2025/26
March-26

Housing and homelessness

Facts and figures for Chelmsford

Overview - Summary position

Chelmsford is facing a significant and worsening housing crisis. This has been driven by rapidly increasing demand and declining supply of affordable homes, particularly for larger family properties. This has been driven mainly by a constant reduction in the supply of affordable homes, a gradual increase in demand and consequently an ever-growing gap between need and supply.

- **'Supply' has reduced over time**, with only 217 properties let in 2025/26 (down from 322 in 2020/21), **resulting in a growing shortfall** of 1,846 homes.
- **Housing 'need' (demand) has risen sharply**, with 2,063 households now on the housing register, an increase of 215% since 2020/21.
- **The gap between housing need and supply is most acute for larger homes.** Demand for 3-bed and 4+ bed properties has increased significantly, with 4+ bed need rising by over 250% since 2021. At the same time, supply of these property types has decreased substantially.

This imbalance is contributing to longer waiting times for housing. Average waiting times have risen across all property sizes and will almost certainly continue to increase year on year.

Pressure on temporary accommodation (TA) has also intensified. There are currently 586 households in TA, more than doubling since 2021. Severe shortages of suitable properties mean only around half of 1- and 2-bed needs are met, with shortfalls of up to 97% for larger homes.

The council is increasingly reliant on nightly let accommodation, which now accounts for over 60% of TA provision.

Operational performance is strong, but cost pressures remain due to demand. While rent collection remains strong at 99% and arrears have improved, rising demand continues to place financial and operational strain on services.

Homelessness continues to rise, with 2,557 cases opened in 2025/26. **The mean reason being the reduction in the supply of affordable homes, whether from Registered Providers or private landlords.** Main causes of homeless have been ending of tenancies by private landlords, victims of domestic abuse, and eviction by family and friends. **Rough sleeping also remains a challenge**, with with success in helping people move off the streets countered by a constant number of new cases.

At the same time, workforce pressures are growing. Housing officers managing caseloads far above recommended levels due to increasing demand, complexity of cases, and limited housing.

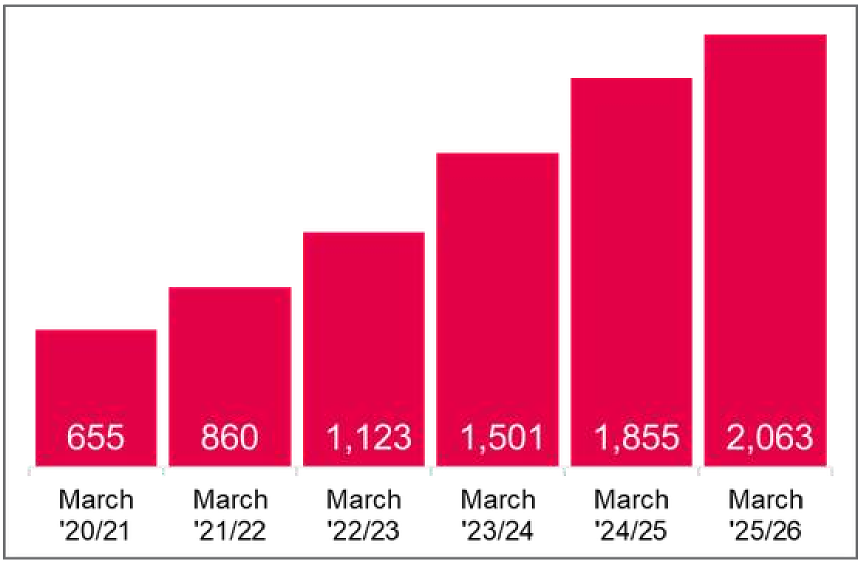
The system is under sustained pressure, with households spending longer (years) in TA and waiting extended periods for permanent housing. Without a significant increase in the supply of affordable and family-sized homes, the gap between housing need and availability is expected to continue widening, exacerbating homelessness and service pressures. Prevention activity is critical but constrained by housing shortages.

KPI 1: Housing register applicants - all bands (Need)

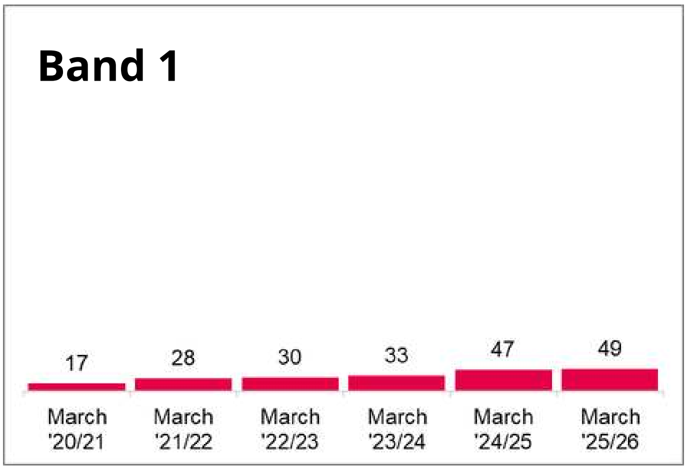
March 2026

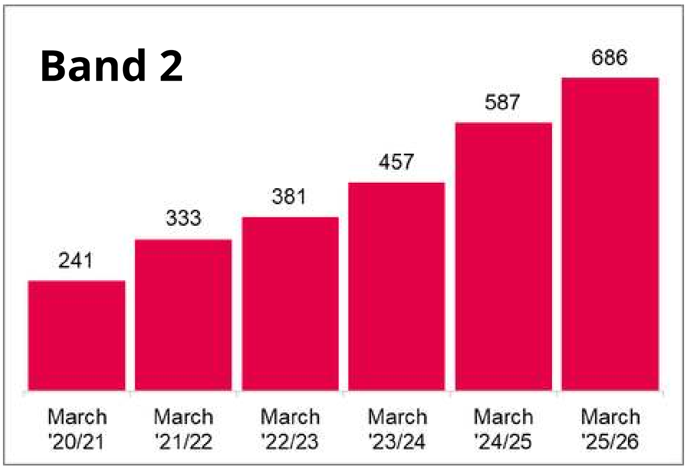
2,063

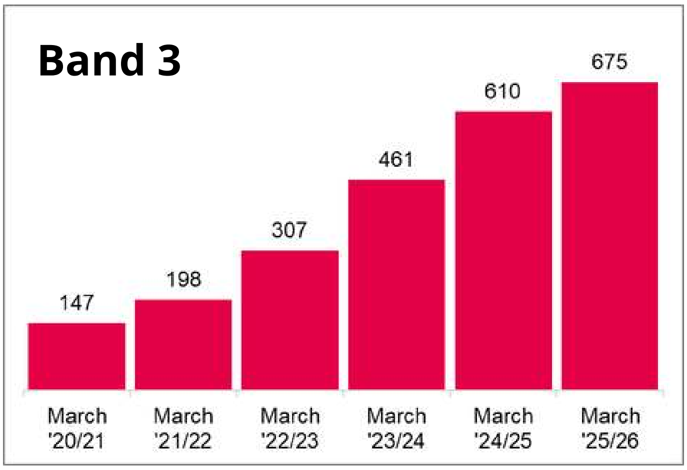
households currently on the housing register

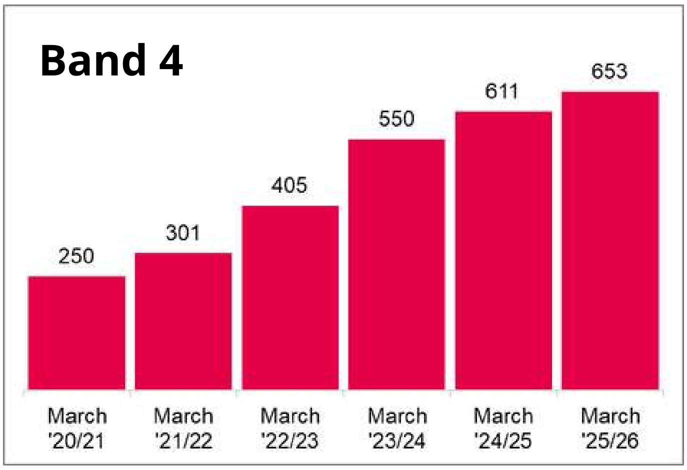


Overall, the number of applicants on the housing register has grown by 1,408 since March 2020/21, an increase of 215%. This means Chelmsford's housing register, for all bands, has grown from 655 March 2020/21 to 2,063 households in March 2025/26.









Band 3 has seen the greatest growth in six years, increasing by 359% (or 528 households) because there are not enough homes to meet the most urgent needs of those in Bands 1 and 2, so inevitably very few in these lower bands are likely to have their housing needs met. This takes the need from 147 in March '20/21 to 675 in March '25/26. This is followed by band 1 (increased 188% or by 32 households), band 2 (increased 185% or 445) and then band 4 (increased 161% or by 403 households).

What is a ‘housing register’?

This is a list of people who qualify and are waiting to be offered a property by one of Chelmsford’s social housing providers.

We can't offer a home to everybody who applies for housing, so only applicants with high levels of identified housing need will be accepted.

To join our housing register, applicants apply through HomeOption (a Choice Based Letting scheme) where they need to create an account. Once on the housing register, a person can bid for suitable properties based on their room size needs.

You can find out more on our **Housing need and allocations policy** at **www.chelmsford.gov.uk/housing**

Do you meet the eligibility criteria?

We look at a number of factors when considering whether a person qualifies for our housing register. These include:

- UK Citizen
- Local connection to Chelmsford
- Financial circumstances
- No recent and past unacceptable behaviour
- Homeless or living in unsuitable housing
- No current or outstanding rent arrears

Are some people classed as ‘priority’?

Applications are assessed based on housing need, placed in one of four ‘bands’ and then by priority date.

Band 1 is considered the highest priority of housing need, Band 2 the next highest and so on, with Band 4 being the lowest priority.

Applicants need to meet at least one criteria for the housing bands
www.chelmsford.gov.uk/housing

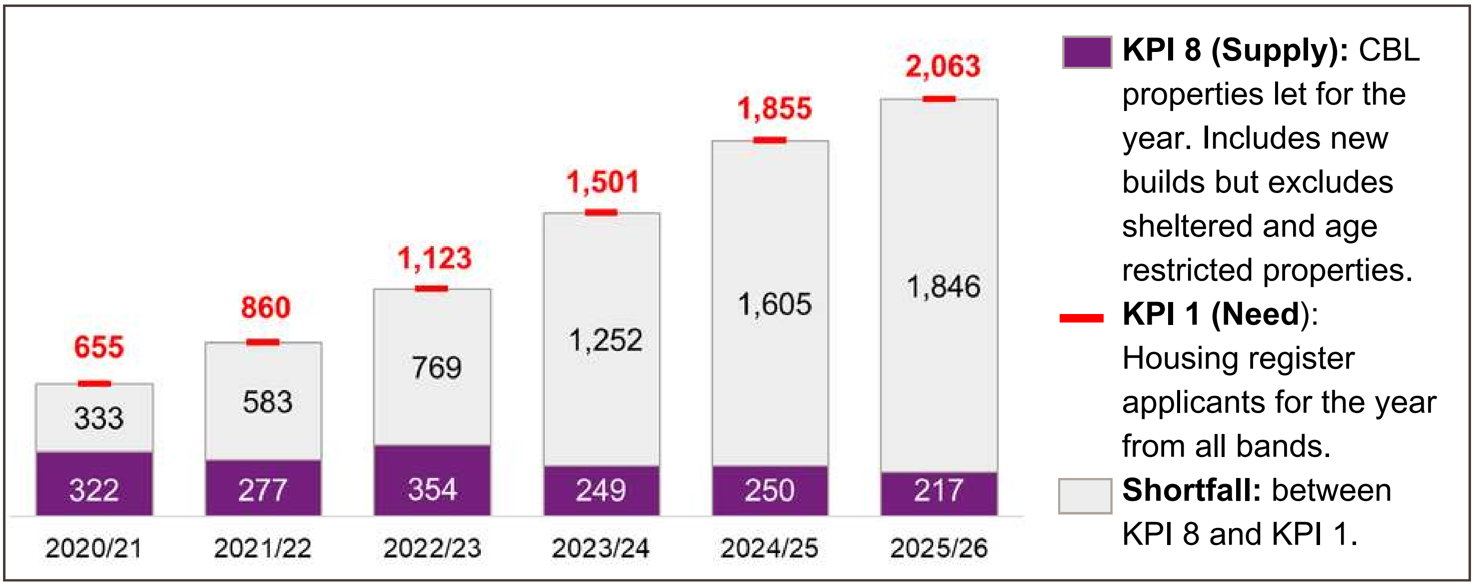
Band 1:

The applicant is a tenant of a registered Chelmsford provider and is giving up a two, three or four-bed general needs family home to move to either a
(a) 1-bed property or
(b) 2-bed property; or
(c) the applicant needs to move urgently based on extremely serious social or welfare grounds; or it is
(d) based on an extreme health and housing award.

Band 2:

Chelmsford City Council..
(a) accepts the applicant is threatened with homelessness and owed the ‘prevention duty’, or
(b) owes them a ‘main housing duty’, or
(c) makes a mobility health and housing award, or
(d) makes a composite health award; or
(e) a prohibition or demolition order has been served on their home; or
(f) a crowding and space assessment identifies a category 1 hazard; or
(g) they are a strategically relevant supported or specialist housing project tenant ready to live independently.

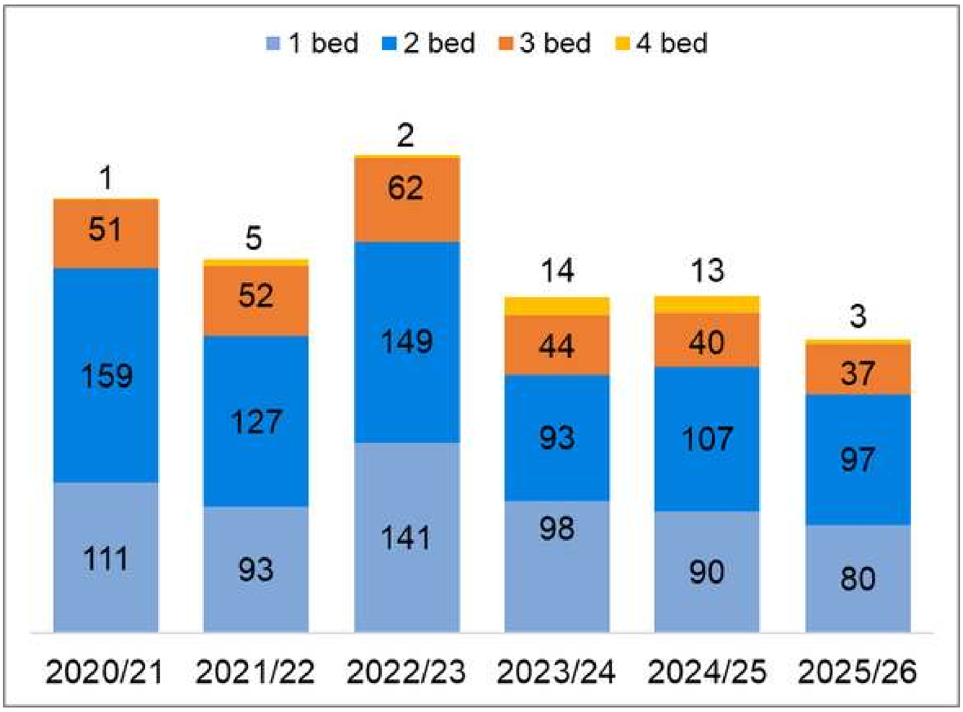
KPI 1: Housing register applicants (Need) vs KPI 8 CBL lets (Supply)



There is a critical shortage of housing in Chelmsford, particularly affordable homes to rent. **The demand for homes through our housing register cannot be met by available properties**.

This gap has grown by 454% (1,513 properties), resulting in the shortfall of 333 properties in 2020/21 increasing to 1,846 in 2025/26.

KPI 8: CBL lets by property size, includes new builds (Supply)



The chart (left) shows the breakdown of CBL properties let by size per financial year.

Totals by financial year

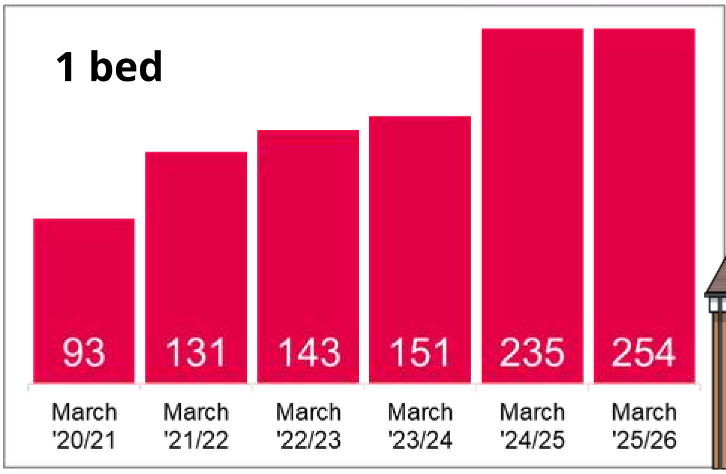
- 2020/21: 322 properties
- 2021/22: 277 properties
- **2022/23: 354 properties**
- 2023/24: 249 properties
- 2024/25: 250 properties
- **2025/26: 217 properties**

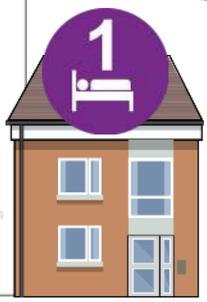
CBL lets available were at their highest in 2022/23 and lowest in 2025/26.

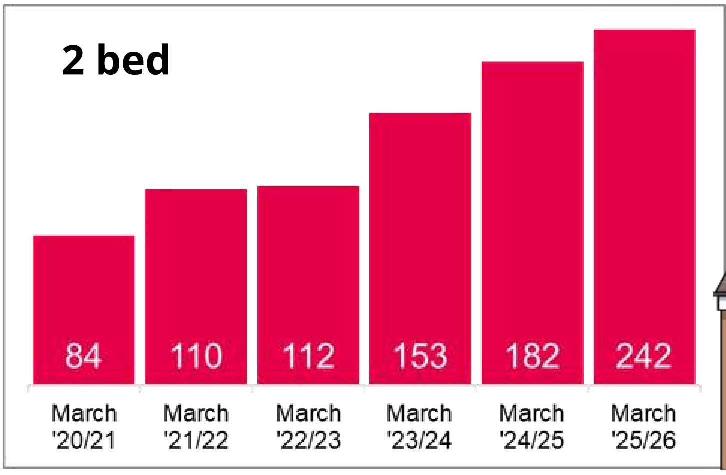
3 beds have seen the greatest reduction (dropped by 79% or 22 properties) since 2020/21. This is followed by 2 bed (dropped by 70% or 59 properties), then 1 bed (dropped by 58% or 32 properties). In 2024 and 2025 more than 50 additional units of supported 1-bed housing were created to meet the rising need of vulnerable single homeless people in Chelmsford. This resulted in the reduction in 1-bed need over that period.

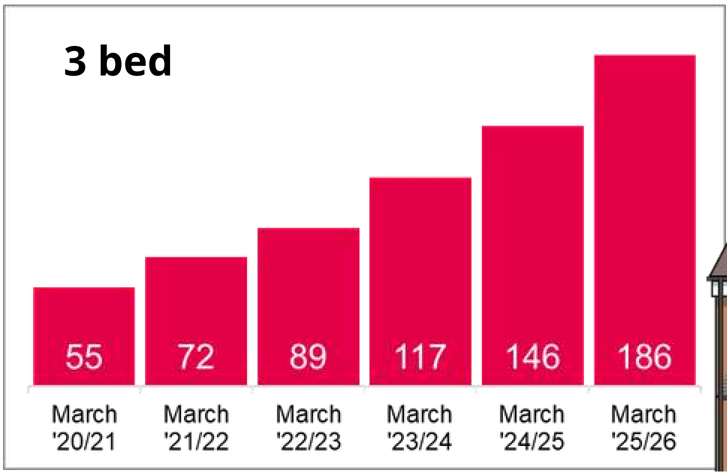
KPI 2: Housing register applicants by bedroom for priority bands 1 and 2 only (Need)

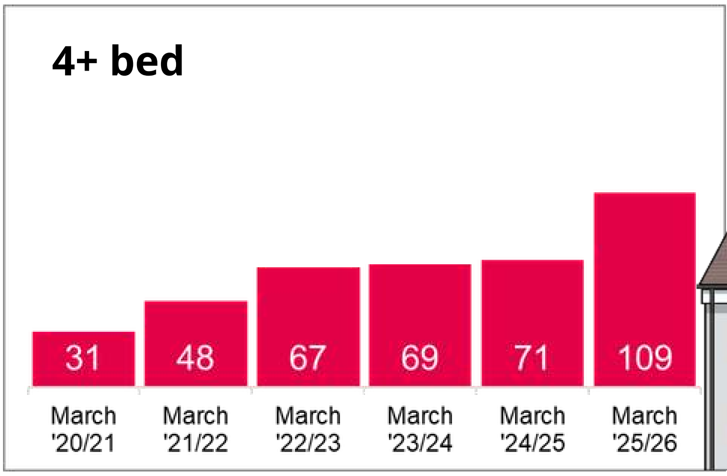
March 2026

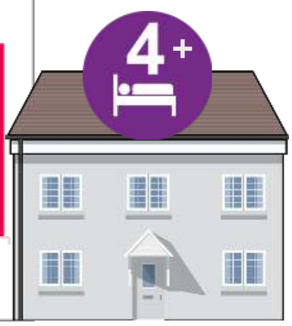












The need for properties to accommodate priority bands 1 and 2 applicants on the housing register has continued to increase over the years.

Since March 2021 need has increased by:

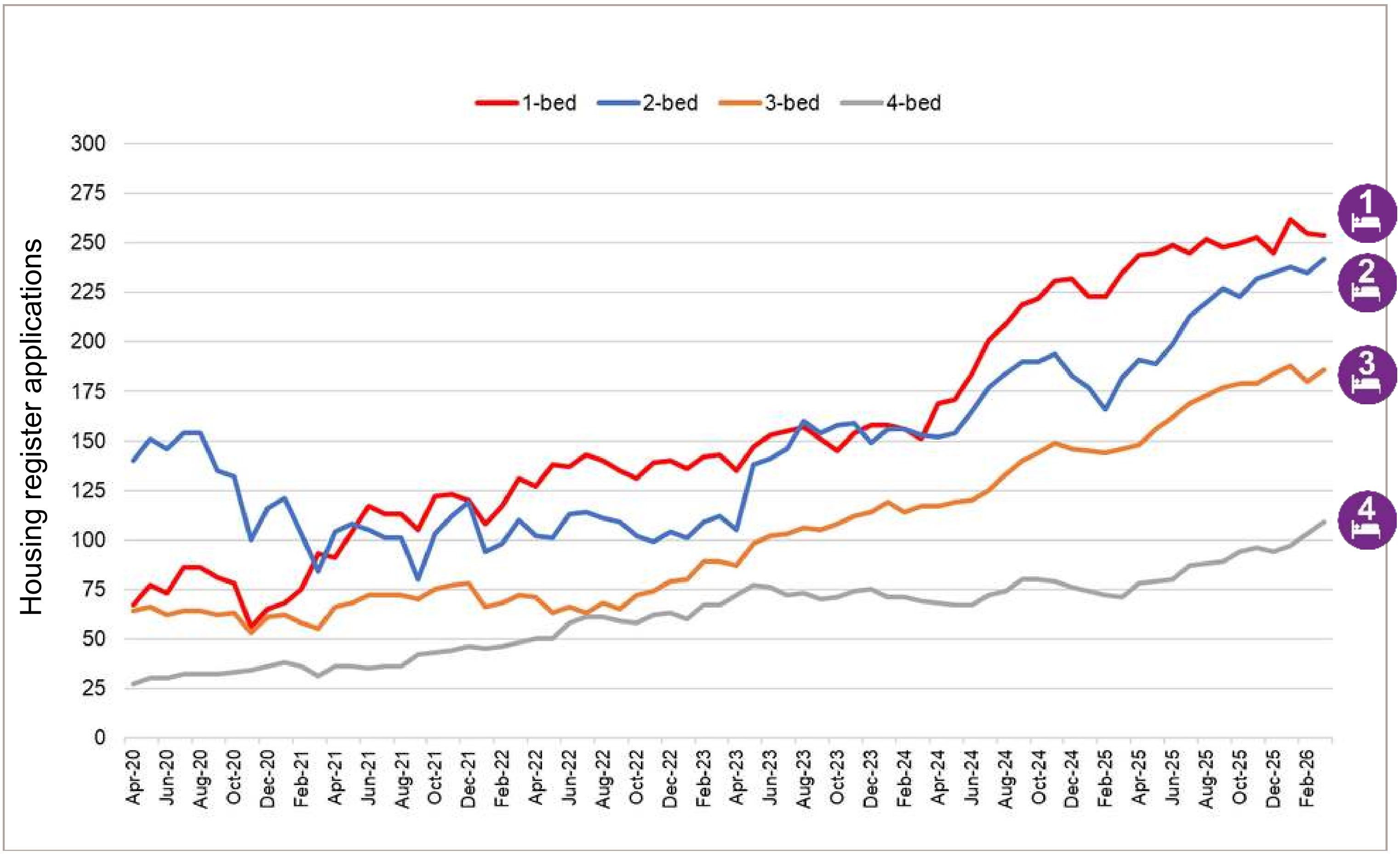
- 173% for 1 bed
- 188% for 2 bed
- 238% for 3 bed
- **252% for 4+ bed**

In the last year since March 2025, need has increased by:

- 8% for 1 bed
- 33% for 2 bed
- 27% for 3 bed
- **54% for 4+ bed**

The need for 4+ bed houses has the greatest percentage increases. For 3 years, need remained fairly consistent (2021-2024) but has risen by 54% in the last year.

The need for 1 bed properties has significantly dropped over the past year to just 8% growth.

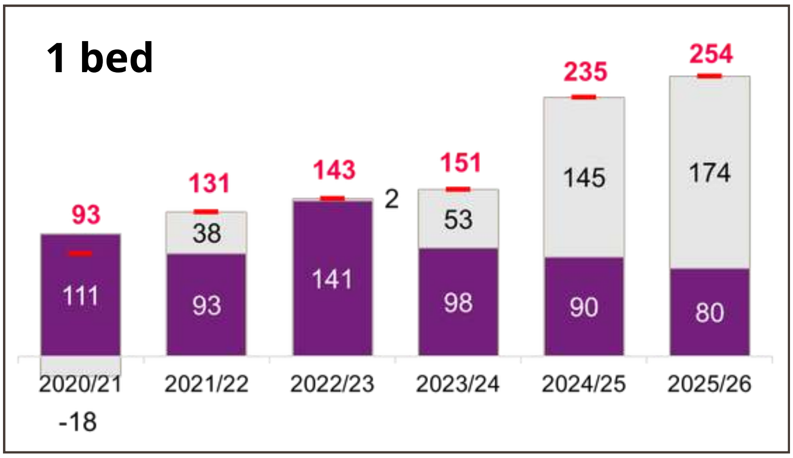


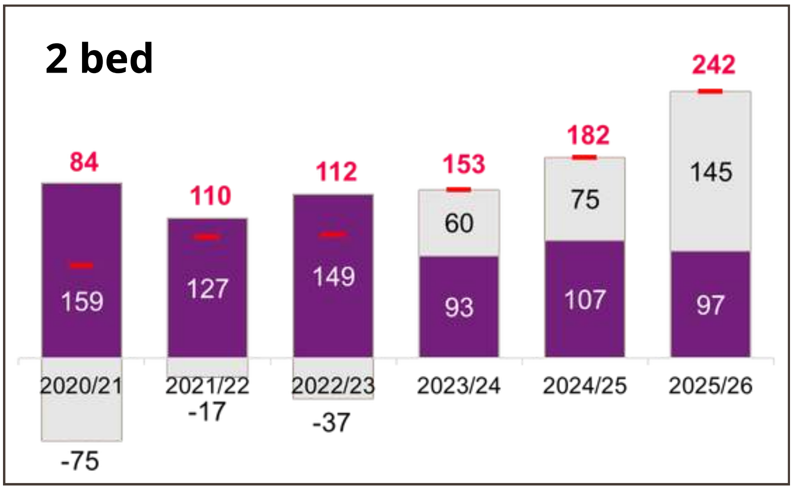
Bands 1 and 2 are those who are in most urgent need the majority being homeless families with children. Therefore, when there is a shortfall in meeting this need the only alternative is temporary accommodation, causing a growing backlog of families living in this position.

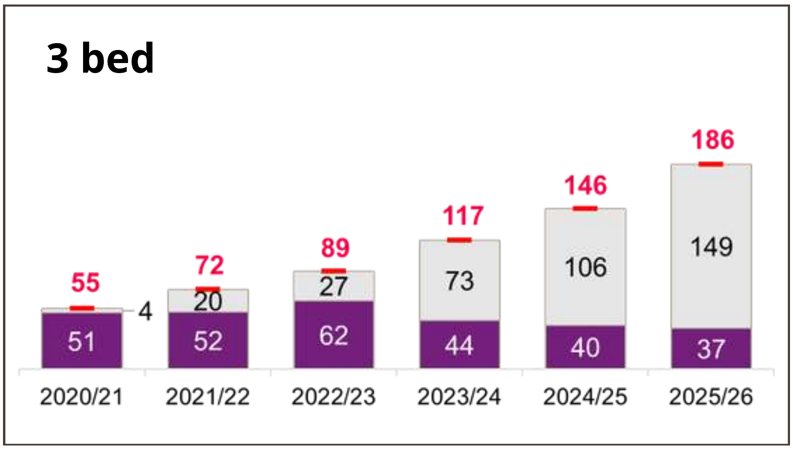
In years when 'supply is greater than need', the reality is that there are a small number of cases whereby other families in inadequate housing (e.g. overcrowded or with health and welfare problems), have an opportunity to be accommodated. Unfortunately in all other periods when 'need is greater than supply', opportunities for these households to be rehoused are significantly more limited.

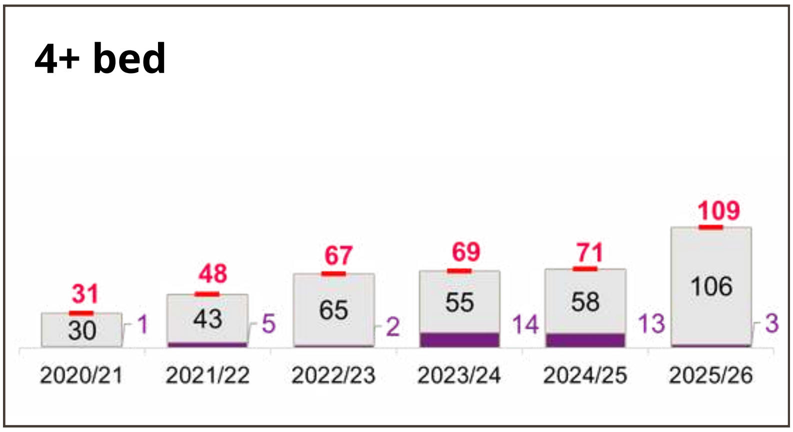
KPI 2: Housing register applicants split by bedroom for bands 1 & 2 only (Need) vs KPI 8 CBL lets (Supply)

March 2026









KPI 8: Supply. CBL properties let for the year. Includes new builds but excludes sheltered and age restricted properties.

KPI 2: Need. Housing register applicants for the year (bands 1 and 2 only).

Shortfall between KPI 8 and KPI 2.

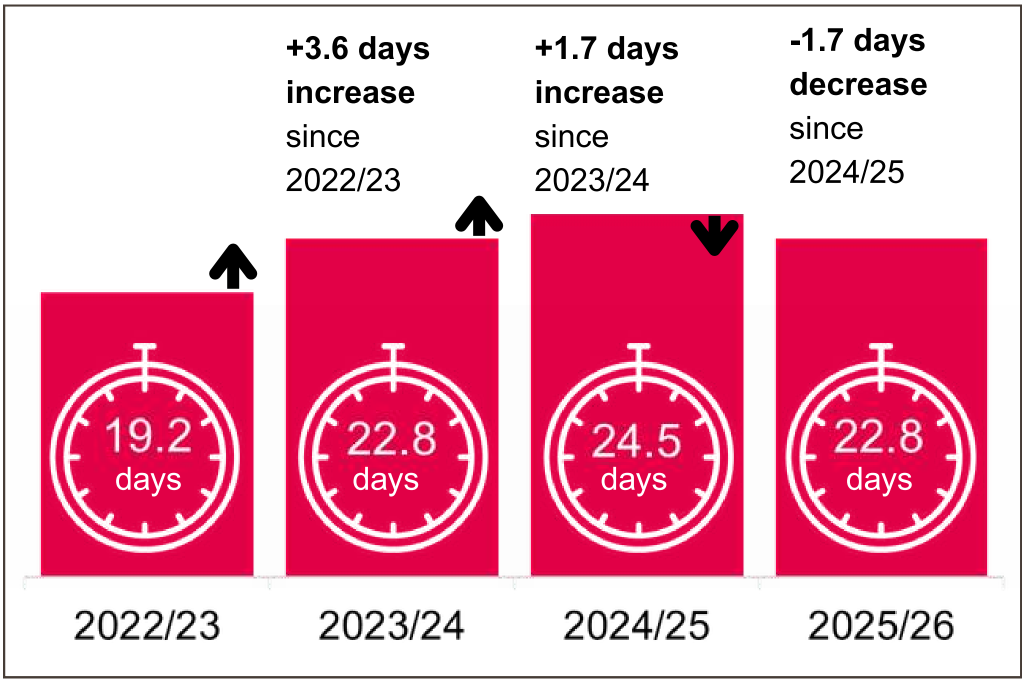
In years between 2020/21 and 2022/23 there were more CBL lets available than were needed for 2-bed properties. So 'supply' was greater than 'need' (demand).

Since 2023/24 housing 'need' by those in priority bands 1 and 2 on the housing register has far exceeded 'supply' of CBL lets.

The shortfalls between 'supply' and 'need' are greater for 3-bed and 4-bed properties. This shortfall is currently 149 and 106 properties respectively for 2025/26.

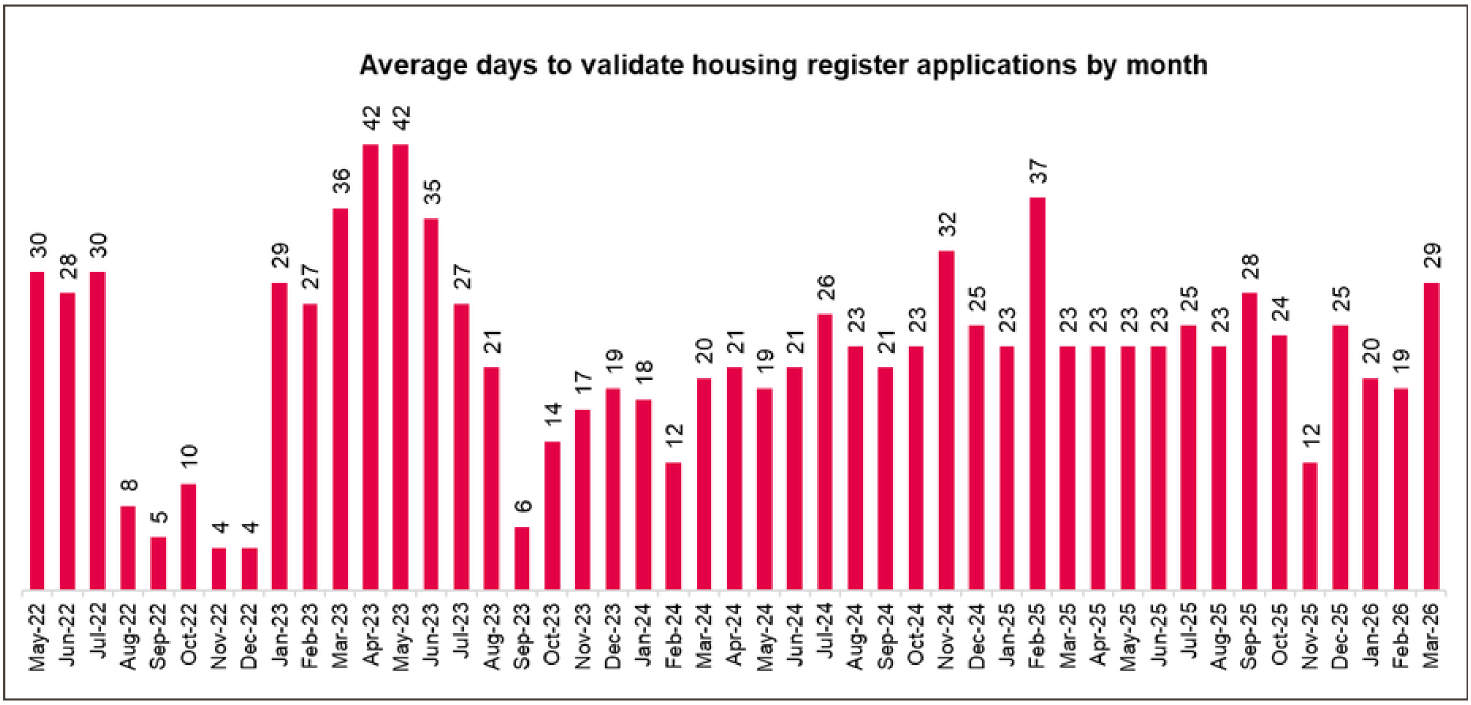
The shortfall for 4+bed properties has remained consistently over 80% since 2020/21. It currently stands at 97% shortfall against need for 2025/26.

KPI 3: Average days to validate housing register applications once all evidence received (Need)



The average monthly time it takes to validate housing register **applications has recently dropped back to 23/24 levels after 2 consecutive years of increases.**

The **highest months** since May 2022 **were April and May 2023 at 42 days.**



Improvements can be seen through a decrease in the time (average days) it takes to validate applications.

Validation was at its highest in March and April 2023 at 42 days. It is now, in March 2026, at 29 days. This an improvement of 13 days or 31% in the last three years, and is a result of:

- The Council's Customer Service Centre (CSC) training up more staff to carry out the initial housing register work.
- The Strategic Housing Team having a dedicated Housing Allocations Team. This includes two Housing Needs officers responsible for complex Housing register assessments.

KPI 11: Average waiting time (months) for **households who have moved into Band 2 on housing register and have then been housed** - excl. new build, sheltered and age restricted properties (Supply)

March 2026

Overall: Waiting time has increased by 6.5 months from 11.9 to 18.4 months

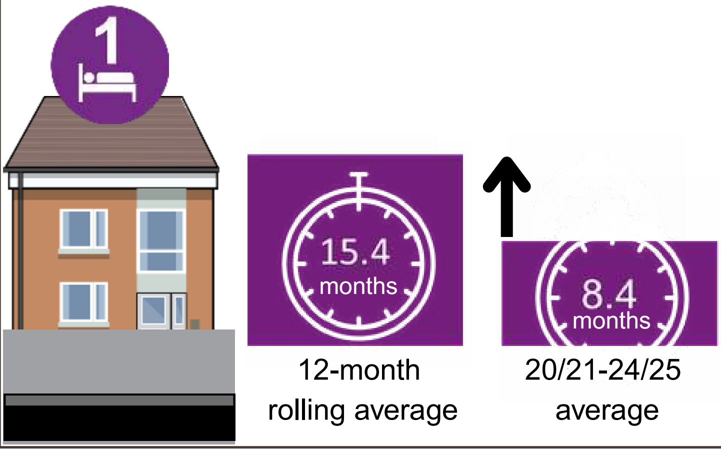
Rolling 12 month average | 2020/21 - 2024/25 annual average

People waiting to be housed now typically have to wait between 8.4 to 33.7 months. **However, those applying to the Housing Register today are likely to wait as long as this, plus a proportional increase too.**

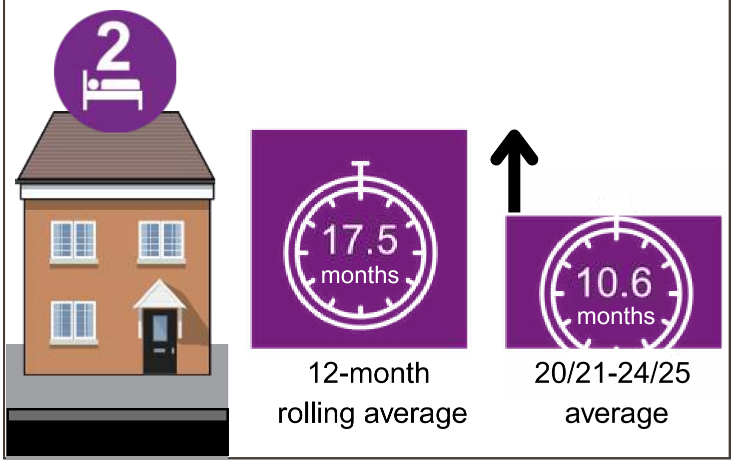
For example:

- 1 bed: 24 months
- 2 bed: 26 months
- 3 bed: 47 months
- 4 bed: Indefinite timeframe

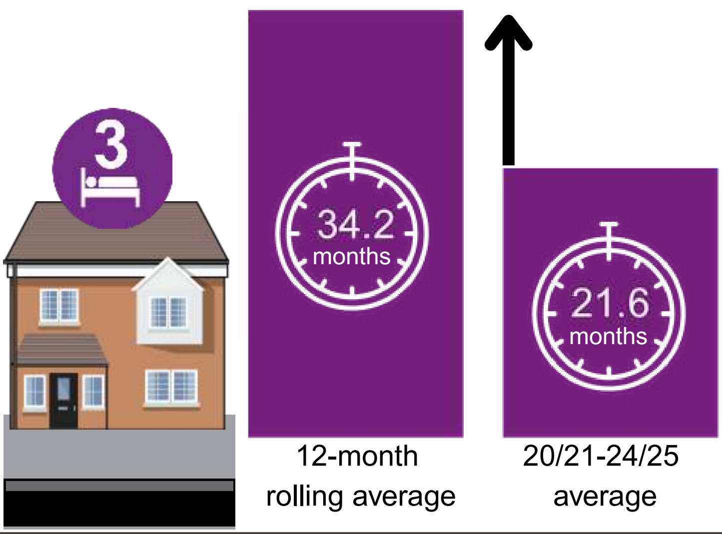
1 bed: Waiting time has increased by 7 months from 8.4 to 15.4 months



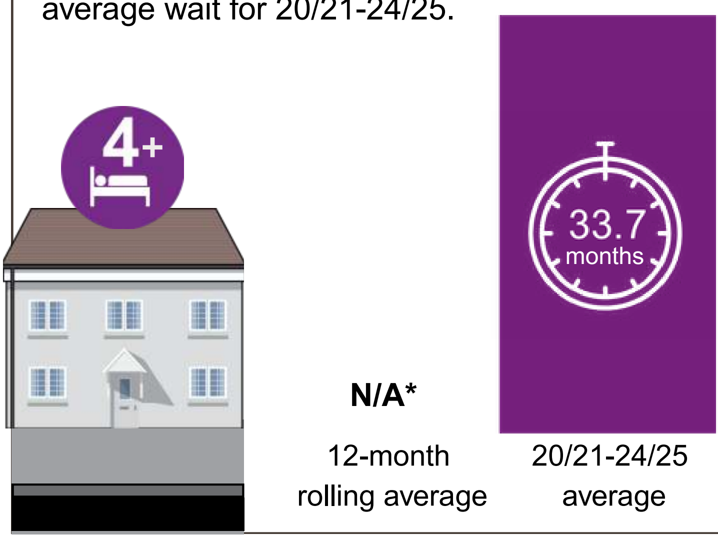
2 bed: Waiting time has increased by 6.9 months from 10.6 to 17.5 months



3 bed: Waiting time has increased by 12.6 months from 21.6 to 34.2 months



No non-new build CBL 4+ bed properties have been let in the last 12 months to band 2 applicants*. This is compared to 33.7 month average wait for 20/21-24/25.



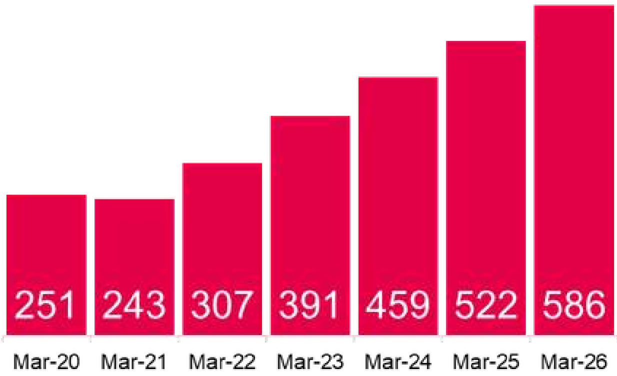
KPI 4: Households in Temporary Accommodation (Need)

March 2026

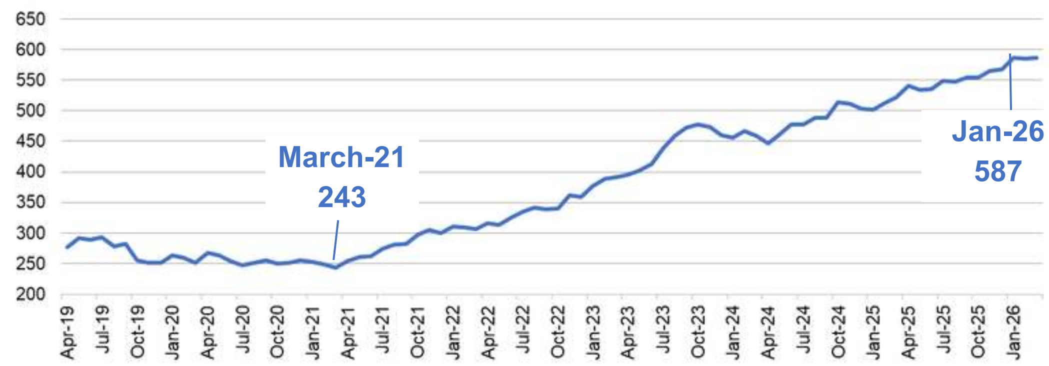
586 households currently in TA

There has been an increase of 64 households needing temporary accommodation since March 2025. This represents a 12% increase in 12 months.

However, the rate of growth has been slowing since it's highest between March 2022 and March 2023. During that 12 month period there was 27% growth.



There has been a steady monthly increase in the number of households in TA. The lowest was 243 in March 2021, and the highest was 587 in January 2026.



Under Housing Law, if a person or family becomes homeless and urgently needs a home, the Council may provide **temporary accommodation (TA)** while helping them find long-term housing. **Councils don't have to find housing for everyone - only if they qualify in law and even then it does not have to be social housing, they can also use private landlords too.**

Temporary accommodation is either emergency accommodation or a long-term temporary solution. This means:

- The location, size, and rent may vary.
- Homes may be single or shared.
- The landlord is responsible for the day-to-day management of that property.

There is a national housing crisis, which is acute in London and the South East, although an increasing problem throughout the whole country.

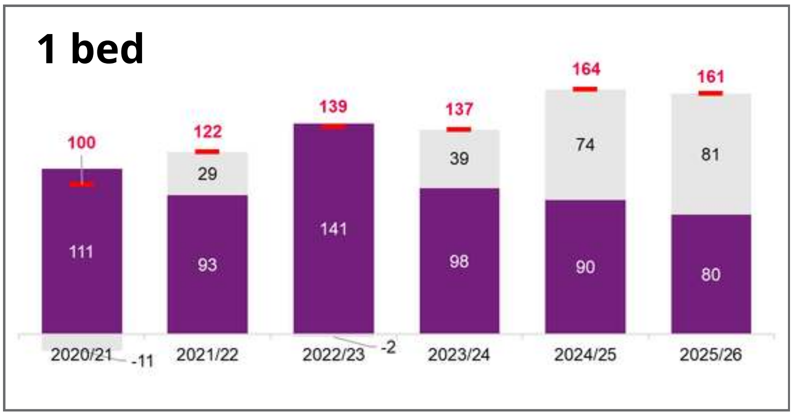
- **There is a critical shortage of housing of all kinds in Chelmsford**, particularly of affordable homes available to rent.
- **Chelmsford City Council does not own any 'Council houses'.**
- **All 'social housing' available for rent are managed by one of 15 housing associations in Chelmsford.**

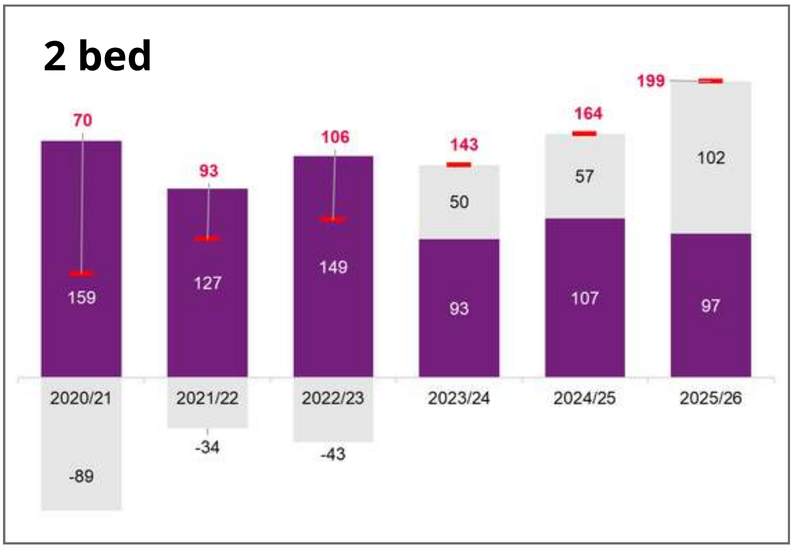
Temporary accommodation could mean living in...

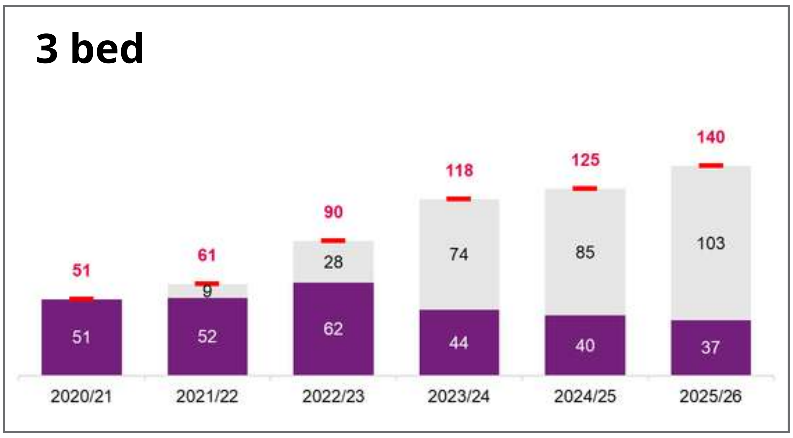
... a nightly let with private landlord

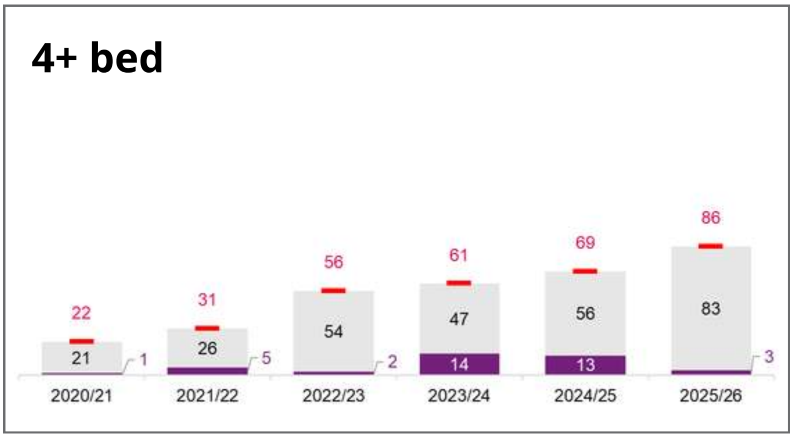
... bed & breakfast property or shared accommodation

...a flat or house miles away from Chelmsford









KPI 8: Supply. Shows the number of CBL properties let for the year (includes new builds but excludes sheltered and age restricted properties).

KPI 4c: Need. This is the number of households in TA (temporary accommodation) for the year.

Shortfall. This shows the gap between supply (KPI 8) and need (KPI 4c).

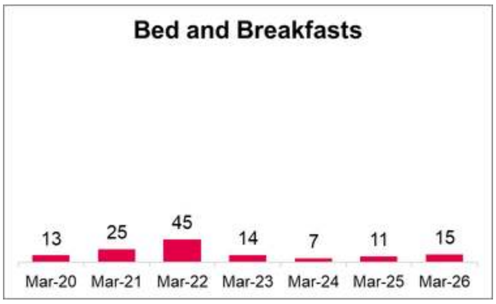
There has been an increasing shortfall gap between 'need' and 'supply' of TA accommodation for 1-bed and 2-bed properties since 2023/24. Prior to this there were opportunities for those who were not living in temporary accommodation to be housed.

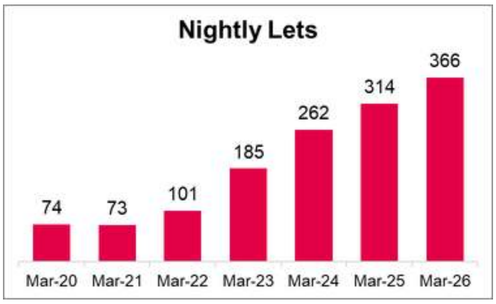
Around half the TA 'need' for 1-bed (50%) and 2-bed (51%) properties was accommodated in 2025/26.

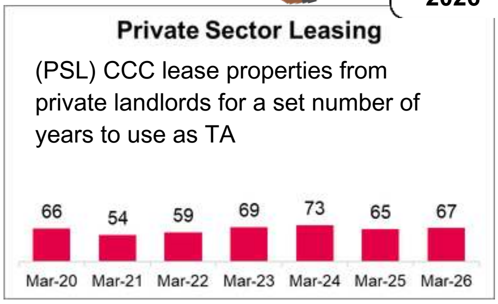
The shortfall gap of TA 'need' in 2025-26 for 3-bed (74%) and 4+ bed (97%) was significantly higher. This meant a shortfall of 103 properties with 3-beds against supply of 37 and need of 140. For 4+ beds this meant a shortfall of 83 against a supply of 3 and need of 86 properties.

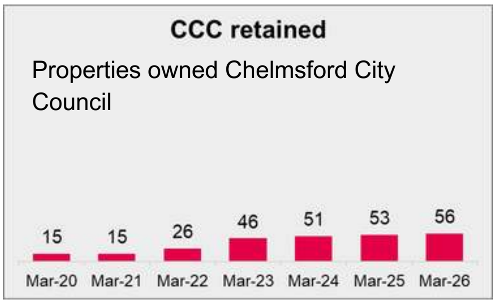
KPI 5: Number of households in TA split by accommodation type (Need)

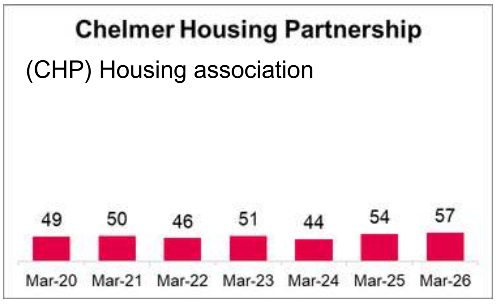
March 2026

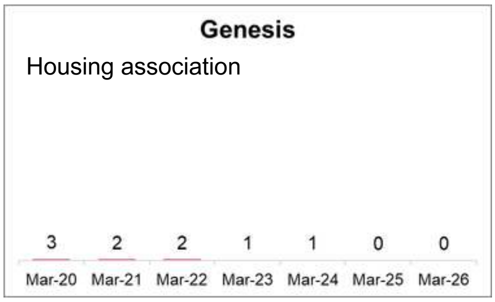


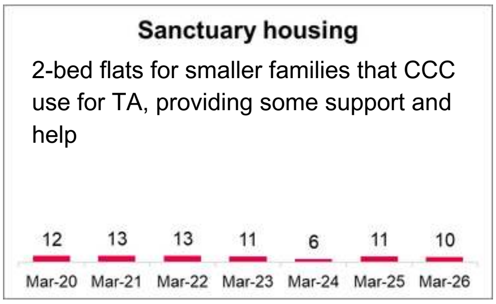


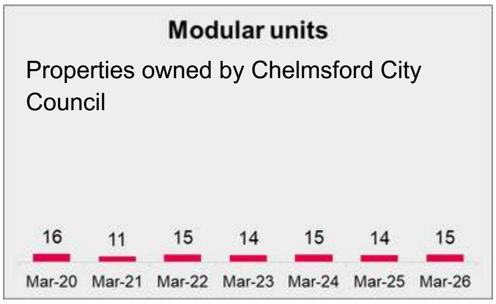


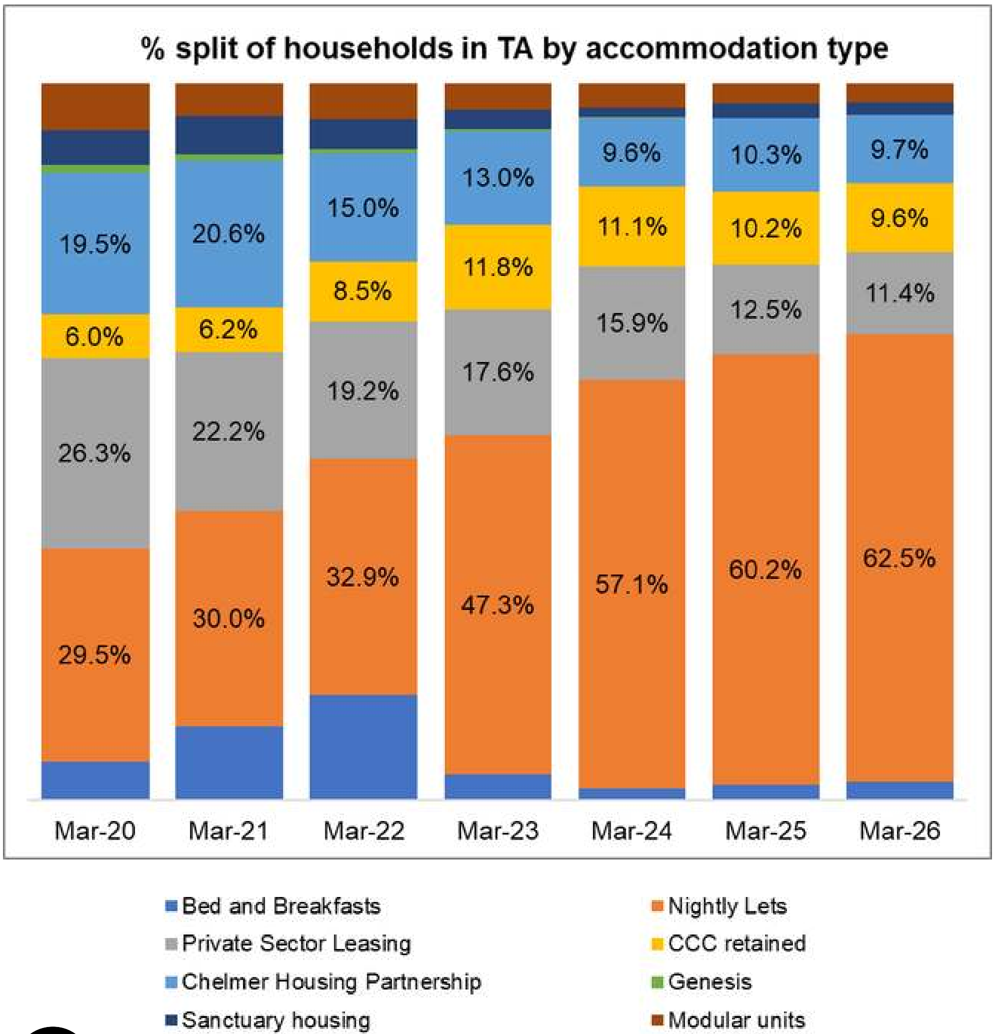








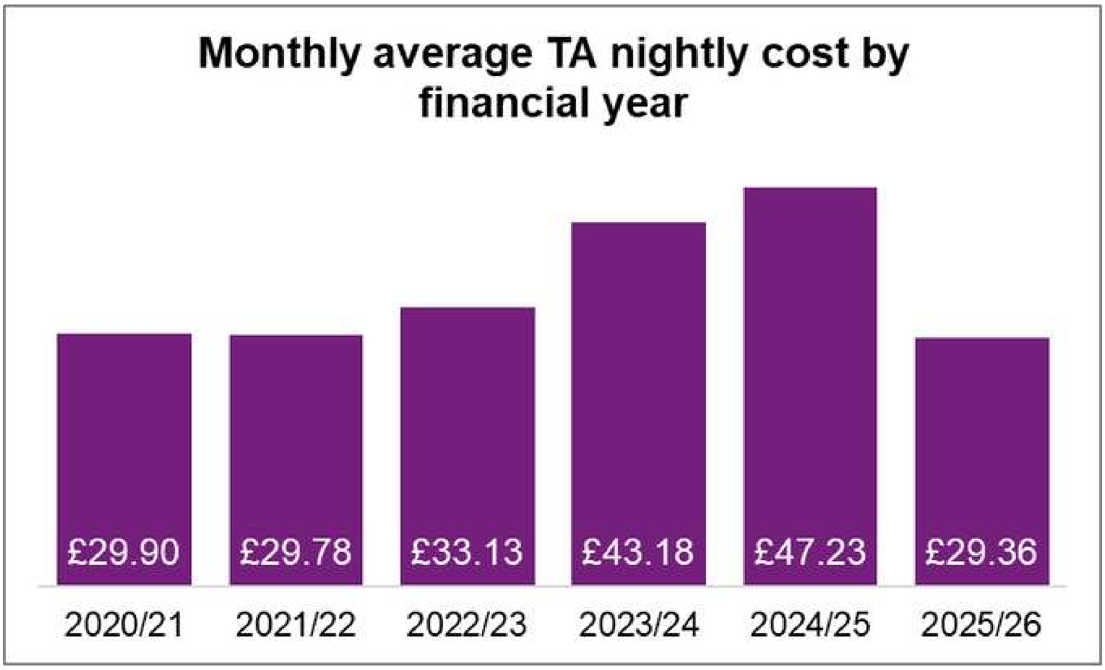


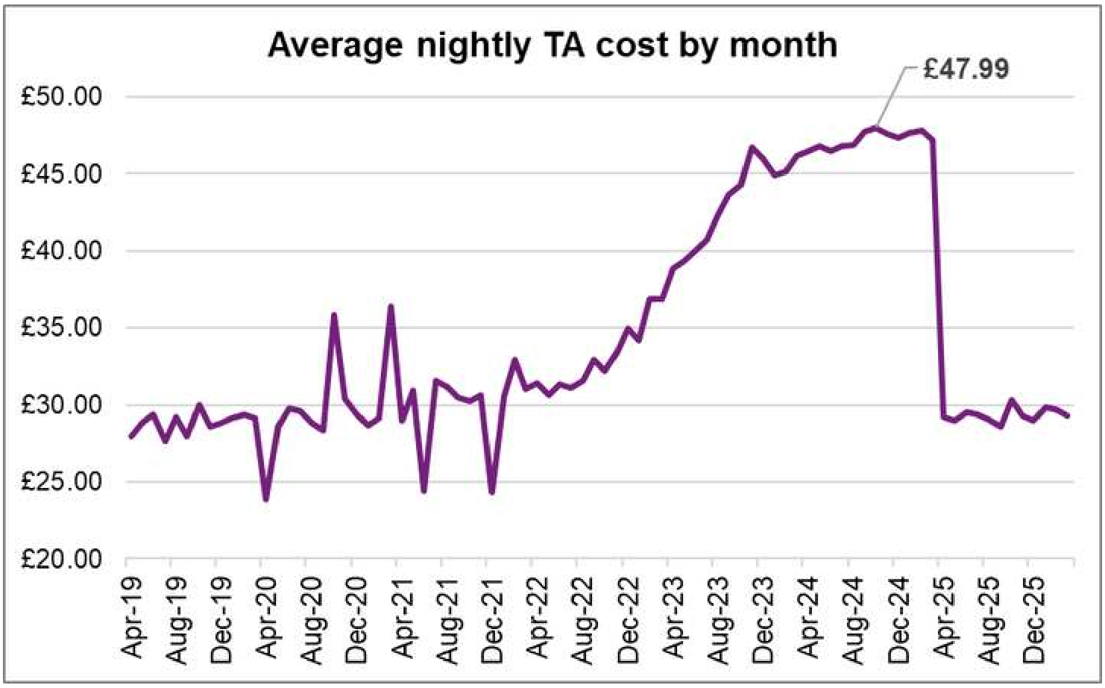


The use of nightly lets to meet Chelmsford's TA (temporary accommodation) needs has increased significantly as demand rises faster than our ability to find more suitable options. This type of use grew by 33% in six years. In March 2020 it accounted for almost one third (29.5%) of all accommodation types used for TA to almost two thirds (62.5%) in March 2026. This represents an increase from 74 to 366 properties.

Our priorities are:

1. **To reduce, and if possible avoid, the use of B&B especially for families.**
2. To work towards finding more affordable sources of temporary accommodation.
3. To ensure all homes used are safe and in good condition.



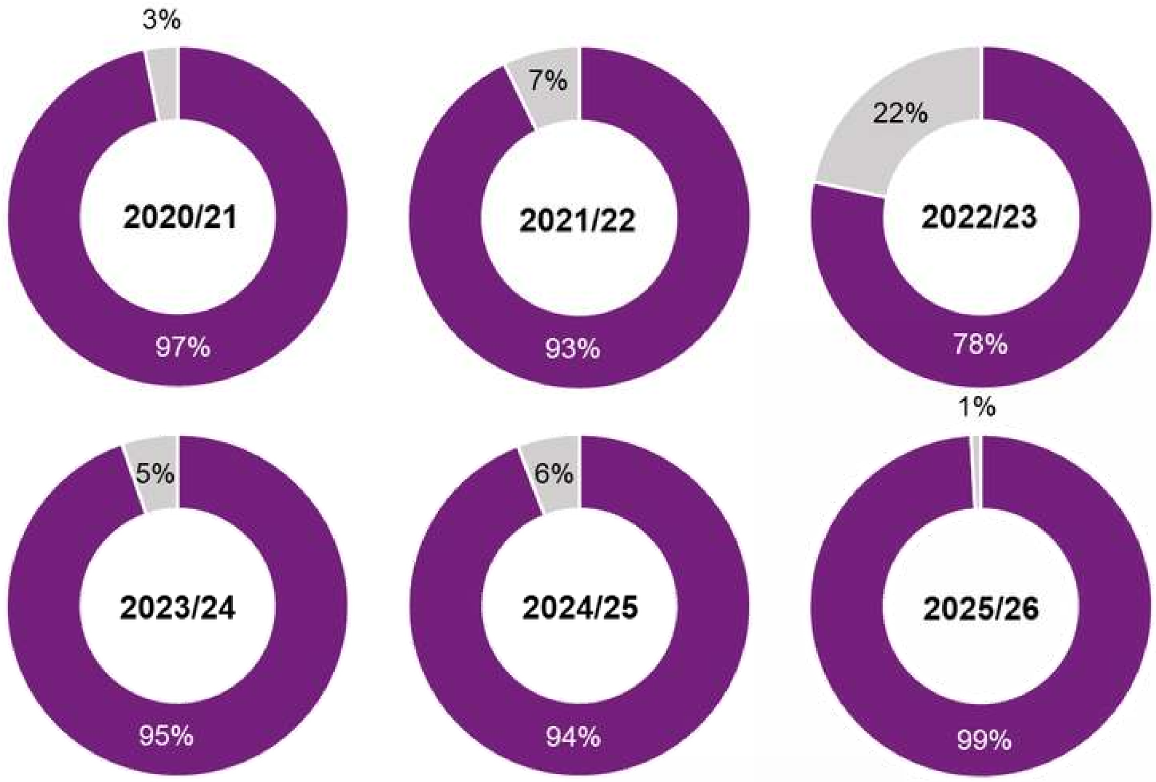


What has caused the average nightly cost to drop since December 2024?

Since 2024, Chelmsford City Council has secured fixed-price agreements with local nightly-let providers to ensure a supply of suitable temporary accommodation. Together with larger temporary accommodation properties purchased by Delta using Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) funding, this has helped to stabilise costs over the past two years.

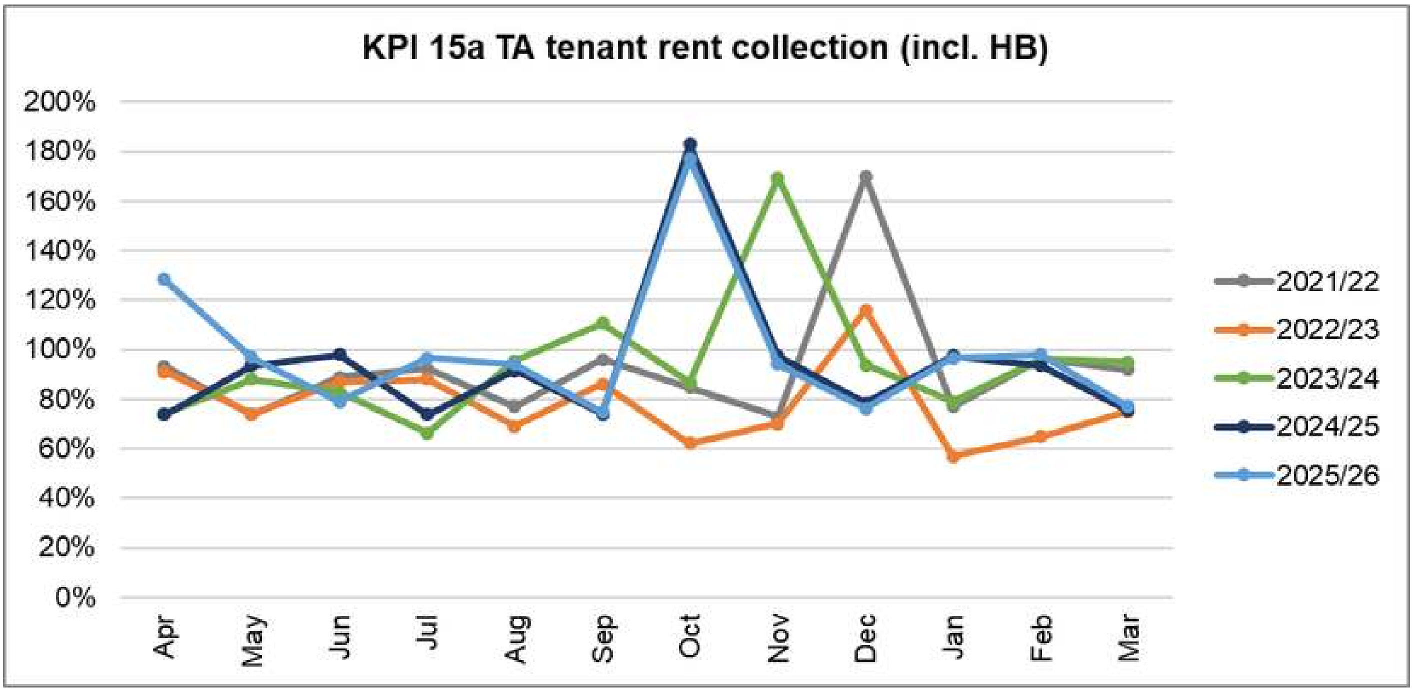
KPI 15a: Temporary Accommodation Rent Collection, including housing benefit (Finance)

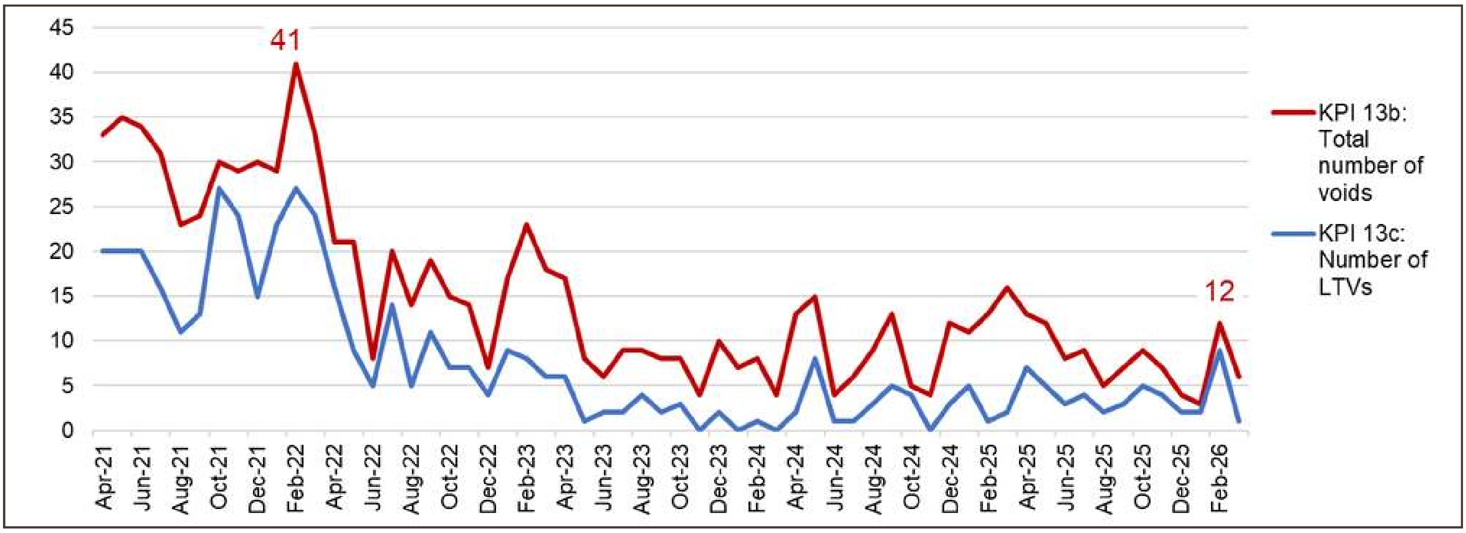
March 2026



99% rent collection (including housing benefit) was achieved in 2025/26. This is the highest level over last six years.

In 2024/25 and 2025/26 the lowest collection months were September, December and March.





In March 2026, Chelmer Housing Partnership managed 151 properties owned by Chelmsford City Council. Eight were classed as 'voids' with four of these being long-term voids. The monthly average for total voids has halved since 2022/23 when it was 16 properties. This means there are more usable properties available, reducing the need for nightly lets and placing families out of the area. The reduction in voids is mainly the result of more investment in our Temporary Accommodation team, enabling them to work more closely with Delta and other providers of temporary accommodation to improve performance.

A 'void' is a vacant property that has been untenanted for a period of time. This could be due to: a property is awaiting an agreed new tenant; a previous tenant giving notice and vacating the property; being empty following the death of a tenant; the abandonment of the property or a tenant transferring to or buying another property.

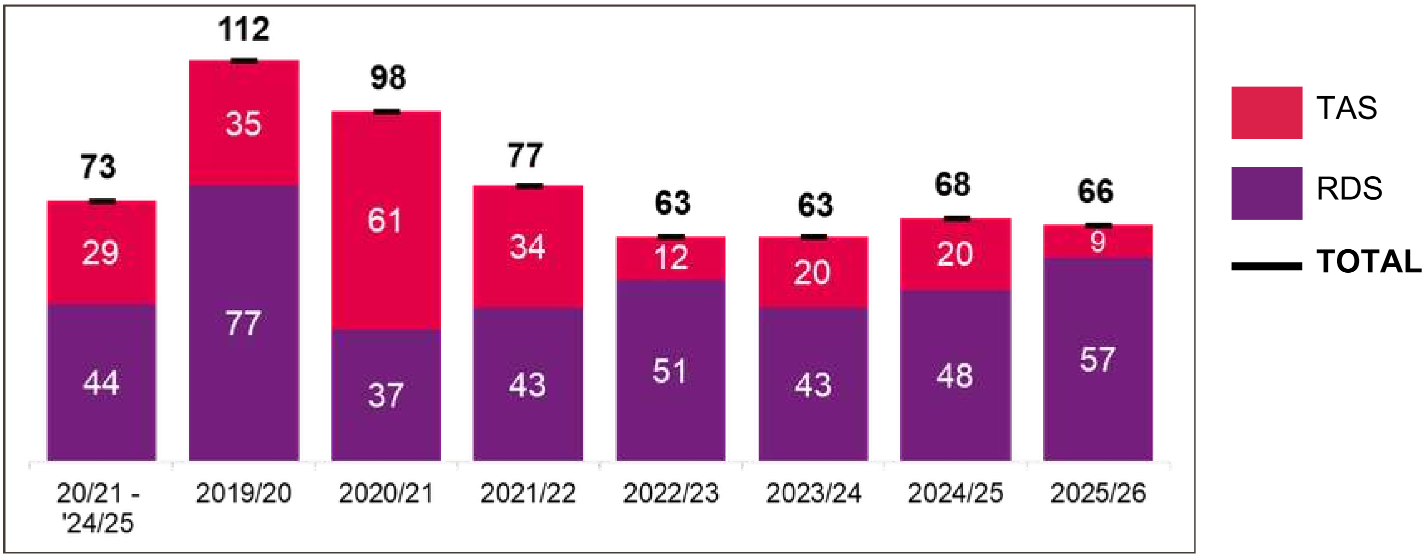
'LTV' is a long-term void (included in 'total voids' figure) meaning:

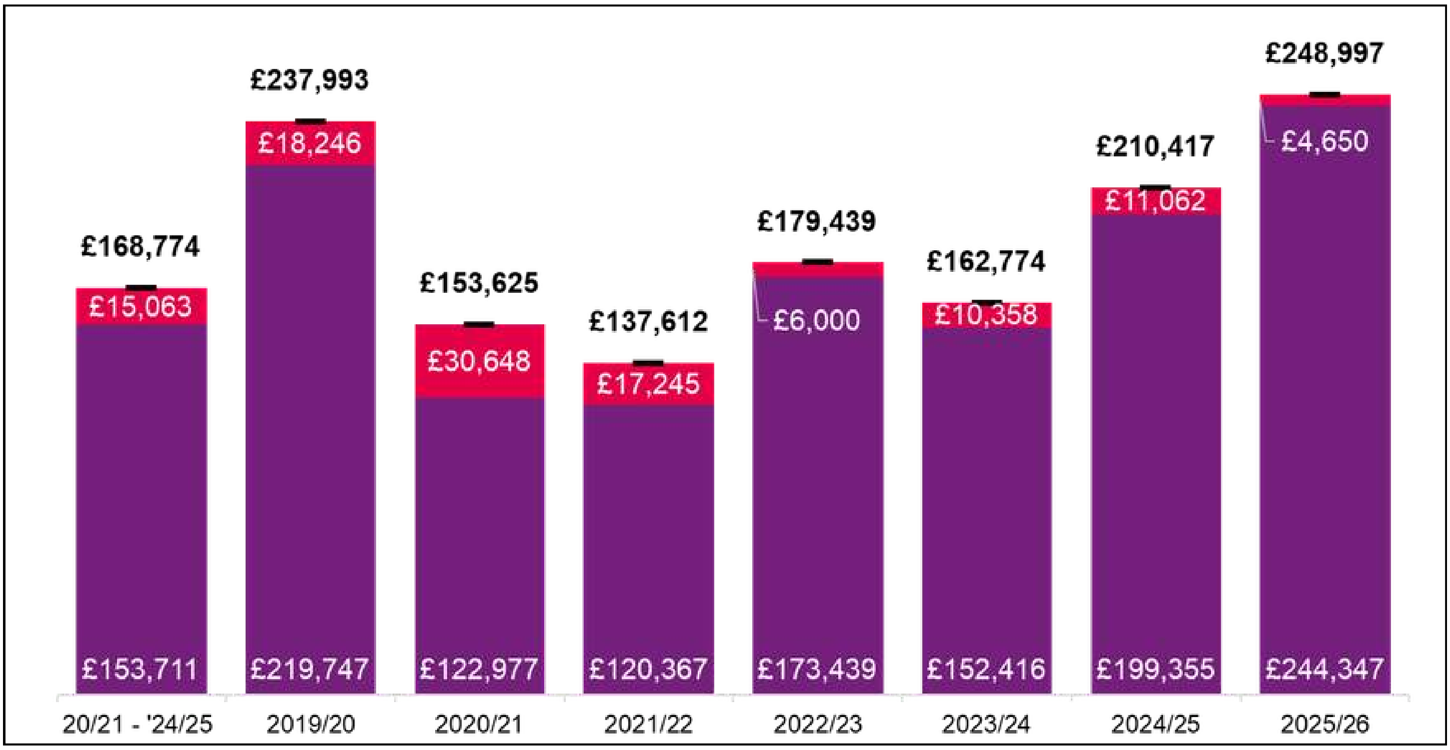
- it is has been void for more than 20 days or
- is subject to major works or
- works that are out of control of CHP or CCC.

KPI 12: Rent deposit (RDS) and tenancy assistance (TAS) schemes provided and their cost (Supply)

March 2026

The following show monthly averages for placements agreed and associated costs



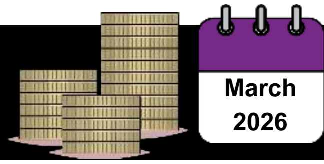


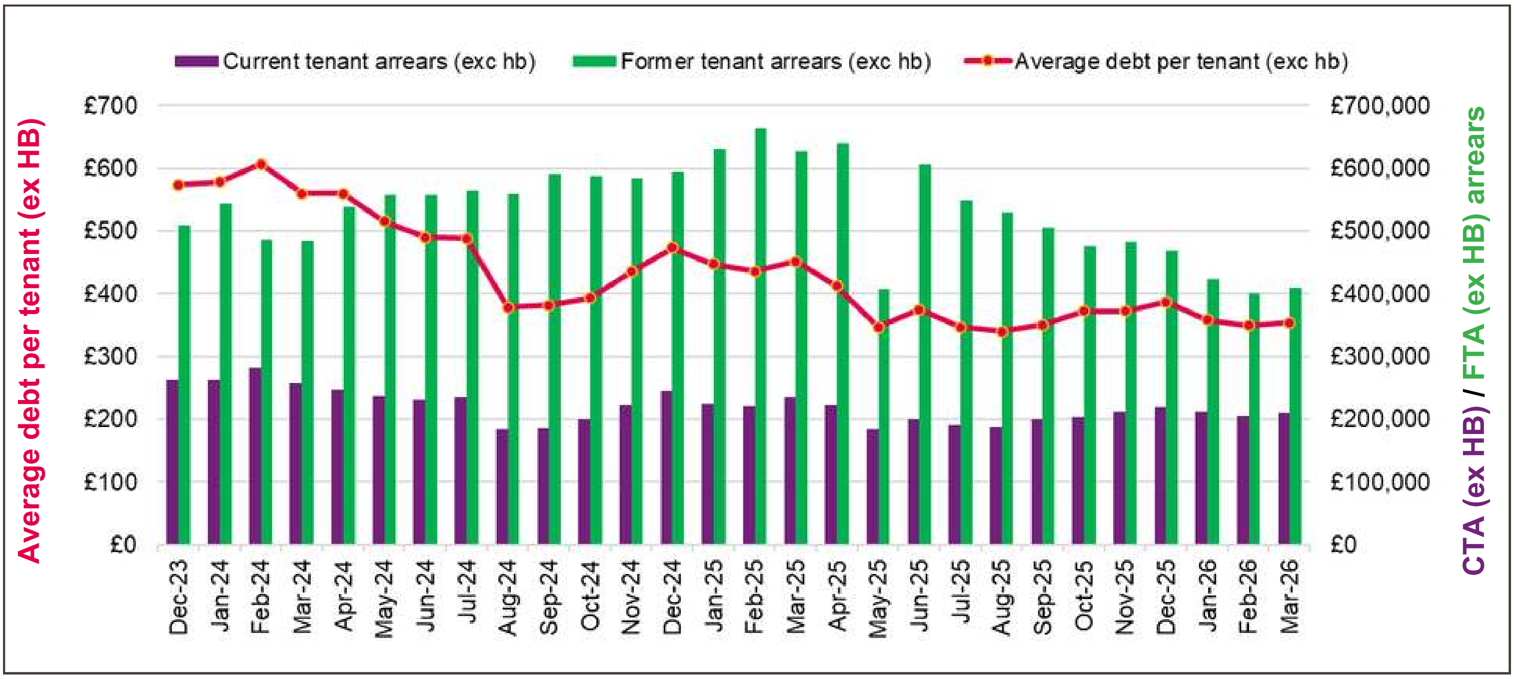
Our Rent Deposit Scheme (RDS) helps bring landlords and tenants together with our support. We can help tenants to maintain their tenancy by helping with the upfront of renting a property privately. The property doesn't have to be in the Chelmsford area for it to be let through us, creating more choice for families, helping to reduce disruption by reducing the need to change schools, access to work, etc. It is also an essential way to supplement the reducing supply of social housing for those the Council has a legal duty to house.

The Tenancy Assistance Scheme (TAS) is used when the case is unlikely to be a household to whom we owe a temporary accommodation duty (costing us money in TA), but to whom we still owe a prevention or relief of homelessness duty to. This is funded via our Homelessness Prevention Grant and is not to do with Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP).

The RDS and TAS are not publicised. Qualifying cases are internally identified by the Homeless Team/Private Rented Sector (PRS) team from our homeless applicants.

KPIs 16d-16f: Current tenant rent arrears (CTA), former tenant rent arrears (FTA) and average debt per current tenant (Finance)



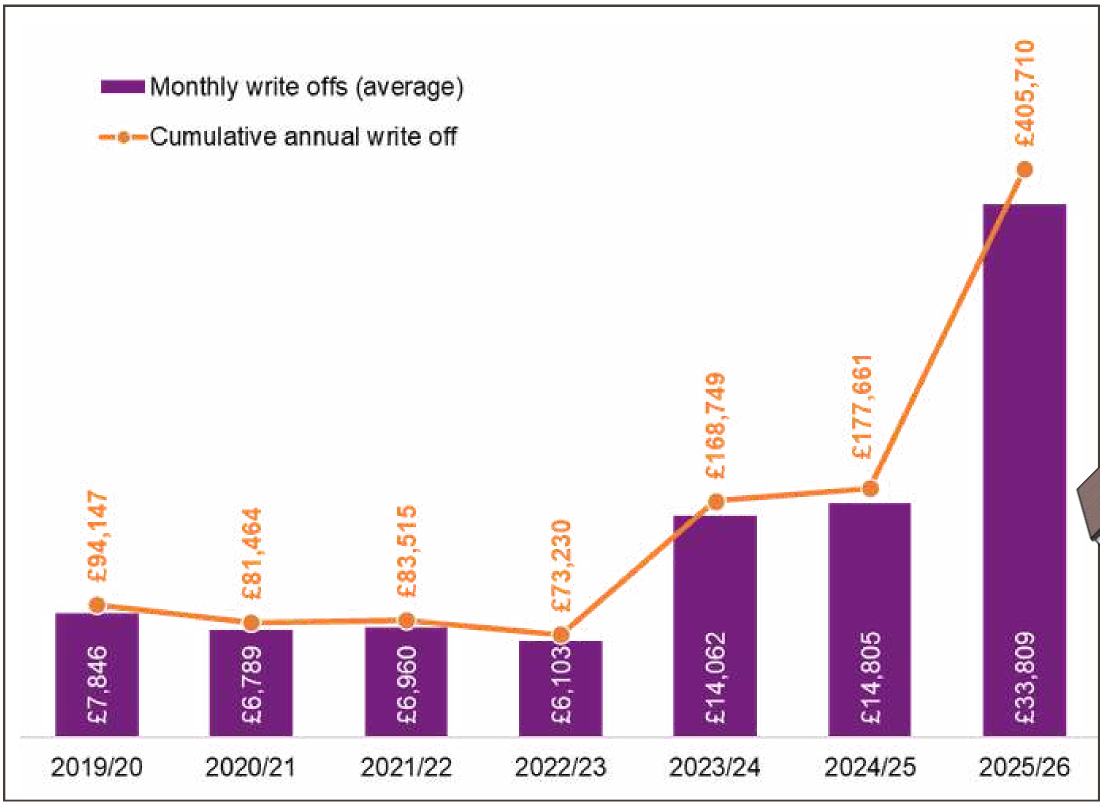


- **CTA:** Highest £282,439 (Feb-24) vs lowest £184,594 (Aug-24). **March 2026 £210,023**
- **FTA:** Highest £664,046 (Feb-25) vs lowest £401,368 (Feb-26). **March 2026 £409,393**
- **Average debt:** Highest £607 (Feb-24) vs lowest £347 (May-25). **March 2026 £354**

During 2024/25, the Council introduced a new Rent Setting Policy for temporary accommodation to align rents with other affordable housing tenures. This improved affordability for residents, reduced barriers to employment and training, and strengthened rent collection performance.

Current Tenancy Arrears (CTA): If rent is not paid, the money owed is called rent arrears. Rent arrears are a serious problem and could lead to the lose of a home. We encourage tenants to advise us straight away if they are struggling to pay their rent, so that we can put in place measures to help them before they lose their home. Our Recovery Officers are available to advise on the next best course of action and they will be able to work out a repayment plan if the tenant is unable able to pay their arrears in full.

Former Tenancy Arrears (FTA): These are a debt of unpaid rent or charges, remaining on a rent account, including garage and court cost accounts when a tenancy (or similar agreement) has been terminated. Having outstanding former tenancy arrears may prevent a person from being able to join the Council's housing register and affect any housing references that the Council is asked to provide.



Given that historic arrears were no longer reflected within the revised rent structure of the New Rent Setting Policy, the outstanding backlog was written off in-year rather than over an extended period.

Our Housing Management System is used to monitor and identify arrears outstanding, allowing for repayment arrangements to be recorded. When a debt has been written off, it will no longer be shown as outstanding in the Council's accounts. However, the debt remains and if the tenant is subsequently traced, the debt will be re-instated.

The Council will not write debts off without taking appropriate steps to recover them.
However, there are circumstances where the Council deems it necessary to write off the debt:

- Where not economical to pursue the debt (e.g. debts under £100)
- Tracing action has failed to find the debtor
- External Debt Recovery Agents deem the debt irrecoverable
- Account is 'Statute Barred' (e.g. debt over 6 years old)
- Debtor is overseas
- Recommended by management
- Bankruptcy; Individual Voluntary arrangement; Liquidation or Debt Relief Order
- Where one partner has left the tenancy due to domestic violence (the victim will not be pursued)
- Debtor is serving a Custodial Sentence
- Vulnerable / Hardship
- Error made by us
- Deceased tenant (e.g. no funds in the estate)

KPI 19: Homeless cases assessed in Chelmsford (H-CLIC)

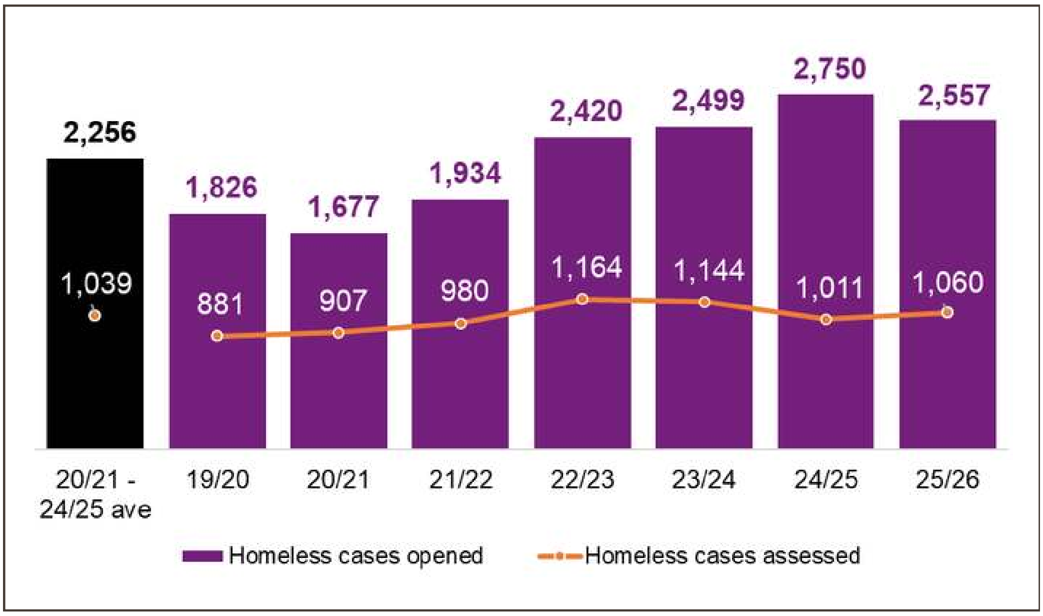
March 2026

2,557

homeless cases **opened in 2025/26**

1,060

homeless cases **assessed in 2025/26**



The proportion of homelessness cases assessed fell from 54% (907 of 1,677 cases) in 2020/21 to 37% in 2024/25, before improving to 41% in 2025/26. Performance was impacted by significantly increased demand, with average homelessness officer caseloads exceeding three times the government-recommended level by late 2023/24. Since then, additional resources have enabled increased staffing, reducing caseloads and improving performance. Enhanced capacity has also supported the development of preventative interventions, contributing to a reduction in domestic abuse-related homelessness cases in 2025/26 despite rising overall demand.

The rise in homelessness in England has been driven by several interconnected factors:

1. **Lack of affordable housing** - including a housing shortage, rising rents and home prices, and a declining stock of social housing, with many homes sold off under the “Right to Buy” scheme.
2. **Welfare reforms and benefit cuts** - delays in receiving Universal Credit, caps on housing benefits and LHA rates not matching rising rent costs.
3. **Economic factors** - cost of living crisis and unstable employment including zero-hour and part time contracts make it hard for people to maintain a steady income.
4. **Private renting sector** - Section 21 ‘no fault’ evictions, rising rents and less rental options.
5. **Mental health and addition** - cuts to services and insufficient support make it difficult for those affected to maintain stable housing.
6. **Domestic abuse** - those feeling abusive relationships end up homeless because of lack of refuge spaces or alternative housing options.
7. **Impact of COVID-19** - Emergency measures during the pandemic temporarily reduced homelessness (e.g., the "Everyone In" scheme), however many of those measures have since been scaled back.

1. Eviction by family or friends

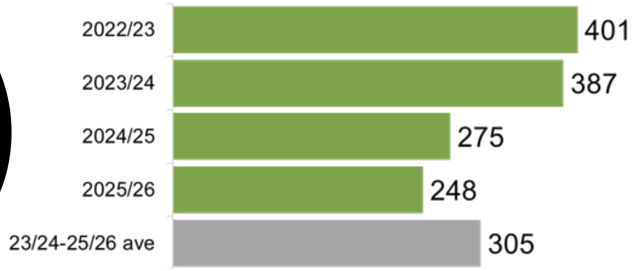
33% of all reasons 2025/26

+23 in the last 12 months

Many families and friends are unaware of the consequences of evicting someone, at best a lengthy stay in temporary accommodation, at worst street homelessness. By working more closely with families and using our 'Homeless at Home scheme' we have reduced Chelmsford's largest cause of homelessness.

2. Section 21 Notice to Quit - Private rented sector

17% of all reasons 2025/26

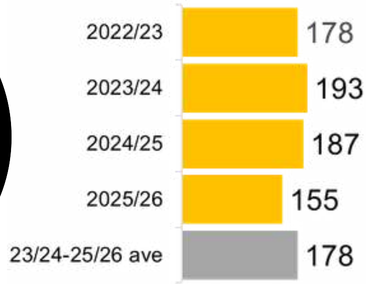


-34 in the last 12 months

Since 1 May 2026 Section 21 notices are no longer allowed in England. The Renters' Rights Act 2025 abolished Section 21, which allowed landlords to evict tenants without providing a reason. Instead, landlords must use Section 8 grounds for possession claims, which now include specific statutory grounds for various situations, such as selling the property.

3. Domestic violence

15% of all reasons 2025/26

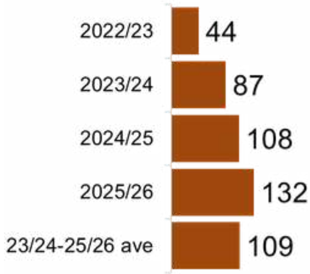


-32 in the last 12 months

In the past year, the Council has worked with Safer Places to introduce the 'My Home, My Choice' scheme, providing victims of domestic abuse with greater support to understand their housing options. A pilot initiative has also been launched to enable perpetrators, rather than victims, to leave the home where appropriate. These measures have helped reduce homelessness resulting from domestic abuse and have contributed to a year-on-year decline in cases.

Left institution with no accommodation available

12% of all reasons 2025/26



+24 in the last 12 months

This is mainly from hospital and prisons, both of which are based in Chelmsford, so this increase reflects the additional demand both institutions are experiencing.

There are many outdated and incorrect perceptions out there about homelessness. Most believe that people are homeless through their own unhealthy lifestyle choices, such as alcohol and drug dependency, violent behaviour or being too lazy to get a job. **The real truth is that anybody can become homeless, and it often happens as a result of changes in personal circumstances over which there is little or no control.**

We are all well aware of the current cost of living issues - huge energy costs, spiralling interest rates and food costs rising - which can lead to debt, as well as redundancy as businesses try to keep their costs down. However, life for some can be particularly difficult for other reasons, such as families falling out, bereavement, separation, divorce, domestic abuse and Section 21 ‘no fault’ evictions. A combination of these could lead to someone being at risk of losing their home or losing their place within a shared house or family home.

Are all homeless people living on the street?

One incorrect assumption is that people who are genuinely homeless are all out living on the street. However that’s wrong. Only a small number of homeless people are visible rough sleepers.

Did you know that a person can still be considered to be homeless if they are:

- **‘Sofa surfing’** - doing the rounds by staying with friends and family, often for two or three nights before moving on;
- **In ‘temporary accommodation’** - even though they have a roof over their heads;
- **Women in refuge**;
- People **hidden away** by sleeping overnight in their cars and in tents in parks and churchyards.

How dangerous is it living on the streets?

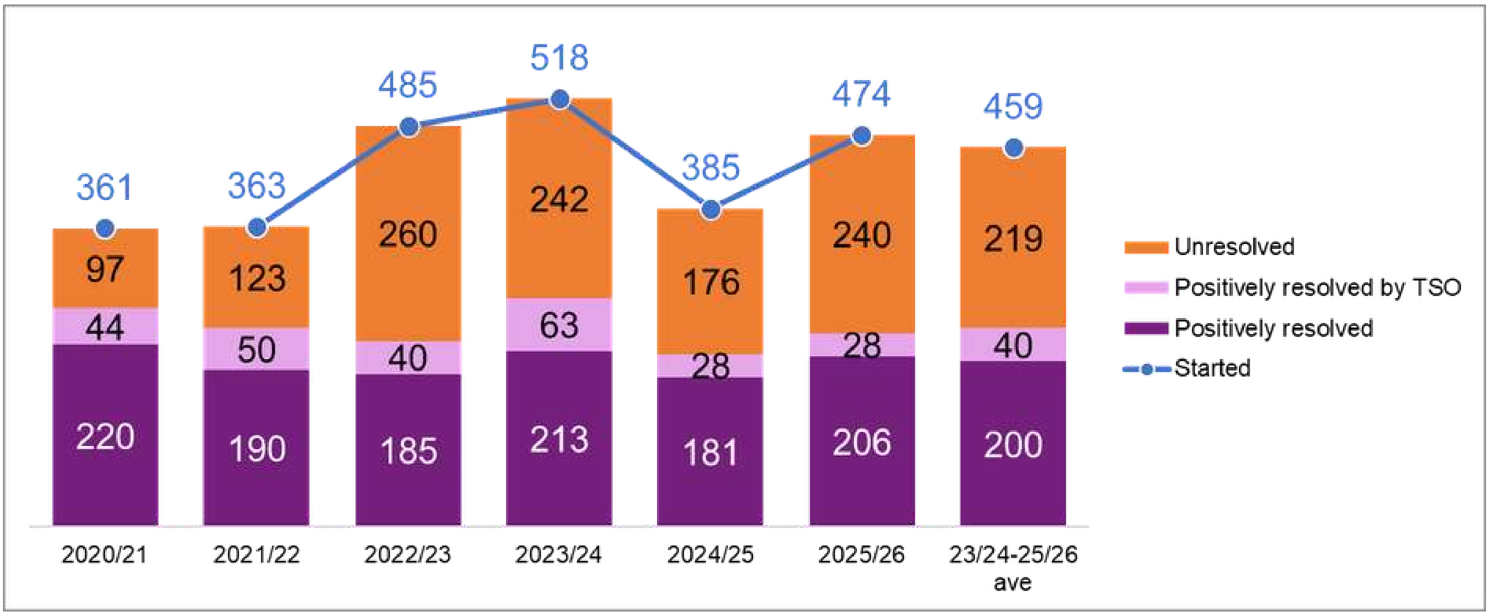
People sleeping on the streets are at risk of:

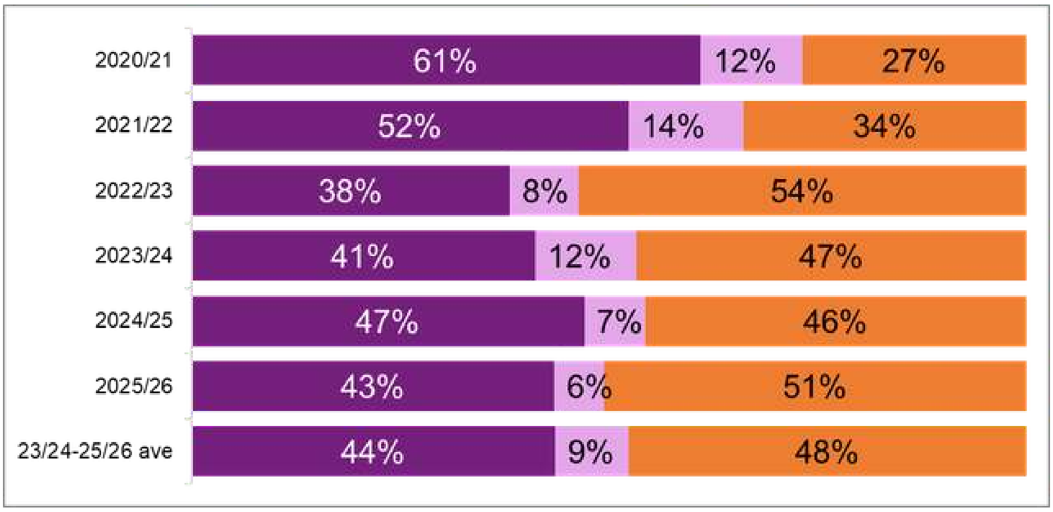
- **poor health** - due to exposure in cold or hot conditions, lack of access to toilet and shower facilities to keep clean, and being in the same clothes and shoes for a long time;
- **being physically abused** - set on fire, stabbed, spat on and robbed;
- **being verbally abused** - especially if they ask for money rather than asking for help.

Why do some rough sleepers refuse help?

Many rough sleepers form attachments to the public spaces where they have been living and their community with other rough sleepers where they have a sense of belonging. Some have mental health conditions, while others fear the consequences of going into emergency accommodation, including being separated, violence at night or detection by the police.

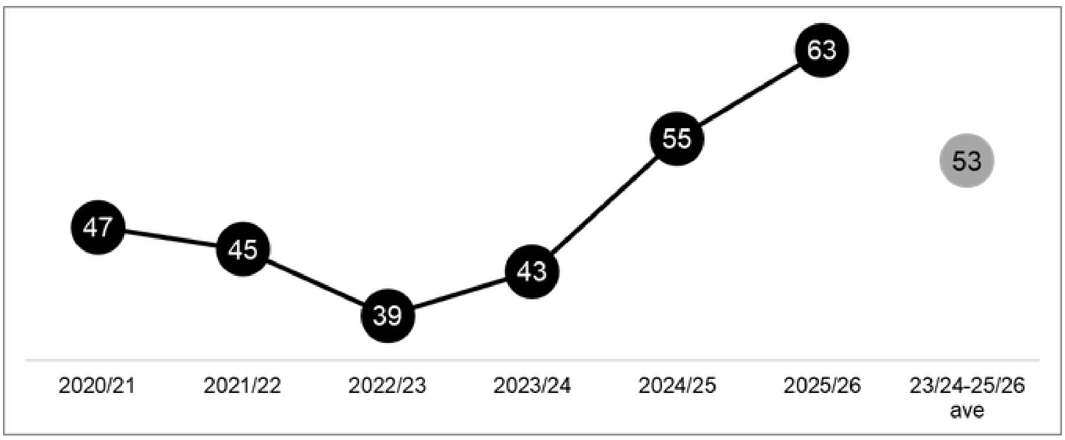
KPI 20: Homelessness preventions started, resolved and active band 2 applicants on housing register with Band 2 prevention priority (H-CLIC)





Tenancy Support Officers (TSOs) provide crucial support to anyone who may be struggling to maintain a tenancy. They may support the tenant to maximise their income through benefits and grants to help with their food and energy bills. They could help with a property exchange to move to a smaller one with less rent and bills, as well organising help with the house move. It could be putting in place a benefits and care package plus financial help for someone with learning difficulties.

Active band 2 applicants on housing register with B2 prevention priority



The rising use of this policy reflects the ongoing work that we do with families and friends to explain the consequences of asking someone to leave their home.

Prevention duty

Local housing authorities (LHA) owe prevention duties to help **stop households from losing their accommodation** if they are eligible for assistance e.g.

- If a person is threatened with homelessness,
- if it is likely that they will become homeless within 56 days,
- or if they have been given a valid section 21 notice relating to their only accommodation which expires within 56 days.

The local authority cannot refer the person to another local authority at the prevention stage. The local authority that the person applies to must take steps under the prevention duty regardless of whether they have a local connection.

An officer will work with that household to carry out an assessment and develop a personalised housing plan (PHP) for them.

Relief duty

The LHA are required to take reasonable steps to to help secure accommodation for at least six months **for any eligible person or household who is already homeless.** This help could include, for example, the provision of a rent deposit or debt advice.

- **The relief duty lasts for up to 56 days.**
- It would be available to all those who are homeless and are eligible, regardless of whether they have a priority need.
- Those who have a priority need (for example they have dependent children or are vulnerable in some way) will be provided with interim accommodation (also classed as ‘emergency accommodation’) while the LHA carries out the reasonable steps.

A household can be referred to a second authority at the relief duty stage. However if they are deemed to be in priority need, the first authority must secure temporary accommodation until a decision has been made by the second authority.

Main duty

Once the relief duty comes to an end, if the household has not been able to secure accommodation, we will assess whether they are owed the main housing duty e.g.

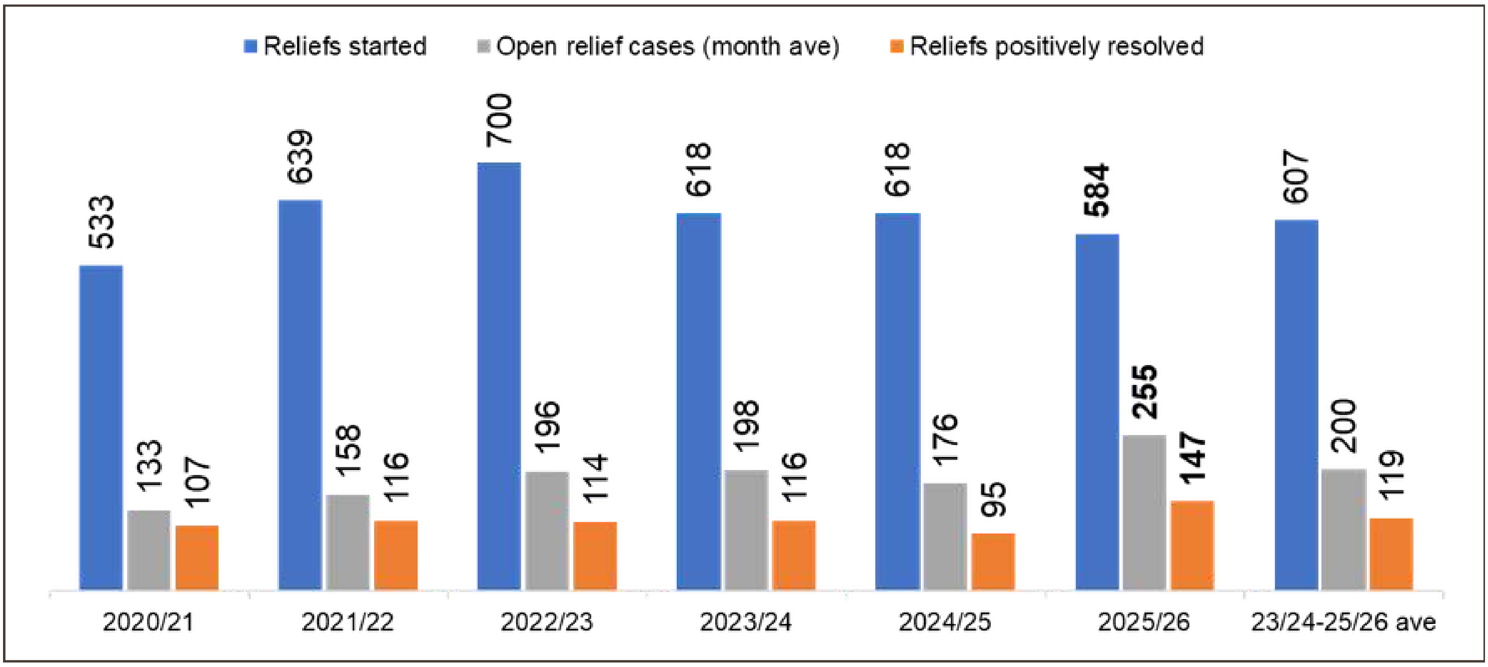
- If they remain homeless after the relief duty comes to an end, are in priority need, and have not made themselves intentionally homeless.

It must be remembered we are responding to a crisis situation. This usually means that these **households may be spending many years in temporary accommodation while bidding for a permanent home.** Any offer made under the main housing duty must be suitable but could be either within the social housing or private rented sector, and could be outside Chelmsford or Essex, depending on where affordable and suitable accommodation can be found.

The wait for a property varies depending on bedroom size but could be over 2 years.

KPI21: Homelessness relief duties started, resolved positively and open relief cases (H-CLIC)

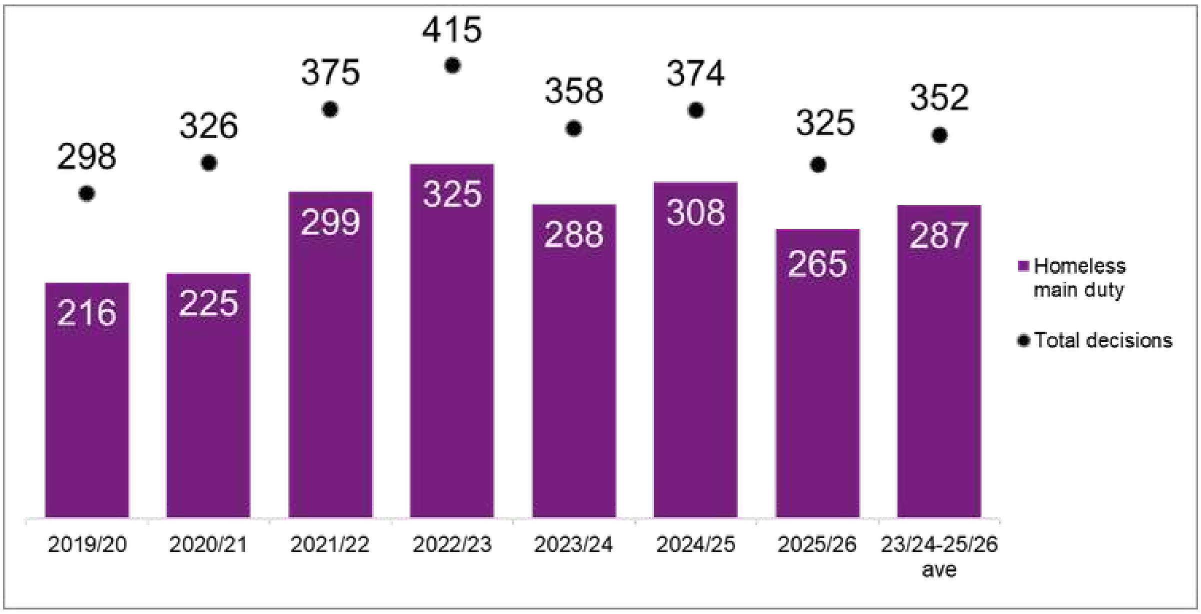
March
2026



The relief of homelessness is difficult in Chelmsford because of the high cost of alternative options (private rent) and the limited supply of supported housing. The increase in the supply of supported housing in 2025/26 helped improve our ability to relieve homelessness especially for vulnerable single people.

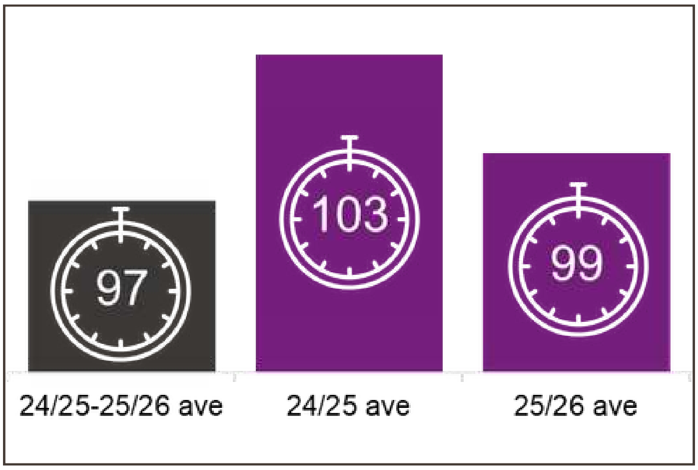
Relief duties: The relief duty has to be continued for 56 days, this means Homeless Officers will have a large number of open cases that have been started but are not yet resolved. If they get to the end of 56 days and have still not been able to help them find accommodation, the Officer will have to determine whether a ‘main housing duty’ is owed.

KPI 22: Main homeless duty decisions made



KPI 23: Average time taken (days) to make a homeless decision (count starts 56 days after start of relief duty)

March
2026



The reduction between 2024/25 and 2025/26 shows the improvement that resulted from being able to recruit additional staff.

Key issues:

- **huge officer case numbers** (three times the recommended amount)
- **increasingly complex clients** affecting enquiries and decision making time periods
- and **ever-diminishing supply of housing** means far less properties to use to prevent or relieve homelessness.

Even when a 'main housing duty' is accepted, that client does not go away, but remains in temporary accommodation for years, increasing the pressure on case workers even further.

KPI 24: Median number of cases per officer (excluding part time and senior homeless officers)

2024/25 monthly average

69

2025/26 monthly average

79

Guidelines recommend 25 - 30 cases per officer. This allows approx. 30 minutes to deal with each case per week.

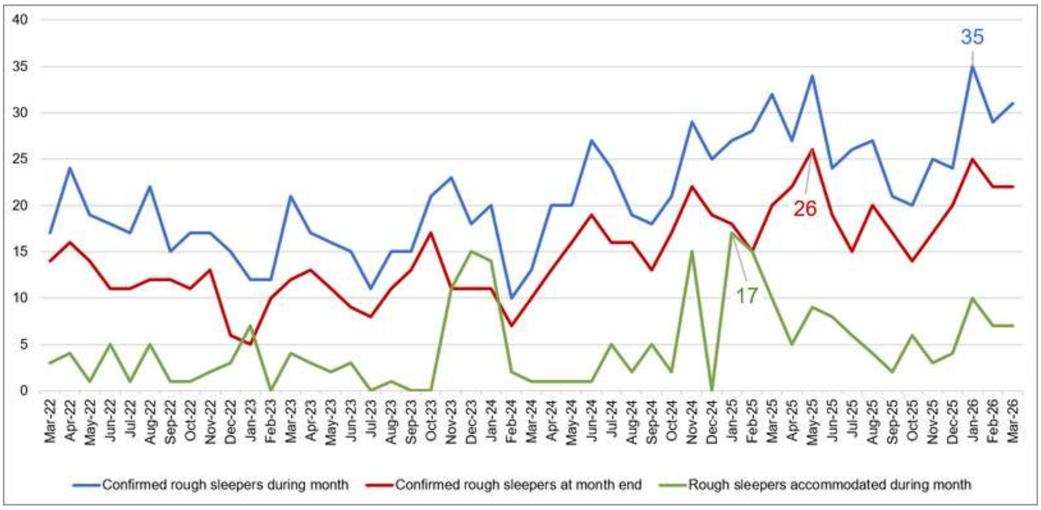
Overall caseloads are reducing; however, they continue to include historic backlog cases and an increasing number of review requests. Growth in reviews reflects the ongoing challenge of meeting accommodation duties in the context of a limited and declining housing supply, which adversely impacts performance against this measure.

71

rough sleepers were accommodated during 2025/26

On average **in one month** during 2025/26:

6 rough sleepers were **accommodated**	**20** **refused offered accommodation** (rough sleeping at month end)



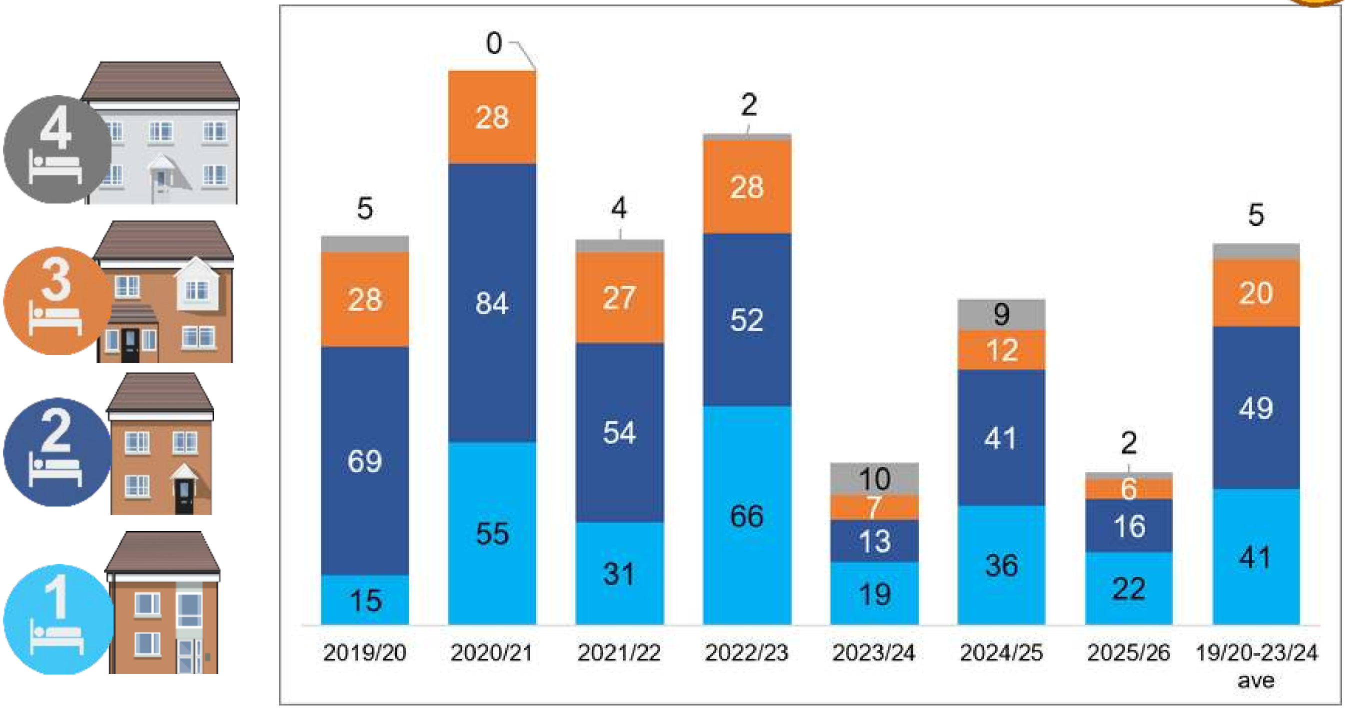
There is a clear distinction between people newly sleeping rough and those with a long-term history of rough sleeping. The former typically need affordable accommodation with low-level support, where provision has increased. The latter often have more complex needs that require specialist support alongside accommodation.

Despite national increases in rough sleeping, levels in Chelmsford have remained stable in recent years. However, almost one in four people with a history of rough sleeping experience homelessness again. To reduce repeat homelessness, we are working with support providers to better prepare residents in supported and temporary accommodation for independent living and tenancy sustainment. Expanding specialist supported housing, particularly for people affected by domestic abuse, mental ill health, or substance misuse, will help to further strengthen homelessness prevention efforts.

Since the introduction of the ‘Everyone In’ initiative during the pandemic, Chelmsford City Council has developed a comprehensive range of accommodation and support services for rough sleepers. While demand may continue to rise, increasing numbers of people are being supported to access services and move into settled, independent accommodation.

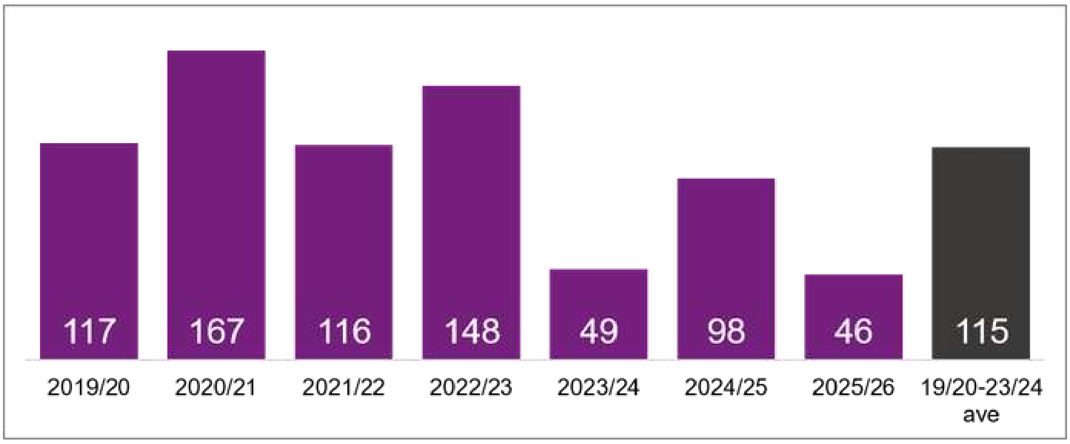
KPI 9: New build CBL properties recorded as let by property size (Supply)

March 2026



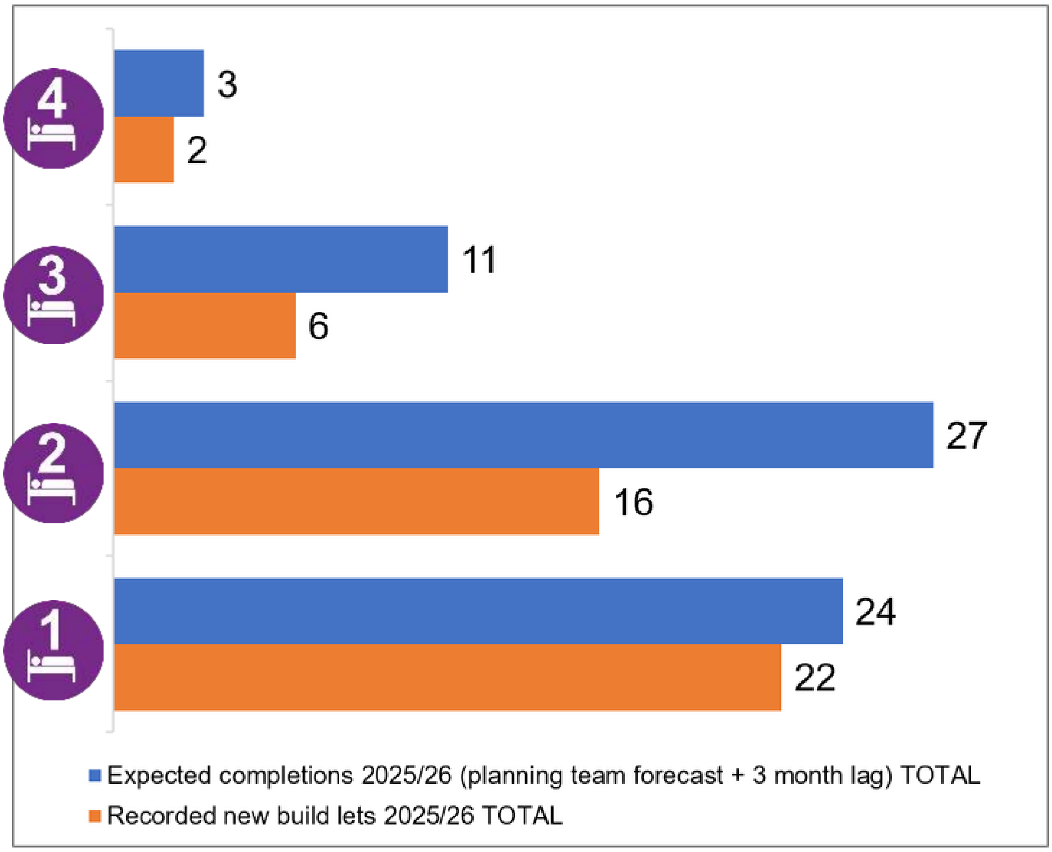
Reliance on planning gain to develop new affordable housing inevitably means supply is constantly subject to varying market conditions, creating peaks and troughs in delivery and adding to a backlog of need. To overcome this, the Council is looking at ways we can work with partners to create an additional source of developing affordable homes especially where this could create additional supply from the existing housing stock, for example the development of Reservoir Close by Delta in 2026 which enabled chain lettings.

KPI 9: New build CBL properties recorded as let TOTALS (Supply)



KPI 10: Expected new build completions (incl. 3 month lag) and recorded new build lets (Supply)

March 2026



We factor in a three-month lag taking into account the need to advertise, allocate and sign up new tenants. Monitoring this planned and actual supply helps us assess how well we will be able to meet our housing need and anticipate the impact this will have reducing the need for temporary accommodation.

This infographic report is provided by Chelmsford City Council

Civic Centre, Duke Street, Chelmsford, CM1 1JE

01245 606400

www.chelmsford.gov.uk/housing

https://forms.chelmsford.gov.uk/contactus-housing/

Data source: CCC Housing Finance KPI's
Latest data used: April 2026
Produced: June 2026

Chelmsford City Council