NOTICE OF MEETING

Meeting:	**HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**
Date and Time:	**WEDNESDAY, 21 JANUARY 2026, AT 6.00 PM**
Place:	**COUNCIL CHAMBER - APPLETREE COURT, BEAULIEU ROAD, LYNDHURST, SO43 7PA**
Enquiries to:	**Email: lee.ellis@nfdc.gov.uk** **Lee Ellis Tel: 023 8028 5719**

PUBLIC INFORMATION:

This agenda can be viewed online (https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk). It can also be made available on audio tape, in Braille and large print.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting. The seating capacity of our Council Chamber public gallery is limited under fire regulations to 22.

Members of the public can watch this meeting live, or the subsequent recording, on the Council's website. Live-streaming and recording of meetings is not a statutory requirement and whilst every endeavour will be made to broadcast our meetings, this cannot be guaranteed. Recordings remain available to view for a minimum of 12 months.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Members of the public may speak in accordance with the Council's public participation scheme:

(a) on items within the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel's terms of reference which are not on the public agenda; and/or

(b) on individual items on the public agenda, when the Chairman calls that item. Speeches may not exceed three minutes.

Anyone wishing to attend the meeting, or speak in accordance with the Council's public participation scheme, should contact the name and number shown above no later than 12.00 noon on Friday, 16 January 2026.

Kate Ryan
Chief Executive

Appletree Court, Lyndhurst, Hampshire. SO43 7PA
www.newforest.gov.uk

AGENDA

Apologies

1. MINUTES

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2025 as a correct record.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To note any declarations of interest made by members in connection with an agenda item. The nature of the interest must also be specified.

Members are asked to discuss any possible interests with Democratic Services prior to the meeting.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive any public participation in accordance with the Council's public participation scheme.

4. CORPORATE PLAN: KEY PERFORMANCE DATA FOR QUARTER 2 2025-2026 (Pages 5 - 32)

To consider the performance data against KPIs identified in the Corporate Plan.

5. DRAFT NEW FOREST CREATIVE AND CULTURAL FRAMEWORK (Pages 33 - 56)

To consider the draft New Forest Creative and Cultural Framework.

6. COMMUNITY GRANTS 2026/27 (Pages 57 - 82)

To consider the recommendations for community grant allocation for 2026/27 from the Community Grants Task and Finish Group.

7. DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY 2025-2028 (Pages 83 - 112)

To receive the Domestic Abuse Strategy following consultation.

8. HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY (Pages 113 - 278)

To consider the draft proposed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

9. DRAFT REVISED ALLOCATIONS POLICY (Pages 279 - 442)

To consider proposals to amend the Housing Allocations Policy.

10. HOUSING LANDLORD ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) STRATEGY (Pages 443 - 500)

To consider the draft Housing Landlord Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategy.

11. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND THE HOUSING PUBLIC SECTOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PROGRAMME FOR 2026/27 (Pages 501 - 534)

To consider the Housing Revenue Account budget and the Housing Public Sector Capital Expenditure programme for 2026/27.

12. SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATION ACT (2023) PROGRESS REPORT NUMBER 5 (SAFETY & QUALITY STANDARD) (Pages 535 - 550)

To receive the progress report on the work related to the Social Housing Regulation Act.

13. PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S UPDATE

An opportunity for the Portfolio Holder's to provide an update to the Panel on developments within their portfolio.

14. WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 551 - 552)

To agree the work programme to guide the Panel's activities over the coming months.

15. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

To:

Councillors	**Councillors**
Steve Clarke (Chairman)	Richard Frampton
Kate Crisell (Vice-Chairman)	John Haywood
John Adams	Patrick Mballa
Hilary Brand	Neil Tungate
Sean Cullen	Melvyn Utley
Substitutes	**Substitutes**
Allan Glass	Barry Rickman
Colm McCarthy	Alex Wade

Co-optee

Melvyn Utley (Tenant Representative)

This page is intentionally left blank

Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 21 January 2026

Corporate Plan: Key Performance Data for Quarter 2 2025-2026

Purpose	For Review
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	This report presents the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Quarter 2 (July to September 2025). Measure IDs 1 through 15 only are for Housing and Communities review.
Recommendation(s)	**1. That panel consider and review the Q2 2025-2026 dashboard; and** **2. Comments will be passed for onward consideration by Cabinet.**
Reasons for recommendation(s)	The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are a core component of our Corporate Plan 2024–2028. The processes for reporting progress and ensuring accountability against the commitments outlined in the plan are detailed in our Performance Management Framework.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Jill Cleary, Leader
Strategic Director(s)	Alan Bethune, Strategic Director Corporate and Resources S151 Officer
Officer Contact	Saqib Yasin Performance and Insight Manager 023 8028 5495 Email address: saqib.yasin@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. The Corporate Plan Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) dashboard is presented for review. The latest dashboard presents data for Q2 covering July 2025 to the end of September 2025, where available.

2. Following EMT approval, the dashboard is now being passed through to panels with associated covering reports. These reports will focus attention to the measures aligned to each panel. Additional feedback from panels will be incorporated into the Cabinet covering report before it is formally presented.

3. The following should be read in conjunction with the Q2 dashboard referenced in appendix 1.

Layout of the dashboard

4. The layout is unchanged from last quarter, key metadata is provided below as a reminder:

    - Target – shows the desired value
    - Desired direction of travel – indicates whether good performance is typified by an increasing or decreasing value
    - Return format – shows the unit of the value being reported
    - Frequency – shows how often the KPI is to be reported
    - RAG status is as per our Performance Management Framework
        - Green, on target or above target
        - Amber, up to 10% below target
        - Red, over 10% below target

Quarter 2 2025/2026

5. Data is presented for 30 of the KPIs. 9 KPIs marked for consideration at Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny panel.

6. Q1 data is also now available for the following Housing and Communities KPIs:

    a. KPI 007 - Investment in and rollout of public space CCTV system.

    b. KPI 009 - Number of positive interventions in response to Public Spaces Protection Orders (1 and 2).

Highlights

ID	Observation
Housing and Communities	
1	The number of homelessness duty cases successfully prevented has shown a substantial improvement in performance. This represents the highest level recorded in the past four quarters, despite ongoing challenges posed by the reduction in available properties within the Private Sector
2	Despite progress in preventing homelessness, EA numbers remain a challenge. Targeted work with families to secure private sector and NFDC-owned temporary accommodation is expected to reduce EA placements.
3	Number of households with children under 16 in external emergency shared accommodation over 6 weeks. This KPI has been green over four quarters with improving performance.
4	Number of Appletree Careline customers. Performance has dipped although it is still green and above target.
7	Investment in and rollout of public space CCTV system. – both Q1 and Q2 figures are now available for this monitored KPI.
8	Education and awareness sessions – Education and awareness sessions were delivered to 280 young students, fostering broader engagement with teachers and parents.
9	PSPOs – both Q1 and Q2 figures are now available. Intervention numbers fell from the Q1 peak for this monitored KPI.
10	Number of cultural events and activities supported by New Forest District Council. – There were a further 12 cultural events in the last quarter which represents good performance.
15	Our five safety and compliance management measures performed very well, covering gas, fire, asbestos, water and lift safety.

Overview and Scrutiny panel comments

7. The quarter 2 dashboard will be presented to all three panels:

    - 15/01/2026 – Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny panel
    - 21/01/2026 – Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny panel
    - 22/01/2026 – Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny panel

8. The dashboard will then be presented to Cabinet on the 04/02/2025 for final approval.

9. Any comments arising from panels will be added to covering reports as the dashboard makes its way through the reporting cycle.

Corporate plan priorities

10. The dashboard presents the KPIs ordered by our new corporate plan priorities.

Options appraisal

11. The KPI list 2024-2028 has been developed following extensive work and consideration of alternative KPIs and targets. This work was completed in conjunction with the development of the Corporate Plan 2024-2028.

Consultation undertaken

12. The performance team have worked closely with data owners, responsible service managers and Strategic Directors to form the KPI list 2024 / 28. We have sought to identify KPIs which align with corporate plan objectives. Consideration was given to setting a baseline and reviewing benchmarking data (where applicable) for the setting of SMART targets.

Financial and resource implications

13. There are no financial or resource implications arising from this report.

Legal implications

14. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Risk assessment

15. There are no new risks arising from this report. The nature of KPI reporting means performance is scrutinised at a service level as data becomes available and any associated risks and mitigation are put in place and reported in the KPI narrative as appropriate.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

16. There are no environmental / climate and nature implications arising from this report.

Equalities implications

17. There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

Crime and disorder implications

18. There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

19. There are no data protection / information governance / ICT implications arising from this report.

New Forest National Park implications

20. Visibility of our measures promotes good outcomes across the land within the National Park area. Measures within our direct control furthers the interests of the National Park/National Landscape. These include making appropriate planning decisions, dwelling supply, reducing homelessness, managing interventions where there are breaches of the Public Spaces Protection Orders, promoting recycling, garden waste removal, provision of water-filling stations and taking action on fly-tipping incidents.

Conclusion

21. Review of our key performance indicators ultimately provides a sense check of progress against our corporate plan commitments. Passing the dashboard through the levels of governance outlined in our Performance Management Framework promotes accountability

Appendices:	**Background Papers:**
Q2 Corporate Performance Dashboard 202526.pdf	

2025/2026 Performance Summary

KPIs are rated RAG (Red, Amber, Green) according to the performance against target.
On target or above target
Below and up to 10% deviation from the lower threshold of the target
Over 10% deviation from the lower threshold of the target
KPI marked TBC due to lag in data availability, context and an estimated data availability is provided in these cases.
KPI marked N/A due to performance being outside of our direct control and influence, or data not being collected during period.

PEOPLE

ID	KPI Name	RAG
1	Percentage of homelessness duty cases successfully prevented	
2	Number of households in external emergency accommodation	
3	Number of households with children under 16 in external emergency shared accommodation over 6wks	
4	Number of Appletree careline services provided to customers	
7	Investment in and rollout of public space CCTV system	
8	Number of education and awareness sessions in relation to serious crime	
9	Number of positive interventions in response to Public Spaces Protection Orders (1 and 2)	
10	Number of cultural events and activities supported by New Forest District Council	
11	Number of social housing homes delivered by NFDC and its partners	
12	Number of affordable council homes delivered against the 2026 target set	
13	Percentage score for the overall tenant satisfaction with the Council as a landlord (TSMs)	
14	Number of council homes achieving Energy Performance Certification band C	
15	Percentage scores for the 5 safety and compliance management (TSMs)	

Summary	
RED	1
AMBER	0
GREEN	5
TBC	0
N/A	7

PLACE

ID	KPI Name	RAG
16	Percentage of major planning applications determined in time	
17	Percentage of minor planning applications determined in time	
18	Percentage of other planning applications determined in time	
19	Percentage of allowed planning appeals	
20	The total outstanding net dwelling supply as set out in our development plan	
21	Kilogrammes of non-recycled waste produced per household	
22	Households using our chargeable garden waste service as a percentage of total properties in NFDC	
23	Emissions from the council's vehicle fleet	
24	Percentage of household waste sent for recycling	
25	Number of fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 people	
27	Equivalent number of 0.5 litre bottles filled at water-filling stations – waste averted	

Summary	
RED	2
AMBER	2
GREEN	6
TBC	0
N/A	1

PROSPERITY

ID	KPI Name	RAG
28	Squared metres of industrial/employment land developed	
29	Level (£) of retained business rates (at source)	
31	Vacancies of retail premises within town/local centres	
32	Employment rate percentage of working age adults (aged 16-64)	
33	Proportion (in percentage terms) of employee jobs with hourly pay below the living wage	

Summary	
RED	0
AMBER	0
GREEN	0
TBC	0
N/A	5

FUTURE NEW FOREST

ID	KPI Name	RAG
35	Staff satisfaction score with NFDC ICT services	
37	Percentage of vacancies filled first time	
38	Percentage staff turnover	
39	Average number of days sickness absence per employee	
40	Number of council apprenticeships	
41	Percentage variance to Council budget +/- (General fund budget variations)	
42	Percentage variance to Housing Revenue budget +/- (HRA budget variations)	
43	Percentage of Council Tax collected in year	
44	Percentage of Non-domestic Rates collected in year	
45	Benefit realisation from ICT investment	
46	Percentage of ICT incidents resolved within SLA	
47	Percentage of annual ICT work programme delivered on time and on budget	
48	Percentage unscheduled downtime for critical systems	

Summary	
RED	0
AMBER	2
GREEN	8
TBC	0
N/A	3

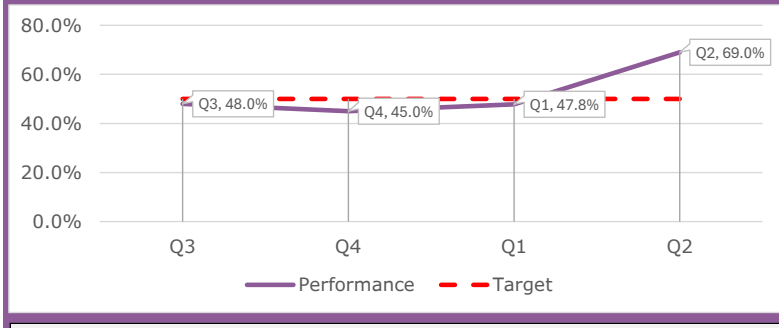
*NOTE KPIs No 5, 6, 26, 30, 34, 36 have been removed.

Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny panel

People: Helping those in our community with the greatest need

NFDC ID NO.1: Percentage of homelessness duty cases successfully prevented

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	48.0%	45.0%	47.8%	69.0%
Target	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%



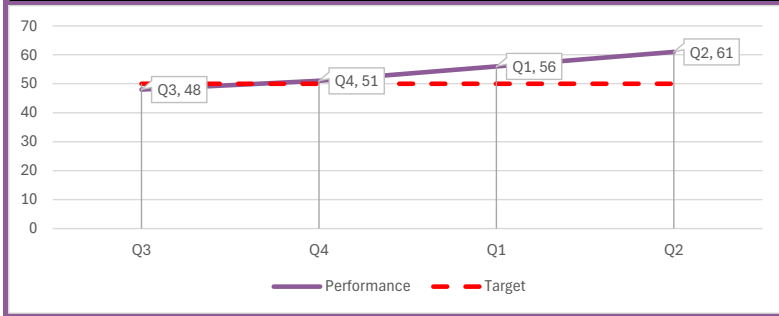
Supporting information	
Target	>50%
Desired DOT	▲
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Chris Pope
Portfolio holder	Cllr Steve Davies
Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	The current private rented sector remains challenging, with several factors affecting renters. Including the limited number of rental properties, changes to landlord circumstances resulting in sale of the property, increasing demands from letting agents, including rent advanced payments and rent guarantors, all creating barriers and difficulties for potential tenants.
2024/5 Q4	Despite the hard work of our teams to prevent homelessness and relieve those experiencing homelessness, it is recognised that this is a challenge due to the limited supply of both social and affordable private rented sector properties, especially family sized homes. To improve these figures, we have invested in training and are recruiting additional Homelessness Prevention Floating Support Workers to assist residents in sustaining tenancies.
2025/6 Q1	Preventing Homelessness remains a challenge with the reducing number of properties available in the Private Sector however a number of suitable properties were released and the team were able to utilise these by supporting applicants with rent in advance loans and deposit scheme.
2025/6 Q2	Prevention of homelessness has always been the priority. Working with private landlords and supporting families at an early stage has seen the prevention of homelessness increase despite the challenging number of private rented properties.

NFDC ID NO.2: Number of households in external emergency accommodation

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	48	51	56	61
Target	50	50	50	50



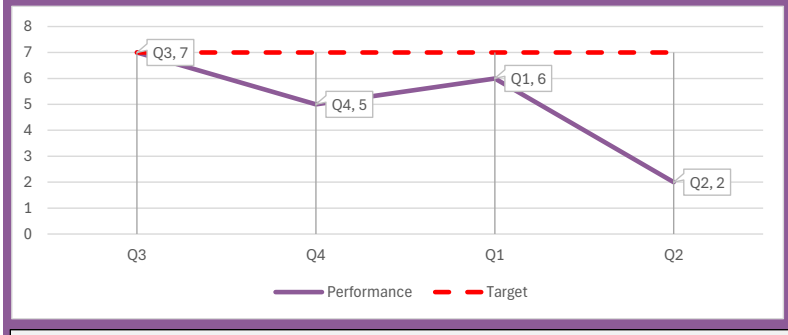
Supporting information	
Target	<50
Desired DOT	▼
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Chris Pope
Portfolio holder	Cllr Steve Davies
Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Significant due to increasingly larger families often with complex needs and affordability of private accommodation.
2024/5 Q4	Despite work to prevent and relieve homelessness, it is a significant challenge due to the limited supply of social/affordable private sector properties, especially family sized homes. To improve these figures, we have invested in training and are recruiting 2 Homelessness Prevention Floating Support Workers to assist residents in sustaining tenancies.
2025/6 Q1	Investment continues with the introduction of a Homelessness Prevention Team Leader, to focus on increasing quality, better managed caseload and outcomes. In total the team have increased support by introducing 4 Homelessness Prevention Floating Support Workers, on top of existing 3 Homelessness Prevention Officers to help people find new homes, liaise with landlords, help with rent deposits, and mediate between parties. On top of this we have provided grant funding to start a Homelessness Prevention drop-in service in Totton and continue to work closely with other voluntary sector services. We continue to explore ways to increase prevention services across the district to provide the right advice at the right time and place for the betterment of our communities.
2025/6 Q2	Despite the successes of preventing homelessness, this has yet to feed through to the number of people in EA. In depth work is being undertaken to work with families to source properties in the private sector as well as NFDC owned TA so it is expected that EA numbers will reduce.

NFDC ID NO.3: Number of households with children under 16 in external emergency shared accommodation over 6 weeks

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	7	5	6	2
Target	7	7	7	7



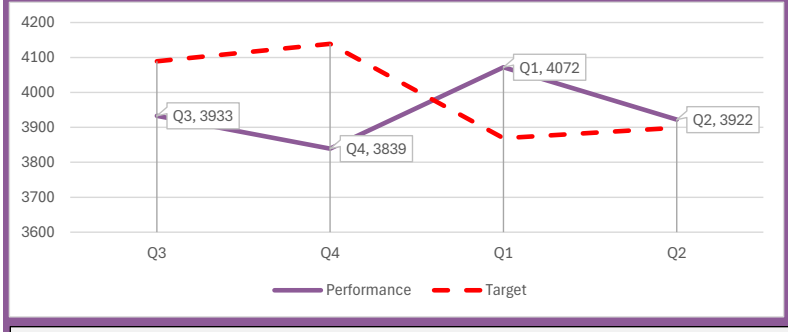
Supporting information	
Target	<7
Desired DOT	▼
Format	Numerical
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Chris Pope
Portfolio holder	Cllr Steve Davies
Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	EA for households with children is only used when no other accommodation is available in the location that the family needs. Moving families in to accommodation with no shared facilities remains a priority. We must consider the needs of the family when seeking accommodation including school/education, doctor or health facilities, family support networks, employment factors or other complex needs.
2024/5 Q4	To reduce the number of households in EA a dedicated officer is tasked with liaising with landlords to identify possible family sized accommodation and to move families as quickly as possible. Performance is in line with target.
2025/6 Q1	Reducing the need to use shared facilities EA for families remains a key commitment. When keeping a family in shared accommodation, we take into consideration their support needs and local networks whilst searching for long term accommodation.
2025/6 Q2	This number of households in shared EA has reduced due to working hard with families to locate private sector properties. There are 7 families in EA shared accommodation currently but under the 6 weeks target.

NFDC ID NO.4: Number of Appletree careline services provided to customers

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	3933	3839	4072	3922
Target	4089	4139	3869	3899



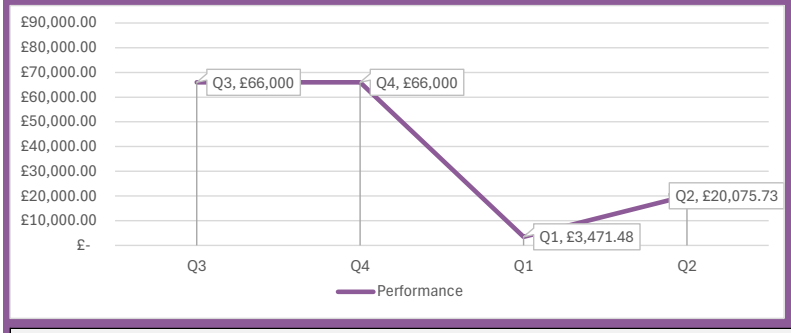
Supporting information	
Target	3899
Desired DOT	▲
Format	Numerical
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Brian Byrne
Portfolio holder	Cllr Dan Poole
Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Although 52 new customers joined careline services in October and November, over the same period we experienced higher monthly averages in cancellations of 59 clients, with a reduction of 118 services. Of these 59 clients, 21 were deceased and 31 moved into full time residential or nursing care placements. This is in line with seasonal expectations i.e. flu etc. December in comparison, between cancellations and installations saw a positive uplift of 8 services overall.
2024/5 Q4	52 new customer installations with over 100 services combined during the quarter. Whilst the growth has continued alongside existing customers being retained and upgraded to digital services, this has been impacted by the death of 29 customers and 37 moving from independent to residential/nursing care accommodation, accounting for a combined loss of 130 services. Current team focus on retention and growth, dedicated resources contacting and managing the switchover from analogue to digital services for existing customers. All Appletree careline literature and promotional material has been refreshed and rebranded highlighting the benefits of digital careline units, in particular highlighting the cost savings to clients no longer requiring fixed telephone lines for service delivery.
2025/6 Q1	Appletree careline continues to transition existing careline customers from analogue to digital services, whilst creating opportunities for revenue growth through the attraction of a new customer base. Development of revised promotional material has been created and disseminated across the district, creating partnerships with age related community based services to promote the service locally.
2025/6 Q2	During quarter 2, 102 new services were added. August saw a higher than anticpated cancellations, with 16 clients resulting from death and 11 clients moving into full time residential care settings resulting in the loss of 54 services.

NFDC ID NO.7: Investment in and rollout of public space CCTV system

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	£66,000	£66,000	£3,471.48	£20,075.73
Target	£30,000	£40,000	MONITOR	MONITOR



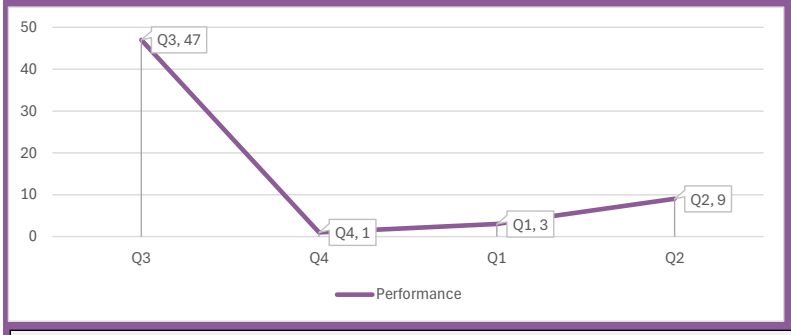
Supporting information	
Target	Monitor towards £80,000
Desired DOT	▲
Format	£
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Cumulative/year to date
Leadership team member	Brian Byrne
Portfolio holder	Cllr Dan Poole
Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
		N/A	N/A

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	The installation plan over Q3 has enabled a partnership to be developed with a large retail store, allowing siting of cameras on their buildings, simplifying the installation process and reducing costs. This will cover locations including Holbury, Bransgore and Fordingbridge. Additional locations have been secured in Fawley, Gangwarily and Ashley. 17 cameras from the Hardley depot have interlinked with the CCTV control room and it is anticipated a further 10 live monitored cameras will be installed by end of January.
2024/5 Q4	Following full handover of the Hardley Depot, A further 10 cameras went live, increasing the total to 28. Fire and security alarms are also live monitored within the main CCTV control room. Electrification works have been confirmed on all proposed public space sites with these being prepared for full camera installation. Terms for a further location on a retail store were agreed in Brockenhurst and a site in Ringwood. Securing these locations provides optimum placement for monitoring whilst negating local disruption.
2025/6 Q1	During the Q1 period, 9 additional cameras have been installed. Additional installations continue to progress. **NEW -** Expenditure has now been confirmed for Q1 as £3,471.48.
2025/6 Q2	In year 24/25 Total expenditure was £66,960.00 for the purchase of cameras and server room upgrades for the increased storage of data. Expenditure in Quarter 2 primarily covers the installation costs for cameras. Quarter 3 has an additional 10 cameras scheduled for installation by November 30th.

NFDC ID NO.8: Number of education and awareness sessions in relation to serious crime

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	47	1	3	9
Target	MONITOR	MONITOR	MONITOR	MONITOR



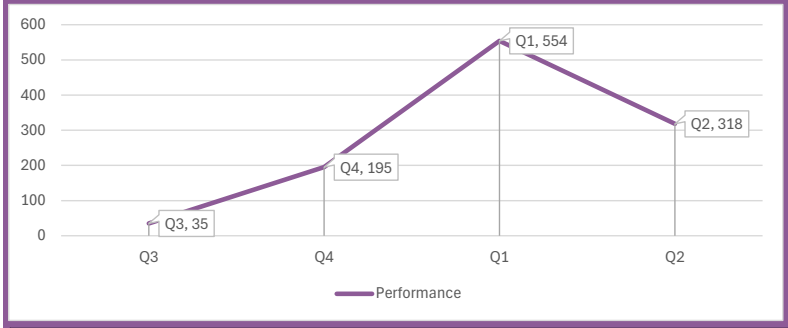
Supporting information	
Target	Monitor
Desired DOT	N/A
Format	Numerical
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Brian Byrne
Portfolio holder	Cllr Dan Poole
Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	47 sessions were delivered to 289 attendees with participant breakdown being 55% male and 45% female.
2024/5 Q4	129 young people participated in a prevention of weapons education programme. Over the past 12 months, weapons prevention education has been delivered to 563 young people within either group or 1-2-1 sessions across the district.
2025/6 Q1	During Q1, safer New Forest provided 3 days training and learning material for 18 employees of youth services, secondary education, colleges and community safety services. This approach aims to create and embed local resources, acting as points of contacts and accredited trainers to deliver weapons prevention training within local education and community based settings. Funding for delivery was supported by a 10k grant obtained from the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner.
2025/6 Q2	Dedicated workshop on weapons, the law, social and medical implications. Educations awareness delived to 280 year 8 students. Delivery was undertaken over a number of sessions with an average group consisting of 30 students. Comparing Year 8 students' age profile with early offenders (13–17) highlights the need for a targeted approach. Delivering education this way reinforces the law and consequences of carrying weapons, reducing the risk of unintentional offences. It also promotes wider discussion among teachers and parents, providing context and relevance for all learners.

NFDC ID NO.9: Number of positive interventions in response to Public Spaces Protection Orders (1 and 2)

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	35	195	554	318
Target	MONITOR	MONITOR	MONITOR	MONITOR



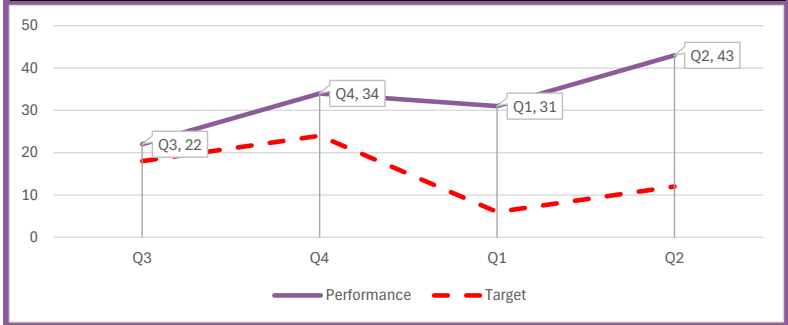
Supporting information	
Target	Monitor
Desired DOT	N/A
Format	Numerical
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Brian Byrne
Portfolio holder	Cllr Dan Poole
Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Quarter 3 showed a reduced number of interactions which is anticipated outside of the main holiday season. Of the 35 engagements, 2 related to fire with the remaining 33 relating to petting of animals. No interactions required escalation necessitating the issuing of any fixed penalty notices. Yearly fire data compiled for the Safer New Forest annual strategic assessment on crime and disorder, show incidents of fire have reduced over the past year since the order was approved. Further monitoring will continue to consider all aspects that have contributed to this reduction.
2024/5 Q4	Quarter 4 period resulted in 31 reports to services regarding concerns of compliance with the orders with Wednesday being the busiest of days. Direct engagement was held with 195 people, with 180 relating to animals and 15 to fire.
2025/6 Q1	**NEW -** 118 reports were received resulting in 554 people being spoken to in relation to the PSPOs, with 146 in relation to fire and 408 to animals. 2 FPNs were issued, both relating to fire. The three highest reported locations during the quarter were Bolton's Bench, Hatchet Pond and Wilverley Plain.
2025/6 Q2	**NEW -** During Q2, 318 members of the public were engaged with by delegated officers in relation to PSPO 1 or 2. During the same period, officers responded to 13 reports of fire related incidents, of this, 4 were fires and 9 relating to BBQ's. 43 reports were in response to the petting or feeding of animals.

NFDC ID NO.10: Number of cultural events and activities supported by New Forest District Council

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	22	34	31	43
Target	18	24	6	12



Supporting information	
Target	24 by end of year
Desired DOT	▲
Format	Numerical
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Cumulative/year to date
Leadership team member	Joanne McClay
Portfolio holder	Cllr Dan Poole
Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Grant for new project Suitcase Stories in partnership with Forest Forge. Resource and support shared in supporting HCT take over the Folio network and sector support function. Funding allocated to the development of ROAM arts festival, bid writer funded by NFDC at this stage.
2024/5 Q4	5 Projects supported this quarter via SPF are Nightjar, Folio training programme, Folio transition support, Milford on Sea beach event and CODA celebration event. 6 cultural projects were supported by the Community Grants programme in 24/25. 1 project has received CIL funding of £142,000 to improve the access to cultural facilities, locally.
2025/6 Q1	Working with Culture in Common and local Folio Partners we have supported a number of smaller projects around the district. Working in partnership we delivered a series of small commissions which saw a number of activities reach new audiences and ensure that there was a spread of activity across the geographic and demographic communities of the district. A high number of one-off commissioned projects have occurred during the period which is reflected in the final data, these are unlikely to be repeated.
2025/6 Q2	The delivery of small commissioned projects and partnership work with organisations such as ICB, PCNs and parish councils, engaging targeted communities. 12 events and activities during the period.

People: Meeting housing needs

NFDC ID NO.11: Number of affordable homes delivered by NFDC and its partners

	2024/5	2025/6
Performance	188	N/A*
Target	186	387

Supporting narrative

*Annual data for the 2025/26 period for KPI no.11 will be reported in the Q4 dashboard.

Supporting information	
Target	199 during period
Desired DOT	On forecast
Format	Numerical
Frequency	Annually
Metric type	Cumulative/year to date
Leadership team member	Tim Davis
Portfolio holder	Cllr Steve Davies
Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities

RAG Status	
2024/5	**2025/6**
	N/A

NFDC ID NO.12: Number of affordable council homes delivered against the 2026 target set

	2024/5	2025/6
Performance	375	N/A*
Target	373	462

Supporting narrative

*Annual data for the 2025/26 period for KPI no.12 will be reported in the Q4 dashboard.

Supporting information	
Target	87 during period
Desired DOT	On forecast
Format	Numerical
Frequency	Annually
Metric type	Cumulative/year to date
Leadership team member	Tim Davis
Portfolio holder	Cllr Steve Davies
Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities

RAG Status	
2024/5	**2025/6**
	N/A

NFDC ID NO.13: Percentage score for overall tenant satisfaction with the Council as a landlord, as determined in the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

	2024/4	2025/6
Performance	84%	N/A
Target	81.6%	82.1%

Supporting narrative

Annual data for KPI no.13 will be reported once the next tenant satisfaction survey has been completed and verified and inline with its submission to the Regulator of Social Housing.

Supporting information	
Target	82.1%
Desired DOT	▲
Format	%
Frequency	Annually
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Kirsty Farmer
Portfolio holder	Cllr Steve Davies
Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities

RAG Status	
2024/5	**2025/6**
	N/A

NFDC ID NO.14: Number of council homes achieving Energy Performance Certification band C

	2024/5	2025/6
Performance	2744	N/A*
Target	2646	2946

Supporting narrative

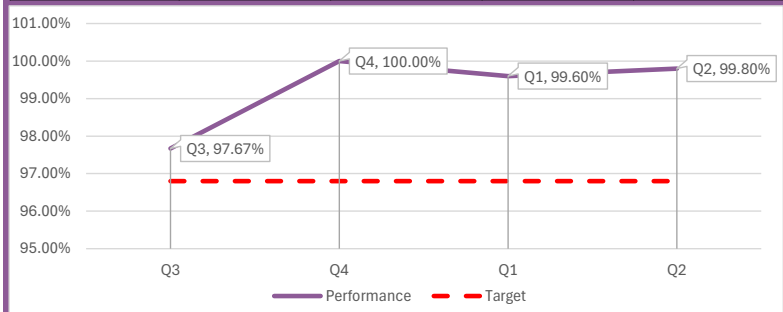
*Annual data for the 2025/26 period for KPI no.14 will be reported in the Q4 dashboard.

Supporting information	
Target	2946
Desired DOT	▲
Format	Numerical
Frequency	Annually
Metric type	Cumulative/year to date
Leadership team member	Sophie Tuffin
Portfolio holder	Cllr Steve Davies
Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities

RAG Status	
2024/5	**2025/6**
	N/A

NFDC ID NO.15: Percentage scores for the 5 safety and compliance management Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	**Q4**	**Q1**	**Q2**
Performance	97.67%	100.00%	99.60%	99.80%
Target	96.80%	96.80%	96.80%	96.80%



Supporting information	
Target	96.80%
Desired DOT	▲
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Sophie Tuffin
Portfolio holder	Cllr Steve Davies
Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities

RAG Status			
2024/5		**2025/6**	
Q3	**Q4**	**Q1**	**Q2**

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Our 5 safety and compliance management measures continue to perform very well.
2024/5 Q4	Our year-end results show strong performance across all five of our safety and compliance management measures, each achieving 100%. These final figures will be submitted to the regulator as part of our annual return.
2025/6 Q1	Our Q1 value represents excellent performance against our five safety and compliance measures.
2025/6 Q2	Our five safety and compliance management measures continue to perform very well.

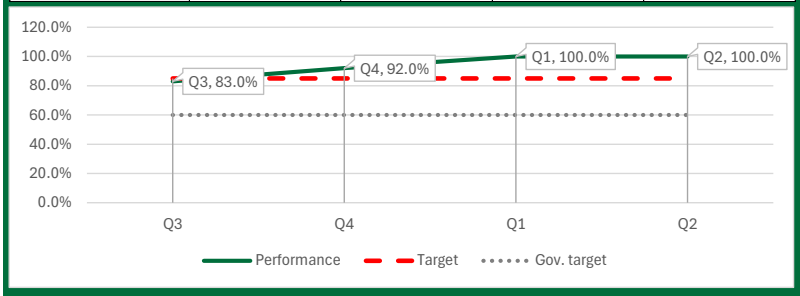
*NOTE KPIs No 5, 6 have been removed.

Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny panel

Place: Shaping our place for now and for future generations

NFDC ID NO.16: Percentage of major planning applications determined in time

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	83.0%	92.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Target	85.0%	85.0%	85.0%	85.0%
Gov. target	60.0%	60.0%	60.0%	60.0%



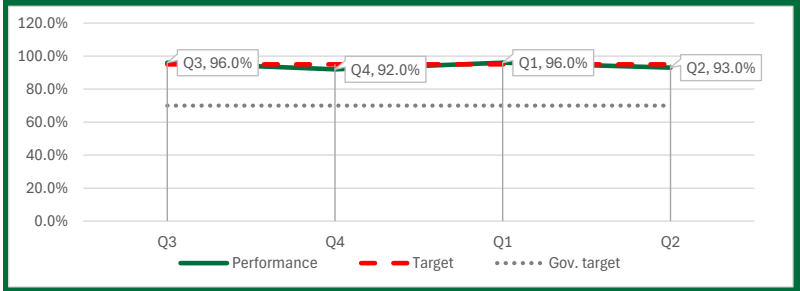
Supporting information	
Target	85.0%
Desired DOT	▲
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Mark Wyatt
Portfolio holder	Cllr Derek Tipp
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Although flagged as amber, should be noted the local target is set at 25% above the Government target of 60%.
2024/5 Q4	Performance exceeds both local and Government targets.
2025/6 Q1	Performance is above both government and locally set targets. An increase on last quarter.
2025/6 Q2	Performance exceeds both local and Government targets.

NFDC ID NO.17: Percentage of minor planning applications determined in time

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	96.0%	92.0%	96.0%	93.0%
Target	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%
Gov. target	70.0%	70.0%	70.0%	70.0%



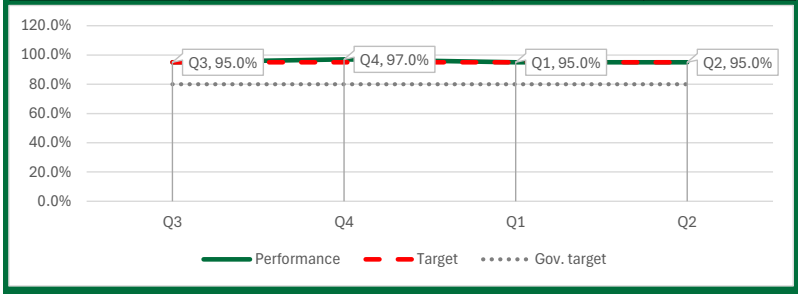
Supporting information	
Target	95.0%
Desired DOT	▲
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Mark Wyatt
Portfolio holder	Cllr Derek Tipp
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Improvement on last quarter and above target.
2024/5 Q4	Although flagged as amber, should be noted the local target is set at 25% above the Government target of 70%. Our performance consistently exceeds Government set targets.
2025/6 Q1	Performance is above both government and locally set targets. An increase on last quarter.
2025/6 Q2	Performance is above government set target but has fallen slightly below locally set target and is a decrease from last quarter.

NFDC ID NO.18: Percentage of other planning applications determined in time

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	95.0%	97.0%	95.0%	95.0%
Target	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%
Gov. target	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%



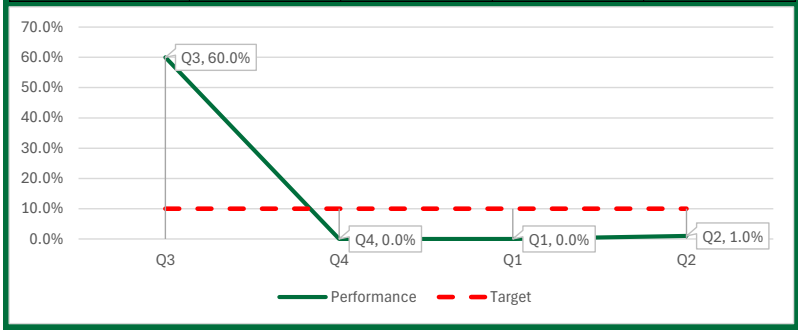
Supporting information	
Target	95.0%
Desired DOT	▲
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Mark Wyatt
Portfolio holder	Cllr Derek Tipp
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Performance is on target.
2024/5 Q4	Performance exceeds both local and Government targets.
2025/6 Q1	Performance is above both government and locally set targets.
2025/6 Q2	Performance is above both government and locally set targets.

NFDC ID NO.19: Percentage of allowed planning appeals

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%
Target	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%



Supporting information	
Target	<10%
Desired DOT	▼
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Mark Wyatt
Portfolio holder	Cllr Derek Tipp
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	3 appeals allowed, 2 appeals dismissed. Between October and December 2024 there were 195 decisions made, 173 granted and 22 refused.
2024/5 Q4	6 appeals, all dismissed.
2025/6 Q1	The total amount of planning decisions made was 255, 6 were appealed and all 6 were dismissed at appeal.
2025/6 Q2	1 appeal allowed of 217 decisions made.

NFDC ID NO.20: The total outstanding net dwelling supply as set out in our development plan

	2023/4	2024/5
Performance	8443	5974
Target	8241	8059

Supporting narrative

Our 2016–2036 plan sets a target of 10,420 new dwellings by 2036. By the end of March 2025, 2,361 dwellings have been delivered, including 182 completed in 2024–25. This falls short of the baseline targets for this stage of the plan. This reflects slower-than-anticipated delivery due to economic uncertainty, viability issues, and site-specific challenges. Performance is rated red however members have been regularly briefed on ongoing progress.

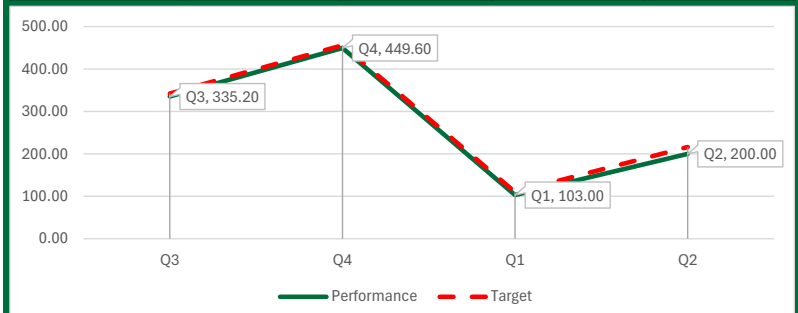
Supporting information	
Target	8059
Desired DOT	▼
Format	Num
Frequency	Annually
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Tim Guymer
Portfolio holder	Cllr Derek Tipp
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability

RAG Status	
2023/4	**2024/5**
N/A	

Place: Protecting our climate, coast and natural world

NFDC ID NO.21: Kilogrammes of non-recycled waste produced per household

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	**Q4**	**Q1**	**Q2**
Performance	335.20	449.60	103.00	200.00
Target	342.00	456.00	110.00	216.00



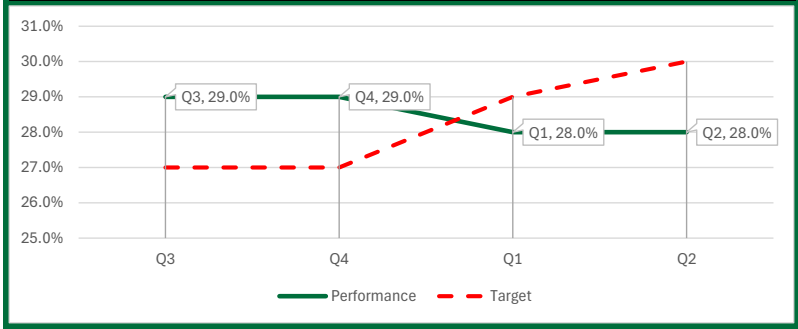
Supporting information	
Target	106.00Kg/per HH
Desired DOT	▼
Format	kg
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Cumulative/year to date
Leadership team member	Liz Mockeridge
Portfolio holder	Cllr Geoffrey Blunden
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability

RAG Status			
2024/5		**2025/6**	
Q3	**Q4**	**Q1**	**Q2**

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	-
2024/5 Q4	Performance is inline with target.
2025/6 Q1	**NEW** - Performance is inline with target.
2025/6 Q2	The impact of the new service is very positive. The reduction in the non-recycled waste and increased the recycling rate for Q2 is based on collection changes in the phase 1 area only (30,000 properties) and can be largely attributed to high food waste recycling tonnages and the impact of restricted general waste capacity. However, waste levels and composition do fluctuate throughout the year so at this stage of the phased roll out it is difficult accurately predict performance levels for Q3 and 4.

NFDC ID NO.22: Households using our chargeable garden waste service as percentage of total properties in NFDC

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	29.0%	29.0%	28.0%	28.0%
Target	27.0%	27.0%	29.0%	30.0%



Supporting information	
Target	30%
Desired DOT	▲
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Cumulative/year to date
Leadership team member	Liz Mockeridge
Portfolio holder	Cllr Geoffrey Blunden
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	-
2024/5 Q4	End of year performance exceeds target.
2025/6 Q1	The subscription numbers for GW customers are down from Q4. This may have been impacted by the unusually dry spring and summer months causing a slow growth year. As the new service started in April 2024, Q1 is the point when most people will need to resubscribe. However, because the subscription is now a rolling year service, residents can join whenever they want throughout the year and still get a years service rather than previously have to join in April to receive a full year. Residents may have waited longer to rejoin with less garden waste to dispose of in the early part of the season.
2025/6 Q2	Percentage of residents subscribed to the service remained steady on last quarter, however this is not in line with targeted service growth. This year saw an unusually dry period, which continued from spring throughout summer. This has limited garden growth and in turn may have impacted our resubscription take up and new subscriptions. Additionally the focus on the new service roll out has restricted opportunities for promotion of the Garden Waste Service this year.

NFDC ID NO.23: Emissions from the council's vehicle fleet

	2024/5	2025/6
Performance	1658	N/A*
Target	MONITOR	MONITOR

Supporting narrative

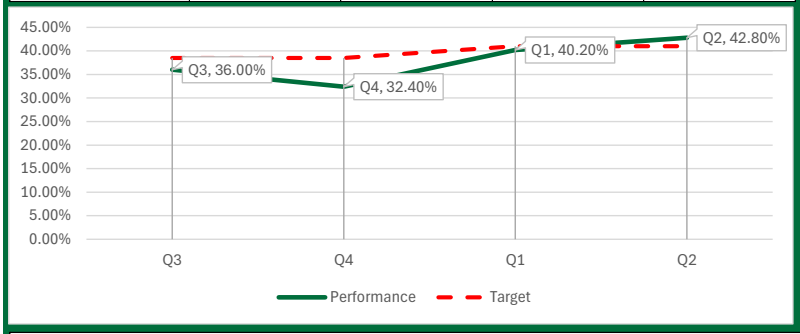
*Annual data for KPI no.23 will be reported in the 2025/6 Q4 dashboard.

Supporting information	
Target	Monitor
Desired DOT	▼
Format	Tonnes of CO2e
Frequency	Annual
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Chris Noble
Portfolio holder	Cllr Geoffrey Blunden
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability

RAG Status	
2024/5	2025/6
N/A	N/A

NFDC ID NO.24: Percentage of household waste sent for recycling

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	36.00%	32.40%	40.20%	42.80%
Target	38.50%	38.50%	41.00%	41.00%



Supporting information	
Target	>41%
Desired DOT	▲
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Liz Mockeridge
Portfolio holder	Cllr Geoffrey Blunden
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability

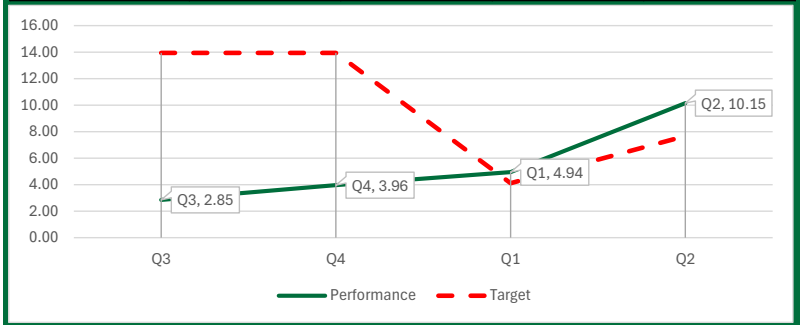
RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	The decrease in quarter 3 is likely due to the seasonal nature of the garden waste service and the reduction in collected tonnages over the winter months.
2024/5 Q4	The overall recycling rate for 2024/25 was 37%
2025/6 Q1	**NEW** - Performance is inline and within 1% of target
2025/6 Q2	The impact of the new service is very positive. The reduction in the non-recycled waste and increased the recycling rate for Q2 is based on collection changes in the phase 1 area only (30,000 properties) and can be largely attributed to high food waste recycling tonnages and the impact of restricted general waste capacity. However, waste levels and composition do fluctuate throughout the year so at this stage of the phased roll out it is difficult accurately predict performance levels for Q3 and 4.

Place: Caring for our facilities, neighbourhoods and open spaces in a modern and responsive way

NFDC ID NO.25: Number of fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 people (total population 175,942)

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	2.85	3.96	4.94	10.15
Target	13.94	13.94	4.11	7.66



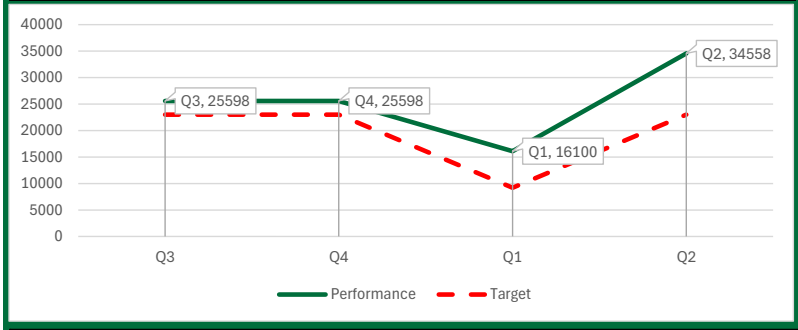
Supporting information	
Target	14 by end of year
Desired DOT	▼
Format	Numerical
Frequency	Quarterly
Leadership team member	Snapshot/point in time
Data owner	Chris Noble
Portfolio holder	Cllr Geoffrey Blunden
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	The reported figure is based on the total of 502 fly-tipping incidents occurring in Q3.
2024/5 Q4	The reported figure is based on the total of 696 fly-tipping incidents occurring in Q4.
2025/6 Q1	Figure is based on 870 incidents of flytipping which operatives responded to during the quarter which is an increase of 182 from Q4 2024/5. This is a revised metric, to more closely reflect the councils desire to tackle fly tipping as an issue across the forest. After a period of review it was felt appropriate to lower the threshold and make the metric more challenging, given understandable concern over the issue. As has been reported to Council, there has been an increase in use of bring sites aligned to the waste roll out. Where this sees residents leaving glass and cardboard outside of the provided containers it is technically classed as a fly tip and is recorded as such. The figure does not relate to an uptick in fly tipping in the more readily defined sense (e.g. building waste/house clearance dumped in laybys/country lanes) and there has been no discernible increase in this aligned to the roll out. There are concerns that are being investigated by our enforcement teams over "commercial" use of our bring sites, which is understood to be a potential byproduct of the roll-out as "commercial" waste can no longer be as easily disguised in residential collections.
2025/6 Q2	The total number of reported incidents of fly-tipping rose to 918 in Q2, which is above target and a notable increase compared to the same period last year (670 in Q2 24/25). The reported figure as above equals the number of incidents per 1000 from both quarters. Ongoing concerns remain from the previous quarter including misuse of bring sites and operatives continue to respond to these issues.

NFDC ID NO.27: Number of 0.5 litre bottles filled at water-filling stations

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	25598	25598	16100	34558
Target	23000	23000	9200	23000



Supporting information	
Target	9,200
Desired DOT	▲
Format	Numerical
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Cumulative/year to date
Leadership team member	Chris Noble
Portfolio holder	Cllr Geoffrey Blunden
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Short period of operation during Q3 before units turned off for winter. Units are not operational during winter months.
2024/5 Q4	Units are not operational during the winter months and therefore there is no additional data available for Q4.
2025/6 Q1	Usage of our water-filling stations during the period was equivalent to filling over 16,000 half-litre water bottles. High temperatures throughout the spring months may have contributed to higher usage rates.
2025/6 Q2	The final water bottle meter readings for Q2 shows the total water volume dispensed was 9.229m3, equivalent to 18,458 0.5l bottles. The units are now non-operational for the autumn/winter months and therefore the next available data will be reported in Q1 2026/27.

*NOTE KPI No 26 has been removed.

Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny panel

Prosperity: Maximising the benefits of inclusive economic growth and investment

NFDC ID NO.28: Squared metres of industrial/employment land developed

	2023/4	2024/5
Performance	21,209	23,809
Target	MONITOR	MONITOR

Supporting narrative

There was a net addition of 2,600sqm employment floorspace completed in 2024/25.

Supporting information	
Target	Monitor
Desired DOT	▲
Format	Sqm
Frequency	Annually
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Tim Guymer
Portfolio holder	Cllr Derek Tipp
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability

RAG Status	
2023/4	**2024/5**
N/A	N/A

NFDC ID NO.29: Level (£) of retained business rates (at source)

	2024/5	2025/6
Performance	£0	N/A*
Target	£0	£450,000

Supporting narrative

*Annual data for KPI no.29 will be reported in the 2025/6 Q4 dashboard.

Supporting information	
Target	£450,000
Desired DOT	▲
Format	£
Frequency	Annually
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Ryan Stevens
Portfolio holder	Cllr Derek Tipp
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability

RAG Status	
2024/5	**2025/6**
N/A	N/A

Prosperity: Supporting our high-quality business base and economic centres to thrive and grow

NFDC ID NO.31: Vacancies of retail premises within town/local centres

	2024/5	2025/6
Performance	7.10%	N/A*
Target	MONITOR	MONITOR

Supporting narrative

*Annual data for KPI no.31 will be reported in the 2025/6 Q4 dashboard.

Supporting information	
Target	Monitor
Desired DOT	▼
Format	%
Frequency	Annually
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Tim Guymer
Portfolio holder	Cllr Derek Tipp
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability

RAG Status	
2024/5	**2025/6**
N/A	N/A

Prosperity: Championing skills and access to job opportunities

NFDC ID NO.32: Employment rate percentage of working age adults (aged 16-64)

	2023	2024
Performance	82.3%	78%
Target	MONITOR	MONITOR

Supporting narrative

*2025 Annual data for KPI no.32 will be reported when available from the ONS.

Supporting information	
Target	Monitor
Desired DOT	▲
Format	%
Frequency	Annually
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Jeannie Satchell
Portfolio holder	Cllr Derek Tipp
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability

RAG Status	
2023	**2024**
N/A	N/A

NFDC ID NO.33: Proportion (in percentage terms) of employee jobs with hourly pay below the living wage

	2023	2024
Performance	13.30%	14.20%
Target	MONITOR	MONITOR

Supporting narrative

*2025 Annual data for KPI no.33 will be reported when available from the ONS.

Supporting information	
Target	Monitor
Desired DOT	▼
Format	%
Frequency	Annually
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Jeannie Satchell
Portfolio holder	Cllr Derek Tipp
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability

RAG Status	
2023	**2024**
N/A	N/A

*NOTE KPI No 30 has been removed.

Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny panel

Future New Forest: Putting our customers at the heart

NFDC ID NO.35: Staff satisfaction score with NFDC ICT services

	2024/5	2025/6
Performance	88.5%	N/A*
Target	70.0%	70.0%

Supporting narrative

*Data for KPI no.35 will be reported following the next ICT staff survey. It has been agreed by the service that the ICT staff survey will now be carried out every two years in a change from previously reported. It is anticipated this data will next be available during financial year 2027/28.

Supporting information	
Target	70%
Desired DOT	Maintain
Format	%
Frequency	Annually
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Rich Bird/Kim Gray
Portfolio holder	Cllr Jeremy Heron
Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation

RAG Status	
2024/5	**2025/6**
	N/A*

Future New Forest: Being an employer of choice

NFDC ID NO.37: Percentage of vacancies filled first time

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	**Q4**	**Q1**	**Q2**
Performance	88.0%	81.0%	79.2%	82.0%
Target	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%



Supporting information	
Target	80%
Desired DOT	▲
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Heleana Aylett
Portfolio holder	Leader Cllr Jill Cleary
Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation

RAG Status			
2024/5		**2025/6**	
Q3	**Q4**	**Q1**	**Q2**

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	33 vacancies were filled first time.
2024/5 Q4	End of year position exceeds target.
2025/6 Q1	We have had 24 vacancies and filled 19 first time.
2025/6 Q2	We have had 34 vacancies and filled 28 first time.

NFDC ID NO.38: Percentage staff turnover

	2024/5	2025/6
Performance	13.00%	N/A*
Target	11.00%	11.00%

Supporting narrative

*Annual data for KPI no.38 will be reported in the 2025/6 Q4 dashboard.

Supporting information	
Target	11%
Desired DOT	▼
Format	%
Frequency	Annually
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Heleana Aylett
Portfolio holder	Leader Cllr Jill Cleary
Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation

RAG Status	
2024/5	**2025/6**
	N/A*

NFDC ID NO.39: Average number of days sickness absence per employee

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	9.33	8.80	8.00	8.80
Target	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00



Supporting information	
Target	8
Desired DOT	▼
Format	Numerical
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Heleana Aylett
Portfolio holder	Leader Cllr Jill Cleary
Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Whilst we are always finding ways to reduce sickness and absence levels to meet our targets, this is of largely out of our direct control. Every step is taken to be satisfied that sickness absence is genuine, that sickness is reducing and that we are managing sickness effectively to keep this figure reducing. HR work closely with managers to apply our policies effectively to manage sickness.
2024/5 Q4	Sickness per FTE has come down since last quarter and continues to come down as can be seen with historical data.
2025/6 Q1	Although sickness days have reduced since the end of last quarter, FTE has increased, resulting in a reported figure in line with previous performance.
2025/6 Q2	Historically, sickness has shown to increase between Q1 and Q2. Although short term sickness has not significantly increased during this period, the increase in the average number of sick days can be attributed to a increase in small number long term sickness cases spanning a period of over 6 months, which can have an impact on overall sickness levels.

NFDC ID NO.40: Number of council apprenticeships

	2024/5	2025/6
Performance	18	N/A*
Target	10	15

Supporting narrative

*Annual data for KPI no.38 will be reported in the 2025/6 Q4 dashboard.

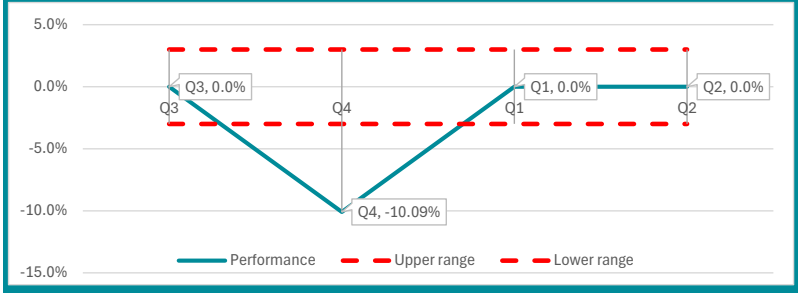
Supporting information	
Target	15
Desired DOT	▲
Format	Numerical
Frequency	Annually
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Heleana Aylett
Portfolio holder	Leader Cllr Jill Cleary
Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation

RAG Status	
2024/4	2025/6
	N/A*

Future New Forest: Being financially responsible

NFDC ID NO.41: Percentage variance to Council budget +/- (General fund budget variations)

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	0.0%	-10.09%	N/A	0.0%
Upper range	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Lower range	-3.0%	-3.0%	-3.0%	-3.0%



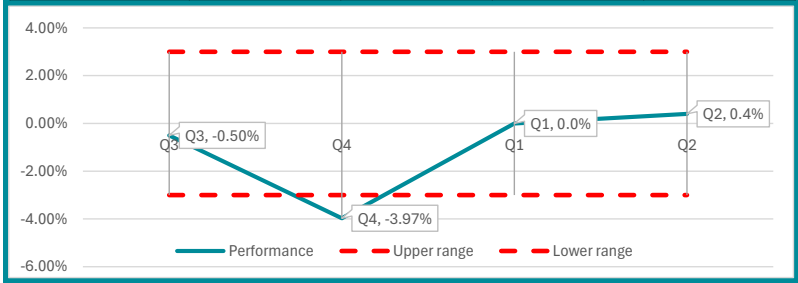
Supporting information	
Target	+/- 3%
Desired DOT	▲ or ▼
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Paul Whittles
Portfolio holder	Cllr Jeremy Heron
Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
		N/A	

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Indicative figures as at 21 January 2025, final figures will be confirmed as set out in the Financial Monitoring Report taken to Cabinet 5 February 2025.
2024/5 Q4	Figures subject to audit. Full details of variations will be set out in the Budget Monitoring report to be presented to Cabinet on 2 July 2025
2025/6 Q1	No financial monitoring report was released during Q1. The next scheduled report will be September 2025.
2025/6 Q2	Data from financial monitoring report which will be taken to Cabinet in November.

NFDC ID NO.42: Percentage variance to Housing Revenue budget +/- (HRA budget variations)

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	-0.50%	-3.97%	N/A	0.4%
Upper range	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%
Lower range	-3.00%	-3.00%	-3.00%	-3.00%



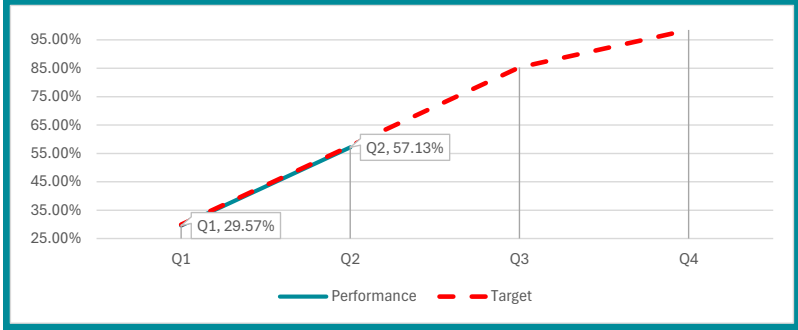
Supporting information	
Target	+/- 3%
Desired DOT	▲ or ▼
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Paul Whittles
Portfolio holder	Cllr Jeremy Heron
Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
		N/A	

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Indicative figures as at 21 January 2025, final figures will be confirmed as set out in the Financial Monitoring Report taken to Cabinet 5 February 2025.
2024/5 Q4	Figures subject to audit. Full details of variations will be set out in the Budget Monitoring report to be presented to Cabinet on 2 July 2025
2025/6 Q1	No financial monitoring report was released during Q1. The next scheduled report will be September 2025.
2025/6 Q2	Data from financial monitoring report which will be taken to Cabinet in November.

NFDC ID NO.43: Percentage of Council Tax collected in year

	2025/6			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Performance	29.57%	57.13%		
Target	29.90%	57.60%	85.30%	98.50%



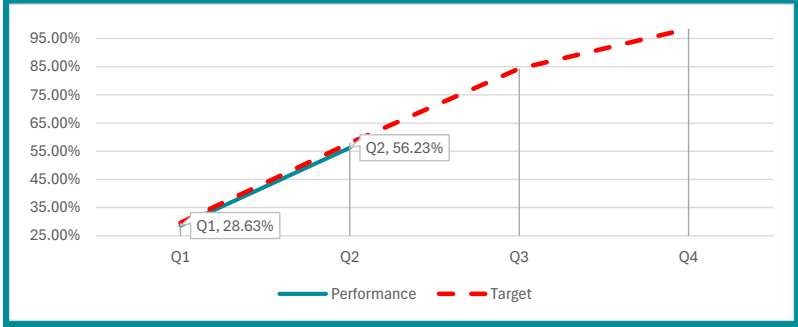
Supporting information	
Target	57.6%
Desired DOT	▲
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Cumulative/year to date
Leadership team member	Ryan Stevens
Portfolio holder	Cllr Jeremy Heron
Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2025/6 Q1	No court dates for 25/26 until August, so there is a delay in recovery proceedings. In additon we are receiving more requests for 12 instalments, instead of 10.
2025/6 Q2	Some instalments have been re-profiled to March 2026 and there was a delay in court date hearings, the first being August 2025.
2025/6 Q3	
2025/6 Q4	

NFDC ID NO.44: Percentage of Non-domestic Rates collected in year

	2025/6			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Performance	28.63%	56.23%		
Target	29.60%	57.90%	84.30%	98.50%



Supporting information	
Target	57.9%
Desired DOT	▲
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Cumulative/year to date
Leadership team member	Ryan Stevens
Portfolio holder	Cllr Jeremy Heron
Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation

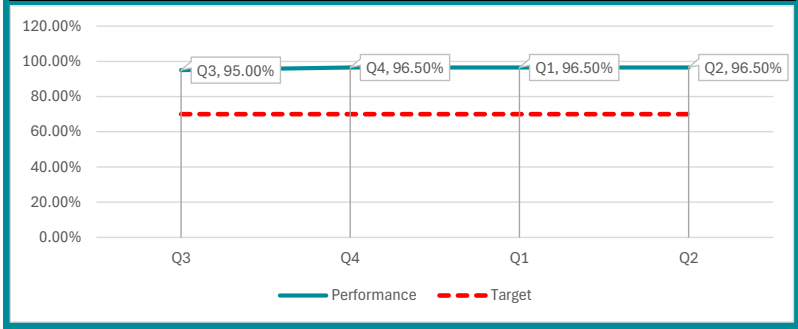
RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2025/6 Q1	No court dates for 25/26 until August, so there is a delay in recovery proceedings commencing.
2025/6 Q2	Delay in court hearing dates, the first being August 2025 and reduction in retail discount and transitional relief may be impacting collections as businesses have more to pay this year.
2025/6 Q3	
2025/6 Q4	

Future New Forest: Designing modern and innovative services

NFDC ID NO.45: Benefits realisation from ICT investment

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	95.00%	96.50%	96.50%	96.50%
Target	70.00%	70.00%	70.00%	70.00%



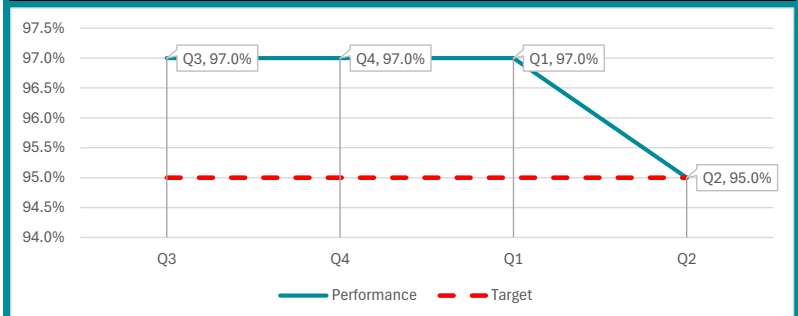
Supporting information	
Target	70.00%
Desired DOT	Maintain
Format	%
Frequency	Every 6 months
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Rich Bird
Portfolio holder	Cllr Jeremy Heron
Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	-
2024/5 Q4	Narrative for April 24 - April 25: Azure Migration project = 100% (9/9) Learning Management System (LMS) project = 86% (6/7) (Security training module is targeting go live on LMS on the 17th Jan) Direct Debit = 100% (5/5)
2025/6 Q1	Performance is in line with previously reported percentage.
2025/6 Q2	Project performance remains on track, with no current risks or issues identified that would impact the anticipated completion timelines.

NFDC ID NO.46: Percentage of ICT incidents resolved within SLA

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	97.0%	97.0%	97.0%	95.0%
Target	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%



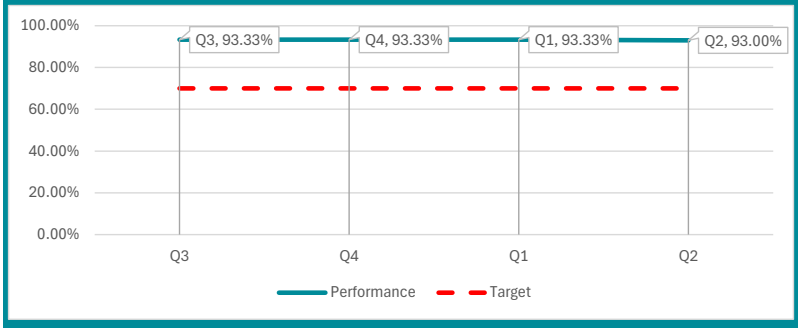
Supporting information	
Target	95.0%
Desired DOT	▲
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Kim Gray
Portfolio holder	Cllr Jeremy Heron
Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	-
2024/5 Q4	Performance is above target and remains steady quarter on quarter.
2025/6 Q1	Performance is above target and in line with previous quarter.
2025/6 Q2	Performance is on target. Slight decrease from last quarter but there was a significant rise in the number of incidents logged within Q2.

NFDC ID NO.47: Percentage of annual ICT work programme delivered on time and on budget

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	93.33%	93.33%	93.33%	93.00%
Target	70.00%	70.00%	70.00%	70.00%



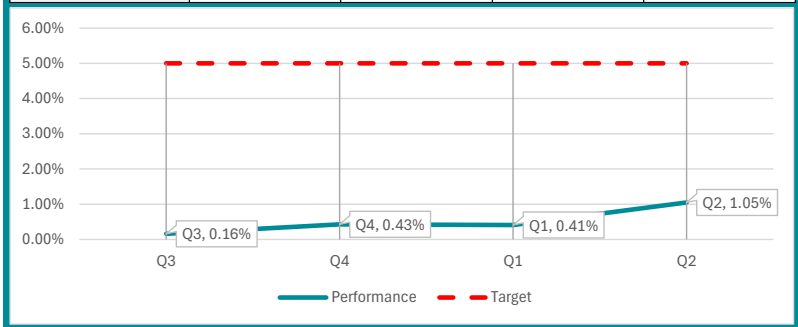
Supporting information	
Target	70.0%
Desired DOT	Maintain
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Rich Bird
Portfolio holder	Cllr Jeremy Heron
Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	-
2024/5 Q4	Narrative for April 24 - April 25: Azure Migration project = delivered on time in line with board approved project plan. Learning Management System (LMS) project = delivered on time in line with board approved project plan. Direct Debit = delivery delayed by around 1.5 months whilst transition to BAU was better prepared for within business units.
2025/6 Q1	Performance is above target and in line with previous quarter.
2025/6 Q2	Project performance remains on track, with no current risks or issues identified that would impact the anticipated completion timelines.

NFDC ID NO.48: Percentage unscheduled downtime for critical systems

	2024/5		2025/6	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Performance	0.16%	0.43%	0.41%	1.05%
Target	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%



Supporting information	
Target	<5%
Desired DOT	▼
Format	%
Frequency	Quarterly
Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
Leadership team member	Kim Gray
Portfolio holder	Cllr Jeremy Heron
Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation

RAG Status			
2024/5		2025/6	
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	-
2024/5 Q4	Performance is within targeted expectation.
2025/6 Q1	Performance is above target and in line with previous quarter.
2025/6 Q2	Performance is within targeted expectation.

*NOTE KPI Nos 34 and 36 have been removed.

This page is intentionally left blank

Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 21 January 2026

Draft New Forest Creative and Cultural Framework

Purpose	To Review
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	The New Forest does not currently have a Cultural Strategy. This draft Creative and Cultural Framework sets out a shared vision for how culture can strengthen our communities, help drive economic growth and enhance wellbeing. It aims to ensure that cultural activity is inclusive, sustainable, and aligned with local, regional, and national priorities, making the sector more resilient and investable. The framework is not owned by the Council, and therefore it is not responsible for the implementation. However, it will be a member of the Creative Forest Steering Group with a role in monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the outcomes. Following a consultation process, and consideration of the responses, it will be recommended that the framework is adopted and endorsed by all key stakeholders. The are to review the draft Creative and Cultural Framework prior to Cabinet consideration and to provide any recommendations ahead of Cabinet approval to go out for public consultation.
Recommendation	**That the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel review the draft Cultural and Creative Framework which will then be considered by Cabinet prior to public consultation.**
Reasons for recommendation(s)	Without a framework, opportunities for collaboration, funding, and impact are

	fragmented, whereas a clear plan helps unlock resources, attract tourism, and embed culture at the heart of place-making and identity.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Dan Poole – Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing
Strategic Director(s)	Peter Matthew – Housing and Communities (Interim)
Officer Contact	Joanne McClay Service Manager – Environmental and Regulation 02380 285325 joanne.mcclay@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction

1. This report outlines the development of a draft Creative and Cultural Framework, which has been designed to provide a unified approach and strong advocacy for culture across the New Forest over the next 6 years.

2. Although the Council has led the development of this draft framework, it has been shaped through extensive consultation with key stakeholders, Members, the creative sector and the public, to ensure priorities reflect a shared vision for culture in the New Forest.

3. The report and draft framework will be presented to the Housing and Community Panel for review prior to Cabinet consideration. At this stage, recommendations will be sought to proceed with public consultation on the draft framework.

4. An eight-week public consultation will follow. Feedback following the consultation will be reviewed and the framework amended where required, after which Council will be asked to formally adopt the framework.

Background

5. Local Government reorganisation, devolution, and a challenging funding environment make it critical, for the New Forest's creative and cultural sector to speak with one voice through a shared framework.

6. The New Forest has benefited from significant Arts Council England investment in recent years (£2 million), with the latest success being a £1 million grant for Culture in Common to continue to deliver the Creative People & Places programme from 2026–2029. This marks a new level of cultural activity for the district and highlights the need for a strong strategic framework to sustain and support this growth.

7. Whilst the district has rich cultural assets, they are dispersed, and greater collaboration is needed to maximise impact. Culture is a key driver across multiple policy agendas—health and wellbeing, economic growth, skills development, environmental sustainability, and placemaking—making a unified strategy essential.

8. This framework is underpinned by a robust foundation of evidence drawn from studies commissioned by NFDC, Arts Council England, and Culture in Common in the past 3 years. Together, these reports offer a comprehensive understanding of cultural life in the New Forest—its strengths, challenges, and opportunities. The evidence includes extensive community engagement, detailed data and insights research, and in-depth cultural analysis.

9. The SWOT analysis from this data has given us a clear understanding of our strengths and challenges which has enabled us to identify and prioritise opportunities for growth. By building on our unique cultural assets, strong sense of place, and active networks, while addressing barriers such as access, skills gaps, and resource constraints, we can unlock the full potential of culture in the New Forest. This strategic approach ensures that opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity are maximised to deliver lasting benefits for communities and the local economy.

Overview of the draft Cultural and Creative Framework

10. The mission and vision statements set out a shared ambition for culture in the New Forest—defining what we want to achieve and how we will work together to get there. They provide a clear direction for strengthening the cultural sector, ensuring it is inclusive, resilient, and positioned to deliver social, economic, and environmental benefits for our communities.

11. These shared ambitions are underpinned by core values to ensure culture in the New Forest is inclusive, sustainable, and authentic. There is a commitment to equality and access for all, environmental

responsibility and stewardship, and celebrating the area's distinct heritage and identity. These principles will shape decisions and partnerships, aiming to create a cultural future that is fair, resilient, and rooted in place.

12. The following four ambitions set out how culture in the New Forest will grow and thrive over the coming years. They are:

    - High quality arts and culture for all
    - Drive sector growth through ambitious partnerships
    - Champion culture and creativity in balance with nature
    - Culture and creativity for health and wellbeing

13. The draft Framework is aligned with local, regional, and national priorities, ensuring culture contributes to health, wellbeing, skills, sustainability, and economic growth. It reflects priorities in the Councils Corporate Plan and the National Park's Partnership Plan while connecting to national frameworks such as Arts Council England's *Let's Create* and the Creative Health agenda.

14. The draft is attached **(Appendix 1)**.

Initial Consultation and Review

15. In June and July 2024 Chris Rolls from Collective Sense was engaged by NFDC and Culture in Common to carry out action research public engagement activity with different stakeholder and community groups across the New Forest.

16. The workshops were Town and Parish Councilors, after school workshop with young people and 5 community engagement sessions in Totton and Eling, Waterside – Fawley, Lyndhurst, New Milton and Ringwood.

17. Attendees were invited to share their views on the concept of culture, its potential to support priority areas within the corporate plan, and the local challenges facing arts and culture. They also contributed ideas and solutions to address these challenges. Recommendations from these workshops have informed the foundations of this framework.

18. The Cultural Development Manager previously employed by NFDC played a key role in drafting this framework.

19. The strategic working group (members from NFDC, NFNPA, St Barbes, Culture in Common, Hampshire Cultural Trust) was reconvened to review the final draft of the cultural framework before public consultation. This feedback has helped refine the

document and shape future actions, ensuring it reflects shared priorities and sector needs.

Governance and Action Plan

20. Governance of the framework will sit with the Creative Forest Steering Group, a new structure which will bring together representatives from across the district's cultural ecosystem. The group will include members from each of the key engagement groups (page 20 of the draft Framework) meeting twice yearly to review progress, share insight and oversee implementation.

21. It will be coordinated by Creative Forest (formerly Folio), which is currently reorganising and building capacity following new Arts Council England investment in October 2025. Creative Forest will continue to champion and advocate for culture, connect and support creative activity across the district, and coordinate monitoring of the New Forest Cultural Framework and its Action Plan.

22. A single Action Plan will set out the shared programme of activity for the district. It will be held and overseen by the Creative Forest Compact, ensuring accountability, alignment and collaboration across all partners. The group will review progress and update the plan regularly, supporting a joined-up approach to cultural development and impact reporting.

23. NFDC's role will be to champion culture at a strategic level for our communities, act as an active partner within Creative Forest, and use the framework as guiding principles for funding decisions. We will also report annually on our actions to evidence impact and progress against the framework.

24. A one-page cultural framework summary is also attached.

Corporate plan priorities

25. Adoption of the Creative and Cultural Framework for the New Forest District is a priority for the Council and relates to the following corporate priority themes.

26. **Theme:**
Empowering our residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives and protecting our climate.
Shaping our place now and for future generations.
Championing skills and access to job opportunities.

27. **Corporate Plan Objective**:
Protect and improve the health and wellbeing of our communities.

28. **Service Objective**:
Adoption and support partners in the implementation of a Cultural Framework for the New Forest.

Options appraisal

29. **Option 1:**
It is recommended that the Housing and Communities Panel support the draft Creative and Cultural Framework progressing to Cabinet prior to consultation. It is noted that publication of the framework, and subsequent handover to the cultural sector to deliver its aims, meets with the council's reprioritisation of corporate plan objectives.

30. **Option 2:**
The alternative is to not prioritise the publication of the Creative and Cultural Framework. However, significant work has been undertaken in developing this with partners and there would be risks to our communities, the cultural sector and the council's reputation in not progressing this framework. This option was not considered appropriate given the Council's corporate plan commitments to the health of its residents and to leaving a cultural legacy for the district.

Consultation undertaken

31. In summer 2024, NFDC and Culture in Common commissioned Chris Rolls to lead action research and public engagement through workshops with Councillors, young people, and community groups across the district. These sessions explored the role of culture, local challenges, and solutions, with recommendations forming the foundation of the framework. This final draft was refined through input from the strategic working group, ensuring it reflects shared priorities and sector needs.

32. There is no legal requirement to consult further, however it is recommended prior to approval. All comments received will be reviewed and the draft Framework amended as required prior to final adoption.

Financial and resource implications

33. The cost to develop the draft Creative and Cultural Framework has been funded from existing budgets and with funding from Arts Council England of £15 000. Implementation of the framework and action plan will be by the Creative Cultural Compact.

34. CIL funding provided for Arts and Cultural projects and programmes across the New Forest will be assessed in line with the ambitions in Cultural Framework.

Legal implications

35. It is not a statutory requirement for councils to have a cultural strategy. However, The Council has identified the need for this Cultural Framework to deliver the priorities in the Corporate Plan and councils also have a general duty under the Local Government Act 2000 and 1999 to promote the economic, social, and environmental well-being of their area. The cultural framework can be used as evidence of fulfilling these duties.

Risk assessment

36. There is no requirement for the council to undertake a formal risk assessment. Governance of the Framework will be handed to Creative Forest with the support of implementation, monitoring and reporting through a Creative Forest Compact.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

37. The draft cultural framework champions creativity in harmony with the natural environment, embedding sustainability and environmental consciousness at the heart of cultural activity. By celebrating the New Forest's landscapes and biodiversity, it promotes sustainable practices, inspires stewardship, and demonstrates how cultural life can protect and enhance the places we live. This approach ensures that creativity and nature thrive together, positioning the New Forest as a leader in low-impact cultural delivery and environmental responsibility.

Equalities implications

38. The draft framework promotes Equality, Inclusivity, and Access by ensuring cultural opportunities are open to all, regardless of background, age, or circumstance. By leading the way in rural co-creation, it tackles isolation and geographic barriers, bringing culture to underserved communities through mobile, touring, and participatory models. These actions improve health and wellbeing, foster social cohesion, and create a more equitable cultural ecosystem where everyone can engage, contribute, and benefit.

Crime and disorder implications

39. A cultural framework can help reduce crime and disorder by fostering pride in place and a strong sense of identity, which are proven drivers of community cohesion and resilience. When people

feel connected to their local heritage and cultural life, they are more likely to engage positively with their community, reducing isolation and anti-social behaviour. Cultural initiatives—such as festivals, creative projects, and heritage activities—create shared experiences, strengthen social bonds, and give residents a stake in their environment, which in turn discourages vandalism, crime, and disorder by promoting belonging and responsibility

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

40. No specific implications.

New Forest National Park implications

41. Ambition 3: in the Framework is to Champion culture and creativity in balance with nature and the Creative and Cultural Framework covers both the New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park areas.

42. The inclusion of the New Forest National Park in the development and initial review of the Framework has ensured their priorities are addressed and they will be a key member on the future steering group for development of the action plan and governance.

Conclusion

43. The draft Framework has been consulted on with many stakeholders and we are now seeking approval to consult more widely on the document.

Appendices:	**Background Papers:**
Appendix 1 Draft Creative and Cultural Framework	FORGING CULTURE RIGHTS IN THE NEW FOREST_REPORT_JULY 2024.pdf

New Forest Creative and Cultural Framework 2026-2032

The New Forest is alive with creativity; from festivals and gigs to local makers, storytellers, and community projects. Culture is part of who we are and how we connect. This strategy is about building on that energy, joining things up, and making the Forest an even more inspiring place to live, work, and create.

Why now

Change is on the horizon; in government, funding, and how people spend their time. If we con together as a creative community, we can have a stronger voice, support each other, and ma sure the New Forest's culture is seen, celebrated, and invested in.

Our vision

A Forest where creativity is woven into everyday life — rooted in place, open to everyone, and celebrated far and wide.

Our four ambitions

1

High-quality arts and culture for all

Position the New Forest as a place where everyone can experience and contribute to exceptional, high-quality creative and cultural activity — in ways that reflect the district's landscapes, communities, and distinct identity.

2

Drive sector growth through ambitious partnerships

Grow opportunities for creative practitioners, freelancers, and young creatives. Build career pathways, connect with business and tourism, and make the Forest a thriving place to live and work as a creative.

3

Champion culture in balance with nature

Create sustainably, celebrate our landscapes, and work with nature. Let's show how the Forest can be a national example of culture and creativity in tune with the environment.

4

Culture for health and wellbeing

Use creativity to connect people, tackle loneliness, boost mental health, and get people moving. Culture can help us all feel healthier, happier, and more connected.

How we will deliver

- Creative Forest will bring creative practitioners, organisations, and communities together to make this happen.
- Everyone can play their part; from local makers and musicians to community groups, venues, and volunteers.
- By working together, sharing stories, and evidencing impact, we'll show how creativity strengthens the New Forest for everyone.

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

This page is intentionally left blank



New Forest

Creative and Cultural Framework

2026–2032

A shared vision for culture & creativity across the New Forest district

Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Funded by UK Government

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL



Contents

2 Introduction

4 A Definition of Culture and Creativity

6 Creativity and Culture in the New Forest – Current Picture

8 A Case for Creativity and Culture

10 Aligning with Local, Regional and National Strategy

11 Readiness for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

12 The Impact of Culture

13 Our Vision and Mission

14 Our Values

15 Our Ambitions

22 Action Plan Monitoring and Evaluation

23 Appendix



During our community consultations, we collaborated with local poets to co-create a series of poems that captured local voices and experiences. These poems reflect the pride, identity, and shared hopes of people across the New Forest, and excerpts feature throughout this strategy.

> ‘Everyone is invited, everywhere is invited
> to open their doors and join the chorus of creativity
> learning laughter and celebrating song
> as libraries and live spaces erupt alike
> in art and joy
> as fabulous frin ge fuels fun
> all across the forest.’
>
> *Poem excerpt co-created by Steven Mizen and residents of Totton*

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Funded by UK Government

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

Commissioned by New Forest District Council and Arts Council England

Written by Kealy Whenray (Consultant) | Designed by Absolute Graphics

Foreword

Cllr Dan Poole
Portfolio Holder Housing and Communities NFDC



Alison Barnes
Chief Executive New Forest National Park Authority



Maria Ragan
Director St Barbe Museum and Art Gallery and Creative Forest Partner



Paul Sapwell
Chief Executive Hampshire Culture Trust



Jacqui Ibbotson
Programme Director Culture in Common



Introduction

The New Forest District is a landscape of striking contrasts, with ancient woodland and open heathland alongside working ports and modern industry, coastal villages beside historic market towns, and communities that range from rural hamlets to urban edges. At its heart lies the New Forest National Park, a designated protected landscape of global significance for its natural beauty, biodiversity and cultural heritage. For centuries it has been shaped by the practice of commoning, a unique way of life that continues to define local identity, stewardship and connection to place.

Home to more than 170,000 residents, the district is both historic and dynamic, a place where deep-rooted traditions sit alongside innovation and creativity. Culture here reflects this diversity. It can be found in festivals, community events, heritage sites, museums and galleries, as well as through a growing network of creative enterprises, studios and independent practitioners. From village halls and forest clearings to arts centres, shipyards and coastlines, creativity thrives in unexpected places, connecting people across generations, sectors and landscapes.

The population of the New Forest is older than the national average, with nearly a quarter aged 65 or over. Around 60 per cent of residents live in rural villages, hamlets or dispersed settlements, shaping both the rhythm of community life and access to services. The area has a smaller proportion of young people and working-age residents, and many local businesses face challenges in attracting and retaining younger talent, including within the creative and cultural industries. These dynamics create both challenges and opportunities, balancing conservation and change, protecting heritage while embracing innovation, and ensuring that culture remains relevant, inclusive and future-focused.



The Mycelium Network

In nature, trees don't stand alone. Beneath the forest floor, a hidden web of mycelium connects roots, passing nutrients, information, and energy across the whole ecosystem.

We see culture in the New Forest in the same way. We are stronger as a network of networks, creative practitioners, organisations, community groups, schools, and partners; all connected, all sharing, all supporting each other, working together.

Rather than relying on one big tree or central trunk, our strength lies in the richness of the whole forest. Each connection makes the system healthier, more resilient, and more creative.

Together, like the mycelium, we can make the New Forest's cultural life grow and thrive in ways no single organisation could achieve alone.



Executive Summary

Culture and creativity are vital to the New Forest's identity, wellbeing, and prosperity. They connect communities, support the visitor economy, nurture talent, and enrich everyday life. This strategy sets out a shared vision for how culture will strengthen our district, ensuring it is locally grounded, regionally connected, and nationally recognised.

Like the mycelium that connects and sustains a forest, the New Forest's cultural strength comes from being a network of networks; creative practitioners, organisations, communities, businesses and partners working together. This collective approach makes our cultural life more resilient, more creative, and better able to deliver for our people and place.

Why now?

- Local Government Reorganisation, devolution, and a challenging funding landscape makes it essential that the New Forest Creative and Cultural sector speak with one voice.
- The district's cultural assets are rich but dispersed, and collaboration is needed to maximise impact.
- Culture delivers across key policy agendas: health and wellbeing, economic growth, skills, environment, and place.

Our vision

A thriving New Forest where culture and creativity strengthen community, enrich wellbeing, and drive sustainable growth.

Our four ambitions

1. **High-quality arts and culture for all**

   Position the New Forest as a place where everyone can experience and contribute to exceptional, high-quality creative and cultural activity — in ways that reflect the district's landscapes, communities, and distinct identity.

2. **Drive sector growth through ambitious partnerships**

   We will strengthen the creative economy by building partnerships, developing career pathways, and embedding culture in development and investment. This will grow prosperity, support the visitor economy, and make the New Forest a thriving place to live and work as a creative.

3. **Champion culture in balance with nature**

   We will embed sustainability in cultural delivery, create opportunities that connect people with the Forest's landscapes, and work with environmental partners. Culture will support stewardship of the natural environment and demonstrate national leadership in sustainable practice.

4. **Culture for health and wellbeing**

   We will place culture at the heart of healthier communities, tackling isolation, improving mental and physical health, and strengthening resilience. By aligning with health and care partners, culture can contribute to preventative outcomes and assist in reducing pressures on services.

How we will deliver

- Creative Forest will oversee delivery, ensuring accountability and alignment with local, regional, and national priorities.
- Actions are designed to be high-level, district-wide, and achievable within existing resources, enabling many organisations and businesses to align and contribute existing and new projects and programmes.
- Shared approaches to evidence and impact will underpin all ambitions, demonstrating the collective value of culture to our people, place, economy, environment, and health.

A Definition of Culture and Creativity

We align with Arts Council England's definition of culture and creativity and adopt this as the basis for our own strategy.

Our definition of culture

'Culture' means many things to many people and is sometimes used to describe food, religion or heritage. In this strategy, we use it to describe a wide range of activity across artforms and organisations: collections, combined arts, dance, libraries, literature, museums, music, theatre and the visual arts.

By bringing these activities together under the single term 'culture', rather than separating them out as 'the arts', 'museums' or 'libraries', we aim to reflect the full breadth of creative life in the New Forest. Research and consultation for this strategy also showed that the public often associate the word 'the arts' narrowly with classical music, opera, ballet or fine art, so a broader term helps ensure inclusivity.

We are using the term creative practitioners as an umbrella for everyone who creates, interprets or reshapes cultural content, rather than using the word 'artist' alone.

Our definition of creativity

'Creativity' describes the process of applying knowledge, skills and imagination to bring something new into being.

Although creativity is part of everyday life, in this strategy we use it specifically to describe the process of making, producing or taking part in cultural activity. We also recognise that traditional boundaries between artforms are dissolving as new technologies and social changes reshape how culture is created and shared.

We welcome these shifts, which are likely to accelerate in the coming decade, and will remain flexible and open to the evolving forms of cultural activity that emerge.

Source: Arts Council England.



> Stretching down the Solent
> along the Waterside
> you have stunning places
> Fawley, Calshot, Hythe
> and many more villages
> and towns along way
> picturesque postcards
> thriving in the Solent spray.'
>
> *Poem excerpt co-created by Steven Mizen with residents from the Waterside*



Creativity and Culture in the New Forest – Current Picture

The New Forest has a diverse cultural and creative ecology, though it is dispersed and often fragile. Together these assets represent a significant but under-recognised strength for the district.

Arts Centres & Venues such as Forest Arts Centre (New Milton), Hanger **Farm** Arts Centre (Totton), SPUDWORKS (Sway) and CODA Music and Art Trust (New Milton).

Creative People & Places (CPP): Culture in Common, supporting community-led projects and participation. With over £2million of Arts Council England investment since 2022.

Many Festivals & Events such as New Forest Show, Milford Music Festival, local carnivals and village shows.

Museums & Heritage Sites such as St Barbe Museum & Art Gallery, Hurst Castle, Buckler's Hard, New Forest Heritage Centre.

Employment is often freelance, with many senior-level practitioners choosing to live in the Forest but working regionally/ nationally.

A network of **libraries & community hubs** across towns and villages, many hosting cultural activity.

The creative and cultural economy contributes around **8% of local GVA**, comparable in scale to construction, manufacturing and business administration, and continues to grow at a faster rate than all three.

Around 370 **creative businesses**, the highest concentration in the Solent region.

The sector is dominated by **sole traders and microbusinesses**, especially in crafts, design, film, and digital content.

Home to the National Motor Museum, a large scale cultural institution, plus a strong patchwork of **small creative hubs, studios, rehearsal spaces and galleries**.

Creative Forest network, formerly Folio, connects creative practitioners, venues and organisations across the district.

The district contributes to the **Southampton creative cluster**, with cross-boundary flows of audiences, workers and opportunities.

Infrastructure challenges include lack of affordable workspaces and studios, limited digital capacity, and transport barriers that restrict access.

Engagement is uneven: Lymington and central Forest areas skew averages upwards, while Totton, Waterside and New Milton show lower participation.

A high number of **community clubs, associations and voluntary groups** underpin the district's cultural life; from choirs, amateur dramatics, bands and dance schools to village halls

This grassroots energy **sustains many local cultural assets** and provides vital social connections, especially in rural communities.

Volunteering has long been a defining feature of the New Forest, sustaining events, venues, museums, festivals and local traditions. However, volunteer numbers are in decline, creating a significant threat to the future viability.

Cultural participation is **above national averages**: 95% of residents engaged with arts in the past year vs. 90% England average.

Residents show the strongest appetite for more **live music (66%)** and **cinema (43%)**, with both seen as major gaps in the current offer. Alongside this, people value opportunities for **outdoor cultural activies**.

Organisations & Provision

Creative & Cultural Businesses

Infrastructure and Networks

Community & Voluntary Activity

Participation & Demand

A Case for Creativity and Culture

This strategy is built on a strong foundation of evidence gathered across three major studies carried out between 2022 and 2025, commissioned by NFDC, Arts Council England and Culture in Common. Together, these reports provide a comprehensive picture of cultural life in the New Forest, its strengths, challenges, and opportunities.

Community consultation

(Forging Culture Rights in the New Forest, 2024) captured the voices of residents, councillors, young people and sector professionals exploring how local people experience culture, what they value, and what they want for the future.

Data and insights research

(New Forest Culture Insights Report, 2024) provided detailed evidence on creative industries, workforce, participation patterns, and the wider impacts of culture on economy, health, and place.

Cultural situational analysis

(Culture in Common Situational Analysis, 2022–23) mapped the wider demographic, geographic, and cultural landscape of the district, identifying key trends, gaps, and barriers to engagement.

Taken together, these reports reveal a consistent set of themes: the power of culture to shape identity and wellbeing; uneven access and participation across the district; pressures from an ageing population, rurality, and transport; and the need for stronger collaboration, innovation, and sustainability.

This evidence base underpins the case for culture in the New Forest; demonstrating why investment in cultural life matters, how it contributes to health, wellbeing, economy, tourism, and community cohesion, and why now is the right time to act.



What We've Learnt



- Unique natural environment and heritage, with the New Forest's landscapes, history, and traditions central to local identity and provide a powerful cultural brand.
- Our distinct sense of place; a nationally recognised name associated with quality of life, creativity, and stewardship of the natural world.
- Strong community pride and participation with residents valuing their local identity, volunteering, and community-led events such as carnivals, fetes, and shows.
- Rich and varied cultural assets, from museums and heritage sites to creative hubs, alongside iconic events.
- Dispersed but diverse provision. Cultural activity exists in many towns and villages, offering breadth across the district even if geographically spread.
- A growing creative economy. The New Forest has the highest concentration of creative businesses in the Solent region, driven by a strong freelance and microbusiness base.
- Skilled and active creative practitioners such as artists, makers and producers contribute to a high-quality, locally rooted creative scene with national connections.
- Plenty of outdoor and participatory culture, our festivals, carnivals, and open-air events are deeply embedded in local life and celebrated across generations.
- Established networks and partnerships such as Creative Forest and Culture in Common who have strengthened coordination, capacity, and shared learning.
- Appetite for everyday creativity. Residents express a strong desire for participatory and hands-on cultural experiences, reflecting an inclusive, community-driven cultural spirit.



- Ageing population, shrinking working-age group, and limited ethnic diversity.
- High levels of loneliness, long-term health conditions, and poor mental health, particularly among young and older residents.
- Disparities between high-engagement areas (e.g. Lymington) and low-engagement areas (e.g. Totton, Waterside, New Milton).
- Limited public transport, long travel times, and lack of confidence in travelling at night.
- Few dedicated spaces, activities, or career pathways for young people; many feel there is "nothing for them."
- Many assets but poorly connected; weak cross-sector collaboration; limited data capture and sharing.
- Employers highlight skills shortages (digital, project management, leadership); high housing costs and limited career routes make it hard to retain creative talent.
- Risk of exclusion or narrow definitions of culture; limited representation of diverse narratives and voices.
- Limited financial capacity and infrastructure to deliver bold ambitions.



- Use the New Forest's landscapes, heritage, and traditions as the foundation for cultural identity, storytelling, and tourism.
- Expand programmes tackling isolation, supporting mental health, and building intergenerational/community bonds.
- Focus new provision in areas with low engagement, improving access through mobile, touring, and pop-up models.
- Invest in youth-led spaces, creative opportunities, and skills pathways; create career routes to retain local talent.
- Build on networks (e.g. FOLIO), empower councillors and local champions, and encourage shared leadership of strategy
- Support microbusinesses and freelancers, align with Solent Creative Strategy, and foster sustainable creative enterprise.
- Position the New Forest as a national exemplar for embedding environmental awareness and low-impact cultural practice.
- Embrace everyday creativity, new artforms, and co-creation to broaden participation and reflect a wider range of voices.
- Use technology to reach isolated communities, expand access, and engage new audiences while addressing the digital divide.
- Use arts and culture to help people explore, communicate and make sense of complex issues, from global challenges to local change, strengthening empathy, dialogue and shared perspective.

Aligning with Local, Regional and National Strategy

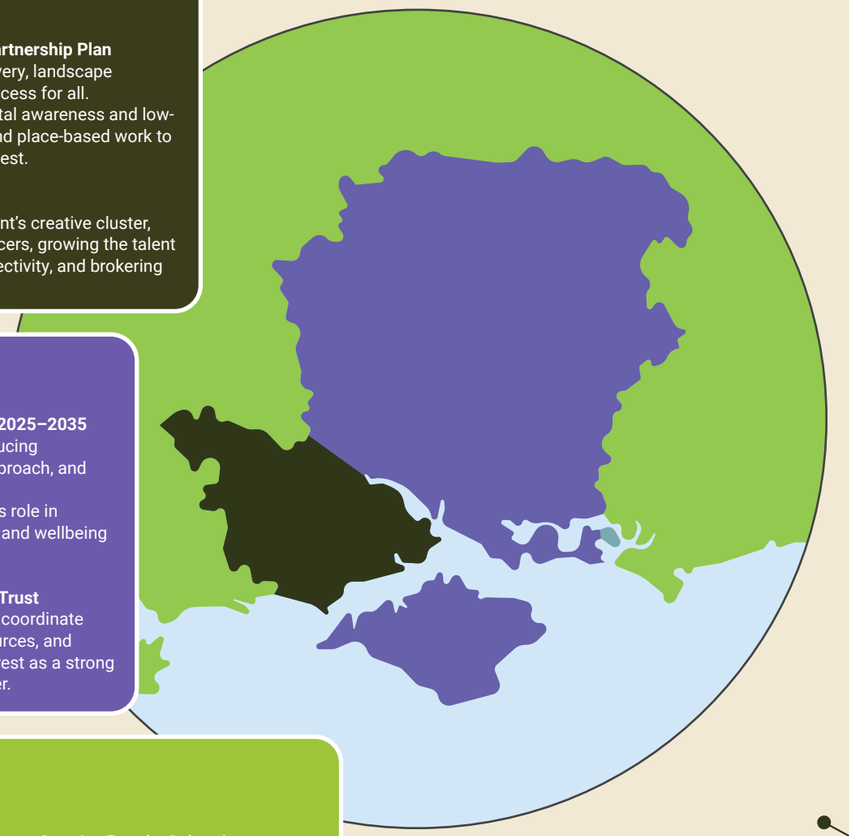
Our evidence base aligns strongly with the policy local, regional and national landscape and provides a clear route to delivery.

LOCAL (New Forest)

New Forest District Council – Corporate Plan
Our actions contribute to community wellbeing, resilient places, and a vibrant local economy. We will focus on equitable access, achieving health and wellbeing outcomes, town/village vitality, and skills pathways that support local businesses and freelancers.

New Forest National Park Authority – Partnership Plan
We will connect culture with nature recovery, landscape stewardship, sustainable tourism, and access for all. Programming will champion environmental awareness and low-impact delivery models, using outdoor and place-based work to deepen people's relationship with the Forest.

Solent Cultural Plan
We will plug the New Forest into the Solent's creative cluster, supporting microbusinesses and freelancers, growing the talent pipeline, improving workspace and connectivity, and brokering



REGIONAL (Hampshire)

Hampshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2025–2035
The Hampshire strategy emphasises reducing inequalities, using a community asset approach, and embedding health across all policies.
Our strategy aligns by reinforcing culture's role in promoting equity, place-based strengths, and wellbeing across Hampshire's communities.

Cultural Connects – Hampshire Cultural Trust
We'll align with county-wide ambitions to coordinate cultural delivery, share learning and resources, and evidence impact, positioning the New Forest as a strong contributor to a joined-up Hampshire offer.

NATIONAL (UK wide)

Arts Council England - Let's Create
We will deliver against ACE's three outcomes Creative People, Cultural Communities, a Creative & Cultural country and embed the four Investment Principles of Inclusivity & Relevance, Environmental Responsibility, Ambition & Quality, Dynamism. Priorities include youth-led opportunities, co-creation with underserved places and sector capacity-building through partnerships and skills.

National Centre for Creative Health - Creative Health Review
We align with the National Creative Health agenda, which calls for creativity to be embedded across health and social care to reduce inequalities, improve quality of life, and relieve pressure on services. Our strategy responds by strengthening cultural partnerships with health and care providers, ensuring creative opportunities contribute directly to healthier, more connected communities.

Readiness for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

To represent the New Forest effectively in upcoming LGR discussions, we will:

- **Speak with one voice:** Creative Forest will convene cultural stakeholders to ensure the sector is represented clearly and efficiently, articulating shared priorities and pipeline projects aligned to ACE, NFDC, NFNPA, Solent, and Hampshire.
- **Show clear alignment:** Keep up to date with the changing regional and national policy landscape and respond appropriately, ensuring that local priorities remain connected to wider agendas such as wellbeing, engagement, skills, sustainability, and the visitor economy.
- **Evidence impact:** Using this shared strategic framework and Action Plan for evaluation, we will produce an annual impact report for the district that demonstrates how culture delivers for people, place, economy, environment, and health.

We will ensure the New Forest has an investable cultural proposition that is locally grounded, regionally connected, and nationally aligned, ready to shape and thrive within any new governance arrangements.

> Tweenies need to try out things, local and low cost
> You can't get there by pony if there ain't no car or bus.
> Mentors share their knowledge "light attracting light"
> yes, it's rough around the edges but with help we'll get it right
>
> *Poem excerpt co-created by Damian Kelly-Basher and residents of Lyndhurst*







The Impact of Culture

The cultural sector plays a vital role in shaping the future of the New Forest. Its impact reaches beyond the arts, touching every aspect of life, place, and community. By nurturing creativity and cultural activity, we can deliver meaningful benefits across five key areas:



Our Vision and Mission

Statement

A thriving New Forest where culture and creativity strengthen community, enrich wellbeing, and drive sustainable growth.

Vision

Our vision is for the New Forest to be a place where culture and creativity flourish at the heart of community life. The cultural sector will celebrate the Forest's unique heritage and identity, enrich everyday experiences, and open up opportunities for all. By strengthening cultural participation and supporting creative practitioners and organisations, we will drive economic growth, attract and sustain tourism, and enhance the health, wellbeing, and cohesion of our communities. Through strong partnerships and shared ambition, we will nurture an inclusive and sustainable cultural ecosystem that ensures the New Forest is known as a place where creativity, nature, and people thrive together.

Mission

Our mission is to strengthen the New Forest's cultural sector for the benefit of our people and place, by working collectively with creative practitioners, organisations, and communities. By positioning ourselves as a united cultural voice ahead of local government reorganisation, we will ensure our sector is visible, resilient, and ready to play a central role in shaping the future of the New Forest.



Our Values

Our mission is underpinned by a set of core values that shape the way we work and the outcomes we seek to achieve. These principles ensure that culture in the New Forest is not only vibrant, but also fair, sustainable, and rooted in place. They guide our decisions, partnerships, and cultural activities, ensuring the New Forest's cultural future is inclusive, resilient, and authentic.

Equality, Inclusivity and Access

We believe culture should belong to everyone. We are committed to removing barriers and ensuring opportunities for participation, expression, and enjoyment are open to all people, regardless of background, race, age, or circumstance.

Environmental Sustainability and Stewardship

We are dedicated to building a cultural sector that is environmentally responsible and future-focused, protecting the Forest's landscapes and communities for generations to come.

Celebrating our Distinct Local Identity

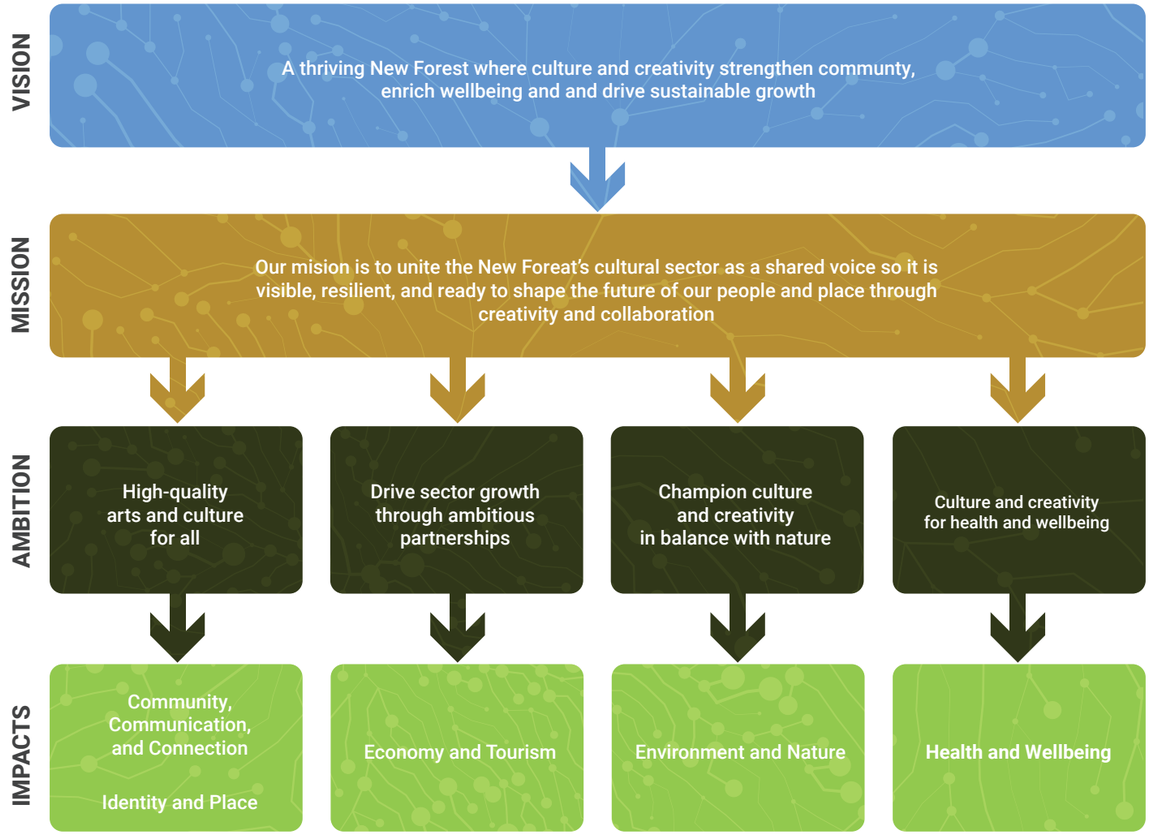
We are rooted in the uniqueness and special nature of the New Forest. Our work celebrates the area's diverse communities, heritage, and creativity, fostering pride of place and strengthening social bonds.



> Let's knead the dough until it starts to rise.
> Let's warm up the cold spots be pleasantly surprised
> when we flood the algorithms with solutions and good news
> and when people create the changes we'll re-invent, continue..re-invent, continue.
>
> *Poem excerpt co-created by Damian Kelly-Basher and residents of Ringwood*

Our Ambitions

The following four ambitions set out how culture in the New Forest will grow and thrive over the coming years. Developed from community consultation, local insight, and national policy, they respond directly to the district's strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Together they provide a clear framework for action: positioning the New Forest as a leader in rural co-creation, driving innovation through ambitious partnerships, championing culture in balance with nature, and harnessing culture to improve health and wellbeing.



Ambition 1:
High-quality arts and culture for all

Position the New Forest as a place where everyone can experience and contribute to exceptional, high-quality creative and cultural activity — in ways that reflect the district's landscapes, communities, and distinct identity. We will champion excellence and inclusion side by side: ensuring that outstanding creative work is made with, by and for local people, and that every resident has the opportunity to take part, experience, and feel pride in the cultural life of their place. Culture in the New Forest will be ambitious, participatory, and rooted in place — connecting high-calibre artists and organisations with communities, and demonstrating how rural areas can lead in quality as well as innovation.

What we know:

STRENGTHS

Strong community pride, active volunteering, outdoor culture, and deep local identity.

CHALLENGES

Uneven participation, underserved young people, narrow definitions of culture, limited inclusion.

OPPORTUNITIES

Empower communities and young people, diversify cultural narratives, broaden participation, grow ambition and quality.

Our actions:

- **Lead the way in rural co-creation** — embedding high-quality creative practice within communities through shared making, learning, and collaboration.
- **Take culture out into communities** through pop-ups, touring, and local activity, meeting people where they are and making participation easy and accessible.
- **Support creative ambition** by connecting local talent with professional artists, training, and commissioning opportunities that raise quality and confidence.
- **Celebrate local stories and traditions** through collaborative projects that connect cultural and community partners, linking identity with placemaking.
- **Adopt shared ways of evidencing community impact** to demonstrate how high-quality rural culture enriches lives and strengthens place.

What is co-creation?

Co-creation is about working together as equals. Creative practitioners and communities share ideas, skills and decisions to create something meaningful. It is built on trust and active listening, so that everyone involved feels ownership, pride and value in what is made.

> If "teamwork is dreamwork" imagine a new pronoun, beyond 'me' or 'us & them',
> "Hi, I'm 'Co'
> for co-operate, co-create, co-evolve, letting all ideas grow at the same time.
>
> *Poem excerpt co-created by Damian Kelly-Basher and residents of New Milton*

Ambition 2:
Drive sector growth through ambitious partnerships

Grow the New Forest's cultural and creative economy through ambitious partnerships that unlock investment, drive innovation and build resilience. By connecting organisations, venues, and businesses we will amplify impact, strengthen digital capability, and create new opportunities for learning and collaboration. Through shared training, aligned infrastructure, and coordinated communication, we will support a thriving, visible, and future-ready cultural sector that contributes to local vitality, supports the visitor economy, and makes the New Forest a great place to live and work as a creative.

What we know:

STRENGTHS

Rich but dispersed cultural assets, growing creative economy, existing networks like Creative Forest.

CHALLENGES

Fragmented sector, weak collaboration, limited data and insight, poor digital connectivity and communications, resource constraints.

OPPORTUNITIES

Strengthen collaboration, connect venues and organisations, align training and skills, grow the creative economy, share knowledge and digital innovation.

Our actions:

- **Broker cross-sector collaborations linking culture** with business, tourism, environment, and education initiatives to unlock new investment and innovation.
- **Align training and skills programmes across artforms and sectors** — including creative, digital, tourism, and green industries — to create a coherent local talent pipeline.
- **Develop creative career pathways for young people and emerging talent**, investing in a skills audit and data-led approach to future workforce planning.
- **Strengthen digital infrastructure and communications**, improving connectivity, data sharing, and digital literacy across cultural organisations and freelancers.
- **Work with partners to embed culture from the outset** in district development plans, business growth initiatives, and regional investment projects to ensure culture shapes long-term prosperity.
- **Establish shared measures for data and insight** to build a collective evidence base on the cultural sector's economic and social value, including its impact on the visitor economy and workforce development.



Ambition 3:
Champion culture and creativity in balance with nature

Embed sustainability and environmental consciousness at the heart of cultural activity, ensuring creativity and nature thrive together. By celebrating the Forest's unique landscapes and biodiversity, we will promote sustainable practice, inspire stewardship of the natural environment, and show how cultural life can protect and enhance the places we live in.

What we know:

Strengths

National Park status, global natural heritage and biodiversity.

Challenges

Transport barriers, environmental pressures, limited sustainable practice in cultural delivery.

Opportunities

Embed environmental stewardship, use outdoor and place-based culture, lead nationally on low-impact cultural practice.

Our actions:

- **Embed environmental responsibility across cultural practice,** ensuring sustainability and low-impact delivery are integral to how cultural activity is planned, produced and experienced across the New Forest.
- **Champion place-based cultural work rooted in landscape and ecology,** using creativity to celebrate the Forest's natural environment, deepen connection to place, and inspire care for its biodiversity and heritage.
- **Strengthen culture–nature partnerships,** aligning cultural organisations with environmental, conservation, tourism and land-management partners to support shared goals for stewardship and sustainable visitor experience.
- **Build shared understanding and evidence of environmental impact,** capturing learning, data and stories that show how cultural activity supports environmental awareness, behavior change and long-term protection of place.



Ambition 4:
Culture and creativity for health and wellbeing

Build healthier, more connected communities across the New Forest by placing culture at the heart of wellbeing. Cultural programmes support people of all ages – tackling isolation and loneliness, improving mental health, and encouraging physical activity. By bringing people together through shared creative experiences, culture can foster stronger relationships, resilience, and a greater sense of belonging. Crucially, culture also delivers preventative benefits – helping to reduce health inequalities, ease pressure on services, and support people to live well for longer.

What we know:

Strengths

Strong sense of community pride, volunteering, and appetite for participatory culture.

Challenges

Higher levels of loneliness and isolation among older residents; significant health inequalities; limited provision for mental health support through culture.

Opportunities

Expand cultural programmes that reduce isolation, support mental and physical wellbeing, and create intergenerational connections. Strengthen partnerships with health, care, and voluntary sectors to embed culture as part of local wellbeing strategies.

Our actions:

- **Position culture at the heart of wellbeing,** recognising creativity as a vital contributor to physical and mental health, prevention, and quality of life for people of all ages across the New Forest.
- **Connect cultural projects with health and care partners,** including social prescribing, care networks and voluntary sector organisations, to embed culture within preventative health and wellbeing agendas.
- **Promote inclusive and accessible cultural opportunities,** encouraging everyday creativity, offering low-cost or free entry points, and ensuring people can take part in ways that support their wellbeing and life circumstances.
- **Bring people together through shared creative experiences,** strengthening connection, belonging and resilience by reducing loneliness, supporting intergenerational activity and building stronger community relationships.
- **Build shared understanding and evidence of culture's preventative value,** demonstrating how cultural participation supports healthier lives, reduces pressure on services and contributes to long-term wellbeing outcomes.

> Overcoming challenges, daily struggles of accessibility and aging through the kindness of creativity sending sparks of incredible colour through brilliant, mindful expression
>
> *Poem excerpt co-created by Steven Mizen and residents of Totton*



Governance

Governance of the strategy will sit with Creative Forest (formerly Folio), a new structure bringing together representatives from across the district's cultural ecosystem. Creative Forest will include members from each of the key engagement groups, meeting twice yearly to review progress, share insight and oversee implementation. It will be coordinated by Creative Forest, which is currently reorganising and building capacity following new Arts Council England investment in October 2025. Creative Forest will continue to champion and advocate for culture, connect and support creative activity across the district, and coordinate monitoring of the New Forest Creative and Cultural Framework and its Action Plan.

The governance model has three tiers of engagement:

Creative Forest
Representatives from each engagement group will make up the Creative Forest, managing governance, monitoring and development of the New Forest Creative and Cultural Framework.

1

Creative Forest Partners

A core group of cultural organisations who provide leadership, delivery capacity, and act as the backbone of the cultural ecology in the district:

- African Activities
- Coda Music & Arts Trust
- Fluid Motion Theatre Company
- Forest Arts Centre
- Forest Forge Theatre Company
- New Forest Heritage Centre
- SPUD
- St Barbe Museum & Art Gallery

2

Key Stakeholders

Strategic partners who connect culture to wider agendas including health, wellbeing, economy, environment, and education:

- Arts Council England
- Energize Me / Culture in Common
- Hampshire Cultural Trust (HCT)
- New Forest District Council (NFDC)
- New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA)

3

Wider Network

A broad network of over 200 individual creative practitioners, community groups, and cultural organisations across the New Forest who contribute to cultural life, feed into planning and evaluation, and collaborate on delivery.

Looking ahead, there are ambitions to develop a cross-sector engagement plan that introduces key stakeholders from health, education, tourism, business, public services, and community charities. This will strengthen collaboration, embed culture within wider systems of policy and practice, and open up new opportunities for investment and impact.

Creative Forest will convene these groups to provide strategic leadership, coordination, and advocacy, ensuring alignment with local, regional and national priorities. It will also oversee monitoring, evaluation and impact reporting, working to embed culture as a driver of wellbeing, identity, economic growth and sustainability across the district.

During uncertain times, and with impending local government reorganisation, Creative Forest will remain responsive and agile while maintaining integrity, and its commitment to creativity and culture. Each year at the time of impact reporting, Creative Forest, together with key stakeholders, will review the effectiveness and relevance of the strategy. This process will ensure that progress is measured, learning is shared, and the strategy is updated as required to remain responsive to local needs and changing circumstances.



Action Plan Monitoring and Evaluation

Our four ambitions provide a clear framework for culture in the New Forest. They are more than statements of intent: they shape how we work, where we focus effort, and how we define success. This framework ensures that ambitions translate into coordinated action and measurable impact across the district.

A single Action Plan will set out the shared programme of activity for the district. It will be held and overseen by Creative Forest, ensuring accountability, alignment and collaboration across all partners. Creative Forest will review progress and update the plan regularly, supporting a joined-up approach to cultural development and impact reporting.

Each ambition will be supported by specific actions developed with communities, cultural organisations and stakeholders, identifying who will lead, when activity will take place and what difference it will make. Many of these activities are already happening across the district but lack a clear framework for visibility, coordination and shared impact measurement. Recognising the importance of demonstrating value, an annual impact report will evidence how culture contributes to people, place, economy, environment and health, helping to strengthen cross-sector partnerships and attract future investment.



Appendix

Culture in Common – Situational Analysis (2022–23)

Forging Culture Rights in the New Forest (2024)

New Forest Culture Insights Report (2024)

Arts Council England – Let's Create (2020–30)

New Forest District Council – Corporate Plan (2024–28)

New Forest National Park Authority – Partnership Plan (2022–27)

Solent Cultural Plan 2025–29 (Solent Growth Partnership, 2025)

Hampshire Cultural Trust – Cultural Connects

Creative Health Review (2024) – National Centre for Creative Health

Hampshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2025–35)

> Empty churches open for creative congregations. And after-school Sports Halls host DJs and dance evenings.
> So, continue. to do what you never did before. Do it with strangers.
> Listen to the skaters.
> Prioritise your happiness. Clear. Fly out the door.
>
> *Poem excerpt co-created by Damian Kelly-Basher and residents of Ringwood*





New Forest

Creative and Cultural Framework

2026–2032

Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Funded by UK Government

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 21 January 2026

COMMUNITY GRANT FUNDING 2026/27

Purpose	For Review
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	The Council's Corporate Plan prioritises the delivery of an annual Community Grants scheme to support organisations delivering wide-ranging services to different communities and to meet the needs of vulnerable residents in the district through the award of discretionary revenue and capital grants to support organisations which meet the Council's objectives. The proposals in this report include total awards of revenue community grants of £201,859 for 2026/27, summarised as: a) Revenue grants of £157,500 to support 28 organisations, of which £72,000 are longer term awards. b) Community Transport scheme grants of £44,359, An allocation of up to £100,000 is available toward capital community grant applications. The proposals in this report include total awards of community capital grants of: c) £97,949 to support 10 projects
Recommendation	**That the Panel make a recommendation to Cabinet:** **1. To approve Community grants totalling £157,500 in revenue grants and £97,949 in capital grants, as detailed in Appendix 1, for inclusion in the Medium-Term Financial Plan and proposed budget for 2026/27** **2. To approve the proposals, as detailed in paragraph 19, and**

	3. To approve the Community Transport grants totalling £44,359, as set out in paragraph 25. **4. Following a further officer review, to approve changes to the administration of grants during 2026 for distribution in 2027/28 as follows:** • **From the overall community grant budget to ringfence an annual allocation of up to £165,000 towards revenue grants for Band A organisations, with any residual budget used for Band B organisations.** • **Make available the option to award on a rolling 3-year basis to Band A organisations.** • **That community transport grants are considered in Band A** • **Prioritise the award of capital grants to organisations who propose additional, or replacement community play spaces and equipment.**
Reasons for recommendation	To complete the Community Grants process for 2026/27.
Wards	All
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Dan Poole – Housing and Communities
Strategic Director	Peter Matthew – Strategic Director Housing and Communities
Officer Contact	Ryan Stevens Service Manager Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services 02380 285693 Ryan.stevens@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. The purpose of this report is to consider the recommendations of the Community Grants Task and Finish Group. Community grants are distributed to support groups and organisations located within

the district who support our residents and communities. The Council is committed to supporting organisations through the Community Grants programme, which is a key priority in the Corporate Plan, actively promoting the programme and encouraging new applications.

2. A full review of the Community Grants scheme was undertaken in 2024; however, a further recommended change is proposed. The Task and Finish Group also received an update on the Community Lottery, including the funding raised for good causes to date, along with the central fund.

3. The Council continues to work in partnership with Hampshire County Council on the provision of two community transport schemes to support vulnerable residents with transport.

Community Grants

4. On 26, 27 and 28 November 2025 the Community Grants Task and Finish Group met to consider the revenue and capital Community Grant applications received for the 2026/27 financial year. We received an unprecedented 42 revenue applications, 23 being first time applicants (54%), and 24 capital applications, from a range of organisations across the district. The programme was promoted via social media, partner organisations, networking and residents' email, with the application window being open for two months.

5. The value of revenue grant applications totalled £504,048 (£277,163 in 2024) and capital grant applications totalled £317,616 (£86,371 in 2024).

6. All recipients of a community grant are provided with information and communications to promote the award by the Council in any publicity or promotional materials.

Revenue grants – the process

7. From the 2024 grants programme 5 organisations were awarded 3-year grant agreements from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2028 as they are key partners who work closely with the Council and support our services and communities. These organisations are:

Organisation	Grant amount for each year
Community First Wessex	35,000
New Forest Disability Information Service	5,000
The Crossings	10,000
The Handy Trust	10,000

Youth and Families Matter	12,000
Total	**67,000**

8. The 3-year funding agreement provides financial security and enables longer term planning, with the grants paid annually. Officers meet regularly with all recipients to review activities, initiatives, objectives and targets.

9. An application was received from New Forest Disability Information Service for additional grant funding. The Group reviewed the request and when considering the work undertaken, the coverage, and the uniqueness of the support provided to a vulnerable cohort, recommended increasing the grant for years 2 and 3 to £10,000 per year.

10. In accordance with the revised process, applications were scored against a matrix and placed into one of three bands, A, B and C. The matrix comprised of various categories, including, how the application demonstrated:

    - value for money
    - a local need
    - that it supports the Council's corporate priorities
    - that funding is required
    - alternative or additional funding raising activities had been explored
    - that it supports Council services and/or priorities
    - that it supports the residents of the New Forest
    - the area of the district covered
    - if the service is duplicated elsewhere

11. Due to Local Government Reorganisation, no applications scoring highly were placed in Band A. Due to the volume of applications, it was not feasible to invite all applicants to interview. Therefore, those applications scoring low against the matrix criteria, or submitted an incomplete application or which did not meet the eligibility criteria, were placed into Band C and not invited to present their application to the Group.

12. From the 42 applications, 28 were placed in Band B and were invited to the Task and Finish Group to present how their application would meet the needs of, and benefit or support, residents in the district. Applicants were also asked to explain how their funding request linked to the priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan and their outcomes and key deliverables, with Members asking further questions about their organisation and application. Advice was also given to applicants on additional and/or alternative funding streams, such as Councillor Engagement grants and Community First Wessex membership.

13. Following the presentations, the Task and Finish Group thoroughly discussed and deliberated the applications. In formulating a recommendation for each grant request, members considered the agreed criteria, the Council's Corporate Plan priorities, and the value for money being offered. Due to the very high number and value of applications the Group had to make difficult decisions and in a number of instances the Group recommended grants of less than the amount being requested so as to support as many groups as possible and to recognise the benefits and work of the individual grant applications. Consideration was given to organisations submitting their first application, if the service is duplicated elsewhere, the financial position, and the impact and benefits of a grant being awarded.

14. From the interviews the Group are recommending a grant award to 11 organisation (47% of awards) who have not previously had a community grant award, and further 2 applications did not receive a grant last year, meaning 56% have not received a grant in the last two years.

15. The Group recommendations of each grant application are summarised in Appendix 1, with further details in Appendix 2.

Capital grants – the process

16. In accordance with the new process, applications were scored against a matrix of criteria which comprised of various categories, including, how the application demonstrated:

- value for money
- community benefits
- it supports the Council's corporate priorities
- if there is community support
- if the project is deliverable
- if the project supports key infrastructure in the community
- if the project will be used by the wider community
- how the project positively supports climate change

17. The Task and Finish group fully discussed and considered the information provided in the applications and the scoring matrix to make their recommendations. Where the applicant had not secured 50% of the project costs, or exceeded the maximum grant award, as detailed in the guidance provided to applicants, these applications were ineligible and not considered.

18. The Group's recommendations for each grant application are summarised in Appendix 1, with further details in Appendix 2.

Review of the community grants process

19. On completing the process, the Task and Finish Group undertook a review and recommend the following:

    a. To reduce the maximum grant award for revenue grants from £20,000 to £10,000
    b. To amend the ordering of questions in the Revenue grant application form so that employee details appear with the budget information
    c. To continue in person attendance to the Group for revenue grant applications
    d. To use the funds raised from the New Forest community lottery general fund to top-up the revenue community grant budget

20. The Group did receive feedback from several applicants who expressed support for the community grants programme as most grant funding is now aimed at specific project work, and not to support the core infrastructure and day-to-day running costs of the organisations, without which project work cannot be achieved.

Community Transport grants

21. The Task and Finish Group also considered community transport grants, which the Council has supported for many years. There are currently 2 schemes the Council supports in partnership with Hampshire County Council for transportation projects, all funded from the overall annual budget for Community Grants. After a recent procurement exercise, new contracts were awarded from 1 September 2025 with Community First Wessex administering the two schemes, which are:

    - Call and Go – This is a bookable community transport service for anyone whose transport needs are not met by public bus services to go, for example, shopping, to visit a library or to see family and friends. Drivers will assist with carrying shopping and wheelchair accessible minibuses collect users from their home at a pre-arranged time. The cost will vary according to the distance travelled.

      Current NFDC funding is £29,998 per year

    - Group Hire – This scheme provides affordable wheelchair accessible minibuses to hire for voluntary or charitable

organisations for a period of 3 hours to 1 week. The cost of hire depends on the distance travelled and duration of hire period.

Current NFDC grant funding is £14,361 per year

22. The total current funding for the two community transport schemes is £44,359, with Hampshire County Council also providing grant funding. The amounts are to be increased annually by April's Consumer Price Index (CPI).

23. The Group reviewed the numbers using the two schemes, with Call and Go and Group Hire recovering following the pandemic. Call & Go has over 400 regular monthly users, mostly being elderly or with mobility issues, whilst Group Hire has 307 organisations registered and averages 486 passenger trips each month.

24. The Group was of the view that NFDC should maintain the same level of funding for the Call and Go and Group Hire service to continue our support our communities, especially those who are vulnerable and in rural areas with limited transport links.

25. The Group recommend the following:

- **Funding for Call & Go for 2026/27 to be £29,997.80**
- **Funding for Group Hire for 2026/27 to be £14,361.12**
- **To continue the funding for both schemes in 2027/28 and 2028/29, subject to an annual increase based on April's CPI.**

26. Following a further officer review the recommendations include changes to the administration of grants during 2026 for distribution in 2027/28 as follows:

- Ringfence an annual allocation of up to £120,000 toward revenue funding for Band A organisations.
- Implement a rolling 3-year award to Band A organisations.
- Prioritise the award of capital grants to organisations who propose additional, or replacement community play spaces and equipment

Corporate plan priorities

27. The contents of this report support the key priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan by providing community grants to organisations that support and meet the diverse needs of the district's communities and vulnerable people, and working closely with key partners to help resolve issues, including those associated with cost of living,

homelessness, and health and wellbeing, as well as supporting a vibrant arts and culture offer.

Options appraisal

28. Details of the options and discussions are included in the paragraphs above.

Financial and resource implications

29. The proposed recommendations of this report are included in the overall budget allocated to community grants of £350,000, of which £250,000 is allocated to revenue projects, which includes Members Community Engagement Grants of £48,000, and funded via the general fund, and £100,000 to capital projects, funded from general fund reserves. The resources used to administer this programme are maintained within existing resources.

30. The proposals in this report include total awards of community grants of £299,338, summarised as:

    a) Revenue grants of £157,500
    b) Capital grants of £97,479
    c) The proposed budget for 2026/27 for the Community Transport schemes of £44,359

Legal implications

31. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Risk assessment

32. There are no risk assessments required, however as part of the deliberations consideration is given to the financial stability of the organisation to ensure that grants are only awarded where the organisation can demonstrate longer term financial stability to deliver the services.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

33. There are no significant environmental or climate and nature implications arising from this report, although applicants to community grants did have to provide details of their activities to support the Council's commitment to climate sustainability, such as recycling bikes and making buildings more energy efficient.

Equalities implications

34. Our Community Grants programme continues to support a wide range of organisations across the district that support, engage and

benefit our diverse communities and residents, including those with mental health and disabilities, the elderly and vulnerable households, as well as those that support the LGTBQ+ and Traveller communities. Applicants have to demonstrate through the application form and process how corporate priorities will be met, for example supporting residents with the greatest need.

Crime and disorder implications

35. There are no crime and disorder implications directly arising from this report. However, several of the organisations proposed to receive grant funding support vulnerable people to sustain accommodation and maximise income, and work with communities and partners to reduce crime.

36. It is a widely held view that providing support to these groups increases stability and positive behaviours, as well as reducing the likelihood of people falling victim to crime.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

37. There are no data protection, information governance or ICT implications arising from this report.

Appendices	**Background Papers:**
Appendix 1 – Details of grant applications and award recommendations	There are none.
Appendix 2 – Summary of revenue grant recommendations	

Appendix 1 – Community grant applications

A. Summary of Revenue Grants - Band A (3-year funding agreement)

No.	APPLICANT	GRANT AMOUNT
1	Community First Wessex	30,000
2	New Forest Disability Information Service	10,000
3	The Crossings	10,000
4	The Handy Trust	10,000
5	Youth and Families Matter	12,000
Total		**72,000**

B. Revenue Grants considered by the Task and Finish Group - Band B

No.	APPLICANT	AMOUNT REQUESTED	RECOMMEN-DATION	2025/26 AWARD (INFO ONLY)
1	Aquaphonics	20,000	4,000	N/A
2	ArtfulScribe	5,000	0	N/A
3	Breakout Youth	7,500	3,000	N/A
4	Broadleaf Home Ed Co-Op	20,000	0	N/A
5	Countryside Education Trust	20,000	0	N/A
6	Families Matter	10,000	6,000	5,000
7	First Steps New Forest	8,000	3,000	N/A
8	Fluid Motion Theatre Company	20,000	4,000	N/A
9	Forest Forge	20,000	4,000	7,500
10	Hammersley Homes	20,000	0	3,000
11	HomeStart	9,100	3,000	0
12	Helping Older people	20,000	4,000	10,000
13	New Forest Basics Bank	12,000	6,000	3,500
14	New Forest Bike Project	5,000	3,000	3,000
15	New Forest Heritage Centre	10,000	3,000	0
16	Pennington Action Group	4,200	3,000	N/A
17	Positive Path Foundation	10,000	3,000	0
18	Ringwood Foodbank	6,851	3,000	N/A
19	SPUD	15,000	4,000	7,500
20	St Barbe	12,000	4,000	3,000
21	STARF	15,000	4,000	N/A
22	Step Up Safe Space	4,576	3,000	N/A
23	The Branch	10,000	3,000	4,000
24	The Honeypot Childrens Charity	9,820	4,000	6,000
25	Thorneyhill Community Centre	8,000	3,000	N/A
26	Totton Spiritualist Church	3,000	0	N/A
27	Yellow Door	20,000	4,500	0
28	Youth in Romsey	17,160	4,000	7,500
Total		**£199,663**	**£85,500**	

(Note: N/A means there was no application received for 2025/26)

C. Revenue Grants not considered by the Group - Band C

ITEM	APPLICANT	AMOUNT REQUESTED
29	15TH New Forest Milford Scout	5,000
30	Aid Ukraine Direct	5,000
31	All Saints Luncheon Club	4,000
32	Burley Charities	3,000
33	Close Combat Martial Arts	20,000
34	Dementia Friendly Hampshire	5,000
35	Lyndhurst Shed	13,500
36	MHA Communities	15,000
37	New Forest Carriage for the Disabled	6,000
38	New Forest for Ukraine	3,000
39	New Forest Mind Body and Spirit	17,441
40	New Forest Wellbeing	8,000
41	Project Manna	24,400
42	Waterside Arts	15,000
	Total	**£144,341**

D. Capital Grants considered by the Task and Finish Group

No.	APPLICANT	PROJECT	AMOUNT REQUESTED	RECOMMEN-DATION
1	Bashley Football Club	Disabled toilets	4,050	4,050
2	Blandford Hall	Roof repair	3,325	3,325
3	Boldre Parish Council	Hall refurbishment	7,000	7,000
4	Bramshaw Community Speed Watch	Speed indicator device	3,107	0*
5	Bramshaw Village Hall	Hall refurbishment	2,000	2,000
6	Burley Parish Council	Village enhancements	4,875	0*
7	Cadnam Cricket Club	Changing and shower facilities	16,000	0*
8	Exbury Club	Community playground	25,000	0*
9	Fawley Rugby Club	Green initiatives	25,000	25,000
10	Foxies Future	Access barrier improvements	4,940	0
11	Hulse Hall	Treatment plant	15,000	0
12	Lymington Community Association	Upgrade electrical supply	90,169	0**
13	Lymington Cricket Club	Scoreboard	3,000	0
14	Lymington Croquet Club	Second lawn	17,577	0
15	Lymington Pétanque Club	Lighting	9,000	0*

16	Lyndhurst and District Community Association	Hall refurbishment	11,224	11,224
17	New Milton Men Shed	Building extension	6,000	6,000
18	Ringwood and District Community Association	New community café	25,000	25,000
19	Salvation Army	Media upgrade	5,000	0*
20	SPUD	Accessibility improvements	11,141	0
21	St Barbe Museum	Visual improvements	4,600	4,600
22	Woodgreen Village Hall	New LED lighting	9,750	9,750
23	The Milford Millenium Hall	New flooring	7,358	0*
24	Totton Community Centre	Hall refurbishment	7,500	0
		TOTAL	**£317,616**	**£97,949**

* These applications had not secured the minimum 50% funding of the overall project costs so are ineligible

** This application is for an amount exceeding the £25,000 limit so ineligible

Appendix 2 – Summary of recommendations for revenue grants applications

A. Revenue Grants – Band A

1	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	New Forest Disability Information Service (NFDIS)	NFDIS provides specialised, free, impartial, and confidential disability related information, advice, and guidance to anyone with a disability who lives or works within the New Forest area. NFDIS are the only organisation within the district that support and represent disabled clients at benefit tribunals. NFDIS specialise in providing mobility aids and equipment, and collaborate with community and other organisations to help people maximise their wellbeing and live safely and as independently as possible in their own home.

Request	Recommendation
£15,000	That a grant of £10,000 be given for years 2 and 3.

Reason for decision:

NFDIS is the only organisation of its kind in the district and provides an essential service to the vulnerable in the face of ever-increasing demand and supports the council in many ways, including with the Just Got Home, working from Lymington and Fordingbridge hospital, and Independence Matters projects. The Group acknowledged the great wok of NFDIS in supporting and advocating for vulnerable and disabled residents and the expansion of outreach work.

B. Revenue Grants - Band B

1	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Aquaphonics	Aquaponics began as way of 'companion farming' where fish and plants grow and nurture each other, providing healthy food in a regenerative and waste-free way. They have since expanded to also support the community with clothes swap, a repair café, and distribute food waste from supermarkets, as well as a food pantry.

Request	Recommendation
£20,000	That a grant of £4,000 be given

Reason for decision:

The Group recognised the range of work of the organisation in educating and promoting sustainable activities, supporting, local communities,

reducing poverty and providing the repair café, food pantry and "cook-ups".

2	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	ArtfulScribe	ArtfulScribe is a literature development agency based in Southampton who support emerging and continuing writers to create new work and develop skills through writing workshops, live events and career development opportunities. They work with all ages and levels of ability, collaborate with schools, businesses and organisations, embedding writing into everyday activities through residencies, creative programmes and events.

Request	Recommendation
£5,000	That no grant be given

Reason for decision

The Group acknowledged and supported the work undertaken, but considered that this was not a corporate priority when considering other applications and the budget available, and that funding could be utilised elsewhere to directly support organisations that benefit our residents.

3	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Breakout Youth	Breakout Youth is the only dedicated LGBTQ+ organisation supporting young people aged 11-25 across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (IOW). They provide safe spaces to deliver seven weekly youth groups, including in New Milton and Marchwood.

Request	Recommendation
£7,500	That a grant of £3,000 be given

Reason for decision

The recognised the work of Breakout Youth in supporting the LGBTQ+ community, in particular providing 1-2-1 sessions and workshops, support with coping strategies and mental health challenges, and their educational work with schools.

4	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Broadleaf Home Ed Co-Op	Broadleaf is a community-led organisation, supporting children, young people and their families through a creative, social and nature-based wellbeing programme. They work directly with families who are not currently accessing school who can find belonging, purpose and connection within a beautiful natural landscape.

Request	Recommendation
£20,000	That no grant be given

Reason for decision

The Group acknowledged and supported the work undertaken, but considered that this was not a corporate priority when considering other applications and the budget available, and that funding could be utilised elsewhere to directly support organisations that benefit our residents.

5	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Countryside Educational Trust	The Countryside Education Trust (CET) was founded as a means of ensuring access to the countryside to all, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. By connecting people and nature the CET helps children and adults understand, protect and conserve the countryside. The CET uses its skills and knowledge to inspire people to act in the face of the nature and climate crisis. This is achieved through a mix of formal education via work with schools, and informal community-based activities such as clubs, volunteering, and events skills training.

Request	Recommendation
£20,000	That no grant be given

Reason for decision

The Group acknowledged and supported the work undertaken, but considered that this was not a corporate priority when considering other applications and the budget available, the reserves and incoming streams being developed, and that funding could be utilised elsewhere to directly support organisations that benefit our residents.

6	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Families Matter	Families Matter is based in Hythe which helps families in need in the Waterside area. They support parents through parenting classes and groups for parents and children with special needs, autism and mental health, and through a crisis, i.e. separation, domestic violence, behavioural problems. They work closely with local schools, supporting children and also run groups for people with dementia and their carers and for families with drug and/or alcohol addictions.

Request	Recommendation
£10,000	That a grant of £6,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

The organisation contributes to the Council's priorities through assisting wellbeing of those in the district, working with and mentoring vulnerable children and young people and parents, and low-income households. Families Matter work in partnership with other organisations, run parenting courses to those families struggling with their child's anxiety or extreme angry behaviour, promote healthy relationships, and support elderly people with dementia, and their carers, with monthly groups.

7	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	First Steps New Forest	First Steps New Forest is a community based registered charity that provides a support network for children, young people and their families from the local settled Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) community who across the New Forest

Request	Recommendation
£8,000	That a grant of £3,000 be given

Reason for decision

The Group support the work of First Steps New Forest in working with and supporting the gypsy and traveller community on a variety of matters, often being their first point of call, notably, the "Mental Health Matters" sessions, support with benefit applications, and counselling.

8	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Fluid Motion	Fluid Motion Theatre Company is an award-winning arts and health charity that uses creativity to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people, and families in our community, using creative activity as tools for recovery, connection, and growth.

Request	Recommendation
£20,000	That a grant of £4,000 be given

Reason for decision

Fluid Motion support the Councils priority of a vibrant and creative culture, providing an inclusive space and creative programmes for young people, which supports mental health and wellbeing, young mums, and holiday clubs.

9	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Forest Forge Theatre Company	Forest Forge is theatre that provides creative learning and outreach activities and tours to communities and schools across the New Forest with an emphasis on creative learning and using theatre to tackle wider social issues such as bullying and mental health. The organisation encourages participation in a variety of activities such as workshops; work experience and targeted outreach projects (e.g. teenagers).

Request	Recommendation
£20,000	That a grant of £4,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

Forest Forge provides creative learning activities across the district and contributes to community cohesion and wellbeing. It supports local business, supports local artists, and provides experience for young people's employability and seeks to be fully inclusive by engaging with all communities. It works in schools, tours a production about mental health, has a youth theatre, and a group for over 55's and workshops in schools.

10	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Hammersley Homes	Hammersley Homes apply a person-centred approach to provide emotional and practical support for people with mental health and aims to provide supported living accommodation for vulnerable adults so that they can live independently. They provide an outreach programme and aim to keep people out of hospital by providing support in their own home.

Request	Recommendation
£20,000	That no grant be given.

Reason for decision:

The Group acknowledged and supported the work undertaken, but considered that this was not a corporate priority when considering other applications and the budget available, the number of people supported, and that funding could be utilised elsewhere to directly support organisations that benefit our residents.

11	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	HomeStart Hampshire	Homestart Hampshire support families with young children through challenging times, helping them

		grow in confidence, build resilience and create nurturing home environments. They empower families, promote good health, both mental and physical, of children and their parents, prevent cruelty to, or maltreatment of, children, and seek to relieve sickness, poverty, and need among children and their families.

Request	**Recommendation**
£9,100	That a grant of £3,000 be given

Reason for decision

The Group recognised the increasing need to support children with mental health issues and the bespoke action plan formulated for families, providing practical and emotional support, as well preventive measures to avoid a future crisis, and plans to expand the service future.

12	**APPLICANT**	**SUMMARY**
	Helping Older People	Helping Older People provide free support, advocacy, advice and befriending services, including home visits, as well as running two charity shops.

Request	**Recommendation**
£20,000	That a grant of £4,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

The Group considered the demographics of the district and recognised the work undertaken to support the elderly and expanding their reach across the district, including to reduce isolation, support those with limited mobility or capacity, for example with benefit claims or “home” administration, and working with partners to receive and provide referrals, and that the grant will be used to provide additional support.

13	**APPLICANT**	**SUMMARY**
	New Forest Basics Bank	New Forest Basics Bank operate a Basics Bank from Lymington which supports the surrounding areas, including schools and community hubs.

Request	**Recommendation**
£12,000	That a grant of £6,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

The Group recognised the work of the volunteers and the support given to vulnerable families, especially with the cost of living, and the work New

Forest Basics Bank do with schools and supporting the Food Larders in areas of deprivation with regular attendance and providing additional supplies and resources, as well as working collaboratively with partners and providing additional household provisions.

14	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	New Forest Bike Project (NFBP)	NFBP is a not-for-profit Community Interest Company that re-cycles bikes and sells them at reduced rates, benefiting residents by offering an affordable source of bikes and parts, especially to those on a low income, to keep people on the road, fit and healthy, reducing the need for car journeys and the impact on the environment. It provides opportunities and a place to help those with issues in their lives improve their confidence, self-esteem, practical and social skills.

Request	Recommendation
£5,000	That a grant of £3,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

The Group support the work of this project, especially as part of the sustainability and greener agenda and to encourage recycling and cycling, providing more affordable access to bicycles for households struggling with the cost of transport, as well as providing volunteering opportunities and training to improve confidence and self-esteem of young people.

15	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	New Forest Heritage Centre	The free entry New Forest Heritage Centre is the only museum dedicated to the social and natural history of the New Forest. Their aim is to inspire visitors to explore and value the New Forest by collecting, conserving, and interpreting collections and by providing educational activities and information to children, young people and adults visiting the Forest and living in the community. The Centre includes an accredited Museum, Reference Library, which preserves historical artefacts, shop, and Exhibition Gallery.

Request	Recommendation
£10,000	That a grant of £3,000 be given

Reason for decision

The Group were supportive of the work undertaken, including with partners organisations to promote the New Forest, promoting sustainable activities, retaining exhibitions, collections and artefacts for future

generations, supporting those with dementia, and providing employment and work experience opportunities.

16	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Pennington Action Group	Pennington Action Group support the people of Pennington, including the young people, where they run a Youth Club, provide Youth Workers, support the elderly, as well as seeking to make environmental improvements to the village.

Request	Recommendation
£4,200	That a grant of £3,000 be given

Reason for decision

The Group recognised that Pennington is an area of deprivation and the work that Pennington Action Group undertakes to support the community, including weekly youth club, helping with benefit and job applications, cooking classes, education on drugs, smoking, sexual health, and bereavement and working collaboratively with partners, and the plan to expand further with a dedicated Project Worker.

17	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Positive Path Foundation	Positive Path provides mentoring, support, advocacy and advice to people with mental health issues, to improve wellbeing, skills and confidence and with gaining and maintaining employment.

Request	Recommendation
£10,000	That a grant of £3,000 be given

Reason for decision

The Group acknowledged the hard work of Positive Path and the impact it has on the lives of people that is supports, many having a disability, including autism, and/or are not in employment, education and/or training, along with the work with partner organisations, including schools and colleges, to maximise the benefits with their limited resources.

18	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Ringwood Foodbank	Ringwood Foodbank support clients in Ringwood, Fordingbridge and surrounding areas. Their objective is the alleviation of poverty through the provision of emergency food and other items and signposting and income maximisation advice

Request	Recommendation
£6,851	That a grant of £3,000 be given

Reason for decision:

The Group recognised the work of the volunteers and the support given to vulnerable families, especially with the cost of living, and the work with schools, and providing additional supplies and resources, as well as working collaboratively with partners with referrals and providing additional household provisions.

19	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	SPUD	SPUD is an arts and education charity that creates opportunities for people to creatively engage with art, architecture, design, and the environment. SPUD supports people works with and support various groups including, youth, disabled, autism, LGBTQ+ and dementia.

Request	Recommendation
£15,000	That a grant of £4,000 be given

Reason for decision:

The Group support the work SPUD does with vulnerable groups, which aligns closely with the 'Culture in Common' programme that the Council is involved in delivering across the district. SPUD's work with residents with dementia, LGTBQ+ and with young people to support their mental wellbeing was noted, as was their outreach programme that builds on the community partnerships, and the support to local artists and businesses.

19	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	St Barbe Museum and Art Gallery	St Barbe is a museum and art gallery providing a cultural hub and educational facilities on the heritage, culture, history, and character of the New Forest. It is part of FOLIO, and provides learning services for schools and interest groups, including workshops, exhibitions, and curriculum-based activities. St Barbe also support groups, e.g. an Elderly Programme for "memories" and works with low-income families, e.g. holiday workshops and activities and Food programme.

Request	Recommendation
£12,000	That a grant of £4,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

St Barbe supports NFDC priorities through assisting with the wellbeing of those in the district, as well as attracting visitors. St Barbe provide a wide range of activities, for all ages, and is a vibrant community hub, working with schools, disabled groups, those suffering with dementia or autism, holiday programmes, and a Young Curator group. The Group were very supportive of the outreach programmes and the summer camps for children eligible for free school meals.

20	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Stronger Together Across Ringwood and Fordingbridge	STARF is a charity providing counselling to children & young people (CYP) and financial advice to families who children go to schools in Ringwood & Fordingbridge

Request	Recommendation
£15,000	That a grant of £4,000 be given.

Reason for decision

Stronger Together Across Ringwood and Fordingbridge work with schools who identify children/families in crisis, with a schools' hardship worker, they provide counselling services, food for vulnerable children, winter clothes, run an under 1's club, provide computers for schools, and workshops for families experiencing complex issues to become more resilient, and work with partner organisations.

21	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Step Up Safe Space	Step Up Safe Space's core mission is to empower the community by providing essential aid with dignity and care, while promoting reuse and recycling for a sustainable future. The organization focuses on delivering critical and emergency support, including fuel and food bank referrals and facilitating food bank referrals.

Request	Recommendation
£4,576	That a grant of £3,000 be given.

Reason for decision

Step Up Safe Space support households in financial hardship by attending community hubs to distribute essential household items, coordinating the school unform and stationary sets distribution, and support women in refuges, new mums and work with partners, including Basics Bank. The Group welcomes the plans to expand the service further.

22	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	The Branch	The Branch is a multi-purpose community hub in Fordingbridge, providing an inclusive and accessible affordable café which facilitates the provision of events, wellbeing and support.

Request	Recommendation
£10,000	That a grant of £3,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

The Group were supportive of community spaces which bring together communities and organisations to support residents and were encouraged by the plans to expand the opening hours and support available, including volunteer experience and developing further networks of partners.

23	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	The Honeypot Childrens Charity	Honeypot Childrens Charity support young carers aged between 5 and 12, including offering respite breaks at their home.

Request	Recommendation
£9,820	That a grant of £4,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

The Group were supportive of Honeypot and their plans to reach out to more young carers, a cohort who have very limited support available from other sources and often struggle with their own mental health, stress, anxiety and social isolation as a result of their caring responsibilities. The Honeypot Childrens Charity work with other organisations and work with schools to raise awareness and to utilise the building during term times.

24	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Thorneyhill Community Centre	The Thorneyhill Community Centre provides a meeting place for the whole community including families of Gypsy origin

Request	Recommendation
£8,000	That a grant of £3,000 be given.

Reason for decision

The Group recognised the importance of the centre in a rural and remote area as a meeting place for whole community to build relationships with community groups, as a community hub to access support, connect,

improve wellbeing and reduce isolation, in particular to the local gypsy and traveller community, and after school and holiday clubs.

25	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Totton Spiritualist Church	Totton Spiritualist Church supports the community, including the homeless, operate a foodbank, a Christmas toy appeal, a weekly bereavement café and warm space in winter. chat. We always open our door for everyone and anyone

Request	Recommendation
£3,000	That no grant is given

Reason for decision

The Group acknowledged and supported the work undertaken, but considered that there was duplication so when considering other applications and the budget available, and that funding could be utilised elsewhere to directly support organisations that benefit our residents on other areas.

26	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Yellow Door	Yellow Door provides a range of integrated specialist services, advocacy, and therapeutic support to those who are at risk of or who have been affected by unwanted Sexual Experience or Domestic Abuse. This may include anything from rape, childhood sexual abuse, to harassment or coercion. The group works with the police, schools, and other organisations within the district, such as the Handy Trust, provides impartial advice, and information, and runs the STAR project delivering bespoke workshops on the impact of drugs and alcohol, image-based abuse, and abusive relationships.

Request	Recommendation
£20,000	That a grant of £4,500 be given.

Reason for decision

Yellow door supports the Council's priorities by delivering outcomes for the community and working with others to achieve more. It works with families offering support to those affected by abuse, and running preventative education programmes to raise awareness of these issues, such as STOP Domestic Abuse. Demand for its services is increasing and Yellow Door worked with young people as part of its STAR project. Yellow

Door have extended their work in the district and have worked with over 700 students in a number of schools across the district. The group was pleased to note the organisation's continued involvement with the Safer New Forest and Domestic Abuse strategy, and that the grant is used solely for the benefit of the New Forest.

27	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Youth in Romsey	Youth in Romsey provide services for young people aged between 5 and 25, including counselling, therapeutic support, youth groups, sexual health, career advice, and support groups for those with anxiety or low self-esteem.

Request	Recommendation
£17,160	That a grant of £4,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

The Group were supportive of the work of Youth in Romsey and recognised the need to support young people, particularly with mental health, self-harm and bereavement, and young carers, and the increased demand and lack of support available. The Group were encouraged by the partnership working with organizations, and 7 local schools, and the further development of networks, and had assurances that any grant will be used to support residents of the New Forest.

This page is intentionally left blank

Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel – 21 January 2026

Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028

Purpose	For Review
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	This report sets out the results of the public consultation that was carried out following EMT Cabinet's decision on 2 April 2025. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 placed new duties on local authorities, requiring tier 2 councils (district & borough councils) to co-operate with the lead local authority (County Council), so far as is reasonably practicable. Section 84(4) of the 2021 Act requires persons exercising public functions, to have regard to the guidance in the exercise of those functions. The Act requires that the council must ensure that victims of domestic abuse and their children can access the right support in safe accommodation when they need it. New Forest District Council (NFDC), through the statutory functions of the Community Safety Partnership 'Safer New Forest', recognises Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) as a strategic priority in supporting victims/survivors and tackling offenders. NFDC's Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028 sets out to prioritise domestic abuse with 4 key priority areas: - Awareness & early intervention - Workforce development - High quality service provision - Multi-agency working and pathway development.

	The public consultation evidenced 94% (17 out of 18) of respondents supported the four priorities. The public consultation was reviewed by EMT on 25 November 2025 and findings noted and support the implementation of the strategy through scrutiny panel and Cabinet.
Recommendation(s)	**1. Notes the findings of the public consultation conducted on the NFDC Domestic Abuse Strategy and supports the implementation of the strategy through Cabinet.**
Reasons for recommendation(s)	The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 placed new duties on local authorities, requiring tier 2 councils (district & borough councils) to co-operate with the lead local authority, so far as is reasonably practicable. Section 84(4) of the 2021 Act requires persons exercising public functions, to have regard to the guidance in the exercise of those functions. The Act requires that the council must ensure that victims of domestic abuse and their children can access the right support in safe accommodation when they need it. The implementation of the Domestic Abuse Strategy outlines the council's commitment to meeting its obligations of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Dan Poole
Strategic Director(s)	Peter Matthew – Housing & Communities (Interim)
Officer Contact	Brian Byrne Service Manager – Community Safety & Support 023 8028 5089 brian.byrne@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. This report outlines the findings of the public consultation undertaken following Cabinet's decision on 2 April 2025 to commence the consultation process for the NFDC Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025–2028.

2. The report to Cabinet in April 2025 can be found here April Cabinet Report from pages 55-79.

Public consultation response and analysis

3. The consultation period commenced on 14 July 2025 and concluded on 10 August 2025.

4. The survey was made available through the New Forest District Council website, promoted via social media channels, media releases including local press, shared with residents via email communications and promoted by partners of the New Forest Domestic Abuse Partnership.

5. The consultation was conducted using the online platform 'Go Vocal', which was hosted and analysed by NFDC officers. The outcomes of the consultation are detailed in Appendix 2 and summarised in paragraphs 6–12 below.

6. A total of 18 responses were received. Appendix 2 provides a breakdown of respondent demographics, with 33% identifying as victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

7. In response to 'In supporting victims-survivors of domestic abuse, do you agree with the councils' priorities as outlined on page 11 and 12 of the domestic abuse strategy?' 94% of respondents expressed their support.

8. In response to the question regarding priority one: awareness and early intervention, 17 out of 18 respondents indicated agreement with the commitments outlined in the strategy.

9. With regard to priority two: workforce development, all respondents (100%) expressed full support for the commitments outlined in the strategy.

10. In response to priority three: high quality service provision 94% supported the commitments outlined within the strategy.

11. When considering priority four: multi-agency working and pathway development, 16 out of 18 respondents agreed with the proposed

commitments. Key themes emerging from the feedback included calls for improved coordination, greater involvement of survivors in governance, and enhanced long-term support for victims.

Corporate plan priorities

12. The Domestic Abuse Strategy supports the Corporate Plan 2024/28 priorities:

    People - Helping people in the greatest need and creating balanced, resilient, and healthy communities who feel safe and supported with easy access to services.

    - **Priority 1:** Helping those in our community with the greatest need.
    - **Priority 2:** Empowering our residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives.

Options appraisal

13. The Domestic Abuse Strategy has been considered and it is deemed appropriate and proportionate for NFDC to publish these documents as best practice.

14. The Domestic Abuse Strategy has been devised with regard to the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership (HDAP) strategy. Through alignment, this will enable effective delivery of combined commissioned and third sector support and prevent services.

Consultation undertaken

15. The New Forest Domestic Abuse Forum is convened by NFDC and chaired by the Community Safety Manager (safeguarding lead officer and deputy single point of contact for domestic abuse).

16. The forum consists of partners from domestic abuse commissioned services, Integrated Care Board through representation of midwifery and Primary Care services, Victim Support, Hampshire Constabulary, NFDC Housing Service and third sector services.

17. The Domestic Abuse Strategy was developed and reviewed by all partners of the forum, with views and recommendations incorporated into the draft Domestic Abuse Strategy.

18. Cllr Dan Poole, Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing and chair of the Safer New Forest Strategy and Delivery Group, following consultation has endorsed the strategy as outlined in the Foreword (Appendix 1).

19. **Financial and resource implications**

20. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 placed new duties on local authorities across England to ensure that victims of domestic abuse and their children can access the right support in safe accommodation when they need it.

21. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC – now MHCLG) provided new burden funding of £257 million allocated to local authorities for delivery of their duties, which included nearly £4.8m for Hampshire, and just over £70k for NFDC.

22. Hampshire County Council provided a Whole Housing Approach (WHA) Grant of £53,364 and working with Stop Domestic Abuse the council appointed a 2-year co-located specialist post to ensure that victim-survivors of domestic abuse can access appropriate support.

Legal implications

23. The implementation of the Domestic Abuse Strategy and recent Housing Landlord Domestic Abuse Policy outline the council's commitment to meeting its obligations of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Risk assessment

24. The work of officers is risk assessed in line with health and safety and lone working procedures.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

25. Whilst the report has no direct implications, this may present opportunities to contribute to the council's climate objectives.

Equalities implications

26. The proposed strategy improves the council's response to domestic abuse for victim-survivors. It is recognised that every individual will have unique needs and experiences and people will face additional barriers and concerns in seeking and accessing help and support, including those in marginalised groups. The strategy sets out the council's commitment to supporting and preventing domestic abuse.

Crime and disorder implications

27. The objectives of the Domestic Abuse Strategy are to support and protect victims-survivors of domestic abuse from the harm of domestic abuse.

28. Prevention of perpetrated domestic abuse behaviours is supported by a range of perpetrator programmes aimed at encouraging healthy, non-abusive relationships, aimed at preventing reoffending behaviours.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

29. The collection, retention and deletion of resident's data is governed by GDPR and associated guidance. All data is collected and maintained in line with the required legislation and shared in accordance with defined and established information sharing protocols and procedures.

New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications

30. The objectives as outlined within the strategy are to support all residents of the New Forest district area. As partners of the Safer New Forest Strategy and Delivery Group, the National Park work alongside statutory partners in keeping residents and visitors safe and free from harm.

31. The new approach to ensuring the housing service positively contributes to housing neighbourhoods may involve increased partnership working with the National Park Authority.

Conclusion

32. The Domestic Abuse Strategy sets out the council's strategic approach and priorities in increasing early awareness of DA thorough employee development and training. Placing the client at the centre, working in partnership with key agencies and commissioned support and prevent services to reduce the incident rate and harm of DA.

33. It is recommended following the public consultation that the NFDC Domestic Abuse Strategy is adopted and implemented.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – NFDC Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028
Appendix 2 – Public consultation result summary

Background Papers:

None

APPENDIX 1

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL



Domestic Abuse Strategy

2025 – 2028

Contents

p3 Foreword

p4 Introduction

p5 National context

p7 Local context – Hampshire

p9 Local context – New Forest

p10 Our strategic priorities

p11 Priority 1 & 2

p12 Priority 3 & 4

Foreword

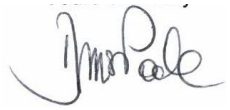
I am delighted to introduce the 2025-2028 New Forest Domestic Abuse Strategy on behalf of the council and our partners.

Domestic abuse can be one of the most harmful crimes in society with far reaching and long-lasting consequences impacting on both adults and children. Growing up in a household of fear and intimidation can impact health, wellbeing and development with lasting effects into adulthood. Within the New Forest we have various services, both statutory and voluntary, who work to support families and individuals affected by domestic abuse. In conjunction with the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership this approach strengthens and coordinates commissioned services, specifically for domestic abuse to ensure that survivors get the best and most appropriate support where possible whilst delivering a range of perpetrator programmes aimed at encouraging healthy, non-abusive relationships.

An estimated 2.1 million people (aged 16 years and over) experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2023 in England and Wales (1.4 million women and 751,000 men)[1]. Domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of age, disability, gender identity, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Home should be a safe place, where we can relax, nurture our families, invite our friends, enjoy our leisure time and a secure base to return to each time we go out into the world. However, for far too many, home is nothing like that because of domestic abuse.

No one organisation holds the key to taking effective action against domestic abuse, but it is recognised that domestic abuse is everyone's responsibility. This strategy builds on the work already undertaken in our district through effective partnership arrangements, including New Forest Domestic Abuse Forum and the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership.



Cllr Dan Poole
Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety & Wellbeing



[1] Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics

Introduction

New Forest District Council's Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028 sets out to prioritise domestic abuse, building on the multi-agency approach and response in working closely with our partners and commissioned services.

NFDC recognises the continued high prevalence of domestic abuse, acknowledging underreporting and the devastating impact it has on the individual, their family, community and wider society.

The development of this strategy sets out our vision, priorities and commitments with the overall aim of reducing incidents of domestic abuse to ensure all those affected receive appropriate support. This strategy fulfils our statutory requirements as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and also incorporates Violence Against Women and Girls Agenda (VAWG agenda) and the Serious Violence Duty 2022.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) placed new duties and functions on Local Authorities under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to provide support for domestic abuse survivors and their children residing in safe accommodation. The aim is to ensure victim-survivors of domestic abuse have access to the right accommodation-based support when they need it.

The social and economic costs of domestic abuse are estimated at £66 billion in England and Wales in year ending 2017. [2]

20% or 1 in 5 children have lived with an adult perpetrating domestic abuse.[3]

1 in 4 women and 1 in 6-7 men experience domestic abuse during their lifetime .[4]

Every 30 seconds a domestic abuse related call is made to the Police.[5]

[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-domestic-abuse
[3] https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/domestic-abuse/
[4] https://www.ncdv.org.uk/domestic-abuse-statistics-uk/
[5] https://www.ncdv.org.uk/domestic-abuse-statistics-uk/

National context

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Definition of domestic abuse[6]

The behaviour of a person ("A") towards another person ("B") is "domestic abuse" if: -

- A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
- the behaviour is abusive.

The behaviour is "abusive" if it consists of any of the following: -

- physical or sexual abuse;
- violent or threatening behaviour;
- controlling or coercive behaviour;
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse;

It does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

Domestic abuse most commonly takes place in intimate partner relationships, including same sex relationships. Intimate relationships can take different forms, partners do not need to be married or in a civil partnership and abuse can occur between non-cohabitating intimate partners. Young people can experience domestic abuse within their relationships although they may not self-identify as victims-survivors.

Domestic abuse may also be perpetrated by a family member: by children, grandchildren, parents, siblings or extended families.
Children are recognised within the Domestic Abuse Act as being victims-survivors of domestic abuse as they see, hear and experience the effects of

The Act creates the statutory presumption that victims-survivors of domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in the criminal, civil and family courts, putting in place additional protections to support people experiencing abuse.
The prevention of domestic abuse and the protection of all victims-survivors lies at the heart of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 ('the 2021 Act') and its wider programme of work. The measures in the 2021 Act seek to:

- promote awareness
- protect and support victims-survivors
- hold perpetrators to account
- transform the justice response
- improve performance

[6] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/part/1/enacted

National context continued.....

On average, 2 women a week are killed by a current or former partner in England and Wales.[7]

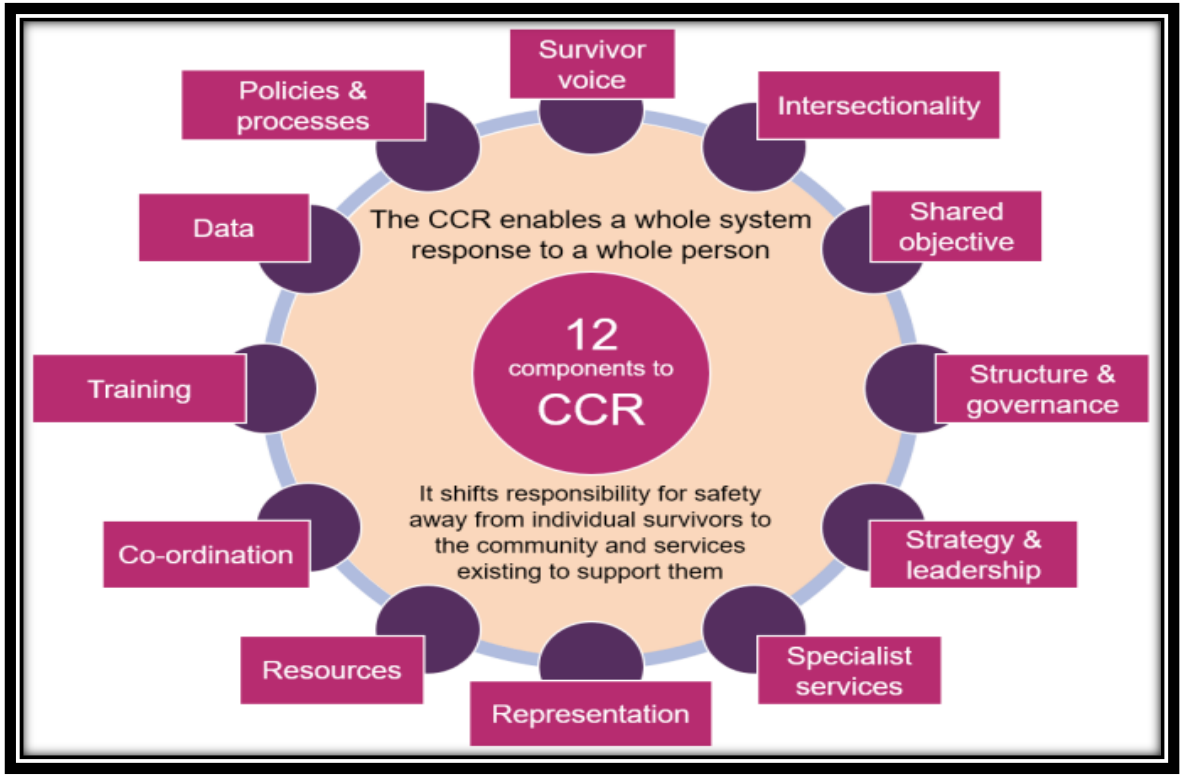
61% of young people demonstrating harmful behaviours are doing so towards their mother (2015). [8]

Domestic abuse is a largely hidden crime which goes unreported.[9]

More than one in four gay men and lesbian women and more than one in three bisexual people report at least one form of domestic abuse since the age of 16.[10]

To tackle and prevent domestic abuse, a Coordinated Community Response[11] (CCR) has been created. A CCR is an approach which brings together services, including health, housing, social care, education, criminal justice and communities.

The model below is widely accepted as best practice and one which New Forest District Council will be adopting. The aim is to ensure local systems keep survivors safe, hold abusers to account and prevent domestic abuse.



[7] https://refuge.org.uk/what-is-domestic-abuse/the-facts/#:~:text=Domestic%20abuse%20feels%20incredibly%20isolating,call%20999%20in%20an%20emergency.
[8] https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Safe%20Young%20Lives%20web.pdf
[9] https://www.ncdv.org.uk/domestic-abuse-statistics-uk/
[10] https://galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Galop_RR-v4a.pdf
[11] https://www.standingtogether.org.uk/what-is-ccr

Local context – Hampshire[12]

It is estimated that between **56,003 – 56,935** people over the age of 16 in Hampshire were subjected to domestic abuse in the last year 2023-2024.

40,063*

17,136*

19% of individuals (aged 16+) in Hampshire who are estimated to be subjected to domestic abuse have their experiences recorded as a crime by the police.

Between 2012-2023 there have been **10 Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)** in Hampshire.

Around **43,000** children aged under 18 have been exposed to domestic abuse between adults in their homes during their childhood in Hampshire.

18.9% of those estimated to be subjected to domestic abuse were aged between **16 and 24** years old.

*The total count here based on sex is slightly higher than the overall total as the prevalence % is based on England and Wales which is different demographically to Hampshire. This means that some demographic breakdown totals might not align with the overall total.

Of those crimes flagged by Police as being domestic abuse related during 2023-24 in Hampshire:

In Hampshire, the rate of DA flagged crimes per 10,000 population was **107** in 2023-24 compared to **119.6** in 2022/23. The number of DA flagged crimes have decreased by 1701 in the last year.

The highest rate of individuals who were victims occurred in those aged between **25-34** years old.

36% were an ex-spouse/ ex-partner relationship.

Domestic abuse flagged crimes, rate per 10,000 population by year 2016-2024 for Hampshire, broken down into district/borough

District	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Basingstoke and Deane	88.59	98.77	101.14	111.99	120.40	151.42	122.86	113.03	**113.88**
East Hampshire	62.51	66.59	65.21	75.24	84.86	101.29	89.82	88.02	**79.48**
Eastleigh	81.45	93.50	90.72	98.56	107.56	137.63	110.58	105.44	**103.51**
Fareham	66.37	75.39	75.98	80.29	96.91	116.49	104.45	92.66	**88.59**
Gosport	122.11	130.02	130.89	138.68	151.66	197.41	186.69	161.26	**152.37**
Hart	50.72	69.39	60.86	61.47	63.87	73.62	79.92	69.25	**66.32**
Havant	121.76	142.02	134.69	152.43	168.12	196.31	178.32	153.43	**156.04**
Isle of Wight	102.42	109.86	117.16	131.77	144.49	165.31	146.40	155.58	**134.19**
New Forest	70.01	71.83	84.66	92.33	98.04	115.95	110.70	100.96	**93.08**
Rushmoor	108.37	116.88	127.97	123.69	157.65	173.51	144.07	132.25	**135.79**
Test Valley	71.57	83.30	82.78	87.85	107.05	127.34	111.82	98.03	**96.61**
Winchester	65.88	61.84	70.25	78.71	82.33	103.78	100.51	80.94	**80.87**
Total	**83.46**	**92.06**	**94.39**	**102.42**	**114.20**	**137.10**	**122.04**	**111.38**	**107.37**

A decrease in the number of crimes since June 2023 can be seen. This does not suggest that there has been a decrease in the number of individuals reporting their experiences to the police. The decrease can be primarily attributed to changes in crime counting rules.

[12]Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership

Local context – Hampshire continued[12]

Commissioned services

Between April 2023 and March 2024, approx. **9,200** referrals to commissioned survivor-victim services.

89% were women.

Around **2,750** clients were supported.

51% were aged between 21-40.

36% of interventions received were 1-2-1 outreach services.

Most common types of domestic abuse experienced by clients:

- Emotional
- Psychological
- Physical

From April 20223 – 2024 an estimated:

969 clients were supported by sanctuary schemes.

169 clients were supported through the domestic abuse health advocate's programme.

256 clients were referred to the commissioned perpetrator service.

91% of those were men.

75% were aged between 25-44.

During this period, **276** clients left the service with **27%** of those leaving completing intervention.

Multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC)

Hampshire & IOW (HIOW) Constabulary has **12** monthly

Annually approx. **4,540** cases were discussed April 2023-March 2024.

92% of victim-survivors discussed at MARAC were female.

The HIOW Constabulary area had a lower rate of cases with LBGT+ victims compared to the England average when adjusting for the population who are LBGT+.

The HIOW Constabulary area continued to have a significantly lower rate of cases where the victim had a disability **(1%)** compared to the England average (10.3%).

The number of cases discussed within MARACs in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary area in 2023/24 was **33%** above the recommended number of cases.

[12]Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership Data

Local context – New Forest[13]

Overall, in the New Forest it is estimated that between **7,085 – 7,419** individuals were subjected to domestic abuse in the last year 2023-2024.

5.224 **2.165**

70.7% of those estimated to be subjected to domestic abuse were female.

Around **4600** aged under 18 have been exposed to domestic abuse between adults in their homes during their childhood in New Forest.

18% of individuals (aged 16+) in New Forest who are estimated to be subjected to domestic abuse have their experiences recorded as a crime by the police.

2.2% of those estimated to be subjected to domestic abuse were from ethnic minorities.

16.8% of those estimated to be subjected to domestic abuse were aged between **16 – 24** years old.

44.5% of those estimated to be subjected to domestic abuse are not in employment.

[13]Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership Data

In the New Forest, the rate of DA flagged crimes per **10,000** population is **101** was lower than the Hampshire average (107) in 2023/24.

The number of DA flagged crimes have decreased by **94** in the last year (2022-23).

In 2023-24 the highest rate of individuals who were victims occurred in those aged between **25-34** years old and was higher than the Hampshire average rate.

The highest rate of individuals who displayed abusive behaviours (suspects/offenders) also occurred in those aged between **25-34** years old and was higher than the Hampshire average rate for individuals who displayed abusive behaviours who were aged between **25-34** years old. **26.1%** of individuals who displayed abusive behaviours committed more than one DA flagged crime.

A trend with deprivation can be seen with the rate of DA flagged crimes being higher in the **20%** most deprived areas than the average across New Forest.

94

Number of non-fatal strangulation crimes between July 2022-Sept 2024.

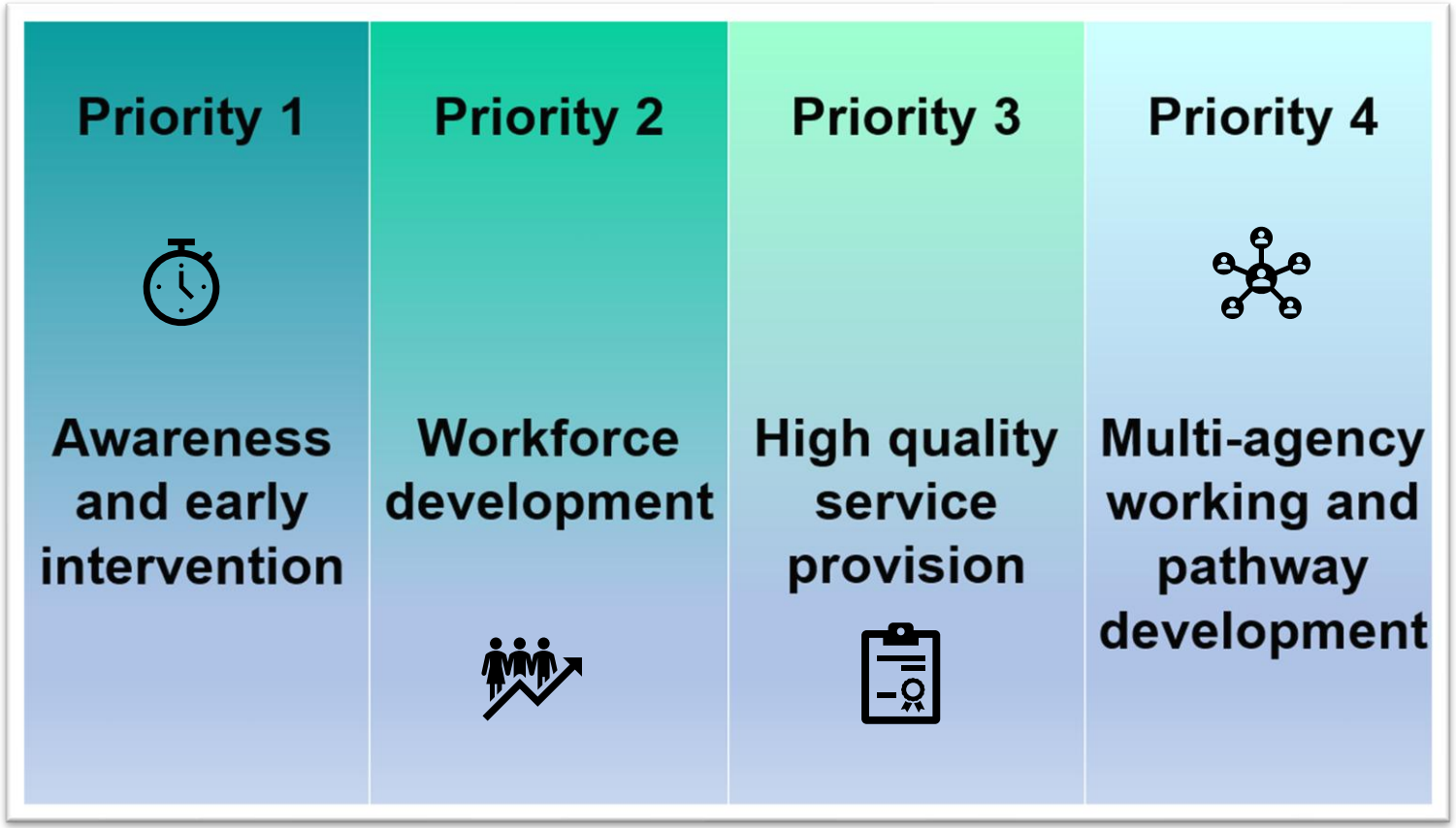
[13]Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership Data

Our strategic priorities

Our response is constructed around 4 key priorities which form areas of work for 2025-2028. New Forest District Council's aim is to;

Prevent and reduce domestic abuse across the New Forest and ensure that when people experience abuse, they can access the help and services they need.

The priorities are aligned to Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership and informed by the national Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and serious violence duty.



Priority 1 – Awareness & early intervention

New Forest District Council (NFDC) is committed to responding to domestic abuse effectively.

By raising awareness and creating pathways to support for both victim-survivors and perpetrators, NFDC aims to reduce risk and harm and prevent homicide in the most serious of cases.

Victims-survivors can experience difficulty in accessing support services when breaking free from a perpetrator of abuse. A person's needs can impact on and be influenced by other members of a family or their environment. We will take a whole family approach to prevention and early intervention services.

With victim-survivors at the centre, we will share information across service providers to enhance cross collaboration and targeted delivery. We will encourage staff to have professional curiosity to explore and understand what is happening more widely within a setting, highlighting other services who should be involved, and connections made. This requires a collaborative response by all agencies. We will ensure that staff have appropriate training and supervision and are supported in their work.

Our commitments

- Increase knowledge, and awareness of domestic abuse through targeted campaigns.
- Enhance information and advice available on domestic abuse in community settings such as GP surgeries, community centres.
- Deliver additional training to support NFDC employees to be able to identify and respond effectively to domestic abuse at the first opportunity.
- To work collaboratively, improving outcomes for victim-survivors of domestic abuse, including children.
- Through a strategic approach, identify gaps in service delivery, seeking additional funding opportunities.

Priority 2 – Workforce development

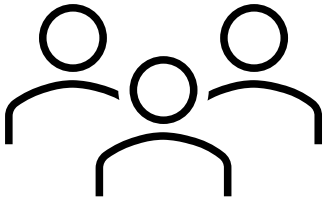
It is recognised that in addition to the mandatory safeguarding training already provided, all NFDC employees will participate in domestic abuse awareness training to enhance early identification and responses to domestic abuse.

Due to the variety of customer services delivered, departments across the Council will benefit from having a domestic abuse champion embedded within their service. The domestic abuse champions will support the dedicated Safeguarding Lead Officers, through enhanced training and awareness to support colleagues and customers.

The dedicated Safeguarding Lead Officers will seek to develop and enhance training opportunities for all staff with a focus on improving the customer journey and access to support.

Our commitments

- Provide a robust response to domestic abuse. All staff will be trained across NFDC departments to recognise, identify, and respond to those vulnerable to domestic abuse both within the community and workplace.
- Develop the knowledge and confidence for all domestic abuse champions. NFDC will ensure the champions receive a bespoke training.
- Domestic abuse champions to disseminate best practice whilst ensuring all reports are taken seriously and appropriate measures taken.



Priority 3 – High quality service provision

It is recognised that having the right support to protect and assist all victims-survivors of domestic abuse will make individuals and families safe, sooner.

As both a landlord and tier 2 local authority, NFDC Housing Services is at the forefront of delivering services to survivors of domestic abuse including providing early housing advice, housing options, prevention and homelessness services to survivors. We also engage with alleged perpetrators of domestic abuse, signposting to specialist support services.

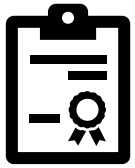
We also provide a fully funded additional security scheme, allowing victims-survivors to remain in their homes through enhanced security measures, should they choose.

The New Forest is served by two dedicated domestic abuse services commissioned by Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership (HDAP).

Stop Domestic Abuse supports and protects victims-survivors of domestic abuse and stalking, providing a range of services including, refuge and community-based support to adults, children and young people affected by domestic abuse.

Our commitments

- Through the collaboration between New Forest District Council and Hampshire County Council, we will ensure specialist domestic abuse safe accommodation and support needs of those accessing accommodation are met.
- Educate and develop a cohort of domestic abuse champions across the Council supporting and signposting colleagues and customers with accessing their most appropriate service provision.



The Hampton Trust delivers domestic violence perpetrator programmes within the criminal justice system. They also offer a range of community-based interventions for families experiencing domestic abuse.

Priority 4 – Multi-agency working and pathway development

Robust and joined up multi-agency processes are essential in responding to domestic abuse.

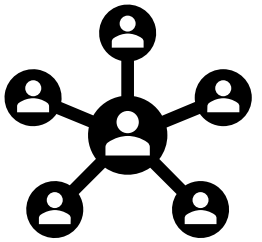
With victims-survivors at the core, proactive risk assessment and information sharing is essential when supporting and reducing risk to survivors and family members whilst providing access to perpetrator-based intervention programmes.

New Forest District Council chair and convene the New Forest Domestic Abuse Forum with the commitment of partner agencies from across the district. Participation includes, commissioned domestic abuse services, health, Hampshire Constabulary, Children & Adult Services, Victim Support with representation from youth services for LGBTQ+ community, Yellow Door, Community First, NFDC Housing and Homestart.

The Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership is a multi-agency group responsible for supporting the Hampshire County Council geographical area in its domestic abuse response, including the New Forest. The Board and Business Group are responsible in meeting its duty under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and for monitoring the partnership approach to all other areas of the Act.

Our commitments

- Ensure multi-agency working is embedded with clear pathways for agencies in accessing specialist domestic abuse support services.
- Providing a consistent response for victims-survivors, perpetrators, and family members.
- Establish a New Forest Domestic Abuse Strategic Board for effective monitoring and delivery of the domestic abuse strategy.



New Forest District Council
Appletree Court, Beaulieu Road, Lyndhurst, Hampshire SO43 7PA
newforest.gov.uk 023 8028 5000

This page is intentionally left blank

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

NFDC domestic abuse strategy 2025-2028 public consultation

July - August 2025

Online public consultation hosted by NFDC through the Go Vocal platform for public feedback to the NFDC domestic abuse strategy 2025-2028. 18 responses were collected in total during 14 July 2025 – 10 August 2025

The consultation period was open for a 4-week period from 14 July 2025 to 10 August 2025 for the public to provide their feedback on the proposed NFDC domestic abuse strategy. The online platform 'Go Vocal' was used for the consultation, created by NFDC officers.

The survey was made available through the New Forest District Council website, promoted via social media channels, and shared with residents via email communications.

Any member of the public unable to complete the survey online were sent either an electronic or paper copy and their responses were inputted to analyse the data.

Respondents were able to access three documents prior to completing the survey:

- NFDC domestic abuse strategy 2025-2028

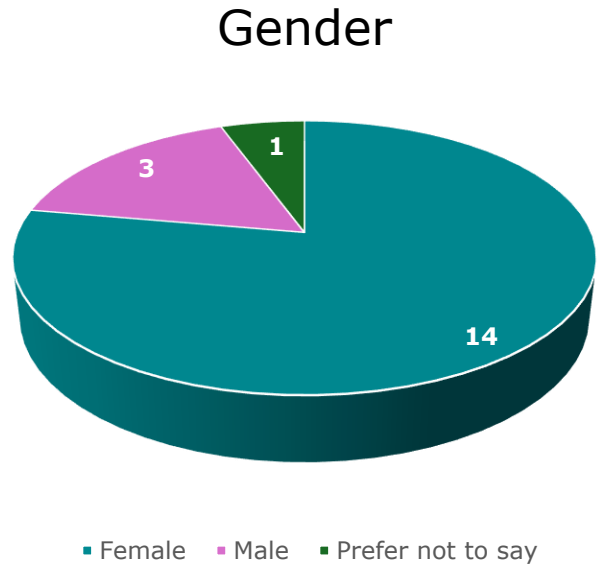


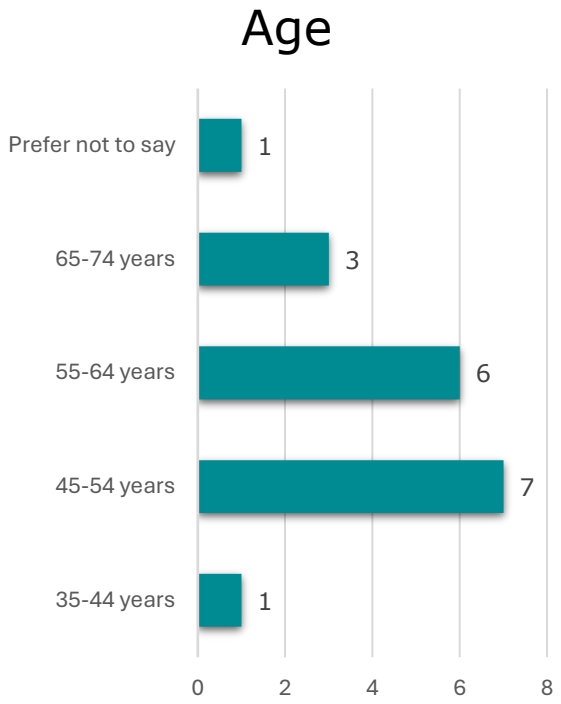
18 responses in total were recorded

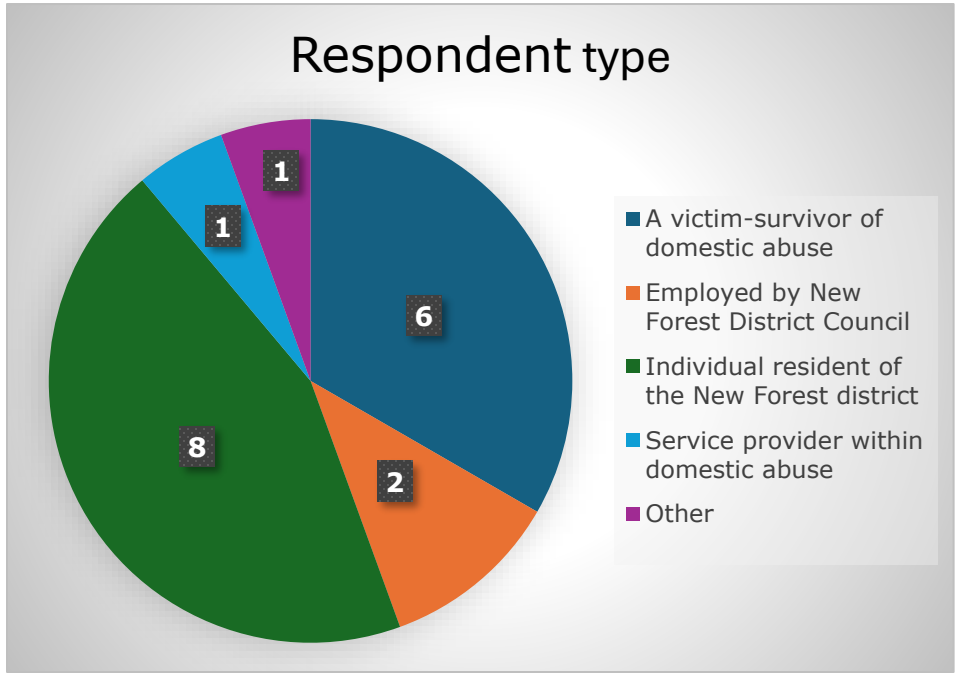
This document summarises the findings of the survey

Good spread of age groups over 35 -74 years responding to the survey, albeit no respondents under the age of 35. More females responded to the survey than males whilst 33% of those completing the survey are a victim-survivor of domestic abuse.

105



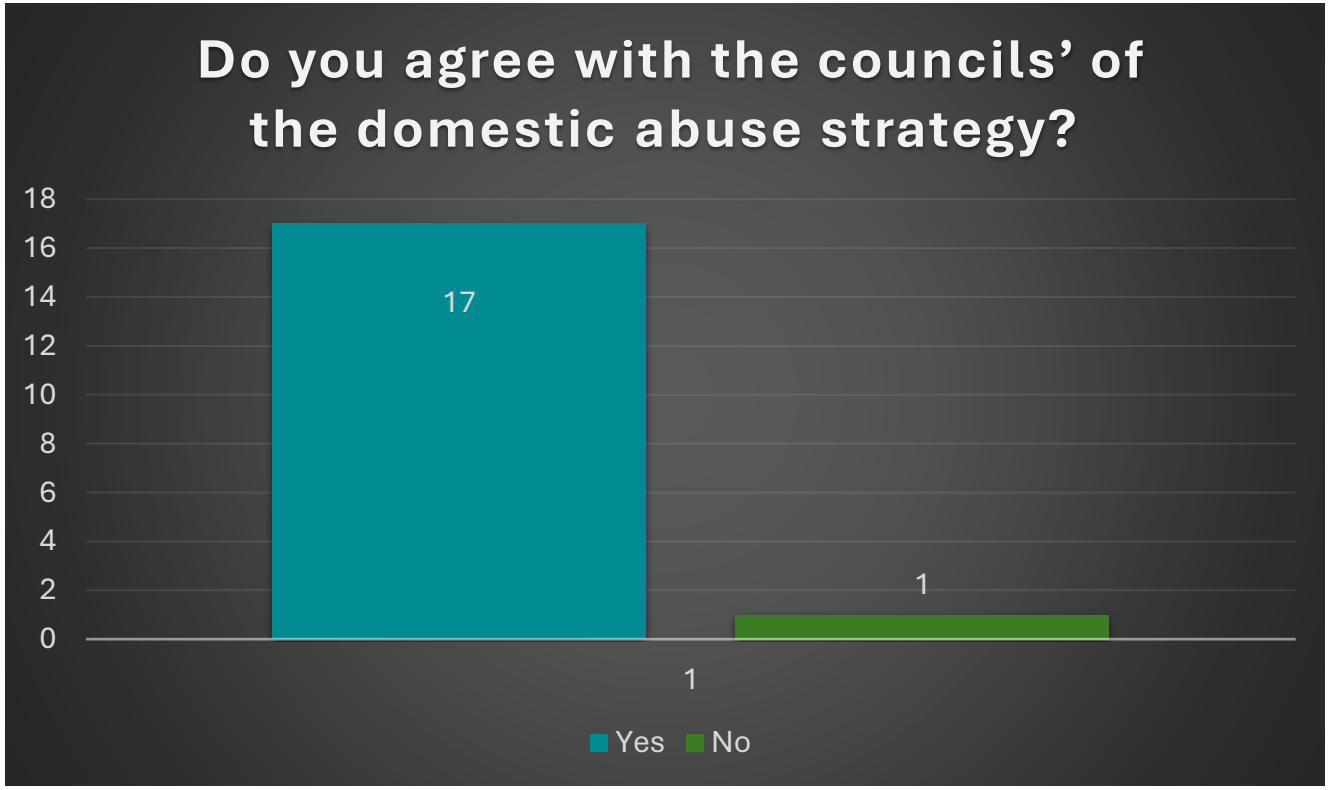




Average age: 56

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

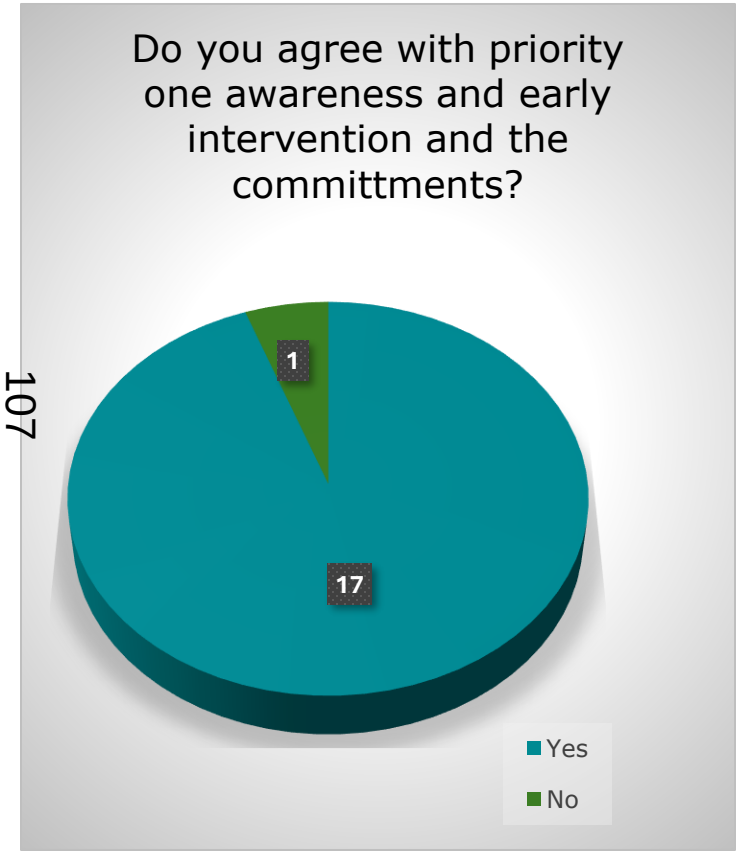
In supporting victims-survivors of domestic abuse, do you agree with the councils' priorities as outlined on page 11 and 12 of the domestic abuse strategy?



94% of respondents agreed with the priorities outlined within the strategy.

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

When considering priority one, awareness and early intervention, do you agree with the commitments outlined within the strategy?



Respondents most frequently emphasised the importance of early intervention and increasing awareness and knowledge about domestic abuse, both among the general public and professionals. Many highlighted that education should start early, particularly with children and young adults, to help them understand what constitutes a healthy relationship and to address domestic abuse as a learned behaviour.

Several responses stressed the need for more experience and expertise in recognising the effects of domestic violence, as well as the importance of identifying gaps in support and ensuring victims are not pre-judged or overlooked by services. There was also a call for greater awareness of less recognised forms of abuse, such as female-to-male abuse and the use of false allegations as a form of control, with a need to address institutional biases.

Some respondents noted that people often do not realise they are in abusive relationships and may interact with multiple agencies before abuse is identified. Others questioned the effectiveness of the commitments if victims are unwilling or unable to speak to council staff.

A few responses pointed out that strategies should not only focus on victims but also address the root causes by considering why perpetrators abuse in the first place. There was also mention of the need to avoid excessive bureaucracy.

Overall, there was broad agreement with the priority one commitments, with most respondents supporting increased awareness, early intervention, education, and improved support for victims, while also highlighting areas for improvement such as perpetrator-focused interventions and recognition of all forms of abuse.

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

When considering priority two, workforce development, do you agree with the commitments outlined within the strategy?



All respondents agreed with the priority two commitments, with several explicitly stating their agreement. There was strong support for the idea of domestic abuse (DA) champions, particularly for their potential to support victims at an earlier stage and to act as leaders within council departments. Some suggested that champions who are themselves survivors could be especially effective.

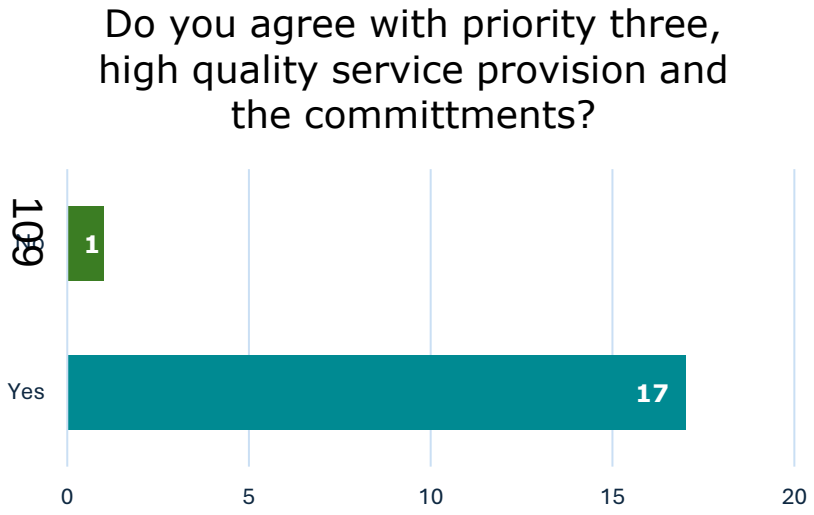
A recurring theme was the need for better and more widespread training for staff, ensuring they are equipped to recognise and respond to all types of domestic abuse, and to break down biases and prejudices. Some respondents emphasised that training should be appropriate to staff roles and that knowledge gained could benefit the wider community. There was also a call for multi-agency working and up-to-date knowledge for champions.

A few respondents expressed uncertainty about the practical impact of the commitments unless all victims interact with trained staff, and one highlighted the importance of a proactive workforce able to prevent and stop abuse. Signposting to appropriate support services was also mentioned as a benefit of better-trained staff.

Overall, the main trends were strong agreement with the commitments, widespread support for DA champions (especially those with lived experience), and a clear emphasis on comprehensive, role-specific training to improve early intervention and support.

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

When considering priority three, high quality service provision, do you agree with the commitments outlined within the strategy?



Most respondents emphasised the need for better and more accessible safe accommodation for domestic abuse victims, with several highlighting that current provision is insufficient and that victims often return to perpetrators due to lack of furnished, suitable housing. There was a strong call for improved support services, including high-quality, individualised support and better service provision from authorities.

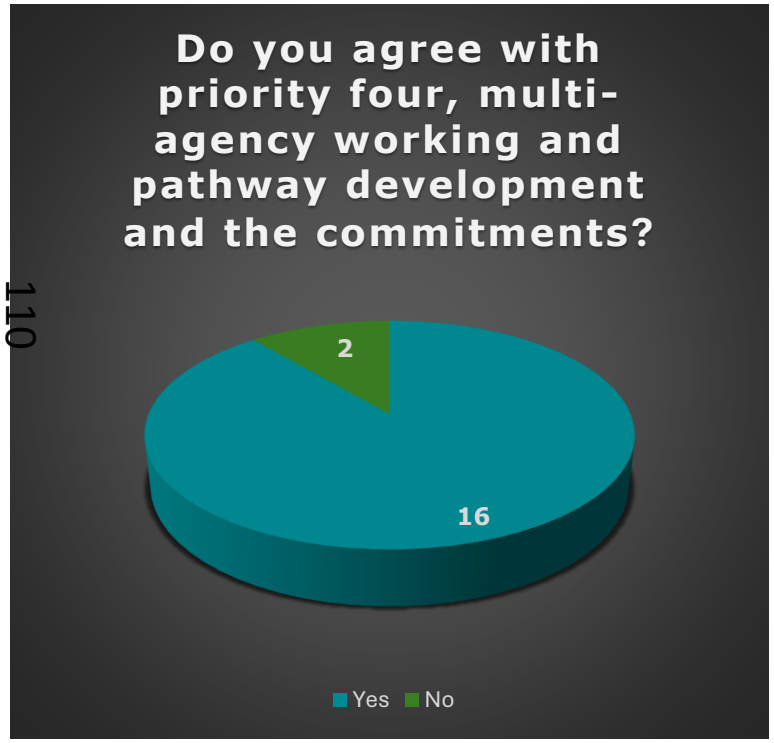
Many respondents stressed the importance of staff training to recognise signs of domestic abuse and provide appropriate support and signposting. The need for local authorities to take a more proactive, leading role rather than relying on charities, especially in coordinating housing, education, finance, and legal support for survivors who are often highly dislocated.

Security in accommodation was noted as crucial, as was the integration of legal and multi-agency approaches. Some respondents mentioned the value of community education and championing abuse-free relationships, with offers to support such initiatives.

Overall, while there was broad agreement with the commitments, respondents consistently called for more resources, better training, and a more joined-up approach to supporting domestic abuse victims.

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

When considering priority four, multi-agency working and pathway development, do you agree with the commitments outlined within the strategy?



Many respondents emphasised the importance of consistency and effective multi-agency working, with several highlighting that a strategic board could help ensure a coordinated response for both victims and perpetrators. However, concerns were raised about agencies' willingness to collaborate, with some noting that different organisations often do not work well together.

A recurring theme was the need for lived experience to be represented in decision-making. Multiple respondents suggested that survivors of domestic abuse should be included on the strategic board, as their insights are vital for shaping effective support and understanding the long-term impact of abuse.

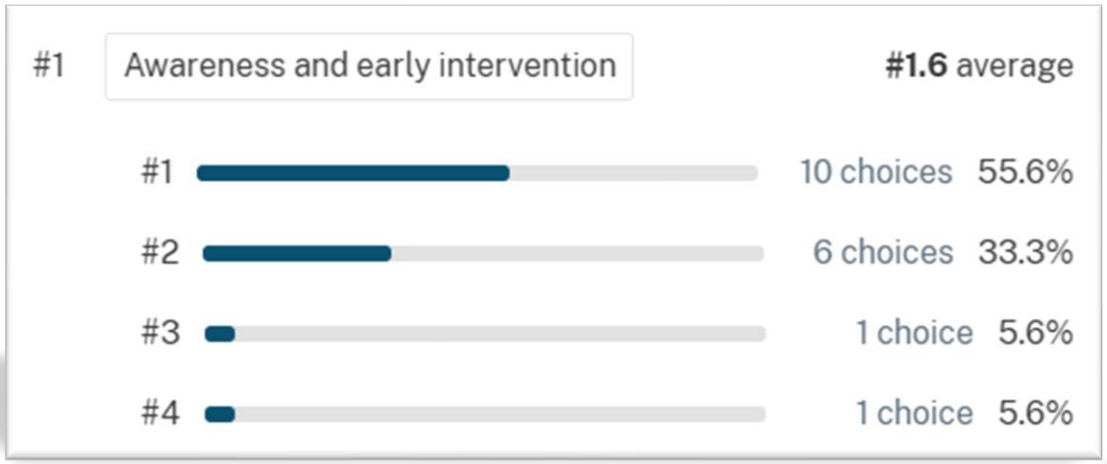
Several responses stressed the importance of ongoing, holistic support for victims beyond the initial crisis stage. There were calls for mentoring schemes involving former victims, and for better assistance with housing, education, employment, and navigating legal processes. Current support from charities was described as insufficient, and the need for practical help (including expenses for volunteers) was highlighted.

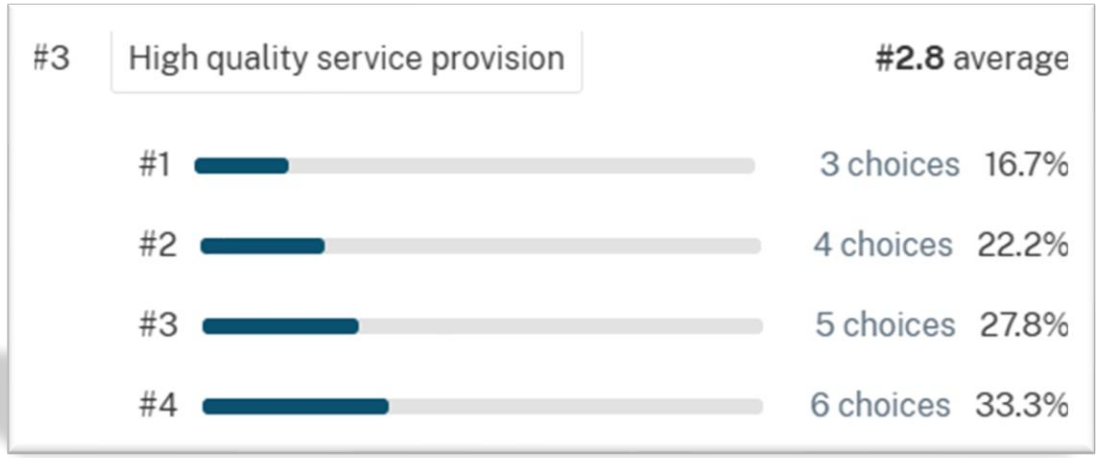
Some respondents simply agreed with the commitments or described them as comprehensive or good, while one expressed uncertainty about the value of creating a new board. There was also mention of the need for non-judgemental support and addressing root causes within families.

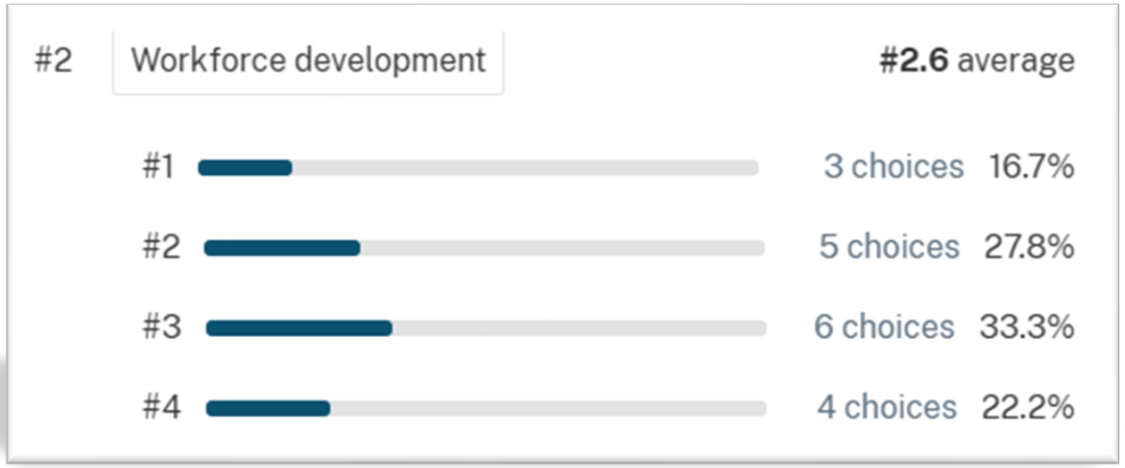
Overall, the main trends were calls for better coordination, survivor involvement in governance, and more comprehensive long-term support for victims.

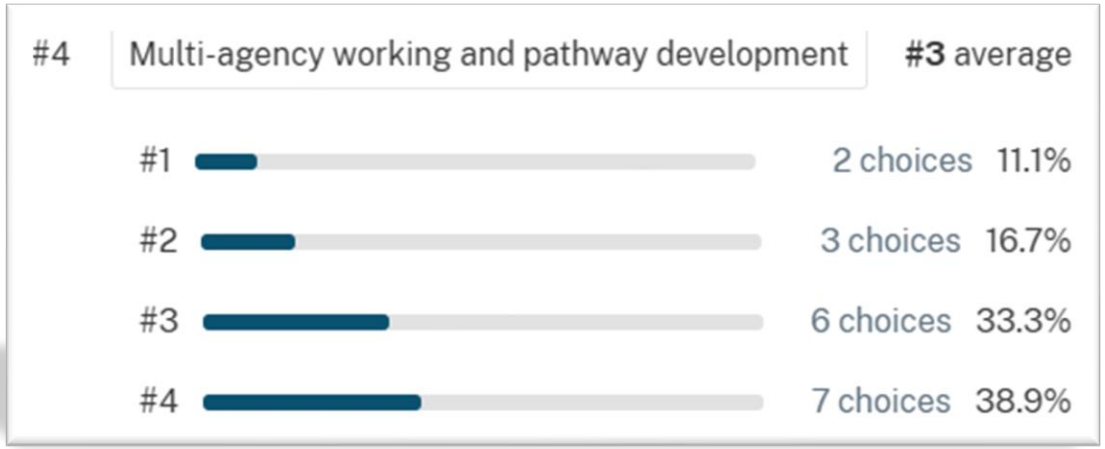
New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

Please rank the four proposed priorities in order of importance, 1 being the highest.









New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

This page is intentionally left blank

Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 21 January 2026

Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026/2031

Purpose	For Review
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	The Homelessness Act 2002 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 legislates that local authorities must carry out a homelessness review of their district at least every five years and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on that review. Following consultation with staff, external stakeholders and EMT it is recommended that the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel support the progress of the strategy through Cabinet, before public consultation and subsequent review. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be a public facing document highlighting the key pressures faced by NFDC and our plans to provide solutions to these pressures and the presentation of housing need in the area.
Recommendation(s)	**1. That the Panel considers the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy ahead of review by Cabinet.**
Reasons for recommendation(s)	The Housing Act 2002 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 legislates that local authorities must conduct a homelessness review and publish a strategy at least every five years outlining how they will prevent homelessness, provide suitable accommodation, support those affected and offer early intervention and cross-agency collaboration.

	The previous homelessness strategy ran from 2019 to 2023 and focussed heavily on addressing rough sleeping in the area. Although the strategy period expired many of the pressures and priorities remained the same and work continued to focus on homelessness prevention. The service and the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness took stock of a change in Government homelessness grant focus, the significant reduction in rough sleeping and increase in family homelessness to develop a new strategy, which will now progress through the Council's decision-making process and public consultation.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Steve Davies -
Strategic Director(s)	Peter Matthew – Housing & Communities
Officer Contact	Paul Thomas Assistant Director – Housing 023 8028 5725 paul.thomas@nfdc.gov.uk Christopher Pope Service Manager Housing Options and Tenancy Accounts 023 8028 5511 chris.pope@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. The Council's previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy was last published in 2018. This strategy has delivered key successes, including the increase in Housing Revenue Account owned temporary accommodation, and a significant reduction of rough sleeping from around 20 rough sleepers to an average of 1 at the time of the last annual count. These successes followed significant investment in the resident-facing support teams managing homelessness and in housing development and acquisition.

2. The landscape for homelessness in the district has changed significantly since 2018, and specialist consultants and data analysts were commissioned to produce a comprehensive review of homelessness and existing support services across the district. This review was undertaken during spring and summer 2025 with consultation held with all key stakeholders across the district including NHS, National Probation Service, Hampshire County Council (HCC) Care Leavers team, HCC social services, housing associations, NFDC staff, the Portfolio Holder Cllr Steve Davies and the Tenant Involved Group of NFDC tenants – see Appendix 2.

Key findings of the review (appendix 2)

3. Homelessness pressures in the New Forest have remained broadly stable in recent years. Statutory homelessness levels are approximately 8% higher than the Hampshire district average, but remain significantly below regional averages for both the South East and South West.

4. The district faces structural challenges, including:
    a. High house prices and limited availability of social housing.
    b. Low levels of supported housing provision.
    c. Areas of deprivation.
    d. Geographic constraints due to the National Park designation, which restricts new development opportunities.

5. The Council has achieved a near elimination of rough sleeping, contrary to national trends, through targeted outreach and specialist officers for mental health and ex-offenders.

6. Use of hotel style Emergency Accommodation (TA) has declined against national and regional increases, but emergency accommodation usage remains high. The Council has invested in high-quality, purpose-built or converted TA and operates a substantial private sector leasing scheme, contrasting with other authorities' reliance on nightly paid accommodation.

7. External agencies report strong collaboration and professionalism across all levels of the homelessness service.

8. A higher proportion of applicants seek assistance before becoming homeless, creating opportunities for prevention. Prevention success rates are slightly below average, with most cases resolved through moves to private sector tenancies rather than sustaining existing accommodation.

9. Relief performance is significantly below average, with only 23% of relief duties resulting in accommodation for six months or more.

Consequently, the Council accepts 40% more main homelessness duties per thousand households than the Hampshire district average.

10. The leading cause is eviction by friends or family, rather than loss of private sector tenancy, which is less prevalent than in other areas, but still remains a high second to family and friend evictions.

11. TA numbers remain higher than other Hampshire districts, and the Council continues to face challenges in reducing the number of households placed in emergency accommodation, including some for more than six weeks. The quality of TA is high, and the Council demonstrates strong management and responsiveness to provider issues.

12. Supported housing provision is limited, resulting in very few homelessness duties ending in supported housing placements.

13. Engagement with Hampshire adult and children's services is strong, though some service users report unmet support needs.

14. Net expenditure on homelessness has increased significantly in recent years, despite additional grant funding, though a reduction is budgeted for 2025/26.

15. The greatest opportunity for cost savings lies in reducing reliance on emergency accommodation through improved prevention, relief, and supply of settled housing.

16. External agencies unanimously commend the professionalism and responsiveness of the homelessness service.

17. Service user feedback is mixed: while some report excellent, person-centred support, others felt unheard or treated insensitively.

Areas to progress

18. The homelessness and rough sleeping review, which supports this strategy, identified a number of areas where we want to improve over the life of the strategy, including:

    a. A stronger housing advice offer for people who are not yet homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness.
    b. Better success rates for homelessness prevention, especially prevention which allows people to stay in their existing home.
    c. Earlier intervention to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping, including reducing the number of households who become homeless through eviction by family and friends.

d. More transparent communication to support people at risk of homelessness getting the information they need to help them, including online and in person.
e. Improving the proportion of people owed homelessness relief duty who have homelessness relieved successfully within 56 days.
f. Reducing the use of B&B to as close to zero as possible, including through more provision of better quality, more cost-effective TA.

Homelessness Strategy Priorities

19. The priorities outlined by the draft strategy are:

    a. Preventing and relieving homelessness

    b. Ending rough sleeping

    c. Investing in accommodation

    d. Providing support

    e. Working in partnership

20. Pages 16 to 22 of the strategy cover the key commitments of the housing service to meet the vision (pages 14 to 15) of the strategy. Pages 23 of the strategy document lists the key deliverable over the life of the strategy.

Corporate plan priorities

21. This strategy establishes our vision for delivering Homelessness and Rough Sleeping services within the New Forest and its contribution in achieving the ambitions of the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-28 including: -

    People Priority 1: Provide more quality, temporary accommodation for single people and households and work with our partners to tackle homelessness.

    Ensure our strategies, policies and working practices support necessary adaptations and other support that enables people to stay in their homes and to live independently.

    Support community engagement, working with partners and our town and parish councils to help resolve local issues, including those associated with the cost of living, homelessness and community, health, safety and resilience.

People Priority 2: Empowering our residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives.

Work with our communities to understand their needs and empower them to influence the services and outcomes of their area.

Consultation undertaken.

22. When carrying out the review of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping consultation was undertaken with stakeholders, including current and former service users, voluntary sector partners The Crossings, Youth and Families Matter, Citizens Advice Bureau, as well as Probation, Registered Social Housing Providers, NHS, HCC Care Leavers Team and Adult and Children's Services.

23. Housing Service staff participated in a homelessness workshop to feed their experience into the strategy, and the Tenant Involved Group met with the consultants and fed back their views on the services and the draft strategy.

24. Cllr Davies, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness was consulted on the development of the strategy.

25. Formal public and further stakeholder and service user consultation will take place to seek views on the proposed draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

26. Consultation methods will include:

    - Drop-in sessions at our community hubs, community days and coffee and catch-up sessions.

    - Face to face and virtual focus groups with residents, current applicants, registered providers and stakeholders.

    - Online survey

Financial and resource implications

27. The total budget for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping is £2.9 Million per annum comprising of several income streams. The Homelessness Prevention Grant of £1.3 million subsidises the costs of providing services across the district with additional contributions of £1.1 million from the Council General Fund, £438,450 from the Rough Sleepers Initiative as well as ad-hoc government payments and initiatives.

28. It is expected that the future Homelessness Prevention Grant from April 2026 will be reduced, however the settlement has yet to be confirmed at time of report publication.

Legal implications

29. Failure to provide effective homelessness advice and services can result in legal challenges through costly judicial reviews, compensation claims from affected individuals and increased scrutiny by central government leading to potential loss of funding or grants tied to performance.

30. There is a legal requirement for councils to carry out a homelessness review in the area at least every five years and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on that review as outlined.

Risk assessment

31. Failure to deliver adequate homelessness advice services can result in several consequences both legally and reputationally. Legal challenges through costly judicial reviews, compensation claims from affected individuals and increased scrutiny from oversight bodies such as Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and fines or reduced grants from central government can impact future service delivery.

32. Fragmented, or poorly coordinated, services pose a risk of harm to vulnerable individuals. Gaps in housing, health, and support provision can lead to delays, inconsistent care, and increased chances of safeguarding failures, health deterioration, and repeat homelessness. A joined-up approach with clear accountability and strong partnerships is essential to mitigate these risks.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

33. Whilst the report has no direct implications, it will align with local climate action plans, biodiversity strategies, and net-zero goals. Work with environmental agencies, health services, and housing providers to ensure joined-up responses.

Equalities implications

34. This policy includes the key components to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure diverse needs are considered including protected characteristics, language barriers, and additional support needs and assess whether all residents have fair access to, and equitable outcomes of, homelessness services.

35. The main considerations for the Equalities Impact Assessment are ensuring fair and inclusive access to housing and support, removing barriers such as language, disability, and digital exclusion, providing suitable accommodation for vulnerable groups, and integrating health

and wellbeing services. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy addresses risks for households, young people, victims of domestic abuse, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those with complex needs, while committing to safeguarding measures, accessible communication, and robust data monitoring to prevent discrimination and promote equality through coordinated service delivery.

36. A full review of equalities implications assessment has been undertaken. Refer to Appendix 3

Crime and disorder implications

37. Homelessness can sometimes be associated with visible street activity that some communities perceive as anti-social, such as rough sleeping in public spaces or substance use. This strategy aims to provide compassionate support for individuals experiencing homelessness, while proactively identifying people sleeping rough and responding promptly on reports from the public.

38. There is a common link between homelessness and petty crime. The strategy commits to strong partnership working with police, social services, specialist support and the community safety team/partnership to reduce the risk of offending including any safeguarding concerns. Homeless support staff also provide support for households to understand how behaviours impact others and to help reduce ASB.

39. A risk-based approach is used for placements of households into TA to ensure community cohesion is at the forefront of decision making.

40. Staff are trained on early intervention and safeguarding.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

41. The collection, retention and deletion of data is governed by GDPR and associated guidance. All data will be collected and maintained in line with the required legislation.

42. Data will be shared only when necessary to fulfil statutory homelessness duties under the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Information may also be shared where there is a legal obligation to do so (e.g. safeguarding concerns or referrals), where it is in the public interest to prevent serious harm or protect vulnerable individuals, or where the individual has provided explicit consent, particularly for non-statutory referrals or support services.

New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications

43. Priority 5 of the draft strategy sets out our proposal of working in partnership, including with the National Park Authority.

44. The new approach to ensuring the housing service positively contributes to housing neighbourhoods may involve increased partnership working with the National Park Authority, whilst partnership work with the NPA and Forestry England supports work with rough sleepers and vulnerable people in remote settings.

45. **Conclusion**

    This draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy consolidates findings from the comprehensive review of homelessness services and sets out a five-year vision focused on preventing homelessness at the earliest opportunity and strengthening collaboration with the voluntary and statutory sectors across the district. It is recommended that EMT supports progress of the draft strategy through the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Cabinet, before public consultation and subsequent review.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
Appendix 2 – Review of Homelessness in New Forest.
Appendix 3 – Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Papers:

None.

This page is intentionally left blank

APPENDIX 1

Draft 1

New Forest Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2031

Contents

Foreword 3

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in New Forest 4

- National context 4
- Homelessness pressures in New Forest 6
- Rough Sleeping in New Forest 8
- Duty to Refer 9
- Temporary Accommodation 9
- Areas of success 10
- Areas to progress 11

Corporate Context 12

- The New Forest District Council Corporate Plan 12

Our Vision 13

- Rough Sleeping 14
- Family Homelessness 13
- Early Intervention and Prevention 13
- Meeting health and support needs 13
- Accommodation 14
- Communication and partnership 14

Preventing and relieving homelessness 15

- Context 15
- What we will do 15

Ending Rough Sleeping 16

- Context 16
- What we will do 17

Investing in Accommodation 17

- Context 17
- What we will do 17

Providing Support 18

- Context 18
- What we will do 19

Working in Partnership 20

- Context 20
- What we will do 20

Monitoring and review 21

Foreword

I am proud to introduce this new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for New Forest District Council. It is based on our past achievements and future ambitions including almost putting an end to rough sleeping since 2018, whilst improving our temporary accommodation and support services, and remaining committed to tackling homelessness in all its forms and preventing its causes going forward.

Ending rough sleeping in the District was the ambition of our existing strategy produced back in 2018. This new strategy updates our position, highlights our successes, and strengthens our ambition to further improve our proactive, compassionate, and sustainable approach to homelessness. It builds on our long-standing commitment to tackling homelessness and reflects the evolving challenges and expectations placed on local authorities like ours at the present time.

It is anticipated that Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the proposed Hampshire Mayoral Strategic Authority may start to reshape our homelessness service delivery from 2027. Nevertheless, we are committed to work collaboratively and seek opportunities to ensure homelessness priorities are embedded in any new unitary council structure created by LGR whilst remaining responsive to any future government policy changes.

Our mission to ensure that every resident has access to safe, secure, and affordable accommodation, and that homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring remains and will live-on through this strategy. We identify our priorities as prevention first, rapid responses to homelessness and rough sleeping, and providing timely personalised assistance to support households at risk of homelessness.

Despite uncertainty, NFDC remains focused on delivering secure, warm, and affordable homes, preventing homelessness, and supporting residents through life's challenges. This strategy aims to protect the most vulnerable, strengthen communities, and create a foundation for long-term housing stability.

We recognise that Homelessness is a complex and deeply personal issue. Behind every statistic is a story of hardship, resilience, and hope. Our strategy recognises that preventing homelessness is not just about housing. It's about working together across services, sectors, and neighbourhoods to build a safety net that catches people before they fall.

As Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities, I am proud to present our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. This document sets out our commitment to ensuring that every resident has access to safe, secure, and sustainable accommodation, and that no one in our community is left without support.

We know that temporary accommodation, while essential in crisis situations, must be a stepping stone—not a destination. That's why this strategy focuses on early

intervention, wraparound support, and long-term housing solutions that restore stability.

I want to thank our dedicated officers, partners, and voluntary organisations who work tirelessly to support those at risk of homelessness. Their compassion and commitment are the foundation of this strategy.

Together, we can create a future where homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring—and where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Cllr Steve Davies
Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in New Forest

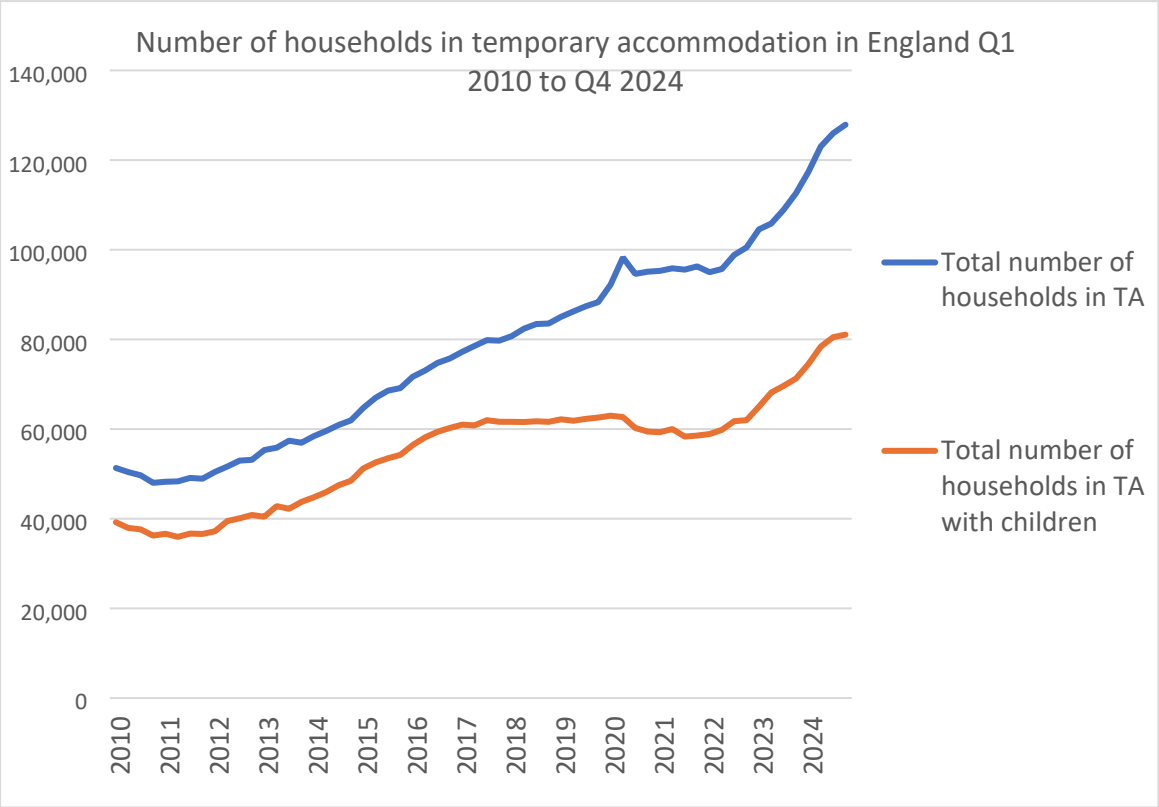
National context

This five-year strategy comes at a time when statutory homelessness has been rising nationally and the number of households in temporary accommodation are at record levels.

178,560 households were owed a homelessness relief duty in England during 2023/24, up 12.3% from 2022/23 and up 27.01% from 2019/20

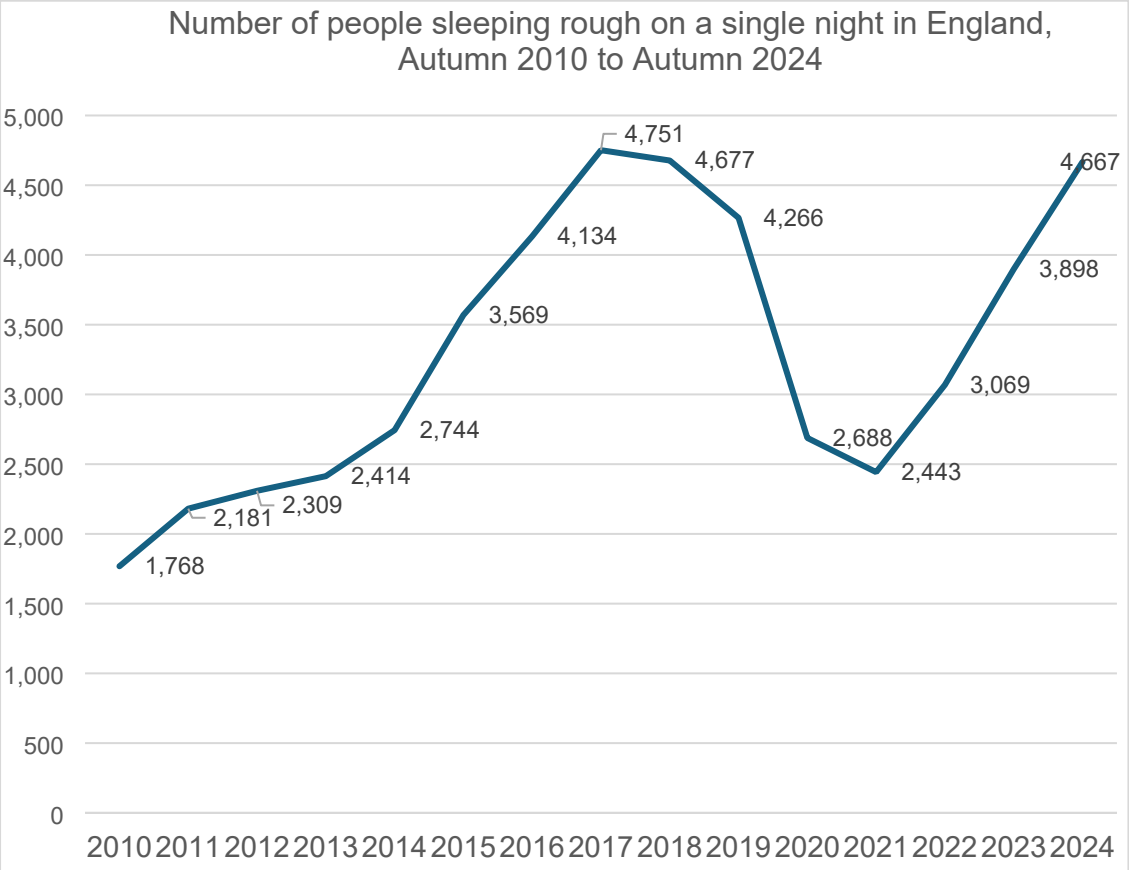
146,430 households were owed a homelessness prevention duty in 2023/24, up 3.1% from 2022/23 but down 1.9% from 2019/20, the last year before COVID.

In December 2024, 127,890 households were accommodated in temporary accommodation (TA), the highest ever figure, up by 13.6% since December 2023 and 44.8% since December 2019. The December 2024 figure includes 165,510 children in TA.



The latest rough sleeping snapshot statistics show that in Autumn 2024 there were 4,667 individuals recorded as sleeping rough on a single night in England, up 19.7% from 2023 and up 91% since 2021. The 2024 figure equates to an estimated 8.1 people sleeping rough on a single night in England per 100,000 population. The

number of people sleeping over the course of a month is estimated by local authorities to be roughly twice the single night figure[1].



It is too early to say what the impact of the new government from May 2024 will be on homelessness.

A national homelessness strategy is expected before the end of 2025, which may bring radical changes to national homelessness policy.

There has already been a significant increase in local authority homelessness funding and the promise of much greater capital funding for social housing. The total national Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) has increased over a number of years and rose significantly from £440m in 2024/25 to £633m in 2025/26, including a significant uplift in HPG funding for New Forest.

The Renters' Rights Act became law in 2025 and will be implemented from 2026 onwards. This will make it significantly harder to evict private rented sector tenants and over time to improve accommodation standards.

The new regulations on supported housing, implementing the Supported Housing Act 2023, are also expected to come into effect in 2026.

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rough-sleeping-data-framework-january-to-march-2025

National government introduced the Ending Rough Sleeping Data Framework[2] from December 2023 which is designed to move beyond the single-night snapshot by tracking whether rough sleeping is:

- Prevented
- Rare
- Brief
- Non-recurring

Local authorities report quarterly on five key indicators showing progress in each of these areas.

However, the fundamental causes of increased homelessness and rough sleeping, such as the lack of affordable accommodation available in both the social rented and private rented sectors, do not look set to improve in the near term, with Local Housing Allowance rates frozen in 2025/26 while rents continue to rise, and with the decades long growth in the private rented sector having come to a halt.

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Action Act from April 2018 has widened the legal responsibilities on local authorities to provide help to prevent and relieve homelessness for a larger group of households, including in some cases, people approaching from outside the local area.

Homelessness pressures in New Forest

The independent homelessness and rough sleeping review carried out to support the development of this strategy highlights the great success of New Forest in achieving a dramatic reduction in rough sleeping and reducing its use of temporary accommodation. In both cases this has been achieved against rising national trends.

The review also makes clear that the team at New Forest District Council have a high level of professional integrity, strongly recognised by partner agencies, and are administering homelessness duties fully and proportionately within both the letter and spirit of the law.

The geography and demographics of New Forest are quite unusual compared to national and regional averages. Much of the district is within a National Park, which places significant restrictions on new housing development. The level of owner

[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-rough-sleeping-data-framework-december-2023/ending-rough-sleeping-data-framework-december-2023?utm_source=chatgpt.com

occupancy in New Forest is high at 75%[3] with the proportion of private rented accommodation at 15% and social housing stock lower than average at 11%.

However, the Council has retained its social housing stock and the common allocations policy in New Forest allocates to 100% of social and affordable rented accommodation in the district, including Registered Provider (RP) accommodation.

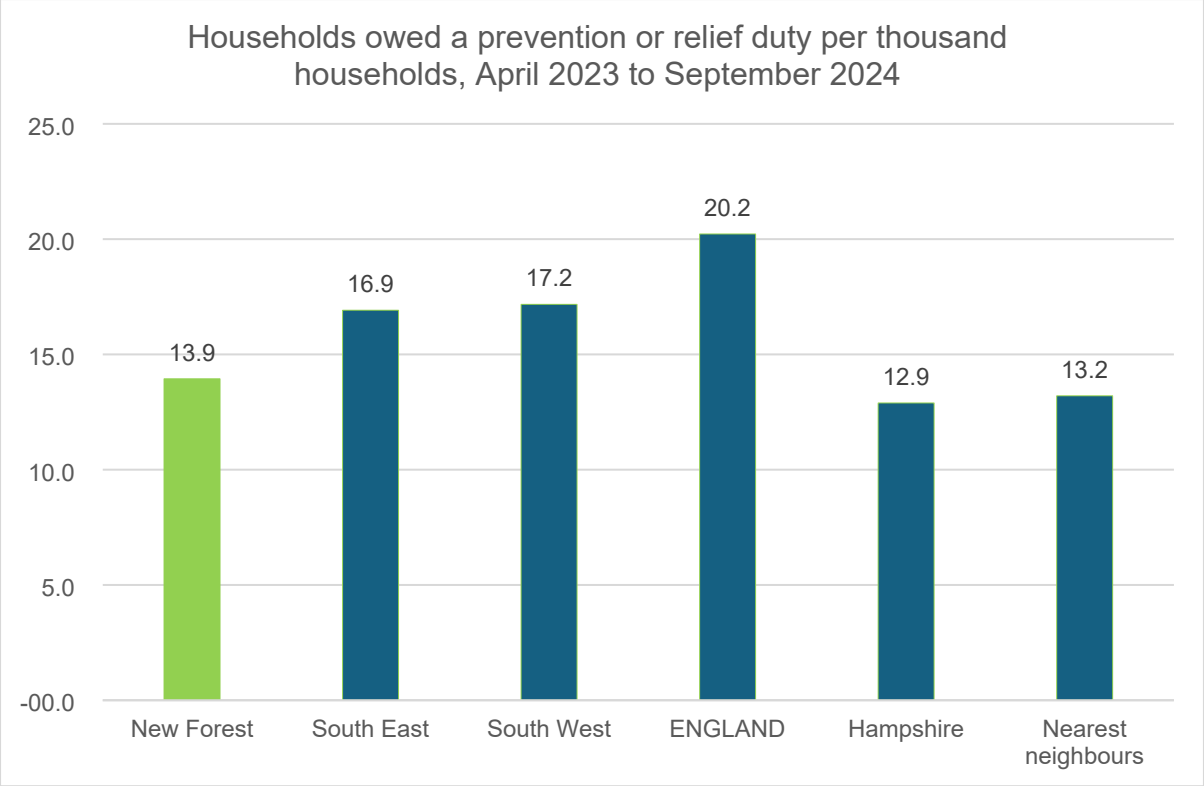
Housing affordability in New Forest is low, as measured by the ratio of median house prices to median earnings, with a ratio of process to median earnings of 10.6 in 2024, compared to an average of 8.9 for the Hampshire district authorities and 7.7 for England as a whole.

In the period April 2023 to September 2024 1,380 households in New Forest were assessed to establish if they were homeless or at risk of homelessness, with 1,135 households (82%) assessed as being owed a homelessness prevention duty due to risk of homelessness within 56 days or a relief duty due to homelessness at the time when they approached the council.

Compared to local authorities in Hampshire, regionally and nationally. New Forest had less households owed a prevention or relief duty per thousand households living in the area than England, the South East or the South West. However, New Forest had slightly more prevention and relief duties than the Hampshire district average and the average from a group of 'nearest neighbour' local authorities with similar demographics to New Forest based on Office for National Statistics (ONS) data[4]

[3] Based on 2021 data: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/subnationaldwellingstockbytenureestimates?utm_source=chatgpt.com

[4] There is a more detailed explanation of this in the New Forest Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review



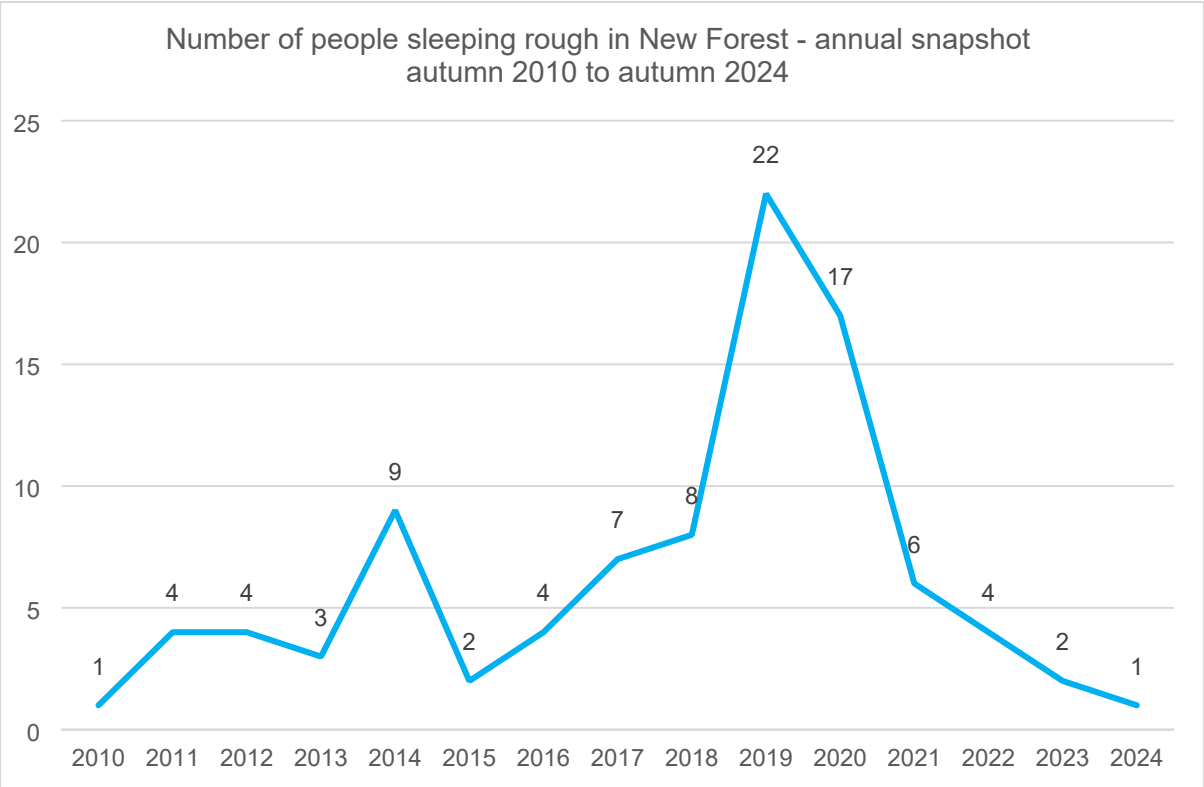
Compared to other local authorities, New Forest had proportionally more people approach them when at risk of homelessness within 56 days and less people approach when already homeless. This is positive as it offers a greater opportunity to prevent homelessness.

Although, as in most of the country, homelessness as a result of loss of a private sector tenancy has been increasing, the trend has been less marked in New Forest than in many other areas, with the largest cause of homelessness in New Forest being the result of family and friends no longer being willing or able to accommodate (37% of relief duties and 33% of prevention duties) followed by loss of a private sector tenancy (13% of relief duties and 38% of prevention duties), with homelessness as a result of domestic abuse being the third most common cause (20% of relief duties and 6% of prevention duties). Homelessness a result of leaving an institution with no accommodation available (prison, childcare, or hospital) was also important (10% of relief duties and 4% of prevention duties).

Compared to other areas, the biggest difference is that New Forest had proportionally lower homelessnes risk from the ending of a private sector tenancy and higher risk from friends and family evictions.

Rough Sleeping in New Forest

Following a spike in rough sleeper numbers in 2020, there has been a considerable decline in Rough Sleeping in New Forest, with only one person sleeping rough on a single night in Autumn 2024.



The fall in rough sleeping in New Forest contrasts with an increase nationally and regionally.

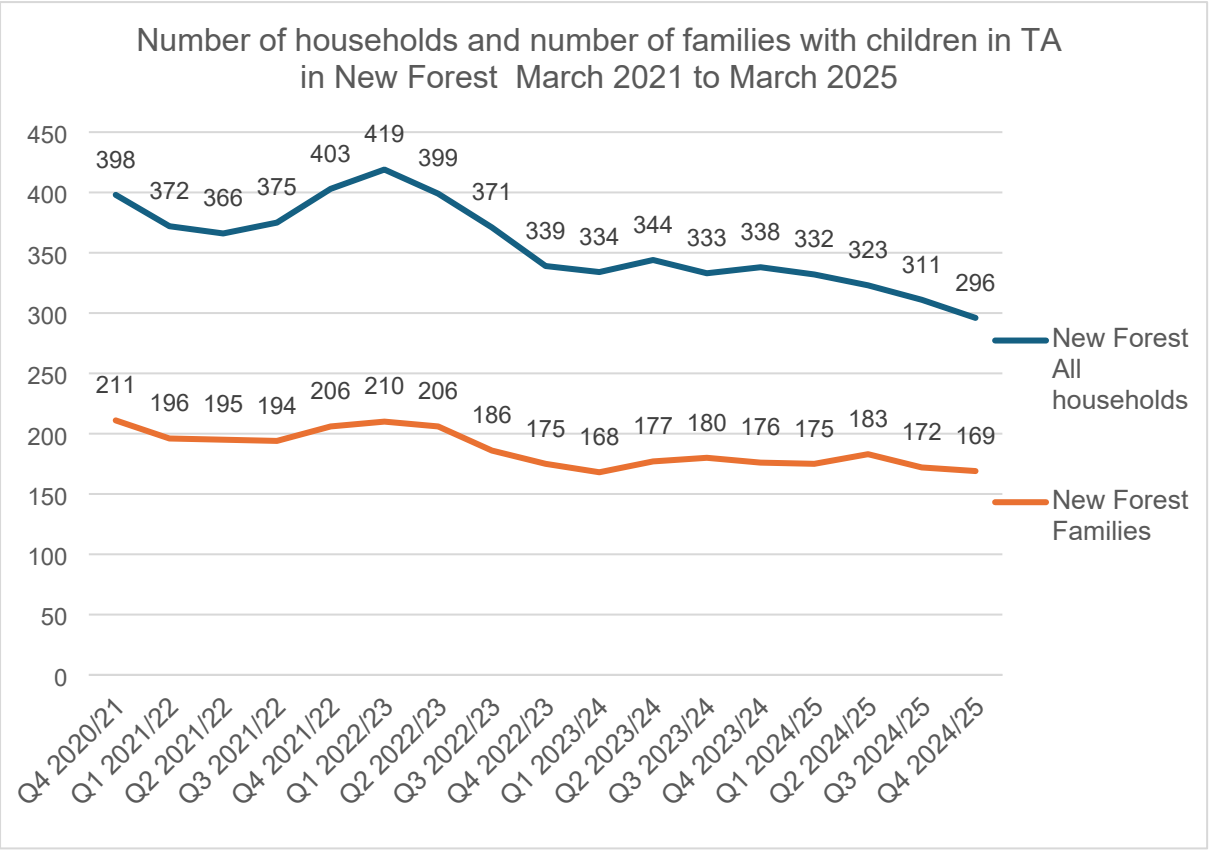
The fall in rough sleeping is due to Council's proactive work in responding swiftly and professionally to any reports of rough sleeping in the district, the development of specialist temporary accommodation for people with experience of street homelessness, and good partnership working with Hampshire social services, prison and probation services and helath services.

Duty to Refer

The introduction of the Duty to Refer in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, has been a success in New Forest, with 10% of all homelessness duties accepted by the Council being as a result of referrals from an organisation included in the Duty to Refer legislation, significantly higher then the national average. The highest number of DTR referrals come from the National Probation Service, children's social aervices, and hospital in patient services.

Temporary Accommodation

The use of temporary accommodation to accommodate homeless households in New Forest has been falling since June 2022, with 296 households in TA in March 2025, including 169 families with children.



This fall is against the national trend of rising TA over the period, but the number of households in TA in New Forest is still high compared to the hampshire district average.

Almost half of the TA New Forest uses is private sector leased accommodation, with a further 28% in properties owned by the council. Less than 1% of New Forest's TA is outside the district. New Forest has a much lower proportion of nightly paid accommodation than most neighbouring authorities.

However in December 2025, New Forest still had 64 households in nightly paid Bed & Breakfast accommodation of whom 44 were families, at an estimated net cost to the council of around £1.4 m in 2025/26. Based on 2024/25 financial data, the cost to the council's budget of a household in B&B is around 10 times the cost of a private sector leased placement.

Despite the demands, the number of households in B&B is expected to reduce during 2026 while operational procedures , resoruces and structure are reviewed.

Areas of success

New Forest has been extremely successful in recent years in reducing rough sleeping to almost zero. Rough sleeping in New Forest has for the most part become rare, brief and non-recurrent. However, there is no room for complacency. This has

been achieved due to ongoing hard work by the Council and its partners.

The Council has managed to reduce the use of temporary accommodation against an increasing national trend, with TA down 25% in the 3 years to March 2025, compared to an increase in TA of 38% nationally over the same period.

New Forest has also improved the quality of its TA including through the development of new, council owned TA and improved accommodation standards in private sector leased accommodation.

The Council also enjoys an excellent reputation with Hampshire Children's Services, Adult Services, the Probation service, local housing associations and voluntary sector organisations for strong partnership working and the care and professionalism with which it supports people who have experienced homelessness.

There are very low rates of homelessness from the loss of social housing tenancies in New Forest and there is effective use of the Duty to Refer.

Areas to progress

The homelessness and rough sleeping review, which supports this strategy, identified a number of areas where we want to improve over the life of the strategy, including:

- A stronger housing advice offer for people who are not yet homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness
- Better success rates for homelessness prevention, especially prevention which allows people to stay in their existing home
- Earlier intervention to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping, including reducing the number of households who become homeless through eviction by family and friends
- More transparent communication to support people at risk of homelessness getting the information they need to help them, including online and in person.
- Improving the proportion of people owed homelessness relief duty who have homelessness relieved successfully within 56 days
- Reducing the use of B&B to as close to zero as possible, including through more provision of better quality, more cost-effective TA

Corporate Context

The New Forest District Council Corporate Plan

This strategy comes under the strategic priorities for New Forest as set out in the New Forest Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028[5]. The vision expressed in the plan is:

"To secure a better future by supporting opportunities for the people and communities we serve, protecting our unique and special place, and securing a vibrant and prosperous New Forest"

The Corporate Plan has three priority areas:

People: Helping people in the greatest need and creating balanced, resilient, and healthy communities who feel safe and supported with easy access to services.

Place: Delivering growth, opportunity and services that shape our place now and for future generations, within a unique environmental context, to ensure we remain a special place to live, work and visit.

Prosperity: Promoting a strong local economy that delivers its inclusive aspirations through effective partnerships, attracting investment, and increasing skills and employment opportunities.

All three themes are important to delivering a successful homelessness and rough sleeping strategy.

Key commitments in the corporate plan, which are directly relevant to this strategy include:

- Provide more quality, temporary accommodation for single people and families and work with our partners to tackle homelessness.

- Support community engagement, working with partners and our town and parish councils to help resolve local issues, including those associated with the cost of living, homelessness and community, health, safety and resilience.

- Provide increased numbers of affordable homes by 2026 and explore innovative models with landowners, partners and developers to enable sustainable and affordable homes for the future.

[5] https://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/3645/Corporate-plan-2024-to-2028

- Work with partners to best support our residents to access employment opportunities regardless of the barriers they face.

Our Vision

Our vision for homelessness and rough sleeping over the five years of this strategy can be summarised as:

Family Homelessness

Family homelessness is prevented wherever possible, including through co-ordination between different services and effective use of data to identify and address homelessness risk.

No families are placed in B&B accommodation except for very short periods in an emergency.

Disruption to children's education as a result of homelessness is minimised and support to meet children's needs is provided for families in TA at least as effectively as in other forms of accommodation.

Early Intervention and Prevention

All parts of both the district and county councils actively look for risks of homelessness among those they are working with, including through effective use of data and artificial intelligence.

Where risks of homelessness are identified these are met by implementation of an agreed approach which cuts across departmental boundaries to achieve the best outcome for the household and prevent homelessness wherever possible.

This approach extends beyond the council to include the Council's main partners in both the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Meeting health and support needs

People using hospital or other health services, who are at risk of homelessness have their needs assessed as early as possible so that a planned approach can be agreed to preventing homelessness upon discharge and ensuring needs for support and care are met.

Support needs of all those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are assessed and met.

There is enough provision of housing related support, floating support and other services to meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness or risk of homelessness.

Accommodation

There is enough suitable and affordable accommodation available to meet the needs of existing and emerging households within New Forest for those who cannot afford to buy their own home or to rent privately without financial assistance.

Temporary accommodation is of consistently high quality and used only when necessary and as briefly as possible, until settled housing solutions can be found

Communication and partnership

Clear information about the range of services available to support people who are experiencing homelessness or may be at risk of homelessness in the future is widely available in a range of formats, including online.

This includes not only services provided by New Forest District Council but also by Hampshire County Council and the voluntary sector as well as information to support self-help.

All written communication from the council to people who access homelessness and housing advice services is written in a clear and accessible format.

Strong partnerships are actively maintained between the Council and all relevant partners including children and adult social services, health services, prison and probation services, housing associations, and voluntary and community sector organisations.

Rough Sleeping

Rough Sleeping in New Forest is prevented wherever possible and remains rare, brief and non-recurring.

People who do sleep rough are assisted quickly and provided with the support they need to be able to move on with their lives and not return to the streets.

Services working to tackle and prevent rough sleeping are co-ordinated across the whole system in order to achieve the best outcomes, including housing and homelessness services, social services, mental and physical health services, drug and alcohol services, police and the voluntary sector.

Preventing and relieving homelessness

Context

The large majority of successful homelessness preventions in New Forest are achieved by helping people to move into alternative accommodation in the private rented sector.

The council has had much less success in assisting people to stay in their existing accommodation or, where appropriate to move into supported housing. The difficulty in securing moves into supported housing reflects the lack of supported housing in New Forest.

This is partly because resources for homelessness prevention have until recently been relatively low. However, there is an opportunity to address this through effective use of the increased homelessness prevention grant from 2025/26.

This allows us to increase the staffing resources available to prevent homelessness within the council, to provide additional staff training and to provide additional funding and support to voluntary and community sector groups across New Forest.

We also want to add to the New Forest District Council website, so that it provides a clearer and more comprehensive set of options for those seeking housing advice or who are at risk of homelessness.

We recognise the potential to make better use of data and rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI) to be able to identify people at risk of homelessness earlier and provide more tailored interventions to help people address who may be at risk of homelessness to achieve better outcomes.

We are very aware that a large percentage of homelessness in New Forest is the result of young adults leaving their family home without the resources needed to obtain their own accommodation and wish to develop more effective ways to address this issue over the life of the strategy.

What we will do

- Increase the size of the Council's homelessness prevention team to include a dedicated team leader and additional homelessness prevention floating support workers working in a variety of ways to help people keep their existing accommodation or move to the private rented sector.

- Invest in enhanced and specialist staff training, including through the Locata Academy

- Revamp the homelessness and housing advice section of the New Forest District Council website to provide more user friendly and comprehensive information, promote self-help, signpost to organisations offering specialist advice, and make it easier to get in touch with council officers when this is the best option.

- Review and refine the Council's approach to homelessness prevention which helps people to stay in their existing home

- Explore options for earlier intervention to prevent homelessness, including exploring alternative accommodation pathways for emerging households.

- Working with partners, make better use of data and AI to identify homelessness risk, and develop intelligent and tailored solutions to meet those risks.

- Review the Council's telephone triage service to encourage access to help and advice at an earlier stage before homelessness is imminent

- Encourage community-based housing and homelessness prevention advice in all parts of New Forest, building on our existing partnerships with organisations including Citizens Advice, The Crossings, and Youth and Family Matters (Totton)

- Establish family mediation services, including home visits, to help reduce the number of family and friends evictions which lead to homelessness

- Conduct an options appraisal of young people's pathways into housing in New Forest

Ending Rough Sleeping

Context

The Council has been successful at reducing rough sleeping to a minimum through effective use of government revenue and capital funding to provide comprehensive outreach support and specialist accommodation for people sleeping rough.

The Council has also invested in specialist homelessness officers working with the NHS on mental health and with probation on ex-offenders.

What we will do

- Continue to provide a responsive and effective in-house rough sleeping outreach service.

- Maintain and strengthen links with Hampshire adult social care, NHS, probation and the police, to prevent and tackle rough sleeping.

- Work closely with MHCLG as the RSI or replacement revenue funding programme is relaunched from April 2026 to ensure the continuation and development of New Forest's successful rough sleeping services.

Investing in Accommodation

Context

The Council has been successful in improving the quality of TA and reducing the use of both total TA and emergency accommodation, but still has too many households in emergency accommodation, including some families.

There is an acute shortage of accommodation in both the social and private rented sectors which is affordable to New Forest residents on low to moderate incomes.

Although there is access to Extra Care accommodation in New Forest in partnership with Hampshire Adult Services, there is a shortage of supported accommodation for people who do not meet the Care Act threshold, including people who have experienced homelessness.

What we will do

- We will reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast and other emergency accommodation for people experiencing homelessness to as close to zero as possible, so that it is only used briefly in an emergency and never for families with children for longer than 6 weeks.

- We will review the Homesearch allocations scheme to ensure that it is meeting housing need as effectively as possible, including the needs of households experiencing homelessness.

- We will continue to work with housing associations and developers to maximise the development of new affordable housing in New Forest and will work with the government to increase the planned total beyond what is expected in the current development pipeline

- We will build on our success of delivering 76 new units of council owned TA between 2018 and 2024 through acquisitions, development and conversions, by delivering more TA during the life of this strategy. This will include taking advantage of new government capital funding schemes such as the Local Authority Housing Fund and any new capital funding to provide accommodation for people with experience of rough sleeping.

- We will review the terms of our current PSL scheme with a view to expanding it as a means to reduce the use of emergency accommodation in the future. This will include consideration of 10 year plus leasing schemes which have the potential to attract additional housing benefit subsidy.

Providing Support

Context

Over 90% of those assessed as being owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty in New Forest between April 2023 and September 2024 were assessed as having at least one support need including 62% with a history of mental health problems, 43% with physical ill health or a disability, 31% with a history of rough sleeping, 29% with a learning disability, and 28% who were at risk of or had experienced domestic abuse.

New Forest has access to Supported Living schemes in partnership with Hampshire adult services.

Funding for housing related support in New Forest from Hampshire County Council has been ended from 2025/26 due to budget pressures.

There is limited access to floating support or supported housing for people experiencing homelessness who do not meet the Care Act threshold.

The Tourlands House scheme developed with the support of MHCLG Capital funding provides accommodation for people with complex needs and a history of sleeping rough, but does not have on site support provided

The council has approved a domestic abuse strategy 2025 to 2028[6] for formal consultation which is aligned to the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2023 to 2025[7], and sets out how New Forest is implementing the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

This includes a statement that: ‘NFDC Housing Services is at the forefront of

[6] https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk/documents/s32189/Appendix+1+-+DRAFT+Domestic+Abuse+Strategy.pdf
[7] https://documents.hants.gov.uk/public-health/domestic-abuse/domestic-abuse-strategy-2023.pdf

delivering services to survivors of domestic abuse including providing early housing advice, housing options, prevention and homelessness services to survivors. We also engage with alleged perpetrators of domestic abuse, signposting to specialist support services. We also provide a fully funded additional security scheme, allowing victims survivors to remain in their homes through enhanced security measures, should they choose.'

What we will do

- The Council will provide additional tenancy sustainment support to people at risk of homelessness and move on support to people in TA through the recruitment of two additional homelessness floating support workers to create a team of four workers in total

- The Council will review its Extra Care community agreements to ensure that extra care support can be delivered a cross a full range of support needs

- The Council will conduct a supported housing needs assessment and develop a supported housing strategy in line with the requirements of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023, which will include an assessment of housing related support needs for those with experience of homelessness and rough sleeping

- The Council will continue to work with partners to provide support to people with mental health issues and ex-offenders who are at risk of homelessness through the employment of specialist officers in the homelessness team.

- The Council will put the commitments in its domestic abuse strategy into practice by strengthening measures to support victims of domestic abuse to remain in their existing home if they wish to or to move through a management transfer in order to avoid homelessness and moves into TA for those victims.

Working in Partnership

Context

New Forest District Council's homelessness service already works well with both county council adult and children's social services on both a strategic and operational basis.

However, there are opportunities to develop this further, for example building on existing joint work to provide housing and support for Care Leavers which can avoid

the need for the use of homelessness temporary accommodation.

The common allocations policy in New Forest is effective at ensuring that 100% of housing association properties, as well as council properties, are let according to the priorities set out in the policy.

New Forest enjoys good relationships with NHS services and Prison and Probation services around homelessness and rough sleeping, which has helped to reduce rough sleeping numbers and keep them low.

The Council also works well with Citizens Advice and with The Crossings and Youth and Family Matters, Totton to prevent homelessness, including attendance of council officers to provide housing and homelessness advice at voluntary sector led drop-in sessions.

The Council now wants to do more work in partnership with schools and the County Council to help to prevent the likelihood of future homelessness.

What we will do

- The Council will explore ways to strengthen homelessness prevention and early intervention through deeper relationships with Hampshire children and adult services including clearer protocols, and making better use of data to identify homelessness risk

- The Council will review the quality of data collected from applicants to provide improved analysis to inform service design, and current and future partnerships.

- The Council will explore opportunities to work more closely with the voluntary and community sector to prevent homelessness and provide relevant advice, including commissioning services when appropriate. This will include developing relationships with groups covering as much of New Forest geographically as is practicable

- The Council will consider expanding its work with Hampshire children's services to develop training flats for care leavers and other vulnerable young people who would otherwise have to go into mainstream TA.

- Working with partners, the Council will explore opportunities to deliver workshops in schools to help children to understand housing pathways and learn important life skills including how to manage a tenancy and how to budget.

- The Council will set up regular Homesearch partnership group meetings to strengthen joint work with housing associations

Monitoring and review

Performance and progress against each of the actions within this strategy will be reviewed annually in conjunction with members and stakeholders.

A transparent annual position statement will be produced to highlight our progress and how effective these measures have been in reducing homelessness and rough sleeping.

New actions and targets may be agreed if further changes are made to national legislation and policy. It is expected the Government will seek to work closely with Councils to implement its new Homelessness Strategy, expected by the end of 2025.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services, working with the Executive Head of Governance & Regulation and Service Manager – Housing Options will lead the review of the delivery plan.

In reviewing its strategy annually this council remains committed to embracing amended policy direction and incorporating it within annual updates.

New Forest Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Work Plan (2026–2031)

Preventing and Relieving Homelessness

Action	Lead	Timeline	Resources	KPIs
Expand homelessness prevention team	Housing Options Manager	Q2 2026	HPG funding	Team in place by Q2 2026
Staff training via Locata Academy	HR / Housing Options		Training budget	100% staff trained by Q4 2026
Revamp website housing advice section	Communications team and Service Manager Housing Options and Tenancy Accounts	Q2–Q3 2026	Internal IT, Communications team and Housing Options staff	Website live by Q2 2026
Review telephone triage service	Housing Options	Q3 2026	Internal review	Increased early contacts
Establish family mediation service	Housing Options Manager	Q4 2027	Commissioning budget	Service operational by Q1 2027
Conduct Young People's housing pathways appraisal	Service Manager Service Manager Housing Options and Tenancy Accounts	Q1 2026	Research budget	Report published Q2 2026

Ending Rough Sleeping

Action	Lead	Timeline	Resources	KPIs
Maintain in-house outreach service	Housing Options	Ongoing	RSI funding	<5 rough sleepers annually
Strengthen links with NHS, probation, police	Strategic Partnerships	Q2 2027	Staff time	Formal protocols in place
Engage with MHCLG for RSI funding	Service Manager Housing Options	Q1 2026	Service Manager Housing Options	Funding secured by Q1 2026

Investing in Accommodation

Action	Lead	Timeline	Resources	KPIs
Review Homesearch allocations scheme	Allocations Team	Q1 2026	Internal review	Scheme updated by Q1 2026
Deliver new council-owned TA	Housing Strategic and Development Service Manager	2026–2031	Capital funding	Increased units by 2031
Expand PSL scheme	Service Manager Housing Options & Service Manager Resident Services	On going	Private Sector Landlord Liaison Officer	New leases signed
Reduce B&B use to near zero	Housing Options	Ongoing	TA budget	<10 families in B&B

Providing Support

Action	Lead	Timeline	Resources	KPIs
Introduce a Prevention Advice Service across the district	Service Manager Housing Options	Q1 2026	HPG funding	Service in place. Number of users.
Conduct supported housing needs assessment	Service Manager Housing Options	Q3 2026	Research budget	Strategy published Q4 2026
Implement domestic abuse strategy	Housing / DA Lead	Q3 2026	DA funding	Measures in place by Q4 2026

Working in Partnership

Action	Lead	Timeline	Resources	KPIs
Develop clearer protocols with HCC	Strategic Partnerships	Q2 2026	Staff time	Protocols signed Q3 2026
Review the quality of data collected from applicants	Service Manager Housing Options / Housing Options Manager /	Q4 2027	Staff time	Requisite information is captured at receipt of application. Target KPI to be determined.

	Performance and Insight Manager			
Investigate developing “training flats” for care leavers	Housing Options and Strategic / HCC	Q4 2027	Capital funding	Options available Q1 2028
Deliver school workshops	Housing Education	Q1 2026	Outreach budget	4 schools reached by 2027
Set up Homesearch partnership group	Allocations Team	Q2 2026	Staff time	Group meets quarterly

Monitoring and Review

Action	**Lead**	**Timeline**	**Resources**	**KPIs**
Annual strategy review	Service Manager Housing Options	Annually	Staff time	Review published each year
Bi-annual position statement	Service Manager Housing Options	Bi-annually	Staff time	Statement published Q2 and Q4 each year presented to Scrutiny Panel

This page is intentionally left blank

APPENDIX 2

NEIL MORLAND CO
HOUSING CONSULTANTS

New Forest
DISTRICT COUNCIL

A review of homelessness and rough sleeping in New Forest

2025

Tim Gray and Neil Morland

New Forest District Council

New Forest District Council is a district local authority which was created on 1st April 1974 under the Local Government Act 1972, located in the County of Hampshire.

The council is based in Lyndhurst and the district also includes the towns of Totton, Fordingbridge, Lymington, New Milton and Ringwood. The district is named after and covers most of the New Forest National Park, which occupies much of the central part of the district. The main urban areas are around the periphery of the forest. The district has a coastline onto the Solent to the south and Southampton Water to the east.

The council is responsible for administering a range of local government functions, including landlord and communitywide housing services.

Neil Morland & Co

Neil Morland & Co are housing consultants, working throughout England, Scotland and Wales. Formed in 2011, we provide advice and assistance to national and local government, housing associations, voluntary organisations and others. We believe there should be adequate housing for everyone. We carry out research and create policies that improve the quality and potential of housing services and strategies.

Disclaimer: All views and any errors contained in this Homelessness Review are the responsibility of the authors. The views expressed should not be assumed to be those of New Forest District Council or any of the persons who contributed to this Homelessness Review. The information contained in this Homelessness Review is accurate at the date of publication. The information in this Homelessness Review should not be considered financial or legal advice. Neither New Forest District Council nor Neil Morland & Co are authorised to provide financial or legal advice. No responsibility can be taken by the commissioners or the authors of this Homelessness Review for any loss or damage incurred, by any persons or organisation acting or refraining from action as result of any statement in this Homelessness Review.

Contents

Executive Summary 5
Context 5
Findings 5
Recommendations 9
1. Introduction 11
About this Review 11
Definitions of homelessness and rough sleeping 12
Homelessness 12
Rough Sleeping 13
Methodology 13
National homelessness context 15
Homelessness legislation 16
Local authority duties 16
Housing Advice 18
Homelessness statistics 18
Homelessness Policy and Funding 22
2. Levels of Homelessness 24
Current levels of homelessness 25
Reasons for homelessness 30
Characteristics of those owed a homelessness duty 35
Previous accommodation 36
Rough Sleeping 42
Future levels of homelessness 45
Crisis model 45
Factors in New Forest 48
3. Preventing and Relieving Homelessness 52
Staffing 52
Access to assistance 52
Relief activity 61
4. Main Homelessness Duties 67
5. Securing Accommodation 71
Housing in New Forest 71

Private rented accommodation 75
Temporary Accommodation 76
Types of TA 79
Accommodation duties in TA 80
TA household characteristics 81
Use of B&B 82
Quality of provision 85
6. Providing Support 86
Support needs of those owed a homelessness duty 86
Support available 88
Voluntary sector collaboration 90
Domestic abuse strategy 90
NFDC's positive reputation 91
Possible gaps 91
Supported Housing Act 92
7. Resources for Tackling Homelessness 92
8. Consultation 95
9. Findings 112
Conclusions 112
Current levels of homelessness 112
Rough Sleeping 114
Future levels of homelessness 115
Preventing homelessness 116
Relieving homelessness 117
Main homelessness duties 119
Securing accommodation 119
Providing support 121
Resources to tackle homelessness 122
Consultation 124
Recommendations 125

Executive Summary

Context

This homelessness and rough sleeping review is being carried out to support the development of New Forest's forthcoming new 5 year homelessness and rough sleeping strategy.

As required by law, the review considers current and future levels of homelessness, activities to prevent homelessness and secure accommodation, need for and provision of support, and the resources available.

The review has been carried out using a mixture of statistical analysis, interviews with representatives for New Forest District Council, external organisations and New Forest tenants, and a survey of current and former users of the council's homelessness services.

The review takes place at a time when homelessness and rough sleeping have been increasing nationally. Both the use of temporary accommodation and local authority expenditure on homelessness are at record levels. The government is expected to produce its own national homelessness strategy later in 2025. It has already made a commitment to increase regulation of the private rented sector, and to encourage more new housing development including social rented accommodation. Local authorities are also to be required to produce supported housing strategies following to passage of the Supported Housing Act 2023.

Since the previous New Forest homelessness strategy, the landscape of local authority homelessness work has been profoundly influenced by the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the impact of the Covid 19 epidemic.

This review also takes place in the context of expected local authority reform, which may mean a merger of two tier local authorities to create new unitary authorities within the lifetime of the next homelessness and rough sleeping strategy.

Findings

Homelessness pressures in New Forest, as measured by the number of households owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty, have been broadly steady over recent years.

Compared to the other Hampshire district authorities, statutory homelessness pressures are about 8% higher than average. However, homelessness in New Forest is significantly below the regional average for both the South East and South West of England.

New Forest faces a number of challenges compared to other areas, including high house prices, relatively little social housing, low levels of supported housing provision and areas of deprivation.

The geography of New Forest, with large areas of the district designated as a national park, restricts opportunities for new development.

Nevertheless, the Council has been successful in reducing its use of temporary accommodation against a rising national trend, and has been particularly successful in reducing rough sleeping to almost zero as street homelessness across the country has been increasing. The reduction in rough sleeping has been achieved through effective outreach work, employment of a specialist mental health officer and a specialist ex- offenders' officer in the homelessness team.

The New Forest homelessness service is widely respected by its partner agencies in all areas.

Compared to most other areas, more people approach New Forest for help when they are at risk of homelessness than when they are already homeless. This is positive, as it provides greater opportunities to prevent homelessness before it occurs.

However, we found shortcomings in New Forest's offer of housing advice to those not yet at imminent risk of homelessness, both online and in person. This is despite positive relationships and good co-operation with Citizens Advice and other voluntary sector groups active in the district.

Although homelessness due to the loss of a private sector tenancy is a significant cause of homelessness in New Forest, this is less so than for many other councils. The most significant cause of homelessness in New Forest is eviction by friends and family.

The Duty to Refer process in New Forest appears to be working well compared to other areas.

A high proportion of those owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty by New Forest come from areas outside New Forest compared to other local authorities.

New Forest District Council has been extremely successful over the last few years in reducing rough sleeping to a minimum, against both the national and regional trend.

The council is slightly below average in its success in preventing homelessness. Nearly all prevention success involves a move to a private sector tenancy, with

comparatively very few successful preventions where the applicant is enabled to remain in their current accommodation.

However, the council is investing in additional homelessness prevention staff, which may improve performance in this area.

New Forest is significantly below average in relieving homelessness with only 23% of relief duties ending by successfully securing accommodation for 6 months or more.

Partly as a result of this, New Forest accepts more homelessness main duties compared to other areas than prevention and relief duties compared to other areas, accepting about 40% more main duties per thousand households than the Hampshire district average.

The allocations policy offers appropriate priority to those requiring accommodation due to homelessness and appears to be successful in delivering social housing lettings to people with a homelessness band reason, in accordance with the intentions of the policy.

The number of households in temporary accommodation has been falling gradually in New Forest over recent years, against a rising trend both nationally and regionally.

However, the council still has higher TA numbers and a higher number of families in B&B than any of the other Hampshire districts. Whilst the total use of B&B has been falling the number of families in B&B has been more difficult to reduce. There is still a small number of families in B&B for more than 6 weeks.

The quality of all types of TA used by New Forest is reportedly high. It is notable that the council has invested in provision of purpose built or converted TA which it owns and plans to continue to do so. This includes bespoke provision of accommodation for people with experience of rough sleeping, supported by MHCLG and Homes England funding.

It is also notable the New Forest continues to operate a substantial private sector leasing scheme, which it manages and helps to maintain, in contrast to most other councils which make more use of nightly paid accommodation, which may be of a lower standard.

Discussions with TA providers suggest that New Forest works harder than some other local authorities to ensure that placements are appropriate and in responding to management or other issues when they occur.

New Forest is more scrupulous than most other local authorities in assessing and recording the support needs of those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Both Hampshire adult services and children's services reported that New Forest works very well with them to support people with experience of homelessness who have social care needs, and maintains a high level of constructive engagement compared to some other district authorities.

However, there were some reports that not everyone engaging with the service gets the support they need, and it is clear from the statistics that very few homelessness duties in New Forest are ended with a placement in supported housing compared to other local authorities. This reflects the fact that supported housing in New Forest is limited compared to other areas.

Despite increased grant funding from MHCLG, net expenditure on homelessness by New Forest Council has increased significantly over recent years, although it is budgeted to fall somewhat in 2025/26.

The greatest opportunity for savings would be the reduction in use of Bed & Breakfast or other emergency accommodation.

This might be achieved through more effective prevention and relief of homelessness, a reduction in homelessness demand from households outside New Forest, or an increased supply of settled accommodation or alternative forms of TA.

The survey of current and former users of the homelessness and housing advice service is not conclusive, due to the limited number of respondents. However, indications are of a mixed picture. Some people reported receiving an excellent, person-centred service. However, others felt they were not listened to or understood and in some cases were treated insensitively.

All the external agencies or organisations spoken to as part of the review were unanimous about the professionalism, engagement and willingness to help of the New Forest homelessness service staff both at a senior and more operational level.

Recommendations

1. The council should strengthen its offer of housing advice including the provision of tailored advice to the specific groups included in the legislation. This should include clear advice on the council's website explaining what to do in the case of different types of homelessness risk. There should also be an option to speak to a person to get housing advice, whether within the council or at another agency without having to complete the online portal application.

2. The council should continue its excellent work on rough sleeping, including its work with offenders and its work in mental health.

3. The council should develop its homelessness prevention offer, specifically to include more effective work to help keep people in their existing home.

4. The council should consider developing an early intervention model to prevent homelessness, particularly to address the main cause of homelessness in New Forest, which is evictions by family and friends.

5. The council should further develop partnership working with women's refuges and domestic abuse agencies to examine whether more can be done to prevent homelessness as a result of domestic abuse.

6. The council should continue to develop its collaborative work with voluntary and community sector groups supporting people in housing need, with a view to achieving joint working across a wider geographical area.

7. The council should conduct an audit into the high number of prevention and relief duties accepted for people coming to New Forest from other areas and explore what it can do within the law to reduce this.

8. As part of the forthcoming review of the housing allocations policy, the council should consider whether it should make changes to support greater use of social housing for homelessness prevention and relief.

9. The council should consider the opportunity of establishing a 10 year + leasing scheme to take advantage of the favourable housing benefit subsidy position for this type of leasing and reduce its reliance on emergency accommodation.

10. The council should continue its programme to develop, acquire and convert accommodation for use as high quality TA.

11. The council should review, as part of, or in advance of developing a supported housing strategy under the terms of the Supported Housing Act 2023 review, whether the need for supported housing and floating support amongst people who have experienced homelessness in New Forest is being met. The support housing strategy should include meeting this need.

12. The council should consider expanding its work with Hampshire children's services to develop training flats for care leavers and other vulnerable young people who would otherwise have to go into mainstream TA.

13. The council should work with Hampshire adult services to develop a stronger service offer to social housing tenants suffering self-neglect.

14. The council should consider investing further in training for customer facing staff in the light of the mixed results from the online survey on the quality of service users' experience.

1. Introduction

About this Review

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

The law requires that a homelessness review concentrates on:

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

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

The decision by the council to appoint Neil Morland & Co to complete this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review, ensured impartiality and transparency in the findings.

The aim of this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review was to assess if the activities for tackling homelessness in the New Forest local authority area, are reflective of good practice, delivering good outcomes for people experiencing homelessness, and are of value for money to the public purse.

Since the last New Forest Homelessness Review, two significant events have taken place. The first of these is the commencement of important new homelessness legislation from April 2018. The enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, (HRA17), brought about the most significant change to homelessness law in

the past 40 years. The improved rights of people who are at risk of homelessness are equally matched with the additional responsibilities of local housing authorities. The period since the last review also saw the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020. This had a significant impact, nationally and locally, on the funding and services being delivered to households at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping, some of which have continued.

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

The structure of this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review is as follows:

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

Definitions of homelessness and rough sleeping

Homelessness

The law[1] defines a person as being homeless or threatened with homelessness if they:

- Are likely to be homeless within 56 days
- Have no accommodation available in the UK or abroad
- Have no legal right to occupy the accommodation
- Have a split household and accommodation is not available for the whole household
- It is unreasonable to continue to occupy their accommodation

[1] Housing Act 1996, Part 7, section 174

- Are at risk of violence from any person
- Are unable to secure entry to their accommodation
- Live in a moveable structure but have no place to put it

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

There are considered to be four forms of homelessness[2]. A person might experience only one of these forms, but could encounter some, or all of them:

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

Rough Sleeping

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the UK Government department responsible for homelessness policies and programmes, has defined street homelessness, as 'people sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or 'bashes')'[3].

Methodology

This review has been carried out in accordance with the law[4], statutory guidance[5], national guidelines[6] and national good practice[7].

This review provides an accurate portrayal of homelessness in the New Forest area at the time of it being completed.

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review includes findings about:

- What is working well to tackle homelessness
- What could be done better to tackle homelessness, and

[2] Fitzpatrick, S. (2005), 'Explaining homelessness: a critical realistic perspective', Housing & Society, 22(1): pp.1-17
[3] Department for Communities & Local Government (2010), 'Evaluating the extent of rough sleeping.
[4] Homelessness Act 2002, sections 1-3
[5] Homelessness Code of Guidance for local authorities
[6] Homelessness: applying All Our Health, Public Health England, November 2018
[7] Morland, Neil. 2019. Making homelessness strategies happen: ensuring accountability and deliverability. Local Government Association.

- Future priorities for tackling homelessness

The following parties contributed to the review through interviews and provision of data and other information:

- The council's housing services covering homelessness, rough sleeping, allocations and lettings, housing strategy, housing management, private sector housing, housing finance
- Hampshire County Council adult social care services
- Hampshire County Council children's services
- Sovereign Network Group (SNG)
- Citizens Advice New Forest
- The Crossings – Help against homelessness, Waterside
- Youth and Family Matters – Totton
- Prison and Probation Services
- Vie Space (accommodation provider)
- TSLG Ltd (accommodation provider)
- New Forest Tenant Involvement Group

An online survey was used to consult with current and former services users of the council's housing services, which received 45 responses from people who had used the service.

Published statistical evidence and data provided by the council was used to help assess levels of homelessness, the effectiveness of activities to prevent and tackle homelessness, and to establish contextual factors such as the availability of different types of housing.

Where relevant and feasible, comparisons of statistical evidence were made with the other district authorities in Hampshire, namely:

- Basingstoke and Deane
- East Hampshire
- Eastleigh
- Fareham
- Harts
- Havant
- Rushmoor
- Test Valley
- Winchester

Additionally, comparisons were made with a group of statistical nearest neighbour authorities across England. The basis for selecting nearest neighbours is inevitably imperfect. In this case the method we used was based on ONS data, clustering local

authorities according to their statistical similarities[8]. The ONS data separates local authorities into groups or clusters according to 'global' model averages, 'economic' model averages, and 'demographic' model averages. To select a comparison group, we chose only the local authorities in England in the same cluster as New Forest in all three areas i.e. the same global cluster, economic cluster and demographic cluster. These local authorities are:

- Castle Point
- Cheltenham
- Fareham
- Mole Valley
- North Hertfordshire
- Rochford
- Tunbridge Wells
- York

We also compared New Forest statistically with the South East region, the South West region, and England as a whole.

National homelessness context

The UK Government is responsible for making decisions about homelessness law and strategy for England. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) (prior to September 2021 known as the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government – DLUHC, the primary term used throughout this report) is charged with leading on policy formulation and programme delivery.

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to formulate a homelessness strategy at least every five years. A review of homelessness in a local housing authority area must take place prior to a homelessness strategy being formulated and published. The legislation requires local authorities to take strategic responsibility for tackling and preventing homelessness in their area.

Homelessness legislation

The current legal framework setting out the rights of people who are experiencing homelessness, and the duties local authorities must administer, has been in force since 1977[9], with significant amendments being made to it 1985[10], 1996[11], and

---

8 https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/methodologies/clusteringsimilarlocalauthoritiesandstatisticalnearestneighboursintheukmethodology

9 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977

10 Housing Act 1985

11 Housing Act 1996, Part 7

2017[12]. The most recent adjustments have substantially increased the assistance local authorities must provide to people who are homeless and threatened with homelessness.

The legal definition of homelessness is set out in section 1.2 above and is summarised again below.

- Homeless within 56 days
- Have no accommodation available in the UK or abroad
- Have no legal right to occupy the accommodation
- Have a split household and accommodation is not available for the whole household
- It is unreasonable to continue to occupy their accommodation
- Are at risk of violence from any person
- Are unable to secure entry to their accommodation
- Live in a moveable structure but have no place to put it

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

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

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

Local authority duties

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

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

[12] Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

- Obtain permanent accommodation when they are unintentionally homeless and have a priority need

A person can have a **priority need** for accommodation due to:

- Being pregnant
- Having dependent children residing with them
- Being vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or mental handicap or physical disability, or other special reasons
- Being homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as a flood, fire, or other disaster
- Being a child aged 16 or 17
- Being a young person under 21 who has been looked after, accommodated, or fostered
- Being a person over 21 who is vulnerable as a result of having been looked after, accommodated, or fostered
- Being a person who is vulnerable as a result of having served in the armed forces
- Being a person who is vulnerable as a result of having been imprisoned
- Being a person who is a victim of domestic abuse

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

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

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

Housing Advice

Under the section 179 of the Housing Act 1996[13] local authorities must provide information and advice on:

- preventing homelessness;

[13] section 179(1) of the 1996 Act

- securing accommodation when homeless;
- the rights of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and the duties of the authority;
- any help that is available from the authority or anyone else for people in the authority's district who are homeless or may become homeless (whether or not they are threatened with homelessness); and,
- how to access that help.

This advice should be available to any person who needs it and is not limited to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness within 56 days.

Specifically, the 1996 Act states that housing authorities must design advice and information services to meet the needs of people within their district including, in particular, the needs of the following groups:

a) people released from prison or youth detention accommodation

b) care leavers

c) former members of the regular armed forces

d) victims of domestic abuse

e) people leaving hospital

f) people suffering from a mental illness or impairment

g) any other group that the authority identify as being at particular risk of homelessness in their district.

The Act does not stipulate how exactly this advice needs to be provided, but it can be through a mixture of online, in person, telephone advice etc.

Homelessness statistics

The latest annual homelessness statistics[14] published by the UK Government at the time of writing are for the year April 2023 to March 2024. The latest quarterly statistics are for the period October 2024 to December 2024. These show that nationally for England:

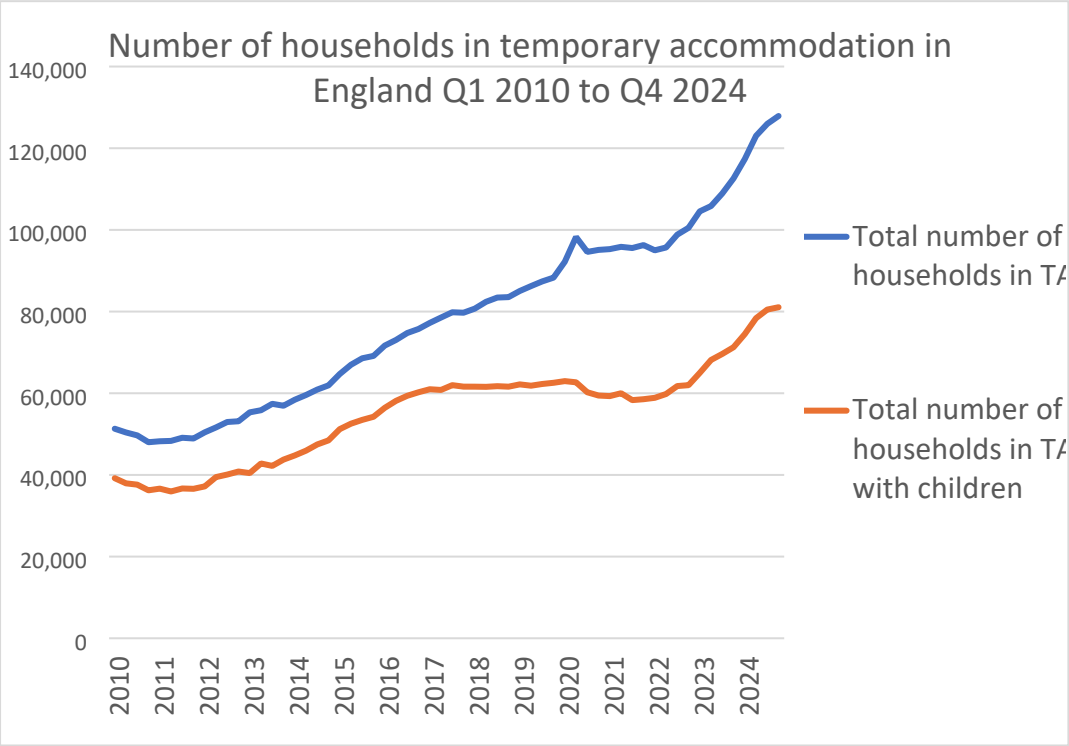
- 146,430 households were owed a prevention duty in 2023/24, up 3.1% from 2022/23 but down 1.9% from 2019/20, the last year before COVID.
- Of these 57,340 were due to the end of an assured shorthold tenancy (AST), notice, up 4.6% from 2022/23 and up 32.1% from 2019/20.
- 178,560 households were owed a relief duty in 2023/24, up 12.3% from 2022/23 and up 27.01% from 2019/20.

[14] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness

- In December 2024, 127,890 households were accommodated in temporary accommodation (TA), the highest ever figure, up by 13.6% since December 2023 and 44.8% since December 2019. The December 2024 figure includes 165,510 children in TA.
- In December 2024, 4,330 families with children were accommodated in Bed & Breakfast hotels (B&B) down 5.0% on December 2023, but up 123.6% since December 2019.
- In December 2024, 41,070 households were in TA in another local authority district to where a homelessness duty had been accepted, 32.1% of all TA placements, and up 23.3% on December 2023 and 68.1% on December 2019.

Figure 1 shows the change in the total number of households in TA and the number of households with children between 2010 and December 2024.

Figure 1

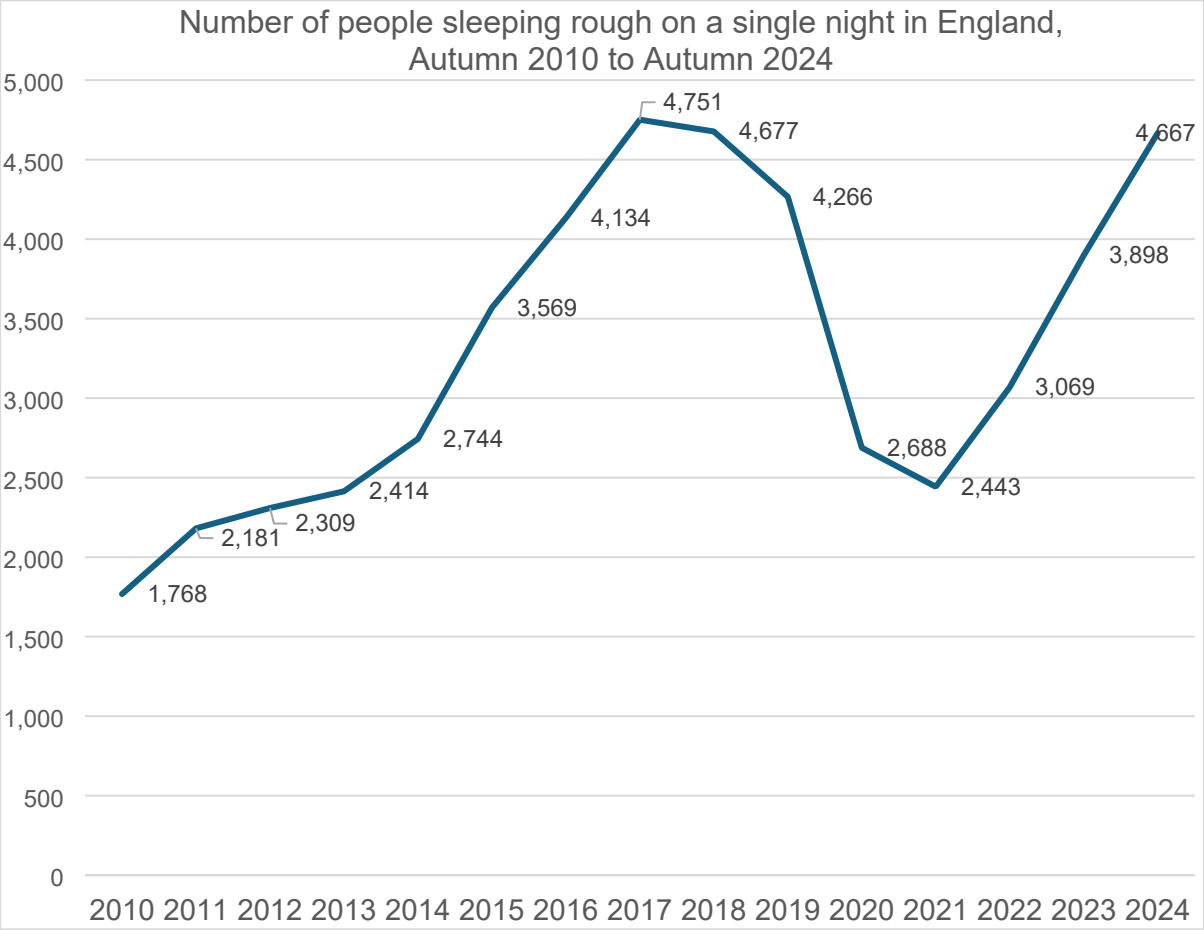


The latest rough sleeping snapshot statistics show that in Autumn 2024 there were 4,667 individuals recorded as sleeping rough on a single night in England, up 19.7% from 2023 and up 91% since 2021. The 2024 figure equates to an estimated 8.1 people sleeping rough on a single night in England per 100,000 population. The number of people sleeping over the course of a month is estimated by local authorities to be roughly twice the single night figure[15].

[15] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rough-sleeping-data-framework-january-to-march-2025

The number of people recorded as sleeping rough on a single night between Autumn 2010 and Autumn 2024 is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2



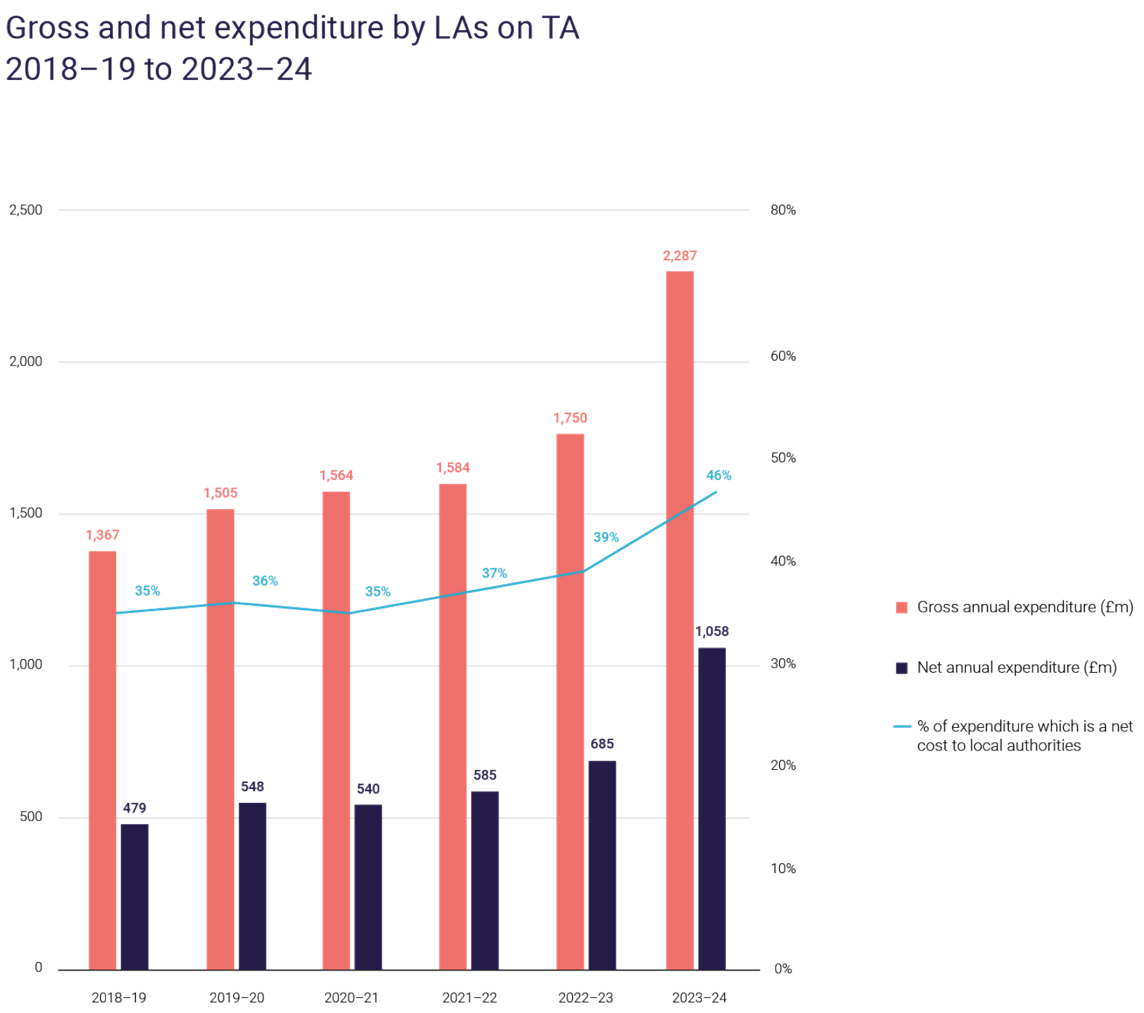
27% of the 261,075 new social lettings in 2023/24[16] were to statutorily homeless households, up from 23% in 2022/23. Households living in temporary accommodation immediately prior to their new letting comprised 14% of new lets, compared to 15% in 2022/23.

The latest data available[17] confirms that in 2023/24, £3.1 billion was spent by local authorities in England homelessness, with a net cost (excluding grants) to local authorities of £1.7 billion. Of the £3.1 billion gross expenditure, £522m was spent on homelessness prevention, relief, administration and support, with a £2.54 billion spent on TA.

Analysis by the Centre for Homelessness Impact in Figure 3 shows the increase in both gross and net costs of TA between 2018/19 and 2023/24, with the increase in costs between 2022/23 and 2023/24 being particularly rapid.

[16] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/social-housing-lettings-in-england-april-2023-to-march-2024
[17] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6759b6e97e419d6e07ce2b46/RO4_2023-24_data_by_LA.ods

Figure 3[18]



Homelessness Policy and Funding

The core homelessness grant to local authorities is the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG). This has been increasing for a number for years and rose significantly from £440m in 2024/25 to £633m in 2025/26, including a significant uplift in funding for New Forest.

The UK government prior to the 2024 election prioritised street homelessness and had an ambition of ending street homelessness by 2024.

Following the Everyone In initiative during the Covid 19 pandemic, which temporarily provided accommodation for almost all people sleeping rough, the government

[18] Source: https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/publication/spending-on-temporary-accommodation-value-for-money Note that the 2023/24 figures are slightly lower than those quoted in the text, due to the RO4 data outturn data being revised upwards after the CHI research was concluded.

allocated significant resources to local authorities towards reducing street homelessness including:

- Revenue funding through the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) programme of £203m in and £547m over 3 years from 2022 to 2025.

- The NSAP, RSAP and SHAP capital funding programmes targeted at providing accommodation for people with experience of sleeping rough

- Housing First Pilot funding to Manchester, Liverpool and the West Midlands 2019 to 2025

- The Accommodation for Ex-Offenders (AFEO) programme 2021 to 2025 to support prison leavers into private rented accommodation.

The government also introduced the Ending Rough Sleeping Data Framework[19] from December 2023 which is designed to move beyond the single-night snapshot by tracking whether rough sleeping is:

- Prevented
- Rare
- Brief
- Non-recurring

Local authorities report quarterly on five key indicators showing progress in each of these areas.

Another significant intervention from the last government was the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF). This has provide capital grant funding to support local authorities in acquiring temporary accommodation and accommodation for Afghan and Ukrainian refugee resettlement. Round 1 in December 2022 provided £500m, followed by £250m in Round 2 in March 2023, £450m in Round 3 in November 2023 topped up to £500m in February 2025.

The Labour government since 2024 has continued to prioritise rough sleeping but has also pledged a cross governmental homelessness strategy putting forward a more holistic, cross-departmental approach. This is expected to be launched in Autumn or Winter 2025 and to include an emphasis on areas such as homelessness prevention, temporary accommodation as well as on rough sleeping.

The government has already increased and consolidated core homelessness

[19] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-rough-sleeping-data-framework-december-2023/ending-rough-sleeping-data-framework-december-2023?utm_source=chatgpt.com

funding through HPG and the new Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant (RSPARG) which amounts to £185.6m in 2025/26 and replaces RSI, winter pressures, Housing First and AFEO funding into a single grant.

The government announced in the June 2025 spending review that there will be an additional £39 bn for affordable homes in the next decade as well as £100m over the next three years for early intervention schemes to prevent homelessness.

In addition, the Renters' Rights Bill currently going through parliament and expected to be enacted in 2025 provides greater protection for tenants in the private rented sector by abolishing S21 'no fault' evictions, increasing notice periods, limiting rent increases, and banning discrimination against benefit claimants seeking to rent properties. The bill also intends to apply the Decent Homes Standard to private rented accommodation, although the timetable for this to be rolled out is not yet confirmed.

It is possible that TA may also be required to meet the Decent Homes standard in future. This should be clarified when the government homelessness strategy is published later in 2025.

The government has also pledged to repeal the Vagrancy Act, decriminalising rough sleeping.

One area which is not clear is whether the government will seek to bring housing benefit subsidy for leased and nightly paid temporary accommodation, which is currently set at 90% of 2011 Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, into line with the current LHA rates which apply in private rented accommodation. This has been a request from local authorities for several years.

Future policy on LHA rates more widely is also unknown. These are currently frozen at 30th percentile rents for private rented accommodation as assessed by the Valuation Office Agency[20] in Autumn 2023 and put in place from April 2024.

The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 lays the ground for enabling local authority led licensing of supported housing schemes in England, including non-commissioned supported housing. It also proposes national supported housing minimum standards and introduces a duty for local authorities to produce strategic supported housing plans.

Following consultation which ended in May 2025, the government is expected to produce draft regulations in late 2025. Local authority licensing and strategy duties will then come into force, probably in 2026.

[20] https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/valuation-office-agency/about

2. Levels of Homelessness

This section considers the current and future likely levels of homelessness in the New Forest local authority area, comparing these to countywide regional and national trends.

The council collects statistics on statutory homelessness and rough sleeping and reports this to the government. This is then published for all local authorities in England allowing us to compare the council's levels of homelessness with Hampshire local housing authorities, South East England, South West England, ONS statistical near neighbours as set out above, and all of England.

Nationally, there is no coordinated collection of statistics on hidden homelessness from either public authorities or voluntary organisations.

However, around 20% of adults in the UK say they've sofa-surfed in their lifetime, with 7% doing so recently, according to Big Issue research from November 2024[21]. Recent research by Citizens Advice and University of Plymouth[22] estimates hidden homelessness growing amongst thousands of people in Plymouth, South Hams in Devon, and in Cornwall.

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

Current levels of homelessness

To assess recent levels of statutory homelessness we have combined the latest annual statistics produced by government for 2023/24 with the quarterly statistics for April to June 2024 and July to September 2024 to give an 18 month picture from April 2023/24 which is as up to date as possible. This is because just using one or even two quarter's figures could misrepresent the true picture due to seasonal variations and reporting spikes e.g. if some councils carry over data for one quarter to another. On the other hand, the latest annual statistics for 2023/24 are now quite distant.

We report the actual totals for homelessness in New Forest in the text of the report. However, for comparison purposes with other councils and regions, we compare either percentage figures e.g. the percentage of those at risk of homelessness due to loss of private rented accommodation, or figures per thousand households living in the area e.g. the number of households in TA per thousand households.

[21] Big Issue November 2024
[22] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ceqxy55004wo?utm_source=chatgpt.com
https://southhamscab.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/HH-REPORT-FINAL-2024.pdf

In the period April 2023 to September 2024 1,380 households in New Forest were assessed to establish if they were homeless or at risk of homelessness, with 1,135 households (82%) assessed as being owed a homelessness prevention duty due to risk of homelessness within 56 days or a relief duty due to homelessness at the time when they approached the council.

Altogether, of those who were assessed, 56% were owed a prevention duty, 27% were owed a relief duty, 9% withdrew their application before assessment, 7% were assessed as being neither homeless, nor at risk of homelessness, and 2% were assessed as not eligible for assistance.

Figure 4 compares the number of households owed a prevention or relief duty per thousand households with the other Hampshire districts, Figure 5 makes the same comparison with ONS near neighbours, and Figure 6 compares New Forest with the South East, South West and England.

Figure 4

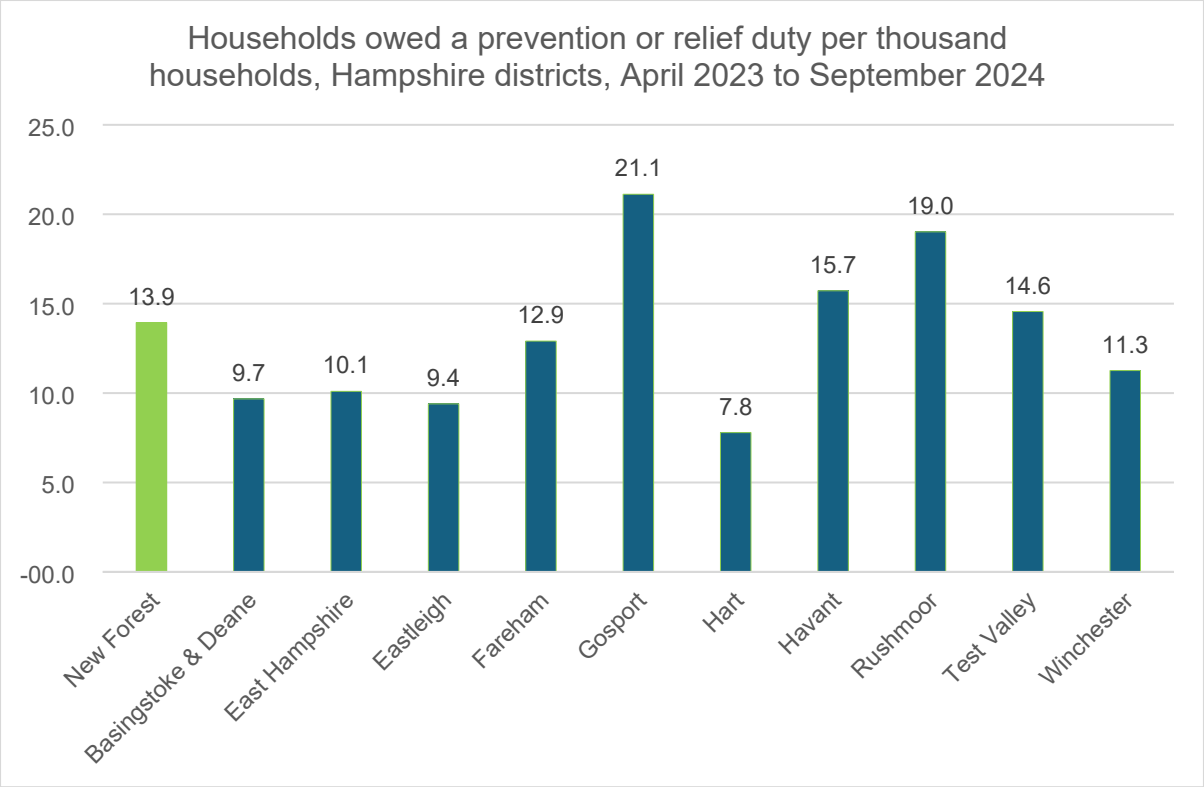


Figure 5

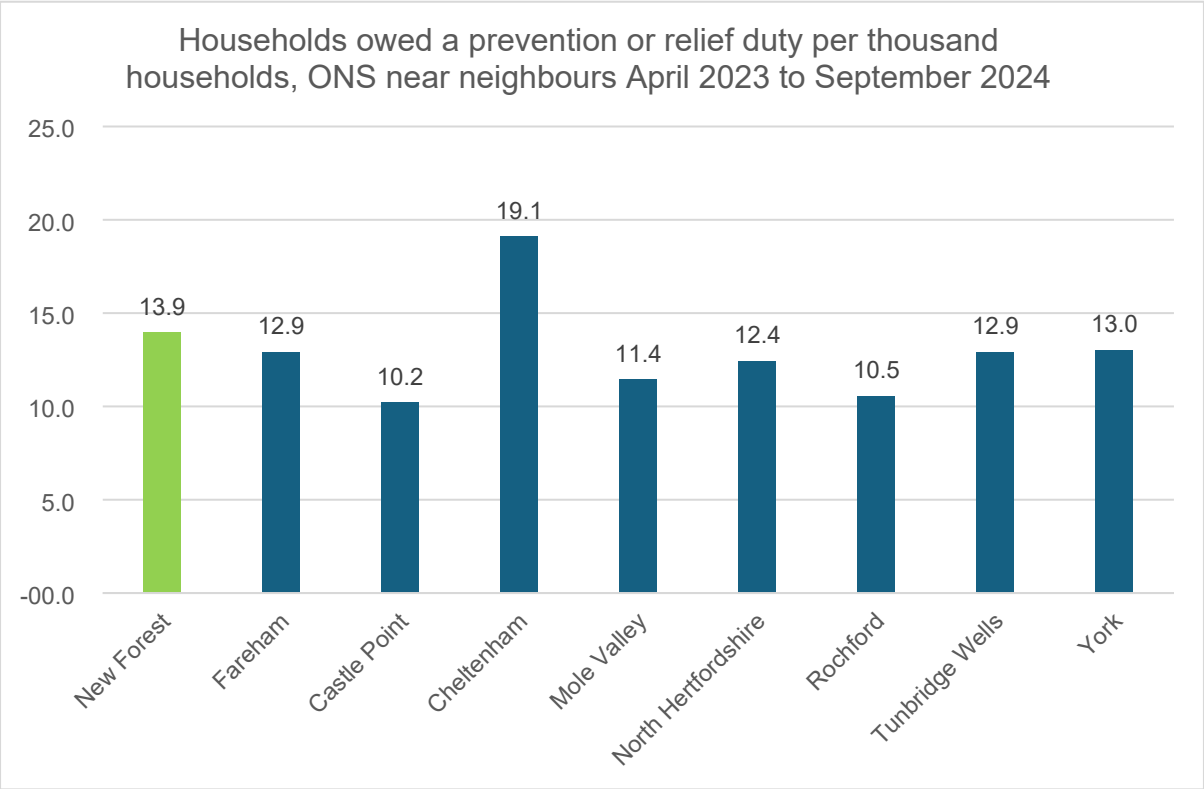
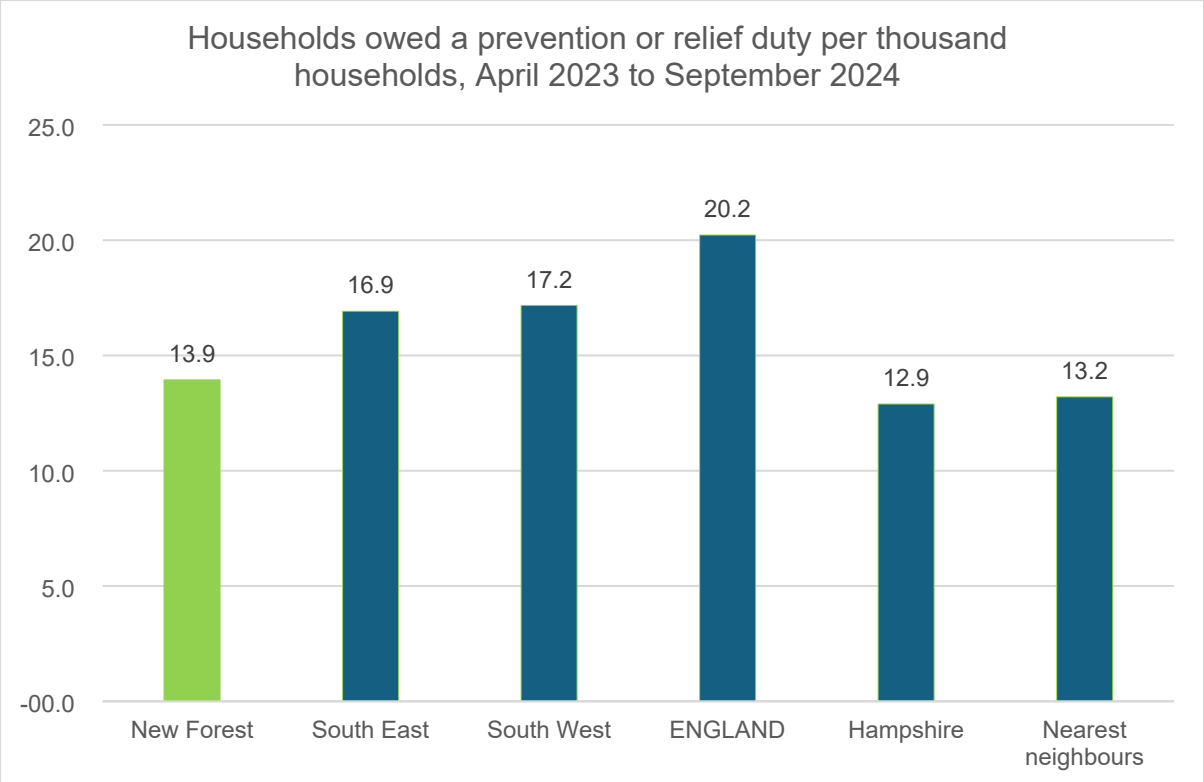


Figure 6



Broadly, this data shows that total homelessness demand as measured by the number of new prevention or relief duties in New Forest was 8% higher than average

levels compared with other Hampshire districts and also slightly higher than for ONS near neighbours, but was significantly lower than the average figures per thousand households for the South East, South West and England as a whole.

The New Forest figure of 13.9 duties per thousand households being 18% lower than the South East average, 19% lower than the South West average, and 35% lower than the England figure.

It must of course be borne in mind that the England figure includes London and other major urban conurbations where homelessness tends to be more frequent.

The percentage of those assessed who are found to be owed a duty is lower in New Forest than in the South West, Hampshire districts, ONS neighbours or England, but around the same as the South East as a whole, as shown in Figure 7

Figure 7

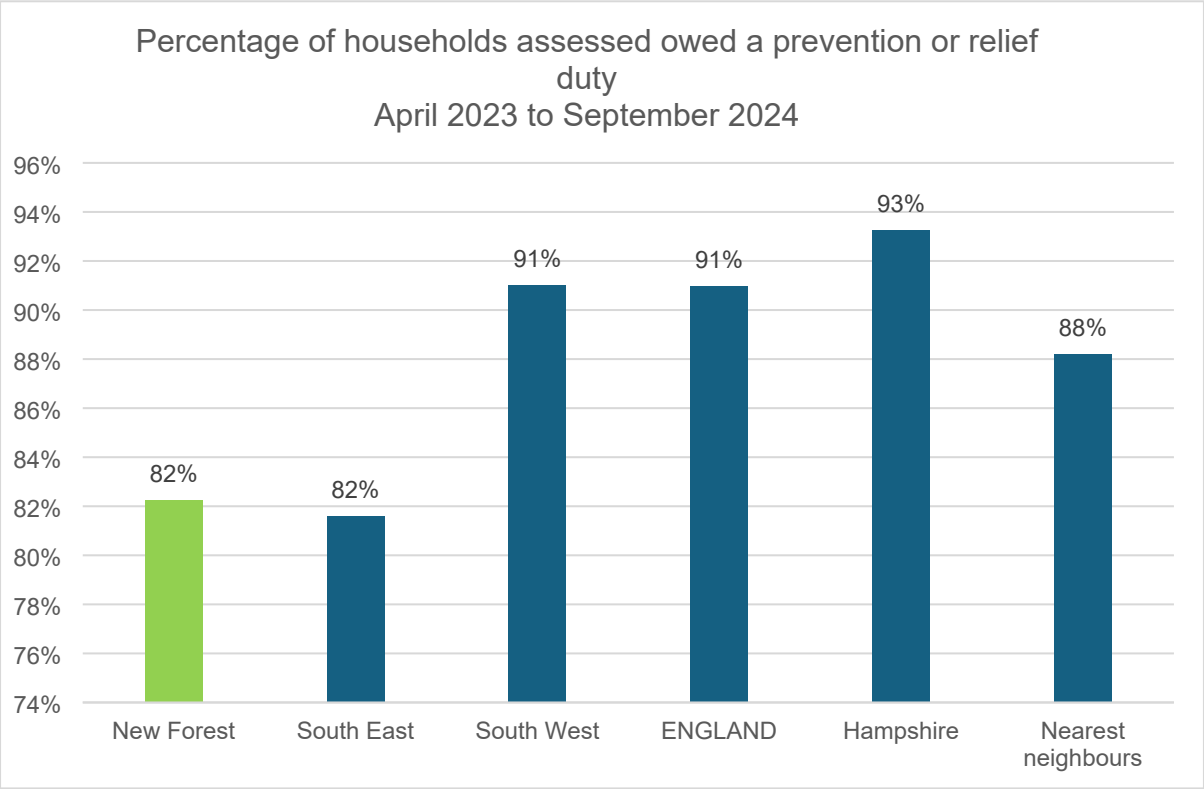
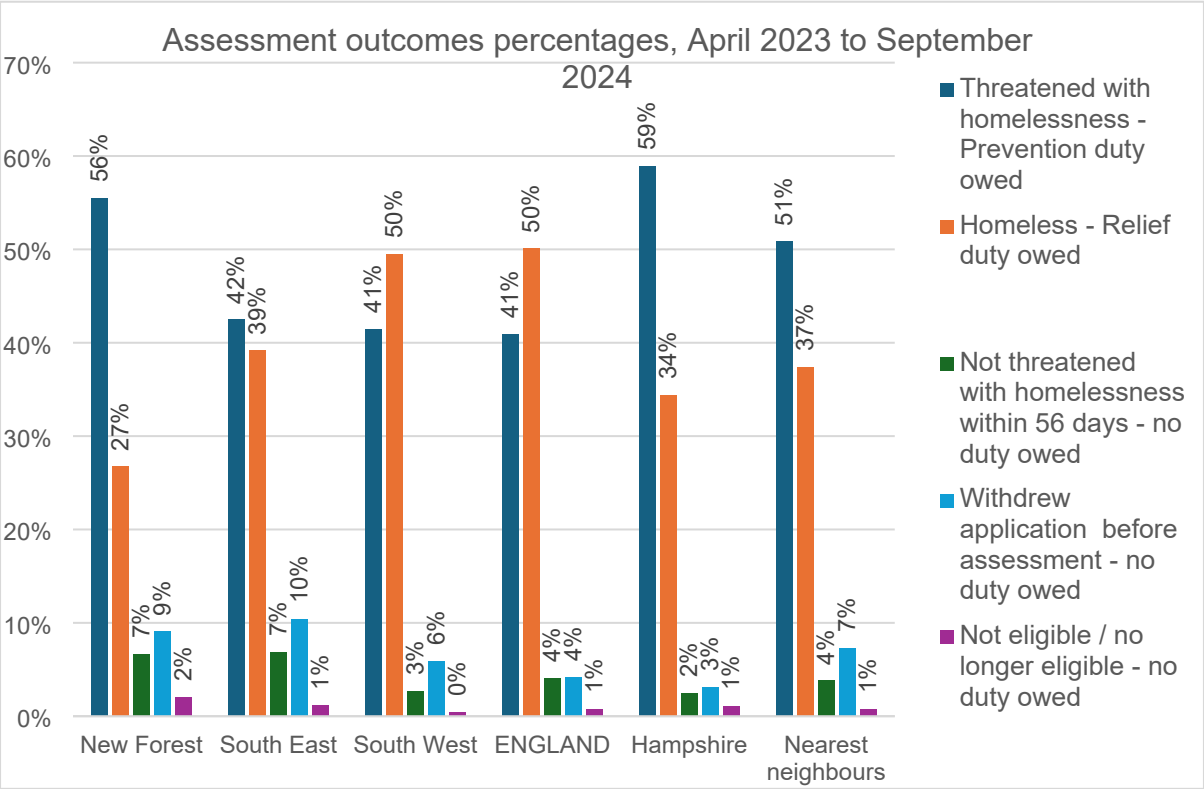


Figure 8 compares homelessness assessment outcomes in more detail.

Figure 8



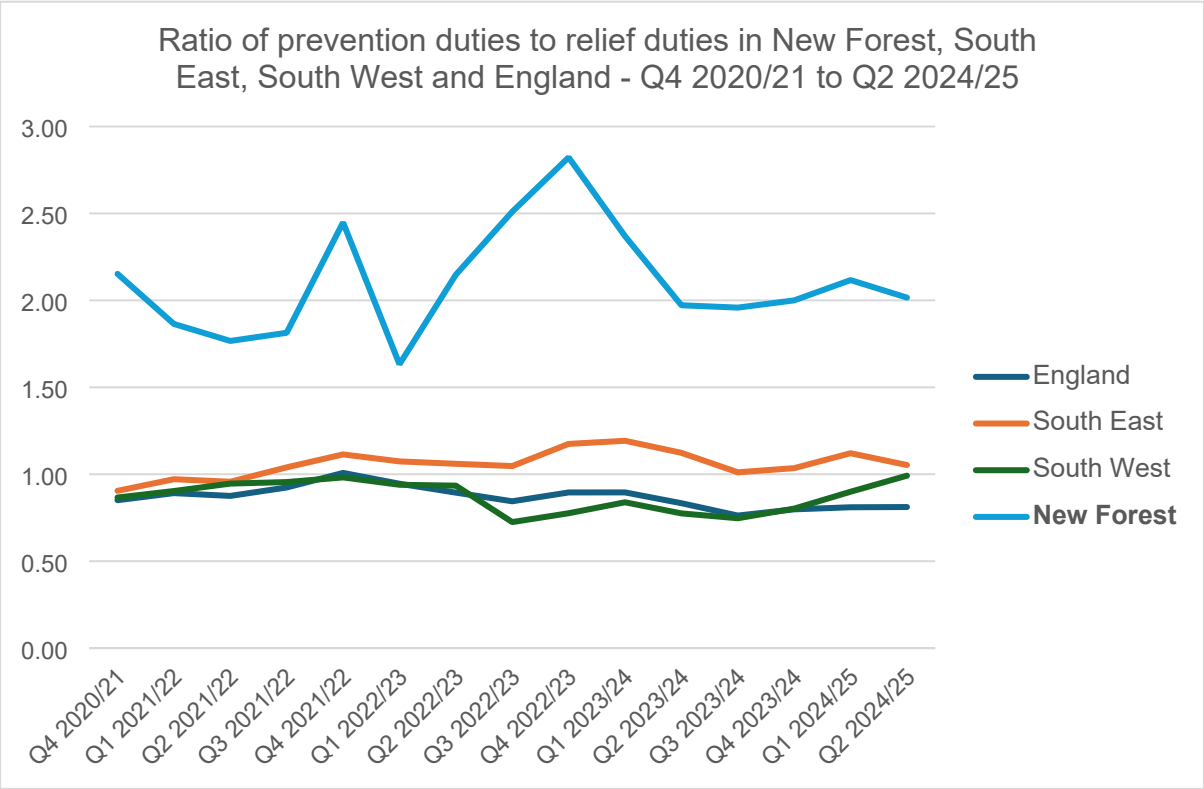
This shows that the percentage of assessments resulting in a prevention duty at 56%, is about the average for the Hampshire districts and ONS near neighbours, but significantly higher than the South East (42%), South West (41%) or England (41%).

In contrast the percentage of assessments resulting in a relief duty in New Forest (27%) is very low compared to all the other areas considered.

Whilst it is difficult to be certain of the specific reasons for this, it is generally considered a good thing to have more prevention duties than relief duties, because this indicates people are approaching the council at an earlier stage, offering greater opportunities to prevent homelessness before it occurs rather than the affected households having to experience the trauma of actually becoming homeless before they can be assisted.

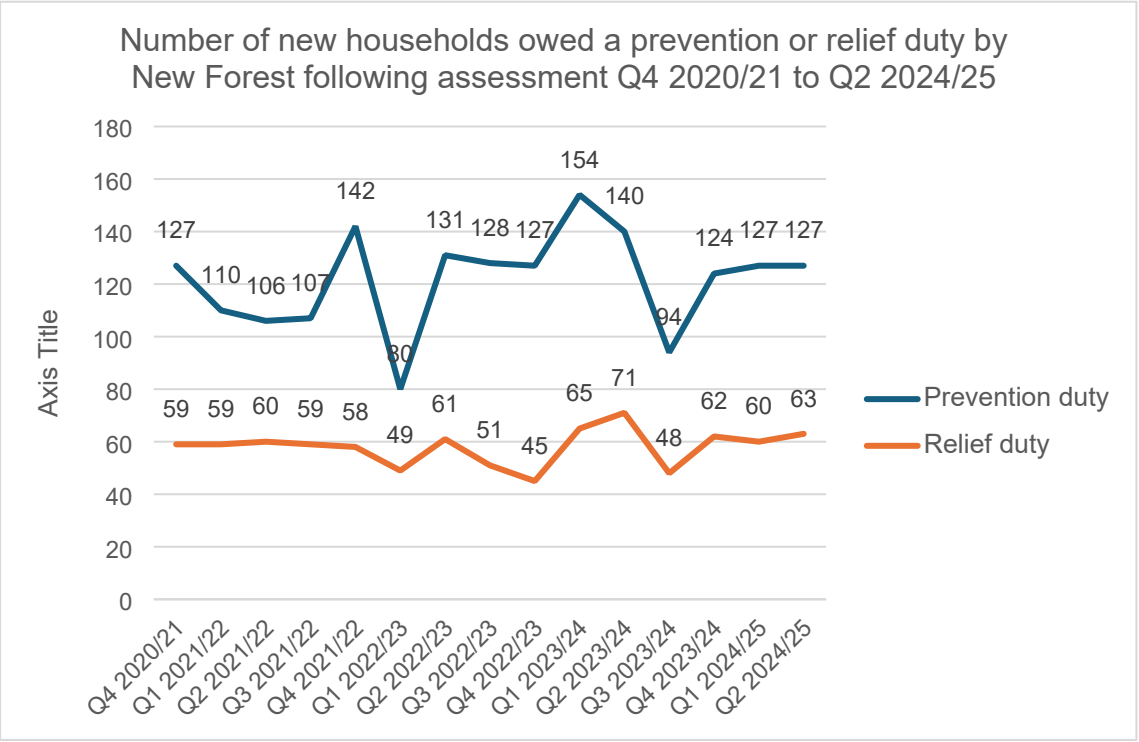
The ratio of prevention duties to relief duties has been consistently high compared to the South East, South West and England over the period since Covid 19, as shown by the quarterly data in Figure 9 between Q4 2020/21 and Q2 2024/25. This can be regarded as positive, for the reasons set out in the previous paragraph.

Figure 9



As shown in Figure 10, the quarterly number of new homelessness prevention duties and relief duties in New Forest has, with some fluctuations (possibly due to administrative and reporting issues rather than sudden changes in demand), been relatively steady since at least January 2021. There does not appear to have been a marked rise or fall in homelessness demand and the ratio of prevention duties to relief duties has remained fairly constant over the period.

Figure 10



Contrary to popular belief, the number of prevention and relief duties accepted across the country also remained relatively steady during this period, despite large rises in TA and rough sleeping, although the England relief duty figure did rise somewhat from 1.61 relief duties per thousand households in Q4 2020/21 to 1.86 in Q2 2024/25.

Reasons for homelessness

The reasons for risk of homelessness for those owed a homelessness prevention duty between April 2023 and September 2024 in the New Forest are shown in Figure 11.

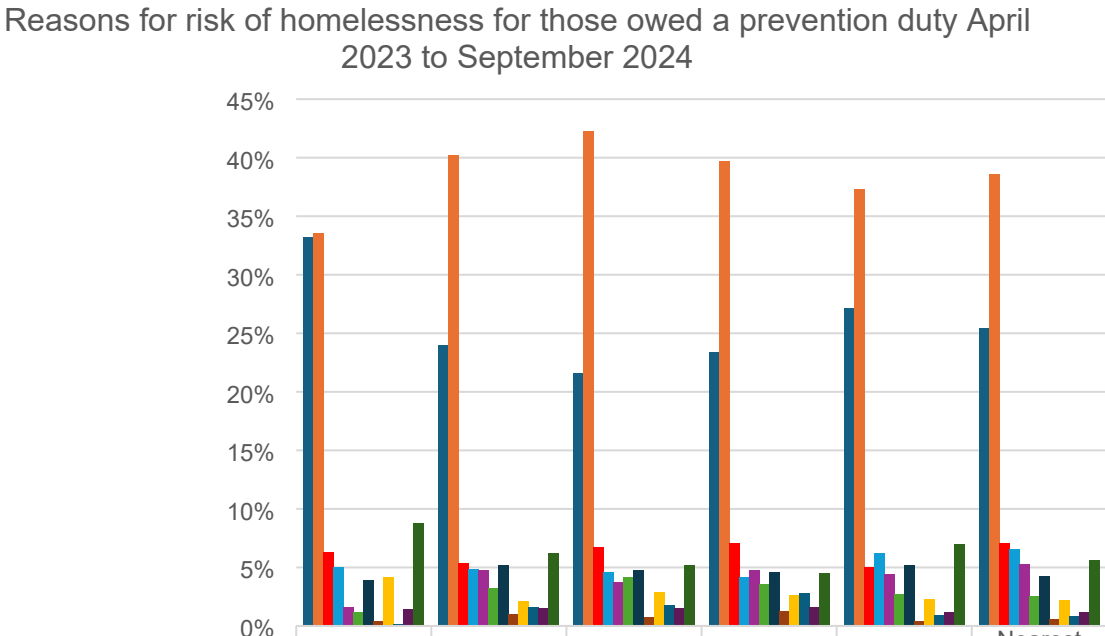
Figure 11

New Forest reasons for risk of homelessness for those owed a prevention duty, April 2023 to September 2024	Total	%
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	254	**33%**
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	257	**34%**
Domestic abuse	48	**6%**
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	38	**5%**
End of social rented tenancy	12	**2%**
Eviction from supported housing	9	**1%**
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	30	**4%**
Other violence or harassment	3	**0%**
Left institution with no accommodation available	32	**4%**
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	1	**0%**

Home no longer suitable - disability / ill health	11	**1%**
Other reasons / not known	67	**9%**

The reason for risk of homelessness for those owed a prevention duty are compared with other areas in Figure 12.

Figure 12



	New Forest	South East	South West	ENGLAND	Hampshire	Nearest neighbours
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	33%	24%	22%	23%	27%	25%
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	34%	40%	42%	40%	37%	39%
Domestic abuse	6%	5%	7%	7%	5%	7%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	5%	5%	5%	4%	6%	7%
End of social rented tenancy	2%	5%	4%	5%	4%	5%
Eviction from supported housing	1%	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%
Other violence or harrassment	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Left institution with no accommodation available	4%	2%	3%	3%	2%	2%
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0%	2%	2%	3%	1%	1%
Home no longer suitable - disability / ill health	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Other reasons / not known	9%	6%	5%	5%	7%	6%

In the New Forest the biggest reason for risk of homelessness was loss of an assured shorthold tenancy (AST) in the private rented sector (34%), closely followed by friends and family no longer being willing to accommodate (33%), with the next

highest reasons for a prevention duty being domestic abuse (6%) and non- violent relationship breakdown (5%).

Compared to other areas, the biggest difference is that New Forest had proportionally lower homelessnes risk from end of an AST and higher risk from friends and family evictions.

Among the less common causes of homelessness risk it is also notable that New Forest had a lower proportion of prevention duties due to loss of social housing than other areas, with 3% of prevention duties as a result of end of a social rented tenancy or eviction from social housing compared with 7 to 9% in the comparator areas.

On the other hand, the percentage of prevention duties as a result of leaving an institution was higher (4%) in New Forest than other areas.

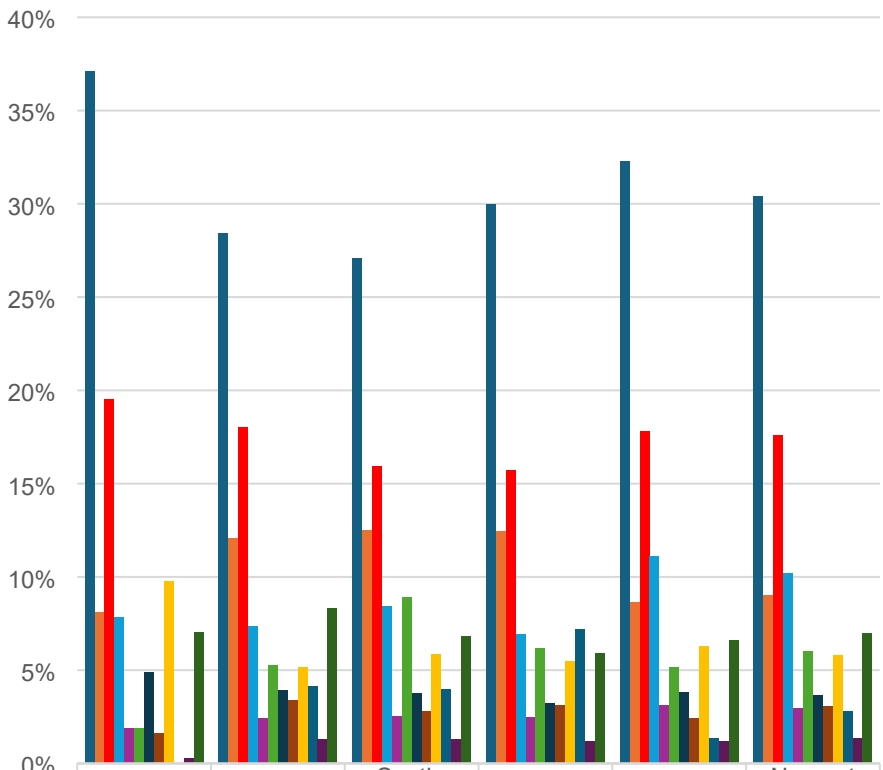
The reasons for actual homelessness for those owed a homelessness relief duty between April 2023 and September 2024 in the New Forest are shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13

New Forest reasons for homelessness for those owed a relief duty April 2023 to September 2024	Total	%
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	137	**37%**
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	30	**8%**
Domestic abuse	72	**20%**
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	29	**8%**
End of social rented tenancy	7	**2%**
Eviction from supported housing	7	**2%**
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	18	**5%**
Other violence or harassment	6	**2%**
Left institution with no accommodation available	36	**10%**
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0	**0%**
Home no longer suitable - disability / ill health	1	**0%**
Other reasons / not known	26	**7%**
Other reasons / not known	67	**9%**

The reason for homelessness for those owed a relief duty are compared with other areas in Figure 14.

Figure 14



	New Forest	South East	South West	ENGLAND	Hampshire	Nearest neighbours
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	37%	28%	27%	30%	32%	30%
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	8%	12%	13%	12%	9%	9%
Domestic abuse	20%	18%	16%	16%	18%	18%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	8%	7%	8%	7%	11%	10%
End of social rented tenancy	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%
Eviction from supported housing	2%	5%	9%	6%	5%	6%
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	5%	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%
Other violence or harrassment	2%	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%
Left institution with no accommodation available	10%	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0%	4%	4%	7%	1%	3%
Home no longer suitable - disability / ill health	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other reasons / not known	7%	8%	7%	6%	7%	7%

In New Forest, the biggest reason for homelessness for those owed a relief duty was friends and family no longer being willing to accommodate (37%), followed by domestic abuse (20%), The next highest reasons for a relief duty was leaving an institution (10%), loss of an AST (8%), and non- violent relationship breakdown (8%).

Mirroring the reasons for a prevention duty, compared to other areas, New Forest had a significantly higher proportion of relief duties as a result of family and friend evictions and a lower proportion of duties due to loss of an AST.

Of some potential concern is that the proportion of relief duties due to domestic abuse was higher than any of the comparator areas and this was also the case for the proportion of relief duties due to leaving an institution.

On closer investigation however, 26.7% of relief duties due to domestic abuse were from refuge placements, with 80% of those found to be owed a relief duty due to domestic abuse having no local connection to the New Forest district such as previously living in the area, family connections or employment.
Similarly, NFDC officers believe that the relatively high number of homelessness duties following discharge from an institution is due to the Council's proactive work and positive relationships with the institutions leading to those who might otherwise be homeless after leaving and potentially sleep rough being more likely to be supported into accommodation.

Again, mirroring the prevention duty data, the proportion of relief duties due to an eviction from social housing was much lower, at 2%, than in any of the comparator areas.

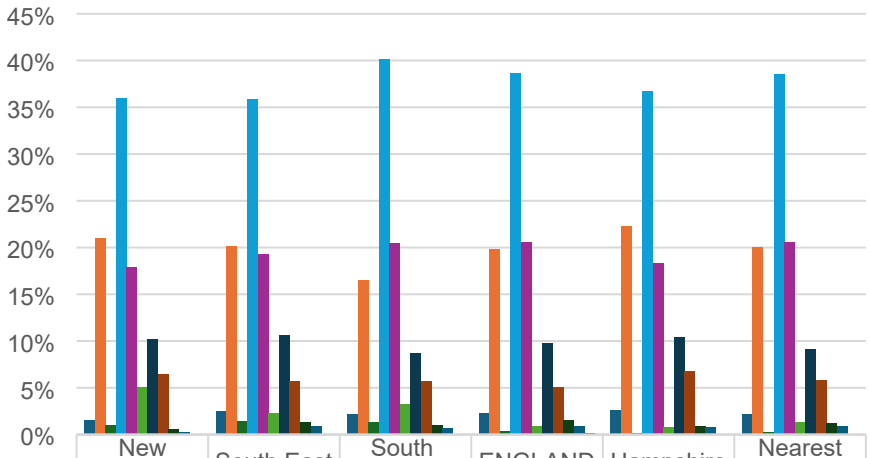
Both the prevention and relief duty information show negligible homelessness as a result of being required to leave asylum seeker accommodation in New Forest, which has become a significant problem in some other parts of England.

The breakdown of household types of those owed a prevention or relief duty is shown in Figure 15. In common with other areas, the highest proportion of households owed a homelessness duty in New Forest are single males without dependent children (36%), followed by female single parents (21%) and single females without children (18%).

New Forest appears to reflect the rest of the country in terms of the household composition of those owed a homelessness duty, although the 5% of cases of single adult other or gender not known, may suggest some issues with recording by council officers.

Figure 15

Percentage breakdown by household type of those owed a prevention or relief duty April 2023 to September 2024



	New Forest	South East	South West	ENGLAND	Hampshire	Nearest neighbours
Single parent with dependent children - Male	1%	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%
Single parent with dependent children - Female	21%	20%	16%	20%	22%	20%
Single parent with dependent children - Other / gender not known	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Single adult - Male	36%	36%	40%	39%	37%	39%
Single adult - Female	18%	19%	20%	21%	18%	21%
Single adult - Other / gender not known	5%	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%
Couple with dependent children	10%	11%	9%	10%	10%	9%
Couple / two adults without dependent children	7%	6%	6%	5%	7%	6%
Three or more adults with dependent children	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Three or more adults without dependent children	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Not known	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

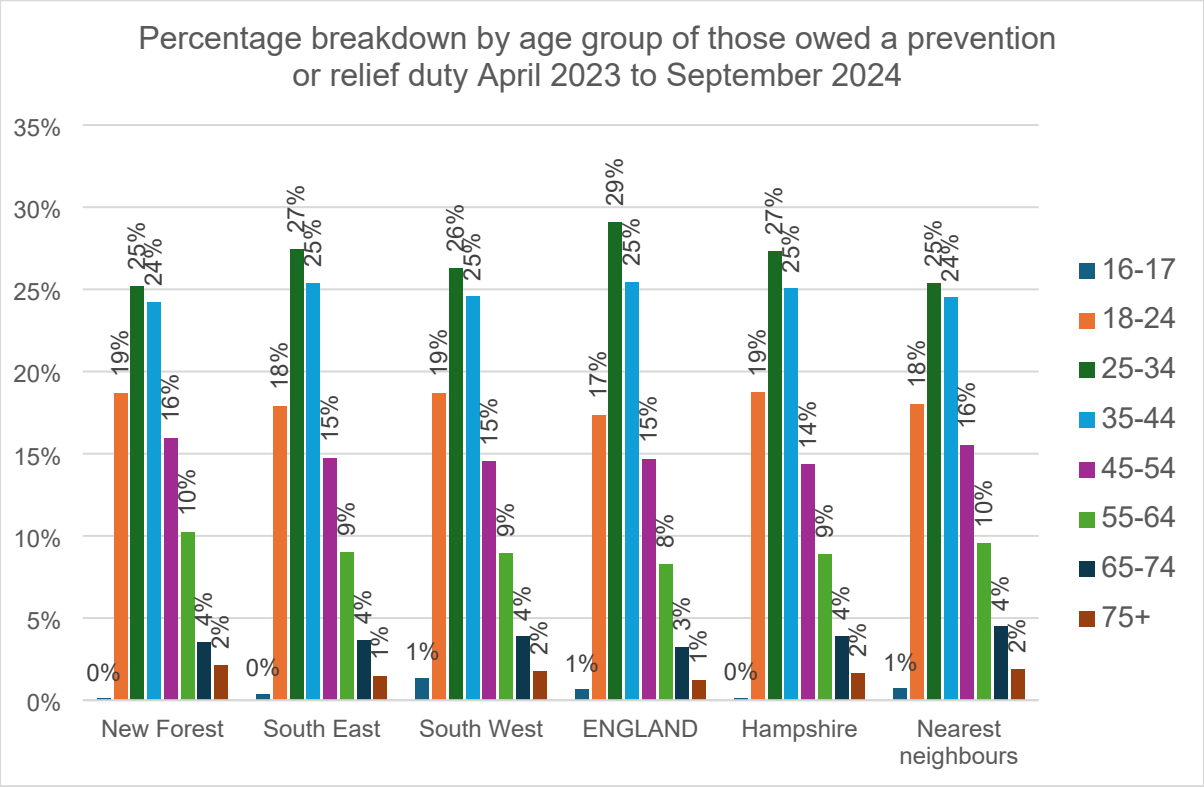
Characteristics of those owed a homelessness duty

The ages of those owed a prevention or relief duty in New Forest also seems broadly similar to other areas as shown in Figure 16, with 25% of households aged 25 to 34, 24% 35 to 44, and 19% 18 to 25.

In terms of ethnicity, 1,096 (97%) of those owed a prevention or relief duty in New Forest in the period April 2023 to September 2024 were White; with only 11 (1%) Black/African/Caribbean/Black British; 8 (0.7%) Asian/Asian British; 4 (0.5%) Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups; and 1.4% other ethnic groups or not known.

This is a much higher proportion of white households than in any of the comparator areas. Whilst in other areas, there is an over-representation of households owed homelessness duties who have a black ethnic origin in particular, in the New Forest the very small number of non-white applicants makes it hard to draw any conclusions to suggest whether this may or may not be the case.

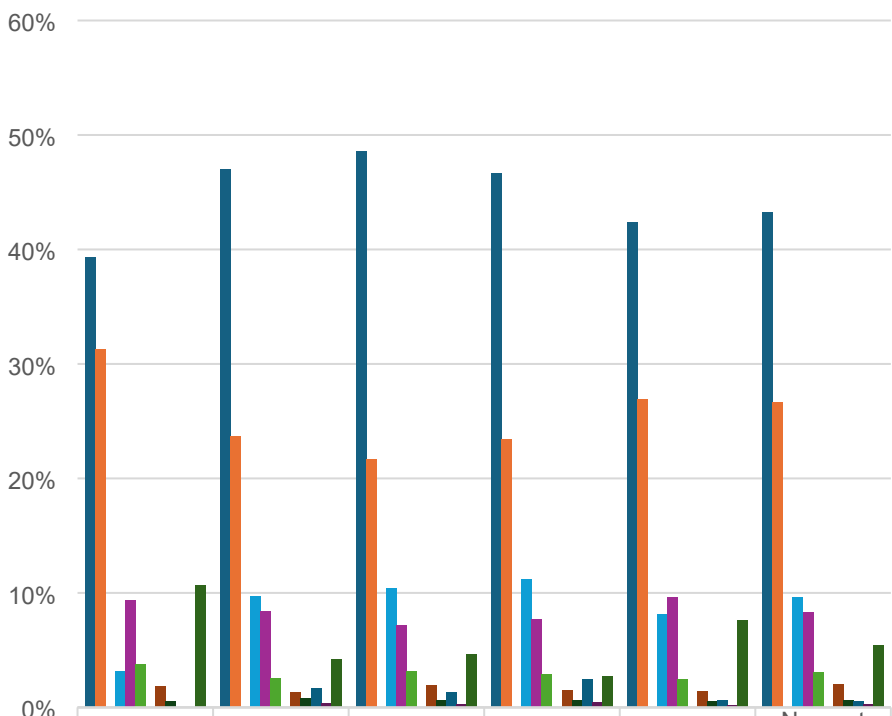
Figure 16



Previous accommodation

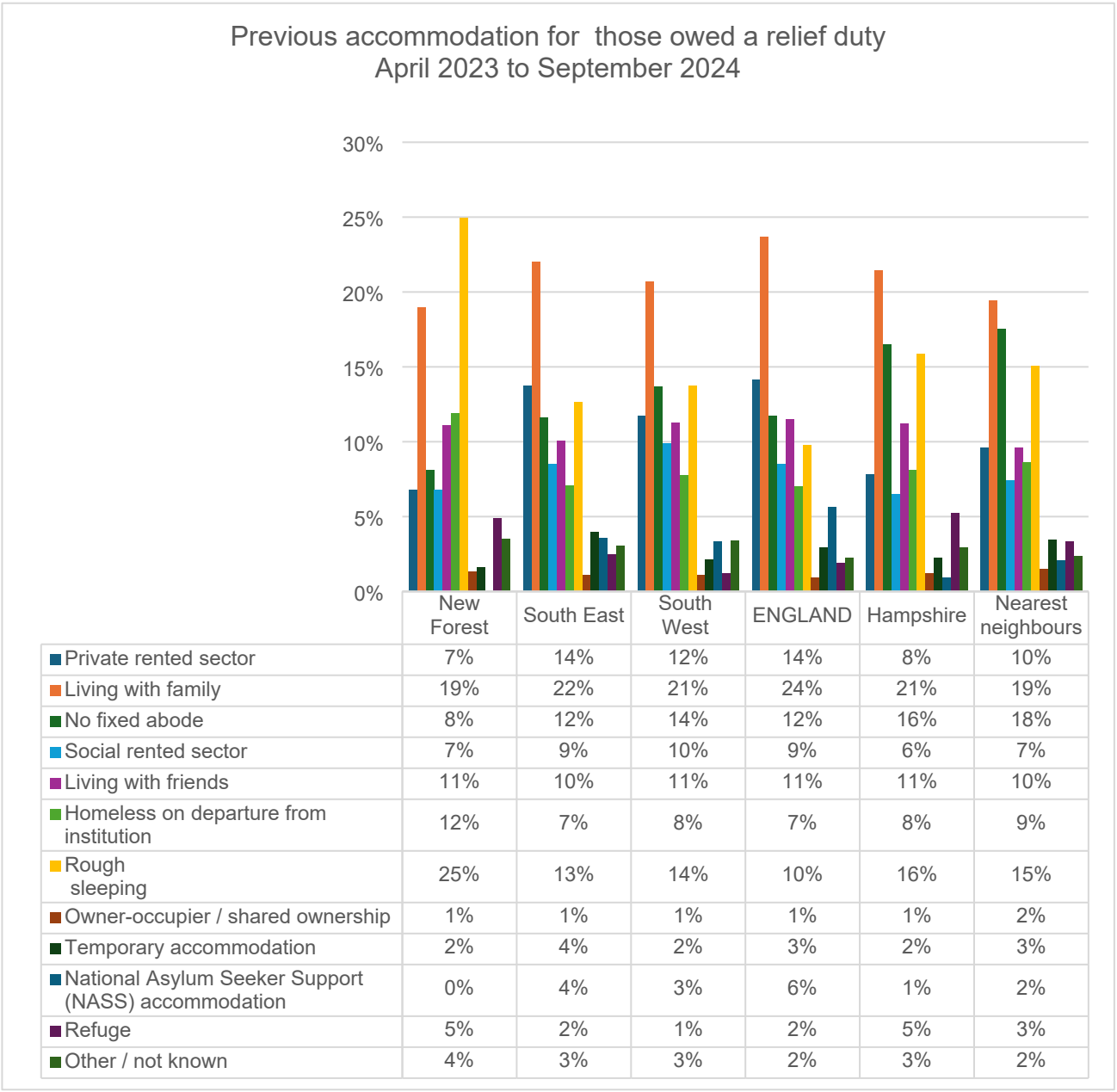
Figure 17 and Figure 18 show the type of accommodation households were living in before they were owed a prevention duty and relief duty respectively.

Figure 17



	New Forest	South East	South West	ENGLAND	Hampshire	Nearest neighbours
Private rented sector	39%	47%	49%	47%	42%	43%
Living with family	31%	24%	22%	23%	27%	27%
No fixed abode[3]	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Social rented sector	3%	10%	10%	11%	8%	10%
Living with friends	9%	8%	7%	8%	10%	8%
Homeless on departure from institution	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Rough sleeping	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Owner-occupier / shared ownership	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%
Temporary accommodation	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
National Asylum Seeker Support (NASS) accommodation	0%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Refuge	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other / not known	11%	4%	5%	3%	8%	5%

Figure 18



	New Forest	South East	South West	ENGLAND	Hampshire	Nearest neighbours
Private rented sector	7%	14%	12%	14%	8%	10%
Living with family	19%	22%	21%	24%	21%	19%
No fixed abode	8%	12%	14%	12%	16%	18%
Social rented sector	7%	9%	10%	9%	6%	7%
Living with friends	11%	10%	11%	11%	11%	10%
Homeless on departure from institution	12%	7%	8%	7%	8%	9%
Rough sleeping	25%	13%	14%	10%	16%	15%
Owner-occupier / shared ownership	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Temporary accommodation	2%	4%	2%	3%	2%	3%
National Asylum Seeker Support (NASS) accommodation	0%	4%	3%	6%	1%	2%
Refuge	5%	2%	1%	2%	5%	3%
Other / not known	4%	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%

These figures are broadly as expected from the comparison of recorded reasons for homelessness and risk of homelessness, for example showing the relatively low proportion of those owed a prevention or relief duty in the New Forest living in the private rented sector compared to other area, the high proportion of households living with family, and the high proportion of households owed a relief duty on departure from an institution.

Two figures which do look anomalous are the 11% of prevention duty cases where previous accommodation is recorded as other / not known and the very high 25% of relief duty cases where the applicant is recorded as sleeping rough. It is hard to see

how the latter figure can be accurate considering the very low rough sleeping figures recorded in New Forest, which we will discuss later.

It is also interesting to note that 5% of homelessness relief duties are recorded as being for households living in refuges – much higher than other parts of the country but reflective of the position in the other Hampshire districts.

Homelessness referrals

The Homelessness Reduction Act has, since 2018, meant that certain organisations, such as Job Centre Plus and prisons, and local authority departments, such as adult and children's social services, have had a legal duty to refer clients using their services who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days to a local housing authority for assistance in preventing or relieving homelessness, subject to obtaining the consent of the service user.

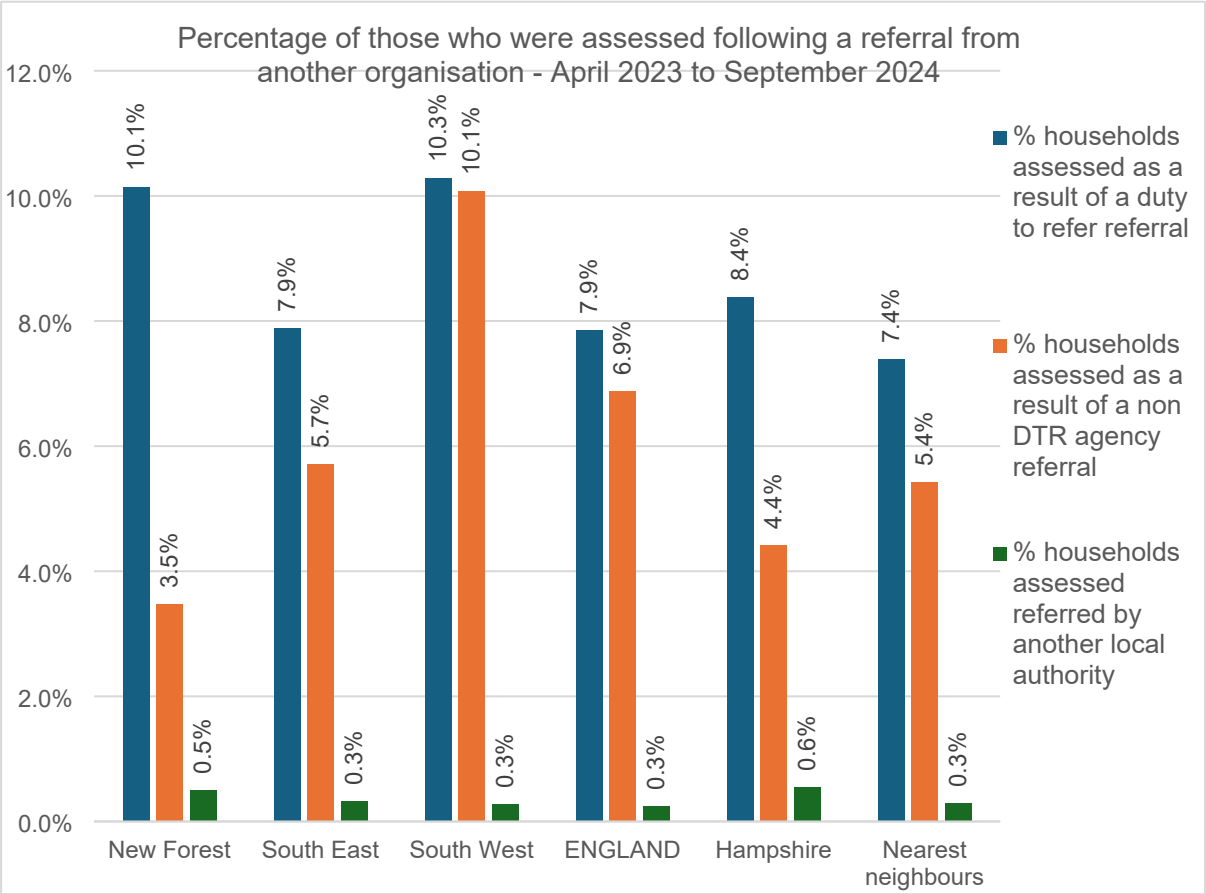
New Forest is a participant in the Hampshire Homelessness Referral Protocol[23], which is designed to ensure consistency across Hampshire for those making such referrals. Referrals may be made using the Hampshire Homelessness Referral Form[24] and submitted by email.

Figure 19 compares the percentages of those assessed on the basis that they might be homeless or at risk of homelessness between New Forest and comparator areas between April 2023 and September 2024 who were referred under the duty to refer and also referred by organisations not included in the duty to refer legislation, as well as those referred by another local authority on the basis of local connection.

In New Forest 14% of those assessed during the period were referred to the council by another organisation, rather than approaching the council independently. This was made up of 10.1% of those assessed being referred under the duty to refer, 3/5% being referred outside the duty to refer, and 0.5% being referred by another local authority. Compared to the comparator areas, the number of duty to refer referrals to New Forest was quite high, but the number of non-duty to refer referrals was quite low.

[23] https://www.newforest.gov.uk/media/482/Hampshire-Homelessness-Referral-Protocol/pdf/hampshire-homelessness-referral-protocol.pdf?m=1588244668247
[24] https://www.newforest.gov.uk/media/120/Hampshire-Homelessness-Referral-Form/pdf/hampshire-homelessness-referral-form.pdf?m=1584915140170

Figure 19



Breaking this down further in Figure 20, it can be seen that the greatest number of duty to refer referrals to New Forest were from the National Probation Service (30% of referrals), Children's social services (12%), Hospitals (12%) and Job Centre Plus (8%). In the case of all these organisations, the percentage of referrals was the highest of any of the comparator areas. This can be seen as positive as it shows that the duty to refer process in New Forest is working well.

The lower number of referrals from other organisations outside Duty to Refer shows that professionals are utilising the Duty to Refer process effectively, but it is hard to be specific about this based on the published data as organisations making referrals outside the duty to refer are not identified in the published homelessness statistics.

Figure 20: Percentage of homelessness referrals from different organisations April 2023 to September 2024						
Referral source	**New Forest**	**South East**	**South West**	**ENGLAND**	**Hampshire**	**Nearest neighbours**
Total households assessed as a result of a referral	195	11270	9850	80610	1102	970
Households referred under the Duty to Refer	72%	57%	50%	52%	63%	56%
Adult Secure Estate (prison)	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Youth Secure Estate	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
National Probation Service	30%	21%	20%	22%	24%	21%
Community Rehabilitation Company	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Hospital A&E, Urgent Treatment Centres or in-patient care	12%	8%	8%	7%	9%	8%
Mental Health in-patient care	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	4%
Jobcentre Plus	8%	7%	4%	5%	9%	6%
Adult Social Services	4%	6%	6%	6%	4%	4%
Children's Social Services	12%	9%	9%	7%	10%	11%
Children's Early Help Services/Children's centres	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Nil Recourse Team	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Secretary of State for defence in relation to members of the armed forces	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not Known	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Households referred by an agency (not subject to the Duty to Refer)	25%	41%	49%	46%	33%	41%
Households referred by another local authority	4%	2%	1%	2%	4%	2%

The employment status of those owed a prevention or relief duty between April 2023 and September 2024 is shown in Figure 21. Compared to the comparator areas, significantly fewer of those owed a homelessness duty in New Forest were registered unemployed 16% compared with 30% for the South East.

On the other hand, a high proportion (22%) were not working due to a long-term illness or disability and higher proportions than average were in full-time work (18%) or part-time work (13%) with another 5% working irregular hours. Combining these figures, over one third of those owed a homelessness duty had at least one employed person in their household.

This illustrates that having a job in New Forest is not necessarily enough to guard against homelessness, and also highlights the additional needs faced by the proportion of those experiencing homelessness with an illness or disability.

Figure 21

Employment status of those owed a prevention or relief duty April 2023 to September 2024						
Status	**New Forest**	**South East**	**South West**	**ENGLAND**	**Hampshire**	**Nearest neighbours**
Registered unemployed	16%	30%	28%	35%	22%	24%
Not working due to long-term illness / disability	22%	15%	19%	14%	16%	18%
Full-time work	18%	15%	13%	14%	19%	17%
Part-time work	13%	11%	10%	10%	11%	11%
Not seeking work / at home	7%	8%	6%	7%	10%	6%
Not registered unemployed but seeking work	6%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Retired	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%	5%
Student / training	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Registered employed off work	3%	3%	4%	3%	4%	4%
Working irregular hours	5%	3%	3%	2%	5%	4%
Other	4%	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%
Not known	1%	3%	4%	4%	2%	3%

Rough Sleeping

The most long-standing measure of rough sleeping levels are the Autumn snapshot figures.

Local authorities across England take an annual Autumn snapshot of rough sleeping using either a count-based estimate of visible rough sleeping, an evidence-based estimate meeting with local partners, or an evidence-based estimate meeting including a spotlight count in specific areas.

Local authorities, together with local partners, decide which approach and date to use for their snapshot of rough sleeping. They are advised by government to use the approach that will most accurately reflect the number of people sleeping rough in their area.

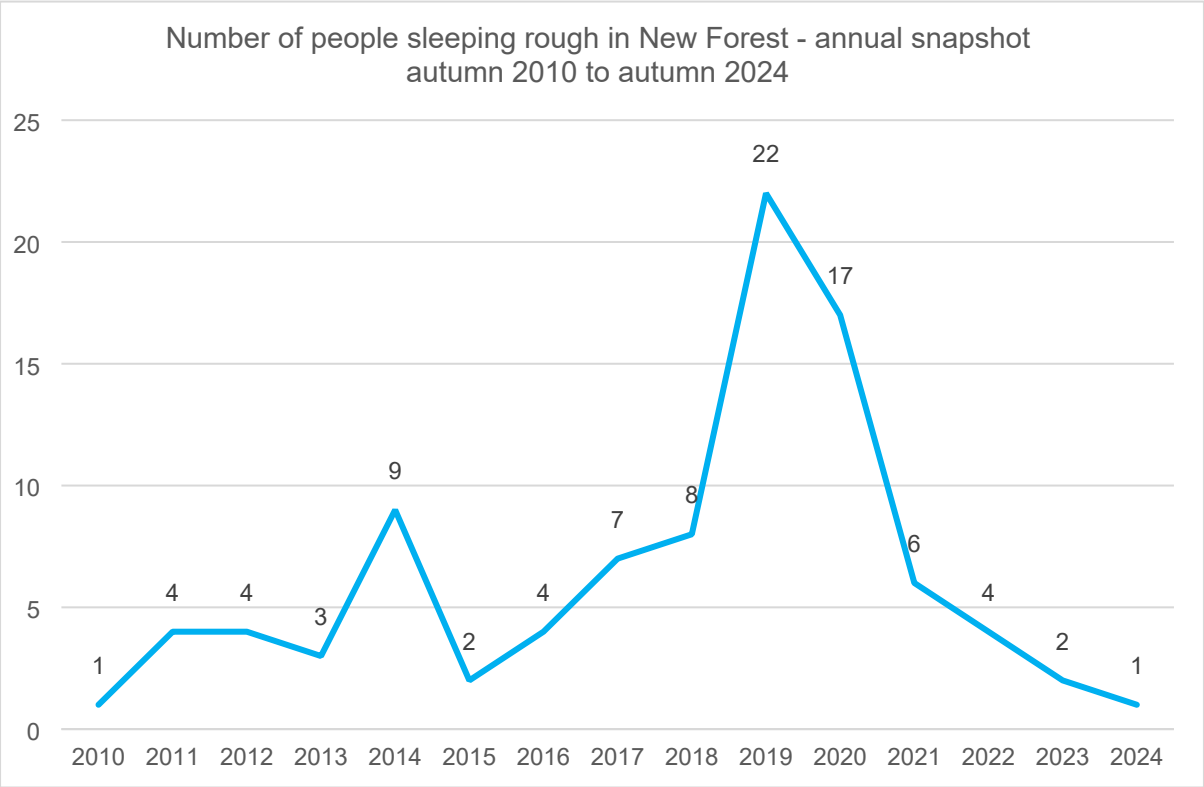
The snapshot is collated by outreach workers, local charities and community groups and is independently verified by Homeless Link[25].

[25] https://homeless.org.uk/areas-of-expertise/rough-sleeping/

New Forest used estimated figures from 2010 to 2021 but has been using an estimate including a spotlight count since 2022.

The single night rough sleeping figures for New Forest from 2010 to 2024 are shown in Figure 22.

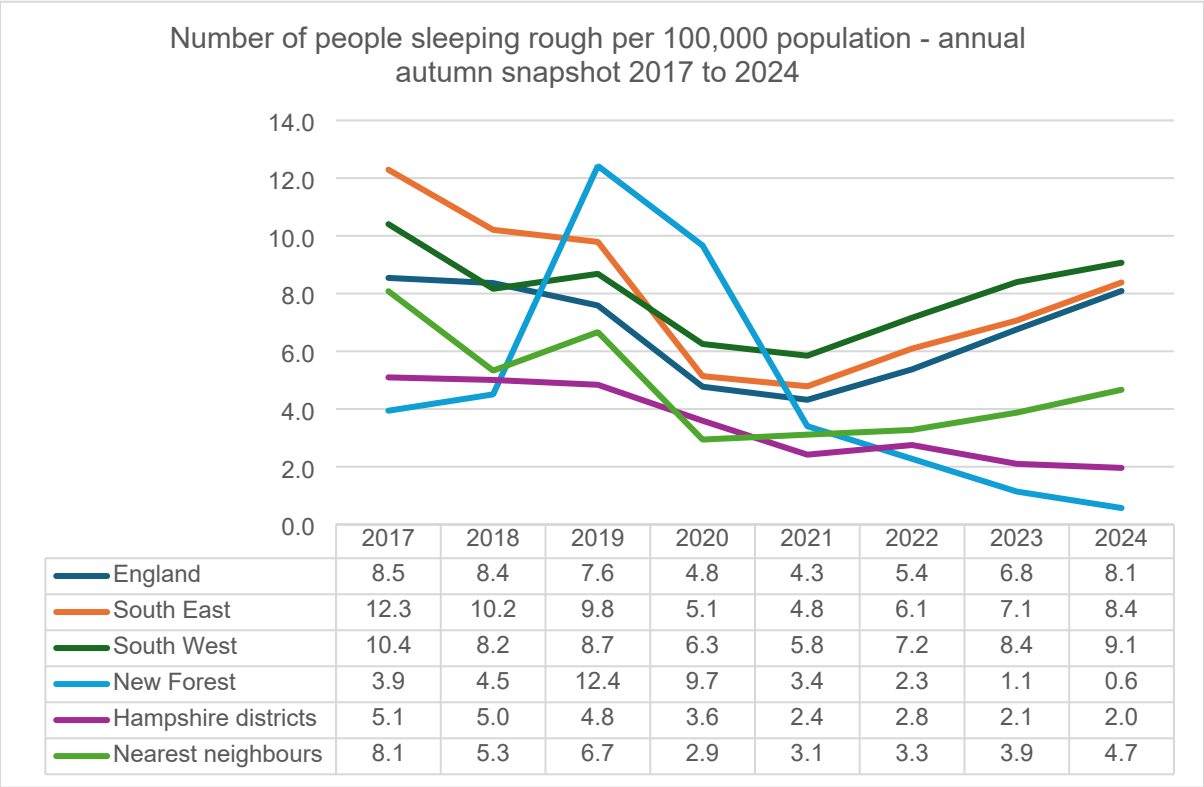
Figure 22



The published figures show impressive progress in reducing the rough sleeping snapshot figure from a high of 22 in Autumn 2019 to just 1 in Autumn 2024.

This reduction bucks the recent national and regional trends. Figure 23 compares the single night rough sleeping rates per 100,000 population in New Forest with comparator areas between 2017 and 2024.

Figure 23

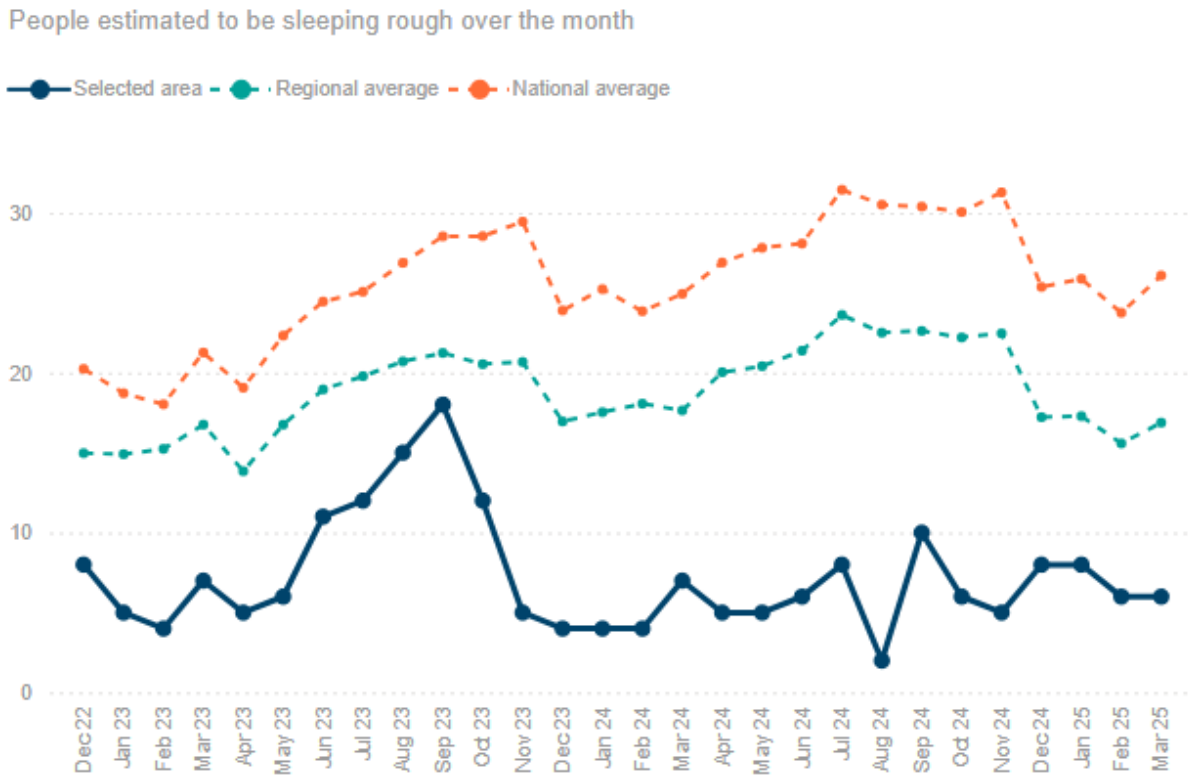


	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
England	8.5	8.4	7.6	4.8	4.3	5.4	6.8	8.1
South East	12.3	10.2	9.8	5.1	4.8	6.1	7.1	8.4
South West	10.4	8.2	8.7	6.3	5.8	7.2	8.4	9.1
New Forest	3.9	4.5	12.4	9.7	3.4	2.3	1.1	0.6
Hampshire districts	5.1	5.0	4.8	3.6	2.4	2.8	2.1	2.0
Nearest neighbours	8.1	5.3	6.7	2.9	3.1	3.3	3.9	4.7

As Figure 23 illustrates, the steadily falling rough sleeping figures in New Forest since 2021 contrast with steadily rising figures for England, the South East, South West and ONS near neighbours. Rough sleeping figures in the Hampshire districts have been falling, but not as rapidly as in New Forest.

More comprehensive estimated information on rough sleeping is available from the MHCLG Rough Sleeping data framework tables and dashboards. This shows that New Forest continues to have low levels of rough sleeping compared to national and regional averages, with 6 people estimated to have slept rough in New Forest in March 2025, broadly in line with consistent figures since Autumn 2023. The monthly data from December 2022 to March 2025 is shown in Figure 24.

Figure 24 Number of people rough sleeping in New Forest per month compared to national and regional averages[26]



Future levels of homelessness

There is no accepted model to predict homelessness in the UK with a strong track record of success.

However, the most rigorous approach to modelling likely levels of future homelessness are probably those used by Heriot Watt University to produce the Crisis Homelessness Monitor[27]. This attempts to make predictions for future 'core homelessness' based on different scenarios.

Crisis model

The core homelessness concept was first introduced in research undertaken with Crisis in 2017. The components of core homelessness and their definitions as applied in this study are shown in Figure 25 below. The core homelessness concept seeks to enable a framework that goes beyond statutory homelessness statistics

[26] Source: MHCLG Rough Sleeping Data Framework dashboard March 2025
[27] https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/the-homelessness-monitor-england-2023/

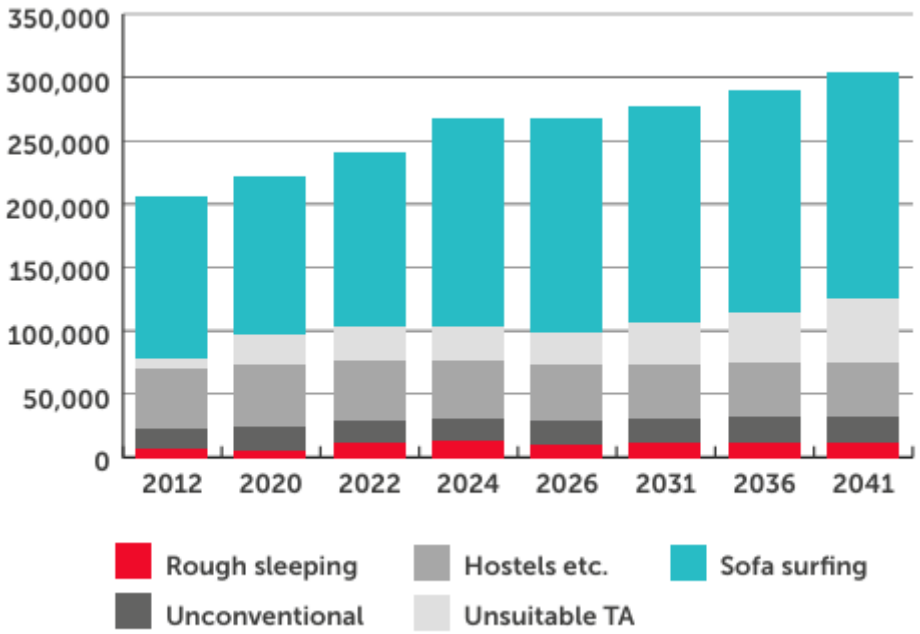
(which track only those who actively seek LA homelessness assistance and who are eligible for it), and counts or estimates of rough sleeping.

Figure 25. Core homelessness categories and definitions – source Crisis homelessness monitor

Category	Description
Rough Sleeping	Sleeping in the open e.g. in streets, parks, carparks, doorways
Unconventional Accommodation	Sleeping in places/spaces not intended as normal residential accommodation, e.g. cars, vans, lorries, caravans/motor homes, tents, boats, sheds, garages, industrial/commercial premises
Hostels etc.	Communal emergency and TA primarily targeted at homeless people including hostels, refuges and shelters[266]
Unsuitable Temporary Accommodation	Homeless households placed in TA of certain types, viz B&B, Private Non-self-contained Licensed/Nightly Let, and Out of Area Placements (half in London, all elsewhere)
Sofa Surfing	Individuals or family groups staying temporarily (expecting or wanting to move) with another household, excluding nondependent children of host household and students, who are also overcrowded on the bedroom standard

This means that the relationship between prediction of core homelessness and future statutory homelessness and rough sleeping is not straightforward. Bearing this in mind, the 2023 England homelessness monitor working from 2022 baseline figures, predicts that the rise in core homelessness since 2012 will continue to 2041 as shown in Figure 26.

Figure 26. New baseline projection of core homelessness by category, England 2012-41 (number of households) – source 2023 England homelessness



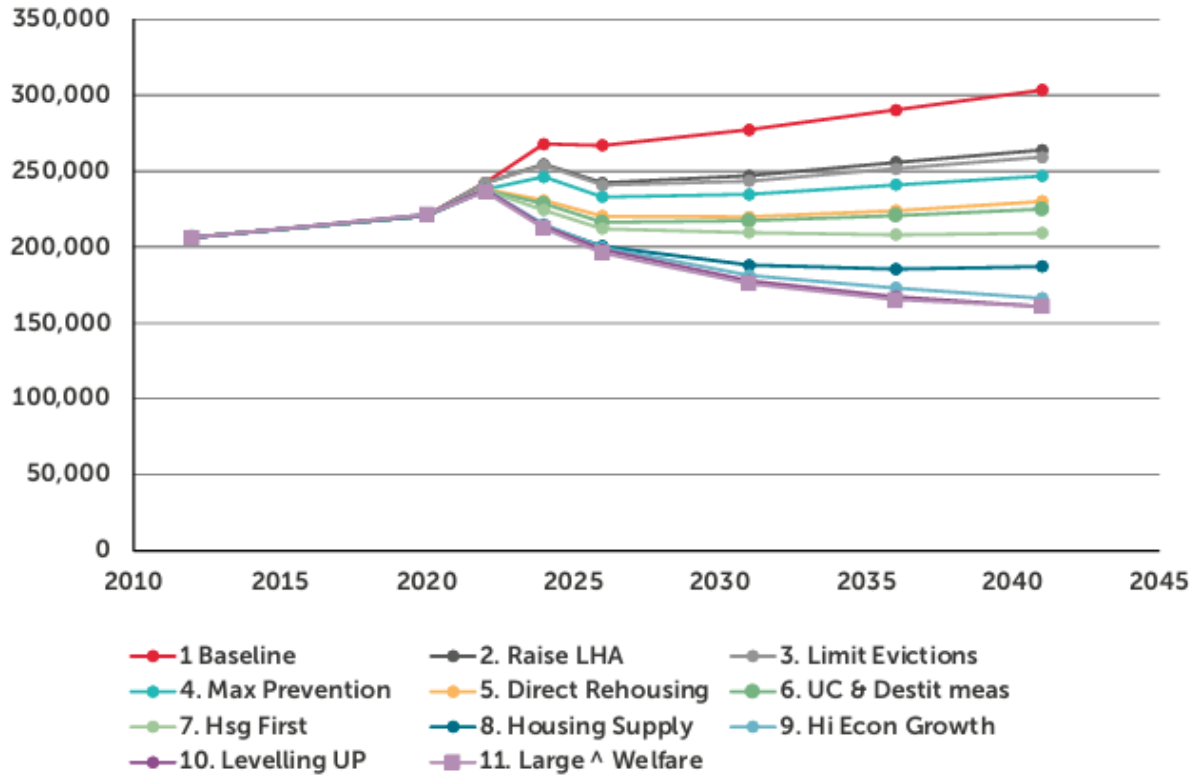
monitor

The Heriot Watt analysis then goes on to estimate the impact of ten policy measures which might reduce future homelessness, namely:

- Increasing LHA rates
- Limiting evictions in the private rented sector
- Increased homelessness prevention
- Increased homelessness social housing allocations
- Making Universal Credit and other benefits more accessible
- Increasing Housing First provision
- Increasing new social housing supply
- Higher economic growth
- Levelling Up to make regions outside London more prosperous
- A large increase in welfare benefits

The estimated impacts of these measures on core homelessness are shown in Figure 27, with a combination of such measures predicated to reduce the growth of core homelessness or to bring about a reduction in core homelessness.

Figure 27. Total core homelessness in England with the sequential addition of ten policy scenarios to reduce core homelessness in the period to 2041 (number of households) – source 2023 England homelessness monitor



It is worth noting, that, with the significant exception of increasing welfare benefits or making them more accessible, these measures are almost all current government policy. However, it is impossible to predict how successfully they will be achieved and what the impact on future homelessness might be.

Factors in New Forest

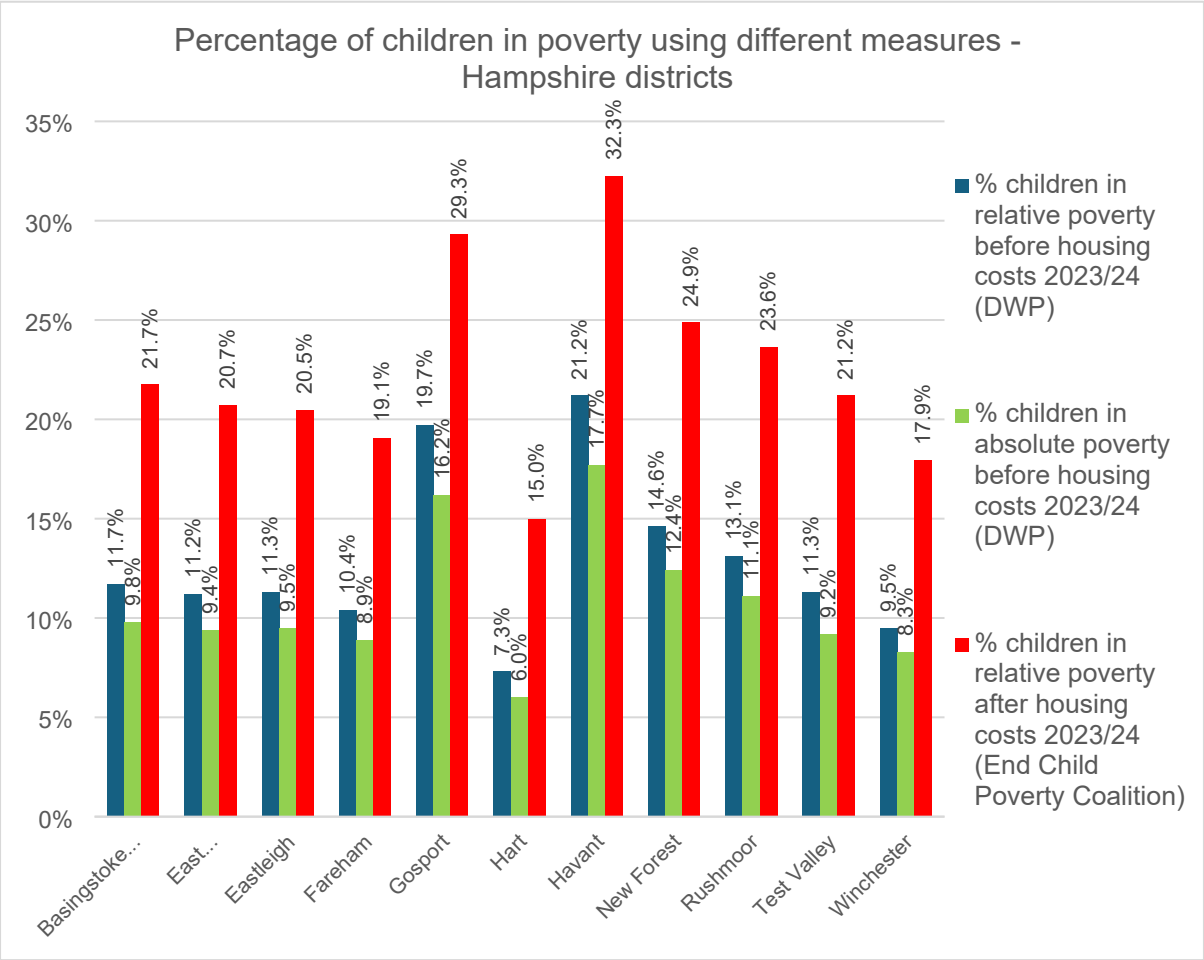
Probably the most prudent assumption is that homelessness will continue to increase nationally or stabilise at current levels and that this will also be reflected in New Forest.

In a New Forest context, it is worth considering trends in poverty and housing affordability as these are likely to affect future homelessness levels.

Figure 28 compares child poverty in New Forest with the other Hampshire districts using DWP data[28] to consider both relative and absolute poverty before housing costs, and End Child Poverty Coalition (ECPC) data[29] to look at relative poverty after housing costs.

[28] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2024
[29] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2024

Figure 28



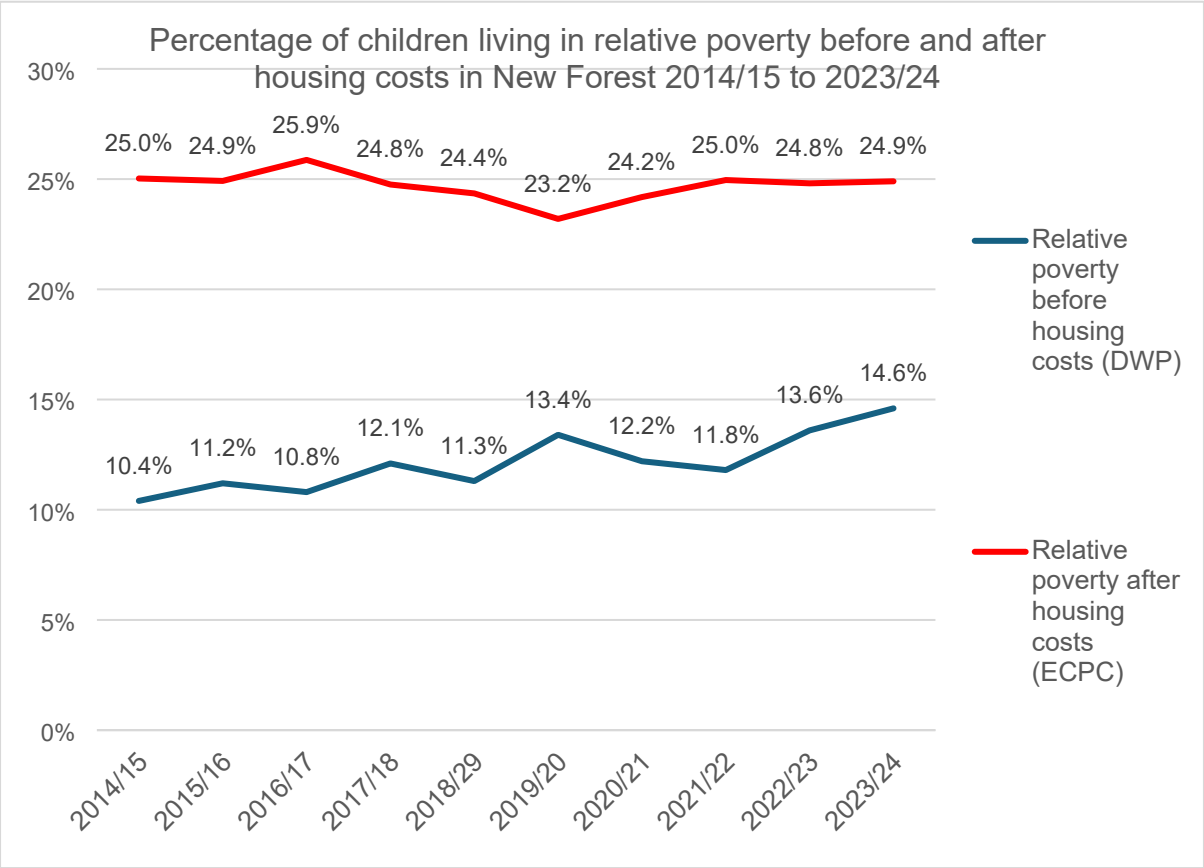
According to the latest data for 2023/24, New Forest has the third highest levels of child poverty of the Hampshire district authorities on any of the measures, with 14.6% of children living in a household in relative poverty before housing costs, 12.4% in a household experiencing absolute poverty before housing costs based on the DWP measure, and 24.9% living in relative poverty after housing costs according to the ECPC.

Poverty is lower than in Havant or Gosport, but higher than in Basingstoke & Deane, East Hampshire, Eastleigh, Fareham, Rushmoor, Test Valley or Winchester.

Interestingly, looking at trend data from 2014/15 to 2023/24 as shown in Figure 29, whilst child poverty before housing costs has risen significantly in New Forest over the past decade, child poverty after housing costs has remained at the same level over the period according to the published data. This is mirrored in the national trend.

It may be that this is largely due to housing benefits compensating for lower incomes relative to housing costs.

Figure 29



Another indicator of potential homelessness pressures due to unmet housing demand are house price to earnings affordability ratios. New Forest has the highest ratio of median house prices to median earnings among the Hampshire districts with the ratio at 10.6 in 2024 as shown in Figure 30. A high ratio tends to mean that less residents can afford to buy, leading to increased demand for rented accommodation, so that rented accommodation can be less accessible to households on lower incomes who may be at risk of homelessness.

Figure 30

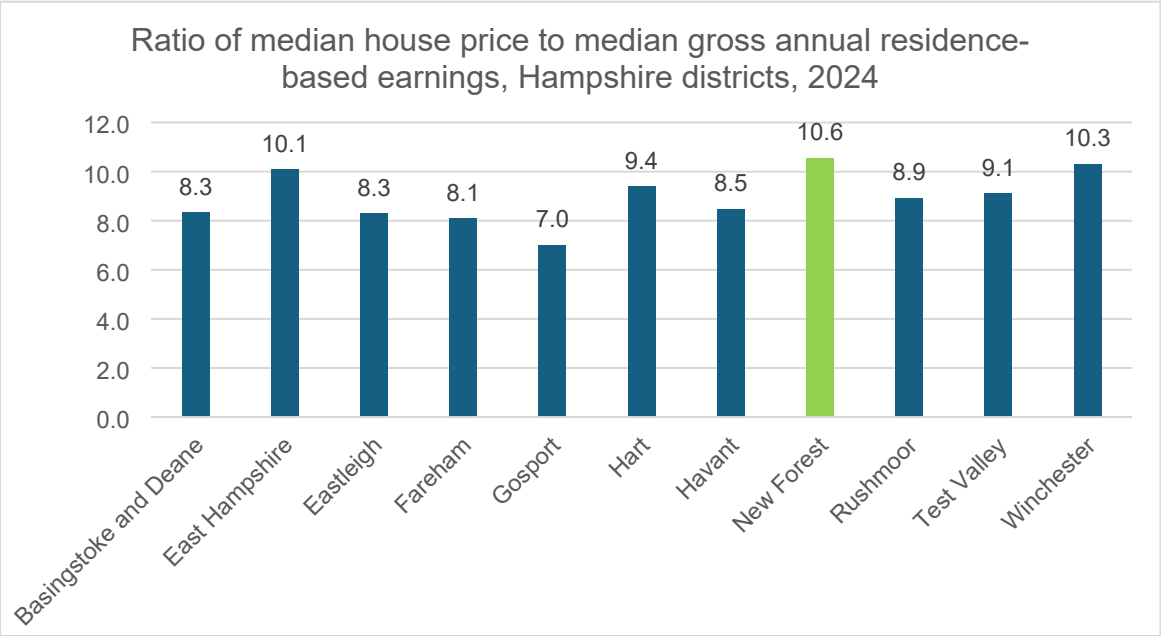
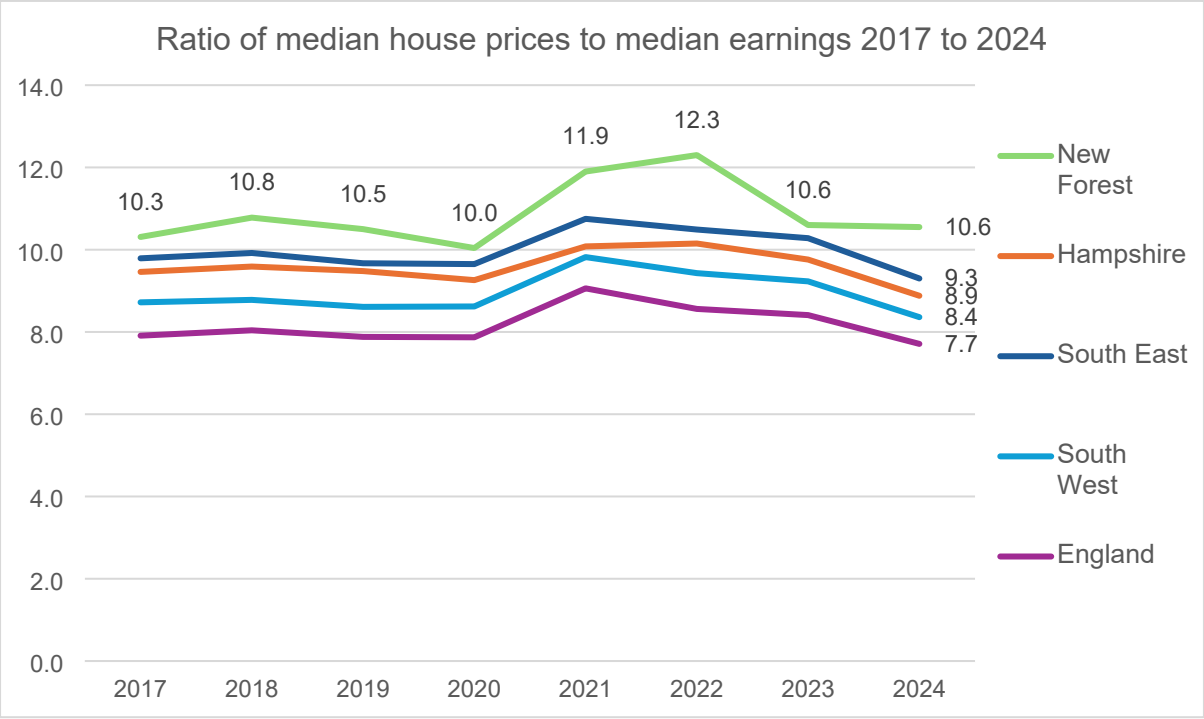


Figure 31 compares the trend in this affordability ratio between 2017 and 2024 in New Forest with the Hampshire districts, the South East, South West and England. Housing has been less affordable to buy in New Forest than any of the comparator areas for the whole period. However, affordability has been improving slightly in New Forest since 2022.

Figure 31



3. Preventing and Relieving Homelessness

Staffing

The New Forest Housing Options service includes, homelessness prevention, homelessness relief, allocations, temporary accommodation, rough sleeping and Ukraine resettlement. The service is led by a housing options manager, who reports to the service manager for housing options and tenancy accounts.

Unlike some councils who have generic housing options officers covering both homelessness prevention and relief New Forest District Council has three dedicated prevention officer roles and is in the process of enhancing homelessness prevention activities by adding additional homelessness prevention staff, including a prevention team leader. There are three homelessness relief officers managed by a homelessness team leader, who is also in charge of rough sleeping

The council also employs a mental health homelessness practitioner and an accommodation for ex-offenders officer who are able to assist on preventing and relieving homelessness and rough sleeping for people experiencing mental health issues and people leaving prison.

In addition, there is a housing options reviews and projects officer, two homelessness triage officers, a homelessness and housing officer, two Ukraine officers, and an accommodation support worker.

The homelessness team also includes homelessness navigators and assertive outreach workers primarily concerned with addressing rough sleeping.

The Council also maintains active links with Citizens Advice and voluntary sector groups The Crossings and Youth and Family Matters Totton who engage with people in housing need. This extends to council officers attending drop in sessions to give advice housing options advice.

Access to assistance

The Council's website suggests that the easiest way to get help if at risk of homelessness is to refer oneself through the online portal.

However, the portal requires quite high level of literacy to be able to use it and asks for a lot of information. It is unlikely that this would be appropriate for anyone at risk of homelessness and in need of informal advice short of making a homelessness application.

There is also a phone line on the website, but this explicitly states it is for people who are 'homeless today' rather than anyone at risk of homelessness.

There is also a video ‘guide to homelessness prevention’ under the heading ‘Refer someone else for help’. The video does indeed seem targeted at professionals, as the content is all text, and quite complex text.

There does appear to be a lack of an accessible route for people to get housing advice short of making quite a complex self-referral.

The position is more straightforward for agencies, who have the option of making a referral through the portal or by email.

We tried telephoning the number the website suggests to call, if homeless on the day. This was engaged and then disconnected the call the first time we tried but led to an automated message when we called a second time.

The message gives 5 options, one of which is ‘homelessness’. There is then a choice between needing urgent help and making a ‘general enquiry’. If the general enquiry option is selected, then the message directs the clearer to the council’s website to fill in the portal.

Immediately after this, however, there is an option to please hold if ‘you do not have access to the internet’.

The call was then picked up quite quickly by a triage officer. After explaining that this was a mystery shopping call to support the review, the officer explained that although people are encouraged to use the portal, in practice they would help anyone in difficulty and would take details over the phone. For an application to be made, documents would be required, but these could be scanned at a local office close to where the person is calling from. The officer was clear that help would be given to match the person’s needs.

Overall this suggests that those not at immediate risk of homelessness, who have not approached another agency, are not encouraged to approach the council for homelessness prevention advice, other than through the portal. Officers informed us that previous transformation work aimed at reducing the number of phone calls received, opened up digital channels to manage incoming contact. However, there is no clear written advice for people at risk of homelessness for what to do in different circumstances, other than formally applying for assistance through the portal.

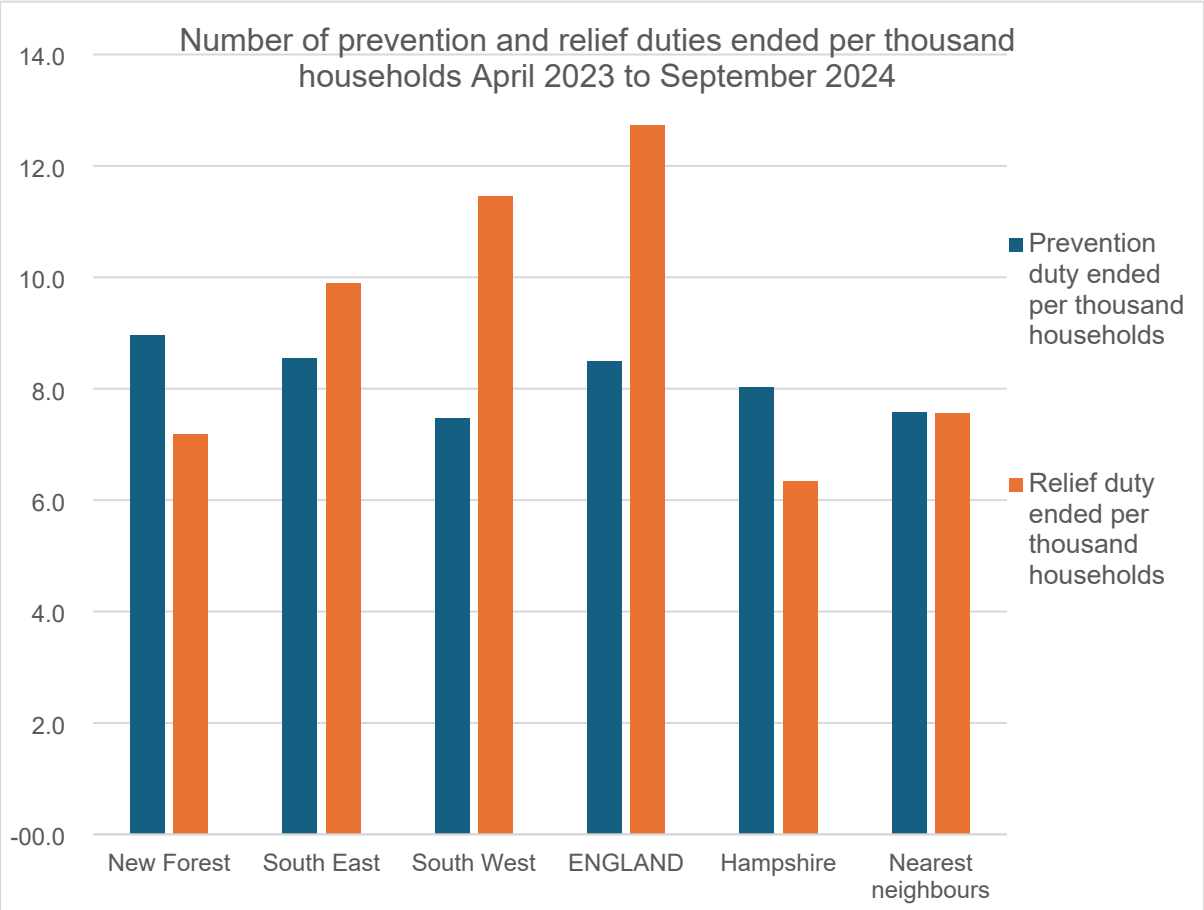
However, the impression based on this one call was that if a caller did persist in trying to get through, they would be helped, or that at least suggestions would be given for where they might be able to get help.

Prevention and relief outcomes

In the period April 2023 to September 2024, 729 homelessness prevention duties ended and 585 relief duties ended in New Forest[30].

Figure 32 compares the number of prevention and relief duties ended per thousand households in New Forest over this period with the Hampshire districts, ONS near neighbours, the South East, South West, and England.

Figure 32



New Forest ended the highest number of prevention duties compared to its population of any of the comparator areas but the second lowest number of relief duties, with only the Hampshire districts ending a lower number of relief duties per thousand households.

Of the prevention duties ending in New Forest, 47% resulted in accommodation being secured for at least 6 months, 30% ended with the household becoming homeless, 11% of duties ended because contact was lost, 8% of cases ended because 56 days elapsed and no further action was taken because homelessness had not occurred. In 4% of cases the application was withdrawn.

[30] The ratio of prevention duties ended to relief duties ended is lower than the ratio of prevention duties owed to relief duties owed at first assessment. This is because a proportion of those owed a prevention duty at first assessment go on to be owed a relief duty if homelessness is not successfully prevented.

Of the relief duties ending in New Forest, only 23% ended by securing accommodation for at least 6 months, with 67% ending with 56 days having elapsed without securing settled accommodation, 4% with contact lost, 4% with the application withdrawn, 1.2% due to a local connection referral being accepted by another local authority and 0.7% due to intentional homelessness from accommodation provided.

Figure 33 shows the percentage of prevention and relief duties ended by securing accommodation for at least 6 months in each of the Hampshire districts and Figure 34 compares New Forest with our comparator areas.

Figure 33

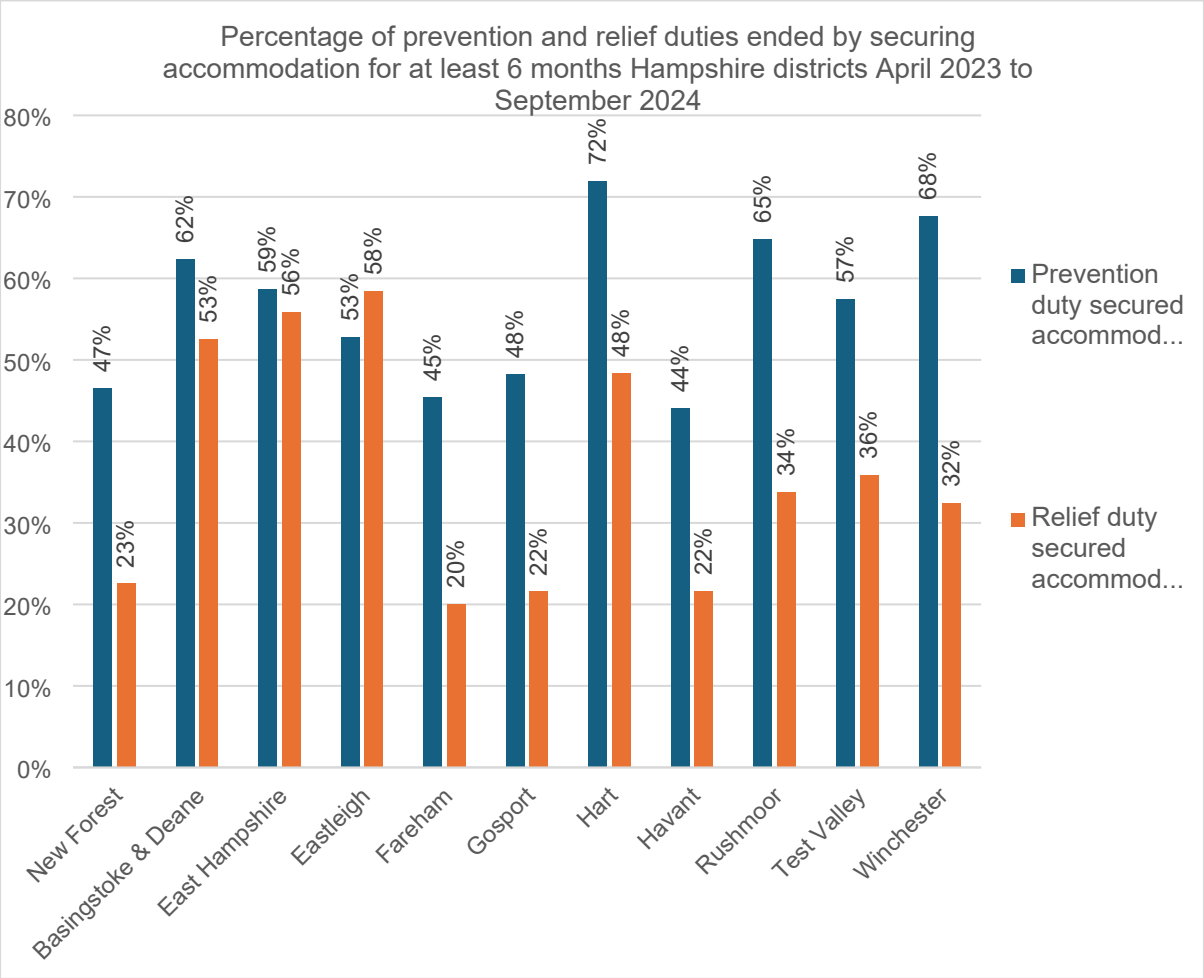
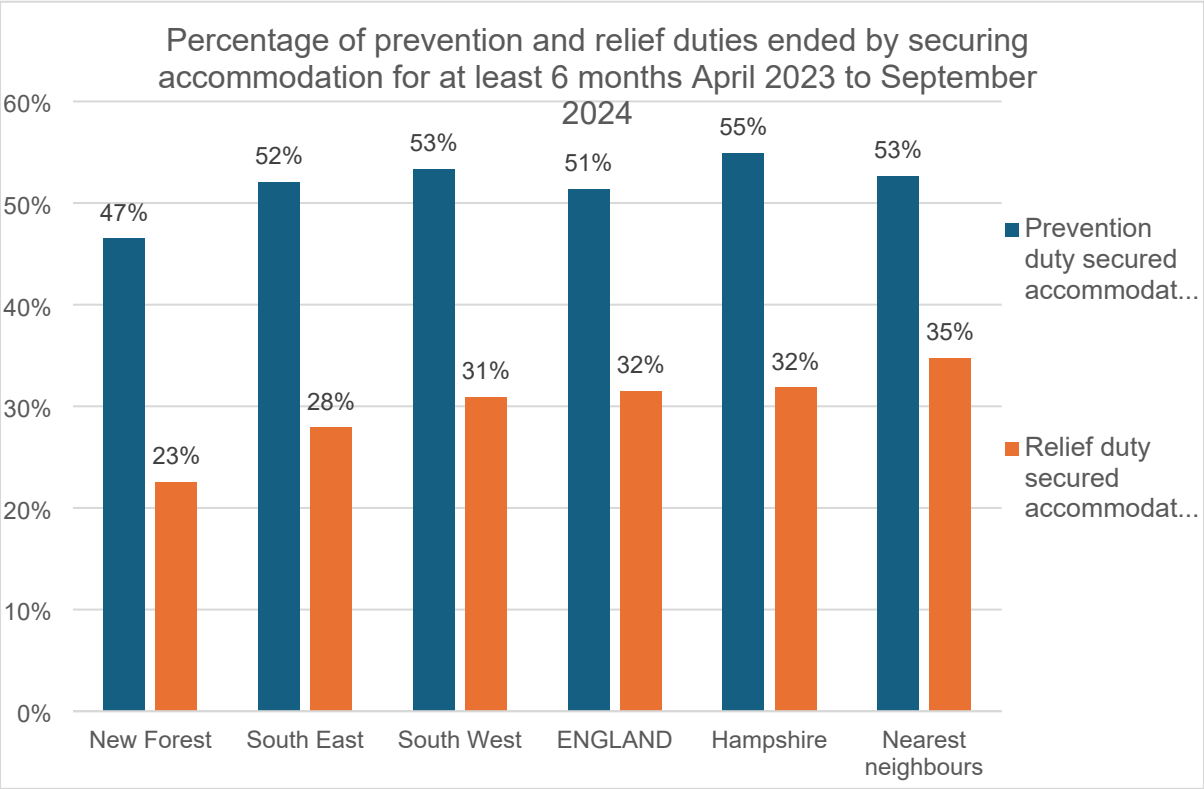


Figure 34



New Forest ended a lower proportion of prevention duties and a significantly lower proportion of relief duties by securing accommodation for at least 6 months compared to any of the comparator areas.

When comparing with the individual Hampshire districts, New Forest was below average, but did perform slightly better than some other districts in both preventing and relieving homelessness, measured in this way.

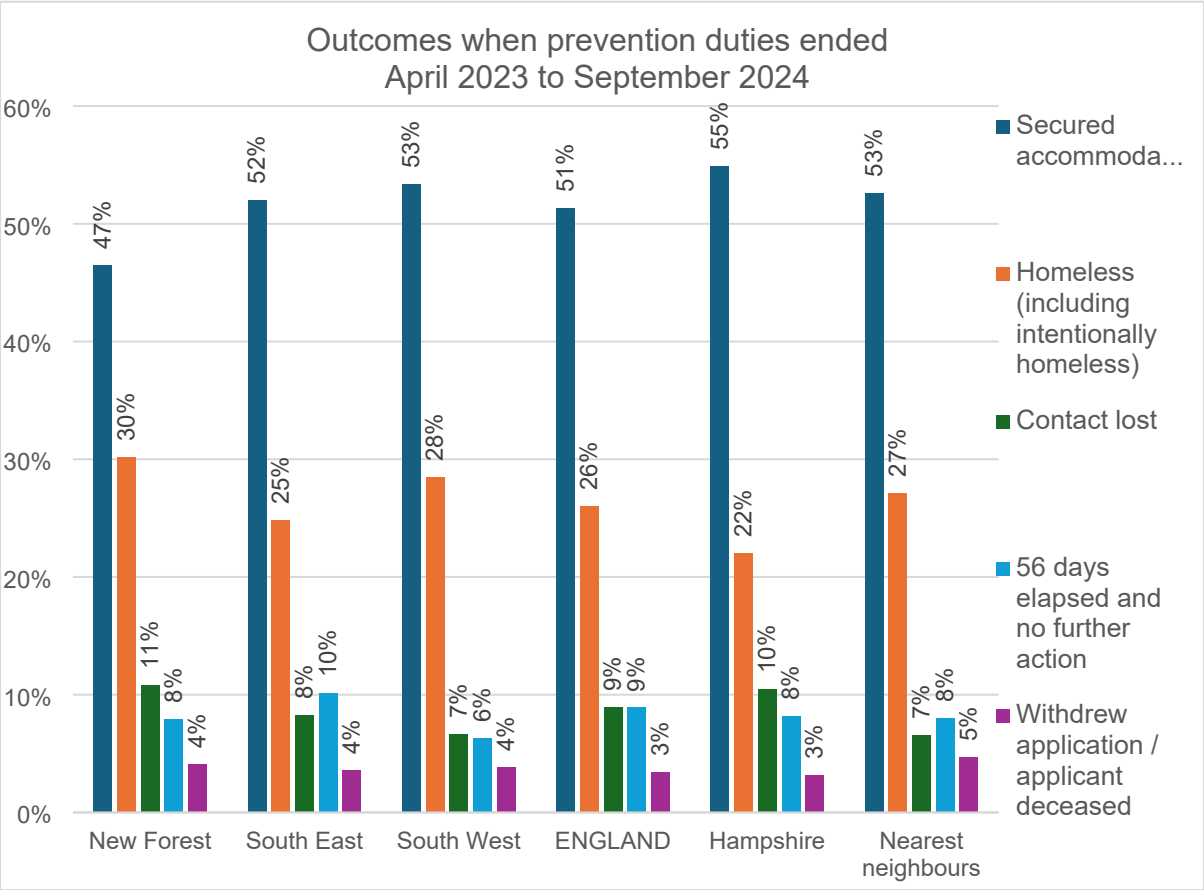
It is impossible to determine from these figures what the reasons are for New Forest's relative lack of success in preventing and relieving homelessness. This might be at least partly due to the relative lack of accommodation in New Forest compared to other areas, but it is very difficult to be certain the extent to which this is the cause from the available data.

However, some light can be shed on this by breaking down the figures further.

Prevention activity

Looking more closely at prevention duties in Figure 35, New Forest had the lowest proportion of duties ending in securing accommodation and the highest proportion ending in homelessness compared to the comparator areas.

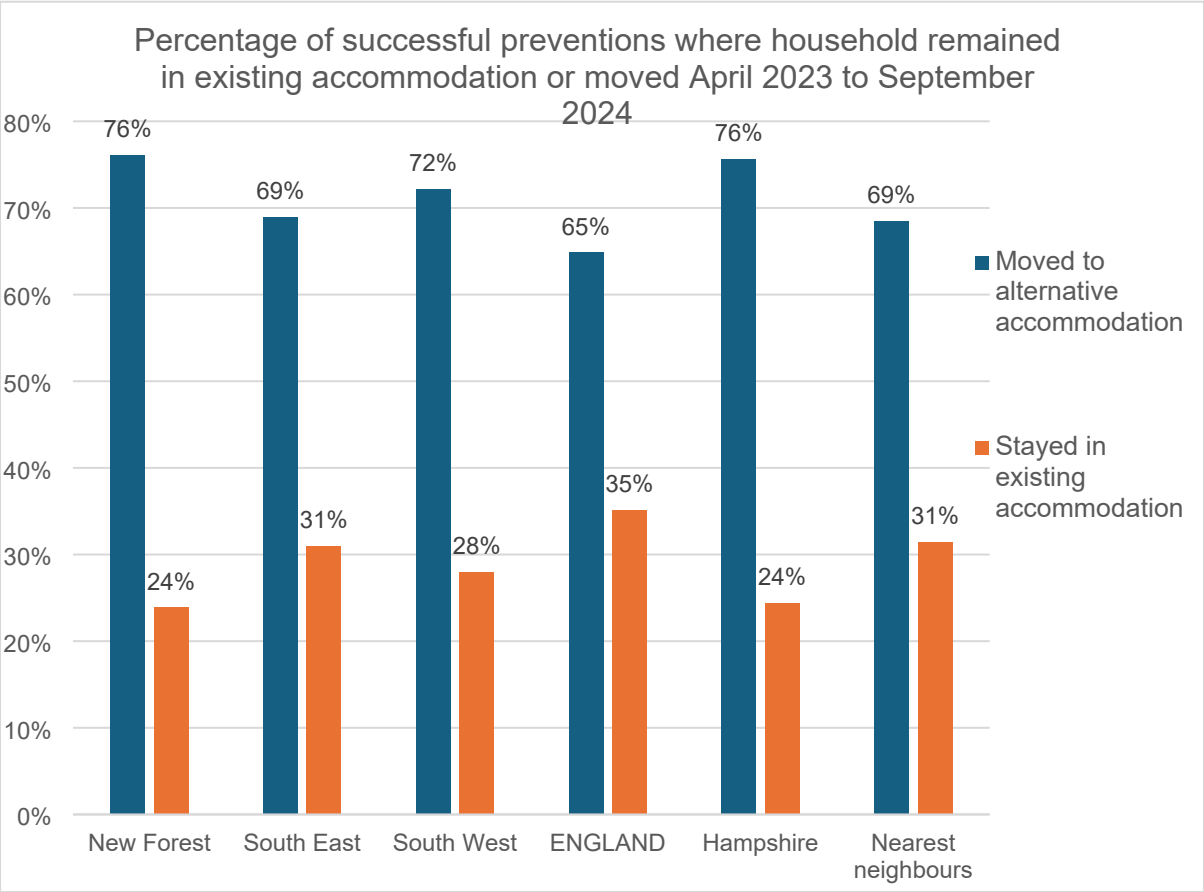
Figure 35



Of the 339 New Forest prevention outcomes where accommodation was secured for at least 6 months 24% were able to stay in their existing accommodation and 76% moved to alternative accommodation. As shown in Figure 36, this is a lower proportion of successful outcomes where households were able to stay in their existing accommodation than any other area except the Hampshire districts, where the average of 24% was the same as New Forest.

This may suggest that there is scope to increase the number of preventions in New Forest in the future, where households can remain in their existing accommodation, where this is a safe option.

Figure 36



This point is further illustrated in Figure 37, which looks at the percentage of different activities used to successfully prevent homelessness across New Forest and the comparator areas.

Comparing New Forest with other areas, it is clear that there are some significant differences.

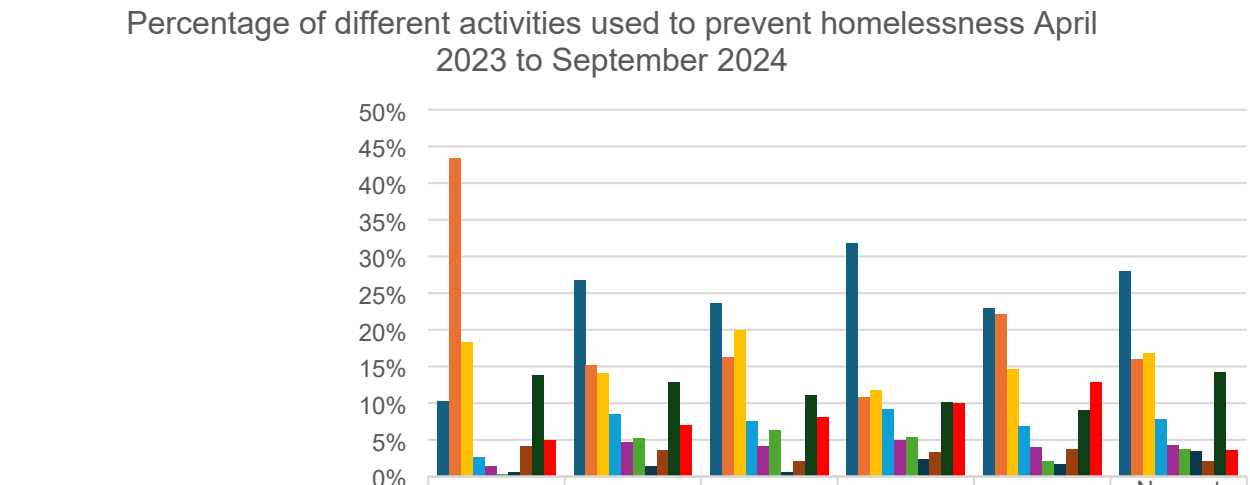
One area where New Forest appears to stand out is that there are far more properties where the applicant has found their own property than where the local authority has secured accommodation. Empowering applicants to find their own properties is good practice. However, discussing this with officers, it may be that this is to at least some extent a reporting anomaly than a real difference, and that New Forest's prevention officers find more accommodation than is suggested by the published data.

Perhaps more significantly, only 4% of New Forest's homelessness preventions were as a result of negotiating to prevent eviction or to secure a return to staying with family and friends. This compares with 14% in the South East, 12% in the South West, 14% in England, 11% across the Hampshire districts and 12% in the ONS near neighbours.

It's also interesting to note that only 0.3% of homelessness prevention in New Forest

were achieved by providing supported housing, a fraction of the number in any of the comparator areas. This reflects the low levels of supported housing within the New Forest area.

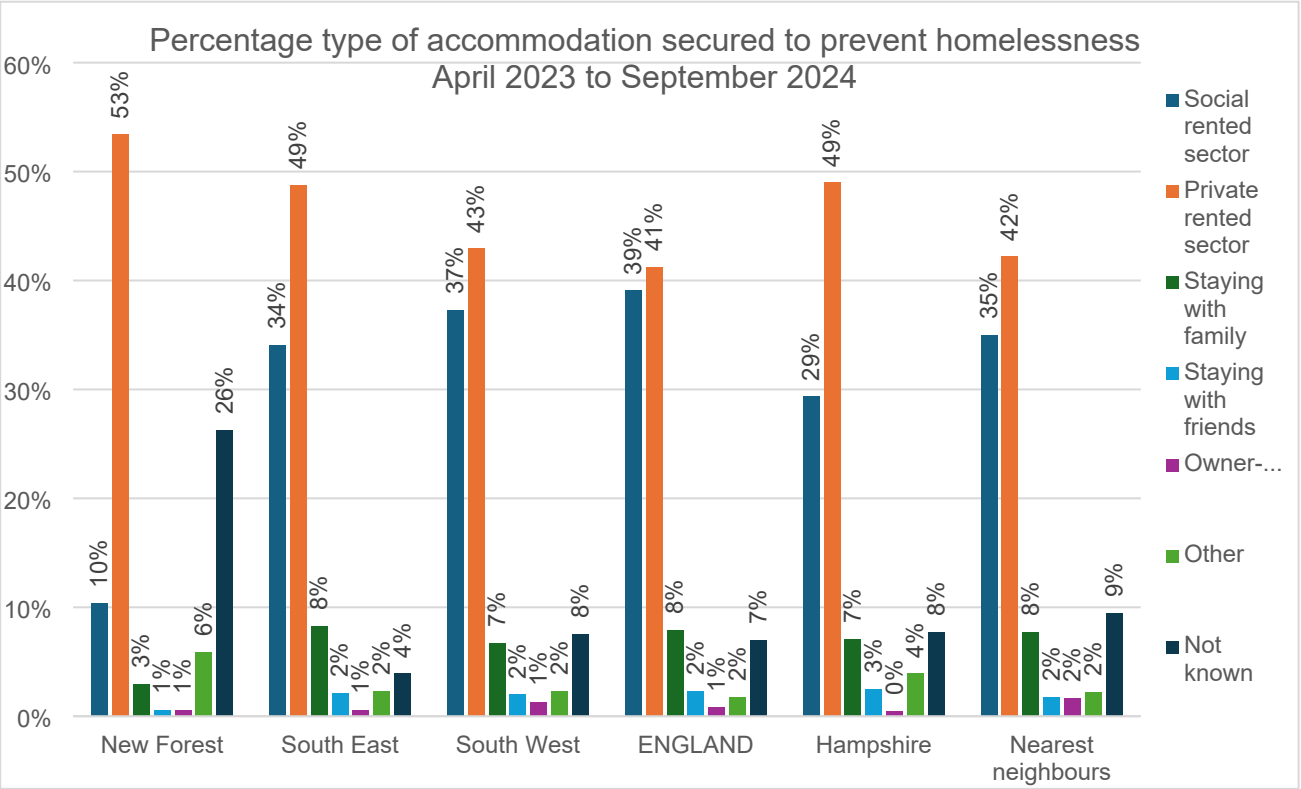
Figure 37



	New Forest	South East	South West	ENGLAND	Hampshire	Nearest neighbours
Accommodation secured by local authority or organisation delivering housing options service	10%	27%	24%	32%	23%	28%
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, with financial payment	43%	15%	16%	11%	22%	16%
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, without financial payment	18%	14%	20%	12%	15%	17%
Negotiation / mediation / advocacy work to prevent eviction / repossession	3%	9%	8%	9%	7%	8%
Negotiation / mediation work to secure return to family or friend	1%	5%	4%	5%	4%	4%
Supported housing provided	0%	5%	6%	5%	2%	4%
Discretionary Housing Payment to reduce shortfall	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	3%
Other financial payments (e.g. to reduce arrears)	4%	4%	2%	3%	4%	2%
Other	14%	13%	11%	10%	9%	14%
No activity – advice and information provided	5%	7%	8%	10%	13%	4%

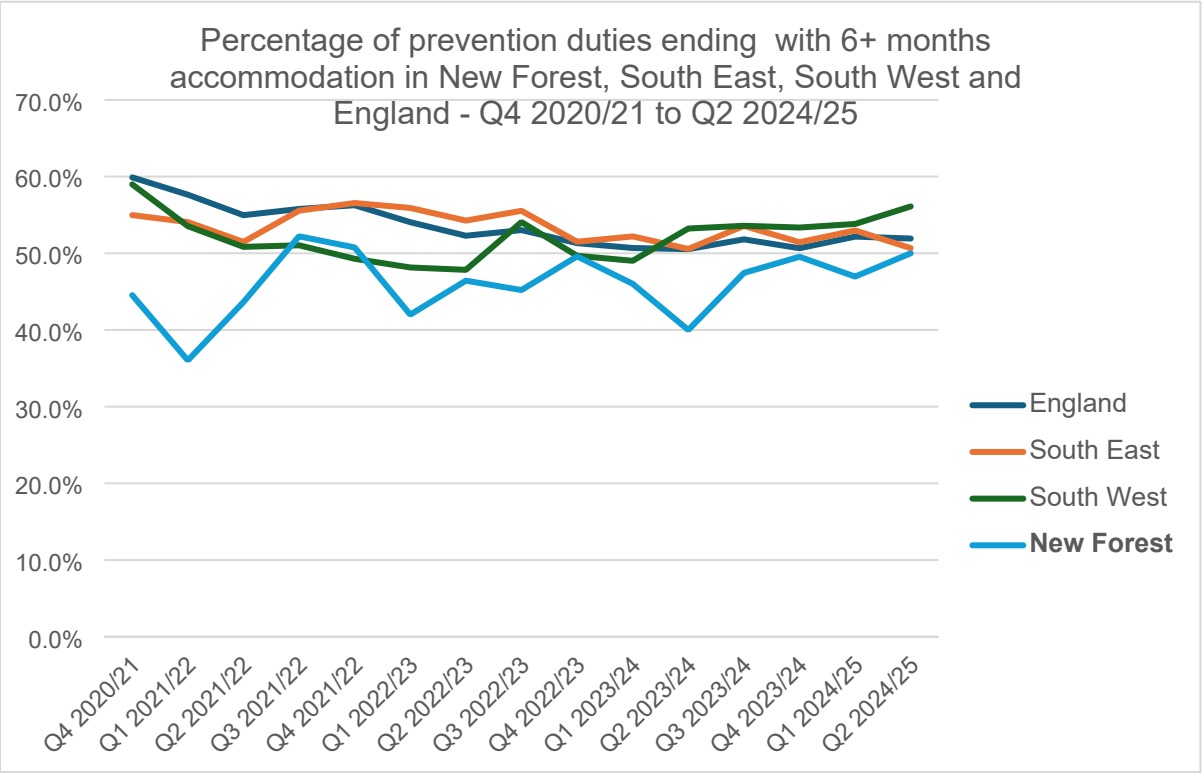
Looking at the types of accommodation secured to prevent homelessness in Figure 38, it is clear that whilst the proportion of private rented sector accommodation is the highest, the proportion of preventions into social rented sector accommodation is by far the lowest in New Forest at only 10%, compared with 29% across the Hampshire districts and 34% across the South East. It's also striking that 26% of New Forest's preventions are recorded as being into accommodation whose type is not known.

Figure 38



Looking at the percentage of prevention duties ended by securing accommodation on a quarterly basis from Q4 2020/21 to Q2 2024/25 in Figure 39 shows evidence that New Forest's performance compared to other areas has been improving over time.

Figure 39



Relief activity

Turning to the outcome of relief duties in Figure 40, New Forest had the lowest proportion of duties ending in securing accommodation and the highest proportion ending in because 56 days elapsed compared to the comparator areas, with only 132 out of 585 relief duties ending with accommodation secured.

Figure 40

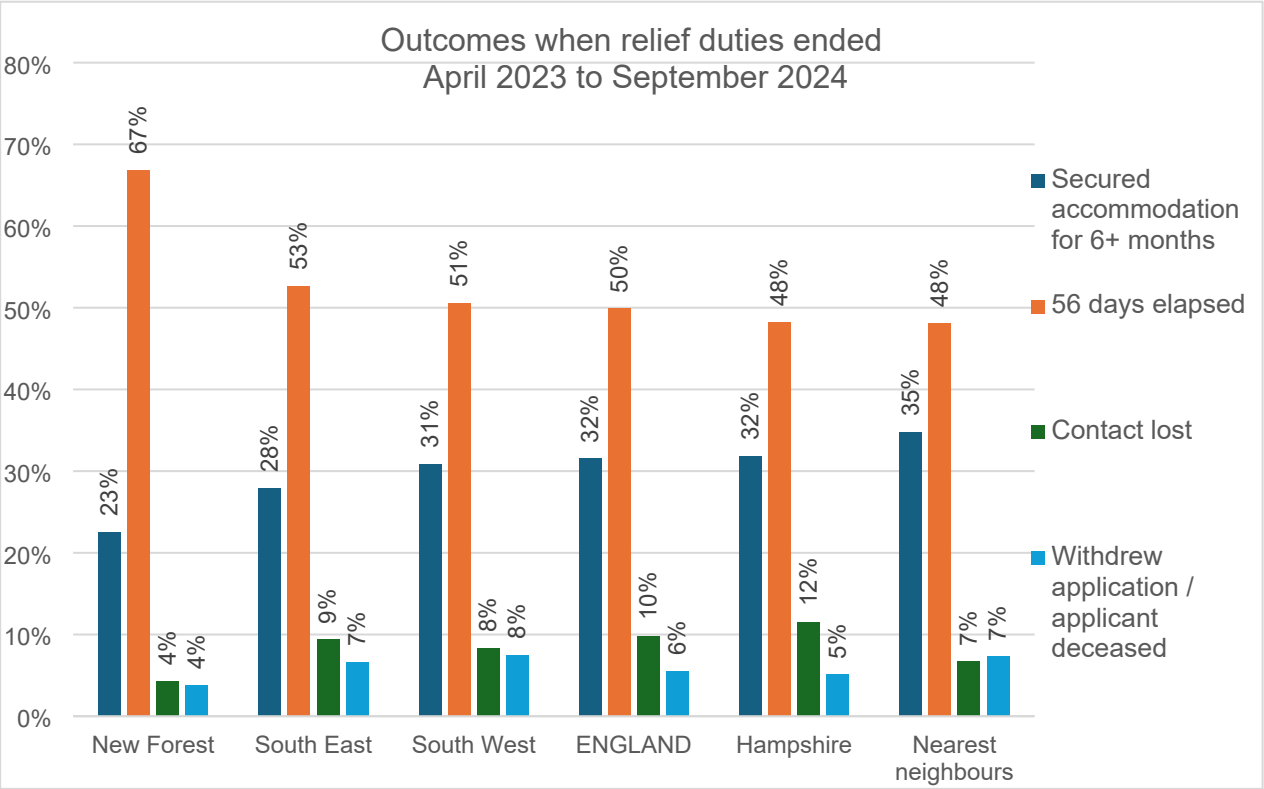
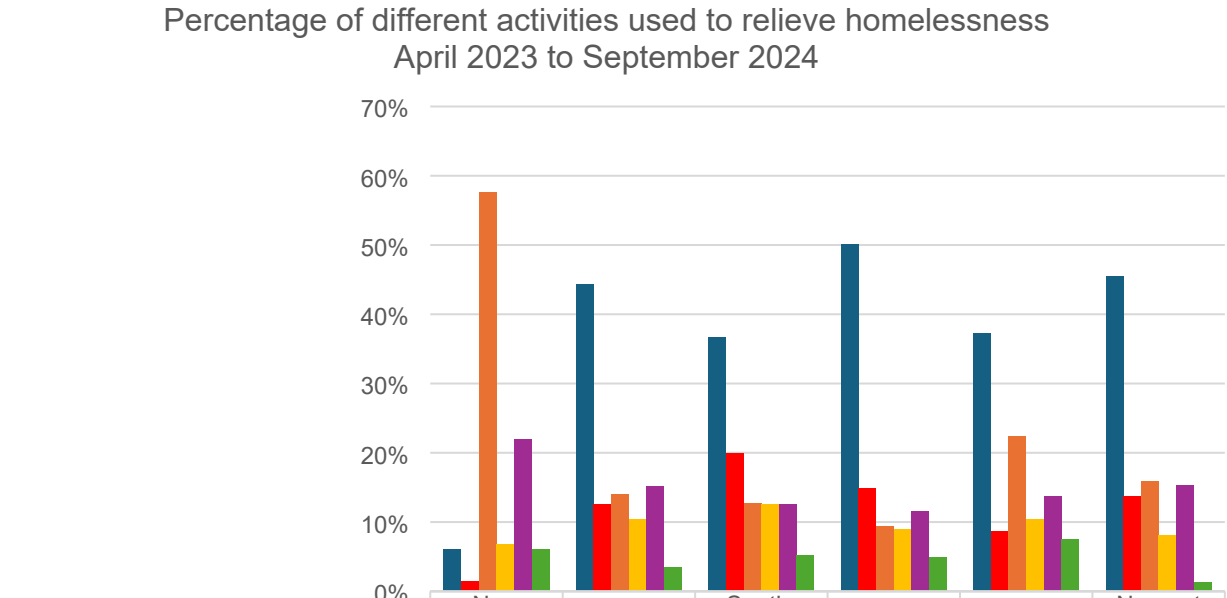


Figure 41 looks at the percentage of different activities used in cases where homelessness was successfully relieved across New Forest and the comparator areas.

Comparing New Forest with other areas, only 6% of successful reliefs in New Forest were recorded as being a result of accommodation being secured by the local authority, compared to 44% in the South East, 37% in Hampshire and in the South West, 50% in England and 46% in ONS near neighbours. On the other hand, and positively, 58% of New Forest reliefs were recorded as being the result of applicants finding accommodation for themselves, much higher than any other comparator area. It is likely, therefore, that the difference is at least in part a result of different recording practices.

As with homelessness preventions the number of New Forest homelessness reliefs into supported housing is particularly low and the proportion of reliefs recorded as 'other' is particularly high.

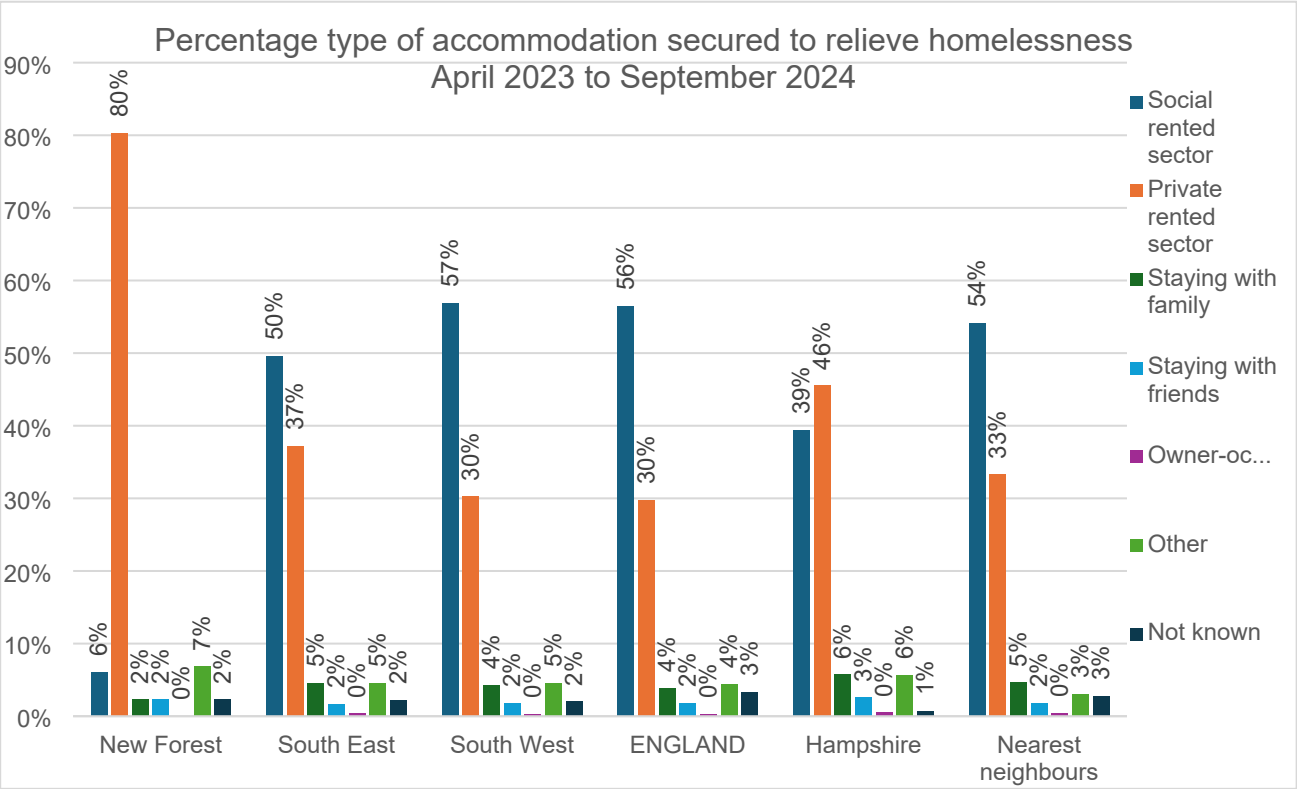
Figure 41



	New Forest	South East	South West	ENGLAND	Hampshire	Nearest neighbours
Accommodation secured by local authority or organisation delivering housing options service	6%	44%	37%	50%	37%	46%
Supported housing provided	2%	13%	20%	15%	9%	14%
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, with financial payment	58%	14%	13%	9%	22%	16%
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, without financial payment	7%	10%	13%	9%	10%	8%
Other activity through which accommodation secured	22%	15%	13%	12%	14%	15%
No activity	6%	3%	5%	5%	7%	1%

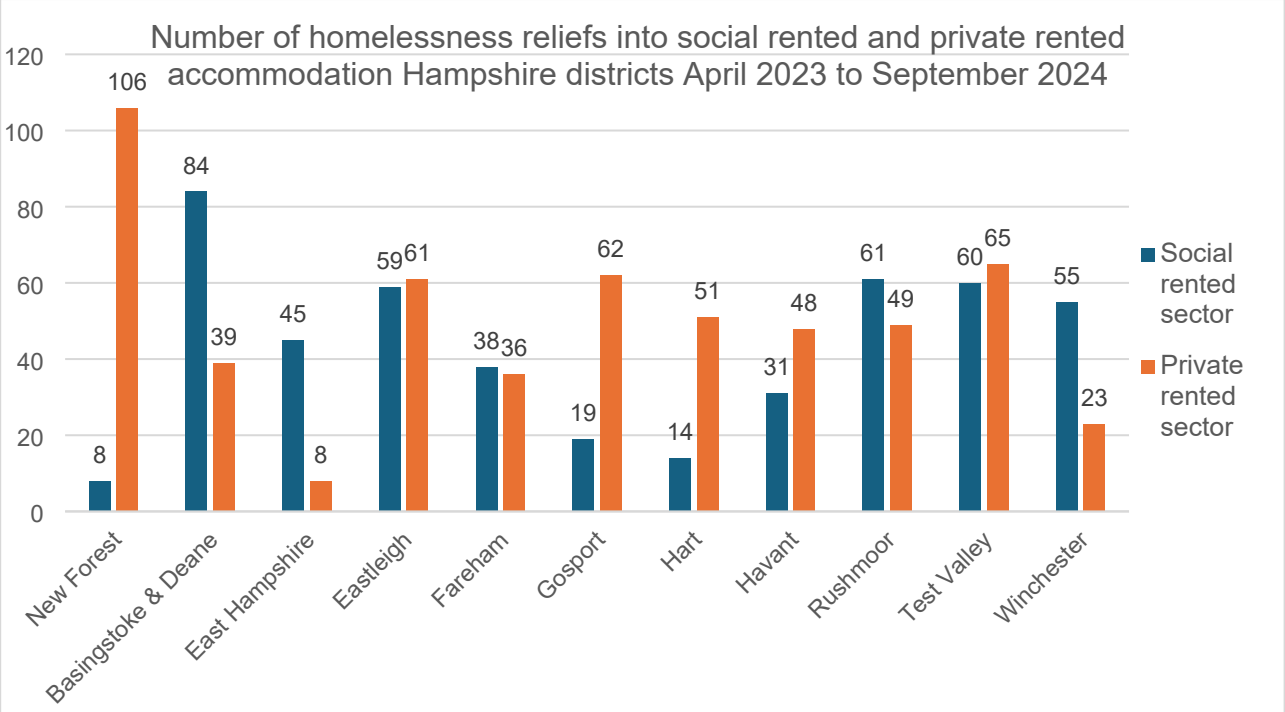
Looking at the types of accommodation secured to relieve homelessness in Figure 42, it is clear that, as with preventions, the proportion of reliefs into private rented sector accommodation is the highest and the proportion of preventions into social rented sector accommodation the lowest in New Forest compared to any of the comparator areas.

Figure 42



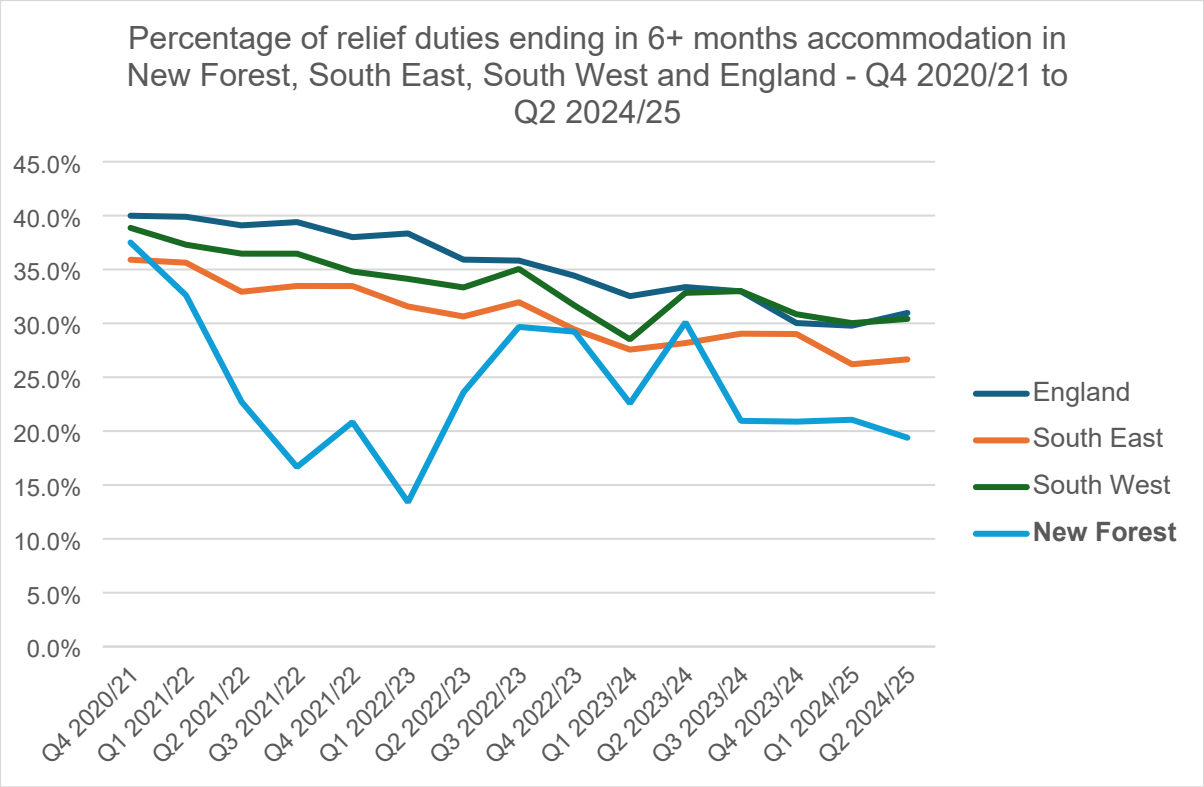
Looking at this numerically in each of the Hampshire districts in Figure 43, New Forest secured easily the highest number of homelessness reliefs into private rented accommodation, and easily the lowest number of reliefs into social rented accommodation, compared to any other district.

Figure 43



Looking at the percentage of relief duties ended by securing accommodation on a quarterly basis from Q4 2020/21 to Q2 2024/25, Figure 44 shows that, whilst performance has been deteriorating in England, the South East and the South West as well as in New Forest, New Forest has been less successful at relief over most of the period. As illustrated above, this is likely to be in large part due to the small number of relief duties ended in social housing in New Forest. This is not necessarily a bad thing if social housing allocations are going to homeless households in TA or other households with an urgent need.

Figure 44



It is also interesting to compare New Forest with other areas to understand the extent to which those successfully accommodated to end a homelessness prevention or relief duty are accommodated in New Forest or in other local authority areas.

Location

Figure 45 shows the proportion of those for whom a prevention duty was ended with 6 months accommodation during 2023/24[31], where the accommodation was in the same local authority area, in another local authority in the same region, or in another

[31] Data on the locations where prevention and relief duties are ended and from where households approach is only published in the annual homelessness statistics, and so we have not been able to include data from Q1 and Q2 2024/25 in Figures 45, 46 and 47.

region. 59% of those accommodated with New Forest's help were accommodated within the New Forest area, a significantly lower proportion than in any of the comparator areas, although this figure must be treated with some caution because of the high number (24%) of New Forest cases where the location of accommodation was recorded as unknown.

Figure 45

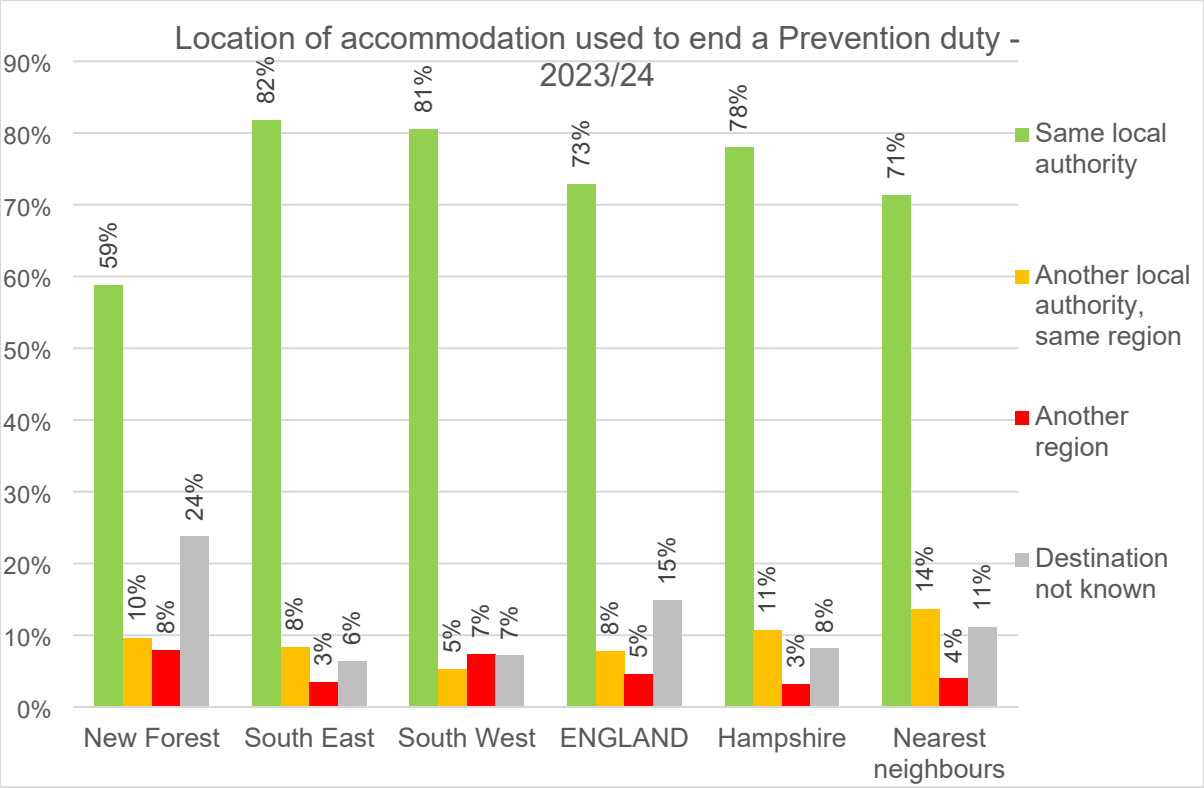
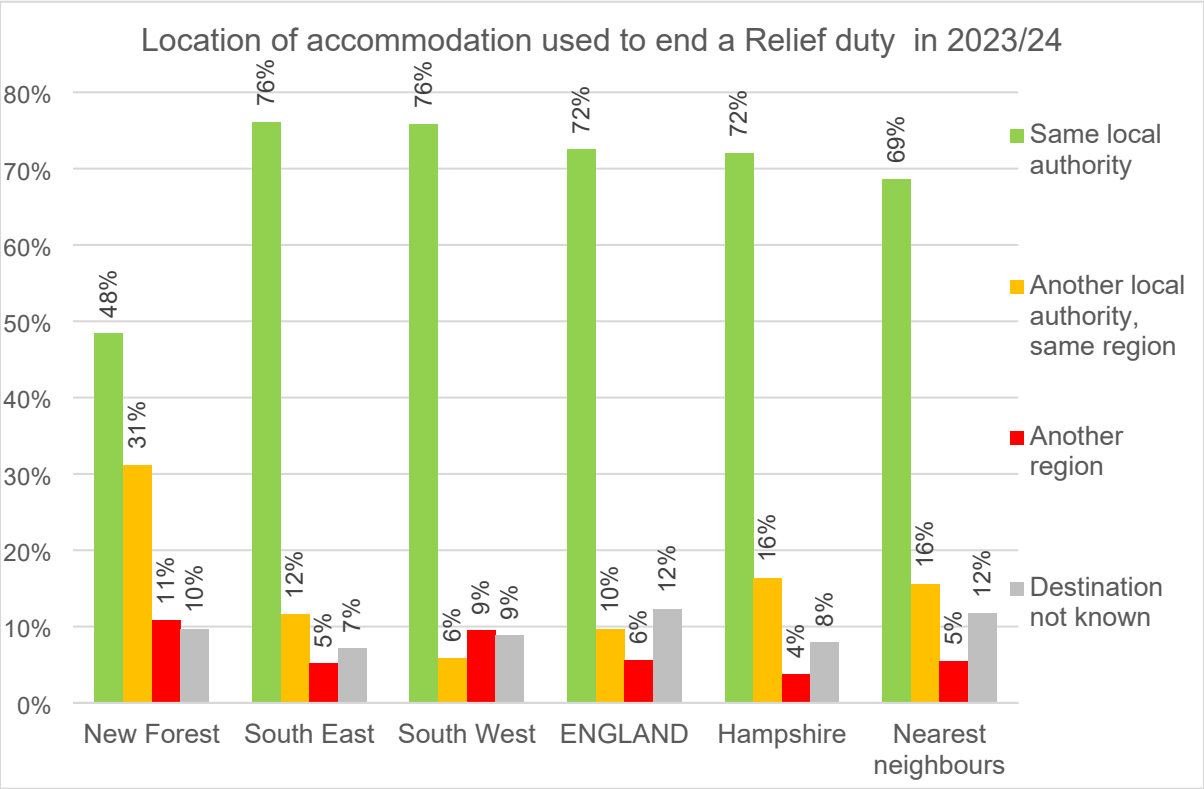


Figure 46 makes a similar comparison for accommodation used to end homelessness relief duties.

For relief duties, the distinction between New Forest and comparator areas is even more stark, with only 48% of accommodation within New Forest, compared to 76% in both the South East and South West, and 72% for the Hampshire districts as a group.

This may be partly explained by the fact that nearly all successfully ended relief duties in New Forest are ended in PRS accommodation rather than social housing, and the fact that private rented accommodation in New Forest is particularly hard to find, although it is beyond the capacity of this review to make an objective assessment of how much harder it is to find affordable PRS accommodation in New Forest than other areas.

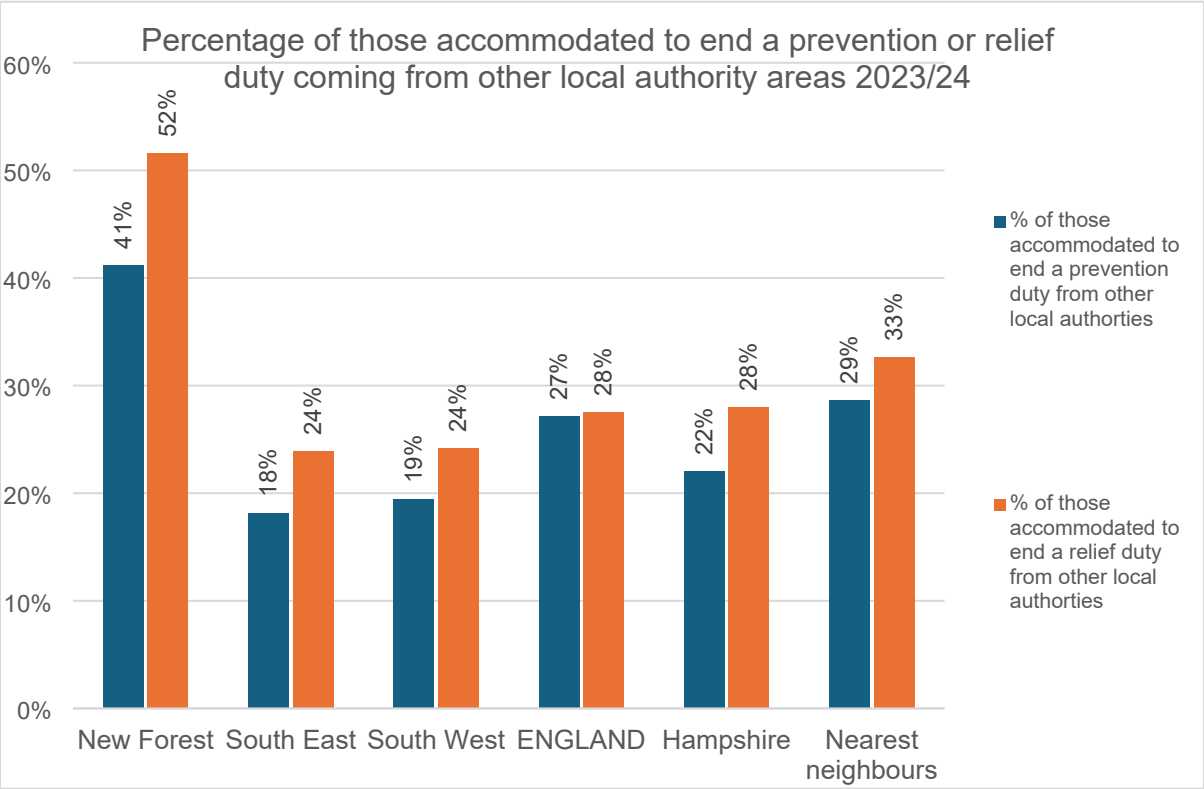
Figure 46



The data also suggests that compared to most other areas, those accommodated by New Forest to end a prevention or relief duty (where a local connection is not required to receive assistance) are much more likely to be approaching the council from outside New Forest. Figure 47 shows that 41% of those helped to secure accommodation under a prevention duty and 52% of those helped to secure accommodation to end a relief duty by New Forest approached the council from outside New Forest. These are much higher figures than for Hampshire districts (22% and 28%) the South East (18% and 24%) and the South West (19% and 24%). The reasons for this are not completely clear, and we lack more detailed data on the geographical origins of those approaching the council. However it seems clear that the influx of people from outside the area approaching the council as homeless in New Forest adds significantly to the homelessness pressures New Forest District Council has to manage.

It is impossible to tell from the published data to what extent the council is accommodating households from outside New Forest in TA and how this compares with other places.

Figure 47

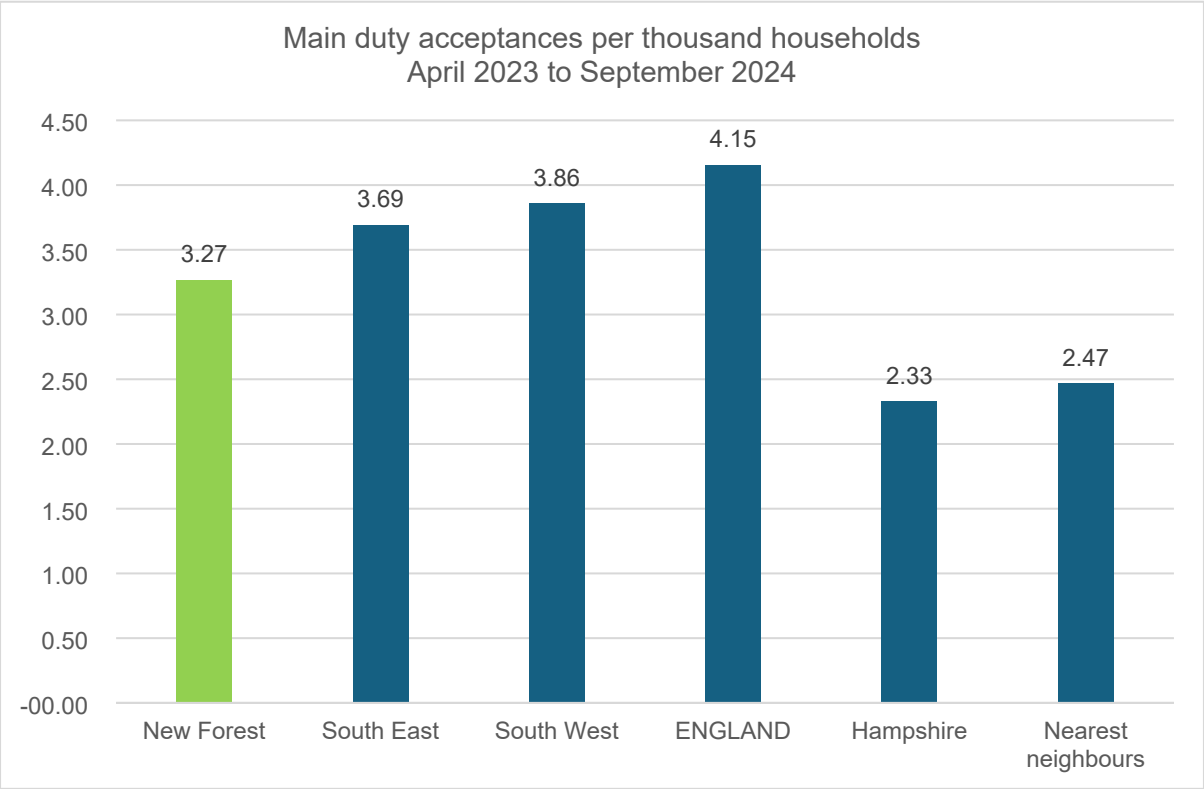


4. Main Homelessness Duties

In the period between April 2023 and September 2024 New Forest took 372 main duty decisions where a relief duty had ended without homelessness being relieved. Of these 266 (72%) resulted in accepting a main duty, 93 (25%) resulted in a homeless but no priority need decision, 7 (2%) resulted in an intentional homeless decision and 6 (2%) resulted in a not homeless decision.

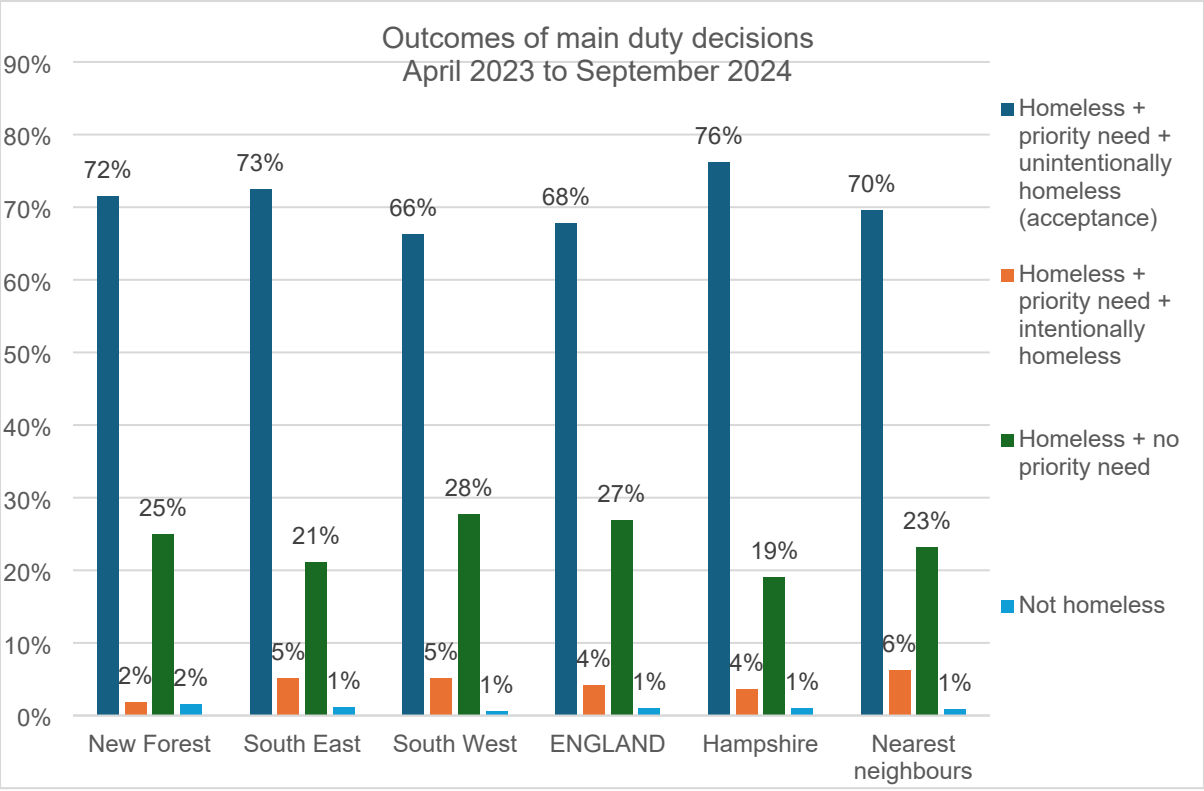
Main duty acceptances per thousand households were 40% higher than the average for Hampshire districts and higher than the average for ONS near neighbours, but lower than the average for the South East, South West and England, as shown in Figure 48.

Figure 48



The percentage outcomes of main duty decisions were broadly similar to those of the comparator areas, as shown in Figure 49.

Figure 49

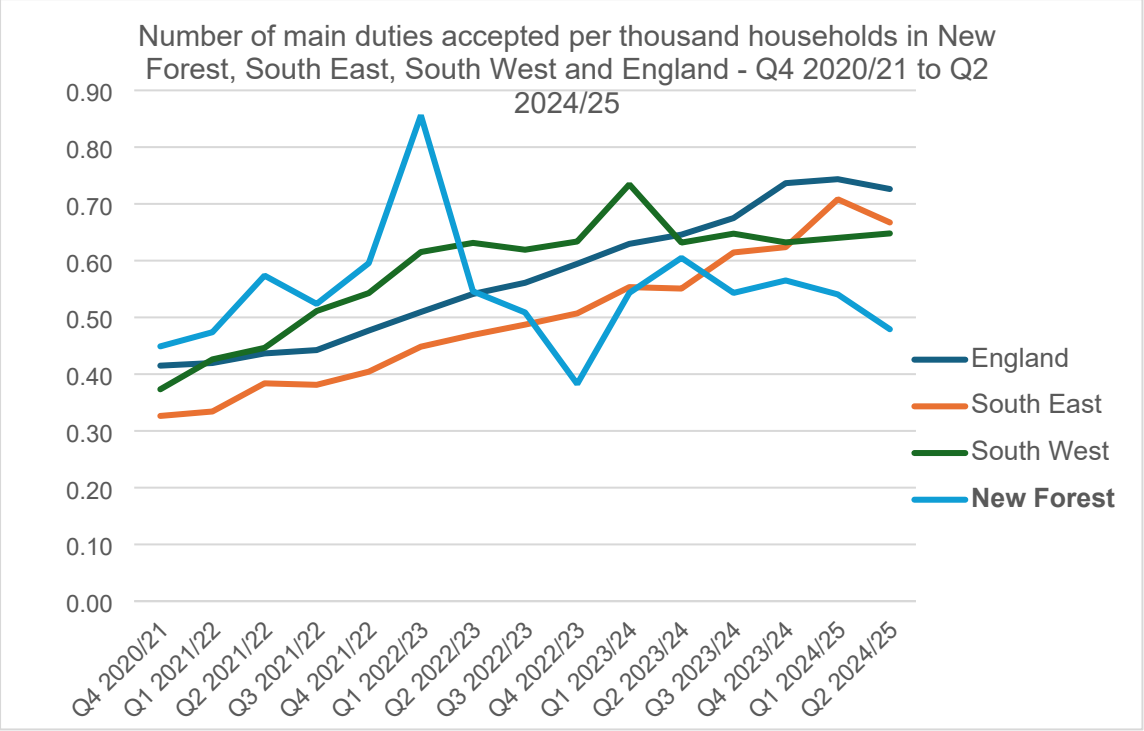


Taken together, this data suggests that the fact that main duty acceptances were 40% higher than the average for the Hampshire districts and the number of prevention and relief duties was only 8% higher than the Hampshire average is due to lower levels of success in preventing and relieving homeless in New Forest than because main duty decisions in New Forest are more likely to result in an acceptance. In fact, the 72% main duty acceptances in New Forest was slightly lower than the Hampshire average of 76%.

Figure 50 tracks the change in the quarterly number of main duty acceptances per thousand households from Q4 2020/21 to Q2 2023/24 for New Forest, the South East, South West, and England.

Although there are some significant fluctuations in the reported New Forest figures, overall the pattern seems to be that the number of accepted main duties in New Forest has remained at about the same level whereas the figures for the South East, South West and England have all risen steadily over the period, so that New Forest's position has changed from the highest number of main duty acceptances per thousand households to the lowest over the period, remembering however that New Forest's current figure is still significantly higher than the Hampshire average, as already discussed.

Figure 50



Looking at the reasons for priority need for households owed a main duty in Figure 51, the percentage figures for New Forest are similar to comparator areas, but with a

higher than average percentage of priority need due to physical ill health but a lower percentage due to domestic abuse or mental health problems.

Figure 51: Percentage reason for priority need for households owed a main duty April 2023 to September 2024

Reason for priority need	New Forest	South East	South West	ENGLAND	Hampshire	Nearest neighbours
Household includes dependent children	*52%*	*51%*	*47%*	*52%*	*48%*	*51%*
Physical disability / ill health	*18%*	*12%*	*15%*	*12%*	*13%*	*15%*
Mental health problems	*8%*	*10%*	*12%*	*10%*	*12%*	*12%*
Household includes a pregnant woman	*3%*	*3%*	*3%*	*3%*	*3%*	*3%*
Domestic abuse	*4%*	*7%*	*7%*	*8%*	*6%*	*5%*
Young applicant	*4%*	*2%*	*2%*	*2%*	*3%*	*2%*
Old age	*1%*	*1%*	*2%*	*1%*	*2%*	*1%*
Homeless because of emergency	*1%*	*0%*	*1%*	*0%*	*1%*	*0%*
Other	*7%*	*6%*	*5%*	*5%*	*7%*	*5%*
Vulnerable with children	*2%*	*8%*	*5%*	*7%*	*5%*	*6%*

The percentage reasons for ending a main duty are shown in Figure 52. These are broadly similar to comparator areas but with a slightly higher percentage of duties ending in an accepted offer of social housing and a lower percentage ending in a private rented sector offer – the reverse of the position for ending prevention and relief duties.

Figure 52: Reasons for the ending of a main duty April 2023 to September 2024

	New Forest	South East	South West	ENGLAND	Hampshire	Nearest neighbours
Housing Act 1996 Pt6 social housing offer - accepted	77%	73%	75%	72%	69%	75%
Housing Act 1996 Pt6 social housing offer - refused	0%	2%	2%	3%	1%	1%
Private rented sector offer - accepted	4%	7%	5%	7%	8%	7%
Private rented sector offer - refused	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Voluntarily ceased to occupy	6%	7%	6%	5%	8%	6%
Refused suitable TA offer, withdrew or lost contact	9%	6%	8%	7%	7%	7%
Became intentionally homeless from TA	3%	5%	4%	4%	5%	4%
Ceased to be eligible	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Not known	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

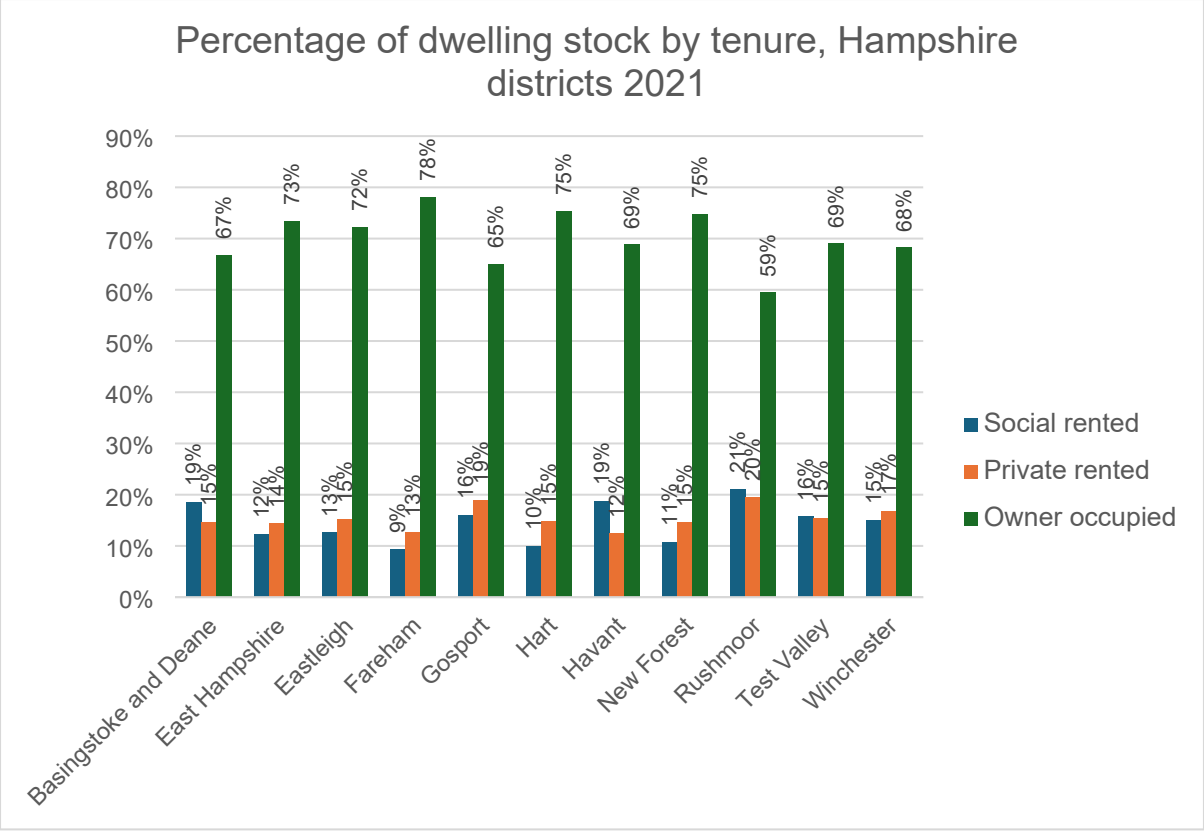
5. Securing Accommodation

Housing in New Forest

According to MHCLG data for 2024[32] 6.2% (5,205) of dwellings in New Forest are local authority owned with 4.2% (3,530) owned by Registered Providers (RP)s. This compares with an average for the Hampshire districts of 3.4% of dwellings owned by local authorities and 10.6% owned by RPs.

Figure 53 shows the proportion of dwellings in 2021 which were owner occupied, private rented or social housing for all the Hampshire districts. Since the 2021 data[33], this information has not been published.

Figure 53



Overall, New Forest has a lower proportion of housing let as social housing than the average for the Hampshire districts, around the average proportion of private rented accommodation, and higher than average owner occupation.

[32] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants

[33] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/subnationaldwellingstockbytenureestimates?utm_source=chatgpt.com

However, as a stock retaining authority, boosted by the fact that New Forest has a common allocations policy which allocates to 100% of social rented housing in the area, New Forest has more control than some of its neighbours on who is allocated social housing.

Social Housing Allocations

New Forest's allocations policy operates on a choice-based lettings basis and has four priority bands.

Band 1: Emergency Need to Move includes urgent management moves; urgent health and well being; emergency disrepair; and moves due to risk of violence or serious harassment.

Band 2: Serious Need to Move includes those with a main homelessness duty, where it has been assessed that they cannot be expected to move to private rented sector accommodation; under-occupation of social housing by 2 or more bedrooms; severe overcrowding; move on from Care or supported housing; and less urgent health and wellbeing or disrepair issues that do not qualify for Band 1.

Band 3: Need to Move includes lower levels of overcrowding; lower levels of health and wellbeing; some current or former members of the Armed Forces; those owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty; some transfers from other local authorities under the Right to Move scheme; some types of homelessness risk where no duty is owed; some key workers; people owed a main homelessness duty but who can access the private rented sector.

Band 4: Lower Need to Move

The New Forest allocations policy is to be reviewed in the near future.

In practice in the calendar year 2024, based on information supplied by the council:

- 443 properties were let
- 54 of the let properties were to households in Band 1 – Urgent housing need to move.
- 162 of the let properties were to applicants in Band 2 with the housing need reasons 'full homelessness duty'
    - Bedsits – 4 (households)
    - 1 bed – 56
    - 2 bed – 60

    - 3 bed – 39
    - 4 bed – 1
    - 5 bed – 1

- 22 of the let properties were to applicants in Band 3 with the housing need reasons ‘accepted prevention and relief duty’

    - Bedsits – 4 (households)
    - 1 bed – 14 – these allocations were all non-standard general needs accommodation – Extra Care, Rural Parish Connection, age restricted.
    - 2 bed – 4 – 1 general needs, 2 rural parish connections, 1 Extra Care

- 28 of the let properties were to applicants in Band 3 with the housing need reasons ‘threatened with homelessness’

    - Bedsits – 4 (households)
    - 1 bed – 1 – these allocations were all non-standard general needs accommodation – Extra Care, Rural Parish Connection, age restricted.
    - 2 bed – 6 – these allocations were all non-standard general needs accommodation – Extra Care, Rural Parish Connection, age restricted.

In other words, in total 212 lettings out of 443 were as a result of homelessness or risk of homelessness i.e. 48% of all lettings, including 37% of lettings going to households owed a main homelessness duty.

The 1,989 households waiting on the allocations system for accommodation at the end of May 2025 were grouped into the following bands and band reasons:

- Band 1 – 32

- Band 2 – 410 of which are in the following housing need bands:

    - 215 - Full homeless duty
    - 5 - Assessed to move on from supported accommodation
    - 119 – High Health and Wellbeing
    - 6 – High state of disrepair
    - 45 – Severally overcrowded
    - 20 - Under occupied by 2 bedrooms in social housing

- Band 3 – 657 of which are in the following housing need bands:

    - 47 – under occupying by 1 bedroom
    - 34 - Armed forces
    - 255 – overcrowded by 1 bedroom
    - 99 – homelessness Prevention or relief duty
    - 118 – threatened with homelessness
    - 1 – keyworker

- 102 – medium health and wellbeing

- Band 4 – 890

In other words, of the 1,099[34] households waiting in Bands 1 to 3, 39% have homeless or risk of homelessness as a band reason including 20% with a main homelessness duty.

This shows that the proportion of lettings to households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is greater than the proportion of those waiting for an allocation (in Bands 1 to 3). This is also true for those with a main homelessness duty, who are the most likely to be in temporary accommodation.

Overall, this suggests that, within the number of lettings available, the allocations system is operating effectively to accommodate those with homelessness as a band reason rather than not doing so because of factors such as local lettings policies, perceived risk of accommodating homeless households, blockages to allocations such as rent arrears in TA, homeless households not bidding etc.

This does assume, however that those who should be registered on the allocation system as waiting for a let are registered. It also does not account for any blockages or barriers to individual households which may prevent them receiving an allocation.

The number of households in TA in New Forest in September 2024 was 323, of whom 294 were owed a main homelessness duty. Comparing this with the 215 households owed a main homelessness duty waiting for an allocation, there does appear to be a possibility that a significant proportion of those in TA are not registered.

Taken at face value, this data would suggest that around 25% of households in TA who have had a main duty accepted are not registered on the allocation system.

We are aware from conversations with council officers that there had historically been an issue with households in TA not being registered on the allocations system, but that considerable work has taken place to improve the position on this. All new cases are expected to be registered. A proportion of households historically housed within the council stock had not been registered. However, these cases are being resolved.

Private rented accommodation

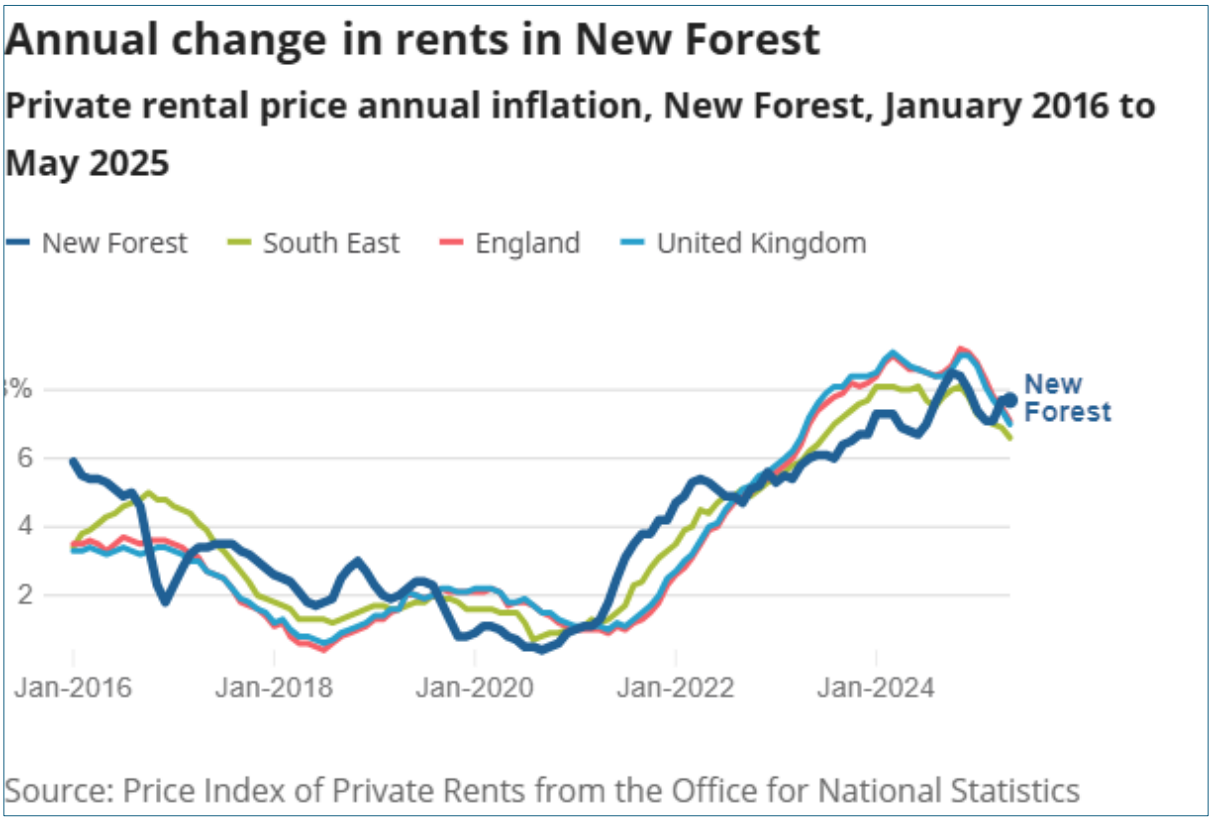
Looking at private rented accommodation, ONS data[35] shows that following the pattern in much of the country rents have been rising rapidly recently as shown in

[34] 1,989 in total minus 890 waiting in Band 4

[35] https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/housingpriceslocal/E07000091/?utm_source=chatgpt.com#rent_price

Figure 54, whilst the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate has been frozen since April 2024.

Figure 54



According to the ONS, the average monthly private rent in New Forest was £1,221 in May 2025. This was an increase from £1,133 in May 2024, a 7.7% rise.

The New Forest District Council area falls across three separate Broad Rental Market Areas (BRMAs):

1. Southampton BRMA – This covers most of the New Forest council area, including the majority of settlements within the district
2. Bournemouth BRMA – Encompasses parts of the district around Ringwood
3. Salisbury BRMA – Covers areas such as Fordingbridge

As market rents in New Forest are slightly higher than in Southampton, the percentage of properties available in New Forest at LHA rents or below is likely to be lower than average for the Southampton BRMA. However, this is not necessarily the case when comparing New Forest to Bournemouth within the Bournemouth BRMA, where ONS data tends to suggest that Bournemouth rents are, on average, even less affordable compared to LHA levels than New Forest.

Looking at affordability of private rented accommodation based on the percentage of

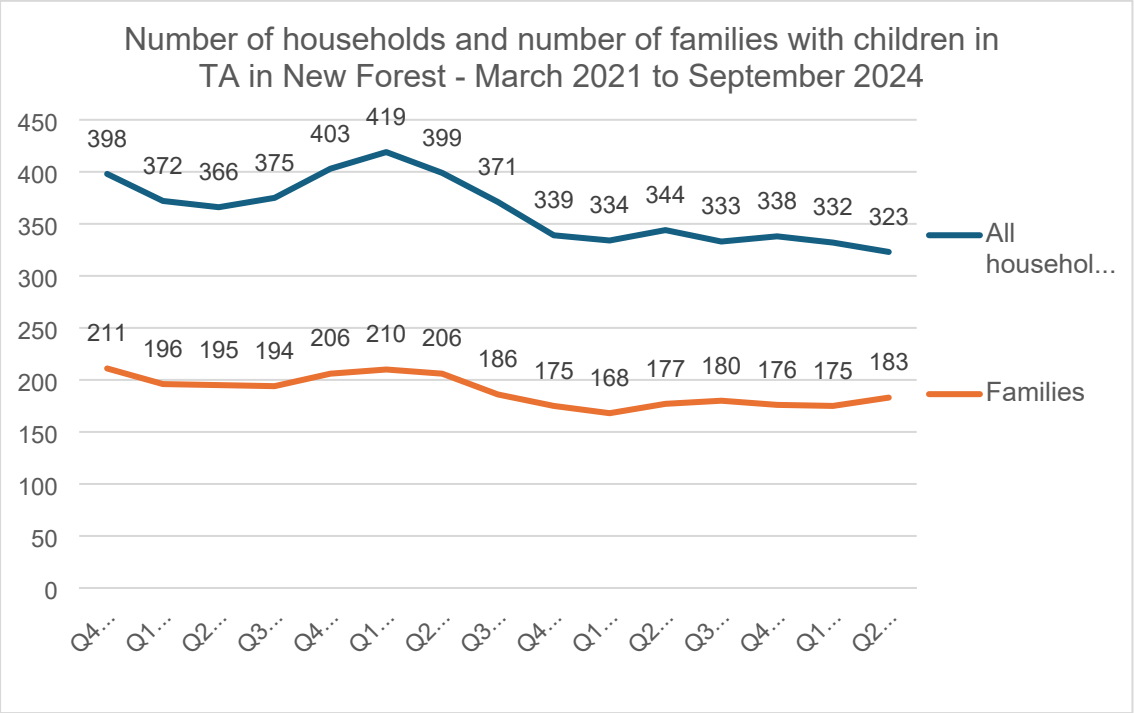
private renters income taken up by rent, the latest ONS estimates are from 2023[36].

These show a rent to income affordability ratio of 31.2% in New Forest. This is the highest of any of the Hampshire districts except Winchester (32.8%), around the same as Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole (31.5%), considerably higher than Dorset (26.4), and slightly higher than Southampton (29.2%). This places New Forest above the affordability benchmark level of 30% income going on rent, and places it as relatively expensive compared to most neighbouring areas.

Temporary Accommodation

Turning to the council's use of temporary accommodation, at the end of September 2024, New Forest had 323 households in TA, of whom 183 were households which included dependent children. Figure 55 shows the trend in quarterly TA numbers from March 2021 to September 2024 in New Forest and demonstrates a gradual fall in number over the period.

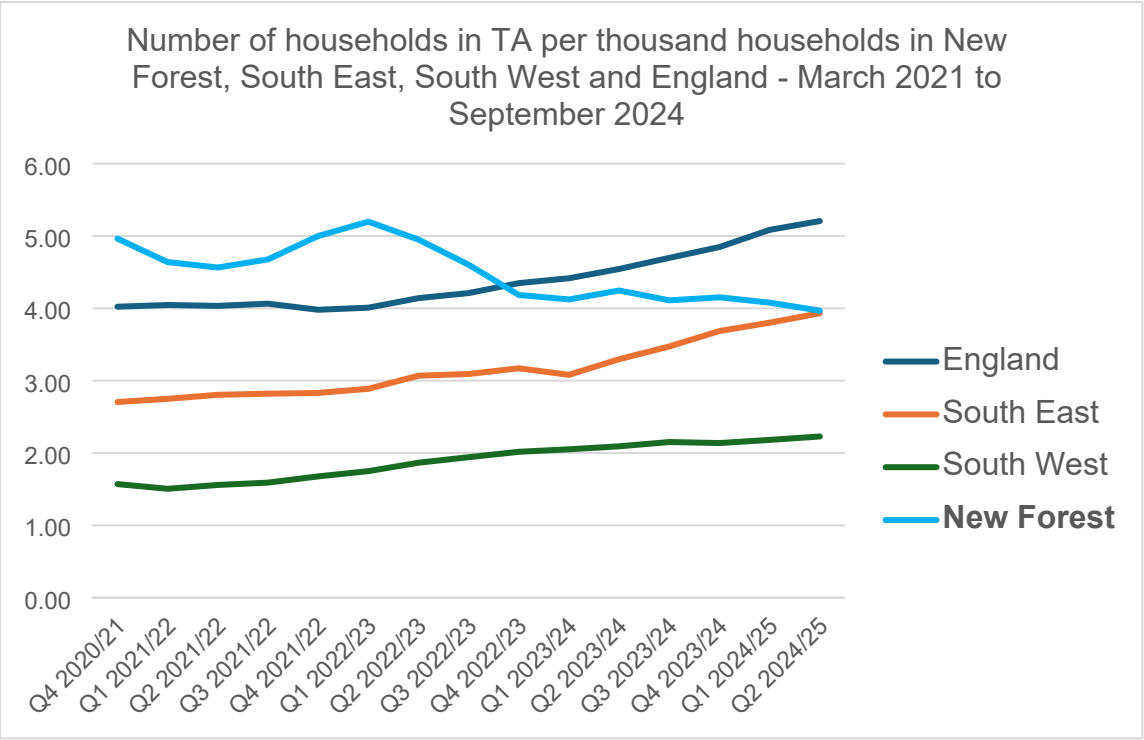
Figure 55



The fall in TA numbers in New Forest goes against national and regional trends of increasing TA use, as shown in Figure 56, which compares the number of households in TA per thousand households in New Forest, the South East, South West and England.

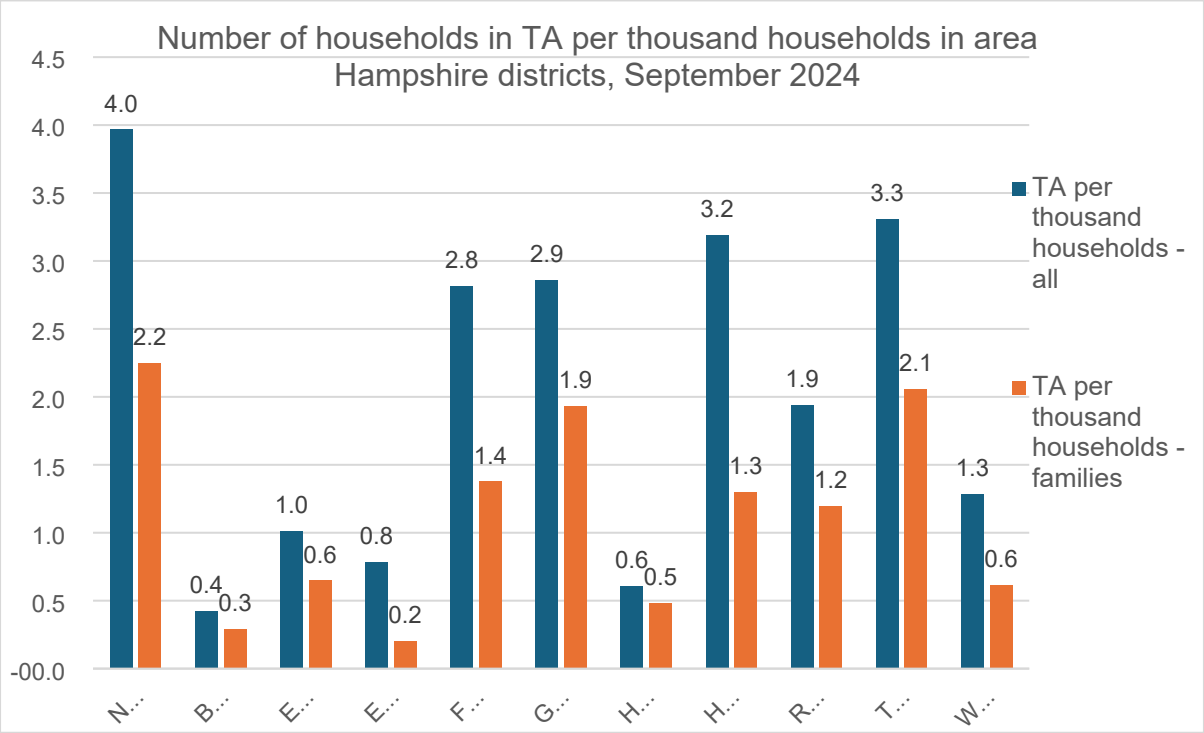
Figure 56

36 https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/privaterentalaffordabilityengland/latest



Although New Forest's use of TA has been falling, it is still the highest of the Hampshire districts compared to populations size, both in the total number of households in TA and the number of families in TA, as shown in Figure 57.

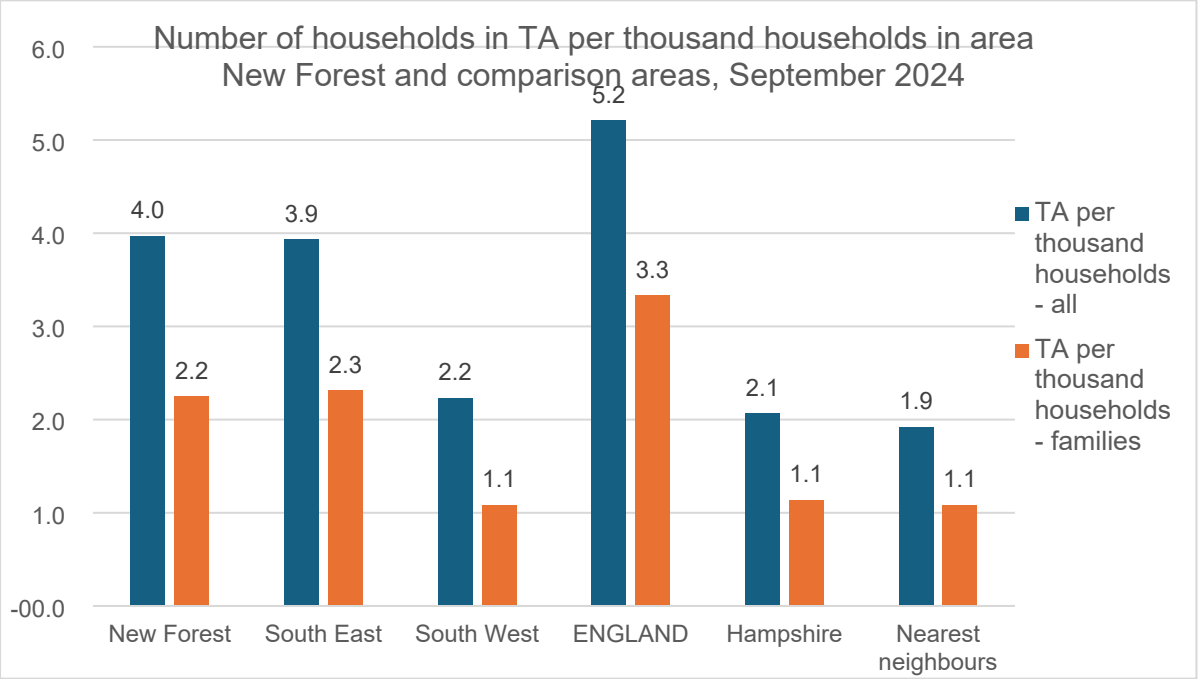
Figure 57



Comparing the number of households in TA per thousand households with comparator areas in Figure 58, the position for both total households and families is that New Forest has substantially higher TA than the Hampshire district average, the

ONS near neighbour average and the South West, but around the same as the South East, and substantially lower than for England as a whole.

Figure 58



Types of TA

Figure 59 compares the proportion of different types of TA used in New Forest and comparator areas reported at the end of September 2024. At that time, 48% of new Forest's TA was private sector leased (PSL), 28% TA using its own housing stock, 8% B&B, 7% hostels including women's refuges, 6% self-contained nightly paid accommodation, and 2.5% 'other'.

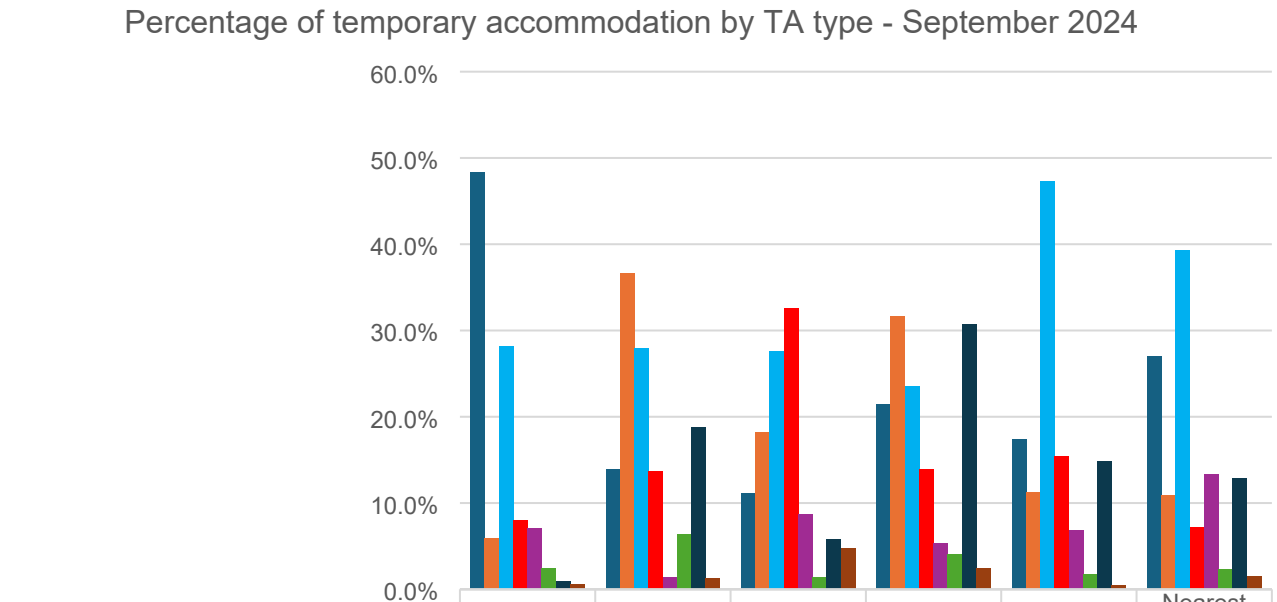
Compared to other areas, New Forest has substantially more PSL and substantially less self-contained nightly paid accommodation. This is positive as both the stability and standards of PSL accommodation are in general higher than nightly paid accommodation. This is reinforced by interviews with officers, who state that the quality of almost all New Forest's TA is very good.

New Forest also has a low proportion of its TA as B&B compared to the average in comparator areas.

New Forest also has a very low proportion of its TA (1%) in another local authority area, compared to 19% for the South East, 6% South West, 31% England[37], 15% in Hampshire and 13% in ONS near neighbours.

[37] The England figure is heavily influenced by the prevalence of out of area TA in London – mostly due to London boroughs placing households in other London boroughs.

Figure 59

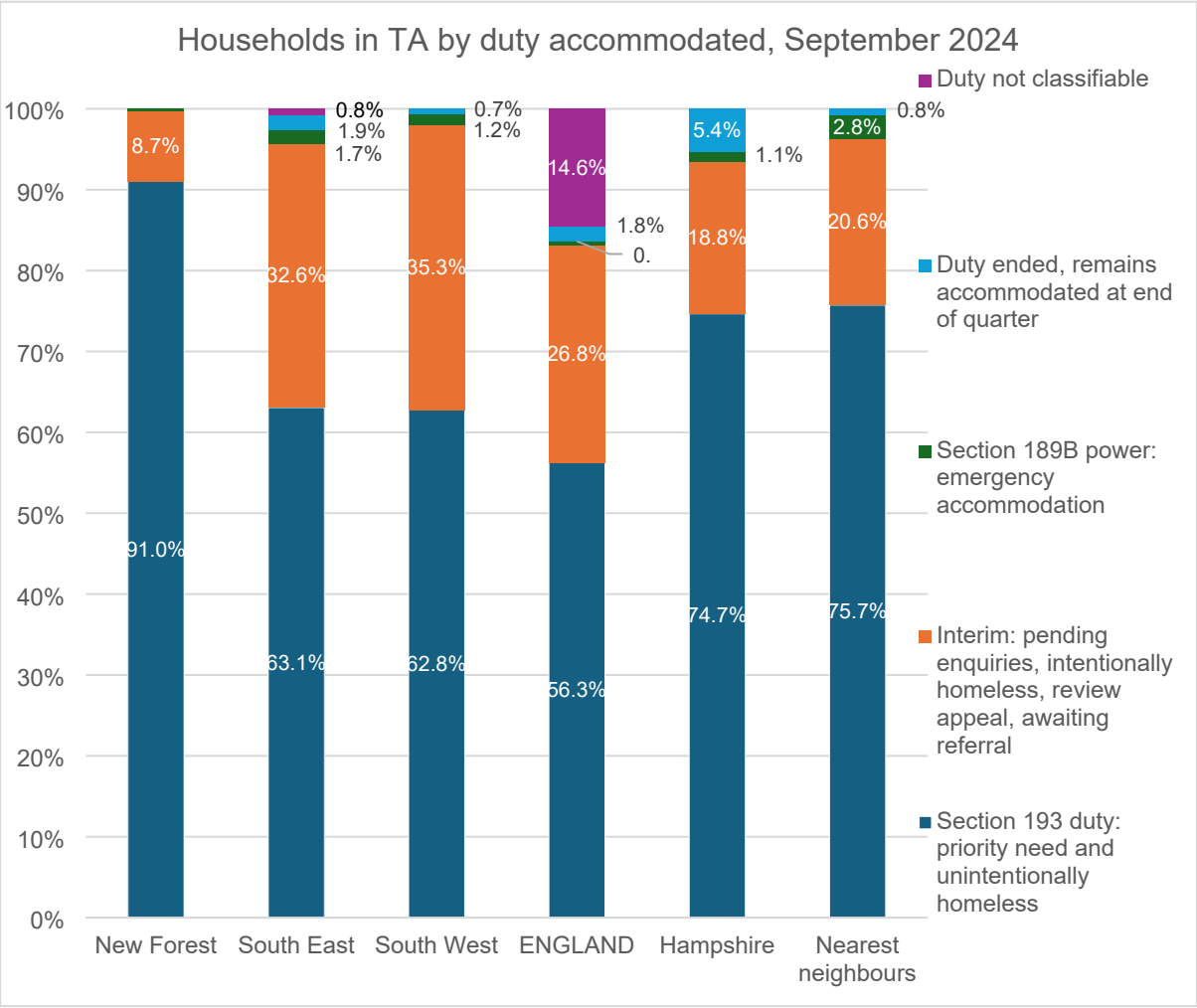


	New Forest	South East	South West	ENGLAND	Hampshire	Nearest neighbours
Private sector accommodation leased by authority or by a registered provider	48.3%	13.9%	11.2%	21.5%	17.4%	27.0%
Nightly paid, privately managed accommodation, self-contained	5.9%	36.7%	18.3%	31.6%	11.3%	10.9%
Local authority or Housing association (LA/HA) stock	28.2%	27.9%	27.7%	23.5%	47.3%	39.3%
Bed and breakfast hotels (including shared annexes)	8.0%	13.7%	32.6%	14.0%	15.4%	7.2%
Hostels (including reception centres, emergency units and refuges)	7.1%	1.4%	8.7%	5.3%	6.8%	13.3%
Any other type of temporary accommodation (including private landlord and not known)2	2.5%	6.4%	1.4%	4.1%	1.8%	2.3%
In TA in another local authority district	0.9%	18.8%	5.9%	30.7%	14.9%	12.9%
Duty owed, no accommodation secured	0.6%	1.3%	4.8%	2.4%	0.5%	1.5%

Accommodation duties in TA

New Forest's performance on TA also appears positive when looking at the duty under which households are accommodated with 91% being accommodated being owed a main duty, compared to significantly lower percentages elsewhere, as shown in Figure 60. In other areas, typically much higher proportions of households are accommodated under an interim duty. Whilst there may be several contributory factors to this, it is likely to show that New Forest is efficient in making homelessness decisions, so that households do not spend long periods in TA before their application is decided.

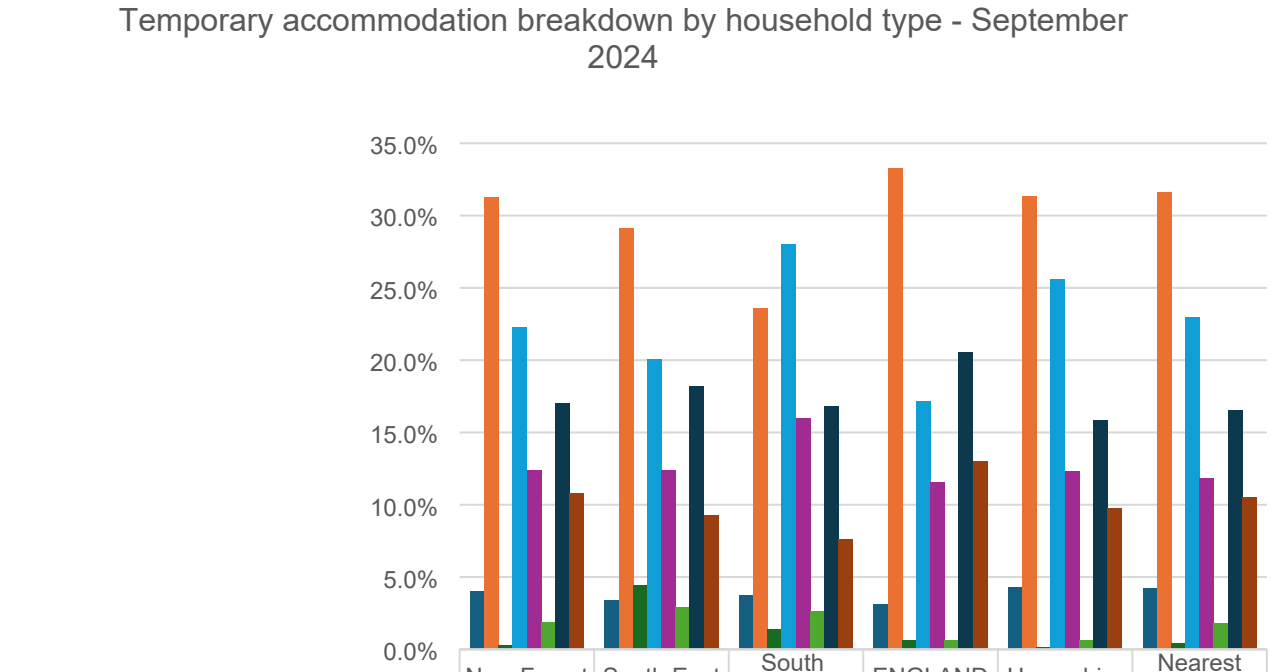
Figure 60



TA household characteristics

Looking at the household types of those in TA, the position in New Forest is broadly similar to comparator areas, as shown in Figure 61, with the largest proportion of TA residents being single female parents (31%) followed by single male adults without dependent children living in their household (22%).

Figure 61



	New Forest	South East	South West	ENGLAND	Hampshire	Nearest neighbours
Single parent with dependent children - Male	4.0%	3.4%	3.7%	3.1%	4.3%	4.2%
Single parent with dependent children - Female	31.3%	29.1%	23.6%	33.3%	31.4%	31.6%
Single parent with dependent children - Other / gender not known	0.3%	4.4%	1.4%	0.7%	0.2%	0.4%
Single adult - Male	22.3%	20.1%	28.0%	17.1%	25.6%	23.0%
Single adult - Female	12.4%	12.4%	16.0%	11.6%	12.3%	11.8%
Single adult - Other / gender not known	1.9%	2.9%	2.7%	0.6%	0.6%	1.8%
Couple with dependent children	17.0%	18.2%	16.8%	20.6%	15.8%	16.6%
All other household types	10.8%	9.3%	7.6%	13.0%	9.7%	10.5%

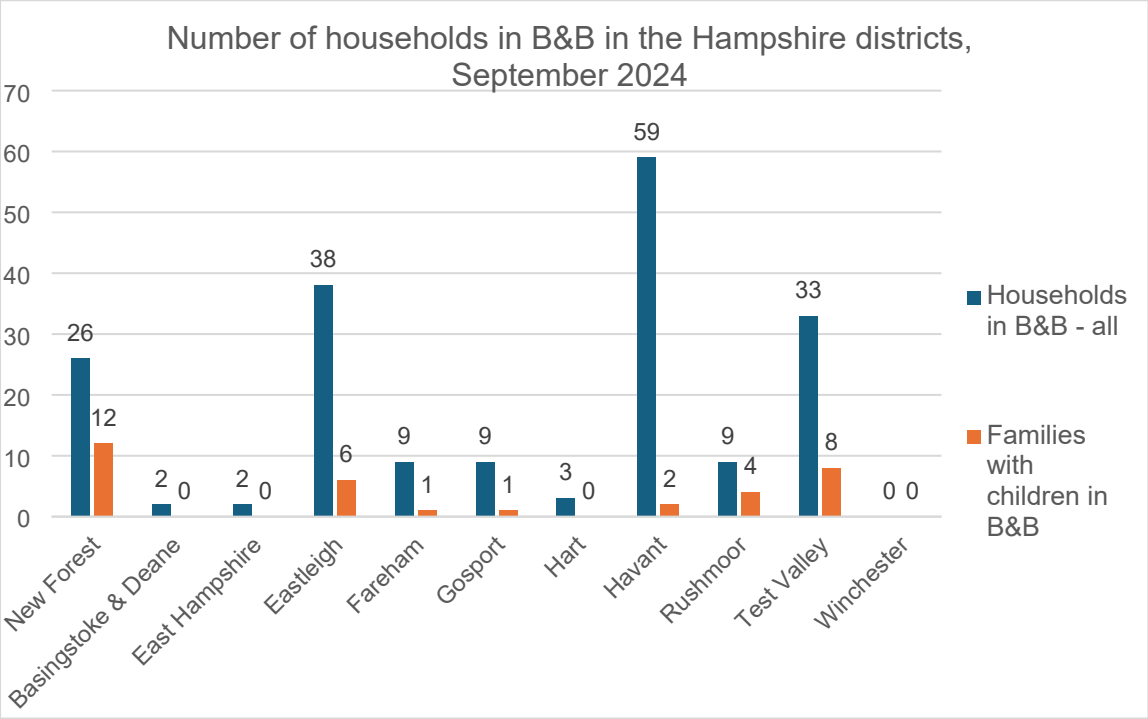
Use of B&B

It is generally considered that Bed & Breakfast or other emergency accommodation with shared facilities is the worst form of TA, and using this accommodation for families with children is unlawful except in an emergency for a period of less than 6 weeks. Reducing the use of emergency accommodation is also the first priority in New Forest's Corporate plan.

In September 2024, New Forest had 26 households in B&B or other shared accommodation of whom 12 were families. 5 of the families had been in B&B for more than 6 weeks. Figure 62 compares the number of households in B&B in New Forest with the other Hampshire districts. New Forest had the 4th highest number of households in B&B in total, behind Havant, Eastleigh and Test Valley, but had the highest number of families in B&B of any of the districts.

It is important to note that these statistics include all nightly paid accommodation with shared facilities accommodation and that this includes facilities of different types. Only 7 placements were in commercial hotels such as Premier Inn and Travel Lodge, with 2 of the 7 being families.

Figure 62



Comparing the number of households in B&B per thousand households with comparator areas in Figure 63, New Forest has lower total use of B&B than the South East, South West or England. However, for families in B&B, New Forest has higher numbers than the South East, South West, Hampshire and ONS near neighbours, although still lower than for England as a whole.

Figure 63

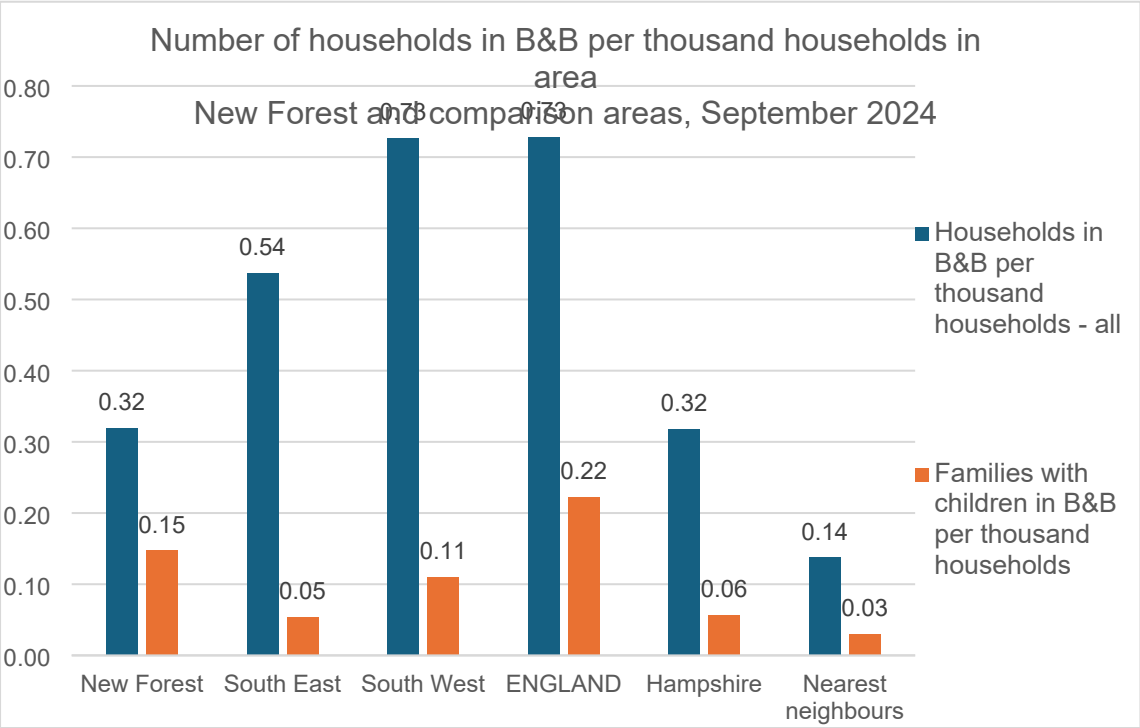
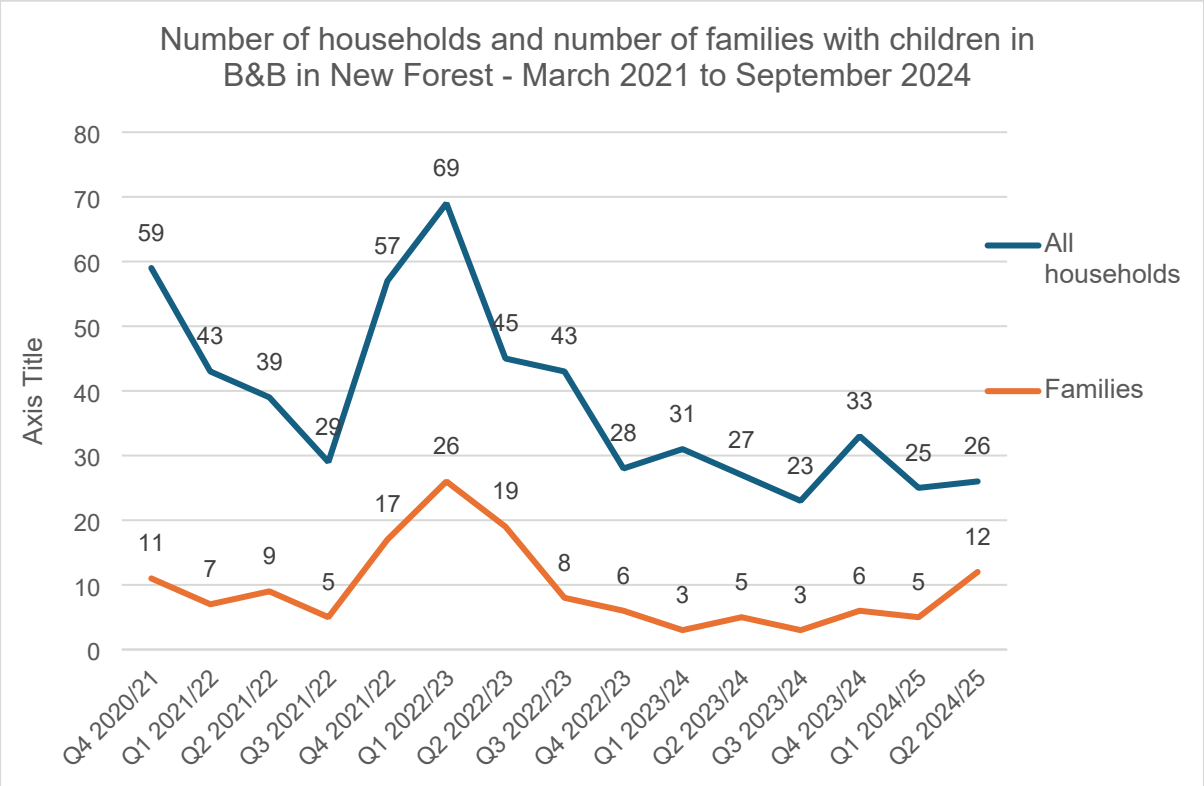


Figure 64 shows, with some fluctuations including a spike in June 2022, a falling trend in the total use of B&B in New Forest between March 2021 and September 2024, but without a corresponding fall in the number of families in B&B.

Figure 64



Quality of provision

It is worth noting that discussions with accommodation suppliers, council officers and a small number of service users suggest that the quality of temporary accommodation used by New Forest is good, with even the emergency accommodation being of good quality compared to much emergency accommodation elsewhere.

It also appears from discussions with stakeholders that New Forest are scrupulous in assessing who should go into which types of TA in which location, doing their best to minimise disruption to support networks and to children's education. This is particularly important due to the lack of regular public transport connecting some parts of the New Forest council area.

The council's preferred forms of TA include accommodation that has been specifically developed, purchased and/or converted by the council to use as TA and also PSL properties sourced from private landlords.

The council confirmed they had 109 PSL properties at the end of May 2025 and have done considerable work in recent years improving the quality of PSL accommodation.

New accommodation supply

The number of PSL properties appears to have remained fairly steady in recent years. While some landlords will exit the scheme at the end of leases there is also an active programme to bring on new PSL properties, with a dedicated officer responsible for this activity.

The council has delivered 76 new TA units through acquisitions development and conversions in the period 2018 to 2024, including 16 units supported by the government's Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF).

The council also delivered 6 new accommodation units for people with experience of sleeping rough with support from the government NSAP capital funding programme, and a 7 unit scheme with support from the RSAP scheme.

The above demonstrate that the council has been active in developing new accommodation to address different forms of homelessness, and has made effective use of government capital funding programmes to support this.

Although we did not visit any of the new TA or rough sleeping accommodation, reports of those consulted during the review indicate that it is of high quality.

There is also a pipeline of new TA in development including a mix of family unts and 1 bed flats expected to become available in the next two years, with the council actively seeking new development opportunities.

In terms of total affordable housing development, including TA, the council and housing associations have delivered a cumulative total of 375 units between 2018/19 and 2024/25 and currently expect to deliver around 406 additional units between 2025/26 and the end of 2028/29.

It is probable that these numbers will increase as a result of the additional funding for affordable housing recently announced in the 2025 Spending Review, and the government's Planning reforms. However, development in New Forest is constrained by the fact that much of the district is a national park.

6. Providing Support

Support needs of those owed a homelessness duty

Figure 65 shows that the percentage of households owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty recorded as having one or more support needs is significantly higher in New Forest than in comparator areas. In total, 93% of those owed a duty in New Forest had at least one support need recorded, compared with 55% in the South East, 63% in the South West and 62% in the Hampshire districts.

It seems highly unlikely that this can be wholly due to higher support needs amongst those approaching New Forest. It is much more likely to be mainly due to good practice in New Forest in being scrupulous on both assessing and recording support needs amongst those who apply. As set out above, the higher recording of support needs at prevention and relief duty stage in New Forest does not lead to a higher proportion of main duty assessments of priority need.

Figure 65

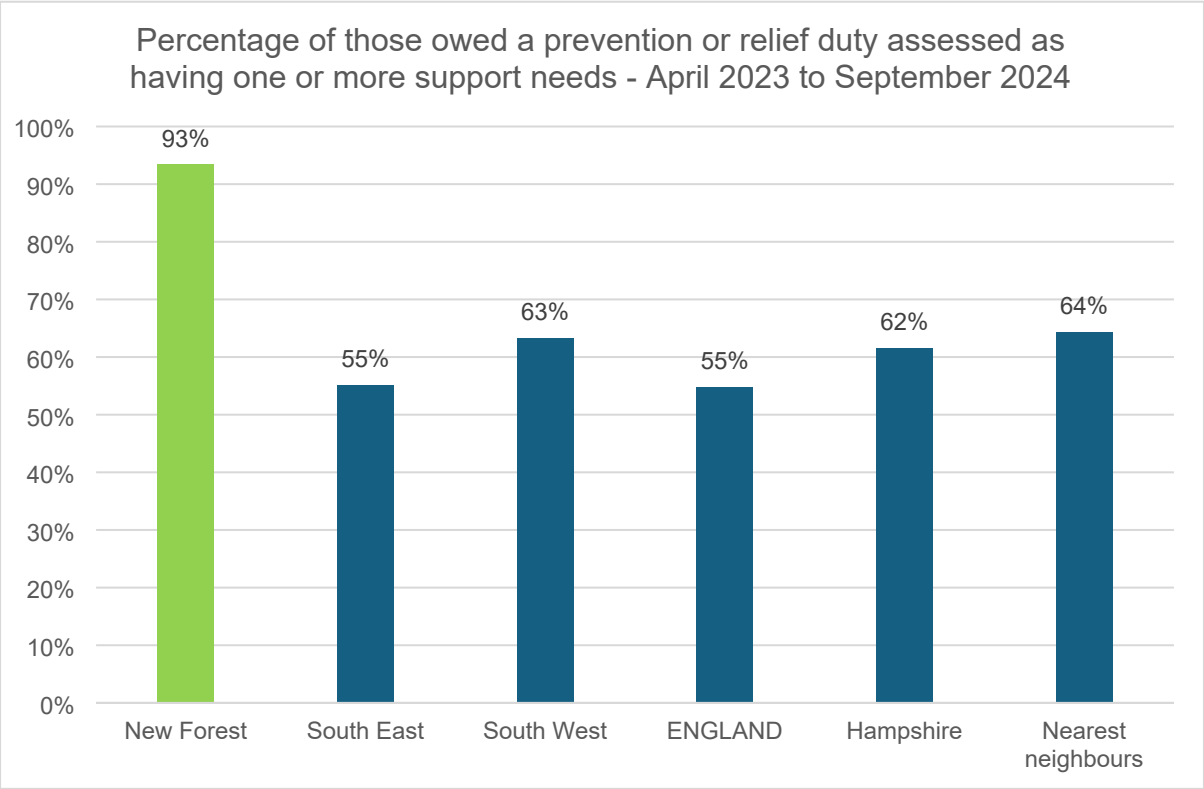


Figure 66 looks in more detail at the support needs recorded in New Forest and other areas.

Figure 66. Percentage of those owed a prevention or relief duty with different support needs, April 2023 to September 2024

Support need	New Forest	South East	South West	ENGLAND	Hampshire districts	ONS nearest neighbours
History of mental health problems	62%	26%	34%	27%	31%	34%
Physical ill health and disability	43%	19%	24%	20%	21%	24%
At risk of / has experienced domestic abuse	28%	11%	14%	12%	13%	15%
Offending history	25%	7%	11%	8%	9%	11%
History of repeat homelessness	25%	6%	11%	7%	8%	11%
Drug dependency needs	11%	6%	8%	6%	7%	7%
History of rough sleeping	31%	5%	10%	6%	8%	11%
Alcohol dependency needs	9%	5%	7%	5%	6%	7%
Learning disability	29%	6%	9%	6%	8%	10%

Young person aged 18-25 years requiring support to manage independently	9%	4%	5%	4%	5%	5%
Access to education, employment or training	42%	4%	6%	5%	7%	12%
At risk of / has experienced abuse (non-domestic abuse)	9%	3%	5%	3%	3%	5%
At risk of / has experienced sexual abuse / exploitation	14%	2%	4%	2%	4%	5%
Old age	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	3%
Care leaver aged 18-20 years	3%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Care leaver aged 21-24 years	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Care leaver aged 25+ years	2%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Care leaver aged 21+ years (retired option)	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Young person aged 16-17 years	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%
Young parent requiring support to manage independently	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Former asylum seeker	0%	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%
Served in HM Forces	4%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Victim of modern slavery	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Difficulties budgeting	30%	6%	8%	5%	9%	12%

62% of all those owed a prevention or relief duty in New Forest are recorded as having a history of mental health problems, with 43% having physical ill health or a disability, 42% lacking access to education, employment or training, 31% having a history of rough sleeping, 30% with difficulties budgeting, 29% with a learning disability, 28% at risk of, or having experienced domestic abuse, 25% with an offending history and 25% with a history of repeat homelessness.

On average across all the support needs listed, any given support need was 2 to 3 times more likely to be recorded by New Forest than in the comparator areas.

Support available

A question which arises from this and not answered by the published data, is to what extent these support needs, having been identified, were able to be addressed by the council and its partners.

Anecdotally, discussions with stakeholders and council officers suggested that New Forest is unusually scrupulous, compared to some other local authorities in following up with clients who have been placed in emergency accommodation to address any issues which arise.

On the other hand, there may be a lack of supported accommodation below the threshold for Supported Living accommodation provided under the Care Act, and there is no Housing First provision in New Forest.

It is hard to be sure what impacts this has, but there is accommodation for people with complex needs in the Tourlands scheme for example, and the Council has clearly been successful in reducing rough sleeping to a minimum in recent years.

Conversations with Hampshire Children's Services suggest that New Forest Council engages well with Children's Services around provision for care leavers, and regularly attends joint meetings with Children's services to discuss cases. The council is also reported to have worked hard at building relationships with Children's services officers and is an active participant in the 'Hampshire Care Leavers Joint Working Housing Protocol'[38] established in 2023.

Discussions with Hampshire Adult Services also indicate that the council works well with the county's adult social services around people with complex needs, including people who have experienced street homelessness and people being discharged from hospital. There are a number of Supported Living schemes in the New Forest area, which can be used to accommodate people who have experienced homelessness where this is appropriate. New Forest was praised for making prompt referrals when social care input is needed, and for being willing to work constructively to find solutions for service users. The council also regularly attends joint meetings.

Two possible areas for greater cooperation, could be to have more rapid co-ordination of professionals around the duty to refer e.g. to set up a multi-agency call, and to work together between Adults and New Forest housing officers to provide support tenants who self-neglect.

Discussions with prison and probation services also indicate good working relationships with the council and appropriate joint working to prevent and relieve homelessness amongst those being released from prison.

Specialist workers are employed within the homelessness team working on mental health and on accommodation for ex-offenders. There are also two workers within the homelessness team working on Ukraine resettlement.

[38] Report - Joint Housing Protocol for 18 Care Leavers - Appendix.pdf

The council's relationship with Sovereign Network Group (SNG), the leading RP in the area was also described positively by SNG.

Voluntary sector collaboration

We also spoke to Citizens Advice; The Crossings; and Youth and Family matters, Totton all of whom work in the community with people who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness through drop-ins, advice sessions, phone calls etc.

All of these organisations reported very positive relationships with the council's housing options service, with officers for the council attending regular drop in sessions organised by voluntary groups, and being reported as supportive and willing to give advice and help and to take responsibility where needed e.g. if a homelessness duty might be owed.

This relationship between the council and these community groups can be highly complementary, as typically the voluntary sector groups may be more physically accessible to service users and able to spend more time working with them than the council realistically could.

The one criticism of the council raised by all three groups was that the council's housing options services are not always very accessible for someone without an advocate acting on their behalf, due to the complex nature of the information required by the council and the difficulty sometimes of getting through on the telephone.

Domestic abuse strategy

The council has also approved a domestic abuse strategy 2025 to 2028[39] for formal consultation which is aligned to the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2023 to 2025[40], and sets out how New Forest is implementing the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

This includes a statement that: 'NFDC Housing Services is at the forefront of delivering services to survivors of domestic abuse including providing early housing advice, housing options, prevention and homelessness services to survivors. We also engage with alleged perpetrators of domestic abuse, signposting to specialist support services. We also provide a fully funded additional security scheme, allowing victims survivors to remain in their homes through enhanced security measures,

[39] https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk/documents/s32189/Appendix+1+-+DRAFT+Domestic+Abuse+Strategy.pdf
[40] https://documents.hants.gov.uk/public-health/domestic-abuse/domestic-abuse-strategy-2023.pdf

should they choose.'

NFDC's positive reputation

All the external stakeholders we spoke to as part of the review, from social services to the voluntary sector, to emergency accommodation providers, were full of praise for New Forest District Council in the way the council works with them in areas related to homelessness and housing need, emphasising the diligence of staff compared to some other local authorities, the efforts the council has made to engage with them and the positive attempts at joint working.

It was also clear from a meeting with a small number of representatives of the New Forest tenant's group, that at least amongst those attending the discussion, the council is trusted to work sensitively with people and to do it's best to help address their needs. One member of the group who had been in TA about three years ago did report a very high number of moves between different types of emergency accommodation over about 10 months, but despite this very challenging experience she was at pains to point out that within the constraints the council had they did their best to make sure the all the placements were suitable and within areas where she could continue to access services and her child could continue to attend school,

Possible gaps

In the context of this positive feedback, a desire was also expressed by both external stakeholders and some New Forest officers for more support for key groups, especially for drug users in New Forest with high levels of self-neglect, residents of temporary accommodation with unaddressed support needs, and care leavers who have had to go into generic TA, but who would benefit from dedicated private rented sector accommodation or other training flat 'provision' where support could be provided by Children's services. This latter would be building on an existing scheme of this type, which New Forest has set up with SDM property group.

A lack of suitable move on accommodation was also raised by one emergency accommodation proprietor, who cited an example of a single woman with support needs who had been moved into unsupported PRS accommodation in Bournemouth and subsequently disappeared, as a result of more suitable provision not being available.

Supported Housing Act

Like all other local housing authorities, New Forest is impacted by the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023. The key provisions of the act are that it:

- Enables locally led licensing of supported (exempt) housing schemes in England.
- Mandates National Supported Housing Standards covering property quality and support.
- Introduces a duty for local authorities to produce strategic supported housing plans.
- Establishes an expert advisory panel to monitor the sector.

Consultation ended in May 2025 on the future shape of locally led licensing, national supported housing standards, and potential housing benefit reforms.

The government is expected to publish its response to the consultation responses and to set out draft regulations, probably in late 2025. The licensing regime should roll out locally once regulations in place.

Local authorities will then be required to develop five-year supported housing strategies looking at supply and demand for supported housing, probably from 2026 onwards.

7. Resources for Tackling Homelessness

Homelessness provision in New Forest is provided through a variety of sources. Whilst the main provider of services is New Forest District Council, important contributions are also made by Care Leavers teams and Family Help teams in Hampshire Children's Services and by Mental Health and Substance Misuse teams, Learning Difficulties teams and sometimes Older People teams in Hampshire Adult Services.

In common with the other Hampshire Districts, New Forest has recently lost grant funding from Hampshire to provide housing related support to people with experience of homelessness, dating back from the former Supporting People programme. However, this is largely offset by recent increases in homelessness funding from MHCLG.

Prison and Probation services, Health Services and Job Centre Plus also all work with the council in different ways to prevent and relieve homelessness and to provide support to people who have experienced homelessness.

The council also has an important role to play in preventing homelessness through its housing management function for council tenants, with housing associations playing a similar role.

In the period April 2023 to September 2024, only 19 households were recorded by New Forest as being owed a prevention or relief duty as a result of a general needs social housing tenancy ending, compared to 287 prevention and relief duties as a result of the end of a private sector tenancy, indicating that social landlords in New Forest are doing a good job of preventing evictions.

However, these figures do not include those households who become homeless as a result of being evicted by their parents from social housing or fleeing domestic abuse taking place within social housing, which are likely to be significantly higher but cannot be determined from the published statistics.

The voluntary and community sector also play a role in preventing homelessness.

In New Forest, Citizens Advice and faith-based organisations The Crossings and Youth and Family Matters, play an important role in supporting people with housing issues and have a good relationship with the council. We understand that the council is interested in building relationships with other faith-based groups.

However the most important organisation in preventing and relieving homelessness, tackling rough sleeping, and providing accommodation for those who experience homelessness is the council.

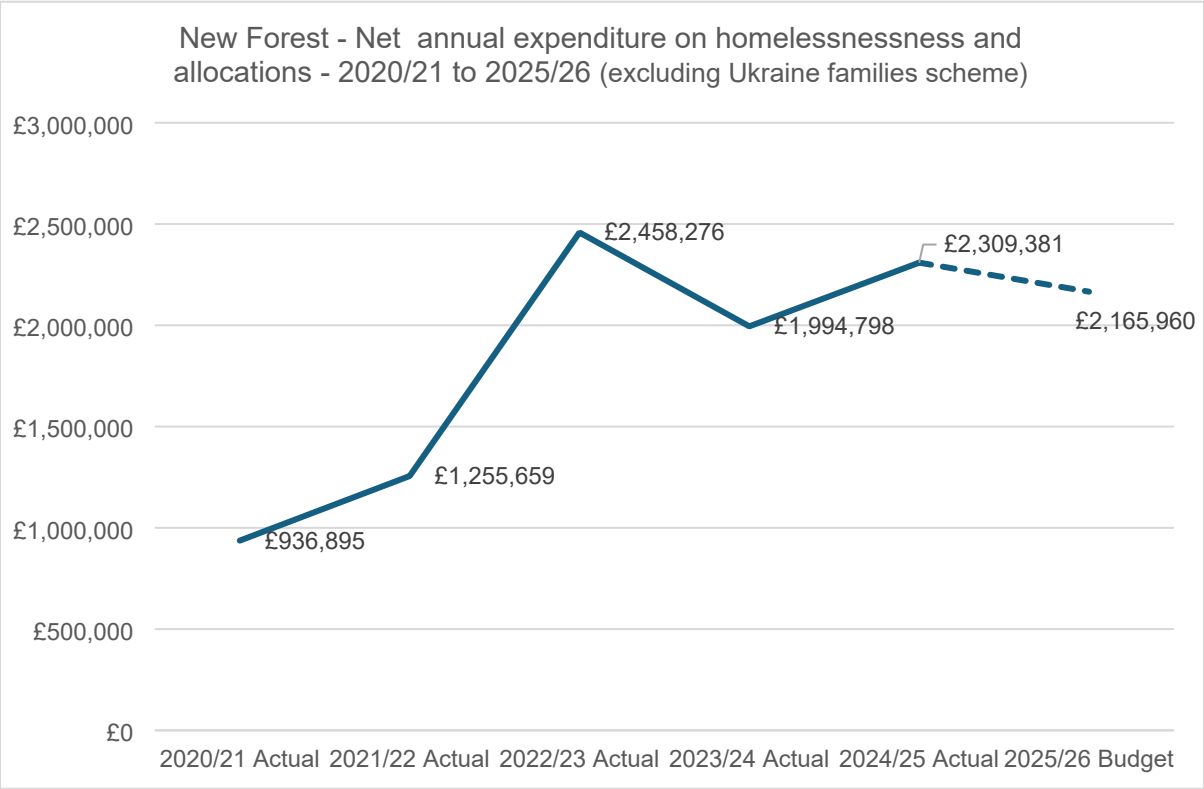
The resources required to do this are significant. They include providing a housing options service carrying out homelessness prevention, homelessness relief, homelessness assessment, work with rough sleepers and specialist work around Ukraine resettlement, mental health and work with ex-offenders.

The council also incurs homelessness related costs in legal services, allocations, IT and rent accounting, and management and maintenance costs for the council's in house TA and PSL properties.

Net general fund[41] expenditure on homelessness and allocations more than doubled between 2020/21 and 2024/25 as shown in Figure 67. However, a modest decrease in net expenditure is forecast in the 2025/26 budget.

[41] This does not include expenditure and income on TA held within the Housing Revenue Account.

Figure 67

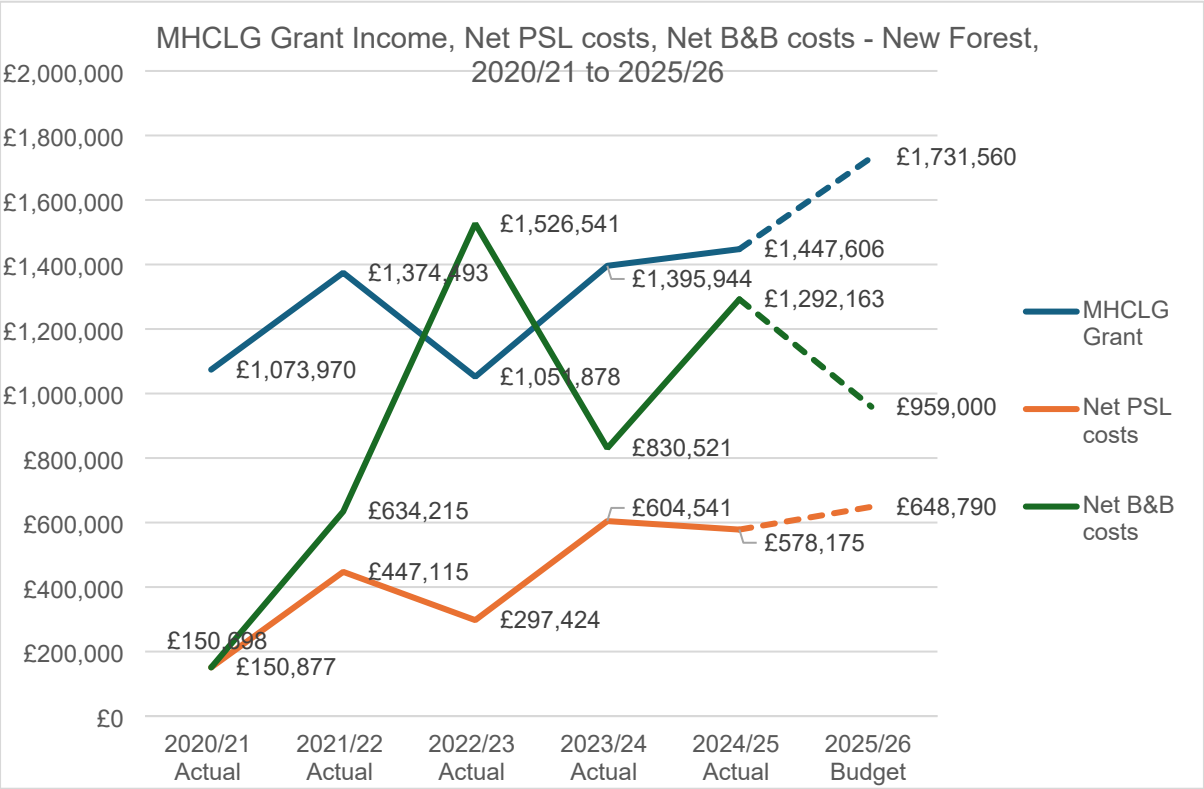


The increase in net expenditure between 2020/21 and 2024/25 is despite a significant increase in grant from MHCLG over the period from just over £1m in 2020/21 to over £1.7m in 2025/26. As can be seen in Figure 68, the major drivers of the increase in council costs are the increase in the net costs of B&B and of PSL accommodation.

However, B&B is much more expensive per household to the council than PSL. Based on an estimated average[42] of around 25 households in B&B during 2024/25 and 150 households in PSL, the net cost of B&B to New Forest per household was over 10 times the net cost of PSL per household.

[42] Based on published H-Clic data.

Figure 68



The best way to reduce the costs of homelessness to the council and to improve the experience of households would be to decrease the use of B&B.

This can in principle be achieved through three mechanisms:

1. more homelessness prevention and relief so that less people need to go in to TA
2. moving people out of TA more quickly into social rented or private rented accommodation
3. increasing the use of TA which is less expensive and better quality than B&B, such as PSL and council owned TA.

8. Consultation

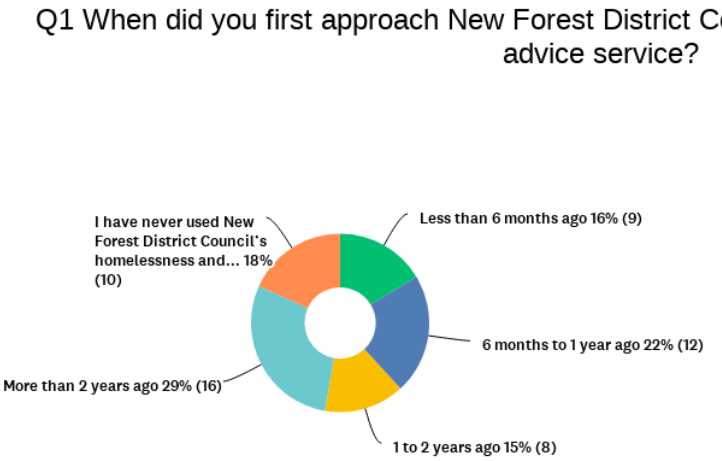
As part of this review an online survey was conducted over 1 month between 6th June and 6th July 2025. The survey was advertised by the council to households in TA and other households who had used the council's homelessness and housing advice services in the last few years.

In total 55 people began filling in the survey. 82% of these had approached the service but 18% had not. Those who said they had not approached the service were

automatically disqualified, so that 45 people continued with the survey. Respondents were free to answer individual questions or to skip any they did not wish to answer.

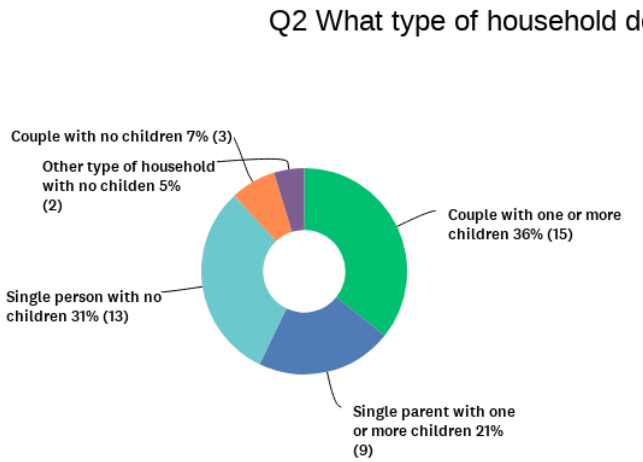
The length of time since respondents had first approached the council is shown in Figure 69. This shows a spread between recent approaches and approaches more than 2 years ago.

Figure 69



Of those responding who did not skip the question, 85% were female and 15% male, with 36% being in a couple with one or more children, 21% single parents, 31% single with no children and 7% couples with no children.

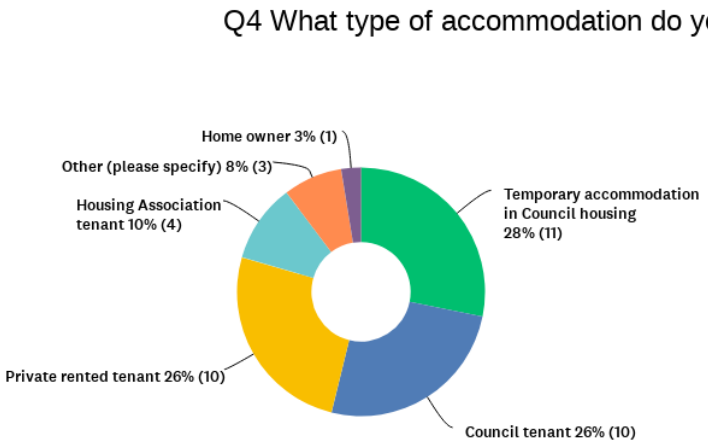
Figure 70



In terms of current accommodation, 28% said they were in TA, 26% were council

tenants, 26% private tenants, 10% housing association tenants and one home owner.

Figure 71



67% of respondents who didn't skip the question said the council had either provided or helped to secure their current accommodation and 24% said the council had helped them to keep their current accommodation and prevent them becoming homeless.

There was considerable overlap between these groups, so that overall, 69% of respondents who didn't skip said that they had been helped to access or keep their current accommodation by the council. In subsequent questions, those who said they hadn't been helped were more likely to skip questions, so that responses are skewed towards the views of those who had been helped.

The reasons why people said they had approached the council for help were, as expected, mainly about homelessness or risk of homelessness in some form. However, they included several who said they needed more affordable or more suitable accommodation, or who needed to get away from their current accommodation for some reason. For example:

"Need ground floor living due to health issues"

"Breakdown of relationship"

"Was homeless, living in a car for 6 years"

"For my mother who came from Ukraine on the family scheme because of the war"

"I'm paying extortionate monthly rental in a private property whilst studying as a mature student to be a teacher; on a low income. I simply cannot afford it but I need to house my son."

"I was in expensive private rented accommodation"

“Section 21 issued by current landlord” – there were several of these

“Need for an adapted property”

“Because we were in private rented & would have been made homeless if they’d not been able to help by offering us a housing association house.”

“To find an affordable secure property to rent”

“To rehouse my daughter who is being stalked by her neighbour and who was sexually assaulted in her home”

“90 and 81 year old living in a 1st floor flat no bus route husband disabled needing ground floor accommodation”

“Ran a pub and was being evicted due to ceasing trading”

When asked what the result was of seeking help from the council, responses were quite mixed. For example, on the positive side:

“We were safely & securely housed!”

“Housed in an appropriate property”

“I received emergency accommodation then temporary accommodation then my own flat.”

“I got really perfect help and I am grateful for it”.

Unfortunately, more negative responses were more common. It is possible that those who were not happy were more motivated to respond to the survey, but:

“No help”

“Nothing”

“Very limited, no financial support with the deposit or rent”

“Nothing for years, now in a bedsit”

“No help. I am listed in category 4 on Home Search and I seem to have no chance of gaining an affordable property to house myself and my son. I'm stretching my finances so broadly at the moment, its incredibly hard to live and stay healthy whilst doing so.”

“Added to housing list but told after 8yrs i had gone to bottom of list because I found private rental.”

“Absolutely nothing apart from a missed appointment with the social worker instigated by the housing officers which she didn’t turn up for.”

“No help and no response. Waited weeks and weeks, phoned and visited the reception with our completed forms for help.”

“Living in a rented property which was only meant to be temporary. I've been on the waiting list nearly 11 years and recently been told because I'm band 4 I'm likely to never get a property. This is incredibly frustrating because we are struggling where we are, but no one seems interested”

“It is really awful accommodation. Firstly, flat had have normally heater, no hot water in bathrooms and we have to pay double for going to swimming pool and wash there. Secondly, flat has had mould in bedroom. Thirdly, bedbugs in this property. Firstly, we became really homeless and should to sleep in the floor in the kitchen. What do you think is it normally for British?”

“Didn't feel listened to or supported for over a year, when I did after abusive relationship felt a relief but has been a really harmful process”

“Currently living in a 1 bedroom flat with my husband and 3 children (two with SEN)”

Other responses were more matter of fact:

“Emergency housing and now temporary housing”

“Being placed in NFDC private sector temporary accommodation”

“I was put in a hotel for 2 days then got moved to emergency accommodation. An incident happened there as it wasn't the greatest of places. I then got moved to a B&B and then a temporary accommodation. (Self contained flat)”

When asked: ‘What were the best things New Forest District Council did to help you?’, again there were quite a lot of answers saying *“nothing”* or words to that effect.

But other responses were positive or more nuanced, for example:

“Offering a bedsit after breaking hip on ice while living in a car”

“Eventually get me into permanent accommodation”

“Communication with the OT”

“Found us a home!”

“Reasonably easy to deal with, acted fairly quickly”

“Not much - rent a garage”

“A very quick referral”

“Once an allocation officer understood our needs progress was made”

“Gave me a new start”

“Communication real assistance treated like person not number”

“Put a roof over my kids heads”

“Didn’t judge me”

“When I got into my temporary flat finally can breathe”

“The support was amazing”

“Both the housing officers that were allocated to us were extremely helpful and understanding. We wouldn’t be in this house without them.”

When asked: ‘What could New Forest have done better?’, the responses were in some cases quite stark, and quite often focused on perceived lack of empathy or the bureaucratic nature of the process. Although there were a small number of responses along the lines of *“I think everything was perfect”*, the following examples are more representative of the general mood:

“Not be so blinkered to individual needs not everyone fits in a neat box”

“Everything. I’m homeless, disabled my only company is my little dog. They’ve told me the only way they will Possibly help me is for my dog to be put down or rehomed. At nearly 11 years old”

“Financially support my mum, who is 72 and very little savings, with the rent and deposit as other Ukrainians were”

“Put a roof over my head while living in a car with mental health problems”

“Give more chance to good people who are trying hard in category 4 banding. I seem to currently have next to no chance of securing an affordable home for myself and my son. If my landlord increases my rent, I'm unsure of how we will be able to stay in our current property. We may not have the greatest need currently, but we still have need. Don't forget us!”

“Have more staff, as when the Homeless Prevention Officer was absent through leave or sickness, no one took over my case. Again, have more staff in the Home Search department, to clear the backlog of cases awaiting assessment.”

“Found me a property, having lived here for 40 yrs, and being a single employed parent, with primary age child.”

“Made the system more straight forward, less tick box exercises, more user friendly application system, Used a decent company for the DFG grant instead of paying for unfinished work and unmet promises. Nearly 3 years later the work isn’t finished. better understanding of the needs of the whole household”

“Not require so many forms and documents. I was lucky to still have a phone and a place I could print things and had access to passports and bank statements etc. Most people experiencing homelessness don't have access to these things.”

“Be more empathetic towards the situation and provide more resolutions in a quick manor instead of pushing to private rent when sometimes this is not possible, and more regular updates to keep the anxiety down. so the people know what is going on instead of being lost in the system.”

“In early stages there was an almost total lack of genuine communication. And what little communication there was - was a tick box exercise and failed to address any questions.”

“Get rid of band 4. It's pointless! All other bands are given the priority. I've lived in the new forest since 2011, been on the waiting list for almost 11 years but that doesn't seem to matter. There should be a period of time where band 4 are on the list and given a priority over a amount of time. All my children are neurodivergent and we need support and at least considered for a property.”

“I think more care needs to be taken with regard to service users’ emotions, I was left in tears many times by the housing officer.”

“Not such long wait times to find out what’s going on leaving us in limbo”

“More communication once in emergency re available property home search took two months then asked for all same info again which given when first applied and unable to contact via phone no reply to email”

“More one to one talks on phone not just emails makes you feel like a robot, find out more if you talk to a person than an email otherwise I'm happy with the service they provide”

“Helped more instead of first stating I couldn’t afford a property”

“Took on my case earlier as my mental health was awful having nowhere stable or comfortable to live and worse not feeling taken seriously”

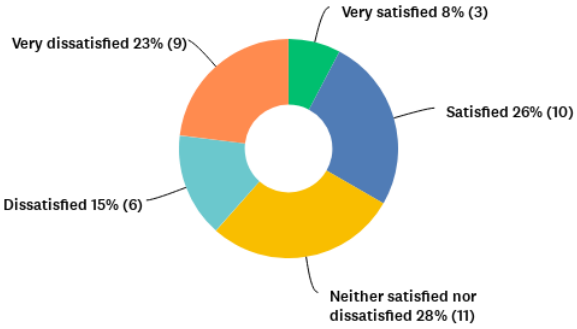
“Helped us before it got to bailiffs/ helped us closer to support network as adviced from GP”

“Been more empathetic. Actually suggest and give options that a lot of people know to be available but the council try to cover it up or say its "no longer available"

When asked how satisfied they were with the overall service provided by the council, responses were mixed, but with slightly more people saying they were dissatisfied than satisfied including 23% of respondents who said they were very dissatisfied.

Figure 72

Q11 How satisfied are you with the overall service provided by New Forest District Council?



The comments in response to this question again tended towards the negative. For example:

"The whole process was incredibly stressful on our whole family"

"Spoken to like I was a lesser person"

"Feeling scared and sad"

"Takes a toll on your health living in a car for years."

The most positive comment also suggested areas for improvement:

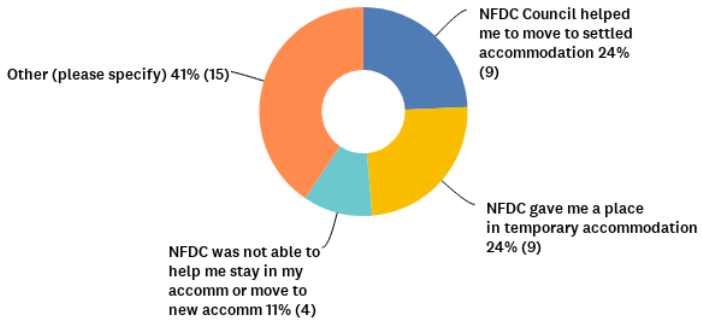
"The homelessness officer who dealt with my case was great, but the whole process should had been a lot quicker but understandable with the current housing crisis. If the turn around times on moving on accommodation was a bit quicker the process would be a lot smoother. I had 3/4 temporary placements offered to me in which they had to be taken back due to disrepair on the property so overall I waited over a year to be placed into self contained temporary housing. The people in the housing team do all that they can and keep you updated as long as you are patient even in a hard time things will work out and they are there to support you."

When asked about the result of their approach to the council's homelessness and housing advice service, 24% said they had been helped to move to settled accommodation and 24% said they had been given a place in TA. Only 11% said NFDC had not been able to help. However, 41% responded 'Other (please specify',

with it being clear from the comments that in most cases this meant respondents felt they had received no help yet or were in an unsatisfactory situation such as being in emergency accommodation.

Figure 73

Q12 What was the result of your approach to New Forest District Council's homelessness and housing advice service?



Those respondents who said they had been placed in TA, were asked more questions about that TA. Here the results were generally more positive.

More people were satisfied than dissatisfied with the TA they had been placed in and with the way their TA was managed. Only 25% of respondents said they were dissatisfied with the way their TA was managed.

"General management & day to day liaison was good and friendly"

"Have a few problems with upstairs neighbours sometimes slamming doors, banging and arguing late at night and early in morning makes the flat shake when they slam their door but otherwise ok"

Figure 73

Q13 How satisfied are you with the temporary accommodation you were placed in by the council?

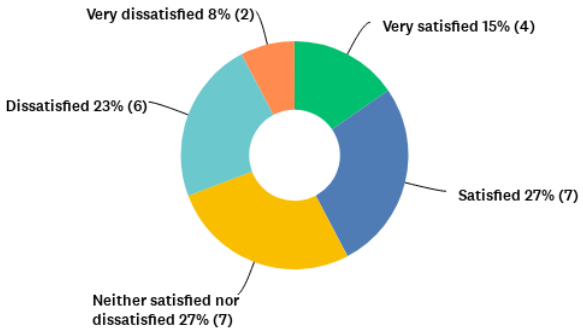
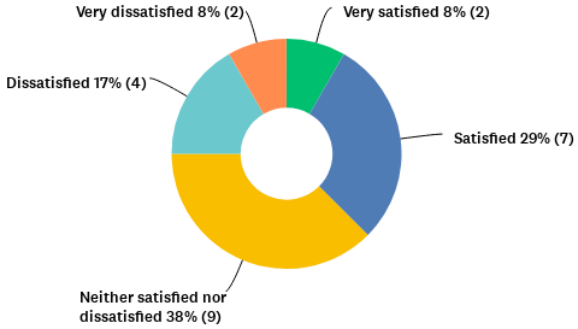


Figure 74

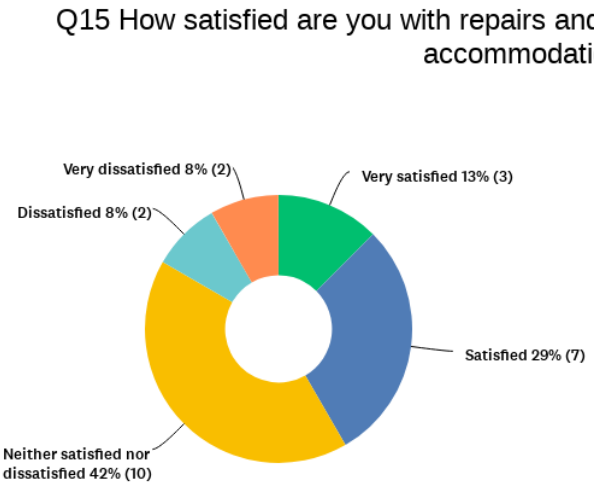
Q14 How satisfied are you with the way your temporary accommodation is managed?



Repairs and maintenance were also reported on positively with only 16% dissatisfied, a figure some councils would envy.

"Very satisfied with day to day maintenance - both call centre & engineers However bigger problems such as damp etc was a problem"

Figure 75

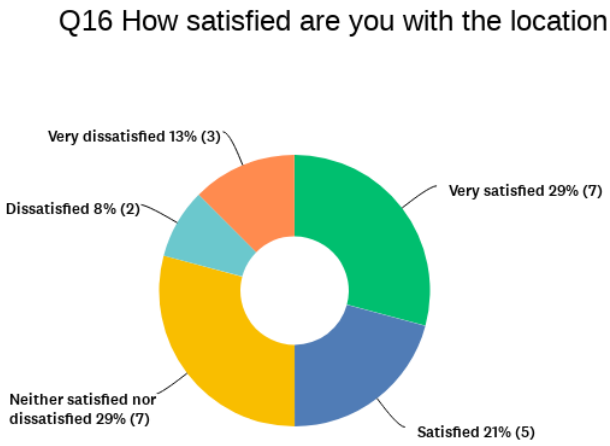


50% of respondents were satisfied with the location of their TA, including 29% very satisfied. This compared with only 21% who were dissatisfied, although location was a significant issue for some people:

"I need to be close to my son and I'm not which is highly upsetting."

"Family support system is 40 minutes away, with children with additional needs this is very hard"

Figure 76



There was, however, more dissatisfaction with options to move out of TA, with 40% dissatisfied, compared with 32% satisfied.

"We have NOT been given any options at all and have been told to look for private when we are unable to afford this on our budget and we would not be left with

anything to even afford a day out for our children"

"Housing association bidding process is just awful! Always show things for over 60s and rarely properties for younger generations."

"We can't bid every week sometimes for a few weeks as there nothing to bid on"

Questions then moved away from TA and focused on people experience of the homelessness and housing advice service.

People tended to find it difficult rather than easy to speak to someone in the service.

"The Homeless Prevention Officer was often unavailable on the telephone and I had to communicate via email. Home Search do not use the telephone, only email."

"NFDC wish to do everything by email"

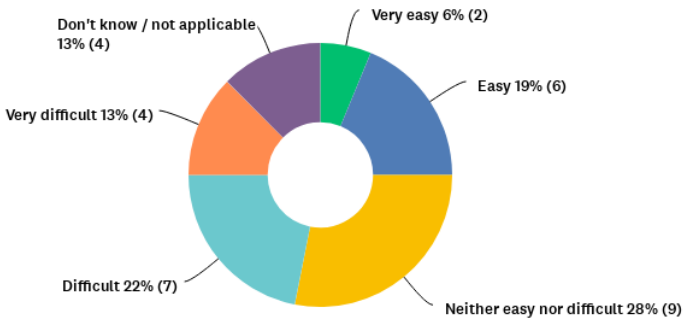
"Until near the end contact via email or phone was almost impossible. With tick-box nebulous responses for the most part"

But with some exceptions:

"My emails where always dealt with quickly and if I couldn't get a response via email I would call and my housing officer would call me back within 24 hours"

Figure 77

Q18 How easy was it to get to speak to someone at the council's homeless and housing advice service?



20% of respondents said they were dissatisfied with how staff treated them personally compared to 36% who were satisfied and 43% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Comments here were quite polarised:

“Everyone was very understanding and kind.”

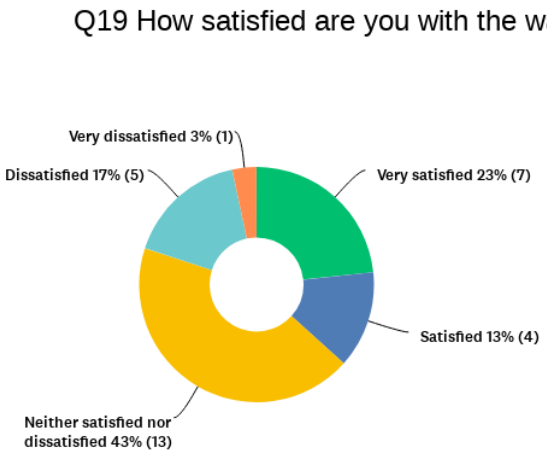
“Person that answers my call are always polite”

But also:

“I was spoken to as if I was a nuisance, no emotional support offered whatsoever, extremely emotionless responses and no regard to mental welfare during the process of being homeless.”

“When I first spoke to a woman she was very rude very blunt and not empathetic at all. She really couldn't of cared less about my situation and made me have a full on breakdown.”

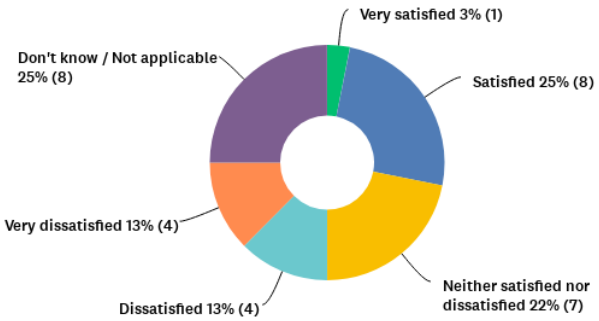
Figure 78



Respondents were fairly evenly split on satisfaction with how long they had to wait for an appointment.

Figure 79

Q20 How satisfied are you with how long you had to wait for an appointment?



When asked how well they were listened to and understood, 47% said they were dissatisfied compared to only 34% who were satisfied.

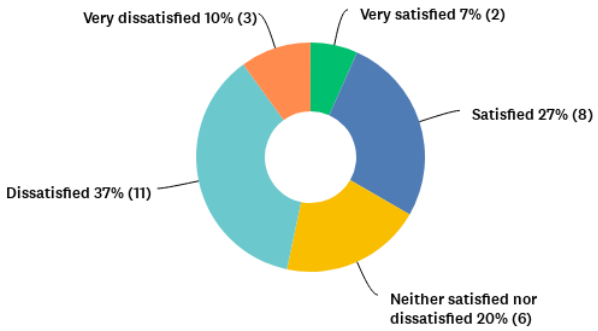
Only 2 respondents left comments for this question and so these may not be representative:

"I may as well shout it into the wind"

"Initially almost totally ignored - however (after several years) once someone actually read paperwork service improved"

Figure 80

Q21 How well you were listened to and understood?

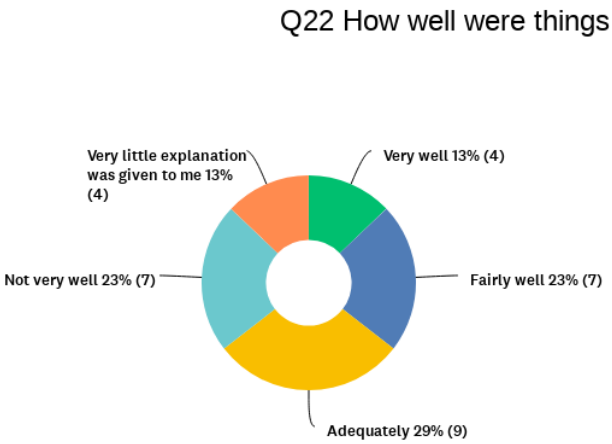


Respondents were fairly evenly divided on how well things were explained to them. This, however, may not be considered good enough. Whilst providing suitable housing can be very challenging, explaining things in a way that service users can understand should be more achievable.

“I told staff I struggle with forms, phone calls ECT and it got brushed away”

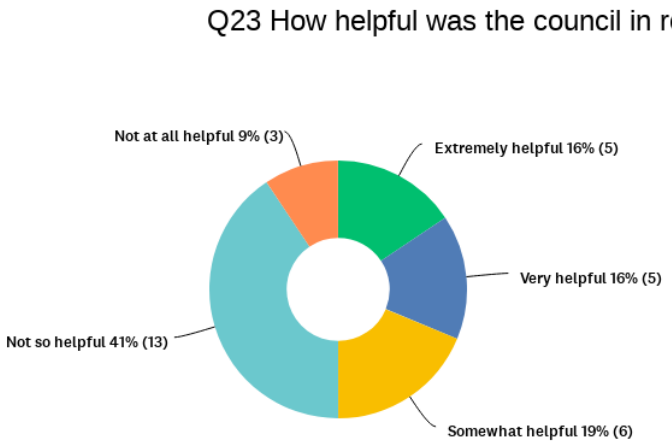
“Initial responses were just to fob you off”

Figure 81



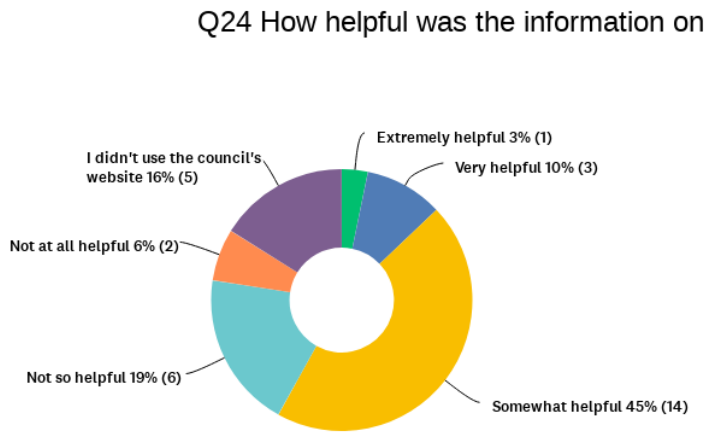
When asked how helpful the council was in resolving their situation, 16% of respondents who did not skip the question said ‘extremely helpful’ 16% very helpful, and 19% somewhat helpful. However, 41% said the council was ‘not so helpful’ and 9% said ‘not at al helpful’.

Figure 81



Of those who used the council’s website, the most common view was that the information was ‘somewhat helpful’

Figure 82

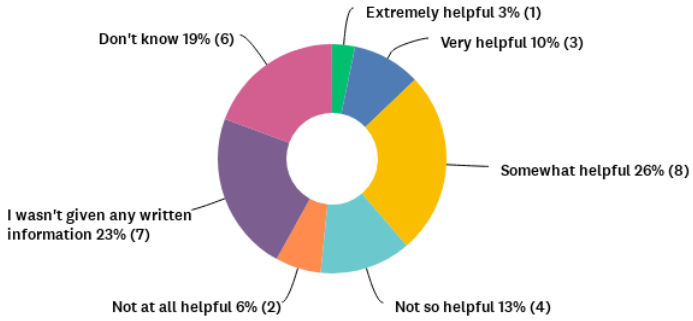


Asked about the helpfulness of any written information they were given, 23% said they had not been given any written information and 19% said 'don't know'. Of those who expressed an opinion only a small proportion felt the information was very or extremely helpful. Overall, this suggests that there is scope to make written information more user friendly.

"Because I am not very good in spoken English"

"I struggle to read big paragraphs due to medication amounts"

Figure 83

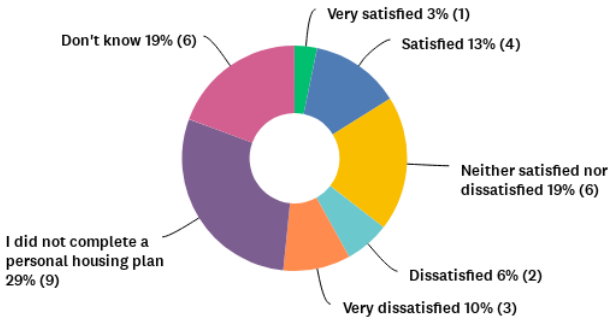


When asked about their level of satisfaction with their personal housing plan, 29% said they did not complete a personal housing plan. As this is a legal requirement for anyone who approaches the council who is homeless or at risk of homelessness within 56 days, it suggests that people were not as involved as they could have been in their PHP or that PHPs may in some cases be seen as a token exercise.

This is reinforced by the 19% of respondents who said they did not know how satisfied they were with their PHP. Of those who expressed an opinion, about the same number were satisfied as dissatisfied.

Figure 84

Q26 If you completed a personal housing plan, how satisfied were you with your personal housing plan?



Finally, people were asked how satisfied they were with the outcome of their approach to the New Forest homelessness and housing advice service, a sightly different questions to the one previously asked about how satisfied they were with the service.

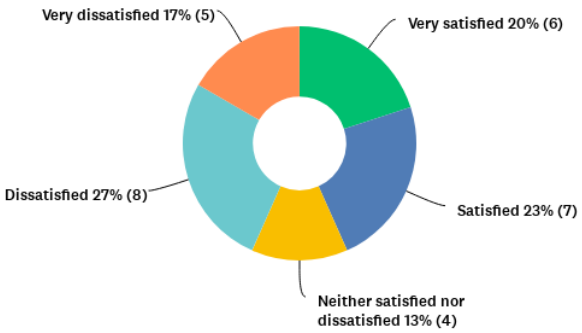
Of those respondents who did not skip the question, 20% were very satisfied, 23% satisfied, 13% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 27% dissatisfied and 17% very dissatisfied. As might be expected, responses here depended significantly on what outcome had in fact been achieved.

"We gave up so does not apply"

"Eventual outcome was good although Housing Options need to be more integrated with tenancy team. Found the service to be very hit and miss - once we were lucky enough to speak with the right person it went well - Again this is not about hearing what you want to hear or timing - but about clear and meaningful communication- giving frank responses and updates - good & bad"

Figure 85

Q27 Overall, how satIsfied are you with the outcome of your approach to New Forest District Council's homelessness and housing advice service



9. Findings

Conclusions

Our conclusions are set out following the order of the discussion within this review.

Current levels of homelessness

Based on the number of homelessness prevention and relief duties accepted per thousand households between April 2023 and September 2024, recent homelessness levels in New Forest were 8% higher than the weighted average for the Hampshire district authorities, but were 18% lower than average levels in the South East, 19% lower than the South West and 35% lower than in the whole of England.

Separating this overall figure into households who approached at risk of homelessness and were owed a prevention duty and those who were already homeless when they approached and were owed a relief duty, 56% of those who approached new Forest were at risk of homelessness compared to 27% who were already homeless.

This is a significantly higher ratio of homelessness prevention to homelessness relief than in any of the comparator areas, and this high prevention to relief ratio has been characteristic of New Forest for some years.

It is highly positive, and something aspired to by other local authorities, that more

people approach New Forest before they become homeless as this gives a greater opportunity for homelessness prevention to take place.

Since at least March 2021, overall homelessness demand in New Forest has, with some fluctuations, been steady, with no indication of an upward or downward trend in either the number of prevention or relief duties.

The main reasons for risk of homelessness in New Forest for those owed a prevention duty are end of a private rented sector assured shorthold tenancy (34%) followed by exclusion by family and friends (33%), followed by domestic abuse (6%).

Whilst this is the same ranking order of causes of risk of homelessness as in comparator areas, proportionally far fewer households approach New Forest due to the end of a private sector tenancy than in other areas and proportionally far more approach due to exclusion by friends and family.

This is emphasised by the reasons for homelessness for those owed a relief duty. In New Forest 37% of those owed a relief duty were homeless due to exclusion by friends and family, with 20% homeless as a result of domestic abuse, and only 8% due to the end of an AST. 10% of those owed a relief duty had left an institution with no accommodation available.

Compared to comparator areas, this was a higher proportion of cases due to family and friends exclusion, and a lower proportion due to end of an AST, but with a significantly higher proportion of relief duties owed due to leaving an institution.

It is expected that more people approach when at risk homelessness due to the end of an AST because notice has to be given by the landlord. On the other hand, people at risk of domestic abuse are more likely to be assessed as homeless than at risk of homelessness because it is deemed unsafe for them to return to their current accommodation.

Both the number of friends and family exclusions in New Forest which lead to homelessness, and the level of homelessness due to domestic abuse, are cause for concern.

It is less clear that homelessness relief duties owed after leaving an institution is problematic as this may be due to good practice in the council picking up relief duties for people in that situation through effective liaison with prisons and hospitals.

The relatively low level of homelessness from those losing a social housing tenancy (4% of prevention duties and only 2% of relief duties) is positive, and New Forest is

lucky to have almost no homelessness as a result of people leaving Home Office asylum seeker accommodation.

The Duty to Refer process in New Forest appears to be working well, with 10% of those assessed due to homelessness or risk of homelessness being referred by a duty to refer agency. However there are low levels of referrals from non-duty to refer agencies, which may indicate barriers to access outside the formal duty to refer process.

The largest number of referrals received come from the probation service (30% of referrals) followed by referrals from hospitals and from children's social services, indicating that referral pathways from those key agencies are working well.

In terms of the demographics of those owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty, ethnicity is overwhelmingly white (97%), reflecting the local population. Household composition and age group are similar to comparator areas with singe adult males (36%) and female single parents (21%) to most likely households types to be owed a duty.

In terms of employment status, those owed a prevention or relief duty in New Forest were more likely to be in full or part time work (31%) than comparator areas, and far less likely to be registered unemployed (16%). More of those owed a homelessness duty in New Forest were not working due to illness or disability (22%) than in comparator areas.

A striking finding is that 41% of those successfully accommodated[43] to end a prevention duty and 52% of those successfully accommodated to end a relief duty came from outside New Forest – a much higher proportion than any of the comparator areas and about twice as high as in the South East or South West regions.

Rough Sleeping

Although levels of rough sleeping are notoriously prone to fluctuations for reasons outside the easy control of any local authority, and therefore there is no room for complacency, New Forest has been extremely successful in recent years in reducing the level of rough sleeping. The annual published snapshot figure fell from a peak of 22 people sleeping out on a single night in Autumn 2019 to one person in Autumn 2024.

Comparing the 2024 figures with comparator areas, the rate of rough sleeping per

[43] There is no data published on this for the total number of those owed a duty, only for those where a duty ended by securing accommodation for at least 6 months.

100,000 population in New Forest is not only much lower than any of the comparator areas but has also been falling against both the national and regional trends.

This same pattern is also clear when looking at the number of people estimated to be sleeping rough over the course of any given month, with the New Forest figure of around 6 people consistently much lower than either the regional or national average, since at least the end of 2022.

It is unlikely that this is due to a reduction in the potential for rough sleeping in New Forest as a result of demographic changes, and much more likely that the reduction is due to the good quality of the council's outreach work and its good use of the additional revenue and capital funding available to counter street homelessness, especially since the Everyone In initiative during the Covid 19 lockdown from March 2020.

Future levels of homelessness

There is no accepted model with a good track record for predicting future homelessness or rough sleeping.

The most thorough attempt at this in England has been the projections of 'core homelessness' published in the Crisis homelessness monitor.

According to this model, on current trends[44], core homelessness in England will continue to rise significantly until at least 2041. Having said this, as discussed above New Forest's homelessness demand has not been rising during a period when homelessness demand has been rising across most of the country.

The Crisis model also offers hope that national homelessness could stabilise or even fall if certain policies were adopted by the government. Some, but not all of these policy changes are being attempted by the current government and there is also a new national homelessness strategy due in Autumn 2025 , which may have a positive impact.

In terms of local issues, New Forest has both relatively high levels of child poverty after housing costs compared to the Hampshire districts, and a very high house price to median earnings ratio, bit of which are likely to contribute to homelessness pressures. However, this has been the case for many years and neither of these statistics are currently on a rising trend.

[44] Based on a 2022 baseline

Our conclusion is that the most prudent assumption is that homelessness pressures in New Forest will remain at approximately current levels with the possibility that they may rise or fall somewhat in the near future. At this point there is no clear evidence that homelessness in New Forest is likely to rise markedly or to fall.

Preventing homelessness

New Forest is currently investing on increased homelessness prevention activity, with the addition new staff paid for through increased homelessness funding from MHCLG.

However, we note that there is comparatively little activity from the council to provide housing advice and to fulfil its duty to do so under S179 of the Housing Act 1996. There is little to no housing advice on the council's website and little if any signposting to where such advice might be obtained.

The council's website in fact specifically discourages anyone from approaching them for housing advice, short of making a formal self-referral for homelessness or risk of homelessness using the online portal.

This message is reinforced by telephone message for anyone who, against the council's explicit instructions, tries to telephone them for advice or help before they are at immediate risk of homelessness.

Still less is there any tailored advice available for the at risk groups specified in the Act for whom tailored advice is required.

We therefore have to conclude that the council is falling short of its legal responsibilities to provide housing advice and as a result is also missing an opportunity to prevent potential homelessness at an earlier stage.

Lack of easy access to help before homelessness is imminent was also raised by the voluntary sector groups we spoke to, who were otherwise very complementary about the council's work.

In the period April 2023 to September 2024 New Forest ended more prevention duties per thousand households than the average in any of the comparator areas, indicating significant opportunities to prevent homelessness.

47% of these duties ended successfully through the securing of accommodation for at least 6 months, lower than the average success rate in any of the comparator areas.

Amongst those cases where homelessness was successfully prevented 74% moved to alternative accommodation and only 24% were able to remain in their existing accommodation, in line with the Hampshire district average but a lower proportion able to remain in existing accommodation than any other comparator area.

There were particularly low success rates in New Forest in preventing homelessness by negotiation, mediation and advocacy work.

There were also low recorded rates of success in the local authority securing accommodation to prevent homelessness, but high levels of success in applicants finding their own accommodation.

Compared to other areas, a large amount of homelessness was prevented through securing private rented accommodation but very little by securing social rented accommodation or supported housing.

59% of accommodation secured to end a homelessness prevention duty was recorded as being within the New Forest area, a lower percentage than the average for any of the comparator areas.

Over time since March 2021, although still slightly lower than average and with some fluctuations, New Forest's performance in preventing homelessness has been increasing compared to the comparator areas, as measured by the percentage of prevention duties ending with a successful prevention.

Relieving homelessness

In the period April 2023 to September 2024, New Forest ended a slightly higher number of homelessness relief duties per thousand households than the Hampshire district average, but a lower number than any of the other comparator areas.

23% of relief duties ending in New Forest ended by successfully securing accommodation for 6 months or more, significantly lower than the average in any other comparator area. By contrast 67% of relief duties ended by 56 days elapsing without successful homelessness relief, significantly higher than the average in any of the comparator areas.

Compared to comparator areas, almost no homelessness reliefs were recorded as being achieved by the local authority securing accommodation or providing supported housing.

On the other hand, a very high percentage of successful reliefs were achieved by the applicant finding their own accommodation and the local authority supporting this though a financial payment.

As discussed in the body of the report, this may be at least partly due to mis-recording of cases where the council was in fact instrumental in securing private rented accommodation. It is also very commendable if applicants are indeed being empowered to find their own accommodation.

Even more strikingly, New Forest Homelessness reliefs were overwhelmingly into private rented accommodation, a far higher percentage of this type of homelessness relief than in the comparator areas. By contrast, only 6% of New Forest homelessness reliefs were into the social rented sector, compared to 39% for Hampshire, 50% for the South East, 57% for the South West, 56% for England.

This is likely to be partly a result of the New Forest allocations policy not prioritising those under a relief duty. Whilst there are competing priorities for allocations of limited social housing and no clear cut answer to what is best practice in this area, it is clear that, compared to many other areas, New Forest is not ending many homelessness relief duties in social rented accommodation.

Only 48% of accommodation used to relieve homelessness by New Forest was within the New Forest area, a much lower percentage than the average in any if the comparator areas, with 42% being accommodation in another local authority[45].

In contrast to New Forest's improving relative performance on homelessness prevention since March 2021 compared to other areas, the council's performance on relief has, with some significant fluctuations, fallen significantly from 37% of relief duties ending in securing settled accommodation in Q4 2020/21 to 19% in Q2 2024/25, a faster fall than in England, the South East or the South West[46].

Main homelessness duties

In the period April 2023 to September 2024, New Forest accepted less main duties er thousand households than the South East, South West or England, but 40% more than the average for the Hampshire districts and more than the average for ONS near neighbours.

[45] And 10% where the destination was recorded as unknown.
[46] This measure was not tracked quarterly for the Hampshire districts or ONS near neighbours due to the complexity of doing so.

In all cases New Forest had a higher ratio of main duties to prevention and relief duties accepted in the period than any of the comparator areas. This was especially clear when compared with the Hampshire districts and ONS near neighbours. New Forest accepted 8% more prevention and relief duties than the average for the Hampshire districts but 40% more main duties.

As the percentage outcomes of main duty decisions was very similar across all the comparator areas, this leads to the conclusion that New Forest's relatively low success rates in preventing and especially in relieving homelessness is leading to more main duties being accepted and therefore to more households being placed in TA.

This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that, as New Forest had a higher ratio of prevention to relief duties than average, it might be expected that fewer of those households would progress to a main duty, as homelessness is normally easier to prevent than to relieve.

Having made this point, it is also true that New Forest's relative main duty numbers have improved over the period Q1 2020/21 to Q2 2024/25 compared to the South East, South West, and England. New Forest had the highest number of main duties per thousand households compared to the other areas in Q1 2020/21 and the lowest number of main duties compared to the other areas in Q2 2024/25.

Securing accommodation

According to ONS data from 2021, New Forest's housing stock was 75% owner occupied, 15% private rented, and 11% social rented[47].

Compared to the other Hampshire districts, this is a higher than average proportion of owner occupied properties, a lower than average proportion of social rented accommodation and an average proportion of private rented accommodation.

New Forest is a stock owning authority and benefits from a common allocations scheme which covers all the council's properties and all RP properties in the area.

The allocations policy is choice based with 4 priority bands and is due to be reviewed. This presents an opportunity to make changes if needed to make it more effective in helping to tackle homelessness.

Households with a main homelessness duty are normally in priority Band 2. Households owed a prevention or relief duty are normally in Band 3. Data from the

[47] Including social housing let at both social rents and affordable rents

calendar year 2024 suggests that the number of lettings to homeless households at least matches the proportions of those on the waiting list, indicating that in general the allocations policy is operating as intended in allocating properties to households with priority based in homelessness and that this is not being prevented due to potential barriers such as local lettings policies, affordability assessments or support needs assessments.

There is some evidence that not all those in TA are registered on the allocations system, but we understand that the position in this has improved significantly.

Private rents in New Forest have risen by 7.7% in the year to May 2025 according to ONS data, whilst LHA has been frozen. Private rented accommodation is relatively unaffordable in New Forst compared to most neighbouring councils, but not dramatically so.

The council reported having 323 households in TA in September 2024 of which 183 included dependent children.

The number of households in TA in New Forest has been falling gradually since at least March 2021. This is a significant success compared to the rising national and regional trends over the same period.

However, New Forest still has more households and more families in TA per thousand households than any of the other Hampshire districts.

Compared to comparator areas, New Forest has a significant stock of PSL accommodation which it maintains to a high standard, and makes considerably less use of self-contained nightly paid accommodation than other places.

The council has also been developing and converting new TA held within its own stock, including specialist accommodation for people with experience of rough sleeping, funded through government rough sleeping capital programmes, and accommodation acquired with the support of the government's Local Authority Housing Fund. There is a pipeline of further TA properties coming online within the next few years and an ambition to provide more in the future as resources allow.

Although we have not inspected the accommodation, we understand from both council officers and stakeholders that New Forest's TA is of a high standard and is well managed and maintained.

Compared to its population size, New Forest has a low number of households in Bed & Breakfast or other emergency accommodation with shared facilities compared to the South East, South West and England, with the same total use of B&B as the

Hampshire district average, but more than for ONS near neighbours.

However, the number of families in B&B is higher than the average in any comparator area except the whole of England (where a comparison is difficult because of the inclusion of London and other large metropolitan areas with very high homelessness pressures).

This include some families in B&B for longer than the legal maximum 6 weeks.

Although, we understand that the B&B accommodation used by New Forest is well managed and of good quality compared to many other areas, it is, and should be, a priority for the council to reduce its use of B&B and to end the placements of families in B&B for more than 6 weeks.

The total use of B&B by New Forest has fallen significantly since March 2021, but within that total, the number of families in B&B has, with some fluctuations, remained at around the same level over the period.

The council is actively developing new affordable housing, both itself and with RP partners. Around 375 new homes were delivered between 2018/19 and 2024/25 and there is an expectation of delivering around 406 more homes by the end of 2028/29, ignoring any further increase in delivery which may be possible due to future funding and planning changes instituted by the current government.

Providing support

New Forest is scrupulous is assessing and recording support needs of those who approach the council due to homelessness or risk of homelessness, with 93 % of those owed a prevention or relief duty recorded as having at least one support need, a much higher proportion than in comparator areas.

The most common support needs are a history of mental health problems (62%), physical ill health or disability (43%), and barriers to education, employment or training (42%). There are also high percentages of households at risk of domestic abuse, with a history of rough sleeping, with a learning disability, and with difficulties budgeting.

It is less clear the extent which it is possible for the council and its partners to address these issues once identified. The housing options team employs specialist staff working with offenders, mental health, rough sleeping and Ukraine resettlement.

There is also positive joint working with the care leavers team and other children’s services teams, as well as with the mental health and substance misuse team in

adult services.

There is also access to supported living accommodation for those who qualify for it.

However there may be a lack of supported accommodation for those who do not meet the Care Act threshold, and there is no Housing First scheme which works in New Forest. It was also put to us that some more vulnerable clients living in TA could be offered more support than s currently the case.

The council also works well with Citizens Advice and with at least two faith-based organisations who provide community support to people in the district who may be at risk of homelessness.

Hampshire children's and adult social services both expressed an interest in working more closely with the council in areas such as provision of training flats for care leavers and in developing a joint housing and adult social care protocol about addressing self- neglect.

The requirement on the council to develop a supported housing strategy following the outcomes of government consultation on implementing the Supported Housing Act 2023.

Adult services would also be interested in more streamlined co-ordination between professionals around the Duty to Refer.

Resources to tackle homelessness

New Forest's spending on homelessness, including staffing, emergency and temporary accommodation, homelessness prevention costs and allocations[48], has risen rapidly over the past 5 years from £937k net expenditure in 2020/21 to £2.17m budgeted for in 2025/26. This is a direct cost to the council after grant income and income from housing benefits.

However, the budgeted position for 2025/26 does represent a reduction in net expenditure of £143k in 2025/26 compared to the previous years actual expenditure.

This increasing cost is despite income from MHCLG grants increasing markedly from £1.1m pa to £1.7m pa over the same period.
The largest increases in costs have been in B&B landlord costs, up £893k (176%) since 2020/21; net PSL costs, up £498k (330%); and Homelessness service

[48] but excluding the Ukraine families programme

employee costs, up £489k (72%).

Additional employee costs have in general been funded by additional MHCLG grant income e.g. for extra services to try to end rough sleeping. The council is increasing its expenditure on homelessness prevention in 2025/26 with additional staff as a direct result of greater MHCLG funding being made available for homelessness prevention activities. The council is also increasing its joint work with voluntary sector groups, which should offer value for money in preventing homelessness.

Additional PSL costs, as we understand it, are partly the result of improving standards in PSL. PSLs also represent a lower net unit cost to the council than B&B or emergency accommodation.

The biggest potential area for saving would therefore appear to be to reduce net expenditure on B&B and other emergency accommodation. These costs have risen from £151k in 2020/21 to £959k budgeted in 2025/26, with the actual net spend being £1.29m in 2024/25.

The council's plans to increase affordable housing supply and to bring on more dedicated council owned TA supply will help to reduce the need for emergency accommodation, but it is hard to know if this will be sufficient to reduce the use of emergency accommodation.

The council's PSL scheme performs an important role in reducing the use of emergency accommodation but comes at a net budgeted cost of £ 650k in 2025/26.

It could be worth considering expanding the PSL scheme to include properties leased on a 10-year plus basis. A number of local authorities are now taking this approach because leases for more than 10 years are outside the 90% 2011 LHA housing benefit subsidy limit, allowing local authorities to receive housing benefit subsidy which is close to covering their full costs.

Such an approach would require careful consideration of the pros and cons. The potential advantages are that it might reduce net PSL scheme costs to the council and also support payment of higher lease rents to support expansion of the scheme and a corresponding reduction in the use of emergency accommodation.

A potential downside is that offering any increase in lease rents for PSL could compete with the ability to secure PRS properties at LHA rents to end homelessness duties. Another possibility is that the government could change the law to reduce future HB subsidy income from 10 year plus leasing. Whilst break clauses can be built into leases to mitigate this risk, it would still be necessary to accommodate those people housed under the scheme, and market expectations might have been

changed in a way that would make this more difficult.

The council's work on reducing rough sleeping has delivered excellent results but could be at risk if future funding for 2026/27 and beyond is not sufficient to allow the services to continue, which have been so effective in bringing rough sleeping numbers down to date.

Consultation

The online survey to current and former customers of New Forest homelessness and housing advice services revealed some interesting findings. Although the small sample size and self-selecting nature of the people completing the survey means the results are only indicative and must be treated with caution, the survey showed that among those completing it:

- Slightly more respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (38%) with the overall service they received from the council than were satisfied or very satisfied (34%), with 23% saying they were very dissatisfied. This was markedly influenced by whether the council had provided accommodation or prevented homelessness for the respondent or not, but 69% of those answering the question had either been accommodated by the council or supported to keep their existing accommodation.

- More people were satisfied (42%) than dissatisfied (31%) with the TA they had been placed in.

- Significantly more people were satisfied than dissatisfied with the way their TA was managed and maintained, and with its location. However, more people were dissatisfied than satisfied with their options to move out of TA.

- The majority of those expressing an opinion said they had found it difficult to get to speak to someone at the council's homelessness and housing advice service, with 13% saying it was very difficult.

- Although people were broadly happy with how long it took to get an appointment and how they were treated personally by staff, 47% of respondents said they were dissatisfied with how well they were listened to and understood compared to 34% who were satisfied. There were some extremes here with some people feeling that staff had been really supportive but others feeling they had been treated like a number.

- Only 16% of respondents who had used the homelessness and housing advice service said they were satisfied with their Personal Housing Plan, with 29% saying they had not completed one and 19% answering ‘don’t know’.

These results, whilst inconclusive, and often influenced by whether the respondent had achieved a successful housing outcome, do suggest that more could be done to ensure that people consistently feel listened to and understood, and that PHPs and other interactions with the service are meaningful for them.

Recommendations

1. The council should strengthen its offer of housing advice including the provision of tailored advice to the specific groups included in the legislation.

   This should include clear advice on the council’s website explaining what to do in the case of different types of homelessness risk. There should also be an option to speak to a person to get housing advice, whether within the council or at another agency without having to complete the online portal application.

2. The council should continue its excellent work on rough sleeping, including its work with offenders and its work in mental health.

3. The council should develop its homelessness prevention offer, specifically to include more effective work to help keep people in their existing home.

4. The council should consider developing an early intervention model to prevent homelessness, particularly to address the main cause of homelessness in New Forest, which is evictions by family and friends.

5. The council should further develop partnership working with women’s refuges and domestic abuse agencies to examine whether more can be done to prevent homelessness as a result of domestic abuse.

6. The council should continue to develop its collaborative work with voluntary and community sector groups supporting people in housing need, with a view to achieving joint working across a wider geographical area.

7. The council should conduct an audit into the high number of prevention and relief duties accepted for people coming to New Forest from other areas and explore what it can do within the law to reduce this.

8. As part of the forthcoming review of the housing allocations policy, the council should consider whether it should make changes to support greater use of social housing for homelessness prevention and relief.

9. The council should consider the opportunity of establishing a 10 year + leasing scheme to take advantage of the favourable housing benefit subsidy position for this type of leasing and reduce its reliance on emergency accommodation.

10. The council should continue its programme to develop, acquire and convert accommodation for use as high quality TA.

11. The council should review, as part of, or in advance of developing a supported housing strategy under the terms of the Supported Housing Act 2023 review, whether the need for supported housing and floating support amongst people who have experienced homelessness in New Forest is being met. The support housing strategy should include meeting this need.

12. The council should consider expanding its work with Hampshire children's services to develop training flats for care leavers and other vulnerable young people who would otherwise have to go into mainstream TA.

13. The council should work with Hampshire adult services to develop a stronger service offer to social housing tenants suffering self-neglect.

14. The council should consider investing further in training for customer facing staff in the light of the mixed results from the online survey on the quality-of-service users' experience.

Equality Impact Analysis (EIA)

Introduction: The EIA it is an effective way of improving decision making, policy development and service delivery by making sure that managers consider the needs of all service users, the community and employees. It is also designed to identify potential steps to promote equality and good relations and avoid unintentional discrimination. Please ensure you read the guidelines before completing this form.

Guidance Notes

Policy/Procedure	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy
Service	Housing Options and Tenancy Accounts
Business unit	Housing and Communities
Your name	Christopher Pope
Email	chris.pope@nfdc.gov.uk
Title	Service Manager
Service manager's name	Christopher Pope

If you would like your service manager to receive a copy of this form, please enter their email address.

Service manager email	chris.pope@nfdc.gov.uk
Date completed	26/11/2025

1. What is the overall purpose and aim of the policy/project/practice or service?

To set out the strategic aims to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping in the New Forest.

2. What are the main aspects of the policy/project/practice or service where consideration of equality impacts and issues need to be incorporated?

1. Access to Services

Ensure that all individuals, regardless of protected characteristics, can access homelessness prevention and support services.
Consider barriers such as language, literacy, disability, and digital exclusion.

2. Assessment and Prioritisation

How priority is given for temporary accommodation or support must be fair and transparent.
Avoid criteria that indirectly disadvantage certain groups (e.g., requiring proof of local connection may impact refugees or victims of domestic abuse).

3. Accommodation Provision

Availability of suitable accommodation for:

People with disabilities (adapted properties).
Families with children.
Single women or men at risk of violence.
LGBTQ+ individuals who may need safe spaces.

4. Health and Wellbeing Support

Rough sleepers often have complex needs (mental health, substance misuse).
Ensure equal access to healthcare and support services for all groups, including those with disabilities or language barriers.

5. Communication and Engagement

Provide information in accessible formats (Easy Read, large print, Braille) and multiple languages.
Engage with diverse communities during strategy development to identify specific needs.

6. Safeguarding and Safety

Consider risks for vulnerable groups such as women, young people, and LGBTQ+ individuals in shared or temporary accommodation.
Policies should include measures to prevent harassment and discrimination.

7. Employment and Financial Support

Address barriers to employment and benefits for groups disproportionately affected by homelessness (e.g., ethnic minorities, disabled people).

8. Monitoring and Data Collection

Collect data on homelessness by protected characteristics to identify trends and address inequalities.
Use this data to inform policy adjustments and resource allocation.

3. Relevance Assessment - which group(s) of people (if any), do you think will, or potentially can be, affected by this policy/project/practice or service? Please state your reasons.

1. People with Disabilities

Reason: Individuals with physical or mental health conditions may require adapted accommodation and specialist support. Homelessness can exacerbate health inequalities.

2. Older People

Reason: Older adults may face barriers accessing services, especially if they have mobility issues or digital exclusion. They are also at higher risk of health complications when rough sleeping.

3. Young People (including Care Leavers)

Reason: Young people are disproportionately affected by homelessness due to family breakdown, lack of financial stability, and limited housing options.

4. Families with Children / Pregnant Women

Reason: Homelessness has severe impacts on child welfare and maternal health. Families often require priority for safe and suitable accommodation.

5. Victims of Domestic Abuse

Reason: Women and some men fleeing abuse often need urgent housing and safe spaces. They may have no local connection, which can affect eligibility.

6. Ethnic Minority Groups and Refugees

Reason: Language barriers, discrimination, and lack of local networks can increase vulnerability to homelessness and reduce access to support.

7. LGBTQ+ Individuals

Reason: LGBTQ+ people may experience family rejection or discrimination, increasing risk of homelessness and requiring safe, inclusive accommodation.

8. People with Substance Misuse or Mental Health Issues

Reason: These groups often face multiple disadvantages and require integrated health and housing support.

9. Low-Income Households

Reason: Economic disadvantage is a primary driver of homelessness; these households are most reliant on affordable housing and support services.

Please indicate if you think the impact is none, low, medium or high?

Age	Sex	Religion or Belief	Disability	Race	Sexual Orientation	Marriage/Civil partnership	Gender reassignment	Maternity and Pregnancy
Low	None	Low	Low	None	Low	None	Low	Low

This page is intentionally left blank

Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 21 January 2026

Draft Revised Allocations Policy

Purpose	For Review
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	The draft Allocations Policy has been updated and refreshed to ensure it remains current and relevant, rather than undergoing a full, comprehensive revision. The current Allocations Policy adopted in 2020 represented a significant change in policy, radically overhauling the previous approach to priority for housing. The Allocation Policy is a significant policy document for the council in terms of its effects on communities living or working in the New Forest which impacts all council wards. Therefore, any changes to this policy including revisions should be regarded as a key decision for both Cabinet and Council, both legally, and perhaps more importantly in meeting local housing needs in a transparent, fair, and equitable manner. The Housing Act 1996 sets out the legal framework for how local authorities must allocate social housing. Under this legislation: • Local authorities must have an allocation scheme that sets out how they prioritise applicants and make decisions about who gets social housing. • The scheme must give "reasonable preference" to certain categories of people, such as those who are homeless, living in overcrowded or unsanitary conditions, or who need to move on medical or welfare grounds.

	NFDC operates a Choice Based Lettings system to allocate social housing in the district to both its own council housing stock, and that of all social housing providers including housing associations. This revised draft policy is an updated version of the current Allocations Policy, setting out NFDC's continuing approach to allocating all social housing across the district through our current Choice Based Lettings system, whilst implementing the required actions and changes in approach once a new revised policy is adopted by the council. The report presents to the first draft of a revised Housing Allocation Policy, supporting documents, plans for consultation, and an Equality Impact Assessment for its consideration. The draft represents changes made to improve the effectiveness of decision making, and uses learning from the last few years, as opposed to another significant overhaul.
Recommendation(s)	**It is recommended that the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel supports the:** **1. revision to our current Housing Allocation Policy 2020 as outlined in this report.** **2. pathway for progress of the draft policy though Cabinet and Council ahead of statutory consultation.** **3. provision that any future changes to the policy, which are not major, can be delegated for approval by the Strategic Director Housing & Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness.**
Reasons for recommendation(s)	The current Allocations Policy no longer fully aligns with prevailing legislation or national guidance and it is considered good practice to review the policy against housing need in the

	district. It is therefore necessary to review and update the existing policy to ensure it remains legally compliant and fit for purpose. That is in meeting the continuing needs of those households who cannot accommodate themselves in the local housing market, or require a specific home due to their household vulnerabilities. The revised draft policy aligns with the Council's proposed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031, aiming to maximise the use of our council housing in meeting the needs of homelessness households, whilst also nominating applicants to our housing association partners, both legally and in keeping with the aim of meeting overall housing needs in the district. It ensures compliance with legal frameworks and aims to provide a fair and transparent allocation process to both applicants and providers. In addition, the revised draft policy reflects the significant housing need in the district, of which the Council has a statutory duty to prioritise taking account of our operating environment and changes including: • To tackle the increase in, and type of, homelessness presentations • To tackle the relatively high number of applicant households in temporary accommodation • To focus on supporting those in most need by providing a more bespoke and managed service • To support a more effective housing options service for all applicants, better aligned with the services provided by the homelessness teams.

	• To strengthen the Council's approach to prevention and homelessness legislative requirements by target resources where they are most needed. • To make best use of our nomination rights to "affordable" housing accommodation in the district • To provide an open and honest alternative pathway for those without a housing need. Due to the changing landscape of allocations guidance supported by secondary legislation, statutory guidance and case law being introduced or made, delegated powers to change the policy have been requested for the Strategic Director Housing & Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member, to assist the policy to remain up to date. Any major changes to the policy will be taken through the full decision-making process.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Steve Davies
Strategic Director(s)	Peter Matthew
Officer Contact	Christopher Pope Service Manager Housing Options and Tenancy Accounts 023 8028 5511 Chris.pope@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. The Council's current Allocations Policy was adopted in 2020 and outlines how the council assesses applications, prioritises housing need, and allocates social housing across the district.

2. This policy has been reviewed to take into account legislative changes since the previous Allocations Policy update in 2020 in particular the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, GDPR 2021, Armed Forces amendments (2024), Domestic Abuse & Care Leavers Regulations (2025). Other updates include local connection exemptions (care

leavers, domestic abuse victims, Armed Forces); clarified habitual residence test; detailed financial assessment criteria, expanded direct offer scenarios, and added Extra Care housing allocation principles. The revision also includes revised case review rights, updated suspension/removal rules; and clarified exceptional circumstances. These updates have been included in the revised draft policy which aligns with the latest Statutory Code of Guidance and adopts sector best practice standards to promote fairness and transparency in the allocations process – See Appendix 1.

3. There is no statutory requirement to review an Allocations policy within a fixed time frame, though most councils adopt a review cycle of three to five years, with interim updates when significant legislative changes occur, and NFDC have adopted a similar approach.

4. The revised new draft policy sets out the framework for assessing housing needs and allocating social housing in compliance with statutory requirements.

5. In addition, the revised policy introduces operational improvements designed to streamline processes, enhance applicant experience, and support consistent decision-making across housing services.

6. The new proposed policy continues to operate a choice-based lettings scheme, giving applicants as much choice as possible whilst prioritising those in greatest need.

7. In the revision of the existing policy consideration has been given to:

    - housing data on supply, demand, and the current housing register.

    - legal advice.

The intention is to build in feedback and results from the substantial consultation and engagement sessions planned, alongside further data analysis around waiting times, areas, and specific cohorts etc.

8. The current Allocations Policy uses a four-band system to prioritise applicants:

    Band 1 – Emergency need for housing

    - Urgent health or wellbeing needs.
    - Risk of violence or serious harassment.
    - Emergency disrepair or unsafe housing.
    - Exceptional management moves.

Band 2 – Serious need for housing

- Accepted as owed the Full Housing Duty where private sector discharge is not possible.
- Severe overcrowding (lacking 2+ bedrooms).
- Under-occupation by 2+ bedrooms.
- High health or wellbeing needs.
- Ready to move on from supported housing.

Band 3 – Need for Housing

- Overcrowded (lacking 1 bedroom).
- Medium health or wellbeing needs.
- Homeless applicants owed Prevention or Relief Duty.
- Under-occupation by 1 bedroom.
- Key workers or Right to Move applicants.

Band 4 – Lower need for housing

- Lower health or wellbeing needs.
- Sharing or lacking essential facilities.
- Living in supported accommodation but not ready to move on.
- Assured shorthold tenants without financial means to buy.

9. Banding directly determines who gets priority for available properties. Properties are allocated first by band, then by band start date. Higher bands (1 and 2) usually result in shorter times on the housing register because they represent urgent or serious housing needs.

10. Special circumstances are considered such as rural parish connections, sensitive lets, preference to paid/voluntary employment, adapted properties, Extra Care and age restricted schemes which may result in overriding normal banding to meet specific needs.

11. If circumstances change (e.g. health worsens or homelessness occurs), applicants may move to a higher band, improving their chances of allocation.

12. This draft policy ensures compliance with duties under Part VI and Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, including:

    - Prevention duty – helping households threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

    - Relief duty – assisting households who are already homeless.

- Full Housing duty – securing accommodation for those who are homeless, eligible, in priority need, and not intentionally homeless.

13. The updated draft revised policy does not propose to remove or change these bandings. It is possible to increase the priority given to homeless applicants, but there is a balance to strike in not creating a perverse incentive to become homeless to gain social housing before making every attempt to prevent homelessness or move on from temporary accommodation. There is also consideration of other households on the register, and given the balanced percentage of applicants moving on from each band it is not proposed to change this, but officers keep this under review.

14. The review of the Homelessness Strategy did not show any evidence to support a more acute priority approach to rehousing homeless applicants.

15. As of 1st December 2025, there were 1,776 live applicants on the Housing Register, these are split as detailed below:

    Band 1 – 45

    Band 2 – 406 (191 have a full homeless duty)

    Band 3 – 592 (89 have a homeless prevention or relief duty accepted)

    Band 4 - 733

16. Over the last 12 months 379 properties were let, of which 17% were to applicants from band 1, 58% band 2, 18% band 3 and 7% band 4.

17. During the same period the percentage of applicants in each banding on the register were band 1 1%, band 2 21%, band 3 35% and band 4 43%

18. The draft Allocations Policy is designed not only to meet housing need but to create and enable sustainable communities. It does this by prioritising local connection by helping people remain close to family, employment, and support networks and promoting social mix and cohesion. The policy also allows for a % of lettings to households who contribute to their local communities and who are employed.

19. It will align with the council's new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, particularly in preventing and reducing homelessness by giving appropriate priority to affected households, providing a clear housing pathway for households moving out of temporary

accommodation, reducing costs and reliance on B&Bs or unsuitable temporary housing.

20. This will continue to support a needs led system supporting a transparent and more equitable allocation system that the public can understand and trust, and should minimise the risk of perceived or bias, or unfairness in how the councils nominates those for allocation of social housing.

Corporate plan priorities

21. The draft Allocations Policy contributes to achieving the ambitions of the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-28 including: -

    Priority 1: - Helping people in the greatest need and creating balanced, resilient, and healthy communities who feel safe and supported with easy access to services.

    Priority 2: Empowering our residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives.

Consultation

22. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness supports the draft Allocations Policy and proposed changes and has been fully consulted. The revised draft allocations policy has also been through informal consultation with council staff including the legal department, with overall feedback being positive and in support of the revised policy and agreement for the need to update.

23. However, this is a first draft policy, and it is recognised that given its significance comprehensive consultation with those directly affected by any new policy changes including applicants, Elected Members, Town and Parish Councils and other stakeholders, Registered Providers (of social housing), 3rd sector organisations, staff across interlinked council operations and the general public.

24. All these groups need to be considered in the consultation programme prior to adopting a new Allocations Policy.

25. Formal consultation will take place to seek views from all relevant stakeholders on the proposed revisions to the Allocations Policy. This will ensure transparency and compliance with statutory requirements, gather feedback from the afore mentioned groups.

26. Consultation methods will include:

    - A letter to all applicants

- Drop-in sessions at our community hubs, community days and coffee and catch-up sessions.

- Face to face and virtual focus groups with residents, current applicants, registered providers, and stakeholders.

- Online surveys.

27. Feedback will be grouped by key themes such as eligibility, banding, and rural connection and analysed to identify any areas requiring amendment.

28. A comprehensive consultation report will then be presented to EMT and the Portfolio Holder. Following this, the policy will be updated in line with the findings and submitted for formal Council approval through the governance structure including revisions and amendments as required.

Financial and resource implications

29. The draft Allocations Policy will be delivered within existing budget and supported by annual contributions from Registered Social Landlords towards the cost of operating Homesearch, the Choice Base Lettings system that serves at the public interface for the Policy.

Legal implications

30. Local authorities are legally required to maintain an allocations policy that complies with Part VI of the Housing Act 1996. The policy must give reasonable preference to certain groups and reflect current legislative requirements.

31. Failure to implement or update the policy correctly could result in non-compliance, legal challenges, judicial reviews, and reputational risks for the council.

32. All current applicants will need be informed of the changes, and how it affects them, six months before the implementation of the proposed new policy, to satisfy Section168(3) of the Housing Act 1996.

33. The main legislative changes taken into consideration in the revision of our existing allocations policy include:

    - Domestic Abuse Act 2021

    - Equality Act 2010

- The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Victims of Domestic Abuse and Care Leavers) (England) Regulations 2025.

- The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

34. Further guidance taken into consideration:

    - The Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local housing Authorities in England (2025, MHCLG) known as "the Code".

Risk assessment

35. The council is required to have full regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty, and there is the possibility of challenge via costly Judicial Review, if the policy is perceived to discriminate against any cohort with protected characteristics.

36. Local authorities must also have regard to statutory guidance and failure to review and update the Allocation Policy could be considered a breach of statutory duty.

37. The delivery of this revised policy mitigates legal and financial risk to the council, as well as aiming to reduce risks in legal challenges and complaints through increased scrutiny from oversight bodies including MHCLG and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

38. Given the limited nature of the changes, and no matter how well managed and communicated the implementation is, there is likely to be a continuation in requests from applicants to review their banding category generating complaints and the potential need for additional staff resources in the future. As it stands, any increase in demand will be managed within existing processes, resources, and with legal guidance.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

39. Whilst the report has no direct implications, it will align with local climate action plans, biodiversity strategies, and net-zero goals. Work with environmental agencies, health services, and housing providers to ensure joined-up responses.

Equalities implications

40. The Council can determine which classes of people qualify, or do not qualify, to join the housing register following the Localism Act 2011 providing they are eligible for public funds. The proposed changes to

the Allocations Policy are within the council's powers providing it does not directly or indirectly discriminate against any cohort of people with protected characteristics.

41. The draft Allocations Policy includes key components to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, diverse needs are considered including protected characteristics, language barriers, and additional support needs to access social housing.

42. The EIA demonstrates that the only impacts are expected to positive or neutral to those households with protected characteristics. Refer to Appendix 2 for the Equality Impact Assessment.

43. In the interests of transparency, a tracked changes version of the current policy with recommended amends is attached at Appendix 3.

Crime and disorder implications

44. There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

45. The collection, retention and deletion of data is governed by GDPR and associated guidance. All data will be collected and maintained in line with the required legislation.

New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications

46. The draft revised Allocations Policy ensures fair and transparent allocating of social housing across the district including the allocation of properties within the National Park and rural parish connection which positively contributes to housing neighbourhoods.

Conclusion

47. The draft Allocations Policy provides a fair, transparent, and legally compliant framework for allocating social housing within the district. It reflects current legislation, statutory guidance, and best practice, while introducing operational improvements to ensure efficient use of scarce housing resources.

48. The draft Allocations Policy prioritises those in greatest need through a structured banding system, supports homelessness duties, and promotes sustainable communities. Regular reviews and monitoring will ensure the policy remains responsive to legislative changes and local housing needs.

49. The draft Allocations Policy will support the Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

50. The council is committed to meeting its obligations under the Housing Act 1996 and ensuring that the policy remains complaint, fair and transparent.

51. Future public consultation will seek a wide variety of valued feedback from current applicants, the Tenant Involved Group of New Forest District Council tenants, a selection of previous applicants who are accommodated, housing associations and key statutory and voluntary stakeholders.

52. The revised draft Allocations Policy allows for any future changes to the policy, which are not major, can be delegated for approval by the Strategic Director Housing & Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness ensuring swift and efficient updates.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Draft revised Allocations Policy.
Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 3 – Tracked Changes Version of the Current Allocations Policy

Background Papers:

None

APPENDIX 1

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

Allocations policy

Housing Options

HLSPOL16

Document publish date: TBC January 2026

Version number 1.1

Version	Author	Date
1.0	Housing Service	15/04/2019
1.1	Christopher Pope	27/11/2025

Contents

1 Document history....4
2 Introduction....5
2.2 Aims and objectives of the scheme....5
3 Legislative and regulatory context....6
4 The scheme....9
4.1 Joining the Housing Register....9
4.2 Eligibility....9
4.3 Qualifying Applicants....9
4.4 Non-Qualifying Applicants....10
4.5 Decisions Following Assessment of Eligibility and Qualification....10
5 Processing applications....11
5.1 Housing need assessment....11
5.2 The scheme bands....11
5.3 Household....14
5.4 The Bedroom Need Assessment....16
5.5 Band Start Date....18
5.6 Rural Connection Band....19
5.7 Areas of Choice....21
5.8 Acceptance onto The Register....22
6 The choice-based allocation process....23
6.1 Managing vacancies....23
6.2 Advertising....25
6.3 Applying for Vacancies....25
6.4 Assisted Bidding....25
6.5 Automatic Bidding....26
6.6 Homeless Applicants....27
6.7 Other Applicants....28
7 Allocating properties....29
7.1 Selection Procedure....29
7.2 Prioritisation Generally....29
7.3 Prioritisation – Rural Parishes....29
7.4 Following Prioritisation....31

7.5 Special Allocations 31
7.6 Verification of Applications 34
7.7 Publishing Details of the Allocation 35
8 Exceptions to The Choice Based Allocations Process 36
8.1 Allocations Excluded From the Choice Based Allocations Process 36
8.2 Direct Offers 37
8.3 Homeless Applicants 37
8.4 Other Applicants 38
8.5 Other Allocations Process 39
8.6 Updating Application details 42
8.7 Suspension and Removal 44
8.8 Right to Request a Review 47
8.9 Exercise of Discretion 49
8.10 Equality and Fair Allocations 49
8.11 Changes to The Scheme 50
8.12 Right to Information 50
8.13 False Statements or Withholding Information 51
8.14 Data Protection 51
8.15 Contacting Housing Options 52
9 Roles and Responsibilities 53
10 Scheme administration 57
10.1 Managing the Scheme 57
11 Appendices 61
Appendix 1 Eligibility and Qualification 62
Appendix 2 Scheme Bands 69
Appendix 3 Health and Wellbeing Assessment 79
Appendix 4 Housing Condition 83
Appendix 5 Allocation of Garages 86
Appendix 6 Brief Summary of Statutory Provisions 87

1 Document history

Name of policy	Allocation Policy
Document reference	HLSPOL16
Purpose of policy	The Housing Act 1996 sets out the legal framework for how local authorities must allocate social housing. Under this legislation: • Local authorities must have an allocation scheme that sets out how they prioritise applicants and make decisions about who gets social housing. • The scheme must give "reasonable preference" to certain categories of people, such as those who are homeless, living in overcrowded or unsanitary conditions, or who need to move on medical or welfare grounds.
Policy applies to	This policy and the subsequent arrangements apply to applicants and prospective applicants of the New Forest Housing Register, known as Homesearch
Lead officer	Christopher Pope – Service Manager
First issued	6 February 2025
Latest update	27 November 2025
Version control	V1.0 1 April 2019 V1.1 27 November 2025
Review period	At least every three years from date of issue, or in response to legislative or organisational change.
Update overview	November 2025, update to reflect legislative changes.

2 Introduction

2.1 New Forest District Council operates a choice-based lettings scheme to register applicants for housing, advertise details of available properties, allow customers to bid or register their interest in suitable properties, and to match customers following successful bids to social rented housing.

2.2 Aims and objectives of the scheme

2.2.1 The Council will allocate housing in a fair and transparent manner with the aim of using its scarce housing resources appropriately, and in particular to enable it to meet:

a) Its homelessness statutory duties;
b) the housing needs of those that are most vulnerable; and
c) its statutory obligations as set out in Part VI of the Housing Act 1996.

2.2.2 The Council also aims to operate the Scheme so that it:

a) Gives Applicants as much choice as possible and helps to create and maintain sustainable local communities;
b) Promotes good standards of tenancy and financial management by tenants and prospective tenants and to assist in tackling anti-social behaviour; and
c) To provide incentives for residents in the Council's district to undertake paid work and make a positive contribution to the local community.

2.2.3 The Council and its partner landlords are committed to giving Applicants for housing as much choice as possible as to where they wish to live. Under the Scheme, Applicants are normally able to apply for vacancies of individual properties which are advertised each week.

3 Legislative and regulatory context

3.1 The Housing Act 1996 ("the Act") Part VI as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011, requires all local authorities to have an allocation policy to determine the priorities and define the procedures that will be followed when allocating housing accommodation. This document sets out New Forest District Council's ("the Council") policy for the allocation of social housing accommodation in its district ("the Scheme"). The Scheme sets out details on how Applications will be assessed, processed and how decisions will be made.

3.2 In drafting the Scheme the Council has had regard to the following:

A. Statutes:

(i) The Act;
(ii) The Homelessness Act 2002;
(iii) The Housing Act 2004;
(iv) The Equality Act 2010;
(v) The Localism Act 2011;
(vi) Homelessness Reduction Act 2017;
(vii) Domestic Abuse Act 2021;
(viii) Children Act 1989
(ix) Data Protection Act 2018;

B. Regulations:

(i) Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulation 1997, SI 1997/483;
(ii) Allocation of Housing (England) Regulations 2002; SI 2002/3264;
(iii) Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006, SI 2006/1294;
(iv) Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012; SI 2012/1869;
(v) Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012; SI 2012/2989

(vi) Allocation for Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015 SI 2015/967

(vii) The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England)(Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2018 SI 2018/1056.

(viii) The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility)(England)(Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations SI 2019/861

(ix) The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Victims of Domestic Abuse and Care Leavers) (England) Regulations 2025.

(x) The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

(xi) UK-GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) 2021

C. Codes of Guidance:

(i) Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for local housing Authorities in England [MHCLG 2025]

(ii) Providing Social Housing for Local People: Statutory Guidance on Social Housing Allocations for Local Authorities in England (DCLG, December 2013);

(iii) Right to Move: Statutory Guidance on Social Housing Allocations for Local Housing Authorities in England (DCLG, March 2015);

(iv) Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England

(v) Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018.

(vi) Improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces (MHCLG, 27 June 2020)

D) Consultation outcome with Applicants, residents in the Council's district and all Private Registered Providers of Social Housing ("PRPSH") and registered social landlords ("RSL") with whom the Council has nomination rights.

E) The Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Tenancy Strategy.

3.3 The Act requires that local authorities give reasonable preference to people with high levels of assessed housing need. The Act has determined that the following class of individuals should be given a reasonable preference. People who:

- are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII of the Act). This will include those who have been found to be homeless but not in priority need, who are owed the "Relief Duty" and who have been found to be intentionally homeless;
- are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section. 190(2), 193(2), or 195(2) (or under ss. 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985); or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under s.192(3).
- are occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including any grounds relating to a disability); and
- need to move to a particular locality of the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others). (including applicants seeking to move under the Right to Move Regulations.

3.4 This group is collectively known as the "Reasonable Preference Group".

4 The scheme

4.1 Joining the Housing Register

4.1.1 The Council operates a housing register ("the Register") which contains a list of people who have applied to the Council for housing. Anyone seeking social housing within the Council's district must make an application to join the Register. This will normally be done by making an online application on the Council's website. Only Applicants who are eligible and qualify for allocation of social housing will be able to join the Register.

4.1.2 All applications to join the Register will be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Scheme as set out in the paragraphs below.

4.2 Eligibility

4.2.1 Certain people from abroad, including some subject to immigration control, are not eligible for an allocation of social housing. These are known as Restricted Persons. The government has set out those who are to be treated as ineligible for an allocation. For further details on eligibility, please refer to Appendix 1: Eligibility and Qualification at page 40.

4.3 Qualifying Applicants

4.3.1 Under the Act, the Council is entitled to set its own qualifying criteria to determine who should be considered for an allocation of housing.

4.2.2 Applicants will qualify to join the Register if they satisfy all 4 of the criteria:

a) Are Over 16 years of age[1];

b) Are in Housing Need; in that the Applicant's housing circumstances fall within one of the Scheme's Bands (see paragraph 5.1 Housing Need Assessment)

[1] Whilst Applicants aged 16 -17 will be able to join the Register, they will not be made an allocation of a property under the Scheme until they attain the age of 18.

c) Have been assessed as lacking the financial means to enable them to resolve their housing need; and

d) Have a local connection to the Council's district.

4.4 Non-Qualifying Applicants

4.4.1 Applicants who fall within the description of people below will not qualify to join the Register:

a) Fail to meet the qualifying criteria at paragraph 4.4.2 above;

b) Are an owner-occupier (with the exception of those with a housing and assessed care need, who cannot resolve their own housing situation and have a need for extra-care or sheltered accommodation);

c) Have deliberately worsened their circumstances to enable them to qualify onto the Register; or

d) Are deemed to be guilty of unacceptable behaviour that is serious enough to make them unsuitable as tenants.

4.4.2 For further details of the qualifying criteria and non-qualifying Applicants, please refer to Appendix 1: Eligibility and Qualification.

4.5 Decisions Following Assessment of Eligibility and Qualification

4.5.1 Where a decision is made that an Applicant is either not eligible or non-qualifying, they will be notified in writing of that decision and of their right to request a review. (See paragraph 7.5 for details of the reviews process.)

5 Processing applications

5.1 Housing need assessment

5.1.1 The Council uses a banding system to prioritise applications on the Register. The Scheme has 4 bands. With the exception as set out at paragraph 5.1.2 below, in order to qualify to join the Register an Applicant's Housing Need will have to fall within one of the Scheme's Bands.

5.1.2 Applicants, who satisfy a Rural Connection Band for a Rural Parish, will be assessed as being in Housing Need and are exempt from having to satisfy paragraph 5.1.1 above. Please refer to paragraph 5.6 Rural Connection Band.

5.2 The scheme bands

5.2.1 The table below outlines in summary the criteria for each band:

Band	**Criteria**
Band 1 **Emergency Need for Housing**	Applicants: (a) Who require a management move: where the applicant has been assessed as having an exceptional need to move by a Service Manager. (b) Who have been assessed as having an urgent health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstances; (c) Whose accommodation has been assessed as being in a state of emergency disrepair and the hazards cannot be rectified within a reasonable timescale; or

	(d) Who need to move to escape violence or threats of violence, harassment
Band 2 **Serious Need for Housing**	Applicants: a) Who have been accepted as being owed the full housing duty under the Act and where discharge of duty cannot be achieved by a Private Rented Sector Offer of accommodation; b) Who are existing social housing tenants under-occupying by 2 or more bedrooms; c) Who are severely overcrowded (e.g. they lack 2 or more bedrooms, or have 2 children who lack a bedroom, such as a single parent with 2 children, where at least one of the children is over the age of 1 in a 1 bed home); d) Who have been assessed as having a high health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstance; e) Who live in a home assessed as being in a state of high disrepair and the disrepair cannot be rectified within reasonable timescales; or f) Who have been assessed as ready to move on from supported housing in the Council's district area.
Band 3 **Need for Housing**	Applicants who: a) Are overcrowded and lack 1 bedroom;

	b) Have been assessed as having medium health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstances; c) Are certain serving, or former serving members of the regular forces, or their spouse or civil partner; d) Are homeless, to whom the Council owes a Relief or Prevention Duty under Part VII of the Act; e) Who need to move under the Right to Move provisions; f) Are existing social landlord tenants under-occupying their accommodation by 1 bedroom; g) Have been assessed as not having a permanent home, or are at risk of becoming homeless and are not owed a duty under (d) above; h) Have been accepted as being owed the full housing duty under Part VII of the Act and where it is possible to discharge duty with a Private Rented Sector Offer of accommodation; or i) Are key workers where the Council identifies that there is a critical need for the key worker to be rehoused to ensure the availability of an essential public service for the New Forest community.
Band 4	Applicants who:

Lower Need for Housing	a) Have been assessed as having a lower health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstances; b) Share essential facilities such as a toilet, bath, shower or kitchen with other households or lack essential facilities; c) Are households sharing with relatives or friends; d) Are occupants living in supported accommodation who have not been assessed as ready for move on from supported housing in the Council's area; e) Are assured shorthold tenants who do not have the financial means to purchase a property (see Appendix 1: Eligibility and Qualification); or f) Have been assessed under Part VII of the Act as not in priority need or are intentionally homeless and are still statutory homeless at the point of offer; g) To move to a Rural Parish Connection area that you are not currently residing in.

5.2.2 Further details of the Housing Need Assessment can be found at Appendix 2: Scheme Bands.

5.3 Household

5.3.1 The following individuals will form part of an Applicant's Household under the Scheme:

- The Applicant's Partner; or
- The Applicant's children/dependants aged 35 and under with whom the Applicant resides or with whom the Applicant might reasonably be expected to reside; or
- Household members with whom the Applicant resides or with whom the Applicant might reasonably be expected to reside.

5.3.2 In determining whether children/dependants/household members can reasonably be expected to reside with the Applicant the Council will take into consideration the following factors:

- Access to other suitable accommodation;
- Previous, current and likely future living arrangements;
- Evidence of membership to the Household (including whether the Applicant is in receipt of relevant benefits for the child/dependant);
- The impact on scarce housing resources on providing the Applicant with additional bedrooms;

5.3.3 Whilst court orders will be taken into consideration, they will not be determinative.

5.3.4 Applicants, who the Council has accepted require a carer to live with them will be allowed to include the carer as a member of their Household. In deciding whether a carer is required to live with an Applicant, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

- Whether there is an established need for live-in 24 hour care;
- The availability of supported or extra-care housing which may meet the Applicant's care needs;
- The Applicant's current, and likely future, living arrangements;
- The impact on scare housing resources on providing an additional bedroom to the Applicant.

5.4 The Bedroom Need Assessment

5.4.1 Following the Housing Need Assessment the Council will assess the number of bedrooms that an Applicant is entitled to by looking at the size and structure of the Applicant's Household as set out at paragraph 5.2 above. This will establish the Applicant's Bedroom Need and the size of property that the Applicant will be able to bid for.

5.4.2 The Council's Bedroom Need Assessment has been set in line with current regulations affecting bedroom entitlement for the purposes of the Local Housing Allowance and Housing Benefit. It also reflects the bedroom entitlement that will be used for the purpose of assessing the housing component associated with rental liability within Universal Credit.

5.4.3 The Scheme's Bedroom Need Assessment is set as follows:

Property Size/Type	**Household**
Bedsit	Single Applicant
1 Bedroom	Single Applicant or Applicants living as a couple with no children
2 Bedrooms	Single Applicant, or Applicants living as a couple, with 1 child; or Single Applicant, or Applicants living as a couple, with 2 children of: a) The same sex under 16; b) Opposite sex under 10
3 Bedrooms	Single Applicant, or Applicants living as a couple with 2 children, with at least 1 of opposite sex over 10; or Single Applicant, or Applicants living as a couple, with 3 children or 4 children: a) of the same sex under 16;

	b) Two children of each sex under 16; or c) of either sex all under 10
4 Bedrooms	Single Applicant, or Applicants living as a couple, with 5 or more children. Single Applicant or Applicants living as a couple, with 4 children where at least one of them is aged 10 and is of the opposite sex of the others or one of them is aged 16 or over.

5.4.4 Pregnant Applicants or those Households with a pregnant member will not have their bedroom requirement reviewed until the baby is born and a copy of the birth certificate for the child has been received.

5.4.5 The Council reserves the right to assess an Applicant as being entitled to more or less bedrooms, provided this does not result in an overcrowding hazard, where this will lead to the effective management of its housing stock or where the circumstances justify the adjustment. This may apply where an Applicant cannot share a bedroom with their Partner due to their disability.

5.4.6 If an Applicant has been recommended by Children's Services as suitable to foster or adopt one or more children but requires additional bedroom(s) in order to be able to adopt or foster, the Applicant will be considered for an additional bedroom. When conducting the Bedroom Need Assessment for prospective foster carers or adopters who state that they need additional bedrooms for their application to foster or adopt to be successful, the Council will consider the risk that the application to foster or adopt may not be successful against the wider benefits which would be realised if a placement was successful. This may mean contacting Children's Services to determine how the lack of the additional bedroom will affect the prospective carers or adopter's application to foster or adopt.

5.5 Band Start Date

5.5.1 The Band Start Date records the date that an Applicant is deemed to have joined the Register. The Band Start Date will be determined as follows:

a) New Applications

The Band Start Date will be the date that the last proof was received to enable the team to assess and verify the application and place into a Housing Need Band.

b) Existing Applicants

If an existing Applicant's Housing Need has been re-assessed due to a change in circumstance, their Band Start Date will be as follows:

Reassessment Outcome	**Band Start Date**
Move into a higher band	Date of Re-assessment - The Band Start Date will be the date that the last proof was received to enable the team to assess and verify the application and place into a Housing Need Band
Moved into a lower band	Retain original Band Start Date
Remain in same band (including for a different housing need)	Retain original Band Start Date

5.5.2 Homeless Applicants who are owed the Full Housing Duty under the Act and are placed in Band 2 following the Housing Need Assessment will have the date the Council made the decision on the duty owed to them as their Band Start Date.

5.6 Rural Connection Band

5.6.1 Some of the Council's social housing is located in Rural Parishes. The Council believes these properties should be allocated so as to ensure that:

- Rural communities are supported in a sustainable way wherever possible; and
- People that are deemed to satisfy a Rural Connection Band to the Rural Parish are given priority in the allocation of vacancies.

5.6.2 Accordingly, Applicants who wish to be considered for an allocation of a property in a Rural Parish will need to satisfy one of the Rural Connection Band criteria as set out below. For a list of the Rural Parishes please refer to paragraph 5.6.3 (Areas of Choice).

Rural Connection Band	**Criteria**
Band A	Applicants who live or are currently in Employment in the Rural Parish and have been so for longer than 10 years or who have lived in the Rural Parish for longer than 10 years previously or a designated keyworker performing an essential service for the Rural Parish community where there is an established need for the Applicant to be rehoused to maintain the service.

Band B	Applicants who live or are currently in Employment in the Rural Parish and have done so for longer than 5 years, or who have lived in the Rural Parish for more than 5 years within the last 15 years, or whose parents, siblings or adult children live in the Rural Parish and have done so for 10 years or longer.
Band C	Applicants who live or are currently in Employment in the Rural Parish and have done so for longer than 2 years, or who have lived in the Rural Parish for more than 2 years within the last 15 years or whose parents, siblings or adult children live in the Rural Parish and have done so for 5 years or more.

5.6.3 Applicants who do not satisfy any of the Rural Connection Band criteria will only be eligible for an allocation of a property in a Rural Parish in the circumstances set out at paragraph 6.2.1.4 (d).

5.6.4 Where an Applicant has been placed in temporary accommodation situated in a Rural Parish the time spent in the Rural Parish will not count towards satisfying a Rural Connection Band. However, if the Applicant has established a longstanding connection with the Rural Parish during their occupation and has made a significant contribution to the local community, then they may be considered to have a Rural Connection Band. Any decision to allow the time spent in temporary accommodation to be taken into consideration when assessing Rural Connection Band is reserved to a Service Manager.

5.7 Areas of Choice

5.7.1 For administrative and management purposes, when Applicants join the Register they will be asked to stipulate which areas they would like to be housed in.

5.7.2 The areas listed below are available for selection by all Applicants on the Register:

Area	
Ashley	Hythe
Blackfield and Langley	Lymington
Calmore	Marchwood
Calshot	New Milton
Dibden and Dibden Purlieu	Pennington
Eling	Ringwood
Fawley	Totton
Fordingbridge	Walkford / Hinton Admiral
Holbury and Hardley	

5.7.3 The areas listed below are Rural Parishes. Please refer to paragraph 5.6 Rural Connection Band at pages 19-20.

Rural Parish	
Ashurst/Colbury	Godshill
Beaulieu	Hale
Boldre/Pilley/Norley Wood	Hordle
Bransgore/Sopley	Hyde
Breamore	Lyndhurst
Brockenhurst	Martin
Brook/Bramshaw	Milford on Sea

Burley	Minstead
Copythorne/Bartley	Netley Marsh/Woodlands
Damerham	Rockbourne
Denny Lodge	Sandleheath
East Boldre/East End	Sway
Ellingham/Harbridge/Ibsley	Whitsbury
Exbury/Lepe	Woodgreen

5.8 Acceptance onto The Register

5.8.1 Once all information has been received from an Applicant, and where appropriate supporting agencies, the Applicant will be notified in writing of the following:

- Their Band Start Date;
- The Band in which their Application has been placed;
- Their reference number to be used for bidding;
- Their assessed Bedroom Need;
- A summary of the Scheme.

5.8.2 If further information is required, the Applicant will be contacted in writing and will be asked to provide the information necessary to assess their Application. Any Applicant who does not provide the requested information within 28 days, or where the Application was made on-line, who fails to submit supporting documents within 28 days, will be assumed to no longer require housing and their Application will be treated as abandoned. Their Application will not be processed further.

6 The choice-based allocation process

6.1 Managing vacancies

6.1.1 All vacancies will be let under the following choice-based allocation process unless they have specifically been excluded, please see paragraph 6.3 below.

6.1.2 Labelling Properties

The Council will set parameters on which type of Households can apply for vacancies. As part of the labelling process full details of each vacancy will be provided and will include the following:

- Type of property;
- Street location;
- Rent, and if appropriate, service charge payable;
- Access to the property (including wheelchair adapted);
- Landlord;
- Number of bedrooms and permitted numbers of occupants (with reference to the Bedroom Need Assessment);
- Specific requirements as specified by the landlord;
- Where appropriate, the Household type that will be given preference;
- Whether or not pets are allowed.

6.1.3 In addition to the above, other circumstances may apply which require particular labelling of properties, schemes or estates. The examples below are for illustrative purposes only and are not exhaustive:

- Where the Council is able to create vacancies within the affordable stock in its district which could increase the number of available homes, then properties may be labelled so that preference is given to Transfer Applicants;

- Where a property is adapted for disabled use or where it has been provided for a specific purpose, such as supported accommodation, it will be labelled for Applicants who require adapted or supported accommodation;
- Where a property is situated in an Age Restricted Scheme, it will be labelled for Applicants that satisfy the age restriction of the scheme;
- If there is a planning requirement for a scheme (i.e. s.106 agreements), vacancies in that scheme will be labelled according to the planning requirements. Similarly, if a scheme has been developed with a specific Applicant group then the labelling will reflect this;
- Where the vacancy is in a Rural Parish the labelling will require that the Applicant has been awarded a Rural Connection Band to the Rural Parish;
- If there is an established need for designated key-workers to be re-housed to ensure the availability of a critical public service within the Council's district area and a Service Manager has determined that this need takes priority over other housing needs within the Council's district, the vacancy will be labelled to give key-workers who are able to provide that service a preference;
- If it is known that there are a large number of Applicants who are in Bands 1-2 or with a particular need for a vacancy, the labelling of the property may be more specific to reduce the number of Applicants who can bid for the vacancy;
- Where the Council is seeking to reduce the numbers of homeless Households in temporary accommodation, a vacancy may be labelled with a preference for those Households who have been accepted as homeless;
- Where sensitive allocations are required because of the needs of other vulnerable or elderly tenants, labelling may stipulate that the successful Applicant needs to be able to demonstrate that they will be able to manage a tenancy successfully.

6.2 Advertising

6.2.1 Unless excluded from the lettings process, all properties will be advertised to provide Applicants with the best possible chance of exercising choice. Applicants will find vacancies advertised on the Council's website. Where a property is for a specific Applicant group who require support contact may be made (as far as resources allow) to ensure that this group are able to bid for the vacancy.

6.2.2 Each property will normally be advertised for a period of 5 days. Where a property has not attracted any bids and/or bids from Applicants that satisfy the labelling criteria for the vacancy, it may be re-advertised to increase the number of Applicants who can bid for the vacancy.

6.2.3 The advert will be labelled as set out at paragraphs 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 above.

6.3 Applying for Vacancies

6.3.1 Interested Applicants will be able to bid for a vacancy electronically by placing a bid via their Council website account before the advert expiry date. Applicants are entitled to bid for a maximum of 3 vacancies each week.

6.4 Assisted Bidding

6.4.1 Where an Applicant requires assistance in bidding for vacancies, because the Applicant is vulnerable or where there is a language barrier, then the Housing Options team may assist the Applicant to bid for vacancies or refer the Applicant to an agency that will be able to assist the Applicant to do so. Applicants will be asked during the application process if they require assistance and if they wish the Housing Options team to manage their bids on their behalf. The Housing Options team will assess whether the Applicant meets the criteria for Assisted Bidding.

6.4.2 Where an Applicant qualifies for Assisted Bidding, the Housing Options team will only make bids on behalf of the Applicant if the vacancy meets the Applicant's preferences and Bedroom Need. Applicants can also ask for assistance with bidding at any time by contacting the Housing Options team or through contact from an agency. Where appropriate the Housing Options team may also enquire whether an Applicant requires assistance following a review of an Applicant's bidding history.

6.4.3 An Applicant will only be assisted with making their bids if they are unable to do so because of vulnerability or because there is a language barrier. Where appropriate, Applicants will be encouraged to access facilities at the Council's offices, use family/friends or the library to access the website to place bids.

6.5 Automatic Bidding

6.5.1 To increase the prospects of re-housing Applicants, the Council may make bids on behalf of some Applicants on the Register.

6.5.2 The Housing Options team will only bid on vacancies that are suitable for the Applicant's Household and that the Applicant has the best chance of securing. Whilst consideration will be given to the Applicants preferences, the overriding consideration will be the effective management of the social housing stock, or where appropriate, the duty to move on Homeless Applicants to more settled housing solutions. In some cases the Housing Options team may encourage an Applicant to increase their preferences to maximise their prospects of being rehoused.

6.5.3 The Housing Options team will normally bid on behalf of the following Applicants:

- Applicants in Band 1;
- Homeless Applicants in Band 2 or in Band 3 who are owed the Relief or Prevention Duty;
- Band 2: Under-occupying by 2 bedrooms;
- Band 3: Under-occupying by 1 bedroom.

6.5.4 The Housing Options team will bid on behalf of an Applicant if the Applicant has failed to bid for suitable properties that have become available in a 6 month period and/or where the bidding history of the Applicant shows they have not made sufficient bids for properties having regard to the number of suitable properties that have become available in a 6 month period. The Housing Options team may also bid on properties where it would assist in the effective management of the Council's housing stock.

6.5.5 Where a bid made on behalf of an Applicant is successful, the Applicant will be made an offer of the accommodation secured by the automatic bid.

6.6 Homeless Applicants

6.6.1 The Applicant will be advised that the offer is made in discharge of the duty owed to them as a Homeless Applicant and the consequences of refusal. They will be notified of their right to request a review of the suitability of the offer and that this right is available whether they accept or refuse the offer.

6.6.2 If the Applicant refuses the offer and lodges an unsuccessful suitability review, or fails to lodge a review request at all, their application will be suspended for a period of 6 months. The Council will discharge the homeless duty. Following the period of suspension, if the Applicant still wishes to remain on the Register, the application will be reinstated to Band 3 and will retain the same Band Start Date. However, if there has been a change in circumstance the Application will be re-assessed and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4 above.

6.7 Other Applicants

6.7.1 The Applicant will be notified of their right to request a review of the suitability of the offer and that they can request a review whether or not they accept the offer. If within a 12 month period, an Applicant refuses two offers of accommodation that are deemed suitable following a review, or where no suitability review was lodged, their Application will be suspended for a period of 6 months. Applicants who fail to respond to an offer will be treated as though they had refused the offer. Following the period of suspension, if the Applicant still wishes to remain on the Register, the Application will be reinstated to Band 3 and will retain the same Band Start Date. However, if there has been a change in circumstance the Application will be re-assessed and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.5 above.

6.7.2 If the Applicant accepts the offer but lodges an unsuccessful suitability review, or does not lodge a suitability review at all, their application will be removed from the Register.

6.7.3 An Applicant whose application has been suspended, has been placed in a lower Band or removed from the Register, will be notified of this decision and of their right to request a review of it; please see paragraph 7.5 for details of the reviews process. The Applicant will be entitled to re-apply to join the Register or seek higher banding if their circumstances change, or have changed, since the decision was made.

7 Allocating properties

7.1 Selection Procedure

7.1.1 Once the time limit for placing bids on an advert has expired, the bids for a vacancy will be considered. Any bids placed after the time limit has expired will be excluded from consideration.

7.1.2 Applicants who do not meet the labelling criteria of the vacancy will be excluded from consideration. Where the advert for the vacancy specified Households who would be given a preference for the vacancy, the Applicants who satisfy the preferences will be considered before those Applicants who do not. Applications will then be prioritised.

7.2 Prioritisation Generally

7.2.1 Prioritisation will be made by:

a) First, by their Band, for example all Applicants in Band 1 will be listed above all Applicants in Bands 2, those in Band 2 will be listed above all those in Band 3 and so on.

b) Then, by the Band Start date; with the Applicant with the earliest Band Start Date and highest Band at the top.

7.2.1 The vacancy will be allocated to the Applicant who is at the top following the above prioritisation.

7.3 Prioritisation – Rural Parishes

7.3.1 Applicants will be prioritised with reference to the strength of their connection with the Rural Parish and Band as follows:

Order of Prioritisation	**Rural Connection Band (RCB) and Housing Need Band**
1.	RCB A with a Band 1 Housing Need
2.	RCB A with a Band 2 Housing Need
3.	RCB A with Band 3 or Band 4 Housing Need

4.	RCB B with a Band 1 Housing Need
5.	RCB B with a Band 2 Housing Need
6.	RCB B with Band 3 or Band 4 Housing Need
7.	RCB C with a Band 1 Housing Need
8.	RCB C with a Band 2 Housing Need
9.	RCB C with Band 3 or Band 4 Housing Need

7.3.2 Applicants who fall within 3, 6 and 9 in the table above will be treated equally within their grouping. Applicants will then be prioritised by Band Start Date. The vacancy will be allocated to the Applicant with the earliest Band Start Date at the top following prioritisation in accordance with the table at 6.2.1.4 (a) above.

7.3.3 Where the vacancy is in a Rural Parish and no bids are received from an Applicant with a Rural Connection Band for that Rural Parish, the Council will re-advertise the vacancy and set new labelling criteria to increase the prospects of the vacancy going to an Applicant with a Rural Connection Band for the Rural Parish. In re-advertising the vacancy, the Council may change the labelling criteria to allow under or over-occupation. However, the Council will only allocate a vacancy to an under-occupier if affordability will not be an issue and to an over occupier where it will not result in a Category 1 Hazard. If the vacancy can still not be filled, the Council will increase the geographical area to allow bids from nearby Rural Parishes and will also consider labelling the vacancy to allow for over or under-occupation (subject to affordability and avoiding Category 1 Hazard).

7.3.4 If a vacancy in a Rural Parish is still not filled after re-advertising it as above, the vacancy will be made available to the whole district.

7.4 Following Prioritisation

7.4.1 If after the applications have been prioritised as set out in paragraphs 7.1 - 7.3, there are two or more Applicants at the top of the list, the Council will carry out an assessment of the Applicants' circumstances to determine who has the greatest Housing Need for the particular vacancy. This may include taking into consideration whether an Applicant has more than one Housing Need, the size of the Household and its make-up to ensure the best use of the property.

7.4.2 If an Applicant confirms that they wish to be considered for a vacancy they will not be able to bid on any other vacancies whilst they are being considered. Any open bids that the Applicant has for other vacancies will be ignored during the period of consideration.

7.4.3 If an Applicant is the successful bidder for more than one vacancy they will have to choose which vacancy they want to be considered for. In order to ensure effective management of the Register, Applicants will not be able to be considered for more than one vacancy at any one time.

7.4.4 If an Applicant is made an offer of a vacancy they will normally have 24 hours in which to make a decision. If the Applicant needs more time and/or support to make the decision, they will need to notify the Housing Options team within 24 hours of the offer being made. Subject to consent having been given and/or appropriate data sharing agreements being in place, if the Council is aware that the Applicant is receiving support from a support agency, the support agency will be notified when the Applicant is made an offer of a vacancy.

7.5 Special Allocations

7.5.1 **Sensitive Lettings**

a) Occasionally, there will be a need to assist in dealing with issues that impact on a small, specific location to reduce the concentration of certain needs groups which is impacting on housing management; or to promote a more balanced community by seeking to select or exclude certain Households with particular characteristics.

b) Where appropriate, this may be requested by a partner landlord; for example, where a previous tenant had caused anti-social behaviour, and it was deemed important to get the right mix of tenants in the area having regard to the needs of existing vulnerable or elderly tenants.

c) The Council, and if appropriate, the partner landlord, may agree that an Applicant who has come top following prioritisation is not the most suitable and reserves the right to overlook the Applicant and make the offer to the next suitable Applicant.

d) As indicated above, where a vacancy is a sensitive let, it will be clearly labelled as such. Where there is more than one property in an area that is affected this will be set out in an agreed Local Lettings Policy.

7.5.2 **Age Restricted Schemes**

a) Some of the Council's vacancies are situated in Age Restricted Schemes. Applicants will only be able to bid for these vacancies if they meet the age restriction criteria. Any such vacancy will be clearly labelled as an Age Restricted Scheme.

b) To ensure the effective management of the Council's housing stock, the Council reserves the right to increase or reduce the number of Age Restricted Schemes or alter the age restrictions as may be deemed appropriate; the decision to do so is reserved to a Service Manager.

7.5.3 **Incentive to Work**

a) Local authorities are encouraged to consider how they can support those Households who want to work, as well as those who, while unable to engage in paid work, are contributing to their communities in other ways, for example voluntary work.[2]

[2]Paragraph 4.27 of the Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Housing Authorities in England.

b) In order to provide incentives for Applicants to work or make a positive contribution to the local community, a percentage of all general needs housing will be advertised so that a preference is given to Applicants, who are currently in Employment or who are currently making a contribution to their community, for example by voluntary work. A decision as to whether an Applicant is making a contribution to their community, for example by voluntary work, is reserved to a Service Manager. The following factors will be considered; time spent carrying out the role/task contribution, frequency, an individual's ability and how long they have been carrying out the role/task contribution. The annual percentage will be set between 10 – 20%.

c) The incentive to work provisions will be regularly monitored to ensure that the Council is complying with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

7.5.4 **Local Letting Policies**

a) The Act allows the Council to adopt Local Letting Policies. This allows the Council to allocate housing to a specific group of people, whether or not they come within the Reasonable Preference Group. In setting Local Lettings Policies, the Council has to ensure it complies with its duty under the Equality Act 2010 not to discriminate, directly or indirectly, against any groups who have a protected characteristic, and it needs to ensure that overall, it has regard to its statutory duties to those in the Reasonable Preference Group.

b) Local Lettings Policies will be used to ensure a mixed and balanced community. When agreed, these Local Lettings Policies will have their own specific allocation criteria. Properties that are subject to a Local Lettings Policy will be clearly labelled in the advert.

c) A Local Lettings Policy may be applied in addition to any local planning restrictions that may be contained in an agreement made under s.106 of the Town and Country Planning Act.

7.6 Verification of Applications

7.6.1 The Council will undertake verification of all the relevant information provided by the Applicant. The verification of information includes obtaining evidence to confirm details given about the Applicant's family and housing situation.

7.6.2 The verification of information may be undertaken when the Application is received and will always be undertaken at the point of allocation.

7.6.3 Where the vacancy is with a partner landlord, for example a housing association, further verification, in accordance with the landlord's own verification processes and policy may be undertaken by the landlord. The landlord may also have additional qualifying criteria; particularly around affordability. Applicants will have to satisfy both the partner landlord and the Scheme's qualification criteria at verification to be made an allocation of the vacancy.

7.6.4 Verification will also include the gathering of information on suitability to be a tenant. If it becomes clear at the verification stage that an Applicant has demonstrated behaviour which may make them unsuitable to be a tenant (please refer to Appendix 1: Eligibility and Qualification at page 40 for further details) then they will not be offered the tenancy. The Applicant's banding and/or qualification to be on the Register will be re-assessed due to information obtained during the verification process. This may result in an Applicant being moved into a lower Band or being removed from the Register. If an Applicant is overlooked for an allocation at the verification stage, the next suitable Applicant who came below the overlooked Applicant following prioritisation will be considered for the vacancy.

7.6.5 If following verification, it is established that the property is not suitable for the Applicant, the Council reserves the right to prevent an offer of a property being progressed. If this happens, the next suitable Applicant who came below the overlooked Applicant following prioritisation will be considered for the vacancy.

7.6.6 The local ward member will be notified of an allocation of a vacancy in their Rural Parish.[3]

7.6.7 If it is not possible to complete verification of the Application within a reasonable period of time due to the Applicant's refusal to co-operate or because the Applicant is unable to provide the information needed to complete the verification process, the Applicant may be overlooked and the Applicant who came below the overlooked Applicant following prioritisation will be contacted.

7.6.8 Where following the verification process, an Applicant has been moved into another Band or has been removed from the Register, they will be advised of the reasons in writing. They will be notified of their right to request a review of the decision; please refer to paragraph 7.5 for further details of the reviews process.

7.6.9 Once the verification process has been completed, the Council, or the landlord, will contact the successful Applicant to make a provisional offer of a tenancy to them.

7.7 Publishing Details of the Allocation

7.7.1 Feedback on allocations provides Applicants with information to exercise choice and to gain information on the likely waiting time for re-housing. Details of the allocation will be published on the Council's website as soon as possible. Whilst the successful Applicant's name will not be published, their Band and the length of time they have been on the Register will be published.

[3] In accordance with Regulation 3 of the Allocations of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997 SI 483, elected members of the Council may not be involved in allocation decisions where the accommodation to be allocated, or the Applicant's sole or main residence, is in the member's ward.

8 Exceptions to The Choice Based Allocations Process

8.1 Allocations Excluded From the Choice Based Allocations Process

8.1.1 Whilst most allocations will be managed through the choice based allocations process, there will be some circumstances when it will be necessary to exclude certain vacancies. Examples of the allocations that may be excluded from the choice-based allocations process are:

- Management moves (carried out by the Council or housing association to assist in the good management of tenancies and its stock).
- Vacancies in Age Restricted Schemes, adapted properties or sensitive lets where no bids have been received from Applicants that satisfy the labelling criteria;
- For community safety, for example re-housing under the Multi-Agency Protection Panel Arrangements (MAPPA) or Witness Protection scheme;
- Where supported housing or extra care housing is being allocated;
- Where a Homeless Applicant is occupying a Council property on a non-secure basis and the property they are occupying is suitable for their needs;
- Where arrangements are in place for partner landlords to provide less than 100% of their properties for allocation.

8.1.2 Where an allocation has been excluded from the choice-based allocations process, the Council will make an allocation of the vacancy to an Applicant who has not bid for it. This is known as a direct offer.

8.2 Direct Offers

8.2.1 The Council may make direct offers to the following:

- Applicants in Bands 1 and 2;
- Applicants being discharged from hospital or needing to go into supported or sheltered housing;
- Flexible tenants whose tenancy is due to, or has, expired and they have been assessed as having a continuing housing need but for alternative accommodation;
- Homeless Applicants occupying temporary accommodation that is suitable for their needs;
- Successors under-occupying their property or Vulnerable Occupants of Council accommodation where a decision has been made to allow them to remain in the property or to give them a tenancy of an alternative property;
- Remaining Vulnerable Occupants of Council accommodation on termination of a joint tenancy where a decision has been made to allow them to remain in that property or to give them a tenancy of an alternative property;
- Applicants needing specially adapted properties, properties in an Age Restricted Scheme or sensitive lets;
- Applicants requiring a management move or who require rehousing under MAPPA or Witness Protection scheme.

8.2.2 Any direct offer will meet the Applicant's assessed needs and should be suitable for the Applicant's Household.

8.3 Homeless Applicants

8.3.1 The Applicant will be advised that the offer is made in discharge of the duty owed to them as a Homeless Applicant and the consequences of refusal. They will be notified of their right to request a review of the suitability of the offer and that this right is available whether they accept or refuse the offer.

8.3.2 If an Applicant refuses the offer and lodges an unsuccessful suitability review, or fails to lodge a review request at all, their application will be suspended for a period of 6 months. The Council will discharge the homeless duty. Following the period of suspension, if the Applicant still wishes to remain on the Register, the Application will be reinstated to Band 3 and will retain the same Band Start Date. However, if there has been a change in circumstance the Application will be re-assessed and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4 above.

8.4 Other Applicants

8.4.1 When Applicants are made an offer, they will be notified of their right to request a review of the suitability of the offer and that this right is available whether they accept or refuse the offer. If an Applicant refuses 2 offers of accommodation that are deemed suitable following a review, or where no suitability review is lodged, within a 12-month period, their application will be suspended for 6 months. Applicants who fail to respond to an offer will be treated as though they had refused the offer. Following the period of suspension, if the Applicant still wishes to remain on the Register, the Application will be reinstated to Band 3 and will retain the same Band Start Date. However, if there has been a change in circumstance the Applicant will be re-assessed and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.5 above.

8.4.2 If an Applicant accepts an offer and lodges an unsuccessful suitability review, or does not lodge a suitability review at all, their application will be removed from the Register.

8.4.3 An Applicant whose application has been suspended, moved to a lower Band or been removed from the Register will be notified of this decision and of their right to request a review of it, please see paragraph 8.8 for details of the reviews process.

8.4.4 To ensure transparency and fairness, decisions to exclude allocations from the choice based allocations process and make a direct offer will be monitored to ensure that the decisions to do so are being properly exercised within limited boundaries.

8.5 Other Allocations Process

8.5.1 A number of allocation processes do not constitute an allocation under the Act and operate outside of the normal allocation processes of the Scheme. This includes vacancies being let as temporary accommodation to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness or decants whilst repairs are undertaken.

8.5.2 **Allocation of Temporary Housing**

8.5.2.1 For allocations of temporary housing to homeless people or to prevent homelessness direct allocations will be made by the Homelessness and Housing Advice Officers.

8.5.2.2 The main aims of allocating temporary housing are to resolve homelessness, meet statutory requirements and to minimise the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

8.5.2.3 There are a number of situations in which homeless applicants can be waiting for temporary housing. The most common ones are:

- Accepted homeless applicants who have been placed in bed and breakfast;
- Accepted homeless applicants in other forms of emergency housing (refuge, staying with friends/relatives);
- Households already in temporary housing where the accommodation is going back to the owner;
- Households already in temporary accommodation where the accommodation is not suitable for their needs.

8.5.2.4 Allocations of temporary housing are a question of judgment for each individual vacancy, as the Homelessness and Housing Advice Officer will have to balance the needs and requirements of a number of different individuals in different circumstances. The matters which the Homelessness and Advice Officer must take into account include:

- Length of time a homeless applicant has been in bed and breakfast. Bed and breakfast is not suitable accommodation for homeless applicants with family commitments (including those who are pregnant) unless used in an emergency and then for a maximum of 6 weeks;
- The length of time homeless applicants have been in other forms of emergency housing awaiting temporary accommodation. Whilst refuge and other forms of emergency accommodation are normally more suitable than bed and breakfast, lengthy waits in emergency housing should be avoided where possible;
- Where temporary accommodation is going back to the owner and delays may cause families to be placed in bed and breakfast or significant difficulties to the landlord;
- The length of time that a homeless applicant has been in unsuitable temporary housing and has been waiting for suitable temporary accommodation and the difficulties that the homeless applicant is experiencing in their current accommodation;
- The areas of choice of each homeless applicant and the availability of accommodation close to those areas of choice.

8.5.3 **Allocations of Extra Care Housing**

8.5.3.1 Allocations of extra-care housing will normally be managed outside of the choice based allocations process due to the vulnerability of Applicants for extra-care schemes and the required partnership working with Hampshire County Council and care and support providers.

8.5.3.2 A separate agreement with Hampshire County Council will be entered into to set out the allocations processes for extra care, so the paragraphs below only summarise the broad principles.

8.5.3.3 Extra-care housing will be advertised on the website but on a non-specific basis to ensure awareness of the availability of the extra-care accommodation.

8.5.3.4 The Housing Options team will assess housing needs in accordance with the Scheme. An Extra-Care Assessment and Allocation Panel (ECAP) will assess support and care needs.

8.5.3.5 For each vacancy the ECAP will determine whether it is a vacancy for an Applicant with high, medium or low care needs. This decision will depend on an understanding of the profile of the Applicant within the extra care scheme (to ensure a balanced extra care scheme) and the details of the particular vacancy (for example, a fully adapted property may suggest higher care needs).

8.5.3.6 Each vacancy will be allocated to the most suitable Applicant. When allocating, the following principles will apply:

- A vacancy of a high/medium or low care need will normally be offered to the Applicant with the equivalent level of care who is top on the list for that particular level need;
- Other factors may be taken into consideration as well as the level of housing need. These will include the needs and preferences of individuals (e.g. wheelchair needs, preferences for floor level and scheme preferences etc);
- In line with the Scheme, normally, Applicants will need to satisfy the local connection criteria;
- If there is a double flat, consideration will be given to giving preference to couples;
- Where there are no suitable Applicants, consideration will be given to Applicants with a different level of assessed care need for the vacancy, if appropriate;

- Where it is still not possible to allocate a vacancy, the vacancy may be individually advertised on the website as a vacancy of older persons' housing within an extra care scheme and allocated by the Housing Options team in accordance with the provisions of the Scheme.

8.5.4 **Hard to Let**

8.5.4.1 Hard to let properties are those which the Council finds difficult to let due to low demand. The Council may allocate such properties by making a direct offer or allowing Applicants who would not ordinarily meet the properties labelling criteria to bid on the property.

8.6 Updating Application details

8.6.1 **Rolling Reviews**

8.6.1.1 A rolling review of Applications will take place so that the Register is kept up to date. Each Application will be reviewed on the anniversary of the Band Start Date; although the Council may review Applications at different intervals if there is a reason to do so. An Applicant will be asked to complete a Renewal Request. If the Applicant fails to respond to the Renewal Request within 28 days of it being sent, the Application will be suspended. If no contact is made within 3 months of the Renewal Request being sent, the Application will be removed from the Register. An Applicant who has had their application removed will be notified and will be advised of their right to request a review. Please refer to paragraph 8.8 for further details of the reviews process.

8.6.1.2 If an Applicant has not responded to a Renewal Request within 28 days, but has done so within 3 months, the Application will be reinstated with the original Band Start Date. Applicants who respond after 3 months will only be reinstated with the original Band Start Date if exceptional circumstances apply. Whilst each case will be determined on its individual facts, exceptional circumstances will apply if there is evidence of incapacity (physical or mental) for the period of delay which resulted in the failure to complete the renewal request within the 3 month deadline. A decision as to whether exceptional circumstances apply is reserved to a Service Manager.

8.6.1.3 If no exceptional circumstances apply, where an Applicant responds to a Renewal Request after having already been removed from the Register for failure to respond, they will have to re-apply to join the Register and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.5 (a) above.

8.6.1.4 Where an Applicant's circumstances are found to have changed during the rolling review process, their application will be suspended to allow for re-assessment of their Application. An Applicant who has had their application suspended will be notified and will be advised of their right to request a review. Please refer to paragraph 8.8 for further details of the reviews process.

8.6.2 **Change of Circumstance**

8.6.2.1 Applicants must inform the Council of any changes in their circumstances as soon as possible after they occur. This includes any change that may affect the Band that has been given to their application.

8.6.2.2 Applicants have the right to request that their application be reconsidered following a change in their circumstance. An application will be re-assessed and given a Band Start Date as set out at paragraph 5.5 above.

8.6.2.3 If a person successfully bids for a vacancy and it is later found that the Applicant's housing situation is different from the details provided when they made their application, the offer will be withdrawn. Please see paragraph 7.6 Verification of Applications.

8.7 Suspension and Removal

8.7.1 **Suspension**

8.7.1.1 An Application may be suspended from the Register in the following circumstances where the:

- Applicant has failed to bid on any properties within a 12 month period;
- Applicant has refused 2 offers (automatic bid, direct offer or successful bid) of accommodation in a 12 month period where the offers have been deemed suitable following review, or where no review was lodged. This includes Applicants who are treated as having refused an offer because they failed to respond;
- Applicant is owed a homeless duty and refuses a suitable offer of accommodation made in discharge of duty owed;
- Council becomes aware of a change of circumstance which requires re-assessment of the application;
- Applicant has failed to complete a Renewal Request within 28 days of it being sent out;
- Council receives information that the Applicant is no longer eligible or qualifying to be on the Register;
- Council receives information that the Applicant has provided false, or withheld, information.

8.7.2 **Period of Suspension**

Reason for Suspension	**Period of Suspension**
Refusing 2 suitable offers of accommodation in a 12-month period, or homeless Applicant who refuses a suitable offer of accommodation resulting in discharge of duty.	6 months
Failure to bid in a 12 month period	6 months

Failure to complete a Renewal Request within 28 days	Until the Renewal Request is completed or 3 months; whichever is earlier
The Council becomes aware or is notified of a change of circumstance	Pending re-assessment
The Council becomes aware of, or is notified that: The Applicant: ▪ is no longer qualifying or eligible; or ▪ has provided false information or has withheld information	Pending investigations

8.7.2.1 If an Applicant who has been suspended for refusing offers of accommodation or failing to bid, wants to remain on the Register after the period of suspension, their Application will be re-instated with the same Band Start Date; unless there has been a change in circumstance in which case the Application will be re-assessed and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.5 above. If following re-instatement, the Application is suspended again within a 12-month period, the Application will be removed from the Register.

8.7.2.2 Where an application is suspended pending a re-assessment following a change in circumstance, the Application will be re-instated once the re-assessment has been completed. The Application will be given a Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.5 (b) above. If following re-assessment, the Applicant is found to no longer be qualifying or eligible, their application will be removed from the Register.

8.7.2.3 Where an application was suspended pending investigations of an allegation that the Applicant is no longer qualifying, eligible or has provided false, or has withheld, information, the Application will be re-instated with the original Band Start Date if the allegations are unfounded. The Application will be removed from the Register if the allegations are founded.

8.7.2.4 An Applicant who has had their application suspended from the Register has the right to request a review. Please refer to paragraph 8.8 below for details of the review process.

8.7.3 **Removal**

8.7.3.1 An Application will be removed from the Register for the following reasons:

- Where the Applicant requests that their application be removed;
- Where the Applicant has died;
- Where the Applicant has been rehoused; including where the Applicant has accepted an offer of accommodation and lodged an unsuccessful review of its suitability;
- Where an Applicant has failed to complete a Renewal Request within 3 months of it being sent out;
- If an allegation that an Applicant is no longer eligible, qualifying or has provided false, or has withheld, information is made out (including following the verification stage);
- If following re-instatement from suspension the Application is suspended again within a 12-month period.

8.7.3.2 Where the Council is aware that an Applicant may be vulnerable or suffer from a disability, it may try to contact the Applicant, or where there are appropriate consents or data sharing agreements, any agency that it is aware is working with the Applicant, before removing the Application from the Register.

8.7.3.3 Applicants can apply to re-join the Register at any time. Where an Applicant considers that they have become eligible or qualifying since being removed from the Register, they may also reapply to join the Register, but must provide evidence of a change of circumstance. Applicants who apply to re-join the Register will be treated as new Applicants and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.5 above.

8.7.3.4 An Applicant who has had their application removed from the Register has the right to request a review. Please refer to paragraph 8.8 below for details of the review process.

8.8 Right to Request a Review

8.8.1 An Applicant has the right to request a review of any decision about the facts of their case which is likely, or has been, taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing to them; and in particular any of the following decisions:

- Whether the Applicant is eligible or qualifying (including following the verification stage);
- The Scheme Band in which their application has been placed;
- Their Rural Connection Band;
- The Band Start Date given to their application;
- Their Bedroom Need Assessment;
- Decision of the Medical and Welfare Panel;
- The suitability of an offer of accommodation (whether direct let, autobid or from a successful bid);
- Their application being moved to a lower Band;
- Suspending their application;
- Removing their Application from the Register.

8.8.2 Once an Applicant has been notified in writing of any of the above decisions they will have 21 days from the date of the decision to request a review. The review must be in writing and needs to include full details of why the Applicant does not agree with the decision made. Where appropriate the Applicant should provide evidence to support the review request.

8.8.3 Reviews should be sent by email to housing.options@nfdc.gov.uk or by post to:

Allocations – Review

New Forest District Council

Appletree Court

Beaulieu Road

Lyndhurst

SO43 7PA

8.8.4 The Council will acknowledge a review within 10 working days. The Reviewing Panel, which will consist of officers who did not take part in making the decision, will carry out a review of the case. A response in writing will be provided within 56 days of receipt of the review request. The response will set out the outcome of the review request and the reasons.

8.8.5 An Applicant who needs support in making their review request can contact the Council at **housing.options@nfdc.gov.uk**. Where the Council is aware that an Applicant is vulnerable or has disability issues, it will try to make direct contact with the Applicant, or if appropriate consents or data sharing agreements are in place, the agency providing support to the Applicant to ensure that the Applicant is aware that they have the right to request a review of the decision made. Where necessary, a vulnerable or disabled Applicant will be afforded alternative means of making their review.

8.9 Exercise of Discretion

8.9.1 In exceptional circumstances, so as not to fetter its discretion, the Council reserves the right to depart from any aspect of the Scheme; including but not limited to: qualification criteria, Bedroom Need Assessment, Household membership or the allocation of a vacancy. Any decision to depart from the Scheme will be taken by the Officer in the appropriate position as set out at 10.1.1 below.

8.9.2 The Council will exercise its discretion specifically in circumstances where it is necessary to ensure compliance with duties that are imposed on it by other statutes; including but not limited to the Equality Act 2010, or guidance issued by the Secretary of State, including but not limited to Applicants who have fled Domestic Abuse. The exercise of discretion will be monitored to ensure that it is properly exercised within extremely limited boundaries.

8.9.3 When exercising discretion, the Council will always consider the circumstances of the Applicant against the prevailing housing conditions within its district.

8.10 Equality and Fair Allocations

8.10.1 The Council is subject to the general public sector equality duty as set out at s.149 of the Equality Act 2010. The Council and its partner landlords are committed to providing equality of opportunity to all individuals who apply for housing. Monitoring of Applications and allocations may take place to ensure that everyone is being treated fairly.

8.10.2 All Applicants may be asked to provide details of age, gender, ethnic origin, religion and sexual orientation. This is to allow the Council to monitor who is applying and being allocated housing and to ensure that properties are being offered and allocated fairly.

8.11 Changes to The Scheme

8.11.1 The Scheme will be reviewed every two years and will be amended, if necessary. Minor changes will be agreed by Service Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing. This will assist in ensuring that the Scheme continues to meet legislative and best practice requirements as well as ensuring the effective use of the social housing within the Council's district. Before adopting any changes to the Scheme that relate to a major change of policy, the Council will comply with the procedures as set out in the Act

8.12 Right to Information

8.12.1 Applicants have the right to request such general information as will enable them to assess:

- How their application will be treated under the Scheme (including in particular whether they are likely to be regarded as a person who will be given reasonable preference); and

Whether housing accommodation appropriate for their needs is likely to be made available to them, and if so, how long it is likely to be before such accommodation becomes available for allocation to them.

8.12.2 Where appropriate the Council will publish such information on its website.

8.12.3 Applicants have the right to ask the Council to inform them of any decision about the facts of their case which is likely to be, or has been, taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing accommodation to them.

8.13 False Statements or Withholding Information

8.13.1 Applicants who knowingly or recklessly make a statement which is false, or knowingly withhold information in connection with their application, are guilty of a criminal offence. Anyone who is found to have committed such an offence may:

- Have their application refused or removed from the Register;
- Have an offer of accommodation withdrawn; and/or
- Be prosecuted by the Council. This could lead to a large fine or imprisonment, and may also lead to legal action for the possession of any accommodation found to have been obtained following false information having been given.

8.14 Data Protection

8.14.1 In accordance with the Council's statutory obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations, all Applicants will be made aware of how their personal information will be processed. Information recorded on the Council's system and on the Applicant's file will be shared with partner landlords and other agencies as necessary. Consent from the Applicant for information sharing will be sought in all cases. For a copy of the Council's Housing Services Privacy Notice please visit: **www.newforest.gov.uk/privacy**

8.14.2 Applicants have a right to see what information is kept about them on written records (please note that a fee may be charged). As far as possible, the Council will make this available subject to certain restrictions. Applicants wishing to view their records should contact the Council at:

Housing Options

Appletree Court

Beaulieu Road

Lyndhurst

SO43 7PA

8.15 Contacting Housing Options

Telephone: 0203 8028 5588

Email: **housing.options@nfdc.gov.uk**

Website: **ww.newforest.gov.uk/homesearch**

Postal Address:

New Forest District Council

Housing Options

Appletree Court

Beaulieu Road

Lyndhurst

SO43 7PA

9 Roles and Responsibilities

9.1 **Applicant**

A person who has applied to join, or who is waiting for an allocation of housing, from the Council's housing register. Generally, the term should also be read to refer to all members of the Applicant's Household.

9.2 **Application**

An application to join, or to be allocated housing, from the Council's housing register.

9.3 **Assisted Bidding**

Where the Housing Options team has assessed that an Applicant needs assistance to bid on vacancies.

9.4 **Band**

One of the four bands used to prioritise Applicants on the Council's housing register.

9.5 **Bedroom Need**

The number of bedrooms that an Applicant is entitled to; having regard to the Applicant's Household make-up (see paragraph 5.3).

9.6 **Domestic Abuse**

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can include, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse.

9.7 **Employment**

Is work where an Applicant or member of their Household holds a contract (written or oral) which gives them a remuneration for the work undertaken that is declared for tax purposes (when required), or self-employment which generates a source of income for an Applicant which is declared for tax purposes (when required). In establishing whether an Applicant or member of their Household is in employment, evidence may be required including a written contract, tax return, letter from the employer, payslips or a statement from an accountant. The following may also be taken into consideration:

- Whether the work is regular or intermittent;
- The period of employment (for example a contract that is intended to last for less than 12 months will be considered short term);
- The number of hours worked (at each location if working in multiple locations);
- The office or business establishment at which a person is based or from where their work is managed.

9.8 **Full Housing Duty**

The duty owed to a homeless applicant who the Council accepts is eligible, in priority need and not intentionally homeless (for post 3 April 2018 applies only after the Relief Duty has expired).

9.9 **Homeless Applicant**

An Applicant (on the housing register) who the Council accepts is statutory homeless and is owed a duty under Part VII of the Act.

9.10 **Homesearch Allocation Scheme 2**

The allocation scheme that was adopted by the Council in 2012 and which was in operation up until the adoption of the Scheme.

9.11 **Household**

The individuals that an Applicant is expected to reside with and who an Applicant can include in their housing application (see paragraph 5.3).

9.12 **Housing Need**

The assessed level of need which determines which of the Scheme's Bands an application will be placed (see paragraph 5.2).

9.13 **Partner**

The spouse or civil partner of an Applicant; including a cohabitant who is living with the Applicant as a spouse or civil partner.

9.14 **Prevention Duty**

The duty owed (for a minimum period of 56 days) to those who the Council accepts are eligible and threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

9.15 **Private Rented Sector Offer**

An offer of an assured shorthold tenancy in discharge of a duty owed under Part VII of the Act.

9.16 **Register**

The Council's housing register which contains the list of all those who have applied to the Council for social housing.

9.17 **Relief Duty**

The duty owed (for a minimum period of 56 days) to those who the Council accepts are eligible and homeless.

9.18 **Renewal Request**

The request sent by the Council to Applicants, normally on the anniversary of their Band Start Date, asking for updated details of their circumstances (see paragraph 8.6.1)

9.19 **Restricted Person**

A person who is subject to immigration control and who is not eligible for an allocation of housing because they do not have leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom or have leave that is subject to a "no recourse to public funds" condition.

9.20 **Regular Forces**

The Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the regular army or the Royal Air Force.

9.21 **Reserve Forces**

The Royal Fleet Reserve, the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Marines Reserve, the Regular Reserve, the Army Reserve, the Royal Air Force Reserve or the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

9.22 **Senior Officer (s)**

The Service Manager, Housing Options Service Manager, Homesearch Team Leader, Allocations Officer or any other officer of an equivalent or higher position.

9.23 **Transfer Applicant**

An Applicant who is already accommodated in social housing but who has a Housing Need and has applied for an allocation of alternative social housing.

9.24 **Vulnerable Occupant**

An occupant of Council accommodation left following the death of, or the departure of, a Council tenant, but who has no legal rights to remain and where the Council has deemed the occupier vulnerable due to their personal circumstances. An Applicant will be deemed vulnerable if they have a disability or other health (physical or mental) issues that make them unable to secure and/or sustain alternative accommodation in the private sector or who the Council would have a duty to secure permanent accommodation under s.193(2) of the Act if they were evicted and who, due to their Household circumstances, a Private Rented Sector Offer discharge would not be available. In assessing whether a person can secure and sustain a private sector tenancy, the Council will have regard to any support or assistance that can be given to the person to facilitate their ability to do so. Such occupants may be occupiers with no succession rights or tenants whose joint tenancy has been terminated by the other tenant but who remains in occupation. The Council will always assess the occupant's circumstances against the prevailing housing conditions within its district.

10 Scheme administration

10.1 Managing the Scheme

10.1.1 **Decision Making**

The following decisions will be the responsibility of the named positions (or positions at an equivalent or higher level) within the Council; the list is not exhaustive and a Service Manager has the discretion to delegate the decision-making responsibility of any decision to another position as may be deemed appropriate by the Service Manager:

Decisions	**Position**
Eligibility of Applicants	Housing Options Assistant/Allocations Officer
Qualifying Applicants (including Local Connection)	Housing Options Assistant/Allocations Officer
Household and Bedroom Need Assessment	Housing Options Assistant/Allocations Officer
Housing Need Assessment (Banding decision)	Housing Options Assistant/Allocations Officer
Renewal Request/Change of Circumstance– re- assessment	Housing Options Assistant/Allocations Officer
Lowering an Applicant's Band, Suspension or Removal from the Register	Allocations Officer
Prioritisation of Applications and successful bids	Allocations Officer
Properties excluded from Choice Based Process	Allocations Officer
Adverts for properties: including labelling, setting preferences and property description	Allocations Officer

Reviews	Project and Reviews Officer / Homesearch Team Leader / Housing Options Manager / Service Manager / Reviewing Panel
Banding for Vulnerable Occupant	Homesearch Team Leader / Housing Options Manager / Service Manager
Selection of an Applicant for Auto-Bidding	Allocations Officer / Homesearch Team Leader / Housing Options Manager / Service Manager
Health and Wellbeing Assessment	Allocations Officer (following assessment by the Health and Welfare Panel)
Decision on community contribution issues (including Incentive to Work and Rural Connection Band)	Housing Options Manager / Service Manager
Exercise of discretion[4]	Service Manager
Rural Connection Band in respect of applicants in Temporary Accommodation and Keyworkers.	Service Manager
Management moves or direct offers	Housing Options Manager and Service Manager
Local Lettings Plans and Sensitive Lettings	Service Manager (in consultation Portfolio Holder for Housing)

[4] Including in relation to whether exceptional circumstances apply for failure to complete a Renewal Request within 3 months.

Decision on key-worker status[5]	Service Manager (in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing)

10.1.2 **Health and Welfare Panel**

10.1.2.1 Decisions relating an Applicant's health and wellbeing will be made by an Allocation Officer following the assessment of the Applicant's health and wellbeing by the Health and Welfare Panel.

10.1.2.2 The Health and Welfare Panel will meet as required, but normally at intervals of no less than fortnightly. It will be quorate with two or more officers present. The Health and Welfare Panel is for professionals only and Applicants may not attend.

10.1.2.3 The Health and Welfare Panel will be chaired by an Allocation Officer and other members of the Health and Welfare Panel may be:

- Allocations Officer;
- Homelessness and Housing Advice Officer;
- Housing Assistants;
- Tenancy Management Officers or Tenancy Management Assistants;
- Representatives from Social or Children's Services;
- An Occupational therapist;
- Support Workers;
- Representatives from the Locality Mental Health Teams;
- Other professionals.

10.1.2.4 In assessing an Applicant's health and wellbeing need the Health and Welfare Panel will have particular regard to the matters set out in Appendix 3: Health and Wellbeing Assessment on page 79. Where necessary the Health and Welfare Panel may seek medical advice.

[5] Including qualification for Band 3

10.1.2.5 Health and Welfare Panel members should not be involved in decisions they are presenting or in which they have a declared interest.

10.1.2.6 The Health and Welfare Panel may make decisions setting the limits and parameters of the properties that the Applicant can bid for; including bedroom entitlement, property type and property location.

10.1.2.7 Applicants will be notified of the decision of the Health and Welfare Panel after the panel meeting. An Applicant who is not happy with the decision of the Health and Welfare Panel will be notified of their right to request a review. Please refer to paragraph 8.8 for further details of the reviews process.

11 Appendices

Appendix 1 Eligibility and Qualification

A. Eligibility

1. The Council is not able to make an allocation of property to anyone who has been classed as a Restricted Person by the government. The Council is not able make an allocation to the following:

   i. A person from abroad who is subject to immigration control unless s/he is of a class prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State, or is currently a tenant of the Council or a private registered provider of social housing or a registered social landlord;

   ii. Two or more people jointly if any one of them falls within the above category of people; or

   iii. Other classes of persons from abroad specified by the Secretary of State.

2. The Council will disregard any Restricted Person when assessing whether an Applicant falls into the Reasonable Preference Group.

3. Most persons from abroad who are not subject to immigration control (including British Citizens) must also be *habitually resident* in the Common Travel Area and/or have the right to reside in the Common Travel Area in order to be eligible to join the Register. This is known as the habitual residence test. The Common Travel Area consists of:

   i. United Kingdom;

   ii. The Channel Islands;

   iii. The Isle of Man; and

   iv. The Republic of Ireland

4. In order to pass the habitual residence test the Council will need to be satisfied that an Applicant is ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom, the test normally looks at whether someone has been in the United Kingdom for an appreciable period of time and whether they have a settled intention to remain. Some British Citizens who are returning from a period abroad will only have to show that they are returning with a settled intention to remain in the United Kingdom.

B. Local Connection

1. Local connection will be established by:

   i. Residence:

   - An Applicant or their Partner has been resident in the Council's district for a continuous period of 2 years at the time of the Application; or
   - An Applicant has resided in the Council's district area for 10 years or more in the past;
   - Applicants who fall within one of the groups below will be exempt from having to satisfy the local connection criteria:

     a) Those owed a s.193(2) and s.189B((2) duty by the Council under Part VII of the Act;

     b) A person who is serving in the regular forces or

     c) A person who has served in the regular forces or

   A person the Council is required by law to exempt from having to satisfy the local connection criteria, including the following:

   - Anyone who the Council is satisfied meets the criteria for a Right to Move as set out at paragraph 3(e) of Appendix 2: Scheme Bands at page 69.
   - Anyone who has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner where:

a) The spouse or civil partner served in the Regular Forces; and

b) Their death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service; or

- Anyone serving or who has served in the Reserve Forces and who is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to that service;
- A person who is an eligible child, a relevant child or a former relevant child:; An "eligible child" is defined as a child aged 16 or 17 who has been looked after by a local authority for a prescribed period. A “relevant child” is defined as a child of 16 or 17 who would have been an eligible child had they stayed in care but who leaves. A "former relevant child" is defined as someone who was previously a "relevant child" (as defined in the Children Act 1989) and is now aged 18 or older, but under 25. Specifically, this refers to a person who was in the care of a local authority on or after their 16th birthday for a period of at least 13 weeks;
- A person who is or has been a victim of domestic abuse carried out by another person, who needs to move for reasons connected with that abuse, including from accommodation initially occupied on a temporary basis or a person living in a refuge in the Council’s district. Each case will be assessed based on the circumstances of the case, will look at the options available and assess if a person is exempt to the local connection criteria;
- An Applicant who satisfies a Rural Connection Band. They will only qualify for the Rural Parish that they have the connection to.

or

ii. Employment

An Applicant or their Partner are currently employed and has been employed (whether it is for a fixed or permanent term or it is self-employment) for a period of at least 5 years continuously within the Council's district. See 9.7 'Employment'.

2. As part of the Council's verification process, Applicants will be required to submit documentary evidence to support local connection qualifying criteria.

C. Financial Assessment

1. All Applicants seeking to join the Register will be subject to a financial assessment. Only Applicants who have been assessed as lacking the income and/or assets to resolve their housing need will qualify to join the Register.

2. For Applicants who have an assessed extra care need who are seeking to join the Register, each case will be assessed on its own merits; however such an Applicant will be assessed as being able to resolve their own housing need if their level of income and/or assets enables them to secure, or make arrangements to secure, accommodation/support that would meet their assessed care needs (including in privately funded accommodation).

3. For all other Applicants, each case will be assessed on its own merits; however, an Applicant will be assessed as having the income and/or assets to enable them to resolve their own housing need if the level of income/assets which they have enables them to purchase a property on the open market.

4. In assessing whether an Applicant will be able to purchase a property on the open market, the following additional factors will be taken into consideration:

   a) The likely ability of the Applicants to qualify for and sustain a mortgage; consideration will be given to:

      i. The Applicant's age;

      ii. The Applicant's credit rating;

iii. Whether the Applicant has savings of at least the deposit needed for a property that meets their Household's needs;

iv. Whether their income is at a level to enable them to qualify for a mortgage.

v. The property type needed for the Applicant and their Household;

vi. Whether assets can be realised within a reasonable period of time.

5. In considering whether an Applicant can afford to purchase a property on the open market, the housing market of the Council's district as a whole will be considered and not only the Applicant's area of choice.

6. In assessing an Applicant's income and assets, the Council will have regard to the Applicants gross income and total assets save for the disregards listed at paragraph 7 below.

7. In assessing whether an Applicant has the income and/or capital assets to resolve their own housing need the following income and capital assets will be ignored:

a) Any lump sum received by a member of the Armed Forces where this is evidenced as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service; and

b) The following benefit income:

i. Disability Living Allowance;

ii. Personal Independence Payments; and

iii. Attendance Allowance

D. Deliberately Worsening Own Circumstances to Qualify onto the Register

1. An Applicant who has deliberately worsened their circumstances to be able to join the Register will be treated as a "non-qualifying" Applicant and will be unable to join the Register.

2. Each case will be determined on its individual facts; however, an Applicant will be deemed to have deliberately worsened their circumstances if they have acted in any of the following ways:

   The Applicant has:

   i. moved into accommodation which at the date of moving in was unsuitable for their Household's needs. In deciding whether the property was unsuitable at the point the Applicant moved in, the Council will take into consideration the property's condition (including disrepair and overcrowding issues), affordability and its location;

   ii. voluntarily given up accommodation that it was reasonable for the Applicant and their Household to continue to occupy without first securing suitable alternative accommodation;

   iii. taken deliberate action to cause accommodation to no longer be reasonable for them and their Household to continue to occupy; for example, causing damage to accommodation that results in accommodation becoming a risk to health.

3. In considering whether accommodation was reasonable for the Applicant and their Household to continue to occupy, the Council will take into consideration the guidance of the Secretary of State as set out in Chapter 6 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018

E. Unacceptable Behaviour Resulting in Being Unsuitable to be a Tenant

1. An Applicant whose unacceptable behaviour makes them unsuitable to be a tenant of the Council will be treated as a "non-qualifying" Applicant and will be unable to join the Register.

2. The Council will assess whether an Applicant is unsuitable to be a tenant because of their, or a member of their Households' behavioural issues; including anti-social behaviour or poor tenancy management.

3. An Applicant will normally be considered to be unsuitable to be a tenant if:

i. They have housing related debts:

- rent arrears of at least 8 weeks at their current or former address;
- court costs owed to the Council, or a former landlord, for possession or injunction proceedings that were issued against the Applicant;
- recharges owed to the Council for damage caused to one of the Council's properties, rent deposit payment or rent in advance.

Where an Applicant has made and sustained a repayment plan to settle the debt for a continuous period of 6 months the Applicant will not be treated as unsuitable to be a tenant.

Applicants who can demonstrate that they can manage their tenancies with support from an agency with whom they are engaging will not be treated as unsuitable to be tenants. Applicants will need to demonstrate this by providing supporting evidence from the support agency;

or

ii. Are guilty of Anti-Social Behaviour:

Where the Applicant:

- Has been found to have behaved in an anti-social manner by their current or former landlord, or by the Courts within 2 years of them submitting their application.

Anti-social behaviour will include any acts that interfere with a landlord's ability to carry out its management functions, nuisance, annoyance, violence against others and using a property for immoral purposes.

4. Each case will be determined on its individual facts and the Council will take into consideration the full circumstances of an Applicant's case when deciding whether an Applicant should be non-qualifying due to their behaviour; including, but not limited to, the reasons for the Applicant's behaviour and/or any steps that the Applicant has taken to address their issues.

Appendix 2 Scheme Bands

1. Band 1: Emergency Need to Move

Applicants will satisfy the criteria for Band 1 if they need to move on an emergency basis. There are very few cases that are likely to be placed in Band 1.

a) Management Move

Where a Service Manager has assessed an Applicant as having an exceptional need to move to ensure the best management of the Council or other landlord's housing stock. Applicants will be assessed as having an exceptional need to move if their need for housing is so urgent that they should take priority over all other Applicants. Each case will be determined on its own merits; however, the following will be placed in Band 1:

Those:

- Who need to move for community safety, for example re-housing under the Multi-Agency Protection Panel Arrangements (MAPPA) or Witness Protection scheme;
- Whose accommodation is unsuitable for their assessed medical needs and they are being discharged from hospital or who need to go into supported or sheltered housing;
- Major works, where a social housing tenant requires permanent rehousing because major works need to be carried out on their property;

- Are occupying a “high need” property, for example an adapted property where the Applicant no longer has a need for that type of accommodation;
- Where the Council has an urgent need to re-house an Applicant to meet statutory or other time limits, for example flexible tenants whose tenancy is due to expire and who need to be secured re-housing in alternative accommodation, under-occupying successors or Vulnerable Occupants in Council accommodation where the Council is rehousing them.

(b) Urgent health and/or wellbeing: Please refer to: Appendix 3: Health and Wellbeing Assessment at page 78.

(c) Emergency Disrepair: Please refer to: Appendix 4: Housing Conditions at page 83.

(d) Violence or Threats of Violence:

Where a Household, including existing social housing tenants, need to move because they are at risk of violence or serious harassment. An Applicant will only be placed in Band 1 for violence or threats of violence where a Housing Service Manager has assessed there is no other housing available (ie temporary accommodation, Sanctuary scheme, refuge) and where the risk cannot be managed in the Applicant’s current accommodation. Applicants who are at imminent risk of violence or threats of violence may be referred to the Council’s homelessness team for assessment under the Part VII of the Act.

A management move will only be made for neighbour problems or issues of anti-social behaviour, if there is a serious risk of physical or psychological harm to the Applicant due to anti-social behaviour. The Applicant will need to provide supporting evidence from appropriate agencies. It will also need to be shown that the landlord, or another appropriate agency, has tried all approaches to prevent such behaviour within their anti-social behaviour policy.

When an application has been placed in Band 1, the Housing Options team may take decisions on which property is suitable for them to bid for. The Housing Options team may also make bids on behalf of the Applicant or make a direct offer to increase the prospects of the Applicant securing rehousing; please refer to Automatic Bidding at paragraph 6.1.6 and Direct Offers at paragraph 6.3.2.

As Applicants who have been placed in Band 1 are in need of urgent re-housing, their circumstances will be kept under review to ensure that the Applicant is still entitled to Band 1. Applicants who fail to make bids where there has been a vacancy that meets their assessed needs may have their application moved into a lower Band. The Council will move an Applicant into a lower Band if the Applicant's reasons for failing to bid on a vacancy demonstrates that the Applicant does not have a genuine emergency need for re-housing.

2. Band 2: Serious Need to Move

(a) Accepted Full Housing Duty:

- Where an Applicant has been accepted as being owed the Full Housing Duty under Part VII of the Act and the Council has been assessed that discharge cannot be achieved by a Private Rented Sector Offer of accommodation.
- The Council will not be able to achieve a Private Rented Sector Offer discharge if the Applicant's circumstances prevent them from being able to secure or sustain a tenancy in the private sector due to vulnerability, property size required, affordability and/or where there is a lack of suitable private rented accommodation available with tenancies of at least 12 months.

- In considering whether a discharge with a Private Rented Sector Offer is achievable the Council will also take into consideration whether the Applicant would be able to sustain a tenancy with appropriate support and/or whether the Applicant's circumstances are likely to change within a reasonable period of time.

(b) Under-Occupying Social Housing by 2 or more bedrooms:

This will include Applicants who have had a change in Household membership or successors to a tenancy.

(c) Severely Overcrowded

- Where, in accordance with the Scheme's Bedroom Need Assessment, an Applicant lacks 2 or more bedrooms given the size of their Household; or
- Lacks 1 bedroom but has 2 children who lack a bedroom. This will include a single parent with 2 children where one is over 1 in a 1 bedroom house or a couple with 4 same sex children in a 2 bedroom house;
- Where the Council's has assessed the Household as a Category 1 hazard under the Housing Act 2004 due to overcrowding.

In assessing overcrowding the Council will treat a second lounge or dining room that is situated in the accommodation as a bedroom.

(d) High Health and/or Wellbeing: Please refer to Appendix 3: Health and Wellbeing Assessment at page 78.

(e) High State of Disrepair: Please refer to Appendix 4 Housing Conditions at page 83.

(f) Assessed Move On

Where an Applicant is in supported housing within the Council's district area and has been assessed as ready to move on. This will include young people leaving care who have been assessed by Children's Services as ready for independent living.

There is no standard definition of supported accommodation. The Council will determine whether accommodation is to be treated as supported accommodation for the purposes of the Scheme.

As Applicants who have been placed in Band 2 have a serious need for re-housing, their circumstances will be kept under review to ensure that the Applicant is still entitled to Band 2. Applicants who fail to make bids where there has been a vacancy that meets their assessed needs may have their application moved into a lower Band. The Council will move an Applicant into a lower Band if the Applicant's reasons for failing to bid on a vacancy demonstrates that the Applicant does not have a serious need for re-housing.

3. Band 3: Need to Move

(a) Overcrowded and lack 1 bedroom

Where in accordance with the Scheme's Bedroom Need Assessment, an Applicant lacks 1 bedroom given the size of their Household.

In assessing overcrowding the Council will treat a second lounge or dining room that is situated in the accommodation as a bedroom.

(b) Applicants that have been assessed as having medium health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstances: Please refer to Appendix 3: Health and Wellbeing Assessment at page 78.

(c) Any serving or former serving members of the Regular Forces, or their spouse or civil partner, stated below will have their Application placed in Band 3:

An Applicant who:

- Is a serving member in the Regular Forces and who is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service;
- Is a formerly serving member in the Regular Forces;

- has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of the Applicant's Partner who has served in the Regular Forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service, or
- is serving or has served in the Reserve Forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's services.

Any Applicant who satisfies the criteria listed above and who has an urgent need for rehousing will be given additional priority under the Scheme in Bands 1 or 2 as may be appropriate.

(d) Applicants that are homeless, to whom the Council owes a Relief or Prevention Duty under Part VII of the Act;

- An Applicant will be owed the Relief duty if the Council is satisfied that they are homeless and eligible for assistance as defined under Part VII of the Act. The duty will last for a minimum of 56 days; thereafter an Applicant whose homelessness has not been relieved will be able to remain in Band 3. However, if an Applicant is found to be owed the Full Housing Duty, they will be moved into Band 2 if a Private Rented Sector Offer discharge cannot be achieved or will remain in Band 3 if it can. An Applicant who is no longer homeless will be removed from the Register.

- An Applicant will be owed the Prevention Duty if the Council is satisfied that the Applicant is eligible for assistance and is threatened with homelessness within 56 days as defined under Part VII of the Act. If an Applicant's homelessness is not prevented within the 56 days, they may be owed the Relief Duty and will remain in Band 3. If however, their homelessness is prevented; their Application will be removed from the Register.

- If an Applicant who was owed either the Prevention or Relief Duty ceases to be threatened with homelessness or is no longer homeless, they will be removed from the Register, unless they have another Housing Need that qualifies them to remain on the Register. If this is the case the Applicant's circumstances will be re- assessed and they will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4.1 (b) above.

(e) Applicants who need to move under the Right to Move provisions:

This applies to existing social tenants who the Council is satisfied are seeking a transfer from another local authority district in England and who need to move because they:

- work in the Council's district; or
- have been made an offer of work in the Council's district and the Council is satisfied that the Applicant has a genuine intention of taking up the offer of work; and
- they would suffer hardship if they were not able to move to the Council's district.

In order to qualify under this heading, the Council must be satisfied that the work is not ancillary to work in another district, voluntary (in that it is undertaken for expenses only or no remuneration at all) or short-term or marginal in nature.

In determining whether an Applicant qualifies under this heading, the Council will take into consideration the following:

(i) Hardship:

- The distance and/or time taken to travel between work and home;
- The availability and affordability of transport, taking into account levels of earning;
- The nature of the work and whether similar opportunities are available closer to home;

- Other personal circumstances relating to the Applicant including: medical conditions or child care, which would be affected if the Applicant could not move.

ii) Qualifying work:

- Whether the work is regular or intermittent;
- The period of employment (for example a contract that is intended to last for less than 12 months will be considered short term);
- The number of hours worked (less than 16 hours per week will be considered marginal);
- Where the Applicant's main place of work is (if the Applicant main place of work is in a different local authority, even if the pattern of work in the Council's district is regular, the Applicant's work is to be considered ancillary to work in another district.);

(f) Are existing social landlord tenants under-occupying their accommodation by 1 bedroom

This will include Applicants who have had a change in Household membership or successors to a tenancy

(g) Have been assessed as not having a permanent home, or are at risk of becoming homeless and are not owed a duty under Part VII of the Act:

- This will include any Applicant who does not have a permanent address; including those who are staying with friend/relatives where it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy that accommodation, homeless Applicants that are not owed any duties under Part VII of the Act, those in hostels or occupying accommodation under a licence and Vulnerable Occupants of Council accommodation;

- Applicants occupying temporary accommodation within the Council's stock (other than under s.193(2) of the Act).

(h) Have been accepted as being owed the Full Housing Duty under Part VII of the Act and where it is possible to discharge duty with a Private Rented Sector Offer of accommodation:

This refers to any Applicant who is owed the Full Housing Duty but who has been assessed as being able to secure and sustain a tenancy in the private sector; including in relation to affordability and where there is suitable private sector accommodation available with at least a 12 month tenancy.

(i) Are key workers where the Council identifies that there is a critical need for the key worker to be rehoused to ensure the availability of an essential public service for the Council's community. Decisions as to whether a key-worker should be placed in this Band is reserved to a Service Manager.

4. Band 4: Lower Need to Move

(a) Where an Applicant has been assessed as having a lower health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstances; Please refer to Appendix 3: Health and Wellbeing Assessment at page 78.

(b) Where an Applicant has to share essential facilities with other Households or lack essential facilities in their accommodation.

- Essential facilities include: a toilet, bath, shower or kitchen.
- An Applicant's Household will be defined as set out at paragraph 5.3.

This will include Applicants who are lodging or renting a room in a shared house with communal facilities.

(c) Where an Applicant is sharing with relatives or friends, and it is reasonable for the Applicant to continue to occupy the accommodation; otherwise they will be placed in Band 3.

In considering whether accommodation is reasonable for the Applicant and their Household to continue to occupy, the Council will take into consideration the guidance of the Secretary of State as set out in Chapter 6 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018.

(d) Where an Applicant is living in supported accommodation where the Applicant has not been assessed as ready for move on from supported housing in the Council's district area.

There is no standard definition of supported accommodation. The Council will determine whether accommodation is to be treated as supported accommodation for the purposes of the Scheme.

(e) Applicants that are assured shorthold tenants in the private sector who do not have the financial means to purchase a property. Please refer to Appendix 1: Eligibility and Qualification on page 62.

(f) Applicants that have been assessed by the Council under Part VII of the Act as not in priority need or are intentionally homeless and are still statutory homeless at the point of offer.

(g) The Applicant will need to be statutory homeless at the point of any offer being made otherwise their application will be removed from the Register unless they have another Housing Need that qualifies them to remain on the Register. In which case their application will be re-assessed and given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4.1 (b). Applicants who have a Rural Parish Connection to a Rural Parish that they do not currently reside in.

Appendix 3 Health and Wellbeing Assessment

The health and/or welfare of an applicant or a member of their household will be assessed on the basis of the effect of their current housing circumstances on any condition.

To qualify for an award of priority the medical condition must meet both of the following criteria:

1. Be made worse by your present housing or home circumstances and
2. Must also be likely to be improved by moving to alternative accommodation.

If any health and/or welfare condition would remain the same if they were to move to alternative accommodation, they would not be awarded any additional priority. Depending on the circumstances, applicants will be expected to explore other Housing Options in the first instance to assist them resolving any issues that they may be experiencing to assist in reducing or relieving their housing need.

An assessment does not mean that an applicant's application will move into a higher band. For example, they may already be in Band 3 and if they are assessed as having a medium health and welfare need (Band 3) to move, they would remain in Band 3.

A health or welfare issue in this context means a physical or mental illness, disability or incapacity, including behavioural syndromes, problems of physical or mental development and disorders related to drugs and / or alcohol. The assessment is based on a holistic approach, which takes account of psychological and social factors alongside physical issues.

An Applicant who needs to move because their health and/or wellbeing is being affected by their housing or home circumstances will need to contact the Housing Options Team providing supporting information by emailing **housing.options@nfdc.gov.uk** The information will be assessed by the team and if appropriate will be presented to the Health and Welfare Panel for assessment.

Please see 10.1.2 Health and Welfare Panel for further details.

1. Health and wellbeing grounds **will not** be awarded in the following circumstances:
    a) Health problems that are not affected by housing or cannot be improved by housing;
    b) Housing defects that can be rectified (see also Appendix 4: Housing Conditions at page 83);

c) Neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour (if the issue cannot be resolved, the Applicant may be eligible for a management move, see paragraph 5.1 and Appendix: 2 Scheme Bands, paragraph 1(a) at page 67).

d) Homeless Households who have been provided with temporary accommodation (if an Applicant's temporary accommodation is affecting their health or wellbeing, they should seek a suitability review);

e) The disability or health issues of someone who is not a member of the Applicant's Household under the Scheme;

f) Time related medical issues (such as pregnancy related problems or a broken leg).

2. An Applicant who has been assessed as having a need to move on health and/or wellbeing grounds, will be placed in one of the 4 Bands (see paragraphs 5.1 above) depending on the assessed level of need. Applicants will normally only be placed in Band 1: Emergency or Band 2: Serious Need to Move if there is supporting evidence from a relevant health professional.

3. Applicants will be informed in writing of the outcome of their health and/or wellbeing assessment, and reasons explaining why the decision was made. If they disagree with the outcome, they have a right of review. Please refer to Request for a Review at 7.5 for the reviews process.

4. Each individual in an Applicant's Household will be assessed if they have a health or wellbeing issue. If more than 1 member of the household is affected by their housing, the Application will be assessed with reference to the Household member with the severest problem. Where an Applicant (or a Household member) has more than 1 health and wellbeing need (for example both mental and physical), an assessment will be made of whether the combination of these factors should result in the Application being placed in a higher band.

5. When considering whether to place an Applicant into one of the Bands for health and wellbeing, the Health and Welfare Panel will take into consideration the following factors:

   (a) Band 1: Urgent Health or Wellbeing Need

   Where the Applicant's accommodation is so unsuitable that should the Applicant remain or return to it the effect on their health would be critical. The only solution would be a move to alternative accommodation in the shortest time possible. Examples of when an Applicant might be placed in Band 1 include:

   - Where there is a significant threat to life;
   - Where there is a significant risk of serious and permanent disability;
   - Where someone cannot be discharged from hospital because their home is, and will remain permanently impossible to live in;
   - Where the Applicant requires essential equipment such as respiratory, which they are prevented from having due to the housing circumstances.

   (b) Band 2: High Health or Wellbeing Need

   Where the Applicant's accommodation is so unsuitable that it has resulted in the Applicant being completely housebound, at risk of injury, relapse or unable to live independently. Alternative housing is required to prevent serious risks to the Applicant's health and wellbeing. Examples of when an Applicant might be placed in Band 2 include:

   - Someone whose housing has rendered them housebound and where they have no support in place;

- Applicants who have escaped Domestic Abuse and who are being accommodated in a refuge or other temporary accommodation whose mental health has deteriorated as a consequence; there will be a need for not only GP but also active intervention from the Local Community Mental Health Team or Primary Care Network Multi-Disciplinary Team involvement.
- Where it is impossible for an Applicant to use essential facilities in the home and adaptation is not possible;
- An inability to cope is solely and directly linked to the housing situation and active intervention from the Local Community Mental Health Team or Primary Care Network Multi-Disciplinary Team involvement. or

(c) Band 3: Medium Health or Wellbeing Need

Where the Applicant's accommodation is unsuitable, and it is having an unacceptable impact on the Applicant's ability to live independently. Alternative housing is needed to prevent a deterioration in the Applicant's health and wellbeing. Examples of when an Applicant might be placed in Band 3 include:

- Someone who without the support that is in place would be housebound;
- Applicants who have escaped Domestic Abuse and who are being accommodated in a refuge or other temporary accommodation;
- Applicants who are able to access their home but are unable to access essential normal day-to- day facilities within it without significant difficulty, pain or discomfort;
- Applicants who suffer from a mental health issue which is exacerbated by their housing situation; normally there will be a need for not only GP but also active intervention from the Local Community Mental Health Team or Primary Care Network Multi-Disciplinary Team involvement.

(d) Band 4: Lower Health and Wellbeing Need

Where the Applicant's housing is unsuitable and is having a negative impact on the Applicant's health and wellbeing but is not causing serious deterioration to their health or ability to live independently, alternative housing would be beneficial. Examples of when an Applicant might be placed in Band 4 include:

- Mobility issues where the current housing is suitable but the location means the Applicant can access but with some difficulty, public transport and other services;
- Mental health where the location, environment around the home is a contributory factor. They may have been prescribed medication but are not in receipt of on-going support from their GP.

6. The above are examples of how assessments will be made and do not form an exhaustive list. A reference to the impact of health or wellbeing on an Applicant should be read as also referring to any member of the Applicant's Household. Each Application will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
7. Applicants who need to move to receive support or where a family member/carer needs to move to provide support to them will also be able to apply for a health and/or wellbeing need to move. If a family member/carer needs to move, they will have to join the Register and complete the Health and Wellbeing Assessment form. Their application will be placed in one of the 4 bands depending on the assessed need to move.

Appendix 4 Housing Condition

1. The Council's Home Health and Safety Surveyor, or an Environmental Health Officer may be asked to investigate the defects that are reported by an Applicant where the problem might lead to an award of Band 1 or Band 2 for housing condition.

2. Where housing defects exists, Applicants are expected to have already raised the problem with their landlord. This will have given the Applicant's landlord the opportunity to carry out the necessary improvements before involving the Council to take possible enforcement action. Applicants should be made fully aware that if an officer of the Council visits and identifies emergency or high disrepair it will be under an obligation to notify the landlord and where appropriate to take enforcement action under Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 ("the 2004 Act).

3. Applicants will be awarded Band 1 or Band 2 depending on the assessment carried out by the Council's Home Health and Safety Surveyor, or if appropriate, Environmental Health Officer following an inspection of the Applicant's property. Applicants will not be placed in Band 1 or Band 2 if remedial action is planned to rectify the issues. In such circumstances, and if it is necessary and appropriate, Applicants may be re-housed temporarily until any works are complete.

4. Applicants will only be placed in Band 1 or Band 2 if the housing condition inspection results in one of the actions stated in the table below being taken and where the Council's Home Health and Safety or Environmental Health Officer states that remedial action is not possible, or if possible, that it cannot be undertaken within a reasonable period of time.

5. In considering whether remedial action is possible within a reasonable period of time, the Council will take into consideration the time scales involved in having to take any enforcement action against a landlord who is failing to co-operate or undertake necessary works.

6. The table below sets out when Emergency and High Disrepair will be awarded:

Band	**Housing Condition Assessment**

Band 1 Emergency Disrepair	Where the Council's Home Health and Safety Surveyor, or where appropriate, an Environmental Health Officer, determines that the Council should serve a Demolition Order, Prohibition Order, Emergency Prohibition Order or carry out emergency remedial works under the 2004 Act.
Band 2 High Disrepair	Where the Council's Home Health and Safety Surveyor, or where appropriate an Environmental Health Officer, has assessed a property as suffering from either a Category 1 or 2 hazard as set out under Part 1 of the 2004 Act and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

7. An Applicants who has been awarded Emergency or High Disrepair will have their application periodically reviewed. An Applicant's Emergency or High Disrepair Banding will be removed if the disrepair is rectified. The Applicant's Emergency or High Disrepair Banding will also be removed if the Applicant is preventing the landlord from undertaking necessary works. An Applicant who is found to be behaving in this way may be removed from the Register, as no longer qualifying as they will be deemed to be someone who is deliberately worsening their circumstances to be able to join the Register (please see paragraph 4.4.1 and Appendix 1: Eligibility and Qualification above).
8. Any Applicant who has had their application removed or placed into a lower Band will be notified and will be able to seek a review of the decision. Please refer to paragraph 8.8 for the reviews process.

Appendix 5 Allocation of Garages

1. To be considered for a Council garage, applicants must be 18 years or older and submit an application to the Council on the appropriate form.
2. Garages are normally allocated on a date order basis from when the application form is received; however,
    - Preferences may be given to applicants living in the same street as the void garage;
    - Preference will be given to applicants who do not currently hold a Council garage tenancy over an applicant who already has a tenancy of 2 or more garages.
3. Applicants may not be allocated a garage if the applicant:
    - Owes former or current arrears on a Council property or garage;
    - Owes former or current recharges on a Council property or garage;
    - Owes any other housing related debt (i.e. court costs);
    - Has previously been evicted or has poor past payment history of a garage tenancy.
4. A review of the garage waiting list will be carried out at least once a year.
5. Succession of a garage may take place depending on a number of factors:
    - Demand in the area;
    - The successor tenant’s address;
    - Payment history.
6. Charities or non-profitable organisations are able to apply for a garage to be held on a free of charge basis. Only hard-to-let garages may be let free of charge (i.e. where there are 2 or more garages available to let in the same street and where there are no eligible applicants on the garage waiting list for them).

Appendix 6 Brief Summary of Statutory Provisions

1. The Act states an allocation of housing takes place when:
    - A person is selected to be a secure or introductory tenant of the Council or is nominated by the Council to be an assured tenant (including assured shorthold) of a private registered provider of social housing in the Council's district; or
    - When there is a transfer of housing accommodation where a Council or a private registered provider of social housing tenant is in a Reasonable Preference Group and the transfer was made on the tenant's Application.
2. The following do not constitute an allocation of housing:
    - A succession under the Housing Act 1985 (including for an introductory succession);
    - An assignment in accordance with the provisions of the Housing Act 1985 or to an introductory tenant;
    - A mutual exchange in accordance with the Housing Act 1985;
    - A transfer in accordance with s.158 of the Localism Act 2011;
    - A transfer of an existing social housing tenant where the tenant does not fall within the Reasonable Preference Group and the transfer is not instigated by the tenant's application;
    - An introductory tenant becoming a secure tenant.
3. The Act prohibits the Council from allocating housing accommodation other than in accordance with the provisions of its allocations policy.

This page is intentionally left blank

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

Equality Impact Analysis (EIA)

Introduction: The EIA it is an effective way of improving decision making, policy development and service delivery by making sure that managers consider the needs of all service users, the community and employees. It is also designed to identify potential steps to promote equality and good relations and avoid unintentional discrimination. Please ensure you read the guidelines before completing this form.

Guidance Notes

Policy/Procedure	Allocations Policy
Service	Housing Options and Tenancy Accounts
Business unit	Housing and Communities
Your name	Christopher Pope
Email	chris.pope@nfdc.gov.uk
Title	Service Manager
Service manager's name	Christopher Pope

If you would like your service manager to receive a copy of this form, please enter their email address.

Service manager email	chris.pope@nfdc.gov.uk
Date completed	26/11/2025

1. What is the overall purpose and aim of the policy/project/practice or service?

To allocate social housing for NFDC and registered social providers across the district.

2. What are the main aspects of the policy/project/practice or service where consideration of equality impacts and issues need to be incorporated?

1. Eligibility Criteria

Ensure that rules for joining the housing register do not indirectly discriminate against any protected group (e.g., residency requirements, income thresholds).
Consider exceptions for vulnerable groups such as refugees, victims of domestic abuse, or people with disabilities.

2. Priority Banding and Allocation Rules

How priority is assigned (e.g., medical needs, homelessness, overcrowding) must be fair and transparent.
Avoid criteria that disadvantage certain groups (e.g., requiring long local connection periods could impact migrants or minority ethnic groups).

3. Accessibility of Application Process

Digital-only applications may exclude older people, those with disabilities, or people with limited digital literacy.
Provide alternative formats (paper, telephone, in-person) and language support for non-English speakers.

4. Communication and Information

Ensure policy documents and guidance are clear, available in multiple languages, and accessible formats (large print, Braille, Easy Read).
Consider cultural sensitivities in communication.

5. Property Adaptations and Suitability

Allocation must account for disability-related needs (e.g., wheelchair access, adapted bathrooms).
Consider family size, cultural requirements, and safeguarding needs.

6. Monitoring and Data Collection

Collect and review data on allocations by protected characteristics to identify and address any disproportionate impacts.
Use equality monitoring to inform policy adjustments.

7. Consultation and Engagement

Engage with diverse communities, equality groups, and stakeholders during policy development.
Ensure voices of underrepresented groups are heard.

8. Staff Training and Decision-Making

Train staff on equality, unconscious bias, and safeguarding.
Ensure decision-making processes are consistent and compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

3. Relevance Assessment - which group(s) of people (if any), do you think will, or potentially can be, affected by this policy/project/practice or service? Please state your reasons.

1. People with Disabilities

Reason: They may require adapted properties or reasonable adjustments during the application process. Allocation rules must consider accessibility needs.

2. Older People

Reason: Older applicants may face digital exclusion if the process is online-only and may have specific housing requirements (e.g., sheltered accommodation).

3. Families with Children / Pregnant Women

Reason: Overcrowding and homelessness disproportionately affect families and those expecting a child, making them more reliant on social housing.

4. Victims of Domestic Abuse

Reason: Women and some men fleeing abuse often require urgent housing and priority allocation.

5. Ethnic Minority Groups and Refugees

Reason: Language barriers and cultural needs may affect understanding of the policy and access to housing services.

6. Low-Income Households

Reason: Social housing primarily serves those who cannot afford market rents, so economic disadvantage is a key factor.

7. LGBTQ+ Individuals

Reason: Risk of discrimination or harassment in housing situations; policy must ensure equal treatment and confidentiality.

8. People of Different Religions or Beliefs

Reason: Cultural or religious needs may influence housing preferences (e.g., proximity to places of worship).

Please indicate if you think the impact is none, low, medium or high?

Age	Sex	Religion or Belief	Disability	Race	Sexual Orientation	Marriage/Civil partnership	Gender reassignment	Maternity and Pregnancy
Low	None	Low	Low	None	Low	None	None	Low

This page is intentionally left blank

APPENDIX 3

ALLOCATION POLICY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	SECTION	PAGE
Part 1:	**Introduction**	4
1.	Purpose	4
2.	Aims and Objectives	5
3.	Statement of Choice	6
Part 2	**The Scheme**	6
4.	Joining the Register 4.3 Eligibility 4.4 Qualifying Applicants 4.5 Non Qualifying Applicants 4.6 Decisions Following Assessment of Eligibility and Qualification	6 6 6 7 7
5.	Processing Applications 5.1 Housing Need Assessment 5.2 Household 5.3 Bedroom Need Assessment 5.4 Band Start Date 5.5 Rural Connection Band 5.6 Areas of Choice 5.7 Acceptance onto the Register	7 7 11 11 13 13 15 16
6.	Choice Based Allocations Process 6.1 Managing Vacancies 6.2 Allocating Properties 6.3 Exceptions to the Choice Based Allocations Process 6.4 Other Allocation Processes	16 16 20 24 26
Part 3:	**Scheme Administration**	29
7.	Managing the Scheme 7.1 Decision Making 7.2 Medical and Welfare Panel 7.3 Updating Application Details 7.4 Suspension and Renewal 7.5 Right to Request a Review 7.6 Exercise of Discretion 7.7 Equality and Fair Allocations 7.8 Changes to the Scheme 7.9 Right to Information	29 29 30 30 31 34 35 35 35 36 36

	7.10 False Statements and Withholding Information	
	SECTION	**PAGE**
Part 3 (continued)	**Scheme Administration**	29
7.	Managing the Scheme 7.11 Data Protection 7.12 Contacting Housing Options	29 36 37
Appendices	Appendix 1: Definitions	38
	Appendix 2: Eligibility and Qualification	40
	Appendix 3: Scheme Bands	45
	Appendix 4: Health and Welfare Assessment	52
	Appendix 5: Housing Conditions	55
	Appendix 6: Allocation of Garages	57
	Appendix 7: Brief Summary of Statutory Provisions	58

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL: HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1. THE PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

1.1 The Housing Act 1996 ("the Act") Part VI as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011, requires all local authorities to have an allocation policy to determine the priorities and define the procedures that will be followed when allocating housing accommodation. This document sets out New Forest District Council's ("the Council") policy for the allocation of social housing accommodation in its district ("the Scheme"). The Scheme sets out details on how Applications will be assessed, processed and how decisions will be made.

1.2 In drafting the Scheme the Council has had regard to the following:

A. Statutes:

(i) The Act;
(ii) The Homelessness Act 2002;
(iii) The Housing Act 2004;
(iv) The Equality~~ies~~ Act 2010;
(v) The Localism Act 2011;
(vi) Homelessness Reduction Act 2017;~~,~~
~~**(vii)**~~ Domestic Abuse Act 2021~~DAA~~;
(vii) Data Protection Act 2018;
(viii) Children Act 1989

B. Regulations:

- Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulation 1997, SI 1997/483;
- Allocation of Housing (England) Regulations 2002; SI 2002/3264;
- Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006, SI 2006/1294;
- Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012; SI 2012/1869;
- Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012; SI 2012/2989
- Allocation for Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015 SI 2015/967
- The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England)(Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2018 SI 2018/1056~~730~~.
- The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility)(England)(Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations ~~2019~~ SI 2019/861
- The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Victims of Domestic Abuse and Care Leavers) (England) Regulations 2025.

- The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- UK-GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) 2021

C. Codes of Guidance:

(i) Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for ~~Local Authorities for l~~Local h~~H~~ousing Authorities in England ~~(DCLG, 2012)~~[MHCLG 2012]~~;~~

~~(i) Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local housing Authorities in England (2020, MHCLG) "the Code".~~

(ii) Providing Social Housing for Local People: Statutory Guidance on Social Housing Allocations for Local Authorities in England (DCLG, December 2013);

(iii) Right to Move: Statutory Guidance on Social Housing Allocations for Local Housing Authorities in England (DCLG, March 2015);

(iv) Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse ~~in Refuges or other Types of Temporary Accommodation~~ Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England ~~(MHCLG, November 2019) (MHCLG, November 2018)~~

(v) Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018.

~~(v)~~(vi) Improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces (MHCLG, 27 June 2020)

D. Consultation outcome with Applicants, residents in the Council's district and all Private Registered Providers of Social Housing ("PRPSH") and registered social landlords ("RSL") with whom the Council has nomination rights.

E. the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Tenancy Strategy

1.3 When drafting an allocation policy the Act requires that local authorities give reasonable preference to people with high levels of assessed housing need. The Act has determined that the following class of individuals should be given a reasonable preference. People who:

- are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII of the Act). This will include those who have been found to be homeless but not in priority need, who are owed the "Relief Duty" and who have been found to be intentionally homeless;
- are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section~~s~~. 190(2), 193(2), ~~192(2)~~ or 195(2) (or under ss. 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985); or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under s.192(3).
- are occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including any grounds relating to a disability); and

- need to move to a particular locality of the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others). (including applicants seeking to move under the Right to Move Regulations.

This group is collectively known as the "Reasonable Preference Group".

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHEME

2.1 The Council will allocate housing in a fair and transparent manner with the aim of using its scarce housing resources appropriately, and in particular to enable it to meet:

a. Its prevention and homelessness statutory duties;
b. the housing needs of those that are most vulnerable; and
c. its statutory obligations as set out in Part VI of the Act

2.2 The Council also aims to operate the Scheme so that it:

(a) Gives Applicants as much choice as possible and helps to create and maintain sustainable local communities;
(b) Promotes good standards of tenancy and financial management by tenants and prospective tenants and to assist in tackling anti-social behaviour; and
(c) To provide incentives for residents in the Council's district to undertake paid work and make a positive contribution to the local community.

3 STATEMENT OF CHOICE

3.1 The Council and its partner landlords are committed to giving Applicants for housing as much choice as possible as to where they wish to live. Under the Scheme, Applicants are normally able to apply for vacancies of individual properties which are advertised each week.

PART 2: THE SCHEME

4 JOINING THE HOUSING REGISTER

4.1 The Council operates a housing register ("the Register") which contains a list of people who have applied to the Council for housing. Anyone seeking social housing within the Council's district must make an Application to join the Register. This will normally be done by making an online Application on the Council's website. Only Applicants who are eligible and qualify for allocation of social housing will be able to join the Register.

4.2 All Applications to join the Register will be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Scheme as set out in the paragraphs below.

4.3 Eligibility

4.3.1 Certain people from abroad, including some subject to immigration control, are not eligible for an allocation of social housing. These are known as Restricted Persons. The government has set out those who are to be treated as ineligible for an allocation. For further details on eligibility, please refer to Appendix 2: Eligibility and Qualification at page 40.

4.4 Qualifying Applicants

4.4.1 Under the Act, the Council is entitled to set its own qualifying criteria to determine who should be considered for an allocation of housing.

4.4.2 Applicants will qualify to join the Register if they satisfy all 4 of the criteria listed below.

They:

(a) Are Over 16 years of age[1];
(b) Are in Housing Need; in that the Applicant's housing circumstances fall within one of the Scheme's Bands (see paragraph 5.1 Housing Need Assessment)
(c) Have been assessed as lacking the financial means to enable them to resolve their housing need; and
(d) Have a local connection to the Council's district.

4.5 Non Qualifying Applicants

4.5.1 Applicants who fall within the description of people below will not qualify to join the Register:

Applicants who:

(a) Fail to meet the qualifying criteria at paragraph 4.4.2 above;
(b) Are an owner-occupier (with the exception of those with a housing and assessed care need, who cannot resolve their own housing situation and have a need for extra-care or sheltered accommodation);
(c) Have deliberately worsened their circumstances to enable them to qualify onto the Register; or
(d) Are deemed to be guilty of unacceptable behaviour that is serious enough to make them unsuitable as tenants.

For further details of the qualifying criteria and non-qualifying Applicants, please refer to Appendix 2: Eligibility and Qualification at page 40.

4.6 Decisions Following Assessment of Eligibility and Qualification

4.6.1 Where a decision is made that an Applicant is either not eligible or non-qualifying they will be notified in writing of that decision and of their right to request a review. (See paragraph 7.5 for details of the reviews process.)

[1] Whilst Applicants aged 16 -17 will be able to join the Register, they will not be made an allocation of a property under the Scheme until they attain the age of 18.

5. PROCESSING APPLICATIONS

5.1 HOUSING NEED ASSESSMENT

5.1.1 The Council uses a banding system to prioritise Applications on the Register. The Scheme has 4 bands. With the exception as set out at paragraph 5.1.2 below, in order to qualify to join the Register an Applicant's Housing Need will have to fall within one of the Scheme's Bands.

5.1.2 Applicants, who satisfy a Rural Connection Band for a Rural Parish, will be assessed as being in Housing Need and are exempt from having to satisfy paragraph 5.1.1 above. Please refer to paragraph 5.5 Rural Connection Band.

5.1.3 The Scheme Bands:

The table below outlines in summary the criteria for each band:

BAND	CRITERIA
Band 1 – Emergency Need for Housing	Applicants: (a) Who require a management move: where the applicant has been assessed as having an exceptional need to move by a Service Manager~~Senior Officer~~. (b) Who have been assessed as having an urgent health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstances; (c) Whose accommodation has been assessed as being in a state of emergency disrepair and the hazards cannot be rectified within a reasonable timescale; or (d) Who need to move to escape violence or threats of violence, harassment ~~or a traumatic event in the home.~~

Band 2. Serious Need for Housing	Applicants: (a) Who have been accepted as being owed the full housing duty under the Act and where discharge of duty cannot be achieved by a Private Rented Sector Offer of accommodation; (b) Who are existing social housing tenants under-occupying by 2 or more bedrooms; (c) Who are severely overcrowded (e.g they lack 2 or more bedrooms, or have 2 children who lack a bedroom, such as a single parent with 2 children, where at least one of the children is over the age of 1 in a 1 bed home); (d) Who have been assessed as having a high health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstance; (e) Who live in a home assessed as being in a state of high disrepair and the disrepair cannot be rectified within reasonable timescales; or (f) Who have been assessed as ready to move on from supported housing in the Council's district area.
Band 3 – Need for Housing	Applicants who: (a) Are overcrowded and lack 1 bedroom; (b) Have been assessed as having medium health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstances; (c) Are certain serving, or former serving members of the regular forces, or their spouse or civil partner; (d) Are homeless, to whom the Council owes a Relief or Prevention Duty under Part VII of the Act; (e) Who need to move under the Right to Move provisions; (f) Are existing social landlord tenants under-occupying their accommodation by 1 bedroom;
Band 3 – Need for Housing (continued)	(g) Have been assessed as not having a permanent home, or are

	at risk of becoming homeless and are not owed a duty under (d) above; (h) Have been accepted as being owed the full housing duty under Part VII of the Act and where it is possible to discharge duty with a Private Rented Sector Offer of accommodation; or (i) Are key workers where the Council identifies that there is a critical need for the key worker to be rehoused to ensure the availability of an essential public service for the New Forest community.
Band 4 – Lower Need for Housing	Applicants who: (a) Have been assessed as having a lower health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstances; (b) Share essential facilities such as a toilet, bath, shower or kitchen with other households or lack essential facilities; (c) Are households sharing with relatives or friends; (d) Are occupants living in supported accommodation who have not been assessed as ready for move on from supported housing in the Council's area. (j) Are assured shorthold tenants who do not have the financial means to purchase a property (see Appendix 2: Eligibility and Qualification); or (k) Have been assessed under Part VII of the Act as not in priority need or are intentionally homeless and are still statutory homeless at the point of offer. ~~(k)~~(l) To move to a Rural Parish Connection area that you are not currently residing in.

Further details of the Housing Need Assessment can be found at Appendix 3: Scheme Bands on page 45.

5.2 HOUSEHOLD

5.2.1 The following individuals will form part of an Applicant's Household under the Scheme:

- The Applicant's Partner; or
- The Applicant's children/dependants aged 35 and under with whom the Applicant resides or with whom the Applicant might reasonably be expected to reside; or
- Household members with whom the Applicant resides or with whom the Applicant might reasonably be expected to reside.

5.2.2 In determining whether children/dependants/household members can reasonably be expected to reside with the Applicant the Council will take into consideration the following factors:

- Access to other suitable accommodation;
- Previous, current and likely future living arrangements;
- Evidence of membership to the Household (including whether the Applicant is in receipt of relevant benefits for the child/dependant);
- The impact on scarce housing resources on providing the Applicant with additional bedrooms.

Whilst court orders will be taken into consideration, they will not be determinative.

5.2.3 Applicants, who the Council has accepted require a carer to live with them will be allowed to include the carer as a member of their Household. In deciding whether a carer is required to live with an Applicant, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

- Whether there is an established need for live-in 24 hour care;
- The availability of supported or extra-care housing which may meet the Applicant's care needs;
- The Applicant's current, and likely future, living arrangements;
- The impact on scare housing resources on providing an additional bedroom to the Applicant.

5.3 THE BEDROOM NEED ASSESSMENT

5.3.1 Following the Housing Need Assessment the Council will assess the number of bedrooms that an Applicant is entitled to by looking at the size and structure of the Applicant's Household as set out at paragraph 5.2 above. This will establish the Applicant's Bedroom Need and the size of property that the Applicant will be able to bid for.

5.3.2 The Council's Bedroom Need Assessment has been set in line with current regulations affecting bedroom entitlement for the purposes of the Local Housing Allowance and Housing Benefit. It also reflects the bedroom entitlement that will be used for the purpose of assessing the housing component associated with rental liability within Universal Credit.

5.3.3 The Scheme's Bedroom Need Assessment is set as follows:

PROPERTY TYPE/SIZE	HOUSEHOLD
Bedsit	Single Applicant
1 Bedroom	Single Applicant or Applicants living as a couple with no children
2 Bedrooms	Single Applicant, or Applicants living as a couple, with 1 child; or Single Applicant, or Applicants living as a couple, with 2 children of: (a) The same sex under 16 (b) Opposite sex under 10
3 Bedrooms	Single Applicant, or Applicants living as a couple with 2 children, with at least 1 of opposite sex over 10; Single Applicant, or Applicants living as a couple, with 3 children or 4 children: (a) of the same sex under 16; (b) Two children of each sex under 16; or (c) of either sex all under 10
4 Bedrooms	Single Applicant, or Applicants living as a couple, with 5 or more children Single Applicant or Applicants living as a couple, with 4 children where at least one of them is aged 10 and is of the opposite sex of the others or one of them is aged 16 or over.

5.3.4 Pregnant Applicants or those Households with a pregnant member will not have their bedroom requirement reviewed until the baby is born and a copy of the birth certificate for the child has been received.

5.3.5 The Council reserves the right to assess an Applicant as being entitled to more or less bedrooms, provided this does not result in an overcrowding hazard, where this will lead to the effective management of its housing stock or where the circumstances justify the adjustment. This may apply where an Applicant cannot share a bedroom with their Partner due to their disability.

5.3.6 If an Applicant has been recommended by Children's Services as suitable to foster or adopt one or more children, but requires additional bedroom(s) in order to be able to adopt or foster, the Applicant will be considered for an additional bedroom. When conducting the Bedroom Need Assessment for prospective foster carers or adopters who state that they need additional bedrooms for their application to foster or adopt to be successful, the Council will consider the risk that the application to foster or adopt may not be successful against the wider benefits which would be realised if a placement was successful. This may mean contacting Children's Services to determine how the lack of the additional bedroom will affect the prospective carer's or adopter's application to foster or adopt.

5.4 BAND START DATE

5.4.1 The Band Start Date records the date that an Applicant is deemed to have joined the Register. The Band Start Date will be determined as follows:

(a) New Applications:

The Band Start Date will be the date that the last proof was received to enable the team to assess and verify the application and place into a Housing Need Band. ~~the Application is processed and placed into a Band~~.

(b) Existing Applicants:

(i) If an existing Applicant's Housing Need has been re-assessed due to a change in circumstance, their Band Start Date will be as follows:

REASSESSMENT OUTCOME	BAND START DATE
Move into a higher band	Date of Re-assessment - The Band Start Date will be the date that the last proof was received to enable the team to assess and verify the application and place into a Housing Need Band
Moved into a lower band	Retain original Band Start Date
Remain in same band (including for a different housing need)	Retain original Band Start Date

~~(ii) Transitional Arrangement: Applicants who were registered on the Council's Homesearch Allocation Scheme 2 prior to the adoption of the Scheme will be able to keep as their Band Start Date the date of their application under the Homesearch Allocation Scheme 2. Where there has been a change in their Housing Need since their original application under the Homesearch Allocation Scheme 2, their Housing Need will be re-assessed and a new Band Start Date given in accordance with paragraph 5.4.1 (b)(i) above.~~

5.4.2 Homeless Applicants who are owed the Full Housing Duty under the Act and are placed in Band 2 following the Housing Need Assessment will have the date the Council made the decision on the duty owed to them as their Band Start Date.

5.5 RURAL CONNECTION BAND

5.5.1 Some of the Council's social housing is located in Rural Parishes. The Council believes these properties should be allocated so as to ensure that:

- Rural communities are supported in a sustainable way wherever possible; and

- People that are deemed to satisfy a Rural Connection Band to the Rural Parish are given priority in the allocation of vacancies.

5.5.2 Accordingly, Applicants who wish to be considered for an allocation of a property in a Rural Parish will need to satisfy one of the Rural Connection Band criteria as set out below. For a list of the Rural Parishes please refer to paragraph 5.6.3 (Areas of Choice).

RURAL CONNECTION BAND	CRITERIA
Band A	Applicants who live or are currently in Employment in the Rural Parish and have been so for longer than 10 years or who have lived in the Rural Parish for longer than 10 years previously or a designated key-worker performing an essential service for the Rural Parish community where there is an established need for the Applicant to be rehoused to maintain the service.
Band B	Applicants who live or are currently in Employment in the Rural Parish and have done so for longer than 5 years, or who have lived in the Rural Parish for more than 5 years within the last 15 years, or whose parents, siblings or adult children live in the Rural Parish and have done so for 10 years or longer.
Band C	Applicants who live or are currently in Employment in the Rural Parish and have done so for longer than 2 years, or who have lived in the Rural Parish for more than 2 years within the last 15 years or whose parents, siblings or adult children live in the Rural Parish and have done so for 5 years or more.

5.5.3 Applicants who do not satisfy any of the Rural Connection Band criteria will only be eligible for an allocation of a property in a Rural Parish in the circumstances set out at paragraph 6.2.1.4 (d).

5.5.4 Where an Applicant has been placed in temporary accommodation situated in a Rural Parish the time spent in the Rural Parish will not count towards satisfying a Rural Connection Band. However, if the Applicant has established a longstanding connection with the Rural Parish during their occupation and has made a significant contribution to the local community, then they may be considered to have a Rural Connection Band. Any decision to allow the time spent in temporary accommodation to be taken into consideration when assessing Rural Connection Band is reserved to a Service Manager~~Senior Officer~~.

5.6 AREAS OF CHOICE

5.6.1 For administrative and management purposes, when Applicants join the Register they will be asked to stipulate which areas they would like to be housed in.

5.6.2 The areas listed below are available for selection by all Applicants on the Register:

AREA
Ashley
Blackfield and Langley
Calmore
Calshot
Dibden and Dibden Purlieu
Eling
Fawley
Fordingbridge
Holbury and Hardley
Hythe
Lymington
Marchwood
New Milton
Pennington
Ringwood
Totton
Walkford / Hinton Admiral

5.6.3 The areas listed below are Rural Parishes. Please refer to paragraph 5.5 Rural Connection Band at pages 13 – 14.

RURAL PARISH	RURAL PARISH
Ashurst/Colbury	Minstead
Beaulieu	Netley Marsh/Woodlands
Boldre/Pilley/Norley Wood	Rockbourne
Bransgore/Sopley	Sandleheath
Breamore	Sway
Brockenhurst	Whitsbury
Brook/Bramshaw	Woodgreen
Burley	
Copythorne/Bartley	
Damerham	
Denny Lodge	
East Boldre/East End	
Ellingham/Harbridge/Ibsley	
Exbury/Lepe	
Godshill	
Hale	
Hordle	
Hyde	
Lyndhurst	
Martin	
Milford on Sea	

5.7 ACCEPTANCE ONTO THE REGISTER

5.7.1 Once all information has been received from an Applicant, and where appropriate supporting agencies, the Applicant will be notified in writing of the following:

- Their Band Start Date;
- The Band in which their Application has been placed;
- Their reference number to be used for bidding;
- Their assessed Bedroom Need;
- A summary of the Scheme

5.7.2 If further information is required, the Applicant will be contacted in writing and will be asked to provide the information necessary to assess their Application. Any Applicant who does not provide the requested information within 28 days, or where the Application was made on-line, who fails to submit supporting documents within 28 days, will be assumed to no longer require housing and their Application will be treated as abandoned. Their Application will not be processed further.

6. THE CHOICE BASED ALLOCATION PROCESS

6.1 MANAGING VACANCIES

6.1.1 All vacancies will be let under the following choice-based allocation process unless they have specifically been excluded, please see paragraph 6.3 below.

6.1.2 Labelling Properties

6.1.2.1 The Council will set parameters on which type of Households can apply for vacancies. As part of the labelling process full details of each vacancy will be provided and will include the following:

- Type of property;
- Street location;
- Rent, and if appropriate, service charge payable;
- Access to the property (including wheelchair adapted);
- Landlord;
- Number of bedrooms and permitted numbers of occupants (with reference to the Bedroom Need Assessment);
- Specific requirements as specified by the landlord;
- Where appropriate, the Household type that will be given preference;
- Whether or not pets are allowed.

6.1.2.2 In addition to the above, other circumstances may apply which require particular labelling of properties, schemes or estates. The examples below are for illustrative purposes only and are not exhaustive:

- Where the Council is able to create vacancies within the affordable stock in its district which could increase the number of available homes, then properties may be labelled so that preference is given to Transfer Applicants.
- Where a property is adapted for disabled use or where it has been provided for a specific purpose, such as supported accommodation, it will be labelled for Applicants who require adapted or supported accommodation.
- Where a property is situated in an Age Restricted Scheme, it will be labelled for Applicants that satisfy the age restriction of the scheme.
- If there is a planning requirement for a scheme (ie s.106 agreements), vacancies in that scheme will be labelled according to the planning requirements. Similarly, if a scheme has been developed with a specific Applicant group then the labelling will reflect this.
- Where the vacancy is in a Rural Parish the labelling will require that the Applicant has been awarded a Rural Connection Band to the Rural Parish.
- If there is an established need for designated key-workers to be re-housed to ensure the availability of a critical public service within the Council's district area and a Service Manager~~Senior Officer~~ has determined that this need takes priority over other housing needs within the Council's district, the vacancy will be labelled to give key-workers who are able to provide that service a preference.
- If it is known that there are a large number of Applicants who are in Bands 1-2 or with a particular need for a vacancy, the labelling of the property may be more specific to reduce the number of Applicants who can bid for the vacancy.
- Where the Council is seeking to reduce the numbers of homeless Households in temporary accommodation, a vacancy may be labelled with a preference for those Households who have been accepted as homeless.
- Where sensitive allocations are required because of the needs of other vulnerable or elderly tenants, labelling may stipulate that the successful Applicant needs to be able to demonstrate that they will be able to manage a tenancy successfully.

6.1.3 Advertising

6.1.3.1 Unless excluded from the lettings process, all properties will be advertised to provide Applicants with the best possible chance of exercising choice. Applicants will find vacancies advertised on the Council's website. Where a property is for a specific Applicant group who require support contact may be made (as far as resources allow) to ensure that this group are able to bid for the vacancy.

6.1.3.2 The advert will be labelled as set out at paragraphs 6.1.2.1 and 6.1.2.2 above.

6.1.3.3 Each property will normally be advertised for a period of 5 days. Where a property has not attracted any bids and/or bids from Applicants that satisfy the labelling criteria for the vacancy, it may be re-advertised to increase the number of Applicants who can bid for the vacancy.

6.1.4 Applying for Vacancies

6.1.4.1 Interested Applicants will be able to bid for a vacancy electronically by placing a bid via their Council website account before the advert expiry date. Applicants are entitled to bid for a maximum of 3 vacancies each week.

6.1.5 Assisted Bidding

6.1.5.1 Where an Applicant requires assistance in bidding for vacancies, because the Applicant is vulnerable or where there is a language barrier, then the Housing Options team may assist the Applicant to bid for vacancies or refer the Applicant to an agency that will be able to assist the Applicant to do so. Applicants will be asked during the application process if they require assistance and if they wish the Housing Options team to manage their bids on their behalf. The Housing Options team will assess whether the Applicant meets the criteria for Assisted Bidding.

6.1.5.2 Where an Applicant qualifies for Assisted Bidding, the Housing Options team will only make bids on behalf of the Applicant if the vacancy meets the Applicant's preferences and Bedroom Need. Applicants can also ask for assistance with bidding at any time by contacting the Housing Options team or through contact from an agency. Where appropriate the Housing Options team may also enquire whether an Applicant requires assistance following a review of an Applicant's bidding history.

6.1.5.3 An Applicant will only be assisted with making their bids if they are unable to do so because of vulnerability or because there is a language barrier. Where appropriate, Applicants will be encouraged to access facilities at the Council's offices, use family/friends or the library to access the website to place bids.

6.1.6 Automatic Bidding

6.1.6.1 To increase the prospects of re-housing Applicants, the Council may make bids on behalf of some Applicants on the Register.

6.1.6.2 The Housing Options team will only bid on vacancies that are suitable for the Applicant's Household and that the Applicant has the best chance of securing. Whilst consideration will be given to the Applicants preferences, the overriding consideration will be the effective management of the social housing stock, or where appropriate, the duty to move on Homeless Applicants to more settled housing solutions. In some cases the Housing Options team may encourage an Applicant to increase their preferences to maximise their prospects of being rehoused.

6.1.6.3 The Housing Options team will normally bid on behalf of the following Applicants:

- Applicants in Band 1;
- Homeless Applicants in Band 2 or in Band 3 who are owed the Relief or Prevention Duty;
- Band 2: Under-occupying by 2 bedrooms;
- Band 3: Under-occupying by 1 bedroom

6.1.6.4 The Housing Options team will bid on behalf of an Applicant if the Applicant has failed to bid for suitable properties that have become available in a 6 month period and/or where the bidding history of the Applicant shows they have not made sufficient bids for properties having regard to the number of suitable properties that have become available in a 6 month period. The Housing Options team may also bid on properties where it would assist in the effective management of the Council's housing stock.

6.1.6.5 Where a bid made on behalf of an Applicant is successful, the Applicant will be made an offer of the accommodation secured by the automatic bid.

6.1.6.6 Homeless Applicants:

- The Applicant will be advised that the offer is made in discharge of the duty owed to them as a Homeless Applicant and the consequences of refusal. They will be notified of their right to request a review of the suitability of the offer and that this right is available whether they accept or refuse the offer.
- If the Applicant refuses the offer and lodges an unsuccessful suitability review, or fails to lodge a review request at all, their Application will be suspended for a period of 6 months. The Council will discharge the homeless duty. Following the period of suspension, if the Applicant still wishes to remain on the Register, the Application will be reinstated to Band 3 and will retain the same Band Start Date. However, if there has been a change in circumstance the Application will be re-assessed and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4 above.

6.1.6.7 Other Applicants

- The Applicant will be notified of their right to request a review of the suitability of the offer and that they can request a review whether or not they accept the offer. If within a 12 month period, an Applicant refuses two offers of accommodation that are deemed suitable following a review, or where no suitability review was lodged, their Application will be suspended for a period of 6 months. Applicants who fail to respond to an offer will be treated as though they had refused the offer. Following the period of suspension, if the Applicant still wishes to remain on the Register, the Application will be reinstated to Band 3 and will retain the same Band Start Date. However, if there has been a change in circumstance the Application will be re-assessed and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4 above.

6.1.6.8 If the Applicant accepts the offer but lodges an unsuccessful suitability review, or does not lodge a suitability review at all, their Application will be removed from the Register.

6.1.6.9 An Applicant whose Application has been suspended, has been placed in a lower Band or removed from the Register, will be notified of this decision and of their right to request a review of it; please see paragraph 7.5 for details of the reviews process. The Applicant will be entitled to re-apply to join the Register or seek higher banding if their circumstances change, or have changed, since the decision was made.

6.2 ALLOCATING PROPERTIES

6.2.1 Selection Procedure

6.2.1.1 Once the time limit for placing bids on an advert has expired, the bids for a vacancy will be considered. Any bids placed after the time limit has expired will be excluded from consideration.

6.2.1.2 Applicants who do not meet the labelling criteria of the vacancy will be excluded from consideration. Where the advert for the vacancy specified Households who would be given a preference for the vacancy, the Applicants who satisfy the preferences will be considered before those Applicants who do not. Applications will then be prioritised.

6.2.1.3 Prioritisation Generally

a) First, by their Band, for example all Applicants in Band 1 will be listed above all Applicants in Bands 2, those in Band 2 will be listed above all those in Band 3 and so on.
b) Then, by the Band Start date; with the Applicant with the earliest Band Start Date and highest Band at the top.

The vacancy will be allocated to the Applicant who is at the top following the above prioritisation.

6.2.1.4 Prioritisation – Rural Parishes

a) Applicants will be prioritised with reference to the strength of their connection with the Rural Parish and Band as follows:

Order of Prioritisation	**Rural Connection Band (RCB) and Housing Need Band**
1.	RCB A with a Band 1 Housing Need
2.	RCB A with a Band 2 Housing Need
3.	~~RCB A or~~ RCB A with Band 3 or Band 4 Housing Need
4.	RCB B with a Band 1 Housing Need
5.	RCB B with a Band 2 Housing Need
6.	~~RCB B or~~ RCB B with Band 3 or Band 4 Housing Need
7.	RCB C with a Band 1 Housing Need
8.	RCB C with a Band 2 Housing Need
9.	~~RCB C or~~ RCB C with Band 3 or Band 4 Housing Need

b) Applicants who fall within 3, 6 and 9 in the table above will be treated equally within their grouping. Applicants will then be prioritised by Band Start Date. The vacancy will be allocated to the Applicant with the earliest Band Start Date at the top following prioritisation in accordance with the table at 6.2.1.4 (a) above.

c) Where the vacancy is in a Rural Parish and no bids are received from an Applicant with a Rural Connection Band for that Rural Parish, the Council will

re-advertise the vacancy and set new labelling criteria to increase the prospects of the vacancy going to an Applicant with a Rural Connection Band for the Rural Parish. In re-advertising the ~~vacancy~~vacancy, the Council may change the labelling criteria to allow under or over-occupation. However, the Council will only allocate a vacancy to an under-occupier if affordability will not be an issue and to an over occupier where it will not result in a Category 1 Hazard. If the vacancy can still not be filled, the Council will increase the geographical area to allow bids from nearby Rural Parishes and will also consider labelling the vacancy to allow—for over or under-occupation (subject to affordability and avoiding Category 1 Hazard).

d) If a vacancy in a Rural Parish is still not filled after re-advertising it as above, the vacancy will be made available to the whole district.

6.2.1.5 Following Prioritisation

a) If after the Applications have been prioritised as set out in paragraphs 6.2.1.3 or 6.2.1.4, there are two or more Applicants at the top of the list, the Council will carry out an assessment of the Applicants' circumstances to determine who has the greatest Housing Need for the particular vacancy. This may include taking into consideration whether an Applicant has more than one Housing Need, the size of the Household and its make-up to ensure the best use of the property.

b) If an Applicant confirms that they wish to be considered for a vacancy they will not be able to bid on any other vacancies whilst they are being considered. Any open bids that the Applicant has for other vacancies will be ignored during the period of consideration.

c) If an Applicant is the successful bidder for more than one vacancy they will have to choose which vacancy they want to be considered for. In order to ensure effective management of the Register, Applicants will not be able to be considered for more than one vacancy at any one time.

d) If an Applicant is made an offer of a vacancy they will normally have 24 hours in which to make a decision. If the Applicant needs more time and/or support to make the decision, they will need to notify the Housing Options team within 24 hours of the offer being made. Subject to consent having been given and/or appropriate data sharing agreements being in place, if the Council is aware that the Applicant is receiving support from a support agency, the support agency will be notified when the Applicant is made an offer of a vacancy.

6.2.2 Special Allocations

6.2.2.1 Sensitive Lettings

a) Occasionally, there will be a need to assist in dealing with issues that impact on a small, specific location to reduce the concentration of certain needs groups which is impacting on housing management; or to promote a more balanced community by seeking to select or exclude certain Households with particular characteristics.

b) Where appropriate, this may be requested by a partner landlord; for example where a previous tenant had caused anti-social behaviour and it was deemed important to get the right mix of tenants in the area having regard to the needs of existing vulnerable or elderly tenants.

c) The Council, and if appropriate, the partner landlord, may agree that an Applicant who has come top following prioritisation is not the most suitable and reserves the right to overlook the Applicant and make the offer to the next suitable Applicant.

d) As indicated above, where a vacancy is a sensitive let, it will be clearly labelled as such. Where there is more than one property in an area that is affected this will be set out in an agreed Local Lettings Policy.

6.2.2.2 Age Restricted Schemes

a) Some of the Council's vacancies are situated in Age Restricted Schemes. Applicants will only be able to bid for these vacancies if they meet the age restriction criteria. Any such vacancy will be clearly labelled as an Age Restricted Scheme.

b) To ensure the effective management of the Council's housing stock, the Council reserves the right to increase or reduce the number of Age Restricted Schemes or alter the age restrictions as may be deemed appropriate; the decision to do so is reserved to a Service Manager~~Senior Officer~~.

6.2.2.3 Incentive to Work

a) Local authorities are encouraged to consider how they can support those Households who want to work, as well as those who, while unable to engage in paid work, are contributing to their communities in other ways, for example voluntary work.[2]

b) In order to provide incentives for Applicants to work or make a positive contribution to the local community, a percentage of all general needs housing will be advertised so that a preference is given to Applicants, who are currently in Employment or who are currently making a contribution to their community, for example by voluntary work. A decision as to whether an Applicant is making a contribution to their community, for example by voluntary work, is reserved to a Service Manager~~Senior Officer~~. The following factors will be considered; time spent carrying out the role/task contribution, frequency, an individual's ability and how long they have been carrying out the role/task contribution. The annual percentage will be set between 10 – 20%.

c) The incentive to work provisions will be regularly monitored to ensure that the Council is complying with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

6.2.2.4 Local Letting Policies

[2]Paragraph 4.27 of the Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Housing Authorities in England.

a) The Act allows the Council to adopt Local Letting Policies. This allows the Council to allocate housing to a specific group of people, whether or not they come within the Reasonable Preference Group. In setting Local Lettings Policies, the Council has to ensure it complies with its duty under the Equality Act 2010 not to discriminate, directly or indirectly, against any groups who have a protected characteristic and it needs to ensure that overall it has regard to its statutory duties to those in the Reasonable Preference Group.

b) Local Lettings Policies will be used to ensure a mixed and balanced community. When agreed, these Local Lettings Policies will have their own specific allocation criteria. Properties that are subject to a Local Lettings Policy will be clearly labelled in the advert.

c) A Local Lettings Policy may be applied in addition to any local planning restrictions that may be contained in an agreement made under s.106 of the Town and Country Planning Act.

6.2.3 Verification of Applications

6.2.3.1 The Council will undertake verification of all the relevant information provided by the Applicant. The verification of information includes obtaining evidence to confirm details given about the Applicant's family and housing situation.

6.2.3.2 The verification of information may be undertaken when the Application is received and will always be undertaken at the point of allocation.

6.2.3.3 Where the vacancy is with a partner landlord, for example a housing association, further verification, in accordance with the landlord's own verification processes and policy may be undertaken by the landlord. The landlord may also have additional qualifying criteria; particularly around affordability. Applicants will have to satisfy both the partner landlord and the Scheme's qualification criteria at verification to be made an allocation of the vacancy.

6.2.3.4 Verification will also include the gathering of information on suitability to be a tenant. If it becomes clear at the verification stage that an Applicant has demonstrated behaviour which may make them unsuitable to be a tenant (please refer to Appendix 2: Eligibility and Qualification at page 40 for further details) then they will not be offered the tenancy. The Applicant's banding and/or qualification to be on the Register will be re-assessed due to information obtained during the verification process. This may result in an Applicant being moved into a lower Band or being removed from the Register. If an Applicant is overlooked for an allocation at the verification stage, the next suitable Applicant who came below the overlooked Applicant following prioritisation will be considered for the vacancy.

6.2.3.5 If following verification it is established that the property is not suitable for the Applicant, the Council reserves the right to prevent an offer of a property being progressed. If this happens, the next suitable Applicant who came below the overlooked Applicant following prioritisation will be considered for the vacancy.

6.2.3.6 The local ward member will be notified of an allocation of a vacancy in their Rural Parish.[3]

6.2.3.7 If it is not possible to complete verification of the Application within a reasonable period of time due to the Applicant's refusal to co-operate or because the Applicant is unable to provide the information needed to complete the verification process, the Applicant may be overlooked and the Applicant who came below the overlooked Applicant following prioritisation will be contacted.

6.2.3.8 Where following the verification process, an Applicant has been moved into another Band or has been removed from the Register, they will be advised of the reasons in writing. They will be notified of their right to request a review of the decision; please refer to paragraph 7.5 for further details of the reviews process.

6.2.3.9 Once the verification process has been completed, the Council, or the landlord, will contact the successful Applicant to make a provisional offer of a tenancy to them.

6.2.4 Publishing Details of the Allocation

6.2.4.1 Feedback on allocations provides Applicants with information to exercise choice and to gain information on the likely waiting time for re-housing. Details of the allocation will be published on the Council's website as soon as possible. Whilst the successful Applicant's name will not be published, their Band and the length of time they have been on the Register will be published.

6.3 EXCEPTIONS TO THE CHOICE BASED ALLOCATIONS PROCESS

6.3.1 Allocations Excluded From the Choice Based Allocations Process

6.3.1.1 Whilst most allocations will be managed through the choice-based allocations process, there will be some circumstances when it will be necessary to exclude certain vacancies.

6.3.1.2 Examples of the allocations that may be excluded from the ~~choice based~~choice-based allocations process are:

- Management moves (carried out by the Council or housing association to assist in the good management of tenancies and its stock);
- Vacancies in Age Restricted Schemes, adapted properties or sensitive lets where no bids have been received from Applicants that satisfy the labelling criteria.
- For community safety, for example re-housing under the Multi-Agency Protection Panel Arrangements (MAPPA) or Witness Protection scheme;
- Where supported housing or extra care housing is being allocated;

[3] In accordance with Regulation 3 of the Allocations of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997 SI 483, elected members of the Council may not be involved in allocation decisions where the accommodation to be allocated, or the Applicant's sole or main residence, is in the member's ward.

- Where a Homeless Applicant is occupying a Council property on a non-secure basis and the property they are occupying is suitable for their needs;
- Where arrangements are in place for partner landlords to provide less than 100% of their properties for allocation.

6.3.1.3 Where an allocation has been excluded from the choice based allocations process, the Council will make an allocation of the vacancy to an Applicant who has not bid for it. This is known as a direct offer.

6.3.2 Direct Offers

6.3.2.1 The Council may make direct offers to the following:

- Applicants in Bands 1 and 2;
- Applicants being discharged from hospital or needing to go into supported or sheltered housing;
- Flexible tenants whose tenancy is due to, or has, expired and they have been assessed as having a continuing housing need but for alternative accommodation;
- Homeless Applicants occupying temporary accommodation that is suitable for their needs;
- Successors under-occupying their property or Vulnerable Occupants of Council accommodation where a decision has been made to allow them to remain in the property or to give them a tenancy of an alternative property;
- Remaining Vulnerable Occupants of Council accommodation on termination of a joint tenancy where a decision has been made to allow them to remain in that property or to give them a tenancy of an alternative property;
- Applicants needing specially adapted properties, properties in an Age Restricted Scheme or sensitive lets;
- Applicants requiring a management move or who require rehousing under MAPPA or Witness Protection scheme.

6.3.2.2 Any direct offer will meet the Applicant's assessed needs and should be suitable for the Applicant's Household.

6.3.2.3 Homeless Applicants:

- The Applicant will be advised that the offer is made in discharge of the duty owed to them as a Homeless Applicant and the consequences of refusal. They will be notified of their right to request a review of the suitability of the offer and that this right is available whether they accept or refuse the offer.
- If an Applicant refuses the offer and lodges an unsuccessful suitability review, or fails to lodge a review request at all, their Application will be suspended for a period of 6 months. The Council will discharge the homeless duty. Following the period of suspension, if the Applicant still wishes to remain on the Register, the Application will be reinstated to Band 3 and will retain the same Band Start Date. However, if

there has been a change in circumstance the Application will be re-assessed and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4 above.

6.3.2.4 Other Applicants:

- When Applicants are made an offer, they will be notified of their right to request a review of the suitability of the offer and that this right is available whether they accept or refuse the offer. If an Applicant refuses 2 offers of accommodation that are deemed suitable following a review, or where no suitability review is lodged, within a 12 month period, their Application will be suspended for 6 months. Applicants who fail to respond to an offer will be treated as though they had refused the offer. Following the period of suspension, if the Applicant still wishes to remain on the Register, the Application will be reinstated to Band 3 and will retain the same Band Start Date. However, if there has been a change in circumstance the Applicant will be re-assessed and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4 above.

6.3.2.5 If an Applicant accepts an offer and lodges an unsuccessful suitability review, or does not lodge a suitability review at all, their Application will be removed from the Register.

6.3.2.6 An Applicant whose Application has been suspended, moved to a lower Band or been removed from the Register will be notified of this decision and of their right to request a review of it, please see paragraph 7.5 for details of the reviews process.

6.3.2.7 To ensure transparency and fairness, decisions to exclude allocations from the choice based allocations process and make a direct offer will be monitored to ensure that the decisions to do so are being properly exercised within limited boundaries.

6.4 OTHER ALLOCATION PROCESSES

6.4.1 A number of allocation processes do not constitute an allocation under the Act and operate outside of the normal allocation processes of the Scheme. This includes vacancies being let as temporary accommodation to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness or decants whilst repairs are undertaken.

6.4.2 Allocation of Temporary Housing

6.4.2.1 For allocations of temporary housing to homeless people or to prevent homelessness direct allocations will be made by the Homelessness and Housing Advice Officers.

6.4.2.2 The main aims of allocating temporary housing are to resolve homelessness, meet statutory requirements and to minimise the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

6.4.2.3 There are a number of situations in which homeless applicants can be waiting for temporary housing. The most common ones are:

- Accepted homeless applicants who have been placed in bed and breakfast;
- Accepted homeless applicants in other forms of emergency housing (refuge, staying with friends/relatives)

- Households already in temporary housing where the accommodation is going back to the owner;
- Households already in temporary accommodation where the accommodation is not suitable for their needs.

6.4.2.4 Allocations of temporary housing are a question of judgment for each individual vacancy, as the Homelessness and Housing Advice Officer will have to balance the needs and requirements of a number of different individuals in different circumstances. The matters which the Homelessness and Advice Officer must take into account include:

- Length of time a homeless applicant has been in bed and breakfast. Bed and breakfast is not suitable accommodation for homeless applicants with family commitments (including those who are pregnant) unless used in an emergency and then for a maximum of 6 weeks;
- The length of time homeless applicants have been in other forms of emergency housing awaiting temporary accommodation. Whilst refuge and other forms of emergency accommodation are normally more suitable than bed and breakfast, lengthy waits in emergency housing should be avoided where possible.
- Where temporary accommodation is going back to the owner and delays may cause families to be placed in bed and breakfast or significant difficulties to the landlord.
- The length of time that a homeless applicant has been in unsuitable temporary housing and has been waiting for suitable temporary accommodation and the difficulties that the homeless applicant is experiencing in their current accommodation.
- The areas of choice of each homeless applicant and the availability of accommodation close to those areas of choice.

6.4.3 Allocations of Extra Care Housing

6.4.3.1 Allocations of extra-care housing will normally be managed outside of the choice based allocations process due to the vulnerability of Applicants for extra-care schemes and the required partnership working with Hampshire County Council and care and support providers.

6.4.3.2 A separate agreement with Hampshire County Council will be entered into to set out the allocations processes for extra care, so the paragraphs below only summarise the broad principles.

6.4.3.3 Extra-care housing will be advertised on the website but on a non-specific basis to ensure awareness of the availability of the extra-care accommodation.

6.4.3.4 The Housing Options team will assess housing needs in accordance with the Scheme. An Extra-Care Assessment and Allocation Panel (ECAP) will assess support and care needs.

6.4.3.5 For each vacancy the ECAP will determine whether it is a vacancy for an Applicant with high, medium or low care needs. This decision will depend on an understanding of the profile of the Applicant within the extra care scheme (to ensure a balanced extra care scheme) and the details of the particular vacancy (for example, a fully adapted property may suggest higher care needs).

6.4.3.6 Each vacancy will be allocated to the most suitable Applicant. When allocating, the following principles will apply:

- A vacancy of a high/medium or low care need will normally be offered to the Applicant with the equivalent level of care who is top on the list for that particular level need.
- Other factors may be taken into consideration as well as the level of housing need. These will include the needs and preferences of individuals (eg wheelchair needs, preferences for floor level and scheme preferences etc).
- In line with the Scheme, normally, Applicants will need to satisfy the local connection criteria.
- If there is a double flat, consideration will be given to giving preference to couples.
- Where there are no suitable Applicants, consideration will be given to Applicants with a different level of assessed care need for the vacancy, if appropriate.
- Where it is still not possible to allocate a vacancy, the vacancy may be individually advertised on the website as a vacancy of older persons' housing within an extra care scheme and allocated by the Housing Options team in accordance with the provisions of the Scheme.

6.4.4 Hard to Let

6.4.4.1 Hard to let properties are those which the Council finds difficult to let due to low demand. The Council may allocate such properties by making a direct offer or allowing Applicants who would not ordinarily meet the properties labelling criteria to bid on the property.

PART 3: SCHEME ADMINISTRATION

7. MANAGING THE SCHEME

7.1 DECISION MAKING

7.1.1 The following decisions will be the responsibility of the named positions (or positions at an equivalent or higher level) within the Council; the list is not exhaustive and a Service Manager~~Senior Officer~~ has the discretion to delegate the decision-making responsibility of any decision to another position as may be deemed appropriate by the Service Manager~~Senior Officer~~:

DECISIONS	POSITION

Eligibility of Applicants	~~Allocations~~ Housing Options Assistant/Allocations Officer
Qualifying Applicants (including Local Connection)	~~Allocations~~ Housing Options Assistant/Allocations Officer
Household and Bedroom Need Assessment	~~Allocations~~ Housing Options Assistant/Allocations Officer
Housing Need Assessment (Banding decision)	~~Allocations~~ Housing Options Assistant/Allocations Officer
Renewal Request/Change of Circumstance– re- assessment	~~Allocations~~ Housing Options Assistant/Allocations Officer
Lowering an Applicant's Band, Suspension or Removal from the Register	Allocations Officer
Prioritisation of Applications and successful bids	Allocations Officer
Properties excluded from Choice Based Process	Allocations Officer
Adverts for properties: including labelling, setting preferences and property description	Allocations Officer
Reviews	Project and Reviews Officer / Homesearch Team Leader / Housing Options Manager / Service Manager ~~Allocations~~ / ~~Manager~~ Reviewing Panel
Banding for Vulnerable Occupant ~~or selection of an Applicant for Auto-Bidding~~	~~Allocations Manager~~Homesearch Team Leader / Housing Options Manager / Service Manager
Selection of an Applicant for Auto-Bidding	Allocations Officer / Homesearch Team Leader / Housing Options Manager / Service Manager
Health and Wellbeing Assessment	Allocations Officer (following assessment by the Health~~l~~ and Welfare Panel)
Decision on community contribution issues (including Incentive to Work and Rural Connection Band)	~~Senior Officer~~Housing Options Manager / Service Manager
Exercise of discretion[4]	~~Senior Officer~~Service Manager
Rural Connection Band in respect of applicants in Temporary Accommodation and Keyworkers.	~~Senior Officer~~Service Manager
Management moves or direct offers	~~Senior Officer~~ Housing Option Manager and Service Manager
Local Lettings Plans and Sensitive Lettings	~~Senior Officers~~Service Manager (in consultation Portfolio Holder for Housing)
Decision on key-worker status[5]	~~Senior Officers~~Service Manager (in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing)

7.2 HEALTH AND WELFARE PANEL

7.2.1 Decisions relating an Applicant's health and wellbeing will be made by an Allocation Officer following the assessment of the Applicant's health and wellbeing by the Health and Welfare Panel.

[4] Including in relation to whether exceptional circumstances apply for failure to complete a Renewal Request within 3 months.
[5] Including qualification for Band 3

7.2.2 The Health and Welfare Panel will meet as required, but normally at intervals of no less than fortnightly. It will be quorate with two or more officers present. The Health and Welfare Panel is for professionals only and Applicants may not attend.

7.2.3 The Health and Welfare Panel will be chaired by an Allocation Officer and other members of the Health and Welfare Panel may be:

- Allocations Officer;
- Homelessness and Housing Advice Officer;
- Housing Assistants;
- Tenancy Management Officers or Tenancy Management Assistants;
- Representatives from Social or Children's Services;
- An Occupational therapist;
- Support Workers;
- Representatives from the Locality Mental Health Teams;
- Other professionals

7.2.4 In assessing an Applicant's health and wellbeing need the Health and Welfare Panel will have particular regard to the matters set out in Appendix 4: Health and Wellbeing Assessment on page 52. Where necessary the Health and Welfare Panel may seek medical advice.

7.2.5 Health and Welfare Panel members should not be involved in decisions they are presenting or in which they have a declared interest.

7.2.6 The Health and Welfare Panel may make decisions setting the limits and parameters of the properties that the Applicant can bid for; including bedroom entitlement, property type and property location.

7.2.7 Applicants will be notified of the decision of the Health and Welfare Panel after the panel meeting. An Applicant who is not happy with the decision of the Health and Welfare Panel will be notified of their right to request a review. Please refer to paragraph 7.5 for further details of the reviews process.

7.3 UPDATING APPLICATION DETAILS

7.3.1 Rolling Reviews

7.3.1.1 A rolling review of Applications will take place so that the Register is kept up to date. Each Application will be reviewed on the anniversary of the Band Start Date; although the Council may review Applications at different intervals if there is a reason to do so. An Applicant will be asked to complete a Renewal Request. If the Applicant fails to respond to the Renewal Request within 28 days of it being sent, the Application will be suspended. If no contact is made within 3 months of the Renewal Request being sent, the Application will be removed from the Register. An Applicant who has had their Application removed will be notified and will be advised of their right to request a review. Please refer to paragraph 7.5 for further details of the reviews process.

7.3.1.2 If an Applicant has not responded to a Renewal Request within 28 days, but has done so within 3 months, the Application will be reinstated with the original Band Start Date. Applicants who respond after 3 months will only be reinstated with the original Band Start Date if exceptional circumstances apply. Whilst each case will be determined on its individual facts, exceptional circumstances will apply if there is evidence of incapacity (physical or mental) for the period of delay which resulted in the failure to complete the renewal request within the 3 month deadline. A decision as to whether exceptional circumstances apply is reserved to a Service Manager~~Senior Officer~~.

7.3.1.3 If no exceptional circumstances apply, where an Applicant responds to a Renewal Request after having already been removed from the Register for failure to respond, they will have to re-apply to join the Register and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4.1 (a) above.

7.3.1.4 Where an Applicant's circumstances are found to have changed during the rolling review process, their Application will be suspended to allow for re-assessment of their Application. An Applicant who has had their Application suspended will be notified and will be advised of their right to request a review. Please refer to paragraph 7.5 for further details of the reviews process.

7.3.2 Change of Circumstance

7.3.2.1 Applicants must inform the Council of any changes in their circumstances as soon as possible after they occur. This includes any change that may affect the Band that has been given to their Application.

7.3.2.2 Applicants have the right to request that their Application be reconsidered following a change in their circumstance. An Application will be re-assessed and given a Band Start Date as set out at paragraph 5.4.1 (b) above.

7.3.2.3 If a person successfully bids for a vacancy and it is later found that the Applicant's housing situation is different from the details provided when they made their Application, the offer will be withdrawn. Please see paragraph 6.2.3 Verification of Applications.

7.4 SUSPENSION AND REMOVAL

7.4.1 Suspension

7.4.1.1 An Application may be suspended from the Register in the following circumstances:

Where the:

- Applicant has failed to bid on any properties within a 12 month period;
- Applicant has refused 2 offers (automatic bid, direct offer or successful bid) of accommodation in a 12 month period where the offers have been deemed suitable following review, or where no review was lodged. This includes

Applicants who are treated as having refused an offer because they failed to respond;

- Applicant is owed a homeless duty and refuses a suitable offer of accommodation made in discharge of duty owed;
- Council becomes aware of a change of circumstance which requires re-assessment of the Application;
- Applicant has failed to complete a Renewal Request within 28 days of it being sent out;
- Council receives information that the Applicant is no longer eligible or qualifying to be on the Register;
- Council receives information that the Applicant has provided false, or withheld, information.

7.4.1.2 Period of Suspension

REASON FOR SUSPENSION	**PERIOD OF SUSPENSION**
Refusing 2 suitable offers of accommodation in a 12 month period, or homeless Applicant who refuses a suitable offer of accommodation resulting in discharge of duty.	6 months
Failure to bid in a 12 months period	6 months
Failure to complete a Renewal Request within 28 days	Until the Renewal Request is completed or 3 months; whichever is earlier
The Council becomes aware or is notified of a change of circumstance	Pending re-assessment
The Council becomes aware of, or is notified that: The Applicant: • is no longer qualifying or eligible; or • has provided false information or has withheld information	Pending investigations

7.4.1.3 If an Applicant who has been suspended for refusing offers of accommodation or failing to bid, wants to remain on the Register after the period of suspension, their Application will be re-instated with the same Band Start Date; unless there has been a change in circumstance in which case the Application will be re-assessed and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4 above. If following re-instatement, the Application is suspended again within a 12 month period, the Application will be removed from the Register.

7.4.1.4 Where an Application is suspended pending a re-assessment following a change in circumstance, the Application will be re-instated once the re-assessment has been completed. The Application will be given a Band Start Date in accordance with

paragraph 5.4.1 (b) above. If following re-assessment the Applicant is found to no longer be qualifying or eligible, their Application will be removed from the Register.

7.4.1.5 Where an Application was suspended pending investigations of an allegation that the Applicant is no longer qualifying, eligible or has provided false, or has withheld, information, the Application will be re-instated with the original Band Start Date if the allegations are unfounded. The Application will be removed from the Register if the allegations are founded.

7.4.1.6 An Applicant who has had their Application suspended from the Register has the right to request a review. Please refer to paragraph 7.5 below for details of the review process.

7.4.2 Removal

7.4.2.1 An Application will be removed from the Register for the following reasons:

- Where the Applicant requests that their Application be removed;
- Where the Applicant has died;
- Where the Applicant has been rehoused; including where the Applicant has accepted an offer of accommodation and lodged an unsuccessful review of its suitability;
- Where an Applicant has failed to complete a Renewal Request within 3 months of it being sent out;
- If an allegation that an Applicant is no longer eligible, qualifying or has provided false, or has withheld, information is made out (including following the verification stage);
- If following re-instatement from suspension the Application is suspended again within a 12 month period.

7.4.2.2 Where the Council is aware that an Applicant may be vulnerable or suffer from a disability, it may try to contact the Applicant, or where there are appropriate consents or data sharing agreements, any agency that it is aware is working with the Applicant, before removing the Application from the Register.

7.4.2.3 Applicants can apply to re-join the Register at any time. Where an Applicant considers that they have become eligible or qualifying since being removed from the Register, they may also reapply to join the Register, but must provide evidence of a change of circumstance. Applicants who apply to re-join the Register will be treated as new Applicants and will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4.1 (a) above.

7.4.2.4 An Applicant who has had their Application removed from the Register has the right to request a review. Please refer to paragraph 7.5 below for details of the review process.

7.5 RIGHT TO REQUEST A REVIEW

7.5.1 An Applicant has the right to request a review of any decision about the facts of their case which is likely, or has been, taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing to them; and in particular any of the following decisions:

- Whether the Applicant is eligible or qualifying (including following the verification stage);
- The Scheme Band in which their Application has been placed;
- Their Rural Connection Band;
- The Band Start Date given to their Application;
- Their Bedroom Need Assessment;
- Decision of the Medical and Welfare Panel;
- The suitability of an offer of accommodation (whether direct let, autobid or from a successful bid);
- Their Application being moved to a lower Band;
- Suspending their Application;
- Removing their Application from the Register.

.

7.5.2 Once an Applicant has been notified in writing of any of the above decisions they will have 21 days from the date of the decision to request a review. The review must be in writing and needs to include full details of why the Applicant does not agree with the decision made. Where appropriate the Applicant should provide evidence to support the review request.

7.5.3 Reviews should be sent by email to housing.options@nfdc.gov.uk or by post to:

Allocations – Review
New Forest District Council
Appletree Court
Beaulieu Road
Lyndhurst
SO43 7PA

7.5.4 ~~The Council will acknowledge a review within 10 working days. The Allocation Manager, or where necessary a~~ Service Manager~~Senior Officer, who did not take part in making the decision, will carry out a review of the case. A response in writing will be provided within 56 days of receipt of the review request. The response will set out the outcome of the review request and the reasons.~~The Council will acknowledge a review within 10 working days. The Reviewing Panel, which will consist of officers who did not take part in making the decision, will carry out a review of the case. A response in writing will be provided within 56 days of receipt of the review request. The response will set out the outcome of the review request and the reasons.

7.5.5

7.5.6 An Applicant who needs support in making their review request can contact the Council at housing.options@nfdc.gov.uk. Where the Council is aware that an Applicant is vulnerable or has disability issues, it will try to make direct contact with the Applicant, or if appropriate consents or data sharing agreements are in place, the agency providing support to the Applicant to ensure that the Applicant is aware that they have

the right to request a review of the decision made. Where necessary, a vulnerable or disabled Applicant will be afforded alternative means of making their review.

7.6 EXERCISE OF DISCRETION

7.6.1 In exceptional circumstances, so as not to fetter its discretion, the Council reserves the right to depart from any aspect of the Scheme; including but not limited to: qualification criteria, Bedroom Need Assessment, Household membership or the allocation of a vacancy. Any decision to depart from the Scheme will be taken by the Officer in the appropriate position as set out at paragraph 7.1 above.

7.6.2 The Council will exercise its discretion specifically in circumstances where it is necessary to ensure compliance with duties that are imposed on it by other statutes; including but not limited to the Equality Act 2010, or guidance issued by the Secretary of State, including but not limited to Applicants who have fled Domestic Abuse. The exercise of discretion will be monitored to ensure that it is properly exercised within extremely limited boundaries.

7.6.3 When exercising discretion the Council will always consider the circumstances of the Applicant against the prevailing housing conditions within its district.

7.7 EQUALITY AND FAIR ALLOCATIONS

7.7.1 The Council is subject to the general public sector equality duty as set out at s.149 of the Equality Act 2010. The Council and its partner landlords are committed to providing equality of opportunity to all individuals who apply for housing. Monitoring of Applications and allocations may take place to ensure that everyone is being treated fairly.

7.7.2 All Applicants may be asked to provide details of age, gender, ethnic origin, religion and sexual orientation. This is to allow the Council to monitor who is applying and being allocated housing and to ensure that properties are being offered and allocated fairly.

7.8 CHANGES TO THE SCHEME

7.8.1 The Scheme will be reviewed every two years and will be amended, if necessary. Minor changes will be delegated for approval by the Strategic Director ~~agreed by Service ManagerSenior Officers~~ in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing. This will assist in ensuring that the Scheme continues to meet legislative and best practice requirements as well as ensuring the effective use of the social housing within the Council's district. Before adopting any changes to the Scheme that relate to a major change of policy, the Council will comply with the procedures as set out in the Act

7.9 RIGHT TO INFORMATION

7.9.1 Applicants have the right to request such general information as will enable them to assess:

- How their Application will be treated under the Scheme (including in particular whether they are likely to be regarded as a person who will be given reasonable preference); and

- Whether housing accommodation appropriate for their needs is likely to be made available to them, and if so, how long it is likely to be before such accommodation becomes available for allocation to them.

Where appropriate the Council will publish such information on its website.

7.9.2 Applicants have the right to ask the Council to inform them of any decision about the facts of their case which is likely to be, or has been, taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing accommodation to them.

7.10 FALSE STATEMENTS OR WITHOLDING INFORMATION

7.10.1 Applicants who knowingly or recklessly make a statement which is false, or knowingly withhold information in connection with their Application, are guilty of a criminal offence. Anyone who is found to have committed such an offence may:

- Have their Application refused or removed from the Register;
- Have an offer of accommodation withdrawn; and/or
- Be prosecuted by the Council. This could lead to a large fine or imprisonment, and may also lead to legal action for the possession of any accommodation found to have been obtained following false information having been given.

7.11 DATA PROTECTION

7.11.2 In accordance with the Council's statutory obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations, all Applicants will be made aware of how their personal information will be processed. Information recorded on the Council's system and on the Applicant's file will be shared with partner landlords and other agencies as necessary. Consent from the Applicant for information sharing will be sought in all cases. For a copy of the Council's Housing Services Privacy Notice please visit: http://www.newforest.gov.uk/~~article/18331/Housing-Services-~~privacy-~~notice~~

7.11.3 Applicants have a right to see what information is kept about them on written records (please note that a fee may be charged). As far as possible, the Council will make this available subject to certain restrictions. Applicants wishing to view their records should contact the Council at:

Housing Options
Appletree Court
Beaulieu Road
Lyndhurst

SO43 7PA

7.12 CONTACTING HOUSING OPTIONS

- Telephone: 0203 8028 5588
- Email: housing.options@nfdc.gov.uk
- Website: http://www.newforest.gov.uk/homesearch~~article/17971/Waiting-list-and-applying-for-housing~~

- Postal Address:

Housing Options Team
Appletree Court
Beaulieu Road
Lyndhurst
SO43 7PA

APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS

Applicant: A person who has applied to join, or who is waiting for an allocation of housing, from the Council's housing register. Generally, the term should also be read to refer to all members of the Applicant's Household.

Application: An application to join, or to be allocated housing, from the Council's housing register.

Assisted Bidding: where the Housing Options team has assessed that an Applicant needs assistance to bid on vacancies.

Band: One of the four bands used to prioritise Applicants on the Council's housing register.

Bedroom Need: the number of bedrooms that an Applicant is entitled to; having regard to the Applicant's Household make-up (see paragraph 5.3).

Domestic Abuse: ~~(Is not limited to physical violence and is not confined to incidents in the home) It relates to physical violence, abuse or patterns of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender.~~ Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can include, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse

Employment: is work where an Applicant or member of their Household holds a contract (written or oral) which gives them a remuneration for the work undertaken that is declared for tax purposes (when required), or self-employment which generates a source of income for an Applicant which is declared for tax purposes (when required). In establishing whether an Applicant or member of their Household is in employment, evidence may be required including a written contract, tax return, letter from the employer, payslips or a statement from an accountant. The following may also be taken into consideration:

- Whether the work is regular or intermittent.
- The period of employment (for example a contract that is intended to last for less than 12 months will be considered short term);
- The number of hours worked (at each location if working in multiple locations);
- The office or business establishment at which a person is based or from where their work is managed.

Full Housing Duty: the duty owed to a homeless applicant who the Council accepts is eligible, in priority need and not intentionally homeless (for post 3 April 2018 applies only after the Relief Duty has expired).

Homeless Applicant: an Applicant (on the housing register) who the Council accepts is statutory homeless and is owed a duty under Part VII of the Act.

Homesearch Allocation Scheme 2: the allocation scheme that was adopted by the Council in 2012 and which was in operation up until the adoption of the Scheme.

Household: The individuals that an Applicant is expected to reside with and who an Applicant can include in their housing application (see paragraph 5.2).

Housing Need: The assessed level of need which determines which of the Scheme's Bands an Application will be placed (see paragraph 5.1).

Partner: the spouse or civil partner of an Applicant; including a cohabitant who is living with the Applicant as a spouse or civil partner.

Prevention Duty: the duty owed (for a minimum period of 56 days) to those who the Council accepts are eligible and threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

Private Rented Sector Offer: an offer of an assured shorthold tenancy in discharge of a duty owed under Part VII of the Act.

Register: The Council's housing register which contains the list of all those who have applied to the Council for social housing.

Relief Duty: the duty owed (for a minimum period of 56 days) to those who the Council accepts are eligible and homeless.

Renewal Request: the request sent by the Council to Applicants, normally on the anniversary of their Band Start Date, asking for updated details of their circumstances (see paragraph 7.3.1.)

Restricted Person: A person who is subject to immigration control and who is not eligible for an allocation of housing because they do not have leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom or have leave that is subject to a "no recourse to public funds" condition.

Regular Forces: the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the regular army or the Royal Air Force.

Reserve Forces: the Royal Fleet Reserve, the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Marines Reserve, the Regular Reserve, the Army Reserve, the Royal Air Force Reserve or the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

~~**Senior Officer (s):** The Housing Options Service Manager or any other officer of an equivalent or higher position.~~

Transfer Applicant: an Applicant who is already accommodated in social housing but who has a Housing Need and has applied for an allocation of alternative social housing.

Vulnerable Occupant: an occupant of Council accommodation left following the death of, or the departure of, a Council tenant, but who has no legal rights to remain and where the Council has deemed the occupier vulnerable due to their personal circumstances. An Applicant will be deemed vulnerable if they have a disability or other health (physical or mental) issues that make them unable to secure and/or sustain alternative accommodation in the private sector or who the Council would have a duty to secure permanent accommodation under s.193(2) of the Act if they were evicted and who, due to their Household circumstances, a Private Rented Sector Offer discharge would not be available. In assessing whether a person can secure and sustain a private sector tenancy, the Council will have regard to any support or assistance that can be given to the person to facilitate their ability to do so. Such occupants may be occupiers with no succession rights or tenants whose joint tenancy has been terminated by the other tenant but who remains in occupation. The Council will always assess the occupant's circumstances against the prevailing housing conditions within its district.

APPENDIX 2: ELIGIBILITY AND QUALIFICATION

(A) Eligibility

1. The Council is not able to make an allocation of property to anyone who has been classed as a Restricted Person by the government. The Council is not able make an allocation to the following:

    i. A person from abroad who is subject to immigration control unless s/he is of a class prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State, or is currently a tenant of the Council or a private registered provider of social housing or a registered social landlord;
    ii. Two or more people jointly if any one of them falls within the above category of people; or
    iii. Other classes of persons from abroad specified by the Secretary of State.

2. The Council will disregard any Restricted Person when assessing whether an Applicant falls into the Reasonable Preference Group.

3. Most persons from abroad who are not subject to immigration control (including British Citizens) must also be *habitually resident* in the Common Travel Area and/or have the right to reside in the Common Travel Area in order to be eligible to join the Register. This is known as the habitual residence test. The Common Travel Area consists of:

    i. United Kingdom;
    ii. The Channel Islands;
    iii. The Isle of Man; and
    iv. The Republic of Ireland

4. In order to pass the habitual residence test the Council will need to be satisfied that an Applicant is ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom, the test normally looks at whether someone has been in the United Kingdom for an appreciable period of time and whether they have a settled intention to remain. Some British Citizens who are returning from a period abroad will only have to show that they are returning with a settled intention to remain in the United Kingdom.

(B) Local Connection

1. Local connection will be established by:

    i. Residence:

    - An Applicant or their Partner has been resident in the Council's district for a continuous period of 2 years at the time of the Application; or

    - An Applicant has resided in the Council's district area for 10 years or more in the past;

    - Applicants who fall within one of the groups below will be exempt from having to satisfy the local connection criteria:

- Those owed a s.193(2) and s.189B((2) duty by the Council under Part VII of the Act;
- A person who is serving in the regular forces or
- A person who has served in the regular forces or
-

- A person the Council is required by law to exempt from having to satisfy the local connection criteria, including the following:

- Anyone who the Council is satisfied meets the criteria for a Right to Move as set out at paragraph 3(e) of Appendix 3: Scheme Bands at page 49.

- ~~Anyone who is serving in the Regular Forces or who has served in the Regular Forces within 5 years of the date of making their Application to join the Scheme;~~

  - Anyone who has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner where:
    - The spouse or civil partner served in the Regular Forces; and
    - Their death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service; or
  - Anyone serving or who has served in the Reserve Forces and who is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to that service
- ~~A "looked after child" as defined by Children's Services in another region and as approved by a Senior Officer; or~~
- A person who is an eligible child, a relevant child or a former relevant child:; An "eligible child" is defined as a child aged 16 or 17 who has been looked after by a local authority for a prescribed period. A "relevant child" is defined as a child of 16 or 17 who would have been an eligible child had they stayed in care but who leaves. A "former relevant child" is defined as someone who was previously a "relevant child" (as defined in the Children Act 1989) and is now aged 18 or older, but under 25. Specifically, this refers to a person who was in the care of a local authority on or after their 16th birthday for a period of at least 13 weeks
- A person who is or has been a victim of domestic abuse carried out by another person, who needs to move for reasons connected with that abuse, including from accommodation initially occupied on a temporary basis or a person living in a refuge in the Council's district. Each case will be assessed based on the circumstances of the case and will look at the options available and assess if a person is exempt to the local connection criteria
- An Applicant who satisfies a Rural Connection Band. They will only qualify for the Rural Parish that they have the connection to.

or

ii. Employment:

An Applicant or their Partner are currently employed and has been employed (whether it is for a fixed or permanent term or it is self-employment) for a period of at least 5 years continuously within the Council's district. See Appendix 1 'Employment' definition.

2. As part of the Council's verification process, Applicants will be required to submit documentary evidence to support local connection qualifying criteria.

(C) Financial Assessment

1. All Applicants seeking to join the Register will be subject to a financial assessment. Only Applicants who have been assessed as lacking the income and/or assets to resolve their housing need will qualify to join the Register.
2. For Applicants who have an assessed extra care need who are seeking to join the Register, each case will be assessed on its own merits; however such an Applicant will be assessed as being able to resolve their own housing need if their level of income and/or assets enables them to secure, or make arrangements to secure, accommodation/support that would meet their assessed care needs (including in privately funded accommodation).

3. For all other Applicants, each case will be assessed on its own merits; however, an Applicant will be assessed as having the income and/or assets to enable them to resolve their own housing need if the level of income/assets which they have enables them to purchase a property on the open market.

4. In assessing whether an Applicant will be able to purchase a property on the open market, the following additional factors will be taken into consideration:

    a. The likely ability of the Applicants to qualify for and sustain a mortgage; consideration will be given to:
        i. The Applicant's age
        ii. The Applicant's credit rating;
        iii. Whether the Applicant has savings of at least the deposit needed for a property that meets their Household's needs;
        iv. Whether their income is at a level to enable them to qualify for a mortgage.
    b. The property type needed for the Applicant and their Household;
    c. Whether assets can be realised within a reasonable period of time.

5. In considering whether an Applicant can afford to purchase a property on the open market, the housing market of the Council's district as a whole will be considered and not only the Applicant's area of choice.

6. In assessing an Applicant's income and assets, the Council will have regard to the Applicants gross income and total assets save for the disregards listed at paragraph 7 below.

7. In assessing whether an Applicant has the income and/or capital assets to resolve their own housing need the following income and capital assets will be ignored:

a. Any lump sum received by a member of the Armed Forces where this is evidenced as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service; and

b. The following benefit income:

i. Disability Living Allowance,
ii. Personal Independence Payments; and
iii. Attendance Allowance

(D) Deliberately Worsening Own Circumstances to Qualify onto the Register

1. An Applicant who has deliberately worsened their circumstances to be able to join the Register will be treated as a "non-qualifying" Applicant and will be unable to join the Register.

2. Each case will be determined on its individual facts; however, an Applicant will be deemed to have deliberately worsened their circumstances if they have acted in any of the following ways:

The Applicant has:

i. moved into accommodation which at the date of moving in was unsuitable for their Household's needs. In deciding whether the property was unsuitable at the point the Applicant moved in, the Council will take into consideration the property's condition (including disrepair and overcrowding issues), affordability and its location;
ii. voluntarily given up accommodation that it was reasonable for the Applicant and their Household to continue to occupy without first securing suitable alternative accommodation;
iii. taken deliberate action to cause accommodation to no longer be reasonable for them and their Household to continue to occupy; for example causing damage to accommodation that results in accommodation becoming a risk to health.

3. In considering whether accommodation was reasonable for the Applicant and their Household to continue to occupy, the Council will take into consideration the guidance of the Secretary of State as set out in Chapter 6 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018

(E) Unacceptable Behaviour Resulting in Being Unsuitable to be a Tenant

1. An Applicant whose unacceptable behaviour makes them unsuitable to be a tenant of the Council will be treated as a "non-qualifying" Applicant and will be unable to join the Register.

2. The Council will assess whether an Applicant is unsuitable to be a tenant because of their, or a member of their Households' behavioural issues; including anti-social behaviour or poor tenancy management.

3. An Applicant will normally be considered to be unsuitable to be a tenant if:

    i. They have housing related debts:

        - rent arrears of at least 8 weeks at their current or former address;
        - court costs owed to the Council, or a former landlord, for possession or injunction proceedings that were issued against the Applicant;
        - recharges owed to the Council for damage caused to one of the Council's properties, rent deposit payment or rent in advance.

        Where an Applicant has made and sustained a repayment plan to settle the debt for a continuous period of 6 months the Applicant will not be treated as unsuitable to be a tenant.

        Applicants who can demonstrate that they can manage their tenancies with support from an agency with whom they are engaging will not be treated as unsuitable to be tenants. Applicants will need to demonstrate this by providing supporting evidence from the support agency;

        or

    ii. Are guilty of Anti-Social Behaviour:

        Where the Applicant:

        - Has been found to have behaved in an anti-social manner by their current or former landlord, or by the Courts within 2 years of them submitting their Application.

            Anti-social behaviour will include any acts that interfere with a landlord's ability to carry out its management functions, nuisance, annoyance, violence against others and using a property for immoral purposes.

4. Each case will be determined on its individual facts and the Council will take into consideration the full circumstances of an Applicant's case when deciding whether an Applicant should be non-qualifying due to their behaviour; including, but not limited to, the reasons for the Applicant's behaviour and/or any steps that the Applicant has taken to address their issues.

APPENDIX 3: SCHEME BANDS

1. **Band 1: Emergency Need to Move**

Applicants will satisfy the criteria for Band 1 if they need to move on an emergency basis. There are very few cases that are likely to be placed in Band 1.

(a) Management Move:

Where a Service Manager~~Senior Officer~~ has assessed an Applicant as having an exceptional need to move to ensure the best management of the Council or other landlord's housing stock. Applicants will be assessed as having an exceptional need to move if their need for housing is so urgent that they should take priority over all other Applicants. Each case will be determined on its own merits; however, the following will be placed in Band 1:

Those:

- Who need to move for community safety, for example re-housing under the Multi-Agency Protection Panel Arrangements (MAPPA) or Witness Protection scheme.

- Whose accommodation is unsuitable for their assessed medical needs and they are being discharged from hospital or who need to go into supported or sheltered housing;

- Major works, where a social housing tenant requires permanent rehousing because major works need to be carried out on their property.

- Are occupying a "high need" property, for example an adapted property where the Applicant no longer has a need for that type of accommodation.

- Where the Council has an urgent need to re-house an Applicant to meet statutory or other time limits, for example flexible tenants whose tenancy is due to expire and who need to be secured re-housing in alternative accommodation, under-occupying successors or Vulnerable Occupants in Council accommodation where the Council is rehousing them.

(b) Urgent health and/or wellbeing: Please refer to: 4: Health and Wellbeing Assessment at page 52.

(c) Emergency Disrepair: Please refer to: Appendix 5: Housing Conditions at page 55.

(d) Violence or Threats of Violence:

Where a Household, including existing social housing tenants, need to move because they are at risk of violence or serious harassment. An Applicant will only be placed in Band 1 for violence or threats of violence where a Service Manager~~Senior Officer~~ has assessed there is no other housing available (ie temporary accommodation, Sanctuary scheme, refuge) and where the risk can not be managed in the Applicant's current accommodation. Applicants who are at imminent risk of violence or threats of violence may be referred to the Council's homelessness team for assessment under the Part VII of the Act.

A management move will only be made for neighbour problems or issues of anti-social behaviour, if there is a serious risk of physical or psychological harm to the Applicant due to anti-social behaviour. The Applicant will need to provide supporting evidence from appropriate agencies. It will also need to be shown that the landlord, or another appropriate agency, has tried all approaches to prevent such behaviour within their anti-social behaviour policy.

When an Application has been placed in Band 1, the Housing Options team may take decisions on which property is suitable for them to bid for. The Housing Options team may also make bids on behalf of the Applicant or make a direct offer to increase the prospects of the Applicant securing rehousing; please refer to Automatic Bidding at paragraph 6.1.6 and Direct Offers at paragraph 6.3.2.

As Applicants who have been placed in Band 1 are in need of urgent re-housing, their circumstances will be kept under review to ensure that the Applicant is still entitled to Band 1. Applicants who fail to make bids where there has been a vacancy that meets their assessed needs may have their Application moved into a lower Band. The Council will move an Applicant into a lower Band if the Applicant's reasons for failing to bid on a vacancy demonstrates that the Applicant does not have a genuine emergency need for re-housing.

2. **Band 2: Serious Need to Move**

(a) Accepted Full Housing Duty:

- Where an Applicant has been accepted as being owed the Full Housing Duty under Part VII of the Act and the Council has been assessed that discharge cannot be achieved by a Private Rented Sector Offer of accommodation.

- The Council will not be able to achieve a Private Rented Sector Offer discharge if the Applicant's circumstances prevent them from being able to secure or sustain a tenancy in the private sector due to vulnerability, property size required, affordability and/or where there is a lack of suitable private rented accommodation available with tenancies of at least 12 months.

- In considering whether a discharge with a Private Rented Sector Offer is achievable the Council will also take into consideration whether the Applicant would be able to sustain a tenancy with appropriate support and/or whether the Applicant's circumstances are likely to change within a reasonable period of time.

(b) Under-Occupying Social Housing by 2 or more bedrooms:

This will include Applicants who have had a change in Household membership or successors to a tenancy.

(c) Severely Overcrowded

- Where, in accordance with the Scheme's Bedroom Need Assessment, an Applicant lacks 2 or more bedrooms given the size of their Household; or
- lacks 1 bedroom but has 2 children who lack a bedroom. This will include a single parent with 2 children where one is over 1 in a 1 bedroom house or a couple with 4 same sex children in a 2 bedroom house.
- Where the Council's has assessed the Household as a Category 1 hazard under the Housing Act 2004 due to overcrowding.

In assessing overcrowding the Council will treat a second lounge or dining room that is situated in the accommodation as a bedroom.

(d) High Health and/or Wellbeing: Please refer to Appendix 4: Health and Wellbeing Assessment at page 52.

(e) High State of Disrepair: Please refer to Appendix 5 Housing Conditions at page 55.

(f) Assessed Move On

Where an Applicant is in supported housing within the Council's district area and has been assessed as ready to move on. This will include young people leaving care who have been assessed by Children's Services as ready for independent living.

There is no standard definition of supported accommodation. The Council will determine whether accommodation is to be treated as supported accommodation for the purposes of the Scheme.

~~Applicants who are not assessed as ready to move on will not qualify for this Band, but may qualify for another Band depending on their Housing Need~~. ~~Applicants whose supported accommodation is being decommissioned will only have their Application placed in Band 2 if they have been assessed as ready to move on.~~

As Applicants who have been placed in Band 2 have a serious need for re-housing, their circumstances will be kept under review to ensure that the Applicant is still entitled to Band 2. Applicants who fail to make bids where there has been a vacancy that meets their assessed needs may have their Application moved into a lower Band. The Council will move an Applicant into a lower Band if the Applicant's reasons for failing to bid on a vacancy demonstrates that the Applicant does not have a serious need for re-housing.

3. **Band 3: Need to Move**

(a) Overcrowded and lack 1 bedroom

Where in accordance with the Scheme's Bedroom Need Assessment, an Applicant lacks 1 bedroom given the size of their Household.

In assessing overcrowding the Council will treat a second lounge or dining room that is situated in the accommodation as a bedroom.

(b) Applicants that have been assessed as having medium health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstances: Please refer to Appendix 4: Health and Wellbeing Assessment at page 52.

(c) Any serving or former serving members of the Regular Forces, or their spouse or civil partner, stated below will have their Application placed in Band 3:

An Applicant who:

- Is a serving member in the Regular Forces and who is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service;
- Is a formerly serving member in the Regular Forces,
- has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of the Applicant's Partner who has served in the Regular Forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service, or
- is serving or has served in the Reserve Forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's services.

Any Applicant who satisfies the criteria listed above and who has an urgent need for rehousing will be given additional priority under the Scheme in Bands 1 or 2 as may be appropriate.

(d) Applicants that are homeless, to whom the Council owes a Relief or Prevention Duty under Part VII of the Act;

- An Applicant will be owed the Relief duty if the Council is satisfied that they are homeless and eligible for assistance as defined under Part VII of the Act. The duty will last for a minimum of 56 days; thereafter an Applicant whose homelessness has not been relieved will be able to remain in Band 3. However, if an Applicant is found to be owed the Full Housing Duty, they will be moved into Band 2 if a Private Rented Sector Offer discharge cannot be achieved or will remain in Band 3 if it can. An Applicant who is no longer homeless will be removed from the Register.

- An Applicant will be owed the Prevention Duty if the Council is satisfied that the Applicant is eligible for assistance and is threatened with homelessness within 56 days as defined under Part VII of the Act. If an Applicant's homelessness is not prevented within the 56 days, they may be owed the Relief Duty and will remain in Band 3. If however, their homelessness is prevented; their Application will be removed from the Register.

- If an Applicant who was owed either the Prevention or Relief Duty ceases to be threatened with homelessness or is no longer homeless, they will be removed from the Register, unless they have another Housing Need that qualifies them to remain on the Register. If this is the case the Applicant's circumstances will be re-assessed and they will be given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4.1 (b) above.

(e) Applicants who need to move under the Right to Move provisions:

This applies to existing social tenants who the Council is satisfied are seeking a transfer from another local authority district in England and who need to move because they:

- work in the Council's district; or
- have been made an offer of work in the Council's district and the Council is satisfied that the Applicant has a genuine intention of taking up the offer of work.

and they would suffer hardship if they were not able to move to the Council's district.

In order to qualify under this heading, the Council must be satisfied that the work is not ancillary to work in another district, voluntary (in that it is undertaken for expenses only or no remuneration at all) or short-term or marginal in nature.

In determining whether an Applicant qualifies under this heading, the Council will take into consideration the following:

i. Hardship:

- The distance and/or time taken to travel between work and home;
- The availability and affordability of transport, taking into account levels of earning;
- The nature of the work and whether similar opportunities are available closer to home;
- Other personal circumstances relating to the Applicant including: medical conditions or child care, which would be affected if the Applicant could not move.

ii. Qualifying work:

- Whether the work is regular or intermittent;
- The period of employment (for example a contract that is intended to last for less than 12 months will be considered short term);
- The number of hours worked (less than 16 hours per week will be considered marginal);
- Where the Applicant's main place of work is (if the Applicant main place of work is in a different local authority, even if the pattern of work in the Council's district is regular, the Applicant's work is to be considered ancillary to work in another district.);

(f) Are existing social landlord tenants under-occupying their accommodation by 1 bedroom

This will include Applicants who have had a change in Household membership or successors to a tenancy

(g) Have been assessed as not having a permanent home, or are at risk of becoming homeless and are not owed a duty under Part VII of the Act:

- This will include any Applicant who does not have a permanent address; including those who are staying with friend/relatives where it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy that accommodation, homeless Applicants that are not owed any duties under Part VII of the Act, those in hostels or occupying accommodation under a licence and Vulnerable Occupants of Council accommodation;

- Applicants occupying temporary accommodation within the Council's stock (other than under s.193(2) of the Act).

(h) Have been accepted as being owed the Full Housing Duty under Part VII of the Act and where it is possible to discharge duty with a Private Rented Sector Offer of accommodation:

This refers to any Applicant who is owed the Full Housing Duty but who has been assessed as being able to secure and sustain a tenancy in the private sector; including in relation to affordability and where there is suitable private sector accommodation available with at least a 12 month tenancy.

(i) Are key workers where the Council identifies that there is a critical need for the key worker to be rehoused to ensure the availability of an essential public service for the Council's community. Decisions as to whether a key-worker should be placed in this Band is reserved to a Service Manager~~Senior Officer~~.

4. **Band 4: Lower Need to Move**

(a) Where an Applicant has been assessed as having a lower health and/or wellbeing need caused or substantially worsened by their home circumstances; Please refer to Appendix 4: Health and Wellbeing Assessment at page 52.

(b) Where an Applicant has to share essential facilities with other Households or lack essential facilities in their accommodation.

- Essential facilities include: a toilet, bath, shower or kitchen.
- An Applicant's Household will be defined as set out at paragraph 5.2.

This will include Applicants who are lodging or renting a room in a shared house with communal facilities.

(c) Where an Applicant is sharing with relatives or friends and it is reasonable for the Applicant to continue to occupy the accommodation; otherwise they will be placed in Band 3.

In considering whether accommodation is reasonable for the Applicant and their Household to continue to occupy, the Council will take into consideration the guidance of the Secretary of State as set out in Chapter 6 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018.

(d) Where an Applicant is living in supported accommodation where the Applicant has not been assessed as ready for move on from supported housing in the Council's district area.

There is no standard definition of supported accommodation. The Council will determine whether accommodation is to be treated as supported accommodation for the purposes of the Scheme.

(e) Applicants that are assured shorthold tenants in the private sector who do not have the financial means to purchase a property. Please refer to Appendix 2: Eligibility and Qualification on page 40.

(f) Applicants that have been assessed by the Council under Part VII of the Act as not in priority need or are intentionally homeless and are still statutory homeless at the point of offer.

~~(f)~~(g) Applicants who have a Rural Parish Connection to a Rural Parish that they do not currently reside in.

The Applicant will need to be statutory homeless at the point of any offer being made otherwise their Application will be removed from the Register unless they have another Housing Need that qualifies them to remain on the Register. In which case their Application will be re-assessed and given a new Band Start Date in accordance with paragraph 5.4.1 (b).

APPENDIX 4: HEALTH AND WELLBEING ASSESSMENT

The health and/or welfare of an applicant or a member of their household will be assessed on the basis of the effect of their current circumstances on any condition.

To qualify for an award of priority the health condition must meet both of the following criteria:

1. Be made worse by your present housing circumstances and

2. Must also be likely to be improved by moving to alternative accommodation.

If any health and/or welfare condition would remain the same if they were to move to alternative accommodation, they would not be awarded any additional priority. Depending on the circumstances, applicants will be expected to explore other Housing Options in the first instance to assist them resolving any issues that they may be experiencing to assist in reducing or relieving their housing need.

An assessment does not mean that an applicants application will move into a higher band. For example, they may already be in Band 3 and if they are assessed as having a medium health and welfare need (Band 3) to move, they would remain in Band 3.

A health or welfare issue in this context means a physical or mental illness, disability or incapacity, including behavioural syndromes, problems of physical or mental development and disorders related to drugs and / or alcohol. The assessment is based on a holistic approach, which takes account of psychological and social factors alongside physical issues.

~~1.~~ An Applicant who needs to move because their health and/or wellbeing is being affected by their housing~~me~~ circumstances will need to contact the ~~to complete a Health and Wellbeing Assessment form. This can be obtained from the~~ Housing Options T~~t~~eam providing supporting information ~~-~~by emailing~~:~~ housing.options@nfdc.gov.uk ~~.~~ The information will be assessed by the team and if appropriate will be presented to the Health and Welfare Panel for assessment.

~~2.~~1. ~~An Applicant will only be assessed as needing to move after the Health and Welfare Panel has considered their Health and Wellbeing Assessment form and any supporting evidence submitted with it and determined that an Applicant has a need to move on a health and/or wellbeing ground.~~ Please see paragraph 7.2 Health and Welfare Panel for further details.

~~3.~~2. Health and wellbeing grounds **will not** be awarded in the following circumstances:

a. Health problems that are not affected by housing or cannot be improved by housing;
b. Housing defects that can be rectified (see also Annex 5: Housing Conditions at page 55);
c. Neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour (if the issue cannot be resolved, the Applicant may be eligible for a management move, see paragraph 5.1 and Appendix: 3 Scheme Bands, paragraph 1(a) at page 45).

d. Homeless Households who have been provided with temporary accommodation (if an Applicant's temporary accommodation is affecting their health or wellbeing, they should seek a suitability review);
e. The disability or health issues of someone who is not a member of the Applicant's Household under the Scheme;
f. Time related medical issues (such as pregnancy related problems or a broken leg).

~~4.~~3. An Applicant who has been assessed as having a need to move on health and/or wellbeing grounds, will be placed in one of the 4 Bands (see paragraphs 5.1 above) depending on the assessed level of need. Applicants will normally only be placed in Band 1: Emergency or Band 2: Serious Need to Move if there is supporting evidence from a relevant health professional.

~~5.~~4. Applicants will be informed in writing of the outcome of their health and/or wellbeing assessment, and reasons explaining why the decision was made. If they disagree with the outcome, they have a right of review. Please refer to Request for a Review at 7.5 for the reviews process.

~~6.~~5. Each individual in an Applicant's Household will be assessed if they have a health or wellbeing issue. If more than 1 member of the household is affected by their housing, the Application will be assessed with reference to the Household member with the severest problem. Where an Applicant (or a Household member) has more than 1 health and wellbeing need (for example both mental and physical), an assessment will be made of whether the combination of these factors should result in the Application being placed in a higher band.

~~7.~~6. When considering whether to place an Applicant into one of the Bands for health and wellbeing, the Health and Welfare Panel will take into consideration the following factors:

(a) Band 1: Urgent Health or Wellbeing Need

Where the Applicant's accommodation is so unsuitable that should the Applicant remain or return to it the effect on their health would be critical. The only solution would be a move to alternative accommodation in the shortest time possible. Examples of when an Applicant might be placed in Band 1 include:

- Where there is a significant threat to life;
- Where there is a significant risk of serious and permanent disability;
- Where someone cannot be discharged from hospital because their home is, and will remain permanently impossible to live in;
- Where the Applicant requires essential equipment such as respiratory, which they are prevented from having due to the housing circumstances.

(b) Band 2: High Health or Wellbeing Need

Where the Applicant's accommodation is so unsuitable that it has resulted in the Applicant being completely housebound, at risk of injury, relapse or unable to live

independently. Alternative housing is required to prevent serious risks to the Applicant's health and wellbeing. Examples of when an Applicant might be placed in Band 2 include:

- Someone whose housing has rendered them housebound and where they have no support in place;
- Applicants who have escaped Domestic Abuse and who are being accommodated in a refuge or other temporary accommodation whose mental health has deteriorated as a consequence; there will be a need for not only GP but also active intervention from the Local Community Mental Health Team or Primary Care Network Multi-Disciplinary Team involvement. ~~secondary mental health intervention;~~
- Where it is impossible for an Applicant to use essential facilities in the home and adaptation is not possible;
- An inability to cope is solely and directly linked to the housing situation and active intervention from the Local Community Mental Health Team or Primary Care Network Multi-Disciplinary Team involvement. ~~is causing relationship breakdown~~ or ~~the need for secondary mental health intervention.~~
-

(c) Band 3: Medium Health or Wellbeing Need

Where the Applicant's accommodation is unsuitable and it is having an unacceptable impact on the Applicant's ability to live independently. Alternative housing is needed to prevent a deterioration in the Applicant's health and wellbeing. Examples of when an Applicant might be placed in Band 3 include:

- Someone who without the support that is in place would be housebound;
- Applicants who have escaped Domestic Abuse and who are being accommodated in a refuge or other temporary accommodation;
- Applicants who are able to access their home but are unable to access essential normal day-to- day facilities within it without significant difficulty, pain or discomfort;
- Applicants who suffer from a mental health issue which is exacerbated by their housing situation; normally there will be a need for not only GP but ~~also~~ also active intervention from the Local Community Mental Health Team or Primary Care Network Multi-Disciplinary Team involvement. ~~secondary mental health intervention~~.

(d) Band 4: Lower Health and Wellbeing Need

Where the Applicant's housing is unsuitable and is having a negative impact on the Applicant's health and wellbeing but is not causing serious deterioration to their ~~a~~ health or ability to live independently.~~,~~ ~~a~~Alternative housing would be beneficial.~~is desirable but not necessary.~~ Examples of when an Applicant might be placed in Band 4 include:

- Mobility issues where the current housing is suitable but the location means the Applicant can access but with some difficulty, public transport and other services;
- Mental health where the location, environment around the home is a contributory factor. They may have been prescribed medication but are not ~~be~~ in receipt of on-going support from their GP.

~~8.~~7. The above are examples of how assessments will be made and do not form an exhaustive list. A reference to the impact of health or wellbeing on an Applicant

should be read as also referring to any member of the Applicant's Household. Each Application will be considered on a case by case basis.

~~9.~~8. Applicants who need to move to receive support or where a family member/carer needs to move to provide support to them will also be able to apply for a health and/or wellbeing need to move. If a family member/carer needs to move, they will have to join the Register and complete the Health and Wellbeing Assessment form. Their application will be placed in one of the 4 bands depending on the assessed need to move.

APPENDIX 5: HOUSING CONDITION

1. The Council's Home Health and Safety Surveyor, or an Environmental Health Officer may be asked to investigate the defects that are reported by an Applicant where the problem might lead to an award of Band 1 or Band 2 for housing condition.

2. Where housing defects exists Applicants are expected to have already raised the problem with their landlord. This will have given the Applicant's landlord the opportunity to carry out the necessary improvements before involving the Council to take possible enforcement action. Applicants should be made fully aware that if an officer of the Council visits and identifies emergency or high disrepair it will be under an obligation to notify the landlord and where appropriate to take enforcement action under Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 ("the 2004 Act).

3. Applicants will be awarded Band 1 or Band 2 depending on the assessment carried out by the Council's Home Health and Safety Surveyor, or if appropriate, Environmental Health Officer following an inspection of the Applicant's property. Applicants will not be placed in Band 1 or Band 2 if remedial action is planned to rectify the issues. In such circumstances, and if it is necessary and appropriate, Applicants may be re-housed temporarily until any works are complete.

4. Applicants will only be placed in Band 1 or Band 2 if the housing condition inspection results in one of the actions stated in the table below being taken and

where the Council's Home Health and Safety or Environmental Health Officer states that remedial action is not possible, or if possible, that it cannot be undertaken within a reasonable period of time.

5. In considering whether remedial action is possible within a reasonable period of time, the Council will take into consideration the time scales involved in having to take any enforcement action against a landlord who is failing to co-operate or undertake necessary works.

6. The table below sets out when Emergency and High Disrepair will be awarded:

BAND	**HOUSING CONDITION ASSESSMENT**
Band 1:Emergency Disrepair	Where the Council's Home Health and Safety Surveyor, or where appropriate, an Environmental Health Officer, determines that the Council should serve a Demolition Order, Prohibition Order, Emergency Prohibition Order or carry out emergency remedial works under the 2004 Act.
BAND	**HOUSING CONDITION ASSESSMENT**
Band 2: High Disrepair	Where the Council's Home Health and Safety Surveyor, or where appropriate an Environmental Health Officer, has assessed a property as suffering from either a Category 1 or 2 hazard as set out under Part 1 of the 2004 Act and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

7. An Applicant's who has been awarded Emergency or High Disrepair will have their Application periodically reviewed. An Applicant's Emergency or High Disrepair Banding will be removed if the disrepair is rectified. The Applicant's Emergency or High Disrepair Banding will also be removed if the Applicant is preventing the landlord from undertaking necessary works. An Applicant who is found to be behaving in this way may be removed from the Register, as no longer qualifying as they will be deemed to be someone who is deliberately worsening their circumstances to be able to join the Register (please see paragraph 4.5.1 and Appendix 2: Eligibility and Qualification above).

8. Any Applicant who has had their Application removed or placed into a lower Band will be notified and will be able to seek a review of the decision. Please refer to paragraph 7.5 for the reviews process.

APPENDIX 6: ALLOCATION OF GARAGES

1. To be considered for a Council garage, applicants must be 18 years or older and submit an application to the Council on the appropriate form.

2. Garages are normally allocated on a date order basis from when the application form is received; however,

   - Preferences may be given to applicants living in the same street as the void garage.
   - Preference will be given to applicants who do not currently hold a Council garage tenancy over an applicant who already has a tenancy of 2 or more garages.

3. Applicants may not be allocated a garage if the applicant:
   - Owes former or current arrears on a Council property or garage;
   - Owes former or current recharges on a Council property or garage;
   - Owes any other housing related debt (ie court costs);
   - Has previously been evicted or has poor past payment history of a garage tenancy.

4. A review of the garage waiting list will be carried out at least once a year.

5. Succession of a garage may take place depending on a number of factors:
   - Demand in the area;
   - The successor tenant's address;
   - Payment history

6. Charities or non-profitable organisations are able to apply for a garage to be held on a free of charge basis. Only hard-to-let garages may be let free of charge (ie where there are 2 or more garages available to let in the same street and where there are no eligible applicants on the garage waiting list for them).

APPENDIX 7: BRIEF SUMMARY OF STATUTORY PROVISIONS

1. The Act states an allocation of housing takes place when:

   - A person is selected to be a secure or introductory tenant of the Council or is nominated by the Council to be an assured tenant (including assured shorthold) of a private registered provider of social housing in the Council's district; or
   - When there is a transfer of housing accommodation where a Council or a private registered provider of social housing tenant is in a Reasonable Preference Group and the transfer was made on the tenant's Application.

2. The following do not constitute an allocation of housing:

   - A succession under the Housing Act 1985 (including for an introductory succession);
   - An assignment in accordance with the provisions of the Housing Act 1985 or to an introductory tenant;
   - A mutual exchange in accordance with the Housing Act 1985;
   - A transfer in accordance with s.158 of the Localism Act 2011;
   - A transfer of an existing social housing tenant where the tenant does not fall within the Reasonable Preference Group and the transfer is not instigated by the tenant's application;
   - An introductory tenant becoming a secure tenant.

3. The Act prohibits the Council from allocating housing accommodation other than in accordance with the provisions of its allocations policy.

This page is intentionally left blank

Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel -
21 January 2026

Housing Landlord Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategy

Purpose	For Review
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	This report sets out the results of the public consultation that was carried out following Cabinet's decision on 2 April 2025. Under Section 218A of the Housing Act 1996 local housing authorities, as landlords, are required to prepare and publish policies and procedures in relation to ASB. The Social Housing Regulation Act (2023) places additional focus on housing landlords to prevent and tackle ASB. In April 2025, a suite of policies were approved in relation to Neighbourhoods and ASB, these were: ASB Policy, Hate Crime Policy, and Good Neighbourhood Management Policy. The proposed Housing Landlord ASB Strategy will formalise the Council's long-term vision and strategic commitments to delivering better outcomes for tenants, preventing, addressing, and resolving anti-social behaviour, providing a clear framework for consistent, accountable, and partnership-led delivery once adopted. The Housing Landlord ASB Strategy 2026 – 2029 sets out 4 key priorities: - Putting tenants first. - Prevention & early intervention. - Managing risk and supporting Victims. - Work in partnership.
Recommendation(s)	**1. Notes the findings of the public consultation conducted on the Housing Landlord ASB Strategy; and**

	2. Supports the adoption of the Strategy by Cabinet.
Reasons for recommendation(s)	The implementation of the Housing Landlord ASB Strategy outlines the council's commitment and approach to meeting it obligations to its tenants and is framed by the duties in relevant legislation, guidance and best practice. The Regulator of Social Housing launched its new regulatory framework on 1 April 2024. The new Regulatory standards relating to ASB require social housing landlords to: • *have a policy on how they work with relevant organisations to deter and tackle ASB in the neighbourhoods where they provide social housing;* • *clearly set out their approach for how they tackle and deter hate incidents in neighbourhoods where they provide social housing;* • *enable ASB to be reported easily and keep tenants informed about the progress of their case;* • *provide prompt and appropriate action in response to ASB, having regard to the full range of tools and legal powers available to them; and* • *support tenants who are affected by ASB, including by signposting them to agencies who can give them appropriate support and assistance.*
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Steve Davies
Strategic Director(s)	Peter Matthew – Housing and Communities (Interim)
Officer Contact	Chris Pike ASB & Neighbourhood Manager 02380 285512

	chris.pike@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. This report outlines the findings of the public consultation undertaken following Cabinets decision on 2 April 2025 to commence the consultation process for the Housing Landlord ASB Strategy 2025 – 2028 (Appendix 1).

2. The report to Cabinet on 05 February 2025 can be found here.

Outcome of the consultation

3. The consultation period commenced on 30 May 2025 to 29 August 2025.

4. The survey was made available through New Forest District Council's website, community hub drop-in sessions, estate walkabouts, and discussions with our Tenant Involvement Group. The consultation was advertised in our 8 local offices around the district, via staff external email banners and tenant links article.

5. The consultation was conducted using the online platform 'Go Vocal', which was hosted and analysed by NFDC officers. See Appendix 2 for further details on the consultation.

6. Several respondents emphasised the need for more proactive measures to address anti-social behaviour, with specific calls for the inclusion of youth centres, youth clubs, and outreach youth workers as part of the strategy.

7. There was a suggestion that collaboration with residents should be encouraged, but not to the extent that residents lead the process. One respondent felt the strategy was on the right track if even half of the proposed work could be implemented. Overall, a more proactive, collaborative approach, with greater community pride. The tenant Involvement Group was overall in support of the strategy.

8. The feedback from the consultation has influenced the following changes to the Housing Landlord ASB Strategy:

    - A shift in language to reduce stigma—focusing on behaviours rather than labels.
    - A commitment to sharing positive outcomes from mediation, community-led improvements, and enforcement actions.
    - Strengthen interdepartmental collaboration through an agreed protocol between Housing Services, Community Safety,

Environmental Enforcement, and CCTV teams to improve the prevention and management of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and environmental crime.

- The containerisation of the current direction of travel in service delivery involves splitting the estate management team into two distinct teams: Neighbourhood Management and ASB & Tenancy Sustainment. This approach will enable ASB cases to be managed more effectively, while still providing support to tenants through the tenancy sustainment team. It will also help prevent workload pressures from diverting focus away from high-risk or high-harm cases.
- Youth service provision is a key component of the Safer New Forest Partnership Plan, which continues to take a strategic overview of youth engagement and prevention initiatives. This ensures that resources and interventions are coordinated effectively across agencies. We will maintain close collaboration with our Community Safety Team to provide feedback to the youth service on any ASB concerns raised through referrals via the Partnership Action Group. In addition, we will strengthen our approach by establishing an agreed protocol for managing youth-related ASB.

9. Feedback from EMT (Executive Management Team) was to move tenant data to an annex 2 and provide a clearer position around our commitment to improve ASB, as one of our lowest performing tenant satisfaction measures and how this will drive the strategy priorities.

Corporate plan priorities

10. The Housing Landlord ASB Strategy supports the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 priorities:

    Priority People (1 – 3): Helping people in the greatest need and creating balanced, resilient, and healthy communities who feel safe and supported with easy access to services.

    Priority Places (3): Caring for our facilities, neighbours and open spaces

Options appraisal

11. The Housing Landlord ASB Strategy has been reviewed in light of consultation feedback, and it is deemed appropriate and proportionate for NFDC to publish the four strategic priories which reflect best practice, our tenants voice and the regulatory framework.

Consultation undertaken

12. Consultation on the Housing Landlord ASB Strategy priorities was successfully completed. A comprehensive consultation period was provided during the summer months, supported by a range of engagement activities:

    - Engagement Events: Held across key locations to gather tenant and community feedback.
    - Partnership Input: Shared with Police partners through the Tactical Planning Meeting (TPM) and the ASB Officer Working Group.
    - Wider Communication: Promoted via social media channels and embedded in staff email signatures.

13. Cllr Steve Davies, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness following consultation has endorsed the strategy as outlined in the Foreword (Appendix 1)

Financial and resource implications

14. Any expenditure required by the proposed strategy and policies will be met from existing budgets, which are provided to Housing Officers to tackle neighbourhood and community issues.

15. Failure to raise standards, meet regulatory requirements and respond appropriately to complaints could lead to fines levied by the Housing Ombudsman.

Legal implications

16. Under Section 218A of the Housing Act 1996 local housing authorities, as landlords, are required to prepare and publish policies and procedures in relation to ASB.

17. The Regulator of Social Housing launched its new regulatory framework on 1 April 2024 which outlines our requirements as a social housing provider.

18. The Strategy supports our priorities including remedies to tackle ASB where non-legal remedies have failed. This will involve action taken through the courts and solicitors.

Risk assessment

19. The delivery of this strategy mitigates legal and financial risk to the Council.

20. The work of Officers in working in difficult circumstances, and priority of response to reports from vulnerable people is risk assessed in line with Health & Safety and lone working procedures and the specific needs of high-risk individuals.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

21. Whilst the report has no direct implications the work of the new Housing Neighbourhood team will include improving the condition of local housing neighbourhoods, including open spaces, and the positive contribution to neighbourhoods. This may present opportunities to contribute to the Council's neighbourhood and climate objectives.

Equalities implications

22. The proposed Housing Landlord ASB strategy improves the response to ASB and hate crimes for victims of such behaviour. Reports of ASB are more often made by vulnerable people, and those with protected characteristics. The reporting process considers the needs of people with different backgrounds and needs, and a flexible and priority-based approach is defined by the policies, and the Council's aims are to positively support vulnerable people.

23. The EIA demonstrates that the only impacts are expected to positive or neutral to those households with protected characteristics. Refer to Appendix 2 for the Equality Impact Assessment

Crime and disorder implications

24. It is anticipated there will be potential indirect and direct positive impacts on the Council's tenants and neighbourhoods. The interventions proposed are likely to lead to an initial increase in the number of cases prosecuted in the courts, or by the Police, whilst long term interventions proposed should lead to a long-term reduction in crime and disorder.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

25. The collection, retention and deletion of Tenant data is governed by GDPR and associated guidance. All data will be collected and maintained in line with the required legislation.

New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications

26. The new approach to ensuring the Housing Service positively contributes to housing neighbourhoods may involve increased partnership working with the National Park Authority.

Conclusion

27. The Housing Landlord ASB strategy will inform a longer-term framework of service delivery and partnering with local agencies and support in aligning our goals and resources with the corporate plan objectives

28. It is recommended following public consultation that the Housing Landlord ASB Strategy is adopted and implemented

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – ASB Strategy 2026-2029
Appendix 2 – Consultation outcome
Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment

Background papers:

Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 5th February, 2025, 10.00 am Council Services

This page is intentionally left blank

APPENDIX 1

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

Housing Landlord Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 2026 - 29



Contents

Foreword 4
Introduction 5
What is Housing related Anti-Social Behaviour? 6
Definition: 6
National context 7
Community Safety Partnerships review and Anti-Social Behaviour Powers 8
The Crime and Policing Bill 2025 8
Safer Neighbourhoods standards 11
Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standards (TSMs) 12
Housing Ombudsman Services 12
Tenant Stigma 13
Local context 14
Stock and Tenancy Type 14
Why this is important for New Forest Resident Services & Tenants 15
Tracking data 16
Corporate Plan 2024-2028 17
Our Current Approach to ASB & Neighbour reports 17
Achievements to date 18
The current ASB picture: Key Problems and Strategic Drivers 19
Our vision and strategy are built on 4 Strategic priorities 21
1. Putting tenants first 21
2. Prevention & early intervention 21
3. Managing risk and supporting victims 21
4. Work in partnership 21
Strategic Priority 1 23
Putting tenants first 23
Strategic Priority 2 24
Prevention & early intervention 24
Strategic Priority 3 26
Managing risk and supporting victims 26
Strategic Priority 4 27
Work in partnership 27
Monitoring and review 28
Measure of success 29

DRAFT

Annexe 1: Strategy Action Plan 30
Priority 1, Putting tenants first 30
Priority 2, Prevention & early intervention 32
Priority 3, Managing risk and supporting victims 35
Priority 4, Work in partnership 36
Annexe 2: ASB Data 39
Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) Data 40
2024-25 TSM results 40
Safer New Forest Partnership 40
Annexe 3: Glossary of terms 43

DRAFT

Foreword

I am delighted to introduce this new Housing Landlord Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategy for New Forest District Council's (NFDC) housing tenants.

We understand the negative impact ASB can have on our communities and on individuals. No-one should live in fear of intimidation from neighbours or others from within their street or neighbourhoods. Too often ASB is referred to as a 'low level' crime or behaviour that should just be tolerated. Police, local authorities, and community agencies all have responsibilities to tackle ASB by working together to help victims.

Whilst no single organisation holds the key to resolving or preventing ASB, this strategy lays down the Council's Housing Service's commitments to take steps towards preventing ASB, supporting victims of ASB, investigating ASB and when necessary, ensuring that we have the necessary mechanisms in place to take rigorous action as a landlord.

ASB is not solely an issue for our tenants, but it is important that we acknowledge our role as the largest social housing provider in the district and the responsibilities we have for keeping our tenants safe and well in their homes. This strategy builds on the work already undertaken in our district through effective community safety partnership arrangements, including the longstanding and effective work of the Safer New Forest Partnership.

I am pleased therefore that this strategy aims to deliver 4 key priorities which will raise the profile of our work to prevent and tackle ASB but is also victim centered and has a clear commitment to continuous improvement and enhancing partnership working.

Steve Davies



Cllr Steve Davies

Portfolio Holder for Housing & Homelessness

DRAFT

Introduction

This strategy responds to a changing legislative and regulatory landscape, as well as feedback from our tenants on how we have managed previous reports of ASB, and how living though ASB feels to our tenants.

The Regulator for Social Housing has led the implementation of a new regulatory regime, including a tenants' charter and consumer standards which provide clear guidance on the role of landlords. In response to these changes and the feedback from our tenants the Council has developed a strategy to deliver effective prevention and support initiatives.

As the largest landlord in the district NFDC has a significant role to play in managing our estates and neighbourhoods to ensure that they are a safe and welcoming environment and one where we encourage harmony in our communities. In doing this we must continue to develop preventative measures and early intervention measures to prevent ASB occurring and escalating.

This strategy sets out the Council's priorities to preventing and responding to ASB, building on the longstanding work of the Safer New Forest Partnership, which will continue to take a strategic overview of Crime and ASB within the New Forest District involving all our partners and commissioned services, including the Council's landlord services.

As a landlord, we are responsible for supporting our tenants who may be victims of Anti-Social Behaviour as well as taking swift and effective action where a perpetrator is our tenant.

Our primary funding is from the Housing Revenue Account, which via income from tenants' rents funds all housing related services and facilities. Therefore, any service relating to Anti-Social Behaviour must primarily be for the benefit of our own tenants or related to our housing management functions.

DRAFT

What is Housing related Anti-Social Behaviour?

Housing Related ASB is defined as activity that affects our housing management functions.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is a term which covers a broad range of issues and there are several definitions for it. The general agreement is that it is defined as 'anything causing a nuisance or annoyance.'

Definition:

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Police Act 2014 Part 1 section 2 defines the meaning of ASB as:

a) conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm, or distress to any person,

(b) conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises, or

(c) conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person.

DRAFT



National context

There is considerable emphasis placed on the Police, Councils and Housing providers by Central Government on ASB and the methods used to tackle it. This focus began in 1998 via the Crime and Policing Act with the introduction of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). The Crime and Policing Act described ASB as ***"Causing or likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress to one or more person not of the same household as the perpetrator."***

In 2003 Central Government set up the Anti-Social Behaviour unit, launched the Anti-Social Behaviour Together action plan and introduced the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. The accompanying guidance outlined the process for tackling ASB via **respect** and **responsibility**. It provided Local Authorities and the Police with a wider and more flexible range of powers to meet their existing responsibilities.

From a social housing perspective, the changes included developing the use of injunctions and demoted tenancies. It included provisions to deal with noise nuisance and introduced closure powers on premises that were being used for drug dealing, it defined ASB to ensure reports were acted upon, as well as stressing the importance of collecting data on ASB and using this to support any community response.

In 2014 The ASB Crime and Policing Act was introduced with the aim of providing simpler, more effective powers to tackle ASB, that would provide better protection for victims and communities. This Act split the definition of ASB to cover the different legal tools available to both the Police and Local Authorities. The Definition under Section 1 of the act became widely recognised by Housing Providers as the definition for Anti-Social Behaviour. Statutory guidance was published in 2019 which focused on the importance of tackling the impact of Anti-Social behaviour and the effect this has on victims and on victim's needs.

In 2022 National Government published **five** ASB principles, which are:

1. Victims should be encouraged to report Anti-Social Behaviour and expect to be taken seriously. They should have clear ways to report, have access to help and support to recover, and be given the opportunity to choose restorative approaches to tackling ASB.
2. Agencies will have clear and transparent processes to ensure that victims can report ASB concerns, can understand how the matter will be investigated and are kept well informed of progress once a report is made.

3. Agencies and practitioners will work across boundaries to identify, assess and tackle ASB and its underlying causes. Referral pathways should be clearly set out between services and published locally. This includes pathways for the ASB case review and health services.
4. The public's ASB concerns should always be considered both nationally and locally in strategic needs assessments for community safety. Best practice should be shared through a network of ASB experts within each community safety partnership, each policing area and nationally.
5. Adults and children who exhibit ASB should have the opportunity to take responsibility for their behaviour and repair the harm caused by it. Agencies should deliver appropriate interventions, which may include criminal justice options, based on the seriousness, risks and vulnerabilities of the case.

In March 2023, the national government set out a new approach to working with local agencies to tackle ASB across England and Wales including:

- Increasing the urgency ASB is responded to.
- Changing laws and system to take a zero-tolerance approach to ASB, cracking down on illegal drugs such as cuckooing.
- Increasing Police and other agencies' tools to discourage ASB, such as higher on the spot fines, increase in youth support and filling empty shops and regenerating local parks.

Community Safety Partnerships review and Anti-Social Behaviour Powers

As Part of the ASB Action Plan national government ran a consultation between March and May 2023 which included a focus on how existing ASB Powers could be improved and expanded. The consultation concluded that respondents felt that expanding the powers in the Anti-Social Behaviours, Crime and Policing Act 2014 would ensure they are used more frequently and consistently to tackle ASB.

The Crime and Policing Bill 2025

This bill seeks to strengthen enforcement against anti-social behaviour (ASB) through the introduction of Respect Orders, replacing Civil

Injunctions for adults. These orders impose strict restrictions, such as area bans, and mandate positive requirements like rehabilitation programmes. Breach of a Respect Order becomes a criminal offence, enforceable by arrest, with penalties of up to six months' imprisonment in Magistrates' Court or two years in Crown Court. Social landlords will still be able apply for ASB injunction where behaviours impacts housing management, supported by risk assessments to ensure proportionality. The Bill also extends dispersal powers to 72 hours, raises fixed penalties for Community Protection Notices and PSPOs to £500, and grants landlords direct authority to seek Closure Orders. Additional measures include expanded drug testing on arrest for Class B and C substances, rapid seizure and disposal of nuisance vehicles within 48 hours, and new offences targeting cuckooing and child criminal exploitation. These reforms aim to deliver a robust, multi-agency response to persistent ASB, combining tougher sanctions with pathways into treatment and rehabilitation.

DRAFT



Regulatory Framework

Following the tragic event at Grenfell Towers in 2017 the government introduced ***The Charter for Social Housing Residents – Social Housing White Paper 2020*** with the aim to make sure social housing tenants are treated with the respect they deserve. Within this it states that "***social housing tenants are more likely to experience anti-social behaviour and be victims of crime than those in other tenures."***

"Anti-social behaviour (ASB) and hate incidents can have a significant negative impact on tenants of social housing, both for those experiencing it directly and for those living in the community where the ASB and hate incidents are occurring.

In order to deter and tackle ASB and hate incidents effectively in areas where they operate, registered providers must work with appropriate partners, with a common aim of trying to reduce ASB and hate incidents. Joint initiatives may include, for example, providing mediation services to try to resolve disputes before they escalate, undertaking security measures and environmental improvements and providing diversionary activities.

It is vital that registered providers have effective policies and processes to tackle ASB and hate incidents, and they should communicate these to tenants. These should include their approaches to investigating reports of ASB and hate incidents (including the roles of other relevant agencies), the support available to affected tenants and the actions they take to deal with perpetrators of ASB and hate incidents.

Registered providers should take into account the diverse needs of tenants in considering how tenants report ASB and hate incidents to them and eliminate any barriers to reporting such incidents.

We expect registered providers to take a victim-centred approach to supporting tenants affected by ASB. This support can take different forms such as, for example, making a referral to an external support agency or taking into account the wishes of the complainant when determining the course of action the provider will take. As part of this approach, registered providers should consider how they support vulnerable perpetrators of ASB, to help them to sustain their tenancy." Consumer standard Coode of Practice

The housing white paper introduced 7 new commitments, of which 3 of these relate directly to Housing providers' responsibilities to ASB

Chapter 2

sets out the requirements for tenants to know how their landlord is performing, setting out new tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) including how satisfied they are with how their landlord has manged their Anti-Social Behaviour case. Landlord performance data will be published in national league tables allowing for tenants to make meaningful comparisons to be made across the sector for the first time

Chapter 3

sets out the requirements to have complaints dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong ombudsman.

Chapter 6

sets out the requirements for tenants to have good quality homes and neighbourhoods to live in, within this, landlords must set out to tackle Anti-Social behaviour by enabling tenants to know who is responsible for actioning their reports and who can support and assist them if they are faced with Anti-Social behaviour

Landlords must also make a positive contribution to the neighbourhood working with local partners and stakeholders

The Regulator of Social Housing launched its new regulatory framework on 1 April 2024. The Regulatory standards relating to ASB are contained in within the Customer Standards including Neighbourhood and Community Standards, Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard and the Tenants Satisfaction Measure Standards, which stipulate:

Safer Neighbourhoods standards

- *Registered providers must have a policy on how they work with relevant organisations to deter and tackle ASB in the neighbourhoods where they provide social housing.*
- *Registered providers must clearly set out their approach for how they tackle and deter hate incidents in neighbourhoods where they provide social housing.*
- *Registered providers must enable ASB to be reported easily and keep tenants informed about the progress of their case.*

- *Registered providers must provide prompt and appropriate action in response to ASB, having regard to the full range of tools and legal powers available to them.*
- *Registered providers must support tenants who are affected by ASB, including by signposting them to agencies who can give them appropriate support and assistance.*

Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standards (TSMs)

- Registered providers must collect and provide information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in managing their homes and neighbourhoods.

This places a requirement on landlords to publish performance on the number of ASB cases relative to the size of the landlord (NM01) and 'How satisfied or dissatisfied tenants are with New Forest Director Council's approach to handling Anti-Social Behaviour.

Housing Ombudsman Services

The Regulator of Social Housing & Housing Ombudsman Service has strengthened their investigative approach, and their response to failings. With failings identified by the Ombudsman leading to real change expected by the Regulator.

Landlords have been notified of the increase in expected standards in a series of **special reports from the Housing Ombudsman,** who have published landlord complaints where evidence of maladministration has been found, with a large focus on ASB complaints.

The Housing Ombudsman continue to publish spotlight reports on common failings within the sector including:

- The Ombudsman's Spotlight on Noise complaints report (October 2022)
- The Ombudsman's Spotlight on Knowledge and Information Management report (May 2023)
- The Ombudsman's Spotlight on Attitudes, respect, and rights (January 2024)

The spotlight report on noise complaints made 32 recommendations to tackle the issue, including looking at refurbishment, neighbourhood management and anti-social behaviour policies, allocations and record-keeping, information-sharing, and complaint handling.

DRAFT

Tenant Stigma

During the consultation for this strategy, we launched an online consultation and attended community hub events in Calshot, Totton, Lymington, and New Milton. Through active casework and feedback from the Tenant Involvement Group (TIG), a recurring theme emerged: the impact of tenant stigma. This is a well-documented issue and resonates with the tragic case of Awaab Ishak, where tenant concerns were ignored—highlighting how negative perceptions of social housing can lead to reduced service quality and systemic neglect. Tenants often feel that social housing is portrayed as a “last resort” compared to home ownership, reinforcing harmful stereotypes and undermining trust.

This ASB strategy aims to challenge these perceptions by embedding fairness, transparency, and respect into how we address ASB and support individuals. We will achieve this through clear and fair communication, ensuring tenants understand their rights and responsibilities, and by sharing success stories where early intervention improved community safety without resorting to tenancy enforcement. Each priority within the strategy will be reviewed to assess whether it effectively tackles stigma.

Tenant involvement will be central to this approach. We will work with TIG and community panels to review and continue to shape ASB & Neighbourhood policies, avoid language that labels tenants or entire communities, and focus on behaviours rather than identities or tenure. ASB interventions will be framed as safeguarding community well-being, not punishing individuals.

DRAFT





Local context

Stock and Tenancy Type

The council remains the largest provider of housing within the district, managing a stock of over 5,250 socially rented homes. Under the Council landlord strategy it is the Council's objective to ensure council housing is used as effectively as possible to provide homes for New Forest residents who are unable to secure their own accommodation. The aims of Council's tenancy policy (Tenancy Police 2025) is to ensure tenants understand their rights and responsibilities and to support the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour and Tenant Engagement Strategies.

NFDC offers a secure lifetime tenancy to all tenants. All new tenants will normally be granted an initial Introductory Tenancy. Should acts of ASB be carried out the Council can seek to end either the introductory tenancy or secure tenancy.

NFDC provides temporary housing and a private sector lease scheme which is let to homeless households or to prevent homelessness. We are responsible for managing these tenancies and ensuring tenants are supported to keep to the terms of their agreements, whilst awaiting permanent offers of accommodation to be made.

DRAFT



Why this is important for New Forest Resident Services & Tenants

As ASB is often primarily referred to as a ‘local concern’. We will need to recognise ASB will fundamentally look and feel different in every area of The New Forest and a one size fits all approach will therefore not work for our tenants.

The New Forest is a large district which is mainly rural with urbanised areas in Totton and Hythe to the east, Lymington and New Milton on the southern coast and Ringwood in the west. These areas hold 73% of the district population. A further 16% of the population live in rural towns and fringe areas, whilst the remaining 11% are in rural villages.

Research and analysis completed by the Home Office in 2023 around the impact of ASB evidenced that the people most likely to be victims of ASB tend to live in more deprived communities. Therefore, we need to look more closely at our deprived areas. Overall, New Forest has a low level of deprivation. It was ranked 240 out of 317 local authority districts across England (where rank 1 had the highest level of deprivation). However, there are small areas of deprivation within the district, with pockets of higher levels of deprivation located in Totton, areas near to Hythe, Lymington, and New Milton. The New Forest ranks similar to the Hampshire average when looking at income deprivation affecting children.

Social demographics and personal circumstances are a key factor in influencing the scale of impact of ASB experienced by individuals. Examples being that those with long term physical or mental health conditions are more likely to have experiences or witness ASB to those without the same conditions. Social demographics will include different

genders, housing tenures, age, and vulnerability such as physical and/or mental health conditions.

Taking the example of age. The New Forest has one of the lowest population densities across English local authorities, but the New Forest has seen an increase in the average age of the population from 47 to 51 years of age, with a 19.9% increase in people aged between 65 and 74 years.

Research on the impact on individual and community by central government has shown that age was key in determining views when determining the perception of ASB. The youngest age group (those aged 18 to 34) being more likely to feel that ASB is a 'very big' or 'fairly big' problem in their local area (57%) than those aged 35 to 54 (50%) and those aged 55 and over (34%). This was despite the 18 to 34 age group being more likely to interpret ASB as 'normal' behaviour.

Interventions identified with our strategy will pay close attention the social demographic profile in the New Forest and effectively target and support groups who may be disproportionately impacted by ASB.

Tracking data

We continue to make improvements in how to track and record vulnerabilities – Annexe 2: ASB Data. Our social housing tenant demographic data survey is not yet fully complete as of April 2025. But this data collection exercise is well underway and will obtain key personal data important to designing services.

Staff feedback received on ASB casework is that we continue to see increased levels of vulnerabilities in our housing stock, and this will need to be reviewed in line with the recommendation made in the housing ombudsman spotlight report on attitudes, respect, and rights – relationship of equals.

A significant amount of our housing stock is found in our urbanised areas and the more deprived areas of The New Forest. A majority of our ASB reports will continue to be reported from these traditional built-up areas and our response will therefore need to be primarily focused to these areas. We do however need to recognise the rural landscape of The New Forest where we also hold housing stock in more sparsely populated rural areas such as Martin, Sway, Burley, Calshot and Bransgore - which will have a different local perception to ASB.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

Our tenants and the communities they live in are an ongoing priority for this council, which is supported by the themes in our Corporate Plan 2024-2028. NFDC is keen to promote opportunities to gather feedback from our tenants through the delivery of a new Tenant Engagement Strategy and our annual tenant survey, as we look to continually improve and evolve our services.

The new corporate plan priority themes are People, Place and Prosperity. Consultation to develop the Corporate Plan involved a resident survey which was conducted between 8 September 2022 and November 2022. Of the 760 interviewed nearly all (96%) respondents stated they felt very/fairly safe in their local area, however nearly a quarter of the respondents reported their quality of life was affected by the fear of crime. This indicated that whilst the people feel safe there is an increased perception of crime and disorder, leading to anxiety and adjustments with daily life.

Our Current Approach to ASB & Neighbour reports

The Council is committed to sustaining tenancies with our Tenancy Policy

Our current preventative measures include:

- Use of Introductory Tenancies – all first-time council tenants are given an introductory tenancy.
- New tenancy visits and structured home visits – taking place with 3 months and 9 months of a tenancy to emphasise tenant obligations, support, and identifying vulnerabilities or disadvantages.
- Regular estate visits and block inspections.
- Regular tenancy visits / check in to update tenant information and check property condition
- Provide training that equips staff with the knowledge of support services available from other agencies and how to access them.
- Attending strategic partnership meetings such as New Forest Drug Related Harm Forum, Partnership Action Group and the New Forest District Tactical Planning Group to ensure there is adequate focus and resources directed toward tackling ASB.

DRAFT

Achievements to date

- Publication of a new Tenant engagement strategy in April 2024.
- Newly created ASB Manager post in 2023 and wider resources review ensuring we have the necessary resources identified to tackle ASB.
- Restructure of the Neighbourhood and Estate Management team and the creation of a dedicated Neighbourhood & ASB services (3x Full time Neighbourhood officers and 1.5 full time neighbourhood assistants)
- Adopted ASB, Hate Crime and Good Neighbourhood Management Policies in April 2025
- A single point of ASB & Neighbourhood reports without housing resident services
- New ICT Housing Management Systems (HMS) developed and launched in February 2023 to support case management and data collection.
- Redefining sub-categories of reports to allow for greater analysis of trends.
- Regulator of social housing learning and internal knowledge sharing applied to processes and disseminated to housing employees.
- Digital consultation platform implementation to allow targeted consultation to different tenant groups.
- Updated procedures and staff guidance.
- Staff Training
- Commissioning of a ASB victim support services
- The adoption of “community walkabouts”





The current ASB picture: Key Problems and Strategic Drivers

Based on our data and Tenant Satisfaction Measures, ASB in the New Forest remains relatively low, and satisfaction levels benchmarked against other organisations are good but remains one of our lowest performing areas.

Cases managed by the team are closed as either resolved, unresolved (where no further intervention is possible), or unproven. The largest reason for the closing unresolved cases is due to low-level disputes between neighbours; such as parking, animals or specific person behaviours. This representing approximately 33% of all unresolved cases. In these situations, advice and guidance around self-help is recommended.

The majority of resolved cases relate to behaviour (linked to alcohol , substance misuse, disturbance from visitors, shouting and screaming and noise report, which together make up nearly 50% of all resolved cases, with behaviour accounting for 26.15% and noise for 23.08%.

Analysis of the data and regular case reviews shows that neighbour disputes remain a significant challenge, suggesting that residents in the New Forest may lack confidence in self-resolution and that there is limited uptake in self-help guidance.

Withdrawn complaints, which do occur, may indicate dissatisfaction with the process or fear of escalation, while anonymous complaints, continue to be difficult to verify and often lead to non-actionable outcomes.

Reports to Housing Resident Services are regular with our highest proportion linked to our largest towns - Totton, New Milton and

Lymington/Pennington, creating an ongoing ASB workload that can delay resolutions.

Our data highlights noticeable challenges in managing anti-social behaviour which is seen both nationally and locally. There remains a need to balance officer time between complex cases linked to behaviour and noise and one on one neighbour disputes, which consume staff and partner resources despite solutions often being achievable through resident self-help. If not addressed correctly, these disputes can escalate into more serious ASB or cooperate complaints.

It is essential that we continue to engage with residents to encourage effective use of self-help tools and provide clear guidance, while also addressing reasons for complaint withdrawal through better communication – this is under our good neighbourhood management Policy. Noise and behaviour issues should remain a priority as they account for nearly half of resolved cases. Improving evidence collection through better reporting channels and regularly reviewing cases will help prevent workload pressures from diverting focus away from high-risk or high-harm cases.

Active case monitoring indicates that the main drivers of reports to us as a landlord are behaviour (linked to alcohol, arguments or visitors) and noise-related reports (impact sounds, arguments and noise from neighbours). These reports often involve one or more parties with additional medical diagnoses, long-term health conditions or substance misuse. These factors can make individuals either more vulnerable to experiencing anti-social behaviour or more likely to exhibit behaviours perceived as ASB. This complexity requires a balanced approach that combines enforcement with tailored support and multi-agency collaboration.

Other common themes noted are the security of our blocks, including older, less secure communal entry doors which do not have electronic fob access, and which allow visitors to contribute to existing ASB issues.

DRAFT

Our vision and strategy are built on 4 Strategic priorities.

1. Putting tenants first	**2. Prevention & early intervention**
3. Managing risk and supporting victims	**4. Work in partnership**

As a landlord our priority should always be to our tenants. Our vision is one where all cases of ASB and reported problems between neighbours are responded to, with clear actions agreed.

The definition of ASB has a low threshold, and what can cause or is likely to cause a nuisance or annoyance can be subjective to the person making the report.

Given the risks attached to ASB; We will follow a harm-based approach towards ASB so that the most serious behaviour, which has the greatest impact on people's lives, is prioritised, tackled and solutions are found.

The Social Housing Regulator's view on ASB is clear and they want housing providers to also take a victim-based approach when responding to reports of ASB and in doing this we need to identify those more vulnerable to ASB and ensure their needs are considered and supported. This is sometimes also referred to as 'human centric' and involves seeing people as the most important thing.

Our data concludes that the majority of ASB or reported cases of annoyance or nuisance will not lead to 'high harm'.

In cases of that do not meet the threshold for ASB intervention, individuals and communities will continue to be provided with the access to the appropriate advice and tools so that they as neighbours can work together to resolve their differences.

To ensure this happens we will provide a robust assessment of all ASB and reported problems between neighbours to identify not only the nature of the behaviour and the causes, but also to identify at an early-stage cases of neighbour nuisance or disagreements which are not to be classified as ASB but may still impact on individuals or communities.

DRAFT

In cases of ASB, when the need for formal intervention is required by the Council, we will take a risk-based approach, assessing both the risk to the victims and their wishes. By assessing cases of ASB we will be able provide the flexible and tailored response to cases of ASB that the regulator and tenants expect.

We want tenants to take pride in their neighbourhood and communities. To support this, we aim to increase resources and funding, from existing budgets, to tackle ASB, to improve our neighbourhoods and other decent neighbourhood projects as well as working with diversionary projects.

These priorities are aiming for real, meaningful impact for both tenants and NFDC services. Our priorities will be reviewed periodically by both tenants and colleagues to make sure outcomes are being achieved and powers can be flexed up and down depending on what our tenants tell us as we progress with implementation.

DRAFT



DRAFT

Strategic Priority 1

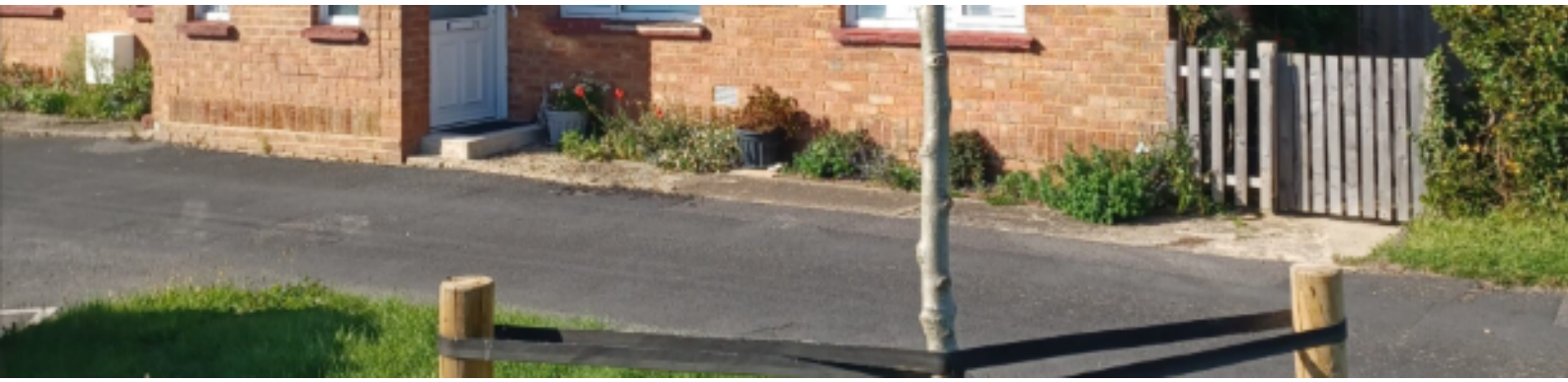
Putting tenants first

Our service and response to ASB needs to be shaped by our tenants as our tenants are best placed to tell us what is working well and what we can do better.

We will

- Ensure tenants are at the forefront of shaping our response to ASB, neighbour disputes and their neighbourhoods.
- Ensure data analysis forms part of our proactive activities to improve our response to ASB and neighbour disputes.
- Learn from complaints , using the tenant complaint forum to implement learning.
- Ensure that the tenants are actively involved around any service improvement and receipt of feedback.
- Gain feedback on all closed cases of ASB and use lessons learnt from complaints to feed into service improvements.
- Identify the core skills and knowledge required to deliver an effective ASB service, and sourcing training that delivers this. As part of this exercise, it will be essential that training on safeguarding is recognised and included as core knowledge.
- Develop a staff essential training plan focusing on legal tools and powers to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour as well as training around Mental health, Drugs and Alcohol and Domestic Abuse.
- We will listen and respond to our communities around how we engage with our tenants, other residents and our elected members.
- Review the team structure to reflect best practice and current service need.

DRAFT



Strategic Priority 2

Prevention & early intervention

One of the most effective tools to resolving ASB is to be proactive in preventing ASB in the first place, as well as responding early to reports to stop issues escalating.

We will:

- Develop on the strategic approach to ASB and community cohesion (communication over conflict) but continuing to develop the adopted ASB Policy and a 'Good Neighbourhood' Policy
- Increase awareness of what ASB is and what services are available.
- Increase awareness of what a hate crime is through the introduction of a Hate Crime Policy and Procedure.
- Increase awareness of Domestic Abuse through NFDC's Domestic Abuse Strategy and a Housing Landlord Domestic Abuse Policy & Procedure.
- Complete a self-assessment and respond to the Housing Ombudsman spotlight report on noise nuisance.
- Continuously review our ASB procedure to ensure it provides a fast response and remains focused on early intervention.
- Strengthen our existing messaging on ASB and make it clear what is a breach of tenancy and the likely consequences.
- Continue our close and effective partnership working arrangements.
- Listen to tenants on the current service provision around tenancy support and the support provided to alleged perpetrators of ASB.
- Ensure data and intelligence is shared between agencies to flag patterns of behaviour, crime & disorder and ASB via Community Partnership Forms (CPIs)
- Continue to review all associated documentation (letters, action plans, website) to ensure that there is a clear and consistent message delivered, with a real focus on prevention and resolution.
- Listen to our tenants when reviewing our processes around managing our neighbourhood and communal areas so that we promote environmental sustainability and tenant engagement through improvements to communal areas and neighbourhoods.
- Empower our communities and tenants not to tolerate ASB and how to safely challenge and report incidents.
- Actively prevent and reduce ASB through timely and appropriate interventions such as sending warning letters, offering mediation, and using acceptable behaviour contracts.
- Complete a review of communal entry door security as part of our stock condition surveys and maintenance programs.

Strategic Priority 3

Managing risk and supporting victims

ASB can leave victims feeling unsafe and afraid in their own home, often leaving them with the feeling that no one is listening. The 'person' needs to be at the centre of our response.

We will:

- Review internal guidance and processes around recording tenant vulnerabilities.
- Address victim's immediate needs and allow time to discuss long-term support while their cases are being investigated.
- Help victims understand the options they have and what actions we can take.
- Complete regular case reviews with victims, listening to victims needs and wishes.
- Seek feedback on ASB cases to give victims the opportunity to give feedback on services.
- Use Risk Assessments in cases of ASB and use this to tailor our individual approach.
- Ensure safeguarding issues are raised and shared between agencies.
- Continue to use sensitive lettings and placements to help manage our neighbourhoods.
- Continue to use the Management Transfer procedure to support rehoming both victims and vulnerable tenants whose risks cannot be managed in situ.
- Using legal enforcement action where necessary, taking a robust approach to resolve ASB whilst ensuring any action is proportionate.
- Work in partnership with Support Services.



DRAFT

Strategic Priority 4

Work in partnership

Police, local authorities, and community agencies, all have the responsibility to tackle anti-social behaviour by working together to help victims.

We will:

- Respond to serious or persistent cases of ASB under MARM (Multi Agency Risk Management) frameworks or working with individual partners, such as Adult Services and Children Services.
- Review current practices and thresholds for support service access ensuring people do not fall through the gaps.
- Review how we manage our homelessness temporary accommodation with close interdepartmental relationships.
- Promote the use of ASB case reviews where complainants are experiencing persistent anti-social behaviour.
- Reviewing how well NFDC (Housing), NFDC (Community Safety) and the Police are reviewing cases and holding services to account for their actions.
- Develop a service level agreement with open spaces around the management of housing land, including tenant involvement on how their open spaces are managed.
- Develop closer relationships with local policing teams across the district.
- Develop closer relationships with Hampshire Adults and Children Services, Mental Health Services and Probation
- Work closely with Environmental Protection to swifty investigate and resolve noise complaints.

Work in partnership around any legal enforcement action.



DRAFT

Monitoring and review

The outcomes of the strategy and the work programme will be under continual monitoring and review. Updates to Members and the Council's Executive Management Team will be provided at least annually.

The tenant perception survey carried out each year will provide valuable insight in to how satisfied our tenants are around our response to ASB. It is accepted that there are some quick wins that can be implemented whilst other changes will take time.

Annex 1 allows us to flex our approach and timescales, but the aim will always be to achieve the priorities in this strategy before the end of 2028.

New actions and targets may be agreed if further changes are made to corporate objectives, national legislation, and policy. The focus on ASB is at the forefront of both the regulatory framework and political attention in both the national approach within criminal justice system and Policing system. It is likely that further legislation, guidance, and funding arrangements will continue to change over the next few years.

We are keen to understand the ongoing impact of Anti-Social Behaviour on our tenants especially those victims who are vulnerable and live in more deprived areas. Our annual review will incorporate statistical and perception-based analysis of our ASB cases and impact on victims. This will enable us to be responsive in tackling any emerging issues.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services, working with the Housing Strategic and Assistant Directors, our Housing Service Managers and the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Manager will lead the review of the delivery action plan.

In reviewing its strategy annually this council remains committed to embracing amended policy direction and incorporating it within annual updates.



DRAFT

Measure of success

Our key measures of success will be quantitative:

- Improved satisfaction performance year on year following on from the initial set of Tenant Satisfaction Perception Survey in 23/24
- Improved satisfaction performance year on year when bench marked against similar sized landlords.
- Reduction in number of stage 1 and 2 complaints received relating to ASB compared with the 23/24 financial year.
- Increase in cases being successfully resolved year on year following outcome being recorded from 24/25.

Our key measures of success will be qualitative.

- By the end of the strategy period in 2028 tenants will have a clear voice under following implementation of the tenant engagement strategy. Tenants will tell us that they are able to directly influence and scrutinise out service.
- Learning from complaints and ASB case review will be embedded into service design and re-design.
- Tenants feedback on closed cases will be used to design and re-design the service.
- Streamlined process and access to more information and advice.
- Greater tenant data feeding into our initial response and tracking of cases

DRAFT

Annexe 1: Strategy Action Plan

Priority 1, Putting tenants first

Ensure tenants are at the forefront of shaping our response to ASB, neighbour disputes and their neighbourhoods.

Lead Officers:
Tenant Engagement Manager, ASB Manager.
Target Date:
On-going

Ensure data analysis forms part of our proactive activities to improve our response to ASB and neighbour disputes.

Lead Officers:
ASB Manager, Performance and Insight Manager.
Target Date:
April 2026

Ensure that the Tenancy Engagement Service are actively involved around any service improvement and receipt of feedback.

Lead Officers:
Tenant Engagement Manager, ASB Manager.
Target Date:
On-going

DRAFT

Gain feedback on all closed cases of ASB and use lessons learnt from complaints to feed into service improvements.

Lead Officers:
Tenant Engagement Manager, ASB Manager.
Target Date:
April 2026

Develop a staff essential training plan focusing on legal tools and powers to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour as well as training around Mental health, Drugs and Alcohol and Domestic Abuse.

Lead Officers:
Service Manager for Housing Resident Services, Housing Estate Manager, ASB Manager.
Target Date:
April 2027

Review how we get out and about on our communities, and how we engage with tenants and our elected members.

Lead Officers:
Tenant Engagement Manager, ASB Manager.
Target Date:
April 2026

DRAFT

Priority 2, Prevention & early intervention

Publish a new ASB Policy and a ‘Good Neighbourhood’ Policy

Lead Officers:
ASB Manager, Service Manager for Housing Resident Services.
Target Date:
Completed

Increase awareness of what ASB is and what services are available through the publication of positive outcomes.

Lead Officers:
ASB Manager, Service Manager for Housing Resident Services.
Target Date:
April 2026, ongoing

Publish a Hate Crime Policy and Procedure.

Lead Officers:
ASB Manager, Service Manager for Housing Resident Services.
Target Date:
Completed

Publish a Domestic Abuse Strategy and a Housing Landlord Domestic Abuse Policy & Procedure.

Lead Officers:
Service Manager Community Safety, Community Safety Manager, Service Manager for Housing Resident Services, ASB Manager.

DRAFT

Target Date:
April 2026

Complete a self-assessment and respond to the Housing Ombudsman spotlight report on noise nuisance.

Lead Officers:
Performance & Insight Manager, ASB Manager.
Target Date:
April 2026

Continuously review our ASB procedure to ensure it provides a fast response and remains focused on early intervention.

Lead Officers:
ASB Manager.
Target Date:
Ongoing

Review the current service provision around tenancy support and the support provided to alleged perpetrators of ASB.

Lead Officers:
Service Manager for Housing Resident Services.
Target Date: April 2027

Review our processes around managing our neighbourhood and communal areas so that we promote environmental sustainability and tenant engagement through improvements to communal areas and neighbourhoods.

DRAFT

Lead Officers:
Service Manager for Housing Resident Services, Tenancy Engagement Manager, Housing Estates Manager, ASB Manager. Fire Safety Manager

Target Date:
April 2027

Complete a review of communal entry door security as part of our stock condition surveys and maintenance programs.

Lead Officers:
Housing Maintenance Programmes and Servicing, Service Manager for Housing Resident Services, Housing Estates Manager. ASB Manager
Target Date:
April 2027

DRAFT

Priority 3, Managing risk and supporting victims

Improve recording tenant dates including vulnerabilities.

Lead Officers:
Service Manager for Housing Resident Services, Tenancy Engagement Manager, Tenancy Sustainment Manager, ASB Manager.
Target Date:
April 2026

Seek feedback on ASB cases to give victims the opportunity to give feedback on services.

Lead Officers:
Tenancy Engagement Manager, ASB Manager.
Target Date:
On-going

Work in partnership with Victim Support.

Lead Officers:
Service Manager for Housing Resident Services, ASB Manager.
Target Date:
April 2026

DRAFT

Priority 4, Work in partnership

Review current practices and thresholds for support service access ensuring people do not fall through the gaps.

Lead Officers:
ASB Manager, Tenancy Sustainment Manager
Target Date:
On-going

Review how we manage our homelessness temporary accommodation with close interdepartmental relationships.

Lead Officers:
Service Manager for Housing Resident Services, Service Manager for Housing Options and Tenancy Accounts, ASB Manager.
Target Date:
April 2027

Promote the use of ASB case reviews where complainants are experiencing persistent anti-social behaviour. Checking NFDC (Housing), NFDC (Community Safety) and the Police are reviewing cases and holding services to account for their actions.

Lead Officers:
Service Manager for Community Safety, Community Safety Manager, ASB Manager.
Target Date:
April 2027

DRAFT

Develop a service level agreement with open spaces around the management of housing land, including Tenant involvement on how their open spaces are managed.

Lead Officers:
Assistant Director- Housing , Service Manager for Housing Resident Services,
Target Date:
April 2027

Develop closer relationships with local policing teams across the district.

Lead Officers:
ASB Manager
Target Date:
April 2026

Develop closer relationships with Hampshire Adults and Children Services, Mental Health Services and Probation – including the use of community pay back.

Lead Officers:
ASB Manager, Community Safety Manager.
Target Date:
On-going

Annual reviews with Environmental Protection to review internal procedures to swifty investigate and resolve noise complaints.

Lead Officers:
ASB Manager, Environmental Protection Manager.
Target Date: 2026

DRAFT

On-going

Improve interdepartmental working between Housing Services, Community Safety, Environmental Enforcement, and CCTV teams so as a Council can work together better to prevent and deal with anti-social behaviour and environmental crime.

Lead Officer
ASB Manager, Service Manager for Service Manager Community Safety and Support Community Safety and Support, Community Safety Manager, Enforcement Manager
Target 2027

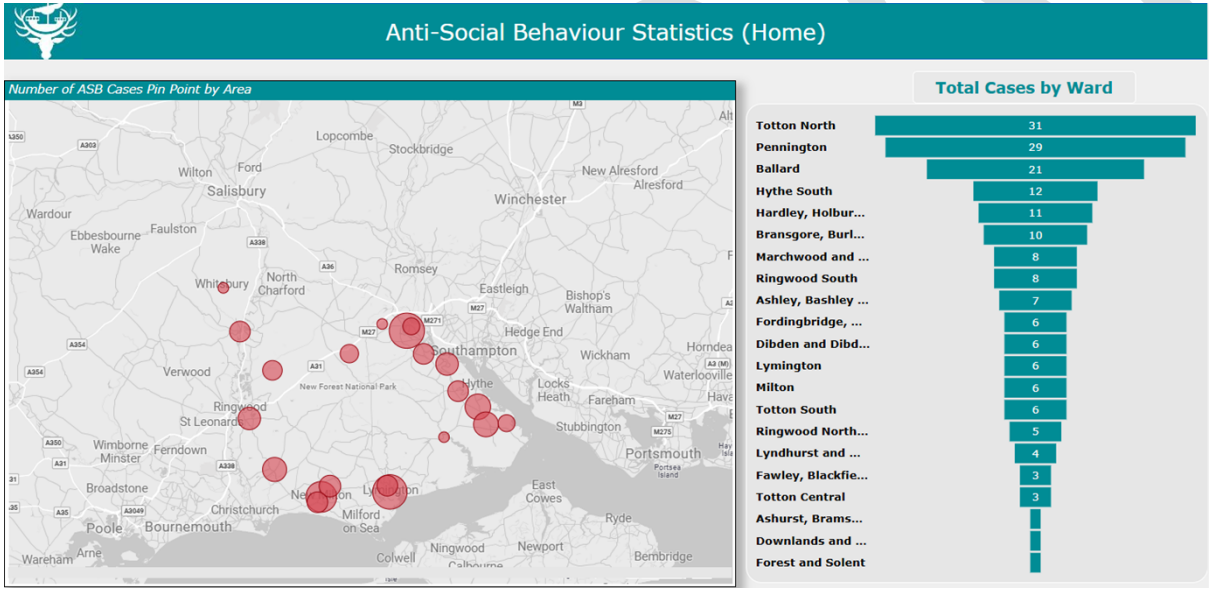
DRAFT

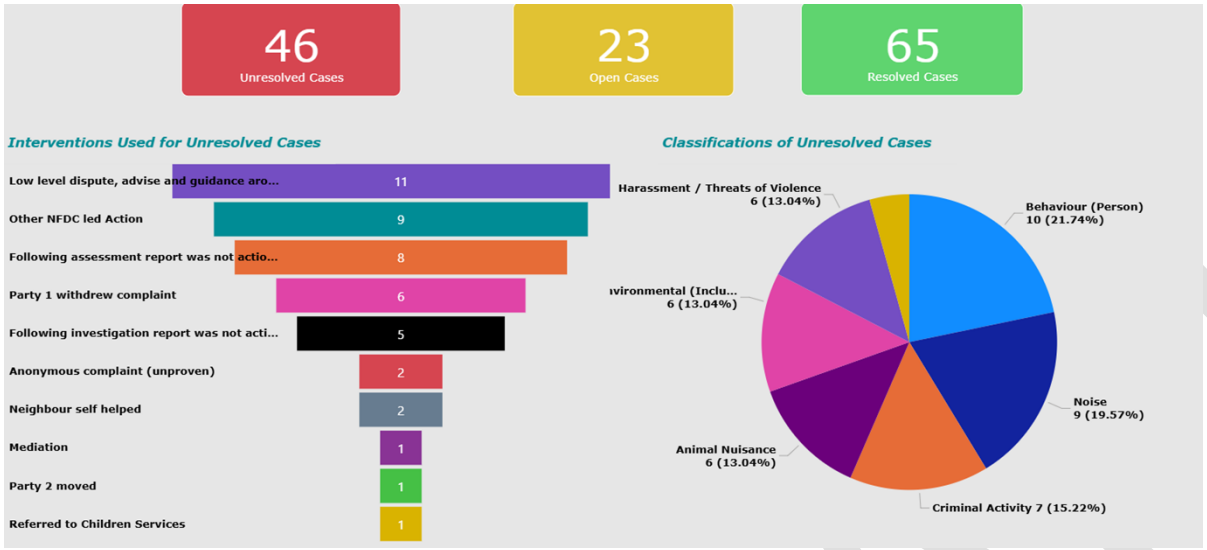
Annexe 2: ASB Data

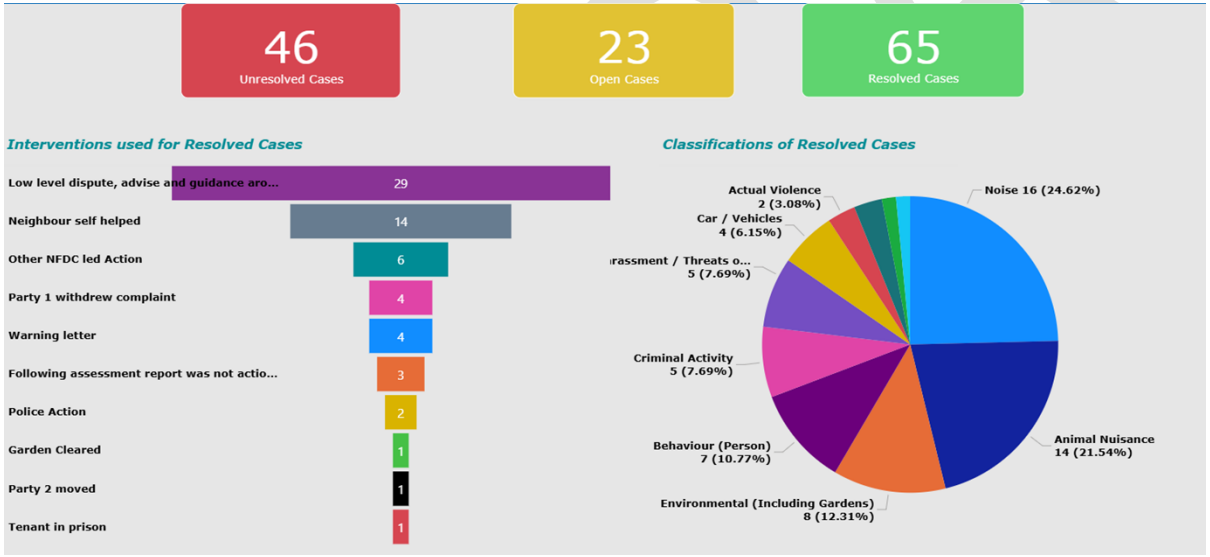
Improvements in how we collect our ASB data were introduced in 2023 and this has allowed us to benchmark our performance.

A review of 2022/23 ASB reports showed 136 reported cases of Anti-Social Behaviour, which represents 26 cases per 1,000 homes.2023/24 showed an increase to 160 reported cases of Anti-Social Behaviour, which represents 31 cases per 1,000 homes.

Further analysis of our data shows that tenant behaviour and noise were the two most reported issues. We track ASB reports by Ward area, this show that Totton (north) Pennington and Ballard (New Milton) have the highest number of reported cases. Total cases equal 185 cases, which represents a 15% increase reports cases from 2023/2024.




46
Unresolved Cases
23
Open Cases
65
Resolved Cases
Interventions Used for Unresolved Cases
Low level dispute, advise and guidance aro... 11
Other NFDC led Action 9
Following assessment report was not actio... 8
Party 1 withdrew complaint 6
Following investigation report was not acti... 5
Anonymous complaint (unproven) 2
Neighbour self helped 2
Mediation 1
Party 2 moved 1
Referred to Children Services 1
Classifications of Unresolved Cases
Harassment / Threats of Violence 6 (13.04%)
Behaviour (Person) 10 (21.74%)
ıvironmental (Inclu... 6 (13.04%)
Noise 9 (19.57%)
Animal Nuisance 6 (13.04%)
Criminal Activity 7 (15.22%)


46
Unresolved Cases
23
Open Cases
65
Resolved Cases
Interventions used for Resolved Cases
Low level dispute, advise and guidance aro... 29
Neighbour self helped 14
Other NFDC led Action 6
Party 1 withdrew complaint 4
Warning letter 4
Following assessment report was not actio... 3
Police Action 2
Garden Cleared 1
Party 2 moved 1
Tenant in prison 1
Classifications of Resolved Cases
Actual Violence 2 (3.08%)
Noise 16 (24.62%)
Car / Vehicles 4 (6.15%)
ıarassment / Threats o... 5 (7.69%)
Criminal Activity 5 (7.69%)
Animal Nuisance 14 (21.54%)
Behaviour (Person) 7 (10.77%)
Environmental (Including Gardens) 8 (12.31%)

Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) Data

Through late 2023 and early 2024 tenants were invited to take part in the tenant perception measure survey as part of the new regulatory performance regime. Overall satisfaction with the housing landlord was received at 81%, and tenants were further asked, 'how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with New Forest District Council's approach to handling Anti-Social Behaviour'. 63% tenants of tenants surveyed answered this question. Overall satisfaction with the handling of ASB cases was 62% and when benchmarked with 52 other registered providers the Council's performance was considered slightly above average. However, remains along with complaints our lowest performing area in terms of satisfaction.

The tenants who answered that they were either fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied were asked a supplementary question on 'why would you say you are dissatisfied?' 3.2% of respondents answered the question.

Common themes of comments received were:

- Tenant incident forms / log sheets being completed but not responded to or actioned.
- Reports about neighbours not taken seriously.
- Perceived lack of joint working from the Police or "lack of Police action".

2024-25 TSM results

Initial Overall satisfaction - 84% (up 3% from last year)

Satisfaction with ASB - 64% (up 2% from last year) 54% of respondents answered this question (312 of 580 responses).

DRAFT

Safer New Forest Partnership

District wide anti-social behaviour data is tracked in partnership with Hampshire Police under the stewardship of the Safer New Forest Partnership strategic assessment.

As a result, the plan identifies 4 priorities for 2024-2025:

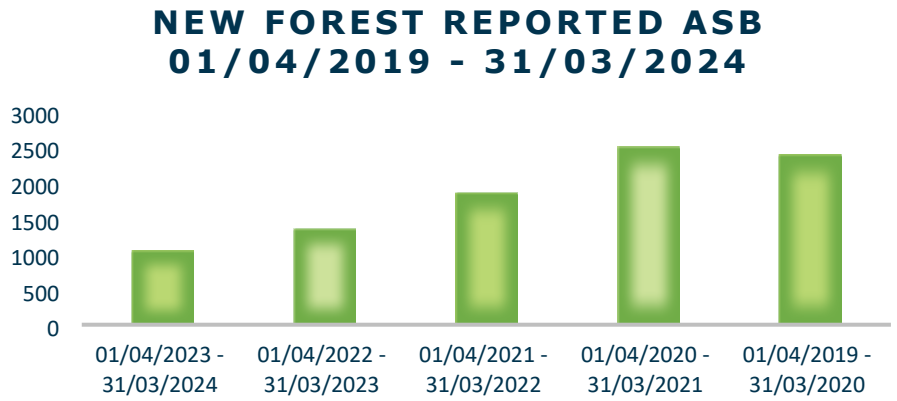
1. Shoplifting& Burglary (Business and Community)
2. Serious violence and possession of weapons
3. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) including Domestic Abuse

ASB	01/04/2023 – 31/03/2024	01/04/2022 - 31/03/2023	**Variation**
New Forest East	569	640	**- 71**
New Forest West	478	705	**-227**

The table shows an overall decrease of 22% in reported incidents of ASB compared with that of the previous year 2022/2023.

DRAFT

New Forest continue to see a reduction in reported ASB. Below shows a 56% decrease in reported ASB from 01/04/2019 to 31/03/2024 (2400 incidents to 1047 incidents).



DRAFT

Glossary of terms

Case Close: What each closure category means

- Resolved
  We've taken proportionate action and the behaviour has stopped or reduced to an acceptable level (or the parties have agreed a way forward).
- Unresolved – no further action possible
  We've assessed and tried reasonable, proportionate steps, but there's no tenancy or practical intervention

that would change the situation. The case is closed with advice/signposting because further action would be disproportionate, outside our remit, or unlikely to succeed.

- Unproven
  We cannot substantiate the allegation to the standard needed for formal action (e.g., contradictory accounts, lack of corroboration), even after reasonable attempts to verify. The report was anonymous / withdrawn

Low-level dispute

These are everyday living frictions that do not meet our ASB thresholds or tenancy breach standards, for example:

- Domestic noise at ordinary levels (footfall, doors closing, daytime activity, children playing)
- Lifestyle clashes (smells from cooking, smoking odour transfer, different routines)
- Minor pet issues (occasional barking without persistent nuisance)
- Use of shared spaces (laundry disagreements, storage in communal areas)
- Parking and boundary clashes (outside demised areas, no designated bays)
- Perception based complaints (staring, “dirty looks,” feeling watched) without evidence of harassment or intimidation

These matters are real and frustrating for residents, but often aren’t legally actionable as ASB, and intervention will be found under our Good Neighbourhood Management Policy

DRAFT

APPENDIX 2

ASB Strategy Consultation Outcome:

1. A total of 8 responses were received through the online survey, with the addition of views gathered at informal engagement in-person events, with many residents contributing valuable feedback and personal accounts, to accompany feedback from cases. Overall, there was support for the four strategic priorities outlined in the draft strategy.

2. In response to the priority Prevention and Early intervention feedback from the online consultation highlighted a strong need for youth-focused interventions. Many respondents felt that facilities such as youth centres, clubs, and outreach workers are essential for successful prevention and early intervention. Alongside this, practical measures were suggested to create safer environments and reduce opportunities for anti-social behaviour. These included improving lighting, considering property design, and deploying CCTV in areas where problems are most prevalent.

3. There was concern that the current wording, “prevent ASB where possible,” may appear too weak and fail to convey NFDC’s commitment to tackling persistent issues, such as noise from local businesses. Stronger language was recommended to demonstrate a proactive stance, such as “actively prevent and reduce ASB” or “take decisive action to address ASB.”

4. Finally, in person engagement expressed a desire to improve pride in gardens and communal spaces, recognising that well-maintained environments can foster a sense of ownership and community responsibility, which in turn supports prevention.

5. In response to the priority “Managing Risk and Supporting Victims” consultation responses most frequently emphasised the importance of supporting victims of anti-social behaviour, with many stating that this support is vital to stop victims living in fear of repeat incidents.

6. There was a strong call for outreach workers, who were seen as essential for managing risk and preventing incidents before they escalate. Practical measures were also suggested, including encouraging the use of CCTV or doorbell cameras and implementing Acceptable Behaviour Contracts to set clear expectations and boundaries.

7. Overall, respondents agreed that delivering this priority would make a significant difference in addressing complaints and taking effective action against anti-social behaviour. Feedback from in-person engagement reinforced these views, highlighting a desire to improve pride in gardens and communal spaces and expressing strong support for direct action against specific behaviours, particularly those linked to substance misuse.

8. In response to the priority “working in partnership” this priority consistently highlighted the importance of strong partnership working, particularly with the police, to ensure quicker responses and provide residents with clear guidance on who is responsible for dealing with anti-social behaviour. Some respondents stressed the need for better coordination during times when council offices are closed, such as weekends, to avoid delays in addressing urgent issues. While some responses referred to earlier points or offered limited additional comments, the dominant theme was a call for improved collaboration and clearer responsibilities across agencies.

9. With response to the priority “Putting Tenants First” respondents raised concerns about the language and focus of this priority, particularly around the perception that responsibility for managing anti-social behaviour might be shifted onto residents rather than being led by NFDC and its partners. There was also a call for clarity on whether support is available to all residents, not just council tenants, with some expressing concern that homeowners could be overlooked in favour of tenants.

10. One respondent commented that the strategy appeared overly broad and questioned what concrete actions are currently being taken, indicating a desire for greater focus and transparency.

11. Overall, the main themes were concerns about language implying resident responsibility.

12. Feedback from in-person engagement reinforced these views, with residents requesting faster response times to ASB reports from NFDC and partner organisations. This reflects a clear expectation that partnership working should not only be about shared responsibility but also about delivering timely and effective action.

13. The Community Hub event in Totton approximately 30 people attended the event at the church. Offices managed to speak with around 10 attendees during the event. three were tenants from NFDC properties. Conversations were generally positive, with some tenants sharing feedback about their housing experience and expressing interest in future engagement. Events in New Milton, Calshot and Pennington had similar attendance. Unfortunately, no questionnaires were completed during these sessions. The first part of the events was often spent addressing urgent matters raised by attendees and making introductions, which limited time for consultation activities. By the time event began, most attendees left after collecting shopping and food. The events were beneficial for relationship-building. Regular attendance could help establish trust and visibility, as tenants seemed to gravitate toward familiar faces from the tenancy engagement team and Neighbourhood Officer.

14. Feedback from Tenant Involvement group members reinforced these points, stressing that the strategy should offer support to tenants experiencing ASB regardless of the perpetrator's housing tenure, to avoid reinforcing the perception that action cannot be taken against non-social housing residents. Members also suggested standardising language throughout the strategy—particularly the use of "tenant" versus "resident" and "estate" versus "block"—to improve consistency and reduce stigma

This page is intentionally left blank

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

Equality Impact Analysis (EIA)

Introduction: The EIA it is an effective way of improving decision making, policy development and service delivery by making sure that managers consider the needs of all service users, the community and employees. It is also designed to identify potential steps to promote equality and good relations and avoid unintentional discrimination. Please ensure you read the guidelines before completing this form.

Guidance Notes

Policy/Procedure	ASB Strategy
Service	Housing Resident Services
Business unit	ASB & Neighbourhood
Your name	Chris Plke
Email	chris.pike@nfdc.gov.uk
Title	Mr
Service manager's name	Kirsty Farmer

If you would like your service manager to receive a copy of this form, please enter their email address.

Service manager email	Kirstym.farmer@nfdc.gov.uk
Date completed	13/11/2025

1. What is the overall purpose and aim of the policy/project/practice or service?

The strategy aims to prevent and tackle housing-related Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) within NFDC's housing stock. Its purpose is to:

Create safe and welcoming communities for tenants.
Adopt a victim-centred approach, prioritising harm reduction and support.
Ensure compliance with regulatory standards and national ASB principles.
Deliver four strategic priorities:

Prevention & early intervention
Managing risk and supporting victims
Work in partnership
Putting tenants first

2. What are the main aspects of the policy/project/practice or service where consideration of equality impacts and issues need to be incorporated?

Access to reporting mechanisms: Ensure all tenants, including those with disabilities or language barriers, can report ASB easily.
Victim support services: Tailored to vulnerable groups (e.g., elderly, disabled, pregnant women).
Policy language and stigma reduction: Avoid stereotyping social housing tenants.
Training for staff: Include safeguarding, mental health awareness, and cultural sensitivity.
Data collection and monitoring: Capture demographic data to identify disproportionate impacts on protected groups.

3. Relevance Assessment - which group(s) of people (if any), do you think will, or potentially can be, affected by this policy/project/practice or service? Please state your reasons.

Age: Older tenants may feel more vulnerable; younger tenants may more likely to be involved in ASB or perceive it differently.
Sex: Women may be disproportionately affected by harassment or domestic abuse linked to ASB.
Religion or Belief: Hate incidents are addressed in the strategy, but prevalence is low due to low mixed communities compared to National Average
Disability:Tenants with physical/mental health conditions are more likely to experience ASB and need tailored support.
Race: Hate crime and discrimination risks exist; strategy includes hate crime policy.
Sexual Orientation: Potential for harassment; requires inclusive victim support.
Marriage/Civil Partnership: Limited direct link, but domestic abuse considerations apply.
Gender Reassignment: Vulnerability to harassment; needs sensitive handling and safeguarding under Hate Crime Policy
Maternity and Pregnancy: Increased vulnerability and need for safe housing environments.

Please indicate if you think the impact is none, low, medium or high?

Age	Sex	Religion or Belief	Disability	Race	Sexual Orientation	Marriage/Civil partnership	Gender reassignment	Maternity and Pregnancy
None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None

Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 21 January 2026

Housing Revenue Account Budget and Housing Public Sector Capital Expenditure Programme 2026/27

Purpose	For Review
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	The report sets out a proposed balanced HRA budget for 2026/27, including decisions to be taken on dwelling rents, garage rents, shared ownership rents and service charges. The proposed budget includes uplifted maintenance budgets meaning that a total of £19.293 million will be spent on maintaining tenant's properties in 2026/27. This proposal supports the Council's Corporate Plan commitments and responsibilities to its tenants. Budgets of £1.300 million and £3.000 million are proposed for Fire Safety & Statutory compliance, and Home Energy Improvement programmes respectively. The proposed Capital Programme totals £31.550 million, including spend of £15.200 million on the continued development and acquisition of new Council dwellings. The Capital programme requires external loan finance of £14.045 million, with the cost of this borrowing covered in the medium-long term through the rents' payable. The budget is supported by a 30-year business plan forecast and spending decisions taken within this proposed budget support the financial sustainability of the HRA over this longer-term period through the protection of the minimum reserve balance and an appropriate level of interest cover.
Recommendations	**That the Panel consider the HRA budget and housing public sector capital expenditure**

	programme for 2026/27 which recommends: **1. that from 06 April 2026, an increase in dwelling rents of 4.8% from the 2025/26 weekly rent level, plus the maximum weekly rent convergence increase allowable, in accordance with Government guidelines to be announced in early 2026, be agreed;** **2. that from 06 April 2026, an increase in garage rents of 4.8% from the 2025/26 weekly rent level be agreed;** **3. that from 06 April 2026, shared ownership property rents be increased in line with the applicable rent review provisions within each lease. For the eight properties held under leases allowing RPI+0.5%, an increase of 5.00% from the 2025/26 weekly rent level be agreed, for all properties which are subject to CPI+1% under the current model lease, an increase of 4.8% be agreed and the weekly rent of one property sold under previous legislation be agreed to increase by 4.8%;** **4. that from 06 April 2026 Service Charges will continue to reflect actual charges;** **5. that the HRA budget, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report, be agreed; and** **6. that a Housing Capital Programme to 2028/29, as set out in Appendix 4, be agreed.**
Reasons for recommendation(s)	The Current National agreed Rent Settlement allows for social housing rents to be increased by up to CPI +1%, plus a further £1 or £2 per week due to the Government's rent convergence model*. To maximise rental income to continue to afford and provide energy efficient, safe and quality housing to our tenants, and to continue to

	provide new affordable housing it is recommended to set the rent increase to the maximum allowable and to confirm the capital programme to comply with statutory compliance regulations, the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 and the Council's Corporate Plan commitments. *Registered Housing Providers are awaiting a government announcement on the amount per week allowed for under the new scheme.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Steve Davies – Housing and Homelessness
Strategic Director(s)	Richard Knott – Chief Operations Officer (Deputy Chief Executive)
Officer Contact	Alan Bethune Strategic Director Corporate Resources (Section 151 Officer) 023 8028 5001 Email: alan.bethune@nfdc.gov.uk Peter Matthew Interim Strategic Director Housing and Communities 023 8028 5729 Email: peter.matthew@nfdc.gov.uk Kevin Green Principal Service Accountant 023 8028 5067 Email: kevin.green@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. This report sets out the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget, the proposed rent levels and other charges, the maintenance programme and a proposed Housing Public Sector Capital Programme for 2026/27 – 2028/29.

2. The proposed budgets for 2026/27 were considered by tenants on the Tenants' Involvement Group on 15 January 2026. Their views will be reported orally to Panel at the meeting.

3. The proposed HRA budget is attached as **Appendix 1,** the detailed maintenance programme at **Appendix 2**, the 3-year forecast medium term financial position at **Appendix 3,** the proposed Capital programme at **Appendix 4** and a 30-year business plan briefing document at **Appendix 5.**

Key Issues

4. Housing Authorities and Registered Providers face on-going challenges to maintain the continuation of high-quality services to their tenants, ensuring that buildings are safe and free from hazards and delivering greater energy efficiency measures in the retrofitting of their stock, as well as delivering more affordable homes. Tenants, too, are facing challenges over rises in the cost of living. The proposal set out below to increase rents in line with the Government's current recommendation is considered to strike the right balance to ensure that the Council continues to provide high quality services to tenants and that the necessary programmes of maintenance and repairs to council housing stock are undertaken, as well as delivering Home Energy Improvement targets (EPC C and above) and new affordable council homes in the district.

5. Members are asked to consider a number of financial issues for 2026/27.

Housing Rents

6. The proposed budget identifies a social rent increase of 4.8%, in line with the Government's policy rent increase guidelines. It is the seventh increase, following a previous four-year social rent reduction programme.

7. Following the rent increase, average weekly rents will be £133.36 for 2026/27. The actual increase will vary by property but will amount to an average increase of £6.10 per week. Approximately two thirds of tenants are in receipt of benefits to help pay rent costs.

8. In 2023/24 the Government restricted rent increases to 7% rather than the 11.1% that would have applied under the policy of CPI+1%. This meant that actual rents have since that time been lower than formula rent levels, and income fell behind the inflationary costs to the service. The formula rent is still calculated per property and is a guideline figure to show what the rent would have been had there been no rent restrictions in place.

9. It is understood that the Government is considering allowing Council's to increase rents by an amount greater than the standard 4.8% in order to move back towards formula rent levels using rent convergence – the act of closing the gap between actual rents and

formula rents over a period of time. Details of the full allowable increase are still awaited but it is proposed that the maximum increase allowable in 2026/27 should be applied, as per recommendation 1.

10. This approach to rent setting enables the council to continue to provide homes that are safe, warm, and attractive places to live for our tenants. For example, the extra rental income allows stable long-term investment in our housing stock to deliver our ambition of improving the energy efficiency of over 3,200 homes to at least EPC C or above by 2030 (Corporate plan 2024 to 2028).

11. The recognised benefits to tenants and their households include better health outcomes, and homes that are cheaper to keep warm. Warmer homes are also better for the environment and for the council in meeting its housing energy efficiency targets.

12. We have a total housing stock of 5,275 well-maintained homes with 98.8% meeting the current Decent Homes Standard. Whilst we do not have any high-rise buildings, we do have properties including temporary accommodation and extra care housing included in our stock requiring on-going capital investment to ensure specific health and safety requirements such as enhanced fire remediation works are met due to vulnerabilities:

    - 3 Extra Care Schemes
    - 81 units of HRA owned Temporary Accommodation comprising 101 bedrooms
    - 1 Scheme for ex-rough sleepers

13. The previous, current and proposed HRA budget allows for around 20,000 responsive repairs each year and the works to relet 250 empty properties per year. This has been reflective of demand, though it continues to increase and tenant expectations continue to rise. From the 01 April – 31 December 2025 the housing landlord service has attended 26,063 repairs which demonstrates a demand increase of 30.3% on the same period last year, with the potential to rise by the end of the financial year 2025-26. In addition, social mobility is increasing with over 400 empty properties requiring relet works.

14. It is worth noting that 1,185 of these repairs were classed as Emergency repairs requiring 3 hours attendance anywhere within the large geography of the New Forest, in turn creating operational delivery pressures for the teams involved to meet the response times.

15. Despite this spike in demand performance in November 2025 against SLA timeframes is recorded as:

Urgent Jobs	Priority Jobs	Routine Jobs	Programmed works
97.89%	96.28%	93.89%	98.72%

16. Our tenant data and insight reports demonstrate that complaints have clustered around damp/mould and repeated access arrangements; and expectation of scope of repairs continue to rise locally and nationally. The introduction of the Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025 which came into force 27 October 2025 commonly known as "Awaab's Law"; plus, the national publicity campaigns are seen as a contributing factor around the surge in repairs demand and associated complaints regarding damp and mould. This should not by proxy be taken that properties are in poor condition, more so that tenants are more aware of their responsibilities, of the implications on their health for not reporting repairs and the ease of reporting repairs to the council.

17. NFDC prepared well for the new legislation and went a step further in planning to address all the 28 hazards contained within the legislation (currently with different implementation dates through 2026) in its current operating procedures, not just damp and mould. This has included faster triage and better resident liaison to reduce re-visits, speed access, and to cut avoidable costs. It also means maintaining uplifted responsive repairs budgets including funding new Resident Liaison Compliance Officer capacity to unblock access and meet statutory health and safety compliance cycles including gas, electrical, and water hygiene etc.

18. A key driver therefore of HRA costs remains cyclical/responsive repairs, where there is less opportunity to control the increasing demand pressures as indicated. It is also the priority landlord service needed and requested by our tenants and leaseholders to keep them safe and satisfied within their own homes and communities.

19. The Major Repairs programme is also a significant proposed programme which includes an increase in gas boiler replacements, and a replacement windows and doors programme to keep on track for the Council to have all its homes certified EPC C by 2030.

20. This ambition has been demonstrated in our housing service always seeking to pro-actively achieve excellence in how we have supported our tenants and their homes. The results of 81% tenant satisfaction for this service, and the high performing service KPIs which demonstrate that despite the increasing service pressures, including

costs of employees and materials that continue to rise above inflation, we can demonstrate and provide assurance of our good performance through our performance data and governance.

21. We work with our housing tenants to understand their needs and provide high quality homes and service standards in line with the government's regulatory regime.

22. Whilst we welcome the opportunities and challenges provided by new legislation and improved standards the proposal to rent setting enables the council to continue to deliver to required standards and maintain its current high levels of regulatory compliance, health and safety, and tenant satisfaction over the medium term.

23. The additional rental income will also fund significant Home Energy Improvement programmes and carbon reduction impacts as costs are likely to be higher at the outset of the programme.

24. Improvements are targeted in specific areas and property types, including non-traditional properties. Our generally aged housing stock needs investment putting pressure on the HRA in the medium and longer term. The geographical spread and type of housing stock with mixed fuel types including oil burning technologies where certain rural areas are off-gas and in a few cases off-grid add complexity and cost to planned improvements

25. There are on-going cost pressures in labour and materials which outstrip inflation targets and remain volatile within the economy. The continued support for the funding of Disabled Facilities Grants in the Council Owned stock to support vulnerable and disabled tenants to remain in their own homes is one example where the service has reported an average of 30% cost increases over the last year by specialist contractors and the price of equipment and building works etc. The council nevertheless remains committed to providing this service for the reasons mentioned.

Service Charges – Hostels & Flat Accommodation

26. Service Charges are currently used by the Council as a method to recover Council Tax and domestic and communal energy costs from tenants where their personal usage costs are charged directly to the Council by the respective billing organisations. Service Charges are also used to recover some aspects of equipment provision, cleaning and communal heating and lighting costs from tenants, which are also incurred in their respective properties.

27. Around 1,300 tenants and leaseholders pay service charges to the Council and a review of costs and rates commences at the end of each calendar year. All service charges are revised and disaggregated

each year to reflect accurate charges for tenants and leaseholders based on actual costs, and this year's exercise has been used to inform this report, and service charges are then adjusted flexibly each year in line with these changes.

28. For 2026/27 total service charge income will increase by £69,000, largely reflecting additional properties arising from the Development Programme.

Garage Rents

29. It is proposed that garage rent charges are increased in 2026/27 by 4.8% (£0.68 per week) to £14.93 per week, plus VAT where applicable.

Planned Maintenance & Improvement Works

30. The report proposes total budgetary provision of £13.657 million for planned maintenance and improvement works to houses and estates. This, together with budgetary provision of £5.636 million for reactive maintenance works means that, in total, £19.293 million will be spent on tenants' properties in 2026/27. Details of the proposed works for 2026/27 and an indication of proposals for the following two years are set out in **Appendix 2**.

Fire Risk Assessment Works

31. Between 2022/23 and 2025/26 the Council will have spent £6.8 million on fire safety and statutory compliance matters. Funding of £1.3 million has been allocated for 2026/27, including £850,000 rephased from 2025/26, to continue the requirements to address identified actions from Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) in flat blocks.

Home Energy Improvement Programme

32. In 2023/24 work to establish the future upgrade programmes to deliver all homes to EPC C by 2030, and net zero carbon by 2050 were established. Measures required to each home within the Council stock to meet these targets is known and estimated costs applied up to 2050. 2024/25 was considered a transition year where planning the upgrade strategy began to be overtaken by the delivery of increased retrofit activity. Funding of £3 million is proposed for 2026/27, but total expenditure up to 2030 is likely to be in the region of £15 million, with a further estimated £115 million required to meet net zero targets by 2050.

33. Expenditure in the next 3 years will likely be partially offset by securing a grant of up to £824,000 from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF).

HRA Income 2026/27

34. Estimated total income for 2026/27 is £1.851 million higher than the original budget for 2025/26. The income variations from the 2025/26 approved budget are set out below:

	Change £000	Paragraph
Dwelling Rents	(1,929)	35
Non – Dwelling Rents	10	36
Service Charges	(69)	37
Contributions to Expenditure	51	38
Other Income	86	39
Total	**(1,851)**	

35. **Dwelling Rents (£1.929 million increase)** – The proposed budget for 2026/27 includes the benefits of £1.640 million arising from the proposed 4.8% rent increase, £267,000 from a net increase in property numbers from the development programme, including new shared ownership properties, offset by Right to Buy Sales and £22,000 from flexible rent and capped rent changes.

36. **Non - Dwelling Rents (£10,000 reduction)** – This income is derived from garages and rents of other housing land. The overall reduction reflects a £74,000 impact of reduced lettings due to voids. There is an ongoing project to provide a full options appraisal of all sites. The reduction is offset by a £34,000 benefit arising from the proposed 4.8% increase in charges and increased non garage rent income of £30,000.

37. **Service Charges (£69,000 increase) –** The service charges proposals referenced in paragraphs 26-28 will result in increased income of £69,000, largely due to additional properties arising from the Development Programme.

38. **Contributions to Expenditure (£51,000 decrease)** – This reduced income reflects the removal of specific Government grant that was provided in 2025/26 as a contribution towards the estimated £200,000 additional costs arising from the National Insurance changes announced in the 2025/26 Budget.

39. **Other Income (£86,000 reduction)** – Interest earnings are anticipated to reduce by £114,000 due to lower interest rates and the use of capital receipts to fund the capital programme. Administration income has reduced by £20,000 due to lower predicted numbers of Right to Buy Sales. These reductions are offset by an increase of £48,000 in the Shared Amenities contribution from the General Fund,

to cover inflationary increases in costs and increases in expenditure on grounds maintenance budgets, as detailed in paragraph 43.

HRA Expenditure 2026/27

40. Budgeted operating expenditure for 2026/27 is £1.026 million higher than the approved budget for 2025/26. After allowing for depreciation charges and the removal of the non-recurring 2025/26 transfer of £150,000 from reserves for specific earmarked projects, surplus resources available for making principal repayments on borrowing have increased by £675,000 to maintain a balanced Housing Revenue Account for the year. The major variations are set out below:

	Change £000	**Paragraph**
Cyclical/Reactive Maintenance	554	41
General Management	248	42
Grounds Maintenance and Trees	176	43
Housing Schemes and Temporary Accommodation	106	44
Capital Financing Costs - Interest	(58)	45
Operating Expenditure	1,026	
Contribution to Capital – Supporting Housing Strategy	0	46
	1,026	
Capital Financing Costs – Principal	675	47
Total	**1,701**	

41. **Cyclical/Reactive Maintenance (£554,000 increase)**– Increased maintenance budgets are principally due to pay and prices increases of £225,000 and an increase of £211,000 on cyclical maintenance, due to the expansion of lead/legionella testing (£131,000), increased stock condition surveys (£45,000) and additional window cleaning costs (£35,000). In addition, a review of the Vehicles programme has increased allocations by £123,000.

42. **General Management (£248,000 increase)**- Supervision and Management budgets will increase due to pay and prices increases of £85,000. Budget provision has been added for a Waste Advisor to support the waste roll out to tenants (£21,000), for additional cleaners for new properties provided by the Development Programme (£30,000) and for additional resources to deal with the impact of increased housing regulations (£120,000).

43. **Grounds Maintenance and Trees (£176,000 increase)** – An increase in budgets is due to pay and prices increases of £23,000 and an increase of £153,000 in charges from the Grounds Maintenance team, principally due to the outcome of a review of vehicle cost allocations. These increases are partially offset by an increase in the Shared Amenities Contribution from the General Fund.

44. **Housing Schemes and Temporary Accommodation (£106,000 increase)** – Additional costs are principally due to inflation of £15,000, an increase of £65,000 in the cleaning budget for additional properties arising from the Development Programme and increased allocations charges of £28,000, principally following a review of the Vehicle allocation methodology.

45. **Capital Financing Costs Interest (£58,000 reduction)** – Capital financing costs have reduced by £58,000. This is principally due to a reduction of £116,000 following the repayment of the next instalment of the settlement borrowing in March 2026. Additional interest costs of £337,000 are expected on forecast new borrowing for the proposed 2026/27 capital programme but these are largely offset by reduced costs due to less borrowing than expected in 2024/25 and 2025/26 and due to lower interest rates than budgeted on actual borrowing taken out during 2025/26.

46. **Contribution to Capital - Supporting Housing Strategy (£0 increase)**– This budget is the prescribed calculation of dwellings depreciation that needs to be charged to the Housing Revenue Account and is used to part fund the capital programme. The figure is based on a combination of factors including property valuation, component costs and remaining component life. While materials costs have increased this impact has been offset by a reduction in the property valuation element. The budget will remain at £10.2 million.

47. **Capital Financing Costs – Principal (£675,000 increase)–** After allowing for transfers from reserves of £150,000, the Council is required to set a balanced budget for the year. Increased operating income of £1.851 million exceeds estimated increased operating expenditure of £1.026 million, increasing the annual amount available for repaying principal on borrowing by £675,000 This results in a total repayment amount available of £3.700 million, which means that there will not be sufficient resources to enable the maturing loan of £4.1 million to be repaid in full during 2026/27 and therefore additional replacement borrowing of £400,000 will be required.

HRA Reserve Balance

48. The HRA Reserve balance as at 1 April 2025 was £1 million. This is a prudent level and meets with good governance practice.

49. The original 2025/26 HRA budget showed a break-even operating position, with no proposed reserves transfers. A financial update report for the year will be presented to Cabinet on 4 February 2026. This includes forecast variations to the year end. In accordance with current policy, any surplus or deficit for the year will be balanced by a transfer to or from the Acquisitions and Development Reserve, but assuming a break-even HRA position for the year 2025/26, this will result in a year-end balance of c£4.8 million as at 31 March 2026, after funding the capital programme.

50. The proposed HRA budget for 2026/27 currently shows a break-even position and therefore the estimated Housing Revenue Account balance (cash reserve) as at 31 March 2026 and 31 March 2027 will be £1 million.

30 Year Business Plan

51. In 2024/25 the Council, with the assistance of an external consultant produced an initial 30-year HRA business plan projection, a summary of which was included in the budget report last year. This projection was further refined during the last year which will inform a formal plan with an agreed strategic direction for stock investment and new housing development. A Briefing document is attached at **Appendix 5.**

Capital Programme

52. The proposed Housing Public Sector capital expenditure programme for 2026/27 totals £31.550 million. The detailed programme and anticipated funding are set out over the page with indicative details for future years in **Appendix 4.**

Proposed Expenditure	Original 2025/26 £000	Latest 2025/26 £000	Original 2026/27 £000
Fire Risk Assessment Works	1,500	650	1,300
Major Structural Refurbishments	0	921	0
Planned Maintenance & Improvements	11,100	10,752	10,700
Home Energy Improvement Programmes	1,870	2,070	3,000
Estate Improvements	200	200	400
Disabled Facilities Adaptations	950	950	950
Development Strategy	15,200	16,400	15,200
TOTAL	**30,820**	**31,943**	**31,550**
Funded by			
Revenue	10,200	10,000	10,200
Capital Receipts	4,000	7,200	6,080
Acquisitions and Dev. Reserve	950	950	950
Government Grant	2,805	4,326	275
External Borrowing	12,865	9,467	14,045
TOTAL	**30,820**	**31,943**	**31,550**

53. Significant works to properties, including mandatory compartmentation and new fire doors, are being carried out following detailed Fire Risk Assessment surveys. Funding of £1.3 million is proposed for 2026/27, but this includes £850,000 rephased from 2025/26.

54. The Major Repairs budget has been set at £10.7 million. Details of the proposed programme are set out in Appendix 2 but include an increase in gas boiler replacements, and a catch-up programme of new window and door replacements which are required for the Council's drive to have all its homes certified EPC C by 2030.

55. Funding of £3.000 million is proposed in 2026/27 to continue works for Home Energy Improvements to the Council's housing stock and take advantage of any government grant funding available, as covered in more detail in paragraphs 32 and 33. Insulation programmes will be continued in 2026/27 to enhance the energy rating of properties and reduce fuel bills.

56. The Council's current Housing Strategy and Corporate Plan prioritise the delivery of new affordable housing homes covering the period 2018 - 2026. The proposed capital programme for 2026/27 includes £15.200 million to be invested in additional homes. Expenditure is also expected over the period post 2026/27 through to the end of 2029, which has been accounted for in Appendix 3 with similar levels of proposed expenditure.

57. In summary, significant financial commitments are needed to deliver the Council's priorities including our capability to deliver the HRA Business Plan:

    - More affordable and sustainable homes
    - Stronger and more resilient communities
    - Changes to realise opportunities including IT Transformation and new asset management/repairs system (MARS)
    - Maintaining high quality and value for money services, monitoring, scrutiny, and collaboration
    - Mitigate Increasing Challenges and Risk in delivering Landlord services to vulnerable tenants with increased legislative requirements including building safety hazards and housing stock improvements with a focus on health and safety.

HRA Medium Term Financial Position

58. Attached at **Appendix 3** is an indication of HRA budgets for two years post 2026/27 and is included to enable decisions for 2026/27 to be made in the context of affordability for the medium term. With the continuation of a significant Home Energy Improvement programme and the increasing expenditure required to maintain the aging stock the HRA is placed under continuing significant pressure.

59. Based on continuing rent increases of CPI+1% alone, it currently shows an estimated operating deficit of c£1.2 million in 2027/28 and £0.7 million in 2028/29. This supports the recommendation to implement rent convergence to provide additional income to close the gap over the medium term, whilst concurrently expenditure and income budgets will be reviewed for those years with a view to reducing the gap, but any remaining deficit will be closed by reducing the loan principal amount repaid to the externally borrowed commitment level of £4.1 million. Significant future costs of the

Major Repairs Programme and the Home Energy Improvement requirements will require both revenue and capital programme spend priorities to be reconsidered in accordance with the Corporate Plan priorities.

Corporate plan priorities

60. People Priority 1: Helping those in our community with the greatest need: Provide more quality, temporary accommodation for single people and families and work with our partners to tackle homelessness.

61. People Priority 3: Meeting housing needs: Provide increased numbers of affordable homes by 2026. Improve the energy efficiency of over 3,200 council houses by 2030. Work with our housing tenants to understand their needs and provide high quality service standards in line with the government's new Social Housing Charter and regulatory regime.

Options appraisal

62. All spending options were considered, including postponing required capital works, but there is a risk that revenue spending will increase fixing end of life components.

63. Due to the age of a significant number of gas boilers, where parts are no longer available, there are very few alternative options to consider. Phasing of boiler replacements over a number of years has already taken place, following the obsoletion of major parts in October 2024.

Consultation undertaken

Tenants' Views

64. Tenants' views will be reported orally to Panel at the meeting.

Financial and resource implications

65. Attached at **Appendix 3** is an indication of HRA budgets for two years post 2026/27 and is included to enable decisions for 2026/27 to be made in the context of affordability for the medium term. With the onset of a significant Home Energy Improvement programme and the increasing expenditure required to maintain the aging stock the HRA is placed under continuing significant pressure. Whilst these budgets will be amended in future years, it shows an estimated operating deficit of c£1.2 million, before the calculation of any additional income achieved through rent convergence. Significant future costs of the Major Repairs Programme and the Home Energy

Improvement requirements will require both revenue and capital programme spend priorities to be reconsidered in accordance with the Corporate Plan priorities.

Legal implications

66. The recommended capital and revenue funding levels for 2026/27 ensure ongoing compliance with legislation and guidance set by central government. Maintaining good quality and safe housing mitigates housing disrepair claims and other health and safety related claims.

67. The council has a fiduciary duty to its tenants to be prudent in the administration of the funds on their behalf.

68. It is the responsibility of councillors to ensure the council sets a balanced budget for the forthcoming year for this ring-fenced account. In setting, such a budget councillors and officers of the council have a legal requirement to ensure it is balanced in a manner which reflects the needs of both current and future tenants in discharging these responsibilities. In essence, this is a direct reference to ensure that council sets a financially sustainable budget which is mindful of the long-term consequences of any short-term decisions.

Risk assessment

69. Risks related to safety compliance, maintaining the decent homes standard and maintaining the momentum toward achieving EPC C and net zero have been addressed by the recommended revenue and capital programmes.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

70. The capital works programme continues to provide more sustainable measures to improve the thermal efficiency of Council housing stock, through more efficient window replacement programmes, insulation, boiler replacements and air source heat pumps. Following the previous work of the Greener Housing Task and Finish Group and the Greener Housing Strategy, the Council is committed to undertaking more sustainable measures year on year to reach the target of all properties having a minimum energy efficiency rating of EPC C, which will require in excess of £6 million over the next 3 years to fund the initial phases of the work, and in the region of a further £9 million by 2030.

71. In the long-term, should decarbonisation of the entire stock still remain a priority it will require the HRA to fund in the region of an additional £115 million of expenditure. This will present significant

challenges to the HRA, and future priorities and strategic choices will need to be carefully considered. Whilst meeting net zero will require some carbon off-setting in due course the programme will remove several thousand tonnes of carbon emissions each year.

72. Initially, we remain focussed on Home Energy Improvement programmes across the stock, targeting the worst performing properties, which are often off the gas network and in rural areas.

73. All products used in the repair, maintenance and improvement of Council homes are selected to ensure the minimum impact upon the environment, are sourced from recycled materials where possible and at the same time balance the need to improve the energy efficiency of tenants' homes in order to meet the requirement for thermal efficiency under the Decent Homes Standard and meet specified and legal safety standards.

Equalities implications

74. All equality and diversity implications will be considered at every stage of the process of commissioning and carrying out planned maintenance, improvement and cyclical maintenance works. In addition, any contractor used for works will have been assessed, as part of the process in becoming an approved NFDC contractor, in respect of their adherence to equality and diversity principles.

75. The HRA funding priorities support the funding and commissioning of necessary works with a view to improving building quality and safety, and the energy efficiency performance of the council stock, which supports vulnerable people reduce household bills at a time of cost-of-living pressures, and which reduces disrepair and the exposure to damp and mould tackling health and housing inequalities.

76. The Tenancy Account Team, which incorporates a dedicated support worker, will continue to support and signpost tenants experiencing difficulties paying their rent, working collaboratively with community support networks.

77. The continued support for the development and acquisitions programme in 2026/27 addresses housing need issues and increases the supply of properties in areas where there is high demand for social housing, and which supports the Council's aims of tackling homelessness in vulnerable communities.

78. The continued funding of Disabled Facilities Grants in the Council Owned stock supports vulnerable and disabled tenants to remain in their own homes or provides suitable alternative housing options for applicants and existing tenants whose needs cannot be met by their existing accommodation.

Crime and disorder implications

79. Many aspects of work identified within this report will improve the security of tenants' homes and improve the condition and aesthetics of neighbourhoods.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

80. There are significant IT systems and change projects to fund and implement in 2026-27 for housing services, including a new council wide customer service IT system as a part of the Transformation programme, and a new asset management/repairs system (MARS) project for housing fully funded by the HRA.

Conclusion

81. The proposed uplifted rent (in line with government guidelines) and service charges, as well as partial re-financing of the HRA settlement loan enable expenditure levels on housing maintenance and capital programmes to be maintained. This increased expenditure ensures compliance with Housing Regulatory Standards. The proposed budget is supported with 30-year projections and potential for fiscal borrowing and debt increases to accommodate the programme.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Summary HRA
Appendix 2 – Maintenance Programme
Appendix 3 – 3 Year HRA MTFP
Appendix 4 – Capital Programme
Appendix 5 – 30 Year Business Plan
Briefing Document.

Background Papers:

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET

	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	Variation £'000	Para
INCOME				
Dwelling Rents	-34,230	-36,159	-1,929	34
Non Dwelling Rents	-735	-725	10	35
Service Charges	-1,142	-1,211	-69	36
Contributions towards Expenditure	-128	-77	51	37
Interest Receivable	-418	-304	114	38
Sales Administration Recharge	-33	-13	20	38
Shared Amenities Contribution	-361	-409	-48	38
TOTAL INCOME	**-37,047**	**-38,898**	**-1,851**	
EXPENDITURE				
Repairs & Maintenance				
Cyclical Maintenance	2,234	2,557	323	40
Reactive Maintenance - General	3,520	3,569	49	40
Reactive Maintenance - Voids	1,885	2,067	182	40
General Management	8,288	8,536	248	41
Grounds Maintenance and Trees	1,087	1,263	176	42
Housing Schemes and Temporary Accommodation	1,200	1,306	106	43
Provision for Bad Debt	150	150	0	
Capital Financing Costs - Interest/Debt Management	5,608	5,550	-58	44
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**23,972**	**24,998**	**1,026**	
HRA OPERATING SURPLUS(-)	**-13,075**	**-13,900**	**-825**	
Contribution to Capital - Supporting Housing Strategy	10,200	10,200	0	45
Capital Financing Costs - Principal	3,025	3,700	675	46
HRA Total Annual Surplus(-) / Deficit	**150**	**0**	**-150**	
Use of Reserves for Major Projects	**-150**	**0**	**150**	
HRA TOTAL ANNUAL SURPLUS(-) / DEFICIT	**0**	**0**	**0**	

2026/27 - 2028/29 MAINTENANCE BUDGETS

CYCLICAL MAINTENANCE	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
External Cleaning and Decoration	630,500		
Appliance servicing (including gas, oil, solid fuel)	1,171,850		
Lift Servicing	103,000		
Fire Alarm Servicing	78,500		
Portable Appliance Testing	4,500		
Fire Risk Assessments	29,000		
Air Source Heat Pump Servicing	17,500		
CCTV, Laundry & Door Entry Servicing	64,000		
Legionella/Lead Testing	165,000		
Emergency Lighting	110,230		
Automatic Door Servicing	32,000		
Window Cleaning	55,000		
Alarms & Telecommunications	51,500		
Stock Condition Surveys	45,000		
TOTAL CYCLICAL MAINTENANCE BUDGET	**2,557,580**	**2,634,310**	**2,713,340**

PLANNED MAINTENANCE & IMPROVEMENTS	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Heating Replacement Gas	1,915,160		
Electrical Rewiring	711,400		
Sheltered Schemes Minor Works	227,900		
Low Maintenance Eaves	460,000		
External Door Replacements	710,000		
Pitched Roofing	1,045,000		
Repointing	10,000		
Window Replacements	1,000,000		
Kitchen Refurbishments	1,250,000		
Drainage	100,000		
Structural Works	300,000		
Asbestos surveys and removal	100,000		
Garages	200,000		
Bathroom Refurbishments	350,000		
Insurance Work	10,000		
Water Main Renewals	40,000		
Miscellaneous	2,270,540		
TOTAL PLANNED MIANTNENACE & IMPROVEMENT BUDGET	**10,700,000**	**11,021,000**	**11,351,630**

ESTATE IMPROVEMENTS	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Provision of estates works and paving	400,000		
TOTAL ESTATE IMPROVEMENTS BUDGET	**400,000**	**400,000**	**400,000**

TOTAL FORECAST MAINTENANCE EXPENDITURE	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**13,657,580**	**14,055,310**	**14,464,970**

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

	Budget 2026/27 £'000	Forecast 2027/28 £'000	Forecast 2028/29 £'000
INCOME			
Dwelling Rents	-36,159	-38,121	-40,365
Non Dwelling Rents	-725	-747	-769
Service Charges	-1,211	-1,247	-1,285
Contributions towards Expenditure	-77	-77	-77
Interest Receivable	-304	-200	-141
Sales Administration Recharge	-13	-13	-13
Shared Amenities Contribution	-409	-421	-434
TOTAL INCOME	**-38,898**	**-40,827**	**-43,084**
EXPENDITURE			
Repairs & Maintenance			
Cyclical Maintenance	2,557	2,634	2,713
Reactive Maintenance - General	3,569	3,676	3,786
Reactive Maintenance - Voids	2,067	2,129	2,193
General Management	8,536	8,792	9,056
Grounds Maintenance and Trees	1,263	1,301	1,340
Housing Schemes and Temporary Accommodation	1,306	1,345	1,386
Provision for Bad Debt	150	150	150
Capital Financing Costs - Interest/Debt Management	5,550	6,171	6,880
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**24,998**	**26,198**	**27,503**
HRA OPERATING SURPLUS(-)	**-13,900**	**-14,629**	**-15,581**
Contribution to Capital - supporting Housing Strategy	10,200	10,500	10,800
* Capital Financing Costs - Principal	3,700	5,301	5,469
HRA Total Annual Surplus(-) / Deficit	**0**	**1,172**	**688**
Use of Reserves for Major Projects	**0**	**0**	**0**
HRA TOTAL ANNUAL SURPLUS(-) / DEFICIT	**0**	**1,172**	**688**
OPTIONS IDENTIFIED TO CLOSE THE DEFICIT			
General Process Efficiency and Channel Shift		**200k-500k**	**200k-500k**
* Loan Re-financing		**upto £4.1m**	**upto £4.1m**

CAPITAL PROJECTS REQUIREMENTS WITH FINANCING

PUBLIC SECTOR HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME

		PROJECT REQUIREMENTS £			2026/27 PROJECT FINANCING £				
		2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Grants & Conts.	Cap Receipts / DC's	Internal/External Borrowing	HRA	HRA Reserves
Fire Risk Assessment Works	HRA	1,300,000	0				1,300,000	0	
HRA - Major Repairs	HRA	10,700,000	10,980,000	11,350,000			500,000	10,200,000	
Home Energy Improvements	HRA	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	275,000		2,725,000		
Estate Improvements	HRA	400,000	400,000	400,000			400,000	0	
Council Dwellings - Strategy Delivery	HRA	15,200,000	15,200,000	15,200,000	0	6,080,000	9,120,000		
Disabled Facilities Grants	HRA	950,000	950,000	950,000					950,000
		31,550,000	**30,530,000**	**30,900,000**	**275,000**	**6,080,000**	**14,045,000**	**10,200,000**	**950,000**
									31,550,000

This page is intentionally left blank

1. Introduction

This note has been prepared by Housing Finance Associates, using information supplied by officers at New Forest District Council about the authority's housing revenue account (HRA). It presents an updated baseline position, which has been prepared using working papers and assumptions agreed with the authority following its budget-setting process.

The projections summarise expenditure, investment, capital financing and borrowing in respect of council housing over a 30 year period, starting in 2024/25 and the authority's best available data and assumptions. They allow for inflationary pressures to impact on budgets and programmes from 2026/27 onwards. The projections also assume that National rent policy will permit maximum rent increases of CPI +1% until 2035/36, which is in line with a recent announcement by government.

The government has recently consulted on reintroducing rent convergence for existing social rent tenancies. Alongside the baseline we have included an indication of the potential effects of two scenarios for reintroducing rent convergence from 2026/27.

We recommend that the authority reviews the risks facing its HRA regularly, with a view to identify the effects of emerging situations at an early stage, testing its response and taking appropriate action to eliminate or mitigate the risk.

DRAFT

2. Baseline projections

2.1. Baseline assumptions

The baseline assumptions reflect the projected 2024/25 revenue outturn, 2025/26 budget and medium term projections for capital and revenue prepared by the authority's finance team. These update the draft budgets that were reported to Cabinet in the annual budget-setting report from February 2025. Other information and assumptions we have used in preparing this baseline projection include:

- Updated information on the authority's programme for developing and acquiring new dwellings over the medium term.
- An expectation that growth in General Management budgets in 2025/26 to support the authority's transformation programme will be removed from 2027/28 onwards.
- Data from the right to buy pooling returns that the authority submits to MHCLG
- We have assumed that the authority sold 25 homes under the right to buy in 2024/25 and sells 40 homes in 2025/26, while it processes an influx of applications that followed publication in October 2024 of the government's plans to reform the Right to Buy and reduce discount levels. From 2026/27 onwards we have allowed for 10 to 11 sales pa.
- The authority aims to maintain a minimum HRA balance of £1.000m, adjusted for inflation
- Any sums generated by the HRA that exceed the minimum balance are made available to finance the capital programme or to repay debt
- Actual rents increase at the maximum rate currently permitted by the rent standard. The maximum rent increase for existing tenants in 2025/26 has been set at 2.7%. Under a recent announcement by government, increases of CPI +1% are expected to apply until 2035/36. We have made the prudent assumption that rent increases will be limited to a CPI uplift from April 2036.
- Formula rents increase at CPI +1% until 2035/36, in line with the government's announcement. From 2036/37 onwards we have assumed that formula rents increase in line with CPI.
- In 2024/25 the authority re-let 5.5% of its social rent stock (282 units) at formula rent, with future relets in the same proportion. A small number of these dwellings (6 pa) are also re-let with an additional 5% rent flexibility charge, which is permitted under the rent standard.
- Depreciation costs have been estimated in line with the authority's budget, uplifted for inflation at CPI.
- Inflation assumptions have been updated to reflect the May 2025 Monetary Policy report from the Bank of England and applied as follows:
    - CPI at 3.25% in the final quarter of 2025 and 2.0% in the final quarters of 2026 and 2027. These rates have been used to reflect underlying inflation for 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29 respectively. From 2028/29 onwards we have assumed CPI runs at 2% pa.
    - RPI tracks at CPI +1%
    - General management and special management costs increase by underlying CPI.
    - Building costs increase at RPI. This affects spending projections for day to day repairs and maintenance, major works to existing homes and the provision or acquisition of new homes.
    - Other costs in the capital programme have been inflated by CPI.
- The baseline allows for the HRA to develop or acquire 445 new homes between 2024/25 and 2034/35.

DRAFT

- Major works and component replacements are treated as 100% variable from 2027/28. These costs have an element that flexes to reflect increases and reductions in the housing stock.
- At the start of the planning period HRA debt includes internal borrowing from the Council of £9.812m.
- The projections assume a pooled interest rate of 4.8% would apply to new loans in 2024/25 and 2025/25, reducing to 4.2% for 2026+/27 and 2027/28, then a rate of 3.8% from 2028/29 onwards.

In preparing this projection we have assumed that the HRA would attempt to repay any additional external borrowing that it undertakes as quickly as possible. Our reason for making this assumption is that it gives a clearer indication of how well the HRA can service and repay any borrowing that is required to deliver its long term capital programme. Any actual borrowing undertaken by the authority would be subject to the prevailing market conditions and guidance received from the authority's treasury advisors.

2.2. Gaps in the data and potential risks

Note that there are gaps in the data available to the authority, which have required us to make assumptions about future expenditure in key areas. The two principal gaps we have identified relate to:

- The cost of unforeseen works that may be required when investing in the authority's existing housing stock. We have included a contingency to allow for such works
- Lack of certainty around future National policies impacting on the Right to Buy, decarbonisation of the housing stock and associated funding. We have made prudent assumptions to accommodate these risks.

The profile of component replacements required for the existing stock is generated from the authority's stock condition data. We recommend continuing to update the modelling assumptions to accommodate new information from the stock condition data, as soon as it becomes available.

Other key risks include:

- fluctuations in the underlying rate of inflation, which can impact on both costs and income
- further constraint imposed on rent increases, whether by government or the authority itself
- increases in the costs of works and services that are not matched by increases in income
- changes to underlying interest rates

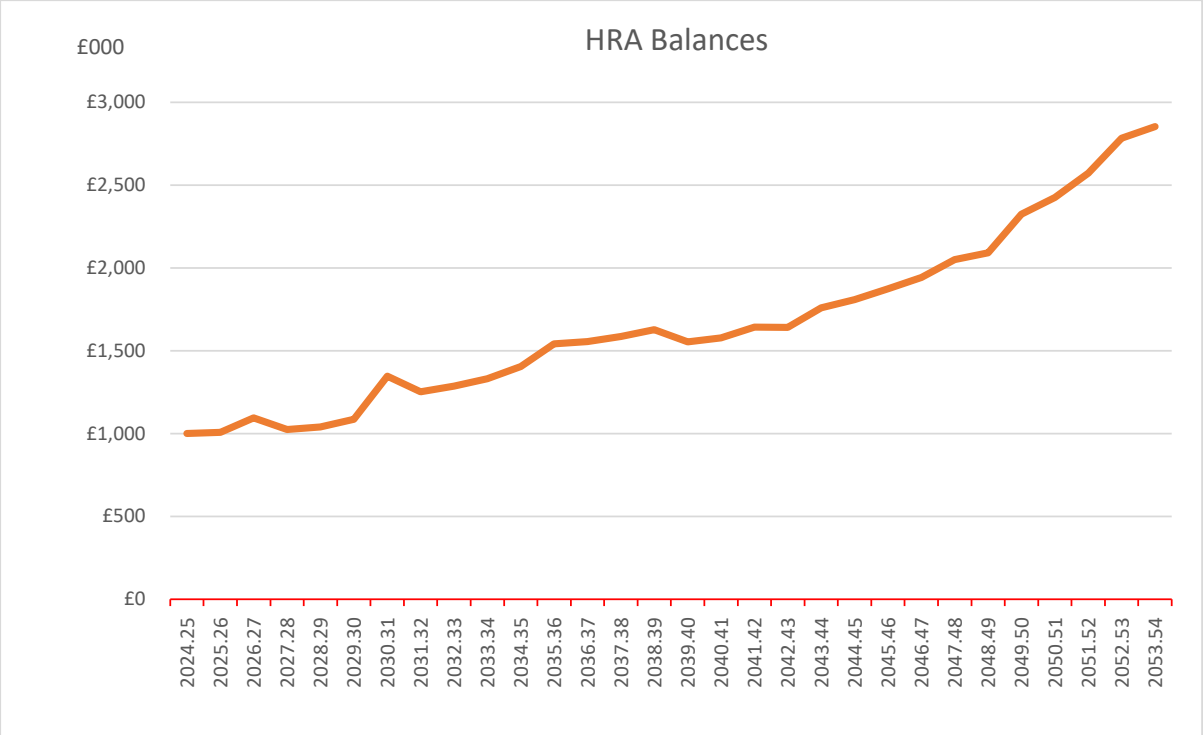
We recommend that the authority reviews the potential HRA impact of these risks regularly, as part of its early warning system. This will enable it to identify the effects of emerging situations at an early stage, test its response and take appropriate action to eliminate or mitigate the risk.

The effects of the baseline assumptions are shown in the following sections.

DRAFT

2.3. Baseline - revenue position

The chart below shows the authority's ability to maintain a minimum level of balances during the 30 year period covered by the baseline projection:



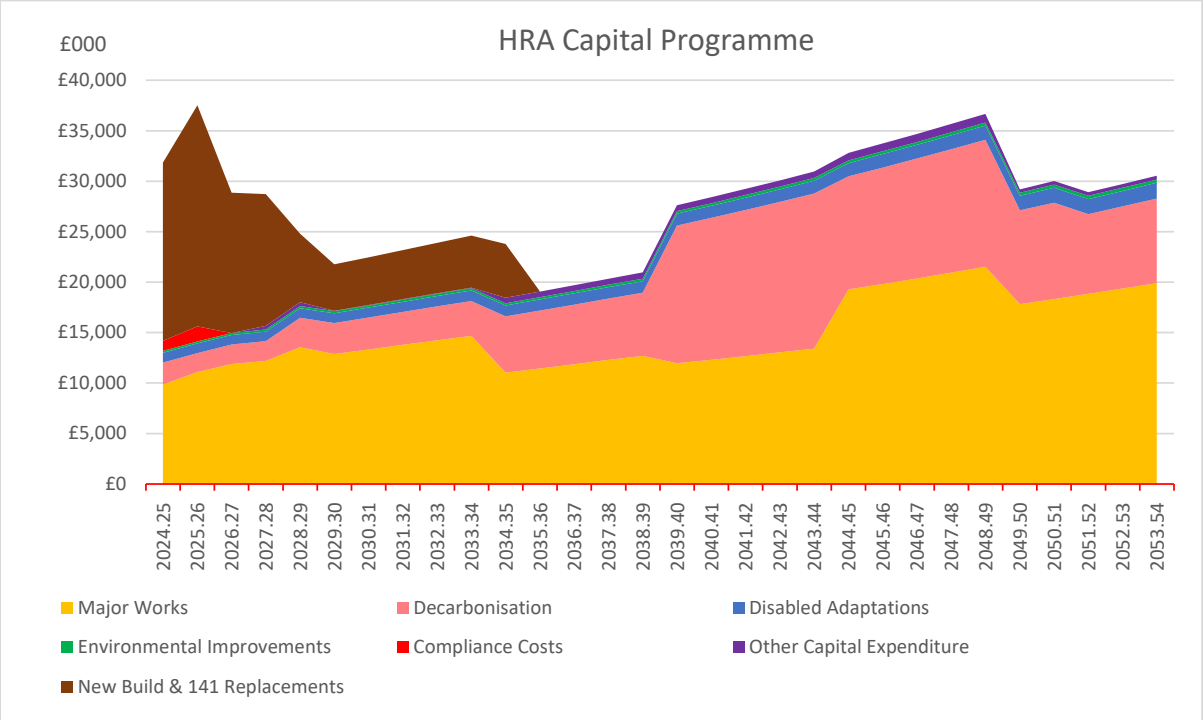
In this chart the orange line projects the cumulative HRA balance at the end of each year.

The authority maintains its minimum HRA balance of £1.000m (plus inflation) throughout the projections. During this period, any "spare" rents generated are used to pay for capital projects or to repay debt.

DRAFT

2.4. Baseline -capital programme

The next chart shows the scale and composition of the authority's projected capital programme:



This projection includes a cautious 10 year programme for new build and stock purchase that produces 445 new properties between 2024/25 and 2034/35 (brown area). This reasonably represents the authority's commitment to increasing its housing stock, including a buyback programme, over the medium term.

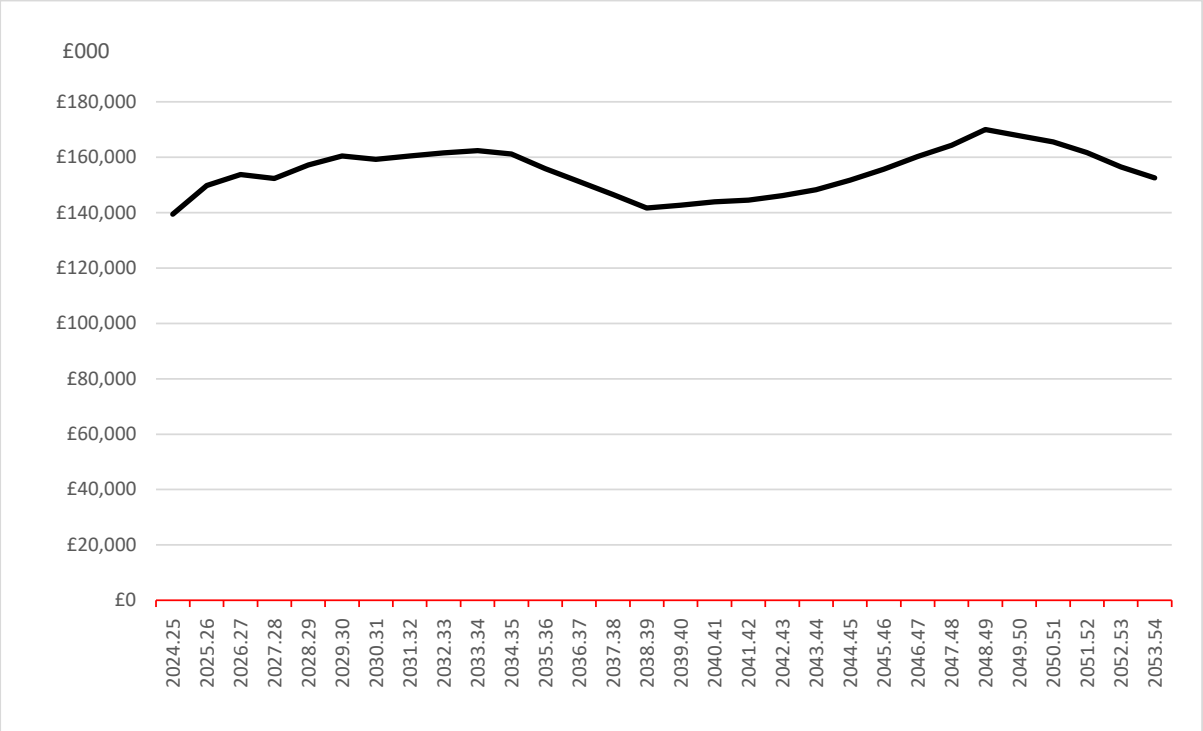
The amber area allows for investment required on stock condition, based on the existing capital programme and stock condition data, with a contingency for (as yet) unidentified additional stock investment. The pink area shows an allowance for improving energy efficiency of existing homes to EPC level C standard by 2030, plus wider decarbonisation works. This allowance is based on the existing capital programme and stock condition data, with a contingency for additional decarbonisation works. The total amount of decarbonisation investment in the above chart is consistent with representative levels assumed by other local authorities.

The average cost of major works at current prices, £51,316 per dwelling (excluding decarbonisation works). The allowance for decarbonisation comes to £24,859 per dwelling at current prices over the same period. These allowances remain consistent with representative levels of investment in other authorities.

DRAFT

2.5. Baseline – debt

The next chart projects movements in the level of HRA debt during the planning period:



On these assumptions, the authority is unable to finance its capital programme entirely from its Major Repairs Reserve, revenue surpluses generated by the HRA and projected right to buy receipts. This causes the HRA to rely on borrowing to part-finance its HRA capital programme throughout the thirty year period.

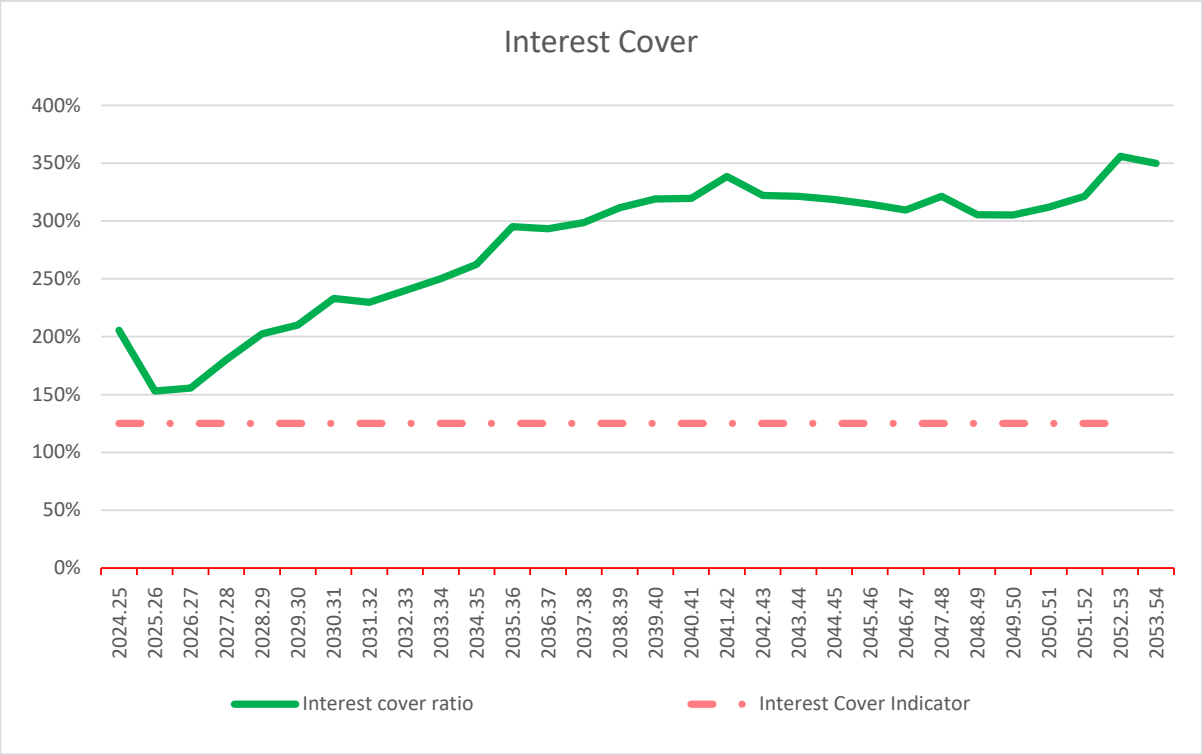
HRA-related debt is projected to rise gradually over the medium term, reaching £162.384m in 2033/34. This coincides with a cyclical drop in major works investment. Debt then falls gradually until 2038/39as the HRA takes the opportunity to repay debt. It then rises again, reaching a peak of £169.977m in 2048/49, when there is a further dip in the capital investment requirement and the authority is able to resume net debt repayments. It is noticeable that the authority is able to repay more debt than under previous projections. This is as a result of it generating additional rent, in line with the government announcement on rent increases.

Debt reaches its peak level in 2048/49, which is towards the end of the period covered. This means that the authority would be exposed to potential fluctuations in interest rates over the long term. It will therefore be important to continue reviewing the authority's options as the underlying economic circumstances evolve.

DRAFT

2.6. Baseline – affordability

Alongside our projection of the ability of the HRA to repay the debt required to finance the assumed capital programme, the chart below compares the level of operational surplus it generates with a standard indicator used by other landlords:



The green line in this chart shows the number of times the revenue HRA surplus is able to cover the assumed interest charges. When the green line goes down the authority's HRA is either making smaller surpluses or paying more in interest charges and the reverse is true when the green line goes up. The static dashed pink line suggests a minimum level of 125%, below which the authority would be at risk of being unable to cover its interest costs from its operating surplus.

This chart shows good levels of interest cover throughout the projections, which implies that the authority would be able to afford the level of borrowing required under the baseline assumptions. It is noticeable that performance against this metric levels off towards the end of the planning period. This reflects an expectation that some costs will rise at a faster rate than income over the long term, along with increases in borrowing to deliver the 30 year capital investment requirement.

Any increase in costs or loss of income would cause performance under this metric to deteriorate, unless the authority is able to make cost savings or generate additional income to compensate. The types of additional cost that the authority could encounter might result from higher inflation, increases in interest charges, commitments to spend more on providing additional or improved services, or additional costs to secure compliance with regulatory requirements. Any constraint on rent levels (whether imposed by government, or by a local decision to set rents at a lower level) would have a similar negative impact on interest cover performance.

Note that the requirement for borrowing is very sensitive to assumptions relating to cost levels, income from rents and other sources, plus interest rates. Initial sensitivity testing of these assumptions indicates that the authority should continuously seek to minimise costs and maximise income as a way of keeping debt levels down and minimising the associated risks.

2.7. Baseline – summary

The baseline assumptions produce a position that looks affordable but starts to weaken over the long term. The HRA can use borrowing to increase the number of council homes over the medium term, but to protect the long term financial health of the HRA the authority needs to be cautious about future commitments. It will be important to continue to minimise costs, while maximising income and resources. Where possible, spending pressures should be contained within the levels of income growth the authority can achieve from rents and other charges.

3. Rent convergence scenarios

3.1. Scenarios and assumptions

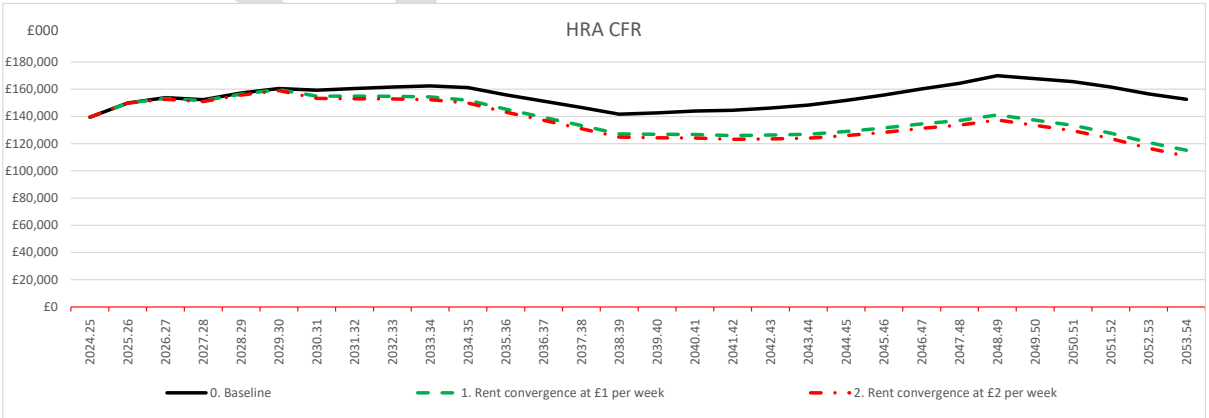
Rent convergence would enable the authority to close any gap between the rent a tenant pays and the formula rent for their property. This would be done by permitting rent increases that are higher than the maximum increase currently set under the rent standard until the actual rent and formula rent for the dwelling reach parity.

The government's consultation on rent convergence considers an uplift of £1 or £2 per week to achieve this alignment. Accordingly, we have prepared one scenario for each of these alternatives:

- Rent convergence at £1 per week
  - The maximum weekly rent increase £1 per week higher for social rent dwellings where actual rents have yet to converge with the formula rent.
  - For dwellings where the rents have already converged, the maximum rent increase is the same as assumed for the baseline
- Rent convergence at £2 per week
  - The maximum weekly rent increase £2 per week higher for social rent dwellings where actual rents have yet to converge with the formula rent.
  - For dwellings where the rents have already converged, the maximum rent increase is the same as assumed for the baseline

3.2. Rent convergence scenarios – debt

The chart below projects movements in the level of HRA debt under each scenario, compared with the baseline position:



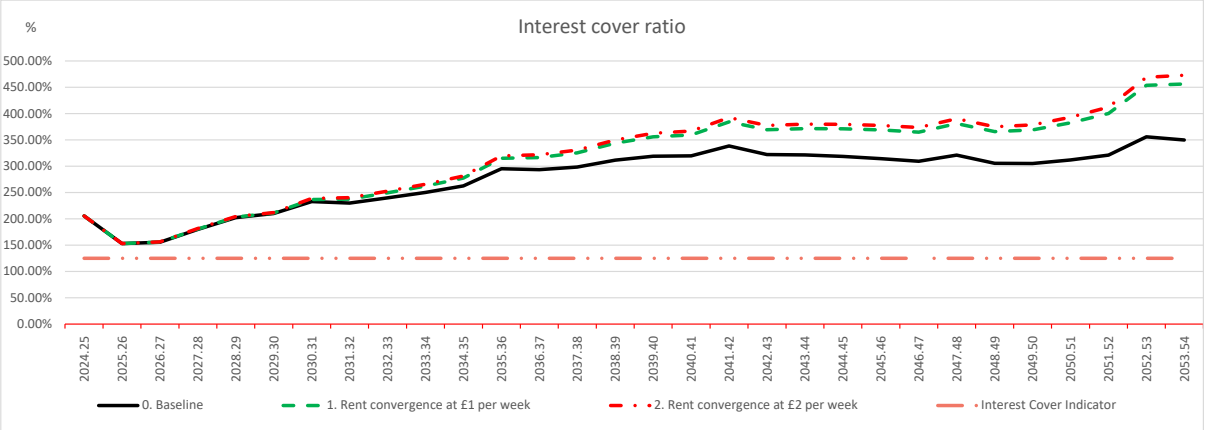
DRAFT

In this chart the black line shows projected HRA-related debt for the baseline. The green dashed line shows the effects of allowing for rent convergence at £1 per week. The red dashed line reflects rent convergence at £2 per week.

Both of the scenarios permit the authority to charge additional rent from 2026/27. This generates additional surpluses for the HRA, which enables it to repay more debt. As a result, debt drops noticeably after the medium term and continues to lower significantly by the end of the projections.

3.3. Rent convergence scenarios – affordability

We can expect rising rents and falling debt levels to have an impact on interest cover, which is a key measure of affordability for HRA-related debt. The impact is shown in the following chart:



The black line in this chart presents the baseline position, with the green line showing the effects of rent convergence at £1 per week and the red line showing rent convergence at £2 per week.

HRA-related debt becomes more affordable as debt levels fall and rents rise. This happens because there is more income available to the HRA, while interest charges on reduced debt levels are also lower. As a result, more income generated from rents is available to be used for other purposes.

3.4. Rent convergence scenarios – summary

Rent convergence clearly has a beneficial impact on the financial health of the HRA, as it permits the authority to increase income from rents while reducing debt.

As an indication, we anticipate that it would take six years for a general needs rent to converge at a rate of £1 per week for New Forest District Council. If rent convergence is permitted at £2 per week, these times reduce to three years for rents to reach parity. This means that rents converge quickly under both options, with similar financial benefits, although the gains are slightly higher for the authority if convergence is permitted at £2 per week.

Alongside any use of rent convergence, we expect the authority would also need to consider the affordability of the resulting rents to its tenants.

DRAFT

This page is intentionally left blank

Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel - 21 January 2026

Social Housing Regulation Act (2023) Progress Report Number 5 (Safety & Quality Standard)

Purpose	To Review
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	This report provides the Housing and Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel with an update on the Council's progress in meeting the Safety and Quality Standard under the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 (SHRA). The Act and its associated consumer standards came into force for all stock-owning registered landlords including councils in April 2024. This report focuses on the Council's progress against the Safety & Quality Standard and identified gaps in provision. It is the first of five consumer standards landlords must now deliver to meet the regulatory requirements set by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) The Safety & Quality Standard as stated by the RSH: *"Outcomes landlords must deliver about the safety and quality of tenants' homes."* Our approach and preparation for improving outcomes for our tenants and preparing for future Inspection by the RSH against this standard is presented in this report. This report focuses on the Council's progress against the Safety & Quality Standard and identified gaps in provision. It is the first of five consumer standards landlords must now deliver to meet the regulatory requirements set by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) The Safety & Quality Standard as stated by the RSH: *"Outcomes landlords must deliver about the safety and quality of tenants' homes."*

	Our approach and preparation for improving outcomes for our tenants and preparing for future Inspection by the RSH against this standard is presented in this report. This is the fifth progress report and focuses on the Safety and Quality Standard, which covers stock quality, decency, health and safety, repairs and maintenance, and adaptations. A self-assessment and gap analysis indicate good overall compliance, but 11 active gaps remain, primarily in stock condition data, integration of repairs systems, and tenant engagement. High-priority actions include completing 100% of all outstanding stock condition surveys by April 2026 (noting that ongoing non-access issues may reduce this to 98%) Improving data use for compliance and investment planning and implementing a new Maintenance and Repairs system to enhance service delivery and tenant experience. Recent steps include providing additional staff and contractor resources to the stock condition team, updated policies, and strengthened governance through the Consumer Standards Board and implementing recommendations from our recent Mock Inspection. Compliance is critical to ensure the provision of a good landlord service, maintain tenant satisfaction and avoid regulatory penalties. The report seeks the Panel's consideration of current compliance and recommendations to support preparedness for future regulatory inspection and improved tenant outcomes.
Recommendation(s)	**1. That the Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel consider the Housing Landlord's compliance against meeting the Safety and Quality Standard and make any further recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness.**

	2. That the Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel note the high-level of performance against this standard to ensure the health and safety of our tenants and achieve positive tenant outcomes. **3. That the Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel receive a further report on the Competence and Conduct Standard for Social Standard at its next meeting.**
Reasons for recommendation(s)	This report supports the Council's Corporate Plan 2024–28, particularly in delivering on priorities related to resident wellbeing, housing needs, and community safety. It also outlines the financial, legal, and operational implications of achieving full compliance with the Safety and Quality Standard.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Steve Davies, Housing and Homelessness
Strategic Director(s)	Peter Matthew – Housing and Communities
Officer Contact	Paul Thomas Assistant Director - Housing 02380 285 725 paul.thomas@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. A comprehensive background to the implementation of the Social Housing Regulation Act (SHRA 2023) was given in the January 2025 report to this Panel. It was agreed that each of the four consumer standards would then be looked at in turn against our gap analysis at subsequent meetings, in the order where we considered there was the most work to be done.

2. Progress against the Transparency, Influence and Accountability (TIA) standard was considered in March, the Tenancy Standard in June and the Neighbourhood and Community Standard in September 2025. This

is the fifth report in the series, and focus this time is on the fundamental Safety and Quality Standard.

3. The fifth Consumer Standard – The Competence and Conduct Standard for social housing, has recently been enacted by the RSH, so it will be part of the regulatory regime and future landlord inspections. It is worth noting that NFDC did not wait for the standard to be enacted and has a programme of professional development and qualification in place for all management levels of staff in partnership with the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and this standard has been included in our gap analysis and action planning work from inception.

4. All these reports aim to give an accurate picture of the current state of compliance with the standard and the improvement plans in place. The aim is to ensure Members receive transparent assurance that the service understands any compliance gaps and has a clear plans to prioritise and implement required improvements in reasonable timescales taking account of higher risk areas.

5. We are awaiting to receive confirmation as to when the Regulator plans to inspect NFDC. However, at our first annual engagement meeting with the RSH in December 2025, it became apparent that their regional team did not have any immediate regulatory concerns about NFDC. Their view has probably been formed by our published high scoring Tenant Satisfaction Measures and our recent Mock Inspection level of preparedness.

6. The Regulator is now taking account of the potential impacts of LGR in Hampshire and their current inspection timetable, the outcome being it is unlikely NFDC will be inspected in the first two quarters of 2026. Nevertheless, the Regulator does continue to expect co-regulation between the council, its elected members, and their regulatory teams including self-referrals if significant gaps or failings are identified by the landlord service against the Consumer Standards and particularly the Safety and Quality standard for obvious reasons.

7. Members can be assured that the service will continue to prepare to ensure the health and safety of all our tenants and that we can demonstrate evidence of compliance against all the four main consumer standards, whilst continuing to deliver high quality services to our tenants as reflected in the other consumer standards.

Safety and Quality Standard

8. A gap analysis (more details below under 'Preparedness for Regulatory Compliance') against the SHRA Consumer standards demonstrated good compliance with the Safety and Quality Standard. However, some

gaps, and subsequent actions have been identified to reach the high level of service delivery we are striving to achieve.

9. Each Consumer Standard is broken down into specific expectations. The following five are within the Safety and Quality Standard.

    - Stock quality
    - Decency
    - Health and Safety
    - Repairs, maintenance, and planned improvements
    - Adaptions

10. This report has been broken down in these specific expectations and performance measured against the outcomes of the self-assessment and gap analysis process.

11. The self-assessment process had further areas, which are not part of the consumer standards and relate to the professional knowledge and best practice suggestions of the Housing Quality Networks (HQN).

12. These further areas have the following headings and where appropriate have been included in this report.

    - General
    - Tenant engagement
    - Customer service
    - Damp, mould and condensation
    - Taking the Lead

Preparedness for Regulatory Compliance

13. The first stage of the preparedness process was the completion of a self-assessment against the consumer standards. This resulted in action plans and a gap analysis tracker.

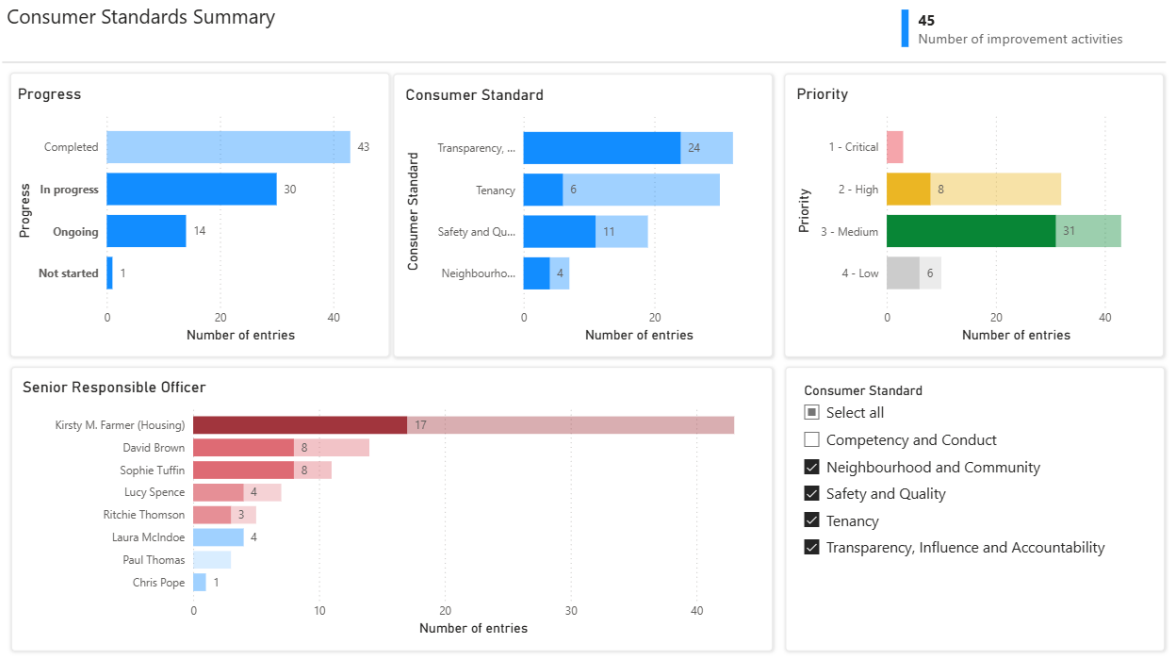
14. A full explanation of the methodology of the self-assessment process was provided in the March 2025 report to Panel. It is worth noting that the self-assessment includes the specific expectations of the consumer standards as well as areas from the Code of Practice and the Housing Quality Networks professional knowledge.

15. Since the last report to Panel the Council has undergone a 'mock inspection.' This has provided a further opportunity to test our own preparation, give an external view of the evidence provided, both in written form and in face-to-face interviews, and has provided improvement actions to aid our preparedness.

16. The process of implementing these actions will be led by the Strategic Director Housing and Communities, through an internal Consumer Standard Board, and progress monitored by the Portfolio Holder at the monthly briefings. Progress reports will also be provided to the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

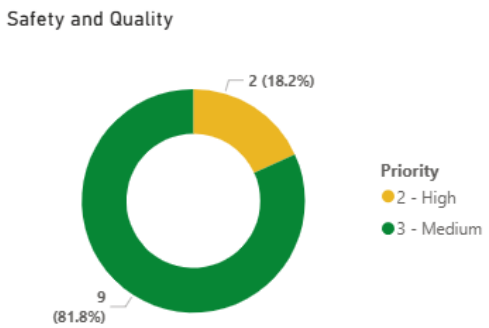
17. Chart 1 below displays the current active gaps within the 4 consumer standards.

Chart 1: Current Gaps across all standards



18. Chart 2 below demonstrates the priority rating for the 11 identified active gaps within the Safety and Quality standard. These are explained in further detail in this report.

Chart 2: Priority Ratings.



Stock Quality

19. *'Registered providers must have an accurate, up to date and evidenced understanding of the condition of their homes that reliably informs their provision of good quality, well maintained and safe homes for tenants.'*

20. Of the 11 current active gaps, 7 come under the Stock Quality specific expectation, 2 are rated as high Priority, meaning that any tasks or actions have been identified and are underway but are not yet business as usual. The rest are rated as medium priority, meaning the items have formed part of business as usual but may have a strong interdependency with other projects that are not yet complete.

21. The identified gaps and subsequent actions will be outlined below.

22. *'Have you an accurate record at an individual property level of the condition of your stock, based on a physical assessment of all homes and do you keep this up to date?'*

    The repairs policy states that stock condition surveys will be completed every 5 years. Due to staffing issues the rate of surveying fell below the expected level. However, the stock condition action plan sets out the plan to have 98% of surveys completed by April 2026 and is back on track. This has been down to the employment of a further Stock condition surveyor and procuring an external provider to complete surveys. The progress of surveying is monitored through monthly compliance monitoring by the Portfolio Holder and a quarterly statutory compliance meeting, chaired by the Strategic Director. Other actions to ensure compliance include, addressing the properties that did not allow access and establishing which homes do not allow access on a general basis to understand the condition of the property and identify any other risks that may be present.

23. The following three identified gaps originate from one question but have been broken down into three separate action and progress update logs.

24. *Do you use data from your records on stock condition to inform your provision of good quality, well-maintained and safe homes for tenants that meets the requirements of this standard? You must ensure:*

a) Compliance with health and safety legal requirements.
There is a plan to increase the use of data to inform budgets for the next financial year 2026/27. It has also been identified that improvements are required in the evidencing of this happening. As previously stated, (para. 14) further work is required to address the homes that do not allow access. A new Resident Liaison Compliance

Officer post was advertised in December. This post will take the lead in resolving access challenges for hard-to-reach properties, building relationships with residents, working toward ensuring essential compliance checks, such as gas servicing, electrical testing and water hygiene are completed within statutory timelines.

b) *Compliance with the Decent Homes Standard*
As stated above (para. 14) the stock condition action plan states the intention to have 98% surveys completed by April 2026. This also outlines how we get to the Decent Homes Standard and the requirement for tenants who wish to refuse works to their homes to sign an 'Expression of Wish' disclaimer. The recording and calculating of decent homes are likely to be impacted by the implementation of the new Maintenance and Repairs system.

c) *Delivery of repairs, maintenance, and planned improvements to stock*
This aspect of the question continues to be assessed as a high priority. While there is nothing wrong with either the repairs or planned improvements service, there continues to be a divide in that the two current systems do not talk to each other. This is something that will improve with the implementation of the new Maintenance and Repairs System.

25. *Do you survey your homes frequently enough and in sufficient depth to remain assured about the quality and safety of your stock?*
As previously stated, the action plan and survey target are working to ensure this happens. Training has also gone in to ensure operatives are able to spot other defects. For example, engineers have been trained in looking for damp and mould.

26. *Do you ensure your approach to assessing and recording the condition of your homes is robust and kept up to date by using information from a range of relevant sources such as repairs, complaints, health and safety assessments and energy performance certificate (EPC) data to maintain a rounded view of property condition?*

This is currently an ongoing medium priority action. While we do ensure our approach is robust, we recognise that the implementation of the new Maintenance and Repairs system will ensure the recording of this process will be more efficient.

27. *In developing your understanding of the condition of your homes do you consider the needs of the individual tenants living in them? Do you consider the potential risk to tenants when identifying investment and repair requirements for their homes? Is this activity undertaken in an appropriate and timely manner?*

This continues to be a high priority action. While at an individual level tenant's needs are taken into consideration, for example when they have phoned through the hub. More work needs to be completed on using the data we hold about the tenants living in our properties to better understand and prevent potential risks from maintenance and repairs.

Decency

28. *'Registered providers must ensure that tenants' homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard unless exempted by the regulator.'*

29. When the self-assessment was initially conducted this action was highlighted as a gap. This was due to the process of identifying non-decent homes, offering the tenants of those properties works to be completed and working through any refusals or planning works, being new. However, this is now embedded into procedure as business as usual, it has therefore been completed.

Health and Safety

30. *'When acting as landlords, registered providers must take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas.'*

31. As with the expectation above, any gaps initially identified under Health and Safety have now been completed. These include items such as identifying and meeting all legal requirements relating to the health and safety of tenants in their homes and communal areas. For example, communal areas checked weekly by one of the dedicated building safety officers who raise any repairs.

32. The safety of tenants has been and is considered in the design and delivery of landlord services, for example, through the review of all relevant policies, including the Damp and Mould policy.

33. An item raised under the extra 'general health and safety' section of the self-assessment that was raised as a gap and has now been assessed as being complete is around knowing whether messages on safety are getting through to tenants. Regular articles are published in the HomeTalk magazine, which is delivered to every council property, the building safety officers visit blocks and engage with tenants. The Tenant Satisfaction Measure data also shows good satisfaction around tenants feeling safe in their homes.

Repairs, Maintenance, and planned improvements

34. *'Registered providers must provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible.'*

35. There were 7 identified gaps from the self**-**assessment under repairs, maintenance, and planned improvements (2 of which came under the further section 'customer service'). 4 of which are now assessed as being complete. The 3 further active gaps fall under the further 'customer service' section of the self-assessment.

36. The first completed gap was around setting timescales and clearly communicating them with tenants. The new Maintenance and Repairs policy clearly sets out the expected timescales and these will be promoted to tenants via the HomeTalk magazine. The second completed gap was ensuring the delivery of repairs, maintenance and planned improvements is informed by the needs of tenants and provides value for money. While the self-assessment process identified we were largely compliant it was felt this area required further review to ensure it is embedded in business as usual. During the period of review two examples of an effective procurement review process highlighted that contractors not performing at the expected level are being dealt with. The tenant involvement group are also kept informed as well as scrutinising the yearly accounts. These minutes are then published on the website.

37. The two completed gaps that fell under the sub-section of 'customer service' relate to having clear and comprehensive service standards and learning from complaints. As explained above all relevant policies have been updated and are published on the website. The housing service learning from complaints process has now had time to embed into business as usual and learning outcomes have started to identify failings in performance which have led to service improvements.

38. The three active gaps all share an interdependency with the implementation of the new Maintenance and repairs system and the corporate customer relationship management system. The first asks whether high levels of service user satisfaction are achieved with stock investment programme and asset management practices more generally. Similarly, the second gap asks the question, do you know what tenants think of your service? How do you plan to improve your repairs service to meet tenants needs? Currently satisfaction is measured through the TSMs. However, this is an area that could benefit from further resident insight.

39. The third active gap in this section is around how easy it is for tenants to report repairs. Currently, monitoring of the Housing Hubs response

rate to telephone calls, emails and online forms takes place, but the digital option for tenants is currently limited by existing systems. The new maintenance and repairs system is the main solution in this improvement for tenants to be able to self-serve, see their notes, job history, and inspection certificates without having to request them.

40. The further extra section on Damp, mould and condensation has been assessed as compliant. A standalone policy has been developed and is now published on the website. Specialist posts deal with the increasing demand and relevant staff have all received accredited training.

Adaptations

41. *'Registered providers must assist tenants seeking housing adaptations to access appropriate services.'*

42. This is one of the areas of the consumer standards where it is worth reminding that they are written for all social landlords, and as a local authority, we also have the responsibility for the aids and adaptions service. Therefore, when the standard refers to the relevant organisations who will assist tenants seeking housing adaptions, as a council landlord this refers to the council.

43. The self-assessment process highlighted broad compliance with adaptions. However, two medium priority gaps were identified. These are around clearly communicating with tenants how they can seek assistance with the housing adaptions service and co-operating with tenants and other relevant organisations so that a housing adaptions service is available to tenants.

44. There is already a close working relationship between NFDC tenancy team, the allocations team, and Hampshire County Council to ensure the best use of properties. There is information published on the NFDC web pages for all. However, there is not anything specific in the landlord services area of the website. Therefore, a link is required from landlord webpages to the Aids and Adaptions information that is held under Private housing.

Taking the Lead

45. As previously explained the final 'taking the lead' section is not a specific expectation of the consumer standard. They are recommendations made by Housing Quality Network as a means of helping landlords meet the Regulator's relevant standards around effective governance.

46. The self-assessment process highlighted that the governing body are aware of their responsibilities providing safe and decent homes, an efficient, effective, and timely repairs service and an adaptions service

for those tenants that need it. The governing body are made aware and kept up to date through regular reporting to the Portfolio Holder and the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Further monthly updates to the Leader and Chief Executive have commenced and planned to go forward.

Analysis of Inspection Judgements – Safety and Quality Standard.

47. It is worth noting straight away that failings of the Safety and Quality Standard are the number one reason for landlord's non-compliance with the Consumer Standards. Four of the top five issues of non-compliance are, stock condition data; repairs and maintenance service; health and safety compliance; performance oversight, with the fifth being tenant engagement and influence in meeting these standards.

48. At the time of writing this report, all five of the C4 inspection judgements state serious failures under the Safety and Quality Standard as reasons for fundamental change required and regulatory intervention. To date, all five have been local authority landlords.

49. Of the 39 C3 inspection judgements, 38 state failures under the Safety and Quality Standard. Of these, 33 are local authority landlords.

50. There have been 71 C2 judgements. Of these 62 state some weakness in the delivery of the Safety and Quality standard.

Corporate plan priorities

51. Priority 2: Empowering our residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives.

52. Priority 3: Meeting Housing Needs – particularly in relation to the number of council homes achieving Energy Performance Certification Band C and percentage scores for the five safety and compliance management Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

Consultation undertaken.

53. We understand that tenant consultation should be factored into any service investment and over 500 hundred tenants participated in the independent TSM data collection exercise about their perceptions regarding the safety and quality of their homes.

54. Consultation with tenants, Members, senior management as well with colleagues across the housing sector has been a strong focus of the preparation process including the learning from the Independent Mock

Inspection recently undertaken and other external audits undertaken by Hampshire County Council in relation to Health and Safety social landlord requirements.

Financial and resource implications

55. Any expenditure required by the proposed action plan will be met from existing budgets within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and have already been factored in the draft 30-year business plan which indicates a £20 Million investment into our housing stock 2026-27 to improve housing standards against new legislation and maintain an effective repairs service for our tenants. This level of investment is anticipated annually going forward.

56. Failure to raise standards, meet the regulatory requirements of the consumer standards and respond appropriately to complaints could lead to fines and compensation levied by the Housing Ombudsman or the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

57. There are significant BAU demands on HR, Finance, and Procurement demands in running this critical part of the housing service due to our operating model of having an in-house Direct Labour Organisation with around 100 employees mostly trades. This labour is supplemented by several large contracts for planned works including kitchens and bathrooms plus energy efficiency works which are procured on regular timetable of works. These resources are recharged and paid for by the HRA along with several connected shared corporate posts in performance and transformation etc.

Legal implications

58. The Regulator of Social Housing launched its regulatory framework on the 1 April 2024 which outlines our requirements as a social housing provider including compliance with its consumer standards.

Risk assessment

59. This report gives assurance that NFDC currently provides a good overall service to its tenants as evidenced by the TSMs and the risk profile is professionally managed. It is nonetheless considered prudent to add any significant gaps in consumer standards to the corporate risk register due to the unknown timescales for inspection to maintain corporate oversight on this business-critical issue, but also what this means for the satisfaction services deliver to our tenants.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

60. Whilst the report has no direct implications, the work of NFDC will include improving the energy efficiency of our local housing stock,

providing better services on our estates, including open spaces, and the positive contribution to neighbourhoods. This may present further opportunities to contribute to the Council's neighbourhood and climate objectives in the longer term.

Equalities implications

61. The Consumer Standards are likely to have a positive impact on NFDC tenants as there is a requirement under the Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard for landlords to 'understand the diverse needs' of tenants, including those arising from protected characteristics, language barriers, and additional support needs and assess whether all tenants have fair access to, and equitable outcomes of, housing and landlord services.

Crime and disorder implications

62. It is anticipated there will be potential indirect and direct positive impacts on the Council's tenants and neighbourhoods. The interventions proposed through our improvement to tackling Anti-Social Behaviour as part of the consumer standards is likely to lead to an initial increase in the number of cases prosecuted in the courts, or by the Police, whilst long term interventions proposed should lead to a long-term reduction in crime and disorder.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

63. The collection, retention and deletion of tenant data is governed by GDPR and associated guidance. All data will be collected and maintained in line with the required legislation. The Policies are required in the shorter-term at a service level to improve service delivery and outcomes. Once the service plan is fully adopted the policies will be updated in line with any changes required and will be continuously reviewed.

New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications

64. The approach of ensuring the Housing Service is fully compliant with the consumer standards including for housing neighbourhoods as well as home may involve increased and better partnership working with the National Park Authority where the Council's housing stock is also located and managed by the housing landlord.

Conclusion

65. The Council has made considerable progress toward meeting the Safety and Quality Standard under the Social Housing Regulation Act

2023, demonstrating good overall compliance and embedding many improvements into business-as-usual processes. However, eleven active gaps remain, primarily relating to stock condition data, system integration, and tenant engagement. High-priority actions, including completing stock condition surveys, improving data use, and implementing the new Maintenance and Repairs system, are underway and monitored through robust governance arrangements.

66. While the current risk profile is managed well, the continued focus on improving our services for tenants and the unknown timing of regulatory inspection requires continued focus and oversight. By maintaining momentum on these actions and strengthening tenant engagement, NFDC will be well-positioned to achieve full compliance, deliver positive outcomes for residents, and uphold its corporate priorities.

Appendices:

None.

Background Papers:

Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards
January 2025 report to HACOSP
March 2025 report to HACOSP

This page is intentionally left blank

HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

WORK PROGRAMME 2026

ITEM	OBJECTIVE	METHOD	LEAD OFFICER
18 MARCH 2026			
Corporate Plan: Key Performance Data (Quarter 3)	To consider the performance data against KPIs identified in the Corporate Plan	Report to Panel	Saqib Yasin
Social Housing Regulation Act Progress	To receive a progress report on the work related to the Social Housing Regulation Act	Report to Panel	Paul Thomas
PSPO Extension Review and Summary of Public Consultation	To consider the PSPO extension review and summary of public consultation	Report to Panel	Brian Byrne
Safer New Forest Strategic Assessment 2025	To consider the Safer New Forest Strategic Assessment 2025	Report to Panel	Brian Byrne
Homelessness Update	To receive an update on homelessness	Report to Panel	Chris Pope
Right To Buy	To consider the Right to Buy Policy	Report to Panel	Emily Berry
Tenant Engagement Strategy – Annual Update	To receive the progress being made in meeting the objectives and actions from the Tenant Engagement Strategy 2024-28	Report to Panel	David Brown

This page is intentionally left blank