



Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Housing Solutions Service

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031

Evidence Base

Version	Changes	Section	Date	Author	Status
1	New Draft			C. Keeling	

Evidence Base for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2026-2031)

1. Introduction

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping have a detrimental effect on individuals, families and society, and is a key challenge facing all communities across the country. It is driven by a range of factors, both structural, such as housing affordability, insecurity in the private rented sector as well as individual factors such as drug and alcohol abuse, poor physical and mental health, crime and anti-social behaviour, poor educational attainment, debt, unemployment and the breakdown of support networks. Tackling homelessness can be costly when compared to the costs associated with proactively seeking to prevent homelessness in the first place, and many households approach the council at the point of crisis, and so our ambition is to intervene earlier, and ensure those who come to Tonbridge and Malling Council about their housing situation get the right support at the right time.

The Housing Act 1996 (as amended 2002) is the primary homelessness legislation and provides the statutory framework within which local authorities work. The 1996 Act was amended in 2002, and this introduced the requirement for all local authorities to have a homelessness strategy which is based on a review of homelessness in the district. The legislation determines that the strategy must set out the authorities plans for the prevention of homelessness and securing sufficient accommodation and support is available for households that approach the local authority as homeless. Tonbridge and Malling previously worked with other West Kent Authorities and there was a West Kent Strategy, but when this expired, actions were included in the Councils housing strategy related to Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, but with the increase in demand on services the Council has an ambition to develop a standalone Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy to take the Council through to Local Government Reform in 2028.

This evidence base meets the requirement contained within the 2002 Act, that we must base any strategy in a review of homelessness in the district, and this will underpin the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031. It provides a comprehensive overview of the national, regional and local context within which the council homelessness service operates, and will set out homelessness trends, local housing market pressures, and the wider socio-economic context in the Tonbridge and Malling district and will form part of a suite of documents including the Strategy, a comprehensive action plan, which will be based on what the evidence tells us within this document, a full equalities impact assessment and a risk assessment.

Throughout this document Homelessness will be used as a generic term, however where information relates to specific cohorts, this will be identified.

2. Our current service

Tonbridge and Malling Housing Solutions Service delivers the strategic housing function of providing advice and assistance to those who need help to keep their home or find a new one in line with Parts VI and VII of the Housing Act 1996. People approach directly but can also be referred and we deal with multiple housing issues. We average 3 appointments a day in the service, and Customer Services dealt with 9,464 calls for the service in 2024-2025.

Our website also contains information on a range of housing issues, and we engage with social media when there is a key message we want to get out such as when we activate SWEP. We actively encourage users to self-serve and to try and resolve their own issues, however there will always be households who are not able to do this and who will need support and guidance from the council.

During Covid a lot of this work was done remotely and via telephone, however services are now offered face to face again on an appointment basis, although no one will be turned away if they drop in. It is hoped with the refurbishment of the Gibson building; we will be able to continue with delivering face to face services to those who need to access advice and support with their housing issues.

The Housing Solutions Service is delivered across three teams

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping service is responsible for initial point of contact with applicants. Applicants are triaged, and once this is completed it is determined what happens to the application. If an application is to progress to a prevention or relief duty, then it is allocated to an officer to complete the prevention and relief work. This team also work to deliver services for those who are rough sleeping working with our commissioned service Porchlight.

The Accommodation service deal with bookings for temporary accommodation as well as managing our TA stock, compliance and standards in this, and move on options for those who may be in TA. Our landlord Offer also sits within this team.

Allocations are responsible for the administration of the housing register, they assess applications, advertising of properties, as well as nominations agreements, shortlisting and are instrumental to developing our emerging approach to partnership working with RPs around forums and performance management.

We also received new burdens funding when the Domestic Abuse Act was introduced, and we have utilised this and share a Housing Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor (IDVA) with Tunbridge Wells Council. We are also working closely with our DA coordinator who is situated in the Community Safety Team on achieving the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation. (DAHA) This has resulted in training for the team as well as improving awareness of the issues faced by those who come to the service who have or who are experiencing DA.

Our Rough Sleeping Grant was used to procure jointly with Tunbridge Wells Porchlight to deliver our rough sleeper services. This includes our verification process, rapid intervention and support, prevention work, tenancy sustainment and a Housing First project for Tonbridge and Malling. We have also secured 9 units of off the street accommodation in the district and are working with Porchlight and Tunbridge Wells to secure further units.

3.. What is homelessness?

To access the Council's service, a household must be threatened with homelessness, or Homeless. These are defined within the Code of Guidance;

A person is threatened with homelessness if they are likely to become homeless within 56 days. An applicant who has been served with valid notice under section 21 of the Housing Act 1998 to end their assured shorthold tenancy is also threatened with homelessness, if the notice has expired or will expire within 56 days and is served in respect of the only accommodation that is available for them to occupy.

An applicant is to be considered homeless if they do not have accommodation that they have a legal right to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them (and their household) and which it would be reasonable for them to continue to live in.

Rough sleeping is defined for the purpose of rough sleeping estimates as

People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, derelict boats, stations, or ébashesê).

4. Strategic context

This section sets out the Strategic and legislative context within which this strategy is framed at a national, regional, and local level

4.1 National context

Since the implementation of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended 2002), focus within housing services has been on the prevention of homelessness, along with the key requirement to produce a Homelessness Strategy. The following section sets out some of the key pieces of legislation that frame the delivery of homelessness services across England.

4.1.1 Housing Act 1996 (as amended 2002)

Prior to the 1996 Housing Act, Councils had a broad duty to secure permanent accommodation for homeless households, where they were homeless or threatened with homelessness, had a priority need and were not intentionally homeless. When introduced The Housing Act 1996 reshaped these homelessness duties and tightened and formalised the homelessness processes.

The 1996 Act was amended in 2002 and introduced the requirement for authorities to have a homelessness strategy which is reviewed every 5 years, with a supporting evidence base, strengthened the prevention duty, encouraged the need to work with other agencies, and enhanced the role of advice and information services for all applicants.

4.1.2 Homeless Reduction Act 2017

This became the biggest change to homelessness duties since the amendments in 2002 to the Housing Act. It kept the 1996 framework but widened it and introduced a duty to prevent or relieve homelessness. The Act ensured that all households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness is entitled to support regardless of priority or intentionality. This is achieved via the assessment of eligible households needs, and whether a household requires support to secure and sustain accommodation via the development of a personalised housing plan.

The requirement for a personalised housing plan is contained within the legislation, as is the duty to refer which was introduced to encourage public bodies to work together to prevent and relieve homelessness through a duty to refer.

[Housing Act 1996](#)

There are also statutory instruments and guidance to which the Council must have regard when exercising its functions relating to homelessness.

4.1.3 Homelessness Code of Guidance

This is document that provides guidance to which local authorities should give regard to when exercising their homeless functions

[Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Guidance - GOV.UK](#)

4.1.4 The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 1996

This order sets out the factors that must be considered when considering if it would be reasonable for a household to remain in their accommodation in relation to its affordability.

[The Homelessness \(Suitability of Accommodation\) Order 1996](#)

4.1.5 The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003

This order amended the earlier 1996 order to strengthen the protection for those who are homeless and are vulnerable, particularly around the use of Bed and Breakfast Accommodation (B&B). This order sets out that this is not to be considered suitable for families with children, and when it is used, it is only done so in an emergency and for a maximum of 6 weeks.

4.1.6 The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012

The Localism Act 2011 gave local authorities powers to end their homeless duties with an offer of accommodation in the private sector without requiring the applicants consent to do so. To ensure that any accommodation offered was suitable, the 2012 Suitability Order was introduced. This sets out the circumstances in which accommodation used to end a homeless duty in the private rented sector should not be considered suitable.

These remain the primary orders; however, amendments were made in 2022 and 2023 in response to households from overseas being placed in Hotel Accommodation,

[The Homelessness \(Suitability of Accommodation\) \(England\) Order 2012](#)

4.1.7 The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2022

This order modified the 2003 order and the 2012 order for a period of 1 year, to address the specific requirements of recent arrivals to the UK with family commitments to accommodate in B&B for more than 6 weeks, where no other accommodation is available to those households. It ensured that accommodation suitability was evaluated with a focus on caring duties. This was due to expire on the 01 June 2023.

4.1.8 The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) (Amendment) Order 2023

This amended the 2022 order and the 2003 order to extend the modifications to the rules on the accommodation deemed suitable for homeless individuals, and adjusted the definition of B&B. This was due to expire on the 01 June 2024 but was further extended until June 2025.

[The Homelessness \(Suitability of Accommodation\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Order 2024](#)

These have now expired, and the suitability rules have now reverted to the primary orders, The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003 The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012

4.1.9 Procedures for referrals of homeless applicants to another local authority

The Local Government Association has developed procedures to guide local authorities in situations where an applicant approaches an authority but has no local connection. If a local authority considers the conditions of referral of the case are met, it must notify the other authority of this opinion. Referrals are discretionary.

[Procedures for referrals of homeless applicants to another local authority | Local Government Association](#)

Figure 1 shows the evolution of homelessness law in England (it is important to note that Homelessness legislation is different in Wales and Scotland)

EVOLUTION OF HOMELESSNESS LAW IN ENGLAND

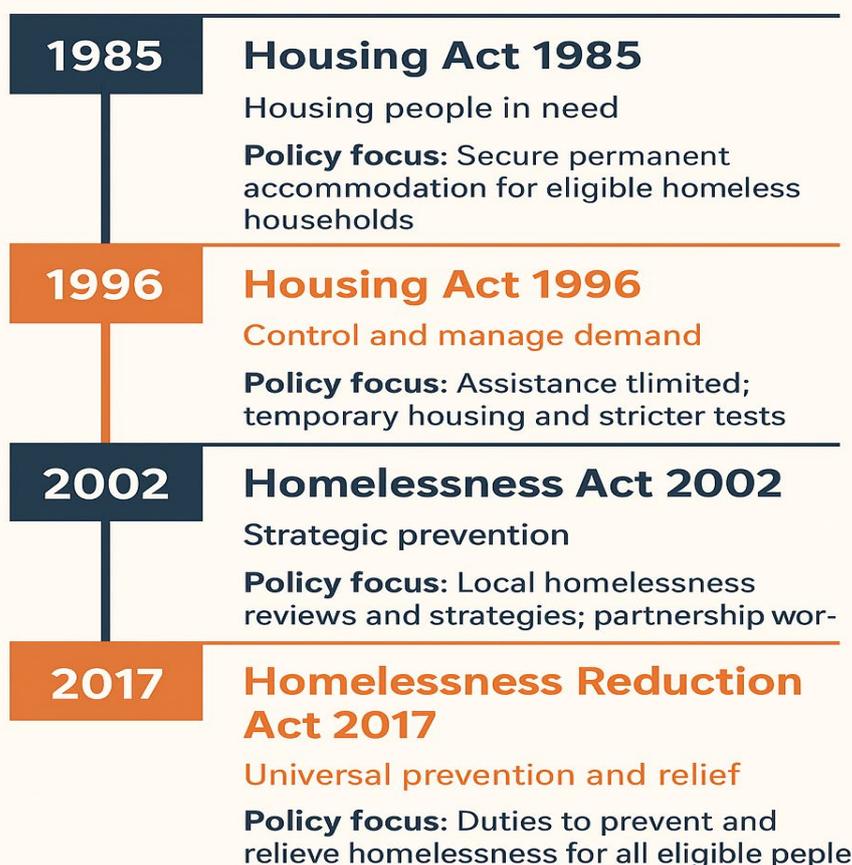


Figure 1 | Evolution of homelessness law in England

4.1.10 The Government's strategic framework for Homelessness

Initially published in 2018 the Government, via its Rough Sleeping Strategy committed to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. The strategy focused on three key themes, prevention, intervention, and recovery. Between publication and the update in 2022, the Country went into lockdown in March 2020 due to the Covid Pandemic. This involved all Councils being required to ensure the health and wellbeing of all rough sleepers and they were required to provide TA, regardless of priority need. This was known as the Everyone In initiative.

The Government then published their updated Rough Sleeping Strategy in 2022, 'Ending Rough Sleeping for Good'. This was a cross departmental document with a goal of ending rough sleeping. It contained four key themes, Prevention, Intervention, Recovery and transparent and joined up systems. It also set out a definition of what is meant by ending rough sleeping, which is

'Prevented wherever possible. And where it does occur it is rare, brief, and non-recurrent'

This has now been superseded by the new plan to end homelessness which was published in December 2025.

The National Plan to end Homelessness sets out a long-term vision to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. The key aim is to shift the focus from managing crisis to preventing homelessness before it happens and stepping into resolve it quickly where it does. The plan has involved lived experience in its development and contains both national targets as well as cross government targets, to reduce the number of people becoming homeless when they leave public institutions.

The national headline targets are

- To build 1.5 million new homes
- To increase the proportion of people supported to remain in their own homes or helped to find alternative accommodation when they approach the council for support
- Eliminate the use of B&B accommodation for families and
- To halve the number of people experiencing long term rough sleeping.

To achieve the national targets and those committed to by the Government departments, the national plan has a comprehensive action plan based on 5 pillars

- Universal prevention – this is aimed at tackling the root causes of homelessness and make homelessness rare, by providing a boost to homebuilding, making the best use of stock, and improving supported housing and housing for people with additional needs
- Targeted prevention – this provides support for those who are more risk of becoming homeless and ensures that tackling homelessness is shared responsibility with all public services collaborating to prevent homelessness
- Preventing crisis – this is to help people remain in their homes by giving councils the flexibility to deliver services to meet the needs of the local community and focus on prevention
- Improving emergency responses – the focus on improving TA and making the experience better if people do become homeless
- Recovery and preventing repeat homelessness – ending the cycle of homelessness and halving rough sleeping

The action plan includes change across the short, medium, and long term

The plan can be found here

[A National Plan to End Homelessness - GOV.UK](#)

4.1.11 Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Domestic Abuse (DA) Act introduced in 2021, set out a legal definition of DA, created a DA commissioner, and introduced new DA notices and orders. It also requires authorities to place those who are leaving an abusive situation to be placed in safe accommodation and recognises children as victims of DA if they witness it. It defines DA as

Behaviour of a person (‘A’) towards another person (‘B’) is ‘domestic abuse’ if

- (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
 - (b) the behaviour is abusive.
- (3) Behaviour is ‘abusive’ if it consists of any of the following:
- (a) physical or sexual abuse;
 - (b) violent or threatening behaviour;

(c)controlling or coercive behaviour;

(d)economic abuse (see subsection (4));

(e)psychological, emotional, or other abuse;

and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

(4) "Economic abuse" means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B's ability to

(a)acquire, use, or maintain money or other property, or

(b)obtain goods or services.

(5) For the purposes of this Act A's behaviour may be behaviour towards B even though it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B's child).

The key change brought about by the introduction of the DA act for homelessness services was the extension of the eligibility criteria for priority need for homelessness to include households who have been forced to leave their homes due to fleeing DA.

[Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)

4.1.12 Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023

The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act came into force in 2023. It was introduced as a private members bill, in response to issues with the quality of supported accommodation. The key aim was to regulate supported housing, more specifically exempt accommodation, to improve standards across the sector with the aim of protecting vulnerable tenants from exploitation and ensure that they are living in decent homes with a good standard of care or support.

Contained within this act were changes to when a local authority can make an Intentional Homeless decision. The Act allows the Government to create national supported housing standards. If a person is evicted from accommodation which does not meet these standards, then they cannot be found intentionally homeless.

This element has not yet been implemented as the proposals for implementing the measures contained within the act were consulted on in early 2025, with further consultation expected in 2026 on the draft regulations which will then allow the Act to be implemented.

4.1.13 Renters Reform Act 2025

The Renters Reform Bill 2025 has recently been given Royal Assent and is now legislation. When enacted (there is phased enactment, with the key homelessness changes in May 2026) it is set to transform the experience of private renting, with the most notable change being the abolition of Section 21 no fault evictions. The aim is to give renters more security and stability.

Whilst there is a raft of reforms due to be introduced via the introduction of this bill, the key reforms are

- The abolition of section 21 no fault evictions
- To level up possession grounds and ensure they are fair for both parties
- The introduction of a Private Sector Landlord Ombudsman
- Create a private rented database
- Apply Decent Homes standard to the private sector
- Introduce Awaab's law
- Make it illegal for landlords and agents to discriminate against tenants on benefits and with pets
- Strengthen Local authority enforcement powers

4.1.14 Equalities Act 2010

The Equalities Act contains a specific Public Sector Equality Duty which requires public authorities to consider how policies, decisions and services affect people with protected characteristics and have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination.

4.2 Regional Context

At a more local level there are county initiatives that impact on the delivery of homelessness services in Kent

4.2.1 Kent Housing Group

The Kent Housing Group (KHG) is a forum for housing organisations in Kent. KHG has representation from all twelve Kent local authorities, Medway Council, housing associations, and Kent County Council. KHG also has affiliated representation from other partner agencies such as the National Housing Federation and the National Landlords Association. Representation from each of the members is at a senior level, so a Head of Service within the local authority or Chief Executive of a housing association.

KHG has an Executive Board, which oversees and provides guidance for the wider membership and subgroups, to ensure that the aims and objectives of the group are met.

Primarily KHG encourages sharing best practice, identifying areas for joint working, and agreeing positive objectives for housing. As a collective the group also aims to

Provide strategic leadership in shaping and setting the housing agenda;

To build relationships and influence decisions for the benefit of Kent;

To draw in resources from both traditional and alternative sources.

To work together to improve the supply and quality of affordable homes.

To create sustainable communities in Kent.

The KHG is also responsible for the review and production of the Kent and Medway Housing Strategy.

[Kent and Medway Housing Strategy 2025-2030, Better Homes: Growth, Wellbeing and Choice - Kent Housing Group](#)

Subgroups

Kent Housing Group has several subgroups that sit beneath the umbrella of the main membership. These subgroups are both strategic and operational, they all have varying roles and functions, but they all support the vision and objectives of Kent Housing Group

[Kent Housing Options Group](#)

The key subgroup for the purposes of supporting the work of the strategy is the Kent Housing Options Subgroup.

4.2.2 Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation

DAHA accreditation provides a framework for accreditation in delivering DA services in the Housing Sector. Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council is working towards achieving this, along with all other districts across Kent.

The accreditation focuses on 8 key areas that looks at the organisation's operations, and ensures the Council is delivering a safe and effective response to DA.

To achieve accreditation organisations must be signed up as a member with DAHA, and this membership provides resources, events, and advice from the DAHA service, as well as the opportunity to network with other providers.

4.3 Local context

4.3.1 TMBC Corporate Strategy 2023 to 2025

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils Corporate plan sets out the Councils vision for the period 2023 to 2027 and how the Council will plan and deliver services to ensure they are cost effective and remain relevant to the needs of residents, Businesses, and visitors to the district. It sets out the Councils vision

“To be an innovative and forward-thinking council, which leads people and businesses of the borough towards a vibrant, prosperous and sustainable future”

The Council also has identified three core values that it believes are key to achieving this aim

- Innovation
- Transformation
- Delivery

Sitting under these values are four key priorities, which then form an action plan to guide the councils service delivery

Efficient services for all our residents maintaining an effective council

Sustaining a borough which cares for the Environment

Improving housing options for local people whilst protecting our outdoor areas of importance

Investing in our local economy

4.3.2 Housing Strategy

Tonbridge and Malling have a current Housing Strategy supported by a complete action plan.

[Housing strategy and policy to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council](#)

4.3.3 Allocations Scheme

Every local authority must have an allocations scheme which sets out how social housing within the district will be allocated.

[Housing allocation scheme to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council](#)

This strategy will sit alongside these documents and provide the key framework within which the Housing Solutions Service operates.

4.3.4 Other key council strategies and Policies

The corporate strategy does not stand alone, and all the following underpin the strategy and contribute to the delivery of this.

Climate Change Strategy

[Climate change strategy 2020 to 2030 to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council](#)

Digital Strategy

[Digital strategy 2023 -2027 to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council](#)

Economic Recovery Strategy

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 to 2031
Evidence Base

Local Plan

[Local plan i Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council](#)

Savings and Transformation strategy

[Search results i Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council](#)

4.4 Health and Homelessness

It has long been recognised that there are significant links between housing and the health of the population, with housing being recognised as a key determinant of health in the 2010 Independent Marmot Report.

10 years later in the updated report The Marmot Review 10 years on, it was stated that inferior quality housing harms health and evidence shows that exposure to poor housing conditions (including damp, mould, and noise) is strongly linked to poor health, both physical and mental.

Homelessness also impacts on the life expectancy of those who rough sleep with the average age of death for those rough sleeping being much lower than the general population.

4.5 The impact of homelessness on children (House of Commons Report) England's Homeless Children: The crisis in temporary accommodation.

The highest number of children on record are currently living in TA. A report published in April 2025 looked at this issue and the outcomes for these children and the unsustainable cost pressures on local authorities.

Many households stay in often unsuitable TA for prolonged periods with many authorities breaching the 6-week limit on families in B&Bs, with households sharing, communal facilities, often with strangers, and at least 74 child deaths in the last 5 years where temporary housing has been a contributory factor. It also touched on the impact of household being placed out of district, and the impact on children's education.

The report made several recommendations

- That all TA must be inspected before first use and whenever new residents are placed.
- B&B use must be ended
- More formal monitoring of the use of out of area placements
- Improve the notification process where households are placed out of area
- The extension of Awaab's law to TA

5. Funding

The Council has now had its funding for the next three years confirmed. The allocation is set out in table 1 below. A breakdown between homelessness and rough sleeping funding has not been provided, as local authorities are expected to design services holistically across all forms of homelessness. However indicative funding amounts for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, Renters' Rights New Burden and Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant have been put in the table. These funding streams form part of the larger ring-fenced Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse grant.

Year	Homelessness, Rough Sleeping, Domestic Abuse Grant TOTAL	Funding for homelessness and rough sleeping	Funding for Renters' Rights Act 2025 New Burdens	Funding for Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant
Financial year 2026/27	£923,296	£827,930	£57,197	£38,169
Financial year 2027/28	£933,208	£867,265	£26,931	£39,012
Financial year 2028/29	£939,281	£899,467	£0	£39,814
Total Allocation Financial Years 2026-29	£2,795,785	£2,594,662	£84,128	£116,995

Table 1 i Funding for 2026 i 2029

6. Evidence

This section focuses on the scale and nature of homelessness both nationally and locally. Nationally statistics on homelessness are published by MHCLG and are based on quarterly statistical returns submitted to MHCLG on a quarterly basis called the 'homelessness case level information collection' (H-Clic).

Rough sleeper numbers are published on an annual basis based on a count on a given night in the autumn.

6.1 Demographic data

The 2021 Census identified that the population of Tonbridge and Malling is 132,201 people which is an increase of 9.4% from the previous census in 2011.

As of 2021 the district contained 55487 dwellings and 53536 households which means there is a vacancy rate of around 3.5%

Women make up 51.3% of the population with men 48.7%

89% of residents were born in England with smaller proportions born elsewhere in the UK or abroad.

The ethnic composition of the district is 93% white with the next biggest groups being

- Asian / Asian British 2.9%
- Mixed 2.2%
- Black / black British 1%

6.2 Current housing provision in Tonbridge and Malling

The following data is taken from the Councils Strategic Housing Market Assessment which can be found at the following link for more detail

[Local Plan evidence i Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council](#)

Housing delivery since 2015 i 2016 has averaged 242 dwelling annually, but this has increased significantly to 483 in 2021 i 2022

The borough has a high-level owner occupation compared to wider areas (72.1%) with the average house price being £390000 which exceeds the national and regional equivalents

House prices have risen over the last 10 years

Affordability has reduced but average prices are 11 times over the average earnings in the district

Average rents in April 2025 were higher than the national and regional averages, at £1370 with rents increasing by around 28%

The number of children in the district is above average, with around 32% of households in the district containing children compared with 29% regionally and nationally

There is a marked difference between types of households with married couples with children more likely to live in the owner-occupied sector and lone parents in the social or private rented sector

Older people have high levels of owner occupation, and this is projected to increase. An ageing population is likely to increase the levels of disabilities in the district

The housing situation in the district has also been impacted by the situations in Syria, Hong Kong, Afghanistan and more recently Ukraine, with the Government setting up schemes to support refugees from these countries to settle in the UK. The longer-term impact of these schemes is not clear, but there is likely to be ongoing pressure placed on available housing in the district.

6.2 Lettings demand

The council operates the housing register for the district, although it does not own or manage any stock.

In 2023 the Council updated its allocations scheme and introduced a new system to manage the housing register. Applicants were asked to reapply to join the register, and the resulting effect was a significant reduction in the numbers of households waiting for social housing. However, applications to the housing register have significantly increased. This is a trend that is showing no signs of slowing with the highest number of applications submitted in January the highest figure recorded (The peak in June and July 2023 was when we closed our previous system down and introduced the new one and asked all applicants to reapply) However since then applications have been consistently higher as can be seen in figure 2

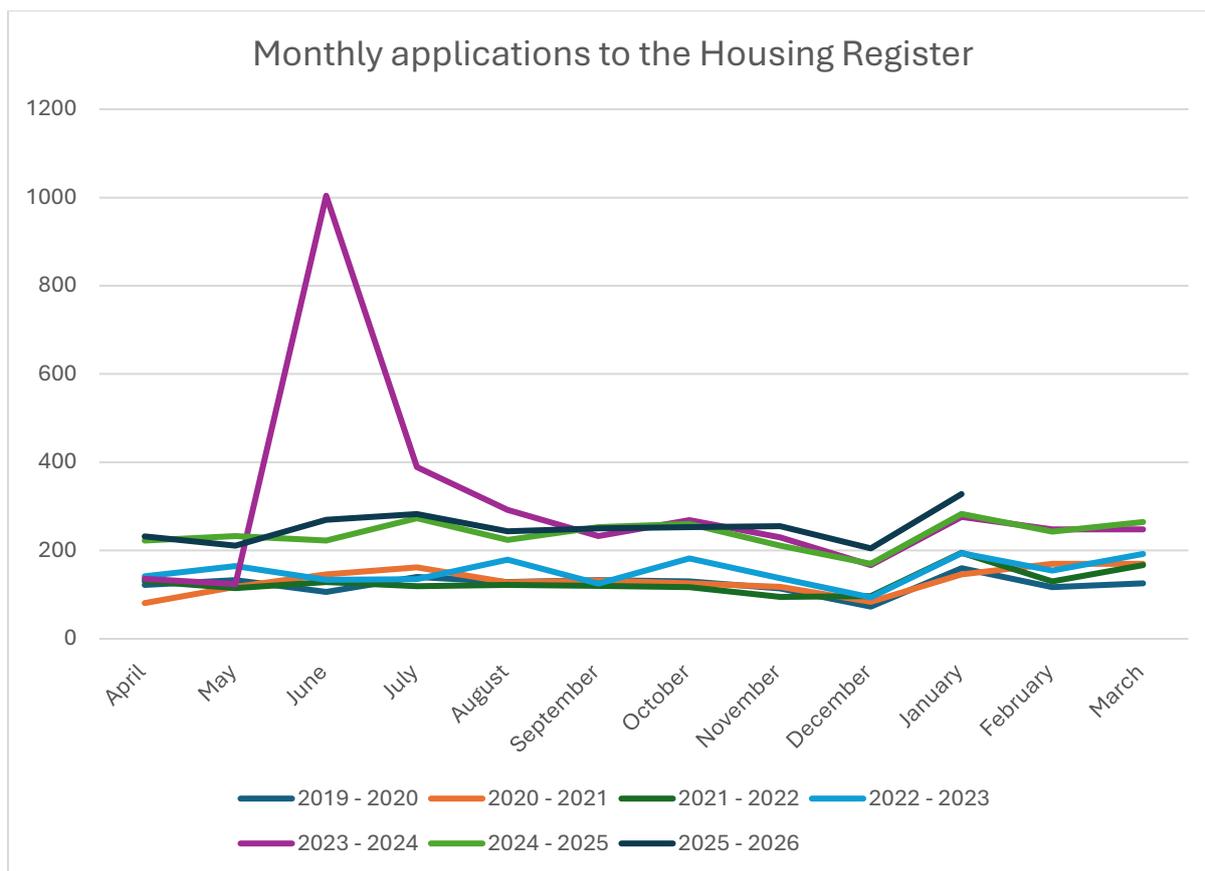


Figure 2 i applications to the housing register

Demand is highest for one-bedroom homes, which suggests that younger households are applying as they cannot afford to get on the property ladder, and may also reflect that one of the main reasons for homelessness in the district is friends and family no longer willing to accommodate

Demand for larger properties is less, but due to limited availability of 4+ bedroom homes, these households wait the longest on the register to be rehoused.

6.3 Homelessness data

This section looks at homelessness data for the district.

1278 households approached or were referred to the service in 2024 i 2025. The Service assessed 689 of these and accepted a duty to 512 households, this was a 4% increase from the previous year. Whilst there have been some fluctuations, what this table demonstrates is a consistent increase in households owed a duty. Table 1 illustrates numbers assessed as being owed a duty have increased consistently with a 72% increase in demand from 2019 in Tonbridge and Malling. Nationally this figure increased by 14%.

Duty to refer remains a keyway for households at risk of homelessness to be referred into the service. We saw a 49% increase in those referring via the duty to refer process between 2023 i 2024 and 2024 i 2025. The agencies who refer the most are the Job Centre and Probation.

Table 2 shows the number of applications where a duty was accepted nationally, regionally, across the southeast and locally in Tonbridge and Malling

	2019 - 2020	2020 - 2021	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025
Owed a duty nationally	288220	269450	276360	298180	326090	330140
Owed a duty southeast	40430	37950	36300	39990	44640	43890
Owed a duty T&M	296	306	265	323	491	512

Table 2 i Prevention and Relief duties accepted by year nationally, regionally and locally

Following a review of the Housing Solutions Service, specifically the Homeless and Rough Sleeping service, in early 2021, the service was split out into a specialist triage service, prevention and relief. The first prevention officer was recruited into this service in Quarter 4 of 2021. Figure 3 clearly demonstrates that prior to this relief acceptances were consistently higher than prevention. However, since the inception of the prevention service, constantly prevention acceptances have been higher than relief. Whilst this does not always mean prevention is successful, more cases are going through prevention increasing the opportunity to prevent homelessness and stop the use of TA.

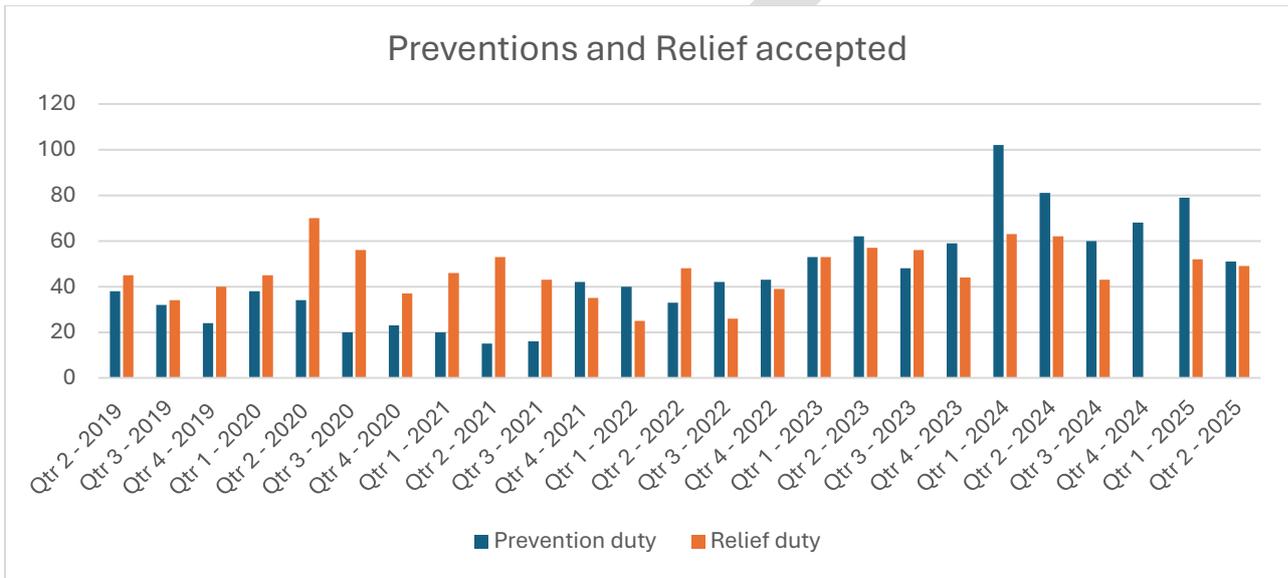


Figure 3 i Preventions and Reliefs accepted

The main reasons for homelessness in the district reflect national statistics and generally regional statistics with the main reasons for approach being given as

- Friends and family no longer willing to accommodate
- Ending of private rented sector tenancies
- Domestic Abuse

Figure 4 shows the main reasons for loss of home in 2024 i 2025 and 2025 year to date (as of the end of January 2025)

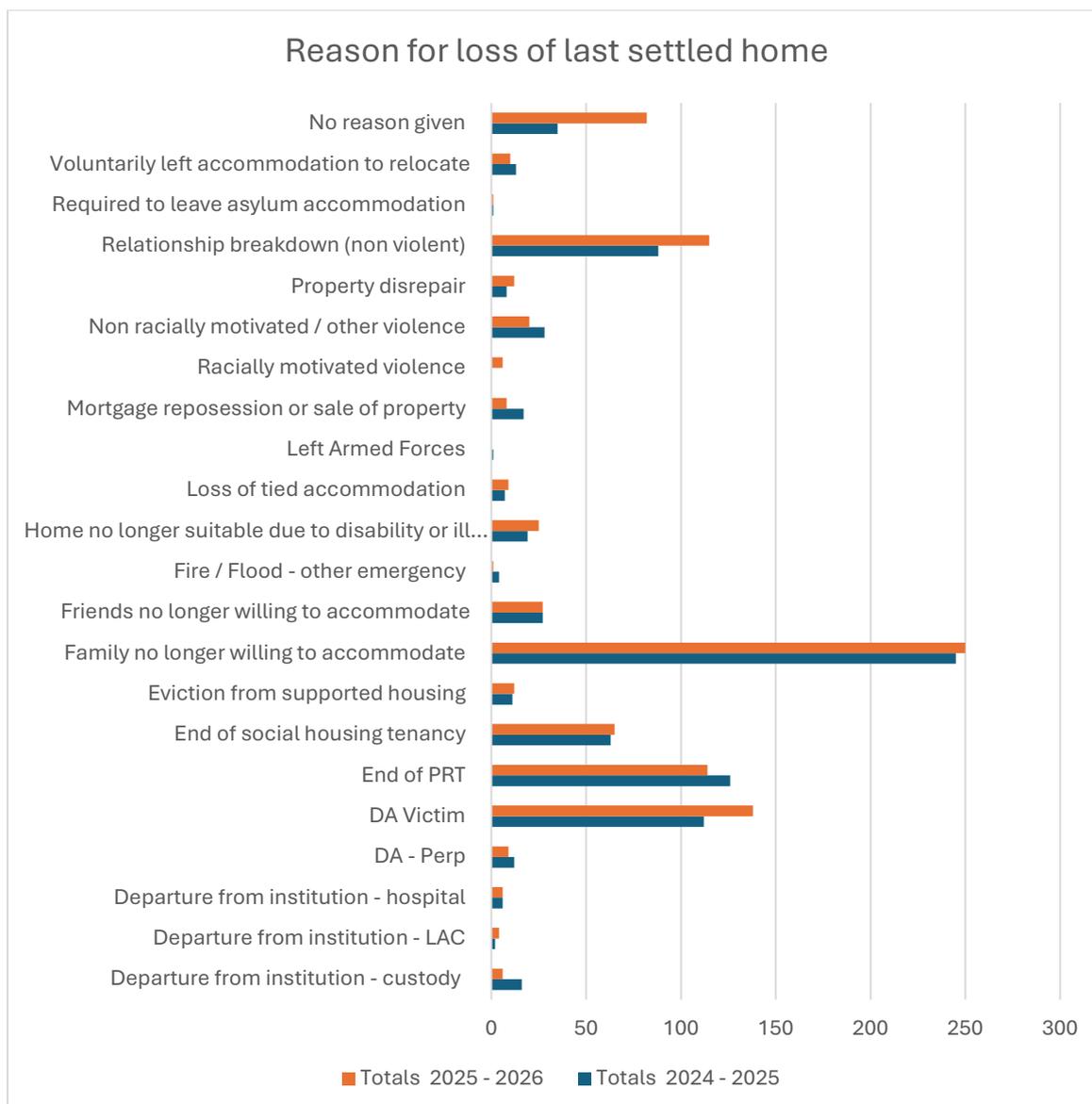


Figure 4 i main reasons for loss of home

Whilst family and friends no longer willing to accommodate is consistently the main reason for loss of the home, this can be a broad category with many reasons to it, and it needs further interrogation to try and understand it.

Similarly, no reason given makes up a significant number of approaches and this also needs further interrogation.

It is also anticipated that the implementation of the abolition of section 21s in May 2026 as part of the changes being made through the Renters Reform Act 2025 will lead to an increase in section 21 notices being served over the coming months as landlords anticipate the changes.

6.4 Temporary Accommodation

Local housing authorities in England have a duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households in priority need under Part 7 of the Housing Act (1996). Households may be placed in temporary accommodation pending the completion of inquiries into an application, or they may spend time waiting in temporary accommodation after an application is accepted until suitable secure accommodation becomes available.

Most applicants placed by the council in temporary accommodation are either awaiting the outcome of a homeless application under section 188 of the 1996 Act, (an interim duty to accommodate), or are waiting for an offer of suitable accommodation.

Figure 5 shows a snapshot of households in TA at the end of each month from 2019 to January 2026.

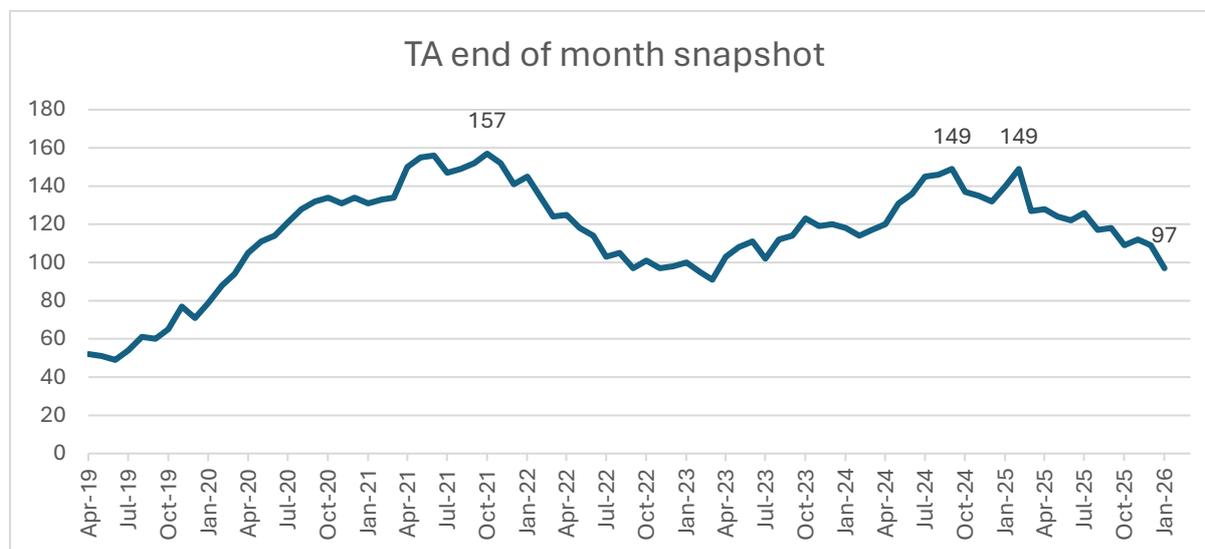


Figure 5 i Snapshot of TA at month end

In many areas lack of suitable TA has led to councils having to use B&B for families for longer than the 6-week period. Tonbridge and Malling do not use B&B accommodation for any families. However high costs of housing in the district means that supply of nightly paid accommodation in the district is limited and whilst the Council does own lease and manage TA, numbers have been low, and there has traditionally been an over reliance on expensive nightly paid, often out of the district which can lead to additional challenges for those who are homeless, such as being moved away from support networks, employment and crucially schools for children.

The average percentage placed outside of the district for 2024 i 2025 was 77% of households, which is one of the highest numbers in England. The last recorded quarter on H-Click (April i June 2025) was 80% of households out of area. This is anticipated to decrease with the new provision in Tonbridge and the development of other TA in the borough with the aim of bringing it more in line with national and regional averages, which nationally for 2024 i 2025 was 32% and regionally for the same period is 18%.

We do have a policy for determining which households get priority for moving back into the district, based on special educational needs, exams etc. This Policy was approved in 2021, but this now needs revision subject to member approval. So, affordability and availability hamper the Councils ability to place local families into accommodation in the district.

However, the Council aims to reduce this figure, by working on expanding the stock of TA managed by the Council. Initially the Council had 16 units in borough, 2 HMOs with a total of 8 bed spaces, 2 x 4-bedroom houses and 6 flats, a mix of 1 and 2 bedrooms, and a unit in Maidstone with 7 self-contained studios. In October 2025 the Council opened new TA in Tonbridge giving an additional 18 units of accommodation in the borough. One 4-bedroom house will shortly be used for resettlement purposes. This brings the total up to 40 units under the Councils control at the moment. Plans have also recently been approved to put 12 modular units on land at the top of Bluebell Hill. Figure 6 is an artists impression of what the units could look like when completed.

The data shows variation in the demand for TA, but it is anticipated with the changes to renting that the demand for TA and the Councils services will continue to grow.



Figure 6 i Proposed modular TA accommodation

Most households move on from TA into the social rented sector. In 2024 i 2025 we accepted a main housing duty to 184 households and 113 of those had their duty ended with an offer of social housing, and we had only 1 main duty ended via a formal private rented sector offer.

In May 2025 the Accommodation Service was moved to sit within the Housing Solutions Service and what this has led to is better joint working between the teams, and whilst demand is increasing on the service TA numbers are reducing.

This service has had some success in ending duties with offers in the private rented sector, however there was a recognition that this was an area where we could improve. Given this the Accommodation Service was expanded to include a specialist move on officer for the private sector. This has provided a resource within the team to work on developing the offer for private landlords and ensuring we are using the private sector for move on, particularly for larger households where stays in TA are significantly longer due to a limited number of homes available to move on into.

Rough Sleeping

This is the most visible form of homelessness, and the Council has a strong track record of tackling rough sleeping and working in a multi-agency environment with stakeholder in both the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Because of the strength of the partnerships, numbers of rough sleepers have remained consistently low in the district, and we commission Porchlight to work with us to prevent rough sleeping and where it does happen this ensures where anyone who is identified on the streets the stays are brief and non-recurring.

Working with Porchlight and Clarion Housing we have opened New Wharf as dedicated supported provision to provide off the street accommodation for those who would otherwise not have a priority need for housing and who may remain on the streets. We have 9 units of which TMBC have 5 utilised.

Again, working with Porchlight and Clarion we have a successful Housing First project in Tonbridge and Malling with 8 clients currently housed and working closely with their support worker.

We also work closely with mental health and the NHS and have available to us when we need it access to a Mental Health worker and a complex care nurse to call on when required.

On the single night rough sleeper count carried out in November 2025 we had a return of 6 rough Sleepers which is an increase from the previous year, however we monitor consistently and currently have 3 rough sleepers we know of sleeping out.

5 What is the evidence telling us?

All of the evidence presented above shows us that housing in the district can be unaffordable for some and there is a high demand for social housing.

Homelessness is at lower-than-average rates, but demand on the service is increasing

That we do well at prevention, but this can still be improved to continue to reduce those coming in at crisis point

We must address the issue of out of area placements as we have high rates of households placed out of area, disrupting education support and employment.

We have low levels of rough sleeping, but effective working partnerships are key to keeping these numbers low and ensuring those who do sleep rough get the support needed to stay off the streets.

6 What are our priorities?

Given all of the above we have identified the following as our key priorities

Priority 1 is To prevent homelessness earlier and support those who are at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes

Priority 2 is To minimise the use of emergency and temporary accommodation, reduce the reliance on nightly paid out of area TA and reduce numbers requiring TA

Priority 3 is Build on the excellent work already done to maintain the low levels of rough sleeping with the aim of achieving zero rough sleepers in the district

Priority 4 is Work with partners collaboratively to prevent homelessness