

# Research report

## Temporary accommodation: four years on

December 2006

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# Shelter

## Temporary accommodation: four years on

### Summary

Temporary accommodation provision is by far the single biggest part of the homelessness services provided by local authorities. However, there is evidence to suggest that the duties around the provision of temporary accommodation are among the hardest to achieve.

In 2004 Shelter Scotland published research into how local authorities were coping with the increased requirements to provide temporary accommodation to all households assessed as homeless. This research found that council's were struggling to comply with these additional temporary accommodation duties.

This report details the findings of further research in this area, conducted in autumn 2006. Three short online surveys were conducted to provide a snapshot of the perceptions of a range of professionals either working in temporary accommodation (through a local authority, RSL or voluntary sector organisation) and those working to provide advice and/or support services to homeless households.

The research findings indicate that:

- The duty to provide or arrange temporary accommodation for all households assessed as homeless is still a struggle to meet.
- The main obstacles to accommodation are lack of supply and applicants presenting with support needs that cannot be met within the available accommodation.
- The pressures that are being experienced are expected to continue over the coming two years.
- There has been a marked increase in local authorities engaging partners in other parts of the housing sector in delivering temporary accommodation. This is also expected to continue.

### Introduction and background

In 2004 Shelter published *Temporary accommodation in Scotland: two years on*. This report detailed research on how local authorities were coping with increased duties to provide temporary accommodation. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 extended the duty to provide temporary accommodation to all households assessed as homeless by councils.

Thirty-four staff members from local authorities in Scotland responded to that survey and the overwhelming finding was that local authorities were struggling to meet the extended duty to provide temporary accommodation. Only 18 per cent felt that they

could provide temporary accommodation to all of the households that they assessed as homeless. The most common reason for not meeting the duty was a lack of suitable accommodation.

There had been an increase in the use of furnished flats as temporary accommodation as well as an increase in the use of bed and breakfast establishments. However, these developments were not seen as providing enough additional capacity and some local authorities were exploring the options for partnerships with other housing providers in the RSL, voluntary and private sectors to help meet demand.

At that time, there was a perceived need for both more temporary accommodation and also greater variation in the types of accommodation available, particularly in relation to supported accommodation.

### **Developments in the last two years**

Since the publication of *Temporary accommodation in Scotland: two years on* there have been a number of developments impacting on the duty to provide temporary accommodation to all homeless households.

The Unsuitable Accommodation Order (2004) limited the use of certain types of accommodation (typically bed and breakfast) for use by homeless households containing children or pregnant women. While this has resulted in an overall reduction in the use of this type of accommodation for these types of households some local authorities have been unable to meet the terms of the Order. Also, some councils have reported knock on effects of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order (2004) in increasing the use of these types of accommodation services for other homeless households such as single people.<sup>1</sup>

There also remains evidence that some local authorities are not meeting demand in providing temporary accommodation for all homeless households. In Communities Scotland's Regulations and Inspections reports, several of the local authority homelessness services that have been inspected to date have been criticised for failing to provide temporary accommodation to households who should have been accommodated.

While there is a perception that difficulties persist in meeting temporary accommodation duties, there is also awareness that some local authorities have developed new and innovative services and provision, attempting to resolve shortfalls in the availability of temporary accommodation. These have included:

- Increased use of the private rented sector.

- Increased provision of self-contained accommodation and furnished accommodation.
- Increased engagement of RSL's and voluntary sector organisations in providing temporary accommodation.
- Changes in the management of temporary accommodation and in the way that homelessness applications are assessed.
- Alterations to the priority that homeless households receive in allocations policies for permanent rehousing in order to move people through temporary accommodation faster.

In light of these developing circumstances, and prior to hosting a conference on temporary accommodation on 29 November 2006,<sup>2</sup> we were keen to update these research findings to provide a snapshot of what the main issues are in temporary accommodation provision and to look at how local authorities and partner organisations are responding to the ongoing challenges of their temporary accommodation duties.

## Methodology

As mentioned above, many of the services being developed to meet demand for temporary accommodation involve local authorities engaging partner organisations in other parts of the housing sector. Therefore we decided to run three separate, short on-line questionnaires to gather opinions from a range of service providers:

- local authority homelessness services staff
- staff of RSL/ voluntary sector organisations providing accommodation
- staff involved in the provision of advice and support services to homeless households.

The questionnaires looked at people's perceptions and opinions on a few key areas of temporary accommodation rather than attempting to provide a comprehensive or detailed overview of current issues and trends. Although the questionnaires were intended to cover similar issues, they were slightly different for each of the target audience to reflect the different roles and responsibilities of those involved in these areas of service provision. The questions were based on similar ones that were asked in the research conducted in 2004.

The questionnaires were available online through the Shelter website. The survey was publicised through the marketing of the temporary accommodation conference and through trade press outlets in housing and homelessness.

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<sup>2</sup> A report of this conference is available at [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

All of the questionnaires were completely anonymous. No information on individual respondents or the organisation that they were employed by were requested or collected.

Copies of the three different questionnaires are attached at Appendices A, B And C.

## Results

A total of 68 completed questionnaires were received. The breakdown of these is as follows:

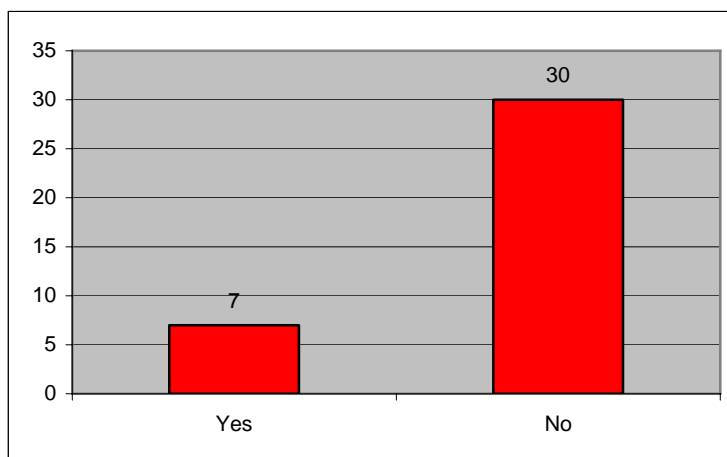
<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Completed surveys</b>
Local Authority	37
RSL/ Voluntary sector accommodation provider	13
Advice/ Support services	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>

As some of the questionnaires were slightly different across each of the target audiences the results are presented separately. However, some of the issues highlighted and information gathered are similar across the three questionnaires and where appropriate these are considered together in the discussion of the results below.

## Local authority respondents

### Question 1

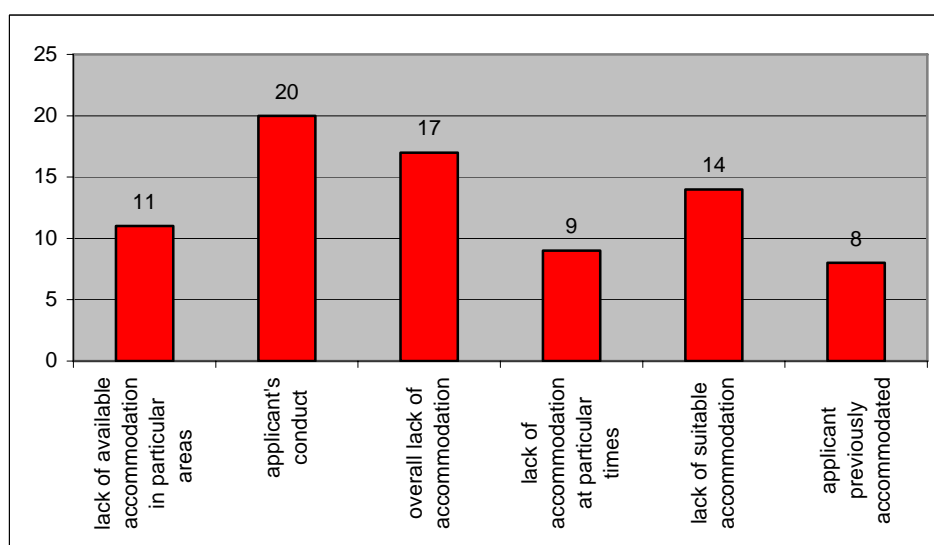
Do you think that you are able to provide/ arrange temporary accommodation for all of the households that you assess as homeless?



Seven local authority respondents (19 per cent) felt that they were able to provide or arrange temporary accommodation for all households assessed as homeless. Thirty (82 per cent) felt that this was not possible.

### Question 2

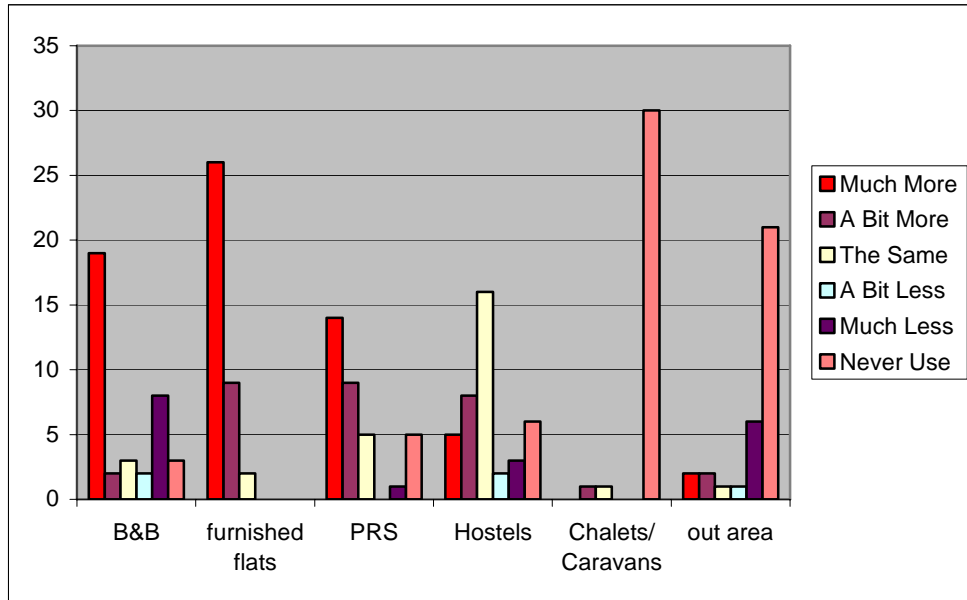
We then asked for those who had indicated in question one that they were not able to provide temporary accommodation for all homeless households what the reason for this was. Respondents were asked to indicate up to three responses from a list of potential reasons provided. Space for responses outwith these was also provided.



The applicant's conduct was the most commonly indicated response as to why a household was unable to be accommodated (20 respondents). There were also a significant number of responses indicating a lack of accommodation as the most significant contributor to local authorities being unable to meet temporary accommodation duties. Seventeen respondents indicated an overall lack of accommodation, 14 a lack of suitable accommodation, 11 a lack of accommodation particular areas and nine a lack of accommodation at particular times as being contributing factors to households not getting access to temporary accommodation.

### Question 3

To look at trends in the provision of temporary accommodation we asked participants to indicate what changes they had perceived in their use of various types of accommodation in the last two years.



The clearest pattern within the responses is a perceived increase in the number of furnished self-contained accommodation being used as temporary accommodation (26 responses). There is a strong indication that the use of bed and breakfast temporary accommodation has also increased (19 responses) although there are a significant number of respondents who feel that they use this accommodation type much less (eight respondents). This is the only type of accommodation provision that is listed as having decreased in its use although the practice of accommodating people outwith the local authority's area is shown as having reduced slightly over the past two years.

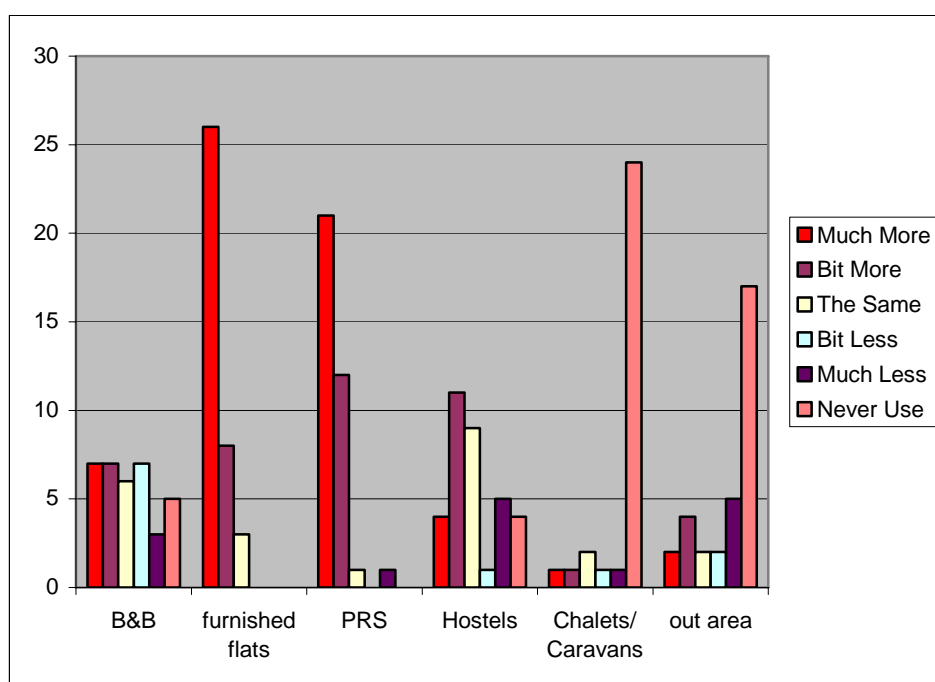
There is also a significant increase in the use of the private sector to accommodate homeless households. 14 respondents indicated that the use of this accommodation had increased much more and a further nine indicated that it had risen a bit more.

Nobody responded that they were using private sector accommodation less or that they never used it.

It appears that the level of hostel use is growing more slowly or remaining relatively static. Sixteen respondents indicated that there had been no change in their level of hostel use in the past two years, while eight indicated that their use of hostels had gone up a bit, with a further five reporting much more use of this accommodation type.

#### Question 4

In relation to the same accommodation types we asked how local authority staff anticipated their use to change over the next two years.



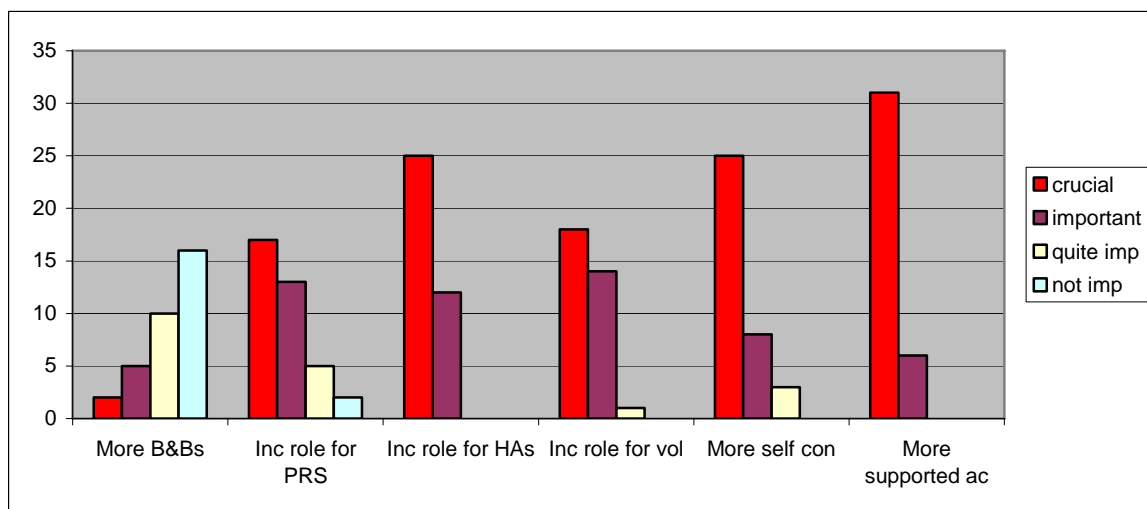
There is a clear expectation that the use of furnished flats and the private sector will continue to increase significantly in this period, 26 and 21 respondents respectively indicated that these options would be used much more. There is also an expectation that hostels will be used more but not to such a significant degree as self contained and private sector accommodation with four respondents saying much more and 11 saying a bit more.

There is no clear indication of how respondents view the future use of bed and breakfast accommodation. Seven respondents expected to use this type of accommodation much more, a further seven indicated that they would use it a bit more and another seven a bit less. Six respondents expected their use of bed and breakfast to remain the same.



### Question 5

The final question asked respondents to indicate how important particular accommodation types would be in ensuring an adequate supply of temporary accommodation over the next two years.

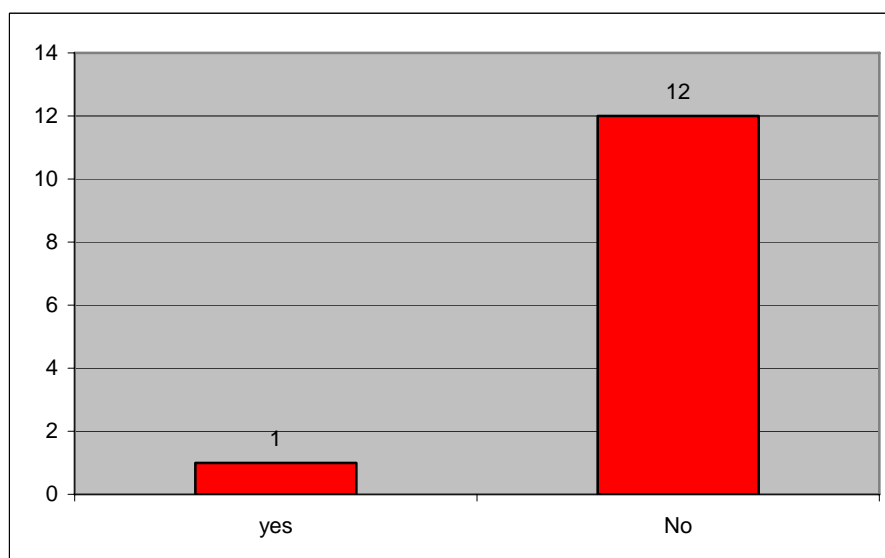


The respondents clearly feel that there is a need to increase provision across a range of temporary accommodation types with an increase of all of the available option except bed and breakfast being predominantly viewed as crucial in being able to fulfil temporary accommodation duties.

## RSL and voluntary sector accommodation providers

### Question 1

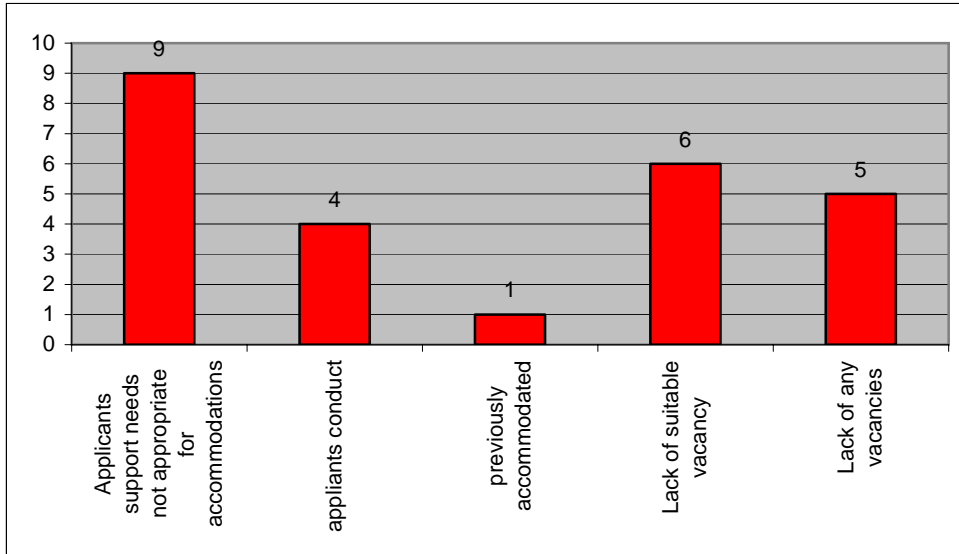
Participants were asked whether or not they were able to accommodate all of the referrals that they received for temporary accommodation.



Only one respondent felt that they could accommodate all of the referrals received while 12 believed that they could not achieve this.

### Question 2

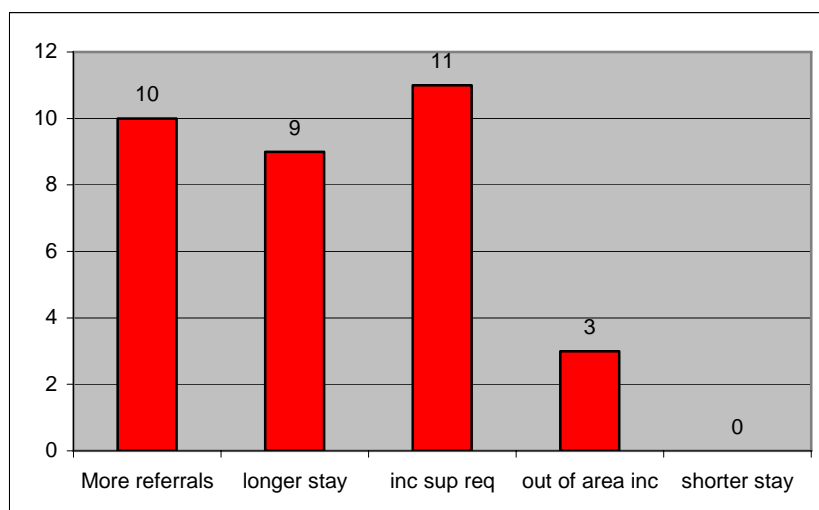
We asked those who felt unable to accommodate all of the referrals received why this was the case, allowing participants to indicate up to three of a list of potential reasons. Space was also provided to allow for any other reasons that people wished to highlight.



The most common reason provided for being unable to accommodate was that the applicant's support needs were not appropriate for the service with nine respondents indicating that this was the case. The next most common reasons were both related to availability with six respondents stating that they were unable to accept referrals because of a lack of suitable vacancies whereas five stated that this occurred due to a lack of vacancies overall.

### Question 3

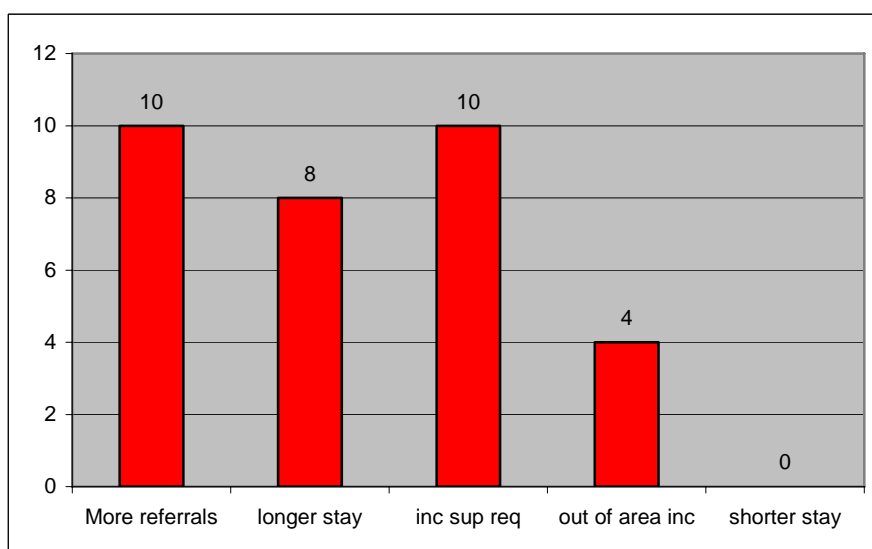
We asked respondents what changes they had perceived in the provision of their accommodation over the last two years.



Eleven of the thirteen participants felt that there was an increase in the support needs of residents over the past two years. Increased demand for accommodation was also highlighted in the responses that ten participants feeling that they are receiving an increased volume of referrals and nine believing that residents are being accommodated for longer periods. Only three respondents, however, believed that there had been an increase in the amount of referrals that they received from outwith their area. None of the survey respondents felt that residents were being accommodated for shorter periods.

#### Question 4

We then asked what changes respondents anticipated over the coming two years.

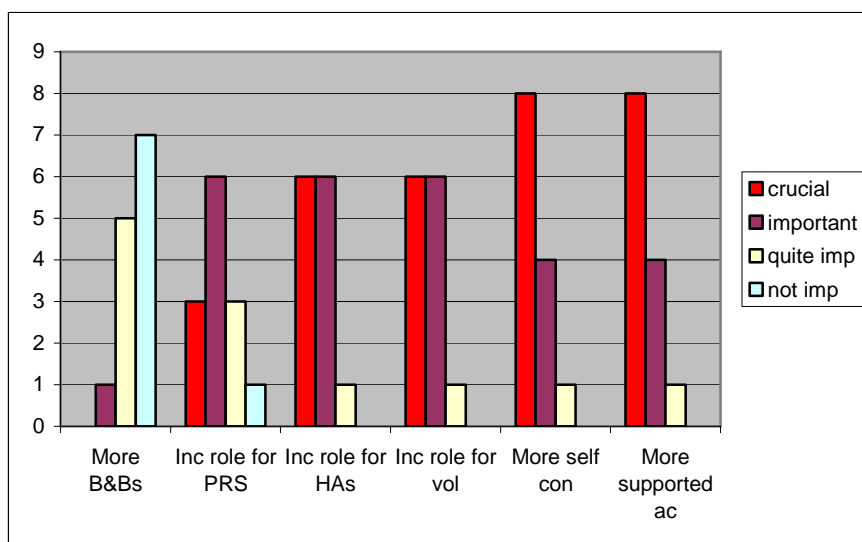


The developments experienced in the past two years appear to be expected to continue. Accommodation providers anticipate an increased rate of referrals and increased support needs among residents (ten responses each). A significant amount also expected residents to be accommodated for longer periods (eight

responses). Four respondents expected to receive more referrals from out of their area and nobody expected residents to experience, on average, shorter stays within their accommodation.

### Question 5

We asked how important participants believed various temporary accommodation services to be in ensuring adequate supplies were available to meet demand over the next two years.

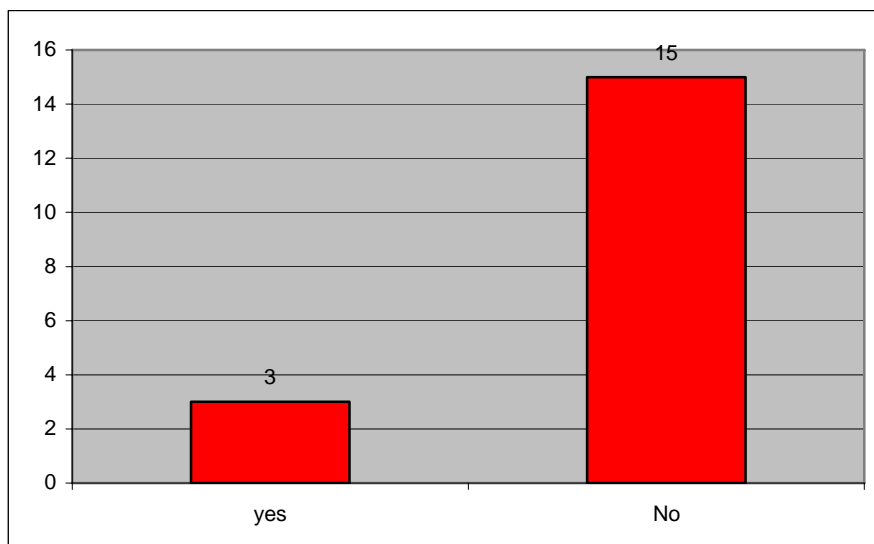


Again there is a perception that increasing provision for most of the available options is crucial for temporary accommodation supply to meet demand over this period. In particular increasing provision for supported accommodation and self-contained accommodation were seen as the most crucial areas for provision to be increased.

## Advice/support services staff

### Question 1

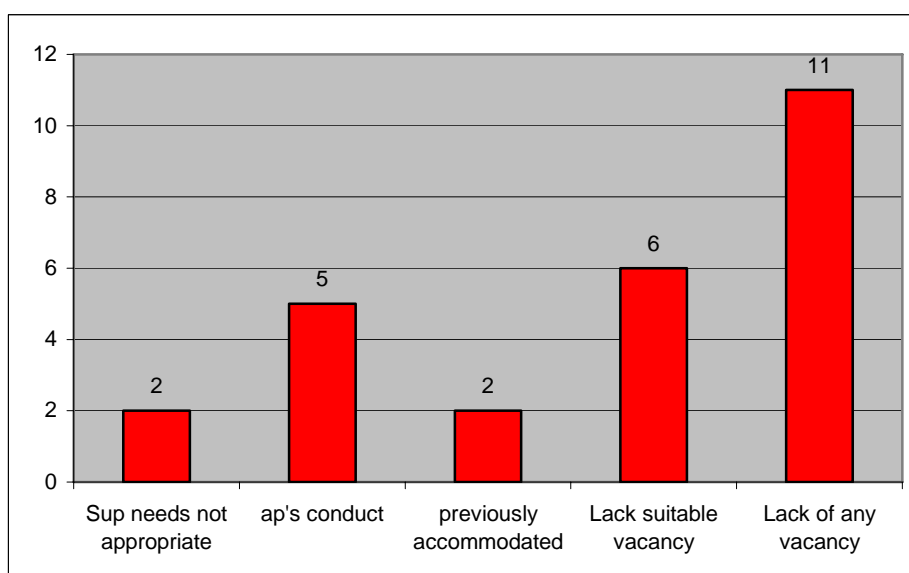
We asked whether staff involved in the provision of advice and/ or support services to homeless households felt that their homeless services users were able to access temporary accommodation when required.



The clear result is the perception that not everyone is getting access to temporary accommodation. Only three respondents (17 per cent) believed that all of the homeless households that they work with were able to access temporary accommodation when required.

### Question 2

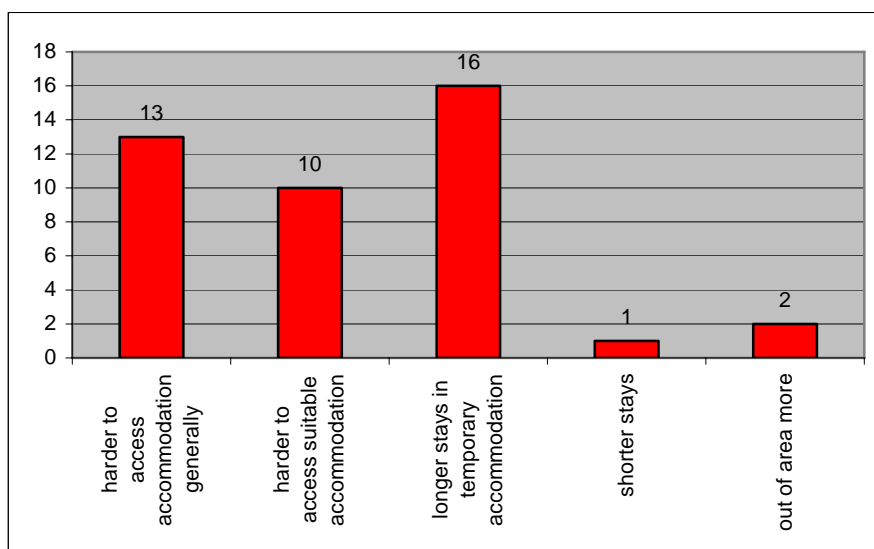
We then asked for those who had indicated that not all of their service users were able to access temporary accommodation, the reasons behind this.



Among these respondents, supply issues were perceived to be at the heart of the reasons behind their service users being unable to access temporary accommodation. Eleven indicated that an overall lack of vacancies caused this while a further six responded that a lack of suitable accommodation contributed to households being unable to access temporary accommodation.

### Question 3

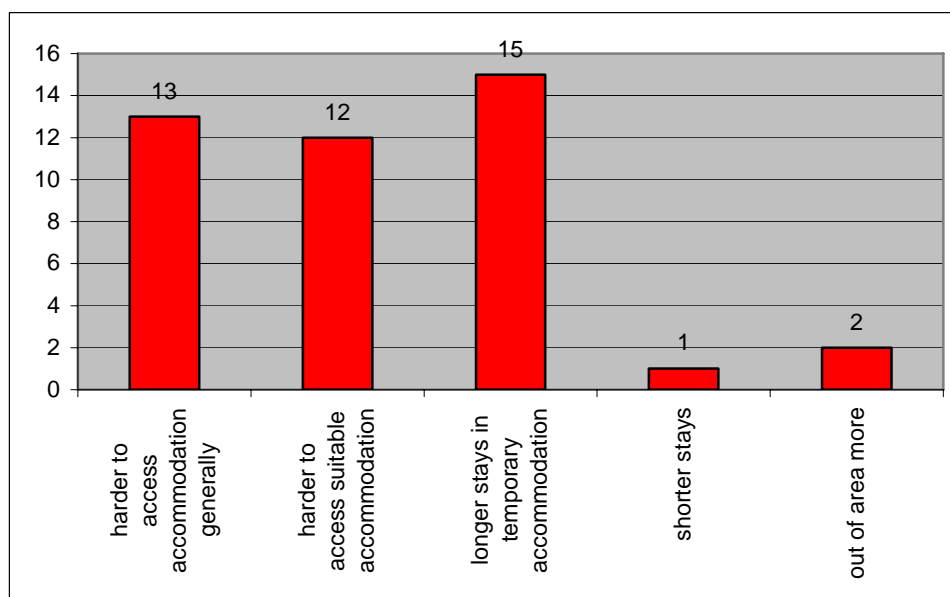
We asked what changes had been perceived in the past two years in relation to the temporary accommodation services accessed by service users.



The perceived importance of supply issues is again highlighted within these findings. The most common perceived development is that people are staying longer in temporary accommodation (16 responses). The other factors that were widely indicated by participants were that that it had become harder for service users to access temporary accommodation generally (13 responses) and that it had become harder to access suitable accommodation (ten responses).

### Question 4

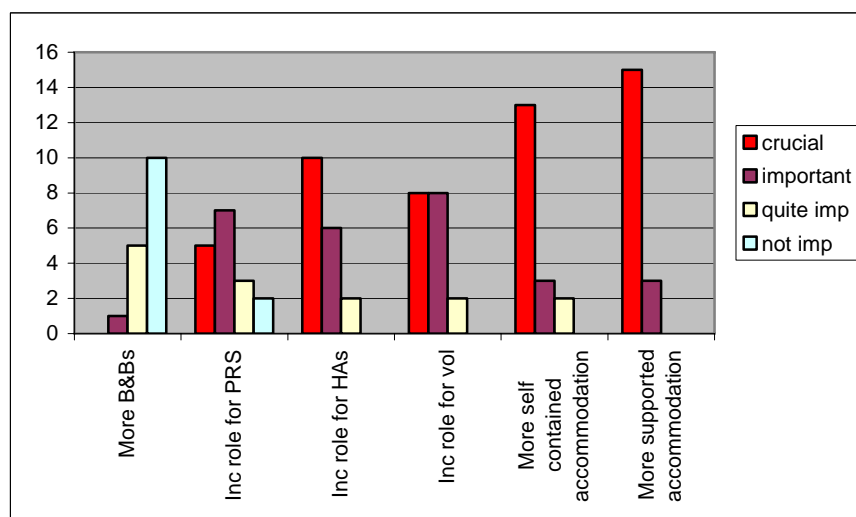
We asked what changes respondents anticipated over the next two years in the provision of temporary accommodation services.



The most common expectation is that services users will be resident for longer periods in temporary accommodation with 15 responses. Furthermore, the perception that it would continue to be harder to access accommodation at all, as well as suitable accommodation was widely held among respondents with 13 and 12 indicating these opinions respectively.

### Question 5

The final question in this survey asked respondents to indicate the importance of various accommodation types in ensuring that there is an adequate supply of temporary accommodation over the next two years.



The pattern of responses is similar to the other two surveys in that people mainly see an increase in both self-contained and supported accommodation provision as being crucial over the next two years. There is support in evidence for an increase in the

roles of the voluntary sector and RSLs in meeting demand. While there is recognition of the role of the private sector, support for increasing this type of provision is less established than in the other surveys. The majority of respondents do not see increasing bed and breakfast provision as being important.

## Discussion and conclusions

The clearest conclusion that can be drawn from this survey is that local authorities and partner agencies are continuing to struggle to meet the duty to provide temporary accommodation to all homeless households. While it does appear that councils, in responding to this challenge, have engaged a wider range of partner organisations to assist in meeting the duty it seems that demand still outstrips supply.

There are two main factors within the survey that are attributed to prevent homeless households being provided with temporary accommodation. Simply there is not enough accommodation available and that what is available does not always meet the support needs of the homeless households who are trying to access them.

There are also clear expectations that the high level of demand for both accommodation and support will continue in coming years. In addition, survey respondents also anticipate that people will be spending longer periods of time in temporary accommodation. This may reflect concerns about the overall lack of affordable rented housing for permanent allocations available to local authorities and RSLs, which can delay people being in temporary accommodation being able to move on.

### Support needs of homeless households

The survey results indicate that one of the most common reasons for people not being accommodated are issues around their support needs not being suitable for the accommodation and support that is available. This is likely to relate to the applicant's conduct as being the reason that a household is unable to access accommodation which was also commonly cited as a contributing reason to people not getting access to temporary accommodation. This finding appears to be supported by research recently published by the Scottish Executive on the Support Needs of Intentionally Homeless Households<sup>3</sup>. This found that while provision of specialist supported accommodation was reasonable widespread for some client groups, for example, 29 of Scotland's 32 local authorities have specialist supported accommodation for women and families who have been victims of domestic abuse and 26 councils have specialist provision for young people. However, the Executive's report also concluded that some other groups were less well served. Examples included people suffering from multiple or complex difficulties (for whom nine local authorities contain specialist provision), people with problematic alcohol use (six local

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<sup>3</sup> Rosengard et al (2006) The Support Needs of Intentionally Homeless Households; Scottish Executive



authorities), people with problematic drug use (five local authorities) and people with a history of antisocial behaviour (two local authorities).

### **Increasing accommodation options**

There does appear to have been significant efforts made to increase the available pool of temporary accommodation in the time since Shelter previously undertook research in this area. Consistently across the three surveys, respondents had recognised the increasing engagement of accommodation providers, other than the local authority, in meeting demand for temporary accommodation as well as efforts to provide more self-contained and furnished accommodation from the council's own stock. This latter service was not without consequences. When local authorities use their own or RSL self contained housing stock to increase temporary accommodation provision, this reduces the amount of permanent housing stock available, as one participant noted in the comments that were received through the survey:

*'We need more permanent, not temporary, accommodation.'*

*Local authority respondent*

It is also clear from the respondents' answers across the surveys that there are clear expectations that extending the range of accommodation service providing temporary accommodation of accommodation providers will continue in the near future with a wide range of partner organisations expected to become involved.

### **Bed and breakfasts**

The survey results indicate that while some local authorities have reduced their use of bed and breakfast accommodation, for others this has not been possible and some report that their use of this type of accommodation has actually increased. There is a clear desire, though, to move away from this type of provision, shown in the answers to the last question where there was very little support shown for the expansion of using bed and breakfast accommodation to ensure an adequate supply of temporary accommodation in the coming months and years.

### **Out of area placements**

The survey results indicate that the use of out of area placements is not particularly widespread and also that the use of these has not increased in recent years. As the Scottish Executive considers extending the terms of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order, this result may indicate that the impact of this on temporary accommodation provision may not be too problematic.

## Annex A: questionnaire for local authority staff

1. Do you think you are able to provide or arrange temporary accommodation for everyone you assess as homeless?

Yes

No

2. If you are unable to provide temporary accommodation in some cases, what are the reasons for this? (Please indicate up to three responses)

Lack of accommodation in certain areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Applicant's conduct	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of accommodation overall	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of accommodation at certain times	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of suitable accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Applicant recently accommodated and lost accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. How do you think your use of the following types of temporary accommodation has changed in the last two years?

	Much more	A bit more	The same	A bit less	Much less	Never use
B&B	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furnished flats/houses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Private sector	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hostels/shared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chalets/caravans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of out of area placements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Thinking ahead, how do you see the use of these forms of temporary accommodation changing in the next two years?

	Much more	A bit more	The same	A bit less	Much less	Never use
B&B	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furnished flats/houses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Private sector	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hostels/shared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chalets/caravans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of out of area placements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Please indicate the how important you feel each of the following are in ensuring that temporary accommodation is available for homeless households in the next two years.

	Crucial	Important	Quite Important	Not Important
More B&Bs				
Greater role for private sector				
Greater role for housing associations				
Greater role for voluntary sector organisations				
More self-contained accommodation				
More supported accommodation				

## Annex B: questionnaire for RSL/voluntary sector accommodation providers

1. Are you able to accommodate all of the referrals that you receive for temporary accommodation?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. If you are unable to provide accommodation for all of the people referred, what are the main reasons for this? (Please indicate up to three responses)

Lack of suitable vacancy for applicant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Applicant's support needs not appropriate for accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of any vacancies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Applicants previously stayed in the accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Applicant's conduct	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Within the last two years, what changes have you noticed within the provision of your accommodation service? (Please indicate up to three responses)

Higher rate of referrals	<input type="checkbox"/>
Residents staying for longer time periods	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased requirement for provision of support	<input type="checkbox"/>
More referrals from out of the area	<input type="checkbox"/>
Residents staying for shorter time periods	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Thinking ahead, what changes do you see happening in the next two years in the provision of your accommodation service? (Please indicate up to three responses)

Higher rate of referrals	<input type="checkbox"/>
Residents staying for longer time periods	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased requirement for provision of support	<input type="checkbox"/>
More referrals from out of the area	<input type="checkbox"/>
Residents staying for shorter time periods	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Please indicate how important you believe each of the following to be in ensuring adequate provision of temporary accommodation.

	Crucial	Important	Quite Important	Not Important
More B&Bs				
Greater role for private sector				
Greater role for housing associations				
Greater role for voluntary sector organisations				
More self-contained accommodation				
More supported accommodation				

## Annex C: questionnaire for advice and support providers

1. Are your homeless service users always able to access temporary accommodation when required?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. If not, what are the reasons for your service users not being able to access temporary accommodation? (Please indicate up to three responses)

Applicants previously stayed in the accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of suitable vacancy for applicant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Applicant's support needs not appropriate for accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of any vacancies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Applicant's conduct	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Within the last two years what changes have you noticed in the provision of temporary accommodation for your service users? (Please indicate up to three responses)

Harder to access accommodation generally for clients	<input type="checkbox"/>
Harder to access suitable accommodation e.g. location, support services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Longer stays in temporary accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shorter stays in temporary accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being referred for accommodation out with the area more frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Looking ahead, over the next two years, what changes do you see happening in the provision of temporary accommodation for your service users? (Please indicate up to three responses)

Harder to access accommodation generally for clients	<input type="checkbox"/>
Harder to access suitable accommodation e.g. location, support services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Longer stays in temporary accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shorter stays in temporary accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being referred for accommodation out with the area more frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Please indicate the how important you feel each of the following are in ensuring that temporary accommodation is available for homeless households in the next two years.

	Crucial	Important	Quite Important	Not Important
More B&Bs				
Greater role for private sector				
Greater role for housing associations				
Greater role for voluntary sector organisations				
More self-contained accommodation				
More supported accommodation				