

Review of Homelessness 2023 - Evidence Based

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Introduction

Executive Summary

The evidence base review of homelessness represents a body of work that will underpin the council's Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2027. It supports the council to meet the legal requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002, and to develop an evidence-led policy that benefits local communities and targets locally identified priorities.

The review of homelessness demonstrates there is much to be proud of in Test Valley and we should celebrate the council's proactive approach to delivering services, while investing in local communities.

Yet with a positive record of delivering new affordable housing, an innovative approach to preventing and relieving homelessness, and with evidence there are considerable levels of affluence in Test Valley; there sadly remains pockets of significant deprivation and those who are left behind.

Like so many areas in southern England, the local housing market locks large numbers of people out of the realistic prospect of home ownership, and many more struggling to afford to rent accommodation in the private rented sector.

Preventing and Relieving homelessness remains a key priority for us, and this evidence base review highlights where our future strategies should focus so that we are able to build on our success, making Test Valley a place for everyone and supporting our communities to thrive.

The evidence base review considers a wealth of data and evidence, leading to a set of key priorities that will inform both Test Valley's future Housing Strategy and a new Preventing Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy, 2024-2027.

Test Valley Borough Council's Corporate Plan

In April 2023 Test Valley Borough Council adopted its new Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027. Entitled “A Place for Everyone – Supporting Our Communities To Thrive” the plan was developed through extensive consultation and community engagement involving a diverse mix of residents across the borough, and the elected Members. Consultation was carried out through a resident survey and through deliberative engagement events involving around 100 residents, leading to comprehensive feedback on what residents of Test Valley feel is most important to them and their wider communities.

A key theme that emerged from the consultation related to the importance of building thriving communities, ensuring that residents have a sense of belonging, and can be involved in shaping their local community.

Valuing and celebrating inclusivity and diversity and creating a welcoming environment for people to take part in was central to this consultation.

As a result, the Corporate Plan sets out 5 main priorities:-

Sustainability – delivering lasting benefits for our communities

Connection – building upon the identify, strengths and ambitions of our communities

Inclusion – working together to create opportunities for our communities

Prosperity – economic growth that impacts positively on our communities

Environment – a greener borough for our communities

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be developed alongside the Corporate Plan and Corporate Action Plan to contribute to meeting these key strategic priorities.

Aims of the Review

The review has set out to understand the local housing market and economic activity within the borough, and to recognise the challenges affecting residents in the area, particularly around access to suitable housing. Consultation has been carried out with a range of stakeholders, including service users, to explore the key challenges.

As part of the consultation process our key stakeholders have been challenged to identify what works well and what could be done better, and to explore ways that partnership working can improve services to those who most need support, using a strengths based approach.

The review will lead to the formation of priorities that will feed into the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2027.

By carrying out this review it has helped us to:-

- Identify new challenges that have arisen since the last review, in particular bearing in mind the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the Cost of Living crisis which has affected many residents over the last few years.
- Identify the challenges that have arisen as a result of an increase in the number of port of entry asylum seekers, as well as Afghan nationals arriving under resettlement schemes set up during the withdrawal of British troops from Afghanistan, and Ukrainians arriving through visa schemes set up as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- Better understand current trends and emerging priorities.
- Identify key causes of homelessness.
- Consider emerging legislation that may impact on the demands of the service.
- Identify the resources available across a range of stakeholders to prevent and relieve homelessness.

- Better understand the needs of our customers and stakeholders and identify the key areas where services need to be more focused.
- Identify the benefits achieved as a result of targeted funding to particular workstreams, and to identify ways to mitigate against the loss of that funding in future.
- Identify where customers may become 'lost' to the service, and to explore ways of ensuring that everyone who approaches the service receives appropriate advice and assistance.
- Identify how to deliver services to the places in the borough that need them the most.

National Agenda and Policy Links

The priorities set out in the new strategy are set within the council's broader strategic objectives and in the context of other national and local strategies, plans and legislation.

National Agenda

Below are the key legislation, strategies and guidance changes since our last strategy adopted in 2020.

- End Rough Sleeping for Good Strategy – DLUHC, September 2022
- Landlord and Tenants Fees Act 2019
- The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020
- Updates to the Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018
 - June 2020 – update to the priority need categories to reflect the Covid-19 virus
 - December 2020 – update to eligibility
 - April 2021 – updates to The Duty to Refer, Priority Need, Local Connection and applications, decisions and notifications
 - July 2021 – amendments made to chapters 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 21, 23 and 25
 - September 2021 – updates made to Eligibility
 - October 2021 – updated made to Priority Need
 - March 2022 – updates made to Eligibility
 - June 2022 – updates made to chapters 4, 7, 14, 17 and 23
 - January 2023 – updates made to Eligibility and Victims of Violence
 - May 2023 – updates made to Eligibility and Suitability of Accommodation
 - October 2023 – updates made to Eligibility
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Renters Reform Bill – second reading in October 2023
- Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023
- Supported Housing (Regulatory Overview) Act 2023

Local Policy Links

In terms of local policy, the evidence base review has been developed in the context of, and with due regard to, the following policies and strategies:

- The Corporate Plan, “*A Place for Everyone – Supporting Communities to Thrive*” 2023-2027
- The Local Plan, including related Affordable Housing Policies and the adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document
- The Housing Strategy 2020 to 2025 (including updated Delivery Plan)
- The Private Rented Sector Offer Policy
- The Allocations Policy & Hampshire Home Choice Based Lettings Process
- The Core Values
- The Test Valley Partnership
- The Climate Emergency Declaration and associated work streams

The council recognises that meeting housing need, and preventing and relieving homelessness, are responsibilities that fall across a range of council services.

Moreover, they can only be addressed with wider support from the broader network of public and voluntary services, and through engagement with and support from local communities and relevant stakeholders.

Approach to the Review of Homelessness 2023

This review has been conducted over a period of at least 12 months and during a period where challenging situations such as the legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Cost of Living crisis, and worldwide events, have added to the pressures placed upon the council to meet an ever growing range of needs.

During the period of the review the council has consulted with a range of stakeholders and service users, building upon the consultation that was carried out for the council’s new Corporate Plan in 2022.

A range of approaches were used to ensure that stakeholders had various opportunities to contribute towards the Review of Homelessness. During 2023 a number of partnership events were held to review the way the service was working with partners and its customers, with a view to identifying opportunities to improve and build stronger relationships across other services. These events formed part of this overall review.

The following lists the specific consultation events that were delivered, together with timelines for finalising and publishing the strategy:

Data captured in relations to applications for Household Support Fund – January 2022 and January 2023

Partner consultation at Test Valley Partnerships meetings – August 2022

Feedback from Rapid Process Improvement workshop – Mental Health Led – September 2022

Feedback from Private rented sector landlords forum – November 2022

Partner consultation: Frontline Workers Forum & workshops – February 2023

Partner consultation: Homelessness Forum - March 2023

Consultation with OSCOM – March 2023

Data analysis – May 2023

Consultation with former rough sleepers – May 2023

Partnership consultation via online survey – May 2023

Housing Team consultation – May 2023

DLUHC Rough Sleeper Advisor visit and feedback – June 2023

Association of Town & Parish Councils Annual Conference – June 2023

Customer consultation – June 2023

New member updates – June 2023

Management Team consultation – July 2023

DLUHC Homeless Advice and Support Team visit – August 2023

Portfolio Group Consultation – August 2023

Preventing Homelessness Forum – September 2023

Test Valley Partnership Consultation – October 2023

Test Valley Management Team – December 2023

Portfolio Group – January 2024

Consultation and consideration of EIA with staff – January 2024

Cabinet consideration – Feb 2024

Commence delivery of new Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy – April 2024

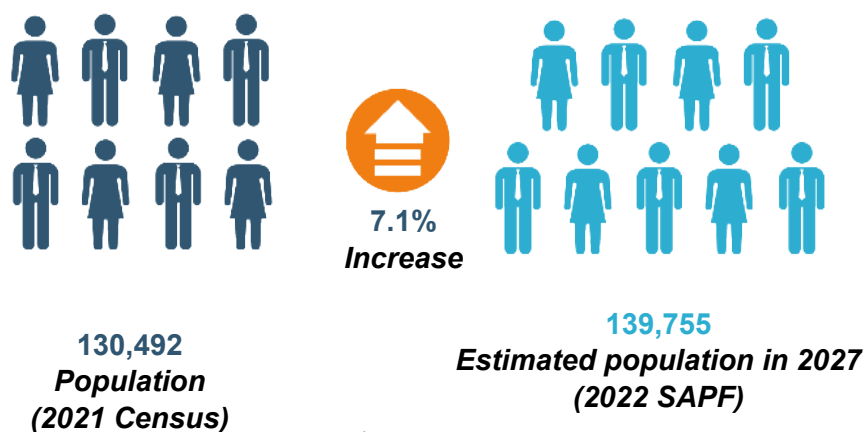
The outcomes of the consultation process are explained in more detail later in the document.

Demographics of Test Valley

Introduction to Test Valley

Test Valley is an area covering approx. 62,758 hectares on the western side of Hampshire. It borders with Southampton in the South and Newbury in the North. Test Valley contains 20 different wards with 2 key town centres, Andover in the North and Romsey in the South with vast amounts of rural areas in between.

Population of Test Valley



1

Gender split



The 2021 Census showed that Test Valley had a population of 130,500 in 2021, which represents an increase of 1.9% from the 2018 population figure of 127,996, and an increase of 12.1% from the 2011 figure of 116,400. This is higher than the overall increase for England (6.6%) and represents the fifth highest population growth area in the South East.² As can be seen from the graphic above, the Small Area Population Forecast estimates that the population in Test Valley in 2027 will have grown by a further 7.1% to 139,755.³

There has been a clear increase in the population of Test Valley from 2011 to 2021, with numbers estimated to increase further within the lifetime of this strategy. This is likely to have an impact on demand for housing in the borough.

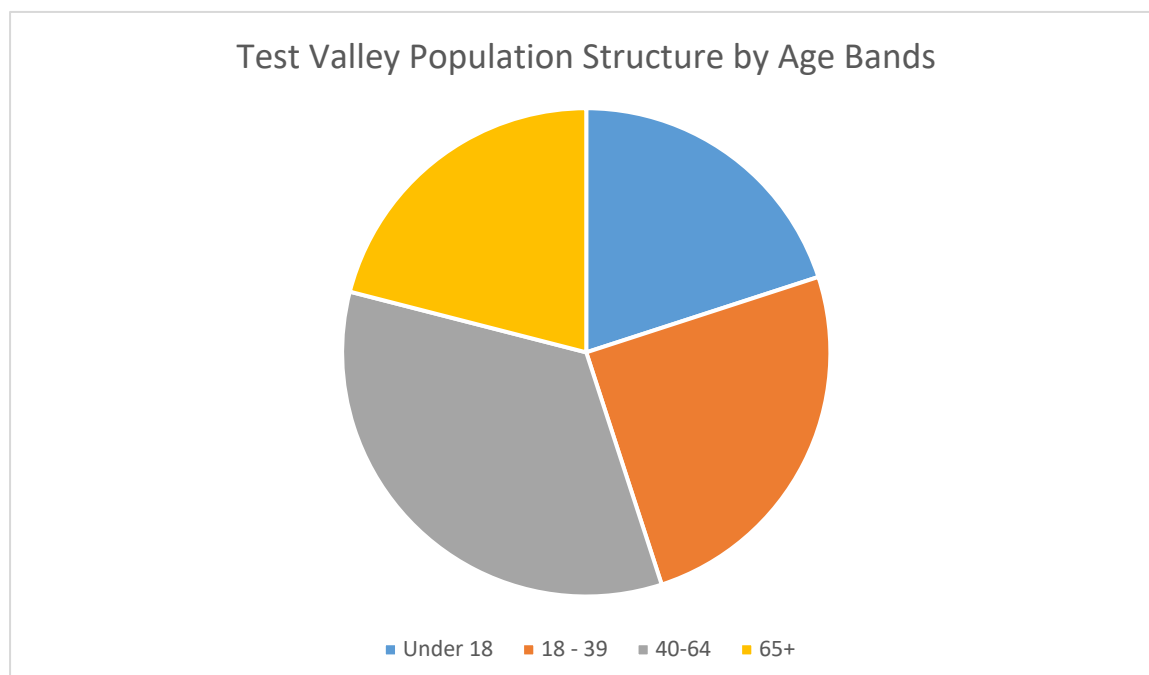
¹ Hampshire Small Area Population Forecast, accessed March 2022- Hampshire County Environment Department's 2018 based Small Area Population Forecasts

² [Test Valley population change, Census 2021 – ONS](#)

³ [Population estimates and forecasts | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](#)

Population by age bands

The population structure by age bands as identified by the 2021 Census are shown below:-

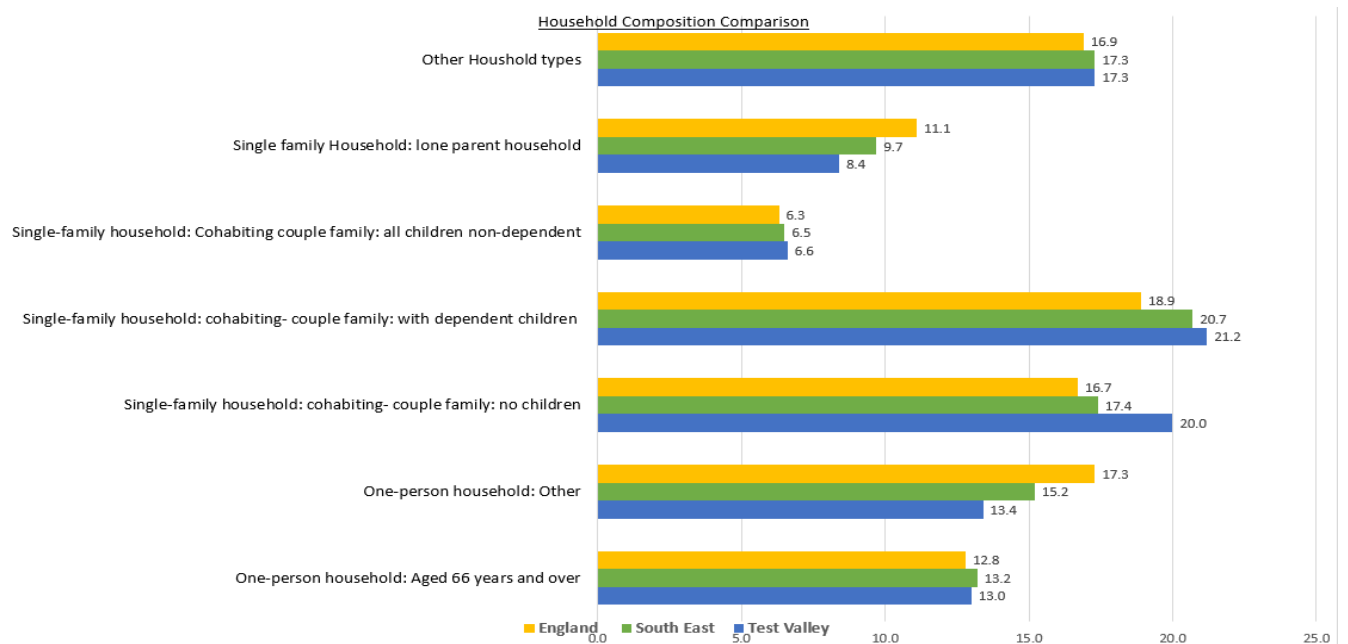


Since 2011 in Test Valley there has been an increase of 29.5% in people aged 65 years and over. This compares with a 20.1% increase in that age group across England. There has also been an increase of 7.7% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and an increase of 9.2% in children aged under 15 years.⁴

Household Composition in Test Valley

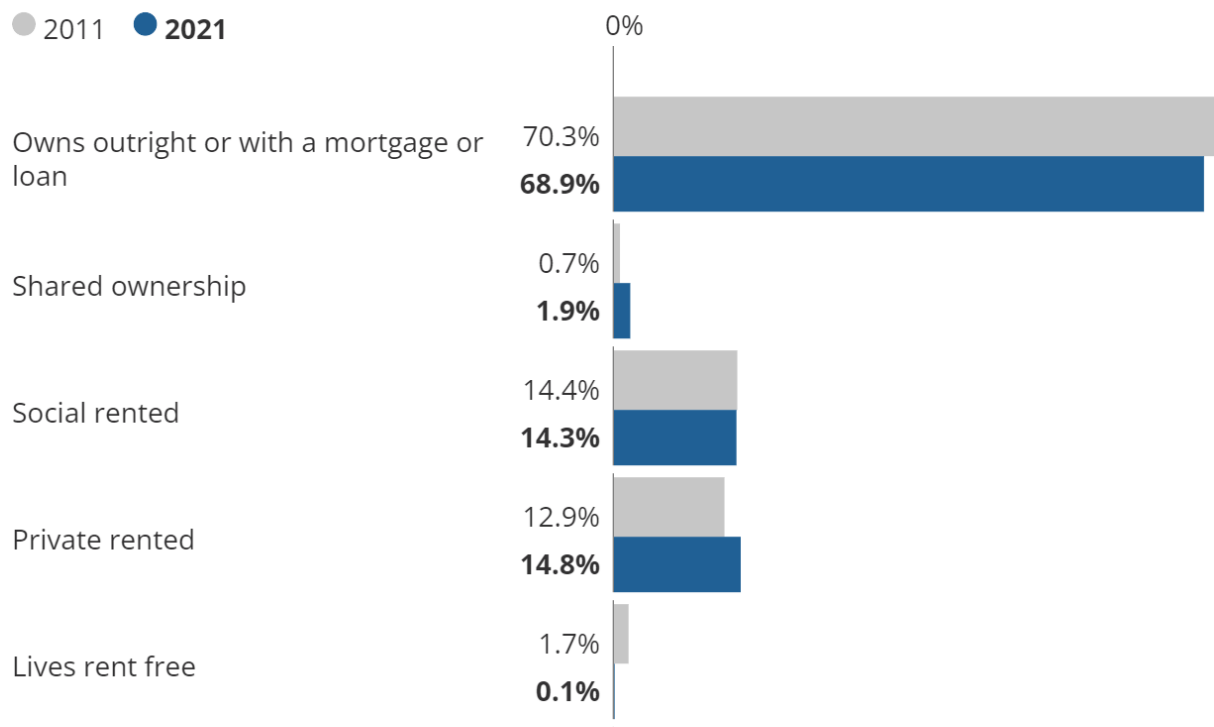
As can be seen from the chart below, there have been no significant changes in household composition since the 2011 Census, with the largest percentage of households across the borough comprising of co-habiting couples without dependent children, and co-habiting couples with dependent children. It is noted that those figures have reduced slightly since 2011, and there has been a small increase in single person households across all age groups. This aligns with the figures for the South East and for England as a whole, with the figures for England showing a higher prevalence of single person households when compared with Test Valley and the South East.

⁴ [Test Valley population change, Census 2021 – ONS](#)



Housing Tenures in Test Valley

Percentage of households by housing tenure, **Test Valley**



Source: Office for National Statistics – 2011 Census and Census 2021

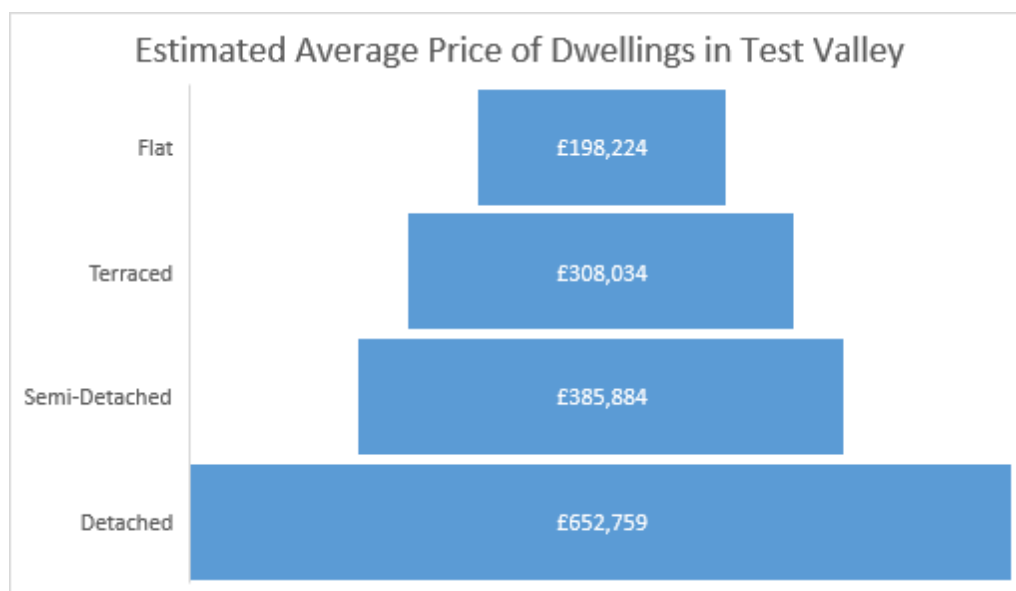
The above graph shows that 68.9% of Test Valley residents owned their home in 2021; a reduction from 70.3% in 2011.

In 2021, just over one in seven households (14.8%) rented privately, compared with 12.9% in 2011. The percentage of Test Valley households that lived in a socially rented property decreased from 14.4% to 14.3%.

The decrease in the percentage of households that owned their home was greater across the South East (2.0 percentage points, from 67.6% to 65.7%) than in Test Valley (1.4 percentage points). Across England, the percentage fell by 2.0 percentage points, from 63.3% to 61.3%.

House Prices in Test Valley

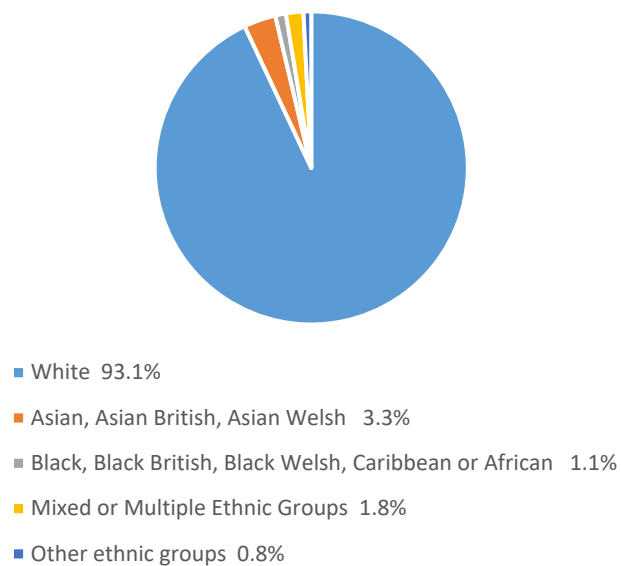
According to the HM Land Registry, the average value of a property in Test Valley in 2021 was £404,110. This represents an increase of 4.3% over the previous year. In Hampshire, the average price of a property in 2021 was £383,066 whilst in Southeast England, the average was £393,057 and nationally it was £303,321.



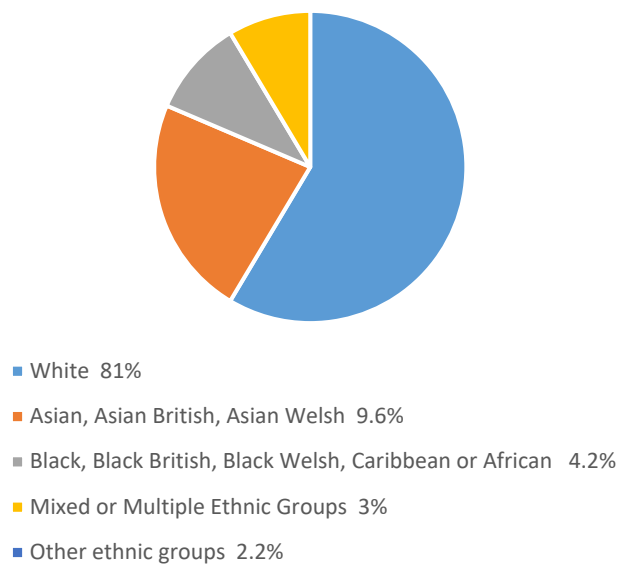
Ethnicity in Test Valley

The proportion of Test Valley resident population classified as White according to the 2021 Census was 93.1%. This includes those describing their ethnicity as English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British or White Other. Those in other ethnic groups increased marginally from 4.1% in 2011 to 6.9% in 2021. By comparison, the proportion of residents across England classified as White was 81%.

Ethnicity in Test Valley 2021



Ethnicity in England 2021



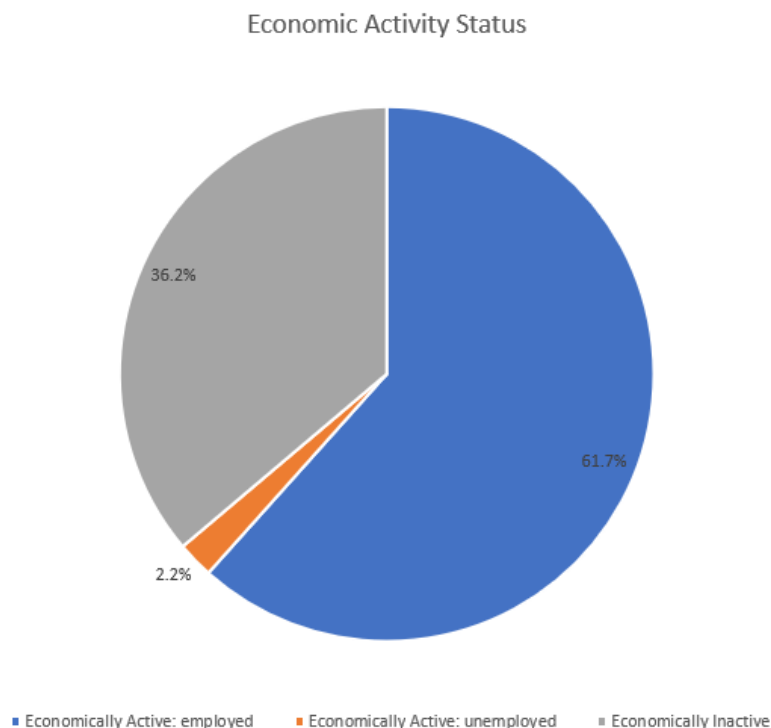
Source: Office for National Statistics – 2011 Census and Census 2021

Economics

Economic Activity

According to the 2021 Census, 61.7% of residents in Test Valley aged 16+ were classed as Economically Active: Employed. 36.2% were classed as Economically Inactive, and 2.2% were classed as Economically Active: Unemployed.

Economic Activity Status in Test Valley 2021



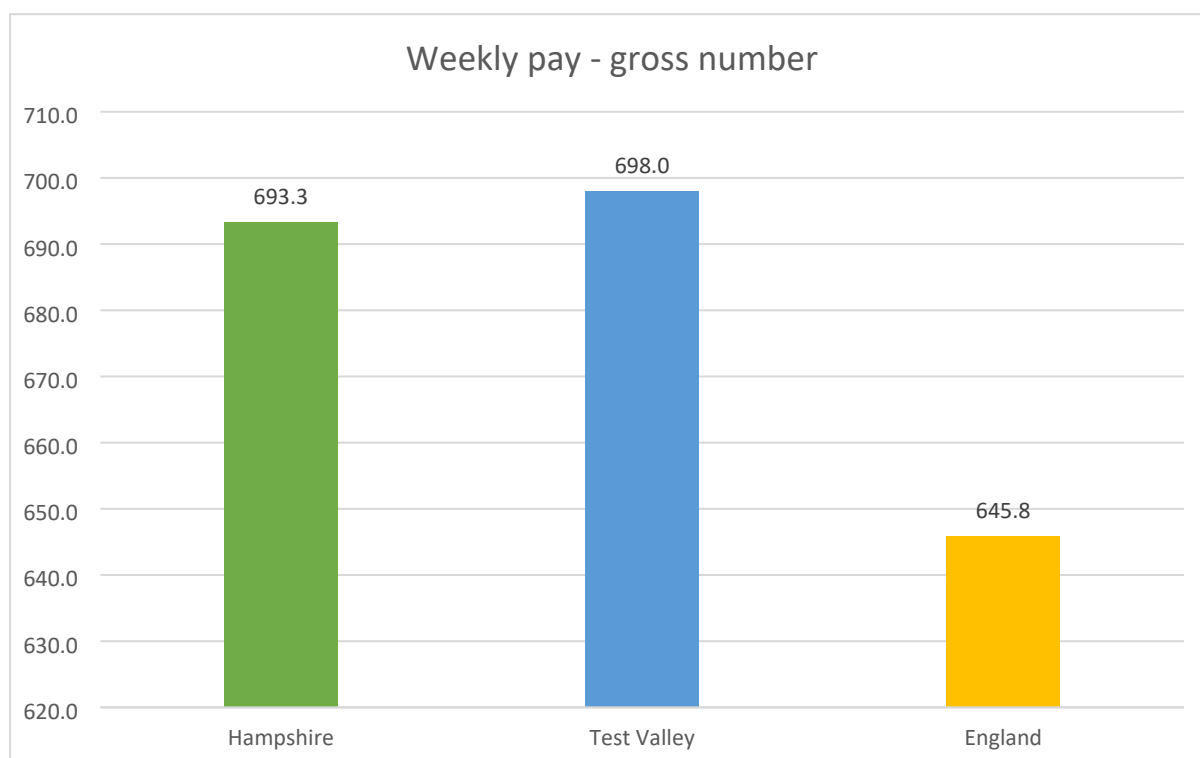
Of those who were not in employment, 12.3% had worked in the last 12 months, 71.1% had not worked in the last 12 months, and 16.6% had never worked.⁵

Earnings in Test Valley

The average gross weekly earnings in Test Valley as at December 2022 were £698.00 representing average gross annual earnings of £36,296. This compares closely to the Hampshire average, but is noticeably above the England average of £645.80 per week, which equates to average gross earnings of £33,581. Test Valley continues to be an attractive place to live for London commuters, who command higher wages and hence drive up the average earnings for the area.

⁵ TS066 - Economic activity status, ONS Crown Copyright Reserved. All usual residents aged 16 years and over

Gross weekly earnings in Test Valley

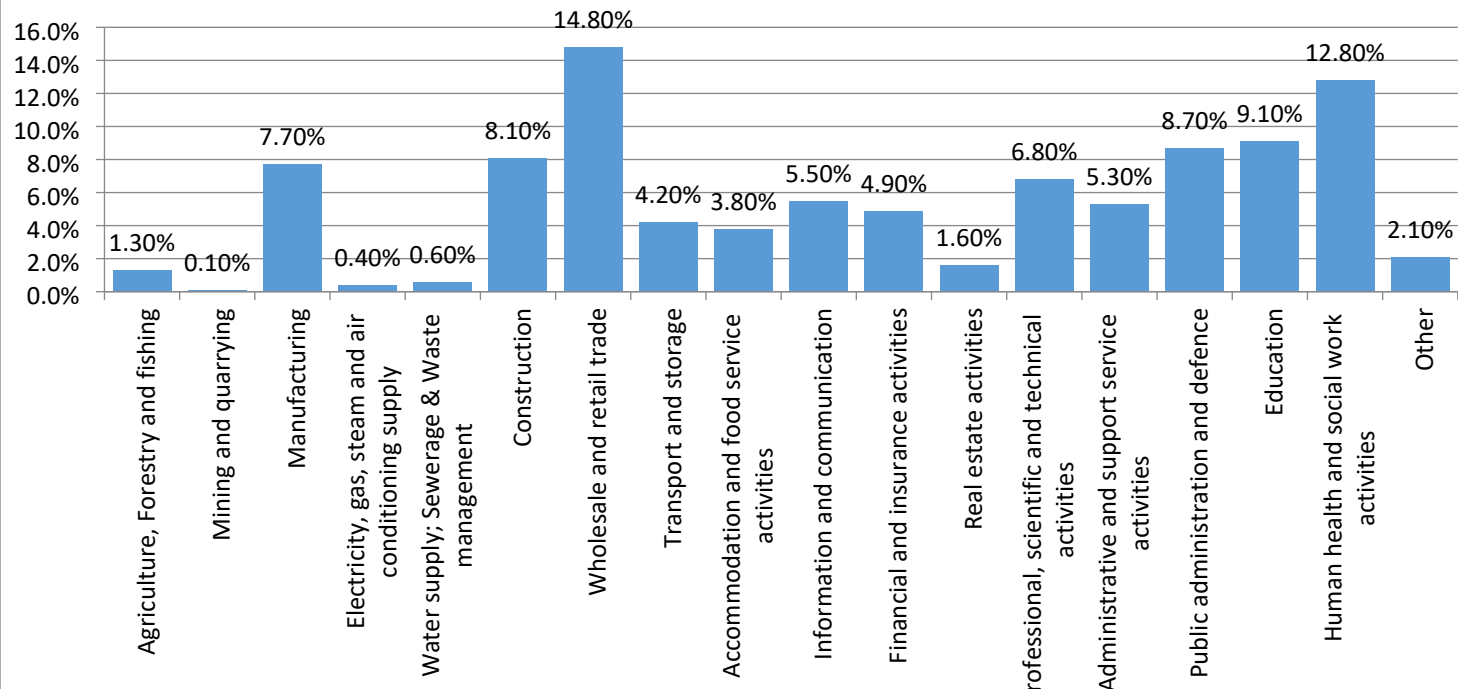


Annual survey of hours and earnings - resident analysis, ONS Crown Copyright Reserved

Employment by Sector

The graph below shows the type of employment carried out by residents in Test Valley. Wholesale and retail trade continues to be the most represented trade, but the number of residents working in human health and social work activities is in a much closer 2nd place in comparison with figures in 2017, overtaking manufacturing as the second most represented trade. Notably manufacturing is now the 6th most represented trade, having also been overtaken by education, public administration and defence, and construction. The lowest represented trade is 'Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply' as well as mining and quarrying, the latter of which is reflective of the characteristics of Test Valley.

Employment by sector



TS060 – Industry. ONS Crown Copyright Reserved. All usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment the week before the census.

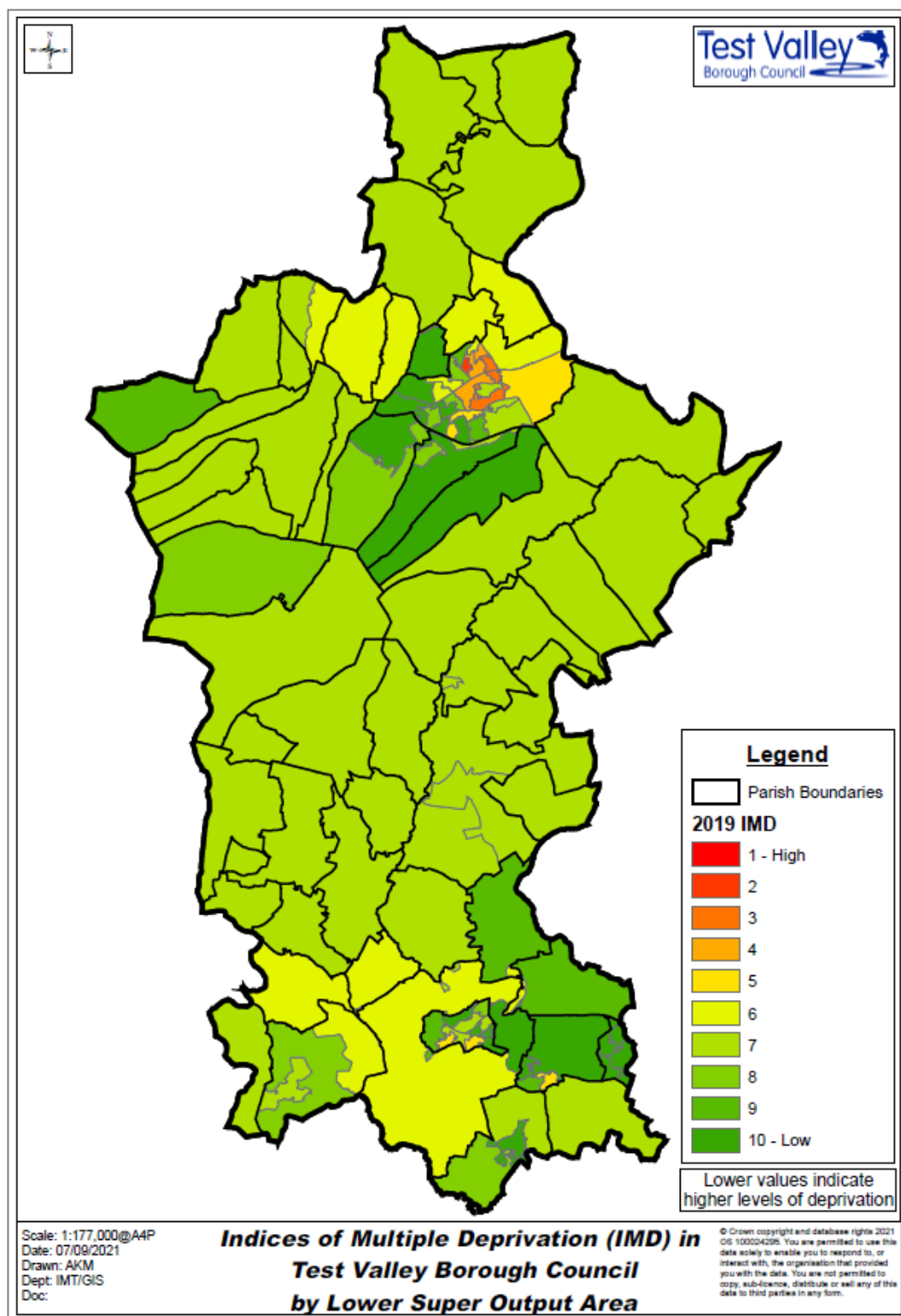
Deprivation

The English Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 is designed to identify areas where communities lack resources and are in need. To do this, seven factors are considered. These are:-

- Income deprivation
- Employment deprivation
- Education, skills and training deprivation
- Health deprivation and disability
- Crime
- Barriers to housing and services
- Living environment deprivation

Areas are scored on each of these factors and ranked nationally from least deprived to most deprived.

Indices of Multiple Deprivation in Test Valley by Lower Super Output Area



The map above shows the deprivation scores for the whole Borough. Test Valley is made up of 71 different Lower Super Output Areas; these are geographies created by the Office for National Statistics that include an average of 1,500 people.

As the map shows, the Output Areas that make up Test Valley vary widely in their deprivation rankings. Parts of the borough seen in dark green are among **the top 10%**

of least deprived areas of the country. However, there are some areas, seen in orange, that are within **the top 30% most deprived areas** in the country. This includes parts of Andover, Enham and Charlton, with parts of Romsey and North Baddesley falling into the mid range deprivation rankings.

Further information about the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2019 English Indices of Deprivation is available online at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

Affordable Housing Supply, Housing Repossessions and Affordable Housing Demand

Affordable Housing Supply

Affordable Housing Delivery in Test Valley over the last 5 years

Year	Social Rent	Affordable Rent	Shared Ownership	Discount Market Sale	Shared Equity	Total
2018/19	22	89	108	31		250
2019/20	4	140	106	21	2	273
2020/21	60	119	106	11	0	296
2021/22	20	213	153	22	0	408
2022/23	13	106	18	3	0	140

The council has a target to deliver 200 new affordable homes per annum. Whilst the annual delivery has in most cases exceeded the target, there will sometimes be challenges and conflicting priorities which result in delivery levels dropping below target, and we must use our best endeavours to maximise the delivery of new affordable homes to meet the needs of the most vulnerable residents in the borough. This is reflected in the council's Corporate Plan, with a focus on working collaboratively with partners to tackle homelessness within communities.

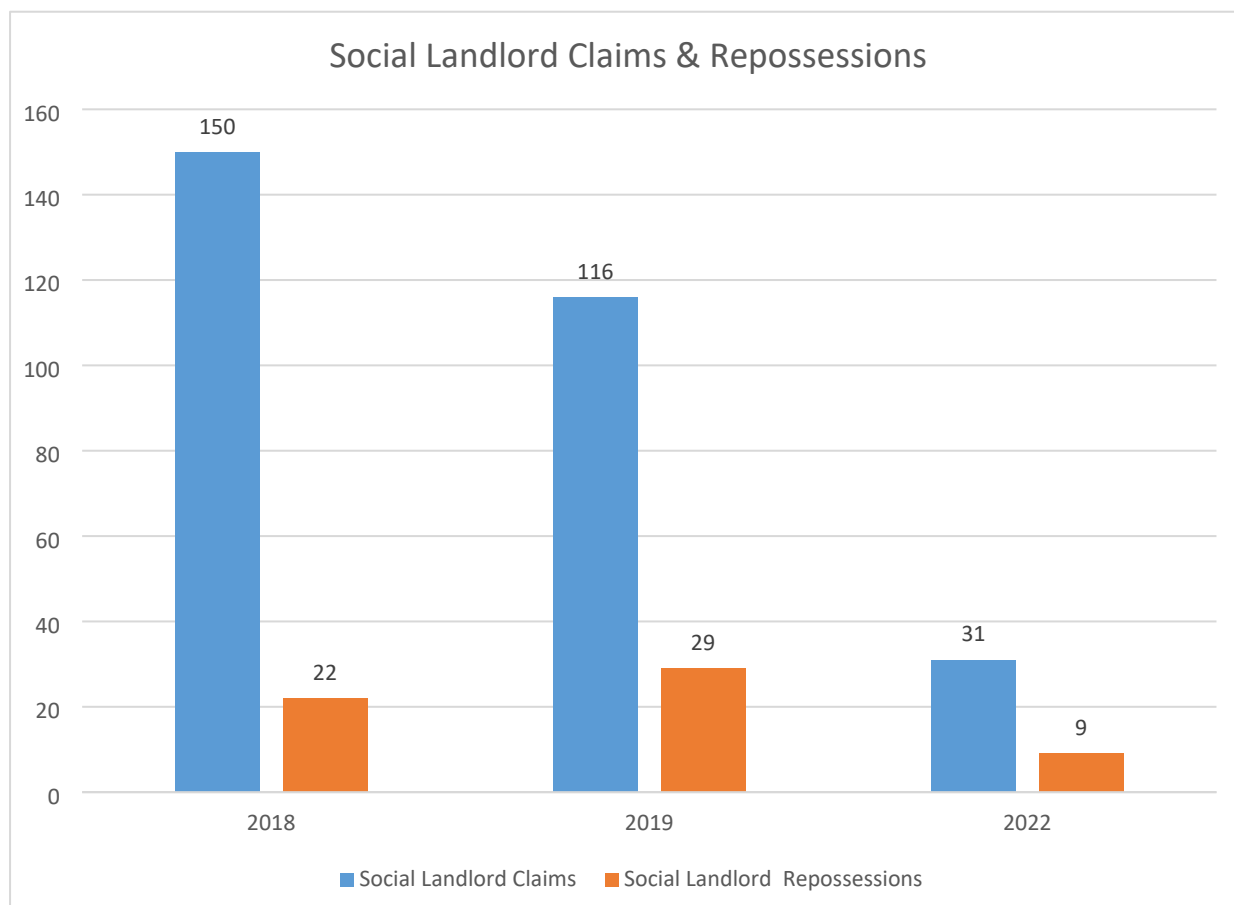
Housing Repossession Data

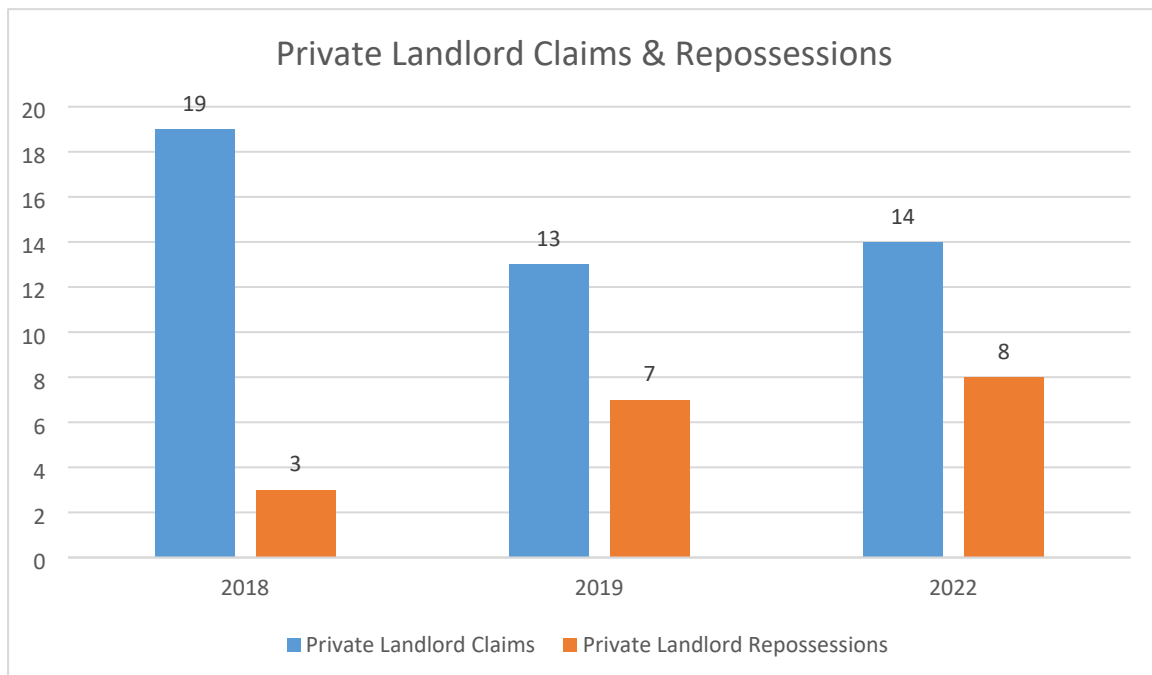
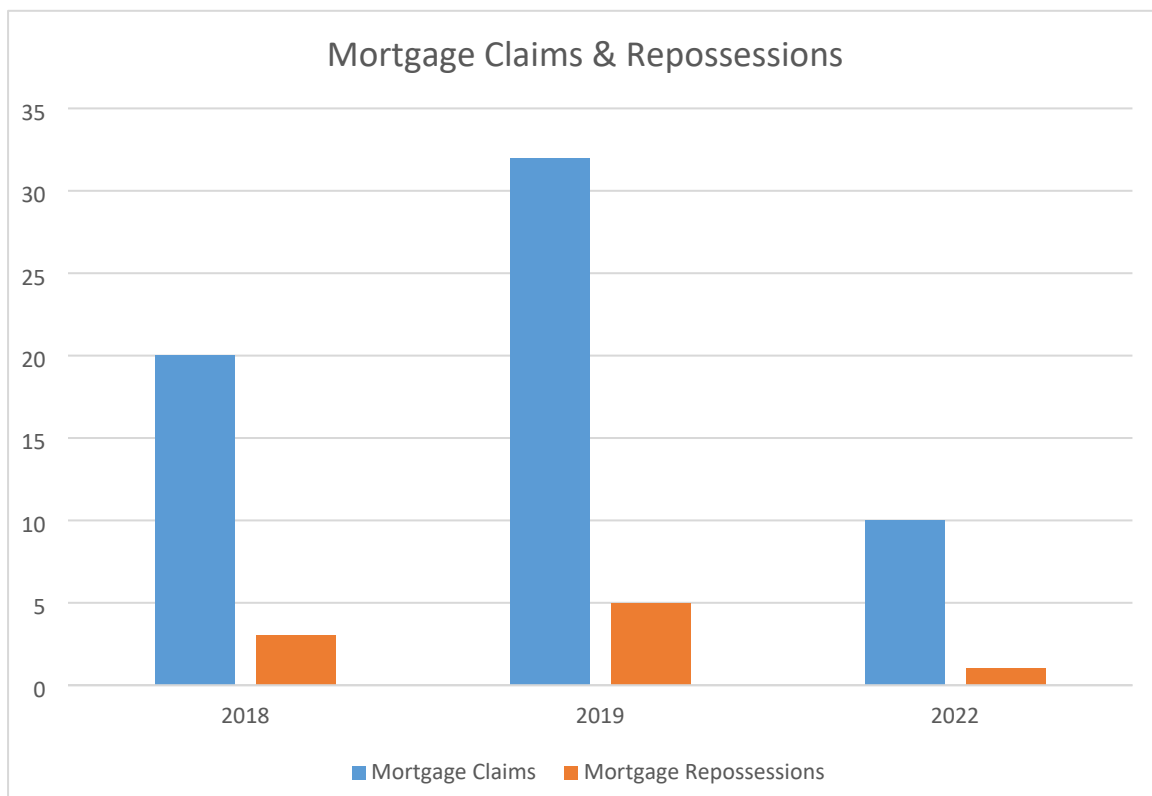
Data from the Ministry of Justice indicates that in 2022 the number of repossessions in Test Valley from owner occupied properties and social housing had reduced since the pandemic, although repossessions from private rented accommodation remained consistent with pre-pandemic levels. In particular there had been a noticeable reduction in the number of repossessions from social housing.

The figures (in the table) show the pre-pandemic level of claims and possessions in 2018 and 2019 and the post-pandemic figures for 2022. During 2020 and 2021 the restrictions on eviction proceedings meant that data from those two years were not an accurate comparison.

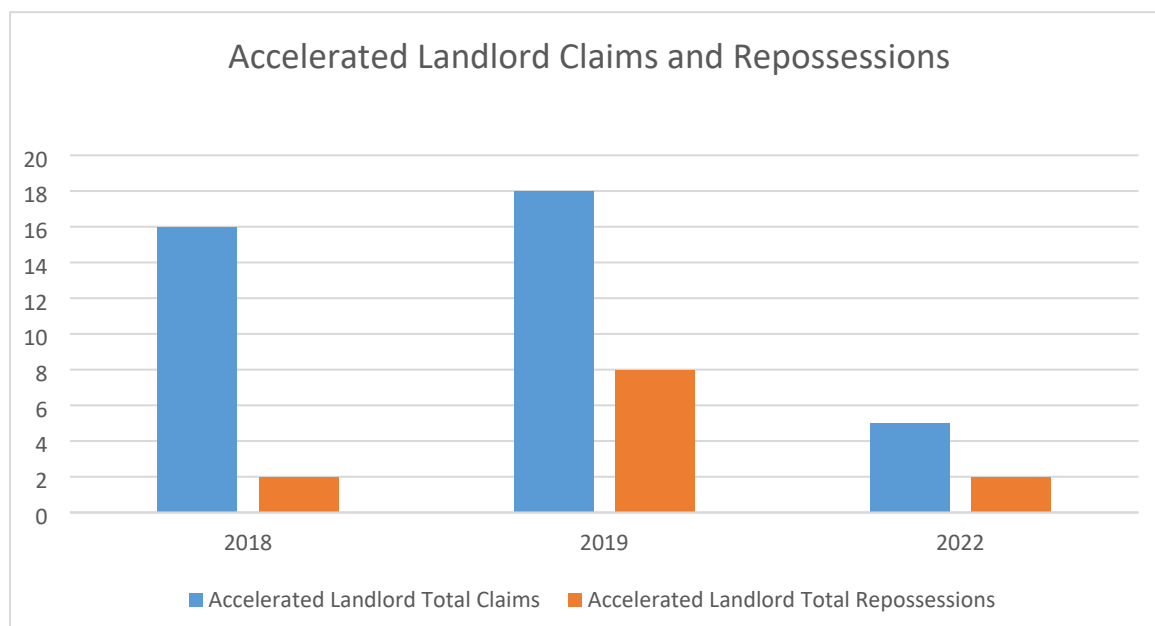
It is encouraging to see that the additional resources targeted by social landlords in preventing claims and repossessions during the pandemic have continued beyond the pandemic, and we continue to see a reduction in the number of residents losing their homes, indicating that those prevention measures are working more effectively than they may have done in the past. Of those cases where possession claims were made in 2022, the percentage that resulted in actual repossession ranged from 10% for mortgage repossessions, to 57% for private rented repossessions, indicating a return of no-fault S21 evictions which had been restricted during the pandemic. Repossessions involving social housing represented 29% of the possession claims that were made for that tenure in 2022, indicating that whilst a lower number of residents of social housing were subject to a possession claim, the cases that did lead to a repossession were the most severe, and were cases where other preventative measures had been exhausted, and limited options were available to the landlord.

Social Landlord Claims & Repossessions



Private Landlord Claims & Repossessions**Mortgage Claims & Repossessions**

Accelerated Landlord Claims & Repossessions



Housing Demand

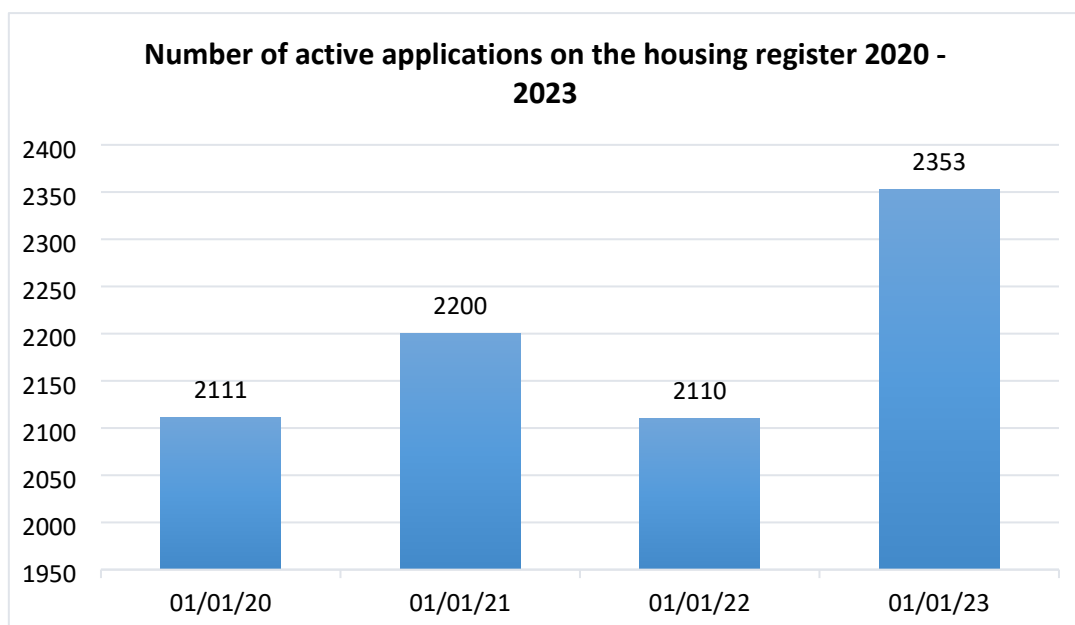
Test Valley Borough Council is part of a sub-regional Housing Register known as Hampshire Home Choice. Hampshire Home Choice has a shared Allocations Policy and Test Valley has its own Scheme of Allocations.

Test Valley Borough Council is no longer a stock holding authority. A Large Scale Voluntary Transfer in 2000 saw the stock transferred to the landlord currently known as Aster, who are one of the several Registered Providers (social housing landlords), operating within Test Valley.

The Allocations Policy sets out the criteria for joining the housing register, how applications are assessed, and where additional priority can be given. The Policy sets out customers' rights to request reviews on decisions made, and where senior managers have discretion.

Applicants on the Housing Register

The number of active applications on the Housing Register has increased over the lifetime of the current Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.



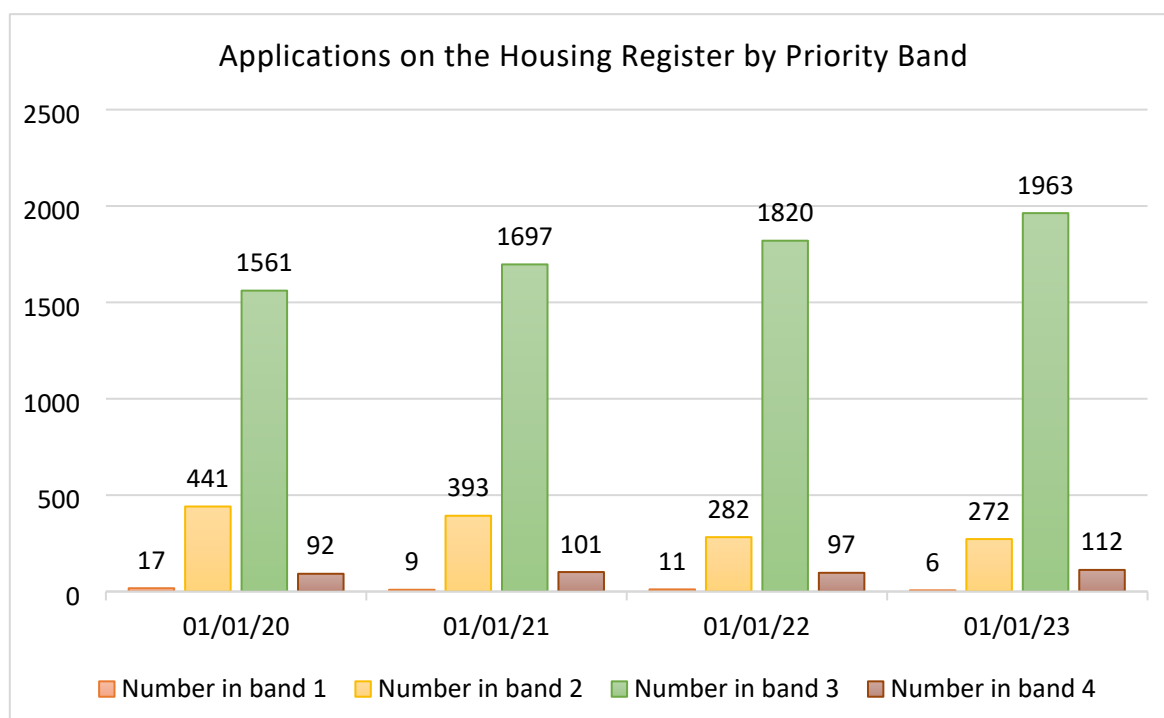
At the beginning of 2020 there were 2111 households on the housing register. At the beginning of 2023 that number had increased to 2353, representing an 11% increase of active applications.

The number of active applications on the housing register is constantly changing as new households join, and existing households receive offers of accommodation, or close their applications.

The table below shows Test Valley's housing register demand compared with that of its sub regional partners as at 1 April 2023:

Test Valley	Eastleigh	Havant	East Hants	Winchester
2535	2162	1890	1590	1579

Applications by Priority Banding



Applications in Band 1 have reduced over the period of the current strategy by 64%. Band 1 is the highest band on the housing register reserved for the most urgent of cases.

Applications in Band 2 have also reduced over the period of the current strategy by 38%.

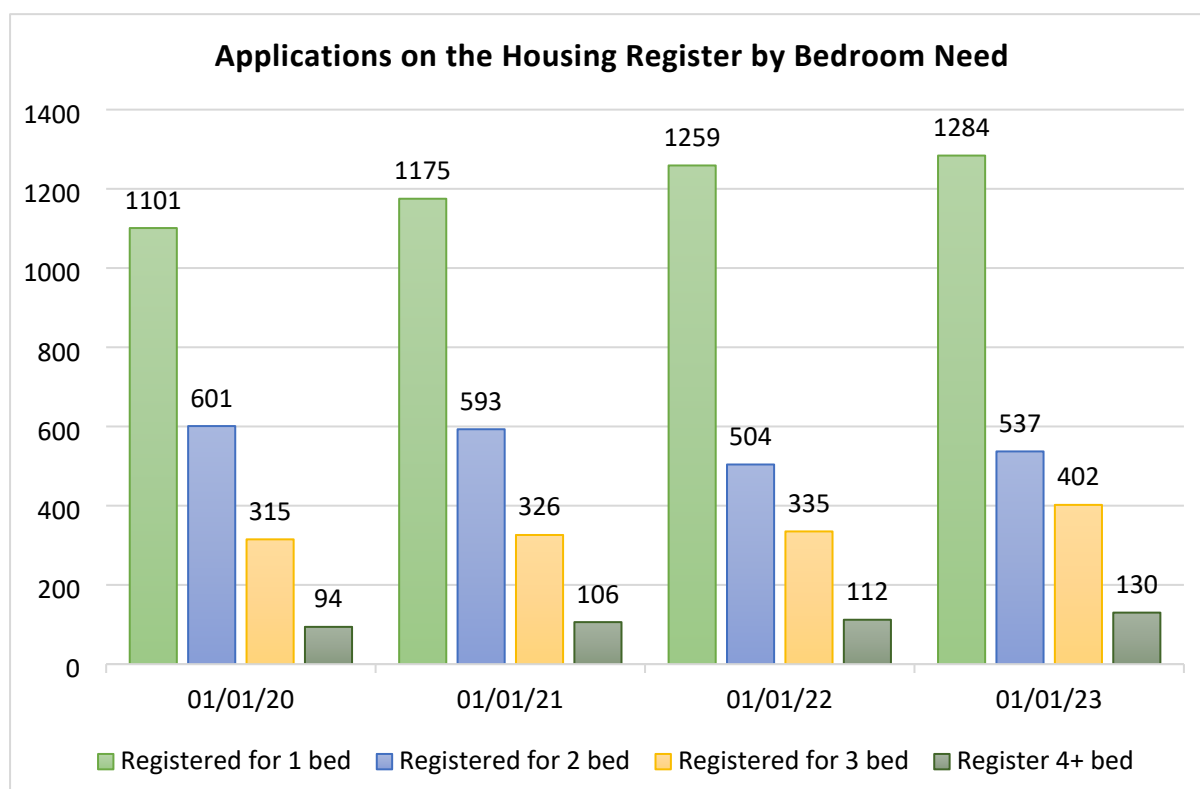
Applications in band 3 have increased over the period of the strategy by 26%.

Applications in Band 4 have fluctuated over the period of the strategy. There has been an increase of 22% between 2020 and 2023.

A comparison of Test Valley's priority bandings with that of its sub regional partners as at 1 April 2023 is shown in the table below:-

	Test Valley	Eastleigh	Havant	East Hants	Winchester
Band 1	6	3	5	3	2
Band 2	272	160	173	226	259
Band 3	1963	1912	1642	1278	1207
Band 4	112	87	70	83	111

Applications by bedroom size



As the table above shows, the largest need is for 1 bedroom properties. This need has increased over the period of the current strategy by 17%.

The next highest demand is for 2 bedroom properties, however this has decreased by 11% over the period of the strategy.

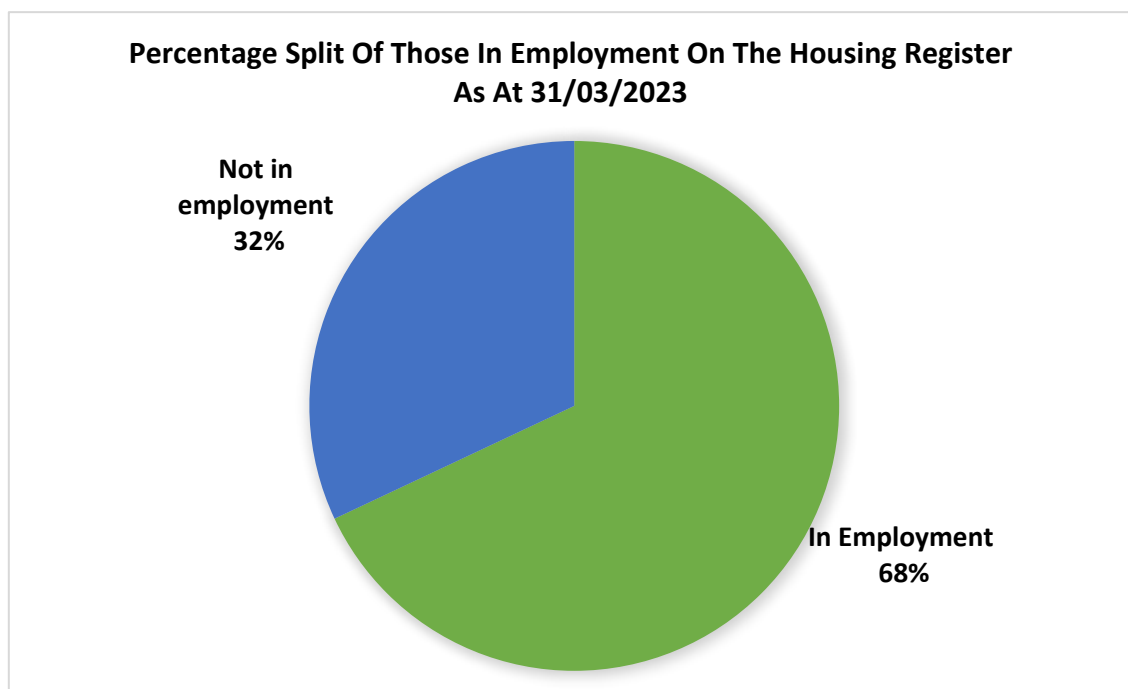
The demand for 3 bedroom properties has increased by 27% over the period of the current strategy. The demand for 3 bedroom accommodation remains the 3rd highest.

Demand for 4 bedroom properties remains the lowest on the housing register, however the overall demand for a 4 bedroom home has increased by the highest proportion over the period of the strategy, by 38%.

The table below compares Test Valley's bedroom need with that of its sub regional partners as at 1 April 2023:

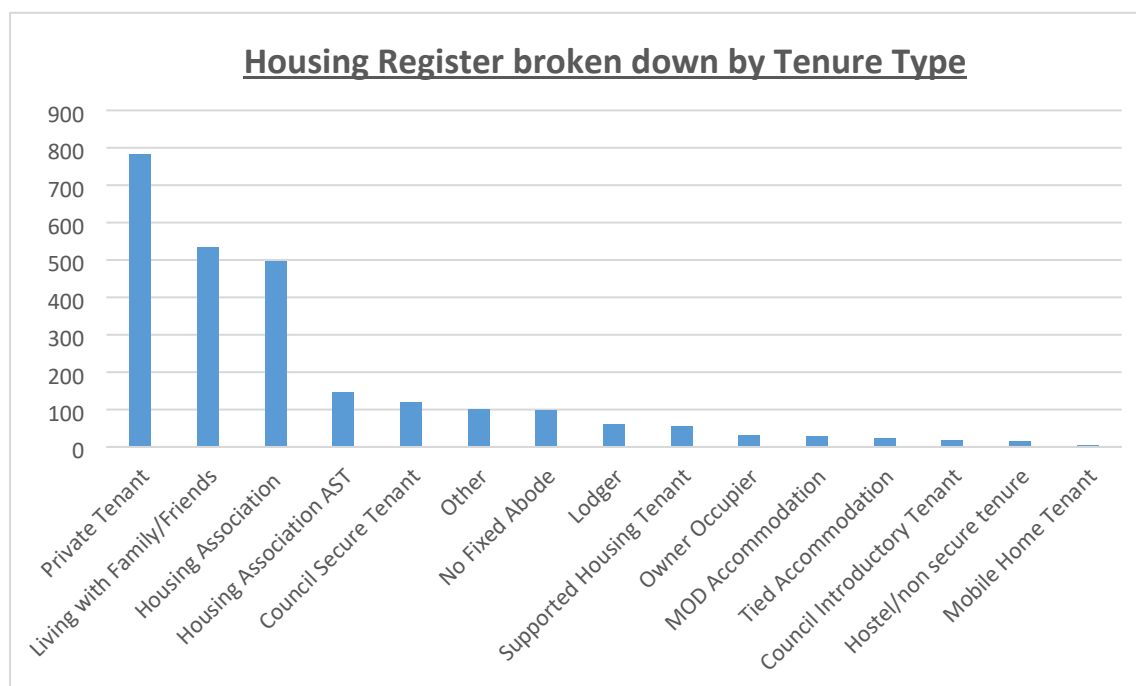
	Test Valley	Eastleigh	Havant	East Hants	Winchester
1 bed need	1284	1163	868	848	1015
2 bed need	537	484	603	433	324
3 bed need	402	416	371	231	168
4 bed need	130	99	68	78	72

Employment breakdown on the Housing Register



The majority of those registered on the housing register are in employment. It is important to recognise that this does not mean that 32% of those on the register choose not to work. This 32% comprises of those households who have reached retirement age, those who may be out of work due to sickness or disability, as well as those who may care for others.

Total number on the Housing Register broken down by tenure type



Households living in private rented accommodation make up almost 1/3 of those on the housing register, followed by those living with family/friends who make up just over 20% of those on the housing register.

Nearly 64% of those on the housing register are currently living in accommodation that has a level of insecurity and a higher risk of becoming homeless.

Total number on the Housing Register broken down by reason for joining



Overcrowding is the most common reason for households joining the housing register, followed by being unable to afford to rent or get a mortgage. Being asked to leave by friend and family is the third most common reason with properties being unsuitable due to health reasons being the fourth.

Evictions by family and friends is one the top cause of homelessness within Test Valley.

Applications that do not result in active applications on the housing register.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of applications made but the applicants did not qualify to join the housing register	432	452	497
Number of applications started but not completed, including the failure to provide supporting documents	747	720	712

Approx 20% of new applications do not qualify to join the housing register and therefore do not result in an active application on the register. The reasons for this will include; being adequately housed, no local connection and income/assets above the prescribe threshold.

For the past 3 financial years, over 700 applications have ben started but not completed, this includes completing the application but failing to provide the supporting documentation such as ID, proof of address etc.

Lettings made via the Housing Register 2020-2023

Number of lets per financial year:

Year	Number of Lets
2020/21	565 properties let
2021/22	621 properties let
2022/23	464 properties let

Properties let broken down by property size:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
1 bed properties	200	188	191
2 bed properties	262	311	210
3 bed properties	90	104	49
4 bed properties	13	18	14

Properties let broken down by priority banding:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Let to band 1	23	12	10
Let to band 2	293	184	140
Let to band 3	301	422	312
Let to band 4	2	3	2

Test Valley has enjoyed a number of large strategic development sites being completed during the lifetime of the current strategy, which have delivered a high level of affordable homes to let during the lifetime of this strategy. Current affordable housing delivery levels are just below target due to reliance on smaller non-strategic sites being brought forward by developers.

Homelessness in Test Valley

Approaches to the service and duties owed

The Housing Options service is used by those households who believe they are homeless, threatened with homelessness or require housing advice. The council will not owe a statutory duty to all households who approach the Options Team.

Approaches – reflects the number of households who approached the council.

Prevention duty – owed to a household when the council is satisfied the applicant is eligible and threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

Relief Duty – owed to a household when the council is satisfied the applicant is eligible and homeless immediately.

Applicants may also move from Prevention duty to Relief duty after a period of 56 days in prevention duty, or if they go from being threatened with homelessness to becoming homeless.

The table below shows the total number of homelessness approaches made to Test Valley Borough Council during the last three full financial years, as well as the prevention and relief duty that was applied:-

	20/21	21/22	22/23
Total number of approaches	835	896	964
Total number of approaches – families with children	278	312	297
Total number approaches – singles, with no children	557	584	667
Total number of households placed into prevention duty only	210	165	174
Total number of families placed into prevention duty only	95	68	81
Total number of singles placed into prevention duty only	115	97	93
Total number households placed into prevention duty, who then moved into relief duty	52	51	49
Total number families placed into prevention duty, who then moved into relief duty	31	32	29
Total number singles placed into prevention duty, who then moved into relief duty	21	19	20
Total number of households placed into relief duty only	222	221	232
Total number of families placed into relief duty only	40	55	68
Total number of singles placed into relief duty only	182	166	164
Total number households accepted as full duty	55	104	59
Total number families accepted as full duty	31	60	32
Total number of singles accepted as full duty	24	44	27

Throughout the lifetime of the strategy there has been an increase in demand for the housing options service. The data for the lifetime of the strategy runs over the period of the Covid-19 Pandemic. For some of this time the government enforced various pieces of legislation to prevent evictions of households from their homes in all sectors.

This may account for the reduction of households being owed the prevention duty over the lifetime of the strategy, with fewer households meeting this criteria as a direct result of new legislations preventing evictions.

There were some exemptions, and in serious or extreme situations landlords could obtain the necessary court orders to end tenancies. The legislation did not apply to certain tenancy types or to those living with family and friends, therefore homelessness still occurred during the pandemic.

The pandemic also saw the introduction of the initiative called Everyone In. On 26 March 2020 the Government asked Authorities to offer accommodation to anyone who may otherwise experience rough sleeping, regardless of eligibility or priority need.

In Test Valley this meant accommodating over 100 single people between March 2020 and March 2021 in emergency accommodation. All placements were made under a homelessness duty and can account for some of the increase in demand from single people. As we moved through the pandemic the demand from single people has not returned to pre pandemic numbers, although the demand from single people remains high.

The data appears to show that the number of households owed a full duty doubled between 2020/21 to 2021/22, however this does not mean that twice as many households became homeless. This reflects the way in which the council changed its approach to how duties were managed for those in temporary accommodation.

Reasons for approaches

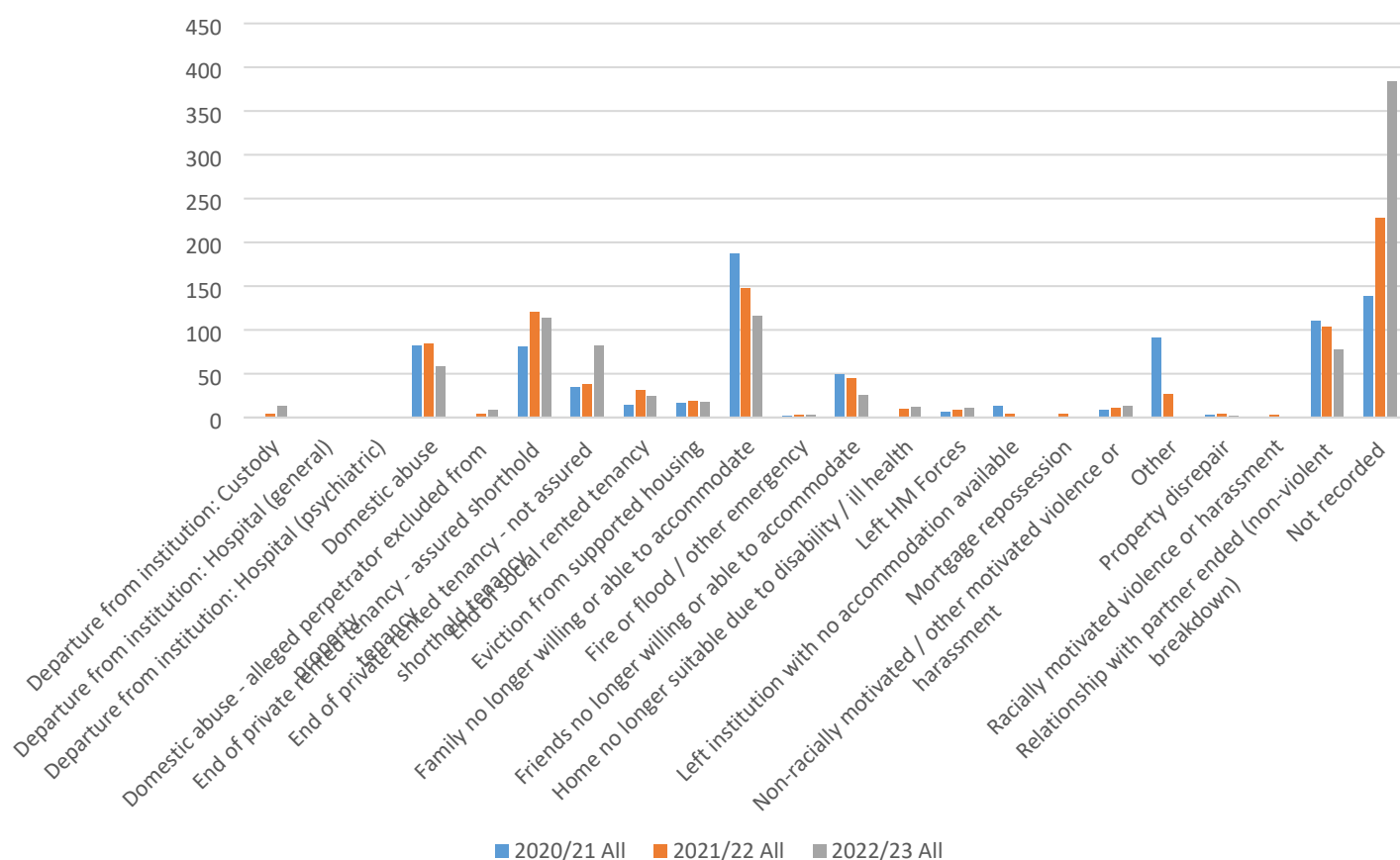
Households approach the Housing Options Team for a variety of reasons. The table below shows a breakdown of the reasons for homelessness approaches over the lifetime of the current strategy:

Approach reasons	2020/21			2021/22			2022/23		
	All	Families	Singles	All	Families	Singles	All	Families	Singles
Departure from institution: Custody	0	0	0	4	0	4	13	0	13
Departure from institution: Hospital (general)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Departure from institution: Hospital (psychiatric)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Domestic abuse	82	48	33	84	48	36	58	33	25
Domestic abuse - alleged perpetrator excluded from property	0	0	0	4	2	2	8	1	7

ANNEX 3

End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold tenancy	81	36	45	120	63	57	114	54	60
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold tenancy	34	7	27	38	5	33	82	43	39
End of social rented tenancy	14	6	8	31	11	20	24	7	17
Eviction from supported housing	16	0	16	19	2	17	17	0	17
Family no longer willing or able to accommodate	187	52	135	148	30	118	116	34	82
Fire or flood / other emergency	2	0	2	3	2	1	3	0	3
Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	49	4	45	45	8	37	25	4	21
Home no longer suitable due to disability / ill health	0	0	0	10	1	9	12	4	8
Left HM Forces	6	3	3	8	6	2	11	8	3
Left institution with no accommodation available	13	0	13	4	0	4	0	0	0
Mortgage repossession	0	0	0	4	0	4	0	0	0
Non-racially motivated / other motivated violence or harassment	9	3	6	11	5	6	13	6	7
Other	91	21	70	27	9	18	0	0	0
Property disrepair	3	0	3	4	3	1	2	1	1
Racially motivated violence or harassment	0	0	0	3	2	1	1	0	1
Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown)	110	39	71	103	42	61	77	30	47
Not recorded	138	55	83	228	72	155	384	72	312

Reasons for Homelessness per Financial Year



In Test Valley the top reasons for homelessness are:

- Family or friends no longer able to accommodation
- Domestic abuse
- Relationship breakdown
- End of private rented accommodation

End of Prevention Duty Reasons

The council can end the prevention duty to a customer by discharging it upon a number of events occurring. Below is a breakdown of how the prevention duties have been discharged (come to an end) throughout the lifetime of the strategy:

End of Prevention Duty	2020/21			2021/22			2022/23		
	All	Families	Singles	All	Families	Singles	All	Families	Singles
56 days or more expired	7	5	2	16	3	13	0	0	0
Contact lost	41	9	32	44	18	26	20	6	14
Became Homeless	50	31	19	51	33	18	48	29	19

ANNEX 3

Intentionally Homeless from accommodation provided	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	1
No longer eligible	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Refused suitable accommodation	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Refused to co-operate	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Secured alternative accommodation for 12 months or more	57	34	23	34	21	13	35	18	17
Secured alternative accommodation for 6 months	88	39	49	53	16	37	53	25	28
Secured existing accommodation for 12 months or more	4	2	2	6	2	4	5	2	3
Secured existing accommodation for 6 months	11	6	5	10	6	4	4	1	3
Withdrew application / applicant deceased	6	3	3	4	2	2	3	2	1

The council wants to resolve homelessness whilst households are within prevention duty, however this is not always possible.

Analysis of the data shows the following outcomes:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Closed positively and homelessness prevented	60% of cases	47% of cases	57% of cases
Lost contact with the customer	15% of cases	20% of cases	11% of cases
Homelessness not prevented	21% of cases	30% of cases	28% of cases

The data shows that contact is more likely to be lost with a single person than with a family with children.

Families are more likely to become homeless whilst in prevention duty than single people.

Securing alternative accommodation for at least 6 or 12 months, along with securing existing accommodation is the main reason for the prevention duty coming to an end.

This means the households threat of homelessness has been resolved with a positive outcome.

End of Relief Duty Reasons

Households may move from the Prevention duty into the Relief duty, be owed the Relief Duty straight away. Below is a breakdown of how the Relief duties have been discharged (come to an end) throughout the lifetime of the strategy:

End of Relief Duty	2020/21			2021/22			2022/23		
	All	Families	Singles	All	Families	Singles	All	Families	Singles
56 days elapsed	17	9	8	111	62	49	91	50	41
Contact lost	72	4	68	70	7	63	62	12	50
Intentionally Homeless from accommodation provided	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Local Connection referral accepted by other Local Authority	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
No longer eligible	2	0	2	1	0	1	1	0	1
Notice served due to refusal to co-operate	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Refused final accommodation or final part 6 offer	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	3
Secured accommodation for 12 months	22	18	14	25	12	13	46	18	28
Secured accommodation for 6 months	82	19	63	50	5	45	79	15	64
Withdrew application / applicant deceased	6	0	6	9	4	5	12	6	6
Applicant has refused suitable offer which was not a final offer	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0

The council wants to resolve homelessness whilst households are within relief duty, however this is not always possible.

Analysis of the data shows the following outcomes:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Closed positively and homelessness resolved	51% of cases	28% of cases	42% of cases
Lost contact with the customer	36% of cases	26% of cases	20% of cases
Homelessness not prevented	8% of cases	41% of cases	30% of cases

As in prevention duty, contact is more likely to be lost with single people rather than families in the relief duty.

Securing alternative accommodation for at least 6 or 12 months, along with securing existing accommodation is one of the main reasons for the prevention duty coming to an end. This means the household's homelessness has been resolved with a positive outcome.

Those recorded as 56 days lapsed have not had their homelessness resolved. These households may move into temporary accommodation or make temporary arrangements. Their relief duty will come to an end, but the council may then owe the full duty or make an adverse decision on their homelessness application.

Homeless Decisions Made

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Total number of households accepted as full duty	55	104	59
Total number of families accepted as full duty	31 (56%)	60 (57%)	32 (54%)
Total number of singles accepted as full duty	24 (44%)	44 (43%)	27 (46%)

As of December 2020, the Council changed the way it managed placing households into temporary accommodation. Prior to this, duties were ended rather than households placed into the Full (Main) Duty. The change allows households to remain under a duty, supported and engaged with a Housing Options Officer until settled accommodation has been secured. This explains the increase in acceptances from 2020/21 to 2021/22.

Over the lifetime of the strategy Full Duties have been accepted to both family and single households. More families are owed the full duty than single person households.

It is rare for Test Valley to make an adverse homeless decision such as non-priority or intentionally homeless. Instead, we work with those households to find a housing solution and limit any time they experience homelessness.

End of Full Duty Reasons

Once a full duty has been accepted the council owes this duty until an event occurs that means the council can discharge that duty. The data below shows how duties have come to an end during the lifetime of the current strategy.

Reason main/full duty ended	2020/21			2021/22			2022/23		
	All	Families	Singles	All	Families	Singles	All	Families	Singles
Ceased to be eligible	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Accepted Part 6 offer	17	9	8	19	9	10	3	1	2
Accepted Private Rented Sector Offer	0	0	0	2	0	2	4	2	2
Applicant withdrew or lost contact	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0
Became homeless intentionally from temporary accommodation	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Ceased to occupy temporary accommodation	2	1	1	3	1	2	0	0	0
Refused suitable Part 6 offer	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Refused suitable Private Rented Sector Offer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Refused suitable temporary accommodation offer	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0

The most common reason for a full duty to end is by way of a Part 6 offer, which is an offer of social housing via the council's housing register.

Over the lifetime of the current strategy the council has started to utilise the ability to make offers of private rented accommodation, known as PRSO (Private Rented Sector Offer) to bring the full duty to an end.

Support Needs

Households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, understandably have a range of support needs. As part of our assessment of households seeking housing advice and support, we capture information about those support needs. The most frequently recorded needs include:

- Physical and mental health needs
- Drug or alcohol dependency
- Offending behaviour
- History of homelessness or rough sleeping
- Young people between 18-25 yrs old
- Old age
- Risk of sexual exploitation
- Care leavers
- Difficulties with budgeting

Household Support Fund Applications – January 2022 & January 2023

January – March 2022

In March 2022 the council chose to operate an open application scheme for customers to access financial support from the Household Support Fund. Part of their application asked them to share with us the financial difficulties they were experiencing, some of which is listed below:

- Funeral costs for those lost during Covid
- Increased cost of fuel – many demonstrated a reliance on a car to attend employment, medical appointments and to get children to school as well as access essential facilities
- Lack of funds for new clothing and shoes
- Increased cost of food
- The daily living cost to those with special dietary requirements, that can't always be met by a food bank. Examples included dairy intolerances, gluten free, or children with additional needs who will only eat certain foods or foods purchased that day.
- Cost of purchasing oil upfront to provide heating for their homes

January – March 2023

In March 2023 the council operated an open application scheme, for the second time, for customers to access financial support by way of a one-off £125 grant from the

Household Support Fund. Part of their application asked them to share with us the financial difficulties they were experiencing. The common trends included:

- Utility Bills – many described not being able to afford utility bills, being in debt with utility companies and avoiding heating their homes to save costs.
- Food – many described struggles in the increased cost of food, and had changed or reduced what they purchased. Some shared struggles around being unable to afford to buy anything in the run up to pay days, or just prioritising food for children.
- Debt – customers talked about being behind on payments such as utility bills or relying on credit cards to meet their costs, or borrowing from family and friends.
- Loss of income – customers shared that their own income had reduced. Several had stopped receiving child maintenance from ex-partners, some had lost hours of work, and some self-employed found their demand had reduced as a direct consequence of the Cost of Living crisis.

Consultations

As part of the review of homelessness in Test Valley several consultation sessions were carried out with our partners, as well as a Homelessness Forum with senior managers and a Frontline Workers event.

Partner Consultation results – February & March 2023

- Stakeholders have shared positive perspectives relating to homeless prevention and relief services provided by TVBC. Partners are realistic about the scale of the challenges facing public services in meeting housing demand post-Covid, and during cost-of-living crisis, as well as providing humanitarian responses to refugees.
- Stakeholders recognise that tackling homelessness is a shared responsibility, and report feeling well informed about housing options available to customers and the support that is accessible in the local area, including from TVBC.
- There is a concern associated with access to affordable housing solutions, including the accessibility of the private rented sector for low-income households, and a recognition that housing supply will not provide the answer to effectively preventing and relieving homelessness.
- Local partnership arrangements, including the Test Valley Partnership, are viewed positively as vehicles through which to discuss and respond to local priorities, and relationships between key system partners locally are generally good, albeit all front-line services are struggling to meet very high demands.
- There is strong local support for enhancing partnership working further to prevent and relieve homelessness, including the potential co-location of services and multi-agency hubs. This feedback is aligned to the new corporate plan's place-based focus and provides an endorsement for the new homelessness strategy to actively pursue particular place-based approaches to homelessness prevention and relief. These were, coincidentally, one aspect of the outgoing delivery plan, however, the pandemic meant that co-location and face to face community initiatives were not pursued as actively as they otherwise would have been.
- The current strategic priorities were endorsed as still current, albeit they could be evolved and developed to reflect the current operating context and what we might sensibly predict to be future pressures arising in the local area.

OSCOM – March 2023

A short presentation was given at the OSCOM round-table session. Members of OSCOM pulled together the following priorities and observations that were important to them:

- Sustainability of villages.
- Accessibility must mean more than being able to access facilities within the home; it also needs to extend to the community.

- Prevention of homelessness is not just about a home; it is about the services beyond a home such as mental health support.
- Allocation of property is important to success and sustainability.
- Accessing affordable housing is essential.
- Community groups and support can prevent homelessness – these groups need to be supported adequately.

Partnership consultation online surveys – May 2023

Partners were invited to take part in an online survey to share their thoughts and feedback.

Partners were asked a number of questions, the results of which are below. Responses were received from Hampshire County Council, Abri, Citizens Advice, Aster, Two Saints, Unity, Vivid, Inclusion NHS, Hampshire Police and Finding Freedom from Abuse.

1. 100% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the 4 priorities set out in the current strategy are still relevant.

2. 100% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they know which services to approach.

1 respondent stated '*I am not sure if there are services that I do not know about*'.

3. 100% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that prevention of homelessness is the responsibility of all local partners.
4. 100% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they understand the housing options available to their customers.
5. Partners are contributing to the prevention of homelessness by providing accommodation, providing specialist advice to care leavers, treating addictions, recovery support and providing advice on rights and responsibilities. They see working in partnership as a key tool in preventing homelessness which includes sharing information.
6. Partners' experience of working with a client experiencing homelessness showed that they found the support provided by TVBC to be faultless and responsive. They also found that TVBC was good at partnership working, acted quickly to find accommodation, was positive, and worked in the best interests of the customer. Partners did identify that sometimes the right housing options were not available, and that they were out of the area, or unrealistic.
7. Partners were able to identify barriers to preventing homelessness in the borough and listed the following:

- High demand for housing and the Cost of Living crisis impacting affordability.
 - Lack of variety of accommodation, and accommodation is hard to access quickly. Rents are higher than the amounts paid by Universal Credit and Housing Benefit. Young people placed in projects find that accommodation is unaffordable if they enter employment.
 - Insufficient access to suitable alternative accommodation, emergency accommodation and accommodation that is affordable.
 - Closer working and better working relationships with statutory bodies offering support within the region is needed.
 - Lack of move-on options outside of the housing register and the lack of adequate mental health services.
 - Availability and affordability of housing stock.
 - Demands for social housing. Single people on low incomes struggle to access private rented accommodation. Drug use and anti-social behaviour are factors, as are the wrong interventions at the wrong time. Insufficient network, local support services for mental health and other health providers. Transport links in rural communities are poor.
 - Lack of engagement by some customers.
 - Robust stepped approach needed to meet client needs and not just client wants. Availability of sufficient resources needed to meet those needs. Need to have a good understanding of the weaknesses and strengths. Ability for clients to step back.
 - Lack of affordable housing and increasing infrastructure for new-builds such as shops and doctors surgeries.
8. When asked what the council is doing well to meet these challenges, partners gave a variety of responses. Partners liked the idea of officers being present, and felt that visiting projects is also helpful. Partnership working was a key feature of things that the council is doing well. Being pro-active and quick to respond, communicating, being flexible and offering a rent deposit scheme were also listed as things we do well.
9. When asked what could be changed to meet the challenges partners were able to give suggestions;
- Identify more accommodation for young people
 - Improve support services
 - Increase social housing and mental health services
 - Careful lettings to prevent anti-social behaviour
 - Housing team and Community Safety team to be more aligned at TVBC – cases discussed at Community Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (CMARAC) are not always known to the Housing team.

- Increase availability of affordable homes, including wet and dry houses, and options for older and younger people. Pre-tenancy education for all new tenancies. Improve the eviction process.
- Change the fact that customers are having to wait six months before they receive an elevated banding.
- Create a stepped approach to housing with opportunities to step back

Customer Surveys & Rough Sleeper Consultation – May & June 2023

Customers provided a lot of positive feedback but they have also helped identify areas for improvements.

70% of customers found it easy or very easy to make contact with the service, however 30% did not, therefore it is important that we ensure all customers can easily make contact with the service.

90% of customers found the service and the officers friendly and approachable. This is extremely positive, but demonstrates there could still be some improvements.

70% of customers indicated that they felt listened to and understood by their Housing Options Officer, whilst 30% felt that officers didn't hear what they were trying to explain.

60% of customers found the level of on-going contact and updates was good, however 40% of customers felt there was not enough. Customers who need to engage with Housing Options Officers are facing homelessness and an extremely stressful time, and updates and communication is important to them at this time.

85% of customers felt the advice and information given to them was clear, however 15% of customers felt it was unclear, with one person making reference to 'feeling as though I was going round in circles'. 70% of customers understood the housing options available to them, with 30% being a bit confused.

When asked to rate their overall experience of the housing options service customers returned an average score of 6.5 out of 10.

Positive feedback was received from those who were former rough sleepers. Their average score was much higher and they found close customer/officer contact extremely important to resolving their rough sleeping experience.

DLUHC Rough Sleeper Advisor Feedback – June 2023

Test Valley have successfully bid for and received grant funding from the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) fund and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) over the lifetime of the tenancy. These bids were formulated in collaboration with the advisor assigned to the council from DLUHC. DLUHC make regular visits to councils to review their work, give advice, and ensure that the grants awarded are being used appropriately.

The advisor's feedback was very positive, with no concerns raised about the services being provided or the use of the grant. The advisor observed staff to be passionate and dedicated to their role and working with customers. The advice given focused on enhancing the service.

Association of Town & Parish Councils' Annual Conference – June 2023

A short presentation was given at the Association of Town and Parish Councils' conference, who were then asked to think around 3 key areas. The priorities and observations that were important to them were:

- Ensure people have the right support; don't allow people to become isolated.
- Ensure people are placed into homes that are suitable and of a good standard and condition.
- Ensure people are supported into homes that they can afford based on their own personal circumstances.

Management Team and Portfolio Group Progress Consultation – July & August 2023

Management Team and Portfolio Group were consulted and updated on the progress of the review following the majority of the consultations. At this stage priority themes had started to emerge which informed the new priorities and delivery plan. Both Management Team and Portfolio Group endorsed the work completed so far and supported the emerging priority theme.

DLUHC Homeless Advice and Support Team visit – August 2023

Homelessness Advice and Support Team (HAST) advisor Claire Dyke visited Test Valley in August 2023 and supported the emerging priority themes and action plan. No service improvements or causes for concern were identified. The challenges experienced by Test Valley at the time were not unusual or unique.

Preventing Homelessness Forum – September 2023

A second Homelessness Forum was held in September 2023. Partner agencies were asked to consider and contribute to the development of the delivery plan for the new strategy. Partners were asked about the actions they felt were most important, what actions they felt were reasonable to commit themselves to, and their views on the emerging priority themes.

Agencies were very supportive of the priority themes. All agreed they felt right and that they cover the most important aspects of preventing homelessness.

Agencies identified a lot of actions to form part of the delivery plan including the following which emerged as popular actions:

- Tenancy support, including pre-tenancy training for customers to maximise their ability to successfully sustain and manage a tenancy.
- Pre-eviction protocols.
- Ability to have early conversations.
- Multi-agency hubs and increased multi-agency working.
- Cross-agency working and staff working within other agencies.
- Events and homelessness forums bringing agencies together.
- Increased frontline training opportunities for all agencies.
- Service directory of a range of services, with clear information on who can provide what support, and how to access it.
- Allocations policy that is fit for purpose, easy to understand and easy to access.
- Keep accommodation supply options under review and continue to look for more accommodation to meet the needs of customers.

Test Valley Partnership Consultation – October 2023

A draft delivery action plan was shared with partner agencies at the Test Valley Partnership meeting held in October 2023. Partners were asked which actions they felt were important, and were given the opportunity to contribute further if they felt that any actions were missing.

Partners gave their support and priority to the follow:

- Actions supporting greater partnership and cross agency working
- Actions to keep the off the street offer under review and fit for purpose
- Actions to ensure the right support is available to people to sustain their accommodation
- Actions to enable access to affordable housing, including a homelessness pathway
- Actions to improve the increased use of duty to refer
- Actions to better use data and insight to prevent homelessness
- Actions to have multi agency support plans for anyone identified to be experiencing rough sleeping
- Actions exploring why people disengage with the service or fail to complete their housing register application

Conclusion and Emerging Priorities

In conclusion, the demand on the service has been increasing. This could be due to a number of national challenges that are emerging post-pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic itself had a significant impact on homelessness and people's well-being, and the service is still seeing the results of this.

Partners and staff place value on partnership working and want to build upon this, recognising that preventing homelessness is a joint responsibility. There is an appetite for multi-agency hubs and more co-located services.

Customers value ongoing communication and easy access to the service to receive clear advice and housing options.

A good standard of affordable accommodation with the right support in place is also essential.

Following the work that has been undertaken to date in the context of the review of homelessness, the following themes are emerging and have been developed:

1. Empower and support people to overcome their housing challenges, building on their strengths to secure the right accommodation at the right time and to provide help when needed.
2. Work together to maintain strong local partnership connections that contribute to the prevention and relief of homelessness in a holistic and timely way.
3. Provide good quality support services and information to communities to enable them to thrive and sustain accommodation.
4. Work in collaboration to ensure rough sleeping is prevented wherever possible or to ensure it is rare, brief, and non- recurring.

The thematic priorities will be used to inform both the new strategy and the structure of its associated delivery plan. In turn, this will sit alongside our Corporate Plan, and the ongoing delivery of our Housing Strategy 2020 to 2025, as well as feeding into the next Housing Strategy that will run from 2025-2030.