

Colchester Borough Council - Housing and Homelessness Summary June 2019

The summary contains key information from the Housing and Homelessness Strategies including the housing stock, housing register, homelessness and housing options service, development of new homes, the housing market, and the private rented sector.

If any of this information is to be used in any publicity, please contact Karen Paton, Housing Strategy Officer by telephone on (01206) 282275 or email: karen.paton@colchester.gov.uk

This bulletin will be published quarterly. Information will be updated if available, but please note that some information is only produced annually.

Housing Stock in Colchester

Type of home	Percentage of total housing %
Owner Occupied with Mortgage	33.7
Owner Occupied without mortgage	31.4
Private rented	16.2
Rented from Colchester Borough Council	9.5
Rented from a Registered Provider	6.5
Shared ownership	0.3
Living in tied accommodation* or rent free	2.4
Total	100

* tied accommodation is accommodation provided as a condition of employment

Source: Census 2011

The table below shows the number of dwellings in Colchester by tenure as at 1st April 2018 (most recent information available).

Local Authority (incl. owned by other LAs)	Private Registered Provider	Other public sector	Private sector	Total
5,950	5,150	20	69,450	80,570

Source: DCLG live tables

Number of homes sold under the Right to buy scheme

During 2017-18 there were **46** Council homes sold to tenants under the national Right to Buy scheme. During 2018-19 there were **29** properties sold under the scheme.

Empty homes

As at 12th June 2019 there were **1,958** empty homes classified as empty for council tax purposes. Of these **1,914** were privately owned or owned by Registered Providers and **44** were owned by Colchester Borough Council. This definition of empty properties is 'Empty, Unoccupied & unfurnished' which includes short term (possibly vacant between moves) and long term (Uninhabitable/subject to Major Works).

The Housing Register

Colchester holds a housing register of people interested in Council or Registered Provider homes. Households eligible to join the register are assessed according to need and 'banded' as to their priority for rehousing. There are five bands (Bands A - E), depending on the assessed level of housing need.

Not everyone on the housing register will be offered a property. Last year (April 2018 – March 2019) there were only **658** lets of affordable housing compared to just over **3,000** households on the register.

Households on the register according to band

Banding	Number of households on register
A	83
B	582
C	784
D	180
E	1478
Total	3107

Gateway to Homechoice, 30th April 2019

Households on the register according to number of bedrooms required

Number of bedrooms required	Number of households on the register
One	870
Two	1256
Three	796
Four or more	185
Total	3107

Gateway to Homechoice, 30th April 2019

Lettings of affordable housing

Affordable housing includes both Council owned and Registered Provider homes. The table below shows the number of properties let during 2018 – 2019.

Landlord	Number of homes let April 2018 - March 2019
Colchester Borough Council	360
Registered Providers	296
Colchester Borough Homes	2
Total	658

Source: Gateway to Homechoice, 31 March 2019

Registered Providers of social housing are independent societies, bodies of trustees or companies established for the purpose of providing low-cost social housing for people in housing need on a non-profit-making basis. They are also known as 'housing associations'.

The table below shows the total number of lettings by applicant type on the Housing register.

Applicant type	Number of homes let April 2018 - March 2019
Direct	173
Transfer	295
Homeless	190
Total	658

Source: Gateway to Homechoice, 31 March 2019

Please note this does not include households who have moved through mutual exchange. This is where an existing Council or Registered Provider tenant 'swaps' their home with another tenant.

Homelessness and Housing advice

The Housing Solutions Team provides free, expert housing advice to residents of all tenures in the borough. The team has a strong focus on preventing homelessness and can advise people with housing problems or assist those people in finding somewhere to live.

In April 2018 a change in homelessness legislation with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, brought a significant change in the way the Housing Solutions Team assess homelessness applications and monitor outcomes.

The new Homelessness Reduction Act places two additional statutory duties on local housing authorities:

The prevention duty – requires councils to intervene to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage, when a household is at risk of losing their home in the next 56 days. This is particularly relevant for those living in privately rented homes who are served with notice and provides more opportunity to support people directly into another tenancy.

The relief duty - requires councils to offer more advice and support to anyone who is already homeless, regardless of whether they are in priority need and may involve offering accommodation.

The duties that existed under the previous homelessness legislation, known as the **main duty**, remain in place. A main housing duty is owed where homeless households are eligible (certain persons from abroad are ineligible for housing assistance), have a priority need for accommodation and are not homeless intentionally.

For the year 2018 - 2019, the Housing Solutions Team;

- prevented homelessness for **186** households and relieved homelessness for **90** households.
- Accepted a duty under the homelessness legislation for **115** households and helped them into accommodation.

The table below shows the number of cases where a homelessness duty has been accepted and where homelessness has been prevented or relieved for each quarter of 2018 – 2019:

	Qtr 1: April-June 2018	Qtr 2: July-September 2018	Qtr 3: October-December 2018	Qtr 4: January-March 2019
Homelessness households accepted	1	8	28	78
Homelessness prevention/relieved	22 prevented 9 relieved	38 prevented 17 relieved	54 prevented 29 relieved	72 prevented 35 relieved

N.B Due to the change in legislation the information previously provided is no longer being recorded in the same way: Homelessness Prevention and Relief statistics from partner agencies can no longer be added to the Housing Solutions Team statistics, as they were previously, and the criteria for prevention has changed.

- The timeframes used to measure prevention or relief of homelessness under the new legislation (56 days for prevention and a further 56 days for relief) mean that reliable statistics

will not be available for at least the first 9 months of 2018-19. This timeframe helps to explain the disparity in the quarterly statistics for 2018-19 in the table above.

- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has acknowledged that monitoring performance statistics will be difficult for at least the first 6-9 months.

The Council has a statutory duty under the Housing Act 2002 to provide temporary accommodation to homeless people that are unintentionally homeless and in priority need, whilst they wait for more permanent accommodation to become available.

The number of households in temporary accommodation as at 31st March 2019 was **179**.

Development of new homes

Between April 2017 and March 2018, a total of **1048** new homes were built in Colchester and between April 2018 and March 2019 there were **1165** new homes built.

Source: Annual Position Statement 2019.

Number of affordable homes delivered

During the year April 2018 to March 2019 a total of **125** new affordable homes were completed in Colchester.

Type of affordable housing	Number of homes completed
Registered Provider for renting	94
Shared ownership	23
Intermediate Rent	0
Social Rent (CBC)	8
Total	125

Source: Registered Provider returns

The areas where these homes were completed included Chesterwell (Northern Gateway), Axial Way, Factory Hill Tiptree, Warren Lane Stanway, Severalls Hospital site, The Garrison, Wyvern Farm and Halstead Road Stanway.

Colchester Borough Council also partnered with Haig Housing Trust on an open market purchase project where Haig acquired 7 homes for ex service personnel. Colchester Borough Council also purchased back 8 ex local authority properties through the Right to Buy Back scheme. These properties were one and two bed flats, a two-bed house and some three bed houses. The wards in which these properties were situated in Colchester, includes; Castle, Berechurch, St Anne's, St John's, Rural North, Prettygate and Shrub End. All properties purchased back have been let at Social rent.

Affordable Home ownership

The Government has set up a number of schemes to help households into homeownership. Two of the key schemes are Help to buy equity loans (a low interest loan towards a deposit for a home) and the Help to buy mortgage guarantee (enables you to buy a home with a 5% deposit).

The number of properties bought in Colchester with the support of the Help to buy Equity loans scheme from April 2013 to 31 December 2018 was **1,775** of which **1,444** were first time buyers.

The number of homes bought with the support of the Help to buy Mortgage guarantee scheme in Colchester from October 2013 to 31 December 2016 was 312. This scheme has now ceased.

The Housing Market

House prices in Colchester

Date	April 2019	April 2018
Average price of home	£291,855	£291,226
Lower quartile price	£210,000	£207,000

Source: Hometrack

The table above compares the changes in both the overall average house price and the average lower quartile house price based on house sales from the previous year. The lower quartile house price is the bottom of the market - usually smaller homes and flats.

Housing in the Private Sector

The Private Sector Housing Team (PSH) has introduced a robust method of monitoring of hazards removed and homes improved. The targets since 2014/15 included 300 housing hazards to be removed and 300 homes improved.

During 2018-19:

The number of requests from tenants asking the Private Sector Housing Team to investigate disrepair in their privately rented property in was **174**

The total number of serious hazards removed by the PSH team during was **324**

The total number of homes improved by the PSH team was **90**

The Council needed to serve **15** Improvement Notices for Category 1 and 2 hazards on non-compliant landlords to secure compliance with housing standards and **1** order prohibiting the use of a property for human habitation due to its condition.

In addition, **7** Prosecution cases were taken against non-compliant landlords and **3** long term vacant properties were brought back into occupation

Assistance to home owners

Colchester Borough Council administers Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to criteria set out by the Government. In 2018-19 there were **62** grants paid after completion of works to adapt properties to enable people with disabilities to continue to live in them.

In 2018-19 Colchester Borough Council completed **6** Home Repair Loans. This is an income based, 'means tested' loan, secured on the property, and is available to home owners and leaseholders to repair and maintain their property.