

AN ANALYSIS OF SHELTER SCOTLAND CLIENT DATA IN 2014

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Shelter
Scotland

CONTENTS

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Summary of Key Findings	4
Section One: Helpline cases	5
Who came to us for help?	5
Why did people engage with Shelter Scotland?	9
Section Two: Non-Helpline cases	13
Who used the non-helpline services?	13
Why did people use the non-helpline services?	14
What were the outcomes for clients of engaging with Shelter Scotland?	15
Conclusion	16

FOREWORD

Shelter Scotland was founded in 1968 in response to growing outrage at housing conditions, and a desire to do something meaningful about it. Almost 50 years later and, though much has improved for the better, having a decent home is still out of reach for thousands across Scotland.

Today, Scotland is still facing a very real housing crisis and it is a crisis with a human cost. This is evidenced by the fact that there are currently more than 150,500 people on waiting lists for a home, 35,764 homeless applications were made last year, 10,488 households were in temporary accommodation on the 31st of March 2015, and across the country more than 4,000 children will wake up without a home of their own tomorrow.

On top of these shocking and unacceptable national statistics, Shelter Scotland deals every day with a wide range of people and families that come to us for help.

Last year, 16,300 cases were opened by our advisors across Scotland. Of these, 12,092 cases were opened by Shelter Scotland advisors on our free national helpline – this is the equivalent of 33 cases opened by our helpline every day of the year and more than 1 case opened every hour of every day.

Of the 12,092 helpline cases we handled in 2014, it is notable that a significant 46% came from people living in the private rented sector (PRS), particularly

as this sector accounts for just 13% of all households in Scotland. This fact, combined with the latest evidence from official homelessness statistics that 18% of all homelessness applications came from the PRS, further underlines the point that this is a sector long overdue for reform.

This report offers a further breakdown of the statistical data of those people that came to us for help in 2014, to enable us to better understand the housing related issues people face in Scotland, their root causes and emerging trends of support that individuals and families suffering at the sharp end of Scotland's housing crisis require.



Alison Watson
Deputy Director, Shelter Scotland

INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a statistical summary and analysis of the individuals Shelter Scotland helped in 2014 through our advice and support services across the country.

Shelter Scotland provides general and bespoke housing support and advice in a number of different ways. Our highest profile service is our free national helpline, but we also deliver housing related services and support through statutory and grant funded support contracts across Scotland, through digital methods and through niche services run out of our four Community Hubs in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee.

For the purposes of this report, the support we provide is measured in case work and referred to as “cases” or “cases opened” and the individuals we help are referred to as “clients” in line with how we record the support we provide on our customer relationship management (CRM) system.

In 2014 there were 16,300 new cases opened by our advisors and support staff

across Scotland. Of these, 12,092 came through our free national helpline, run out of our Glasgow Hub and a further 4,208 cases were handled through our housing advice and support services across the country. For clarification, this report focuses on these specific cases and not those people who we have helped through digital methods.

This report is split into two main sections with the first half covering all cases opened by staff on our free national helpline. In this way, the data is not skewed by the geographical location of our hubs, or bespoke services offered and instead provides an overview of housing issues in Scotland. The report then goes on to look at access to our other advice and support services. All data and analysis in this report covers the 2014 calendar year.

Summary of Key Findings



16,300 cases were opened by advisors in 2014, of which 12,092 came through our free national helpline



Certain demographics are over-represented in our helpline services, including under 35s and trans-gender people



46% of helpline calls were from people in the private rented sector



The main problems our helpline deals with are struggling with housing costs, landlord issues, and homelessness, making up half of all presenting problems



The main problems dealt with in our non-helpline cases are eviction and possession action, homelessness, debt and struggling with housing costs



Of the 4,208 non-helpline cases, 53% were helped to keep their accommodation, 36% were helped to access housing, and 4% were helped to improve their home

SECTION ONE: HELPLINE CASES

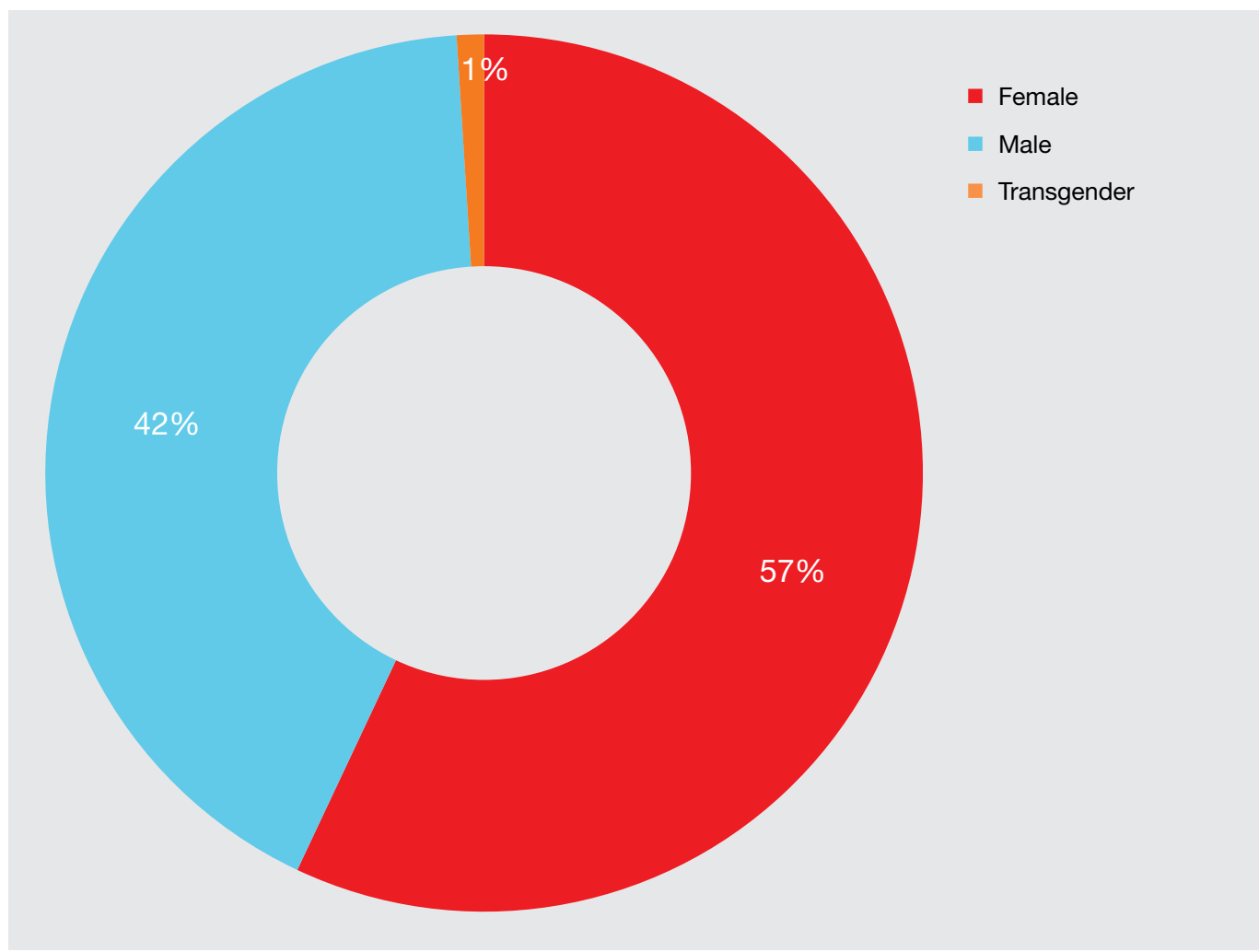
Who came to us for help?

Gender

In 2014, 57% of all our cases were female, and 42% were male, with an additional 1% recorded as trans-gender. This is notable as it is estimated that less than 0.2% of the

population in Scotland are trans-gender, suggesting an overrepresentation of housing problems among this demographic.

Figure 1: Percentage of people who identified as a specific gender when calling our helpline in 2014

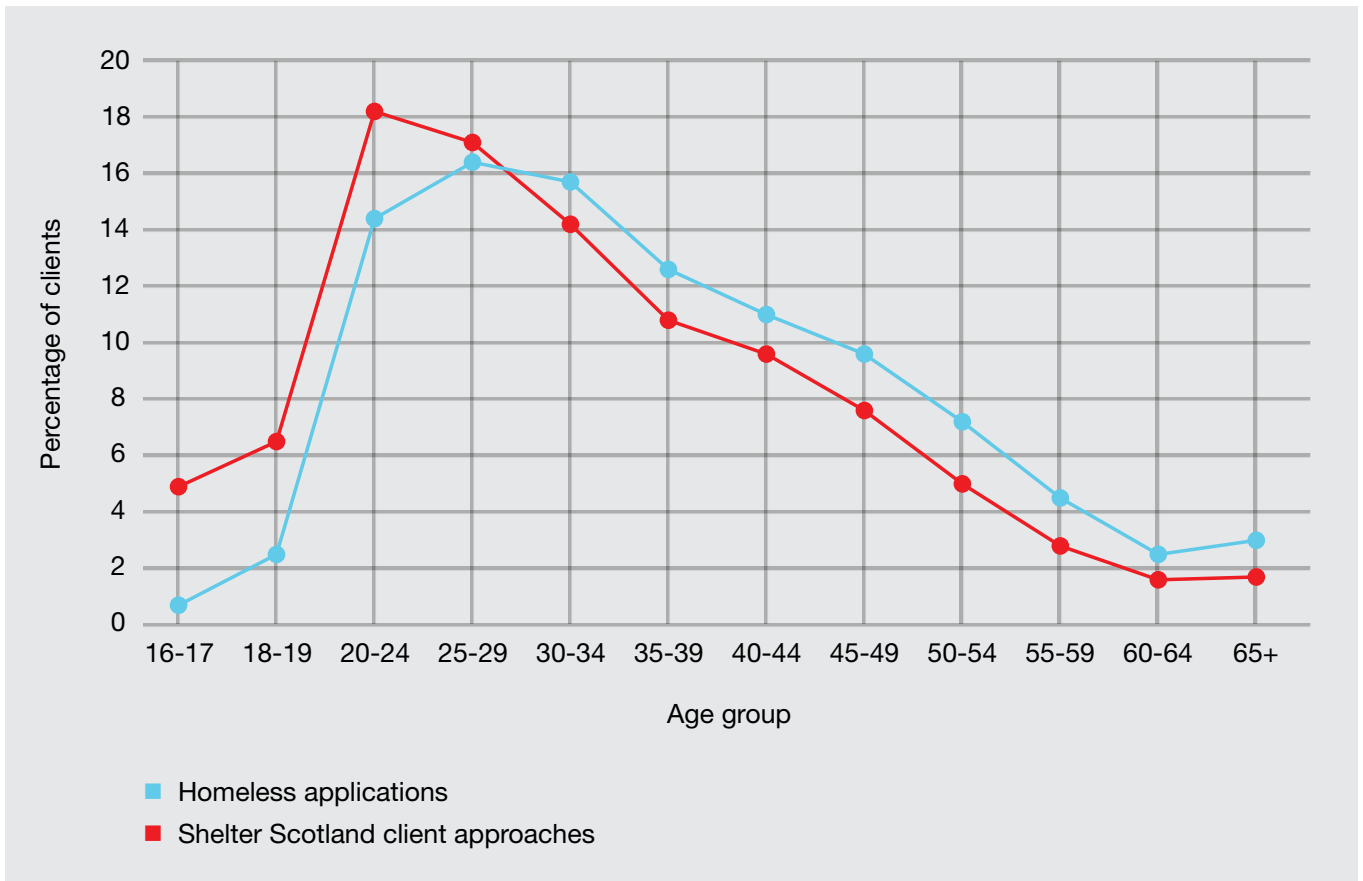


Age

In 2014 a third of all our clients were aged between 25 and 34, and under 35s accounted for a half of all cases. This follows the same pattern as the official

homelessness statistics, which show a concentration of applications from younger people.

Figure 2: Age comparison of homelessness applications in 2013-14, compared with age of Shelter Scotland helpline cases¹

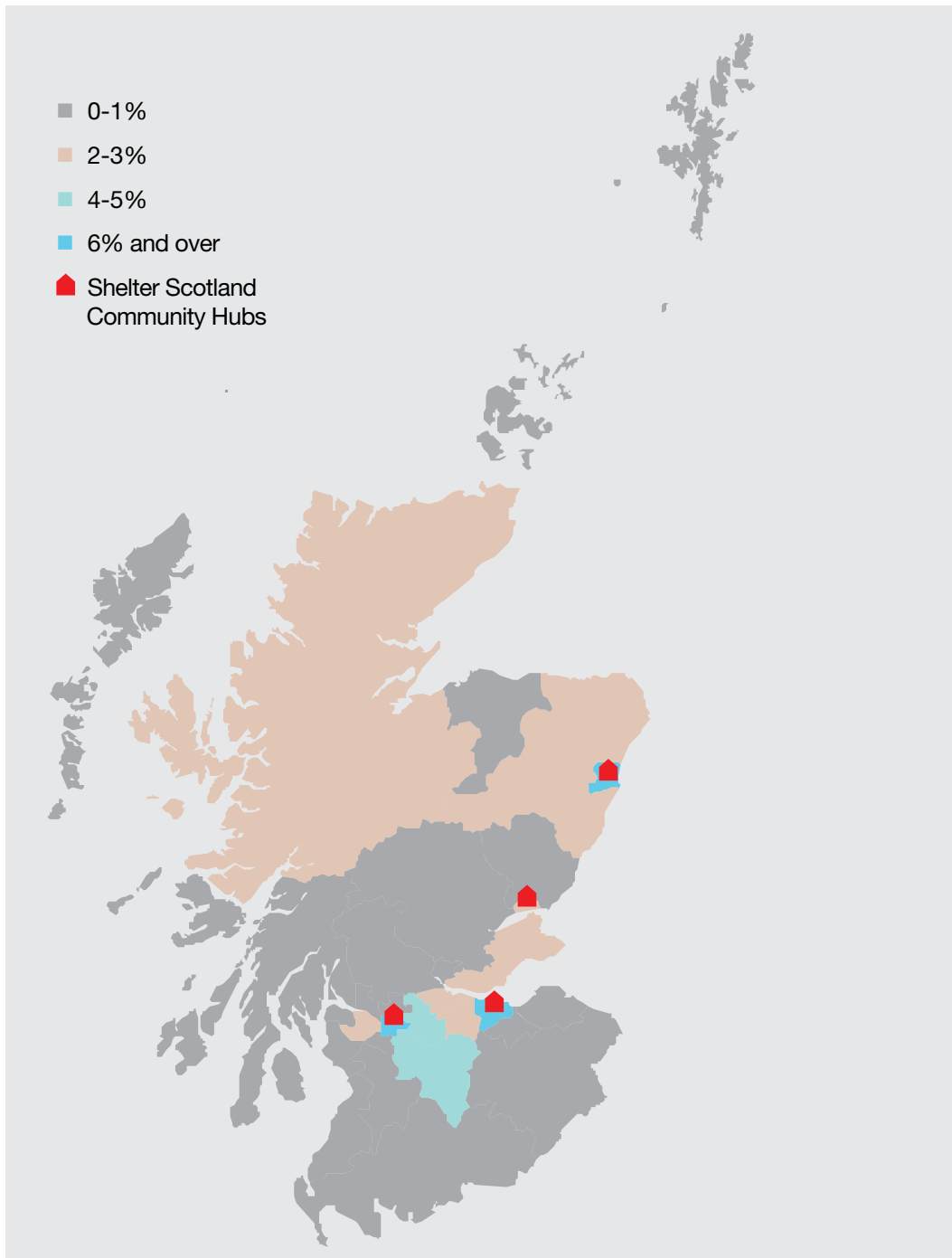


1. Source: Scottish Government, Operation of the Homeless Persons legislation in Scotland: 2013-14, www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/RefTables

Geographical distribution

Our clients are spread across the country with a notable concentration of cases aligned to the locations of our four city Hubs.

Figure 3: Percentage of calls by geographical area, 2014

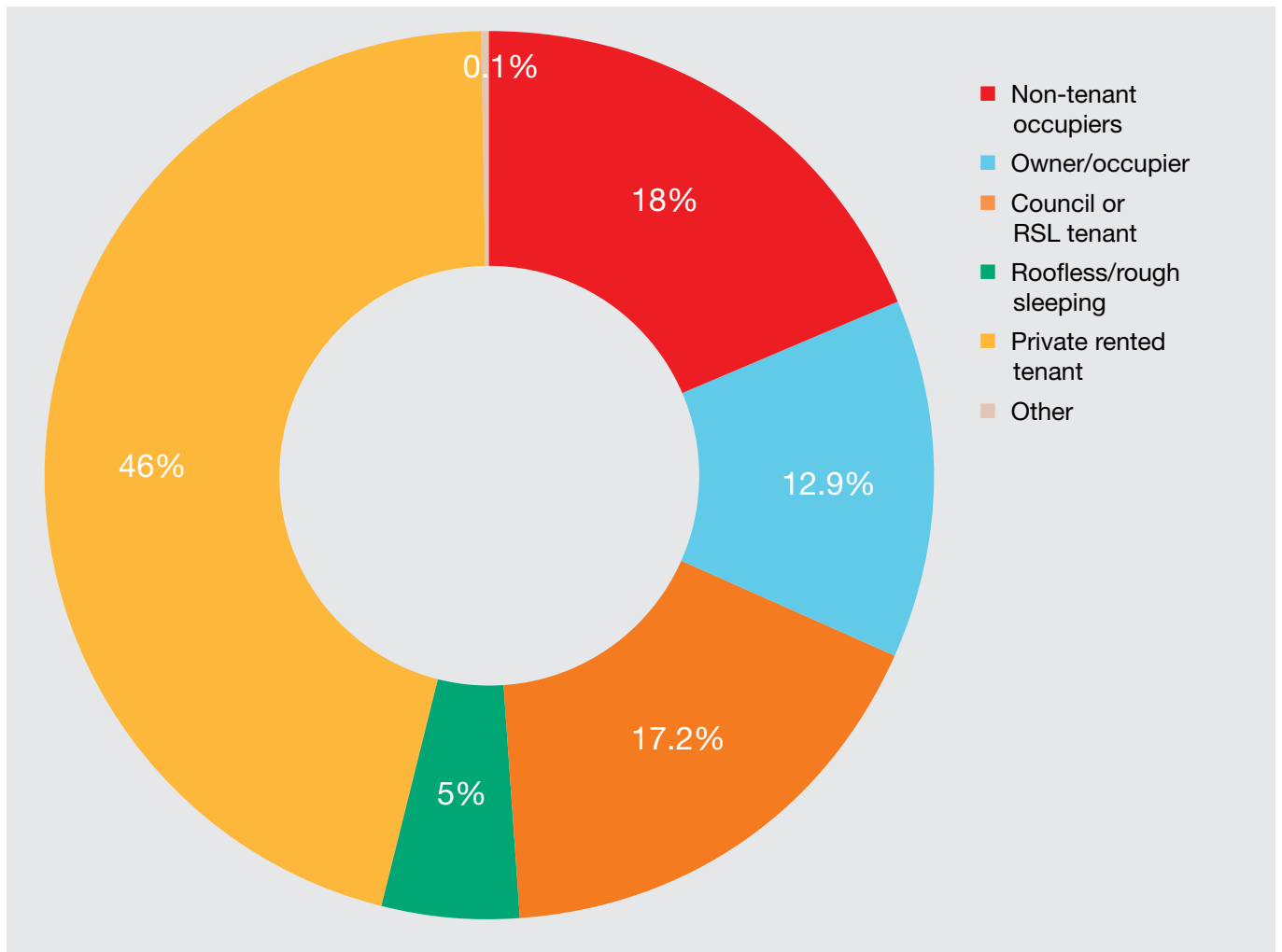


Tenure split

We provide support and advice to people living in all types of tenure in Scotland:

- Almost half of all our helpline cases were from individuals in the private rented sector, the majority of whom had short assured tenancies (5,203 = 46.0%).
- 17.2% (1,942) of our cases were from social rented tenants
- More than 1 in 10 were owner occupiers (1,461 = 12.9%).
- A further 18.8% (2,128) were what we have termed 'non-tenant occupiers'. This includes tenants in temporary accommodation, tenants of resident landlords, tied accommodation, or people living with their parents or spouse. This group have limited housing rights.
- 5.0% (565) of our clients were roofless or rough sleeping.

Figure 4: Calls to our free national helpline by housing situation



Why did people engage with Shelter Scotland?

The reasons people come to us for advice and support can broadly be split into three categories:

- issues around keeping their homes – for example people struggling to afford their housing costs, or facing eviction (4,499 cases = 32%)
- issues related to people accessing housing – such as advice and assistance with homelessness (3,603 cases = 26%)
- issues related to people seeking to improve their housing – for example,

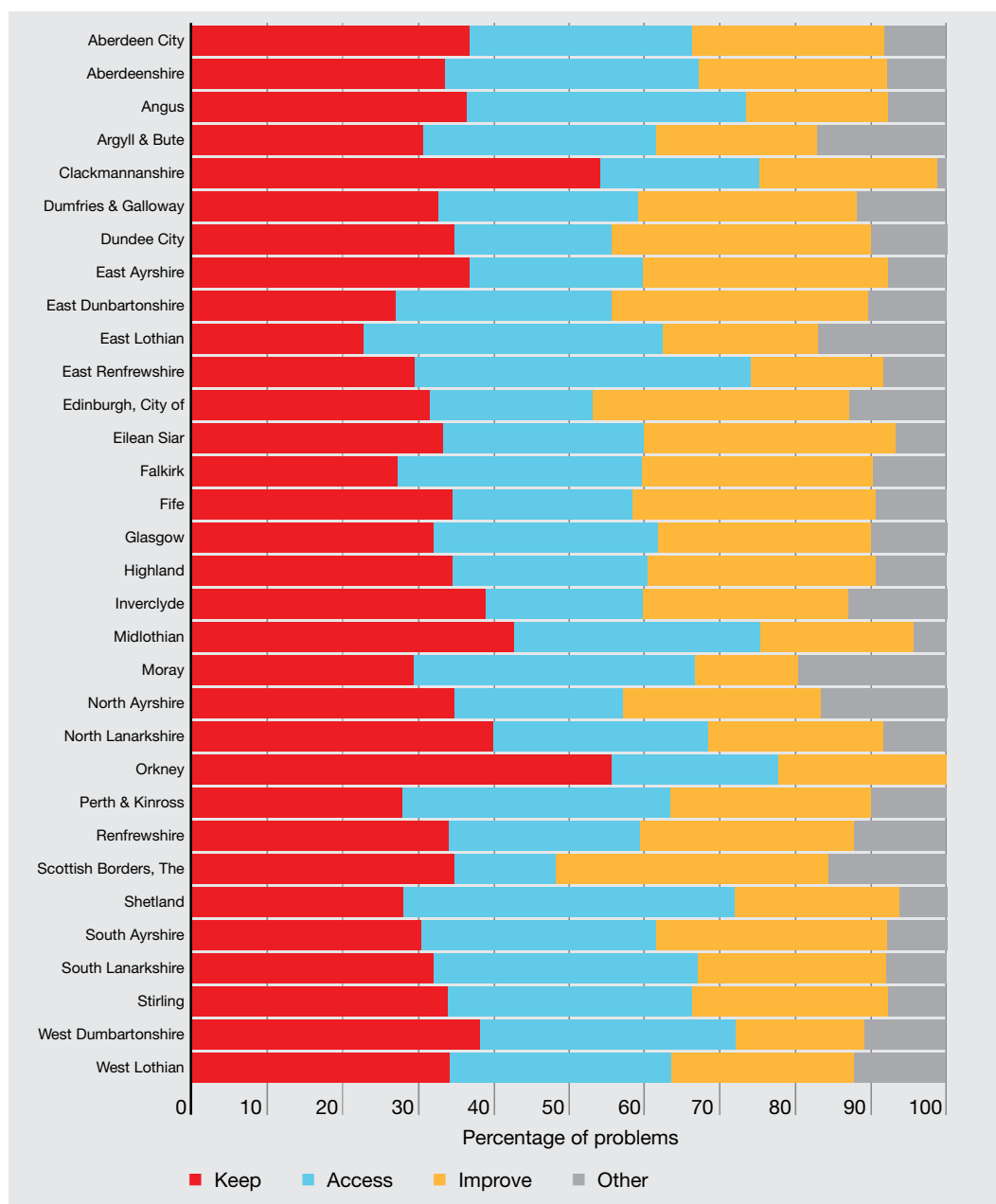
landlord issues or housing conditions (3,909 cases = 28%).

It is important to note, however, that often people who come to us for help will have numerous difficulties spanning these three broad areas of categorisation.

Local Authority Variation

As would be expected, the split between the three categories varies significantly across Scotland's 32 local authorities:

Figure 5: Presenting problem category, by local authority area



Presenting problems

In 2014, the top problems that clients presented with to our free national helpline were:

- Struggling to pay or afford housing costs (2,238 = 16%), which might include mortgage or rent arrears or calling to query a rent increase.
- Advice and assistance with homelessness (2,187 = 16%), such as general advice on what to do if you're homeless, how to make a homeless application, or challenging a homeless decision made by the local authority.
- Landlord issues (2,299 = 16%) covers any sort of dispute with a landlord (private or social).
- Eviction or possession action (1,531 = 11%)
- Housing conditions (1,476 = 10%) which might include problems around dampness or disrepair, overcrowding, or if someone is seeking help to source white goods or furniture.

The category of 'other' was chosen 14% of the time. This would include unique cases where there is not clear match with another option, or where the problem is not clear at the outset.

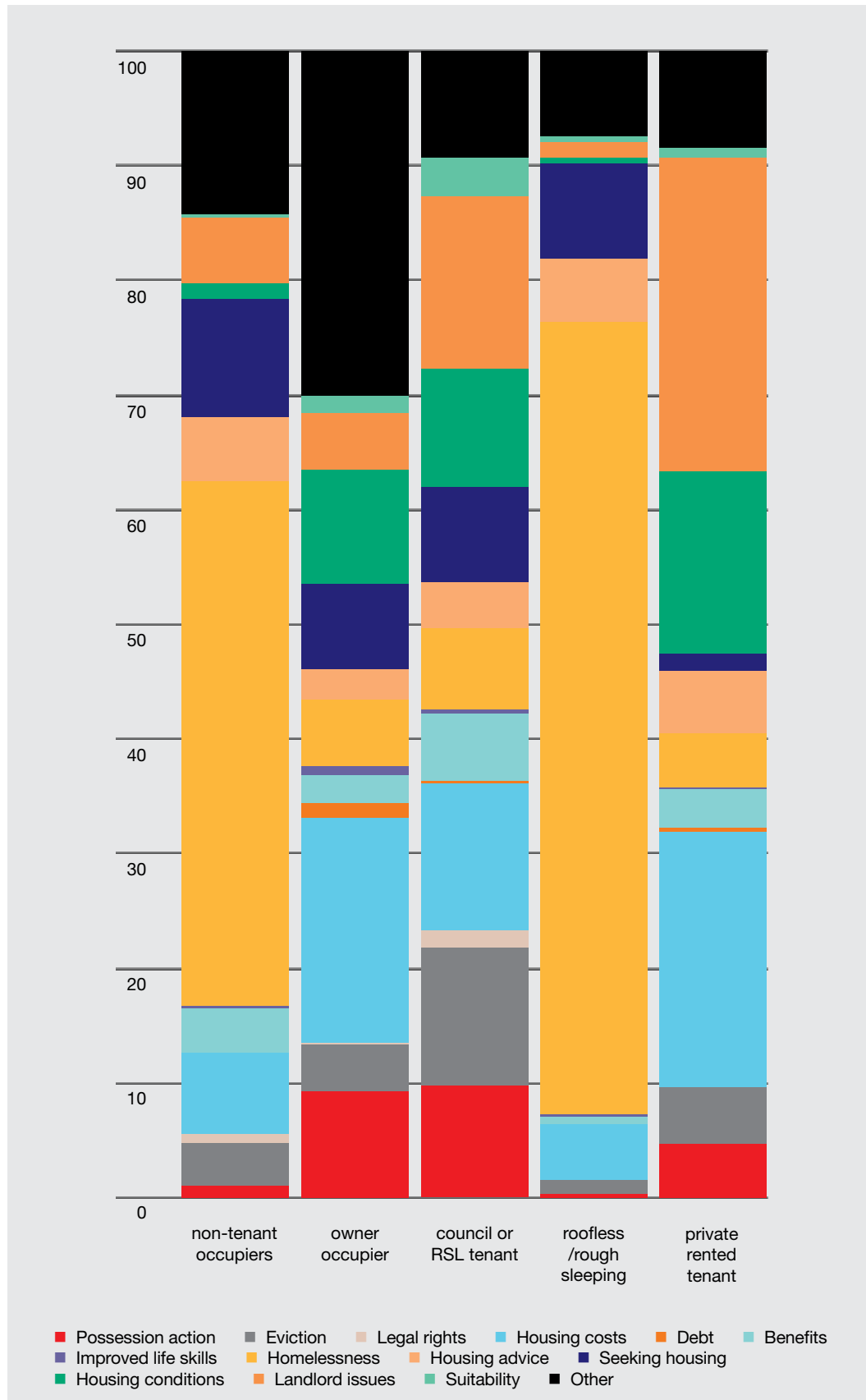
Figure 6: Presenting problem of callers to free national helpline in 2014



In addition to these top presenting problems, there are clear patterns of

different challenges faced by individuals in different types of tenure in Scotland.

Figure 7: Presenting problem of callers to free national helpline in 2014, by tenure type



For tenants in the **private rented sector (PRS)**, the top three presenting problems were:

1. Landlord issues (1,565 = 27%)
2. Struggling to pay or afford housing costs (1,268 = 22%)
3. Housing conditions (899 = 16%)

For tenants in the **social rented sector**, the top three presenting problems were:

1. Landlord issues (413 = 15%)
2. Struggling to pay or afford housing costs (352 = 13%)
3. Eviction (328 = 12%)

For **owner occupiers**, the top three presenting problems were:

1. Struggling to pay or afford housing costs (320 = 20%)
2. Housing conditions (163 = 10%)
3. Possession action (152 = 9%)

For **non-tenant occupiers**, the top three presenting problems were:

1. Advice and assistance with homelessness (1,113 = 46%)
2. Seeking housing (252 = 10%)
3. Struggling to pay or afford housing costs (170 = 7%)

For those who were **roofless/street homeless**, the top three presenting problems were:

1. Advice and assistance with homelessness (440 = 69%)
2. Seeking housing (53 = 8%)
3. General advice on housing and options available (35 = 6%)

SECTION TWO: NON-HELPLINE CASES

Non-Helpline Cases

The data below lays out the breadth of housing issues currently facing people in Scotland, leading to the 12,092 helpline cases our advisors opened in 2014.

For many of these cases, an advisor on our helpline can resolve the issue – providing accurate and detailed advice and information over the phone. For some cases, however, additional support or more detailed casework is needed and our advisers can pass this on to our specialist advice and support services across the country.

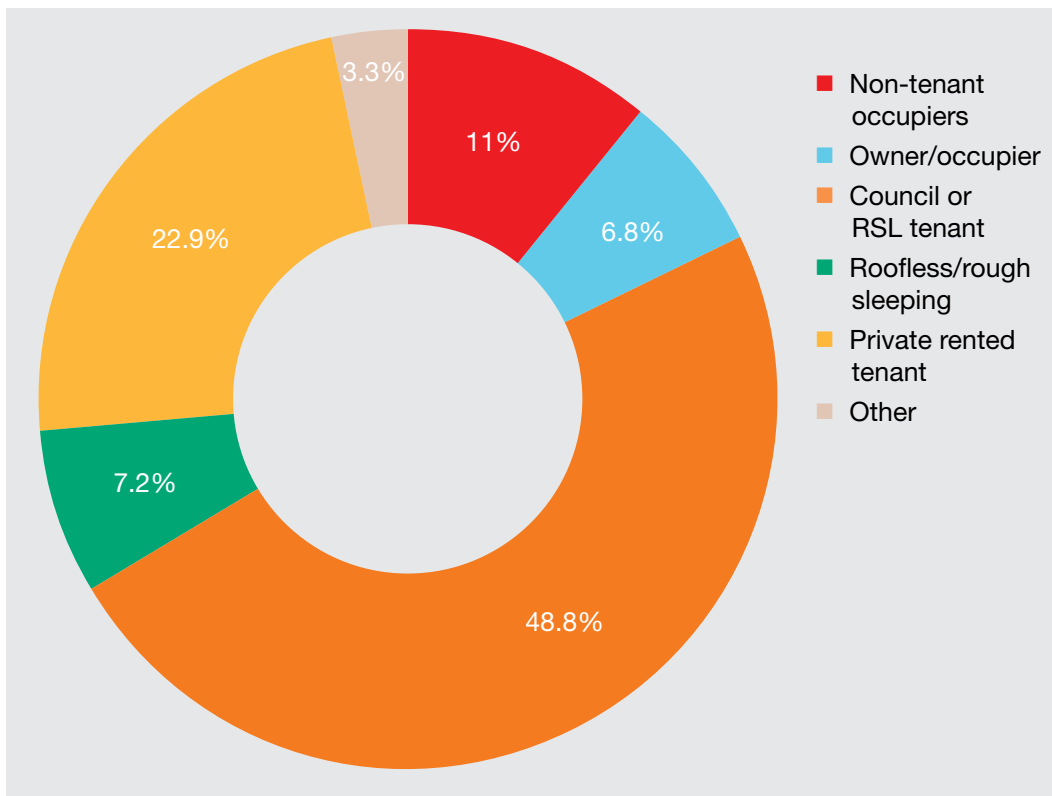
In 2014 our Shelter Scotland advice and support services (not including our free national helpline) opened 4,208 cases across the country.

Who used the non-helpline services?

The split of these cases dealt with by the non-helpline services was slightly different from the overall cases dealt with by the helpline in terms of tenure, with proportionally less cases for individuals in the private rented sector, and much more from tenants in the social rented sector:

- Social rented tenants (1,719 = 48.8% – compared to 17% via our helpline)
- Private rented sector (808 = 22.9% – compared with 46% via our helpline).
- ‘Non-tenant occupiers’ (386 = 11% – compared to 18% via our helpline)
- Long term roofless or rough sleeping (253 = 7.2% – compared to 5% via our helpline)
- Owner occupiers (238 = 6.8% – compared to 12.9% via our helpline)

Figure 8: Non-helpline cases by housing situation, 2014



Why did people use the non-helpline services?

Similarly, when looking at the reasons people use our non-helpline services for advice and support there was a different split from those calling the helpline (some of whom, as detailed in the previous section, would be passed on to other services) with more focus on helping to keep a client's home:

- 62% of issues were around keeping a client's home – for example people struggling to afford their housing costs, or facing eviction (4,450 – compared with 32% helpline)
- 21% of issues related to people accessing housing – such as advice and assistance with homelessness (1,492 – compared with 26% helpline)
- 10% of issues related to people seeking to improve their housing – for example, landlord issues or housing conditions (738 – compared with 28% helpline).

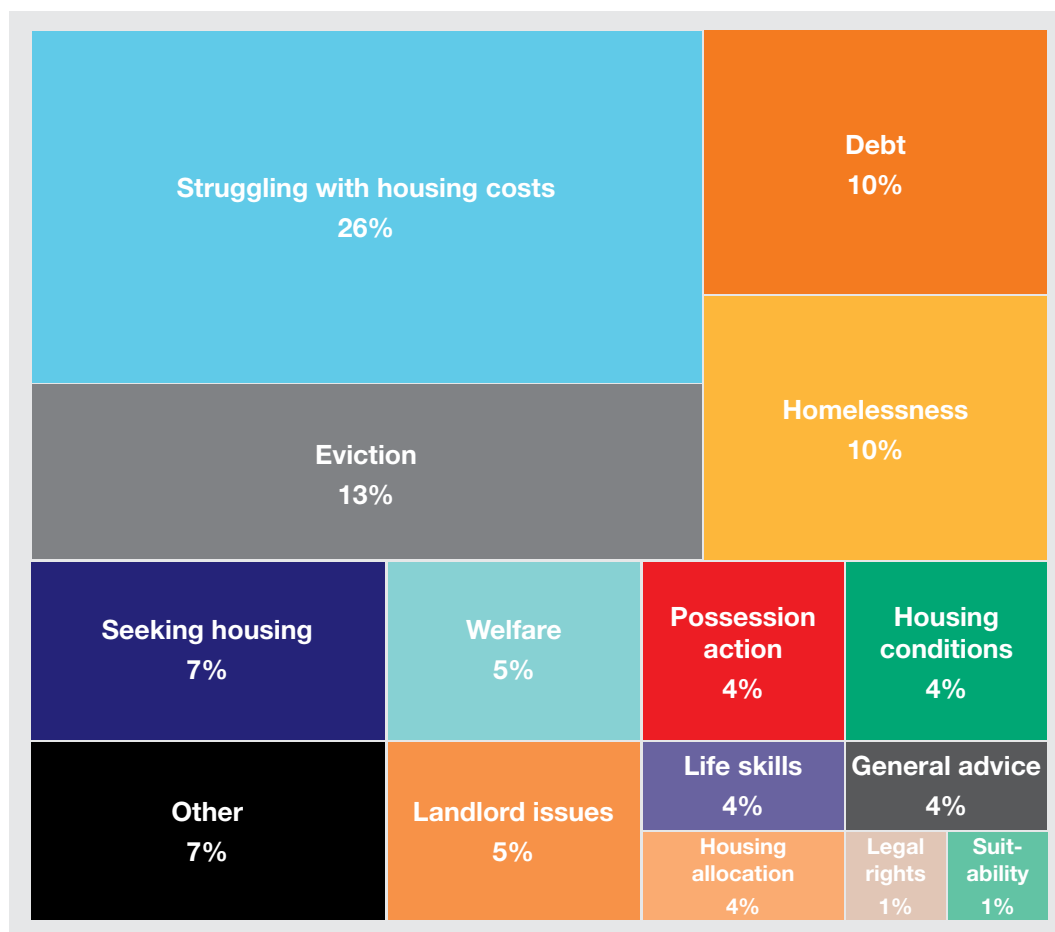
It is important to note, however, that often people who come to us for help will have numerous difficulties spanning these three broad areas of categorisation.

In 2014, the top problems that clients presented with at our advice and support services (not including our free national helpline) were:

- Struggling to pay or afford housing costs (1,895 = 26% compared with 16% helpline),
- Eviction (930 = 13%) or possession action (310 = 4%, compared with helpline 13% combined)
- Advice and assistance with homelessness (740 = 10%, compared with helpline 16%)
- Debt (692 = 10%)

Landlord issues which make up 16% of helpline presenting problems only accounted for 5% (388) problems, and similarly housing conditions which made up 10% of helpline presenting problems only made up 4% (264).

Figure 9: Presenting problems of non-helpline clients, 2014



What were the outcomes for clients of engaging with Shelter Scotland?

Just as it is difficult to accurately summarise the range of housing related problems that our clients face, it is similarly hard to concisely describe the work that was done by our advisers and case workers and the outcomes these achieved for our clients.

As noted, many of the cases initially opened by our free national helpline advisers were referred on to another service internally for further advice or support.

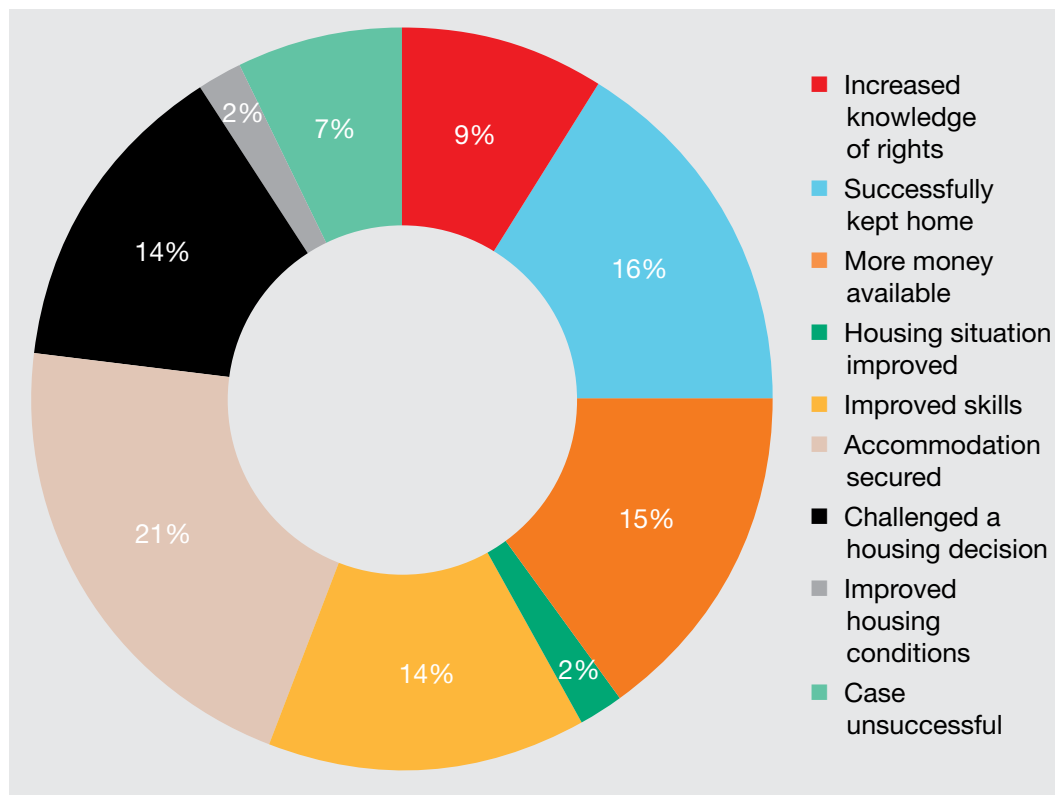
For all services, excluding our helpline, and where a detailed outcome was recorded, 53% of outcomes recorded helped a client to keep their home, 36% enabled a client to access a home, and 4% assisted a client in improving their home. In 8% of cases the issue was not resolved.

Specifically, for the 1,659 cases where a detailed outcome was recorded:

- A fifth of all cases (353 or 22%) secured accommodation for a client, which might include permanent, temporary or supported.

- 16% of cases (258) enabled the client to stay in their home – this might include preventing eviction or overturning a possession order.
- 15% (245) of cases, as a result of Shelter Scotland’s intervention, had more money available to pay for housing costs. This might be as a result of resolving benefit issues, helping with access to a grant, or assisting a client with debt.
- In 14% (226) the Shelter Scotland helped to improve a client’s skills or ability to manage their home, for example through assisting with budgeting, increasing confidence to address own problems, or referring and registering with other services.
- 14% (224) cases successfully challenged a decision, for example on allocations or homelessness.
- In almost 1 in 10 cases, the outcome was increasing the client’s understanding of their rights and options, helping them to make informed choices and actions (146, 9%).

Figure 10: Outcomes of non-helpline cases, 2014



CONCLUSION

This data report demonstrates that the human cost of Scotland's housing crisis is significant and very real.

It is clear that in Scotland, a combination of: a chronic lack of supply of social rented homes over successive generations; the ongoing impact of welfare reforms; a housing market that's prone to boom and bust cycles; and significant reductions in local authority budgets means that too many individuals and families are facing difficulties in accessing, keeping and improving the most basic of their human needs – somewhere to call home.

We need to see a move towards much wider provision of solutions based support

for those in housing need or facing the tragedy of homelessness, based on common principles, of preventions, personalisation and partnership working.

Shelter Scotland will continue to drive forward this agenda in the housing support and advice that we offer, focused through our free national helpline, our four Community Hubs and bespoke services located across Scotland to meet specific needs and ensure that we do all that we can in helping as many people as possible to secure and sustain a home of their own.

For more information on this report please contact:

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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

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