

Homelessness and rough sleeping are often caused by a culmination and combination of factors. These can be interrelated in various ways and reinforce one another. These include:

Structural factors- poverty; inequality; the supply and affordability of housing; insecure employment or unemployment; access to social security

Individual factors- poor physical and/or mental health; experiencing violence, abuse and neglect; drug and alcohol problems; relationship breakdown; experience of care or prison; bereavement; being a refugee

[Public Health England \(PHE\), 2020](#)

Why is this important?



Homelessness can be a cause and consequence of ill health. Reducing homelessness will contribute to improving health and to reducing health inequalities. ([PHE](#))

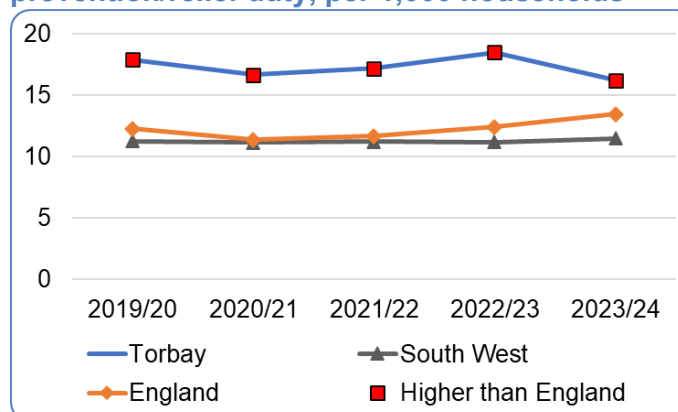
What is the local context?



Torbay has higher rates than England of households owed a prevention or relief duty, and a higher percentage with support needs and with 3 or more support needs.

Homelessness acceptances: The Homelessness Reduction Act, 2018, requires Local Authorities to assist eligible households who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days (prevention duty) or who are already homeless (relief duty). Torbay has a significantly higher rate owed one of these duties compared with the South West and England (Fig 1).

Fig 1: Rate of households owed a statutory prevention/relief duty, per 1,000 households



Source: Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID)- [Public health profiles](#)

In 2023/24 Torbay's rate equated to 439 households owed a prevention duty and 612 owed a relief duty. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) publishes data from Local Authorities showing details of these households as below.

Support needs: Torbay in 2023/24 (Fig 2) has a much higher percentage of households owed a relief or prevention duty who have support needs than England, especially with 3 or more needs-

39% in Torbay compared to 17% in England. Not far off half (45%) of the Torbay households owed these duties had mental health needs, 1 in 3 had physical ill health and disability (Fig 3). Torbay is higher than England in all 5 most common needs.

Fig 2: % of households owed a prevention/relief duty who have support needs, 2023/24

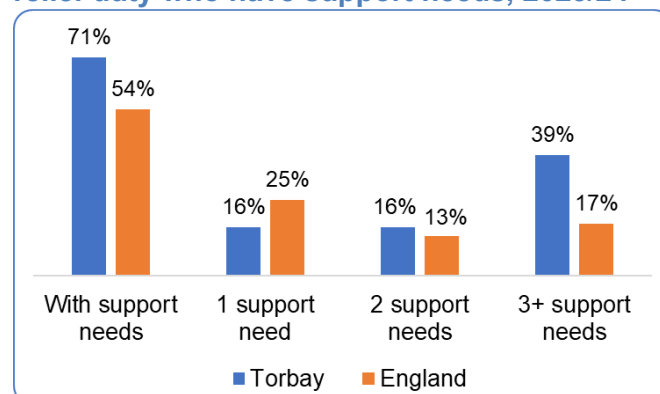


Fig 3: Torbay's 5 most common support needs- % of households owed a relief/prevention duty with each need, 2023/24

Support need	% with need	
	Torbay	England
History of mental health problems	45%	26%
Physical ill health and disability	34%	19%
At risk of/has experienced domestic abuse	20%	12%
Offending history	18%	8%
History of rough sleeping	17%	6%

Sources of Figs 2 & 3: MHCLG- [Tables on homelessness](#)

Age and household composition: In 2023/24 half (49%) of Torbay's main applicants (the lead applicant in the household) were aged 25 to 44, 3% were aged 16 or 17 and 8% were aged 65 and over. This is in line with the previous year.

In Torbay in 2023/24 single males made up the highest percentage of households owed a relief/prevention duty- almost half (48%) of those owed a relief duty (England is similar at 47%). They made up 30% of those owed a prevention duty, slightly higher than single parents with dependent children (27%). Single females made up 20% of

households owed a prevention duty and 27% of households owed a relief duty, the latter being higher than England which was 21%.

Reason for loss or threat of loss of the home:

For 67% of households owed a prevention duty in 2023/24 this was due to the end of a private rented tenancy (either assured shorthold or not), far higher than the England average of 44%. This was why 30% of households owed a relief duty lost their home (England- 16%). For both duties in Torbay this was the most common reason. For those owed a relief duty the next highest was family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate- 21%- and then domestic abuse (including if the alleged perpetrator)- 18%.

Private rented: The 2021 census shows Torbay has a higher percentage of households living in private rented housing (27%) than England (21%), and a lower percentage in social rented (8%) while England is 17%. This difference shows in the reason for (threat of) loss of home above as well as in the type of accommodation secured. Of those Torbay households where relief/prevention duty ended with accommodation secured, 67% were living in private rented (2023/24), not far off double the England figure of 36%. Torbay's [Housing Strategy 2023-2030](#) says about the private rented sector: 'tenancies in this sector are less secure than other tenure and can create a repeating cycle of homelessness.'

Housing waiting list: The local authority's list (published by [MHCLG](#)) consisted of 1,639 Torbay households on 31 March 2024, slightly lower than the previous year (1,674) but much increased since 2018 (1,074). Over half of Torbay households on the list on 31 March 24 required 1 bedroomed accommodation while 8% required 4 bedrooms or more (Fig 4). In both requirements Torbay is higher than the percentage for England.

Fig 4: Households on the local authority housing waiting list- percentage with each bedroom requirement, 31 March 2024

	Bedrooms required			
	1	2	3	4+
Torbay	53%	23%	16%	8%
England	47%	26%	17%	5%

Source: MHCLG- [Local Authority Housing Statistics tables](#)

Temporary accommodation- provided by the local authority where needed as part of its statutory homelessness function. In Torbay the rate (derived from the average number of the 4 quarters) of households in temporary

accommodation is significantly lower in Torbay than England throughout the 5 years (Fig 5). OHID says figures are influenced by the number eligible for help but also by the supply of social or affordable private housing that can be used.

Fig 5: Rate of households in temporary accommodation, per 1,000 households

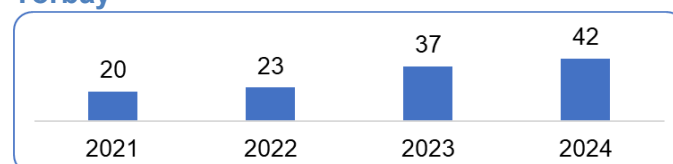
	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Torbay	1.6	2.5	2.3	2.3	2.0
England	3.8	4.0	4.0	4.2	4.6

Source: OHID- [Public health profiles](#)

Rough sleeping: In this section this is defined as people sleeping or about to bed down in open air locations and other places including tents and makeshift shelters. It doesn't include hostels, shelters, squatters, travellers, or camp/other sites used for recreation or organised protest.

The annual rough sleeping snapshot ([MHCLG](#)) shows visible rough sleeping on a single Autumn night, taken from a count or an estimate. From 2018 to 2022 in Torbay the number of rough sleepers ranged from 16 to 20. In 2023 it rose to 27, in 2024 the number was 29.

Fig 6: Estimated number sleeping rough over the course of the month, monthly average, Torbay



Source: MHCLG- [Rough sleeping data framework](#)

Another source of data is the rough sleeping data framework, not independently verified like the annual snapshot but it gives further information including the number who have slept rough during the month. It is a cohort or casework figure based on work done by outreach teams and other service providers. The number varies each month in Torbay but Fig 6 shows the monthly average has generally risen over the years.

References:

MHCLG: Various datasets of homelessness statistics- linked to throughout the profile, accessed May 2025

[OHID](#): Public health profiles. 2025
<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/>, accessed 5 June 2025

Office for National Statistics: [Census 2021](#)

PHE: [Health matters: rough sleeping](#), updated February 2020

Torbay Council: [Housing Strategy 2023 to 2030](#)