Homelessness in Scotland 2014

Getting behind the statistics

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www.shelterscotland.org

Foreword

Scotland has in place some of the most progressive homelessness legislation in the world, which gives a right to housing for all unintentionally homeless households. This includes the right to housing support and temporary accommodation. The last ten years has seen the sector move towards delivery of the '2012 Commitment' and as part of that process, there has been a largely positive shift in the culture, practices and partnerships of service delivery.

However, there is more to meeting the needs and aspirations of homeless or potentially homeless households than rights and duties. We now need to build more complete and responsive services around this legislative framework to allow people to make the choices that are right for them.

36,457 households making homeless applications, a rate of youth homelessness at 13.7 per 1000 – over double the rate for over 25s, and a rising proportion of homeless applications from households renting in the private sector signals that although there are movements in the right direction, there is still a long way to go.

With the significant weakening of the welfare state in recent years, it is more important than ever to ensure that vulnerable households are offered support before they are pushed into crisis. For those who do find themselves without a home, a strong housing safety net should be there to provide the services, advice and information they need to help build a pathway out of homelessness.

For households with previously no or few rights to housing, to be provided with temporary accommodation is a significant step forward. However long term reliance on temporary accommodation is not in the best interests of those experiencing homelessness nor is the use of this expensive resource sustainable for local authorities. Over 10,000 households in temporary accommodation, including more than 4,000 children, is too many.

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Homelessness and housing supply are intrinsically linked, and the ability of local authorities to fulfil their duties under the homelessness legislation is affected by supply of social housing in their area. As such, homelessness legislation cannot be looked at in silo. We must take a cohesive approach to tackling Scotland's housing crisis.

Graeme Brown

Director, Shelter Scotland

Summary

- There has been a marked decrease in the number of homeless applications, with 36,457 applications made in 2013-14. This has been falling since 2009-10, with a 34% reduction in the number of homeless applications in Scotland in that period.

- This decrease can be linked to the introduction of the housing options model and a renewed preventative approach adopted by local authorities, rather than any significant change in the underlying causes of homelessness.

- There are large variations in the statistics in local authority areas for many of the series of data that are gathered, as a result of differing pressures and practice.

- Different groups are responding differently to changes in legislation and practice. The number of applications from single people over 25 is not falling as quickly as it is for other groups.

- The proportion of homeless applicants who are classed as intentionally homeless (i.e. when the local authority decides a household deliberately did or did not do something which made them homeless) has been increasing since 2009-10, and is now higher than in 2002-03, at over 6%.

- The proportion of homeless applications from households renting in the private sector has grown from 13% in 2008-09 to 18% in 2013-14, and is disproportionate to the number of households in the sector.

- The existing data portrays a homeless population of whom a large proportion have additional support needs.

- Contact was lost with around a fifth (18%) of all applicants at some stage in the assessment process. Whilst in some cases the household's circumstances may have changed, for instance they may have found alternative accommodation, it is unlikely this was the case for all of this group.

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- 10,281 households were in temporary accommodation on 31 March 2014. Since a peak in 2011, the total number of households in temporary accommodation has been decreasing, mirroring the trend in homeless applications. It should be noted however that this figure is still 60% higher than the same period in 2002.

- The number of households without children in temporary accommodation is continuing to rise, in contrast to households with children which has been falling since 2008.

- Pressures on housing supply has an impact on the type of tenancy authorities can offer settled accommodation in. Local authorities discharged their duty to homeless applicants through an offer of a social rented tenancy for 69% of households. Household type has a large influence on how the duty is discharged, for example as a result of the availability of different property sizes in an area.

Introduction

This paper presents an overview of the Scottish 2013-14 homelessness statistics in the context of recent policy changes. We highlight some specific statistics and interpret and analyse trends in the context of policy and practice. We have provided hypotheses to help explain some of the trends, but this report does not aim to provide policy solutions.

Given the breadth of data available, this report does not aim to examine each area of homelessness in detail, but instead provides a general overview focusing on certain groups and specific areas of interest.

The Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 set in motion a series of changes to homelessness law. Since the end of 2012, everyone who is accepted as unintentionally homeless has had the right to a permanent home. In practice this meant the abolition of the 'priority need test', which divided homeless households into those eligible for a permanent home and those who were not. Coinciding with this change has been the adoption of the Housing Options model and a general move towards a more preventative approach to homelessness in local authorities.

Unless otherwise stated, all figures are taken from the Scottish Government annual homelessness statistics dataset 2013-14.[1]

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[1] Scottish Government, Operation of the Homeless Persons legislation in Scotland: 2013-14
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/RefTables
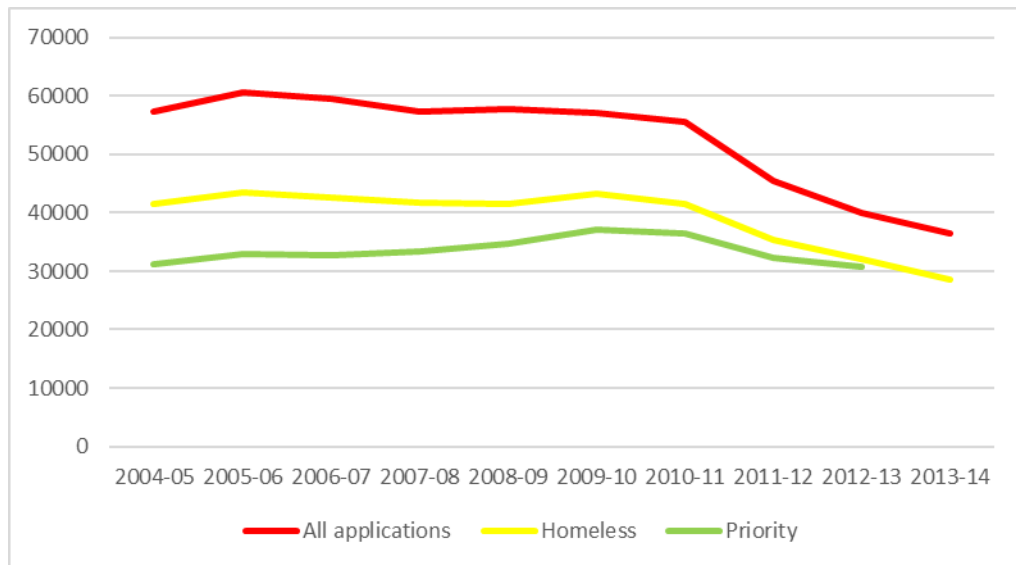
1. How many people are homeless in Scotland?

Chart 1: Number of applications and assessments to local authorities under the Homeless Persons legislation: 2004-05 to 2013-14

In 2012, legislation was passed meaning that from 2013 local authorities could no longer apply the priority need test to homeless households. As a result, all unintentionally homeless households in Scotland are entitled to settled accommodation, and the collection of data for the 'priority' category has stopped.

Applications

- In 2013-14, 36,457 homeless applications were made. The number of homeless applications has been falling since 2009-10, with a 34% reduction in the number of homeless applications in Scotland in that period. This marked decrease correlates with the introduction of the Housing Options and preventative approach adopted by local authorities[2], and can be attributed to this rather than any significant change in the underlying causes of homelessness.[3]

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[2] For more information on housing options, Shelter Scotland produced two papers:

Shelter Scotland, March 2013 *What are my options? Delivering a person centred housing and homelessness advice service in Scotland*

http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_library/policy_library_folder/what_are_my_options_delivery_a_person_centred_housing_and_homelessness_advice_service_in_scotland

- Reduced levels of homeless applications does not necessarily mean lower numbers of homeless households. The 36,457 only relates to the number of households approaching their local authority and making a homeless application. The Scottish Housing Regulator highlighted evidence of the under-recording of homelessness in cases where individuals who should have been given a homeless assessment were diverted into Housing Options instead.[4] This should be taken into account when considering the reduced levels of homeless applications.

- The Scottish Government introduced a mandatory data collection for local authorities on homelessness prevention and Housing Options, called 'PREVENT1'. Since 1 April 2014 collection of this data has been mandatory, which will facilitate analysis of the Housing Options process and the outcomes of preventative work by local authorities. This data should help form a fuller picture of households facing homelessness and in housing need in Scotland, which is not currently fully captured in the homeless applications figure.

- There is another group of individuals, the 'hidden homeless', who may be long term 'sofa surfing' or rough sleeping. This 'hidden homeless' by definition do not approach their local authority for assistance and therefore do not appear in official statistics. There have been some attempts to record rough sleeping, with Glasgow Homelessness Network reporting that around a quarter of rough sleeping service users did not make a presentation to Glasgow City Council for homelessness assistance.[5]

Shelter Scotland, July 2011 *Housing Options in Scotland*
http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_library/policy_library_folder/a_shelter_scotland_report_housing_options_in_scotland

[3] Scottish Housing Regulator (2014) *Housing Options in Scotland: a thematic inquiry*
http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/publications/housing-options-scotland-thematic-inquiry

[4] Scottish Housing Regulator (2014) *Housing Options in Scotland: a thematic inquiry*
http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/publications/housing-options-scotland-thematic-inquiry

[5] Glasgow Homelessness Network (2014) *Annual Homelessness Monitoring, Report: April 2013-March 2014* http://www.ghn.org.uk/HomelessnessMonitoring

Assessment decisions

- In 2013-14, 29,326 of all applications (80%) were assessed as 'homeless' or threatened with homelessness in the next two months by their local authority. The remaining 20% were deemed to be 'not homeless' under the legislation (5%) or contact was lost with the applicant or their application was withdrawn (15%).

- The proportion of applications to assessments as homeless varies widely across Scotland, from 63% in Aberdeen City to 97% in Edinburgh. From Scotland as a whole, there has been a shift from an average of 72% of applications assessed as homeless in 2004-05 to 80% in 2013-14. This is likely to be as a result of different policy and practice around guiding people towards or away from making a homeless application or into other routes.
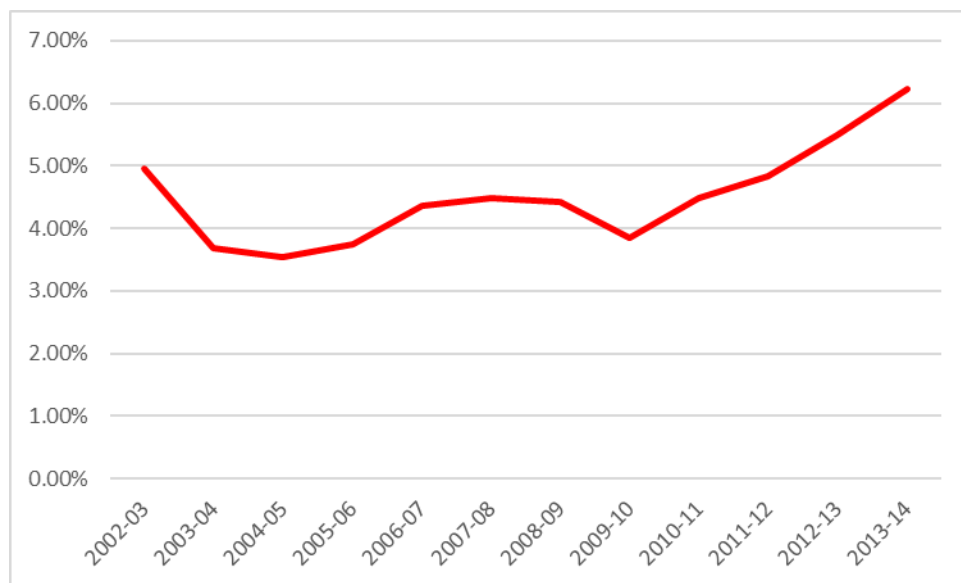

Chart 2: Proportion of priority homeless applicants found to be 'intentionally' homeless

- After assessing a case as homeless or threatened with homelessness, local authorities test for 'intentionality'.[6] In 2013-14, 1,828 homeless applicants (6.2% of all households assessed as homeless) were assessed as intentionally homeless, up from 1,569 (+4.4%) in 2011-12. You would expect the **number** of intentionality

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[6] The 'intentionality' test seeks to establish whether the applicant deliberately did, or didn't do, something that caused them to leave accommodation they could otherwise have reasonably stayed in.

decisions to rise with the removal of the priority need assessment as intentionality was only considered if an application was confirmed as meeting 'priority need' criteria. However, intentionality decisions as a **proportion** (as opposed to number) of homeless priority assessments have in fact been increasing since 2009-10, and are now higher than in 2002-03, at over 6% (Chart 2). This may be a result of specific policies and practices amongst frontline staff in response to the availability of and pressures on local resources.

- There are large variations between local authorities in the proportion of homeless households assessed as intentionally homeless.[7] Between July 2013 and June 2014 the proportion assessed as intentionally homeless ranged from 1.2% in Dundee to 22.1% in East Ayrshire.   There were sixteen local authorities where the rates of intentionality decisions were significantly different from the national average – and where this would not be expected by chance.

- In six authorities levels of intentionality were significantly lower than the national average. These are South Ayrshire, Scottish Borders, Dundee City, South Lanarkshire, Edinburgh and Glasgow City.

- Ten authorities have levels of intentionality that are significantly higher than the national average. These are East Ayrshire, East Lothian, Moray, Aberdeen City, Falkirk, Angus, Stirling, Argyll & Bute, North Lanarkshire and Aberdeenshire. As above, this may be because of specific policies and practice in these authority areas.

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[7] Scottish Government, Operation of the Homeless Persons legislation in Scotland: Quarterly Update: April-June 2014 http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/RefTables/HomelessAprtoJun2014, chart 3B and table 5c

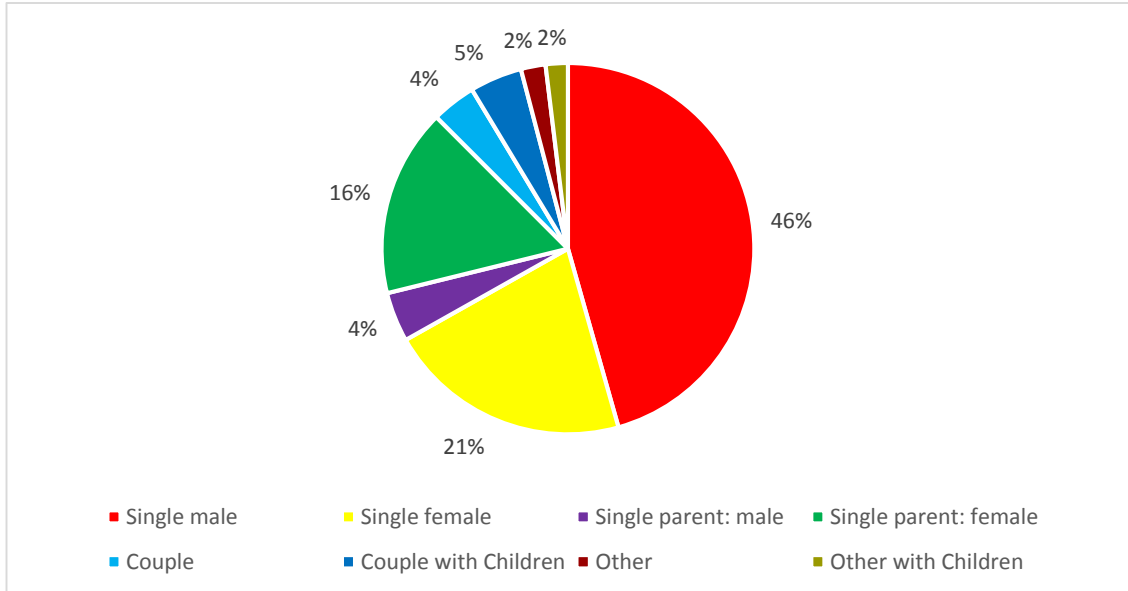# 2. Who is homeless in Scotland?

Household characteristics

Chart 3: Percentage of homeless applications by household type: 2013-14
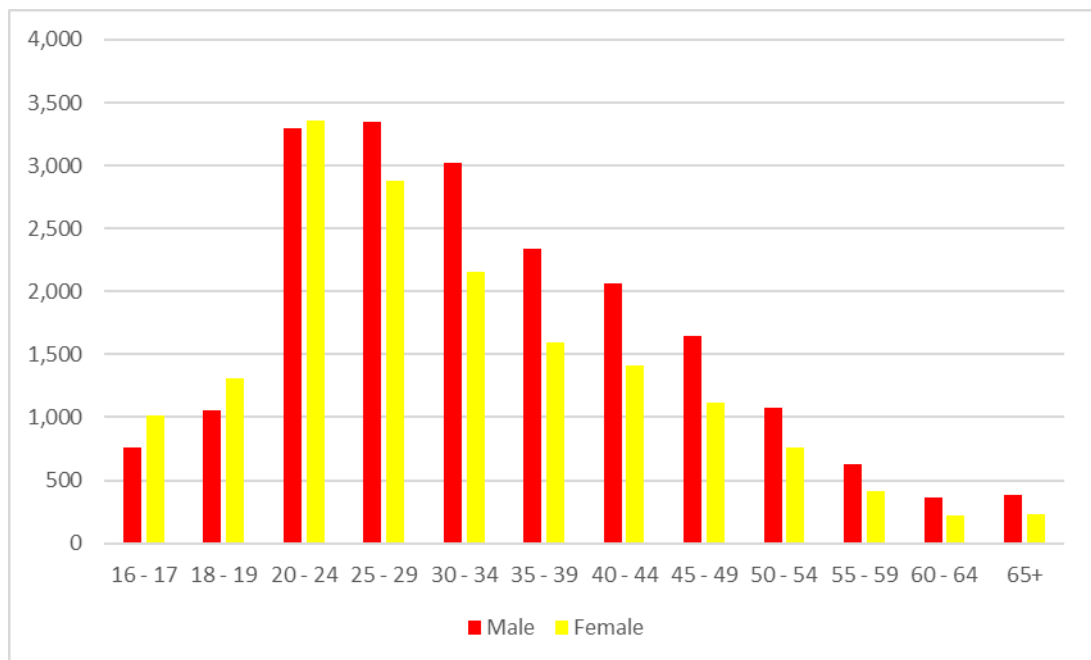

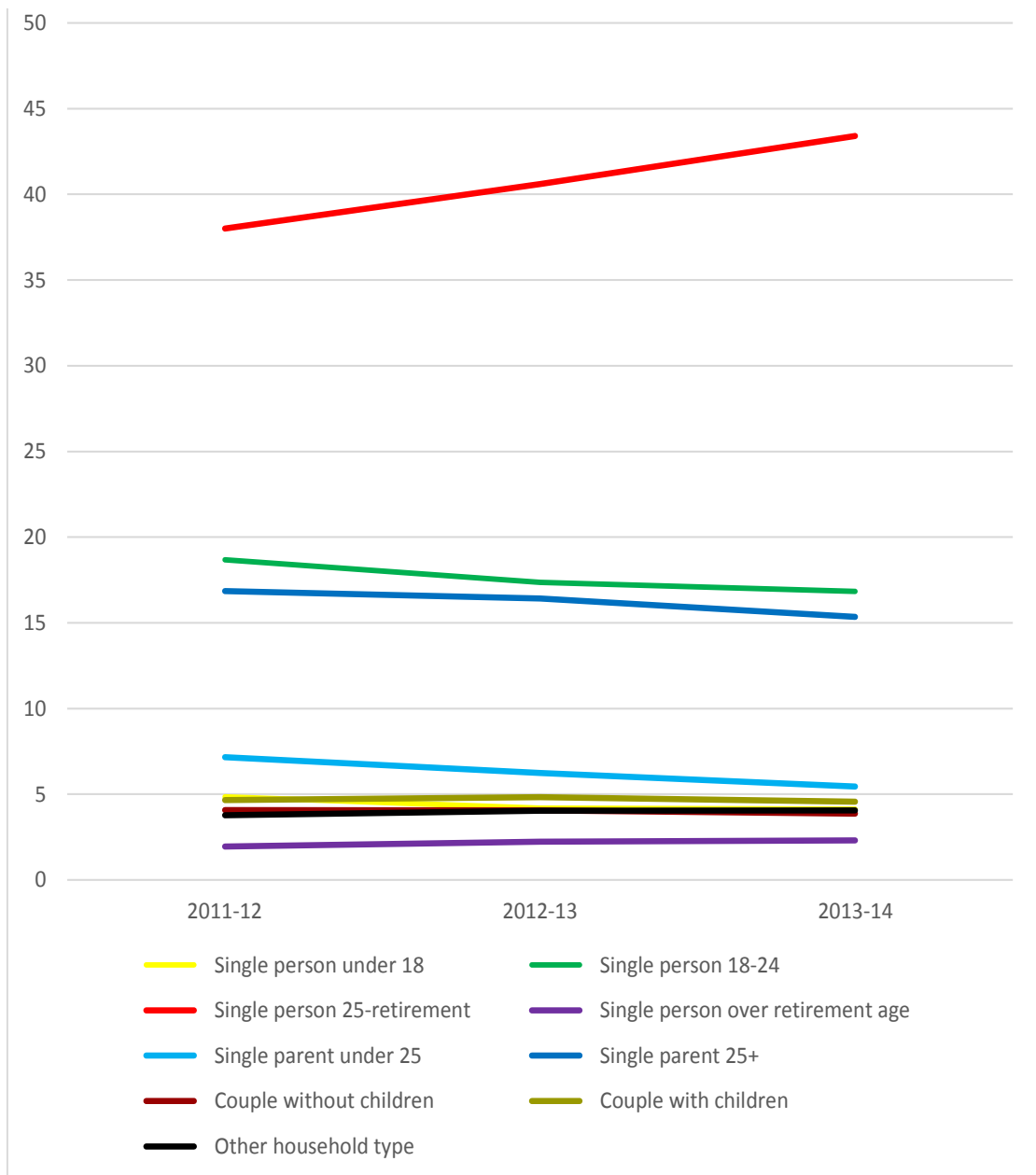**Chart 4: Homeless applications by age and sex: 2013-14**

Chart 5: Percentage of homeless applications by household type 2011-12 to 2013-14

- Nearly half of all homeless applications are made by single males (46%), and 87.5% of all applications are made by households headed by a single adult (single person or single parent) (Chart 3).

- Male applications top female applications in the majority of age categories, and overall (55% of applications to 45%). However female applicants typically have a younger age profile than males with more female applications than male in the under 25s (Chart 4).

- Since 2012, there has been a change in applications by household type. For all household types, the number of applications is decreasing for reasons discussed above. However, proportionally the number of applications from single people over 25 is rising.

- With the removal of the priority need test, you may expect an increase in applications amongst groups such as single people over 25, who were previously more likely than other groups not to meet this criteria. As a result of this change you could expect an increasing awareness amongst this group that there would be a greater chance of positive outcomes coming from making a homelessness application. This upward pressure could be lessening the general downward trend across all groups as a result of the preventative approach. At the same time it may be because other options, presented through the introduction of Housing Options and a more concerted move towards a prevention method, are less effective for this group leading them to still make a homeless application.

Particular groups

- There are particular sub-groups of individuals applying as homeless who have all had close recent contact with a professional, and should have both the opportunity and the clear need for a care plan to be in place for their discharge from hospital, prison, or from no longer being looked after by the local authority. The individual needs of these groups suggests a direction for focused policy and resource attention towards them.

- There were 2,126 applications in 2013-14 made by individuals who were previously in prison, making up 5.8% of all homeless applications.

- In 2013-14, there were 956 applicants who had a household member who had previously been in the armed forces.

- There were 1,568 applicants in 2013-14 aged under 25 who had a household member who was previously looked after as a child by the local authority, i.e. a care leaver.

- In 2013-14 just under a third (29%, or 8,321 people) of applicants assessed as homeless were under 25.[8] This has been decreasing as a proportional share of all ages since 2009-10 when it stood at 36% of all homelessness. However, they are still an overrepresented group – **the rate of youth homelessness in Scotland is 13.7 per 1000 of the population, compared to the rate of homelessness for over 25s which is 5.5.**[9]
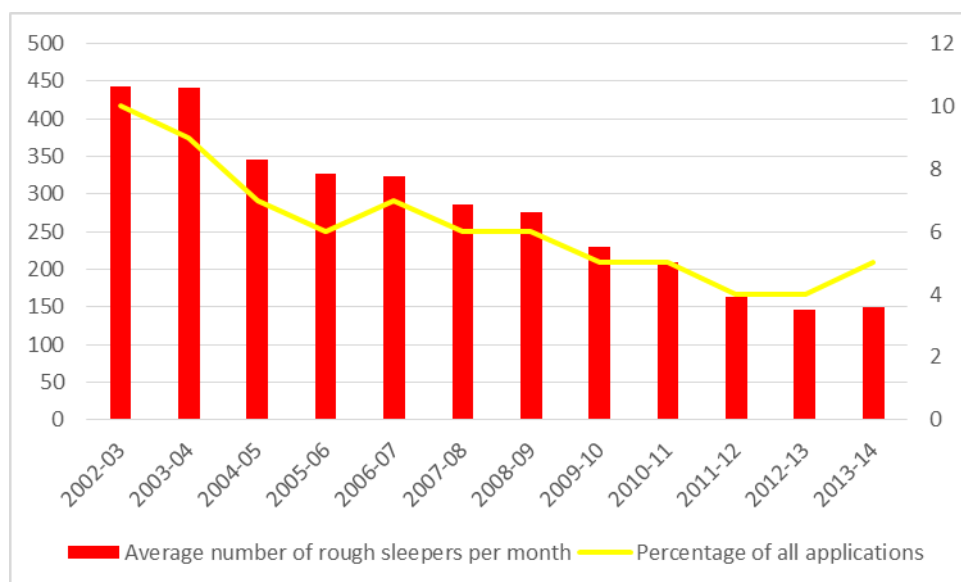
Rough sleeping

Chart 6: Average number of rough sleepers per month: 2002-03 to 2013-14

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[8] Scottish Government Youth Homelessness Analysis 2013-14 http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/RefTables/adhoc-analysis/youthhomeless201314

[9] General Register Office for Scotland Mid-2013 Population Estimates Scotland http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/theme/population/estimates/mid-year/mid-2013/index.html

Chart 7: Number of 'long term roofless' applying as homeless: 2007-08 to 2013-14

- The graphs above demonstrate the two data sources we have on rough sleeping – applicants are asked if they slept rough the night before making their homeless application, and when asked their previous housing circumstances applicants have an option of 'long term roofless'. Although they don't show a full picture of the situation, they do allow us to look at trends in rough sleeping in relation to those making homeless applications. Whilst the total number of homeless applications has been decreasing, last year the number of people who gave 'long term roofless' as their previous housing circumstance rose by 40 (+24%).

- Comparing the two data sources, it can be noted that the number of people sleeping rough the night before their application in 2013-14 was on average 149 per month – equating to around 1,788 a year. The number of people in 2013-14 who gave long term roofless as their previous housing circumstance in the year however was 204. That means there could be assumed to be around 1,500 people who at some point were rough sleeping but didn't class this as their previous accommodation. There therefore seems to be a distinction between 'emergency' and 'chronic' rough sleeping.

- These datasets only relate to those making homeless applications. Therefore they are likely to underestimate the true extent of rough sleeping in Scotland. As previously noted, Glasgow Homelessness Network reported that around a quarter

of rough sleeping service users did not make a presentation to Glasgow City Council for homelessness assistance.[10]

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[10] Glasgow Homelessness Network (2014) *Annual Homelessness Monitoring, Report: April 2013-March 2014* http://www.ghn.org.uk/HomelessnessMonitoring

3. Why are people homeless in Scotland?

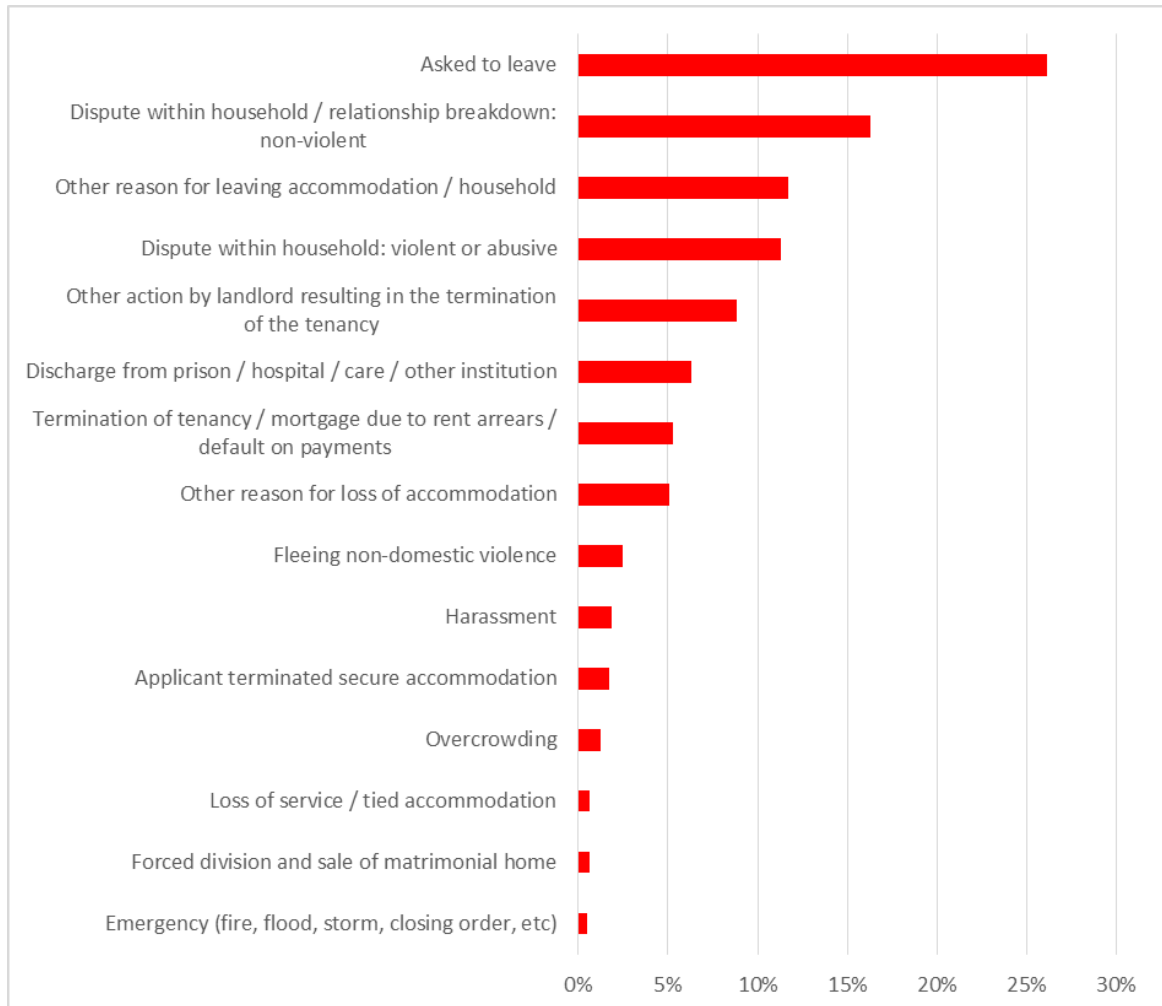## Reasons for applying as homeless

Chart 8: All applications by main reason for applying: 2013-14

- 28% of applicants apply for homelessness assistance as a result of relationship breakdown (violent or non-violent) and a further 26% are homeless after being asked to leave their current accommodation by another member of the household. This is particularly a problem for young people for whom two thirds of homeless applications are made as a result of a relationship breakdown or

being asked to leave[11]. The proportion of applicants applying for these reasons is largely unchanged since 2012-13.

Parental/family home/relatives
Friends/partners
Own property-private rented tenancy
Own property-LA Tenancy
Prison
Not Known/Refused
Own property - owning/buying
Own property-RSL Tenancy
Other
Long-term "sofa-surfing"
Supported accommodation
Hospital
Own property-tenancy secured through employment
Long-term roofless
Caravan/mobile home
Hostel (unsupported)
Bed & Breakfast
Armed services accommodation
Childrens residential accommodation

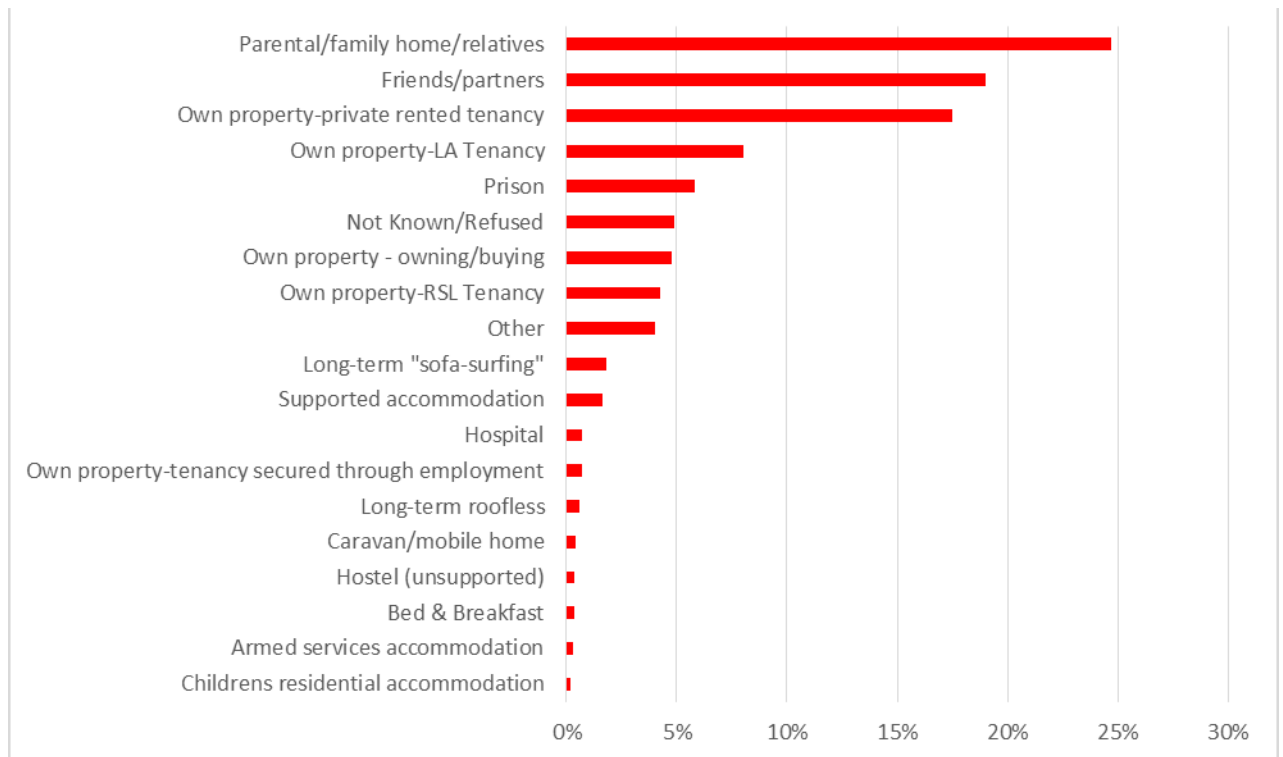0%   5%   10%   15%   20%   25%   30%

Chart 9: Homeless applications by previous accommodation type: 2013-14

- 44% of applications are made from people who previously lived with family, friends or their partners. This is in line with the statistic discussed above showing relationship breakdown is the main cause of homelessness.

- The split between the previous housing circumstances of homeless applicants has been largely stable in recent years. The proportion of homeless applications from owner occupation has decreased from 7% in 2010-11 to 5% in 2013-14, and the proportion of applications from the private rented sector has increased, as detailed in the next section.

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[11] Scottish Government Youth Homelessness Analysis 2013-14
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/RefTables/adhoc-analysis/youthhomeless201314
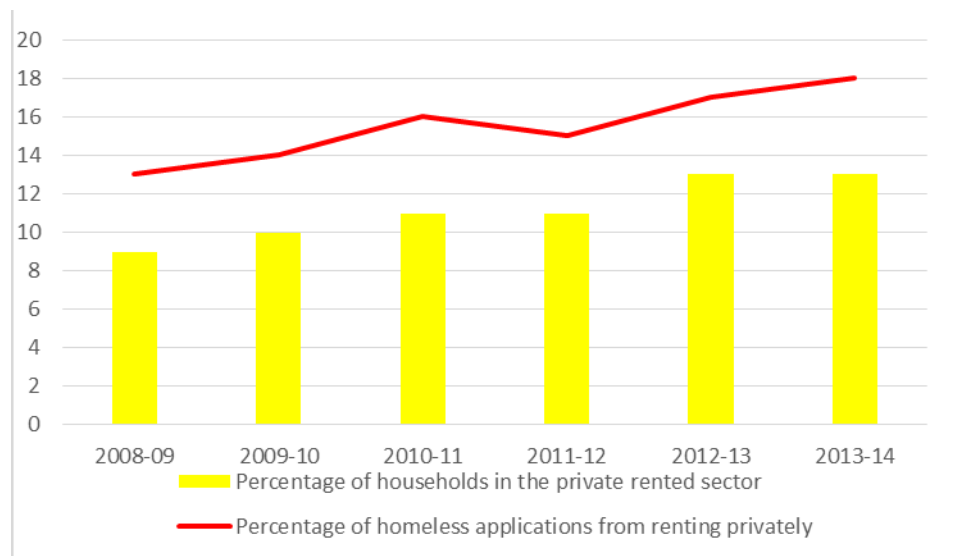
Homelessness and the private rented sector

Chart 10: Homeless applications from the private rented sector: 2008-09 to 2013-14*

*This graph was replaced on 4/2/2015 to correct for an error. The correction does not affect the text or conclusions from the analysis.

- The proportion of homeless applications from households renting in the private sector has grown from 13% (7,569) in 2008-09 to 18% (6,382) in 2013-14. Though this coincides with a growth in the number of households renting in the sector, the proportion of homeless applications is still disproportionate to the number of privately renting households, which in 2013 stood at 13% of all households in Scotland.[12]

- The proportional increase in homeless applications from the private rented sector may be because of the changing demographic in this sector. More people now call the private rented sector home. There are now over 310,000 households in the sector,[13] 28% of these are families with children and more children now live in the private rented sector than in local authority housing.[14] Other reasons for the

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[12] Scotland's People Annual Report: Results from 2013 Scottish Household Survey
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/08/7973/downloads

[13] Scotland's People Annual Report: Results from 2013 Scottish Household Survey
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/08/7973/downloads

[14] Statistics request to Scottish Household Survey analysis team by Shelter Scotland, 2014

increase may be attributed to benefit changes and rent increases impacting on affordability in the sector, leading to an increase in people struggling to pay their rent and resultant evictions.
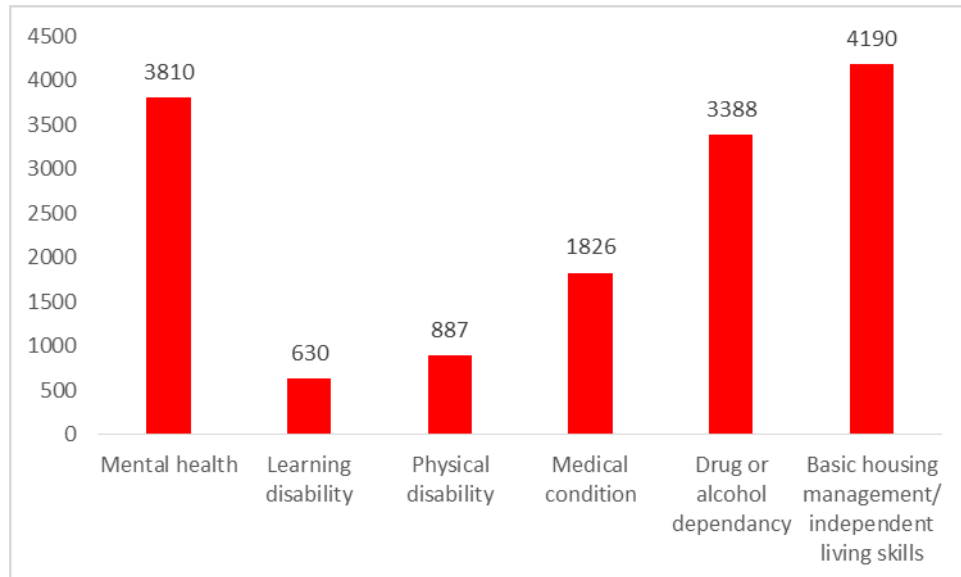
Support needs

Chart 12: Support needs of homeless households: 2013-14

- Just over a third (34%) of households assessed as homeless (9,999 households) were assessed as having one or more support needs. The main areas support was identified for were mental health (13% of all applicants), drug or alcohol dependency (12%), and a medical condition or physical or learning disability (6%, 3% and 2% respectively).

- From 1st June 2013 local authorities have had the duty to identify households who have been assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness who may have a support need, to assess whether the household needs support, and if so, to provide this. Statistics on the implementation of this new duty are still incomplete. In its latest statistics publication covering the period up to June 2014,

local authorities had reported that support was provided to 72% of those assessed under this new duty.[15]

- As there is no previous data, trends in the impact of the new duty cannot yet be established. However, alongside the demographic information we have, the existing data portrays a homeless population of whom a large proportion have additional support needs. We should expect that the new support duty will lead to improved support for households assessed as homeless and will lead to more sustained positive outcomes.

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[15] Scottish Government, Operation of the Homeless Persons legislation in Scotland: Quarterly Update: April-June 2014 http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/RefTables/HomelessAprtoJun2014
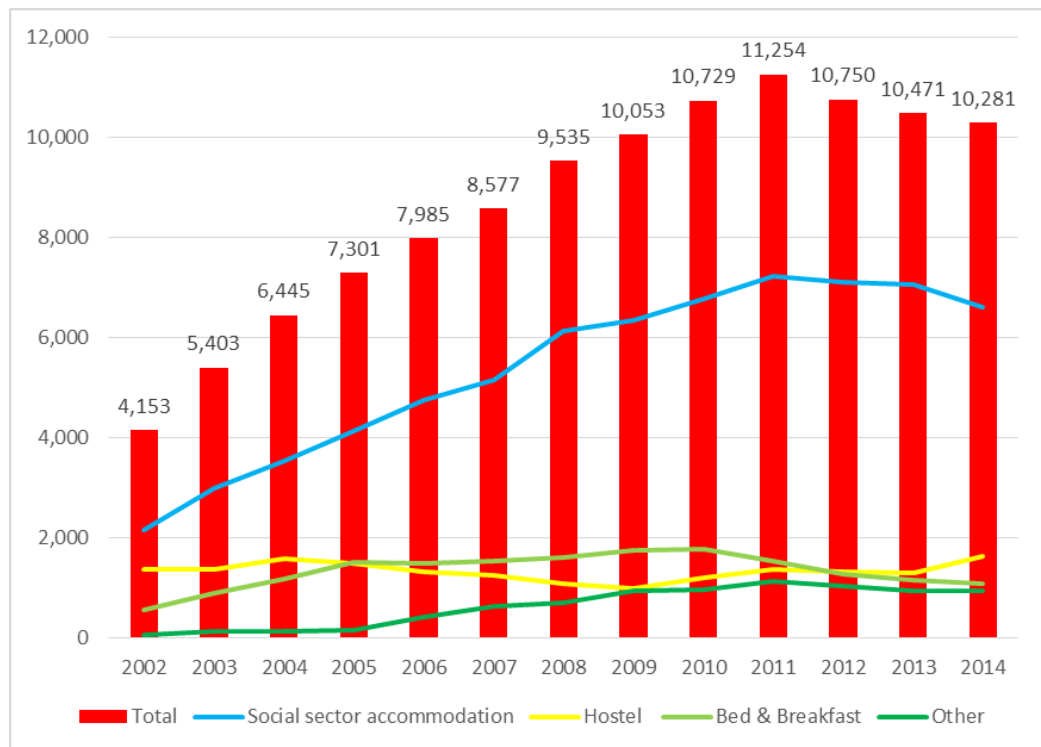
4. Temporary accommodation

Chart 13: Number of households in temporary accommodation by accommodation type: 2013-14
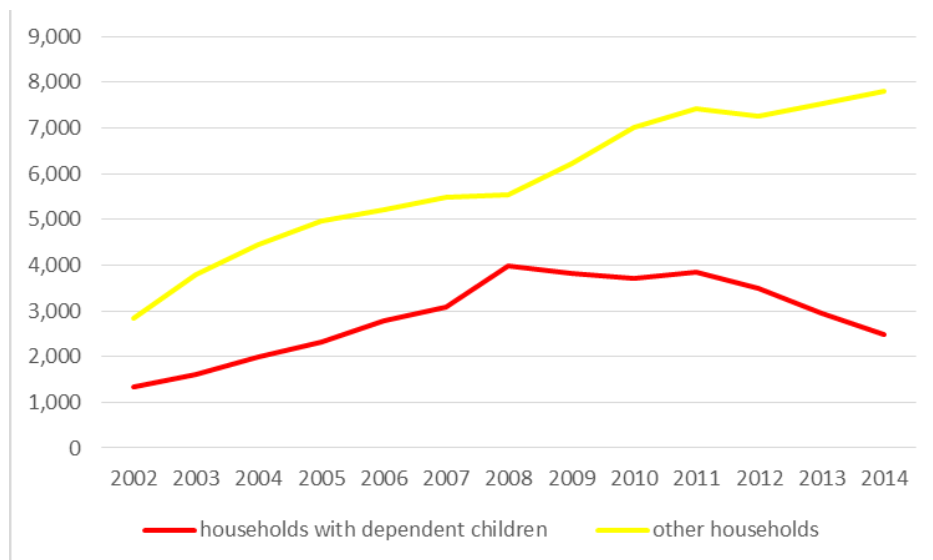

Chart 14: Number of households in temporary accommodation by household type: 2013-14

- The Scottish Government temporary accommodation statistics are a snapshot statistic – the numbers above are based on the number in temporary accommodation on 31st March each year. What we can't therefore deduce from the data is how long people are staying in temporary accommodation – however the Scottish Housing Regulator has recently published statistics on this.[16]

- Since a peak in 2011, there has been a decline in the total number of households in temporary accommodation. However, looking longer term the number of households in temporary accommodation is up by 60% comparing 2002 and 2014 levels. This is likely to be a consequence of the expansion of rights with the abolition of priority need. The resulting increase in pressure on social housing, combined with a lack of availability of permanent housing has resulted in a bottleneck.[17] There have been different patterns for different household types however.

- The number of households with children in temporary accommodation has been decreasing since 2008 – as has the number of children in temporary accommodation. This is a positive trend and is likely to be due in part to the impact of housing options in reducing applications from households with children.

- However, for households without dependent children it is a different story, with the number continuing to rise by 26% since 2008 – a disproportionate rise when you consider the falling number of households assessed as priority homeless. On 30th June 2014 there were 7,714 households without children in temporary accommodation, compared with 5,712 on 30th June 2008, a 26% increase.[18] This is a result of the 'bottlenecking' situation identified above, with local authorities struggling to meet the demand on them to provide temporary and permanent

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[16] Scottish Housing Regulator: Scottish Social Housing Chart http://www.scottishhousing regulator.gov.uk/what-we-do/how-we-regulate/scottish-social-housing-charter. Shelter Scotland have requested some additional data from Local Authorities to add to this analysis.

[17] See section on supply for more analysis of increased pressure on social housing.

[18] Scottish Government, Operation of the Homeless Persons legislation in Scotland: Quarterly Temporary Accommodation Reference Tables http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/ Browse/Housing-Regeneration/RefTables/HomelessAprtoJun2014

accommodation for a changing clientele (see section 2). This reflects the lack of one bed properties available to move people into as settled accommodation, coupled with the fact most people affected by the removal of priority need, and therefore the source of the changed demand on local authorities, were single homeless households.

• For households with previously no or few rights to housing, to be provided with temporary accommodation is a significant step forward. However long term reliance on temporary accommodation is not in the best interests of those experiencing homelessness nor is the use of this expensive resource sustainable for local authorities.[19]

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[19] Audit Scotland's (2013) *Housing in Scotland* report includes some analysis on the cost of temporary accommodation to councils, estimating that councils spend about £27 million more by housing people in temporary accommodation, rather than in a permanent home. Audit Scotland, July 2013, *Housing in Scotland* http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/utilities/ search_report.php?id=2295
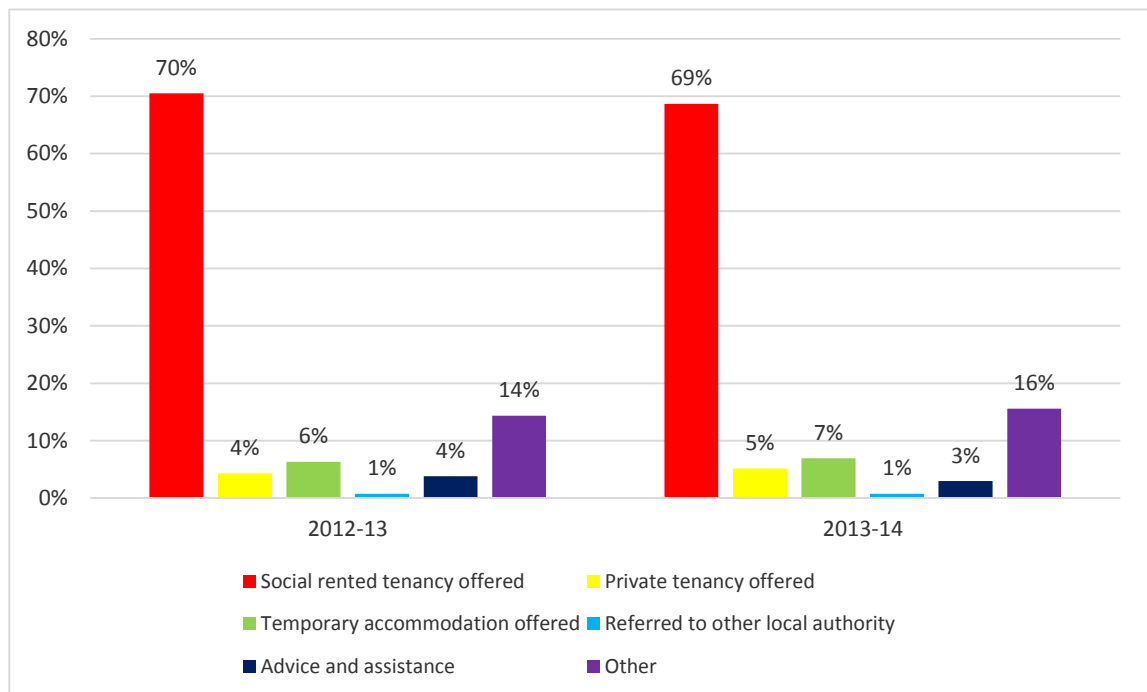
5. Outcomes

Action taken by local authority

Chart 15: Duty discharge action taken by local authority for priority homeless when removing lost contacts[20] [21] [22]

- In 2013-14, a total of 29,264 duty discharge actions[23] were taken for households assessed as priority homeless.

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[20] Some cases may have been assessed prior to the abolition of priority need, but have only had their final rehousing outcome in 2013-14, so for clarity this term has been used.

[21] An application outcome is marked as 'lost contact' if the local authority has been unable to make contact with the applicant after a minimum of 28 days, at any point in the application.

[22] This category of 'other' includes Short Scottish Secure tenancies and interim/non-permanent accommodation offered under Interim Accommodation Regulations/ Homeless Persons (provision of Non-Permanent Accommodation) (Scotland) Regulations 2010, and applicants who have been given a prison sentence.

[23] A 'duty discharge action' is the last action taken by the local authority under their statutory homelessness duties. Note: the figure of 29,264 includes 4,346 households with whom contact was lost before the local authority had discharged their duty. Chart 15 does not include these lost contacts.

- The proportion of households offered temporary accommodation has risen slightly from 6% to 7% (chart 15), which could be because of the proportional rise in intentionality decisions. This is because local authorities have a duty to provide temporary accommodation for a reasonable period, as well as advice and assistance, for those classed as intentionally homeless.

- The use of private rented tenancies to discharge duties has also gone up from 4% to 5%. This should be monitored given the statistics showing the growing number of applications from the private rented sector and relative lack of security of tenure in this accommodation type.
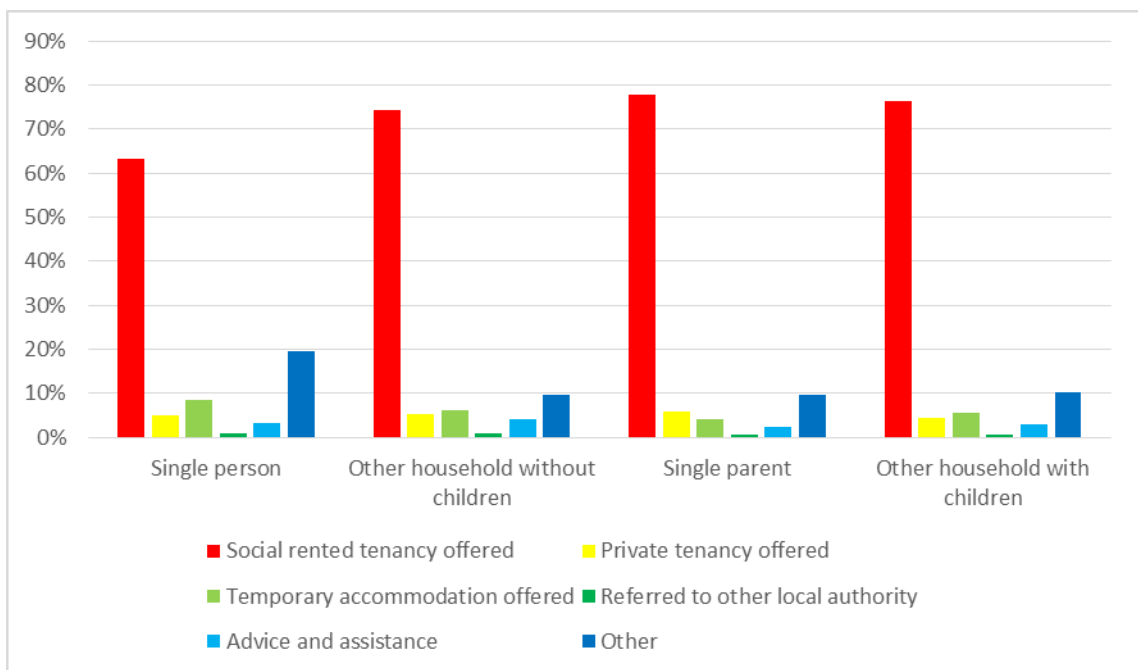

Chart 16: Duty discharge action taken by local authority for priority homeless households by household type: 2013-14

- Excluding lost contacts, 63% of priority homeless single people were offered a social rented tenancy, less than the average of 76% for the other household types. This difference is made up by more single people being offered temporary accommodation (8% compared to 5%) and offers of 'other' (19% compared to 10%).

Repeat homelessness

- It is important that the discharge of homelessness duties by local authorities leads to a sustainable outcome. Homeless households who re-apply and are re-assessed as homeless within a year of an earlier instance of homelessness are identified in the official statistics as 'repeat homeless'.

- In 2013-14 there were 1,691 households who were assessed as repeat homeless. This was 5.8% of all homelessness assessments in the period.

- The number of repeat homeless has been steadily declining, from 3,887 (9.8%) repeat applications in 2002-03, though the proportion of repeat applications has remained about the same for the last 5 years.

- Most of this improvement comes from a reduction in the proportion of repeat applications by single people. It is likely this is because higher proportions of single people are getting settled accommodation as the outcome of their initial application due to the removal of priority need – and therefore are less likely to apply as homeless again.

- The proportion of repeat applications remains highest among single people, and single men are more likely to repeat than single women. With the move towards homelessness prevention and housing options, and with the introduction of the new support duty, this figure of repeat applications is likely to continue to fall.

- The number of repeat applications varies hugely dependent on local authority. The percentage of repeat homeless applications in 2013-14 was highest in Renfrewshire (736, 10.6%) and City of Edinburgh (3,930, 10.2%), with repeats in both these local authority areas representing over a tenth of all homeless applications in the year.[24] This figure is quite changeable year to year within local authorities but suggests a need for good support both before and after the local

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[24] In 2013, levels of repeat homelessness was highest in Renfrewshire, Edinburgh, West Dunbartonshire, South Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway, compared with Dumfries and Galloway, Edinburgh, Inverclyde, Eilean Siar and Renfrewshire in 2012.

authority have discharged their homelessness duty, to ensure that good outcomes can be maintained.
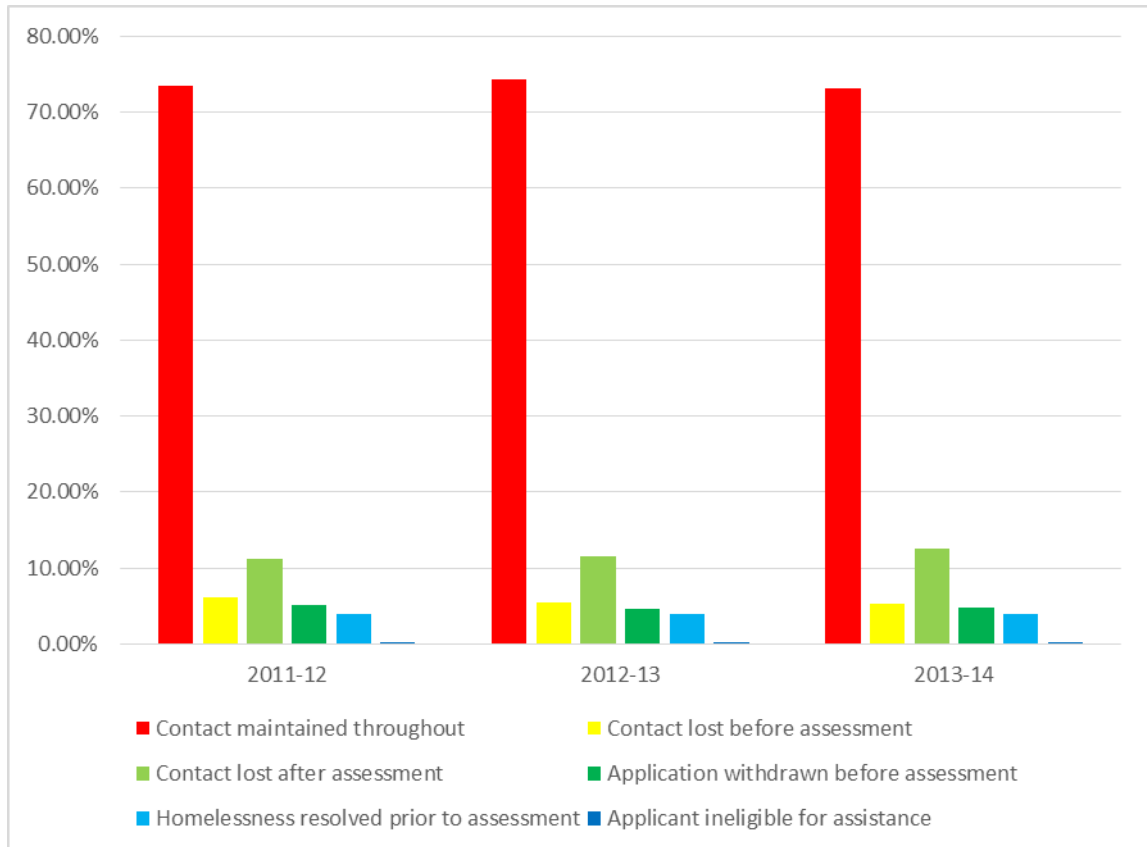
Lost contact

Chart 17: All applications closed by whether contact was maintained: 2011-12 to 2013-14

- Contact was maintained with the applicant from application through to duty discharge for 73% of applicant whose case was closed in 2013-14. For around 4% of cases closed, the household's homelessness was resolved before the local authority completed its homelessness assessment, just under 5% withdrew their application before an assessment was made and for around 18% – 6,437 households – contact between the local authority and the applicant household was lost at some stage during the application.

- Therefore, nearly a fifth of homeless cases were closed without resolution of the homelessness application. This is an issue which needs to be looked into further.

In some cases the household's circumstances may have changed, for example they may have found alternative accommodation or moved back in with a family member. However it is unlikely this was the case for all of this group.

- What is particularly surprising perhaps is the 4,346 households with whom contact was lost **after** they were assessed as homeless and in priority need and whom the local authority therefore had a duty to help. It is single people who predominate this group, both in number and in proportion – contact was lost with 19% of single person applicants who were assessed as homeless and in priority need in 2013-14.

6. Housing supply

Demand			
Local Authority waiting lists[25]	115,500 (2004)	150,500 (2014)	**Up 30%**
Population[26]	5,068,500 (2003)	5,327,700 (2013)	**Up 5%**
Households[27]	2,230,796 (2003)	2,401,797 (2013)	**Up 8%**
Supply[28]			
Social Sector Housing Stock	654,730 (2003)	595,544 (2013)	**Down 9%**
New build completions	23,822 (2003-04)	14,737 (2013-14)	**Down 39%**

Figure 18: Factors affecting the demand and supply of housing – comparing now and 10 years ago

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[25] Scottish Government, *Housing Statistics for Scotland - Housing lists, August 2014* http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/HSfS/HousingLists This figure reflects an unmet need for local authority homes but not all social stock, given that it does not include housing associations which is particularly problematic for local authority areas where stock transfer has taken place. The 2013 Scottish Household Survey introduced a new figure which accounts for some of the limitations of the 150,500 number.

[26] GROS *Mid-2013 Population Estimates Scotland* http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/theme/population/estimates/mid-year/mid-2013/index.html

[27] GROS *Estimates of households and dwellings in Scotland: 2013* http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/theme/households/estimates/2013/index.html

[28] Scottish Government, *Housing Statistics for Scotland dataset* http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/HSfS

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- Homelessness and housing supply are intrinsically linked, and the ability of local authorities to fulfil their duties under the homelessness legislation is affected by supply of social housing in their area.

- Currently, Scotland is in a housing crisis, with supply not meeting levels of demand. Supply levels are being affected by slow rates of social house building and private construction, as well as a decline in the existing stock through right to buy and demolition. At the same time, housing demand is rising with household numbers at 2.4 million in 2013, a 171,000 increase (+8%) from 10 years ago.[29] Audit Scotland's 2013 'Housing in Scotland' report detailed the current pressures on supply levels: *"it could be more than 20 years before there are enough new homes to meet the projected increase in households in any one year"*.[30]

- Local authorities have to try to meet their increased duties to homeless households since the priority need test was abolished within this pressured environment, balancing the proportion of social lets to those on the waiting list and those applying through the homelessness route. Currently 1 in 3 social lets are made to homeless households. Though RSLs and local authorities provide roughly equal shares of social lets, RSLs provided slightly less homeless lets proportionally in 2013-14, between 38 and 40% of all homeless lets compared to local authorities who provided between 60 and 62% of all homeless lets in the year.[31]

- There are sharp differences between local authority areas in the proportion of available social lets needed in order for local authorities to meet their homelessness duties. In 2013-14, 60% of all social lets in Edinburgh (excluding

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[29] GROS *Estimates of households and dwellings in Scotland: 2013* http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/theme/households/estimates/2013/index.html

[30] Audit Scotland July 2013, *Housing in Scotland* http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/utilities/search_report.php?id=2295

[31] Scottish Government, *Social Sector housing tables, January 2014*, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/HSfS/socialtables

transfers) were given to homeless households compared with 12% in East Ayrshire.[32]

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[32] Scottish Government, *Social Sector housing tables, January 2014,*
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/HSfS/socialtables