

Colchester Borough Council - Housing and Homelessness Summary Year-end 2019-20

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.

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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 on 1 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 2018-19 there were **29** properties sold under the Right to buy scheme. During 2019-20 there were 31 properties sold under the scheme.

Empty homes

As of 9 April 2020, there were **1,942** empty homes classified as empty for council tax purposes. Of these **1,886** were privately owned or owned by Registered Providers and **56** 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 information below shows the length of time that these properties had been empty:

- 0 – 6 months: 1,020
- 7 – 12 months: 406
- 1 – 2 years: 290
- 2 – 5 years: 147
- 5 + years: 79

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 2019 – March 2020) there were only **658** lets of affordable housing compared to almost **3,000** households on the register.

Households on the register according to band

Banding	Number of households on the register
A	80
B	598
C	688
D	173
E	1224
Total	2763

Gateway to Homechoice, 31 March 2020

Households on the register according to number of bedrooms required

Number of bedrooms required	Number of households on the register
One	834
Two	1107
Three	663
Four or more	159
Total	2763

Gateway to Homechoice, 31 March 2020

Lettings of affordable housing

Affordable housing includes both Council owned and Registered Provider homes. The table below shows the number of properties let during 2019 – 2020.

Landlord	Number of homes let April 2019 - March 2020
Colchester Borough Council	336
Registered Providers	322
Colchester Borough Homes	0
Total	658

Source: Gateway to Homechoice

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 Colchester applicants who were housed via Gateway to Homechoice. The total is different to the that in the table above as some of the direct and transfer applicants were housed outside Colchester

Applicant type	Number of applicants housed April 2019 - March 2020
Direct	392
Transfer	195
Homeless	140
Total	772

Source: Gateway to Homechoice

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 2019 - 2020, the Housing Solutions Team;

- prevented homelessness for **285** households and relieved homelessness for **146** households.
- Accepted a duty under the homelessness legislation for **230** 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 2019 – 2020:

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	Quarter 1- April – June 2019	Quarter 2 July- September 2019	Quarter 3 October- December 2019	Quarter 4 January- March 2020
Homelessness households accepted	59	64	49	58
Homelessness prevention/relieved	53 prevented 42 relieved	87 prevented 38 relieved	71 prevented 29 relieved	74 prevented 37 relieved

N.B Due to the change in homelessness legislation the information previously provided is no longer 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.

During 2019-20 the Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator and the Outreach Team worked with **158** clients who were provided with support, advice and assistance to help them move off the streets, and 144 rough sleepers were housed during the same period. These

included rough sleepers housed in an emergency due to the Covid 19 Public Health pandemic.

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 of 31 March 2020 was **156**.

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 2019 to March 2020 a total of **237** new affordable homes were delivered in Colchester.

Type of affordable housing	Number of homes completed
Registered Provider for renting	159
Shared ownership	43
Intermediate Rent	0
Social Rent (CBC)	35
Total	237

Source: Registered Provider returns

The areas where these homes were completed included Chesterwell (Northern Gateway), Axial Way, Factory Hill Tiptree, Lakeland Stanway, Severalls Hospital site, Winnocks and Kendalls Almshouses Military Road, Grange Road Tiptree, Rowhedge Wharf and Hill Farm in Boxted.

Colchester Borough Council also purchased 35 ex local authority properties. These properties were one and two bed flats, two-bed houses, three bed houses and a four-bed house. The wards in which these properties were situated in Colchester, includes; Berechurch, Castle, Greenstead, Lexden and Braiswick, Mersea, New Town and Christ Church, Old Heath and the Hythe, Rural North, Shrub End, St Anne's and St John's, West Bergholt and Wivenhoe. All properties purchased back have been let at social rent.

Affordable Home ownership

The Government set up several schemes to help households into homeownership. One of the key schemes is the Help to buy equity loans (a low interest loan towards a deposit for a home).

The number of properties bought in Colchester with the support of the Help to buy Equity loans scheme from April 2013 to 31 December 2019 was **2,140** of which **1,749** were first time buyers.

The table below shows the number of properties bought in Colchester with the support of the Help to buy Equity loans scheme by year.

Year	Total properties	First time buyers
2013	126	116
2014	258	212
2015	232	183
2016	215	168
2017	398	325
2018	541	434
2019	370	311
Total	2140	1749

The Housing Market

House prices in Colchester

Date	March 2019	March 2020
Average price of home	£293,826	£296,433
Lower quartile price	£210,000	£211,000

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 end 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 2019-20:

The Private Sector Housing Team completed nearly 500 inspections/visits and assessments of homes in the private rented sector.

The total number of serious hazards removed by the PSH team during was 406 including 116 hazards assessed to be Category 1 hazards using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

The total number of homes improved by the PSH team was 167

The Council needed to serve **4** Improvement Notices for Category 1 and 2 hazards on non-compliant landlords to secure compliance with housing standards. In addition, Prohibition Orders were served on 2 properties that were considered too unsafe to be lived in. In addition, 5 other statutory notices were served requiring works and Emergency Remedial Action was taken to undertake works to a property that presented an imminent and serious risk to the health and safety of the residents.

7 Notices of Intent to serve financial penalties were served on individuals or companies managing properties without being members of an approved property management redress scheme.

2 Notices of Intent to serve Civil Penalty Notices were served on the owners of a House in Multiple Occupation that failed to meet required health and safety standards.

6 offences were referred to Legal to commence prosecution proceedings and 7 prosecution cases were heard and sentenced.

Assistance to homeowners

Colchester Borough Council administers Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to criteria set out by the Government. In 2019-20 there were **74** grants paid after completion of works to adapt properties to enable people with disabilities to continue to live in them.

In 2019-20 Colchester Borough Council completed **6** Home Repair Loans. This is an income based, 'means tested' loan, secured on the property, and is available to homeowners and leaseholders to repair and maintain their property.