is a small number, it is significant. More work must be done on both tenure to intervene at an earlier stage to prevent homelessness.
11. Case file checks are carried out by Homelessness Services Team Leaders to ensure accuracy of decisions and identify training needs. There is also an opportunity to learn what more could be done, and at what stage, to prevent homelessness, if these files were considered from a different perspective.
12. Negative outcomes of an assessment, whether it be prevention, relief or main housing duty, such as someone found to be intentionally homeless, lost contact with the Council, etc, leaves the risk of a continued cycle of homelessness for that household.
13. Rough sleepers are moving between Dorset and BCP on a regular basis, and although this transience is not unusual, it can be indicative of low levels of support and other appropriate services to support rough sleepers locally.
14. Housing Associations who are working in partnership with Dorset Council are working hard to house and support homeless households, but this is not the case overall. In addition, the number of evictions from social housing in Dorset is high, and more could be done to encourage these landlords to help tackle homelessness in Dorset.
15. There is no early identification of potential cases of threatened homelessness, prior to the time a prevention duty would be assessed, outside of agency referrals including under the Duty to Refer.

8.1.3 Activities to secure accommodation

1. Housing association partners have expressed their commitment to increase their housing stock within the Council area. There is no current housing strategy to support this or other initiatives that could help to secure additional accommodation across tenures.
2. Households are regularly placed in TA away from their community in another unfamiliar part of Dorset, and even outside of the Dorset Council area, as there is a shortage of all types of temporary accommodation locally, which needs addressing.
3. Housing association partners are not always able to accept nominations for their accommodation as the nominee does not meet the requirements of their lettings policy, regardless of their position on the housing register. This also applies to homeless households who may have former tenancy debts for example. Nominees are not always aware that they are bidding on properties that they will not qualify for with the housing association.
4. Feedback regarding temporary accommodation varies with some stakeholders dissatisfied about the location quality of some accommodation as well as the levels of housing management available.
5. Good use has been made of the PRS with financial assistance but figures for PRSO's have been low. There is a Private Rented Sector Offer/discharge Policy (PRSO) but this does not cover the whole of Dorset and would benefit from reviewing and being updated alongside a Suitability of Accommodation policy

8.1.4 Activities to provide support

1. There is considerable good practice and innovation from the majority of commissioned support services as well as Homelessness Services in preventing and relieving homelessness, but this has not been showcased or used to demonstrate the need for additional support resources.
2. There is a clear need for additional support services and supported housing but there is no up to date needs assessment which includes the needs of adults and children's services as well as that of the NHS, and there is a risk that several needs assessments and strategies to deliver these homes and services will be completed in silos.
3. There is limited outreach support, but there should be more understanding of how people in need of support to resolve homelessness problems can be reached before they access public services, to allow earlier engagement.
4. The external support services are not commissioned by housing and are not therefore formally inspected by them. The Commissioning team work very closely with Homelessness Services in commissioning and reviewing the services, but regular service inspections from the perspective of the housing service user is not currently in place.
5. Council departments and external agencies are working with the same service users as homelessness services, providing money advice, employment support, corporate parenting etc, and joint working for the benefit of the service users and the services could be enhanced by the colocation of services.
6. Many homeless households are not accessing support services because of their special circumstances, such as those living in TA without a support worker, or those hidden homeless sofa surfers, and even low levels of support may be of great benefit to these groups.
7. There is an increasing number of single adult males and single adult females becoming homeless in Dorset, in line with England, but the reasons for this is not yet well understood.
8. There is some joint work between Children's Services and Homelessness Services, and with the increase in homelessness generally this should be built upon, but there is a need for both to understand the other's roles and responsibilities.

8.1.5 Conclusions about resources for tackling homelessness

1. Performance management arrangements have been complicated by the introduction of HRA17 and evolving arrangements through the Dorset Councils merger. The recording and analysis of performance data needs to be supported by regular case file and data audit to ensure accuracy and effectiveness of information.
2. There is little benchmarking carried out at present and this makes it more difficult to understand performance and service demand from an external perspective. There is a good amount of resource and activity in tackling homelessness in Dorset and comparing this with other Councils would help to understand the effectiveness of arrangements.
3. Funding has been awarded from various national streams as well as locally, and there have been positive outcomes from many of the programmes being delivered, but these outcomes are not routinely presented other than as performance data, and would benefit from being published as case studies where possible in order to demonstrate the added value that Dorset Council and its partners can deliver.
4. The lack of formal benchmarking, other than national H-CLIC statistics, could leave Dorset Council fairly isolated in regard to external perspectives on performance, as the merger does mean there are few similar housing authorities to compare with at present.

5. Former arrangements for shared staff training on new legislation or caselaw updates have reduced again as a result of the merger, and the benefit of external input from other councils during training, or peer opportunities is missed, for example peer casework audits.
6. There are many required policies and procedures in place for use in carrying out homelessness functions, however few are Dorset wide or current.
7. Training on all aspects of carrying out homelessness functions including making homelessness decisions should be provided regularly. The Council have shared case law information but there is no specific training in place to show evidence based, lawful decisions are being made. As the service is becoming busier even less time is allocated to training.
8. The homelessness forum is an excellent example of local networking and partners are committed to the joint working opportunities this provides. There have been some joint bids for external resources, but there is more opportunity that could be realised.
9. More use could be made of feedback from service users at each stage of interaction with homelessness and related services, such as when in temporary accommodation.
10. Complaints from service users against homelessness services regarding the level of service provided are uncommon, but when these are received, they should be of use as a training tool.

8.1.6 Conclusions about consultation

Elected Member, stakeholders, service users and staff all want homelessness to be tackled in Dorset and have seen the change made with the 'Everybody In' programme in response to Covid-19, which provided evidence of what can be achieved in a very short space of time with appropriate resources in place.

A good response rate from service users, stakeholder interviews and elected members input has resulted in broad agreement that social rented housing is the preferred housing tenure due to security and cost. There was also agreement with the desktop review findings that the number of single people with mental and physical ill-health who are finding themselves homeless is increasing, and that more support to prevent and relieve homelessness was needed generally.

8.2 Recommendations

8.2.1 Current and future levels of homelessness

1. Develop, implement and embed a proactive, early homelessness prevention and support service, beginning in the wards with the highest levels of child poverty, seeking out and targeting households in, or at risk of, poverty including those with children living in poverty, in receipt of in-work means tested welfare benefits, known to have difficulty managing welfare benefit claims, in receipt of Council Tax benefit.
2. Ensure that effective information, advice and support is available at points across Dorset that are naturally accessed by all households, such as schools, DWP, supermarkets, sports clubs, foodbanks, GP surgeries and hospitals etc, to alleviate real poverty and prevent the threat of homeless at every possible opportunity.
3. Enable the teaching of homelessness awareness in primary and secondary schools, plus provide teaching resources and training for teachers to deliver within curriculum.

4. Ensure that the housing register application and assessment process include mandatory identification of applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and automatic referral to Homelessness Services to provide prevention/relief support to those identified.
5. Review housing register to identify applicants who are not eligible for main housing association accommodation due to HA lettings policies and provide prevention/relief support. Ensure Housing Register software can identify new cases at registration, and automatically refer to Homelessness Services to provide prevention/relief support to those identified.
6. Use Duty to Refer data and other referral data to map service user route to the referring agency, using this information to identify early opportunities to divert early homelessness prevention interventions.
7. In partnership with NHS and Public Health Services develop a range of activities to prevent and relieve homelessness for people who have poor health outcomes, especially people who misuse alcohol and/or drugs and have mental ill health.

8.2.2 Preventing homelessness

1. Capture all homelessness prevention outcomes achieved by all stakeholders, including those achieved by Dorset Council services, to inform a strategic approach to prevention. This includes early prevention activity that has not been commissioned as a homelessness prevention service, (eg, housing association tenancy support, DWP employment support, money advice workshops at food banks, etc).
2. Review homelessness cases that move from the prevention stage to the relief stage, and to the main duty stage. Map the flow from the prevention duty owed stage to other stages to determine why households move through the stages to establish any trends, including household type or location, that require specialist support to prevent homelessness.
3. Complete an options appraisal on the way in which the merged Dorset Council homelessness service should be delivered, including for example:
 - Remotely or face to face – or a combination of both
 - Location(s) of staff and services
 - Colocation with other public and voluntary sector services, full or part time
4. Produce a modern procurement strategy to apply best practice and achieve improved value for money in priority areas to develop a prospectus for commissioned prevention services, including extending the length of contract to provide greater financial security to a wider range of organisations to provide services within Dorset.
5. Review existing arrangements with criminal justice agencies and agree a joint pathway with to prevent offenders becoming homeless following release from all secure estates.
6. Review existing arrangements of the joint work to prevent care leavers and other young people from becoming homeless, including:
 - updating the 16 /17 year olds protocol to include any new legislative developments
 - building on the key trained officer role within housing to develop a champions role in each service where joint cases can be administered
 - locating Homelessness Officers in the Youth advice and information centres.

7. Review homeless prevention activities available to members or former members of the Armed Forces and ways of identifying former serving personnel to raise awareness of and refer to the specialist support available.
8. Adopt a Homeless from Hospital Discharge Policy to prevent patients from becoming homeless when leaving hospital.
9. Review social landlord activity against the Dorset Tenancy Strategy, then carry forward the findings to formulate a new tenancy strategy.
10. Develop an early warning system for tenancies coming to an end in the private and social sectors.
11. Carryout regular case file audit of homelessness cases to learn what more could be done, and at what stage, to prevent homelessness. Check the rationality, legality, and adherence to public law procedural requirements.
12. Review all cases with negative outcomes within a three- month period, including intentionally homeless, not homeless, no duty owed, lost contact etc., to ascertain how/if they resolved their own homelessness and analyse the cost/benefits of assisting these households to secure settled accommodation.
13. Research and analyse local patterns of and reasons for rough sleeping, and rough sleeper service provision, with neighbouring counties to ensure that appropriate services and accommodation are in place locally to support rough sleepers and reduce the transience of rough sleepers and help to prevent sleeping.
14. Introduce a peer led benchmarking scheme for social landlords to evidence that activity against the following themes:
 1. Board member commitment to tackling homelessness, and evidence of spend to tackle homelessness
 2. Prevention of evictions due to rent arrears
 3. Actions for tackling homelessness featuring in organisational strategy
 4. Involvement of tenants in activities to prevent homelessness
 5. Prioritisation of homeless applicants when letting homes
 6. Prevention of homelessness due to anti-social behaviour and neighbour nuisance
 7. Effective early warning and joint working with local authority Homelessness and Housing benefits services to prevent homelessness in complex cases
15. Proactive and highly effective arrangements need to be in place for early identification of potential cases of threatened homelessness and the need for housing advice (e.g. early intervention protocols with Social Housing management services, Domestic Violence agencies, National Offender Management Service, private sector and anti-social behaviour teams).

8.2.3 Securing accommodation

1. Formulate a housing strategy that prioritises:
 - increasing the supply of affordable housing, including one-bedroom accommodation suitable for single people with complex needs
 - maximising the potential of the PRS across Dorset
 - bringing empty homes back into use

2. Undertake a strategic review of all temporary accommodation including an options appraisal into future TA arrangements, including private sector leasing, and use findings to update policy for how temporary accommodation will be procured and allocated.
3. Housing association partners to develop a pre-tenancy training and qualification to equip households placed in temporary accommodation to become tenancy ready, including 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.
4. Adopt a new temporary accommodation placement policy which provides information to the service user on costs of the accommodation, and the standards and the level of housing management and any support they can expect as early as possible.
5. Review and adapt the Private Rented Sector Offer/discharge Policy (PRSO) and develop a Suitability of Accommodation policy for all of Dorset that aims to reduce or remove any reliance on discretionary housing payments to subsidise rents.

8.2.4 Providing support

1. Publish an annual report promoting the work of homelessness services and showing how funding streams have been utilised to support households for the prevention and relief of homelessness, including case studies that:
 - highlight local good practice,
 - demonstrate the need for additional or more intensive support for some households,
 - show the positive practices used to help households in temporary accommodation to move on within six months, and
 - demonstrate the need for additional support resources
2. Complete a supported housing needs and gap analysis, to better understand whether current provision reflects the needs of actual and potential users who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
3. Review access points to support with service users, to ascertain how, if any, improvements can be made.
4. Agree a method for carrying out performance inspections of support services that benefit people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
5. Evaluate the potential for co-location of services that are working with the same service users, and other partnership initiatives would improve performance and outcomes of these services.
6. Develop a series of prevention, relief and support initiatives that will benefit people who may not access these services for example if they are currently living in unsupported temporary accommodation or 'sofa surfing' as hidden homeless.
7. Commission research to understand why the level of homelessness among single adult male and single adult females is increasing (pre-Covid increases) and what is needed to reduce or prevent this.
8. Explore options for homelessness officers to be involved with locality-based working alongside Early Help and Adolescent services and service providers, such as Youth Hubs, and vice-versa, including when providing support in temporary accommodation.

8.2.5 Resources

1. Implement effective performance management arrangements to drive improvement and deliver value for money using regular internal audit of performance information and data collection.
2. Benchmarking the range and success of activities currently in place to prevent homelessness against other local housing authorities.
3. Monitor the quality of outcomes against each funding stream and report on these, publishing case studies to demonstrate positive outcomes to residents and central government.
4. Form a benchmarking club with like housing authorities, potentially BCP and Wiltshire, to support the development of effective performance management and improvement.
5. Develop a shared staff training curriculum and external peer audit function for regular casework audits.
6. Review all operational policies, procedures, and paperwork associated with administering the homelessness service from the perspective of the merged council services and the new duties arising from the HRA17.
7. Develop a comprehensive training programme including:
 - induction procedures for new homelessness and housing allocations staff
 - a 12 month programme in housing and homelessness policy, practice and law for those new to the housing service, as well as the opportunity to complete a recognised housing qualification
 - regular refresher training for homelessness and allocations assessment officers
 - additional regular training for all staff covering case law and other legislative updates
 - best practice and new initiatives updates training
 - ICT and monitoring systems training for all system users
 - Specialised training for those managing the monitoring and reporting of H-CLIC and other data to ensure that evidence is always accurate and current to provide for evidence-based decision making.
 - Housing benefit regulations and practice annual update training from Housing Benefits Team.
8. Using the established homelessness forum, harness stakeholder enthusiasm and resources for tackling homelessness through engaging with cost benefit analyses and joint bidding for external funding.
9. Seek out feedback from service users to ensure their knowledge helps to shape policy and practice:
 - during the provision of the service at regular points such as initial assessment, placement in temporary accommodation etc.
 - through regular customer satisfaction consultation including an annual consultation exercise which includes stakeholders
 - through an annual event, at which users of homelessness services are invited to put questions to key decisions makers about what works well and what could work better.
10. Develop a process for complaints from service users against homelessness services and stakeholder services to be used as training tool for all staff and publish the learning from this.

Appendices

Appendix One – Record of Contributors

Appendix Two – Service User Consultation Responses

Appendix Three – Stakeholder Interview summaries

Appendix Four – Stakeholder Consultation Responses

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Appendix One – Record of Contributors

The following persons and organisations generously gave their time to contribute evidence to this Homelessness Review:

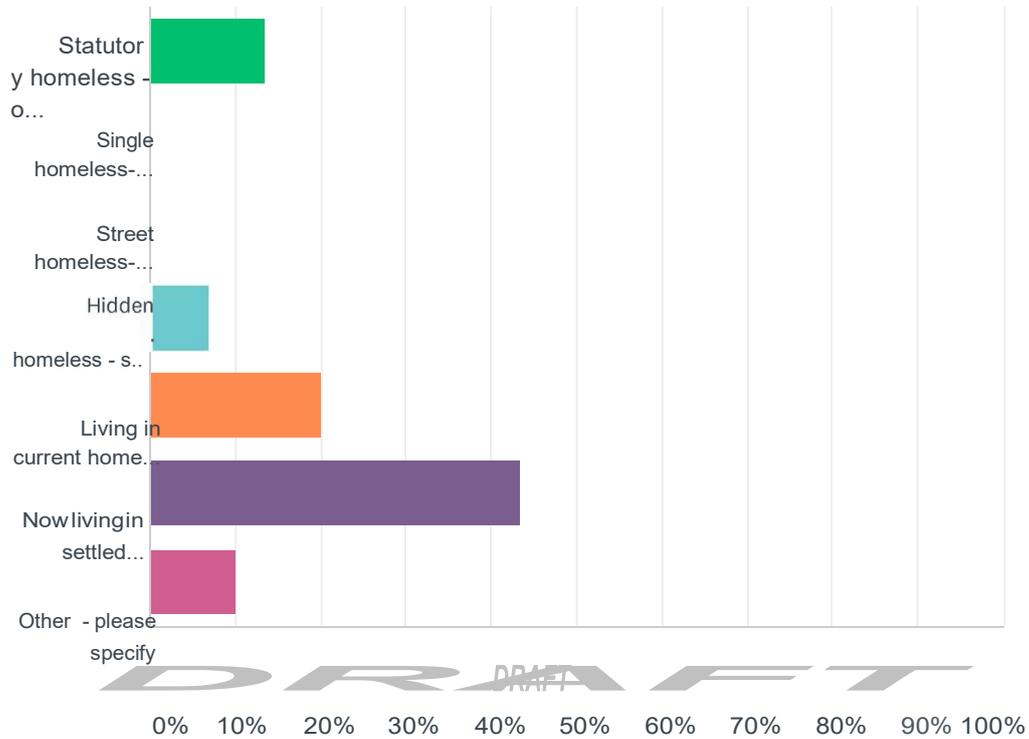
- Cllr Graham Carr-Jones
- Cllr Andrew Kirby
- Sharon Attwater
- Andrew Billany
- Fiona Brown
- Sarah How
- Melissa Johnson
- Maria Byrne
- Miriam Smith
- Louise Capaldi-Tallon
- Richard Conway
- Andy Frost
- Diana Balsom
- Tina Frampton
- 16+ Team
- Citizens Advice
- Shelter
- Chair of Weymouth & Portland Landlords Forum
- Magna Housing Association
- Abri Housing Group
- Royal British Legion
- Armed Forces Covenant Co-ordinator
- The Lantern
- The Bus Shelter
- NHS Trust
- NHS Homeless Health Service
- Julian house

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Appendix Two – Service User Survey Responses

Q1 How would you describe your current experience of homelessness?

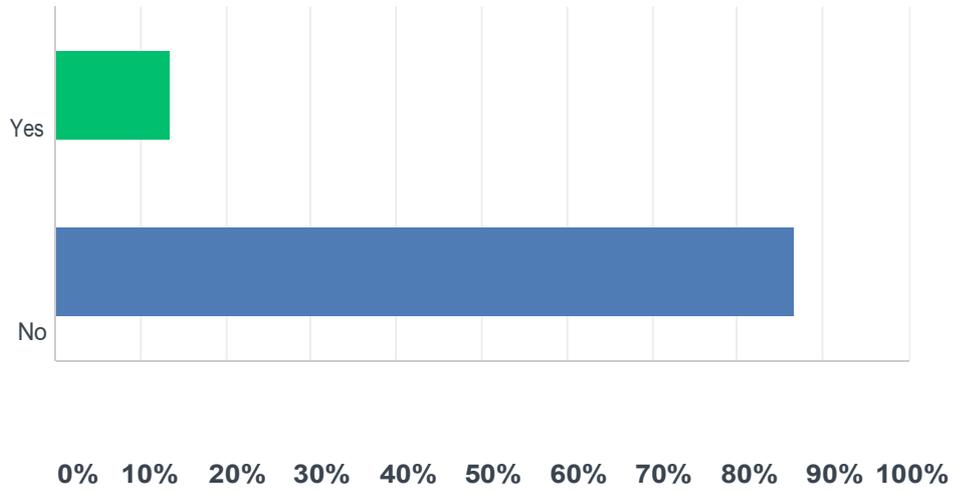
Answered: 30 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Statutory homeless - owed a duty by a local authority	13.33%	4
Single homeless - living in supported housing	0.00%	0
Street homeless - sleeping rough	6.67%	2
Hidden homeless - sofa surfing with friends or family	6.67%	2
Living in current home but risk of losing it	20.00%	6
Now living in settled accommodation, but previously homeless in one of the above situations	43.33%	13
Other - please specify	10.00%	3
TOTAL		30

Q2 Have you been homeless before this occasion, ie. Is this repeat homelessness?

Answered: 30 Skipped: 0

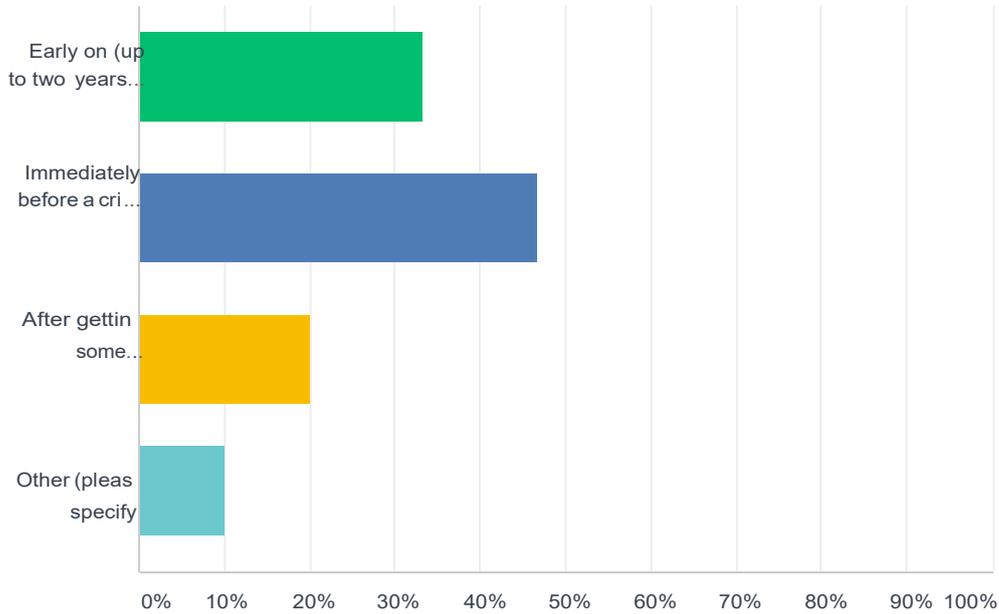


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	13.33%	4
No	86.67%	26
Total Respondents: 30		

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Q3 What do you think is the best way to prevent homelessness?

Answered: 30 Skipped: 0

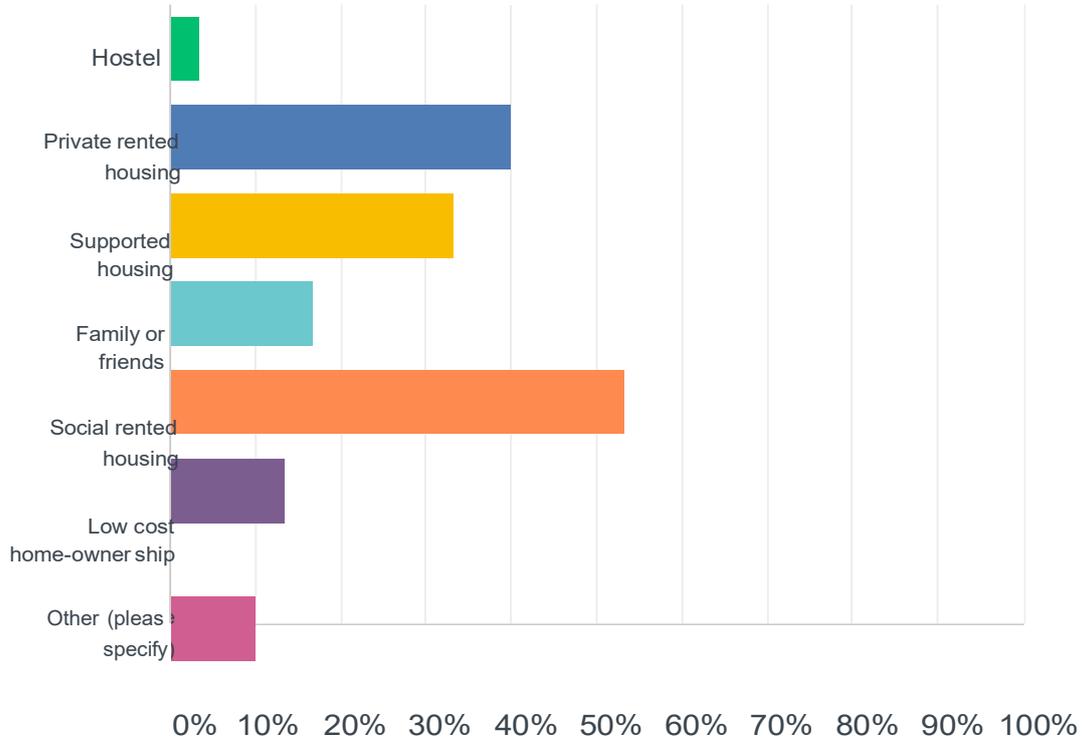


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Early on (up to two years before)- for example being helped prior to leaving prison, care, armed forces, hospital, escaping domestic abuse etc.	33.33%	10
Immediately before a crisis (up to two months before) being helped to stay in your current home or getting help to find somewhere else to live.	46.67%	14
After getting some accommodation, to stop a repeat occurrence of homelessness.	20.00%	6
Other (please specify)	10.00%	3
Total Respondents: 30		

A review of homelessness in the Dorset area : Service User Survey

Q4 When homeless or threatened with homelessness, what do you think is the best housing option?

Answered: 30 Skipped: 0

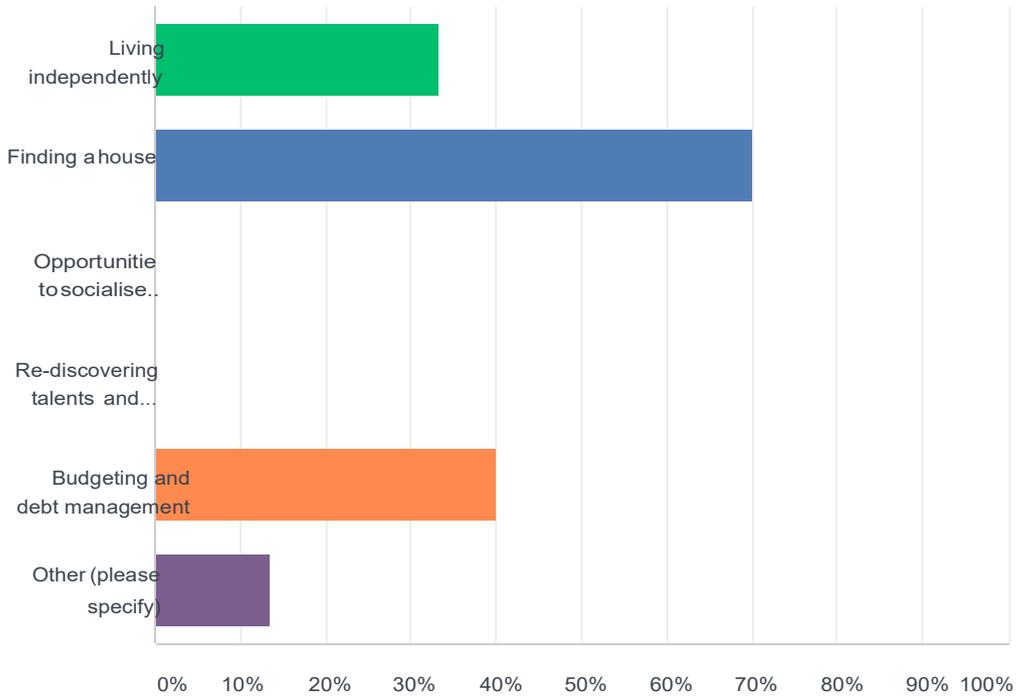


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Hostel	3.33% 1
Private rented housing	40.00% 12
Supported housing	33.33% 10
Family or friends	16.67% 5
Social rented housing	53.33% 16
Low cost home-ownership	13.33% 4
Other (please specify)	10.00% 3
Total Respondents: 30	

A review of homelessness in the Dorset area : Service User Survey

Q5 When someone is, or has recently been homeless, what is the most important thing they need help and support with?

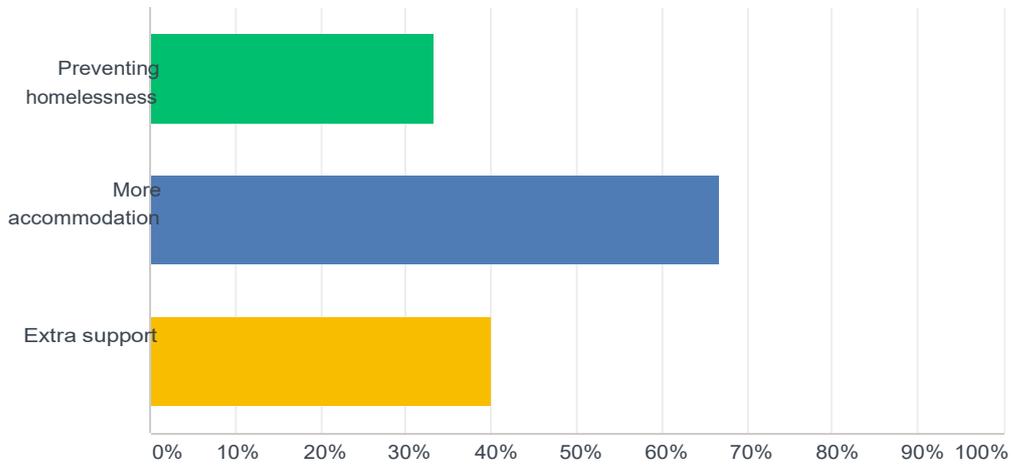
Answered: 30 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Living independently	33.33%	10
Finding a house	70.00%	21
Opportunities to socialise and find a job	6.67%	2
Re-discovering talents and interests	0.00%	0
Budgeting and debt management	40.00%	12
Other (please specify)	13.33%	4
Total Respondents: 30		

Q6 How do you think homelessness funding should be spent?

Answered: 30 Skipped: 0

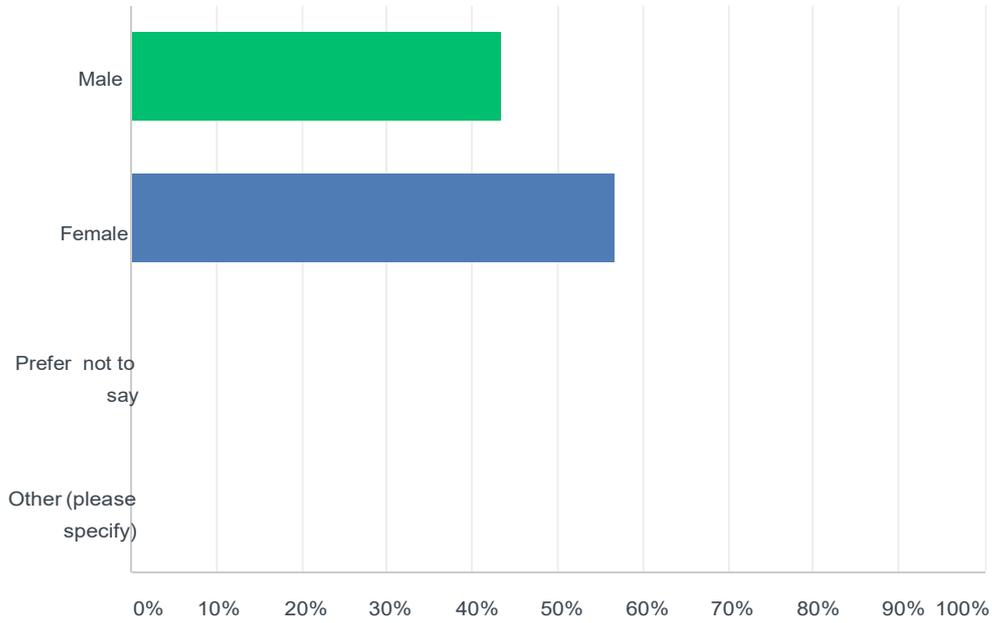


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Preventing homelessness	33.33% 10
More accommodation	66.67% 20
Extra support	40.00% 12
Total Respondents: 30	

A review of homelessness in the Dorset area : Service User Survey

Q7 What gender are you?

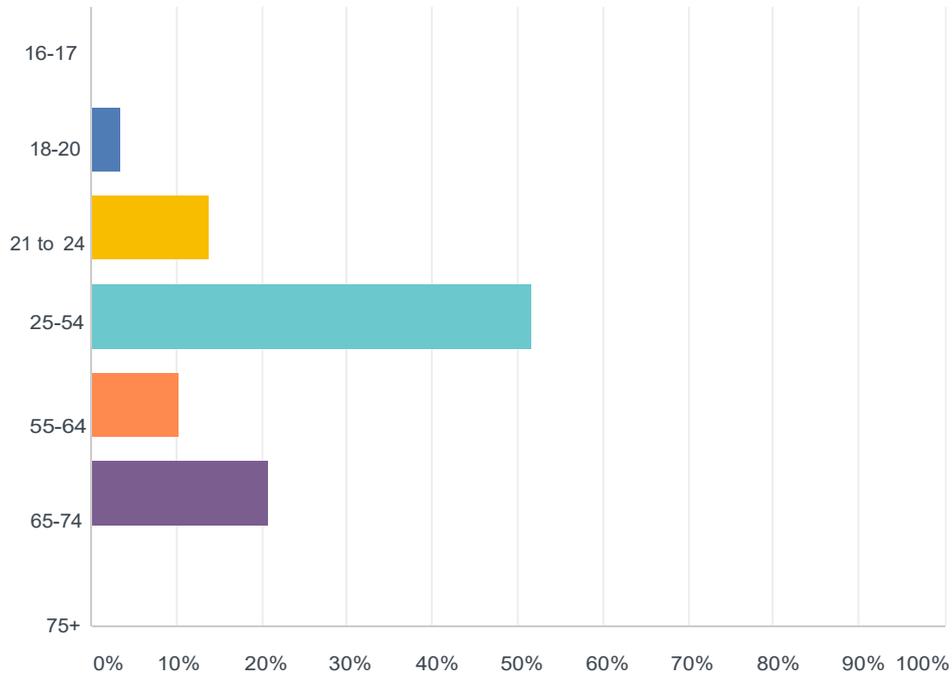
Answered: 30 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Male	43.33%	13
Female	56.67%	17
Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
TOTAL		30

Q8 What age are you?

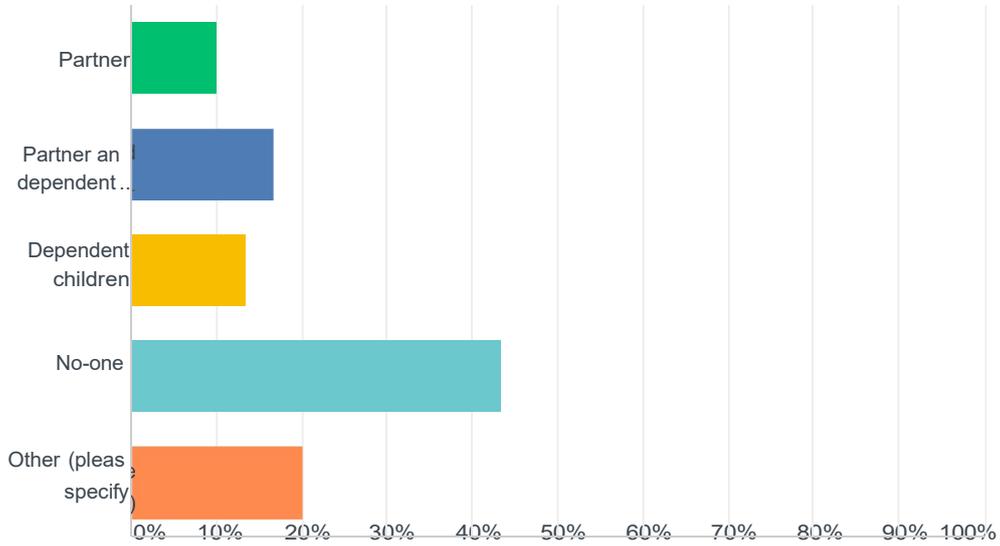
Answered: 29 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
16-17	0.00%	0
18-20	3.45%	1
21 to 24	13.79%	4
25-54	51.72%	15
55-64	10.34%	3
65-74	20.69%	6
75+	0.00%	0
TOTAL		29

Q9 Who else normally lives with you?

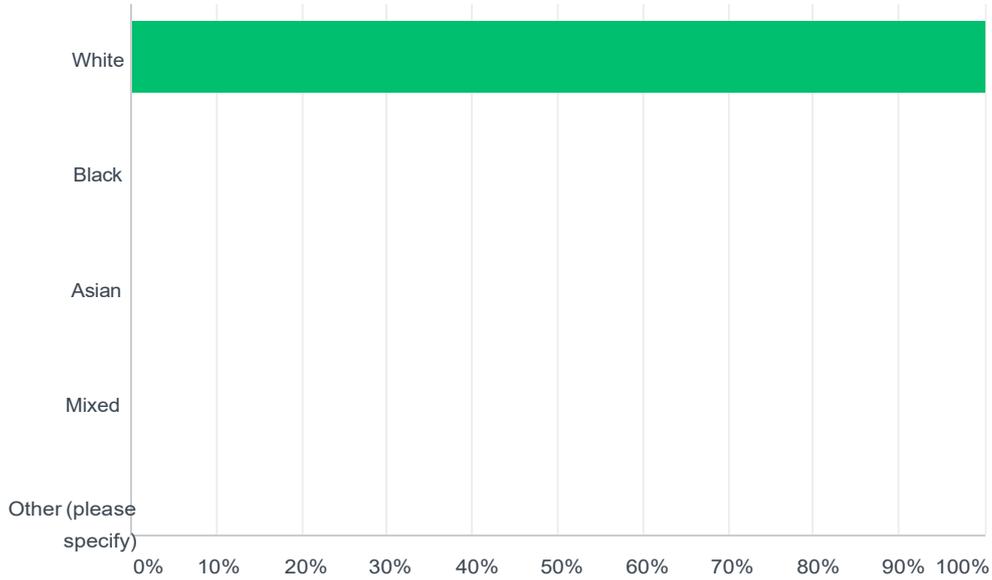
Answered: 30 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Partner	10.00%	3
Partner and dependent children	16.67%	5
Dependent children	13.33%	4
No-one	43.33%	13
Other (please specify)	20.00%	6
Total Respondents: 30		

Q10 What is your ethnic origin?

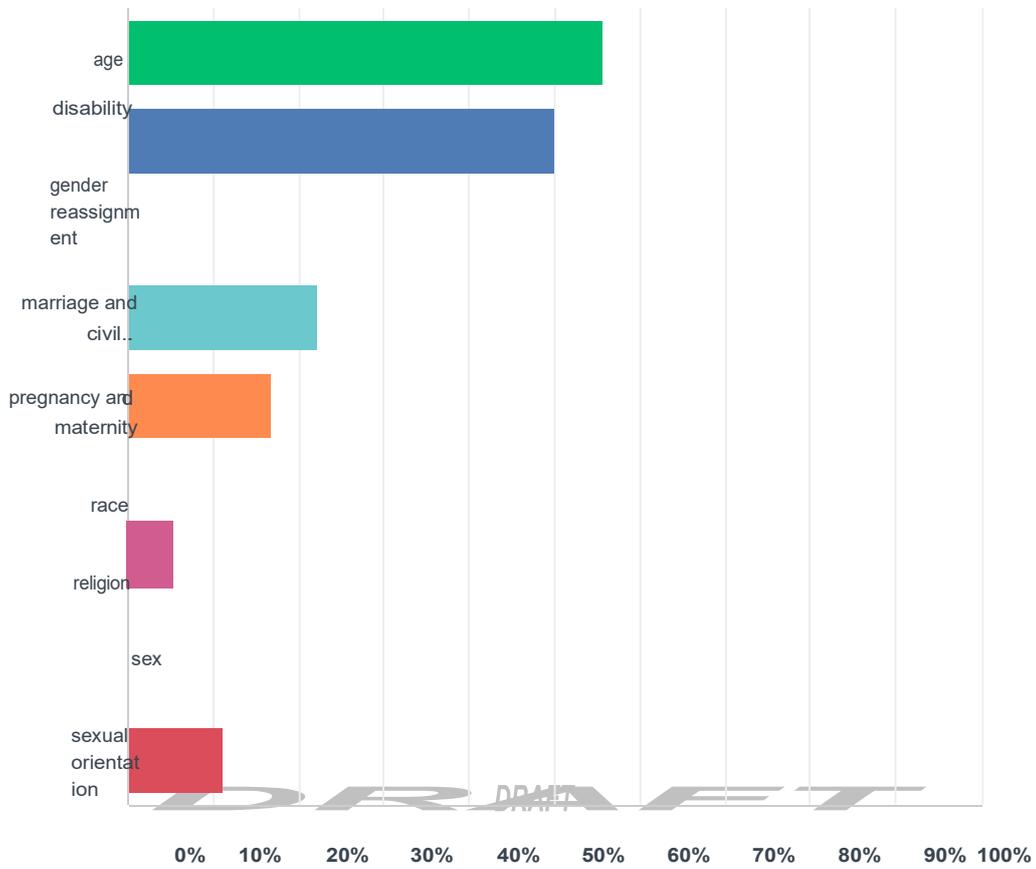
Answered: 29 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
White	100.00%	29
Black	0.00%	0
Asian	0.00%	0
Mixed	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
TOTAL		29

Q11 Do you personally identify with any of the following characteristics? (Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics)

Answered: 18 Skipped: 12

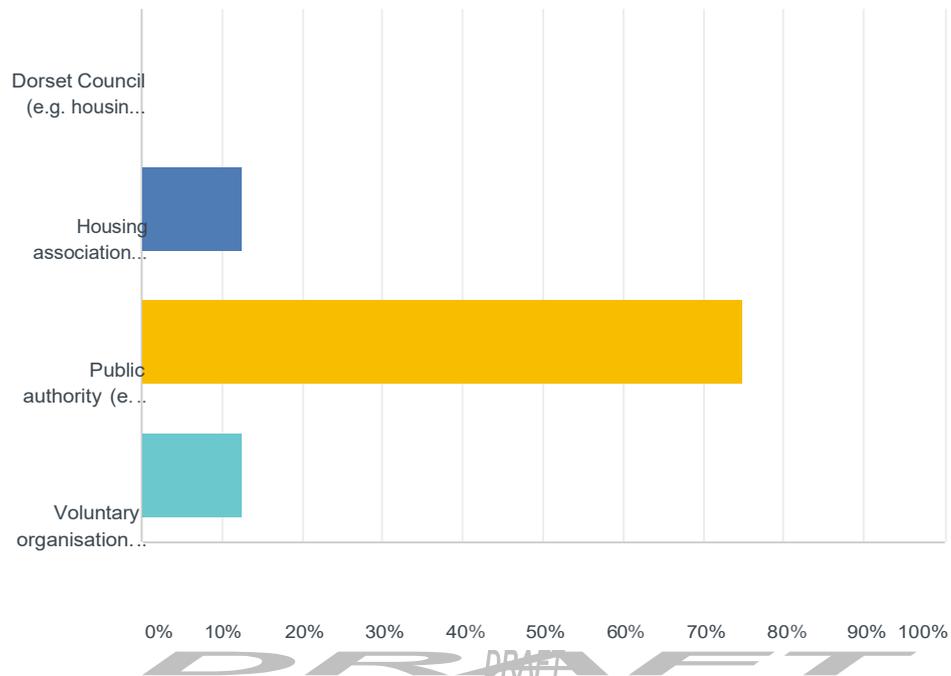


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
age	55.56%	10
disability	50.00%	9
gender reassignment	0.00%	0
marriage and civil partnership	22.22%	4
pregnancy and maternity	16.67%	3
race	0.00%	0
religion or belief	5.56%	1
sex	0.00%	0
sexual orientation	11.11%	2
Total Respondents : 18		

Appendix Three – Stakeholder Survey Responses summaries

Q1 Which type of organisation do you work for?

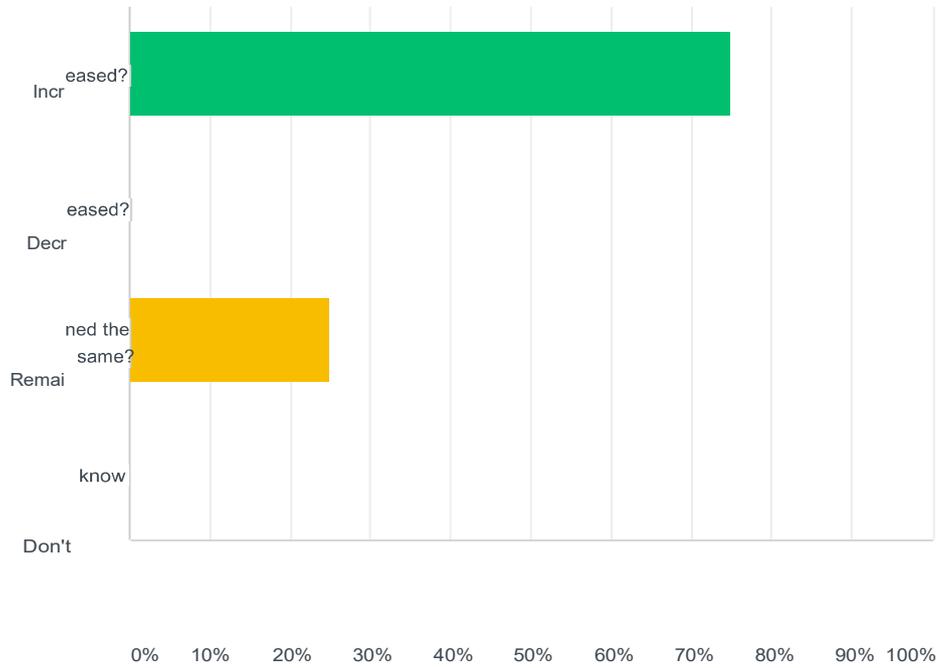
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Dorset Council (e.g. housing, adult social care, children's services , etc)	0.00%	0
Housing association (registered provider of social housing)	12.50%	1
Public authority (e.g. prison, armed forces , NHS, police, etc)	75.00%	6
Voluntary organisation (e.g. not for profit organisation, community/faith group etc)	12.50%	1
Total Respondents: 8		

Q2 What do you believe has happened to the levels of homelessness during the past five years?

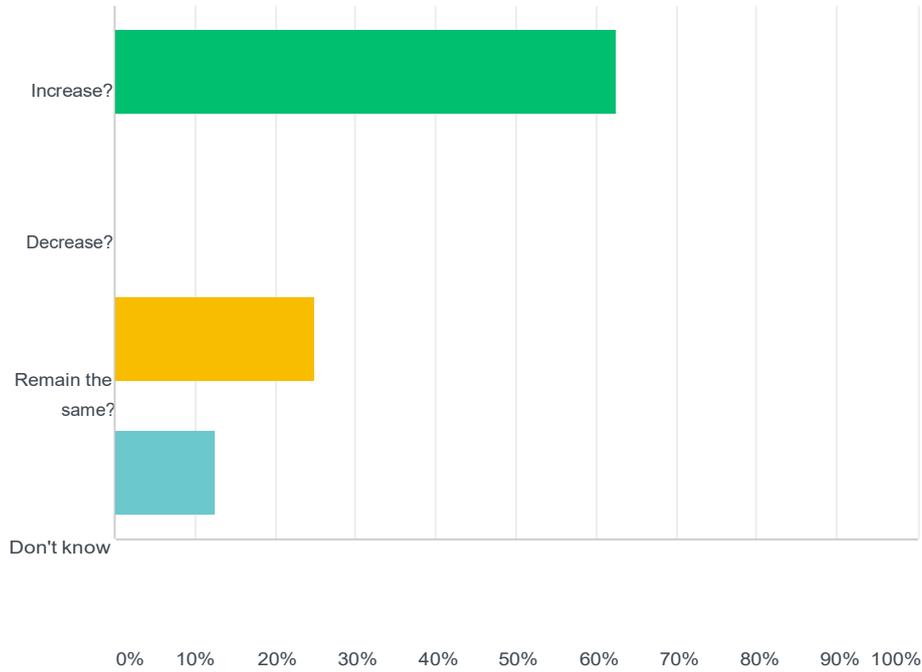
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Increased?	75.00%	6
Decreased?	0.00%	0
Remained the same?	25.00%	2
Don't know	0.00%	0
TOTAL		8

Q3 What do you believe will happen to the levels of homelessness during the next five years?

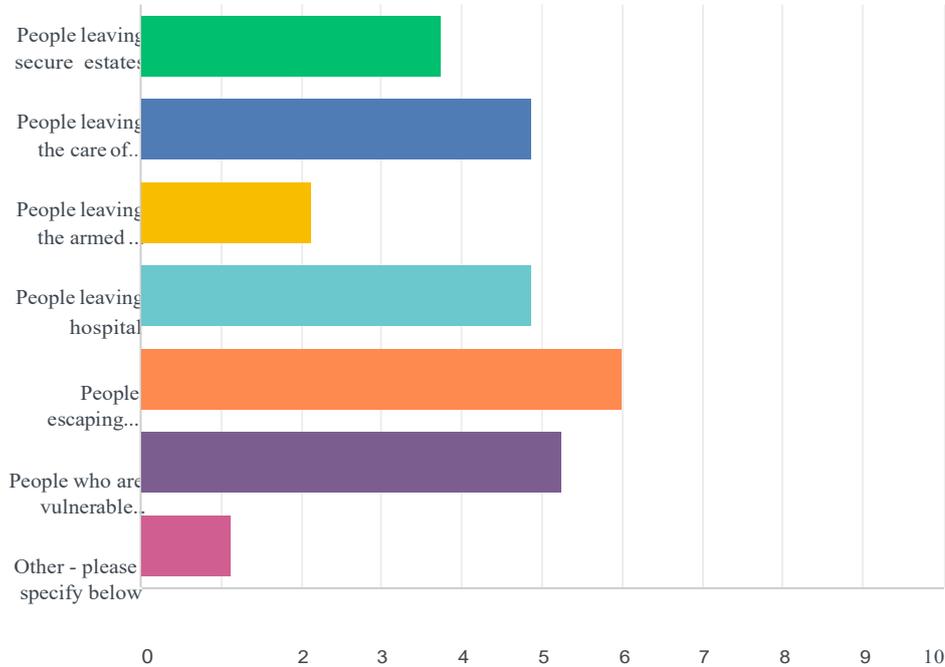
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Increase?	62.50%	5
Decrease?	0.00%	0
Remain the same?	25.00%	2
Don't know	12.50%	1
TOTAL		8

**Q4 When preventing homelessness, in what order should the groups of people shown be prioritised?
Please rank from 1 to 7, with 1 being the highest priority and 7 being the lowest:**

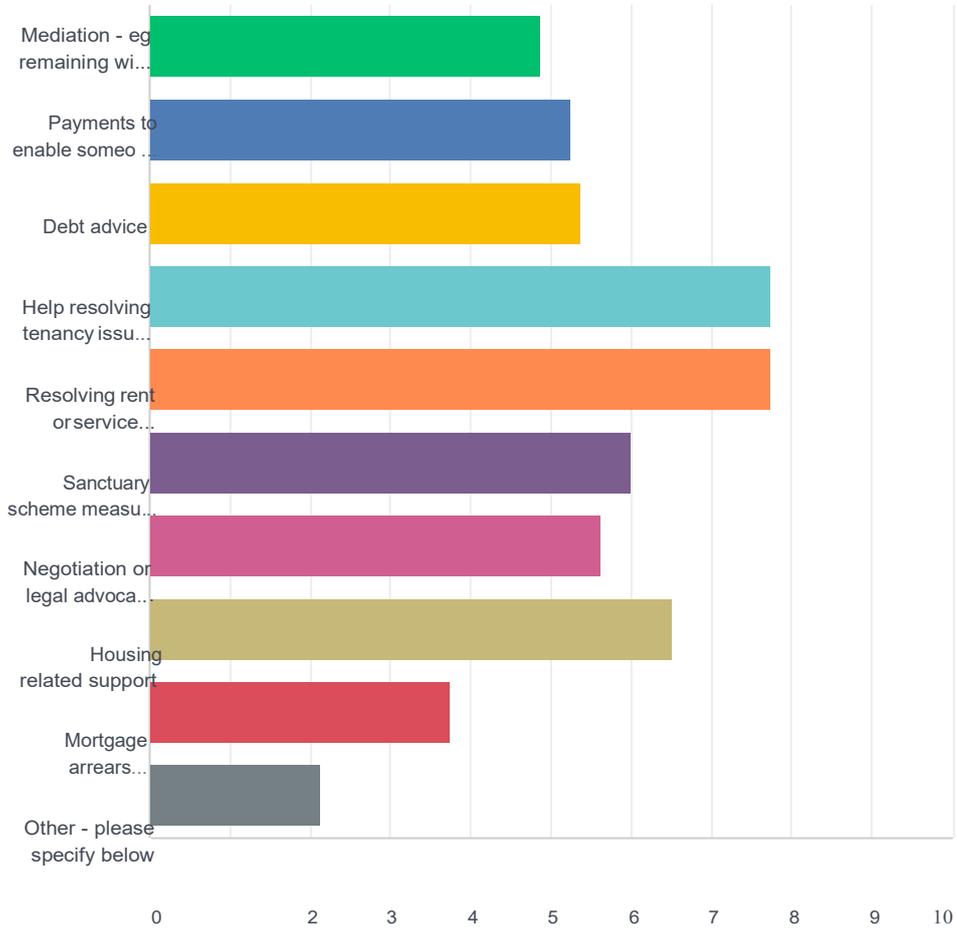
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL	SCORE
People leaving secure estates	0.00% 0	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	37.50% 3	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	8	3.75
People leaving the care of children's services	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	37.50% 3	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8	4.88
People leaving the armed forces	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	25.00% 2	62.50% 5	12.50% 1	8	2.13
People leaving hospital	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	62.50% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8	4.88
People escaping domestic abuse	62.50% 5	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8	6.00
People who are vulnerable adults	0.00% 0	50.00% 4	37.50% 3	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8	5.25
Other - please specify below	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	87.50% 7	8	1.13

Q5 When preventing homelessness, which is the most helpful method to help someone remain in their existing home? Please rank from 1 to 10, with 1 being the highest priority and 10 being the lowest:

Answered: 8 Skipped: 0

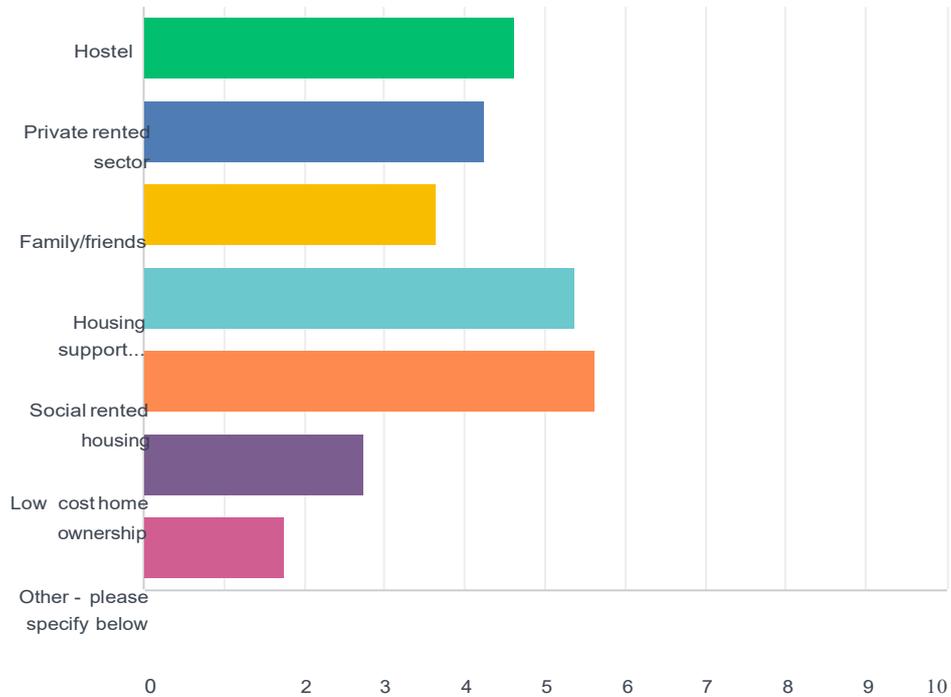


A review of homelessness in the Dorset area: Stakeholders

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	TOTAL	scd
Mediation-eg remaining with family and friends	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	25.00% 2	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	8	4
Payments to enable someone to remain in the existing home	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	37.50% 3	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	8	5
Debt advice	0.00% 0	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	8	5
Help resolving tenancy issues and housing benefit problems	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	37.50% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8	7
Resolving rent or service charge arrears	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	37.50% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8	7
Sanctuary scheme measures for victims of domestic abuse	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	8	6
Negotiation or legal advocacy to enable someone to remain in their existing home	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	50.00% 4	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8	5
Housing related support	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8	6
Mortgage arrears intervention or mortgage	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	25.00% 2	25.00% 2	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	8	3

Q6 When obtaining accommodation for someone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness, which is the best housing option? Please rank from 1 to 7, with 1 being the highest priority and 7 the lowest:

Answered: 8 Skipped: 0

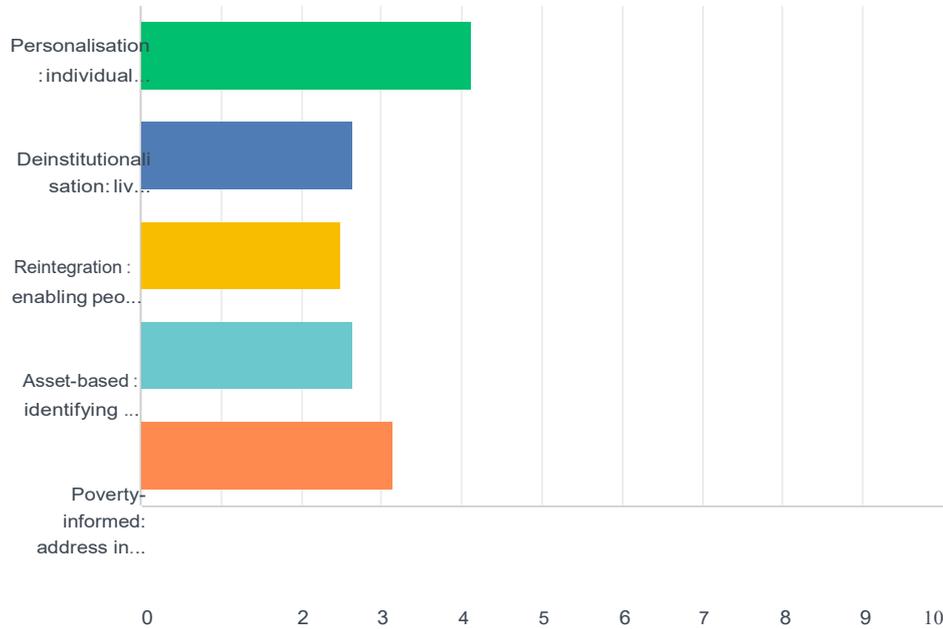


	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL	SCORE
Hostel	0.00% 0	37.50% 3	0.00% 0	50.00% 4	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8	4.63
Private rented sector	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	37.50% 3	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	8	4.25
Family/friends	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	8	3.63
Housing support services	25.00% 2	37.50% 3	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8	5.38
Social rented housing	62.50% 5	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	8	5.63
Low cost home ownership	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	37.50% 3	50.00% 4	0.00% 0	8	2.75
Other - please specify below	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	87.50% 7	8	1.75

A review of homelessness in the Dorset area: Stakeholders

Q7 When supporting someone who is, or has been homeless, how important are the following - please rank from 1 to 5 with 1 being the highest priority and 5 the lowest?

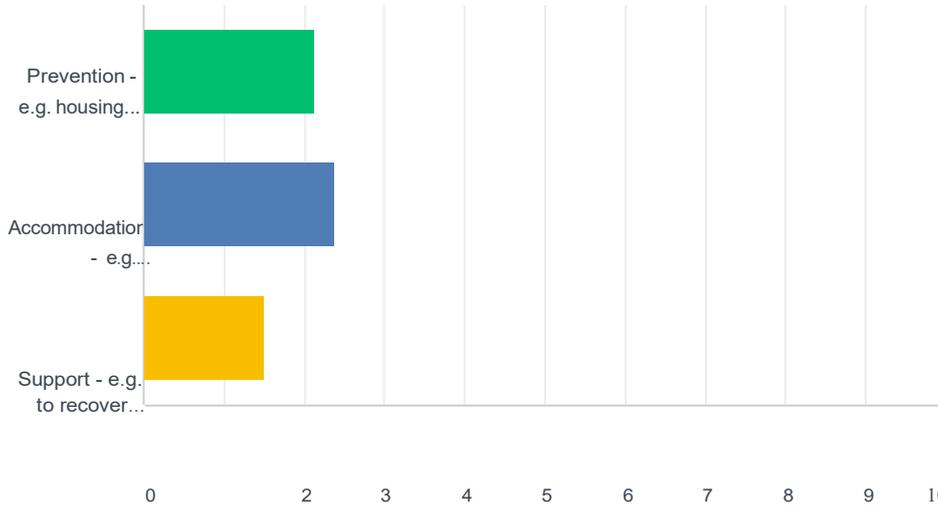
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
Personalisation: individually tailored, open ended, persistent, flexible and coordinated support	50.00% 4	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	8	4.13
Deinstitutionalisation: living in mainstream housing rather than specific, separate institutions	0.00% 0	37.50% 3	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	37.50% 3	8	2.63
Reintegration: enabling people to socialise in ordinary social settings and work in ordinary mainstream settings (where employment is a realistic prospect)	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	37.50% 3	25.00% 2	25.00% 2	8	2.50
Asset-based: identifying and nurturing peoples' strengths and assets, as well as addressing their needs	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	50.00% 4	12.50% 1	8	2.63
Poverty-informed: addressing the financial and material hardship people face as well as tackling challenging behaviours sometimes associated with homelessness.	25.00% 2	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	8	3.13

QB Thinking about the resources need to tackle homelessness, what should be prioritised for funding- please rank from 1 to 3, with 1 being the highest priority and 3 the lowest

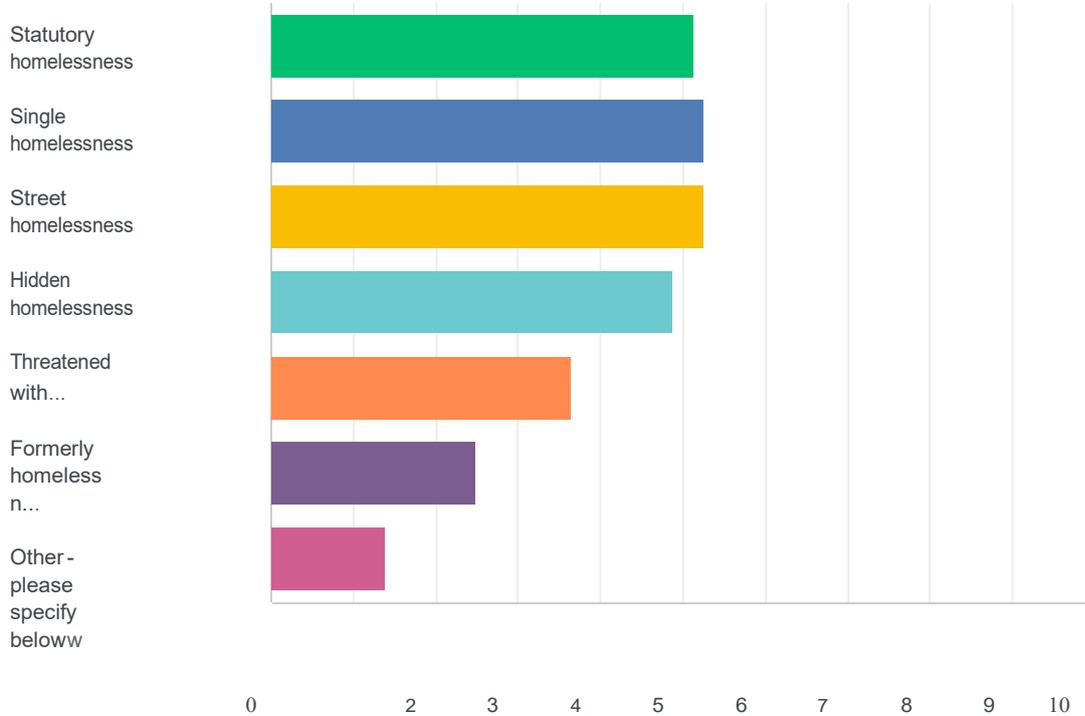
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



	1	2	3	TOTAL	SCORE
Prevention - e.g. housing advice, help to remain in existing home, obtain alternative accommodation, etc	25.00% 2	62.50% 5	12.50% 1	8	2.13
Accommodation - e.g. affordable housing to rent or buy, social rented housing, emergency/temporary accommodation, etc	62.50% 5	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	8	2.38
Support - e.g. to recover wellbeing, improve relationships, live independently, manage money, etc	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	62.50% 5	8	1.50

Q9 Which type of homelessness do people who use your organisation typically experience? (tick as many that are applicable)

Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL	SCORE
Statutory homelessness - e.g. living in local authority temporary accommodation	37.50% 3	0.00% 0	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8	5.13
Single homelessness - e.g. living in supported housing	0.00% 0	50.00% 4	25.00% 2	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8	5.25
Street homelessness - e.g. sleeping rough	37.50% 3	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	8	5.25
Hidden homelessness - e.g. sofa surfing	12.50% 1	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	37.50% 3	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8	4.88
Threatened with homelessness - living current home, but at risk of losing it	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	37.50% 3	25.00% 2	0.00% 0	8	3.63
Formerly homeless - now living settled accommodation, but previously in one of the above situations	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	62.50% 5	12.50% 1	8	2.50
Other - please specify below	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	87.50% 7	8	1.38

Appendix Four – Stakeholder Interview Responses

1. What difference do you think the previous homelessness strategy (2015-2019) made?

Most Stakeholders have not been involved in previous strategies so had no comments.

2. Is there any particular form of homelessness (e.g. statutory, single, street, hidden, threatened, repeat) that should be prioritised in the new homelessness strategy?

Single homelessness, men and women, with complex problems, particularly mental health. Mental health across all groups of people is becoming more difficult, and drug and alcohol use is also growing.

There are more single males and females who are homeless and most have MH and or addiction who are difficult to assess. The vulnerability assessment with indicators for all guidelines laid out in Solihull judgement etc. is used but the suitability assessment preamble reminds officers of indicators they must consider rather than the impact on the homeless persons.

Hidden homelessness needs addressing in some way.

3. Do you have any records that monitor the number of people experiencing homelessness who use your services, if so, does this show whether levels are currently increasing or decreasing and whether they are likely to do so in the future?

Where these are recorded, levels are increasing and have been for some time as funding is cut and solutions are less available. Stakeholders feel this will continue and get worse with Covid-19.

4. What works well and what could work better to prevent homelessness?

There is no mediation service used and no staff trained. There is informal negotiation with landlord and family but not trained. Mediation should be put in place when people are in TA which gives breathing space between partners to allow for a solution to be agreed.

Homeless officers feel their tool bag for preventing homelessness is empty. As the investment in prevention work is in the commissioned services. Not enough people are encouraged into private rented accommodation and that needs to change. Advice to applicants is the housing register takes a while, so look in the PRS and here are the LHA rates.

A barrister at CAB commissioned to do homelessness prevention work to help get debts under control, encourage landlord to withdraw notice etc used the Spend to Save Fund

to pay off rent arrears and used rent deposit scheme. Match funding CAB paid for support for this service for three days a week.

5. Is there effective collaboration and cooperation to prevent homelessness?

Responding to the Covid-19 impact on service users was the priority for 2020 and the commissioned services worked well to support this response. A number of providers are now piloting new approaches to homelessness prevention, and the Everyone In and Next Steps initiatives have led to some very good partnerships with enhanced relationships.

'Everyone in' worked really well. There were regular meetings around hostels and a the next steps which has led to intensive housing support work

6. What works well and could work better to obtain accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness?

In the past rent deposits were really, and they are still used but DHP is the most useful but does not help make the tenancies sustainable. The only real solution is more social and supported housing from housing associations.

7. How suitable is the temporary accommodation provided to homeless households?

TA is not always suitable. It can be poor condition and in an area that the homeless person doesn't know at all. They are often sent to Bournemouth with others that are in chaotic situations and this can make them vulnerable. It is not always much of a step up from the street, so more housing first needed.

8. What works well and what could work better to provide support to people who are homeless, have been so in the past or could be in the future?

There is not enough support time to carry out the intensive support needed to set a person up to succeed. It is not always easy to know who is leading on each funding stream and who is commissioning which services and would like to see oversight of all funding for housing and homelessness services, including the early prevention for Adult Services which ultimately helps to prevent homelessness located in a single commissioning area within the Housing Directorate. Most contracts are to be recommissioned in 18 months which provides an opportunity to evaluate the outcomes of services provided during the current contract period to refine the service specifications to provide for innovation and implementation of what works across services as well as appraising the potential for housing advice and homelessness officers to become embedded within commissioned services.

9. Is the impact of homelessness on health understood?

This is understood by stakeholders and service providers but there does not appear to be understood outside of this. It is something that should be at the core of why homelessness services are in place.

10. In terms of the help you provide to people at risk of homelessness, where does your funding come from and how secure is it?

Funding is from a range of sources: MHCLG, NHS, Council budgets for core and commissioned services, and fundraising.

11. What should be the priorities for the new homelessness strategy?

There is a need to map out who is involved in homelessness, what the voluntary sector response is, what services are available, and how to refer to all services and accommodation.

There needs to be a creative solutions approach, with a panel at senior level from all services including substance misuse adult social care, mental health services and housing providers, to agree package they can put together for the really complex cases that housing have tried to help many times, such as those with a reputation for being aggressive or unresponsive.

Shared offices and joint teams is the way forward generally. It doesn't need to be complicated, just group needs together and set up a team around that.

Pathways created from the perspective of the clients story.

All services for children need to be mapped from the customer point of view as many who are or have been street homeless for a long time had problems starting young with trauma. They may not be the largest cohort but helping them could make the biggest difference so a new YP pathway understanding this needs to be agreed.

Need pre- eviction protocol needed for own TA.

PHP needs to be effective. Need consistent service across all areas to interact with PHPs to provide a person centred approach, 'tell us your story, what do you need?',

Need more qualified or experienced debt advisers. CAB, and Christian aid are used but we need more resource as well as someone independent, to do bankruptcy or debt relieve orders.

Internet and signposting needs improving. It is not clear or comprehensive for clients or advocates to use.

Not enough supported accommodation.

If people are intentionally homeless there is not enough help.

Staff would like to take an approach where, for example, a young mum asked to leave by family is encouraged to stay at home on the condition that her housing register application is progressed as if she were homeless - a homeless at home agreement.

Working between Housing and Children's Services needs to improve. The Corporate Parenting responsibilities of the Council towards care leavers should extend to housing needs and this requires a more comprehensive collaboration between housing services and children's services to be developed plus a commitment that no young person who

has left care in Dorset is left to secure their own housing, even those determined as intentionally homeless.

We would also like to see something in the strategy about increasing the capacity for single person accommodation in the social rented sector.

12. What more, if anything, could housing associations do tackle homelessness?

More work needs to be done with social landlords on their lettings policy as they are not willing to accept people who owe tenancy money, or have former criminal activity etc. and there needs to be a wider conversation about rent in advance and expectation of a DHP.

Too many housing association tenants are being evicted and that needs to be addressed with the support of other agencies to see how it can be reduced.

13. What types of tenancies should people experiencing homelessness be awarded?

Mostly social rented housing but where the private sector is good condition and affordable this is a good option.

14. Are the current arrangements for the homelessness forum fit for purpose?

The Homelessness forum is highly regarded by every stakeholder. Since Covid response this has not met so people are looking forward to when it starts to meet again. The right people are in the room and the networking is excellent. Dorset is built on informal partnerships and good people, but this relies on everyone staying in their post.

This group was used to develop a response to Covid and that worked so well.

15. Are those responsible for delivering the homelessness strategy held to account well enough?

The front-line services are held to account on a case by case basis where there is an advocate, but there isn't a structure for this to happen otherwise. The homelessness forum is not at the right level to do this.