

MORE THAN A NUMBER

Report on the analysis of ODPM homelessness statistics: Financial Year 2001/2002

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Preface

The Homelessness Act 2002, and the publication of the Government's national strategy on homelessness *More than a Roof*, has re-focused the attention of policy makers and service providers on how to prevent homelessness. This means understanding how people were housed immediately before they became homeless, why they become homeless, and what happened to them as a result.

It is also important to explore the pattern of homelessness across the country and in different housing market conditions. This is not just an academic exercise: it will help policy makers understand how legislation is being applied, and what other support (guidance, good practice, resources, new initiatives) are needed. It will help practitioners to compare what is happening in their area with what is happening elsewhere, and adjust their responses accordingly. Indeed the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has recently made use of the national-level data to highlight some possible responses to the main recorded causes of homelessness.¹

This report demonstrates more fully what can be done with the national data that already exists – in the form of the 'P1E' forms completed by local authorities to record their decisions under the homelessness legislation. While it shows how rich this information is, it does only relate to some aspects of homelessness, and in particular those households who have approached a local authority and who qualify for help under the various provisions of the homelessness legislation. This means that there are large numbers of people – including many single people and childless couples – whose experience of homelessness is not recorded here.

This is by no means the last word on the subject: more analysis and additional data are needed to provide a fuller picture of homelessness, and this is reflected in our recommendations. In the meantime we are sure that it will be helpful to central and regional government, local authorities, and policy and research organisations. Shelter will certainly be using the information for our own campaigning work on the extent of homelessness, the importance of measures of prevention, and the need for support to those who do experience it.

Alastair Jackson
Director of Policy
Shelter

¹ ODPM (2003) *Achieving Positive Outcomes on Homelessness* (Advice note to local authorities)

Recommendations

The aim of this report is twofold. Firstly, it illustrates regional patterns in homelessness decision-making, in respect of a number of different criteria. Secondly, it highlights where there are gaps in data collection and data analysis of the P1E returns. Some of these regional patterns have been discussed briefly in order to substantiate a call for more comprehensive data collection and analysis, and to point to areas or issues where further examination, beyond the scope of a P1E form, is required.

On the basis of the analysis carried out and the trends identified, there are five key recommendations. A number of recent government policy documents substantiate the recommendations made.

- Improved recording of P1E data at the local level.
- There is a need for further analysis of the existing data set.
- Research is required to help explain the differences identified in the report – for example the variation across the country in homelessness acceptances due to domestic violence.
- An extension and wider use of the data currently collected is required, for example to provide better information on repeat homelessness.
- Data regarding non-statutory homelessness needs to be collated in a standard format to give a better understanding of those who fall into this group.

Improved recording of P1E data at the local level.

There needs to be more accurate and fuller completion of the P1E forms at local authority level, as well as a more consistent use of categories across local authorities.

One of the constraints in conducting this analysis, and in trying to interpret the findings, was the inconsistent level of reporting from local authorities, and the varying quality of data supplied. There is also inconsistent use across local authorities of the different categories on the P1E form. In particular, the use of the vulnerability categories to record reasons for households being found to be in priority need varies. For example, households fleeing domestic violence with dependent children may in some authorities be accepted on the basis of having dependent children, and in others, on the basis of fleeing domestic violence.

Further analysis of the existing data set

This report only discusses a few of the areas covered by the P1E data as examples of possible analysis beyond the summary data currently published by the ODPM. The data set is large and would benefit from in-depth analysis of other areas not covered by this report. In addition, changes have been made to the P1E form since the analysis was carried out, so there are further categories to explore.

Further research to explain highlighted differences

The recent Audit Commission report, *Homelessness – Responding to the New Agenda*² sets out current learning from inspections, audits and research on homelessness and housing advice services in England and Wales.

It highlights weaknesses in current data collection systems: government statistics reflect the immediate reason for homelessness, but do not clearly illustrate how factors link up. This leaves gaps in understanding individual episodes of homelessness and the overall impact of different service interventions. Further research is required to fill these gaps and some of the differences highlighted by the analysis in this report.

² *Homelessness – Responding to the New Agenda* (Audit Commission, Jan 2003)

Extension and wider use of the data currently collected

The central theme of *More than a Roof*³ is that significant changes are required in current approaches to tackling homelessness. The size and scope of the homelessness problem needs to be identified through more effective compilation of research and statistics. These are the building blocks needed in order to analyse the causes of the problem and to develop new approaches that will prevent and better respond to homelessness.

For example, a lack of analysis of the data collected is preventing local authorities from identifying reasons for repeat homelessness in their districts. More work also needs to be done – in conjunction with other partners – to assess underlying causes and trends of homelessness within particular client groups, for example BME, lesbians and gay men.

The P1E form is limited in scope, and other ways of recording and exploring information need to be developed and supported. For example, sample studies following homeless applicants in a number of local authorities over time would be an example of another way of building knowledge. Such studies could help shape local authority reviews and strategies, national homelessness policy, and the range of services and schemes offered to homeless people and those threatened with homelessness.

*Achieving Positive Outcomes on Homelessness*⁴ sets out the government's targets for local authorities on the use of bed and breakfast accommodation and levels of rough sleeping. It also suggests additional outcome measures that councils should consider in relation to reducing levels of repeat homelessness and the main causes of homelessness. P1E returns are seen as the 'most obvious' means of recording change in relation to these outcomes, but are unlikely to be able to reflect the full range of structural and demographic factors that impact upon levels of local homelessness. We therefore recommend that authorities put in place systems to record the activities and impact of other services, such as housing advice, which are not covered by the the P1E statistics.

Collation of data regarding non-statutory homelessness

The data presented in this report analyses those accepted as homeless and in priority need. However, little data is collected on the P1E form about non-statutory homeless households. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to produce a review that evaluates the current and likely future levels of homelessness (including non-statutory homeless households). We therefore recommend that the data collected by authorities on non-statutory homelessness be collated in a standard format in order that regional differences (such as those found in this report for statutory homelessness) can be compared and analysed. Shelter's own *Multi-Agency Monitoring* format is an example of how this can be achieved.

³ *More than a Roof* (DTLR, Mar 2002)

⁴ *Achieving Positive Outcomes on Homelessness* – A Homelessness Directorate Advice Note to Local Authorities (April 2003)

Introduction and background

This paper presents an analysis of the statutory homelessness returns ('P1E returns') made by local authorities in England to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), in the period April 2001 to March 2002.

Each quarter, the ODPM publishes summary tables of these data (Supplementary Tables: Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 and 1996 Housing Acts). The analysis in this paper draws on the raw data that underpins these summary tables, which has been made available to Shelter.

Not all local authorities submit homelessness returns. In the case of 'no returns', the ODPM's summary tables make use of estimated data. However, the analysis in this paper only includes actual returns, which means that the totals presented here are not the same as those in the ODPM's summary tables (see Appendix 1 and the background discussion below for a more detailed explanation of this).

Background

This section discusses the data, and considers some methodological issues:

- the limited use of statutory homeless figures to represent the scale of homelessness;
- the variation in local authority practice in recording information; and therefore
- the particular limitations of the data set available.

Statutory homeless figures

'Statutory homelessness' as recorded in the P1E returns is not a measure of homelessness in England. Local authorities only record the number of homeless applications formally received by them. Many households whose circumstances meet the legal definition of homelessness do not make an application. Others make a tentative application that is then withdrawn, and it is then not recorded.

However, information about households that do formally approach their local authority for help does provide a lot of detail about the (main and final) causes of homelessness and the circumstances of the households concerned. Section 1 explains what the different homelessness decisions mean, and highlights the discretion involved in making these decisions. This discretion places further limits on the accuracy of these figures as a true picture of homelessness and its distribution across different local authorities. Indeed this whole report highlights the differences between local authorities and the lack of any simple explanation for them.

Local authority practice in monitoring homelessness

There is no statutory duty on local authorities to complete P1E returns and there is no direct financial incentive to complete the information.⁵ Ninety per cent of local authorities do return some information on homelessness acceptances. This can be done either on paper or electronically. Some returns are submitted late and the figures corrected at the end of the financial year. In completing the forms, local authorities should refer to guidance provided by the ODPM.

Local authorities often monitor further information about homeless assessments, in addition to that required through the P1E. The recording processes vary in their sophistication and IT formats. This information is not collected centrally but is important in providing local information for homelessness reviews and strategies, which local authorities have to produce by 31st July 2003 and renew at least every five years thereafter (under the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002).

⁵ The number of households in temporary accommodation is, however, used in developing the needs indices of local authority areas.

The picture provided by data in the P1E is influenced by conditions of supply and demand in the local housing market, local authority policy towards homelessness, and issues such as local politics and the resources available. Given these constraints and factors, and the limited nature of the local data presented here, this analysis is given only as a snapshot, and as a platform for further investigation into homelessness patterns, as well as a guide for collecting data locally and nationally in the future.

ODPM data set

The data set that this analysis is based on is provided by the ODPM in four separate quarters for 2001/02, for England only. The most important limitation of the raw data (as already mentioned) is that some of it is missing or incomplete. Some local authorities have not submitted returns for some or all of the quarters. In addition, some local authorities submit incomplete information (for example, only on priority need decisions, without further detail about these decisions). An analysis of data from only those local authorities with complete data for all sections would be of a fairly small number of local authorities. For this reason we have chosen to include local authorities with missing data and highlight these limitations where relevant. Appendix 1 provides a more detailed discussion of the data set, and of why the figures do not tally with the published quarterly ODPM summary figures.

While there are clearly a number of problems with using the data set, especially as we do not know how – on an individual local authority level – missing data are arrived at and do not have access to the original returns, the exercise is still worthwhile. Differences in the data (between the ODPM published summaries and the raw data used here) are not substantial. These differences do not detract from the general patterns or the proportions and percentages that the analysis illustrates. A good example of this is illustrated in the next section: despite different figures, both sets of data yield a figure of 45.4 per cent of total decisions as ‘eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need’.

The structure of the report

The main body of the report is structured around key sections in the P1E form, the order of which is outlined in Appendix 2.

PART A: All decisions

The first section presents a breakdown of homeless decisions for 2001/02;

The second section analyses these decisions according to the ethnic origin of the households concerned.

PART B: All ‘homeless and in priority need’ decisions

The third section looks at:

- the reasons households have been found to be in priority need;
- the proportion of families with dependant children that are found to be homeless and in priority need;
- the number of children in these families; and
- the specific ‘priority need’ categories of domestic violence and mental illness.

Section four analyses the reasons for loss of last settled accommodation for all homeless and priority need households.

Section five analyses the number of households leaving temporary accommodation, and the length of time they had been there.

PART C: Appendices

Appendix 1: The ODPM Data set

Appendix 2: The P1E form

Appendix 3: Homelessness legislation – decision making process

Section 1: Homelessness decisions 2001/02⁶

This section explains the different homelessness decisions, and explores the breakdown of different decisions made by local authorities in 2001/02.

As can be seen by the wording of some of the definitions (which include phrases such as ‘reasonably’, ‘reason to believe’, ‘satisfied’ and ‘vulnerable’), many are open to interpretation. The stringency with which the tests are applied will reflect the individual policies and cultures of local authorities, and the levels of supply, demand and need in the local authority area. Appendix 3 provides details of the homelessness decision making process.

In 2001/02 there were a total of 236,541 homelessness decisions actually reported by local authorities in England. The comparable national total of homelessness decisions as estimated by the ODPM is 255,930, which includes estimates for local authorities that did not submit a return. See Appendix 1 for a more detailed explanation of the different totals.

Table 1.1 Proportion of homelessness decisions reported 2001/02

Decision	Number of households	% of decisions
Homeless, in priority need	107,445	45.4
Homeless, not in priority need	49,539	21.0
Intentionally homeless	7,899	3.3
Ineligible for assistance	3,713	1.6
Not homeless	67,945	28.7
Total decisions	236,541	100

A breakdown of the decisions by region and type follows below. It is important to reiterate that these figures only represent decisions actually made; they do not therefore give a complete indication of either the actual housing need in an area, nor of the number of households that did not formally make an application even if they had initially approached a local authority. It is however a good start to understanding both local and national need and policy, and as an indicator of where further investigation is required.

Table 1.2 below shows a breakdown of all decisions by region. It includes household data from the 2001 Census⁷ so that the data can be interpreted in terms of proportions of all decisions and of total household numbers in each region, rather than just as absolute numbers, which are less meaningful.

The most common decision in all regions is homeless and in priority need, which ranges from 39.2 per cent (North West) to 50.1 per cent (South West) of all decisions. Ineligibility accounts for the smallest number of decisions, between 0.3 per cent in the East Midlands and 3.9 per cent in London. Apart from a couple of exceptions (ineligibility being a good example), the trends across regions for all decisions are quite similar. These differences are most notable in charts 1.1 and 1.2 below.

⁶ There are a number of local authorities with missing data, and this varies across quarter and across variables. The ODPM summary totals are therefore different to those shown above.

⁷ Source: Household numbers are taken from the 2001 census data (Crown Copyright 2003) which gives numbers for ‘household spaces with residents’.

Table 1.2: Breakdown of decisions by region 2001/02

Region	NE	Y&H	EM	E of E	Lon	SE	SW	WM	NW	England total
Total number of households	1,066,292	2,064,748	1,732,482	2,231,974	3,015,997	3,287,489	2,085,984	2,153,672	2,812,789	20,451,427
Total decisions	11,727	24,813	13,851	19,676	57,537	28,901	20,175	28,161	31,700	236,541
Homeless, priority need	5,192	10,298	6,130	8,862	27,019	13,550	10,116	13,858	12,420	107,445
Homeless non-priority	2,727	4,095	2,662	4,167	10,841	5,708	4,443	6,534	8,362	49,539
Intentionally homeless	557	590	682	757	1,425	1,411	636	785	1,056	7,899
Ineligible	43	262	48	322	2,232	224	135	255	192	3,713
Not homeless	3,208	9,568	4,329	5,568	16,020	8,008	4,845	6,729	9,670	67,945

Key to Table 1.2

- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| NE | North East | SE | South East |
| Y&H | Yorkshire and the Humber | SW | South West |
| EM | East Midlands | WM | West Midlands |
| E of E | East of England | NW | North West |
| Lon | London | | |

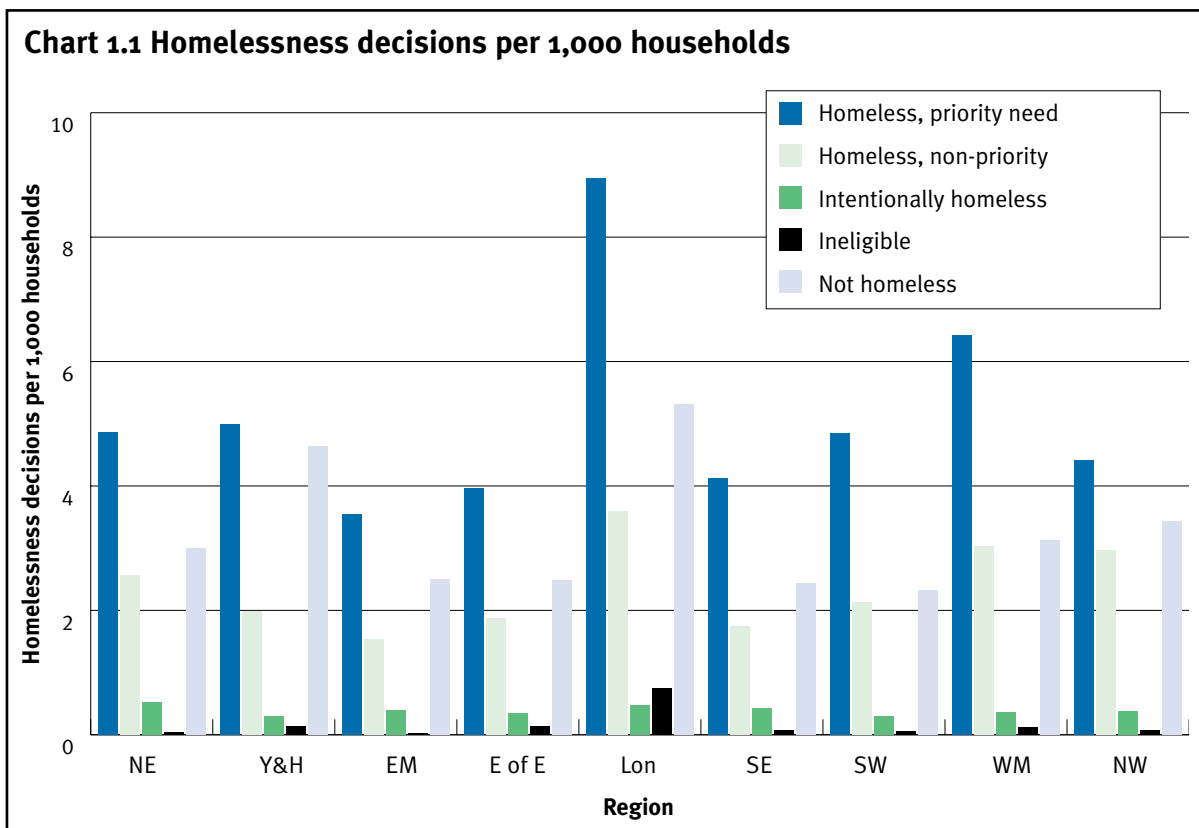
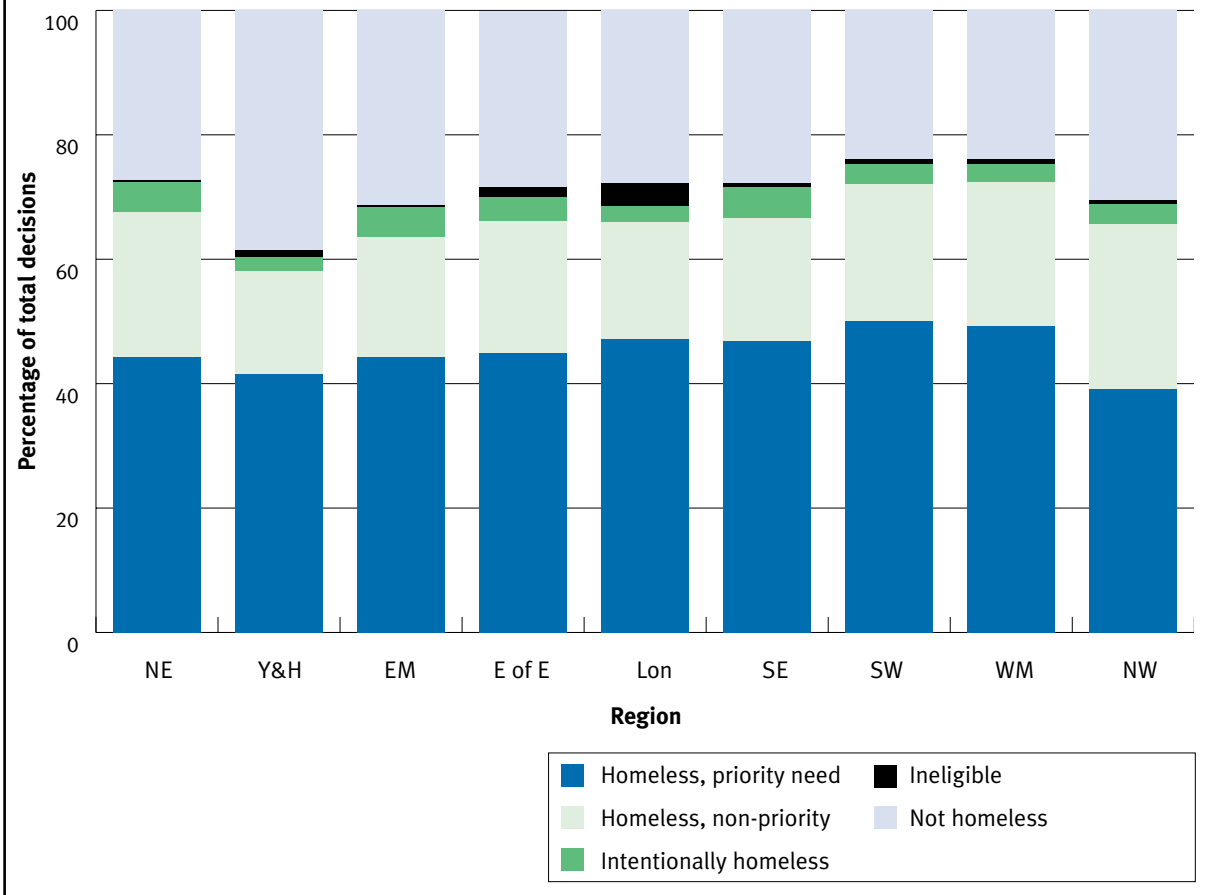


Chart 1.2 Split of homelessness decisions by region



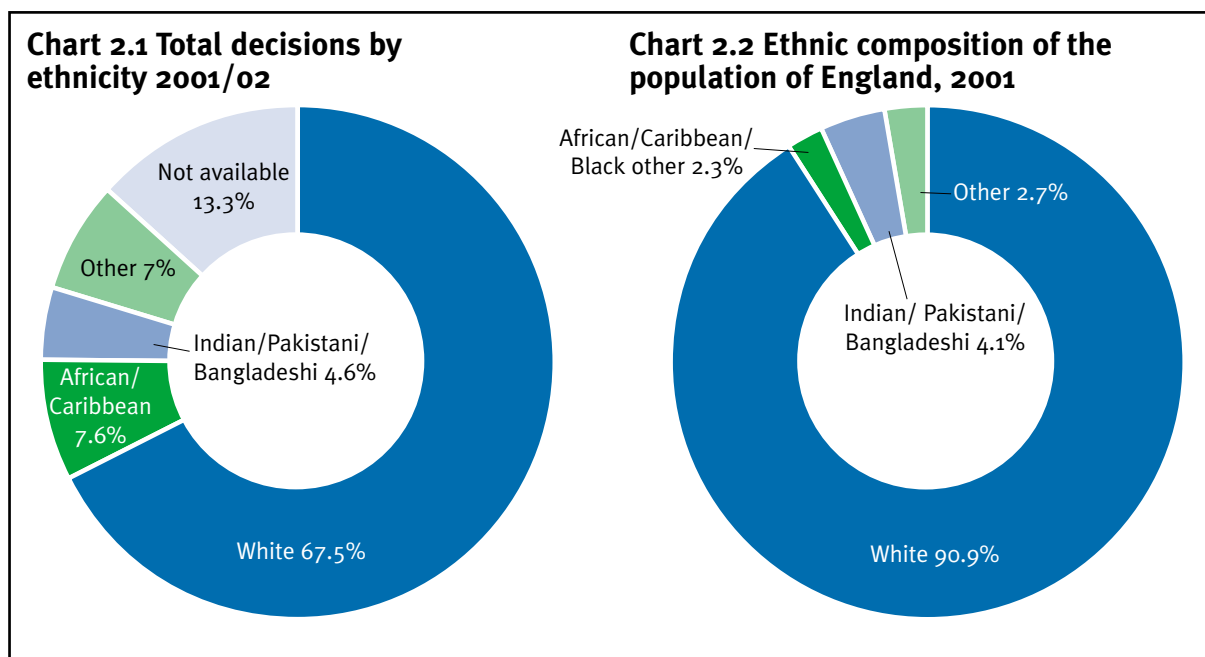
From the above charts, the following observations can be made:

- the number of homelessness decisions being taken per 1,000 households seems to be higher in more metropolitan regions; and
- the proportions of homeless and priority need acceptances as opposed to other outcomes (e.g. 'not homeless', 'not in priority need') is higher in southern regions.

Section 2: Homelessness decisions by ethnic group⁸

This sections discusses decisions made broken down by ethnic group. The data are considered in relation to 2001 Census data⁹ in an attempt to compare the ethnic breakdown of homelessness decisions in relation to the ethnic breakdown of the population.¹⁰ There are some interesting comparisons between the two.

- 9.1 per cent of the population in 2001 fall into the category of ‘black and minority ethnic’, however, 19.2 per cent of decisions are in respect of black and minority ethnic households;
- 90.9 per cent of the population in 2001 was classified as white (which includes the ‘white other’ category), but only 67.5 per cent of homelessness decisions are in respect of white households;
- 7.6 per cent of decisions are in respect of African/Caribbean households, but only 2.3 per cent of the population in 2001 was classified as ‘African/Caribbean/Black other’;
- a less stark comparison exists for the Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi group, where 4.6 per cent of homelessness decisions are in respect of this group, whereas they represented 4.1 per cent of the population in 2001.



The data confirm that black and minority ethnic (BME) households remain more likely to be homeless than other groups. As highlighted by Jheni Williams in a recent ROOF article¹¹ this raises two important questions:

- Why are a disproportionate number of BME people more vulnerable to homelessness? and
- What should be done about it?

The issues around disproportionate vulnerability and poverty among ethnic minority groups in Britain are further discussed in a new book published by the Child Poverty Action Group *Parallel Lives* by Lucinda Platt (2002). Research is currently being undertaken by the ODPM into BME groups and homelessness.

Chart 2.3 below shows the ethnic breakdown of all of the decisions made on homelessness applications during 2001/02. There are a few noticeable differences between the ethnic groups. The decisions on priority need largely reflect the ethnic composition of total decisions. There are slightly higher numbers of ‘intentionally homeless’ decisions

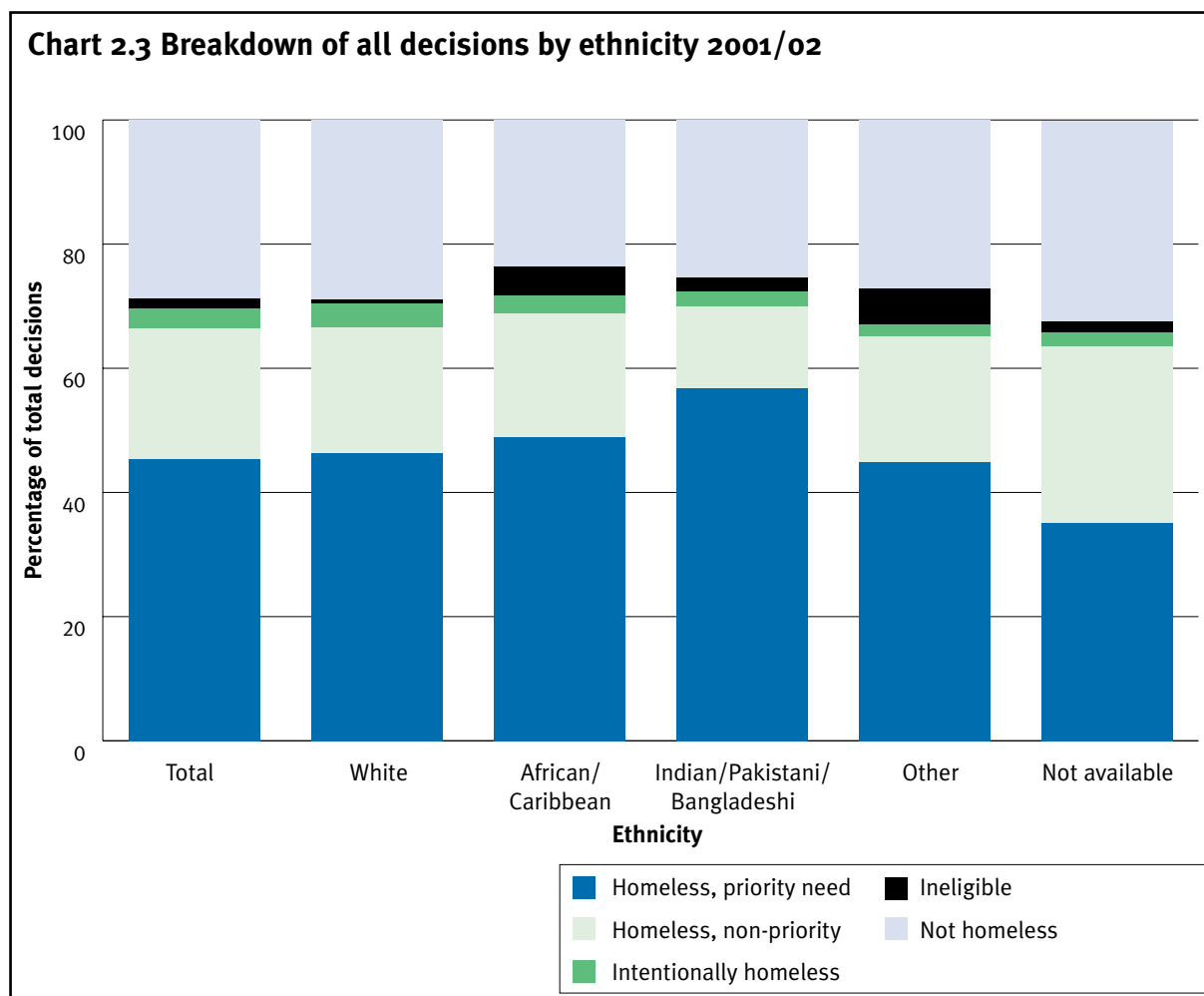
⁸ The main problem with the data on ethnicity by decision type is missing data for many local authorities. In some quarters up to 46 local authorities have missing data for individual ethnic groups or total applications from non-white households.

⁹ Source: Census 2001 – Key statistics for local authorities (Crown Copyright) ‘Percentage of people in ethnic groups’

¹⁰ The calculations do not include the ‘not available’ category from the P1E form because there is no corresponding census category.

¹¹ Speak Up in ROOF, January/ February 2003

for white applicants. 68 per cent of all decisions concern applicants that are white, whilst 76 per cent of applicants found 'intentionally homeless' are white.



A large proportion of decisions made in respect of African or Caribbean applicants were found to be 'ineligible' (4.7 per cent of all decisions for made for African/ Caribbean applicants). This figure represents 22.9 per cent of all 'ineligible' decisions, while African/ Caribbean decisions made up only 7.6 per cent of total homelessness decisions. Minority ethnic groups are likely to be over-represented in the figure for ineligible decisions as persons from abroad (including people seeking asylum and people failing the habitual residency test) are defined as being ineligible. Similarly the 'other' ethnic group made up 26.6 per cent of ineligible decisions, but just 7 per cent of all decisions. This 'ineligibility' figure also reflects the immigration status of those applicants who were classified as 'other'; however, the 'other' category tells us nothing about people's actual ethnic origin. Further breakdown of this category is needed, not least of all to allow for greater clarity around decision making concerning eligibility.

Note also that in respect of people seeking asylum, only those households dealt with under relevant homelessness legislation are included in this data. Households dealt with under social services legislation are not included. It would be more interesting to have figures based on all applications rather than just decisions made, so that we could examine 'successful' applications as a proportion of all those approaching the local authority. BME groups are already over-represented within the homelessness statistics: however, there may be other applicants who do not get to the stage of formally applying for help. Actual or perceived discrimination, lack of support, and language barriers are just some of the possible reasons why people from minority ethnic groups may not pursue an application, even if they do consider themselves homeless.

Section 3: Households found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need¹²

This section deals with households found to be unintentionally homeless, eligible for assistance, and in priority need.

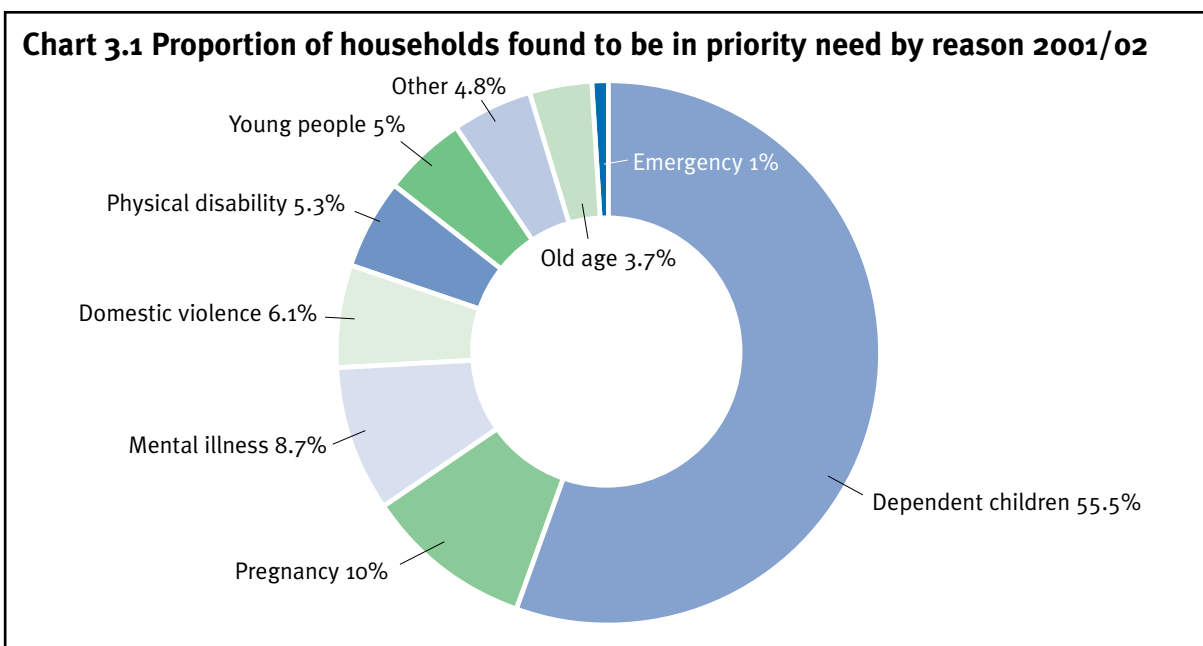
It breaks down the priority need decisions made by region. Some individual categories (i.e. reasons why the household was found to be in priority need) are discussed in more detail, examining the regional distribution of decisions, and the proportion of these decisions in relation to household numbers.¹³ In order to highlight variations, a number of anonymous 'Top 10' local authorities have been compiled for each of the different categories.

In 2001/02, 107,445 households in England were actually reported as eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need by local authorities. (The comparable figure as estimated by the ODPM is 117,840. Appendix 1 gives an explanation of this difference). This accounts for 45.4 per cent of total decisions (the same figure is arrived at by the ODPM). This proportion of decisions is represented fairly equally across the regions, as shown above in Table 1.1, with the highest of 50.1 per cent in the South West, and the lowest of 39.2 per cent in the North West.

For comparative purposes, in 1997, 102,000 households fell into this category; and in 1991 137,250 households were found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need.¹⁴

The pie chart and tables below show slightly lower figures than those shown in Table 1.1 and 1.2 above – 106,197 total priority need decisions when totalled by category, as opposed to the total of 107,445 priority need decisions broken down by ethnicity as part of the overall decisions calculation. The reason for this is that local authorities did not all provide complete data for each quarter.

Chart 3.1 below shows the reasons why households were found to be in priority need during 2001/02.¹⁵ By far the most common reason is the presence of dependent children (55 per cent). The second most common reason was pregnancy (10 per cent). The third most common reason was mental illness (9 per cent).



¹² Missing data have not been estimated.

¹³ Source: Household numbers are taken from the 2001 Census data (Crown Copyright 2003) which gives numbers for 'household spaces with residents' i.e. the number of households.

¹⁴ Statutory Homeless Bulletin, DETR, March 2001.

¹⁵ The sum of the totals for each reason for priority need in the quarter does not add up to the number given in total priority need for the quarter by individual local authorities (although the figures are close).

The table below presents the breakdown of reasons for a household being found to be 'in priority need' by region:

- A number of categories, for example, 'dependent children', show similar proportions across all regions, whereas others, such as 'domestic violence', range from 1.3 per cent of all decisions in London to 13.2 per cent in the West Midlands.
- Yorkshire and the Humber has a large proportion (10.2 per cent) of its reasons coded as 'other', which suggests that the category needs to be broken down further to allow for more detailed information to be recorded.
- Looking at 'mental illness', the East of England, London and South East regions have the highest proportions of decisions made for people with mental illness across all regions (10.5 per cent, 10.5 per cent and 11.2 per cent respectively) compared to the East Midlands, which only records 5.1 per cent of all its reasons for priority need as mental illness.
- Likewise, the 'vulnerability' totals range from 23 per cent in the East Midlands to 35.4 per cent in the North East.

Table: 3.1 Regional breakdown (%) of priority need category¹⁶

Region	ENG	NE	Y&H	EM	E of E	LON	SE	SW	WM	NW
Dependent children	56.0	51.9	47.2	63.4	57.3	56.7	55.3	55.5	54.0	55.0
Pregnant	10.1	8.0	7.8	9.9	11.3	12.1	13.2	10.4	8.5	6.8
Children/ pregnant total	66.1	59.9	55.0	73.3	68.6	68.8	68.5	65.9	62.5	61.8
Old age	3.7	3.3	2.5	2.9	4.2	4.8	3.8	4.3	3.2	2.8
Physical disability	5.4	3.8	3.5	3.5	6.1	8.3	5.5	5.9	3.5	3.5
Mental illness	8.7	6.0	8.2	5.1	10.5	10.5	11.2	10.3	6.4	6.4
Young people	5.0	11.6	8.7	4.4	4.5	2.5	4.3	5.7	3.1	8.3
Domestic violence	6.2	10.7	10.9	7.1	3.3	1.3	2.9	3.8	13.2	9.7
Vulnerability total	29.0	35.4	33.8	23.0	28.6	27.4	27.7	30.0	29.4	30.7
Other	4.8	4.7	10.2	2.9	2.0	3.4	2.0	3.4	6.4	6.6
Emergency	1.0	1.2	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.3	1.9	0.6	1.8	1.0

The reasons for these differences are likely to be complex, and include differences in local authority policies, local resources and service provision across the statutory and voluntary sector, and local supply and demand. The data suggest many interesting areas for future research. The sections below present a further analysis of the 'dependent children' category, and regional analysis of two categories of vulnerability – 'domestic violence' and 'mental illness' – as exemplars and to highlight key areas for further analysis. In particular, the 'Top 10' local authorities are presented, with figures for those (anonymous) local authorities with the highest numbers of decisions per 1,000 households in each category.

DEPENDENT CHILDREN

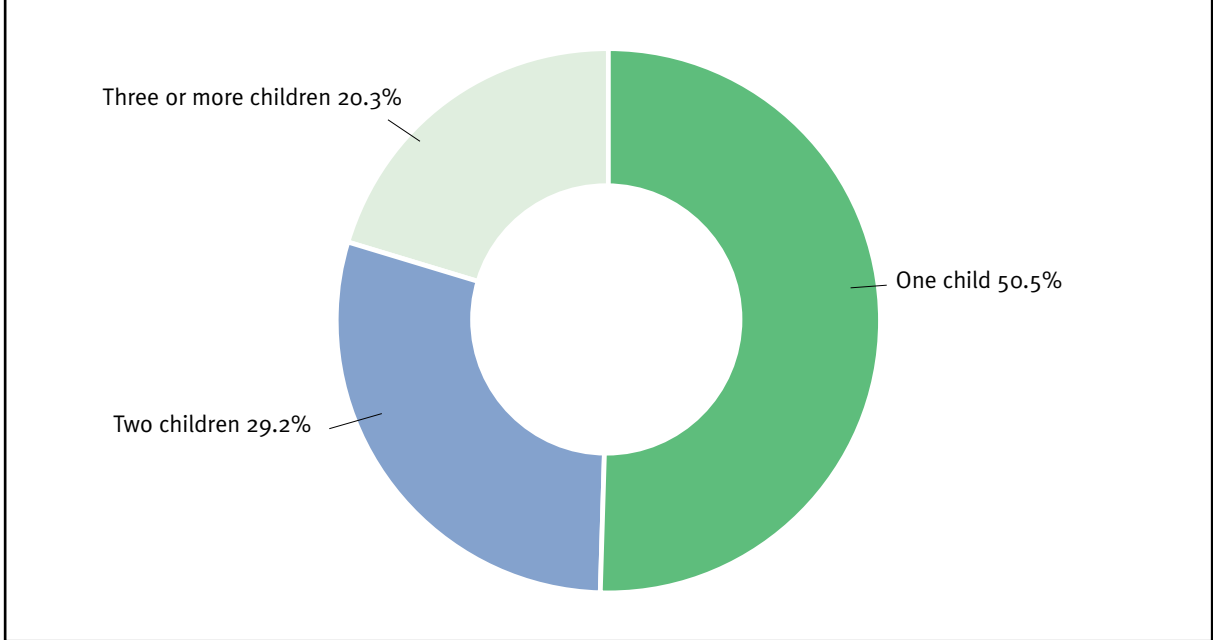
This section discusses the number of children in homeless and priority need households. In 2001/02, 58,931 households were found to be homeless and priority need with dependent children.¹⁷ In addition, 10,602 homeless households in priority need contained a pregnant woman.

In 2001/02, families with one child made up 50.5 per cent of all households in priority need with dependent children. From the above numbers of households with children, the estimated number of children in homeless households in 2001/02 is at least 100,097. This is a conservative estimate since households with three or more children have been counted as having three.

¹⁶ The numbers from which these percentages are derived differ from the regional totals for priority need decisions because local authorities with any missing data for any quarter have not been included here. However, because of equally poor reporting across all vulnerability categories, proportions should remain similar.

¹⁷ The individual categories of households with '1 child', '2 children' and '3 or more children' do not add up to the category of 'total' number of households with dependent children as given by local authorities.

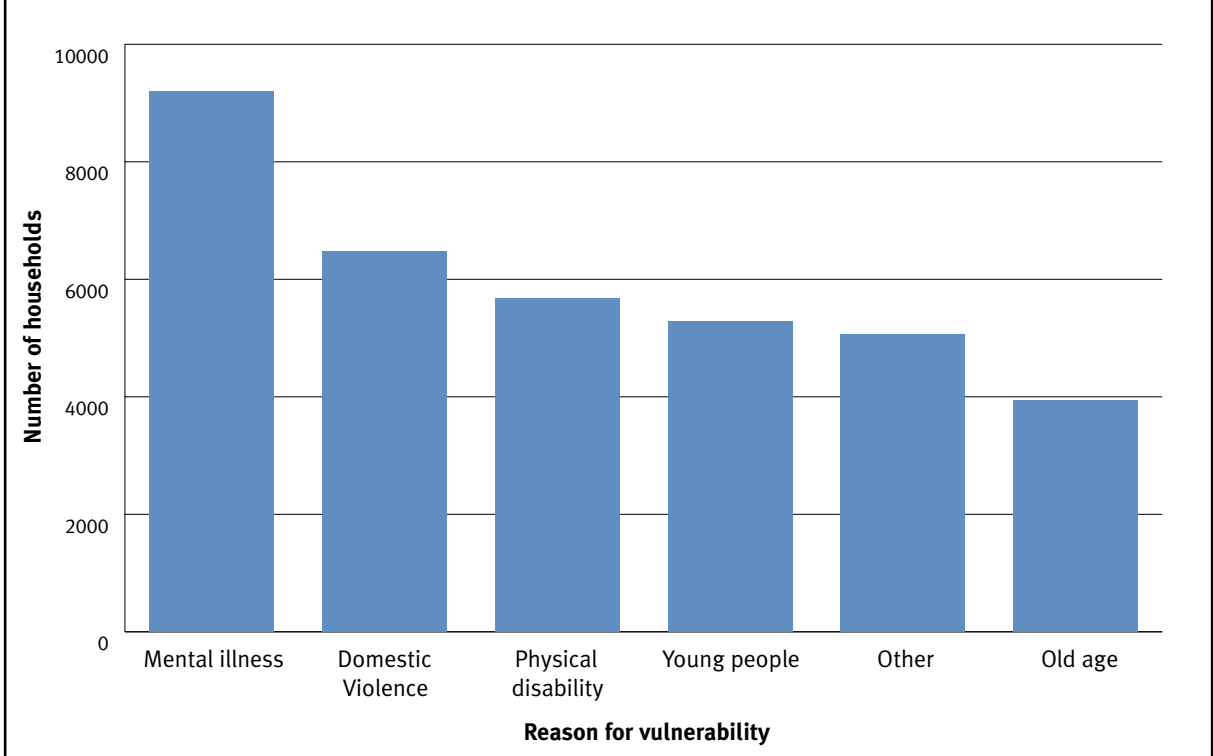
Chart 3.2: Proportion of priority need households with dependent children by number of children 2001/02



VULNERABILITY

The total number of households found to be homeless and in priority need due to vulnerability was 35,633 in 2001/02. Note that local authorities are asked to record the main reason for vulnerability only, which means multiple needs are obscured.

Chart 3.3 Priority need households with a vulnerable member by reasons 2001/02



The largest single reason for vulnerability during all four quarters in 2001/02 was mental illness, accounting for 25.8 per cent of all decisions on vulnerability. The second largest category of people homeless in 2001/02 was people fleeing domestic violence (18 per cent). The ‘other special reason’ category (including racial harassment and violence from outside the home) was a significant group (14 per cent). The relative size of this category indicates that this is possibly inadequate as a category and needs to be further broken down into more specific categories.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

There is no record of the number of women (or men) in Britain who lose their homes each year when they escape a violent partner. A study by Malos and Hague (1997)¹⁸ shows that in the majority of cases in their study, women had experienced violence from their partners, although in some cases the violence came from another member of the family, a father, step-father, an adult son or parents-in-law.

Data are difficult to collate for a number of reasons. People experiencing domestic violence may not necessarily formally approach a council for re-housing, either because they have been accommodated by family or friends or because their initial enquiries do not lead to a formal application. Where applications are made, the reason for vulnerability may not be recorded as domestic violence if the applicant has dependent children or is pregnant. The figures below are therefore an underestimation of the extent of the problem.

We can however calculate from the P1E data how many women formally apply to their local housing department for help in respect of homelessness, giving violent relationship breakdown as the reason. The table below shows the breakdown of households found to be unintentionally homeless, eligible, and in priority need fleeing domestic violence by region. Household data from the 2001 census have been used to present regional decisions per 1,000 households, as well as a percentage of all decisions made in England on this basis.

Table 3.2: Breakdown of priority need households fleeing domestic violence by region

Region	% of all England priority need households fleeing domestic violence*	Decisions per 1,000 households
North East	8.0	0.49
Yorkshire and the Humber	15.8	0.49
East Midlands	6.9	0.26
East of England	5.7	0.17
London	5.6	0.12
South East	6.4	0.13
South West	5.7	0.18
West Midlands	27.5	0.83
North West	18.5	0.43

*Base = 6,473

The West Midlands has by far the highest number of households accepted as being in priority need after fleeing domestic violence. It accounts for 27.5 per cent of priority need homeless families who are fleeing domestic violence, but only 10.5 per cent of all households in the country. After households with dependent children, this is the single biggest priority need category for the West Midlands.

This trend is likely to be shaped by a number of factors, some of which could include local authority policies and practices, police and local authority attitudes towards domestic violence, housing supply and the availability of services

¹⁸ Malos, E and Hague, G ‘Women, housing, homelessness and domestic violence’ in *Women’s Studies International Forum*, Vol. 20 No. 3

for people fleeing domestic violence in the region. Further investigation of the individual contexts of these regions is required to develop an understanding of these data.

By contrast, London accounts for only 5.6 per cent of the households accepted as priority need and fleeing domestic violence, and in London, apart from ‘households homeless in emergency’, domestic violence accounts for the lowest number of priority need decisions. As above, this is likely to be influenced by a number of factors, and needs to be understood within the context of the relative extent and scope of other categories of vulnerability in London.

In addition to overall regional comparisons, ‘Top 10’ tables have been produced to show those local authorities with the highest numbers of decisions made on this basis per 1,000 households. Thus while there are interesting regional patterns, within these, there are also stark differences between individual local authorities. While it is useful to highlight what regions these local authorities fall under, it was felt that naming individual authorities was not necessary. Local authorities presented in these tables are not constant throughout the report – for example local authority 1 in Table 3.3 is not the same as local authority 1 in Table 3.5. Rather, the ranking of these local authorities is determined by the proportion of decisions per 1,000 households.

Table 3.3: ‘Top 10’ local authorities with the highest numbers of people accepted as homeless in priority need and vulnerable fleeing domestic violence 2001/02

Local Authority	Region	Number of decisions per 1,000 households
Local authority 1	West Midlands	3.02
Local authority 2	North East	2.18
Local authority 3	East Midlands	1.65
Local authority 4	North West	1.60
Local authority 5	North West	1.54
Local authority 6	West Midlands	1.45
Local authority 7	Yorkshire and the Humber	1.37
Local authority 8	South East	1.33
Local authority 9	Yorkshire and the Humber	1.33
Local authority 10	South East	1.14

Base = 286 local authorities with complete information for all quarters (81%).

Local authority 1 in the West Midlands has 3.02 ‘homeless, eligible, in priority need and fleeing domestic violence’ decisions made on this basis per 1,000 households, which is a very high number. There are no London authorities in the ‘Top 10’ at all, and only two in the South East, with 1.33 and 1.14 per 1,000 households respectively.

By way of comparison, looking at those with the lowest proportions per 1,000 households, 51 authorities had accepted no-one as in priority need for reasons of domestic violence and the 52nd authority – which is in London – had 0.01 decisions per 1,000 households.

These findings are in keeping with the overall pattern of lower proportions of priority need decisions based on domestic violence in the south of England compared to the north. It is important to keep in mind that some households in other categories of priority need (for example, households with children) may in fact have lost their home because of domestic violence but this is not recorded as the main reason for being in priority need. Furthermore, a wide range of factors are responsible for these variations, and these figures are not a proxy for the prevalence of domestic violence.

The recent ODPM research, *The Provision of Accommodation and Support for Households Experiencing Domestic Violence in England* (December 2002) finds that current local authority practice in meeting the accommodation and support needs of victims of domestic violence varies widely. This is due to a variety of factors, including the lack of women-only accommodation and understanding of support needs, the quality of local partnership working and integration and other support services.

The same study also recognises that regional variations exist. There is evidence of much regional variation in local authority practice. Local authorities tend in practice to favour one of two approaches: transferring the victim or encouraging them to remain in the family home (and providing them with appropriate support, security, practical help and advice). According to the recent ODPM research, this latter approach is becoming more common. However, some local authorities may still channel all applicants via the homelessness route or directly via the housing register/transfer process. This could also account for variations in figures regionally, and very little information exists on housing due to domestic violence via the register/waiting list because local authorities are not required to produce figures on this. Obviously housing people via the waiting list/ register would lower the number of homeless applications.

Some local authorities aim to remove the perpetrator of the violence. On the other hand, some allow households to use temporary accommodation as respite, whilst others compel victims to relinquish tenancies immediately. In addition to these variations, there are also variations in practice regarding housing benefit payments, where it has been found that some local authorities will illegally refuse to pay housing benefit on two properties.

A lack of appropriate support services/tenancy support may produce higher levels of repeat homelessness. The Homelessness Directorate policy brief (September 2002) recognises domestic violence as a strong factor in repeat homelessness overall. It also draws attention to the use of inappropriate temporary accommodation placements – away from social networks – and how these may lead to tenancy failure. There is again a link to be made with the quality of local service provision.

The ODPM research also suggests that a series of considerations are at play regarding intentionally homeless decisions. These relate to ‘reasonableness to remain’ (unable to remain in family home and the need to secure more suitable accommodation), the legal rights the victim has to the property, the loss of the home due to debts incurred as a result of relationship breakdown. All of these are open to interpretation by individual local authorities.

MENTAL ILLNESS

Nationally, 8.7 per cent of all priority need decisions were for reasons of mental illness. This is the third biggest category, after having dependent children, and pregnancy, which together account for 66.1 per cent. Tables 3.4 and 3.5 below present a regional breakdown of households accepted as homeless and in priority need because of mental illness (including decisions per 1,000 households), as well as the ‘Top 10’ local authorities with the highest numbers of decisions based on this vulnerability category. The figures show a marked variation, in line with other regional variations for the different ‘priority need’ categories discussed here. These variations will also be determined by a range of local factors, including local authority policies, service provision, and local housing supply. Further analysis of these data would provide a clearer understanding of the patterns. A particular focus of further work should be on the demographic breakdown in each region (and the links between this and the incidence of mental illness), and the reporting of mental illness as a reason for homelessness.

It is important to bear in mind that having a mental health problem would not in itself lead to a local authority finding that someone had ‘priority need’ if they were homeless. The test that would be applied is if the applicant would be less able to fend for themselves than an ordinary homeless person and that they would be likely to suffer injury or detriment, in circumstances where a less vulnerable person would be able to cope without harmful effects. Given the subjective nature of this assessment, this could in part explain some of the local and regional variations, because local authorities are left a certain amount of discretion when assessing ‘vulnerability’, as they are with assessing ‘intentionality’.

Table 3.4: Breakdown of priority need households vulnerable due to mental illness by region

Region	% of all England priority need households vulnerable due to mental illness (9,195)	Decisions per 1,000 households
North East	3.2	0.28
Yorkshire and the Humber	8.7	0.39
East Midlands	3.4	0.18
East of England	10.6	0.44
London	28.5	0.87
South East	16.4	0.46
South West	11.1	0.49
West Midlands	9.3	0.40
North West	8.8	0.29

In terms of decisions, London accounts for the highest proportion of households found to be in priority need due to mental illness. It accounts for 28.5 per cent of all priority need decisions based on mental illness, but only 14.7 per cent all households in the country. After households with dependent children or a pregnant household member, mental illness accounts for the highest number of priority need decisions made in London: 10.5 per cent (as illustrated in Table 3.1).

While London is the region with the second highest number of households that are vulnerable due to mental illness, it is the region with the smallest number of households found to be in priority need due to domestic violence. This is likely to arise from a range of factors, including both local authority policy, housing supply, housing demand, but possibly a lack of other options or support (e.g. mental health service provision) relative to the incidence of mental illness in London.

The North East and thereafter the East Midlands account for the lowest number of decisions nationally: 3.2 per cent and 3.4 per cent respectively, while they have 5.2 per cent and 8.5 per cent of all households in England. These figures can only be understood in terms of a better developed understanding of the particular socio-economic contexts of these regions, as well as of the relative scope and extent of the other priority need categories in these areas. The patterns are further reflected in the 'Top 10' table below, where London authorities represent five out of 10 of the authorities with the highest number of decisions based on mental illness, with a further four in the South East.

Table 3.5: ‘Top 10’ local authorities with the highest number of people homeless and vulnerable due to mental illness 2001/02

Local authority	Region	Number of decisions per 1,000 households
Local authority 1	London	3.68
Local authority 2	London	2.64
Local authority 3	London	2.47
Local authority 4	South East	2.17
Local authority 5	South East	1.73
Local authority 6	London	1.45
Local authority 7	East of England	1.43
Local authority 8	London	1.43
Local authority 9	South East	1.36
Local authority 10	South West	1.34

Base = 288 (81%) of local authorities with full information on all 4 quarters of 2001/02

As a comparison, 11 local authorities had found no-one to be in priority need for this reason, and the next lowest local authority – which is in the North West – had 0.01 per 1,000 households. This is in keeping with the tendency – for a range of complex reasons – for decisions based on mental illness to be more common in the south of England than in the north.

As discussed above, it was decided for the purposes of this report to use domestic violence and mental illness as exemplars of regional and local patterns of priority need decisions. There is however a need to explore other categories in further detail, and for more in-depth analysis to be done to establish why and how these patterns have emerged.

Section 4: Main reasons for loss of last settled accommodation

This section considers the main reason for loss of last settled accommodation in respect of people accepted as homeless and in priority need. It is important to stress the limitations of these data. There is only data available for those households who have been found to be homeless and in priority need. There is no longitudinal data in respect of individual households, so there is no record of any repeated experience of homelessness: only the main reason for loss of last accommodation is given. Someone with a set of complex issues, having finally being asked to leave a friend's home after having been homeless before that for a different reason, will most likely be recorded under the heading 'friends no longer willing or able to accommodate'. There are no data available about the reasons for loss of last settled accommodation by those applicants found to be 'intentionally homeless' or those found not to be in 'priority need'.

The data do however provide a useful starting point to understanding patterns around the main reasons for loss of last accommodation, and how these trends vary regionally. The analysis presented here points to the need for further examination of why these trends are as they are, and to the need for more effective and comprehensive data collection on loss of last accommodation.

Since April 2002 data have been collected for households having to leave National Asylum Support Service (NASS) accommodation. This is being recorded in terms of the main reason for loss of last accommodation. Analysis of this data will highlight – among other things including local supply and demand, and NASS dispersal patterns – interesting local and regional variations in local policy for households previously housed by NASS.

Regional variations in reasons for loss of last accommodation

In calculating the regional totals for each reason, only those with complete figures for all four quarters have been used. The totals may also be affected by some reasons being better reported than others in each region. For example, in most regions, 'relationship breakdown', 'other', 'loss of assured shorthold' and 'parents no longer willing to accommodate' are more often reported on than 'rent arrears' and 'leaving an institution'. These variations are considered in more detail below. The size of the 'other' category once again suggests that it needs to be broken down into more specific reasons.

Table 4.1 below presents all main reasons for loss of last accommodation by region. There is again a broad North/South distinction in the main reasons given. An example of this is the high proportion of 'loss of an assured shorthold tenancy' in the south and a high proportion of 'violent relationship breakdown' in the north of England. London local authorities show different pattern of reasons given for loss of accommodation compared with local authorities outside London. The main reasons in London were 'relatives or friends no longer willing to accommodate', followed by 'parents no longer willing to accommodate', then 'other reasons' and 'loss of an assured shorthold tenancy'.

'Violent relationship breakdown' was second equal nationally as a reason for loss of last settled accommodation (the same percentage as 'other reasons', 'relatives no longer able to accommodate' and 'loss of an assured shorthold tenancy'), but sixth in London. These variations need to be explored further to be understood more fully. As discussed above, they will, among other factors, be shaped by both housing supply and demand in the area from these particular groups of people. Supply and demand are in turn shaped by the areas' socio-economic profile, as well as by the attitudes and policies of local authorities in these regions.

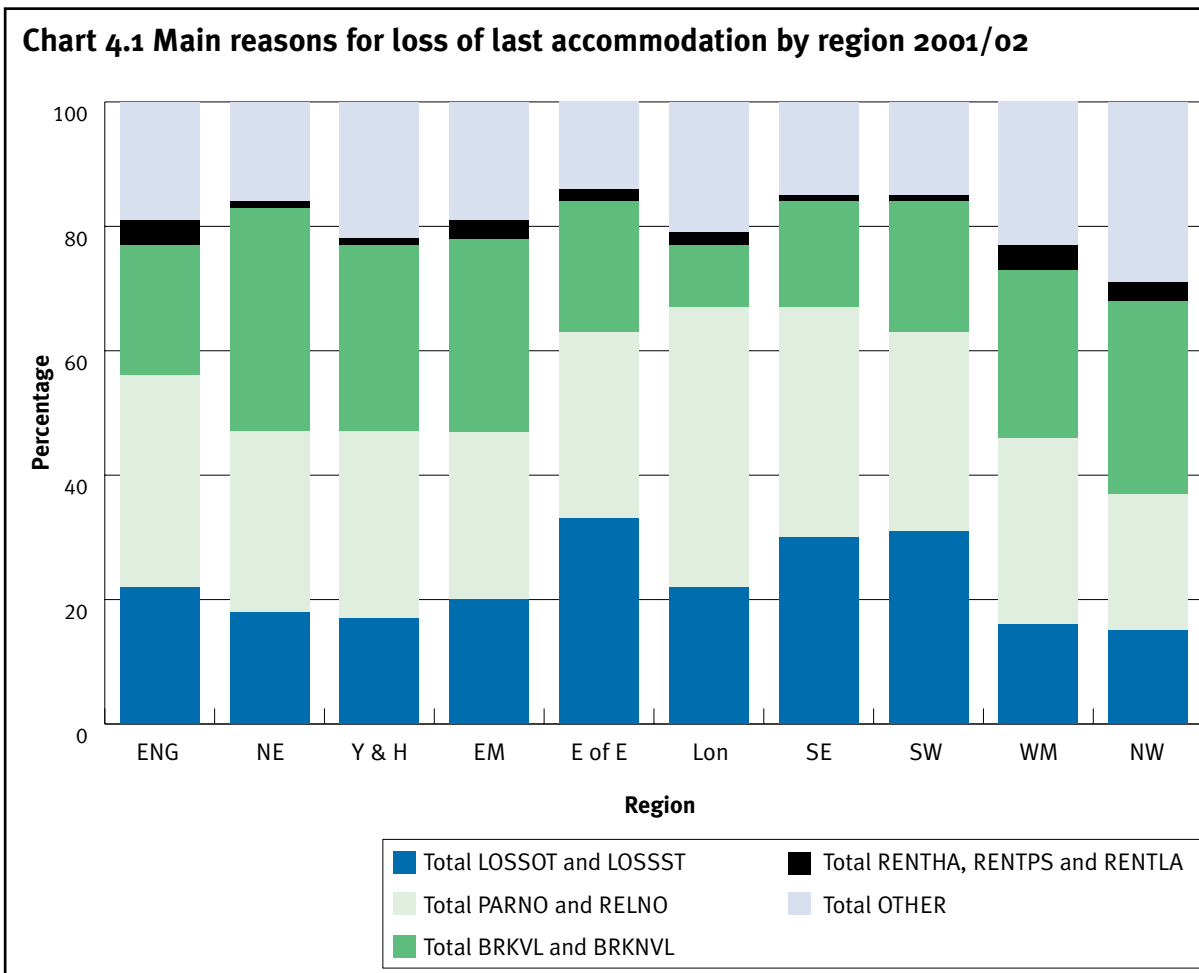
Table 4.1: Main reasons given for loss of last accommodation: % by region

	ENGLAND	NE	Y&H	EM	E of E	LON	SE	SW	WM	NW
PARNO	19	19	14	17	20	20	22	19	17	14
OTHREA	15	10	17	13	8	17	10	10	18	24
BRKVL	15	24	21	23	12	7	10	13	21	22
LOSSST	15	11	11	16	23	14	21	23	10	9
RELNO	15	10	16	10	10	25	14	12	13	8
BRKNVL	7	11	8	9	9	3	7	8	7	9
LOSSOT	7	7	6	4	9	8	8	7	6	6
INSTIT	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	3
MORRAR	2	4	3	4	3	1	2	2	3	3
RENTPS	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
RENTLA	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	2
RENTHA	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0

Key to reasons in chart above

P1E Abbrev	Reason
PARNO	Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate
OTHREA	Other (including homeless in emergency/ returned from abroad/ sleeping rough or in hostel)
BRKVL	Relationship breakdown with partners – violent
LOSSST	Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to termination of an assured shorthold tenancy
RELNO	Other relatives or friends no long able or willing to accommodate
BRKNVL	Relationship breakdown with partners – non violent
LOSSOT	Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to other reason
INSTIT	In institution or care (prison, hospital or residential care)
MORRAR	Mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home)
RENTPS	Rent arrears (Private Sector)
RENTLA	Rent arrears (Local Authority)
RENTHA	Rent arrears (Registered Social Landlord)

Chart 4.1 below shows grouped categories from the above table to show totals for loss of tenancy, parents and relatives no longer willing or able to accommodate, relationship breakdown, rent arrears and other reasons. This has been done to highlight regional patterns in certain types of reasons.



Two categories have been chosen to further illustrate regional and local variations: ‘violent relationship breakdown’ and ‘loss of an assured shorthold tenancy’. These are by no means the only important categories, but they serve to highlight issues being raised elsewhere in this report. Furthermore, the data point to the need for further analysis, both within these categories – to explain the variations – and of the other categories, to illustrate similar patterns.

MAIN REASON FOR LOSS OF LAST SETTLED ACCOMMODATION: VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN

The regional patterns for violent relationship breakdown as a main reason for loss of last settled accommodation are very similar to those for domestic violence as a reason for being in priority need. Violent relationship breakdown is the most common main reason given for loss of accommodation in five regions (North East, East Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber, West Midlands and North West). Table 4.2 below illustrates the regional differences in this category. The West Midlands has by far the highest rate of decisions per 1,000 households: 1.39. This is over three times the proportion of decisions in the South East (0.43 decisions per 1,000 households).

Table 4.2: Regional breakdown of loss of last accommodation due to violent relationship breakdown

Region	% of all England priority need households that lost their last accommodation because of violent relationship breakdown*	Decisions per 1,000 households
North East	7.7	1.17
Yorkshire and the Humber	12.9	1.02
East Midlands	8.9	0.84
East of England	6.9	0.50
London	12.0	0.65
South East	8.8	0.43
South West	8.1	0.63
West Midlands	18.4	1.39
North West	16.3	0.94

*Base = 16,285

Table 4.3 below presents the ‘Top 10’ local authorities with the highest proportions of decisions with the main reason given as violent relationship breakdown. As with the other ‘Top 10’ tables above, this has been included to illustrate further sub-regional patterns and differences in decision making.

Table 4.3: ‘Top 10’ local authorities where ‘violent relationship breakdown’ was given as the main reason for loss of last accommodation

Local authority	Region	Number of decisions per 1,000 households
Local authority 1	East Midlands	3.47
Local authority 2	North East	3.29
Local authority 3	West Midlands	3.14
Local authority 4	North West	2.95
Local authority 5	Yorkshire and the Humber	2.57
Local authority 6	North East	2.43
Local authority 7	West Midlands	2.4
Local authority 8	London	2.32
Local authority 9	East Midlands	2.14
Local authority 10	North West	2.03

Base = 288 (81.3%) of all 354 local authorities

As can be seen from Table 4.3, the individual local authority with the highest number of decisions per 1,000 households is in the East Midlands, with 3.47. As a comparison, looking at the ‘bottom’ local authorities, two local authorities had no

instances where ‘violent relationship breakdown’ was the reason for loss of last settled accommodation, and the next lowest rate was in the South West: 0.02. This is in keeping with the regional patterns for this reason as highlighted above.

There are only two local authorities with no ‘violent relationship breakdown’ as the reason for loss of accommodation but 51 with no ‘domestic violence’ as the reason for being in priority need. This discrepancy highlights one of the problems with recording only one reason for vulnerability/loss of accommodation.

There is only one London local authority in the ‘Top 10’, with 2.32 decisions per 1,000 households. These patterns are in keeping with the findings above on fleeing domestic violence as a reason for being in priority need. On the whole, London and the South have low proportions of the England total for this category, and violent relationship breakdown represents a lower proportion of all decisions made when compared to other local authorities and other regions.

MAIN REASON FOR LOSS OF LAST ACCOMMODATION: LOSS OF AN ASSURED SHORTHOLD TENANCY

The second main reason for loss of accommodation used to illustrate regional and local variations is that of loss of an assured shorthold tenancy (AST). This category was chosen in part because of the extent of variation across regions, and because, as illustrated in Table 4.1, it accounts for an high proportion of all main reasons – 15 per cent in England.

Table 4.4: ‘Top 10’ local authorities where ‘termination of an assured shorthold tenancy’ was given as the main reason for the loss of last accommodation

Local authority	Region	Number of decisions per 1,000 households
Local authority 1	London	4.29
Local authority 2	London	3.82
Local authority 3	South West	2.81
Local authority 4	London	2.74
Local authority 5	East of England	2.64
Local authority 6	East of England	2.51
Local authority 7	South West	2.43
Local authority 8	South West	2.37
Local authority 9	London	2.28
Local authority 10	South East	2.23

Base = 289 (81.6%) of all 354 local authorities

In the East of England and South West regions the loss of rented or tied accommodation due to the termination of an AST was the most common reason for loss of last settled accommodation. These reasons were also very common in London and the South East. The local authority with the highest proportion of decisions per 1,000 households is in London, with 4.29. The next ‘Top 10’ local authority (also in London) had 3.82, which is still a significant number per 1,000 households. London boroughs account for four of the 10 ‘Top 10’ local authorities, which points to significant issues about housing supply, housing demand and security of tenure in London. There are no local authorities from the north of England represented in the ‘Top 10s’. Looking at those local authorities with the lowest proportions, three local authorities have zero, and the fourth, from the North West, has only 0.03 decisions per 1,000 households with loss of an AST as the main reason.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Sections three and four have used domestic violence and mental illness (as priority need categories), and violent relationship breakdown and loss of an AST (as reasons given for loss of last accommodation), to show the regional and sub-regional variations in decisions under the homelessness legislation. Further examination of local authority culture, service provision and the housing supply in these areas, as well as developing a better understanding of the social factors at play that shape demand, is necessary if we are to achieve a better understanding of these trends.

One clear finding is that in the South people are more likely to be accepted as homeless and in priority need because they have dependent children or suffer from mental illness, and have lost their last accommodation because parents and relatives are no longer willing to accommodate them or due to a loss of an assured shorthold tenancy. By comparison, in the North, domestic violence is the biggest single reason for both priority need vulnerability and loss of last accommodation.¹⁹

¹⁹ One caveat here is the 'other' categories, which could be obscuring data in these regions.

Section 5: Reasons for households leaving temporary accommodation provided by the local authority²⁰

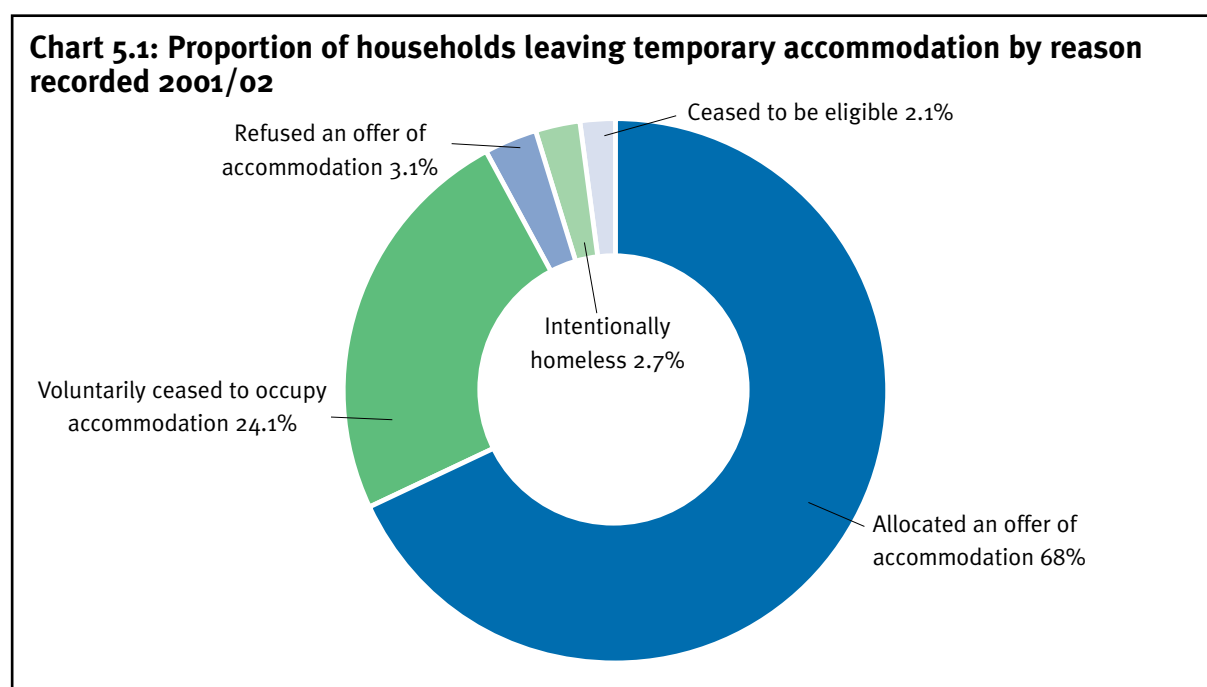
Households leaving accommodation

This section looks at the statistics regarding people leaving accommodation provided under either a s.193 or s.194 duty. These are duties which require an authority to accommodate, or continue to accommodate a homeless household once the authority had made a decision on their application.²¹

In many cases, the household will have spent a period of time in interim accommodation under s.188, whilst the authority investigates their homeless application. This period will range from a matter of days, to many months, depending on the circumstances of the applicants and the local authority.

A total of 33,278 households were reported by local authorities to have left accommodation provided by local authorities in 2001/02. The main reason recorded for leaving was that the households had accepted an offer of accommodation through the allocation scheme (68 per cent). This means that 32 per cent left under other circumstances. It is important to keep in mind that households may have been in interim accommodation for some time before a decision was made. These data only count the time in temporary accommodation from the point at which the decision was made. They do therefore not count any time spent in temporary accommodation while the decision was being considered.

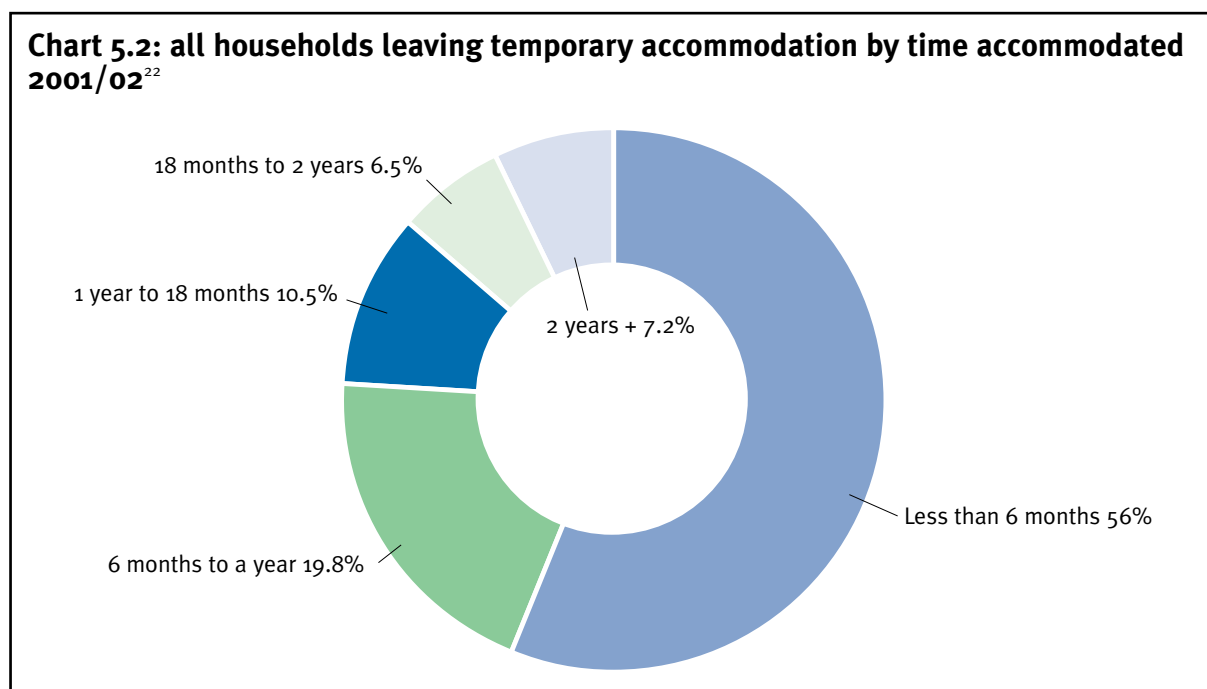
Chart 5.1 below shows the proportion of different reasons given. The two most common reasons are then examined.



²⁰ The data are available for approximately 300 of the 354 local authorities (84 per cent) (this varies since some have returned information on some reasons for leaving and not others).

²¹ The period of the data – April 2001 to March 2002 – preceded the changes to these sections introduced by the Homelessness Act 2002. The two year rule has been repealed by the Act.

Chart 5.2 below shows that 56 per cent of households are most likely to leave temporary accommodation during the first six months. This is the same pattern across all of the reasons for leaving accommodation provided by the local authority. What the data do not show, and what would be very interesting to explore, is where these households go, particularly those who were not allocated a property and left voluntarily or became ‘intentionally homeless’ from their temporary accommodation. Intentionality would relate to a deliberate action or inaction resulting in the tenant losing their accommodation, for example by being evicted for rent arrears, and would not only refer to households who have refused an offer of accommodation by the local authority. While this additional information is not feasibly collected via the P1E form, there could be other ways in which these patterns are explored.



Households leaving accommodation having accepted an offer

The most common of these was for households to accept an offer of accommodation during the first period of up to six months in temporary accommodation. However, 7.7 per cent households only accepted an offer after two years: we do not know from the data provided whether or not this was the first offer people received. However, many authorities make a limited number of offers to homeless households (frequently only one offer) so very often this would have been the first time a suitable offer was made. We would need detailed information on individual local authority policy to be able to comment on this any further.

Households ‘voluntarily’ leaving accommodation

The second most common reason – almost a quarter – for leaving temporary accommodation was households leaving voluntarily, the reasons for which are not indicated. This may be due to a number of different factors including returning to family, finding other accommodation or leaving the temporary accommodation because it was unsuitable. However, the data include those households that have moved to a housing association dwelling other than via nominations by the local authority (as stated in the P1E guidance, those nominated to move to a housing association property would be included in those ‘allocated property’).

It was most common for households to leave temporary accommodation voluntarily in the first six months – a total of 67 per cent did so, compared to 5.1 per cent who were allocated accommodation in the first six months. Further research into why this was the case and where people went to would be useful, especially if it looked into ways of

²² The total households given under each reason do not correspond to the number of households given for each time period. These again do not correspond to the number in the total for each time period for all reasons. The totals generated automatically from this data have been used.

sustaining tenancies. 'Voluntarily' leaving a property could be instigated by a range of factors, many of which could make the temporary tenancy no longer sustainable. Furthermore, it would also be interesting to examine the impact of arbitration and mediation schemes which have become increasingly common in some local authority areas since the collection of these data.

The data do not allow for an examination of repeat homeless applications, nor do they tell us anything about tenancy breakdowns and loss of accommodation once households have been re-housed. Understanding all of these trends better would inform homeless reviews and strategies, and help distil and replicate good practice.

APPENDIX 1: THE ODPM DATA SET

The raw data set, which is compiled from 354 quarterly local authority P1E returns, poses two main challenges:

- Missing data within each P1E form means that within the form, the sum of individual categories does not always tally with the total figure given. The totals may therefore be under or over estimated. An example of this using ‘ethnicity’ is given below.
- The ODPM’s estimate of missing data (which is not included in the raw data provided to Shelter) also means that the ODPM quarterly summary statistics are not the same as the figures presented here. In the analysis for this report, local authorities with any missing data for any one quarter have not been counted at all for that variable (see the example table below). In the database package used here – SPSS – missing data bring about the added complication of ‘disqualifying’ a local authority from an automated annual total (these totals have been used mainly to calculate ‘Top 10’ tables). This is the case even if they are missing data from only one quarter.

When the ODPM presents summary tables of these statistics it estimates values for non-responding local authorities. This estimate is based on a grossing method which uses the local authority value from the last quarter, and a multiplier based on the increase or decrease overall for groups of local authorities. We have chosen not to employ similar methods as we do not have access to the ODPM’s method for doing this.

The data provided for individual categories do not always add up to the total figure given for that category, hence the totals within the P1E forms themselves do not add up. In some cases this is because local authorities complete a total figure without breaking it down. An example of this is ethnicity: individual data for ‘white’, ‘African/Caribbean’, ‘Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladeshi’, ‘other’ and ‘not known’ categories do not add up to the ‘total’ category given on the P1E form for decisions of all ethnicities. Thus, for the purposes of this report, manual totals are calculated of the individual variables in most cases.

Using the example of ethnicity above, all decisions for ‘white’, ‘African/Caribbean’, ‘Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi’, ‘other’ and ‘not known’ decisions have been added manually, giving a different total to that presented by the local authority as its total for decisions for all ethnic groups. These totals in turn differ from the summary totals published quarterly by the ODPM, because that summary has allowed for missing data.

In the analyses presented here, the figures for non-responding local authorities have not been estimated and therefore totals are on the whole lower than those published by the ODPM. In each section the problems with the data and the number of local authorities included in the analysis given in footnotes. The data set also contains zeros for some entries and blanks for others; this makes it difficult to interpret where the data are really missing. In this case zero has been interpreted as none and a gap has been coded as missing data.

Some questions are answered less well than others. For instance Section E7 (households leaving accommodation provided under S.193) is problematic because of the specific nature of questions that require local authorities to break data down into three to six monthly intervals. There are more gaps in this data and hence fewer local authorities are used to calculate the overall totals. For example, each quarter has replies regarding voluntarily leaving accommodation from approximately 300 local authorities. However, the total for 2001/02 is only calculated from approximately 250 – 260 local authorities, because different local authorities complete different quarters and leave some quarters blank – i.e. it is not always the same 50 local authorities that leave blanks. The table below illustrates this point.

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Local authority 1	2	2	3	3	10
Local authority 2	3	-1	4	3	-1
Local authority 3	-1	4	-1	6	-1
Local authority 4	4	2	5	5	16

-1 = missing data

In quarters 1, 2 and 3 there is one local authority with missing data (but not the same local authority each time), i.e. we have data for three local authorities in each of the first three quarters. In the total calculation, however, we only have total data for two local authorities because different local authorities had missing data in different quarters. In SPSS, any missing data in any quarter results in that local authority not being counted at all. This must be kept in mind when reading the 'Top 10' tables, as some local authorities that may rank higher have been excluded. The number of authorities on which the 'Top 10' tables are based is shown under each table. This is where there is value in the ODPM estimating missing values, based on local knowledge of local authorities and on previous returns, to allow for a count of all local authorities.

Another limitation of the data set is that it records households and not individuals. Furthermore, data are, out of necessity, presented as totals of decisions per type for each local authority, and do therefore not allow for cross-tabulated data analysis. For example, we know that in local authority 'X' there are certain number of households with dependent children, and another number of minority ethnic households, but the data do not allow us to look at the ethnic composition of households with children.

The data do not provide a full picture of a given household, over time. An example of this would be to record the decision made for a household, and then whether that household moved in to temporary accommodation and if so when it moved out again. Extended further, these data could give some idea of repeat homelessness and the multiple reasons for priority need and reasons for loss of last settled accommodation. These sorts of complex descriptions are beyond the scope of the current P1E form.

Despite these complications the missing data do not in the main detract from the general patterns presented here, as proportionately there is not a huge difference in figures. They also do not detract from the key message, which is that better local authority level homelessness data collection and analysis is needed, and that while the P1E will always be a fairly limited tool, its full potential is not being utilised.

APPENDIX 2: THE P1E FORM

- Section E1: Households for which decisions were taken during the quarter
- Section E2: Households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the quarter
- Section E3: Main reason for loss of last accommodation of last settled home for households found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the quarter
- Section E4: Referrals between authorities and households accepted with no local connection during the quarter
- Section E5: Duty accepted towards households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the quarter
- Section E6: Homeless households accommodated by your authority at the end of the quarter
- Section E7: Households leaving accommodation provided under S.193 (minimum two year period) or S.194 (discretionary power to continue to accommodate) during the quarter

As from 31st March 2002 the form followed a slightly new format that includes more detail on temporary accommodation, in line with new bed and breakfast targets. Data generated from this form – i.e. the first quarter of the 2002/3 financial year – have not yet been analysed. In addition to this, subsequent to the introduction of the Homelessness Act 2002, P1E forms have been amended to include new priority need categories. These areas both need further, more detailed, analysis.

APPENDIX 3: HOMELESSNESS LEGISLATION – DECISION MAKING PROCESS

In order to qualify for help under the homelessness legislation (Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) a household has to pass a number of qualifying tests.

Eligibility

The household has to be 'eligible' for help by the local authority. People who are 'not eligible' for help include some people who normally live abroad, and anyone subject to immigration control (including asylum seekers whose claim for asylum has not yet been determined).

Homeless

If it is 'eligible' for help, the household next has to show that it is homeless. According to the legislation, this means that there is nowhere where they could reasonably be expected to live that is available to them. The precedents set through the courts, government guidance, and local authority policy affect exactly how this test is applied to the individual circumstance of different households.

Priority need

Households that are 'eligible' and 'homeless' may only receive very limited, short-term help unless they can also show that they are in 'priority need'. The Government has determined that certain types of household must always be considered as in 'priority need' (for example, households with children). Households not automatically covered by the 'priority need' definition may qualify if they are found to be 'vulnerable'. The local authority will carry out an assessment of whether someone is 'vulnerable', and in this respect will have regard to precedents set by the Courts, government guidance, and its own policies.

Intentionally homeless

If a household considered to be 'eligible', 'homeless' and in 'priority need' is found to be intentionally homeless, the authority will only have a duty to provide housing advice and assistance. 'Intentionally homeless' is defined as a deliberate action or inaction, taken by the applicant, which has resulted in them losing accommodation. For example, a person may be found intentionally homeless if they are evicted from a property for failing to pay their rent or mortgage costs, or because of 'unacceptable behaviour'.²³

Local connection

If the household is found to be 'eligible', 'unintentionally homeless' and in 'priority need', it still has to pass a 'local connection' test. If the household fails this test then the local authority can choose to refer it to another local authority where the household is deemed to have a local connection.

²³ Strictly speaking, at the time these data were being collected, the duty was to provide temporary accommodation for up to two years and then for further periods if the household still needed it. In practice, however, the temporary accommodation was almost always provided until the household was made an offer of a tenancy in the local authority's own stock (or in a registered social landlord's stock) or the household left the temporary accommodation for some other reason.

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