

Wednesday, 1 February 2023

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

A meeting of **Overview and Scrutiny Board** will be held on

**Thursday, 9 February 2023**

commencing at **5.30 pm**

The meeting will be held in the Grace Murrell Suite, Riviera International Conference Centre, Chestnut Avenue, Torquay, TQ2 5LZ

### **Members of the Committee**

Councillor Douglas-Dunbar (Chairwoman)

Councillor Atiya-Alla	Councillor Foster
Councillor Barrand	Councillor Johns
Councillor Brown	Councillor Kennedy
Councillor Bye (Vice-Chair)	Councillor Loxton

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**Together Torbay will thrive**

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# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD AGENDA

1. **Apologies**  
To receive apologies for absence, including notifications of any changes to the membership of the Board.
2. **Minutes** (Pages 4 - 6)  
To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 11 January 2023.
3. **Declarations of Interest**
  - a) To receive declarations of non pecuniary interests in respect of items on this agenda  
  
**For reference:** Having declared their non pecuniary interest members may remain in the meeting and speak and, vote on the matter in question. A completed disclosure of interests form should be returned to the Clerk before the conclusion of the meeting.
  - b) To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on this agenda  
  
**For reference:** Where a Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest he/she must leave the meeting during consideration of the item. However, the Member may remain in the meeting to make representations, answer questions or give evidence if the public have a right to do so, but having done so the Member must then immediately leave the meeting, may not vote and must not improperly seek to influence the outcome of the matter. A completed disclosure of interests form should be returned to the Clerk before the conclusion of the meeting.  
  
**(Please Note:** If Members and Officers wish to seek advice on any potential interests they may have, they should contact Governance Support or Legal Services prior to the meeting.)
4. **Urgent Items**  
To consider any other items that the Chairman decides are urgent.
5. **Draft Housing Strategy and Public Consultation** (Pages 7 - 88)  
To consider the final draft Housing Strategy and Project Plan and make recommendations to the Cabinet.
6. **Revenue and Capital Budget 2023/2024 - Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board** (To Follow)  
To agree the final report of the Priorities and Resources Review 2023/2024 on the Revenue and Capital Budget for 2023/2024.

**Meeting Attendance**

Please note that whilst the Council is no longer implementing Covid-19 secure arrangements attendees are encouraged to sit with space in between other people. Windows will be kept open to ensure good ventilation and therefore attendees are recommended to wear suitable clothing.

If you have symptoms, including runny nose, sore throat, fever, new continuous cough and loss of taste and smell please do not come to the meeting.

## **Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board**

**11 January 2023**

**-: Present :-**

Councillor Douglas-Dunbar (Chairwoman)

Councillors Barrand, Brown, Bye (Vice-Chair), Foster, Johns and Kennedy

(Also in attendance: Councillors Chris Lewis, David Thomas, Cowell and Long)

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### **29. Apologies**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Loxton.

### **30. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 7 December 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairwoman.

### **31. Climate Change Emergency Update**

The Board received an update from the Climate Emergency Officer, Jacqui Warren on the Cabinet's implementation of the recommendations arising from the Climate Change Emergency Review. Members also had before them the Torbay Climate Emergency Action Plan Consultation Draft 2023-2025 which was currently out to public consultation. The Board discussed the following:

- When would the guidance be issued on traffic free pavements and storage of recycling bins as part of the planning process and who would be issuing it.
- Was the decarbonisation of Torbay Leisure Centre value for money given the costs of installation against the proposed savings.
- What progress has been made to change our vehicles from petrol and diesel.
- Was the target for increasing Torbay's recycling rates to 50% by March 2023 realistic based on the current figures.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the Cabinet be recommended to approve the draft Torbay Climate Emergency Action Plan 2023-2025 subject to the dates in the Action Plan being achievable.

### 32. Exclusion of press and public

Prior to consideration of the items in Minutes 33 and 34 the press and public were formally excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the items involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

### 33. Delivery of Capital Projects

The Senior Lawyer, Cathy Fleming, outlined the submitted exempt paper on the appropriateness of the inclusion of termination provisions in leases. The Board noted that the delivery of capital projects by local authority was subject to a multitude of factors and risks. The ability to de-risk such projects was subject always to market conditions and the bargaining strength of the local authority. It was not possible to remove risk entirely and the transfer of risk away from the local authority was likely to increase the cost of the project.

The Board then scrutinised and received detailed updates in respect of the following Capital Projects.

- Edginswell Station;
- Paignton Coastal Defence Scheme;
- Edginswell Business Park Site 3;
- Torbay Road;
- Victoria Centre;
- Lymington Road Business Centre; and
- St Kildas.

Members challenged if some of the information contained within this item could have been made public and requested future reports to include public and private information separately to allow for open discussions where appropriate on some of the Council's Capital Projects to help keep the public informed. They would then be able to exclude the press and public if they wanted to discuss the updates on the commercial or contractor elements of the schemes.

Resolved:

That the Cabinet be recommended:

1. the current economic situation is one where almost all project costs are increasing, especially in terms of materials and labour. Every project budget should have a contingency percentage built-in. The contingency percentage should be project specific and calculated by reference to a number of factors including the cost of the project and the risk profile of the project. It may be that a more robust contingency percentage needs to be applied in the current economic circumstances;
2. it may be appropriate to review the level of financial due diligence undertaken in respect of a project, particularly in respect of prospective contractors.

Thorough financial due diligence should inform the level of security that the Council should be seeking in respect of a contractor. Financial due diligence is also something that should be monitored throughout the life of the project, not simply at the outset; and

3. a capital project will be made up of several elements and potentially multiple contracts. There needs to be a joined-up approach to reviewing and negotiating the legal documentation – as indicated in the submitted report in regard to agreements for lease and building contracts, the terms of the documents need to dovetail.

#### **34. Review of Council Investments**

The Board considered the submitted exempt report which provided an update on the performance of the Council's investment portfolio. Members noted that there were only two empty properties and it was hoped that a lease would be signed on one over the next few weeks with the other being a small property which it was hoped would be let in due course. Overall, the investments were generating an annual income of around £13.5m with £4m being allocated to the Council's Revenue Budget to help fund other Council services.

Members challenged if some of the information contained within this item could have been made public to enable the Council to promote the success of our investments and requested future reports to include public and private information separately to allow for open discussions where appropriate.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the Director of Pride in Place be requested to provide a public report and private report for future investments so that the Council can share the success of their investments.

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Chairwoman

**Meeting:** Overview and Scrutiny Board / Cabinet      **Date:** 9 February 2023 / 23 February 2023

**Wards affected:** All wards

**Report Title:** Draft Housing Strategy and Public Consultation

**When does the decision need to be implemented?** 23 February 2023

**Cabinet Member Contact Details:** Swithin Long, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Tourism and Housing

**Director/Divisional Director Contact Details:** Tara Harris, Divisional Director Community and Customer Services

## 1. Purpose of report

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- 1.1 To consider the draft Housing Strategy and to note the response from the public consultation

## 2. Reason for proposal and its benefits

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- 2.1 In 2021 Torbay Council declared a housing crisis to address local housing issues and announced, via the Community and Corporate Plan, the challenge for economic and housing growth. As such, Housing has become a high corporate priority for Torbay Council.
- 2.2 The Strategy will better inform our communities, stakeholders and members about what the Council and its partners are doing about local housing priorities and issues.
- 2.3 The Strategy will give stakeholders and members a clear annual delivery plan on which performance can be monitored on a quarterly basis.
- 2.4 Although the current Housing Strategy runs to April 2025, it was adopted prior to the Council declaring a Housing and Climate emergency in 2021, and before the C-19 Pandemic in 2020. We have refreshed our aims and objectives accordingly.
- 2.5 The Strategy supports cross-organisational, collaborative working. It provides the structure against which the Council can develop other, more specific policies affecting its housing function.
- 2.6 Both the Housing Delivery Group and the Torbay Strategic Housing Board have recommended that the Strategy be reviewed in light of the Council's new priorities.
- 2.7 Responses to the consultation has helped inform the approach we will take with all our partners and stakeholders to improve housing supply, conditions and support.

### 3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

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That the Overview and Scrutiny Board considers the submitted report and documents and make recommendations to the Cabinet.

That Cabinet recommends to Council:

- 3.1 That the Torbay Housing Strategy 2023-2030, as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be approved; and
- 3.2 subject to 3.1 above, the Cabinet approves the Housing Strategy Project Plan 2023-2024

### Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Housing Strategy 2023-2030

Appendix 2 – Housing Strategy Consultation Report

Appendix 3 - Housing Strategy Project Plan 2023 – 2024

### Background Documents

Corporate Housing Indicators (approved by Cabinet 26th July 2022)

Housing Strategy Evidence Base Document

### 4 Supporting Information

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- 4.1 The Housing Strategy is the over-arching strategic document that pulls together all aspects of the Council's strategic housing function. It sits within the Council's policy framework and provides the context for other plans policies and strategies, such as the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy and the Empty Homes Policy.
- 4.2 The Strategy supports the Community and Corporate Plan 2019-2023 to 'improve the delivery, affordability and quality of housing', 'regenerate and re-invent our town centres' and to 'encourage a sustainably developed built environment. It also supports Torbay's Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans, as well as the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026, the Torbay Carbon Plan (2023/25), the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document and the Economic Growth Strategy to name but a few.
- 4.3 The Strategy sets out what the Council, and its partners, will be doing to improve the housing situation for our current and future residents. It sets out the approach we will take with all of our partners to work towards our vision. These are grouped into three priorities.



4.4 The priorities reflect the broad range of work that we do to meet local housing need, including developing affordable housing, maintaining housing standards, and helping people to stay independent in their own homes, whilst preventing homelessness. Within each theme officers have identified key aims of the Council, which are considered to directly contribute to the overall sense of community health and wellbeing in the Bay.

4.5 Our housing priorities:

1. Improve housing supply
2. Improve housing quality
3. Improve housing support

Our cross-cutting principles:

4. Put our customers first
5. Tackle climate change
6. Work in partnership

4.6 During 2022/23 there has been investment to:

- increase capacity across Planning and Housing to enhance the development of affordable homes
- tackle disrepair and poor housing conditions, including the review and reduction of empty homes
- enhance homeless reduction, such as investment in temporary accommodation and client support

4.7 The Chief Executive is currently reviewing the Housing structure to provide additional capacity to enable the delivery of new affordable homes and the development and production of Housing policy and strategies, which will link with Torbay's urban regeneration programme and the Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.

## 5 Options under consideration

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5.1 Consider the consultation response from partners, members, stakeholders and note the wider response from the public consultation

5.2 As a result of consultation with the public, partners and stakeholders we have taken on a number of comments and suggestions and have amended the Strategy accordingly. In summary they are:

- a. Clarify and better explain housing terms, such as 'housing support', geographic relief' and the role of strategic partners.

- b. Include the fact that affordable housing is key to attracting and retaining our workforce, supports the growth of our key employment sectors, such as tourism, fishing, hi-tech etc, reduces the levels of deprivation and meets the priorities in our Economic Growth Strategy.
  - c. Reinforce partner approach and that we are open to all methods of affordable housing delivery and that it is the Local Plan that dictates overall housing targets, as well as affordable homes.
  - d. Update the number of affordable homes required over the next eight years to ensure all of our strategies reflect the same target. This is the function of the Local Plan, and, until it is updated, we must adopt the Government's 'standard method' calculation for the delivery of homes that places a requirement on Torbay to build 600 dwellings a year, plus a 20% (120) imposed 'buffer', due to the under-delivery of housing over the previous years. However, the Government is now looking at reducing its compulsory housebuilding targets, which will also be mentioned.
  - e. Ensure we include our partners in the voluntary sector to help us improve our support offer and take the opportunity to work closer to better understand how they can assist and support our work, as well as listen to what is happening at a local level.
- 5.3 Recommend the adoption of a Housing Strategy for Torbay, including amendment recommendations from the consultation. Please see Appendix 2 – Housing Strategy Consultation Report for more detail

## 6 Financial opportunities and implications

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- 6.1 There are no significant financial implications. Any financial commitments would be subject to further approval.
- 6.2 New homes and improved facilities are key ingredients in developing economic growth. It often goes unnoticed that increased capacity of schools, GP surgeries, new roads, community centres or sports facilities have been paid for as a direct result of housing development.

## 7 Legal Implications

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- 7.1 The Council's Housing Strategy must be 'fit for purpose' in terms of providing an overall framework against which the Council will formulate other more specific policies affecting its housing functions, which will ensure that the Council is capable of meeting its statutory functions as housing authority.

- 7.2 The Housing Strategy sets out the Council's priorities in terms of its housing ambitions, but the overall number of homes, including affordable housing is determined by the Local Plan update, a key statutory document. Once a local plan has been submitted, a Planning Inspector's role is to examine whether the submitted plan meets the tests of soundness defined in the National Planning Policy Framework and meets all the relevant legislative requirements, including the duty to co-operate
- 7.3 Until the new Local Plan is adopted, the Government's 'standard method' calculation for the delivery of homes places a requirement on Torbay to build 600 dwellings a year, plus a 20% (120) imposed 'buffer', due to the under-delivery of housing over the previous years. This may be revised by Government

[Procedure Guide for Local Plan Examinations](#)

## 8 Engagement and consultation

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- 8.1 The draft Strategy has been developed Council wide and went out to consultation from 24 October to 5 December 2022; for just over 6 weeks. Please see Appendix 2 – Housing Strategy Consultation Report

## 9 Purchasing or hiring of goods and/or services

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- 9.1 It is not anticipated that the Housing Strategy itself will require the purchasing or hiring of goods and/or services. Should the Council wish to hire goods, or services to facilitate its strategic objectives, then more specific reports detailing this will be presented to Cabinet

## 10 Tackling climate change

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- 10.1 One of the cross-cutting principles in the Strategy is to 'tackle climate change'. The Strategy also supports the Torbay Carbon Plan (2023/25), which has the following action 'Torbay Council to develop a new Housing Strategy and Action Plan that aims to Improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty' (p20). Additionally, Torbay Council's Climate Emergency Officer has provided input into the development of this Strategy.

## 11 Associated risks

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- 11.1 Not finding the Housing Strategy 'fit for purpose' and thus unable to provide an overall framework against which the Council will formulate other more specific policies affecting its housing functions
- 11.2 Reduced compulsory housebuilding targets from central Government will deliver fewer homes, particularly affordable homes

## 12 Equality impacts - Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups

- 12.1 Our equality duties apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, gender and sexual orientation. Although not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Torbay Council recognises the profound and far-reaching impacts of socio-economic disadvantage and public health and treats these characteristics as protected.
- 12.2 The Strategy prioritises and supports low-income households, those fleeing domestic violence, care experienced children, vulnerable households eligible for grants to help heat their homes.

	Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
Older or younger people	Helping older households remain independent at home		
People with caring Responsibilities			Neutral
People with a disability	Helping households remain independent at home		
Women or men	Particularly single parents, are more reliant on benefits and are consequently more vulnerable to welfare cuts and are also more likely to be eligible for means tested support		Neutral
People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME) (Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)			Neutral
Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			Neutral
People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual			Neutral
People who are transgendered			Neutral

People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			Neutral
Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave	Housing support for those escaping domestic violence		
Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)	<p>Providing affordable housing for households on low incomes</p> <p>Improving energy efficiency, thus reducing the cost of heating the home</p> <p>Support people into jobs that will improve their quality of life and reduce homelessness</p>		
Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)	<p>Improving housing conditions will positively impact health outcomes</p> <p>Tackle street homelessness and provide support</p> <p>Provision of temporary accommodation for those accepted as homeless</p>		

## 13 Cumulative Council impact

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- 13.1 Build on the Council's understanding about what our communities, stakeholders and partners want in relation to housing and planning and deliver agreed solutions that align with Council priorities

## 14 Cumulative community impacts

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- 14.1 Reinforce our commitment to deliver against our Community and Corporate Plan 2019-2023 to 'improve the delivery, affordability and quality of housing', 'regenerate and re-invent our town centres' and to 'encourage a sustainably developed built environment. It also supports Torbay's Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans
- 14.2 Help reduce carbon emissions and achieve a carbon neutral Torbay by 2030, and reduce household energy costs
- 14.3 Provide affordable housing to retain a sufficient workforce in Torbay
- 14.4 Prevent homelessness and address rough sleeping

# DRAFT Housing Strategy

2023-2030

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# Introduction

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A home is special to everyone and directly contributes to good health, wellbeing, and life achievement. Having a place to call home is one of life's main goals. It offers warmth and shelter; and is the place where we feel safe and secure; a place to shape family.

Known as the English Riviera, Torbay comprises of three towns: Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham. Torbay has a population of c. 135,000 and has an increasingly skilled workforce; increasing numbers of small and micro businesses; and a large catchment population. The recent investment in the A380 South Devon link road, directly connecting Torbay with the M5 at Exeter, has significantly reduced travel times locally and regionally making the Torbay area an increasingly attractive place to live and work.

It is a place of huge ambition, and we want it to be the best place for children to grow, for people to live and work and for residents to fulfil their ambitions today and for many years to come.

However, Torbay is facing a housing crisis. There is a shortage of new housing supply and particularly affordable housing.

This strategy sets the vision and approach we will take through our leadership; and by working with partners to 'improve the delivery, affordability and quality of housing'.

We have the foundations in place to build more affordable homes through our urban and town regeneration plans; our housing company TorVista and the Torbay Strategic Housing Board.

By working with our partners, we will achieve more, giving more families a home and more children the best possible start in life.

We will prioritise brownfield locations in our towns to reduce the impact on the climate and endeavour to protect our natural environment and continue to seek new potential sites. We will create jobs and investment to support inclusive economic growth and make safe homes for residents and their families.

Whilst the council and its partners face many significant challenges, we are determined to provide appropriate and affordable homes, particularly for those with the greatest need.

We recognise the challenges of providing new affordable homes in the current economic conditions and the climate challenge.

Separate to this Housing Strategy an Action Plan will be developed to deliver our vision for housing in Torbay. The Action Plan will be an agile document, which we will use to monitor progress and it will be overseen by a cross-directorate Housing Delivery Group.



# External influences and local issues

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## Housing needs

Housing needs for Torbay have been objectively assessed in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework guidance, which, taking into account local policy added targets for employment growth, estimate that 615 new homes are required to be provided per year over the Local Plan period. However, as part of the Examination of the Torbay Local Plan, this figure was reduced to 495 homes per year to reflect environmental constraints in Torbay.

Consequently, the adopted Torbay Local Plan 2012-2030 identifies land for the delivery of around 8,900 new homes over the plan period and we are reviewing our current Local Plan.

## Our housing ambition

A balanced housing market is essential to sustainable communities, but this will not be achieved without the right level of new housing development, across all tenures. As well as providing desperately needed new homes, house building also delivers substantial benefits and better facilities for the wider community. The affordability and environmental sustainability of homes will be crucial factors in getting the balance right between homes, jobs, the green environment and protecting the climate.

We already know from our community led neighbourhood plans, that protecting the natural environment of Torbay is a priority; along with providing more affordable homes; reducing the impact of climate change and creating a sustainable economy. It will be necessary to strike a balance between competing priorities.

There is little appetite for green field development despite the level of additional homes required. However, we need to find more sites to meet future demand. So, we need to be bold, innovative, and creative, in the delivering of those additional homes.

## The economic challenge

The current economic backdrop provides challenges for us all, including housebuilders and registered providers.

The English Riviera Destination management plan 2022-2030 to make Torbay the UK's premier visitor destination and help boost the local economy was approved at Council in August 2022. The new plan sets out the interventions that can help propel the English Riviera forward, building on the strengths of the destination and the opportunities to achieve a more sustainable and resilient destination.

There has been a huge increase in demand for available properties, both rented and for home ownership. This has pushed up local prices and rents, making it much more difficult for households to afford. Rents are now well above the Housing Benefit rates, and we are seeing an increasing number of households at risk of homelessness.

Providing access to affordable housing is key to the growth of key sectors such as tourism, fishing, hi-tec and medical & health care, creative and digital technologies.

We need to continue to attract and retain our workforce in Torbay and to meet the gap created by vacancies outstripping availability in our local workforce. This will support growth, reduce levels of deprivation and enable our residents to thrive and reach their economic potential

Families on Housing Benefit are struggling to afford private rents and the Council continues to lobby government on Local Housing Allowance rates to reflect the challenging rental market specific to Torbay.

Additionally, since the energy price cap was lifted at the beginning of 2022, we have seen heating and electricity costs rise by over 50%, which has come alongside increases in the cost of food, taxes and other everyday expenses.<sup>1</sup>

## Strengths, challenges, and opportunities

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### Strengths

The council has put the foundations in place to kick start delivery of affordable homes in Torbay, as set out in our **Community and Corporate Plan** objective to **'Improve the delivery, affordability and quality of housing'**

We will ensure we put our residents and clients first; we continue to tackle climate change and we work in partnership to achieve better outcomes. We will focus on preventing and alleviating homelessness and we will continue to do everything we can to make sure our residents are treated fairly.

We are taking action to improve supply:

- Through the Torbay master plan for town centre and waterfront regeneration to support sustainable, residential communities
- The refreshed English Riviera Destination Management Plan 2022-2030 to make Torbay the UK's premier visitor destination and help boost the local economy
- Progressing sites and regeneration identified in the Local Plan growth areas
- Working with Torbay strategic housing board (TSHB) and others to create more opportunities to identify and progress schemes
- Delivering 100+ new homes (maximising affordable homes) on the Preston Down Road site
- Seeking a strategic partner(s) to deliver more affordable homes on small challenging sites
- Purchasing up to 36 homes to meet current demand for family Temporary Accommodation (TA), with the option to use these homes for longer term affordable rentals as we tackle and reduce the need for TA

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<sup>1</sup> Cost of living rises for households: ONS.gov.uk

- Delivering new homes through modern construction, such as modular build pilots currently under consideration for two sites.
- Commissioning 72 units to meet older people's supported housing need
- Investing in property to increase the supply of social rent homes in Torbay.
- By adopting an Empty Homes Policy and recruiting an Empty Homes Officer to help bring empty homes back into use
- By pledging financial support to introduce Interim Management Orders within the private rented sector to raise standards for tenants
- Continuing to make the best use of existing social housing through Devon Home Choice plus our Rightsizing and empty homes project
- TorVista to deliver new homes

## Challenges

- 42% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Torbay are from domestic homes (2019)
- Private rental properties are well above the local Housing Benefit rates (LHA)
- 68% of households renting privately rely on Housing Benefit, higher than national (48%) and regional (44%) averages
- 8% social rented stock in Torbay; 18% national average
- Current delivery of homes built is an average of 343 per year, the Local Plan target is 720
- By 2040 one in three (34%) of Torbay's population will be over 65
- Lack of local builders in the Bay

We know that, for our residents:

- Housing is unaffordable to many in Torbay. The average house price in Torbay is nine times average annual earnings and house prices have increased significantly post 2020
- Increasing demand for holiday accommodation has reduced the availability of accommodation for local people
- Homelessness in Torbay is over twice the national and regional averages
- One third (38%) of households are being made homeless due to the end of a private rented tenancy
- Homes becoming available through the Housing Register have fallen 6% since 2019

In Torbay:

- Housing need outstrips demand for new affordable homes
- Demand for temporary accommodation has increased over the last 12-24 months
- There is not enough brownfield land across the Bay to provide all the homes Torbay needs, and the cost of any site clearance means there is less money to build affordable homes
- The cliff like and hilly nature of Torbay makes site development challenging
- Our small developments can reduce affordable housing delivery, as units fall below planning obligation thresholds

- Regeneration takes time due to site assembly, market appetite and financing complexities
- A low growth local Plan to protect the environment can reduce the opportunities to build new homes
- The challenging economic climate is making house building difficult. Financial uncertainty, cost of materials, and labour shortages are delaying housebuilding

## Opportunities

Whilst accepting that there are significant challenges in providing decent homes for all our residents it is important to recognise that there are opportunities that can help us achieve this, including:

- The Government's new Affordable Homes Programme (2021 to 2026) managed by Homes England. By working with Homes England, we hope to deliver more affordable homes through new build, residential led regeneration and purchase and repair of existing stock
- The Torbay Affordable Housing Development Partnership, which was established in 2022 to work more closely with Homes England, registered providers, and other stakeholders to increase the overall provision of affordable housing
- TorVista Homes Limited, which was awarded registered provider status in 2021. As a new registered housing provider, wholly owned by the council; its aim is to deliver a wide range of good quality, affordable and supported housing
- The Council announced a 'climate crisis' in 2021, making a commitment that Torbay will be carbon neutral by 2030
- Our Local Plan is under review and sets out how the need for homes of all types will be delivered together with jobs and infrastructure
- We have created the Torbay Strategic Housing Board to promote our ambitions and actively engage with partners to help increase housing supply and be a critical friend
- We are maximising the use of existing social housing stock through our Rightsize programme and working with owners of empty properties to bring them back into use
- We are working on economic and urban regeneration plans to increase the supply of new homes in Torbay

We are co-ordinating infrastructure improvements to support economic and town centre regeneration including increasing the supply of new homes

# Vision

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The housing vision for Torbay is to:

## **Improve the delivery, affordability and quality of housing**

To achieve this vision, we will:

- Work across the Council and with partners to come up with innovative ideas and modern build techniques to increase the delivery of affordable housing for rent and ownership
- Deliver a diverse choice of housing for our residents that meets every stage of life and lifestyle
- Support our communities to improve and maintain their homes; to be safe, warm, fit for purpose and be more environmentally friendly
- Continue to protect homeless households and those threatened with homelessness, whilst putting an end to street sleeping.

# Our Priorities

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Our housing priorities are:

- Improve housing supply
- Improve housing quality
- Improve housing support

Our cross-cutting principles:

- Put our residents and customers first
- Tackle climate change
- Work in partnership

These aspirations are underpinned by our community and corporate visions:

- Thriving people
- Thriving economy
- Tackle climate change
- Council fit for the future

Within each priority we have identified key areas of work that we believe will directly contribute to the overall sense of community health and wellbeing in Torbay.

## Improve housing supply

We will:

1. Build affordable homes for rent
2. Build homes for low-cost ownership
3. Build and acquire innovative and specialist homes
4. Make the best use of the existing housing stock

This is important because:

- Need on the Housing Register has increased by 50%, since 2018, with over 1,600 applicants now in housing need
- The Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (2022) identifies a local need for 721 affordable homes per year: 387 for rent and 334 for low-cost sale
- The Government requirement on Torbay is to build 720 dwellings a year
- Torbay is the corporate parent to nearly 5 times as many children and young people as the England average (302, compared with 62), with a 42% increase since 2011
- There is a distinct lack of larger family homes, both in the private rented and social sectors

We want local households to have access to quality housing that they can afford in a range of tenures. Open market housing is the main route to securing the delivery of affordable housing via S106 planning obligations. However, affordable housing can also be provided using Government grants and the Council's assets, including land. The majority of this delivery is focused in urban areas, yet we recognise the need for smaller development in our less urban communities.

Homes built for rent by registered providers are the only type of homes that remain affordable for the majority of low-income households in Torbay. Traditionally, homes let on social rents are around 60% of the local market rent, but in 2010 the government introduced a new 'affordable rent' at rents on new homes of up to 80% of market rent levels.

Since 2016, we have delivered an average of 339 market homes each year, 59 (17%) of which have been affordable. At the current trajectory, with no additional greenfield allocation, Torbay is likely to only develop up to 50 affordable units a year through the Section 106 developer contributions. To meet the total need on the Housing Register with new builds alone would take 32 years.

Our strategy proposes a mix of Homes England grant and local housing investment, such as Council land and assets, with a view to establishing two third affordable homes for rent and one third for low cost ownership. We will also strive to maximise energy efficiency, making our homes more affordable to heat and run.

Torbay Council and our NHS partners want to increase independent living; allowing people receiving social care and support to have a greater choice and control over how, where and with

whom they live. Whilst we are commissioning 72 units of extra care for people to live well for longer in a home of their own, there is more to do.

There is also an urgent need to create housing stock that provides independent living and move-on accommodation options for our care experienced young people.

To improve housing supply, we will:

- Use Council land and the redevelopment of existing buildings to create new affordable homes and sustainable communities
- Look to establish a strategic housing partnership to progress our affordable home delivery programme
- Maximise opportunities to deliver affordable homes through Homes England's new Affordable Homes Programme (2021 to 2026)
- Work with TorVista, the Council's wholly owned Housing Delivery Company to deliver specialised housing for older people, for those with learning disabilities and autism and for people with enduring mental ill health
- Deliver more homes to improve the outcomes for our care experienced leavers
- Purchase up to 36 self-contained properties in the Bay to help accommodate homeless households to help them move-on into more permanent homes
- Work with 'build for rent' developers to investigate funds, suitable land, or property to accommodate a shared housing project
- Bring empty homes back into use, making them affordable to rent where appropriate
- Deliver Torbay Council's 'Right-Sizing Project', to free up much needed larger family homes and developing larger homes if necessary

We will work with our partners to increase supply:

- We will pro-actively build strong partnerships with Homes England, landowners, registered providers, and local communities to improve the delivery of new homes
- Through our Economic partnership work with Home England, neighbouring authorities, NHS, local colleges, local landowners, developers and employers to find solutions to new, existing, and stalled development sites
- Through the Torbay Strategic Housing Board, working in partnership to build stronger relationships to increase the supply of new homes, including affordable and supported housing
- Utilise TorVista to deliver additional homes
- Work with our RP partners to deliver additional homes
- Encourage developers to progress sites that have received planning permission, but are not coming forward in a timely fashion
- Look to explore alternative solutions such as self-build and modular build for challenging sites to deliver new homes

To understand future needs/demand, we will:

- Gather evidence to better understand where our unmet housing need is coming from

- Better understand local housing need by regularly reviewing applications on the Housing Register and predicted demand from children's and adult services, local colleges and employers
- Undertake a structured review of planning policies to make sure that they are relevant, joined-up, straightforward and encourage development, particularly on brownfield sites

## Improve housing quality

We will:

1. Tackle conditions in the private rented sector
2. Improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty
3. Keep people independent at home

This is important because:

- In addition to working with landlords to improve standards, on average, Torbay Council serves 49 legal notices to remedy disrepair each year.
- Nearly 20% of our enforcement work was to remedy poor heating in people's homes.
- There is a higher proportion of homes in private rented sector in Torbay (27%) compared to England (20%)
- Three quarters (75%) of Torbay's housing stock's energy performance is below band C, for England it's just over half (54%)

Housing has a key role to play in health and wellbeing. The poor condition of a property can negatively affect the physical and mental health of our residents. Similarly, some people's physical health needs, particularly for older residents, can restrict their ability to live an independent life without some adaptations to the home.

The expansion of the private rented sector has focused attention on the need to improve conditions in this tenure. The English Housing Survey (EHS) estimates that in 2019, 23% of these homes did not meet the Decent Home Standard. This compares with 18% of owner-occupied and 12% of social-rented homes.

The housing conditions in the private rented sector are worse than for any other, so making sure that the quality and standard of the private rented sector is a priority for us. We also focus much of our work in this sector because tenants have little, or no control over getting remedial works carried out, so we use all the tools available to take action against poor standards.

The main enforcement issues identified relate to poor heating, risk of fire, damp and mould and falls. The Housing Standards Team identified and remedied 578 housing hazards last year, resulting in a significant cost saving to the NHS and wider society.

A key theme running through our plans is a commitment to become carbon neutral. The carbon emissions from our area will fall as our homes and businesses become more energy efficient. The widespread reliance on gas as an energy source will mean few households will be immune from rising bills. However, homes with poor fuel efficiency will be hit hardest by energy price rises.



Households who live in a property they own or rent from a registered provider have the least likelihood of being fuel poor at 8% and 19% respectively. However, households living in privately rented accommodation are most likely to be fuel poor (25%).

The scale of the issues facing the private rented sector are such that the answer does not lie with regulation alone. We must create the right environment to encourage self-compliance by working alongside landlords, property agents and landlord associations.

To improve housing quality, we will:

- Tackle disrepair and poor housing conditions by proactively targeting non-compliant landlords, taking appropriate action where standards are not being met
- Support communities to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and meet our carbon neutral target, tackle fuel poverty, and reduce carbon emissions
- Help households adapt existing homes, so they can remain independent for longer
- Regularly consult with our customers to improve service design and delivery

## Improve housing support

We will:

1. Prevent homelessness
2. Offer support packages to stabilise a household's housing situation
3. Help households sustain accommodation

This is important because:

- Need on the Housing Register has increased by 50%, since 2018, with over 1,600 applicants now in housing need.
- Typically, households who rent privately spend around 35% of their income on housing costs, compared to 18% for those with a mortgage, or 29% in social housing.
- There has been a 92% increase in use and stay of temporary accommodation for homeless households since 2019 [169, 37% families (2022)]
- The most common reasons for homelessness is the loss of a private rented home (38%), family and friends no longer able to accommodate (19%) and domestic abuse (13%)
- Last year the Housing Team received around 13,000 requests. Calls about being 'homeless tonight' increased by 12%
- Around 24 people a month sleep rough in Torbay

Homelessness has a serious and harmful effect on those who experience it. Our approach is to act at the earliest opportunity, before individuals, or families lose their home. We are developing a separate homelessness and rough sleeping strategy that will be published during the life of this strategy.

Our primary focus is upon helping households to remain in their own home, provided that it is safe and suitable for them to do so. There are a number of in-house services available to help households remain in their homes, including: money advice, mediation and partnership work to tackle harassment and domestic abuse. We must also be mindful to work with partners to help us improve our support offer, for example, our voluntary and community groups, who are the eyes and ears of the community. We will take the opportunity to work closer to better understand how they can assist and support our work, as well as listen to what is happening at a local level.

It is not always appropriate for people to remain in their existing home and sometimes it is not possible to prevent homelessness. Over recent years we have seen a steady rise in demand for temporary accommodation, with many households placed in increasingly costly and sometimes unsuitable accommodation. This is having a significant impact on Council budgets.

Due to the low provision of social homes and new build affordable homes Torbay is reliant upon the private rented sector to meet its homelessness duties. However, recent rental increases have pushed this type of accommodation beyond the reach of low-income households, particularly for families. Additionally, some landlords are converting to the holiday market, both permanently, and across the summer months.

Three quarters of homeless households are re-housed in the private rented sector, more than twice the national average. However, as tenancies in this sector are less secure than other tenure and can create a repeating cycle of homelessness.

The theme throughout this strategy is to make sure that the entire system is working to prevent all forms of homelessness, but also to work across the Council, and with partners to deliver more affordable homes, and work with the private rented sector to promote longer, more secure tenancies.

To improve housing support, we will:

- Continue to improve the Housing Options Service, to make sure that we give residents high quality, accessible advice when they need it
- Work with members, partners, and clients to develop a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy that is fit for purpose and meets statutory and legislative requirements
- Improve engagement with private and social landlords, letting agencies and tenants to promote compliance and the importance of those threatened with homelessness seeking help at an early stage
- Develop a domestic abuse and sexual violence strategy with an emphasis on moving victims to safe and secure accommodation
- Work with partners to create sustainable tenancies through local employment, training, and education

# Measuring success

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We will measure our success through the following indicators

## **Improving housing supply**

- Total additional homes provided
- Number of affordable homes delivered
- Number of households housed through the Housing Register

## **Improving housing quality**

- Number of home hazards remedied/disrepair resolved
- Number of homes fitted with adaptations to help people remain independent
- Number of homes receiving energy efficiency measures

## **Improving housing support**

- Average number of single households, including couples, in temporary accommodation on any one night per quarter
- Average number of families, including pregnant, in temporary accommodation on any one night per quarter
- Number of new homelessness cases per quarter
- The % of homelessness cases that were taken at the prevention stage
- Number of families in bed and breakfast for longer than 6 weeks
- Number of families where Children's Services have a duty to accommodate in temporary accommodation
- Number of children where Children's Services have a duty to accommodate in temporary accommodation
- Number of rough sleepers per year

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This document can be made available in other languages and formats.  
For more information, please contact [housing@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:housing@torbay.gov.uk)

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## **1 Housing Strategy Consultation Report**

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1.1. The consultation exercise was undertaken for 6 weeks, from 24 October to 5 December 2022. Details of the consultation were sent to the following groups and platforms, (including potential reach):

1. Torbay Housing Development Partnership (27)
2. Devon Home Choice applicants (1,600)
3. Living Options
4. Elected members (briefing)
5. Households in temporary accommodation (160)
6. Neighbourhood forums - Planning
7. Senior Voice of Devon
8. Town Councils: Brixham, Paignton, Torquay (press release distribution list)
9. Torbay Strategic Housing Board (32)
10. Housing associations: newsletters to tenants etc (press release distribution list)
11. Schools and colleges (also asking to share with parents)
12. Local businesses, via Torbay Development Agency (including the Black and Minority Ethnic Network)
13. Local churches and other faith organisations (press release distribution list)
14. Torbay Community Development Trust (press release distribution list)
15. Community Partnerships (press release distribution list)
16. Ward councillors
17. Riviera Business Improvement Districts
18. Public sector partners such as the local NHS, Devon and Cornwall Police, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue and a range of others (press release distribution list)
19. Voluntary sector partners (press release distribution list)
20. Administrators of local Facebook groups and pages
21. Devon Equality Network
22. Churston, Galampton and Broadsands Neighbourhood Forum
23. Sports clubs (press release distribution list)
24. Torbay Council, TDA and SWISCo staff (917)
25. Local environmental groups (press release distribution list)
26. Harbours
27. Devon Communities (press release distribution list)
28. Food safety - business support (5,358)
29. One Torbay newsletter (9,223)
30. Facebook (12K followers)
31. Twitter (12.8k followers)

Both the Local Plan Update and the Housing Strategy were out to consultation at the same time and consultees were encouraged to undertake both.

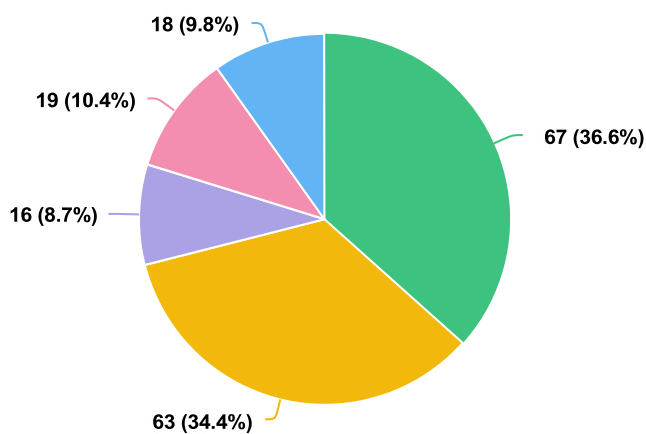
- 1.2. 186 people took part in the main survey (58% female, 38% male), from which we received 292 comments and suggestions. 10 people took part in the longer, more in depth supplementary survey for housing stakeholders.
- 1.3. The majority of respondents (79%) were over 45 years of age. Of these 74% owned their own home, 12% rented privately and 8% rented from a social landlord. The remaining 6% were either in temporary accommodation or staying with friends/family.
- 1.4. The online survey results generally demonstrate an endorsement of the Strategy's three priorities and the three cross-cutting principles, which support the Council's ambition to 'improve the delivery, affordability and quality of housing' (Community and Corporate Plan 2019-2023)
- 1.5. Percentage of respondents who 'strongly agree and agree' for each priority and principle:
- |                            |     |
|----------------------------|-----|
| 1. Improve housing supply  | 71% |
| 2. Improve housing quality | 84% |
| 3. Improve housing support | 69% |
| 4. Put the customer first  | 76% |
| 5. Tackle climate change   | 65% |
| 6. Work in partnership     | 64% |
- 1.6. For more detail, please see the 'Survey Response Report', pages 3 to 18

## Housing Strategy survey

### SURVEY RESPONSE REPORT 24 October 2022 - 05 December 2022

#### PROJECT NAME: Have your say on our new Housing Strategy

Q1 | The Strategy's first priority is to 'improve housing supply'. Do you agree with this priority?



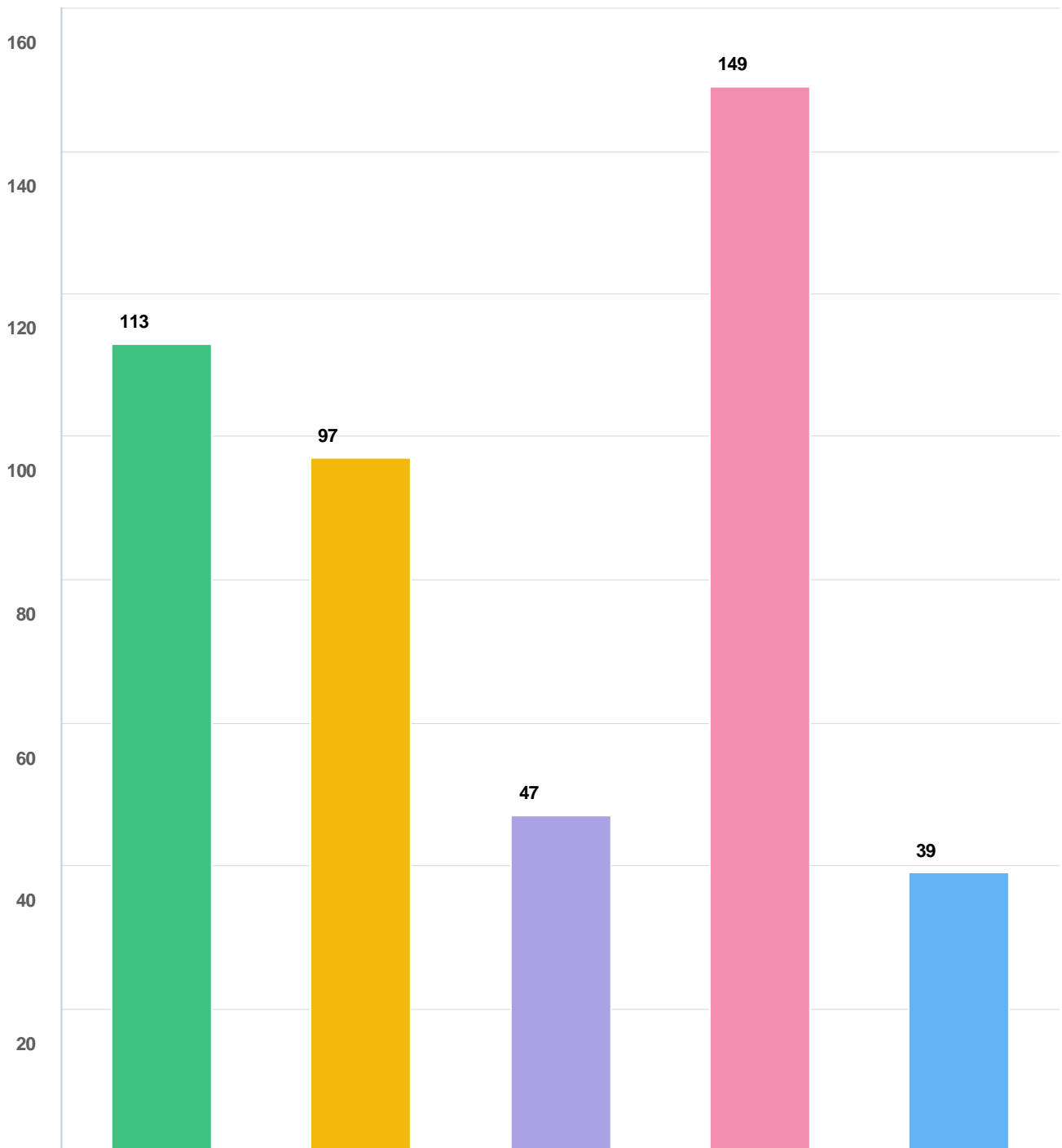
#### Question options

● Strongly agree ● Agree ● Neither agree, or disagree ● Disagree ● Strongly disagree

Optional question (182 response(s), 4 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

**Q2** Under this priority we have identified 4 key actions. With which of the following do you agree with? You can choose as many as you want.



**Question options**

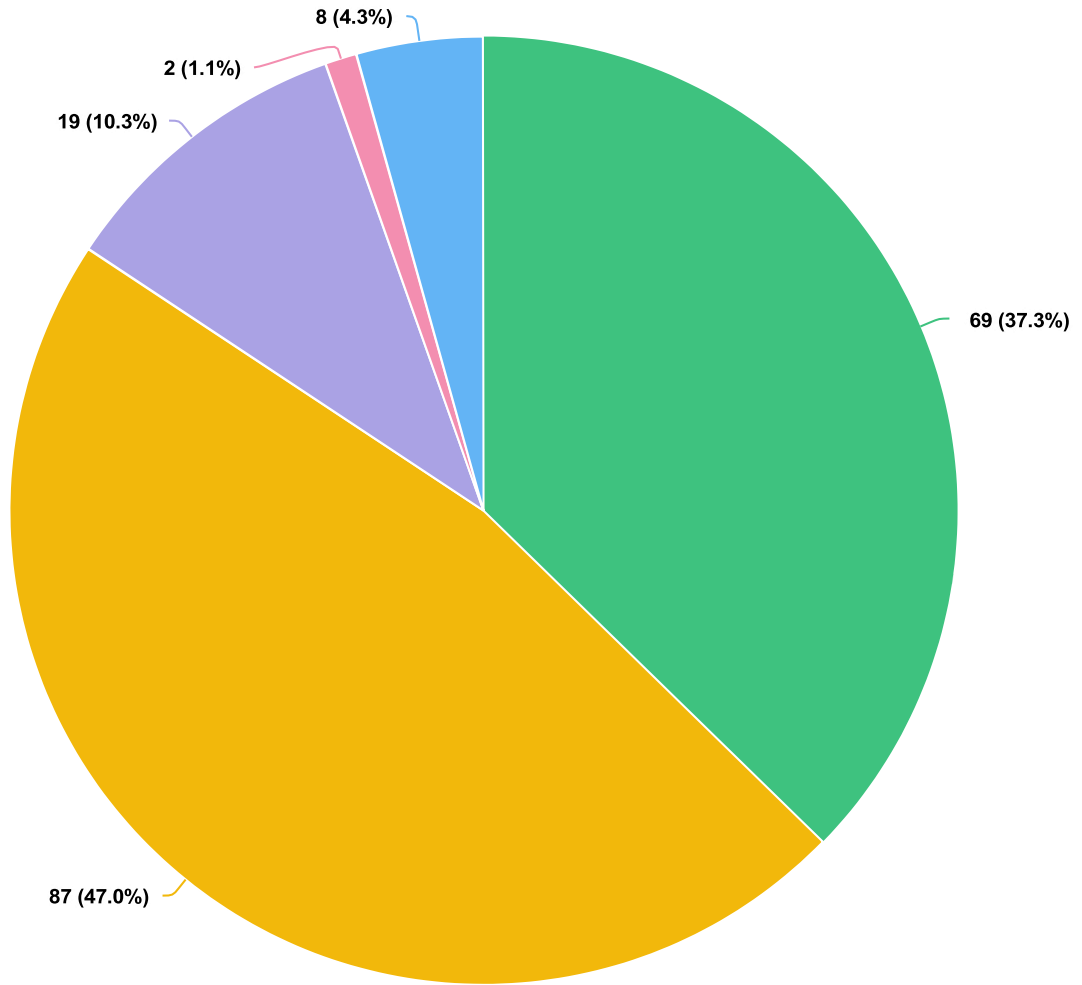
- Build affordable homes for rent
- Build homes for low-cost ownership
- Build and acquire innovative and specialist homes
- Make better use of our housing stock
- Other priority, please say:

*Optional question (184 response(s), 2 skipped)*

*Question type: Checkbox Question*



**Q3** | The Strategy's second priority is to 'improve housing quality'. Do you agree with this priority?



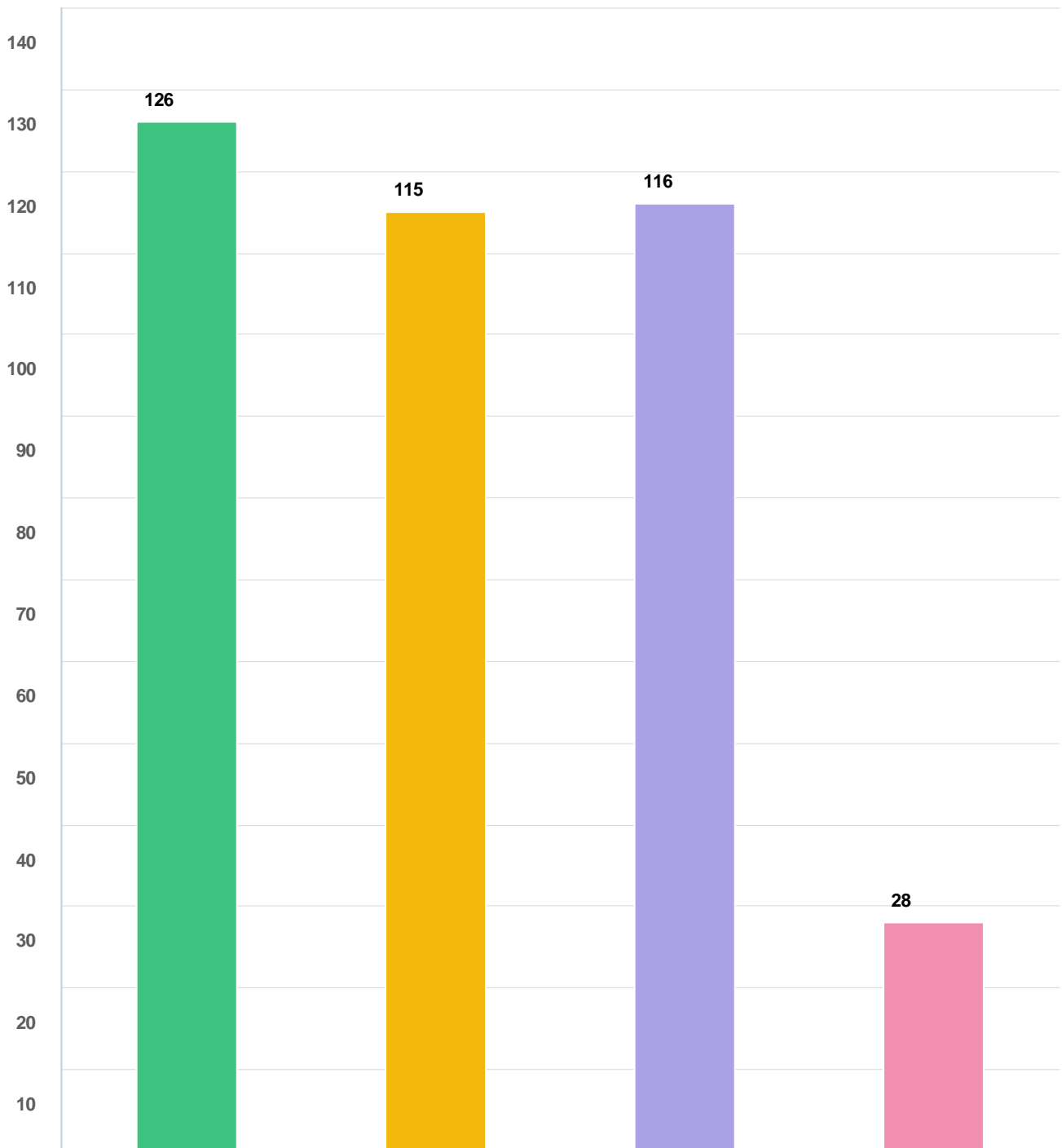
**Question options**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

*Optional question (184 response(s), 2 skipped)*

*Question type: Radio Button Question*

**Q4** Under this priority we have identified 3 key actions. Which of the actions do you agree with? You can choose as many as you want.



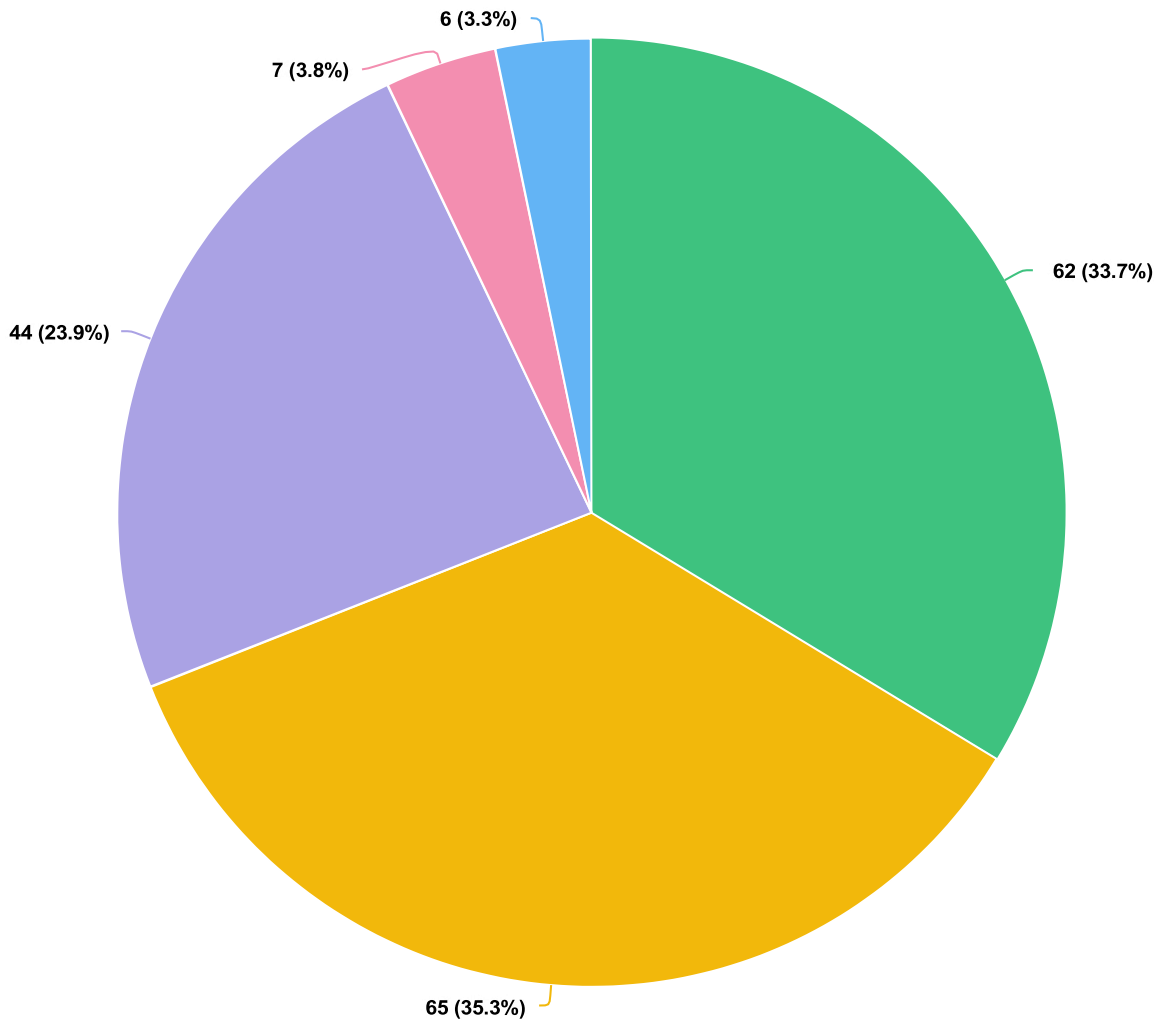
**Question options**

- Tackle conditions in the private rented sector
- Improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty
- Keep people independent at home
- Other priority, please say:

*Optional question (183 response(s), 3 skipped)*

*Question type: Checkbox Question*

**Q5** | The Strategy's third priority is to 'improve housing support'. Do you agree with this priority?



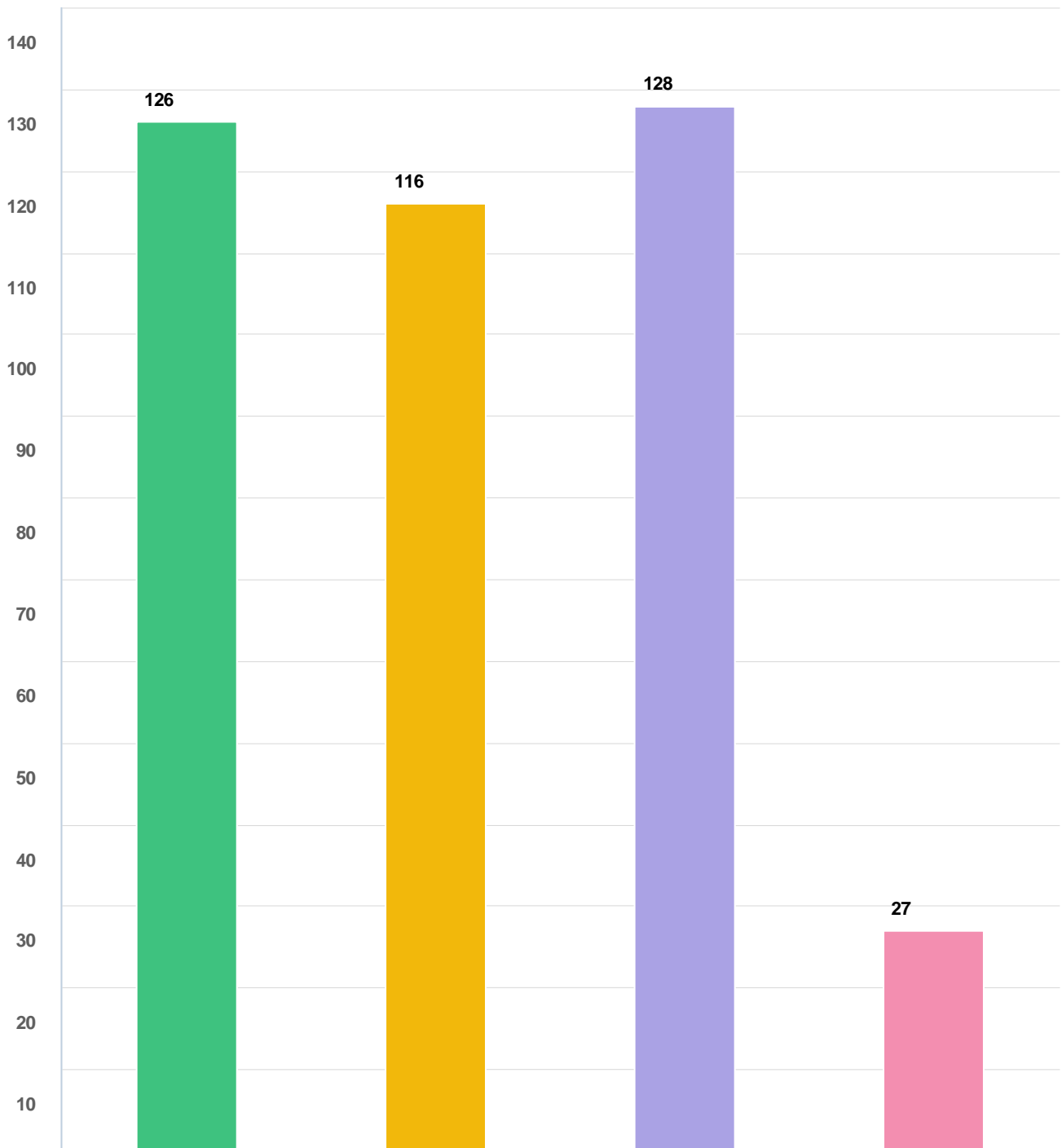
**Question options**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

*Optional question (183 response(s), 3 skipped)*

*Question type: Radio Button Question*

**Q6** Under this priority we have identified 3 key actions. Which of the actions do you agree with? You can choose as many as you want.

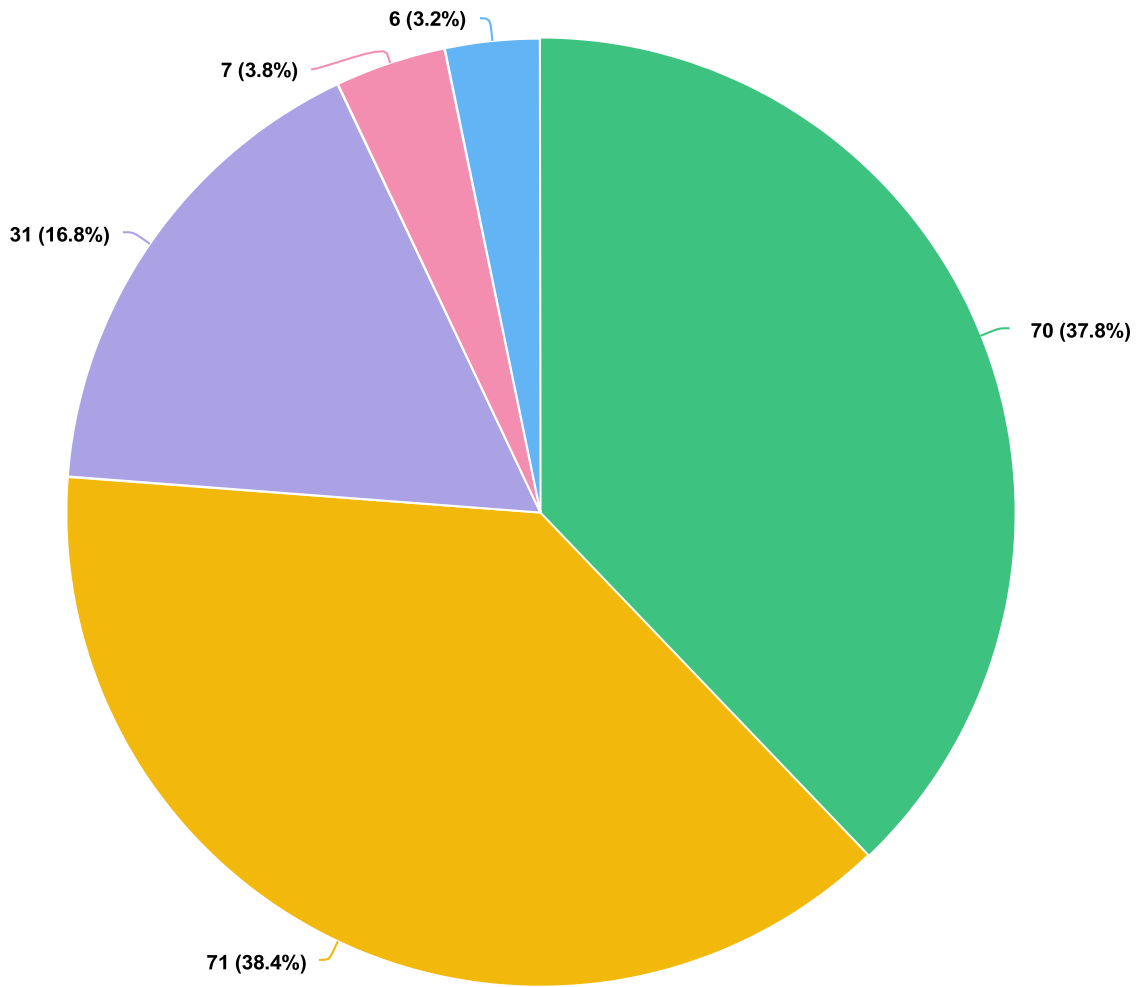


**Question options**

- Prevent homelessness
- Offer intervention, for example, advice, support and temporary accommodation
- Help households sustain accommodation
- Other priority, please say:

*Optional question (182 response(s), 4 skipped)*  
*Question type: Checkbox Question*

**Q7** | The Strategy aims to 'put the customer first'. Do you agree with this principle? See our Customer Service Standards

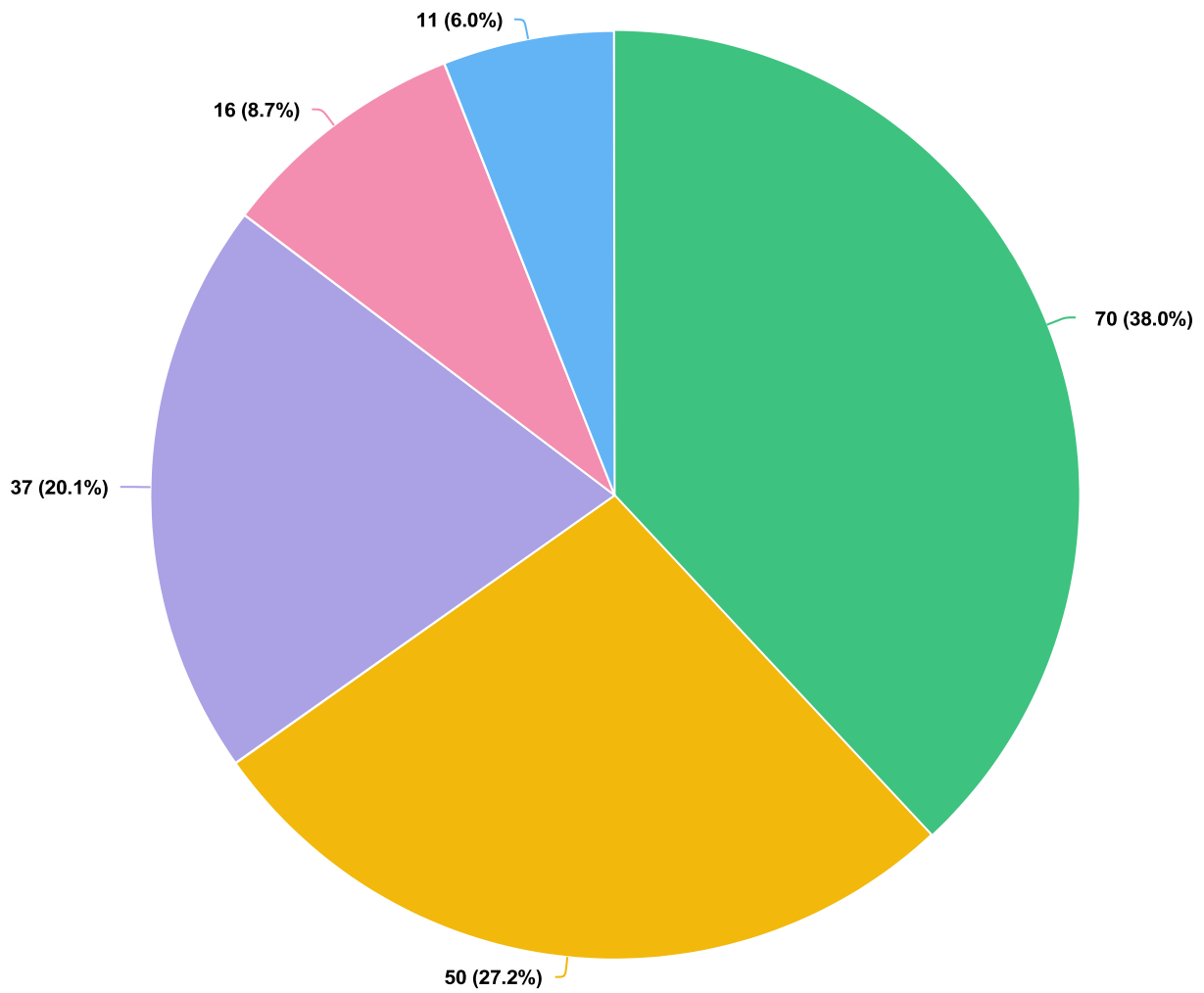


**Question options**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Optional question (184 response(s), 2 skipped)  
Question type: Radio Button Question

**Q8** The Strategy aims to 'tackle climate change'. Do you agree with this principle?

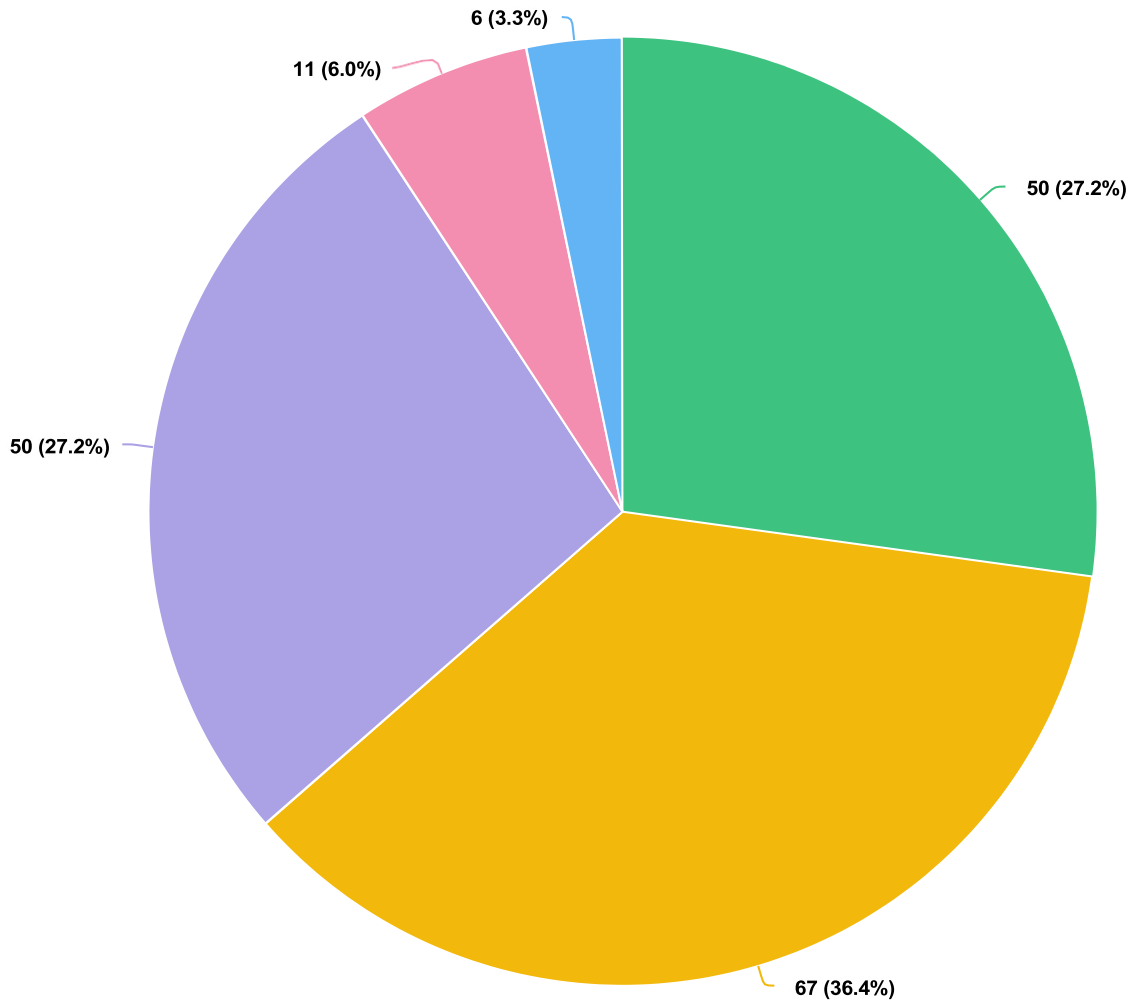


**Question options**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Optional question (183 response(s), 3 skipped)  
Question type: Radio Button Question

**Q9** The Strategy aims to 'work in partnership'. Do you agree with this principle?

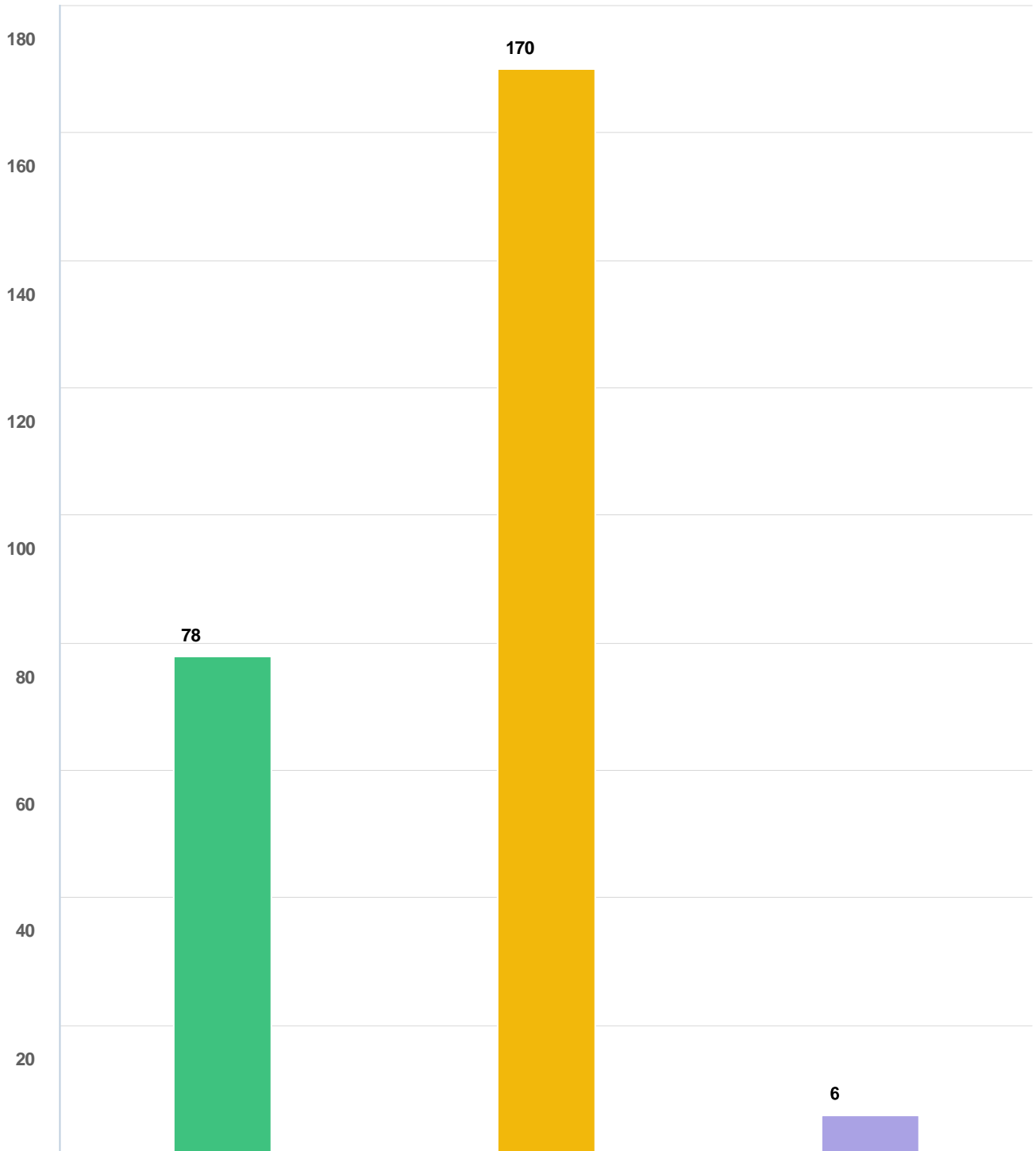


**Question options**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Optional question (183 response(s), 3 skipped)  
Question type: Radio Button Question

**Q10** Do you work, or live in Torbay?



**Question options**

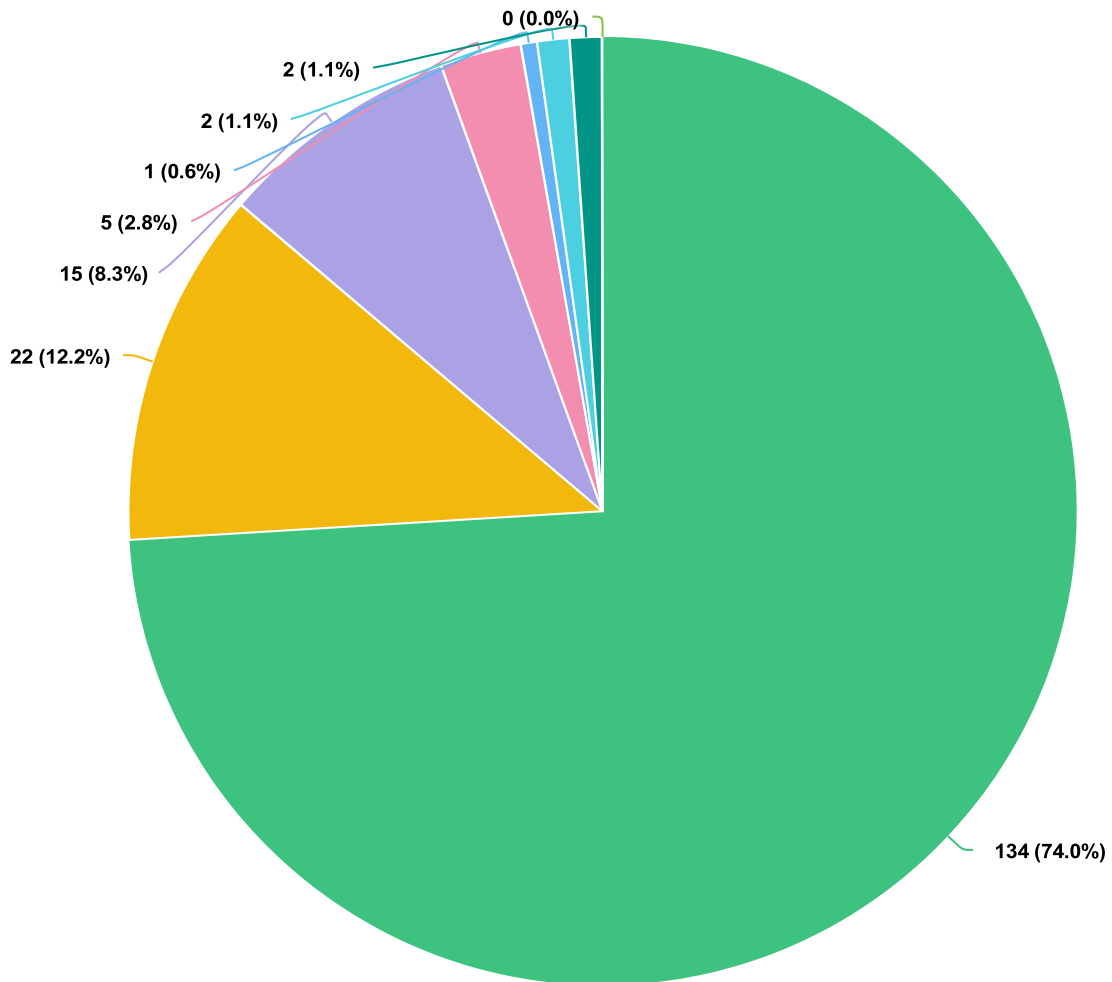
Work in Torbay     Live in Torbay     Other, please say:

*Optional question (182 response(s), 4 skipped)*

*Question type: Checkbox Question*



Q11 Where do you live?

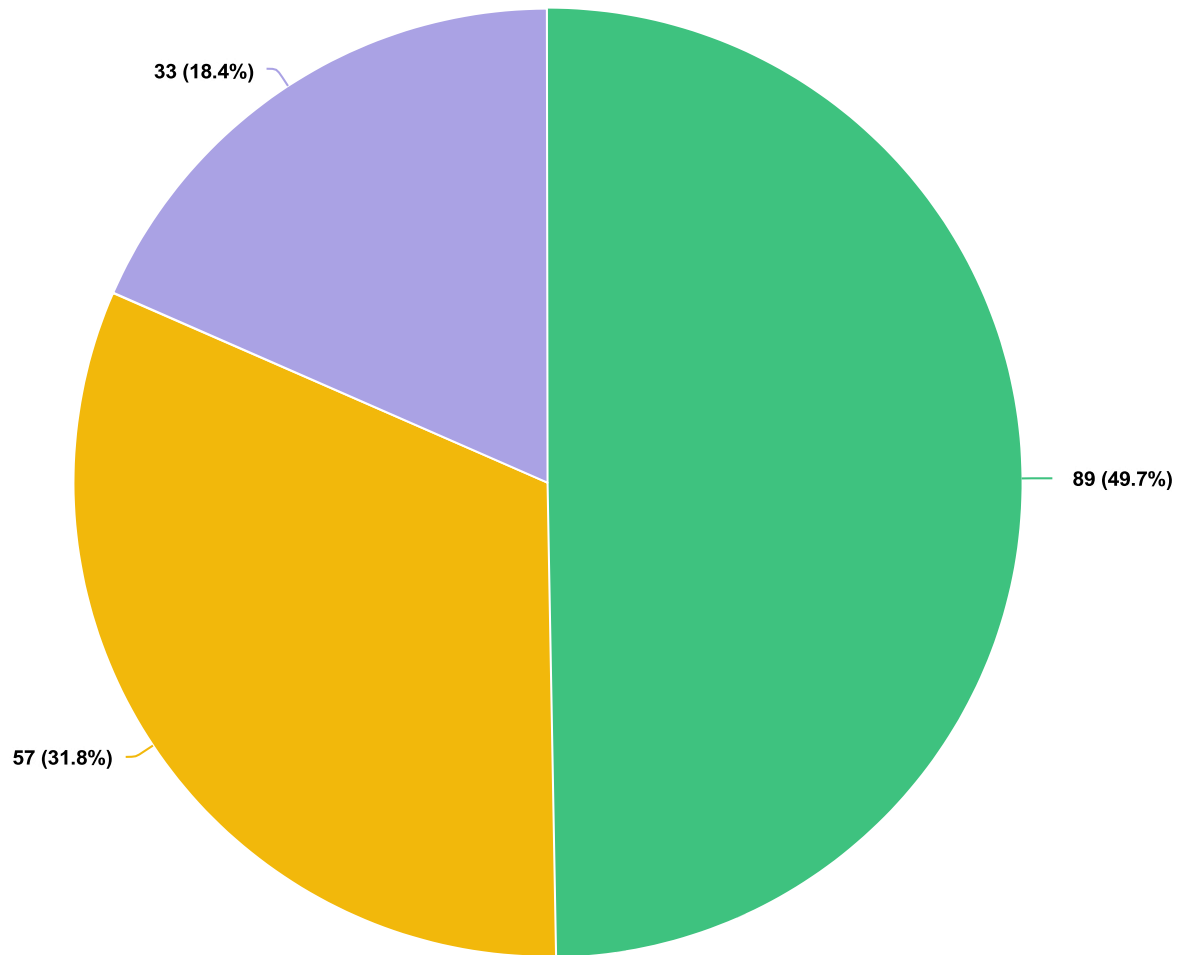


Question options

- Home owned outright, or with mortgage
- Private rented home
- Housing association home
- Living with family
- Living with friends
- Temporary accommodation
- Other, please say:
- Homeless

Optional question (180 response(s), 6 skipped)  
Question type: Radio Button Question

**Q12** Is your annual income, including any benefits or pension:

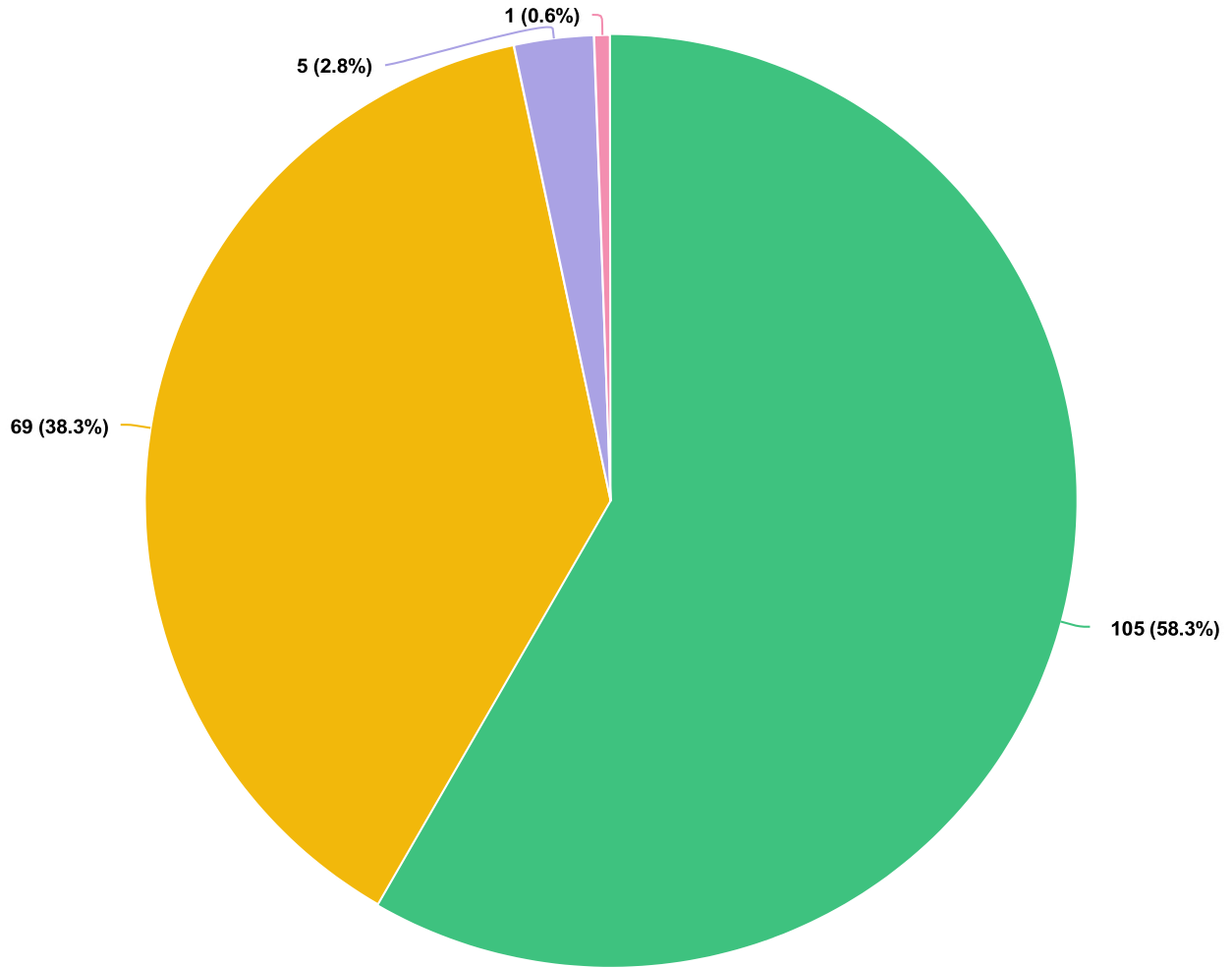


**Question options**

- Above £18,840
- Below £18,840
- Prefer not to say

*Optional question (178 response(s), 8 skipped)*  
*Question type: Radio Button Question*

Q13 What is your gender?

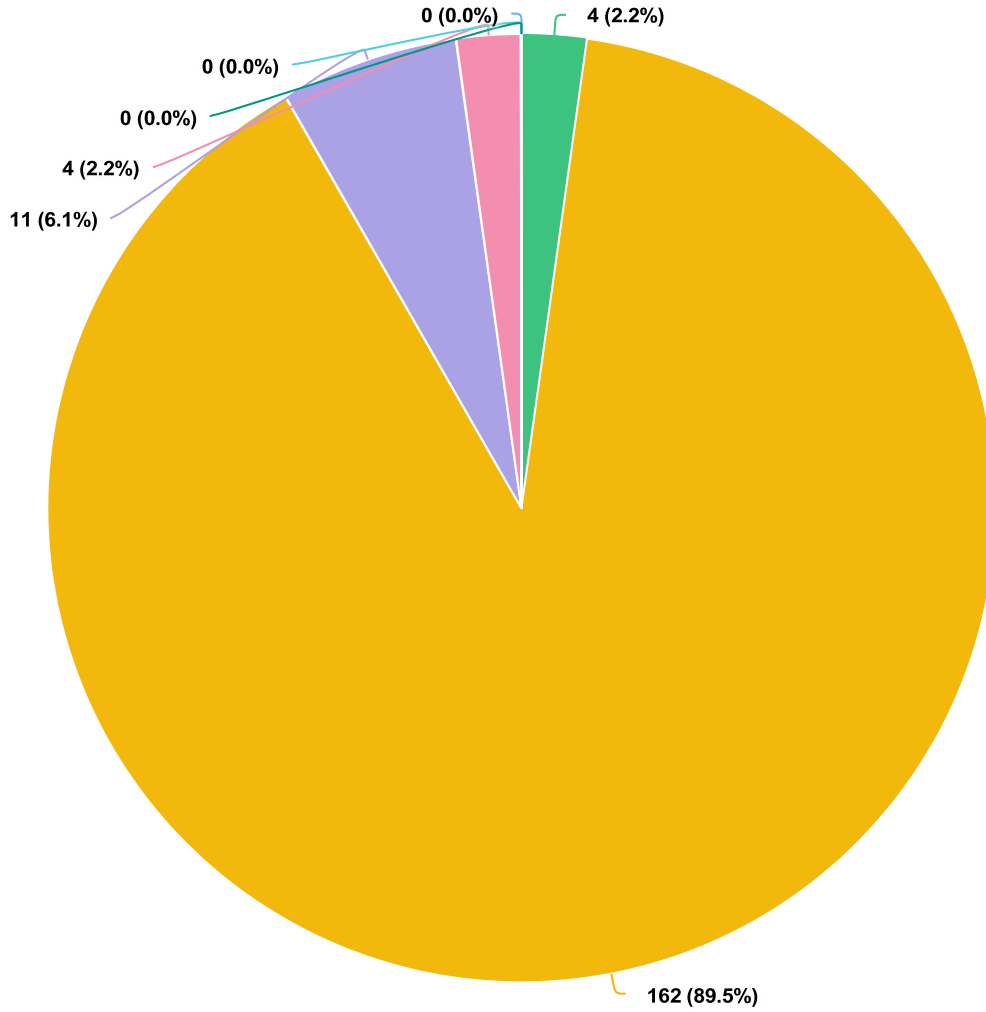


Question options

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say
- Other, please say:

Optional question (179 response(s), 7 skipped)  
Question type: Radio Button Question

**Q14** How would you describe your ethnic origin?

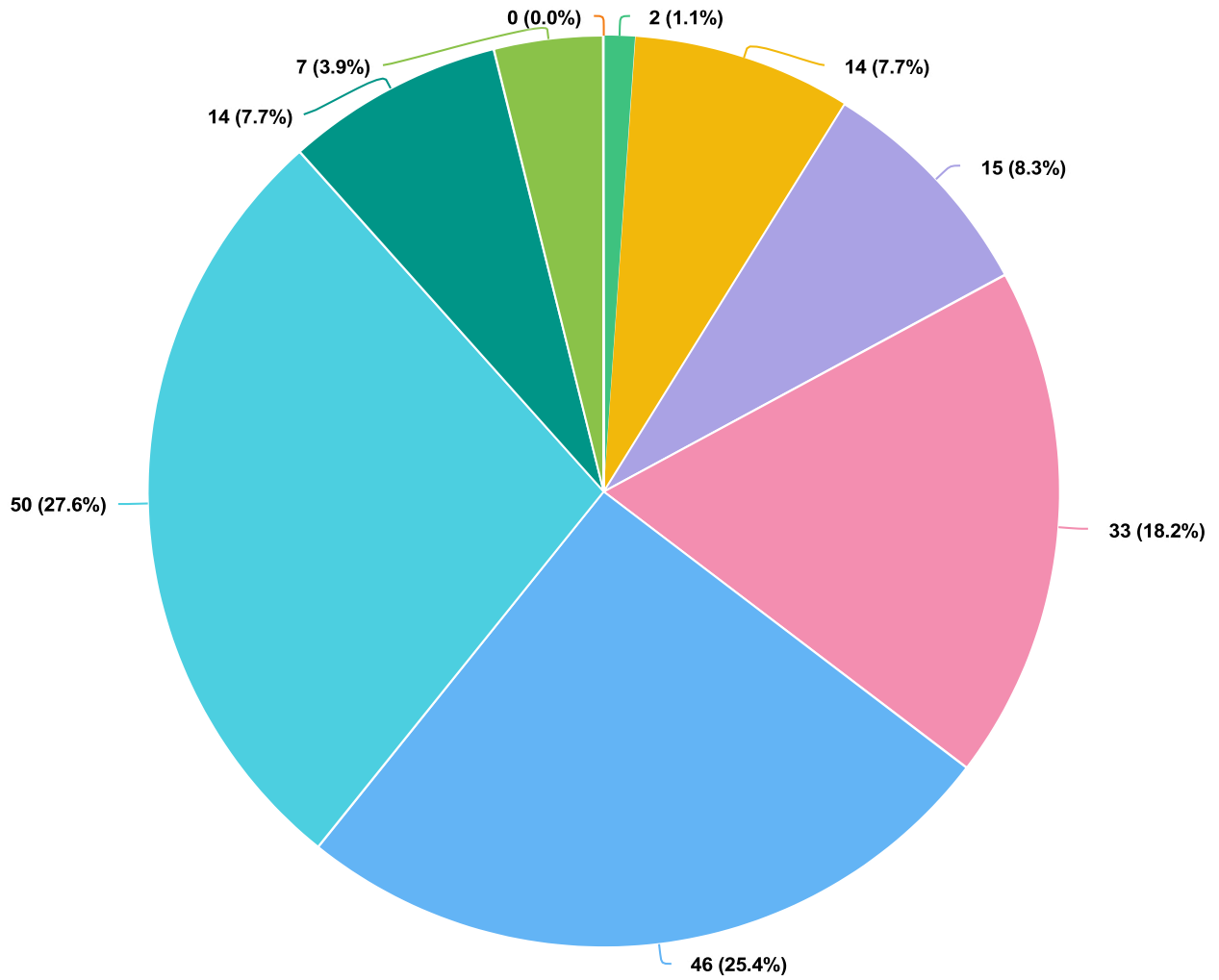


**Question options**

- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- White
- Prefer not to say
- Other, please say:
- Asian, or Asian British
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- Gypsy or Traveller

Optional question (180 response(s), 6 skipped)  
Question type: Radio Button Question

**Q15** To which age group do you belong?

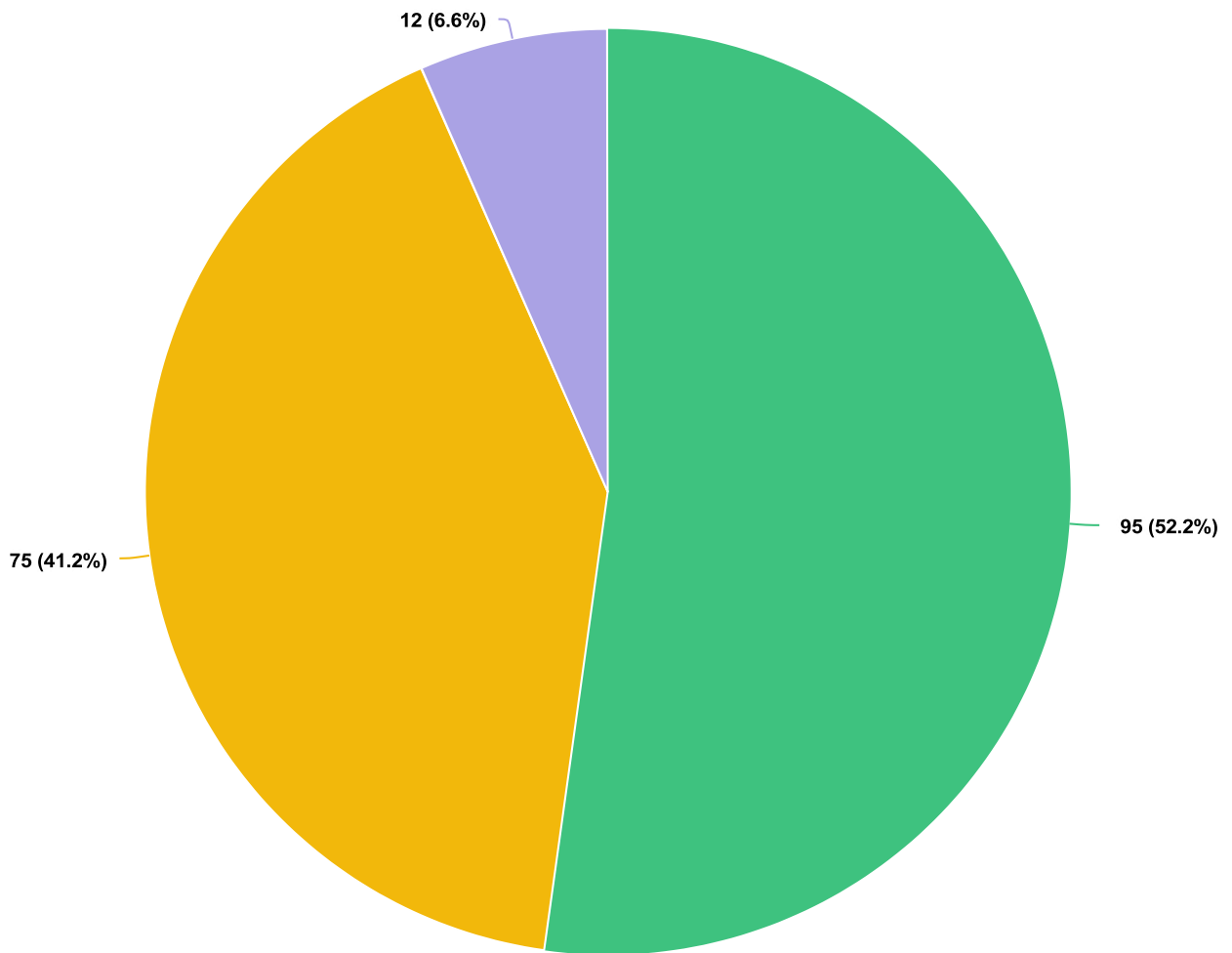


**Question options**

- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- Over 75
- Prefer not to say
- Under 18

Optional question (180 response(s), 6 skipped)  
Question type: Radio Button Question

**Q16** Do you, or anyone living with you, have a long-term illness, or condition?



**Question options**

- No
- Yes
- Prefer not to say

*Optional question (181 response(s), 5 skipped)  
Question type: Radio Button Question*

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## 2 Comments and suggestions

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The comments and suggestions received were grouped by topic and can be categorised under the following themes:

Topic	Count	%
1 Develop on brownfield land, reduce the number of empty homes and curb the use of second homes	73	25%
2 Develop more affordable homes	31	11%
3 Homes should go to local households	29	10%
4 Preserve open countryside and green fields	28	10%
5 Prevent homelessness and address rough sleeping, particularly in town	23	8%
6 Help landlords and help tenants in private rented accommodation	23	8%
7 New homes require more infrastructure, like roads, NHS, schools, cycling, public transport etc	21	7%
8 Other: topics related to other Council functions	20	7%
9 Tackle conditions in the housing stock, both private and social	15	5%
10 Improve the design of new homes, including energy efficiency and parking	10	3%
Housing is unaffordable	8	3%
More eco and environmental measures, such as insulation, solar power etc	6	2%
Less luxury market homes and more for first time buyers	3	1%
More homes, including extra care for those with a disability	2	1%
Total	292	100%

Of these, around 57% were related to planning policy, such as policies on the open countryside, brownfield land and lack of infrastructure, with a further 7% related to other Council initiatives, such as tourism, waste collection etc. We will pass the comments to the relevant departments.

Officers have summarised a response for the most frequent topics and themes, where more than 10 responses were received:

### **1 Develop on brownfield land, reduce the number of empty homes and curb the use of second homes**

Unfortunately, there isn't sufficient brownfield land across the area to provide all the homes Torbay needs. Additionally, due to site clearance and contamination issues, viability of these sites reduces the delivery of affordable homes. The current economic climate is making the situation worse.

Torbay Council currently charges 100% Council Tax on properties from the day the property becomes empty. This increases to 200% if the property remains empty for over two years, increasing to 400% should it remain empty for up to ten years. The Council

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adopted an Empty Homes Policy in 2022 and is committed to bringing empty homes back into use to increase all of the available housing stock in the Bay.

To enable higher Council Tax levies on second homes would require changes to legislation. Torbay Council currently charges the maximum 100% Council Tax allowable for second homes. From April 2023, second homeowners will have to prove holiday lets are being rented out for a minimum of 70 days a year to access small business rates relief, where they meet the criteria.

## **2 Develop more affordable homes**

It is the Torbay Local Plan that provides the Council's blueprint for housing distribution and the level of development, including affordable housing. It establishes the level and need for supporting infrastructure and sets out a raft of policies, proposals and actions to meet the environmental, social and economic challenges facing the area.

Open market housing (in particular the contribution via affordable housing planning obligations) is the main route to securing the delivery of affordable housing. However, affordable housing can also be provided using government grants and the Council's assets, including land. The housing strategy proposes a mix of Homes England grant and local housing investment, such as Council land and assets, with a view to establishing affordable rents for Torbay residents on low incomes. Building more affordable homes is one of the Strategy's key priorities.

## **3 Homes should go to local households**

Social housing is managed by registered providers and lettings are governed by the Housing Register (Devon Home Choice) Allocation Policy. All applications are assessed and placed in one of four priority bands, which is based on our assessment of a household's housing need, and whether or not they have a local connection.

At the end of each weekly advertising cycle, a list is produced of all qualifying bids. The list initially sorts applicants by their priority banding and then on how long they have been waiting. All appropriate checks are carried out by the registered provider that owns the stock.

## **4 Preserve open countryside and green fields**

The Local Plan determines the level and need for development and sets out a raft of policies, proposals and actions to meet the environmental, social and economic challenges facing the area. The Local Plan consultation has just concluded and following a review, the Council will update its housing supply policies.

The Local Plan housing growth scenario will affect poverty, inequalities, and the delivery of affordable housing. Broadly speaking, a high growth scenario will provide the most affordable housing and economic prosperity; but will come at the cost of its environmental impact. Torbay has internationally important biodiversity associated with the South Hams Special Area of Conservation (SAC) at Berry Head, and the Marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The options will need to be assessed through a Habitats Regulations Appropriate Assessment (HRA), that will need to consider the in-combination effects of growth.

## **5 Prevent homelessness and address rough sleeping, particularly in town**

Homelessness has a serious and harmful effect on those who experience it. No household should ever have to experience homelessness. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017



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took effect on 3 April 2018, placing new duties on councils to work with homeless families to prevent or relieve homelessness before a main homeless duty is accepted.

Our approach is to prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity, before individuals, or families lose their home. We are developing a separate homelessness and rough sleeping strategy that will be published during the life of this strategy. It will contain a lot more detail about how we intend to tackle homelessness and its causes.

For many people there will be several reasons they become homeless; for some there will be multiple, complex reasons. Our primary focus is upon helping households to remain in their own home, provided that it is safe and suitable for them to do so. There are a number of in-house services available to help households remain in their homes, including:

- financial and debt advice
  - work with landlords and lettings agents
  - mediation with family and friends, or landlords
  - partnership work to tackle harassment and domestic abuse
  - partnership work to deal with anti-social behaviour
- taking a trauma informed approach to supporting those with complex needs

## **6 Help landlords and help tenants in private rented accommodation**

The housing conditions in the private rented sector are worse than for any other, so making sure that the quality and standard of the private rented sector is a priority for us. We also focus much of our work in this sector because tenants have little, or no control over getting remedial works carried out, so we use all the tools available to take action against poor standards.

In Torbay there is a large percentage of low-income households renting privately. A low-income household is defined as a household in receipt of one, or a number of benefits. In Torbay's private rented stock, 68% of households claim some sort of housing subsidy. This is significantly higher than national and regional averages. Legislation states that benefits are paid to the tenant, not direct to the landlord, unless there are extenuating circumstances. The cost of living crisis is making the situation worse, with the Housing Options Team receiving around 13,000 calls each year.

Our Enforcement Policy helps to promote efficient and effective approaches to regulatory inspection and enforcement that improve outcomes without imposing unnecessary burdens. We work with private landlords to drive up standards, but will also take action against any landlords who do not comply with legislation, in line with our Policy.

Although there are many reasons for homelessness, last year, the most common reasons recorded locally were: the loss of a private rented home (34%), family and friends no longer willing, or able to accommodate (19%) and domestic abuse (12%).

## **7 New homes require more infrastructure, like roads, NHS, schools, cycling, public transport etc**

It is the Torbay Local Plan that establishes the level and need for supporting infrastructure, which is considered alongside plans for new development. All existing Local Plan allocations are supported by policies that require specific types of infrastructure to be provided, whether that be roads, schools, community facilities etc.

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All new dwellings, or commercial premises are subject to what is effectively a tax on new development called the Community Infrastructure Levy. This money is retained in the Council's budget for infrastructure projects in the Bay. It often goes unnoticed that increased capacity of schools, GP surgeries, new roads, community centres or sports facilities have been paid for as a direct result of housing development.

### **8 Other: topics related to other Council functions**

A number of comments were received related to other Council initiatives, such as tourism, road works, waste collection etc. We will pass the comments to the relevant departments.

### **9 Tackle conditions in the housing stock, both private and social**

Torbay Council does not own housing stock at scale. In the late 1980s, along with the 'Right to Buy' Torbay undertook a 'Large Scale Voluntary Transfer' (LSVT) as part of the Government's programme to transfer the ownership, management, and repair of public housing from local government to private contractors and landlords. Subsequently, a number of local authorities created private housing associations, now called 'registered providers'. In Torbay Riviera Housing was created, the stock is now owned by Sanctuary Housing.

It is the Regulator of Social Housing who undertakes the economic regulation of social housing providers, focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer. It also sets consumer standards and will take action if these standards are breached, or if there is a significant risk of serious detriment to tenants.

If you rent your home from a social landlord, they're responsible for dealing with most repair problems. If you've reported repairs to your landlord and they haven't done anything, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman. Our advice would be to follow the registered provider's complaints process, however, over recent months we have received an increasing number of complaints from tenants in social housing requiring formal action to be undertaken by the Council.

### **10 Improve the design of new homes, including energy efficiency and parking**

Housing design is one of the issues under consideration in the emerging Local Plan update. Aspiration 4 aims 'to conserve and enhance the richness and diversity of the built, historic, marine and natural environments, and 'to avoid mediocre design by the application of clear design standards, including the use of Torbay's Design Review Panel to maintain quality development that is well integrated in its surroundings and responds successfully to local character'.

Aspiration 5 aims 'to end the cycle of deprivation linked to substandard accommodation and resist inappropriate conversions and poor design where this may exacerbate disadvantage and deprivation'. Policy SHS aims 'to end the cycle of deprivation linked to substandard accommodation and resist inappropriate conversions and poor design where this may exacerbate disadvantage and deprivation.'

## **3 Amendments to the strategy**

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Generally, the comments received tend to, either echo Torbay's Council's commitment to our housing function and practice, for example 'reduce the number of empty homes', or they contravene our statutory duties, for example 'pay rent direct to landlord'. Sometimes it's simply not possible to achieve the suggestions as there are insufficient resources to do so. It might

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therefore be beneficial to promote our housing duties and actions more widely as part of a communication campaign.

As a result of consultation with the public, partners and stakeholders we have taken on a number of comments and suggestions and have amended the Strategy accordingly. In summary they are:

- a. Clarify and better explain housing terms, such as 'housing support', geographic relief' and role of strategic partners
- b. Include the fact that affordable housing is key to attracting and retaining our workforce, supports the growth of our key employment sectors, such as tourism, fishing, hi-tech etc, reduces the levels of deprivation and meets the priorities in our Economic Growth Strategy
- c. Reinforce a partner approach and that we are open to all methods of affordable housing delivery and that it is the Local Plan that dictates overall housing targets, as well as affordable homes
- d. Update the number of affordable homes required over the next seven years to ensure all of our strategies reflect the same target. This is the function of the Local Plan, and, until it is updated, we must adopt the Government's 'standard method' calculation for the delivery of homes that places a requirement on Torbay to build 600 dwellings a year, plus a 20% (120) imposed 'buffer', due to the under-delivery of housing over the previous years. However, the Government is now looking at reducing its compulsory housebuilding targets, which will also be mentioned
- e. Ensure we include our partners in the voluntary sector to help us improve our support offer and take the opportunity to work closer to better understand how they can assist and support our work, as well as listen to what is happening at a local level

## **Conclusion**

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The refreshed strategy describes how the Council will continue to expand our innovative approach to deliver solutions to meet the wide variety of housing need in our communities. It has been updated in light of the consultation and where appropriate we have taken on board comments to prioritise the work we do.

Overall, it does look like the Strategy reflects the public mood and ambition, for example a demand for affordable homes for local people and increased energy efficiency in the Bay. As it is the Local Plan that dictates the delivery of affordable homes; we will feed consultation results into the Local Plan Update, which ran alongside the Strategy consultation.

Ref	<b>Housing Strategy Project Plan: Year one 2023/24</b> (reported quarterly in July 23, Oct 23, Jan 24 , April 24)	
1	<b>Priority 1: Improving housing supply</b>	Lead
1.1	Enable 34 units of sheltered housing with care for older people, deliver 72 units of extra care at Tor Marine, 12 units for those with learning disabilities and autism and 6 units of supported living accommodation for people with enduring mental ill health by 2023/24 Q4 (based on the Adult Social Care Strategic Housing Requirements 2022)	AR
1.2	Provide a flexible approach to allow access to a mixed economy of 101 units of varying types of accommodation, to improve the housing outcomes for care experienced leavers by 2023/24 Q4 (based on Temporary Accommodation Care Experienced Young People Accommodation and Sufficiency Plan 2022)	BT
1.3	Work in partnership with organisations such as the NHS, Environment Agency, Natural England, Primary Care Trust, transport companies Homes England and other local authorities to assemble land for development by 2023/24 Q4	AD, DE
1.4	Purchase 36 self-contained, temporary accommodation for homeless households by 2023/24 Q1	TH
1.5	Deliver the Empty Homes Policy action plan to reduce the number of empty homes, by working with property owners and targeting those empty for over 2 years	TH
1.6	Work through the Housing Delivery Group to proactively address stalled sites, use compulsory purchase orders to buy brownfield sites at realistic prices, review exception sites in the Local Plan and regularly review the potential for 'off the shelf' purchases 2023/24 Q4	DE
1.7	Deliver Torbay Council's 'Right-Sizing Project' via Devon Home Choice to free up 16 larger family homes a year	TH
1.8	Review Council and social housing provider assets and land ownership, including car parks and other land appropriate for acquisition and link into the town centre masterplan and urban regeneration ambitions by 2023/24 Q3	DE
1.9	Establish formal strategic partnerships with registered providers on affordable housing sites to enable affordable and first time buyer homes by 2023/24 Q4	DE
1.10	Work with 'build for rent' developers to investigate a shared housing project within the Town Centre Master and Waterside Development Plans by 2023/24 Q2	DE, AD
1.11	Conduct an external assessment of potential residential development in the town centres, focussing on Council assets, viability, supply chain etc by 2023/24 Q4	AD, DE
2	<b>Priority 2: Improving housing conditions</b>	
2.1	Produce and deliver a private rented sector improvement plan to tackle disrepair and poor housing conditions, proactively target non-compliant landlords by and take appropriate action where standards are not being met	TH
2.2	Develop business plan and seek funding for loans scheme to target those most in need to help improve energy efficiency, tackle fuel poverty and reduce carbon emissions for 2023/24 Q3	TH, DE
2.3	Develop and implement a robust Housing Assistance Policy to help residents remain independent at home in line with changing needs and legislative requirements. By 2023/24 Q2	TH
3	<b>Priority 3: Improving housing support</b>	
3.1	Undertake appropriate lobbying to increase the Local Housing Allowance rates to meet local need 2023/24 Q3	TH

3.2	Continue to improve and implement the Housing Options Service Improvement Plan, to make sure that we give residents high quality, accessible advice when they need it. (See action plan for key milestones)	TH
3.3	Work with members, partners and clients to develop a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy that is fit for purpose and meets statutory and legislative requirements. By 2023/24 Q4	TH
3.4	Implement the domestic abuse and sexual violence strategy and associated action plan with an emphasis on moving victims to safe and secure accommodation and preventing homelessness. (See action plan for key milestones)	TH
3.5	Work with the Department of Works and Pensions and the community and voluntary sector to improve options for employment, education and training for people who have experienced homelessness	TH, AD
3.6	Formalise our Rent Guarantor Scheme for care experienced young people, offering six months rent in advance and deposit by 2023/24 Q2	BT
3.7	Deliver a revised homeless hostel provision plan for the Leonard Stocks Centre, with the right level of support. See delivery plan for key miles stones	TH
3.8	Develop a funding bid for the Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP) from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for 23/24 Q2	TH
3.9	Undertake a cost benefit assessment and develop a business plan for people who require accommodation, but are not eligible under the Care Act (2014), (Housing Plus) to better understand potential cost savings by 2024/25 Q1	AR, TH

# Agenda Item 5

## Appendix 4

These are the corporate indicators, agreed at Cabinet 26 July 2022. These will be reported on a quarterly basis to Cabinet as part of the Councils Performance framework, along with the Housing Strategy projects

Ref	Performance Indicators	Responsible Officer	Actual 2021/22	Actual 2022/23				Target 2023/24
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
1	Net additional homes provided annually (number could be revised according to LP adoption)	DE	310	Not due	Not due	Not due		720
2	Number of affordable homes delivered	DE	23	7	8			180
3	Numbers housed through Devon Home Choice (tracking)	TH	224	41	45			tracking
4a	Average numbers in temporary accommodation on any one night this quarter:	TH	168	142	140			120
4b	With dependents (inc pregnant women)	TH	61	58	72			44
4c	Single households (including childless couples)	TH	107	84	68			76
5a	Number of new homelessness RELIEF cases this quarter (tracking)	TH	814	169	224			tracking
5b	Number of new homelessness PREVENTION cases this quarter (tracking)	TH	259	72	118			tracking
5c	Number of new homelessness TRIAGE cases this quarter (tracking)	TH	132	39	144			tracking
5d	The % of total cases that were taken at prevention stage	TH	21%	26%	26%			45%
6	Number of families in B&B accommodation longer than 6 weeks this quarter. (N.B 5 is the number at which local government are notified). (Grant)	TH	Q1 4, Q2 7, Q3 7, Q4 0	1	0			2
7	Number of families where Children's Services have a duty to accommodate in temporary accommodation (tracking)	BT	16	18	10			tracking
8	Number of children where Children Services have a duty to accommodate in temporary accommodation	BT	37	40	13			tracking
9	Number of rough sleepers (NI annual survey, tracking)	TH	17	Not due	Not due	Not due		tracking

DE - David Edmondson , TH- Tara Harris, BT - Becky Thompson

Torbay Council

# Housing Strategy evidence base

2023

‘Healthy homes, healthy lives’

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# 1 Forward

A home is special to everyone and directly contributes to good health, wellbeing, and life achievement. Having a place to call home is one of life's main goals from where we can begin to build our lives. It offers warmth and shelter; and is the place where we feel safe, and secure, a place to shape family.

Since early 2020, most people have been spending a lot more time at home, not only as a place to live, but also as the workplace, the school, or the gym. This has highlighted stark inequalities in housing, with some residents enduring the lockdown in large homes with gardens, whilst others struggled in overcrowded conditions with no outdoor space. For some it has become the new place for employment, forever changing the way we think about the commute to work.

Housing can contribute positively to people's mental and physical health, but all too frequently it does not. As a Council we will strive to address this by continuing to expand our innovative approach to deliver solutions and infrastructure to meet the wide variety of housing need in our communities.

The strategy sets out what the Council, with its partners, will be doing over the next 7 years to improve the housing situation for our current and future residents. It sets out the approach we will take with all our partners to work toward our vision.

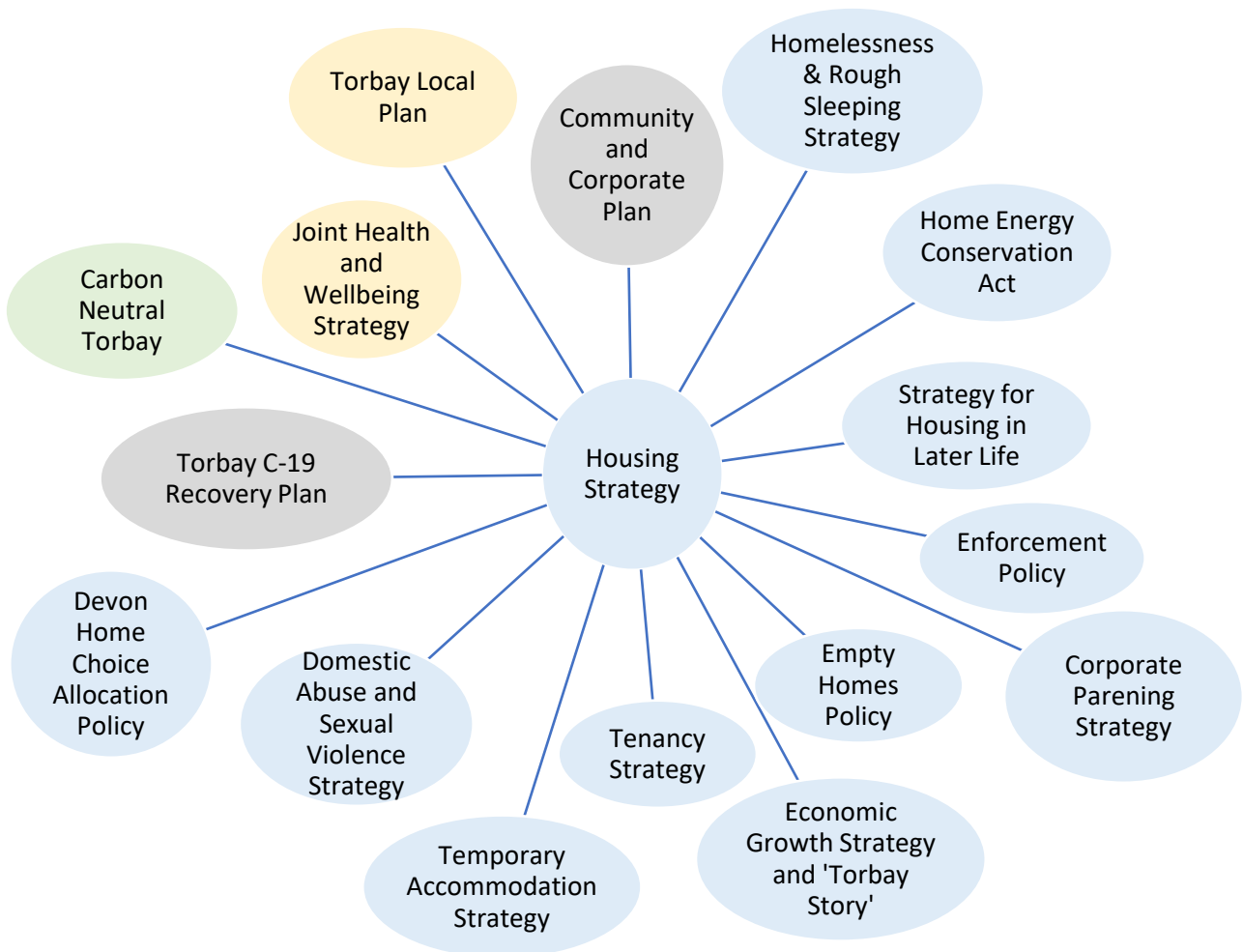
## 2 Introduction

In 2021 Torbay Council declared a housing crisis to address local housing issues and announced via the Community Plan the challenge for economic and housing growth. Additionally, the 'Thriving People' vision announced an intent to work with key partners to 'improve the delivery, affordability and quality of housing'. The Housing Strategy is part of that vision.

A balanced housing market is essential to sustainable communities, but this will not be achieved without the right level of new housing development, across all tenures. As well as providing desperately needed new homes, house building also delivers substantial benefits and better facilities for the wider community. It often goes unnoticed that increased capacity of schools, GP surgeries, new roads, community centres or sports facilities have been paid for as a direct result of development. New homes and improved facilities are key ingredients in developing economic growth and building communities; places where people want to live. The affordability and environmental sustainability of homes will also be crucial factors in getting the balance right between homes, jobs, the green environment and protecting the climate.

Beneath the Community and Corporate Strategy and the Local Plan sits the Housing Strategy that supports cross-organisational, collaborative working and lies at the centre of a number of stand-alone strategies, plans and policies that shape Torbay's ambitions. The purpose of this Strategy is to assess our current position, look toward what we aim to achieve, making 'evidence based' decisions, and put in place performance-based actions that will be of benefit to our residents and communities.

## Key strategic documents



[Torbay strategies, plans and policy](#)

## 3 External influences and local issues

We know that there has been a huge increase in demand for available properties, both rented and for home ownership from people inside and outside the Bay. This has pushed up local prices and rents, making it more difficult for local households to afford.

Against an already compromised economic backdrop, ongoing financial uncertainty makes the operating environment for housebuilders and registered providers more difficult. For many, there are major concerns around the economic certainty to secure finance, the loss of funding streams and the shortage in both skilled and unskilled labour. Rates of inflation are increasing rapidly, and construction companies are feeling the effects as essential materials and skilled labour become significantly more expensive.

There has been, and will continue to be, an increase to the numbers of people needing help with their housing costs, particularly in the private rented sector. However, this welfare support is limited to the levels of our area's Local Housing Allowance (LHA) that sets out the maximum level of Housing Benefit, or

the housing costs element in a Universal Credit award, depending on the number of bedrooms the household requires.

Prior to the pandemic, there will be people living in homes that they could comfortably afford, however many households have now suffered major changes to their financial situation. Additionally, since the energy price cap was lifted at the beginning of 2022, millions have seen their heating and electricity costs rise, which has come alongside increases in the cost of food, taxes and other everyday expenses.

[Cost of living rises for households: ONS.gov.uk](https://www.ons.gov.uk)

The Local Plan provides a framework for guiding development and investment across Torbay over the coming years. Our Masterplans (Policy SS2) for the regeneration of our town centres have been developed alongside our Economic Strategy, which represent the strategic objectives of what our town centres should aim to be. These areas should provide a mix of jobs and housing as part of the longer term growth trajectory to help bring new life and investment to those vital centres.

[Masterplans: Torbay Council](#)

## 4 Strategy vision and themes

The strategy sets out what the Council intends to do over the next 7 years to improve the housing situation for local residents. It sets out 3 priorities and 3 cross-cutting principles, which cut across all the work we do. Within each theme we have identified key actions, which we believe will directly contribute to the overall sense of community health and wellbeing in Torbay.

### **Our housing priorities are:**

1. Improve housing supply
2. Improve housing quality
3. Improve housing support

### **Our cross-cutting principles:**

4. Put our customers first
5. Tackle climate change
6. Work in partnership

## Cross cutting principles

As a service we are looking to deliver support and advice from a client, or customer, point of view. At Torbay, we want customers to easily give feedback, so we can put things right and do things better in future.

[Get in touch: Torbay Council](#)

[Consultations: Torbay Council](#)

[Customer service standards: Torbay Council](#)

To meet Torbay's 2030 carbon neutral target, we will need to reduce emissions by 178,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> from our homes. Any residual emissions will need to be offset. A large amount of activity is ongoing, but to become carbon neutral by 2030 will require a considerable amount of work and effort. Torbay's largest source of carbon dioxide emissions comes from domestic homes. In 2019 they made up 42% of Torbay's total carbon emissions. Our Local Plan contains a range of policies (SS14 and ES1) to tackle climate change on new build homes, however, it should be noted that new dwellings are 44% more energy efficient than existing dwellings so, a key focus of this strategy will be to improve the energy efficiency of our existing homes, particularly in the private rented sector.

Whilst it is not solely the Council’s responsibility to provide resources for the decarbonisation of all homes in Torbay, ways to finance the scale of the transition will need to be found. The move towards decarbonisation also presents an opportunity if we can develop the skills locally that will be needed to aid this transition, and this has been reflected in the new Economic Growth Strategy.

Carbon Neutral Torbay  
Devon climate emergency

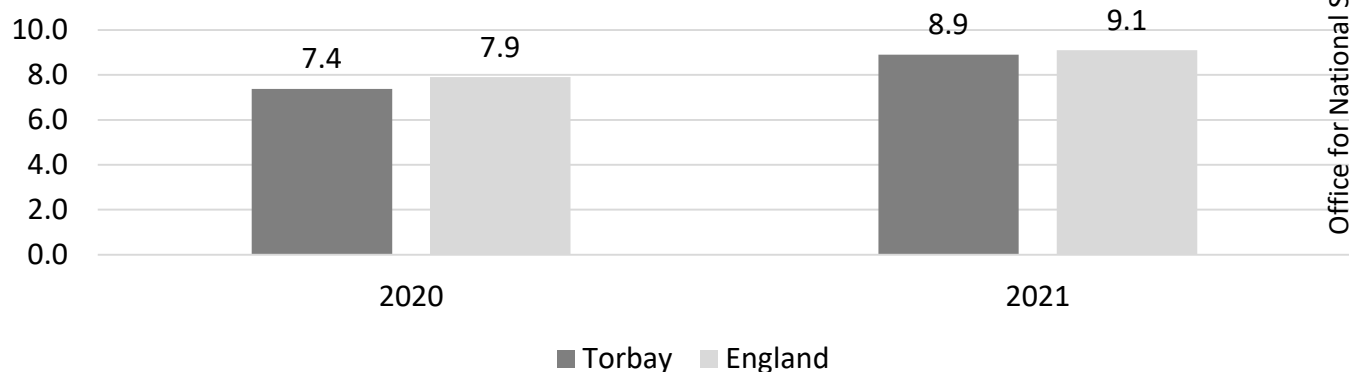
The key principles of partnership working are, openness, trust and honesty, agreed shared goals and regular communication between partners. Partnership working is at the heart of our agenda for improving outcomes and making local, community services more cost effective.

## 5 Challenges

Many people in our local communities are struggling to afford private rented accommodation or buy a home. There is a shortage of affordable housing in Torbay and there is a risk that the housing crisis will not just impact upon the current generation, but also generations to come.

In Torbay the proportion of social rented stock (8%) is significantly lower than the national average (18%). Conversely, there is a higher proportion of private rented sector housing (26%) compared to 19% in England. The shortage of affordable housing means that low-income households are increasingly more reliant on the private rented sector, with nearly 70% of these households dependent on some form of housing subsidy.

Table 5.1: House price to workplace-based earnings ratio, Torbay and England, 2022



Housing is unaffordable in Torbay, primarily due to low wages in the area, rather than abnormally high house prices. However, house prices increased significantly post 2020, which has further eroded affordability. In 2021 median incomes in Torbay were £25,854 and median house prices £230,000 making median houses 8.9 times average earnings. This ratio is almost the same as for England and Wales, where workplace earnings (£31,344) and house prices were both higher (£279,783). It is important to note that Torbay has an existing housing need, which has been made worse by the pandemic and subsequent shortage of accommodation due to higher demand for holiday accommodation.

## 5.1 Constraints on Torbay’s affordable house building

Open market housing is the main route to securing the delivery of affordable housing via S106 planning obligations. However, affordable housing can also be provided using Government grants and the Council’s assets, including land.

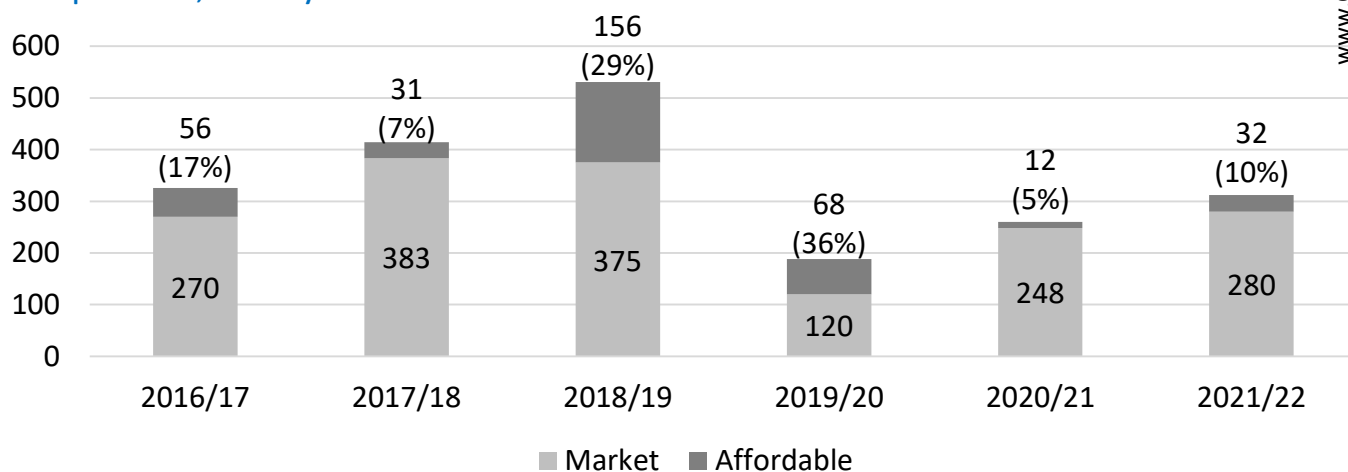
Provision of affordable housing through planning gain is currently sought on the basis of one third social rent, one third affordable rent and one third shared ownership, however the introduction of the Government’s ‘first homes’ (25%) for affordable ownership could potentially reduce the delivery of affordable rented dwellings.

The Government’s ‘standard method’ calculation for the delivery of homes places a requirement on Torbay to build 600 dwellings a year, plus a 20% (120) imposed ‘buffer’, due to the under-delivery of housing over the previous years. However, this is unlikely to be met due to the area’s environmental constraints and shortage of development sites. The number of affordable homes delivered relies upon planning obligations placed upon developers building homes on the open market, with the Local Plan (Policy H2) requiring affordable housing on a sliding scale of up to 30% on qualifying sites. The delivery of affordable homes will therefore be reduced due to local land constraints.

The Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (2022) identifies a local need for 721 affordable homes per year: 387 for rent and 334 for low-cost sale. However, since 2016, we have delivered an average of 339 market homes each year, 59 (17%) of which have been affordable. Need on the Housing Register, however, has increased by 50%, since 2018, with 1,572 applicants now in housing need.

[Housing and Economic Needs Assessment \(HENA\); Torbay.gov.uk](#)

**Table 5.2: Delivery of affordable homes, as % of total housing completions, Torbay**

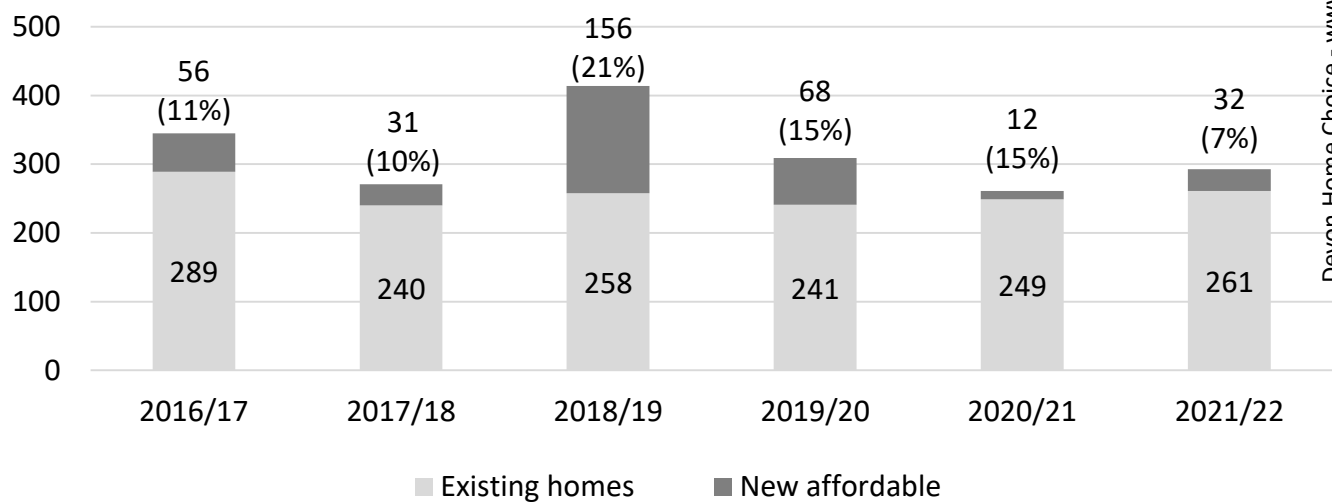


It should also be noted that a significant proportion of Torbay’s housing development comes from smaller sites, below affordable housing thresholds. Thus, whilst the supply of market homes is increasing, the delivery of affordable homes has been in decline.

Government policy states that ‘affordable housing should not be sought for residential developments that are not major developments’ (NPPF p64). Unfortunately, there is not sufficient brownfield land across the Bay to provide all the homes Torbay needs. Issues, such as site clearance and contamination further erode build viability on these sites. The current economic climate is making the situation worse.

[Planning practice guidance; GOV.UK](#)

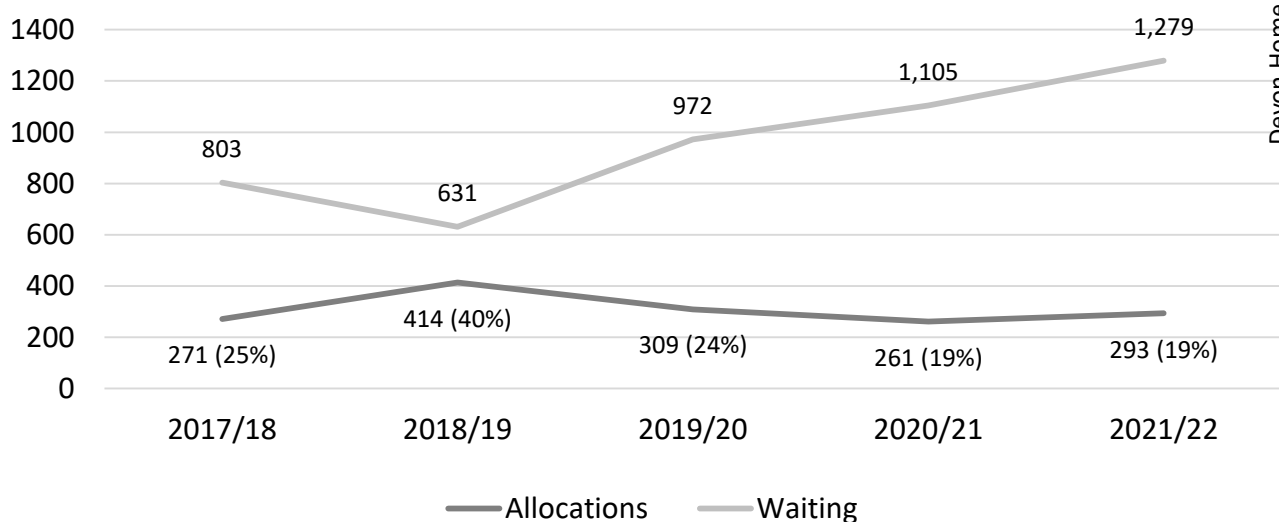
**Table 5.3: Affordable housing delivery as % of Housing Register allocations, Torbay**



Devon Home Choice - www.GOV.UK

Since 2016, an average of 59 (23%) lets on the Housing Register are into new build, affordable homes each year.

**Table 5.4: Allocations as a % of applicants on the Housing Register**



Devon Home Choice

The Local Plan housing growth scenario will affect poverty, inequalities, and the delivery of affordable housing. Broadly speaking, a high growth scenario will provide the most affordable housing and economic prosperity; but will come at the cost of its environmental impact. Torbay has internationally important biodiversity associated with the South Hams Special Area of Conservation (SAC) at Berry Head, and the Marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The options will need to be assessed through a Habitats Regulations Appropriate Assessment (HRA), that will need to consider the in-combination effects of growth.

[Local Plan update: torbay.gov.uk](http://torbay.gov.uk)

# 6 Improve housing supply

## 6.1 Build affordable homes for rent

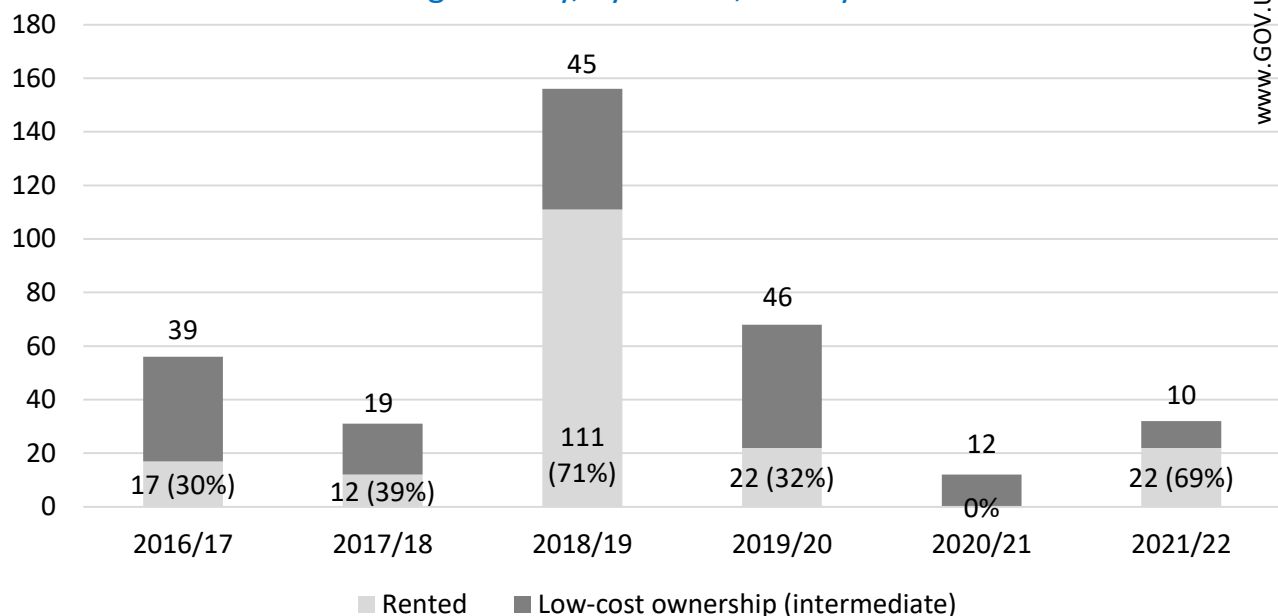
Most of Torbay’s housing development comes from small sites, with no obligation to provide affordable housing, however officers have been working on opportunities to deliver affordable homes on land within the Council’s ownership, by reviewing existing assets and land ownership, including car parks, public open space, and other land appropriate for acquisition.

Homes built for rent by registered providers are the only type of homes that remain affordable for the majority of low-income households in Torbay. Traditionally, homes let on social rents are around 60% of the local market rent, but in 2010 the government introduced a new ‘affordable rent’ at rents on new homes of up to 80% of market rent levels.

Our strategy proposes a mix of Homes England grant and local housing investment, such as Council land and assets, with a view to establishing affordable rents. We will also strive to maximise energy efficiency, making our homes more affordable to rent, heat and run.

## 6.2 Build homes for low-cost ownership

Table 6.1: Affordable housing delivery, by tenure, Torbay



Many local working age households on average incomes struggle to raise the deposit needed to get a mortgage. One option open to them is low-cost home ownership, or ‘intermediate housing’, which is an umbrella term for homes for sale discounted below market rates, but more expensive than social and affordable rented products.

The Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA) for Torbay shows that the highest net inflow of population is in the 55 to 59 age cohort, with high levels also in the 60 to 64 and 65 to 69 age groups.

These age groups are either retired, or nearing retirement, and accounts for almost all of Torbay's population increase. Within a decade these households become more reliant on health services, placing a demand on Social Services and the NHS.

## 6.3 Build and acquire innovative and specialist homes

We wish to provide a range of specialist housing to meet the needs of existing local residents who may have to go into specialist accommodation. In Torbay, the population size has increased by 6.4%, from around 131,000 in 2011 to 139,300 in 2021.

The Torbay Housing Learning and Improvement Network (LIN) Assessment 2020, indicates a need to provide around 848 specialist housing units for older people by 2035, of which half should be for rent. Additionally, there is a need for 276 units of housing with care, again half for rent, and 370 nursing beds. Conversely there is an oversupply of about 188 'care home' bedspaces.

### 6.3a Adult Social Care strategic housing need

Torbay Council and its NHS partners want to increase the use of home-based models of care and support and reduce dependence on residential care. This will allow people assessed as requiring social care and support to have a greater choice and control over how, where and with whom they live. Doing so means prioritising housing with varying levels of support for all age groups, enabling people to live well for longer in a home of their own.

Securing a long-term planned supply of appropriate housing to meet the diverse accommodation needs of Torbay's Care Act eligible population is a complex task and requires a detailed understanding of supply and demand over a long time.

The Council, in partnership with the NHS and voluntary sector organisations, has prepared three key documents regarding housing needs in relation to adult social care:

1. Identifying the Need for Specialist Housing in Torbay until 2030
2. Strategy for Housing in Later Life 2020-2025
3. Blueprint for Market Transformation in Torbay 2020-2030

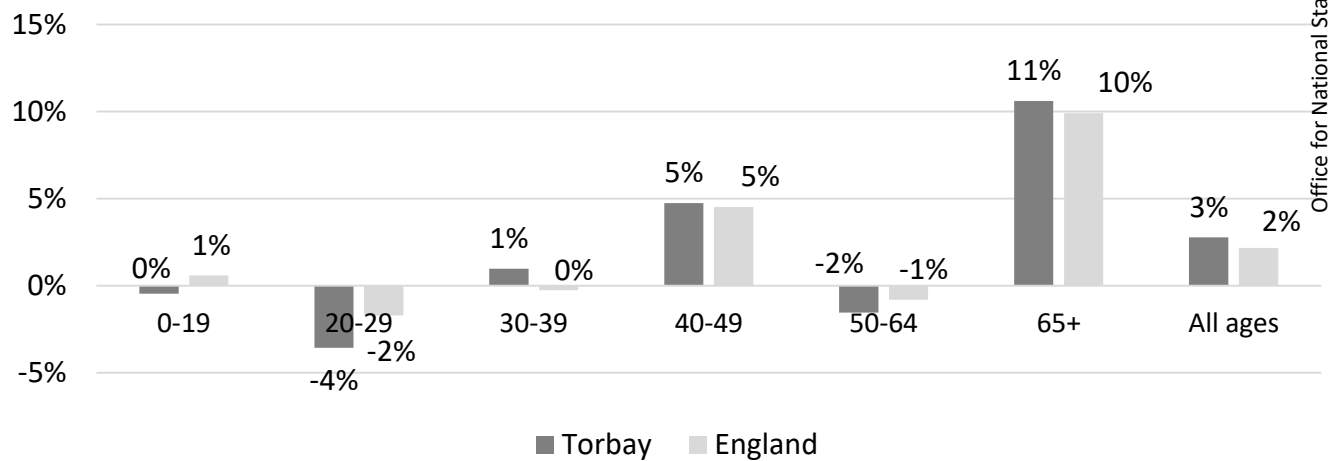
These key documents set out the following requirements to make sure that the transformation of the adult social care market is supported by the availability of suitable housing across the range of care needs in Torbay.

### People over the age of 65

27% of Torbay's population are aged 65 or over, compared to just 18% of population across England. By 2040, this is expected to rise to one in three (34%). Torbay has 550 nursing home beds, some of which are in residential care homes, but this is insufficient.



**Table 6.2: Population increase, Torbay and England, 2022 to 2027**



Office for National Statistics

Over the next 5 years we will deliver 170 (34 per year) additional 1 bed and 2 bed units of sheltered, rented, social housing in Paignton and Torquay, providing housing for older people with Care Act eligible needs. Commissioners have also identified a need for an additional 340 units of this model of housing for leasehold purchase.

Over the next 10 years the Council needs to work in partnership with housing providers to deliver more sheltered housing for rent and purchase. All models of housing with support help older people to remain independent for longer, improving life outcomes, thus reducing the need for expensive health and social care alternatives. Commissioners have identified a demand for 1,462 additional sheltered housing units for rent and 1,938 units for private purchase by 2035.

Local planning policy needs to make sure that enough affordable housing and services are made available to help the older population to ‘age in place’. This needs to be done in parallel with the development of health and social care services. Homes should be of good design with the ability to be modified as people’s abilities change. The Council should make sure that the older population are well-informed about the services that are available.

### People with learning disabilities and autism

To meet the housing needs of people with a moderate to severe learning disability, 12 additional units of social rented housing with support are required annually. To meet the housing needs of people with very complex learning disabilities and autism, 2 to 3 units of highly adapted, purpose-built accommodation are also required each year (Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information assessment).

People should be able to choose where, how and with whom they live. We need to move away from residential care and significantly increase our supported living and ‘extra-care’ provision for people with learning disabilities. These models of care enable independence, and social participation, helping people to be part of their community, thus reducing the cost and level of state-funded services and reducing the risk of out of area admission.

All organisations involved in the delivery of housing should be able to provide housing applications and tenancy documentation in a format that is accessible for people with a learning disability, cognitive impairment or neurological diversity.

Housing providers and commissioners, including Homes England and the NHS need to work together to assemble capital funding packages to ease the high cost of developing bespoke housing options for people

with complex needs that would otherwise see them 'placed' outside of Torbay and away from family and their circles of support.

## People with enduring mental illness

To meet the housing needs of people living with mental illness in Torbay, 30 additional units of housing with support, in single, or in planned clusters are required over the next 5 years (6 per year). More people under 65 with mental health issues should be supported to live as independently as possible in their chosen communities within the Bay.

Too many younger adults with mental health needs are living in residential care. For adults in contact with mental health services, less than half (45%) are living independently, this is lower than the England average (58%). Supported living not only costs less than residential care, but increases self-determination, control, and citizenship, which are the basis of recovery.

The Council and its partners need to improve the support available for people with mental illness to navigate the social housing application process. We also need to develop effective tenancy sustainment services to help people living chaotic lives. There should be a clear step-down process from intensive supported into increasing levels of supported independence, offering greater opportunities for recovery.

[Adult Social Care in Torbay](#)

## 6.3b Children's Service's housing need

Over the last year, there has been an increase in the number of families needing to access emergency accommodation. In May 2022, 157 households, of which 62 (39%) were families, were living in temporary accommodation. This negatively impacts family life, as families experience a prolonged detachment from their local communities, away from friends, family, schools and social networks.

In situations where a family is not found eligible for a homeless duty by the Council, the responsibility of housing families returns to Children's Services. Torbay is the corporate parent to cared for children from 0-18, and under the extended duties is also the corporate parent to all care experienced young people from the ages of 16 to 25. As of April 2022, the care experienced team supports 118 former young people aged 19 to 21, and a total of 177 care experienced young people aged 16 to 25, a total of 295.

Recent trends show Torbay to be the corporate parent to nearly 5 times the England average. With a 42% increase since 2011, this trend is set to continue. On average, over the last 10 years, Torbay has 302 looked after children, compared to 62, the national average.

During both of the recent Ofsted inspections of Local Authority Children's Services (LACS) in March 2021 and 2022, the following challenges faced by Torbay regarding housing and accommodation were noted:

- The sufficiency and availability of highly specialist placements provision
- The suitability of after care and the range of housing options for care-experienced young people

There was a clear direction from the regulators that accommodation for care experienced young people must be a corporate priority for Torbay. There is an urgent need to create housing stock that provides independent living and move-on accommodation options for our care experienced young people. A scoping exercise has been undertaken, considering the number of properties that will be required for the next three years. It estimates that 101 homes need to be delivered in 2023/24, with a further 127 in the following year.

If the housing stock remains inaccessible for care experienced young people, there is a significant financial risk associated with other options, as well as contravening Government guidance.

More than a third of care experienced young people told us that we needed to help prepare them for living alone, including how to manage money and their emotions. (Torbay Bright Spots ‘Your Life After Care’ survey, 2021). Since receiving feedback we have entered into contract with ‘Listening Works’ to provide financial and emotional support for all care experienced young people. Additionally, a ‘Transitions Panel’ is now in place that tracks independence plans for those over the age of 14; promoting independence and emotional regulation management skills.

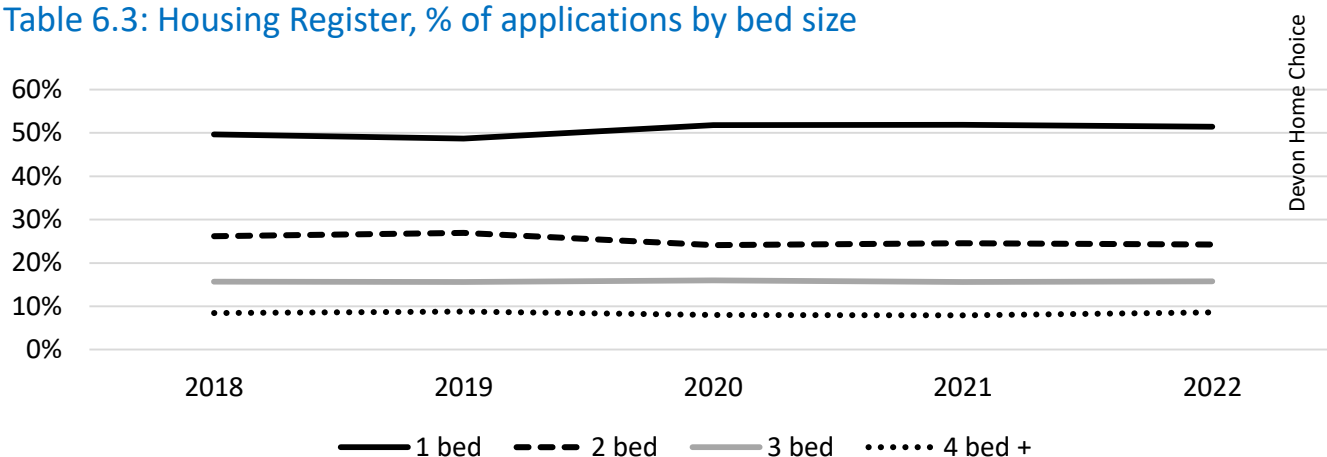
### 6.3c Single households

The Housing Register regularly records that half of applicants are single households on low incomes, reflecting a sustained local demand for single affordable housing units. Often people find shared accommodation more affordable than renting alone and, in an area, when the average house price is nine times the average salary, local people, particularly the young, need all the help they can get.

Most rental homes already on offer are owned by small-scale landlords, who provide tenants with an inconsistent quality of property and management experience, and who may well ‘cash-out’ of the market at any time, thus rendering the tenant homeless.

It is clear that more tenants are looking for effective property management and security, and there is potentially a gap in the market for developments in the right locations. Build to Rent is a term used to describe private rented property that is designed for a rent model that allows property investors to achieve long-term investment returns, while providing renters with more options and better quality accommodation. These developments are typically owned by companies, such as property companies, or pension or insurance investment companies, and are let directly, or through an agent.

Table 6.3: Housing Register, % of applications by bed size



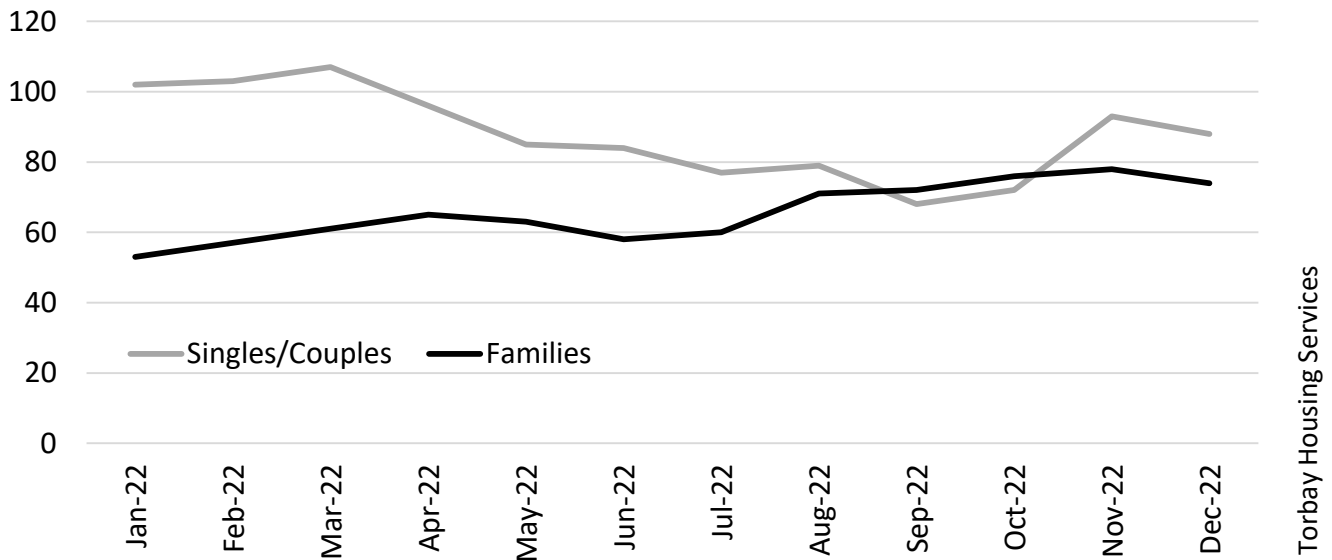
Build to rent developments benefit tenants and local areas, by:

- Increasing the supply of new homes
- Providing a choice of housing types and sizes, for different tenant needs
- Providing professional management, which is more reliable than an individual landlord
- Promoting long-term investment and stewardship in the local areas
- Supporting the delivery of regeneration programmes in local areas

## 6.3d Temporary accommodation

We have seen demand for all households, including families steadily increase. In the period from April 2019 to March 2022, there has been a 92% increase in the need for temporary accommodation. At the beginning of 2022, a total of 169 households, of which 63 (37%) were families were living in this kind of accommodation.

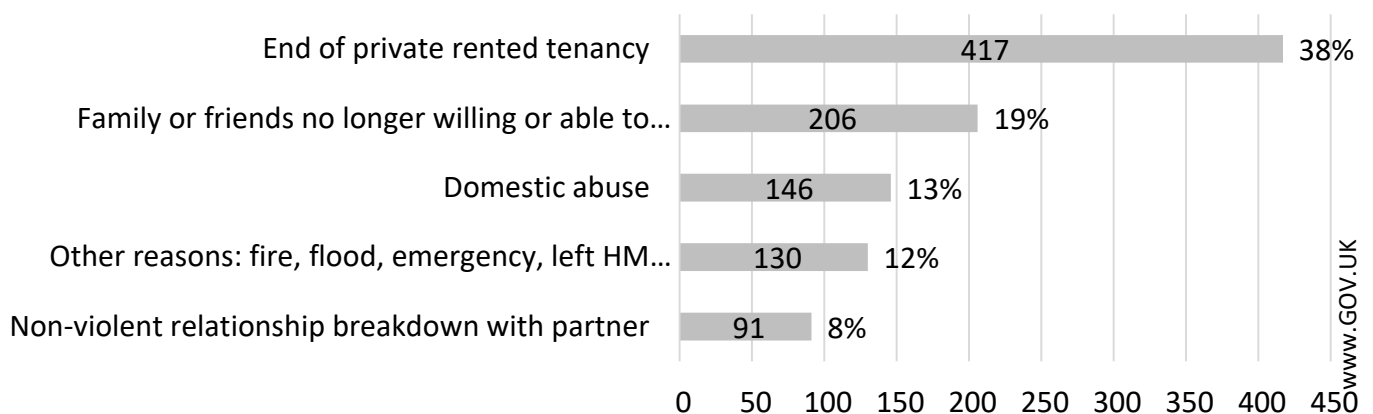
Table 6.3: Households in temporary accommodation, Torbay



## 6.3e Domestic abuse safe houses

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) places a statutory duty on unitary authorities, like Torbay to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe, appropriate accommodation. Under the legislation, temporary accommodation, such as homelessness hostels, hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation are not considered appropriate. The Torbay Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment, undertaken in 2021, highlighted that finding enough accommodation for victims was a challenge, particularly if one considers that half the number of victims who presented to the local authority as homeless, were families with children.

Table 6.4: Main reasons for loss of last settled home for households owed a homeless duty, Torbay, 2021/22



Aside from the capacity for accommodating different families and households we heard through the consultation with victims that they often found shared refuge spaces difficult. Some discussed tensions between residents, as well as being re-traumatised by hearing others' injuries, both mental and physical. Whilst some victims and survivors did benefit from shared accommodation, it is clear from the findings that the dispersed, self-contained approach is generally seen as more favourable.

Overall, in terms of capacity, Torbay is operating in line with the Council of Europe thresholds for the number of refuges, however given the current landscape, additional capacity needs to be explored. In this regard Torbay has worked with partners to acquire an additional 7 units of accommodation. In total we now have 21 units of dispersed, self-contained units of accommodation. The biggest gap currently in terms of safe spaces are for those with a disability with only 1 safe space having mobility access. It is estimated that a further 3 units will be required.

[Torbay Domestic Abuse Service: Torbay.gov.uk](https://www.torbay.gov.uk/domestic-abuse-service)

## 6.3f Gypsy and traveller accommodation

In comparison with other parts of Devon, and the Southwest, Torbay has played a limited part in the lives, traditions and movements of the travelling community, whether Romany, Irish or New Age in origin. There are no long-established cultural connections with Torbay, or any historical employment links for travellers in the area. There are no records of any planning applications having been submitted, by private individuals, or public bodies, for sites for permanent residential pitches, or transit pitches.

The 2015 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA) identified a need for 2 transit pitches. The Local Plan review seeks to identify these sites.

[Gypsies and travellers: Torbay.gov.uk](https://www.torbay.gov.uk/gypsies-and-travellers)

## 6.4 Make better use of our housing stock

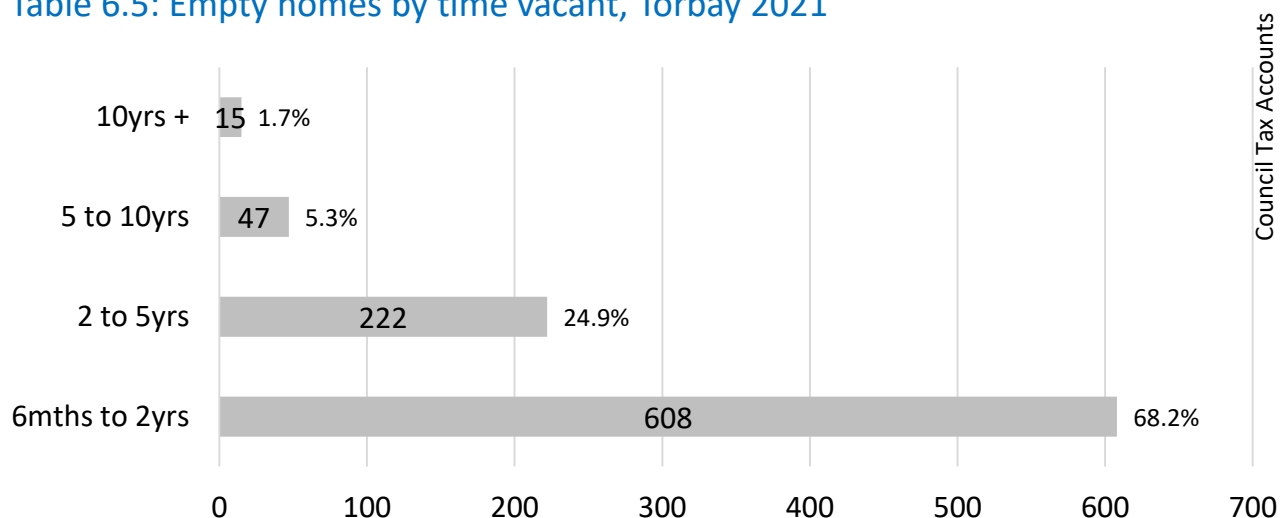
Clearly Torbay will be unable to build the number of new affordable homes required to meet the current need. We are conscious that we need to work more innovatively to address the increasing need for housing. By working with partners across the Bay, we intend to make better use of the housing stock to achieve this aim.

### 6.4a Bring empty homes back into use

Bringing empty homes back into use is a sustainable way of creating much needed homes and reduces the negative, anti-social impacts of empty properties upon communities. Homes may become empty for several reasons; in most cases they are empty for a temporary, short-term situation, for example awaiting sale, letting, or being renovated prior to occupation. Homes empty for under 6 months will often come back into use without any Council intervention, yet some may take longer, depending on the financial and personal circumstances of the owner.

As of October 2021, 892 dwellings in Torbay were empty for longer than 6 months. This represents 1.4% of Torbay's total housing stock. A long-term empty home is defined as 'an unoccupied property for a period of six months or more'. Longer term, empty homes are of interest to the Council because they are a wasted resource and can sometimes be in a dangerous state, detrimental to the area. 284 dwellings were empty for longer than 2 years.

**Table 6.5: Empty homes by time vacant, Torbay 2021**



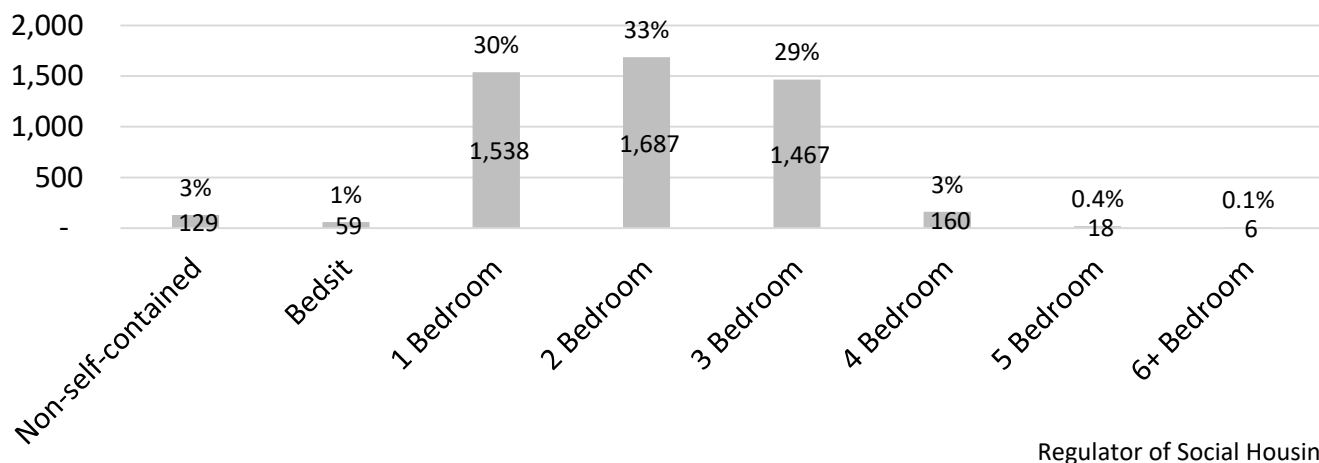
In 2021 the Council adopted an Empty Homes Policy, the aim of which is to target and bring back into use the 284 dwellings empty for longer than 2 years. This ensures the effective use of the housing stock in Torbay, whilst reducing the negative impacts on the local community.

[Empty homes: Torbay.gov.uk](https://www.torbay.gov.uk/empty-homes)

### 6.4b Review our social housing stock

One of the key priorities of the Housing Strategy is to make the best use of existing homes. As part of that commitment, we are working with local registered providers to review our social housing stock to prioritise action on under occupation. We will work together to help those wishing to downsize, thus freeing up larger, under-occupied homes, in a bid to reduce waiting times and prevent homelessness.

**Table 6.6: Torbay social housing stock by bed size, 2021**



Regulator of Social Housing

The proportion of social rented stock in Torbay (8%) is significantly lower than the national average (18%). There are currently 1,572 applicants on Devon Home Choice, with 26% households reporting that they lack 1 bedroom. Average waiting times before being housed can be between 59 and 80 weeks depending on band and preference. This can leave families in expensive private rented accommodation, often in overcrowded housing scenarios. Furthermore, since 2018 there has been a 50% increase in the number of applicants on the Housing Register, with the trend set to continue.

There is a distinct lack of larger family homes, both in the private rented and social sector in Torbay, so we need to focus on freeing up these much needed homes. Over the last 3 years, an average of 287 homes were allocated each year to households via the Housing Register. This means that, on average, around 6 homes are made available each week.

The number of homes owned by the 4 largest registered providers represents 88% of the total social housing stock in Torbay. The Council is therefore concentrating its efforts by working with the main providers, but we are open to collaborating with other 24, once our policies are in place. We potentially have 309 homes being under occupied, however, there are 1,682 (37%) social homes with three bedrooms or more that could be explored.

**Table 6.7: Number of social homes in Torbay, by registered provider, 2022**

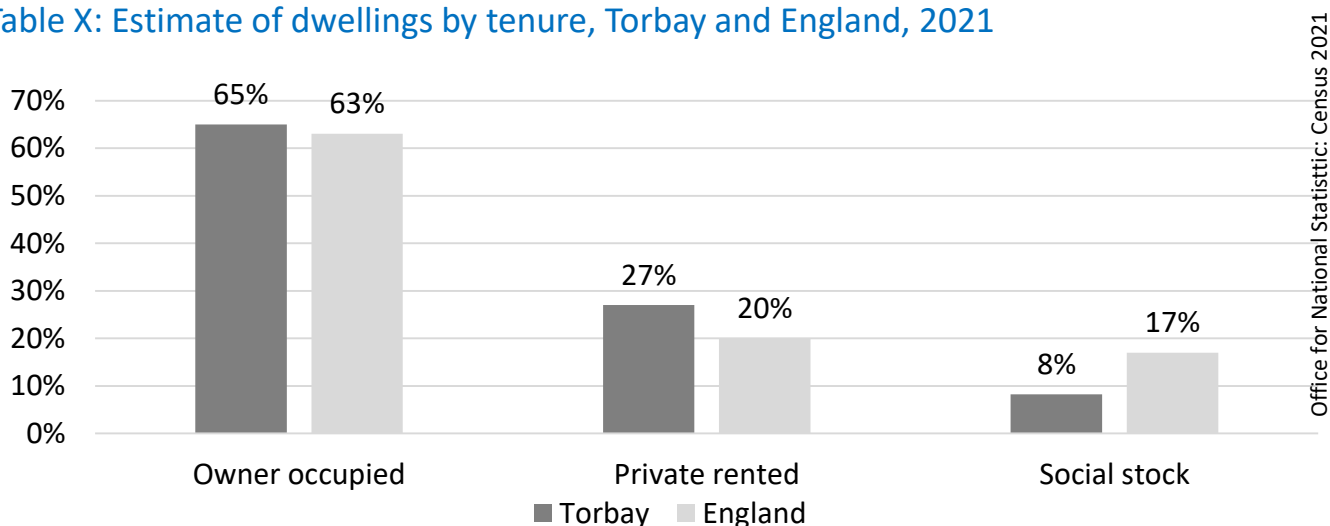
Registered provider	Total	6+ bed	5 bed	4 bed	3 bed	Under occupying by 2 bed
Sanctuary	2,653	4	13	52	955	174
Westward	1,247	2	5	35	329	75
LiveWest	559	0	0	22	107	27
Sovereign	541	0	0	44	114	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>1,505</b>	<b>309</b>

Registered providers  
(estimated)

## 7 Improve housing quality

Housing has a key role to play in health and wellbeing. The poor condition of a property can negatively affect the physical and mental health of our residents. Similarly, some people’s physical health needs, particularly for older residents, can restrict their ability to live an independent life without some adaptations to the home.

**Table X: Estimate of dwellings by tenure, Torbay and England, 2021**



In Torbay, over a third of households (34%) rent a home, with 26% renting from a private landlord; a recent YouGov report suggests the figure to be even higher at 30%, far greater than the national average of 19%. The remaining 66% owner occupy. Results from the Census 2021, suggest that Torbay has 63,000 dwellings.

**Table 7.2: Mortgage and rent as % of household income, including housing benefit, England 2020/21**



In general, the condition of the social housing stock in Torbay is better than other tenures for indicators relating to hazards, disrepair and energy efficiency. This is due to government requirements placed upon registered providers; however, we are open to complaints from the social sector and will work with registered providers to drive up standards.

Generally, owner occupiers spend less on housing costs and can, on the whole, take action against disrepair themselves, whilst implementing their own energy efficiency measures. However, a number of owner occupiers, usually retired households on reduced incomes, can be said to be ‘equity rich and cash poor’.

The expansion of the private rented sector has focused attention on the need to improve conditions in this tenure. The English Housing Survey (EHS) estimates that in 2019, 23% of PRS homes did not meet the Decent Home Standard – around 1.1 million homes. This compares with 18% of owner-occupied homes and 12% of social-rented homes. PRS homes were more likely to have at least one Category 1 hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

The housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS) is a risk-based evaluation tool to help local authorities identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings.

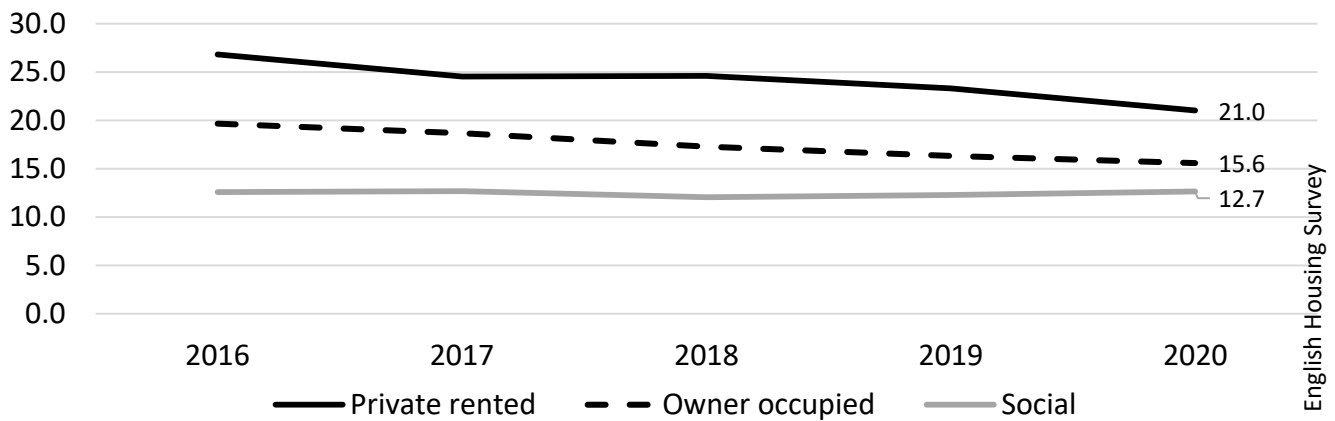
## 7.1 Tackle conditions in the private rented sector

The private rented sector (PRS) offers a flexible form of tenure and contributes to labour market mobility. Once the domain of younger people it is now home to a wider range of age groups, in particular those aged 35 to 44. On average, households in the PRS move house every 4 years; four times more often than those who own their homes.

The housing conditions in the private rented sector are worse than for any other, so making sure that the quality and standard of the private rented sector is a priority for us. We also focus much of our work in this sector because tenants have little, or no control over getting remedial works carried out, so we use all the tools available to take action against poor standards.



Table 7.3: Non-decent homes, by %, by tenure, England, 2016 to 2020



In Torbay there is a large percentage of low-income households renting privately, driving up fuel poverty. A low-income household is defined as a household in receipt of one, or a number of benefits. In Torbay’s private rented stock, 68% of households claim Housing Benefit, or the housing element of Universal Credit. Low income is a contributor to fuel poverty and as such, a large percentage of households who privately rent find themselves fuel poor.

Additionally, just under a third of households owed a homelessness duty in Torbay was due to the end of private rented tenancy (29% in 2021). Not only must we work with private landlords to drive up housing standards, but we need to work more holistically to protect and sustain tenancies.

The scale of the issues facing the private rented sector are such that the answer does not lie with regulation alone. We must create the right environment to encourage self-compliance by working alongside landlords, property agents and landlord associations, offering opportunities to all landlords and letting agents operating in the Bay.

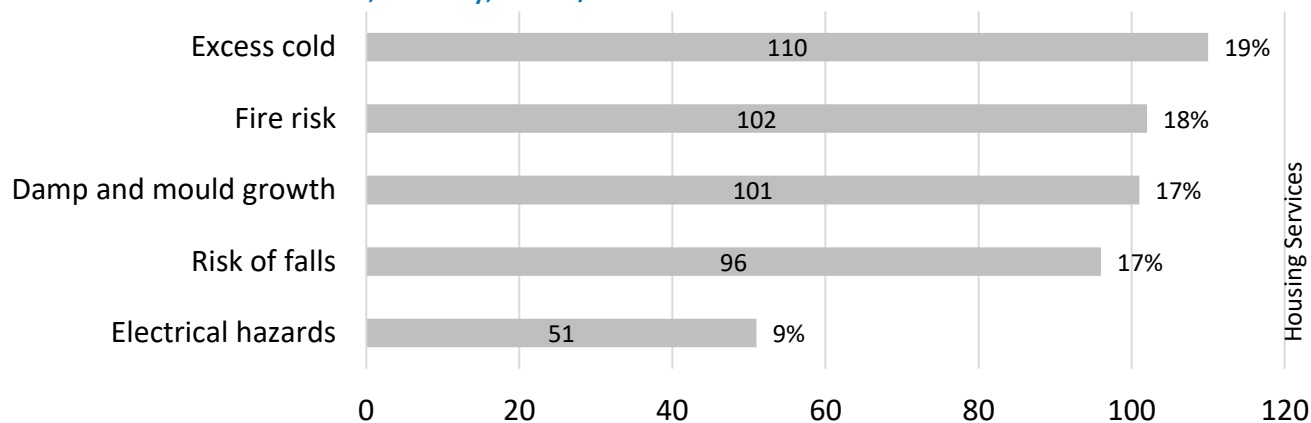
[Renting out your property: GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/renting-out-your-property)

## 7.1a Enforcement

Local housing authorities play a key role in protecting the health, wellbeing and the consumer rights of residents. Our Policy helps to promote efficient and effective approaches to regulatory inspection and enforcement that improve outcomes without imposing unnecessary burdens. It sets out what owners, landlords, their agents and tenants of properties can expect from us and what we expect of them.

We work with private landlords to drive up standards, but the Council will also take action against any landlords who do not comply with legislation, in line with our Housing Enforcement Policy.

**Table 7.4: Main Category 1 and high scoring Category 2 hazards identified and remedied, Torbay, 2019/20**



In 2019/20, the year prior the COVID-19 visiting restrictions, the Housing Standards Team received 848 enquiries and complaints (16 per week) about housing related issues in the private rented sector. From these, the Housing Standards Team identified and enforced against 578 Category 1 and high scoring Category 2 HHSRS hazards. Using the BRE health cost calculator, the hazards remedied resulted in a cost saving to the NHS and wider society of approximately £740,000.

The main issues identified relate to poor heating, risk of fire, damp and mould and falls. Whilst the Team address all hazards during inspections these four issues remain a strategic priority.

On average, Torbay Council serves 49 legal notices each year. These notices ensure that works are undertaken to remedy disrepair, establishing that we will use our powers of enforcement to drive up housing standards. We have also served a number of civil penalty notices as an alternative to lengthy and costly prosecutions of up to a maximum of £30,000. Although Torbay is a small unitary authority, we undertake similar levels of enforcement activity as that of some of the larger metropolitan areas.

[Housing Standards Enforcement Policy: Torbay.gov.uk](https://www.torbay.gov.uk/housing-standards-enforcement-policy)

The Planning Department also have discretionary powers to take enforcement action where unauthorised development has taken place. Unauthorised development includes building works, changes in the use of buildings or land, the appearance of buildings or land, or works to listed buildings

[Planning Enforcement Policy: Torbay.gov.uk](https://www.torbay.gov.uk/planning-enforcement-policy)

## 7.1b Houses in multiple occupation

The definition of a ‘House in Multiple Occupation’ (HMO) is complex and subject to various tests and interpretations. However, a simplified definition is: ‘any dwelling occupied by 3 or more people comprising of 2 or more households who share facilities, such as a kitchen, bathroom and/or toilet and occupy the property as their only, or main residence’.

In larger towns and cities, HMOs are commonly occupied by students, but there is a growing number of young professionals and migrant workers choosing this type of accommodation, as they are often more affordable, with bills included. HMOs are often occupied by the most vulnerable people in our society; in Torbay they are widely occupied by single households in receipt of benefits. These dwellings were often not built for multiple occupation, so the risk of overcrowding and fire can be greater in these dwellings than with any other type of accommodation.

In 2018 the national HMO licencing regulations were changed. As a result, the number of licenced HMOs in Torbay increased to 134. Licencing has been successful in driving up standards, making these larger dwellings safer places in which to live.

A robust assessment of various data sources, including Council Tax records, Housing Benefit claims, and bin collections were undertaken to identify unlicensed HMOs in the Bay. The public can also report suspected unlicensed HMOs via our website. Properties found to be operating without a licence are subject to action in accordance with our Housing Enforcement Policy and non-compliance may result in paying a higher licence fee, a civil penalty of up to £30,000, or even prosecution. As of July 2022, 9 civil penalties have been issued for unlicensed HMOs, with an additional 7 properties that were required to pay the higher application rate due to late licencing.

Identifying non-licensed HMOs remains a challenge to all local authorities in the absence of a much discussed, but not established national landlord registration scheme. It is estimated that approximately 1,450 buildings in Torbay are being used to house multiple households. Their identification remains a strategic priority for the Council.

[Houses in multiple occupation - Torbay Council](#)

## 7.1c Park homes

A park home is a permanently occupied, prefabricated building located with others in a dedicated area, or site. Downsizing to a park home is often viewed as the ideal move for cash-strapped pensioners. On the whole, park homes are cheaper than traditional bricks and mortar, but the costs don't stop at the purchase of the property. Residents will also need to pay a 'pitch fee' or ground rent to the site owner, which increase in line with retail prices index (RPI) inflation each year.

Additionally, heating is primarily provided through high cost fuels, such as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), this coupled with their poor thermal structure this makes them difficult to heat and often count as 'fuel poor'. According to the latest Housing Condition Survey residential caravans had the highest rate of thermal comfort failure at 51%.

It should be noted that Torbay has a relatively low number of park homes compared to other Devon districts. In 2021/22 the Council recorded 239 park homes, over 6 sites.

[Park homes: torbay.gov.uk](http://torbay.gov.uk)

## 7.2 Improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty

The carbon emissions from our area will fall as our homes and businesses become more energy efficient. The widespread reliance on gas as an energy source will mean few households will be immune from rising bills. However, homes with poor fuel efficiency will be hit hardest by energy price rises. Nationally, households who live in a property they own, or rent from a registered provider have the least likelihood of being fuel poor at 8% and 19% respectively. However, households living in privately rented accommodation are most likely to be fuel poor (25%).

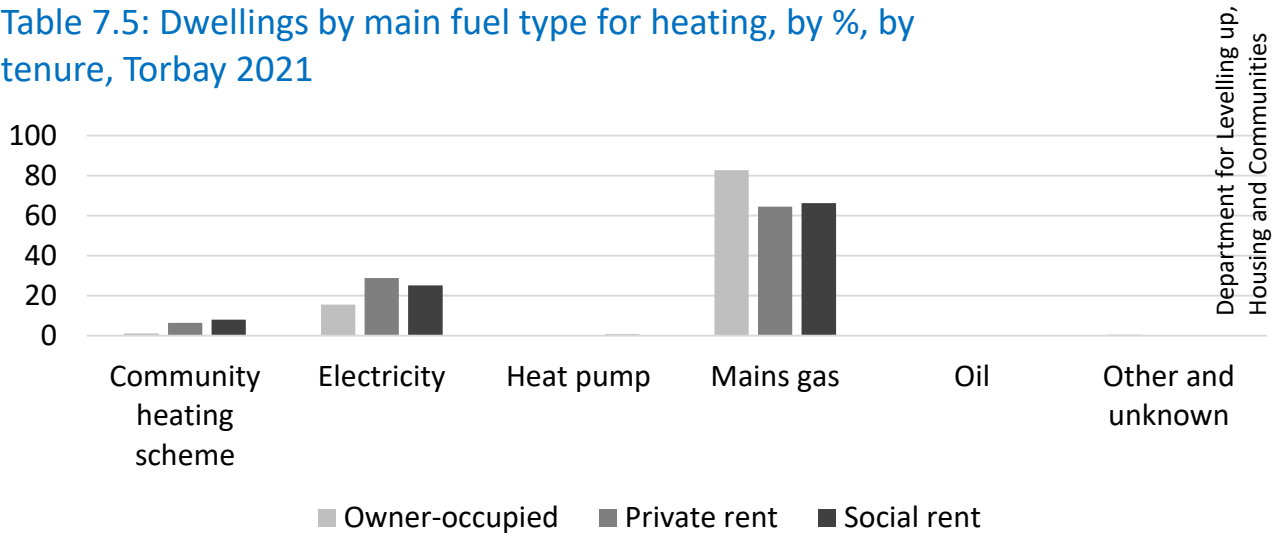
Nationally, 54% of homes in England have an EPC rating lower than band C, for Torbay it rises to 75%. For those with lower EPC ratings, energy bills can be considerably higher.

Fuel poverty is caused by a number of factors:

- Low income
- High energy prices, which are often made worse by higher tariffs for both low-volume users, those not able to pay via direct debit and those unable to access the cheapest 'online only' deals

- Poor energy efficiency – for example, inadequate insulation, inefficient heating systems and under-occupancy

**Table 7.5: Dwellings by main fuel type for heating, by %, by tenure, Torbay 2021**

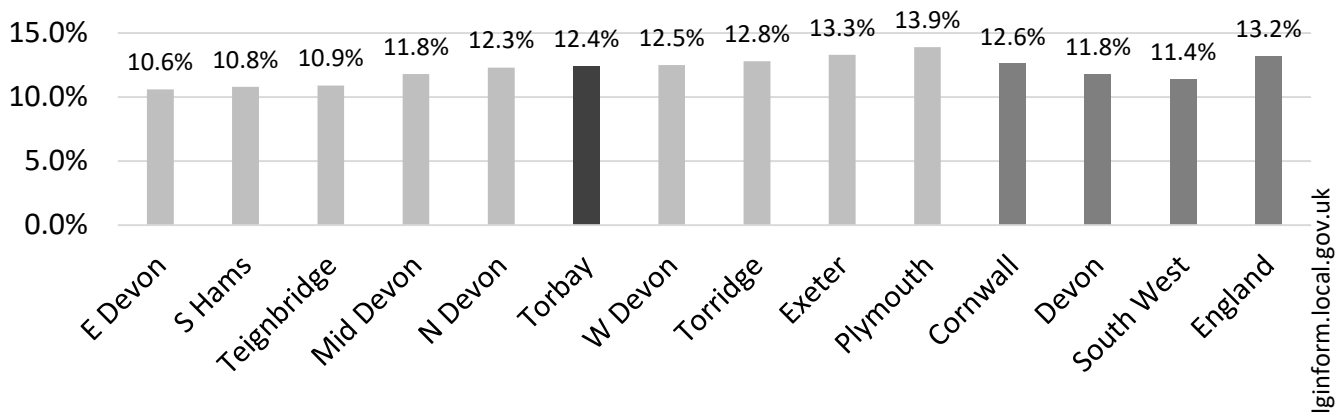


Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

Fuel poverty is most common among vulnerable households:

- Those on low incomes.
- People with children under the age of 16.
- People with disabilities or suffering from a long-term illness.
- Older people

**Table 7.6: % households in fuel poverty, 2020**

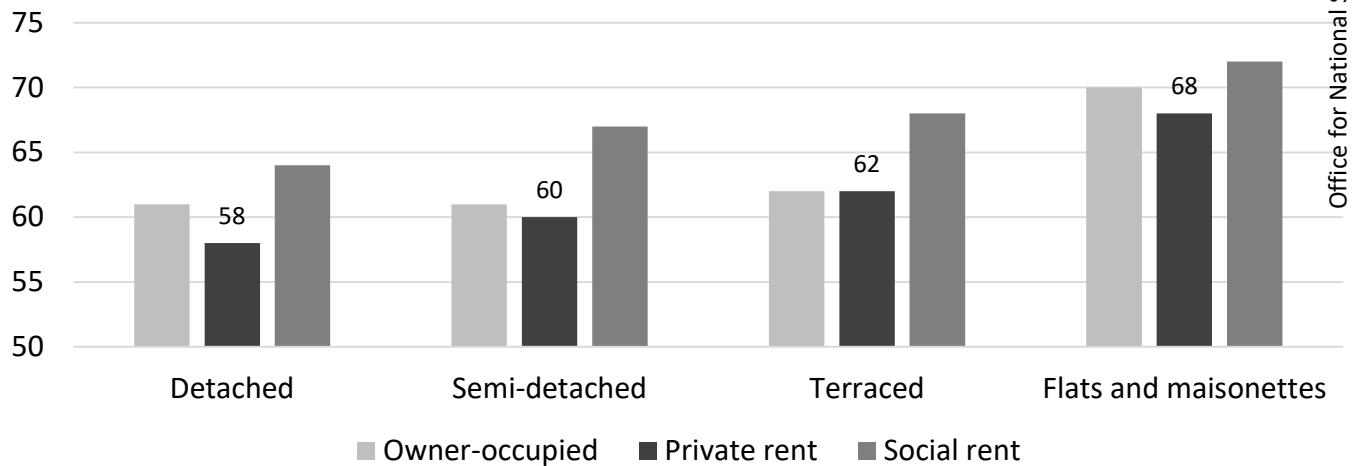


lginform.local.gov.uk

There are a number of factors that are associated with the energy efficiency of housing, including property type, tenure and when it was constructed.

Based on local data it is estimated that 4% of homes in Torbay have an EPC rating below band E compared to England at 2.7%. Nationally, this rises to 4.3% in the private rented sector, higher than for any other tenure. This figure has reduced year on year since 2020, when the Government stipulated that landlords could no longer let properties covered by the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard Regulations (MEES) if they have an EPC rating below E, unless they have a valid exemption in place.

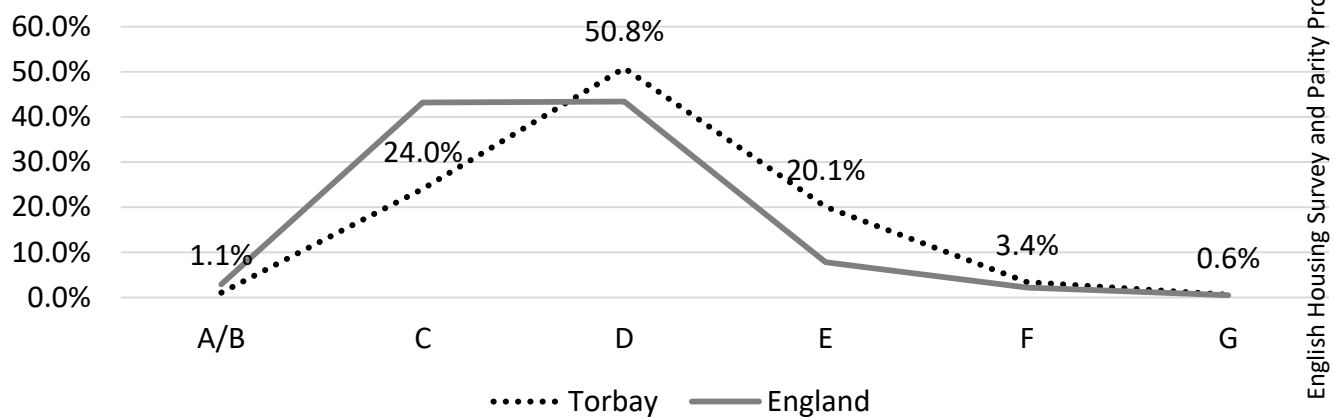
**Table 7.7: Median energy efficiency score, by property type and tenure, England 2021**



Office for National Statistics

By 2030 the Government aims for as many privately rented homes as possible to be upgraded to EPC band C, where practical, cost-effective, and affordable. Nationally, more than half (54%) of all dwellings fall below band C, for Torbay this increases to 75%. In fact, we generally fall behind the national average for energy efficiency.

**Table 7.8: Energy efficiency rating bands, Torbay 2022, England 2020**



English Housing Survey and Parity Projects

The Council has developed a ‘compliance and enforcement plan’ to contact all private rented properties in the Bay where the energy performance certificate (EPC) falls below band E, where it has expired, or where there is none. This requires the checking of approximately 19,000 records. By improving the energy efficiency of homes, we can increase our energy efficiency in the Bay, as well as help occupants save money on their fuel bills.

[MEES: GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/mees)

We have been working with partners in Torbay to utilise Government initiatives, such as ECOflex to target those most in need. Since 2019/20 an average of 214 homes a year have receive energy efficiency measures through the scheme.

[EcoFlex Scheme: Torbay.gov.uk](https://www.torbay.gov.uk/eco-flex)

## 7.3 Keep people independent at home

Getting housing right for people could have immense benefits for society and the economy. Although there are positive initiatives in the pipeline, they are not enough to respond to the rapidly expanding population of older people, in a way that significantly extends the options available.

Maintaining independence and the quality of life is one of the keys to ageing well and mitigates the increasing demand for more expensive care interventions and cost to the NHS. It is easier and less costly to adapt a house for people who develop a mobility problem, or disability, both young and old.

### 7.3a Disabled facilities grants (DFGs)

Households who need to adapt their home to allow them to live independently and safely, may be able to get help with a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). This grant is means-tested, which generally means that if you can afford to do the work yourself, you will not qualify for a grant.

Following an assessment by an occupational therapist, typical adaptations can include:

- external ramps, or internal stair lifts, or widening of doors, helping you move more easily into and around your home
- a level entry shower if you cannot use the bath safely
- providing lower level kitchen worktops for wheelchair users

Prior to the Pandemic, each year we were helping around 143 households to remain independent at home. On average £1,000,000 is spent each year in Torbay to undertake this work and assist people of all ages, including children.

The speed and efficiency with which adaptations are provided can make all the difference between people staying in the comfort and security of their own homes, or suddenly being forced into more expensive care options, such as residential care, or even hospital. Unfortunately, adaptations are often only considered in a crisis situation, so working to make people aware of their housing options in later life is a key consideration, not just for those who are eligible for the grants.

Regarding early assistance, the Council will work more closely with NHS partners to help households prepare their homes for the future. Where residents are admitted to more 'acute' care, such as hospital, it is important that we offer a rapid, co-ordinated response to undertaking works, to promote a safe, timely discharge.

## 8 Improve housing support

Homelessness has a serious and harmful effect on those who experience it. No household should ever have to experience homelessness. Our approach is to prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity, before individuals, or families lose their home. We are developing a separate homelessness and rough sleeping strategy that will be published during the life of this strategy. It will contain a lot more detail about how we intend to tackle homelessness and its causes.

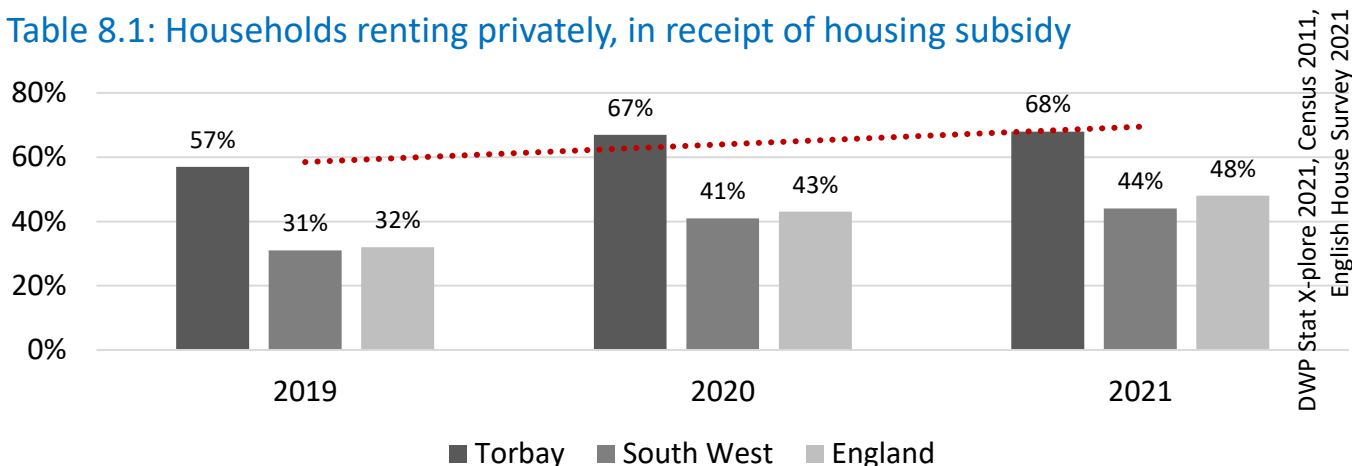
Due to the modest proportion of social housing and the low supply of new build affordable homes Torbay is reliant upon the private rented sector to discharge its homelessness duties. Due to the availability of converted flats, hotel and guest house accommodation in the Bay, Torbay not only draws low-income households, but also receives households from other authorities discharging their duties. In 2020/21, we

saw 43 households from other local authorities placed in temporary accommodation, 7% of all placements. Over time, these households may fall into the Torbay system, thereby exacerbating the problem.

Recent private rental increases, often £150 to £200 above the local housing allowance, have pushed rented accommodation beyond the reach of low-income households and families, also making the Council’s task of finding affordable accommodation more challenging. Additionally, there has been some constraint in private rented stock, as some landlords ‘cash out’ and some convert to the short-term lettings sector, particularly Air BnB style lettings for the holiday market.

The growing number of low-income households in Torbay who are reliant on housing subsidy, such as Housing Benefit, or the housing element of Universal Credit in the private rented sector is significantly higher than national and regional averages and at the upper end of the scale for benchmark authorities. Interestingly, Torbay has approximately twice as many households renting privately in receipt of housing subsidy than the total number of social homes.

**Table 8.1: Households renting privately, in receipt of housing subsidy**



## 8.1 Prevent homelessness

Prevention means helping those at risk of losing their home with the necessary resources and support to stabilise their housing situation and to ultimately reduce the risk of the repeat homelessness by improving social and economic integration. Over the last two years, the Housing Options Team received around 13,000 calls each year. In 2021/22 emergency calls about being ‘homeless tonight’ increased by 12%.

Whilst all calls are important to us, as potentially any call could lead to homelessness and early intervention, focussing on emergencies must be a priority for us to fulfil our homelessness duty.

Although there are many reasons for homelessness, last year, the most common reasons recorded locally were: the loss of a private rented home (34%), family and friends no longer willing, or able to accommodate (19%) and domestic abuse (12%). For many people there will be several reasons; for some there will be multiple, complex reasons. Our primary focus is upon helping households to remain in their own home, provided that it is safe and suitable for them to do so. There are a number of in-house services available to help households remain in their homes, including:

- financial and debt advice
- work with landlords and lettings agents
- mediation with family and friends, or landlords
- partnership work to tackle harassment and domestic abuse

- partnership work to deal with anti-social behaviour
- taking a trauma informed approach to supporting those with complex needs

In 2020/21, of the 3,454 calls made to Housing Options Team as ‘homeless tonight’, 30% were assessed as being owed a homelessness duty. A Housing Prevention Officer has been recruited to identify gaps in our prevention offer by reviewing and understanding trends based on data. By promoting a more holistic approach to tackle homelessness we hope to reduce the number of presentations.

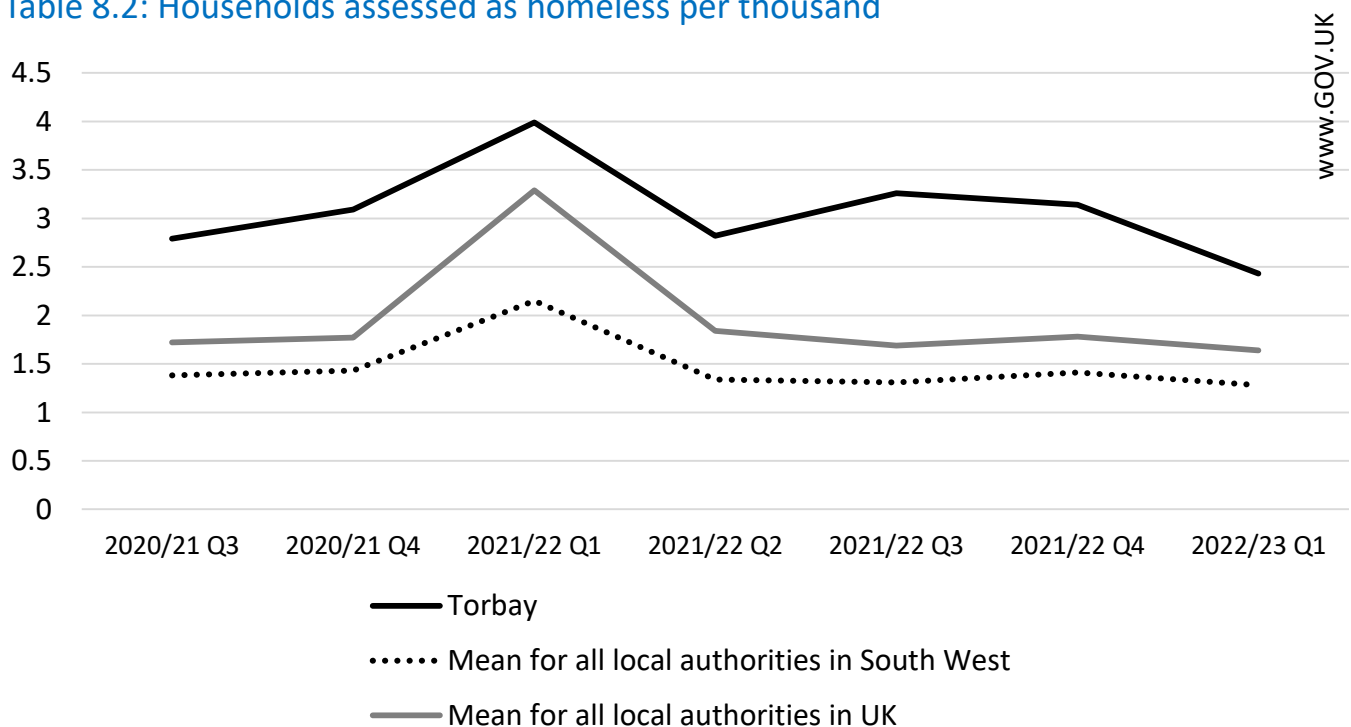
## 8.2 Offer intervention

It is not always appropriate for people to remain in their existing home and sometimes it is not possible to prevent homelessness. ‘Intervention’ covers a broad range of activities that ensure local people who are made homeless are given the support and help they need to access and sustain suitable accommodation.

To intervene effectively to relieve homelessness, we will:

- Act to minimise the use of unsuitable emergency accommodation
- Seek to improve access to a range of accommodation options, both temporary and permanent
- Improve access to, and the effectiveness of support services
- Continue to build on our commitment to end rough sleeping within the Bay using targeted outreach and the development of homelessness and health pathways

Table 8.2: Households assessed as homeless per thousand



Homelessness data across 2019/20 and 2020/21 shows the total number of households assessed as homeless. Over recent years Torbay saw a high proportion of households per thousand population assessed as homeless. This is more than both the national and regional figures.

Due to the large private rented sector and modest social housing sector, Torbay is heavily reliant upon the former to discharge its homelessness duties. For example, in 2021/22 we discharged our homelessness duties into the private rented sector in Torbay (59%) at above the national (34%) and regional (36%) rates.



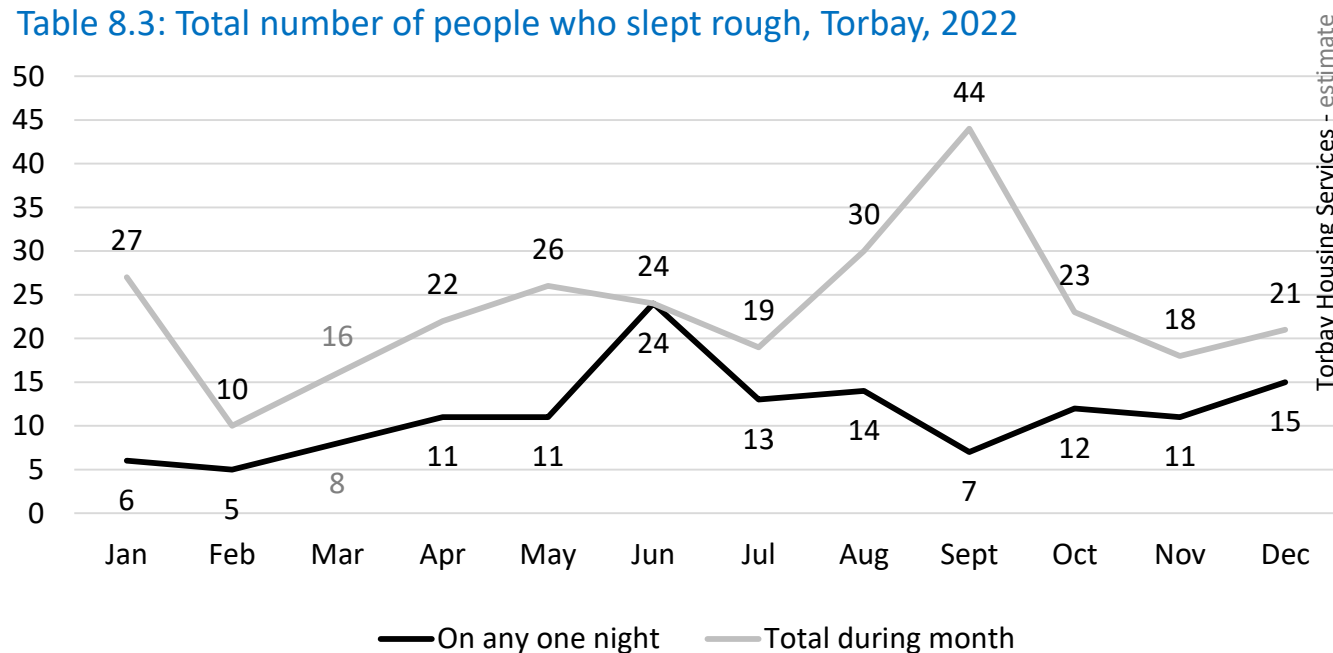
As discussed throughout the strategy, tenancies in the private rented sector are generally more volatile and likely to yield higher homelessness applications and acceptances (38%) than from any other tenure, thus creating a repeating cycle of homelessness.

Given increased demand and the recent price increases in the private rental market, pushing accommodation beyond the reach of low-income households, finding more permanent affordable accommodation has become more challenging. The Council is willing to work with local landlords who are willing to rent accommodation at affordable rents, in return for help and assistance to manage the properties. By providing support, guidance, and mediation, we hope to maintain tenancies and reduce the high churn within this sector.

## 8.2a Addressing rough sleeping

We continue to build on our commitment to end rough sleeping in the Bay by using targeted outreach and the development of homelessness and health pathways. Rough sleeping is the most extreme form of homelessness, and it is therefore right we take action to help people off the streets. The theme throughout this strategy is to make sure that the entire system is working to prevent all forms of homelessness, but also to work across the Council, and with partners to deliver more affordable homes, and work with the private rented sector to promote longer, more secure tenancies.

**Table 8.3: Total number of people who slept rough, Torbay, 2022**



Prevention is vital, but if we are to ensure no one has to sleep rough again, we must act and intervene to support the people who are experiencing it. We need to ensure that people have support in place to move into sustainable accommodation. A stable home is an essential element in a person’s recovery from rough sleeping and needs to go hand in hand with flexible support that is tailored to an individual’s needs. For this reason, we are developing a new routes into temporary and more permanent accommodation.

## 8.3 Help households sustain accommodation

We need to make sure that our interventions are focused towards helping people to sustain safe and suitable accommodation in the long term. Sustainment also means breaking the cycle of repeat and chronic homelessness and enabling people to lead healthy and productive lives.

There are now two resettlement officers within the Housing Options Team. Their role is to visit all households in temporary accommodation to ensure they are providing up to date information to assist timely homeless decisions. Visits also identify any support needs that are required and that clients are 'tenancy ready' by maximising their income, understanding budgeting, assisting applications to the Housing Register and arranging and accompanying clients to private sector viewings.

In most cases these actions reduce the time households spend in temporary accommodation. The Council is fully aware of the current crisis that the Council faces in relation to our temporary and permanent housing. Strategically, we are in a phase of horizon scanning and researching our next steps. As discussed, we intend to increase accessibility to affordable homes, in particularly family-sized accommodation, with new projects, such as the 'Purchase and Repair Scheme' and a 'Right Sizing Project', but we will also need to refocus our attention on prevention to help families to stay settled in the home where they live.

Where appropriate, we pay the top-up on rent for a fixed period to either give breathing space for alternative accommodation to be sought, or other activity such as maximising income through checking benefits and employment opportunities, that would allow the family to remain in their existing homes.

## 9 Action plans and governance

The Council has its own Housing Delivery Group, comprised of officers from: Children's Services, Planning, Housing Options, Housing Standards, Adult Social Care, TorVista, the Torbay Development Agency and elected members. In addition, an external Strategic Housing Board acts as a 'critical friend' to review any actions that the Council proposes to take, making other suggestions as appropriate. This group is made up of local registered providers, Public Health, NHS partners, as well as organisations from the voluntary sector.

Both groups meet every three months to monitor performance and discuss housing priorities, with the aim to tackle barriers and increase resources where required. Following review by the groups above, our action plans are updated and reported on quarterly basis to Council where they are publicly scrutinised under the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

All actions will be assessed annually to make sure that they remain fit for purpose and relevant to addressing key housing issues. To this end we intend to regularly consult with elected members, partners and stakeholders every year before finalising plans and then putting them into action.

[Housing Services action plan](#)

# 10 Appendix A: national policy

This Strategy is informed by a wide legislative and policy context, with many changes to the national policy framework for housing and planning since the previous Housing Strategy 2020-2025. Key areas are outlined in this section by most recent.

## Levelling Up the United Kingdom (2022)

Our aim is to improve pride in place in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas narrowing (Mission Nine). Poor housing quality, overcrowding and a reliance on temporary accommodation for vulnerable families also contribute to unnecessarily poor health and quality of life for many. We will take action on two fronts. First, building more housing in England, including more genuinely affordable social housing. Second, we will launch a new drive on housing quality to make sure homes are fit for the 21st century.

[Levelling Up: GOV.UK](#)

## National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

The NPPF was originally published in 2012 and was most recently revised in July 2021. It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It has three overarching objectives:

1. Economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive, and competitive economy
2. Social objective – to support strong, vibrant, and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations
3. Environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy

Paragraph 65 seeks that at least 10% of homes within major developments to be available for affordable home ownership, unless this would exceed the level of affordable housing required in the area, or seriously prejudice the ability to meet the identified housing needs of specified groups.

[Planning practice guidance; GOV.UK](#)

## Heat and Buildings Strategy 2021

This Heat and Buildings Strategy sets out Government plans to decarbonise homes and commercial, industrial and public sector buildings, towards achieving net zero by 2050. The Strategy outlines 5 core principles to guide action over the next decade and longer-term transformation to net zero:

1. A whole buildings and whole-system approach needs to be taken to minimise costs of decarbonisation
2. Innovation is essential to driving down costs, improving options and informing future decisions
3. 'No- and low-regrets' action need to be accelerated now – prioritising actions to improve the energy performance of buildings, including retrofitting, fabric first approach for improved building thermal efficiency and build the market by developing technical expertise, growing the workforce and the UK's manufacturing capacity and capability. This includes building the market for hydronic heat pumps

4. Balance certainty and flexibility to provide stability for investment and an enabling environment for different approaches to be taken to address different buildings
5. Government will target support to enable action for those most in need

The Strategy confirms additional funding through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (investing £800 million over 2022/23 to 2024/25) and Home Upgrade Grant (investing £950 million over 2022/23 to 2024/25) to improve the energy performance of low-income households' homes, support low-carbon heat installations, help reduce fuel poverty and build the green retrofitting sector.

[Heat and Buildings Strategy 2021](#)

## Future Building Standard (consultation 2021)

The Government's Future Homes and Buildings Standard will come into force from 2025 and strengthen building regulations and result in significant reductions in the amount of carbon emissions new homes and buildings emit; 80% reduction in regulated carbon emissions. However, it is not expected to create carbon neutral homes and buildings and does not tackle operational emissions that arise.

[The Future Buildings Standard: GOV.UK](#)

## Net Zero Strategy: building back greener 2021

This strategy sets out the Government's delivery pathway to net zero emissions by 2050. It covers all sectors of the economy including housing and buildings. Heating homes and buildings makes up about a third of all UK carbon emissions. Decarbonising the way we heat and power our homes is a key strand to delivering net zero by 2050. To reduce these emissions a range of actions are proposed to making the transition to low carbon buildings affordable and achievable for all.

[Net Zero Strategy: GOV.UK](#)

## Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018

The Government announced a new Rough Sleeping Strategy in 2018, with the aim of halving rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027, now brought forward to 2025. Funding has been provided through the Rough Sleeping Initiative and Rapid Rehousing Pathway for Councils to reduce rough sleeping.

[The Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018](#)

## Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Act focuses on significant procedural changes from a range of services, including the police, the courts and domestic abuse services, such as local authorities, particularly in relation to housing provision for survivors of domestic abuse. They include:

1. A duty to provide safe accommodation for all survivors of domestic abuse
2. Ensure that fleeing abuse does not result in the loss of right to lifetime or assured tenancies when these were in place
3. Ensure homeless people identified as survivors of domestic abuse are given priority
4. Prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of support, and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy

The Council has received funding to assist in us fulfilling our new duties under the Act and is working in partnership with other local organisations to develop and deliver our response.

[Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)

## Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 took effect on 3 April 2018, placing new duties on councils to work with homeless families to prevent or relieve homelessness before a main homeless duty is accepted. The main changes brought in by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 are as follows:

1. Work to prevent homelessness of all eligible applicants likely to be homeless in 56 days
2. Work to relieve homelessness of all eligible applicants who become homeless
3. Take reasonable steps to secure accommodation for those who approach for assistance
4. New 'Duty to Refer' for public bodies working with homeless households to the Council Homelessness Team

[Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#)

## 11 Appendix B: Local strategies and plans

### Community and Corporate Plan 2019–2023

The Community and Corporate Plan delivers our ambition of making Torbay 'a place where we have turned the tide on poverty and tackled inequalities; where our children and older people will have high aspirations and where there are quality jobs, good pay and affordable housing for our residents'. Our challenges:

1. An ageing population
2. An unprecedented demand for services for children in need of safeguarding and the protection of care
3. The need for economic and housing growth
4. The climate change emergency
5. Substantial reductions in central government funding

To deliver our ambition we have identified four visions:

1. Thriving people
2. Thriving economy
3. Tackle climate change
4. Council fit for the future

These visions contain a number of housing priorities:

1. Improve the delivery, affordability and quality of housing
2. Reduce levels of deprivation in the Bay
3. Protect and involve children and young people
4. Reduce reliance on addictive substances
5. Work with partners to tackle crime and reduce offending
6. Work with partners to tackle domestic abuse and sexual violence and its effects
7. Focus on areas of significant deprivation
8. Regenerate and re-invent our town centres
9. Reduce Torbay's carbon footprint
10. Encourage a sustainably developed built environment

Prevention and early intervention will be a key component of all Council services. In providing services that help to address needs earlier and aim to deal with the wider causes of all problems, the Council will improve outcomes for communities and individuals.

We will work in partnership with the community and voluntary sector to build resilience and ensure they are equal partners on service design and delivery. We will continue to be part of the Torbay Together partnership, recognising that no organisation can deliver for the community on its own. At a local level, we will continue to work with our wide range of partner organisations, both within the public sector such as the NHS and Police, the private sector and the community and voluntary sector to ensure we maximise the opportunities to deliver services together.

[Community and Corporate Plan 2019-2023](#)

## The Torbay Local Plan 2012 - 2030

It is the Torbay Local Plan that provides the Council's blueprint for housing distribution and the level of development, including affordable housing. It establishes the level and need for supporting infrastructure and sets out a raft of policies, proposals and actions to meet the environmental, social and economic challenges facing the area.

The Local Plan sets out policies and proposals for land use in the Bay that guides and shapes day-to-day decisions as to whether or not planning permission should be granted. It is an important document that sets out the planning vision for the area, delivering growth, jobs, homes, facilities and environmental protection. It guides the location of homes, employment land, business infrastructure and community facilities over the next decade.

Because the Local Plan was adopted more than 5 years ago, the housing requirement is set by a national formula, set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The national formula for calculating housing need gives a figure of at least 600 homes per year in 2022. This target is calculated based on household formation projections and the affordability of local housing and is updated on an annual basis.

Policy H2 of the Local Plan sets out thresholds for affordable housing. All housing developments that are of sufficient size should provide an element of affordable housing. The NPPF stipulates that affordable housing cannot be sought from non-major housing developments (broadly fewer than 10 dwellings), other than in the AONB. On this basis the Local Plan seeks affordable housing from brownfield sites of 15+ dwellings and greenfield sites of 10+ dwellings (3 in the AONB). To meet the housing needs of local people, affordable housing will be sought on a sliding scale of up to 30% on qualifying sites, as set out in Policy H2.

Policies ES1 and SS14 of the Local Plan seek to minimize carbon emissions from development. Applications for major development should include an 'energy statement' setting out how energy efficiency, low carbon design, and climate resilience has been incorporated into the development. The policy seeks to ensure that development minimises carbon emissions and maximises the use of natural resources through the consideration of construction methods and materials, design, energy, water consumption, waste management, travel planning and carbon offsetting.

The Planning Contributions and Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides more detail on the implementation of affordable housing planning policies, and other developer Section 106 'obligations'. Affordable housing is the Council's highest priority for S106 obligations after directly necessary 'site delivery matters' such as access and ecological mitigation have been provided.

[Torbay Local Plan 2012-2030](#)

## Torbay's Neighbourhood Plans

Neighbourhood plans help local communities play a direct role in planning homes and infrastructure in the areas where people live and work. The policies in these plans are related to the use of land and to characteristics that affect how a place works. They are the legal starting point for considering all planning applications in their respective areas, alongside the Local Plan.

There are currently 4 neighbourhood areas designated across the Bay, each with a neighbourhood plan:

1. Broadsands, Churston and Galmpton
2. Brixham Peninsula
3. Paignton
4. Torquay

These plans have all been through the statutory process, including local referendums and have been formally accepted ('made') by Full Council in 2019. They set out additional policies for development beyond the Local Plan, with a strong preference for previously developed land. Policy BH2 of the Brixham Peninsula Neighbourhood Plan sets out a local occupancy requirement for affordable homes in that area. The current plans are now more than two years old and are being refreshed by the Neighbourhood Planning bodies.

[Neighbourhood plans: Torbay.gov.uk](https://www.torbay.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plans)

## Carbon Neutral Torbay 2019

In June 2019 Torbay Council declared a climate emergency. Torbay Council has responded by committing to making Torbay carbon neutral by 2030, as indicated in its Community and Corporate Plan. The Council is also working in partnership with the Devon Climate Emergency Partnership, and with Devon County Council to help deliver the forthcoming Devon Carbon Plan. This plan has a range of actions to reduce carbon emissions associated with homes across Devon.

[Carbon Neutral Torbay  
Devon climate emergency](https://www.torbay.gov.uk/carbon-neutral-torbay-devon-climate-emergency)

## Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026

The Torbay Health and Wellbeing Board, has been preparing the next Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy that has identified 5 priority areas:

1. Mental health and wellbeing
2. Good start to life
3. Supporting people with complex needs
4. Healthy ageing
5. Digital inclusion

In addition, there are six cross-cutting areas:

1. Housing
2. Physical activity
3. Tackling inequalities
4. Climate sustainability
5. Domestic and sexual violence and abuse
6. Supporting carers

The strategy responds to the latest Torbay joint strategic needs assessment and to the issues highlighted in the Chief Medical Officer's annual report on health in coastal communities 2021 and the Levelling Up Government White Paper. It also takes account of the developing Torbay economic strategy.

[Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026](#)

## 12 Contact details and alternative versions

If you need this information in another format, please contact us.

**Email:** [housing@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:housing@torbay.gov.uk)

**Web:** [www.torbay.gov.uk/housing](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/housing)

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