



# Somerset Homelessness Review & Strategy 2017

Mendip District Council  
Sedgemoor District Council  
South Somerset District Council  
Taunton Deane Borough Council  
West Somerset Council

December 2017

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## Foreword by Cabinet Member for Housing Mendip District Council



Welcome to the new Somerset Homelessness Review and Strategy which sets out a vision and plan for tackling homelessness across the five districts.

In times of challenging need with limited funding, the Homelessness Strategy sets out the framework for our work and the action plan that will help us deliver specific objectives. We are aligning our practices with the new statutory framework of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which we believe brings significant positive and empowering change to help us to increase our homelessness prevention work through early intervention and new duties.

Our district residents and businesses are central to everything we do. We care about our people and we know that a home is an essential foundation for good health and wellbeing supporting individual capacity to positively contribute in their local community. Consequently, we are focused on finding the best solutions to prevent and alleviate homelessness and have been successful in reducing the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation despite rising numbers nationally.

We are committed to continuous improvement and quality service provision for our community. One of only a handful of authorities in England to have achieved silver status, we are working to achieve the Gold standard in Housing and Homelessness Prevention by the National Practitioner Support Service.

We invest time, energy and resources into services that make a real difference to the lives of individuals and families who face homelessness. In response to reductions in funding, changes in government policy and new legislation, we continue to find fresh and innovative ways of working. Our voluntary sector and statutory partners help us to deliver these critical services locally where they are most needed and in ways and places that are accessible to our most vulnerable residents.

Our collaborative projects help us to deliver better outcomes for our households at risk of homelessness and increase value for money. Together with our partners we have made a significant number of achievements since the last Homelessness Strategy; however, with continuing challenges and increasing needs and vulnerabilities, more remains to be done.

I would like to extend my thanks on behalf of the Council to everyone who has contributed to the development of this strategy and crucially, the ongoing work and partnerships which will help us improve the way in which we tackle future homelessness.

**Councillor Nigel Woollcombe-Adams  
Portfolio Holder for Planning, Growth and Housing Services and Vice Chairman of the Planning Board**

## Foreword by Cabinet Member for Housing Sedgemoor District Council



Sedgemoor District Council welcomes this Homelessness Strategy for Somerset and also acknowledges the tremendous challenges we face in ensuring all of our residents have access to a safe and secure place to live. Homelessness nationally is on the increase and in Sedgemoor, our residents have additional pressures including the issues arising from the introduction of Universal Credit, the pressures on the private rented stock given the influx of workers at the Hinkley Point C development and the on-going shortage of 1 bed roomed accommodation.

Nevertheless, Sedgemoor DC has a proud record in assisting households facing potential homelessness and has been in the top quartile of councils in the prevention of homelessness over several years. In addition, we also have a proud record of working in partnership with social landlords to provide good quality, affordable housing for our residents.

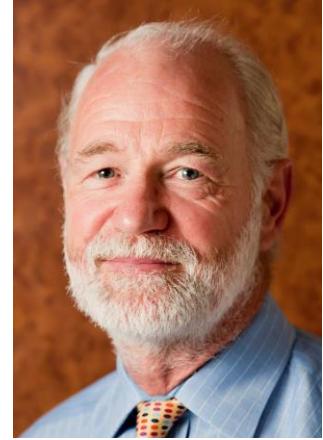
We support the 4 priority areas as identified by this Strategy:

- We will support the transition in services required by the Homelessness Reduction Bill 2017 - the process of restructuring the Housing Advice service in preparation for the introduction of the Act is well underway.
- We will support clients to remain in their existing accommodation where appropriate by ensuring our staff are fully trained with sufficient resources to react quickly to resolve issues which could lead to homelessness.
- We will continue to support clients to access suitable and affordable alternative accommodation where appropriate. We will do this by utilising a wide range of homeless prevention initiatives developed over several years and by working with our clients on robust Personal Housing Plans.
- We will continue to build and maintain strong working partnerships to deliver cost effective and responsive services. Partnership working in Sedgemoor over many years has played a crucial role in the provision of good quality housing and homelessness services and we intend to strengthen and expand those partnerships.

The Homelessness Reduction Act is considered to be the most important piece of homelessness legislation in 40 years. It is essential therefore, that all councils in Somerset support this Strategy and give the front line teams who will implement the action plan all the support they need.

**Councillor Andrew Gilling  
Portfolio Holder – Housing**

## Foreword by Cabinet Member for Housing South Somerset District Council



Aligning thinking across 5 District Councils will always be a challenge but in 2003 we recognised the benefits of working seamlessly across Somerset on the issue of Homelessness and that created a logical alliance that dovetailed with our joint decision to use one ICT platform for Housing and create "Homefinder Somerset". Much has changed in the intervening years and across the country Homelessness and Rough Sleeping is inexorably rising month by month. Whilst Somerset is not immune from the changes, across the five Districts we are not matching the National picture. Our figures have consistently been at the lower end of the graph from which it is clear that Homeless Prevention is delivering better outcomes in Somerset. We need to stay in that enviable position. Using the combined resource and experience that has been created through joint working we are undoubtedly making a real difference to the lives of those who find themselves in the situation of facing Homelessness in our County.

Over the past few years a perfect storm has been created through the cumulative impact of central Government measures primarily designed to reduce the financial burden of Welfare Benefits. Individually, each measure has an impact and a commensurate saving and on their own each may be absorbed or managed by individuals or families but taken as a cocktail of measures it is creating a new and potentially very serious situation. On one side we have individual debt continuing to rise and we have rent on private sector properties also rising whilst on the opposite side of the scales we have capping or restrictions across a whole range of benefits that should make housing affordable to those in need but doesn't. Facing us is the impact and implications of the Homelessness Reduction Act which will increase Local Authority responsibilities and duties. Learning, evaluating, supporting and delivering solutions together in a holistic way across the County has to offer better chances of meeting and reacting to the changes than doing it individually and hence the importance of that work being underpinned by a Homelessness Strategy informed by an up to date review.

I am conscious of the hard work that has gone into delivering this document and specialist staff across Somerset have all gone the extra mile for our residents.

Finally, whilst an important starting point, a Strategy is only words on a page and thus the really important part is what is contained in the detailed Action Plan that sets out what we are going to do about the issues facing us. It is right that we review again in 18 months to measure how effective our Plan is in this fast changing world but I believe this document is the core contributor that we need now if we are to minimise the impact of the changes.

**Ric Pallister OBE  
Leader & Executive Member for Strategic Housing  
South Somerset District Council**

## Foreword by Cabinet Member for Housing Taunton Deane Borough Council



Taunton has an ambitious programme for growth and we recognise the need for a range of new housing of mixed tenure, particularly affordable housing.

Taunton is seeing a steady rise in the number of rough sleepers since 2013. In response to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, there is a need to further embed prevention into the core of our delivery of homelessness services- a holistic approach to enable individuals, young people and families to achieve their aspirations.

Accordingly, we welcome the new Somerset Homelessness Review and Strategy. The provision of the right support is pivotal and is the focus of the Strategy as we seek to work on maintaining existing tenancies and increasing access to affordable accommodation.

We want to be ambitious and engaging with all partners and stakeholders to create innovative solutions that will provide for the wide ranging needs that described in the Strategy. We also want to be forward thinking and respond creatively to challenges such as Hinkley Point C.

Finally, we want to continue the strong working relationship with our partners such as the Taunton Association for the Homeless, Open Door and the range of Housing Providers we work with.

**Councillor Terry Beale  
Portfolio Holder - Housing**

## Foreword by Cabinet Member for West Somerset Council



West Somerset is a beautiful place to live, but has its own unique housing challenge, particularly around its demography and rurality. Social mobility for young people is also a pertinent issue and West Somerset has successfully obtained £6mil to remedy this. House prices are increasingly unaffordable as market entry levels are 10 times the average earnings.

With the advent of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, we must prepare for the rise in numbers and welcome the new Somerset Homelessness Review and Strategy for its holistic approach to ensuring the right support and working partnerships are available and effective.

For the future, it is essential to build on the successes to date with a clear focus on prevention and early intervention especially with the Hinkley Point C funding, ensuring it provides a lasting legacy. We will also continue to explore options to provide affordable shared housing solutions within West Somerset.

**Councillor Keith Turner  
Portfolio Holder - Housing**

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002, it is a legal requirement that Housing Authorities have in place a homelessness strategy based on a homelessness review within their Boroughs. This exercise should be carried out and the strategic documents reviewed at least every five years.
- 1.2 The five Somerset District Authorities, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council decided in 2003 that they would work in partnership to carry out a homelessness review and create a homelessness strategy jointly in order to recognise the opportunities to pool resources and highlight best practise across the larger area.
- 1.3 A homelessness review has been carried out in 2003, 2008 and 2013. A homelessness strategy representing all five Districts was created after each review.
- 1.4 The homelessness strategy to be created following this homelessness review will cover the next 18 months, after which it will be reviewed. The decision to review after 18 months has been made by the five Local Authorities due to the amount of change within the area forthcoming as a direct result of the perceived impact of the Homeless Reduction Act and the Hinkley Point Development.
- 1.5 EDF Energy is building a brand new nuclear power station called Hinkley Point C on the Somerset Coast, North West of Bridgwater. Construction has started and it is envisaged that the new plant will be operational in 2025. Once it is operational it is estimated that the plant will support 700 operational and 200 contractor jobs. However, the construction of the plant itself will create circa 25,000 full time equivalent construction jobs over the lifetime of the build. At its peak workforce, there is estimated to be around 5,600 full time equivalent jobs on the site. This is having and will continue to have an impact on the local housing market for the region.
- 1.6 There are strategies covering provision of Hinkley Point C Housing Funding for Sedgemoor and West Somerset Councils through the Site Preparations Works section 106 agreement and the allocation of new funds made available to Sedgemoor, West Somerset Council and Taunton Deane Council through the Hinkley Point C DCO section 106 agreement. The aim of the funding is to mitigate any potential adverse effects on the local private rented and low cost housing market, and particularly the ability of those on lower incomes to access local housing, that might arise as a result of the Hinkley Point C development.

The £4m of funding secured through the Site Preparation section 106 agreement became available to West Somerset Council and Sedgemoor District Council in May 2014. A further £3.5m of funding became available in June 2016 when EDF Energy transitioned from the Site Preparation Works planning permission to the Development Consent Order (DCO). This additional funding was secured to deliver additional housing capacity in West Somerset, Taunton Deane, Sedgemoor and North Somerset.

- 1.7 This document provides a detailed account of the results of the Homelessness Review undertaken across the five Districts. This evidence will inform the new Homelessness Strategy.
- 1.8 This review has considered the way homelessness services are delivered across the area. It has established current levels of homelessness, who is becoming homeless locally and why

and examined trends in homelessness. It has considered available accommodation and support services to identify gaps in provision.

- 1.9 It is intended that the Homelessness Strategy will be a partnership approach between the Local Authorities and their partners. As such extensive consultation with partners has been carried out in order to include their views and opinions on homelessness priorities for the area. This consultation has taken a variety of formats including, online surveys, consultation events/focus groups and one to one interviews.
- 1.10 The findings from this strategic review have been used to inform the priorities that will underpin the Homelessness Strategy for the area for the next 18 months.

## 2.0 NATIONAL AGENDA & POLICY LINKS

- 2.1 In conducting this review, the Local Authorities have complied with legal duties set out in the Housing Act 1996 Part 7, the Homelessness Act 2002, the Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- 2.2. The review has considered all statutory orders relating to the suitability of accommodation in England.
- 2.3 It has further considered all relevant statutory guidance on allocations and homelessness, along with best practice in the delivery of housing options and homelessness services.
- 2.4 The Councils have had regard to both Ministerial Working Group reports on homelessness:
  - *"Vision to End Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out"* and;
  - *"Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness"*
- 2.5 The toolkit created by the DCLG funded National Practitioner Support Service "*Developing Homelessness Strategies*" has been carefully considered.
- 2.6 The national Gold Standard challenge outlined in the second Ministerial Working Group report has formed a key aspect of this review and the five District Local Authorities aspire to achieving the 10 Local Challenges set by Government for Local Authorities. The 10 challenges are:
  - To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all Local Authority services.
  - To actively work in partnership with the voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.
  - To offer a Housing Options prevention service to all clients including written advice.
  - To adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective alternative.
  - To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support.
  - To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord.
  - To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossession including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
  - To have a homelessness strategy that sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs.
  - To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed & Breakfast accommodation.
  - To not place any families in Bed & Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks.

- 2.7 This review has also considered the likely impact and forthcoming changes in the delivery of housing options services to be introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, effective from 1 April 2018.
- 2.8 The key measures within this Act and affecting the delivery of housing options services include:
- An extension of the period during which an Authority should treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days.
  - The introduction of personalised plans for clients to outline the circumstances of homelessness, the housing needs of the client, any support required to secure and sustain accommodation, steps that the client is required to take along with the steps the Local Authority is required to take to assist the client.
  - A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need.
  - A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants, regardless of priority need.
  - A new duty on other public services to notify a Local Housing Authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
- 2.9 Similar legislation was introduced in Wales in 2015 and the following outcomes were experienced by Local Authorities:
- A rise in applications and caseload for Housing Options Officers.
  - A rise in the percentage of cases owed prevention and relief duties.
  - A high dropout rate as a result of client withdrawal or client contact lost.
  - A reduction in full duty acceptances.
  - A reduction in temporary accommodation use.
  - A rise in the number of successful homeless prevention cases.

### 3.0 SOMERSET STRATEGY LINKS

- 3.1 A draft Somerset Strategic Housing Framework will be ready by the end of January 2018 focusing on the priorities and ambitions for Somerset. These will be reflected on in the District based action plans that will pick up on the challenges within each locality.

The Somerset Strategic Housing Framework includes information from a number of sources including the Somerset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Youth Housing Strategy and Action Plan.

## 4.0 DISTRICT STRATEGY LINKS

- 4.1 This review has regard for the Mendip District Council Corporate Strategy 2017 – 2020 “*Shape the District*”. This strategy has two core priorities:
- Transformation – finding better ways of working together, and making better use of assets, resources and skills to deliver the best possible outcomes for local communities.
  - Inclusive Growth – Mendip District Council would like to see positive growth in the District. They would like to see businesses develop, grow and enjoy greater success.
- 4.2 This review has regard for the Sedgemoor District Council Corporate Strategy 2016-2024. The strategy has three priority themes:
- Customers & efficiency
  - Growth & infrastructure
  - Housing, health & well-being
- 4.3 This review has regard for the South Somerset Council Plan 2016 – 2021. The Plan has five aims:
- Protect core services to the public by reducing costs and seeking income generation
  - Increase the focus on jobs and economic development
  - Protect and enhance the quality of our environment
  - Enable housing to meet all needs
  - Improve health and reduce health inequalities
- 4.4 This review has regard for the Taunton Deane Corporate Strategy 2016 – 2020. The strategy has four overarching themes:
- People
  - Business & enterprise
  - Our place
  - An efficient and modern Council
- 4.5 This review has regard for the West Somerset Corporate Strategy 2016 – 2020. The strategy has four overarching themes:
- Our Communities
  - Business & Enterprise
  - Our places & Infrastructure
  - An efficient and modern Council
- 4.6 This review has regard for the South Somerset Rural Housing Action Plan 2016-2018 which outlines the Council’s approach to the provision of affordable housing in rural locations (parishes with a population of less than 3,000), and the South Somerset District Council Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014.
- 4.7 This review has regard for the Somerset West Unlawful Evictions Policy, Somerset West Housing Enforcement Policy, Somerset West Civil Penalty Policy and the Somerset West Empty Homes Strategy which focuses on housing homeless families in empty properties which have been brought back into use through grants and loans from the Local Authority.

## 5.0 THE SOMERSET DISTRICTS

5.1 There are five Somerset Districts and they are located in the South West region of England:

- Mendip District Council
- Sedgemoor District Council
- South Somerset District Council
- Taunton Deane Borough Council
- West Somerset District Council

5.2 These are represented in the map below:



5.3 The size of each individual District is shown below (*Source: Wikipedia*)

Table 1: Size of each District

Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset
738km <sup>2</sup>	564km <sup>2</sup>	959km <sup>2</sup>	463km <sup>2</sup>	726km <sup>2</sup>

5.4 The population of each District in 2016 is shown in the table below (*Source: Nomis*)

Table 2: District Population

Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset
112,500	121,400	165,600	115,500	34,300

5.5 The total population for all five Districts is 549,300.

- 5.6 Population projections for each District are shown below. These are based on 2014 figures and it appears based on the figures shown in 5.4 above that the population of Taunton Deane has grown faster than originally anticipated. (*Source: 2014 based, ONS, nearest thousand*)

Table 3: Population Projections

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Mendip	112,000	113,000	113,000	114,000
Sedgemoor	121,000	123,000	124,000	125,000
South Somerset	166,000	167,000	168,000	169,000
Taunton Deane	114,000	115,000	116,000	117,000
West Somerset	34,000	34,000	34,000	34,000

- 5.7 The population split between males and females for each District is shown below (*Source: 2016 Nomis*). These compare to 49.2% males / 50.8% females for the South West region and 49.3% males / 50.7% females for Great Britain.

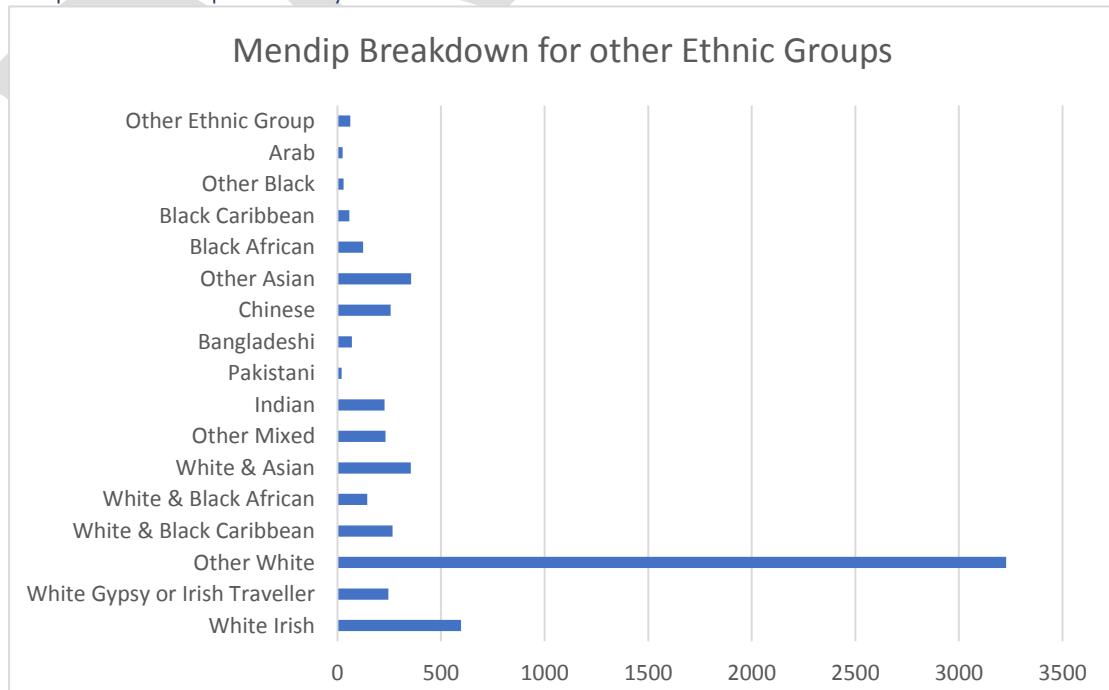
Table 4: Population by Gender

	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	South West	Great Britain
Males	48.7%	49.1%	49.1%	48.6%	48.1%	49.2%	49.3%
Females	51.3%	50.9%	50.1%	51.4%	51.9%	50.8%	50.7%

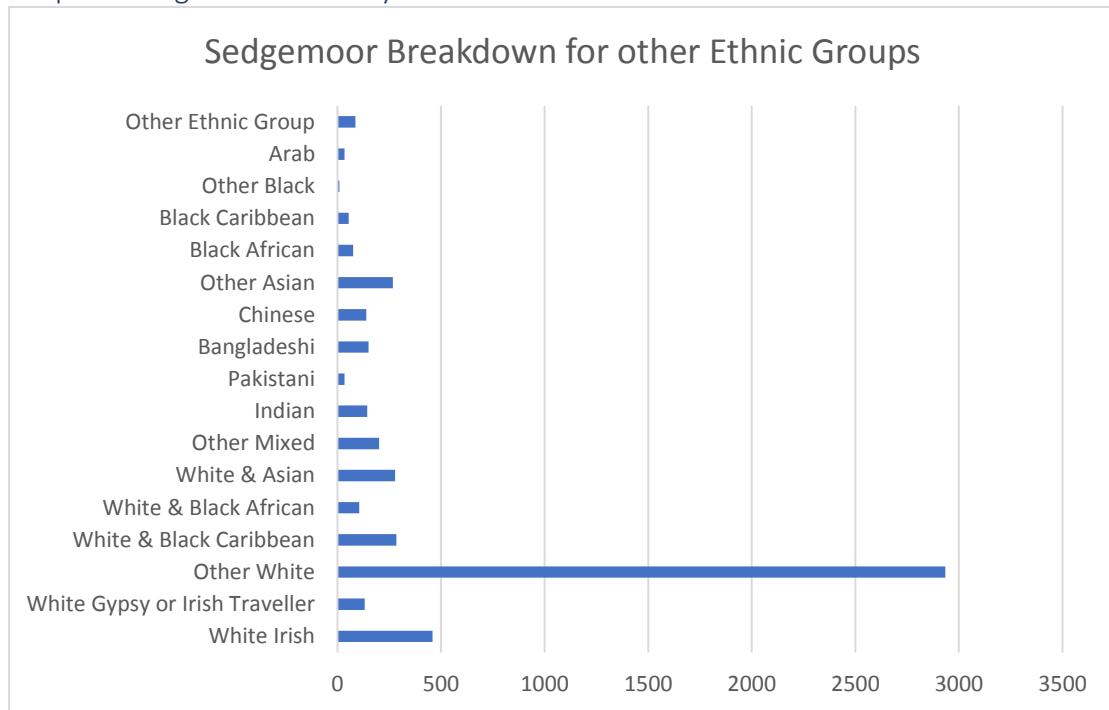
- 5.8 The largest ethnic population group in each of the Somerset District is “White British”. These form percentage populations as follows; Mendip (94.24%), Sedgemoor (95.30%), South Somerset (94.96%), Taunton Deane (93.50%) and West Somerset (95.83%). These compare to 93.67% in England and Wales and 91.80% for the South West region. (*Source: Census 2011*)

The distribution of other ethnic groups for each District is shown in the bar graphs below.

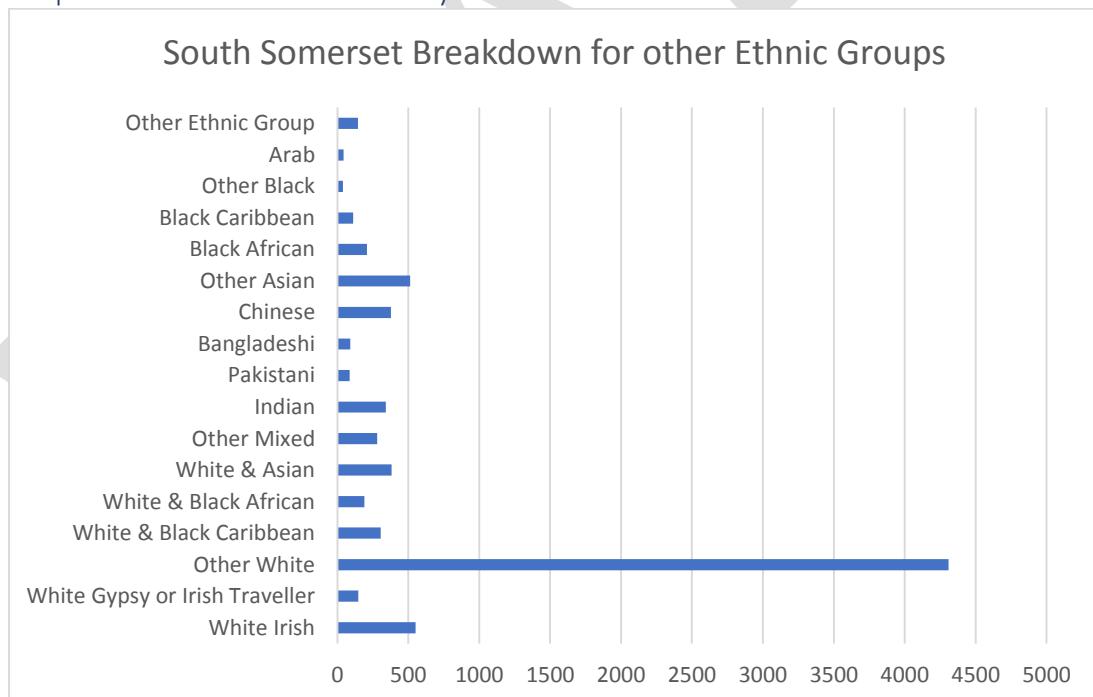
Graph 1: Mendip Ethnicity



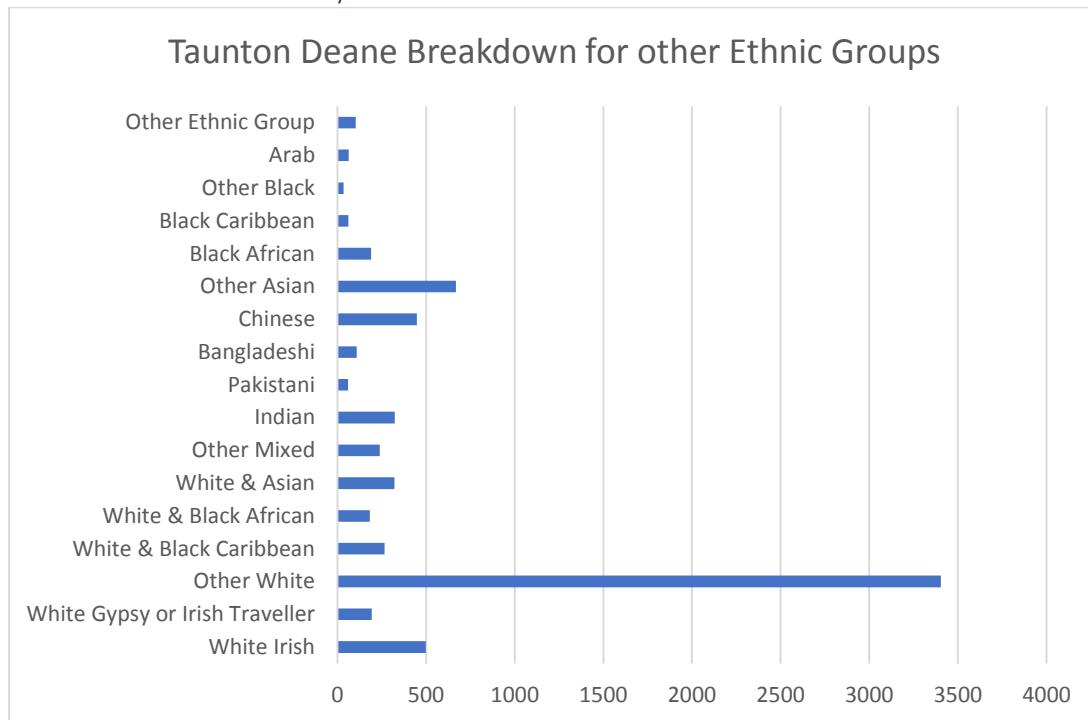
Graph 2: Sedgemoor Ethnicity



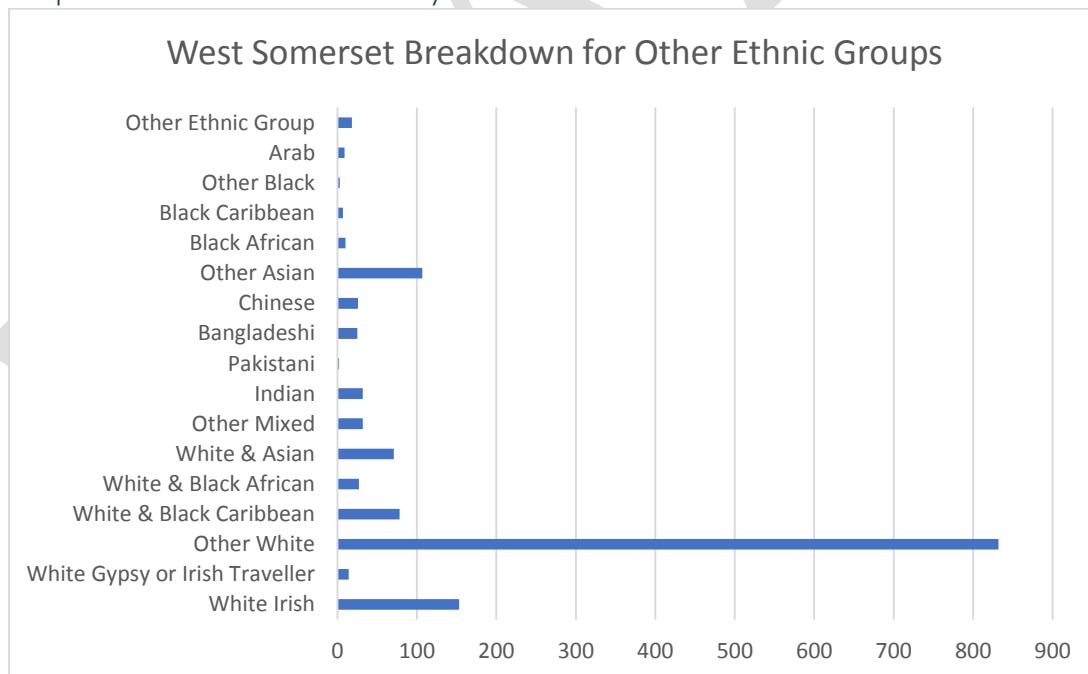
Graph 3: South Somerset Ethnicity



Graph 4: Taunton Deane Ethnicity



Graph 5: West Somerset Ethnicity



- 5.9 Economic activity for each District is shown below along with unemployment figures. (*Source: Nomis, Jul 2016 – Jun 2017*). The percentage economically active of the working age population for the South West region is 81.0% and for Great Britain this figure is 78.0%. The unemployment rate for the South West region is 3.7% and for Great Britain it is 4.6%.

Table 5: Economic Activity by District

	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	South West	Great Britain
Economically active (% of working age population)	79.3%	79.3%	78.4%	79.6%	84.4%	81.0%	78.0%
Unemployment	4.8%	4.8%	3.5%	4.3%	3.6%	3.7%	4.6%

## 6.0 HOUSING MARKET, DEMAND, SUPPLY AND POSSESSION ACTION

- 6.1 The table below describes what multiple of the lower quartile income in the area the lower quartile house price in the area is since 2012 (*Source: Shelter Databank*).

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 has also been assumed that a household would have a 10% deposit.

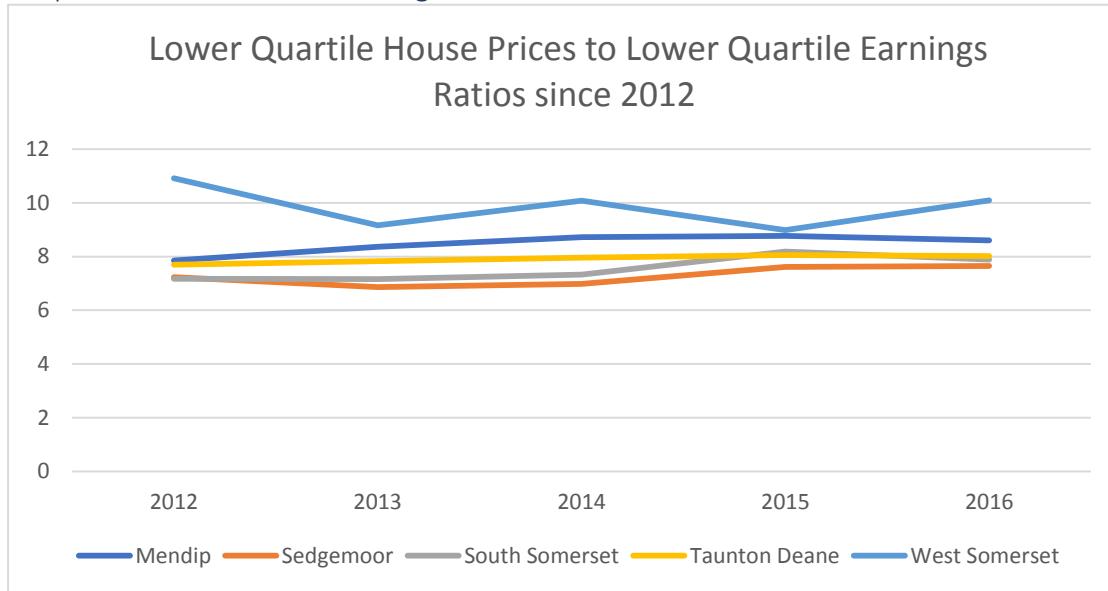
Table 6: Household Income Multiplier

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Mendip	7.85	8.37	8.73	8.77	8.61
Sedgemoor	7.23	6.87	6.98	7.62	7.65
South Somerset	7.17	7.16	7.33	8.19	7.89
Taunton Deane	7.7	7.83	7.96	8.06	8.02
West Somerset	10.92	9.17	10.09	8.99	10.1

In the South West region, the multiple in 2016 was 8.45 and in England it was 7.16. From the table above it can be seen that there is a large disparity in affordability by lower quartile incomes for lower quartile house prices across the Somerset Districts with West Somerset having the highest ratio in comparison to Sedgemoor and South Somerset Districts.

The graph below shows how the lower quartile income in the area compares to the lower quartile house price over time since 2012.

Graph 6: House Prices to Earnings



- 6.2 The table below shows the average selling house price in each area at the end of each quarter in the years since 2012. (*Source: Shelter Databank*)

Table 7: Average House Price

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Mendip	189,691	195,158	207,514	220,231	237,430
Sedgemoor	163,533	169,668	174,449	190,036	207,223
South Somerset	179,888	184,969	190,543	199,299	215,989
Taunton Deane	182,775	190,414	198,769	205,846	221,186
West Somerset	184,600	186,749	193,029	212,075	209,696

The following percentage changes demonstrate how these prices have changed over the last five years:

Mendip: 25.2% increase

Sedgemoor: 26.7% increase

South Somerset: 20.1% increase

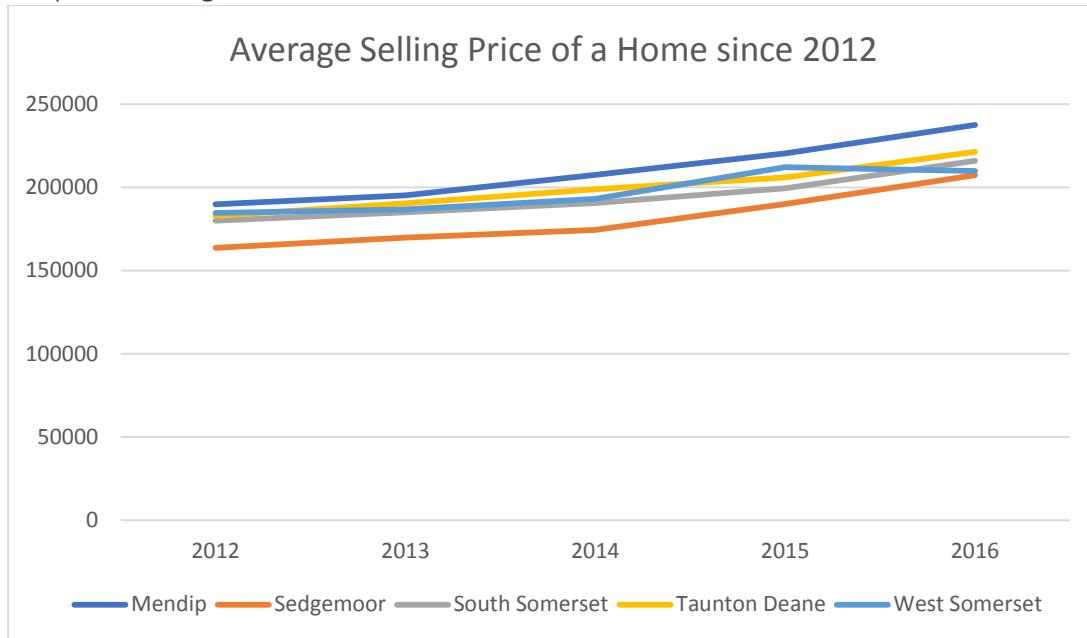
Taunton Deane: 21.0% increase

West Somerset: 13.6% increase

The average selling house price in 2016 for the South West region was £242,808 (higher than all of the five Districts in 2016) and £236,424 for England (also higher than all of the Districts other than Mendip).

The graph below shows how the average selling price of a house has varied over the last five years in each District.

Graph 7: Average House Price



- 6.3 The table below shows the median private rents by District since 2012. (*Source: Shelter Databank*). These figures compare to £675 in 2016 for the South West region and £650 for England.

Table 8: Median Private Rents

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	% Change
Mendip	575	600	603	625	625	+8.7%
Sedgemoor	550	560	570	575	575	+4.5%
South Somerset	575	575	575	595	600	+4.3%
Taunton Deane	575	595	595	595	600	+4.3%
West Somerset	595	595	595	600	600	+0.8%

Over the last five years, median private rents have gradually increased the percentage increases are shown below for each District:

Mendip: 8.7% increase

Sedgemoor: 4.5% increase

South Somerset: 4.3% increase

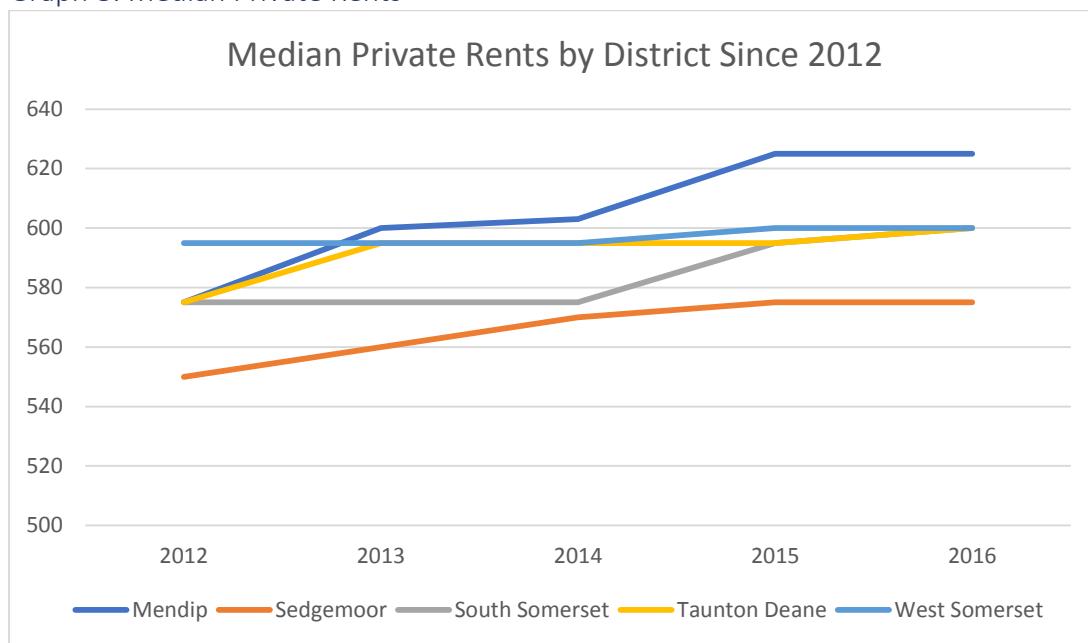
Taunton Deane: 4.3% increase

West Somerset: 0.8% increase

In the South West, median rents have increased by 12.5% and in England they have increased by 17.4% over the past five years.

The graph below shows the trends in the median private rent by District since 2012.

Graph 8: Median Private Rents



- 6.4 The table below shows the mean private rents by District since 2012. (*Source: Shelter Databank*). These figures compare to £748 in 2016 for the South West region and £839 for England.

Table 9: Mean Private Rents

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	% Change
Mendip	600	656	655	678	685	+14.2%
Sedgemoor	572	594	603	600	618	+8.0%
South Somerset	598	597	602	625	630	+5.4%
Taunton Deane	601	609	628	620	642	+6.8%
West Somerset	603	607	631	622	637	+5.6%

Over the last five years, mean private rents have gradually increased, the percentage increases are shown below for each District:

Mendip: 14.2% increase

Sedgemoor: 8.0% increase

South Somerset: 5.4% increase

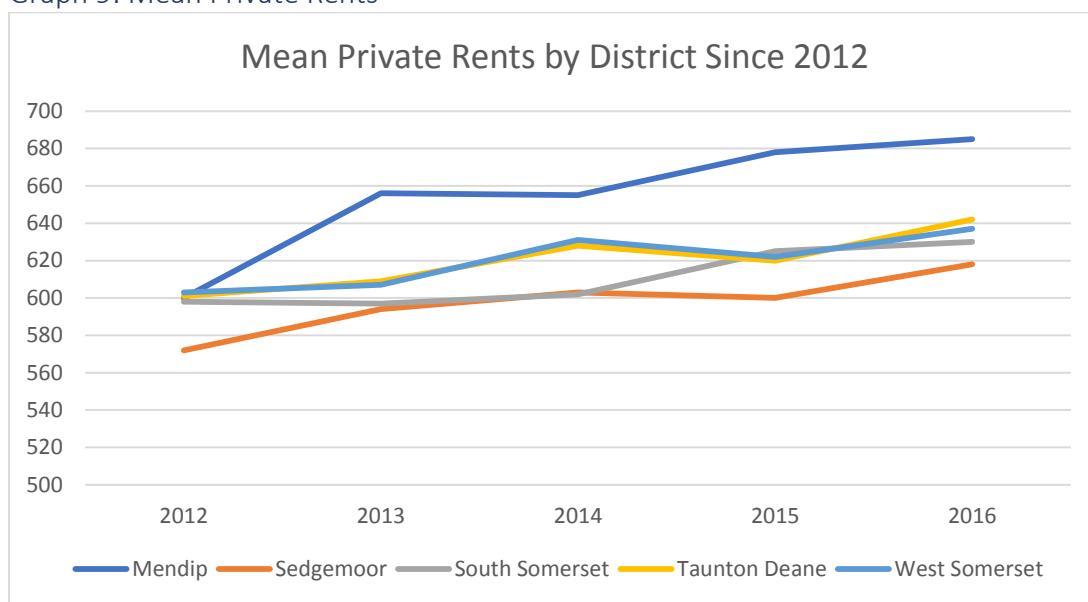
Taunton Deane: 6.8% increase

West Somerset: 5.6% increase

In the South West, mean rents have increased by 13.3% and in England they have increased by 19.0% over the past five years.

The graph below shows the trends in the mean private rents by District since 2012.

Graph 9: Mean Private Rents



- 6.5 The graph below shows the Local Housing Allowance rate in each district.

Graph 10: Local Housing Allowance



- 6.6 The table below shows the number of households on Homefinder Somerset since 2012.

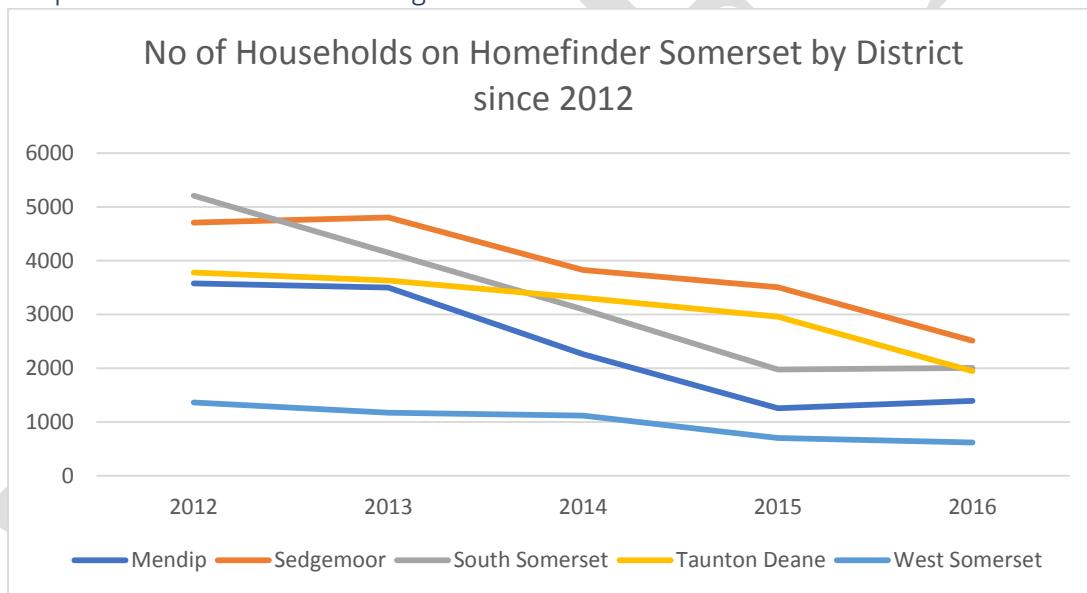
Table 10: No of Households Registered to Homefinder Somerset

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Mendip	3580	3500	2261	1258	1391
Sedgemoor	4706	4807	3830	3505	2511
South Somerset	5211	4150	3097	1975	2006
Taunton Deane	3783	3633	3310	2956	1949
West Somerset	1363	1173	1122	700	622
Total	19,643	17,263	13,620	10,394	8479

In total the number of households on Homefinder Somerset has decreased since 2012 by 56.8% across all the Districts.

The graph below shows the trend in the number of households on Homefinder Somerset since 2012.

Graph 11: No of Households Registered to Homefinder Somerset



- 6.7 The table below shows the current banding and property need per District for all households currently registered on Homefinder Somerset (December 2017).

Table 11: No Registered in Each Band on Homefinder Somerset

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Band</b>	<b>1 Bed</b>	<b>2 Bed</b>	<b>3 Bed</b>	<b>4 Bed</b>	<b>5 Bed</b>	<b>6 Bed</b>	<b>Total</b>
Mendip	Bronze	371	241	61	6			679
	Emergency	2			1			3
	Gold	62	23	8	6	7		106
	Silver	260	221	109	24	2		616
		695	485	178	37	9		<b>1404</b>
<hr/>								
Sedgemoor	Bronze	590	402	132	19	1	1	1145
	Emergency	3	1			1		5
	Gold	38	36	12	5	4	1	96
	Silver	187	180	119	47	2		535
		818	619	263	71	8	2	<b>1781</b>
<hr/>								
South Somerset	Bronze	618	342	115	10	1		1086
	Emergency	2	2					4
	Gold	74	49	19	6	8		156
	Silver	261	214	131	50	3	1	660
		955	607	265	66	12	1	<b>1906</b>
<hr/>								
Taunton Deane	Bronze	667	434	114	8	1		1224
	Emergency	3						3
	Gold	109	42	24	5	5		185
	Silver	204	180	151	52	2		589
		983	656	289	65	8		<b>2001</b>
<hr/>								
West Somerset	Bronze	249	114	41	5	1		410
	Emergency		1					1
	Gold	23	3	7	5	2	1	41
	Silver	84	52	29	16	3		184
		356	170	77	26	6	1	<b>636</b>
<hr/>								
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3807</b>	<b>2537</b>	<b>1072</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7728</b>

The banding criteria for each band is shown in the diagram below. The Emergency Band is for those applicants that require an 'urgent' move to ensure their safety and welfare. As you can see from the table above, the highest accommodation need for applicants within each District is for 1 bedroom accommodation.

Table 12: Banding Criteria for Homefinder Somerset

Gold Band – High need	Silver Band – Medium Need	Bronze Band – Low Need
<b>G</b> Homeless households who are owed a main homeless duty by a Homefinder Somerset partner authority. Applicants who lack 2 or more bedrooms or have been confirmed as overcrowded by a Local Authority officer.  Current supported housing residents or care leaving applicants who are assessed as ready to move on to independent living. High disrepair for people living in the private sector.	<b>S</b> Where the applicant lacks 1 bedroom in their current home. 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 there is a medium medical need. Medium welfare need	<b>B</b> Where an applicant is adequately housed.  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.  Applicants with a low medical need. Applicants with a low welfare need.
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 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.  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.  Victim of harassment or violence at their current property within the Homefinder Somerset area.	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.  Applicant has no housing need.
Applicant awarded 4 or more silver band housing needs with the exception of applicants found to be intentionally homeless.  Social housing tenants whose homes are subject to major works for rebuilding/renovation or re-designation.		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.  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.

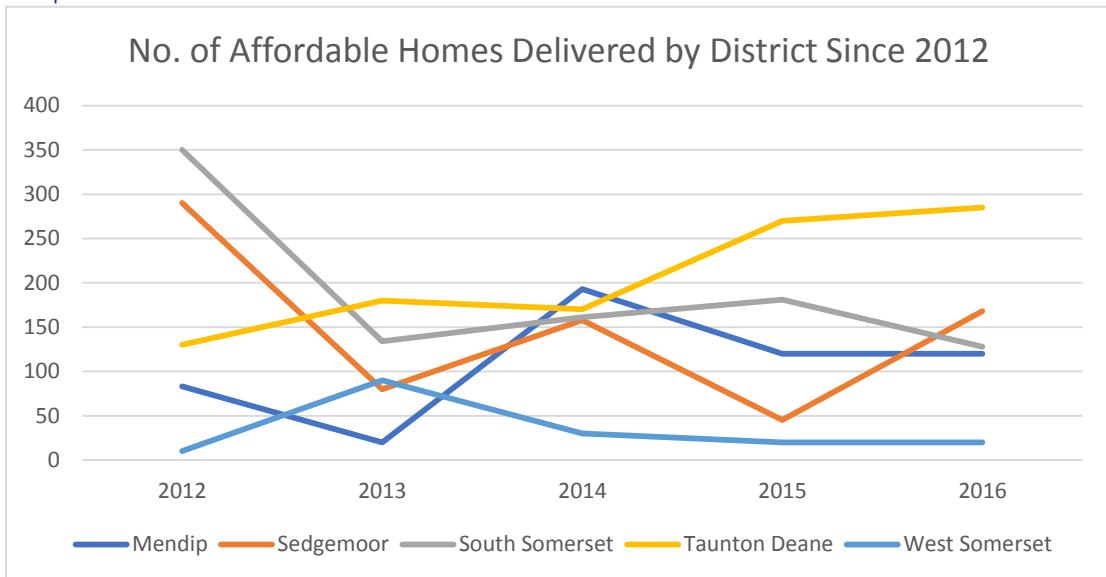
- 6.8 The table below shows the number of affordable homes delivered by each District since 2012. This includes the number of social rented, intermediate rented and low cost home ownership homes delivered through new build, acquisition or refurbishment during that time period.

Table 13: No of Affordable Homes Delivered

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Mendip	83	20	193	120	120
Sedgemoor	290	80	158	45	168
South Somerset	350	134	161	181	128
Taunton Deane	130	180	170	270	285
West Somerset	10	90	30	20	20

The graph below shows how the number of affordable homes delivered has varied by District since 2012.

Graph 12: No of Affordable Homes Delivered



- 6.9 The table below and included within the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016 demonstrates the estimated annual need for affordable housing by location.

Table 14: Estimated Annual Affordable Housing Need

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

\* Current need reflects the annual number of households already in need of affordable housing and includes households without housing (concealed households).

The table below shows the estimated size of dwellings needed for affordable housing 2014 to 2039 by Local Authority area. This table is sourced from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016.

Table 15: Estimated Size of 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%

6.10 The table below shows the older person population by District in 2015. This information has been taken from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016.

Table 16: Older Population by District

		Under 65	65-74	75-84	85+	Total	Total 65+
Mendip	Pop	87,102	13,552	7,674	3,396	11,724	24,622
	% pop	78.0%	12.1%	6.9%	3.0%	100.0%	22.0%
Sedgemoor	Pop	93,251	14,924	8,408	3,677	120,260	27,009
	% pop	77.5%	12.4%	7.0%	3.1%	100.0%	22.5%
South Somerset	Pop	125,125	21,661	12,499	5,697	164,982	39,857
	% pop	75.8%	13.1%	7.6%	3.5%	100.0%	24.2%
Taunton Deane	Pop	88,820	13,154	7,957	4,090	114,021	25,201
	% pop	77.9%	11.5%	7.0%	3.6%	100.0%	22.1%
Somerset	Pop	417,458	69,350	40,109	18,473	545,390	127,932
	% pop	76.5%	12.7%	7.4%	3.4%	100.0%	23.5%
South West	% pop	78.6%	11.6%	6.8%	3.0%	100.0%	21.4%
England	% pop	82.3%	9.6%	5.7%	2.4%	100.0%	17.7%

The table below shows the projected change in population of older persons (2014 to 2039) by District. This table has been sourced from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016.

Table 17: Projected Population Change – Older Persons 2014-2039

	Under 65	65-74	75-84	85+	Total	Total 65+
Mendip	-0.7%	32.8%	85.6%	159.4%	14.0%	67.3%
Sedgemoor	9.0%	33.4%	85.2%	151.0%	21.6%	65.8%
South Somerset	-1.9%	22.6%	74.8%	150.8%	12.2%	57.5%
Taunton Deane	2.8%	31.3%	80.8%	154.3%	16.8%	66.9%
Somerset	1.3%	27.6%	78.0%	137.4%	16.4%	57.4%
South West	5.4%	27.3%	72.1%	137.4%	16.4%	57.4%
England	7.4%	33.3%	70.1%	137.5%	16.5%	59.2%

This table suggests that by 2039, Mendip will have experienced the largest percentage growth in population over the age of 65 with South Somerset experiencing the smallest percentage growth.

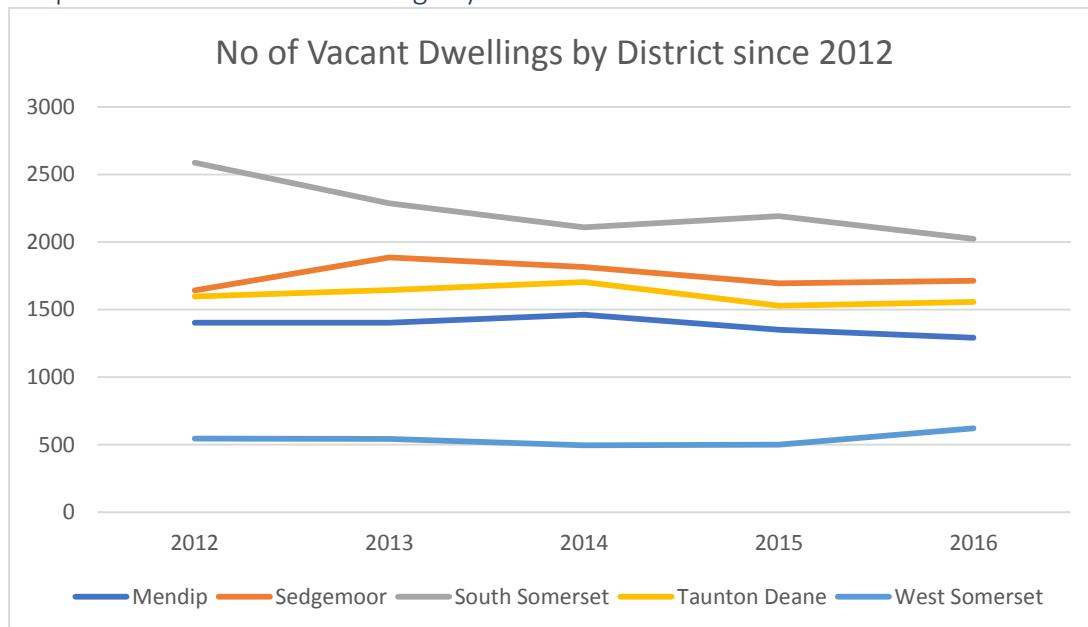
6.11 The table below shows the number of vacant dwellings per District since 2012. (Source: *Shelter Databank*)

Table 18: No of Vacant Dwellings

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Mendip	1403	1402	1461	1351	1292 (2.54%)
Sedgemoor	1643	1886	1815	1694	1714 (3.19%)
South Somerset	2588	2286	2108	2191	2023 (2.65%)
Taunton Deane	1596	1644	1703	1529	1557 (2.97%)
West Somerset	545	544	495	501	622 (3.45%)

The graph below shows how the number of vacant dwellings have changed by District since 2012.

Graph 13: No of Vacant Dwellings by District



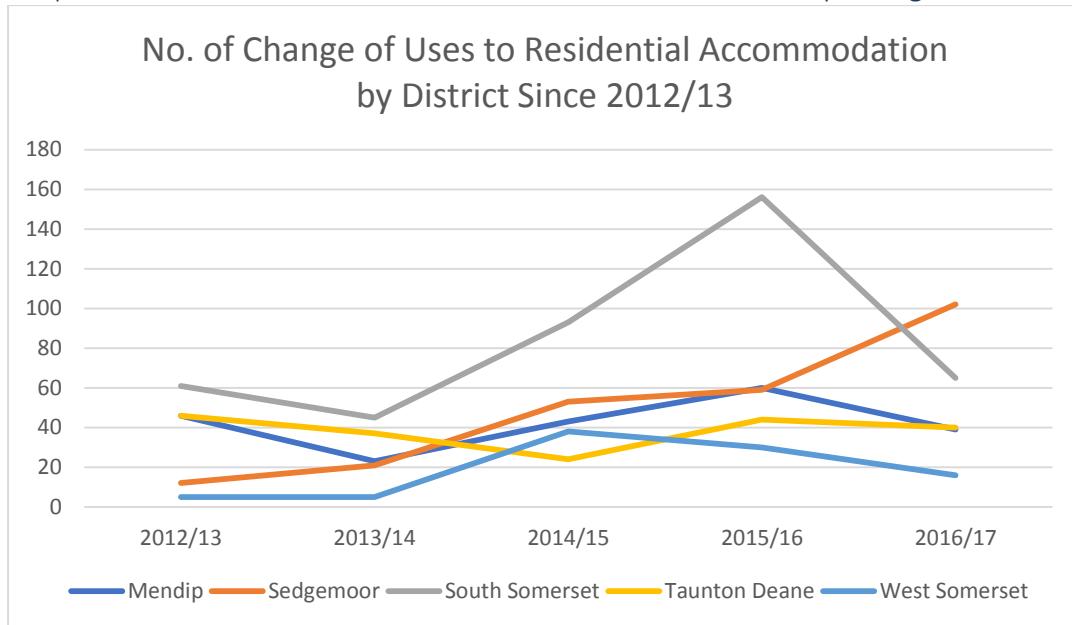
- 6.12 The table below shows the number of properties in each District where a change of use has been exercised in order to create residential accommodation since 2012/13 (*Source: Government Live Tables*).

Table 19: No of Units of Residential Accommodation Created by Change of Use

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Mendip	46	23	43	60	39
Sedgemoor	12	21	53	59	102
South Somerset	61	45	93	156	65
Taunton Deane	46	37	24	44	40
West Somerset	5	5	38	30	16

The graph below shows the number of new residential accommodation units created from change of use since 2012/13. The Sedgemoor District shows a spike in numbers for the 2016/17 period which could well be attributed to the start of the Hinkley Point development.

Graph 14: No of Units of Residential Accommodation Created by Change of Use



- 6.13 The table below shows the possession claims taken by landlords within each District since 2012. (Source: *Shelter Databank*)

Table 20: Possession Claims taken by Landlords

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Mendip	131	144	198	119	134
Sedgemoor	164	171	165	161	193
South Somerset	212	239	213	189	184
Taunton Deane	163	211	203	235	189
West Somerset	26	12	7	13	30

The change over the last five years in each District is shown as a percentage below:

Mendip: 3.1% increase

Sedgemoor: 17.7% increase

South Somerset: 13.2% decrease

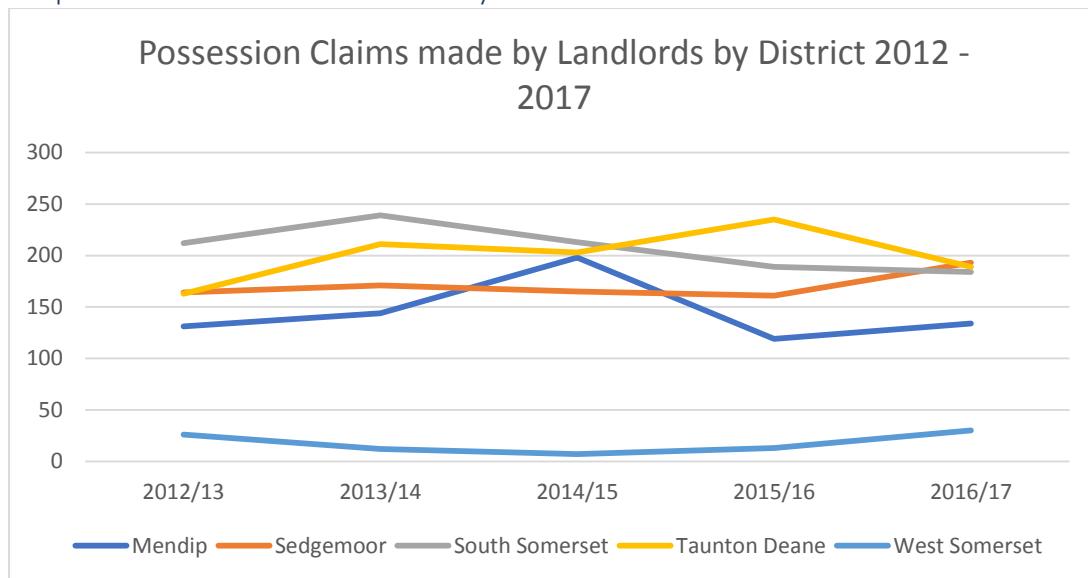
Taunton Deane: 16.0% increase

West Somerset: 15.4% increase

This compares to a 7.1% increase in the South West region and an 8.9% decrease in England.

The graph below demonstrates the trends by District in possession claims by landlords since 2012.

Graph 15: Possession Claims taken by Landlords



- 6.14 The table below shows the number of possession claims issued by mortgage lenders by District since 2012. (Source: *Shelter Databank*)

Table 21: Possession Claims Issued by Mortgage Lenders

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Mendip	77	87	66	15	25
Sedgemoor	116	102	65	31	30
South Somerset	120	97	71	32	42
Taunton Deane	67	51	41	21	18
West Somerset	0	31	6	0	1

The change over the last five years in each District is shown as a percentage below:

Mendip: 67.5% decrease

Sedgemoor: 74.1% decrease

South Somerset: 65% decrease

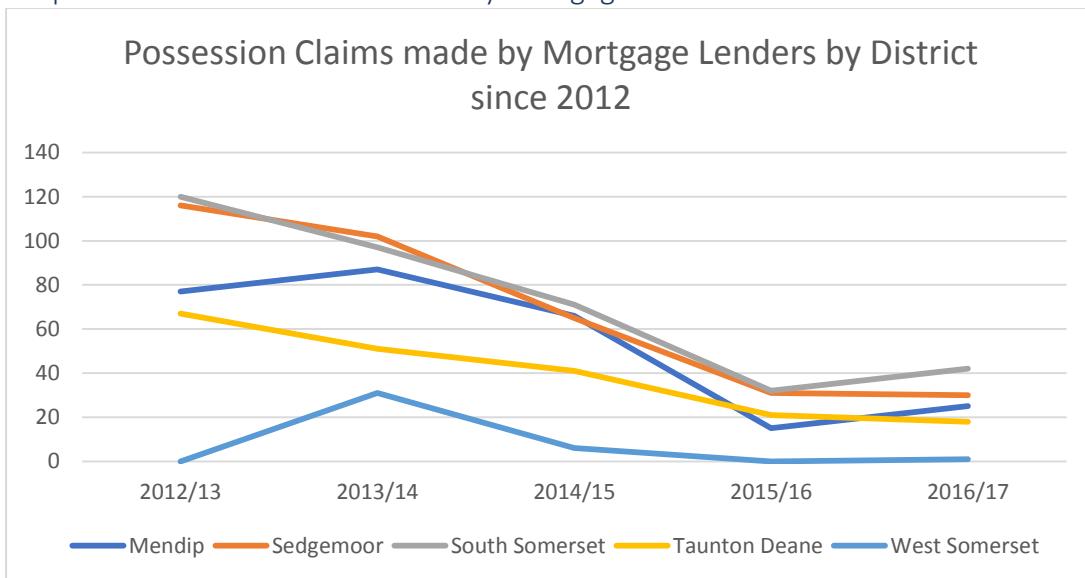
Taunton Deane: 73.1% decrease

West Somerset: 100% increase

This compares to a 69.9% decrease in the South West region and a 69.4% decrease in England.

The graph below demonstrates the trends by District in the number of possession claims made by mortgage lenders since 2012.

Graph 16: Possession Claims Issued by Mortgage Lenders



## 6.15 SUMMARY OF DATA

Average house prices are continuing to rise across the Somerset Districts. The increases seen over the last five years range from 13.6% in West Somerset to 26.7% in Sedgemoor. However, the average house price in the five Districts is still lower than that of the South West region, and with the exception of Mendip, also lower than the average for England.

Low wage levels within the five Districts coupled with house prices make it impossible for first time buyers to purchase on the open market without substantial deposit sums.

The multiple of the lower quartile income to lower quartile property price ranges from 7.65 in Sedgemoor to 10.1 in West Somerset. All Districts have a higher multiple than the comparative for England. Sedgemoor, South Somerset and Taunton Deane have a lower multiple compared to the South West region where as Mendip and West Somerset are higher. A household is generally assumed to be able to afford a property at less than four times multiple.

Median private rents have increased in all Districts over the last 5 years. The largest increase was seen in Mendip (8.7% increase) and the smallest increase was seen in West Somerset (0.8% increase). All Districts have seen much smaller increases in median private rents than the comparative increases for the South West region and England.

Mean private rents have also increased in all Districts over the last 5 years. The largest increase was seen in Mendip (14.2% increase) and the smallest increase was seen in West Somerset (5.4% increase). All Districts have seen smaller increases in mean private rents than the comparative increases for the South West region and England with the exception of Mendip which had a higher increase in mean rent than the South West region average.

Local Housing Allowance rates have not been uprated for the past two years and prior to that they were only uprated at a maximum of 1% per annum. Therefore, comparing these marginal increases to the increases the Districts have seen over the last five years in both median and

mean rents, it can be concluded that the private rented sector in the Districts is becoming less affordable for low income households.

All the District Councils in Somerset use Homefinder Somerset to allocate affordable housing. The number of households on Homefinder Somerset has decreased since 2012 by 56.8% across all the Districts. There are currently 7,728 households registered with Homefinder Somerset across four different bands – Emergency, Gold, Silver and Bronze and ranging in need from 1 bed to 6 bed need. The highest need in all Districts is for 1 bedroom accommodation.

Population estimates suggest that by 2039, the Districts will experience a big shift in ageing population. Mendip will experience the largest percentage growth in population over the age of 65 years with a 67.3% increase with the number of over 85 year olds projected to increase by 159.4%. South Somerset will experience the smallest growth in the over 65 year age group with a 57.5% increase of which the over 85 year old group will have an increase of 150.8%. Therefore, any homeless strategy must prepare to provide housing options to an aging population.

The number of vacant dwellings has remained fairly constant across the Districts over the last five years. The highest number of vacant properties can be found in South Somerset where there are 2,023 vacant dwellings. The smallest number is found in West Somerset where there are 622 vacant dwellings. However, as a percentage of the total dwelling stock within the Borough, West Somerset has the highest percentage of vacant dwellings at 3.45% of all dwellings.

The change in possession claims initiated by landlords over the past five years has varied by District. All Districts have shown an increase in claims with the exception of South Somerset where there has been a decrease in claims by 13.2%.

All Districts have shown a substantial decrease in the number of possession claims issued by mortgage lenders. These range from a 65.0% decrease in South Somerset to a 100% increase in West Somerset, albeit from an extremely low starting point. These decreases are comparative to those experienced across the South West region and England.

## 7.0 HOMELESSNESS IN MENDIP, SEDGEMOOR, SOUTH SOMERSET, TAUNTON DEANE & WEST SOMERSET

- 7.1 Since the first joint homelessness strategy between the Districts in 2008, there has been a focus on the prevention and relief of homelessness. The number of homeless prevention and relief cases recorded by each Local Authority is shown in the table below (*Source: Shelter databank*):

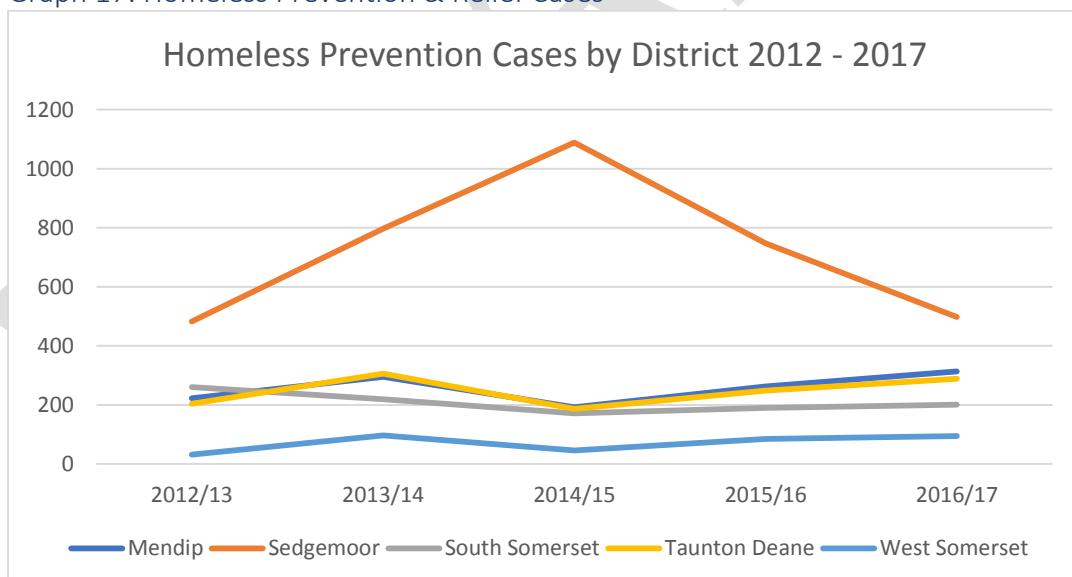
Table 22: Homeless Prevention & Relief Cases

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	% Change
Mendip	222	295	192	263	313	+41.0%
Sedgemoor	483	797	1089	747	498	+3.1%
South Somerset	260	219	172	190	201	-22.7%
Taunton Deane	204	306	187	248	289	+41.7%
West Somerset	32	97	46	85	94	+193.8%

In England, there has been an increase of 6.1% of homeless prevention and relief cases.

The graph below demonstrates the trends in each Local Authority area of homeless prevention cases.

Graph 17: Homeless Prevention & Relief Cases



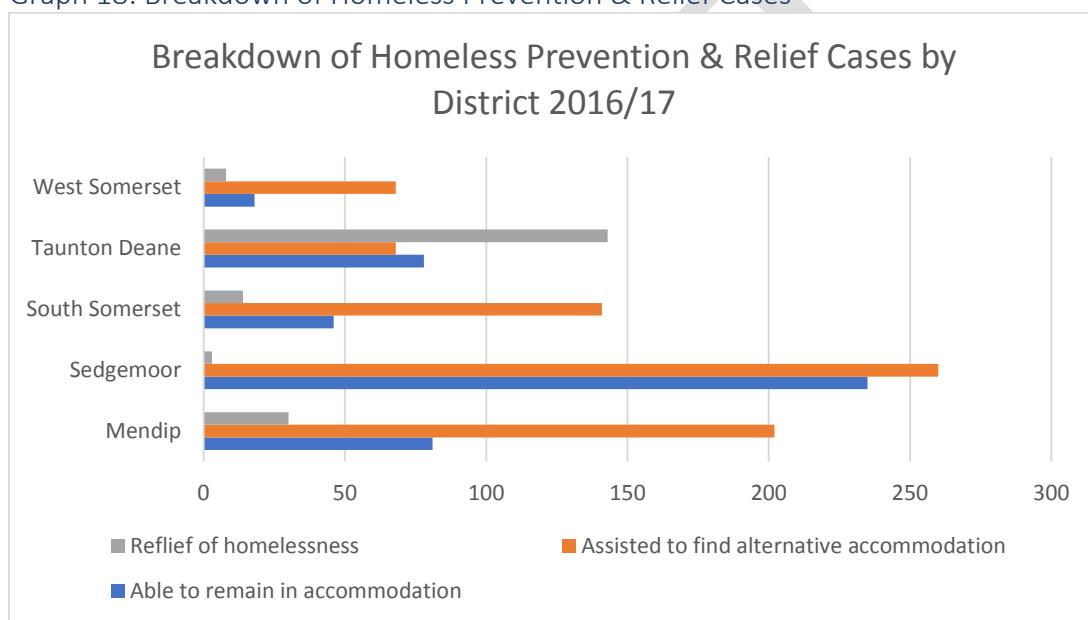
The number of homeless prevention and relief cases can be further broken down in order to analyse how many households were assisted to remain in their accommodation, how many households were assisted to move to alternative accommodation and in how many cases homelessness was effectively relieved. The breakdown of these figures for 2016/17 is shown in the table below by District.

Table 23: Breakdown of Homeless Prevention & Relief Cases

	Assisted to remain in accommodation	Assisted into alternative accommodation	Successful homelessness relief	Total
Mendip	81	202	30	313
Sedgemoor	235	260	3	498
South Somerset	46	141	14	201
Taunton Deane	78	68	143	289
West Somerset	18	68	8	94

The bar graph below demonstrates the breakdown of homeless prevention and relief cases by District in 2016/17.

Graph 18: Breakdown of Homeless Prevention & Relief Cases



- 7.2 The number of homeless acceptances made by each District since 2012 is shown in the table below. (Source: *Shelter Databank*)

Table 24: Homeless Acceptances

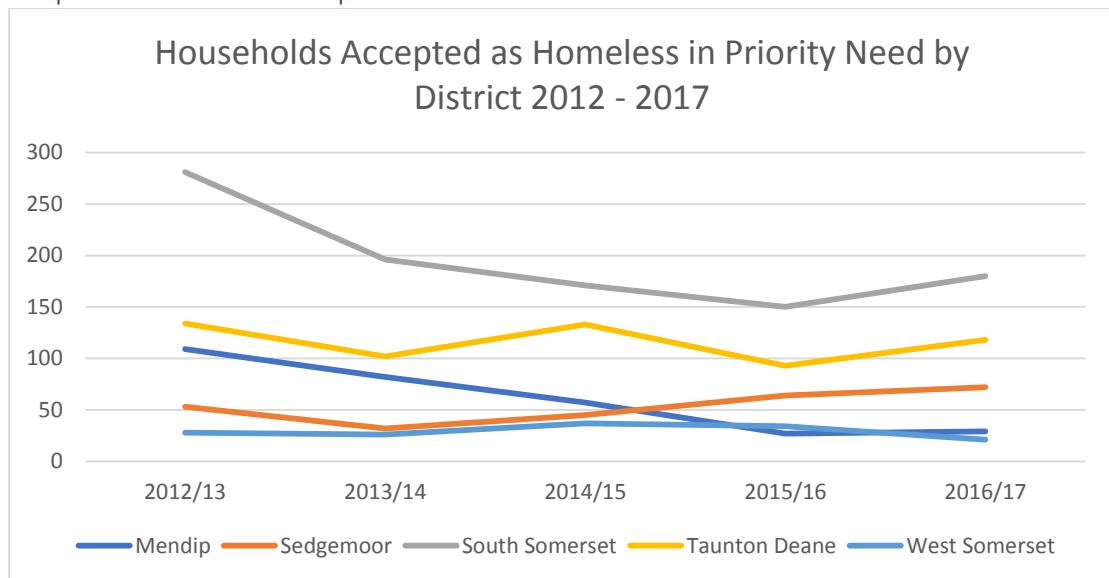
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	% Change
Mendip	126	92	61	24	34	-73.0%
Sedgemoor	53	32	45	64	72	+35.8%
South Somerset	255	221	177	150	165	-35.3%
Taunton Deane	139	106	133	90	97	-30.2%
West Somerset	33	16	34	36	22	-33.3%

The change experienced by each District over the last five years is shown as a percentage above.

In the South West, there was a 16.4% increase in the same period and in England there was a 10.8% increase.

The graph below demonstrates the trends in each Local Authority area of homeless cases accepted.

Graph 19: Homeless Acceptances



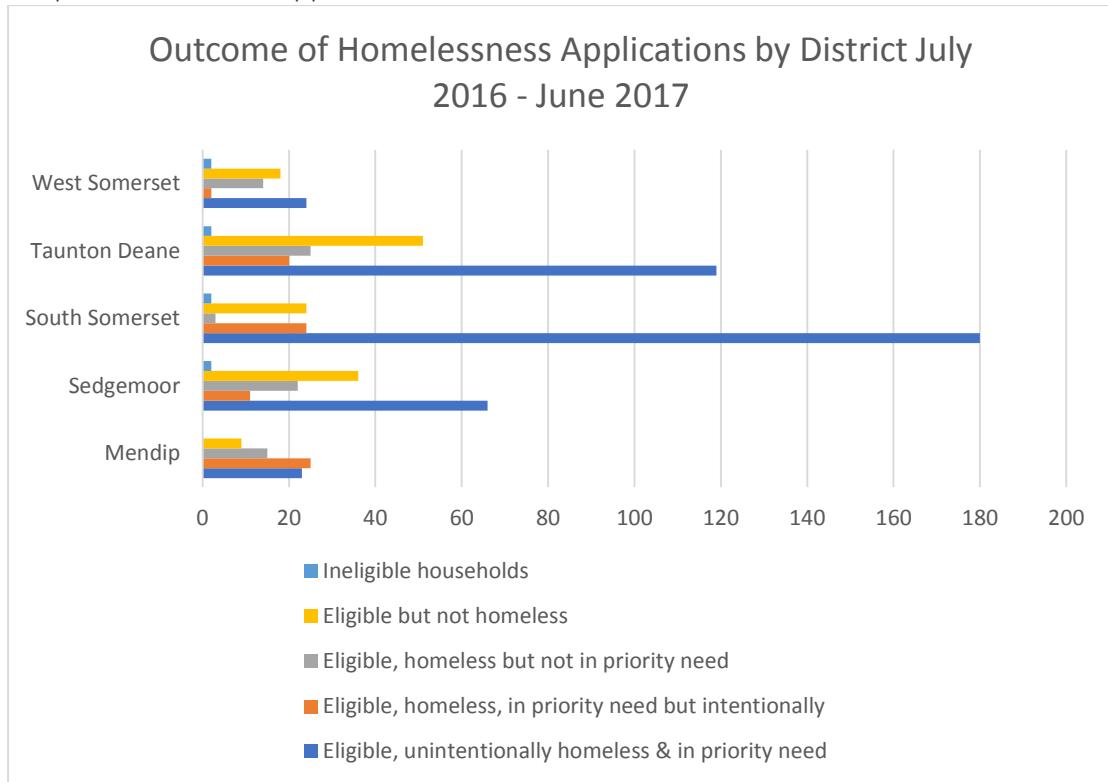
- 7.3 The table below shows the outcome of homelessness applications by District in the period July 2016 to June 2017. (Source: *Government Live Tables*)

Table 25: Homeless Applications Outcomes

	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset
Eligible, unintentionally homeless & in priority need	23	66	180	119	24
Eligible, homeless, in priority need but intentionally	25	11	24	20	2
Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	15	22	3	25	14
Eligible but not homeless	9	36	24	51	18
Ineligible households	0	2	2	2	2

The graph below shows the outcome of homeless decisions by District during the period July 2016 to June 2017.

Graph 20: Homeless Applications Outcomes



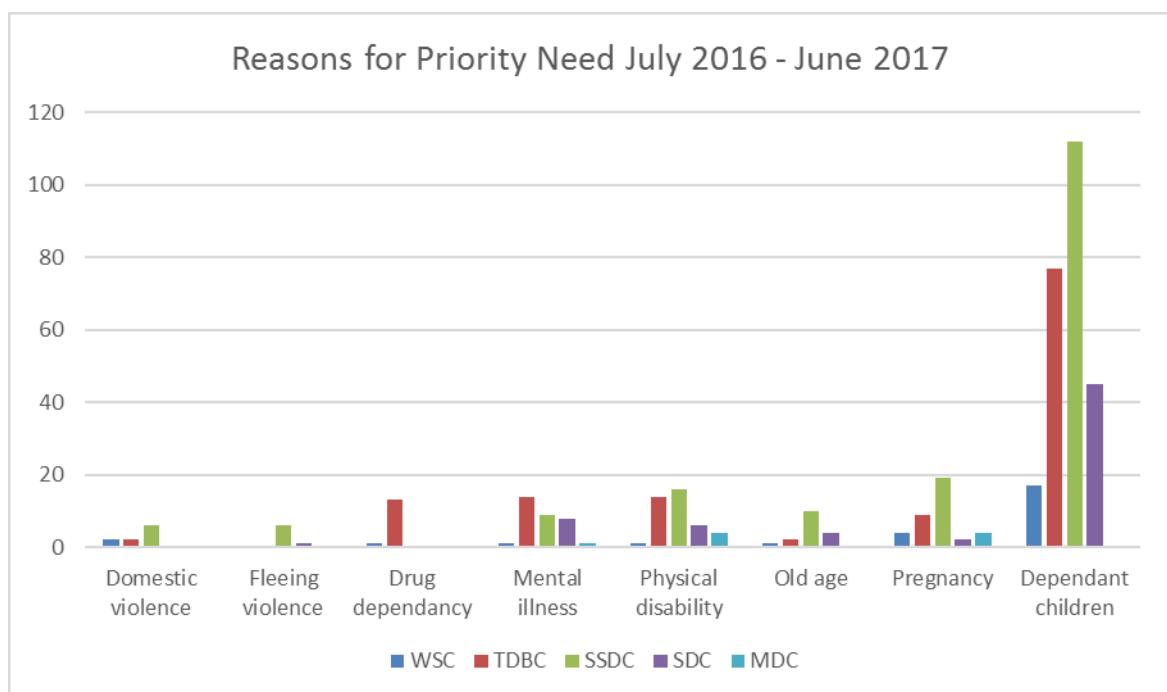
- 7.4 The table below shows the ethnicity of eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need households by District over the last four quarters of data available (July 2016 to June 2017). (Source: Government Live Tables)

Table 26: Homeless Acceptances Ethnicity Breakdown

	White	Black	Asian	Mixed	Ethnicity not stated	Other
Mendip	19	0	0	0	3	2
Sedgemoor	61	0	0	0	0	0
South Somerset	155	0	0	1	21	3
Taunton Deane	115	1	1	3	1	0
West Somerset	24	0	0	0	0	0

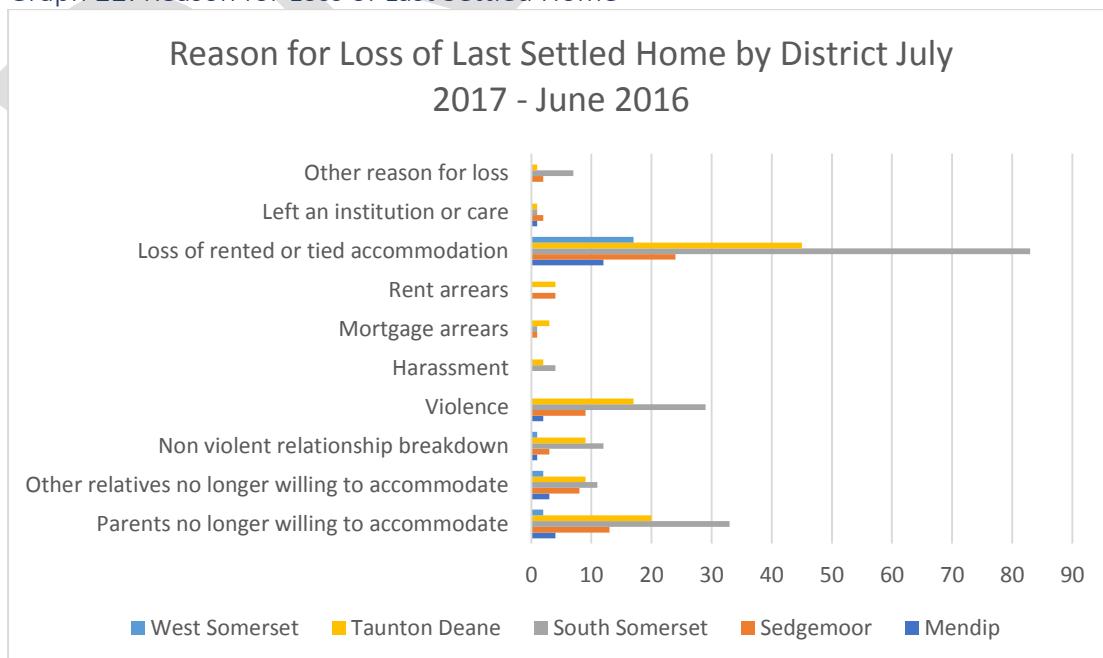
- 7.5 The bar graph below shows the reason for priority need for applicant households found to be unintentionally homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need for July 2016 to June 2017. (Source: Government Live Tables)

Graph 21: Reason for Priority Need



- 7.6 The bar graph below shows the reason for the loss of last settled home for applicant households found to be unintentionally homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need for July 2016 to June 2017. (Source: Government Live Tables)

Graph 22: Reason for Loss of Last Settled Home



- 7.7 The table below shows the number of households in temporary accommodation within each District since 2012 at the end of quarter 3. (Source: Shelter Databank)

Table 27: No of Households in Temporary Accommodation

	2012 Q3	2013 Q3	2014 Q3	2015 Q3	2016 Q3
Mendip	30	19	4	4	4
Sedgemoor	15	21	19	17	24
South Somerset	50	37	32	34	31
Taunton Deane	37	39	35	29	26
West Somerset	5	0	0	6	0

The change in use of temporary accommodation over the last five years by each District is shown below:

Mendip: 86.7% decrease

Sedgemoor: 60.0% increase

South Somerset: 38.0% decrease

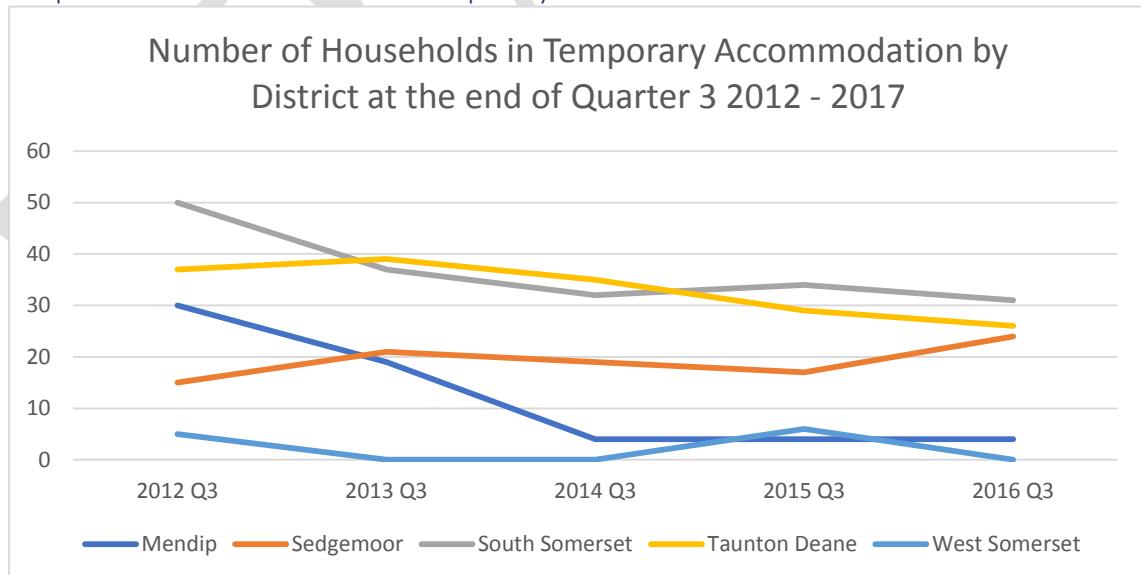
Taunton Deane: 29.7% decrease

West Somerset: 100.0% decrease

The South West region recorded a 17.7% increase in the same period and England recorded a 40.9% increase in the use of temporary accommodation.

The graph below demonstrates the trends for each Local Authority in its use of temporary accommodation over the last few years.

Graph 23: No of Households in Temporary Accommodation



- 7.8 The table below shows the number of households with dependent children in temporary accommodation by District since 2012 at the end of quarter 3.

Table 28: No of Households with Dependent Children in Temporary Accommodation

	2012 Q3	2013 Q3	2014 Q3	2015 Q3	2016 Q3
Mendip	28	16	11	0	7
Sedgemoor	8	11	11	10	13
South Somerset	27	19	8	10	7
Taunton Deane	26	26	23	15	19
West Somerset	5	0	0	6	0

The change over the last five years in percentages is shown below for each District:

Mendip: 75.0% decrease

Sedgemoor: 62.5% increase

South Somerset: 74.0% decrease

Taunton Deane: 26.9% decrease

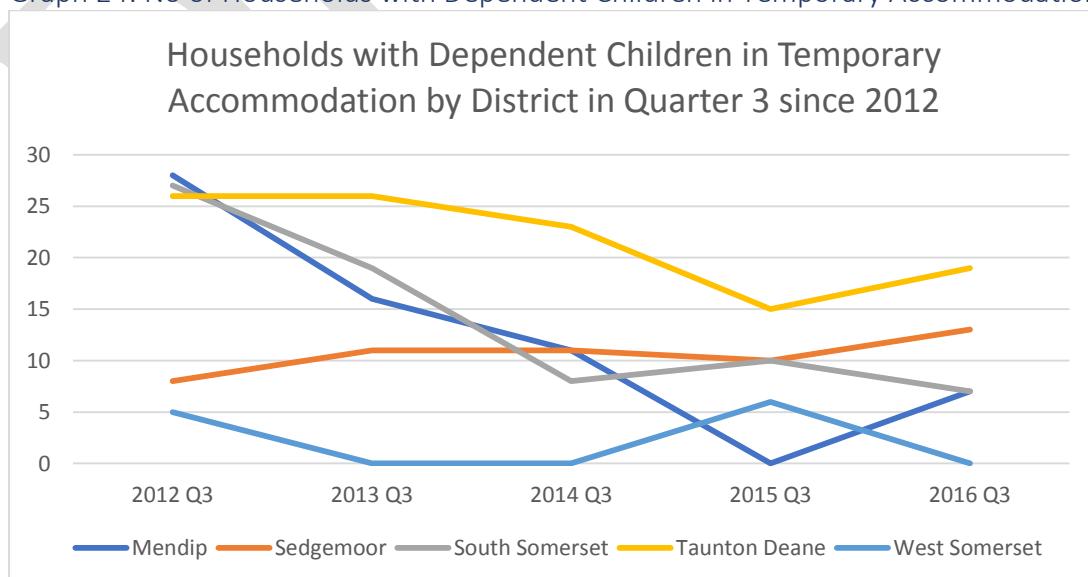
West Somerset: 100.0% decrease

Over the same period, the comparative percentages for the South West region and England were 35.7% increase and 47.8% increase respectively.

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

The graph below demonstrates the trends for each Local Authority in the number of households with dependent children in temporary accommodation since 2012.

Graph 24: No of Households with Dependent Children in Temporary Accommodation



- 7.9 The table below shows the number of households found to be intentionally homeless since 2012 by District.

Table 29: Households Found Intentionally Homeless

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Mendip	16	12	23	31	30
Sedgemoor	7	8	6	12	10
South Somerset	26	22	10	22	18
Taunton Deane	3	6	11	11	19
West Somerset	10	11	7	4	0

The percentage change over the past five years for each District are shown below:

Mendip: 87.5% increase

Sedgemoor: 42.9% increase

South Somerset: 30.8% decrease

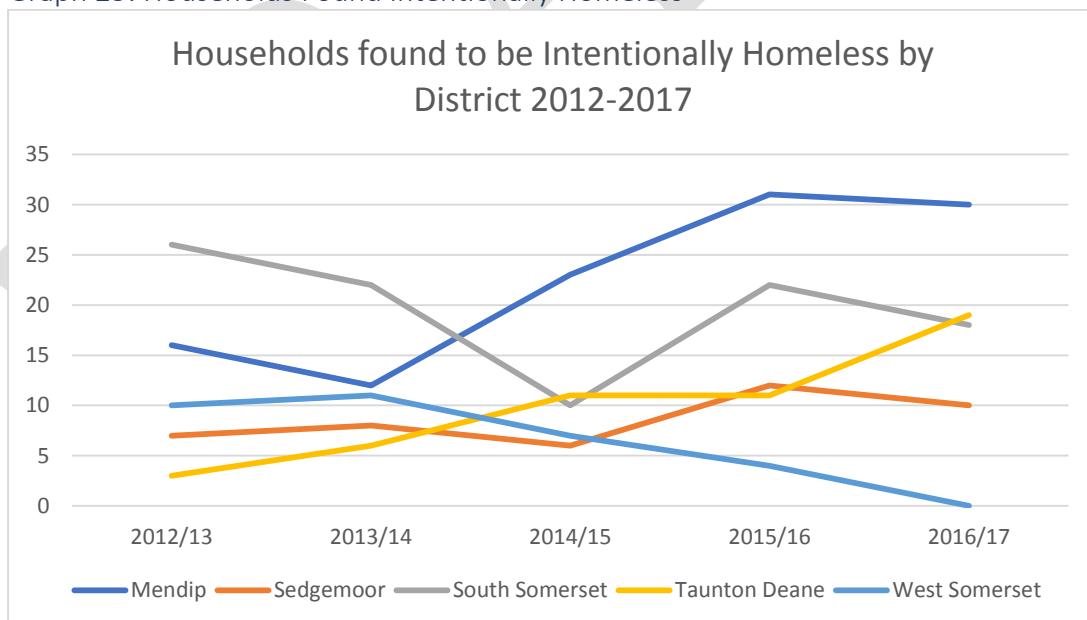
Taunton Deane: 533% increase

West Somerset: 100.0% decrease

In the South West region there was 30.3% increase over the same time period and in England, a 20.3% increase.

The graph below demonstrates the trends for each Local Authority in the number of households found to be intentionally homeless.

Graph 25: Households Found Intentionally Homeless



- 7.10 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.

Table 30: Extent of Rough Sleeping

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

The change over the last five years in terms of percentages is shown below:

Mendip: 15.8% decrease

Sedgemoor: 60.0% decrease

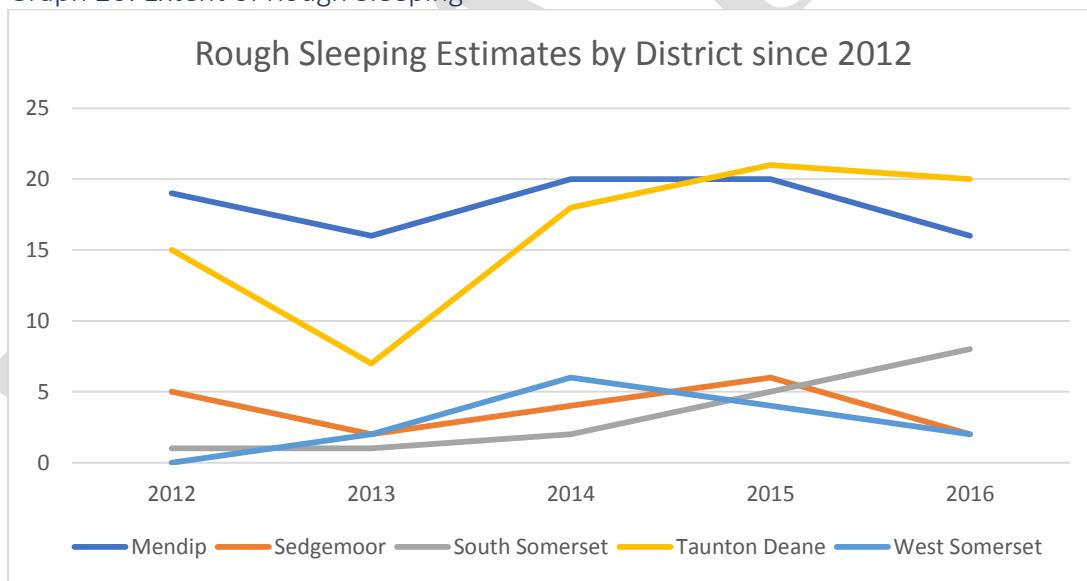
South Somerset: 700.0% increase

Taunton Deane: 33.3% increase

West Somerset: 200.0% increase

The graph below demonstrates the trends in rough sleeping estimates by District since 2012.

Graph 26: Extent of Rough Sleeping



## 7.11 SUMMARY OF DATA

The change in number of homeless prevention and relief cases has been very varied across the Districts over the last five years. South Somerset has experienced a decrease of 22.7% whereas West Somerset has experienced an increase of 193.8%. This compares to a 6.1% increase across England.

When further broken down, all Districts prevented more homelessness by assisting households into alternative accommodation than assisting clients to remain in their homes with the exception of Taunton Deane. Taunton Deane had much higher rates of homelessness relief and households assisted to remain in existing accommodation.

All districts saw a decrease in homeless households accepted over the last five years except Sedgemoor which saw a 35.8% increase. The largest decrease was seen in Mendip where the percentage decrease in homeless household acceptances was 73.0%. Both the South West region and England saw increases in homeless households accepted. This was 16.4% in the South West and 10.8% in England.

The main reasons for priority need of homeless applicants across all the Districts during the period July 2016 to June 2017 were households with dependent children, pregnancy, disability, old age, fleeing violence, mental illness and drug dependency.

The main reasons for becoming homeless across all the Districts for the period July 2016 to June 2017 were loss of tied or rented accommodation, parents or relatives no longer willing to accommodate and violence.

Use of temporary accommodation in the Districts over the monitored period for the last five years has mostly decreased across the Districts. Sedgemoor was the only District to experience an increase of 60.0%. Both the South West and England experienced percentage increases over the same period of 17.7% and 40.9% respectively.

The change in use of temporary accommodation for households with dependent children over the monitored period for the last five years is also similar. West Somerset achieved a 100.0% reduction whereas Sedgemoor had a 62.5% increase. Both the South West and England experienced percentage increases over the same period of 35.7% and 47.8% respectively.

The number of households becoming homeless intentionally has decreased in two Districts over the last five years – South Somerset and West Somerset. The other Districts all experienced an increase. Both the South West and England experienced increases of 30.3% and 20.3% each.

The extent of rough sleeping by the official autumn street counts each year has varied considerably by District over the last five years. South Somerset has seen a 700% increase, West Somerset a 200% increase and Taunton Deane an increase of 33.3%. Mendip and Sedgemoor both registered decreases over the last five years. The disparity in data could well be explained by rough sleepers moving through areas and presenting in other Districts.

## 8.0 CREATING THE NEW STRATEGY – CONSULTATION

- 8.1 In order to assess the effectiveness of the outgoing homelessness strategy and to examine the ongoing homelessness issues in the area, extensive consultation was undertaken with the five Districts as well as their partners.
- 8.2 The homelessness managers from each Local Authority were invited to submit their views via an online survey. This survey asked them to specify what actions from the previous homelessness strategy had been difficult to achieve, what the ongoing homelessness issues were for their areas and any examples of best practise they wished to highlight. They were also asked to provide a list of partners who should also be consulted as part of the exercise. A response was received from each of the five Somerset Local Authority Districts.

- 8.3 The named partners were then also encouraged to complete an online survey in order to gauge their views on the outgoing homelessness strategy and give feedback on the ongoing homelessness issues affecting their geographical area, their partners and their areas of work. In total, 51 responses were received. 143 partners were invited to submit feedback via the online survey giving a response rate of 35.7%.
- 8.4 Two consultation events were held on Thursday 2 November 2017 to which all named partners were invited to attend. A lunchtime session was held at the Sedgemoor District Council offices and a further session was held in Street later in the afternoon. 143 partners were invited to attend these sessions and across both sessions there were 45 attendees, giving a response rate of 31.5% for this consultation method.
- 8.5 Twelve key stakeholders of the 143 named partners were consulted with on a more direct basis, either by phone or email interview.

## 9.0 OUTGOING HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

The outgoing homelessness strategy covering Mendip, Sedgemoor, South Somerset, Taunton Deane and West Somerset for the period 2013 to 2016 had three main goals;

- 1) Reduction and prevention of homelessness
- 2) Provision of appropriate advice, accommodation and support if a crisis occurs
- 3) Maximising effective partnership working to provide cost effective and responsive services

### 9.1 REDUCTION AND PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS

Actions suggested under this goal heading included:

- Continued use of the Homeless Prevention Fund- proactive use of funds to reduce homelessness using innovative solutions
- Bond/Deposits schemes and rent in advance - helps homeless households secure privately rented accommodation
- No Second Night Out - All five authorities have signed up to deliver the Governments 'no second night out vision'. We are also part of the Avon and Somerset Rough Sleepers Group, which aims to prevent rough sleeping and improve the advice given to single non-priority homeless.
- Provide support and incentives to private sector landlords to encourage them to let their properties to homeless or threatened with homelessness households.
- Ensure households threatened with homelessness are given the right advice as soon as it is needed
- Work with registered providers to maximise the number of properties let through Homefinder Somerset
- Mediation especially when relationships have broken down at home and young people are asked to leave their accommodation
- Provide good quality advice to landlords, people threatened with homelessness and the general public

### 9.2 PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE ADVICE, ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT IF A CRISIS OCCURS

Actions suggested under this goal heading included:

- Ensuring staff have up to date training to give the correct advice and information to applicants
- To facilitate grants to bring empty properties back into occupation
- To facilitate grants to improve the standard of private sector accommodation
- Continue to work with Somerset County Council and the providers to deliver P2I which includes providing education work at schools and colleges
- Continue to work with Somerset County Council to deliver P4A
- To support where appropriate the Family Focus Programme
- To provide a Tenant Accreditation Scheme so households are equipped with the right skills to maintain their tenancy.

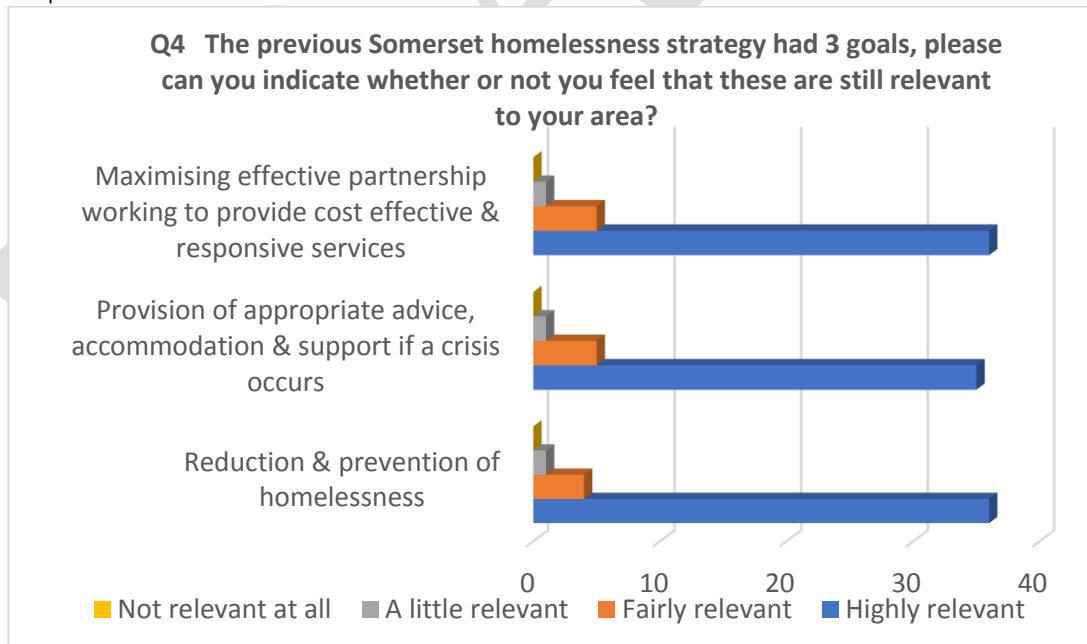
9.3 MAXIMISE EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING TO PROVIDE COST EFFECTIVE AND RESPONSIVE SERVICES

Actions suggested under this goal heading included:

- Create a protocol with the Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs) and hospitals to ensure patients are not discharged from hospital without suitable accommodation.
- Create a protocol with the local Prisons and Police to ensure people are not released from prison/custody without suitable accommodation.
- Work with Registered Providers to maximise the creation of appropriate new properties.
- Work with Partners to give advice e.g. debt advice, mortgage repossession to households threatened with homelessness to ensure their long-term stability.
- Work with Avon and Somerset Rough Sleepers Steering Group to ensure there is adequate provision for single homeless and rough sleepers in each District.
- Work collaboratively with partners to deliver value for money services and maximise funding opportunities.
- Work with Housing Benefits to maximise the use of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) to prevent homelessness.
- Continue to work together to administer Homefinder Somerset
- To ensure District Planning authorities are made aware of the appropriate size and type of accommodation that is required using evidence from Homefinder Somerset.

9.4 Survey respondents were asked how relevant they felt the outgoing homelessness strategy goals were and the results are shown below:

Graph 27: PREVIOUS GOALS



9.5 As can be seen from the results above, the majority of respondents felt that all three goals were still relevant. However, the outgoing goals also received some criticism. Some respondents felt that the goals were too broad in nature and that the new homelessness strategy should be more specific in relation to its goals.

## **10.0 PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN THE DELIVERY OF THE OUTGOING ACTION PLAN & HOMELESSNESS ISSUES AFFECTING THE REGION**

- 10.1 Key stakeholders and partners within each Somerset District Authority were asked by survey and group consultation to highlight areas of the outgoing action plan they had found difficult to implement. They were also asked to highlight current areas of weakness/barriers experienced in delivering homelessness objectives in the region. They were also asked about achievements from the outgoing action plan and examples of good practice for which responses will be covered in the next section.

Their responses have been grouped into themes.

10.2 **DUAL DIAGNOSIS CLIENTS**

Concern was expressed with regard to how dual diagnosis clients that may fall between mental health teams and drug/alcohol teams were catered for. There was group consensus that this client group may be passed from one team to another without collaborative assistance for the client. There are also widespread concerns about the under-resourcing of mental health services and drug and alcohol services, which can be a significant factor in causing and sustaining homelessness. It was suggested that a better partnership approach was required for this group of clients in order to better support their prevention of homelessness.

10.3 **SINGLE HOMELESS CLIENTS**

Providing adequate accommodation options for single households was cited as a particular challenge. It was also felt that this problem has been exacerbated by the Hinkley Point development with private landlords now developing and letting single units of accommodation with Hinkley Point workers in mind as preferred tenants. Anecdotal evidence from the consultation exercise suggested that private landlords may also be actively serving notice on existing private tenants in order to re market and achieve increased rental returns by letting to Hinkley Point workers. There appears to be a reluctance by private landlords to enter the houses in multiple occupation (HMO) market. There also appears to be a lack of ongoing support for single homeless clients with some support needs in managing to avoid repeat homelessness.

The new Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places greater emphasis on Local Authorities to cater for non-priority need clients and as such more work needs to be done around supporting single homeless client groups.

10.4 **HOUSING OPTIONS FOR THE 25-34 YEAR AGE GROUP**

Closely linked to the issue highlighted above is that of the housing options available for clients within the 25-34 year old age group. This group of clients is generally expected to live in shared accommodation and is restricted to the shared accommodation housing element of universal credit. The consultation exercise suggested that whilst there are a comparatively high number of options and services catering for young people, the options diminish at the time an individual reaches the age of 25. This is creating problems in moving clients on from programmes and freeing up spaces when they reach the age of 25. There is also a lack of ongoing support for the client group so when they do manage to secure accommodation they are at high risk of repeat homelessness.

**10.5 DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED IN WORKING WITH PARTNERS**

Whilst consultation on the partnership approach between local authority homelessness functions and third parties was generally positive and mutually respectful, there were a couple of examples cited of where further focus and work was required to meet satisfactory outcomes for homeless clients. It was suggested that there needed to be more resource dedicated to engaging with the County Council. It was also suggested that there had been difficulties experienced in establishing a protocol for patients being discharged from hospital and mental health schemes.

**10.6 OCCURRENCE OF REPEAT HOMELESSNESS**

The consultation exercise suggested that numbers of repeat homelessness could be high and rising. One of the reasons suggested for this were the cutbacks in funding for floating support services for families in crisis. It was generally felt that if more floating support services were available, repeat homelessness may reduce and private sector landlords may be more willing to accept homeless households in private rented sector properties.

**10.7 PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS FOR 16/17 YEAR OLDS**

The consultation exercise revealed that there was desire to work with local schools in raising awareness around homelessness for this age group, however there had been difficulties experienced with buy in from the schools and fitting in with the current curriculum. It was generally felt that there needed commitment at County Council level to push the project forward.

**10.8 ACCESS TO SOCIAL HOUSING**

There were concerns raised around the level of information and scrutiny being applied to households being selected by social housing providers with the result being that households that may previously have been accepted into social housing now being declined due to scrutiny of their housing/personal history. Universal Credit was generally blamed for this shift due to the loss of direct payments to landlords with social landlords becoming far more risk adverse.

**10.9 UNIVERSAL CREDIT**

Universal credit has now been rolled out across all the Districts and has been cited as causing a number of problems in relation to homelessness and sustainment of accommodation:

- Nationally, delays in new claimants receiving Universal Credit payments have been cited as 6 to 8 weeks but consultees suggested that in their areas, delays of 13-14 weeks are not unheard of.
- These delays are causing clients to experience high levels of debt that can become unsurmountable by the time payment is eventually received.
- Clients are being refused private rented accommodation because private landlords don't want to take the risk of Universal Credit and possible rent arrears.
- Clients are struggling to make the online application for Universal Credit and experience difficulty in finding places to get online.
- Clients with support needs are struggling to complete the application without assistance.
- Social landlords are reportedly being more selective with social housing applicants.
- Once completing a Universal Credit online application, clients are expected to make their own appointment with the Job Centre. When clients don't do this, their claims get cancelled and they have to re start the process.
- Tenants are losing accommodation because they are getting into high rent arrears.

- Tenants are living in poverty because delays in receiving payments mean that they have no income for food or essential items.
- Chaotic clients do not prioritise their rent money and so when huge sums of backdated monies are received, other choices may be made on how it is spent.
- A lot of work with young people in the area is trying to teach them how to be responsible in preparation for a tenancy however, with the delays in payments being experienced, clients are very often in high levels of debt and it was felt that this is counterproductive to the lessons trying to be taught.
- Some consultees suggested that the delays being experienced in receiving Universal Credit are having a detrimental effect on client health and mental well-being.

#### **10.10 OPTIONS FOR OLDER PERSONS**

The region is expected to experience an increase in the number of older persons, particularly in the number of people to be in the over 85 year age bracket. It was highlighted that more housing options needed to be developed to meet the future demands of this client group moving forward.

#### **10.11 SKILLS GAP IN HOMELESSNESS**

Managers responsible for homelessness within the Local Authorities suggested that the skillset and attributes required within Housing Options Officers has changed over the last few years as the emphasis around homelessness has shifted to that of prevention and relief. New skills such as negotiation skills are now required to deliver positive outcomes and as such there may be a need to upskill existing members of staff and re define officer key attributes when recruiting for vacancies.

#### **10.12 PRIVATE RENTAL MARKET**

It was suggested that due to the local housing allowance rates applied, large parts of the county were unaffordable to clients, making it very difficult for clients to maintain links with local communities and families if required to move to cheaper areas of the Districts. The private rented sector was cited as becoming increasingly difficult to access due to the unwillingness of landlords to accept households on low incomes and in receipt of Universal Credit. It was suggested that increasing numbers of landlords are choosing professional households particularly in light of the development occurring at Hinkley Point. The demand for accommodation near Hinkley Point has pushed up private rents in the area making them even less affordable for local households threatened with homelessness.

#### **10.13 RURAL HOUSING AND OPTIONS**

Large parts of the Districts represented by this homelessness review are rural in nature and as such it presents a continued challenge providing rural housing options for local households. Affordable housing for local families is difficult to achieve Transport links between areas can also present a challenge in how easy it is for a client to access and engage with support services that are made available to them and can directly affect or hinder their effectiveness.

#### **10.14 ROUGH SLEEPING**

The numbers of rough sleepers remains fairly constant across the Districts with higher numbers statistically present in the Districts of Mendip and Taunton Deane. Organisations that regularly support rough sleepers claim the actual numbers of rough sleepers to be higher due to the “unseen” cases of homelessness. This includes those that are sofa surfing as well as sleeping in vehicles. Rough sleeper support workers also claim that as it is a very rural area, there are rough sleepers who seek to sleep away from society in wooded areas. Practitioners state that cross region links need to be improved to ensure that when a rough sleeper moves from one District to another after exhausting services in an area, they are recognised and supported.

### **11.0 ACHIEVEMENTS & EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE ACROSS THE DISTRICTS**

**11.1** The consultation exercise highlighted a number of examples of good practice across the Districts, some just being piloted in one District, other examples spanning several of the Districts. These are highlighted below.

#### **11.2 SOCIAL LETTING AGENCIES**

Nationally there has been a general shift away from Local Authority backed deposit bond schemes to the delivery of social lettings agencies. A social lettings agency is a private sector access scheme that is run on a commercial basis for the purpose of helping households homeless or threatened with homelessness access affordable accommodation in the private rented sector.

There are two social lettings agencies operating in the Somerset Districts – Keyring Lettings in Mendip and Somerset West Letting Agency (part of Taunton Association for the Homeless and joint funded by Sedgemoor and West Somerset Local Authorities).

Keyring Lettings is an independent social enterprise operating predominantly in the Mendip area. It offers full management and tenant introduction services for private landlords and accepts all types of properties. Any properties that are not affordable for low income households are let on the open private rental market, thus creating opportunities for income to be put back into the work it does with households threatened with homelessness.

Keyring have directly helped 71 tenants to find affordable and decent accommodation since its beginning in October 2013.

Somerset West Letting Agency operates across the Sedgemoor and West Somerset Districts. It offers full management and let only options for private landlords and charges fees for its services. It finds that many of its landlords use its service because of its ‘not for profit’ status and tends to attract landlords with a philanthropic outlook.

In the first two years of operation the Somerset West Lettings Agency secured 89 bed spaces in Sedgemoor and 5 bed spaces in West Somerset.

#### **11.3 YMCA TENANCY TRAINING & ACCREDITATION**

The YMCA Somerset Coast offers a Tenant Accreditation Scheme to anyone over the age of 16 which includes six modules covering where to look for accommodation, what a tenancy agreement is, what landlords expect, budgeting, looking after a home and themselves and what they should do when things go wrong. It was initially offered as a group session but due to

the demand for the service it is now offered in one to one sessions as well. All clients successfully completing the course receive a certificate. Whilst it is recognised by some letting agents and landlords in the area, more work could be on the recognition of this qualification. There are aspirations to expand this scheme to include an online option.

Tenant Accreditation can be accessed across all districts although, only the YMCA schemes have been audited by the South West Audit Partnership and are also signed up to the Somerset Tenant Accreditation Group (STAG). The Scheme is delivered by Mendip YMCA to supported housing schemes in South Somerset. The Home Group are also delivering a tenant accreditation model in South Somerset but not under STAG or audited by SWAP. An agreement for all schemes to work to the same standards and to be verified by the same independent auditors would be of benefit to residents and landlords across Somerset.

YMCA Somerset Coast deliver Tenant Accreditation across Sedgemoor, West Somerset and Taunton Deane Districts whilst Mendip YMCA delivers the scheme in Mendip.

In 2016/17, 75 clients enrolled on the scheme; 40 from Sedgemoor, 23 across Taunton Deane and a further 12 across West Somerset. 27 clients successfully completed the course; 18 from Sedgemoor, 4 from Taunton Deane and 5 from the West Somerset District.

In Mendip, 49 individuals engaged in the scheme in the first two quarters of 2017/18 achieving 252 completed modules and 21 fully completed the course.

The Tenant Accreditation Scheme is widely used as a homeless prevention tool amongst the Somerset Housing Authorities. Referrals are sent through on behalf of clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and in need of support and skills to sustain their tenancy.

#### **11.4 LOAN SCHEMES**

Sedgemoor District Council has been trialling several loan schemes within their District in partnership with the Credit Union. Funding for these new schemes came from Hinkley Point C section 106 funds and a grant from the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Safety Grant. Details of the schemes are as follows:

- Repossession prevention loan scheme – loans provided to households threatened with repossession action of up to £5,000. A financial assessment is completed by the Citizens Advice Bureau and the finances administered by the Credit Union.
- Sedgemoor Loan Guarantee Scheme – to alleviate or prevent homelessness. Up to £350.00 per application and administered by the Credit Union.
- Universal Credit Rent in Advance Loan Scheme – scheme designed to help assist households in receipt of universal credit access the private rented sector. Up to two months' rent in advance is available and borrowed from the Credit Union. It is paid directly to the landlord and recouped from Universal Credit payment.
- Loan a phone – clients can borrow a phone so that they can keep track of their Universal Credit application.
- Furniture package – credit union loan for essential furniture.

#### **11.5 MENDIP HELP TO RENT SCHEME**

Mendip District Council works closely with Mendip Community Credit Union to assist clients into the private rented sector where they have limited finance and meet the necessary eligibility criteria. The Help to Rent scheme allows the applicant to take out an affordable loan with the Credit Union at 0% interest for a suitable period in order to secure a suitable property within the private rented sector.

**11.6 DEPOSIT GUARANTEE SCHEME**

Mendip District Council works in partnership with Mendip YMCA to provide a Deposit Guarantee Scheme (DGS) to help clients into private sector housing. The DGS is in effect a non-cash deposit where the landlord of the property being rented, agrees that in the event that a tenant causes damage or requires reimbursement for costs normally taken out of a cash deposit, the YMCA would pay the landlord the agreed amount and the tenant would then be liable to pay that money back to the YMCA.

**11.7 SEDGEMOOR LODGINGS SCHEME**

This is a partnership scheme with Somerset Coast YMCA to establish lodgings so that people can remain in their homes and provide much needed accommodation. A £1000 grant is available to make property suitable for lodgings. The Lodgings Scheme was set up using mitigation funding from the Hinkley C Development (planning gain money for site preparation) and this funding was restricted to Sedgemoor and West Somerset Districts. In the first two years of operation it delivered 180 bed spaces in Sedgemoor and 38 in West Somerset.

**11.8 YMCA ADULT EMERGENCY HOST FAMILY ACCOMMODATION (EHFA)**

Adult EHFA is the provision of Host Family Accommodation for up to seven nights for someone aged 25 and over. The scheme is operated by Mendip YMCA

**11.9 HELPING ROUGH SLEEPERS**

The Avon & Somerset Rough Sleeper Group was formed by the 9 Avon & Somerset local authorities. The group were awarded £450k by DCLG in 2011 to improve services and access to housing provision for this group experiencing the most acute form of homelessness. Over the last 7 years, the funding has been spent on initiatives to reduce rough sleeping in the Avon and Somerset area and to improve services and access to accommodation. The group still meets to share good practice, making joint applications for funds, monitoring rough sleeping and its implications, organising training events and working together to implement changes required by the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The Elim Connect Centre in Wells is a good local example of excellent service provision for this particular client group. Mendip District Council commission them to deliver an outreach service to work with rough sleepers on a one to one basis. Due to the sometimes transient nature of rough sleeping, people can navigate away from their home and support networks to the Mendip area. As with all of the Avon and Somerset Authorities, the outreach service will work closely with Mendip Housing Options Team to reconnect those without a local connection to Mendip to their home authority.

**11.10 REPRESENTATION OF CLIENTS FACING HOMELESSNESS IN COURT**

Housing Officers in South Somerset attend Court on request to prevent homelessness which has proved very successful. While the numbers of people attending possession hearings have decreased, figures for warrant suspension cases has increased, indicating that clients are leaving things until crisis stage. The proximity of the housing office to the courts is useful and we are often called over at very short notice to attend a hearing, sometimes at the Judge's request if they feel the Tenant needs assistance. This remains an essential tool for preventing homelessness.

In Sedgemoor, the Council provides the Citizens Advice Bureau with £10,000 per annum to prepare referred clients' files and represent them in Court to prevent homelessness.

### 11.11 SOMERSET HOMELET WEBSITE

This is a new initiative that allows private landlords and agents to advertise their vacant properties to let for free. The service only currently covers Sedgemoor, West Somerset, Taunton Deane and North Somerset and has been funded in partnership with the Hinkley Point development. At the time of writing this strategy, there are currently the following properties registered on this site.



### 11.12 PATHWAY TO INDEPENDENCE (P2i)

Somerset County Council and the five District Councils across Somerset commissioned 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 a multi-agency homelessness prevention service for young people aged 16-25 who reside in, or have a local connection to the Somerset area. It was recommissioned in 2016 and a new contract began on 1st January 2017.

First and foremost the service is designed to prevent homelessness by providing targeted prevention measures. If prevention is 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.

The service is jointly funded by Somerset County Council and the five District Councils within Somerset and is currently commissioned to be delivered by two providers taking responsibility for a designated geographical area.

P2i is an outcome based homelessness prevention service which aims to provide a service for all vulnerable young people aged 16 to 25 inclusive who have a relevant need. There are however some young people who are unsuitable for P2i because:

- Their needs are so complex that they require a specialist, or statutory based service, which providers are not regulated to provide;
- Their requirement is only that of accommodation and not support;
- They are not eligible as they do not reside in, or have a local connection to Somerset.

In these circumstances P2i will aim to work in a multi-agency way to find the best immediate solution.

The following have been identified as having a primary need for P2i support:

- 16 and 17 years olds towards whom children's social care have a responsibility;
- Care Leavers aged 18 to 21 (or 25 if in full time education)
- 16 and 17 year old homeless young people;

- Vulnerable 18 to 25 year olds in priority need (as defined under homelessness legislation).

Under the P2i Initiative there are a total of 168 beds available across the count; 48 in Taunton and West Somerset, 40 in Sedgemoor, 38 in Mendip and 42 in South Somerset.

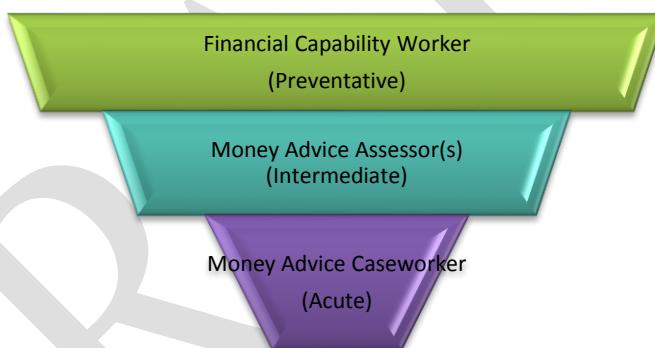
Young people request a service under P2i through the area access hubs in each area. A total of 770 contacts were made at these hubs Jan 17-Jan 18. 413 in Taunton, 141 in South Somerset, 149 in Sedgemoor and 67 in Mendip. These contacts include repeat customers, telephone calls and emails.

After their initial presentation the young people are discussed at a weekly allocations panel. In 2017 672 young people were discussed at these panels, 138 (21%) were care leavers and 140 (21%) were 16/17 year olds.

#### 11.13 MONEY ADVICE IN SEDGEMOOR

Citizens Advice Sedgemoor delivers a model of Money Advice on behalf of Sedgemoor District Council as set out below in order to address the challenges faced by Universal Credit and in order to offer a comprehensive money advice service to the people of Sedgemoor.

The model takes into account the whole spectrum of money advice needs and the abilities of clients to progress matters themselves.



#### **Preventative level**

Improving financial capability gives people the power to make the most of their money and improve their lives to enable them to have the best possible financial wellbeing, both now and in the future.

Universal Credit clients can access financial capability sessions through Personal Budgeting Support in order to help them to manage their Universal Credit payments.

#### **Intermediate level**

This enables those clients who have an increased need for support to have a more in-depth conversation with a money advice assessor, on an appointment basis. The money advice assessor can produce a financial statement on behalf of the client, look at ways to maximise the client's income, or refer on to a money advice caseworker.

#### **Acute level**

A referral to a money advice caseworker where a client is vulnerable, has complex needs or issues or requires input in order to achieve long term money advice solutions. This may

include preparing a client for insolvency proceedings, submitting a Debt Relief Order for a client, representation at court and ongoing negotiation with creditors.

### **Key Outcomes**

- reduction and eradication of debt ;
- improved emotional well-being ;
- improved mental health ;
- preventing homelessness ;
- maintaining jobs/wages ;
- increased income ;
- avoiding criminality ;

### **CITIZENS ADVICE WARRANT, DEBT AND BUDGETING SCHEME**

Mendip District Council works closely with Citizens Advice to provide applicants with Warrant, Debt and Budgeting schemes.

The Warrant scheme can be used where the applicant is at risk of homelessness due to their landlord having obtained a bailiff's warrant. The scheme ensures urgent professional advice and assistance is available to see if the warrant can be stopped. Providing the Warrant has not already been executed, a referral can be made to Citizens Advice.

The Debt scheme provides applicants whose debts may mean they are at risk of homelessness, with specialist debt advice by pre-arranged appointment.

The Budgeting scheme is for applicants who may be at risk of falling into arrears due to their budgeting to provide them with advice to maximise their income. This scheme aims to help people that need assistance with budgeting and living within their means. It would also include help budgeting following transition to Universal Credit.

#### **11.14 FLOATING SUPPORT SERVICE**

Since 2016, South Somerset District Council has funded Yeovil4Family, a church based organisation, to provide a floating support service to people at risk of homelessness. Clients work directly with a Link Worker and a trained volunteer mentor for up to 1 year. The approach is proving very successful; 56 referrals have been received, 26 individuals have been supported and 18 mentors trained. Positive outcomes already being identified include sustained tenancies, training, employment, improved self-esteem and accessing support for drug and alcohol issues.

YMCA Mendip offer a Private Rented Sector Worker for those 25 and over to work with people to source and sustain affordable accommodation in the private rented sector. This support can be tailored for the individual and be for any length of time. This floating support may also offer assistance with a deposit bond and put clients in touch with landlords who will accept those on a low income.

#### **11.15 SOUTH SOMERSET IN HOUSE WELFARE BENEFITS TEAM**

South Somerset District Council has an in-house welfare benefits team with 2.1 Full Time Equivalent posts (FTE) undertaking casework for clients across South Somerset. The team provides free, confidential and impartial information, advice and advocacy on Welfare Benefits. They carry out specialised case work; preparing claims, representing clients at Appeals, up to and including First-Tier and Upper Tier Tribunals.

In 2016/17, they supported 482 clients across South Somerset, achieve an annual increased income of £1,025,202 and lump sum payments in total of £175,940.

**11.16 HOMEFINDER SOMERSET**

All five councils in Somerset are part of the Homefinder Somerset partnership. The Homefinder Somerset Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme and Common Lettings Policy is administered by the five Somerset Local Authorities (LA's) in partnership with the majority of the registered housing providers operating within Somerset. The single policy takes account of Somerset's strategic housing framework, homelessness strategy and tenancy strategy.

Homefinder Somerset is considered a major success in terms of partnership working across the county, providing social housing applicants with a wide choice of properties and creating freedom of movement across a wide geographical area.

**11.17 POSITIVE LIVES**

Positive Lives is a county-wide initiative designed to support vulnerable homeless adults with complex needs. Following an £880,000 cut in housing support and with reduced funding of £309,000, statutory and voluntary agencies and local housing providers are working together to tackle challenging needs. Each agency has piloted and found local creative solutions. After listening to Service User's aspirations and views, services were redesigned to be empowering and flexibly meet their individual needs through smaller bespoke services. New initiatives are piloted to build a successful evidence based approach to engaging individuals who find traditional services unhelpful. Services incorporate peer support and mentoring, accommodation with support, floating support, creative use of budgets to engage individuals in their own solutions, emergency access accommodation, family hosting and therapeutic models. Removing interagency barriers and collaborative working between local statutory and voluntary partners, local providers and service users has been critical to the success of Positive Lives.

## **12.0 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2017-2019**

**12.1** Using the evidence from the homelessness review and information obtained from the consultation in preparation for this strategy, four new priorities have been developed to focus the Homelessness Strategy for the Districts over the next 18 month period. These are described below. Each Local Authority will adopt the Action Plan locally to ensure that it is relevant to their District and the priorities for each Local Authority area have been highlighted in the forewords of this document.

**12.2 PRIORITY 1**

Support the transition in services required by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 to reduce and prevent homelessness.

The Act will become effective from 3rd April 2018 and presents a new way of working and expansion of existing homeless services. It will present a number of challenges due to the level of change required and as such it has been given its own priority category for the short term. It is expected that upon review of the strategy in 18 months' time it will no longer need to be considered a priority in its own right.

**12.3 PRIORITY 2**

Support clients to remain in their existing accommodation where appropriate.

This priority involves looking at and improving the range of options, support and tools that can assist an individual in remaining in their existing accommodation. Needing to move accommodation can be hugely disruptive and costly for individuals and families. Being able to sustain current accommodation can deliver cost savings for Local Authorities and their partner agencies.

**12.4 PRIORITY 3**

Support clients to access suitable and affordable accommodation where appropriate.

It may not always be possible for a client to remain in their current accommodation so where a move cannot be avoided, this priority will ensure that they can access suitable accommodation that is affordable to them in a timely manner. This priority looks at the options available to clients and addresses accommodation options such as the private rented sector and move on options.

**12.5 PRIORITY 4**

Build and maintain strong working relationships across partnerships.

This homelessness strategy for the next 18 months is a partnership approach between five Local Authorities as well as their partners. It cannot be delivered in isolation and this priority recognises the need for existing working relationships to be maintained and built upon. Effective partnership working brings a number of benefits including the sharing of best practice and effective use of resources to deliver cost savings to all working partners and for this reason it remains a priority for this homelessness strategy.

**12.6** It is expected that the Homeless Managers Group (HMG) will be responsible for the delivery of this strategy and action plan and responsible for monitoring progress against actions and targets.

## 13.0 ACTION PLAN

### PRIORITY 1: Support the transition in services required by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 to reduce and prevent homelessness

No.	Our Aims/Priorities	When?	Who will deliver this?	Resources Needed	What Will We Do	Target/Outcome	What would success look like?
1.1	Address any staffing skill gaps by recruiting/retraining individuals to effectively deliver what is required by the Act including increased ability to provide good quality advice and information	April 2018 and on-going	HMG	Within existing resources and New Burdens funding from Government.	Assess current staffing skillsets Identify gaps in skillsets Identify training programmes Recruit new skills required	Achieve and deliver the requirements as set out by the Act	Increase in support available to clients  Improvement in the quality of advice offered to clients  Increase in the number of cases where homelessness is successfully prevented and relieved
1.2	Share best practice in delivering the Act amongst Somerset Homelessness Managers & Officers	Ongoing	HMG	Within existing resources	Ensure that each Local Authority is represented at HMG meetings  Improved use of IT to share information	Share best practice across Districts  Brainstorm challenges  Share information  Share resources	Evidence of new ideas, practices & initiatives that will contribute to improved homeless prevention

No.	Our Aims/Priorities	When?	Who will deliver this?	Resources Needed	What Will We Do	Target/Outcome	What would success look like?
					Explore options for sharing best practise		
1.3	Develop protocols for Public Services, Housing Providers & all other Agencies to refer clients they believe to be homeless or at risk of homelessness	October 2018 and on-going	HMG  Public Services to be defined by Government	Within existing resources	Create procedure  Create associated forms  Monitor effectiveness of new protocol  Raise awareness of new protocol and duties on Public Services	Achieve and deliver the requirements as set out by the Act	Increase in the number of referrals from third parties of clients believed to be homeless or at risk of homelessness
1.4	Maximise partnerships with all existing service providers to ensure the quality of support provided to clients	Ongoing	HMG  All Partners	Within existing resources	Raise awareness of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 amongst partners	Achieve and deliver the requirements as set out by the Act	Increase in support provided to clients  Improvement in the quality of advice offered to clients  Increase in the number of referrals to and from third parties of clients believed to be homeless or at risk of homelessness

**PRIORITY 2: Support clients to remain in their existing accommodation where appropriate**

No.	Our Aims/Priorities	When?	Who will deliver this?	Resources Needed	What Will We Do?	Target/Outcome	What would success look like?
2.1	Review options and availability of tenancy support services both for families and single homeless clients	June 2018	HMG  Solutions to be identified on a District basis Floating support providers	Within existing  Use of new burdens funding.	Identify gaps in provision of floating support & barriers to effective use	Increase in the number of tenancies sustained	Increase in the number of homeless prevention & relief cases
2.2	Review the countywide Pre Eviction Protocol to take account of the Homelessness Reduction Act	September 2018	HMG	Within existing resources	Create awareness and campaign using social media, radio and Local Authority publications  Appoint a landlord liaison officer in each District	Increase in landlords contacting the Council  Increase in early interventions  Reduction in number of eviction notices served  Reduction in officer caseload created by Homeless Reduction Act  Improvement in landlord relations	Fewer homeless approaches as a result of loss of last settled home  Fewer homeless presentations to Local Authority

No.	Our Aims/Priorities	When?	Who will deliver this?	Resources Needed	What Will We Do?	Target/Outcome	What would success look like?
2.3	Review the initiatives currently in place to prevent the ending of Assured Shorthold Tenancies (AST's) in the Private Rented Sector	December 2018	HMG / Partners	Within existing	Brainstorm within the Partnership  Develop pilot projects, procedures, plans for any new initiatives	Reduction in the number of evictions caused by private landlords serving notice	Fewer homelessness approaches as a result of loss of last settled home
2.4	Continue to monitor the effectiveness of the P2i initiative in supporting 16-24 year olds to remain in their homes	Ongoing	P2i Monitoring Board	Within existing	Develop any new services, initiatives or pilot projects within this framework to meet a specific need	Increase in the number of 16-24 year olds remaining at home	Fewer homelessness approaches by clients aged 16-24  Fewer homelessness approaches as a result of parents or relatives no longer willing to accommodate
2.5	Ensure housing/homelessness awareness sessions are promoted in schools & colleges in each District	December 2018	HMG  Somerset County Council  YMCA  TAH	Within existing	Meet with Somerset County Council to improve school "buy in" and attach to curriculum  Expand on work already initiated	Increase in the number of 16-24 year olds remaining at home	Fewer homelessness approaches by clients aged 16-24  Fewer homelessness approaches as a result of parents or relatives no

No.	Our Aims/Priorities	When?	Who will deliver this?	Resources Needed	What Will We Do?	Target/Outcome	What would success look like?
					by YMCA and TAH  Develop a programme		longer willing to accommodate
2.6	Evaluate the “stay safe” at home options available for victims of domestic violence where this choice is suitable  Where ‘stay safe’ at home is not an option, review banding, policy and processes around domestic violence to ensure consistency	January 2019	HMG  Avon & Somerset Police  Somerset County Council  Homefinder Somerset	Within existing	Evaluate existing “stay safe” at home options  Identify gaps and weaknesses of current schemes  Develop any new services  Review banding, processes & Procedures	Ensuring victims of domestic violence remain safe	Increase in the number domestic violence victims able to remain in their home where it is practical to do so  Consistent banding policy for victims of domestic violence
2.7	Explore the options to provide mediation services to different age groups/client groups	January 2019	HMG  Mediation Providers	Within existing	Identify and create new relationships with mediation providers	Increase in the number of clients supported to remain in their homes	Increase in the number of cases where homelessness is successfully prevented

**PRIORITY 3: Support clients to access suitable and affordable alternative accommodation where appropriate**

No.	Our Aims/Priorities	When?	Who will deliver this?	Resources Needed	What Will We Do?	Target/Outcome	What would success look like?
3.1	Review available options for the use of Social Lettings Agencies and the services offered by existing Social Lettings Agencies to improve access to affordable private rented sector accommodation	May 2019	HMG	Additional funding required / re allocation of existing budget	Evaluate the effectiveness of Keyring Lettings and Somerset West Lettings  Explore additional services that could be offered to landlords by both organisations  Carry out feasibility studies for social lettings agencies in Taunton Deane and South Somerset	Increase in the number of households able to access good quality and affordable private rented sector accommodation  Expansion of existing social lettings agencies or creation of new social lettings agencies	Increase in the number of successful homeless prevention & relief cases
3.2	Reduce the impact that Universal Credit is having on private landlords and agents shying away from households in receipt	Ongoing	Each District Authority	Existing resources	Promote awareness of loan schemes available to households amongst landlords and agents  Promote awareness of support services available to	Increase in the number of households able to access good quality and affordable private rented sector accommodation	Increase in the number of successful homeless prevention & relief cases

No.	Our Aims/Priorities	When?	Who will deliver this?	Resources Needed	What Will We Do?	Target/Outcome	What would success look like?
					<p>households amongst landlords and agents</p> <p>Explore guaranteed rent options within social lettings agencies</p> <p>Explore additional pre-tenancy training or support for clients in successfully making UC claim</p>		
3.3	Continue the development of the Tenant Accreditation Schemes and ensure consistency provision and availability throughout the County	December 2018	HMG  Local providers  Somerset Tenant Accreditation Group	Additional funding required for expansion	<p>Explore options to extend pre-tenancy training across more Districts and all client groups</p> <p>Explore option to deliver programme online</p> <p>Increase awareness of scheme with private landlords &amp; agents</p>	<p>Increase in the number of households able to access good quality and affordable accommodation</p>	<p>Increase in the number of successful homeless prevention &amp; relief cases</p> <p>Fewer homeless approaches</p>

No.	Our Aims/Priorities	When?	Who will deliver this?	Resources Needed	What Will We Do?	Target/Outcome	What would success look like?
3.4	Monitor the success of the Lodgings Scheme in Sedgemoor, Taunton Deane & W Somerset and consider roll out to other Somerset Districts	Ongoing	HMG	Within existing resources. Additional funding may be required for any grant adaptations	Review pilot Identify deliver partners Develop eligibility criteria Develop procedures & raise awareness	Increase in the number of single units of accommodation available in the private rented sector  Increase in the number of residents able to afford to remain in their own homes	Increase in the number of successful homeless prevention & relief cases  Fewer homeless approaches
3.5	Explore options to increase the number of single units available to single homeless clients, particularly the 25-34 year age group	November 2018	HMG	Within existing resources to explore options  Additional funding may be needed if grants to landlords considered viable	Carry out feasibility study to assess type, numbers and areas in which units are needed  Consider options to meet this need  Consider grant funding to property owners to increase number of single units available in exchange for referral rights to properties	Increase in the number of single units of accommodation available in the private rented sector  Increase in availability of move on accommodation from 16-24 year housing projects	Increase in the number of successful homeless prevention & relief cases  Fewer homeless approaches by those aged under 35

No.	Our Aims/Priorities	When?	Who will deliver this?	Resources Needed	What Will We Do?	Target/Outcome	What would success look like?
3.6	Work with social housing providers to ensure that there are transparent and fair tenant selection practices. Monitor skipping reasons more closely.	Ongoing	HMG  Social housing providers  Homefinder Somerset Board	Within existing resources	Written and transparent selection criteria Review processes for refusals or review boards Explore risk mitigation options	Reduction in the number of households refused by social landlords Improved access to social housing for clients with difficult housing histories	Improved housing options for clients
3.7	Develop Somerset wide Rough Sleepers Strategy	April 2019	HMG	Within existing resources	Carry out consultation with partners  Develop strategy and action plan	Improved communication between partners in relation to rough sleeping  Improved options & outcomes for rough sleepers  Improved access to services for rough sleepers	Fewer rough sleepers
3.8	Raise awareness amongst Planners and Enabling Teams on the need and demand for particular units of accommodation	Ongoing	HMG	Within existing resources	Create & distribute fact sheets  Meet Development Teams  Attend Development Committees	Address the need within each District for 1 bedroom accommodation	Fewer households waiting for 1 bedroom accommodation on Homefinder Somerset

**PRIORITY 4: Continue to build and maintain strong working partnerships to deliver cost effective and responsive services**

No.	Our Aims/Priorities	When?	Who will deliver this?	Resources Needed	What Will We Do?	Target/Outcome	What would success look like?
4.1	Improve partnership working between Community Mental Health Teams and Drug/Alcohol dependency support to improve outcomes for dual diagnosis clients	Ongoing	Somerset County Council  Rethink  Connect  Drug alcohol teams  HMG	Within existing resources	Identify where cases are falling between services  Develop protocols to prevent clients falling between services	Personalised and planned positive outcome for client	Reduction in the number of clients falling between services  Increase in the number of successful homeless prevention & relief cases  Fewer repeat homeless cases  Increase in the number of successful move on cases
4.2	Continue to work with Community Mental Health Teams, Hospitals, Prisons and Probation to develop a protocol to ensure that clients are not discharged/released without suitable accommodation	Ongoing	HMG  Hospitals  Community Mental Health Team  Prisons  Probation	Within existing resources	Effective protocol in place  Protocol launched  Awareness raised  Protocol monitored  Review Dangerous Offender Protocol	Personalised and planned positive outcome for client	Reduction in the number of discharge patients presenting in homeless departments without warning

No.	Our Aims/Priorities	When?	Who will deliver this?	Resources Needed	What Will We Do?	Target/Outcome	What would success look like?
4.3	Work with Registered Providers to maximise the creation of new properties using creative design solutions in the right locations	Ongoing	HMG Homefinder Somerset Registered Providers Planners	Within existing resources	Work in partnership and provide data/evidence to ensure that new developments meet desired local housing need	Suitable units of affordable housing provided	Increase in the number of affordable units of social housing provided  Fewer clients registered on Homefinder Somerset
4.4	Continue to share best practice within the HMG	Ongoing	HMG	Within existing resources	Share knowledge on challenges and achievements within the homelessness sector  Identify best practice  Implement pilot projects	Partnership working  Increased knowledge  Cross District services linked more closely	Reduce costs  Improved use of resources
4.5	Provide briefings for elected Members periodically on the work of HMG	Ongoing	HMG	Within existing resources	Produce briefing every 6 month and circulate	Better awareness amongst Members on homelessness issues	Fully informed elected Members on homelessness achievements and challenges