

Overview & Scrutiny

Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

All Members of the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission are requested to attend the meeting of the Commission to be held as follows

Monday 18 September 2023

7.00 pm

Council Chamber, Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street, London E8 1EA

This meeting can be viewed (or replayed) via the following link:

<https://youtube.com/live/29mzknGQFjo>

A back up link is provided in the event of any technical difficulties:

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Dawn Carter-McDonald

Interim Chief Executive, London Borough of Hackney

Members: Cllr M Can Ozsen, Cllr Ian Rathbone, Cllr Soraya Adejare (Chair), Cllr Clare Joseph (Vice-Chair), Cllr Joseph Ogundemuren, Cllr Sam Pallis, Cllr Ali Sadek, Cllr Zoe Garbett, Cllr Caroline Selman and Cllr Yvonne Maxwell

Agenda Supplement

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

4 Draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy (Pages 7 - 90)

The following late item submission is now included:

- The Homelessness Monitor: England 2023

Access and Information

Public Involvement and Recording

Public Attendance at the Town Hall for Meetings

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Advice to Members on Declaring Interests

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This note is intended to provide general guidance for Members on declaring interests. However, you may need to obtain specific advice on whether you have an interest in a particular matter. If you need advice, you can contact:

- Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services
- the Legal Adviser to the Committee; or
- Governance Services.

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You will have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter if it:

- i. relates to an interest that you have already registered in Parts A and C of the Register of Pecuniary Interests of you or your spouse/civil partner, or anyone living with you as if they were your spouse/civil partner;
- ii. relates to an interest that should be registered in Parts A and C of the Register of Pecuniary Interests of your spouse/civil partner, or anyone living with you as if they were your spouse/civil partner, but you have not yet done so; or
- iii. affects your well-being or financial position or that of your spouse/civil partner, or anyone living with you as if they were your spouse/civil partner.

If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest in an item on the agenda you must:

- i. Declare the existence and nature of the interest (in relation to the relevant agenda item) as soon as it becomes apparent to you (subject to the rules regarding sensitive interests).
- ii. You must leave the meeting when the item in which you have an interest is being discussed. You cannot stay in the meeting whilst discussion of the item takes place, and you cannot vote on the matter. In addition, you must not seek to improperly influence the decision.
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meeting. If dispensation has been granted it will stipulate the extent of your involvement, such as whether you can only be present to make representations, provide evidence or whether you are able to fully participate and vote on the matter in which you have a pecuniary interest.

Do you have any other non-pecuniary interest on any matter on the agenda which is being considered at the meeting?

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- i. It relates to an external body that you have been appointed to as a Member or in another capacity; or
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- iii. If you have an interest in a contractual, financial, consent, permission, or licence matter under consideration, you must leave the meeting unless you have obtained a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer or Standards Committee. You cannot stay in the meeting whilst discussion of the item takes place, and you cannot vote on the matter. In addition, you must not seek to improperly influence the decision. Where members of the public are allowed to make representations, or to give evidence or answer questions about the matter you may, with the permission of the meeting, speak on a matter then leave the meeting. Once you have finished making your representation, you must leave the meeting whilst the matter is being discussed.
- iv. If you have been granted dispensation, in accordance with the Council's dispensation procedure you may remain in the meeting. If dispensation has been granted it will stipulate the extent of your involvement, such as whether you can only be present to make representations, provide evidence or whether you are able to fully participate and vote on the matter in which you have a non-pecuniary interest.

Further Information

Advice can be obtained from Dawn Carter-McDonald, Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services via email dawn.carter-mcdonald@hackney.gov.uk

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Further Information about the Commission

If you would like any more information about the Scrutiny Commission, including the membership details, meeting dates and previous reviews, please visit the website or use this QR Code (accessible via phone or tablet 'app')

<http://www.hackney.gov.uk/individual-scrutiny-commissions-living-in-hackney.htm>





Together
we will end
homelessness

The homelessness monitor: England 2023

Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Glen Bramley, Lynne McMordie, Hal Pawson,
Beth Watts-Cobbe & Gillian Young, Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities
Research (I-SPHERE), Heriot-Watt University; City Futures Research Centre,
University of New South Wales.

July 2023



The homelessness monitor

The homelessness monitor is a longitudinal study providing an independent analysis of the homelessness impacts of recent economic and policy developments across Great Britain. Separate reports are produced for England, Scotland and Wales.

This eleventh annual report updates our account of how homelessness stands in England in 2023, or as close to 2023 as data availability allows. It also highlights emerging trends and forecasts some of the likely future changes, identifying the developments likely to have the most significant impacts on homelessness.

The homelessness monitor: England 2023

Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Glen Bramley, Lynne McMordie, Hal Pawson,
Beth Watts-Cobbe & Gillian Young, Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities
Research (I-SPHERE), Heriot-Watt University; City Futures Research Centre,
University of New South Wales.

July 2023

About Crisis

Crisis is the national charity for people experiencing homelessness. We help people directly out of homelessness, and campaign for the social changes needed to solve it altogether. We know that together we can end homelessness.

About the authors

Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Glen Bramley, Lynne McMordie, Beth Watts-Cobbe and Gillian Young are all based at the Institute for Social Policy, Housing, and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE). Professor Hal Pawson is based at the City Futures Research Centre, University of New South Wales.

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Disclaimer: All views and any errors contained in this report are the responsibility of the authors. The views expressed should not be assumed to be those of Crisis or any of the key informants who assisted with this work.

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Acronyms

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			HSF	Household Support Fund
			JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
			LA	Local authority
			LHA	Local Housing Allowance
			LWA	Local Welfare Assistance
			MD	Main Duty
			MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
			NPRF/Other RE	Non-UK nationals with No Recourse to Public Funds or other restricted eligibility for statutory support
			OBR	Office for Budget Responsibility
			ONS	Office for National Statistics
			PRS	Private Rented Sector
			RSAP	Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme
			RSI	Rough Sleeping Initiative
			SHAP	Single Homeless Accommodation Programme
			SHIP	Supported Housing Improvement Programme
			SMD	Severe and Multiple Disadvantage
			TA	Temporary Accommodation
			UC	Universal Credit

Foreword

The homelessness system in England is at breaking point. This annual study is the strongest evidence yet of how the cost-of-living crisis, rising rents and widespread destitution are driving homelessness levels and making it harder for councils to provide people with effective support.

At the centre of this is a dysfunctional housing market which leaves the people on the lowest incomes being squeezed the hardest. Decades of failure to build the social homes we need, coupled with rising interest rates and surging rents in the private rented sector is making it impossible for local authorities to house people experiencing homelessness in some areas of the country, with the overwhelming majority (97%) of local authorities stating they have struggled to source private rentals over the past year.

As this year's Homelessness Monitor analysis documents, the consequences of this is nearly a quarter of a million households across England (242,000) are now experiencing the worst forms of homelessness, including sleeping on the streets, spending night after night on friends and families' sofas or stuck in unsuitable temporary accommodation like nightly paid B&Bs. With councils running out of suitable longer-term housing options, they are increasingly reliant on temporary accommodation – with the number of households living in such accommodation at the highest level in 18 years.

This forces councils to rely on inappropriate forms of accommodation as a solution, meaning thousands of people - including families with children - live for long periods of time in B&Bs or nightly paid accommodation, often far away from their families and communities in out-of-borough placements. Often in poor condition and without necessities like cooking and washing facilities, it is estimated that the number of households in unsuitable temporary accommodation has tripled over the past ten years. Worryingly, the research forecasts that the number of households living in unsuitable temporary accommodation is expected to almost double over the next twenty years if the Westminster Government doesn't take action to address the challenges councils are facing.

We do know there are solutions to reverse this, for the fifth year in a row the projections modelling shows us the levers that can be implemented to bring homelessness levels down dramatically. In the shorter term these include allocating significant proportions of social lettings to homelessness households and increasing focus on prevention. In the long term we need to increase Local Housing Allowance to meet the cost of rents and increase housing supply.

The evidence in the report is a stark warning to Government that unless it starts to act now, we will see a rise in homelessness over the coming year – let's make sure we all work together to stop this being a reality.



Matt Downie
Chief Executive, Crisis

Executive summary

The Homelessness Monitor series is a longitudinal study providing an independent analysis of the homelessness impacts of recent economic and policy developments across Great Britain.¹ This eleventh annual Homelessness Monitor England updates our account of how homelessness stands in 2023, or as close to 2023 as data availability allows. This year's report focuses in particular on the homelessness impacts of the current cost of living crisis, and also on rough sleeping and responses to it, a major Government policy priority in recent years. The report also includes a comprehensive analysis of Homelessness Reduction Act processes and outcomes and updated modelling estimates and forward projections of extreme forms of 'core' homelessness.

Key points to emerge from our latest analysis are as follows:

- Following several years of decline, the number of people seen sleeping rough in England grew in 2022. At 3,069 in November of that year, recorded rough sleeping was 26% up on the equivalent figure twelve months earlier. London-specific data also indicates rising rough sleeping since 2021, with around half of those sleeping on the streets of the capital non-UK nationals, many of whom will have No Recourse to Public Funds or other restricted eligibility for statutory support.

- Some 290,000 eligible households sought help from local authorities on grounds of homelessness in 2021/22. While those judged at risk of homelessness within 56 days increased by 10% over the year, applicants assessed as actually homeless fell by 4%. Nonetheless a large majority of local authority survey respondents (85%) perceived that homelessness service 'footfall' had increased in the preceding year, with almost half (49%) reporting a 'significant' increase. These local authority perceptions of a deteriorating situation are consistent with our core homelessness statistical analysis (see below).

- After falling sharply during the height of the pandemic, homelessness applications involving family households rose in 2021/22, with two-parent family applicants growing in number by 76% to stand substantially higher than in the pre-pandemic year of 2019/20 (25,020 compared with 21,240). Single adult applicants, by contrast fell back in the latest year.
- While Homelessness Reduction Act provisions give far better protection to single homeless households than the previous legal framework, some homeless people still navigate – and exit – the system without having secured a long-term accommodation offer. Thus, in 2021/22 nearly 19,000 homeless households were deemed as either not in priority need or intentionally homeless, and therefore not owed the main rehousing duty.
- Since bottoming out in 2010/11, total temporary accommodation placements had more than doubled to over 100,000 households by 31st December 2022. Within this, Bed and Breakfast hotel placements have risen more than five-fold since their 2009 nadir. Having increased sharply during the early part of the pandemic, Bed and Breakfast placements once again climbed steeply during 2022, up by 32% in the year to Q4 2022. The homelessness impacts of the Ukrainian and Afghan refugee crises, and wider asylum dispersal pressures, were said to be ratcheting up existing temporary accommodation pressures on local authorities.
- 'Core homelessness'² in England – a concept which captures the most acute forms of homelessness – is estimated to have totalled 242,000 in 2022, compared to 206,000 people affected a decade ago.
- Baseline forecasts show core homelessness rising significantly in the immediate future, with overall core homelessness in 2024 one fifth higher than 2020 levels. Current drivers of these increases relate primarily to inflation squeezing real incomes and increasing poverty and destitution, alongside rising private rents and evictions, and declining social rented lettings. Further rises are projected in the longer term, particularly in London, with core homelessness rising by 37% above 2020 levels to 303,000 by 2041.
- In the shorter term, the most effective policies for reducing core homelessness would be allocation of a significant proportion³ of social lettings to core homeless households, increasing the level of the Local Housing Allowance, and maximising prevention activity to the level of the higher performing local authorities.
- In the longer-term, the largest projected impacts on reducing core homelessness would result from increasing the Local Housing Allowance, increasing housing supply, a higher proportion of social lettings allocated to core homeless households, and large-scale expansion of Housing First accompanied by appropriate rehabilitation provision and a reduction of traditional hostel accommodation. A comprehensive programme of the recommended measures is shown to be capable of reducing core homelessness by 37% in 2031 and 47% in 2041, compared with what it would have been without any change in policies.

² 'Core homelessness' includes people sleeping rough, but also those staying in places not intended as residential accommodation (e.g. cars, tents, boats, sheds, etc.), living in homeless hostels, refuges and shelters, placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation (e.g. Bed and Breakfast hotels, Out of Area Placements, etc.), and sofa surfing (i.e., staying with non-family, on a short-term basis, in overcrowded conditions).

³ Allocating up to 20% of net social lettings to core homeless households, where appropriate, on an ongoing basis.

¹ Parallel Homelessness Monitors have recently been published for Scotland and Wales. All of the UK Homelessness Monitor reports are available from <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/homelessnessmonitor.html>

- The launch of a refreshed Rough Sleeping Strategy in September 2022 was welcomed by key informants, particularly with regard to its confirmation of sustained investment in the Rough Sleeping Initiative. However, acute concerns remain about addressing rough sleeping amongst people with No Recourse to Public Funds or other restricted eligibility to statutory support, as pandemic-associated emergency accommodation options for this group have contracted sharply after the ending of specialist public health funding in April 2022.
- Three-quarters (74%) of respondents to our local authority survey reported that the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme had improved their ability to prevent and alleviate rough sleeping, and the new Single Homeless Accommodation Programme was also roundly welcomed. However, there were some question marks over the sustainability of the accommodation associated with both programmes beyond the current revenue funding timeframes.
- Notwithstanding continuing support for the framework of the Homelessness Reduction Act, key informants reported that opportunities for upstream prevention are contracting because of sustained cuts to public services, a reduction in the supply of affordable rental properties, and a squeeze on household budgets. Deep cuts to Discretionary Housing Payments have further constrained the ability of local authorities to prevent homelessness. While the Household Support Fund, which runs until March 2024 has the potential to help offset a proportion of these cuts, there is little evidence that it has done so.
- Four in ten local authority respondents to our survey reported the existence of problematic exempt accommodation in their locality. The Supported Housing Improvement Programme was therefore welcomed and there was also firm support for the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Bill which aims to provide for stronger regulation of this problematic sector. However, some key informants voiced a note of caution about the need to guard against any potential for the proposed legislation to have unintended impacts on supported accommodation more generally.
- Rapidly rising mortgage costs and private rents have made it ever more difficult for low-income households to access the private housing market over the past year. At the same time, the continued decline in social lettings has severely squeezed access to this sector. Growing pressure on social landlords to address dampness and mould and to de-carbonise existing homes, the lack of new social rented homes being delivered through the Affordable Housing Programme, and the continuation of the Right to Buy, suggest that access to social rented housing will become even tighter going forward.
- The rapid rise in eviction action by private landlords, and in particular 'no fault' cases since the end of 'pandemic-related' eviction measures in May 2021 is increasing calls for the Government to raise Local Housing Allowance rates to reflect the real cost of rent and to quicken the pace of private rental reform. The overwhelming majority (82%) of local authorities surveyed this year viewed the refreezing of Local Housing Allowance rates as 'very challenging' in the context of their efforts to prevent or alleviate homelessness.
- The UK economy's road to recovery from the COVID-19 related recession is proving long and difficult. During 2022 the economy flat lined as higher energy and food prices saw inflation reach double digits, outstripping wages, and social security benefit

rates. Although the UK economy has so far narrowly avoided recession, the Office of Budget Responsibility expects that real household disposable income will continue to fall in 2023/24 and will be no higher than pre-pandemic levels by 2027/28.

- Lower income households have been particularly exposed to the 'cost of living crisis' as a high share of their spending is on food, energy, and other necessities. In response, the UK Government has introduced various measures including the near universal energy price guarantee, and payments targeted at specific groups, including those on Universal Credit (and the legacy benefits and tax credits it is replacing). But few of the surveyed local authorities thought that these measures would substantially mitigate the impact of the cost of living crisis on homelessness.
- Social security payments and the benefit cap were uprated by 10.1% in April 2023, in line with inflation. However, cuts and freezes to social security benefits since 2010 have seen social security benefits for many working age households fall below the level required to avoid severe material hardship. Along with benefit sanctions and 'other' deductions from their benefit, this has contributed to rising levels of problem debt, destitution, and food bank dependency, as well as homelessness.

Trends in homelessness

Rough sleeping

Following several years of decline, the number of people seen sleeping rough in England grew in 2022. At 3,069 in November of that year, recorded rough sleeping was 26% up on the equivalent figure twelve months earlier. There

was some geographical variation here, with London numbers up by 34% over the period, while the North of England total grew by 15%.

Recent trends should be seen within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus the sharp drop in rough sleeping registered in Autumn 2020 is likely to have reflected the extraordinary action taken during the early part of that year under the Everyone In programme to shelter people at risk of sleeping rough during the height of the public health crisis. As the health crisis subsided during 2021 and into 2022, Everyone In arrangements began to lapse in many areas (see below). Rising rough sleeping numbers in the year to November 2022 may well reflect this contraction in support.

London-specific (CHAIN)⁴ data also indicates rising levels of rough sleeping. Since 2019, a marked reduction in CHAIN-recorded numbers during the height of the pandemic has been succeeded by a recently renewed upward trend, with total quarterly observations rising by 21% over the latest year. This data also indicates that around half of those sleeping on the streets in London are non-UK nationals, many of whom will have No Recourse to Public Funds.

Statutory homelessness

Some 290,000 eligible households sought help from local authorities on grounds of homelessness in 2021/22 – similar to the numbers recorded in the years since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act framework in 2018. Applicants assessed as actually homeless (and therefore owed the relief duty) fell by 4% over the year, while those judged at risk of homelessness within 56 days increased by 10%.⁵

⁴ These data are collated via the Greater London Authority's CHAIN system managed by St Mungo's. Because this method enumerates people who have slept rough during a given period (financial year) the resulting figures cannot be directly compared with the 'point in time' snapshot numbers produced under the DLUHC national monitoring methodology.

⁵ DLUHC Homelessness Statistics

By comparison with the Housing Act 1996 regime and its associated non-statutory prevention and relief activity, far fewer statutory homelessness applicants now 'progress' through the system as far as a Main Duty decision. Thus the number of households accepted as owed the Main Duty and entitled to rehousing – at 42,120 in 2021/22 – remained well below the 57,000 recorded in 2017/18, albeit that this was the highest number recorded under the Homelessness Reduction Act regime to date.

After falling sharply during the height of the pandemic, as a result largely of the evictions moratorium, homelessness applications involving family households rose in 2021/22, with two-parent family applicants growing in number by 76% to stand substantially higher than in the pre-pandemic year of 2019/20 (25,020 compared with 21,240). Single adult applicants, by contrast fell back in number in the latest year.

While Homelessness Reduction Act provisions give far better protection to single homeless households than the previous legal framework, some homeless people still navigate – and exit – the system without having secured a long-term accommodation offer. Thus, in 2021/22 nearly 19,000 homeless households were deemed as either not in priority need or intentionally homeless, and therefore not owed the main rehousing duty.

Pressures on temporary accommodation emerged as a central concern of key informants this year, with continuing concerns that government is excessively focussed on addressing rough sleeping to the detriment of homelessness in its wider sense and in particular to tackling the number

of families and children in temporary accommodation.⁶ Significant increases in the use of nightly paid temporary accommodation and Bed and Breakfast were reported by key informants, alongside increased reliance on poorer quality provision, including problematic 'exempt' accommodation (see below).

This chimes with the official temporary accommodation statistics, with placements more than doubling since bottoming out in 2010/11 to exceed 100,000 households in the latest available figures (for 31st December 2022). Within this, Bed and Breakfast hotel placements have risen more than five-fold since their 2009 nadir. Having increased sharply during the early part of the pandemic, Bed and Breakfast placements once again climbed steeply during 2022, up by 32% in the year to Q4 2022. At 29% of the national placement total, the proportion of out-of-area placements has remained fairly stable in recent years, although much higher than the 11% recorded in 2010/11.⁷

Core homelessness

The concept of 'core homelessness' captures some of the most severe and immediate forms of homelessness, which includes people sleeping rough, but also those staying in places not intended as residential accommodation, living in homeless hostels, refuges and shelters, placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation, and sofa surfing.

We estimate that the number of people affected by core homelessness in England in 2022 to be about 242,000. This is up from 221,000 in 2020, 224,000 in 2018 and 206,000 in 2012. There seems to have been some narrowing in the regional differences in core homelessness rates, particularly

between the North and Midlands and London over the period 2012-22. This partly reflects the greater scale of 'Everyone In' provision in London, as well as the different timing of housing market fluctuations.

Baseline forecasts show most elements of core homelessness and the total rising significantly in 2023/24 above 2022 and earlier levels, with overall core homelessness in 2024 21% higher than 2020 levels. Current drivers of these increases relate primarily to inflation squeezing real incomes and increasing poverty and destitution, while private rents are rising alongside evictions, and social rented lettings are declining. Should the policy landscape remain fairly stable, further increases are projected in the longer term, particularly in London, with core homelessness rising by 37% above 2020 levels to 303,000 by 2041.

The most effective policies for reducing core homelessness in the short-term would be significant allocation of social lettings to core homeless households, increasing the level of Local Housing Allowance to cover the typical level of actual rents (and maintaining that level through indexation), and maximising prevention activity to the level of the higher performing local authorities. With these and other measures in place, core homelessness could be reduced by 21% to around 2020 levels in 2024 and by 27% in 2026.

In the longer-term, the largest projected impacts on reducing core homelessness would, again, be linked to increasing the Local Housing Allowance and allocating significant social lettings to core

homeless households, but also increasing housing supply, and large-scale expansion of Housing First accompanied by appropriate rehabilitation provision and a reduction of traditional hostel accommodation. Other significant contributors would be more effective prevention, achieving higher economic growth, improving the working age welfare benefits system, effective levelling up of economic performance across regions, and limiting evictions from private renting. A comprehensive programme of recommended measures is shown to be capable of reducing core homelessness by 37% in 2031, and by 47% in 2041, compared with what it would have been without any change in policies.

Economic and policy impacts on homelessness

In 2021 the UK economy began to recover from the shock of the pandemic, but by the latter half of 2022, inflation had soared to over 10%,⁸ with the poorest households often worst hit due to the large share of their budget spent on food, energy, and other essentials. The Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts suggest that while the UK economy may avoid a technical recession in 2023, it will not return to pre-pandemic growth levels until mid-2024,⁹ with the outlook gloomier than for any other major global economy.¹⁰ Taking wages, personal taxes, state benefits and inflation into account, the Office for Budget Responsibility expect real household disposable income to fall by 7.1% between 2021/22 and 2023/24, the sharpest fall in household disposable income since 1945.¹¹ The UK Government announced plans in November 2022 to reduce public spending by £30 billion by 2027/28.

6 Leppänen, A. (2022) 'Homelessness in London'. *London Councils*. 22nd December. Online: London Councils. <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/node/40105>

7 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023) Live Tables: Statutory Homelessness Q4 2022 Table TA1. Online: DLUHC. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1155378/StatHomeless_202212.ods

8 Office for National Statistics (2022) *GDP First Quarterly Estimate Time Series*. London: ONS <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/datasets/secondestimateofgdp>

9 Office for Budget Responsibility (2022) *Economic and Fiscal Outlook – March 2023*. Online: OBR <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2023/>

10 International Monetary Fund (2023) *World Economic Outlook – Update January 2023*. USA: IMF <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2023/01/31/world-economic-outlook-update-january-2023>

11 Office for Budget Responsibility (2022) *Economic and Fiscal Outlook – November 2022*. Online: OBR <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-november-2022/>

Outside of priority areas, much of the public sector will therefore have to make real terms savings over the next two years.¹² Key informants reported that opportunities for upstream prevention are shrinking, in large part because of sustained cuts to public services, now exacerbated by a cost of living-related squeeze on resources, meaning that much of the prevention work undertaken by local authorities tends to be crisis intervention.

Around 22% of people in England (12.4 million) live in relative poverty after housing costs.¹³ Even though this rate changed little in the decade to 2021,¹⁴ many more children and working adults now face poverty, especially members of large families with three or more children. Food insecurity and destitution have also escalated, with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation cost of living tracker indicating that, by November 2022, some 3.7 million households in England were doing without essentials, including 3 million that were food insecure.¹⁵

Social security payments and the benefit cap were uprated by 10.1% in April 2023, in line with inflation. However, cuts and freezes to social security benefits since 2010 have seen the basic rates of social security benefits for working age households

fall below the level required to avoid destitution.¹⁶ Along with benefit sanctions, which have again been tightened,¹⁷ and 'other' deductions from benefit,¹⁸ this has contributed to rising levels of severe poverty, problem debt, and food bank dependency.¹⁹ While the UK Government has introduced a range of measures to address the impact of the cost of living crisis, including the near universal energy price guarantee, and payments targeted at households in receipt of means-tested benefits, fewer than one in ten local authorities responding to our survey considered any of these measures likely to play any substantial role in mitigating the homelessness effects of the crisis.

Deep cuts to Discretionary Housing Payments have also constrained the ability of local authorities to prevent homelessness. The Department for Work and Pensions reduced the Discretionary Housing Payments allocation for England and Wales from £179.5 million to £140m in 2021/22 and by a further £40m to £100m in 2022/23, the lowest allocation in cash (nominal) terms for a decade.²⁰ While the Household Support Fund, which runs until March 2024 has the potential to help offset a proportion of these cuts, there is little evidence, one way or another, that it has done so.²¹

At the same time, only around two-thirds of all councils responding to our survey confirmed that they had a Local Welfare Assistance fund operating in their area. Considering that most local authority survey respondents in areas with such schemes said they were at least moderately important in mitigating homelessness, it is concerning that these crisis funds are absent in so many areas.²²

Meanwhile housing market conditions continue to deteriorate for those on the lowest incomes. Over the course of 2016-21 just 31,580 out of the 257,929 affordable housing completions were for social rent. A further 59,175 new affordable homes were completed in 2021/22, but this included just 7,528 for social rent. It remains to be seen whether the recent commitment to deliver 32,000 social rented homes through Affordable Homes Programme 2021-26 will be achieved.²³ There is also uncertainty around the replacement of Section 106 developer contributions by the 'infrastructure levy' set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.²⁴ Alongside growing financial and political pressure on social landlords to address dampness and mould and to de-carbonise existing homes, and the continuation of the Right to Buy, suggest that access to social rented housing will become even tighter.

In the four years to 2021/22, local authority lettings to households new to the social housing (i.e., excluding transfers) fell by almost 20% from 64,000 to 52,000, driven mainly by a lack of new homes to replace Right To Buy sales. In the decade to 2020/21, the proportion of general needs

lettings to new social tenants allocated to statutory homeless households by all social landlords increased from 20% to 31%. But this has been driven more by the sharp drop in lettings than by an increase in the numbers of homeless households allocated a social tenancy. In the three years to 2020/21, the number of general needs lettings to homeless households averaged 42,000 while the number of lettings to new social tenants fell from 174,000 to 143,000. Three-quarters (74%) of respondents to our local authority survey reported that it had become more difficult to secure social rented tenancies for homeless households and those at risk over the past year.

At the same time an overwhelming majority of respondents to our local authority survey (97%) reported that it had become more difficult to source private rentals for households experiencing or at risk of homelessness over the past year. Growing demand for a dwindling flow of advertised private lets has contributed to a rapid rise in rents, with commercial indices suggesting that advertised rents increased by up to 12% in 2022.²⁵ The continued freeze of the Local Housing Allowance at April 2020 rates has reduced the support available to help with housing costs, with potentially just 8% of private properties now available to rent at Local Housing Allowance rates or below.²⁶ The vast majority of local authorities responding to our survey (81%) reported that the re-freezing of Local Housing Allowance rates had been 'very challenging' in relation to efforts to manage and reduce homelessness.

12 Public Services Committee (2022) *Fit for The Future? Rethinking The Public Services Workforce*. London: House of Lords <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/pubserv/48/48.pdf>

13 Individuals that live in a household with an income equivalent to 60% or less of median household income

14 The UK wide AHC rate fell by 1% i2020-21, but this was not statistically significant.

15 Earwaker, R (2022) *Going Under And Without: JRF's Cost Of Living Tracker- Winter 2022/23*. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/going-under-and-without-jrfs-cost-living-tracker-winter-202223>

16 Bramley, G. (2023) *Destitution in the UK: income thresholds for October 2022*. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-income-thresholds-october-2022>

17 Pattaro, S., Bailey, N., Williams, E., Gibson, M., Wells, V., Tranmer, M., & Dibben, C. (2022) 'The Impacts of Benefit Sanctions: A Scoping Review of the Quantitative Research Evidence.' *Journal of Social Policy*, 51(3): 611-653 <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-social-policy/article/impacts-of-benefit-sanctions-a-scoping-review-of-the-quantitative-research-evidence/9272BC857236795930DCD6AB7B8E04A1>

18 Lloyds Bank Foundation (2022) *Deductions: The Driver of Poverty*. London: LBF <https://www.lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk/media/h1adbmzu/deductionsreport.pdf>

19 Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Blenkinsopp, J., Wood, J., Sosenko, F., Littlewood, M., Johnsen, S. Watts, B., Treanor, M., & McIntyre J. (2020) *Destitution in the UK 2020*. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2020>

20 Department for Work and Pensions (2022) *Discretionary Housing Payments statistics*. Online: DWP <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/discretionary-housing-payments-statistics>

21 Department for Work and Pensions (2022) *Household Support Fund Management Information For 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022*. Online: DWP <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/household-support-fund-management-information-6-october-2021-to-31-march-2022>

22 Trussell Trust (2022) *Local Lifelines: Investing in Local Welfare During and Beyond Covid-19*. London: Trussell Trust https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/10/LWAS_1020_v3.pdf

23 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Ending Rough Sleeping for Good: September 2022*. London: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-rough-sleeping-for-good/ending-rough-sleeping-for-good#annex-b-summary-of-commitments-and-policies>

24 Centre for Social Justice (2022) *Levying Up - Ensuring Planning Reform Delivers Affordable Homes*. London: CSJ <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/library/levying-up>

25 Donnell, R. (2002) *UK Rental Market Report*. London: Hometrack <https://www.hometrack.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/UK-rental-market-Dec-22-FINAL-PM-HT.pdf>

26 Crisis (2022) *Falling Short - Housing Benefit and the Rising Cost of renting in England*. London: Crisis https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/247716/zoopla_briefingv6.pdf

A rapid rise in eviction action by private landlords, and in particular 'no fault' cases since the end of 'pandemic-related' eviction measures in May 2021 is increasing calls for the Government to raise Local Housing Allowance rates to reflect the real cost of rent and to quicken the pace of private rental reform. Key informants to this study were unanimous in their support for the Renters Reform Bill, which was published on 17th May²⁷, with the repeal of Section 21 'no fault' evictions being considered of particular importance.

The Government's overwhelming focus within homelessness policy in England in recent years has been on addressing rough sleeping. The Everyone In initiative, launched in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, saw the easing of restrictions on eligibility criteria to allow people at risk of sleeping rough to be accommodated in hotel or similar accommodation. However, by late 2022, as reported by many key informants, emergency accommodation options for people at risk of sleeping rough have since been subject to rapid shrink-back, with notable increases in rough sleeping now evident, particularly in London, as noted above.

A 'refreshed' Rough Sleeping Strategy was launched in September 2022, *Ending Rough Sleeping for Good*, underpinned by ongoing ambition to meet the 2024 target to 'end' rough sleeping as per the 2019 Conservative Party election manifesto commitment.²⁸ The new Strategy was broadly welcomed by research participants in this year's Monitor, with three-quarters (77%) of local authority respondents to our survey

indicating that it was at least 'somewhat helpful'. The Strategy sets out a definition of what it means to end rough sleeping, "which is that it is prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurrent".²⁹ Views on the definition were mixed: while most key informants considered it a realistic and helpful measure, some were concerned that it represents a weakening of the 2024 target. It was also widely noted by key informants that the new Strategy fails to resolve a fundamental tension between current immigration and homelessness policy in a context where over half of all people sleeping rough in London are non-UK nationals, many of whom will have No Recourse to Public Funds or other restricted eligibility for statutory support.

What was universally welcomed was the confirmation of sustained investment in the Rough Sleeping Initiative, which has increased from £30 million in 2018/19 to the most recent allocation of £500 million across three years. Predating the new Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme, running from 2021 and now extended to 2025, was widely endorsed by our key informants as a useful mechanism for expanding the move-on options for those at risk of sleeping rough. This view was backed by three-quarters (74%) of respondents to our local authority survey, who reported that the programme had improved their ability to prevent and alleviate rough sleeping. The new Single Homeless Accommodation Programme,³⁰ which opened for bidding in January 2023, and intends to support up to 2,400 vulnerable young people and adults

sleeping rough or at risk of doing so to access supported accommodation, was also roundly welcomed. That said, some frustrations remained around the sustainability of accommodation associated with both programmes beyond the revenue funding timeframes. Also welcomed was the extension of the three Housing First regional pilots to 2024,³¹ although again there is ongoing uncertainty over how the open-ended nature of the support required under Housing First will be funded in the long-term.

Beyond rough sleeping, there were few positive policy developments on homelessness emerging from this year's analysis, with concerns expressed that the strategic focus of government is overly- dominated by rough sleeping to the detriment of homelessness in its wider sense.³² In particular, key informants reported that opportunities for upstream homelessness prevention³³ are shrinking because of sustained cuts to public services, now exacerbated by the cost of living-related crisis.³⁴ Consistent with this, large-scale longitudinal research by Crisis found that, while the Homelessness Reduction Act has opened up support and assistance for significantly more single adults than had hitherto been the case,³⁵ acute housing access pressures, coupled with insufficient staffing and service funding, meant

that many local authority staff felt it was challenging to deliver appropriate support under the Act. Concerningly, among those research participants whose contact with Housing Options had ended, nearly half (46%) remained homeless after going to the local authority for support.

Narrowing housing options for low income households are reflected in growing homelessness pressures as experienced by local authorities. It was particularly notable in this year's local authority survey that, in contrast to the fairly static picture presented by official statistics on statutory homelessness assessments (see above), a large majority of respondents (85%) perceived that homelessness service 'footfall' had increased in the preceding year; almost half (49%) reported a 'significant' increase. A higher proportion of respondents reported increasing demand than in any other Homelessness Monitor survey since 2015. As noted above pressures on temporary accommodation emerged in as a central concern of key informants this year, with new demands associated with the Ukrainian³⁶ and Afghan³⁷ refugee crises, together with wider asylum dispersal pressures, said to be ratcheting up the existing difficulties faced by local authorities, with no clear solutions for longer-term accommodation for these groups.

27 Renters (Reform) Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament

28 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Ending Rough Sleeping For Good: September 2022*. Online: DLUHC https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1102408/20220903_Ending_rough_sleeping_for_good.pdf p. 16.

29 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Ending Rough Sleeping For Good: September 2022*. Online: DLUHC https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1102408/20220903_Ending_rough_sleeping_for_good.pdf p. 10.

30 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023) *Guidance: Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme: prospectus and guidance (outside of Greater London)*. Online: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/single-homelessness-accommodation-programme/prospectus-and-guidance-outside-of-greater-london>

31 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots: Third Process Report*. Online: DLUHC https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1102005/Housing_First_Evaluation_Third_process_report.pdf Online: DLUHC p.1

32 Leppänen, A. (2022) 'Homelessness in London'. *London Councils*. 22nd December. Online: London Councils. <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/node/40105>

33 Fitzpatrick, S., Mackie, P., & Wood, J. (2021) Advancing a Five-Level Typology of Homelessness Prevention. *International Journal on Homelessness*. 1(1): 79–97 <https://doi.org/10.5206/ijoh.2021.1.1334> p. 87

34 Kerslake Commission (2022) *The Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A new way of working: ending rough sleeping together: Progress Report*. Online: Commission on Rough Sleeping. <https://www.commissiononroughsleeping.org/progress-report-2022/> p. 19

35 Sutton-Hamilton, C., Allard, M., Stroud, R., & Albanese, F. (2022) 'I hoped there'd be more options' *Experiences of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018-2021*. Online: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/247390/hra-report-2022.pdf>

36 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP (2022) 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme launches 14th March. Online: gov.uk <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/homes-for-ukraine-scheme-launches>

37 UK Visas and Immigration and Home Office (2021) Afghan citizens resettlement scheme. 18th August. Online: gov.uk <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

Linked with growing pressures on both temporary and supported accommodation has been the emergence of a problematic form of 'exempt' accommodation,³⁸ which lacks regulatory oversight and has been associated with exploitative practices and extremely poor quality of both accommodation and support. Four in ten (39%) of local authority respondents to our survey reported the existence of problematic exempt accommodation in their locality. Various actions have been taken by Government in recent years in response to concerns around this sector, including the publication in October 2020 of a national "statement of expectations" around supported housing, and the establishment of 'Oversight Pilots' focused on improving the quality and oversight of exempt supported accommodation in five areas³⁹ (now extended under the auspices of the Supported Housing Improvement Programme).⁴⁰ But a parliamentary select committee inquiry,⁴¹ reporting in October 2022, noted ongoing exploitation of the system for profit by rogue providers.⁴² This agenda has now been taken up in the form of a Private Members Bill - the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Bill - which aims to provide for stronger regulation of this problematic sector. Key informants welcomed the Bill but sounded some notes of caution about the need to avoid any unintended impacts of the proposed legislation on the supported accommodation sector more

generally, and flagged the unresolved issue of inadequate revenue funding for the sector.

Conclusion

In the midst of the worst cost of living crisis for decades, Government policy on homelessness in England is overwhelmingly focussed on meeting the 2024 target to 'end' rough sleeping, but with little sense of how the tension with immigration policy that leaves so many people with No Recourse to Public Funds on the streets will be resolved. At the same time, the temporary accommodation system is facing unprecedented pressures, as access to affordable settled accommodation in both the social or private rented sector progressively narrows, and concerns mount about growing reliance on problematic 'exempt' accommodation in certain parts of the country. Looking ahead, the Homelessness Monitor series will continue to interrogate homelessness policies, trends and outcomes in England and the other two Great Britain jurisdictions until at least 2026. By next year's Monitor we should have a fuller picture of the homelessness impacts of the cost of living crisis, and also be closer to knowing whether the Government is likely to come anywhere near to meeting its rough sleeping target in 2024.

Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This longitudinal Homelessness Monitor study, which started in 2011, provides an independent analysis of the homelessness impacts of economic and policy developments in England. It considers the consequences of economic and housing market trends for homelessness, with recent iterations capturing the homelessness-related effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. A central focus is the impacts of policy changes implemented under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government (2010-2015), and the post May 2015 Conservative Governments.

This eleventh annual report provides an account of how homelessness stands in England in 2023 (or as close to 2023 as data availability will allow), and analyses key trends in the period running up to 2023. This year's report focuses in particular on the homelessness impacts of the current cost of living crisis, and also on rough sleeping and responses to it, which has been a major Government policy priority in recent years. Updating and building upon analysis presented in the last two year's Homelessness Monitors we also project homelessness trends

in England into the future under various policy scenarios.

Readers who would like a fuller account of the recent history of homelessness in England should consult with the previous Homelessness Monitors for England, which are available on Crisis's website.⁴³ Parallel Homelessness Monitors are also published on the Crisis website covering developments in Scotland and Wales.⁴⁴

1.2 Scope of report

There remains considerable debate on the most appropriate definition of homelessness, with stakeholders often disagreeing on where the boundary should lie between 'homelessness' and other forms of housing need.⁴⁵ In order for this report to be as comprehensive and inclusive as possible, we adopt a range of definitions or 'perspectives' on homelessness, considering the impacts of relevant policy and economic changes on the following (partially overlapping) groups:

- People sleeping rough.
- 'Statutorily homeless households': that is, households who seek or receive housing assistance from local

38 Wilson, W. (2022) Supported exempt accommodation (England). Research Briefing: House of Commons Library. Number CBP09362. Online: House of Commons Library <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9362/CBP-9362.pdf>

39 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Evaluation of the Supported Housing Oversight Pilots*. Online: DLUHC https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1068653/Evaluation_of_the_supported_housing_oversight_pilots.pdf p.1

40 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Supported Housing Improvement Programme: list of funding awards to local authorities*. Online: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-housing-improvement-programme-prospectus/supported-housing-improvement-programme-list-of-funding-awards-to-local-authorities>

41 UK Parliament Committees (2021) *Levelling Up Committee launches inquiry into exempt accommodation*. Online: UK Parliament <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1688/exempt-accommodation/news/159501/levelling-up-committee-launches-inquiry-into-exempt-accommodation/>

42 House of Commons, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee (2022) *Exempt Accommodation*. Online: HoC <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/30512/documents/175989/default/> p. 3

43 See <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/homelessnessmonitor.html>

44 See <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/homelessnessmonitor.html>

45 Busch-Geertsema, V., Culhane, D. & Fitzpatrick, S. (2016) 'Developing a global framework for conceptualising and measuring homelessness.' *Habitat International*. 55. 124-132 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0197397515300023?via=ihub>

authorities (LAs) on grounds of being currently or imminently without accommodation.

- People experiencing 'core homelessness':⁴⁶ this refers to households who are currently experiencing the most acute forms of homelessness. It includes people in the following situations: rough sleeping; sleeping in cars, tents and public transport, unlicensed squatting, or occupation of non-residential buildings; staying in hostels, refuges and shelters; living in 'unsuitable' temporary accommodation (TA) (e.g., Bed and Breakfast (B&B)); sofa-surfing (i.e., staying with non-family, on a short-term basis, in overcrowded conditions).

1.3 Research methods

We employ five main methods in this longitudinal study:

- First, relevant literature, legal and policy documents are reviewed each year.
- Second, we undertake annual interviews with a sample of key informants from the statutory and voluntary sectors across England. The current sample of 17 key informants includes representatives of homelessness service providers, as well as other key stakeholders with a national overview of relevant areas of policy and practice, including housing, health and social security. These participants were interviewed in the winter of 2022. See Appendix 1 for the basic topic guide used to structure these interviews, though note that this guide was tailored for each interviewee.

- Third, we undertake detailed statistical analysis on a) relevant economic and social trends in England; and b) the scale, nature and trends in homelessness amongst the sub-groups noted above.
- Fourth, for the seventh Homelessness Monitor report in a row we have conducted a bespoke online survey of England's 309 LAs (from October 2022-January 2023). As in previous years, the main aim of the survey was to delve beneath the routinely published statutory homelessness statistics to assess the impact of economic and policy change on homelessness trends and responses at local level. In all, 155 (50%) of all LAs in England responded to the survey. Response rates varied across broad regions, from a high of 63% in the North to a low of 35% in the Midlands, with London (at 52%) and the South (at 50%) sitting somewhere in between. See Appendix 2 for details.
- Fifth, for the third time in the Homelessness Monitor England series, we incorporate a statistical modelling exercise which both estimates 'core' forms of homelessness, and projects trends in these forms of homelessness into the future. Further information about the methodology behind this exercise is given in Chapter 5, and a fuller account is available in a separate technical report.⁴⁷

1.4 Causation and homelessness

All of the Homelessness Monitors are underpinned by a conceptual framework on the causation of homelessness that has been used to inform our interpretation of the likely impacts of economic and policy change.⁴⁸

Theoretical, historical and international perspectives indicate that the causation of homelessness is multi-dimensional, with no single 'trigger' that is either 'necessary' or 'sufficient' for it to occur. Individual, interpersonal, and structural factors all play a role – and interact with each other – and the balance of causes differs over time, across countries, and between demographic groups.

With respect to the main structural factors, international comparative research, and the experience of previous UK recessions, suggests that housing market trends and policies have the most direct impact on levels of homelessness, with the influence of labour-market change more likely to be lagged and diffuse, and strongly mediated by welfare arrangements and other contextual factors. The central role that poverty plays in shaping homelessness risks in the UK is also now well established.⁴⁹

The individual vulnerabilities, support needs, and 'risk taking' behaviours implicated in some people's homelessness are themselves often, though not always, also rooted in the pressures associated with poverty and other forms of structural disadvantage. At the same time, the 'anchor' social relationships which can act as a primary 'buffer' to homelessness, can be put under considerable strain by stressful financial circumstances. Thus, deteriorating economic conditions in England, such as those associated with the current cost of living crisis,

could also be expected to generate more 'individual' and 'interpersonal' vulnerabilities to homelessness over time, with any improvement in such conditions tending to have the reverse effect.

1.5 Structure of report

The structure of this year's *Homelessness Monitor* report is as follows. Chapter 2 reviews the wider context for homelessness, including economic, poverty and labour market trends, housing market developments, and social security policy changes, including response to the current cost of living crisis. Chapter 3 shifts focus to homelessness-specific policies and practices at national and local level, including the Government's predominant focus on rough sleeping. Chapter 4 provides a fully updated analysis of the available statistical data on the current scale of and recent trends in homelessness in England. This analysis is substantially based on the operation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017, in force from 1st April 2018. Chapter 5 covers the official data on rough sleeping, and also provides estimates of the current scale of core homelessness in England, and projects trends in these forms of homelessness into the future. All of these chapters are informed by the insights derived from our in-depth interviews with key informants conducted in 2023, and from the statistical and qualitative information gleaned from this year's online survey of LAs. In Chapter 6 we summarise the main findings of this year's report.

46 Bramley, G. (2017) *Homelessness Projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain. Summary Report*. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237582/crisis_homelessness_projections_2017.pdf

47 Bramley, G. (2023) *Homelessness Monitor Research Programme: Technical Report on Updated Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections 2023*. I-SPHERE, Heriot-Watt University. <https://researchportal.hw.ac.uk/en/publications/homelessness-monitor-research-programme-technical-report-on-updat>, or <https://doi.org/10.17861/949n-am24>

48 For a more detailed account of this conceptual framework please consult with Chapter 2 in the first Homelessness Monitor: Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G. & Wilcox, S. (2011) *The Homelessness Monitor: Tracking the Impacts of Policy and Economic Change in England 2011-2013*. London: Crisis.

49 Bramley, B. & Fitzpatrick, S. (2018) 'Homelessness in the UK: who is most at risk?' *Housing Studies*. 33(1). 96-116

The wider context

2. The wider context

Key findings

The UK economy's road to recovery from the COVID-19 related recession is proving long and difficult. By the end of 2022, the UK was the only major economy where both total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the size of workforce were below the level at the end of 2019. During 2022 the economy flat lined as higher energy and food prices saw inflation reach double digits, outstripping wages, and social security benefit rates. Although the UK economy has so far narrowly avoided recession, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) expect that real household disposable income will continue to fall in 2023/24 and will be no higher than pre-pandemic levels by 2027/28.

Lower income households have been particularly exposed to the 'cost of living crisis' as a high share of their spending is on food, energy, and other necessities, leaving them more exposed to the risk of homelessness. In response, the UK Government has introduced various measures including the near universal energy price guarantee, which increased from £2,500 to £3000 in July 2023, and payments targeted at specific groups, including those on Universal Credit (UC) (and the legacy benefits and tax credits it is replacing).

Social security payments and the benefit cap were uprated by 10.1% in April 2023, in line with inflation.

However, cuts and freezes to social security benefits since 2010 have seen social security benefits for working age households fall below the level required to avoid severe material hardship. Along with benefit sanctions and 'other' deductions from their benefit, this has contributed to rising levels of problem debt, destitution, and food bank dependency.

Deep cuts to Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) have further constrained the ability of LAs to prevent homelessness. While the Household Support Fund (HSF), which runs until March 2024 has the potential to help offset a proportion of these cuts, there is little evidence, one way or another, that it has done so.

Rapidly rising house prices and private rents have reinforced deep-seated housing inequalities and made it ever more difficult for households to access the private housing market while the continued decline in social lettings has made it ever more difficult for younger and homeless households to access this sector. Growing financial and political pressure on social landlords to address dampness and mould and to de-carbonise existing homes, the lack of new social rented homes being delivered through the affordable housing programme and the continuation of Right to Buy suggest that access to social rented housing will become even tighter.

The rapid rise in eviction action by private landlords, and in particular 'no fault' cases since the end of 'pandemic-related' eviction measures in May 2021 is increasing calls for the Government to raise Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates to reflect the real cost of rent. It has also increased calls to quicken the pace of private rental reform, especially as the Government first consulted on abolishing 'no fault tenancies' and introducing open-ended tenancies in 2018.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the wider context within which homelessness occurs. Section 2.2 looks at recent economic, and labour market developments and their impact on living standards and poverty. Section 2.3 reviews measures to help households whose incomes have been strained by the rising cost of living. Section 2.4 looks at how inflationary and policy developments are affecting the ability to access and afford housing.

2.2 The broader economic context Recent economic and labour market developments

In 2021 the UK economy began to recover from the shock of the pandemic, assisted by the vaccine programme and temporary Government measures to protect jobs and household incomes, including

the furlough scheme and the £20 temporary uplift to UC and Tax Credits. By the latter half of 2022, however, inflation had soared to over 10% and the economy flat lined.⁵⁰ The OBR forecasts, which are amongst the most optimistic available, suggest the while UK economy may avoid a technical recession in 2023, it will not return to pre-pandemic growth levels until mid-2024 (see figure 2.1).⁵¹

The economic slowdown has been shaped by difficult global economic conditions. The war in Ukraine, sanctions imposed on trade with Russia, and lockdowns in China have intensified supply chain disruptions and inflationary pressures that began to emerge during the pandemic, most notably for energy, food and imported goods.⁵² However, at the start of 2023 the outlook for the UK economy is gloomier than for all other major global economies.⁵³ In part this is due to post-Brexit policy that has disrupted trade and labour and the political turmoil seen in 2022,⁵⁴ which led to a succession of seesaw shifts in the direction of UK fiscal policy.⁵⁵

By Q3 of 2022, the unemployment rate for both the UK and England had fallen below pre-pandemic levels to a record low of 3.6%.⁵⁶ However, growing numbers of people have become economically inactive since the start of the pandemic.⁵⁷ Fewer overseas

50 Office for National Statistics (2022) *GDP First Quarterly Estimate Time Series*. London: ONS <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/datasets/secondestimateofgdp>

51 Office for Budget Responsibility (2022) *Economic and Fiscal Outlook – March 2023*. Online: OBR <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2023/>

52 Resolution Foundation (2022) *Macroeconomic Policy Outlook: Q4 2022*. London: RF <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/macroeconomic-policy-outlook-q4-2022/>

53 International Monetary Fund (2023) *World Economic Outlook – Update January 2023*. USA: IMF <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2023/01/31/world-economic-outlook-update-january-2023>

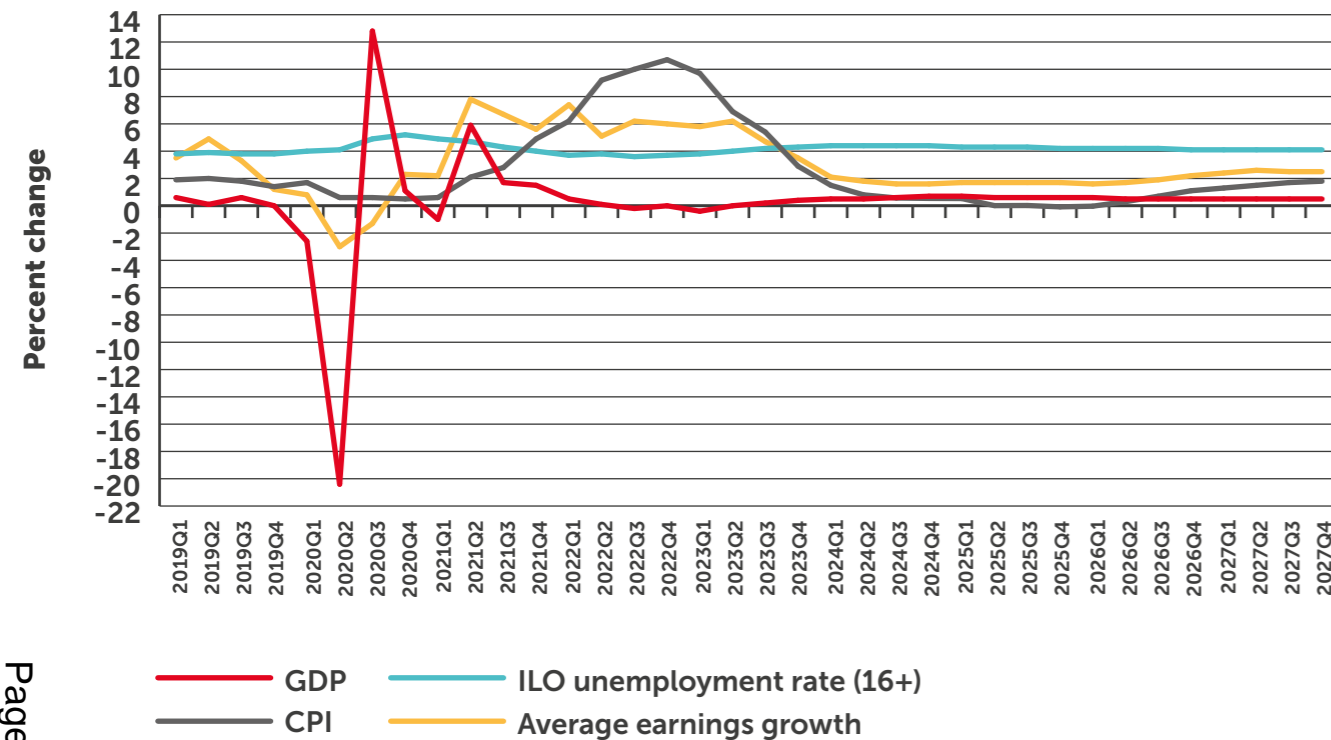
54 National Institute Of Economic And Social Research (2022) *National Institute UK Economic Outlook – Autumn 2022*. London: NIESR <https://www.niesr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/NIESR-UK-Economic-Outlook-Autumn-2022-final-1.pdf>

55 Hughes, R. (2002) *Transcript of Presentation by Chair, Office for Budget Responsibility*. London: OBR https://obr.uk/docs/dlm_uploads/November_2022_EFO_Speaking_notes.pdf

56 Office for National Statistics (2022) *Labour Market Overview, UK: November 2022- accompanying data*. Online: ONS <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/november2022>

57 Institute for Fiscal Studies (2022) *The Rise In Economic Inactivity Among People In Their 50s And 60s (BN345)*. London: IFS <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/rise-economic-inactivity-among-people-their-50s-and-60s>

Figure 2.1: Recent and predicted change in key economic indicators for the United Kingdom, 2019-2027



Source: OBR (2023) Economic and Fiscal Outlook – March 2023

nationals from the European Union also now work in the UK⁵⁸ following changes to the immigration system in January 2021.⁵⁹ As a result, the UK is now one of the few major economies where the workforce is smaller than it was before the pandemic.⁶⁰ In Q3 of 2022, some 75.8% of people aged 16-64 years in England were in work, 1.1 percentage point lower than on the eve of the pandemic.⁶¹

A tightening labour market has seen labour and skills shortages grow, but under-employment and hidden unemployment remain problematic. In Q2 of 2022, the proportion of the economically active population who wanted to work more hours, was higher than before the 2008 recession⁶² and around 909,000 people in England were on zero hours contracts, 149,000 more than in Q2

58 McCurdy, C. (2022) *The RF Labour Market Outlook - Quarterly Briefing Q3 2022*. London: Resolution Foundation <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2022/09/Labour-Market-Outlook-Q3-2022.pdf>

59 Migration Observatory (2022) *The end of free movement and the low-wage labour force in the UK*. Online: MO https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/rewage/publications/labour_shortages_paper_final.pdf

60 See <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/f87551f1-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/f87551f1-en>

61 Office for National Statistics (2022) *H100 Regional Labour Market: Headline Labour Force Survey Indicators For Regions*. Online: ONS <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/headlinelabourforcesurveyindicatorsforallregionshi00>

62 The Health Foundation (2022) *Trends in unemployment and underemployment*. Online: The Health Foundation <https://www.health.org.uk/evidence-hub/work/employment-and-underemployment/trends-in-unemployment-and-underemployment>

of 2019.⁶³ The numbers of people claiming unemployment related benefits or claiming incapacity benefits but would prefer to work, also remains high. Using this definition, Sheffield Hallam University estimated that 1.97 million people aged 16-64 years in England (5.9%) were unemployed in early 2022,⁶⁴ some 860,000 more than the official estimate. They also found large variations in the rate of hidden unemployment, ranging from 2% in the south of England (outside London) to over 9% in the least prosperous older industrial and seaside towns.

Economic and fiscal outlook

The Autumn Statement⁶⁵ issued in November 2022 sought to restore the UK Government's reputation for fiscal competence by overturning the Growth Plan⁶⁶ issued just a few weeks earlier. The latter had proposed £45 billion of unfunded tax cuts and had been savaged by the market, culminating in a weaker pound, higher interest rates, more costly Government borrowing and intervention in the Bond Market by the Bank of England "to restore orderly market conditions."⁶⁷ It also ended Prime Minister's Truss's tenure in October 2022 after 44 days in office, with Rishi Sunak becoming the UK's third Prime Minister in less than two months.

In March 2023, the OBR that the Government would have to borrow

£152.4 billion (7.1% of GDP) in 2022/23, well above the £99 billion it March 2022 forecast and the £133 billion (5.7% of GDP) borrowed in 2021/22.⁶⁸ This will add to the stock of public sector net debt built up over many years, which had already increased from £2,025 billion to £2,460 billion⁶⁹ in the six months to October 2022 to reach 85.2% of GDP.⁷⁰

To ease inflation and bring down current and net public debt by 2027/28, the UK Government announced plans in November 2022 to reduce public spending by £30 billion and to increase tax revenues from 34.7% to 37.31% of GDP by 2027/28. As the Spring 2023 Budget confirmed,⁷¹ this will mean a tough time ahead for public services, households and businesses. Tax rises for households will principally be achieved through stealth measures such as freezing tax thresholds until 2027/28, reducing the amounts people can make before paying capital gains tax, increasing the dividend tax, and reducing the threshold at which the 45% income tax becomes payable. By 2027/28, the proportion of the UK adult population paying tax could increase by 3% to 66% as growing numbers of low paid and part time workers become liable for tax.

In terms of the current spending review period to the end of 2024/25, extra funding is being made available

63 Office for National Statistics (2022) *People In Employment On Zero Hours Contracts*. Online: ONS <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/emp17peopleinemploymentonzerohourscontracts>

64 Beatty, C., Fothergill, S., Gore, T., and Leather, D. (2022) *The Real Level Of Unemployment 2022: The Myth of Full Employment Across Britain*. Online: Sheffield: Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research <https://shura.shu.ac.uk/30252/1/real-level-of-unemployment-2022.pdf>

65 HM Treasury (2022) *Autumn Statement 2022*. London: HM Treasury <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-statement-2022-documents/autumn-statement-2022-html>

66 HM Treasury (2022) *The Growth Plan*. London: HM Treasury <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-growth-plan-2022-documents/the-growth-plan-2022-html>

67 Bank of England (2022) *Bank Of England Announces Gilt Market Operation - press release 28 September*. Online: Bank of England <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/news/2022/september/bank-of-england-announces-gilt-market-operation>

68 Office for Budget Responsibility (2023) *Economic and Fiscal Outlook - March 2023*. Online: OBR <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2023/>

69 Figures exclude debt related to public sector banks and Bank of England spending in line with UK fiscal rules.

70 Office for National Statistics (2022) *Public sector finances, UK Statistical bulletins - March 2022 and October 2022*. Online: ONS <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/governmentpublicsectorandtaxes/publicsectorfinance/bulletins/publicsectorfinances/previousReleases>

71 HM Treasury (2023) *Spring Budget 2023, HC 1183*. London, HMSO <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spring-budget-2023/spring-budget-2023-html>

for education (schools), defence, the NHS and social care. English LAs were also granted permission to raise council tax for 2023/24 by up to 3% (or 5% if they have social care duties) unless residents agree to a higher rate through a local referendum. In addition, the Spring 2023 Budget announced plans to promote economic growth and redistribution. These plans include the expansion of free childcare and the shift to paying childcare support in advance rather than in arrears, which will help many families. They also include the development of trailblazer devolution deals for Greater Manchester and the West Midlands, the establishment of eight Investment Zones across England and increased funding through numerous pots of money in support of the Government's 'levelling up' agenda.

Elsewhere, spending settlements have changed little in cash terms despite high inflation. Much of the public sector will therefore have to make real terms savings over the next two years at a time when limited pay growth is making it difficult for public services to recruit and retain staff⁷² and the number of working days lost to strikes is rising.⁷³ Local authority austerity measures and staffing challenges are likely to impact negatively on rates of homelessness and the services available to both prevent and respond to homelessness.

Beyond April 2025, spending plans are clouded in uncertainty. The UK Government relaxed its fiscal rules

- 72 Public Services Committee (2022) *Fit for The Future? Rethinking The Public Services Workforce*. London: House of Lords <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/pubserv/48/48.pdf>
- 73 Office for National Statistics (2022) *Working Days Lost Due To Strike Action In The Public Sector – Monthly statistics*. Online: ONS <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/timeseries/f8xz/lms>
- 74 Unless an early election is called, the next UK general election must be held by January 2025.
- 75 Zaranko, B. (2022) *Spending on Public Services*. London: IFS <https://ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-11/Spending-on-public-services-Ben-Zaranko.pdf>
- 76 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Levelling Up the United Kingdom*. London: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>
- 77 Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill, 2022 (HL Bill 84) Online: UK Parliament <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3155>
- 78 Office for Budget Responsibility (2022) *Economic and Fiscal Outlook – November 2022*. Online: OBR <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-november-2022/>
- 79 Office for Budget Responsibility (2022) *Economic and Fiscal Outlook – November 2022*. Online: ONS <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-november-2022/>

in November 2022 to avoid cutting public spending in cash terms prior to the next general election.⁷⁴ At the time, the Institute for Fiscal Studies has observed the consequent post April 2025 revenue and capital spending proposals look implausibly tight,⁷⁵ but they look tighter still following the ambition to spend 2.5% of GDP on defence announced in the Spring 2023 Budget. It also remains unclear how the devolution deals and other plans to boost economic growth and reduce economic and social inequalities in support of the Levelling Up White Paper⁷⁶ and Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill will evolve.⁷⁷

Falling living standards and deepening poverty

Wages have increased since the re-opening of the economy during 2021 but recent average earnings growth remains well below inflation (see figure 2.1). Taking wages, personal taxes, state benefits and inflation into account, the OBR expect real household disposable income to fall by 7.1% between 2021/22 and 2023/24, the sharpest fall in household disposable income since 1945.⁷⁸ This will make almost everyone worse off, with the OBR indicating living standards will not recover to pre-pandemic levels until at least 2028.⁷⁹

The National Living Wage increased by 9.7% from £9.50 to £10.42 in April 2023, and now equates to 66% of the median wage, up from 59% in 2016. Along with the uprating of state benefits for 2023/24 by 10.1% and

other measures discussed in section 2.3, this should help ease the fall in living standards for many lower income households. That said, the crisis will continue to impact heavily on the poorest households, especially those already in debt and arrears.⁸⁰

The poorest households face relatively high inflation rates due to the large share of their budget spent on food, energy, and other essentials. In Autumn 2022, the inflation rate for the poorest households were estimated to be anywhere from 1.5⁸¹ and 3⁸² percentage points above Consumer Prices Index (CPI) (11.1%). Poor households also tend to pay more for essentials, for example, by relying on more expensive pre-payment meters. In 2022, the average poverty premium for lower income households was estimated to be £430 a year.⁸³ This inevitability deepens poverty, the key risk factor for homelessness.

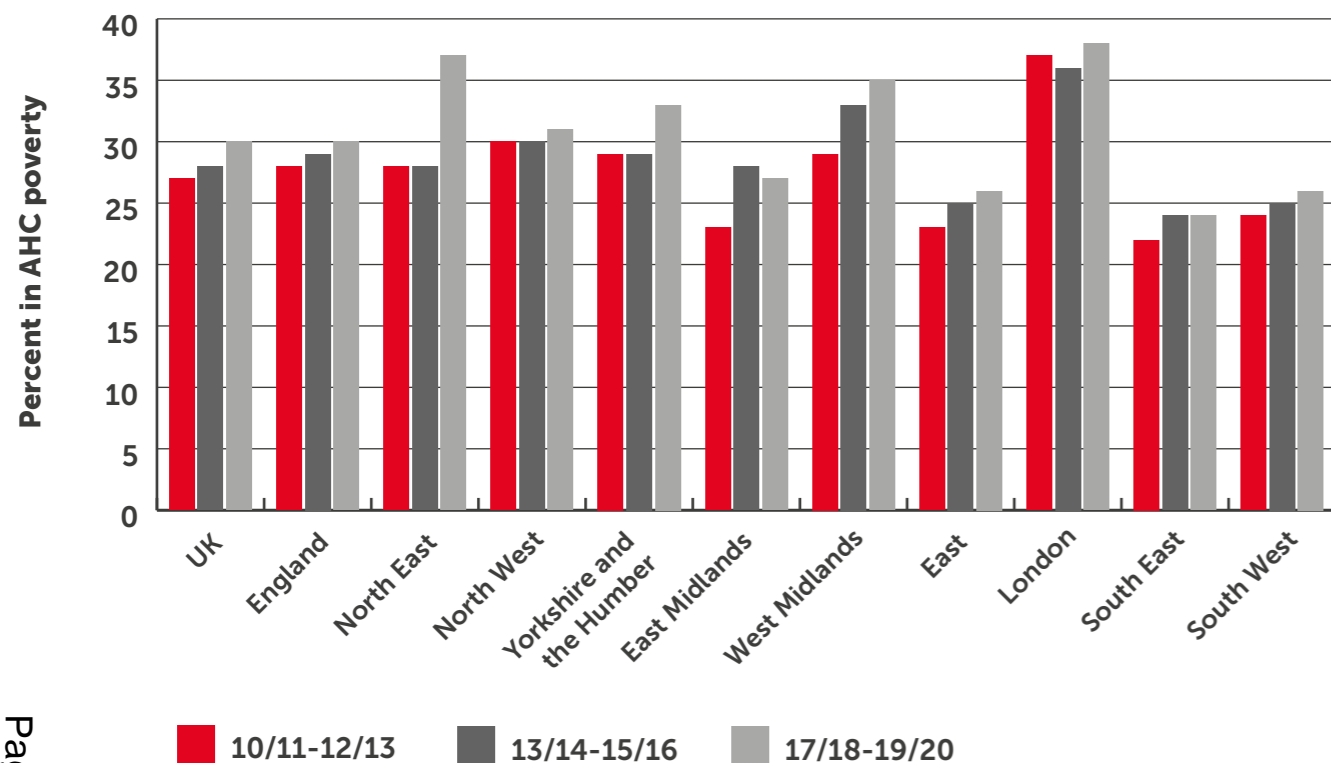
Around 22% of people in England (12.4 million) live in relative poverty after housing costs.⁸⁴ Even though this rate changed little in the decade to 2021,⁸⁵ many more children and working adults now face poverty, especially members of large families with three or more children. This trend has been propelled by the growth of non-standard employment, the growth of comparatively expensive private

renting, and the faster growth of pensioner incomes, which has raised the overall median. Another factor has been the propensity for adults with childcare responsibilities to work fewer hours, partly due to the lack of affordable childcare.⁸⁶ Poor working households have also seen much of any wage rise offset by cuts and reforms to social security, including the exclusion of third and subsequent children born after April 2017 from UC and Child Tax Credit claims.⁸⁷

Figure 2.2 shows there are large spatial disparities in child poverty, between English regions.⁸⁸ In 2017-20, the latest period for which reliable data is available, the child poverty rate for London (38%) was 14 percentage points higher than in the South East (24%), principally due to the high cost of renting in London that tip many families into poverty. In the North East, the child poverty rate soared from 28% in 2013-16 to 37% in 2017-20, driven by weaker labour market conditions, relatively low wages and the cuts in social security support for families.⁸⁹

Many have struggled to secure food and essentials needed to stay warm and dry prior to the current economic crisis. Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) report that in 2020/21 around 4 million people in England (7%) lived in a household that had

- 80 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2022) *UK Poverty 2022: The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK*. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/uk-poverty-2022>
- 81 Office for National Statistics (2022) *Inflation and cost of living for household groups, UK: October, 2022*. London: ONS <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/inflationandthecostoflivingforhouseholdgroups/October2022>
- 82 Karjalainen, H. and Levell, P. (2022) *Inflation for poorest households likely to increase even faster than for the richest and could hit 14%*. London: IFS <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/16065>.
- 83 Personal Finance Research Centre, University of Bristol (2022) *The Cost of Living and Levelling Up*. London: Fair by Design https://fairbydesign.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Local-poverty-premium-summary-report_v07-1-2.pdf
- 84 Individuals that live in a household with an income equivalent to 60% or less of median household income
- 85 The UK wide AHC rate fell by 1% i2020-21, but this was not statistically significant.
- 86 All Party Parliamentary Group On Poverty (2022) *In-work Poverty*. London: APPG http://www.appgpoverty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/APPG_Poverty_in_work_poverty_FINAL.pdf
- 87 Institute for Fiscal Studies (2022) *Living Standards, Poverty And Inequality In The UK: 2022*. London: IFS <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/living-standards-poverty-and-inequality-uk-2022>
- 88 Institute for Public Policy Research (2021) *No Longer 'Managing: The Rise Of Working Poverty & Fixing GB's Broken Social Settlement*. London: IPPR <https://www.ippr.org/files/2021-05/no-longer-managing-may21.pdf>
- 89 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2022) *UK Poverty 2022: The Essential Guide to Understanding Poverty In The UK*. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/uk-poverty-2022>

Figure 2.2: Child poverty rate after housing costs by region, 2010/13 to 2017-20

Source: DWP Households Below Average Income 1994/95 - 2020/21

Note: Figures based on 3 year rolling average

experienced food insecurity and had skipped or shrunk meals in the past month because they could not access or afford food.⁹⁰ Single adults (15%), lone parents (19%) and families with three or more children (11%) were at most risk, especially if they rented their home, claimed UC, had a disability, or had a non-white background.

Since then, food insecurity and destitution have escalated. The food insecurity tracker indicates that between July 2021 and December 2022, the proportion of households in the UK that had experienced food insecurity in the past month jumped

from 7.3% to 17.7%, of which over a third had gone a day or more without eating because they could not afford or access food.⁹¹ The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) cost of living tracker paints a similar picture.⁹² Figures kindly supplied by JRF indicate that around 75% of household representatives in England in the lowest income quintile group interviewed in October-November 2022 said they had gone without essentials (such as sufficient food, a heated home, basic toiletries and appropriate clothing) compared to 68% of those interviewed in May-June 2022. This suggests that by November 2022, some 3.7 million households

90 The Family Resources Survey asks the person in the household who knows most about food purchasing and preparation a series of questions about access to food in the past 30 days. The resulting food security can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2020-to-2021/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2020-to-2021#household-food-security-1>

91 The Food Foundation (2023) Food Insecurity Tracking: Summary Outputs. Online: Food Foundation <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/food-insecurity-tracking#tabs/Round-12/All-households>

92 Earwaker, R (2022) Going Under And Without: JRF's Cost Of Living Tracker- Winter 2022/23. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/going-under-and-without-jrfs-cost-living-tracker-winter-202223>

in England experienced or were at high risk of destitution, including 3 million that were food insecure. The forthcoming Destitution in the UK 2022/23 report is likely to confirm the damaging impact of the rise in numbers of destitute households.⁹³

Rising levels of food insecurity and destitution have increased reliance on food banks. The Trussell Trust distributed close to 2.5 million food parcels in England in 2022/23, over 670,000 more than in 2021/22 and close to a million more than in 2019/20.⁹⁴ They also saw a marked rise in households that have never used a food bank before, including working households.⁹⁵ More people appear to be asking for food that does not require cooking or to be stored in a fridge or freeze due to prohibitive energy costs.⁹⁶ Moreover, foodbanks and other charities are at increasing risk of collapse due to rising bills and declining donations.⁹⁷

The vast majority of respondents to our local authority (LA) survey believed that these cost of living stresses had already contributed to rising homelessness by autumn 2022. While most judged that such impacts had been only modest rather than substantial at that point (see Appendix 2, Table 8), 81% of respondents anticipated that unfolding effects of the crisis would generate significantly increased homelessness over the coming year. This assessment of the anticipated impacts of the cost of living crisis was strongly echoed by key informants:

"I think it's going to be massive. I think it's going to be unprecedentedly horrible, because everyone's feeling under pressure... If they increase the rents... how do you manage that when everything is going up? Not just your rent. Your energy, your food, your travel, everything. I cannot see anything other than, it is going to be horrendous."

(Voluntary sector key informant)

"I think we are seeing an impact already. I think there's a risk that the impact is catastrophic ... I think there is a real risk that we end up with... services that are just not able to support, and local authorities having to prioritise families because of children, so a real risk, again, of particularly single homelessness just skyrocketing."

(Voluntary sector key informant)

Many LAs reported expanding TA provision, staffing capacity, financial assistance, and/or information and advice as a means of coping with these additional pressures (see Chapter 3).

93 Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Treanor, M., Blenkinsopp, J., McIntyre, J., Johnsen, S. & McMordie, L. (forthcoming). *Destitution in the UK 2023*, York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

94 The Trussell Foundation (2022) *Mid-Year Stats, April-September 2022*. London: Trussell Foundation. <https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/mid-year-stats/>

95 The Trussell Foundation (2022) *Mid-Year Stats, April-September 2022*. London: Trussell Foundation. <https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/mid-year-stats/>

96 Irvine, S., Gorb, A., Francis-Devine, B (2022) *Food Banks In The UK*. London: House of Commons Library <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8585/CBP-8585.pdf>

97 Irvine, S., Gorb, A., Francis-Devine, B (2022) *Food Banks In The UK*. London: House of Commons Library <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8585/CBP-8585.pdf>

2.3 Financial support for low-income and vulnerable households

This section looks at the main measures put in place to dampen energy prices and help households cope with the rising cost of living. It also looks at recent social security developments likely to impact on homelessness, including additional discretionary funding.

Help with energy bills and rising cost of living

The energy price cap sets the maximum price for a unit of gas and electricity plus related standing charges. Soaring wholesale energy prices saw Ofgem raise this cap by 54% in April 2022, raising the indicative annual energy bill for a typical household from £1,277 to £1,971. Subsequent cap adjustments saw the unsubsidised energy bill for this typical household rise by 80% to £3,549 in October 2022 and by a further 21% to £4,279 in January 2023, before falling back to £3,280 from April to June 2023.⁹⁸

To shield domestic consumers from rising energy costs, the UK Government looks set to spend around £65 billion⁹⁹ on a cost of living package to April 2024. Much of this cash, which is partly financed by a windfall levy on oil and gas producer profits,¹⁰⁰ is being spent on three near universal measures outlined in the following paragraph.¹⁰¹

First, around £27 billion¹⁰² will be spent on the Energy Price Guarantee (EPG) that came into effect in October 2022 and will subsidise energy bills until April 2024.¹⁰³ Following the Spring 2023 Budget, the EPG for a 'typical household' increased from £2,500 to £3,000 in July 2023 instead of April as initially intended. From 1 July 2023 until the EPG ends, charges for those on prepayment meters were also brought in to line with comparable charges for direct debit customers. Second, from October 2022 to March 2023, households benefited from a £400 discount on their energy bills paid through the £12 billion Energy Bills Support Scheme.¹⁰⁴ Third, households in Band A-D rated properties, around 80% of all households in England, received a £150 Council Tax rebate in 2022/23. This was paid for by the £2.9 billion Council Tax Energy Rebate, which also allocated £144 million extra discretionary funding to LAs to help vulnerable households living in higher rated properties.¹⁰⁵

The overall package also comprises of Cost of Living Payments, which are exempt from personal tax and the Benefit Cap. In 2022/23 these payments were issued in two instalments (July and November) at a cost of £9 billion. Around 6.8 million households in England in receipt of

UC (and the legacy benefits and tax credits it is replacing) or Pension Credit received £650.¹⁰⁶ Around 5 million households in receipt of disability benefits received a £150 Disability Payment¹⁰⁷ and 7 million older households received a £300 addition to their Winter Fuel Payment.¹⁰⁸

The Autumn Statement announced that the income-related payment would increase to £900 in 2023/24 but the disability and pensioner payments would remain unchanged.¹⁰⁹ The shift to greater reliance on Cost of Living Payments and the scaling back of EPG in 2023/24 is consistent with the more redistributive approach of the Autumn Statement.¹¹⁰ The continuation of fixed rate payments will also enable DWP to issue payments quickly.¹¹¹ However, this will come at the expense of failing to reach or equally benefit all lower income households.¹¹²

Fixed rate payments have been criticised for insufficiently recognising the varied needs of households of differing size and composition¹¹³ and creating cliff-edges.¹¹⁴ Essentially, households just below the upper UC threshold receive the full payment

while those just above the threshold receive nothing, resulting in unequal treatment of similar families in similar circumstances.¹¹⁵ Households with fluctuating earnings that received no qualifying benefit during a defined assessment period continue to be ineligible for a payment.¹¹⁶ So too do those that only claim Housing Benefit or a contributory benefit (e.g. Jobseekers Allowance), people with no recourse to public finance and people who fail to claim benefits.

LA survey respondents were generally cautious in their expectations about the potential for these various Government measures to mitigate the impact of the cost of living crisis on homelessness (see Appendix 2, Table 9). The Council Tax Rebate in particular was thought unlikely to make much if any difference, and none of the measures was judged likely to have a substantial mitigating effect by any more than 10% of respondents. Key informants in this study similarly emphasised that these Government measures, while welcome, were not sufficient to address the impacts of the crisis.

98 Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (2023) *Latest Energy Price Cap Announced By Ofgem* – Press Release 27 February 2023. Online: Ofgem <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/ofgem-announces-latest-quarterly-price-cap-update>

99 Office for Budget Responsibility (2023) *Economic and Fiscal Outlook – March 2023*. Online: OBR <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2023/>

100 The Energy Profits Levy has operated since May 2022 and increased from 25% to 35% in January 2023, when the electricity generators levy of 45% was also introduced. These two measures will run until March 2028 and are expected to raise £14 billion pounds in 2023/24 and £40 billion pounds over the next 6 years.

101 The package also includes measures for households that ineligible for Energy Price Guarantee and Energy Bills Support Scheme because they are off the grid, such as those living in mobile homes, oil-heated homes, in homes linked to a heat network.

102 Office for Budget Responsibility (2023) *Economic and Fiscal Outlook – March 2023*. Online: OBR <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2023/>

103 HM Treasury (2022) *Autumn Statement 2022*. London: HM Treasury <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-statement-2022-documents/autumn-statement-2022-html>

104 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2022) *Getting the Energy Bills Support Scheme Discount- Guidance*. Online: gov.uk <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/getting-the-energy-bills-support-scheme-discount>

105 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Council Tax Energy Rebate: Information Leaflet For Households In Council Tax Bands A-D*. Online: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/52022-council-tax-information-letter-24-february-2022>

106 Department for Work and Pensions (2022) *7.2 Million Cost Of Living Payments Made To Low-Income Families*. Online: DWP <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/7-2-million-cost-of-living-payments-made-to-low-income-families>

107 Department for Work and Pensions (2022) *7.2 Million Cost Of Living Payments Made To Low-Income Families*. Online: DWP <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/7-2-million-cost-of-living-payments-made-to-low-income-families>

108 Department for Work and Pensions (2022) *Pensioner Cost of Living Payment management information* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pensioner-cost-of-living-payment-management-information>

109 HM Treasury (2022) *Policy paper- Cost of living support Factsheet*. London: HM Treasury <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-statement-2022-cost-of-living-support-factsheet/cost-of-living-support-factsheet>

110 Johnson, P. (2022) *Autumn Statement 2022: IFS Analysis – Opening remarks*. London: IFS <https://ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-11/Autumn-Statement-2022-IFS-Analysis-Opening-Remarks.pdf>

111 Institute for Fiscal Studies (2022) *IFS Response to Government Cost Of Living Support Package*. Online: IFS <https://ifs.org.uk/articles/ifs-response-government-cost-living-support-package>

112 Treasury Committee (2022) *Autumn Statement 2022 – Cost of living payments*. London: House of Commons <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmtreasy/740/report.html#heading-1>

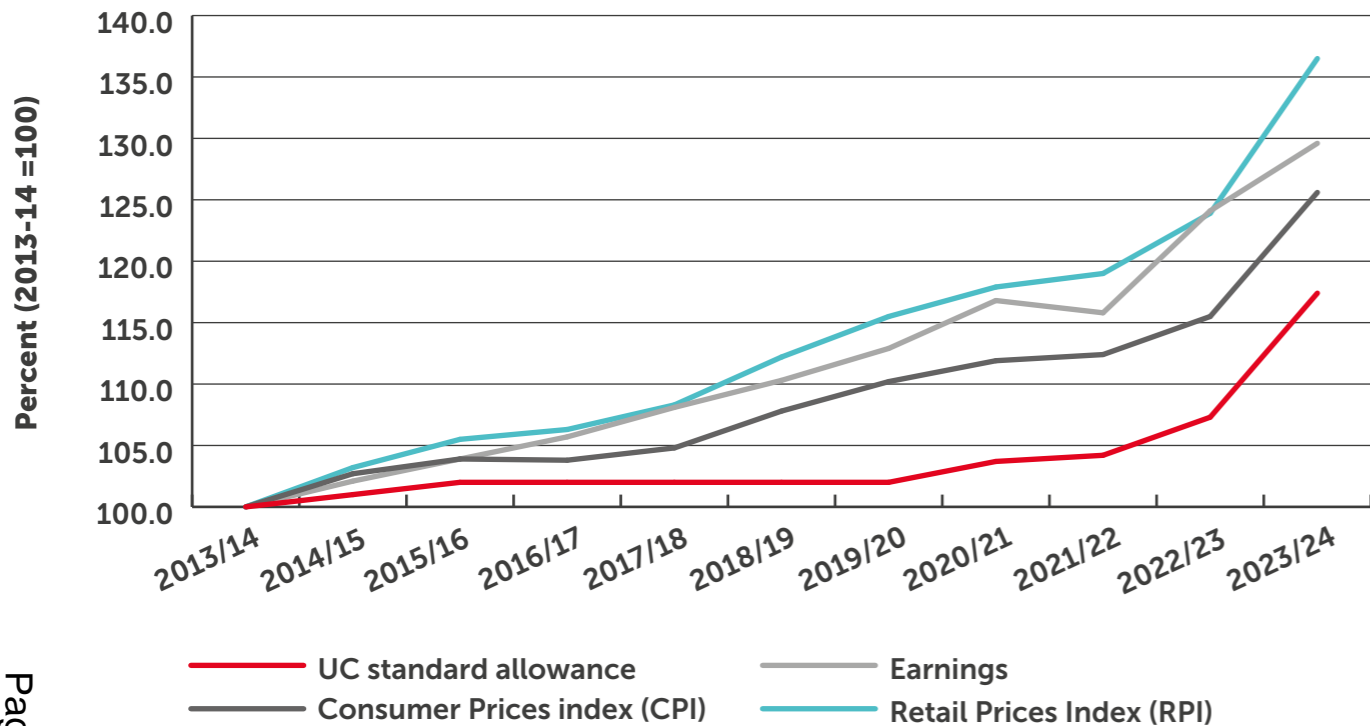
113 Resolution Foundation (2022) *Back-on-target: Analysis of The Government's Additional Cost of Living Support*. London: RF <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/back-on-target/>

114 Treasury Committee (2022) *Autumn Statement 2022 – Cost of living payments*. London: House of Commons <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmtreasy/740/report.html#heading-1>

115 Institute for Fiscal Studies (2022) *IFS Response to Government Cost Of Living Support Package*. Online: IFS <https://ifs.org.uk/articles/ifs-response-government-cost-living-support-package>

116 Treasury Committee (2022) *Autumn Statement 2022 – Cost of living payments*. London: House of Commons <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmtreasy/740/report.html#heading-1>

Figure 2.3: Universal Credit Standard Allowance, Earnings & Inflation indices 2013/14 to 2023/24 (2013/14 =100)



Sources: DWP benefit and pension rates, various editions and ONS inflation and earning rates
 Notes: CPI and RPI are both based on annual inflation rate to September each year.

“Stuff like rebates for council tax, it’s not enough money to... I’m sure it’s very welcome to individual families for a week or two, but it’s not going to fundamentally change their circumstances.”
 (LA key informant)

“I think they... are welcomed... but a line of criticism is that it’s not enough and you can’t just random... a policy framework on a series of crisis

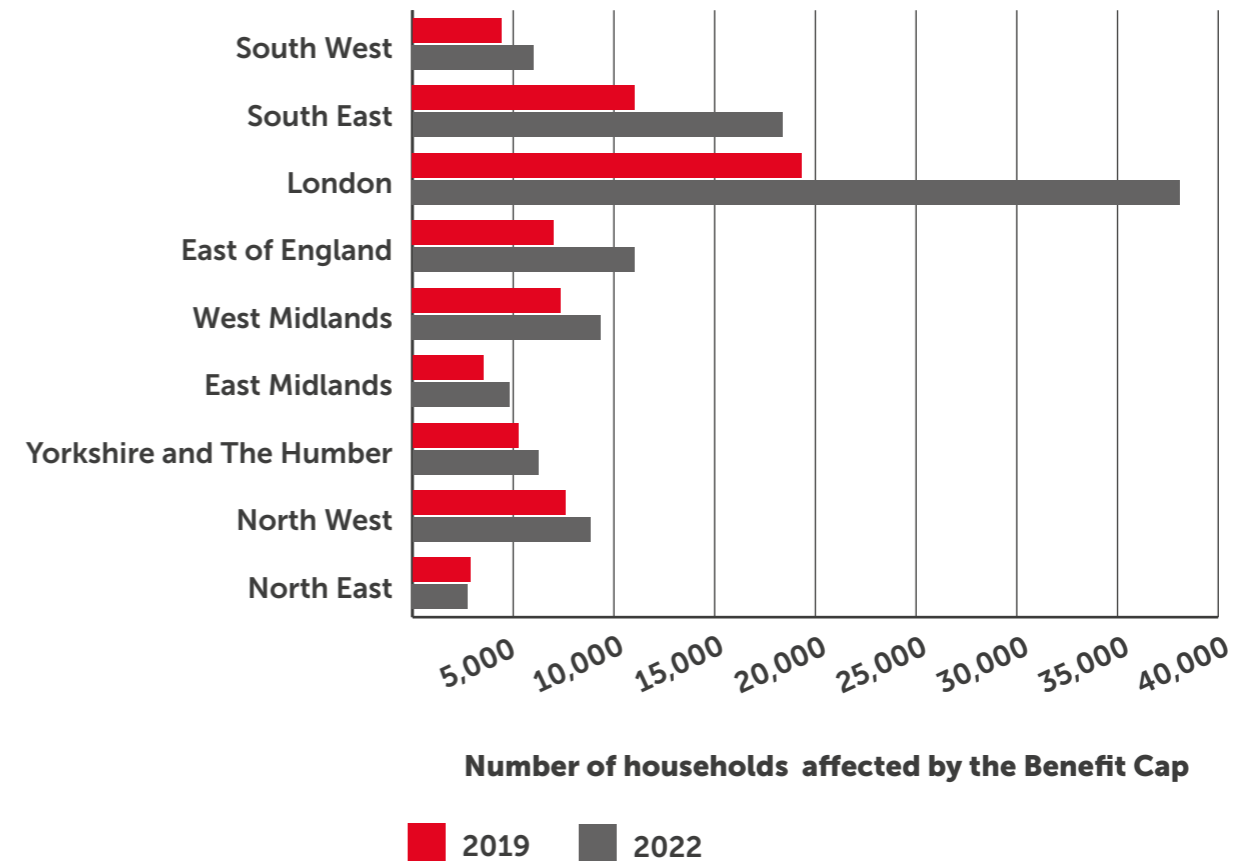
interventions, you need to give people some stability.”
 (Statutory sector key informant)

“I don’t think that they’re going to be more than short-term fixes to what is a much bigger problem and much bigger pressure.”
 (Independent key informant)

Income related social security
 According to one estimate, the 10.1% uprating of social security benefits in April 2023, may shield half a million from poverty.¹¹⁷ Revisions to the work

117 Legatum Institute (2022) *The Poverty Impact Of The Autumn Statement 2022*. London: Legatum Institute <https://li.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/LI-Briefing-November-2022-Autumn-Statement-final.pdf>

Figure 2.4: Number of Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants in England affected by the Benefit Cap, November 2019 and November 2022



Source: DWP Benefit Cap Statistics Stat-Xplore Uc and HB tables accessed March 2023

allowance and the earning taper in late 2021 has also meant that UC become more generous for families in work than the current legacy system.¹¹⁸ However, concerns persist about the adequacy of basic benefit rates,¹¹⁹ which now pay less than the cash thresholds for destitution for working age households.¹²⁰

Benefit cuts and freezes have reduced the value of income-related benefits for adults of working age, both in real terms and relative to earnings. Excluding the temporary

£20 uplift, figure 2.3 shows that between 2013/14 and 2023/24, the UC Standard allowance increased by 17% whereas CPI increased by 26%, earnings increased by 30% and the retail price index, which was used to uprate benefits prior to 2011, by 37%. The frequency of benefit uprating has also been questioned by the Pensions and Works Committee, who called for the DWP to develop more agile IT systems to allow more frequent benefit uprating when volatile economic circumstances cause financial hardship.¹²¹

118 Institute for Fiscal Studies (2022) *The Green Budget 2022*. London: IFS <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/ifs-green-budget-2022>

119 Works and Pensions Committee (2022) *The Cost of Living*, London: House of Commons. Online: Parliament <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmworpen/129/report.html>

120 Bramley, G. (2023) *Destitution in the UK: income thresholds for October 2022*. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-income-thresholds-october-2022>

121 Works and Pensions Committee (2022) *The Cost of Living*. London: House of Commons <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmworpen/129/report.html>

The benefit cap limits the amount of benefit a household classed as 'out of work' by the DWP can receive, increasing the risk of homelessness. As noted in last year's monitor,¹²² the numbers of households in England affected by the cap peaked at 176,450 in February 2021 before falling back to 109,777 in October 2021, when the temporary £20 uplift ended. Numbers crept up between April and August 2022, mainly because the benefit cap remained frozen whereas UC and associated legacy benefits were uprated by 3.1%. While numbers have subsequently dropped back, they remain very high compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Some 105,500 households in England had their benefit capped in November 2022, 54% higher than in the same month in 2019, driven mainly by the steep rise in claimants subject to the benefit cap in London and, to a lesser extent, the South East (see figure 2.4). Of those who had their benefit capped in November 2022, 90% were claiming UC, 86% had children, 70% were lone parents and 36% lived in London, up from 28% in November 2019.

The fact that the benefit cap had remained frozen at 2016 levels was lamented by key informants, who reported that homeless households that had their benefit capped often remain trapped in TA indefinitely.¹²³

"We're talking about... more households on the benefit cap... [H]ow that can be... sustainable in policy terms... because of the hardship that that creates but also how it interacts with temporary

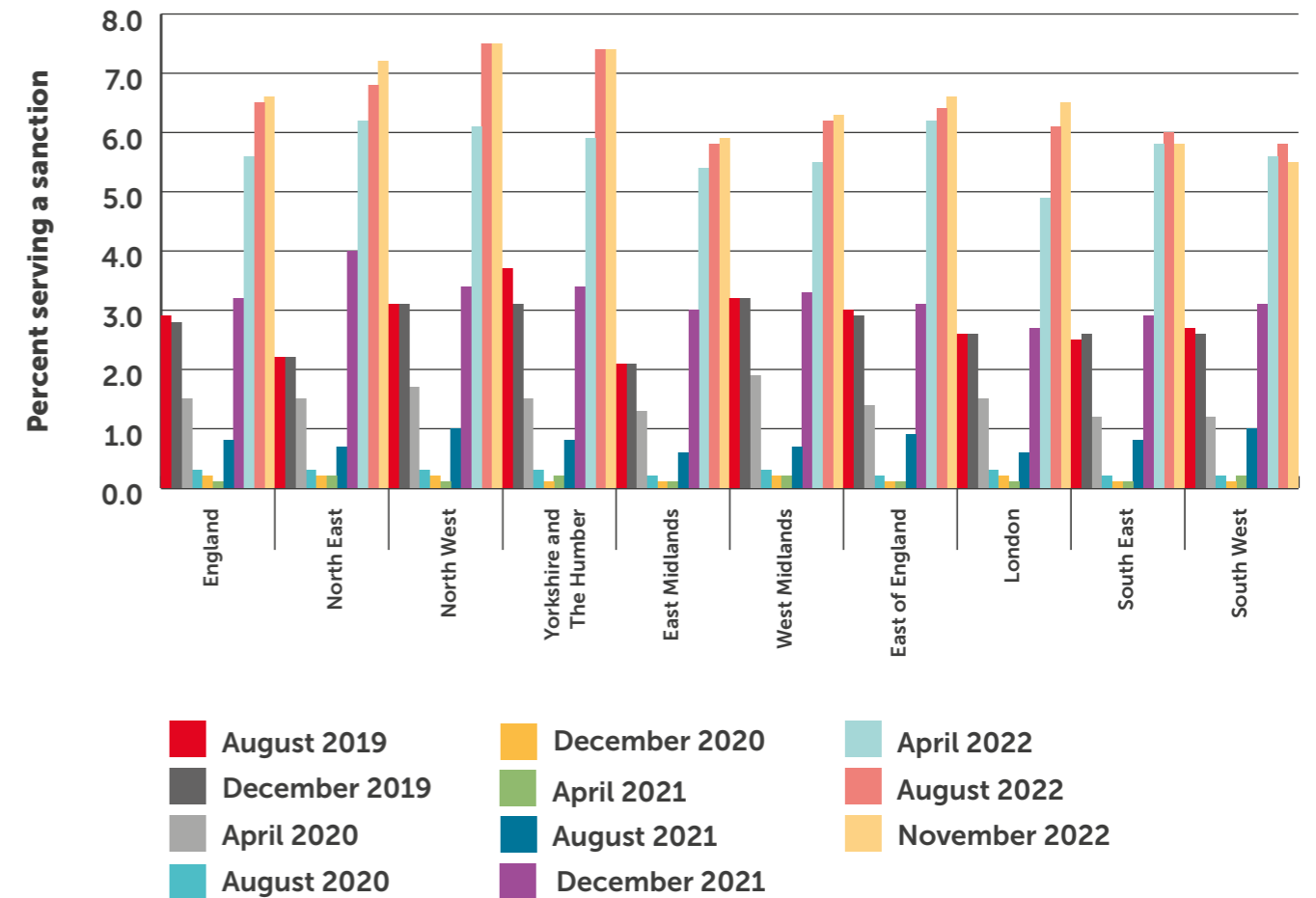
accommodation objectives. If people have got no money to pay the rent because they've been capped... that means temporary accommodation just... gives them a roof over their head but... at the higher cost of the taxpayer than conventional accommodation.... I think we've got to a very poor sort of state of affairs, I have to say, in terms of where we've got to in our policy journey."

(Statutory sector key informant)

From April 2023, the benefit cap rose by 10.1% from £13,400 to £14,753 for single adults (£15,410 to £16,967 in Greater London) and from £20,000 to £22,020 for families (£23,000 to £25,323 in In Greater London). In the absence of any Government impact assessment of the first rise in the benefit cap's 10 year history, it is not known how much this might dampen the Institute for Fiscal Studies prediction that up to 250,000 households in GB could have had their benefit capped by 2025/26 if rates had remained frozen.¹²⁴

Households claiming UC and other income-related state benefits often must comply with work-related conditions or risk having their benefit cut, leaving them destitute. The numbers of people with a sanction deduction plummeted when conditionality was suspended in the early months of the pandemic. Since the re-introduction of face to face appointments in April 2021, rates have soared above pre-pandemic levels. Figure 2.5 shows UC full service claimants in England with a

Figure 2.5: Proportion of Universal Credit full service claimants in England with a sanction deduction by region



Source: DWP Sanction Decisions Stat-Xplore tables accessed 3 January 2023

Notes: At August 2022, there were around 4.9m full service UC claimants in England, of which 1.6m were subject to conditionality and could have their benefit sanctioned. This latter figure for each time period is the denominator used to calculate the rate for England.

sanction deduction as a proportion of UC full service claimants subject to conditionality where benefit can be cut.¹²⁵ In November 2022, the rate stood at 6.6% compared to 2.9% in August 2019. DWP statistics report most sanctions are for failing to attend appoints. This does not adequately reflect what is happening on the ground,¹²⁶ but this was the only reason

offered for the rise by Guy Opperman, DWP Minister of State, when asked by the Works and Pensions Committee.¹²⁷

Figure 2.5 also shows that the rate of increase has been spatially uneven, with the Institute for Public Policy Research suggesting that someone in the North East is over 30% more likely to be sanctioned than someone

122 Watts, B., Bramley, G., Pawson, H., Young, G. Fitzpatrick, S., & McMordie, L (2022) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2022*. Online: Crisis https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/246994/the-homelessness-monitor-england-2022_report.pdf
 123 Child Poverty Action Group (2022) *Pushed Deeper into Poverty: The Impact of the Benefit Cap on Families and Rising Prices*. Online: CPAG. https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/policypost/Briefing_Benefit_Cap_Mar_2022.pdf
 124 Institute for Fiscal Studies (2022) *The Green Budget 2022*. London: IFS <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/ifs-green-budget-2022>

125 DWP ceased publishing sanction statistics for UC live service claimants in 2020 and for JSA, ESA and Income Support from July 2022 but 423,600 people on these legacy benefits were liable to sanction.
 126 Webster, D. (2022) *Benefit Sanctions Statistics Briefing: Nov' 2022*. Glasgow: CPAG & Glasgow University <https://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/david-webster-university-glasgow-briefings-benefit-sanctions>
 127 House of Commons (2022) *Westminster Hall Debate - Benefit Sanctions Volume 724: debated on Tuesday 13 December 2022*. London: Hansard <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-12-13/debates/7C52ABED-61DB-4BDC-95F5-36565E33516D/BenefitSanctions>

in the South West.¹²⁸ As this cannot be explained by spatial disparities in the labour market, it appears that sanctions continue to be inconsistently and inappropriately applied across England.¹²⁹ Data is lacking about homeless households and the extent to which they are being sanctioned, how long they are sanctioned for and the extent to which they can secure easement to suspend conditionality.¹³⁰ It is therefore unclear if implementation of the DWP homelessness easement guidance is becoming more effectively and consistently applied across England in the last few years. Little is known about the 6,600 households that were ineligible for the cost of living payment because they had a zero UC award during the July qualifying period due to being sanctioned.¹³¹

The labour market and wider outcomes of sanctions remains under-investigated and inconsistent,¹³² but this has not prevented the Government from tightening sanctions. UC claimants have been required to seek work outside their chosen sector after four weeks instead of three months since early 2022. The 'administrative earnings threshold', which is the minimum a person must earn to be exempt from the imposition of

sanctions, has been increased sharply in recent months. In January 2023 it stood at £618 a month (£988 for joint claimants) compared to £355 (£567 for joint claimants) prior to September 2022. It will increase to around £813 in July 2023, with the exemption for those whose partner is earning above the 'administrative earnings threshold' for joint claimants is removed entirely. The recent uplifts have extended in-work conditionality to 234,000 claimants in GB in low paid part time work while the July changes will affect a further 100,000 claimants.¹³³ Proposals Plans to extend in-work conditionality to UC claimants with earnings equivalent to over 18 hours but less than 35 hours a week at the national living wage from September 2023,¹³⁴ will impact on many more.

Around 44% of households on UC in England have 'other' deductions from their benefit,¹³⁵ which is closely linked to debt, food bank use, destitution and homelessness.¹³⁶ Of the £124 million recouped across GB in November 2021, £80 million was for debt owed to Government for benefit advances, overpayments and errors and £44 million was for third party deductions for things like rent arrears, council tax arrears and fuel bills.¹³⁷

128 Parkes, H (2023) *The Sanctions Surge*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research. <https://www.ippr.org/files/2023-03/the-sanctions-surge-mar23.pdf>

129 House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee (2018) *Benefit Sanctions*. London: HMSO <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmworpen/955/95502.htm>

130 Institute for Public Policy Research (2022) *No-one left behind: Supporting people with complex needs on Universal Credit*. London: IPPR <https://www.ippr.org/files/2022-04/no-one-left-behind-march22.pdf>

131 Department for Work and Pensions (2022) *Universal Credit: Cost of Living Payments Department for Work and Pensions written question – answered on 22nd September 2022*. Online: DWP <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2022-09-07.49154.h>

132 Pattaro, S., Bailey, N., Williams, E., Gibson, M., Wells, V., Tranmer, M., & Dibben, C. (2022) 'The Impacts of Benefit Sanctions: A Scoping Review of the Quantitative Research Evidence.' *Journal of Social Policy*, 51(3): 611-653 <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-social-policy/article/impacts-of-benefit-sanctions-a-scoping-review-of-the-quantitative-research-evidence/9272BC857236795930DCD6AB7B8E04A1>

133 HM Treasury (2023) *Spring Budget 2023 factsheet – Labour Market Measures*. London: HM Treasury. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spring-budget-2023-labour-market-factsheet/spring-budget-2023-factsheet-labour-market-measures>

134 HM Treasury (2022) *Autumn Statement 2022*. London: HM Treasury <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-statement-2022-documents/autumn-statement-2022-html>

135 Lloyds Bank Foundation (2022) *Deductions: The Driver of Poverty*. London: LBF <https://www.lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk/media/h1adbzmz/ductionsreport.pdf>

136 Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Blenkinsopp, J., Wood, J., Sosenko, F., Littlewood, M., Johnsen, S. Watts, B., Treanor, M., & McIntyre J. (2020) *Destitution in the UK 2020*. York: JRF <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2020>

137 Child Poverty Action Group (2022) *Reducing deductions: the first step in a package of support for low-income households*. London: CPA https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/policypost/Reducing_Deductions.pdf

There has been some progress in reducing financial hardship caused by deductions. Between 2019 and 2021, the maximum amount deducted from benefit for debt owed to the Government was incrementally reduced from 40% to 25%. In April 2021, the repayment period for advance payments to cover the 'sign-on' 5 weeks wait period was increased from 12 to 24 months. In April 2022, energy companies were prevented from increasing existing, or initiating new, deductions for ongoing fuel consumption.¹³⁸ Nonetheless, benefit deductions are out of step with best practice in consumer credit, which centres on assessing a person's ability to afford repayments as opposed to fixed rate deductions.¹³⁹ There have therefore been calls to suspend or reduce deductions until a system based on comprehensive affordability checks is put in place.¹⁴⁰

Discretionary funding

One way households facing financial hardship - including those affected by benefit deductions, the benefit cap or LHA shortfalls - can be supported are discretionary payments.

LAs receive funding for DHPs from the DWP, to help people meet shortfalls between their housing costs and the financial support they receive from UC or Housing Benefit to cover it. In contrast to other long standing discretionary funds, most LAs spend all or most of their DHP allocation, which has become an important homeless prevention tool.¹⁴¹

The DWP reduced the DHP allocation for England and Wales from £179.5

million to £140m in 2021/22 and by a further £40m to £100m in 2022/23, the lowest allocation in cash (nominal) terms for a decade.¹⁴² The share of LAs topping up their DHP allocation by more than 5% grew from 13% in 2020/21 to 25% in 2021/22. However, the total value of this top-up funding (£7 million) in 2021/22 fell far short of compensating for the loss of DWP funding:

“The council is now having to fund a topped-up DHP programme... but because we've been impacted by energy costs as well... we've had an increase in our costs, with not one penny of additional money from central government... I don't know how they continue to expect councils to deliver the services that residents require.”
(LA key informant)

Key informants were of the view that DHP funding cuts are constraining the capacity of LAs to use DHPs to prevent and relieve homelessness' at a time when demand is growing.

“It's really, really difficult for us to discharge homelessness duties [now]... It's like having a millstone around your neck... The DHP was particularly egregious, I felt, to cut back, because that's how councils make it work...”
(LA key informant)

138 Works and Pensions Committee (2022) *The Cost of Living*, London: House of Commons. Online: Parliament <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmworpen/129/report.html>

139 Works and Pensions Committee (2022) *The Cost of Living*, London: House of Commons. Online: Parliament <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmworpen/129/report.html>

140 Lloyds Bank Foundation (2022) *Deductions: The Driver of Poverty*. London: LBF <https://www.lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk/media/h1adbzmz/ductionsreport.pdf>

141 Hick, R. (2022) 'Austerity, Localism, and the Possibility of Politics: Explaining Variation in Three Local Social Security Schemes Between Elected Councils in England.' *Sociological Research*, 27(2): 251-272 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1360780421990668>

142 Department for Works and Pensions (2022) *Discretionary Housing Payments statistics*. Online: DWP <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/discretionary-housing-payments-statistics>

“DHP helps enormously – but it’s been cut... we can do less when the need is more; that is the problem.”

(LA key informant)

This was highlighted in a recent Inside Housing article based on FOI responses of 251 councils.¹⁴³ It reported that the success rate for DHP applications fell from 71% in 2020/21 to 67% in 2021/22 and that the value of individual DHP awards to applicants had also reduced. In addition, it noted that LAs continue to differ in the way they prioritise and administer DHPs, another reason why DHPs do not always reach households, especially private renters, in need of extra support with their housing costs.¹⁴⁴

Most LA survey respondents (54%) saw DHP funding cuts as ‘very challenging’ in the context of their efforts to prevent or alleviate homelessness (see Appendix 2, Table 10) A number of authorities noted that reduced funding had resulted in funds being exhausted well before the end of financial year Q3.

DWP suggest that DHP allocations should be viewed alongside the HSF.¹⁴⁵ This is intended to help vulnerable households with payments towards

the rising cost of essentials. It can therefore be used in principle to help with the housing costs,¹⁴⁶ principally for those ineligible for DHP funding, such as those classed as having No Recourse to Public Funds or other restricted eligibility for statutory support (NRPF/Other RE).¹⁴⁷ An additional £842 million is to be allocated to English LAs for 2023/24,¹⁴⁸ bringing the total HSF funding in England up to £2.1 billion since its launch in October 2021.

DWP conditions and guidance on how HSF should be used, and which groups should be prioritised has been modified with each funding allocation. The extent to which these changes have ensured the most vulnerable households are being supported effectively is unclear. The only published Government data reports that some 8.9 million awards were made by the end of March 2022, that 80% of expenditure was directed to families with children and that £4 million of the first tranche of HSF was not spent at the year end.¹⁴⁹ Key informants able to comment on the HSF were uncertain about the value of the fund and its relevance to mitigating homelessness risk, and several reported challenges around administering it within the given timescales.

“Household Support Fund, what we are hearing is it’s really difficult to access, that local authorities in some cases are struggling to get it out the door because they just don’t have the resources to do the grant management of it, and then also the criteria really varies across local authority to local authority... I don’t think it’s a particularly effective measure, and I suspect specifically not for single homelessness. I imagine it’s going more to families.”

(Voluntary sector key informant)

“it’s not supposed to be for rent apart from in exceptional circumstances. So it doesn’t really help with people struggling with housing costs, or at risk of homelessness... [and] because councils had to allocate it all, within a fixed amount of time, they didn’t really have the capacity to make sure it was being that well targeted.”

(Voluntary sector key informant)

Drawing on responses to Freedom of Information requests,¹⁵⁰ End Furniture Poverty estimate that 69% of HSF in 2021/22 was used to provide grants (including vouchers and other payments in kind) to households in receipt of certain benefits and 14% was distributed via voluntary and

community organisations. Households therefore had limited scope to apply directly for HSF assistance, with just 17% of HSF distributed through Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) schemes or similar crisis schemes.

LWA schemes were set up in 2013 to support people through a crisis or to live independently in the community after the Social Fund was abolished and its budget was devolved to LAs. By 2021/22, however, 35 out of the 151 single tier and upper tier LAs had closed their LWA scheme and funding for many others had been drastically cut back. Just £55.5 million was spent on LWA in England in 2021/22, of which £30.5 million came from LAs’ core funding and £25 million from the HSF.¹⁵¹ This has reinforced concerns about the adequacy, coverage, and efficacy of LWA schemes.¹⁵²

One fifth of LA survey respondents reported that there was no LWA scheme in their area, while a further 14% did not know whether such a local scheme existed or not (see Appendix 2, Table 11).¹⁵³ Considering that most respondents in areas with such schemes believe them at least moderately important in mitigating homelessness (see Appendix 2, Table 12), it is concerning that they are absent in so many areas. Positive comments on the contribution of LWA schemes in mitigating and/or relieving homelessness included the following:

“Local welfare assistance scheme helps homeless people to move / resettle i.e. with costs.”
(LA respondent, London)

143 Jayanetti, C. (2023) Councils Refuse Emergency Housing Payments After Large Government Cut To Support Fund. *Inside Housing*. 6th January. Online: Inside Housing <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/councils-refuse-emergency-housing-payments-after-large-government-cut-to-support-fund-79592>

144 Judge, L. (2021) *Getting ahead on falling behind: Tackling the UK’s building arrears crisis*. London: Resolution Foundation <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/getting-ahead-on-falling-behind/>

145 Jayanetti, C. (2023) Councils Refuse Emergency Housing Payments After Large Government Cut To Support Fund. *Inside Housing*. 6th January. Online: Inside Housing. <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/councils-refuse-emergency-housing-payments-after-large-government-cut-to-support-fund-79592>

146 Works and Pensions Committee (2022) *The Cost of Living*. London: House of Commons <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmworpen/129/report.html>

147 Kennedy, S., Mackley, A., and Hobson, F. (2022) Cost of Living Payments: Overview and FAQs. London: House of Commons Library <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9616/CBP-9616.pdf>

148 HM Treasury (2022) *Autumn Statement 2022*. London: HM Treasury <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-statement-2022-documents/autumn-statement-2022-html>

149 Department for Works and Pensions (2022) *Household Support Fund Management Information For 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022*. Online: DWP <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/household-support-fund-management-information-6-october-2021-to-31-march-2022>

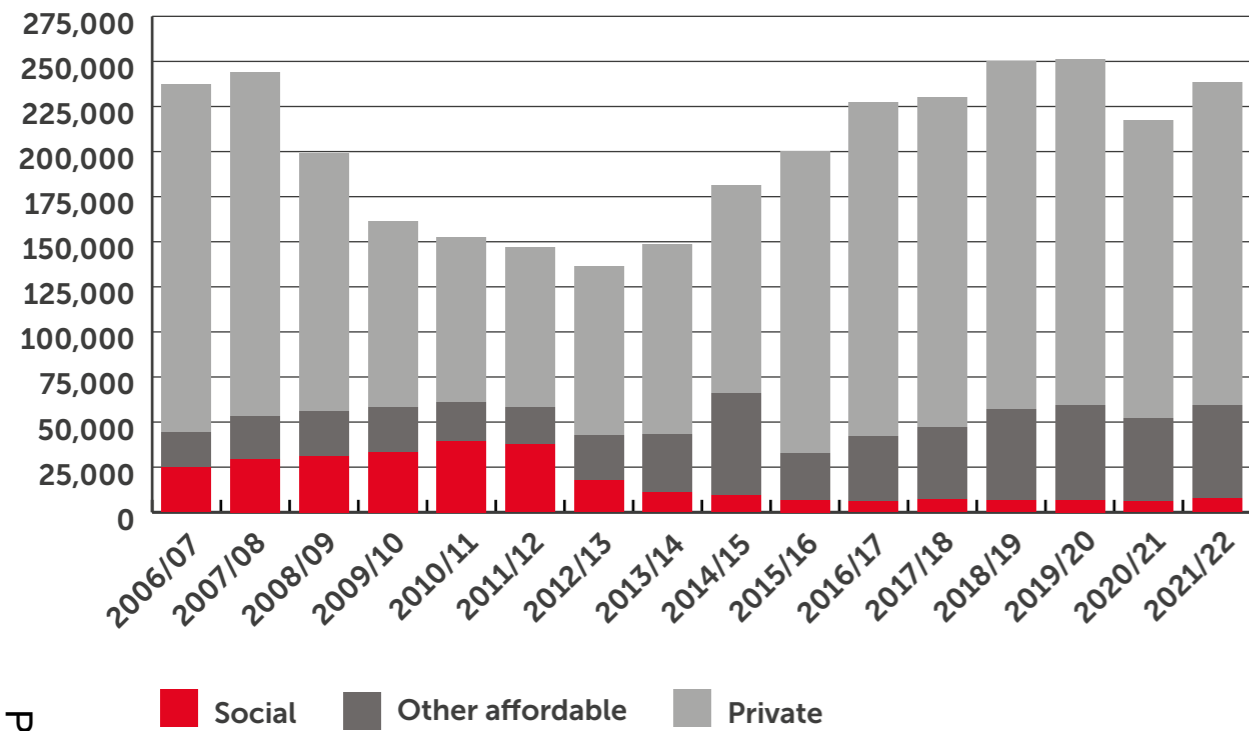
150 Bond, D & Donavan, C. (2022) *Resetting Crisis Support: Local Welfare Assistance 2021/22 & Household Support Fund*. Liverpool: End Furniture Poverty <https://endfurniturepoverty.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/EFP-Resetting-Crisis-Support-Final.pdf>

151 Bond, D & Donavan, C. (2022) *Resetting Crisis Support: Local Welfare Assistance 2021/22 & Household Support Fund*. Liverpool: End Furniture Poverty <https://endfurniturepoverty.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/EFP-Resetting-Crisis-Support-Final.pdf>

152 Trussell Trust (2022) *Local Lifelines: Investing in Local Welfare During and Beyond Covid-19*. London: Trussell Trust https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/10/LWAS_1020_v3.pdf

153 Since LWA schemes may be operated by county authorities in two tier local government areas, it may be that district (lower tier) council respondents are less well-acquainted with such arrangements.

Figure 2.6: Affordable housing and all new housing additions, England, 2006/07 to 2021/22



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Source: DLUHC Nov 2022, Housing supply: net additional dwellings.

Note: Social figures refer to social rented completions, private sector figures refer to gross additions to private stock and other affordable refer to gross additions to affordable stock minus social completions. As additions include conversions and change of use, the social rented figures are not strictly comparable.

“This scheme is crucial to prevent and relieve homelessness and is very much at risk in light of the council overall budget deficit as it is discretionary.”
(LA respondent, the North)

“[Enables] people to access funding to remain in their tenancies rather than feel they have no other options but to abandon.”
(LA respondent, the North)

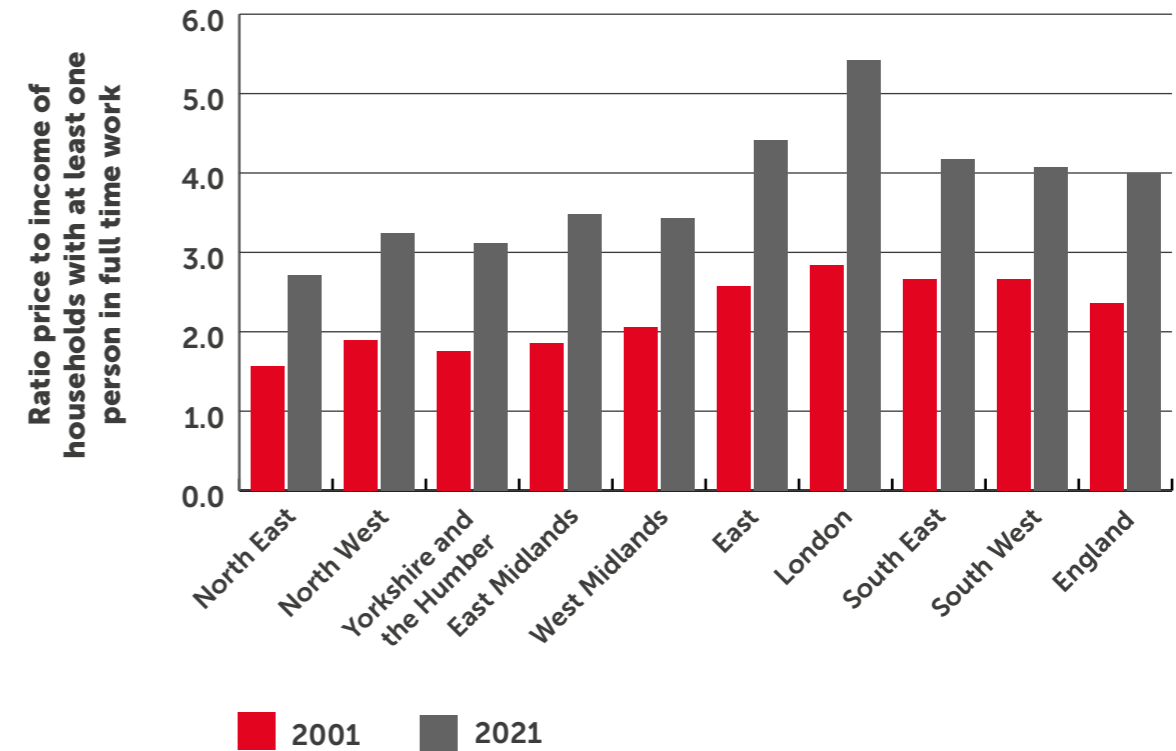
Some respondents, on the other hand, emphasized scheme limitations with respect to homelessness mitigation:

“Although a hardship fund, it is small emergency payments and grant provisions for removals and appliances/ Furniture – it’s not set up to mitigate against the risk of homelessness.”
(LA respondent, the South)

2.4 Housing system trends

This section looks at changes in the supply of housing, principally the ability to access housing that is affordable and trends in eviction and repossession actions since the temporary pandemic measures in England ended on 31 May 2021.

Figure 2.7: Average first time buyer price to working household income ratios, 2001 to 2021 by English Region



Sources: DWP Family Resources Survey (average income of households with one or more persons in full time work: 3 year rolling averages), ONS House price simple averages (average first time buyer prices).

Housing Delivery

In each of the five years to the end of 2021/22, there was an average of 206,000 net additions to England’s housing stock, with new housing completions accounting for around 90% of net growth.¹⁵⁴ In 2021/22, 191,820 new homes were completed. This was 10% higher than the 191,820 new homes built in 2020/21 when pandemic lockdowns stalled construction but 9,000 fewer than in 2019/20. The delivery of new homes therefore remains well below the Government’s aim to deliver to

300,000 per year by the mid-2020s,¹⁵⁵ and independent research estimates that there was a need for 340,000 extra homes each year.

Figure 2.6 shows that 22% of all new additions to the housing stock (i.e., excluding demolitions) during the lifespan of the Government’s Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme 2016-21 were for affordable housing, up from 16% in 2015/16. Just 31,580 out of the 257,929 affordable housing completions, however, were for social rent. A further

154 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Housing Supply: Net Additional Dwellings, England: 2021 to 2022*. London: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/housing-supply-net-additional-dwellings-england-2021-to-2022>

155 Bramley, G. (2019) *Housing Supply Requirements across Great Britain for low income households and homeless people: Research for Crisis and the National Housing Federation; Main Technical Report*. Edinburgh. Heriot-Watt University <https://doi.org/10.17861/bramley.2019.04>

59,175 new affordable homes were completed in 2021/22, including 7,528 for social rent.

The £11.4 billion Affordable Homes Programme 2021-26 is expected to deliver 157,000 'grant-funded' starts by March 2026 rather than the 180,000 originally announced.¹⁵⁶ It therefore remains to be seen whether the recent commitment to deliver 32,000 social rented homes through the Affordable Homes Programme will be achieved.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, the National Audit Office has warned that the programme lacks the necessary incentives to deliver homes in areas of highest need or unaffordability and that targets to boost the provision of supported housing and rural areas are being missed.¹⁵⁸

While only 42% of new affordable homes constructed in 2021/22 was grant funded,¹⁵⁹ the outlook for new affordable supply is extremely challenging. There is uncertainty around the replacement of Section 106 developer contributions by the 'infrastructure levy' set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill,¹⁶⁰ and costs are mounting due to rapid inflation, shortages of building material and labour and delays in planning and the provision of utilities.¹⁶¹

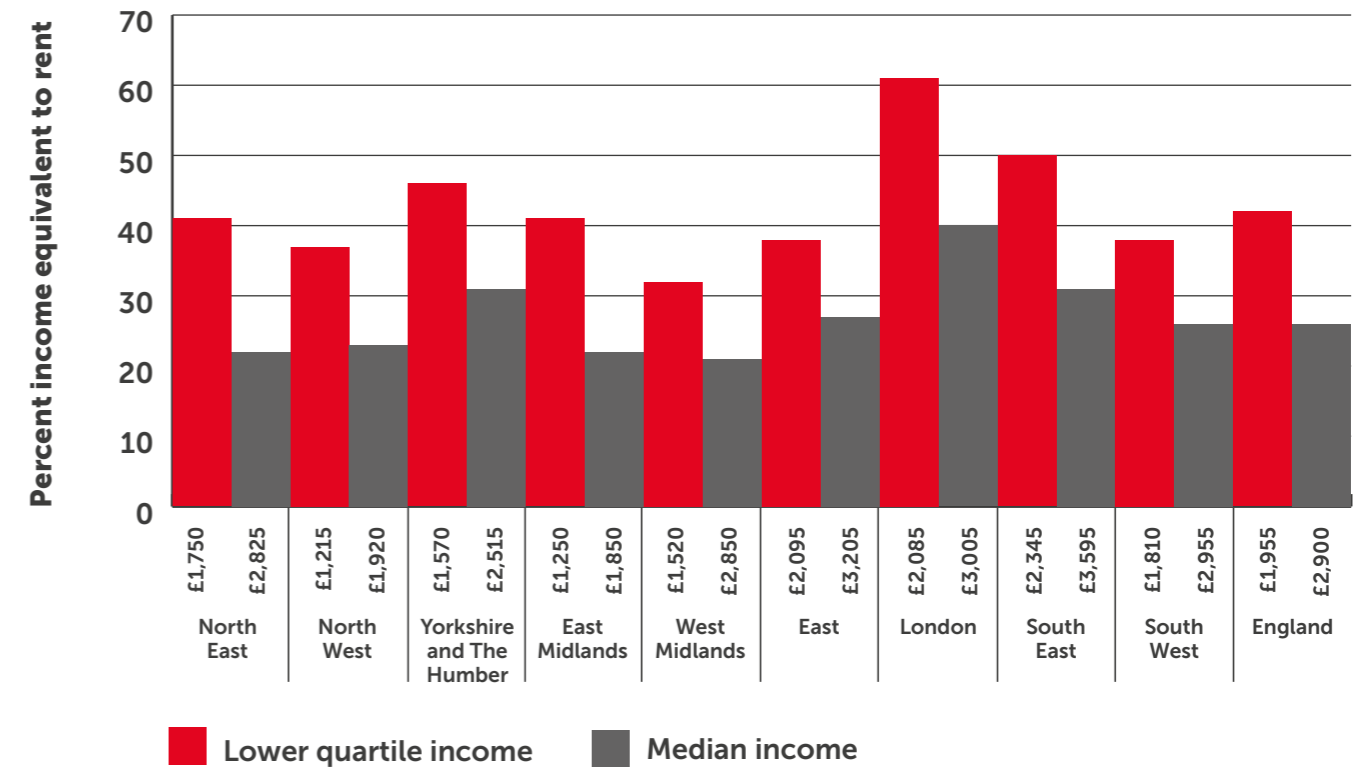
Social landlords also face competing investment pressures to decarbonise and improve the quality and safety of

their existing stock. The Government's aim to halve the number of rented homes across the social and private sector that do not comply with the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) by 2030,¹⁶² will add to these investment pressures. Set against this, the Spring 2023 Budget announcement that Public Works Loan Board borrowing rates for LAs building new affordable housing will be discounted by 0.4% is likely to have minimal impact, especially in the absence of a clear commitment to a retrofit strategy to decarbonise the stock.

The inquest into the death of 2 year old Awaab Ishak due to a respiratory condition following prolonged exposure to mould at his family home, has also increased pressure on social landlords to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould. The Government has tabled amendments to the Social Housing Regulation Bill that will require landlords to fix reported health hazards within specified timeframes.¹⁶³ The Regulator for Social Housing estimates that some 160,000 social homes (3-4%) have 'notable' damp, including 8,000 (0.2%) with a "very serious" problem. It has also warned it will take regulatory action against landlords that fail to improve arrangements to protect tenants from damp and mould.¹⁶⁴

156 National Audit Office (2022) *The Affordable Homes Programme since 2015*. London: NAO <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/the-affordable-homes-programme-since-2015/>
 157 Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Ending Rough Sleeping for Good*. London: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-rough-sleeping-for-good/ending-rough-sleeping-for-good#annex-b-summary-of-commitments-and-policies>
 158 National Audit Office (2022) *The Affordable Homes Programme since 2015*. London: NAO <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/the-affordable-homes-programme-since-2015/>
 159 Perry, J. (2023) *Housing Expenditure Plans*, in UK Housing Review 2023. Coventry: CIH
 160 Centre for Social Justice (2022) *Levelling Up - Ensuring Planning Reform Delivers Affordable Homes*. London: CSJ <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/library/levelling-up>
 161 National Audit Office (2022) *The Affordable Homes Programme since 2015*. London: NAO <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/the-affordable-homes-programme-since-2015/>
 162 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Levelling Up the United Kingdom*. London: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>
 163 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023) *Government to Deliver Awaab's Law, Press Release, 9th February*. London: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-deliver-awaabs-law>
 164 Regulator of Social Housing (2023) *Damp and Mould In Social Housing: Initial Findings*. London: RSH <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/damp-and-mould-in-social-housing-initial-findings>

Figure 2.8 Proportion of income of private renting households at lower quartile and median income point equivalent to the median PRS rent, 2020/21



Source: ONS (2023) Private rental affordability, England, Wales and Northern Ireland: 2021 dataset
 Notes: 1. Lower quartile and median household income refer to gross monthly income of private renters and are derived from the Family Resources Survey (FRS). The median PRS rent are sourced from the Private Rental Market Summary statistics (PRMS) and exclude service charges and rents paid for by housing benefit.
 2. As FRS and the PRMS may not provide fully representative samples for smaller regions, figures should be treated as indicative rather than definitive..

Access to housing that is affordable

The incomes of working households grew more slowly than house prices since 2001, progressively restricting access to homeownership to more affluent, usually dual earner households. Between 2001 and 2021 the average price paid by a first time buyer in England as a multiple of the average income of households that contained at least one person in full time work, increased from 2.4 to 4 (see figure 2.7). London saw the sharpest deterioration in affordability but affordability deteriorated considerably in all regions.

House prices continued to rise in 2022 but growth slowed in the second half of the year as mortgage rates increased, mortgage loan approvals dropped back and Help-To-By closed to new entrants. This slowdown in the market looks set to continue into 2023 regardless of the extension of the Mortgage Guarantee Scheme until the end of 2023. Consistent with this, separate survey reports for Aviva¹⁶⁵ and Forbes¹⁶⁶ suggest many more adults in the UK are likely to defer plans to buy, adding to private rental demand pressures.

165 Aviva (2022) *More Than A Million First-Time Buyers May Put Plans On Hold, Due To Cost of living Crisis* – Press Release, November 2022. Online: Aviva <https://www.aviva.com/newsroom/news-releases/2022/11/more-than-a-million-first-time-buyers-may-put-plans-on-hold/>
 166 Howard, L. & Pratt, K. (2022) *How The Cost of living Crisis Is Changing Our Approach To Life's Landmarks*. Forbes Advisor. 6th December. London: Forbes Advisor <https://www.forbes.com/uk/advisor/life-insurance/delayed-life-stages/>

Between 2011 and 2021 the number of households in England living in the private rented sector (PRS) (including rent free) increased from 3.7 to 4.8 million (19%),¹⁶⁷ with most of this increase having occurred prior to 2014.¹⁶⁸ It is unclear if the PRS has begun to shrink. The picture most likely varies across England, depending on the attractiveness of an area to 'build-to-rent' investors and how many private landlords have seized on rising house prices to sell up or rationalise their portfolios in the face of rising mortgage costs, tax changes and impending regulatory change. What is clear is that demand is growing for the dwindling flow of advertised private lets. Hometrack, for example, report that rental enquiries to estate agents in 2022 were 46% above the 5-year average.¹⁶⁹ This is contributing to a rapid rise in rents.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) report that private rents in England increased by an average of 1.7% per annum in the 5 years to mid 2021 but increased by 3.9% in the year to November 2022.¹⁷⁰ The ONS Index tracks all private rents, so it takes some time for it to reflect rent inflation for new tenancies, which is when landlords tend to adjust rents in line with market conditions. Commercial indices therefore offer a clearer insight into market dynamics. They suggest that advertised rents increased by up to 12% in 2022, with Zoopla

reporting that rents have increased fastest in cities, such as London (+17%), Manchester (+15.6%), Birmingham (+12.3%) and Bristol (+12.9%).¹⁷¹

Even before the current spike in rents, private renters were spending a sizeable proportion of their income on rent. Figure 2.8 reports the lower quartile and median gross household income (including state benefits) of private renters in 2020/21 and the proportion of this income they could expect to spend on a median priced rented home. Those with a median household income could expect to spend 26% of their income on a median priced rented home. For lower quartile income households, the proportion was 42%. Affordability pressures for lower income private renters were most marked in London (61%) and the South East (50%) but the rate in all regions were high when compared to the average proportion of gross income spent by social tenants (27%) and house buyers (22%).¹⁷²

Whilst the sharp rise in rents has affected most private renters, those on lower incomes have been most affected. This includes 1.7 million households, equivalent to 36% of all private renters in England, that claim support for their rent.¹⁷³ The continued freeze of the LHA at April 2020 rates¹⁷⁴ has reduced the support

available to help with housing costs, with potentially as few as 8% of private rental properties now available to rent at LHA rates or below.¹⁷⁵ Reflecting this, in August 2022, over 685,100 private renters in England that claimed UC (57%) paid a rent in excess of the applicable LHA, 221,000 more than in April 2020.¹⁷⁶ High and rising private rents have also failed to deliver major improvements in the quality of private rentals in terms of space standards or energy efficiency.¹⁷⁷ The net effect is that it is now tougher than ever to find suitable and affordable accommodation in the private rental market.

Key informants to this study echoed these concerns, reporting that the refreezing of LHA was:

"...devastating for people's ability to afford their rent leading to an increased risk of homelessness."

(LA key informant)

"It seems nonsensical to do this sort of stop/start because, if you were to unfreeze it you would like to think that there's a principle that's established there that says Housing Benefit needs to keep up with inflation... in order for this to be... a viable safety net."

(LA key informant)

"You need to bring the LHA up to the 30th percentile otherwise poorer households are going to be increasingly struggling to... afford anywhere to live... and how can you justify that when..."

175 Crisis (2022) *Falling Short - Housing Benefit and the Rising Cost of renting in England*. London: Crisis https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/247716/zoopla_briefingv6.pdf

176 Figures for England derived from Stat-Xplore Universal Credit data in January 2023

177 Resolution Foundation (2022) *The Resolution Foundation Housing Outlook, Q3, 2022*. Online: RF <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/housing-outlook-q3-2022/>

they're struggling already so much... you're talking about just putting people who are poor and vulnerable through this uncertainty... [of] relying upon handouts from time to time... [when] the whole point to the benefits system... was that it was allowing people to plan ahead with confidence."

(Statutory sector key informant)

Likewise, the vast majority of LAs responding to our survey (81%) reported that the re-freezing of LHA rates had been 'very challenging' in relation to efforts to manage and reduce homelessness (see Appendix 2, Table 10). In open-ended comments, many LAs vented concerns around this growing stress resulting from the re-freezing of LHA rates:

"Average rental values are now 50% over the LHA rates and therefore the PRS is completely unaffordable for the people on benefits."

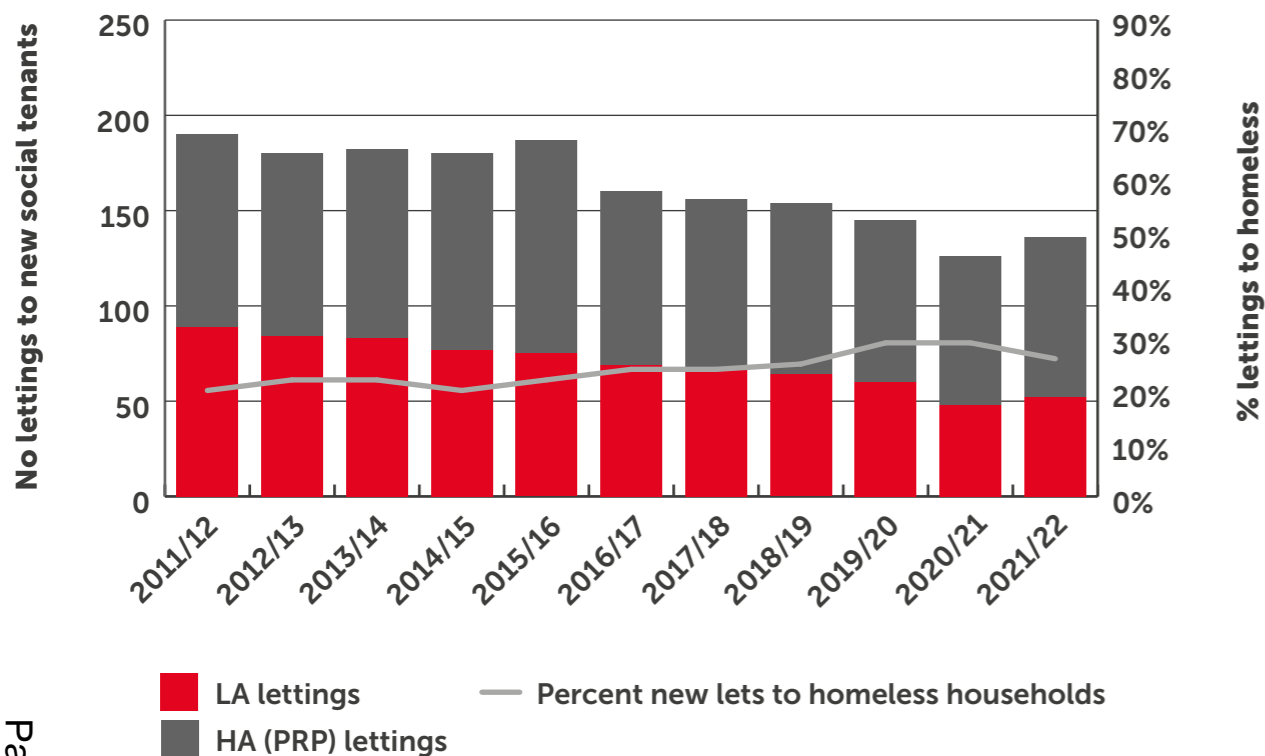
(LA respondent, London)

"Either LHA rates and benefits need to be increased or limits and caps need to be put in place to for PRS rents."

(LA respondent, the South)

Others commented that, considering high rents in their area, the benefits of any relaxation of LHA restrictions would be compromised by payment limits under the total benefit cap.

Figure 2.9 Lettings to new social tenants and % made to homeless households, 2011/12 to 2020/21



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Source: DHLUC (2023) Local Authority Housing Return, Social Lettings Report, and CORE data.

Notes: : DHULC has issued revised CORE lettings figures for the period from 2011 that no longer reports "new to social rent". Housing Association figures have therefore been derived by excluding transfers and those moving from supported or temporary accommodation to avoid double counting. The count of local authority lettings are derived from the LAHR. The percentage of all social lets to homeless households are derived from CORE data.

An overwhelming majority of respondents to our LA survey (97%) reported that it had become more difficult to source private rentals for households experiencing or at risk of homelessness over the past year. Many survey participants again emphasized challenges surrounding the restoration of the LHA freeze, but also the impact of sharply rising demand from other renter cohorts – notably working adults, and also in some areas, students. In certain areas, competition for lower priced properties from SERCO and Mears was also noted.

"There are so many households going for the same property, landlords are opting for working households on high incomes."

(LA respondent, the South)

"More competition from other LAs and Home Office/Serco with blank cheques."

(LA respondent, London)

"Competition for private rented sector properties is further impacted due to ... two [local] universities where student lets are often seen

as more profitable than the lower rates where the frozen LHA rates are further limiting. Additionally, the high use of cheaper properties ... by Home Office contractors (i.e. Mears) for temporarily housing asylum seekers places further pressure on our private rented sector."

(LA respondent, the North)

Many comments also reflected a belief that the sector has been contracting overall (not just at the lower end of the market). Landlords, it was widely asserted, were tending to sell up due to rising costs and/or concerns about the anticipated abolition of S21:

"Landlords pre-emptively selling up before changes to PRS legislation, i.e., abolishing of S.21."

(LA respondent, the South)

"Many landlords are also leaving the market due to concerns around the cost of living crisis, inflated mortgage payments, abolition of S21s."

(LA respondent, the South)

Growing demand for the diminishing annual flow of social lettings has made it progressively more difficult to secure a social tenancy. In the four years to 2021/22, LA lettings to households new to the social housing (i.e., excluding transfers) fell by almost 20% from 64,000 to 52,000, driven mainly by a lack of new homes to replace

Right to Buy sales. Over the same period, the numbers of applicants on LA housing registers increased by over 7% to 1.2 million. Recent research also suggests that there are a further 500,000 households in England with unmet need for which social housing is the only suitable option.¹⁷⁸

In the decade to 2021/22, the proportion of general needs lettings to new social tenants that was allocated to statutory homeless households by all social landlords increased from 20% to 26% (see figure 2.9). Much of the increase occurred after the definition of statutory homelessness was amended in April 2018 to include households accepted as homeless by a LA and granted a prevention, relief or main duty. That said, this has been driven more by the sharp drop in lettings than by an increase in the numbers of homeless households allocated a social tenancy. In the seven years to 2021/22, the number of general needs lettings to homeless households averaged 35,200 while the number of lettings to new social tenants fell from 187,000 to 136,000.

Three-quarters (74%) of respondents to our LA survey reported that it had become more difficult to secure social rented tenancies for homeless households and those at risk over the past year.

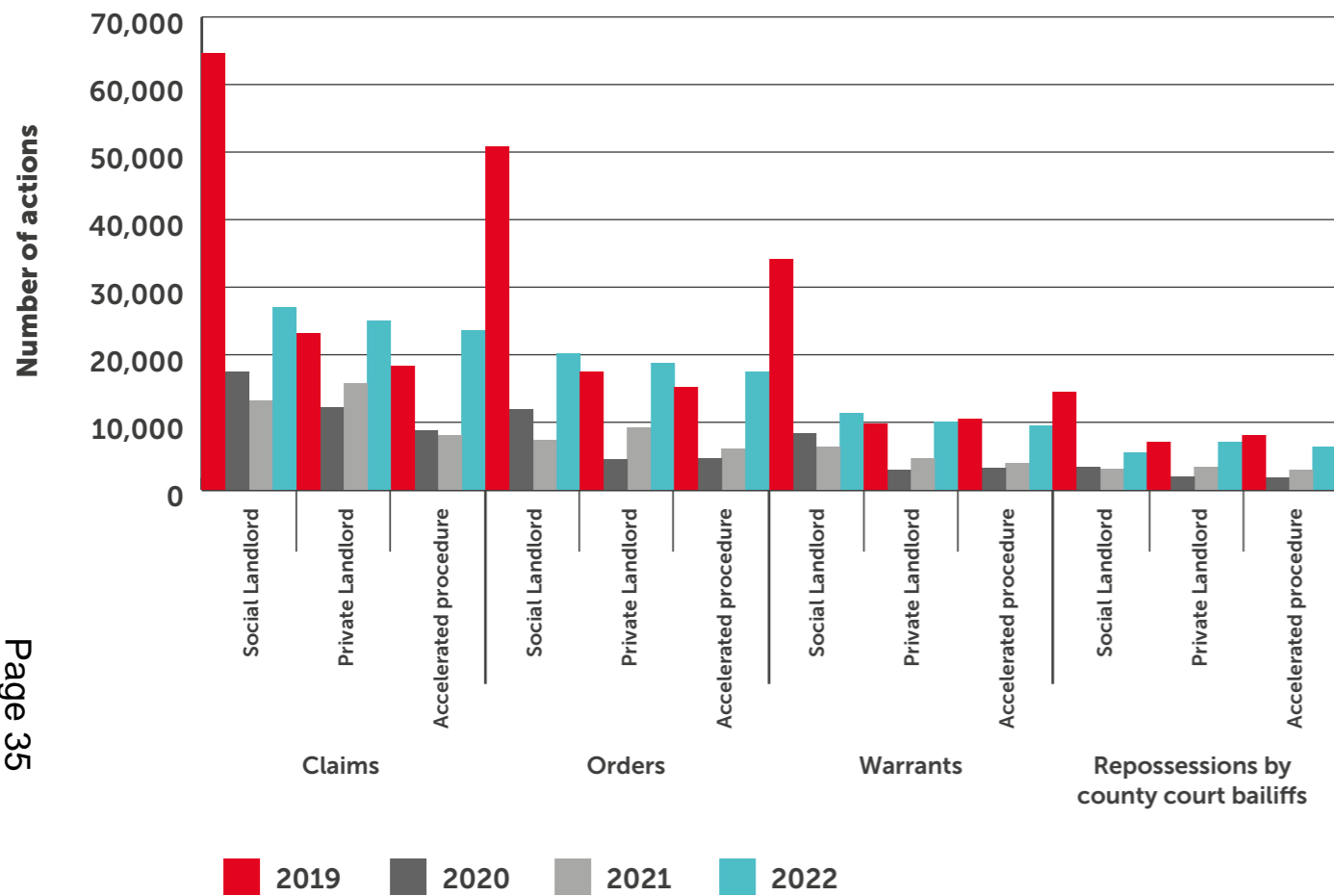
As the number of social lettings continuing to fall, the Smith Institute has provided a timely exploration of the lack of mobility within London's social housing.¹⁷⁹ Based on their findings, they suggest a vacancy chain¹⁸⁰ led approach to planning new supply, allocations and reducing void times could assist more households, including statutory and hidden

178 National Housing Federation (2021) *People in Housing Need 2021*. London: NHF <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/people-in-housing-need-2021> (see figure 2.8). /

179 The Smith Institute (2022) *Housing Allocations and the Vacancy Chain: How Coordinating Chains can better meet housing needs and tenant choice*. London: Smith Institute <https://thinkhouse.org.uk/site/assets/files/2696/smith0922.pdf>

180 A vacancy chain refers to the total sequence of homes made available for let as one household vacates a social home and then it is re-let to another household and so on until no new social housing vacancy is formed.

Figure 2.10: Private and social landlord eviction court action in England, 2019-2022



Page 35

Source: Ministry of Justice, Mortgage and Landlord Possession statistics: February 2023

Note: figures for 2022 are provisional.

homeless households, to secure homes suitable for their needs..

Following 4 years of 1% rate cuts, The English social rent policy was amended to permit social rents to rise of CPI + 1% from April 2020. This policy was intended to run for at least 5 years. However, mounting concerns about the impact of above inflation rent increases for tenants¹⁸¹ saw the Government announce that social

rents will be capped at 7% from April 2023 other than for support housing which is exempt from this cap.¹⁸² This will nevertheless result in a big increase in rents for social renters that do not have their full rent covered by Housing Benefit or the housing element of UC, those who do not receive a DHP to offset the bedroom tax or the Benefit Cap and those subject to benefit sanctions.

181 Resolution Foundation (2021) *Housing Outlook for Q4 2021, December 2021*. Online: RF <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2021/12/Housing-Outlook-Q4-2021.pdf>

182 HM Treasury (2022) *Autumn Statement 2022*. London: HM Treasury <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-statement-2022-documents/autumn-statement-2022-html>

Evictions and regulation

Eviction action plunged during the pandemic, but it has been rising since June 2021 when temporary measures to prevent evictions ended. While total claims in 2022 (75,609) remained lower than in 2019 (106,199), private landlord and accelerated claims, which mainly involve Section 21 “no fault” eviction notices, had surpassed 2019 levels (see figure 2.10). Statistics for landlord court orders, warrants and (to a lesser extent) repossessions by bailiffs broadly replicated this pattern. The continued rise in eviction action, and in particular ‘no fault’ cases, is worrying, as the loss of a private tenancy is a key driver of homelessness. In 2021/22, 19,790 households owed a prevention or a relief duty had been served a section 21 notice, up from 8,940 in 2021/22.¹⁸³

Consultation on reforming private tenancies first began in 2019 but it was only in 2022 that some reform began to look likely to happen. Published in June 2022, “A Fairer Private Rented Sector”¹⁸⁴ set out a 12 point plan to deliver “a fairer, more secure, higher quality private rented sector”, including the ending of ‘no-fault’ evictions. Despite fears during the Truss administration that proposals might be deferred, publication of the Renters Reform Bill has gone ahead albeit slightly delayed¹⁸⁵. The Bill’s passage through Parliament is unlikely to be plain sailing, however, due to some landlord opposition.¹⁸⁶

Key informants to this study were unanimous in their support for the Renters Reform Bill, with the repeal Section 21 ‘no fault’ evictions being considered of particular importance (alongside other targeted supports) to preventing cost of living related increases in homelessness:

“...the Renters Reform Bill, if it comes off as currently stated in the white paper... [is] a massive step forward in terms of standards and security of tenure for people who rent. I think there is a major concern about... how it is implemented, and how big of a shock that... brings to the rental market.... We know that. If landlords exit, local authorities and our partners will be ready to take the properties on.”

(LA key informant)

“It [increases in homelessness] could be avoided but it will require some fairly bold government policies like... some form of eviction ban for a temporary period or absolutely taking through this renters’ reform proposals as quickly as we can... without that combination of protections for those in rented accommodation plus protections against cost of living rises plus adjustments to LHAs... It [increases in homelessness] will be inevitable but it doesn’t need to be. Government could take the steps that would prevent that if they wanted.”

(Independent key informant)

183 Department Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Homeless statistics*. London: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>

184 Department Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Renters Reform Bill*. London: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-fairer-private-rented-sector/a-fairer-private-rented-sector>

185 Renters (Reform) Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament

186 Wilson, W. (2022) *The end of ‘no fault’ section 21 evictions (England)*. London: House of Commons Library <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8658/>

Government commitments to raise standards, increase transparency and accountability in the social rented sector set out in 2020¹⁸⁷ are also very slowly progressing. At the time of writing, the Social Housing Regulation Bill, which as mentioned above, is intended¹⁸⁸ to deliver a stronger and more proactive regulatory regime, was winding its way through Parliament. Nonetheless, there remains a lack of clarity around the Government's view about who and what social housing is for.

187 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2020) *The Charter For Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper*. London: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper>

188 Social Housing (Regulation) Bill, 2022 (HL Bill 109) Online: UK parliament. <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3177>

Homelessness policies

3. Homelessness policies

Key findings

The launch of a refreshed Rough Sleeping Strategy in September 2022 was welcomed by key informants, particularly with regard to its confirmation of sustained investment in the Rough Sleeping Initiative. However, concerns were expressed that the strategy brings nothing new on the affordable housing and wider welfare challenges that drive homelessness. Moreover, acute concerns remain about preventing rough sleeping for people with NRPF/ Other RE, particularly given that emergency accommodation options for people sleeping rough or at risk of doing so have been subject to rapid shrink-back after the ending of specialist public health funding in April 2022.

Three-quarters of respondents to our LA survey reported that the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) had improved their ability to prevent and alleviate rough sleeping, and key informants valued the programme as a mechanism for developing supported accommodation-based interventions, with the linking of capital and revenue funding noted as a key driver of its success. The new Single Homeless

Accommodation Programme (SHAP) was also roundly welcomed. However, some frustrations were expressed around the sustainability of RSAP and SHAP accommodation beyond the revenue funding timeframes.

Notwithstanding continuing support for the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA), key informants reported that opportunities for upstream prevention are contracting because of sustained cuts to public services, now exacerbated by the cost of living crisis. LAs also face increasing challenges in addressing homelessness because of rising rents, a reduction in the supply of rental properties, and a squeeze on household budgets.

Pressures on TA emerged as a central concern, with key informants reporting significant increases in use of nightly paid TA, and to a lesser extent B&B, alongside increased reliance on poorer quality provision. The homelessness impacts of the Ukrainian and Afghan refugee crises, and wider asylum dispersal pressures, was said to be ratcheting up the existing pressures on LAs, especially with regards to supply of TA, with no clear solutions for longer-term accommodation.

Four in ten LA respondents to our survey reported the existence of problematic exempt accommodation in their locality, including recent increases in its use in some areas. Linked with this, the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) was welcome and there was also strong support for the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Bill which aims to provide for stronger regulation of this problematic sector. However, some key informants voiced notes of caution about the need to guard against any potential for unintended impacts on supported accommodation more generally.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the evolution and impact of homelessness-specific policies in 2022. First section 3.2 considers the legacy of Everyone In, alongside wider Government policy relating to rough sleeping, including funding programmes and the refreshed Rough Sleeping Strategy. Then section 3.3 considers homelessness prevention, including the performance of the HRA, before section 3.4 examines the supply and use of TA, and Section 3.5 reviews the specific and concerning issue of problematic exempt accommodation.

3.2 Rough sleeping

The Everyone In initiative, launched in the early stages of the pandemic, saw the easing of restrictions on eligibility criteria to allow people sleeping rough, at risk of doing so, or in communal shelters, to be accommodated in hotel

or similar accommodation, backed by £25 million Protect and Vaccinate funding. Over 40,000 people were accommodated under the scheme bringing about radical reductions in levels of rough sleeping.¹⁸⁹ Other notable outcomes included infection control-related gains – allowing for reduced hospital admissions, and increased prevention of acute illness and loss of life.¹⁹⁰

Key informants emphasised that the initiative had positively shifted perception of what was possible in terms of reducing rough sleeping, albeit with significant caveats about variation across LAs in the nature, extent, and quality of responses.¹⁹¹ However, they voiced growing doubts about the sustainability of these shifts post the ending of specialist public health ‘Protect and Vaccinate’ funding in April 2022. Many reported that emergency accommodation options for people sleeping rough or at risk of doing so have since been subject to rapid shrink-back, with notable increases in rough sleeping (particularly in London) including a return to the streets for those previously accommodated and a more limited offering to those new to sleeping rough (see Chapter 4). Most LA survey respondents (56%) reported that TA sourced under the Everyone In programme at the height of the pandemic had ceased to be used for this purpose by late 2022. In London, however, such emergency provision more frequently continued to be available (see Table A2.15) and in all

London boroughs at least some of this accommodation was continuing to be used to house people with NRPF or other restricted eligibility for statutory support (see Table A2.16):

“A lot of the Everyone In stuff ended where there wasn’t another duty... [and] most of those placements now, have come to an end, so you saw those people returning back to the streets. They’ve just got nowhere to go, so they’re just going around and around.”
(Voluntary sector key informant)

“There’s been a big spike in people on the street, and about half of them are people that are new to the streets. It’s not just that people have returned from being in emergency accommodation during lockdowns.”
(Voluntary sector key informant)

Tackling rough sleeping was already a high priority for the Government pre-pandemic, with the publication of a Rough Sleeping Strategy in 2018 committing to end rough sleeping by 2027,¹⁹² backed by the launch of the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) investment programme. The 2019 Johnson Government was elected with a manifesto commitment that accelerated this work, committing to ending rough sleeping by 2024. A planned 2020 review of the strategy considering this new target was delayed by the pandemic.

Key informants to last years’ Monitor felt that the absence of a plan to meet the 2024 target had hindered progress, so many welcomed the refreshed Rough Sleeping Strategy, *Ending Rough Sleeping for Good*, published in September 2022, with three-quarters (77%) of LA respondents to our survey indicating that it was at least ‘somewhat helpful’. The strategy sets out a definition of what it means to end rough sleeping, “which is that it is prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurrent”.¹⁹³ Views on the definition were mixed: while most key informants considered it a realistic and helpful measure, some were concerned that it represents a weakening of the 2024 target.

“I think the increased focus on data and... that rare, brief and non-recurrent is a big step forward in terms of... having that more accurate measure of what do we mean by ending rough sleeping?... I think that is a good definition... I still don’t think that’s achievable to be perfectly honest by the target that has been set, especially with the cost of living and... immigration... [but] I do think that’s a better, more grown-up conversation... to go, ‘Yes, we haven’t achieved it. However, we have achieved this, and this is where we’re working towards.’”
(LA key informant)

189 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2021*. Online: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021>; Fitzpatrick, S., Mackie, P., Pawson, H., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2021) *The COVID-19 Crisis Response to Homelessness in Great Britain: Interim Report*. Online: CaCHE https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2021/02/12544_UoG_CaCHE_Covid_Homelessness_Report-Final.pdf; see also, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021/annexa-support-for-people-sleeping-rough-in-england-2021-not-official-statistics>; Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing (2022) *Ending Rough Sleeping For Good: September 2022*. Online: gov.uk <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-rough-sleeping-for-good>

190 Lewer, D., Braithwaite, I., Bullock, M., Eyre, M. T., White, P. J., Aldridge, R.W., Story, A. & Hayward, A.C. (2021) ‘COVID-19 among people experiencing homelessness in England: a modelling study.’ *The Lancet: Respiratory Medicine*. 8(12): 1181-1191. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2213-2600\(20\)30396-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2213-2600(20)30396-9)

191 Watts, B., Bramley, G., Pawson, H., Young, G., Fitzpatrick, S. & McMordie, L. (2022) *The homelessness monitor: England 2022*. Online: Crisis https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/246995/the-homelessness-monitor-england-2022_exec-summary.pdf

192 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018) *Rough Sleeping Strategy*. Online: MHCLG https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy_WEB.pdf

193 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Ending Rough Sleeping For Good: September 2022*. Online: DLUHC https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1102408/20220903_Ending_rough_sleeping_for_good.pdf p. 10

“...that was the big issue... on the strategy. The watering down of ‘we’ve got to eliminate rough sleeping by the end of Parliament’... What is it [now]? You will try to end rough sleeping, but if you don’t, that’s fine. That’s the strategic tone of the document.... I think it is a wasted opportunity.”

(LA key informant)

The strategy is organised around four core activity streams. The first is to prevent rough sleeping including ensuring that no one is released from a public institution to the streets, and enhancing access to drug and alcohol treatment and mental health supports. The second is to intervene when rough sleeping does occur, including an “*exhaust all options*” approach to supporting non UK nationals,¹⁹⁴ with these commitments backed by £500 million over three years for an expanded RSI and a £10 million Night Shelter transformation fund. The third is to support recovery for those who have slept rough, including a pre-existing commitment to the completion of some 6,000 RSAP funded properties, an extension of the Housing First pilots until 2024, and new commitments under a £200 million Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) to deliver some 2,400 properties by March 2025. The fourth is to deliver a more transparent, joined-up system including a national data-led framework to measure progress against targets, with a linked accountability structure. The proposed measurement framework, which is currently being trialled, covers four core indicators, focused on the prevention, rareness, brevity and non-recurring nature of rough

194 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Ending Rough Sleeping For Good: September 2022*. Online: DLUHC https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1102408/20220903_Ending_rough_sleeping_for_good.pdf p. 16

195 See: <https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/ending-rough-sleeping-eng>

sleeping.¹⁹⁵ The strategy also makes a strong commitment to expanding the evidence base on what works to resolve homelessness, including a £12 million Test and Learn Programme set to trial and evaluate specific interventions, and a £2.2 million “*systems wide*” research programme running alongside.

Key informants welcomed the Strategy’s development and publication. Three areas emerged as particularly welcome, albeit with some caveats around their actioning and implementation. First, key informants were very positive about the Strategy’s cross-ministerial sign-off.

“It’s really, really welcomed that it is countersigned across government departments. I think, at this point, that is largely symbolic... in terms of policymaking from those respective government departments, but the fact those signatures are there does speak volumes from the kind of distance travelled in terms of government’s thinking, or at least the thinking in DLUHC [Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities] about... what does it mean to end rough sleeping? That’s all really positive.”

(Voluntary sector key informant)

That said, informants regretted that the strategy does not tie down specific inter-departmental actions or commitments, nor establish clear grounds for interdepartmental funding. These misgivings were in part assuaged by the Strategy’s stated

commitment to leveraging the new Integrated Care Systems’ focus on inclusion health groups. With the passing of the Health and Care Act 2022, integrated care systems (ICSs) have been placed on a statutory footing. The Act sets a requirement that all Integrated Care Partnerships develop an integrated care strategy and requires integrated care boards “*to have regard to the need to reduce inequalities... in respect to access to health services*”.¹⁹⁶ The Department of Health and Social Care has issued statutory guidance on the development of these strategies, which asks that ICSs consider inclusion health groups such as “*people experiencing homelessness, including people who sleep rough*” and “*ensure that the needs of underserved populations are identified and met*”.¹⁹⁷

“The jury’s out... I’m very pleased that the Department of Health have given some clearer guidance, attention, but we’re just too early in the lives of the integrated care systems to be sure about this point about inclusive health... there is, massive pressures [on our health service] so does it get the time it needs? That is a risk... The intent is there – the reality, time will tell.”

(Voluntary sector key informant)

Second, key informants were positive about the impact of the RSI and other rough sleeping targeted funding streams in improving responses to rough sleeping. There was praise for the sustained and ongoing level of

investment in RSI, which has increased from £30 million in 2018/19 to the most recent allocation of £500 million across three years.

“That three-year commitment of funding will hopefully enable areas to do something slightly more strategic... That one year, one year, one year is not conducive to actually doing anything that strategic or that forward-thinking; because you’re constantly going, ‘Okay, we’re going to have to do it [bid] again... Hopefully, the staff will still remain... that constant chop and changing and only being able to a contract for a year isn’t that helpful.”

(LA key informant)

At the same time, however, key informants voiced concern about the overall approach to funding, with many lamenting a lack of joined-up thinking across government and within DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities), resulting in sometimes incoherent and often overlapping funding streams, with multiple small pots meaning onerous time spent in the preparing and submission of bids:

“Our concern is the segmentation of the funding and the fact that why have we got this RSI part? We’ve got the Homeless and Prevention Grant, we’ve got all SHAPs...

196 Health and Care Act, 2022, c.31 <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3022>; Department of Health and Social Care (2022) Guidance on the preparation of integrated care strategies. Online: DHSC <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-the-preparation-of-integrated-care-strategies/guidance-on-the-preparation-of-integrated-care-strategies> p.11

197 Department of Health and Social Care (2022) Guidance on the preparation of integrated care strategies. Online: DHSC <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-the-preparation-of-integrated-care-strategies/guidance-on-the-preparation-of-integrated-care-strategies> p.11

formerly RSAP... formerly NSAP [Next Steps Accommodation Programme] - all of these parts, when actually we need a coherent system... it's still so fragmented and so incoherent."
(Voluntary sector key informant)

"They keep on introducing these small pots of money. We couldn't even bid for the exempt accommodation, because we said, 'Small pots of money, the effort you need to put in is greater than the reward you get... It's just a waste of actual bureaucratic resources; we'd much prefer to just get on with the bloody job.'"
(LA key informant)

Third, key informants welcomed the focus on prevention of rough sleeping as central to achieving the 2024 target, but most felt that this focus was inconsistent with the parameters of RSI funding, with an expectation that this work ought to be intensely focused on people who are actively sleeping rough:

"All we're really doing in terms of our rough sleeping side of things is doing an amazing job once people hit the streets. We should be doing more... to try and stop people hitting the streets in the first place. I still think they haven't quite got that bit quite right within the strategy."
(LA key informant)

"The key is preventing people going on to the street, as opposed to putting the money into helping them off, because if all you ever do is fund helping people off the street, while you're not addressing the inflow, then you're really just like running the bath with the plug out."
(Voluntary sector key informant)

Key informants also raised several other concerns. First that the strategy brings nothing new on increasing the supply of affordable housing, or on the wider welfare policies that might address lack of affordability.¹⁹⁸

"Unless they put this at the top of their list... policymaking to alleviate poverty, we will not hit that 2024 target. We simply can't. There has been so much work done over the last few years to increase emergency responses, and to increase emergency prevention, and to improve the quality of recovery support and move on for people facing multiple disadvantage at risk of rough sleeping, and continued risk of rough sleeping. I struggle to see how we're going to find that extra push, that extra room to get from where we are now in terms of numbers to where we need to be without the poverty alleviating policymaking."
(LA key informant)

Second, and relatedly, that the cost of living crisis has radically altered the context in which the strategy will be enacted, introducing a starkly increased risk of homelessness for some and rendering the refresh of an earlier strategy insufficient to that task at hand. These concerns echo those of the Kerslake Commission who warned that *"Failure to act could see this become a homelessness as well as an economic crisis and the results could be catastrophic; with all the good achieved in reducing street homelessness since the pandemic lost, and any hope of the Government meeting its manifesto pledge to end rough sleeping by 2024 gone."*¹⁹⁹

"I think the... challenge is it's a refresh of a strategy that was written in 2018. Since then, we've... entered a cost of living crisis, and everything has changed. I don't really think it reflects that at all... we are not in the same position we were in 2018, and a strategy based on what was... good then is no longer the right direction of travel."
(Voluntary sector key informant)

Thirdly, acute concern was voiced about those with NRPF/Other RE for whom all options have been exhausted, with key informants of the view that meeting the 2024 target is dependent on resolving the tension between current immigration and rough sleeping policy:

"Rough sleepers have been rising..., and yet there's a commitment to end rough sleeping within this parliament

and how that's going to be done I'm at a loss to understand... [without a] focus on some of the issues such as what happens to people with no recourse to public funds and how is that treated."
(Statutory sector key informant)

"NRPF remains a really difficult, knotty issue... what happens is people don't move on... a lot of the Everyone In stuff ended where there wasn't another duty... so you saw those people returning back to the streets. They've just got nowhere to go, so they're just going around and around... You have to address NRPF. We won't get rare, brief, and non-recurrent if we don't address NRPF, so can we have that dialogue"
(Voluntary sector key informant)

Predating the new Rough Sleeping Strategy, the RSAP, running from 2021 and now extended to 2025, was widely endorsed by our key informants as a useful mechanism for expanding the move-on options for those at risk of sleeping rough. This view was backed by three-quarters (74%) of respondents to our LA survey, who reported that the programme had improved their ability to prevent and alleviate rough sleeping. The Programme's linking of capital and revenue funding together was noted as a key driver of its success, but informants also voiced complaints about the timescales for capital spend, with unspent funds having to be returned by the close of the financial year in which the award is granted:

198 Local Government Association (2022) *LGA responds to Rough Sleeping Strategy*. Online: LGA <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-responds-rough-sleeping-strategy>;

199 Kerslake Commission (2022) *Further urgent action needed to avoid homelessness, as well as economic crisis*. Online: Commission on Rough Sleeping <https://www.commissiononroughsleeping.org/news/further-urgent-action-needed-to-avoid-homelessness-as-well-as-economic-crisis/>

“I know that money had to get handed back because the turnaround was so tight.”

(Voluntary sector key informant).

Concerns were also voiced about the two-year limit on RSAP tenancies and the security of services beyond the existing revenue funding commitments to 2024/25:²⁰⁰

“The worry is, obviously, come the end of this Parliament... what happens with that money. But if there’s no commitment to continue, we let bold schemes down... a big accommodation purchase programme; the opening of a 30-year scheme. Will it continue? Nobody can tell us.”

(LA key informant)

The new SHAP,²⁰¹ a further capital and revenue funding programme that opened for bidding in January 2023, was also roundly welcomed. The programme, which intends to support up to 2,400 people sleeping rough or at risk of doing so to access supported accommodation, has a targeted focus on adults experiencing multiple disadvantage and vulnerable young people, with an expectation that accommodation will be longer-term with no specified limitation on tenancy duration. Supported and specialist housing, Housing First and housing-led schemes fall within the scope of the programme. The programme is backed by £200 million over a three-year period:

200 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme: Prospectus and Guidance (Outside of Greater London)*. Online: DLUHC https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1061330/RSAP_2021-24_Prospectus_2022.pdf

201 Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023) *Guidance: Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme: prospectus and guidance (outside of Greater London)*. Online: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/single-homelessness-accommodation-programme/single-homelessness-accommodation-programme-prospectus-and-guidance-outside-of-greater-london>

“There is longer-term revenue funding. It’s still for three years, but not tied into a three-year capital programme, which is great... You could look at it is a revival of Supported People in a very contained way... I think lots of areas will be looking to make use of it because there isn’t, in many instances, the kind of supported accommodation that is necessary.”

(LA key informant)

However, some frustrations were also expressed, often echoing those voiced about RSAP around the sustainability of accommodation beyond the SHAP’s three-year revenue funding timeframe. Moreover, SHAP, unlike RSAP, makes no explicit presumption in favour of self-contained accommodation options, yet the prospectus is clear that Housing First responses fall within the scope of the programme:

“One of our concerns with it, again, is the push to say use it for Housing First even though they are, by default, short-term...It’s not an open-ended tenancy, it is, by default, a fixed tenancy.”

(Voluntary sector key informant)

“It still has the same worries to me as RSAP because it is only potentially three years’ revenue... that’s more of a worry because if we’re talking

supported housing then you can’t flip it as easily into general needs that you could do with an RSAP unit and, ‘Okay, but the revenue funding isn’t there... at least it can still be of use... as a general needs’ unit for someone.’ If it is more of a block-based thing that you’re funding, actually, how many people are going to want to move into a block with other people? If there isn’t any support, how are you going to manage that?”

(LA key informant)

A key element of Government efforts to address rough sleeping are the regional Housing First pilots in Greater Manchester, the West Midlands and Liverpool, launched with £28m of funding in 2018. Results from the third process report,²⁰² published in September 2022, indicate that a total of 1286 individuals have been recruited across the three regions throughout the Pilot and that some 288 people have exited the programme during this time, with loss of contact and service users dying the primary reasons. A total of 998 people were supported under the pilots and 78% of these had been housed, while the remainder await settled accommodation. The pilots had a high tenancy sustainment rate, with three-quarters (76%) of those accommodated having been housed for between 6 months and three years.

Tenants interviewed as part of the evaluation reported positive experiences of Housing First, with the greatest benefit identified as having secured their own tenancy in an area

202 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots: Third Process Report*. Online: DLUHC https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1102005/Housing_First_Evaluation_Third_process_report.pdf

203 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Housing First Pilots 2 year extensions: funding allocations 2022/23 and 2023/24*. Online: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-first-pilots-2-year-extensions-funding-allocations-202223-and-202324>

of their choosing. Additional benefits commonly reported included: access to health treatment and substance misuse support, help with benefits applications and budgeting, moral and emotional support, and help in finding meaningful activities. The report found an increased willingness amongst some registered providers to supply properties for Housing First, but access to housing remained the primary challenge across the Pilots, with lengthy waits in some areas placing a strain on service user and staff relationships. Key informants to this study echoed these concerns.

“[With the] Housing First pilots... the pace of delivery [is] shockingly slow... if you’re going to... change the system, then... they’ve got to take more people, with more complex needs, and they’ve got to do things quickly. I can’t see that Housing First is going to be as successful as people would like, with the delivery timeline that’s been created. I just think it’s not good enough.”

(Independent key informant)

In September 2022, DLUHC announced the extension of the three Housing First Pilots up to March 2024, with a further £13.9 million over 2 years “to enable the areas to cement best practice and drive forward the programme’s legacy.”²⁰³

Key informants were of the view that the extension, while welcome, does not adequately address the need for open-ended support:

“[Housing First has] got a bit stuck. I think it’s generally accepted that Housing First is a good thing. I think we’ve got there, which is great. I think where we are stuck now is anyone putting their hand up and saying, ‘We’re going to commit to fund it properly’, because obviously you have the pilot, and they’ve extended the funding there, but they’re just now on... a rolling [pilot]... and it’s written into RSI, ‘Use RSI for Housing First’. It’s specified in the SHAP prospectus, ‘Use SHAP for Housing First’... but all of these are short-term, and... this needs its own model of funding that is separate.”
(Voluntary sector key informant)

3.3 Homelessness prevention

In 2018, the HRA came into force, providing a radical new legal framework defining the nature of LA duties to homeless households. Key informants to this and earlier Homelessness Monitors, were in general positive about the HRA, with key outcomes including an improved offering of support and assistance to single homeless people and a reorientation

of LAs toward person-centred and prevention-focused approaches.²⁰⁴ However, the limitations of the Act are also now clear. Principal amongst these is that where prevention and relief efforts fail, it remains the case that only households with priority need are entitled to have housing secured by the local housing authority (see Chapter 4). The scope and application of the priority need criterion was altered to some extent in 2021, when legislative changes saw domestic abuse survivors gaining automatic priority need status regardless of household type, so that single survivors without children are entitled to accommodation for the first regardless of any additional ‘vulnerability’ status.²⁰⁵

The onset of the pandemic just two years after the Act came into force transformed (for a time) the support available to single homeless households on a much wider basis, with many areas lifting all restrictions on eligibility criteria to allow people sleeping rough, at risk of doing so, or in communal shelters, to be accommodated in hotel or similar accommodation.²⁰⁶ This shift away from testing entitlement in relation to a series of tests, and towards a culture of assisting people facing homelessness to secure a positive outcome was roundly welcomed by key informants to last year’s Monitor²⁰⁷ and moreover received highly positive evaluation from a number of sources.²⁰⁸

However, with the ending of the Everyone-In programme and a return to eligibility testing, it remains the case post-pandemic that substantial numbers of (mainly single) homeless applicants reach the end of the various operational procedures without having secured settled accommodation, or even having had such accommodation offered to them.

Large-scale longitudinal research by Crisis, and funded by Oak Foundation, provides a very substantial evidence base on experiences of the HRA, confirming this perspective.²⁰⁹ Speaking to around 1,500 people facing homelessness, as well as staff in six Housing Options services, Crisis found that the HRA has opened support and assistance for significantly more people facing homelessness than had hitherto been the case, with single adults being the main beneficiaries of this additional help. However, acute housing access pressures, coupled with insufficient staffing and funding for their service, meant that many LA staff felt it was challenging to deliver support under the HRA. One in six (17%) of respondents to the second and third wave of research reported receiving no support, advice, or assessment from Housing Options. Tellingly, and very concerningly, among those research participants whose contact with Housing Options had ended, nearly half (46%) remained homeless after going to the LA for support.

Key informant interviews gave an opportunity to explore views on the strengths and weakness of the Act following the radical impacts of the pandemic on homelessness. The emphasis within the legislative framework on preventative interventions was seen as a strength by key informants, with LA respondents in particular welcoming efforts to weight homelessness services toward

prevention and pointing to positive outcomes as a result:

“There is definitely a lot of attention on prevention... identify those at risk, and get early [support]. We’re seeing that in our region, I’m seeing that, certainly, in our local authorities... [a] restructuring... around the prevention model.”
(Voluntary sector key informant)

“We’ve got some really, really great patches building across some areas... for models of early help... that starts that homelessness prevention conversation in far more productive, and early-stage spaces, and that is bearing fruit... at the front door in terms of not having people come through at such a point in crisis, so it’s evidence-based practice, isn’t it? It’s good to see that it works.”
(LA key informant)

However, this preventative turn was seen to have been tempered first by the pandemic response, which necessitated a focus in LAs on responding to crisis thus distracting from or minimising opportunities for preventative interventions, and more recently by the growing impacts of the cost of living crisis, which key informants suggested has required LAs to sustain a similarly crisis-oriented position, albeit without the same level of support and funding from central Government.

204 Ahmed, A., Wilding, M., Gibbons, A., Jones, K., Rogers, M. & Madoc-Jones, I. (2018) *Post-implementation Evaluation of the Homelessness Legislation (Part 2 of the Housing Act (Wales) 2014): Final Report*. GSR report number 46/2018. Online: Welsh Government <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-06/evaluation-of-homelessness-legislation-part-2-of-the-housing-act-wales-2014-final-report-summary.pdf>; Boobis, S., Sutton-Hamilton, C. & Albanese, F. (2020) *‘A foot in the door’ Experiences of the Homelessness Reduction Act*. London: Crisis https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/241742/a_foot_in_the_door_2020.pdf

205 See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-21-domestic-abuse?msclkid=b89c1debcec711ec8f711403e71bd4f2>

206 Fitzpatrick, S., Mackie, P., Pawson, H., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2021) *The COVID-19 Crisis Response to Homelessness in Great Britain: Interim Report*. Online: CaCHE https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/12544_UoG_CaCHE_Covid_Homelessness_Report-Final.pdf; see also <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021/annex-a-support-for-people-sleeping-rough-in-england-2021-not-official-statistics>

207 Watts, B., Bramley, G., Pawson, H., Young, G., Fitzpatrick, S. & McMordie, L. (2022) *The homelessness monitor: England 2022*. Online: Crisis https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/246994/the-homelessness-monitor-england-2022_report.pdf

208 Lewer, D., Braithwaite, I., Bullock, M., Eyre, M. T., White, P. J., Aldridge, R.W., Story, A. & Hayward, A.C. (2021) ‘COVID-19 among people experiencing homelessness in England: a modelling study.’ *The Lancet: Respiratory Medicine*. 8(12): 1181-1191 DOI:[https://doi.org/10.1016/S2213-2600\(20\)30396-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2213-2600(20)30396-9)

209 Sutton-Hamilton, C., Allard, M., Stroud, R., and Albanese, F. (2022) *‘I hoped there’d be more options:’ Experiences of the Homelessness Reduction Act, 2018-2021*. London: Crisis. <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/247390/hra-report-2022.pdf>

“I’m a bit worried... that we’re... putting more and more emphasis on the crisis interventions... [in] an environment which isn’t, in my view, oriented enough towards prevention because... we’re just cutting everything to the bone... in the past... [I’ve] been a little bit like well, it’s not quite as bad as you might imagine it is, but at the moment I’m beginning to feel that... it really is as bad as the stakeholders are saying. I’m very, I feel uneasy and anxious, upset about it really, and I think that’s a common view.”
(Statutory sector key informant)

Opportunities for upstream prevention are shrinking, in large part because of sustained cuts to public services now exacerbated by a cost of living-related squeeze on remaining resources, meaning that much of the prevention work undertaken by LAs tends to be crisis intervention.²¹⁰ Key informants voiced concerns that these interventions are sometimes insufficient to preventing recurrence of housing crisis and thus mitigating against homelessness in the longer term:

“A lot of the Housing Options prevention work is still what you would probably call crisis prevention, and the sustainability of it is quite questionable. There’s a lot of quick fixes, quick fix mediation, quick fix nominal payments, and things like that, whereas actually the

drivers of that risk for that individual, that household, are sustained... that side of it is just going to get more and more challenging.”
(LA key informant)

Key informants also reported that they are facing increasing challenges in the delivery of crisis prevention work, because of a combination of rising rental costs, a reduction in the supply of rental properties, and a squeeze on household budgets as the cost of living increases.

“[Our ability to prevent is] deteriorating, especially for the big local authorities... I think pressures are mounting. The affordability of housing is going down as the cost of living increases, and welfare payments are not keeping up, so the squeeze is getting worse, isn’t it?”
(LA key informant)

“We can’t prevent into private rental which is one of the tools which we heavily use... those options are no longer affordable - so there’s more of a draw on social sector. In the social sector, people aren’t moving on to private sector options... You’ve got less moving on through and therefore more demand. It’s the perfect toxic mix.”
(LA key informant)

Reflecting similar concerns, the Kerslake Commission on homelessness and rough sleeping recently warned

of cost of living related “ramifications” for homelessness prevention and the “particularly significant impact on people with experience of homelessness who have moved into PRS accommodation.”²¹¹ Echoing the recommendations of the Kerslake Commission, most key informants were supportive of the reinstating of a “temporary ban on evictions, as seen during the pandemic, to ensure that no one is made homeless as a result of the cost of living crisis.”²¹² Social housing evictions have remained considerably below pre-pandemic levels (see chapter two, section 2.5), and key informants reported that pandemic-related evictions moratoria had supported shifts within the social rented sector toward the avoidance of eviction where possible, particularly in the case of eviction to homelessness, with this movement effectively propelling and consolidating work underway prior to the pandemic.²¹³

“There has been a real step change in eviction properties from social housing landlords. I think the COVID pandemic, and the ask to put a stop on any and all evictions that were avoidable, led to a good level of soul-searching across a lot of organisations saying, ‘Isn’t this something we should be doing already?... It’s now seen as an acceptable standard... in terms of no eviction into homelessness.”
(LA key informant)

In the PRS, the legacy of the moratoria has been an ongoing backlog in the legal processing of evictions, and a few key informants were concerned that a further evictions ban would add to this, building arrears for tenants and pressure to exit the market for landlords:

“I do have some reservations. I mean... [we are] still dealing with the backlog from the last evictions ban. I suppose that in an ideal world I would prefer that tenants got support so they’re not just building up arrears, and building up resentment as well, because we’re already trying to stop landlords from exiting the market... You don’t want to add to that.”
(LA key informant)

There was strong support amongst key informants for the Renters Reform Bill, and particularly the repeal of Section 21 ‘no fault’ eviction, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Also high on the priorities of some key informants was possible changes to the Homelessness Prevention Grant, which is paid to all LAs in England and distributed using an allocations formula that is intended to reflect relative homelessness pressures within LAs.²¹⁴ In July 2022 the Department opened a consultation on proposed amendments to the funding arrangements, including to

210 Fitzpatrick, S., Mackie, P., & Wood, J. (2021) Advancing a Five-Level Typology of Homelessness Prevention. *International Journal on Homelessness*. 1(1): 79–97 <https://doi.org/10.5206/ijoh.2021.1.1334> p. 87

211 Kerslake Commission (2022) *The Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A new way of working: ending rough sleeping together: Progress Report*. Online: Commission on Rough Sleeping <https://www.commissiononroughsleeping.org/progress-report-2022/> p. 19

212 Kerslake Commission (2022) *Further urgent action needed to avoid homelessness, as well as economic crisis*. Online: Commission on Rough Sleeping <https://www.commissiononroughsleeping.org/news/further-urgent-action-needed-to-avoid-homelessness-as-well-as-economic-crisis/>

213 Homes for Cathy (unknown) *Our Commitments*. Online: Homes for Cathy. <https://homesforcathy.org.uk/commitments/>

214 Kerslake Commission (2022) *The Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A new way of working: ending rough sleeping together: Progress Report*. Online: Commission on Rough Sleeping <https://www.commissiononroughsleeping.org/progress-report-2022/>

the allocation formula, proposing two alternatives with a view to ensuring that “funding is more reflective of current pressures and demand in areas across England”.²¹⁵ The proposed formulae was thought likely to benefit many LAs but London boroughs would see significant reductions in allocated funds under both models, with potential for “serious unintended” (Voluntary sector key informant) and potentially “devastating” (Independent key informant) consequences. The consultation has now concluded, and these concerns may to some extent be assuaged by Government commitment to apply an Area Cost Adjustment “to account for areas where high costs make it difficult to prevent homelessness”, including the application of a London-average Area Cost Adjustment for all London boroughs.²¹⁶

“We are extremely concerned about the proposed changes to the funding ... although some London boroughs are going to gain from the new formula, the majority [will] see their funding significantly reduced, at a time when we are seeing extreme demand and pressure on our services, a nationwide temporary accommodation shortage, and a cost of living crisis which is likely to lead to an increase in approaches.”
(LA respondent, London)

3.4 Temporary accommodation

Against a background of growing difficulty in homelessness prevention, pressures on TA emerged as a central concern of key informants (see also Chapter 4), with the now familiar refrain that the strategic focus of government is too much on rough sleeping to the detriment of homelessness in its wider sense and in particular to addressing the number of families and children in TA.²¹⁷

“We’ve done really well here... on reducing rough sleeping. Rough sleeping’s not an issue... it’s flipping families in TA is the major issue here. That’s the main issue.”
(Voluntary sector key informant)

“[I] want them to start listening on temporary accommodation because I’m more worried about that.”
(Independent key informant)

Key informants reported two interrelated factors impacting on TA, both of which are discussed in detail in Chapter 2. First, social security provision is not keeping pace with rising market rents and other household costs, thus curtailing capacity for both prevention and relief. Second, rising market rents have compounded the existing lack of affordable settled accommodation leading to households becoming trapped and unable to move-on from TA. Data is now available on how long households spend in temporary accommodation, and

shows that at March 2022 some 25,980 households were in living in temporary accommodation for between two to five years, with a further 18,630 households resident in TA for more than five years.²¹⁸

With a reduction in LA capacity to prevent and resolve homelessness, concerns were voiced about increasing pressure on the availability of TA, with some key informants suggesting that LAs are “running out of temporary accommodation” and “struggling to procure any more” (Voluntary sector key informant), with “everyone”, including the Home Office, “competing for the same very small, dwindling amount of stock” (LA key informant). The acquisition of PRS properties for use as TA was also seen to be undermining homelessness prevention efforts more generally. A recent study by The Smith Institute examining statutory homelessness and TA in Greater Manchester and London, echoed these concerns, finding that while statutory homelessness acceptances are on the rise in both areas - fuelled they suggest by poor housing affordability, poverty and the cost of living crisis - the TA market is shrinking, with housing associations generally less active, private landlords in London often not renewing TA leases, and reports of the Home Office outbidding LAs for use of TA. The authors conclude that TA is reaching crisis point with many boroughs “struggling to cope.”²¹⁹

“... things are so bad now... [that] councils are having to say to people, ‘We know we owe you a legal duty of accommodation, but we can’t get any.’”
(Voluntary sector key informant)

“it’s increasingly difficult... in terms of around the emergency relief. I think it’s not the best picture”
(LA key informant)

Key informants reported significant increases in use of nightly paid accommodation, and to a lesser (though still significant) extent B&B, alongside an increased reliance on poorer quality provision.

“We try to reduce that nightly paid accommodation out of borough... but we’ve had a massive influx in homelessness, and nightly paid has gone up.”
(LA key informant)

“they are placing under - temporary accommodation duties into nightly let. Most of them are very keen to avoid B&B... but nightly let is high cost... That’s a big concern for them.”
(Independent key informant)

Now familiar concerns were also voiced about out-of-borough placements in London, but some key informants reported increases in this practice beyond these usual confines, a view backed by a Guardian investigation which concluded that “an increasing number of out-of-area placements are being made by non-London councils.”²²⁰ Against this background, it is perhaps unsurprising that key informants reported very significant and, in some cases,

215 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Homelessness Prevention Grant 2023/24 onwards: government response*. Online: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/homelessness-prevention-grant-202324-onwards-technical-consultation/homelessness-prevention-grant-202324-onwards-technical-consultation>

216 Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing (2022) *Homelessness Prevention Grant 2023/24 onwards: government response*. Online: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/homelessness-prevention-grant-202324-onwards-technical-consultation/homelessness-prevention-grant-202324-onwards-technical-consultation>

217 Leppänen, A. (2022) ‘Homelessness in London’. *London Councils*. 22nd December. Online: London Councils. <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/node/40105>

218 See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-financial-year-2021-22>

219 Hackett, P. & Farrelly M. (2022) *Temporary accommodation at crisis point: Frontline perspectives from London and Greater Manchester*. Online: The Smith Institute <http://www.smith-institute.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Temporary-accommodation-at-crisis-point.pdf> p. 6.

220 Cooper, K. & Weaver, M. (2022) Hundreds more homeless families rehoused outside local area in England. *The Guardian*. 24th October. Online: The Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/oct/24/hundreds-more-homeless-families-rehoused-outside-local-area-in-england>

unsustainable increases in TA spend, with these findings again echoed by the Smith Institute research for both Manchester and London, and reflected in recent temporary accommodation spending figures, which continue the trend – highlighted in the 2022 Great Britain Monitor – toward mounting temporary accommodation costs in England, while expenditure on support, administration and prevention has been progressively squeezed down.²²¹

“We are anticipating a [huge] overspend [on TA]... If we continue with the current revenue expenditure which we have, we are going to bankrupt the council; so, we need to be looking at capital expenditure to allow us to offer more in-house temporary accommodation.”

(LA key informant)

Some key informants warned of increases in gatekeeping as demand grows and stock dwindles. A recent report by the Public Interest Law Centre found that gatekeeping of “housing support for domestic abuse survivors is a systemic issue across London local authorities,”²²² despite recent changes to the priority need criterion and additional funding allocation via the Homelessness Prevention Grant to support the extension of statutory duty to all those experiencing domestic abuse.

221 Watts, B., Bramley, G., Fitzpatrick, S., McMordie, L., Pawson, H., and Young, G. (2022) *The homelessness monitor: Great Britain 2022*. Online: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/248457/the-homelessness-monitor-great-britain-2022-full-report_final.pdf; see also Local authority revenue expenditure and financing England: 2020 to 2021 individual local authority data - outturn - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

222 Mulholland, I. (2022) *“Abused twice”: The ‘gatekeeping’ of housing support for domestic abuse survivors in every London borough*. Online: Public Interest Law Centre <http://files.localgov.co.uk/pilc.pdf>

223 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP (2022) ‘Homes for Ukraine’ scheme launches 14th March. Online: gov.uk <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/homes-for-ukraine-scheme-launches>

224 Home Office & UK Visas and Immigration (2023) Ukraine Family Scheme, Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine) and Ukraine Extension Scheme visa data. Online: HO & UKVI <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-family-scheme-application-data/ukraine-family-scheme-and-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-homes-for-ukraine-visa-data--2>

225 Office for National Statistics (2022) Experiences of Homes for Ukraine scheme sponsors follow-up data, UK. Online: ONS. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/datasets/experiencesofhomesforukraineschemesponsorsuk>

“[LA’s response to homelessness has] weakened... because of the amount of demand. I’m very aware... [there is] gatekeeping for domestic violence. A lot of that is... It’s just because people literally can’t cope. We’ve not got enough officers. There’s burnout in the service. There’s no staff, so that’s another thing. We’re struggling to recruit... That’s been really difficult at all levels.”

(LA key informant)

Adding substantially to these pressures on TA in some areas were new demands associated with the Ukrainian and Afghan refugee crises. The Government’s Ukraine Family and Sponsorship (Homes for Ukraine) schemes²²³ was launched in March 2022. As of March 2023 over 220,000 three-year UK visas have been issued.²²⁴ A report by the Office for National Statistics found that only 23% of hosts under the Homes for Ukraine programme (whose initial participation in the scheme involved agreement to a six-month hosting term) would consider hosting beyond 12 months.²²⁵

“We’ve got 300 households from the Ukraine being accommodated by hosts in [LA]. We’ve surveyed them recently, and only about a

third want to continue with that hosting arrangement. We’ve got to look at solutions for those individuals, because there’s no way they’re going to return to the Ukraine.”

(LA key informant)

“We have been a massive draw for Ukraine and dispersal, something that we’ve really wanted to support. They’re coming to an end now, those placements. That’s going to create additional, really high demand.”

(LA key informant)

Some accommodation placements under the scheme, including those involving families with children, have broken down or were not available or suitable on arrival, and recent data shows that 5,410 Ukrainian households were owed a prevention or relief duty between February 2022 and April 2023.²²⁶

“On the Ukrainian side... our local authorities are reporting that we are seeing more that are tumbling out into the homelessness system.”

(Voluntary sector key informant)

“We’ve got lots of people from Ukraine who are living in houses in London... and there’s lots of people coming through [as homeless].”

(LA key informant)

226 See https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fuploads%2Fsystem%2Fuploads%2Fattachment_data%2Ffile%2F1141192%2FUkraine_Homelessness_Pressures_09032023.ods&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK; and also https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fuploads%2Fsystem%2Fuploads%2Fattachment_data%2Ffile%2F1154505%2FUkraine_Homelessness_Pressures_Publication_21042023.ods&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

227 UK Visas and Immigration and Home Office (2021) *Afghan citizens resettlement scheme*. 18th August. Online: gov.uk <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

3.5 Exempt accommodation

Key informants to recent Monitors expressed concern in relation to the provision of very poor quality 'exempt accommodation', that is supported housing, not commissioned by the LA, that *"is exempt from certain Housing Benefit provisions... [and] which houses more marginalised groups with support needs, such as recent prison leavers; care leavers; those fleeing domestic violence; and homeless people with substance dependence or mental health issues."*²²⁸ Over a third (39%) of LA respondents to this year's survey reported the existence of non-commissioned exempt accommodation in their locality, including recent increases in its use in some areas. None believed provision to have declined.

Key informants to this study were of the view that the issue of problematic exempt is widespread and growing, albeit particularly concentrated in areas where local housing market conditions are conducive to exploiting the given financial incentives and, in areas where this is the case, demand for exempt accommodation is further inflated through out-of-area placements.

"Because it's an economic driven abuse... [profit] also depends on the particular markets that you're buying into. So I think the North and the Midlands are more vulnerable because for a million quid you can buy up quite a few properties, HMOs [house in multiple occupation] or whatever, or lease them,

whereas you couldn't do that in London."

(Voluntary sector key informant)

"[My region] has got... [more than double the] units of exempt accommodation... [than] by its own housing needs analysis it...needs... [with] an awful lot of people that have been shifted around the country by local authorities who can't meet their need locally. Not just local authorities, to be fair, by probation services, by criminal-justice system, all sorts."

(Voluntary sector key informant)

Various actions have been taken by Government in recent years in response to concerns around problematic exempt accommodation. The publication in October 2020 of a national "statement of expectations" around supported housing set out recommendations for assessing local need and planning to meet demand for supported housing, alongside guidance on standards in accommodation.²²⁹ In the same year, 'Oversight Pilots' focused on improving the quality and oversight of exempt supported accommodation, were established in five areas - Birmingham, Blackburn, Blackpool, Bristol, and Hull - to *"test the effectiveness of measures to improve enforcement as a means of improving the quality and value for money of supported housing."*²³⁰

The Oversight Pilot, reporting in April 2022, indicated that they had produced some positive outcomes across support, accommodation, and financial scrutiny, but that their overall impact was hampered by the lack of a standardised definition of 'care, support and supervision' in Housing Benefit regulations and the absence of LA *"levers or powers to prevent... [providers of exempt accommodation] from opening new schemes, regardless of whether they meet local need or the local authorities' expectations on quality."*²³¹

A parliamentary select committee inquiry on exempt accommodation,²³² reporting in October 2022, noted ongoing exploitation of the system for profit by rogue providers who can *"make excessive profits by capitalising on loopholes"*, which amount to *"a licence to print money."*²³³ The inquiry concluded that the current system of exempt accommodation is a *"complete mess"*, which at its worst allows for the *"exploitation of vulnerable people who should be receiving support"*, with some residents living in *"shocking conditions"* and subject to experiences that are *"beyond disgraceful"*, including some being *"victims of terrible crimes at the hands of staff."*²³⁴ The committee made a series of recommendations, including calling for national standards that are enforceable by LAs and spanning referral, support and accommodation.

Key informants viewed the lack of oversight of exempt accommodation as deeply problematic.

"if you set up as a registered provider then you can charge market rents... and fall outside the HMO [house in multiple occupation] licensing rules... If... you've got at least one unit of social housing, then only your units of social housing fall under consumer regulation ... All of these systems of regulation have developed separately at different times, and nobody has ever had a look at them overall and seen how they all fit together... [and that has created] basically an economic incentive driven abuse..."

(Voluntary sector key informant)

"...the local authority has got very little power to address it... [because] the main powers that they would find useful like HMO [house in multiple occupation] licensing they can't use."

(Voluntary sector key informant)

228 Wilson, W. (2022) Supported exempt accommodation (England). Research Briefing: House of Commons Library. Number CBP09362. Online: House of Commons Library <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9362/CBP-9362.pdf>

229 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Department for Work and Pensions, & Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Guidance: Supported housing: national statement of expectations*. Online: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-housing-national-statement-of-expectations/supported-housing-national-statement-of-expectations>

230 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Evaluation of the Supported Housing Oversight Pilots*. Online: DLUHC https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1068653/Evaluation_of_the_supported_housing_oversight_pilots.pdf p.1

231 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Evaluation of the Supported Housing Oversight Pilots*. Online: DLUHC https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1068653/Evaluation_of_the_supported_housing_oversight_pilots.pdf p. 8

232 UK Parliament Committees (2021) *Levelling Up Committee launches inquiry into exempt accommodation*. Online: UK Parliament <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1688/exempt-accommodation/news/159501/levelling-up-committee-launches-inquiry-into-exempt-accommodation/>

233 House of Commons, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee (2022) *Exempt Accommodation*. Online: HoC <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/30512/documents/175989/default/> p. 3

234 House of Commons, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee (2022) *Exempt Accommodation*. Online: HoC <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/30512/documents/175989/default/> p. 3

The extension of the Oversight Pilots under the auspices of the SHIP, to include an additional 22 local authority areas and for a further three years with linked funding of £20 million, was therefore welcomed in this context.²³⁵

“[We have] been awarded SHIP funding – the funding will enable us to create a multi-Disciplinary team including housing, housing enforcement and Housing Benefit to collectively address the concerns and challenges that poor quality non-commissioned exempt supported accommodation cause.”
(LA respondent, the Midlands).

Accompanying the launch of the SHIP, in March 2022, the then minister, Eddie Hughes, issued a written statement outlining intentions for the future regulation of exempt accommodation, including minimum standards for support, new powers for LAs to better manage local supported housing markets, and changes to Housing Benefit to better define care, support, and supervision.²³⁶

This agenda has subsequently been taken up via a Private Members Bill by Bob Blackman MP in June 2022.²³⁷ If passed, The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Bill would require LAs to review and develop strategies for supported housing in their areas and give them power, and in certain circumstances require them, to create licensing schemes

for exempt accommodation; provide for the creation of a national expert advisory panel on supported housing; and give Government power to introduce national support standards and review the case for the introduction of a new planning class for exempt accommodation. The Bill passed its third reading in the Housing of Commons with cross-party support on 3rd March 2023 and is now at committee stage in the House of Lords.²³⁸

Key informants voiced very strong support for the Blackman Bill, seeing legislation as a necessary step to addressing problematic exempt accommodation. However, two notes of caution were voiced. First, concerns were raised about the potential impact of legislative change on supported housing more generally:

“Most supported housing providers are exempt accommodation and most of them have been providing decent accommodation for a long time... There is certainly... this really horrific exempt... [but] our concern is that they have dominated the conversation at the sacrifice of understanding the wider system, and that there is risk... [that] unintended consequences will knock out people who you would want to work with to improve their services... versus people

who are genuinely there unscrupulously, they have no intention of providing good quality.”

(Voluntary sector key informant)

Second, most key informants traced the origins of problematic exempt accommodation to the lifting of the ringfence on Supporting People funding in 2009. It was a key concern for informants therefore that the Bill and other associated Government actions do not address the question of funding:

“Your specialist temporary accommodation, supported accommodation... that’s obviously gone down since the days of supporting people because the revenue element has fallen away. This is where that slightly bizarre element of supported exempt has come... from... We would actually say that we want more commissioned [exempt]... [and] better mechanisms for commissioning what they do want, as opposed to just being able to tackle what they don’t want. I mean the Bill is really good... [but] It doesn’t go into the revenue space, does it?”

(LA key informant)

In this context, key informants valued both the RSAP and SHAP, as noted above, albeit with reservations.

²³⁵ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) *Supported Housing Improvement Programme: list of funding awards to local authorities*. Online: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-housing-improvement-programme-prospectus/supported-housing-improvement-programme-list-of-funding-awards-to-local-authorities>

²³⁶ Hughes, Eddie (2022) Housing Update Volume 710: debated on Thursday 17 March 2022. Online: UK Parliament <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-03-17/debates/22031756000007/HousingUpdate>

²³⁷ The Supported Housing (Regulated Oversight) Bill, 2022, (HC Bill 19 58/3). <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0019/220019.pdf>

²³⁸ Wilson, Wendy (2022) The Supported Housing (Regulated Oversight) Bill 2022-23. House of Commons Library: Research Briefing. Online: House of Commons Library <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9668/CBP-9668.pdf>

Statistics on homelessness

4. Official statistics on homelessness

Key findings

Following several years of decline, the number of people seen sleeping rough in England grew in 2022. At 3,069 in November of that year, recorded rough sleeping was 26% up on the equivalent figure twelve months earlier. London-specific data also indicates rising rough sleeping since 2021, with around half of those sleeping on the streets in the capital non-UK nationals.

Some 290,000 eligible households sought help from LAs on grounds of homelessness in 2021/22 – similar to the numbers recorded in the years since the introduction of the HRA framework in 2018. Applicants assessed as actually homeless (and therefore owed the relief duty) fell by 4% over the year, while those judged at risk of homelessness within 56 days increased by 10%.

A large majority of LA survey respondents (85%) perceived that homelessness service ‘footfall’ had increased in the year preceding the survey; almost half (49%) reported a ‘significant’ increase. Moreover, the perception of recently rising demand

commanded greater unanimity in 2022 than in any year since 2015, when the question was first asked in a Homelessness Monitor England survey.

The apparent disjuncture between survey findings and official administrative statistics on overall demand trends might be explained by survey respondents taking into consideration demand from households ineligible for assistance (due to their migration status) or others assisted outwith the parameters of the statutory framework, and thus not recorded in the prevention and relief numbers.

After falling sharply during the height of the pandemic, homelessness applications involving family households rose in 2021/22, with two-parent family applicants growing in number by 76% to stand substantially higher than in the pre-pandemic year of 2019/20 (25,020 compared with 21,240). Single adult applicants, by contrast fell back in number in the latest year.

While HRA provisions give far better protection to single homeless households than the previous legal framework, some homeless people still navigate – and exit – the system without having secured a long-term accommodation offer. Thus, in 2021/22 nearly 19,000 homeless households were deemed as either not in priority need or intentionally homeless, and therefore not owed the main rehousing duty.

Since bottoming out in 2010/11, total TA placements have more than doubled to over 100,000 households in latest figures – up by 111% over the period to Q4 2022 and now at their highest ever level. Within this, B&B hotel placements have risen almost five-fold since their 2009 nadir. Having increased sharply during the early part of the pandemic, B&B placements once again climbed steeply during mid-2022 up by 32% in the year to Q4 2022.

4.1 Introduction

This is the third edition of Homelessness Monitor England where our statutory homelessness analysis is substantially based on the operation of the HRA 2017, in force from 1 April 2018. Our prime focus is the fourth year of the HRA regime, financial year 2021/22, effectively the second twelve months of the COVID-19 pandemic. A few analyses incorporate statistics covering the first two quarters of 2022/23, as published shortly before this report’s completion.

While the public health crisis had begun to ease towards the end of 2021/22, this was a year in which repeated infection spikes continued to pose particular challenges for people experiencing homelessness and for LA homelessness managers. Some

of the emergency housing policy responses to the pandemic initiated in early 2020 remained in place, at least for part of 2021/22. It would therefore be expected that there will be some reflection of these circumstances in the statutory homelessness statistics analysed in this chapter.

Part and parcel of the HRA framework is a novel set of legal and associated statistical concepts.²³⁹ However, given that the regime has been in place only since 2018 there is limited scope for trend over time analyses where these involve such new metrics. Nevertheless, in the case of a few key measures, it remains possible to retain trend analyses covering more extended periods, albeit sometimes requiring qualification. This is true with respect to Main Duty (MD) decisions (see Sections 4.1 and 4.5) and, especially, TA placements (see Section 4.4). In relation to such statistics, as in previous editions of the Homelessness Monitor England, our analysis takes as its starting point 2009/10. Otherwise, the main time period examined is 2018-22. The chapter also draws on the results of our bespoke online LA survey and in interpreting both these and the statistical data presented, we also draw on key informant interview data (see Chapter 1).

The chapter is structured as follows. First, in Section 4.2 we analyse the official statistics on rough sleeping – the most extreme form of homelessness. Given the widely acknowledged limitations of these official statistics, we also briefly review some alternative sources of data on rough sleeping in England.

²³⁹ It should be noted that the H-CLIC statistical series on which we primarily draw has not yet received the designation of official National Statistics. In a recent assessment report, the Office for Statistics Regulation outline the key issues regarding quality and public value and detail six actions required of DLUHC to enable the statistics to achieve this designation in the future. See Office for Statistics Regulation, UK Statistics Authority (2021) *Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics: Statistics on Statutory Homelessness in England* (produced by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities). Assessment report 364.

Then in Section 4.3 we switch focus to the statutory homelessness system, beginning with a flow chart diagram illustrating the structure of the HRA and presenting the raw national case processing statistics to give a sense of the relative incidence of the various case decisions logged by LAs during 2020/21 and 2021/22. We then focus on applications and initial LA decisions to shed light on the changing incidence of homelessness in the post-HRA period; that is, the two years immediately preceding the pandemic (2018/19 and 2019/20), the year when COVID-19 was at its height (2020/21), and the period when the crisis began to wane (2021/22 and first half of 2022/23).

Next, in Section 4.4, we analyse the statistics in relation to the profile of homelessness applicants and the factors prompting them to seek assistance. Section 4.5 then focuses on the use of TA, mainly in terms of its utility as a proxy for homelessness stress as this bears on LAs. Linking back to the flow chart, Section 4.6 analyses the distribution of outcomes that result from statutory decisions taken under each legal power/obligation as identified in Figure 4.7 – that is, the prevention or relief of homelessness, or the main rehousing duty. Section 4.6 reviews key stakeholder views on access to settled housing for homeless households during 2021/2022.

4.2 Trends in rough sleeping

The national picture

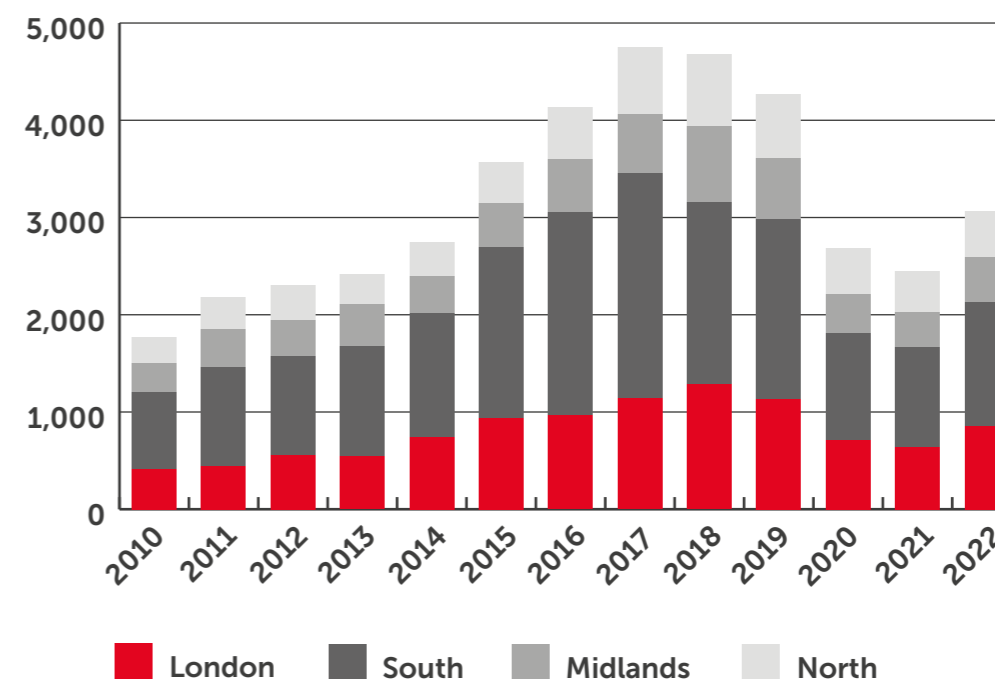
Rough sleeping in England has been annually monitored by the relevant UK Government department for more than 20 years. The numbers are collated from LA 'snapshot' counts and estimates relating to a chosen night in November each year. Such methods are, of course, inherently imperfect.

By their very nature, physical counts can never do more than provide a minimum estimate. However, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities reports that their application as directed under current official guidance is 'independently verified and ... published in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics',²⁴⁰ in part a reference to Homeless Link's role in this process. In 2022, count-based statistics were submitted by 20% of LAs, with 80% of submissions being estimates of various kinds. This is roughly in line with norms for previous years (ranging from 25% in 2019 to 12% in 2020).

Across England, following several years of decline, the number of people seen sleeping rough grew in number in 2022 – see Figure 4.1. At 3,069 in November of that year, recorded rough sleeping was 26% up on the equivalent figure twelve months earlier. There was some geographical variation here, with London numbers up by 34% over the period, while the North of England total grew by only 15%.

In part, recent trends should be seen within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The sharp drop in rough sleeping registered in Autumn 2020 is likely to have reflected the extraordinary action taken during the early part of that year under the Everyone In programme to shelter people at risk of sleeping rough during the height of the public health crisis. Equally, it is important to acknowledge that – at the national level – numbers had already been on a gradual downward trend for two years in advance of this, and that downward trend continued in the year following COVID-19.

Figure 4.1: Rough sleeping in England, as officially estimated, 2010-2022



Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics

Importantly, as well as providing an unusually widely scoped TA programme which extended to people at risk of sleeping rough who had NRPf/Other RE, significant efforts were made to secure move-on housing for at least a proportion of those accommodated under Everyone In, including some who will have formerly slept rough, reinforcing efforts already in place under the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy of 2018 and subsequent Action Plans. While some will undoubtedly have returned to housing insecurity or homelessness after a period of Everyone In assistance, many scheme beneficiaries will have been helped to find longer term accommodation.²⁴¹ At the same time, as the health crisis subsided during 2021 and into 2022, Everyone In arrangements began to lapse, with the

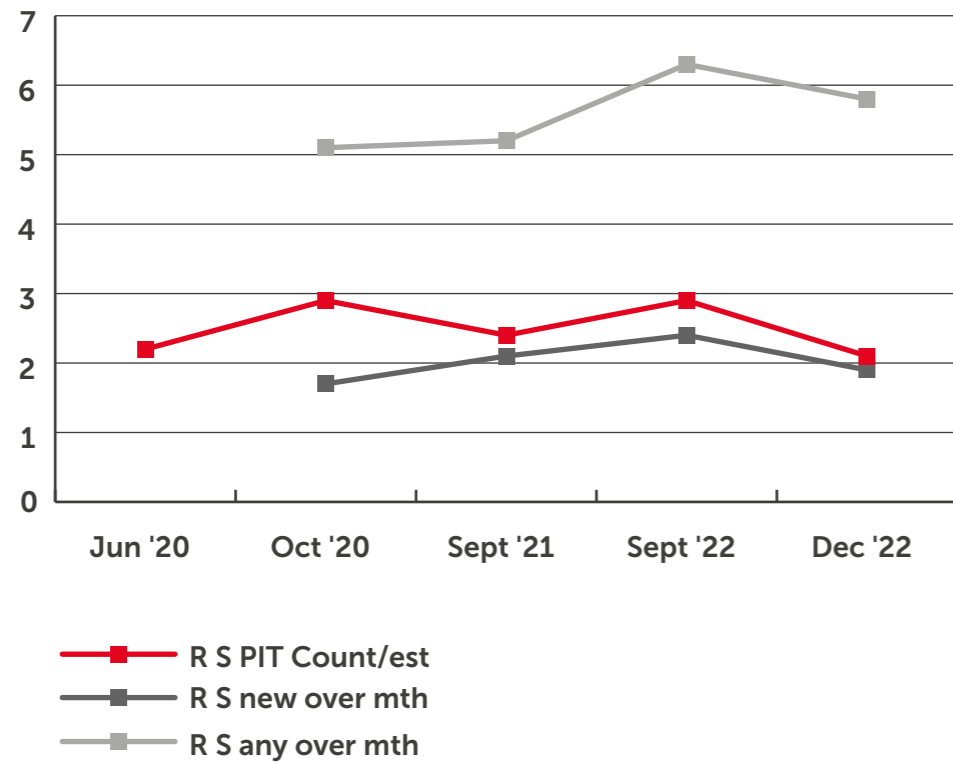
restoration of pre-COVID-19 policies and practices on housing support for people experiencing rough sleeping and other forms of homelessness (see Chapter 3). Rising rough sleeping numbers in the year to November 2022 may well reflect this situation with a renewed flow of people newly experiencing homelessness, but no longer potentially benefiting from the stepped-up level of intervention and support on offer during 2020 and 2021.

Post-COVID-19 trends in more detailed numbers addressed by Rough Sleeping related services are illustrated by Figures 4.2 and 4.3, derived from the quarterly management information on Support for People Sleeping Rough (DLUHC, 28 Feb 2023). Figure 4.2 shows three measures, including an

240 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023) *Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2022*. Online: DLUHC <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2022/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2022>

241 Watts, B., Bramley, G., Pawson, H., Young, G., Fitzpatrick, S. & McMordie, L. (2022) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2022*. Online: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/the-homelessness-monitor-england-2022/>

Figure 4.2: Selected management information on key rough sleeping measures for England, 2020-22 (thousands, monthly)



Source: Quarterly Management Information on Support for People Sleeping Rough (DLUHC, 28 Feb 2023).

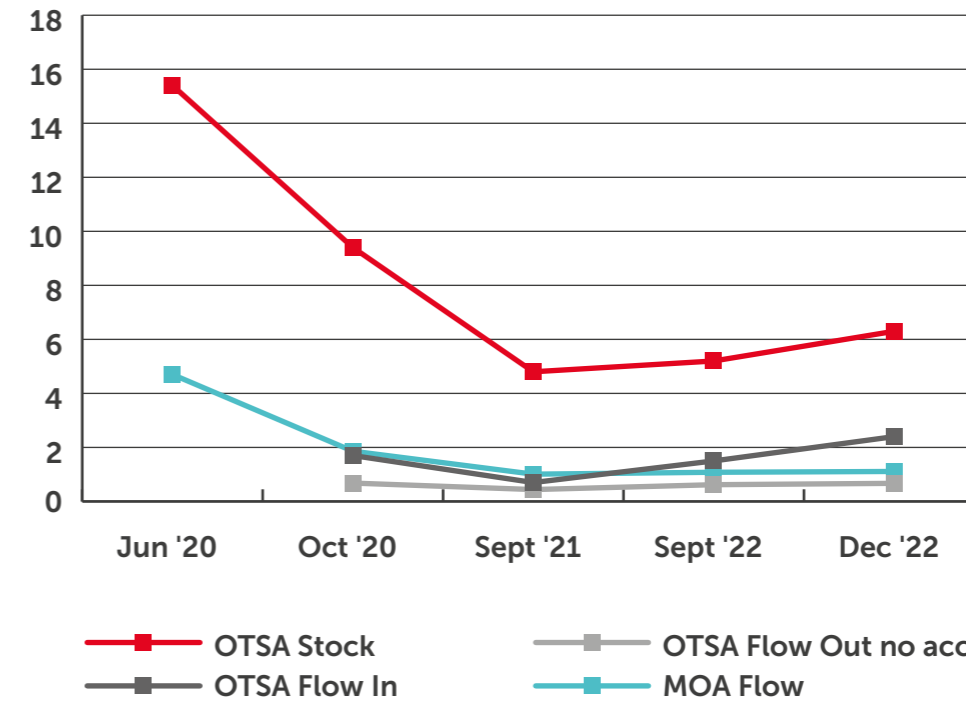
approximate equivalent of the official annual 'Point in Time' count, the number of new people seen sleeping rough by services during the month, and the number sleeping rough at all during the month. These confirm the picture of rising numbers during 2022, but also illustrate the normal seasonal dip in December.

Figure 4.3 shows trends in the stock of 'off the street' emergency accommodation (falling steeply with the rundown of Everyone In to Sept 2021), the inflow of cases rising from September 2021, the flow out to 'not accommodated' running at between 30% and 60% of the flow in, and the flow into move-on accommodation

which appears relatively static since 2021, but where the ratio to inflow has fallen from one-and-a-half to less than one-half. Overall, this picture confirms a deterioration in the performance of services in addressing rough sleeping over the year, while noting that this may reflect factors outside the control of local services.

Rough sleeping in London
While accounting for only just over a quarter of the official national total (see Figure 4.1), rough sleeping numbers and dynamics for London are of particular interest and significance because these are much more intensively monitored than elsewhere in England. These data are collated via

Figure 4.3: Stocks and flows of households in 'Off the Street' and 'Move On' Accommodation associated with Rough Sleeping Action Plans, England 2020-22 (thousands of households)



Source: Quarterly Management Information on Support for People Sleeping Rough (DLUHC, 28 Feb 2023).

the Greater London Authority's CHAIN system managed by St Mungo's.²⁴² It should be emphasized that CHAIN metrics are different from, and not directly comparable with the DLUHC statistics reported above. Unlike the national numbers, the former involve ongoing collection of data about the rough sleeping population by outreach teams who engage directly with people sleeping rough nightly on the street.

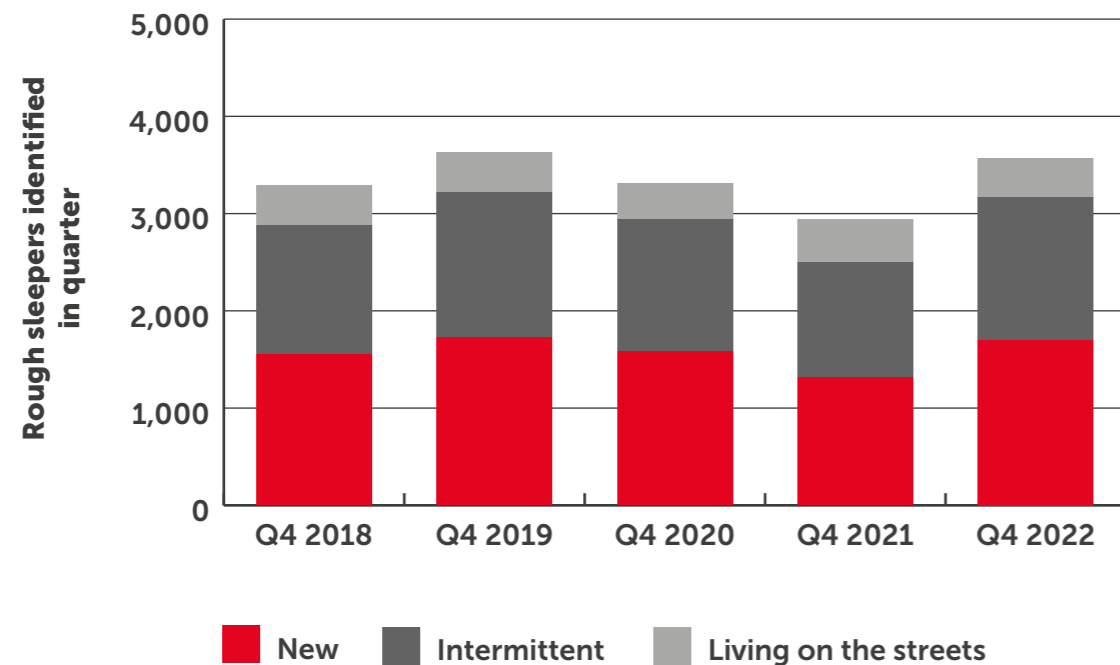
The recent CHAIN statistics trend shown in Figure 4.4, nevertheless, triangulates quite well with the DLUHC annual estimates for the past few years, albeit that the CHAIN peak year

was 2019 rather than 2018 for London in the DLUHC series. Since 2019, a marked reduction in CHAIN-recorded numbers during the height of the pandemic has been succeeded by a recently renewed upward trend, with total quarterly observations rising by 21% over the latest year to 3,069 in Q4 2022.

As shown in Figure 4.5, UK nationals have continued to account for around half of enumerated people sleeping rough in London over recent years (falling slightly from 51% in 2021 to 48% in 2023). At the same time, the CEE share has been generally trending

²⁴² Because this method enumerates people who have slept rough during a given period (financial year) the resulting figures cannot be directly compared with the 'point in time' snapshot numbers produced under the DLUHC national monitoring methodology as described above. Similarly, these statistics are non-comparable with the new monthly DLUHC data enumerating people sleeping rough over the course of the month because of the different time frame involved (monthly rather than quarterly), as well as because of likely differences in data quality.

Figure 4.4: London rough sleepers enumerated Q4 2018-2022: breakdown by assessed status



Source: Greater London Authority/CHAIN
Note: 'Q4' meaning October-December.

down since 2018 – reducing from 31% at the start of this period to 23% in 2022. The somewhat contrasting patterns of change can be seen more clearly when presented on an indexed basis as in Figure 4.6.

While the absolute numbers concerned remain relatively small, large proportionate increases in enumerated people of African and Asian origin partly explain the pattern shown here. The former increased in number from 210 to 305 (45%) in the year to Q4 2022, while the latter were up from 176 to 281 (a 60% increase).²⁴³ The way the data for these two periods have been published does not permit finer analysis. However, this does tie in with other evidence which

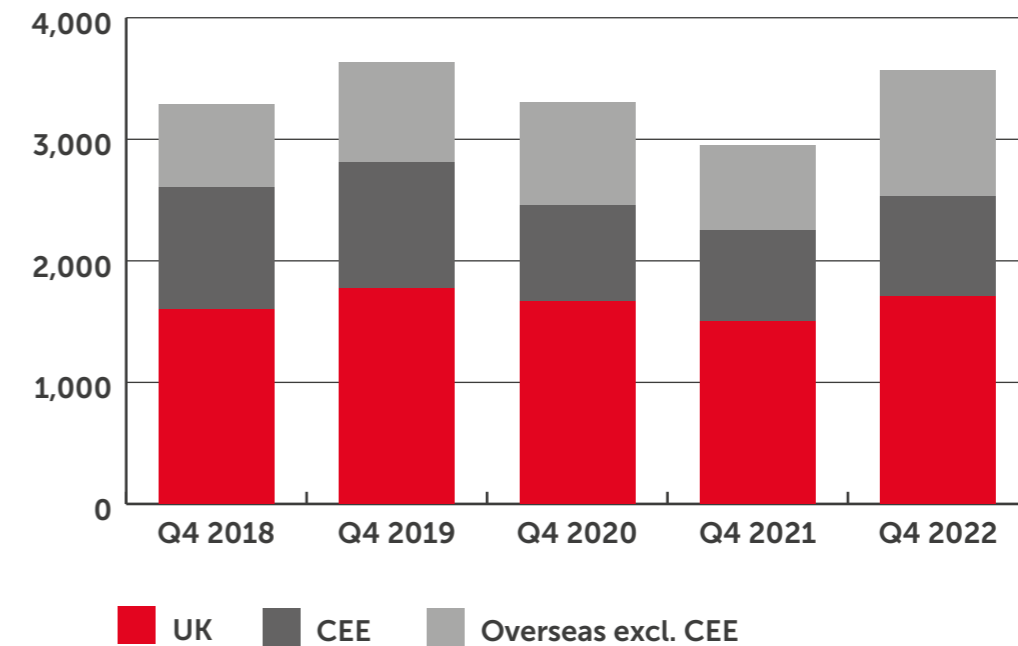
indicates a growing problem with migrants experiencing homelessness including people sleeping rough lacking recourse to public funds and therefore unable to access LA statutory homelessness services. Some further survey evidence on this is presented below.

Alternative evidence on rough sleeping

In the core homelessness analysis presented in Chapter 5, we refer to a total of six separate data sources in arriving at our central estimate of the scale of rough sleeping in England. Only one of these is the official annual count-estimate number, and even this we modify to allow for the different methodologies used locally and to

²⁴³ Note that these are author estimates that allow for missing and not known nationality data.

Figure 4.5: London rough sleepers enumerated Q4 2018-2022: breakdown by nationality



Source: Greater London Authority/CHAIN. Note that the definition of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has been narrowed to exclude four central European /Baltic countries, and numbers are also adjusted to compensate for under-recording of nationality.

Notes: 1. CEE = Central and Eastern European, defined as the combined total number of people sleeping rough originating from the following countries: Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania. This is a slightly different definition to that until recently used in the published CHAIN statistics which also included Czechia, Estonia, Slovakia and Slovenia. Because figures for these latter countries are no longer published in the CHAIN quarterly bulletin, it has been necessary to re-calibrate this cohort for all previous years in order to establish a properly comparable cohort. 2. Figures adjusted to allow for observations where nationality is missing or not known – i.e. the numbers shown here are estimates that assume under-enumeration of each nationality is consistent with the overall incidence of nationality under-counting.

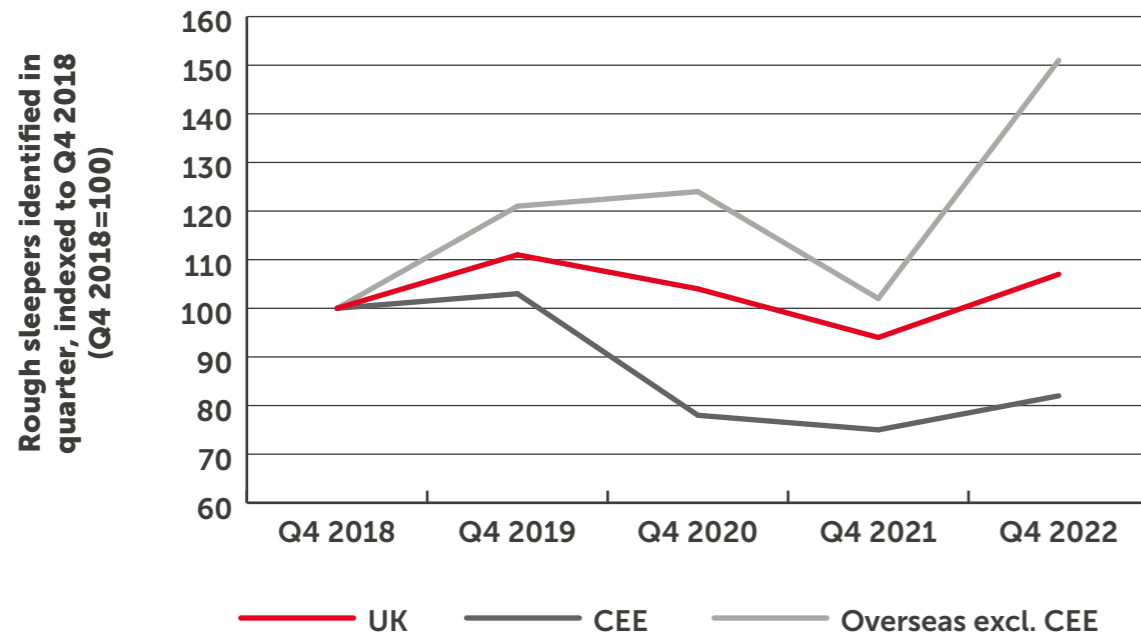
take account of CHAIN evidence in London. All of the other five sources show higher numbers than the official figures, by varying margins. These other sources vary in robustness but they do in various ways overcome the limitations of 'point-in-time' counts and estimates as rehearsed at length in previous editions of the Monitor.²⁴⁴ For

example, the longitudinal Destitution in the UK Survey funded by JRF²⁴⁵ shows snapshot rough sleeping numbers consistently higher than the official count estimates, by a factor of 3-4, in the years 2017, 2019 and 2022. A key reason for this discrepancy is that the Destitution in the UK study covers users of a wide range of crisis services,

²⁴⁴ Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2021) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2021*. London: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/the-homelessness-monitor-england-2021/>

²⁴⁵ The 2019 study received a special award from the Market Research Society for Inclusive Research, and was a key element cited in the award of the Queens Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education in 2020 to I-SPHERE for its path-breaking and impactful research on destitution and homelessness.

Figure 4.6: London rough sleepers enumerated Q4 2018-2022: breakdown by nationality, indexed to Q4 2018 (Q4 2018=100)



Source: Greater London Authority/CHAIN.
Notes: see notes to Figure 4.5.

not just homelessness services, but also advice, food, community, and migrant services, and is therefore able to provide an unusually comprehensive picture.

4.3 The changing incidence of statutory homelessness demand: headline indicators and processes

Figure 4.7 contextualises official statistics on LA statutory homelessness decisions under the third (2020/21) and fourth (2021/22) years of the HRA regime’s operation. These have been collated from the H-CLIC system.²⁴⁶ The flow chart is a substantially simplified representation of the multiple possible outcomes of HRA homelessness application and assessment processes.²⁴⁷

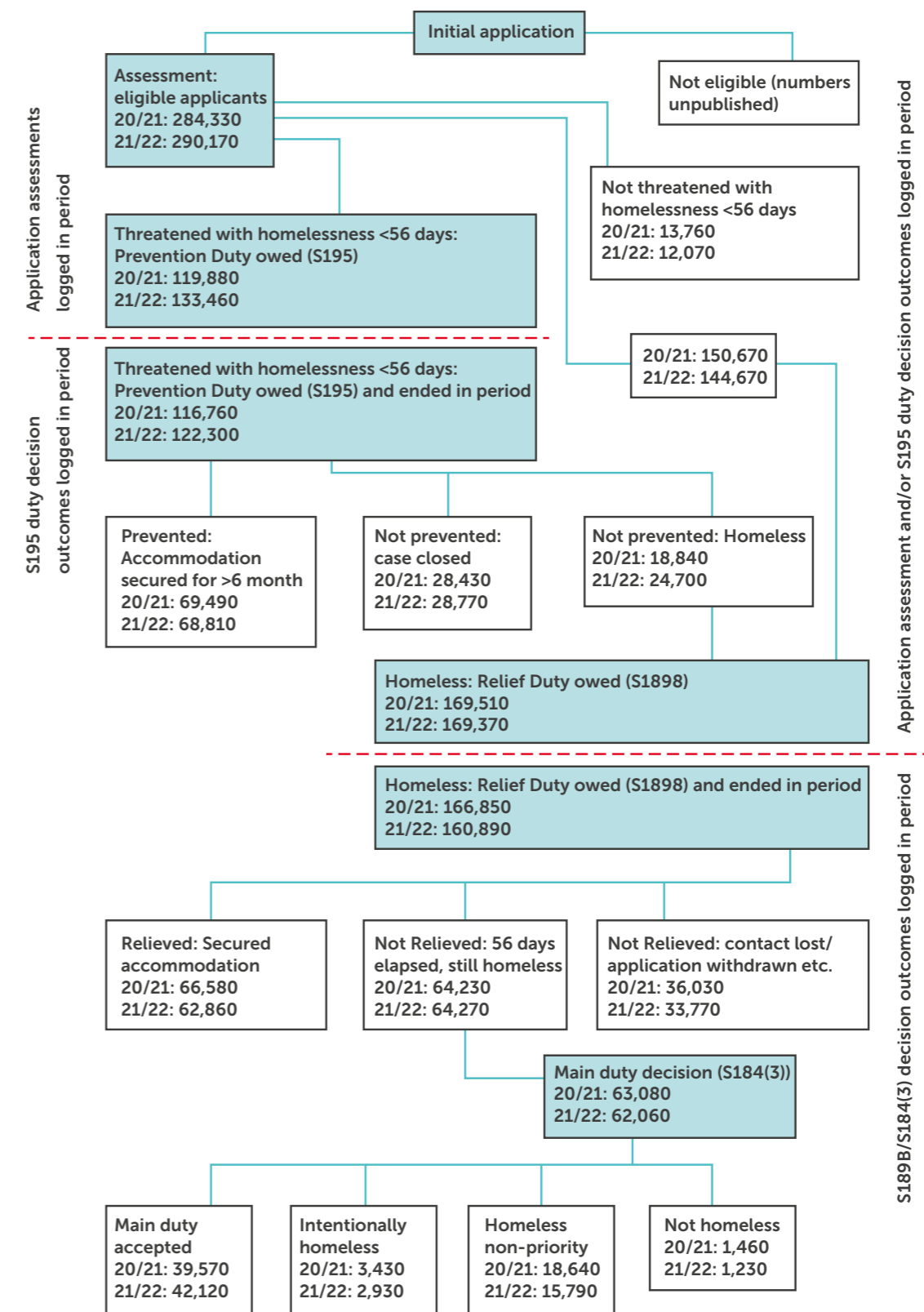
As depicted in Figure 4.7, there are four significant HRA LA decision-taking points. A few applications may ultimately pass through all four of these. This would be true where:

- The applicant is initially deemed eligible (ineligibility pertains primarily to citizenship/immigration status).
- The eligible applicant is judged as threatened with homelessness – and thus subject to the Prevention Duty (S195).
- With efforts to prevent homelessness having been unsuccessful, or where the applicant is already homeless at the point of application, they are subject to the Relief Duty (S189B).

²⁴⁶ Accompanying HRA implementation as from April 2018, this ‘individual case return’ framework replaced the previous system of quarterly aggregate statistical returns. See DLUHC briefing on the new recording system at: <https://bit.ly/2W47x2n>

²⁴⁷ An elaborated flow chart, as produced for the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) is at: <https://bit.ly/2F6NiKB>

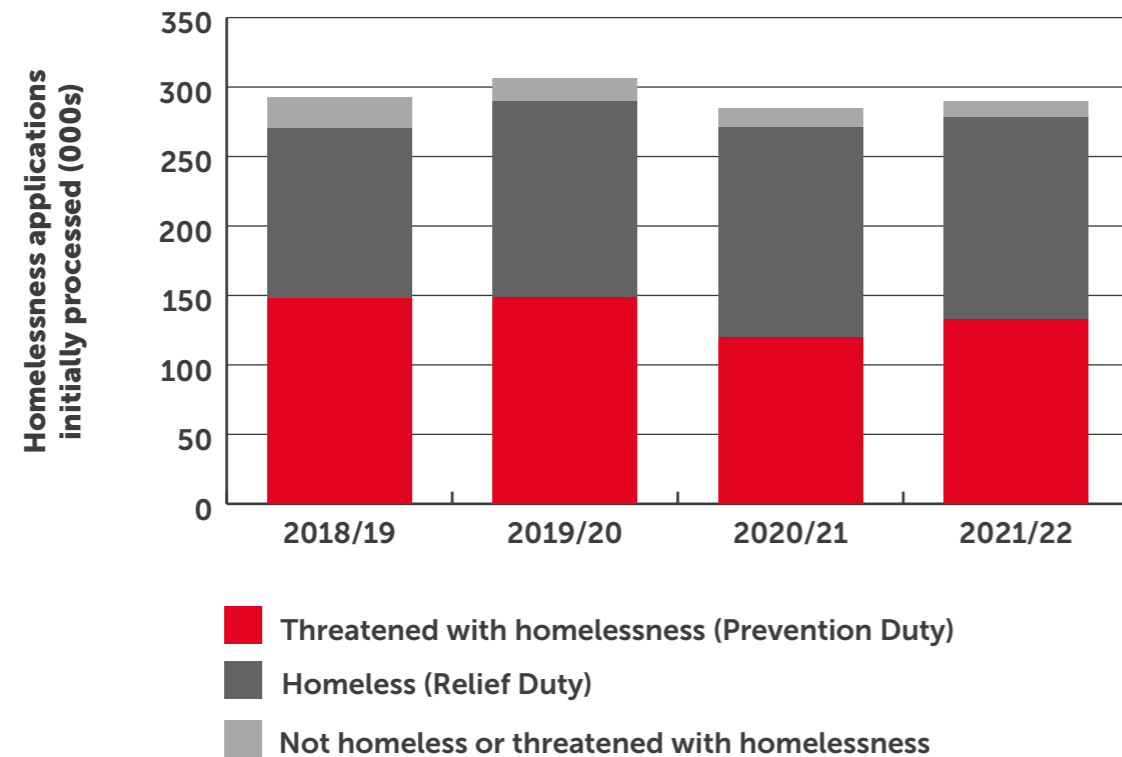
Figure 4.7 : Homelessness Reduction Act – statutory homelessness decisions 2020/21 and 2021/22



Source: Authors – based on DLUHC statistics and drawn with DLUHC assistance.

Note: 1. Statistics cited in each box represent national published totals for 2020/21 and 2021/22. 2. Homelessness prevention and relief duties completed during each financial year denoted as such by the term ‘and ended in period’.

Figure 4.8: Eligible homelessness applications 2018/19-2021/22
(a) Breakdown by initial decision – financial years 2018-22



Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics

- With the Relief Duty having been unsuccessful in relieving homelessness, the applicant is subject to the Full Duty assessment (S193(2)).

At each of these decision points various outcomes are possible. Our flow chart necessarily amalgamates some of these for intelligibility. For example, the box ‘not prevented – case closed’ under S195 includes applications deemed to have been withdrawn as well as those where an offer of accommodation has been refused or where there has been ‘an unreasonable refusal to co-operate’. A finer breakdown of case closure decisions is presented at Figure 4.24, and can also be found in officially published DLUHC (formerly Ministry of

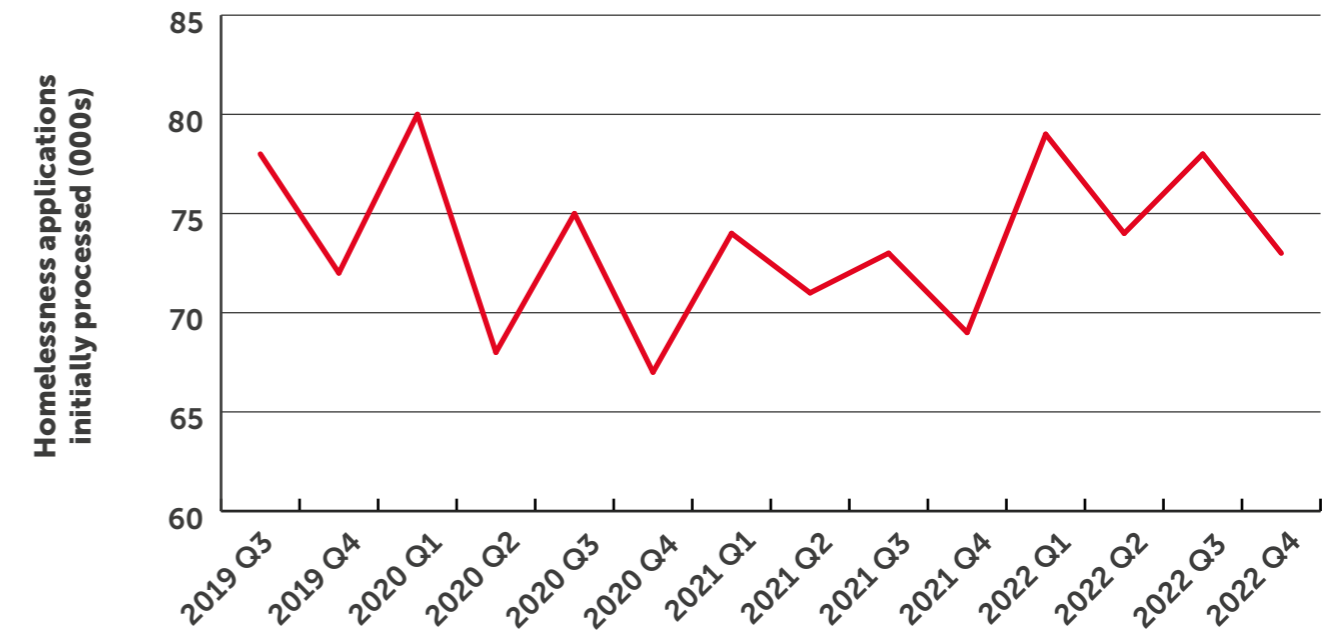
Housing, Communities and Local Government) statistics.²⁴⁸

The statutory outcomes that result from decisions at each stage of this process are examined later in this chapter in Section 4.5. In the remainder of this section and in Sections 4.3-4.4 we analyse the scale and nature of homelessness ‘demand’ as revealed by the published figures.

Historically, ‘homelessness acceptance’ statistics generated quarterly through the statutory homelessness system were widely treated as the prime measure of homelessness. With the April 2018 introduction of the HRA regime, however, a new official prime measure of ‘homelessness demand’ was created, namely: ‘initial decision

248 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

(b) Total eligible applications – Quarterly, 2019-22



Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics

of homelessness duty owed’. The decision here refers to whether, at first contact, an eligible applicant²⁴⁹ is deemed by a LA as homeless or threatened with homelessness.

In 2021/22, the second pandemic year, total eligible applications rose by 2%, from 285,000 in 2020/21 to 290,000. This came about wholly because of a 10% increase in those classed as threatened with homelessness (and therefore owed the prevention duty) – see Figure 4.8(a). This was a partial ‘bounce back’ towards the incidence of applicants deemed as ‘threatened with homelessness’ prior to the pandemic. It seems probable that this reflects the 2021 wind-down of special eviction restrictions imposed in 2020.²⁵⁰

A quarterly analysis demonstrates that, following on from relatively

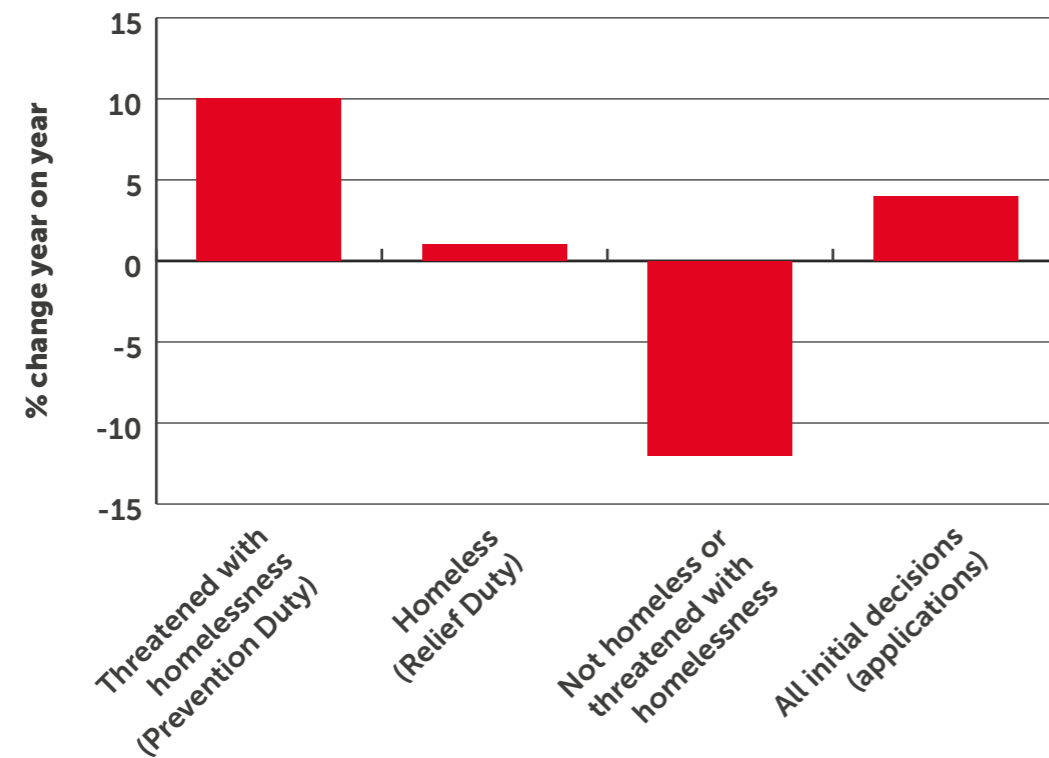
subdued numbers during the height of the pandemic (Q2 2020-Q4 2021), applications sharply increased in Q1 2022 (see Figure 4.8(b)). However, averaged across the first four quarters of 2022, logged applications during this period had only returned to 2019 levels rather than rising significantly above pre-pandemic rates.

As shown in Figure 4.9, applicant households deemed actually homeless (and therefore owed the relief duty) increased only marginally in the latest year for which published statistics are available (year to Q3 2022). However, the cohort judged ‘at risk of homelessness’ (and therefore owed the prevention duty) had grown by 10%. This may reflect a knock-on consequence of the eviction moratorium in place during 2020 and 2021. The relatively sharp reduction in applicants deemed not homeless or

249 That is, a person whose citizenship and immigration status entitles them to assistance – e.g., unaffected by rules that exclude certain non-UK citizens from recourse to public funds.

250 England’s eviction moratorium, introduced by the UK Government in March 2020, was lifted in June 2021, with notice periods of standard duration (two months) restored in October 2021.

Figure 4.9: Initial application decision outcomes, year to Q3 2022 - % change on year to Q3 2021



Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics

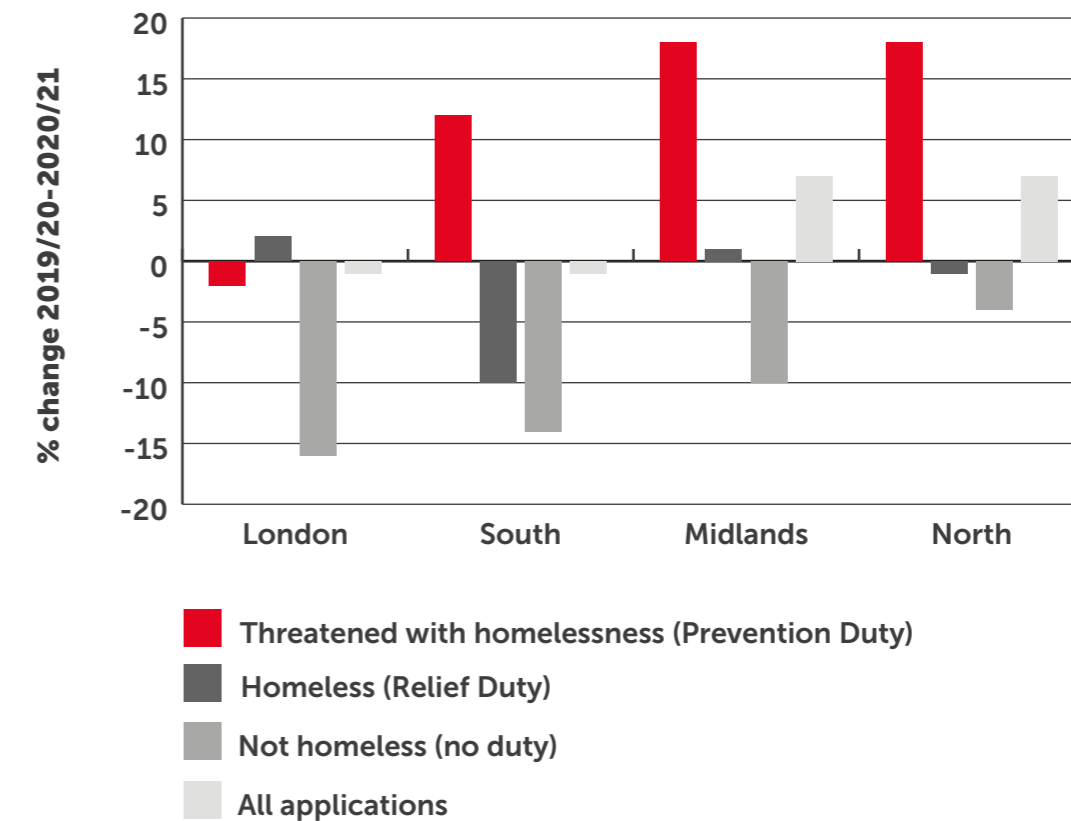
threatened with homelessness is more difficult to interpret or explain.

Official statistics indicate that significantly increased numbers of applicants deemed as 'threatened with homelessness' were common to all broad regions other than London in 2021/22 – see Figure 4.10. As also revealed by Figure 4.10, the national reduction in 'homeless' (applicant owed relief duty) cases as shown in Figure 4.9 came about almost entirely due to a drop in such assessment decisions in the South. Finally, although the numbers involved were relatively small, there was commonality across all broad regions as regards a decline in 'not homeless' decisions – although this was most marked in London.

By comparison with the Housing Act 1996 regime and its associated non-statutory prevention and relief activity, a much-increased proportion of those seeking help under the HRA are formally assisted under prevention or relief duties, with the result that far fewer applicants/applications are 'progressing' through the system as far as a MD decision (see Figure 4.7). Thus, in Year 4 of the new system, for example, only 62,060 cases passed through those initial stages to be referred for a MD judgement – equating to only 22% of the 278,100 applications judged homeless or threatened with homelessness at the initial stage²⁵¹ – see Figure 4.11. Likewise, the number of households deemed unintentionally homeless and

²⁵¹ By comparison, under the pre-HRA system in 2017/18 109,000 households were assessed in terms of the MD, equating to some 40% of all LA statutory and non-statutory case actions recorded that year. However, the extent to which such MD-assessed cases would have been already subject to prevention and/or relief efforts is difficult to know.

Figure 4.10: Initial application decision outcomes, 2021/22 - % change on 2020/21 by region



Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics

in priority need has been substantially reduced. This traditional 'headline indicator' of homelessness demand – at 42,120 in 2021/22 – remained well below the 57,000 recorded in 2017/18 – albeit the highest number recorded under the HRA regime to date.²⁵²

Notably, 'MD accepted' decisions in 2021/22 represented 68% of all MD decisions, well up on the 52% recorded under the final year of the pre-HRA regime in 2017/18. An important contributory factor here is that 'not homeless' MD decisions have been

hugely reduced under the new regime – accounting for only 2% of the latter in 2019/20 (1,230 households) compared with 23% of 2017/18 MD outcomes (25,720 households).²⁵³

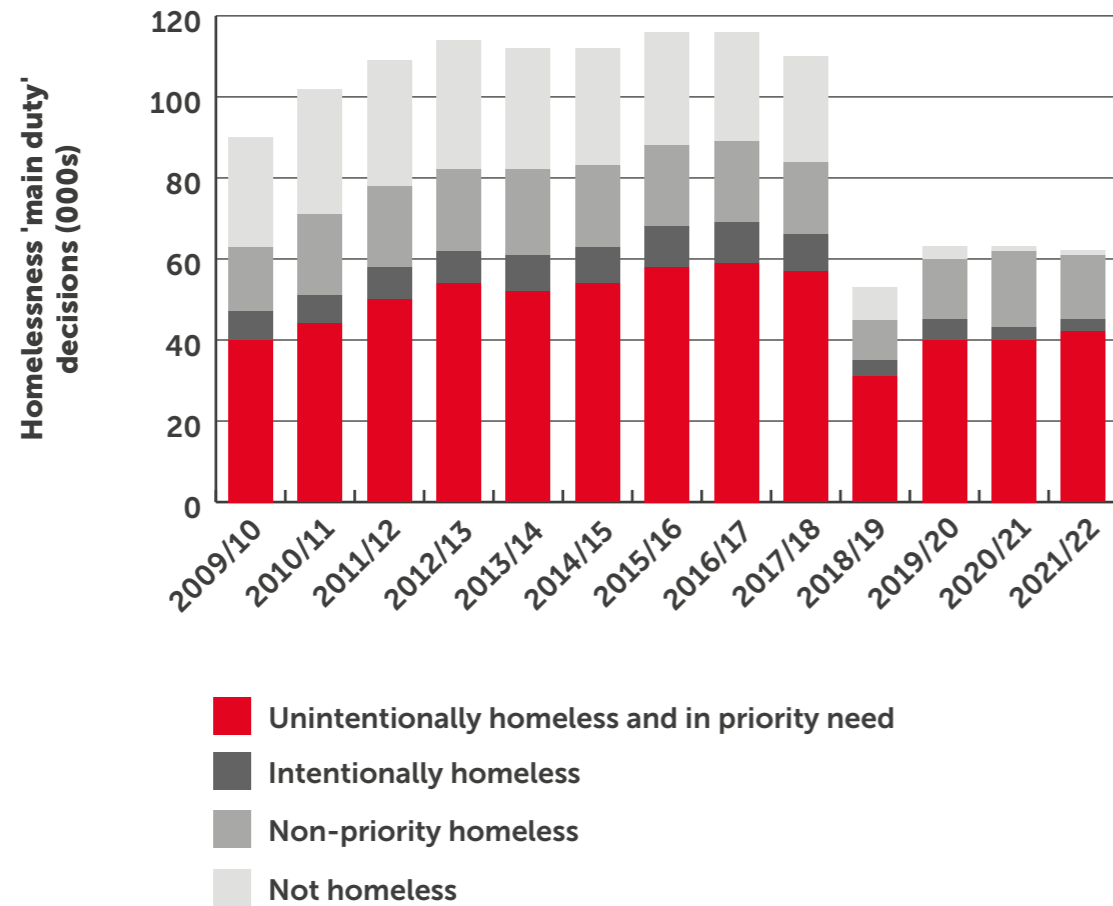
Local authority perspectives on homelessness demand

Complementing our analysis of overall homelessness demand as recorded in official statistics we can also refer to data from our own online survey of LAs (see Chapter 1 for methodological details). A large majority of respondents perceived that

²⁵² A similar pattern was evident in Wales after the introduction of the Housing Wales Act 2014. See Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Young, G., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2021) *The Homelessness Monitor: Wales 2021*. London: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/246433/the-homelessness-monitor-wales-2021-executive-summary.pdf>

²⁵³ Some or all of those classed as such under HRA procedures may be households whose housing situation has improved since their original application (when they will have been judged as owed the prevention or relief duty).

Figure 4.11: Main Duty decisions, 2009/10-2021/22



Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics

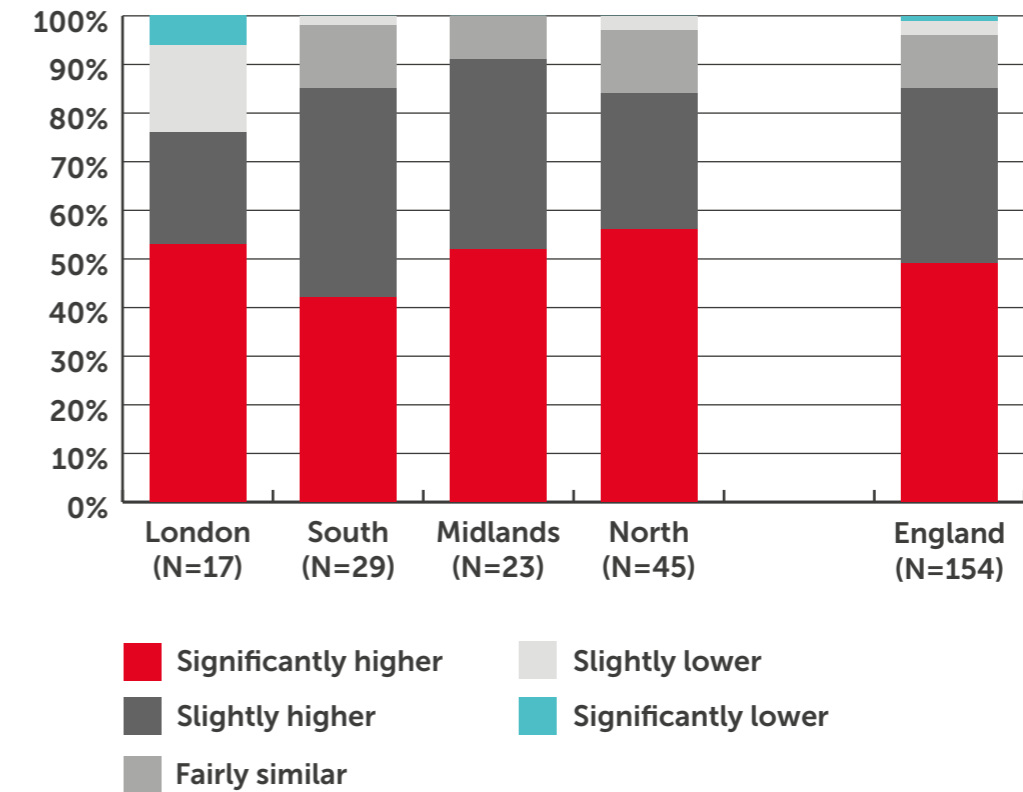
homelessness service 'footfall' had increased in the year preceding the survey, with 85% responding as such – see Figure 4.12. This perception was shared by more than three quarters of authorities in every broad region. Whilst this might appear slightly at variance with the picture painted by DLUHC statistics, it should be noted that the broadly scoped survey question may capture a slightly wider range of people – e.g. those deemed ineligible for assistance due to their immigration status. It could also be that these responses were partly influenced by participant expectations of imminently intensifying pressures anticipated on the basis of very recent experience. In Autumn 2022, when fieldwork for this study was completed,

most key informants believed that homelessness was beginning to steadily increase..

“Numbers are going up. They’re not going up in a tsunami sort of way, yet, but they are... definitely creeping back up. I think there’s not really been an authoritative, ‘Why is this happening?’ yet, but they are.”
(LA key informant)

“It’s all going up, and across the board. I think families are going up. There are

Figure 4.12: Overall number of households seeking homelessness assistance October 2021-September 2022 compared with preceding 12 months (% of responding local authorities)



Source: Authors' survey

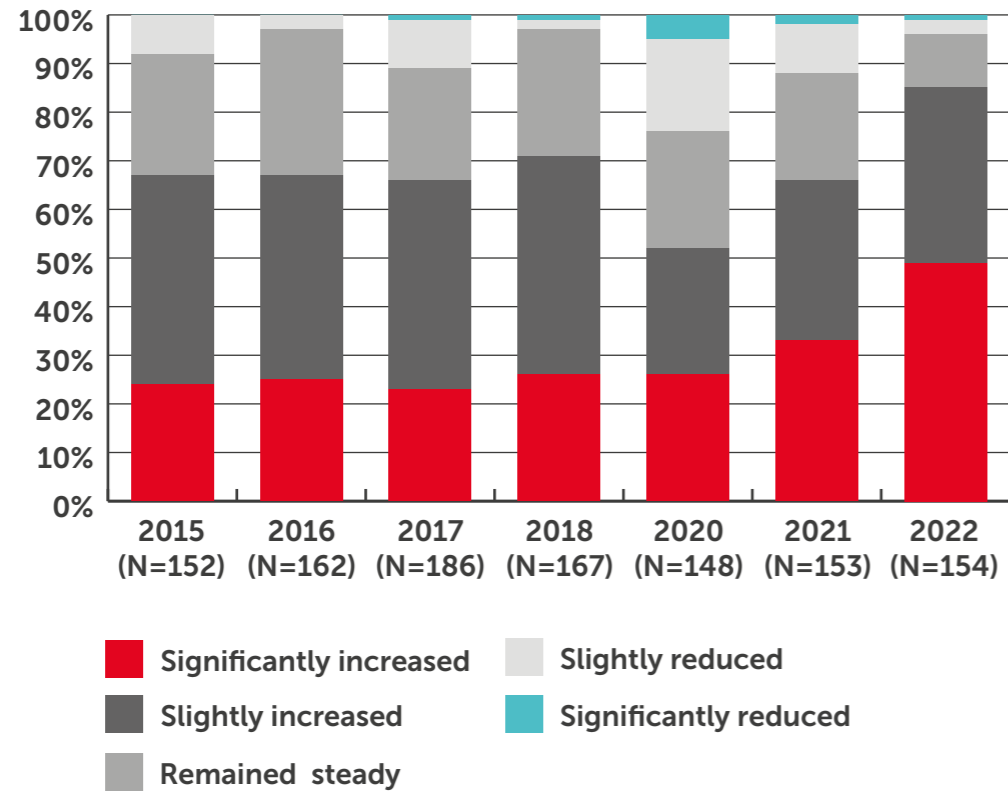
increased pressures. I think it’s already starting to come through... in terms of Section 21 presentations.... We have heard that there is an increase in in-work homelessness... I think, across the board, ramping up as the year has progressed, generally a sense that is increasing.”
(Voluntary sector key informant)

Perhaps surprisingly, it was only in Greater London where any significant proportion of authorities reported some easing of demand over the most recent year – notwithstanding that this represents only four authorities. Associated with a perception that applications were 'slightly lower' during this period, one of these respondents

stated that 'The number of applications reduced by 8% during lockdown. We are not at the same level as pre-lockdown'. Another suggested that the recent observed local trend might reflect the effectiveness of its own counter-measures:

“As a service we have been supporting applicants to sustain their tenancies through in house initiatives and incentives which may have had an impact on the number of approaches to the service and the type of approaches we have seen.”
(LA respondent, London)

Figure 4.13: Change in number of households seeking homelessness assistance in latest year, compared with preceding year, 2015-2022 (% of responding local authorities)



Source: Authors' survey

More broadly, at the national level, the perception of recently rising demand commanded greater unanimity in 2022 than in any year since 2015, when the question was first asked in a Homelessness Monitor England survey – see Figure 4.13. Furthermore, nearly half of respondents (49%) judged that numbers had recently increased ‘significantly’. In no previous year did the comparable proportion exceed one third (Appendix 2, Table 3).

Certain causal factors were widely perceived as having generated rising numbers of applications in the most recent period. Notably, the vast majority of responding authorities (88%) had experienced expanded applications involving people displaced from private tenancies. This may well be connected with the widespread observation of recently increasing

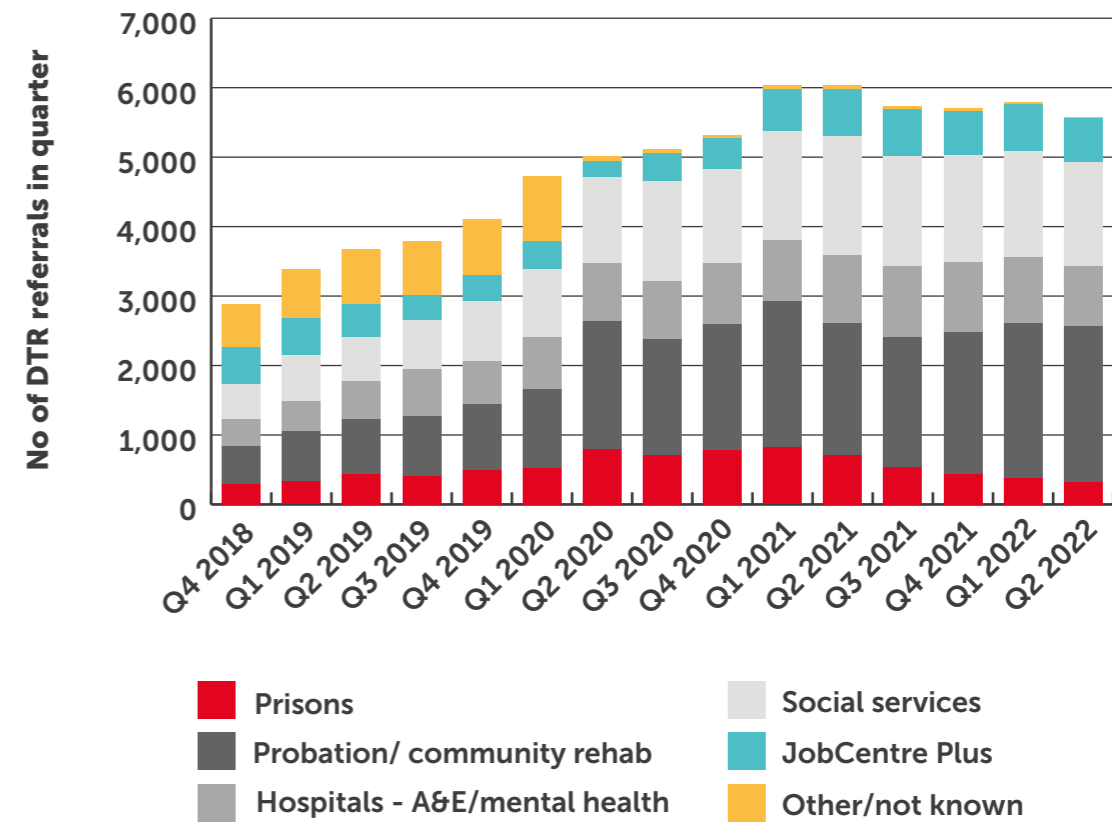
demand from families with children – as discussed later in this chapter.

While the actual numbers of applicants involved will undoubtedly have been much lower in most cases, the vast majority of authorities (83%) also noted that Ukrainian refugee applications had come to represent a significant component of demand during 2022.

Open-ended survey responses shed additional light on recent homelessness application dynamics. Arguably, these indicate something of a perfect storm scenario. Overall, the most frequently-cited explanations for recently rising homelessness applications noted in these responses were:

- Cost of living impacts on households and on private landlords

Figure 4.14: Referrals under ‘Duty to Refer’ 2018-2022



Source: DLUHC homelessness statistics.

Notes: 1. ‘Prisons’ includes Youth Secure Estate; 2. Social services includes adult social services, children’s social services and ‘Nil Recourse’ team. 3. ‘Other’ includes not known. 4. A sharp drop in referrals classed as from ‘other/not known’ DTR agencies was recorded as from Q2 2020, with an approximately corresponding increase in Probation referrals also occurring at that time.

- Private landlord decisions to raise rents or sell properties – possibly triggered by their own rising costs or even in anticipation of regulatory reform
- The clearance of a tenancy terminations backlog resulting from the 2020-2021 eviction moratorium.

Probably the single most commonly mentioned ‘free text’ explanation for recently rising homelessness numbers was the cost of living crisis, escalating in late 2022 at the time of the survey fieldwork. Many respondents saw this as impacting through the mechanism of financially pressured householders

feeling obliged to exclude adult sons and daughters from the family home:

“The ... cost of living [crisis] is having an effect on families and therefore they are excluding adult children as well as elderly household members.”

(LA respondent, London)

“Families facing the cost of living crisis are unable to accommodate family members and are therefore asking them

to leave, increasingly this is occurring on the day rather than being able to carry out prevention work whilst they remain in the family home which places an additional burden on emergency accommodation.”

(LA respondent, the North)

“Despite a spike in people asked to leave by their families in 2021, which we believe may be an after effect of the covid pandemic, it has still increased significantly in 2022. This could arguably be a result of the increased cost of living for most households, who are unable to financially support family members who are sofa surfing.”

(LA respondent, the North, 2022)

Many also saw ‘cost of living’ pressures as contributing to recent system stress through their impacts on private landlords. Rising mortgage interest rates and other costs were believed to have motivated rent increase demands and/or disposal of rental properties:

“Lots more private landlords either selling or wanting to re-let at a higher rental price due to their increased costs meaning they go down the repossession route.”

(LA respondent, the North)

“Most notable increase in people being made homeless is from the PRS [partly due to] landlords ... struggling with cost of living, causing them to increase rent, or sell up.”

(LA respondent, the North)

Issues related to the perceived decline in private rental availability are further discussed in Section 4.6.

Referrals for homelessness assessment

An important innovation brought in through the HRA was the Duty to Refer (DTR). In the interests of a prevention-focused approach, this involves certain specified public agencies being mandated to notify the relevant LA where an agency service user is at risk of homelessness and therefore in need of housing assistance. The agencies concerned include prisons, youth offender institutions, social services and hospitals.

Focusing on 2021/22, the most recent year, the largest single DTR referral source was probation and community rehabilitation services, followed by Social Services departments (see Figure 4.14). While DTR referrals continued to increase in 2021/22 as a whole, the quarterly statistical series reveals that the previously rapidly rising referral numbers in fact topped out at the start of that financial year, subsequently stabilising at 5,500-6,000 per quarter, with an approximately similar number of referrals from other agencies (4,500-5,500) being recorded.

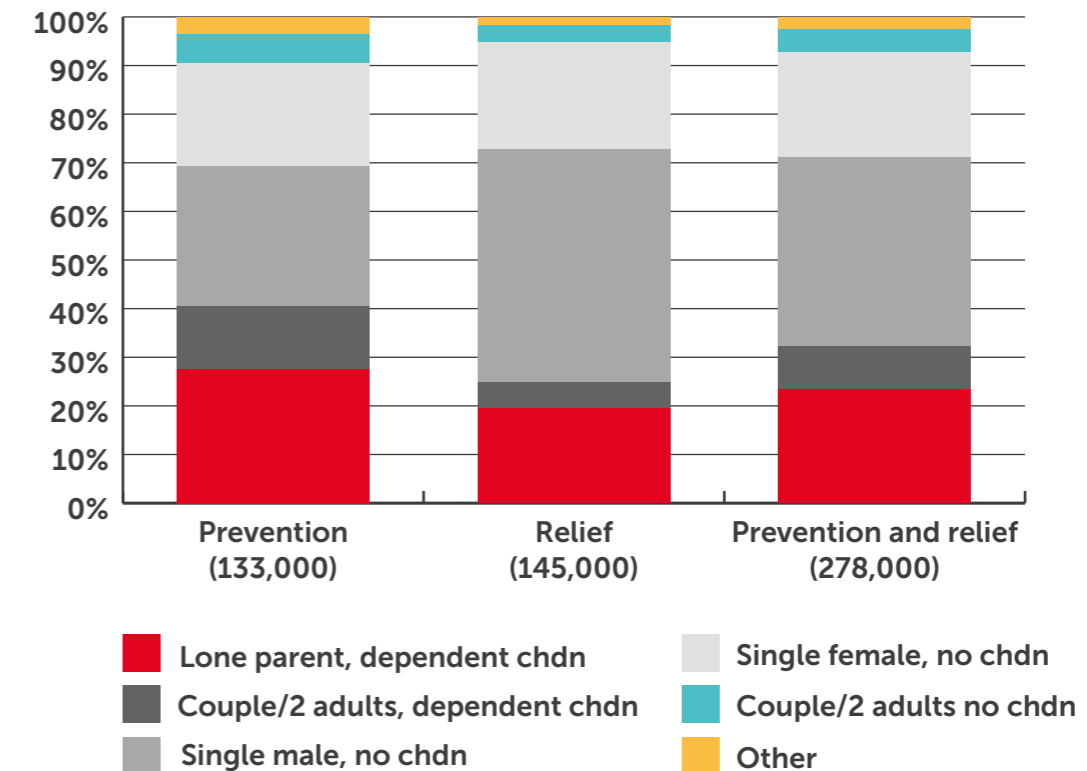
4.4 Statutory homelessness: profile and causes

Historically, statistical data on the statutory homelessness caseload (i.e., profile data) was restricted to the cohort owed the main rehousing duty (i.e., assessed as unintentionally homeless and in priority need). Under the HRA H-CLIC framework, however, such data is collected and published for the much wider group of households deemed by LAs as owed a duty of homelessness prevention or relief (see Figure 4.7).

Household type

The bulk of those assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness in 2021/22 – 61% –

Figure 4.15: Homeless applicants owed prevention or relief duties in 2021/22: household type profile
(a) Distinguishing ‘prevention duty’ applicants from ‘relief duty’ applicants



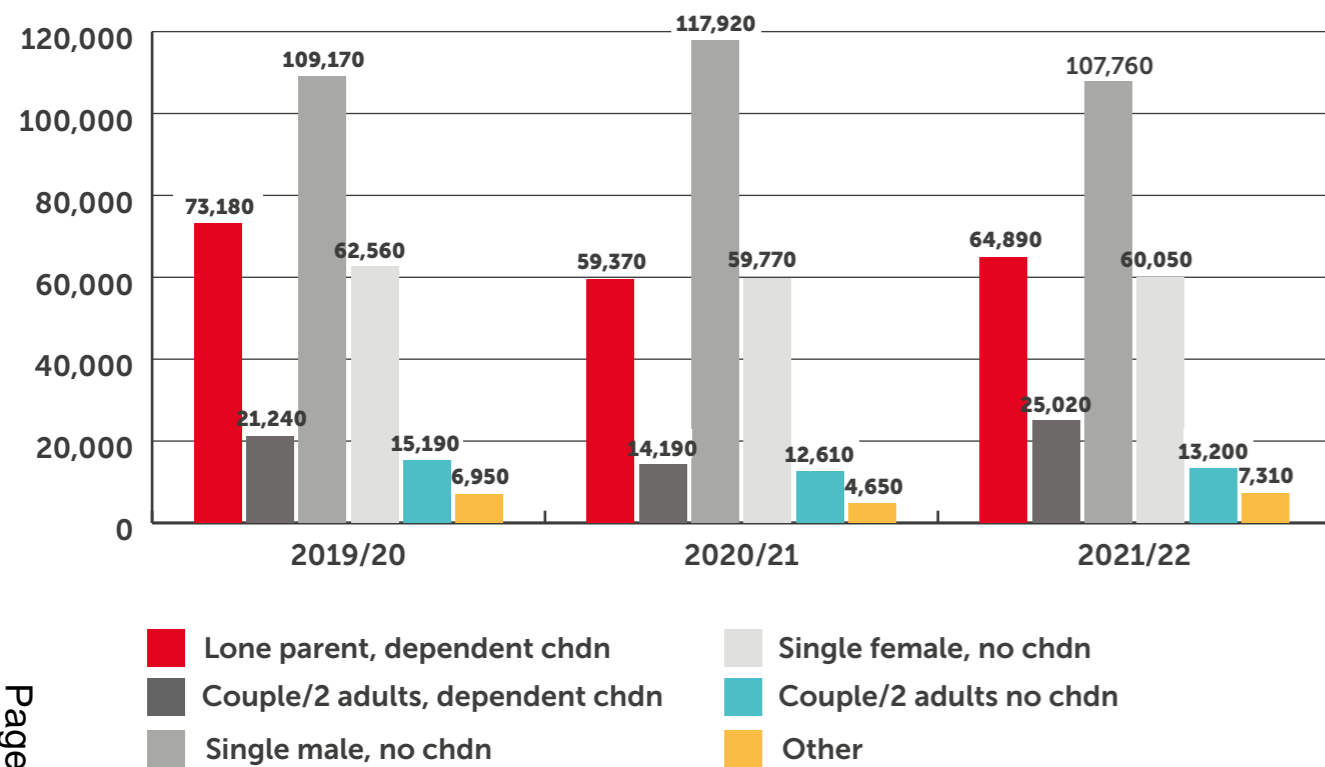
Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics

were single adults (see Figure 4.15(a)). Far more ‘relief duty’ applicants (judged homeless, rather than threatened with homelessness) were single adult households than in the ‘prevention duty’ (threatened with homelessness) cohort – 70% compared with 51%. The difference here is almost entirely accounted for by single men’s stronger representation in the relief duty cohort – the representation of single women was almost identical across the two groups.

As shown in Figure 4.15(b), the representation of households with children among those owed prevention or relief duties was highly uneven over the three years covered by the analysis. Numbers of both lone parent and two parent households fell

sharply in 2020/21, probably associated with an overall reduction in the flow of applicants classed as ‘threatened with homelessness’ and therefore owed the prevention duty (see Figure 4.8). This, in turn, likely reflects the differential impact of the COVID-19 eviction moratorium which particularly benefited family households in that year. In 2021/22, however, with the moratorium ended, family household numbers once more increased. Thus, two parent family applicants grew in number by 76% to stand substantially higher than in the pre-pandemic year of 2019/20 (25,020 compared with 21,240). Family households, overall, increased in number by 22%. Single adult applicants, by contrast fell back in number in the latest year – an observation more difficult to explain.

(b) All prevention and relief duty applicants: 2019/20-2021/22



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Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics

Taking a longer-term view, it is worth noting that the household-type profiles presented in Figure 4.15 represent a very major departure from that depicted by the official statutory homelessness statistics in the pre-HRA era. The latter focused much more narrowly on the subset of applicants accepted as owed a MD, only around a third of whom were single adults.

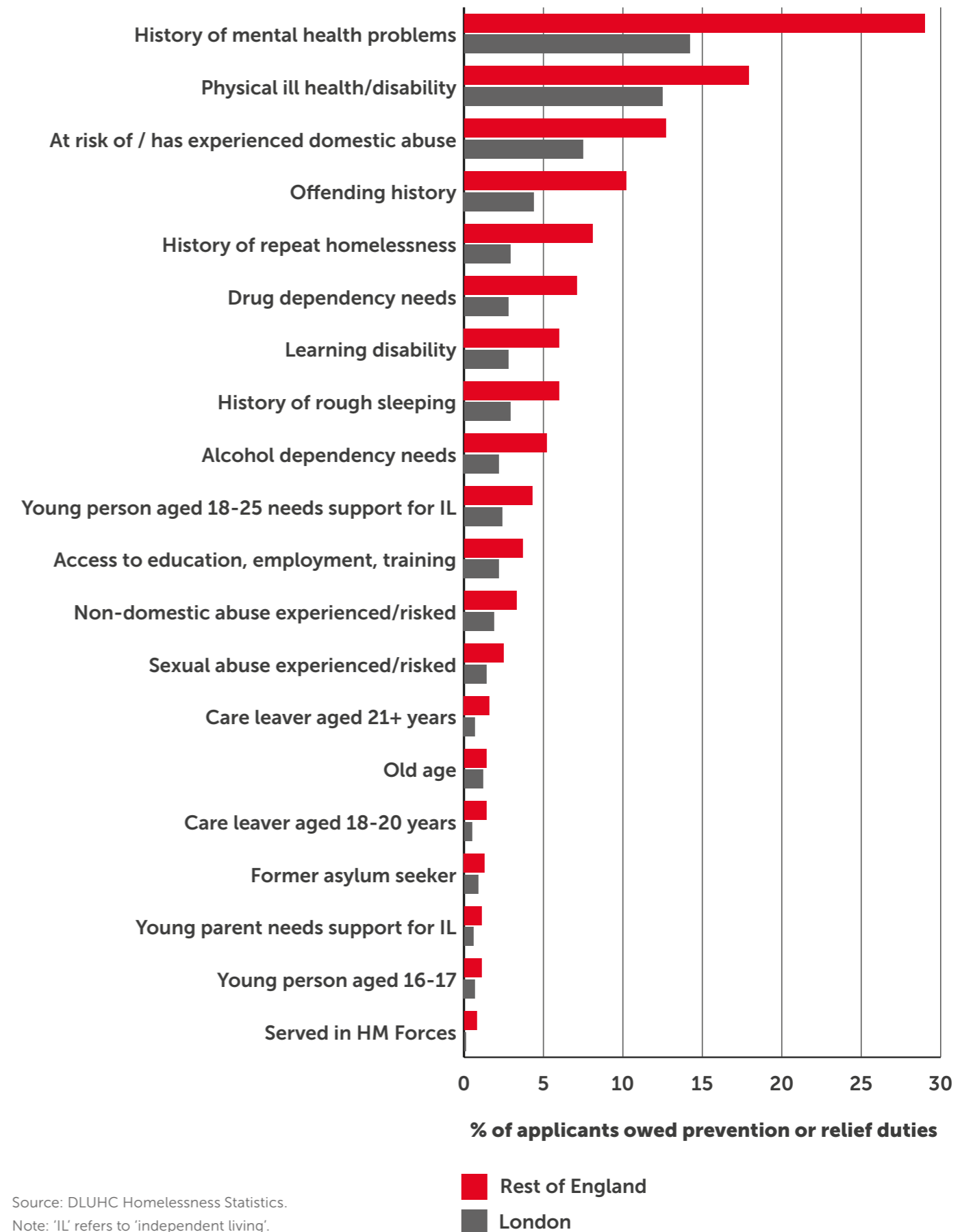
Support needs

Among households owed a prevention or relief duty, 144,000 (or 52%) contained a person with support needs in 2021/22, almost identical to the number in 2020/21 (136,000), with 15% assessed as having three or more support needs.

Statutory data now published in this area also cover the nature

of homelessness applicants' assessed support needs. As shown in Figure 4.16, the support needs most frequently identified among households owed prevention or relief duties relate to mental ill health (26% of households owed a duty) and physical ill health or disability (17%). Smaller proportions of households are assessed as having support needs associated with drug problems (6%) and alcohol dependency (5%). A fuller breakdown of this data is shown in Figure 4.16, which reveals very substantially lower assessed rates of most support needs among London applicants, likely reflecting the role of the city's especially pressurised housing market in placing a wider cohort of the population at risk of homelessness than is true elsewhere.

Figure 4.16: Homeless applicants owed prevention or relief duties in 2021/22: incidence of applicants with assessed support needs



Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics.
Note: 'IL' refers to 'independent living'.

These data also provide tentative evidence of rising vulnerability (support needs) among people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. While the number of households assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty was only around 1% higher in 2021/22 than in 2019/20, the sub-total deemed as having support needs was up by 10%.²⁵⁴ As shown in the more detailed official statistics, several applicant cohorts in need of various types of support increased by substantially higher rates over the period. Two of these are particularly notable:

- at risk of /has experienced domestic abuse – 21% up in 2021/22 compared with 2019/20
- learning disability – 20% up in 2021/22 compared with 2019/20.

Importantly, these are both relatively large cohorts (see Figure 4.16). Thus, households with support needs due to domestic abuse increased from some 26,890 to 32,600 over the period, while those needing special help on account of learning difficulties was up from some 12,550 to 15,060. The first of these could possibly be related to worries that COVID-19 lockdowns would exacerbate the incidence of family and domestic violence. However, several key informants thought to be driven in part by recent legislative changes that saw domestic abuse survivors gaining automatic priority need status regardless of household type.²⁵⁵

“Over the last year, we’ve seen a massive increase in domestic abuse cases; that’s now our largest reason for

being placed into temporary accommodation... That’s something that’s good, in terms of the Domestic Abuse Act, in terms of single people, etc; so it’s got positive aspects to it.”

(LA key informant)

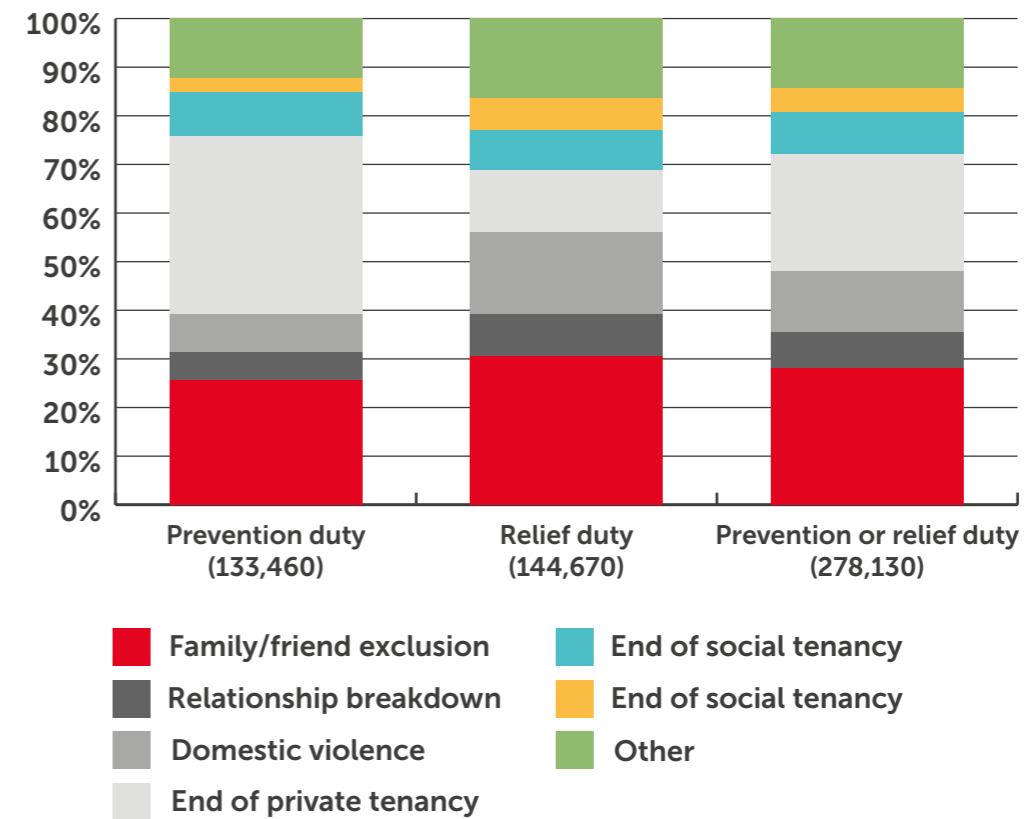
Equally, it is difficult to conceive of any pandemic or legislative linkage for the rising numbers of learning disabled people among the population of those experiencing homelessness. It may be, of course, that the apparent expansion in this total results more from improving identification of this group than from a real increase.

Considering that 2021/22 was a second significantly pandemic-affected statistical year, it will be important to monitor the ‘homeless with support needs’ statistics to be published for 2022/23 for a better sense of whether there is any underlying and ongoing rise in the incidence of this vulnerability indicator.

Immediate reason for homelessness

Nearly half of all households owed a duty of prevention or relief in 2021/22 (48%) were people who had needed to exit accommodation of an existing household – those asked to leave by family or friends (28%), those having lost (or under threat of losing) their home because of relationship breakdown (7%) or due to domestic abuse (12%) – see Figure 4.17. The most marked differences in the prevention versus relief cohort profiles relate to end of private tenancy (much more common for the prevention cohort) and domestic abuse (more

Figure 4.17: Homeless applicants owed prevention or relief duties in 2021/22: main reason for loss (or threat of loss) of last settled home



Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics.

Notes: 1. Relationship breakdown includes instances of domestic abuse. 2. Institutional discharge includes people required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support. 3. End of social tenancy includes people evicted from supported housing.

common in the relief cohort). This makes sense in terms of the likely urgency of housing need arising from different types of housing insecurity events.

Nearly a third of applicants judged homeless or threatened with homelessness (32%) were in this position due the loss of an existing tenancy in either the PRS (24%)²⁵⁶

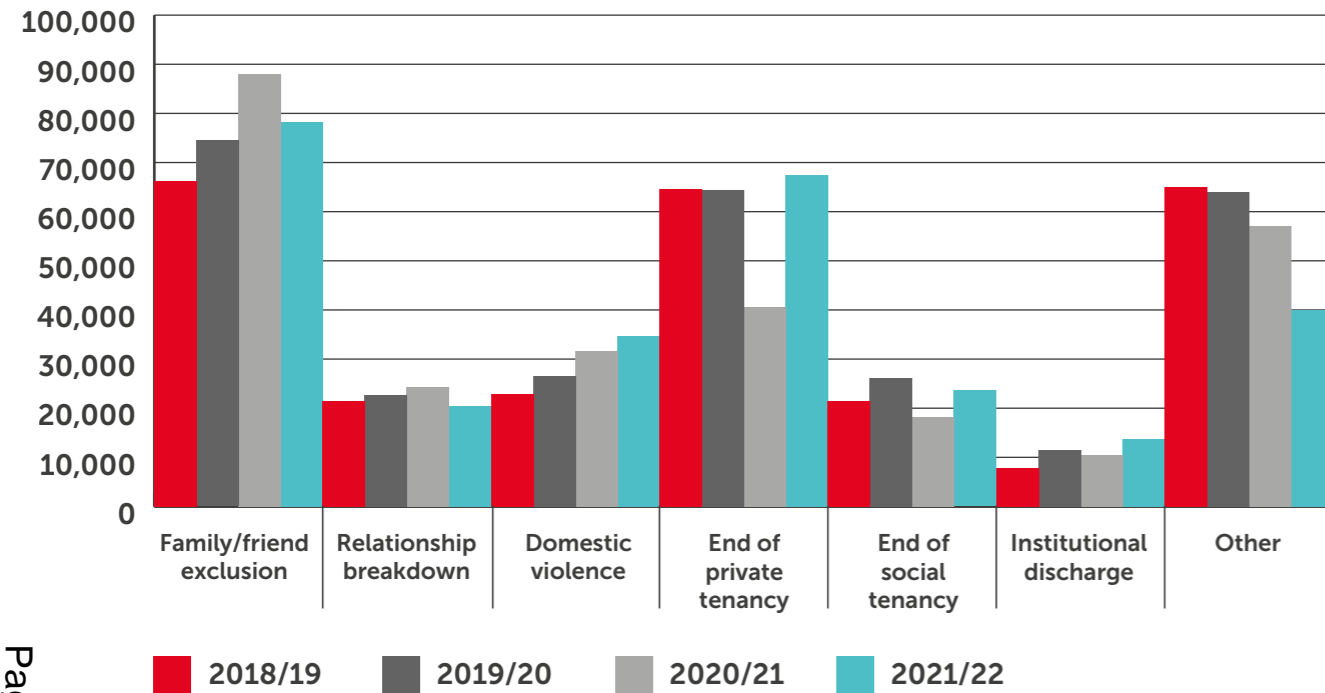
or the social rented sector (8%) (see Figure 4.17). Within these cohorts (not shown in our graphics), approximately 18,000 households had been evicted or had otherwise lost their tenancy due to rent arrears, a figure equating to 7% of all households assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness in 2021/22. On the other hand, and again not shown in the charts, some 33,000 (or 12% of all

²⁵⁴ The new legal and statistical regime under which households with support needs are now routinely enumerated was inaugurated in 2018/19. However, making allowance for the fact that new procedures are liable to have resulted in some under-counting in the first year of the new system, this is discounted here – the base year for the comparison underlying Figure 4.9 is therefore 2019/20, the second year of the regime.

²⁵⁵ See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-21-domestic-abuse?msclkid=b89c1debcec711ec8f711403e71bd4f2>

²⁵⁶ Note that this is a somewhat smaller proportion than the ‘end of AST’ as reason for homelessness statistic that readers might recall from earlier editions of the Homelessness Monitor. This reflects the fact that under the HRA regime the ‘reason for homelessness’ statistical breakdown relates to all households deemed as owed a prevention or relief duty, as opposed to the substantially narrower cohort analysed as such under pre-HRA arrangements – i.e., households accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

Figure 4.18: Homeless applicants owed prevention or relief duties, main immediate cause of homelessness 2018/19-2021/22



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Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics.

those owed a prevention or relief duty) were made homeless from a private rental property because of the landlord 'wishing to sell or re-let the property'. At least some of this activity might be prevented under the Government's proposed proscription of 'no fault evictions'²⁵⁷ (see Chapter 2).

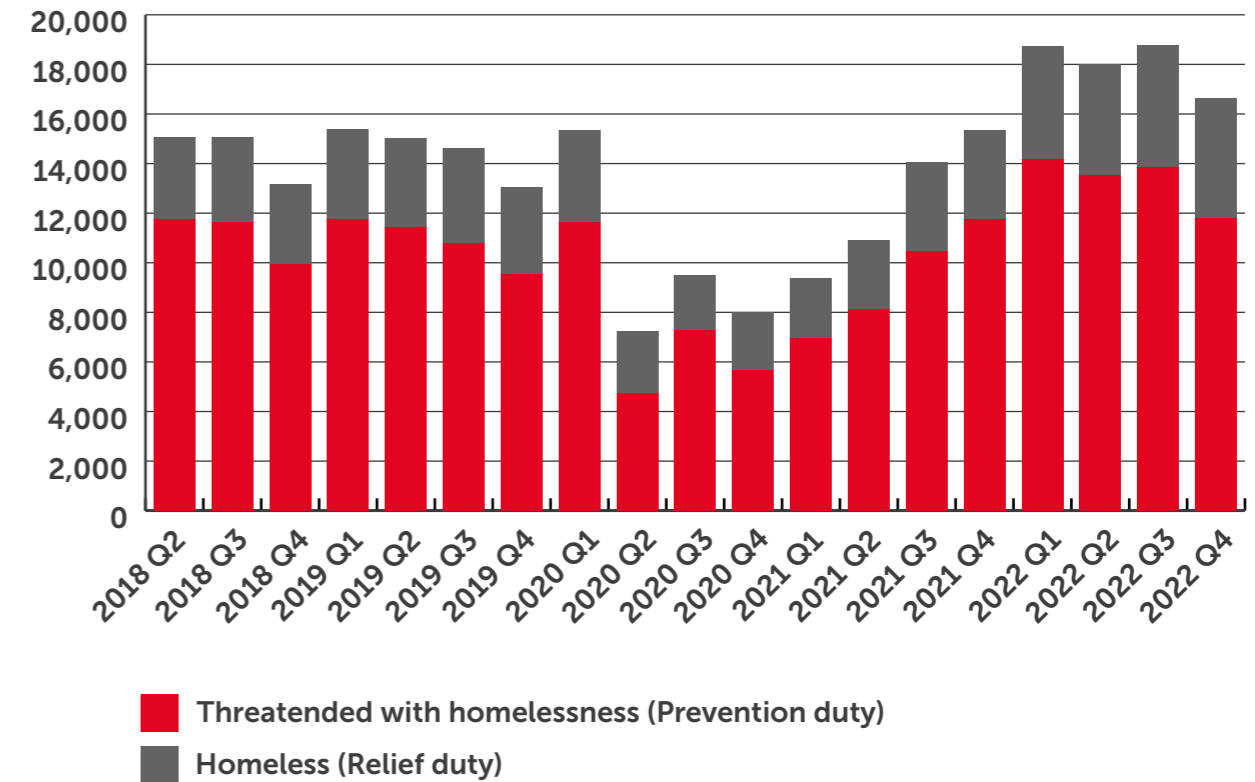
Probably at least partly due to the pandemic, the mix of 'immediate reasons for homelessness' has varied fairly markedly over the past three years (see Figure 4.18). Categories involving the loss of accommodation as part of an existing household (e.g. family/friend exclusions) tended to grow in 2020/21, the first year of COVID-19. On the other hand,

homelessness due to the loss of private and (albeit to a lesser extent) social tenancies fell back – reflecting eviction restrictions. In a number of categories, 2021/22 statistics appear to show a resumption (or continuation) of pre-pandemic trajectories.

In Figure 4.19 we focus more specifically on homelessness arising from the PRS (around a quarter to a third of all applicants in recent times), with the analysis informed by the latest published statistics as at the time of writing. After a sharp drop during the onset of the pandemic in 2020, tenancy termination-triggered homelessness applications began to rise from early 2021 (see Figure 4.19).

257 Although provided that 'property sale' is a specifically allowable reason for tenancy termination under the associated legislation, the resulting reduction in homelessness is likely to be modest.

Figure 4.19: Homelessness applications triggered by assured shorthold tenancy terminations, 2018-2022



Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics

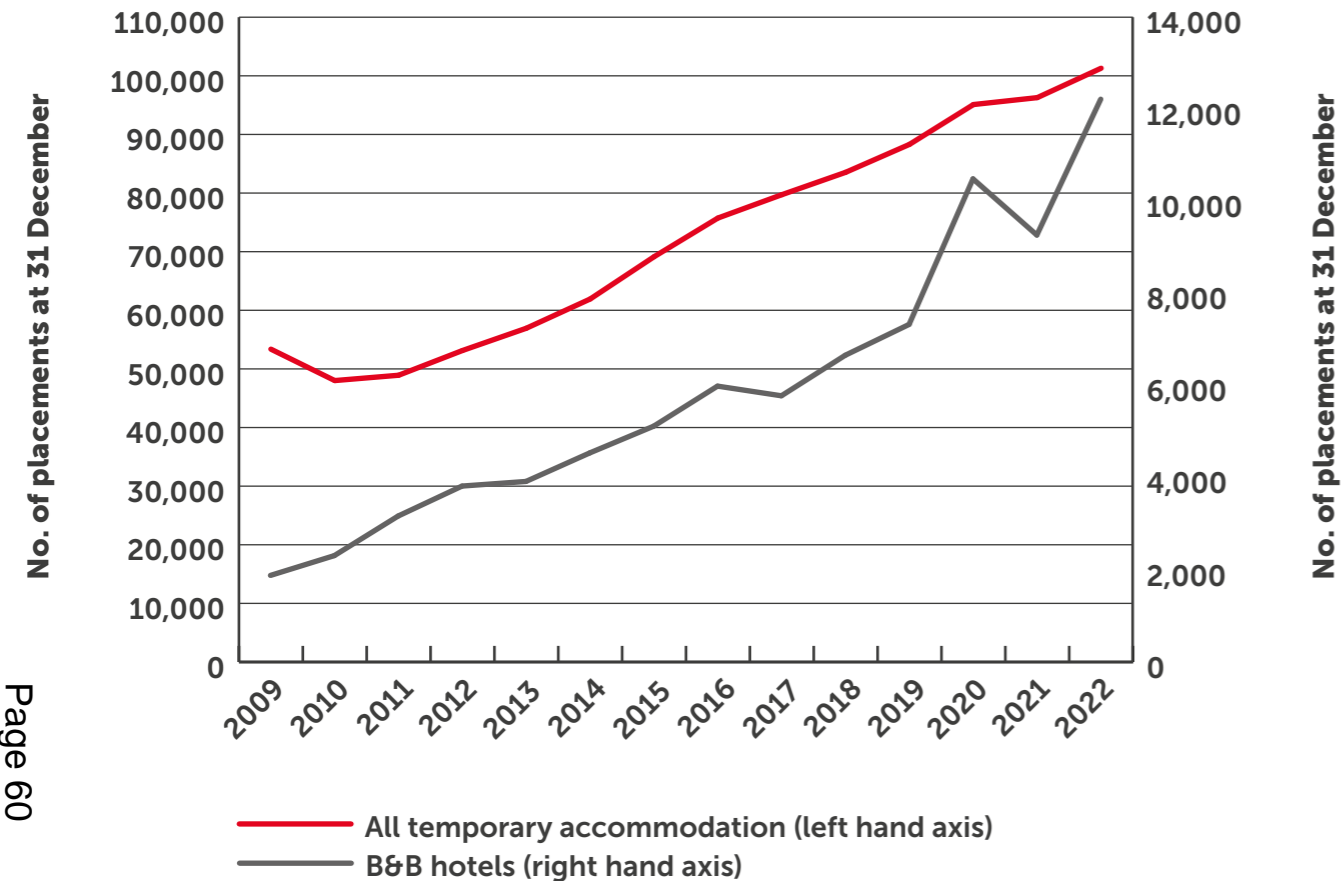
At least in part, this seems likely to have resulted from the 2020 eviction moratorium. Having recovered to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2021, homelessness originating from the PRS continued to increase into 2022. The four quarters of 2022 saw an average of 18,040 applications of this kind, some 25% higher than the norm for the seven quarters preceding the pandemic (up to and including Q4 2019). Whether this represents a new post-pandemic norm, or whether it partly reflects the clearance of a backlog that built up during the moratorium should become clear during 2023.

Key informants believed that instances of homelessness due private tenancy termination would continue to gradually increase as cases make their way through the moratorium-related court backlogs.

“In terms of eviction moratorium, the biggest thing that’s preventing a vast majority of evictions is that hold up in the courts, so we’ve still got horrendous delays there.”

(LA key informant)

Figure 4.20: Local authority homelessness temporary accommodation placements 31 December 2009-31 December 2022



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Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics

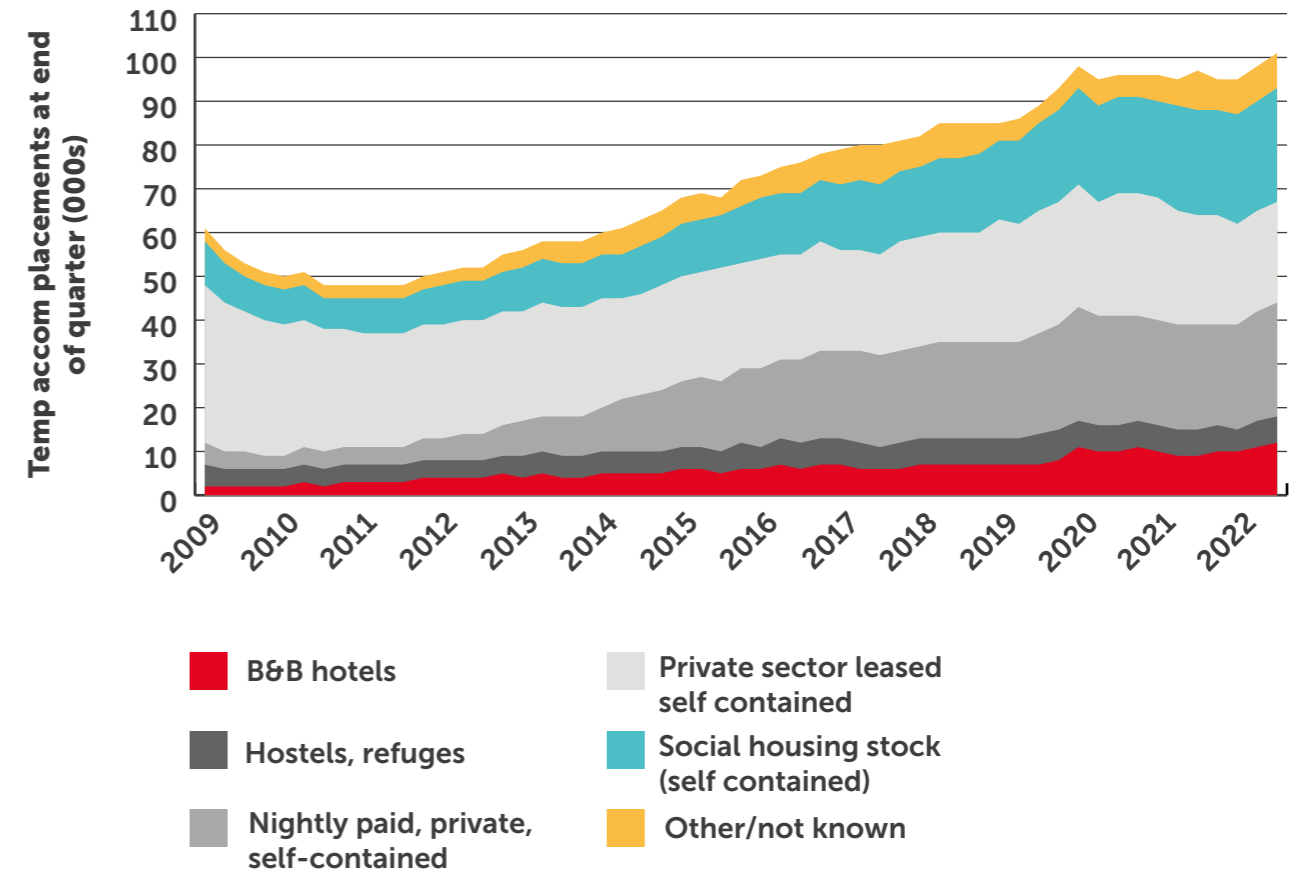
“Because of the backlog of cases that have built up, you’re never going to get a big bang of coming out of that, it’s going to gradually build, and build, and build, and that’s what we’ve been seeing in the eviction statistics that bit, by bit, by bit they’re going up, and up, and up as that backlog works its way through.”
(Voluntary sector key informant)

4.5 Temporary accommodation placements

The number of households in TA is another important indicator of the changing scale of homelessness, especially in relation to LAs’ capacity to discharge statutory rehousing duties to homeless people (see also Chapter 3). Since rates of TA utilisation reflect the interaction of (homelessness) demand and (social/affordable housing) supply, they are an acute proxy for changing rates of homelessness stress as these bear on LAs.²⁵⁸

258 As recognized by the crucial role total TA numbers play in the projections analysis of core homelessness presented in chapter 5.

Figure 4.21: Temporary accommodation placements, Q2 2009-Q4 2022 (Quarter by Quarter): type of temporary accommodation



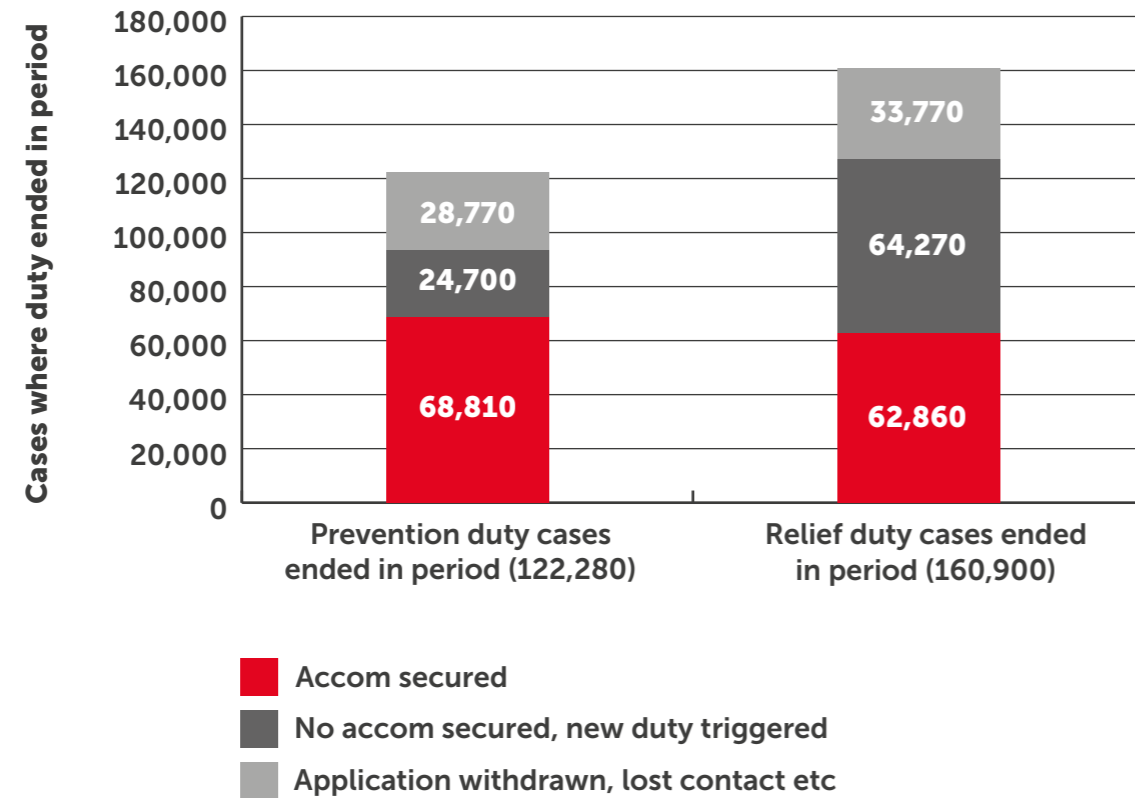
Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics

Since bottoming out in 2010/11, total placements in TA have more than doubled (see Figure 4.20).²⁵⁹ In late 2022 placements exceeded 100,000 for the first time in 18 years, equalling the record number – 101,300 – recorded in Q3 2004. B&B hotel placements are up almost five-fold since their 2009 nadir. More recently, having increased sharply during the early part of the pandemic, B&B placements once again climbed steeply during 2022 (see Figure 4.20) – up by 32% in the latest 12 month period shown here.

The bulk of TA placements involve self-contained units (see Figure 4.21), with around one in six placements (18%) at 31 December 2022 taking the form of B&B hotel or hostel rooms – accommodation in which units often lack cooking facilities and where sanitary facilities may be shared. Although B&B hotels and hostels are mainly used for childless households, the 31 December 2022 cohort included 5,857 households with children (33% of all households in these forms of accommodation).

259 It should be noted that the TA statistics discussed in this section do not include those reflecting LA emergency action undertaken in the COVID-19 pandemic to accommodate people sleeping rough and others under the Everyone In program.

Figure 4.22: Outcomes of prevention and relief activity in 2021/22 – cases where associated duties ended in period



Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics.

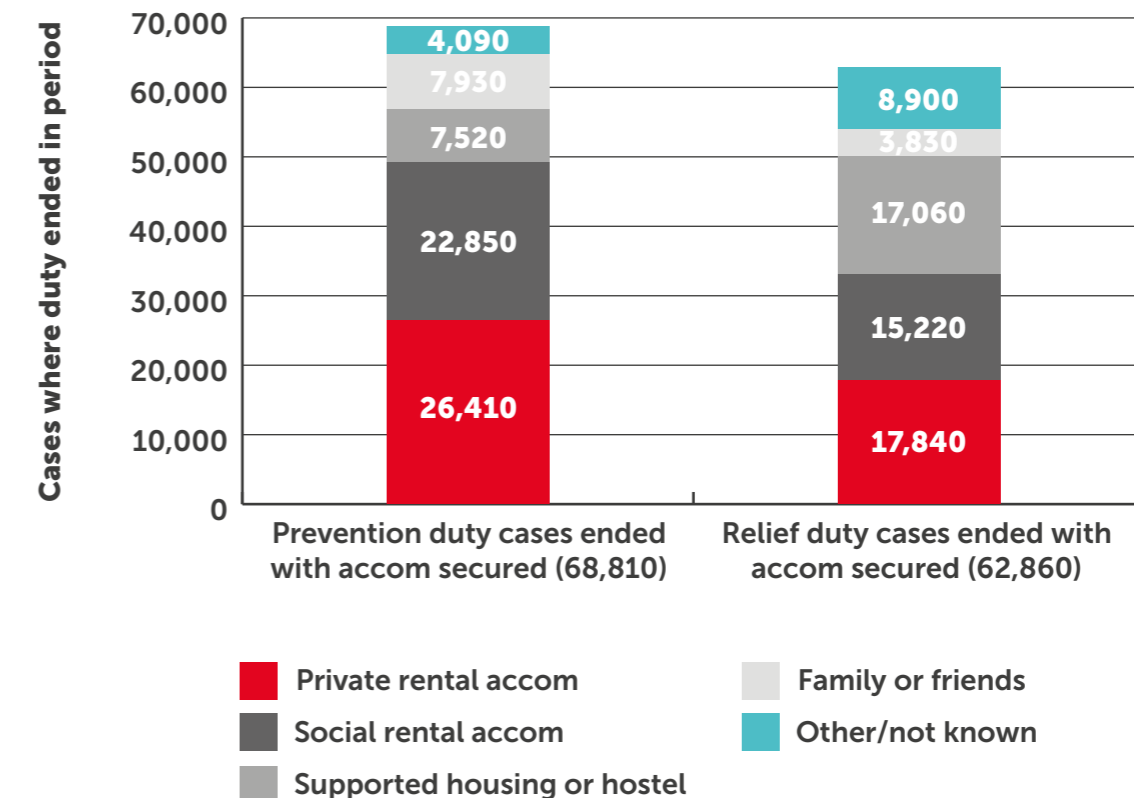
Signs of stress are also evident in the substantial levels of out-of-borough TA. At 31 December 2022, such placements numbered over 29,580, most of these probably the responsibility of London boroughs (but see Chapter 3 about possible geographical expansion of this phenomenon). At 29% of the national placement total, this proportion has remained fairly stable in recent years, although much higher than the 11% recorded in 2010/11.²⁶⁰

4.6 Analysing Homelessness Reduction Act duty decision outcomes

Graphically re-presenting statistics set out in Figure 4.7, Figure 4.22 demonstrates that almost half (46%) of 2021/22 prevention and relief actions ended with accommodation having been secured (i.e. households have been enabled to retain existing – or to obtain new – accommodation). This was the outcome for most prevention duty cases ended during the year (56%), with the equivalent figure for relief cases ended being 39%. The distribution of outcomes for the two previous years were virtually identical.

260 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) Statutory homelessness live tables; April 2019 to March 2020, England; Table TA1. Online: DLUHC

Figure 4.23: Outcomes of prevention and relief activity in 2021/22 – cases where associated duties ended in period with accommodation secured



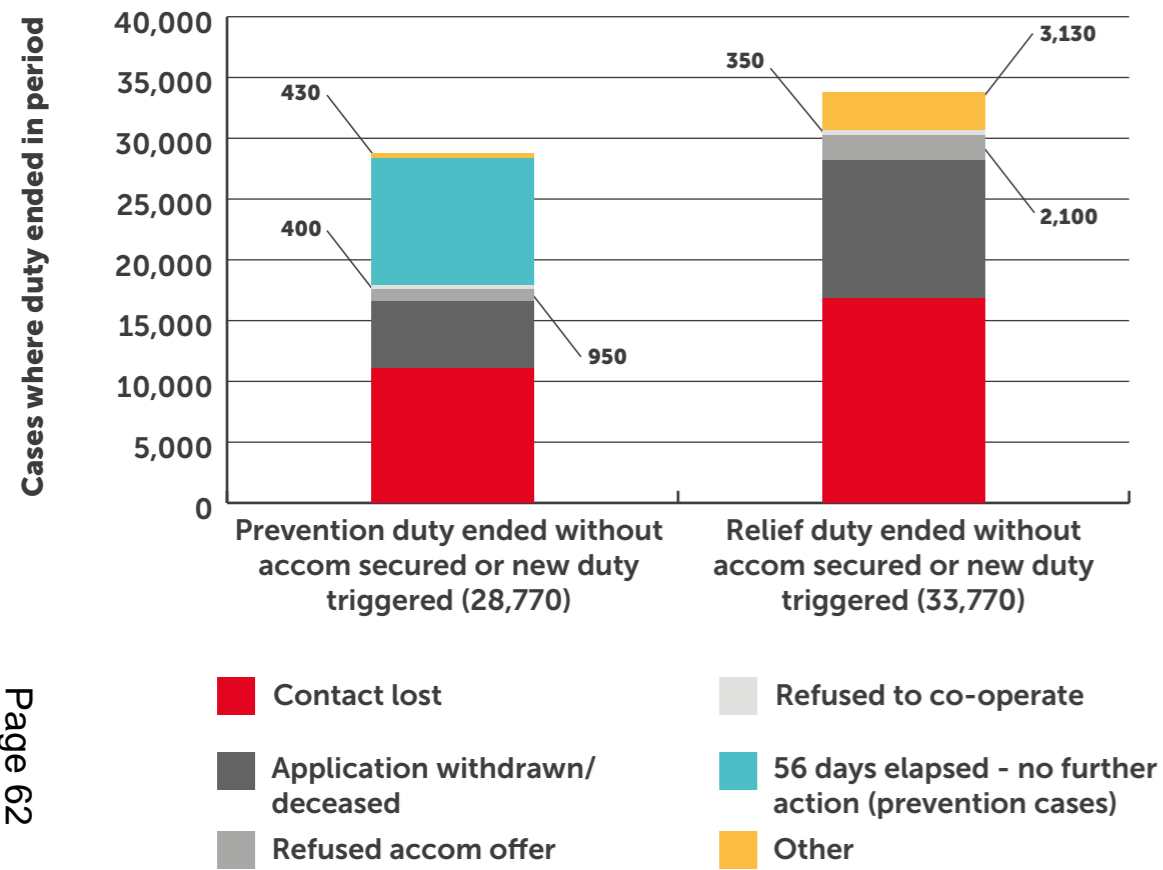
Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics.

Assisting an applicant to obtain a new place to live (rather than to retain existing housing) was, by definition, the 'accommodation secured' result for all of the 2021/22 relief cases with this outcome. More detailed DLUHC statistics show that this was also true for 46,110 (38%) of the 122,280 prevention cases logged as 'duty ended' during the year. The other 22,700 whose prevention duty ended with 'accommodation secured' (19% of all prevention cases closed) were assisted to retain existing accommodation. The proportionate split between these two possible outcomes for prevention cases resolved was very similar to that in previous years. In absolute terms, both numbers were slightly higher than in 2020/21 (as shown in Figures 4.7 and 4.8).

As also illustrated by Figure 4.22, the prevention or relief duty outcome often involves the triggering of a 'new duty' (see also Figure 4.7). For prevention cases, the onset of actual (as opposed to threatened) homelessness can lead to a relief duty, whereas in relief cases the inability to secure accommodation within 56 days can lead to a MD decision.

A substantial proportion of 'accommodation secured' outcomes for prevention and relief duties involved social rented housing (see Figure 4.23), including 15,220 relief cases resolved as such in 2021/22 and a proportion of the 22,850 social rental 'prevention action closed' cases (published statistics do not differentiate cases where an existing

Figure 4.24: Outcomes of prevention and relief activity in 2021/22 – cases where associated duties ended in period without accommodation secured or new duty triggered



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Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics.

tenancy was secured versus a new one offered in the case of prevention duty discharges). Notably, private tenancies are a somewhat more common outcome than social tenancies for both prevention and relief cohorts.

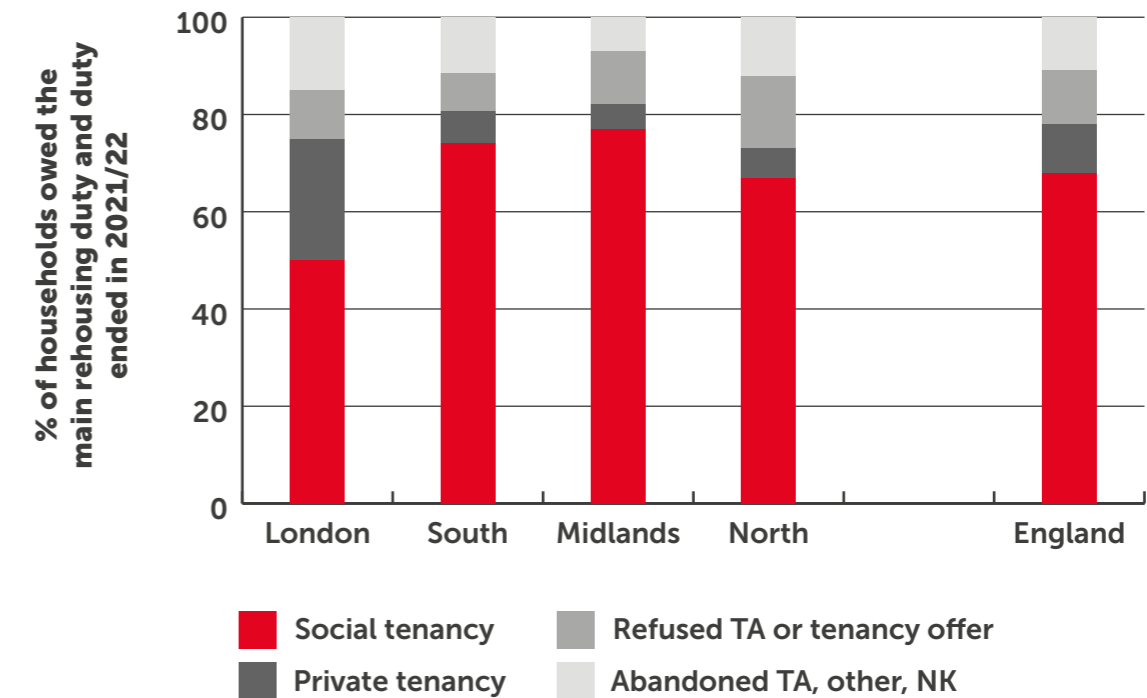
Returning to figure 4.23, we can see that 7,520 prevention cases ended with supported housing being offered (a new tenancy) or secured having been at risk, and an additional 17,060 relief cases ended with an offer of such accommodation. Access to – and the quality of – supported housing is discussed further below,

but it is important to note there that discharging prevention or relief duties into this kind of accommodation encompasses diverse arrangements, ranging from secure tenancies in self-contained supported accommodation models, to placements in hostel-type congregate accommodation in which residents have very little security of tenure²⁶¹ (albeit that the HRA framework requires said accommodation to be available for at least six months).

The third ‘duty ended in 2021/22’ housing outcome identified in

²⁶¹ Indeed, households in some forms of supported accommodation would still be counted as ‘core homeless’. See Chapter 5.

Figure 4.25: Housing (and other) outcomes for households owed the Main Duty, where duty ended in 2021/22 – by region



Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics.

Note: Abandoned TA includes ‘became intentionally homeless from TA’

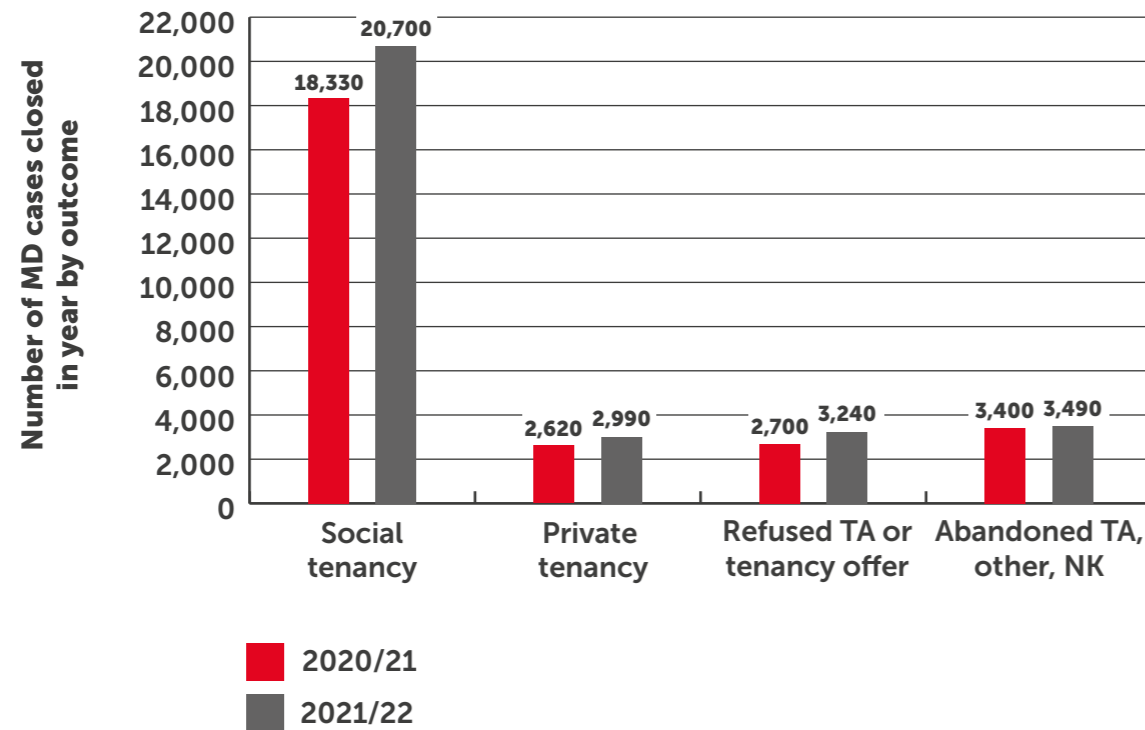
Figure 4.22 (and Figure 4.7) involved the 28,770 prevention cases and the 33,770 relief cases labelled as ‘application withdrawn, lost contact etc’. These are households who exit the system without having been assisted to secure settled accommodation. For this reason, and particularly since the HRA enables authorities to discharge prevention or relief duty on the grounds of applicant non-cooperation, they are of particular interest. With this in mind, Figure 4.24 presents a more detailed breakdown. However, as shown here, only a relatively small number of cases (a total of 750) were recorded as having been ended in this way in 2021/22 (similar to numbers for previous years). Far more

common was the scenario where contact with the applicant was lost or the application was withdrawn.²⁶² There could be a case for targeted research to enhance understanding of this phenomenon.

Prevention duty cases ended in the category ‘56 days elapsed – no further action’ (see Figure 4.24) probably involved instances where, an applicant initially judged as threatened with homelessness within 56 days had not, in fact, experienced this outcome within the specified timescale. Where, in the case of households owed a relief duty (i.e., already homeless), 56 days elapses without a resolution, the MD assessment process is triggered

²⁶² It is also worth noting that people exiting from the statutory homelessness system without having been assisted to secure settled accommodation was also significant under the pre-HRA framework. For example, in 2017/18 only 75% of the 40,040 households accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need subsequently accepted a social or private rental tenancy offer. The most common scenario for disappearance from the process was the abandonment of temporary accommodation.

Figure 4.26: Housing (and other) outcomes for households owed the Main Duty, where duty ended in 2020/21 and 2021/22 - England



Source: DLUHC Homelessness Statistics.

Note: Abandoned TA includes 'became intentionally homeless from TA'

(see Figure 4.7). Moreover, as is flagged below, there are also a very substantial number of (mainly single) applicants who 'stay the course' to the very end of the MD stage without a housing resolution because they are deemed not in priority need or to be intentionally homeless.

Main duty decision outcomes

Some 30,410 applications with a 'Main Duty owed' decision were ended in 2021/22. Nationally, in 78% of cases the outcome was a tenancy offer accepted – see Figure 4.25. Private tenancy outcomes were somewhat more common in London (25% of MD owed decisions) than in other regions (11% across England as a whole). Likewise, probably reflecting the typically longer stays in TA in London,

the incidence of TA abandonment was somewhat higher in the Capital than elsewhere. A higher level observation, comparing Figures 4.23 and 4.25, is that social tenancies remain the dominant Main Duty outcome, whereas these are outnumbered by private tenancies among those assisted via prevention and relief.

MD cases ended in 2021/22 totalled 30,410 – up by 13% on 2020/21. As shown in Figure 4.26, this was mainly due to increase in cases ended via a social housing tenancy. Finally, it should be borne in mind that substantial numbers of (mainly single) homeless applicants still reach the end of the post-HRA system without having secured settled accommodation, or even having had such accommodation

offered to them. In 2021/22, nearly 19,000 homeless households were deemed either not to be in priority need or to be intentionally homeless, and therefore not owed the main rehousing duty (see Figure 4.7). While this is a small reduction on the previous year (some 22,000), it remains notable as the principal remaining gap in the HRA safety net.

Core homelessness

5. Core homelessness: numbers, projections and policy impacts

Key findings

Our central estimate of core homeless numbers in England in 2022 is about 242,000. This is up somewhat from 221,000 in 2020, 224,000 in 2018 and 206,000 in 2012.

There was some narrowing in the regional differences in core homelessness rates, particularly between the North and Midlands and London over the period 2012–22, although this partly reflected the greater scale of ‘Everyone In’ provision in London as well as the different timing of housing market fluctuations.

Baseline forecasts show most elements of core homelessness and the total rising significantly in the immediate future, with overall core homelessness in 2024 21% higher than 2020 levels. Current drivers of these increases relate primarily to inflation squeezing real incomes and increasing poverty and destitution, while private rents are rising alongside evictions, and social rented lettings are declining. Further increases are projected in the longer term, particularly in London, with core homelessness rising by 37% above 2020 levels to 303,000 by 2041.

In the shorter term, the most effective policies for reducing core homelessness would be increased allocations of social lettings for core homeless households, increasing the level of LHA to cover the typical level of actual rents (and maintaining that level through indexation), and maximising prevention activity to the level of the higher performing LAs.

In the longer term, the largest projected impacts on reducing core homelessness would result from raising the LHA, increasing housing supply, increased allocations of social housing to core homeless households, and large scale expansion of Housing First accompanied by appropriate rehabilitation provision and a reduction of traditional hostel accommodation.

A steady rise in core homelessness is not inevitable. A comprehensive programme of the recommended measures is shown to be capable of reducing core homelessness by 37% in 2031 and 47% in 2041, compared with what it would have been without any change in policies.

5.1 Introduction

Having examined the statutory homelessness trends in Chapter 4, we now move on to examine homelessness from a different angle. This chapter presents updated estimates of the level and composition of core homelessness in England²⁶³ in 2022. It reviews trends over the preceding years and assesses the core homelessness legacy of COVID-19 and the current cost of living crisis. In view of the Government’s particular focus on rough sleeping it discusses in particular the different estimates of this element of core homelessness and the underlying difficulties of measurement. It then proceeds to present updated forward projections of core homelessness numbers and composition over the next two decades, including a regional breakdown. Finally, this forecasting model is used to examine the impacts of a range of potential policy and practice changes on the likely level of core homelessness numbers, as well as key numbers in the wider statutory homelessness system.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, in this section we define the elements of core homelessness and explain the rationale for the concept. Then in section 5.2 we go on to present estimates of the main elements of core homelessness over the period 2012 to 2022, with a particular focus on the last two years. Section 5.3 introduces the forward projection model and the policy options considered. Section 5.4 presents the forward projections and discusses key drivers, while Section 5.5 looks at the impacts of cumulatively introducing the policy options tested.

The concept of core homelessness

The core homelessness concept was first introduced in research undertaken with Crisis in 2017.²⁶⁴ The components of core homelessness and their definitions as applied in this study are shown in Table 5.1 below.

The development of the core homelessness concept seeks to enable a robust measurement framework that overcomes limitations in traditional approaches to homelessness calibration used in the UK, and in particular on statutory homelessness statistics (which track only those who actively seek LA homelessness assistance and who are eligible for it), and counts or estimates of rough sleeping (see Chapter 4). While both of these approaches are informative and important, they are also subject to shortcomings that limit their value for analytical purposes – including for cross-country (including within UK) comparison, trend over time analysis, and serving as a basis for projections on the possible future scale of homelessness. These limitations were reviewed more fully in chapter 5 of the 2021 edition of the Homelessness Monitor England.²⁶⁵

5.2 Core homelessness estimates and trends

In this section we present evidence on the level of core homelessness in England in the period up to and including the COVID-19 pandemic. The estimates of core homelessness in the base period (2022) presented below draw on ten data sources overall, with each component triangulating between four and seven separate data sources, helping

263 Indicative estimates are also made for Great Britain, but fully detailed projections and scenarios have yet to be developed for Wales and Scotland.

264 Bramley, G. (2017) *Homelessness Projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain. Summary Report*. London: Crisis https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237582/crisis_homelessness_projections_2017.pdf

265 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2021) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2021*. London: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/the-homelessness-monitor-england-2021/>

Table 5.1: Core homelessness categories and definitions

Category	Description
Rough Sleeping	Sleeping in the open e.g. in streets, parks, carparks, doorways
Unconventional Accommodation	Sleeping in places/spaces not intended as normal residential accommodation, e.g. cars, vans, lorries, caravans/motor homes, tents, boats, sheds, garages, industrial/commercial premises
Hostels etc.	Communal emergency and TA primarily targeted at homeless people including hostels, refuges and shelters ²⁶⁶
Unsuitable Temporary Accommodation	Homeless households placed in TA of certain types, viz B&B, Private Non-self-contained Licensed/Nightly Let, and Out of Area Placements (half in London, all elsewhere)
Sofa Surfing	Individuals or family groups staying temporarily (expecting or wanting to move) with another household, excluding nondependent children of host household and students, who are also overcrowded on the bedroom standard

to address variations in statistical robustness in terms of coverage, definitions used and sample sizes applying to any single measure. The sources used to estimate numbers in each category of core homelessness are summarised in Table 5.2. More details on the datasets and weightings given to each component are provided in a separate Technical Report.²⁶⁷

In updating the estimates for 2022²⁶⁸ we have taken account of:

- Administrative data from the LAs submitted through the H-CLIC system or through other routine statistical returns.

- Additional information provided about the special additional homelessness accommodation provided under the 'Everyone In' initiative, plus information about the throughput of households under this scheme.
- More detailed management information regarding rough sleeping and associated initiatives tracking estimated stocks and flows through initial emergency and move-on accommodation.
- Additional monitoring data from London Councils and CHAIN.

²⁶⁶ For the purposes of these core homeless estimates and projections, 'Everyone In' accommodation and its legacy has been treated as being part of 'hostels, etc.' Data for 2020 have been adjusted to reflect the fact that some of it was recorded by LAs as 'B&B' (part of 'unsuitable TA').

²⁶⁷ Further detail and commentary on most of these sources is contained in Bramley, G. (2021) *Research on Core Homelessness and Homeless Projections: Technical Report on new baseline estimates and scenario projections*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University <https://doi.org/10.17861/fex5-jg80>. New sources for 2022 base estimates are described in Bramley, G. (2023) *Homelessness Monitor Research Programme: Technical Report on Updated Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections 2023*. I-SPHERE, Heriot-Watt University. <https://researchportal.hw.ac.uk/en/publications/homelessness-monitor-research-programme-technical-report-on-updat>, <https://doi.org/10.17861/949n-am24>.

²⁶⁸ In this chapter, references to years such as '2020' should be taken to mean 'Financial Year 2020/21', i.e. April 2020 to March 2021, which is the normal basis for reporting homelessness statistics and many other public data.

Table 5.2: Data sources used to estimate base period numbers in each category of core homelessness

Category	Data sources
Rough Sleeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destitution in the UK 2022 survey of users of crisis services • Public Voice retrospective survey of adult experiences, 2020 • Office of National Statistics Survey of living Conditions 2018 retrospective questions on housing difficulties • H-CLIC administrative data on prior accommodation of homeless applicants, 2018-21 • LA Rough Sleeper Counts/estimates (annual), and associated quarterly management information, augmented in London by CHAIN and supplementary LA monitoring returns, and with some imputation in non-London areas where counts were not conducted • State of Hunger survey of users of foodbanks conducted for Trussell Trust in 2018/19.
Unconventional Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destitution in the UK 2022 survey of users of crisis services • Public Voice retrospective survey of adult experiences, 2020 • Office of National Statistics Survey of living Conditions 2018 retrospective questions on housing difficulties • H-CLIC administrative data on prior accommodation of homeless applicants, 2018-21 • State of Hunger survey of users of foodbanks conducted for Trussell Trust in 2018/19.
Hostels etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destitution in the UK 2022 survey of users of crisis services • Public Voice retrospective survey of adult experiences, 2020 • Office of National Statistics Survey of living Conditions 2018 retrospective questions on housing difficulties • H-CLIC administrative data on prior accommodation of homeless applicants, 2018-21 • Homeless Link Survey of services for single homeless, 2021 • DWP Freedom of Information dataset on Housing Benefit cases in short term, emergency or transitional²⁶⁹ accommodation, 2020, 2021 and 2022 • State of Hunger survey of users of foodbanks conducted for Trussell Trust in 2018/19.
Unsuitable Temporary Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Voice retrospective survey of adult experiences, 2020 • Office of National Statistics Survey of living Conditions 2018 retrospective questions on housing difficulties • H-CLIC administrative data on homeless households placed in selected categories of TA at year end, annual to 2021/22 • DWP Freedom of Information dataset on Housing Benefit cases in selected categories of TA, 2020, 2021,2022.
Sofa Surfing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Voice retrospective survey of adult experiences, 2020 • Office of National Statistics Survey of living Conditions 2018 retrospective questions on housing difficulties • English Housing Survey data on concealed households meeting definition and temporary household members avoiding homelessness, 2019/20 • UK Household Longitudinal Survey on concealed households meeting definition, 2019/20 • Opinion panel survey for Crisis of lower income households, Autumn 2022.

²⁶⁹ Adjusted to exclude estimated numbers in certain transitional rehab-type facilities, based on Blood, I., Copeman, I. & Finlay, S. (2016) *Supported Accommodation Review: The Scale, Scope and Cost of the Supported Housing Sector*. DWP Research Report No. 927. Online: Department for Work and Pensions. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/572454/rr927-supported-accommodation-review.pdf

- Forecast figures from the relevant forecasting models with actual values for the predictor variables updated from their relevant secondary sources (e.g. unemployment, incomes, house prices, rents).
- Numbers of units of emergency temporary and transitional accommodation occupied by recipients of Housing Benefit, obtained via FOI to DWP.
- Robust estimates of numbers of concealed households from quarterly Labour Force Survey household estimates are used to trend sofa surfing estimates forward over last two years.
- Changes observed for key groups between the comparable Destitution in the UK Surveys for autumn 2019 and autumn 2022.

Figure 5.1 below shows our central estimates of core homeless in England and its composition in terms of the five main categories. In 2022, the number of core homeless households in England was about 242,000, up somewhat (6%) from 231,700 in 2021 and 220,600 in 2020, or 206,400 going back further to 2012. Core homelessness had been on a gradually rising trend until 2019, then fell somewhat in 2020. That fall was primarily attributable to the 'Everyone In' initiative responding to COVID-19, with clear reductions in rough sleeping and sofa surfing in 2020, but partially offset by an increase in hostels, etc. because of the additional special provision. Secondly, the evictions moratorium in the rented sector significantly reduced inflows into the statutory homeless system, reducing pressure on TA. In the two years since then there has been an upward movement in the core homeless numbers, including rough sleeping, unsuitable TA and sofa surfing. This upward movement is strongly supported by the evidence from our survey of LA homelessness services, with a record majority of authorities

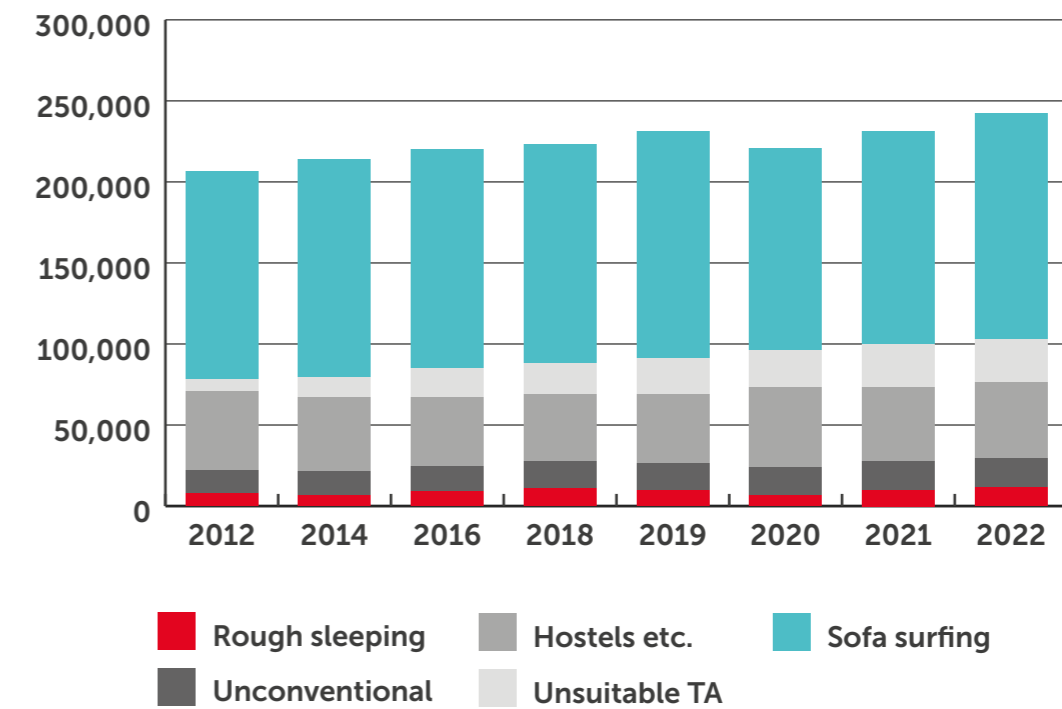
reported increased demand on homelessness services (see Chapter 4).

A similar analysis by broad region of England is shown in Figure 5.2. In the 2021 Monitor we noted that the coming into force of the HRA led to an increasing emphasis on addressing homelessness among single person households, and that this shifted the geography of demand somewhat, with more emphasis on the Midlands and North, particularly the more economically disadvantaged urban areas. This is reflected in Figure 5.2. Growth in core homelessness in the decade to 2022 seems to have been greater in the North (up 53%) and Midlands (up 40%), compared with London and the South (which have seen drops of 11 and 12% respectively).

Figure 5.3 shows timelines for core homelessness expressed as percentage rates of resident households by region and country. This brings out several features more clearly. Firstly, London remains the most important hotspot for core homelessness, but the difference between it and the North and Midlands has narrowed noticeably, as London's rates have fallen and Midland rates have risen. In this period this reflected the differential timing of housing market recoveries and some effects of the HRA. Secondly, the rate for the south is close to the English average while the north has had a generally lower rate until recently. Thirdly, England as a whole, and two of its broad regions (London, the South) saw a marked reduction in 2020. We interpret the latter contrast as reflecting the fact that 'Everyone In' (and the evictions moratorium) had a bigger impact in 2020 in London and the South.

One further point to note on recent core homelessness numbers is that, hitherto we have only counted as 'unsuitable TA' cases where the LA has placed households in fulfilment of its statutory homelessness duties. However, as discussed in detail in Chapter 3, there has been increasing concern about an apparent growth of

Figure 5.1: Core homelessness estimates by category and year, England 2012-2020 (number of households)



Sources: Authors estimates of core homelessness elements from sources listed in Table 5.2, and described more fully in G. Bramley (2023) [full reference to be given once and/or in bibliography] *Homelessness Monitor Research Programme: Technical Report on Updated Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections*. Heriot-Watt University <https://doi.org/10.17861/949n-am24>

part of the supported housing sector, financed by Housing Benefit under the banner of 'Exempt Accommodation', where there may be no commissioning oversight and standards are very poor. There is a strong case for counting such accommodation as unsuitable TA in this context, but hitherto there has not been a robust basis for estimating numbers. We anticipate being able to accommodate this category in future core homelessness assessments, as relevant data becomes available, and in the meantime the numbers presented

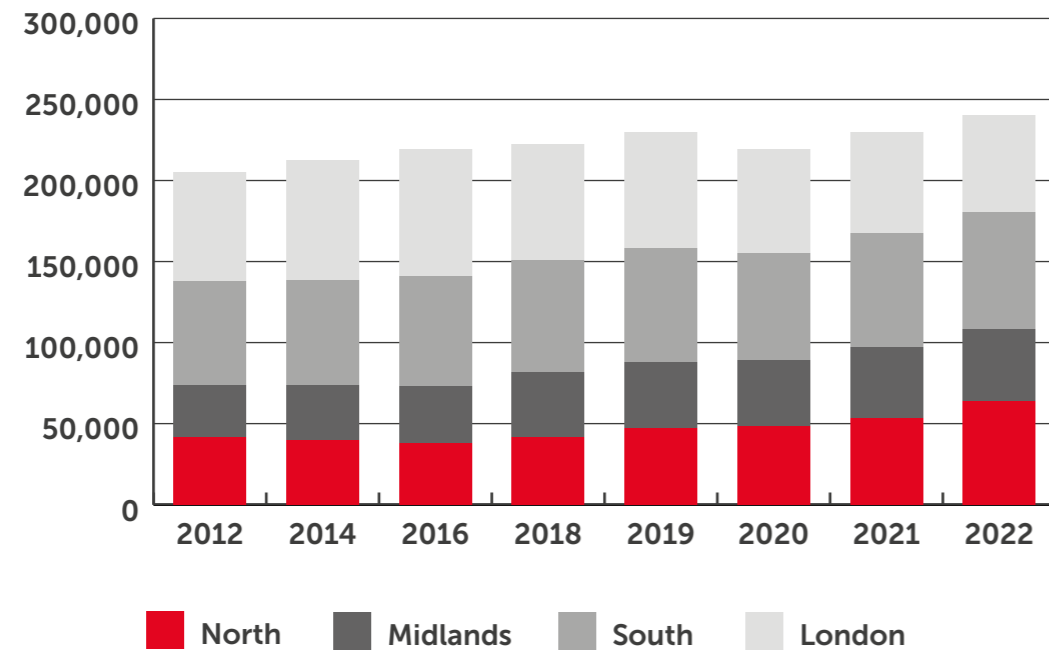
on unsuitable TA should be treated as conservative.

5.3 Introduction to projections

The purpose of the projections reported below is to examine future scenarios for the evolution of core homelessness and the potential impact of different policy options. This research builds on an existing modelling framework which has been used in a number of other research studies.²⁷⁰ The model predicts levels of housing need and key homelessness

²⁷⁰ More information on this model was given in Appendix 3 to the 2021 Monitor and the longer Technical Report: Bramley, G. (2021) *Research on Core Homelessness and Homeless Projections: Technical Report on new baseline estimates and scenario projections*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University <https://doi.org/10.17861/fex5-jg80>. See also Bramley, G. & Watkins, D. (2016) 'Housebuilding, demographic change and affordability as outcomes of local planning decisions: exploring interactions using a sub-regional model of housing markets in England.' *Progress in Planning*, 104: 1-35; Bramley, G. with Leishman, C., Cosgrove, P. & Watkins, D. (2016) *What Would Make a Difference? Modelling policy scenarios for tackling poverty in the UK*. https://pureapps2.hw.ac.uk/portal/files/10844984/Bramley_WhatWouldMakeaDifference_Report.pdf; and Bramley, G. (2018) *Housing Supply Requirements across Great Britain for low income households and homeless people*. Research Report for Crisis and the National Housing Federation. Main Technical Report. Edinburgh. Heriot-Watt University. <https://researchportal.hw.ac.uk/en/publications/housing-supply-requirements-across-great-britain-for-low-income-h>.

Figure 5.2: Core homelessness estimates by broad region and year, England 2012-2020 (number of households)



Sources: As Figure 5.1

numbers, for sub-regional areas in England, with a major focus on time horizons of 2024, 2026, 2031 and 2041. In this round, improvements have been made to most parts of the forecasting model to take account of new data and to improve model properties.²⁷¹ This chapter presents future scenarios looking at the medium (2-5 years) and longer (10-20 years) term.

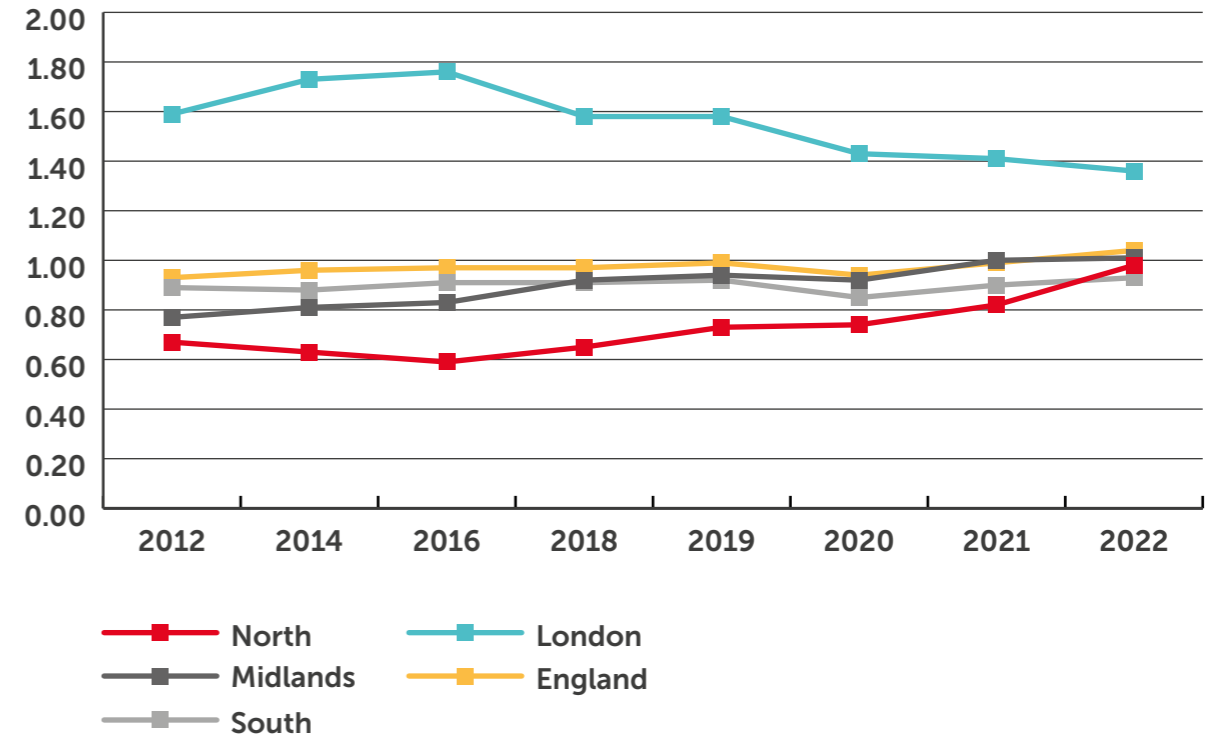
The COVID-19 emergency and subsequent responses to it are baked into the base year (2022) and the forecasts for the immediately following years, as is the emerging cost of living crisis associated with the Ukraine war and its impact on energy and other prices. This has been a period

of exceptional economic turbulence as a result of these and preceding events (including Brexit), which poses a challenge for forecasting. We reflect this challenge both by taking careful account of recent and short-medium term forecasts of economic variables at national level (drawing on a range of respected sources), but also by testing different economic scenarios.

Looking forward, eleven variant policy packages were tested by running the projection model forward over 20 years with each policy in place. These policy options are listed and described in Table 5.3 below.

²⁷¹ See Bramley, G. (2023) *Homelessness Monitor Research Programme: Technical report on Updated Baseline Estimates and Scenario Projections 2023*. Edinburgh: I-SPHERE, Heriot-Watt University. <https://researchportal.hw.ac.uk/en/publications/homelessness-monitor-research-programme-technical-report-on-updat>, <https://doi.org/10.17861/949n-am24>. Fifteen of the specific predictive models have been updated and refined, including those addressing new build supply, house prices, rents, social relets, homeless applications and TA, rough sleeping and sofa surfing.

Figure 5.3: Core homelessness rates as % of households by broad region and for England overall, 2012-2022 (percent of resident households)



Source: as Figure 5.2, with household estimates within model as denominators

5.4 The baseline projections

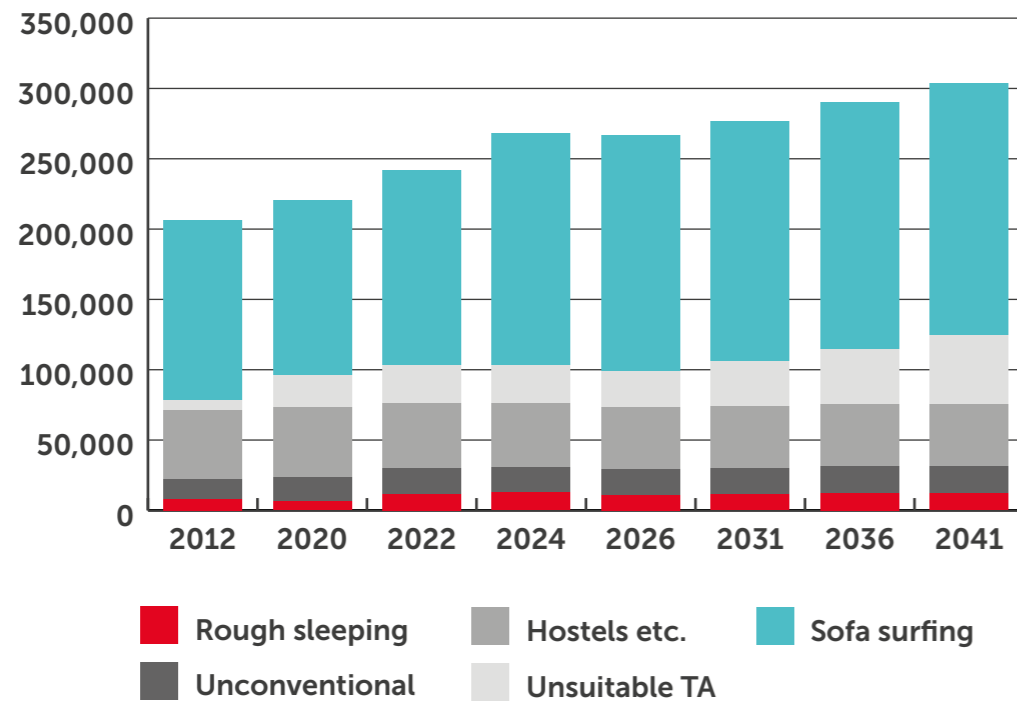
Figure 5.4 shows our resulting new baseline estimates and projections by category for key years.²⁷² It is obviously of particular interest to focus on 2022 as our new base year, on 2024 as a short-term impact picture coinciding with the Government's current target date for ending rough sleeping, then 2026 and five-yearly intervals thereafter, with 2041 representing the long run.

As detailed in Chapter 2, we would expect the current cost of living crisis, welfare restrictions, and increasing pressure on affordable housing in both the private and social rented sectors to have adverse effects on homelessness.

In the light of this background, we would certainly expect the model to predict quite a spike in some elements of core homelessness over the current and immediately following years, assuming no further policy measures are put in place. This is indeed what the baseline projection summarized in Figures 5.4 and 5.5 shows, with most elements of core homelessness and the total rising significantly above 2020 and 2022 (and pre-COVID-19) levels by 2024. This applies to all elements of core homelessness except hostels, etc., where the tail end of running down remaining Everyone In provision is factored in. Overall core homelessness in 2024 is projected be 21% higher than 2020 levels under

²⁷² 'Estimates' refer to estimated actual numbers from multiple sources for past years up to 2022; 'projections' refer to conditional forecasts generated by the models for future years up to 2041.

Figure 5.4: New baseline projection of core homelessness by category, England 2012-41 (number of households)



Sources: Estimates as Figure 5.1; forward projections are model predictions developed as described in Bramley (2023) *Technical Report*.

this scenario, while applications to the statutory homeless system would be 17% higher. Levels in 2023 are projected to be approaching those in 2024.²⁷³

In the shorter term (2024), the largest increase in both percentage and absolute numerical terms is projected to be in sofa surfing (18%, 25,000). Rough sleeping is projected to increase but the predicted rise is less at around 9% (1,000); while recently published 2022 count/estimate and management data suggest a more rapid rise just recently (following reductions through 2021, as shown above), we believe continuing local implementation of rough sleeping strategies are having

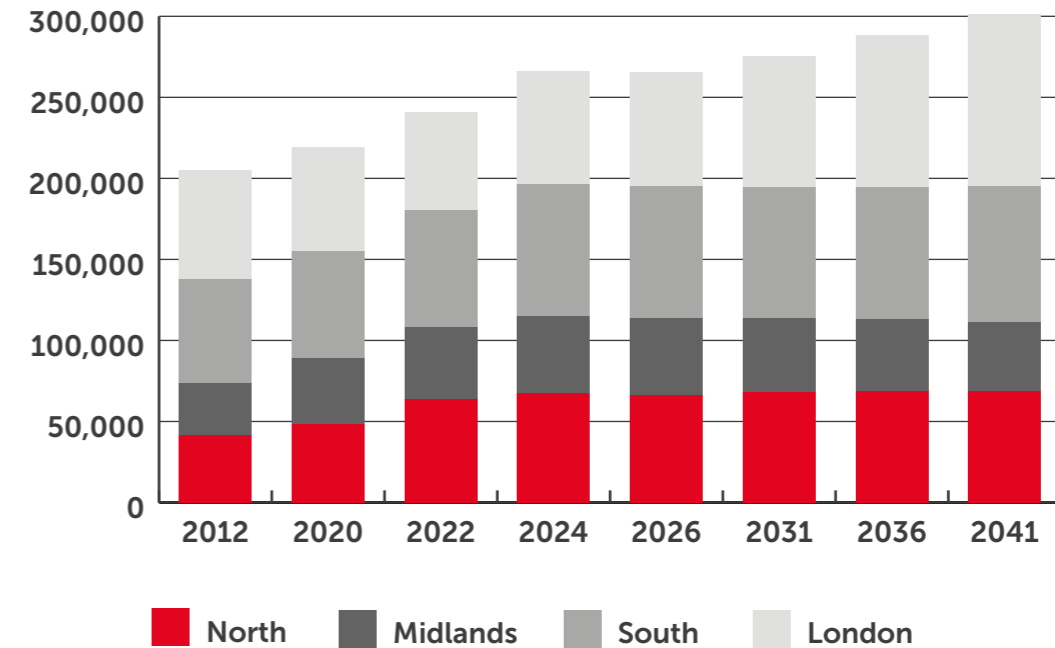
an impact in reducing durations of episodes by offering immediate off-street accommodation and increasing move-on opportunities.

Looking to the medium and longer term, total core homelessness is projected to rise by 25% (61,000) by 2041, reaching a total of 303,000, 47% above the level of 2012. While rough sleeping is projected to remain fairly stable beyond 2024, all other elements apart from hostels, etc.²⁷⁴ rise with the largest proportional increase being in unsuitable TA (84%, 23,000) but the largest absolute rise being in sofa surfing (28%, 40,000).

273 The forecasting and projection model is designed for assessing medium term outcomes and is not optimised as a short term forecasting model, containing as it does many one-year lags, so we do not place emphasis on the predictions just one year after the base year.

274 In our modelling framework, hostels etc. is 'supply-determined', i.e. dependent on policies and funding; specific policies tested below entail phased reduction of hostel numbers as a deliberately sought outcome.

Figure 5.5: New baseline projection of core homelessness by broad region, England 2012-41 (number of households)



Sources: As Figure 5.4.

The regional impacts shown in Figure 5.5 suggest that the core homelessness impacts of all of the factors enumerated above would be substantial in all regions in 2024 and subsequently. However, the impacts to 2024 are greater in London (15.5% up on 2022) and the South (12.7%), compared with the Midlands and the North (5-7%). Later in the projection period, the prospective worsening of core homelessness prospects appears to be strikingly concentrated on London (up 77% by 2041), with slight easing in the Midlands (-5%) and moderate growth in the North (8%) and South (17%).

The main forms of core homelessness which rise dramatically in London in the longer term are unsuitable TA (+20,300 or 134%) and sofa surfing (+25,500 or 46%). As pressure through the statutory system places ever greater strain on the ability of authorities to respond appropriately, where market pressures are greatest

and social sector relets constrained, unsuitable TA rises disproportionately. Although similar percentage increases are recorded for unsuitable TA in some other regions, the absolute numbers are generally small. In the case of sofa surfing, moderately large numerical increases are recorded in a number of regions. Sofa surfing responds to a wider range of factors, including demographics, age, household formation, migration, socio-economic status, income, savings, health, tenure and lettings, and rental affordability (LHA). These findings in turn suggest a longer-term accentuation of the divide between London and much of the rest of the country, with ever more extreme housing market pressure in London. Thus, the broader agenda of regional imbalance, alias 'Levelling Up' remains important, including the need to reduce pressure on the London housing market.

5.5 Impacts of policy changes

This section considers the impacts of the policy scenarios described in table 5.3 below.

While several of these policy options, or packages, are effectively the same as those tested in the previous Monitor, some are new or have been significantly modified in scope or implementation.²⁷⁵ Some particular points to note on the policies that have been modelled are that:

- On LHA, the baseline representing existing policy has been changed to cash freeze to 2026, followed by indexing on CPI; the proposed option would raise it to the median level and index to the actual change in rents;
- On limiting evictions, we assume that implementation of proposed legislation to end Section 21 'No Fault' evictions, together with administrative measures such as the court protocols used in 2008-10 to limit mortgage repossessions or improved legal representation of tenants in court as tested in the United States²⁷⁶ could be adopted to achieve a 50% reduction in loss of tenancies leading to a homeless application;²⁷⁷
- By 'increased allocation' we mean implementing or significantly increasing the allocation of social rented lettings to core homeless households up to a target of 20% of net lettings, where core homeless numbers would justify that;
- As part of the housing supply options we have introduced a specific link to an implicit strategy of reducing hostel, etc. capacity through targeted

new provision matched in terms of location, size, type and tenancy support to the needs of a significant part of the hostel-using population.

- We have introduced a new specific scenario entailing a notable increase in economic growth, as explained below.

Summary impacts are shown in Figure 5.6 below, which presents the percentage reductions in core homelessness, relative to the baseline projection, at key points in time for each policy considered in isolation. In Figure 5.6, the policies are shown in descending order of the size of their impact at the end of the projection period, 2041.

Policies which are most effective in the short as well as the longer term are raising and properly indexing the LHA and increasing the allocation of social housing to core homeless households. Policies which have a significant early impact but which build up further over time include more effective prevention, large improvement in welfare benefits, and housing supply (given the link to hostel reduction discussed further below). Policies which have relatively smaller early impact but which build up to a substantial impact later in the period include Housing First – targeting severe and multiple disadvantage homelessness and associated hostel use – higher economic growth, and 'levelling up'. Of those tested in this round, the policies which show relatively smaller impacts on core homelessness overall include the more specific welfare measures geared to reducing destitution and the limiting of evictions.

275 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2021) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2021*. London: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/england/the-homelessness-monitor-england-2021/>

276 Evans, W., Philips, D., Ruffini, C. (2019) *Reducing and Preventing Homelessness: A review of the evidence and charting a research agenda*. Working Paper 26232. National Bureau of Economic Research. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w26232>

277 It should be noted that the Renters' Reform Bill which proposes the abolition of Section 21 evictions was published as this report was being finalised.

Table 5.3: Policy scenarios tested through projections model over period to 2041

Shorthand Name	Description
Baseline	Includes after-effects of COVID-19/lockdown, Ukraine war induced cost of living crisis and financial instability induced by September 2022 budget, with economic trajectory similar to average of reputable forecasts for short/medium term.
Raise LHA	Raise LHA to median level in all LA areas and maintain relative level in real terms through effective indexing. ²⁷⁸
Limit Evictions	Private rental tenancy reform & administrative measures to limit and delay evictions, etc. from private renting, sufficient to reduce such homelessness presentations by half. ²⁷⁹
Prevention	More effective prevention by LAs using existing tools, raising key measures of performance (based on cohort outcomes data) to the level of best performing quarter of authorities.
Increased allocation of social lettings to core homeless	Allocating up to 20% of net social lettings to core homeless households, where appropriate, on an ongoing basis. ²⁸⁰
UC & destitution measures	Restore £20 per week enhancement to UC personal allowance, end 5-week wait for first UC payment, curb debt deductions from benefits, reduce Personal Independence Payment 'fails', improve Local Welfare Support and scrap Benefit Cap; also proactively support clients transferring to UC under 'managed migration'.
Housing First & Severe and Multiple Disadvantage (SMD) reduction	Increase by 3x the level of Housing First provision, with associated increase in rehabilitation services for addictions & offending, leading to progressive reduction in hostel etc accommodation and crime rates.
Housing Supply	Increase in social rented housing supply (increasing from 30,000 to 70,000 p.a.), including specific provision (c.4,000 pa) targeted at permanent sustainable rehousing of hostel etc. residents, enabling further reduction of scale of hostel provision. ²⁸¹
Higher Economic Growth	Raising real GDP growth over next 20 years from 1.9% pa to 3.0% pa, including raising productivity from 1.25% to 1.8%, including increase in general housebuilding and higher net in-migration (+45k pa).
Levelling Up	Raising economic growth rates in regions away from London to divert population and economic activity to other regions, with some enhanced housing provision in growth areas.
Large Welfare Hike	In addition to the UC and destitution measures, increase personal allowances in UC and related systems by 3x the amount in the above in UC & Destitution measures scenario (from mid 2020s).

278 The baseline assumption for LHA is an extension of the current Government policy of fixed allowances in money terms with no indexing, over a period of years (6 assumed), followed by indexing on CPI. An alternative of periodic rebasing and fixing is also tested, with more adverse results.

279 The key tenancy reform would be to implement the ending of Section 21 'No Fault' evictions in England, as already implemented in Scotland; examples of administrative measures include court protocols and improved legal representation as noted above.

280 Additional to current numbers, and subject to maximum of 30% of current core homeless numbers

281 This supply-linked rehousing of hostel residents would reduce hostel numbers overall by one-third of the current level, or 55% including the effect of the Housing First option above as well.

Arguably some policies might be scaled up further, for example prevention. In this case this is because current duties and powers are limited to what LAs can do, and do not extend to other public bodies.

In some contrast with findings reported in 2022 for England, the impact of increased *social housing supply* on core homelessness is now shown to be more substantial, because we have introduced a specific link to an implicit strategy of reducing hostel, etc. capacity through targeted new provision. This parallels the modelling of Housing First which is targeted on a group with more complex need. We would also argue that a broader reason for having a higher level of new supply is to facilitate the effectiveness of homelessness strategies more generally, particularly by making significant increased allocation of social housing to core homeless households more feasible, by changing the mix and profile, while at the same time motivating LAs to implement such measures.

In the light of recent political and macro-economic events, we decided to include an explicit scenario of higher overall economic growth. Across the political spectrum there are calls to improve UK's economic performance in the medium term, after a decade and a half of faltering real growth in incomes and productivity. While our baseline essentially projects 'carrying on as we are', the higher growth strategy looks at the implications of achieving a meaningful increase in GDP growth over the next two decades (from 1.9% pa to 3.0% pa) which would entail higher levels of productivity and employment, somewhat higher international migration and general housing supply. Figure 5.6 shows that this scenario

would see noticeable reductions in core homelessness over the longer term.

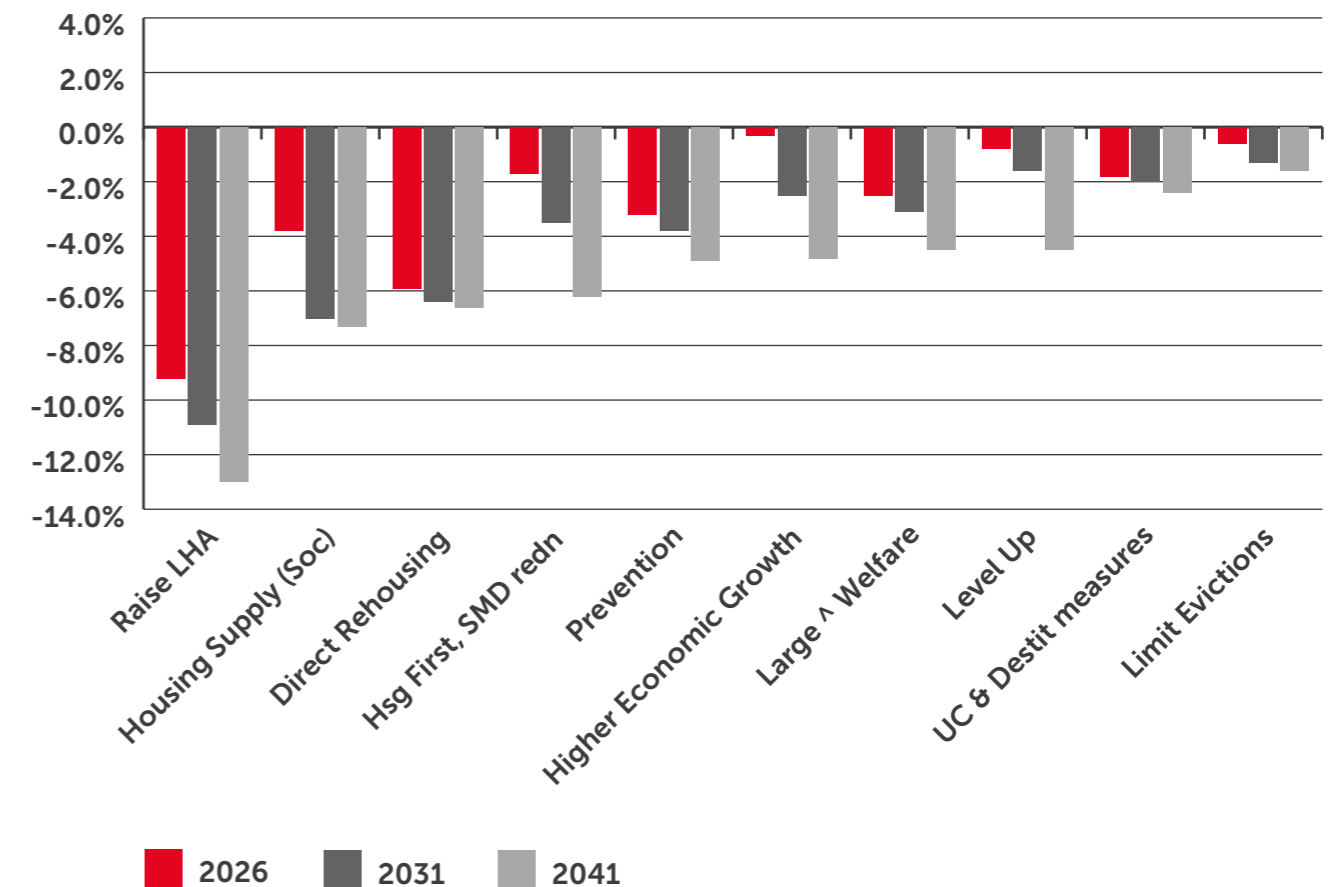
'Levelling Up' remains an important plank of UK government policy, although not without attracting considerable scepticism and controversy. Higher overall growth as modelled here captures some of the intended effects of 'Levelling Up'. However, we test a further option entailing a greater degree of narrowing of GDP and productivity growth between leading and lagging areas, higher growth in identified areas with higher potential (in all regions except London), and some associated changes in migration flows. The model shows that these elements would bring a similar scale of reduction in core homelessness particularly in the longer term.

Apart from LHA, which is the clear priority in the welfare policy arena, we also test two packages of measures, one focussed on the more immediate alleviation of destitution²⁸² and the other building on that by increasing the basic level of personal allowances in the benefit system for working age households. The effects of these welfare measures on core homelessness is sizeable, as can be seen below.

Impacts of different policies on rough sleeping and other specific components of core homelessness in 2024

There is strong current interest in the immediate period, and in particular in the Government's target of eliminating (or greatly reducing the adverse aspects of) rough sleeping by 2024. We therefore present a specific analysis of the forecast impacts of different policies on the different components of core homelessness by 2024. Table 5.5 shows this

Figure 5.6: Summary of impact of policies considered individually by selected year, ranked by size of impact by 2041 (% of baseline core homeless forecast)



Sources: forward projections are model predictions developed as described in Bramley (2023) *Technical Report* for policy scenarios set out in Table 5.3.

analysis. The Table also shows the impacts on two key measures for the statutory homelessness system: total homeless applications and total TA. We now consider impacts on these components of core and wider homelessness in turn.

In the case of rough sleeping, the focus of immediate policy interest, it appears that, while a number of policies would have an impact, the three offering the most potential on this time horizon would be prevention, increased allocation and limiting evictions. It is noteworthy that these are all policies within DLUHC remit although one (evictions) relies

partly on proceeding with planned legislation.

The overall story is that, with all policies in place, rough sleeping in 2024 would be reduced by 36%, from 12,740 to 8,240, a level not much above 2012 and below most years since 2016 apart from 2020 (the year of COVID-19 and Everyone In). Given the typical relationship between DLUHC rough sleeping count/ estimates and our fuller estimate of the scale of rough sleeping in England, as discussed above, that might be consistent with a count estimate of around 2,750, roughly the level of 2014. This would be a very substantial

282 Based on the findings of Fitzpatrick et al (2020) *Destitution in the UK 2020* (JRF report), these include ending the 5-week wait for UC, ending the taking of debt repayments from basic benefit payments, and ending the unjustified rejection of many PIP claims, as well as retaining the £20pw enhancement to personal allowances beyond April 2021.

Table 5.4: Shorter term impact of policies considered individually on main components of core homelessness, overall homeless applications and total temporary accommodation (% of baseline at 2024)

Impact in 2024 of policy measures	Rough Sleep	Unconventional Acc	Hostels Etc	Unsuitable Temp Acc	Sofa Surfing	Homeless Applic'ns	Total T A
Raise LHA	-2.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-7.9%	-1.2%	0.0%
Limit Evictions	-5.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-13.8%	0.0%
Prevention	-17.0%	-0.1%	0.0%	-19.4%	-0.4%	-6.4%	-5.6%
Increased allocations	-7.2%	-0.2%	0.0%	-13.2%	-6.9%	0.0%	0.0%
UC & Destitution meas	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	-0.1%	-1.1%	0.1%	0.0%
Hsg First, SMD red'n	-1.2%	0.0%	-7.6%	0.0%	-0.4%	-0.7%	0.0%
Housing Supply	-1.2%	0.0%	-3.8%	-3.8%	-2.4%	0.0%	-0.8%
Higher Economic Growth	1.1%	0.8%	0.0%	1.1%	0.6%	0.9%	0.2%
Levelling Up (vs HIG)	-0.3%	-0.2%	0.0%	-0.6%	-0.6%	-0.4%	0.0%
Large Benefits increase	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	-0.3%	-2.2%	0.3%	-0.1%

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Sources: as Figure 5.6

reduction on what our model suggests could take place with no further policy measures in place, but is clearly still substantially above zero.

In this context it is important to note that, as discussed in detail elsewhere in this Monitor (see Chapter 3 and 4), a key feature of rough sleeping, particularly in London, is the presence of non-UK nationals, including many with NRPF/Other RE, because of their migration /citizenship status. A range of sources of data, including CHAIN data and the Destitution in the UK survey in autumn 2022, indicate that around half of rough sleepers in London are non-UK nationals. This reinforces the difficulty of meeting the 2024 rough sleeping target without resolving the core tension between homelessness and immigration policy.

Only two policy options covered in our modelling reduce hostel numbers, these being Housing First and Social Housing Supply, and these would only achieve modest gains by 2024 (a

reduction of about 11%), with much greater potential in the longer run.

Table 5.5 also shows that several policy measures could contribute to a substantial reduction in unsuitable TA in the short term: the key ones are enhanced prevention (-19%), increased allocations (-13%), with a modest contribution from increasing supply (-4%). Four policies are shown to have beneficial effects in the short term in reducing sofa surfing, particularly raising the LHA and increased allocations (-7 to -8%), with moderate reductions also associated with housing supply and improvements to benefits.

The costs and challenges of running the statutory homelessness system are primarily related to levels of homeless applications and total TA numbers. The former could be reduced in the short run most effectively by limiting evictions (-14%) and spreading best practice on homeless prevention (-6%), while the latter would also have a similar impact on total TA.

Impacts of different policies on each component of core homelessness in long run

Table 5.6 looks at policy effects of the five different components of core homelessness on the longer-term time horizon of 2041.

It can be seen that a majority of policies have effects in the desirable direction of reducing *rough sleeping* in the longer run, with seven policies offering reductions in the range c.6%-14%. The biggest impacts are associated with prevention, Housing First, and increased allocations, with significant contributions also from raising LHA, limiting evictions and Levelling Up. Other policies are shown as having a smaller impact. A general reason for this is that our baseline now shows a more modestly growing/static trajectory for rough sleeping, probably due to a reduction in the duration of many episodes of rough sleeping.

The unconventional accommodation category, as represented in the current version of the model, again shows relative limited changes in response to the different policy strategies. This is the category of core homelessness on which we have least robust evidence and hence limited capability of modelling drivers, although it is apparent that it is in part linked to other elements of core homelessness.

The hostels category is essentially supply-determined in our modelling approach. Hitherto the main opportunity to reduce hostel numbers was seen to lie in the Housing First related strategy,²⁸³ but there is also significant opportunity to reduce hostel numbers much more by introducing a targeted element within enhanced new supply. This accounts for the much larger role of additional social renting supply in the overall impacts, although there is also a moderate effect of improved market

affordability, particularly via total TA and unsuitable TA.

Unsuitable TA is the category of core homelessness which is most likely to be affected by any and indeed all of the policies tested. This reflects the way our modelling structure channels a wide range of influences through the overall level of homeless applications to LAs, movements in the total level of TA placements and, from the dynamics of that, the proportion of 'unsuitable' placements. In the current round of projections the unsuitable TA category is quite strongly influenced by prevention and also by five other policy measures which each reduce it by more than 7% (limiting evictions, increased allocations, supply, levelling up and economic growth). All other policies make some contribution to reducing this, but the benefit-related measures play a more modest role.

Sofa surfing - while all policies appear to have beneficial impact in reducing this form of core homelessness, one in particular has quite a large effect (over 20%), namely raising the LHA. A further five policy measures could achieve reductions in the range 3%-8% each: increased allocations, higher economic growth, large benefit rate increases and specific destitution-related benefit measures, and Housing First. Because of the large scale of sofa surfing, even a moderate percentage impact could make a worthwhile contribution to the overall outcome.

Total homeless applications are forecast to be most reduced, relative to baseline, by limiting evictions and by Levelling Up (-18% each) The former is expected given the high proportion of homeless applications directly related to the ending of private tenancies; the latter reflects the way our modelling of levelling up takes pressure off the London housing system. Higher economic growth comes next in scale

²⁸³ The impact of Housing First and related policies on reduced hostel numbers is somewhat attenuated when constraints are placed at sub-regional level on the scale of reduction related to overall local provision and the local scale of SMD homelessness.

Table 5.5: Longer term impact of policies considered individually on main components of core homelessness, overall homeless applications and total temporary accommodation (% of baseline at 2041)

Impact in 2041 of policy measures	Rough Sleep	Unconventional Acc	Hostels Etc	Unsuitable Temp Acc	Sofa Surfing	Homeless Applic'ns	Total T A
Raise LHA	-6.7%	-2.6%	0.0%	-1.6%	-20.9%	-3.6%	-2.3%
Limit Evictions	-5.8%	-0.4%	0.0%	-7.5%	-0.2%	-17.9%	-12.8%
Prevention	-13.8%	-1.2%	0.0%	-23.4%	-0.7%	-4.1%	-14.1%
Increased allocations	-8.4%	-1.5%	0.0%	-10.9%	-7.5%	0.0%	0.0%
UC & Destitution meas	-2.7%	-0.5%	0.0%	-1.8%	-3.3%	-0.3%	-0.6%
Hsg First, SMD red'n	-8.9%	-1.1%	-20.6%	-3.0%	-3.9%	-6.5%	-4.6%
Housing Supply	1.3%	-2.6%	-35.3%	-12.3%	-0.1%	4.9%	-9.6%
Higher Economic Growth	-2.7%	0.6%	0.0%	-6.6%	-6.2%	-8.4%	5.8%
Levelling Up (vs HIG)	-5.8%	-0.4%	0.0%	-7.5%	-0.2%	-17.9%	-12.8%
Large Benefits increase	-3.6%	-0.9%	0.0%	-5.3%	-5.9%	-1.0%	-1.8%

Sources: as Figure 5.6

of reduction in homeless applications (-8%), underlining the general relationship between homelessness and low incomes/poverty. More moderate reductions would come through Housing First, prevention and raising of LHA. Increased social housing supply is predicted to increase statutory homeless applications somewhat, owing to increased household formation and/or greater prospects of rehousing in the social rented sector.

Total TA numbers would be significantly reduced by many of the measures examined here, especially better prevention, limiting evictions, and Levelling Up (-13 to -14%), with social housing supply also leading to a significant reduction (-10%), notwithstanding the positive effect on applications mentioned above. More moderate reductions would be associated with Housing First, while the welfare measures and raising of the LHA, despite their many other positive benefits on levels of poverty

and destitution, would have rather modest impacts on this particular aspect of homelessness. The only slightly perverse effect is from higher economic growth; this is probably because it would increase pressure in some housing markets. It is worth noting here that total TA is an important driver of the overall costs of local homelessness services. Key informant interviews emphasized this point but also heightened concerns about the quality of some TA.

5.6 Stacking up the impacts

So far we have looked at policy options individually, enabling us to compare their individual effectiveness, short or longer term. While that gives some initial guide to 'what works', it is not necessarily the same as what the effect would be of adding that one to others already in place. Sometimes, adding a fresh policy approach may work in a synergistic way to increase the impact so that it is greater than the sum of its parts. However, more commonly, the more policies you add, the less

they may appear to add, relative to what might have been expected from looking at them in isolation. That may be because the different policies are to varying degrees helping the same people, and the pool of remaining 'at risk' people may be getting smaller the more policies are in place.

It follows that, in this 'stacking up' approach, it does matter in which order policies are added to the package. We would argue that the most logical order would relate to immediacy of implementation and impact, and after that work through more directly housing-related policies, perhaps taking the simpler before the more complex. Policies further back in the hierarchy would then be ones which would take longer to impact, be more complex to implement, involve a wider range of sectors, and cost most. Following these principles, we have created a sequence of ten scenarios building on our Baseline scenario, and run the model with each element added in turn. The results are shown in Figure 5.7, where data points represent number of core homeless households at a point in time over three decades.

This analysis shows a number of things very clearly.

Firstly, by introducing a package of policy measures, it is possible to reduce projected levels of core homelessness by substantial margins. Implementing all policies discussed in the previous section would see core homelessness drop by 47% compared with the baseline by 2041. In 2041 core homelessness would be around 32% below 2022 levels and 22% below 2012 levels. The cumulative reduction is less than the simple sum of individual policy impacts summarised in Figure 5.6 (47% vs 56%), indicating a proportional overlap factor of about 0.16 (i.e. the cumulative sum is 84% of the sum of separate impacts).

Secondly, some policies have a bigger impact than others. The biggest

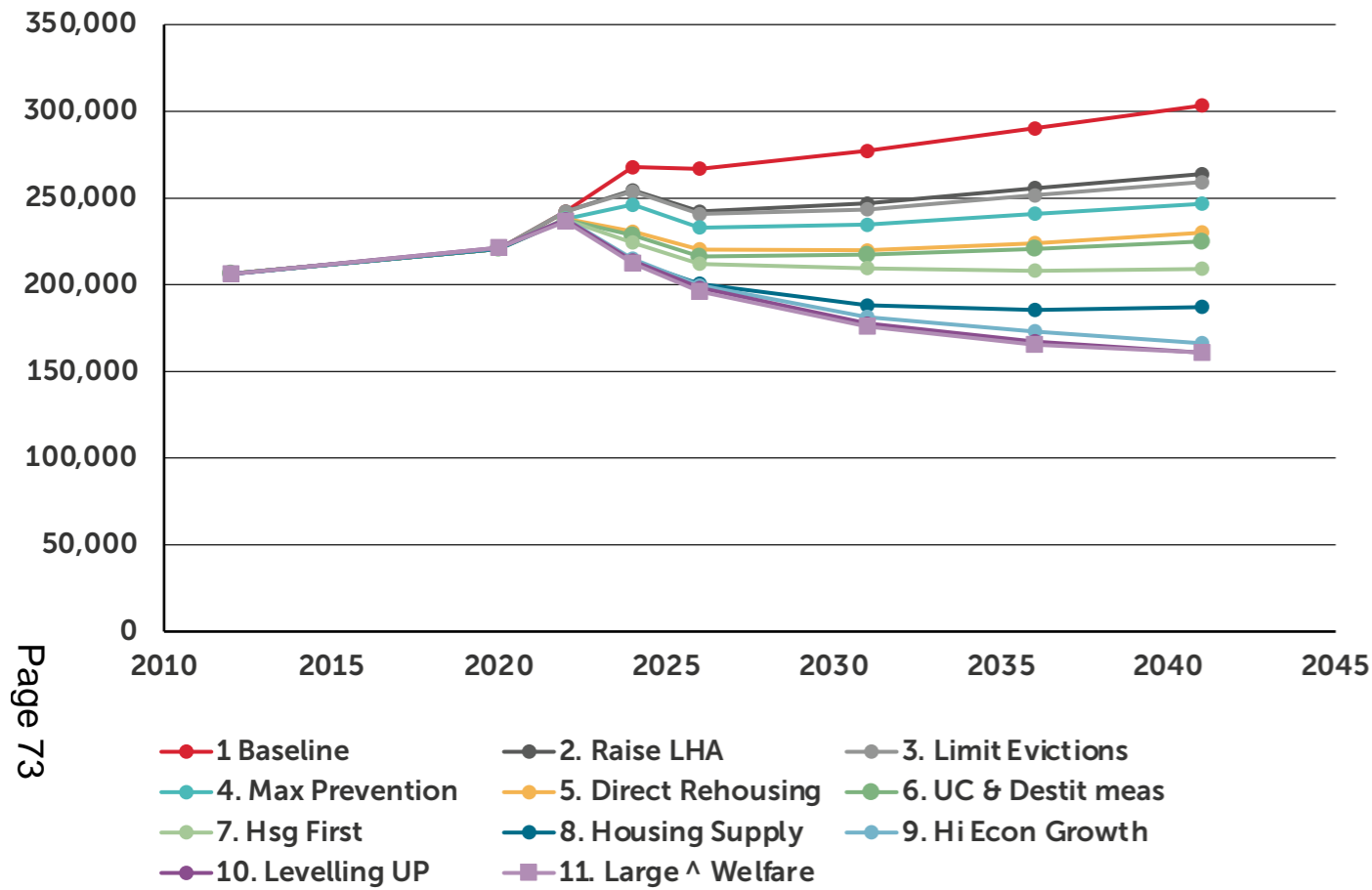
wins would come from: raising and indexing the LHA (39,000 reduction); significantly higher economic growth (21,000); and 120% higher social housing supply with a specific link to hostel replacement (22,000). Medium-scale gains (12-17,000 reductions) would result from direct rehousing/increased allocations, Housing First expansion and maximised prevention within the existing framework. Moderate gains (5-6,000) would be expected from 'levelling up', destitution-related changes to UC, and limiting evictions. Relatively small additional gains would be associated with a further large rise in UC personal allowances.

Thirdly some policies have larger effects earlier on, including direct rehousing/increased allocations, prevention and the measures to reduce destitution. Other strategies including the Housing First, housing supply, and levelling up would clearly be more gradual and progressive in their effects.

Fourthly, some policies have not been projected at their maximum feasible level. For example, based on 2018 research on overall housing requirements we argued that a social housing programme of up to 90,000 units pa would be justified in the next decade or so, and this is likely to still be the case. Additional prevention duties and mechanisms might be introduced, involving mandating cooperation from certain other public agencies in relation to particular groups at risk. Levelling up could be taken further in the longer run, given sufficient priority.

Finally, there are specific policies which have been mooted which could quite clearly impact on the risks of core homelessness for specific groups. An obvious example here is measures to enable some or most households within the NRPF/Other RE group to access a fuller range of legal work, benefits and/or housing support, measures which have been argued to

Figure 5.7: Total core homelessness in England with the sequential addition of ten policy scenarios to reduce core homelessness in the period to 2041 (number of households)



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Sources: as Figure 5.6

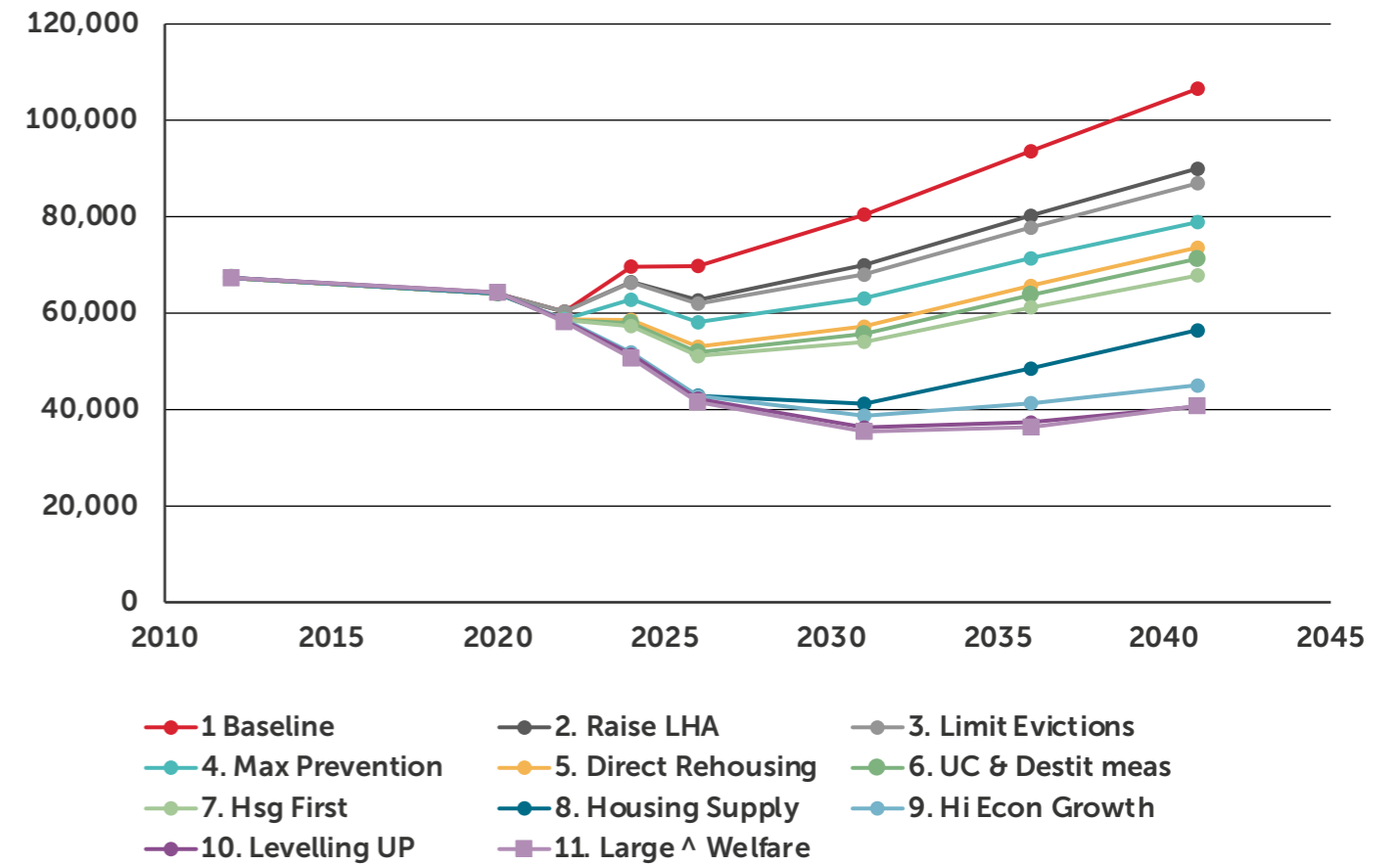
offer significant cost-benefits to the public sector in the longer term, as well as alleviating acute homelessness problems in the short term.²⁸⁴

It has been clear throughout this exercise that the more volatile elements of core homelessness (rough sleeping, unsuitable TA) are particularly associated with London. As a consequence, concerted measures to reduce core homelessness are likely to have a more dramatic impact in London. This is illustrated by Figure 5.8 below, which shows the impacts of the same set of sequentially added

strategies for London. The main story is that, without further measures, core homelessness would be likely to grow much more steeply than was apparent from the national picture, but again concerted measures would bring it back down below the base level. In fact the total net reduction in 2041 would be 60% for London, compared with 46% for England as a whole. However, unlike the picture of England overall, there would still be a slight tendency for core homelessness to rise again after 2036.

284 See in particular Benton, E., Karlsson, J., Pinter, I., Provan, B., Scanlon, K., & Whitehead, C. (2021) *Social Cost Benefit Analysis of the no recourse to public funds (NRPF) policy in London*. Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion Report, London School of Economics.

5.8 Total core homelessness in London with the sequential addition of nine policy scenarios to reduce core homelessness in the period to 2041 (number of households)



Sources: as Figure 5.6

As for England as a whole, the most impactful policies for London would be raising the LHA, higher economic growth, and housing supply. Prevention would appear to offer almost as great an opportunity as supply, but this might be indicative of a reality that prevention options are currently very constrained and difficult to implement effectively in London. Otherwise the ranking of policy measures is similar.

Conclusions

6. Conclusions

This Homelessness Monitor England has been written against the backdrop of a cost of living crisis more serious than that seen in decades, and with the UK seemingly struggling more than any other major economy to recover from the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic. During 2022 higher energy and food prices saw inflation reach double digits, outstripping wages, and leaving social security benefit rates ever more inadequate for meeting even basic needs. Although the UK economy has so far narrowly avoided recession, it is expected that real household disposable income will continue to fall in 2023/24, compounding the financial and social pressures that drive homelessness.

Lower income households have been particularly exposed to the cost of living crisis as a high share of their spending is on food, energy, and other necessities. While in response the UK Government has introduced various measures, including the near universal energy price guarantee, and cost of living payments for households in receipt of means-tested benefits, fewer than one in ten local authorities responding to this year's survey considered these measures likely to play any substantial role in mitigating the impact of the cost of living crisis on homelessness.

In this dire context, the Government's overwhelming focus within homelessness policy in England has been on addressing rough sleeping, with a 'refreshed' Rough Sleeping Strategy launched in September 2022, underpinned by the ongoing ambition to meet the 2024 target to 'end' rough sleeping. Ambition is certainly needed in this area given that, following several years of decline, the number of people seen sleeping rough in England grew by some 26% in 2022 according to the official estimate.

This new Rough Sleeping Strategy was broadly welcomed by the sector as presenting at least some kind of plan for progressing towards the 2024 target, though the definition employed of what it means to end rough sleeping, i.e. that it is prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurrent, provoked mixed reactions. While most key informants considered this a realistic and helpful measure, some were concerned that it represented a weakening of the 2024 target.

The most glaring and widely noted weakness with the Rough Sleeping Strategy is its failure to address the obvious tension between current immigration and homelessness policy in a context where over half of all

people sleeping rough in London are non-UK nationals, with many of them likely to have No Recourse to Public Funds or other restricted eligibility for statutory support.

What was universally welcomed, on the other hand, was confirmation in the Strategy of sustained investment in the Rough Sleeping Initiative. The Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme and the new Single Homeless Accommodation Programme were also positively endorsed as making valuable contributions to preventing and alleviating rough sleeping, albeit some frustrations remained around the sustainability of the accommodation provided in both programmes beyond the revenue funding timeframes. Also welcomed was the extension of the three Housing First regional pilots to 2024, although continuing issues with access to housing remained a key challenge across the pilots, with lengthy waits in some areas placing a strain on service user and staff relationships. There also remained ongoing uncertainty over how the open-ended nature of the support required under Housing First will be funded in the long-term.

Beyond rough sleeping, there was much less by way of positive policy developments on homelessness to report this year. Notwithstanding continuing support for the Homelessness Reduction Act, key informants noted that opportunities for upstream prevention are shrinking because of sustained cuts to public services, a squeeze on household budgets, and a reduction in the supply of affordable rental properties. Rapidly rising mortgage costs and private rents have made it ever more difficult for households to access the private housing market, while the continued decline in social lettings has severely constrained access for younger and homeless households to this sector. The overwhelming majority (82%) of

local authorities surveyed this year viewed the refreezing of Local Housing Allowance rates as 'very challenging' in the context of their efforts to prevent or alleviate homelessness. Escalating eviction action by private landlords, and in particular 'no fault' cases since the end of pandemic-related eviction measures in May 2021 is increasing calls for the Government to raise Local Housing Allowance rates to reflect the real cost of rent, as well as to quicken the pace of private rental reform.

Deep cuts to Discretionary Housing Payments have further constrained the ability of local authorities to prevent homelessness. While the Household Support Fund, which runs until March 2024 has the potential to help offset a proportion of these cuts, there is little evidence, one way or another, that it has done so. At the same time, only around two-thirds of all councils responding to our survey confirmed that they had a Local Welfare Assistance fund operating in their area, with the absence or reduced scale of such emergency funds further diminishing local authorities' ability to prevent both homelessness and destitution.

These deteriorating economic conditions and narrowing housing options for low income households are reflected in growing homelessness pressures as experienced by local authorities. While official statistics on statutory homelessness assessments indicated a fairly static picture overall (with total eligible applications up by just 2% in 2021/22), a large majority of survey respondents (85%) perceived that homelessness service 'footfall' had increased in the year preceding the survey; almost half (49%) reported a 'significant' increase. This perception of recently rising demand commanded greater unanimity in 2022 than in any year since 2015, when the question was first asked in a Homelessness Monitor England survey. These local authority perceptions of a deteriorating

situation are consistent with our core homelessness statistical analysis (see below).

Pressures on temporary accommodation emerged as a central concern of key informants this year, with significant increases in use of nightly paid temporary accommodation and Bed and Breakfast reported, alongside increased reliance on poorer quality provision. This chimes with the official temporary accommodation statistics, with placements having now more than doubled since bottoming out in 2010/11, reaching over 100,000 households in latest available figures, the highest level ever recorded. This means that the temporary accommodation figures match the 2003 level that was considered so unacceptable by the then Labour Government that it launched a major – and successful – initiative to reduce these numbers by at least 50% by 2010. This progress has therefore been completely reversed since the Coalition and then Conservative Governments have come to power, with temporary accommodation numbers returning to their 2003 historic high and likely to soar straight past them unless the policy climate on both housing and welfare radically changes. Within this, Bed and Breakfast hotel placements have risen almost five-fold since their 2009 nadir – and up by 22% in the latest 12-month period. As at March 2022, almost 26,000 households had been living in temporary accommodation for between two to five years, with a further almost 19,000 households resident in temporary accommodation for more than five years. These are truly shocking statistics, in terms of both their human cost and their impact on the public purse. The homelessness impacts of the Ukrainian and Afghan refugee crises, and wider asylum dispersal pressures, was said to be ratcheting up the already unsustainable

temporary accommodation pressures on local authorities, with no clear solutions for the longer-term accommodation of these groups.

Linked with growing pressures on both temporary and supported accommodation has been the emergence of a problematic ‘exempt’ accommodation sector, which lacks regulatory oversight and has been associated with disgracefully exploitative practices and extremely poor quality of both accommodation and support. Four in ten LA respondents to our survey reported the existence of problematic exempt accommodation in their locality, including recent increases in its use in some areas. While a current Private Members Bill which aims to provide for stronger regulation of this problematic sector – the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Bill – was broadly supported, there were some notes of caution around the need to avoid any unintended impacts of the proposed legislation on the supported accommodation sector more generally.

Our ‘core’ homelessness analysis, focussed on the most extreme and immediate forms of homelessness, indicates that the number of people affected has increased over the past few years, with this rising trend set to continue over both the short and longer-term if the policy landscape remains as it is now. But these rises are not inevitable. A comprehensive programme of recommended measures is shown to be capable of reducing core homelessness by 37% in 2031, and by 47% in 2041, compared with what it would have been without any change in policies. The most effective policies for reducing core homelessness in the short-term would be increased allocations for core homeless households, increasing the level of Local Housing Allowance to cover the typical level

of actual rents (and maintaining that level through indexation), and maximising prevention activity to the level of the higher performing local authorities. In the longer-term, the largest projected impacts on reducing core homelessness would, again, be linked to increasing the Local Housing Allowance and increased allocations for core homeless households, but also increasing housing supply, and large-scale expansion of Housing First accompanied by appropriate rehabilitation provision and a reduction of traditional hostel accommodation.

Looking ahead, the Homelessness Monitor series will continue to interrogate homelessness policies, trends and outcomes in England and the other two Great Britain jurisdictions until at least 2026. By next year’s Monitor we should have a fuller picture of the homelessness impacts of the cost of living crisis, and also be closer to knowing whether the Government is likely to come anywhere near to meeting its rough sleeping target in 2024.

Appendix 1 Key informant topic guide (2022)

About the research

- Explain nature and purpose of research: longitudinal study exploring the impact of economic and policy developments on homelessness across England; mixed methods including administrative and survey data analysis, LA survey and key informant interviews.
- This is an independent study conducted by I-SPHERE, Heriot-Watt University and funded by the charity Crisis. Participation is anonymous – you will not be identifiable from any research outputs.
- Any questions before we proceed?
- Switch on recording and confirm consent on the record

Introduction

- Their job title/role; how long they have been in that position/organisation, and specific involvement in homelessness

Trends in homelessness

- What have been the key trends in **levels** of homelessness in past year and why? Probe:
 - trends in subgroups: single versus families; statutory homelessness vs. rough sleeping etc.
- Have there been any significant changes in the **profile** of those facing homelessness in the last year? Probe:
 - nature/complexity of need; age; household type etc.
- What changes, if any, have we seen in the **triggers** for/**drivers** of homelessness? Probe:
 - PRS vs. relationship breakdown, etc.

Statutory/general homelessness responses

- Have LA responses to homelessness improved or weakened over the last year? If so, in what ways/why? Probe in relation to:
 - Ability to prevent and relieve homelessness – why?
 - Ability to provide appropriate temporary accommodation?
 - Ability to access settled rehousing for those owed the full rehousing duty. Probe re PRS, social housing, etc.
 - Probe use/quality of exempt/supported accommodation; views on the Supported Housing Improvement Programme
 - Probe on proposals to change to the Homelessness Prevention Grant Fund formula

- *[For LA interviewees]* Does your LA use and/or commission exempt accommodation as part of your homelessness response?
 - Probe in relation to challenges, type of provider (private or registered provider), regulation

Cost of living crisis/welfare benefits

- What impact, if any, has **the cost of living crisis** had on homelessness thus far? What impact do you see it having over the next 6-12 months?
- Which, if any, of the **special measures** taken by Government do you think have had/may have a material effect in mitigating any homelessness implications of the cost of living crisis? Probe:
 - one-off cost of living payment for those on means-tested benefits;
 - energy price cap;
 - energy bill discount for all households;
 - Council Tax rebate;
 - extension of Household Support Fund
- What else, if anything, might be needed to mitigate homelessness impacts of cost of living crisis? Are they aware of anything that's been suggested at either a local or central government level that would help?
- On **welfare benefits more generally**, what, if any, have the homelessness impacts been of:
 - the refreezing of LHA 30th percentile;
 - cuts in DHP allocations;
 - temporary uplift in UC standard allowance and its removal in October 2021;
 - reduction of UC taper rate and increase in UC work allowances;
 - developments on LWA.
- What, if any, will the homelessness impacts be if means-tested benefits are not increased in line with inflation?

Evictions protections

- What has been the impact on homelessness of the ending of the **evictions moratorium** in May 2021?
- What difference will the **abolition of Section 21 (no fault) evictions** make (if it happens)?
- What, if anything, do you think of the **winter eviction bans** in the PRS and social rented sector, and rent freeze, being introduced in Scotland?

Rough Sleeping, COVID and health developments

- What is your view on the new ***Rough Sleeping strategy***? What are the most significant elements of it? What impact, if any, do you think it will have? Do you think it will help to achieve the government's ***target to end rough sleeping by end of this Parliament***?
- How useful or otherwise have ***Government funding streams*** been in enabling effective responses to rough sleeping? How effective (or otherwise) have they been in bringing about sustained reductions in rough sleeping? Probe:
 - RSI, RSAP, NSAP, Prevent etc.
- What is your view on the ***funds linked to the new Rough Sleeping Strategy***? Probe:
 - Expanded RSI funding; Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme; Test & Learn; RS Drug & Alcohol Treatment Grant, etc
 - To what extent can these be considered 'new' funds or restating of previously announced/existing expenditure?
- What are your views on the Government's support of ***Housing First*** as a response to rough sleeping among those with more complex needs? Probe: sufficient/insufficient commitment and resourcing; too much/little emphasis on Housing First?
- To what extent have ***night shelters*** and other forms of shared room emergency accommodation now re-opened across England? Probe:
 - reasons for re-opening or not;
 - anticipated trends in shelter provision going forward;
 - views on the Night Shelter Transformation Fund.
- Any other ***legacies/impacts of the pandemic*** on responses to rough sleeping and homelessness more generally not covered here that are important? Probe:
 - new ways of working, legacy of improved working with health partners, etc.
- What impact, if any, do they see the new local ***Integrated Care Systems*** having on effective meeting of the health and social care needs of people sleeping rough/other people experiencing homelessness? What else, if anything, is needed to meet the health social and social care needs of people facing homelessness?

Immigration/refugees

- How have responses to those facing rough sleeping and with ***No Recourse to Public Funds*** developed over the last year? How effectively are this group being supported to avoid/escape homelessness?
- What are the homelessness implications of the ***Ukrainian/Afghan refugee crises*** – both for those fleeing war/Taliban and other groups in housing need/at risk of homelessness?

Appendix 2 Local authority survey (2022)

Emulating similar surveys implemented as an integral component of Homelessness Monitor England fieldwork since 2014, an online survey of England's 309 local authorities²⁸⁵ was initiated in October 2022 and closed in January 2023. As in earlier years a key aim was to delve beneath the routinely published statutory homelessness statistics to enhance understanding of how housing market trends and welfare reforms have impacted on (a) homelessness demand pressures, and (b) local authorities' ability to prevent and resolve homelessness.

While the starting point for this year's survey was the suite of questions posed in previous years, the survey's scope was also updated to reflect recent, ongoing and anticipated policy developments. This customisation was once again influenced by the recent experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. Survey design was also informed through consultation with national experts in the field, as well with CRISIS colleagues. A draft version of the questionnaire was kindly piloted by three case study authority contacts.

An e-mail invitation to participate in the survey was sent to LA homelessness contacts (or 'housing options managers'). Net of duplicates and seriously incomplete returns, responses were filed by 155 authorities or 50% of all authorities – see Table 1. In terms of its regional distribution the achieved sample is reasonably representative of England as a whole.

Table A2.1: Survey response rate

Broad region*	Responding local authorities	All local authorities	Response rate %
London	17	33	52
South	69	139	50
Midlands	23	65	35
North	45	72	63
England	154	309	50

* In this survey we have followed the convention that the South includes the East of England as well as the South East and South West of England.

Table A2.2: Overall number of households seeking homelessness assistance October 2021-September 2022 compared with preceding 12 months (% of responding local authorities)

	Significantly higher	Slightly higher	Fairly similar	Slightly lower	Significantly lower	Total	N=
1 London	53	24	0	18	6	100	17
2 South	42	43	13	1	0	100	69
3 Midlands	52	39	9	0	0	100	23
4 North	56	27	13	2	0	100	45
England	49	36	11	3	1	100	154

Table A2.3: Change in number of households seeking homelessness assistance in latest year, compared with preceding year, 2015-2022 (% of responding local authorities)

	Yes – significantly increased	Yes – slightly increased	No – remained reasonably steady	Yes – slightly reduced	Yes – significantly reduced	Total	N=
2015	24	43	25	8	0	100	152
2016	25	42	30	3	0	100	162
2017	23	44	23	10	1	100	186
2018	26	45	26	2	1	100	167
2020	26	26	24	19	5	100	148
2021	33	33	22	10	2	100	153
2022	49	36	11	3	1	100	154

Table A2.4: Perceived change in expressed demand from specific groups, October 2021-September 2022 compared with preceding 12 months (% of responding local authorities)

Group	Increase	Fairly steady	Decrease	Don't know	Total	N=
People with complex support needs	82	1	12	5	100	153
Families with children	73	4	22	1	100	153
People sleeping rough	60	7	32	1	100	152
Single people aged 25 and over	56	3	39	1	100	153
Households in work	52	3	32	13	100	153
Sofa surfers	48	3	41	8	100	153
People with disabilities	41	3	44	13	100	152
Young single people (aged 16-24)	34	7	57	3	100	152

Note: Excludes respondents indicating specified cohort 'not relevant in my area'

Table A2.5: Perceived change in expressed demand from specific groups, 2020, 2021 and 2022 local authority surveys - % of responding local authorities reporting increased demand in previous year

Group	2020	2021	2022	N=
Families with children	12	26	73	143-155
People sleeping rough	81	68	60	143-155
Single people aged 25 and over	75	70	56	143-155
Young single people (aged 16-24)	38	41	34	143-155

Source: Homelessness Monitor England annual local authority surveys

Table A2.6: Perceived change in numbers becoming homeless for specific reasons, October 2021-September 2022 compared with preceding 12 months (% of responding local authorities)

Homelessness trigger	Increase	Fairly steady	Decrease	Don't know	Total	N=
People evicted from private rented sector	88	10	1	1	100	154
Ukrainian refugees	83	14	0	3	100	147
Survivors of domestic abuse	66	28	4	3	100	154
People being asked to leave the family home	55	37	6	1	100	154
Prison leavers	44	50	5	1	100	154
People experiencing non-violent relationship breakdown	34	55	8	4	100	154
People evicted from social rented sector	32	55	10	3	100	154
Afghan refugees	29	54	6	12	100	126
Other migrants with NPRF or restricted eligibility for statutory support	28	55	3	14	100	139
Repossessed home owners	15	72	6	7	100	152

Note: Excludes respondents indicating specified cohort 'not relevant in my area'

Table A2.7: Do you anticipate any change in the numbers seeking assistance from your Housing Options/homelessness service over the next year, as compared with the past 12 months? (% of responding authorities)

Group	Will increase	Will remain fairly steady	Will decrease	Don't know	Total	N=
People evicted from private rented sector	93	3	2	2	100	154
Ukrainian refugees	81	11	1	6	100	150
Repossessed home owners	76	18	2	5	100	153
Survivors of domestic abuse	69	25	1	5	100	154
People asked to leave the family home	68	25	1	6	100	154
People sleeping rough	60	34	3	3	100	153
Sofa surfers	60	30	1	8	100	153
People experiencing non-violent relationship breakdown	53	38	1	9	100	154
Afghan refugees	50	37	3	10	100	143
People evicted from social rented sector	50	44	4	3	100	154
Other migrants with NPRF or other restricted eligibility for statutory support	39	43	1	17	100	145
Prison leavers	34	55	1	10	100	154

Note: Excludes respondents indicating specified cohort 'not relevant in my area'

Table A2.8: Perceived impact of cost of living and energy crisis on homelessness levels in local area over period October 2021-September 2022 (% of responding local authorities)

	Increased whomelessness significantly	Increased homelessness slightly	Little impact on homelessness	Don't know	Total	N=
1 London	35	53	12	0	100	17
2 South	17	67	13	3	100	69
3 Midlands	26	61	13	0	100	23
4 North	18	62	16	4	100	45
England	21	63	14	3	100	154

Table A2.9: To what extent, if any, do you think that the following Government measures have helped to (or will help to) mitigate the impact of the cost of living crisis on homelessness levels in your area? (% of responding local authorities)

Measure	Will substantially mitigate it	Will slightly mitigate it	Will make little difference	Don't know	Total	N=
The Energy Price Guarantee, which limits average household energy bills to £2,500	5	56	37	3	100	153
£400 energy bill discount for all households	1	61	37	1	100	153
£150 council tax rebate for homes in council tax band A-D	0	39	60	1	100	153
Cost of living payments for households in receipt of means-tested benefits (£650 for all benefits, and additional £150 for those receiving certain disability benefits)	3	65	30	2	100	153
Expanded funding for Housing Support Funding for 2022/23 (£842 million)	10	62	21	7	100	153
Reduction of UC taper rate and increase in UC work allowances	5	51	34	10	100	153

Table A2.10: How challenging (or otherwise) have the following developments been in the context of your authority's efforts to prevent or alleviate homelessness in your local area in the 12 months to 30 September 2022? (% of responding local authorities)

	Very challenging	Somewhat challenging	Slightly challenging	Not at all challenging	Don't know	Total	N=
The refreezing of the Local Housing Allowance at the 30th percentile	82	12	3	0	2	100	153
Reduction in DHP funding allocation since 2021/22	54	35	8	1	3	100	153
Removal of the temporary uplift in UC standard allowance in October 2021	48	31	13	0	8	100	153

Table A2.11: Does your local authority have a Local Welfare Assistance scheme (or similar) in place? (% of responding local authorities)

	Yes	No	Don't know	Total	N=
1 London	76	6	18	100	17
2 South	54	28	19	100	69
3 Midlands	74	22	4	100	23
4 North	77	14	9	100	44
England	66	20	14	100	153

Table A2.12: Areas with Local Welfare Assistance scheme in place - How important has the Local Welfare Assistance scheme been in mitigating the risk of homelessness in your area? (% of responding local authorities)

	Highly important	Moderately important	Low importance	Not important at all	Don't know	Total	N=
1 London	54	38	8	0	0	100	13
2 South	27	46	19	3	5	100	37
3 Midlands	35	18	41	0	6	100	17
4 North	44	53	3	0	0	100	34
England	38	43	16	1	3	100	101

Table A2.13: The Government published a new Rough Sleeping Strategy in September 2022. How helpful do you feel this will be in facilitating an effective response to rough sleeping in your area over the next year? (% of responding local authorities)

	Very helpful	Some-what helpful	Not that helpful	Not helpful at all	Don't know/ NA	Total	N=
1 London	18	59	6	6	12	100	17
2 South	9	68	19	0	4	100	69
3 Midlands	9	70	13	0	9	100	23
4 North	16	61	16	0	7	100	44
England	12	65	16	1	7	100	153

Table A2.14: To what extent, if any, has the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme and the Next Steps Accommodation Programme impacted on your ability to prevent and/or alleviate rough sleeping in your area? (% of responding local authorities)

	Greatly improved ability to prevent and alleviate rough sleeping	Moderately improved ability to prevent and alleviate rough sleeping	Slightly improved ability to prevent and alleviate rough sleeping	No impact on ability to prevent and alleviate rough sleeping	Don't know/ NA	Total	N=
1 London	18	59	12	0	12	100	17
2 South	31	34	15	10	10	100	68
3 Midlands	39	30	22	4	4	100	23
4 North	39	30	18	7	7	100	44
England	33	35	16	7	9	100	152

Table A2.15: Does any of the additional hotel and other emergency accommodation provided as a result of the 'Everyone In' initiative remain in use in your authority? (% of responding local authorities)

	Yes	No	Don't know/ NA	Total	N=
1 London	65	29	6	100	17
2 South	36	58	6	100	69
3 Midlands	30	70	0	100	23
4 North	41	55	5	100	44
England	40	56	5	100	153

Table A2.16: Authorities where additional accommodation provided under Everyone In remains in use - Is at least some of this being used to accommodate people with No Recourse to Public Funds or other restricted eligibility for statutory support? (% of responding authorities)

	Yes	No	Don't know	Total	N=
1 London	100	0	0	100	11
2 South	32	60	8	100	25
3 Midlands	29	71	0	100	7
4 North	61	33	6	100	18
England	52	43	5	100	61

Table A2.17: How has any partnership working between health and homelessness services prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic evolved? (% of responding local authorities)

	Enhanced partnership working prompted by the pandemic...			No improvement in partnership working due to the pandemic	Don't know	Total	N=
	...has continued	...has now decreased	...has now stopped				
1 London	94	6	0	0	0	100	17
2 South	66	25	0	6	3	100	68
3 Midlands	52	30	9	9	0	100	23
4 North	57	18	5	20	0	100	44
England	64	22	3	10	1	100	152

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Table A2.18: Has the Health and Social Care Partnership in your area impacted on your ability to prevent and/or alleviate homelessness? (% of responding local authorities)

	Impact on ability to prevent and alleviate homelessness			Don't know	Total	N=
	Improved	Unchanged	Reduced			
1 London	47	41	6	6	100	17
2 South	38	32	6	24	100	68
3 Midlands	43	30	0	26	100	23
4 North	43	43	2	11	100	44
England	41	36	4	18	100	152

Table A2.19: Has access to the following kinds of accommodation for households experiencing or at risk of homelessness become easier or more difficult in your area over the past year (% of responding local authorities)

	Easier	More difficult	No difference	Total	N=
Social rented tenancies	8	74	18	100	130
Private rented tenancies	2	97	1	100	138
Supported accommodation	13	58	28	100	120

Note: Excludes respondents opting for 'don't know' or 'there has been variation over the year'.

Table A2.20: Does your authority have non-commissioned supported exempt provision targeted at people at risk of homelessness? (% of responding local authorities)

	Yes	No	Don't know	Total	N=
1 London	35	41	24	100	17
2 South	28	51	21	100	68
3 Midlands	43	30	26	100	23
4 North	56	30	14	100	43
England	39	41	20	100	151

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