

**SOMERSET JOINT
STRATEGIC NEEDS
ASSESSMENT
(JSNA)**

2012

SECTION 1

**DEMOGRAPHY, SOCIAL AND PLACE
AND HOUSING:**

**WHAT'S NEW AND WHAT'S CHANGED SINCE
2011?**

SOMERSET JOINT STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT (JSNA)
Demography, Social And Place And Housing:
What's New And What's Changed Since 2011?

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**Demography, Social and Place and Housing:
What's New and What's Changed since 2011?**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to highlight any changes in data trends or findings since the publication of the latest full Somerset JSNA in 2011. Where no notable change in data trends has been identified, or no new data is available, the issue is not cited. This document also aims to highlight any relevant health and wellbeing issues which have come to light in the last 12 months.
- 1.2 Data which informs the JSNA is published on the INFORM Somerset data hub (<http://inform.sine.org.uk/>) and can be accessed through a series of maps, charts and tables. Links to relevant sections of INFORM Somerset are provided within this report.

2 DEMOGRAPHY

- 2.1 This section looks at latest demographic data for Somerset, including the first release of 2011 Census estimates, the Somerset School Census and DWP National Insurance registration figures.

FIRST RELEASE OF 2011 CENSUS STATISTICS

- 2.2 The first phase of results from the 2011 Census was published in July 2012. The release provided population and household estimates at county and local authority district level. Detailed Census statistics will be published over the next 12 months and will be an invaluable source of data to inform future JSNA work. New population projections, based on the 2011 Census results, are due to be released by ONS in October/November 2012.
- 2.3 Somerset's population on Census Day 2011 was estimated to be 530,000. This estimate was in line with recent NHS Somerset estimates and slightly higher than latest ONS estimates (for summer 2010). Part of the discrepancy with ONS estimates is thought to be the result of more reliable counting of migrant workers and migration of people within the UK.
- 2.4 The Census confirmed Somerset's increasing ageing population: the number of people aged 80 and over is estimated to have increased by a quarter since the 2001 Census, while there has also been a notable increase in residents aged 60 to 69, as post-war baby boomers reach

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retirement age. The results also identified an increase in the estimated number of Somerset residents aged 20-24 since 2001, which is likely to be linked to increases in young migrant workers.

2.5 School Census

2.5.1 The Somerset School Census revealed an increase in the total number of pupils in mainstream schools in Somerset for the first time in 8 years.¹

2.5.2 The number of primary aged pupils in mainstream schools increased for the second year in succession, while the number of secondary aged pupils has continued to gradually decline.

2.6 Ethnicity And First Language

2.6.1 The proportion of non-'White British' school pupils in Somerset continues to increase year-on-year, rising from 6.3% in 2010 to 7.1% in January 2012.

2.6.2 The proportion of school pupils whose first language is not English has increased slightly to 3.6%. Polish remains the most common non-English first language, followed by Portuguese.

Link to ethnicity data on INFORM Somerset:

<http://inform.sine.org.uk/dataviews/view?viewId=32>

2.7 Special Educational Needs (SEN)

2.7.1 As at January 2012, 864 pupils in Somerset had a Statement of Special Educational Needs, marginally down in the 871 pupils on 2011. The number of pupils with SEN but without Statements (i.e. recorded at School Action and School Action Plus) was also very slightly down, from 12,080 in 2011 to 11,967 in 2012.

2.7.2 In the past year, consultations have been carried out with children and parents regarding SEN services and provision. Results and proposed actions are to be published in autumn 2012.

¹ Somerset Schools Number on Roll Report October 2011

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2.8 Free School Meals

- 2.8.1 The number of Somerset school pupils eligible for and claiming Free School Meals (FSM) continues to rise; up from 11.7% of pupils in 2011 to 11.9% in 2012. This mirrors a national upward trend.

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- 2.9 The latest Somerset County Council forecast identifies a particular demand for additional primary school places in Bridgwater, Taunton and Yeovil over the next few years.
- 2.10 The forecast is now for an overall rise in the number of school pupils each year (from 2012-2016), notwithstanding a slight fall in secondary aged pupils.

MIGRATION

2.11 Non-UK short term residents

- 2.11.1 The first 2011 Census release estimated that there are approximately 700 non-UK short-term residents in Somerset (those staying for between three and twelve months), representing around 0.1% of the county's population. This is typical of Somerset's statistical neighbours; areas with high levels of short-term non-UK residents tend to be cities, e.g., Exeter (1.1%), Bournemouth (0.8%).

2.12 NINO Registrations

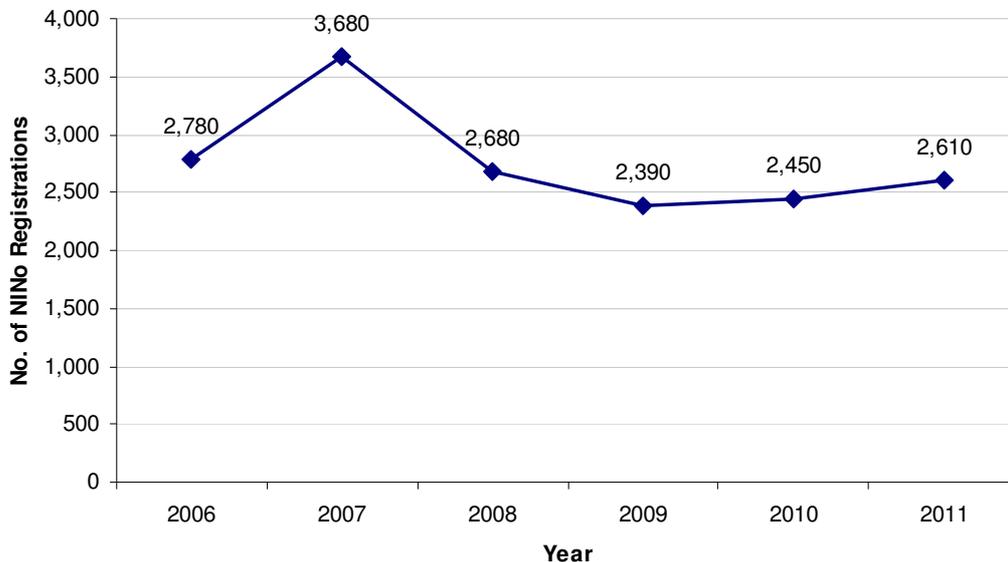
- 2.12.1 The number of NINo Registrations (overseas nationals being allocated a National Insurance number) in Somerset increased for the second year running in 2011, following a decline from a peak in 2007.

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2.13 National Insurance registrations to overseas nationals, Somerset 2006 to 2011



Source: DWP

2.14 The majority of recent increases in registrations have been in South Somerset and Taunton Deane. Migrants from Poland continue to be the most common, accounting for around a third of new NINo registrations in 2011. Migrants from India and the Philippines continue to be the main non-European migrant workers.

2.15 Hinkley Point C Development

2.15.1 As at June 2012 there were estimated to be 350 people working on the site of the proposed Hinkley Point C power station. Numbers of workers are expected to peak in 2014/15 at around 6,000. Around 70% of workers are expected to be non-local.

2.15.2 It is anticipated that many workers on the Hinkley Point site will be short-term, with the total number of different workers on site during the construction phase predicted to be around 25,000. Accommodation blocks for 1,800 workers (one site for 1,000 workers, another for 800 workers) are planned for the Bridgwater area.

2.15.3 EDF and local authorities have signed an agreement which secures a range of measures to reduce the impact of the proposed development as far as possible. EDF will be required to make approximately £64m available to mitigate impacts across a range of areas, including housing

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and community safety. It is anticipated that an announcement will be made in March 2013 as to whether Hinkley Point C will be granted planning consent.

2.16 COUNT OF GYPSY AND TRAVELLER CARAVANS

2.16.1 The number of gypsy and traveller caravans in Somerset has increased to its highest level in recent years. In January 2012 there were 565 caravans in Somerset, compared to 503 a year earlier. This was the highest number recorded in any of the previous six available counts (back to January 2009). Much of the increase is due to higher numbers of gypsy and traveller caravans in Sedgemoor.

2.16.2 Most (320) gypsy and traveller caravans in Somerset are on 'authorised' sites; that is, with planning permission.

3 SOCIAL AND PLACE

3.1 This sections looks at latest data related to society and the environment, including child poverty, social care provision, educational achievement, the local economy, unemployment and community safety.

CHILD POVERTY

3.2 Although numbers remain low when compared to the national average of 21.9%, latest data² indicates that the proportion of children (under 16) living in poverty in Somerset has increased to 15.6%.

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

3.3 Despite big increases in previous years, the number of Children's Social Care referrals and Initial Assessments (IAs)³ remained fairly constant from 2010/11 to 2011/12. However, Core Assessments increased from 896 to 1,108; reflecting an increase in more complex cases being referred.

3.4 A total of 5,467 referrals were made to Children's Social Care in 2011/12, resulting in 4,437 Initial Assessments being completed.

² For 2009. Child Poverty data for 2010 is due to be released in September.

³ An Initial Assessment has to be completed within 10 working days. One possible outcome is for a more detailed Core Assessment to be prepared and completed within 35 days.

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3.5 Children in Need

3.5.1 There were 3,421 children in need; 495 children looked after (up from 451 a year earlier) and 282 children subject of a Child Protection Plan in Somerset in 2011/12.

3.5.2 The proportion of children looked after who were subject to three or more placements improved from 13.1% in 2010/11 to 12.3% in 2011/12.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

3.6 A total of 29,394 clients received services provided or commissioned by Somerset County Council during 2011/12. This was marginally up on the number of clients receiving services in 2010/11 (29,038).

3.7 Just over a third of clients (36.6%) were of 'working age', aged 18-64. Mental Health Services were the most common service used by working age clients (59.3% of clients), followed by Physical Disability (24.5%) and Learning Disability services (14.5%).

3.8 The majority (68.5%) of clients aged 65+ received services for Physical Disability. The next most common category was Mental Health (29.1%); with a very small proportion (0.8%) of older people receiving Learning Disability services.

3.9 Just under a third (30.3%) of clients in 2011/12 received Homecare; broadly the same proportion as in 2010/11. The proportion of clients receiving Day care increased from 6.4% to 8.3%, as a result of a large rise in the number of over 65s receiving Mental Health day care services.

3.10 Adult Social Care User Survey

3.10.1 Results of the 2011/12 NHS England Adult Social Care User Survey showed Somerset as improving year-on-year and being above the national average for most aspects of service satisfaction and users' quality of life. In particular, Somerset service users were relatively positive regarding personal mobility indoors and in the local area and in finding information about support, services and benefits. A more detailed summary is available as a JSNA supporting document on the SINE website at <http://www.sine.org.uk/jsna-2011/>

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3.11 Mental Health Service Users

3.11.1 Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust provided a snapshot of their mental health clients, as on 7th August 2012. More than half of clients are aged under 65, amongst whom there are roughly equal numbers of men and women. Data on ethnicity, first language, marital status and disability are more limited. However, there is evidence of multiple needs amongst service users. Many of those receiving services for mental health also have visual impairment/blindness and/or long-term physical disability. More details are available from a JSNA supporting document at <http://www.sine.org.uk/jsna-2011/>

3.12 Somerset Care Services Directory

3.12.1 An updated directory of adult social care and support for 2012-13 is available on the Somerset County Council website⁴ and in written form. It lists the registered care providers in Somerset and provides information about how to access care services.

3.13 Young Carers

3.13.1 Many children and young people experience substantial additional ongoing caring responsibilities at home relating to siblings or parents. In Somerset there is a Young Carers Support Service to provide support, advice and respite breaks for children and young people aged 8 - 18 who are in this situation. Following consultation with young carers, their families and other stakeholders, recommendations will shortly be made as to the future structure of this service.

SCHOOL ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT

3.14 In 2011/12 57.2% of pupils in Somerset achieved at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), compared to 59% nationally and regionally. Provisional 2012 data suggests that attainment at EYFS has improved to 62.5%.

3.15 The achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the mean (at Early Years Foundation Stage) in Somerset remained better than the

⁴<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/iri/public/services/directory/service?rid=wpcontent/Sites/SCC/Web%20Pages/Services/Services/Community/Adult%20Social%20Care>

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national average of 31.3%, but widened slightly to 30.3%. Provisional 2012 data suggests that the gap has narrowed to 29.2%.

- 3.16 The proportion of 16 year olds achieving 5 or more A*-C Grades at GCSE (or equivalent), including English and Maths increased from 54% (2010) to 56.7% (2011). Whilst this represents a 10% improvement since 2008, it remains below the 2011 national average of 58.3%.

CHILDREN'S TRUST / CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN 2011/12

- 3.17 Despite the removal in 2010 of statutory Children's Trust Guidance and the requirement to produce a Children and Young People's Plan, Somerset continues with its Children's Trust arrangements. The change in legislation has meant the 2011/12 plan has taken a different format to previous Plans: it will no longer be a three-year plan, but will be reviewed on an annual basis. The number of priorities has been reduced from five to three:

- Raise Achievement and Aspirations – actively support increased educational attainment, achievement and improved outcomes
- Keep Children Safe – safeguard vulnerable children and ensure that those looked after by the Local Authority are well cared for
- Narrow the Gaps – challenge inequalities in health, wellbeing, access and education

IMPROVING INTER-GENERATIONAL RELATIONS

- 3.18 One issue identified by work last year was the impact on some older people's wellbeing of some older people of negative attitudes towards the younger generation. This manifests itself in fears or crime and anti-social behaviour and mutual mistrust. Across England, there have been various inter-generational projects aimed at breaking down barriers, changing attitudes and boosting personal development. A report produced by the Beth Johnson Foundation, in partnership with the National Youth Agency, reviews these projects and the learning's taken from them (see JSNA Supporting Documents: <http://www.sine.org.uk/jsna-2011/>).

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WORKFORCE QUALIFICATIONS

- 3.19 The proportion of Somerset residents (aged 16-64) educated to at least NVQ4 (or equivalent) is below south west and national averages, with the gap appearing to increase between 2010 and 2011. In Somerset 28.5% of the resident population aged 16-64 educated to NVQ4, compared to 32.9% in the south west and Great Britain⁵. The problem of supplying a sufficiently well-qualified local workforce to meet demand in the 'knowledge sector' is thus in danger of becoming even greater.
- 3.20 The proportion of Somerset residents educated to at least NVQ level 2 (or equivalent) continues to exceed south west and national averages.

BUSINESS AND ECONOMY

- 3.21 The number of businesses in Somerset has continued its recent downward trend, mirroring the national picture. There were 395 fewer VAT and/or PAYE based enterprises recorded in Somerset in 2011 than in 2010 (there were a total of 25,530 enterprises in 2011). The biggest falls were in the number of small businesses, employing 0-4 people.
- 3.22 Most industry sectors saw a decline in the number of active businesses in 2011, with the 'public administration and defence' and 'arts, entertainment, recreation' sectors showing the biggest falls (down 5% and 4% respectively). The only industry to buck the downward trend was 'agriculture, forestry and fishing'.

Link to business demography data on INFORM Somerset:

<http://inform.sine.org.uk/byTheme?themelid=28>

UNEMPLOYMENT

- 3.23 The Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) claimant rate in Somerset increased slightly from 2.2% in April 2011 to 2.4% in April 2012. Bridgwater is a major hotspot – the top four wards in Somerset in terms of JSA claimant rates are all in Bridgwater.
- 3.24 Youth unemployment continues to rise. In April 2012 the JSA claimant rate in Somerset was 6.5% compared to 5.8% a year earlier. Sedgemoor

⁵ ONS Annual Population Survey

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is a particular concern; with 8.2% of young people aged 18-24 currently out of work and claiming JSA.

Link to JSA claimant data on INFORM Somerset:

<http://inform.sine.org.uk/dataviews/view?viewId=11>

WELFARE REFORM

- 3.25 The Welfare Reform Act provides for the introduction of a 'Universal Credit' to replace a range of existing benefits including JSA, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance and Housing Benefit.
- 3.26 The Universal Credit is scheduled for roll-out from October 2013. New claims for the existing benefits are to be phased out by April 2014. The transfer of existing claimants to the new system is intended to be completed by 2017.
- 3.27 Besides introducing the Universal Credit and related measures, the Act makes other significant changes to the benefits system:
- Introduces Personal Independence Payments to replace the current Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Around 4.6% of Somerset's population currently claim DLA
 - Restricts Housing Benefit entitlement for social housing tenants whose accommodation is larger than they need
 - Caps the total amount of benefit that can be claimed

COMMUNITY SAFETY

- 3.28 The 2012/13 Somerset Community Safety Strategic Assessment identified five key priorities:
- 3.29 Reducing the impact of alcohol misuse in town centres: alcohol-related violent crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) are having a big impact on some of Somerset's main town centres and is related to the night-time economy.
- 3.30 Tackling acquisitive crime hotspots: a small number of urban communities bear the brunt of a high proportion of burglaries and thefts.
- 3.31 Reducing the impact of drug use on communities: drug use is linked to a high proportion of offenders committing acquisitive crime. The number of

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young people committing drug offences has been increasing year-on-year.

3.32 Improving community cohesion: levels of reported hate incidents have been increasing. Yeovil and Taunton town centres have been hate crime 'hotspots'

3.33 Tackling increasing environmental crime: levels of reported fly-tipping increased in Somerset by 50% between 2010 and 2011.

Link to crime and community safety data on INFORM Somerset:

<http://inform.sine.org.uk/dataviews/view?viewId=32>

3.34 Interpersonal Violence

3.34.1 Somerset's Interpersonal Violence Strategy 2011-2014, produced by Somerset Domestic Abuse Strategic Group, was updated in May 2012. Latest data reveals that 250 people entered a specialist domestic abuse service (e.g., women's refuge, supported housing, resettlement service) in Somerset in 2011/12. There were a total of 5,737 domestic violence incidents recorded by the Police over this period. The Interpersonal Violence Strategy outlines 12 overall 'aims' relating to prevention, service provision and risk reduction.

3.35 Rape and Sexual Abuse Paper

3.35.1 NHS Somerset has published a response to Somerset LINK's paper 'Services for Victims / survivors of rape and sexual abuse in Somerset – Unmet Need'. The response outlines current services available for victims of rape and sexual assault and acknowledges that the topic could benefit from further discussion at the Somerset Domestic Abuse Strategic Group, or the Avon & Somerset Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy Group.

3.36 Domestic Abuse of Older People Research

3.36.1 People aged 60 or over in Somerset are being invited to take part in research to improve services for older people affected by domestic abuse. Somerset County Council has funded research by the University of Nottingham to establish how well current services are meeting the needs of the over 60s, and recommend ways of developing them in the future.

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TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

- 3.36 Overall estimated traffic volumes on Somerset's roads have declined since the start of the economic downturn. The 2011 estimate (3,853 million vehicle miles) is the lowest since 2005.
- 3.37 There were 224 people killed or seriously injured on Somerset's roads in 2011, slightly lower than the 238 people killed or seriously injured in 2010. This confirms a continuous downward trend in the overall number of road casualties.
- 3.38 Blue Badge Scheme⁶ Consultation
- 3.38.1 Between November 2011 and January 2012, Somerset County Council conducted a consultation on a potential increase in the cost of a three-year Blue Badge, from £2 to £10. The proposed increase was considered to be 'reasonable and fair' by more than two-thirds of respondents. The new charge came into effect on 1 April, 2012.

ACCESS TO SPORT AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

- 3.39 An important element in maintaining a healthy population is encouraging exercise and mobility. At the county-wide level, the [Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership](#) (SASP) is the County Sports Partnership for Somerset. Its mission is to create a healthier and more active community in Somerset. SASP's strategy is to increase the number of people of all ages and abilities in Somerset who start to participate in physical activity and sport, increase the number of people who stay active and enable everybody to succeed in achieving their potential. Within Somerset, this means that (amongst other things) there will be more public facilities for physical activity and sport, together with better use through wider access.
- 3.40 In 2011-12, West Somerset District Council (WSDC) carried out an assessment of the sport and recreation facilities which exist within the West Somerset planning area (that is, excluding Exmoor National Park). The study looked at current and potential future needs along with current provision and any gaps that exist. It incorporates a detailed audit of

⁶ The Blue Badge scheme provides a range of parking concessions for people with severe mobility problems who have difficulty using public transport.

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facilities in the area, from halls to allotments, swimming pools to bowling greens, alongside use of Sport England and Mosaic household segmentation data and bespoke research (see JSNA Supporting Documents: <http://www.sine.org.uk/jsna-2011/>)

WASTE AND RECYCLING

- 3.41 The amount of household waste produced by Somerset households is declining. In 2011/12, 238,894 tonnes of household waste was created, 4% less than the previous year.

4 HOUSING

- 4.1 This section looks at latest trends in housing, including affordability, homelessness, demand for social housing and fuel poverty.

FIRST RELEASE OF 2011 CENSUS DATA

- 4.2 The first release of 2011 Census data estimated the number of 'usually resident' households in Somerset to be 227,000. This is broadly in line with ONS's mid-year (2008) estimate of 226,000. Note that dwelling stock figures quoted by local authorities and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) are somewhat higher. This is because they include vacant properties and second homes.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

- 4.3 House prices at the less expensive end of the market continue to be less affordable relative to earnings in Somerset than in England as a whole. Whilst the ratio of lower quartile house price to lower quartile average earnings⁷ in Somerset was largely unchanged between 2010 and 2011, at 7.87 (England: 6.53), there were some variations at district level. The 'affordability ratio' increased from 8.92 to 9.85 in West Somerset, while in South Somerset the ratio dropped from 8.02 to 7.20. South Somerset replaces Sedgemoor as having the lowest ratio of house prices to earnings.

Link to housing data on INFORM Somerset:
<http://inform.sine.org.uk/dataviews/view?viewId=30>

⁷ Source: Land Registry and Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)

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4.4 Additional Affordable Dwellings

- 4.4.1 After two consecutive year-on-year decreases in net additional dwellings, the figure rose sharply to 2,570 in 2010/11⁸ in Somerset. Around two in five were in South Somerset district. Local authorities in the county provided 1,150 additional affordable dwellings in 2010/11, the highest of any individual year in the past two decades. As in 2009/10, around seven in ten of these were social rent dwellings.

COSTS OF RENTING

- 4.5 The gap between average rents for local authority and housing association/Registered Social Landlord (RSL) properties narrowed further in 2011/12⁹. At 31st March 2011, the average RSL rent in Somerset stabilised at just over £76 a week, compared with £62.70 for Local Authority (LA) owned properties. The latter increased again to a provisional figure of almost £66 a week at 31st March 2012.

HOMELESSNESS

- 4.6 The number of homelessness applications in Somerset increased from 983 in 2009/10 to 1,004 in 2010/11 and 1,077 in 2011/12. The number accepted as being homeless and in priority need also advanced from 564 to 652 over the same two-year period, in line with an increasing national trend. In the latest financial year, South Somerset and Taunton Deane had the highest rates of people accepted as homeless and in priority need, of any local authority in the South West.
- 4.7 The number of households placed in temporary accommodation has declined further while the total to whom duty is owed but no accommodation had been secured rose to 149 by 31st March 2012. Both trends were also evident regionally and nationally.

SOCIAL HOUSING DEMAND

- 4.8 As at 30th June 2012 there were 18,476 households on the Homefinder Somerset register. This is 2,613 fewer households than at the same time in 2011. The reduction has been caused by district councils undertaking

⁸ Excludes West Somerset, for which data was not submitted

⁹ Source: Local authorities and Tenant Services Authority.

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renewal programmes, where the applicant is asked to re-register and confirm their circumstances.

4.9 Some districts have undertaken this renewal work in batches, which has had the effect of taking large numbers off the register at one time. However, Homefinder Somerset reports that the size of the register continues to increase, taking account of the reductions for the renewal programmes.

4.10 The number of applicants within Gold band ('High Need') has remained fairly consistent between 2011 and 2012 while the numbers within Silver ('Medium Need') and Bronze ('Low Need') have fallen.

Link to social housing data on INFORM Somerset:

<http://inform.sine.org.uk/dataviews/view?viewId=30>

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPLY

4.11 At 1st April 2012, there were approximately 50 individual registered providers of social rented housing in Somerset, excluding those provided by local authorities. This is fewer than in 2011 but the total number of units/ bed spaces increased to around 23,700.¹⁰

4.12 The four largest providers - Yarlinton Housing Group, Aster Communities (was Flourish Homes), Knightstone Housing Association Limited and Magna West Somerset Housing Association Limited - account for almost three in four places in the county.

4.13 Of the total, 80% (19,000 units) are categorised as 'general needs', 16% (3,700) as housing for older people and 4% (1,000) as supported housing.

4.14 In addition, there are just over 10,000 local authority-owned dwellings in Somerset, principally in Sedgemoor and Taunton Deane districts.

MORTGAGE AND LANDLORD REPOSSESSIONS

4.15 Mortgage repossession claims leading to court orders have stabilised at levels well below those seen in 2008. However, the number of landlord

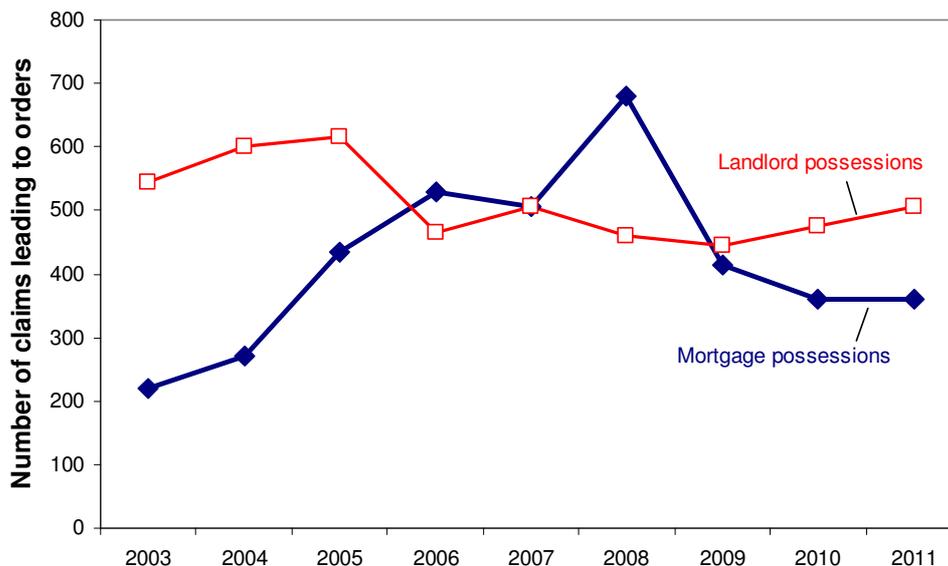
¹⁰ Source: <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/ourwork/publications>

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repossession orders reached a four-year high in 2011 (see chart, following).

4.16 Annual trends in mortgage and landlord possession claims leading to court orders in Somerset, 2003 to 2011



Source: Ministry of Justice

4.17 Expressed as a rate per thousand households, Somerset has a small number of possession claims leading to court orders, for both mortgages and landlords, compared with England and the South West region.

YOUTH HOUSING STRATEGY

4.18 In April 2012, the Somerset Youth Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2012-15 was published¹¹. It was developed by local authorities and a wide range of partnership agencies dealing with young people such as housing associations, colleges and the YMCA. The priorities and action plan for this strategy have been taken from the agreed vision and objectives created by the members of the Housing Related Support Advisory Group Young Person Thematic Group and endorsed by the Somerset Youth Housing Forum and through consultation with the Young People themselves.

¹¹ Source: Somerset County Council.
<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/irj/go/km/docs/CouncilDocuments/SCC/Documents/Community/Adult%20Social%20Care/Youth%20Housing%20Strategy.pdf>

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- 4.19 The priorities are to:
- Prevent young people from becoming homeless or from living in unsuitable accommodation
 - Encourage young people to develop positive relationships
 - Encourage and assist young people to live in safe environments
 - Enable young people to grow in confidence, strength, self-esteem and skills; help them to enjoy life
- 4.20 The strategy will be for three years with a yearly refresh to ensure the actions are still relevant. The refresh should form part of a yearly needs assessment to ensure commissioned services continue to meet the needs of the young people of Somerset.

FUEL POVERTY

- 4.21 Latest data (for 2010) indicates that the proportion of 'fuel poor' households in Somerset has declined, from 19.5% of households in 2009 to 16% in 2010. Five of the top 10 'fuel poor' Lower Super Output Areas¹² (LSOA) in Somerset in 2010 were in West Somerset.
- 4.22 Levels of fuel poverty are closely aligned with wholesale fuel prices. Whilst 2010 saw lower domestic fuel prices than 2009, it is reasonable to assume that given recent increases in domestic fuel prices, a squeeze on household income and an increasing older population, that there will be increasing numbers of fuel poor households in 2012.

Link to fuel poverty data on INFORM Somerset:
<http://inform.sine.org.uk/dataviews/view?viewId=30>

- 4.23 Green Deal
- 4.23.1 A trailblazer for the government's 'Green Deal' was launched in Sedgemoor, Taunton Deane and West Somerset in April 2012. The Somerset West Home Energy project offers homeowners the opportunity to install solid wall insulation on a no upfront cost basis, no matter what their financial circumstance. Basic insulation and heating improvements,

¹² When the Census was conducted, the Government needed to group households together into units which were small enough to provide meaningful statistics, yet large enough to protect the identity of the individuals involved. This unit is known as a Lower Super Output Area – LSOA – and represents about 1,500 people.

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including heating system replacement, will also be accessible for those falling into a 'Super Priority Group'

- 4.23.2 A free Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) is carried out to determine what type of insulation or heating measures will be needed at the property along with an assessment of the customer's current occupancy habits. The results are used to calculate a 'pay-as-you-save' finance package, whereby monthly repayments will be lower than the expected monthly fuel bill savings.

OTHER HOME IMPROVEMENTS

- 4.24 The total number of dwellings improved to Decent Homes standard in 2010/11 more than trebled from 1,040 in 2009/10 to 3,332 in 2010/11¹³.
- 4.25 Of the latest total, almost half (1,565) were for households defined as 'non-vulnerable'. Three-quarters of the 'vulnerable' households (1,336) were pensioners, around a quarter (429) were families with children and two fell into the 'other' category.
- 4.26 Most of the dwellings (2,136) improved were in Sedgemoor. The second highest total (616) was in West Somerset where more than 400 homes for 'vulnerable' families with children were affected. Almost 500 Taunton Deane homes for non-vulnerable residents were also improved.
- 4.27 The Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership has provided data on the number of home improvements enabled under various national and local schemes funded by grants or loans.
- Warm Front: installs insulation and heating measures for people on certain disability or income-related benefits and who own their own home or rent it from a private landlord. Between 2001 and 2011, there were almost 14,000 installations, although some homes may have had more than one in that period. Most were in Sedgemoor or South Somerset
 - Warm Streets: launched in October 2008, funded by Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) and the five district councils of Somerset along with the unitary authorities of Bath & North East Somerset and North Somerset. Focuses on helping vulnerable households in, or at

¹³ Source: Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

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risk of fuel poverty. It provides free cavity wall and loft insulation measures for those on eligible benefits, over 70 or meeting council grant criteria. It also offers discounted cavity wall and loft insulation for all other households. Until 2011, there were more than 4,000 installations in Somerset

- Wessex Home Improvement Loans (WHIL): partnership with local authorities launched in 2006, incorporating anything from advice and repairing draughty windows to replacing boilers or heating systems. Since then, it has facilitated around 300 individual installations across Somerset

4.28 The rate of installations per household under Warm Streets and WHIL schemes is relatively high in West Somerset, reflecting the higher levels of fuel poverty in the district.

HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFITS

4.29 The number of claimants of Housing Benefit in Somerset increased from 34,830 in February 2011 to 35,980 in February 2012, continuing a long-term upward trend.

4.30 It has been estimated nationally that around 90% of new Housing Benefit claims in the last two years have been made by employed people, as squeezed workers seek help with their living costs.

4.31 The number of Council Tax Benefit claimants in Somerset has been rising in line with increases in Housing Benefit claimants. In February 2012 there were 43,550 Council Tax Benefit claimants, up from 42,990 a year earlier.

4.32 The Somerset Strategic Housing Group has compiled estimates of the number of Somerset people likely to be affected by the proposed changes to the current Housing Benefit system.

4.33 While at this stage it is impossible to provide an accurate total number of people or households affected, the Somerset Strategic Housing Officers Group has compiled estimates of the number of Somerset people likely to be affected by *each* of the proposed changes to the current Housing Benefit system. For example:

- Around 3,500 households could be affected by Housing Benefit (HB) reductions because of 'under-occupation' of the property (where the

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number of bedrooms is considered too many for the size and structure of the household)

- Nearly 9,000 households could face higher payments if Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are set at the 30th, instead of the 50th, percentile of local private rent prices
- Almost 1,800 households could be affected by deductions in benefit entitlement for non-dependants living with tenants
- About 2,760 households in Somerset face losses of up to £15 per week where rents are below the Local Housing Allowance threshold. Tenants may have got used to the extra income and will feel the loss
- More than 1,300 households are affected by the extension of LHA single room rent restrictions for single people (not lone parents) to cover those under 35, not 25

4.34 Please note that some people may be affected by more than one of these changes. Individual circumstances will dictate the extent of the affects but it could lead to unmet needs, and/or an increase in debt including rent and mortgage arrears.

4.35 Changes to Council Tax Benefit

4.35.1 As part of its wider welfare reform and localism policy, the Government is abolishing the current national Council Tax Benefit scheme from April 2013 and asking councils to replace it with their own locally-run service called Council Tax Support. The amount of money available for Council Tax benefit is being cut by 10% nationally. As a result, Somerset's five district councils are drawing up proposals for the new scheme with consultations planned for August and September 2012.

Link to benefits data section on INFORM Somerset:
<http://inform.sine.org.uk/dataviews/view?viewId=29>

**POTENTIAL CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT POLICY TO BOOST
INVESTMENT IN THE PRIVATE RENTAL MARKET**

4.36 Earlier in 2012, Sir Adrian Montague (chairman of private equity group 3i) was commissioned by the Government to review the UK's private rental housing market and find ways of encouraging investment in this sector.

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- 4.37 In the report published on 23rd August 2012, recommendations include:
- That councils could consider waiving affordable housing requirements on new developments of homes specifically for private rent or reviewing stalled sites to see whether some of the new homes planned could be made available to rent rather than sell
 - That a task force be set up to encourage and support build-to-let investment from the private sector and to develop voluntary standards that future landlords would meet and tenants could expect
 - That the Government look to provide a number of targeted incentives to encourage the development of Build-to-Let business models which could include sharing development risk in the short-term
 - That the Government allocate some of the redundant, formerly used public sector land and buildings being released for house building to build-to-let development and publish data on how this is done
 - That the Government work with councils to identify a number of sites where there is good demand for rental housing and make them available to developers on the grounds that a proportion of the homes built be let out to tenants
- 4.38 If adopted, whilst potentially addressing some of the imbalance between supply and demand, this could place increased pressure on the social housing market. New dwellings would be more likely to be private rental and less likely to be other types of social rent or affordable homes than would otherwise have been the case.