

Torbay  
Homelessness  
Strategy

**2015-2020**

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## **Executive Foreword**

**Councillor Mark King**  
**Executive Lead for Housing, Planning,**  
**Transport and Waste**



Since the last homelessness strategy was written in 2011, there have been considerable changes in the delivery of the homelessness service and homelessness prevention activities of the council and its partners.

It is clear that many households and individuals require help, advice, and access to affordable accommodation. We are determined to work with our partners to alleviate these problems.

Torbay Council through this strategy will take the lead role on tackling homelessness by working with other services and agencies to address the causes of homelessness and assist those in need to secure appropriate accommodation.

This homelessness strategy takes forward our efforts to improve the lives of many individuals and families in Torbay who find themselves faced with homelessness whilst also addressing other challenges brought through welfare reform and the current economic climate

## **Introduction**

There have been many changes since Torbay Council published its last Homelessness Strategy in 2011. These changes, both local and national, have had an impact on the nature of homelessness, and the way in which Torbay Council needs to respond to homelessness.

To formulate this new strategy we have undertaken a homelessness review, which has involved looking at national policy and data, and a comprehensive review of the local homelessness situation, looking at data and evidence of need. We have consulted with all partners, both statutory, community, voluntary and people who use homelessness services. We have mapped current services and available resource. This strategy has been developed from the results of this review.

The Council recognises that homelessness is not always just an issue of lack of housing; there can be other factors involved which affect people's ability to obtain and sustain settled accommodation. Issues such as substance misuse, mental health issues, relationship breakdown, domestic abuse, and financial issues can be involved. The Council recognises that it cannot tackle these issues alone, and partnership work is essential to an effective response to homelessness.

Torbay Council is committed to the prevention of homelessness, and recognises that many services, both statutory, community, and voluntary, have an opportunity, and a part to play, in this prevention work. Building on existing partnerships to promote the prevention of homelessness, leading to changes in practice to facilitate early intervention, is the most important element of our approach.

The strategy sets out our vision, priorities and actions for the next 5 years from 2015. The strategy aims to provide a clear guide to the present situation, and our response to it, in the form of the delivery plan. The delivery plan will be monitored by a newly formed Homelessness Strategy group, which will be attended by statutory and voluntary partners and Torbay Council Executive Leads for Housing, and Adults.

The next review of the homelessness strategy is due in 2020, but if there are major changes in national or local policy within the time, a decision may be taken to bring forward this review.

### **Scope of the Strategy**

The strategy covers general homelessness in Torbay. However, it does not specifically cover youth homelessness, as there is a separate strategy which addresses this issue.

## **Our Priorities 2015 – 2020**

- **To Maintain and Improve Measures to Provide Early Intervention and Prevent Homelessness and Crisis**
  
- **To Meet Accommodation Needs of People with a Housing Need**
  
- **To ensure that Service pathways are responsive , flexible and sustainable, and to maximise integration and partnership working**
  
- **Reducing Homelessness for people with individual needs.**

## **Impacts of Homelessness**

## On the Individual



Diagram from Homeless link

As the diagram above illustrates, the impact of homelessness on the individual can be wide ranging. Issues such as lack of employment could naturally either be a cause, or an effect of homelessness. However, the health impacts of homelessness are well documented.

### Mental and Physical Health

One of the most important determinants of health, in addition to being employed, is having a home and living in a safe and supportive environment. People who are homeless frequently suffer from a range of health problems and homelessness can exacerbate these existing health problems, whether mental, emotional or physical, create further risks to health and wellbeing.

People who are homeless often have multiple and complex health needs. 73% of people who are homeless have a physical health problem. Common physical health concerns among homeless people include joint/muscular problems, chest and breathing issues, dental problems, eye problems and stomach complaints. 41% reported a long term health problem (compared to 28% of the general population). 80% had a mental health issue and 45% had been diagnosed with a mental health issue (compared to 25% of the general population). 39% said they take drugs or are recovering from a drug problem. 27% said they have or are recovering from an alcohol use problem.<sup>1</sup> The average age of people who die while homeless is 47; for women it is only 43.<sup>2</sup> People who are homeless often struggle to access healthcare.<sup>3</sup>

Poor health can also make it more difficult to recover from homelessness. Integrating housing and health commissioning can help ensure people who are homeless get the support they need to improve their health and move on from homelessness.<sup>5</sup>

The annual cost of hospital treatment for homeless people in the UK is at least £85m a year.<sup>3</sup> Failure to support homeless people to get the healthcare they need when they need it, before they require urgent hospital treatment, comes at great cost to the health sector, and for homeless people themselves. There is evidence of a number of health interventions that can bring significant financial savings.<sup>4</sup>

### **On women**

Shelter state that 'there are high levels of vulnerability within the female homeless population - mental ill-health, drug and alcohol dependencies, childhoods spent in care, experiences of sexual abuse and other traumatic life experiences are all commonplace. Homeless women are also likely to have greater levels of mental illness than men as a result of physical and sexual abuse.'

Rough sleeping is particularly dangerous for women. Women are often the subject of verbal abuse and sexual assault. Women can become involved in sex working.

It is also likely that, at any given time, there are also many women staying in 'hidden' homeless accommodation situations. Crisis' interviews with homeless women<sup>6</sup> found a number of women engaging in unwanted sexual liaisons in order to secure accommodation, such as prostitution or going back to old, potentially abusive, partners.

### **Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers**

Whilst the vast majority will not become homeless, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are particularly vulnerable to homelessness. This is due to a range of factors, both personal and structural, including a lack of support networks, such as friends and family, to turn to in a time of crisis; difficulties with language and a lack of familiarity with the British system and not being entitled to benefits and services.

Refugees and asylum seekers who have experienced torture or war are known to have high rates of mental disorder, which can further increase their likelihood of becoming homeless.

Once they become homeless, it can be more difficult for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to access services to relieve homelessness, as they are often not eligible for public funds.

## Impacts on the community

There are clear impacts on the community from homelessness. A study<sup>7</sup> on the experience of homeless people with complex needs found that there is a;

- 53% chance that someone could be involved in street drinking
- 32% chance that someone could beg
- 10% chance that someone could be involved in prostitution.

This visible street activity can make an area feel unsafe for the community.

## Impacts on the tax payer

There is a substantial cost associated with homelessness. Research<sup>8</sup> indicates that the estimated average cost of a homeless person each year to public purse is £26,000.

Costs can include the Council's statutory service, commissioned services, and other costs such as for those involved in the criminal justice system, and health services (substance misuse, mental and physical health) early intervention to prevent homelessness would clearly reduce these costs.

1. Homeless Link (2014) The unhealthy state of homelessness: health audit results 2014
2. Thomas, B (2011) Homelessness is a silent killer Crisis.
3. McCormick, B, (2010) Healthcare for single homeless people Office of the Chief Analyst, Department of Health
4. Hendry, C (2009) Economic Evaluation of the Homeless Intermediate Care Pilot Project; Hewitt, N (2010) Evaluation of the London Pathway for Homeless Patients University College London Hospitals
5. St Mungos Broadway (2014) Homeless health matters: the case for change
6. Reeve, K, Casey, R & Goudie (2006) Homeless Women: Still being failed yet striving to survive
7. <http://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/understanding-homelessness/impact-of-homelessness>
8. <http://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/understanding-homelessness/impact-of-homelessness>

## Section One: The Legal and Policy Situation

### Legal and policy framework

The Local Authorities' legal responsibility to homeless people is set out in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.

**The Housing Act 1996** placed a range of duties upon the Local Authority, including advice and assistance and provision of temporary accommodation. The main housing duty is to accommodate those who are unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

**The Homelessness Act 2002** put in place the requirement for Local Authorities to have a homelessness strategy in place that sets out how it plans to prevent homelessness and ensure it has enough accommodation and support for homeless people or anyone at risk of becoming homeless.

**The Localism Act 2011** made an important change to the authorities' ability to end its main homelessness duty. Following the Localism Act, Local Authorities have been allowed to discharge their duty to secure accommodation through an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector. The duty can only be ended in the private rented sector in this way with a minimum 12 month assured shorthold tenancy.

**'No Second Night Out' 2011** - A Vision to End Rough Sleeping 'No Second Night Out' was the first report of the Government's ministerial working group in 2011. The idea behind 'No Second Night Out' was to ensure that rough sleepers were helped off the streets as quickly as possible, that nobody lives on the street, and that people do not return to the streets. The report set out principles, which the majority of Local Authorities have adopted;

- New rough sleepers should be identified and helped off the streets immediately so that they do not fall into a dangerous rough sleeping lifestyle.
- Members of the public should be able to play an active role by reporting and referring people sleeping rough.
- Rough sleepers should be helped to access a place of safety where their needs can be quickly assessed and they can receive advice on their options.
- Rough sleepers should be able to access emergency accommodation and other services, such as healthcare, if needed.
- If people have come from another area or country and find themselves sleeping rough, the aim should be to reconnect them back to their local community unless there is a good reason why they cannot return. There, they will be able to access housing and recovery services

## **Making Every Contact Count – A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness 2012**

This document set out the expectation that local services should work together to make every contact with a homeless person count, and for resources to be targeted on early intervention initiatives for groups most at risk of homelessness. The document introduced a 'Gold Standard' for Council's Homelessness Services by introducing the 'ten local challenges'

1. Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services
2. Actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
3. Offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients
4. Adopt a *No Second Night Out* model or an effective local alternative
5. Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support
6. Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords
7. Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
8. Have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs
9. Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
10. Not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks

Torbay Council welcomes the direction of the ten local challenges, and is working towards the challenges that we do not currently meet. The local challenges have informed the direction of our Homelessness Strategy and Delivery Plan.

### **Supreme Court Judgement on definition of 'vulnerable' homeless person.**

This judgement in May 2015 superseded the previous 1998 'Pereira' High Court ruling which defined a vulnerable person as 'being less able to fend for oneself than the ordinary homeless person'. The Supreme Court ruled that vulnerability should be measured against the 'ordinary person' if they became homeless, rather than against existing street homeless people. This judgement has clear implications for Local Authorities in making homelessness decisions, and has the potential to increase homelessness acceptances, and the pressure on Local Authority budgets.

## **The Care Act 2014**

The Care Act 2014 gives a new statutory framework for adult care and support which came into effect in April 2015. The Care Act has the following implications for Housing;

- Local authorities that are responsible for care and support are given a duty to promote the well being of every adult. The definition of well being includes 'suitability of living accommodation'
- Local authorities responsible for care and support are expected to integrate services with those provided by the NHS; this includes their Housing services
- All Local authorities must co-operate with each other in relation to the provision of care and support, and have a duty to ensure co-operation between Adult Social care, Housing, Public Health and Children's Services.

This legislation has clear implications for Local Authorities to ensure that effective partnerships and working protocols are in place between services.

## **Welfare Reform**

### **Welfare Reform Act 2012**

The Welfare Reform Act introduced many changes to welfare benefits;

**Universal Credits** aims to simplify the benefits system by bringing together a range of working-age benefits into a single payment. All current benefits will be rolled into one monthly payment, paid to one member of the household. Claims will need to be made online, and payments will be made into a bank account. This will include a housing payment. Universal credits began in April 2013, but currently only applies to a small number of people in certain areas. It is anticipated that everyone of working age will be receiving Universal Credits by 2017.

There is a concern that people with limited budgeting skills may not manage a lump sum payment and fail to pay their rent regularly, thus jeopardising their tenancy and causing a general increase in homeless presentations to the Local Authority.

**The Benefit Cap** set a maximum amount of total benefits that any household could receive. This amount includes Housing Benefit, and was again reduced in the July 2015 budget, bringing the annual total maximum to £23,000 in London, and £20,000 in other parts of the country.

**Benefit Sanctions** were introduced in circumstances where people do not comply with activities that are required of them, for example attending appointments at the Job Centre, attending training events, and undertaking activities to search for work. Sanctions can run for between a week and 156 weeks.

When a person receives a benefit sanction, the Council will be informed, and Housing Benefit will be stopped. There is a clear danger that vulnerable people will fail to contact the Council to restart their claim, thus building up rent arrears and putting their tenancy at risk.

### **Summer Budget 2015**

Further welfare reform was introduced in the Chancellor's summer budget in July 2015. Reforms that may impact on homelessness include;

- Tax credits and Universal Credits will be restricted to 2 children affecting those born after April 2017
- Working age benefits including tax credits and LHA will be frozen for 4 years
- 18-21 year olds will have no automatic right to claim Housing Benefit

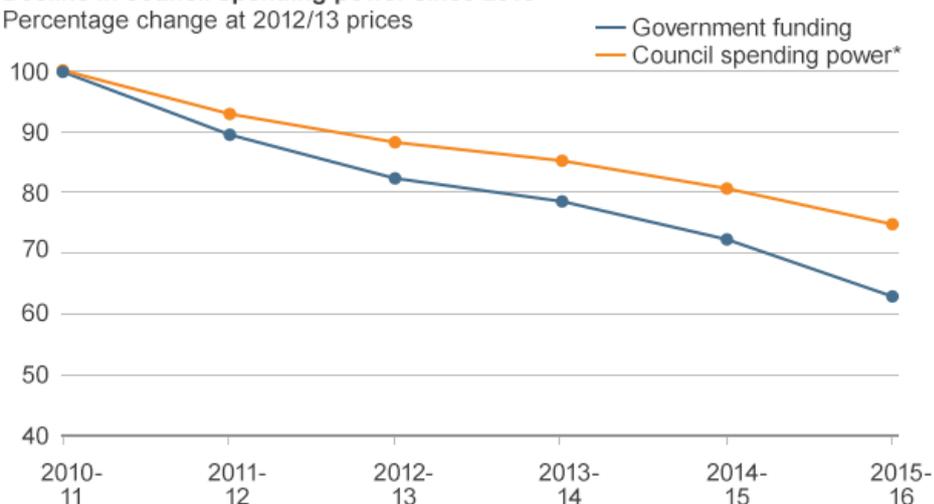
## Changes to Local Authority Funding

Since May 2010, the Coalition Government has instituted a series of budget reductions to address the overall budget deficit. This has meant substantial reductions in the settlement to Local Authorities. The Local Government Association estimates that central funding for Councils has shrunk by 40% overall since 2010. Councils have therefore had to make savings on services they provide, and this has, in some areas, impacted on services for people who are homeless.

### Decline in Council Spending Power since 2010 <sup>6</sup>

Decline in council spending power since 2010

Percentage change at 2012/13 prices



\*Spending power includes government funding and council tax income

Source: National Audit Office, Dept for Communities and Local Government



BBC News 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014. Source National Audit Office. Department for Communities and Local Government.

## **Changes to other statutory services**

There have been funding reductions to other services whose work can impact on homeless people, for example the police, adult social care, mental health services, and substance misuse services. These funding reductions have particularly impacted on work with people who have complex needs, and rough sleepers. Health budgets have also been affected by the increasing demand of an ageing population.

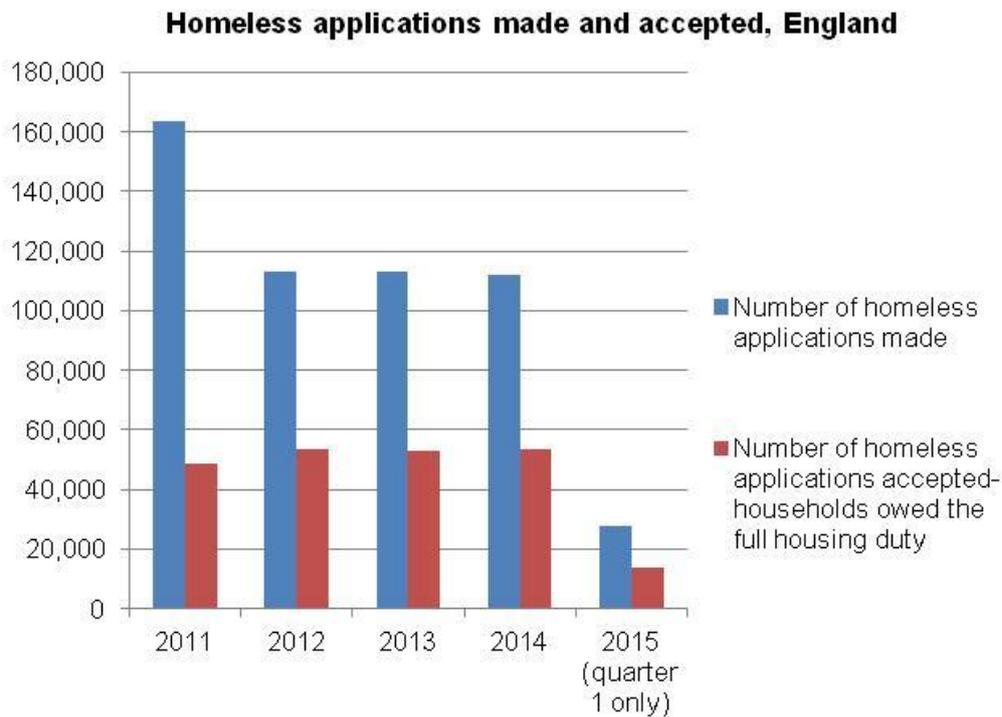
## **Changes to Probation**

Major changes to probation occurred in early 2015 in England and Wales, when a single National Probation Service was created, to be responsible for the management of high risk offenders, and 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies became responsible for the management of low to medium risk offenders. The Community Rehabilitation Companies work was tendered, and contracts awarded for work to begin in April 2015. The CRC's will have a new responsibility for supervising short sentence prisoners (with sentences of under 12 months) after their release. They are expected to build 'supply chains' that consist of organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors in order to subcontract some of the services to address issues including, homelessness, employment and poor mental health that may lead to repeat offending.

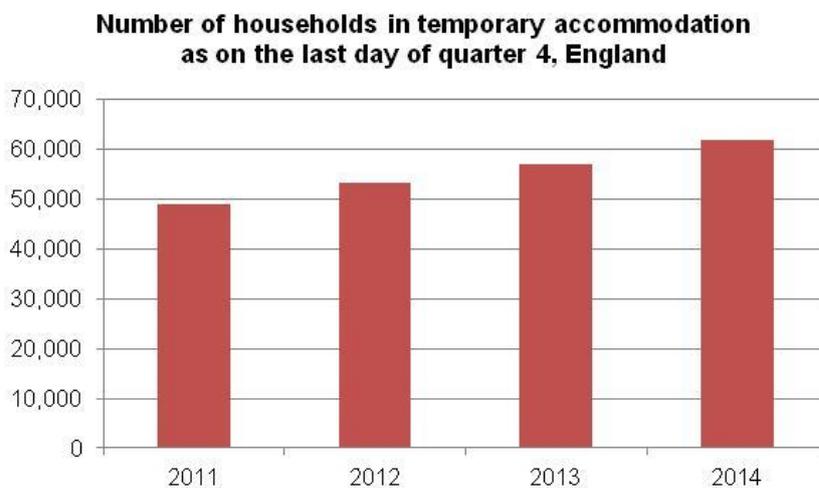
## Section Two: National Homelessness data

### National Homelessness Data – England

#### Statutory homelessness



Source: Homeless Link



Source: Homeless Link

### Reasons why households (that were accepted) became homeless 2011-2015, England

Year	Relatives friends no longer able/willing to house	Relationship breakdown	Mortgage arrears	Rent arrears	Assured shorthold tenancy came to end	Loss of other rented/tiered accommodation	Other
2011	34%	18%	3%	3%	18%	6%	19%
2012	32%	18%	3%	3%	21%	6%	18%
2013	30%	18%	2%	3%	25%	6%	17%
2014	27%	17%	2%	3%	29%	6%	17%
2015 (quarter 1 only)	27%	16%	1%	3%	29%	6%	17%

Source: Homeless Link

The national figures show that homeless acceptances rose slightly from 2011-2012, and then have remained at around the same level until 2014. Full year's figures are not available for 2015.

The number of households in temporary accommodation has risen steadily from 2011. There has been an interesting change nationally, in the reason for loss of previous accommodation; in 2011, relatives/friends no longer willing/able to accommodate was the predominate reason, at 34% of all households. However, loss of previous accommodation due to the end of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy has risen steadily from 18% of households in 2011, to 29% in 2014 and the first quarter of 2015. It is now the predominate reason for loss of previous accommodation in England.

## Rough sleeping

### Rough sleeper numbers –England 2010-2015

Since autumn 2010, all local authorities have been required to submit an annual figure to DCLG to indicate the number of people sleeping rough in their area on a typical night. They can arrive at this figure by means of an estimate or a count. This annual rough sleeping figure allows local authorities to track progress, consider whether current measures are effective in tackling rough sleeping and if new approaches are needed.

### Number of people sleeping rough in England 2010 -2015 <sup>5</sup>

Year	Number of people sleeping rough	% Change from previous year
2010	1768	
2011	2181	23%
2012	2309	6%
2013	2414	5%
2014	2744	14%

## Section Three: The Local Situation

### The Torbay area

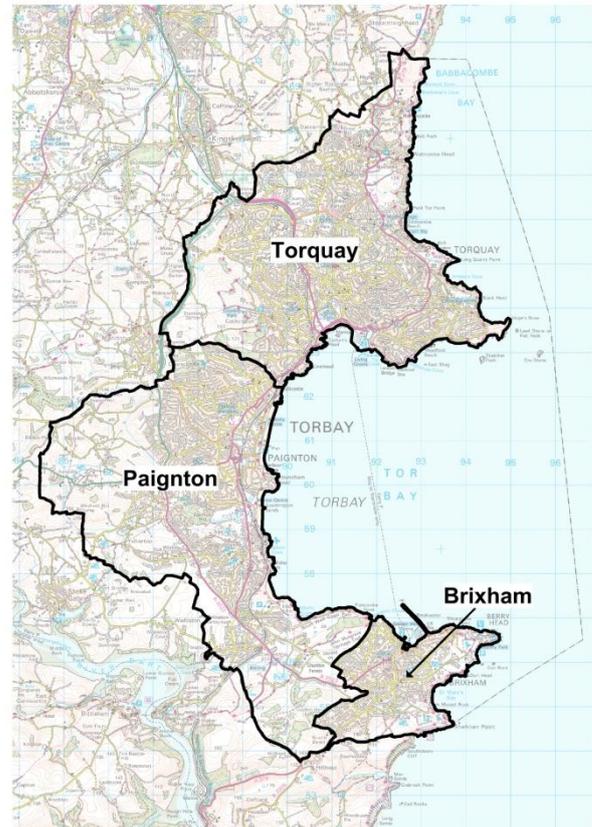
Torbay is a coastal area, encompassing the three towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham. It covers an area of 62.9 square kilometres/ 24.3 square miles and is administered by Torbay Council.

### Distribution of homes/households within Torbay

Urban areas		Rural areas	
Number	%	Number	%
58,668	99%	342	1%

Source: 2011 census, [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk)

The vast majority of Torbay households are within an urban location.



### Population and households within each town

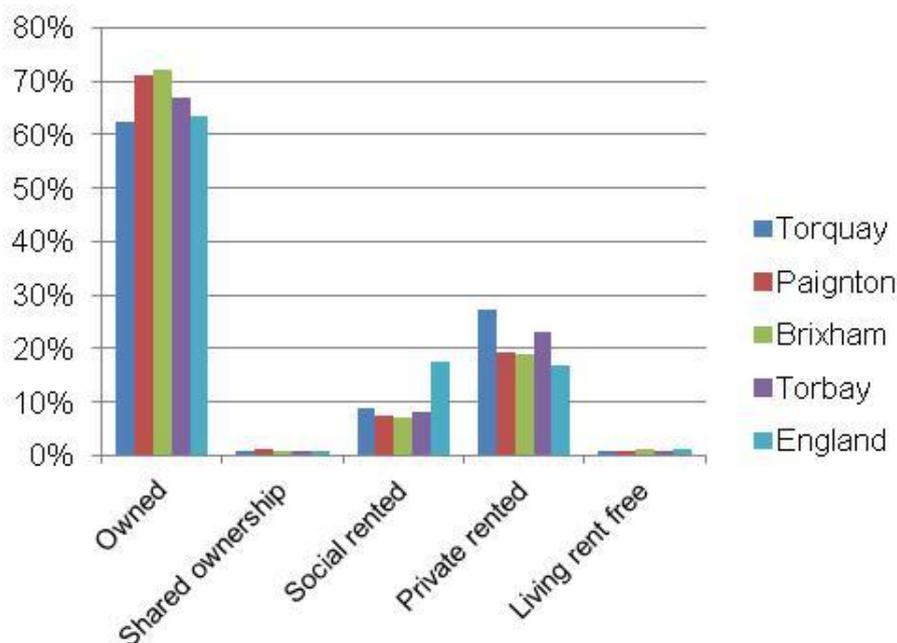
Town	Number of households	Number of people	% of households within each town
Torquay	29,510	65,245	50%
Paignton	21,764	49,021	37%
Brixham	7,736	16,693	13%
<b>Total in Torbay</b>	<b>59,010</b>	<b>130,959</b>	

Source: 2011 census, [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk)

## Homes in Torbay

The tenure of housing within Torbay is as follows;

### Tenure of households in each geographical area



Source: 2011 census, [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk)

The tenure chart shows that there is a:

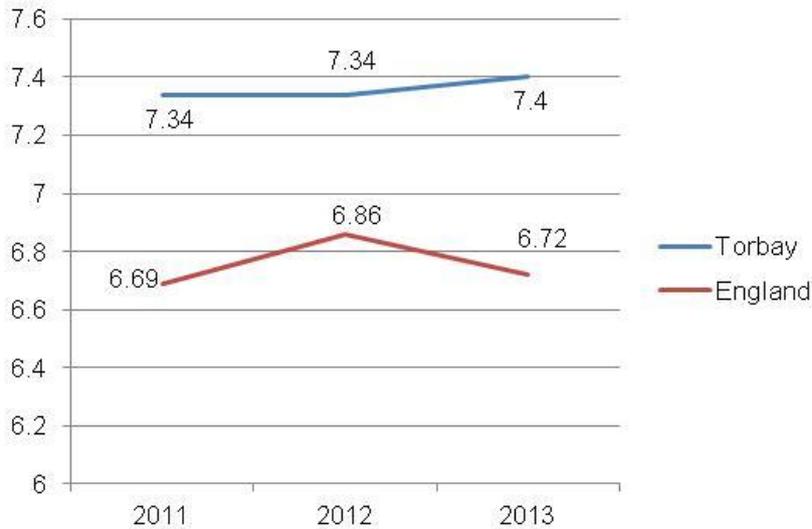
- Higher percentage of home ownership in Paignton and Brixham compared to England
- Significantly lower percentage of social rented housing in all three towns than in England
- Significantly higher percentage of private rented housing in Torbay compared to England, particularly in Torquay

Source: 2011 census, [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk)

## House prices and earnings

The chart below shows that in 2013 it cost over 7 times the average Torbay salary to buy the average Torbay house. This ratio has remained consistently higher compared to England.

### Average (median) house price to income ratio



Source: Land Registry and the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), Table 577, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk), 2012 and 2013 figures are provisional

Despite this, the percentage of home ownership is slightly higher in Torbay than in all England.

## Homelessness in Torbay

The following table shows the number of cases dealt with by the Housing Options team, where homelessness was prevented or relieved. These figures include cases where homelessness was prevented, where people were threatened with homelessness, and cases which were not statutory

Year	Number of cases where homelessness was prevented or relieved
2010/11	557
2011/12	511
2012/13	688
2013/14	517
2014/15	423

Source: Housing Options, Torbay Council Government P1E returns

The drop in numbers from 2012/13 to 2013/14 and subsequently 2013/14 to 2014/15 can be explained by the loss of Supporting People services over this period of time, as people moving to one of these services was recorded as a positive outcome of prevention/relief.

## Households accepted as owed the full housing duty, Torbay



Source: Housing Options service, Torbay Council, Government P1E returns

The numbers of acceptances were steady in the period from 2010-2012, followed by a large rise in 2012/13. There was a drop in the number of acceptances in 2013/14, back to a similar level to 2010-12. This was followed by a rise in 2014/15.

This pattern of number of acceptances is very different to the national pattern over the same period.

**Main reasons for loss of last settled home for applicant households accepted as owed the full housing duty in Torbay**

	2010/11		2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15	
	No.	%								
Violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner	11	19%	12	21%	18	24%	19	34%	14	22%
Loss of rented/tied accommodation due to:										
Termination of assured shorthold tenancy	15	26%	17	30%	12	16%	13	23%	8	12%
Reasons other than termination of assured shorthold tenancy	8	14%	8	14%	10	13%	7	13%	12	18%
Other reasons	23		20		35		17		31	
<b>Total number accepted as owed the full housing duty</b>	<b>57</b>		<b>57</b>		<b>75</b>		<b>56</b>		<b>65</b>	

Source: Torbay Council, Housing Options P1E returns

Other reasons for loss of home in Torbay since 2010/11 for those households owed the full housing duty involved very small numbers:

- Parents, other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate
- Non violent breakdown of relationship with partner
- Violent breakdown of relationship involving associated persons (not partner), other forms of violence (not linked to racial or relationships)
- Harassment (racial and other)
- Mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home)
- Rent arrears on private sector dwellings
- Left prison/on remand, left hospital, left other institution or Local Authority care
- Other (e.g. homeless in emergency, sleeping rough or in a hostel)

Therefore it can be seen that the reasons for the loss of previous tenancy show a different pattern to the all England figures. In Torbay, the violent breakdown of a relationship has risen steadily as the reason for loss of previous tenancy, from 19% of households in 2010/11 to 22% in 2014/15, with a spike of 34% in 2013/14.

The loss of an Assured Shorthold tenancy, conversely, has shown an irregular pattern, varying year by year and ranging from 30% of all households in 2011/12, to 12% of all households in 2014/15. The relatively small numbers of households involved may explain this pattern.

The clear predominate reasons for loss of previous tenancies in Torbay from 2010/11 to 2014/15 have been the violent breakdown of a relationship, and the loss of rented accommodation, whether this is through the loss of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, or other.

### **Details of households accepted as homeless**

The highest proportion of people accepted as homeless are aged 25-44 years

Data shows that in 2014/15, 42% of households accepted as owed the full duty, had dependent children and around 50% of those accepted as owed the full housing duty in 2014/15 were one person households.

Source: Housing Options service, Torbay Council, Government P1E returns

### **Priority need**

To be accepted as owed the full housing duty by the Local Authority, the household must be identified as in 'priority need for accommodation'. Households with dependent children and pregnant women are always identified with this as their priority need regardless of any other priority need they may have.

In 2014/15 the number of households accepted as owed the full housing duty where the priority need was due to 'mental illness or disability' more than doubled compared to the previous year and was the highest number for at least the last 5 years. In 2014/15 this is the most common priority need (outside of children/pregnancy) for households owed the full housing duty. Fleeing domestic abuse is another main reason for being accepted as owed the full housing duty.

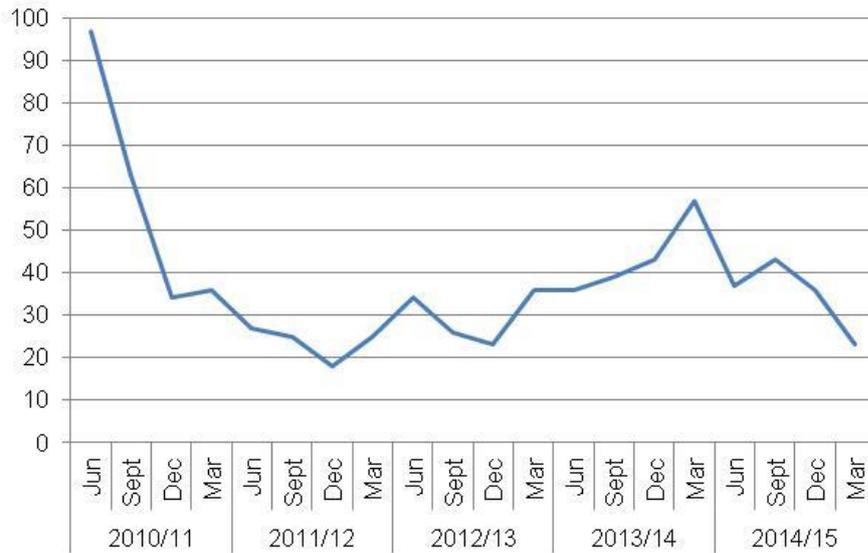
Source: Housing Options service, Torbay Council

### **Homelessness- temporary accommodation**

The Local Authority has a duty to provide emergency accommodation when it has reason to believe that an applicant may be homeless, eligible and in priority need for accommodation.

The Local Authority also has a duty to provide emergency accommodation for households owed the full housing duty.

**Number of households in emergency accommodation provided by Torbay Council, measured at the end of each quarter**



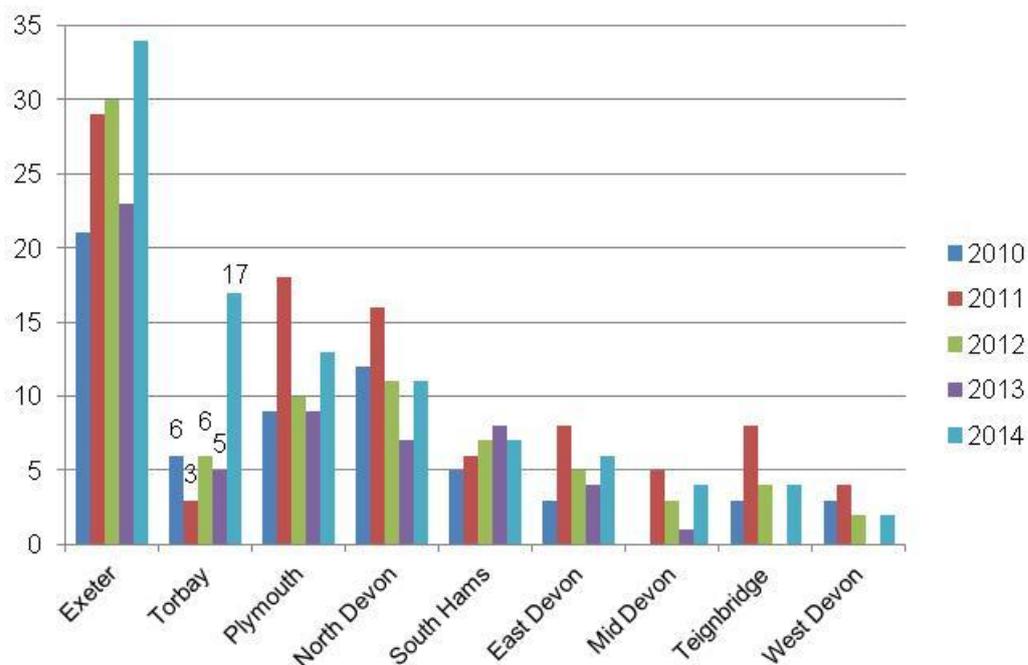
Source: Housing Options service, Torbay Council, P1E returns

The number of households in temporary accommodation measured at the end of each quarter has decreased generally since 2010/11, with a rise in 2013/14.

As of June 2015 the number of households in temporary accommodation had increased to 52.

## Rough sleeping

### Counts and estimates of the number of rough sleepers in Devon, 2010-2014



Source: Department for Communities and Local Government, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)  
Lack of a column for a year means the estimate was 0.

All of the above were estimates except: Exeter- 2010, 2011, 2013; Torbay- 2011; Mid Devon- 2013

Between 2013 and 2014, the Torbay estimate increased from 5 to 17 rough sleepers, an increase of 240%. All other Local Authority areas (except South Hams) saw an increase in this period. England as a whole rose from 2,414 to 2,744 rough sleepers between 2013 and 2014- an increase of 14%.

There will be a rough sleeping count taking place in Torbay in November 2015, and the expectation is that this will show another dramatic increase from 2014.

Collectively, this group is vulnerable, and many have complex needs. They are subject to an increased risk of harm from other members of the public and from within the rough sleeping community, and are open to exploitation and health risks.

A small number of this group are involved in Anti Social Behaviour, public order offences, begging, and theft.

A recent survey of 39 rough sleepers in Torbay highlighted high levels of concern around personal safety. Many of the people surveyed stated that rough sleeping was very dangerous, and some stated that they would only sleep out in areas that are covered by CCTV.

### **Local Connection**

At any time, a significant proportion of the rough sleepers in Torbay, do not have a local connection to Torbay, and do not usually approach Housing Options. They are not eligible to use Council commissioned services, such as the Leonard Stocks Centre. Whilst community and voluntary agencies work with these individuals, and try to encourage reconnection, individuals are not always willing to consider this option. This results in a group of people on the streets who are vulnerable, and are not eligible to use commissioned services.

### **Young people**

Young people (aged 16-24) make up a substantial proportion of homeless acceptances in Torbay:

Year	Number	Percentage of all acceptances
2010/11	12	21%
2011/12	14	25%
2012/13	15	20%
2013/14	13	23%
2014/15	14	22%

The 2014/15 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for South Devon and Torbay “Developing Well – 5 to 24 year olds” comments that the private rented sector “is playing an increasing role in accommodating those who might otherwise be housed in the social rented sector as an answer to ever-growing waiting lists and problems of accommodating homeless households. In recent years the sector has increased its role as a provider of housing for young people and low-income households”.

In addition, there are increasing numbers of young homeless people in commissioned support services who:

- self harm
- are a suicide risk
- have mental health issues
- have Aspergers Syndrome, autism, or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

To summarise, Torbay's housing market is dominated by owner occupiers and use of the private rented sector with low levels of social housing. House prices are high compared to average salaries.

Homeless acceptances show a general rise since 2011, with a spike in 2012/13. The main reasons for the loss of last accommodation is the loss of rented accommodation, and the violent break up of a relationship. Acceptances on the basis of vulnerability due to mental health have more than doubled in 2014/15 compared to the previous year, and are at the highest level for at least 5 years. Domestic abuse is also a major reason for acceptances due to vulnerability. Young people make up, on average, nearly a quarter of all homeless acceptances.

Rough sleeping has increased dramatically; this reflects a national trend, but Torbay shows a higher percentage increase compared to England as a whole.

## Corporate Support and Strategies

The Draft Corporate Plan for Torbay 2015-2020 is designed to provide an overarching framework for the ambitions of the Councils. The priorities within this draft document are:

- Protecting all children and giving them the best start in life
- Working towards a prosperous Torbay
- Promoting healthy lifestyles across Torbay
- Ensuring Torbay remains an attractive and safe place to live and visit
- Protecting and supporting vulnerable adults

There are clear ties to homelessness within these priorities.

Within the current administration, the delivery expectations are;

- To provide adequate specialist housing for those needing care and support
- To improve the Living Environment and Quality of Life
- To provide an integrated approach and options for Housing Advice and prevention of Homelessness

The draft 'My Home Is My Life' strategy is the overarching Housing strategy for Torbay Council. The homelessness strategy forms a key element of this strategy in particular around the elements of preventing homelessness, and vulnerable people.

All strategies have regard to the JSNA, the Market Position Statement, and the Housing and Health Needs Assessment 2015.

There are clear ties from the homelessness strategy to the Youth Homelessness Strategy.

The Early Help Strategy is a key element in Torbay's commitment to improve outcomes for children and young people; prevention of homelessness and ensuring quality of accommodation are key threads of the strategy.

## Services and Partnerships in Torbay

### Services for people who are homeless or have a housing need

#### Services that the Council provides

- **Statutory services** are provided through the Housing Options team. The public can access the Housing Options team through Connections, a walk in contact centre for the public available in all 3 towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham, or by telephone.

In addition to statutory work, the Housing Options team provides;

- **A MEAM worker (Making Every Adult Matter)**, who works predominately with young people with complex needs, to give them additional support to obtain and maintain settled accommodation as part of a multi agency approach. This post is funded until July 2016.
- **A private sector development worker** whose aim is to form partnerships to improve the supply and quality of private sector accommodation for single homeless people, and to look at innovation in this area. This post is funded until July 2016.
- **Youth homelessness mediation and prevention service** – this service is for 16-24 year olds threatened with homelessness and focuses on preventing homelessness.

The wider Community Safety team is involved with homelessness, both from an enforcement perspective, and with offering support. They employ the following workers;

- **A MEAM worker**, who works with adults with complex needs, to give them additional support to obtain and maintain settled accommodation and address underlying issues.
- **A Vulnerable and Complex Needs Officer** to work specifically with people with mental health issues and complex needs throughout the housing pathway.

**Tenancy Training** – This has been developed through the Housing Options Team, and piloted with tenants within the Single Homeless accommodation and support service. The training is delivered in modules, and supported by the support workers attached to the support service. The training aims to give tenants the opportunity to learn skills to help maintain future tenancies, and a certificate to present to future landlords. The Private Sector Development Worker is promoting the certificates with local landlords. Tenancy training is funded until July 2016.

## Torbay Council Commissioned services

- **The Leonard Stocks Centre**, a 24 bed engagement and resettlement centre is commissioned to work with single people with housing and support needs, and a local connection. Severe Weather provision is included in this contract, and provided from the Leonard Stocks building. A GP and nurse service, provided in partnership with a local GP practice, is delivered for Leonard Stocks residents, and rough sleepers, from the purpose built surgery within the Leonard Stocks building. 3 of the units at Leonard Stocks are accessible for people with disabilities, and there is a kennel, to ensure the hostel can house people with dogs. Occupancy of Leonard Stocks has been between 95% and 97% every year since 2011, and there is always a sizeable waiting list for the service.  
The current contract for Leonard Stocks runs until April 2016. The service will be re procured to start a new service from the building in April 2016.
- **'Bay 6'** is a service which provides support around hospital discharge. This is provided through a 15 hour a week post which is based between Housing Options, and the hospital, to identify people who are going to be homeless on discharge, and source accommodation for them to ensure discharge is not delayed. The funding for this service is secured until the end of December 2015.
- **Prison release service.** This service employs two workers across two of the local prisons (Channings Wood and Exeter) and several local authority areas. The service aims to reduce numbers of people being released with no accommodation. The workers have multiple bases with various local agencies, to maximise potential for partnership work.
- **Homemaker** – This service provides debt and welfare support, maximises income and prevents homelessness in social housing sector, and is accessible through Housing Options. This service is funded until March 2016.
- **Temporary accommodation** – a variety of temporary accommodation is commissioned in Torbay. This service will be reviewed in April 2016.
- **Accommodation and support service for single homeless people.** This service provides a 4 bedroom house with support for single homeless people. It provides move on accommodation from Leonard Stocks, and the Council's Temporary accommodation.
- **Young people's services** – all services for people aged 16 to 24 are in the process of being re-commissioned. New services will include accommodation and support services for this age group.
- **Integrated Domestic Abuse Service** – this service provides crisis accommodation, floating support, MARAC/IDVA (independent domestic violence advocates for high risk cases) and support programmes for survivors and their children.
- **Adult Substance Misuse services** – these services provide treatment around drugs and alcohol, and work closely with Leonard Stocks. The services report that homelessness, family breakdown and insecure tenancies are often issues for their clients. Treatment can be shown to be effective in terms of avoiding family or relationship breakdown, and can ultimately be a contributing factor to alleviating homelessness.

**Non-commissioned services for people who are homeless** – these are services that work specifically with homeless people. There are many other community services in Torbay that are open to all, and are accessed by homeless people.

- **An outreach service**, which contacts rough sleepers and signposts them to services is funded by the Friends of Factory Row and delivered by Shekinah. The service employs a worker who visits known sites in the 3 towns to speak to rough sleepers and signpost them into services.
- **Shekinah Mission** provides Employability Co-ordinator who works with supportive employers locally who offer work experience and supported job opportunities. The Employability Co-ordinator meets with residents of Leonard Stocks, and rough sleepers once a week and engages with those who are interested in employment opportunities.
- **Friends of Factory Row** fundraise for, and promote the work of the Leonard Stocks Centre. They currently contribute £100 a month to Leonard Stocks, for activities.
- **The Street Pastor** service has a presence on the streets on Friday and Saturday nights. They work with people who are homeless, (amongst others) and provide food, practical assistance, and signposting.
- **The Haven** is a drop in centre in Paignton which is open every week day and provides a listening ear, practical support and signposting to people who are street homeless.
- **The Living Room** is a drop in centre at a local church, which operates on Wednesday and Friday lunchtimes, and provides food, signposting and a listening ear for people.
- **The Salvation Army** – offers food parcels and signposting.
- **Brixham Does Care** offers signposting and practical assistance in Brixham.
- **Night shelters.** During the month of February 2015, Church groups provided a night shelter for people who were street homeless. The night shelter was operated from Church Halls in Paignton.  
The Church groups plan to offer a similar service in 2016, and to expand to offer shelters in Torquay in January 2016, in addition to Paignton in February.

## **Partnership projects**

- **Single Homeless Bid**

The funding for a number of the current posts and commissioned services (MEAM worker, private sector development worker, prison workers) originated from a bid made jointly by several local authorities in Devon in 2014; Torbay, Teignbridge, East Devon, Mid Devon and Exeter. The successful bid to the single homeless fund brought in £250,000 of funding to the area, and funded the above posts, some tenancy training, and some consultancy.

➤ **Specialist Accommodation**

This joint project between Adult Social Care, Housing Options, and the Commissioning Team, sought to bring outcomes based support and accommodation services into Adult Social Care, and improve the prevention of homelessness in this area. This project will enable the retention of local providers who were previously funded through Supporting People contracts, and have particular skills around tenancy sustainment for people with complex needs and mental health issues. The procurement process is currently underway to establish a list of approved providers, and work is being done with practitioners to introduce them to the available services.

➤ **'Ladies Lounge'**

This service works with vulnerable women with complex needs, who are often rough sleeping, involved with sex working, and have complex needs. A joint project between the Street Pastors, Torbay Council's Community Safety team, St Mary Magdalens Church, and Shekinah, the project offers a weekly womens only drop in. The drop in, at a centrally located church, offers a safe space and aims to build relationships and trust with vulnerable women, with a view to supporting them to a more stable life.

➤ **The Orb**

The Orb is a co-commissioned project, facilitated by Torbay Community Development Trust. The Orb will provide an all encompassing online directory for everything within Torbay from statutory services to small groups/clubs and events, and is due to be launched in October 2015. The aim is for the Orb to replace all other Torbay directories, meaning that all information can be accessed from a single site. This site will offer service users, and staff in statutory, community and voluntary agencies, access to information about services for people who are homeless, or vulnerably housed.

## **Forums/partnerships**

### **➤ Rough sleepers forum**

This forum is attended by Housing Options, voluntary groups working with people who are street homeless, and the current provider of the Leonard Stocks Centre. The aim of the group is to share information about work that is being done by various agencies around rough sleeping, focus effort, and avoid duplication

### **➤ Rough sleepers operational group**

This group is organised by a voluntary sector partner, and is attended by voluntary sector groups working with people who are street homeless. The group aims to co-ordinate the work around individual rough sleepers, by looking at cases and agreeing and allocating work between agencies.

### **➤ The 'Move On' Meeting**

This is a monthly meeting to look at move ons from services. The meeting originated when there were numerous services moving people on, to ensure appropriate and smooth moves through the single homeless pathway. This meeting is currently being reviewed.

### **➤ Youth Homelessness Prevention Panel**

This group focuses on young people, and is attended by Children's Services, Housing Options, current providers of commissioned services for young people, and the MEAM worker. The group prioritises people for vacancies in services, looks at placements at risk, and those ready for move on. The group aims to co-ordinate work around young people to prevent homelessness.

### **➤ Community Safety Partnership**

The Torbay Community Safety Partnership has four main aims:

- Torbay will be a safe environment
- Torbay will have less victims of crime
- People of Torbay will feel safe
- People will be given an opportunity to change

And four Priority areas:

- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)
- Abuse in the family

- Reducing re-offending
- Alcohol and the night time economy

## **Wider Local Context**

### **Welfare reforms – local impact**

Universal credits are to be introduced in Torbay from January 2016. There will be a gradual introduction with only new claims from single working age claimants being affected in the initial phase. The DWP estimate that there will be approximately 350 claims made during the first year, and around 100 of these will include the Housing element (formerly Housing Benefit)

### **Changes to probation**

The local Community Rehabilitation Company in Torbay is run by Working Links. Discussions have begun with Working Links, to look at the implications of the new service and its work, and forming partnerships. This work will be further developed and is picked up in our delivery plan.

The CRC continues to be bound by the probation instructions issued by the Ministry of Justice. These govern the relocation of offenders and make clear that movement between areas should be managed with risk as the priority. The new Post Sentence Supervision, providing twelve months oversight to all persons released from prison, regardless of how short their sentences are, includes a requirement to "Reside permanently at an address approved by your supervisor and obtain the prior permission of the supervisor for any stay of one night or more at a different address".

This new legislation has enabled us, here in Torbay, to refuse cases, thus avoiding housing and accommodation issues and the attendant costs falling on the council.

### **Integrated Care Organisation (ICO)**

From 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 Torbay and Southern Devon Health and Care Trust (local community health and social care provider) and South Devon Healthcare Foundation Trust (Torbay Hospital) became an ICO with a pooled budget for health and social care. The ICO will deliver new models of integrated care in the community, reducing the need for acute hospital care and enabling people to manage conditions with greater access to advice information and community support. The ICO will change the focus of care from "What's the matter **with** me?" To "What matters **to** me?" and will have prevention at its heart. In this way, new ways of working with primary care and community voluntary sector in multi-agency teams will ensure crucial influences on health, such as homelessness, will form part of wider care and support plans.

## **Better Care Fund**

From 2014 all local areas are required to pool elements of health and social care funding into a better care fund aimed at protecting social care services, ensuring 7 day services, data sharing and joint assessments. The objective is to avoid delayed transfers of care, emergency admissions and admissions to residential and nursing care, improving patient and service user experience and dementia diagnosis in Torbay. Homelessness can have a direct impact on performance in these areas so the ICO and CCG will be involved in delivering the Homelessness strategy delivery plan.

## **Supporting People Services**

Supporting People services formed an integral part of the pathway for homeless people, to ease transition into settled accommodation. Since the removal of the ring fence from the Supporting People budget in 2009, and increasing pressure on statutory services, budget investment in housing related support services has decreased dramatically. More than 600 units of outreach and accommodation based support have been decommissioned in Torbay since 2014.

The impact of the loss of these services has been mainly in the disruption of pathways, which enabled people to move through services of differing intensities, from 24 hour intensive support, to a tenancy in the community with an hour's visiting support per week. This loss of 'step down' or 'move on' accommodation can impact on the time people spend in emergency or temporary accommodation such as LSC, or in residential care and hospital. Many of the services supported people with low level mental health and social care needs; the support enables people to maintain a home and live independently, and prevented their needs escalating, or enabled planned resettlement following crisis.

Torbay Council is looking for innovative ways to provide these pathways, and recognises that the way forward is through partnership working, particularly with the voluntary and community sector, joint commissioning, and the identification of funding opportunities.

Partnership working such as the cross authority single homelessness bid and the Specialist Accommodation Project with Adult Social Care have provided extra capacity to support the homelessness pathway, and strengthened partnerships.

## Section 4 – Our Priorities

### Consultation/how we developed our priorities

To develop our priorities, we conducted a Homelessness Review from March to July 2015. This involved looking at both national and local data, to identify any emerging trends, and undertaking extensive consultation. We spoke to practitioners and Commissioners from Adult Social Care, probation and Mental Health services, voluntary and statutory sector partners and partners from commissioned services. Service user consultation was undertaken by Torbay Voice, a group of people who have used, or are using support services in Torbay. Torbay Voice Members are trained in interview skills, and safeguarding, and receive support and supervision to carry out their work. Torbay Voice spoke to rough sleepers, people in temporary accommodation, people in the Leonard Stocks centre (hostel) and members of the public.

The main findings from our consultation were;

- There was a lot of positive feedback from service users around the support they had received from Housing Options, the Leonard Stocks Centre, and voluntary agencies in Torbay. However, some people wanted more support to find accommodation and settle into accommodation, information about what's available, help with things when they need to be done online, and help with deposits. The Devon Home Choice process was flagged by some as being difficult as it has to be done online.
- Frontline staff in mental health and Adult Social Care sometimes found it difficult to contact Housing Options. They all felt that there isn't enough support for people to fill in Devon Home Choice forms online, and that they often ended up doing this. They all stated that they are doing more housing work with people since the decommissioning of Supporting People services, and the end of the funding for the link workers. They would like a better link with Housing Options (ideally an outreach service from Housing), and support for people to fill in Devon Home Choice forms. They would like training in things such as DHP and if there are places to access deposits.
- Mental health staff flagged that there are a small number of people with mental health issues who are not accepted into Leonard Stocks as they are too risky.

- Police priorities were the area around Leonard Stocks, mental health (as they are seeing a lot of people with mental health issues) and re-establishing a pathway for people who are homeless.
- Probation stressed continuity of services for people leaving prison, and pathways for people who are homeless.
- Move on from Leonard Stocks was flagged as problematic by many people. Other supported accommodation has been decommissioned, and the private sector is the main option for people. It is particularly difficult to house people who have dogs, or who are known to landlords as 'bad tenants'
- The Council's family services reported more pressure on their service since the supported accommodation service (Stone Court) was decommissioned. Previously, homeless families who needed support would get support at Stone Court – now family services have to get involved. Family services would like to see a pathway for homeless families.
- Voluntary agencies raised the fact that there are a number of people who cannot go to Leonard Stocks due to being banned or who do not see Leonard Stocks as an appropriate place for them. They stressed the need to target people who are new to the streets to stop them becoming entrenched.
- The importance of all departments of the local authority recognising their role in homelessness prevention was flagged, as was, the importance of Housing Options remaining as a specialist team due to their knowledge and experience
- The importance of Leonard Stocks and the GP service being protected was mentioned by many people.
- The importance of links to employment and training for people who are/have been homeless.
- The importance of access to mental health services was raised

The homelessness review presented us with clear areas where there are currently gaps or services that are only funded short term, areas where we could be working better together, policy change that will have an impact in the future, and areas where we have good practice that we need to maintain.

From this, we have set our priorities, and developed our delivery plan.

## **Our Priorities**

From our homelessness review we have decided upon the following priorities to try to address the issues that have emerged;

- **To Maintain and Improve Measures to Provide Early Intervention and Prevent Homelessness and Crisis**
- **To Meet Accommodation Needs of People with a Housing Need**
- **To ensure that Service pathways are responsive , flexible and sustainable, and to maximise integration and partnership working**
- **Reducing Homelessness in Specialist groups with individual needs.**

## **Delivery Plan**

Our delivery plan has been drawn up around the priorities we have identified, and with regard to trends recognised from data, consultation results, the ethos of prevention, the ten local challenges, and policy and legislative changes.

The delivery plan will be a live document and will be updated as actions are progressed. There are some areas that need further investigation before a course of action is set. These areas will be updated with our course of action. The strategy and up to date action plan will be available on the Council's website.

The Delivery Plan is an appendix to the Strategy.

## **How we will monitor our Delivery Plan**

A new Homelessness Strategy Group will be formed and will include a wide range of partners and agencies, for example the Police, Adult Social Care, Probation, and voluntary sector partners. The primary objective of the group will be to monitor the Homelessness Strategy Delivery Plan, and, to facilitate this, the Chair will be from the voluntary sector, or a Councillor.

The Rough Sleepers Forum will end, and its work will be incorporated into the new Homelessness Strategy Group. The Executive Lead for Adults and Children will attend the Homelessness Strategy Group, and also attends the Health and Wellbeing Board, ensuring a link between the groups. Progress of the Homelessness Strategy action plan will be reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board

## **With thanks....**

With thanks to the following teams/organisations who contributed to this strategy;

Shekinah Mission  
Langley House Trust  
Torbay Street Pastors  
CentrePeace  
The Haven  
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Early Help Team, Torbay Council  
Adult Social Care zone teams  
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Turnaround Team Torbay  
Psychosis Team, Torbay  
Troubled Families Co-ordinator, Torbay Council  
Public Health team, Torbay Council  
Safer Communities Torbay  
Adult Substance Misuse, Torbay  
Partnership and Commissioning Team, Torbay Council

And special thanks to members of 'Torbay Voice'; a group of people who use or have used support services in Torbay, and who carried out the interviews with service users to inform this strategy.