

Glasgow Community Hub Impact Report

Shelter Scotland

September 2018

Introduction

Shelter Scotland is the national housing and homelessness charity.

At Shelter Scotland we work to alleviate the distress caused by homelessness and bad housing.

We do this by giving advice, information and advocacy to people in housing need, and by campaigning for lasting political change to end the housing crisis for good.

We strive every day to give people the help they need and we campaign relentlessly to achieve our vision of a safe, secure and affordable home for everyone.



Glasgow Community Hub

Shelter Scotland has 4 Community Hubs; in Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh. All our Community Hubs offer independent housing advice alongside advice on money and debt, welfare benefits and fuel poverty; as well as access to legal advice and advocacy.

The Glasgow Community Hub, based at 116 Osborne Street in the city centre, provides the public with specialist advice staff as well as an Information Station where they can access digital services. Simply put – we help de-stress an already stressed situation by delivering person-centred support.

Our Glasgow Hub makes Shelter Scotland visible within the local community, making it clear that we are available both locally and nationally. While housing and homelessness problems are a national concern, Glasgow has its own local concerns and it's essential that Shelter Scotland delivers support in line with these specific issues.



Official National Statistics show that in Glasgow in 2017/18...

4,185

households were assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness.

5,204

homelessness applications were made



a 4% decrease on 2016/17

80%

of applications were assessed as homeless



slightly lower than the national average of 82%

9,010

housing options approaches were made



2,150 households in temporary accommodation on 31 March 2018, incl. **1,790** children. These are increases of 4% and 12% respectively



455

households were re-assessed as homeless within the same year



a 2% decrease on 2016/17

47%

of assessments identified an additional support need



a 3% increase on 2015/16

30%

of households are classed as fuel poor



not statistically different to the national level

530

households slept rough in the 3 months before applying



a 25% increase on 2016/17

460

households slept rough the night before making an application



a 15% increase on 2016/17

Key Issues and Concerns

Of all Shelter Scotland's client cases, the largest number from a single local authority relate to Glasgow City Council. For several years, Shelter Scotland has had major concerns about the homelessness service being delivered across the city.

We have a sustained concern that homeless individuals, or those at risk of homelessness, are too often being denied their right to a formal homelessness assessment, or – after applying as homeless – being denied the temporary accommodation they have a legal right to. This concern has been confirmed by the latest statistics release, which shows that in 2017/18 there were 3,025 instances in which applicants were denied their right to temporary accommodation. This is a clear breach of the law.



Glasgow Hub staff take their expert housing advice to the streets

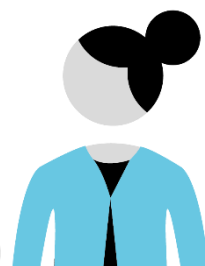
Our frontline housing and homelessness advisors in Glasgow tell us that:

"We are troubled by instances of people being turned away before they can make a homelessness application (which it is their legal right to do)."

"Demand for temporary accommodation is outstripping daily availability; we are told regularly, when advocating on behalf of clients, that there is no temporary accommodation available."

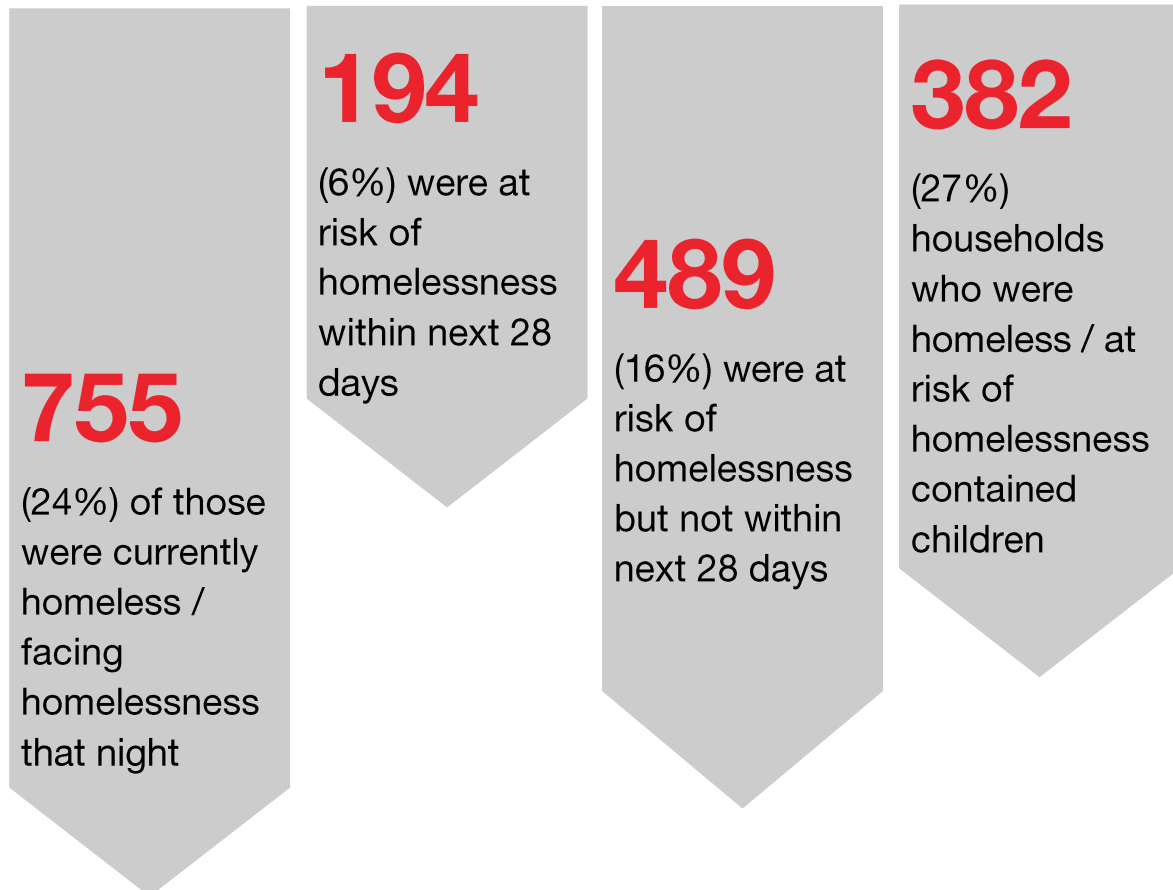
"We are aware of cases whereby a significant number of individuals have been turned away without accommodation, which means there is a significant problem with access to temporary accommodation."

"We are extremely concerned by the continued use of B&B accommodation, especially where the condition is extremely poor and the cost is high."



Summary of Shelter Scotland Glasgow Cases (1st April 2017 – 31st March 2018)

3,080 households from Glasgow approached Shelter Scotland for help last year



From a legal perspective

Shelter Scotland's advisors and legal teams have recorded over **60 cases since June 2016** where we have tangible evidence that the City Council failed their legal duty to accept an application or provide temp.

Shelter Scotland's housing and homelessness advisors keep a national log of examples of bad practice when engaging with local authority staff across Scotland. **Glasgow City Council consistently accounts for the largest number of recorded bad practice cases we encounter.**

Shelter Scotland Case Studies

The following case studies are just a small example of the types of situations our advisors handle on a regular basis and all relate to cases in Glasgow City Council.

CASE STUDY A

In the summer of 2016 Shelter Scotland became aware of a family – mother, father and four children (aged 6-14) – who had been forced to sleep rough in the streets of Glasgow city centre after being denied a home from the council. One of the reasons given was that there was no accommodation at that time as the World Pipe Band Championships were being held in the city. On a number of fronts, this was a clear breach of the city's legal duty.

Shelter Scotland used charitable funds to put the family in a city centre hotel over the weekend (which we were swiftly able to find available). Our legal team then proceeded to formally challenge the decision not to accommodate the family in the court of session. Before the case was heard, the Council homelessness team was able to find a house for the family.

CASE STUDY B

A male client was advised by the city homelessness casework team that being seriously stabbed, in his own home, for an old drug debt would make him “intentionally homeless” and that he must go back. His homelessness application was refused until Shelter Scotland intervened to advocate on his behalf.

CASE STUDY C

A female client was an EEA national with 2 daughters. They attempted to make a homeless application but were incorrectly told that they could not as she was not in receipt of benefits which is when she came to Shelter Scotland.

Once she gained employment she presented to the South Community Casework Team who had lost her payslips which she had been asked to email.

Shelter Scotland advisors advocated for the family, a homeless application was finally accepted but the city council advised they believed the client had accommodation that night so temporary accommodation would only be provided from the next day. It was made clear by Shelter Scotland adviser that this was not the case and the client and children would be on the streets. Client was eventually accommodated from that night.

Recommendations for Action

Shelter Scotland have a number of suggestions of action to better prevent and respond to homelessness cases on a Local Authority level. We'd like to see a move towards a more person-centred, joined-up approach, in which a person's engagement with various different services is coordinated, rather than fragmented. We'd like those experiencing or facing homelessness to receive comprehensive support that recognises their diverse and unique needs.

Prevention

Statutory guidance on preventing and responding to homelessness should be updated to dovetail better with the Housing Options Guidance and form a coherent body of guidance on implementing the legislation and good practice.

Statutory Duty

Every household in Scotland has the right to make a homelessness application, the right to temporary accommodation, and, for households found to be unintentionally homeless, the right to settled accommodation.

Unfortunately, in Glasgow specifically, Shelter Scotland are aware of many cases in which these rights have not been upheld. Shelter Scotland would like to see Glasgow City Council complying with their statutory duty without exception.

Temporary Accommodation

We are aware of the strain on temporary accommodation in Glasgow, which we see as in part due to the long stretches of time spent in temporary accommodation.

We therefore recommend that processes around section 5 referrals are clarified, to ensure higher proportions of homeless applicants are resettled in housing associations tenancies.

Funding

We recommend that local authorities provide a clear break down of homelessness costs by advice and assistance, and temporary accommodation, with transparency around costs relative to services provided, to allow for better understanding of the cost of homelessness services.

For more information, or to chat through this further, don't hesitate to get in contact:

Fiona King

National Campaigns and Policy Manager
Fiona_king@shelter.org.uk

Gillian Reid

National Services Manager
gillian_reid@shelter.org.uk

Shelter Scotland helps over half a million people every year struggling with bad housing or homelessness through our advice, support and legal services. And we campaign to make sure that, one day, no one will have to turn to us for help.

We're here so no one has to fight bad housing or homelessness on their own.

Please support us at shelterscotland.org