

Briefing for Lothian

Crisis in Scotland

March 2023



Crisis is the national charity for people experiencing homelessness. Our Skylight in Edinburgh offers frontline services for people who need help in Edinburgh and the Lothians, while we also work alongside partners across the country to offer our expertise and support wherever we can.

But while our expertise stems from our experience of offering frontline support, we also campaign for the changes needed to end homelessness altogether.

Almost 1 in 12 people in Scotland have experienced homelessness. In 2021/22, just under 29,000 households were found to be homeless by Scottish local authorities, or 47,000 people, including 14,000 children. The number of households found to be homeless has been increasing gradually in recent years, after many years of decline.

- The most common triggers for homelessness are a household dispute/ relationship breakdown or being asked to leave the family home. For women, it is domestic abuse.
- 2,130 households slept rough in the three months before making an application for homelessness assistance in 2021/22. (This doesn't include anyone who did not make a formal homelessness application to their council.) At 6% of all homeless households, this proportion has fallen slightly over recent years.
- There has been a very significant increase in the numbers of homeless households with support needs in recent years. The majority of homeless households (52%) now have support needs, and three in ten (29%) have mental health difficulties requiring support.
- On average it takes over 36 weeks before a homelessness case is resolved. But in some areas and for some households, particularly those with children, the wait is much, much longer.
- Last year 1 in 8 (13%) homeless households last year had already been homeless in the past five years.

While the Scottish Government have committed £100 million to supporting rapid rehousing, research shows that overall funding for homelessness in Scotland has been reducing since 2016, particularly for housing support. A recent report from the Scottish Housing Regulator (Feb 2023) found some councils are "reaching the limits of their capacity to respond effectively to the demands from people applying for help, the range of policy and statutory requirements they must meet and impacts from the wider economic context". Some councils are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their statutory duties, particularly to provide temporary accommodation.

Local authorities are keen to do more to prevent people become homeless and reduce pressure on the system, but currently this is difficult legally. A housing bill is due to come to parliament in the autumn. As well as content regarding privately rented accommodation, we expect this bill to contain legislation on preventing homelessness which should address this, and require other public bodies to support efforts to help people in housing crisis

Homelessness in the Lothian region

During 2021/22, across the four local authorities represented with the Lothian region:

- 4,210 households were found to be homeless or at risk of homelessness (4,857 adults and 2,234 children)
- 415 households slept rough in the three months prior to making a homelessness application, mainly in Edinburgh.
- 4,524 households were in temporary accommodation as of 31 March 2022. Use of temporary accommodation is above average in all areas. In Midlothian use is twice the national average and in Edinburgh it is three times the national average for homeless households.
- 28% of households in Edinburgh have five or more temporary accommodation placements, nearly five times the rate of the next highest place (Stirling).
- Lothian has the longest durations for homelessness cases and for temporary accommodation stays in the country. The majority of households in the Lothians are in temporary accommodation for over a year on average, and in Edinburgh and East Lothian many are in the system for nearly two years on average.
- Midlothian has by far the longest durations in the country, followed by Edinburgh. East and West Lothian are also in the top seven (all seven of which are pressured housing markets).
- Lothian areas have some of the highest use of B&B in the country. In East Lothian and West Lothian the rate of placements in B&B is 66% and 57% respectively, while the national average is 22%.
- People stay for long periods in B&B. Over a month in West Lothian, around 50 days in Edinburgh and Midlothian and over 80 days in East Lothian. B&B is not suitable for long term living and should not be used for more than 7 days.
- Edinburgh has particularly low use of social housing as temporary accommodation compared to the rest of Scotland, with a large proportion being housed in “other” forms of accommodation and in hostels.
- Edinburgh breached its duty to provide temporary accommodation 850 times last year, representing 42% of breaches across Scotland. East Lothian and West Lothian represented a further 22% of breaches.
- Rates of homelessness per 100,000 population are a little below national average across Lothian.
- In East Lothian, Midlothian and Edinburgh there is a backlog of cases. Edinburgh had over 2,000 cases still live from previous years. On the other hand, West Lothian cleared a backlog of around 200 cases last year.

	No. households found to be homeless / at risk	Slept rough in past 3 months	Households in temporary accommodation	Ave. no. days in TA	Ave. no days to close homeless application	Rate of homelessness per 100,000
East Lothian	525	50	407	391	398	586
Edinburgh (City of)	2,415	225	3,048	449	631	539
Midlothian	380	0	372	524	674	500
West Lothian	890	140	697	255	392	592
<i>Lothian region</i>	<i>4,210</i>	<i>415</i>	<i>4,524</i>			
<i>SCOTLAND</i>	<i>28,880</i>	<i>2,130</i>	<i>13,945</i>	<i>207</i>	<i>256</i>	<i>606</i>