

# Torbay Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Evidence base

2024

'Homelessness, it's more than not having a home'

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# 1 Purpose

## 1.1 introduction

The Homelessness Act (2002) places a duty on English local housing authorities, to formulate a homelessness strategy at least every five years. The legislation requires local housing authorities to take strategic responsibility for tackling and preventing homelessness in their local authority area.

There are two key stages to making a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. Firstly, a review of homelessness in a local authority to evaluate the current picture, following which, a strategy will be formulated, considering all forms of homelessness.

Legislation specifies five key stages to carrying a homelessness review:

1. Reviewing the current and future likely levels of homelessness
2. Reviewing activities for preventing homelessness
3. Reviewing activities for securing accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
4. Reviewing the support available for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, or were previously homeless
5. Reviewing the resources available to tackle homelessness

To develop and inform the new Strategy, Torbay Council has undertaken a review of national, regional and local homelessness and related statistics to provide evidence within this document. It will help shape and inform the Strategy and provide an update on the local picture, highlighting emerging issues, trends and potential solutions, to secure a better understanding and resolution of Torbay's homelessness and rough sleeping issues.

Following the review, Torbay Council will revise its existing 'Homelessness Strategy 2019-24', by developing a new 'Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 to 2030'. The Homelessness Act (2002) stipulates that a strategy must include objectives for:

1. Preventing homelessness in the area
2. Making sure that accommodation is, or will be, available for people in the area who are, or might be, homeless
3. Providing support for people in the area who are, or may become homeless, or have been homeless and need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again

The Strategy intends to provide the framework for the future long-term, sustainable approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in the area. To provide a benchmark for Torbay, key data is included from four comparator areas to help demonstrate why Torbay is performing in different ways from the national, regional and local trends. Where data allows, we have set out statistics over a number of years, thus demonstrating trends over time. In some instances, the report refers to other, local Devon authorities, as well as local authority groupings by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), but the majority refer to similar local authorities in the following areas, due to their coastal locations and similar socio-economic challenges.

# 2 Statistical summary

The following key statistics are drawn from each of main chapters:

## 2.1 Current and future likely levels of homelessness

1. There is a high proportion of households (per thousand population) assessed as homeless in Torbay (3.31), compared to the national average (2.00), 2021/22
2. A total of 14,075 calls were received by the Housing Needs Team, that's an average of 1,143 per calendar month. 28% were high priority, 2023
3. A total of 1,194 households were assessed by the Torbay Housing Needs Team. 2022/23.
4. Since 2019, there has been an average of 501 households staying in temporary accommodation each year. This dropped to 416, in 2022/23, with 55.7% singles, 3.6% couples and 40.6% families
5. A total of 1,688 households on the Housing Register, a 7% increase since the same time last year. April 2023
6. The Autumn 2022 annual rough sleeping snapshot found a total of 20 people sleeping rough in Torbay, this is higher than the average of 15 for all English unitary authorities

## 2.2 Preventing homelessness

1. A total of 268 households were owed a homelessness duty: 153 (57%) households were assessed as homeless and 115 as threatened with homelessness. 2023/24 Q1
2. On average, 28% of households needing homeless assistance required temporary accommodation. This dropped to 19% in January 2024
3. On average, 57% of households said the ending their private rented tenancy led to the loss of their home, nearly twice the national average (30%) and above that of the South West (36%), 2022/23
4. An average of 22% single female and 53% single males are owed a homelessness duty. The male figure is higher than that of England (Female 22%, male 49%), 2022/23
5. On average, Torbay recorded 35% of households owed a main duty with dependent children, compared to 55% for England and 47% for the south West

## 2.3 Securing accommodation

1. From 2020 to 2023, there has been a 50% increase in those on the Housing Register, with a 40% reduction of lets into the social rented sector
2. More than 1 in 4 (27%) households privately rent, significantly higher than England (20%)
3. From August 2022 to August 2023 there were only two, four bedroom properties advertised via Devon Home Choice, meaning greater waiting times for families in 'temporary' accommodation
4. Households living in private rented accommodation spend around 35% of their household income on housing costs. This drops to 29% in social homes and 18% for households with a mortgage
5. Local private rental increases are now, on average, £350 above the local housing allowance per calendar month, increasing for larger properties
6. During 2022/23, the duration of stay in B&B has rapidly diminished to 9 weeks for singles, 7 weeks for couples and only 2 weeks for families
7. An average of 293 children each year in temporary accommodation, staying for approximately 22 weeks, 72% of whom are primary school age and 28% secondary school age
8. In 2022/23 there were 28 households in safe accommodation, 3 quarters into 2023/24, that number has doubled to 56, each year 89% are women

## 2.4 Appropriate support

1. A 'history of mental health problems', was the 'support need' for 47 % of those owed a duty. This is almost double that of England (25%) and above that of the South West (33%)
2. A 'physical ill health and disability', was the 'support need' for 32% of those owed a duty. This is twice the national average (16%) and greater than that of the South West (21%)
3. A 'physical ill health and disability' was the 'support need' for 14% of those owed a duty, rising sharply last year to 22%. This is double that of England (11%) and above that of the South West (13%)

Further statistics are available via the data sources in Appendix 2.

# 3 Current and future likely levels of homelessness

This chapter presents an overview of overall levels of homelessness in Torbay by looking at the level of housing need, street sleeping and service users' journeys. It is intended that this will help to better understand the drivers and levels of homelessness within Torbay, so as to assess the necessary resources required to enable our service to better prevent homelessness and improve the support we provide.

Torbay has a duty to secure a home for households under a specific legislative criterion, this is often referred to as the 'main homelessness duty'. However, many people who are not entitled to help with housing, or who do not even approach their councils for help, are not counted in the official statistics. Many stay in hostels, squats, or stay in overcrowded, 'concealed' accommodation, such as the floors, or sofas of friends and/or family.

It has been predicted that the levels of hidden homelessness are 13 times higher than street homelessness, with young people, persons who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender, and those escaping domestic abuse, being most likely to experience this form of 'hidden' homelessness.

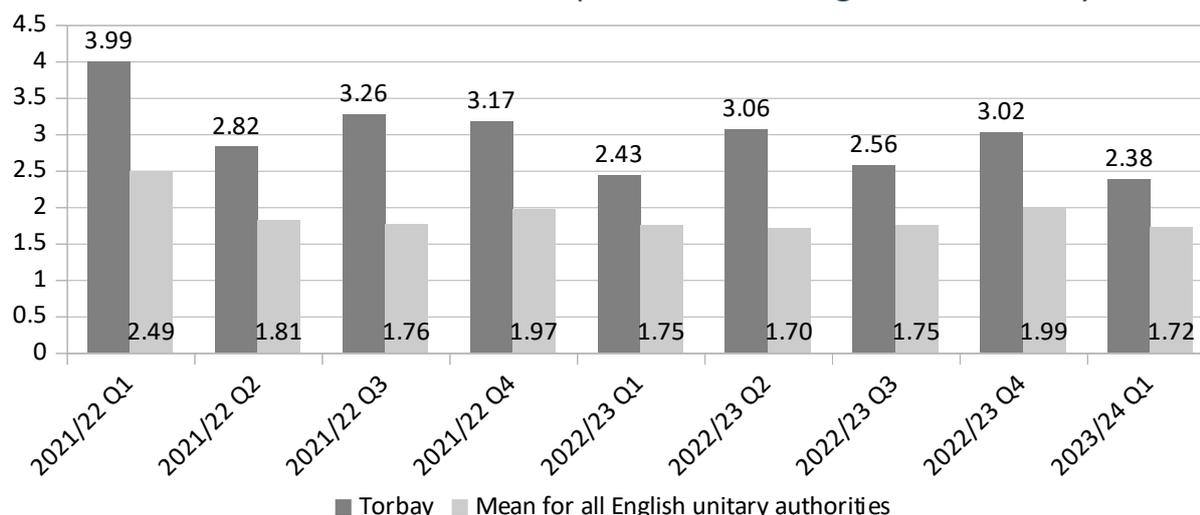
Source: LG Inform

## 3.1 Demand on services

Households find themselves at risk of homelessness for many reasons, often through no fault of their own. For example, one of the largest drivers for homelessness in Torbay is the loss of private rented tenancies, due to the larger proportion of homes in the private rented sector in Torbay (27%), compared to that of the national figure (20%). Torbay also has a small social housing stock (8%), compared to England (18%), which means that there is an over reliance on discharging a homeless duty back into the private rented sector in Torbay.

Following the pandemic the number of people losing private rented accommodation increased dramatically due to the backlog of evictions, landlords selling, or converting to holiday accommodation and private rents increasing to unaffordable levels, way beyond housing benefit payments. In 2021/22 Torbay saw a high proportion of households per thousand population assessed as homeless (3.31), compared to the national average (2.00).

### 3.01 Households assessed as homeless per thousand, England and Torbay



Source: LG Inform (1.90)

In 2022/23, Torbay continued to see a high proportion of households per thousand population assessed as homeless, compared to the national average, however both figures have reduced to 2.8 per thousand and 1.8 per thousand respectively.

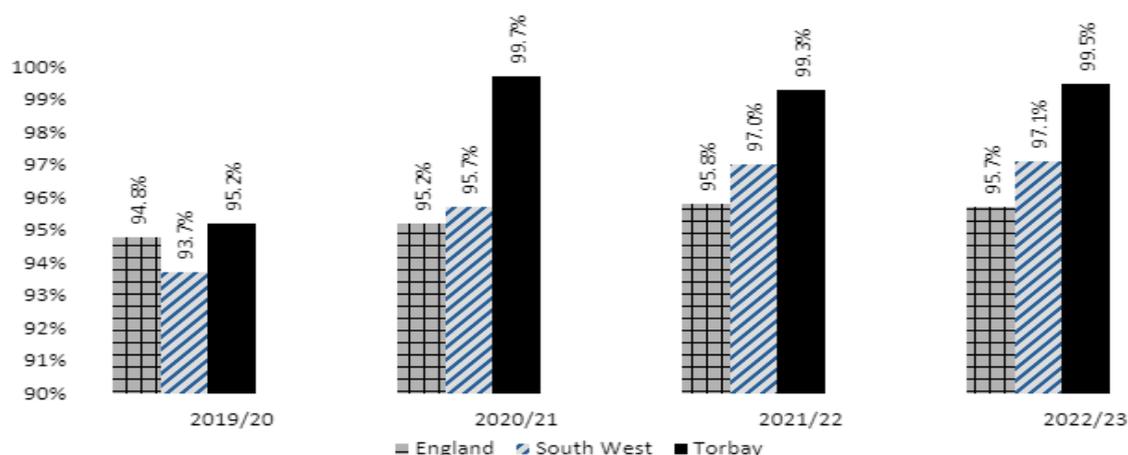
### 3.02 Number of households in housing need, bands A to D at 1st April 2023, Devon

	Band A		Band B		Band C		Band D		Total	Band E	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%		Count	%
West Devon	1	0%	122	23%	147	28%	258	49%	528	450	46%
South Hams	4	1%	212	27%	184	23%	398	50%	798	680	46%
Mid Devon	0	0%	155	18%	299	35%	406	47%	860	811	49%
Teignbridge	0	0%	241	21%	350	31%	541	48%	1,132	0	0%
Torrige	0	0%	170	15%	366	32%	608	53%	1,144	842	42%
North Devon	4	0%	311	21%	405	27%	770	52%	1,490	754	34%
<b>Torbay</b>	4	0%	332	20%	435	26%	917	54%	1,688	0	0%
Exeter	4	0%	488	22%	589	27%	1,114	51%	2,195	0	0%
East Devon	3	0%	333	13%	825	32%	1,427	55%	2,588	2,786	52%
Plymouth	10	0%	1,592	21%	1,937	25%	4,127	54%	7,666	3,636	32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>3,956</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>5,537</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>10,566</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>20,089</b>	<b>9,965</b>	<b>33%</b>

Source: Devon Home Choice (1.88)

At 1 April 2023, there were a total of 1,688 households on the Housing Register, a 7% increase since the same time in 2022. Low-income households are increasingly reliant on the private rented sector, with nearly 70% of these households dependent on some form of housing subsidy.

### 3.03 Total households assessed as owed a duty 2019-2023



[GOV.UK: Tables on homelessness \(1.23\)](#)

Torbay, had higher than the national and regional averages for households assessed as owed a duty.

Since 2019/20 the Torbay Housing Needs Service has assessed an average of 1,132 households each year, with 1,194 assessed as homeless in 2022/23. That is approximately 23 households assessed each week.

During 2023/24 Q1, 46 households were accepted as priority need and owed a main duty in Torbay, and 25 were identified as vulnerable households. Since 2020/21, Torbay, and its comparator local authorities have recorded higher levels of households assessed as owed a duty, at around 99%, however the South West is beginning to record higher levels as that of Torbay.

Both Bournemouth and Hastings have been used as a benchmark authority to Torbay, as they represent coastal locations that have similar level of social housing to Torbay. It aims to illustrate the similar challenges for a similar type of local authority. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) comparators do not consider the housing market makeup in the area, which in turn play a significant role in accessing and keeping a home.

### Priority need category of households owed a main duty

Households that are threatened with homelessness within 56 days are owed help from the local authority to prevent homelessness and the authority must work to relieve homelessness for those who are actually homeless. If their homelessness cannot be resolved during this time, then the Council may need to provide temporary accommodation through a 'main duty'.

Main homelessness duty describes the duty a local authority has towards an applicant who is unintentionally homeless, eligible for assistance and has priority need. This definition has not been changed by the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017). This means that the Council has a duty to source suitable alternative accommodation.

In total, there are 550 homelessness cases being processed each month. On average, each month, there are the following active cases:

**64 triage:** an assessment of a homeless person’s housing need, this includes the tailored needs of the applicant. These details are then shared with the applicant to inform their personal housing plan

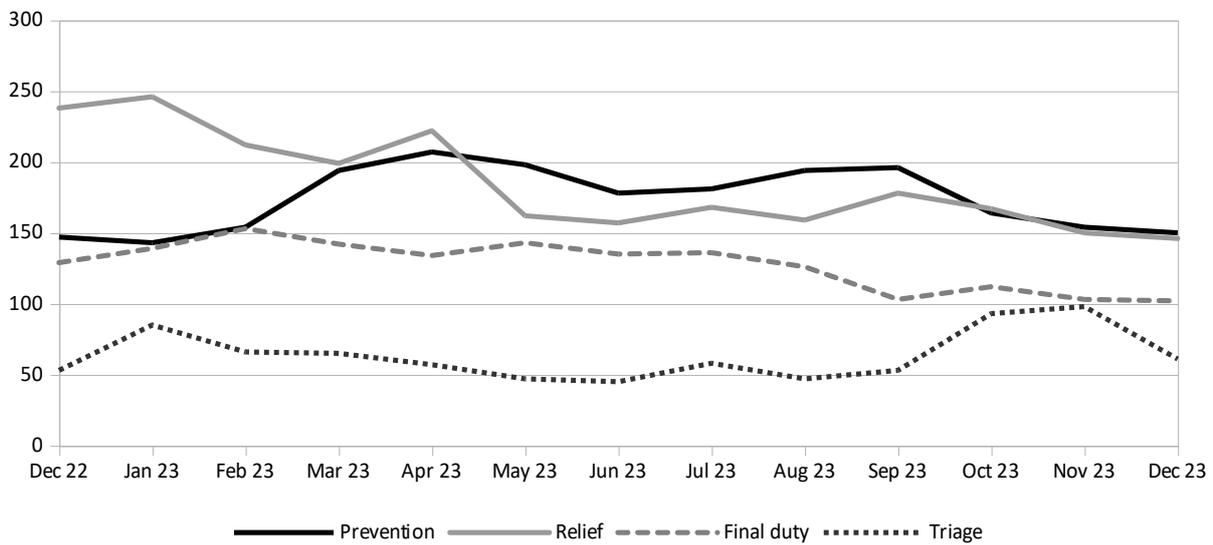
**174 prevention:** steps taken to help households to secure accommodation, for example mediation, matching with private landlords, assistance with applying for social housing

**185 relief:** threatened with homeless and a duty to prevent, could include household in temporary accommodation

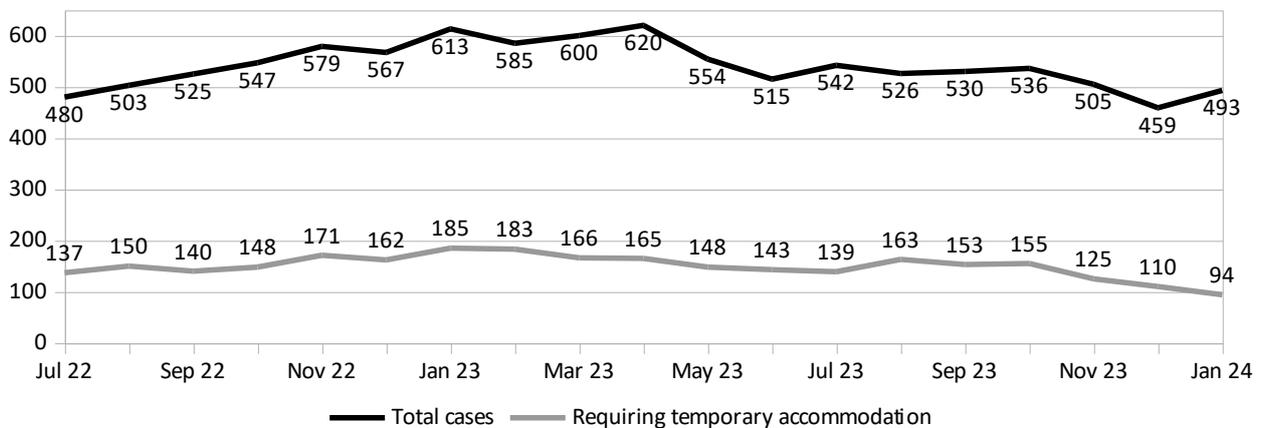
**127 final duty:** where the local authority must conclude whether, a full housing duty i.e. need to assist in proving permanent accommodation, is owed to the applicant or duty has come to an end

### 3.04 Active homelessness cases within the Housing Needs Service, Torbay, 2023

Source: Torbay Housing Needs Service (1.77)



### 3.05 Number of households needing homeless assistance, Housing Needs, Torbay



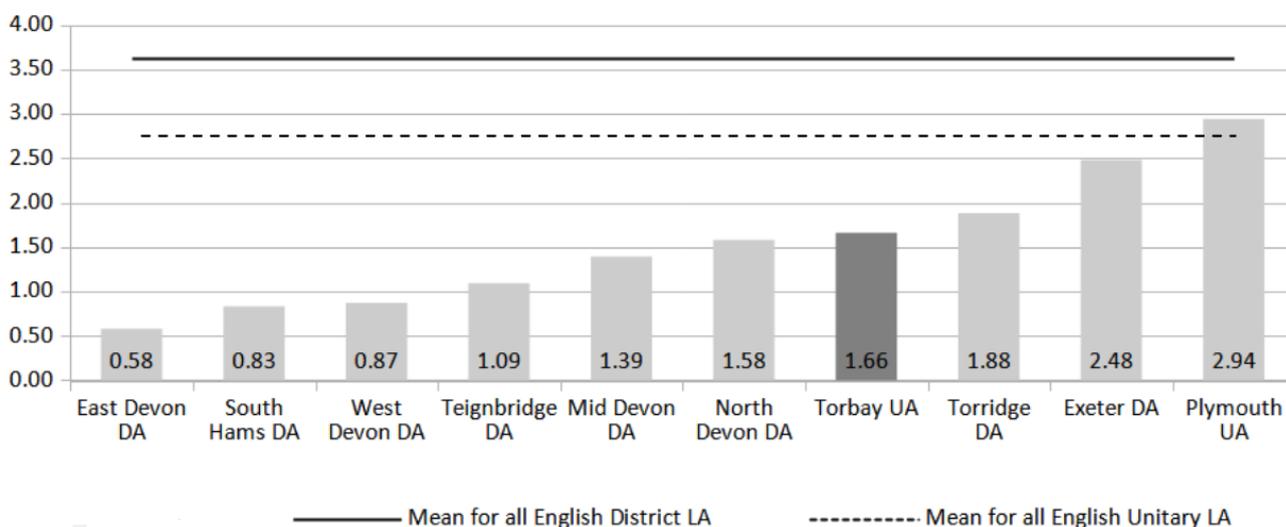
Source: Torbay Housing Needs Service (1.78)

On average, 28% of households needing homeless assistance required temporary accommodation. This dropped to 19% in January 2024.

## 3.2 Temporary accommodation

Households in temporary accommodation refers to households living in accommodation secured by Torbay Council under its statutory homelessness functions. The majority of households in temporary accommodation have been placed under the main homelessness duty to secure suitable accommodation until the duty ends. This data therefore provides a useful indication of levels of potential resident vulnerability within Torbay.

### 3.06 Number of households in temporary accommodation, per (000's), Devon, 2023/24 Q3



Source: LG Inform (1.05)

For the larger conurbations in Devon the number of households in temporary accommodation reflect the overall population sizes of Plymouth, Torbay and Exeter, although, Torbay is above the average for all English unitary authorities.

In 2023/24 Q1, there were, on average, a total of 130 households in temporary accommodation in Torbay. This equates to a rate of 2.15 households per 1,000 households, which is lower than the all English unitary authorities rate of 2.42. Whilst trends have been increasing nationally, Torbay experienced an earlier increase than others. This along with the work that has been undertaken, has meant that there has not been as sharp an increase compared to others areas, although it is still significant.

## 3.3 Rough sleeping

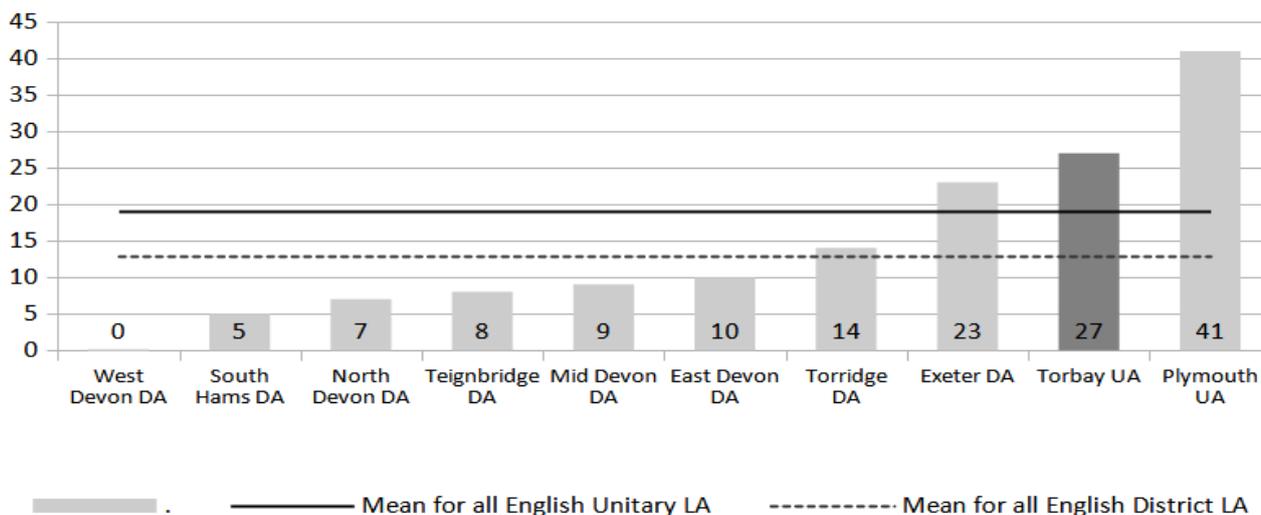
Rough sleeping is the most visible and dangerous form of homelessness. It rightly causes the most concern among the public, decision makers, and advocates for homeless people in the charity sector. The longer someone experiences rough sleeping the more likely they are to face challenges around trauma, mental health, and drug and alcohol misuse.

Generally, most people experiencing street homelessness in Torbay are from, or have a local connection. However, there are seasonal changes whereby more people from out of area arrive from April through to the end of September. Most transient people stay for a short time before moving on, typically seeking no local assistance from Housing Services.

## The number of people sleeping rough

People sleeping rough are defined as those sleeping or about to bed down in open air locations and other places including tents and makeshift shelters. The government’s annual snapshot records only those people seen, or thought to be, sleeping rough on a single night, the date of which is chosen by the local authority between 1st October and 30th November.

### 3.07 Number of people sleeping rough in Torbay, annual gov snapshot, Devon 2023



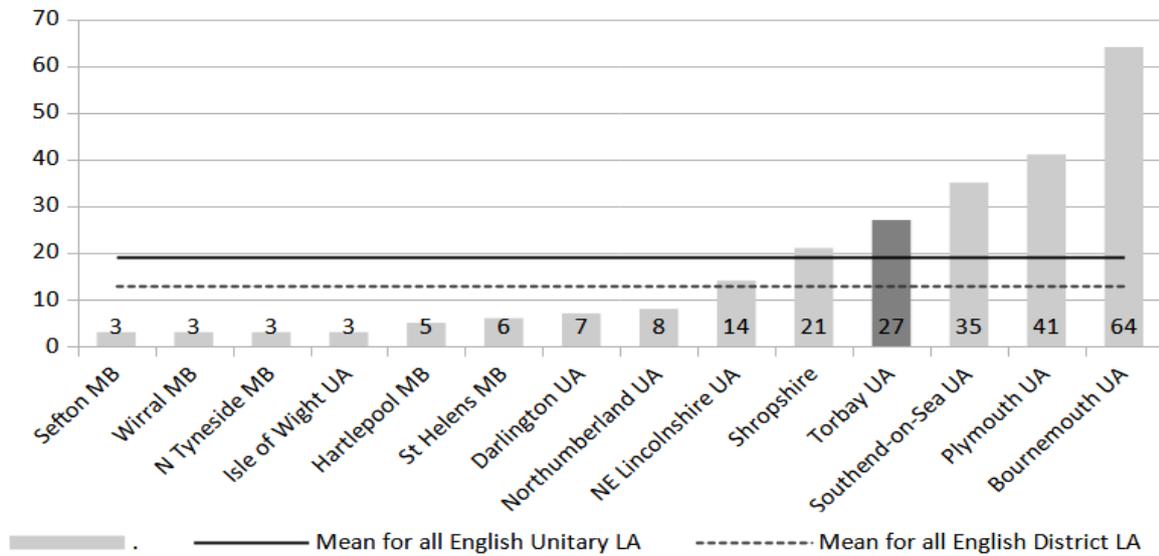
Source: LG Inform (1.86)

The Autumn 2023 annual rough sleeping snapshot found a total of 27 people sleeping rough in Torbay, this is higher than the mean for all English unitary authorities. When compared with our neighbouring authorities in Devon (Autumn 23) Torbay was ranked second behind Plymouth.

In Q3 22/23, 79.8% of the relief cases taken were from single person households. The average for England was 68%. Of the cases considered for the main housing duty in this period, 52% were single person households who were found to not be in priority need, so the Council has no statutory accommodation duty.

This is a national picture and Torbay is not unique in experiencing increased numbers. An increase in rough sleeping was experienced in all regions of England. Numbers nationally increased by 26% in 2022 and are estimated to increase again in 2023.

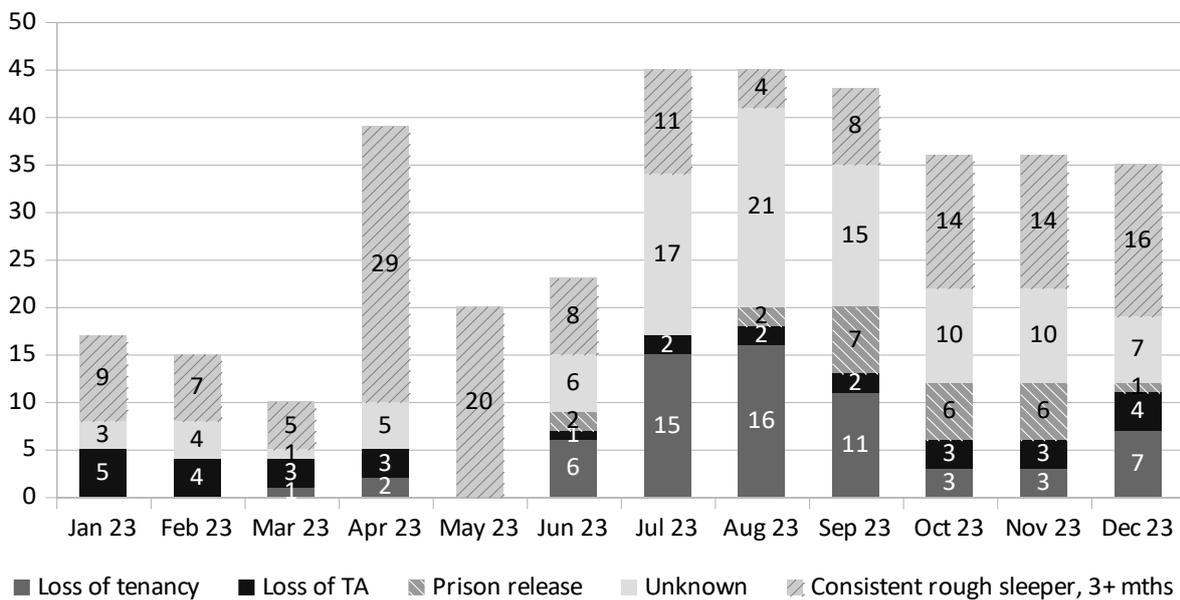
### 3.08 Number of rough sleepers, (CIPFA), annual gov snapshot, 2023



Source: LG Inform (1.87)

One of the main reasons of street homeless is the loss of a tenancy, which seems to spike, with a 200% increase in the summer months, when the weather is more clement and those evicted may try their luck sleeping outdoors. It is also the season when landlords tend to seek higher rents and holiday lets.

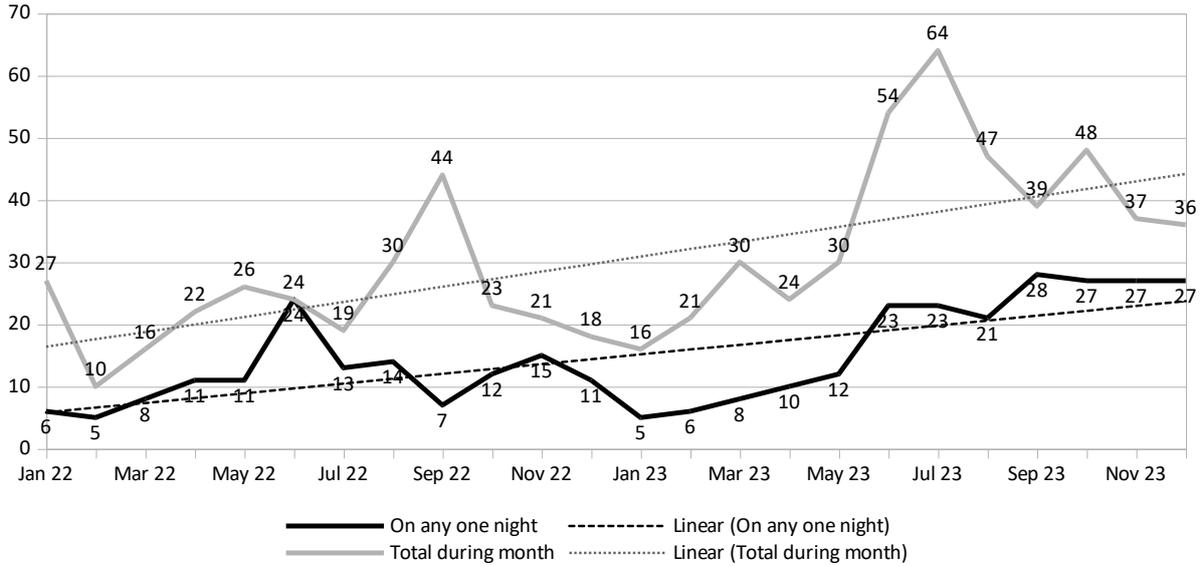
### 3.09 Reasons people became street homeless, Torbay, 2023



Source: Torbay Housing Needs Service (1.83)

The picture of street homelessness is also always evolving. There is a common misconception that people are static. Although there will always be those that sleep on the streets for a period of time in an area, the number of different people over a month will be far more than that on any one night. This reflects the true picture of street homelessness and the transient nature of location, or sofa surfing that is part of the hidden picture.

### 3.10 Total number of people who slept rough, monthly, Torbay 2022/23



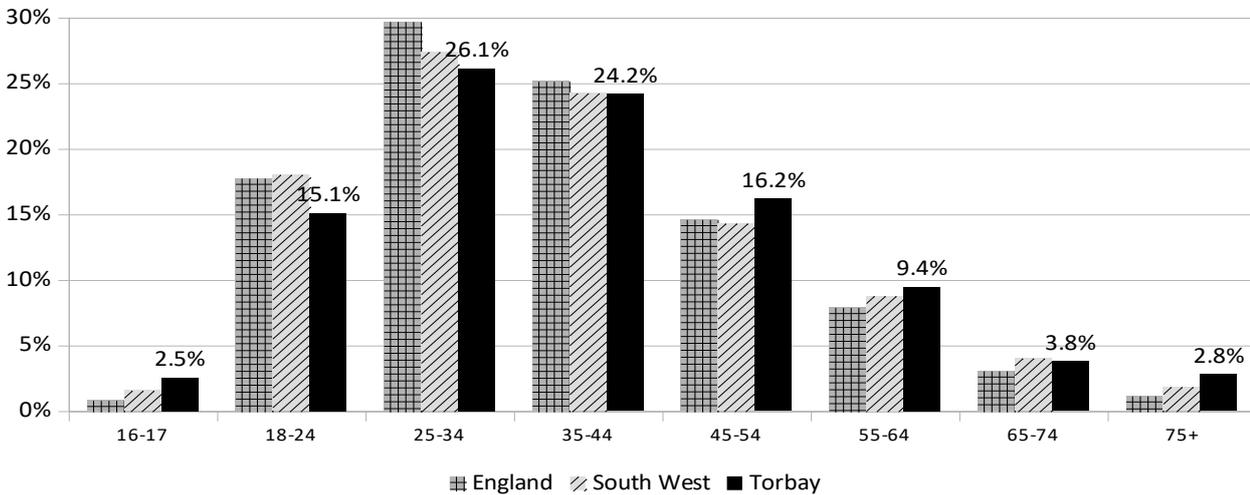
Source: Torbay Housing Needs Service (1.10)

In December 2024, the Rough Sleeping Team (RSI) was working with 59 different individuals. A 35% increase since the start of the year.

## 3.4 Client characteristics

### Age

#### 3.11 Age of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty, 2022/23



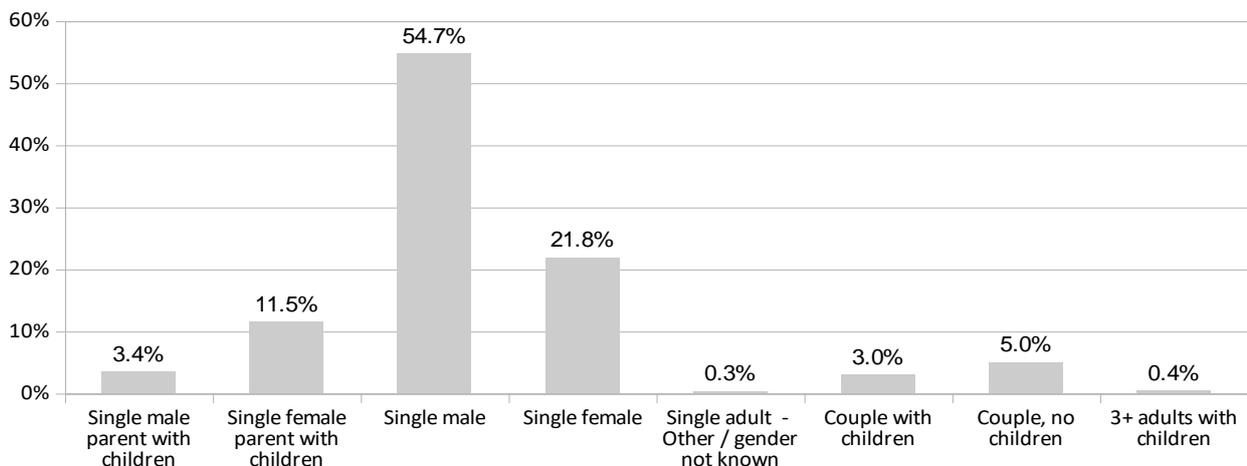
GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness (1.71)

This chart shows the proportion of main applicants from each household assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty by their age groups for Torbay alongside the mean, median and maximum figures for all English unitary authorities. The age group with the highest number of households owed a duty in Torbay in 2022/23 was 25 to 34 and 35 to 44, with 310 households and 287 households respectively.

In regard to youth homelessness, there were 30, 16 to 17 year olds and 179, 18 to 24 year olds owed a prevention or relief duty in 2022/23. However, it should be noted that this number has decreased since the year before from 39 (3.6%) down to 30 (25%) for 16 to 17 year olds and from 197 (18%) to 179 (15.1%) for 18 to 24 year olds, the latter lower than the national and South West averages. There were 193 people aged 45 to 54 and 112 people aged 55 to 64, both higher than the national and South West averages. There is also a higher than average number of people (33) owed a duty who are 75 years, or older.

## Gender and family grouping

### 3.12 Household gender and grouping of main applicants owed a relief duty, 2022/23



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(1.89\)](#)

Over half of the applicants owed a relief duty were single males (386), followed by single female households (154). There were 81 single female parents and 24 single male parents with children, 35 couples with no children and 21 couples with children. There were 3 adults with children, presumably adult children and 2 households registered who identified as 'other' gender.

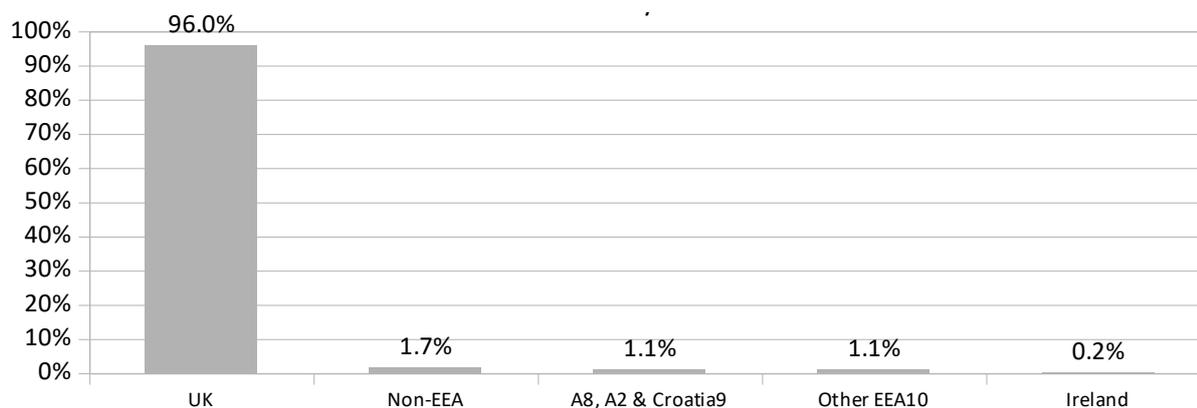
The gender split for those sleeping rough in Torbay and more generally, is approximately 1 in 4 female (20% female and 80% male).

## Ethnicity

In 2022/23 Torbay, the main applicants owed a prevention, or relief duty were recorded as: 0.8% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, 1.1% Asian/Asian British, with 1% Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups. The main ethnic group being 93% white.

## Nationality

### 3.13 Nationality of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty, 2022/23

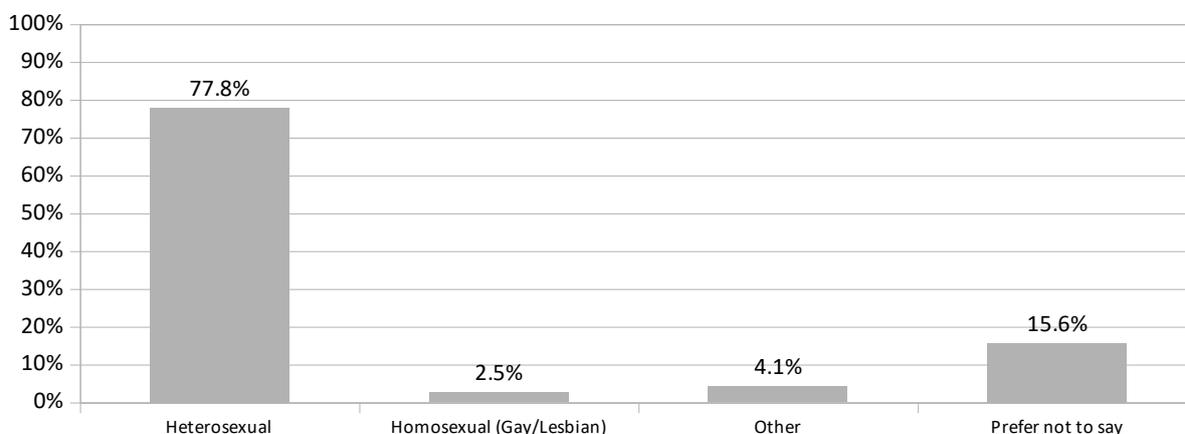


[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(1.73\)](#)

In Torbay, 1,140 households were recorded as having the UK as the nationality of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty, followed by 20 Non-EEA, 13 A8, A2 and Croatia and 10 'Other EEA'. Smaller numbers are suppressed to protect the identity of the households.

## Sexual identification

### 3.14 Sexual identification of main applicants owed a duty, 2022/23

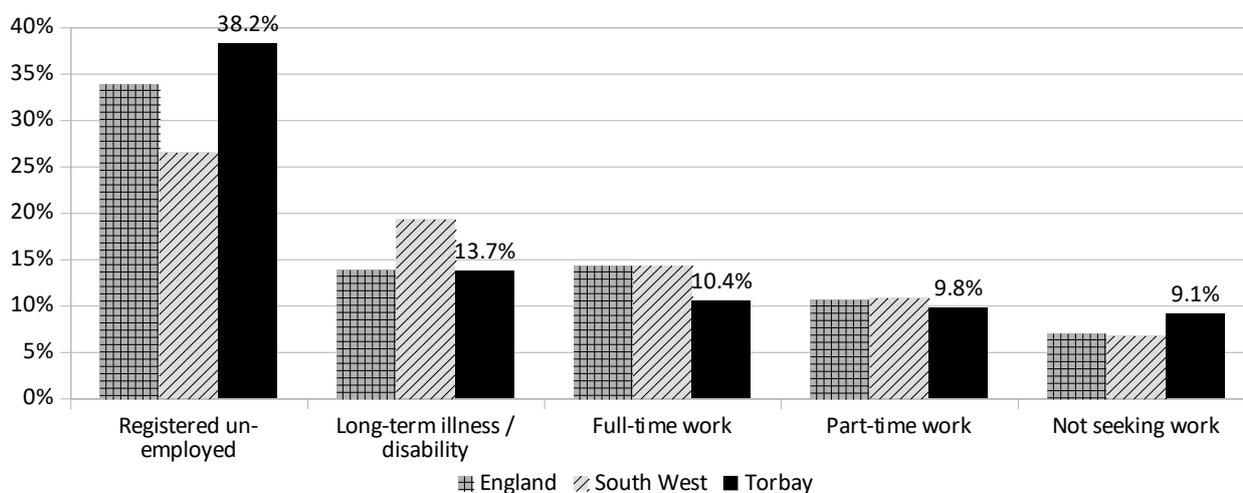


[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(1.74\)](#)

In Torbay, of main applicants owed a duty, 924 households identified as heterosexual, followed by 30 homosexual (gay/lesbian), 49 as 'other' and 185 preferred not to answer the question.

## Employment status

### 3.15 Employment status of applicants owed a duty, 2022/23



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(1.75\)](#)

The employment status of a household is a useful indicator demonstrating an applicant's ability to earn a sufficient wage to maintain some form of accommodation. In Torbay, 454 (38.2%) applicants owed a duty were unemployed, this higher than both the national average (33.9%) and that of the South West (26.5%). 108 (9.1%) people said that they were at home/not seeking work, again this higher than both the national average (7%) and that of the South West (6.7%). This data should also be read in conjunction with support needs in chapter 4.

## 3.5 Future demand

Research has been undertaken and there are no models that predict the levels of homelessness. There is an absence of sufficiently reliable measures to predict the future prevalence of homelessness and of future demand for services. For example, much of the data reported about homelessness is actually a measure of the supply of help available to people, rather than the levels of demand for that help. Additionally, homelessness is a complex issue, due to its transient nature and is often unique to each area.

The levels of housing need and homelessness are often hidden, but are predicted to be 13 times higher than street homelessness, particularly with young people, who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender, and those escaping domestic abuse.

According to Crisis, homelessness in Great Britain is forecast to continue to grow over the next 25 years. Although in the medium term the rate of increase is tempered by a predicted correction in the affordability of the housing market. By 2041 there are predicted large increases in homelessness.

[Source: Crisis.](#)

## 3.6 Summary

Torbay Council has a duty to assess a homeless applicant's housing needs, which follows strict criteria set out in the homelessness legislation, this is often referred to as the main homelessness

duty. Every year, thousands of people apply to the Council for homelessness assistance. The Housing Needs Team receives over 14,000 calls each year, that's an average of 1,143 per calendar month. Over a quarter of those call are high priority. In 2022/23, a total of 1,194 households were assessed by the Torbay Housing Needs Team.

Over half of the main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty were between the ages of 25 to 44 years of age, however this is below the national and regional levels. Although low in numbers, Torbay has a higher prevalence of homelessness of people aged 16 to 17, 45 to 54 and those over 75 years of age.

Since 2019, there has been an average of 501 households staying in temporary accommodation each year. In 2022/23, the total number dropped to 416, with 56% single households, 4% couples and 40% families with children. At times throughout the year the percentage of families accommodated can exceed 50%. At 1 April 2023, there were a total of 1,688 households on the Housing Register, a 7% increase since the same time in 2022.

The levels of housing need and homelessness are often hidden but are predicted to be 13 times higher than street homelessness, particularly with younger people. The Autumn 2023 annual rough sleeping snapshot found a total of 27 people sleeping rough in Torbay, this is higher than the average for English unitary authorities. When compared with our neighbouring authorities in Devon (Autumn 23) Torbay was ranked second behind Plymouth.

## 4 Homelessness prevention

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.

Although there are many reasons for homelessness, the most common reasons recorded locally are the loss of a private rented home and family and friends who are no longer willing, or able to accommodate. For many people there will be a number of reasons, and for some there will be multiple complex needs.

Torbay Council has a duty to assess a homeless applicant's housing needs and share the results of its assessment with them. This process is a collaboration between the housing officer and the person, working together to identify what action is needed to help the person secure suitable accommodation.

### 4.1 Torbay's prevention and relief duties

Torbay Council must assess a person's housing needs if it is satisfied that they are eligible for help based on their immigration status and either homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days. This is set out in section 189A of the Housing Act 1996. The local authority must take reasonable steps to either:

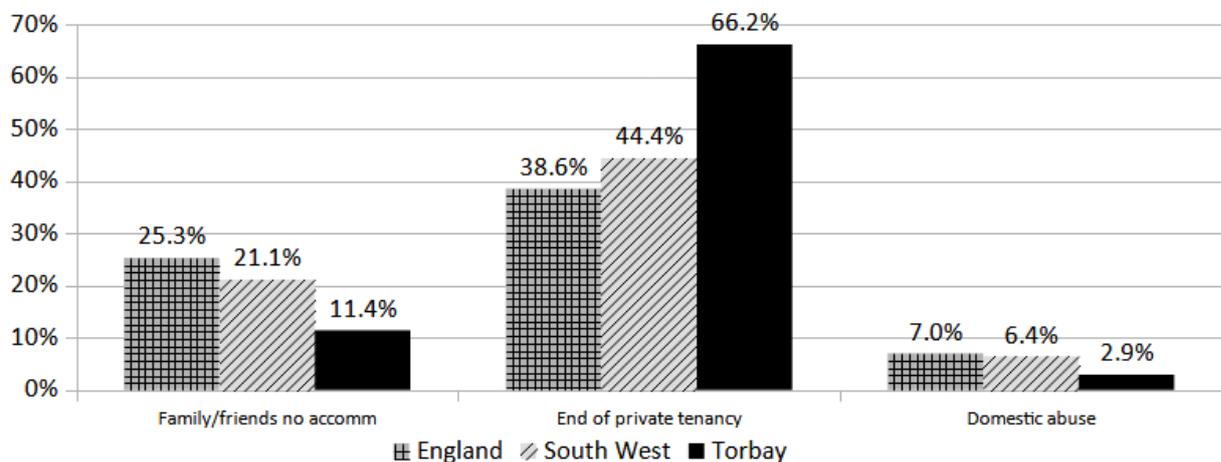
- prevent the person becoming homeless: **the prevention duty**
- help them secure accommodation for at least six months: **the relief duty**

The results of the assessment form the basis of a personalised housing plan. The plan sets out what steps the person and the authority agree to take to prevent the person becoming homeless, or help them secure accommodation.

## 4.2 Loss of last settled home

There are many reasons why a household becomes homeless, or threatened with homelessness. In Torbay the most common reasons are the loss of a private rented home and that family and/or friends who are no longer willing, or able to accommodate. Other reasons include relationship breakdown, eviction from supported housing, the end of a social tenancy and people needing to flee violence and harassment, including domestic violence. Many may require increased support because they have a number of complex issues.

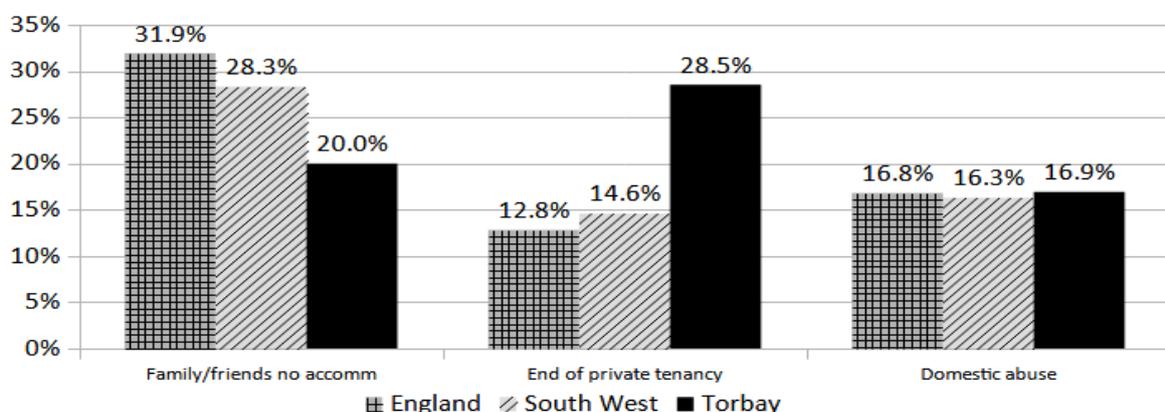
### 4.01 Reason for loss of home for households owed a prevention duty, 2022/23



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(1.24\)](#)

The main reason for the loss of a settled home for households, owed both a prevention and relief duty in Torbay, continues to be the end of a private sector ‘assured shorthold tenancy’. 66% of those assessed as a prevention duty and 29% of those owed a relief duty fell into this category.

### 4.02 Reason for loss of home for households owed a relief duty, 2022/23



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(1.25\)](#)

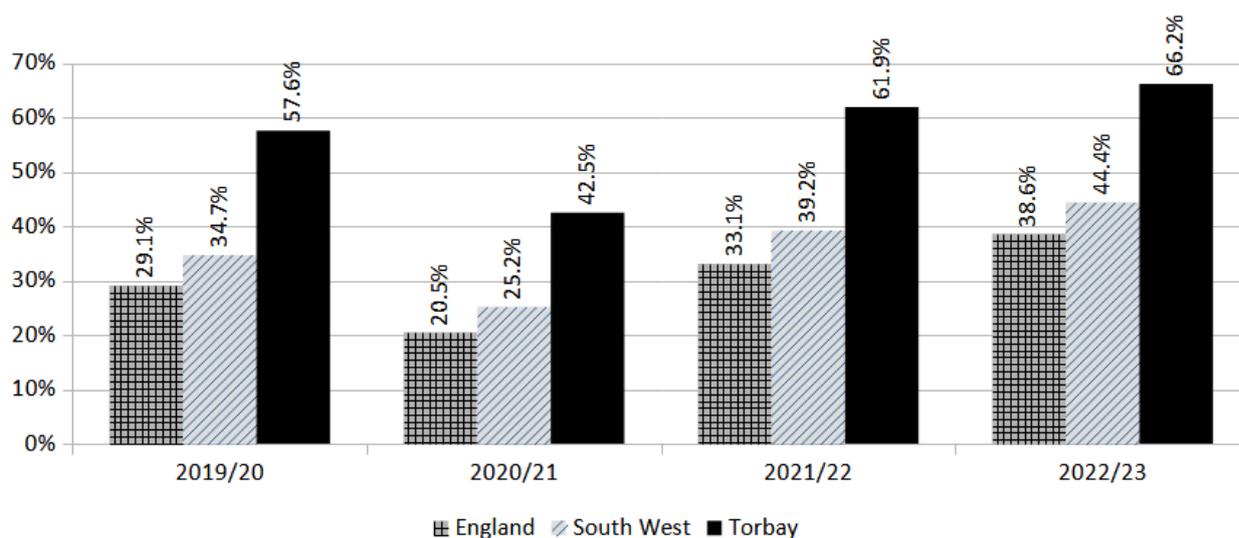
The end of a private sector tenancy is a prevailing problem for Torbay Council, due to the over reliance of the private rented sector and lack of affordable rented housing. The subsequent lift on tenancy protection following the pandemic has exacerbated the problem further.

For households owed a prevention duty, on average, 57% of households said that the ending of a private rented tenancy led to the loss of their home, approximately twice as prevalent as the national average (30%) and way above that of the South West (36%). This number has increased by 56% since 2020/21, standing at 66.2% in 2022/23.

For households owed a relief duty, on average, 20% of households said that the ending of a private rented tenancy led to the loss of their home, approximately twice as prevalent as the national average (10%) and way above that of the South West (12%). This number has increased by 123% since 2020/21, standing at 28.5% in 2022/23.

Since 2019, and the subsequent lift on tenancy protection following the pandemic, this issue has increased by 56%.

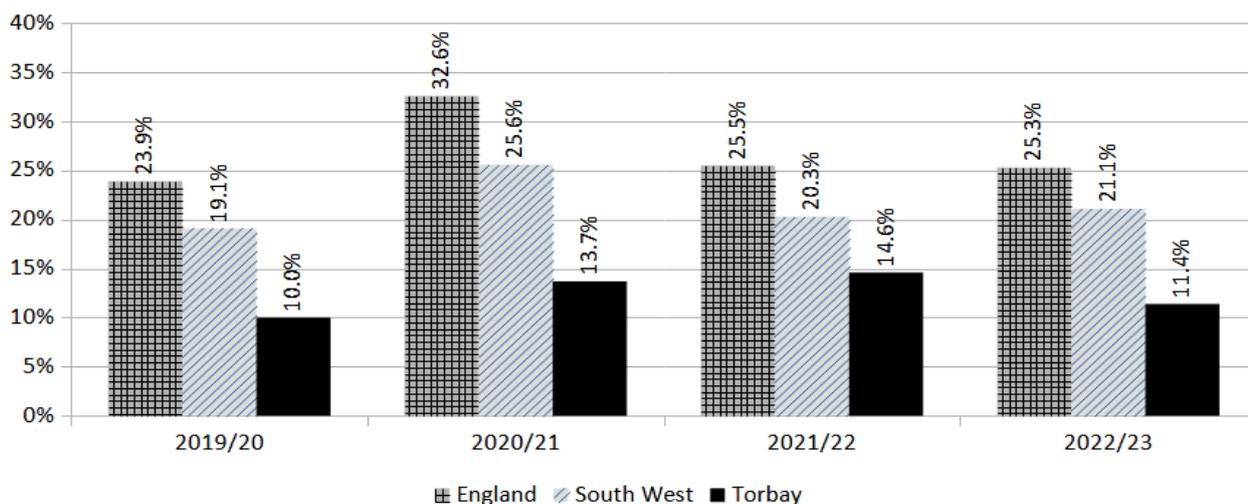
#### 4.03 Reason for loss of home for households owed a prevention duty: End of private rented tenancy



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(1.27\)](#)

In Torbay the second most given reason for the loss of a settled home for households owed a prevention duty, is 'family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate', however this has been a continuing trend over a number of years remaining relatively constant at around 12.5%, half that of the national average (26.8%) and much lower than that of the South West (21.5%).

#### 4.04 Reason for loss of home for households owed a prevention duty: Family/friends unable to accommodate

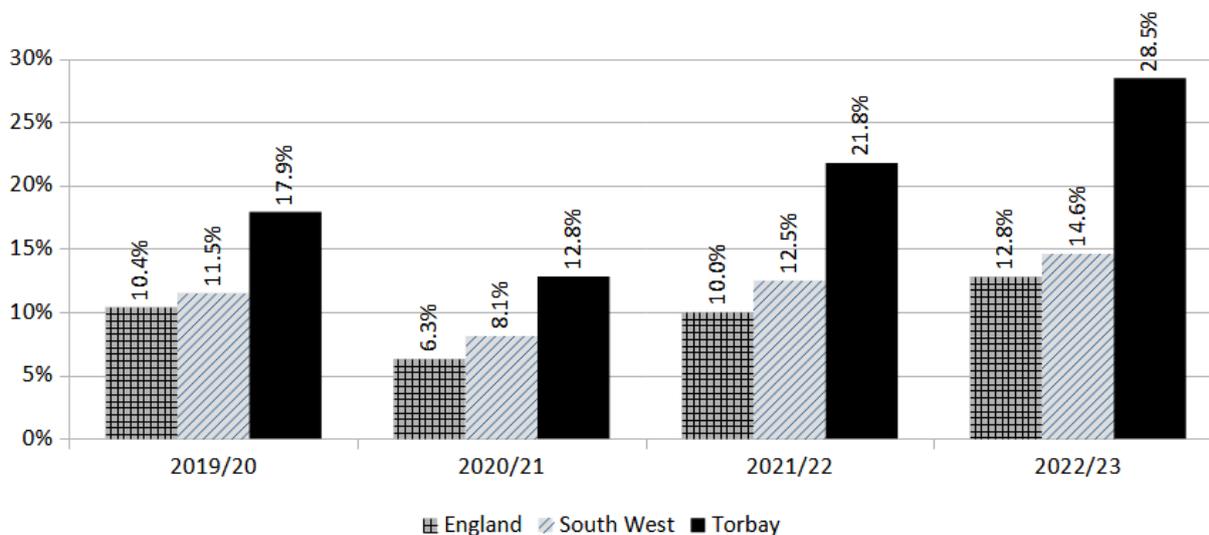


[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(1.26\)](#)

The reason behind this could be that accommodation choices for low income households, particularly single households, are limited to an expensive private rented sector. So, it is quite possible that they would rather remain in over-crowded conditions at home, or reach out to friends. The Housing Register regularly records that single households make up just over half (51%) of the total applicants, but due to the fact they have no dependent children, will generally attract a lower priority banding.

Over recent years, Torbay records an average of 22% single female and 53% single male as the household gender split for main applicants owed a prevention, or relief duty. This is similar to that of the South West (Female 22%, male 53%), but slightly higher than that of England (Female 22%, male 49%)

#### 4.05 Reason for loss of home for households owed a relief duty: End of private rented



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(2.29\)](#)

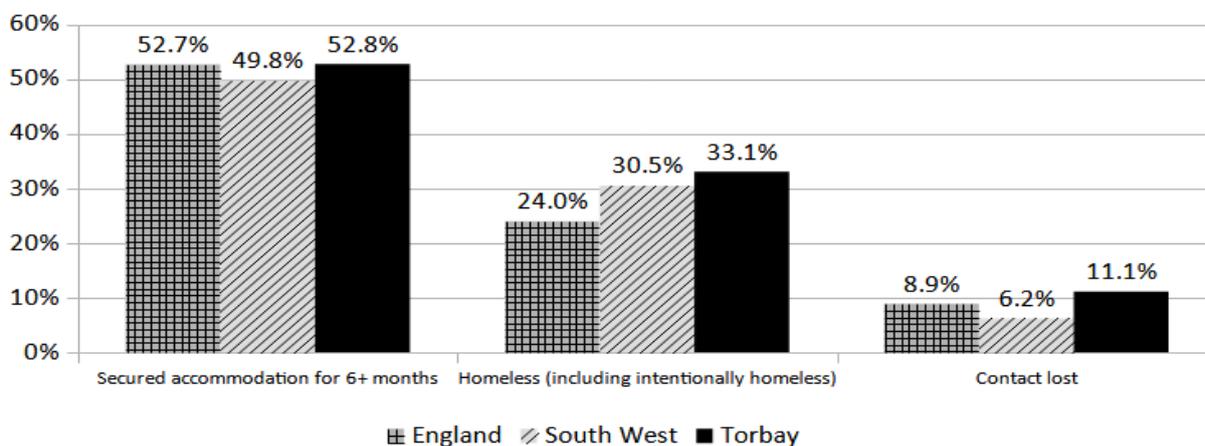
When owed a relief duty, high volumes of households also report that the main reason for the loss of their last settled home was the end of private rented tenancy. This trend mirrors prevention work in the Bay, and has continued grow since 2019, increasing by 59%.

### 4.3 Main reasons for duty ending

The reasons to end a prevention duty in Torbay is broadly in line with the national, regional and other benchmarking authorities in other parts of the country.

A total of 1,100 households were assessed by the team in 2022/23, of those 1,092 (99%) were owed either the prevention or the relief duty. Only 21.7% of those households were accepted as being owed the main housing duty and it is these households that remain in temporary accommodation the longest. This means that 78.3% of households are assisted and their issues resolved at the prevention and relief stage, ensuring that the duration of stay in temporary accommodation remains as brief as possible.

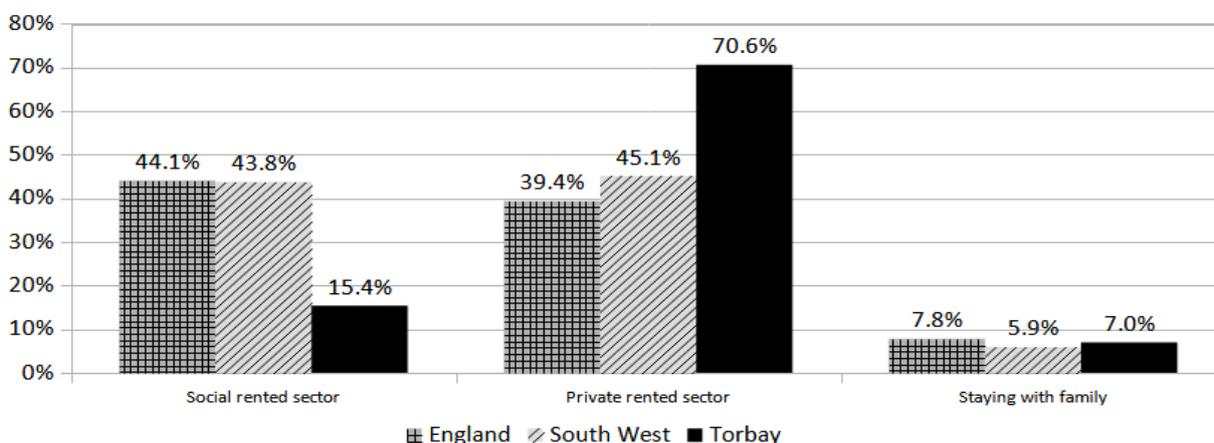
#### 4.06 Main reason for households’ prevention duty ending, by type 2022/23



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(2.32\)](#)

When carrying out its homeless relief duties, Torbay Council is overly reliant on the private rented sector.

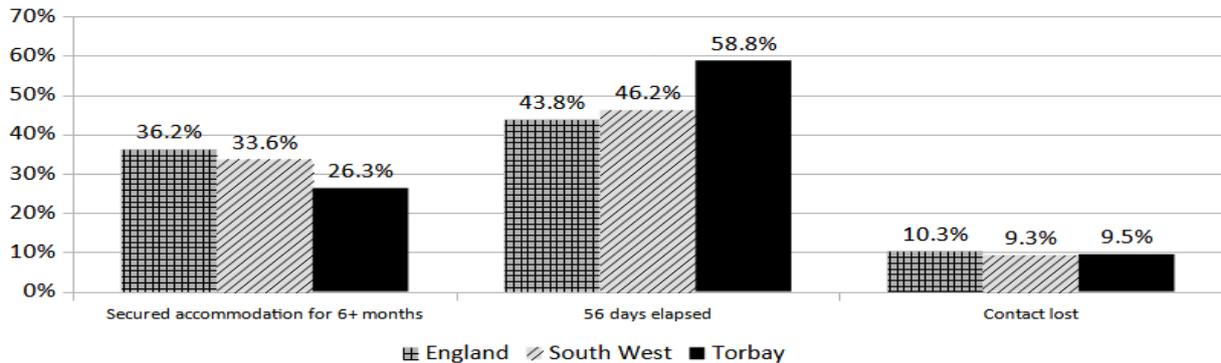
#### 4.07 Main activity that resulted in accommodation secured for households, by type 2022/23



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(2.39\)](#)

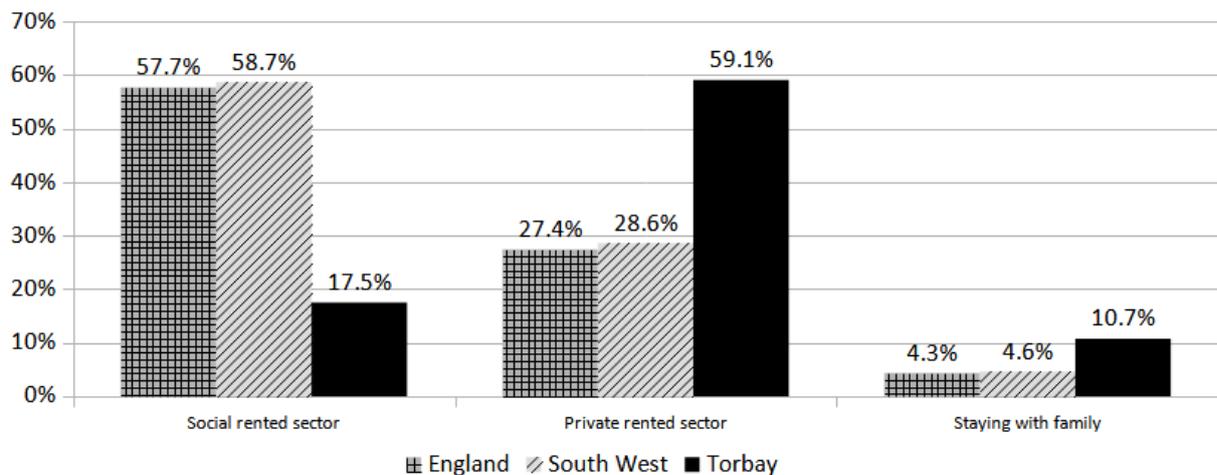
#### 4.08 Main reason for households' relief duty ending, by type 2022/23

[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(2.43\)](#)



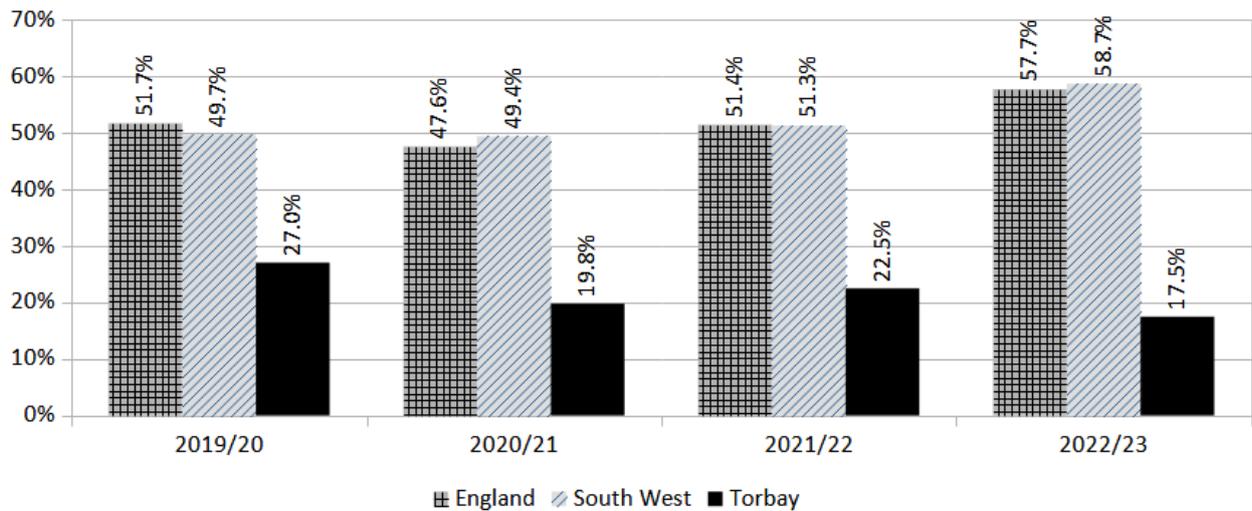
The lack of affordable accommodation in Torbay, means that finding placements for households owed a duty, is becoming more difficult, with relief duty sometimes extending the 56 days stipulated. Where efforts to prevent, or relieve homelessness are unsuccessful, or do not happen quickly enough, the Council must provide suitable temporary accommodation to certain households who are considered vulnerable. Approximately, one third of the cases held by the Housing Needs Team are owed a temporary accommodation duty at any one time.

#### 4.09 Type of accommodation secured for households at end of relief duty 2022/23



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(2.47\)](#)

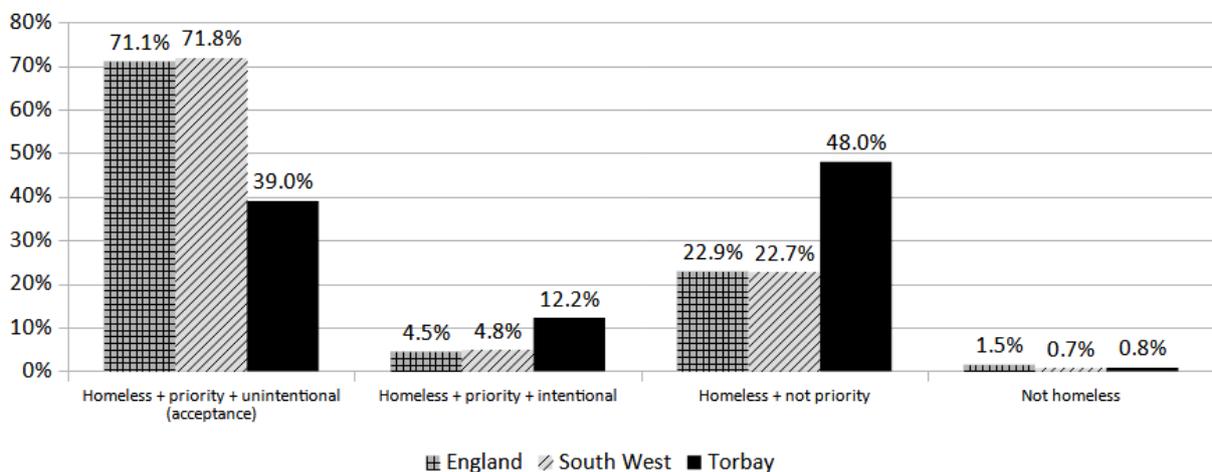
#### 4.10 Type of accommodation secured for households at end of relief duty: Social rented sector.



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(2.48\)](#)

Social housing in Torbay is delivered via the Housing Register, Devon Home Choice, a partnership of registered providers across Devon, that delivers a Choice Based Lettings Scheme. In 2022/23, 249 properties were advertised for let in Torbay.

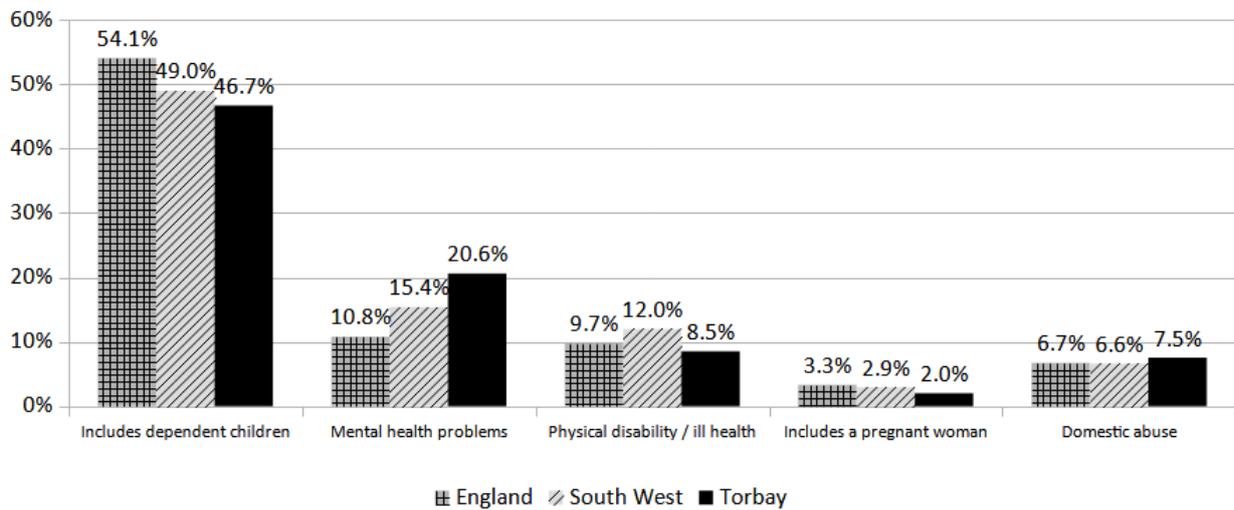
#### 4.11 Outcome of main duty decision for eligibility households, by type 2022/23



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(2.51\)](#)

In the 12-month period, August 2022 to August 2023 there were only two, four bedroom properties advertised. The result of which, is that larger households in ‘temporary’ accommodation with children are waiting a significant amount of time to access affordable housing. This has a significant impact on child development and negatively impacts family life, as families experience a prolonged detachment from their local communities, away from friends, family, schools and social networks.

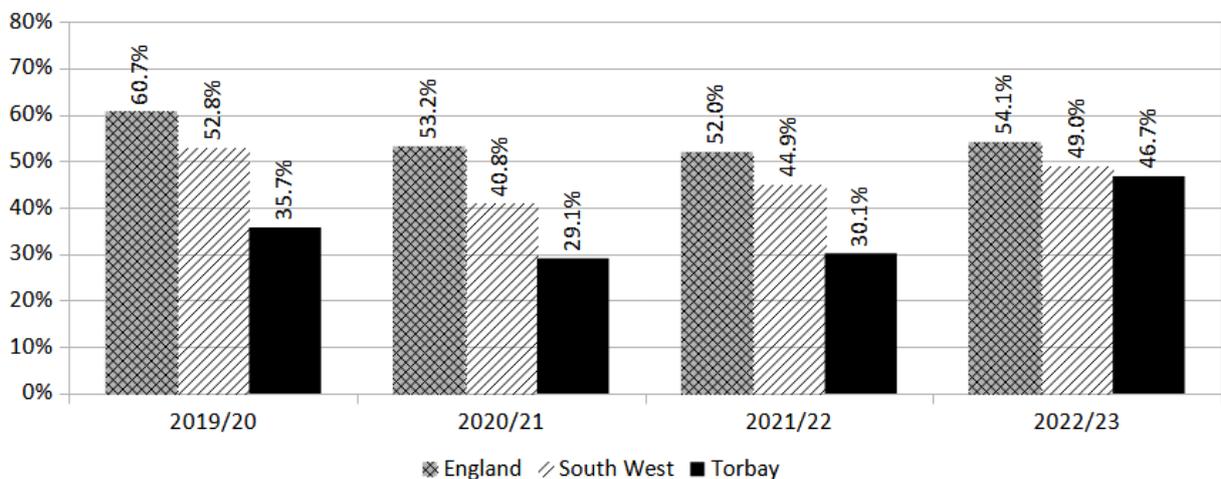
#### 4.12 Priority need of households owed a main duty, by type 2022/23



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(2.56\)](#)

Last year, 2022/23, the main priority need for households owed a main duty, was for those who included dependent children (46.7%). This is approximately a 58% rise on the two previous years.

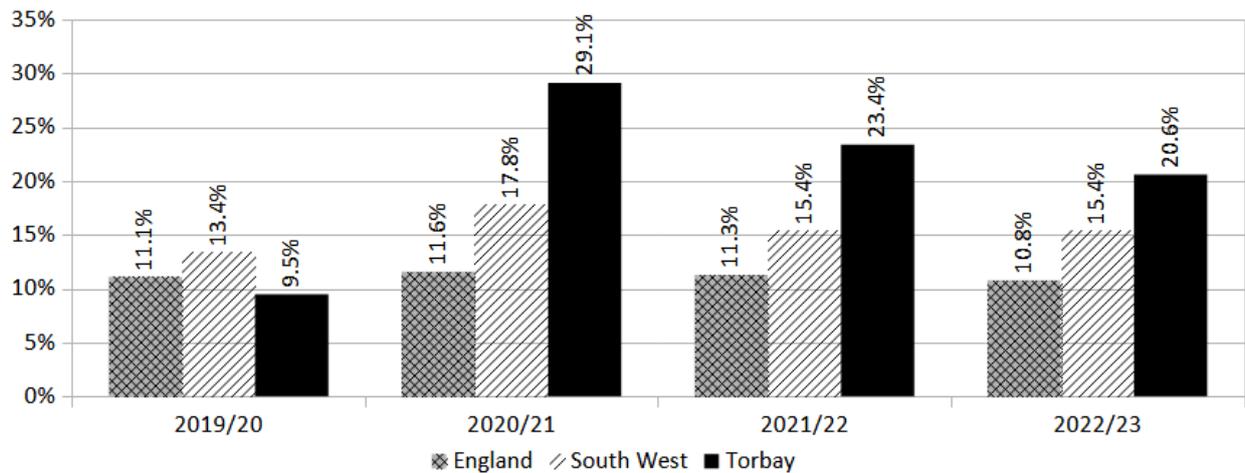
#### 4.13 Priority need households owed a main duty: Household includes dependent children



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(2.57\)](#)

On average, Torbay recorded 35% of households owed a main duty with dependent children, compared to 55% for England and 47% for the South West. This could be that Torbay Council works more diligently to prevent families with children becoming homeless, combined with the fact that Torbay has a large older population.

#### 4.14 Priority need of households owed a main duty: Mental health problems

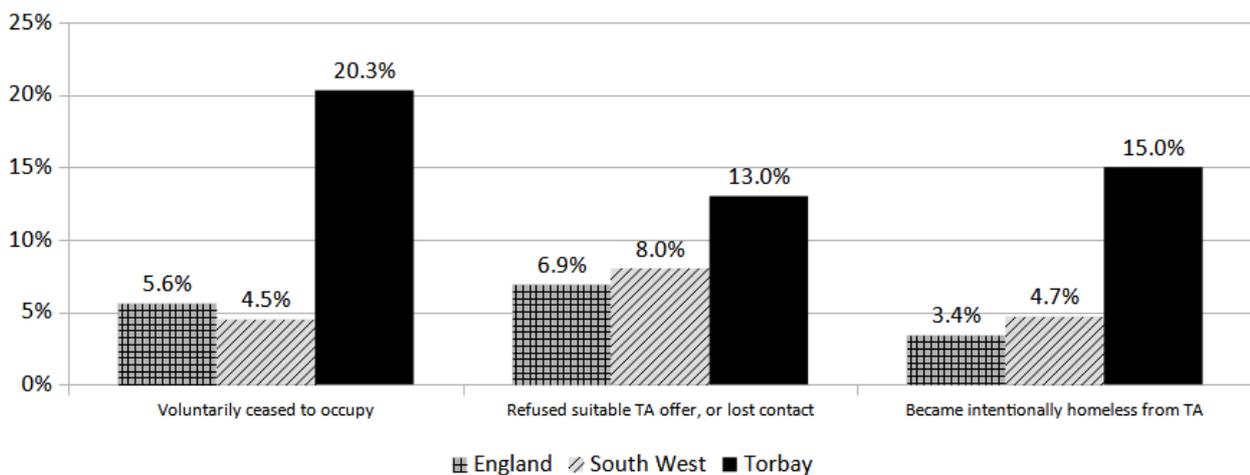


[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(2.58\)](#)

A recurring theme in Torbay is the prevalence of mental health issues contributing to homelessness in the Bay. In 2022/23 Torbay recorded 20.6% of households owed a main duty due to mental health problems. In each year since the pandemic, Torbay has, on average, recorded a significant priority need for households with mental health issues (24%), doubling that of England (11%) and ahead of the South West (16%).

This is likely due to the fact that the Torbay Housing Needs Team has implemented more rigorous detail and robust data integrity in case work recording, whereas some other local authorities may not record as much detail.

#### 4.15 Outcome of households no longer owed a main duty, by type 2022/23



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(2.63\)](#)

## 4.4 Summary

Although there are many reasons for homelessness, the most common reasons recorded locally are the loss of a private rented home, family and friends who are no longer willing, or able to accommodate and people fleeing domestic abuse. For many people there will be a number of reasons, and for some there will be multiple complex needs.

The limited supply of social rented housing and a lack of affordable, long-term private rented accommodation in the Bay has meant that the sustained prevention of homelessness has been extremely challenging. Many of the contributing factors are beyond the control of the Council, so this is a situation that is likely to continue for many years.

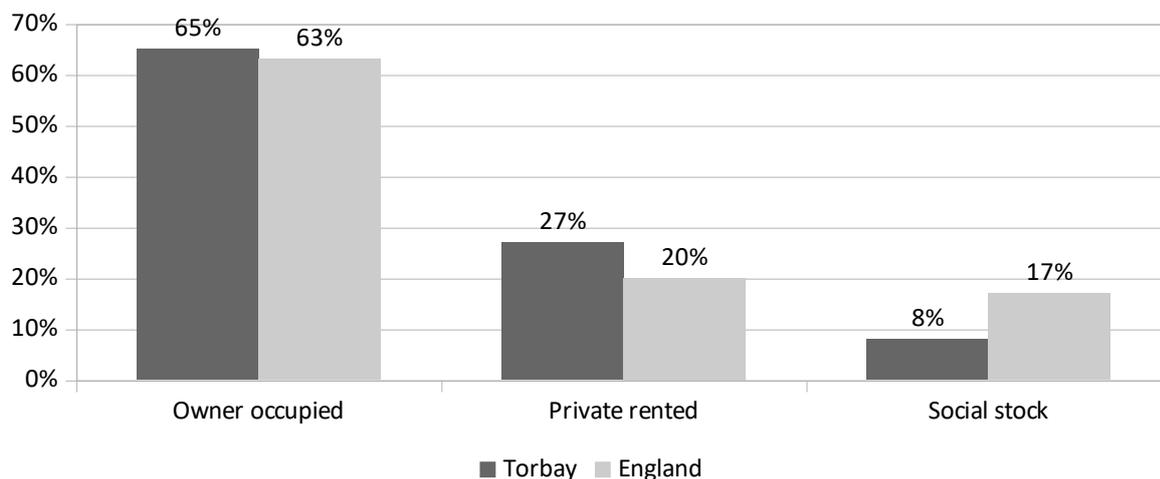
Helping households owed a duty, to either stay in their existing home, or to find new alternative accommodation continues to be problematic. Although, there is a plentiful supply of private rented homes (27%), compared with England (20%), the sector is volatile and fraught with challenges for low-income households. Private rents have become unaffordable due to increased demand, mortgage costs increasing etc.

Due to the modest amount of affordable rented dwellings, Torbay is heavily reliant upon the private rented sector. For a number of consecutive years, Torbay has discharged its homelessness duties into this sector, often at twice the national and regional average. As discussed, tenancies in the private rented sector yield higher homelessness applications and acceptances than from any other tenure, again well above the national and regional averages.

# 5 Suitable accommodation

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

## 5.01 Estimate of dwellings by tenure, Torbay and England, 2021



[GOV.UK: English Housing Survey 2020 to 2021 \(3.34\)](#)

This, combined with increasing rent levels in the private rented sector has made it extremely challenging for the Housing Needs Team and low-income households to secure suitable accommodation.

Further information on the provision of accommodation can be found in the Housing Strategy 2023 and evidence base documentation.

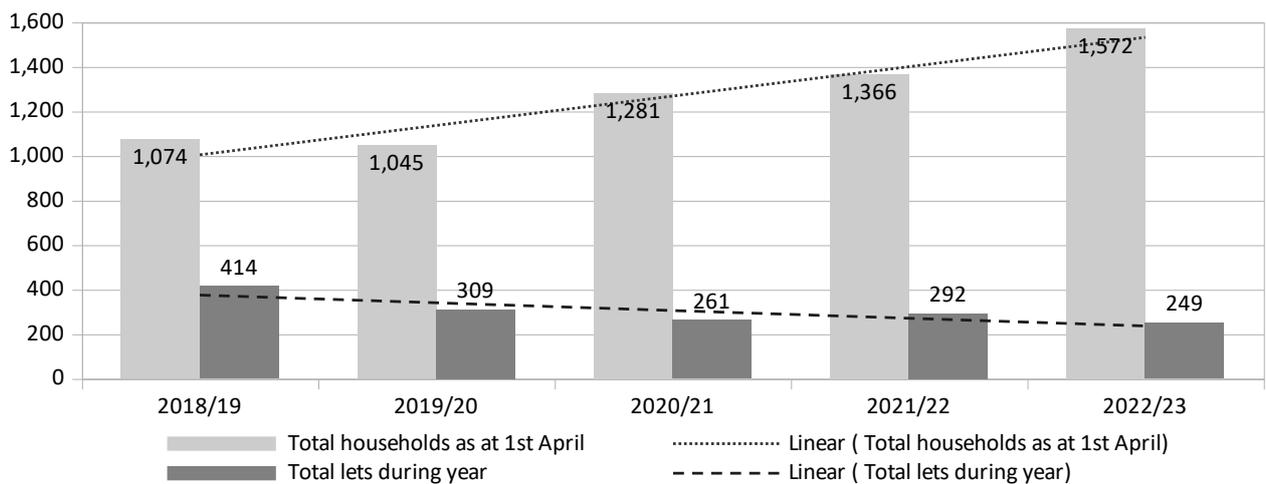
[Source: Housing Strategy and Evidence Base 2023 to 2030](#)

## 5.1 Social rented homes

Homes built for rent by the Council, or registered providers are the only type of homes that remain truly affordable for the majority of low income households in the Bay.

Traditionally, homes let on social rents are around 60% of the local market rent, but in 2010 the government announced their intention to introduce a new intermediate 'affordable rent'. Under this model, registered providers could offer tenancies at rents on new homes of up to 80% of market rent levels with the intention that any additional finance raised would be reinvested in new affordable housing.

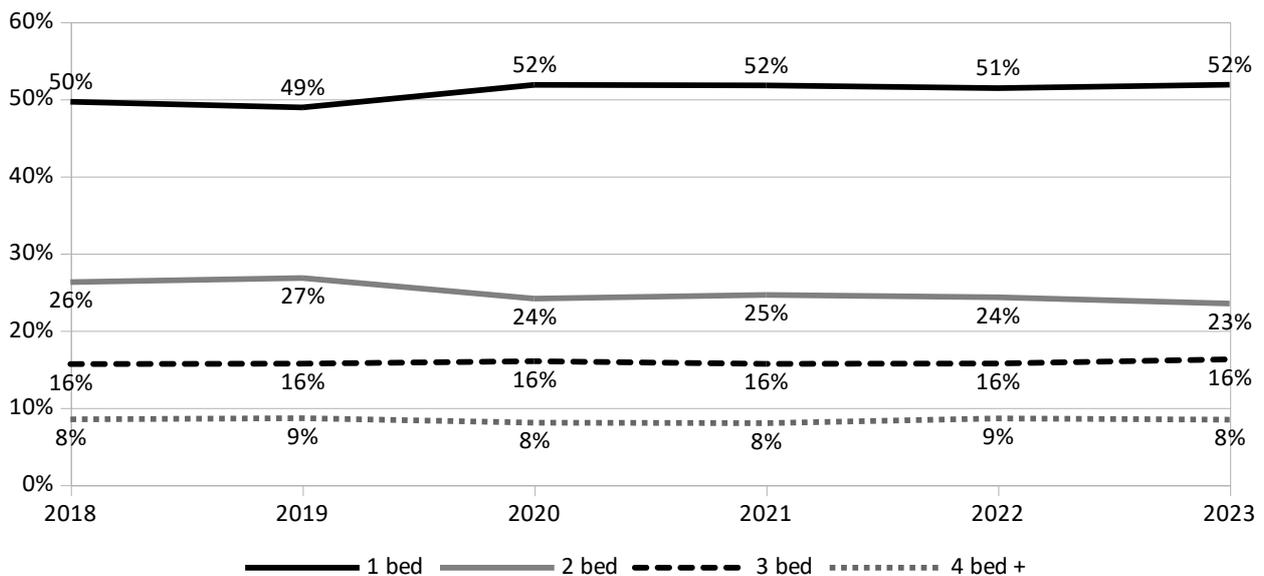
## 5.02 Number of applicants on Housing Register, and social homes let during the year, Torbay



Source: Devon Home Choice (3.09)

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, there has been a 50% increase in number of applicants on the Housing Register. Over that time there has been a 40% reduction of lets into the social rented sector.

## 5.03 Total households on the Housing Register, by bed size, Torbay



Source: Devon Home Choice (3.10)

Housing Register figures regularly show that single households make up just over half (51%) of the total applicants, but due to the fact they have no dependent children, will generally attract a lower priority banding. At 1 April 2023, there were a total of 1,688 households on the Housing Register, meaning approximately 861 single applicants in housing need.

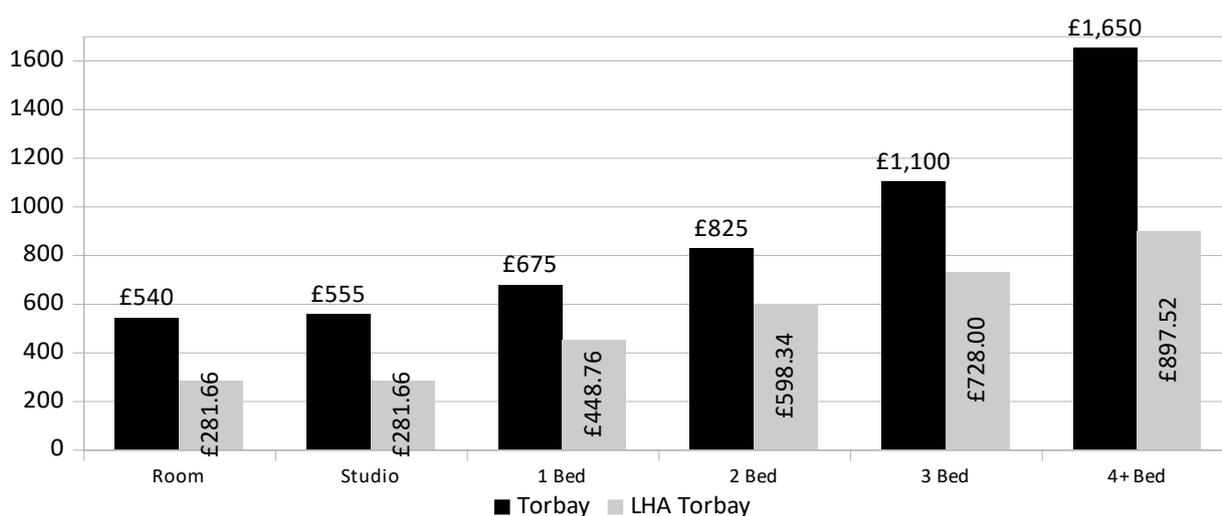
## 5.2 Private rented accommodation

Post pandemic, the number of people losing rented accommodation increased dramatically due to the backlog of evictions from the pandemic, landlords selling, or converting to holiday accommodation and rents increasing to levels even average income households cannot afford.

Typically, low income families struggle to afford to live in private rented accommodation. The English Housing Survey reports that on average, in England, households living in private rented accommodation are likely to spend around 35% of their household income, including benefits, on housing costs. This drops to 29% in social homes and 18% for households with a mortgage. But the backdrop of rising energy prices and living costs is making it increasingly difficult, for many.

Recent private rental increases are now, on average, £350 above the local housing allowance per calendar month, increasing for larger properties, have pushed rented accommodation beyond the reach of low-income households and families. This making the Council's Housing Team's task of finding affordable accommodation more challenging when undertaking their housing duties.

### 5.04 Average local rents compared with Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, Torbay 2024



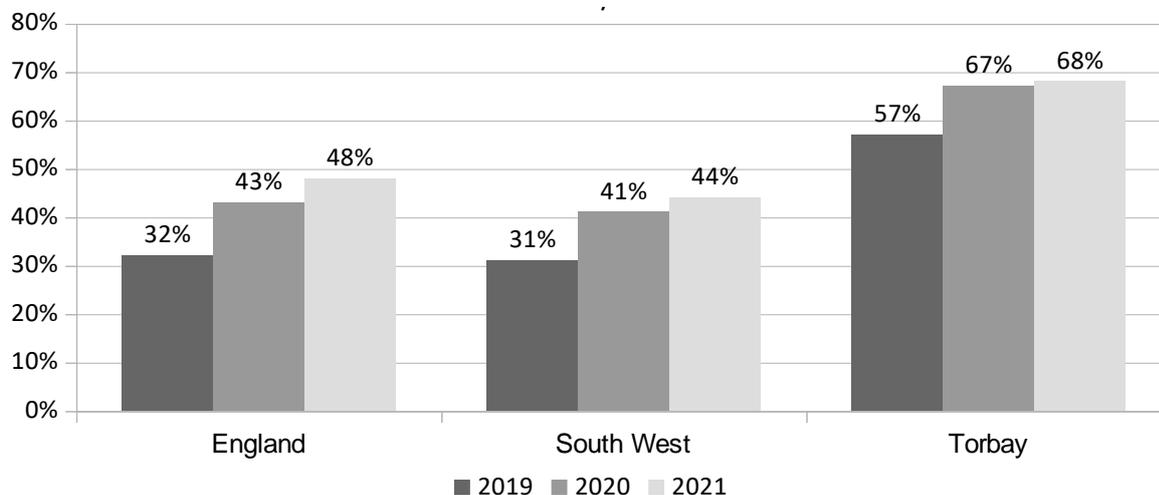
Source: Torbay Housing Needs Service (3.36)

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.

It should be noted that Local Housing Allowance rates quoted above are the rates, unchanged from April 2021. However, in its 2023 Autumn Statement, the Government announced an end to a four-year freeze in Local Housing Allowance rates. From April 2024 new rates will be determined by, the size of property a household is entitled to, with bedroom entitlement based on family size and characteristics. This equates to an approximate increase of between £84 to £199 per month, depending on the property size.

The prevention, or relief of homelessness is about either keeping a household in their own home, or helping them find a new home before they need temporary accommodation. The tools used to achieve this are now very limited, as the Housing Needs Team is now faced with increased demand and spiralling rent levels, as landlords experience increased mortgage repayments, or choose to exit the market in favour of holiday type accommodation, or liquidise their assets.

### 5.05 Households renting privately, in receipt of housing subsidy 2020/21



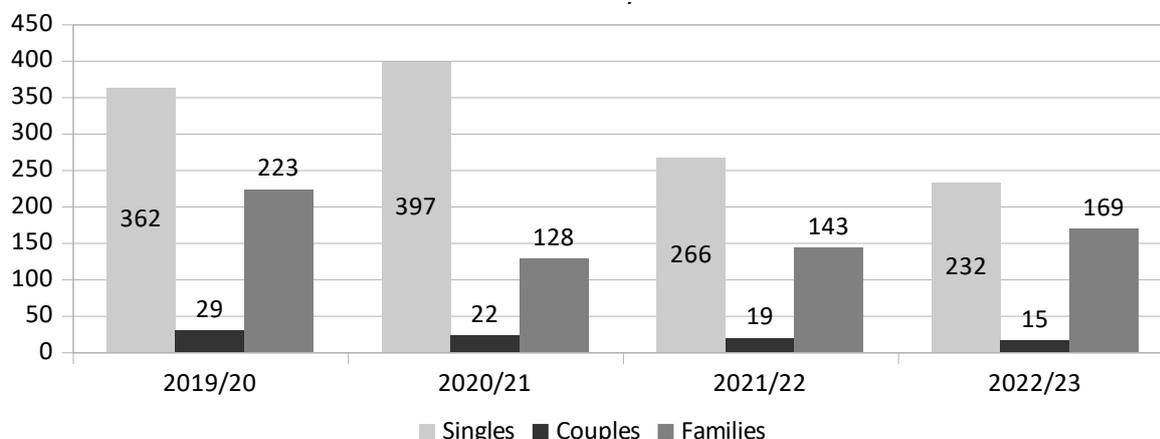
Source: DWP Stat Explore (3.35)

## 5.3 Temporary accommodation

The Council has seen continued high demand from households in housing need over the last few years. Prior to the Homelessness Reduction Act of 2017, there were approximately 60 households in temporary accommodation at any one time, following the introduction of the new 56 day relief duty, this increased to more that 100 households.

The pandemic and the ‘Everyone In’ policy in May 2020, created a step change in demand. At its peak it saw 267 households in temporary accommodation at any one time. Numbers have never returned to pre-pandemic levels due to the pressures on households who continue to be adversely impacted by the cost of living crisis.

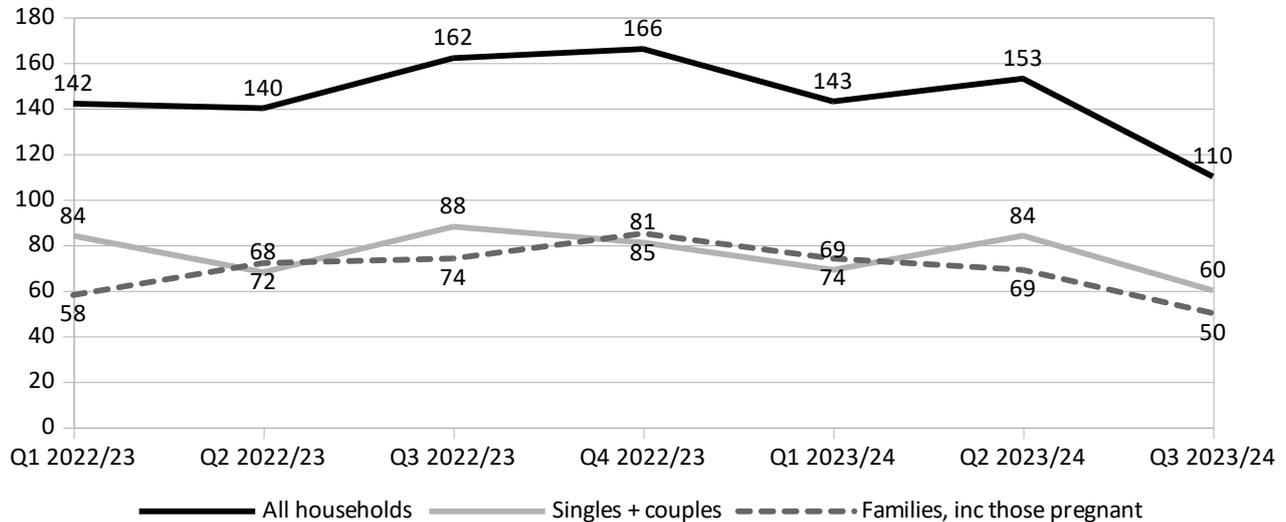
### 5.06 Annual number of households in temporary accommodation by type, Torbay



Source: Torbay Housing Needs Service (3.37)

Since 2019, there has been an average of 501 households staying in temporary accommodation each year. In 2022/23, the total number dropped to 416, with 55.7% single households, 3.6% couples and 40.6% families with children. At times throughout the year the percentage of families accommodated can exceed 50%.

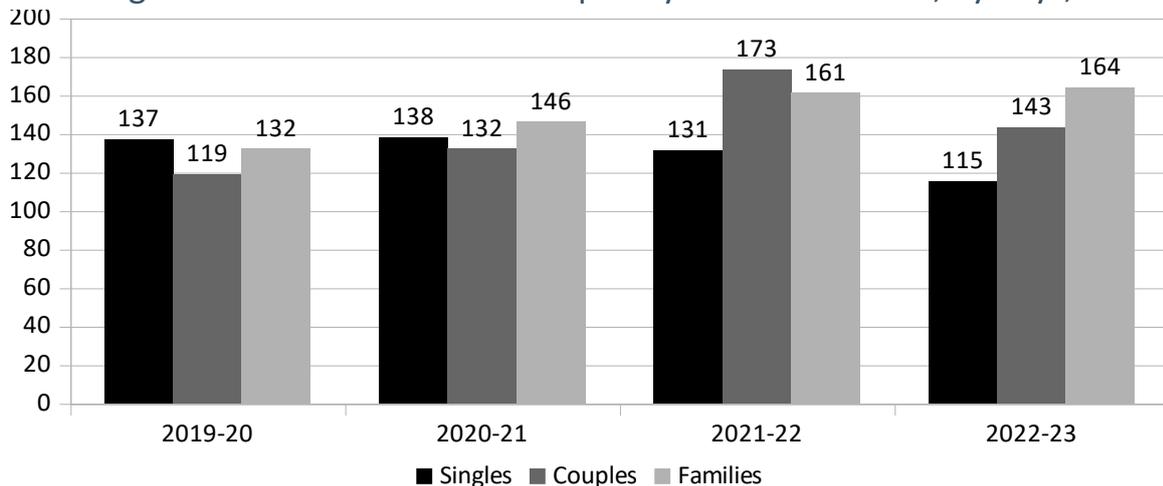
### 5.07 Average numbers in temporary accommodation on any one night, Torbay



Source: Torbay Housing Needs Service (3.11)

Through staff recruitment and a Team, restructure, there has been an increase in capacity and focus within the Housing Needs Service. There is a focus on prevention work, keeping households, particularly families in their existing accommodation, which has helped stabilise the number of households needing temporary accommodation. This against a backdrop of an increase in overall demand on the Housing Needs Service.

### 5.08 Average household duration in temporary accommodation, by days, Torbay



Source: Torbay Housing Needs Service (3.30)

Affordable housing of any tenure in Torbay cannot meet the needs of our community; there is not enough accommodation available, particularly larger homes for families.

The result of which, is that larger households in ‘temporary’ accommodation with children are waiting a significant amount of time to access housing. In 2022/23, on average, single households spent 16 weeks in temporary accommodation, whereas couples spent 20 weeks and families 23 weeks. This however has reduced slightly in 2023/24.

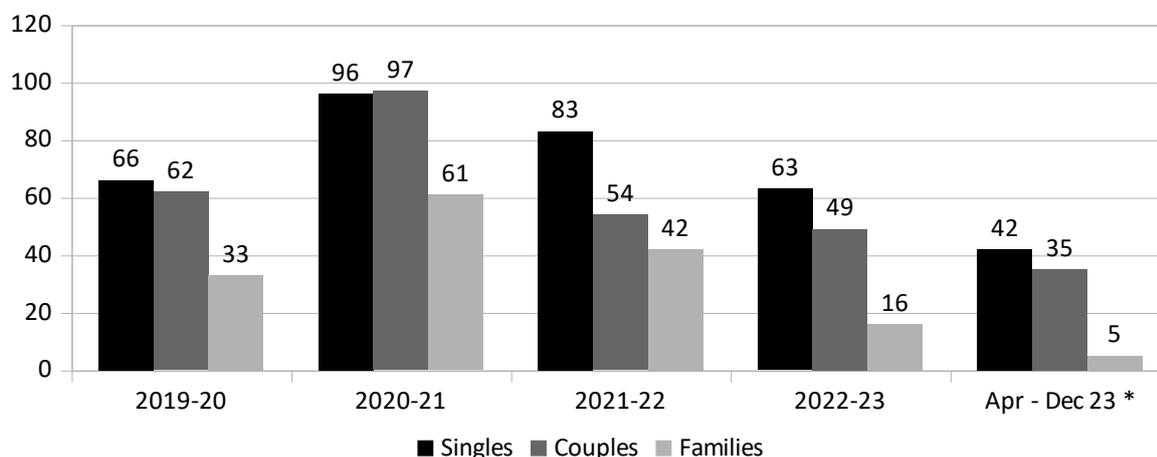
Torbay Council has re-profiled its supply of temporary accommodation and has purchased 38 properties to use as Council accommodation for families. It will aid compliance with government targets and assist in negating the need to place families in B&B accommodation and out of area placements. There is also specialist accommodation to support those fleeing domestic abuse and who have more complex needs.

### 5.09 Type and size of temporary accommodation, Torbay, 2024

Temporary Accommodation Type	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	Total
Owned Torbay Council	4	2	24	6	1	37
Leased and managed by Torbay Council	12	2	1			15
Accommodation and management from an external provider	48	2				50
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>102</b>

Source: Torbay Housing Needs Service (3.01)

### 5.10 Average household duration in bed and breakfast, by days, Torbay



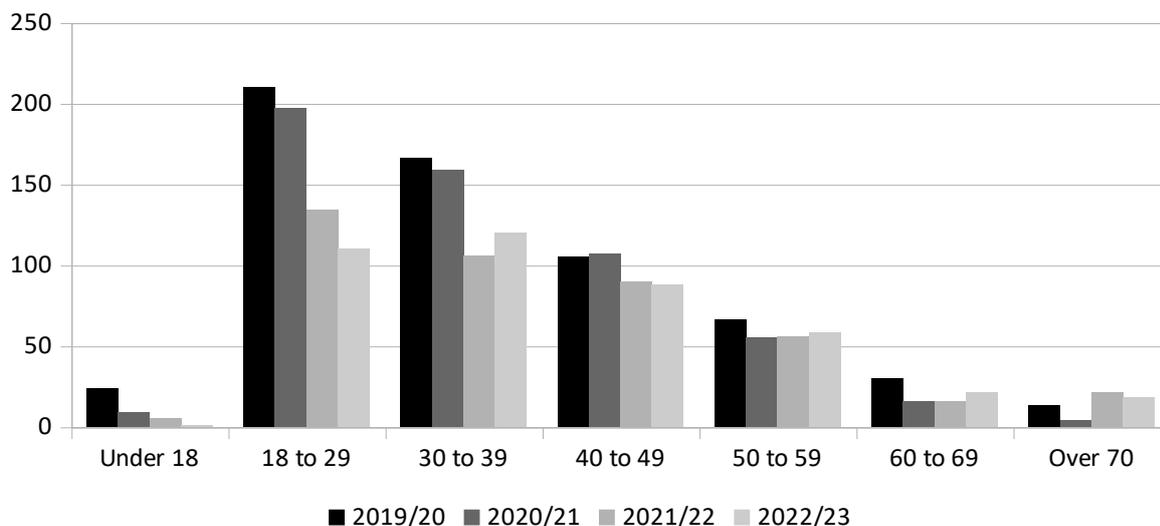
Source: Torbay Housing Needs Service (3.31)

Significant progress made by the Housing Needs Team, which has meant that, during 2022/23, the overall duration of stay in B&B has rapidly diminished to 9 weeks for singles, 7 weeks for couples and only 2 weeks for families. In fact, more recently, the use of bed and breakfast accommodation has now almost been eliminated for families.

There will be times, however, in exceptional circumstances, where an immediate initial placement is required for a few days. In these circumstances we hope to identify families at risk of

homelessness at an earlier stage and will therefore be able to plan placements when an urgent presentation is made, as there may be no alternative available.

### 5.11 Age of people staying in temporary accommodation, Torbay



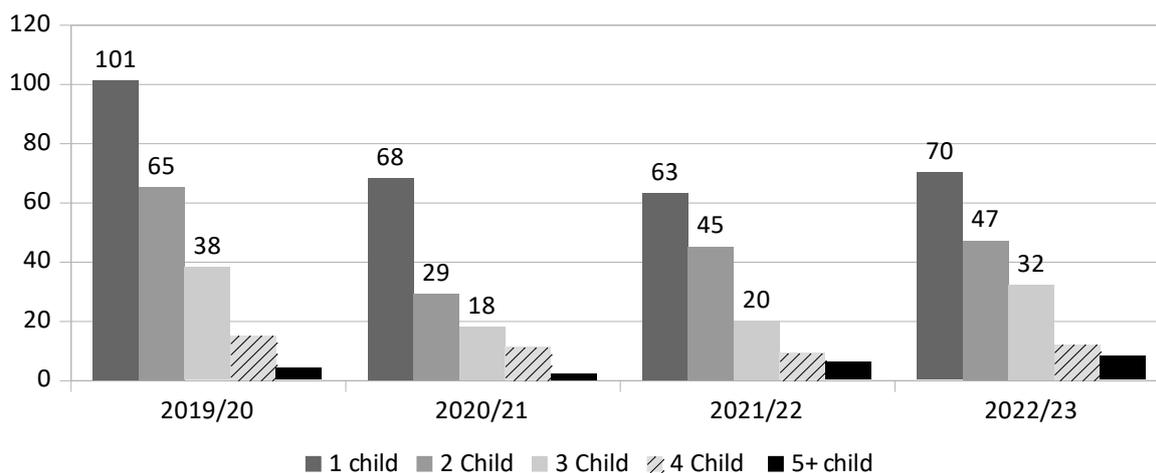
Source: Torbay Housing Needs Service (3.29)

Against a backdrop of increasing demand and escalating costs, mitigating an increase in household numbers in temporary accommodation is essential and will be our ongoing aim, along with bringing down costs and increasing quality.

## 5.4 Children in temporary accommodation

On average, each year, 33% of households in temporary accommodation account for families, however in 2022/23 this rose to 41%.

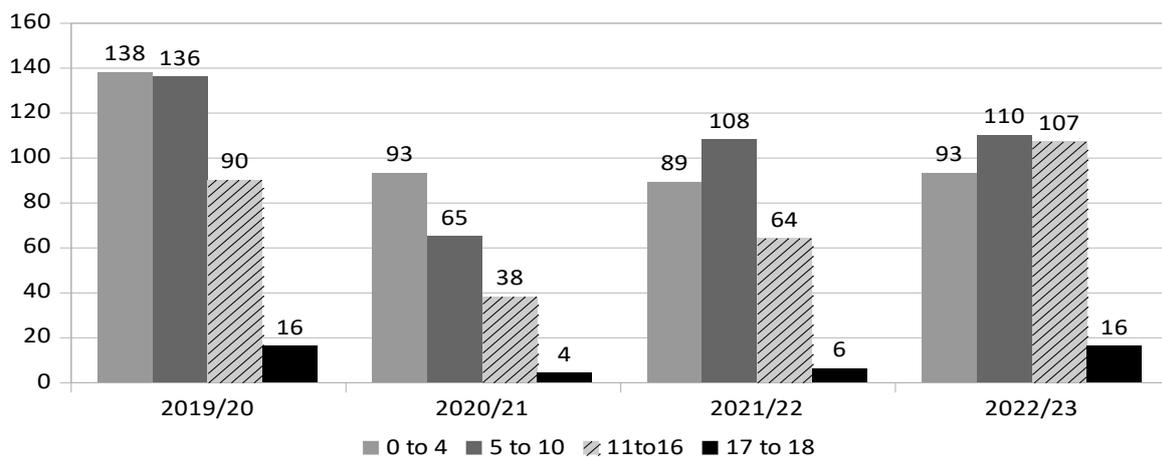
### 5.12 Number of families, by size, in temporary accommodation by Housing Needs, Torbay



Source: Torbay Housing Needs Service (3.32)

In temporary accommodation, on average each year, 46% of families have one child, 28% have 2 children, 16% three, 7% four, and 3% have 5, or more children.

### 5.13 Number of Housing Needs children in temporary accommodation, by age, Torbay

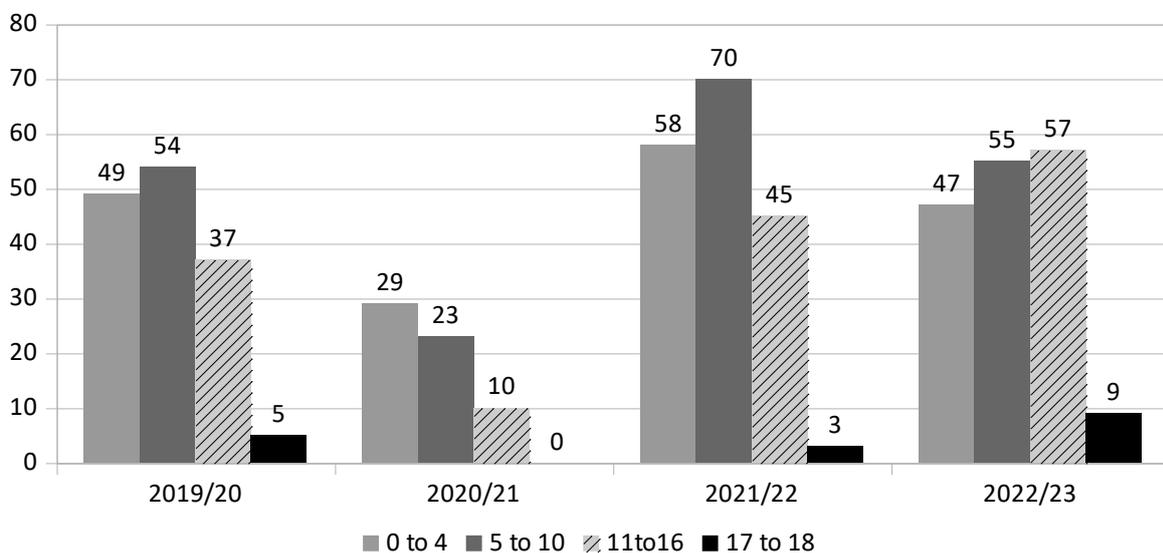


Source: Torbay Housing Needs Service (3.06)

Over recent years there has been an average of 293 children each year accommodated in temporary accommodation by the Housing Needs Service, 72% of whom are primary school age and 28% secondary school age.

There is a consistent need for larger units to accommodate families with four, or more children. The Housing Register shows a steady year on year increase in demand for 3 and 4 bed homes from 2019.

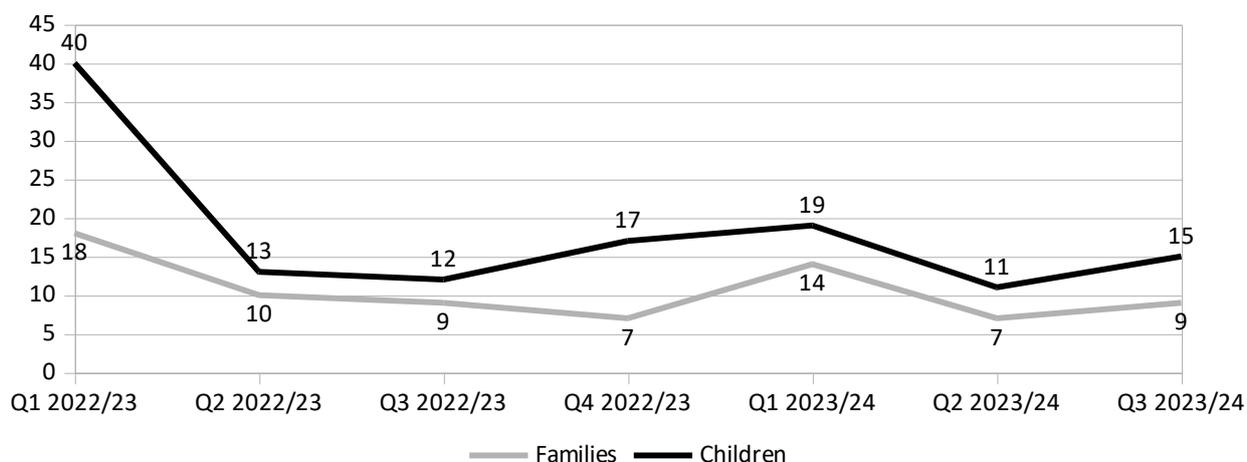
### 5.14 Number of Housing Needs children in bed and breakfast, by age, Torbay



Source: Torbay Housing Needs Service (3.07)

Last year, there were, on average, 18 children, per quarter provided with emergency accommodation through Children's Services. Although the assessment under Housing legislation may not bind Torbay Council to legally provide temporary accommodation, the Council does so, as vulnerable children would otherwise be at risk of homelessness.

## 5.15 Number of Children's Services households currently accommodated in temporary accommodation, Torbay, 2022/23



Source: Torbay Children's Services (3.14)

Furthermore, under the Children Act (1989) there are powers, but not a duty, to provide housing assistance to homeless families with children in need, when they have no further entitlement, or eligibility for assistance under the homelessness legislation, for example if they have been found to be intentionally homeless. The wider cost of homelessness, both financially and for the use of wider resources, therefore straddles several departments within the local authority.

## 5.5 Domestic abuse safe houses

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) places a statutory duty on unitary authorities, such as 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 appropriate 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. Over half (55%) of the survivors that were surveyed for the needs assessment indicated that domestic abuse created a housing, or accommodation based support need.

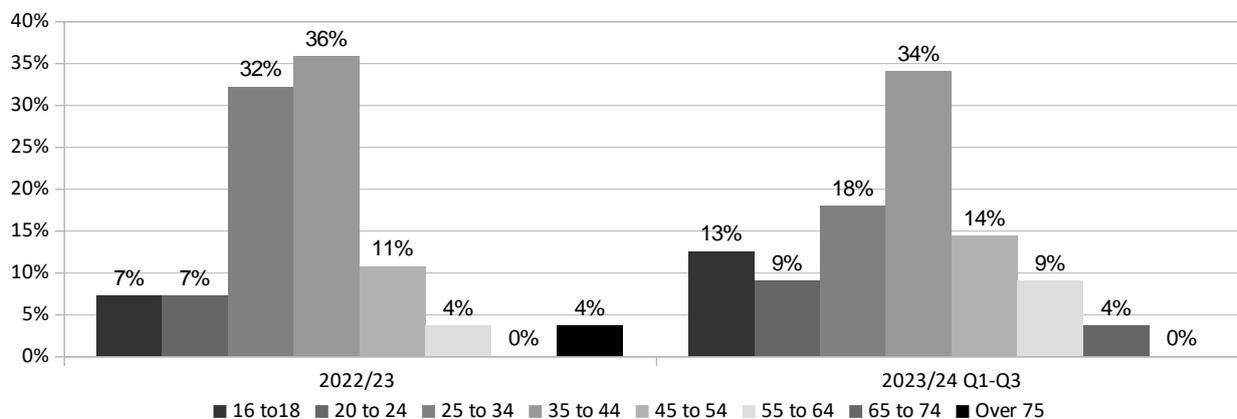
Torbay Council: Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy (2023-2030)

Torbay has worked with partners to provide 22 units of dispersed, self-contained units of accommodation as 'safe houses'. Currently, the biggest gap in terms of safe spaces are for those with a disability, with only 1 safe space available having mobility access. It is estimated that a further 3 units will be required.

In 2022/23, 59% of applicants stayed over 13 weeks in the safe houses and 75% stayed for over 6 weeks in the crisis units. In the 9 month period between April a December 2023, 50% of applicants stayed over 13 weeks in the safe houses and 71% stayed for over 6 weeks in the crisis units.

This compares to 21% of households staying for over 13 weeks in 2019/20 when there were only 14 safe house units available. This illustrates, that despite having more accommodation, move on still remains a significant challenge.

### 5.16 Age range of those entering safe accommodation, Torbay



Source: Torbay Children’s Services (3.40)

In 2022/23 there were 28 households in safe accommodation. Already, 3 quarters into 2023/24, that number has doubled to 56. Each year women making up 89% of those living in safe accommodation, with 11% male in 2022/23 and 9% male and 2% transgender in 2023/24.

In 2022/23 there were 35 children living in safe accommodation, 29% 0 to 5 years, 37% 6 to 10 years and 34% 11 to 15 years.

In 2023/24 there were 34 children living in safe accommodation, 44% 0 to 5 years, 35% 6 to 10 years and 21% 11 to 15 years.

By far the largest age groups in safe accommodation are people aged 20 to 24 and those aged 35 to 44, with a pronounced decline in the former in 2023/24.

## 5.6 Hostel provision

Currently The Leonard Stocks Centre is Torbay’s only purpose-built, short term homeless shelter that is equipped to tackle rough sleeping and provide rehabilitation for people with multiple complex needs, such as substance and alcohol misuse. The 29 bed facility provides access to a GP surgery and other support services and now forms part of a wider alliance including drug and alcohol services and support for those who have experienced domestic abuse.

Since Torbay Council took over the management in 2023, there has been a demonstrable improvement in the ‘move-on’ of clients in to more settled accommodation. For example, in February 2023 the average stay of tenants as, on average 506 days (72 weeks), which has reduced to an average stay of 178 days (25 weeks) in December 2023.

The aspiration is to further reduce the average length of stay to 90 days (13 weeks). This will increase the move-on of clients into more appropriate accommodation and services, freeing up space for those in need of more acute assistance, who maybe sleeping rough, or fleeing domestic abuse.

## 5.7 Summary

Typically, low income families struggle to afford to live in private rented accommodation, where they are likely to spend around 35% of their household income, including benefits, on housing costs. Recent private rental increases are now, on average, £350 above the local housing allowance per calendar month, increasing for larger properties. Costs have pushed private rented accommodation beyond the reach of people on low-incomes, particularly families. This makes the Council's Housing Team's task of finding affordable accommodation more challenging when undertaking their housing duties.

In Torbay, over the 12-month period between August 2022 to August 2023 there were only two, four bedroom properties advertised via the Housing Register. As a consequence larger households with children in 'temporary' accommodation are waiting a significant amount of time to access social housing, or waiting for larger more affordable home in the private rented sector.

In 2022/23, 416 households were provided temporary accommodation, with 55.7% single households, 3.6% couples and 40.6% families with children. At times throughout the year the percentage of families accommodated can exceed 50%.

on average, families spent 23 weeks in temporary accommodation, whereas single households spent 16 weeks and couples 20 weeks. This has a significant impact on child development and negatively impacts family life, as families experience a prolonged detachment from their local communities, away from friends, family, schools and social networks.

Significant progress made by the Housing Needs Team, which has meant that, during 2022/23, the overall duration of stay in B&B has rapidly diminished to 9 weeks for singles, 7 weeks for couples and only 2 weeks for families. The latter figure being within the Government stipulation of accommodating children in B&B for under six weeks. In fact, more recently, the use of bed and breakfast accommodation has now almost been eliminated for families.

# 6 Appropriate support

Since 2018, the Housing Needs Team has significantly grown from 12 officers to a team of 40. This has been in response to the increased duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) and rising homeless demand over recent years. The Team responds to requests for housing assistance, but also presides over Torbay’s temporary accommodation, its management, its sourcing and also seeking sustained accommodation provision by building and maintaining trusted relationships with landlords.

Recently, there has been a significant development in our efforts to prevent homelessness. The Initial Assessment Officers are the front door to the service and aim to prevent homelessness at the first point of contact, giving quality advice that helps clients to self-serve. Many people can resolve their own situation with basic support from the Service. Those who require higher levels of assistance, or where efforts to prevent homelessness on the same day have failed, are then allocated to a Housing Needs Officer.

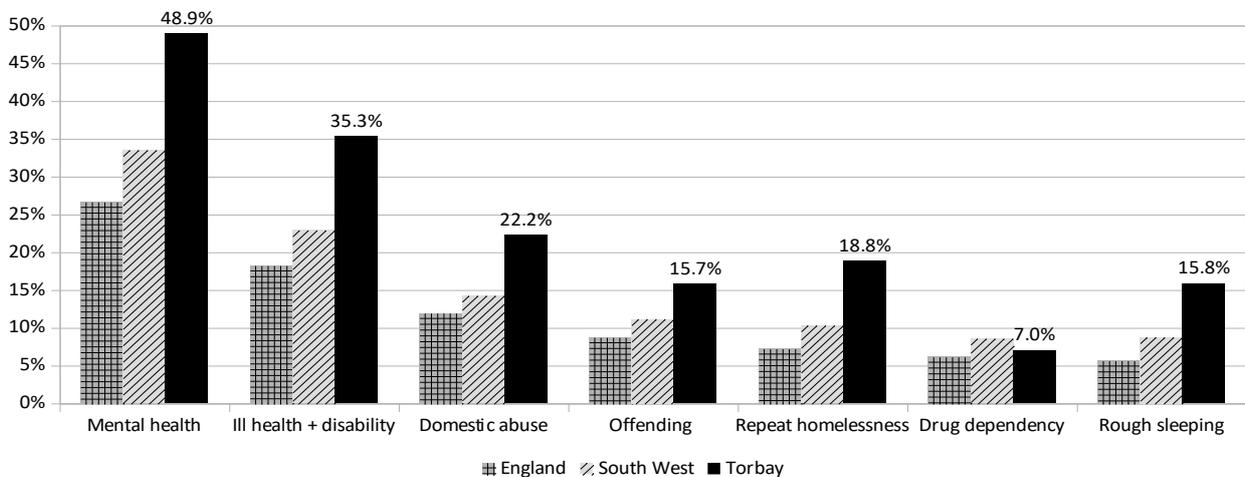
Homelessness is becoming increasingly complex and accommodation is often not the only requirement needed by households applying for assistance. Homelessness data (H CLIC) shows that across England, homeless households have a multitude of support needs.

## 6.1 support needs for households owed a duty

The main ‘support need’ for households owed a duty in Torbay was for a ‘history of mental health problems’. This has been a prevailing issue for a number of years, with, on average 47% of households saying they needed support. This is almost double reported for England (25%) and way above that of the South West (33%).

Similarly, the second main support need for households owed a duty in Torbay was for ‘physical ill health and disability’. Again this has been prevalent for a number of years, with, on average 32% of households requesting support, rising to 35% more recently. Again, this is twice the national average (16%) and greater than that of the South West (21%).

### 6.01 Main support needs for households owed a prevention, or relief duty, 2022/23



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(4.01\)](#)

The third main support need for households owed a duty in Torbay was for the ‘risk or experience domestic abuse’. Although, this is stable nationally at 11% and regionally at 13%, on average it has been high in Torbay at 14%, rising sharply last year to 22%, twice that of the national average.

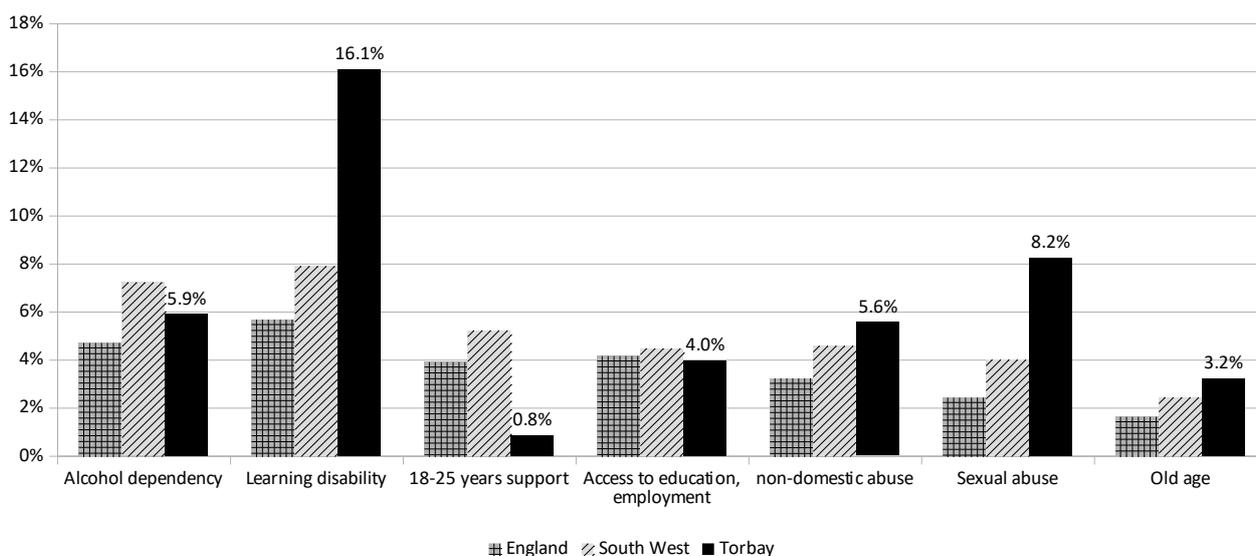
The fourth main support need for households owed a duty in Torbay was for the ‘history of repeat homelessness’. Again, this is stable nationally at 7% and regionally at 11%, on average it has been high in Torbay at 15%, rising over recent years to 19%, over twice that of the national average and significantly greater than that of the South West.

The fifth main support need for households owed a duty in Torbay was for ‘history of rough sleeping’. Again, stable nationally at 6% and regionally at 10%, on average it has been high in Torbay at 13%, rising sharply last year to 16%, over twice that of the national average and significantly over the South West average. Women rough sleep rough tend to experience higher levels of both domestic abuse and sexual violence, making them a particularly high risk group, having additional vulnerabilities on top of those associated with rough sleeping. Visibility and knowing where women are rough sleeping enables a degree of monitoring for safety. Moving women in relationships on from various locations potentially increases their risk and places further from support and assistance.

The sixth main support need for households owed a duty in Torbay was for ‘offending history’. Although, this is stable nationally at 9% and regionally at 11%, on average it has been high in Torbay at 13%, rising sharply last year to 16%, a 64% rise since 2019/20, to almost twice that of the national average.

The Prison Navigator post is a new post funded from the Rough Sleeper Initiative and aims to ensure that ex-offenders have somewhere to go when they are released from prison. This is proven to reduce rough sleeping and re-offending.

## 6.02 Secondary support needs for households owed a prevention, or relief duty, 2022/23



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(4.02\)](#)

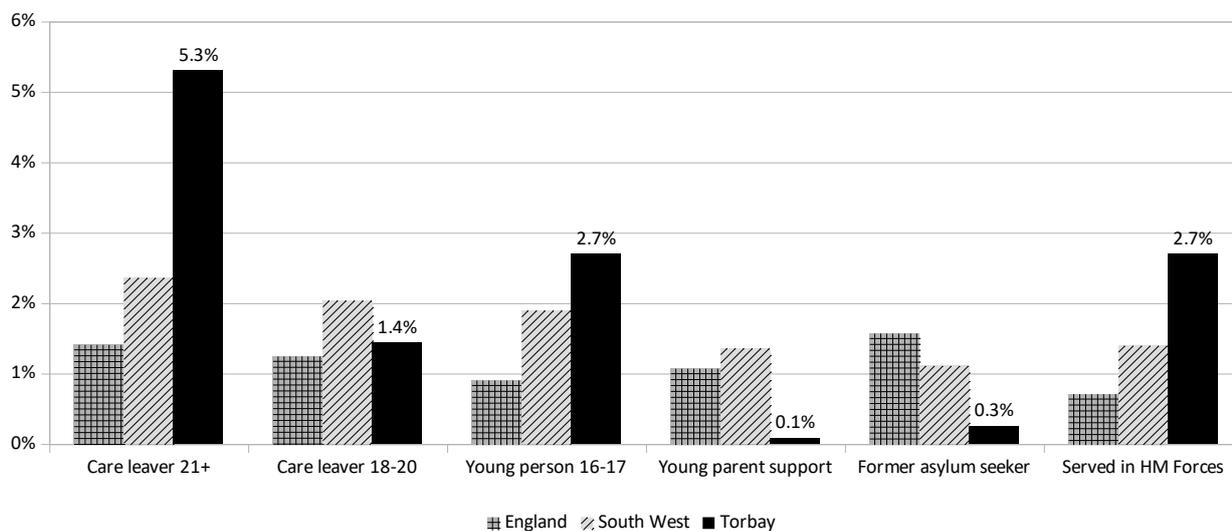
The seventh main support need for households owed a duty in Torbay was for a 'learning disability'. Although, this is stable nationally at 5% and has grown incrementally in the South West to 7%, on average it has been high in Torbay at 13%, doubling from 2019/20 to 16% last year, twice that of the national and regional figures.

The eighth main support need for households owed a duty in Torbay was for people 'at risk of, or has experienced sexual abuse, and/or exploitation'. Although growing incrementally at a nation and regional level to 2% and 4%, respectively, on average it has been high in Torbay at 5%, rising sharply last year to 8%, over twice that of the national average and significantly over the South West average.

Torbay also has higher than usual support needs for households owed a duty for 'Care leavers aged over 21', 'young people aged 16-17, and people who have 'served in HM Forces'. Although numbers are relatively low, we need to be mindful of their support need, as they are all over twice the level of the national and regional average.

The Early Help Housing Officer works across Housing Needs and Children's Social Care to provide early support to families that have a housing issue. This post has proven very successful, having prevented numerous complex families from becoming homeless and the cost shunting from housing to children's services and their 's17 budget'. Support therefore, often needs to be provided across a variety of services to assist households.

### 6.03 Tertiary support needs for households owed a prevention, or relief duty, 2022/23



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(4.03\)](https://gov.uk/latest-data-tables-on-homelessness)

Currently, 100% of people in the hostel are struggling with mental health issues and/or addiction. Whilst there is an excellent offer of support, there is a lack of supported accommodation available to help them transition back into independent living. The length of time people are in both temporary accommodation and hostel accommodation, means that people are can potentially deteriorate and become institutionalised.

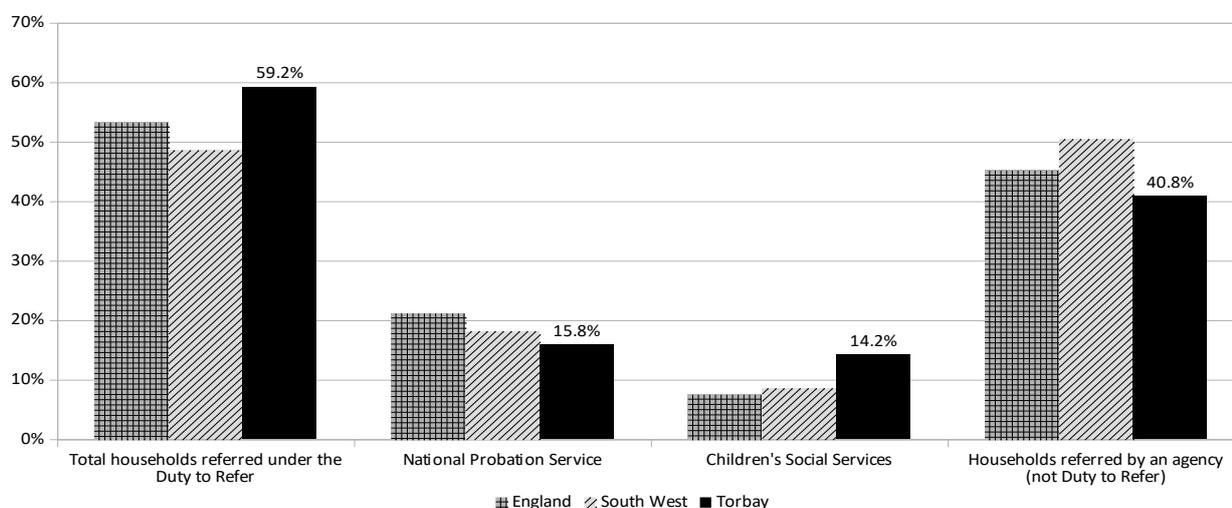
'Growing Together Torbay', previously called the 'Complex Needs Alliance', brings together a number of homelessness support services, namely: drug and alcohol, domestic and sexual

violence, and homeless hostel services. There is now the prospect to develop a strategic approach to the co-ordination and optimisation of resources. This will increase efficiency and deliver integrated support to those most in need., which in turn will benefit both the individuals and the wider community. The Alliance can also work together towards ensuring its services are flexibly accessible to groups, such as rough sleepers, for whom services historically fail to engage productively.

## 6.2 Referrals, including the Duty to Refer

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 significantly reformed England’s homelessness legislation by placing duties on local housing authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness. The Act introduced a duty on public authorities to refer service users who they think may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to local authority housing needs teams.

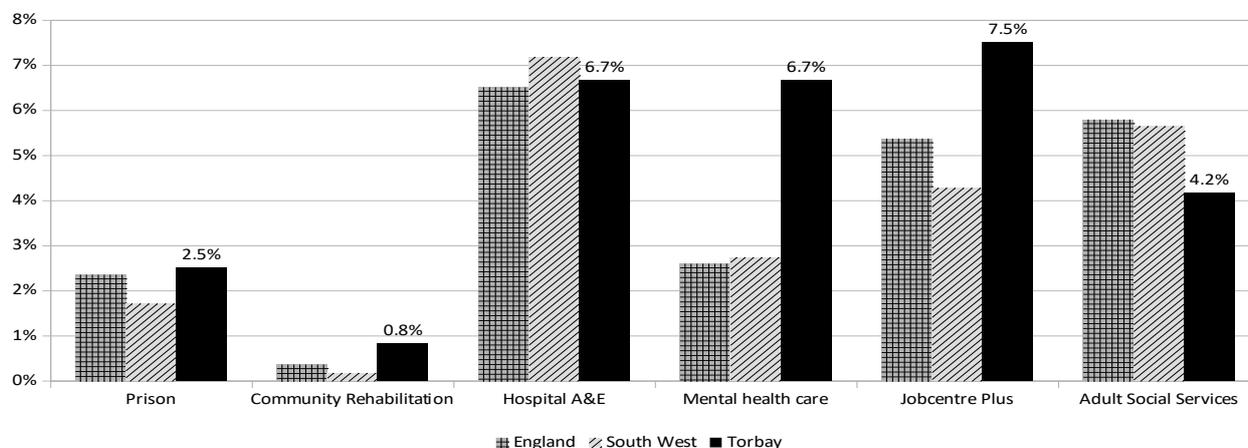
### 6.04 Main referrals for assessed households, including Duty to Refer, 2022/23



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(4.04\)](#)

The duty to refer helps to ensure that services are working together effectively to prevent homelessness by considering peoples’ housing needs when they come into contact with public authorities.

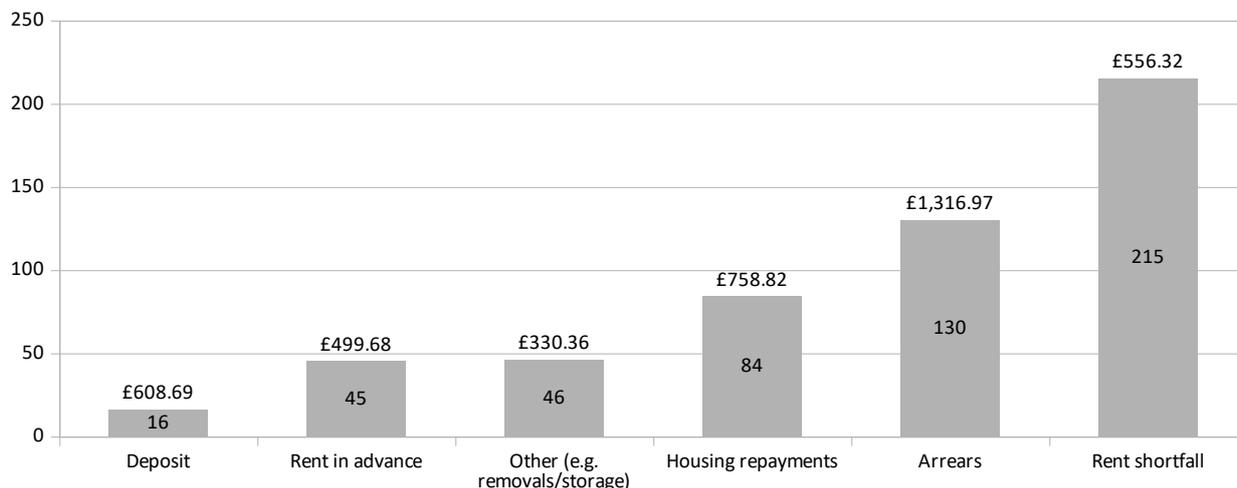
### 6.05 Secondary referrals for assessed households, including Duty to Refer, 2022/23



[GOV.UK: Latest data tables on homelessness \(4.05\)](#)

Financial support is also required to maintain accommodation. Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are provided through a government grant to the local authority. Funding has reduced nationally with Torbay receiving £314,000 in 2023/24, with an additional £300,000 allocated to support this fund. There has been a significant increase in the number of households seeking financial assistance to address the shortfall between their rent and what they can afford.

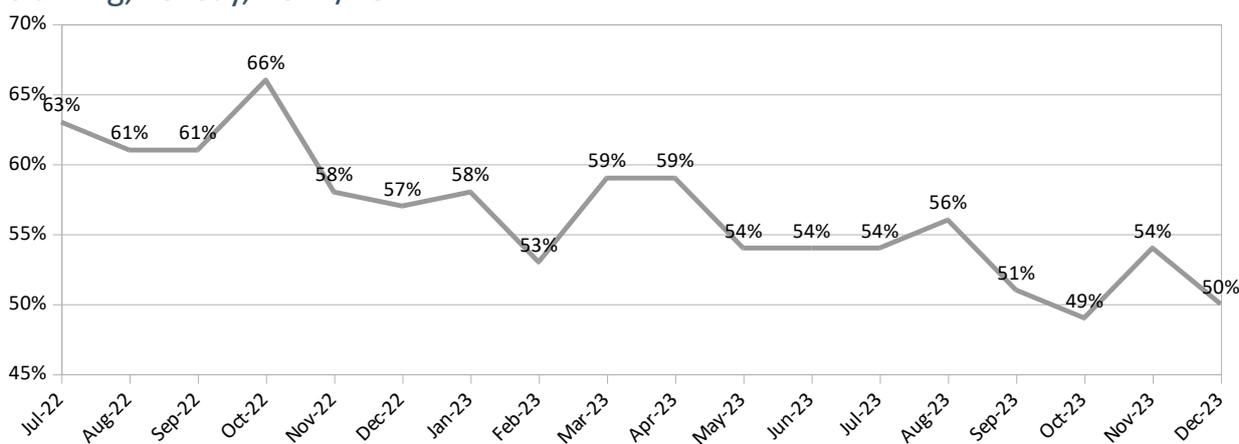
### 6.06 Number of discretionary housing payments and average spend per applicant, Torbay 2022/23



Source: Torbay Housing Needs Service (4.06)

Further financial support is provided through Torbay’s Housing Needs Service to facilitate the prevention of homelessness, often by obtaining accommodation, otherwise unaffordable to those on low incomes. In 2023/24 it is predicted that £350,000 will be spent to provide this type of support through the Housing Needs Team. Assistance is also provided by Children’s Services, who pay for the provision of temporary accommodation.

### 6.07 % of former cared for children now aged 19 to 21, in employment, education, or training, Torbay, 2022/23

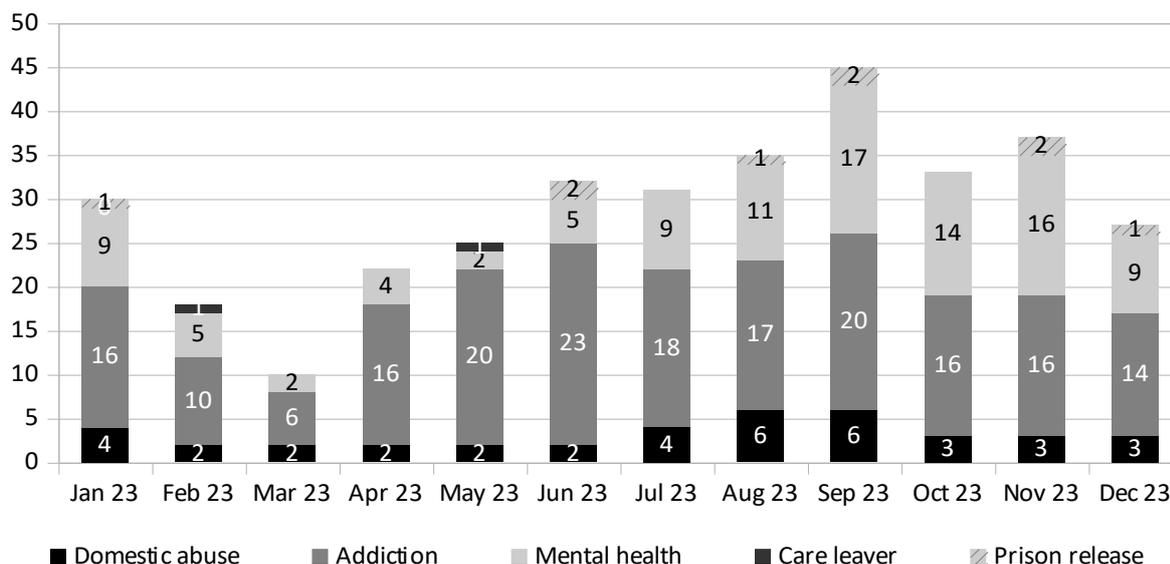


Source: Torbay Children’s Services (3.23)

The percentage of care-experienced young people who are in EET is affected by the economy, this figure continues to remain a concern and has not increased as we would have hoped. We are

reviewing our delivery model to support pupils back to school which may result in an increase but this will need continued monitoring.

### 6.08 Competing needs of those rough sleeping, Torbay, 2023



Source: Torbay Housing Needs Service (1.84)

The background and support needs of rough sleepers is a complex picture. Torbay’s rough sleepers frequently exhibit alcohol and drug addiction and substance misuse. It has been evidenced that people experiencing various forms of homelessness have higher mortality rates than the average population, with average age of deaths for rough sleepers being in the mid to late 40s (nationally).

In 2021, 17 people known to the Housing Needs Service were known to have died, who were mainly between 30 and 40 years old. For those where circumstances of death were known, substance use was prevalent, but was not necessarily the cause of death.

## 6.3 Summary

Since 2018, the Housing Needs Team has significantly grown from 12 officers to a team of 40. This has been in response to the increased duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) and rising homeless demand over recent years. Homelessness is becoming increasingly complex and accommodation is often not the only requirement needed by households applying for assistance. Homelessness data shows that in Torbay, homeless households have a multitude of support needs.

The main support need for households owed a duty in Torbay was for a ‘history of mental health problems’. This has been a prevailing issue for a number of years, with, on average 47% of households saying they needed support. This is almost double reported for England (25%) and way above that of the South West (33%).

Similarly, the second main support need for households owed a duty in Torbay was for ‘physical ill health and disability’. Again this has been prevalent for a number of years, with, on average 32% of households requesting support, rising to 35% more recently. Again, this is twice the nation average (16%) and greater than that of the South West (21%).

Other support needs for households owed a duty in Torbay was for 'domestic abuse', which, on average it has been high in Torbay at 14%, rising sharply last year to 22%, twice that of the national average. The 'history of repeat homelessness' has been high in Torbay at 13%, rising over recent years to 16%, over twice that of the national average (6%) and significantly greater than that of the South West average (9%).

People owed a duty for a 'history of rough sleeping' has also been high in Torbay at 16%, rising sharply last year to 18%, over twice that of the national average and significantly over the South West average. Women rough sleep rough tend to experience higher levels of both domestic abuse and sexual violence, making them a particularly high risk group, having additional vulnerabilities on top of those associated with rough sleeping.

For those people who approach our service for help when threatened with homelessness, our primary focus is upon helping them to remain in their own home, provided that it is safe and suitable for them to do so.

There are a number of services available to help people remain in their homes, including: financial and debt advice; work with landlords and lettings agents; mediation with family and friends with whom the person at risk is living; a tenancy sustainment approach to support both private and social housing tenants; partnership work to tackle antisocial behaviour, harassment and domestic abuse; and taking a trauma informed approach to supporting those with complex needs.

The background and support needs of rough sleepers is a complex picture. Torbay's rough sleepers frequently exhibit alcohol and drug addiction and substance misuse. It has been evidenced that people experiencing various forms of homelessness have higher mortality rates than the average population, with average age of deaths for rough sleepers being in the mid to late 40s (nationally).

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## 8 Appendix 2

### 2.1 Data Sources

1. Devon Community Foundation, Housing and Homelessness
2. Devon Home Choice, Devon's Housing Register
3. DWP stat explore
4. GOV.UK: Local authority housing data
5. GOV.UK: National Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS)
6. LG Inform
7. LGA: The impact of homelessness on health
8. MHCLG: Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (HCLIC)
9. Nomis: official census and labour market statistics
10. Office for National Statistics
11. Shelter: homelessness in England
12. Torbay Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2023 to 2030
13. Torbay Housing Strategy 2023 to 2030
14. Torbay Housing Strategy Evidence Base 2023
15. Torbay Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2023/24

# 10 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)

Tel: 01803 201201

For emergencies out of hours: 0300 456 4876.

[www.facebook.com/torbaycouncil](https://www.facebook.com/torbaycouncil)

[www.twitter.com/Torbay\\_council](https://www.twitter.com/Torbay_council)

If you have seen someone sleeping rough and want to connect them with support services, please use StreetLink, it alerts local outreach teams to reach people they haven't seen before.

[www.streetlink.org.uk](http://www.streetlink.org.uk)