

Review of Homelessness in Cherwell

Cherwell District Council Population Overview

By size of population, Cherwell has grown to be the largest district in Oxfordshire. The most recent census in July 2021 advises the population has grown to 161,000, an increase of 13.5%. The District is estimated to grow by a further 20,000 households by the end of the decade.

The census in 2021 details that the percentage of households in social rented housing in Cherwell rose to 13.3%, which contrasts with the national trend that has seen social renting decrease. This is still below the national average of 17.1% of households in social tenancies. Private renting in Cherwell rose by nearly 4% to 19.8% and homeownership decreased by 4%, although this is still 65% of the housing tenure in the district.

Cherwell has seen a rise in the proportion of people who do not identify as having a UK nationality, this rose to 11% in the 2021 census. The census reported that 79.5% of the local population were born in England, with Poland being the second highest country of birth. That figure has doubled in the last 10 years. 88% of the Cherwell population identify as White, which is a slight decrease over the last 10 years. The next largest other ethnic group is Asian at 6%, then mixed ethnicity at 3% with Black and other groups around 2%.

The percentage of people who have sought assistance as being homeless or at risk, broadly reflect the ethnicity of the general population, but those who identify as Black are higher at 6% of homeless presentations and those with mixed ethnicity as 3%.

A review of the homeless statistics submitted to DLUHC over the last five years reveal that number of people presenting for assistance is returning to the levels seen prior to the Covid 19 pandemic.

At the height of the Covid Pandemic there was a shift to cases being immediately owed relief duties and less option for early intervention. This is now returning to pre-covid levels, with many cases being supported ahead of any crisis.

Homelessness Data

Below is an illustration of some of the key data and statistics that show trends and pressures on homelessness services within Cherwell.

Local Authorities have a number of statutory homelessness duties. These are outlined within legislation. The data and statistics refer to many of them, such as the Prevention, Relief and Main duty. A brief overviews of these duties and what they mean for applicants is provided below

Prevention Duty

An applicant is likely to become homeless in the near future (within 56 days) but does not by statutory definition, threatened with homelessness. However, local authorities are encouraged to begin taking reasonable steps to prevent the homelessness rather than waiting. The duty applies regardless of whether the applicants is within a 'Priority Need' group. Priority Need is a further assessment of a clients vulnerability if they were to become

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homeless and is also linked the provision of temporary accommodation should the need arise at a later date.

Relief Duty

The Relief Duty requires a local authority to take reasonable steps to help and applicant secure suitable accommodation for at least 6 months because the applicant is homeless. This does not mean that the accommodation is always a new letting of social or private accommodation, but instead the act of securing accommodation. In the relief duty, it is possible to refer the case to another local authority if it is believed that a local connection exists to the other local authority. Where a local authority has reason to believe that the applicants is eligible, homeless and in priority need, they should provide temporary accommodation until all the enquiries are made and completed.

Main Duty

The Main Duty applies when the Relief Duty ends (after 56 days of commencement of the duty) and the applicant is in priority need and is not homeless intentionally.

Homelessness Assessments and Duty Owed

Assessments

The below table shows the overall number of being assessed and accessing the service. It has trended downwards initially over the last 5 years, as was seen by many authorities as the Homelessness Reduction Act settled in. But is not starting to trend upwards. Not all clients that are assessed are owed a duty.

Duty	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Application/Assessments	450	435	318	377	419
Prevention Duty Owed	253	287	150	250	257
Relief Duty Owed	141	121	164	126	162

Duties Owed

The below table shows the outcomes of homeless cases and when the outcome is reached in the process. The COVID period had an effect on our ability to prevent homelessness and thus more clients were owed the relief duty as a proportion of those owed a duty. The number of cases that are being resolved in the prevention stage is again increasing and is higher than the other duties, as was seen pre COVID.

Duty	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Prevention Duty Ended	211	148	172	214	260
Relief Duty Ended	146	141	197	228	228
Decision at end of Relief Duty	53	35	49	43	83
Decision at end of Main Duty	42	19	21	23	45

Household Types and Duties Owed

Household Types Owed the Prevention Duty

The below table shows the type of applicant that approaches in the Prevention Duty. In the prevention duty, family presentations have prevalence, but single families are also high. Families are more likely to be seen by the team in the prevention duty and thus can have more chance of early interventions to prevent homelessness, reducing the need to be placed in temporary accommodation.

Household Type	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Single Female with Children	79	85	43	71	72
Single Male with Children	2	10	5	2	10
Single Adult Male	56	79	55	69	54
Single Adult Female	43	49	23	49	44
Couple with Children	50	28	7	41	53
Couple no Children	17	31	14	13	19
Three adults with Children	3	3	1	2	5
Three adults without Children	3	2	2	3	0

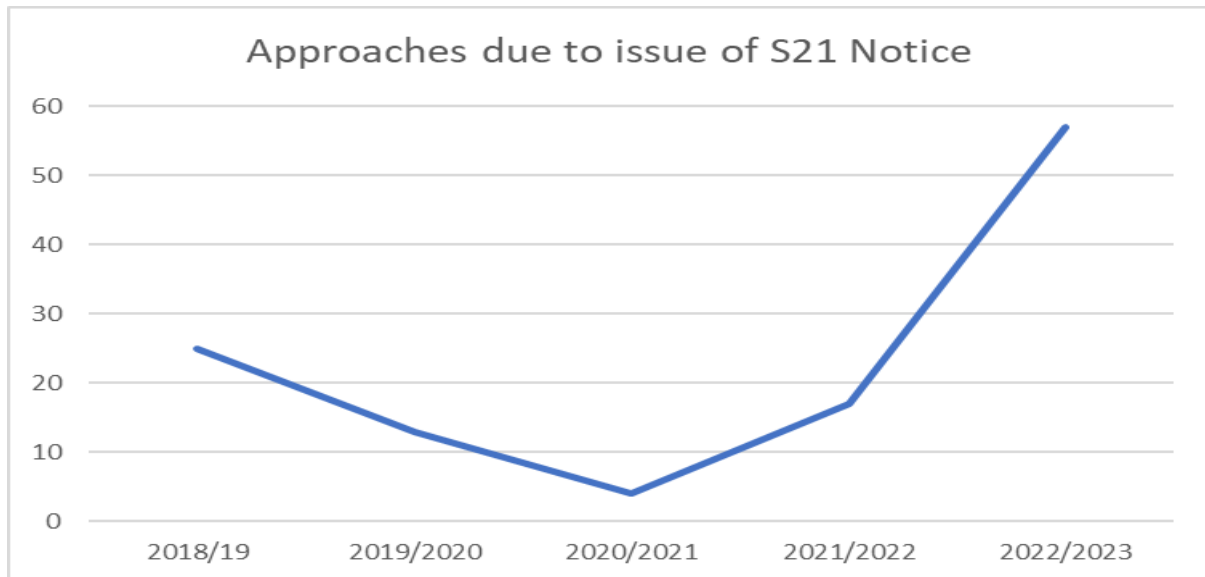
Household Types Owed the Relief Duty

The below table shows the type of applicant that approaches in the Relief Duty. In the relief duty, where more crisis presentations are seen, single males are by far the most dominant group. This is also linked to those at risk of or those who are rough sleeping and those that are in temporary accommodation.

Household Type	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Single Female with Children	35	28	18	17	25
Single Male with Children	5	4	7	0	5
Single Adult Male	52	61	95	78	85
Single Adult Female	27	13	30	19	28
Couple with Children	9	11	8	6	11
Couple no Children	11	3	6	6	0
Three adults with Children	2	0	0	0	0
Three adults without Children	0	1	0	0	0

Reasons for Loss of Accommodation

A Section 21 Notice brings a private rented tenancy to an end. Approaches for assistance due to the loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancies (due to service of a Section 21 Notice) has increased considerably in recent years. The numbers were low during the COVID period because of a 'stay' on evictions during the pandemic, so the number of notices did decline from pre-pandemic levels. However, they have increased sharply since.



Reasons for Loss of Accommodation at the Prevention Stage

This measure shows the housing circumstances of applicants approaching the Council at the earlier Prevention Stage. The figures show consistently that the main reason for a housing approach at this stage is a breakdown in a relationship with a family member or friend and because of the ending of a private rented tenancy. These are trends and factors that are typical and are seen by other local authorities.

Type of accommodation loss	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Family or Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	59	84	43	46	56
End of private rented tenancy – AST	108	110	44	119	141
Domestic Abuse	8	13	16	18	12
Non-Violent relationship breakdown with partner	20	29	14	17	6
End of social rented tenancy	15	19	7	13	16
Eviction from supported accommodation	8	1	4	3	7
End of private rented tenancy – no AST	9	10	10	13	10
Other violence or harassment	1	0	0	1	1
Left institution with no accommodation available	0	0	2	4	3
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0	0	0	0	1
Other reasons/not known	25	21	10	16	4

Reasons for Loss of Accommodation at the Relief Stage

This measure shows the housing circumstances of applicants approaching the Council at the Relief Stage. These reflect those that are at a later stage of homelessness and may be in housing crisis or emergency, such as going into temporary accommodation. The figures show that the most prevalent reason for loss of accommodation at this stage is still family and friends no longer able to accommodate, however, the proportion of relationship breakdown, either abusive or not, jumps significantly as a proportion of the overall number, compared with the prevention duty.

Type of accommodation loss	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Family or Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	40	36	64	40	59
End of private rented tenancy – AST	35	17	16	24	25
Domestic Abuse	6	9	8	16	17
Non-Violent relationship breakdown with partner	18	16	25	17	22
End of social rented tenancy	8	9	6	5	4
Eviction from supported accommodation	2	3	9	7	4
End of private rented tenancy – no AST	5	8	12	4	9
Other violence or harassment	1	2	6	6	6
Left institution with no accommodation available	2	2	4	1	5
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0	0	0	0	2
Other reasons/not known	24	19	14	6	9

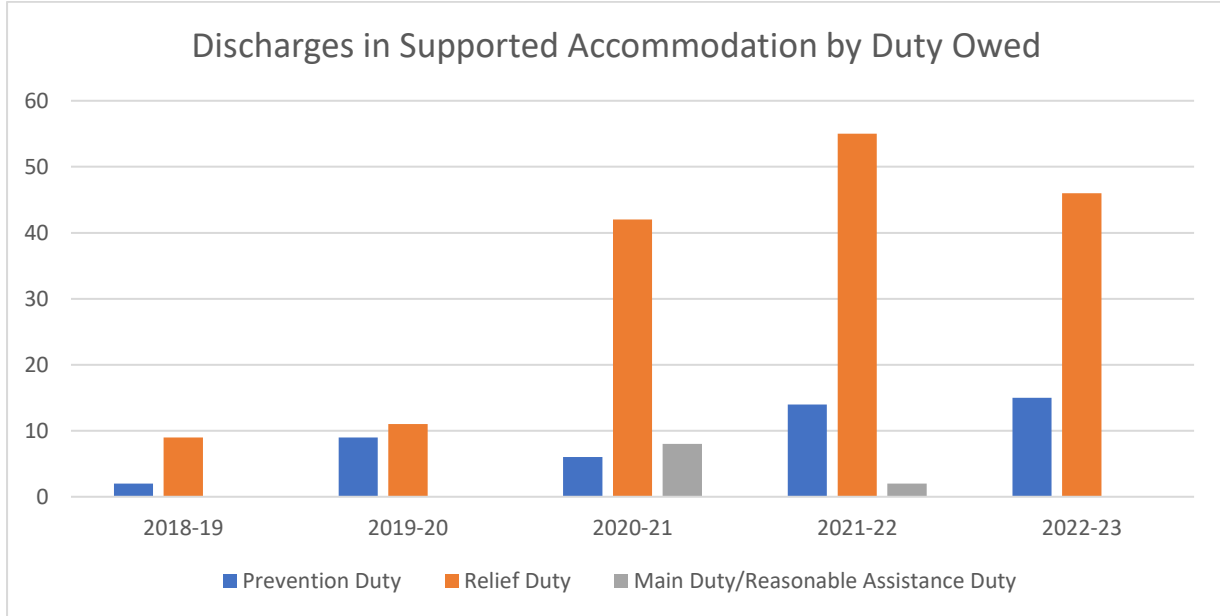
Discharges of Duty

The below table shows the outcome of cases and where they are placed following their homelessness and by duty. The most common way in which duties at Prevention, Relief or Main duty have been discharged remains an offer of social housing. This is particularly true for households who are owed main duties, with very few being resolved by securing private rented or moving in with family or friends.

Discharge method	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Social Housing – Prevention Duty	84	101	37	50	63
Social Housing – Relief Duty	48	56	64	66	74
Social Housing – Main Duty	36	18	15	16	36
Private Rented – Prevention Duty	37	30	42	57	49
Private Rented – Relief Duty	13	11	29	18	22
Private Rented – Main Duty	2	0	2	0	4
Family/Friends – Prevention Duty	10	15	13	21	29
Family/Friends – Relief Duty	5	4	3	7	17
Family/Friends – Main Duty	0	0	0	0	0
Offers Refused or left temporary accommodation	5	6	13	7	5

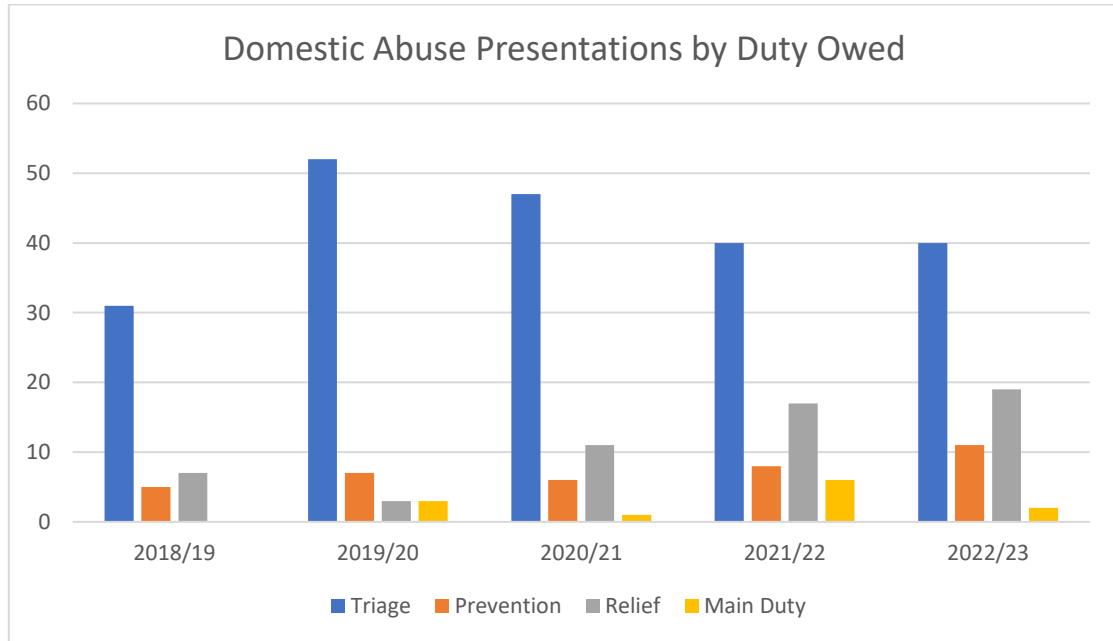
Discharges of Duty into Supported Accommodation

The number of households having their homelessness duties discharged into supported accommodation has shown an increase over the last three years. This shows that the clients that are being seen in all duties are potentially more vulnerable and therefore not suitable for general needs accommodation in social housing or a discharge into the private sector.



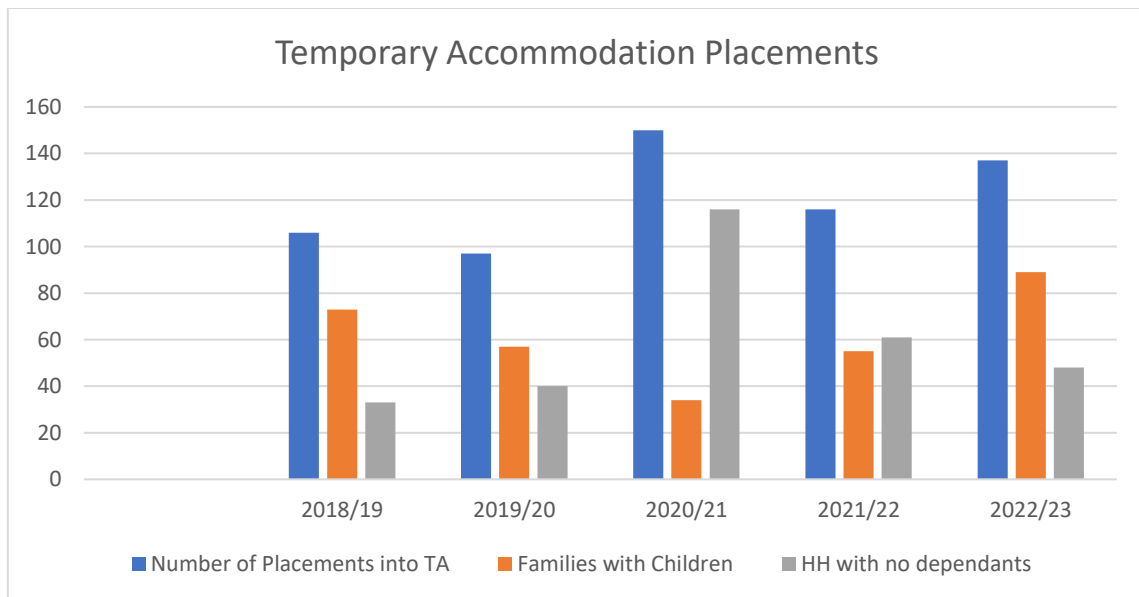
Domestic Abuse

In Cherwell the number of applicants presenting as homeless due to domestic abuse is relatively low compared to the total number of cases presenting for homeless advice and support. Of the cases presenting as homeless due to domestic abuse, most were given advice only and did not progress to any formal homeless duties. The prevalence of domestic abuse is increasing.



Temporary Accommodation

The number of households requiring temporary accommodation has risen over recent years. The high number during the pandemic were due to the requirement to take everyone into emergency accommodation, regardless of priority need. The number of placements in 2023 is greater than for 2021/22 and much higher than pre-pandemic levels. The pressure and requirement for temporary accommodation is therefore increasing. Higher numbers presenting for emergency accommodation duties and longer waiting times for nominations via the Housing Register requires a review of temporary accommodation resources to meet expected future demand.



Rough Sleeping

Rough Sleeping figures are reported annually in a formal estimate to DLUHC. The increase in numbers reported in Cherwell reflects the higher numbers of rough sleeping nationally. Cherwell has seen a significant rise in rough sleeping post pandemic. Men are the most at risk of rough sleeping. It is also an issue that affects all age groups and nationalities.

Gender of Rough Sleeper	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Male	8	8	8	4	15
Female	3	3	2	2	2
Total	11	11	10	6	17

Age of Rough Sleeper	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Under 18	0	0	0	0	0
18-25	1	4	0	2	3
Over 25	9	7	10	4	14
Not known	1	0	0	0	0

Nationality of Rough Sleeper	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
UK National	9	10	8	6	13
EEA National	2	0	2	0	3
Non EEA National	0	1	0	0	1

Housing Register

Housing Register figures show the current demand for accommodation, (July 2023)

There is greater demand on the housing register for those that have housing need than there is supply of suitable property. The supply of property during the COVID 19 period also had an effect on the number of properties available and overall lets. Numbers are rising again in 2023 and it is hoped figures similar to lets in 2017/18 will be achieved. Even at this level the waiting times for a nomination are expected to increase.

Current Bedroom Need	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Total
1 bedroom	44	128	172	401	745
2 bedroom	10	167	105	326	608
3 bedroom	2	216	28	105	351
4+ bedroom	1	111	5	14	131
Total	57	622	310	846	1835

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The number of properties that are being let through the Housing Register has decreased over recent years, this has a knock on effect on homelessness because there is less movement through the pathway.

The waiting times for larger family homes has grown in particular. This is an area where more households are assessed as being in significant need, but supply is limited.

Lets by bedroom size.

Bedroom Size	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
1 bedroom	255	209	258	137	187
2 bedroom	298	334	263	210	235
3 bedroom	183	174	119	87	111
4 bedroom	16	22	25	17	13
5 bedroom	0	0	1	1	0
Total	752	739	666	452	546

Private Rented Market Data

Summary of monthly rent data by bedroom size 2022-23. Cost per month.

Bedroom	Lower Quartile (£)	Median (£)	Upper Quartile (£)
Room	400	460	550
Studio	498	625	820
1 bedroom	565	725	925
2 bedroom	625	800	1050
3 bedroom	725	900	1250
4+ bedroom	1127	1500	2100
All Categories	625	825	1150

Local Housing Allowance Rates

There are two rates operating in Cherwell, depending on where you live. These are called the Cherwell Valley Rate and the Oxford Rate. Local Housing Allowance is a mechanism of how much housing benefit you can claim to help pay your rent if you are renting privately.

The data shows that rents in the Cherwell area are more expensive than that national average. The Oxford rate is also considerably higher than the Cherwell Valley Rate.

The table when contrasted with the previous table show the disparity between market rents and local housing allowance

Number of bedrooms	Weekly LHA amount (Cherwell Valley Rate) (£)	Weekly LHA amount (Oxford Rate) (£)	National Average (£)
Shared	338.09	515.10	346.53

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1 bedroom rate	648.22	772.89	561.51
2 bedroom rate	772.89	910.00	694.76
3 bedroom rate	897.52	1096.98	837.89
4 bedroom rate	1293.98	1580.67	1092.39

Housing Market Data

The market data shows that there are affordability issues within the housing market within Cherwell, with property prices considerably in excess of the national average.

Month	National Average	Cherwell Average
May 2023	£285,861	£366,014

Average Earnings

People in Cherwell do earn more than the national average, both male and female. However, the average earnings are not significantly greater than the national average, compared to the property price disparity.

Year 2022 per year gross earnings (£)

	Male Average	Female Average	Combined Average
National Average	39795	26878	33402
Cherwell Average	40139	28392	34858

Conclusions following review of homelessness in Cherwell

The review of Cherwell's homelessness data and associated waiting list pressures informs the drawing of the following conclusions.

- That the overall trend of homelessness in Cherwell is downward from where it was in 2018/19 in terms of the full picture. However, the amount of homelessness preventions has fallen at a rate that is faster than the other duties, which in turn means that more people are likely to be in crisis situations. It also shows that homelessness prevention is becoming more difficult
- The most prevalent group in of homelessness person is single males, which follows a national trend. Females or couples with children are more common in the Prevention Duty.

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- The service of Section 21 “no fault eviction” notices have become increasingly more prevalent. There has been a significant increase, which could be linked to economic factors and upcoming changes in legislation.
- Domestic Abuse prevalence is increasing.
- Friends and family and the breakdown of these relationships and living arrangements is a major contributing factor to homelessness within the District.
- An offer of social housing is the main way in which our homelessness duties are discharged. The ability of the Council to be able to discharge to the Private Sector has fallen over the last two years.
- The number of lettings of Social Housing that have been made through the Choice Based Lettings system have fallen and have not recovered to pre COVID levels. This creates additional waiting list pressures making it more difficult to discharge duties to social housing.
- The supply of one-bedroom units is slowing in favour of a greater number of 2- and 3-bedroom units. This is therefore meeting certain areas of Cherwell demand regarding homelessness, particularly families with children, the number of single people who are homeless have more limited options through the general housing pathway.
- There has been a reduction in the lets and availability of the largest properties. Larger properties are also the most difficult to source through the private sector because of affordability issues within Cherwell. If families approach requiring these larger properties, such as 4-bedroom houses, it can be particularly difficult to discharge duties.
- There is an increasing use of supported accommodation as a way of discharging homeless duties, this suggests the client group is more vulnerable and therefore may be more susceptible to repeat homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Rough sleeping figures within Cherwell have increased, showing a growing national trend. These are predominantly single men. Since COVID lockdowns ended, there has been a particularly significant increase.
- Affordability of accommodation is an issue within Cherwell.

Sources

VOA administrative database

Land Registry

Office of National Statistics

DLUHC Live Tables

Census

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