

The homelessness monitor: Scotland 2015

Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Hal Pawson, Glen Bramley, Steve Wilcox and Beth Watts, Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Environment and Real Estate (I-SPHERE), Heriot-Watt University; Centre for Housing Policy, University of York; City Futures Research Centre, University of New South Wales

December 2015

Executive Summary



The homelessness monitor

The homelessness monitor is a longitudinal study that provides an independent analysis of the impact on homelessness of recent economic and policy developments across the UK. The key areas of interest are the homelessness consequences of the post-2007 economic recession, and the subsequent recovery, as well as welfare reform and cuts. Separate reports are produced for each UK nation.

This year's Scotland report monitors the impact on homelessness of the slow pace of economic recovery and the effects of welfare and housing reform and analyses key trends from the baseline account of homelessness established in 2012 up until 2015. It also highlights emerging trends and forecasts some of the likely changes, identifying the developments likely to have the most significant impacts on homelessness in Scotland.

Executive Summary

Key points

The Homelessness Monitor series is a five-year study that provides an independent analysis of the homelessness impacts of recent economic and policy developments in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK.¹ This update report provides an account of how homelessness stands in Scotland in 2015, or as close to 2015 as data availability allows, and how things have changed since the 'baseline' Homelessness Monitor Scotland report was published in 2012.²

Key points to emerge from this 2015 update report for Scotland are as follows:

- The overall scale of statutory homelessness peaked in Scotland in 2005/06, and has been on a marked downward path for the past five years. In 2014/15 Scottish local authorities logged 35,764 statutory homelessness applications, of which 28,615 were assessed as homeless. The total number of applications has fallen by 37% since 2009/10. In the most recent year, total applications fell by 4% while 'assessed as homeless' cases dropped by 5%.
- This downward trend is wholly the result of the introduction of the 'Housing Options' model of homelessness prevention from 2010 onwards. Taking into account 'homelessness-type' approaches to Housing Options services, in combination with formal homelessness applications, we can see that the overall annual level of homelessness presentations to Scottish local authorities has remained relatively steady in recent years (at around 54,000).
- While the principles of Housing Options have been widely endorsed in Scotland, there has been considerable controversy over the practical implementation of this approach to homelessness prevention, especially with regard to its interaction with the statutory homelessness framework. After a critical report by the Scottish Housing Regulator, national (non-statutory) guidance is expected to be issued on Housing Options, together with a new training toolkit.
- After a steady and substantial increase in the years to 2010/11, Scotland's temporary accommodation placements have subsequently remained fairly steady in the range 10-11,000 households at any one time. Most temporary accommodation placements in Scotland are in ordinary social housing stock, though single person households are more likely than families to experience non-self contained temporary accommodation, such as hostels and Bed & Breakfast hotels. Local authorities across Scotland have reported substantially lengthening periods of time spent in temporary accommodation, and from April 2016 there will be mandatory data collection on this. There is currently substantial anxiety in Scotland with regard to the implications of welfare reform for meeting the costs of temporary accommodation.
- There was a marked upturn in local authority evictions in 2014/15, and a smaller upturn in housing association evictions, predominantly for rent arrears cases attributable at least in part to welfare reform. However, mortgage and rent arrears continue to account for only a very small proportion of statutory

¹ Parallel Homelessness Monitors are being published for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. All of the UK Homelessness Monitor reports are available from <http://www.crisis.org.uk/policy-and-research.php>

² Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G. & Wilcox, S. (2012) *The Homelessness Monitor: Scotland 2012*. London: Crisis.

homelessness cases in Scotland, and there is little evidence of a strongly rising trend with respect to the ending of private tenancies as a cause of homelessness (as seen in England).

- Scotland has generally followed UK-wide trends in the prevalence of concealed potential households, including a sharp upward movement in 2010-12. Younger adults are rather more likely to form separate households in Scotland than in the wider UK, but all areas of the country saw a sharp drop after 2010. Overcrowding has increased in Scotland, to a level more similar to the rest of the UK, and seems to be strongly related to poverty.
- Housing supply fell to historically low levels during the recession, and annual additions to the housing stock now need to rise by some 30% from 2013/14 levels just to keep pace with household growth. The gradual long-term decline in social sector lettings has been contained, for now, by the new lettings developed through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme.
- While the private rented sector doubled in size over the decade to 2013, and now accounts for 15% of all housing stock, it still provides less than two thirds of the number of rented dwellings available in the social rented sector in Scotland. Private tenants are set to benefit from a substantial improvement in their rights to security of tenure under proposed new Scottish legislation which would see the ending of 'no fault' evictions.
- This is a time of continuing policy development on homelessness in Scotland, with youth homelessness and 'multiple exclusion homelessness' specific foci of activity. Of particular relevance to the latter, there have been recent positive developments with regard to renewed engagement of the health sector in addressing homelessness in Scotland, and important opportunities, as well as challenges, are presented by the health and social care integration process. However, the practical impact of the new statutory 'housing support duty' appears to have been limited.
- A further round of major welfare reforms and cuts were announced in the 2015 Summer Budget, which will have particular implications for young single people under 22 years old and for larger families, and more generally for the ability of low income households to access the private rented sector. However the Scottish Government, as part of the post referendum constitutional settlement, is to be provided with some limited new powers on the operation of welfare policies in Scotland. They have stated that these will be used for the effective 'abolition' of the 'social sector Housing Benefit size criteria' (commonly known as the 'Bedroom Tax') in Scotland, and the continuation of direct payments to social landlords of Universal Credit elements related to rental costs.
- The Shared Accommodation Rate continues to cause major problems across Scotland in limiting the access of younger single people to the private rented sector, and is viewed as undermining the ability of Housing Options teams to use the private rented sector as a means to prevent or resolve homelessness. However, cultural antipathy towards the private rented sector, and sharing in particular, also plays a role in some local authority areas.
- Benefit sanctions are now a core concern within the homelessness sector in Scotland, with implications both for people's capacity to avoid or move on from homelessness, and for the financial viability of some accommodation projects which struggle to recover service charges from sanctioned residents.

- The Scottish Welfare Fund appears, on the whole, to be positively viewed by both service providers and service users.
- According to the Scottish Household Survey, about 50,000 adults (1.1% of the adult population) experience homelessness each year. Rough sleeping is experienced by around 5,000 adults in Scotland each year, with about 660 sleeping rough on a typical night, the overwhelming majority of them men. This national survey data confirms the key role of household-level poverty in the generation of homelessness, exacerbated to some degree by local housing and labour market conditions.

Defining homelessness

A wide definition of homelessness is adopted in this Homelessness Monitor series to enable a comprehensive analysis taking account of: people sleeping rough; single homeless people living in hostels, shelters and temporary supported accommodation; statutorily homeless households; and those aspects of 'hidden homelessness' amenable to statistical analysis using large-scale surveys, namely 'concealed',³ 'sharing'⁴ and 'overcrowded'⁵ households. Three main methods are employed in the study: reviews of relevant literature, legal and policy documents; interviews with a sample of key informants from the statutory and voluntary sectors across Scotland (22 such key informants were consulted in 2014/15); and detailed analysis of published

and unpublished statistics, drawn from both administrative and survey-based sources.

The economic and policy context for homelessness in Scotland

Homelessness policy

This is a time of continuing policy debate and development on homelessness in Scotland. The most important innovation over recent years has been the promotion of the 'Housing Options' approach to homelessness prevention in Scotland, with the Scottish Government providing (relatively modest) financial support for the establishment of five regional 'Housing Options Hubs' in 2010. The principles of Housing Options have been widely endorsed in Scotland,⁶ and the development and contribution of the Hubs positively evaluated,⁷ but there has been considerable controversy over the practical implementation of this model of homelessness prevention, especially in light of the very large falls in statutory homelessness acceptances that have occurred in some parts of Scotland (see below), raising concerns about potential 'gatekeeping'.

After a critical report by the Scottish Housing Regulator,⁸ which noted that the 'diversion' of people from a homelessness assessment to Housing Options was not always appropriate, national (non-statutory) guidance is expected to be issued on Housing Options by the Scottish Government, alongside a new training toolkit for use by staff and elected members. Mandatory data collection under

3 'Concealed households' are family units or single adults living within other households, who may be regarded as potential separate households that may wish to form given appropriate opportunity.

4 'Sharing households' are those households who live together in the same dwelling but who do not share either a living room or regular meals together. This is the standard Government and ONS definition of sharing households which is applied in the Census and in household surveys. In practice, the distinction between 'sharing' households and 'concealed' households is a very fluid one.

5 'Overcrowding' is defined in this report according to the most widely used official standard – the 'bedroom standard'. Essentially, this allocates one bedroom to each couple or lone parent, one to each pair of children under 10, one to each pair of children of the same sex over 10, with additional bedrooms for individual children over 10 of different sex and for additional adult household members. However, we also draw on a more 'generous' definition of overcrowding in the discussion below.

6 Shelter Scotland (2011) *A Shelter Scotland Report: Housing Options in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland; see also Scottish Housing Regulator (2014) *Housing Options in Scotland: A Thematic Inquiry*. Edinburgh: SHR.

7 Ipsos MORI & Mandy Littlewood Social Research and Consulting (2012) *Evaluation of the Local Authority Housing Hubs Approach*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

8 Scottish Housing Regulator (2014) *Housing Options in Scotland: A Thematic Inquiry*. Edinburgh: SHR.

'PREVENT1' on homelessness prevention and Housing Options, underway since April 2014, will generate an exceptionally important resource for monitoring the outcomes of these policy developments over time. Linkage with the statutory homelessness data collection (HL1) is a particularly helpful feature of PREVENT1, enabling estimation of the global 'homelessness caseload' of Scottish local authorities (see below), and also the tracking of households moving through both systems to their final 'housing outcome'.⁹

There are, however, aspects of PREVENT1 that limit the ability to 'drill down' into the specific activities undertaken by local authorities in pursuit of homelessness prevention, with only quite aggregated information provided on the 'level' of assistance provided. Nonetheless, the data available thus far is indicative of relatively 'light touch' Housing Options interventions in many cases, limited to active information and signposting, and very often culminating in a statutory homelessness application.¹⁰

Notably, there appears to be far less use of the private rented sector to prevent or resolve homelessness in Scotland than in England. In part this will reflect the tenure's smaller size in Scotland, and the traditional dominance of social housing in meeting housing need, as well as underdeveloped relationships between local authorities and private landlords in some parts of the country. It is also likely to be linked to welfare reform restrictions (particularly the Shared Accommodation Rate) that limit local authorities' ability to use the private rented sector to rehouse single people under 35, who make up a much larger proportion of the

statutory homelessness caseload in Scotland than elsewhere in the UK, especially since the abolition of priority need. In addition, there appears to be a cultural antipathy on the part of some Scottish local authorities to both the use of the private sector in general, and to shared accommodation in particular, while many homelessness applicants are understandably reluctant to contemplate the latter in a context where they are entitled to settled housing via a homelessness system that almost always leads to a self-contained social let.¹¹

In sharp contrast to the great impact that the introduction of Housing Options has had in Scotland, and the controversy it has aroused, the practical effect of the new statutory 'housing support duty',¹² which came into effect in June 2013, appears to have been rather muted. While few expected this new duty to have a very major impact, at the time of the 2012 Monitor there were some concerns that it may draw resources away from preventative interventions, and possibly generate unsustainable new demands for support services. Equally, there were hopes in some quarters that it would help to protect vulnerable housing support resources in a climate of severe budget cutbacks in local authorities. In practice its import, both positive and negative, seems to have been very modest, with many local authorities reporting that they were already doing what the duty required, albeit that in some cases it has provided a prompt to formalise existing processes.¹³

Youth homelessness has been an important area of focus over a run of years in Scotland, with the Scottish Parliament¹⁴ as well as the Scottish Government and the cross-sector

⁹ p. 4 in Scottish Government (2015) *Housing Options (PREVENT1) Statistics in Scotland 2014/15*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Sanders, B. & Dobie, S. (2015) *Sharing in Scotland: Supporting young people who are homeless on the Shared Accommodation Rate*. London: Crisis.

¹² The Housing Support Services (Homelessness) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/331)

¹³ Shelter Scotland (2014) *Supporting Homeless People: Have New Legal Duties Made a Difference?* Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland.

¹⁴ Scottish Parliament (2012) *Having and Keeping a Home: Steps to Preventing Homelessness Among Young People*. Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament.

'Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group', taking an interest in this area. There has been an expansion in mediation and other young person specific interventions in the context of the broader homelessness prevention agenda. Also highly relevant here is the provision made for improved support for care leavers under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.¹⁵ While there has been a decline in statutory youth homelessness in both absolute and relative terms over the past few years, this reduction has been more gradual than that seen in England, which may be viewed as something of a disappointment in light of these focused policy efforts. But over the same timeline young people have fared particularly badly under UK welfare reforms,¹⁶ with both the Shared Accommodation Rate extension to single claimants under 35 (see above) and the intensifying sanctions regime (see below) disproportionately affecting younger age groups.

A more recent area of policy interest in Scotland pertains to 'multiple exclusion homelessness',¹⁷ denoting situations where homelessness intersects with other complex support needs, such as those associated with alcohol or drug dependency or mental health problems. This new policy focus seems to have been prompted in part by widespread reports from local authorities that the proportion of people in the statutory

homelessness system with complex needs is increasing. Particularly encouraging are recent positive developments with regard to a renewed engagement of health stakeholders in addressing homelessness in Scotland, following an influential report published earlier this year by the Scottish Public Health Network.¹⁸ Moreover, important opportunities, as well as challenges, are presented by the health and social care integration process, particularly with respect to the commissioning of services for homeless people with complex needs. Notably, the Scottish Government has made reference in this context to the 'Housing First' model of intensive support in mainstream tenancies for homeless people with complex needs.¹⁹

'Multiple exclusion homelessness' is a particularly acute concern in Glasgow, where there are an unusually large number of rough sleepers with complex needs,²⁰ and the City Council has struggled and often failed to meet its statutory homelessness duty,²¹ in part because of an acute shortage of temporary accommodation for single men since the closure of most of the city's large-scale, poor quality male hostels.²² Pressure has also been placed on the city's temporary accommodation system by long-standing difficulties in ensuring sufficient access to long-term social tenancies for homeless households.²³ Glasgow City Council has

15 CELCIS (2014) *The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014: Parts 10 and 11 (Aftercare and Continuing Care)*: http://www.celcis.org/media/resources/publications/Inform_Children_Young_People_Act_Part_10-11.pdf

16 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wilcox, S. & Watts, B. (2015) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2015*. London: Crisis; Johnsen, S. & Watts, B. (2014) *Homelessness and Poverty: Reviewing the Links*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University; Homeless Link (2014) *Young and Homeless 2014*. London: Homeless Link; Smith, N. (2015) *Feeling the Pinch: the Impact of Benefit Changes on Families and Young People*. London: Barnardo's.

17 Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G. & Johnsen, S. (2013) 'Pathways into multiple exclusion homelessness in seven UK cities', *Urban Studies*, 50(1): 148-168.

18 Hetherington, K. & Hamlet, N. (2015) *Restoring the Public Health Response to Homelessness in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Scottish Public Health Network.

19 Busch-Geertsema, V. (2013) *Housing First Europe: Final Report*: <http://www.servicestyrelsen.dk/housingfirsteurope/>

20 Anna Evans Housing Consultancy, with Davidson, E. Mandy Littlewood Social Research and Consulting Ltd & Solomon, S. (2014) *Homelessness and Complex Needs in Glasgow*: <http://www.ghn.org.uk/sites/default/files/FINAL-SUMMARY-ON-AEHC-WEB-30.1.15.pdf>

21 Glasgow Homelessness Network (2014) *ODM Annual Homelessness Monitoring Report: April 2013 – March 2014*: <http://www.ghn.org.uk/node/173>; Glasgow Homelessness Network (2015) *Glasgow Winter Night Shelter 2014–15. Monitoring Report – March 2015*: <http://www.glasgowcitymission.com/admin/resources/gwns-2014-2015-report-mar15.pdf>

22 Fitzpatrick, S., Bretherton, J., Jones, A., Pleace, N. & Quilgars, D. (2010) *The Glasgow Hostel Closure and Re-provisioning Programme: Final Report on the Findings from a Longitudinal Evaluation*: <https://www.york.ac.uk/media/chp/documents/2009/The%20Glasgow%20Hostel%20Closure.pdf>

23 Anna Evans Housing Consultancy, with Davidson, E. Mandy Littlewood Social Research and Consulting Ltd & Solomon, S. (2014) *Homelessness and Complex Needs in Glasgow*: <http://www.ghn.org.uk/sites/default/files/FINAL-SUMMARY-ON-AEHC-WEB-30.1.15.pdf>

publicly acknowledged these difficulties²⁴ and at the time of writing had undertaken an internal service review, and was developing its strategy to try to resolve the issue in partnership with RSLs and other local stakeholders. It was also working with the Scottish Housing Regulator on a 'voluntary' basis to try to improve its performance in this area.

Housing policy

Housing supply remains a major structural challenge with respect to addressing homelessness in Scotland. Housing supply in Scotland fell to historically low levels during the recession, and annual additions to the housing stock now need to rise by some 30% from 2013/14 levels just to keep pace with household growth. The gradual long-term decline in social sector lettings has, for now, been contained by the new social lettings developed through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme, and it is noteworthy that public policy in Scotland continues to support substantial new investment in social rent, in sharp contrast to England where investment in 'affordable' rent (up to 80% of market rents) – for all low income households – has now almost totally replaced investment in new social rented stock.²⁵ Despite the difficult financial climate, especially post the Summer 2015 Budget, the SNP has made a commitment to provide some 50,000 new affordable homes over the five years of the next Scottish Parliament.²⁶

The Scottish Government has also now legislated to abolish the Right to Buy from August 2016. Once introduced, this measure will prevent further losses to the social rented sector stock, but it should be borne in mind

that the impact on the availability of social lettings will be limited given the relatively low level of contemporary Right to Buy sales. Much more significant will be the continuing impact from historical sales in the form of lost relets for many years to come.²⁷

As in the rest of the UK, the private rented sector has grown rapidly in Scotland in recent years, and now accounts for some 15% of the total housing stock, though it still provides less than two thirds of the number of rented dwellings available in the social rented sector. Private tenants are set to benefit from a substantial improvement in their security of tenure under proposed new Scottish legislation, with the abolition of the 'no fault' ground for eviction of private tenants;²⁸ a policy development which is all the more notable given moves in the opposite direction elsewhere in the UK.²⁹ While there is, interestingly, less evidence in Scotland than anywhere else in the UK of a rising incidence of people becoming homeless as a result of private tenancy terminations (see below), these proposed additional protections will nonetheless be helpful in stemming any nascent trend in that direction (assuming of course no negative impact on the supply of private rented dwellings as a result of these changes in tenure arrangements).

Welfare policy

Threatening to overwhelm efforts to prevent and address homelessness in Scotland is the ongoing impact of UK welfare reform. A raft of further major welfare cuts were announced in the 2015 Summer Budget, with particular implications for young single people under 22 years old and larger families, and more

²⁴ McArdle, H. (2013) 'Charities: no room for the homeless', Herald Scotland, 1st December: http://www.heraldsotland.com/news/13134261.Charities__no_room_for_the_homeless/

²⁵ Wilcox, S., Perry, J. & Williams, P. (2015) *UK Housing Review 2015*. Coventry: CIH.

²⁶ Stone, J. (2015) 'Nicola Sturgeon pledges 50,000 Affordable Homes for Scotland'. 15th October: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/nicola-sturgeon-pledges-to-build-50000-affordable-homes-in-next-parliament-a6695101.html>

²⁷ Wilcox, S. (2006) 'A financial evaluation of the right to buy' in Wilcox, S. (ed.) *UK Housing Review 2006/2007*. Coventry: CIH & CML.

²⁸ Scottish Government (2015) *Private Housing (Tenancies) Scotland Bill*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

²⁹ Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wilcox, S. & Watts, B. (2015) *The Homelessness Monitor: Wales 2015*. London: Crisis. Subsequent to our publishing of this year's Welsh Monitor the Welsh Government has decided to reverse its proposal to remove the six month moratorium on 'no fault' evictions of private tenants.

generally for the ability of low income households to access the private rented sector. While the Scottish Government, as part of the post referendum constitutional settlement, is to be provided with some new powers in respect of the operation of welfare policies in Scotland, these are limited and pertain to only 15% of welfare spend. However, and crucially from a homelessness perspective, the Scotland Bill does allow for the continuation of direct payments to social landlords of Universal Credit elements related to rental costs. It also permits the effective ‘abolition’ of the ‘Bedroom Tax’ in Scotland. While the ‘Bedroom Tax’ has been heavily mitigated by Discretionary Housing Payments by Scottish local authorities, it has nonetheless reportedly had the deleterious effect of making it more difficult to rehouse single homeless people (two thirds of the Scottish local authority homeless caseload) in social housing, given significant shortfalls in one bedroom properties in many parts of the country. The impact of this high spend on the ‘Bedroom Tax’ has also been to restrict local authorities’ ability to deploy Discretionary Housing Payments to support private rented sector access.

There is substantial anxiety in the homelessness sector in Scotland at present with regard to the implications of ongoing welfare reform for meeting the costs of temporary accommodation.³⁰ Under the Universal Credit regime the lower Local Housing Allowance rates, including the Shared Accommodation Rate for single under 35s, (with a limited additional management allowance) will also apply to local authorities seeking to secure accommodation for homeless households in the social rented sector. It has been estimated that the

application of the Local Housing Allowance rates and caps to local authority temporary accommodation will cost Scottish councils some £26.5 million a year.³¹ In addition, eligible rents for households in temporary accommodation are subject to the overall benefit cap (see below), and for those in local authority temporary accommodation also the ‘Bedroom Tax’. Key informants emphasised that any shortfall in temporary accommodation funding will have to be offset by budget cuts in other areas of support to homeless people in their area.

One positive ‘welfare story’ to emerge from this year’s Scottish Monitor is that the Scottish Welfare Fund, controlled by the Scottish Government rather than the UK Government, appears on the whole to be positively viewed by both service providers and users.³² However, one of the most striking changes since the 2012 Homelessness Monitor in Scotland is the extent to which the fallout from benefit sanctions has come to dominate the day-to-day lives of many homelessness service users and providers in Scotland. There are major concerns associated with the organisational as well as personal impacts of sanctioned residents being unable to pay service charges in temporary and supported accommodation. Sanctions are reported to be so sudden in their impact that they are much more difficult for support agencies to manage than, say, the ‘Bedroom Tax’, and sanctioned clients are now routinely referred to food banks by homelessness agencies.

Until now, the number of households affected by the overall benefit cap in Scotland has been quite modest, reflecting the lower levels of social and private rents compared

³⁰ Arrangements are different and more generous for ‘supported’ and other ‘specified’ accommodation.

³¹ COSLA (2014) *Housing and Welfare Reform, CWEG Item 3.3*: <http://www.cosla.gov.uk/system/files/private/cw140318item3-3.pdf>. An additional unpublished piece of work, undertaken by LAs for a Scottish Government chaired group on TA/supported accommodation, used a different methodology and arrived at a very similar estimate for the deficit arising from the implementation of the LHA rates plus management fee alone (i.e. without taking into account the impact of the caps).

³² Sosenko, F., Littlewood, M., Strathie, A., & Fitzpatrick, S. (2014) *Review of the Scottish Welfare Fund Interim Scheme*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

to other parts of Great Britain, and London in particular. But the planned lowering of the cap to £13,400 a year for single people and £20,000 for all other households will significantly extend its impact in Scotland – the Department for Work and Pensions Impact Assessment suggests that for Great Britain as a whole the numbers affected by the cap will quadruple to 126,000.³³

The disproportionate impact of welfare reform to date on young people has already been noted above. Going forward, the planned removal of Housing Benefit entitlement from 18–21s, other than for those deemed ‘vulnerable’, is obviously a matter of great concern;³⁴ Universal Credit recipients in this age group will also be subject to an intensified support and conditionality regime. Young people under 25, for whom rates of Job Seekers Allowance are already paid at a below ‘destitution’ level,³⁵ will be affected, along with other age groups, by the four year freeze in working-age benefits. Disproportionate cuts in youth services as a result of pressure on local authority budgets has also been argued to contribute to risks of homelessness for young people.³⁶ This all points to the particular difficulties that might be faced in maintaining the ‘gains’ on youth homelessness seen in Scotland in recent years.

Trends in homelessness Rough sleeping

In contrast with official practice in England, the Scottish Government maintains no regular rough sleeper ‘headcount’. Instead, the scale of rough sleeping can be gauged

indirectly through the local authority homelessness recording system. According to local authority HL1 returns, some 1,409 people applying as homeless in 2014/15 (4% of all applicants) reported having slept rough the night preceding their application.³⁷ Over the past few years the number and proportion of applicants recorded as having slept rough immediately prior to a statutory homelessness application has fallen steadily, with the 2014/15 national total having almost halved since 2009/10 (down by 49%).³⁸

However, this official pattern of declining rough sleeping is at odds with the steady, or even slightly upward trend, as suggested by self-reported data on past experience of homelessness captured by the Scottish Household Survey until 2012 (see further below). This national survey data indicates that just under 5,000 adults sleep rough over a year in Scotland, with an average of 660 sleeping rough on a typical night.³⁹

Review work undertaken by Homeless Action Scotland confirms that rough sleeping is still primarily an urban problem in Scotland, and that the predominant characteristics of rough sleepers are that they are white, male, Scottish and aged between mid-twenties to mid-forties.⁴⁰ However, in certain parts of the country it is evident that a substantial proportion of rough sleepers are not UK nationals. For example, in Aberdeen nearly half of rough sleepers enumerated by homelessness services in 2013/14 were of Central or Eastern European origin, while in Edinburgh this was true for over a third of the

33 DWP (2015) *Welfare Reform and Work Bill: Impact Assessment for the benefit cap*. London: DWP.

34 HM Treasury (2015) *Summer Budget 2015*. London: HM Treasury.

35 Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Blenkinsopp, J., Johnsen, S., Littlewood, M., Netto, G., Sosenko, F. & Watts, B. (2015) *Destitution in the UK: An Interim Report*. York: JRF.

36 Watts, B., Johnsen, S. & Sosenko, F. (2015) *Youth Homelessness in the UK*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University.

37 Steps are now being taken to embark on a programme of work to share anonymised data between local authorities and voluntary sectors providers in order to identify the extent to which these statutory homelessness statistics are fully capturing levels of rough sleeping in Scotland, see <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/homeless/activity/homelessness-prevention-and-strategy-group/meetings/paper2>

38 p.23 in Scottish Government (2015) *Operation of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland: 2014-15*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

39 SHS asks for what time period the respondent slept rough, stayed with friends or relatives, or stayed in hostels etc., in terms of broad bands; we make assumptions about the average number of days/nights in each band to arrive at these figures.

40 See also Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G. & Johnsen, S. (2013) ‘Pathways into multiple exclusion homelessness in seven UK cities’, *Urban Studies*, 50(1): 148–168.

city's much larger total.⁴¹ This suggests that the substantial representation of so-called 'A10' country nationals among the rough sleeper population in London⁴² is far from uniquely a London phenomenon.

Statutory homelessness

Trends in statutory homelessness in Scotland have tended to reflect major policy and administrative changes. Thus, the overall scale of statutory homelessness peaked in 2005/06, reflecting the early stages of the expansion of priority need, and has been on a marked downward path since 2010/11, since the introduction of Housing Options. In 2014/15 Scottish local authorities logged 35,764 statutory homelessness assessments, of which 28,615 resulted in a judgement that the household concerned was 'legally homeless'. The number of total assessed applications was 41% lower than in the peak year (2005/06) and 37% lower than in 2009/10 (before the sharp downward trajectory associated with Housing Options commenced). In the most recent year, total assessed applications fell by 4%, while 'assessed as homeless' cases dropped by 5%.

That the marked downward trend in the overall scale of statutory homelessness is wholly the result of the introduction of Housing Options is confirmed by the linkage between 'PREVENT1' and the official homelessness statistics (HL1). This allows us to see that, if we combine 'homelessness-type' approaches to Housing Options services, with formal homelessness assessments, the overall number of homelessness presentations to Scottish local authorities has remained relatively steady in recent years (around 54,000 per annum).

After a sustained and significant increase in the years to 2010/11, driven by the expansion of priority need in tandem with a declining supply of social housing lettings in Scotland, temporary accommodation placements have subsequently remained fairly steady in the range of 10-11,000 households at any one time, as the overall numbers accepted as statutorily homeless have declined. Most such placements are in ordinary social housing stock in Scotland, though single people are far more likely than families to be temporarily accommodated in non-self contained temporary accommodation, such as hostels and Bed & Breakfast hotels.⁴³

Local authorities across Scotland have reported substantially lengthening periods of time spent by households in temporary accommodation, and from April 2016 there will be mandatory data collection on this via the HL3. Prolonged stays in temporary accommodation have been attributed to a combination of the increased demand associated with the duty to accommodate single people, pressure on the supply of permanent social tenancies, and the challenges to move on presented by welfare reform measures (especially the 'Bedroom Tax'). Standards in temporary accommodation have been a key focus of Shelter Scotland campaigning in recent years, and there has been a recent strengthening of the 'Unsuitable Accommodation Order' – which restricts the use of certain types of accommodation, particularly Bed & Breakfast for families with children – to include provisions with regard to being wind and water tight.⁴⁴ However, concerns about the impact of welfare reform on the financial viability of temporary accommodation seem to have taken precedence over the 'standards debate' for now (see above).⁴⁵

⁴¹ Harleigh Bell, N. (2015) *An Overview of Rough Sleeping in Scotland; Paper to Homelessness Prevention Strategy Group*. Edinburgh: Homeless Action Scotland.

⁴² Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G. Wilcox, S. & Watts, B. (2015) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2015*. London: Crisis.

⁴³ Mackie, P. & Thomas, I. (2015) *Single Homelessness in Scotland*. London: Crisis.

⁴⁴ See <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/en/ssi/2014/243/article/4/made>

⁴⁵ HPSG (2013) *Temporary Accommodation in Scotland*: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/homeless/activity/homelessness-prevention-and-strategy-group/meetings/October-temporary-accommodation>

Despite the significant contraction in the numbers of formal homelessness assessments over the past few years, the profile of assessed applicants has remained fairly stable both in terms of applicant households' former living circumstances and the factors triggering loss of previous accommodation. While there was a marked upturn in local authority evictions in 2014/15, reflecting the rise in rent arrears attributable at least in part to welfare reform, mortgage and rent arrears continue to account for only a very small proportion of statutory homelessness cases in Scotland. Moreover, as noted above, there is little obvious tendency toward rising numbers of people losing their homes due to private tenancy terminations as recently seen in England.⁴⁶ This might reflect the fact that Scotland's housing market has been generally less pressurised than that of London and the South of England where such trends have been particularly evident. Proposals by the Scottish Government to end 'no-fault' evictions in the private rented sector may similarly be expected to play a restraining role going forward (see above).⁴⁷

Hidden homelessness

One of the most important forms of potential hidden homelessness is when individuals, groups or families are not able to form separate households and are obliged to live with others. We refer to these as 'concealed households'. Allowing for the estimated proportions of these groups who want or expect to move and live separately,⁴⁸ we find that about 9.3% of households in Scotland contain concealed households, including 6.7% nondependent children, 2.3% unrelated single adults, and 0.6% concealed families.⁴⁹ The number of households affected totals 223,000, including 56,200 consisting of

unrelated single adults and 14,460 involving concealed families. Scottish trends have largely paralleled those in the wider UK, although with a tendency for the shares of concealed potential households to fall slightly in Scotland, relative to UK. The bigger picture is that the UK has made no progress over more than two decades in reducing these proportions, and indeed there was a sharp upward movement between 2010-2012, perhaps reflecting the financial and economic crisis. This affected Scotland in a similar way to the general pattern across the UK.

Another way of looking at the issue of concealed households involves analysing the extent to which different age groups are able to form separate households, as measured by the 'household representative rate'. In general, at least up until 2010, one could say that the chances of a younger adult forming a separate household were increasing in Scotland, although there was a dip for the 25-29 age group between 2000 and 2008.⁵⁰ One could also say that the chances were greater in Scotland than in the UK as a whole, where there was a more pronounced tendency for rates to fall, especially in London and the South. However, since 2010 there has been a sharp fall for all of these age groups, which Scotland has experienced in parallel with the UK. Again, the economic crisis has likely been a factor here, but perhaps also the initial impacts of reforms to welfare, particularly the Local Housing Allowance.

Shared accommodation is another way in which people's inability to access affordable and adequate housing may manifest. It is similar to concealed households, with the distinction turning (officially) on whether people share a living room (which may be a larger kitchen) or eat meals together. Scotland

⁴⁶ Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G. Wilcox, S. & Watts, B. (2015) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2015*. London: Crisis.

⁴⁷ Scottish Government (2015) *Private Housing (Tenancies) Scotland Bill*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

⁴⁸ Based on questions in the English Housing Survey and UK-wide Understanding Society Survey

⁴⁹ Authors' analysis of Labour Force Surveys

⁵⁰ Authors' analysis of Labour Force Surveys

appears to have rather higher sharing than the rest of the UK, but this may also reflect differences in housing type mix or the way in which multiple occupation is regulated.

A further indicator of acute housing pressure and unmet need can be overcrowding. Data from the Understanding Society Survey suggests that while, until 2010, Scotland had lower levels of overcrowding than elsewhere in the UK, in the period 2011/12 this increased to a level similar to that in UK as a whole. Data from the 2011 Census, although using a somewhat different definition, shows that the hotspots for overcrowding in Scotland were Glasgow and the other major cities, followed by the poorest urban areas such as Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire. Thus it appears to be quite strongly related to poverty.

Overall distribution of past experience of homelessness

Survey-based evidence of people's past experience of homelessness⁵¹ is available via the Scottish Household Survey, an annual cross-sectional survey of a representative sample of around 10,000 private households. The Scottish Household Survey asks a range of questions of a randomly chosen (adult) household respondent including 'Have you ever been homeless, that is, lost your home with no alternative accommodation to go to?' Those who answer in the affirmative are also asked whether they have had this experience in the past two years. The Survey further asks all randomly chosen adults whether they have experienced a number of 'objective' housing problems, including applying to the local

authority as homeless, staying in temporary accommodation, staying with friends and relatives because they have nowhere else to live and, as noted above, rough sleeping.⁵²

The Scottish Household Survey indicates that 5.3% of adults living in Scotland in 2012 (the latest year for which relevant data is available) said that they had ever been homeless, with 1.9% saying that this has happened to them in the previous two years. These data imply that about 50,000 adults experience homelessness each year.⁵³ Since 2001, the former proportion had risen from 3.2%, with the two-year rate rising from 1.5% to 1.9%.

This large-scale household survey data confirms the overriding importance of poverty in the generation of homelessness in Scotland and its concentration in the urban areas of the central belt, and particularly in Glasgow. It also indicates that, aside from rough sleeping, which is overwhelmingly experienced by men,⁵⁴ all other forms of homelessness have equal prevalence among men and women in Scotland. This may come as a surprise in some quarters, where it has long been assumed that 'hidden homelessness' is more prevalent amongst women.⁵⁵ In Scotland we also find no significant relationship with non-white ethnic minority status and experience of homelessness. However, confirming previous study evidence, it is clear that both young people⁵⁶ and lone parents⁵⁷ are at heightened risk of homelessness in Scotland as a result of their disproportionate exposure to poverty.⁵⁸

⁵¹ Utilising large-scale household surveys like the SHS is a method best suited to investigating past rather than current experience of homelessness because these surveys do not generally capture people living in temporary or crisis accommodation or those sleeping rough.

⁵² Note that, in order to boost sample sizes, six years' of the SHS which included the homelessness questions have been used in most of this analysis, the years 2003 – 2007 and 2012 (years with relevant questions currently accessible on UK Data Service).

⁵³ This conservative estimate makes some allowance, based on questions about length of time, for people being homeless in both of the last two years; it also allows for those currently in temporary accommodation or sleeping rough, who would not be included in the SHS sample.

⁵⁴ Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G. & Johnsen, S. (2013) 'Pathways into multiple exclusion homelessness in seven UK cities', *Urban Studies*, 50(1): 148-168.

⁵⁵ Fitzpatrick, S., Kemp, P. A. & Klinker, S. (2000) *Single Homelessness: An Overview of Research in Britain*. Bristol: Policy Press.

⁵⁶ Quilgars, D., Johnsen, S. & Pleace, N. (2008) *Youth Homelessness in the UK: a Decade of Progress?* York: JRF.

⁵⁷ Burrows, R. (1997) 'The social distribution of the experience of homelessness' in Burrows, R. & N. Pleace (Eds.), *Homelessness and Social Policy* (pp. 50-68). London: Routledge.

⁵⁸ Bramley, G. & Fitzpatrick, S. (unpublished) *The Social Distribution of Homelessness: Impacts of Labour Markets, Housing Markets and Poverty in the UK*.

It is worth noting that the evidence from this wholly independent, self-reported source is broadly consistent with the patterns emerging from official statistics on homelessness trends and the use of temporary accommodation, as reviewed above.

Conclusion

Even as the UK and Scottish economies strengthen, policy-led factors continue to have a direct bearing on levels of homelessness across the country, as well as on the effectiveness of responses. Certainly, if the welfare reform agenda driven by the UK Government further increases poverty in Scotland, as is widely anticipated, then we would expect a concomitant, if lagged, rise in homelessness. With Scottish elections in 2016, the prospect of a referendum on European Union membership, and the possibility of another Scottish referendum on independence, there are major political developments in the pipeline that may change the context for homelessness in Scotland in quite fundamental ways. The evidence provided by the Homelessness Monitor over the coming years will provide a powerful platform for assessing the impact of political, economic and policy change on some of the most vulnerable people in Scotland.

About Crisis

Crisis is the national charity for single homeless people. We are dedicated to ending homelessness by delivering life-changing services and campaigning for change.

Our innovative education, employment, housing and well-being services address individual needs and help homeless people to transform their lives. We measure our success and can demonstrate tangible results and value for money.

We are determined campaigners, working to prevent people from becoming homeless and advocating solutions informed by research and our direct experience.

We have ambitious plans for the future and are committed to help more people in more places across the UK. We know we won't end homelessness overnight or on our own. But we take a lead, collaborate with others and together make change happen.

Get in touch

Crisis head office
66 Commercial Street
London E1 6LT
Tel: 0300 636 1967
Fax: 0300 636 2012

www.crisis.org.uk

© Crisis 2015
ISBN 978-1-78519-023-0

Crisis UK (trading as Crisis). Registered Charity Numbers:
E&W1082947, SC040094. Company Number: 4024938

Homelessness ends here