

Somerset Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Needs Assessment 2019

Mendip District Council
Sedgemoor District Council
South Somerset District Council
Somerset West and Taunton Council

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Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
1. THE SOMERSET DISTRICTS	3
Table 1: District Size and Population.....	4
Table 2: Population Projections	4
Table 3: Current Expressed Housing Need for Somerset	5
Table 4: Population by age.....	6
Table 5: Out of Work Benefits (Source Nomis)	6
2. HOUSING MARKET, DEMAND AND SUPPLY	7
Table 6: House price to residence-based earnings ratio	7
Chart 1: House Prices to Earnings	8
Table 7: Mean House Price	9
Table 8: Median Monthly Private Rents.....	10
Table 9: Median gross monthly pay (Full time).....	11
Chart 2: Local Housing Allowance	11
Table 10: Estimated Annual Affordable Housing Need	12
Table 10a: Gross need for Intermediate and affordable/social rented housing.....	13
Table 11 Percentage of Households Registered on Homefinder Somerset in 2018	13
Table 12: No Registered in Each Band on Homefinder Somerset	14
Table 13: Banding Criteria for Homefinder Somerset	15
Table 14: Estimated Size of Affordable Dwellings Needed 2014-2039	15
Table 15: No of long term Vacant Dwellings.....	15
Table 16: No of Affordable Homes Delivered	17
3. HOMELESSNESS IN MENDIP, SEDGEMOOR, SOUTH SOMERSET, SOMERSET	
WEST & TAUNTON	17
Table 17: Homeless Application Decisions.....	17
Table 18 Top 5 Reasons for Initial Contact.....	18
Table 19: Numbers accepted as being homeless and in priority need	18
Chart 3: Reason for Priority Need	19
Table 20: Households accepted by LA as owed a main homelessness duty by age of applicant	20
Table 21: No of Applicant Households Accommodated in Temporary Accommodation since 2014	20
Table 22: Successful Homeless Prevention & Relief Cases	21
Table 23: Breakdown of Homeless Prevention & Relief Cases 2018/19	21
Table 24: P2i Age Demographics as of 28th March 2019	23
Chart 4: P2i County Rolling 12 Months	24
Chart 5: P2i Panel Outcome Decisions	24
Table 25: Extent of Rough Sleeping	26
4. CONSULTATION EVENTS:	27
Chart 6: Perceived Relevance of Priorities (rated 0-10)	28
5. CONCLUSIONS: GAPS IDENTIFIED.....	28

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the extent of homelessness and rough sleeping across Somerset at the level of a district authority. It takes into account the characteristics of those who find themselves homeless and the reasons for their homelessness. This assessment of need can be evaluated against existing provision and can assist in identifying gaps. Throughout this document, we will clarify the differences that arise within the county and understand these differences to assist in the development and delivery of plans that meet local need.

This information will inform the development of a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy for Somerset, which will be accompanied by a clear delivery plan.

1. THE SOMERSET DISTRICTS

1.1. There are currently four Somerset districts located in the South West region of England. In April 2019, Taunton Deane and West Somerset Council combined to form Somerset West and Taunton Council. For the purposes of this document some information from these two councils will be considered separately if this is how the evidence is presented:

- Mendip District Council
- Sedgemoor District Council
- South Somerset District Council
- Somerset West and Taunton Council (formerly Taunton Deane & West Somerset District)

1.2. These councils are represented in the map below:



1.3. The size and population for each District is shown below:

Table 1: District Size and Population

	Size ¹	Population ²
Mendip	739km ²	113,500
Sedgemoor	606km ²	122,200
South Somerset	959km ²	167,200
Taunton Deane	463km ²	117,500
West Somerset	747km ²	34,800
Total	3514km ²	555,200

1.4. South Somerset is the largest district, geographically, and has the highest population. West Somerset was the most rural district as it encompassed parts of Exmoor and the Quantocks and had a very low population density.

1.5. The table below shows population projections for each District. The predictions have been made using figures from 2016. It appears, based on the figures shown in Table 2 that the population of Taunton Deane, Mendip and West Somerset has grown faster than anticipated. It is expected that Sedgemoor however, will have experienced the largest population change. (Source: 2016 based, ONS, nearest thousand³)

Table 2: Population Projections

	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change
Mendip	113,700	114,400	115,100	115,800	1.85%
Sedgemoor	122,400	123,600	124,700	125,900	2.86%
South Somerset	167,200	168,000	168,700	169,500	1.37%
Taunton Deane	116,900	117,800	118,800	119,800	2.48%
West Somerset	34,500	34,400	34,500	34,500	0%

1.6. This anticipated increase could have an impact on the need for additional affordable housing. Table 3 shows the current expressed need on Homefinder Somerset (our Choice Based Lettings system). It shows there are currently 8795 people expressing a need for affordable housing. This expressed need via Homefinder is likely to be less than actual need since there will be others who need affordable housing, but who have not registered on Homefinder.

¹ Source: ESRI ArcGIS 10.2.2

² <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/contents.aspx> - Local Authority Profile

³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/datasets/localauthoritiesinenglandtable2>

Table 3: Current Expressed Housing Need for Somerset

Number of Bedrooms	District	Bronze	Emergency	Sliver	Gold	Total
1 Bedroom	Mendip	418	2	276	54	750
	Sedgemoor	612	1	268	59	940
	South Somerset	555	3	308	82	948
	Taunton Deane	898	3	378	150	1429
	West Somerset	300	1	104	40	445
2 Bedroom	Mendip	275	1	246	31	553
	Sedgemoor	381	1	273	30	685
	South Somerset	323	1	243	42	609
	Taunton Deane	470	0	334	76	880
	West Somerset	127	0	71	11	209
3 Bedroom	Mendip	76	1	132	12	221
	Sedgemoor	109	1	161	24	295
	South Somerset	101	0	168	21	290
	Taunton Deane	135	0	210	28	373
	West Somerset	43	0	40	3	86
4 Bedroom	Mendip	4	0	27	9	40
	Sedgemoor	18	0	56	9	83
	South Somerset	9	0	58	8	75
	Taunton Deane	22	0	70	20	112
	West Somerset	3	0	23	5	31
5 Bedroom	Mendip	1	0	1	3	5
	Sedgemoor	2	0	4	4	10
	South Somerset	1	0	6	5	12
	Taunton Deane	0	0	5	7	12
	West Somerset	0	0	1	2	3
6 Bedroom	Sedgemoor	0	0	1	2	3
	South Somerset	0	0	1	1	2
Grand Total		4883	15	3465	738	9101

*Please note this is a snapshot of the number of active applications, on a given day. Unregistered and hidden housing need is not reflected in this figure.

- 1.7. These tables indicate that the highest demand for affordable housing is for one bedroom accommodation. Although this is the dwelling size with the highest need, it should be noted that vacancies arise more frequently for these types of dwellings so some of the need will be met through this natural turnover. The data shows that demand decreases, as the size of property gets larger. For example, a six-bedroom property has the lowest demand based on this data but the supply of these larger dwellings is significantly lower, and they are not often available through ad-hoc vacancies so demand for the larger dwellings, such as 5 and 6 bedroom homes is harder to meet.

- 1.8. The table below shows the population split by age within each district in 2017 (*Source: Nomis⁴*).

Table 4: Population by age

	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	Somerset Average
Under 15	16.8%	17%	16.5%	17%	13%	16%
15-24	10.5%	10.3%	9.8%	10.0%	8.6%	10%
25-44	20.8%	21.1%	21.2%	23.0%	15.6%	20%
45-59	22.7%	21.9%	21.1%	21.0%	21.0%	22%
60-64	6.4%	6.5%	6.5%	6.2%	8.1%	7%
65-74	12.6%	12.9%	13.7%	12.1%	18.2%	14%
75+	10.1%	10.2%	11.2%	10.6%	15.6%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

- 1.9. Data relating to age can be helpful in explaining the differences we see in requests for specific accommodation, for example, bungalows or assisted living accommodation. Across the districts, the highest prevalence is for ages 25-59, except in West Somerset where the highest groups are 45-59 and 65-74. In Taunton we see a slightly higher proportion of 25-44 year olds whilst, in West Somerset, 42% are 60 years or older, compared to 33% for Somerset as a whole.
- 1.10. Table 5 shows the details of working age people within the county who are claiming benefit principally because they are unemployed.

Table 5: Out of Work Benefits (*Source Nomis⁵*)

	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset
Claimant count	1,665	1,990	1,705	1,502	365
Population aged 16-64	67,300	71,800	96,500	69,600	18,400
Percentage of population total	2.47%	2.77%	1.77%	2.16%	1.98%

- 1.11. As part of its welfare reform programme, the government introduced a new benefit called Universal Credit.
- 1.12. Universal Credit is a new single payment for people who are looking for work or on a low income. Universal Credit helps claimants and their families to become more independent, it simplifies the benefits system by bringing together a range of working-age benefits into a single payment. It replaces: income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Child Tax Credits, Working Tax Credits and Housing Benefit ⁶

⁴ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157378/report.aspx>

⁵ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157378/report.aspx>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-welfare-reform/2010-to-2015-government-policy-welfare-reform#appendix-1-government-policy-on-universal-credit-an-introduction>

- 1.13. Under Universal Credit, a broader span of claimants is required to look for work than under Jobseeker's Allowance. As Universal Credits Full Service is rolled out in particular areas, the number of people recorded as being on the Claimant Count is therefore likely to rise.⁷
- 1.14. Research has been conducted into the impact of Universal Credit: Inside Housing reported that, since April 2018, among the 42 Universal Credit areas, 4,940 households have declared themselves homeless to their council while claiming the benefit out of 168, 653 universal credit households. In the other 31 areas over the same period, 3,500 households were receiving housing benefit at the point of presenting as homeless. This translates as 1 in 34 Universal Credit households having become homeless this year compared with 1 in 79 housing benefit households⁸. We believe we are seeing a negative impact amongst Universal Credit claimants on arrears compared to claimants of other benefits but we are not always able to evidence the link directly: as the number of people on Universal Credit rises, problems are likely to be compounded.

2. HOUSING MARKET, DEMAND AND SUPPLY

- 2.1. The Somerset Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) states, "A household is considered to be able to afford to buy a home if it costs less than four times the gross household income. It is assumed that a household would have a 10% deposit".⁹
- 2.2. Table 6 shows the ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile gross annual (where available) residence-based earnings (residence-based earnings refer to the median or lower quartile earnings based on the area in which an individual lives, whereas workplace-based earnings refer to earnings based on the area in which the individual works¹⁰) by local authority district since 2013. "The lower quartile is the value determined by putting all the house prices or earnings for a given area and year, in order of value, and then selecting the value of the house prices or earnings that fall three-quarters of the way down the list, such that 75% lie above and 25% lie below that value. These ratios are particularly useful for assessing housing affordability to indicate the entry level for first-time buyers".¹¹ 'Affordability ratios are calculated by dividing house prices by gross annual residence-based earnings.' (Source: ONS¹²)

Table 6: House price to residence-based earnings ratio

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Mendip	8.37	8.73	8.77	8.75	10.23
Sedgemoor	6.87	6.98	7.64	7.74	8.04
South Somerset	7.16	7.33	8.19	7.89	7.61
Taunton Deane	7.83	7.94	8.06	8.04	7.97
West Somerset	9.17	10.09	9.02	10.09	10.25
South West	7.78	8.03	8.27	8.50	8.75
England	6.57	6.91	7.11	7.16	7.26

⁷ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157378/report.aspx>

⁸ <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/insight/insight/starting-to-bite--how-universal-credit-is-making-people-homeless-59445>

⁹ https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/862544/somerset_final_shma_oct2016_revised.pdf

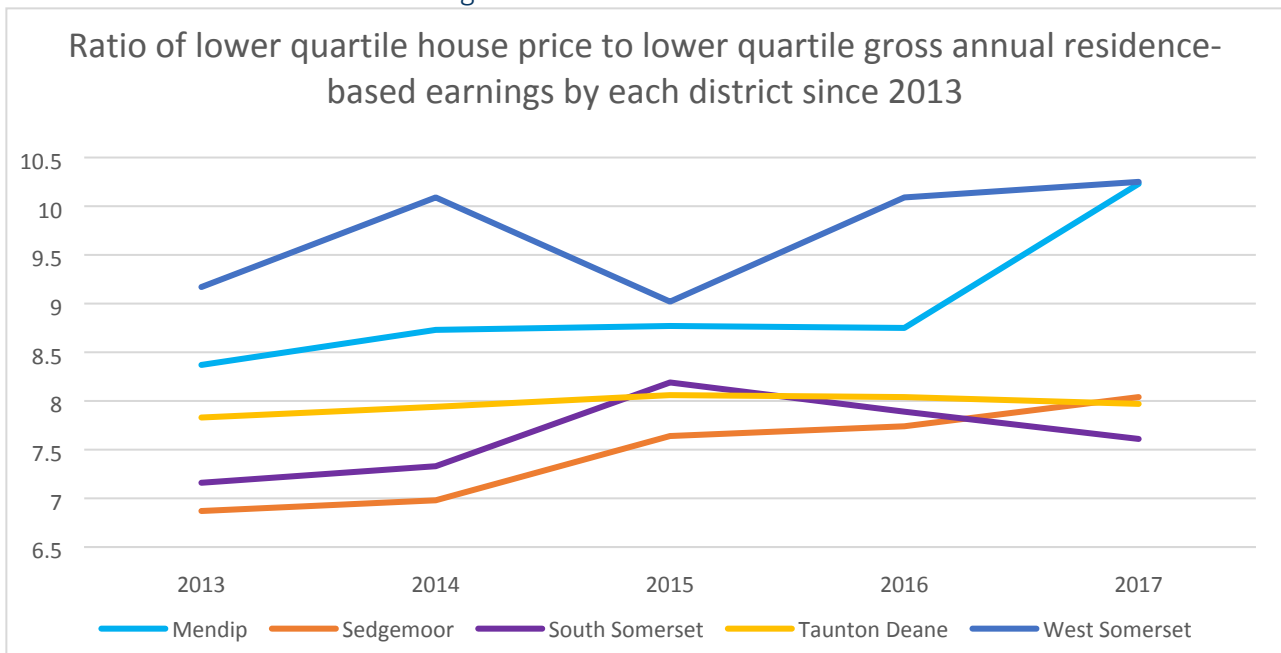
¹⁰ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/qmis/housingaffordabilityinenglandandwales> - quality and methodology information

¹¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/qmis/housingaffordabilityinenglandandwales> - quality and methodology information

¹² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/ratioofhousepricetoresidencebasedearningslowerquartileandmedian> - Table 6C and 2C

- 2.3. The data in Table 6 highlights that households would require more than 7.6 times their earnings to afford a home in Somerset, although there is wide disparity in affordability across the Somerset Districts. The highest ratio is in Mendip and West Somerset where in 2017 a household would have required more than 10 times their earnings to afford a home. Sedgemoor has also seen a sharp ratio increase.
- 2.4. This affordability is hindered further by the national employment shift to zero hour contracts rather than traditional employment contracts. This change can prove a barrier to accessing rented accommodation and in meeting any affordability tests of income and expenditure, thus obstructing the ability to become an owner-occupier. Mortgage lenders can be reluctant to lend against an uncertain income stream. ONS figures show that, in 2017, 16% of the UK workforce (aged 16 years and over) were on a zero hours contract, and in 2018, this rose to 16.4%. (Source ONS¹³)
- 2.5. The graph below shows how the lower quartile income in the area compared to the lower quartile house price over time since 2013. Taunton Deane is the only district to have maintained its ratio; in all other districts, the situation has been worsening, with house prices in the lower quartile typically being at best close to eight times earnings in the lowest quartile. This starkly illustrates the difficulty of housing affordability across Somerset when considered against the accepted standard for affordability (four times earnings).

Chart 1: House Prices to Earnings



13

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplewoinrk/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/emp17peopleinemploymentonzerohourscontracts>

2.6. Table 7 depicts the mean price paid for homes by local authority area. (Source: ONS¹⁴)

Table 7: Mean House Price

District	House Type	March 2015	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	% difference in last 12 months
Mendip	Detached	370,165	359,6222	419,599	419,056	-0.13%
	Semi Detached	211,331	221,067	244,488	260,846	6.69%
	Terraced	200,878	204,863	229,472	236,333	2.99%
	Flats/ Maisonettes	132,419	129,404	142,117	141,464	-0.46%
Sedgemoor	Detached	290,487	295,959	321,511	342,483	6.52%
	Semi Detached	177,000	194,351	204,238	215,171	5.35%
	Terraced	148,281	151,945	166,763	169,213	1.47%
	Flats/ Maisonettes	101,548	107,430	119,328	125,382	5.07%
South Somerset	Detached	310,574	324,102	345,141	367,622	6.51%
	Semi Detached	199,106	198,188	210,990	215,951	2.35%
	Terraced	165,312	171,053	183,227	186,697	1.89%
	Flats/ Maisonettes	108,275	109,226	110,009	118,113	7.37%
Taunton Deane	Detached	312,756	322,739	348,318	355,424	2.04%
	Semi Detached	200,648	209,542	213,849	232,881	8.90%
	Terraced	171,784	175,888	184,398	190,153	3.12%
	Flats/ Maisonettes	159,275	139,241	143,009	143,912	0.63%
West Somerset	Detached	318,137	315,281	336,123	361,327	7.50%
	Semi Detached	209,765	218,966	222,072	236,534	6.51%
	Terraced	172,906	182,168	177,088	195,998	10.68%
	Flats/ Maisonettes	159,970	128,097	133,442	130,037	-2.55%

2.7. The evidence shown in the table above demonstrates how the mean house price has changed over the last 4 years, moving house purchase further beyond the reach of many residents.

¹⁴<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/meanhousepriceforationalandsnationalgeographiesquarterlyrollingyearhpssadataset12> - Table 2b-2e

2.8. Table 8 shows the median private rents by District since 2014/15, data is taken from October to September (Source: ONS).

Table 8: Median Monthly Private Rents

	Bedroom Size	2014/15¹⁵	2015/16¹⁶	2016/17¹⁷	2017/18¹⁸	% Increase over last 3 years
Mendip	1 bedroom	465	455	475	475	4%
	2 bedroom	595	625	625	625	0%
	3 bedroom	730	750	775	775	3%
	4 bedroom	995	1,050	995	1,150	10%
Sedgemoor	1 bedroom	425	430	450	450	5%
	2 bedroom	550	550	575	595	8%
	3 bedroom	678	695	720	725	4%
	4 bedroom	885	900	900	925	3%
South Somerset	1 bedroom	430	450	450	455	1%
	2 bedroom	575	595	595	600	1%
	3 bedroom	695	700	725	750	7%
	4 bedroom	950	995	995	1,000	1%
Taunton Deane	1 bedroom	450	450	475	475	6%
	2 bedroom	585	595	600	625	5%
	3 bedroom	700	700	735	750	7%
	4 bedroom	1,000	995	1,000	1,100	11%
West Somerset	1 bedroom	453	475	475	475	0%
	2 bedroom	575	585	595	600	3%
	3 bedroom	675	675	695	700	4%
	4 bedroom	855	950	950	933	-2%
Somerset	1 bedroom	450	450	450	475	6%
	2 bedroom	575	590	595	610	3%
	3 bedroom	695	700	725	750	7%
	4 bedroom	950	988	995	1,000	1%
South West	1 bedroom	500	525	550	574	9%
	2 bedroom	625	650	675	695	7%
	3 bedroom	750	795	800	830	4%
	4 bedroom	1,200	1,250	1,288	1,368	9%
England	1 bedroom	540	575	595	600	4%
	2 bedroom	595	625	650	650	4%
	3 bedroom	695	715	750	750	5%
	4 bedroom	1,200	1,275	1,300	1,320	4%

*Counts are rounded to the nearest 10

¹⁵<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/private-rental-market-summary-statistics-england-2014-15> - Table 2.3 - 2.6

¹⁶<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/private-rental-market-summary-statistics-october-2015-to-september-2016> - 2.6

¹⁷<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/private-rental-market-summary-statistics-october-2016-to-september-2017> - Table 2.3 - 2.6

¹⁸<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/private-rental-market-summary-statistics-october-2017-to-september-2018> -

Table 2.3 – 2.6

2.9. Table 9 shows the gross monthly pay for full time workers. This sum has been calculated using a weekly gross pay for full time workers.

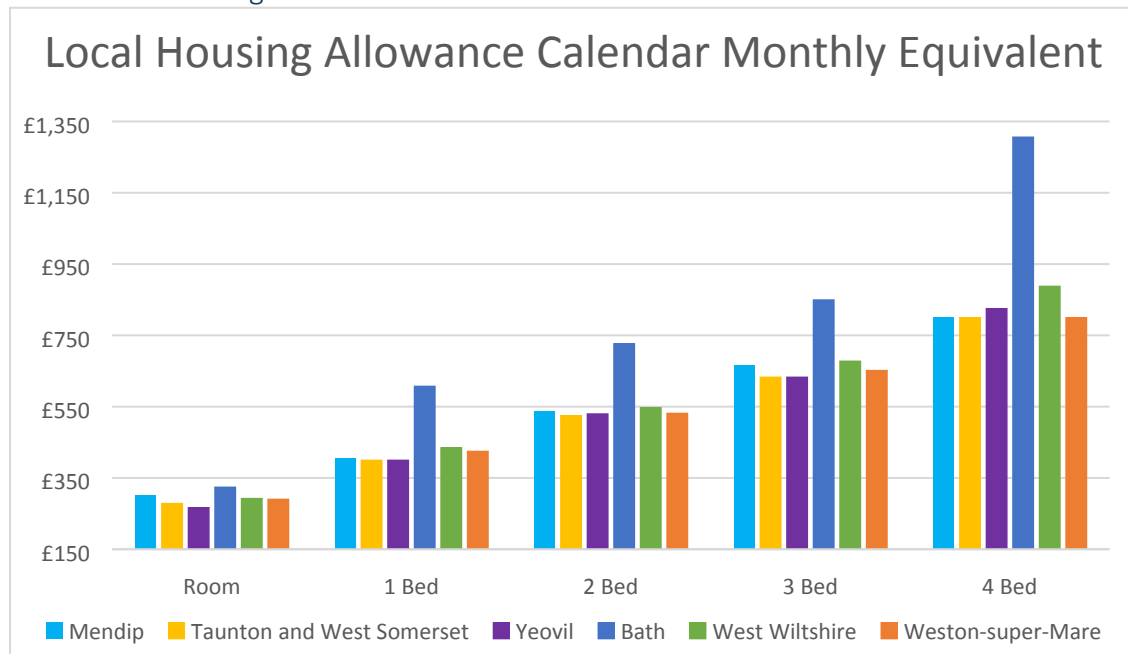
Table 9: Median gross monthly pay (Full time)¹⁹

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Mendip	£2216.5	£2178.8	£2314.9	£2129.4
Sedgemoor	£2063.1	£2019.8	£2262.9	£1763.2
South Somerset	£1975.1	£2074.4	£2107.3	£1791.0
Taunton Deane	£2119.9	£2200.0	£2225.6	£1789.2
West Somerset	£2375.1	No data	£1742.4	£1409.2
Somerset	£2076.1	£2093.4	£2228.6	£1733.3
South West	£2159.3	£2224.7	£2283.7	£1866.4
England	£2304.9	£2360.4	£2408.5	£2019.3

2.10. The figures in tables 8 and 9 indicate a widening gap in affordability to rent. Average monthly earnings have dropped significantly with the median monthly rent accounting for an average of 36% of the gross monthly pay. This figure has increased since 2015 where the average for Somerset as a whole was 28%.

2.11. The chart below shows the Local Housing Allowance rate in each district (Source: LHA 2016 table²⁰). 'Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are used to calculate housing benefit and the Housing Element of Universal Credit for tenants renting from private landlords. LHA rates relate to the area in which you make your claim. These areas are called Broad Rental Market Areas (BRMA). A BRMA is where a person could reasonably be expected to live taking into account access to facilities and services'²¹. There are six BRMAs being used within the county of Somerset:

Chart 2: Local Housing Allowance



¹⁹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/placeofresidencebylocalauthorityshetable8>

²⁰<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-housing-allowance-lha-rates-applicable-from-april-2018-to-march-2019> - Table 4

²¹<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-local-housing-allowances-rates-broad-rental-market-areas>

2.12. The LHA boundaries do not mirror district boundaries. Of the six BRMAs (see Chart 3), Bath receives the highest Local Housing Allowance (LHA) across all housing types. When comparing Yeovil, Mendip and Taunton Deane, it can be seen that Mendip has the highest LHA for all property sizes except for 4-bed accommodation, where this is higher for Yeovil. Taunton Deane and Yeovil have very similar LHAs across all property types; however, Taunton Deane has a higher rate for rooms.

2.13. We have seen from the data above that there is a considerable gap in the affordability of homes either to purchase or to privately rent in Somerset because of low earnings relative to house prices and rental values. The need for affordable housing is evident from these ratios.

2.14. Table 10 also included within the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2016, demonstrates the estimated annual need for affordable housing by location. There was no data available for West Somerset as they were not part of the SHMA although need for West Somerset is shown in the information obtained from Homefinder Somerset.

Table 10: Estimated Annual Affordable Housing Need

	Current need* (annualised)	Newly forming households	Existing households falling into need	Total need	Re-let supply	Net need	Net need % of Total need
Mendip	17	351	191	559	319	240	43%
Sedgemoor	15	408	232	655	354	301	46%
South Somerset	20	466	379	865	659	206	24%
Taunton Deane	17	363	393	774	613	161	21%
Somerset	74	1665	1274	3013	2058	955	

* Current need reflects the annual number of households already expressing a need of affordable housing and includes households without housing ('concealed households'²²).

2.15. Table 10a details the gross need for intermediate and affordable/social rented housing taken from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2016 (figure 7.13²³). The SHMA also mentions other factors that should be considered when looking at the table below such as the savings an applicant may have/access to a deposit and the supply of intermediate housing.

²² Concealed households are family units or single adults living within 'host' households - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6338/1776873.pdf

²³ <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/1344/strategic-housing-market-assessment-oct-16.pdf>

Table 10a: Gross need for Intermediate and affordable/social rented housing

Component of need (all per annum)	Intermediate Housing	Affordable rented	Social rented	Total
Current need	3	5	66	74
Newly forming households	234	244	1187	1665
Existing households falling into need	105	115	1054	1274
Total	342	364	2307	3013
Percentage of Total	11%	12%	77%	100%
Mendip	12%	14%	75%	100%
Sedgemoor	12%	13%	75%	100%
South Somerset	11%	10%	79%	100%
Taunton Deane	11%	13%	76%	100%

2.16. The figures above show the suggested percentages of need for the different tenures provided as affordable housing. It is clear in all districts that the highest need is for social rented dwellings which account for 70-80% of the need overall whilst intermediate housing and affordable rented housing account for 10-15% each.

2.17. The table below shows the number of households on Homefinder Somerset since 2013, data is taken up to 28th November 2018 (Source: Homefinder Somerset).

Table 11 Percentage of Households Registered on Homefinder Somerset in 2018

	Household population projection ²⁴	No of households on Homefinder	% of population on Homefinder
Mendip	11100	1491	1.34%
Sedgemoor	122000	1920	1.57%
South Somerset	164000	2041	1.24%
Taunton Deane	114000	2628	2.31%
West Somerset	33000	710	2.15%
Total	545000	8790	1.61%

2.18. There are currently just under 9000 active households who have registered on Homefinder and expressed a need for affordable housing, although in the last 12 months 10,562 have applied. This indicates there is a strong demand that outweighs the supply. The district with the most households shown as having an “active” status on Homefinder (as opposed to closed or housed etc.) reside in Taunton Deane and the least in West Somerset, although the expressed need is still high in South Somerset and Sedgemoor. The number of households registered on Homefinder account for just under 2% of the households, overall, in the county.

2.19. Table 12 shows the current need per district by band for all households currently registered on Homefinder Somerset (as at 28th November 2018). This should be seen in relation to Table 3 where property sizes were detailed for each district (Source: Homefinder Somerset Report).

²⁴ Where universal credit has already been rolled out, this would be used to calculate the housing element of Universal Credit

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/datasets/householdprojectionsforengland> - table 426




Table 12: No Registered in Each Band on Homefinder Somerset

Local Authority	Band	Total
Mendip District Council	Bronze	734
	Silver	636
	Gold	118
	Emergency	4
Mendip District Council Total		1492
Sedgemoor District Council	Bronze	1058
	Silver	738
	Gold	122
	Emergency	4
Sedgemoor District Council Total		1922
South Somerset District Council	Bronze	1028
	Silver	819
	Gold	186
	Emergency	7
South Somerset District Council Total		2040
Taunton Deane Borough Council	Bronze	1474
	Silver	899
	Gold	256
	Emergency	2
Taunton Deane Borough Council Total		2631
West Somerset Council	Bronze	437
	Silver	216
	Gold	56
	Emergency	1
West Somerset Council Total		710
Grand Total		8795

2.20. Registered households are placed into four bands – Gold, Silver and Bronze plus a separate Emergency banding - to determine the urgency of their affordable housing need. Taunton Deane has the highest combined number of “Gold” and emergency need households, followed by South Somerset. This result could be reflective of the area’s population rate, or that the right types of dwellings are not available for the households concerned; or that they are in the wrong location. Additionally, Taunton offers a significant number of supported temporary accommodation (via a range of providers) which could be a pull factor for those who are homeless.

2.21. The banding criteria for each band are shown at Table 13. The Emergency Band is for those applicants that require an ‘urgent’ move to ensure their safety and welfare. The data demonstrates that both Taunton Deane and South Somerset have a higher proportion of applicants falling within the Gold Band.

Table 13: Banding Criteria for Homefinder Somerset

Gold Band – High need 	Silver Band – Medium Need 	Bronze Band – Low Need 
Homeless households who are owed a main homeless duty by a Homefinder Somerset partner authority.	Where the applicant lacks 1 bedroom in their current home.	Where an applicant is adequately housed.
Applicants who lack 2 or more bedrooms or have been confirmed as overcrowded by a Local Authority officer.	Applicants who can demonstrate a need to move for employment reasons or to give or receive support where significant harm would result if this was not provided.	Where applicants own their own property but whose home is not suitable for their needs but they have sufficient equity to address their housing needs.
Current supported housing residents or care leaving applicants who are assessed as ready to move on to independent living.	Where there is a medium medical need. Medium welfare need	Applicants with a low medical need. Applicants with a low welfare need.
High disrepair for people living in the private sector.	Medium disrepair for people living in the private sector.	Applicants living in short term supported housing or are care leavers prior to being ready to move at which stage they will move up to the gold band.
High medical need High welfare need	Applicants with dependent children and are lodging with friends or family or in accommodation with shared living facilities.	Applicants with no dependent children and are lodging with friends or family or in accommodation with shared living facilities.
Applicants awarded a 'medium' medical priority, combined with 'medium' disrepair award from the silver band.	Other homeless (where Homefinder Somerset partners do not owe an applicant a full homeless duty).	Applicants are assessed as having adequate financial resources to address their housing needs.
Victim of harassment or violence at their current property within the Homefinder Somerset area.	Applicants of split families who not by choice are living separately.	Applicant has no housing need.
Applicant awarded 4 or more silver band housing needs with the exception of applicants found to be intentionally homeless.		Applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances or made use of the under occupation band before, or has accepted an offer that doesn't meet their needs previously.
Social housing tenants whose homes are subject to major works for rebuilding/renovation or re-designation.		Applicants with low disrepair needs living in private sector rented property.
Where the Local Authority receives written support from a Homefinder Somerset landlord that an applicant has no legal right to succession and the landlord will pursue possession.		Applicants that have no local connection applying for extra care or sheltered properties.

2.22. Table 14 shows the estimated size of dwellings needed for affordable housing 2014 to 2039 by Local Authority area (Source: Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016; figure 10.8).

Table 14: Estimated Size of Affordable Dwellings Needed 2014-2039

	One bedroom	Two bedrooms	Three + bedrooms
Mendip	48.2%	31.5%	20.2%
Sedgemoor	43.3%	28.4%	28.3%
South Somerset	44.6%	37.3%	18.2%
Taunton Deane	47.5%	32.3%	20.2%

2.23. Table 15 shows the number of long-term vacant dwellings per District since 2013. Long-term vacant dwellings mean 'dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for over six months' (Source: ONS²⁵). There was just over 2000 long-term vacant dwellings as of October 2018 within the County, the highest proportion being within South Somerset. Bringing these dwellings back into use could help with the current shortfall in housing. Work is already underway on this aim as detailed in points 2.24 – 2.29.

Table 15: No of long term Vacant Dwellings

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018*
Mendip	470	439	404	460	479	332
Sedgemoor	390	277	269	335	325	376
South Somerset	470	636	739	595	643	657
Taunton Deane	428	473	464	456	388	453
West Somerset	211	224	202	224	241	223
Total	1969	2049	2078	2070	2076	2041

*Provided by the Local Authority direct

²⁵<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants> - Table 615 Long Term Vacants

- 2.24. All districts work within their Authority to identify empty dwellings. They proactively work with the owners to understand the reasons the dwelling is empty to enable collaborative working with partners to help the owners access low cost loans and advice and guidance on repairs and leasing.
- 2.25. In particular, Sedgemoor, with funding linked with the Hinkley development, is leading on assisting homeowners with bringing empty properties back into use, leasing them from the owner and managing them to completion. This is being carried out in phases, with Phase One producing 690 bed spaces against a target of 320 and Phase Two to date producing 481 against their original target of 270.
- 2.26. Due to recent changes in legislation under the Local Government Finance Act 1992, local authorities now have the discretion to increase the council tax charges on empty dwellings. This is in addition to the existing 150% council tax on all dwellings that are empty for 2 years or more.
- 2.27. All districts either have already introduced increases in council tax charges for empty properties or are looking to do so in line with the new legislation. The charges range from a total charge of 200% to 300% for dwellings vacant for longer periods. This will help the districts in their commitment to encouraging empty dwellings being brought back to use.²⁶
- 2.28. In certain circumstances if a dwelling remains empty the relevant district can take enforcement action. This can be in the form of an enforced sale, compulsory purchase order (CPO) or an empty dwelling management order (EDMO).
- 2.29. It is imperative that all districts monitor the benefit realisation of each targeted action to help inform future strategies.
- 2.30. Table 16 shows the number of affordable homes delivered by each District over the last 3 years. This includes the number of:
- 2.30.1. **Social rented dwellings** - local authorities and private registered providers own social rented housing (as defined in section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with Homes England.
- 2.30.2. **Affordable rented dwellings** - local authorities or private registered providers of social housing let affordable rented housing to households who are eligible. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).
- 2.30.3. **Intermediate housing** - Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.”²⁷

²⁶ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/25/enacted>

²⁷ https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/862544/somerset_final_shma_oct2016_revised.pdf

2.30.4. Units provided as part of planning obligations would not be included; so we have obtained this information direct from the local authorities to ensure we included both in Table 16.

Table 16: No of Affordable Homes Delivered

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19*	Estimated Annual Affordable Housing Need
Mendip	120	38	189	100	240
Sedgemoor	98	147	65	130	301
South Somerset	128	48	86	122	206
Taunton Deane	222	284	92	218	161
West Somerset	21	40	21	3	47
Total	589	557	453	573	955

*please note these figures are indicative

2.30.5. Although the number of affordable homes delivered has increased considerably, most notably in Taunton Deane; we are still around 40% short of what we need, annually, in order to meet need.

3. HOMELESSNESS IN MENDIP, SEDGEMOOR, SOUTH SOMERSET, SOMERSET WEST & TAUNTON

2.1. A main homelessness duty is owed where the authority is satisfied that an applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a specified priority need group. Such statutorily homeless households are referred to as 'acceptances'.

2.2. Table 17 table shows the outcome of homelessness applications by district for the year 2018/19. (Source: provided direct by local authority as the Government Live Tables did not cover this period at the time of preparing)

Table 17: Homeless Application Decisions

	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Somerset West and Taunton
Eligible, unintentionally homeless & in priority need	10	84	83	62
Eligible, homeless, in priority need but intentionally Homeless	4	7	9	0
Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	18	38	25	7
Eligible but not homeless	2	14	2	2
Lost contact prior to assessment	2	3	0	0
Withdrew prior to assessment	1	0	1	89*
Not Eligible for assistance	0	1	4	10
Total	37	147	124	170

* When the HRA was introduced in 2018 any approach regarding homelessness, including those who approached via email and telephone, were recorded onto the system and taken through an initial triage. Out of 1170 approaches, 89 either failed to continue to engage to enable an assessment to be carried out or did not meet the criteria to continue with an assessment (i.e. they were not homeless/ threatened with homelessness or ineligible for assistance).

2.3. The top five reasons why an individual contacts the local authority with a threat of Homelessness²⁸ is detailed below:

Table 18 Top 5 Reasons for Initial Contact

Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Somerset West and Taunton
Loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	Loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	Loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	Loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancy
Family no longer able/willing to accommodate	Family no longer able/willing to accommodate	Non- Violent breakdown of relationship	Family no longer able/willing to accommodate
Non- Violent breakdown of relationship	Non- Violent breakdown of relationship	Family no longer able/willing to accommodate	Non- Violent breakdown of relationship
Domestic abuse	Domestic abuse	Domestic abuse	Rough Sleeping
End of Social Rented Tenancy ²⁹	End of Social Rented Tenancy	End of Social Rented Tenancy	Friends no longer able/willing to accommodate

2.4. The table below shows the number of applicants that were accepted by the Somerset local authorities as homeless and in priority need since 2013 (Source: Government Live Table³⁰)

Table 19: Numbers accepted as being homeless and in priority need

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19*
Mendip	82	57	27	29	17	10
Sedgemoor	32	45	64	73	67	84
South Somerset	196	171	150	180	154	80
Taunton Deane	102	133	93	118	133	41
West Somerset	26	37	34	21	26	

* Provided by the districts direct

²⁸ The term 'homelessness' is often considered to apply only to people 'sleeping rough'. However, most of our statistics on homelessness relate to the statutorily homeless, i.e. those households that meet specific criteria of priority need set out in legislation, and to whom a local authority has accepted a homelessness duty.

Such households are rarely homeless in the literal sense of being without a roof over their heads, but are more likely to be threatened with the loss of, or are unable to continue with, their current accommodation. -

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-data-notes-and-definitions>

²⁹ This termination would normally be because the tenant has failed to adhere to their tenancy agreement such as: anti-social behaviour, failing to adequately maintain the dwelling or garden or rent arrears

³⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness#statutory-homelessness-live-tables> -

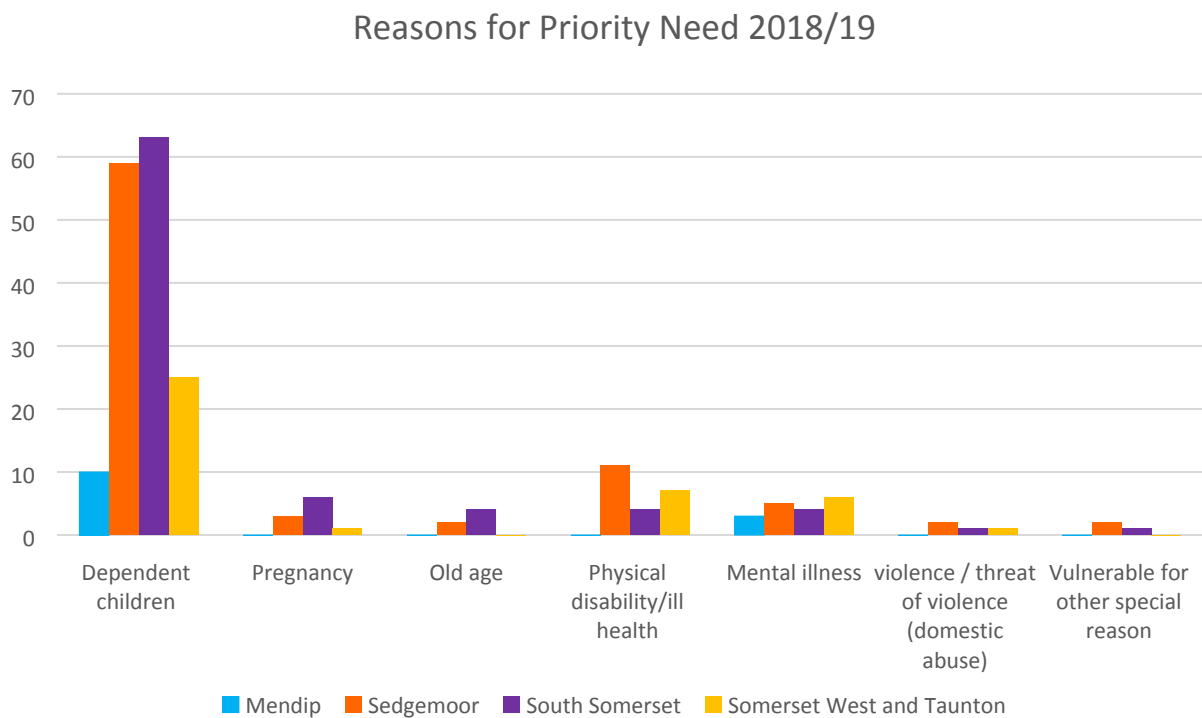
Detailed local authority homelessness figures April 17 – March 18

2.5. “The priority need groups include households with dependent children or pregnant women and people who are “vulnerable” in some way; e.g. because of mental illness or physical disability. In 2002 an Order made under the 1996 Act extended the priority need categories to include applicants:

- aged 16 or 17
- aged 18 to 20 who were previously in care
- vulnerable as a result of time spent in care, in custody, or in H.M. Forces
- vulnerable as a result of having to flee their home because of violence or the threat of violence”³¹

2.6. The chart below shows the ‘Applicant households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the financial year 2018/19, by priority need category’. (Source: provided direct by local authority as the Government Live Tables did not cover this period at the time of preparing³²)

Chart 3: Reason for Priority Need



2.7. The main reason for priority need is having dependent children; the remaining factors cover the main criteria for a “vulnerable” individual.

2.8. 58% of applicants to whom we owe a main housing duty are aged 25-44, this compares with a 20% incidence in the general population. 16-24 year olds follow, who disproportionately make up 25% of applicants, but has only around a 10% incidence of the general population.

2.9. Table 20 shows the breakdown of homelessness duty by age, the information has been provided direct by each local authority as the information was not available on the government live tables at the time of preparing:

³¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-data-notes-and-definitions>

³² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness#statutory-homelessness-live-tables> – Detailed local authority homelessness figures April 17 – March 18

Table 20: Households accepted by LA as owed a main homelessness duty by age of applicant

2018/19	16-24	25-44	45-59	60-64	65-74	75 & above	Total
Mendip	3	2	5	0	0	0	10
Sedgemoor	13	53	11	1	6	0	84
South Somerset	23	48	6	0	3	3	83
Somerset West and Taunton	7	27	6	0	0	1	41
Total	46	130	28	1	9	4	218

2.10. Table 21 shows the number of households accommodated in temporary accommodation within each District since 2014 at the end of quarter 4 (January to March) each year. (Source: Government Live Tables Section 6³³).

Table 21: No of Applicant Households Accommodated in Temporary Accommodation since 2014

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Mendip	19	5*	7	6	3*
Sedgemoor	9	17	23	23	32
South Somerset	34	36	31	37	39
Taunton Deane	34	31	34	18	23
West Somerset	6	6	2*	3*	9

* Provided via a report on Homefinder as this was not recorded on the live tables

2.11. There is some evidence of an increase in property change of use to houses of multiple occupants (HMOs) in Sedgemoor, possibly to accommodate an increase in single workers requiring accommodation in the area. This change has resulted in less family accommodation (3 or 4-bed) being available.

2.12. It should be noted that these statistics are a snap shot of the situation at the end of quarter four and do not necessarily reflect long-term trends in all cases. It is clear, however, that the use of temporary accommodation for applicants has been consistently low in Somerset over the past few years.

2.13. Since the first joint homelessness strategy between the Somerset districts in 2008, there has been a focus on the prevention and relief of homelessness.³⁴ Homelessness prevention means providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness. 'Homelessness relief' is where an authority has been unable to prevent homelessness but helps someone to secure accommodation, even though the authority is under no statutory obligation to do so.³⁵ The number of homeless prevention and relief cases recorded by each local authority is shown in table 22 (Source: Government Live Table³⁶):

³³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness> Detailed local authority level homelessness figures: January to March. Section 6.

³⁴ This could involve services such as debt advice, undertaking the Tenancy Accreditation Scheme, rapid response service, Intensive Tenancy Support, rapid support that is carried out jointly between CAB & LA, mediation, floating support, deposit schemes, rough sleeper outreach, direct access hostels, tech loan to enable support etc.

³⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-data-notes-and-definitions>

Table 22: Successful Homeless Prevention & Relief Cases

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19*	% Change since 2012/13
Mendip	222	295	192	263	313	324	377	69.81%
Sedgemoor	483	797	1089	747	498	526	272	-43.6%
South Somerset	260	219	172	190	201	201	206	-20.76%
Taunton Deane	204	306	187	248	289	156	640	171.18%
West Somerset	32	97	46	85	94	68		
South West	17,100	19,500	19,090	18,080	18,090	18,660	Not Available	
England	202,900	228,400	220,700	213,260	215,220	214,970	Not Available	

* Provided by the districts direct

2.14. The number of homeless prevention and relief cases can be further broken down to allow analysis of how many households were assisted to remain in their accommodation, how many households were assisted to move to alternative accommodation and how many homeless cases were effectively relieved. The breakdown of these figures for 2018/19 is shown in Table 23 by district (These figures were provided direct by local authority, as the Government Live Tables did not cover this period at the time of preparing³⁷).

Table 23: Breakdown of Homeless Prevention & Relief Cases 2018/19

	Prevention		Successful homelessness relief	Total
	Assisted to remain in accommodation	Assisted into alternative accommodation		
Mendip	77	251	49	377
Sedgemoor	32	161	73	266
South Somerset	24	104	78	206
Somerset West and Taunton	251*		389	640

*unable to breakdown further

2.15. Further impact from the Homeless Reduction Act 2017:

- 2.15.1. We are expecting demand for temporary accommodation to increase since the Homeless Reduction Act of 2017, so continuing to prioritise growth in temporary accommodation will be important.
- 2.15.2. The four districts have noticed a range of sources of increased pressure, including volume of approaches and length of time staff are working with a case. In real time, this can mean applicants who are likely to be Intentionally Homeless, remain with the

³⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness#statutory-homelessness-live-tables> - Table 792

³⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness#statutory-homelessness-live-tables> - Table 792

officers in the casework until the final decision. The Homeless Reduction Act has extended this to 56 days.

- 2.15.3. Personal Housing Plan³⁸ production and monitoring, H-Clic administration and process requirements are meaning that staff are less able to spend time to work effectively with applicants on good prevention or relief solutions.

2.16. Armed Forces Veterans and Homelessness

- 2.16.1. Identifying numbers, characteristics and needs of veterans and their families is difficult as there is no single reliable source of such data either nationally or locally.
- 2.16.2. In 2017 the MOD produced figures based on data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Population Survey in 2016³⁹. The study estimated that 75.64% of the veteran population in Great Britain own a house outright (or have a mortgage/loan) and 23.19% rent or part rent their property. This implies therefore that 1.17% (or 568) of veterans are potentially homeless, based on the estimated figure of 49,000 veterans living in Somerset⁴⁰.
- 2.16.3. What we do know is that the vulnerabilities and support needs of homeless ex-Service personnel are, overall, very similar in nature to those of other non-statutory homeless people, but a greater proportion of ex-Service personnel have alcohol, physical and/or mental health problems⁴¹.
- 2.16.4. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has been found among a small number of homeless veterans although other non-military related mental health problems were more common.
- 2.16.5. A 2013 study conducted by York University⁴² (commissioned by the Centre for Housing Policy) identified several key reasons why veterans experience housing difficulties. These include:
- A shortage of affordable accommodation;
 - Problems sustaining a tenancy;
 - Relationship breakdown;
 - Inadequate transition planning from the Armed Forces
- 2.16.6. Other factors that may contribute to homelessness amongst single veterans include their experience of Service e.g. unfamiliarity with civilian life (e.g. housing markets, the welfare system and budgeting) making it difficult for them to secure housing and to manage tenancies.
- 2.16.7. Homeless veterans have also been found on average to be older, have slept rough for longer, be less likely to use drugs and more likely to have alcohol-related problems.
- 2.16.8. In considering the needs of homeless veterans, addressing the wider and contributory factors through informed advice and referral to specialist military support services can be, therefore, as important as the meeting the accommodation needs.

³⁸ provides a framework for housing authorities and applicants to work together to identify appropriate actions to prevent or relieve the applicant's homelessness - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-11-assessments-and-personalised-plans>

³⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/annual-population-survey-uk-armed-forces-veterans-residing-in-great-britain>

⁴⁰ <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/veterans-and-dependants.html>

⁴¹ Literature review: UK veterans and homelessness (2009) – Royal British Legion

⁴² Centre for Housing Policy, University of York (2014) Meeting the Housing and Support needs of Single Veterans in Great Britain, Stoll/Riverside.

2.17. Youth Housing in Somerset

- 2.17.1. Pathways to Independence (P2i) is a commissioned service, by the county council with district council involvement that deals with youth housing in Somerset.
- 2.17.2. Somerset County Council and the four district councils across Somerset commissioned the setting up of Pathways to Independence (P2i), during 2012/2013 as a response to the escalating issues around youth housing in Somerset. P2i was launched in May 2013 and is the multi-agency homelessness prevention service for young people aged 16-25 who reside in, or have a local connection to the Somerset area.
- 2.17.3. Primarily, the service was designed to prevent homelessness by providing targeted prevention measures. If prevention was not possible the service allows young people with housing related support needs to progress along a pathway of outcome focused needs led provision, until they are able to sustain independent living without the need for support.
- 2.17.4. Whilst P2i has achieved its objectives and has provided a good service over the past three years there are some key areas of service delivery that were not considered as part of the original specification and as a result have arisen in gaps in provision for some of the most vulnerable young people. To understand these identified gaps, a comprehensive needs analysis was undertaken and informed the new specification which was launched on the 1st January 2017. For example, there is a need for smaller properties rather than larger multi occupancy dwellings such as a Foyer provision. The current contract is due to end in September 2021 and aims to create an outcomes focussed service.⁴³
- 2.17.5. Table 24 shows the age demographics of P2i for all districts, it shows that the largest proportion of individuals are aged 18-21.

Table 24: P2i Age Demographics as of 28th March 2019 ⁴⁴

	16/17	18/21	22 and over
Mendip	4	30	5
Sedgemoor	10	19	9
South Somerset	5	17	9
West Somerset and Taunton	2	22	12
Total	21	88	35

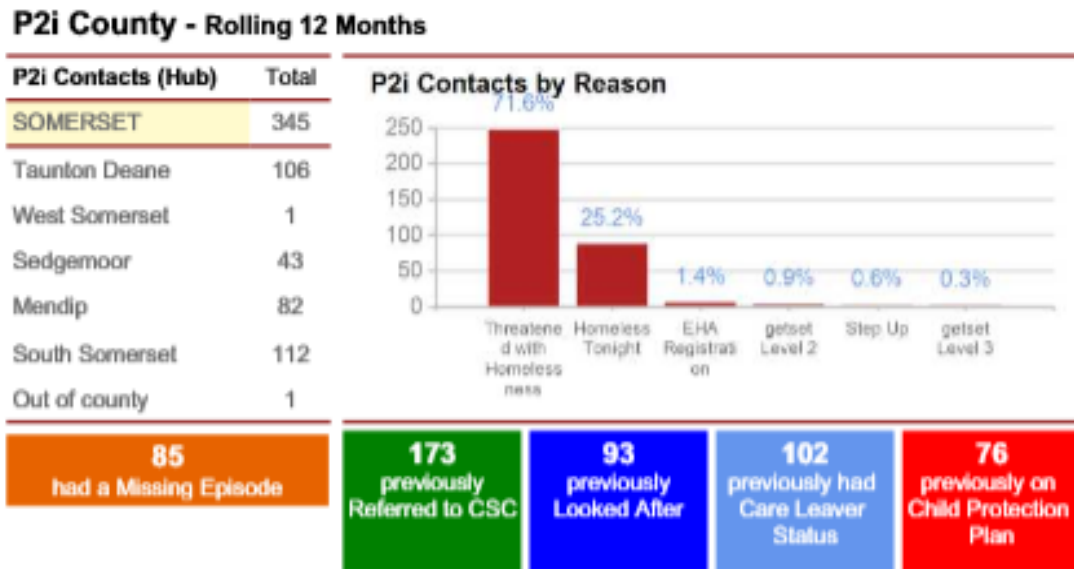
- 2.17.6. Chart 4⁴⁵ shows the number of contacts that staff have had with individuals when an assessment of need has been completed; please note that one person could have had contact on more than one occasion. The reason for contact is largely being threatened with homelessness.

⁴³ P2i Service Specification

⁴⁴ Provided by Somerset County Council

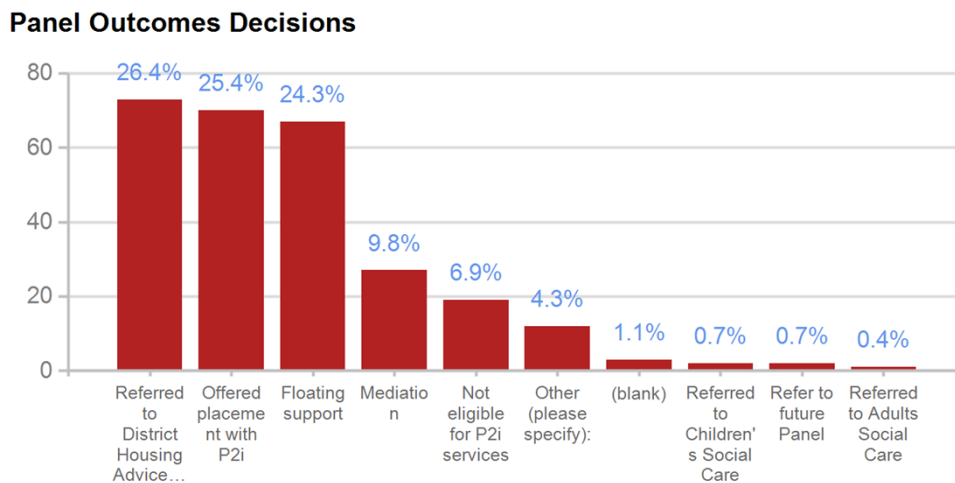
⁴⁵ Provided by Somerset County Council

Chart 4: P2i County Rolling 12 Months



2.17.7. The information below ⁴⁶ shows that just over a quarter of all cases are referred to the local authority for housing advice with another 25% being offered a placement, there is also just under 25% that need floating support⁴⁷. This highlights the need for adequate housing to be provided which is suitable and available to prevent youth homelessness.

Chart 5: P2i Panel Outcome Decisions



⁴⁶ Provided by Somerset County Council

⁴⁷ This is where a key worker supports an individual in their own accommodation or helps them to secure accommodation away from their supported accommodation. This could be helping them look for a suitable dwelling, helping them to apply for benefits etc.

2.18. Housing and Support for Vulnerable Adults and People with Complex Needs

2.18.1. Positive Lives

- 2.18.1.1. Following budgets being cut in May 2015 for adults with complex needs, it was agreed that a countywide approach was needed and a multi-agency, cross sector alliance was formed. It championed a new approach that innovated and delivered creative solutions for the most entrenched adults with complex needs. It offered greater flexibility and commitment around multi agency working as well as a strategy to deliver effective ongoing support.
- 2.18.1.2. Positive Lives was initiated through a Local Government Association (LGA) sponsored Design in Public Services programme undertaken in 2015. It has since then developed into a broad multi agency, cross sector coalition of partners.
- 2.18.1.3. Positive Lives has focused on the following objectives:
- To strengthen positive family and support networks
 - To promote physical and emotional health as part of a positive life
 - To reduce or avoid unnecessary admissions to hospital/care/prison
 - To help maintain stability of tenure
 - To provide the right support at the right time – least intervention first.
 - To reduce unnecessary financial burden on agencies
- 2.18.1.4. Over the last year Positive Lives have:
- Supported 850 people
 - Supported 400 people at any one time
 - 380 people engaged with education or training
 - 226 people moved into independent living
 - 47 people obtaining employment
 - 38 very vulnerable / high risk people moved into independent living
 - 20 people engaged in formal volunteering as a preparation for work
 - 262 people from local communities have provided voluntary support.

2.18.2. Step Together

- 2.18.2.1. “Step Together is a new support service commissioned by Somerset County Council for adults in Somerset who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and also have a mix of mental health needs, drug and alcohol problems, behavioural issues, debt or have been involved in the criminal justice system”.
- 2.18.2.2. “The service is provided by ‘Second Step’ whose clients have complex needs and often find it extremely hard to sustain positive change in their lives. Their service is primarily about helping people to live fulfilling lives in their own communities, retain their tenancy and reduce repeated homelessness”.
- 2.18.2.3. “They support people to build their strength and reach their goals in areas such as: maintaining a home; improving health and wellbeing; accessing treatment; reducing re-offending; and, becoming part of their communities through activities, training, volunteering or employment.”⁴⁸

- 2.18.3. The contract will be closely monitored to ensure that positive outcomes are delivered for this client group.

⁴⁸ <https://www.second-step.co.uk/our-services/support-and-housing/step-together/>

2.19. Gypsies and Travellers

2.19.1. When considering the needs of Gypsies and Travellers who travel through and temporarily settle in the County it is very unusual for members of that community to come into the housing office and present as homeless. Instead, their needs are normally assessed when we visit any unauthorised encampment and appropriate advice is given at the time.

2.19.2. We are already assessing our gypsy and traveller provision within the county and working to ensure that we have suitable sites for settled or settling Gypsies and Travellers, as well as transit sites for those who only stay for a short time.

2.20. Rough Sleeping

2.20.1. Rough sleeping is defined as “People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or “bashes” which are makeshift shelters, often comprised of cardboard boxes). The definition does not include people in hostels or shelters, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protest, squatters or travellers (this includes new age/van dwellers).”⁴⁹

2.20.2. The table below shows the extent of rough sleeping by District since 2012. This information is based on a single night snapshot carried out in autumn every year using street counts and intelligence driven estimates. (Source: Government Rough Sleeping Table⁵⁰). Rough sleeping is a current challenge in the Taunton area of Somerset West and Taunton Council and for Mendip District Council.

Table 25: Extent of Rough Sleeping

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Mendip	19	16	20	20	16	19	14
Sedgemoor	5	2	4	6	2	7	3
South Somerset	1	1	2	5	8	4	3
Taunton Deane	15	7	18	21	20	23	14
West Somerset	0	2	6	4	2	4	2

⁴⁹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy_WEB.pdf

⁵⁰ Government Rough Sleeping Table, Rough Sleeping Statistics England Autumn 2017, Table 1
July 2019 - Final Document

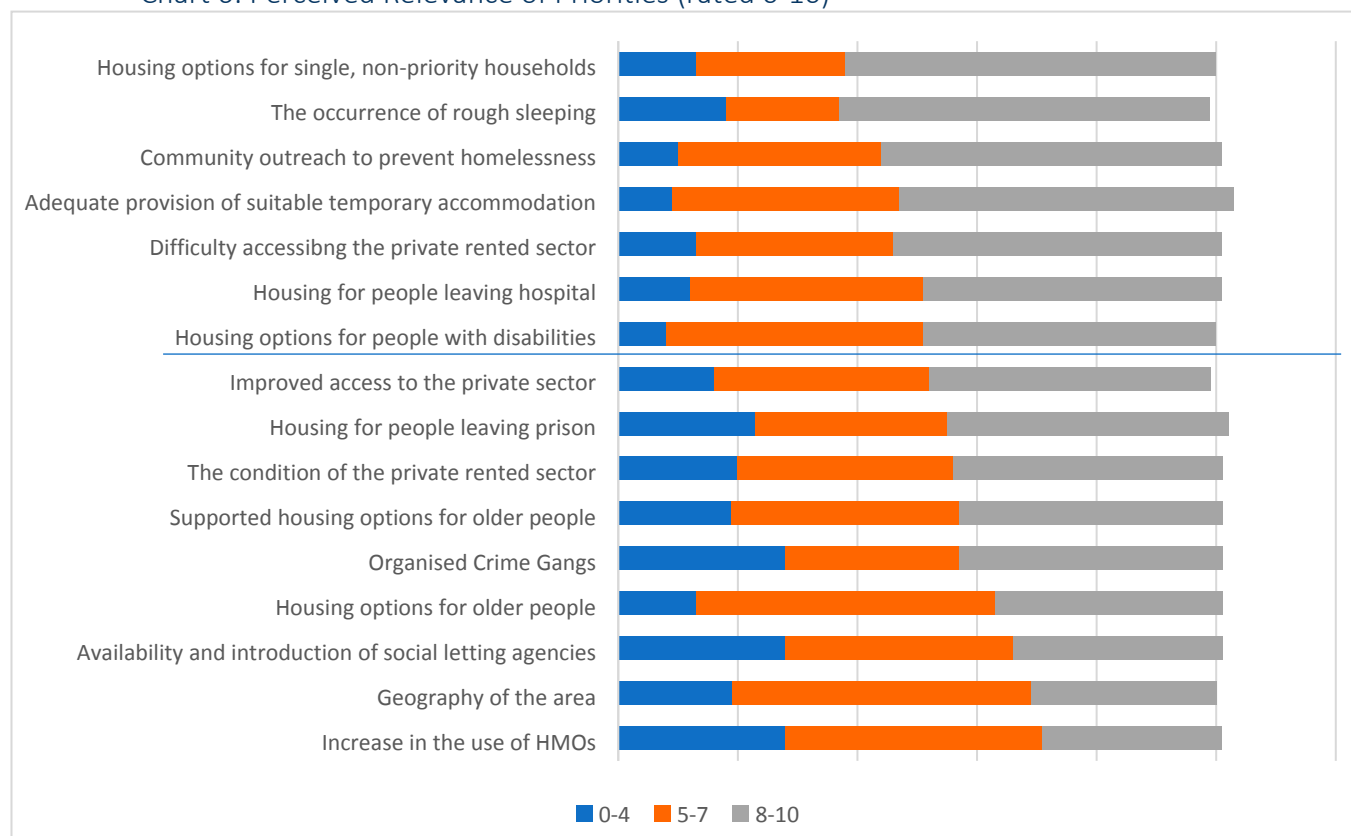
3. CONSULTATION EVENTS:

- 3.1. A Homelessness Survey was available throughout November and December 2018. The survey was sent to a sample of homeless applicants and all stakeholders. The number of responses received for each district is shown below. There were also consultation events across the County in December 2018.

	Applicants	Stakeholders
Mendip	7	32
Sedgemoor	12	22
South Somerset	11	12
Taunton Deane	11	4
West Somerset	2	3
Total	43	73

- 3.2. Amongst applicants, there were only 19 of the total who found the Personalised Housing Plan (PHP) useful and referred to it again. Some of the comments attached to this referred to the fact that it didn't feel personalised to them/their family. Perhaps more should be done to work with applicants to determine how to improve the PHP.
- 3.3. Those who had been offered temporary accommodation commented on the accommodation that they had been offered and, whilst some accepted this accommodation, several clients felt the accommodation was not suitable. Sometimes it felt unsafe because of the other tenants, or was unsuitable because of the applicant's specific needs around disability or because they were asked to share with a teenage child of the opposite sex. There were also comments more generally; that clients offered private rented accommodation felt they could not afford the accommodation proposed.
- 3.4. Stakeholders were asked how relevant a number of issues were to them in their roles. Shown in chart 6 are the priorities that were assigned the highest relevance. Those above the horizontal line are those that generate the highest scores for relevance; housing options for single, non-priority households and rough sleeping are deemed to be the most relevant priorities. However, there are other pressing needs, as shown:
- 3.5. Improved access to the private rented sector, and better quality of provision here, is a relatively high priority. It is also clear that there are groups with particular needs who remain a key priority: those with disabilities or those leaving hospital or prison. There is also a clear need for access to suitable temporary accommodation and better options for older people.

Chart 6: Perceived Relevance of Priorities (rated 0-10)



3.6. The responses to the survey shown above are supported by verbatim comments made as part of the consultation:

'Challenge to prevent homelessness and work together creatively in this respect. There is a huge gap in accessible temporary or longer term temporary accommodation to help move ons from hospital, repossessions etc. for people with complex medical needs for whom B&B simply is not an option'

'Suitable and adequate housing choices. Affordable rents. Encouraging new and good quality landlords in the private sector to work with us. Prevention/Intervention Support after accommodation is found'

'There is a huge gap for those who have a dual diagnosed with mental health and drugs misuse. The homeless rate for individuals within this category is on the increase. Accommodation officers are housing individuals who fall out of their sector because they have no option. It is a huge concern for many agencies at this present time, especially with the weather turning'

4. CONCLUSIONS: GAPS IDENTIFIED

4.1. The Assessment has identified the following key Priorities for consideration for inclusion in the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2023:

1.1.1. Population projections show that the population is due to grow faster than anticipated, especially in the former Taunton Deane area and in Sedgemoor. The challenge to deliver sufficient affordable homes and to support the tenure needs of our residents will become more pressing, not less.

1.1.2. Whilst earnings have reduced, the average selling price of a house in Somerset has increased over the last five years, with a house costing typically close to eight times the earnings in the lowest quartile.

- 1.1.3. There is a considerable gap in the affordability of homes for private rent in Somerset. The average rent currently accounts for 36% of the median gross monthly pay compared with 28% in 2015. Whilst the delivery of additional social housing may go some way to deal with the gap, it will not resolve the entire issue for example affordable rents are not always affordable to all prospective tenants.
- 1.1.4. In addition, the gap between the LHA and the market rent for private lets is a significant barrier in allowing applicants to secure a private rented property because they cannot secure financial support to make the home affordable. This can force people to make a difficult choice and move away from support; e.g. to move away from their family.
- 1.1.5. We need to keep pushing for access to more and better quality private, rented stock
- 1.1.6. We are concerned that the wider roll out of Universal Credit will place further demands on homeless services; we should continue to track these demands and may need to increase the proportions of Homefinder applicants who present in the Gold Band.
- 1.1.7. More work should be done to look at long-term vacant dwellings, mirroring good practice across the districts and stepping up our existing efforts so these dwellings may be brought into use.
- 1.1.8. When assessing what housing is needed in the county we need to ensure that adequate housing is provided which is suitable and available to help prevent youth homelessness. This may point to the need for smaller shared units rather than larger multi occupancy dwellings. Stakeholders also point to the need for more access for single, non-priority households
- 1.1.9. The highest proportion of homeless applicants are aged 25-44 years, with the most common reason for being made homeless being due to receiving a notice to quit from a landlord. Work could be undertaken to understand the reasons why notice was served and what we could do to reduce the occurrences of this happening. Support could be given to landlords facing difficulties to stay in the private renting market if they are finding it problematic.
- 1.1.10. Whilst we have been successful with cases, preventing and relieving their homelessness, we continue to seek new ways to reduce the number of people approaching us needing temporary accommodation.
- 1.1.11. We anticipate further demands on the time of service providers in dealing with cases and the volume of approaches following the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 (namely, 56 days' prevention duty and 56 days relief duty). We now have a duty to produce and agree a personal housing plan, support all clients for a longer period during the extended duty time, and including increased length of time in Temporary Accommodation.
- 1.1.12. When working with veterans and their families, additional protocols may be needed to signpost to support with other factors, such as PTSD, alcohol or mental health problems exacerbating the situation.

1.1.13. We have an ageing population in Somerset, especially in the 85 years and older group. The future needs of older people need to rise up the agenda and more energy given to understanding their requirements and delivering more options to meet them.

1.1.14. Rough sleeping is a challenge in two districts in particular, due to numbers and complexity of need, and will continue to demand sustained focus and resource with additional interventions, strategies and coordinated partnership working. It's likely that there is rough sleeping which is 'unseen', which would include those sofa surfing, sleeping in vehicles hidden in rural areas.

1.1.15. Feedback from the consultation events about the key issues expressed the need for more suitable, affordable sustainable accommodation. To achieve this there needs to be:

- Increased collaborative working with partnership agencies especially to support the vulnerable and those with complex needs.
- Continue to intervene where possible to help clients to remain in their existing homes to aid the prevention of homelessness