



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Statistical Digest of Rural England

Housing availability and affordability

This document is part of the larger compendium publication the [Statistical Digest of Rural England](#), a collection of rural statistics on a wide range of social and economic government policy areas.

The Statistical Digest of Rural England is an official statistics publication meaning these statistics have been produced to the high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

More information on the Official Statistics Code of Practice can be found on the [Code of Practice web pages](#).

These statistics allow comparisons between the different rural and urban area classifications. The Rural-Urban Classification is used to distinguish rural and urban areas. The Classification defines areas as rural if they fall outside of settlements with more than 10,000 resident population.

More information on the Rural-Urban Classification can be found on the [Rural-Urban Classification web pages](#).

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

rural.statistics@defra.gov.uk

Last updated: 26th May 2022

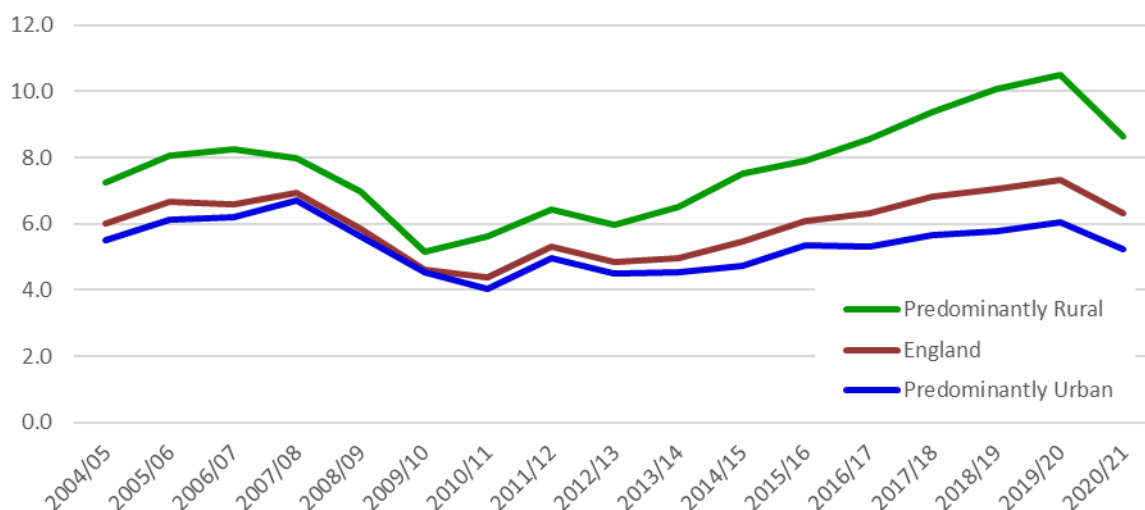
Housing

- In order to compare levels of house building, comparisons are made based on the number of households in the area. More new dwellings are started and completed per 1000 households in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas.
- Between 2019/20 and 2020/21 the number of dwelling completions per 1,000 households decreased in all areas irrespective of their Rural or Urban classification category. This is not surprising given the lockdown restrictions associated with the pandemic.
- House prices are less affordable in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). In 2020/21, the average lower quartile house price was 9.2 times the average lower quartile earnings in Predominantly Rural areas. This compares with 8.0 times in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London), 15.2 times in London and 9.6 times in England as a whole.
- There are proportionally fewer homeless people and people in temporary accommodation in rural areas than in urban areas.

Housing completions

- In 2020/21 there were 8.6 dwelling completions per 1,000 households in Predominantly Rural areas, this compares with 5.3 completions per 1,000 households in Predominantly Urban areas.
- The number of dwelling completions were stable until 2007/08, when there was a sharp downturn. This is likely to reflect the economic downturn and later recession. After 2009/10 completions began to recover with numbers in Predominantly Rural areas now surpassing levels observed prior to 2007/08.

Permanent dwellings completed per 1,000 households, by Local Authority Classification, in England, 2004/05 to 2020/21

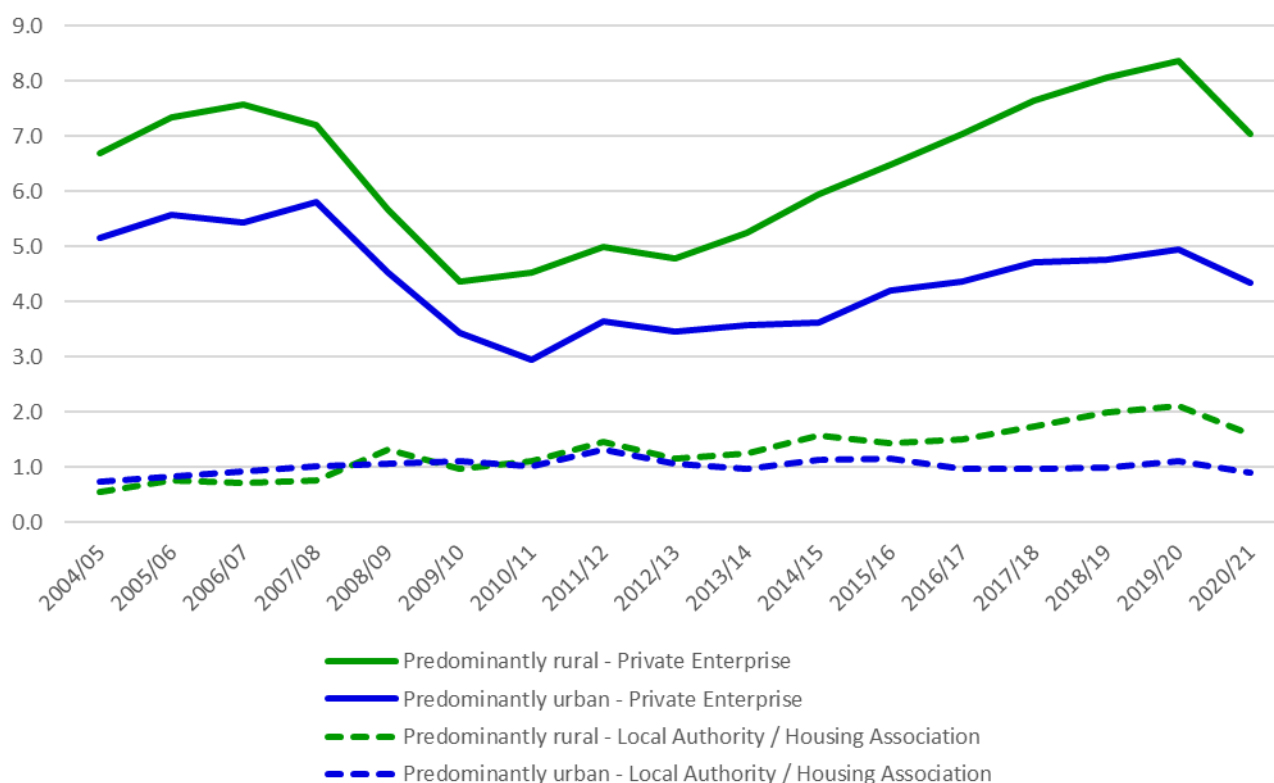


- The rate of dwelling completions declined sharply between 2019/20 and 2020/21. The rate of decline is sharper in predominantly rural areas (-1.8 dwelling per 1000 households) than

predominantly urban areas (-0.8 dwelling per 1000 households). In absolute terms this translates to 9,300 fewer dwelling completions in predominantly rural areas compared to 11,700 fewer in predominantly urban areas. The decline in the rate dwelling starts is much smaller than for completions in both predominantly rural (-0.6 dwellings per 1000 households) and predominantly urban areas (-0.2 dwellings per 1000 households). This decline in both starts and completions is clearly linked to the restrictions imposed to combat the Covid-19 pandemic during 2020/21.

- Tables showing the number of permanent dwellings completed in total and per 1,000 households, broken down by tenure and detailed local authority rural-urban classification for 2004/05 to 2020/21 are available in the [rural living supplementary data tables](#).

Permanent private enterprise and Local Authority / Housing Association dwellings completed per 1,000 households, by Local Authority Classification, in England, 2004/05 to 2020/21



- In 2020/21, 7.0 dwellings were completed by private enterprise per 1,000 households in Predominantly Rural areas, compared with 4.4 per 1,000 households in Predominantly Urban areas.
- The private sector was affected more immediately by the economic downturn of 2008, with a sharp downturn in house building, but figures for 2017/18 in Predominantly Rural areas show a return to the levels prior to the downturn.
- In 2020/21, 1.6 dwellings were completed by local authorities or housing associations per 1,000 households in Predominantly Rural areas, compared with 0.9 per 1,000 households in Predominantly Urban areas.

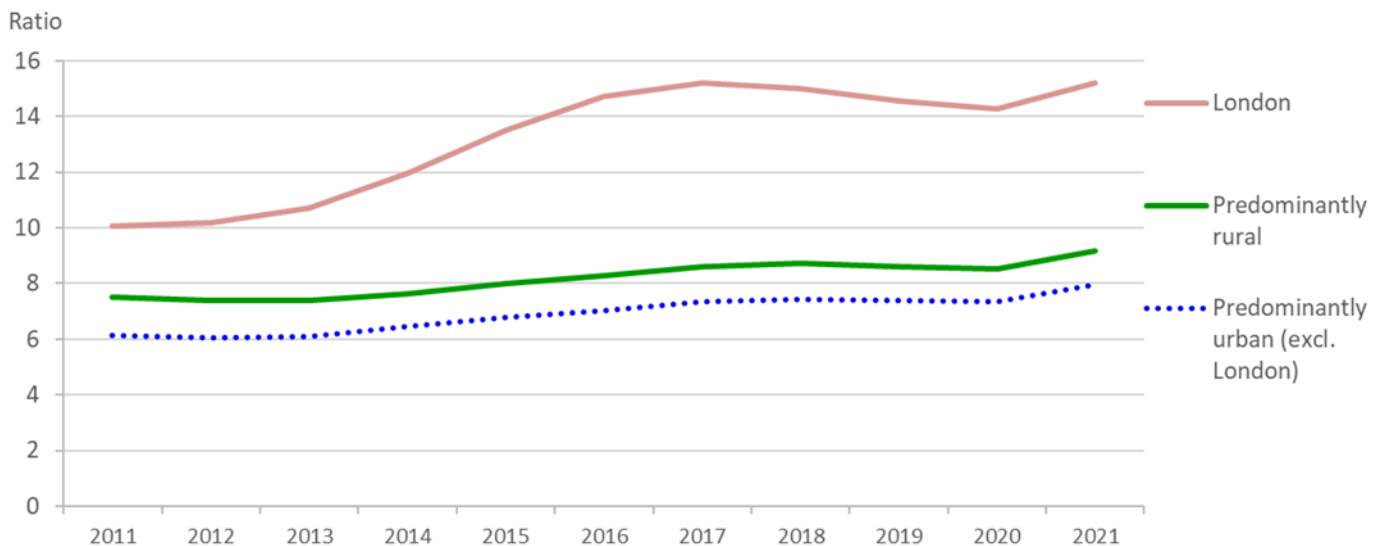
- Dwelling completions in the private sector have been affected more by the Pandemic than completions for local authorities/housing associations in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas. The decrease in the completion rate is sharper for Predominantly Rural than predominantly Urban areas for both private sector builds and local authority / housing association builds.
- Tables showing the number of permanent dwellings completed in total and per 1,000 households, broken down by tenure and detailed local authority rural-urban classification for 2004/05 to 2020/21 are available in the [rural living supplementary data tables](#).

Notes: Figures on housing starts and completions are from records kept for building control purposes. It is sometimes difficult for data providers to identify whether a dwelling is being built for a housing association or for a private developer. This may lead to an understatement of housing association starts and completions recorded in these tables, and a corresponding overstatement of private enterprise figures. This problem is more likely to occur with starts than completions. Further information available from: [document on GOV.UK titled 'House building; new build dwellings data: note and definitions](#). The figures exclude a significant number of Local Authorities for which data on building starts and completions is not available. The number of missing Local Authorities varies from 54 in 2004/05 to 37 in 2010/11. The total England figures shown in the tables do not include estimates for missing data. From 2011/12 estimates are included for missing values. Source: [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Live Tables on House Building - Table 253 Housebuilding: permanent dwellings started and completed, by tenure and district](#)

Housing and accommodation affordability

Housing affordability

House prices as a multiple of earnings: ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings (residence-based), by Local Authority Classification, in England, 2011 to 2021



- The ratio between the lowest quartile (25 per cent) house prices and the lowest quartile earnings gives an indication of whether someone in the lower earnings band could afford to buy a house.
- In 2021, in Predominantly Rural areas the average lower quartile house price was 9.2 times the average lower quartile earnings, compared with 8.0 times in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). This does not take account of a household with more than one income from earnings – for example when a couple combine their earnings to buy a house.
- The house price disparity remains consistent between Predominantly Rural areas and Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) throughout the time period, whilst London showed a particularly large increase from 2013 to 2020. The increase in ratio of house prices to earnings seen in 2021 is seen across all areas, indicating London may be returning to the normal trend.
- The ratio of lower quartile house prices to earnings is a useful indication of housing affordability.
- Housing in Predominantly Rural areas is, on average, less affordable than in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London).
- In Predominantly Rural areas in 2021 the lower quartile house price was 9.2 times the lower quartile average earnings.
- Across all areas, the ratios of house prices to earnings seen in 2021 were the highest seen in the last decade.
- A table showing house prices as a multiple of earnings, broken down by local authority rural-urban classification from 2008 to 2021 is available in the [rural living supplementary data tables](#).

House prices as a multiple of earnings: most and least affordable Local Authorities based on ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile residence-based earnings, in England, 2021

	Most Affordable		Least Affordable	
London	Barking and Dagenham	11.9	Kensington and Chelsea	24.4
Urban with major conurbation	Sunderland	4.5	Hertsmere	16.5
Urban with minor conurbation	Barnsley	4.8	Gedling	7.4
Urban with city and town	Burnley	3.3	Windsor and Maidenhead	14.5
Urban with significant rural	Barrow-in-Furness	4.1	Brentwood	15.2
Largely rural	County Durham	3.7	Waverley	14.8
Mainly rural	Copeland	3.4	Cotswold	14.2
Predominantly urban (excl. London)	Burnley	3.3	Hertsmere	16.5
Predominantly rural	Copeland	3.4	Waverley	14.8
England (re-weighted)	Burnley	3.3	Kensington and Chelsea	24.4

- Both the most and least affordable local authorities across England are classified as urban. The local authority with the lowest ratio is Burnley; here, the lower quartile house price is 3.3 times the average earnings seen in the lower quartile. The local authority with the highest ratio is Kensington and Chelsea; here, the lower quartile house price is 24.4 times the average earnings seen in the lower quartile. Outside of London, the least affordable local authority is Hertsmere, where the lower quartile house price is 16.5 times the average earnings seen in the lower quartile.
- In rural areas, the local authority with the lowest ratio, and is therefore most affordable, is Copeland; the lower quartile house price is 3.4 times the average earnings seen in the lower quartile. The local authority with the highest ratio, and is therefore least affordable, is Waverley; the lower quartile house price here is 14.8 times the average earnings seen in the lower quartile.
- The difference in affordability varies greatly for the bottom 25% of earners within each local authority. In the most affordable scenario, a single individual amongst the lowest quartile of earners within their local authority is likely to be able to access a mortgage⁵ in order to purchase a home within the cheapest 25% of homes in that area. In the least affordable scenario, it could need the wages of at least 6 individuals earning amongst the lowest quartile of earners within their local authority in order to be able to access a mortgage to purchase a home within the cheapest 25% of homes in that area

Notes: The housing affordability ratio is calculated by dividing the average lower quartile house price by the average lower quartile earnings. The 'lower quartile' property price/earnings is determined by ranking all property prices/incomes in ascending order. The lowest 25 per cent of prices/earnings are below the lower quartile; the highest 75 per cent are above the lower quartile.

The ratio is calculated for each Local Authority in England. Residence based earnings data are used so that both the average house price and average earnings data used in the ratio calculation refer to the same Local Authority. The resulting ratio is weighted by Local Authority household count projections published by the ONS to allow comparison of Local Authorities according to their 'Rural Urban' classification. It should be noted that the England figure included in the table and graph is also weighted for the purpose of this analysis and will not match the original England data published by the ONS.

Data are reported from 2008 onwards as earlier years are incomplete due to structural changes to Local Authority arrangements which mean direct comparisons are not possible.

The earnings data are from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings which provides a snapshot of earnings at April in each year. Earnings relate to gross full-time individual earnings on a place of residence basis. The house price statistics come from the House Price Statistics for Small Areas, which report the median and lower quartile price paid for residential property and refer to a 12-month period with April in the middle (year ending September).

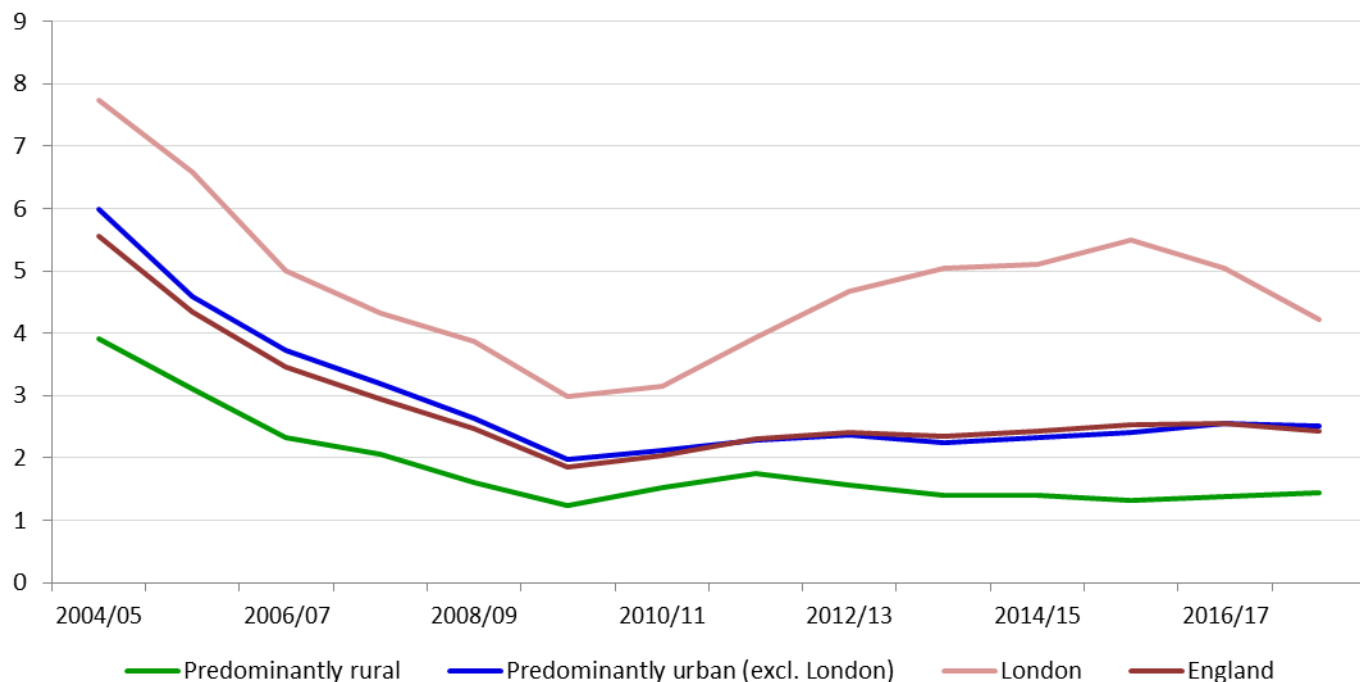
Source: [ONS, Ratio of lower quartile house price to lower quartile gross annual \(where available\) residence-based earnings by local authority district, England and Wales, 1997 to 2019, Table 6c](#)

Rents

There are currently no figures for comparing rents between rural and urban areas. Previous analysis on rents with private rental providers was providing a very limited and partial perspective and has been removed until such time as it is possible to produce more comprehensive analysis of rents.

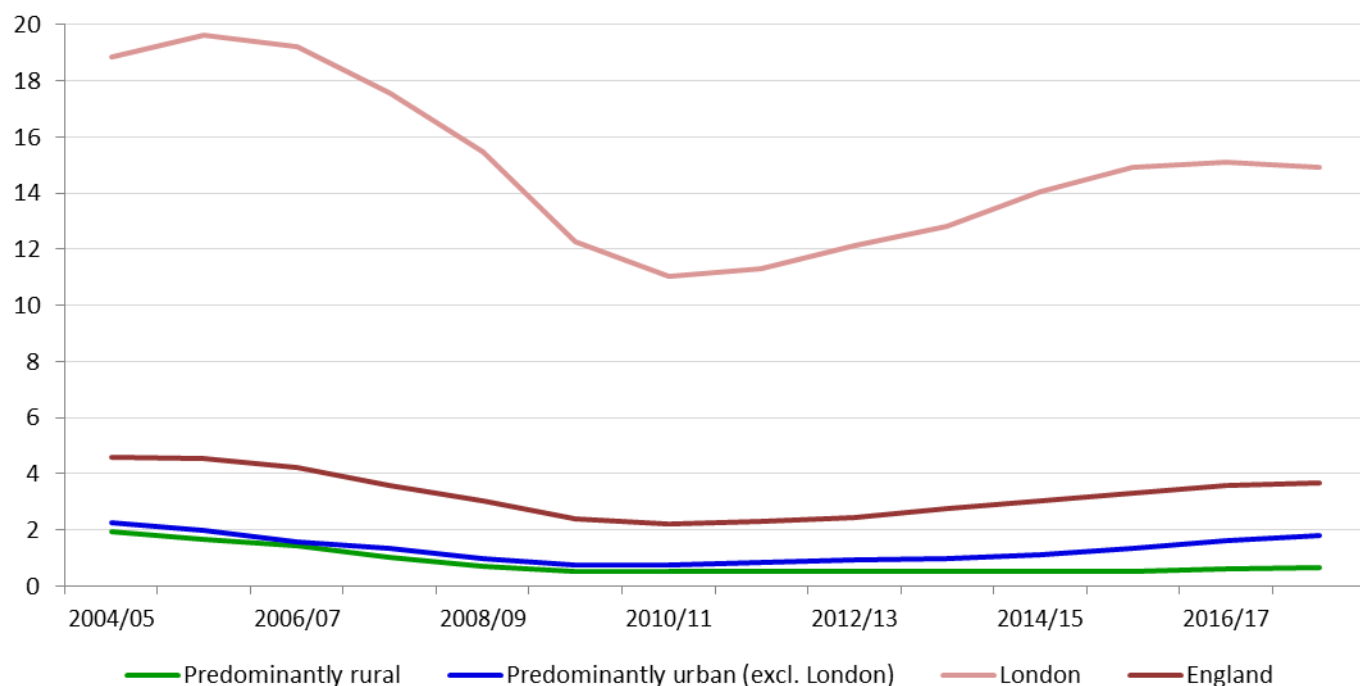
Homelessness and temporary accommodation

People accepted as being homeless and in priority need per 1,000 households, by Local Authority Classification, in England, 2004/05 to 2017/18



A table showing the number of people accepted as being homeless and in priority need per 1,000 households, broken down by local authority rural-urban classification from 2004/05 to 2017/18 is available in the [rural living supplementary data tables](#).

Households in temporary accommodation per 1,000 households, by Local Authority Classification, in England, 2004/05 to 2017/18



- In 2017/18 the proportion of people who were homeless and in priority need of assistance in securing permanent settled accommodation was 2.5 per 1,000 households in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) and 1.4 in Predominantly Rural areas.
- The number of households in temporary accommodation, per 1,000 households, was 1.8 in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) and 0.7 in Predominantly Rural areas.
- The number of homeless and in priority need of assistance has remained broadly the same in Predominantly Rural areas since 2013-14, whilst there has been a small increase in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) over the same time period.
- A table showing the number households in temporary accommodation per 1,000 households, broken down by local authority rural-urban classification from 2004/05 to 2017/18 is available in the [rural living supplementary data tables](#).

Notes: Further information: www.gov.uk/homelessness-data-notes-and-definitions

The figures exclude a significant number of Local Authorities who did not supply the data. The number of missing Local Authorities varies from 0 in 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12 to 35 in 2014/15. The England totals do not include estimates for missing data.

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Live tables on homelessness: table 784 Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Acts: www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness