

A review of homelessness and rough sleeping in New Forest

2025

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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.

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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 law¹ 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 homelessness². 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 law⁴, statutory guidance⁵, national guidelines⁶ and national good practice⁷.

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 similarities⁸. 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 1977⁹, with significant amendments being made to it 1985¹⁰, 1996¹¹, and

⁸

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/methodologies/clusteringssimilarlocalauthoritiesandstatisticalnearestneighboursintheukmethodology>

⁹ Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977

¹⁰ Housing Act 1985

¹¹ Housing Act 1996, Part 7

2017¹². 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 homeless 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 1996¹³ 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 statistics¹⁴ 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:

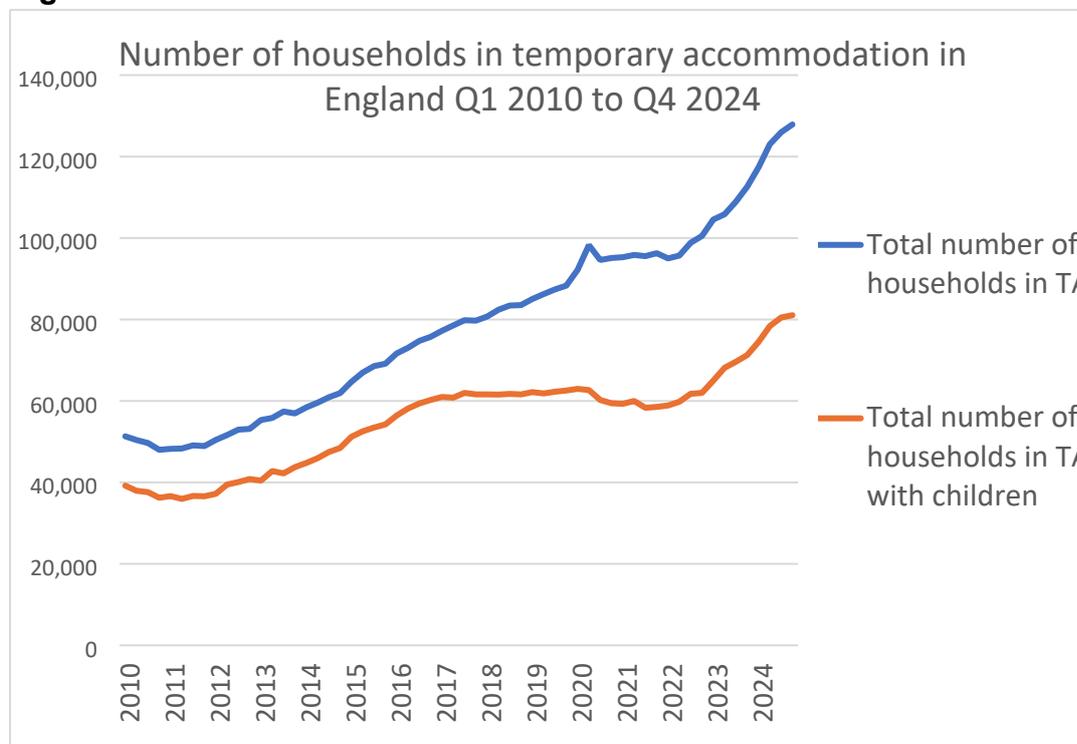
- 146,430 households were owed a prevention duty in 2023/24, up 3.1% from 2022/23 but down 1.9% from 2019/20, the last year before COVID.
- Of these 57,340 were due to the end of an assured shorthold tenancy (AST), notice, up 4.6% from 2022/23 and up 32.1% from 2019/20.
- 178,560 households were owed 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

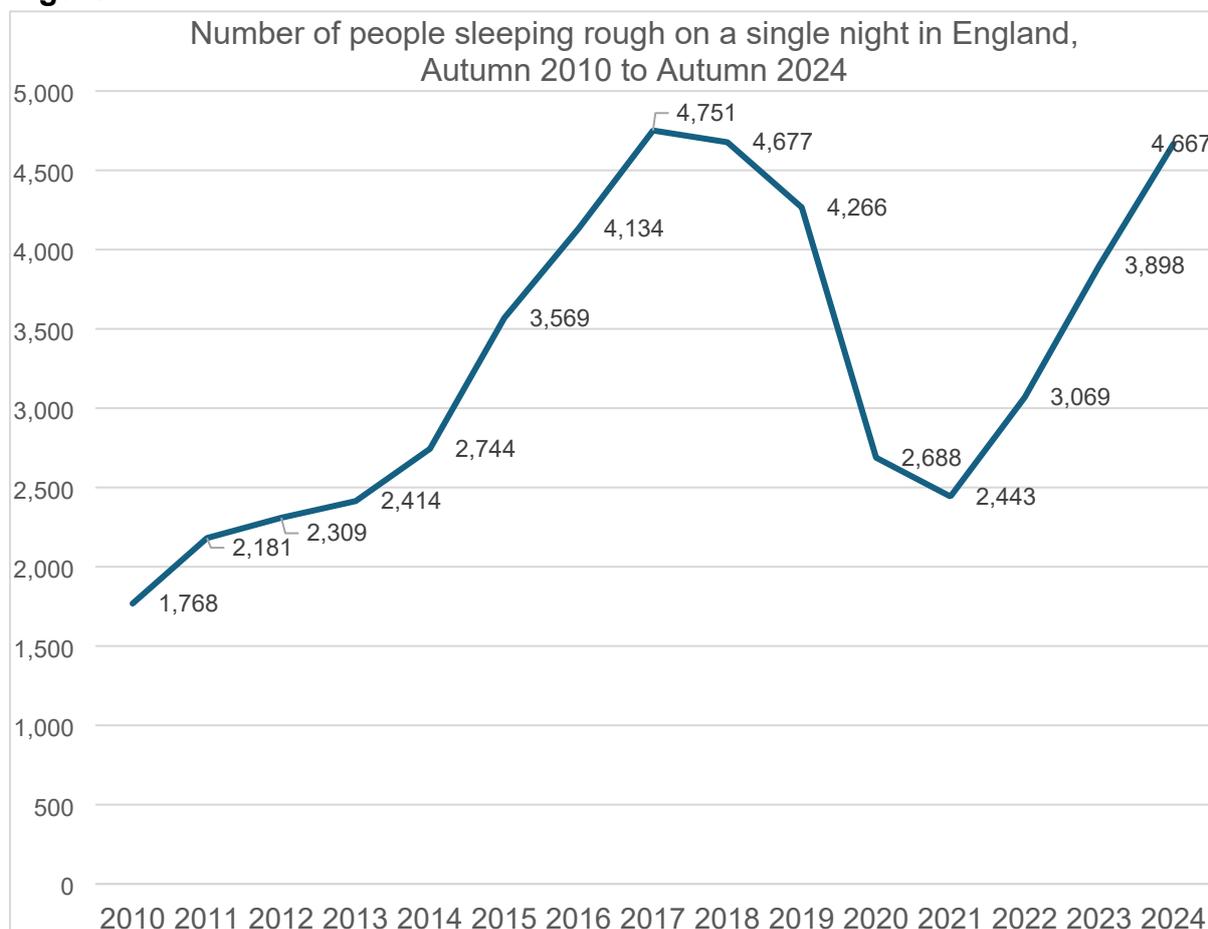


The latest rough sleeping snapshot statistics show that in Autumn 2024 there were 4,667 individuals recorded as sleeping rough on a single night in England, up 19.7% from 2023 and up 91% since 2021. The 2024 figure equates to an estimated 8.1 people sleeping rough on a single night in England per 100,000 population. The number of people sleeping over the course of a month is estimated by local authorities to be roughly twice the single night figure¹⁵.

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 2023/24¹⁶ 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 available¹⁷ 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.

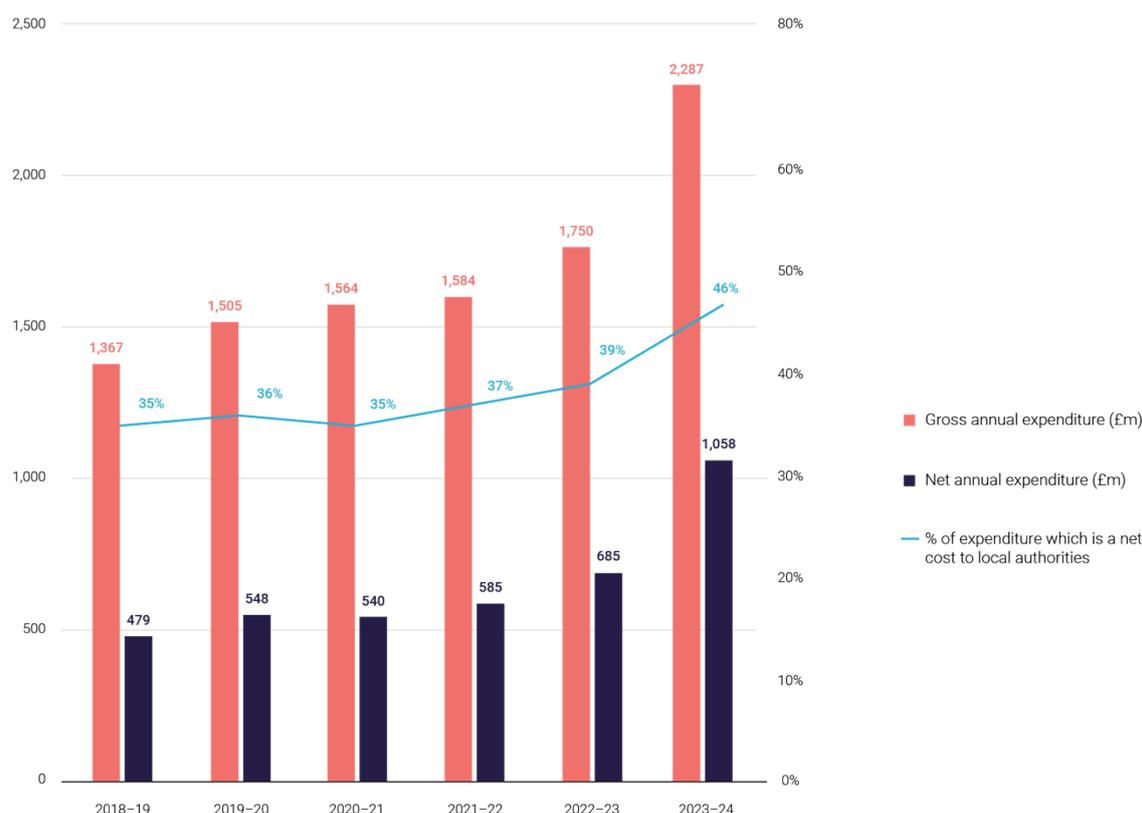
Analysis by the Centre for Homelessness Impact in Figure 3 shows the increase in both gross and net costs of TA between 2018/19 and 2023/24, with the increase in costs between 2022/23 and 2023/24 being particularly rapid.

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 3¹⁸

Gross and net expenditure by LAs on TA
2018–19 to 2023–24



Homelessness Policy and Funding

The core homelessness grant to local authorities is the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG). This has been increasing for a number of 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 Framework¹⁹ 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 Agency²⁰ 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 2024²¹. Recent research by Citizens Advice and University of Plymouth²² 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

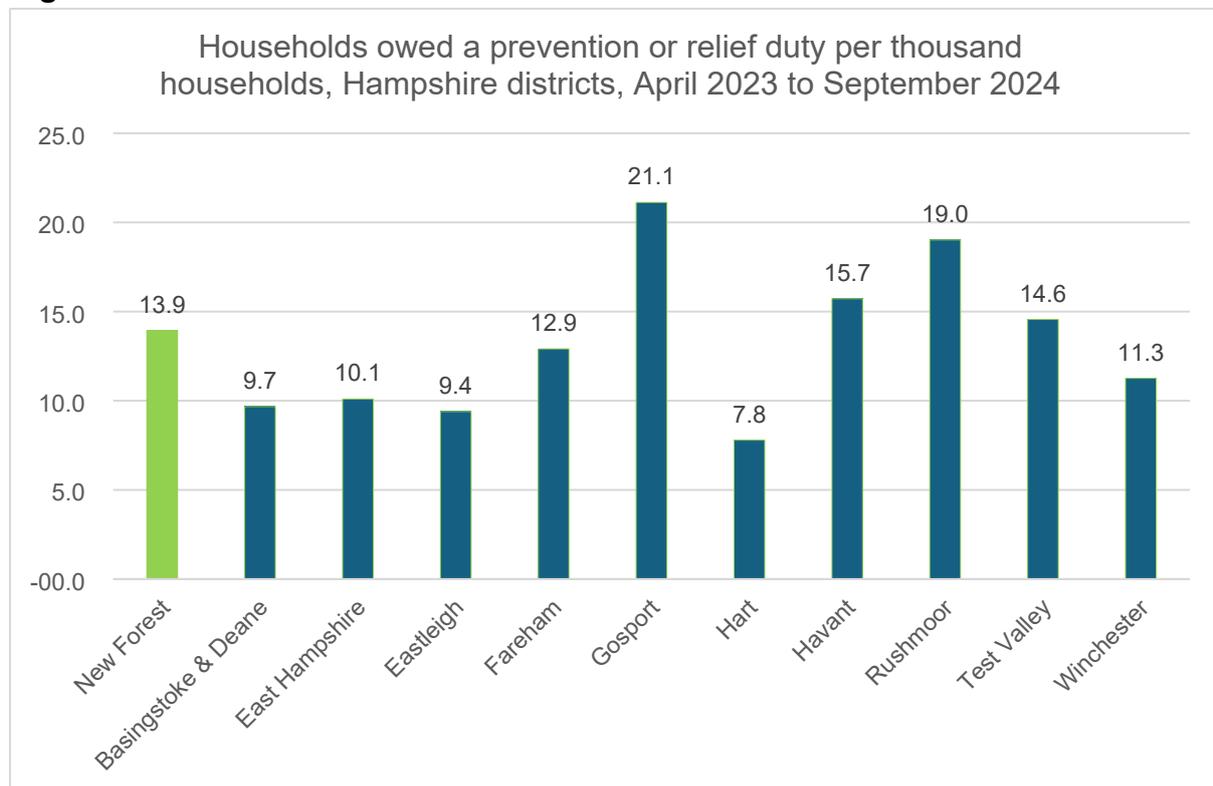


Figure 5

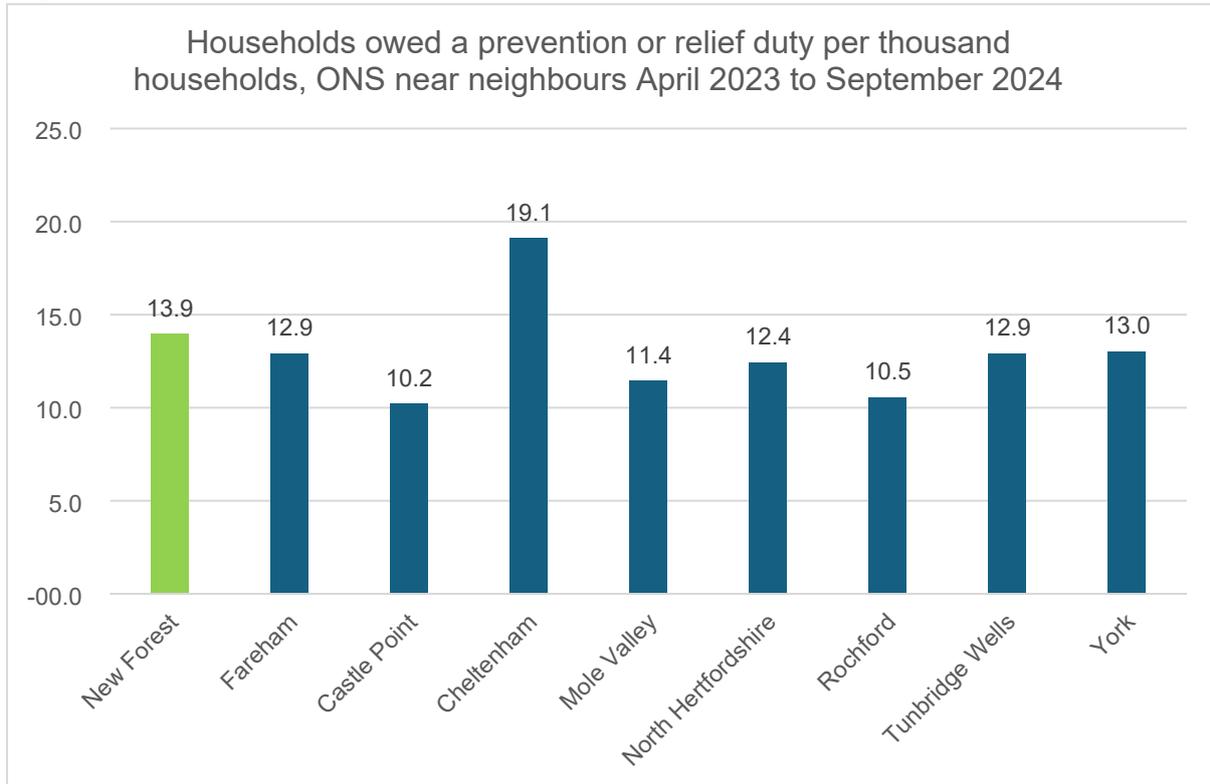
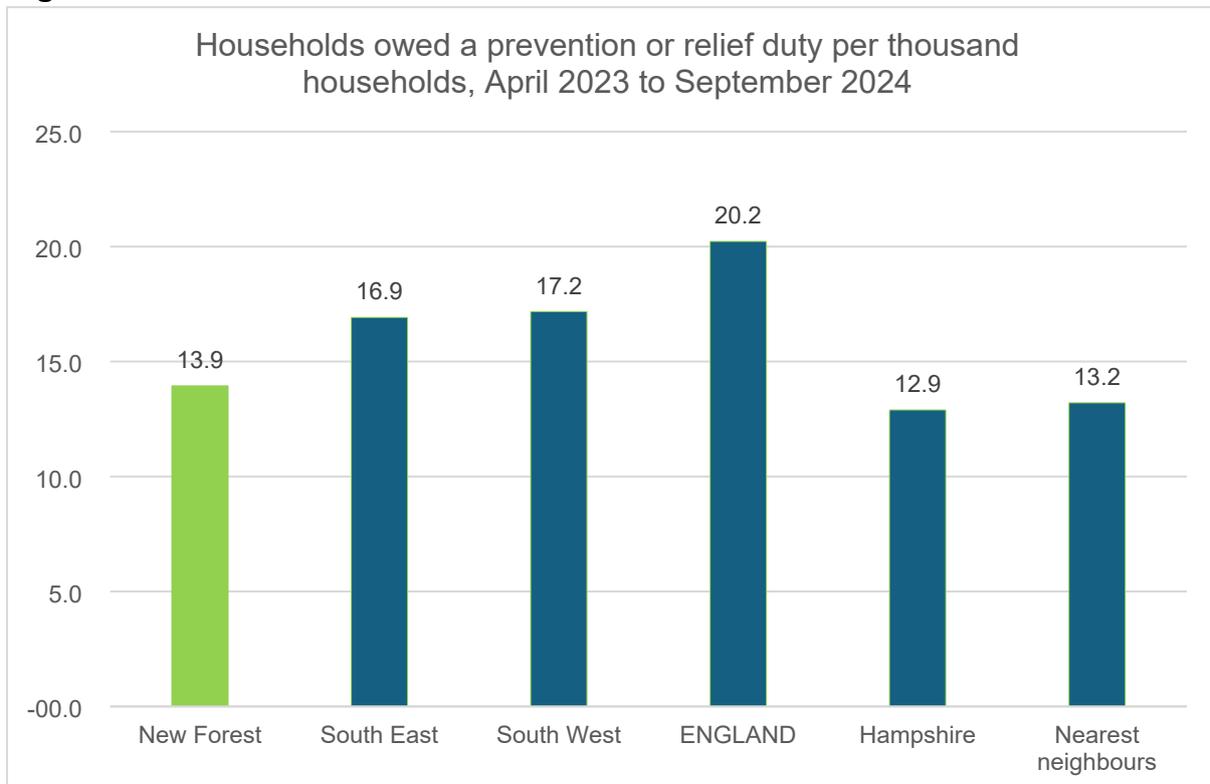


Figure 6



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

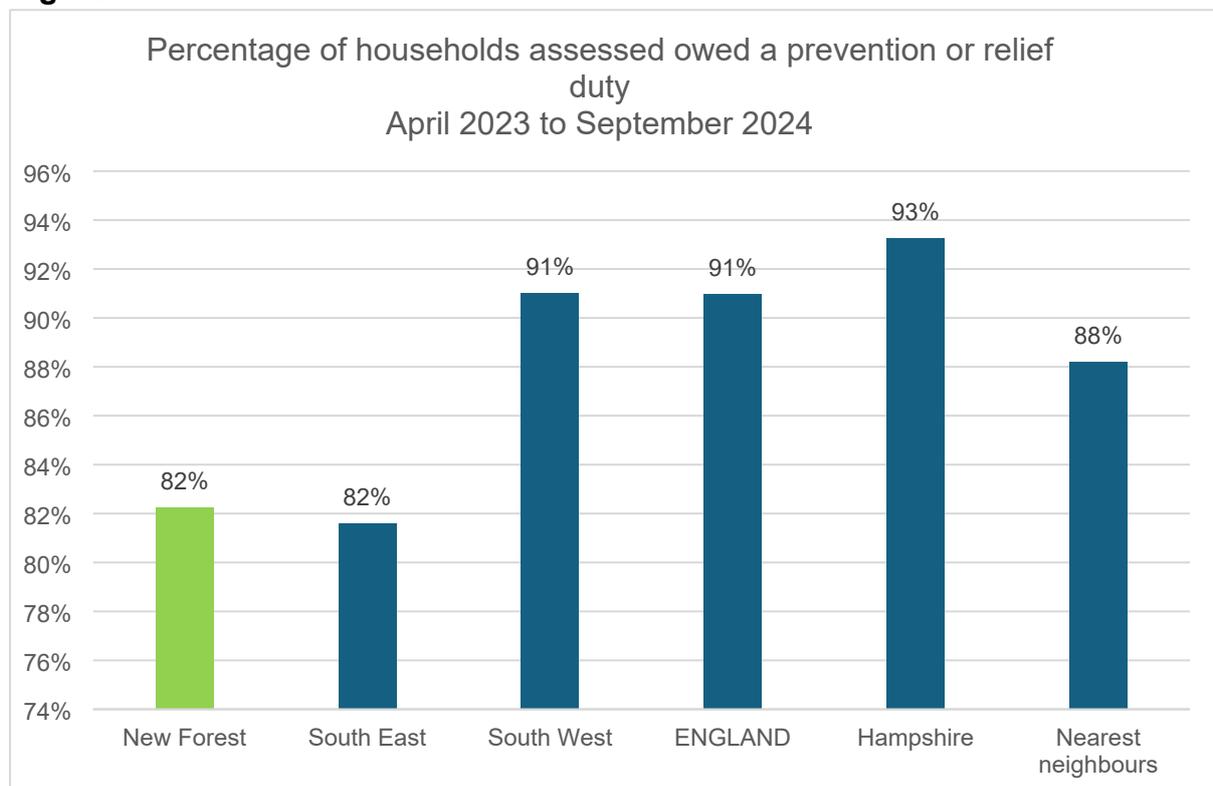
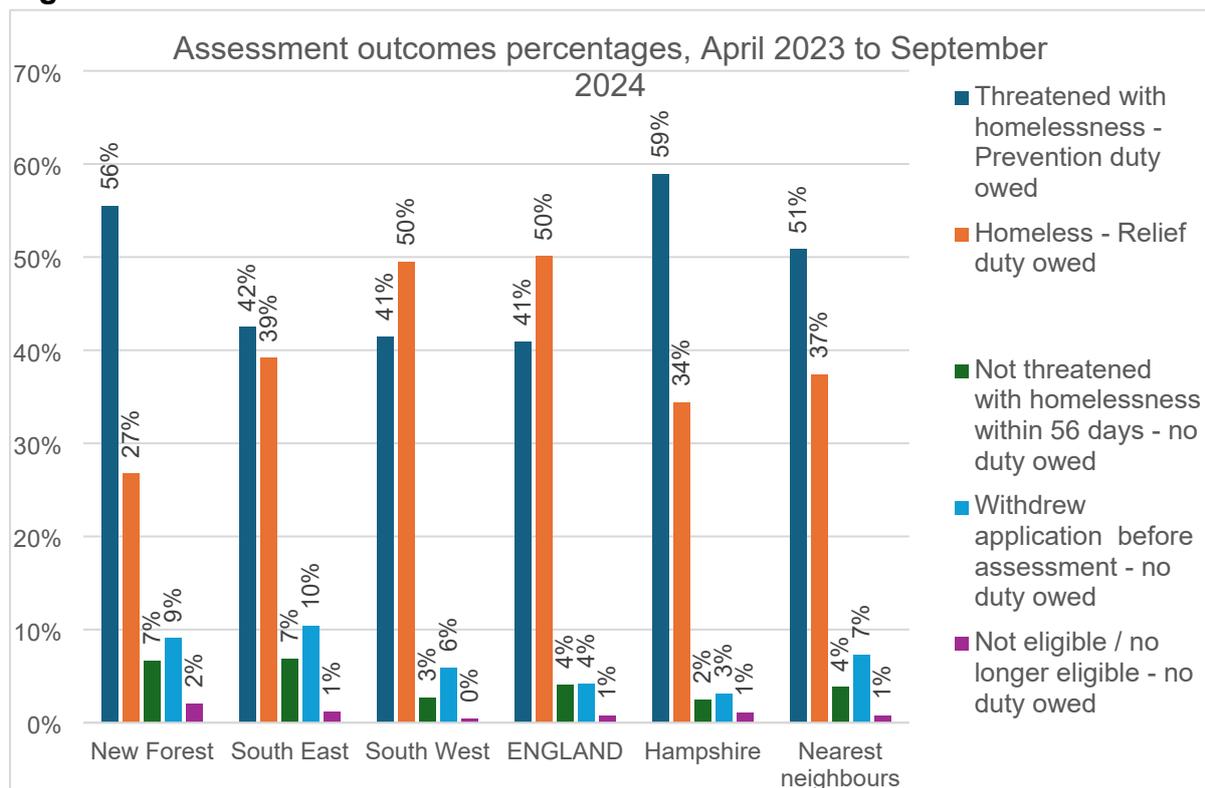


Figure 8 compares homelessness assessment outcomes in more detail.

Figure 8



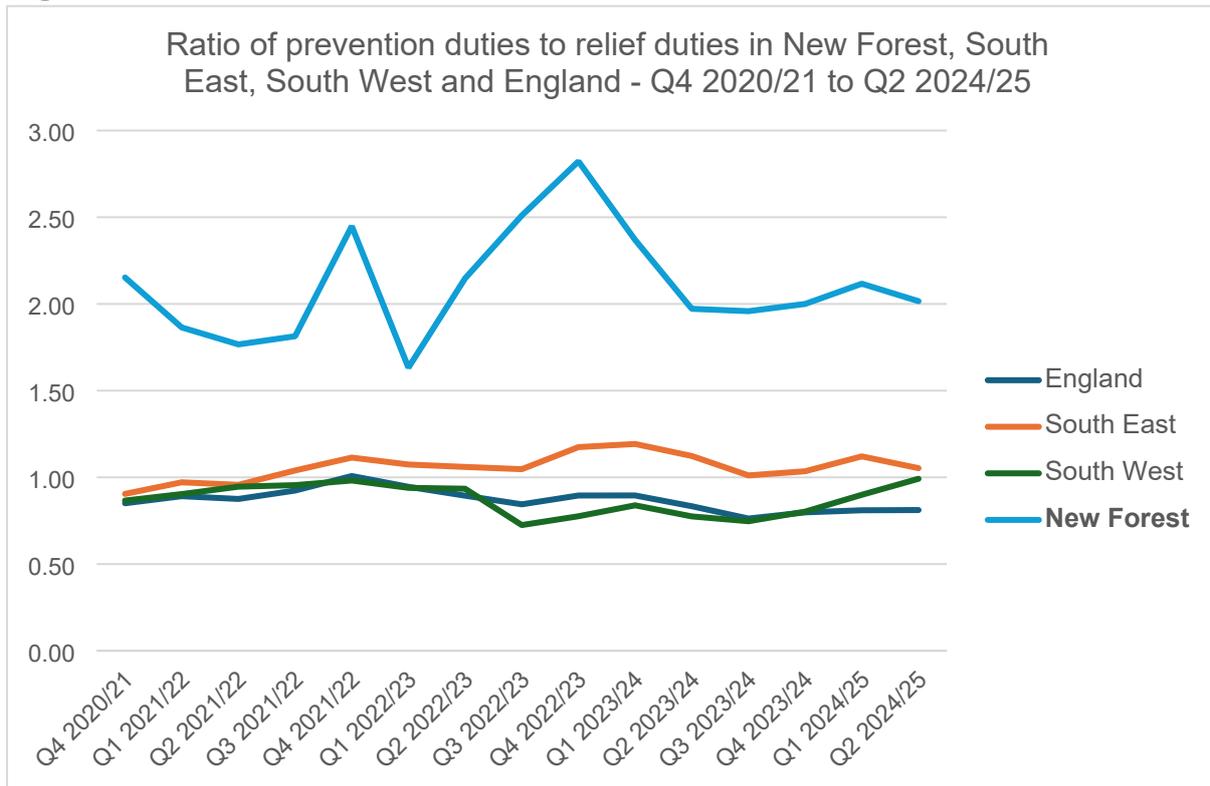
This shows that the percentage of assessments resulting in a prevention duty at 56%, is about the average for the Hampshire districts and ONS near neighbours, but significantly higher than the South East (42%), South West (41%) or England (41%).

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.

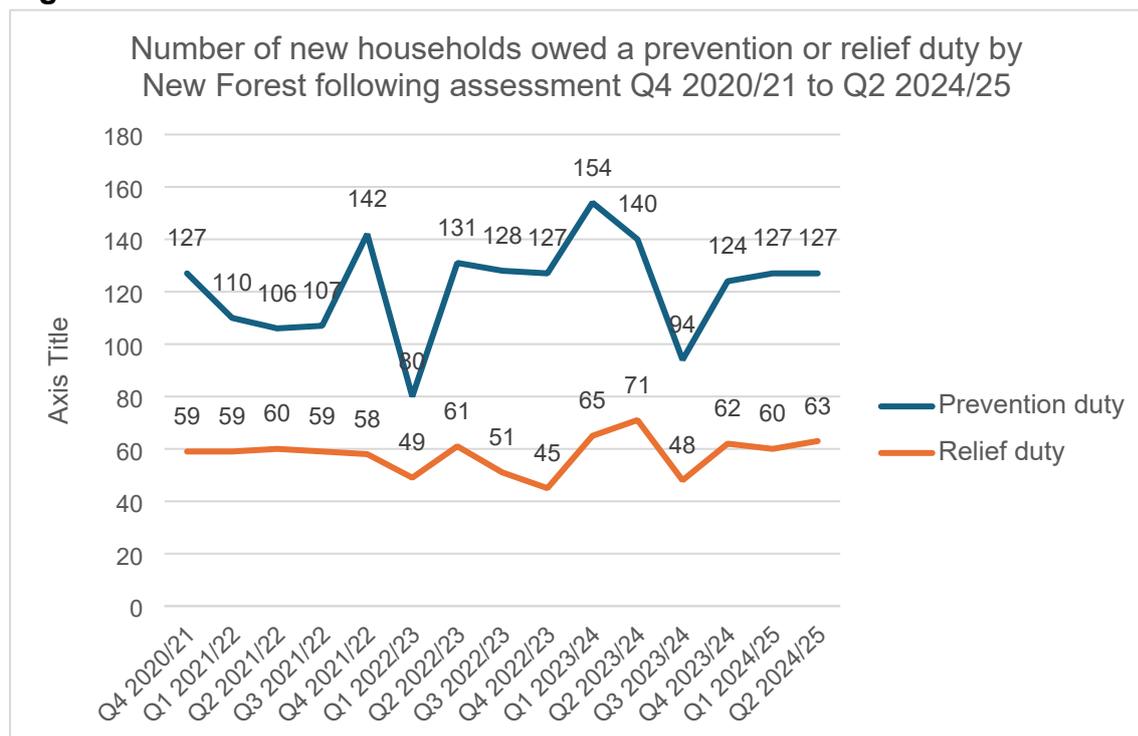
The ratio of prevention duties to relief duties has been consistently high compared to the South East, South West and England over the period since Covid 19, as shown by the quarterly data in Figure 9 between Q4 2020/21 and Q2 2024/25. This can be regarded as positive, for the reasons set out in the 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.

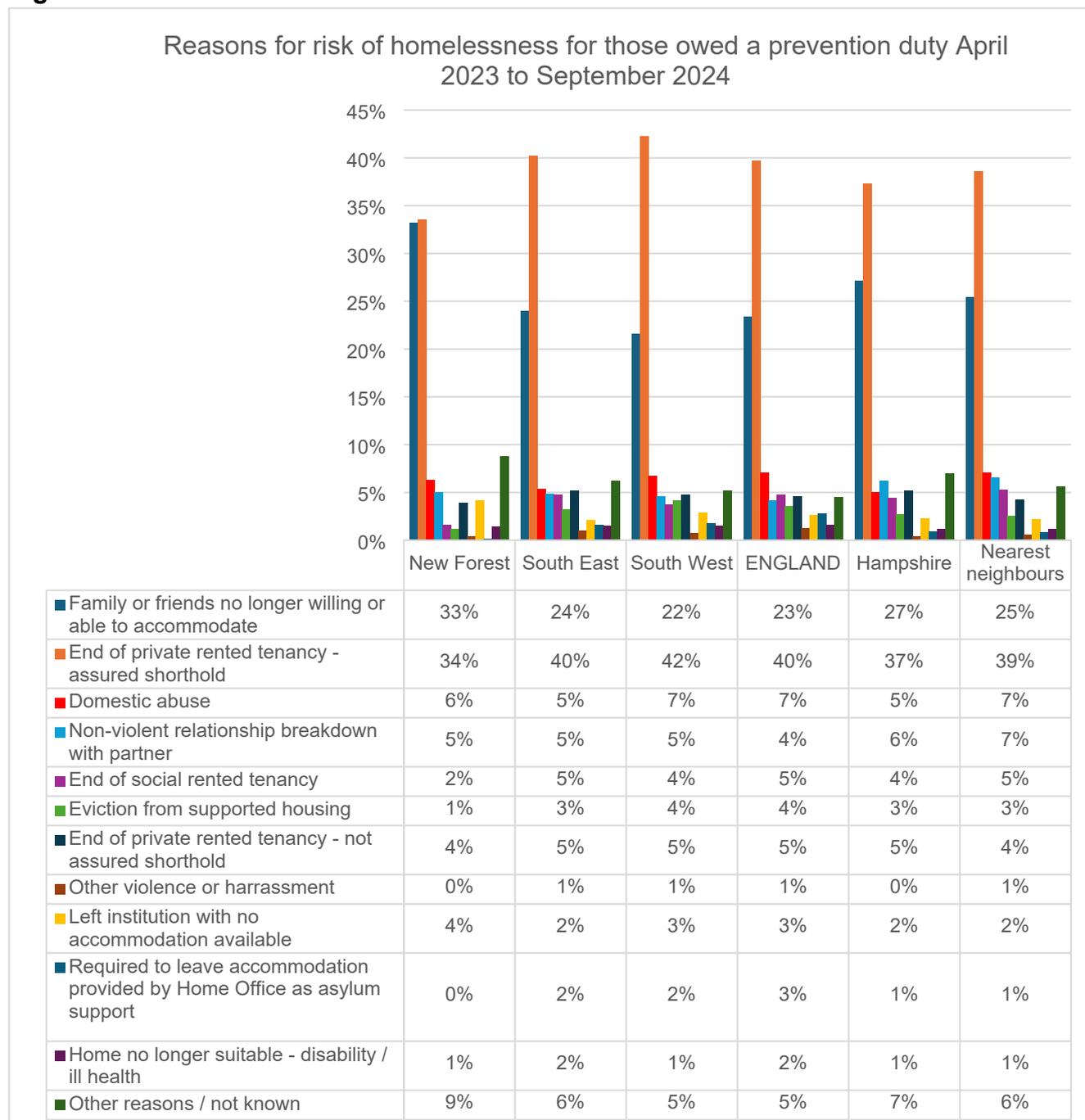
Figure 11

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



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 homelessness 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.

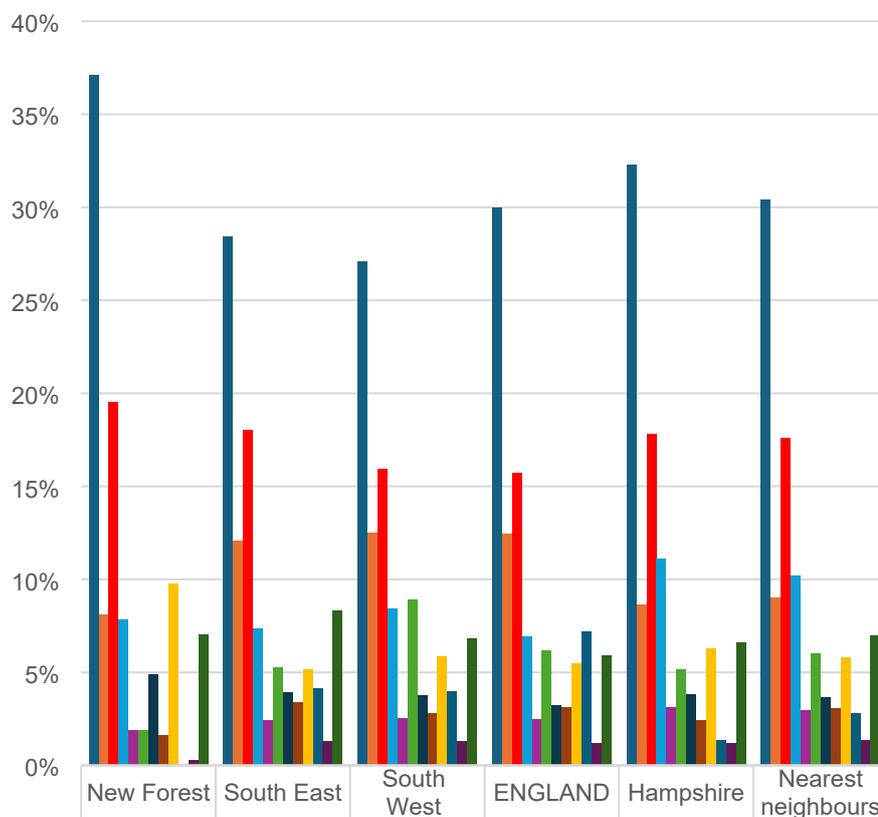
Figure 13

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

Reasons for homelessness for those owed a relief duty
April 2023 to September 2024



■ 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.

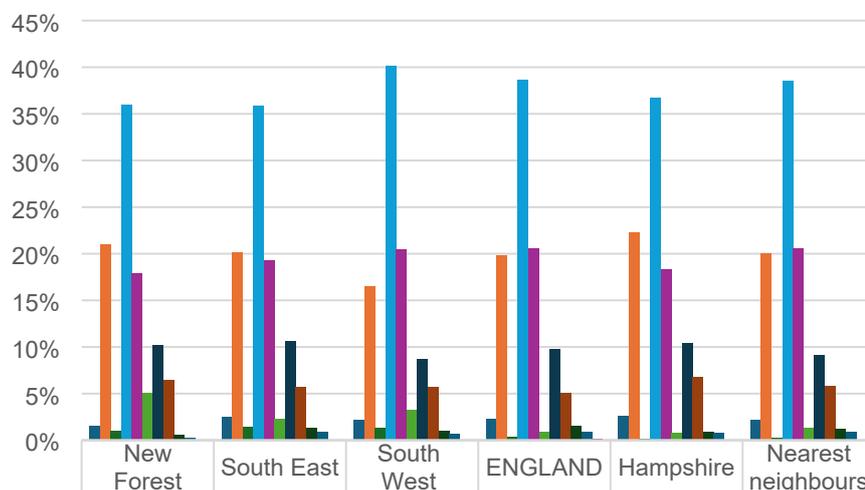
Both the prevention and relief duty information show negligible homelessness as a result of being required to leave asylum seeker accommodation in New Forest, which has become a significant problem in some other parts of England.

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



Household Type	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%

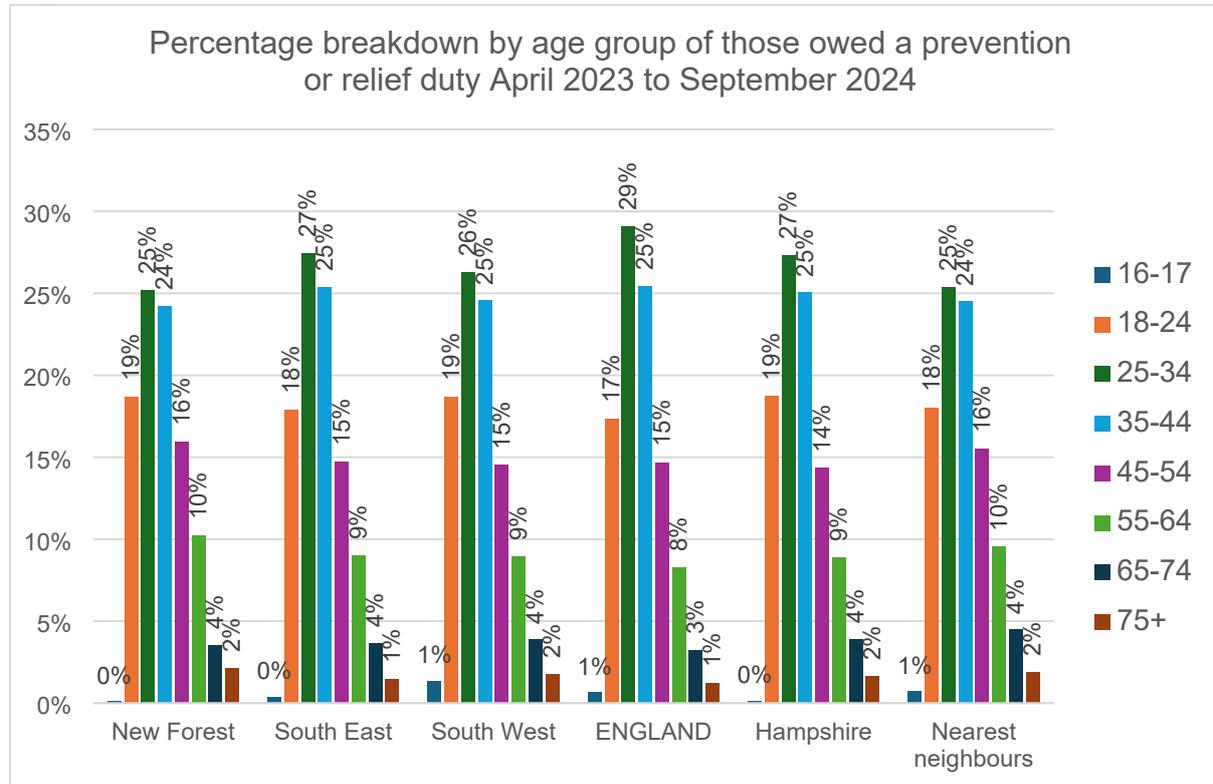
Characteristics of those owed a homelessness duty

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

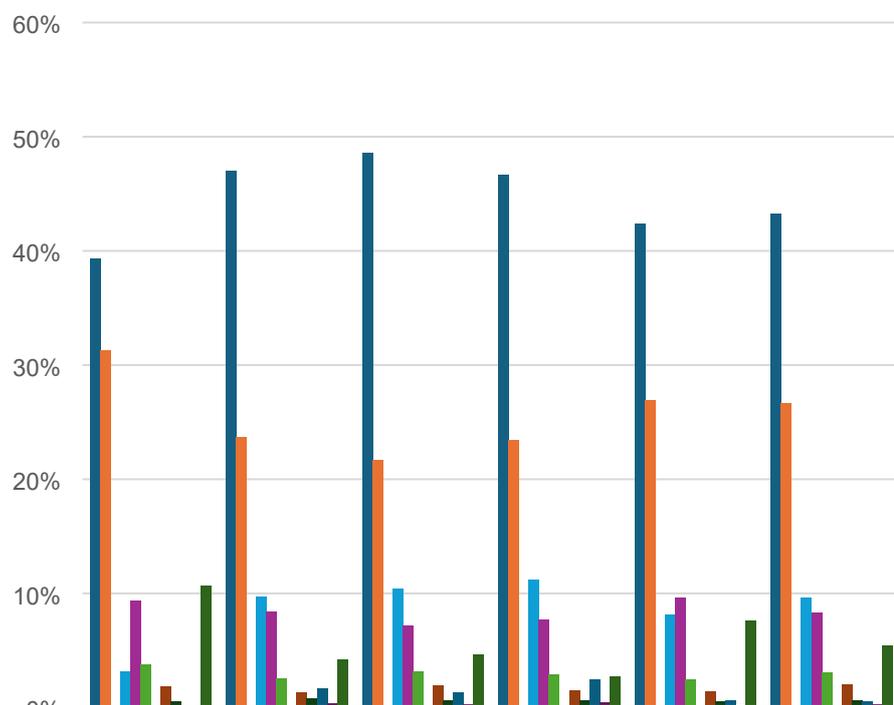


Previous accommodation

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

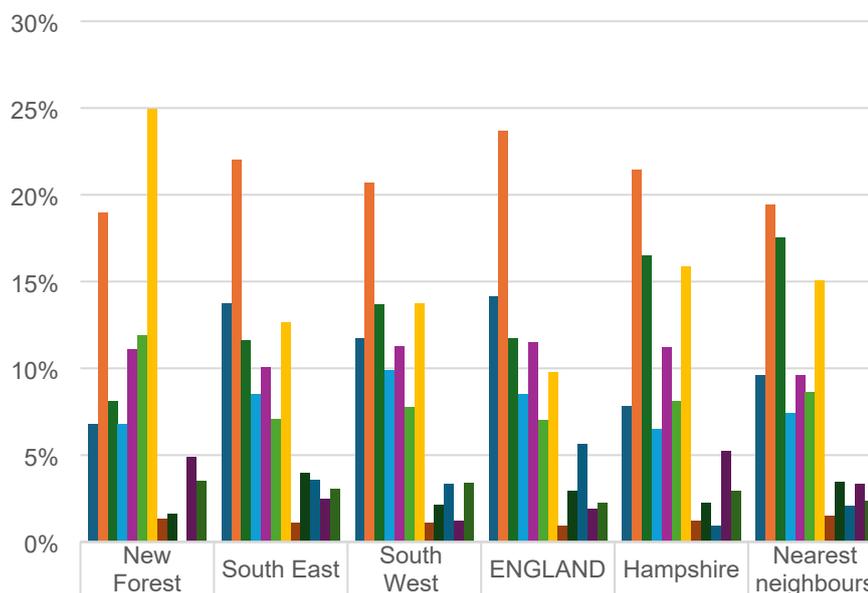
Previous accommodation for those owed a prevention duty
April 2023 to September 2024



	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

Previous accommodation for those owed a relief duty
April 2023 to September 2024



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 Protocol²³, which is designed to ensure consistency across Hampshire for those making such referrals. Referrals may be made using the Hampshire Homelessness Referral Form²⁴ and submitted by email.

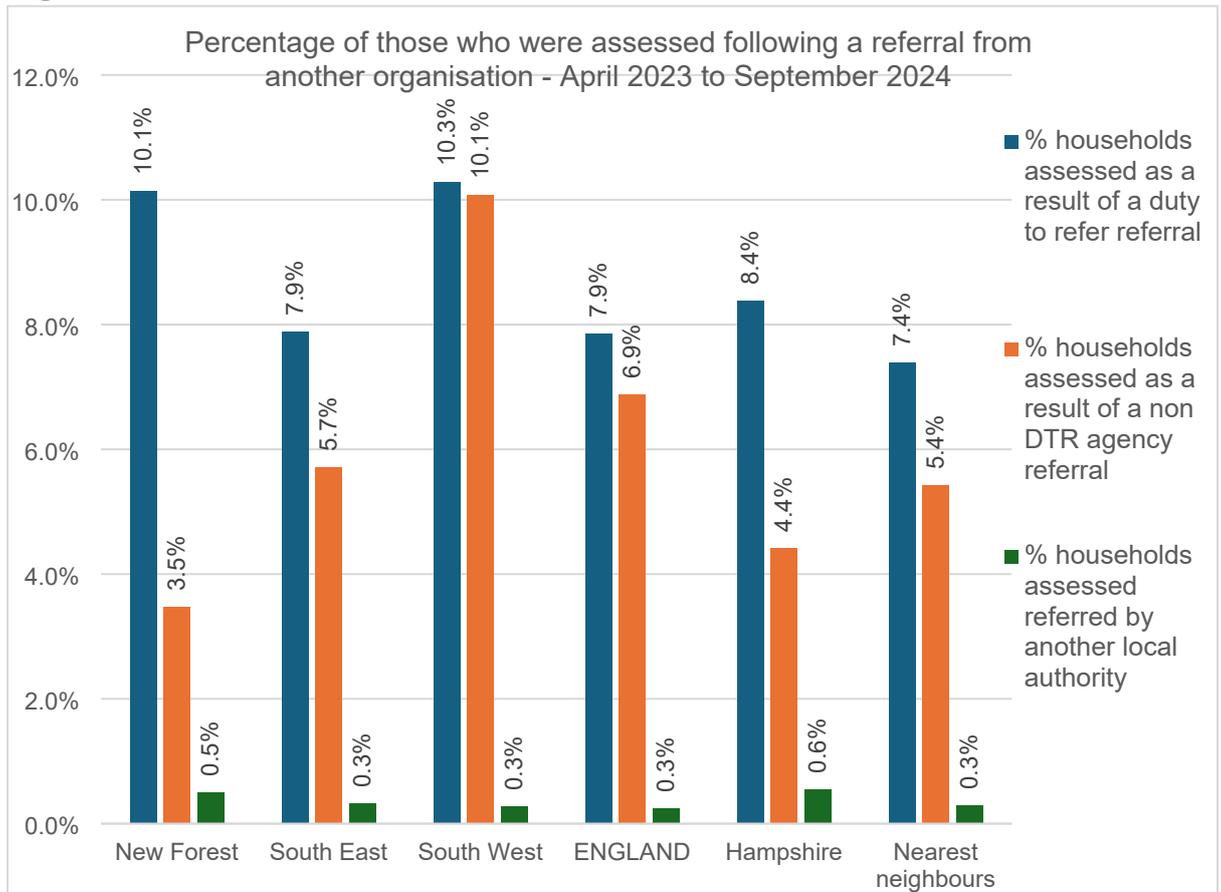
Figure 19 compares the percentages of those assessed on the basis that they might be homeless or at risk of homelessness between New Forest and comparator areas between April 2023 and September 2024 who were referred under the duty to refer and also referred by organisations not included in the duty 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.

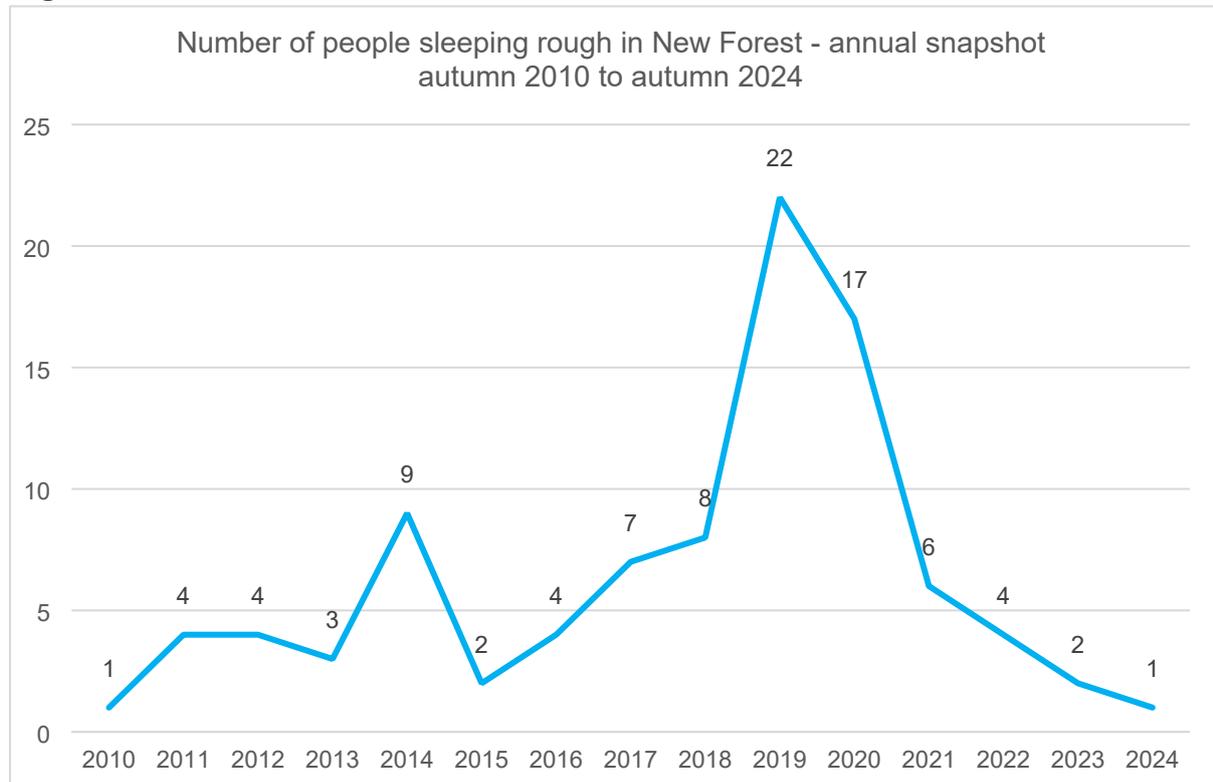
The snapshot is collated by outreach workers, local charities and community groups and is independently verified by Homeless Link²⁵.

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.

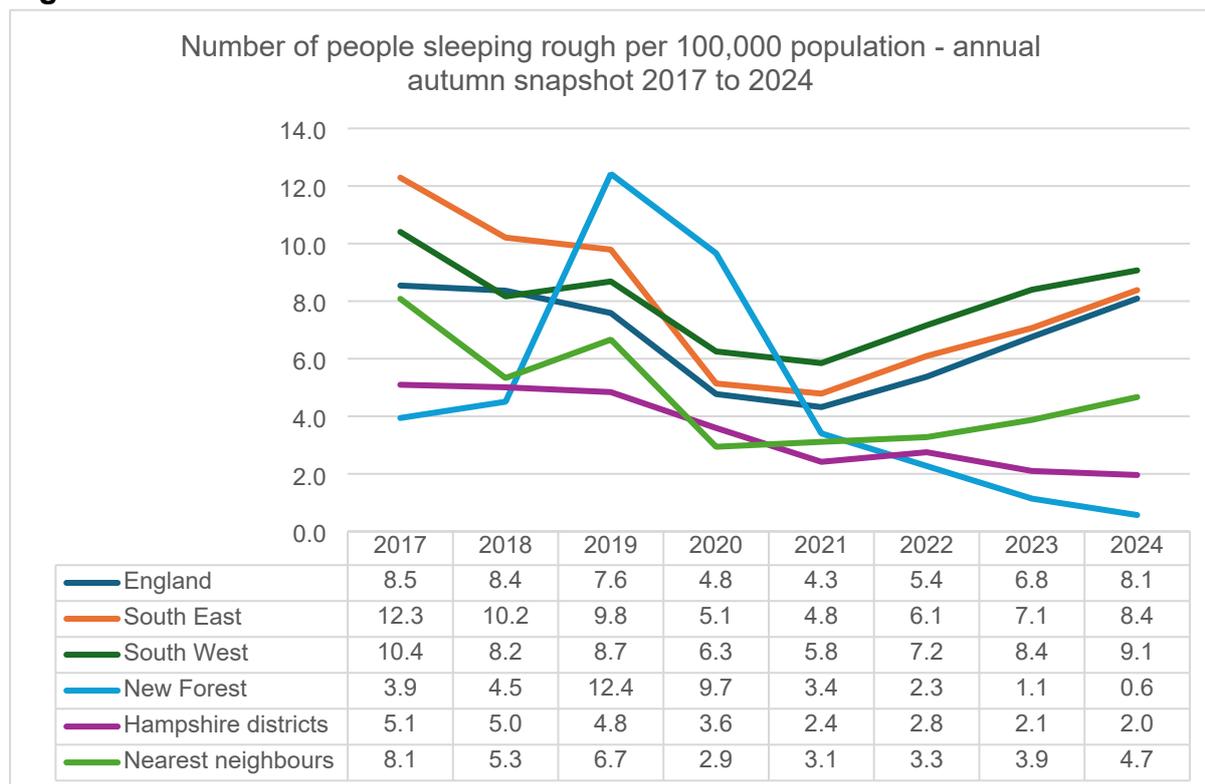
Figure 22



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

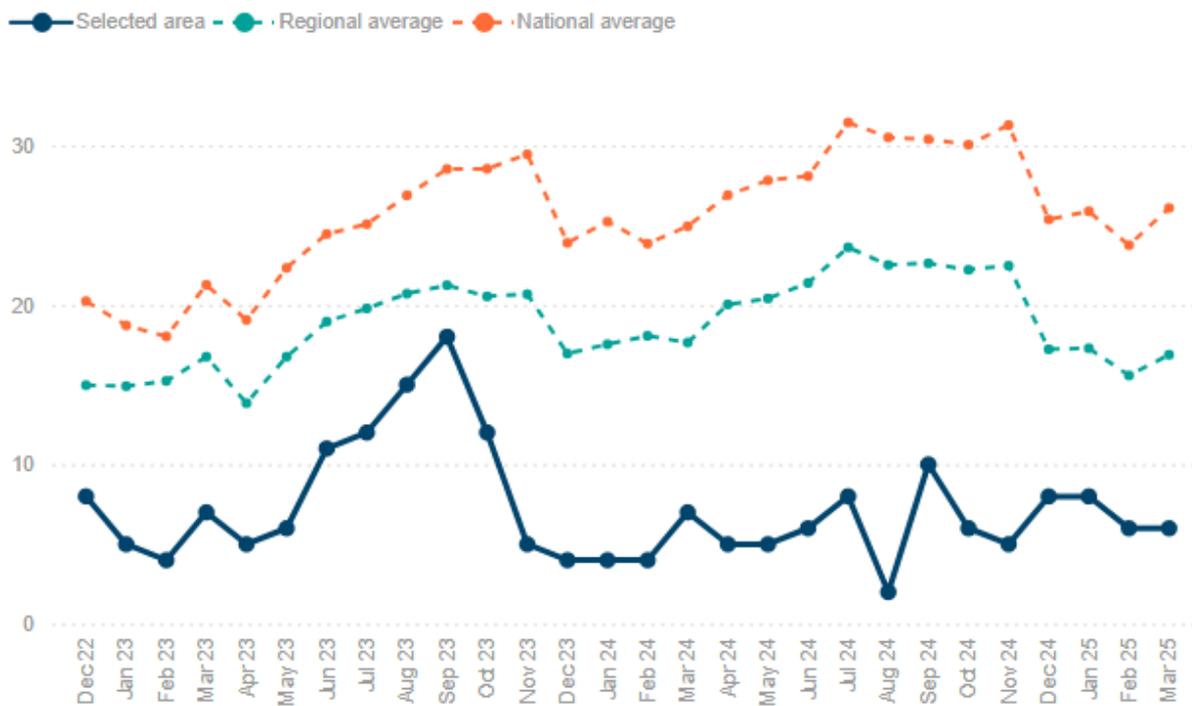


As Figure 23 illustrates, the steadily falling rough sleeping figures in New Forest since 2021 contrast with steadily rising figures for England, the South East, South West and ONS near neighbours. Rough sleeping figures in the Hampshire districts have been falling, but not as rapidly as in New Forest.

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 averages²⁶

People estimated to be sleeping rough over the month



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 Monitor²⁷. 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/>

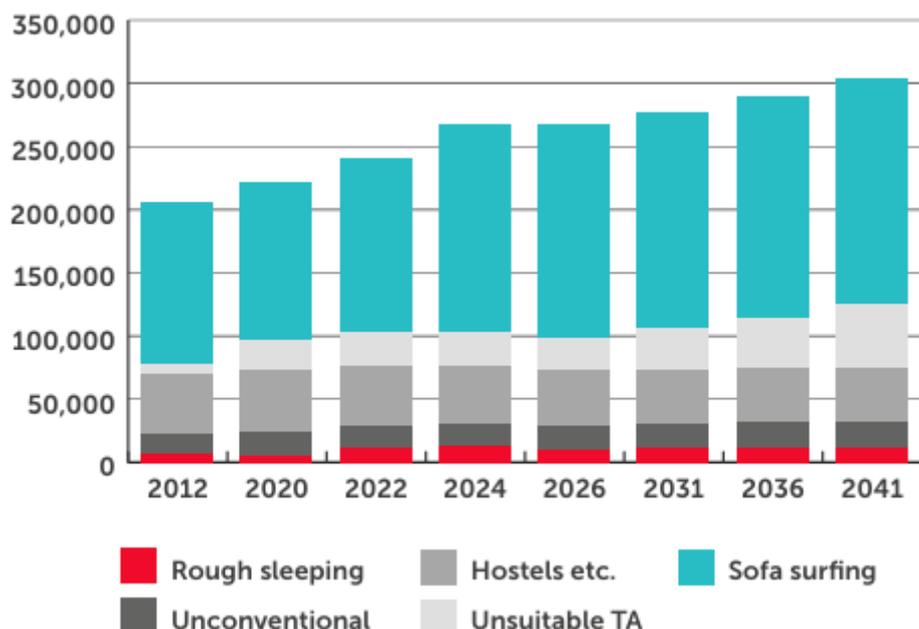
(which track only those who actively seek LA homelessness assistance and who are eligible for it), and counts or estimates of rough sleeping.

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



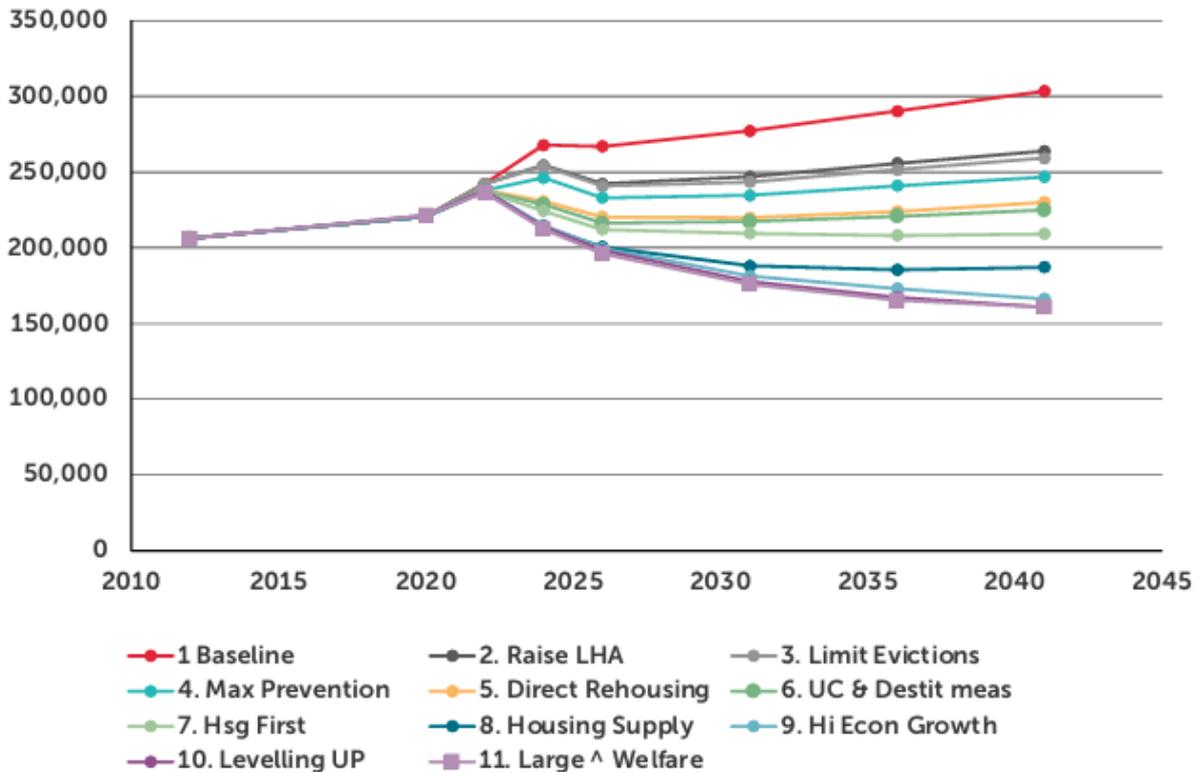
monitor

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.

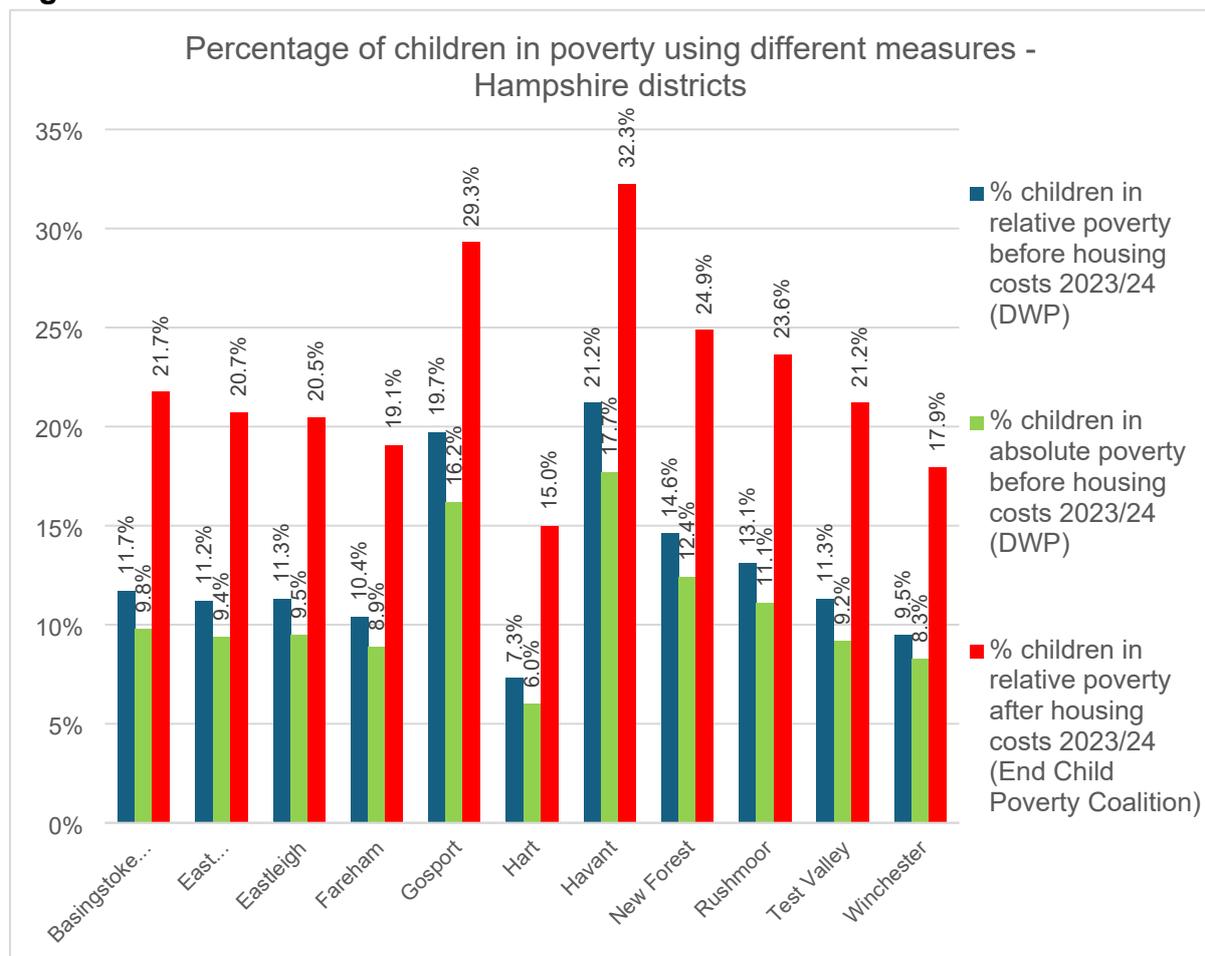
In a New Forest context, it is worth considering trends in poverty and housing affordability as these are likely to affect future homelessness levels.

Figure 28 compares child poverty in New Forest with the other Hampshire districts using DWP data²⁸ to consider both relative and absolute poverty before housing costs, and End Child Poverty Coalition (ECPC) data²⁹ 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



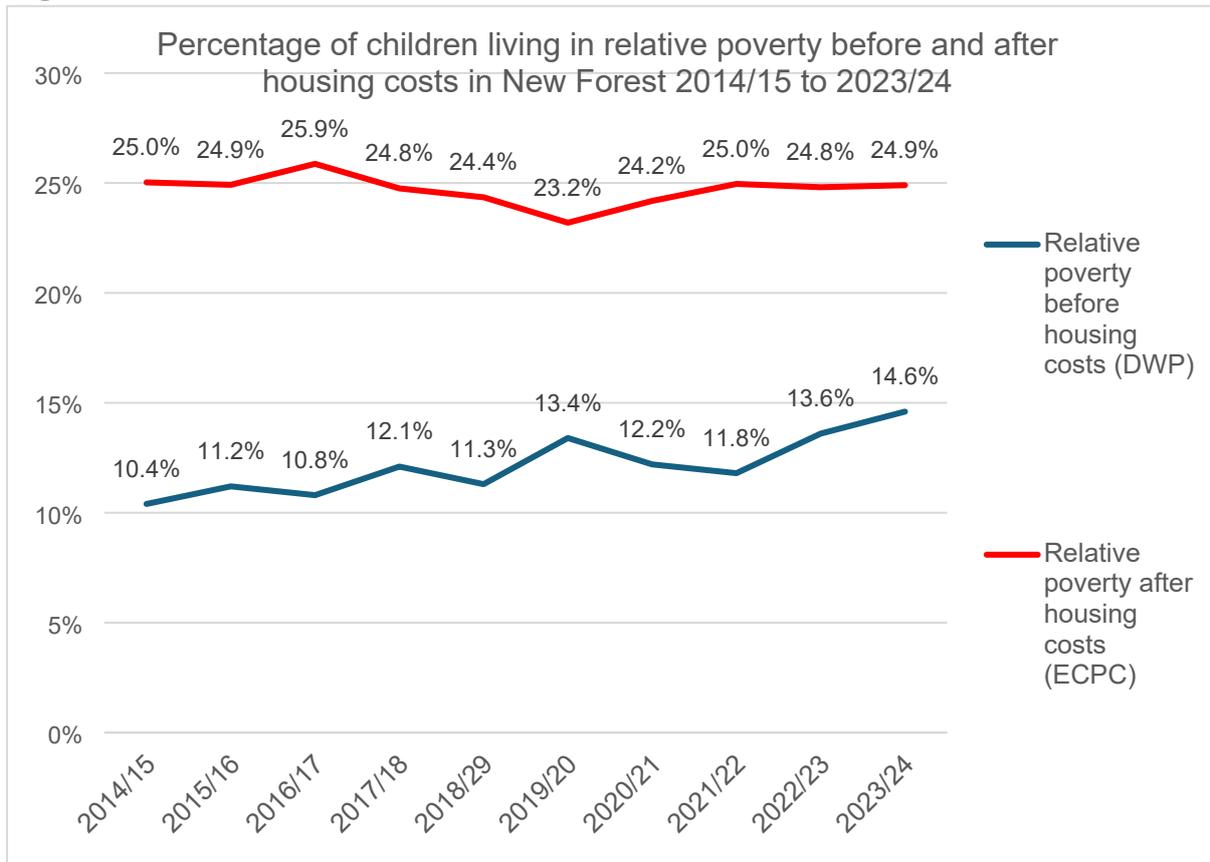
According to the latest data for 2023/24, New Forest has the third highest levels of child poverty of the Hampshire district authorities on any of the measures, with 14.6% of children living in a household in relative poverty before housing costs, 12.4% in a household experiencing absolute poverty before 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

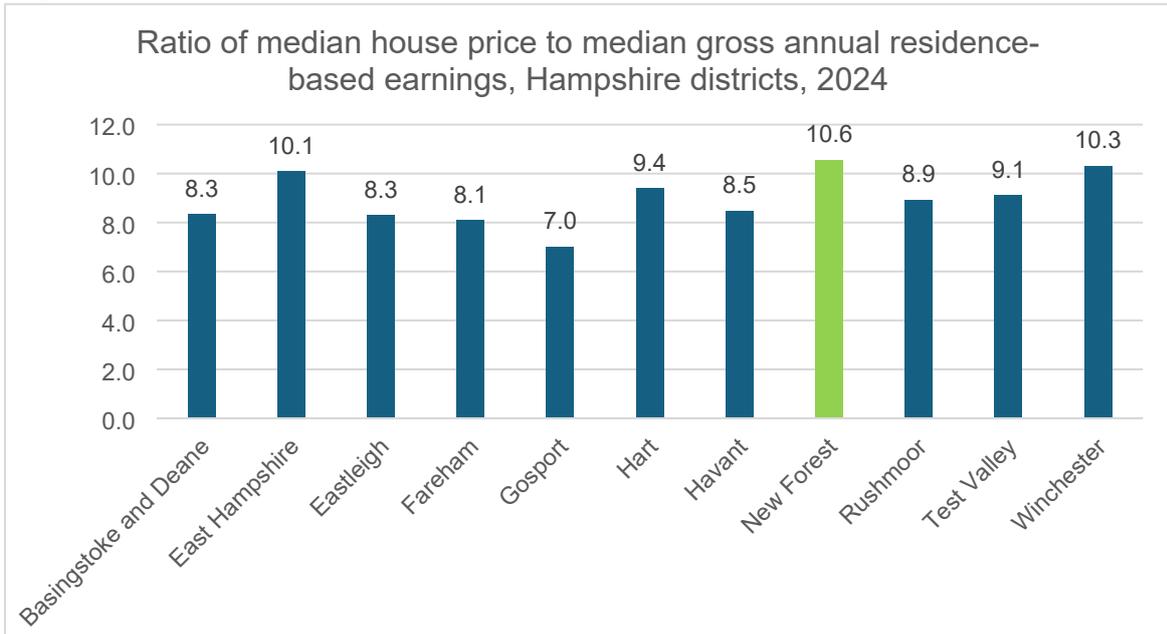
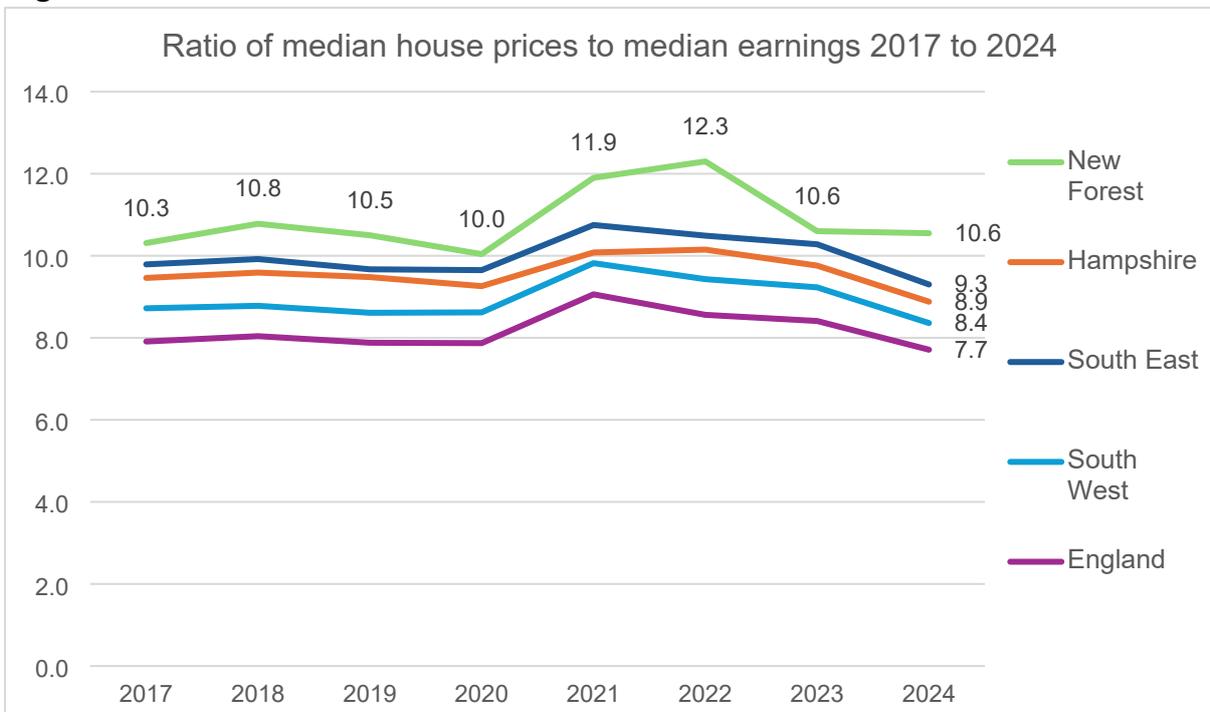


Figure 31 compares the trend in this affordability ratio between 2017 and 2024 in New Forest with the Hampshire districts, the South East, South West and England. Housing has been less affordable to buy in New Forest than any of the comparator areas for the whole period. However, affordability has been 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.

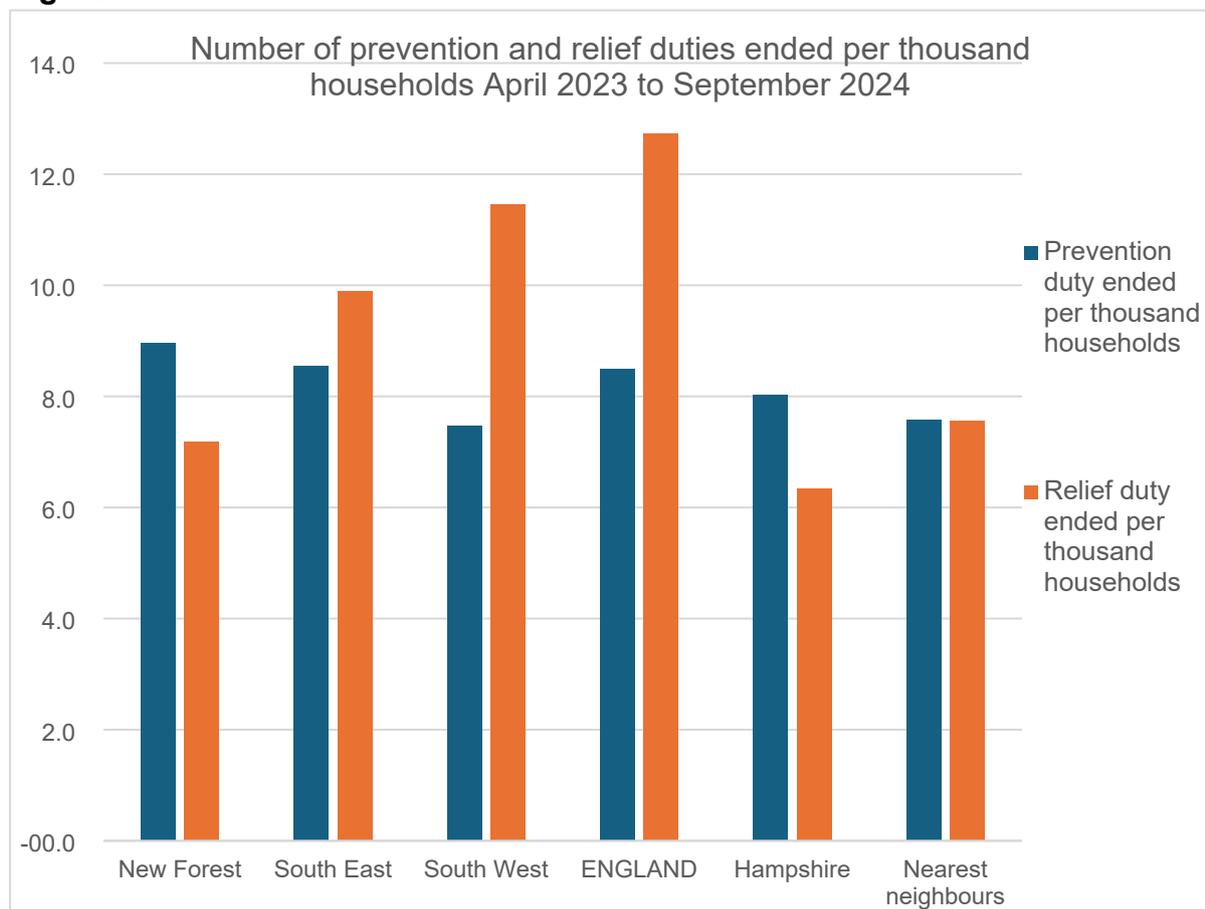
However, the impression based on this one call was that if a caller did persist in trying to get through, they would be helped, or that at least suggestions would be given for where they might be able to get help.

Prevention and relief outcomes

In the period April 2023 to September 2024, 729 homelessness prevention duties ended and 585 relief duties ended in New Forest³⁰.

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

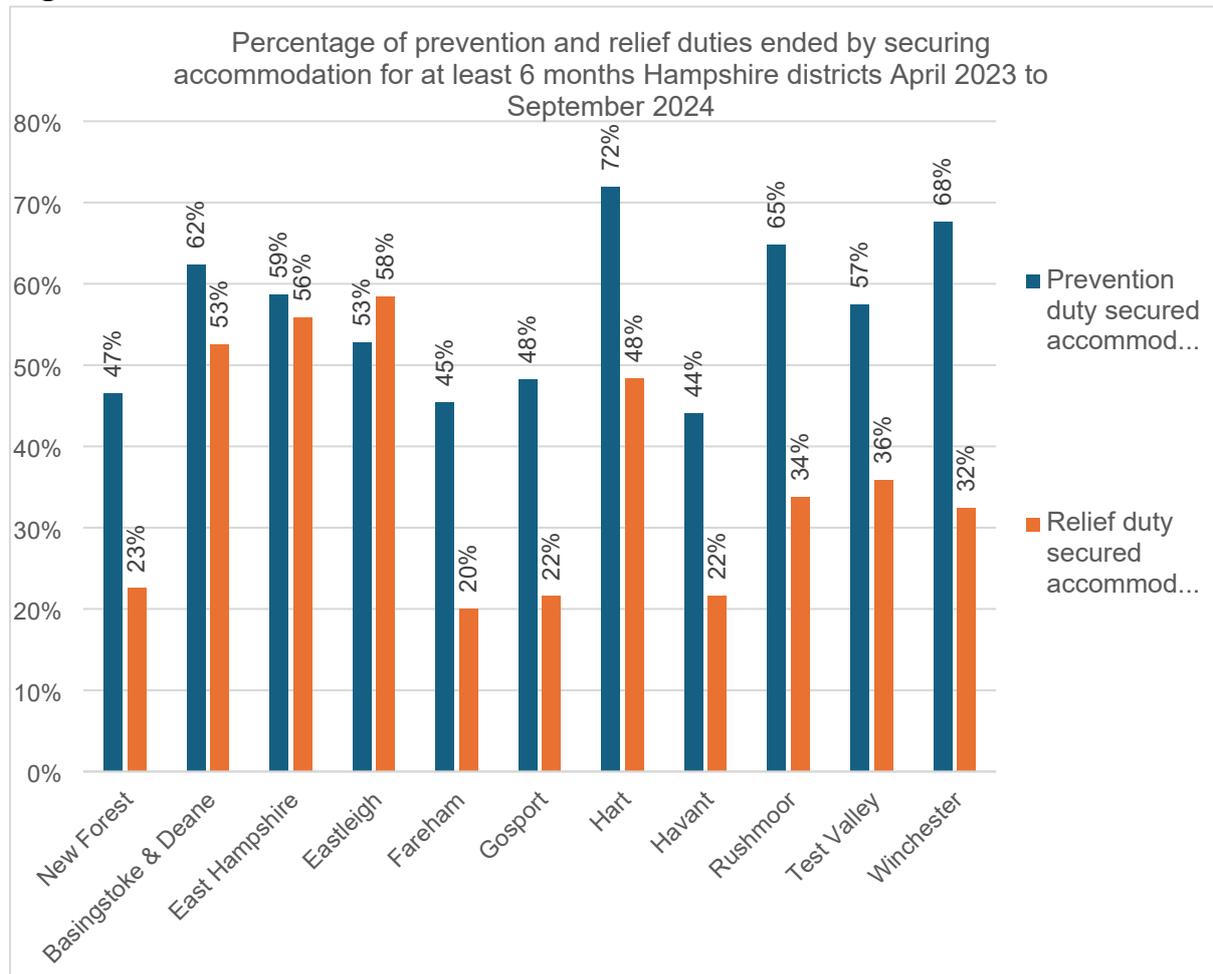
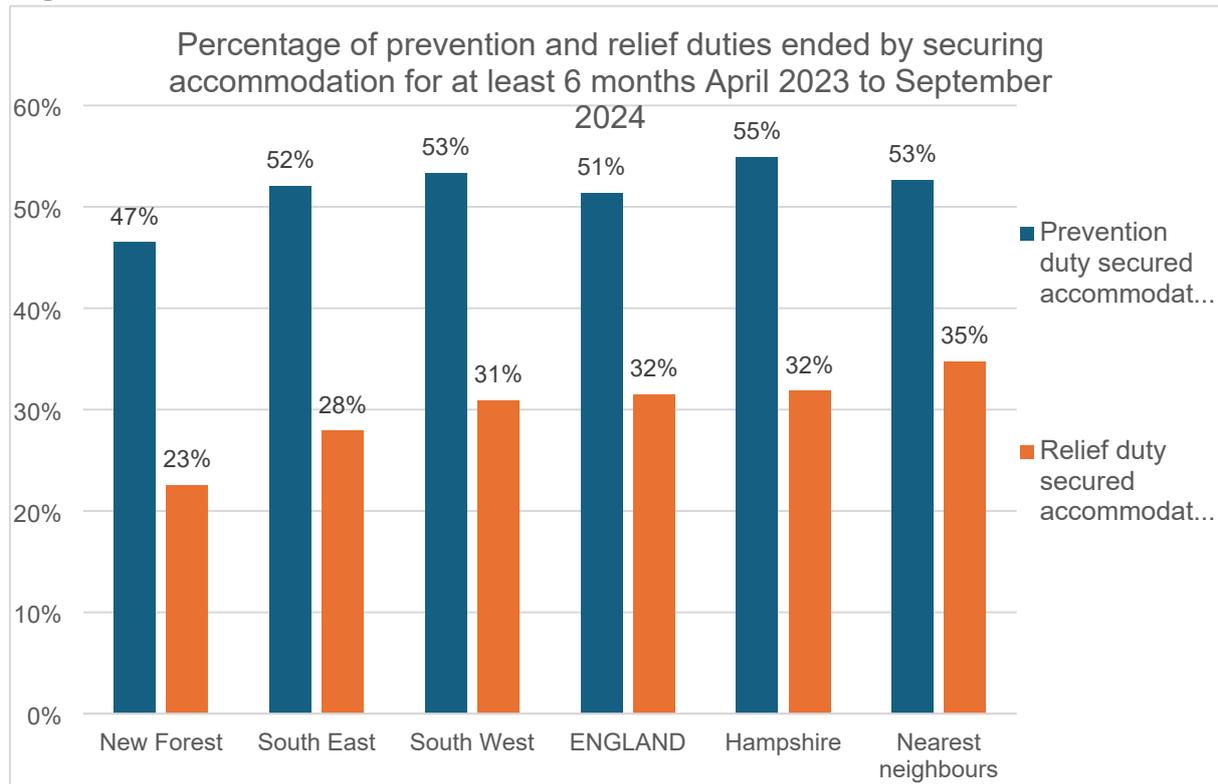


Figure 34



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.

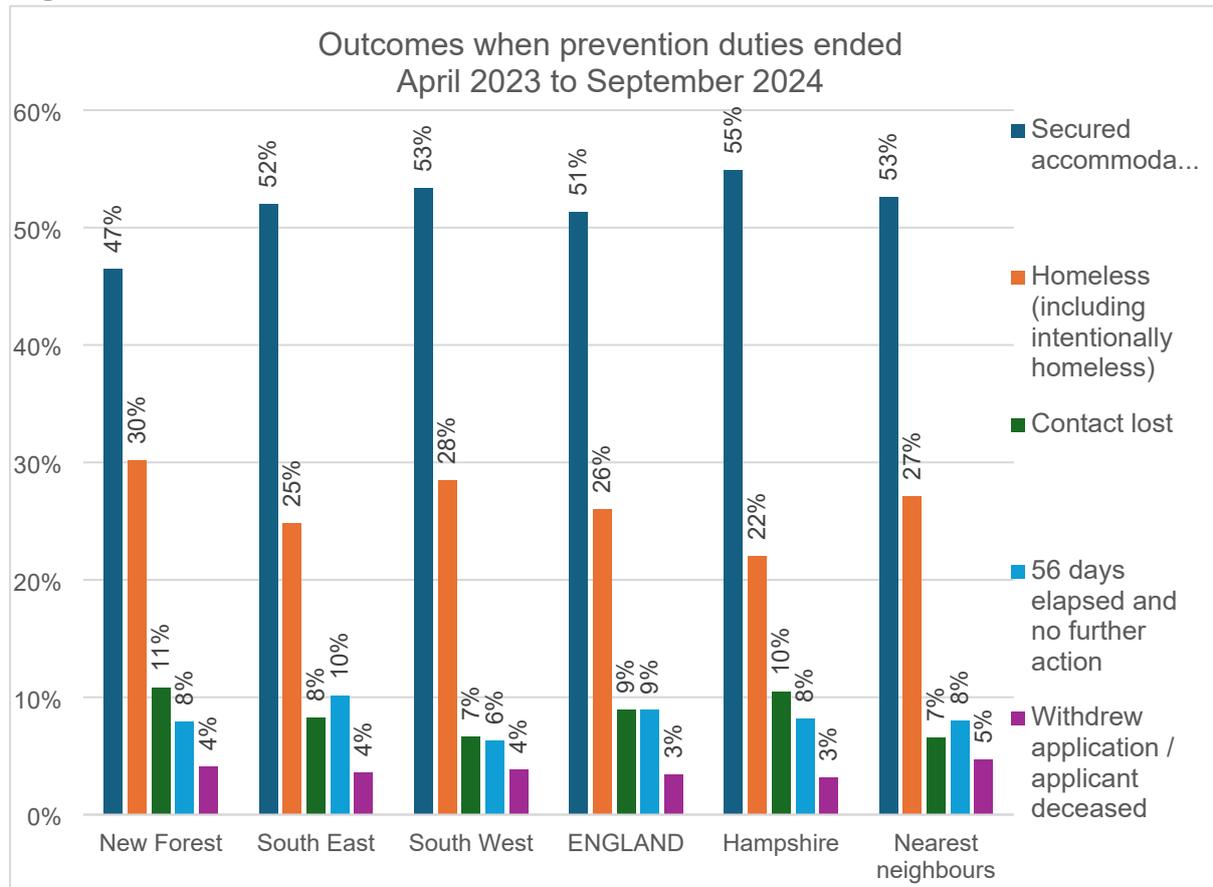
It is impossible to determine from these figures what the reasons are for New Forest's relative lack of success in preventing and relieving homelessness. This might be at least partly due to the relative lack of accommodation in New Forest compared to other areas, but it is very difficult to be certain 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.

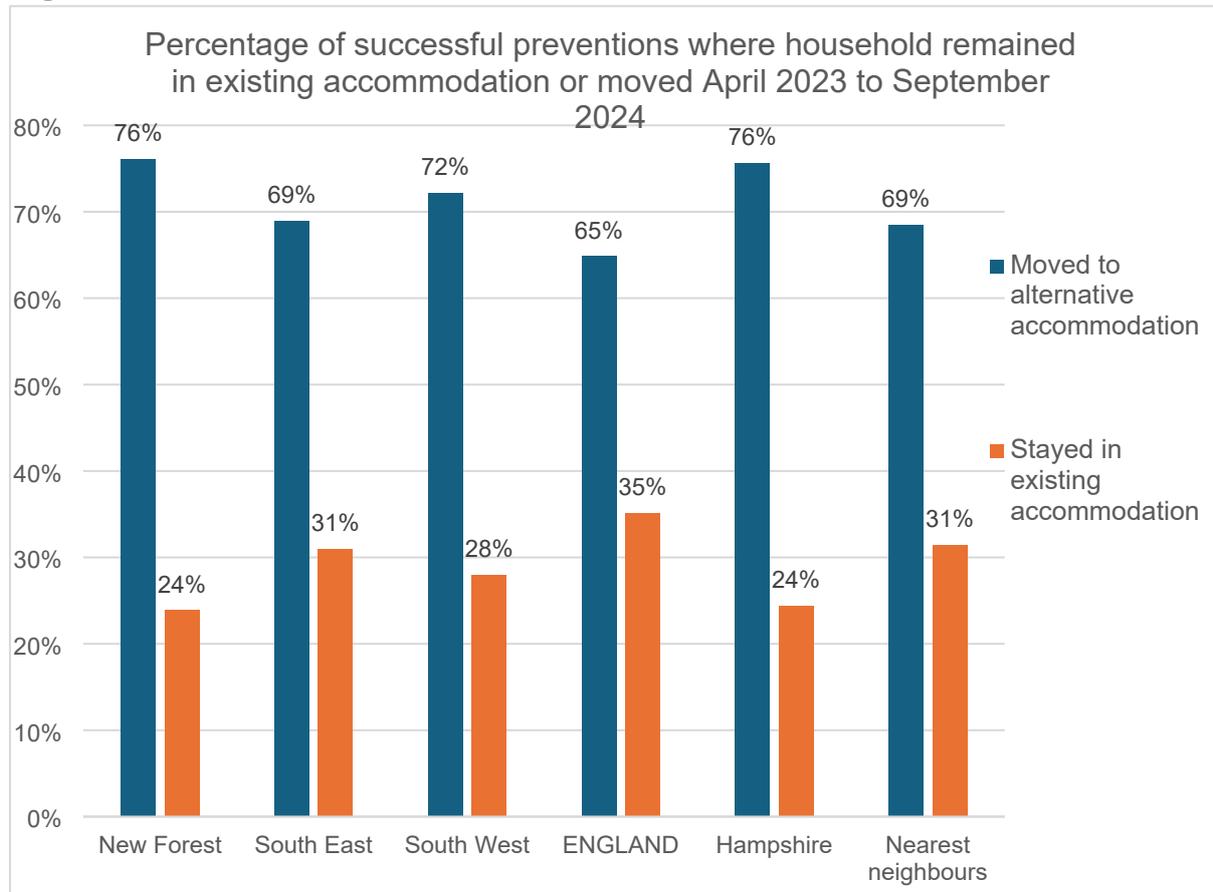
Figure 35



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.

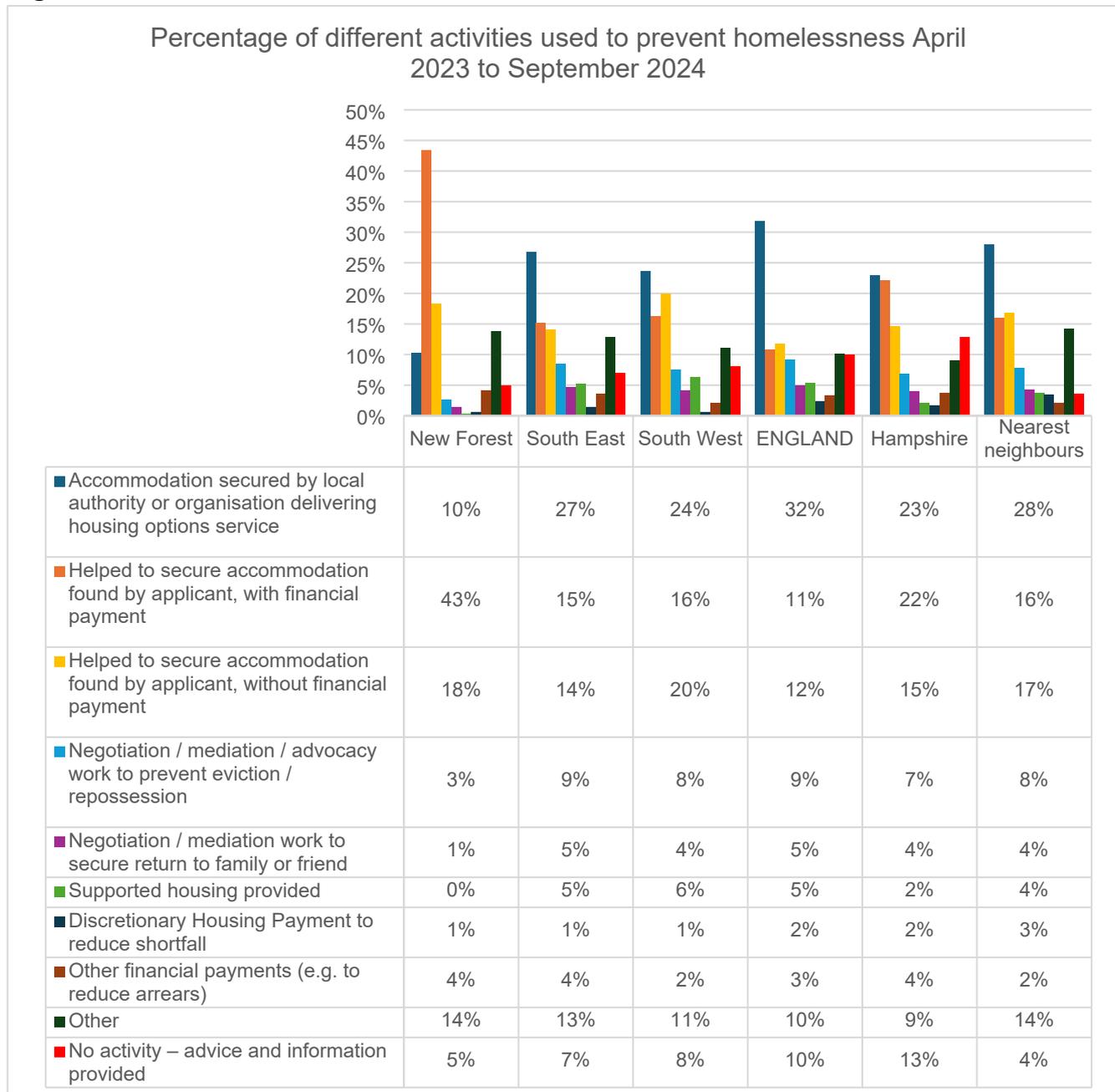
One area where New Forest appears to stand out is that there are far more properties where the applicant has found their own property than where the local authority has secured accommodation. Empowering applicants to find their own properties is good practice. However, discussing this with officers, 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

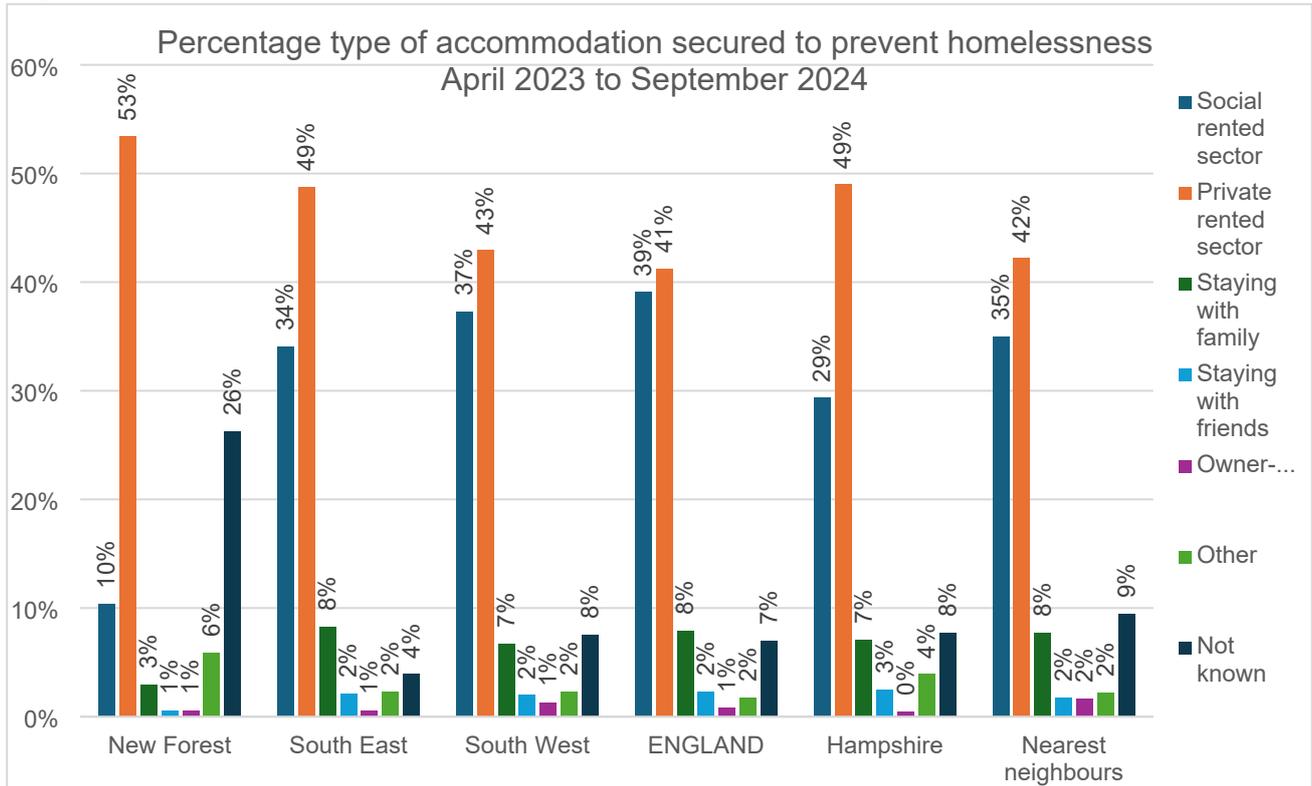
were achieved by providing supported housing, a fraction of the number in any of the comparator areas. This reflects the low levels of supported housing within the New Forest area.

Figure 37



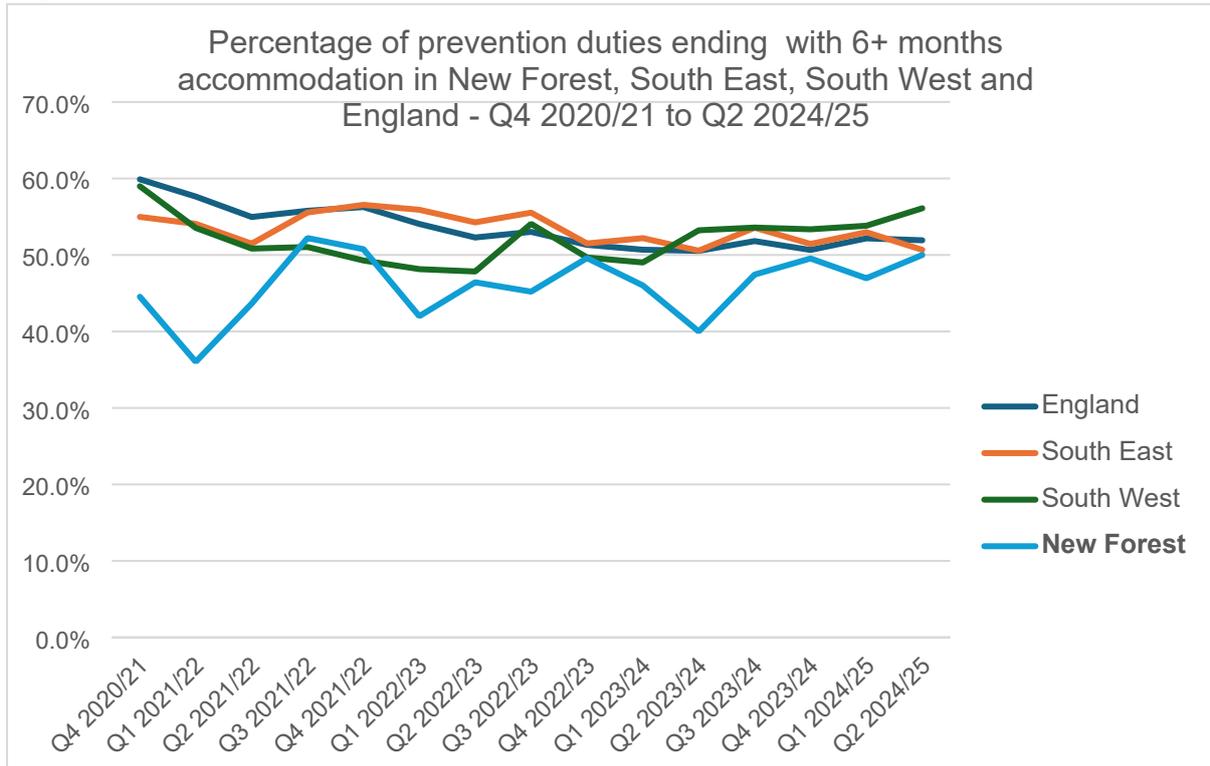
Looking at the types of accommodation secured to prevent homelessness in Figure 38, it is clear that whilst the proportion of private rented sector accommodation is the highest, the proportion of preventions into social rented sector accommodation is by far the lowest in New Forest at only 10%, compared 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

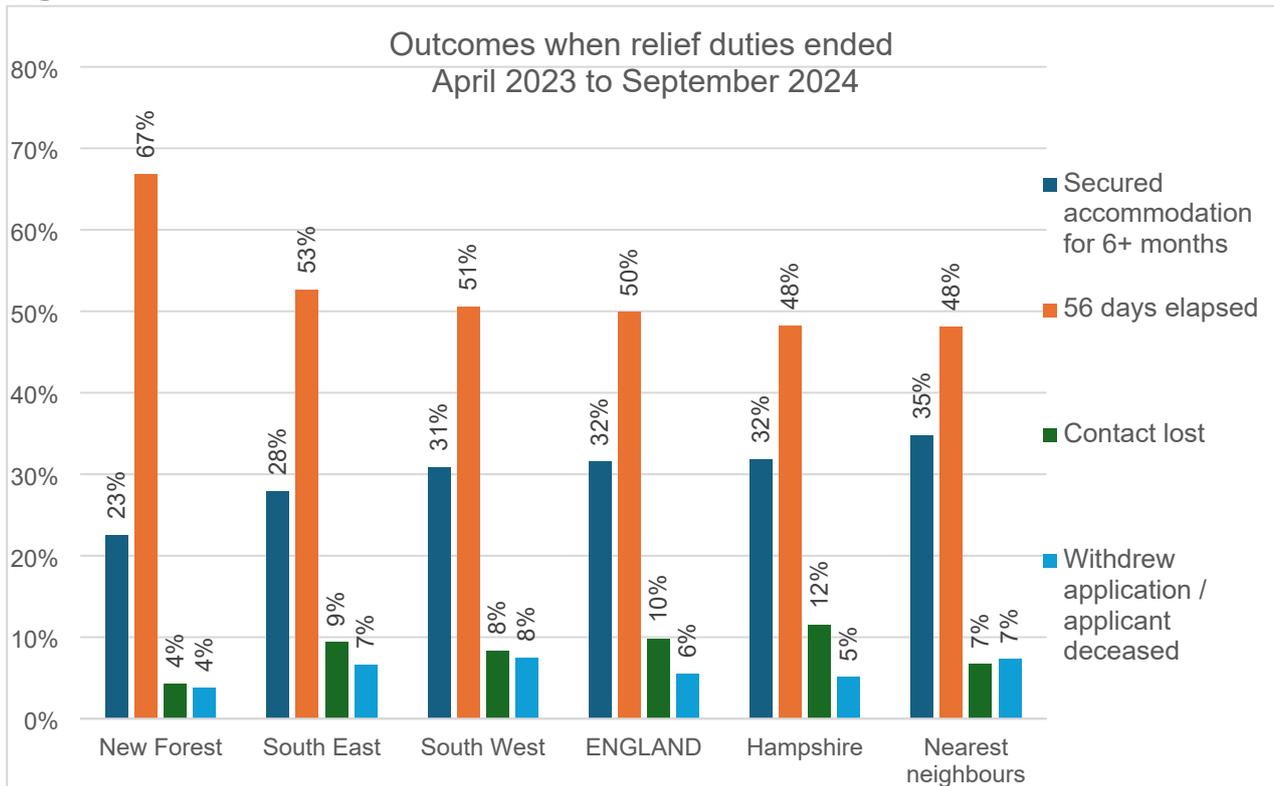
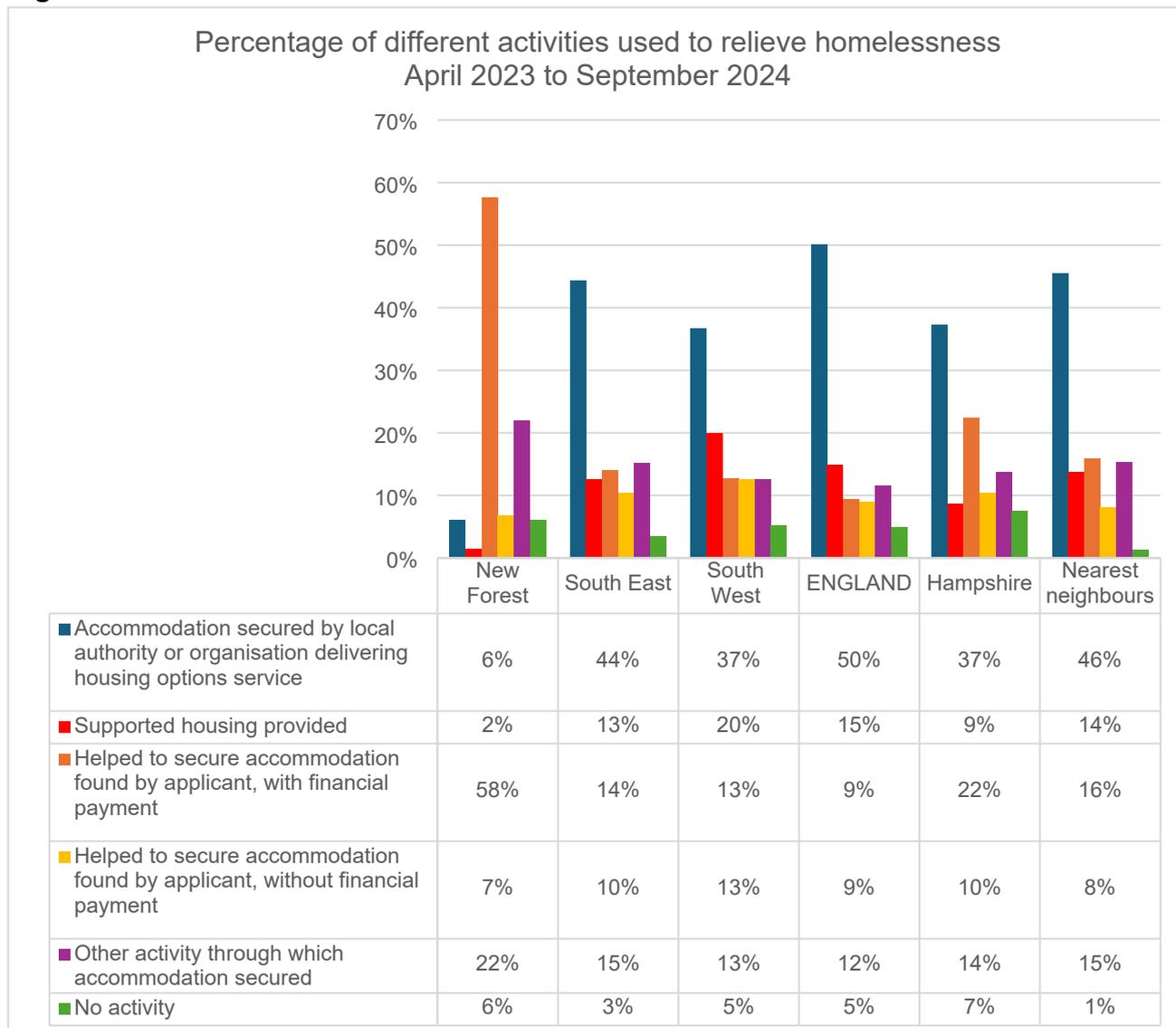


Figure 41 looks at the percentage of different activities used in cases where homelessness was successfully relieved across New Forest and the comparator areas.

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.

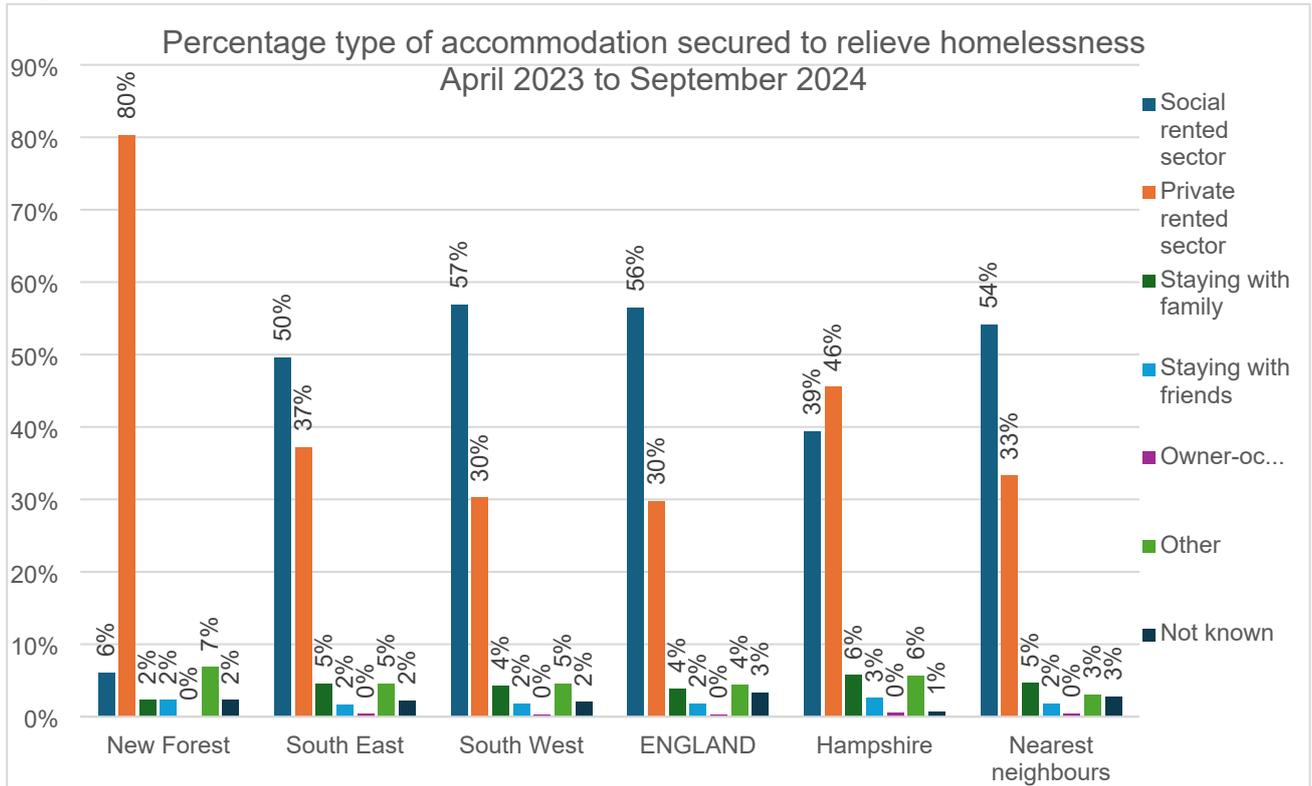
As with homelessness preventions the number of New Forest homelessness reliefs into supported housing is particularly low and the proportion of reliefs recorded as 'other' is particularly high.

Figure 41



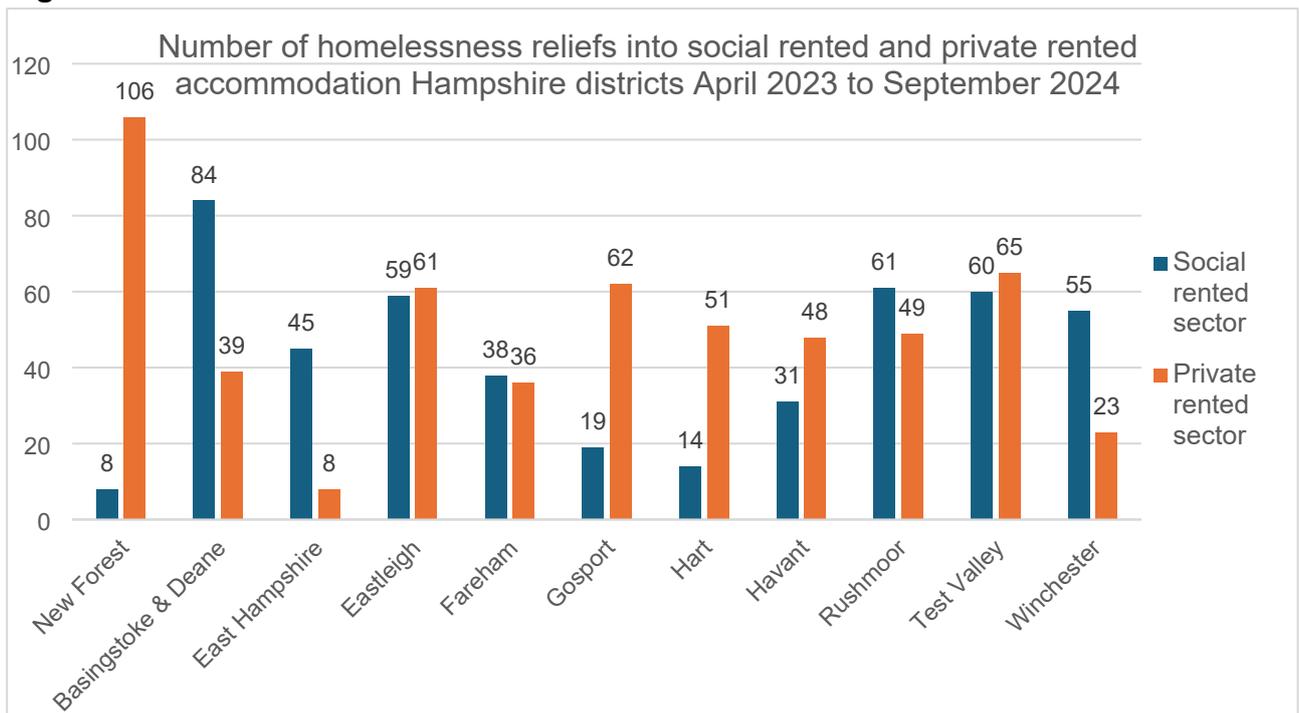
Looking at the types of accommodation secured to relieve homelessness in Figure 42, it is clear that, as with preventions, the proportion of reliefs into private rented sector accommodation is the highest and the proportion of preventions into social rented sector accommodation the lowest in New Forest compared to any of the comparator areas.

Figure 42



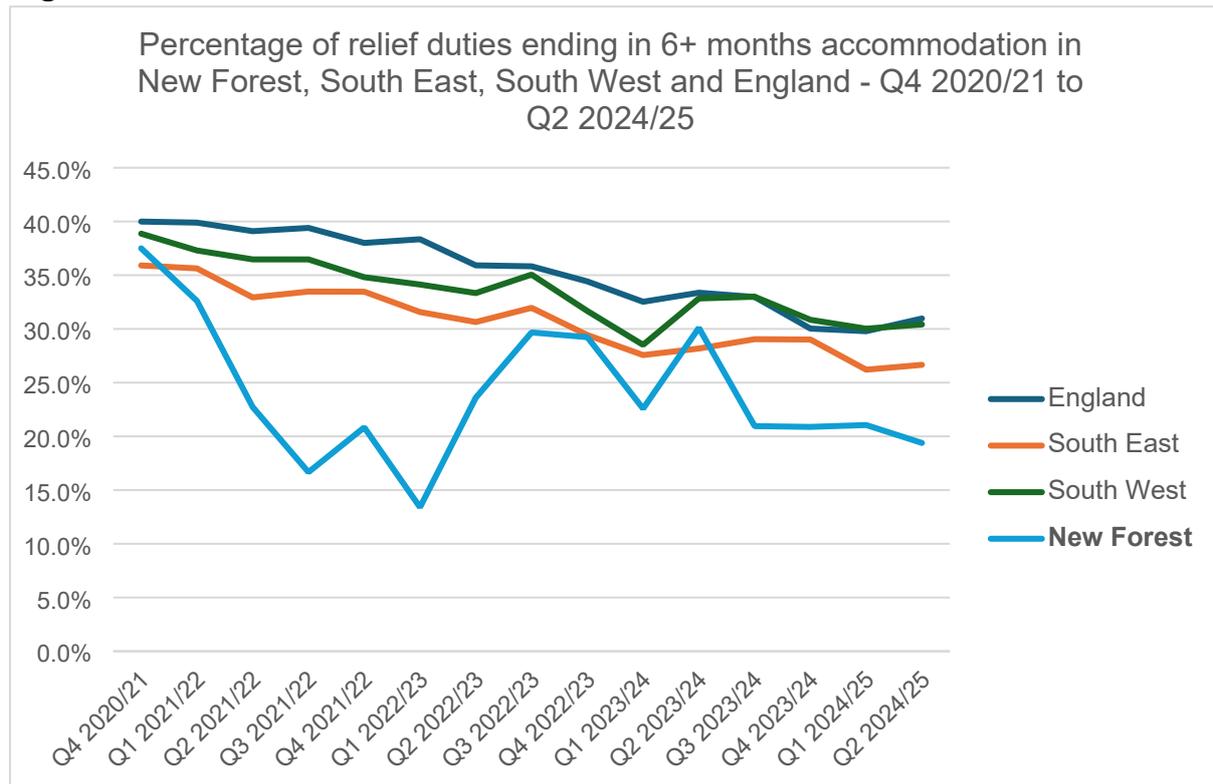
Looking at this numerically in each of the Hampshire districts in Figure 43, New Forest secured easily the highest number of homelessness reliefs into private rented accommodation, and easily the lowest number of reliefs into social rented accommodation, compared to any other district.

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 2023/24³¹, 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

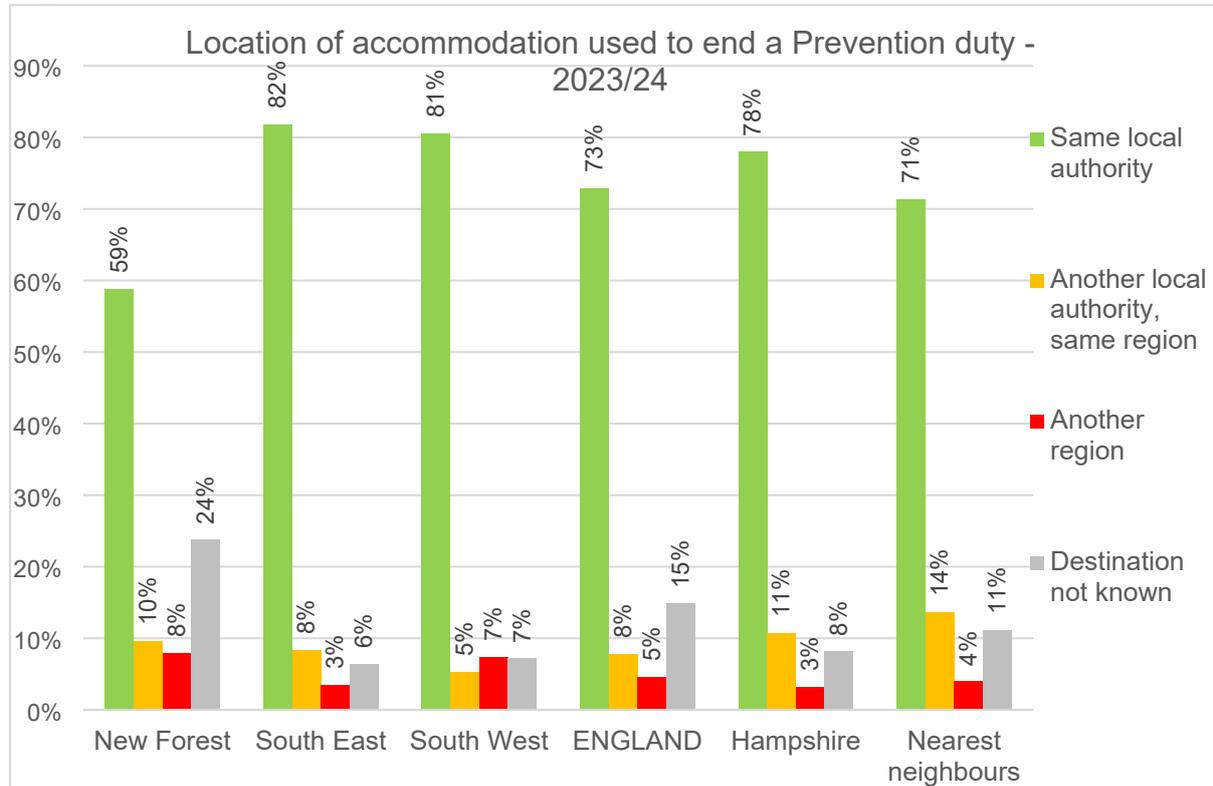
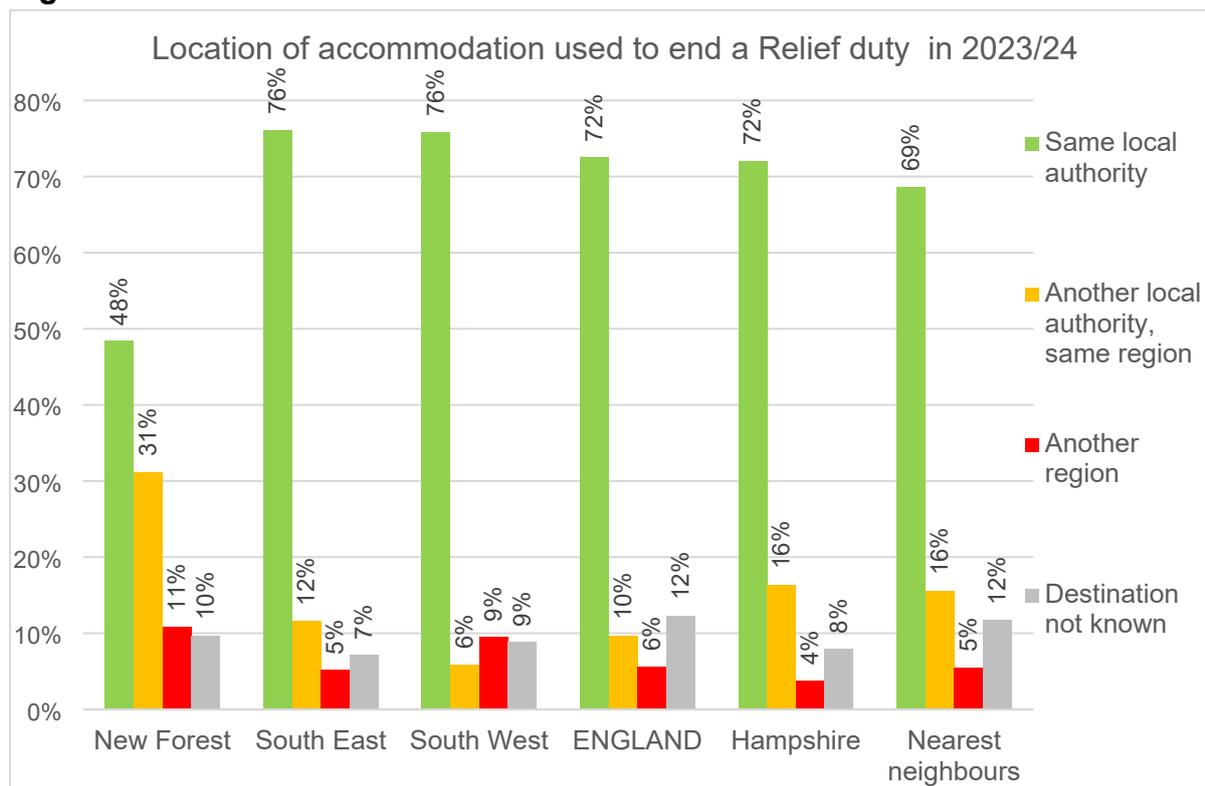


Figure 46 makes a similar comparison for accommodation used to end homelessness relief duties.

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.

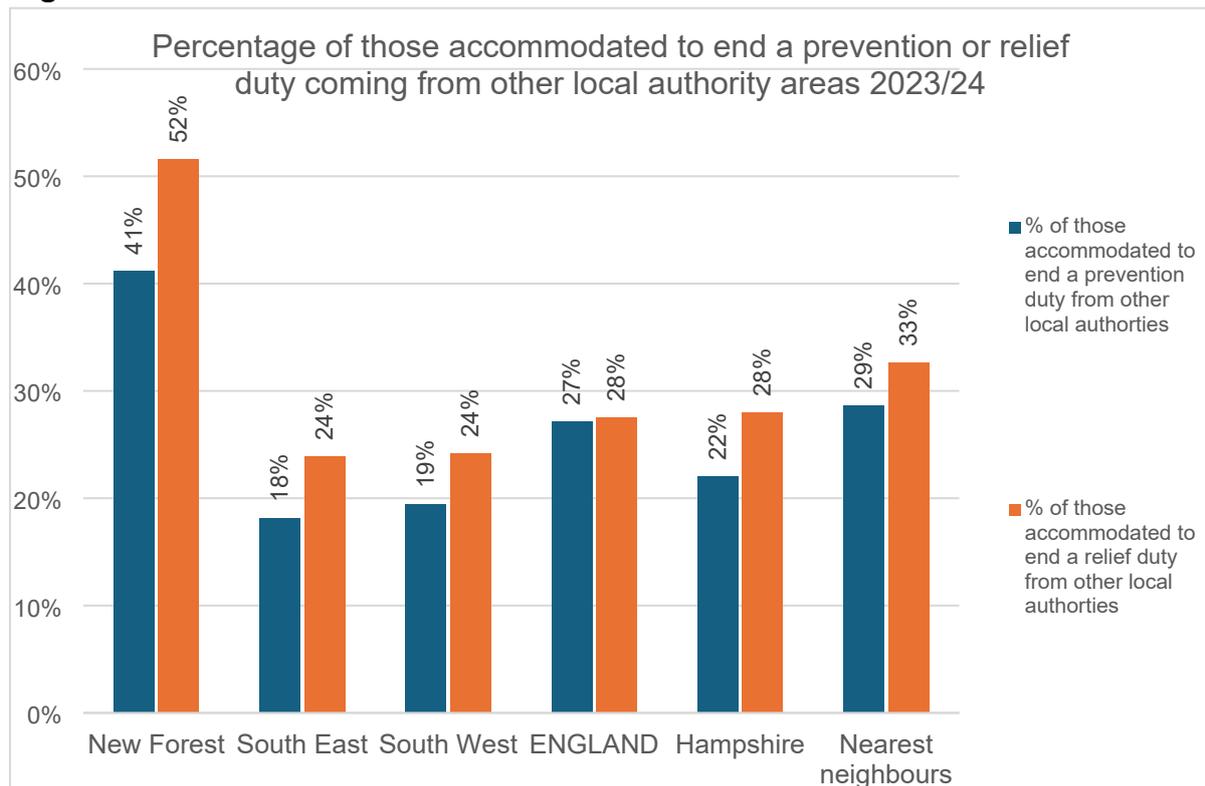
Figure 46



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

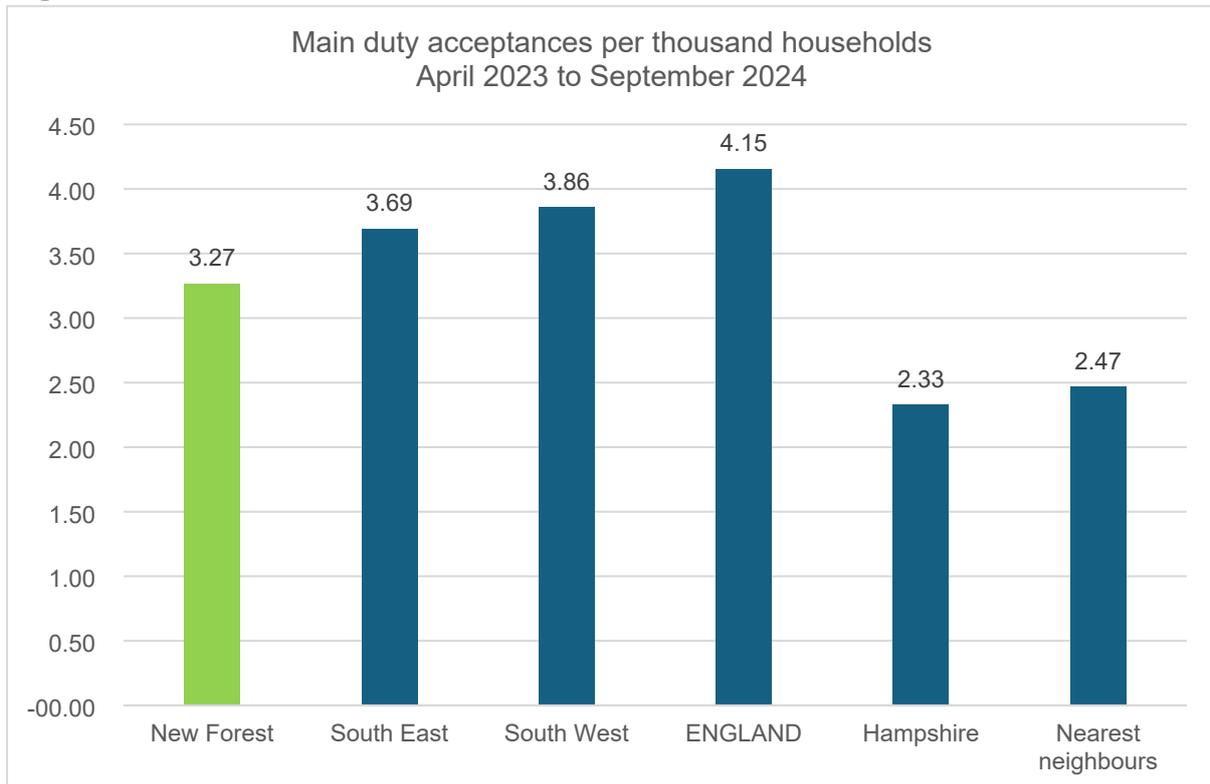


4. Main Homelessness Duties

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.

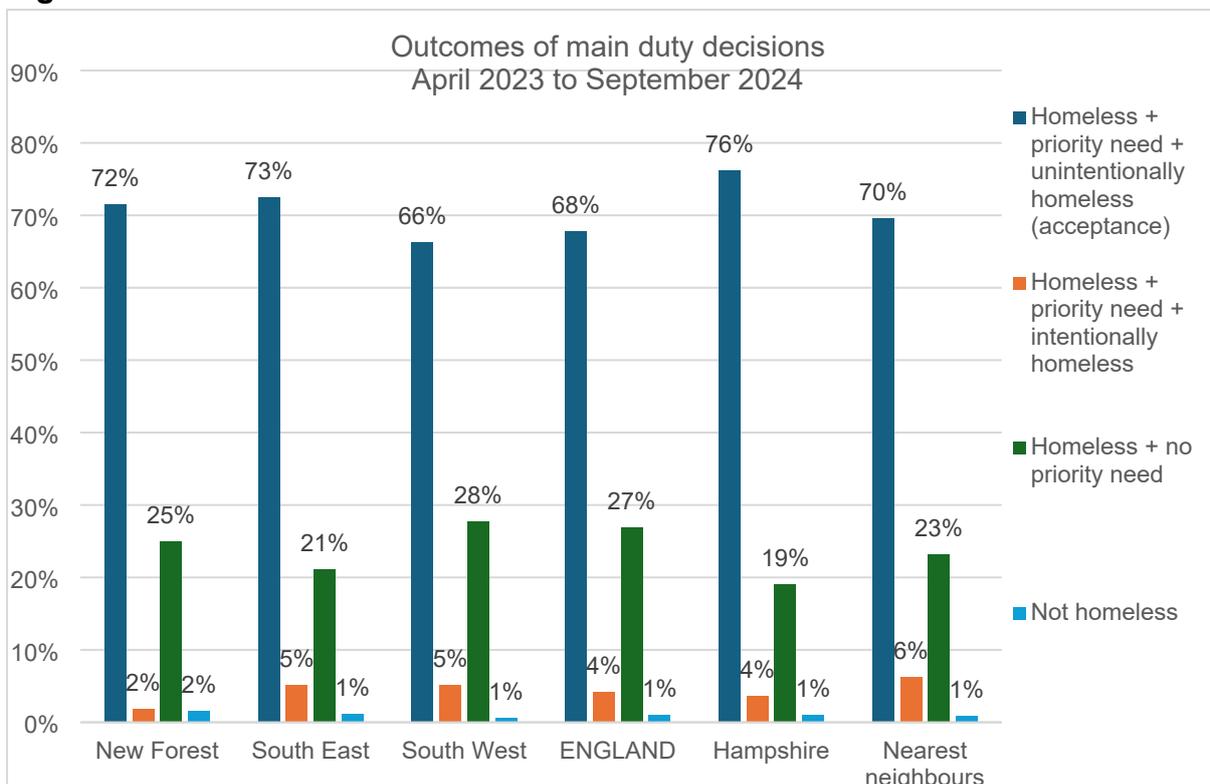
Main duty acceptances per thousand households were 40% higher than the average for Hampshire districts and higher than the average for ONS near neighbours, but lower than the average for the South East, South West and England, as shown in Figure 48.

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

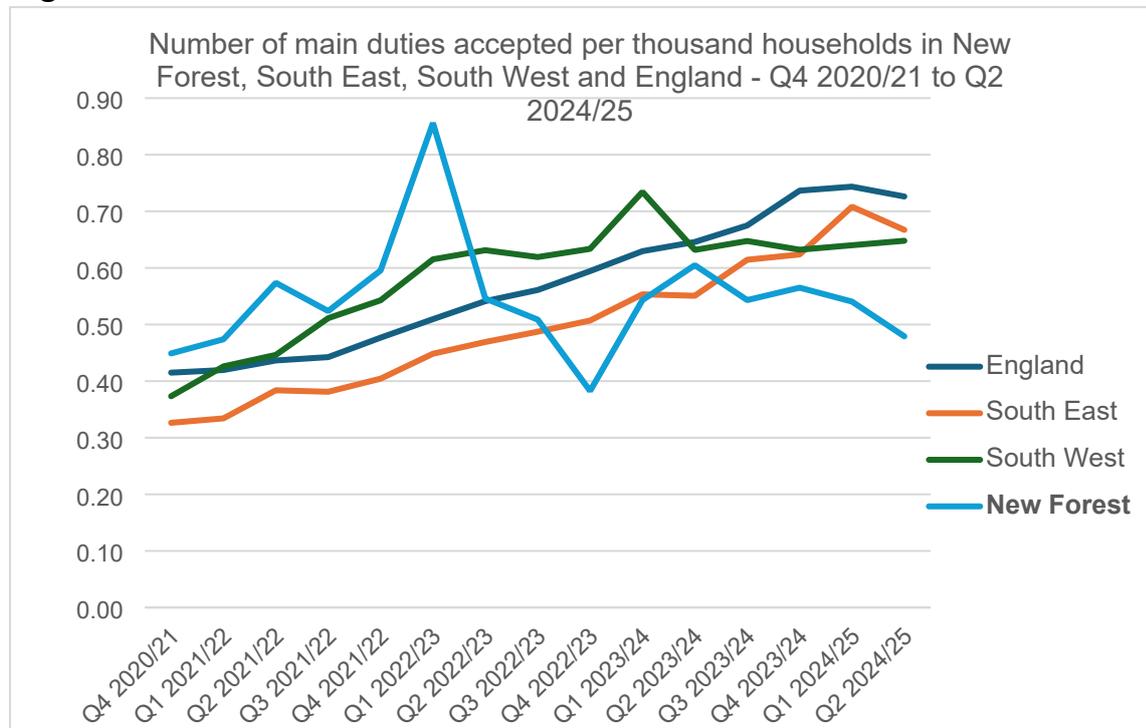


Taken together, this data suggests that the fact that main duty acceptances were 40% higher than the average for the Hampshire districts and the number of prevention and relief duties was only 8% higher than the Hampshire average is due to lower levels of success in preventing and relieving homeless 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%

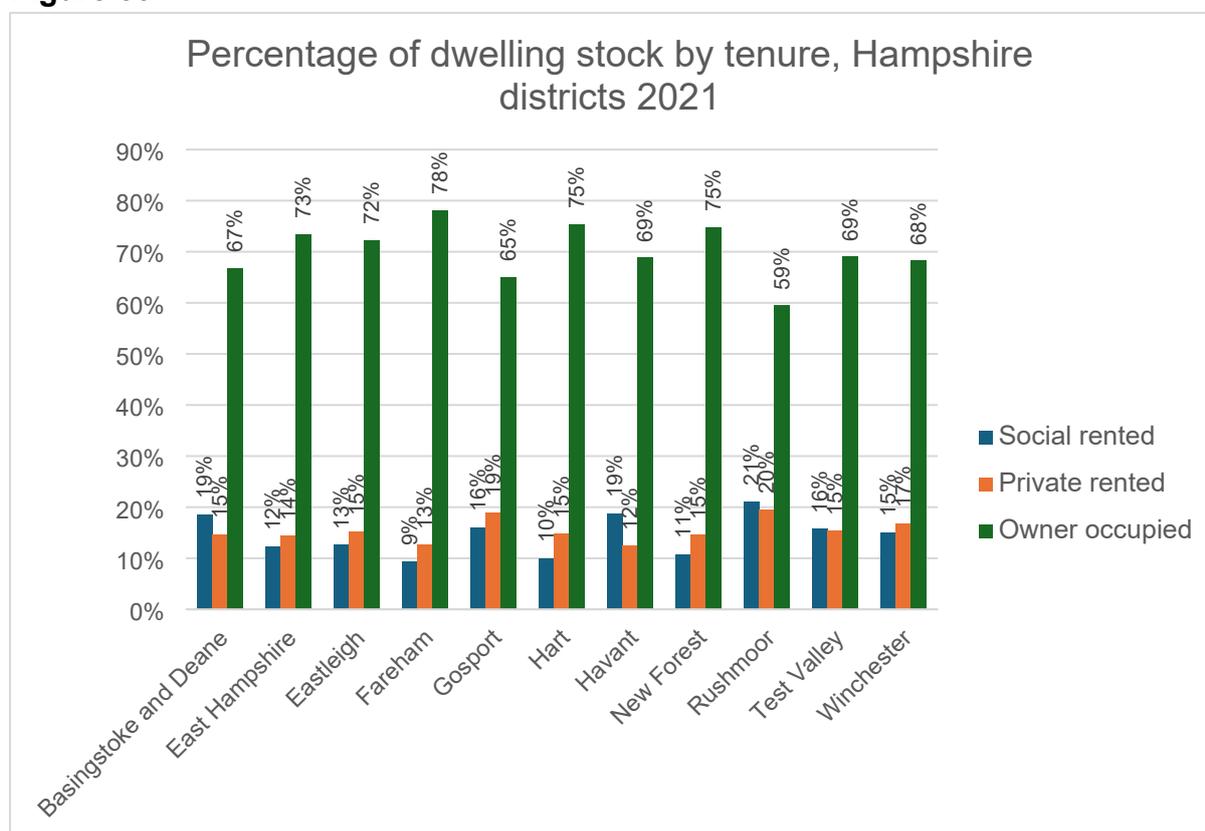
5. Securing Accommodation

Housing in New Forest

According to MHCLG data for 2024³² 6.2% (5,205) of dwellings in New Forest are local authority owned with 4.2% (3,530) owned by Registered Providers (RPs). 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 data³³, 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 1,099³⁴ 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 data³⁵ shows that following the pattern in much of the country rents have been rising rapidly recently as shown in

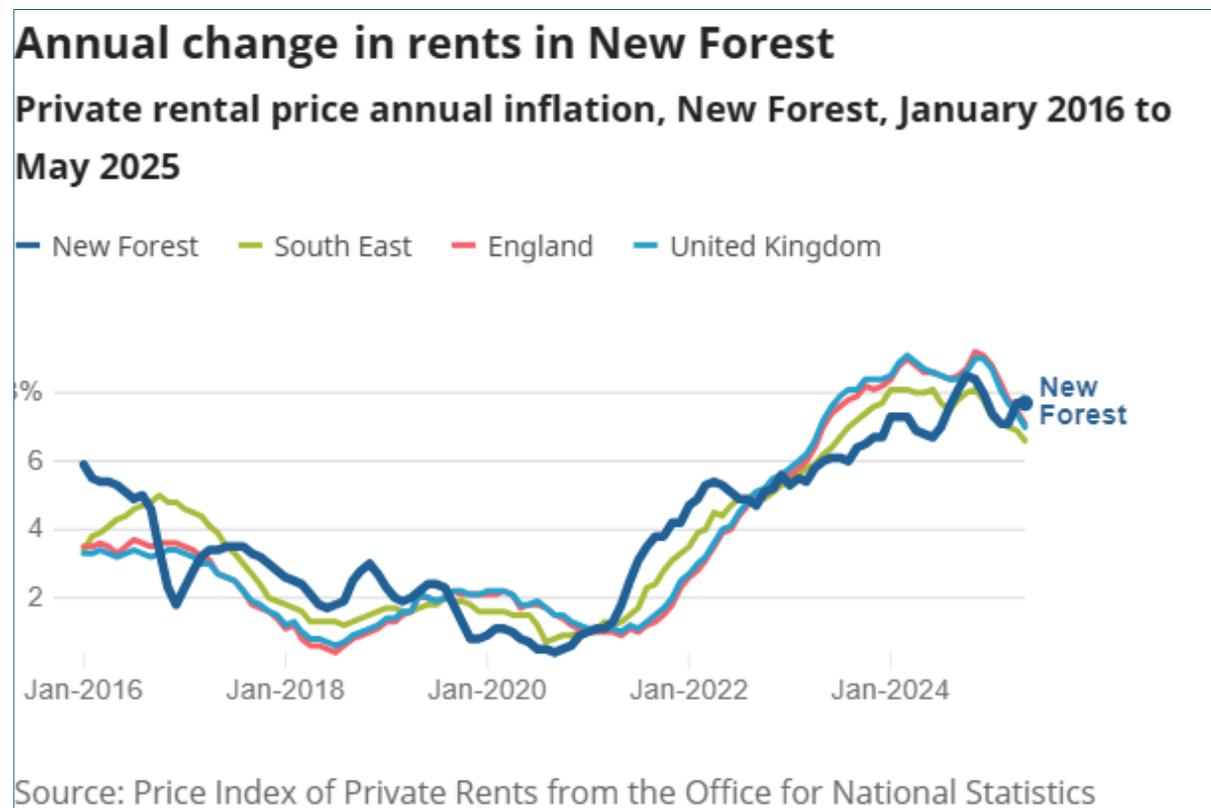
³⁴ 1,989 in total minus 890 waiting in Band 4

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

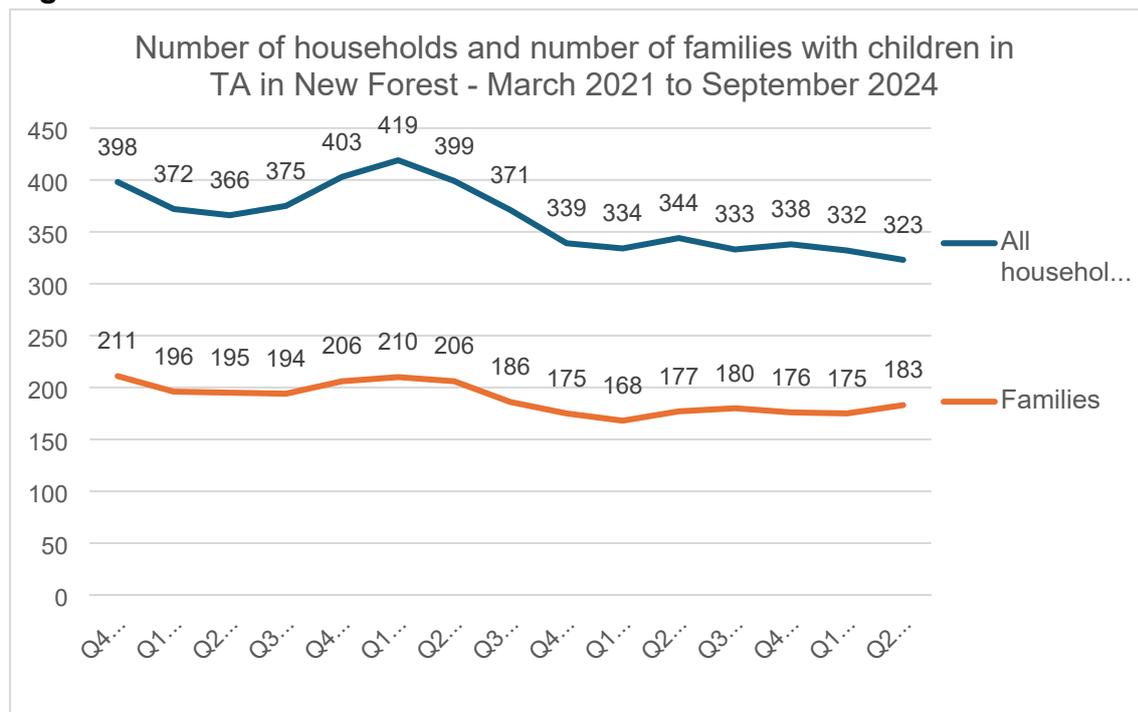
private renters income taken up by rent, the latest ONS estimates are from 2023³⁶.

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

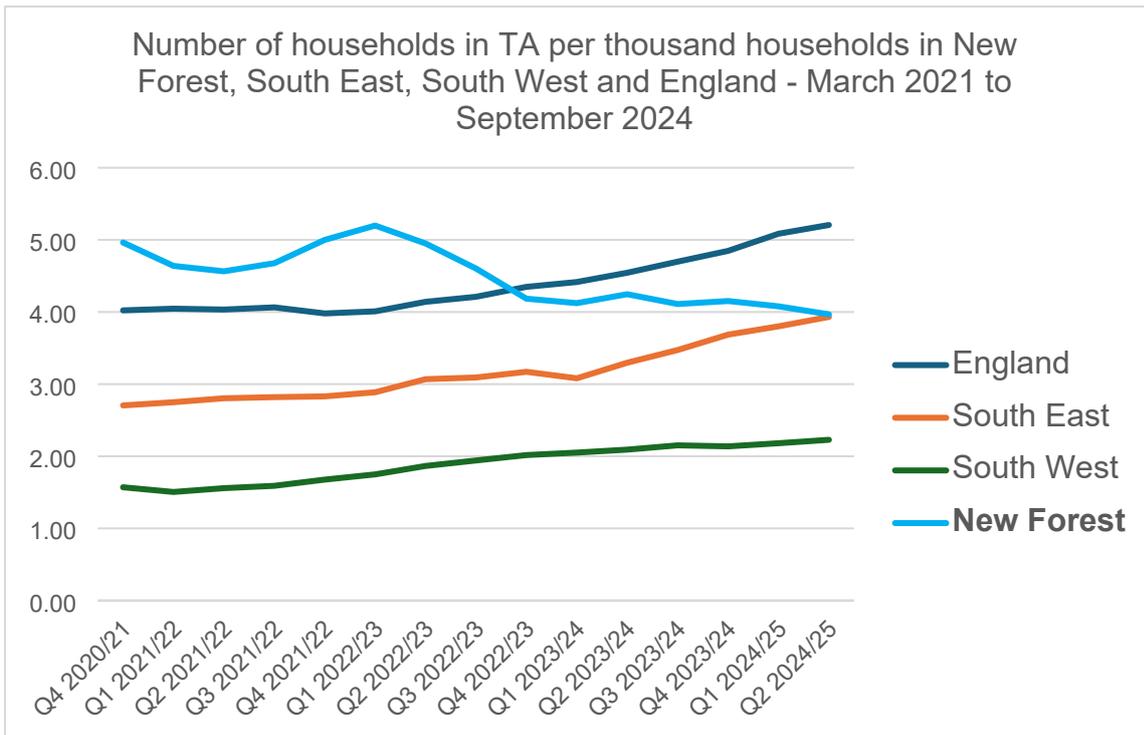


The fall in TA numbers in New Forest goes against national and regional trends of increasing TA use, as shown in Figure 56, which compares the number of households in TA per thousand households in New Forest, the South East, South West and England.

Figure 56

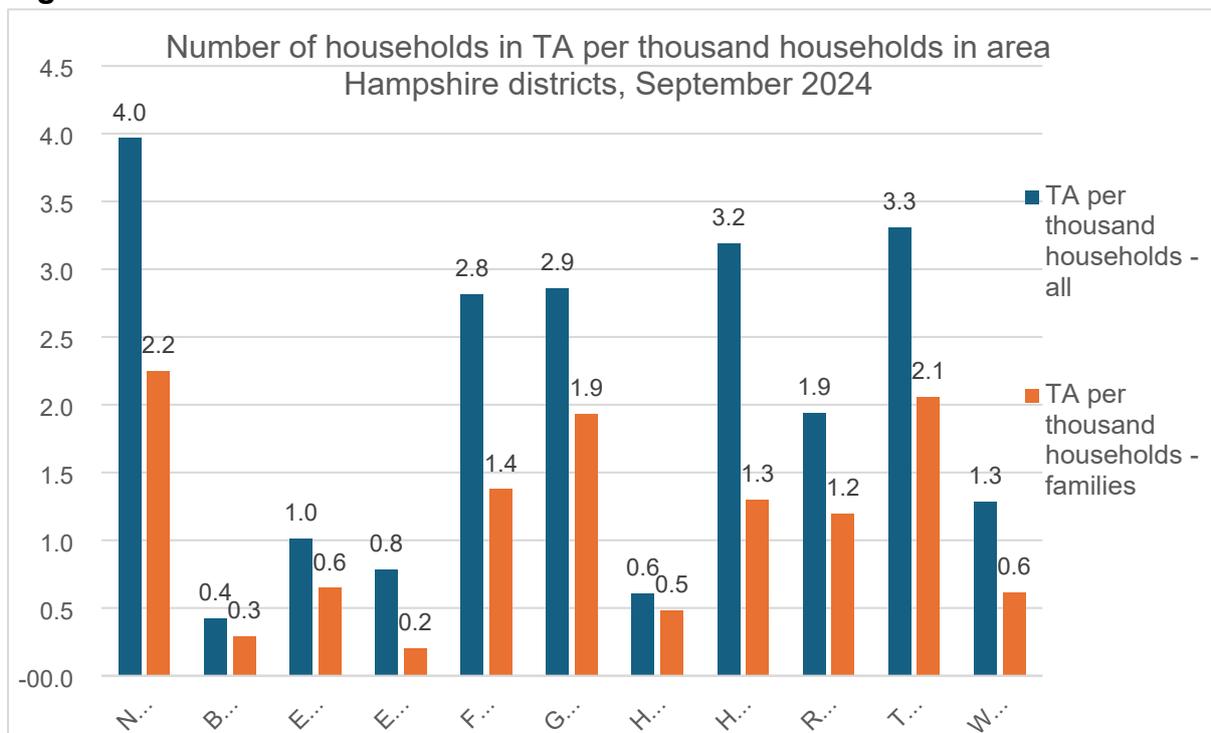
36

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/privaterentalaaffordabilityengland/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.

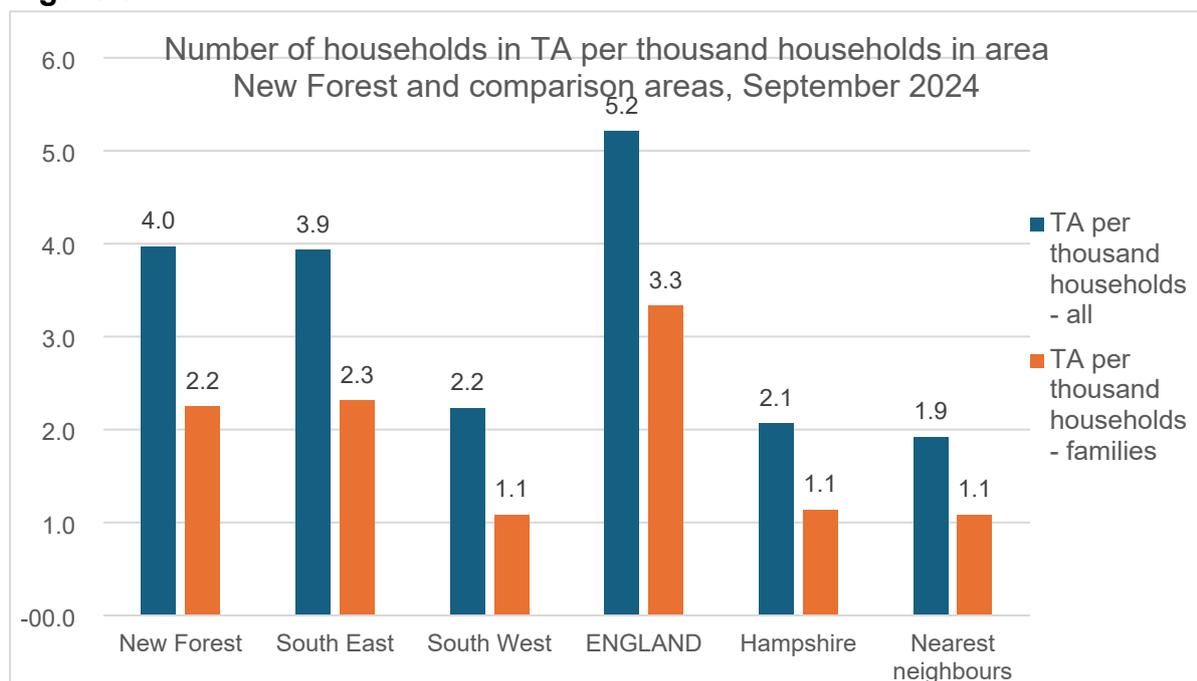
Figure 57



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’.

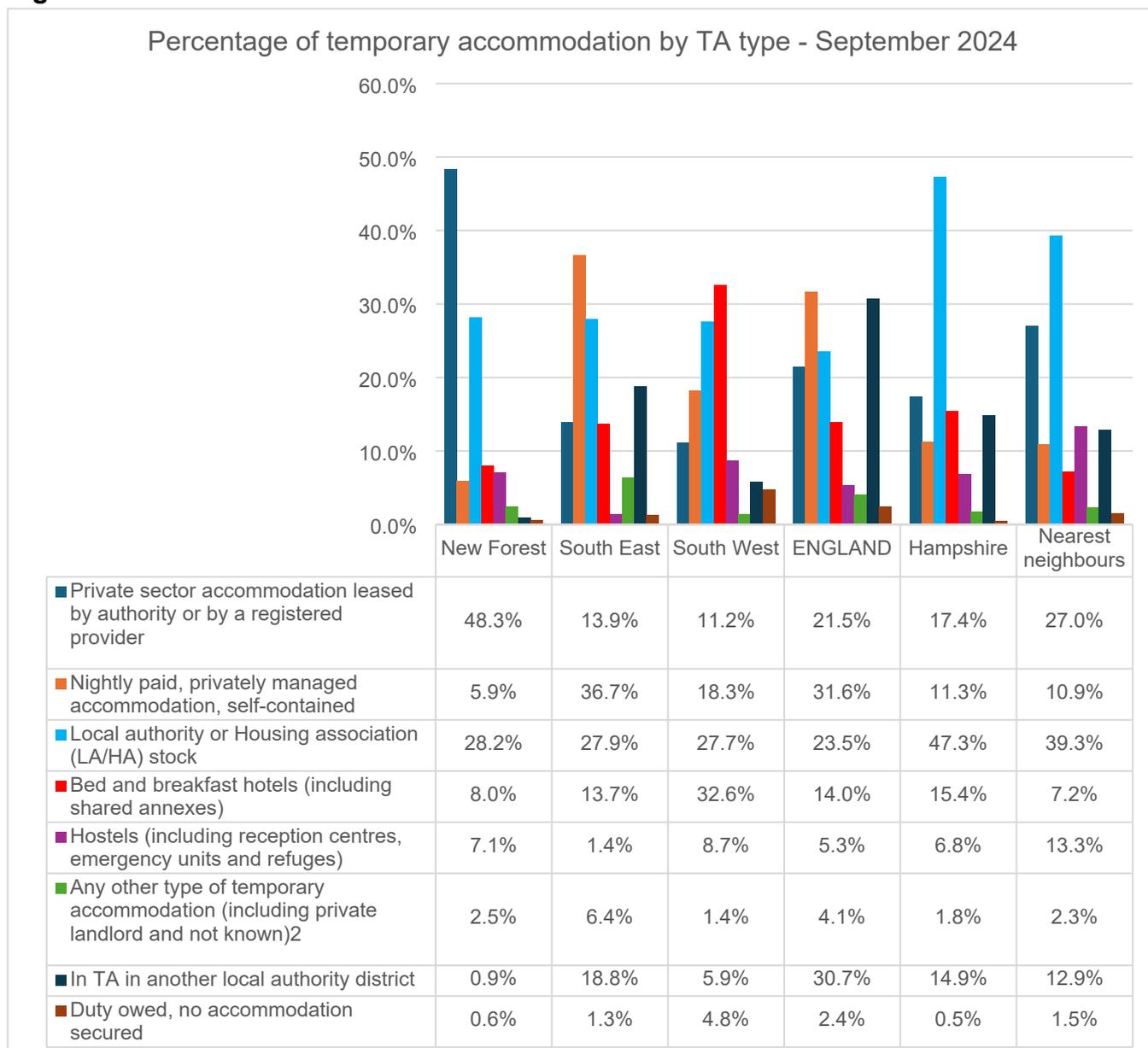
Compared to other areas, New Forest has substantially more PSL and substantially less self-contained nightly paid accommodation. This is positive as both the stability and standards of PSL accommodation are in general higher than nightly paid accommodation. This is reinforced by interviews with officers, 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% England³⁷, 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.

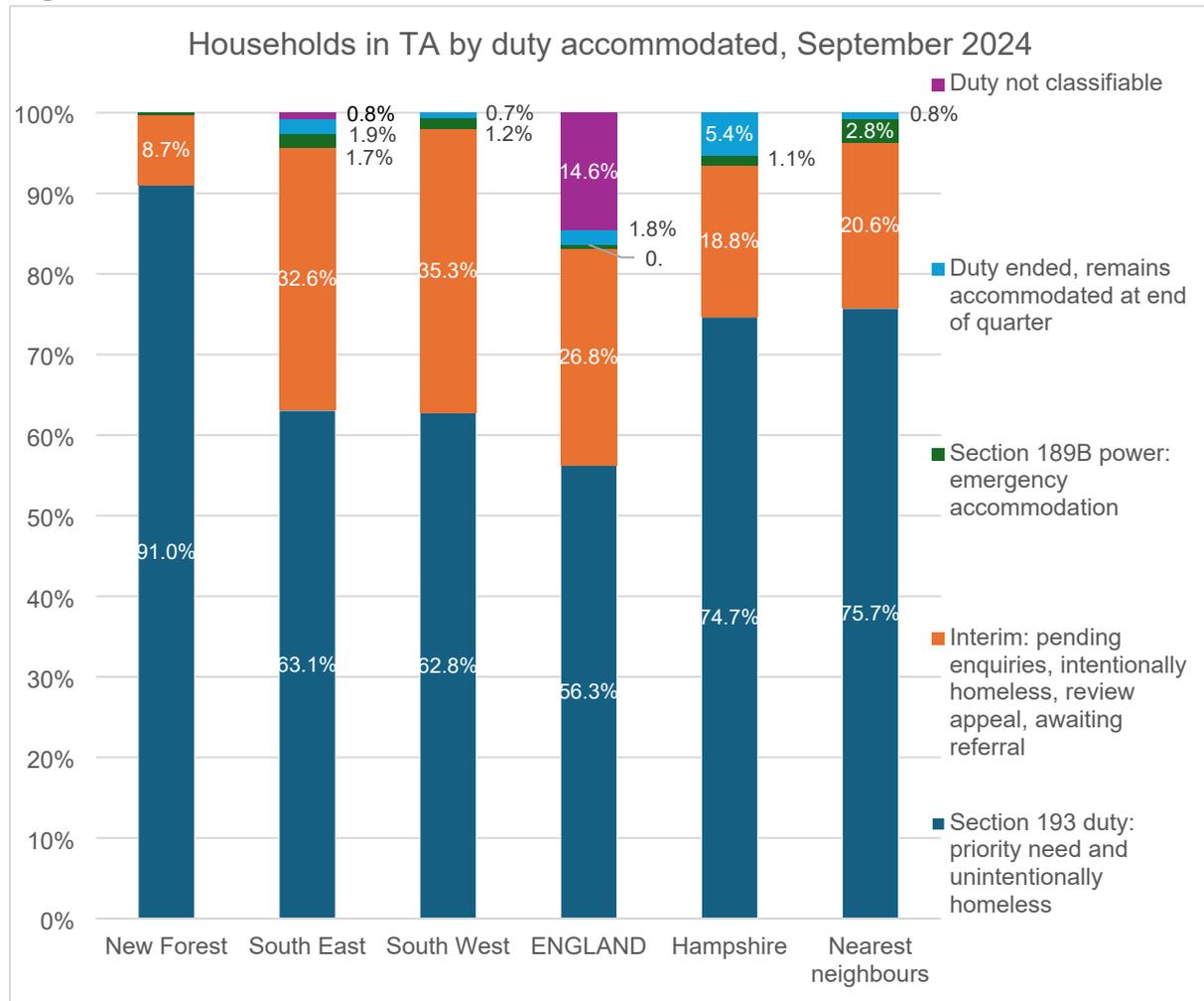
Figure 59



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

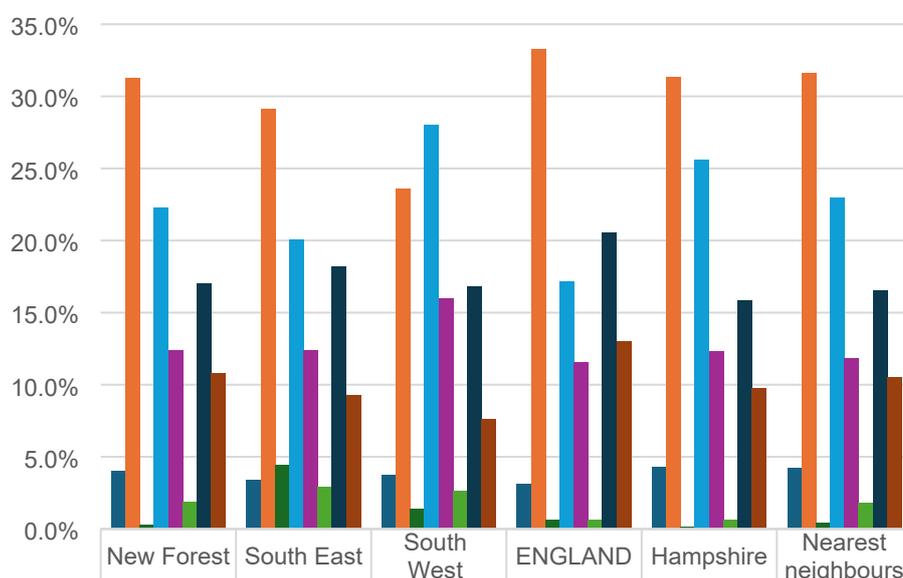


TA household characteristics

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

Temporary accommodation breakdown by household type - September 2024



	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%

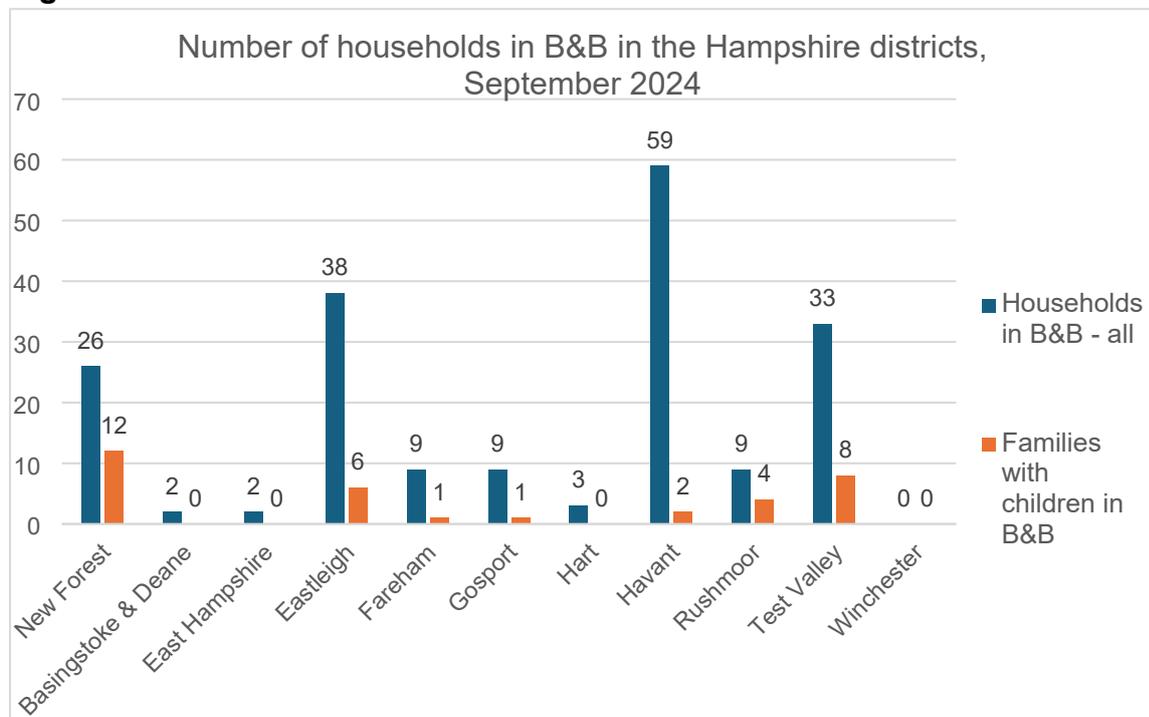
Use of B&B

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

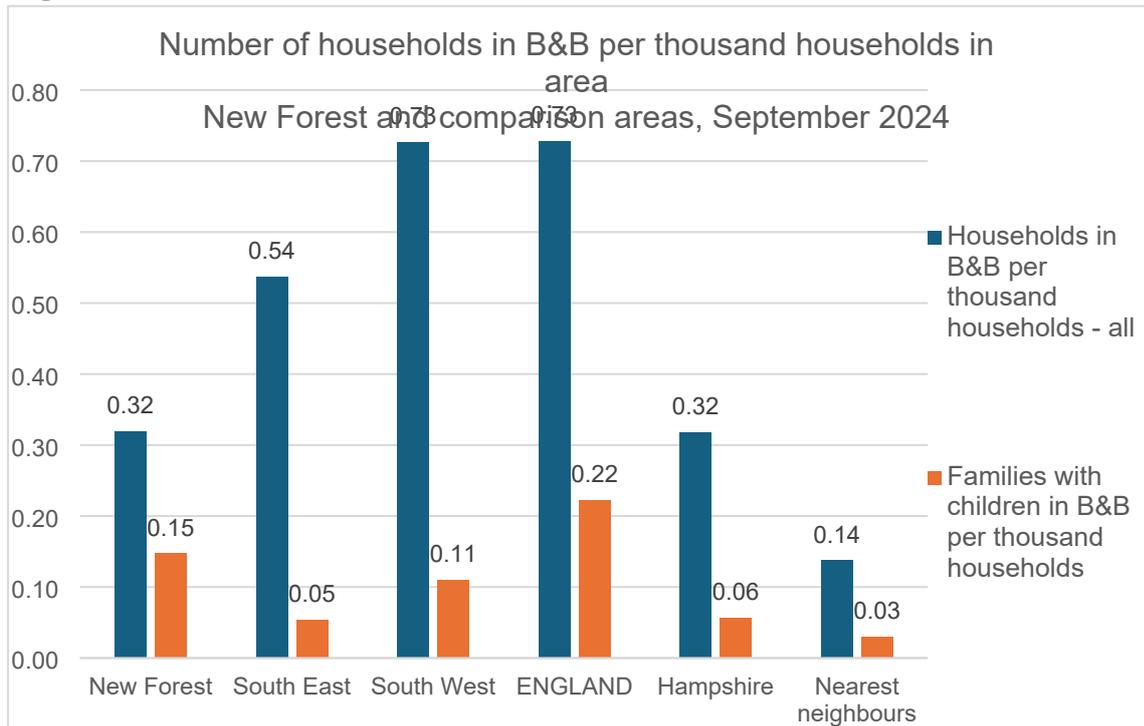
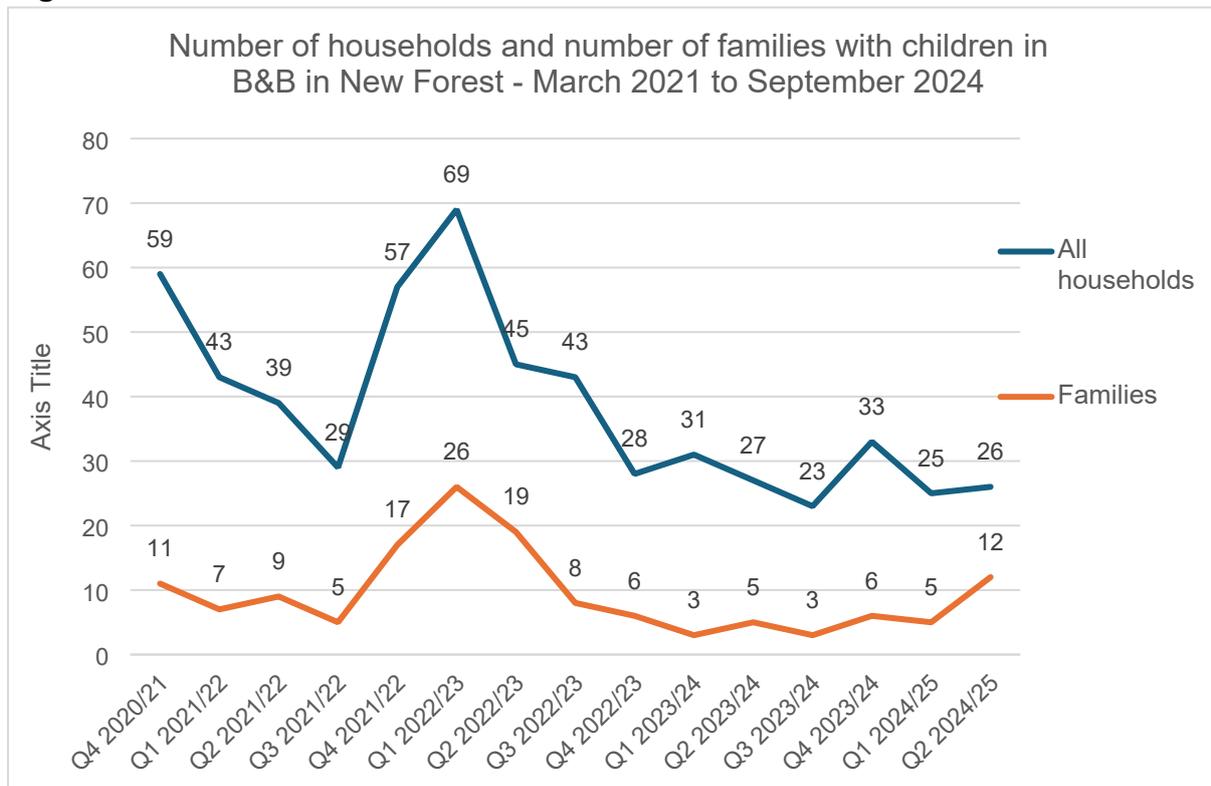


Figure 64 shows, with some fluctuations including a spike in June 2022, a falling trend in the total use of B&B in New Forest between March 2021 and September 2024, but without a corresponding fall in the number of families in B&B.

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 units 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

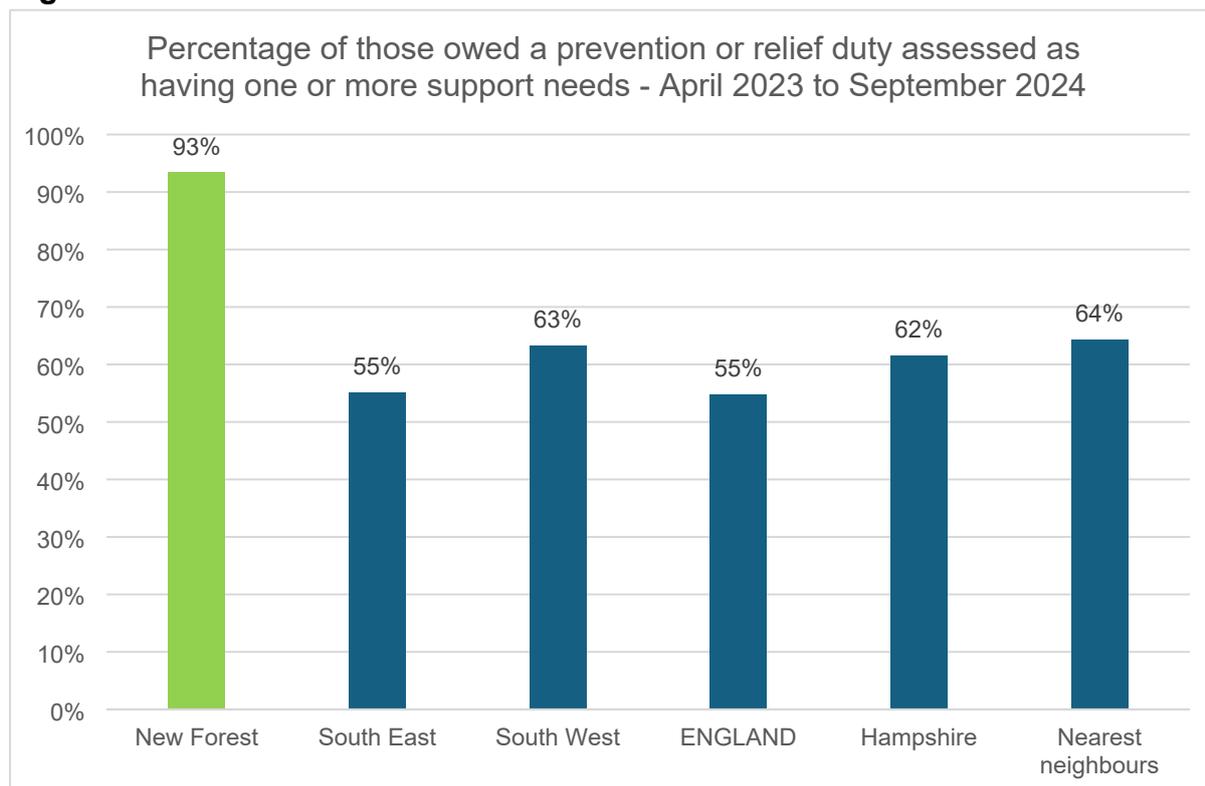


Figure 66 looks in more detail at the support needs recorded in New Forest and other areas.

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 2028³⁹ for formal consultation which is aligned to the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2023 to 2025⁴⁰, 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 its 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.

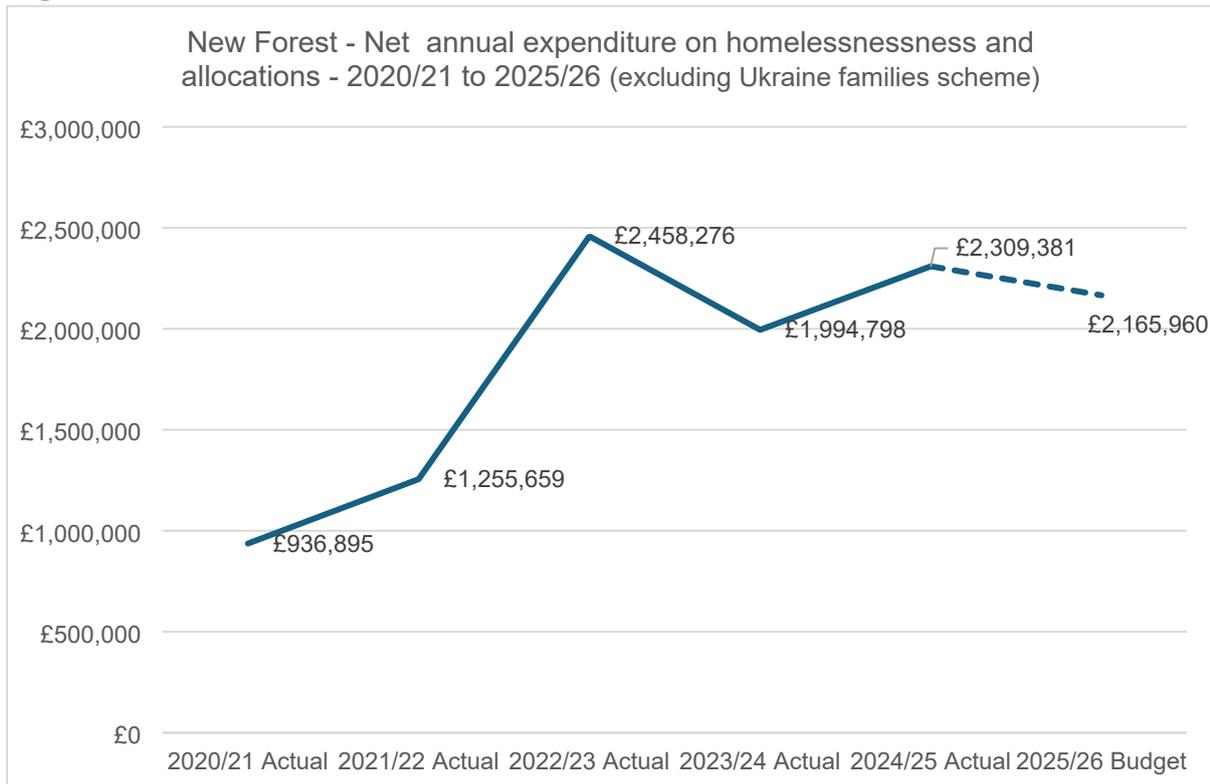
The resources required to do this are significant. They include providing a housing options service carrying out homelessness prevention, homelessness relief, homelessness assessment, work with rough sleepers and specialist work around Ukraine resettlement, mental health and work with ex-offenders.

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 fund⁴¹ 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

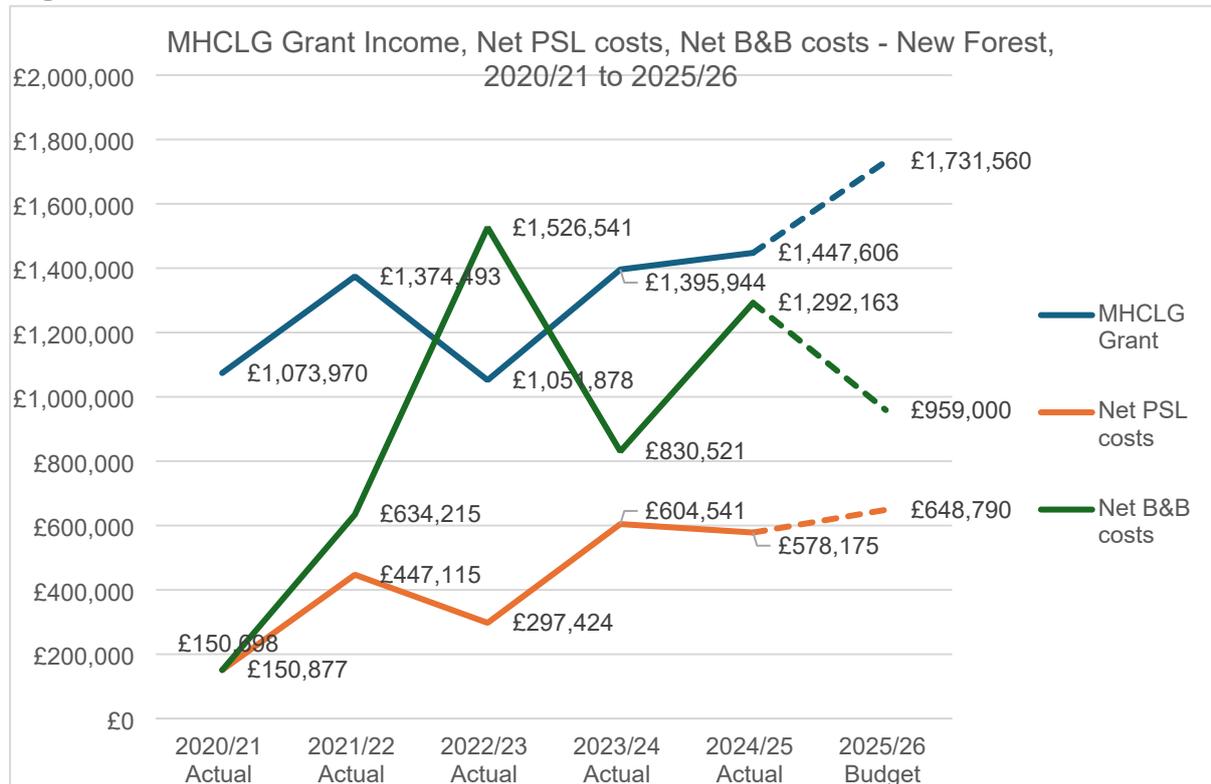


The increase in net expenditure between 2020/21 and 2024/25 is despite a significant increase in grant from MHCLG over the period from just over £1m in 2020/21 to over £1.7m in 2025/26. As can be seen in Figure 68, the major drivers of the increase in council costs are the increase in the net costs of B&B and of PSL accommodation.

However, B&B is much more expensive per household to the council than PSL. Based on an estimated average⁴² 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.

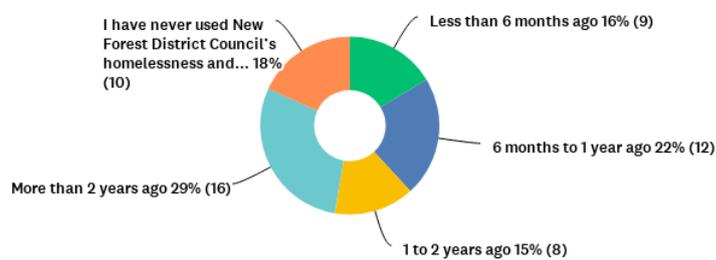
In total 55 people began filling in the survey. 82% of these had approached the service but 18% had not. Those who said they had not approached the service were

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

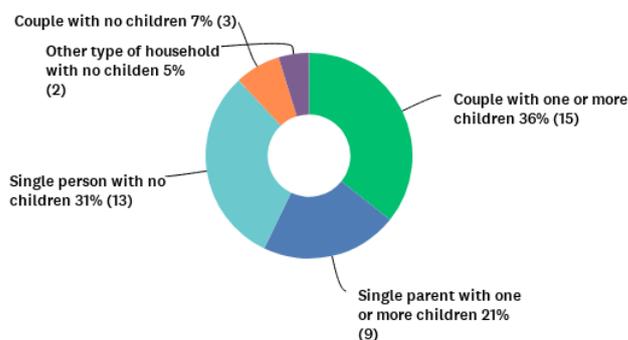
Q1 When did you first approach New Forest District Council's homelessness and housing advice service?



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

Q2 What type of household do you live in?

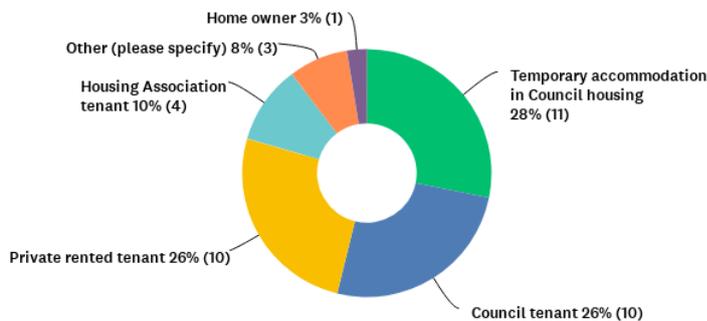


In terms of current accommodation, 28% said they were in TA, 26% were council

tenants, 26% private tenants, 10% housing association tenants and one home owner.

Figure 71

Q4 What type of accommodation do you live in at present?



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”

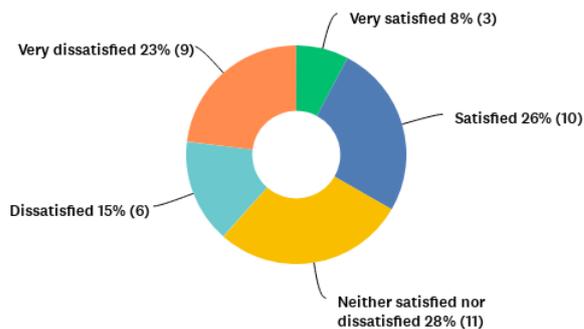
“Helped us before it got to bailiffs/ helped us closer to support network as adviced from GP”

“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:

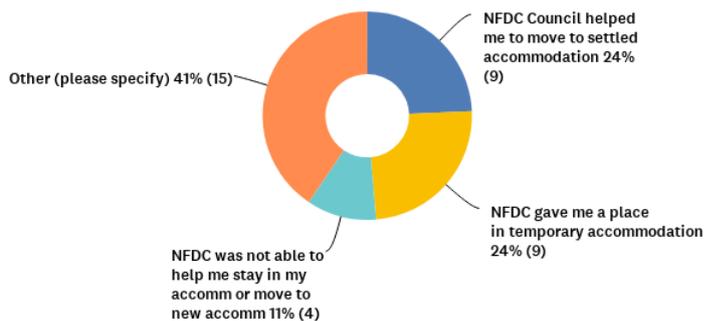
“The homelessness officer who dealt with my case was great, but the whole process should had been a lot quicker but understandable with the current housing crisis. If the turn around times on moving on accommodation was a bit quicker the process would be a lot smoother. I had 3/4 temporary placements 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?

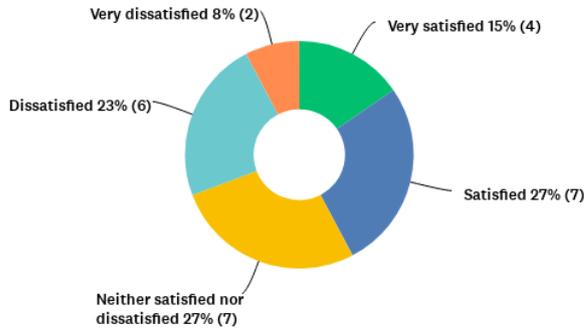
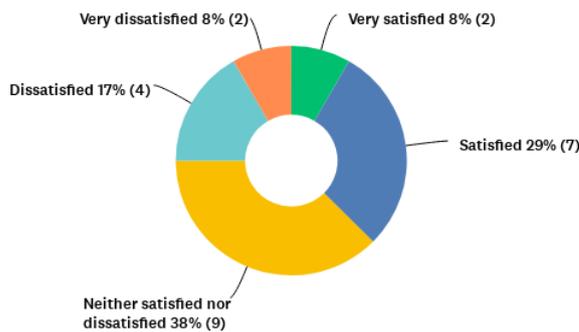


Figure 74

Q14 How satisfied are you with the way your temporary accommodation is managed?

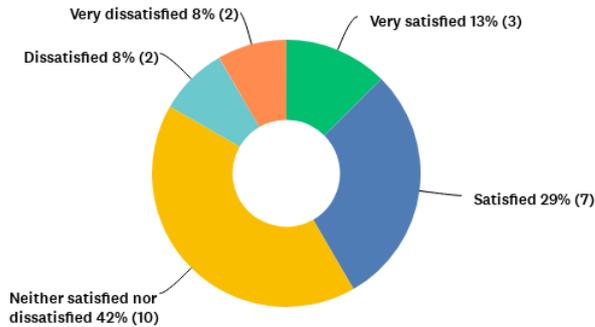


Repairs and maintenance were also reported on positively with only 16% dissatisfied, a figure some councils would envy.

“Very satisfied with day to day maintenance - both call centre & engineers However bigger problems such as damp etc was a problem”

Figure 75

Q15 How satisfied are you with repairs and maintenance of your temporary accommodation?



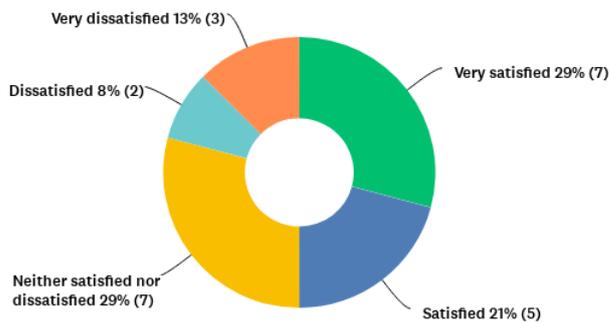
50% of respondents were satisfied with the location of their TA, including 29% very satisfied. This compared with only 21% who were dissatisfied, although location was a significant issue for some people:

“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

Q16 How satisfied are you with the location of the temporary accommodation



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”

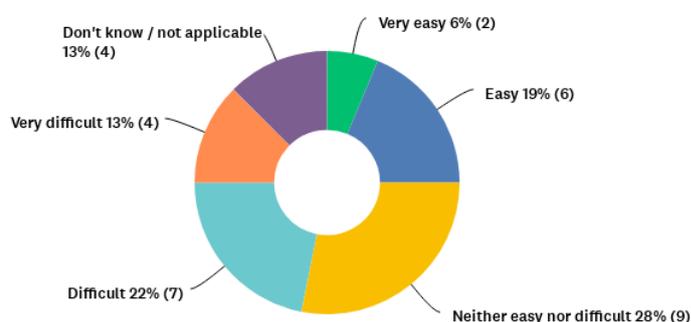
“Until near the end contact via email or phone was almost impossible. With tick-box nebulous responses for the most part”

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”

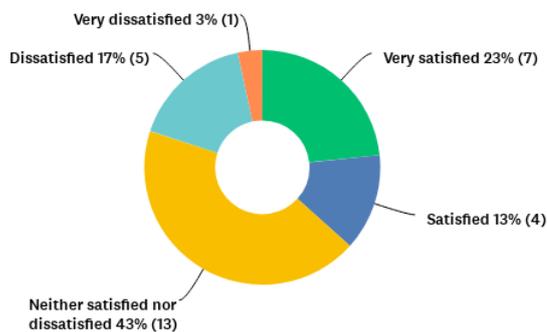
But also:

“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

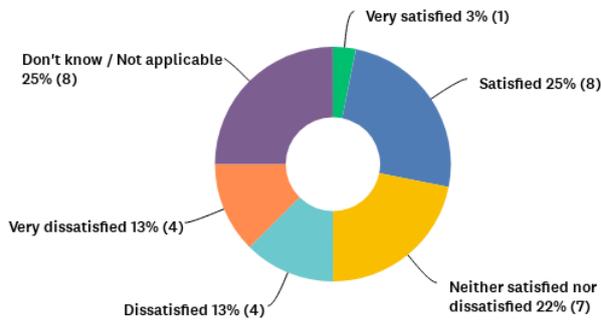
Q19 How satisfied are you with the way staff treated you personally?



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.

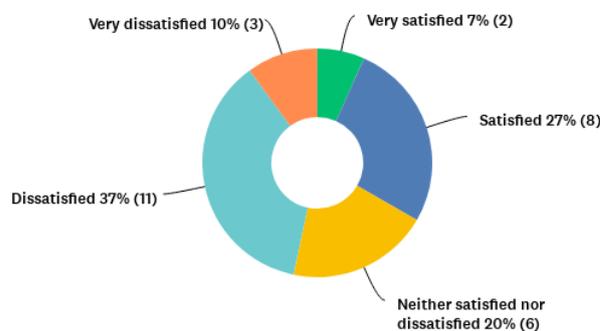
Only 2 respondents left comments for this question and so these may not be representative:

“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?



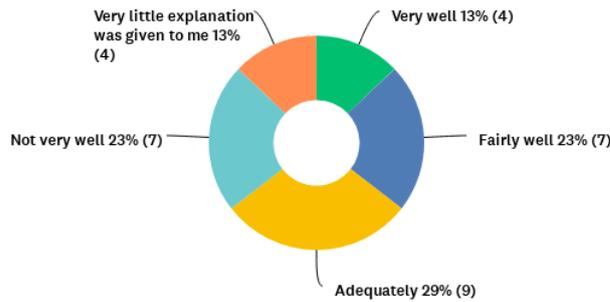
Respondents were fairly evenly divided on how well things were explained to them. This, however, may not be considered good enough. Whilst providing suitable housing can be very challenging, explaining things in a way that service users can understand should be more achievable.

“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

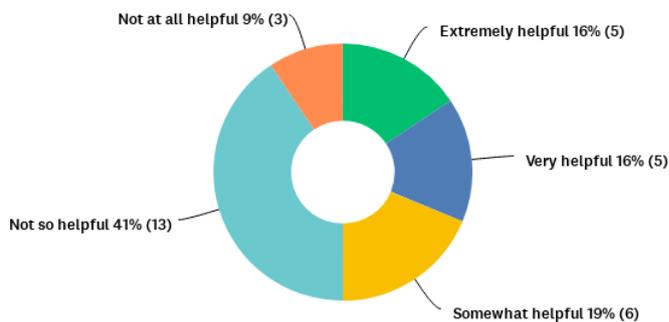
Q22 How well were things explained to you?



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 all helpful'.

Figure 81

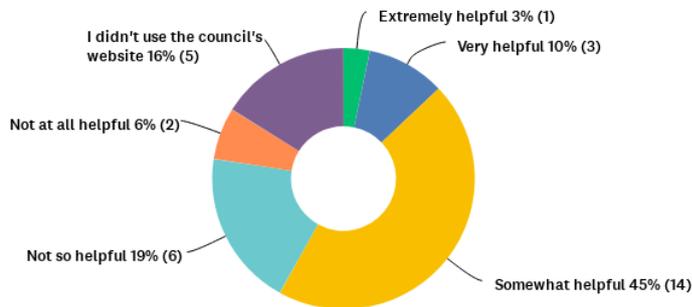
Q23 How helpful was the council in resolving your situation?



Of those who used the council's website, the most common view was that the information was 'somewhat helpful'

Figure 82

Q24 How helpful was the information on the council's website?



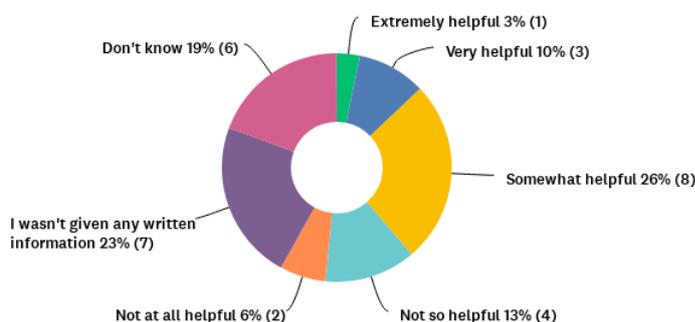
Asked about the helpfulness of any written information they were given, 23% said they had not been given any written information and 19% said 'don't know'. Of those who expressed an opinion only a small proportion felt the information was very or extremely helpful. Overall, this suggests that there is 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

Q25 If you were given written information, how helpful was it?

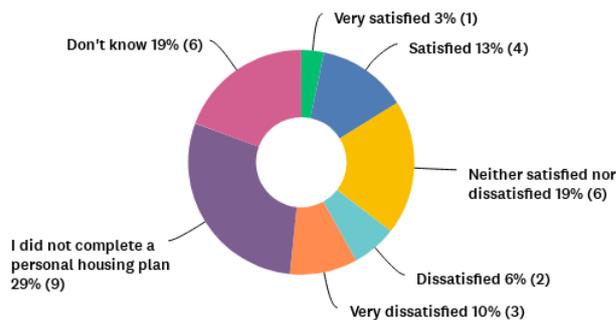


When asked about their level of satisfaction with their personal housing plan, 29% said they did not complete a personal housing plan. As this is a legal requirement for anyone who approaches the council who is homeless or at risk of homelessness within 56 days, it suggests that people were not as involved 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 slightly different questions to the one previously asked about how satisfied they were with the service.

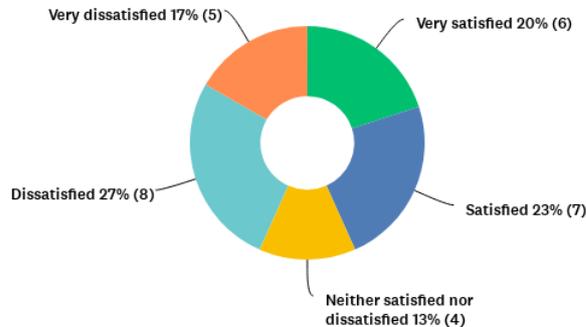
Of those respondents who did not skip the question, 20% were very satisfied, 23% satisfied, 13% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 27% dissatisfied and 17% very dissatisfied. As might be expected, responses here depended significantly on what outcome had in fact been achieved.

“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 single adult males (36%) and female single parents (21%) to most likely household 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 accommodated⁴³ 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 trends⁴⁴, 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 through 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 of the comparator areas, with 42% being accommodation in another local authority⁴⁵.

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 West⁴⁶.

Main homelessness duties

In the period April 2023 to September 2024, New Forest accepted less main duties per 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 rented⁴⁷.

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 allocations⁴⁸, 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.