Getting Behind the Statistics
Update for 2016-17

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About the Authors

Author: Aoife Deery, Policy Officer, Shelter Scotland

CONTENTS

SUMMARY

- People who become homeless in Scotland have some of the strongest rights in the world. This report aims to consider the operation of these legislative rights through available statistics and identify what these may mean for policymaking.

- Scottish Government annual statistics show that homeless applications in Scotland continue to decrease, but at a significantly slower pace than previous years. This suggests that while Housing Options, the preventative approach to homelessness adopted by local authorities, has had an impact in reducing homelessness during the early years of its implementation, it is unlikely to lead to further large reductions beyond those already seen. Ministers should now look to address the underlying drivers of homelessness.

- Young people and single men continue to be over-represented in homelessness statistics, which poses a challenge considering recent welfare policy changes limiting the amount of help with housing costs these groups can access.

- The private rented sector continues to be a significant source of homelessness in Scotland, with nearly 20% of homeless applicants living in the private rented sector immediately before applying as homeless, compared to 15% in 2011-12.

- There is some evidence that the number of homeless households experiencing multiple and complex needs has grown in recent years, which may make it more difficult for local authorities to find sustainable solutions to meet their needs.

- Temporary accommodation usage has risen since 2014, and people are spending longer in it before moving to settled accommodation[1]. This can be linked to the lack of supply of permanent affordable homes.

- Housing Options "approaches" and "activities" are decreasing compared to previous years. In 2016-17, there were around 50,120 "approaches" made and 50,125 "activities" undertaken. Both approach and activity numbers have dropped by 11% compared to the previous year.

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[1] Shelter Scotland (2017); The use of temporary accommodation in Scotland - 2016

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This report is intended to give the reader a better understanding of Scottish homelessness and Housing Options statistics, and is designed to follow on from previous Shelter Scotland statistical analysis reports[2][3]. It draws on homelessness and Housing Options statistics produced by the Scottish Government for 2016-17[4], based on HL1 and Prevent1 returns[5] from Scottish local authorities for this period, as well as some information from special information requests. This report also considers what the available statistics can tell us about the challenges facing Housing Options and homelessness policy now and in the future.

Scotland is often praised as having world leading homelessness legislation and homeless applications are frequently cited as being in decline, suggesting that homelessness and housing problems are being adequately dealt with through the existing homelessness legislation and the Housing Options approach. Housing Options was introduced in 2010 in Scotland and encourages local authorities to take a holistic view of a person's housing situation and assess all of the options available to resolve the problem. In practice, this means that when a person goes to their council as potentially homeless, generally the first stage of the process is a Housing Options interview.

This report provides context for Shelter Scotland's "Far From Fixed" campaign[6], in which we call for a national homelessness strategy, underpinned by the following three themes:

- Prevention
- Multiple and complex needs
- Temporary accommodation

Homelessness statistics are for the most part an administrative record of the operation of the homelessness legislation, recording homelessness applications. Despite the wealth of information published, they do not provide a full picture of housing need in Scotland, but just reflect the people who come forward for help. The problem of hidden homelessness, such as sofa surfing, is not recorded in official figures, although may be picked up in other assessments of housing need

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[2] Shelter Scotland (2015); Homelessness in Scotland 2014: Getting behind the statistics
[3] Shelter Scotland (2015); Statistical Analysis Report: Homelessness and prevention through Housing Options in 2015 - what does the data show?
[4] Homelessness statistic are published bi-annually. This report draws on the annual figures for 2016-17 with allows comparison with previous reports.
[5] The 'HL1 return' is the dataset local authorities have to return to Scottish Government which records all households who have applied as homeless to their local authority in any given year. The 'Prevent1 return' is the dataset which records Housing Options approaches from households that local authorities submit to the Scottish Government for inclusion in the national statistical analysis.
[6] Shelter Scotland (2016); Homelessness: Far From Fixed – Why Scotland needs a National Homelessness Strategy

and demand. Anecdotal information from winter night shelters tells us that there are many rough sleepers who choose not to seek assistance from their local authority and make a homelessness applicatuon, for reasons including not wishing to be placed in a certain temporary accommodation unit or a negative previous experience. This is obviously not reflected in official statistics, which can only report on those who did make an application. It is also important to be aware of the impact of varying local practice on statistics and how they are recorded.

Lastly, this report will consider homelessness and housing options trends in tandem with welfare reform and the financial pressures facing many households as a result of reduced income from benefits, despite the Scottish Government's efforts to mitigate the worst effects.

CHAPTER 2: HOMELESSNESS STATISTICS

How many people are homeless in Scotland?

34,100 people made a homeless application in Scotland in 2016-17[7]. This is a decrease of 826 compared to the year before and continues the downward trend that has been seen since 2008, with the steepest decreases between 2010-11 and 2013-14, as shown in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1: Homeless Applications in Scotland 2002/03 - 2016/17
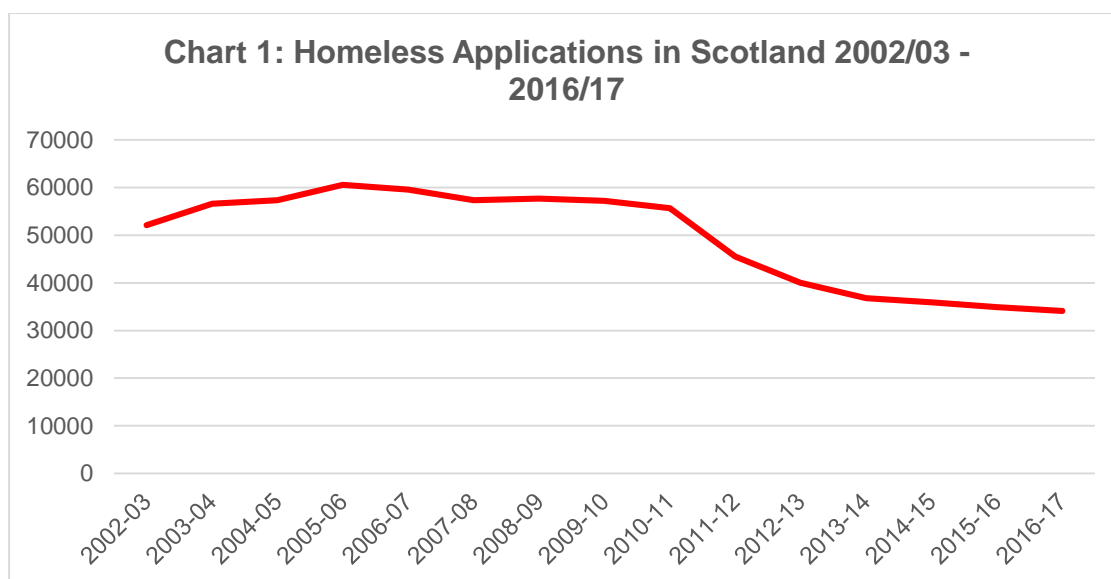
When the Housing Options approach was introduced in 2010, there was a sharp decline in the number of people going on to make a homeless application and receiving a Housing Options interview instead. This trend is now slowing, leading the Scottish Government to conclude that, in its current form, the impact of housing options work is unlikely to lead to further large reductions in applications beyond those already seen[8].

This confirms the conclusions we made in the 2015 version of this report, that the "reduction in the number of homeless applications made since 2009-10 is almost wholly due to the impact of housing options, rather than any change in the underlying causes of homelessness".[9] It is therefore imperative that these drivers of homelessness, such as housing supply, affordability and child poverty[10] especially, are addressed as a matter of priority.

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[7] Scottish Government (2017); Homelessness in Scotland 2016-17
[8] Scottish Government (2017); Homelessness in Scotland 2016-17 (commentary)
[9] Shelter Scotland (2015); Statistical Analysis Report: Homelessness and prevention through Housing Options in 2015 - what does the data show?
[10] Bramley, G and Fitzpatrick, S. (2017); Homelessness in the UK: who is most at risk?

We are also concerned that there are many people who do not make a homeless application for various reasons, including;

1) They have attempted to apply as homeless before and received a decision which they did not agree with;

2) They have attempted to apply as homeless before and did not want to stay in or could not afford to live in the temporary accommodation provided by the local authority;

3) They were not aware of their housing rights and therefore did not know that they had the right to submit a homeless application or were not able to enforce their right.

Of the 34,100 applications, 28,247 (or 82%) were assessed as being either homeless or threatened with homelessness. The rate of assessed homelessness has risen steadily since 2003 and has remained stable since 2014-15. Shelter Scotland believes that the underlying causes of homelessness, include the rising unaffordability of housing, the lack of supply and poverty, require significant and sustained policy efforts to change.

Who becomes homeless?

Single person households
Over 66% of homeless applications were made by single people in 2016-17, and just under 70% of this single person group was made up of single men. This trend suggests that the removal of priority need[11] in Scotland has been positive for single men in terms of being able to access homeless services and accommodation which prior to 2012 was very difficult. However, the number of applications does not give any insight into their housing outcomes.

We know from Shelter Scotland national helpline advisors that single men often have negative experiences in temporary accommodation. Single men are not given the same protections from unsuitable accommodation as households with children and pregnant women, and so they are often allocated poor quality B&Bs and hostels. We are concerned about the impact of this on the likelihood of them being able to exit homelessness quickly and permanently.

Young people
Young people continue to be overrepresented in homeless application figures, with 15 out of every 1000 under 25s in Scotland making a homeless application in 2016-17, compared to 9.4/1000 of all people aged 25-59[12]. Further, the rate of

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[11] The removal of priority need was enacted through the Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003, but only came into force through the Homelessness (Abolition of Priority Need Test) (Scotland) Order 2012. The removal of priority need meant that local authorities had a duty to find temporary accommodation and settled accommodation for all households found to be unintentionally homeless, regardless of vulnerabilities.
12 Shelter ad-hoc analysis – young people were defined as aged 16-24 at time of application, and whole adult population aged 16-59. These parameters were chosen due to lower occurrence of homelessness after the age of 60 and use of sheltered housing for over 60s. Calculated using homeless applications for this age range as a

homelessness among 16-24 year olds was over 20 per 1000 of the population in two local authority areas[13].

This statistic is particularly worrying as under new regulations effective from 1st April 2017, young people aged 18-21 no longer have automatic help with housing costs under Universal Credit, unless they meet certain exemptions[14]. The exemptions do include 18-21 year olds who are homeless and are in temporary accommodation, however they will still only be able to access the shared room rate of Local Housing Allowance, which will fall short of the cost of temporary accommodation. Further, once they cease being in temporary accommodation, help with housing costs will stop. We anticipate that this will lead to a significant number of young people becoming "stuck" in temporary accommodation, unable to take up offers of permanent housing due to its cost.

Rough sleepers

In 2016-17, there was a significant increase in the number of people who slept rough either the night before or at least once in the 3 months prior to presenting as homeless compared to the previous year. 2,621 people slept rough at least once in the 3 months before making their application (an increase of 8%) and 1,500 slept rough the night before (an increase of 10%).

It must be noted that while these statistics show an increase in rough sleeping, they are still likely to underestimate true figures as these numbers are only rough sleepers who went on to present as homeless to their local authority. We know anecdotally that many rough sleepers choose to not approach their local authority for reasons including having had previous negative experiences, being previously deemed intentionally homeless, and preferring not to access temporary accommodation. Rough sleepers may choose to use night shelters, such as those provided by Glasgow City Mission and Bethany Christian Trust during the winter months, and these organisations therefore hold a lot of information that can supplement and improve government statistics.

To illustrate this point, research carried out by the Glasgow Homelessness Network[15] estimated that there were over 800 people sleeping rough in the Glasgow in 2013-14 while official HL1 statistics for same year stated that there were between 445 and 539 rough-sleepers. This shows the discrepancy between "official" statistics and experiences of those organisations working directly with rough sleepers.

Additionally, recent Scottish Welfare Fund statistics[16] showed that there were 430 applications made for a crisis grant for the reason of "nowhere to stay and may

percentage of the same age range's population according to the National Records of Scotland Mid-Year Estimates 2016.

[13] Scottish Government (2017); Youth Homelessness 2016-17

[14] Department for Work and Pensions (2017); Housing costs for 18 to 21 year olds

[15] Glasgow Homelessness Network & The Oak Foundation (2014); Homelessness and Complex Needs in Glasgow

[16] Scottish Government (2017); Scottish Welfare Fund Statistics: Annual Update 2016-17

resort to resort to rough sleeping", an increase of 46% on the previous year. This gives an insight into the growing number of people who resort to rough sleeping.

People with multiple and complex needs

Multiple and complex needs homelessness (also often known as multiple exclusion homelessness or MCN) is an area which has recently gained a lot of attention and interest from across the homelessness sector. MCN refers to people who have experience of a number of adverse issues or circumstances, such as mental ill-health, alcohol or drug dependencies and experience of the criminal justice system, among others. Generally speaking, homelessness for this group is more difficult to resolve sustainably, given the other factors affecting a person's life and the effect of these factors on the person's ability to independently manage a tenancy.

The Scottish Government Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group (HPSG) included this type of homelessness in its work-plan in 2015-16. Several academic reports and studies[17][18] point to an increasing demand on homeless services by people who have a combination of substance misuse issues, mental health needs and, often, experience of the criminal justice system. Interest in multiple and complex needs is not limited to the homeless sector. The health sector in Scotland is carrying out valuable work linking different datasets from health and homelessness to better understand the connections.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 gave rise to the introduction of a Housing Support duty in 2013, based on the principle that "access to accommodation alone will not be sufficient to meet the needs of some of those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness."[19] This duty means that local authorities must assess whether a homeless household had any support needs *and* provide the appropriate support. As a result, it may be that households with support needs and subsequently multiple and complex needs may not have actually significantly increased in recent years but rather the recording and reporting of these needs may simply have improved.

For the purposes of this report, we understand those with a combination of two or more of the following characteristics combined with homelessness to fall into the multiple and complex needs group, which aligns with the approach taken by the Glasgow Homelessness Network:

- Mental health issues
- Alcohol/drug dependencies
- Rough sleeping

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[17] Glasgow Homelessness Network & The Oak Foundation (2014); Homelessness and Complex Needs in Glasgow
[18] Crisis (2015); The Homelessness Monitor: Scotland 2015
[19] Scottish Government (2013); Guidance for Local Authorities - Housing Support Duty to Those Found to be Homeless or Threatened with Homelessness

- Experience of criminal offending

In order to understand the combinations of multiple and complex needs experienced by homeless households, we requested additional data from the Scottish Government statistics team[20], and asked them to analyse how many households' homeless applications indicated that they had experienced any combination of alcohol/drugs misuse, criminal offending, mental health issues and rough sleeping in both 2015-16 and 2016-17. A number of questions in the HL1 dataset relate to the above indicators, and the Scottish Government statistics team picked two HL1 question bundles to answer the query with the results (see Appendix 1). These bundles suggest that there were between 3800 and 4500 households in Scotland with any combination of the above multiple and complex needs in 2015-16, and between 4300 and 4800 such households in 2016-17. Both approaches have limitations which must be taken into account, and this is explained in more detail in Appendix 2.

The most common multiple and complex needs combination among homeless applicants is alcohol/drug misuse and mental health issues. The results showed that the biggest increases were in the group who had experienced criminal offending and mental health issues, followed by the group who had experienced criminal offending and rough sleeping. This shows that there is still significant work to be done in understanding the barriers people with these needs face in terms of their homelessness experience and shaping services to overcome them. The prevalence of criminal offending suggests that much more work needs to be done in partnership with the criminal justice system in particular.

In future, the data could be analysed further to understand more about household characteristics, such as age and gender, and importantly, the housing outcomes for people experiencing multiple and complex needs.

Why do people become homeless?

Chart 2 illustrates the most common reasons for people applying to their local authority as homeless.

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[20] Scottish Government (2017); Ad-hoc multiple and complex needs statistics request

Chart 2 - Reasons for applying as homeless

Reason	Percentage
Harassment	~2%
Left hospital, prison or care	~6%
Action by landlord or lender	~11%
Dispute within household (violent or abusive)	~12%
Dispute within household / relationship breakdown (non-violent)	~18%
Asked to leave accommodation	~25%
Other	~26%
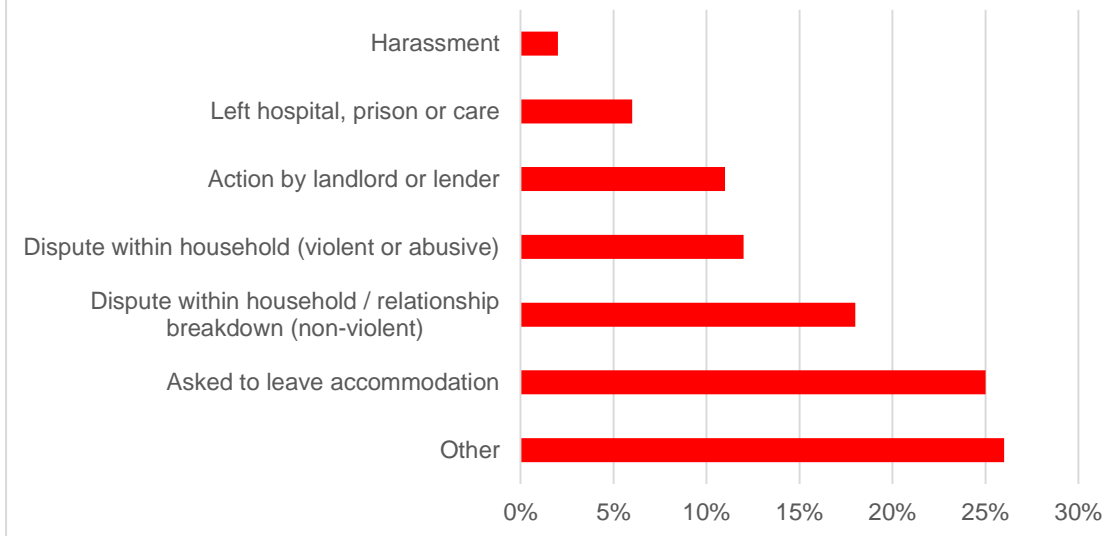
Some of the reasons are fairly opaque and difficult to understand in depth. For example, in "asked to leave" cases, it is unclear whether the person had left the home of family, friends or a partner. More research is needed to identify whether there is a policy response which might be able to address this.

Similarly, 25% of applicants stated that the reason for their homelessness is "other" and it is difficult to understand the circumstances which would be categorised as this. This leads us to conclude that it might be helpful for an exercise to be carried out with local authorities to better understand what they understand as "other" and for the case to be made to the Scottish Government for HL1 reason options to be expanded to allow for a better understanding.

## Where do people live before becoming homeless?

As expected from the previous section on reasons for making a homeless application, the majority (42%) of people who made a homeless application lived with their friends, family or partner prior to becoming homeless. This may suggest that, when it is no longer possible for the person to remain in the original household, perhaps due to a relationship breakdown, they struggle to secure alternative, suitable accommodation without making a homeless application. This may be because there are barriers such as cost.

Nearly 20% of people applying as homeless previously lived in the private rented sector. This suggests that the private rented sector is not a secure housing option for people. The introduction of the new private tenancies bill may help to improve this as it will remove the option for landlords to evict on "no fault" grounds and prevent excessive rent rises among other new protections.

Preventing homelessness

Prevention is now a key aspect of homelessness policy in Scotland. As mentioned above, Housing Options is the prevention approach prescribed by the Scottish Government which aims to assess a person's circumstances and attempts to prevent homelessness by exploring all options available to them. Local authorities create records called "Prevent1" for Housing Options cases[21], and return these to the Scottish Government on a quarterly basis for analysis.

According to Prevent1 statistics for 2016-17, 45,061 unique households made 50,120 Housing Options approaches to their local authority and 103,870 Housing Options activities were carried out. These activities include general housing advice, help to remain in the current accommodation, mediation and also being informed of rights under homeless legislation. Both approaches and activities have decreased compared to the previous year.

Chart 3: Housing Options in Scotland 2016-17
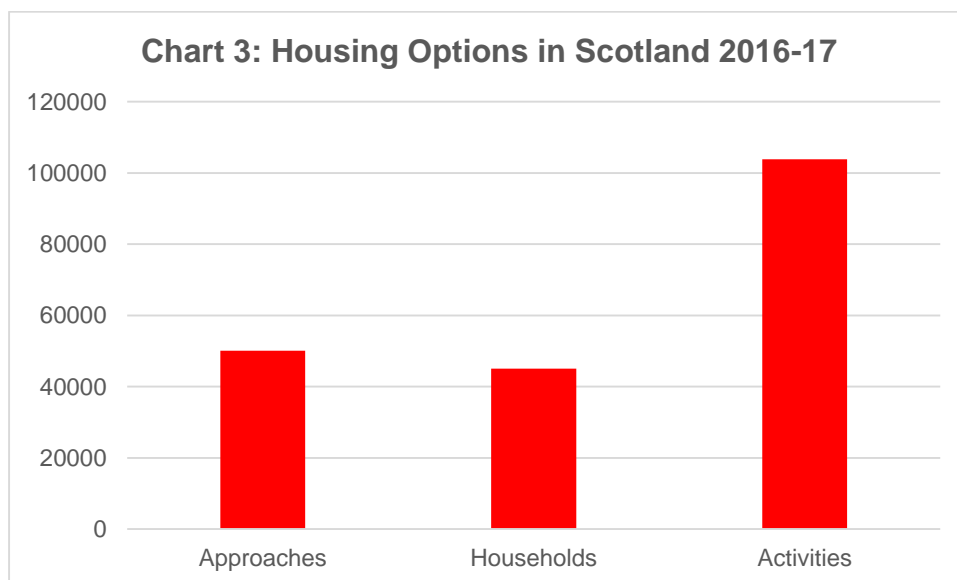
For those making only a Housing Options approach the main recorded housing outcome was 'returned to/ remained in previous/ current accommodation'. This may reflect the importance of mediation for household disputes, or the provision of support to tenancies. However, it is impossible to know from the statistics whether or not this is a positive outcome for households or not, and whether this accommodation meets their needs.

In terms of Housing Options outcomes, 22,434 households went on to make a homeless application, which is a decrease of 13% compared to the previous year, and 11,033 remained in their current accommodation, which is consistent with 2015-16.

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[21] Prevent1 records contain details of each Housing Options case including the reason for approach, the activity undertaken by the local authority to prevent homelessness and the outcome.

In 2016-17, 2,353 Housing Options approaches resulted in a social let (Local authority or RSL), while there were 16,485 LA/RSL tenancy outcomes for those who were assessed as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The most common activities were:

- General Housing advice/Tenancy rights advice - 40,120
- Client informed of rights under homelessness legislation - 27,518
- 8,883 of these cases lost contact with the local authority, which is a 16% increase on the previous year.

In order to understand the impact of current prevention work, we must consider the interplay and relationship between Housing Options and homelessness statistics. The Prevent1 statistics record approaches as either for "homeless-type" reasons or for "prevention-type" reasons. Approaches for homeless-type reasons have consistently been higher than for prevention-type reasons, with approaches being split into 65% and 35% respectively.

It is also important to improve our understanding of the outcomes for households as they move through the process, especially those who approach their local authority for a "homeless-type" reason. The Prevent1 statistics are somewhat limited in terms of what they can tell us about pathways through the homelessness and housing options systems, however it does record outcomes although not linked to specific groups or individuals.

We requested an ad-hoc analysis from the Scottish Government team[22] looking at the outcomes for unique households who approached their local authority for housing assistance, broken down by their "pathway" i.e. Housing Options only, homeless application only or both Housing Options and a homeless application. These cases are those which began in 2014 onwards and had an outcome in either 2015-16 or 2016-17 and were subsequently closed. The results of these are below in graph form and the relevant tables can be found in Appendix 3.

Chart 4a: Outcomes in 2015-16 by pathway

Legend: ■ Housing options only ■ Housing options and homeless application ■ Homeless application only

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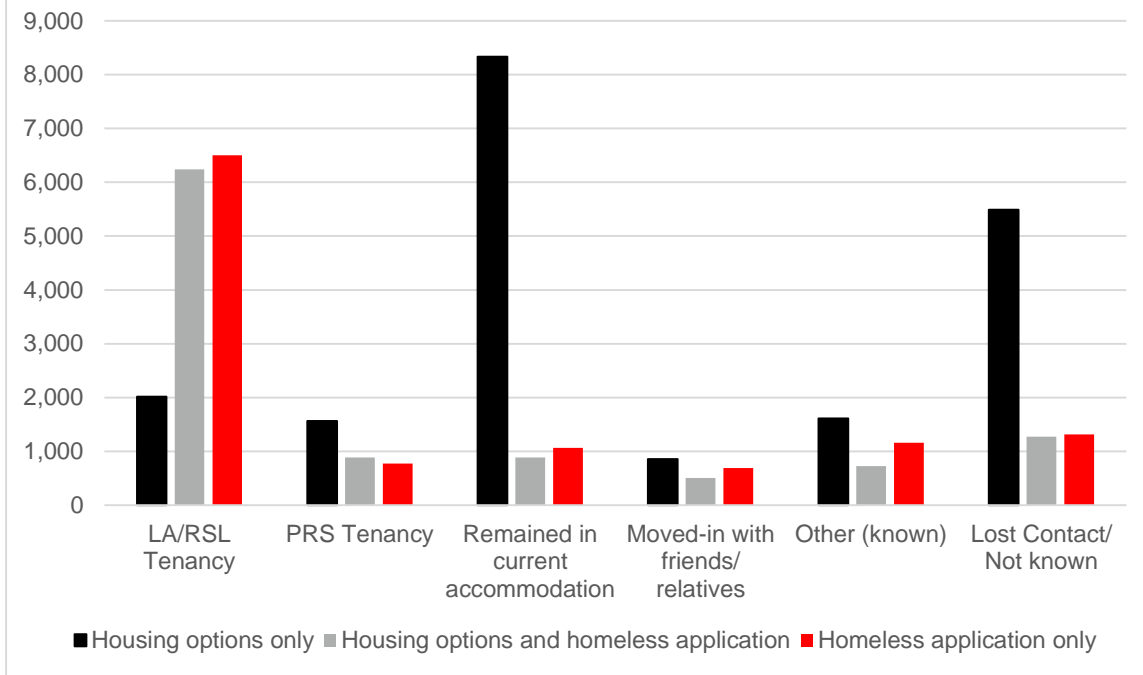
Chart 4b: Outcomes in 2016-17 by pathway

Legend: ■ Housing options only ■ Housing options and homeless application ■ Homeless application only
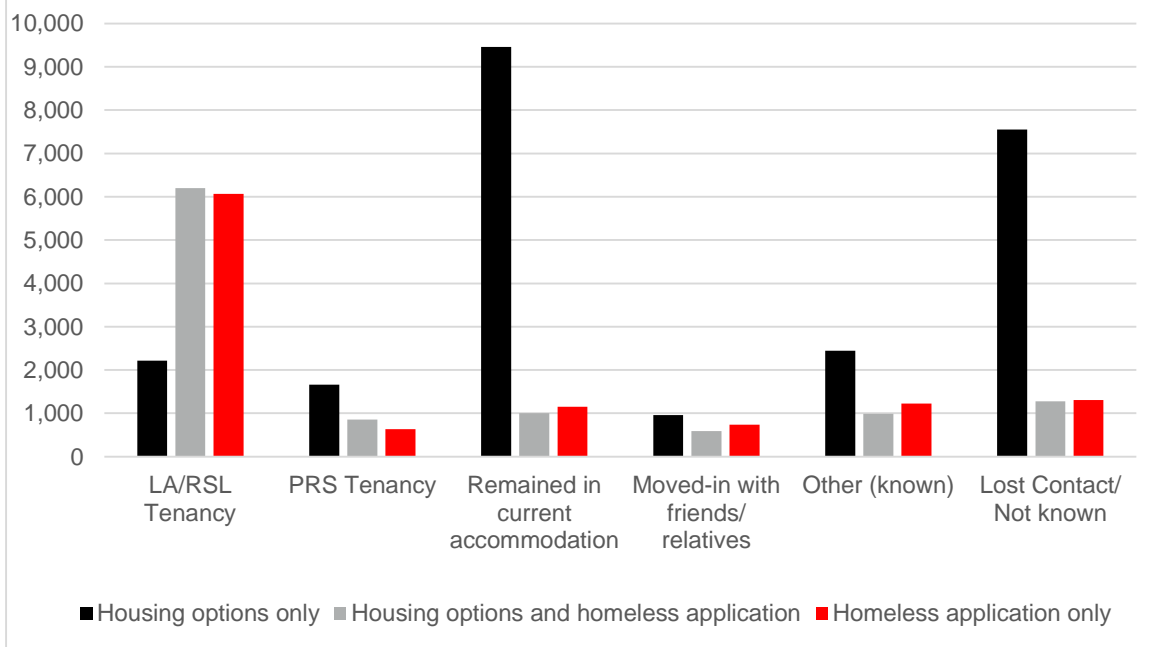
The above graphs show some key trends:

- Just under a quarter (24%) of households used both Housing Options and homelessness services. It is important to note that some local authorities operate a system whereby a homeless application may be made on the same day or shortly after a Housing Options approach. Conversely, some LAs record a HL1 primarily and do not complete a Prevent1 record if it is obvious that the household will require to make a homeless application.
- Households who were given Housing Options only were most likely to have the outcomes of remaining in their current accommodation or lost contact.
- The most likely outcome for a household whose pathway was homeless application only was an LA/RSL tenancy.
- Those households who experienced both Housing Options and a homeless application were most likely to have the result of an LA/RSL tenancy, with a fairly even spread among the remaining outcome options.

It may be useful to break this down further into a local authority level analysis in future to understand the use of Housing Options in different areas.

Lost contacts

In 2016-17, there were 8,883 Housing Options cases which had the outcome recorded as "lost contact/not known". This represents 18% of all approaches in Scotland in 2016-17 and continues the trend of increasing numbers of lost contacts since Prevent1 statistics began being published in 2014-15.

Additionally, there were 4,676 homeless applications where the outcome was unknown or contact was lost after the homeless assessment. This is equivalent to 17% of all post-assessment applications in 2016-17 and is therefore similar to the percentage of Housing Options lost contacts. Conversely to Housing Options lost contacts, this number has been falling year on year since 2004-05, suggesting among other things that methods of recording outcomes have improved and that it is perhaps becoming easier for local authorities to stay in touch with people if they use a variety of methods, such as emails and text messages as opposed to traditional letters and phone calls.

There are a variety of reasons why people may lose contact with their local authority in relation to Housing Options or homelessness, such as;

- Some households may have resolved their homelessness, either by themselves or through the advice given by the local authority and did not tell the homeless service that this had happened;
- Some may have become discouraged at the time it had taken to provide an offer of settled accommodation;
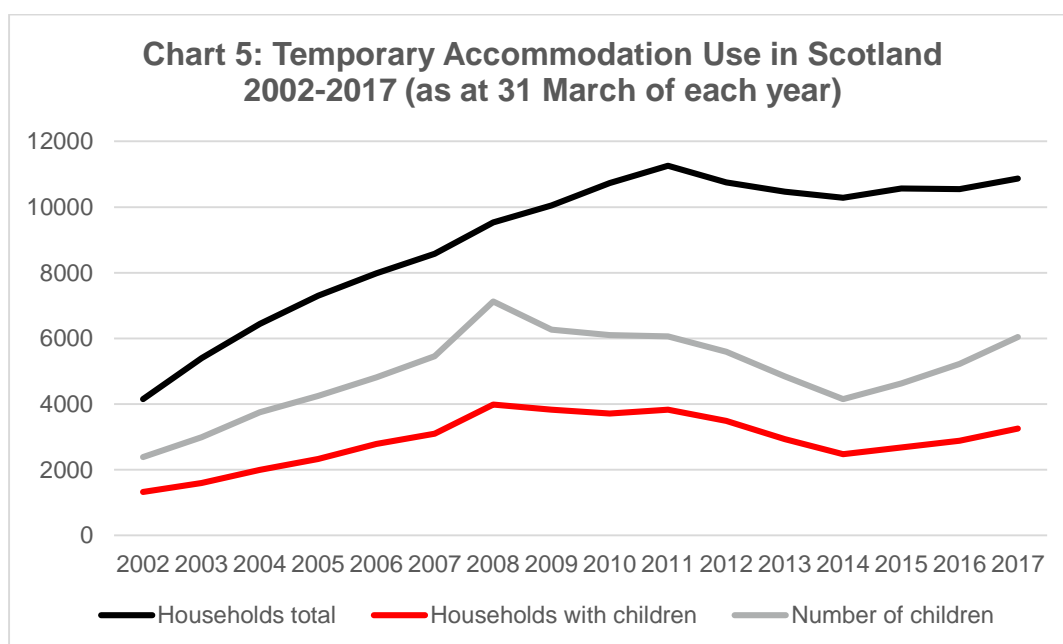
- Some, for example with chaotic lifestyles, may have found it difficult to cope with the homelessness system and decided to return to insecure accommodation or sofa surfing.

While there will always be some lost contacts, information about households' outcomes is always valuable and allows us to better understand how homeless legislation is operating.

Temporary accommodation

There continues to be a rise in demand for temporary accommodation, especially from households with children. As at 31 March 2017, there were 10,873 households in total and 3,250 households with children in temporary accommodation across Scotland. This represents an increase of 13% in the number of households with children compared to the same time in 2016.

Further, the number of children in temporary accommodation totalled 6,041 on the same date. This number is at its highest since 2011 and is an increase of 818 compared to the same time the previous year.

Chart 5: Temporary Accommodation Use in Scotland 2002-2017 (as at 31 March of each year)

Households total ——— Households with children ——— Number of children

Shelter Scotland has long been campaigning to improve the standards of temporary accommodation. In 2011, Shelter Scotland jointly produced guidance on standards with CIH Scotland, setting out what good temporary accommodation should seek to achieve and provide for its users.[23] While the majority of households use normal local authority owned flats for temporary accommodation and these are subject to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, hostels and B&Bs are also used to meet demand and there are no standards

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[23] Shelter Scotland & CIH Scotland (2011); Temporary Accommodation Guidance

required of them. Chart 6 demonstrates the level of use of the main types of temporary accommodation.

We know from research into the use of temporary accommodation[24] that households are, on average, spending longer periods of time in temporary accommodation. Single households tend to spend shorter periods of time in temporary accommodation but more frequently whereas households with children tend to spend longer periods of time there. We know from research[25] that this can negatively impact children's educational attainment, among other factors.

There are significant changes planned to the way temporary accommodation will be funded in future. At the time of writing, plans to impose the LHA on temporary accommodation had been scrapped by the UK Government, however alternative funding plans had not yet been announced.

Chart 6: Households in temporary accommodation by type of accommodation (as of 31 March 2016 and 2017)

	Social sector accomm	Hostel	B&B	Other
2015-16	6679	1728	1052	1084
2016-17	6636	1739	1113	1385
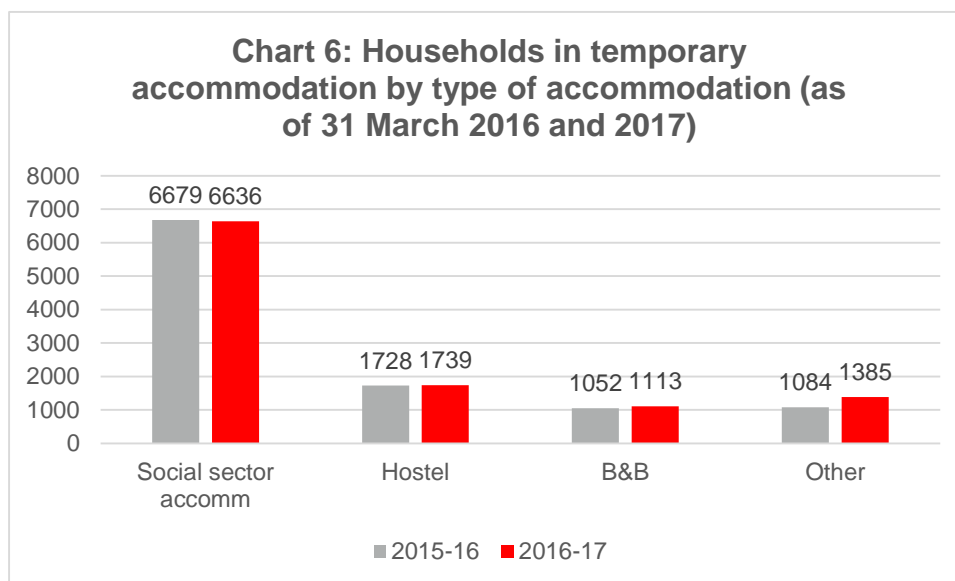
[24] Shelter Scotland (2017): The use of temporary accommodation in Scotland - 2016
[25] Shelter England (2006): Chance of a Lifetime: The impact of bad housing on children's lives

CHAPTER 3: POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

So far, this report has explored some of the key areas relating to homelessness in Scotland and what the relevant statistics can tell us. This section will now think about what the policy implications are for these areas, bearing in mind the context of continuing welfare reform.

In terms of Scottish Government policy, we welcome the renewed interest in tackling homelessness on a national scale and the announcement of the establishment of a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group, a £50 million "Ending Homelessness Together" fund over five years and new funding for alcohol and drugs services. We also welcome the Scottish Government's efforts to mitigate against the bedroom tax and the benefit cap, however we continue to be concerned about the financial hardship being experienced by tenants and to a lesser extent social landlords, as a result of welfare reform and the risk this poses to undermining homelessness policy in Scotland.

People affected by homelessness

This report has acknowledged that single people and young people made up significant proportions of the homeless applications made in 2016-17. The overrepresentation of these groups in homelessness statistics may become particularly problematic in terms of changes to help with housing costs.

CIH Scotland has explored this issue specifically in relation to young people[26], and showed that younger tenants who are only able to access the Shared Accommodation Rate of LHA will face a significant rent shortfall. A number of options to address this are being considered by the Scottish Government in light of the research, including the option of promoting sharing in the social sector and further financial mitigation. Regardless of the policy or practice responses which are eventually pursued, significant public money will be required.

The apparent growth in households with multiple and complex needs cannot be addressed by homelessness services alone. It requires a joined-up approach by local authorities, health services, the voluntary sector and other statutory bodies to embed evidence based approaches. Housing-led approaches such as Housing First[27] have been identified as the foremost solution for this group, however there are barriers to this approach such as the current system not allowing for direct entry into settled accommodation, nor the aspect of choice which is central to its success. Shelter Scotland support the exploring of options such as these which are designed to help people with multiple and complex needs, but emphasise that

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[26] CIH Scotland, Scottish Government, Indigo House (2017); The introduction of the LHA cap to the social rented sector: impact on young people in Scotland: research report
[27] Homeless Link (2016); Housing First in England – The Principles

this will require a whole systems change to the delivery and funding of homelessness services, including the commitment to significant resources.

Prevention and Housing Options

The Housing Options approach is still in its relative early stages in Scotland and different local authorities approach and record its operation to different degrees. As such, it is difficult to be sure of the full impact that Housing Options is having based on an analysis of the data alone.

Housing Options is not appropriate for some of the most acute forms of homelessness and this is reflected by the apparent decision by some local authorities to not complete a Prevent1 record for those obviously requiring homelessness assistance. However, a more consistent approach across local authority areas would be helpful for improved understanding and we look forward to seeing the impact of the new Housing Options toolkit on this.

We support the provision of Housing Options where it is able to keep people in their own homes, however this may not be sustainable if the household is using the private rented sector. Private renting is often problematic, for reasons including affordability and weaker tenancy rights compared to those who are social renters. In Shelter Scotland's view, in order for a private tenancy to be suitable for a local authority to discharge its homeless duty, the tenancy must meet strict criteria[28], and a private rented tenancy should be treated as an option for the household rather than a requirement by the local authority. However, in some cases private renting can work well for some households leaving a period of homelessness, and the new Private Residential Tenancy which came into force at the end of 2017 should strengthen and protect the rights of private renters in Scotland, especially with the removal of no-fault evictions[29]. These measures have the potential to help to create a sector which is more reliable and appropriate for a greater number of households to use.

Temporary accommodation challenges

The apparent end of significant annual reductions in the number of homeless applications poses a particular problem for temporary accommodation provision. As mentioned previously, demand for temporary accommodation continues to grow, and we know anecdotally that more people with complex needs are requiring temporary accommodation. We also know from previous research[30] that there are huge variances in temporary accommodation charges between local authorities. Given imminent changes to funding for this type of

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[28] Shelter Scotland (2008); Consultation response Regulations made under Section 32A of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987
[29] Scottish Housing News (17 June 2016); Major changes to the private rented sector
[30] Anna Evans (2016); Funding Homelessness Services in Scotland

accommodation[31][32] and anticipated financial losses for temporary accommodation providers, substantial rethinking and work around the current model of temporary accommodation will be required.

In terms of the quality of temporary accommodation, we reiterate the need for temporary accommodation to be subject to the same standards as permanent mainstream accommodation, given the increased numbers of households relying on it for increased periods of time. We also believe that improved temporary accommodation will correlate with decreased rough sleeping, as temporary accommodation which is of better standards and is better-managed will lose the negative connotations associated with it by service users.

As it stands, homelessness legislation in Scotland is likely to be undermined by wider challenges. As explored throughout this report, this includes continued welfare reform, affordability issues and services which are underfunded to the point of being unresponsive to the changing needs of the people who use it. In order to avoid this, significant policy and practice efforts must be made to tackle these problems and ensure that nobody falls through the safety net.

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[31] Department for Work and Pensions (2017): Housing Benefit Circular HB S5/2017
[32] Shelter England (2017): Temporary accommodation: Here's what we should do to prevent homelessness

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Approach 1:

HL1 Questions used:		
(16b.3) Reason for failing to maintain accommodation: Mental Health Reasons		
(16b.3) Reason for failing to maintain accommodation: Drug/Alcohol dependency		
(16b.3) Reason for failing to maintain accommodation: Criminal/ Anti-social behaviour		
(12) Has any member of the applicant household slept rough during the 3 months preceeding their application		
		Year of application
Type of multiple and complex needs	2015/16	2016/17
Alcohol/drugs misuse and experience of criminal offending	585	605
Alcohol/drugs misuse and Mental Health issues	1,115	1,270
Alcohol/drugs misuse and Rough sleeping	430	480
Experience of Criminal offending and Mental Health issues	465	590
Experience of Criminal offending and Rough sleeping	195	225
Mental Health issues and Rough sleeping	405	450
Alcohol/drugs misuse, Experience of Criminal offending and Mental Health issues	250	285
Alcohol/drugs misuse, Experience of Criminal offending and Rough sleeping	85	105
Alcohol/drugs misuse, Mental Health issues and Rough sleeping	190	220
Experience of Criminal offending, Mental Health issues and Rough sleeping	60	75
Alcohol/drugs misuse, Experience of Criminal offending, Mental Health issues and Rough sleeping	45	50

Approach 2:

HL1 Questions used:		
(20b.1) Reasons for support needs: Mental Health problem		
(20b.5) Reasons for support needs: Drug or alcohol dependency		
(16b.3) Reason for failing to maintain accommodation: Criminal/ Anti-social behaviour		
(12) Has any member of the applicant household slept rough during the 3 months preceeding their application		
		Year of application
Type of multiple and complex needs	2015/16	2016/17
Alcohol/drugs misuse and experience of criminal offending	650	585
Alcohol/drugs misuse and Mental Health issues	1,405	1,435
Alcohol/drugs misuse and Rough sleeping	510	540
Experience of Criminal offending and Mental Health issues	530	640
Experience of Criminal offending and Rough sleeping	195	225
Mental Health issues and Rough sleeping	570	650
Alcohol/drugs misuse, Experience of Criminal offending and Mental Health issues	245	265
Alcohol/drugs misuse, Experience of Criminal offending and Rough sleeping	70	95
Alcohol/drugs misuse, Mental Health issues and Rough sleeping	225	245
Experience of Criminal offending, Mental Health issues and Rough sleeping	65	75
Alcohol/drugs misuse, Experience of Criminal offending, Mental Health issues and Rough sleeping	40	40

In Approach 1, the questions are in relation to the reason why the applicant has failed to maintain their previous accommodation. Many applicants may not consider their "support need" to be the primary reason for the previous accommodation failing and therefore may not state if they have support needs, especially if for example, the household had lost their accommodation due to rent arrears and regard that as being the most important element.

In Approach 2, mental health issues and drug and alcohol problems are framed under support needs questions. This approach has the advantage that needs such as mental health issues do not need to be the primary reason for applying as homeless, and so needs may be more likely to be disclosed. Conversely, however, some individuals may still choose not to disclose that they have support needs, especially if they feel this will preclude them from housing.

Appendix 2

1) *Table 10a: Reasons for failing to maintain accommodation*: within this, there is the opportunity for applicants to state whether they feel that there is any factor which caused them to lose their previous accommodation. In 2017-18, the majority of applicants stated that the loss of accommodation was caused by something outwith their control e.g. fire or landlord selling their property, however, 4,098 people cited mental health reasons (18% increase compared to 2015-16), 2,912 people cited drug or alcohol dependencies (5% increase compared to previous year) and 2,549 people cited criminal or antisocial behaviour (5% increase). However, recording of these metrics may be inconsistent and applicants may choose not to disclose any underlying needs, especially if they do not consider these to be the primary reason for their homelessness.

2) *Table 15: Support need identified for those homeless (or threatened with homelessness) households*: this is a more targeted assessment of needs, which were identified or disclosed either at the initial homelessness interview or at a follow-up support assessment. The applicant can state one or more of the following factors – mental health problem, learning disability, physical disability, medical condition, drug or alcohol dependency, and basic housing management/independent living skills. Within this and linked to the above multiple and complex needs parameters, 5,578 people identified as having a mental health problem and 3,156 people identified as having a drug or alcohol dependency.

Appendix 3

Outcomes – 2015-16	Housing options only	Housing options and homeless application	Homeless application only	Total
LA/RSL Tenancy	2,014	6,240	6,501	**14,755**
PRS Tenancy	1,563	887	775	**3,225**
Remained in current accommodation	8,335	889	1,065	**10,289**
Moved-in with friends/ relatives	854	503	692	**2,049**
Other (known)	1,610	727	1,160	**3,497**
Lost Contact/ Not known	5,492	1,275	1,314	**8,081**
Total with an outcome in the period	**19,868**	**10,521**	**11,507**	**41,896**

Outcomes – 2016-17	Housing options only	Housing options and homeless application	Homeless application only	Total
LA/RSL Tenancy	2,218	6,203	6,064	**14,485**
PRS Tenancy	1,659	855	637	**3,151**
Remained in current accommodation	9,462	1,007	1,148	**11,617**
Moved-in with friends/ relatives	957	592	741	**2,290**
Other (known)	2,447	990	1,224	**4,661**
Lost Contact/ Not known	7,551	1,280	1,303	**10,134**
Total with an outcome in the period	**24,294**	**10,927**	**11,117**	**46,338**

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