

# Housing Strategy

Evidence Base – July 2023



Home in on  
**Housing**



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## Context: Life in Dorset

This document evidences the data used to inform the Housing Strategy. It supports decisions on the key objectives and actions in the implementation plan. The data is for the Dorset Council area. Compiled from:

- 2021 Census
- NOMIS
- council strategies and plans
- information from council departments and partner agencies

### Population

There are 379,850 people living in the Dorset council area and this is likely to grow by 7% over the next decade. 216,750 people live in urban areas and 162,830 live in rural areas.

Higher than any other unitary authority, 30% of Dorset's population are 65 and over and 8% are 80 or older.

78% of Dorset working age residents are economically active (someone who is working) with a median wage of £29,200.

22% of our residents are economically inactive (defined by people not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last 4 weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks).

Someone is economically inactive if they:

- are studying
- are retired
- have sickness or a disability that means they cannot work
- have caring responsibilities
- someone who is unemployed but could work

Of our residents:

- 75,000 have a disability
- 32,200 have a long-term health condition
- 35,000 provide unpaid care

Dorset has 11 areas with a high level of deprivation.

10 of these are in Weymouth and Portland, one is in the former West Dorset area.





## Household make-up

Of our households:

- 66% are single people and couples with no children
- 22% have dependent children
- 9% have non-dependent children
- 3% are not related to each other for example students sharing a home

## Occupancy type

70% of Dorset homes are owner occupied. This is higher than the national average of 62.5%.

17% of homes are private rented. 12% are owned by social housing providers for example housing associations. Shared ownership makes up just 1% of property tenure.

## Rental costs

The average monthly rent for a:

- privately rented property is £816
- for a housing association it is £605.80

Both of which are higher than the national average.

Local Housing Allowance is the amount of housing rent support people can receive. A national freeze was put in place in April 2016 and was due to last for 4 years. In 2020, despite a small raise, it was frozen again in real cash terms. The freeze remains in place until March 2024.

At the same time, private rents have increased nationally by 4.4% whilst real time earnings have reduced by 3.3%.

The difference between Dorset average private rent and local housing allowance is:

Property Type	Average Rent	Local Housing Allowance
Room in shared property	£413	£346
1 Bedroom	£638	£518
2 Bedroom	£816	£648
3 Bedroom	£1,017	£792
4+ Bedroom	£1,571	£1,047

## Homeownership costs

The average cost to buy a house in Dorset has risen to £325,000. This is 11 times the average Dorset wage. Since 2018 Dorset property prices have risen by more than 30%.





## **Housing need: Enabling residents to live safe, healthy, independent lives in homes that meet their needs.**

### **Social housing waiting list**

As of April 2023, there were 4,488 households registered on our housing register. This is the waiting list for social housing. 83% seeking general needs rented housing and 17% seeking older persons, sheltered housing.

#### **Bedroom need**

Of those on the waiting list:

- 50% need a one bedroom property
- 25% need a two bedroom property
- 25% need a three or more bedroom property

The census says 3,496 households with dependent children live in overcrowded conditions. 757 of these have joined the waiting list for social housing.

Whilst the biggest need is for smaller properties, families needing larger homes often wait longer to move. This is because larger family homes rarely become available. During the 12 months to March 2023, twenty properties with 4 or more bedrooms were let.

#### **Assessment for priority**

Following assessment:

- 51% have a low housing need
- 25% have a high or urgent housing need

Half of emergency homeless households were seeking one-bedroom properties. A quarter needed 2 bedrooms. This reflected the bedroom needs of those on the housing waiting list.

### **Supported and specialist housing needs**

To identify housing need we:

- carry out a Care Act Assessment
- complete an accommodation needs form





Up to June 2023, 480 assessments have taken place and show the following needs:

- 30% for people with mental health issues
- 30% for people with learning disabilities
- 10% for people with physical support needs
- 14% relate to the needs of children with 5.6% of those for disability

16% of forms returned with no identified need.

Almost half the demand is for self-contained units. This could be either as part of a clustered scheme with shared access, or self-contained.

42% could live with others.

More than half of those assessed have an immediate need for housing. In particular for those aged 18 to 25 and 40 to 65.

180 people say they have difficulties with their current housing.

Almost 55% have accessibility or mobility needs.

38% need access to open outdoor space. A further 25% need access to a private, accessible, or secure garden.

We are still working on a more complete picture of supported and specialist housing need.

## Children and young people

Over the next 5 years:

- 103 young people will have housing needs
- 20 of these will need a single person service
- 11 need accessible properties
- most have support needs around mental health, followed by support with learning disability
- 87 have mobility and accessibility needs

As of April 2023, there were:

- 518 young people leaving care
- 390 of whom need settled accommodation
- 318 who are due to leave care during the lifetime of this strategy

## Older person accommodation

There are 22,258 older residents living in Dorset who have a life limiting condition. These impact their ability to manage the activities of daily living.





By 2038, we expect that 8,946 more older people will develop these long-term conditions.

Currently, 8,708 of Dorset's older people have a dementia related condition. 22,194 have significant mobility challenges.

We expect these figures to rise by more than 40% in the next 10 years.

1,100 residents receive funded homecare.

## **Housing supply: Driving the delivery of homes people need and can afford to live in.**

### **Housing in Dorset**

Housing in Dorset is made up of:

- 23% detached properties
- 17% semi-detached
- 21% terraced
- 16% flats & maisonettes
- 19% bungalows
- 4% annexes, houseboats, or mobile homes

### **Social housing**

There are 52 providers of social housing in Dorset. Together they own 12% of the homes in Dorset.

Housing in Dorset as of March 2022:

- 16,667 units of general needs housing
- 4,768 units of sheltered, older persons or supported housing
- 1,467 units of low-cost home ownership properties, including shared ownership

Social housing provider rents in Dorset are higher than the national average.

Average weekly rents:

- £115.16 one-bedroom rent
- £139.83 two bedrooms rent
- £136.30 three bedrooms rent
- £202.11 for four or more bedrooms







## Projected housing demand

A housing needs assessment was completed in November 2021. This sets the level of new housing needed to match current and future population needs.

The report projected the needs for affordable housing. Find out [what 'affordable housing' means](#).

### Projected needs for the provision of affordable housing in our area

1,757 new units per year broken down as:

- 990 rented
- 767 home ownership

Over the 5-year lifetime of the strategy this equals:

- 4,950 rented homes
- 3,835 home ownership

Of the rented:

- 39% should be one-bedroom units
- 35% two bedrooms
- 24% three bedrooms
- 2% for four or more bedrooms

Of the homeownership:

- 21% should be one-bedroom units
- 40% two bedrooms
- 29% three bedrooms
- 10% for four or more bedrooms

### Projected specialist housing needs (to 2039)

Dorset will need:

- 2,862 homes with support
- 1,874 homes with care
- 1,023 residential bedspaces
- 1,912 nursing care bedspaces
- 3,663 fully wheelchair accessible properties

## Projected housing delivery

More than 600 affordable homes were built during April 2022 and March 2023. This is a record number for Dorset.







Whilst we know there is a healthy number of properties coming, the numbers fall short of the need.

During the lifetime of the strategy, planning has approved:

- 2,124 affordable rented
- 1,330 affordable home ownership
- 6,722 properties for sale on the open market

## **Housing standards: Improving the quality, standard, and safety of homes.**

### **Enforcement action**

Poor housing has a big impact on health and the wider community.

We work with a range of people to improve housing standards. These include:

- property owners
- landlords
- letting agents
- tenants

In a small number of cases, we take enforcement action. This is to ensure that housing meets minimum standards.

From 2022 to 2023 we took the following action:

- 20 improvement notices (Housing Act 2004)
- 3 prohibition orders (Housing Act 2004)
- 7 electrical safety notices
- 4 financial penalty notices
- 62 minimum energy efficiency compliance notices
- 1 abatement notices (Environmental Health Act 1990)
- 23 formal requirements to supply information

We received 830 service requests about housing conditions. 24% (197) of these were from Housing Association tenants.

### **Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards project**

We actively enforce the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES). Private rented properties must have an EPC energy rating of E or above.

If a property cannot reach the minimum standard, landlords can apply for an exemption.





We have checked 87 exemption applications.

Of these:

- 61 are waiting to be resolved
- 26 properties need to be improved before meet the regulations

If a property does not meet the standard or is not exempt, it cannot be used as private rented accommodation.

We contacted every owner of a rented property with a low EPC rating of F or G.

This work led to the improvement of 226 rented properties.

## Help to improve properties

We offer financial support to help people improve property standards.

Support includes:

- Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG): up to £45,000 to help disabled people remain independent in their own homes
- Disabled Facilities Loan: up to £25,000 to help applicants for DFGs. Used where the maximum grant is not enough to meet the cost of the works
- Home Loan: Up to £25,000 to bring a property up to the Decent Homes Standard
- Empty Property Loan: up to £25,000 subject to a public benefit test
- Park Home Loan: up to £10,000 to rectify defects
- Energy Efficiency Loan: up to £15,000 for energy efficiency works. This includes solar panels, thermal systems, heat source pumps, biomass, and solid wall insulation

## Loans

We can provide loans to help people improve property standards. From 2022 to 2023 we gave 19 loans for a total of £273,657. The average loan was £14,403.

April 2022 to March 2023

Type of loan	Amount lent	Number of Loans
Homes Repairs	£203,813	16
Empty Homes	£60,000	2
Energy Efficiency	£9,830	1
Total	£273,643	19





## Helping people to live independently in their home

We support residents to remain independent in their homes.

Our Dorset Accessible Homes Service offers:

- financial help
- project management services
- a “one stop shop” for a range of simple and complex adaptations

Type	Number delivered from 2022 to 2023	Spend from 2022 to 2023
Minor adaptations (grants up to £2,500)	779	£371,358
Major adaptations (grants up to £45,000)	372	£2,922,536

## Empty homes

1132 properties have been empty for more than 6 months in Dorset. Many of these will come back into use without us needing to get involved.

We work with owners to bring empty properties back into use when they:

- fall into disrepair
- attract anti-social behaviour

To do this we:

- offer advice
- encourage action
- offer loans and incentives

Where this fails, we can take enforcement action. This can mean:

- we take compulsory purchase proceedings. This means that we either buy the property or to force the owner to sell it
- sale of the property

We are currently investigating 68 properties. We are considering 5 for compulsory purchase proceedings.

We aim to get 10 long-term empty properties back in to use each year. Number of properties brought back into use:

- 16 from 2022 to 2023
- 10 from 2021 to 2022





## Park homes

There are 50 licensed park home sites in Dorset. They provide around 2200 homes (1.2% of the total housing stock).

Park Homes are an important housing option. They are popular with older people.

Sites must meet required standards. They are inspected to make sure they meet these.

During 2021 to 2022:

- 10 formal inspections took place
- 77 service requests investigated
- £11,524.40 income from annual site licences

## Prevention of homelessness: Support, at the right time, to people in crisis to prevent homelessness.

### Homelessness demand

Dorset had a 17.5% increase in homeless approaches last year. There were almost 4,000. Some monthly increases were at over 30% compared to the year before. During one period this figure increased to 30%.

The service receives:

- around 670 calls per month. Each call lasts up to 30 minutes
- an average of 2,100 emails each month
- more than 4,000 contacts from their online portal

Front door enquiries resulted in 1,702 homeless assessments (up 17%). This resulted in:

- Prevention duties triggered: 771 cases (up 13%)
- Relief Duties triggered: 1,099 cases (up 62%)

Despite these pressures, the service saw a:

- 44% increase in the number of cases where homelessness was prevented
- 67% increase in the number of cases where homelessness was ended





## Reasons for homelessness

These are the main reasons people said they were being made homeless.

Reason given	Number
Evicted by family	844
End of private rented accommodation	557
Relationship breakdown	328
Victim of Domestic Abuse	260
End of private rented HMO/Other	245
Friends no longer willing to accommodate	217
Loss of social housing	121
Home no longer suitable (disability)	114

In all, 20 reasons were given. These include:

- release from prison
- evicted from supported housing
- mortgage repossession

The increase has led to placing an average of 129 households into bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation. This costs £1.5million a year.

We need at least 200 more temporary accommodation units to end our reliance on B&Bs.

## The data

Our evidence base uses the data that was available to us at the time of publication (July 2023).

